

Background Quality Report

Analysis of NICS

Recruitment Competitions

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Introduction – *Context for the quality report*

This output is the latest in an annual series which began in 2009. It was designed to provide easy access to summary information on recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service during a particular year. NICS recruitment figures are compiled from HRConnect, the human resources service for the NICS, whereas appointments to the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) are verified using Compass, the NIPS system.

Up to 2022, the report examined competitions which closed to applications within a particular calendar year. As of the 2023 report, databases are compiled and analysis produced on competitions which closed during the previous calendar year. Using this methodology, the equality information reflects the complete end-to-end recruitment process for the selected competitions and does not require future updates.

The report is usually published in March on a pre-announced date. Further details are available in the [Quality Assurance of Administrative Data \(QAAD\) report](#).

Relevance - *The degree to which the statistical product meets user needs in both coverage and content.*

Stakeholders are consulted after the publication of each year's report. The current method uses a Citizen Space online survey which remains open for a year following the publication of the latest report. The consultation indicated that both the coverage and content are appropriate to the needs of users. It also indicated that the report is used for policy making and monitoring, performance monitoring, responding to information requests, aiding decisions on resource allocation and to inform public marketing campaigns.

Accuracy and Reliability - *The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value*

Coverage of applicants is believed to be 100%. While care is taken to ensure the competition list is accurate, it is possible that competitions could be included when they should be omitted or vice versa. However this process is managed by the statisticians within HRCS and it is felt that the risk of this happening is relatively low. While the vast majority of entries are complete, there can be missing values, particularly when a paper application is made. These are all footnoted in the report and no assumptions are made once all avenues for completion have been exhausted. A further potential source of bias is that in providing an overall summary of competitions, the overall picture may be influenced by one large competition.

Timeliness and Punctuality - *Timeliness refers to the time gap between publication and the reference period. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.*

The publication relates to competitions which have closed within the calendar year being reported. Therefore, the figures given relate to final equality profile at the various recruitment stages.

The publication date allows time for all the analysis and quality assurance to be undertaken. The survey of users indicated that 100% of users were 'Satisfied' with the timeliness of the report.

Accessibility and Clarity - *Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.*

The output presenting information in tables and graph, is published on the NISRA website. As this is the first year of the new format, user feedback will be collected after publication.

Coherence and Comparability - *Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.*

As the NICS holds different recruitment competitions each year, year-on-year comparisons in terms of equality are not appropriate because different competitions attract different profiles of candidates.

Trade-offs between Output Quality Components - *Trade-offs are the extent to which different aspects of quality are balanced against each other.*

As the new methodology examines closed competitions, all information is collected by the end of the reference period. Therefore data are available for analysis in early January. This removes the previous trade-off between the timeliness of the report and its accuracy and reliability.

Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions - *The processes for finding out about users and uses, and their views on the statistical products.*

Staff involved in the production of the output are in regular telephone and email contact with the key users of their statistics throughout the year, typically with specialist staff within NICS HR who have responsibility for the relevant work area and with staff in the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners. In addition to these meetings, HRCS staff would also have regular telephone and email contact with key users. The main reasons for using the publication were for policy making and monitoring, performance monitoring, media related / informing public / public interest and to aid decisions on resource allocation. Overall satisfaction with the report was complete with all respondents saying that the statistics they used fully or mostly met their needs. These findings relate to the previous report format.

Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden - *The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output.*

The operational cost (staff time) of producing each issue of the output is approximately £6,000. There is no respondent burden since the data are held on an administrative system.

Confidentiality, Transparency and Security - *The procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices.*

Suppression is applied where the number of cases in a cell containing personal information is disclosive; this is described in table footnotes. This approach has been used to provide as much useful information as possible while maintaining confidentiality of personal details.

Data are held on a network that is only accessible to the few statisticians who need access. More detailed information on the processes used to produce the database and output are outlined in the [Quality Assurance of Administrative Data \(QAAD\) report](#).