

Outcome of consultation on changes to NISRA's statistical outputs

Background

NISRA is the primary source of statistics, analysis and research on the economy, society and population of Northern Ireland. We conduct surveys, collect data and interrogate administrative sources to produce key statistics and analyses.

The work we do is central for decision making in Northern Ireland. Our statistics – many of which are designated as 'National Statistics' by the Statistics Authority, reflecting their trustworthiness, quality and value – help to inform policymakers, businesses and the public, so that they can make the best possible decisions with the best possible information.

The financial challenge facing public services in Northern Ireland has been well publicised. As the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council has set out, compared to the outturn for 2022-23, resource expenditure across the NICS will fall by around 0.9% in cash terms in 2023-24 at a time of rising cost pressures, putting departmental budgets under pressure.

Similarly, to other parts of the public sector in Northern Ireland, NISRA has been developing strategies to meet this shortfall. These include generating new revenue, reducing costs and tailoring our outputs and activities to align with available resources. This work will enable NISRA to continue to provide insights on the economy, society and population of Northern Ireland and to progress key parts of our transformation agenda while living within our financial constraints.

To meet the financial constraints while producing high quality statistics and progressing key parts of our transformation agenda, NISRA will need to make some changes to statistical outputs and activities. We continue to focus on making our core operations as efficient as possible – ensuring our resources are targeted where they can add the most value for users while meeting statutory obligations. However, some changes to our statistical outputs will also be required to scale activities and funding appropriately.

Consultation

As part of the response to this challenging financial context, NISRA recently consulted users on proposed changes to some statistical outputs and activities. The consultation opened on Wednesday 23rd August and closed on Sunday 15th October. Responses were obtained via an online questionnaire. Responses were also received via email to NISRA's general mailbox.

This consultation sought views from users and stakeholders on a range of proposed changes to statistical outputs including suspending some outputs until further notice; scaling back outputs in frequency or content; and delaying some outputs from their planned publication dates. Details on the consultation including which outputs were included can be found in the [consultation document](#).

These proposals were designed to minimise the impact on users. Most involved scaling back releases – either by reducing supporting analysis, or by reducing their frequency – but retaining the core datasets on which we know users depend. We proposed stopping statistical outputs only as a last resort, and only where we believe the data are being put to limited or low impact uses.

Under each of the three sections – suspending, scaling back or delaying outputs - respondents were asked about their frequency of use of the relevant outputs, and what impact if any, the proposed changes would have on them if implemented. A free text option was also included to allow for further comments on the proposed changes.

Details of the consultation were emailed to known users of the outputs listed in the consultation and shared on NISRA's social media channels, as well as on the NI Direct and Department of Finance social media channels. A news article was added to the NISRA website home page and details of the consultation were included in NISRA reports published during the consultation period. An online information event was also held.

Correspondence between Philip Wales, NISRA Chief Executive and Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, Office for Statistics Regulation, can be found on the [NISRA consultation publication page](#).

Responses

This document sets out the results of our consultation and NISRA's response. For each of the changes we proposed in the consultation, we detail what change we proposed making, what respondents said through the consultation process, and what we plan to do as a result.

We received 62 responses from the online questionnaire and 4 email responses. Responses were received from a range of stakeholders, including, government departments, local government councils, political representatives, voluntary organisations, businesses, academia, consultancy firms and individuals.

NISRA are hugely grateful to the wide range of individuals, organisations and businesses which took the time to provide us with detailed consultation responses.

The responses paint an affirming picture of the value which users derive from our outputs, and the high esteem they place on the products we release.

Statistical Outputs proposed to be suspended until further notice

Below is the list of outputs we were proposing to suspend. Forty respondents provided input on these releases by answering the questions in this section. More detail on each proposal, the responses received, and the action we will take is available below.

- [Deaths Registered with Clostridium Difficile Mentioned on the Death Certificate](#)
- [Deaths Registered with MRSA Mentioned on the Death Certificate](#)
- [Northern Ireland Annual Coal Inquiry](#)
- [Northern Ireland: In Profile](#)
- [Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic](#)
- [Northern Ireland Statistical Surveys – Assessment of Cost Burden to Businesses](#)
- [Overview of Northern Ireland Trade](#)
- [Overview of Northern Ireland Trade with Great Britain](#)

[Deaths Registered with Clostridium Difficile Mentioned on the Death Certificate](#)

Proposal

To suspend outputs until further notice.

You said

Six users responded that they used this output either occasionally or often, of these, four reported that suspending this output would have a high impact.

Among the respondents reporting a high impact were Department of Health (DoH) and Public Health Agency (PHA). These colleagues were concerned about the proposal to stop reporting key statistics used to inform health related targets for deaths from Clostridium Difficile (CDiff) and MRSA. DoH are also working with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Scotland, and Wales to develop the UK National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), which focuses on reducing Healthcare-Associated Infections (HCAIs) and requires ongoing reporting.

Some respondents also queried the reasoning for suspending the publication of such valuable information. Their responses suggested that NISRA should continue to publish if we can access the relevant data, negating the need for specific requests. One respondent felt that access to these data must be maintained to be able to push back against dangerous and politically motivated misinformation.

Action

NISRA have reviewed our proposals in light of this feedback. Although we intend to suspend this release as proposed, we will incorporate a large proportion of the information contained in the suspended release into an alternative publication.

Specifically, provisional information on the number of deaths due to MRSA and CDiff are routinely published in the separate, quarterly Registrar General tables. This will continue to be the case. Provisional data will then be finalised in two new tables contained within the [Annual Report of the Registrar General](#), most recently released on Thursday 26 October 2023. This approach will ensure the following detail will continue to be published for both counts of 'mentions' on the death certificate as well as where either Cdiff or MRSA was the underlying cause;

- Age
- Sex
- Age-standardised mortality rate (ASMR) (where numbers are sufficient)

Under this production model, only the breakdowns by individual hospitals where the deaths took place would be lost, as well as information on underlying causes of death, on death certificates that include any mention of MRSA and CDiff.

NISRA routinely supply operational, monitoring information on HCAs to the Health Trusts and DoH on a monthly basis. This will continue to be the case.

[Deaths Registered with MRSA Mentioned on the Death Certificate](#)

Proposal

To suspend outputs until further notice.

You said

Five users reported that they used this output either occasionally or often, with four indicating that suspending this output would have a high impact.

Among the respondents reporting a high impact were Department of Health (DoH) and Public Health Agency (PHA). These colleagues were concerned about the proposal to stop reporting key statistics used to inform health related targets for deaths from Clostridium Difficile (CDiff) and MRSA. DoH are also working with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Scotland, and Wales to develop the UK National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), which focuses on reducing Healthcare-Associated Infections (HCAs) and requires ongoing reporting.

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NISRA routinely supply operational, monitoring information on HCAs to the Health Trusts and DoH on a monthly basis. This will continue to be the case.

[Northern Ireland Annual Coal Inquiry](#)

Proposal

To suspend until further notice.

You said

Seven users replied that they used this output occasionally and four used it often. Of these, seven said that suspending this output would have either a high or medium impact while three said that the impact would be low.

Users commented on the potential benefits of the Coal Inquiry to monitor the use of coal as NI attempts to move away from the fossil fuel, following its commitment to Net Zero and the renewed focus on sustainability. There is also an interest in NI’s reliance on raw materials, coal being one of these materials.

Action

NISRA welcomes the feedback on this output. While we recognise the value that some users place on the information it contains, we have decided to suspend this

until further notice, in order to focus on higher priority data collections and releases. The position will be kept under review.

Northern Ireland: In Profile

Proposal

To suspend until further notice. The information contained in this output is and will continue to be available from either the [NISRA website](#), or published on other websites.

You said

Twenty-five users indicated they used this output, 17 occasionally and eight often. Eight of the 25 said that suspending would have a high impact, whilst eight responded it would have a medium and eight a low impact.

The output is used by Local Government, researchers, Arm's Length Bodies and consultants to understand and provide contextual information as to what is happening in Northern Ireland. It has been used to provide background and contextual information for consultation documents and funding applications. By not publishing this, users will be required to collate the information themselves and develop their own commentary.

Action

NISRA welcome the positive feedback on this output. We recognise the value that users place on this release, and we note the convenience of a single release which brings together recent developments for our users. However, despite the value this release generates, we have decided to suspend this output until further notice, in part in order to focus our resources on the component data collections. The position will be kept under review.

Northern Ireland Quarterly Ports Traffic

Proposal

To suspend until further notice. The data in this output is and will continue to be available on the [Department for Transport website](#). The [Northern Ireland Annual Ports Traffic](#) output will continue to be published.

You said

Twenty-three users said they used this output either often (12) or occasionally (11). Nine indicated that suspending would have a high impact, four indicated a medium impact, and the remaining ten said it would have a low impact.

Users noted that the ports analysis is very useful, particularly following recent changes in trading relationships between Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the European Union. Whilst the data will still be available from the Department for

Transport (DFT) website, users noted that this means the data will be more difficult to source and less user friendly to understand. The loss of this output could be detrimental to their work.

It was commented that users would like this output to be continued.

Action

NISRA welcome the positive feedback on this output. However, in view of the data continuing to be available from the Department for Transport – and as we are proposing to retain the Northern Ireland Annual Ports Traffic release, NISRA have decided to suspend the quarterly release until further notice. The position will be kept under review.

[Northern Ireland Statistical Surveys – Assessment of Cost Burden to Businesses](#)

Proposal

To suspend until further notice.

You said

Of the 16 users indicating that they used this output, 14 occasionally, five responded that suspending the output would have a high impact, eight medium and three low.

While the majority of the written comments related to other outputs, it was noted that this output was an integral part of the work of the Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC) and that it would be useful to explain the rationale for dropping this survey when reporting on the consultation. Several users questioned why the data would not be provided to users, if available to NISRA – although in fact this output is based on a bespoke data collection.

There was support for prioritising those outputs which are most useful to policymakers, such as social, economic, trade and population data. This output would fall outside this category.

Action

Based on the responses to this consultation and the [previous consultation on the 'Northern Ireland Statistical Surveys - Assessment of burden on businesses, households and individuals' publications](#), as well as discussions with the [Statistics Advisory Committee](#) (SAC), it has been decided to suspend the 'Northern Ireland Statistical Surveys - Assessment of Cost Burden to Businesses' release.

While suspending this report will impact on users, usage of the report is low, particularly when compared with other outputs that NISRA produces. The Cost to Business report also imposes a significant burden on data suppliers in Government Departments and Arm's Length bodies, as well as those NISRA statisticians who

coordinate the data collection locally within Departments. While the 'Cost to Business' report provides the SAC with a complete picture of the cost to business due to government statistical surveys, it is not essential to SAC carrying out their statutory role under the [Statistics of Trade and Employment \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1988](#).

Overview of Northern Ireland Trade

Proposal

To suspend until further notice. Headline figures will still be available via NISRA's [Data Portal](#), or via the [HM Revenue & Customs Regional Trade Statistics](#) pages.

You said

Thirty-one users reported using this output, 20 often and 11 occasionally. Fifteen thought the impact of suspending the output would be high, whilst eight said it would be medium, and seven low.

A lot of positive feedback was received in relation to this release, which is published in the form of a slide pack. The NI Trade slide pack is used by a wide range of stakeholders within Whitehall Departments, Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments, Arm's Length Bodies, economic development organisations, wider industry stakeholders and the media to understand NI trade in the context of important and complex trade issues associated with EU Exit and the implementation of the NI Protocol and Windsor Framework.

It is viewed as a valuable source of independent and trusted information and has been used to assist with policy analysis and development work, to provide Ministerial and Permanent Secretary briefings and as part of our wider communication to the public about the performance of the NI economy. As such, users consider the slide pack as a critical and important source to aid research and decision making.

Despite data being available in alternative places such as the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and the NISRA website, users have indicated that the high quality and robust analysis undertaken by NISRA in combination with the accessible and succinct presentation format is of high importance to them and they consider it vital that NISRA maintain the publication of this output.

Users indicated that not providing the information has the potential to reduce the accessibility of this analysis to all stakeholders and simply providing the data does not overcome the shortfall in analysis, as stakeholders would need to have the expertise to source and analyse the data and then interpret the results correctly.

Action

NISRA welcome the very positive feedback on this output. It has helped us to better understand the important work that the slide pack is used to inform and how valued it is by our users.

As such, NISRA has reviewed our proposal to suspend this output. We now intend to investigate whether a condensed release – covering both the NI Trade Data slide packs consulted on in this exercise – could enable us to meet these user needs and NISRA’s need to scale back our resourcing footprint. Preliminary work indicates this is feasible, with a possible release date in the Spring of 2024.

Overview of Northern Ireland Trade with Great Britain

Proposal

To suspend until further notice. Headline figures will still be available via NISRA’s [Data Portal](#), or via the [HM Revenue & Customs Regional Trade Statistics](#) pages.

You said

Thirty-two users indicated that they used this output often (17) or occasionally (15). Fifteen thought suspending it would have a high impact, eight thought medium, and eight low.

A lot of positive feedback was received on this release, which is also published in the form of a slide pack. The NI Trade slide pack is used by a wide range of stakeholders within Whitehall Departments, Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments, Arm’s Length Bodies, economic development organisations, wider industry stakeholders and the media to understand NI trade in the context of important and complex trade issues associated with EU Exit and the implementation of the NI Protocol and Windsor Framework.

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NISRA's need to scale back our resourcing footprint. Preliminary work indicates this is feasible, with a possible release date in the Spring of 2024.

Outputs proposed to be scaled back in frequency or in their content

Below is a list of outputs we proposed to scale back in frequency or content. Forty-four respondents provided input on these proposals by responding to the questions in this section. More detail on each proposal, the responses received, and the action taken is available below.

- [Baby Names](#)
- [Northern Ireland Air Passenger Flow Statistics](#)
- [Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index \(NICEI\)](#)
- [Northern Ireland Economic Trade Statistics](#)
- [Northern Ireland Quarterly Construction Output Statistics](#)
- [Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey](#)
- [Northern Ireland Quarterly Index of Production](#)
- [Northern Ireland Quarterly Index of Services](#)
- [Northern Ireland Quarterly Retail Sales Index](#)
- [Traffic Counts of Vehicles at the Fifteen Main Northern Ireland-Ireland Border Crossing Locations](#)

[Baby Names](#)

Proposal

The online and hard copy commentary report will no longer be produced but the data tables will continue to be published.

You said

Seven users responded that they used the output often or occasionally. Four indicated that the impact of scaling back would be high or medium, while three said it would be low.

Respondents questioned the extent of the saving created by not producing this report. Their responses indicated a belief that this is a routine, simple release requiring little supporting staff time which could be updated in a matter of hours. Another respondent highlighted the need for factually accurate information to remain in the public domain to dispel misinformation.

Action

NISRA recognises the value that users derive from this output and the attention that it attracts. However, in view of the tight financial position, NISRA intends to proceed to suspend the baby names report as proposed, in order to enable resources to be focused on key issues of policy importance. We consequently intend to cease

producing the baby names report, but to continue to publish the tables containing the data relating to popular baby names as normal.

Users of this release should be reassured that the suspension of the report will not entail any loss to the detail published. The headline figures will still be available within published tables, as will the top boys and girls names broken down by Local Government District (LGD), Health and Social Care Trust, Registration Month, Age and Country of Birth of Mother. Users will be able to look at the tables to source this information rather than a report with accompanying tables and/or use NISRA's [Baby Names Dashboard](#) with Top 10 Baby Names analysis and search functionality.

Northern Ireland Air Passenger Flow Statistics

Proposal

These outputs are currently published quarterly; however it is proposed to scale this back to annual updates.

You said

Twenty-four users responded that they either used the output occasionally (16) or often (eight). Four thought that scaling back would have a high impact, 11 thought it would be medium, and eight low.

The data is used by a range of users within Government Departments and in the wider tourism industry. They are used to inform tourism policy and the work of important tourism stakeholders across NI. They are used to track changes, at both a Northern Ireland and airport level, and benchmark trends against competitor destinations. The air passenger flow statistics are regularly used in internal and external publications and presentations by users. These statistics have also been utilised in Departmental briefings and submissions for senior management within tourism focussed organisations and the wider Civil Service.

Users consider that it is very important that NI Air Passenger Flow Statistics continue to be produced by NISRA. These figures are frequently quoted in briefings and submissions to key officials such as Permanent Secretaries, and senior management within Departments as well as Ministers. They are also used to inform business cases.

Passenger Flow statistics are also used in meetings with the local airports and they are vital in considering air connectivity funding under subsidy control rules. The NISRA data on the residency of passengers, which are not available from other sources, are particularly useful for planning and policy purposes. Users also noted that the data is used to inform tourism industry clients of the type of visitors to NI which is used to inform their offering to these visitors.

Despite this strong positive feedback, the responses provided indicated that the proposed move by NISRA from quarterly to annual reporting was considered acceptable by users.

Action

NISRA welcome the positive feedback on this output as well as the realism of respondents who indicated that a reduced frequency of publication would be acceptable under these circumstances. NISRA will consequently proceed with our proposal to reduce the frequency to an annual publication. The position will be kept under review.

Users should also note that NISRA are working to develop new information on the economic importance of the Tourism industry in NI in the form of a set of Tourism Satellite Accounts which we hope to publish in Spring 2024. We hope that this new release will provide users with a new important data source to understand the performance and structure of the tourism industry within NI.

[Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index \(NICEI\)](#)

Proposal

To reduce the statistical bulletin to headline results only; some detailed analysis and economic commentary will be removed. The bulletin will be reduced from 19 pages to approximately 5 pages. Data will continue to be provided in the existing supplementary tables, with the number of supplementary tables remaining the same (approximately 12 tables).

You said

Twenty-eight users indicated that they used the output often (20) or occasionally (eight). Thirteen thought the impact of scaling back would be high, nine thought it would be medium and six low.

NISRA received comments from a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to scale back the NI Composite Economic Index (NICEI). Comments outlined the range of ways the statistics are used and some of the different workstreams the statistics contribute to. NICEI is viewed as a key deliverable from NISRA which is crucial in interpreting the overall performance of the local economy, is frequently used by policymakers and economists, and attracts media coverage each time it is updated.

NICEI statistics are used by stakeholders to understand and explain the performance of the local economy, to provide Ministerial and Permanent Secretary briefings, for research and analysis, and to inform the general public.

While some comments were supportive of proposals to scale back the statistical bulletin and recognised that the underlying data would still be available in supplementary tables, there were some comments that expressed concern that the

data would be less accessible to non-statistical users. Concerns were raised that average users would be unable to make use of the data tables to fill the void of detailed analysis and economic commentary.

Action

NISRA recognises the value that users place on this release and the importance of an authoritative, independent view of developments in the economy of Northern Ireland. Users are reminded that NISRA also produce a range of economic dashboards that are updated regularly and which also provide an overview of key economic, business and labour market trends. These are available on the [NISRA Economic Overview page](#).

In view of the availability of these wider resources, NISRA will proceed to scale back the statistical bulletin as planned. This position will be kept under review.

Northern Ireland Economic Trade Statistics

Proposal

To reduce the statistical bulletin for the 2022 reference year from 30 pages to approximately 6 pages with limited commentary. Data will continue to be published on NISRA's [Data Portal](#).

You said

Of the 36 users who responded that they used this output, 21 used it often and 15 occasionally. Twenty-six of those indicated that scaling back would have a high or medium impact, while nine thought it would be low.

Users were very positive about the importance and value of these statistics. The Northern Ireland Economic Trade Statistics (NIETS) data is highly relied upon and valued by a wide variety of NI and GB Government departments, Local Government, economic development bodies, Arms Length Bodies, researchers and others to inform a wide range of important work, including policy development focusing on trade, the NI economy and EU Exit.

It was noted that the infographics within the bulletin are also used extensively for onward briefing of senior officials and policy areas within multiple Government Departments in NI and GB. The data are considered to be a trusted source of high-quality data and analysis on NI trade.

The statistics are also used to build a picture of how effectively the UK internal market is operating over time, enabling analysts and policy makers to identify and monitor trends and draw to the attention of policy makers, parliamentarians and other stakeholders.

Although respondents noted that the proposal to scale back the NIETS will not affect underlying data collection, and this approach was welcomed, users reported that analytical outputs play an important role in interpreting data and making it more accessible to non-specialists. Users also noted that the data around NI imports could still be improved.

Action

NISRA welcomes the very positive feedback provided on this release and the engagement from our users. Although we recognise the value that our users place on this, NISRA will continue with the approach proposed in the consultation to streamline the published bulletin. However, we will take cognisance of user feedback when developing the next bulletin. We are also working to develop other methods of disseminating the data which we hope will help to meet users' needs for accessible and quality NI trade data.

Some users were concerned that the actual production and frequency of release of the NIETS data would be impacted by our proposal. This is not the case.

Northern Ireland Quarterly Construction Output Statistics

Proposal

To reduce the statistical bulletin to headline results only; analysis of subsectors will be removed. The bulletin will be reduced from 17 pages to approximately 5 pages. Data will continue to be provided in the existing supplementary tables; however, the following sections will be discontinued – the Structure of Industry tables and the Standard Errors and Coefficients of Variation (CVs) tables. All other supplementary tables will remain the same.

You said

Twenty-three users indicated they used this output, 15 of those indicating they used it often and eight occasionally. Nine indicated that the impact of scaling it back would be high, while eight indicated it would be medium, and four low.

NISRA received comments from a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to scale back the Quarterly Construction Output Statistics. Comments outlined the range of ways the statistics are used and the different workstreams to which these statistics contribute. Quarterly Construction statistics are used by key stakeholders to understand and explain the performance of the local economy. The statistics are used by other Departments and Government Bodies to feed in to briefing papers, research and analysis, and to inform the general public.

While a number of comments were broadly supportive of proposals to scale back the statistical bulletin and recognised that the underlying data would still be available in supplementary tables, there were some responses that expressed concern that data would be less accessible to non-statistical users, particularly if subsector analysis

was removed. One respondent expressed concern that there would be a loss of robustness by removing some of the supplementary information that is currently published.

Action

NISRA welcomes the positive feedback on this release. Consistent with some of the responses to the consultation, we will proceed to scale back the statistical bulletin as planned but will consider whether some detail of subsector analysis can still be included in the reduced bulletin.

Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey

Proposal

To reduce the statistical bulletin to headline results only; some further analysis will be removed (for example Composition of Employee Jobs (Full-time/Part-time) and UK Comparisons). The bulletin will be reduced from 25 pages to approximately 5 pages. Data will continue to be provided in the existing supplementary tables, with the number of supplementary tables remaining the same (approximately 15 tables).

You said

Thirty-three users reported using this statistical output, 21 often, and 12 occasionally. Fourteen users said the proposed changes would have a high impact, 12 said it would be medium, and the remaining seven said low.

NISRA received comments from a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to scale back the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES). Comments from users outlined the range of ways the statistics are used and some of the different workstreams the statistics contribute to. QES statistics are used to feed in to briefing papers, research and analysis, and to inform the general public. The statistics are used to understand the composition of employee jobs across the NI economy.

While a number of comments were supportive of proposals to scale back the statistical bulletin and recognised that the underlying data would still be available in supplementary tables, some comments expressed concern that data would be less accessible to non-statistical users, and that insights would be limited to those who could work with large datasets. A number of comments highlighted the use of QES data to inform strategies such as the Department for the Economy's 10X Economic Vision, and its use in analysis of male/female employment gaps, and full-time/part-time employment gaps.

Action

NISRA welcomes the positive feedback on this release. Consistent with some of the responses received in this consultation, NISRA will proceed with scaling back the statistical bulletin as planned but recognises the wide range of uses of the

supplementary data and will consider what detailed analysis should continue to be included in statistical bulletins.

Northern Ireland Quarterly Index of Production

Proposal

The statistical bulletin will be reduced to headline results only and analysis of subsectors (for example manufacturing) will also be removed. The bulletin will be reduced from 23 pages to approximately 5 pages. Data will continue to be provided in the existing supplementary tables, with the number of supplementary tables remaining the same (approximately 20 tables).

You said

Twenty-six users either often (15) or occasionally (11) used this output. Of these, 11 indicated a high impact of scaling back the output, ten a medium impact, and four a low impact.

NISRA received comments from a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to scale back the Index of Production (IOP). Comments from users outlined the range of ways the statistics are used and some of the different workstreams the statistics contribute to. IOP statistics are used by key stakeholders to understand and explain the performance of the local economy. The statistics are often used by other Departments and Government Bodies to feed in to briefing papers, research and analysis, and to inform the general public.

While a number of comments were broadly supportive of the proposals to scale back the statistical bulletin and recognised that the underlying data would still be available in supplementary tables, some respondents expressed concern that the data would be less accessible to non-statistical users, particularly if subsector analysis was removed.

Action

NISRA will proceed with scaling back the statistical bulletin as planned but will consider whether some detail of subsector analysis can still be included in the reduced bulletin.

Northern Ireland Quarterly Index of Services

Proposal

The statistical bulletin will be reduced to headline results only. The bulletin will be reduced from 17 pages to approximately 5 pages. Additionally, the Retail Sales Index statistics will be included in this bulletin rather than a separate one – see section below. Data will continue to be provided in the existing supplementary tables, with the number of supplementary tables remaining the same (15 Index of Services tables and 5 Retail Sales Index tables).

You said

Of the 28 users who indicated that they used the output often (13) or occasionally (15), 12 suggested scaling back would have a high impact, eight a medium impact, and seven a low impact.

NISRA received comments from a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to scale back the Index of Services (IOS). Comments from users outlined the range of ways the statistics are used and some of the different workstreams the statistics contribute to. IOS statistics are used by key stakeholders to understand and explain the performance of the local economy. The statistics are often used by other Departments and Government Bodies to feed in to briefing papers, research and analysis, and to inform the general public.

While a number of comments were broadly supportive of the proposals to scale back the statistical bulletin and recognised that the underlying data would still be available in supplementary tables, some respondents expressed concern that the data would be less accessible to non-statistical users.

Action

NISRA welcomes the positive feedback that users provided on this release, and we understand the concerns raised about the proposed changes. In view of ongoing financial pressures, NISRA will proceed with scaling back the statistical bulletin as planned. However, the position will be kept under review.

Northern Ireland Quarterly Retail Sales Index

Proposal

The statistical bulletin will no longer be produced, the Retail Sales Index headline figures and scaled back commentary will be included in the Index of Services bulletin. The Retail Sales Index supplementary tables will continue to be published along with the Index of Services output (approximately 5 tables).

You said

Twenty-seven users responded that they used the output, 18 occasionally, and nine often. Eight indicated a high impact if scaled back and ten thought the impact would be medium and seven low.

NISRA received comments from a wide range of stakeholders on the proposal to scale back the Retail Sales Index (RSI). RSI statistics are used to understand the performance of the Retail sector of the economy. The statistics are used to feed in to briefing papers, research and analysis, and to inform the general public.

While a number of comments were received about the use of RSI data, there were no comments specifically about proposals to stop producing a separate RSI bulletin and include it in the Index of Services (IOS) output. Comments from users

recognised that the underlying data would still be available in supplementary tables. Some comments expressed concern that data would be less accessible to non-statistical users. A comment was also received on the frequency of the RSI series, noting that the comparable Office for National Statistics (ONS) series is published monthly.

Action

NISRA will proceed with plans to stop producing an RSI bulletin and instead include it in the Index of Services bulletin, ensuring that users are appropriately informed of the change. While NISRA recognises the comment on the frequency of the RSI series, unfortunately NI data is not collected in a way that allows for a monthly series to be produced.

Traffic Counts of Vehicles at the Fifteen Main Northern Ireland-Ireland Border Crossing Locations

Proposal

The monthly Excel tables published on the NISRA website will be stopped, monthly data will continue to be released via NISRA's [Data Portal](#) every 6 months instead of monthly.

You said

Twenty-two users reported using the output often (10) or occasionally (12). Of these, nine thought the impact of scaling back would be high, four medium, and eight low.

Users noted that the traffic counts information is used to inform briefings and work around the economy, trade and people movement. It was commented that some users rely heavily on these outputs to monitor Northern Ireland's overall place within a North-South context.

Action

NISRA will proceed with scaling back the frequency of this output as planned but will keep the situation under review. Users can still access the underlying data which will continue to be published on the [Transport Infrastructure Ireland \(TII\) Traffic Data website](#).

Outputs proposed to be delayed from their planned publication dates

Below is a list of outputs we proposed to delay. Thirty-nine people expressed an interest in responding to the questions in this section. More detail on each proposal, the responses received, and the action taken is available below.

- [Input-Output Analytical Tables & Multipliers report & associated tables](#)
- [Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry](#)

- [Northern Ireland Research & Development Survey](#)
- [Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey](#)
- [Structure of the Northern Ireland Economy – Supply-Use Tables & associated publication](#)

[Input-Output Analytical Tables & Multipliers report & associated tables](#)

Proposal

The publication for the 2020 reference year scheduled for December 2023 will be published in the second quarter of 2024.

You said

Twenty-three users responded that they used this output either occasionally or often. Nine reported that delaying the output would have a high impact while ten said it would be medium, and three low.

The Input-Output (I-O) Analytical Tables & Multipliers report and associated tables are used in economic research and modelling through a Computable General equilibrium model. The data is being used to inform a number of projects underway with researchers commissioned by NI Departments.

The data from both the I-O tables and Supply-Use Tables (SUTs) are being used to inform several novel research projects and to monitor the Northern Ireland economy and understand some niche activities within it. They provide a fundamental piece of Departments' evidence base. Going forward, Departments would like to continue to have access to these reports as well as expert support to utilise them. If they continue to be produced annually, a delay is unlikely to cause any detrimental impacts.

Users commented that they really valued both IOT and SUTs to monitor the circularity of Northern Ireland's economy. The Department for the Economy considers that a circular economy will be a key enabler for their 10x Economic Vision for a decade of innovation. Some respondents said they relied on these outputs to inform the [Circularity Gap Report](#) - which is a fundamental piece of their evidence base used to inform the development of the [Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland](#).

Action

NISRA will proceed with delaying this output as planned but will keep the situation under review. If resources become available next year and it is possible to publish earlier than originally indicated then we will make every effort to do so.

Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry

Proposal

To delay the statistical bulletin for the 2022 reference year until January 2024 and reduce in content from 28 pages to approximately 6 pages. However, high-level ABI results for turnover and purchases of Northern Ireland businesses will be published in December 2023 alongside the Northern Ireland Economic Trade Statistics. In January, we will publish the approximate Gross Value Added (aGVA) figures which are the headline indicators for the output.

You said

Twenty-nine users reported using the output, 19 often and ten occasionally. Fifteen indicated a high impact of the proposed change, while seven thought it would be medium, and seven thought it would be low.

The Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) is used by a range of stakeholders including the Office for National Statistics (ONS), NI and GB Government Departments, Local Government, researchers, and others involved in monitoring and understanding the NI economy and developing policy to improve the performance of NI.

The data is used as the basis for a range of key strategic metrics associated with the NI economy and used to monitor and inform a range of important Government strategies such as the Department for the Economy (DfE) NI Energy Strategy, and the DfE 10X Economic Vision.

The ABI statistics are used to inform regular public facing updates on the Northern Ireland economy and the issues which affect it. They are used to inform analysis and research on issues of interest to stakeholders and policy makers and contribute to economic briefings to the Minister for the Economy and Senior Department for the Economy Officials.

NISRA's data outputs and supporting materials are a vital source of information to inform the work of various Departments and stakeholders. Any move to less detailed and / or timely releases, or the withdrawal of supporting narrative will have a material impact on the quality of economic briefing provided to future Ministers and senior officials.

Action

NISRA will proceed with delaying this output as planned but will keep the situation under review. If it is feasible to publish earlier than originally indicated then we will make every effort to do so.

Northern Ireland Research & Development Survey

Proposal

The publication scheduled for November/December 2023 will be published in the first quarter of 2024.

You said

Eighteen users reported using the output, seven often and 11 occasionally. Of these, five thought the impact of delaying would be high, nine thought it would be medium, and three thought low.

The Northern Ireland Research and Development (R&D) Survey data is used by a range of stakeholders including the Office for National Statistics (ONS), NI and GB Government Departments, Local Government, researchers, and others involved in monitoring and understanding the NI economy and developing policy to improve the performance of NI.

The R&D data is important for, amongst other things, being used as a foundation for applying to international fundings streams, and for determining how future funding bids and Research & Development projects to these programmes are shaped.

Action

NISRA will proceed with delaying this output as planned but will keep the situation under review.

Our proposed delay to the publication is also linked to ongoing [methodology work](#) that NISRA are undertaking in conjunction with the ONS. As such, when we publish will be reliant upon progress made in completing both our own internal developments and developments made within ONS.

Northern Ireland Visitor Attraction Survey

Proposal

The publication for the 2023 reference year scheduled for July 2024 will be published at the end of 2024.

You said

Of the 25 users of the output who responded, 14 used it often and 11 occasionally. Ten users said that the impact of delaying the output would be high, eight said it would be medium, and six said low.

This data is crucial to informing clients as to the type of attraction that is currently drawing visitors and the opportunity for them to contribute to or draw ancillary business from these attractions. This is considered essential data for Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the hospitality industry.

For many within the cultural sector, having timely access to information is necessary to inform a raft of funding applications and strategies. To have delayed or out of date information can have a hugely detrimental effect on accurate planning and could have a negative impact on revenues as well.

It was commented that it is essential that there is access to timely, relevant and up to date tourism statistics for benchmarking, business planning and investment planning purposes. It was felt that the information published on tourism is not timely enough, so to push it back even further, to essentially a one-year lag, is troublesome and worrying, and will make forward planning very challenging.

Action

NISRA will proceed with delaying this output as planned but will keep the situation under review. If resources become available next year and it is possible to publish earlier than originally indicated, then we will make every effort to do so.

Users should also note that NISRA are working to develop new information on the economic importance of the Tourism industry in NI in the form of a set of Tourism Satellite Accounts which we hope to publish in Spring 2024. We hope that this new release will provide users with a new important data source to understand the performance and structure of the tourism industry within NI.

[Structure of the Northern Ireland Economy – Supply-Use Tables & associated publication](#)

Proposal

The publication for the 2020 reference year scheduled for December 2023 will be published in the second quarter of 2024.

You said

Of the 29 users of this output who responded to the consultation, 14 used it often and 15 occasionally. Thirteen said the impact of the proposed changes would be high, 11 said medium, and five said it would be low.

The data from both the Input-Output Tables (IOTs) and Supply-Use Tables (SUTs) are being used to inform several novel research projects and to monitor the Northern Ireland economy and understand some niche activities within it. They provide a fundamental piece of Departments' evidence base. Going forwards Departments would like to continue to have access to these reports as well as expert support to utilise them. If they continue to be produced annually, a delay is unlikely to cause any detrimental impacts.

NI SUTs will be widely used in green growth strategy development and implementation. It was commented that NISRA should also consider developing NI

environmental accounts. Still other respondents commented that a delay to the publication will have significant impact on some users' work.

Users commented that they really valued both IOT and SUTs to monitor the circularity of Northern Ireland's economy. The Department for the Economy considers that a circular economy will be a key enabler for their 10x Economic Vision for a decade of innovation. Some respondents said they relied on these outputs to inform the [Circularity Gap Report](#) - which is a fundamental piece of their evidence base used to inform the development of the [Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland](#).

Others used the publication to estimate spend on importing goods into NI, specifically energy fuel orientated data and links to economic modelling analysis.

Action

NISRA will proceed with delaying this output as planned but will keep the situation under review. If resources become available next year and it is possible to publish earlier than originally indicated then we will make every effort to do so.