



Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

2021 Census: Outputs Strategy Consultation for Northern Ireland

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CENSUS OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

October 2018

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What is this consultation all about? Why is it important?

We are planning for the next census for Northern Ireland in 2021. As part of this, we would like to ask users for their views on how NISRA should publish the outputs of the 2021 Census. It is important that our users respond to this consultation – without it we will not know what type of outputs users will require from the 2021 Census and the format in which output data should be provided.

When is this consultation taking place?

Our public consultation about the 2021 Census Outputs Strategy will take place from 18 October to 9 January 2019.

Is this consultation about the questions on the questionnaire?

No, this consultation will focus on users output or data requirements and does not ask about specific questions to be included on the 2021 Census questionnaire. A topic consultation was conducted in 2015/16 which sought views from users about the content of the questionnaire, the results of which can be found [here](#).

When will we know what questions will be asked in the 2021 Census?

NISRA have published the full [2021 Census household questionnaire](#) on the NISRA website.

Is this about the UK Census?

This 2021 Census Outputs Strategy consultation is for Northern Ireland only. NISRA is responsible for the census in Northern Ireland. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Records of Scotland (NRS) recently completed their own consultations on 2021 Census Outputs for the rest of the UK. NISRA will, however, aim to harmonise with the approaches taken in the rest of the UK in accordance with the [‘Agreement between the National Statistician and the Registrars General for Scotland and Northern Ireland’](#).

Who can take part in this consultation?

Everyone can take part. People can respond as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Guidance on how to respond on behalf of an organisation can be found [here](#).

How can I take part?

Taking part is easy. We have put our consultation on a website called Citizen Space. Simply log in to [Citizen Space](#) and get started.

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What is Citizen Space?

Citizen Space is an established public consultation website used by many people to view and take part in consultations, including public sector consultations. We wanted to make our 2021 Census Outputs Strategy consultation as accessible as possible. Citizen Space is easy-to-use and meets government accessibility standards.

How long does it take to respond to this consultation?

It really depends on your response. Our consultation covers a number of areas but most people are only interested in a few – while we would like you to respond to all of our questions, you only need to complete the sections you are interested in.

Do I have to complete this consultation in one go?

No, you can fit it around when you are free. You can save your responses at any time and come back later.

Should organisations only send one response or are multiple responses possible?

Ideally, we would prefer one response per organisation but we appreciate that this is not always possible. More information on how to submit one response for an organisation can be found [here](#).

What about people who do not use the internet?

We appreciate that not everyone has access to the internet. People who prefer to, or can only respond, on paper can still complete and return a consultation questionnaire. A paper version of the questionnaire can be provided in either a [Microsoft Word](#) or [pdf](#) format. Alternatively, people can contact our Census Customer Services on 028 90255156 if they wish for a questionnaire to be sent to them.

Will NISRA be holding any events as part of this consultation?

Yes, engagement events are being planned which will provide consultees with additional information and an opportunity to discuss issues of interest to them. Further details will be provided in due course.

Will the 2021 Census go ahead if there is no Northern Ireland Assembly at the time?

Yes, plans are currently being drafted to ensure that the appropriate legislation can be passed to ensure the 2021 Census can take place in the event that the Northern Ireland Assembly is not operational.

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How will GDPR affect NISRA's data confidentiality arrangements?

GDPR was implemented across the EU on 25 May 2018, as such NISRA's confidentiality arrangements were updated to make the organisation GDPR compliant. Further information on NISRA's confidentiality arrangements can be found on [NISRA's privacy notice](#).

How will Brexit affect our EU data obligations?

The UK has already signed GDPR requirements into law and will therefore have to comply with GDPR regulations while the UK is still in the EU. However, once the UK leaves the EU it will be able to make changes to the legislation to make the law more UK-specific. As previously discussed, all responses to this consultation will be treated in line with [NISRA's privacy notice](#) which is GDPR compliant.

What is a flexible dissemination system?

As part of the 2021 Census Outputs Strategy Census Office are considering developing a flexible dissemination system, which will allow users to access data and build tables that meet their specific needs. Where possible, this system will embrace new technologies such as Application Programming Interfaces (APIs).

What is an Application Programming Interface (API)?

NISRA, ONS and NRS are considering the provision of easy and co-ordinated access to census data or statistics, through the use of an Application Programming Interface (API). This would allow access to UK-wide data through the flexible dissemination system provided on each organisations website. Further information on what an API is can be found [here](#).

What is Statistical Disclosure Control?

Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) refers to a range of statistical methods that aim to protect individuals, households, businesses, and their attributes from being identified in published information. NISRA are considering two SDC methods in 2021; targeted record swapping and cell key perturbation. For further information on these methods please refer to NISRA's document on ['Statistical Disclosure Control Methodology for 2021 Census'](#).

What are specialist products?

As with the Census in 2001 and 2011, NISRA aim to provide a range of specialist products to assist user's access to census data. These specialist products include; Origin and Destination data, Alternative Populations, Bulk download, and Microdata. Further information on these products can be found in NISRA's [2021 Census Outputs Strategy Consultation for Northern Ireland document](#).

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What are NISRA Geographies?

Historically, NISRA has published census outputs using geographies based on electoral boundaries in place at that time. In 2001 and 2011 NISRA released census outputs for a range of administrative and statistical geographies including small levels of geography known as Census Output Areas and Super Output Areas which, due to their hierarchical nature, were used to create larger geographies such as Wards and Local Government Districts.

Since the introduction of new electoral wards in 2015 NISRA have had to evaluate the geographies produced. As such, this subject forms a key component of the 2021 Census Outputs Strategy Consultation. Further information on NISRA geographies can be found [here](#).

What happens after the consultation?

A further consultation on the timing of output products is planned for Summer/Autumn 2021.