User Engagement on "Northern Ireland Statistical Surveys - Assessment of burden on businesses, households and individuals" publications

Overview

NISRA Statistical Support Branch are consulting on the content and future of the Cost to Business of Completing Statistical Surveys report and the Burden to Households & Individuals of Completing Statistical Surveys report. Both these reports take considerable resource to produce, in terms of data collection from all NI Government Departments and Arm's Length Bodies (co-ordinated locally by statisticians within each NI Government Department), quality assurance checks (following up on missing data and inconsistencies within the data and between years) and the production of the reports. There is also no identified user base for the Burden on Households and Individuals report and the user base for the Cost to Business report is small. It is therefore proposed to discontinue the Burden on Households and Individuals report, and to streamline the Cost to Business report. The downloadable data would still be made available alongside the Cost to Business report, enabling users to replicate the missing analysis.

Rationale

The Code of Practice for Statistics requires that:

> **V1.6** Statistics producers should periodically review whether to continue, discontinue, adapt or to provide the statistics through other means, in discussion with users and other stakeholders.

> **T4.4** Good business practices should be maintained in the use of resources…

This review is in response to this requirement.

Cost to Business report

Streamlining the 'Cost to Business report' to concentrate on analysis at the Northern Ireland level rather than Department level with a single breakdown by Department would notably reduce the work required to produce the report, while retaining the key information. Currently the detailed departmental tables and accompanying commentary and explanations account for the majority of follow-up queries with departmental coordinators and their data suppliers and these queries are both time-consuming and resource-intensive.

The Northern Ireland level analysis would allow users, including the Statistics Advisory Committee, to continue to monitor the cost to business of completing statistical surveys issued by Northern Ireland departments. It would also provide an insight into how this cost compares for statutory and voluntary surveys; surveys that contribute to official statistics and those that don't; by data collection method and by NI Government Department. Information on how the overall burden varies over time, as well as the change in data collection methods would also be provided. For those users who require more detailed analysis, the downloadable data would still be provided.

<u>Burden on Households and Individuals</u>

As well as having no identified user base, the 'Burden on Households and Individuals' report is more resource intensive to produce than the 'Cost to Business report'. This report requires data collection from a larger number of data suppliers (almost 40 compared to 25 for the Business report). In addition, the data are more complex and require appreciably more quality assurance, partly due to greater difficulty in applying the definitions and more variability over time. This in turn imposes greater burden on data suppliers, departmental coordinators, and the production team.

The Code of Practice for Statistics requires that:

> **V5.5** Statistics producers should be transparent in their approach to monitoring and reducing the burden on those providing their information, and on those involved in collecting, recording and supplying data. The burden imposed should be proportionate to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics

It is judged that for these statistics the burden imposed on data suppliers is not proportionate to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics. Therefore, the decision has been taken to discontinue this report.

<u>Requirement to report on survey burden</u>

There is no requirement for NI Government Departments or official statistics producers to report on survey burden. The requirement to

> "Report annually the estimated costs (for example, on businesses, service providers, or the public) of responding to statistical surveys and strive to develop methods that will reduce the costs to individual organisations or people."

included in the first edition of the Code of Practice (Principle 6, Practice 1) has been replaced by Practice V5.5 (above) in the second edition which places the responsibility on individual statistics producers to monitor and reduce the burden on their data suppliers.

<u>Comparability with England, Scotland and Wales</u>

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) no longer produces a report or comparable data for England and Wales. Scotland does not publish comparable data or statistics.

Why we are consulting

NISRA Statistical Support Branch would welcome your views on these proposals - do you use these statistics and how will these proposed changes affect you?

You can respond to the consultation using the [online consultation form](#) or by completing the form in Annex A and emailing it to Garbhan.McKevitt@nisra.gov.uk. The survey should take no longer than fifteen minutes to complete. The consultation will end on 15 February 2023.

An anonymised summary of the feedback, and actions taken as a result of the user engagement will be published on the [Survey Burden webpage](#).

Annex A - User Engagement Survey

COST TO BUSINESS OF COMPLETING STATISTICAL SURVEYS

1. Do you use the 'Cost to Business of Completing Statistical Surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments' report?

Yes	Please go to Q2
No	Please go to Q10

2. What do you use the 'Cost to Business' report for?

3. Which of the following analyses do you use, and how essential are they to your use of the report?

Northern Ireland level	Don't use	Interesting but not essential	Essential
Total Compliance Cost (NI)			
- split by Statutory/Voluntary			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- split by primary data collection method			
- split by data collection method(s)			
- Compliance Cost (NI) over time			
- Compliance Cost (NI) over time at current year pay rates			
- Compliance Cost (NI) over time by primary data collection method			
Total number of surveys (NI)			
- split by Statutory/Voluntary			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- split by primary data collection method			
- split by data collection method(s)			
- split by Programme for Government (PfG) outcome			
- number of surveys (NI) over time			
- number of surveys (NI) over time by primary data collection method			
Total number of returns (NI)			
- number of returns (NI) over time			

Department level	Don't use	Interesting but not essential	Essential
Compliance Cost by Department			
- split by Statutory/Voluntary			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- split by data collection method			
- Compliance Cost (Department) over time			
Number of surveys for each Department			
- split by Statutory/Voluntary			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- split by data collection method			
- number of surveys (Department) over time			
Total number of returns for each Department			
- number of returns (Department) over time			
Change over time - detailed commentary (by Department)			

4. If the report was reduced to only include analysis at Northern Ireland level (rather than Departmental level) and a single breakdown by Department (i.e. Compliance Cost, Number of Surveys & Number of Returns by Department), would this impact your use of the report?

Yes	
No	

5. If 'yes', how would this impact your use of the report?

6. Would continuing to release the underlying data (Cost to business - downloadable data) be sufficient for your needs?

Yes	
No	

7. If 'no', why not?

8. Do you use any of the following sections, and how essential are they to your use of the report?

Survey level	Don't use	Interesting but not essential	Essential
Information on Uses of Surveys (Section 6)			
Measures being taken to Reduce Compliance Cost (Section 9)			
Case Study focusing on a specific use (e.g. 2021 - the use of government surveys of businesses to assess the impact of COVID-19 and inform decision-making)			

9. Do you have any further comments regarding the 'Cost to Business' report or the proposed changes?

BURDEN TO HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIVIDUALS OF COMPLETING STATISTICAL SURVEYS

10. Do you use the 'Burden to Households and Individuals of Completing Statistical Surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments' report?

Yes	Please go to Q11
No	Please go to Q16

11. What do you use the 'Burden to Households and Individuals' report for?

12. Which of the following analyses do you use, and how essential are they to your use of the report?

NI level	Don't use	Interesting but not essential	Essential
Total Compliance Burden (NI)			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- split by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed)			
- Compliance Burden (NI) over time			
Distribution of surveys by Compliance Burden (from smallest to largest)			

Total number of surveys (NI)			
- split by Compliance Burden (0-49, 50-99, 100-499 & 500+ hours) (with percentage contribution of each group to overall compliance burden)			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- split by Programme for Government (PfG) outcome			
- split by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed) (with further detail on mixed methods used)			
- total number of surveys (NI) over time			
Total number of responses (NI)			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- split by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed)			
- total number of responses (NI) over time			
Average achieved sample size (NI)			
- by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed)			
Average issued sample size (NI)			
- by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed)			
Average response rate (NI)			
- by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed)			
Average survey completion time (NI)			
- by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed)			
Scatterplot of surveys - average completion time by number of responses			

Department level	Don't use	Interesting but not essential	Essential
Compliance Burden by Department			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed)			
- Compliance Burden (by Department) over time			
Number of surveys by Department			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- by data collection method (face-to-face; paper; telephone; electronic; mixed)			
- number of surveys (by Department) over time			
Number of responses by Department			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
- number of responses (by Department) over time			

Average survey response completion time by Department			
- split by contribute to official statistics/don't contribute to official statistics			
Number of surveys, average survey response completion time, number of responses, compliance burden - detailed commentary (by Department)			
Change over time - detailed commentary (by Department)			

13. Do you use any of the following sections, and how essential are they to your use of the report?

Survey level	Don't use	Interesting but not essential	Essential
Information on Uses of Surveys (Section 11)			
Measures being taken to Reduce Compliance Burden (Section 10)			
Case Study focusing on a specific use (e.g. 2021 - the use of government surveys of households and individuals to assess the impact of COVID-19 and inform decision-making)			

14. If the report was discontinued, would this impact you?

Yes	
No	

15. If 'yes', how would this impact you?

16. Do you have any further comments regarding the 'Burden to Households and Individuals' report?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

17. Do you have any other comments regarding the 'Cost to Business' or the 'Burden to Households and Individuals' reports or the proposals?

ABOUT YOU

18. Which of the categories below best describe you (or your organisation) as a user of these reports?

Business Representative/Advisory Body	
NI Business	
NI Government Department/ALB - NISRA branch	
NI Government Department/ALB - other	
Other NI Government Body/Organisation (incl. Councils)	
Non-NI Government Department/ALB	
Academia	
Student	
Media	
Personal Use	
None of the above (please specify - optional)	

19. Please provide your contact details below if you are content that SSB can contact you about your responses:

Name	
Organisation (if applicable)	
Email	

20. Can we include your organisation in the list of respondents?

Yes	
No	

21. Would you like us to add your contact details to our user database?

Yes - for the Survey Burden reports	
Yes - for the Survey Burden and Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics reports	
No	

Note: - your contact details will only be used in relation to this user engagement unless permission has been provided above and will be deleted once responses are analysed and clarified.