



NISRA

Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency

Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde



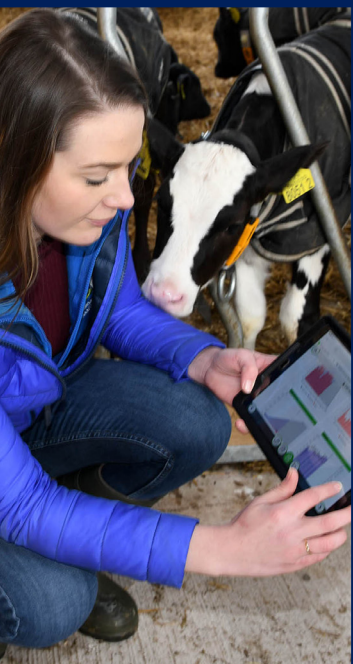
Department of
Finance

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NISRA Corporate Plan 2025-29



Statistics, analysis, research & registration services
to drive decision making for the public good.

WE provide trusted **official statistics** which help us to understand the economy, population and society of Northern Ireland; independently produced **data** which help to monitor progress, make decisions and hold government to account; outstanding **research** to support policy makers and which makes sense of a complex world; modern, empathetic **registration services** that **ARE** enabling for our citizens; the **census** which meets the needs of Northern Ireland; analytical insights from management and **real time information** systems to guide responsive decision-making in the public good; the **survey and data** collection infrastructure which provides trusted, reliable insights on life in Northern Ireland; **linked datasets** which enable cross-cutting, ground-breaking applied research and analysis; analytical support to the data-led **design, implementation & evaluation of policy** by mobilising the expertise and independence of our analysts and **NISRA**'s statisticians.

Foreword



Philip Wales
Chief Executive
& Registrar General

As Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and Registrar General for Northern Ireland, I'm delighted to introduce NISRA's Corporate Plan for 2025-29.

I took up this role in early 2023, against a challenging economic, social and political background. Northern Ireland was emerging from the shadow of the Covid pandemic, facing significant budget challenges without an Assembly or an Executive at Stormont.

Yet against this backdrop, NISRA has made good progress in recent years. The Census 2021 programme was among the most successful in our history and will provide rich detail about life in Northern Ireland for researchers for the next decade and beyond. Our economic, health and education statistics have tracked our economy and the delivery of public services through the pandemic and now set out the scale of the challenge for the Assembly and the Executive, which returned on 3rd February 2024.

The research and analysis of the NISRA network – which covers 24 Northern Ireland Departments and other public sector bodies – have provided important insights for policy makers and citizens alike, something attested to by our users

through our engagement work. The services of the General Register Office are among the most responsive – and our field force of interviewers delivers among the best response rates – of our nearest neighbours.

While challenges remain, there is much to be proud of in this performance: rarely have statistics and analysis been so prominent in public debate, or monitored so closely as the situation changed from week to week.

NISRA's new Corporate Plan – Statistics, Analysis, Research and Registration Services to Drive Decision Making for the Public Good – builds on this progress and responds to the new and rapidly changing landscape in government and beyond. It recognises the continuing importance of official statistics both as a means of departments measuring progress towards their key objectives, and as a support for democratic accountability. It highlights research and analytical advice from real time management systems as critical supports to policy development. It emphasises the importance of reliable,

modern registration services, underpinned by up to date, efficient, and empathetic processes.

Meeting the growing demand for new, faster and more detailed data and analysis is a challenge for all leading statistical and registration services institutes. New sources of administrative data, combined with new digital tools and methods are driving a revolution in best statistical and registration practices. Our new Corporate Plan demonstrates our willingness to continuously interpret our mandate in this changing context and to learn from international experience to meet the evolving needs of our users.

It emphasises the growing importance of linked data assets and cross-cutting analysis to provide joined up advice to support joined up policy. It reflects the need for rapid insights to support decision makers in Northern Ireland. And it highlights the potential of new digital developments to strengthen our registration services and our understanding of our economy and society to help make a difference to the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

To meet these aspirations, NISRA will need to build on its strengths and develop important aspects of the way we work: identifying the key strategic enablers for us to progress. This is especially important in light of the new draft Programme for Government which NISRA's statistical and research services feed into.

This Corporate Plan sets out the importance of our People as our greatest assets and as fundamental to our capacity to deliver. It reflects how our approach to our data, dissemination and technology need to continue to evolve over the next five years, reflecting the insights from our user engagement. It underscores the importance of our regulatory and legislative obligations, and our commitment to collect, store and use data safely, securely and transparently.

It recognises that NISRA can only deliver on our ambitions by working in partnership with other organisations.

Meeting the ambitions of this Plan – particularly in a period of constrained budgets – will be challenging. However, in our view sound data and insightful analytics are the bedrock of good policy design: there are few challenges which are not made easier or more tractable through focused research and analysis. At times of tight budgets, understanding the impact and efficacy of policy choices becomes even more paramount.

I look forward to working with Dr Caoimhe Archibald as the Minister of Finance and the wider Assembly to deliver the key statistical, research and registration services which will be required in the months and years ahead.



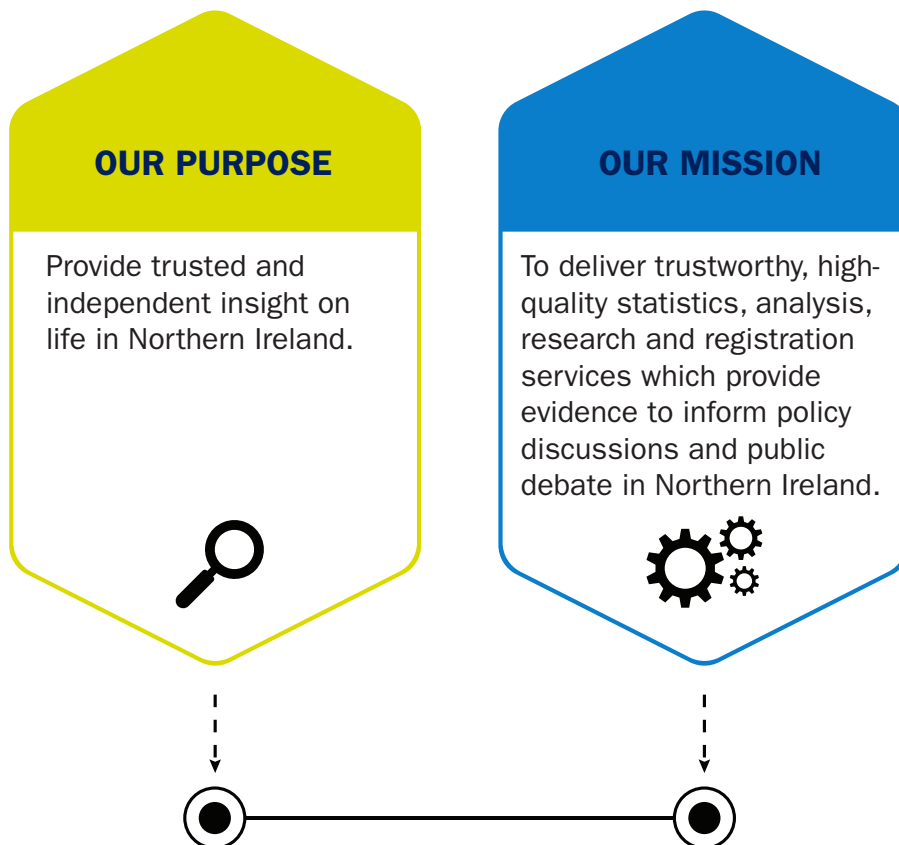
Philip Wales
Chief Executive & Registrar General

OUR ORGANISATION AND PURPOSE

NISRA, which incorporates the General Register Office (GRO), is an executive agency of the Department of Finance (NI). Our central purpose is to provide trusted and independent insights on life in Northern Ireland.

In delivering on this purpose, NISRA has become the principal source of statistics, analysis and research on the economy, population and society of Northern Ireland. Our outputs support decision makers in government, businesses, academia and among the general public by providing them with the best possible information on which to make important judgements. The statistics, analysis and research we produce enable us to monitor the progress we make towards the shared economic and social ambitions of the people of Northern Ireland.

In government, we produce a wide range of analytical outputs to support policy design, implementation and evaluation: helping to deliver better outcomes for the people of Northern Ireland. We independently monitor progress towards key objectives of the Programme for Government (PfG): supporting the effective operation of critical democratic accountability processes, free from political influence.



NISRA provides these services through a network of people embedded throughout the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and the public sector more broadly. More than 400 staff work across 24 government departments, executive agencies and arm's length bodies.

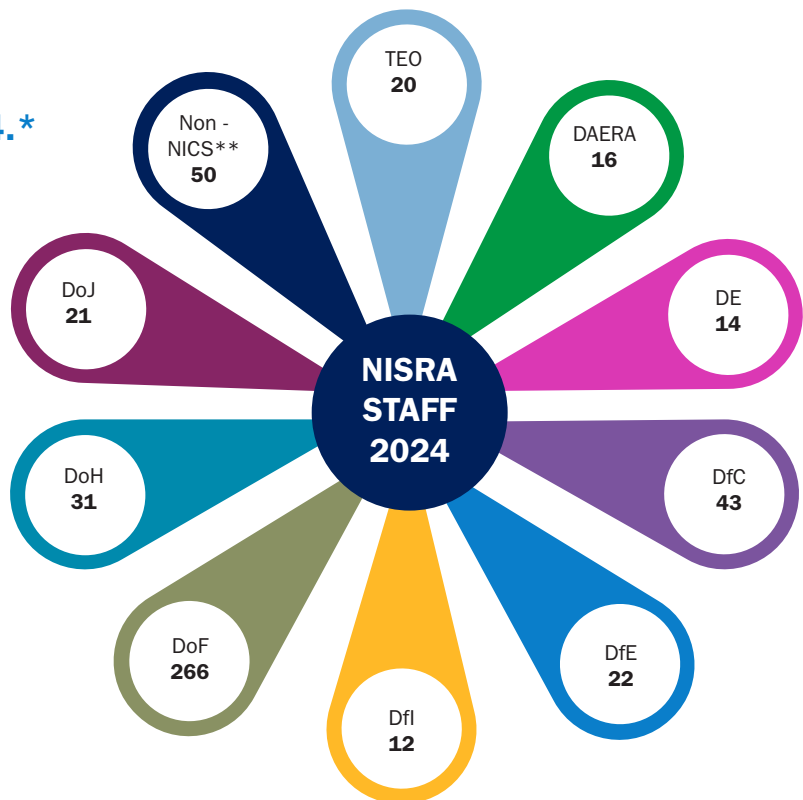
The Agency is directed by the Chief Executive with support from the Senior Management Team and the Agency Board. Our governance arrangements are set out in the [NISRA Framework document](#).

We work with detailed and sometimes sensitive data within and across departments to identify and then answer key analytical challenges on topics ranging from the economy to the health service, from climate change to education. This increasingly involves important data linkage projects – combining information from different departments to support joined up policy making. We have a high-performing and professional field force numbering more than 200: helping to gather critically important intelligence on life in Northern Ireland.

A core part of NISRA, the GRO is responsible for the administration of marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland, along with the registration of births, deaths, adoptions and gender recognition. GRO is also responsible for the maintenance of registration records and the production of certificates in relation to these events on request. GRO's activities provide an up-to-date account of life in Northern Ireland, through the recording of key life events.

Every 10 years NISRA conducts the Census of Population and Housing. The information collected provides detailed insights on our society, and is used widely inside and outside of government. It helps local government, health authorities and other organisations to plan and provide future services, and to allocate resources effectively. Following the release of key statistics from this programme, the data are now feeding into key population estimates and research to support policy making for the future.

NISRA representation and number of staff across the Civil Service, October 2024.*



* These are the provisional figures at 2nd October 2024.

** Includes NISRA staff in BSO, EONI, Invest NI, Libraries NI, NIPB OPONI, PBNI, PPSNI, PSNI, SEUPB.

THE THINGS WE DO



Trusted Official Statistics

Trusted **official statistics** play a critical role in modern government: helping to independently monitor our progress towards the shared economic and social objectives of the people of Northern Ireland.



Insightful Research & Analysis

NISRA's **research and analysis** uses cross-cutting datasets to deliver the key insights that policy makers need: working across departments to deliver joined up thinking for joined up policy making.



Census & Registration Services

The **General Register Office** provides registration services to the general public: recording a wide range of life events through our network of Registrars. NISRA undertakes the **Census** of population and housing in Northern Ireland every ten years.



Informing Decision Takers

Alongside our official statistics and our research outputs, NISRA statisticians provide **analytical insights** from management and real time information systems: giving key insights for decision makers.



Data Leadership

NISRA **collects data** from households and businesses in Northern Ireland, and uses a wide range of administrative data, increasingly creating **new linked datasets** which address cross-cutting challenges for use inside and outside of government.



Policy Design & Evaluation

Effective policy design learns from past experience. Working with teams across the NICS, NISRA supports **the design and evaluation of policy**: allowing realistic assessments of impact ahead of implementation, and evaluating outcomes afterwards.

OUR USERS

NISRA's statistics and outputs are put to many different purposes by a wide array of users. We maintain a two-way dialogue with our users to make sure that we are meeting their needs in the best way possible through proactive engagement. They include:

Policy makers

Policy makers in central and local government, public sector agencies and arms lengths bodies make extensive use of NISRA's statistical outputs and services. In Central government departments and in some public sector agencies, statisticians seconded from NISRA provide advice, analysis and data to support the policy design process, to monitor the evolving policy context and to evaluate impact.

In a broader context, policy makers in local government and in other public sector roles use NISRA data and statistics for many different purposes – ranging from understanding their service delivery success to forecasting demand for their services, from planning or allocating public expenditure to evidencing the impact of their initiatives.

The Public

The Public are a key user group for NISRA and GRO. The registration services we provide – including for births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships, adoptions and gender recognition – touch on almost everyone in our society, often at some of the most exciting or challenging times of our lives.

The public also make significant use of our statistical and research outputs. From very technical users who will design and download their own customised datasets to individuals seeking specific statistics; from school students completing their homework to households looking to better understand their neighbourhood, NISRA's outputs help to inform the public, and to enable them to hold government to account.

Businesses, the media, voluntary and civil society groups

The data and analysis that we produce helps to inform decision making by a wide range of organisations – either directly, or through the media. Information on the economy, population and society of Northern Ireland can help businesses to make important decisions about where they locate, where to invest and what products and services to bring to market, among others.

The data NISRA produce can also enable voluntary and civil society groups to understand social developments and to track important inequalities over time and across regions: articulating evidence-based arguments for the changes they seek.

Academics

Academics use a wide array of the data which NISRA produces – often at the most detailed level – to produce outstanding applied research. Often this research uses new linked data to understand policy issues and design solutions – ranging from key economic challenges like raising productivity to understanding the prevalence of different medical conditions in Northern Ireland.

OUR CONTEXT

Data driven decision making in government

Data plays an increasingly central role in government. High quality statistics, analysis and research are essential to inform the design of policy, to assess policy impacts, to provide insights for decision makers, and to hold government to account. At NISRA, we use our skillsets to drive decision making in the public good through the provision of high quality statistical, analytical, research and registration services.

A large part of our work involves the production of [Accredited Official Statistics](#) and official statistics. Whether measuring hospital waiting lists, the size of the Northern Ireland economy or other areas of policy focus, these statistics serve as a published yardstick against which progress can be measured and enable democratic accountability. Our Wellbeing dashboard, which sits alongside the Programme for Government, provides a high level view of some of these metrics.

NISRA is guided by the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#), which sets out the common standards for producers of official statistics. It plays an essential role in ensuring that statistics published by government command public confidence through demonstrating **trustworthiness** and providing high **quality** statistics that enhance public **value**. Our compliance with the Code is monitored by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), under the [Statistics and Registration Services Act \(2007\)](#).



Accredited Official Statistics and other official statistics on the key priorities of government: independently and transparently produced to show progress and enable democratic accountability. High quality outputs to underpin PfG monitoring.

Management information, research and policy evaluations to provide important insights on the policy priorities of departments and other public bodies.

Real time analysis, policy development work and informatics to enable departments and other public bodies to plan, predict and prepare.

Beyond official statistics, NISRA supports the delivery of Programme for Government commitments through a wide array of outputs. These include management information releases, research outputs and policy evaluations. These expand on our official statistics and provide insights on a wider range of government policy. They can provide early insights into emerging issues; monitor the effectiveness of individual policies; identify causes and drivers; and further enhance our understanding of society.

Alongside these published outputs, NISRA produces analytical insights from real time information systems and bespoke surveys to support policy development and service delivery in Government. The real time analysis we produce enables public bodies to be responsive to emerging trends, take preventative action where required and continuously improve service delivery. Often informed by the high response rates achieved by our outstanding interviewer field force, our analyses, informatics, modelling and other research supports informed policy development: identifying the underlying issues and causes, exploring alternative solutions and determining which interventions are likely to have the most impact.

Research as a core part of the evidence base

Research plays an increasingly important role in the decision making process. NISRA's research outputs are focused on key areas of policy interest and enable decision makers to ask and explore detailed and important questions which shape the formulation of policy. To deliver these outputs, NISRA works in partnership across the NICS and with academics. We routinely produce high quality, original research pieces which help to throw light on key issues – ranging from important labour market inequalities to key research on the health of the population. These pieces are presented within government, but also at national and international conferences.

NISRA is part-funded to deliver these outputs by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), as part of the Administrative Data Research Northern Ireland Partnership (ADR NI). This involves NISRA working closely with academics at Queens University Belfast and Ulster University on critical questions to help inform approaches to the delivery of the Programme for Government.

Modern, efficient, empathetic registration services

The registration services provided by the General Register Office sit alongside and complement the statistical and research activities of NISRA. Provided in concert with the network of District Registration Offices (DROs), these services support citizens at some of the most sensitive and challenging times of their lives: registering a wedding, an adoption or a birth; a gender recognition, a death or a still birth.

The administration of civil law – which has evolved with society in recent decades – through the registration system is a statutory function and public service. The imperative to provide high quality services, at acceptable cost, which keep pace with both societal and technological developments is one of our most important challenges.

OUR VISION

Our vision is to deliver the key statistical, analytical, research and registration services which are needed to improve the lives of people of Northern Ireland. We want to collect, analyse and publish the key information which users need to make important decisions, to the benefit of the shared economic and social objectives of government in Northern Ireland and the broader public good. Implementing this vision will involve:

- Working to modernise our data collection and linkage services to produce the highest quality information possible on the economy, population and society of Northern Ireland: embedding modern, low-cost and high quality data collection processes which promote interoperability between datasets to maximise the potential for analytical insights from linked data.
- Being innovative and proactive in our engagement: identifying and meeting user needs for new data and analyses, while continuing to produce trusted, valued statistical outputs, and working to deliver outputs in increasingly accessible, impactful ways.
- Working across government and with academics to deliver high quality research outputs which address important questions in support of the Programme for Government.
- Continuing to deliver first class registration and genealogical services to our customers, using modern, efficient and secure technologies, consistent with legislation and in line with best practice.
- Developing and supporting our people so we can continue to foster an engaged, innovative, diverse workforce who are valued, supported and empowered to develop their careers in NISRA.

Through the delivery of excellent services and outputs, our vision will help NISRA continue to be a proud, confident, modern agency which is recognised for trusted and independent statistics, analysis, research and registration services.



CASE STUDY

Evidence to support local pharmacy needs assessments



Decisions about the provision of health and care services can be some of the most difficult and challenging taken by government. NISRA's statisticians play an important role in focusing these decisions on evidenced local needs.

NISRA statisticians in the Health and Social Care Business Services Organisation (BSO) and the Department of Health (DoH) were commissioned by DoH's Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) to undertake a comprehensive assessment of need for community pharmacy services within Northern Ireland. This review would help to identify areas where the demand and supply of services were mismatched, highlighting areas where need is greater than the current provision, and areas where pharmacy needs are being met more completely.

Statisticians in DoH assembled a rich dataset of potential drivers of need at the small area level, which included data from right across government such as the levels of the population, morbidity, deprivation, social security benefit uptake, and the location of health services.

This dataset formed the foundations for the next phase of the work which statisticians in BSO undertook. This required the key variables in these data to be identified and

empirically linked to need for pharmacy services. Statisticians used statistical modelling to produce a single composite index of needs, incorporating features of the population in each area (including age, sex, morbidity, disability status and socio-economic status). They developed accessibility measures based on usual road travel times to different locations in Northern Ireland to account for the distribution of existing pharmacies, and derived a benchmarking model informed by extensive stakeholder engagement which could indicate areas of relative need.

The third phase of the work involved the development of a user-friendly dashboard incorporating a mapping interface. This enabled users to consider pharmacy needs for predefined areas, such as Local Government Districts, or to construct their own localities from small area building blocks. This feature enables service commissioners to bring local knowledge to bear when defining the area of interest.

Following a formal public consultation, the Northern Ireland Pharmacy Needs Assessment (PNA) Dashboard Tool was adopted by SPPG and is now helping to inform decisions when new pharmacies apply to join the Pharmaceutical List or which want to move location.



CASE STUDY

The impact of schooling on educational and economic outcomes



Understanding how the education system is delivering for school students, employers and parents is a central policy issue. NISRA statisticians are at the forefront of efforts to build datasets and analyses which can help guide policy making in this critical area.

In the past, evidence about the education system depended on sample surveys. The impact of policies would emerge very gradually as respondents moved into the labour force and then appeared in official statistics. The effect of changes in policy on employment, earnings and economic inactivity rates could be difficult to discern with accuracy.

The Education Outcomes Linkage (EOL) project aims to use administrative data to provide greater insights into the impact of policy making more quickly. Bringing together policy makers and statisticians in the education, economy and finance departments, the project has created a longitudinal dataset using the School Census, the Exams Database and the School Leavers Survey.

Devised as part of NISRA's Administrative Data Research Northern Ireland partnership, this dataset tracks cohorts of students as they move through the school system

and into the labour market. The design allows for future years to be added, and for other data to be included covering further and higher education, apprenticeships and vocational training. We will work with data providers to link these records to employment and earnings records to create the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes Northern Ireland (LEONI) dataset.

The LEONI will enable researchers to chart the career paths of individuals from school, through vocational education and training, further and higher education and into work. Bringing these data together in other jurisdictions has provided powerful evidence about the impact of policy changes, about different educational and economic pathways and on the strength and extent of social mobility.

The linked dataset also creates the potential for new and cross-cutting statistics on important and policy-relevant themes. This could include information about the average earnings of individuals with different education pathways; the unemployment and inactivity rates among school leavers with different characteristics, or the extent to which students from Northern Ireland choose to study and work here.

HOW WE WILL DELIVER ON OUR VISION

To meet these aspirations, our Corporate Plan sets out how we need to change our operations over the 2025 to 2029 period. These changes draw on NISRA's recent experiences and on national and international best practice. They seek to learn from the proactive, positive responses of the statistical and registration systems to the Covid pandemic, the cost of living crisis arising and the UK's exit from the European Union.

More broadly, they reflect the way that modern statistics and registration services institutes aspire to work. They draw on our understanding of developments in the UK, Ireland and other international organisations and that of similar organisations in the NICS.

STRATEGIC ENABLERS

To deliver our vision for statistical, analytical, research and registration services in Northern Ireland, NISRA depends on a range of strategic enablers. These are central aspects of our operating context which govern our ability to deliver services for our users and stakeholders, and which – along with our financial position – determine our capacity for change.

As our most important asset, our diverse **People** are perhaps the key strategic enabler which help NISRA to deliver on our mandate and advance change. The Corporate Plan sets out our ambition to continue to invest in their advanced skillsets, to maintain and increase their engagement on important policy issues, so that they continue to feel proud to work in NISRA and of the public good which their activities facilitate. It signals our commitment to deliver an enabling **digital infrastructure** which empowers them to use their skills and capabilities efficiently and effectively.

The change we envisage will also require a renewed strategic approach to our **data**: how we collect data against a backdrop of falling response rates internationally; how we store, link and make available cross-cutting datasets which are interoperable by design. Our approach to **dissemination** will also play a key enabling role. We need to continue to address questions identified in dialogue with users and to publish our insights through increasingly accessible, impactful, user-focused methods.

NISRA's capacity to deliver will also be shaped by our enabling **partnerships**. Working with analysts, operational services and domain experts across the NICS, the UK and international statistical systems will play a key role. In all this work, we need to ensure we have the right **statistical, legislative and public approval** to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland.

To deliver our vision and to become the agency that we need to be, progress will need to be made against all of these areas over the next five years. Working with partners across the NICS and more widely, we will monitor progress towards this vision in our annual business plans: setting out the measures that we need and will take as an Agency – finances permitting – on an annual basis.



ENGAGED, AMBITIOUS, SKILLED PEOPLE



Our People are our key asset and strength. Whether they work in analytical, field interviewer or generalist roles and wherever they are based, NISRA’s skilled and capable people are the means by which we deliver for our users.

We want to build an environment in which our People can thrive. We want them to continue to be engaged in the work that they do and to be excited by their impact on decision making. We want them to be able to act on their new ideas and innovations: enabled to deliver for their customers in the best possible way. We want them to be able to learn and acquire new skills, and we want them to have clear pathways to develop their careers in NISRA. We want to attract and retain staff from diverse backgrounds, and we want our people to continue to be proud of working in NISRA.

Delivering this vision for our People is imperative to NISRA’s success now and in the future. To build this environment – in collaboration with Trade Unions – we will:

- Develop a People & Skills Strategy which identifies our skills needs now and over the next five years, and which sets out how we will meet them, working across the NICS to promote and make space for learning opportunities.
- Ensure our recruitment, retention and promotion practices continue to be inclusive, efficient and transparent: giving people from a wide range of backgrounds the best chance to manage their careers in NISRA.

- Promote diverse, cross-cutting, multi-disciplinary teams which collaborate at ease and by default: recognising that our strength flows from our plurality and that building teams with varied capabilities can achieve better results faster.
- Enhance our culture of celebrating success and innovation: calling out excellent work while removing the fear and blame often associated with failure. Promoting learning and best practice across the statistical system, enabling people to take proportionate risks in a mature and considered way.

Our first steps in delivering this vision will be to develop a recruitment plan for NISRA to make sure we recruit in the best way and at the right time; to produce a training and development strategy that recognises the needs of both NISRA staff and the Agency as a whole; and to review our recruitment and management policies to ensure they remain up to date, inclusive, efficient and fair.

Delivering this vision will enable our teams to unlock their potential. Individuals will be able to access new learning opportunities which enhance their considerable skillsets and will be better able to plan their careers at NISRA. Our multi-disciplinary teams will continue to draw strength from our diversity, and work confidently on cross-cutting challenges. They will feel valued for their contributions, supported as they innovate, and proud to work in NISRA.

PURPOSEFUL PARTNERSHIPS



NISRA's vision demands purposeful partnership working. These partnerships help us to operate more efficiently, to learn from national and international experience and to deploy the right expertise to the right challenge, so we can deliver on our potential.

We want to build on our existing networks to develop trusted partnerships which can support our statistical, registration and general service people to deliver. We want to build diverse, multi-disciplinary teams from across the NICS and public sector who can use their expertise to drive insights out of data on important policy questions and enhance our service provision. We want to partner with researchers and academia: mobilising expertise and capability to strengthen our data, statistics and analysis. We want to develop our relationships with the data, statistical and registration systems of the UK, Ireland and internationally to drive the adoption of best practice.

Delivering on this vision is important because NISRA will only deliver on its potential by working with delivery partners across the NICS and beyond. We will:

- Mobilise our cross-government network to deliver the data, analysis, research and registration services that our users demand; continuing our two-way dialogue with users to identify the key insights they need to make important decisions.
- Build on our partnerships with academia: continuing to develop our strategic, ESRC-funded Administrative Data Research (ADR) partnership to make better use of the data that government

holds and work with wider academics to develop insights from new and high-quality, linked datasets.

- Leverage our connections to the statistical and registration systems of the UK, Ireland and internationally to adopt best practice. Using our international ties and our Statistics Advisory Committee to benchmark our delivery and to identify ways we can improve our efficiency and effectiveness over the long term.
- Work with the wider NICS and the public in Northern Ireland to promote data understanding, advance a strategic approach to data governance and demonstrate its power to improve service provision.

Our first steps will be to strengthen our existing engagement within the NICS to promote data driven decision making. We will engage our delivery partners in workshops to clarify responsibilities and streamline our processes. We will develop a refreshed ADR Northern Ireland vision focused on renewed partnership working to promote policy-relevant research. We will deepen our engagement with other external partners, academia and the public to help identify their analytical needs.

Building these partnerships will strengthen our capacity to deliver key statistical and analytical insights, as well as high quality registration services. It will enhance our connections with a wide array of delivery partners to meet the needs of decision makers in the most effective ways possible. And it will help us to anticipate and meet the evolving needs of our users and the public.

USER-FOCUSED DISSEMINATION



Effective user engagement plays a central role in shaping NISRA's service offering. Ensuring that our activities continue to address our users' growing demands – and they are delivered in useful and effective forms – is critical to achieving our vision.

We want our outputs to continue to respond directly to our users' needs, and to be a recognised, trusted and authoritative voice in public debate. We want to build on our programme of user engagement and reputation for high quality outputs to maintain high levels of trust in our statistics and analysis and maximise our reach. We want our users and our customers to be able to find the information they need easily and to be able to identify our work as NISRA products. Recognising that different users have different needs, we want to disseminate our outputs in innovative, dynamic, user-focused forms – ranging from infographics and dashboards to custom table builders – ensuring our products are accessible and inclusive.

Adopting a more user-focused approach to dissemination will enhance the value and impact of NISRA's outputs and amplify their influence on key decisions. We will:

- Continue to engage with our users and their needs, to develop a more user-focused approach to dissemination which identifies and addresses their evolving demands.
- Build on our reputation and our respected, authoritative and impartial voice in the public square: enabling our outputs to reach a wider audience to

ensure they can help to drive important decisions.

- Adopt a more strategic view of NISRA's outputs: giving greater visibility to our upcoming releases and improving the consistency and coherence of our outputs, making them more identifiable and increasing their impact.
- Work to develop the skillsets we need to drive best practice dissemination as it evolves: increasing the take up of new, dynamic forms of publication for use inside or outside of government. Work to grow expertise in data journalism, data visualisation, content design and social media to widen our impact.

Our first steps will be to refresh the NISRA website to better signpost our services and outputs; to develop and implement a dissemination strategy which recognises new and different delivery vehicles to meet different user needs; and to increase the consistency of our outputs to make them recognisably NISRA products.

Improving our dissemination will give NISRA outputs a greater profile in public debate and increase the number of people using them to make important decisions. Users will be able to access our releases more easily, interacting with different forms of content to meet their specific needs, and be able to move seamlessly between NISRA content published by different departments.

ENABLING DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE



In common with other modern statistics and registration services institutes, NISRA increasingly depends on new analytical and digital tools to deliver our services efficiently and to mobilise new, large-scale datasets to meet evolving user needs.

We want to develop a digital infrastructure which enables best in class data collection practices, and supports the provision of effective, empathetic digital registration services. We want to improve the efficiency of our processes by accelerating our roll out of automated analytical pipelines using artificial intelligence. We want to create a safe, secure environment where new, large administrative datasets can be combined with survey data, enabling important, policy-relevant analysis and research. We want to empower our people to deploy their considerable digital skills to innovate and deliver for our users.

This ambitious vision will be achieved through the development of new digital capabilities and resources. We will:

- Consider the feasibility of greater digitisation in our registration services and adopt a digital first approach to data collection.
- Develop a common analytical environment with a standardised digital tool kit to support cross government working, strengthen the resilience of our business systems, and improve the support we can provide to our interviewers.

- Ensure that NISRA has access to a trusted, accredited and safe infrastructure which supports interoperability between data sources and enables cross-cutting, timely and policy-relevant data linkages.
- Promote the use of automation and artificial intelligence in our business systems, including widening our use of Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP) to produce outputs efficiently and to a consistently high standard.

Our first steps towards delivering this new digital infrastructure will be to develop a vision for a common analytical toolkit for statisticians in the NICS; to develop ambitious plans to automate a large proportion of our outputs over the next five years; to examine how greater digitisation could be used in our registration services and to develop options for a secure, data linkage infrastructure.

Delivering on this vision will ensure that our people have access to a modern digital infrastructure that supports data collection, linkage, analysis and dissemination. We will improve the resilience and cohesiveness of our systems by promoting a common tool-kit. We will use automation in our outputs as standard, creating space for more value adding, cross-cutting analysis: energising our innovative culture across NISRA.



CASE STUDY

Criminal justice statistics to meet statutory obligations



The seriousness of some offences – and the imperative to monitor how often they occur – has required NISRA statisticians to work across the criminal justice system to deliver new statistics required under legislation.

The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021 criminalised abusive behaviour which occurs on two or more occasions against an intimate partner, former partner or close family member. The legislation includes both physical violence and controlling or coercive behaviours, and recognises the involvement of children as an aggravating factor.

To enable monitoring of these offences – which can be difficult to capture with accuracy – the Act mandated that the Department of Justice (DoJ) should collate and report to the Assembly on the operation of the domestic abuse offence, child aggravators and other offences aggravated by domestic abuse by 2025. The report was specifically required to include the numbers of offences recorded by PSNI, the number of cases prosecuted; convictions in cases prosecuted; and average length of time for disposal of cases.

Compiling this information required statisticians from a wide range of criminal justice organisations (including DoJ, PSNI and the Public Prosecution Service) to work with policy and IT specialists to source and combine the relevant and often sensitive information gathered. The data standards they created enabled the key information required to flow through Causeway – DoJ's integrated messaging system – and for important quality and resilience tests to be carried out. Statisticians also worked with policy colleagues to develop internal, interim outputs, to allow monitoring of initial impact of the new legislation.

The final report, due in 2025, will inform policy colleagues and MLAs of the level of reporting of offences covered by the legislation alongside resulting prosecutions, convictions and disposals, as well as some measure of justice performance.



CASE STUDY

Data dashboards designed to make a difference



NISRA's data dashboards put important information at the fingertips of decision makers in an accessible and digestible form. The statisticians in The Executive Office, in conjunction with NISRA's Tech Lab, have developed a wellbeing framework to support the draft Programme for Government, which uses the latest NISRA data to show the wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland as individuals, communities and as a society across ten domains of wellbeing.

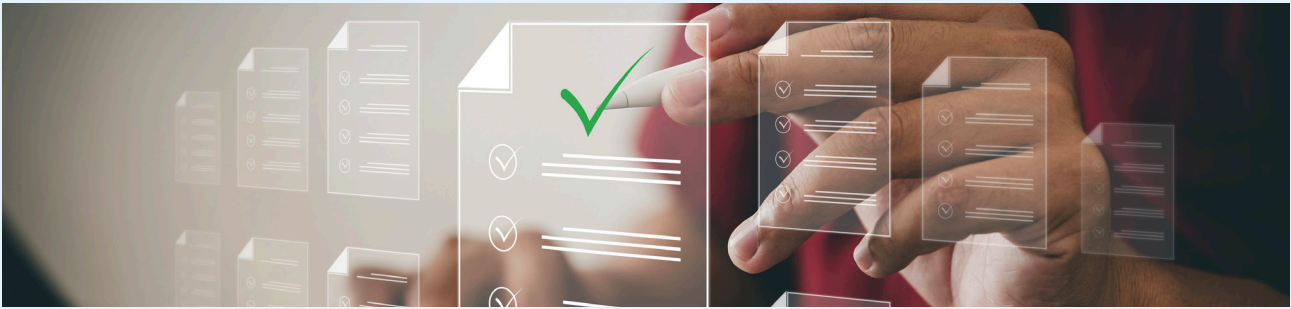
The dashboard draws together around 50 different indicators from official statistics published in many different sources. Each indicator has commentary, which examines how it's measured, why it's important, and what it's telling us. The dashboard uses modern techniques to automatically update as new and more up to date information becomes available, and provides geographical and demographic breakdowns to provide depth of insight.

By looking at the evidence provided by these indicators, we can gain valuable insights into Northern Ireland's wellbeing: highlighting areas of progress and areas where more needs to be done, as well as inequalities across groups in society. Policy makers, service providers and researchers can use this information to tackle issues, inform their own research and guide decisions.



CASE STUDY

Data collection to learn lessons and demonstrate impact



Collecting data to help to evaluate the effectiveness of policy interventions is key to improving service delivery. Even when policy has a very positive impact, there is often learning that can improve outcomes 'next time'. NISRA statisticians can help to design questionnaires that collect data which will be used to inform policy evaluations.

During the Covid-19 pandemic a wide range of grants were available to help businesses weather the financial impact of lockdowns. These government interventions were often designed at pace within Departments – rather than through a coordinated central mechanism. To evaluate these interventions, NISRA and external consultants were commissioned by a cross-Departmental working group to develop, deploy, and report on a survey to capture the views of those businesses that applied for or received Covid-19 related grant funds.

The first stage of the work involved identifying all the Covid-19 specific grant schemes in operation during the pandemic. NISRA's project team worked across government to identify all relevant grant schemes. The NISRA team quickly put in place data sharing agreements with the key data supplier stakeholders and received grant scheme related data for a wide range of businesses and individuals covering approximately £1.16 billion of these government grants.

NISRA staff processed the data on scheme applicants from across many different government departments to produce a sampling frame that could be used to launch a Covid-19 grant evaluation questionnaire. It was a significant challenge to obtain and 'stitch' all of these data sources together into a comprehensive dataset covering all grants in a short timeframe.

NISRA then worked with scheme providers in all Departments to develop a single set of questions that could be asked of any grant recipient or applicant. NISRA used its data collection software to develop an electronic questionnaire which could be deployed on mobile phones as well as larger desktop screens to collect information. NISRA's software solution was ideal to cope with the complexity of the questionnaire enabling respondents to take a variety of routes through the questions, depending on which of the grants they had applied for.

The Covid-19 Grant Evaluation survey was deployed via email to almost 50,000 businesses and individuals over a period of 10 weeks, with automated reminders issued at appropriate intervals. The final completed sample consisted of 8,750 returns and provided important insights. NISRA's unique position embedded at the centre of government, with skilled professional staff and state of the art data management and collection software, enables this and many other data collections to provide evidence of policy impact.

STRATEGIC DATA ASSETS



As a modern statistics and registration services institute we recognise the value of data. Collecting data efficiently and storing it within a safe, secure infrastructure promotes interoperability between sources and drives key insights.

We want to ensure that the data held by the public sector can be gathered efficiently, stored safely, linked and analysed accurately and at pace to deliver decision-shaping insights. We want to continue to work with data owners to mobilise more administrative data for analysis and to transform our survey estate to reduce respondent burden and increase efficiency. We want the data we hold to be interoperable by design, collected on agreed standards to drive data quality. We want to develop new, joined up datasets which enable joined up policy, and we want to enhance the resilience, flexibility and the utility of the data and statistical systems.

These ambitions will only be achieved through a careful, strategic approach to our data standards, collections and management processes. We will:

- Establish a survey transformation and data acquisition strategy which mobilises data efficiently and effectively to deliver insights while minimising respondent burden.
- Utilise our strategic position at the centre of the data and statistical systems to promote modern data policies for the safe, secure management and analysis of data.

- Develop strategic data assets combining data from different domains to enable cross-cutting statistical and analytical work which can help to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of policy.
- Enhance the interoperability of public sector data collections; fostering a centre of excellence in the development of cross-cutting datasets which can be mobilised quickly to deliver policy insights at pace.

To achieve these ambitions, NISRA's first steps will be to devise and implement a survey transformation strategy designed to improve efficiency and focus our skilled field force on more difficult to reach respondents; to work with data owners to identify and progress important data shares which can promote data interoperability; to engage with key stakeholders on a wider vision for a data service for the NICS.

Delivering on these ambitions will enable analysts, researchers and policy-makers to draw on a wider array of data, more quickly, to help make challenging and important decisions. Data collections will be highly interoperable and will be subject to modern, robust data standards. A larger fraction of the public sector data estate will be leveraged to deliver services more effectively; researchers will be able to ask more detailed questions to reflect the complex nature of society today, and NISRA's people will be enabled to mobilise their considerable data skills to continue providing key insights on life in Northern Ireland.

LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL AND AUTHORITY



As the landscape for and demands on modern statistics and registration services institutes has evolved, we have had to become confident users of our governing frameworks, actively shaping our context with regulators, the public and users.

We want to continue to develop our expertise in data sharing: working with data owners to drive important, cross-cutting data linkages. Where legal gateways need to be updated for us to meet user needs, we want to surface and address these constraints. We want to explore new registration services legislation to drive efficiency, quality and convenience for our customers. We want to continue to meet our obligations under the Code of Practice for Statistics; we want to build on our unique position to promote and advance sound data policy and governance, and we want to ensure that our outputs have the backing of the public.

Ensuring that NISRA has the appropriate legal authority and complies with our legislative and regulatory frameworks is central to maintaining user trust. We will:

- Ensure that our people can continue to develop their understanding of key data-sharing legislation: empowering them to act quickly and innovatively where demand arises, to acquire and link datasets from across the public sector.
- Consider the legal context for our services – consulting on changes which could improve the efficiency, quality or convenience of our data collection, research, registration or statistical services.

- Continue to work to apply the Code of Practice for Statistics in our work: applying the principles of the Code both to our official statistics and to the work that we do for policy-makers in government, ensuring our activities are trusted, valued and high quality.
- Work to establish public acceptability for a flexible, empowering legal framework, which combines essential data safeguards with authority to deliver insights for policy makers.

Our first steps will include making the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 which relate to the registration of deaths and still births permanent and exploring further legal changes required for both the registration service and a future Census. We will create new learning resources to promote data sharing and we will work to ensure that our new recruits are all versed in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Delivering these ambitions will ensure that NISRA is able to continue delivering for our users. Building on our People’s understanding of our legal context, we will promote and encourage greater data sharing. We will continue to deploy trusted statistics through our compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and we will continue to build a modern, empathetic and efficient registration service.

MEET OUR SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM



Philip Wales
Chief Executive of NISRA
and Registrar General
for Northern Ireland



Paul McKillen
Director of Statistical
Coordination & Analysis



Nicola Fisher
Director of Analysis
and Research



Conor McKiernan
Head of Business
Services & Development



Sandy Fitzpatrick
Director of Census and
Social Statistics



Aoife Rooney
Deputy Registrar General
for Northern Ireland



Brian Green
Director of Economic &
Labour Market Statistics

MEET OUR AGENCY BOARD*



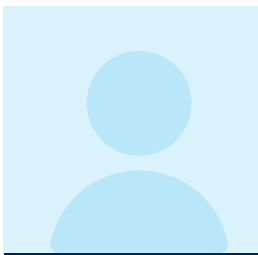
Martin Mayock
BSO



Linda Keys
DAERA



Pauline Donnan
DE



Vacant
DfC



Cathryn Blair
DfE



Richard Elliott
DoF, Census



Andrew McCormick
DoF, CSU



Chris Ganley
DoF, ELMS



Gerard Colgan
DoF, ELMS



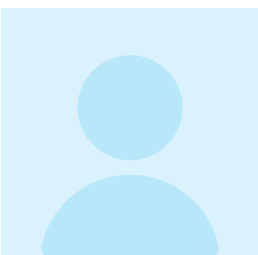
Gillian McCrory
DoF, Modernisation
and Population
Statistics



Maire Brolly
DoF, Tech Lab and
Dissemination.



Deborah Lyness
DoF, VARS



Eugene Mooney
DoH



Orla Bateson
TEO

NISRA AT A GLANCE

Headquarters	Colby House, Stranmillis Court, Belfast. BT9 5RR
Status	Executive Agency within the Department of Finance
Number of staff at 2nd October 2024	495 permanent staff and 24 temporary. Of which 23 are GRO staff.
Telephone number	0300 200 7836
NISRA Social Media	X: @NISRA; Facebook: @nisra.gov.uk
Website	www.nisra.gov.uk
E-mail address	info@nisra.gov.uk
GRO Website	www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/go-groni-online
GRO E-mail address	gro_nisra@finance-ni.gov.uk

ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	Administrative Data Research
BSO	Business Services Organisation
CSU	Central Survey Unit
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DE	Department of Education
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for the Economy
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoF	Department of Finance
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
DRO	District Registration Offices
ELMS	Economic and Labour Market Statistics
EOL	Education Outcomes Linkage
EONI	Electoral Office for Northern Ireland
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GRO	General Register Office
LEONI	Longitudinal Educational Outcomes Northern Ireland
NI	Northern Ireland
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
OPONI	Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
OSR	Office for Statistics Regulation
PBNI	Probation Board for Northern Ireland
PfG	Programme for Government
PNA	Pharmacy Needs Assessment
PPSNI	Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RAP	Reproducible Analytical Pipelines
SEUPB	Special EU Programmes Body Statistics & Research Branch
SPPG	Strategic Planning and Performance Group
Tech Lab	Technology and Support Lab
TEO	The Executive Office
VARs	Vital Statistics and Administrative Research and Support Branch



68%

of the population are registered with a Health Service dentist in 2023/24



971,936

tonnes of waste collected by Northern Ireland Councils in 2022/23



19.2%

of the school population have special educational needs in 2023/24



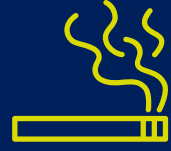
22,556

children are enrolled in pre-school education in 2023/24



49,337

employment vacancies notified to DfC in 2023/24



14%

of the population smoked cigarettes in 2022/23, a decrease from 2010/11 (24%)



26%

reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 1990 and 2022 in Northern Ireland



39%

of female 16 year olds reported they had experienced online violence in the last year (2023)



428,858

patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at hospitals on 30 September 2023



31,164

prosecutions and 26,026 convictions at courts in 2023



1,903,175

usual residents living in Northern Ireland in Census 2021



10,025

planning applications were received during 2023/24



20%

increase in enrolments at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions between 2013/14 and 2022/23



112,087

Certificates produced in 2023 (includes birth, death, marriage, civil partnership, adoption and still-birth)



55

police recorded crimes per 1,000 population in Northern Ireland in 2023/24 compared with 94 per 1,000 population in England & Wales



78.2 million

journeys on public transport in 2023/24



19,964

births were registered in 2023 to resident mothers*



71.1%

employment rate (aged 16 to 64) for May - July 2024

*These figures are provisional.