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Further results from Census 2021 published today

9.30am Tuesday 21 March 2023

The Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency today released the fourth set of results from Census 2021. The new statistics cover the remaining topics including labour market (e.g. occupation, hours worked), highest level of qualifications, marital status, and sexual orientation.

Among the key points are:

- of the 1.515 million adults aged 16 and over, Census 2021 recorded 849,000 (56%) in employment, 42,000 (2.8%) who were unemployed and 624,000 (41%) who were economically inactive (e.g. retired, long-term sick or disabled);
- around 1 in 3 adults (32%, or 486,000 people aged 16 and over) indicated that their highest level of qualification was degree/NVQ 4 or above, while just under one-quarter (24%, or 361,000) had no qualifications;
- over the last six censuses there has been a fall in the percentage of adults (aged 16 and over) who are 'Married' - down from 61% in 1971 to 46% in 2021, with a rise in the percentage who are 'Single' - up from 31% in 1971 to 38% in 2021;
- a sexual orientation question was included for the first time in Census 2021. In total 2.1% of people aged 16 and over (31,600 adults) identified as LGB+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other sexual orientation), 90% of adults identified as 'Straight or Heterosexual' and 8% of adults either ticked 'prefer not to say' or did not answer the question;
- the proportion of adults who identified as LGB+ varied by area and age. By area, this ranged from 4.1% of adults in Belfast to 1.1% in Mid-Ulster and by age from 4.6% of people aged 16 to 24 to 0.3% of people aged 65 and over.

Labour Market (Economic Status)

- Census 2021 recorded 1.515 million adults aged 16 and over, of which:
 - 849,000 (56%) were in employment,
 - 42,000 (2.8%) were unemployed and
 - 624,000 (41%) were economically inactive (e.g. retired, looking after home and family, long-term sick or disabled);
- of the 849,000 adults in employment, 81% were employees, 15% were self-employed and 4% were full-time students who also had a job;
- Derry City & Strabane had the highest percentage of adults who were unemployed (3.7%), while Fermanagh & Omagh, Mid Ulster and Lisburn & Castlereagh had the lowest (at 2.2% each);
- of the 624,000 economically inactive adults, around half (306,000 adults) were 'Retired', with a further 18% (113,000 adults) 'Long-term sick or disabled';
- at 56.1% Northern Ireland has proportionately more adults in employment than Wales (53.5%) but less than England (57.4%);

Labour Market (Hours worked)

- around 70% of adults in employment were working full-time (31 hours or more per week) with the remaining 30% working part-time (30 hours or less per week). In total 10% of the adults in employment were working 15 hours or less per week (87,000 adults);
- from 2011 to 2021 there has been faster growth in part-time workers than in full-time workers. Part-time workers increased by +13% (from 232,000 in 2011 to 263,000 in 2021), while full-time workers increased by +3% (from 567,000 to 586,000). Those working 15 hours or less per week grew from 66,000 in 2011 to 87,000 in 2021 (an increase of +31%);

Labour Market (Industry)

- in Census 2021 the two largest industry sectors of Northern Ireland workers were:
 - 'Human Health & Social work activities', with 140,000 people working in that sector; and
 - 'Wholesale & retail trade, including repair of motor vehicles' with 137,000 people working in that sector;
- these two sectors experienced contrasting changes over the decade between Census 2011 and Census 2021,
 - the number of workers in the 'Human Health & Social Work activities' sector grew from 14.2% of the workforce in 2011 to 16.5% of the workforce in 2021,
 - conversely, workers in the 'Wholesale & retail trade, including repair of motor vehicles' sector fell from 17.5% of the workforce in 2011 to 16.1% in 2021.

These changes mirror the increasing healthcare needs of the population and the challenges the retail sector faces.

- In 2021 amongst females the two most common employment sectors were 'Human Health & Social work activities' (112,000 females) and 'Wholesale & retail trade including repair of motor vehicles' (65,000 females). However, amongst males 'Wholesale & retail trade including repair of motor vehicles' (73,000 males) and 'Construction' (64,000 males) were the two most common sectors;

Labour Market (Occupation)

- the largest occupation group in Census 2021 was 'Professional Occupations' with 172,000 workers (e.g. healthcare professionals, engineers, teachers, IT professionals);
- amongst females the two most common occupations were 'Professional occupations' (97,000 females) and 'Caring, leisure and other service occupations' (75,000 females). However amongst males 'Skilled trades' (99,000 males) and 'Professional occupations' (75,000 males) were the two most common groups;

Highest Level of Qualification

- around 1 in 3 adults (32%, or 486,000 people aged 16 and over) indicated that their highest level of qualification was degree/NVQ 4 or above, while just under one-quarter (24%, or 361,000) had no qualifications;
- the highest level of qualifications of our population has changed between Census 2011 and Census 2021. The proportion of adults with no qualifications fell from 29% in 2011 to 24% in 2021, while the proportion of adults with degree/NVQ 4 or above qualifications rose from 24% to 32%;
- the proportion of adults with no qualifications ranged from 18% in Lisburn & Castlereagh to 28% in Derry City & Strabane, while the proportion of adults having degree/NVQ 4 or above qualifications ranged from 29% in Mid & East Antrim to 39% in Lisburn & Castlereagh;

People living in communal establishments

- there were 26,000 people (1.4% of our population) living in 1,420 communal establishments at the time of the 2021 Census;
- around half of the 26,000 people living in communal establishments lived in a Care Home (13,000 people), while a further 7,000 people lived in an educational communal establishment (e.g. student hall of residence);

Marital or Civil Partnership Status

- Census 2021 recorded 693,000 adults (aged 16 and over) who were Married or in a Civil Partnership. This group made up 46% of our adult population. In contrast 577,000 adults (38%) were Single (never married/civil partnered);
- in the last 50 years there has been a decline in the percentage of adults who are 'Married' - down from 61% in 1971 to 46% in 2021, with a rise in the percentage who are 'Single' - up from 31% in 1971 to 38% in 2021;
- over the same time period the percentage of adults who are 'Separated, widowed or divorced' has risen from 9% in 1971 to 16% in 2021. Indeed the number of divorced adults has risen from 3,000 in 1971 to over 90,000 in 2021;

Couple relationships within households

- of the adult population who live in households (i.e. excluding those living in Care Homes, Halls of Residence etc.), just over half lived as part of a couple within the same household (53% or 794,000 people in a married, civil partnered or co-habiting couple). The remaining 695,000 adults (47%), did **not** live as part of a couple within the same household;
- of the 11 Local Government Districts, all except for Belfast and Derry City & Strabane had a majority of adults living in a couple within the household;

Sexual Orientation

- a question on sexual orientation was asked for the first time in Census 2021;
- in total 31,600 adults (aged 16 and over) or 2.1% identified as LGB+ ('Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other sexual orientation'), 1.364 million adults or 90% identified as 'Straight or Heterosexual' and 119,000 adults or 8% either did not answer the question or ticked 'Prefer not to say';
- 4.1% of adults in Belfast identified as LGB+, while 1.1% of adults in Mid-Ulster identified as LGB+;
- 4.6% of people aged 16 to 24 identified as LGB+, this falls to 0.3% of people aged 65 and over;
- Northern Ireland (2.1%) has the lowest percentage of adults who identify as (LGB+), thereafter comes Wales with 3.0% of adults who identify as LGB+ and then England with 3.2%;

Irish and Ulster-Scots language ability

- around 7% (127,000 people) of our population aged three and over reported that they could speak the Irish language. Of this group around 70,000 people spoke Irish at least once a week;
- in total 3.3% (61,000 people) of our population aged three and over reported that they could speak the Ulster-Scots language. Of this group around 41,000 people spoke Ulster-Scots at least once a week;

Year of Arrival of people born outside Northern Ireland

- in total 257,000 or 13.5% of our population were born outside Northern Ireland. Of this group 105,000 came to live in Northern Ireland in the last ten years (2011 to 2021) and a further 66,000 came to live here between 2001 and 2010;

Address One Year Ago

- in total 157,000 people lived at a different address 12 months prior to Census Day (21 March 2021). This includes 129,000 people who had a different address within Northern Ireland, with the remaining 27,000 people (or 1.4% of our population) having an address outside Northern Ireland (i.e. Great Britain, Republic of Ireland or elsewhere);

Place of work or study

- there were 814,000 adults (excluding full-time students) in employment (i.e. working). Of these, 154,000 (19%) indicated that they worked mainly at or from home. Of the remainder, 545,000 had a workplace within Northern Ireland and 115,000 either had no fixed place of work or worked outside Northern Ireland;
- there were 402,000 children/adults aged four and over who were in full-time education (i.e. studying). Of these, the vast majority (95.1% or 382,000) had a place of study within Northern Ireland. Of the remainder, 15,000 studied mainly at or from home and 5,000 either had no fixed place of study or studied outside Northern Ireland.

Notes to Editors

1. The statistics released today provide a further and final wide ranging profile of the population covering: labour market; qualifications; communal establishments; marital or civil partnership status; couple relationships within households; sexual orientation; Irish and Ulster Scots language; migration and travel to work or study.
2. The information is presented for Northern Ireland and each of the 11 local councils. The full information can be accessed on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) website at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census2021>.
3. A number of supporting papers on Census 2021, including a number of Statistics Bulletins and infographics, are available on the NISRA website at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census2021>. The Census statistics underlying this report can also be accessed from this link.
4. Census statistics are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency free from political influence and have been assessed as National Statistics by the Office for Statistics Regulation at <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>. Census 2021 statistics meet the highest standards of trust, quality and value and are produced using standards set out in the statutory Code of Practice for Statistics at <https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-code/>. The census plays a fundamental role in the provision of official statistics – census data are used to inform key policies, plan key services and allocate public funds.
5. Media queries to Department of Finance Press Office by email dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk or telephone 028 9081 6724.
6. We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of this release. Please send feedback to the email address below.

7. Today's release of results from Census 2021 will be followed by a number of further releases. Further information about these is set out in the Census 2021 Output Prospectus at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/2021-census/outputs-prospectus/release-plans> which will be regularly updated as the release programme proceeds.

8. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from Census Customer Services at:

Telephone: 028 9025 5156

Email: census@nisra.gov.uk

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