

Uses of the Business Register Employment Survey (BRES)

1. Introduction

The first [Business Register Employment Survey \(BRES\)](#) estimates were published in December 2010. BRES has been assessed by the United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) for compliance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#), this being part of the process of gaining official National Statistics (NS) status. A link to the final report can be found [here](#) under report number 73.

Permission was given for BRES to carry the NS accreditation, but a number of requirements needed to be met in order to keep this. One of these was to *"Take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of the statistics; publish the relevant information and assumptions, and use them to better support the use of the statistics"*

This paper has been written in response to this requirement. The information presented has been collected in the following ways:

1. The first BRES user group was held in July 2011, followed by a second meeting in January 2012. Delegates, selected from central and local government were asked for their feedback.
2. Information was obtained from [NOMIS](#) (the online dissemination tool used by BRES) regarding who requests access to BRES data, and their reasons for wanting this access.
3. Internet based research has been carried out looking at what uses are made of the BRES tables published on the National Statistics website.
4. A user feedback survey was included in the [2010 BRES statistical bulletin](#).
5. Regular consultation with users in Local Government via the Central and Local Government information Partnership (CLiP).
6. Frequent ad hoc meetings with Welsh Government (WG) and Scottish Government (SG).
7. During the development of the BRES a web consultation exercise was undertaken inviting users of annual employment estimates (which at the time were from the Annual Business Inquiry) to provide their views and comments. These comments were used in developing BRES to ensure user needs were met. A paper was published summarising the views of users in response to this open consultation. A copy of both the consultation document and response can be found [here](#).

2. How the data is accessed

Employee and Employment estimates are available to users from two identifiable sources. Firstly, through the [National Statistics \(NS\) website](#), where the BRES survey has its very own [product page](#). These estimates are free to view and data is presented in many different tables, giving customers an overall picture of data at UK and Local Authority County/District levels.

Secondly, regular users register with the [NOMIS](#) website, which gives them access to data at low levels via a "Chancellor's Notice". The Chancellor's Notice grants customers access to the latest estimates as well as previous year's data. A Chancellor's Notice costs £125 and grants access until the next year's data is released. Access to identifiable data is only allowable after giving a valid statistical purpose and the signing of a confidentiality agreement.

3. Uses of BRES data

3.1 ONS website

ONS publishes free to view tables on the [NS Website](#). Each publication contains nine tables at various levels of detail, accompanied by standard error tables.

Below is a count of how many times each web link has been accessed from the web product page on the NS website between publication on 30 September 2011 and 31 January 2012. Results are given for both the published tables as well as the different section of the BRES statistical bulletin.

| Table | Visits | Ranking* |
|--|---------------|-----------------|
| Table 1 - Broad Industry Group | 373 | 1897 |
| Table 1 CV | 201 | 3188 |
| Table 2 - Industry (5 digit) | 212 | 3050 |
| Table 2 CV | 29 | 10156 |
| Table 3 - Region | 190 | 3353 |
| Table 3 CV | 10 | 16347 |
| Table 4 - Region by Broad Industry Group | 134 | 4356 |
| Table 4 CV | 12 | 15572 |
| Table 5 - Region by Industry (3 digit) | 116 | 4795 |
| Table 5 CV | 6 | 20303 |
| Table 6 - Local Authority Council | 249 | 2680 |
| Table 6 CV | 19 | 12360 |
| Table 7a - Local Authority County by Broad Industry Group | 186 | 3425 |
| Table 7b - Local Authority County by Broad Industry Group | 159 | 3857 |
| Table 8 - Local Authority District | 276 | 2466 |
| Table 8 CV | 26 | 10699 |
| Table 9 - Parliamentary Constituency by Broad industry Group | 76 | 6292 |
| Statistical Bulletin - Headline figures | 1339 | 509 |
| Statistical Bulletin - Summary | 86 | 5837 |
| Statistical Bulletin - Results by region | 175 | 3574 |
| Statistical Bulletin - Sub-regional estimates | 163 | 3774 |
| Statistical Bulletin - Results by industry | 164 | 3756 |
| Statistical Bulletin - Public/private sector estimates | 80 | 6094 |
| Statistical Bulletin - 2011 User feedback survey | 38 | 9029 |
| Statistical Bulletin - Background notes | 73 | 6451 |

*A measure of the popularity of each page relative to the entire ONS website

It is difficult to gather information about the use that is made of the tables published on the NS website. Internet based research has shown some use, although our findings are limited. Here is an [example](#) of a regional perspective on the statistics from Kent County Council.

Other government departments and private organisations also provide links to BRES on their web pages, implying users of these sites may also have an interest in the statistics.

In 2011, a user feedback survey was included alongside the [2010 BRES statistical bulletin](#). The number of responses to this was very small. Users who responded explained that the information taken from the statistical bulletin and tables on the NS website was mostly used for writing briefs and for research purposes, and that sub-regional estimates were more valued than higher aggregates.

3.2 NOMIS

3.2.1. Who uses the data disseminated via NOMIS?

There are many different types of users who access the data on [NOMIS](#), ranging from local government to academics. The most common users of the data are central government, consultancies and local government. The information below gives a detailed count by business type of data accessed in 2011.

Table 1 – Data downloads by type of user

| Description | Areas Selected | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Central/Local Government and NHS | 11,500 | 56 |
| Commercial | 6,400 | 31 |
| Not-for-profit Organisation | 1,400 | 7 |
| University | 600 | 3 |
| Training Body | 500 | 2 |
| School / College | 100 | 0 |
| Other | 200 | 1 |
| Total | 20,600 | 100 |

As table 1 (above) shows, around half of the users who held a Chancellor's Notice in 2011 are in central and local government and NHS, with commercial organisations making up thirty-one percent as the second most common user.

3.2.2 Geographical level of data downloaded from NOMIS

The information made available on NOMIS is at various levels of geographical detail, from country to Super Output Area (SOA). Generally, the lower the level of detail, the higher the number of estimates that are deemed disclosive. Therefore, the lower levels cannot be made public unless disclosive cells are either suppressed, rounded or summed up so that the data cannot be recognised.

When a user makes an application for access to the data they have to specify what geographical areas they wish to view, and must not access data in any other area. If they do so, they are not complying with the terms and conditions of their Data Access Agreement (DAA).

Table 2 shows the top viewed geographical levels in 2011 (includes repeat views from the same user).

Table 2 - Data views by geographical area

| Area type | Downloads |
|--|------------------|
| local authorities: district / unitary | 11,400 |
| counties | 11,300 |
| local authorities: county / unitary | 9,400 |
| government office regions | 6,600 |
| ward level | 2,600 |
| super output areas | 1,800 |
| Local enterprise partnerships | 1,100 |
| Pre-2009 local authorities: district/unitary | 700 |
| nuts levels | 500 |
| travel to work areas 2001-based | 400 |
| Scottish zones | 400 |
| constituencies | 300 |

It can be seen from the results of table 2 that the majority of users are most interested in the finer detail from the BRES results.

There are many more geographies available, both current and historic, and during the period considered by this report there were fifty-six (56) levels of geography accessed by users. This does not include any user defined geographies.

3.2.3 Periodicity of data available via NOMIS

As well as users having access to the latest employee estimates, they also have access to historical data that are made available back to 1972. The following data are available on NOMIS under the terms of a Chancellor's Notice:

- Census of Employment (Employee and Workplace analysis)
- Annual Employment Survey (Employee and Workplace analysis)
- Annual Business Inquiry (Employee and Workplace analysis)
- Business Register Employment Survey (Employee analysis)

Looking at the NOMIS system shows us that many users just look at the latest year's data. However, users who are accessing the data for the first time will generally look at historical data for comparison. Users are warned that comparisons between current and historic data should be made with caution due to the changes in survey methodology.

3.2.4 Usage made of the statistics downloaded from NOMIS

Applicants for BRES data via NOMIS must stipulate what they want to use the estimates for. Each Chancellor's Notice has to be checked and signed off by at least two members of staff in ONS, one of whom will be the Survey statistician.

In 2011, 630 data access agreements were approved under the terms of the Chancellor's Notice process.

As we have seen in Table 1, just over half of users are in central and local government and the NHS. The use of the data for local government is generally in the context of the economic and local development framework, with users looking specifically at their local authorities (LAs) and neighbouring LAs for comparison. The data are used to help councils develop their local strategy for the coming financial year, and in some cases one district council will undertake the work for all its borough councils.

Another key user group of the data are consultancies, who are covered under the 'commercial' heading of Table 1. Their main use for the data is for local economic assessment and profiling. This work is undertaken on behalf of their clients who can range from local authority county/districts to private companies looking at employment in a specific area.

3.3 Use within government

3.3.1 Results from the BRES user group

On 21 July 2011 the first BRES user group meeting was held comprising of delegates from central government who were known BRES users. This was followed by a second meeting on 23 January 2012. At the meetings, each delegate was asked to state how they use the BRES data. The responses are provided below:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) - BIS use BRES data directly and indirectly for many different aspects of its work. The delegate used BRES data for sector specific analysis for the UK. BIS also use BRES statistics in various reports that are available from their website.

Scottish Government (SG) - SG monitor progress of Scottish business sectors in terms of employment change, with key sectors being of particular interest. SG refers to BRES information (from NOMIS) when advising local authorities and also in addressing Parliamentary Questions (PQs). By matching local unit employment micro-data with survey data, SG is able to find labour costs and also run surveys for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimates.

Welsh Government (WG) - WG use it as part of a suite of information in order to carry out ad hoc analyses and statistical bulletins.

Department of Finance and Personnel - Northern Ireland (DfPNI) - DfPNI use the data to answer PQs, and to answer requests from councils, such as for employee estimates.

Hertfordshire County Council mainly use BRES data to produce their statistical bulletins and to invite new business into the area.

Dorset County Council use BRES data to analyse the labour market and the knowledge sectors of the economy, and in identifying sectors of growth and decline. It is also used for other analyses, such as Gross Value Added (GVA) estimates and for strategic planning.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) - Regional Accounts use full time and part time employment estimates by NUTS2 and NUTS3 geography. The BRES data are used in conjunction with average earnings data (acquired from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) to derive regional estimates of compensation of employees (COE), which are used to apportion UK national totals. COE is the major component in the GVA

estimates. The data are then used by Eurostat in the process to allocate European structural funding. The more timely BRES publication date of September is a key part of future plans to accelerate the production of NUTS2/NUTS3 GVA estimates.

3.3.2 Other users from within government

Below are details of uses made by other government bodies gathered through a consultation exercise:

The Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus staff are currently using BRES estimates as part of their ongoing [Get Britain Working](#) campaign.

HM Treasury is currently using BRES estimates as part of a project to measure the size of employment in retail and wholesale financial services in the UK. This work is being undertaken by the Independent Commission on Banking.

The Cabinet Office is using ONS data for its [Giving Green Paper](#) project.

Among other government departments that are currently using the BRES statistics for ongoing projects are Department for Transport and the Audit Commission.

The use of the data by Local Government is covered under section 3.2.4.

The links below provide details of articles and analyses produced by government bodies using statistics from BRES:

[Parliament](#)

[City of London](#)

[North Yorkshire Council](#)

[Hertfordshire Council](#)

[Hampshire Council](#)

[Wakefield Council](#)

[North West Regional Development Agency](#)

[South West Observatory](#)

[Cumbria Intelligence Observatory \(CIO\)](#)

[Warwick University](#)

4. Future plans to engage with users of BRES

4.1 BRES user group

The BRES user group will continue to be held bi-annually, and ONS will be looking to expand the membership of this group to include both government and non-government organisations. The user group will act as a platform for ONS to inform and consult users of developments and planned changes with regards to the BRES statistics, as well as for obtaining feedback on the service that ONS provide.

4.2 Central & Local Government Information Partnership (CLIP)

This is a forum where representatives from several local authorities and the ONS meet to discuss the Labour Market. BRES is covered within this forum and is used to share developments to the annual employment figures with local authority users and also to take on board their comments and needs. This forum has been in place for several years and will continue to meet twice a year.