

**census**  
2021

# 2021 Census Outputs Consultation for Northern Ireland

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**CENSUS@NISRA.GOV.UK**



Northern Ireland  
Statistics and Research Agency

Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann  
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

October 2021

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

Census Office conducted the Census for Northern Ireland in March 2021. This technical consultation outlines in detail, the proposed design of the 2021 Census statistical outputs. Specifically the order and the way census statistics will be made available. We would like to gather your views to ensure our proposals meet your needs. Your response to this consultation is important and feedback will help us finalise the development of 2021 Census outputs plan.

### **When is this consultation taking place?**

Our public consultation about the 2021 Census Outputs Strategy will take place from 1 October to 26 November 2021.

### **Is this consultation about the questions on the questionnaire?**

No, the collection of data from the 2021 Census is already complete. This consultation will focus on the statistical outputs. A [topic consultation](#) was conducted in 2015/16 which sought views from users about the content of the questionnaire.

### **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. 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’](#).

A user working group has been set up for UK Census data for 2021 and 2022. The purpose of this group is to provide a forum for sharing information and feedback between the three UK Census Offices and UK Census data users.

This group is looking for UK Census data users, from Northern Ireland in particular, to understand what UK data they are using and what UK data would be useful. If you use UK Census data and wish to contribute to this group or you know of any individual or organisation in Northern Ireland that currently use such data and may be interested in participating in this group, please get in touch with [census@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:census@nisra.gov.uk).

Being part of this working group will help shape the provision of future UK Census data. For users in Northern Ireland this resource could enhance their research, provide greater insight and inform better decision making. More information on UK census data can be found on the [NISRA website](#).

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### **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 [on the NISRA website](#).

### **How can I take part?**

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

### **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 in the [guidance for multiple respondents](#).

### **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 0800 328 2021 if they wish for a questionnaire to be sent to them. If you wish to respond to this consultation using a paper questionnaire, responses can be scanned and returned to the email or posted to the addresses cited below:

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Email: [2021census.consultation@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:2021census.consultation@nisra.gov.uk)

Post: Census Office  
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency  
Colby House  
Stranmillis Court  
Belfast  
BT9 5RR

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

Yes, a webinar event is being planned for the start of November, which will provide consultees with additional information and an opportunity to ask questions about the issues of interest to them. Further details will be provided in due course. If you would like to be notified when registration for the event is available, please email Census Office at: [2021census.consultation@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:2021census.consultation@nisra.gov.uk).

### **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](#).

### **Has Brexit affected our data protection 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. Now that the UK has left the EU it will be able to make changes to the legislation to make the law more UK-specific, however, no new legislation has been developed to this date. As previously discussed, all responses to this consultation will be treated in line with [NISRA's privacy notice](#) which is GDPR compliant.

### **What are the flexible dissemination systems?**

The standard results from the 2021 Census will be provided via two main methods, described below. While both systems offer flexible dissemination to certain degrees, the 'Build-Your-Own' tables will be a fully flexible dissemination system.

- **'Ready-made' tables**, similar to the standard tables in 2011 ([Key Statistics](#), [Quick Statistics](#), [Detailed Characteristics](#) and [Local Characteristics](#)), will be freely available online in the PxStat system. PxStat will allow for an element of flexibility within each of the pre-defined tables, with users able to filter using the variables in the table and/or particular geographic areas (if the table includes geographies) to best suit their needs.

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- **‘Build-Your-Own’** tables will be available via an interactive table builder. This system will collect user requests, create the outputs, and apply disclosure control to the final table. Concurrently, it will run checks to determine whether the resulting outputs are potentially disclosive and, therefore, whether they can be provided to the user or not.

Where possible, both systems will embrace new technologies such as Application Programming Interfaces (APIs).

### **What is an Application Programming Interface (API)?**

NISRA, ONS and NRS aim for 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 in an [ONS Blog](#).

### **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 the [2021 Census Outputs Consultation document](#).

### **What happens after the consultation?**

Consultation responses will be evaluated to inform decisions on the final design of the 2021 Census outputs for Northern Ireland. When making these decisions, factors such as data quality, the risk of disclosure of personal information, and how the publication of the data will serve the public good, will be considered.

We aim to publish a response to the consultation as soon as possible after the consultation closes. A 2021 Census Outputs Prospectus, including the final design of the 2021 Census outputs, and more detail on the planned release schedule, will be published by end January 2022.