



Methodology for Annual Employment Survey (AES) and Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact (ABSEI)

Background

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) has a dedicated Survey Unit which collects official, national data as well as data relating to client companies of the enterprise development agencies (Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta).

Each year DETE carries out two major surveys, namely the Annual Employment Survey (AES), and the Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact (ABSEI). These surveys are used to track the employment and economic activity of firms that are being assisted by the development agencies. The resulting data is used to inform policy analysis conducted by DETE as well as End of Year Statements and Annual Reports for the agencies. The surveys are therefore crucial annual outputs for DETE and the agencies, and the data yielded is used extensively by a range of stakeholders. Recent AES and ABSEI surveys, as well as further supporting documentation, can be found on the Department's [Surveys and Data](#) webpage.

Different aspects of the surveys are conducted by DETE, the enterprise development agencies, and a research contractor, and the process is managed by these organisations working collaboratively through an inter-agency steering group.

AES Overview

The AES is a census of employment in all manufacturing and services companies supported by the enterprise development agencies. The survey takes place from September to December each year when approximately 7,000 questionnaires are sent to relevant Agency-assisted client firms. Clients are asked to indicate the number of Permanent/ Full-time Jobs and Other Jobs (that is, Temporary/ Part-Time) on 31 October of that year. From 2021 onwards the questionnaire will also ask about the number and location of remote workers.

ABSEI Overview

The aim of the ABSEI is to track a number of variables relating to the economic activity of firms that are being assisted by the state agencies and to measure expenditure by these companies in the economy. The information from the survey is a key input into a framework of performance indicators designed to assess the economic contribution of agency-assisted client companies. The data on individual companies are also used by the agencies concerned in their day-to-day working relationship with their clients. The survey takes place between April and August each year and targets approximately 4,600 client companies.

Project Planning

Much of the process through which the AES and ABSEI reports are produced is managed through an inter-agency steering group which includes representatives from DETE, the enterprise agencies and the research contractor. This steering group reviews the process and outputs from the previous survey cycle and considers emerging data needs. It reviews processes for dealing with survey non-respondents. It agrees the design of the survey e-form, with each agency adding additional survey questions specific to their domain. The agencies compile a list of the survey population for the contractor.

Data Collection

Online systems for data collection have been in use for these surveys since 2018. The research contractor sends a link and password for the survey to each of the client companies, who respond via the secure web-based survey system. The research contractor responds to queries and follows up with survey non-respondents.

Data Processing

The research contractor submits the primary microdata to the agencies and DETE. A rigorous, line-by-line quality check on the microdata is carried out by the enterprise agencies, and edits are made as appropriate. The microdata is returned to the research contractor, which applies statistical weighting and prepares summary tables. The summary tables and microdata are transferred to DETE, which drafts the AES and ABSEI reports.

Dissemination

The reports and statistics produced through the AES and ABSEI surveys are available free of charge to all users via the Department's website. In line with Government policy the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is committed to publishing open data so that its outputs are accessible to and reusable by the widest possible audience. The Department's dissemination policy can be accessed under [statistical quality and methodology documentation](#).

The Department is committed to protecting the confidentiality of all enterprise data, consistent with the Department's obligations under Irish law. The Confidentiality Commitment for the AES and ABSEI publications is published on [statistical quality and methodology documentation](#).

The Department may provide access to pseudonymised survey microdata files to researchers in Government Departments, State Agencies or other third parties (for example, researchers engaged in policy analysis, or consultants working on behalf of one of the aforementioned organisation types) subject to our strict Access Criteria. For further information see our Policy on Access to Research Microdata Files on [statistical quality and methodology documentation](#).

Quality

The Department's Quality Commitment Statement for AES and ABSEI is published on [statistical quality and methodology documentation](#).

Code of Practice

The Department is committed to ensuring that all data is compiled to the highest standard. In particular, the Department adheres to the principles set out in the 'Irish Statistical System Code of

Practice' (ISSCOP)¹ and has signed a statement of commitment to ISSCoP, which can be found on [statistical quality and methodology documentation](#).

Quality Assurance

Quality is maintained through the inter-agency steering group that manages the AES and ABSEI publications. The key components of the Quality Assurance Plan are:

- The AES and ABSEI process map, which is aligned with the General Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM²).
- Data Validation Meetings to review the raw survey data.
- Formal reviews by the steering group on statistical processes, outputs and quality.
- The Department's Quality Commitment Statement.
- Membership of the Formal Statistician Liaison Group³, which promotes best practices across the Irish Statistical System.
- The appointment of an IGSS⁴ Statistician to the Department, who acts as the designated statistical coordinator with responsibility for monitoring standards across data sources, and works in an independent capacity in this regard.

Release Calendar

The release dates for the AES and ABSEI reports, together with supporting data, is available on the Department's website, see [release calendar](#).

¹ www.isscop.ie/codeofpractice/

² www.cso.ie/en/methods/gsbpm/

³ www.cso.ie/en/aboutus/lgdp/cgt/ocg/csogroups/formalstatisticianliaisongroup/

⁴ Irish Government Statistical Service: www.isscop.ie/irishstatisticalsystem/