

Statistical bulletin

UK business register and employment survey (BRES): 2014 revised and 2015 provisional

The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) is the official source of employee and employment estimates by detailed geography and industry



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Release date:
28 September 2016

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Main points

The number of employees in the UK increased by 607,000 between 2014 and 2015, from 28.7 million to 29.3 million. Between 2009 (when the survey began) and 2015, the number of employees in the UK is estimated to have increased by 1.9 million (7.0%). The increase in employees between 2014 and 2015 accounts for around one-third of the growth since 2009.

Between 2014 and 2015, the number of employees increased in all regions; London (up 153,000) and the South East (up 133,000) are showing particularly strong growth, while increases were smallest for Scotland (6,000), Northern Ireland (7,000) and the South West (11,000).

Between 2014 and 2015, the largest increase in employees has been in the professional, scientific and technical industry (up 129,000), closely followed by business administration and support services (up 95,000).

The professional, scientific and technical industry, which has shown particularly strong growth since 2009 (up 477,000), can be seen to have a strong presence in London and the South East. In 2015, of the 20 local authorities with the highest share of employees in this industry, 8 were located in London. Conversely, 5 of the 20 local authorities with the lowest share of employees in this industry were in Scotland.

Between 2014 and 2015, public administration (down 24,000), finance and insurance (down 20,000), and manufacturing (down 6,000) were the broad industry groups which showed decreases in the number of employees.

Between 2014 and 2015 for Great Britain, the number of public sector employees decreased in 55% of local authority districts, with 84% showing a decrease between 2009 and 2015. In contrast, 78% of local authority districts saw an increase in the number of private sector employees over the same period, with 92% seeing growth in numbers between 2009 and 2015.

2 . Introduction

The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) is the official source of employee and employment estimates by detailed geography and industry. It is also used to update structural information on the Inter-Departmental Business Register, the main sampling frame for business surveys used to produce UK official statistics.

This statistical bulletin focuses on the strengths of BRES, giving employee estimates by region level and below and by broad industry group and below. There is also a section that looks at public and private sector estimates of employees. Many of the analyses contained in this bulletin make comparisons with 2009, the year that BRES was introduced.

The survey collects employment information from businesses across the whole of the UK economy for each site that they operate. This allows us to produce workplace-based employee and employment estimates by detailed geography and industry, full-time or part-time workers and whether the business is in the public or the private sector.

Due to the survey's large sample size (approximately 80,000 businesses), BRES is able to produce good quality estimates for detailed breakdowns by industry and geography. Indeed, no other Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey of regional and sub-regional employment data can provide the same level of industry detail. Furthermore, being a business survey, the quality of this industry data is very good and is recommended in preference to industry data from household surveys such as the Annual Population Survey. BRES provides both employee and employment data and is particularly recommended for analysis of employee data. All analysis in this bulletin is for data on employees.

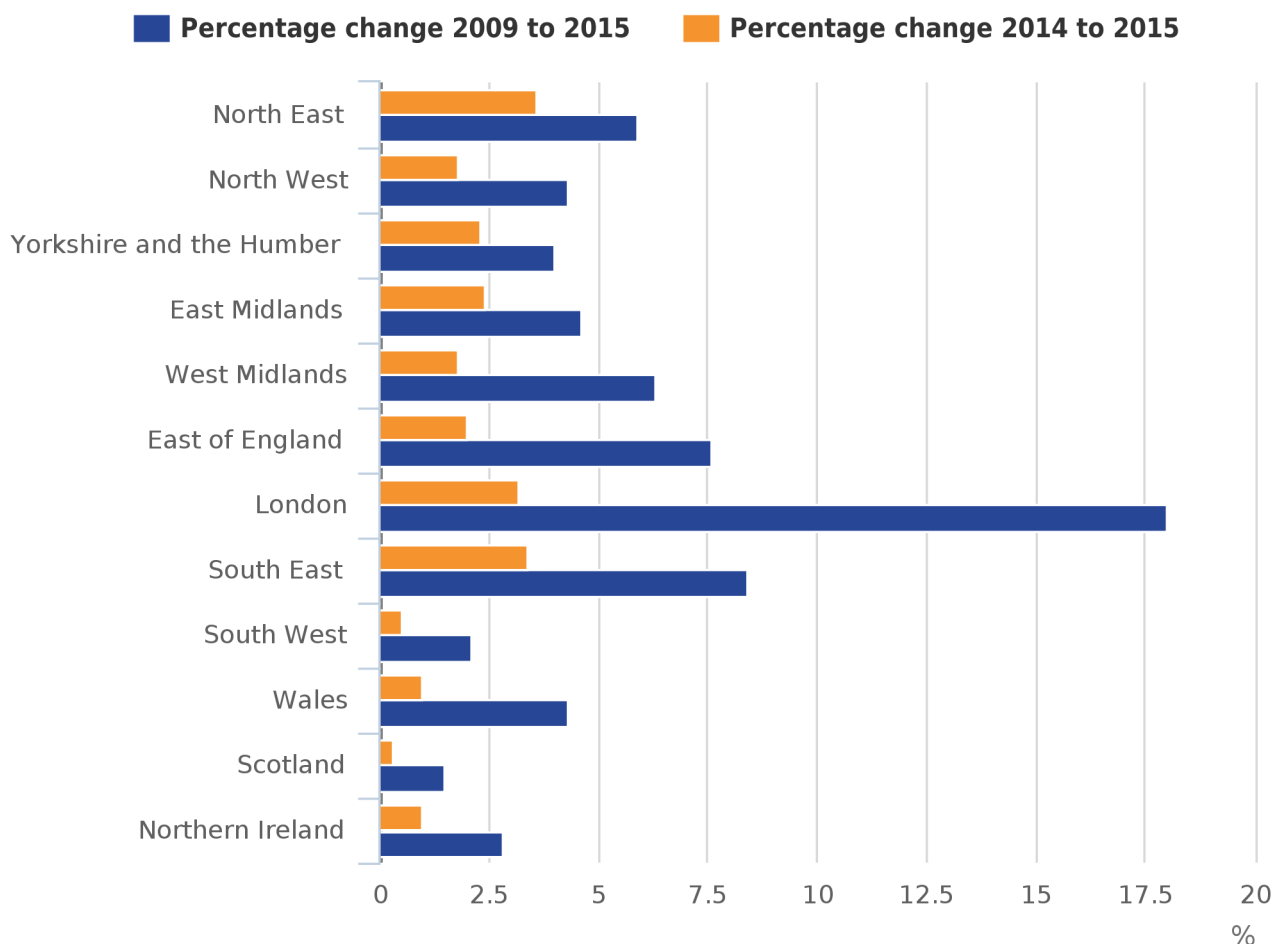
The employment data in BRES is the number of employees added to the number of working owners (for example, sole proprietors and partners). However, BRES does not cover the very small businesses neither registered for VAT nor Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE), which make up a small part of the economy. As a result there is a difference between the BRES UK estimate of employment and the estimate from the ONS workforce jobs series. So for total employment figures, other ONS sources such as workforce jobs (regional) and the Annual Population Survey (sub-regional) can provide fuller coverage of total employment, albeit with a less detailed industrial breakdown.

Since BRES is based on a sample of businesses, it can be affected by sampling variability. In particular, the quality of the estimates may deteriorate for smaller geographies and this should be taken into account when making inferences about the figures. Quality measures accompany the BRES tables on our website.

3 . Regional estimates

Figure 1 shows the percentage change in the number of employees between 2009 and 2015, and between 2014 and 2015 by region. Between 2009 and 2015, the number of employees in the UK has increased by 1.9 million (7.0%) from 27.4 million to 29.3 million. The increase between 2014 and 2015 accounts for 607,000 of the 1.9 million increase.

Figure 1: Percentage change in employees by region, 2009 to 2015 and 2014 to 2015, UK



Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

Over the 2 time periods (between 2009 to 2015 and 2014 to 2015) all regions have experienced an increase in the number of employees. Between 2009 and 2015, London had the largest increase, 18.0%, whereas all other regions had growths ranging between 8.4% (South East) and 1.5% (Scotland). In the latest year (between 2014 and 2015) the regions outside of London have picked up and some have shown larger growth than London. Both the North East (3.6%) and the South East (3.4%) had a larger percentage increase than London (3.2%). The regions with the smallest growth are the South West and Scotland with 0.5% and 0.3% increases in employees respectively.

4 . Results by broad industry group

Figure 2 shows the percentage change in employees by broad industry group between 2009 and 2015 and between 2014 and 2015.

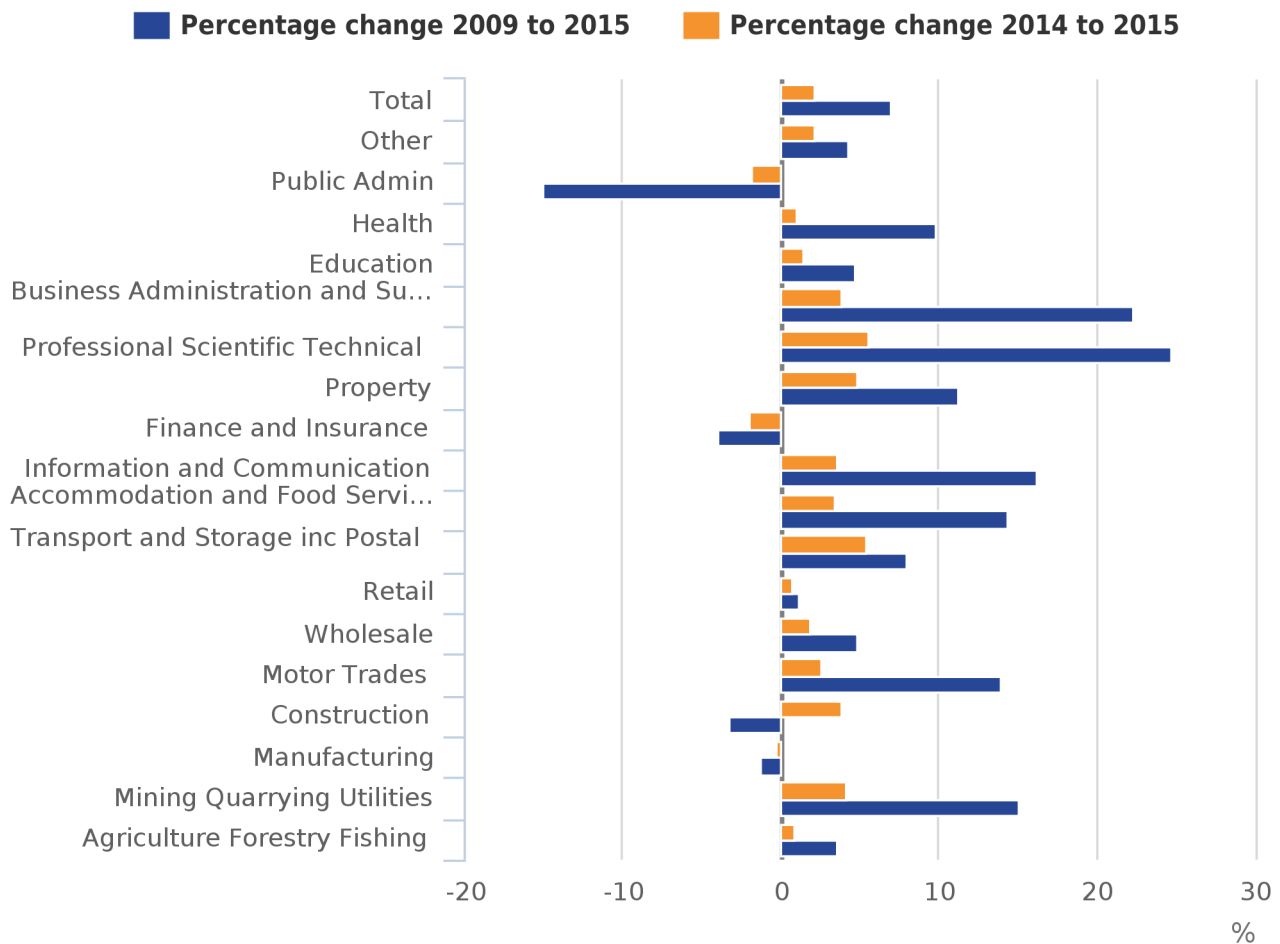
Between 2014 and 2015, there were increases in all but 3 sectors. The professional, scientific and technical industries (5.6%) and transport and storage industries (5.4%) showed the largest increases. This is the third consecutive annual rise of more than 100,000 employees in the professional, scientific and technical industry. The finance and insurance (1.9%), public administration (1.8%) and manufacturing (0.2%) sectors showed decreases in the number of employees over the period. The decrease in these groups is consistent with the trends they have shown since 2009.

Between 2009 and 2015, the largest increase was in the professional, scientific and technical industries (24.7%) followed by the business administration and support services industries (22.4%).

Over the six years to September 2015, the largest decrease was in public administration (15.0%). There were also decreases in finance and insurance (3.9%), construction (3.3%) and manufacturing (1.2%).

Short-term changes in the industrial composition of employees can result from the reclassification of businesses across industrial groups.

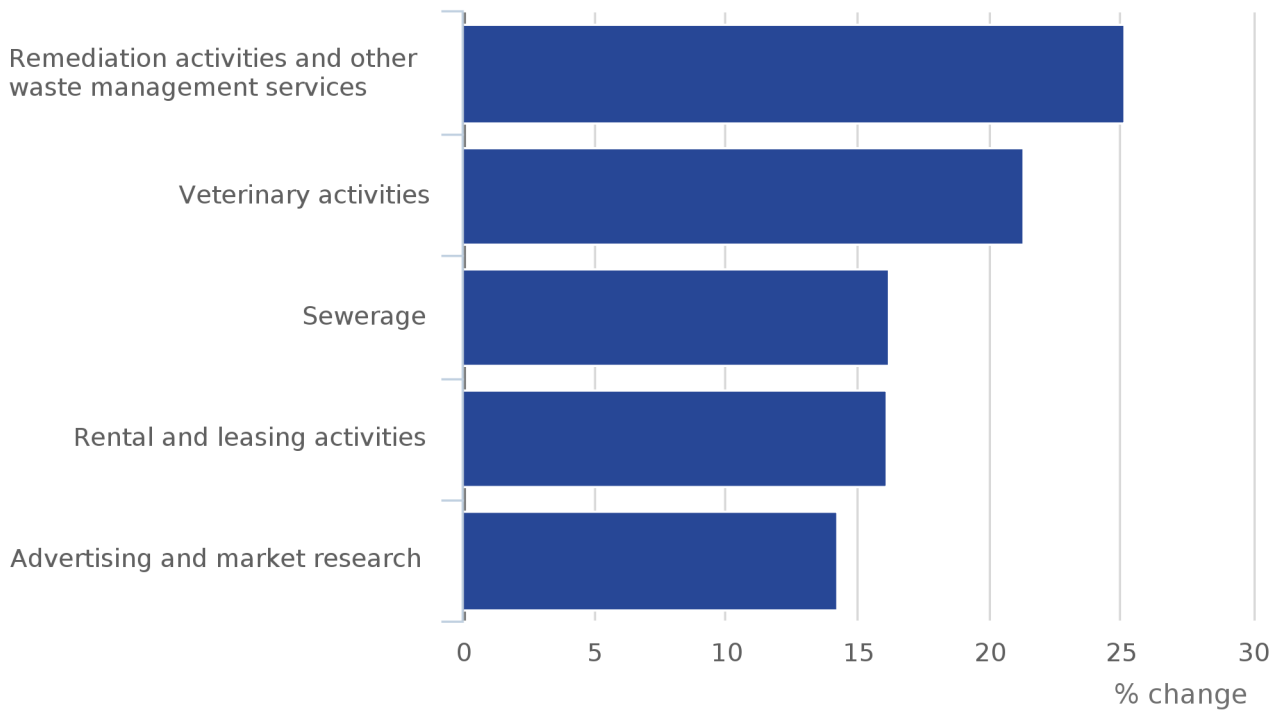
Figure 2: Percentage change in employees by broad industry group, 2009 to 2015 and 2014 to 2015, UK



Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

The rest of this section looks at these industries in more detail. Figure 3a shows the 5 divisions with the largest percentage increases in employees between 2014 and 2015. Figure 3b shows the 5 divisions with the largest falls over this period.

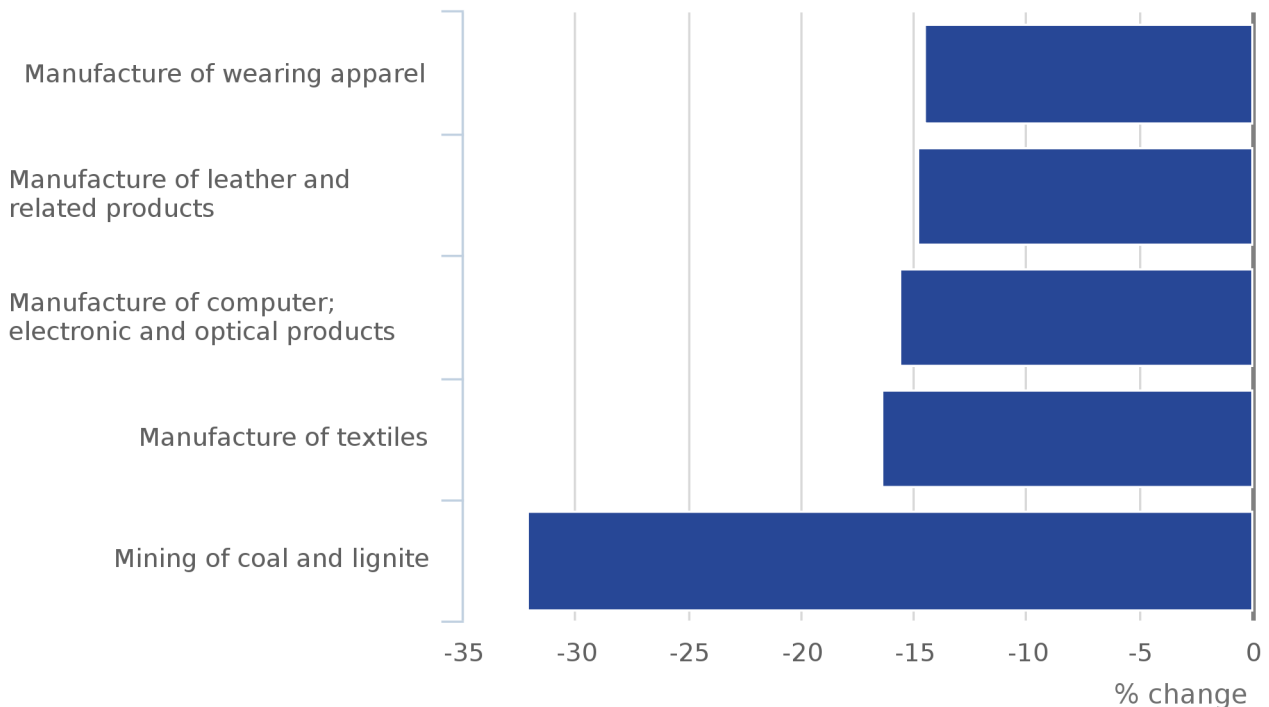
Figure 3a: The 5 largest growths in industry divisions between 2014 and 2015, Great Britain



Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

The chart shows growth of just over 25% in remediation activities and other waste management services over the year to September 2015.

Figure 3b: The 5 largest declines in industry divisions between 2014 and 2015, Great Britain

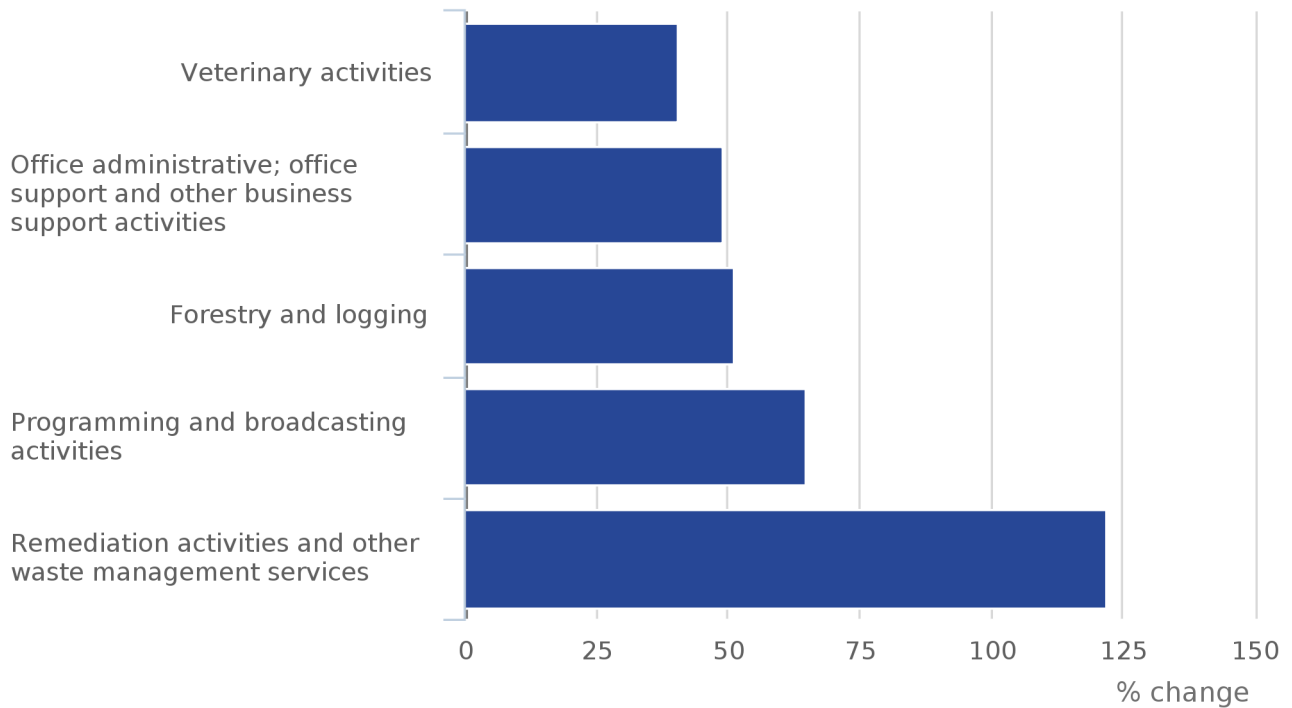


Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

The biggest fall came in mining of coal and lignite, where employment fell by 32% in the year to September 2015.

Figures 3c and 3d below show movements in the number of employees from the start of the survey in 2009 to September 2015.

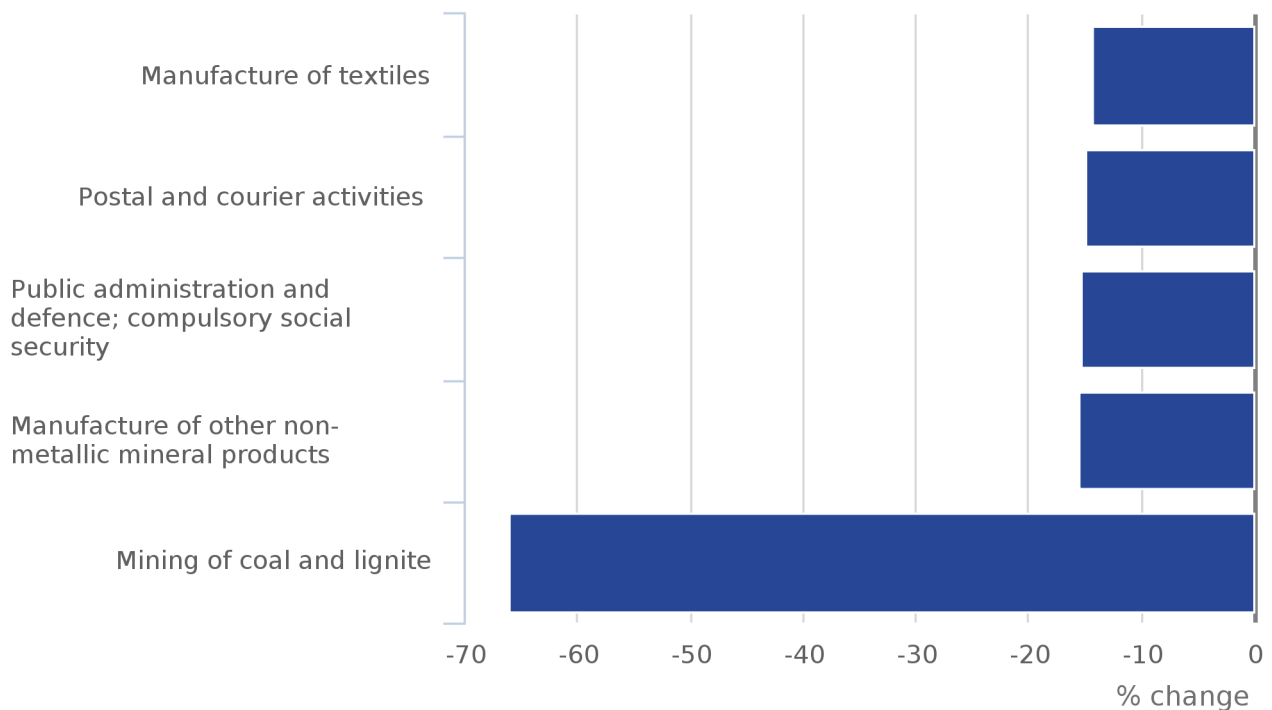
Figure 3c: The 5 largest growths in industry divisions between 2009 and 2015, Great Britain



Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

Once again the industry with the greatest increase over the six year period is remediation activities and other waste management services, with growth in the number of employees of over 120%.

Figure 3d: The 5 largest declines in industry divisions between 2009 and 2015, Great Britain



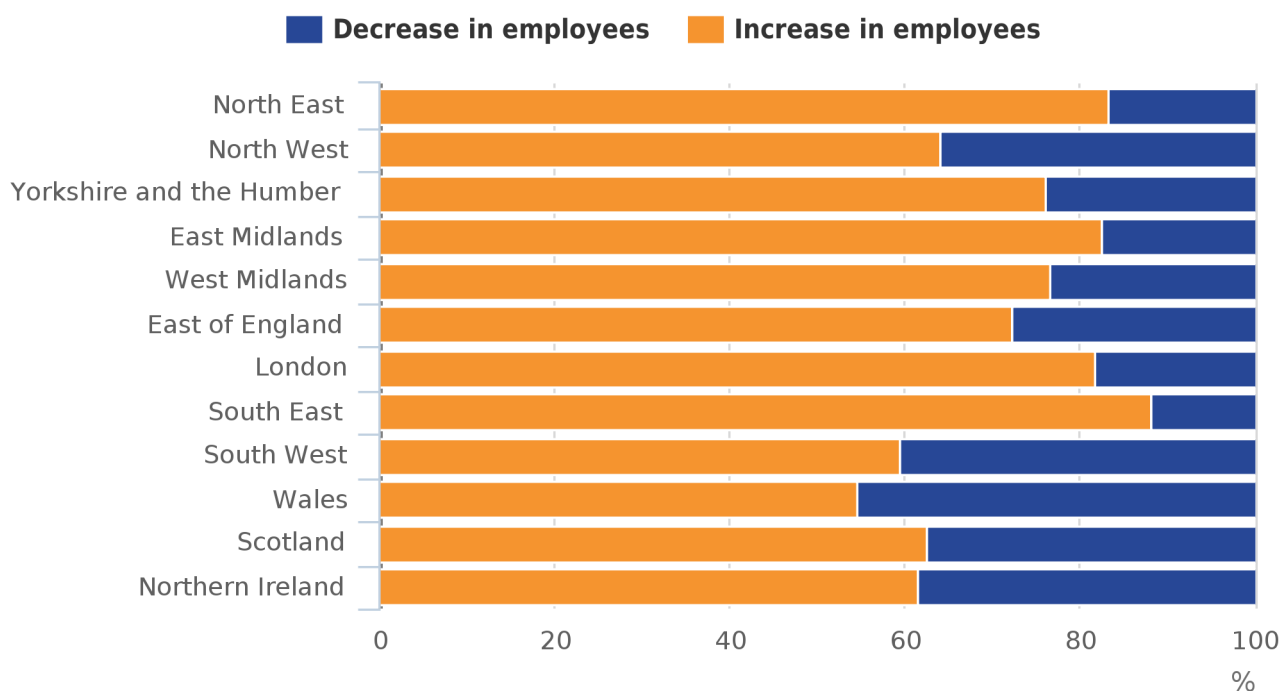
Source: Business register and employment survey (BRES), Office for national Statistics

The strongest fall over this period comes from the mining of coal and lignite industry, which has fallen by 66% over the six years to September 2015.

5 . Sub-regional estimates

The analysis in this section focuses on changes in employees at a local authority (LA) district level. Although regional estimates show interesting patterns and shifts over time, they can mask some of the sub-regional variation in the geographical distribution of employees. For example, strong growth in the East of England in the number of employees between 2014 and 2015 has been driven by growth in the Watford and St Albans LAs. Similarly, the growth seen in the South West and Scotland has been driven by the Bristol and Renfrewshire LAs respectively.

Figure 4: Percentage of local authority districts that have seen an increase or decrease in the number of employees between 2014 and 2015, UK

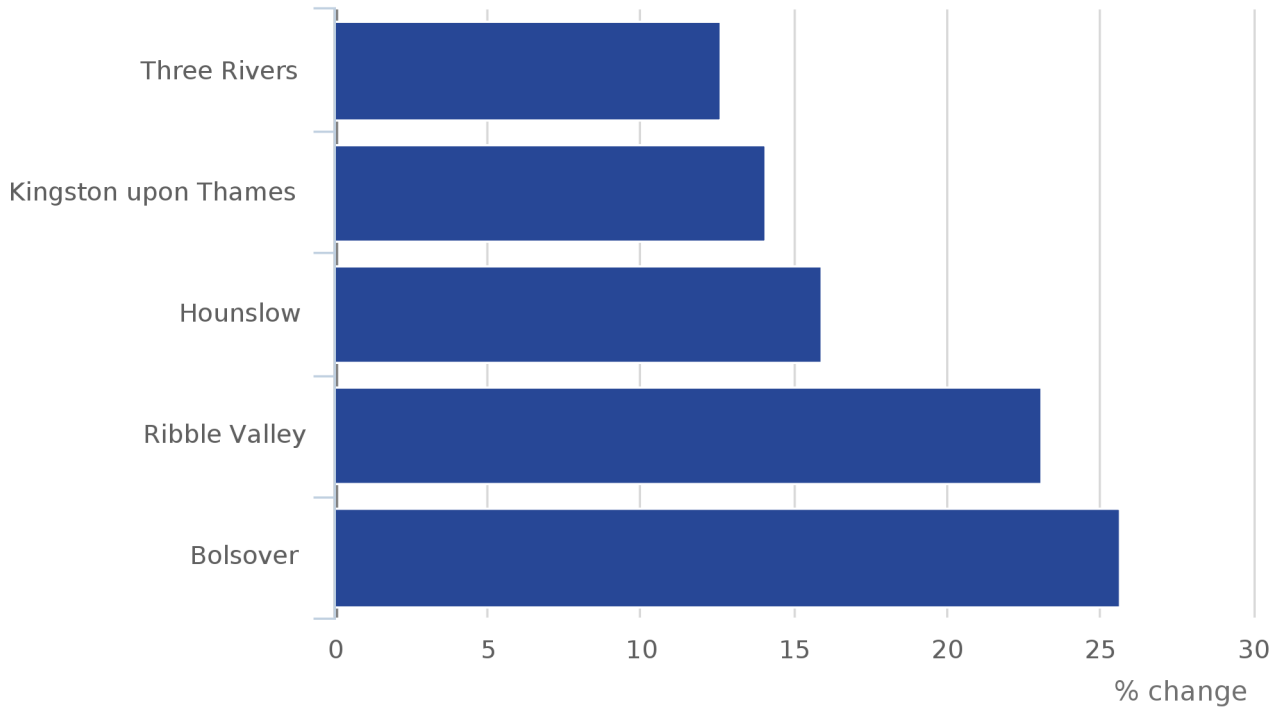


Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

Since the overall regional growth can be greatly affected by the growth in a small number of LAs, Figure 4 looks at the percentage of LAs within a region that have shown an increase or a decrease in the number of employees. This needs to be compared with Figure 1 to give an indication of how well the growth is spread across all LAs within the region.

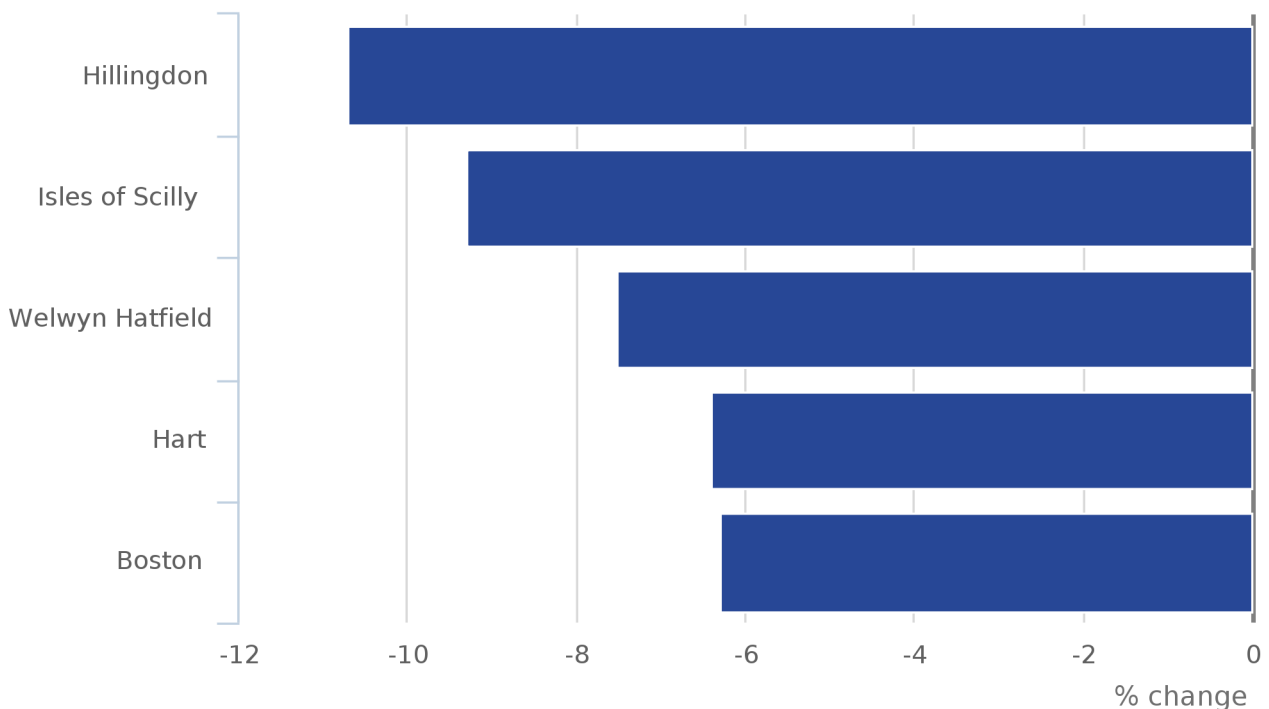
Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the South West are the regions with the highest proportion of Local Authorities that show a decrease in the number of employees in the year to September 2015.

Figure 5a: Local authorities showing the 5 biggest increases between 2014 and 2015, Great Britain



Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

Figure 5b: Local authorities showing the 5 biggest decreases between 2014 and 2015, Great Britain



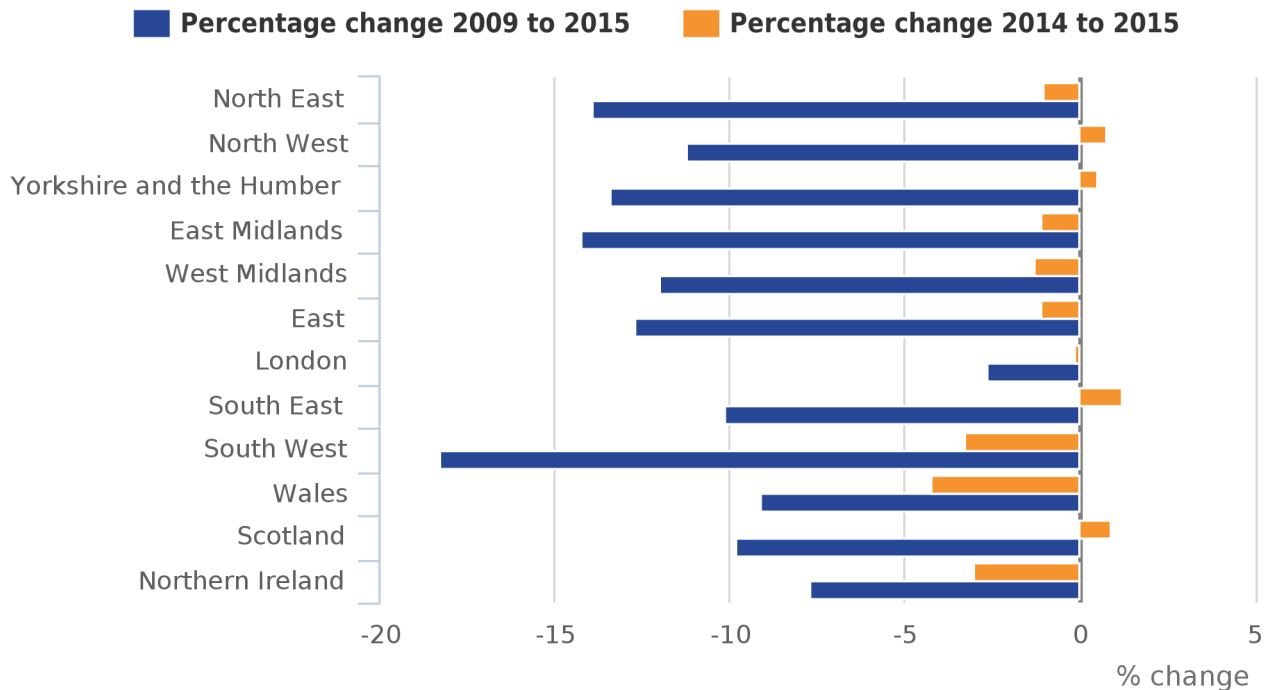
Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

Figure 5a shows that the largest increase in employees was seen in Bolsover (East Midlands) (25.7%), while Figure 5b shows that the largest decrease was seen in Hillingdon (London) (10.7%).

6 . Public and private sector estimates

Figures 6 and 7 show the movements in public and private sector employees by region between 2014 and 2015 and 2009 and 2015.

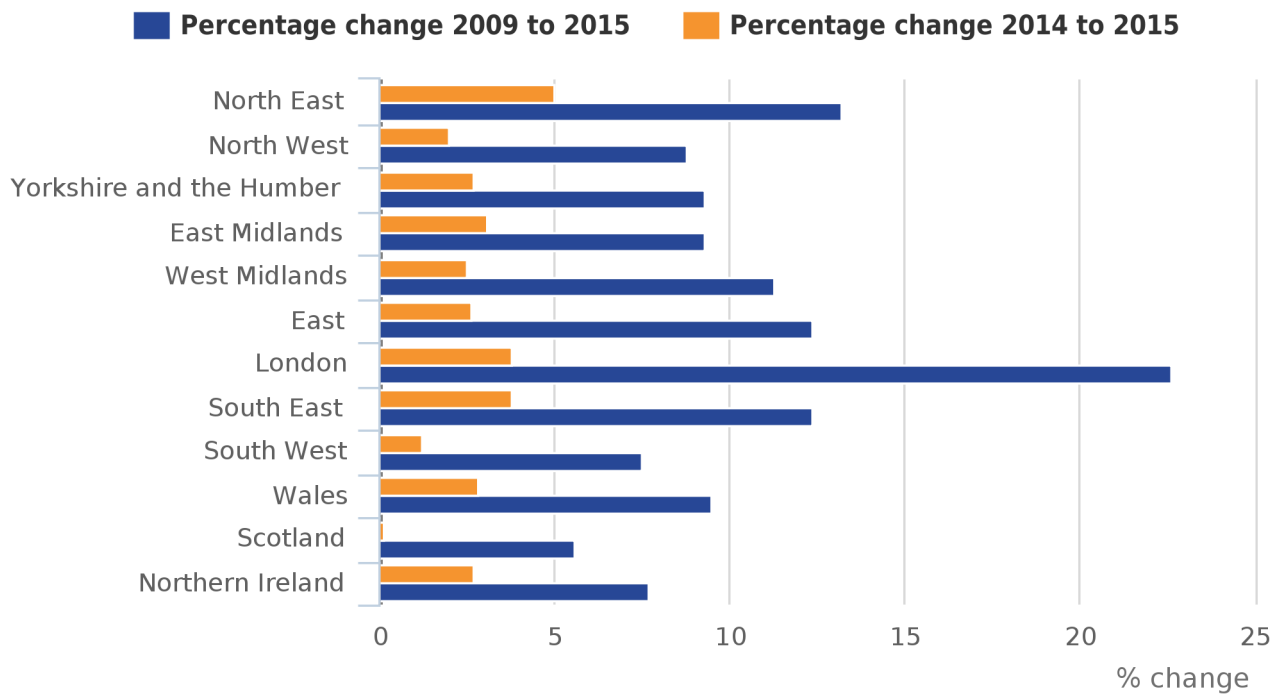
Figure 6: Percentage change in employees by region for the public sector, 2009 to 2015 and 2014 to 2015, UK



Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

During the 2014 to 2015 period, most regions have continued to see a fall in public sector employees, with Wales (down 4.2%) and the South West (down 3.3%) showing the largest percentage falls. Increases in public sector employees for the South East, Scotland, the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber buck the trend witnessed since 2009. Since 2009, London (down 2.6%) has shown the smallest fall in the number of employees in the public sector.

Figure 7: Percentage change in employees by region for the private sector, 2009 to 2015 and 2014 to 2015, UK



Source: Business Register Employment Survey (BRES), Office for National Statistics

In contrast, the number of employees in the private sector has grown in every region between 2014 and 2015, with strong percentage growth in the North East, South East and London. In fact, the growth in employees in the private sector is greater than the fall in employees in the public sector in every region, resulting in a net increase in employees in every region.

For Great Britain between 2014 and 2015, there were 55% of local authority districts that saw a decrease in the number of public sector employees, with 84% showing a decrease between 2009 and 2015. In contrast, 78% of local authority districts saw an increase in the number of private sector employees, with 92% seeing growth between 2009 and 2015.

When looking at changes in the number of employees in the public and private sectors, it is worth noting that these estimates can be distorted as a result of changes to the public or private designation of large businesses. For example, the transport and storage (including postal) industry in the public sector declined in 2014 due to the privatisation of the Royal Mail. Similarly, the finance and insurance industry in the public sector declined in 2014 due to the return to the private sector of one of the major banks brought into public ownership in 2008.

7 . Quality and methodology

The [BRES Quality and Methodology Information document](#) contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- users and uses of the data
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data

8. Background notes

1. To support this release a set of tables providing greater geographical and industrial detail is available on our website.
2. Estimates presented in this release and associated published tables are rounded to prevent disclosure. Differences may exist in totals across tables due to rounding of estimates and disclosure methods used.
3. For 2015, employee job numbers are estimated as at 11 September.
4. Sub-regional estimates are based on the county and district geography boundaries at the time the survey sample was selected (August 2015).
5. Although this bulletin focuses on employees, BRES collects information on employees and employment (employees plus working owners). BRES therefore includes self-employed workers (within the employment estimates) as long as they are registered for VAT or Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) schemes. Self-employed people who are not registered for these, along with HM Forces and government-supported trainees are not included.
6. Employee jobs are allocated to the area in which the businesses completing the survey questionnaire say the employee works. Therefore, geographic estimates are on a workplace basis, and do not reflect where the person lives. Jobs at local hospitals, for example, may be situated in one local authority while the employees or people may reside in another.
7. The public sector comprises central government, local government and public corporations. The private sector comprises companies, sole proprietors, partnerships and non-profit bodies.
8. An employee is defined as anyone aged 16 years or over that is paid directly from the payroll, in return for carrying out a full-time or part-time job or being on a training scheme. Employment includes employees plus the number of working owners who receive drawings or a share of the profits. Full-time is defined as working more than 30 hours per week with part-time defined as working 30 hours or less per week.
9. Farm agriculture data are either provided or taken from existing publications by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland. These figures are not available for all sub-regions so for consistency they have not been included in estimates below Region level. The figures have only been included at a 2-digit Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) level and above. Where employment in farm agriculture has been included in estimates it has been included within the private sector.
10. Alternative employment estimates are available from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Workforce Jobs (WFJ). BRES is the primary source for employee estimates at a detailed regional and industrial level. Workforce Jobs benchmarks the private sector employee component to the BRES private sector employee estimates on an annual basis. The WFJ series, which is compiled mainly from surveys of businesses, is the preferred source of statistics when comparing changes in employment over time. The LFS, which collects information mainly from residents of private households, is the preferred source of statistics on employment at the whole economy level. The concept of employment (measured by the LFS as the number of people working at least 1 hour during the survey reference week) differs from the concept of jobs, since a person can have more than 1 job, and some jobs may be shared by more than 1 person. The LFS can also be used to produce estimates of the total number of jobs in the UK, by adding together the headline employment figures (which are equivalent to main jobs) and those for workers with a second job.
11. The public sector employee job figures from BRES aggregated to regional or national level will not match those produced from the Public Sector Employment release, which is the recommended source for public sector employment figures.
12. On 31 May 2012, we announced the reclassification of English further education corporations and sixth form colleges to the private sector, as Non-Profit Institutions Serving Households, effective from 1 April 2012. As such, employee estimates for English further education colleges and sixth form college corporations are included in our estimates of public sector employment for 2011 and earlier years. From 2012 onwards, English further education corporations and English sixth form college employment estimates were included in the private sector. Welsh further education colleges were reclassified to the private sector in early 2015.

13. A further breakdown of the number of employees, by region and industry, is provided on the [Nomis website](#) . Employee estimates from BRES can only be viewed on Nomis by applying for access, details of which can be found on the Nomis website.
14. Figures are classified to the 2007 revision to the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). BRES includes breakdowns by public and private sector according to the legal status of employees for National Accounts classification purposes.
15. We apply statistical methods to the survey returns to ensure that the estimates derived are as representative of the population as possible. Nevertheless, there is still some error associated with these estimates, and we measure this by calculating coefficients of variation, which are defined as the ratio of the standard error of an estimate to the estimate itself.

For example, an estimate with a CV of 5% will have a standard error that is 5% of the estimate. The smaller the coefficient of variation, the greater the accuracy of the estimate. CVs that are greater than or equal to 20% should be used with caution.

CVs are provided within the published tables that accompany this release.

16. Quality Methodology Information for BRES is available on the ONS website.
17. BRES is a sample survey. For the 2015 survey period, approximately 80,000 businesses were sampled for Great Britain. Further details of the sample design can be found in the BRES QMI to be updated by the end of the year. The response rate for the 2015 BRES survey was 87%. Northern Ireland data was collected independently by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.
18. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting the [UK Statistics Authority](#) website or from the [Media Relations Office](#).

These National Statistics are produced to high professional standards and released according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.