



# Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2016

Publication Date: 7 November 2017



The General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland is part of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). NISRA is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (DoF) and has been in existence since April 1996.

GRO is responsible for the administration of the marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland along with the registration of births, deaths and adoptions. The office is also responsible for the maintenance of registration records and the production, on request, of certificates in relation to these events.

NISRA's core purpose is to provide a high quality, cost effective, statistics, research and registration service that informs policy making, the democratic process and the wider public.

**The overall corporate aims of NISRA are to:**

- provide a statistical and research service to support decision making by Northern Ireland Ministers and Departments and to inform elected representatives and the wider community through the dissemination of reliable official statistics; and
- administer the marriage laws and to provide a system for the civil registration of births, marriages, civil partnerships, adoptions and deaths in Northern Ireland.

NISRA can be found on the internet at [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk)

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Ninety-Fifth  
Annual Report  
of the  
Registrar General  
2016

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under:  
Section 34 of the Marriage (Northern Ireland) Order, 2003  
Article 3(3) of the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976  
Section 154 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004  
by the Department of Finance

7 November 2017

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### Foreword by the Registrar General for Northern Ireland



It gives me great pleasure to present the ninety-fifth Annual Report of the Registrar General to the Northern Ireland Assembly, my first since taking up the position of Registrar General for Northern Ireland and NISRA Chief Executive just over one year ago.

The report draws on the work of NISRA's General Register Office (GRO) and Demographic Statistics Branch and provides an overview of Northern Ireland through the analysis of key life events such as births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships that were registered in 2016. It takes a new format and should be read in conjunction with the supporting information (both current and historical) that is available on the NISRA website [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk). Should you require information that hasn't yet been published our customer services team will be happy to consider any requests you may have.

My first year as Registrar General has been exciting, challenging and rewarding. A year which saw the implementation of the new Northern Ireland Registration Office System (NIROS), which has both transformed and streamlined the registration of the key vital events in question. It also saw the relocation of our Agency Headquarters to Colby House in Stranmillis Court, an image of which is included on the front cover of the report. As part of the move we took the opportunity to modernise and expand the facilities on offer to the public; including reducing the time to issue a priority certificate at the public counter and the bright and modern facilities in the Public Search Room. Customers are staying longer in the search room to carry out their research, where both current and historical records (for over 150 years) are available.

The information from the registration service plays a pivotal role in terms of supporting evidence based decision making and the delivery of public services; informing both regional and international comparisons; and underpinning NISRA's population estimates and projections, which are integral to the policy development and evaluation work undertaken by both central and local government.

In presenting the report I very much appreciate the work undertaken by the team of 11 Registrars and 91 Deputy Registrars located in the District Registration Offices across the eleven new councils, and all the NISRA personnel involved in the delivery of civil registration services – without their collective commitment, professionalism and support the production of this report simply wouldn't have been possible.

I trust that you will find the report both informative and useful and I welcome any comments you may have regarding its revised format and content.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siobhan Carey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

**Siobhan Carey**

Registrar General for Northern Ireland

November 2017

The General Register Office (GRO) is part of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) with the Registrar General having overall responsibility for the work carried out by the GRO. GRO functions are set in legislation, the main areas of responsibility are:

- The administration of the births, deaths, marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland through the District Registration Offices (DRO);
- Policy development, oversight and regulation of the DROs;
- Casework relating to name changes, registration of adoptions and re-registrations;
- The maintenance and access to the online official registration records; and
- Production, on request, of certificates in relation to these events.

### **Main Activities in 2016 – January to December**

- Over 49,000 life events registered through the DRO offices.
- Between January 2016 and December 2016 the GRO processed 92,500 certificate applications, an increase of 45% on the previous year. Almost 28,600 certificate applications related to priority (fast-tracked) certificates, an increase of 250% on the previous year. After the Brexit vote in June 2016 GRO saw an increase in applications for birth certificates. This was largely due to customers applying for Irish Passports.
- In February 2016, the new Northern Ireland Registration Office System (NIROS) was introduced. This has improved both the turnaround times and accuracy for the production of certificates, in particular for online customers.

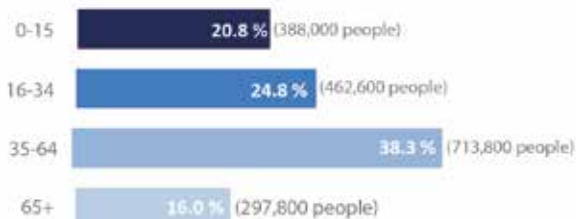


- Different channels are used by the public to submit certificate applications. Online (which includes telephone applications) is now by far the most popular:
  - ◆ Postal 6,539
  - ◆ Counter 11,105
  - ◆ Online - 64,259
- Additionally, GRO processed over 2,900 registration related cases including re-registrations, adoptions, name changes and corrections.
- GRO shared information with Business Services Organisation, Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities.
- Over 10,000 new accounts were registered on the GRO Family History website. There were almost 1.38 million searches carried out – the most popular being the basic index search<sup>1</sup> which accounted for 1.2 million searches. There were over 1.16 million credits purchased by online users with almost 545,000 credits used for the enhanced<sup>2</sup> and full<sup>3</sup> index searches.
- There were 1,133 visits to the GRO Public Search Room in Oxford House in 2016, which has since relocated to Colby House in Stranmillis Court.
- In September 2016 facilities were installed in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) search room which extended GRO search room facilities to another Belfast location. This facility offers the PRONI visitors access to all official birth, death and marriage records not just the historical records which can be viewed remotely.

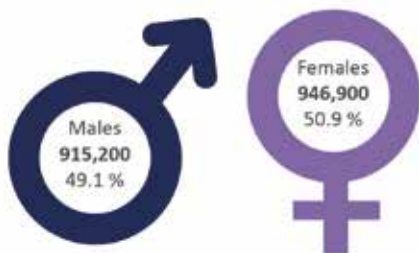
Population of Northern Ireland at 30 June 2016

## 1,862,100

Population by Age



Population by Gender

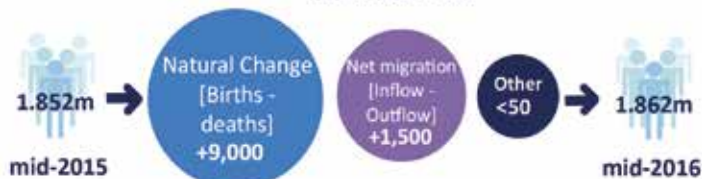


Source: 2016 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland

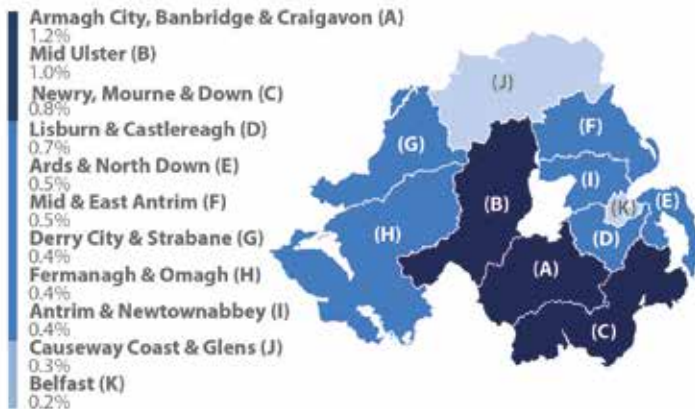
How has the population increased since 30 June 2015?

## +10,500 people

(0.6% growth)



Population Change by Local Government District (Mid-2015 to Mid-2016)



## In 2016:

- The population of Northern Ireland was estimated to be 1.862 million people at 30 June 2016.
- Over the year mid-2015 to mid-2016, the number of people living in Northern Ireland increased by 10,500 people (0.6 per cent).
- Natural growth was the main driver of population growth, adding 9,000 people (24,400 births minus 15,300 deaths) to the population.
- For the third successive year the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland (23,800) was greater than the number of people leaving (22,300), leading to a net population gain of 1,500 people due to migration.
- Both the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere and those arriving to live here increased in the year ending mid-2016, by 3.8 per cent and 1.0 per cent respectively.
- The population continues to age with the number of those aged 65 or over increasing by 2.0 per cent in the year ending mid-2016

to reach 297,800 people (16.0 per cent of the population). In contrast, the number of children aged 0 to 15 years increased by just 0.7 per cent to reach 388,000 children (20.8 per cent of the population).

- Each of the 11 Local Government Districts experienced an increase in population between mid-2015 and mid-2016.

## Population Projections:

- The Northern Ireland population is projected to increase by 4.5 per cent to 1.94 million in the next ten years to mid-2026, reaching the 2 million mark by mid-2040.
- Projections also indicate a continued ageing population in Northern Ireland, with the number of people aged 65 or over projected to grow by 25 per cent in the 10 year period to mid-2026.
- Furthermore, the proportion of the population aged 65 or over is projected to overtake that of children by mid-2028 (20.1 per cent and 19.6 per cent respectively).

## 24,076

births



12,425 Boys

11,651 Girls



**30.6** years  
average age  
of mothers



**40%** of births were to  
first time mothers

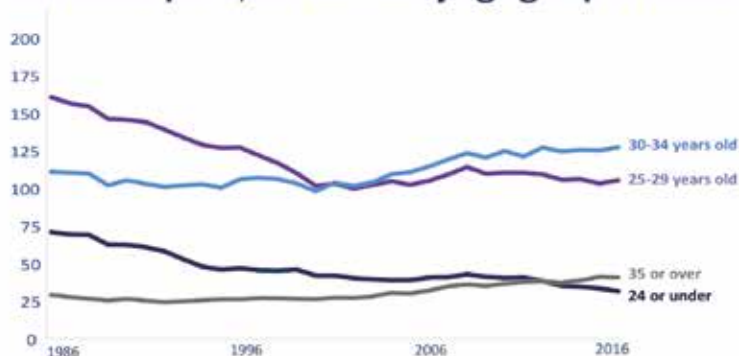
2,094  
in 1986

Teenage  
births

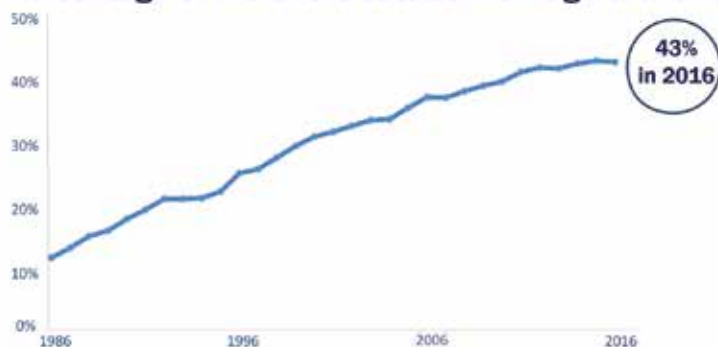
791  
in 2016

**10%** of births were  
to mothers born  
outside the UK & Ireland

### Live births per 1,000 women by age group of mother



### Percentage of live births outside marriage over time



## In 2016:

- There were 24,076 births (12,425 males and 11,651 females) registered to Northern Ireland mothers, 139 fewer than in 2015.
- The most popular name for boys registered this year was James whilst for girls it was Emily.
- The average age of mothers was 30.6 years. This compares to 30.5 years in 2015 and 27.5 in 1986.
- 22 per cent of all births were to mothers aged 35 years or over, up from 11 per cent 30 years ago.
- Teenage births increased from 760 in 2015 to 791. This however was noticeably lower than a decade previously (1,427) and 3 decades ago (2,094).
- First time mothers accounted for 2 in 5 of all births. Just under 9 per cent of mothers already had 3 or more live born children. This compares to 16 per cent in 1986, reflecting the trend towards smaller family sizes.
- The average age of first time mothers was 28.4, almost 4 years older than in 1986 (24.7).
- 43 per cent of births occurred outside of marriage, compared to only 13 per cent three decades ago.
- Of the 23,771 maternities, 1.6 per cent resulted in multiple births with 359 sets of twins and 14 sets of triplets being born. This was twice as many sets of triplets as in 2015.
- 10 per cent of births were to mothers who were born outside the UK and Ireland. This compares with 6 per cent 10 years ago.

# Stillbirths & Infant Deaths

**82**  
stillbirths

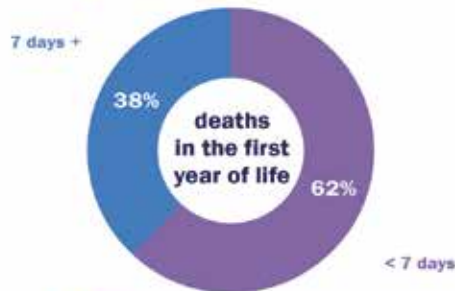
**3.4** stillbirths  
per 1,000 live and still births




82 stillbirths registered  
**7.9%**   
than the 2015 figure (76)

**112**  
infant deaths

**4.6** infant deaths  
per 1,000 live births



**43%** of infant deaths occurred in the first day of life

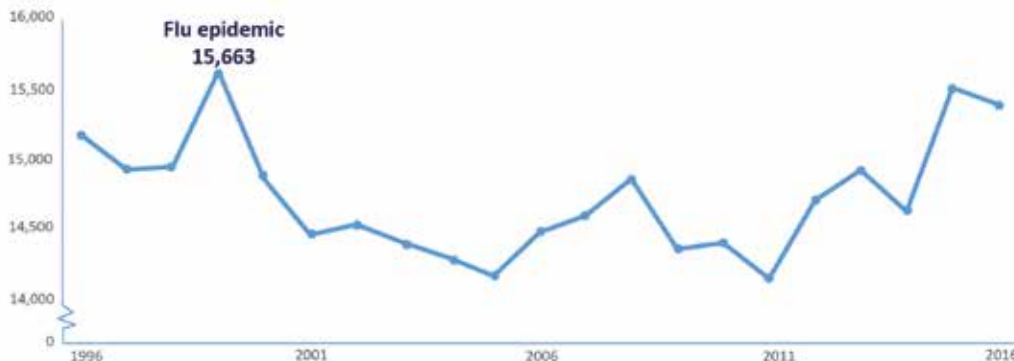
112 infant deaths registered  
**9.7%**   
than the 2015 figure (124)

### In 2016:

- 82 stillbirths (39 males and 43 females) were registered. This was 6 more than in 2015 and equates to a stillbirth rate of 3.4 per 1,000 total births (both live and still). The stillbirth rate in 2015 (3.1) was the lowest on record.
- Conditions originating in the perinatal period were the cause of 79 per cent of stillbirths, whilst congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities were the cause of the remaining 21 per cent.
- 112 infant deaths (i.e. deaths in the first year of life) were registered, representing a fall of 9.7 per cent on the previous year (124). This equates to 4.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Approximately three fifths (62 per cent) of infant deaths occurred in the first week of life.
- 43 per cent of infant deaths occurred during the first day of life.
- Conditions originating in the perinatal period were the cause of 49 per cent of infant deaths, whilst congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities were the cause of a further 29 per cent.

## 15,430 deaths

### Trend in number of deaths over time



Slightly more females than males



Average age



**2/3** deaths were of people aged 75 and over



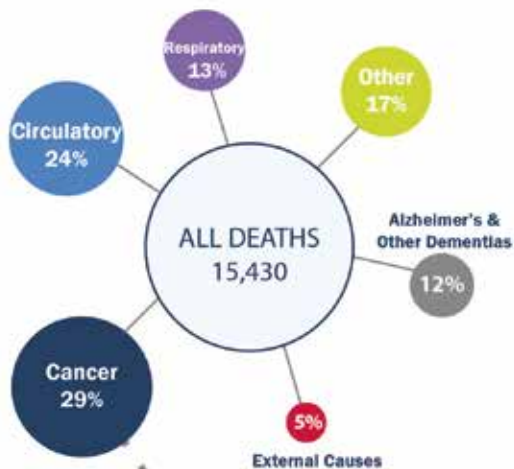
**3** TIMES as many **CENTENARIAN** Deaths as in 1986



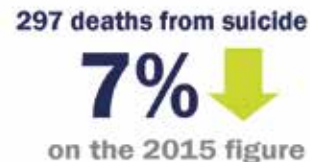
**In 2016:**

- 15,430 deaths (7,430 males and 8,000 females) were registered, slightly less than in 1999 (15,663) when the severe flu epidemic occurred.
- There were 108 female deaths for every 100 male deaths, exceeding the female to male ratio in the population as a whole (103 females: 100 males).
- The average age at death for men was 73.7 years and 79.3 for women. This compares with 68.3 and 74.6 respectively 3 decades ago.
- Approximately 2 out of every 3 deaths were of people aged 75 or over.
- Life expectancy for females (82.3 years) was almost 4 years higher than for males (78.5 years). This gap has however been closing, down from over 6 years 3 decades before.
- 48 per cent of deaths occurred in NHS hospitals, whilst a further 20 per cent of deaths occurred in other hospitals or nursing homes.
- Approximately 4 out of every 5 deaths in an NHS hospital was a person aged 65 or over.
- There were 115 deaths of people aged 100 or over, three times the number of 30 years previously (38 in 1986).

# Cause of Death



**MOST COMMON  
CANCER SITE  
WAS THE  
BRONCHUS OR LUNG**



## Most relevant cause of death by age



**In 2016:**

- Of the 15,430 deaths, the leading cause of death was cancer (29 per cent), followed by circulatory disease (24 per cent).
- For both males and females, the most common cancer site was the bronchus or lung; the breast was the second most common cancer site in female deaths whereas the prostate was the second most common cancer site in males.
- 66 per cent fewer people died of heart disease than three decades ago - 1,602 compared with 4,686 in 1986. This also represented a 12 per cent decrease on the number of people who died of heart disease in 2015 (1,825).
- There were 297 deaths registered due to suicide, a 7 per cent decrease on the previous year (318). Males accounted for approximately three quarters of all suicides (74 per cent).
- The number of deaths due to Alzheimer's and other dementias increased by 5 per cent on the previous year, from 1,760 in 2015 to 1,847.
- External causes of death (for example accidents, suicide) were the leading cause of death in people aged 15-34, accounting for approximately 3 in 5 deaths in this age group.
- Cancer was the leading cause for those aged 35-84, accounting for almost 2 in 5 deaths in this age group. Circulatory disease was the leading cause for those aged 85 or over.

# Marriages



**8,306**  
marriages



Average of  
**1** marriage  
per hour



Most  
popular  
date

Average age  
at marriage



Most popular month  
of marriage

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
May	Jun	Jul	<b>Aug</b>
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

## In 2016:

- 8,306 marriages were registered, equivalent to just under 1 every hour.
- August was the most popular month to get married, with Saturday 6th August having been the most popular day, with 106 couples having married on this day.
- Grooms were on average 2 years older than brides (34.7 and 32.6 years respectively). Compared with 30 years previously, the average age of both brides and grooms increased by 7.5 years.
- Four in five marriages were first time marriages for both partners, while for 8.1 per cent of marriages both partners had been previously married.
- St Patrick's Church, Pennyburn, Derry remained the most popular religious venue for religious marriages, with 44 marriages having taken place there. The Belfast Registration Office was the most popular venue for civil marriage ceremonies.
- 14 per cent of all religious marriage ceremonies were held outside of religious buildings.
- One in two civil marriages (51%) were held in a registrar's office.
- 11 per cent of marriages were of couples who both reside outside Northern Ireland.



**2,572**  
divorces

**Average length of  
marriage at divorce**



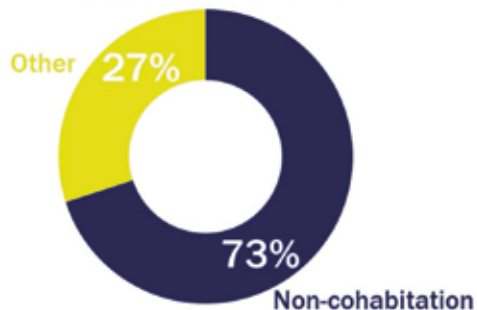
**Average age at divorce**



**Divorces over time**



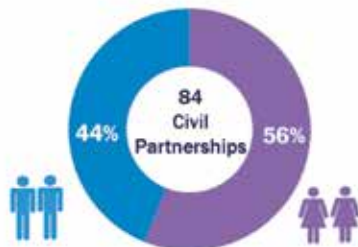
**Grounds for divorce**



**4,584**  
children/stepchildren  
affected by divorce  
of which  
**1,992**  
aged under 16

**In 2016:**

- 2,572 divorces were granted. While this represented an increase on the previous year (2,360), it was 12 per cent lower than the peak number of 2,913 in 2007.
- Non-cohabitation remained the most frequently recorded reason for divorce accounting for 73 per cent of all divorces.
- Those marriages which ended in divorce had lasted an average of 17 years, compared with only 14 years three decades previously.
- The average ages of the men and women concerned were 46.7 and 44.6 years respectively.
- For approximately one in ten men and women who divorced, this was not their first divorce.
- 4,584 children/stepchildren were affected by the divorces that were granted, of which 1,992 were under the age of 16.



Most popular month of civil partnership

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
May	<b>Jun</b>	Jul	Aug
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Average age at civil partnership



Location of civil partnership ceremony



**8**

Civil Partnership Dissolutions



4 male Partnerships

4 female Partnerships



### In 2016:

- There were 84 civil partnerships registered (37 male partnerships and 47 female partnerships), 5 fewer than in 2015.
- The average age of males entering a civil partnership was 33.7 years, while for females it was 36.5 years.
- Slightly less than half (39) of civil partnership ceremonies were held in a District Registration Office. The remaining 45 ceremonies were held in an approved venue.
- June was the most popular month for civil partnership ceremonies, with 13 being held then.
- 8 civil partnership dissolutions were registered; 4 of male couples and 4 of female couples.
- The average age of all partners dissolving a civil partnership was 37.3 years.

**168**  
adoptions



**55**  
more  
ADOPTIONS  
THAN IN 2015

**807**  
birth re-registrations

Reasons for re-registering  
a birth include:



Parents  
getting  
married



Adding  
father's  
details

**204**  
fewer  
RE-REGISTRATIONS  
THAN IN 2015

## In 2016:

- 168 children (89 boys and 79 girls) were adopted, an increase of 49 per cent from the 2015 figure of 113.
- The age of these adoptees ranged from under 1 year of age to 17, with an average age of 4.
- 113 children adopted this year were aged 5 or under. A further 38 children were aged between 6 and 10, with the remaining 17 children aged 11 or over.
- 807 births were re-registered, 20 per cent fewer than the 2015 figure of 1,011.
- There were three births re-registered showing their new gender in the Gender Recognition Register.

### <sup>1</sup> **Basic index search:**

**Births** – displays forename and surname, date of birth, sex, mother's maiden surname, registration number and district of registration.

**Deaths** – displays forename and surname of deceased, date of death, sex, date of birth or age at death, registration number and district of registration.

**Marriages** – displays surname of bride and groom, forename of either bride or groom, date of marriage, registration number and district of registration.

**Civil Partnerships** – displays surname of partner 1 and partner 2, forename of either partner 1 or partner 2, year of civil partnership, registration number and district of registration.

## <sup>2</sup> Enhanced index search:

**Births** – displays basic index information along with date of birth, district of birth, father's forename and surname and mother's forename and surname.

**Deaths** – displays basic index information along with date of death, date of birth and marital status.

**Marriages** – displays basic index information along with date of marriage, place of marriage, date of birth of bride and groom and age at marriage of bride and groom.

**Civil Partnerships** – displays basic index information along with date of civil partnership, place of civil partnership, date of birth of partner 1 and partner 2 and age at civil partnership of partner 1 and partner 2.

## <sup>3</sup> Full Index Search:

View full registration details (image or data).



All of the data in this report are available on the NISRA website [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk).

Any queries or requests for further information should be addressed to:

### **Customer Services**

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e-mail: [info@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:info@nisra.gov.uk)

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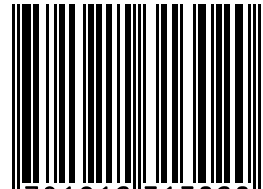
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