

## 2021 Census Outputs Strategy Consultation Questionnaire

NISRA's preferred method for you to respond to this consultation is [online](#). If you wish to respond by email or paper, please download and complete the 2021 Census Outputs Strategy Consultation Questionnaire from the NISRA website ([PDF](#) or [Microsoft Word](#) version).

Please note, for your response to be included in the analysis, you must answer questions marked with a star (\*) in [Section 1: About you](#).

We would ask that you consider responding to all questions in this consultation questionnaire, rather than only those that are relevant to you, as this will help us form a more inclusive and robust strategy.

**Please note that comments relating to questions in the 2021 Census should not be included in the responses to this consultation.** A consultation on [2021 Census topics](#) was undertaken and completed in 2016. If you require further information regarding 2021 Census topics please contact Census Office using the information provided below.

If you wish to respond to this consultation using a paper questionnaire, responses can be returned to the email or postal addresses cited below:

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

## Section 1: About you

**\*Are you answering this questionnaire on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?**

- Individual
- Organisation – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your contact details.

\*Your name \_\_\_\_\_

\*Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

**\* Which of the following best describes the sector you work in?**

*Please select one.*

*This will assist us in monitoring the range of users the consultation has reached.*

- Central government
- Local government
- Statutory body (for example, health, education, transport, housing, etc.)
- Private sector
- Social / Academic research
- Market research / Data analytics
- Charity / Community / Voluntary
- Utility provider
- Press / Media
- Genealogist / Family historian
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*May we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation?**

*This may be to follow up any specific points we need to clarify.*

- Yes
- No

**\*May we contact you in future about the 2021 Census?**

*For example, to provide you with a link to the results of this consultation, to inform you of further consultations or provide updated information on the 2021 Census.*

Yes

No

**Consent**

**\* To support transparency in our decision making process, all responses to this consultation will be made public (subject to our Moderation Policy). This will include the name of the responding organisation (if applicable). However, names of individuals will only be published if you give consent below. Please note that we will not publish your contact details.**

Yes, I consent to my name being published with my response

No, please remove my name before publishing my response

**All responses will be treated in line with the [NISRA privacy notice](#). Please be aware that any information provided in response to this consultation could be made publicly available if requested under a Freedom of Information request.**

Please read through our [consultation document](#), which outlines our initial proposal for the 2021 Census output content and dissemination. The following questions are related to the topics discussed in the consultation document. Please provide as much detail as you can to support your answers. If you refer to a specific policy or scheme, please provide a direct reference to this.

We'll only evaluate the evidence provided in your responses. In 2015/16<sup>1</sup>, Census Office conducted a consultation on the topics to be included in the 2021 Census, therefore we will be unable to accept comments related to questions asked in the 2021 Census during this consultation. However, if you require further information regarding the 2021 Census topics, please contact Census Office.

We have asked questions based on your experience with 2011 Census data. If you haven't used 2011 Census data, we'd still be interested to hear your thoughts about your needs for 2021 Census data.

---

<sup>1</sup> More information on the '2021 Census Topic Consultation for Northern Ireland' is available: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/2021-census-topic-consultation-for-northern-ireland-document.pdf>

## Section 2: Background

We'd like to know which topics and geographies you used the most from the 2011 Census outputs. If you didn't use 2011 Census results, we would still be interested to hear your views about the outputs you are interested in from the 2021 Census.

1

### What are your main topics of interest?

*Tick all that apply.*

- Age
- Car or Van Availability
- Central Heating
- Country of Birth
- Ethnic Group
- Economic Activity
- General Health
- Household and Family Relationships
- Long-term health problem or disability
- Main Language
- Marital and Civil Partnership Status
- Migration
- Number of Rooms
- Occupation
- Passports Held
- Provision of Unpaid Care
- Qualifications Held
- Religion
- Sex
- Tenure and landlord
- Travel to Work or Place of Study
- Type of Accommodation
- Type of Long-Term Condition
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2

**Which geographies from the 2011 Census results did you use?**

*Tick all that apply.*

- Assembly Area
- Education and Library Board
- Health and Social Care Trust
- Neighbourhood Renewal Area
- Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
- Small Area
- Super Output Area
- Postcode
- Settlement 2015
- Electoral Ward
- 26 Local Government Districts
- 11 Local Government Districts
- District Electoral Area 2014
- Travel to Work Area
- Grid Square
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

3

**What did you use the 2011 Census results for?**

*Tick all that apply.*

- Commercial purposes
- Resource allocation
- Service planning and delivery
- Policy development and monitoring
- Academic research
- Personal interest
- Other purposes – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 3: Accessibility and Flexibility

#### Flexible Dissemination System

For 2021, NISRA are considering providing census data through a flexible dissemination system which will allow users to access data to build customised tables that meet their specific needs. This approach will facilitate a quicker turnaround of standard outputs than was seen in 2011 and will enable users to have access to data as soon as it becomes available.

The following questions assess your need to access the data this way and what impact it would have on your work. *Please circle the response most relevant to you.*

4

**I would prefer earlier access to data after census day via an online flexible dissemination system rather than waiting for tables to be developed by NISRA.**

*Please circle the response most relevant to you.*

Agree      Neither Agree nor Disagree      Disagree      Not Sure

5

**Being able to define my own tables is more useful to me than using predefined tables.**

*Please circle the response most relevant to you.*

Agree      Neither Agree nor Disagree      Disagree      Not Sure

6

**I would find it useful to be provided with a small number of univariate tables, similar to the Key Statistics and Quick Statistics tables produced for the 2011 Census outputs, alongside those I can generate through the flexible dissemination system.**

*Please circle the response most relevant to you.*

Agree      Neither Agree nor Disagree      Disagree      Not Sure

7

**Currently, NISRA are considering releasing 2021 Census data using the flexible dissemination system, but we'll also aim to provide an application programming interface (API). Would an API to access 2021 Census data be useful to you?**

Yes

No

8

**Any other comments?**

## Supporting Information

Following the 2011 Census, NISRA provided a range of documentation about the information contained within the data tables, and supporting documentation, for example, about the quality of outputs and definitions used. This information provides context to the data, for example, how they were collected and the coverage of the data, publication dates, descriptions and search keywords. We want to make sure the information we provide is useful and easy for you to understand.

9

### Which supporting information did you use in 2011?

*Tick all that apply.*

- Definitions and output classifications
- Methodology overview
- Quality assurance reports
- Guidance notes
- Comparability of 2001 and 2011
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

10

### Where would you expect to access supporting information?

- In the data tables
- In a link next to the data table
- Accessed via another part of the NISRA website

11

### In 2011, did you read the accompanying analysis and commentary?

- Yes
- No (I didn't need to)
- No (I didn't know it was available)

12

### What format of accompanying commentary do you find most useful?

*Tick all that apply.*

- Statistical bulletin describing key outputs
- Interactive data visualisations
- Infographics
- Short stories
- None
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

13

**Any other comments?**

#### Section 4: Timeliness of Release

We recognise the importance of the timely release of 2021 Census data. Census Office are currently considering the publication of Population and Household estimates in the first release by Summer 2022, with all other standard releases being published by Summer 2023. Census Office are also considering the coordination of release dates with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and National Records of Scotland (NRS), where possible.

14

**Are you content with the proposed release schedule?**

Yes

No

15

**If you have selected no, please explain why.**

16

**Any other comments?**



## Section 5: Public Confidence

Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) refers to a range of methods that aim to protect individuals, households and businesses from being identified whilst minimising impact on the quality and utility of results. For the 2021 Census, NISRA is considering two strategies of SDC – targeted record swapping and cell key perturbation. The SDC methodologies will be co-ordinated across the UK Census Offices, where it is practicable to do so, as set out in the Statement of Agreement between the National Statistician and the Registrars General<sup>2</sup>.

For more information on these methods please refer to [‘Statistical Disclosure Control Methodology for 2021 Census’](#).

### Targeted Record Swapping

Targeted record swapping was applied to the 2011 Census data and NISRA propose to use it again in 2021. This method involves assessing individuals or households with rare or unique characteristics and swapping those at risk of identification with a similar household from another area.

17

**Do you support the use of targeted record swapping as a form of Statistical Disclosure Control?**

Yes

No

18

**If you have selected no, please explain why.**

### Cell Key Perturbation

NISRA are considering an additional form of SDC known as “cell key perturbation” to facilitate the development of a flexible dissemination system. This method involves making small changes to some cells in a table with low counts to add more uncertainty (noise), with the goal of protecting against disclosure, especially disclosure which occurs when one table is compared to other tables with similar information (differencing). Although adding noise disrupts the differencing process and allows for a more timely release of census data, it may lead to inconsistent table totals. However, in these instances the proportions would remain the same. This approach is consistent with the proposed SDC methods intended for use by both the ONS and NRS.

---

<sup>2</sup> More information on the ‘Statement of Agreement between the National Statistician and the Registrars General’ is available from: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2021-census/planning/legislation>

**19** Do you support the use of cell key perturbation as an additional form of Statistical Disclosure Control?

Yes

No

**20** If you have selected no, please explain why.

**21** In 2021, would you be content with slightly inconsistent table totals in order to receive the results in a more timely manner?

Yes

No

**22** If you have selected no, please explain why.

**23** Any other comments?

## Section 6: User Acceptability

### UK Harmonisation and Statistics

NISRA, ONS and NRS have been working together to facilitate the harmonisation of output content, where possible. The statistical disclosure control methodology, for example, will be a major focus of harmonisation across the UK with focus given to adopting common population bases, geography, metadata and output formats.

NISRA, ONS and NRS are also considering the provision of easy and co-ordinated access to census data or statistics, through the use of an API, which would allow access to UK wide data through the flexible dissemination system provided on each organisations website. As such, we're interested in establishing the value of UK-level statistics and the detail required.

#### 24 Did you use UK data from the 2011 Census?

- Yes
- No

#### 25 How important is being able to access and compare data for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for your work?

- Important
- Not important
- Not sure

#### 26 In 2021, which of the following would you be interested in?

*Tick all that apply.*

- UK statistics totals
- Small area statistics for different geographies across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

#### 27 How would you expect to access UK data?

- Access data about each UK country through a single website for example, select data about Scottish local authorities through the NISRA website
- Visit each UK country website to access data about that country

28

**Any other comments?**

### **Ireland and Northern Ireland Harmonisation and Statistics**

As has been the case for the last two censuses, NISRA will continue to work closely with the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ireland, to ensure where possible consistency and comparability of 2021 Census Key Statistics across the island of Ireland and are considering the production of an Ireland and Northern Ireland 2021 Census report, similar to the published report on the 2011 Census<sup>3</sup>.

29

**Did you use the Ireland and Northern Ireland joint report from the 2011 Census?**

Yes

No

30

**How important is it to you that you are able to access and compare data for Ireland and Northern Ireland for your work?**

Important

Not important

Not sure

31

**Any other comments?**

---

<sup>3</sup> More information on the 'Ireland and Northern Ireland' report is available from:  
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2011-census/results/ireland-and-northern-ireland>

## Geography

Historically, NISRA have published census results using geographies based on electoral boundaries in place at that time.

In 2001, NISRA released census outputs for a range of administrative and statistical geographies. This included 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.

These same geographies were used again in 2011, allowing users to directly compare data from both censuses. In 2015, following the revision of local government boundaries, a new set of Local Government Districts, District Electoral Areas and Electoral Wards were introduced. To date a number of 2001 and 2011 Census outputs have been produced using these new geographical areas. However, outputs could not be produced for the new lower level Electoral Wards due to increased risk of disclosure.

32

**In 2021, Census Office are considering two alternative options for releasing data at different geographic levels. It should be noted that due to the risk of disclosure Census Office can only provide one of these. Annex 2 of our [consultation document](#) highlights the differences in the 2021 Census outputs which would be produced by each of the options detailed below. Please select which option you would prefer.**

- Census Office are considering the production of 2021 Census statistics for the administrative and statistical geographies used in both the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. This will allow comparability of census information at consistent geographies across 2001, 2011 and 2021. However, due to the risk of disclosure, 2021 Census statistics would not be made available for the new Electoral Wards.
- An alternative option is the production of results for a new small area statistical geography. This would allow the production of 2021 Census results for a new set of statistical geographies consistent with the 2015 revision of local government boundaries. This new geography would nest within the new Electoral Wards. However, 2021 Census data would therefore not be made available for the old local government boundaries or electoral wards, therefore users would be unable to compare 2001-2011-2021 census results for these geographies.

**33** As previously stated, NISRA will not be able to provide 2021 Census results for both options above. In deciding the overall design of 2021 Census outputs geographies, NISRA will take the following into consideration:

- Legislative requirements
- National and international obligations
- The needs of key stakeholders
- Allocation of public money
- Statistical geographies identified as the most appropriate at that time
- Efficiency in conducting the 2021 Census
- Any other factors that users believe are necessary

Please use the box below to detail any other suggestions or comments you have.

### **Grid Square Product**

Historically, census outputs have been presented as statistical aggregates for given geographic areas, which themselves are based on local government boundaries. This can lead to difficulties when considering trends over time as these boundaries are reviewed and revised.

In order to permit the examination of trends over time for consistent spatial units, NISRA has made available grid square statistics for every census since 1971. The geographic base for these outputs is the Irish Grid, and Census statistics are produced for 100m and 1km grids. It is the intention of NISRA to continue this time series and produce a 2021 grid square product.

**34** Did you use the 2011 Census grid square product?

- Yes
- No

**35** Would you use a 2021 Census grid square product if it were made available?

Yes

No

**36** How important is it to your work to have a 2021 Census grid square product?

Important

Not important

Not sure

## 2021 Census Specialist Products

### Origin and Destination Data

Origin and destination (flow) data produced following the 2011 Census shows the flows of people from one place to another. A large number of the origin and destination outputs were produced at the UK level, providing flows for usual residents within and between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**37** Did you use 2011 Census origin and destination data?

Yes

No

**38** Would you use 2021 Census origin and destination data if it were made available?

Yes

No

## Alternative Populations

In 2011, statistics were made available for three alternative populations: short-term residents, daytime population and workplace population. NISRA are currently reviewing whether these data should be produced as part of the 2021 Census outputs.

39

**In 2011, which alternative population statistics did you use?**

*Please tick all that apply.*

- Short-term residents
- Daytime population
- Workplace population
- None

40

**Would you use 2021 Census alternative population data if they were made available?**

- Yes
- No

## Bulk Download

In 2001 and 2011 NISRA provided a facility to download all released tables through a bulk download. It is the intention of NISRA to continue the provision of this bulk download facility.

41

**Did you use the 2011 Census bulk download facility?**

- Yes
- No

42

**Would you use a 2021 Census bulk download facility if it were made available?**

- Yes
- No



## Microdata

Microdata products are small samples of data for whole households and individuals, which include some associated census characteristics but no information that could identify a household or individual. Microdata products enable researchers to look at combinations of characteristics that are not generally available from the standard census tables, and to perform different types of analyses not possible from standard tabulations.

In 2011, NISRA produced three microdata products: microdata teaching file, secure microdata and safeguarded microdata.

43

**In 2011, which microdata products did you use?**

*Please tick all that apply.*

- Microdata teaching file
- Secure microdata
- Safeguarded microdata
- None

44

**Would you use 2021 microdata if it were made available?**

- Yes
- No

45

**Do you have any other requirements for specialist products? If so, please list your requirements below?**

## Section 7: Final Comments

46

**Do you have any final comments about the areas covered in the 2021 Census Outputs Strategy Consultation document?**

THIS IS THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.