

Insolvency Statistics – July to September 2018 (Q3 2018)

Coverage

England and Wales
Scotland
Northern Ireland

Release date

30 October 2018

Frequency of release

Quarterly

Next update

29 January 2018

Media enquiries

Michael Gibbs
020 7637 6304
Ade Daramy
020 7596 6187

Author

Michael McDaid
statistics@insolvency.gsi.gov.uk
01273 224113

Responsible Statistician

John Perrett

Website

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/insolvency-service-official-statistics>

This statistics release contains the latest data on **company insolvency** (companies which are unable to pay debts and enter liquidation, or enter administration or other company rescue process) and **individual insolvency** (people who are unable to pay debts and enter formal procedures).

Statistics are presented separately for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland because of differences in legislation and policy.

Main messages for England and Wales

Companies

- **The underlying number of insolvencies increased in Q3 2018, both on the previous quarter and on the same quarter in 2017.**
- **This was driven by a rise in underlying creditors' voluntary liquidations which increased to their highest level since Q1 2012.**

People

- **Total individual insolvencies fell in Q3 2018 from a six-year high in Q2 2018.**
- **This was driven by a decrease in individual voluntary arrangements, and was partially offset by increases in bankruptcies and debt relief orders.**

Proposed changes to the Quarterly Insolvency Statistics release

We endeavour to provide the most relevant statistical information to meet our user's needs. As such we are proposing to split the publication into two distinct products: quarterly statistics for individual insolvency and quarterly statistics for company insolvency. The aim is to target the release to the specific needs of the user and include more quality analysis in each section. The new publications aim to be more concise, focusing on recent trends and changes in insolvencies, and including methodology separately for expert users.

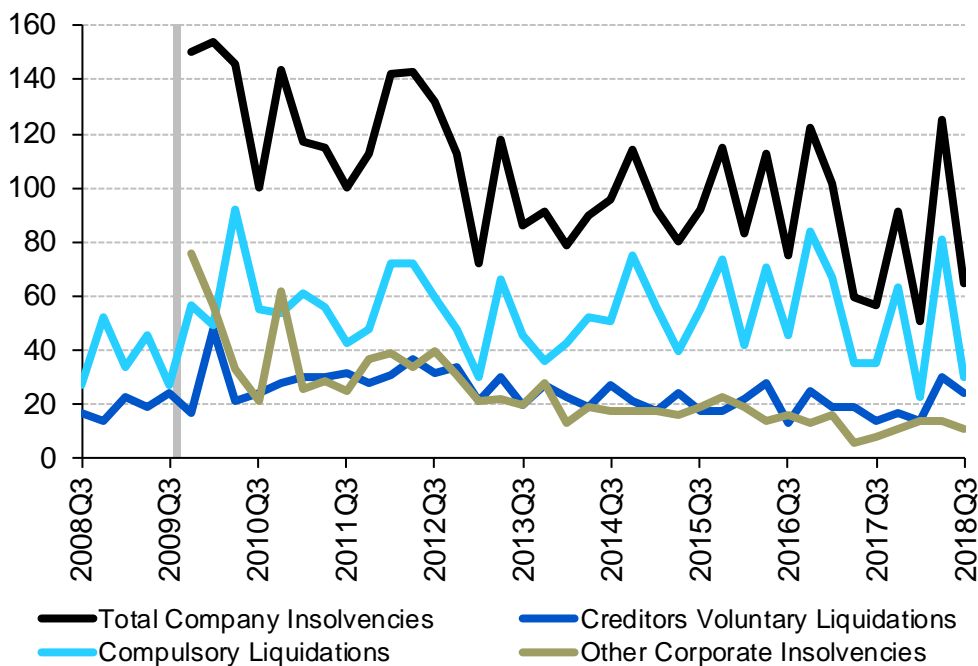
If you have any views or comments regarding this proposed change, please complete our online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YQPQ2N2>

5 Insolvency in Northern Ireland

5.1 Company insolvency

Company insolvency in Northern Ireland is governed by separate, but broadly similar, legislation to England and Wales, and so figures are presented separately.

Figure 15: Company insolvencies in Northern Ireland
(quarterly data, not seasonally adjusted)



Explanation of key terms

See section 2 (company insolvency in England and Wales) for further information.

Sources: Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland; Companies House.

Vertical line indicates discontinuity in methods – data from 2009Q4 not directly comparable with previous data. Creditors' Voluntary Liquidations before 2009 Q4 includes those companies which had previously been in administration.

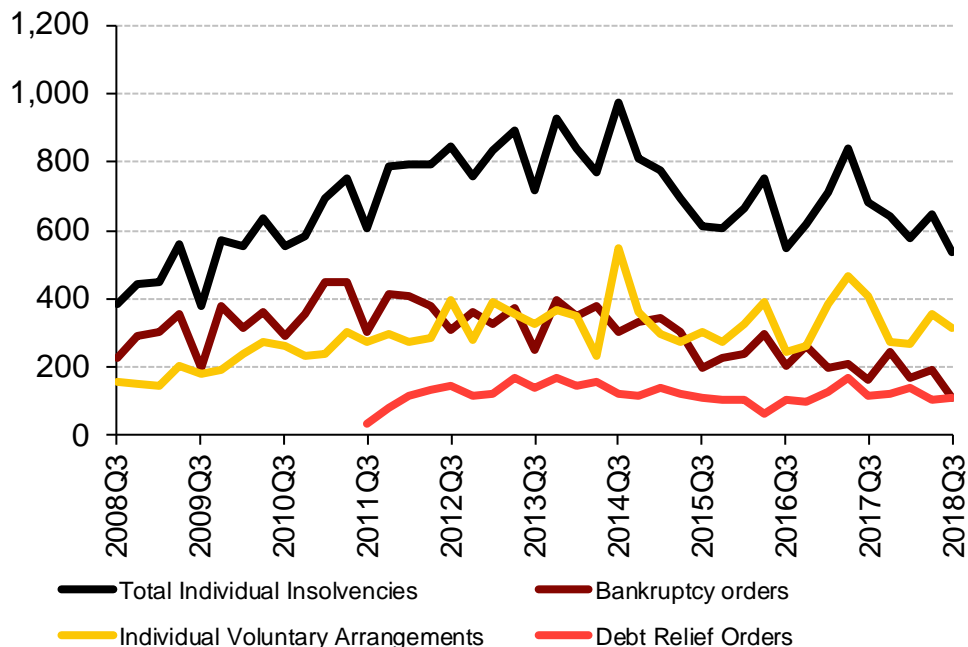
See Table 12 of the accompanying Excel file for more detail.

There were 65 company insolvencies in Northern Ireland in Q3 2018, 14.0% higher than the same quarter in 2017. Of these, 30 were compulsory liquidations (down from 35 in Q3 2017), and 24 were creditors' voluntary liquidations (CVLs, up from 14 in Q3 2017). There were six administrations, four company voluntary arrangements and one administrative receivership in Q3 2018.

5.2 Individual insolvency

Individual insolvency in Northern Ireland is governed by separate, but broadly similar, legislation to England and Wales, and so figures are presented separately.

Figure 16: Individual insolvencies in Northern Ireland
(quarterly data, not seasonally adjusted)



Source: Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland.

See Table 14 of the accompanying Excel file for more detail.

Explanation of key terms

Bankruptcy orders – a form of debt relief available for anyone who is unable to pay their debts. Assets owned will vest in a trustee in bankruptcy who will sell them and distribute the proceeds to creditors. Discharge from debts usually takes place 12 months after the bankruptcy order is granted.

Debt relief orders (DROs) – a form of debt relief available to those who have a low income, low assets and less than £20,000 of debt. There is no distribution to creditors, and discharge from debts takes place 12 months after the DRO is granted. DROs were introduced in June 2011.

Individual voluntary arrangements (IVAs) – a voluntary means of repaying creditors some or all of what they are owed. Once approved by 75% or more of creditors, the arrangement is binding on all. IVAs are supervised by licensed Insolvency Practitioners.

There were 536 individual insolvencies in Northern Ireland in Q3 2018, a decrease of 21.6% compared with the same quarter in 2017.

In Q3 2018 there were 112 bankruptcies, down 30.9% on the same quarter last year. There has been a general downward trend in the number of bankruptcies per quarter since Q4 2016. This coincided with a change in the minimum debt a creditor must be owed to make someone bankrupt, which increased from £750 to £5,000 for petitions presented from 30 November 2016.

There were 313 IVAs, a decrease of 23.5% on the same quarter last year.

There were 111 DROs, down 1.8% on the same quarter last year. A change to eligibility criteria was introduced on 30 November 2016 with DROs becoming available to people with up to £20,000 debt (up from £15,000) and £1,000 assets (up from £300).

Though the graph highlights changes, it should be noted that the volatility in the data is because the numbers of insolvencies are low, so any small changes will result in large percentage changes.

6 Background notes

Further information can be found in the [Guide to Insolvency Statistics](#), including high-level descriptions of the types of insolvency which apply to companies and people; the data recorded and any associated data quality issues; and legislation coming into effect in the period covered by the statistics, which may affect comparisons over time.

Data sources and methodology

More details may be found in Insolvency Statistics Methodology, the Statement of Administrative Sources, the Revisions Policy, and Data Quality Assurance and Audit Arrangements, on the [policy and procedures](#) section of the Insolvency Service website.

Data sources

The statistics for England and Wales are derived from administrative records of the Insolvency Service and Companies House, both of which are Executive Agencies of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). For Scotland, the company insolvency statistics are derived from administrative records at Companies House, while figures for individual insolvencies in Scotland are sourced from the Office of the Accountant in Bankruptcy (AiB). The Northern Ireland statistics are derived from administrative records of the Department for the Economy's Insolvency Service and from Companies House. The adult (18+) population data for England and Wales (used in the calculation of individual insolvency rates) are created using annual mid-year population estimates and projections by single year of age sourced from the [Office for National Statistics](#)

Methodology

The statistics are produced via tabulation of raw data collected from the various sources. More information is available in a separate [methodology](#) document.

The methods used to produce breakdowns by industry are described in more detail in the accompanying Excel file.

Seasonal adjustment is performed on certain data series. The X13-ARIMA-SEATS program (developed by the US Census Bureau) is used for the seasonal adjustment of the *Insolvency Statistics*, this being the recommended program within UK National Statistics. Seasonal adjustment models are reviewed annually: the most recent review was completed in April 2017 with the outcome published on the [policy and procedures](#) section of the Insolvency Service website.

Revisions

These statistics are subject to scheduled revisions, as set out in the published [revisions policy](#). Revisions tend to be made as a result of data being entered onto administrative systems after the cut-off date for data being extracted to produce the statistics. Such revisions tend to be small in the context of overall totals; nonetheless all figures in this release that have been revised since the previous edition have been highlighted in the relevant tables.

A new method for producing statistics on company insolvencies was introduced in April 2018. A revised historical time series using the new method was provided back to 2000Q1 for England and Wales, and for Scotland. For Northern Ireland, the data required were only available back to 2009Q4. However, it should also be noted that because the statistics for 2000 to 2015 were sourced from a live database, which includes subsequent corrections, they may not exactly reflect the original numbers of new cases that would have been reported at the time.

Quality

This section provides information on the quality of the *Insolvency Statistics*, to enable users to judge whether or not the data are of sufficient quality for their intended use. The section is structured in terms of the six quality dimensions of the [European Statistical System](#). Further information can be found in the [statement on quality strategy, principles and processes](#), which cover all Official Statistics outputs from the Insolvency Service.

Relevance *(the degree to which the statistical product meets user needs for both coverage and content)*

The *Insolvency Statistics* are the most comprehensive record of the number of corporate and individual insolvencies in England and Wales. They include all formal types of insolvency procedure currently available. Insolvencies in Scotland and Northern Ireland are also included, but are shown separately as they are covered by separate legislation. There are some differences in definition, and policy responsibility for them lies within the devolved administrations. The Statistics Release itself covers the most recent 10 years of annual and quarterly figures; while historic data series are also available (back to 1960 in some cases), as are related sets of Official Statistics on insolvency.

Key users of the *Insolvency Statistics* include the Insolvency Service itself, which has policy responsibility for insolvency in England and Wales and for the non-devolved areas within Scotland and Northern Ireland; other government departments; parliament; the insolvency profession; debt advice agencies; media organisations; academics; the financial sector; the business community and the general public. The headline quarterly statistics are widely reported in national, regional and specialist media on the day of release.

The statistical production team welcomes feedback from users of the *Insolvency Statistics* (current contact details are provided at the end of these Notes). More formal engagement with users has recently included a user feedback survey on Insolvency Service Official Statistics, the results of which can be found here:

[Summary of User Feedback on Insolvency Statistics](#)

Accuracy and Completeness *(including the closeness between an estimated or stated result and the [unknown] true value)*

All formal insolvency procedures entered into by a company, a partnership or an individual are required by law to be reported to the appropriate body, so the statistics should be a complete record of insolvency in the United Kingdom.

Generally speaking, numbers of cases are based on the date it was registered on the administrative recording system, not on the date of the order or agreement of the insolvency procedure. The implication of this is that the published figures will not be influenced by, for example, the late reporting of orders made leading to missing data. The exceptions for England and Wales are: compulsory liquidations and bankruptcy orders after Q2 2011; and debt relief orders. This should be noted when making comparisons of trends over time. Checks are in place to identify and remove duplication of cases, to ensure that returns cover all reporting areas, and to check consistency within tables and between related tables.

Coherence *(the degree to which data which are derived from different sources or methods, but which refer to the same phenomenon, are similar)*

The Insolvency Service also publishes individual insolvency statistics by location, age and gender, and outcome statistics for individual voluntary arrangements, both as Official Statistics. These report figures on an annual basis, and they differ from the headline quarterly *Insolvency Statistics* in that there are some differences in the case selection criteria and/or the database from which they are sourced; this means that the totals are not identical between different outputs.

[Companies House](#) produces quarterly official statistics on company insolvencies registered. These are not consistent with the *Insolvency Statistics*, because of differences in counting rules.

The [Accountant in Bankruptcy](#) (AiB) is required to be notified of all company liquidations and receiverships in Scotland, and publishes quarterly official statistics based on its own administrative records. These differ

from the *Insolvency Statistics*, which use data from Companies House as the source. Differences are due to the Accountant in Bankruptcy using its own administrative system's date rather than the start date of the insolvency. AiB does not publish information on the number of company voluntary arrangements or administrations, which are a reserved matter for the UK government.

AiB also publishes quarterly statistics on the number of individual insolvencies, which are reproduced in the *Insolvency Statistics*.

The [Office for National Statistics](#) produces annual statistics on business "deaths" in its [Business Demography](#) publication. These statistics relate to all registered businesses, whereas the *Insolvency Statistics* relate to companies on the Companies House register. Not all business deaths are because of insolvency.

Timeliness and Punctuality (*Timeliness refers to the elapsed time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication.*)

The *Insolvency Statistics* are usually published on the 29th of the month following the end of the quarter being reported on; this is the earliest publication date which ensures receipt of all the data inputs, and allows sufficient time for liaising with data suppliers and completing all the steps between this and compilation of the statistical release in its final form ready for publication. The exception to this is where the 29th falls on a weekend or a Monday, when the statistics will be delayed until the following Tuesday, or brought forward to an earlier date if possible.

There is a publication schedule for a year ahead available on the [UK National Statistics Publication Hub](#) and the statistics have always been published on target.

Accessibility and Clarity (*Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data. It also relates to the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice*)

The *Insolvency Statistics* are available free of charge to the end user on the [Insolvency Service website](#). They are released via the [Publication Hub](#) and they meet the standards required under the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

Historic data are also published for the key series, on the [National Archives website](#).

Views on the clarity of the publication are welcomed via the contact details on the cover page of this release.

Comparability (*the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain*)

Changes in legislation and policy can affect the extent to which comparisons can be made over time for individual data series. Where such changes are known, they have been highlighted in explanatory notes at the bottom of the tables in the accompanying Excel file, and in the [Guide to Insolvency Statistics](#).

Company insolvency statistics after 2000 Q1 (England and Wales, and Scotland) and 2009 Q4 (Northern Ireland) are not directly comparable with earlier periods because of a change to methods.

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.



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This document/publication is also available on our website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/insolvency-service-official-statistics>.

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at statistics@insolvency.gsi.gov.uk.