

Public Awareness of and Confidence in Official Statistics Northern Ireland 2014



Published: 18th December 2014

Coverage: Northern Ireland

Frequency: Periodic

In April 2008 the UK Statistics Authority was set up as a non-Ministerial government department with a remit to improve public confidence and trust in official statistics. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) first collected information on the public's awareness and confidence in official statistics (PCOS) in 2009, and subsequently in 2010 and 2012. This is the [fourth bulletin](#) in the series.

PCOS information is collected via NISRA's [omnibus survey](#). The most recent survey, which took place in September 2014, included PCOS related questions. This bulletin details the main findings for 2014, with comparative figures from previous years included where applicable.

For the first time in the series respondents were asked if they believe that personal information they provide to NISRA is kept confidential, and also whether statistics produced by NISRA are free from political interference.

Details of the key results are given in Section 1 of this bulletin. A further, more substantive report with more substantive breakdowns will follow in early 2015.

Key Points

- Public confidence in the accuracy of Official Statistics in Northern Ireland was 68% in 2014. This is significantly higher than the 2012 figure of 61%. The trend in public confidence has been increasing, up from 53% in 2009 when it was first measured.
- In 2014, only 5% of respondents disagreed (includes strongly disagreed) that official statistics in NI are generally accurate.
- Of those that responded to the survey, 82% indicated that they had trust or a great deal of trust in the statistics produced by NISRA.
- Nine out of ten respondents said they believed that personal information provided to NISRA will be kept confidential.
- 77% of respondents believed that the statistics produced by NISRA are free from political interference.

Section 1

Details of the responses for 2014, with comparative data for previous years where applicable

1. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement...official statistics in Northern Ireland are generally accurate?

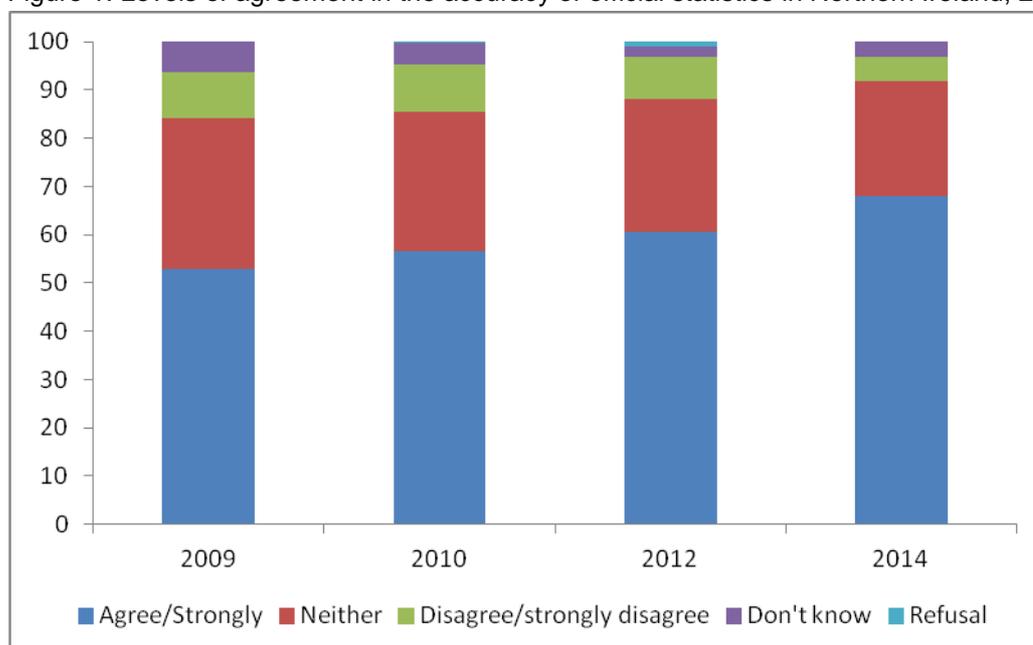
Table 1: Levels of agreement in the accuracy of official statistics in Northern Ireland, 2009 - 2014

All persons aged 16 and over	2009	2010	2012	2014
Strongly agree	4%	5%	6%	10%
Agree	49%	52%	55%	58%
Neither agree nor disagree	31%	29%	28%	24%
Disagree	9%	8%	8%	5%
Strongly disagree	1%	1%	1%	1%
Don't know	6%	4%	2%	3%
Refusal	-	0%	1%	-
Total	1,168	1,212	1,015	1,081

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

'-' where there were no respondents, 0% where the percentage is less than 0.5%

Figure 1: Levels of agreement in the accuracy of official statistics in Northern Ireland, 2009 – 2014



2. Why do you disagree that official statistics are generally accurate?

Table 2: Reasons for disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that official statistics are generally accurate.

<i>All respondents who answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' to Q1</i>	<i>Total Count[#]</i>
Statistics are manipulated or adjusted for political purposes	28
Statistics are misrepresented or spun by politicians or the media	31
Statistics are contradicted or disputed by politicians, the media and other sources	15
Don't trust statistics from personal experience	14
Statistics are difficult to count or measure/information is not always reported	16
Statistics alone do not tell the whole story/there is more to it than just the figures	24
Other [*]	8
Total	62

Note: [#]Where the number of respondents is less than 100, percentages are not presented as they are subject to fluctuations due to the small counts involved. As such the unweighted counts (actual number of respondents) are presented in Table 2. Respondents were allowed multiple responses.

**Includes those that responded 'No opinion/don't understand figures or statistics' and 'Don't know'.*

3. Personally, how much trust do you have in statistics produced by NISRA? Forexample, on unemployment, economic growth, or life expectancy?

Table 3: Levels of trust in the statistics produced by NISRA

<i>All persons aged 16 and over</i>	<i>Total</i>
Trust them greatly	16%
Tend to trust them	67%
Tend not to trust them	7%
Distrust them greatly	1%
Don't know	10%
Total	1,081

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

**Less than 1% of respondents refused to answer this question.*

4. Can you tell me if you have heard of any of the following sources of information about Northern Ireland?

Table 4: Percentage of respondents indicating awareness of the following sources of information, 2009 – 2014

<i>All persons aged 16 and over</i>	2009	2010	2012	2014
The number of births, deaths, marriages in NI each year	48%	54%	41%	48%
The size of the NI population	50%	56%	45%	47%
The number of casualties on NI roads	76%	78%	67%	66%
Recorded levels of crime in NI	59%	62%	48%	48%
Official statistics on hospital waiting times in NI	57%	62%	63%	56%
The Census	#	60%	62%	64%
The number of unemployed persons in NI	75%	70%	71%	58%
None of the above	10%	6%	8%	10%
Total	1,168	1,212	1,015	1,081

A question relating to the Census was not asked in 2009.

Note: Respondents may have answered yes to more than one question.

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I believe that personal information provided to NISRA will be kept confidential.'

Table 5: Levels of agreement on how personal information is kept confidential within NISRA

<i>All persons aged 16 and over</i>	Total
Strongly agree	31%
Tend to agree	58%
Tend to disagree	5%
Strongly disagree	1%
Don't know	5%
Total	1,081

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I believe that the statistics produced by NISRA are free from political interference.'

Table 6: Levels of agreement on whether the statistics produced by NISRA are free from political interference

<i>All persons aged 16 and over</i>	Total
Strongly agree	21%
Tend to agree	55%
Tend to disagree	13%
Strongly disagree	2%
Don't know	9%
Total	1,081

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Background Notes

This bulletin is based on questions relating to Public Confidence and Awareness in Official Statistics that were included in the September 2014 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey. The omnibus survey is administered by NISRA's [Central Survey Unit](#).

The omnibus survey consists of modules of different themes and is conducted at various times throughout the year. It is based on a systematic random sample of addresses selected from the Land and Property Services Agency list of private addresses. In September 2014 a total of 2,200 addresses were selected for interview and, at each address sampled, a person aged 16 or over was randomly selected to complete the face to face interview. The results were weighted to take into account the fact that households are sampled rather than individuals, and individuals in a household with a larger number of respondents have a smaller chance of being selected than households with a smaller number of respondents. The percentages in the tables are based on weighted data but the total number of respondents is unweighted. There were 1,081 respondents to the [PCOS](#) module.

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December 2014