

## **Northern Ireland Self-Catering Occupancy Statistics 2018**

Published 6th June 2018

### **The key points are:**

- There were an estimated 45,100 weeks sold at self-catering establishments during 2018. This compares to an estimated 39,000 in 2017;
- There was a large increase in the number of certified self-catering units with 3,500 in 2018, compared to 2,800 in 2017;
- Total arrivals were estimated to be 337,900 in 2018, compared to an estimated 264,000 in 2017.
- The estimated annual self-catering unit occupancy in 2018 was 32%. This compares to an estimated 34% in 2017;
- The estimated peak season (April-September) unit occupancy was 43% in 2018, this compares to an estimated 45% in 2017;
- Around two out of three weeks sold (68%) in self-catering establishments were to visitors from outside Northern Ireland.

### **Lead Statistician:**

Ian Stanley  
Tourism Statistics Branch,  
NISRA,  
Colby House, Stranmillis Court,  
BELFAST  
BT9 5RR

Telephone: 028 9025 5162

Email: [tourismstatistics@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:tourismstatistics@nisra.gov.uk)

Frequency: Annual  
Coverage: Northern Ireland  
Theme: People and Places

### **Contents:**

<a href="#">Introduction</a>	<b>2</b>
<a href="#">Self-catering stock</a>	<b>3</b>
<a href="#">Occupancy rates and weeks sold</a>	<b>4</b>
<a href="#">Arrivals country of residence</a>	<b>5</b>
<a href="#">Guests' country of residence</a>	<b>6</b>
<a href="#">Average length of stay</a>	<b>7</b>
<a href="#">Background Notes</a>	<b>8</b>

## Introduction

This report provides statistics on self-catering occupancy rates in Northern Ireland during 2018 which are intended to provide an indication of how the self-catering sector is performing. The statistics are based on the results of a sample survey of establishments. The results derived from sample surveys are estimates and are subject to margins of error which can have an impact on how the estimates should be interpreted, especially regarding comparisons over the short term.

### What you can say....

**Whilst we cannot say there has been a statistically significant change in Self-Catering weeks sold year on year, sources point towards a general growth in weeks sold since 2013**

### What you cannot say....

**There was a definite decrease of 2% in Northern Ireland Self-Catering annual occupancy rates, from 34% during 2017 to 32% during 2018**

This report should be read in conjunction with other tourism statistics reports for a full picture of Northern Ireland tourism. When looking at the full picture, sources point toward a general upward trend in Northern Ireland Tourism from 2013.

A full picture of all tourism activity can be found in the [Northern Ireland Annual Tourism Statistics Publication](#).

## Self-catering stock (Source: Tourism NI)

You must have a certificate from Tourism NI (TNI) to offer tourist accommodation in NI – this is referred to as certification. It is illegal to offer tourist accommodation in NI without a certificate from TNI. The list of certified accommodation in TNI is known as the ‘stock’. Table 1 shows Northern Ireland’s certified self-catering stock operating at the start of December 2018.

**Table 1: Northern Ireland self-catering accommodation stock 2018**

Size	2017		2018	
	Establishments	Units	Establishments	Units
1 to 4 Units	1,823	2,094	2,433	2,738
5 to 9 Units	42	277	49	316
10 + Units	21	404	23	450
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,886</b>	<b>2,775</b>	<b>2,505</b>	<b>3,504</b>
<b>Classification</b>				
Unclassified	1,560	2,148	2,169	2,875
One Star	0	0	0	0
Two Star	2	4	2	5
Three Star	86	202	79	187
Four Star	184	348	200	359
Five Star	54	73	55	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,886</b>	<b>2,775</b>	<b>2,505</b>	<b>3,504</b>

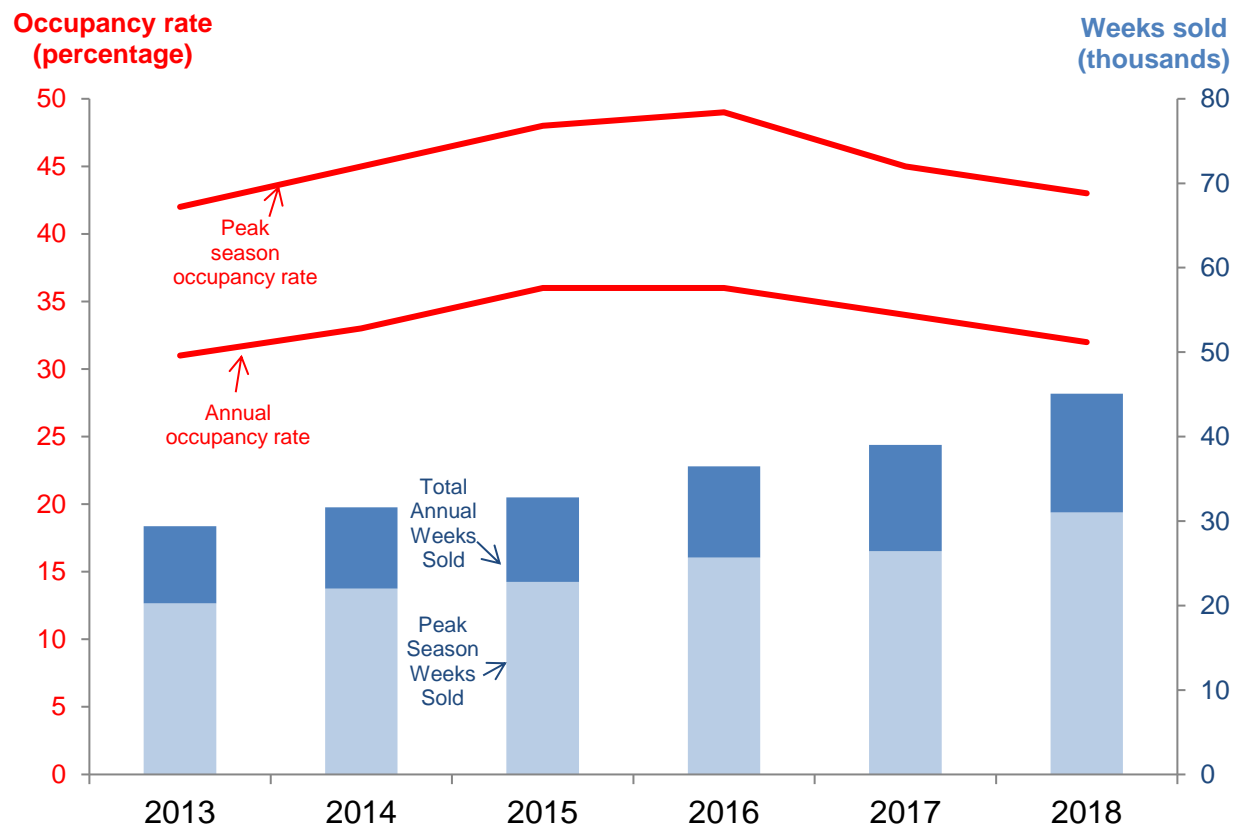
Source: Tourism NI

It can be seen that the number of self-catering units increased from 2,775 in 2017 to 3,504 in 2018, which represents a 26% increase. Some establishments responded to the survey that they had registered in advance of the Open Golf 2019, but reported they were not currently operating. These units are considered closed and are not part of the occupancy calculations, but may account for some of the large increase in the number of units.

Full information regarding self-catering stock from 2013 can be found in the [Self-Catering Occupancy Statistics Additional Tables](#).

## Occupancy rates and weeks sold

Figure 1: Unit occupancy and weeks sold (annual and peak season) 2013-2018



Peak season=April-September

Full information on Northern Ireland self-catering accommodation can be found on the following link [Northern Ireland Self-Catering Occupancy Statistics Additional Tables](#)

There were an estimated 45,100 weeks sold in self-catering establishments during 2018 compared to an estimated 39,000 weeks sold in 2017. Generally, there has been a steady rise in estimated weeks sold over recent years.

The self-catering occupancy rate depends on the number of self-catering units available in Northern Ireland as well as the number of weeks sold. Stock has been rising over the last two years and this can impact survey results as a greater number of units available can result in unit occupancy rates appearing to remain flat, yet the number of guests and weeks sold could have increased.

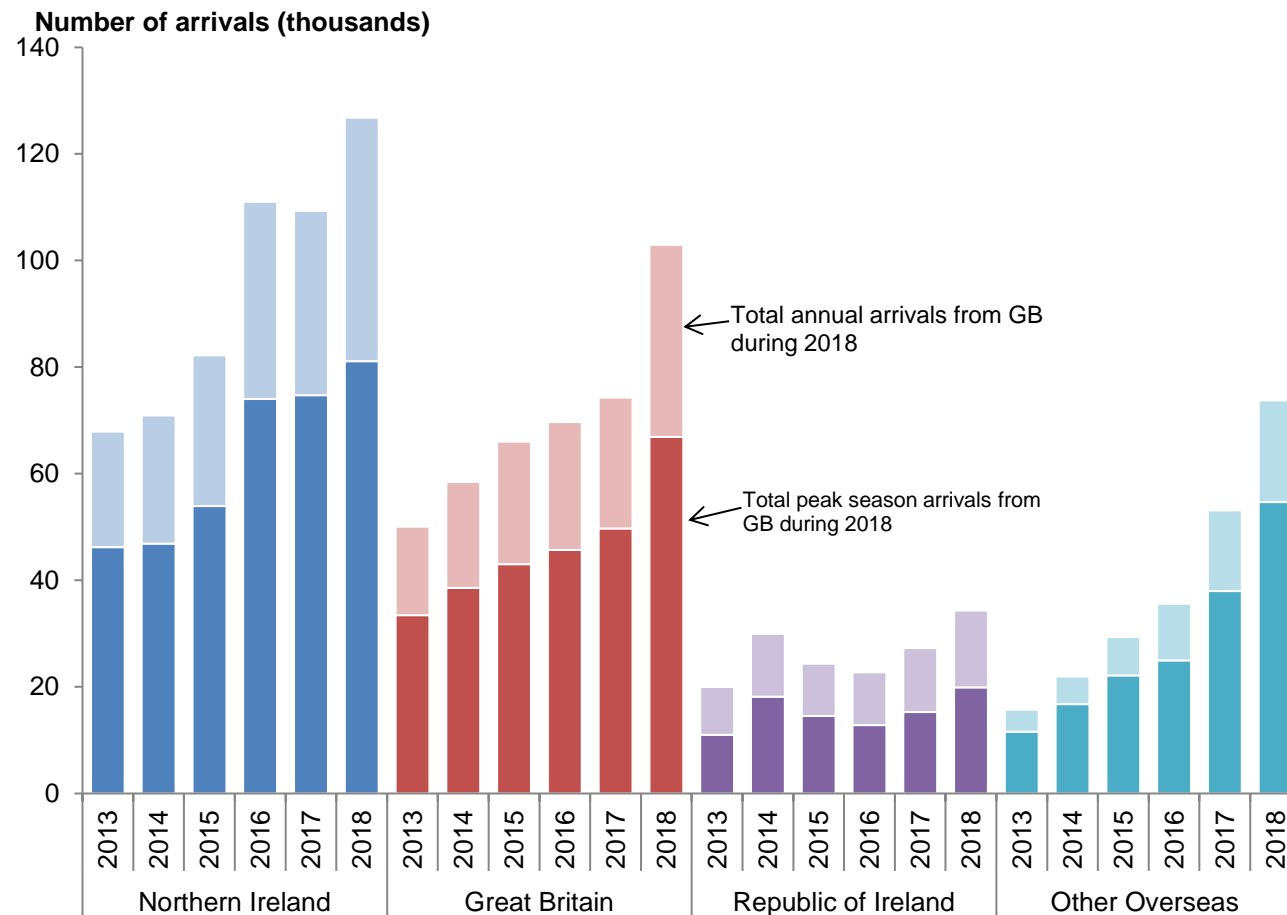
The self-catering unit occupancy rate was estimated to be 32% during 2018. During peak season, April to September, the occupancy rate was estimated to be 43%. Figure 1 shows the trend in weeks sold and annual and peak season occupancy rates since 2011.

Of the 45,100 weeks sold during 2018, 31,000 (69%) were during peak season (Figure 1).

## Arrivals by country of residence

An arrival does not take into consideration the length of stay, therefore a party of 5 staying for two weeks is treated as 5 arrivals, as would a party of 5 staying for one week.

**Figure 2: Total arrivals (annual and peak season) by country of residence 2013-2018**



It is estimated that there were 337,900 arrivals to self-catering establishments during 2018.

Figure 2 shows estimated arrivals by country of residence over time (2013 – 2018). There has been a general upward trend in arrivals from all areas since 2013.

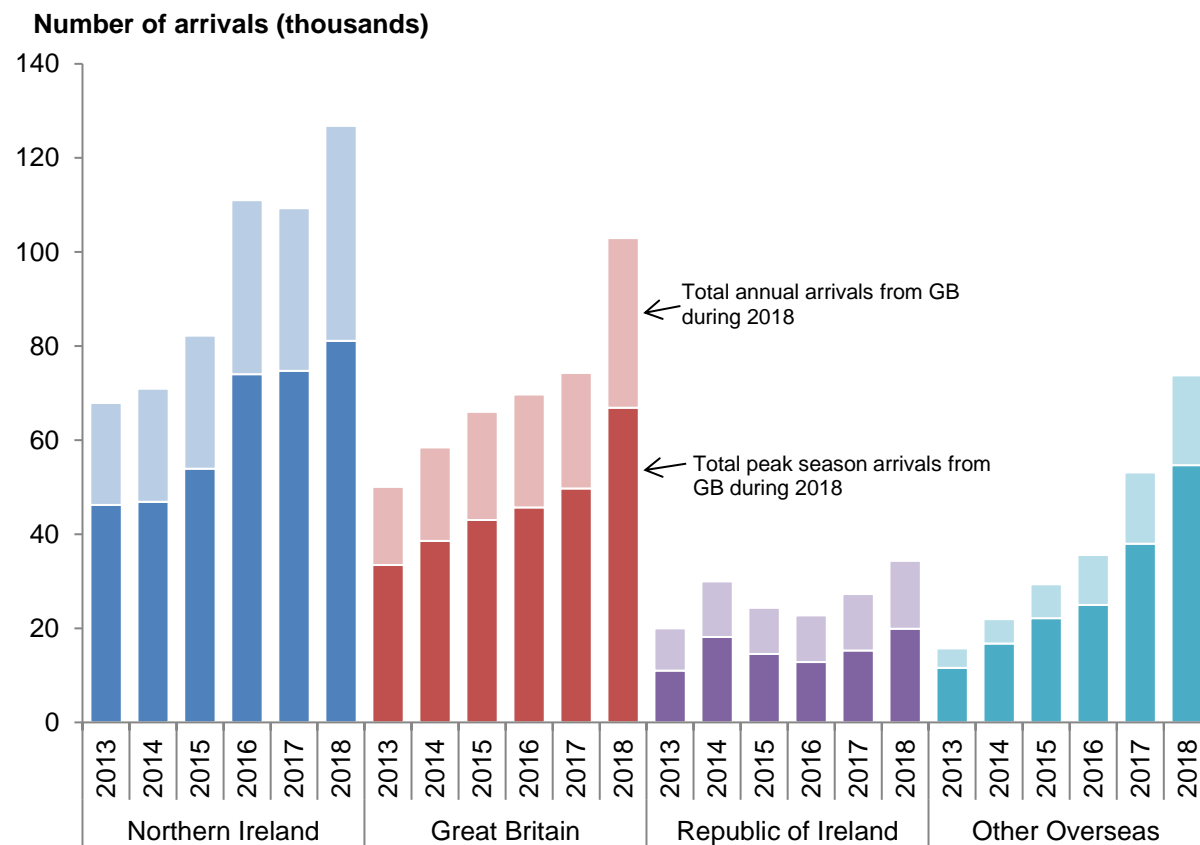
During 2018 approximately 66% of all estimated arrivals came during peak season (April to September). This proportion has remained at a similar level since 2013.

As with annual arrivals, from 2013 there has been a general upward trend in peak season arrivals from all areas.

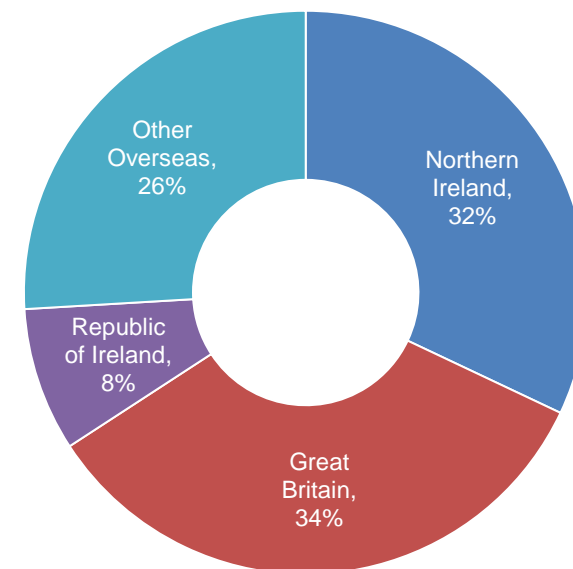
## Guests by country of residence

During 2018, an estimated 45,100 weeks were sold in self-catering establishments. Reflecting the number of arrivals, when looking at the trend since 2013, estimates would suggest that there has been growth in guests from Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Other Overseas, as seen in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Total weeks sold (annual and peak season) by country of residence of guests 2013-2018**



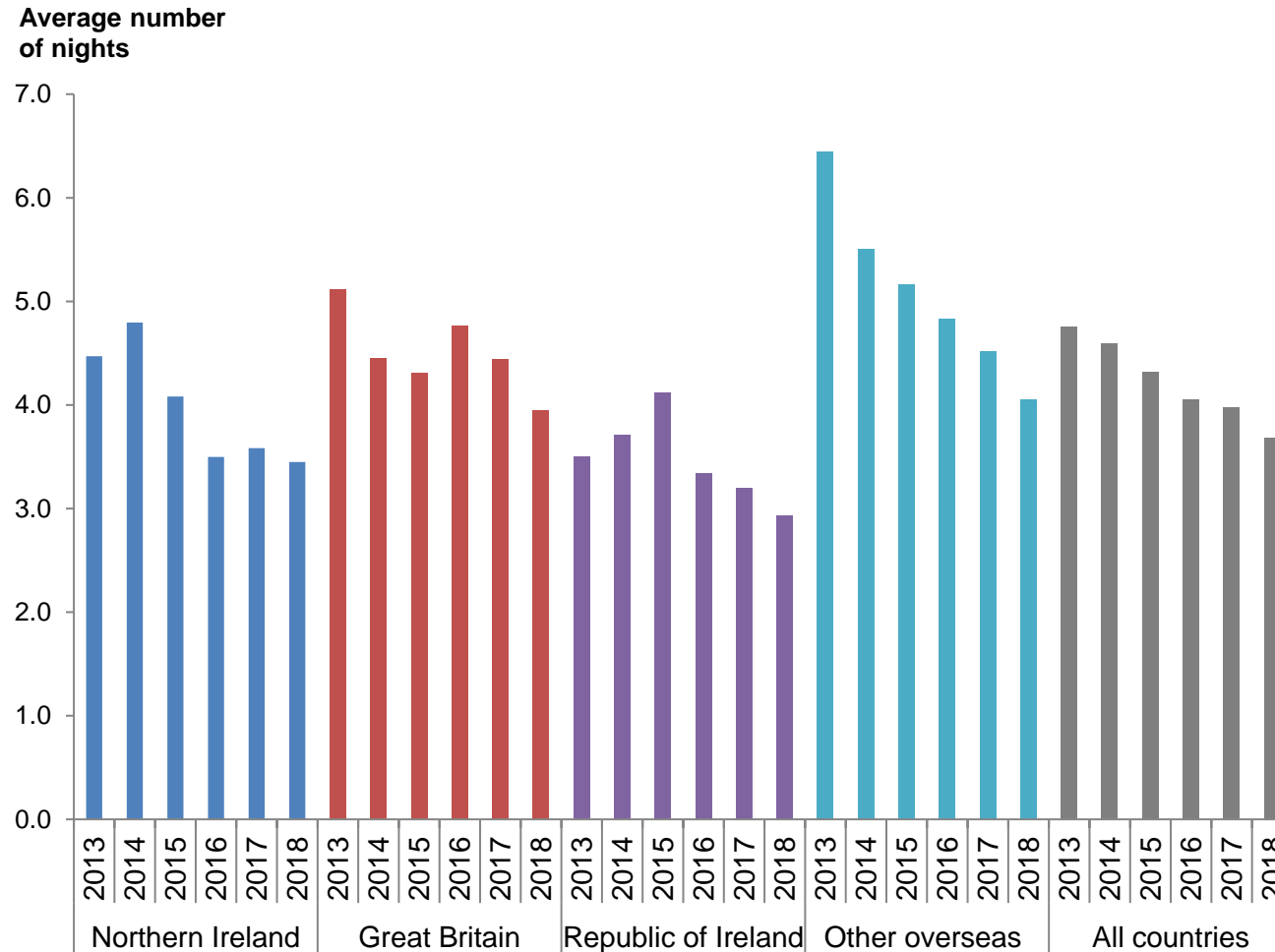
**Figure 4: Proportion of total annual weeks sold by country of residence of guests 2018**



Guests from both Northern Ireland and Great Britain each made up similar proportions of all guests at self-catering establishments during 2018 with an estimated 32% from NI and 34% from GB. A further 26% of guests were from Other Overseas and 8% from the Republic of Ireland (Figure 4).

## Average length of stay

**Figure 5: Average length of stay by country of residence 2013 – 2018**



During 2018 the average length of stay in self-catering accommodation was 3.7 nights.

Figure 5 shows that from 2013 the average number of nights spent in self-catering accommodation in Northern Ireland has generally been declining for guests from each region.

During 2018, the estimated average number of nights spent in self-catering accommodation ranged from 2.9 nights for guests from the Republic of Ireland to 4.1 nights for guests from other overseas.

## Background Notes

### Occupancy Survey - Methodology

#### Sample

All tourist accommodation providers in Northern Ireland must receive certification by Tourism NI in order to operate. It is illegal to offer tourist accommodation in NI without a certificate from TNI. The list of certified accommodation in TNI is known as the 'stock'. Table 1 in the report showed the stock when the self-catering survey was issued.

The 2018 self-catering survey was conducted by means of a postal questionnaire covering the period January-December of that year. The questionnaire was issued in December 2018; it was also emailed to any establishments that had an email address and an option for returning it through the same method. All owners (a full census) were asked to provide the length of stay, number of arrivals and country of residence for each arrival for each booking throughout the year.

In 2018, there were a total of 2,505 establishments in the self-catering stock (Table 1). Of these, 429 returned completed responses. Additionally, there 48 establishments that had informed us they had ceased trading or refused to participate. The resultant response rate is 24%.

#### Weighting

All the analysis was carried out on weighted data. The data was weighted for non-response assuming no non-response bias and also weighted by local authority and number of units.

#### Terminology

The following definitions are employed throughout the report

- “**establishment**”: refers to the total property of self-catering chalets/houses/flats
- “**units**”: refer to the actual number of chalets/houses/flats within an establishment
- “**seasonal**”: refers to the period “April-September” which in tourism is deemed to be peak season

A quality report on Tourism Statistics can be found at this [link](#).