

Burden to Households & Individuals of Completing Statistical Surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments, 2020/21

Statistics Bulletin

Summary of Key Findings

- There were 121 surveys or parts of surveys¹ issued to households and individuals by Northern Ireland Departments and their Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) in 2020/21 and 207,300 responses were received.
- The estimated total burden to NI households and individuals in 2020/21 was 61,275 hours, or 2,553 days. This represents an increase of 6,879 hours or 287 days compared to 2019/20. The Department of Health (DoH) was responsible for the highest proportion of this burden (41%) and face-to-face methods² accounted for the highest proportion of burden by data collection method (38%).
- Three-fifths (59%) of the total 2020/21 burden can be attributed to COVID-related surveys. In particular, the *COVID-19 Infection Survey* contributed almost two-fifths (37%) of the total burden, while the *COVID-19 Opinion Survey* contributed just over one tenth (11%). A number of surveys or parts of surveys (30) did not run in 2020/21 due to COVID related reasons, and many ongoing surveys saw a drop in their response rate in 2020/21.
- In 2020/21 the average time taken to complete a survey, or part of a survey, was 17.7 minutes³ which compares to 9.8 minutes in 2019/20. There was, however, a wide variance in completion times across surveys, with the shortest survey taking on average less than a minute to complete, and the longest survey taking on average 2.5 hours per respondent⁴.
- There were four surveys in 2020/21 with an estimated compliance burden of over 3,500 hours. Three were COVID-19 related surveys (the *COVID-19 infection survey*, *COVID-19 Opinion Survey* and *Impact of COVID Student Survey*) and the fourth was the *Labour Force Survey*. These four surveys were together responsible for over three fifths (61%) of the total compliance burden.

Lead Statistician

Garbhan McKeivitt
Survey Control Unit
Statistical Support Branch NISRA
Colby House, Stranmillis Court
Belfast, BT9 5RR



028 9038 8459



Garbhan.McKeivitt@nisra.gov.uk

Published: 10th June 2022

Frequency: Annual

Coverage: Northern Ireland

Theme: Government

¹ When several NI Government Departments share a single survey vehicle, such as the *Continuous Household Survey* or the *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*, each part of the survey is counted separately. This means that these surveys, and the respondents to these surveys, will be counted more than once. The compliance burden however is based on the time spent responding to the part of the survey and is estimated by apportioning the total compliance burden for the survey.

² Surveys have been categorised as face-to-face, paper, telephone, electronic (online/email/TDE/DVR) or mixed methods. Telephone Data Entry (TDE) and Digital Voice Recognition (DVR) are included under electronic methods. TDE is a data collection method where data are entered using the telephone keypad.

³ The average time taken to complete a survey has been calculated as the total compliance burden divided by the total number of responses.

⁴ The longest survey (*Living Costs and Food Survey*) includes participation in a telephone interview and completion of a diary.

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1. Background

This 2020/21 report is the sixth in an annual series detailing the burden to households and individuals of completing Government Statistical Surveys in Northern Ireland; the first report covered both 2015/16 and 2014/15. This report is published alongside the annual report on the Cost to Business of complying with NI Government Statistical surveys⁵.

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)⁶ has a statutory basis⁷ and recognises the importance of monitoring and reducing respondent burden, balanced with the need to produce official statistics that are fundamental to good government and provide a good evidence base to inform public policy:

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 on this basis that NISRA produces an annual report detailing the burden placed on households and individuals as a result of completing statistical surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments.

This report includes information on the number of surveys, or parts of surveys, issued by NI Departments (including their Arm's Length Bodies) in the financial year ending 31st March 2021, and the time spent by households and individuals in complying with these regular and ad-hoc Government surveys. Department's names have been abbreviated as shown in Appendix D.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) no longer produces a report or comparable data for England and Wales, although some Government Departments publish information for their own department.

⁵ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

⁶ <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-code/>

⁷ Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/18/contents>

Useful Links:

- [Previous publications in this series](#)
- [Cost to Business publications](#)
- [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)
- [NISRA publications and datasets](#)

- [Downloadable data](#)

2. Definitions

In this report a survey refers to a single survey, or part of a survey, carried out by or on behalf of a NI Government Department. When a survey is shared by a number of Departments, each part of the survey will be treated as a separate survey. This means a single survey vehicle could be counted multiple times.

The number of responses is based on the achieved sample for the survey, or part of the survey. When a survey is shared by more than one Department, each single respondent will be counted as a response to each part of the survey. Thus when responses are aggregated across Departments, some respondents will be counted multiple times.

The compliance burden due to a survey is defined as the **time spent** by the household or individual in responding to the survey, or part of the survey⁸.

In this report, surveys that contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'official statistics' surveys, and surveys that do not contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as 'other statistics' surveys.

The average time to complete a survey has been calculated as the total compliance burden for the group of surveys (or parts of surveys) divided by the total number of responses for the group of surveys (or parts of surveys).

⁸ While the survey and respondents to the survey, will be counted more than once, the compliance burden is calculated based on the relevant part of the survey and is estimated by apportioning the total compliance burden for the survey.

3. Compliance Burden to Households and Individuals

In 2020/21, there were 121 surveys, or parts of surveys⁹, issued to households and individuals by Northern Ireland Government Departments. The total estimated compliance burden was 61,275 hours, or 2,553 days.

In this report, a survey refers to a single survey or part of a survey carried out by, or on behalf of, a NI Government Department. A single survey vehicle shared by a number of different Government Departments will be counted multiple times.

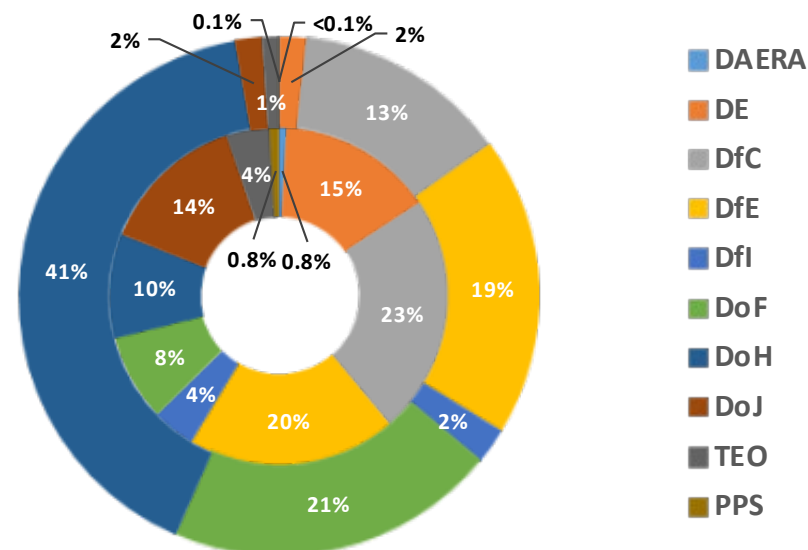
Nearly a quarter of all surveys were conducted by DfC (23%), with a fifth conducted by DfE (20%) followed by DE (15%) and DoJ (14%). DoH and DoF contributed 10% and 8% of surveys respectively, while TEO and DfI both conducted 4% of surveys. DAERA and PPS carried out one survey each.

DoH contributed two fifths (41%) of the total compliance burden, while DoF and DfE each accounted for one fifth of the overall burden (21% and 19% respectively). These three departments all ran large COVID-19 related surveys. DfC contributed 13% of the total compliance burden.

Table 1: Number and Burden (Hours) for Surveys by Department¹⁰

Department	Number of Surveys ¹¹	Percentage of Surveys	Compliance Burden (hours)	Percentage of Burden
DAERA	1	0.8%	44	0.1%
DE	18	14.9%	1,024	1.7%
DfC	28	23.1%	8,187	13.4%
DfE	24	19.8%	11,407	18.6%
DfI	5	4.1%	1,396	2.3%
DoF	10	8.3%	12,611	20.6%
DoH	12	9.9%	24,939	40.7%
DoJ	17	14.0%	1,029	1.7%
TEO	5	4.1%	627	1.0%
PPS	1	0.8%	13	<0.1%
Total	121	100.0%	61,275	100.0%

Figure 1: Percentage of Surveys (Inner) & Percentage of Burden (Outer) by Department



⁹ When several NI Government Departments share a single survey vehicle, such as the *NI Life & Times Survey (NILT)* or the *Continuous Household Survey (CHS)*, each part of the survey is counted separately. This means that these surveys, and respondents to these surveys, will be counted more than once. The compliance burden however, is based on the time spent responding to the part of the survey and is estimated by apportioning the total compliance burden for the survey.

¹⁰ Information on the surveys carried out by each Department is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix E).

¹¹ This includes 9 modules in the *Continuous Household Survey (CHS)*; 7 in the *NI Life & Times Survey (NILT)*; and 2 in the *Kids Life & Times Survey (KILT)*. Each of these modules is counted separately.

DoH accounted for 10% of the total number of surveys, but contributed two fifths (41%) of the total compliance burden. Similarly, DoF surveys contributed 21% of the total burden, but only 8% of the total number of surveys in 2020/21.

In contrast, DE carried out 18 surveys (15%) in 2020/21, but these surveys only contributed 2% of the total burden. DoJ contributed 2% of the total burden and carried out 14% of all surveys.

A relatively small number of surveys were responsible for a disproportionate amount of the overall compliance burden to households and individuals. Figure 2 groups surveys by their compliance burden. The blue bars (first bar in each group) show the percentage of surveys in each category and the orange bars show the percentage of the overall compliance burden due to those surveys.

Figure 2 illustrates that although only 14% of surveys had a total survey burden of over 500 hours, these surveys were responsible for 83% of the total burden. In contrast, 41% of surveys had a burden of 49 hours or less, and contributed only 1% of the total burden to households and individuals in 2020/21.

In 2020/21, four surveys contributed over 3,500 hours of compliance burden, as a result of large numbers of respondents and relatively long completion times. The *COVID-19 Infection Survey* (DoH), which has not been included in Figure 3,

Figure 2: Percentage of Surveys by Compliance Burden, and Contribution to Overall Compliance Burden

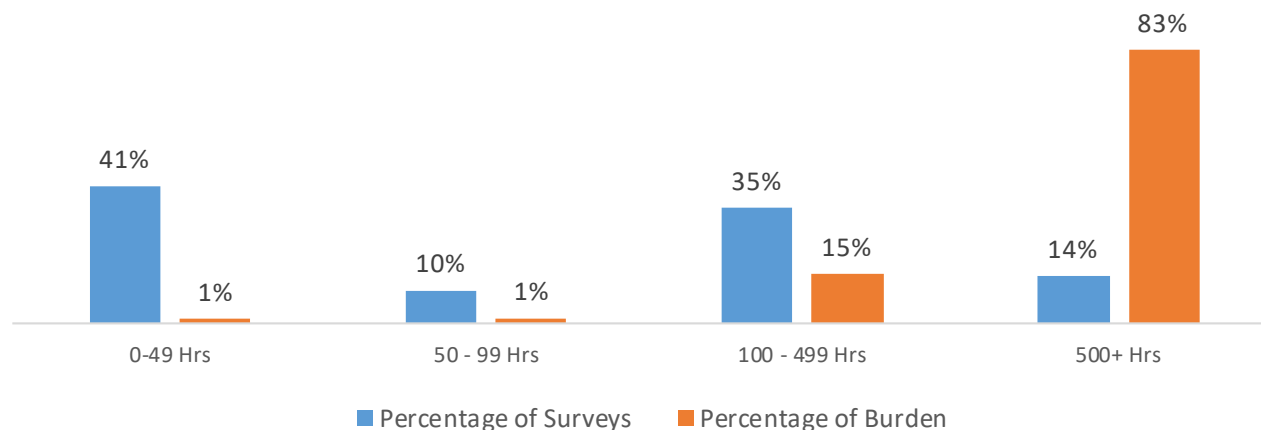
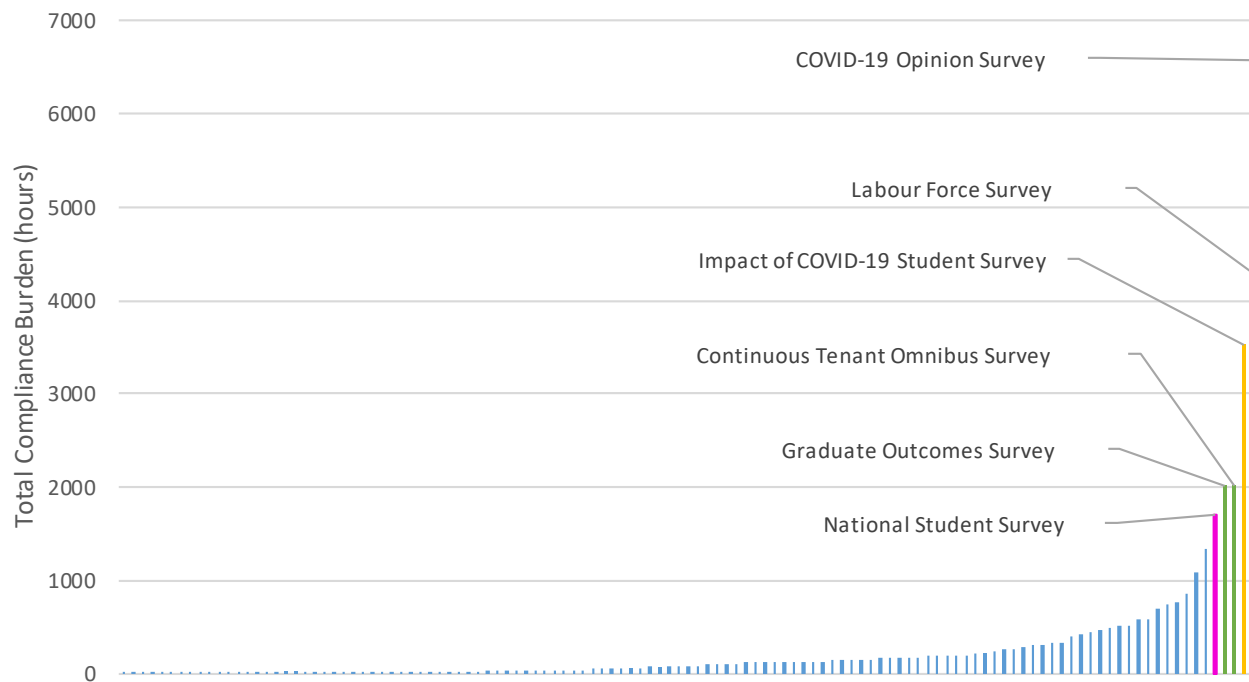


Figure 3: Distribution of Surveys by Total Compliance Burden (excluding the COVID-19 Infection Survey)



takes on average 40 minutes to complete, with 34,166 responses, and contributing 22,777 hours of compliance burden (37% of the total burden).

The *COVID-19 Opinion Survey* (DoF) was responsible for 6,571 hours of burden, with 13,142 responses, and an average completion time of 30 minutes. The *Labour Force Survey* contributed 4,289 hours of burden with 7,568 responses, and an average completion time of 34 minutes. Finally, the *Impact of COVID-19 Student Survey* (DfE) took on average 15 minutes to complete, had 14,094 responses, and contributed 3,524 hours of burden. Together, these four surveys accounted for 61% of the total compliance burden for 2020/21.

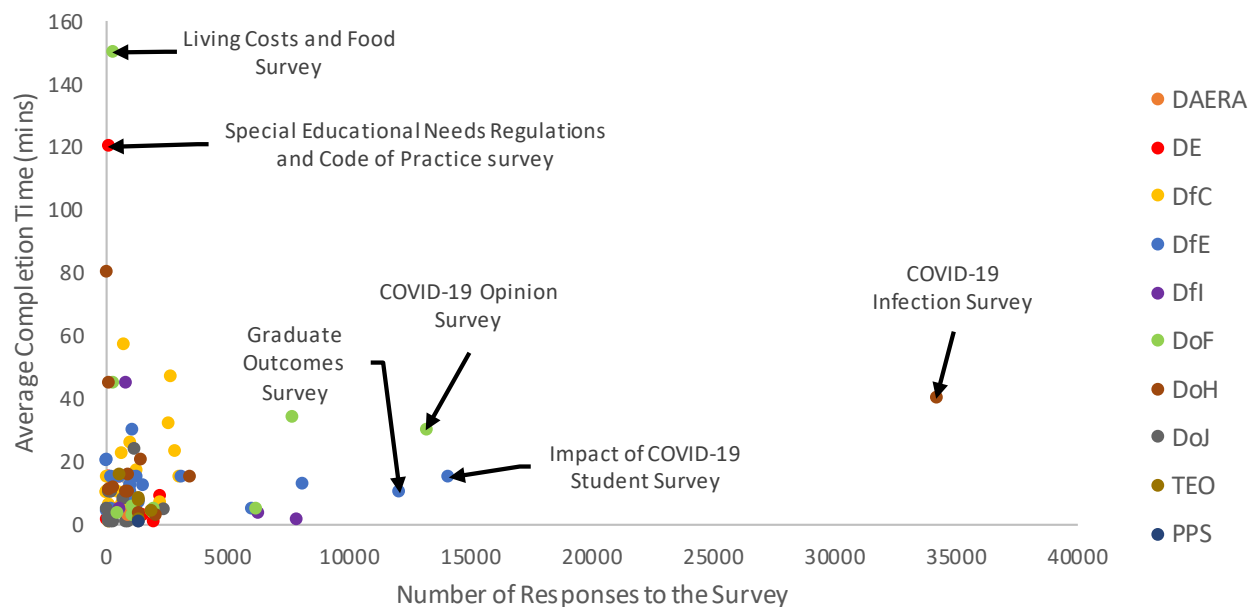
In addition, two surveys contributed around 2,000 hours of compliance burden. These were the *Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey* (DfC) and the *Graduate Outcomes Survey* (DfE).

Four of the six largest surveys contributed to official statistics, and accounted for 84% of the total burden due to official statistics; while the other two contributed to other statistics (*Impact of COVID-19 Student Survey* and *Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey*), and accounted for 29% of the total burden due to other statistics¹².

The total burden due to each survey will depend

on both the number of households or individuals responding and the time taken to complete the survey, or part of the survey. Figure 4 shows the relationship between these two factors.

Figure 4: Average Completion Time¹³ by Number of Responses to the Survey¹²



There were two outliers in terms of surveys with a high average completion time and relatively low number of responses. The *Living Costs and Food Survey* (DoF) obtained 234 responses but had an average completion time of 150 minutes, the longest of any survey in 2020/21. This survey involved respondents taking part in a telephone interview, but also required participants to keep a diary. Similarly, the *Special Educational Needs Regulations and Code of Practice survey*¹⁴ (DE) took on average 120 minutes to complete, requiring respondents to complete a face-to-face interview and a paper questionnaire (with 46 responses). The *COVID-19 Infection Survey* had the most responses at 34,166, and having an average completion time of 40 minutes was one of the longest surveys. It involved a household visit which included a questionnaire, the administration of COVID-19 swab tests, and in some cases, finger-prick antibody blood tests.

¹² Further information on the compliance burden for individual surveys can be found in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix E).

¹³ The average completion time has been calculated as the total compliance burden divided by the number of responses.

¹⁴ This survey was a targeted consultation of parents/carers of children and young people with SEN, and formed part of a wider consultation exercise to seek views on both the new draft Special Educational Needs Regulations, and the associated Code of Practice.

Table 2 shows the average completion time ‘per response’ by NI Government Department, alongside the total number of responses and total compliance burden.

Overall, the average completion time ‘per response’ was 17.7 minutes. There was however a wide variance in completion times, with the shortest ‘parts of surveys’ taking on average under a minute to complete (the *Perceptions of the Public Prosecution Service* (PPS) and *Public Awareness of the police complaints system in Northern Ireland* (OPONI) modules of the NI Life and Times Survey) and the longest survey (*Living Costs and Food Survey* (DoF)) taking on average two and a half hours (150 minutes) to complete¹⁵.

The average completion time ‘per response’ was highest for DoH at 33 minutes, followed by DoF (23 minutes) and DfC (20 minutes).

For DoH, the high average completion time ‘per response’ is a result of the *COVID-19 Infection Survey*, which had a very large number of responses (34,166) and a high completion time (40 minutes). In addition, the *Health Survey NI* and the *Contact Matrix* both had relatively high completion times (20 minutes and 15 minutes respectively) and a high number of responses (1,408 and 3,400 respectively).

Table 2: Average Completion Time¹⁶, Number of Responses¹⁷ and Burden by Department

Department	Number of Surveys	Average Time to Complete Surveys (mins)	Number of Responses	Compliance Burden (hours)
DAERA	1	3.0	872	44
DE	18	6.4	9,667	1,024
DfC	28	19.9	24,628	8,187
DfE	24	11.6	58,807	11,407
DfI	5	4.9	17,119	1,396
DoF	10	22.5	33,567	12,611
DoH	12	33.0	45,285	24,939
DoJ	17	6.3	9,801	1,029
TEO	5	6.0	6,261	627
PPS	1	0.6	1,292	13
Total	121	17.7	207,299	61,275

Similarly, DoF conducted two large surveys which had high completion times, these were the *Labour Force Survey* (34 minutes, 7,568 responses) and the *COVID-19 Opinion Survey* (30 minutes, 13,142 responses).

DfC carried out four relatively large surveys which had high or relatively high completion times: the *Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey* (47 minutes; 2,600 responses), the *Private Tenants Survey* (32 minutes, 2,527 responses), the *Customer Exit Survey* (23 minutes; 2,851 responses) and the *Housing Executive Tenants COVID-19 Survey* (15 minutes; 3,018 responses). The *Family Resources Survey*, carried out on behalf of DfC, had an average completion time of 57 minutes and 735 responses.

Other than DAERA and PPS who ran only one survey in 2020/21, the average completion time ‘per response’ was lowest for DfI, at just under 5 minutes. Three of the five DfI surveys took four minutes or less to complete on average, and accounted for 93% of the total DfI responses, with a fourth survey taking on average 5 minutes. The remaining survey was the *Travel Survey for Northern Ireland* which had 771 responses and took 45 minutes on average to complete.

¹⁵ Further information on the compliance burden for individual surveys can be found in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix E).

¹⁶ The average completion time has been calculated as the total compliance burden divided by the number of responses.

¹⁷ When several NI Government Departments share a single survey vehicle, such as the *Continuous Household Survey* or the *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*, each part of the survey is counted separately. This means that these surveys, and the respondents to these surveys, will be counted more than once. The compliance burden however is based on the time spent responding to the part of the survey and is estimated by apportioning the total compliance burden for the survey.¹⁸ The average completion time has been calculated as the total compliance burden divided by the number of responses.

4. Official Statistics & Other Surveys

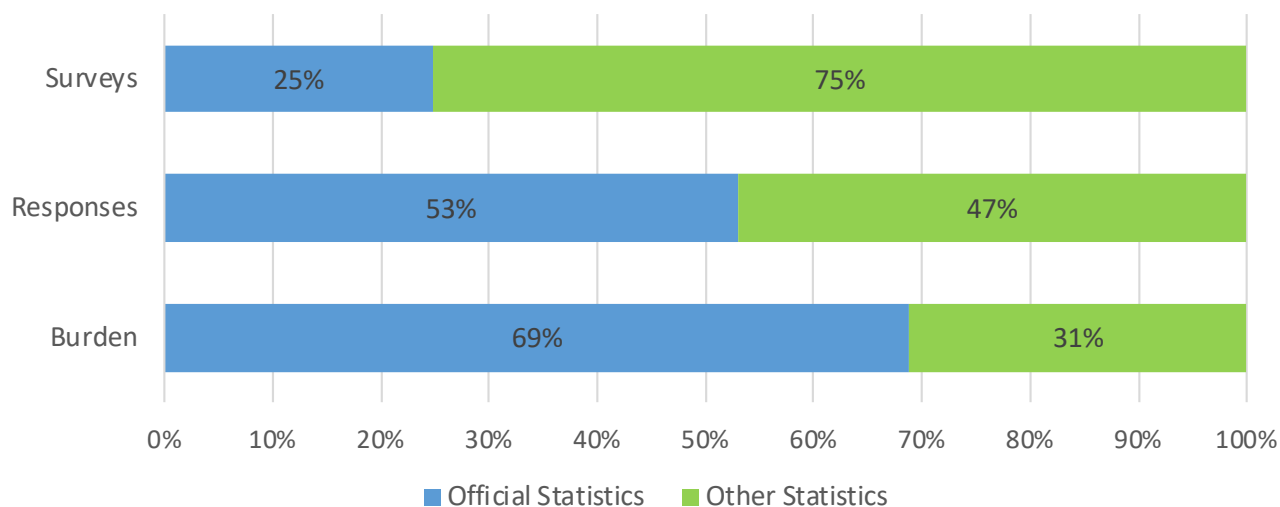
In 2020/21 a quarter (25%) of surveys of households and individuals contributed towards official statistics (see Figure 5). Some of the surveys which did not contribute to official statistics contributed to policy monitoring, evaluation of a scheme or service, service improvement and customer satisfaction. Surveys contributing to official statistics made up over half of all survey responses (53%) and over two thirds of the total compliance burden (69%).

One fifth (6) of all official statistics surveys were conducted by DoF and one fifth by DoJ. The DoF surveys were responsible for 23% of the responses and over a quarter (28%) of the compliance burden due to official statistics surveys. In contrast, the DoJ surveys accounted for 5% of the responses and 2% of the burden due to official statistics surveys (Table 3).

DoH carried out two surveys which contributed to official statistics. These two surveys accounted for nearly a third of the responses (32%) and over half of the compliance burden (55%) due to official statistics surveys, with the *COVID-19 Infection Survey* being the largest contributor (31% of responses; 54% of burden).

DfE carried out four surveys which contributed to official statistics. These surveys accounted for a quarter (25%) of the responses and a tenth (10%) of the burden due to official statistics surveys.

Figure 5: Percentage of Surveys, Responses and Compliance Burden by whether Surveys Contribute to Official Statistics



DfC conducted the highest number of surveys (25) which did not contribute to official statistics, accounting for nearly two fifths (38%) of the compliance burden due to other statistics and around one fifth (21%) of the responses to these surveys. Similarly DfE conducted 20 surveys which did not contribute to official statistics, accounting for 38% of the burden due to other statistics and a third (33%) of the responses to these surveys. The 17 surveys conducted by DE which did not contribute to official statistics accounted for 8% of the responses and 5% of the burden due to other statistics.

Of the 24,939 hours of total compliance burden attributable to DoH, 93% of this was due to official statistics surveys. Similarly, 94% of the 12,611 hours from DoF, 80% of the 627 hours from TEO and 70% of the 1,029 hours from DoJ stemmed from surveys which contributed to official statistics. The single survey conducted by DAERA and the single survey from PPS contributed to official statistics; 44 hours and 13 hours respectively.

In contrast, of the 1,024 hours of compliance burden attributed to DE, 97% of this was due to surveys which did not contribute to official statistics. Similarly, 89% of the 8,187 hours due to DfC resulted from surveys which did not contribute to official statistics. The burden was more evenly split between official statistics and other statistics in DfI, where half of the burden (50%) was a result of official statistics surveys.

Table 3: Compliance Burden by Official Statistics and Other Statistics, by NI Department

Department	Official Statistics							Other Statistics						
	Number of Surveys		Number of Responses		Compliance Burden		Average Time to Complete Survey	Number of Surveys		Number of Responses		Compliance Burden		Average Time to Complete Survey
	N	%	N	%	Hours	%	Minutes	N	%	N	%	Hours	%	Minutes
DAERA	1	3.3%	872	0.8%	44	0.1%	3.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE	1	3.3%	1,885	1.7%	31	0.1%	1.0	17	18.7%	7,782	8.0%	992	5.2%	7.6
DfC	3	10.0%	3,784	3.4%	921	2.2%	14.6	25	27.5%	20,844	21.4%	7,266	38.1%	20.9
DfE	4	13.3%	27,028	24.6%	4,240	10.0%	9.4	20	22.0%	31,779	32.6%	7,166	37.6%	13.5
DfI	2	6.7%	2,656	2.4%	704	1.7%	15.9	3	3.3%	14,463	14.8%	692	3.6%	2.9
DoF	6	20.0%	25,738	23.5%	11,778	27.9%	27.5	4	4.4%	7,829	8.0%	832	4.4%	6.4
DoH	2	6.7%	35,574	32.4%	23,247	55.1%	39.2	10	11.0%	9,711	10.0%	1,692	8.9%	10.5
DoJ	6	20.0%	5,164	4.7%	719	1.7%	8.4	11	12.1%	4,637	4.8%	309	1.6%	4.0
TEO	4	13.3%	5,761	5.2%	499	1.2%	5.2	1	1.1%	500	0.5%	128	0.7%	15.4
PPS	1	3.3%	1,292	1.2%	13	0.0%	0.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	30	100.0%	109,754	100.0%	42,196	100.0%	23.1	91	100.0%	97,545	100.0%	19,078	100.0%	11.7

Table 3 also shows that average completion times ‘per response’¹⁸ tend to be higher for surveys which contribute to official statistics.

5. Statutory & Voluntary Surveys

All statistical surveys of households and individuals carried out by NI Government Departments in 2021/21 were voluntary surveys¹⁹.

The use of voluntary surveys for official statistics reflects the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) which states that:

V5.4 Voluntary participation in statistical data collection should be sought, rather than using statutory powers, wherever possible.

¹⁸ The average completion time has been calculated as the total compliance burden divided by the number of responses.

¹⁹ Although completion of the survey was voluntary, there may have been a regulatory requirement for the Department to carry out such a survey.

6. Data Collection Methods

In contrast to 2019/20²⁰, face-to-face surveys were the least popular method of data collection in 2020/21, comprising just 4% of surveys and 18% of all responses, although the compliance burden remained high at 38%. This resulted from the large number of responses and large compliance burden contributed by the *COVID-19 Infection Survey*, which accounted for 98% of the burden from all face-to-face surveys.

Many surveys in 2020/21 moved away from face-to-face interviews, instead making use of electronic data collection (online/email/TDE/DVR²¹) and telephone interviews. Electronic data collection methods were the most popular approach, with two in five surveys (41%) using them, an increase from 27% in 2019/20. Surveys using electronic methods contributed over one third of responses (34%), and 18% of the total compliance burden.

28% of surveys used a telephone interview as their primary method in 2020/21, a significant increase from 2019/20, when telephone interviews were the least employed method, accounting for only 8% of surveys.

Figure 6: Percentage of Total Surveys, Responses and Compliance Burden by Method of Collection^{21, 22}

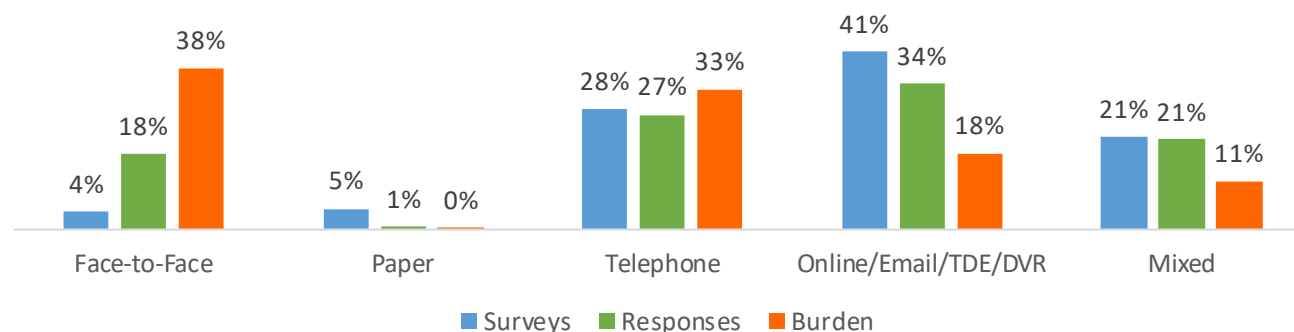


Table 4: Issued Sample Size, Achieved Sample Size, Response Rate and Survey Average Completion Time by Data Collection Method

Method	Number of Surveys	Issued sample size (average)	Achieved sample size (average)	Response Rate (average) ²³	Survey Average Completion Time (average) [mins] ²⁴
Face-to-Face	5	7,276	7,276	100%	15.0
Paper	6	947	237	31%	13.3
Telephone	34	7,351	1,636	40%	20.2
Online/Email/TDE/DVR	50	15,694	1,411	48%	8.9
Mixed	26	6,778	1,666	41%	14.3
Total	121	10,355	1,713	46%	13.7

²⁰ In 2019/20, the percentages were Face-to-face (36% surveys, 39% responses, 40% burden); Paper (11% surveys, 5% responses, 2% burden); Telephone (8% surveys, 2% responses, 2% burden); Online/Email/TDE (27% surveys, 37% responses, 25% burden); Mixed (17% surveys, 17% responses, 31% burden).

²¹ DVR stands for Digital Voice Recognition and TDE stands for Telephone Data Entry. TDE is a data collection method where the requested data are entered using the telephone keypad.

²² Further information on the compliance burden for individual surveys can be found in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix E).

²³ Response rate (average) has been calculated as the average of the response rates for all surveys using that method, meaning each survey has equal weight.

²⁴ Survey average completion time (average) has been calculated as the average of the 'average completion time' for all surveys using that method, meaning each survey has equal weight.

Similarly, telephone interviews accounted for 27% of responses and 33% of compliance burden in 2020/21, an increase from 2% for both responses and burden in 2019/20.

26 surveys (21%) used a mixed methods survey design, accounting for 21% of responses and 11% of compliance burden. An online questionnaire or email data collection was the primary method in 19 of these 26 surveys, and a secondary method in one more survey. Four mixed method surveys used telephone interviews as the primary method, with each of these surveys using a paper questionnaire as the secondary method. An additional 14 surveys used telephone interviews as a secondary method. Two mixed methods surveys used face-to-face interviews as the primary method, however a further two surveys used them as a secondary method and seven surveys used video-conferencing as a tertiary method. Finally, there was one mixed method survey which had a paper questionnaire as its primary method.

Paper questionnaires were used by only 5% of surveys in 2020/21, compared to 11% in 2019/20 and 14% in 2018/19. These six surveys were relatively small, accounting for 1% of the total responses and 0.4% of the total compliance burden for 2020/21.

Table 5 shows how different NI Government Departments used the various data collection methods to conduct surveys.

Table 5: Collection Methods for Surveys by Department: Number of Surveys and Compliance Burden (hours)

Dept	Face-to-Face		Paper		Telephone		Online/Email/TDE/DVR		Mixed/Multiple	
	N	Burden	N	Burden	N	Burden	N	Burden	N	Burden
DAERA	-	-	-	-	1	44	-	-	-	-
DE	-	-	1	12	1	31	12	714	4	266
DfC	2	29	2	131	7	3,832	15	3,095	2	1,099
DfE	2	334	1	1	6	1,350	9	4,970	6	4,752
DfI	-	-	-	-	3	741	2	654	-	-
DoF	-	-	-	-	8	11,997	1	513	1	101
DoH	1	22,777	1	42	2	1,319	6	671	2	130
DoJ	-	-	1	31	4	460	5	331	7	206
TEO	-	-	-	-	2	254	-	-	3	373
PPS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	13
Total	5	23,140	6	217	34	20,029	50	10,948	26	6,941

DfC conducted the most surveys of households and individuals, with over half (54%) of these surveys using electronic methods, while a quarter were telephone based. Electronic surveys were the most frequently used method in DE, where 67% of surveys used electronic methods; in DoH where half of the surveys (50%) were electronic; and in DfE, where electronic surveys accounted for 38% of surveys, more than any other method within DfE surveys.

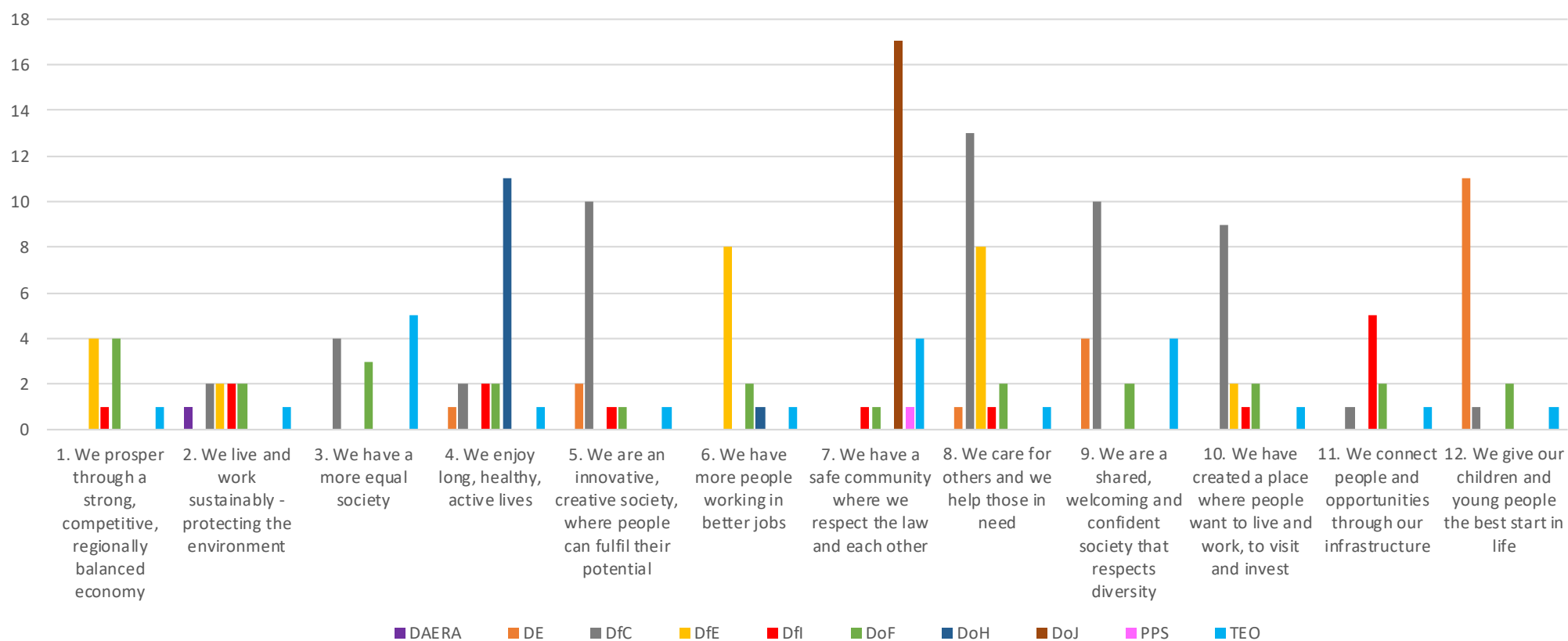
Telephone based surveys were the second most widely used method of data collection with 80% of DoF surveys (8), 60% of DfI surveys (3), 40% of TEO surveys (2), 25% of both DfC surveys (7) and DfE surveys (6), 24% of DoJ surveys (4), 17% of DoH surveys (2), one DE surveys (6%) and the single DAERA survey all using telephone surveys.

Mixed methods surveys were the third most popular approach for surveys in 2020/21, with the majority of TEO surveys (60%), DoJ surveys (41%) and the single PPS survey employing multiple methods. Paper based surveys and face-to-face surveys were the least commonly employed primary methods, with five Departments not conducting any surveys with either of these methods as their primary method.

7. 2016-21 Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes

In 2016, the Northern Ireland Executive released the draft Programme for Government (PfG) which laid out the ambition the Executive had for society in Northern Ireland. The draft PfG was consulted on and refined during 2016/17, and formed the basis for the [2018/19 Outcomes Delivery Plan](https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/outcomes-delivery-plan-201819)²⁵ and subsequently the [Outcomes Delivery Plan \(December 2019\)](https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/outcomes-delivery-plan-december-2019)²⁶. The draft 2016-21 PfG comprised 12 strategic outcomes outlined by the Executive to represent the society we wish to have. These 12 outcomes were supported by 49 indicators, which showed how the Northern Ireland Government and wider public sector were performing in relation to the outcomes, providing a basis to monitor progress and take appropriate action. Details of the 12 outcomes and 49 indicators are provided in Appendix C.

Figure 7: Programme for Government Outcomes for Surveys carried out by each NI Government Department²⁷



²⁵ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/outcomes-delivery-plan-201819>.

²⁶ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/outcomes-delivery-plan-december-2019>.

²⁷ Information on individual surveys is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix E).

In 2020/21, data suppliers were asked to identify to which PfG outcome each survey carried out by their Department or ALB contributed. 97 surveys contributed to one PfG outcome, with 21 surveys recorded as contributing to more than one outcome²⁸. Surveys which contributed to multiple outcomes are recorded against each of these outcomes. The *Continuous Household Survey (CSU Core questions)* (DoF) and *Continuous Household Survey (TEO part)*, contributed to all 12 PfG outcomes.

Surveys which only contributed to UK statistics are excluded from the analysis, as are surveys where a linked PfG outcome can't be identified.

For some Departments, the majority of surveys, or parts of surveys, contribute to one specific PfG outcome. For example, all surveys conducted by DoJ and the single survey conducted by PPS (a module within the *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*) contributed to *Outcome 7: We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other*. Similarly, the single survey conducted by DAERA (a module within the *Continuous Household Survey*) contributed to *Outcome 2: We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment*.

Similarly, all but one of the 12 surveys conducted by DoH contributed to *Outcome 4: We enjoy long, healthy active lives*, while the remaining survey contributed to *Outcome 6: We have more people working in better jobs*. Of the 18 surveys conducted by DE, 11 contributed to *Outcome 12: We give our children and young people the best start in life*; these DE surveys accounted for 73% of the surveys which contributed to *Outcome 12*.

In total, 26 surveys or parts of surveys contributed to *Outcome 8: We care for others and we help those in need*, the highest of the 12 outcomes. Half of these surveys (13) were carried out by DfC, while DfE carried out 8. Likewise, 24 surveys or parts of surveys contributed to *Outcome 7: We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other*, with DoJ conducting 17 of these surveys. There were 20 surveys which contributed to *Outcome 9: We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity*. DfC conducted half of these surveys (10), with the remaining surveys conducted by TEO (4), DE (4) and DoF (2). Overall, 15 surveys contributed to *Outcome 5: We enjoy long, healthy, active lives*.

Of the three surveys which did not contribute to any PfG Outcome, two were UK surveys. These were the *Living Costs and Food Survey* (DoF) and *Survey on Living Conditions* (DoF). The remaining survey was the *Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics survey* (DoF).

²⁸ Of the 21 surveys that contributed to more than one PfG Outcome, there were 11 DfC surveys, 4 TEO surveys, 3 DoF surveys, 2 DfI surveys, and 1 DE survey. Further information on individual surveys is available in the [downloadable data](#) (see Appendix E).

8. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic had various impacts on surveys of households and individuals in 2020/21, with many surveys unaffected.

In some cases it affected the number of forms issued, while in others the impact was on the response rate. For other surveys, the data collection method was changed to accommodate remote working or restrictions on face-to-face interaction. A number of surveys were cancelled or postponed.

COVID-19 related survey burden

There were also 17 surveys (14% of all surveys conducted in 2020/21) commissioned specifically to capture the impact of the pandemic and inform or evaluate decisions related to the pandemic. Table 6 shows how these COVID-19 related surveys were split across departments, as well as the number of responses and compliance burden.

In total, these 17 surveys accounted for 37% of all responses in 2020/21, and 36,030 hours of compliance burden: 59% of the total compliance burden from all 2020/21 surveys.

DoH conducted 4 COVID-19 related surveys, which had 38,496 responses (85% of the total DoH responses) and contributed 23,833 hours of compliance burden (96% of the DoH total). The *COVID-19 Infection Survey* was responsible for the vast majority of this (91% of the DoH total).

Table 6: COVID-19 Related Survey Burden by Department

Dept	Surveys			Responses			Compliance Burden (Hrs)		
	All	COVID related	% COVID related	All	COVID related	% COVID related	All	COVID related	% COVID related
DAERA	1	-	-	872	-	-	44	-	-
DE	18	2	11%	9,667	40	< 1%	1,024	10	1%
DfC	28	5	18%	24,628	6,843	28%	8,187	1,268	15%
DfE	24	4	17%	58,807	17,883	30%	11,407	4,310	38%
DfI	5	1	20%	17,119	450	3%	1,396	38	3%
DoF	10	1	10%	33,567	13,142	39%	12,611	6,571	52%
DoH	12	4	33%	45,285	38,496	85%	24,939	23,833	96%
DoJ	17	-	-	9,801	-	-	1,029	-	-
TEO	5	-	-	6,261	-	-	627	-	-
PPS	1	-	-	1,292	-	-	13	-	-
Total	121	17	14%	207,299	76,854	37%	61,275	36,030	59%

Similarly, the one COVID-19 related survey (the *COVID-19 Opinion Survey*) conducted by DoF was a large survey; with 13,142 responses, contributing 6,571 hours of compliance burden, accounting for over half (52%) of the total compliance burden in DoF.

DfC carried out the most COVID-19 related surveys (5), followed by DfE and DoH, who each carried out four, while DE conducted two, and DfI and DoF carried out one each. DAERA, DoJ, TEO and PPS did not conduct any surveys specifically related to the pandemic.

Of the 36,030 hours of compliance burden incurred from surveys related to COVID-19, almost two thirds (66%) of this was due to DoH surveys, followed by DoF (18%) and DfE (12%). Similarly, of the 76,854 responses to COVID-19 related surveys, half (50%) of these came from DoH surveys, while DfE and DoF surveys contributed 23% and 17% respectively.

Most of the COVID-19 related surveys were conducted using either online data collection (8, 47%) or telephone interviews (6, 35%). Two of the remaining surveys used mixed methods (online data collection combined with telephone or face-to-face interviews) and the *COVID-19 Infection Survey* used face-to-face interviews.

Figure 8 shows the relationship between the average completion time and the number of respondents to surveys conducted in response to the pandemic. There were three surveys with more than 10,000 respondents, two of which were among the three surveys with the highest average completion times.

These were the *COVID-19 Infection Survey* (34,166 responses; 40 minutes) carried out by DoH and the *COVID-19 Opinion Survey* (13,142 responses; 30 minutes) carried out by DoF.

The longest survey to complete was the *Social Care Student Placements in COVID-19 Employer Survey* (DoH) which on average, took 80 minutes to complete. This survey however contributed a small amount of burden (49 hours; 0.2% of the DoH total), with only 37 responses.

Surveys not conducted due to COVID-19

30 surveys, or parts of surveys, weren't carried out during 2020/21 due to a range of factors resulting from the pandemic. Of these, 23 were cancelled or suspended for 2020/21 and six were postponed until 2021/22.

The postponed surveys (2 DE, 2 TEO, 1 DoH and 1 DoJ) were all modules in the *Young Life and Times Survey*²⁹, which subsequently ran in May 2021.

Figure 8: COVID-19 Related Surveys: Average Completion Time³⁰ by Number of Responses

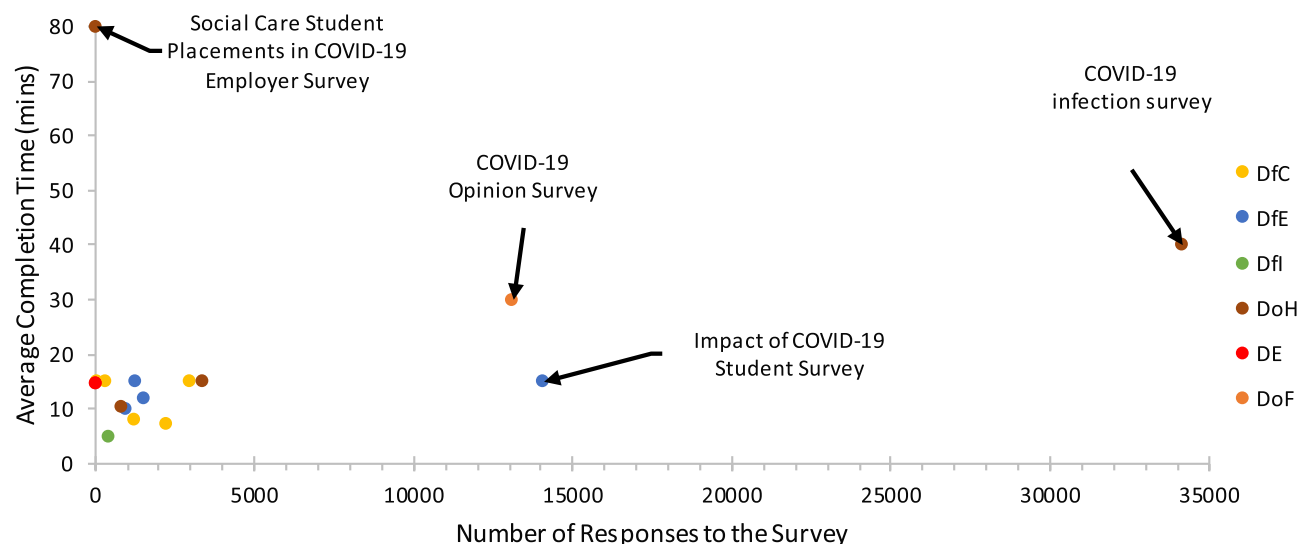


Table 7: Surveys not conducted during 2020/21 due to COVID-19 by Department and Status³¹

Department	Number of Surveys	Postponed	Cancelled/ Suspended (for this year)	Suspended, then discontinued
DE	3	2	1	-
DfC	7	-	6	1
DfE	1	-	1	-
DfI	5	-	5	-
DoF	3	-	3	-
DoH	6	1	5	-
DoJ	2	1	1	-
TEO	3	2	1	-
Total	30	6	23	1

²⁹ The Young Life and Times survey was postponed due to a delay in receiving the respondents' contact information. This was due to pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well other factors such as HMRC staff turn-over and priority commitments regarding the EU Exit.

³⁰ The average completion time has been calculated as the total compliance burden divided by the number of responses.

³¹ Surveys not conducted in 2020/21 but were expected to have been, categorised as either postponed, cancelled for 2020/21, or initially cancelled and then discontinued. A list of these surveys is included in Table 7b in the tables and charts accompanying the report (see Appendix E).

Six of the seven cancelled DfC surveys were National Museums NI surveys, cancelled due to the closure of visitor attractions during lockdown. Similarly, one DE and one DfI survey (the *Cycling Proficiency Scheme* survey) did not run due to school closures.

Three face-to-face DoF surveys (the *National Diet and Nutrition Survey*, the *International Passenger Survey* and the *Northern Ireland Passenger Survey*) did not run due to the suspension of face-to-face interviewing. Several other face-to-face DoF surveys, such as the *Labour Force Survey* and the *Living Costs and Food Survey* were able to switch to telephone interviewing.

A number of customer satisfaction surveys, carried out by DfI and DoH were also cancelled or suspended, due to service disruption and/or pressures on the workforce; these included two Translink surveys, two DVA surveys and five NI Social Care Council (NISCC) surveys.

Impact of COVID-19 on existing surveys

The pandemic also had an impact on surveys carried out in 2020/21. For some surveys, there was a switch from face-to-face to telephone interviewing or video conferencing. For other surveys, the sample size was reduced due to COVID-19 restrictions and/or activities being curtailed. Often there was a decrease in response

Table 8: Impact of COVID-19 on Surveys carried out in 2019/20 and 2020/21

Dept	Same Methodology (and)				Methodology Modified (and)			
	No impact	Sample Decrease	Response Decrease	Sample Adjusted	No other impact	Sample Decrease	Response Decrease	Sample Adjusted
DAERA	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
DE	4	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
DfC	1	4	-	-	1	-	2	1
DfE	10	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
DfI	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	-
DoF	1	-	-	-	-	1	5	1
DoH	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
DoJ	5	2	-	-	-	-	2	2
PPS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
TEO	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3
Total	24	9	0	1	1	1	17	8

rate, usually due to the change in data collection method or a reduction in response chasing (due to staff availability or to reduce burden). For some surveys, the sample size was increased to allow for the anticipated reduction in the response rate - this adjusted sample meant that the number of responses was similar to previous years.

Table 8 shows the impact of the pandemic on the 61 surveys of households and individuals³² which ran in both 2019/20 and 2020/21. There were 24 surveys (39%) where the pandemic was judged to have had minimal impact, either due to only minor changes between years or due to the presence of other influences accounting for these changes. This means around 3 in 5 of the surveys which ran in both years were impacted in some way.

The data collection methodology was changed for 27 surveys (44%). These were mostly face-to-face surveys which switched to telephone interviews (15) or mainly video-conferencing (6). For 17 of these 27 surveys, there was a decrease in responses; for one survey the available sample was reduced; and for a further 8 surveys (the *Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey* (DfC), six modules in the *NI Life and Times* (3 TEO, 2 DoJ & PPS) and the *Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics Survey* (DoF))

³² This comparison excludes a number of surveys where the data was not returned for 2019/20 or where an issue with the previous year's data was subsequently discovered.

the sample was increased to compensate for a reduced response rate.

For those surveys where there was no change in methodology, the available sample was reduced for 9 surveys, with one further survey increasing the sample to allow for a reduced response rate.

Table 9 shows the difference in responses and burden between 2019/20 and 2020/21 for the 27 surveys where the available sample or response rate was affected by COVID-19, and there was no compensatory adjustment to the sample.

There was a 57% reduction in responses to these surveys between 2019/20 and 2020/21. Similarly, the compliance burden for these surveys reduced by 59% between 2019/20 and 2020/21. The impact of the pandemic is seen across all NI Departments, apart from PPS, where the sample was adjusted (in the single survey which ran in both 2019/20 and 2020/21) to allow for a reduced response rate.

DoF saw the largest drop in responses, with 13,499 fewer responses in 2020/21 than in the previous year, representing a decrease of 51%. This corresponds with a decrease of 2,927 hours (35%) of compliance burden. This was driven by the *Labour Force Survey* and two modules in the *Continuous Household Survey*.

Table 9: Change in Responses and Compliance Burden for Sample/Response affected Surveys carried out in 2019/20 and 2020/21

Dept	Sample or Response Affected ³³						
	Number of Surveys	2019/20 Responses	2020/21 Responses	% Difference	2019/20 Compliance Burden (hours)	2020/21 Compliance Burden (hours)	% Difference
DAERA	1	2,289	872	-62%	153	44	-71%
DE	2	4,361	3,313	-24%	218	103	-53%
DfC	6	7,326	3,328	-55%	3,391	931	-73%
DfE	2	7,217	1,872	-74%	361	162	-55%
DfI	3	22,237	8,857	-60%	2,657	1,117	-58%
DoF	6	26,336	12,837	-51%	8,376	5,449	-35%
DoH	2	6,090	2,253	-63%	3,910	685	-82%
DoJ	4	5,780	2,209	-62%	2,785	460	-83%
PPS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TEO	1	5,918	1,885	-68%	395	126	-68%
Total	27	87,554	37,426	-57%	22,244	9,076	-59%

DfI saw a similar reduction in responses, with 13,380 fewer responses (60%) in 2020/21 than in 2019/20, which led to a reduction of 1,539 hours between years, a decrease of 58%. This was driven by a drop in responses to the *Continuous Household Survey* and a reduction in the available sample for the *DVA Theory Test Customer Satisfaction Survey*.

DoH saw the largest reduction in compliance burden, decreasing from 3,910 hours in 2019/20 to 685 hours in 2020/21, a decrease of 82%. This was mostly due to a drop in responses and burden for the *Health Survey Northern Ireland*. DfC saw a reduction of 2,460 hours (73%), the third largest decrease in burden, which was driven primarily by the reduction in responses and burden for the *Family Resources Survey*.

Further details about how the pandemic affected individual surveys can be found in Section 9 – Between Years Comparisons.

³³ Table 9 excludes those surveys in which the sample was adjusted (i.e. increased) to compensate for a reduced response rate.

9. Between Year Comparisons

Due to the biennial, triennial or quinquennial nature of several surveys³⁴, as well as the large number of ad-hoc and programme-specific surveys, the number of surveys and resultant compliance burden fluctuates from one year to the next. Additionally, NISRA statisticians are continually working towards improving the efficiency of the statistical process and thus minimising the burden on survey respondents, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Table 10: Changes between 2016/17 and 2020/21

Dept	Number of Surveys					Number of Responses					Compliance Burden (Hrs)				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
DAERA	1	1	1	1	1	2,532	2,204	2,198	2,289	872	295	184	147	153	44
DE	24	14	16	18	18	31,477	44,055	43,503	22,081	9,667	8,816	2,738	15,738	1,398	1,024
DfC	40	45	39	43	28	33,984	20,048	27,965	25,655	24,628	10,707	7,194	11,102	10,507	8,187
DfE	16	12	24	20	24	13,112	9,110	33,722	40,104	58,807	2,021	1,512	5,792	5,246	11,407
DfI	13	11	11	14	5	81,540	70,070	70,063	88,508	17,119	7,944	6,035	6,310	7,301	1,396
DoF	18	16	17	17	10	74,603	72,802	79,238	92,224	33,567	8,494	10,227	8,526	14,254	12,611
DoH	3	9	14	13	12	11,262	14,620	17,613	22,539	45,285	5,939	5,336	7,606	9,528	24,939
DoJ ³⁵	31	15	21	17	17	9,354	9,629	12,005	19,535	9,801	2,400	2,576	3,278	3,935	1,029
TEO	10	10	9	9	5	18,801	13,661	12,049	16,379	6,261	1,686	1,677	1,172	1,670	627
PPS	2	1	2	2	1	1,863	911	2,118	2,161	1,292	346	30	44	404	13
Total	158	134	154	154	121	278,528	257,110	300,474	331,475	207,299	48,647	37,509	59,714	54,395	61,275

DAERA

DAERA ran one survey in 2020/21, a module within the *Continuous Household Survey (CHS)*. There was a decrease of 109 hours in compliance burden due to 1,417 fewer responses. This year, as a result of restrictions in place because of the pandemic, the *Continuous Household Survey* was conducted via telephone when it had previously been a face-to-face interview; due to this and other factors related to the pandemic the response rate for the DAERA part of the survey dropped from around 50% to 23% resulting in fewer responses and a lower compliance burden.

DE

DE carried out 18 surveys in 2020/21, the same as in 2019/20. There was a decrease of 12,414 responses (56%), and a reduction of 374 hours of burden (27%) compared to the previous year. The primary reason for the decrease in responses and burden was the re-classification of the annual *Getting Ready to Learn*

³⁴ There was one biennial survey in 2020/21, compared to 2019/20 when there were two biennial surveys, eight triennial 'parts of surveys' and two quinquennial surveys.

³⁵ The 2017/18 number of responses and compliance burden for DoJ (and the overall totals for 2017/18) have been amended since the 2017/18 report was published. While historic estimates are not normally revised, this revision was made in 2018/19 due to the scale of the error and the impact on the overall time series for DoJ. Further details are included in Appendix B4.

baseline survey as operational, which means that this survey is no longer in scope and was therefore not included in the 2020/21 data; this survey contributed 12,000 responses and 400 hours of compliance burden in 2019/20. There were also no large multiennial surveys in 2020/21 (as in 2018/19).

Despite DE accounting for 15% of the surveys carried out in 2020/21, these surveys contributed less than 2% of the total compliance burden for all Departments in 2020/21. This is a result of DE carrying out many small surveys. For example, 8 of the 18 surveys conducted by DE in 2020/21, contributed seven or less hours of compliance burden.

The largest contributor of burden in 2020/21 was the *Kids Life and Time Survey: Shared Education* module, which contributed 326 hours of compliance burden from 2,170 responses, accounting for 32% of the total compliance burden attributed to DE. Two other surveys contributed over 100 hours of compliance burden: these were the *Digital Admissions - Post-Primary Satisfaction Survey* which contributed 189 hours (18%), and the *Digital Admissions - Parents Satisfaction Survey* which contributed 118 hours (11%).

DfC

DfC conducted 28 surveys in 2020/21, 15 fewer than in the previous year. These surveys contributed a compliance burden of 8,187 hours, 2,320 fewer hours than in 2019/20 (a decrease of 22%). There was a similar number of responses in 2020/21 at 24,628, which represents a slight decrease of 1,027 (4%).

The primary reason for the decrease in the number of surveys in 2020/21 is the absence of the 'public realm' surveys. DfC typically run 13 or 14 small ad-hoc surveys linked to revitalisation projects, carried out in order to gauge perception of a particular area. In 2020/21 there was only one of these surveys. These surveys however are typically relatively small, with the 13 surveys in 2019/20 contributing a combined 225 hours of compliance burden and 1,348 responses.

Several regular DfC surveys saw a decrease in responses and burden in 2020/21, most notably the *Family Resources Survey* which had 735 responses (698 hours burden) in 2020/21, compared to 2,140 responses (2,425 hours burden) in 2019/20. This survey was previously face-to-face however due to restrictions imposed by the pandemic, it was conducted via telephone in 2020/21. This resulted in a lower response rate and a reduction in the number of questions which could be asked (reducing the median completion time from 65 to 57 minutes). In addition, respondents were not re-contacted for validation after the interview, which further reduced the burden. Similarly, the compliance burden for the *Continuous Household Survey (DfC section)* reduced from 542 hours (2,957 responses) to 126 hours (1,885 responses) with the median completion time reducing from 11 minutes to 4 minutes. The National Museums NI *Exit Surveys* saw a decrease in responses from 1,609 (327 hours burden) in 2019/20 to 130 (22 hours burden) in 2020/21 due a reduction in the available sample arising from attraction closures and reduced capacities.

Conversely, the *Affordable Warmth Customer Satisfaction Survey*, saw an increase in the number of responses and compliance burden, contributing 284 hours (1,100 responses) in 2020/21, compared to 66 hours (265 responses) in 2019/20. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) reviewed the survey methodology, as a result of the move from a postal to a telephone survey, increasing the sample size and target number of responses to achieve improved geographical coverage.

The largest DfC survey in 2020/21 was the *Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey* (carried out by NIHE) with 2,600 responses and 2,015 hours burden (25% of the DfC total). This was followed by the *Private Tenants Survey*, an ad-hoc NIHE survey which had 2,527 responses and 1,348 hours burden (16% of the DfC total). The third largest NIHE survey, the *Housing Executive Tenants COVID-19 Survey*, contributed 3,018 responses and 756 hours burden. Overall, the seven surveys conducted by NIHE contributed 5,112 hours of compliance burden, accounting for 62% of the DfC total.

DfE

In 2020/21, DfE conducted 24 surveys, four more than in the previous year; this variation is explained by an increase in ad-hoc surveys from 8 in 2019/20 (plus one triennial survey) to 13 in 2020/21. In addition, there were 58,807 responses in 2020/21 (an increase of 18,703) and the DfE compliance burden increased from 5,246 to 11,407 hours³⁶.

The *Impact of COVID-19 Student Survey* (14,094 responses; 3,524 hours burden) was the primary reason for the large increase in compliance burden. This survey which accounted for 31% of the total DfE compliance burden was carried out in order to improve online learning and to help inform decision making regarding the resumption of on-site learning.

In addition, the two largest surveys from 2019/20 (the *Graduate Outcomes Survey* and the *National Student Survey*) both saw increases in their compliance burden. This was primarily due to increased responses, but the completion time for the *National Student Survey* also increased slightly due to the inclusion of additional questions concerning COVID-19. The *Graduate Outcomes Survey* contributed 2,014 hours of burden (18% of the DfE total and an increase of 289 hours) and the *National Student Survey* had a compliance burden of 1,699 hours (15% of the DfE total and an increase of 485 hours).

The Consumer Council conducted 8 of the 23 DfE surveys. These were mostly ad-hoc consumer surveys on topical issues such as COVID-19, Energy and the impact of Brexit. These surveys contributed 7,889 responses and 1,631 hours of compliance burden (14% of the DfE total). In contrast, the five surveys conducted by the Consumer Council in 2019/20, contributed 2,920 responses and 672 hours of burden.

DfI

DfI carried out 5 surveys in 2020/21, the lowest number in the time series and 9 fewer than in 2019/20. Similarly, the number of forms returned and the compliance burden is the lowest in the time series. There were 17,119 responses to DfI surveys in 2020/21 compared to 88,508 in 2019/20 (an 81% decrease). Similarly, DfI surveys contributed 1,396 hours of compliance burden in 2020/21, down from 7,301 in 2019/20, also a decrease of 81%.

There were five regular DfI surveys which took place in 2019/20 but were suspended in 2020/21 due to the impact of the pandemic: the *DVA Booking Service - Internet Booking Customer Satisfaction Survey* (which had 43,242 responses and 2,883 burden in 2019/20); the *DVA Booking Service - Test Centre and Call Centre Booking Customer Satisfaction Survey*; Translink's *Public Transport Monitoring Survey*; Translink's *Enterprise Customer Satisfaction Monitoring Survey*;

³⁶ The 2019/20 figures for DfE were slightly under-reported due to an error in one of the returns. The 2014-20 NI European Social Fund Programme S75 survey should have had 5,185 responses with a compliance burden of 864 hours (rather than 1 response with a compliance burden of 0.17 hours). The 2019/20 figures have not been adjusted.

and NI Water's *Customer Satisfaction Omnibus Survey*. Overall, these five surveys contributed 51,231 responses and 3,789 hours of burden in 2019/20 (52% of the DfI total). The biennial survey *Belfast Bike Life* survey and triennial *Young Person's Behaviour and Attitude Survey* also took place in 2019/20. NI Water's *Allto – Consumer Satisfaction Survey* was discontinued in 2020/21 as it was no longer required. The remaining surveys were ad-hoc surveys.

The largest contributor of compliance burden in 2020/21 was the *Travel Survey for Northern Ireland*, which contributed 578 hours of burden in 2020/21 (41% of the DfI total) compared to 943 hours in 2019/20. This was largely due to a reduction in the number of responses as a result of the move from face-to-face to telephone interviewing, with 771 responses in 2020/21, compared to 979 in 2019/20.

The *DVA Theory Test Customer Satisfaction Survey* was the second largest survey in 2020/21. While the other two regular DVA surveys (the *Internet Booking* and *Test Centre and Call Centre* customer satisfaction surveys) were suspended due to the impact of the pandemic, the *Theory Test Customer Satisfaction* survey was able to run, although with a much reduced sample due to theory tests being suspended at times throughout the year. As a result, the survey had 6,201 responses (12,095 fewer than in 2019/20) returned in 2020/21 and a compliance burden of 413 hours (30% of the DfI total), a decrease of 806 hours.

There was also a 75% reduction in the burden due to the DfI module in the *Continuous Household Survey* which decreased from 494 hours in 2019/20 to 126 hours in 2020/21. The move to telephone interviewing resulted in a lower response rate (a decrease of 1,077 responses) and a reduction in the number of questions which could be asked (the median completion reduced from 10 minutes to 4 minutes).

DoF

DoF conducted 10 surveys in 2020/21, 7 fewer than in the previous year. Similarly, the number of responses for DoF surveys decreased from 92,224 in 2019/20, to 33,567 in 2020/21 (a 64% decrease), while the compliance burden also decreased from 14,254 hours to 12,611 hours (a reduction of 12%).

The primary reason for the reduction in the number of responses is due to the absence of the *International Passenger Survey* and the *Northern Ireland Passenger Survey*, which did not run in 2020/21 due to restrictions in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019/20, these surveys had 50,927 responses, accounting for 55% of the total number of responses for DoF surveys. These two surveys also contributed 2,174 hours of compliance burden in 2019/20, with the *Northern Ireland Passenger Survey* accounting for the vast majority of this (91%). In addition, in 2019/20, NISRA Census Office conducted the *2019 Census Rehearsal*, which contributed 3,167 hours and had 9,500 responses.

There was also a decrease in burden for other DoF surveys due to the switch from face-to-face to telephone interviewing and the associated drop in response rates and reduction in the number of questions. For example, the burden from the *Continuous Household Survey (CSU Core Questions)* decreased from 1085 hours in 2019/20 to 157 hours in 2020/21, and burden from the *Continuous Household Survey (Tourism Questions)* decreased from 850 hours in 2019/20 to 126 hours in 2020/21. Likewise, the burden for the *Labour Force Survey* decreased by 709 hours from 4,998 hours in 2019/20 to 4,289 hours in 2020/21. This was a result of 3,141 fewer responses; however the median completion time increased from 28 to 34 minutes as the telephone interviews took longer so the decrease was offset to an extent. The *Labour Force Survey* was the second largest survey conducted by DoF, accounting for 34% of the DoF total.

Similarly, the *Living Costs and Food Survey* changed its primary method to telephone interviews (reducing the length of the questionnaire) and in 2020/21 did not conduct back-checks; this led to a reduction in completion time (150 minutes compared to 165 in the previous year) and a reduction in responses, with 137 fewer responses in comparison to the previous year. There was a reduction of 454 hours in the compliance burden (a decrease of 44%).

There were also two new DoF surveys in 2020/21. Land Property Services (LPS) conducted the *Domestic Rate Survey 2020*, which contributed 513 hours (4% of the DoF total) and had 6,154 responses. The other - the *COVID-19 Opinion Survey* - was the largest DoF survey in 2020/21. It was run on a continuous basis throughout the year, with 13,142 responses and 6,571 hours of compliance burden, which accounted for over half (52%) of the total compliance burden from DoF surveys in 2020/21.

DoH

DoH conducted 12 surveys in 2020/21, one fewer than in 2019/20. There was a large increase in the number of responses to DoH surveys, with 45,285 responses - more than double the number of responses in the previous year. Similarly, there was a large increase in the compliance burden rising from 9,528 hours in 2019/20, to 24,939 hours in 2020/21.

The primary reason for the increase in compliance burden was the inclusion of the *COVID-19 Infection Survey*. This survey, which began fieldwork on 27 July 2020, ran continuously throughout the year, and involved a questionnaire, swab tests to test for COVID-19 and in some cases, blood tests to test for antibodies. The survey which had a median completion time of 40 minutes, 34,166 responses and contributed 22,777 hours of compliance burden was the largest DoH survey, accounting for 91% of the total compliance burden attributed to DoH.

The second largest survey conducted by DoH in 2020/21 was also initiated in response to the pandemic. The *CO-MIX (Contact Matrix)* survey was used to assemble contact matrix data and thereby estimate R for community COVID. The survey had 3,400 responses and contributed 850 hours of compliance burden, representing 3% of the total DoH burden.

The *Health Survey Northern Ireland* has consistently been the largest survey conducted by DoH in recent years, and typically comprises a face-to-face interview and paper questionnaire with a large number of responses (around 4,000). In 2020/21 however, due to the impact of the pandemic, the survey method changed to a telephone interview, with a drop in response rate, and the questionnaire was shortened. As a result, the survey contributed 469 hours of compliance burden in 2020/21, which is a decrease of 2,935 hours compared to 2019/20. The *Health Survey Northern Ireland* was responsible for 2% of the total DoH compliance burden in 2020/21, compared to 36% of the total DoH burden in 2019/20.

DoJ

DoJ carried out 17 surveys in 2020/21, the same number as in the previous year. Despite the number of surveys being the same, there was a decrease of 9,734 responses compared to 2019/20 – representing a 50% decrease. Similarly, the compliance burden from DoJ surveys has decreased from 3,935 hours in 2019/20, to 1,029 hours in 2020/21 (a 74% decrease).

The *NI Safe Community Survey* was the primary reason for the decrease observed in the total DoJ compliance burden. This survey was previously a face to face interview, however due to restrictions in place because of the pandemic, the survey methodology was changed to a telephone interview. In addition, the questionnaire was refined and reduced in order to facilitate telephone interviews, meaning a survey that previously took 40 minutes on average to complete, took on average 23.5 minutes in 2020/21. Furthermore, respondents were not re-contacted for validation after the interview – for context, 1,652 respondents (45%) were re-contacted in 2019/20. Altogether, these factors resulted in a large reduction in compliance burden. In 2020/21, this survey contributed 441 hours of compliance burden (43% of the total DoJ burden) and 1,125 responses, a reduction of 2,308 hours burden and 2,585 responses compared to 2019/20.

There were 6 surveys that ran in 2019/20 that did not run in the current year. One of these was the triennial *Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitude Survey*, which had 4226 responses in 2019/20 (and a compliance burden of 211 hours). Another was the *Young Life and Times Survey: Community safety and attitudes to paramilitaries* which had 1132 responses in 2019/20 (and 132 hours burden), and was due to run in 2020/21 but was delayed until 2021/22. Together with the *NI Safe Community Survey*, these two surveys account for the decrease in responses between 2019/20 and 2020/21.

TEO

TEO conducted 5 surveys in 2020/21, four fewer than in the previous year. In 2020/21, TEO surveys contributed 6,261 responses and 627 hours of compliance burden, a decrease of 10,118 responses and 1,043 hours of compliance burden compared to 2019/20.

Three of the four surveys that ran in 2019/20 were due to run in 2020/21 but the *VSS Individual Needs Programme Qualitative Survey* was cancelled and the data collection for the *Young Life and Times Survey* (which includes two TEO modules or 'parts of surveys') was delayed until 2021/22. The remaining survey, the *Young Person's Behaviour and Attitudes Survey*, runs on a triennial basis. These four surveys were responsible for 821 hours of compliance burden and 6,352 responses in 2019/20.

Of the five surveys carried out in 2020/21, four surveys (the *Public Opinion Survey on Equality in Northern Ireland* and three TEO modules in the *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*) remained relatively consistent, with little variation in their compliance burden. There was however a large reduction in burden for the TEO module of the *Continuous Household Survey (TEO section)*. Due to the impact of the pandemic, the *CHS* was conducted via telephone rather than a face-to-face interview; this change in method resulted in a large drop in the response rate with 4,033 fewer people (1,885) interviewed in 2020/21. As a result, there was a corresponding drop in the compliance burden from 395 hours in 2019/20 to 126 hours in 2020/21.

PPS

PPS conducted only one survey in 2020/21, a module within the *NI Life and Times Survey*, which resulted in 13 hours of compliance burden. The total burden from PPS decreased in 2020/21 due to the absence of the *Northern Ireland Victims and Witnesses Survey*, a triennial survey which ran in 2019/20 and contributed 383 hours of compliance burden.

10. Measures to Reduce Compliance Burden

A few of the specific initiatives employed by NI Government Departments in 2020/21 to reduce respondent burden include:

Department	Name of Survey	Steps taken to reduce compliance burden
DE	Continuous Household Survey (DE section)	Due to the change to telephone interviewing, the number of questions was reduced.
DfC	Positive Ageing Month online forum	Survey was targeted solely on those who participated in the associated activity.
	IDPWD 2020 online Event	
	Continuous Household Survey (DfC section)	Due to COVID-19 and the change to telephone interviewing, a shortened version of the questionnaire was developed by reducing the number of questions and reviewing those remaining.
	Family Resources Survey	Due to the change to telephone interviewing, the number of survey questions was reduced. The back-checking procedure also did not occur due to COVID-19.
DfC (NIHE) ³⁷	Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey	The questionnaire is reviewed annually by a Project Advisory Group to ensure that the burden on respondents is minimal, within the parameters of the survey.
	Home Improvement Grants Satisfaction Survey	The questionnaire is reviewed to ensure that the burden on respondents is minimised, within the parameters of the survey.
	Affordable Warmth Customer Satisfaction Survey	
DfI	Continuous Household Survey (DfI section)	Due to the change to telephone interviewing, the number of questions was reduced.
DoF (CSU) ³⁷	Continuous Household Survey (CSU Core Questions)	Due to the change to telephone interviewing, the number of questions was reduced.
	Living Costs and Food Survey	
	Survey on Living Conditions	The back-checking procedure did not occur due to COVID-19.
DoF (TSSSB) ³⁷	Continuous Household Survey (TSSSB section)	Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the need to reduce the length of the survey to facilitate telephone interviewing, questions on Day Trips and Flights were removed from the survey in 2020/21.
DoH	Health Survey Northern Ireland	Questionnaire shortened in order to facilitate the adoption of telephone interviewing, due to COVID-19 restrictions.
DoH (NISCC) ³⁷	Technology for Social Care Services	The survey didn't include telephone interviews in 2020/21 in order to reduce burden on respondents who were frontline workers.

³⁷ NIHE (Northern Ireland Housing Executive); CSU (Central Survey Unit); TSSSB (Tourism and Staff Surveys Branch); NISCC (Northern Ireland Social Care Council)

Department	Name of Survey	Steps taken to reduce compliance burden
DoJ	Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey	Due to the pandemic the survey moved from a face-to-face to a telephone interview with a shorter questionnaire being asked in 2020/21.
TEO	NI Life & Times Survey: Respect half module	Questions are checked annually to ensure continued need.
	NI Life & Times Survey: Minority Ethnic Groups module	
	NI Life & Times Survey: Community Relations module	

11. Uses of Surveys

The data collected through government surveys of Northern Ireland households and individuals are used for a range of purposes including:

- production and development of official statistics (see Figure 5 & Table 3)
- development, monitoring and evaluation of government policy
- design, monitoring, refinement and evaluation of programmes
- improvement and refinement of government services.

Some examples of how data collected in surveys carried out in 2020/21 were used are included below:

Labour Force Survey (LFS)

The [Labour Force Survey](#)³⁸ is a quarterly survey conducted by Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch (ELMS), which asks people in Northern Ireland about employment, unemployment and economic inactivity. It also covers a wide range of related topics such as income, qualifications, training and disability. Everyone aged 16 and over in the household is interviewed about a range of topics, and the interviewer will contact the household for five occasions every three months to find out if anyone's circumstances have changed. In 2020/21, a new sample of 1,300 households was added in the first quarter, and 2,600 in every subsequent quarter (to allow for falling response rates).

ELMS use data from the LFS to produce a [range of National Statistics publications](#)³⁹, including the [Monthly Labour Market Report \(and accompanying tables\)](#), [Quarterly Labour Force Survey Tables](#), [Work Quality Tables](#), [Labour Force Survey Annual Report](#), [Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts](#) and various topic reports such as [Women in Northern Ireland 2020/21](#). The monthly Labour Market Report (LMR) and accompanying tables include statistics for Northern Ireland on employment, unemployment and economic inactivity (seasonally adjusted and unadjusted); labour market status by age; reasons for inactivity; employment categories; hours of work; and international comparisons. Quarterly tables provide additional breakdowns including employment by industry section and occupation group, and information on graduates, education and training, disability and the labour market, Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) and working and workless households. The Work Quality Tables provide information on under employment, over employment, permanent employment, temporary employment and job satisfaction. ELMS also produce the [Economic Overview dashboard](#)⁴⁰ which uses data obtained from the LFS.

Government departments are key users of Northern Ireland labour market statistics, in particular the Department for the Economy (DfE), which uses the statistics to design and monitor the impact of economic and labour market policy. Analytical Services Division in DfE uses the Labour Force Survey data, as well as [other statistics produced by ELMS](#)⁴¹ to provide briefing and analysis on the local economy to a wide range of stakeholders. This includes a [monthly economic](#)

³⁸ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/find-your-survey/labour-force-survey>

³⁹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/labour-force-survey>

⁴⁰ <https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/economy-and-labour-market/economic-overview.html>

⁴¹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/nisra-economic-and-labour-market-statistics-elms/economic-overview>

[update](#)⁴² and a more detailed [economic commentary](#)⁴³ produced three times per year, which are published on the DfE website and disseminated to the Minister for the Economy and senior departmental officials as well as a wide range of interested parties. These outputs provide an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy, in context with the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Data from the LFS were used by DfE economists, working extensively with ELMS in DoF and DfE Skills Policy to establish several aspects of the [Skills Strategy](#)⁴⁴ evidence base. This included;

- Agreeing the indicators for the [Work Quality Indicators](#)⁴⁵ publication that resulted in new questions in the LFS.
- Producing for the first time a Lifelong Learning Indicator based on training questions in the LFS.
- Producing new qualification statistics that align with DfE policy direction and were derived from existing LFS questions on qualification attainment.
- Providing the evidence to help establish Strategic Goals by analysing the changing qualification profile in NI as the population ages using 10 years of LFS data.

The Skills Strategy is evidence-based, and the LFS data were used extensively in its development. For example, Lifelong Learning is one of the major policy objectives and the draft includes a recommendation to reduce the gap between Northern Ireland and the UK.

LFS data feeds into the [NI Composite Economic Index \(NICEI\)](#)⁴⁶, a quarterly measure of the performance of the NI economy, broadly equivalent to the output measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The NICEI is used to help monitor progress of a range of key government strategies in NI, notably the [Industrial Strategy](#)⁴⁷ and the [10X Economic Vision](#)⁴⁸. The statistics are also used by a broad range of users with an interest in assessing and reporting on the level of economic activity in Northern Ireland, such as ONS, economists in the public and private sector, academics, media and the general public. Another survey that feeds into NICEI data is Central Survey Unit (CSU)'s [Living Costs and Food Survey](#)⁴⁹. This provided data for the NICEI's Household Final Consumption Expenditure, measuring levels of household spending on goods and services, an important measure of economic activity to inform policy making.

In addition, results from the LFS feed into [UK figures on Employment and the Labour market](#)⁵⁰ produced by ONS. LFS data has also been used by ONS to produce UK-wide analysis, including specific information for Northern Ireland. This included a report on [Homeworking in the UK labour market](#)⁵¹.

Other government departments such as The Executive Office (TEO), the Department of Finance (DoF) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and

⁴² <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/monthly-economic-update>

⁴³ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/economic-commentary>

⁴⁴ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/employment-and-skills-programmes/skills-strategies>

⁴⁵ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/work-quality-indicators>

⁴⁶ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/economic-output-statistics/ni-composite-economic-index>

⁴⁷ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/industrial-strategy>

⁴⁸ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/10x-economy-economic-vision-decade-innovation>

⁴⁹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/find-your-survey/northern-ireland-living-costs-and-food-survey>

⁵⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/>

⁵¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/homeworkingintheuklabourmarket>

Rural Affairs (DAERA), as well as bodies such as Invest NI and Belfast City Council, regularly require specific ad hoc labour market analysis in order to monitor policies, for example, equality and employment.

Significant 'non-governmental' users of labour market statistics (including the media, banks, academics, private consultants and the general public) use the data primarily for reporting or researching the performance of the economy in general. Labour market statistics attract widespread media coverage, with a number of broadcasters publishing articles on the labour market on a monthly basis, generally on the day of publication of the LMR.

During the pandemic, the LFS provided government officials with readily available and detailed information on the composition of Northern Ireland workforce which allowed them to assess the impact of various restrictions, including the initial lockdown, and evaluate different amendments to the restrictions and support options. Further details can be found in *Appendix A: The use of government surveys of households and individuals to assess the impact of COVID-19 and inform decision-making*.

Continuous Household Survey (CHS)

The [Continuous Household Survey](#)⁵² is another large survey which has been running since 1983, in which sets of questions are commissioned by different government departments. The burden associated with each set of questions is recorded against the commissioning department. In 2020/21, questions were commissioned by DAERA, DE, DfC, DfE, DfI, DoF and TEO.

DAERA

The results from the environmental questions, commissioned by DAERA, are published in the annual [Environmental Statistics Report \(ESR\)](#)⁵³ which provides annual updates of key environmental indicators, as well as data related to the level of public concern for the environment and what actions the public take for environmental reasons. Data from the CHS ensures that the most up to date information is readily available for policy makers, environmental interest groups, academics and the public. These data inform policy development and are used for input into and monitoring of a number of strategies and policies. The results can be [disaggregated to district council level and are published on NINIS](#)⁵⁴, enabling district councils to use the data to inform their area plans and to compare against other councils.

DAERA also uses information from the CHS to provide [urban/rural disaggregation data](#)⁵⁵ including household size, household tenure, educational attainment, health, car access, internet access, religion, caring responsibilities, smoking and drinking habits etc. These data are extremely useful for policy makers within DAERA and other departments.

DE

Questions on *Play and Leisure*, commissioned by DE, are asked of all households with children aged 0 to 18. A separate question on awareness of the United

⁵² <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/find-your-survey/continuous-household-survey>

⁵³ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report>

⁵⁴ <https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Theme.aspx?themeNumber=38&themeName=Agriculture%20and%20Environment>

⁵⁵ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/continuous-household-survey>

Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is asked of all respondents. The findings from these questions will contribute to the monitoring of the Executive's [Children and Young People's strategy 2020-2030](#)⁵⁶ and the development of Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plans. CHS has informed government policy and strategy on play, including the [EITP Play Matters](#)⁵⁷ project and will be used to inform the Play Matters Strategic Plan which is currently under development. These data are also useful to organisations and stakeholders other than government departments, for example PlayBoard NI, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and local councils (in respect of local play facilities).

DfC

DfC is the lead department for arts and creativity, museums, libraries, public records, sports, heritage and volunteering. The CHS includes key questions relating to these areas, a number of which were of particular relevance in informing cultural and arts activities as defined in the draft 2016-21 Programme for Government (or the [Outcomes Delivery Plan \(December 2019\)](#)⁵⁸). In addition, data obtained from the CHS are used across DfC to inform the development, monitoring and evaluation of policy, for example, assessing key targets from the [Active Living - Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)⁵⁹ and [Public Library Standards for Northern Ireland](#)⁶⁰.

The CHS normally provides data for a number of official statistics reports; however, due to changes to the survey in 2020/21 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic⁶¹, only one overall summary report was produced: [Engagement in culture, arts and sport by adults in Northern Ireland](#)⁶².

Dfi

Dfi commissions a number of questions in the CHS on 'road safety', 'travel to school', 'public transport journey planning' and 'walking, cycling and public transport'. The data from the CHS are used to assist the Department in focussing its policies on addressing the key issues preventing people taking up active travel and to encourage more people to use public transport; to monitor the overall effect of the initiatives aimed at increasing the proportion of children who actively travel to school; and to assist providers in identifying improvements to passenger information and access to public transport services. Data collected from the CHS also contributes to a number of research reports including the [Active and Sustainable Travel in Northern Ireland](#)⁶³ and the annual [Road Safety Issues in Northern Ireland](#)⁶⁴ report which measures the attitudes, awareness and behaviour of respondents in relation to specific road safety issues, namely speed limits, speeding and mobile phone usage while driving.

DoF (TSSSB)

Data from the CHS are normally used by NISRA's Tourism Statistics and Staff Surveys Branch (TSSSB) to measure overnight trips taken by NI residents within

⁵⁶ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/artides/children-and-young-people>

⁵⁷ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/artides/play-matters>

⁵⁸ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/making-government-work/programme-government>

⁵⁹ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/active-living-sport-and-physical-activity-strategy-northern-ireland>

⁶⁰ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/delivering-tomorrows-libraries-public-library-standards-2019-20>

⁶¹ Due to the pandemic, data collection for the 2020/21 survey moved from face-to-face interviewing to a telephone interview, with a reduction in the number of questions. The output from the survey, in terms of the range and depth of topics covered was reduced from that of previous years, with the subsequent capacity for detailed analysis constrained.

⁶² <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/engagement-culture-arts-and-sport-by-a-adults-northern-ireland-202021>

⁶³ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/active-and-sustainable-travel>

⁶⁴ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/road-safety-issues-northern-ireland>

and outside Northern Ireland, day trips and air passenger flow by NI residents. In 2020/21, due to travel restrictions and the change from face-to-face to telephone interviewing, questions on day trips and flights were removed from the CHS. The remaining questions asked about overnight trips taken by NI residents.

As TSSSB were unable to produce their regular publications in 2020/21 (due to significant disruption to their data sources as a result of the pandemic), they began to release an [Alternative Sources](#)⁶⁵ document, bringing together information to provide an indicator for tourism performance. This provided a variety of statistics (including the data on overnight trips from the CHS) produced by both NISRA and other producers, such as ONS and HMRC, to supplement the absence of official tourism statistics, enabling policy makers within the tourism industry to aid decision making.

TEO & DoF (SCB)

TEO and Statistical Coordination Branch in DoF use data from the CHS in the [Wellbeing in Northern Ireland](#)⁶⁶ report. This report provides a breakdown of loneliness, self-efficacy, personal wellbeing and locus of control among a range of demographic sections including gender, age, employment status, marital status, deprivation quintiles and government district. Data included in this report was previously used to produce three Population Indicators in the draft 2016-21 Programme for Government. The report also has wider application across the civil service, as it includes some Section 75 breakdowns allowing the data to be used as evidence for a diverse range of policy areas including older people, engaged communities and good relations. The data have been used by several community programmes, including Urban Villages and the Social Investment Fund, to evaluate programme intakes against NI averages.

DoF (CSU)

Core information from the CHS is also published annually in [CHS Results tables](#)⁶⁷. These tables (published by NISRA's Central Survey Unit, CSU) provide regular and timely data for researchers and analysts and include household composition, household type and tenure, individual demographics e.g. religion, internet / broadband access, and car ownership. Data are available for every year from 2008-09 to the previous year, as well as for 1983, 1991-92 and 2001-02.

In addition, anonymised data from the CHS are made available to researchers through the [UK Data Archive](#)⁶⁸, managed by the ESRC. The UK Data Archive is a valuable resource and is used by researchers, students and teachers from all sectors, including academia, central and local government, charities and foundations, independent research centres, think tanks, business consultants and the commercial sector.

UK Surveys

Data from a number of the surveys carried out by CSU are not used directly by NI Departments but rather feed into UK statistics. Collecting responses from NI households and individuals, ensures that the UK statistics produced and the data available from these surveys are representative, and often allows comparison

⁶⁵ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/tourism/alternative-source>

⁶⁶ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/wellbeing-northern-ireland>

⁶⁷ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/chs-results>

⁶⁸ <https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/series/series?id=200008#!/abstract>

between Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK. These surveys include the [Living Costs and Food Survey](#)⁶⁹ and [Survey on Living Conditions](#)⁷⁰.

Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF)

The *Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF)* is a UK wide survey which collects information on spending patterns and the cost of living that reflect household budgets, as well as information on food consumption. Data on household expenditure from the LCF is used in key economic measures such as the [consumer prices index](#)⁷¹ and [GDP figures](#)⁷². It is also used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to produce the annual [UK Family Spending report](#)⁷³ (and accompanying [regional tables](#)⁷³).

In addition, the LCF is a valuable source of information on food consumption and nutrition and is used by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to produce the [UK Family Food Statistics](#)⁷⁴ publication (and the accompanying [regional data](#)⁷⁵).

Survey on Living Conditions (SLC)

The *Survey on Living Conditions (SLC)* collects information on household resources, housing, labour, education, pensions and health. Data from SLC helps the UK government understand how different sections of society are managing, so that it can plan for the future, assess the effects of policy changes and measure the state of the economy. The UK Government use these statistics to monitor and inform policies aimed at combating poverty and social exclusion.

Life and Times surveys

The [Northern Ireland Life and Times \(NILT\)](#)⁷⁶ survey, set up by Queen's University Belfast and the Ulster University, was launched in October 1998 as a resource for everyone interested in the social attitudes of people living in Northern Ireland. The corresponding [Young Life and Times \(YLT\)](#)⁷⁷ survey (which was postponed in 2020/21) gives young people (aged 16) the chance to share their experiences of school, and their views on politics, sectarianism and other social issues. The [Kids' Life and Times \(KLT\)](#)⁷⁸ survey asks Primary 7 children what they think about school and other issues important to children today. A major aim of all three surveys is to make the data freely available to the widest possible audience. As a result data from modules (or 'parts of surveys') funded by NI Departments are available for others to use in their research or to inform their decisions.

Some examples of modules commissioned by DE, DoJ, DoH, PPS and TEO are presented below:

- **TEO** - Good Relations, Minority Ethnic Groups, Respect, Community Relations
- **PPS** - Perceptions of the Public Prosecution Service

⁶⁹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/find-your-survey/northern-ireland-living-costs-and-food-survey>

⁷⁰ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/find-your-survey/survey-living-conditions>

⁷¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices>

⁷² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp>

⁷³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/bulletins/familyspendingintheuk/previousReleases>

⁷⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-food-statistics>

⁷⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/family-food-datasets>

⁷⁶ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/>

⁷⁸ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/klt/>

- **DoJ** - Community Safety and Perceptions of Paramilitary Influence, Public Awareness of the police complaints system in Northern Ireland
- **DoH** - Palliative care, Breastfeeding, Coercive Control
- **DE** - Shared Education, Pupil well-being, School Bullying

Research papers based on these modules are published on the [NILT](#)⁷⁶, [YLT](#)⁷⁷ and [KLT](#)⁷⁸ websites.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Many surveys of households and individuals are conducted by NI Government Departments in order to attain feedback on the services provided by the Department or ALB and their affiliates. The data are collected in order to guide decision making on how to effectively deliver or improve these services, or to identify issues to resolve

DVA Customer Satisfaction Surveys

The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) within DfI normally carries out three customer satisfaction surveys covering their booking services (Internet Booking; Test Centre and Call Centre Booking) and the Driving Theory Test. As tests were intermittently suspended due to restrictions in place resulting from the pandemic, only the *Theory Test Customer Satisfaction Survey* was run during 2020/21. These short surveys enable DVA to ask customers for feedback after delivering a service and DVA then uses this feedback to help improve the service going forward. As a result, these surveys help government and DVA as a public body to plan and deliver better front-line public services.

DfC Customer Insight Surveys

DfC's Customer Insight Continuous Improvement Unit carries out a monthly analysis on the *Customer Exit Survey*, which allows customers to provide feedback on their experience of the telephone service from within key DfC business areas (Benefit Overpayment/Social Fund Loan Recovery, Compensation Recovery Disability and Carers Service, Discretionary Support, Discretionary Support Recovery, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Jobseekers' Allowance, Pensions Service, Personal Independence Payments, Self-Isolation Grants, Social Fund, Universal Credit). The information provides each business area with a tangible and real-time measurement on the service they provide, identifying areas of strength and improvements required on the customer approach. Each business area benefits by hearing directly from the customer, their experience and emotions when they engage with their people.

Further information on the purpose of all surveys is available in the [downloadable data](#)⁷⁹ which accompany this bulletin.

⁷⁹ See Appendix E for further details.

Appendix A: Case Study - The use of government surveys of households and individuals to assess the impact of COVID-19 and inform decision-making

Data from existing surveys of households and individuals, such as the *Labour Force Survey (LFS)*, were used to gauge the impact of the pandemic, inform decision-making and develop schemes to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic. In addition, several new surveys were specifically commissioned in response to the pandemic (see Section 8). These surveys were invaluable in providing up-to-date and relevant information on the spread of the pandemic, the effectiveness of various mitigation measures, and the impact of the pandemic and the restrictions on households and individual.

Labour Force Survey (LFS)

The LFS is a study of the employment circumstances of the population. This quarterly survey is conducted by Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS), DoF and interviews everyone aged 16 and over in the household. It collects information about employment, unemployment and economic inactivity, as well as a wide range of related topics such as income, qualifications, training and disability. Due to the size of the survey, estimates from the LFS can be broken down by different characteristics such as age band, occupation, industry and geography.

Data from the *Labour Force Survey* has been used by multiple departments in order to assess the impact of the pandemic, and inform decision-making.

Department for the Economy (DfE)

At the start of the pandemic, the LFS data provided government officials in DfE with a readily available and detailed source of information on the Northern Ireland workforce allowing them to assess the impact of the initial lockdown, evaluate the effect of different changes to the restrictions, and compare various support options. Pre-pandemic LFS data provided detailed baselines on occupation and industry, age and gender, and employee and self-employment compositions of the NI labour market. These data were instrumental in developing the scope and scale of NI COVID-19 recovery programmes.

Along with other data sources, LFS data were used to underpin the various support packages that DfE established in response to the pandemic, for example, the [£10k and £25k business support grants schemes](#)⁸⁰, the [microbusiness Hardship Fund](#)⁸¹ and the [Newly Self-Employed Support Scheme](#)⁸².

In addition, Analytical Services Division within DfE analysed LFS data alongside other economic indicators to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the economy and on the labour market. This enabled the production of a wide range of [COVID-19 related research](#)⁸³, including an early report on the economic impact of coronavirus [Coronavirus and the NI Economy \(June 2020 assessment\)](#) (see Annex J)⁸⁴; a [presentation](#)⁸⁵ and paper on [Rebuilding a](#)

⁸⁰ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/news/covid-19-business-support-grant-schemes>

⁸¹ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/news/ps40million-ni-micro-business-hardship-fund-opens-applications-today>

⁸² <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/news/dodds-announces-new-support-scheme-newly-self-employed>

⁸³ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/covid-19-analysis>

⁸⁴ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/coronavirus-and-ni-economy>

⁸⁵ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/rebuilding-a-stronger-economy-slideshow.pdf>

[stronger economy – the medium term recovery](#) (June 2020)⁸⁶; further research on the [Short and Long Term Impact of Covid-19 and the potential for bounce back in the local economy](#) (March 2021)⁸⁷; and another paper looking at the consequences of COVID-19 and the restrictions on the economy and society, and the prospects of recovery amidst current and upcoming risks [Economic Recovery from COVID-19 and Restrictions](#) (August 2021)⁸⁸.

Within DfE, data from the LFS (and other data sources) was incorporated into a regular monitoring dashboard, which helped the Department to understand the impacts of COVID-19 and restrictions as they progressed. Information and analysis from this dashboard was used to brief the Minister for the Economy as well as Ministers in the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the NI Executive on economic recovery as restrictions were relaxed.

Economists in DfE also worked with ELMS to produce a paper and slide pack on the Labour Market impacts of COVID-19 for the new Head of Civil Service (HOCS). Statistics from the LFS, as well as DoF business surveys, were incorporated in order to provide analysis on multiple indicators of the labour market. LFS data was used to produce labour market compositions, with additional data from Business surveys: analysis of pay from [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings \(ASHE\)](#)⁸⁹, and the job market from the [Quarterly Employment Survey](#)⁹⁰ and the [Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\)](#)⁹¹. The paper provided compelling evidence of the impacts of COVID-19 and has led to additional research being commissioned in order to understand how other countries have reacted to reduce labour market scarring.

Department of Communities (DfC)

DfC, in collaboration with [Ulster University Economic Policy Centre](#)⁹², used LFS data to estimate employment vulnerabilities within the Arts, Culture, Creative and Heritage sectors. Employment vulnerabilities estimates were broken down by occupation, sector, part-time and full-time, geography and gender, and incorporated an [analysis of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme \(CJRS\) claimants](#)⁹³ by the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) to estimate how shifts in demand impacted employees in these sectors.

This research encouraged policy interventions towards targeted groups needing aid. This, alongside DfC engagement with the associated sectors, informed the development of the policy framework behind the [COVID-19 Culture, Languages, Arts, and Heritage Support Programme](#)⁹⁴.

Economic Labour Market Statistics (ELMS, DoF)

ELMS have produced the regular [Labour Force Survey outputs](#)⁹⁵ throughout the pandemic, including the monthly [Labour Market Report](#)⁹⁶ which tracked

⁸⁶ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/rebuilding-stronger-economy-medium-term-recovery>

⁸⁷ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/research-short-and-long-term-impact-covid-19>

⁸⁸ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/research-economic-recovery-covid-19-and-restrictions>

⁸⁹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/annual-survey-hours-and-earnings>

⁹⁰ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/quarterly-employment-survey>

⁹¹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/annual-employee-jobs-surveys/business-register-and-employment-survey>

⁹² <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/epc>

⁹³ <https://obr.uk/box/what-happened-to-furloughed-employees-after-the-cjrs-closed/>

⁹⁴ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/culture-languages-arts-and-heritage-support-programme-2020-2021>

⁹⁵ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/labour-force-survey>

⁹⁶ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/labour-market-reports-2022>

the impact of the pandemic, and the restrictions and support in place on a monthly basis.

In addition, ELMS has produced a range of [COVID related analysis](#)⁹⁷ using LFS data, including reports on [Self-Employment prior to the pandemic](#)⁹⁸, [Usual method of travel to work tables by occupation and industry](#)⁹⁹ and a short paper on [Hours worked in 2019 \(compared to during 2020\)](#)¹⁰⁰.

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

LFS data collected from households and individuals in Northern Ireland has also been used by ONS to produce UK-wide analysis, including specific information for Northern Ireland. This has included a report on [Coronavirus and homeworking in the UK, April 2020](#)¹⁰¹, [Information on Key workers](#)¹⁰², [Homeworking in the UK labour market](#)¹⁰³ and data on the [Employment share for older workers \(60+\) by occupation, industry and region](#)¹⁰⁴. More recent analysis includes [Homeworking hours, rewards and opportunities in the UK: 2011 to 2020](#)¹⁰⁵.

COVID-19 Infection Survey (DoH)

DoH, in collaboration with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Public Health Agency (PHA) and Central Survey Unit, NISRA (DoF), established the *COVID-19 Infection Survey (CIS)* in Northern Ireland, which commenced fieldwork on 27 July 2020. This survey provides an estimate of the number of people infected with COVID-19, the number of new cases that occur over time and the number of people who have developed antibodies to COVID-19. The survey assists in tracking the extent of infection and transmission among people in the community population (those in private households) and the sample includes people who would not necessarily have otherwise been tested, such as cases where people do not report to having any symptoms. Both [DoH](#)¹⁰⁶ and [ONS](#)¹⁰⁷ publish weekly reports on the number of people estimated to have COVID-19, and fortnightly reports on antibody levels.

CO-MIX (Contact Matrix) survey (DoH)

This survey was used to assemble contact matrix data and thereby provided an estimate of the Reproduction Number (R)¹⁰⁸ for community COVID which provided an additional check early in the epidemic. This approach may be more reliable when levels of community transmission are very low. While the [official Reproduction Number \(R\) for Northern Ireland](#)¹⁰⁹ was determined using a bespoke Northern Ireland SIR (susceptible-infectious-recovered) model,

⁹⁷ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/covid-19-related-analysis>

⁹⁸ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/self-employment-northern-ireland-2019>

⁹⁹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/covid-19-related-analysis/#toc-4>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/employment-and-hours-worked>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/covid-19-related-analysis/#toc-3>

¹⁰² <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/covid-19-related-analysis/#toc-7>

¹⁰³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/homeworkingintheuklabourmarket>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/covid-19-related-analysis/#toc-9>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/articles/homeworkinghoursrewardsandopportunitiesintheuk2011to2020/2021-04-19>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/covid-19-infection-survey>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveypilot/previousReleases>

¹⁰⁸ The Reproduction Number (R) is the number of individuals who, on average, will be infected by a single person with the infection. R (or more accurately Rt) does not have a fixed value but varies with time (t), and is likely to be different every day.

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/R-Number>

which used hospital in-patient admissions with community-acquired COVID-19 as its primary input, there were a range of other potential inputs (and models) to estimate R. The modelling group therefore had several different values for R each day, each of which had a midpoint value and a lower and upper boundary (95% confidence intervals).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion survey (DoF)

NISRA's Central Survey Unit (CSU) in DoF conducted the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Opinion Survey](#)¹¹⁰ a weekly survey introduced on 20 April 2020 measuring the effects of the pandemic on people's lives, circumstances and behaviours in Northern Ireland. The survey was based on a similar survey conducted by ONS in Great Britain (as part of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey). The questions were refreshed every four weeks with many of the questions being retained between versions. The survey included questions about the impact of the pandemic on people's lives (curtailment of activities, concerns, well-being), their attitude to and adherence to the restrictions and other questions which were relevant to Northern Ireland Departments.

The results of this survey provided a better understanding of the impact of pandemic, assisting in policy making regarding allocating resources and improving the efficiency of preventative measures. Examples include:

Monitoring Wellbeing

The COVID-19 Opinion survey included questions on loneliness and personal wellbeing, which were analysed by NISRA's Statistics Co-ordination Branch (SCB). These questions provided measures of mental health, wellbeing and loneliness throughout 2020/21, which allowed users of the data, including policy makers and charities, to see how different restrictions affected levels of loneliness and personal wellbeing throughout the pandemic. The data was used to better allocate resources, measure success, and improve the efficiency of initiatives.

The data were quoted by Northern Ireland's Mental Health Champion, Professor Siobhan O'Neill, when urging the NI Executive to deliver faster action on a targeted mental health strategy and the implementation of the [Building Forward: Consolidated Covid-19 Recovery Plan](#)¹¹¹, with a particular focus on the actions to tackle inequalities and support the health of the groups most affected by the pandemic.

Providing Tourism Statistics

As face-to-face interviews stopped at all ports across Ireland and Northern Ireland, Tourism Statistics Branch (TSSSB) in DoF used data collected from the COVID-19 Opinion Survey on the population of Northern Ireland and day trips over the past 7 days along with a smaller scaled indication of summer holidays. These data comprised part of their [alternative source](#)¹¹² tourism release. This was welcomed by policy makers within the tourism industry in the absence of official statistics releases, which had been adversely impacted by the pandemic.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/nisra-coronavirus-covid-19-opinion-survey>

¹¹¹ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/building-forward-consolidated-covid-19-recovery-plan>

¹¹² <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/tourism/alternative-source>

Informing the public

As well as providing internal information for policy makers, Central Survey Unit (CSU) published the [results from the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Opinion Survey](#)¹¹⁰. These were published at regular intervals and included a key findings report, data visualizations and data tables.

Kids & Young Life and Times Surveys: Coronavirus Modules (NICCY, DfC)

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) commissioned a new *Coronavirus* module in the 2020 [Kids Life and Times \(KLT\)](#)¹¹³ and [Young Life and Times \(YLT\)](#)¹¹⁴ surveys in order to gather the views and experiences of the responding age groups (P7 children for the KLT and 16 year olds for the YLT) on COVID-19 on its impact.

The results of the YLT (postponed until May 2021) and the KLT were the main source of information for NICCY's report; [A New and Better Normal: The Experiences and Impacts of COVID-19 on Children and Young People](#)¹¹⁵ which assessed the impact of early government policies in response to COVID-19 on children and young people. In preparing this report, NICCY used the results of the two surveys, along with research by Queen's University Belfast into the [planning and delivery of services to children and young people](#)¹¹⁶, and focus group interviews with of children and young people representing those groups identified as particularly vulnerable.

The report concluded that the difficulties already present in Northern Ireland to supporting children with disabilities, physical or mental ill health, and issues stemming from socio-economic differences and family circumstances were greatly exacerbated by the pandemic, with long delays to critical services, health treatments and other support services. Low-income families, those with complex needs and those without digital/online access were termed 'invisible' with the support available to them greatly impacted. NICCY made a number of recommendations for policy decisions, such as addressing inequalities within education and social care and prepare financing in order to build public services post-pandemic.

Home Learning Reviews (CCEA, DE)

During the initial lockdown period in early 2020, CCEA provided a *Home Learning* resource (renamed [Supporting the Curriculum and Assessment in 20/21](#)¹¹⁷), as part of the *Supporting Learning* initiative. The overall aim of the project was to provide parents and teachers with curriculum support to ensure children could continue to learn at home. When schools began to reopen later in 2020, CCEA continued its support by promoting a range of resources dedicated to supporting Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Primary learning. Three [surveys](#)¹¹⁸ (of pupils, their parents or teachers¹¹⁹) were

¹¹³ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/klt/>

¹¹⁴ <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.niccy.org/about-us/news/latest-news/2021/august/26/vulnerable-children-invisible-during-pandemic/>

¹¹⁶ <https://pure.qub.ac.uk/en/publications/a-new-and-better-normal-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-planning-an>

¹¹⁷ <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/supporting-curriculum-and-assessment>

¹¹⁸ <https://ccea.org.uk/news/2020/november/review-cceas-home-learning-resource-renamed-supporting-curriculum-and-assessment>

¹¹⁹The survey of teachers is classified as a business surveys (and so not include in this report) as they were surveyed in the context of their employment.

conducted to measure the effectiveness of the Home Learning resource in facilitating home learning and identify improvements and further support requirements for those children identified as most negatively affected by the loss of direct contact with others.

Consumer Council Surveys (DfE)

The Consumer Council carried out a number of surveys, in order to understand the effects of the impact of COVID-19 on consumers. The [Older Persons, Transport and COVID-19](#)¹²⁰ survey was conducted in order to understand the experience and attitudes of older public transport users during the height of the pandemic. The results were shared with DfI and the Council worked with the Department as it developed a new Public Service Agreement with Translink. The findings from the survey will also be used to work with DfI on transport policy and strategy issues, as well as with Translink to help public transport recover from the pandemic, and improve services to older people.

In addition, The Consumer Council conducted the *Lending, Savings and Debt Research* – a survey of NI consumers, concerning users’ experience of the pandemic regarding lending, savings and debt – and the *Impact of COVID-19 on Energy Consumers in Northern Ireland* survey, which collected data on the impact of the pandemic on users’ energy consumption.

COVID-19 - Attitudinal Survey (Translink, DfI)

Translink also conducted a telephone survey in order to understand the attitudes and behaviours of transport users. This helped inform their approach to dealing with the pandemic.

Health and Safety Benchmarking Survey (NMNI, DfC)

National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI) carried out a fortnightly *Health and Safety Benchmarking* survey during the pandemic, through the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions UK. This survey collected the views and opinions of museum visitors on how they were feeling about returning to the museums and about the health and safety measures in place. National Museums NI monitored the results closely and made changes to signage, website messaging, welcome and orientation messages and location of hand sanitiser etc. as a direct response to the feedback. As a result they saw scores improve and remain at a very high level above benchmarks for other museums and visitor attractions.

Impact of COVID-19 on Private Rented Tenants and Landlords (DfC)

DfC conducted two surveys; the *Impact of COVID-19 on Private Rented Tenants* and the *Impact of COVID-19 on Private Rented Landlords and Letting Agents*, in order to assess the impact of the pandemic on the private rental sector. The data collected were used to inform the Private Tenancies Bill,

¹²⁰ <https://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/policy-research/publications/summary-research-report-older-persons-public-transport-and-covid-19>

which included a series of amendments to The Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, in order to make the private rented sector a safer and more secure housing option for a wider range of households, ensure better regulation and offer greater protection to private renters.

Housing Executive Tenants COVID-19 Survey (NIHE, DfC)

In addition, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) conducted the *Tenants COVID-19 Survey* to inform decision making regarding service delivery to tenants during the pandemic.

Appendix B: Methodology, Quality and Use of Publication

B1. Rationale for publication

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)¹²¹ recognises the importance of monitoring and reducing respondent burden, balanced with the need to produce official statistics that are fundamental to good government and provide a good evidence base to inform public policy. It emphasises the importance of **transparency**, ensuring respondent **burden is proportionate to benefits** and making **use of existing data** before undertaking a new data collection:

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.

V5.3 The suitability of existing data, including administrative, open and privately-held data, should be assessed before undertaking a new data collection.

V5.1 Opportunities for data sharing, data linkage, cross-analysis of sources, and the reuse of data should be taken wherever feasible. Recognised standards, classifications, definitions, and methods should be applied to data wherever possible.

V5.6 Statistics producers should analyse the impact of new data requirements or extending existing collections on those involved in the collection, recording and supply of data, against the potential value of the statistics in serving the public good.

V5.4 Voluntary participation in statistical data collection should be sought, rather than using statutory powers, wherever possible.

The burden to businesses due to surveys conducted by government departments and their arm's length bodies (ALBs) has been monitored within Northern Ireland since the 1980s. As of the 1st April 2014, surveys to households and individuals were included within the scope of Survey Control and this information is now published on an annual basis alongside the [Survey Burden on Business information](#)¹²².

B2. Methodology

Data Collection

Data were requested from Survey Control Liaison Officers (SCLOs) in each of the Northern Ireland departments, as well as from officials in Arm's Length Bodies (ALBS). Respondents were provided with guidance notes and asked to provide details on Government Statistical Surveys of households and/or individuals which their department/ organisation had commissioned or carried out in 2020/21. When surveys are shared by more than one Department,

¹²¹ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/the-code/>

¹²² <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

Arm's Length Body, or NISRA branch within DoF, the relevant survey is included in each return and the respondent burden for the survey is proportionately split across the Departments/ ALBs/ branches.

Surveys are included under the commissioning department(s)/ ALB(s) which may not be the same as the department or branch which carried out the survey. Any surveys carried out by NI departments/ ALBs, on behalf of GB departments/ ALBs, where the data are only collected to facilitate the production of UK statistics (and not used by any NI government department) are included under the department or branch carrying out the survey.

Coverage

All statistical surveys to households and/or individuals carried out by, or on behalf of, Northern Ireland Government Departments (including Arm's Length Bodies) are included, as well as statistical surveys carried out by NI Departments (or ALBs) on behalf of GB Government Departments (or ALBs) where the data are used directly by the NI Department (or ALB) or feed into UK statistics.

Definition of Statistical Survey

A statistical survey is any structured inquiry designed to obtain aggregated data (which may be qualitative or quantitative) where the individual or corporate identities of the respondents are in themselves of little significance.

This includes both regular and ad hoc surveys; both voluntary and statutory surveys that may be required to determine, evaluate or monitor policy and/or action, provide social or economic indicators or measure customer satisfaction. Statistical surveys conducted by, or on behalf of, non-departmental public bodies are also covered. Arm's length bodies are included under their parent departments.

Statistical surveys in scope are not limited to those conducted by statistics branches and include all modes of data collection: completion of a questionnaire; telephone data entry; face-to-face interview; online/email data collection etc.

Surveys that contribute to official statistics and those that do not are both in the scope of survey control.

The following are examples of statistical surveys **covered** by these controls:

- Surveys designed to obtain aggregated data;
- Surveys where responses are solicited by means of a direct approach to potential respondents;
- Surveys carried out for departmental sponsors by consultants or private organisations;
- Customer satisfaction surveys designed to identify overall success of a product or service.

The following are examples of surveys **excluded** from survey control:

- Surveys where there is no direct approach made and where respondents clearly select themselves (e.g. web sites, readership surveys, some types of consultation exercises where there is an invitation to comment);
- Where information is required as an integral part of the operational management of a public service. Such returns will often be regulated under specific departmental controls;
- Surveys relating to the contractual obligations of potential respondents to the department or agency concerned;
- Surveys to respondents in central government and its agencies.

Where part of a survey falls outside scope, the part of the survey within scope has been included where possible.

Respondent Burden

For surveys of households and individuals, respondent burden is calculated on the basis of the time taken for each respondent to complete the survey (or part of the survey). Where a household or individual is re-contacted as part of the validation or quality assurance procedures, the burden due to the re-contact is also included. The time taken to complete the survey includes any time taken to establish eligibility (e.g. time spent by the interviewer on the doorstep determining household eligibility). Total compliance burden will also include time taken to establish non-eligibility for respondents or households that are subsequently deemed out of scope. Only those responding to the survey are included; non-response is assumed to have zero burden.

If actual survey completion times (and re-contact times) are available then these are used. Otherwise estimated median completion times (and estimated median re-contact times) are used. These estimated median times may be based on information from the survey, paradata, historical data (within the last 5 years), a pilot survey, reviews or survey manager expertise.

The calculation of compliance burden requires the following:

- Number of responses to the survey (including full/partial and invalid)
- Number of respondents re-contacted (if applicable)
- (Actual or) Median time to complete the survey (or part thereof)
- (Actual or) Median re-contact time for validation purposes

If estimated median re-contact times are not available then the median time taken to complete the full survey may be used on the assumption that a respondent may need to review their entire response.

The Compliance Burden (mins) is a simple **addition** of Response Burden (mins) and where applicable Re-contact Burden (mins)

Response Burden (mins) = No. of responses x Median completion time (mins)

Recontact Burden (mins) = No. recontacted x Median re-contact time (mins)

Compliance Burden is calculated in minutes but has been changed to hours (or days) in this report.

The calculation of compliance burden will include all questionnaire or interview types. If different questionnaires or interviews are used (and these vary in terms of completion time), then the compliance burden may be estimated separately for each questionnaire/interview type and then summed for an overall compliance burden. Similarly, if there are different groups of respondents with different completion times (e.g. main and proxy respondents) then the calculations for each subgroup may be carried out separately and summed.

Shared Surveys

For those surveys which are commissioned by several branches within DoF/ Departments/ ALBs, each part of the survey is treated as a separate survey. The compliance burden for each part of the survey (or module) is estimated by apportioning the total compliance burden for the survey. The number of responses is the same as for the complete survey (unless the questions were only asked of a subgroup of respondents).

This approach allows the burden for individual Departments, ALBs (or branches) to be calculated, but means that some survey vehicles and respondents will appear more than once when the 'number of surveys' and 'number of responses' is summed across branches / Departments / ALBs. For this reason, the number of responses is not a good proxy for the number of respondents (or households and individuals responding to NI Government Statistical Surveys). In addition, some households and individuals may respond to more than one NI Government Statistical Survey. As the compliance burden has been apportioned based on the time taken to answer each part of the survey, there is no 'double counting' of compliance burden.

The use of an existing survey vehicle (such as the *Continuous Household Survey* or one of the *Life & Times Surveys*) is an effective way of reducing respondent burden as the overall contextual questions don't need to be repeated for each module, and the initial stages/survey introductions only need to be carried out once.

Average completion time (or average burden per response)

This has been calculated as the total compliance burden (for the group of surveys or parts of surveys) divided by the total number of responses (for the group of surveys or parts of surveys). This may differ from the median completion time for the survey.

Official Statistics and Other Statistics surveys

Surveys that contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as ‘official statistics’ surveys, and surveys that do not contribute to National or official statistics are referred to as ‘other statistics’ surveys.

Statutory and Voluntary surveys

Where the status of a survey is statutory there is a legal obligation on the respondents to provide the information that will be collected.

Data collection method

The data collection method is recorded for each survey. Prior to 2016/17 SCLOs were asked to write-in the data collection method(s) used for each survey. This meant that there was substantial variation in the descriptions used and it was not always easy to identify the primary data collection method. In 2016/17, this was replaced with a drop-down menu (Paper questionnaire; Paper diary¹²³; Telephone interview; Face-to-face interview; Email data collection; Online questionnaire/data collection; Online/electronic diary¹²³; Telephone data entry; and Digital Voice Recognition Survey). SCLOs are asked to identify the primary, secondary, tertiary, etc. method of data collection. As a result, groupings and analysis from 2016/17 onwards will be more accurate than in previous years.

Rounding

Please note that figures for compliance burden (hours) have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures for average completion time (minutes) have been rounded to one decimal place, and percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number or one decimal place. Thus figures may not add exactly to totals due to rounding.

B3. Data quality

Data are derived from returns provided by other government departments and ALBs. Although the compliance burden is an estimate, the quality of the underlying data is considered to be of a good standard, particularly since the review and expansion of the SCLO guidance prior to the 2016/17 data collection and the introduction of mandatory training. This has resulted in:

- Improved coverage of non-NISRA branches within Departments; and improved coverage of ALBs;
- Better application of the criteria to determine whether surveys should be included or excluded from the return; with some surveys previously omitted as they were assumed to be part of the operational management of a public service now included, such as participant evaluation surveys, customer surveys and surveys with a secondary operational purpose;

¹²³ This option was first introduced in 2017/18. As paper diaries usually accompany face-to-face interviews, these have been grouped with face-to-face interviews in the analysis. This maintains consistency with what was done in 2016/17 and earlier years. Online/electronic diaries have been grouped with online questionnaire/data collection.

- Better estimation of median completion times, re-contacts and median re-contact times; including the use of actual completion times (rather than an estimate based on the median) where these are available;
- Better allocation of burden to departments/ALBs for surveys which are split across departments/ALBs/branches within DoF;
- More use of separate calculations for different subgroups where the compliance costs vary across different modes of data collection and/or type of respondent; and
- Improved quality assurance, with the introduction of local quality assurance by SCLOs.

There have also been improvements in the coherence and comparability of the returned data, both within and between departments due to the expanded guidance and annual training, as well as an improved data collection workbook which includes standardised options for e.g. data collection methods; automatic calculation of compliance costs; built-in guidance and basic validation checks.

The data collection process means that individual SCLOs are the key decision makers in terms of including or excluding surveys from the returns. While there is communication between SCLOs and NISRA Survey Control Unit to clarify any queries, there is the potential for individual interpretations of the inclusion and exclusion criteria to lead to small inconsistencies in individual returns.

The quality assurance checks carried out by NISRA Survey Control Unit focus on ensuring that the data returned are complete and internally consistent for the current year, and also consistent with returns from previous years. Where data are missing or there are large changes or inconsistencies explanations are sought from the data supplier, and if necessary the data are re-supplied.

Further information on the quality of the data used to produce these official statistics can be found in the [Background Quality Report – Burden to Households and Individuals of Completing Statistical Surveys issued by Northern Ireland Departments](#)¹²⁴.

B4. Amendment to 2017/18 data (DoJ and overall totals)

There was an error in the number of responses and compliance burden reported for DoJ in 2017/18, which also affects the overall totals for 2017/18. Although, historic estimates are not normally revised (due to the impracticality of incorporating all subsequent improvements) the 2017/18 figures for DoJ were amended in 2018/19 due to the scale of the error and the impact on the overall time series for DoJ. The amended DoJ figures and 2017/18 totals are used in this report, when comparing the burden across years (Section 9; Table 10).

The number of responses to the PSNI Victim Satisfaction Survey in 2017/18 was incorrectly reported as 8,000 instead of 2,269, inflating the compliance burden for this survey and also for DoJ. As a result this survey was recorded in 2017/18 as contributing 1,333 hours of compliance burden, when it actually contributed 378 hours. The error came to light during the quality assurance of the 2018/19 data, when the figures were compared with the previous year.

¹²⁴ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/background-quality-report-burden-households-and-individuals-completing-statistical>

B5. Main uses of these statistics

These statistics are used by NI Government Departments, by the Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC), by Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), by the media and by the general public. These statistics and the accompanying data can be used to investigate the burden on households and individuals resulting from Government Statistical Surveys, to monitor changes over time, to respond to MLA questions, and to provide briefing to Ministers.

B6. User Engagement

User engagement is on-going between the publication of one report and the production of the next. Following the pre-2016/17 review of the guidance and methodology a specific programme of engagement was carried out. This has resulted in some minor changes to the publication.

An engagement exercise is also planned for Summer/Autumn 2022 looking at the content and future of this report and the accompanying [Cost to Business of Completing Statistical Surveys](#) report. Details will be posted on the [Survey Burden page](#)¹²⁵ on the NISRA website or can be obtained from Garbhan.McKevitt@nisra.gov.uk. The consultation exercise will also be publicised through the NISRA social media channels.

In the interim, we would welcome your feedback, on what you use the report for, any tables/charts or commentary you find particularly helpful and any additional analysis you would like to see. Feedback can be provided by emailing Garbhan.McKevitt@nisra.gov.uk

¹²⁵ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

Appendix C: 2016-21 Programme for Government (PfG) Outcomes

The 2016-21 draft Programme for Government (PfG) comprised 12 strategic outcomes outlined by the Executive to represent the society we wish to have. These 12 outcomes were supported by 49 population indicators, which were accompanied by measures (derived from statistics) which monitored performance in relation to the outcomes¹²⁶. The table below lists the 12 outcomes and the indicators used to monitor performance against each outcome.

Detailed descriptions of each of these strategic outcomes can be found in the [Outcomes Delivery Plan \(December 2019\)](#)¹²⁷, including why each of the outcomes matters; what the issues were and how these would be addressed; the relevant indicators for that outcome (with a link to the data sources); and the proposed actions along with the rationale and associated benefits.

A revised draft PfG outcomes framework ([Programme for Government \(PfG\) 2021](#)¹²⁸) was consulted on in early 2021. This builds on the previous outcomes-based approach and contains nine strategic outcomes.

OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
1 We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector NI Composite Economic Index • External sales • Rate of innovation activity • Employment rate by council area • % change in energy security of supply margin
2 We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % all journeys which are made by walking/cycling/public transport • Greenhouse gas emissions • % household waste that is reused, recycled or composted • Annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentration at monitored urban roadside locations • Levels of soluble reactive phosphorus in our rivers and levels of Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen in our marine waters • Biodiversity (% of protected area under favourable management)

¹²⁶ Detailed Measurement Annexes provided details of each measure, how they were calculated and the data sources used.

¹²⁷ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/outcomes-delivery-plan-december-2019>. This replaced the 2018/19 Outcomes Delivery Plan (<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/outcomes-delivery-plan-201819>)

¹²⁸ <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/programme-government-pfg-2021>

OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
3 We have a more equal society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gap between highest and lowest deprivation quintile in healthy life expectancy at birth • Gap between % non-FSME school leavers and % FSME school leavers achieving at Level 2 or above including English & Maths • % population living in absolute and relative poverty • Employment rate of 16-64 year olds by deprivation quintile • Economic inactivity rate excluding students • Employment rate by council area
4 We enjoy long, healthy, active lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy life expectancy at birth • Preventable mortality • % population with GHQ12 scores ≥ 4 (signifying possible mental health problem) • Satisfaction with health and social care • Gap between highest and lowest deprivation quintile in healthy life expectancy at birth • Confidence of the population aged 60 years or older (as measured by self-efficacy)
5 We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of innovation activity • Proportion of premises with access to broadband services at speeds at or above 30Mbps • % engaging in arts/cultural activities • Confidence (as measured by self-efficacy) • % school leavers achieving at least level 2 or above including English and Maths
6 We have more people working in better jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic inactivity rate excluding students • Proportion of the workforce in employment qualified to level 1 and above, level 2 and above, level 3 and above, and level 4 and above • Seasonally adjusted employment rate (16-64) • A Better Jobs Index • % people working part time who would like to work more hours • Employment rate by council area • Proportion of local graduates from local institutions in professional or management occupations or in further study six months after graduation
7 We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence rate (% of the population who were victims of any NI Crime Survey crime) • A Respect Index • % the population who believe their cultural identity is respected by society • Average time taken to complete criminal cases • Reoffending rate

OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
8 We care for others and we help those in need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % population with GHQ12 scores ≥ 4 (signifying possible mental health problem) • Number of adults receiving social care services at home or self directed support for social care as a % of the total number of adults needing care • % population living in absolute and relative poverty • Average life satisfaction score of people with disabilities • Number of households in housing stress • Confidence of the population aged 60 years or older (as measured by self-efficacy)
9 We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Respect Index • % who think all leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres in their areas are “shared and open” to both Protestants and Catholics • % of the population who believe their cultural identity is respected by society • Average life satisfaction score of people with disabilities • Confidence (as measured by self-efficacy)
10 We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence rate (% of the population who were victims of any NI Crime Survey crime) • Total spend by external visitors • % of the population who believe their cultural identity is respected by society • Nation Brands Index • A Better Jobs Index
11 We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average journey time on key economic corridors • Proportion of premises with access to broadband services at speeds at or above 30Mbps • Usage of online channels to access public services • % of all journeys which are made by walking/cycling/public transport • Overall Performance Assessment (NI Water) • Gap between the number of houses we need, and the number of houses we have
12 We give our children and young people the best start in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % babies born at low birth weight • % children at appropriate stage of development in their immediate pre-school year • % schools found to be good or better • Gap between % non-FSME school leavers and % FSME school leavers achieving at Level 2 or above including English and Maths • % school leavers achieving at Level 2 or above including English and Maths • % care leavers who, aged 19, were in education, training or employment

Appendix D: Departments and their Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Department
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DE	Department of Education
DfC	Department for Communities
DfE	Department for the Economy
DfI	Department for Infrastructure
DoF	Department of Finance
DoH	Department of Health
DoJ	Department of Justice
TEO	The Executive Office
PPS	Public Prosecution Service

Appendix E: Further Information

Downloadable data

The data used in this report can be downloaded from the 'NI Statistical Surveys - Burden to Households and Individuals 2020-21' page, which can be accessed from <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

Information is provided for each individual survey, including the name, purpose of the survey, 2016-21 PfG outcome, frequency, statutory/voluntary status, official statistics status, data collection methods (primary, secondary etc.), issued sample, achieved sample, median completion time, number of re-contacts, median re-contact time, compliance burden, burden per response, department and ALB/branch. Where available, the survey contact and a link to the published statistics (or survey) is also included. This allows more detailed analysis to be carried out for individual surveys and/or additional information sought.

Tables and charts

The tables and charts in this report, including the data used in the charts, can be downloaded from the 'NI Statistical Surveys - Burden to Households and Individuals 2020-21' page, which can be accessed from <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

Other linked publications

Previous publications in this series, and the equivalent publications for the Cost to Business of Completing Statistical Surveys can be accessed at: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/ni-statistical-surveys-assessment-burden>

For further details regarding this publication contact:

Garbhan McKeivitt
Survey Control Unit
NISRA Statistical Support Branch
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
Belfast
BT9 5RR

Tel: 028 9038 8459

Email: Garbhan.McKeivitt@nisra.gov.uk