

# STATISTICS PRESS NOTICE

9.30am Wednesday 27 October 2021



## Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics, Northern Ireland 2020

The level of public trust in official statistics produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has increased significantly, according to the latest findings from the Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey on 'Public awareness of and Trust in Northern Ireland Official Statistics'.

The report, which relates to October 2020 to March 2021, shows trust in official statistics is high with trust levels increasing from 84% in the 2019 survey, to 90% in the 2020 survey.

The report also reveals trust in official statistics produced by NISRA remains significantly higher than trust in official statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (69% in 2018) although this figure does not capture any impact of the pandemic.

Trust in NISRA as the body which produces official statistics is also high, with 90% of respondents trusting NISRA a great deal or tending to trust NISRA. This is similar to the level of trust in the Civil Service (83%) and compares favourably with the media (32%) and the NI Assembly (30%). The report also shows that trust in NISRA has increased significantly since 2019 when it was 80%.

Other key findings are as follows:

### Awareness

1. Public awareness of NISRA, which produces the majority of Northern Ireland official statistics, has increased significantly since 2019, with over half of respondents (58%) indicating they had heard of the Agency before being contacted about the survey compared to 35% in 2019.
2. Of those respondents that had heard of NISRA, almost two thirds (64%) indicated their awareness had increased since the previous year.
3. When asked for the reason(s) for this increase, the most frequently selected answer was hearing NISRA mentioned in the news (60%). The second most common reason, mentioned by 44% of respondents, was "As a result of publicity surrounding COVID-19", whilst 33% said they had seen NISRA statistics quoted on social media.

## **Value**

4. The statistics produced by NISRA are valued, with 94% of respondents agreeing that statistics produced by NISRA are important to understand Northern Ireland. This represents a significant increase on the 2019 (90%) and 2016 (88%) figures.

## **Political Interference**

5. Almost nine-tenths (88%) of respondents believe that statistics produced by NISRA are free from political interference. This has increased significantly since 2019 (82%) and 2016 and 2014 (both 77%).

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. The 'Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics, Northern Ireland 2020' publication, data tables and accompanying infographics can be found at:  
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/government/public-awareness-and-confidence-trust-official-statistics-pcos>
2. The questions were asked in the Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey (CHS) between October 2020 and March 2021. The duration of the 2020 survey was extended by three months, from December 2020 to March 2021, to take account of lower ongoing response rates. The percentages reported are based on a sample of the population (1,021 persons) and are therefore estimates.
3. NISRA is an Agency within the Department of Finance and provides statistical services across government in Northern Ireland. The majority of Northern Ireland official statistics are produced by NISRA staff. NISRA branches can be found within all Northern Ireland Departments and many Arm's Length Bodies.
4. NISRA produces official statistics for Northern Ireland on a wide range of issues, including births, deaths and marriages; the size of the population of Northern Ireland; qualifications of school leavers; recorded levels of crime; hospital waiting times; people living in poverty; the NI Census; journeys made by walking, cycling or public transport; and the unemployment rate.
5. Official statistics are statistical outputs produced by Government departments and agencies, the Office for National Statistics, and by other Crown bodies. Official statistics are fundamental to good government, to the delivery of public services and to decision-making in all sectors of society.
6. The Code of Practice for Statistics, produced by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), outlines the principles and detailed practices that producers of official statistics must commit to when producing and releasing official statistics. It is based on three pillars:
  - **Trustworthiness** is about having confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data.
  - **Quality** is about using data and methods that produce assured statistics.

- **Value** is about producing statistics that support society's needs for information.
7. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from NISRA Statistical Support Branch.
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