

Economic Data Inquiry

North Lanarkshire Council

Accuracy	NLC response
How reliable is the economic data currently available at the Scottish level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a good level of accuracy, reliability and trust in Scottish and UK government official statistics. • We use NOMIS for unemployment and labour market data and our use of Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a key strength in relation to identifying poverty, unemployment and income deprivation at a small geographical level. • We use Census Travel to Work data which is helpful and accurate in relation to identifying commuting populations and the catchment area of jobs. • We have some concerns about the Labour Force Survey (LFS) as it is a sample survey and only available at NLC level. Therefore, the unemployment rate given can sometimes be different from the claimant count we use to measure unemployment at sub-council areas. This is due to the LFS using some other non-public data to calculate the unemployment figure.
What are the areas of strength and of weakness of provision within Scotland and at UK level?	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIMD is a key strength of economic stats (at a small Datazone geographical level). However confidentiality means that some data is suppressed, specifically looking at industrial and occupational classification numbers. • The 2016 SIMD released small area data that sits behind the domains and allows interrogation. • NOMIS provides all economic data at varying geographies in an easy to read local authority profile with a thorough reference section. <p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic forecasting data is not collated nationally beyond population statistics. • Different bodies (such as Scottish Development International, Skills Development Scotland, and Scottish Enterprise etc.) have useful forecast data which could be better shared – this data also needs to be further broken down to at least LA level. • Public sector information is available relating to the payment of the living wage. However there is difficulty in sourcing reliable data on private sector companies paying a living wage. • It would be of benefit if statistical information was gathered about the number of people with more than one job and frequencies of joblessness to determine the cycle of joblessness. • Changes to IT databases when implemented are not always user friendly e.g. change from Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics to Statistics.Gov.Scot

Accuracy	NLC response
<p>What could be done by Scottish Government and/or others to improve the quality of data? How could this be funded?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per the recommendations of the Scottish Government Skills & Enterprise Review 2016, there should be a creation of a central economic data intelligence hub. • The central hub should tie in with proposed regional data hubs to support the work of City Deals/Regional Partnership. One is proposed as part of the new Glasgow City Region City Deal Economic Strategy & Action Plan. • The facilitation of greater collaboration and information exchange between the public and private sectors. This could be supported by a national unit (for example Inward Investment query data etc.)
<p>Do you have any views on how data is collected, specifically the role of businesses and households in providing economic data?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be advantageous if business data collection could be improved particularly for SMEs possibly using routes such as the Federation of Small Business and others. • We believe it would give us better quality data and evidence if the Scottish Household Survey data could be gathered more frequently to assist with assessing economic shifts etc. With the advent of online surveys this should be an easier task to undertaken on a more frequent basis. • In the provision of business data available at ward level and below we would like it to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of businesses by ward • number of businesses by sector by ward • number of businesses by size (e.g. number of employees) by ward • number of businesses by turnover by ward

Utility	NLC response
<p>How are economic statistics used by local, regional and national policy makers to deliver and scrutinise policy?</p>	<p>These statistics are the cornerstone to evidence market failure. Data is used locally/regionally to set economic investment plans and support cases for funding.</p> <p>We use economic statistics to profile communities and produce background information which sits alongside other public data. These profiles are used for targeting resources and services, funding bids and to tap into additional funding from a variety of sources.</p> <p>We have also recently used economic data to develop a report for a Fairness Commission looking at endemic deprivation in North Lanarkshire. However we have experienced gaps in data provision about the instability of the labour market. Job Centre Plus cannot give data on the</p>

Utility	NLC response
	number of people who are signing on/ signed off/ signing on cycle in a year.
Where are the gaps in provision?	<p>Referring to our previous comments, we find forecasting data, even under a range of identified economic scenarios, very limited. Gaps in data provision have been around the instability of the labour market. Job Centre Plus cannot give data on the number of people who are part of the signing on/ signed off/ signing on cycle in a year.</p> <p>Occupation and industrial classifications used are too broad to focus in on a particular area of interest e.g. those working in the care sector.</p>
Can you identify examples of international good practice and case studies?	-
Are there any barriers preventing the Scottish or UK Governments from improving statistical provision?	<p>We believe there are some barriers to improvement. These include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of skilled and experienced professionals and the costs of employing these staff. • The perception of the role of statistical data intelligence and analysis posts. These staff can be typically viewed as an “add on” within key functions of an organisation. These posts should be seen as vital to organisations as their output informs the evidence needed to help make strategic decisions. • The willingness of different organisations to share information and intelligence, particularly private sector companies.

NLC response	NLC response
What are the key issues in making sense of the data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppressed data. Data is available to datazone level, however confidentiality means that some data is suppressed. This is true when looking at industrial and occupational classification numbers. • Data is one dimensional, apart from census data. It would be interesting to have data on unemployed alongside qualifications and other factors that influence employment. • Geography. The barriers to better data are down to sample surveys and data only being available at council level and not sub-council level.
What are the barriers to better understanding and how might	Barriers include easy to find data or to understand the scope for the data provided. Often issues such as the frequency of

NLC response	NLC response
they be overcome?	collection, size of survey pool etc. is the key to understanding the strengths/weaknesses of a data source are not easy to uncover.

Scrutiny	NLC response
What are we measuring and what should we be measuring?	We should be measuring all possible sources of actual (and forecast) socio-economic data. Data collection should be beyond employment levels – to understand socio background, greater emphasis on health & education journey's etc.
What data is necessary for effective parliamentary scrutiny by the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee (our remit also covering energy)?	A greater emphasis should be placed on investment in data gathering and analysis and making sure it is used as evidence to inform strategic decisions for service development and investment. All types of business data should be made available, especially from SMEs and those in the social economy/voluntary sector who are often under-represented.
Are the current national Performance Framework indicators the best way of measuring innovation, internationalisation, investment and inclusive growth in the Scottish Economy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 55 indicators are a useful overview of key economic statistics to help understand performance. • A greater understanding of the interdependencies between these indicators would be useful. • Softer/qualitative narrative and best practice/case studies to support trends evidence through indicator stats would be beneficial. • Further understanding the logic model (and again interdependencies) between the indicators and the Scottish Government 16 outcomes. A wider strategy would potentially be useful.