Making greater use of administrative data in economic statistics

In common with many other statistical agencies, Statistics New Zealand is looking to make greater use of administrative data as the primary source for its published economic statistics. Indeed, strategically, the Department has adopted an “administrative data first” paradigm which envisages data collection from surveys only when administrative data (directly or in modified form) cannot meet user needs. As well as reducing respondent burden, this new collection paradigm allows us not only to develop new statistics efficiently but also to dig deeper into the data which is a big win for our customers. A number of different models can be adopted when using administrative data depending on its coverage and quality. The paper describes a number of these approaches and illustrates them with reference to the Annual Enterprise Survey, a “traditional” postal survey that has been modified to make use of replacement administrative data, and three key quarterly releases of manufacturing, wholesale trade and building activity statistics that have recently been redesigned in line with the new collection paradigm. In addition, the paper describes how this new approach is being used to considerably expand the industry coverage of quarterly turnover statistics, which, inter alia, will lead to quality improvements in quarterly GDP measures.