

NATIONAL STATISTICS ASSESSMENT - OSR FEEDBACK AND A WAY FORWARD FOR USER SUGGESTIONS

BACKGROUND

1. The Human Resources Consultancy Services (HRCS) branch of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) publishes an annual statistical bulletin on pay in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).
2. In 2021, this bulletin was assessed for accreditation as National Statistics (NS) by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).
3. The statistics were awarded NS accreditation on 10 December 2021. The assessment report can be found [here](#).
4. A key part of the assessment involved the assessors talking to the people who used the statistics, to help them understand the current value of the bulletin and to obtain user's views on how it could be improved.
5. These users worked in a number of Departments in the NICS, in the Northern Ireland Prison Service, and in Trade Unions.

FEEDBACK FROM USERS

6. During the process of this assessment, some users expressed an interest in additional analyses which they felt would improve the bulletin. Four specific suggestions were received, as follows;
 - (i) Further analysis and breakdown of data by working pattern (i.e. analyses of pay of full-time vs part-time staff)
 - (ii) Analysis of highest to lowest earner ratios,
 - (iii) Data on pay for specific bands within Senior Civil Service (SCS), and
 - (iv) Analysis of NICS pay adjusted for inflation.
7. HRCS contacted the individuals who provided this feedback, to better understand their requirements, and to allow HRCS to determine if the suggestions were feasible/practicable.
8. The purpose of this paper is to inform users about how/if HRCS are taking forward these suggestions, and to provide a rationale and explanation if it has been decided that these suggestions should/could not be implemented.

HRCS RESPONSES TO FEEDBACK

Breakdown of data by working pattern

9. On further discussion with the individual who provided this feedback, it was confirmed that this analysis was not required and that HRCS should take no further action.

Highest to lowest earner ratios

10. On further discussion with the individual who provided this feedback, it was confirmed that this analysis was not required and that HRCS should take no further action.

Data on pay for specific Bands within the SCS

11. The Senior Civil Service is made up of four specific pay bands according to grade (i.e. Grade 5, Grade 3, Permanent Secretary and Head of the Civil Service (HOCS)).
12. In the current statistical bulletin, SCS are treated as one group, and the median pay for the SCS as a whole is presented in any tables where a breakdown by grade is provided.
13. It is however possible to provide the suggested level of detail, as the median pay for each of the four grades within the SCS is available.
14. HRCS will take forward this suggestion for future bulletins. Additional columns/rows will be included in the appropriate tables in the bulletin and the ODS files which are supplied along with the publication.

NICS pay adjusted for inflation

15. On further discussion with the individual who provided this feedback, it was determined that requirement was for the pay bulletin to publish time-series information on NICS pay adjusted for inflation.
16. The stated purpose of this analysis would be to strengthen TUS' position in pay negotiations by allowing them to present a better indication of actual spending power i.e. where below inflation pay increases actually represent real-terms cuts in pay.
17. It was discussed and agreed at the Pay Bulletin User Group meeting that this type and level of analysis is not in keeping with the aims and objectives of the bulletin.
18. Given that the primary aims of the bulletin are to assist in the development and evaluation of public policy, and to inform the public about social and economic matters, our objective should be to provide independent, impartial information and analyses, free from conflicts of interest.
19. On that basis, it is our view that the bulletin should not include this information, as it conflicts with our objective of providing impartial information. In this case, carrying out and presenting such analysis could be seen as potentially prejudicial to one side of a political debate.
20. As it stands, the bulletin presents all the information necessary for an external user to perform the required analyses if necessary.