
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation

Sandy Fitzpatrick
Director of Census and Social Statistics
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)
(By email)

11 February 2025

Dear Sandy

Assessment of the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland

Today we have published our [phase 3 assessment report](#) of the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland. This report, our third and final report, focused on assessing how well NISRA's census outputs have met users' needs and revisited the requirements outlined in our [phase 2 report](#) in 2021. We can confirm that the 2021 Census statistics in Northern Ireland are produced in compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, meaning that these official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

NISRA has been dedicated to delivering high quality and accessible census outputs which have met the needs of a wide range of users in line with the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics. My team and I were impressed with the high level of satisfaction reported to us by users of the census statistics. NISRA's innovative approach to the outputs, particularly the development of a new dissemination tool, the Flexible Table Builder, which allows the creation of bespoke tables, has been particularly valuable in enabling users to maximise their use of the results and provides an example of good practice for other producers to follow.

In addition, NISRA responded well to the requirements outlined in our [phase 2 report](#). NISRA's comprehensive approach to addressing the requirements included effective user and public engagement, the provision of sufficient documentation on quality and methods, and the publication of timely, accessible and flexible census outputs. This impressive response was achieved despite the challenge of delivering Census 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings reinforce our designation of the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland as accredited official statistics.

To inform future population work, our assessment report includes five recommendations for NISRA to address. Of note, we recommend that NISRA can do more to support the appropriate use of data affected by the pandemic. We also want to see NISRA continuing to work with other producers to improve the comparability of census statistics across jurisdictions. We look forward to seeing how you address these findings in line with NISRA's commitment to learning and improvement outlined in the [Census 2021 general report](#).

I would like to thank your team for their positive contribution and engagement throughout the assessment process. If you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter or the accompanying assessment report, please get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Humpherson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for OSR