Loneliness in Northern Ireland
2019/20 Quality Report

Dimension	Assessment by the author.
Introduction	**Context for the quality report.**
	Following suggestions by the Jo Cox Commission, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) developed national measures on loneliness. One measure of loneliness has been included in the NI Continuous Household Survey (CHS) since 2017/18.
	The analyses in this report are based on the direct measure of loneliness included in the CHS. This measure asks people the question, "How often do you feel lonely?"
	The statistics are based on annual data (year to end March 2020). The sample size for the CHS was 5,985 in 2019/20, half of whom (2,953) were asked the question on Loneliness.
Relevance	**The degree to which the statistical product meets the user needs in both coverage and content.**
	This report provides data for the frequency of loneliness in Northern Ireland.
	Information is gathered using the 'direct measure of loneliness' recommended by the Government Statistical Society (GSS) harmonisation team. An additional three measures of loneliness have been included in the Annual Health Survey for Northern Ireland since 2017/18. This provides four strands of data that can be used to look at the factors associated with loneliness.
	The population level analysis is broken down by various characteristics, including section 75 categories, household characteristics and wellbeing measurements.
	Analysing the personal characteristics and circumstances which are associated with loneliness will provide understanding and insight for policy makers and those looking to improve societal wellbeing by trying to alleviate or prevent loneliness.
	The report includes infographics, charts, tables and statistical commentary to communicate the findings to the end user in a clear and concise manner. Additional notes and definitions have been included throughout the report to provide the user with additional information to aid understanding of the statistical concepts.
Accuracy and Reliability	**The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value.**
	The CHS is based on a systematic random sample of addresses drawn each year from the Pointer list of domestic addresses. Pointer is the address database for Northern Ireland maintained by Land & Property Services (LPS). The full achieved sample for 2019/20 was approximately 5,985 people. Findings on loneliness are based on a question asked of a smaller subsample of 2,953.
	As the CHS is a sample survey, there is a certain level of sampling error, i.e. the characteristics of the group sampled may differ slightly from the

	population as a whole. To account for this sampling error, the data has been weighted in order to produce estimates that better represent the population. Statistical significance was determined using 95% confidence levels. These show the ranges within which we are 95% confident that the true value for the population falls. For example, 5.4% of the Northern Ireland population reported that they were "Often/Always" lonely in 2019/20; we can be 95% certain that the true (if we surveyed everyone and not just a sample) 2019/20 figure for the Northern Ireland population falls between 4.6% and 6.2%.
Timeliness and Punctuality	**Timeliness refers to the time gap between publication and the reference period. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.**
	Statistical Co-ordination Branch, the producers of this report, received the validated 2019/20 CHS dataset from the Central Survey Unity (CSU) in July 2020. The report on Loneliness - 'Loneliness in Northern Ireland: 2019/20' was published in December 2020. This was later than anticipated, due to facilitate the training of new staff. It is planned that future publications of this report will be published within 8 months of the reference period.
Accessibility and Clarity	**Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.**
	The 'Loneliness in Northern Ireland: 2019/20' report was published in PDF format on the NISRA website following pre announcement on Gov.uk. The report was also emailed to a list of key users and an Infographic containing key statistics, along with a link to the publication, was published on all NISRA social media sites on the morning of its release. Accompanying tables, in both Microsoft Excel and OpenData format, are available alongside the main report on the NISRA website. The report includes infographics, charts, tables and statistical commentary to communicate the findings to the end user in a clear and concise manner. Additional notes and definitions have been included throughout the report to provide the user with additional information to aid understanding of the statistical concepts. The contact details for the producing statistician have been included in the Annex section of the report.
Coherence and Comparability	**Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.**
	The statistics contained within the report are derived from the CHS. The question, measuring the frequency of loneliness, has been included since

2017/18. This question will continue to be included each year, allowing comparability over time.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Guidance for Measuring Loneliness recommends loneliness questions for adults and children and how to interpret and report findings. The CHS incorporates the recommended direct Measure of Loneliness:
"How Often do you feel lonely?"
With responses Often/always, Some of the time, Occasionally, Hardly ever, Never.
The direct measure of Loneliness is used in various surveys across the UK, as reported by the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Harmonisation team for loneliness. This will allow for comparison across different administrations.

Trade-offs between output quality components	**Trade-offs are the extent to which different aspects of quality are balanced against each other.**
	Although considering sex by age and marital status by sex would be of interest, the numbers in some categories are too small for accurate analyses and combining groups would provide less meaningful results.
	It would also be beneficial to run a Latent Class Analysis (LCA) to aid understanding of the links between variables and those most likely to be "more often lonely", however the sample size would also be too small to provide meaningful results.
	From 2020/21, the sample size for the direct measure of loneliness will be doubled to allow for more cross tabular analysis and to gain more understanding of the variables by running LCA.
Assessment of user needs and perceptions	**The process for finding out about users and uses, and their views on the statistical products.**
	The Statistical co-ordination team have met with relevant policy areas and the 'Loneliness Action group'. The team will continue to liaise with these users to ensure needs and perceptions are met.
	The lead statistician is also liaising with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) with regards to their ongoing systemic review on loneliness. Any findings from this review will be implemented in future publications
	Contact details for the responsible statistician are also provided within the Annex sections of the report.
Performance, cost and respondent burden	**The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output.**
	The total cost for the inclusion of a question for a half sample within the CHS is £2,000. The overall cost of running the CHS cannot be provided as this is commercial-in-confidence.

Confidentiality, transparency and security	The procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices
	NISRA follows the 'National Statistician's Guidance: Confidentiality of Official Statistics' in the collection and dissemination of these statistics.
	Standard disclosure control methodology is applied to the data. This ensures that information attributable to an individual is not identifiable in any published outputs and that the outputs are only seen by authorised staff prior to their publication.
	As part of the staff induction process and their ongoing personal development plan, staff regularly complete mandatory training on the Code of practice and managing information.