Background Quality Report for Personnel Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service

This background quality report provides information about the quality of the data used to produce the Personnel Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2024, and any statistics derived from these data.

Introduction – Context for the quality report

This report provides an overview of the human resource profile of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) in 2024 and how it has changed over time. Information is broken down by analogous grade, department, work-pattern and reason for leaving.

The primary data source, with the exception in part of the NIPS, was HRConnect, the Human Resource Service for the NICS. Data for NIPS staff not on HRConnect was obtained from NIPS's own personnel data systems. Figures are based on actual staff in post at 1 April each year; analyses of leavers are on a financial year basis.

Relevance – the degree to which the statistical product meets user needs in both coverage and context.

Covers a breakdown of NICS staff at 1 April 2024 by analogous grade, department and work pattern. Comparative figures and trend data have been included where possible.

Accuracy and Reliability - The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value.

Coverage of staff is 100%. The main computer system from which the data are extracted is also used to pay staff.

Timeliness and punctuality:- Timeliness refers to the time gap between publication and the reference period. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.

The report relates to 1 April 2024, and is published as pre-announced on 9 July 2024. There was a slight delay in publication in 2024 due to the UK Parliamentary Election on 4 July.

Accessibility and Clarity - Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.

The report contains a description of the staff covered, and definitions of the terms used. It is available on the NISRA website and contains contact details for further information.

The main report is made available in a PDF format, which includes commentaries, notes, and charts. This can be viewed using free software. Data tables and charts are available on the website in an open Document Spreadsheet (ODS) format

Coherence and Comparability - Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.

Counts of staff depend on the reference date, whether staff are permanent or casual, whether those on a career break are included, and whether secondees are included.

There have been various changes in the scope of the NICS over the past decade as a result of the transfer of functions (and the associated staff) to new bodies outside the NICS, or from outside bodies to the NICS. The headcount figures are on the same basis as those in the 'Employment in the Northern Ireland Civil Service', the 'Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service' and 'Pay Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service' publications.

Where appropriate comparisons are made with GB figures. However, some data for GB comparators were not available in time for publication of the 2024 report.

Trade-offs between Output Quality Components - Trade-offs are the extent to which different aspects of quality are balanced against each other.

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Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions - The processes for finding out about users and uses, and their views on the statistical products.

The report contains contact details in case users wish to provide feedback, comments or queries on the publication.

Key stakeholders, notably People and Organisational Development, regularly communicate their personnel statistics requirements to NISRA. In addition an annual customer satisfaction survey is undertaken to review the publication by gathering feedback on the statistics produced, how well they meet user needs and whether there are any suggested improvements. Where specific changes have been suggested, these have been incorporated as far as possible.

Following a User Consultation and in the face of constrained resources, it was decided to continue with publication of the Personnel Statistics in the NICS report in the same format and aim to streamline production process with the application of a Reproducible Analytical Pipeline (RAP) approach, using R code to create an HTML output in the next year.

Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden - The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output.

The annual operational cost (staff time) of producing this publication is approximately £5,560.

There is no respondent burden, since the data are held on an administrative system.

Confidentiality, Transparency and Security - The procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices.

Data are held on a network that is only accessible to the few statisticians who need access.