

census
2021

Census 2021: Outputs Strategy for Northern Ireland

Assessment of the responses received

February 2021

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1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) published their proposal for the “2021 Census Outputs Strategy” in October 2018. NISRA invited views on this proposal through a public consultation that was launched on the 18 October 2018 and ran for a period of 12 weeks ending on 9 January 2019. This consultation allowed NISRA to gather the views of users on the proposed strategy for producing and disseminating 2021 Census results, including specialist products and census microdata.

This report presents the views expressed in response to the 2021 Census Outputs Strategy Consultation and the results of NISRA’s assessment of those responses. It is important to note that the consultation was to inform a proposed way forward. The final design of output content will be subject to further research, resources, feasibility, UK harmonisation considerations, availability of administrative data, testing and feedback from users.

The information presented in this document specifically refers to the proposed outputs for the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland, unless otherwise stated. We are working closely with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Records of Scotland (NRS) to ensure UK comparability of results, where possible and appropriate.

Distribution List

Details of the consultation were issued to approximately 400 key users who were identified through the Census office mailing list and a range of other key partners including:

- Northern Ireland’s MPs, MLAs and MEPs;
- Key advisory groups such as Demographic Statistics, Statistics Advisory Committee and Statistics Coordinating Group;
- A range of statistics and research organisations including the ONS, NRS, CSO and Northern Irish Universities; and
- Other census users known to Census Office

To ensure that the general public were aware of the consultation, the consultation was also promoted on the NISRA website, through the NISRA and nidirect official social media pages and in the NINIS e-zine.

Methods of completion

The recommended way to respond to the consultation was online at the nidirect consultation hub using the Citizen Space online consultation package, and users were encouraged to comment on as many topics as were of interest. To encourage response and cater for a variety of user preferences, users were also able to respond by email or post using printed copies of the questionnaire.

Responses

A total of 52 valid responses were received, 40 were received via the consultation hub where users were able to type their responses directly into the Citizen Space system, and 12 were received via email. The majority of responses (30) were received from individuals, and 22 were received from organisations. The breakdown by respondent type is given in figure 1.

Figure 1 – Respondent type

Topic	Frequency (by most popular)
Local Government	16
Statutory body (e.g. Health, education, housing, etc.)	9
Central Government	8
Charity / Community / Voluntary	6
Social / Academic research	4
Private sector	2
Other	7

In the table above, Other relates to 2 respondents that stated they were students, and 5 individual write in responses including; “Professional organisation”, “Consultancy”, “Politics”, “Parliament”, and “Public Sector economic and strategic”.

Moderation

Moderation was applied to the responses received in accordance with the moderation policy stated within the consultation document. Moderation was also applied to ensure the anonymity of any individual respondent who did not wish to have their name published alongside their response. Respondent names will only be provided alongside their comment within this report if consent was provided.

Reports and further information relating to the 2021 Census Outputs Strategy Consultation can be found on the NISRA website¹.

¹ [NISRA Outputs strategy consultation page \(opens in a new window\)](#)

2. Evaluation Criteria

In drafting our response, we have assessed responses provided against the criteria of Accessibility and Flexibility, Timeliness of Release, Public Confidence, and User Acceptability. We identified where users had provided positive or negative comments relating to our intended design. We've also considered any other comments users made about our design that do not fit neatly into the categories laid out below.

Criteria	Description
Accessibility and Flexibility	<p>This covers the users' ability to easily locate and access the 2021 Census, including access to commissioned tables, safeguarded and secure products, metadata and a commentary to help users understand and interpret any published data.</p> <p>This criterion also includes access to the proposed flexible dissemination system that will allow users to develop tables to meet their specific needs as soon as the data is available.</p>
Timeliness of Release	<p>This is a measure of the punctuality of the release of census outputs and includes the release of specialist products (e.g. microdata and origin and destination). Census outputs should be produced as soon as possible after census day.</p>
Public Confidence	<p>This covers ensuring that data is seen to be anonymised and appropriate statistical disclosure controls have been implemented. This includes ensuring that the methods used to produce outputs are transparent and fully communicated to users.</p>
User Acceptability	<p>This covers testing the functionality of output solutions against user requirements. This can be assessed through this consultation process and from any other feedback provided.</p>

The responses provided will be used to understand the impact (positive, negative or none) of our intended design on the outputs for users. This impact will be measured against the criteria above and used to identify the most important concerns for users and prioritise research on these aspects.

3. Topics and Geographies

We asked respondents to indicate their main topics of interest and the geographies they used the most from the 2011 Census. If respondents didn't use the 2011 Census results, we were still interested to hear their views about the outputs they would be interested in from the 2021 Census. This information will be used alongside previous data usage information to help us design and prioritise the outputs for the 2021 Census.

Topics

We wanted to know what the main topics of interest were for users following the 2011 Census.

Number of responses to question	49
Key findings	Age, general health, economic activity, religion, country of birth, long-term health problem or disability, and main language were the most important topics.

Figure 2 – Responses to the question “What are your main topics of interest?”

Topic	Frequency (by most popular)
Age	40
General Health	38
Economic Activity	37
Religion	35
Country of Birth	34
Long-term health problem or disability	34
Main Language	34
Ethnic Group	32
Occupation	32
Migration	31
Travel to Work or Place of Study	31
Qualifications Held	30
Sex	28
Type of Long-Term Condition	26
Household and Family Relationships	24
Marital and Civil Partnership Status	24
Type of Accommodation	24
Passports Held	21
Tenure and landlord	21
Provision of Unpaid Care	20
Number of Rooms	19
Car or Van Availability	15
Central Heating	14
Other	8

Geographies

We wanted to know which geographies have been used following the 2011 Census.

Number of responses to question	48
Key findings	<p>Electoral ward, super output areas, and the 11 local government districts were the most used geographies.</p> <p>Other geography types, grid square, and nomenclature of Territorial Units for statistics were overall ranked as the least-used geographies.</p>

Figure 3 – Responses to the question “Which geographies from the 2011 Census results did you use?”

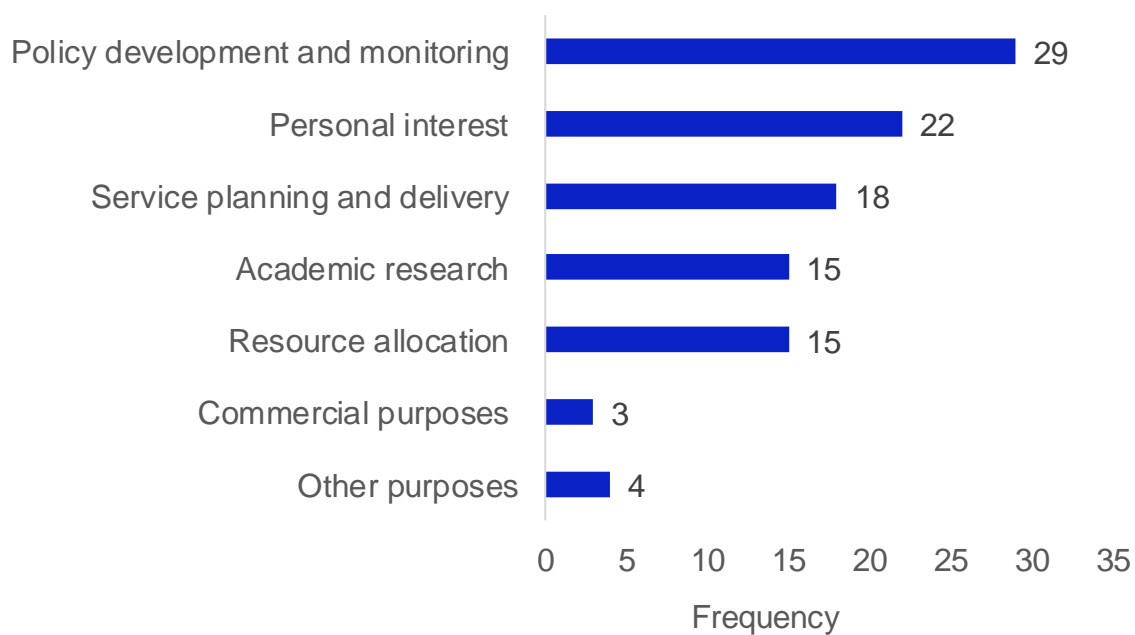
Geography	Frequency (by most popular)
Electoral Ward	35
Super Output Area	32
11 Local Government Districts	32
Small Area	28
26 Local Government Districts	26
Assembly Area	23
District Electoral Area 2014	22
Neighbourhood Renewal Area	21
Postcode	21
Health and Social Care Trust	20
Settlement 2015	20
Education and Library Board	16
Travel to Work Area	14
Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics	11
Grid Square	11
Other	2

Use of Census results

We were also interested to understand how the 2011 Census results had been used.

Number of responses to question	49
Key findings	Most frequent uses were for Policy development and monitoring (n=29), and Personal interest (n=22). Lowest frequency of use was Commercial purposes, and Other purposes.

Figure 4 – Responses to the question “What did you use the 2011 Census results for?”



4. Accessibility and Flexibility

Flexible Dissemination System

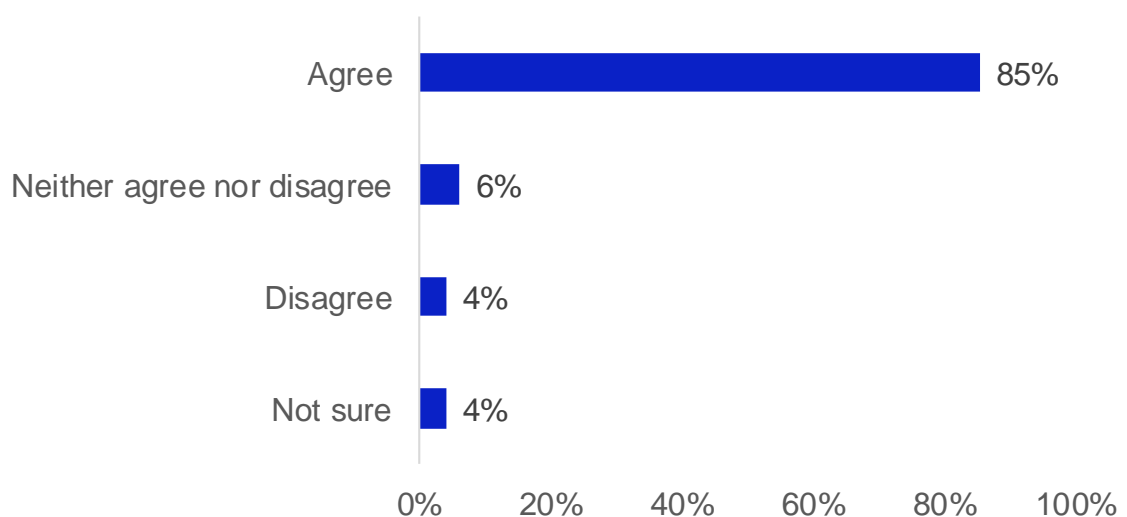
For 2021, NISRA are considering providing census data through a flexible dissemination system. This will allow users to access data to build customised tables that meet their specific needs. This approach will facilitate a quicker turnaround of standard outputs than was seen in 2011 and will enable users to have access to data as soon as it becomes available.

We wanted to establish the need for users to access the data this way and what impact it would have on their work.

We asked if users would prefer to access data using an online flexible dissemination system sooner after Census Day rather than waiting for us to develop tables.

Number of responses to question	48
Key findings	85% of respondents agreed that they would prefer to access data earlier via an online flexible dissemination system rather than waiting for tables to be developed by NISRA. 6% neither agreed nor disagreed 4% disagreed and 4% were not sure.

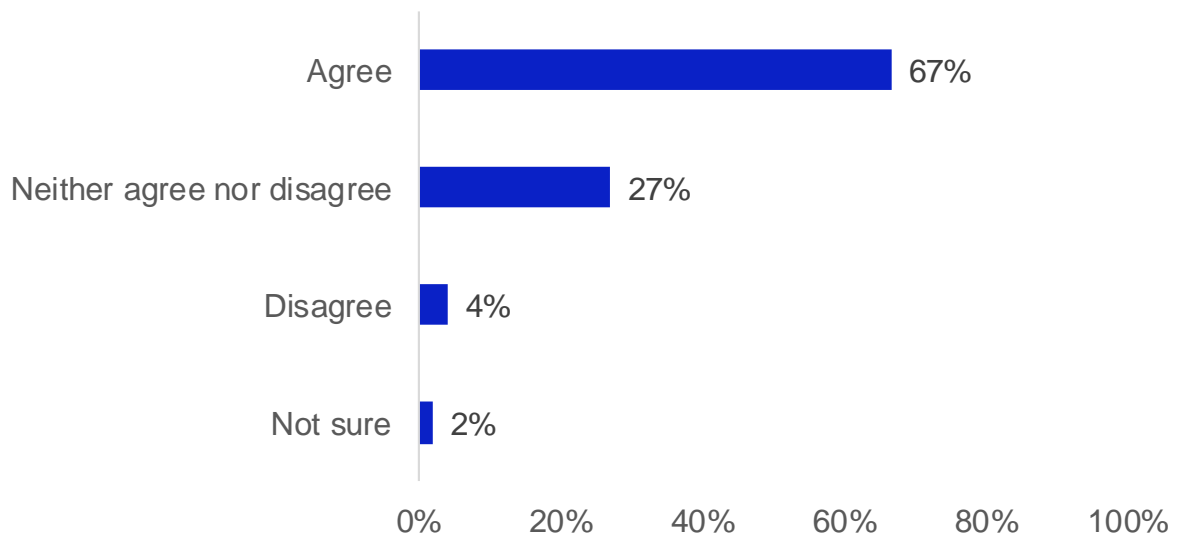
Figure 5 – Responses to the question “I would prefer earlier access to data after census day via an online flexible dissemination system rather than waiting for tables to be developed by NISRA.”



We wanted to know if users thought that defining their own tables is more useful than using pre-defined tables.

Number of responses to question	48
Key findings	67% of respondents agreed that being able to define their own tables was more useful than using pre-defined tables. 27% neither agreed nor disagreed 4% disagreed and 2% were not sure.

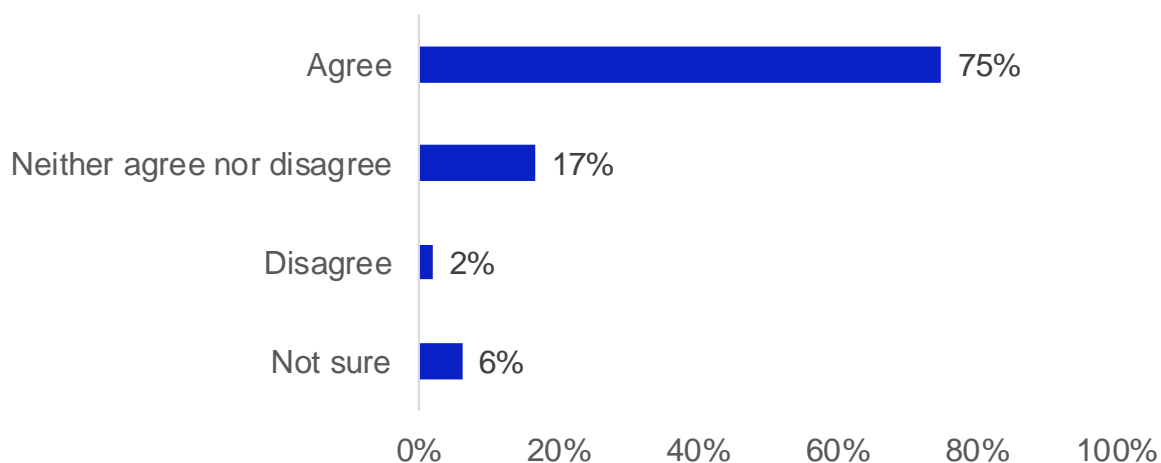
Figure 6 – Responses to the question “Being able to define my own tables is more useful to me than using predefined tables.”



We also wanted to identify if users would find it useful to be provided with a small number of univariate tables, similar to Key Statistics and Quick Statistics tables produced for the 2001 Census outputs, alongside those generated through the flexible dissemination system.

Number of responses to question	48
Key findings	75% of respondents agreed that they would find it useful to be provided with a small number of univariate tables alongside those they can generate through the flexible dissemination system. 17% neither agreed nor disagreed 2% disagreed and 6% were not sure.

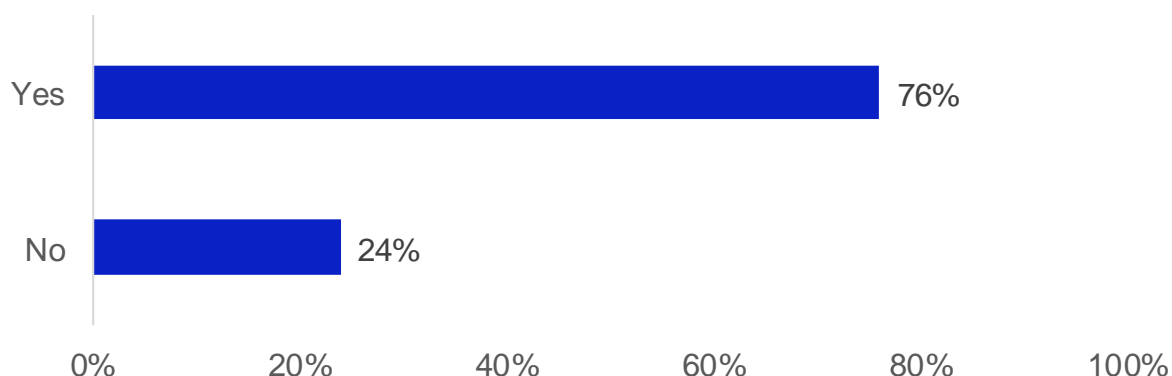
Figure 7 – Responses to the question “I would find it useful to be provided with a small number of univariate tables, similar to the Key Statistics and Quick Statistics tables produced for the 2011 Census outputs, alongside those I can generate through the flexible dissemination system.”



Whilst NISRA are currently considering releasing 2021 Census data using the flexible dissemination system, we wanted to identify if users would find it useful to access 2021 Census data through an application programming interface (API), which we are also aiming to provide. As such, we asked respondents if an API to access 2021 Census data would be useful to them.

Number of responses to question	46
Key findings	76% of respondents indicated that an API to access 2021 Census data would be useful. 24% indicated that an API would not be useful.

Figure 8 – Responses to the question “Currently, NISRA are considering releasing 2021 Census data using the flexible dissemination system, but we’ll also aim to provide an application programming interface (API). Would an API to access 2021 Census data be useful to you?”



Respondents were provided with the opportunity to provide a written response in relation to the flexible dissemination system and associated API. The responses received indicated that the flexible dissemination system was welcomed by most respondents as they felt it would improve the **accessibility and flexibility** of Census data. However, concerns were raised around the technical knowledge and skill required to utilise the flexible table builder and the API.

- Any system developed for flexible dissemination will need to be easily accessed by all users and not only for people skilled in data analysis. – *Catharine McWhirter, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.*

- The possibility of incorporating an application programming interface (API) is a welcome addition that could result in the further strengthening the resourcefulness of the statistical section of the DCSDC website by allowing residents to hone in on data specifically for our council region and within. – *Hugh McNickle, Derry City and Strabane District Council.*

- The Council has some concerns that an API/flexible dissemination programme would require a certain level of skill to use and thus would be a barrier to lay users.- *Alan Mitchell, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.*

- It would be useful to have greater access to what is currently designated, 'Specialist Product'. In particular this information would be useful for policy formation particularly in regard to Migration and whether or not there are particular issues regarding Urban/Rural migration patterns. - *Paul Kavanagh, Sinn Féin.*

- NILGA welcomes the proposal to include the development of a flexible dissemination system to enable users to meet their specific needs more easily. – *NILGA Executive Committee.*

- It would be useful to have a number of key statistics tables (including at Local Government District level) to refer to alongside the proposed flexible dissemination system. This would help users have confidence they were using comparable variables on the system (and therefore results) to any results published by NISRA. - *Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.*

- Having the prepared tables by NISRA is very useful, but I would also like to be able to create my own tables cross-tabulating data categories useful to my research. - *Johanne Devlin Trew.*

- API data especially useful to UK Data Service and potentially for data reprocessing projects which integrate population datasets from multiple sources. Also potentially a valuable aid to UK data assembly if integrated access is not available from NISRA/ONS/GROS. – *Prof. David Martin.*

Additional comments were received regarding **Timeliness of Release** with respondents indicating that early access to census data would be preferable for them:

- Timely access to information gathered by the census is a priority for me.
Roy McConkey.

- Earlier access to data in any form would be extremely useful. - *Anonymous*

- Surely you have web analytics from 2011 content to know what are the key data - produce them early. Consider your early outputs. - *Anonymous*

Two further comments were received regarding the **User Acceptability** of the API and flexible dissemination tool stressing the need for these to be user friendly and the need for appropriate guidance to be provided:

- In addition, any API should be user friendly and fully functional, with training provided for end users. - *Alan Mitchell, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.*

- Just make it user friendly. Clear, helpful file naming and not codes that mean nothing to the user. Files that don't need tidying up before being able to use. Think of your user and not your own needs and practices; move with the times and provide infographics and clear, snappy reporting and not just text heavy reports. Think user, not statistician. - *Anonymous*

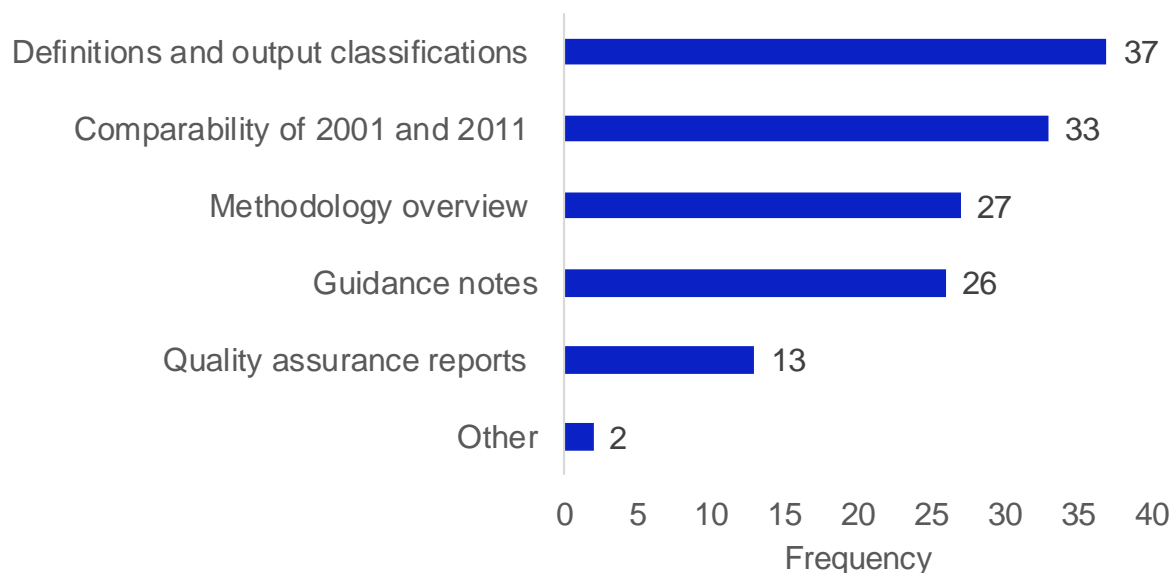
Supporting Information

Following the 2011 Census, NISRA provided a range of documentation about the information contained within the data tables, and supporting documentation, for example, about the quality of outputs and definitions used. This information provides context to the data, for example, how they were collected and the coverage of the data, publication dates, descriptions and search keywords. We want to make sure the information we provide is useful and easy for users to understand.

We wanted to know which supporting information was used following the 2011 Census.

Number of responses to question	44
Key findings	The most frequent supporting information used following the 2011 Census was for Definitions and output classifications (n=37), and for Comparability of 2001 and 2011 information (n=33).

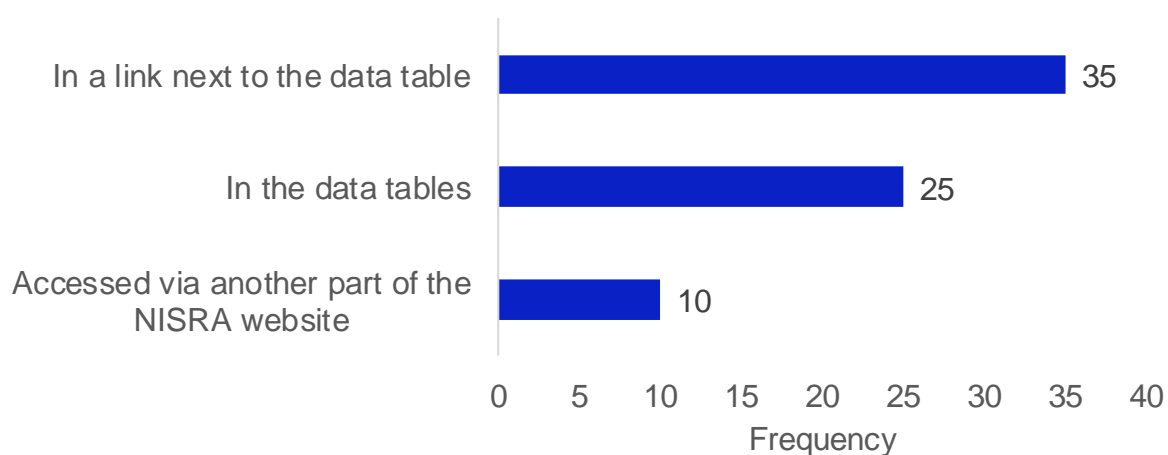
Figure 9 – Responses to the question “Which supporting information did you use in 2011?”



We wanted to know where users would expect to access supporting information.

Number of responses to question	48
Key findings	The most frequent expectation for accessing supporting information was through a link next to the data table.

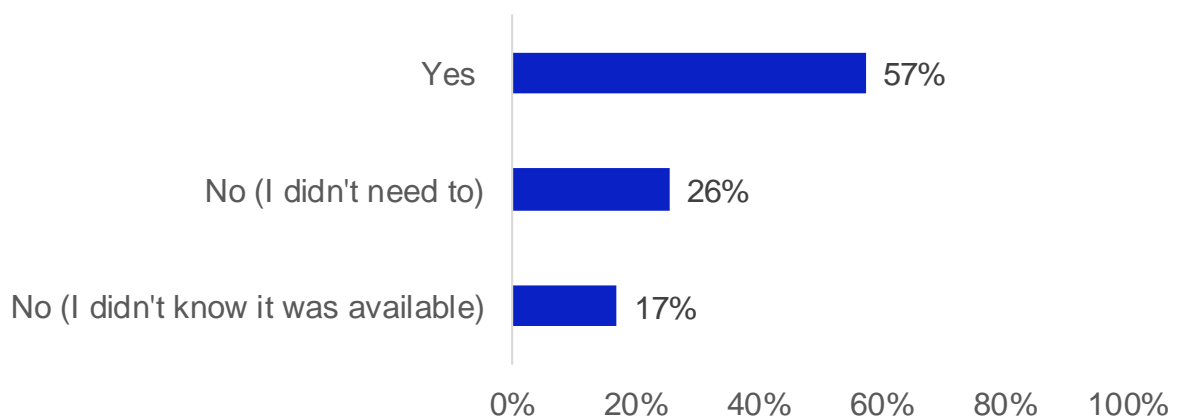
Figure 10 – Responses to the question “Where would you expect to access supporting information?”



We also wanted to know if users had previously read the accompanying analysis and commentary.

Number of responses to question	47
Key findings	57% of respondents indicated that they read the accompanying analysis and commentary. 26% indicated that they didn't need to. 17% indicated that they didn't know it was available.

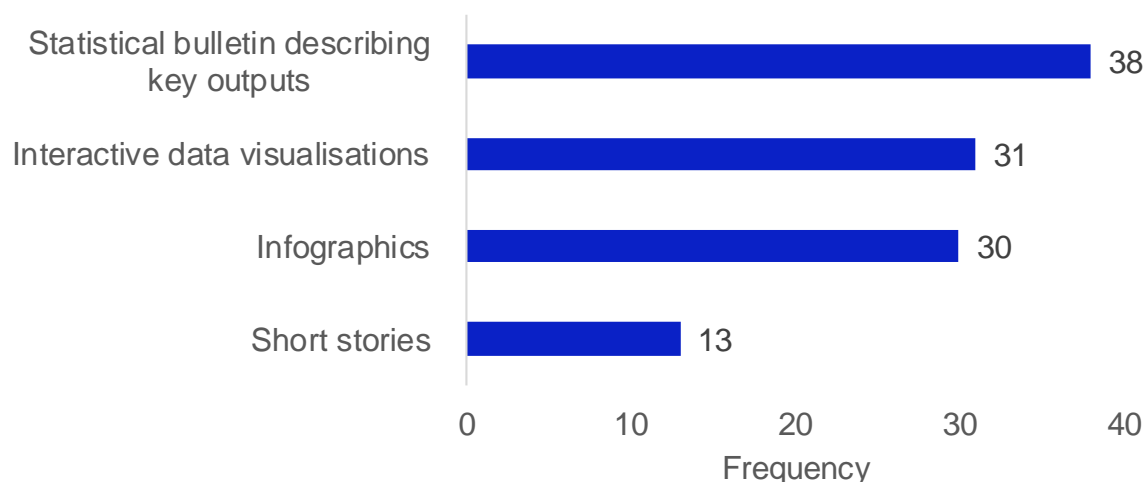
Figure 11 – Responses to the question “In 2011, did you read the accompanying analysis and commentary?”



We wanted to know what format of accompanying commentary users find most useful.

Number of responses to question	47
Key findings	The most useful accompanying commentary was a Statistical bulletin describing key outputs (n=38). Interactive data visualisations (n=31), and infographics (n=30) are 2 other formats that users find most useful.

Figure 12 – Responses to the question “What format of accompanying commentary do you find most useful?”



Respondents were provided with the opportunity to provide a written response in relation to the proposed supporting information that will be provided alongside 2021 Census results. All comments received relate to the **Accessibility and Flexibility** of our proposed census outputs with respondents indicating a preference for guidance to be included outside of the tables themselves. Respondents expressed a preference for supporting information to take the form of a commentary and analysis to be provided in statistical bulletins and press releases, interest was also expressed for data to be presented through infographics.

- Some supporting information should be made available in the meta data with links to larger reports where appropriate. - *Alan Mitchell, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.*

- We strongly support the proposal to include a commentary and analysis section in statistical bulletins and press releases, given recent experience e.g. of planning statistics being misconstrued by the media. We also welcome the intent to include short stories and infographics, which will enhance the accessibility of the statistics gathered, making them more user-friendly to the general public. - *NILGA Executive Committee.*

- I regularly use the NISRA statistical bulletins for population estimates. Generally these are very useful and of high quality. The Infographics are great to use in teaching. The recent addition of some interactive data visualisations is also very welcome. - *Johanne Devlin Trew.*

- I tend to like to access data flexibly and to work with tables with the minimum of extraneous text in them. I analyse the data in statistical or GIS software so what is most important to me if I am linking tables is a series of consistent identifiers and labels and for the data to be in a convenient text file format. - *Ian Shuttleworth.*

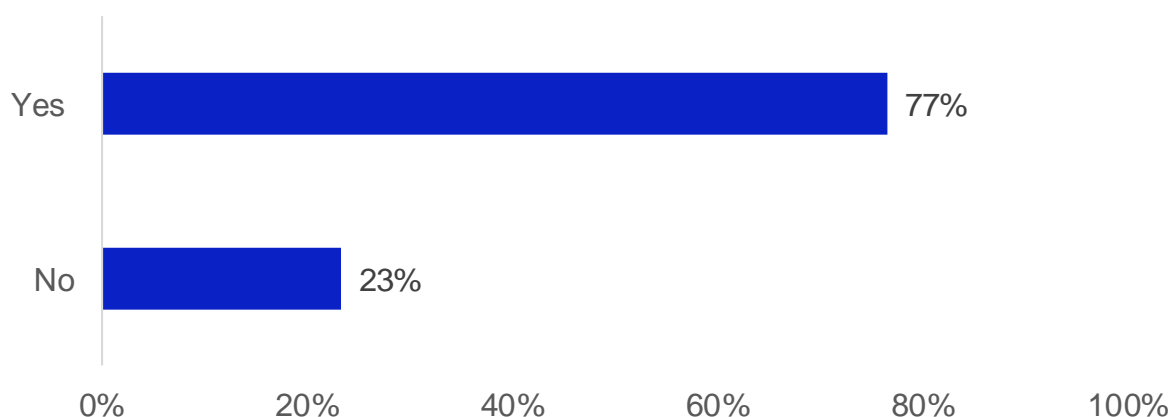
5. Timeliness of Release

We recognise the importance of the timely release of 2021 Census data. Census Office are currently considering the publication of Population and Household estimates in the first release by Summer 2022, with all other standard releases being published by Summer 2023. Census Office are also considering the coordination of release dates with other Census Offices across the UK and Ireland, however, it is important to note, that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the delay of the census in Scotland and Ireland until 2022 and as such there may be a delay to the production and publication of their results.

We wanted to know if users were content with the proposed release schedule.

Number of responses to question	47
Key findings	77% of respondents indicated that they are content with the proposed release schedule. 23% indicated that they are not.

Figure 13 – Responses to the question “Are you content with the proposed release schedule?”



Respondents were then provided with the opportunity to provide any additional comments in relation to the timeliness of release of census outputs. From the comments received it was clear that respondents felt that there was too great a time lag between the collection of Census data and the release of results or outputs.

- It is imperative that we have accurate population totals as soon as is possible. It is noted the Central Statistics Office (CSO) had its first preliminary report published in July 2016 after the Census being carried out in April 2016. – *Hugh McNickle, Derry City and Strabane District Council.*

-Too slow. CSO are much faster. – *Robert Barry, NI Assembly.*

- Earlier releases would be welcome. - *Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.*

-The Council respects the scale of the operation required to collate Census data and the time it takes to produce robust outputs for public consumption. However, the Council would urge the prioritisation of information where the Council is the only source. - *Alan Mitchell, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.*

-We appreciate that compiling all the information received does take time but NISRA will be aware of complaints following the last census that they were slow to release the figures in relation to religion (either current or brought up in). That is a political situation which will be even more prevalent following this census. - *Paul Kavanagh, Sinn Féin.*

-The Council request that NISRA give consideration to release of statistics for the 11 Local Government Districts as soon as possible in the timetable. - *Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.*

- The EC has set performance targets and will use this information as critical input to their judgement of the success or otherwise of their **#REDACTED#** programme objectives.

If this output forms part of the 'other standard releases being published by **#REDACTED#** then I'm content with the proposed release schedule. Any delay will risk negative feedback and criticism from the EC. - *Michael Power.*

- I believe it would more beneficial to release the publication of population and household estimates as soon as they have been counted, even a preliminary figure would be ideal as information such as this can very quickly become outdated, especially with the rate at which new homes are being built across the country. - *Kai-Sang Tse.*

- A two year wait seems excessive given modern computer systems and software. - *Roy McConkey.*

- While I understand that compiling the data is a very complex process, the time-lag means that reacting to fast-paced changes in the population can be very difficult for planning purposes. - *Professor Karen Corrigan.*

- Once data has been collected and processed, it should be available immediately and not up to two years after the census. - *Marcin Barszczewski.*

- Data is two years old by that point. Too slow. - *Anonymous*

6. Public Confidence

Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) refers to a range of methods that aim to protect individuals, households and businesses from being identified whilst minimising impact on the quality and utility of results. For the 2021 Census, NISRA is considering two strategies of SDC – targeted record swapping and cell key perturbation. The SDC methodologies will be co-ordinated across the UK Census

Offices, where it is practicable to do so, as set out in the Statement of Agreement between the National Statistician and the Registrars General².

For more information on these methods please refer to [‘Statistical Disclosure Control Methodology for 2021 Census’ PDF \(481KB\) \(opens in a new window\)](#).

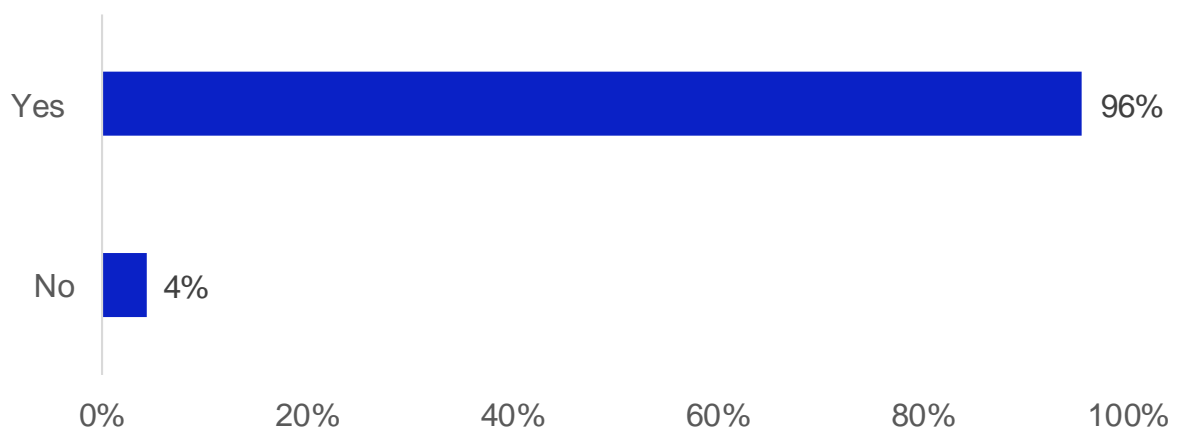
Targeted Record Swapping

Targeted record swapping was applied to the 2011 Census data and NISRA propose to use it again in 2021. This method involves assessing individuals or households with rare or unique characteristics and swapping those at risk of identification with a similar household from another area.

We wanted to know if users supported the use of targeted record swapping as a form of Statistical Disclosure control.

Number of responses to question	46
Key findings	96% of respondents supported the use of targeted record swapping as a form of Statistical Disclosure control. 4% did not support the use of targeted record swapping.

Figure 14 – Responses to the question “Do you support the use of targeted record swapping as a form of Statistical Disclosure Control?”



² [NISRA page hosting the ‘Statement of Agreement between the National Statistician and the Registrars General’ \(opens in a new window\)](#)

The vast majority (96%) of respondents supported the use of targeted record swapping as a form of statistical control. Where a respondent had indicated that they did not support the use of targeted record swapping as a form of statistical control, they were invited to explain why. Only one comment was received;

- The information collected should be limited enough to render this unnecessary. -
Carl McClean.

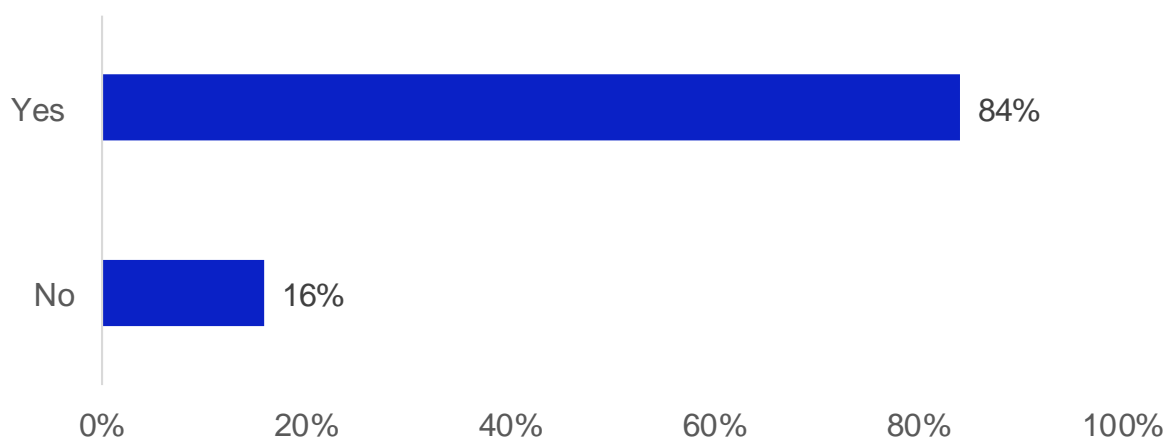
Cell Key Perturbation

NISRA are considering an additional form of SDC known as “cell key perturbation” to facilitate the development of a flexible dissemination system. This method involves making small changes to some cells in a table with low counts to add more uncertainty (noise), with the goal of protecting against disclosure, especially disclosure which occurs when one table is compared to other tables with similar information (differencing). Although adding noise disrupts the differencing process and allows for a more timely release of census data, it may lead to inconsistent table totals, however, the proportions would remain the same. This approach is consistent with the proposed SDC methods intended for use by both the ONS and NRS.

We wanted to know if users would support the use of cell key perturbation as an additional form of Statistical Disclosure control, in order to facilitate the development of a flexible dissemination system.

Number of responses to question	44
Key findings	84% of respondents supported the use of cell key perturbation as an additional form of Statistical Disclosure control. 16% did not support the use of cell key perturbation

Figure 15 – Responses to the question “Do you support the use of cell key perturbation as an additional form of Statistical Disclosure Control?”



The majority (84%) of respondents supported the use of cell key perturbation as a form of statistical control. Where a respondent had indicated that they did not support the use of cell key perturbation as a form of statistical control, they were invited to explain why. Most of the comments express concerns around the quality of the data post perturbation and questioned the need for its use in 2021.

- Slight concern as to how unidentifiable this data is. – *Terry Johnston*.

- It is critical that we can accurately compare 2021 data to 2011 data at the NI level. It is also highly desirable (but not critical) to do the same at LGD level. – *Michael Power*.

- The information collected should be limited enough to render this unnecessary. - *Carl McClean*.

- Support alternative methods of statistical disclosure control, rather than introducing variability and error significance that can then be interpreted/misinterpreted by the user. – *Ken Reid*.

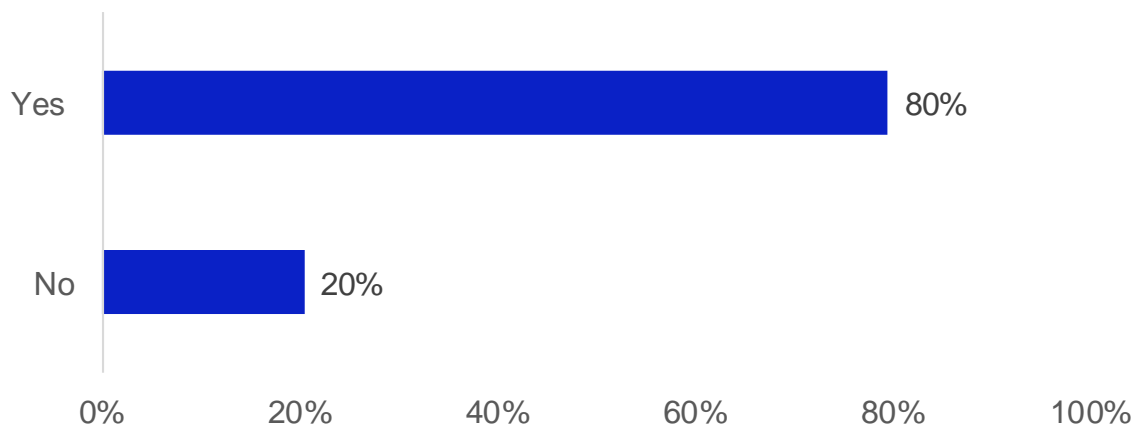
- It hides the truth - just state there are low numbers which can't be released. – *Anonymous*.

- One form of SDC was ok for the last census, so why do we need another method to further confuse things. – *Anonymous*.

We also wanted to know if users would be content with slightly inconsistent table totals in support of the use of cell key perturbation as an additional form of Statistical Disclosure control, in order to facilitate the development of a flexible dissemination system.

Number of responses to question	44
Key findings	80% of respondents indicated that they would be content with slightly inconsistent table totals in support the use of cell key perturbation as an additional form of Statistical Disclosure control, in order to facilitate the development of a flexible dissemination system. 20% indicated that they would not be content with this.

Figure 16 – Responses to the question “In 2021, would you be content with slightly inconsistent table totals in order to receive the results in a more timely manner?”



The majority (80%) of respondents indicated that they would be content with slightly inconsistent table totals in order to receive the results in a more timely manner.

Where a respondent had indicated that they would not be content with slightly inconsistent table totals in order to receive the results in a more timely manner, they were invited to explain why. Respondents indicated that accuracy was more important to them than the timeliness of release:

- Accuracy should be paramount over timely results. After all, we’ve waited 10 years for the data! – *Elma O’Callaghan, HereNI.*

- Accurate comparison to 2011 is critical. - *Michael Power.*

- Its either accurate or not accurate. – *Terry Johnston.*

- Support alternative methods of statistical disclosure control, rather than introducing variability and error significance that can then be interpreted/misinterpreted by the user. – *Ken Reid*.

- Using cell key modification as part of an interactive table builder, it may be inevitable that there will be some inconsistency between estimates generated by different series of aggregation/disaggregation but these should always be stable. It would be highly problematic if the official outputs ever contained multiple values for the same estimate produced at different times (if that is what the question means), as this will result in complex variations in data use that could be impossible to trace in later analysis. – *Prof. David Martin*.

- Speed shouldn't be a reason for lower than ideal accuracy. Take the time needed to do the job as best as possible. – *Anonymous*.

Respondents were then invited to provide any other additional comments in relation to our proposed SDC methodology. All additional comments about the proposed release schedule relate to the **Public Confidence** criteria, with a number of respondents expressing concerns that inconsistent totals may cause confusion in the interpretation of results with suggestions being made that corrected tables should be provided in due course or that perturbation is applied consistently. While this was seen as quite negative a number of other respondents indicated that they approved of the process if it increased the speed with which results are released.

- The Council does have some concern regarding inconsistent table totals from the Census. Whilst the timeliness is important (and avoiding disclosure of the utmost importance), in our experience inconsistent table totals can cause confusion and undermine users confidence in the data. If this trade off must occur, we would stress that a comprehensive guidance note be issued in the metadata. - *Alan Mitchell, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council*.

- The population will continue to change and evolve from the date of the Census in 2021. With this in mind, I see no reason to delay Census outputs as long as what is released is closely and reliably indicative of the population in local areas in 2021. – *Hugh McNickle, Derry City and Strabane District Council*.

- NILGA is aware of the need to protect individuals, households and businesses from being identified in any published tables and is supportive of NISRA efforts to ensure this requirement is met, including the proposed additional 'key cell perturbation' measure. We know that the localised application of data by councils can increase the risk of identification if statistical disclosure control methods aren't used; we are therefore keen to ensure that data is presented in a form which will maximise usefulness locally (and 'hyper locally'), without putting individuals at risk of identification. - *NILGA Executive Committee*.

- As long as the corrected tables would appear eventually. - *Johanne Devlin Trew*.

- I can see this is a sensible approach. Of course, what is unknown is what cells and how many would be perturbed and the possible implications of tables for lower

geographies not adding to higher levels. But better this than delays in outputs. - *Ian Shuttleworth*.

- Three priorities

- 1) minimal perturbation
- 2) consistent perturbation (always the same result from the same data extract)
- 3) clear documentation. – *Prof. David Martin*.

7. User Acceptability

UK Harmonisation and Statistics

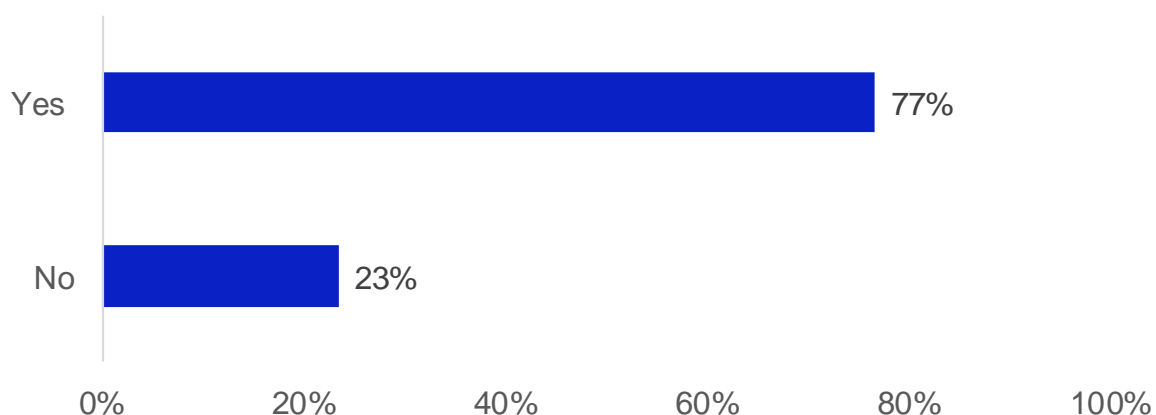
NISRA, ONS and NRS have been working together to facilitate the harmonisation of output content, where possible. The statistical disclosure control methodology, for example, will be a major focus of harmonisation across the UK with focus given to adopting common population bases, geography, metadata and output formats.

NISRA, ONS and NRS are also considering the provision of easy and co-ordinated access to census data or statistics, through the use of an API, which would allow access to UK wide data through the flexible dissemination system provided on each organisations website. As such, we are interested in establishing the value of UK-level statistics and the detail required.

We wanted to know if users used UK data from the 2011 Census.

Number of responses to question	47
Key findings	77% of respondents indicated that they used UK data from the 2011 Census. 23% indicated that they did not use UK data.

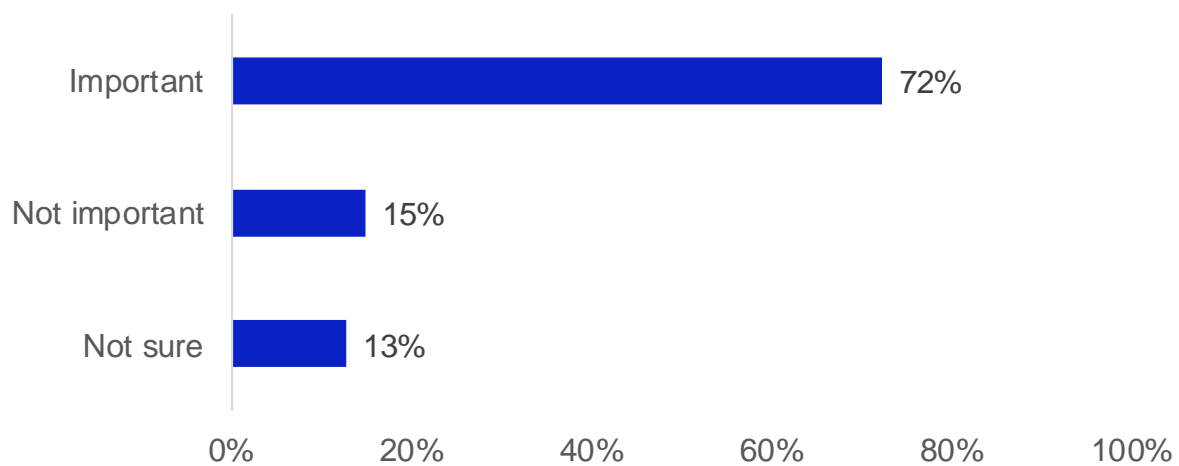
Figure 17 – Responses to the question “Did you use UK data from the 2011 Census?”



We were interested to identify how important it is for users to be able to access and compare data for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Number of responses to question	47
Key findings	<p>72% of respondents stated that it was important for them to be able to access and compare data for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.</p> <p>15% of respondents stated that it was not important.</p> <p>13% of respondents stated that they were not sure.</p>

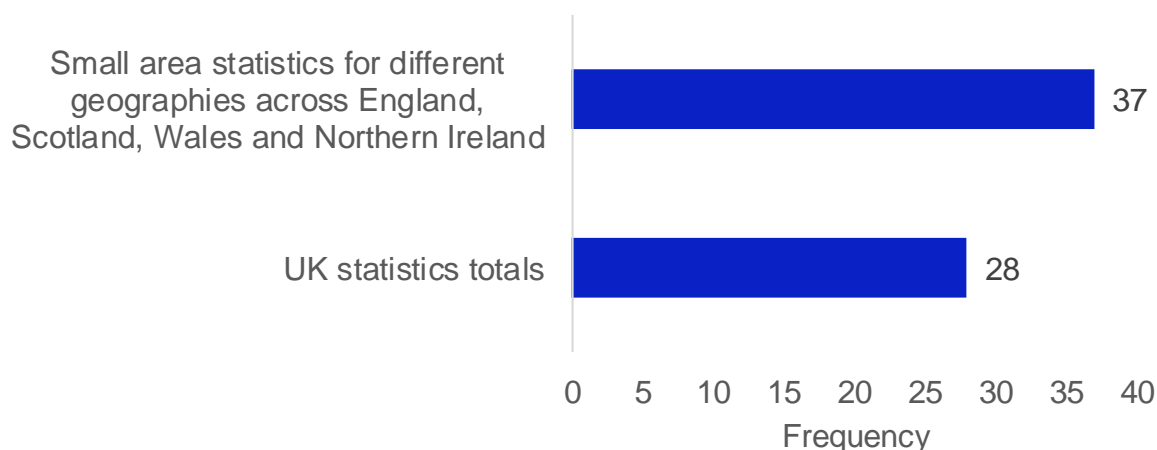
Figure 18 – Responses to the question “How important is being able to access and compare data for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for your work?”



We wanted to know if, in 2021, users would be interested in UK statistics totals and/or Small area statistics for different geographies across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Number of responses to question	42
Key findings	<p>Respondents were most interested in Small area statistics for different geographies across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (n=37).</p>

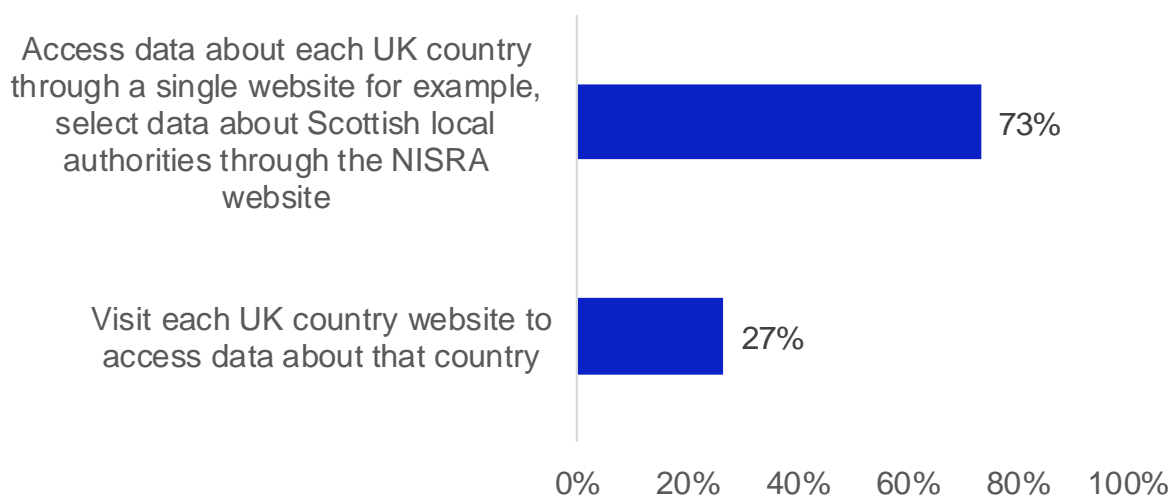
Figure 19 – Responses to the question “In 2021, which of the following would you be interested in?”



We also wanted to identify how users would expect to access UK data.

Number of responses to question	45
Key findings	<p>73% of respondents indicated that they would expect to access data about each UK country through a single website.</p> <p>27% indicated that they would expect to visit each UK country website to access data about that country.</p>

Figure 20 – Responses to the question “How would you expect to access UK data?”



Respondents were invited to provide additional feedback in relation to the UK harmonisation and statistics with all additional comments received relating to the **User Acceptability** criteria. The comments received indicated that harmonisation was of the utmost importance to our service users and preferences were expressed that UK wide data should be available through the NISRA website however concerns were raised about how comparable this data would be.

- Derry City and Strabane District Council would welcome a single entry point to UK census data. If this cannot be accommodated on the NISRA website, then possibly greater inclusion of NI census data could be provided on the UK NOMIS website. – *Hugh McNickle, Derry City and Strabane District Council.*

- Re q27 is this not all available through ONS website? – *Christine Robinson, Belfast City Council.*

- Above an 'ideal' scenario - in practice despite best efforts to harmonise / standardise, the regional variations, measures, timing and structural/administrative differences result in 'false' comparisons - as such more needs to be done to try to standardise, but emphasis (including within tables themselves) where 'like-for-like' comparisons are not possible. – *Ken Reid.*

- Harmonisation of questions is also crucial. For example those relating to long-term health conditions and disability (Qu 23). - *Roy McConkey.*

- I would like a common access point to draw data for selected tables/themes for NI alone and then for all or various other combinations of the UK's constituent countries. - *Ian Shuttleworth.*

- Access through a single website is ideal, but access to an unambiguously comparable set of data (even if through different websites) is the priority. – *Prof. David Martin.*

Ireland and Northern Ireland Harmonisation and Statistics

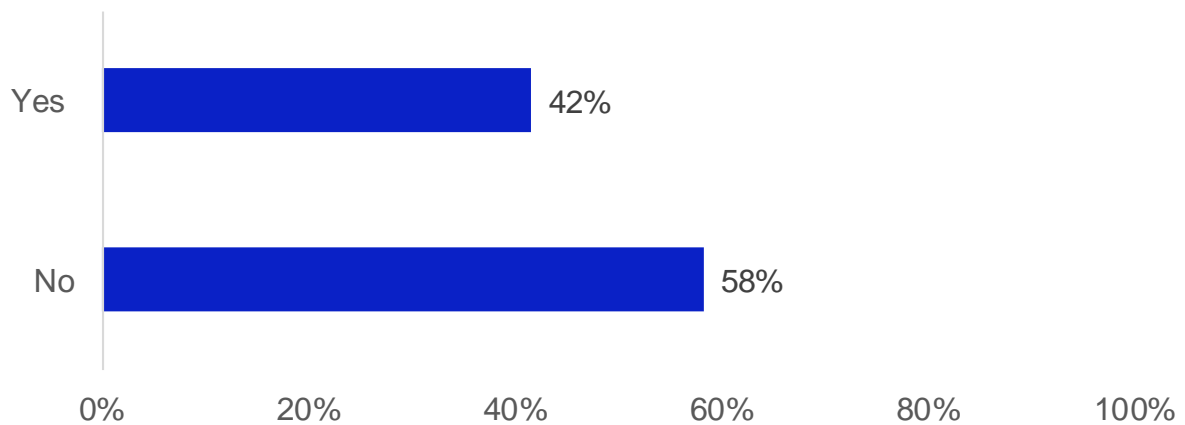
As has been the case for the last two censuses, NISRA will continue to work closely with the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ireland, to ensure where possible consistency and comparability of 2021 Census Key Statistics across the island of Ireland and are considering the production of an Ireland and Northern Ireland 2021 Census report, similar to the published report on the 2011 Census³.

We were interested to identify the interest in the Ireland and Northern Ireland joint report from the 2011 Census.

³ [NISRA page hosting the 'Ireland and Northern Ireland' \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Number of responses to question	48
Key findings	58% of respondents stated that they did not use the Ireland and Northern Ireland joint report from the 2011 Census. 42% of respondents stated that they used the joint report.

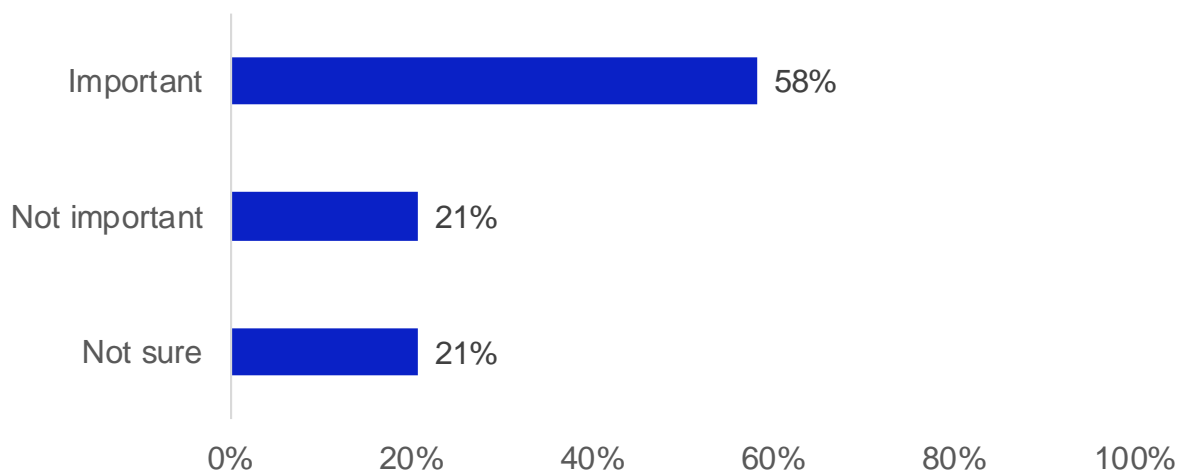
Figure 21 – Responses to the question “Did you use the Ireland and Northern Ireland joint report from the 2011 Census?”



We also wanted to identify how important it is for users to be able to access and compare data for Ireland and Northern Ireland for their work.

Number of responses to question	48
Key findings	58% of respondents stated that it was important for them to be able to access and compare data for Ireland and Northern Ireland for their work. 21% of respondents stated that it was not important. 21% of respondents stated that they were not sure.

Figure 22 – Responses to the question “How important is it to you that you are able to access and compare data for Ireland and Northern Ireland for your work?”



Respondents were invited to provide additional feedback in relation to Ireland harmonisation and statistics with all additional comments received relating to the **User Acceptability** criteria of our analysis. The majority of comments received stressed the importance of a cross border collaboration with CSO especially for organisations who operate around the border area.

- Cross comparisons are insightful between the 2 parts of Ireland. – *Elma O’Callaghan, HereNI.*

- The North West of Northern Ireland and Ireland, the area incorporating Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council (DCC) is very much a unique, cross border region in terms of population and economic / social viability. For this region to prosper, it is essential that a single and comparable body of evidence is made available detailing the socio-economic conditions pertinent to this north-west region. – *Hugh McNickle, Derry City and Strabane District Council.*

- As a border district, it is very important that Fermanagh and Omagh District Council can draw comparisons with neighbouring areas, including those in the Republic of Ireland (particularly those in the ICBAN region). In addition, there will be increased interest in comparing Fermanagh and Omagh (and other districts) with areas in the Republic of Ireland following the outcome of Brexit. - *Alan Mitchell, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.*

- It is important that NISRA and CSO build on their already existing work so as we are able obtain information on an all Ireland basis, this is particularly true for the future planning of services. Consideration should be given to the census being carried out every 5 years to match the work of the CSO. - *Paul Kavanagh, Sinn Féin.*

- My organisation **#REDACTED#** distributes **#REDACTED#** money to **#REDACTED#** and having comparable data based on the census **#REDACTED#**

has the potential to be very beneficial, both in terms of accessing and developing current and future areas of funding. - *Michael Power*.

- CSO and NISRA are planning to produce and release a joint report on the 2021 Census. This proposal will be presented to users as part of CSO's dissemination strategy engagement prior to Census 2021. – *Eoin Whelan, Central Statistics Office*.

- In my area of interest, comparability of the census in NI and RoI would be very helpful. - *Roy McConkey*.

- Yes, I regularly use the Central Statistics Office, Dublin, website which is far superior for historical census material than NISRA, as they have digitised all of their previous censuses (every book). I cannot understand why the Northern Ireland census 1926-1981 and much of 1991 have not yet been digitised. It is astonishing to me. I have had to go to the Magee Campus Library in Derry as the only place I can find a full copy of the census books. Considering there is not that many books in total, it would not be difficult to digitise the whole lot. It is incredible that by 2019 this has not yet been done. The Histpop website, which is no longer functioning, provided digitisations of 1926 and 1937 NI censuses. But now even these are no longer available. I do a lot of historical work and need regular access to this material. - *Johanne Devlin Trew*.

- Cross-border comparisons were less important but were of interest and would gain in importance the more comparable data are available. - *Ian Shuttleworth*.

Geography

Historically, NISRA have published census results using geographies based on electoral boundaries in place at that time.

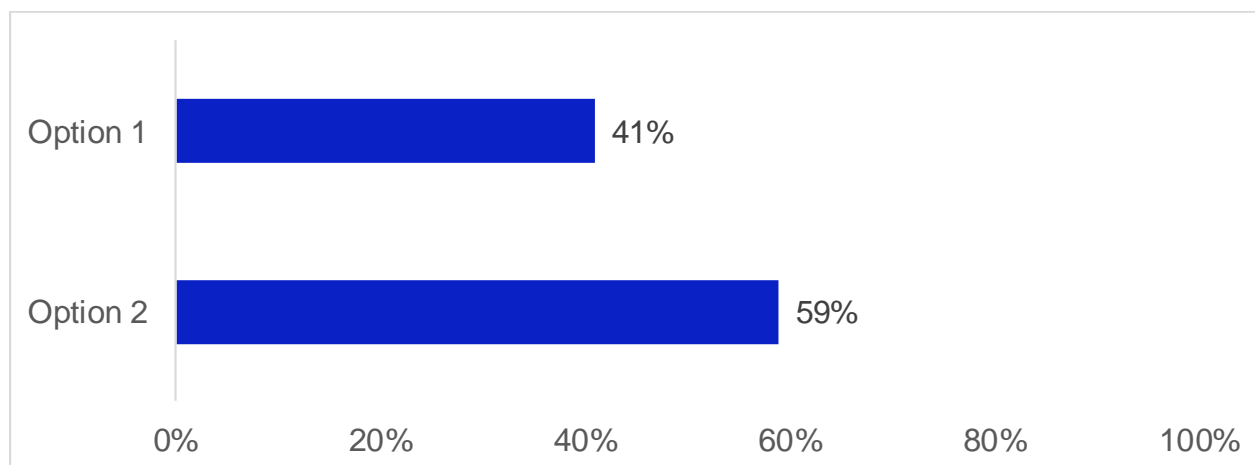
In 2001, NISRA released census outputs for a range of administrative and statistical geographies. This included small levels of geography known as Census Output Areas and Super Output Areas which, due to their hierarchical nature, were used to create larger geographies such as Wards and Local Government Districts.

These same geographies were used again in 2011, allowing users to directly compare data from both censuses. In 2015, following the revision of local government boundaries, a new set of Local Government Districts, District Electoral Areas and Electoral Wards were introduced. To date a number of 2001 and 2011 Census outputs have been produced using these new geographical areas. However, outputs could not be produced for the new lower level Electoral Wards due to increased risk of disclosure.

We wanted to identify users' interest in the two alternative options for releasing data at different geographic levels.

Number of responses to question	46
Key findings	<p>59% of respondents stated that they preferred the alternative option of results being produced for a new small area statistical geography, which would allow the production of 2021 Census results for a new set of statistical geographies consistent with the 2015 revision of local government boundaries.</p> <p>41% of respondents stated that they preferred the option of 2021 Census statistics being produced for the administrative and statistical geographies used in both the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, which would allow comparability of census information at consistent geographies across 2001, 2011 and 2021.</p>

Figure 23 – Responses to the question - In 2021, Census Office are considering two alternative options for releasing data at different geographic levels. It should be noted that due to the risk of disclosure Census Office can only provide one of these. Please select which option you would prefer.



***Option 1:** Census Office are considering the production of 2021 Census statistics for the administrative and statistical geographies used in both the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. This will allow comparability of census information at consistent geographies across 2001, 2011 and 2021. However, due to the risk of disclosure, 2021 Census statistics would not be made available for the new Electoral Wards

***Option 2:** An alternative option is the production of results for a new small area statistical geography. This would allow the production of 2021 Census results for a new set of statistical geographies consistent with the 2015 revision of local government boundaries. This new geography would nest within the new Electoral Wards. However, 2021 Census data would therefore not be made available for the old local government boundaries or electoral wards, therefore users would be unable to compare 2001-2011-2021 census results for these geographies.

Respondents were given the opportunity to detail any other suggestions or comments that they had in relation to the proposed geography options outlined above. All additional comments received related to the **User Acceptability** criteria. Responses appear to support either one option or the other. The majority of comments expressed a preference for option 2 and expressed the need for data to be produced for the most up to date administrative and statistical geographies as this would support the work of local councils and organisations. Those who opted for option 1 stressed the need for data to be comparable to the 2001 and 2011 Census.

- The new wards have been established for 5 years, therefore it is more important to collate these new boundaries now than to wait another 10 years for the next census, by which the boundaries will be in effect for 15 years. Makes more sense to adjust now when the option is available. – *Elma O’Callaghan, HereNI.*

- Ideally we need this replicated on a comparable basis in 2021 at LGD and it is critical that we do same on a NI wide basis as we have National (NI and RoI) and international (EC) obligations. Aside from this, I’m content for NISRA to proceed with option 2. - *Michael Power.*

- We have found it unhelpful to have Census data which does not accord with electoral geographical boundaries. While we recognise the value in time sequenced comparisons, these can be more easily approximated than aligning deprivation data with differing geographical boundaries. – *David Williamson, Consultancy Company.*

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council has had, and continues to have, difficulties sourcing statistics at low levels for our Council area. Much of the census data collected in 2001 and 2011 is not available at Output Area (population sizes of around 125 households and 350 people) or Super Output Area (890 SOAs of size 1,300-2,800 people) for Lisburn and Castlereagh. As Outcomes Based Accountability becomes the norm for assessing the successes or otherwise of the Community Plan, the Council's services and the impact of the Programme for Government we are more and more dependent on having robust and verified data to form an essential part of our evidence. It is vital therefore that the Census data is delivered reflecting the new geographies. - *Catharine McWhirter, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.*

- The formation of the new 11 Councils and their administrative sub-divisions, predicates the need for statistical geographies to be constructed in such a way that they provide wholly constituent information on sub-sections of their population. I believe that this is an essential requirement for non-expert users of Census data. – *Hugh McNickle, Derry City and Strabane District Council.*

- As a local council, we rely on NISRA to produce accurate statistical information about our area. This should allow a full picture of the district consistently across all geographical tiers; i.e. the 7 DEA's should add up to the district total and the wards should add up to the DEA total. Therefore we fully support Option B. However we would ask NISRA to explore the potential of using cell key perturbation or other techniques to allow the publication of all geographies. - *Alan Mitchell, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.*

- The issue here lies within the outcome of the Boundary Review 2018 and whether or not the new PC boundaries are adopted. If they are not adopted, we require the current existing geographies, including the old electoral wards. However if the new PC boundaries are put in place, we will require the new geographies. – *Robert Barry, NI Assembly.*

- As a result of the Local Government Reform, Belfast City Council (BCC) area is now made of 10 District Electoral Areas (DEA), which in turn are comprised of between 5 and 7 Electoral Wards. As such, there are presently 60 Wards within the city. With DEAs being the basic electoral unit for local government elections, it would be that each Ward represents a seat on the Council – although, strictly speaking, councillors are not elected to a particular Ward, they are elected to represent the District Electoral Area. This in turn means they are elected to represent the DEA and so an electoral areas will be represented by 5, 6 or 7 councillors, depending on the number of Wards it contains. And so, from the Belfast City Council perspective, it is these two geographies that our councillors can both identify and would have the strongest affinity with.

BCC strongly believes that NISRA should continue to release outputs that are consistent with the administrative boundaries in place at the time, as suggested

within the consultation guidance. By the principle of the creation of statistical geographies, which are designed to nest within administrative boundaries, we feel that the second option is most appropriate. We acknowledge that the new statistical geographies have not currently been developed, however the changing characteristics in smaller areas have created the need for their redevelopment. BCC uses the census outputs at a local area level for service planning and delivery, area working, resource allocation and evidence-based policy development and monitoring. It is therefore imperative that we have access to the census information and other data at an electoral ward level. This will become increasingly important as we develop the local dimension of community planning.

We understand the benefits of having comparable data between 2001-2011-2021 census results however, whilst a comparison over time is important from an evidence base perspective, this is generally undertaken at LGD level and so changes to lower level geographies would be less important. Many of the statistics used from 2001 and 2011 are modelled to the new LGD level. For things like population counts, the MYE's between census' are more important for trend based analysis. – *Christine Robinson, Belfast City Council.*

-NILGA has been consistent, prior even to the 2011 census in:

- seeking (initially preparation for and latterly) provision of statistical information that takes account of the boundary changes experienced due to the review of public administration; and in
- highlighting the importance of aggregating small geographies (e.g. SOAs) to the new council boundaries, ensuring that the various geographic levels are aligned in such a way to ensure appropriate statistical intelligence can be captured to inform service planning and delivery at local level.

It is highlighted that the changes to council boundaries brought about by the RPA have now been in place for four years.

NILGA has been in contact with relevant data users in councils, council statisticians and NISRA statisticians currently embedded in councils to assess what the local government view is in relation to the proposals on 2021 Census Outputs geography. We have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of both options proposed at Question 32 in the questionnaire.

Of the 11 councils, two have not formed a view on the consultation proposals, two intend to recommend Option 1 (i.e. retention of current geographies) to their councils; officials in the other 7 councils are strongly in favour of Option 2, i.e. change, providing a new small area statistical geography to correspond with the 2015 local government boundaries. The councils favouring option 2 are also demonstrating much more strongly held views on this than those favouring option 1, largely due to the issues faced locally arising from the limited usefulness of the current geographies. Comments have been received by NILGA from council Planning Officers in relation to use of census statistics and the ongoing production of the suite of Local Development Plans:

In addition to informing community plans, councils use census data (and – importantly – other statistics produced by NISRA to align with census output geographies) extensively as part of the evidence base for Local Development Plans (LDPs) and for monitoring purposes. This is particularly true in relation to population and housing statistics.

Whilst a comparison over time is important from an evidence base perspective, this is generally undertaken at LGD level and so changes to lower level geographies

would be less important – most of the statistics needed from 2001 and 2011 statistics are modelled to the new LGD level anyway. For things like population counts, the mid-year population estimates between Censuses are more important for trend-based analysis.

Councils have come across some difficulties with accessing 2011 census data using SOAs (such as population by community background/religion) as these no longer align to the new post-RPA LGD boundaries. It would therefore be more useful to local government planners to have the new 2021 lower-level geographies aligned with the new LGDs.

It should also be noted that the NI Housing Executive, which is responsible for conducting Housing Market Analysis work that forms part of the evidence base for the LDPs, have recently re-worked the housing market areas on which this analysis is based to align with the new ward boundaries. This analysis work uses a range of published statistics (including Census, but also other statistics that are produced to align with whatever boundaries the Census uses) collated across much larger housing market areas. Current local government understanding is that the re-working of the housing market areas was in part necessitated by the change in boundaries as a result of RPA, meaning that meaningful statistics were not available for the new LGD areas or their existing housing market areas. This would indicate that it would be essential for the new census statistics to be available at ward level, which doesn't seem to be the case under Option 1. Although this is NIHE's work, it forms an important part of the evidence base required by councils and should be considered in decisions arising from this consultation.

#REDACTED# it has been agreed that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association is strongly in favour of Option 2.

NILGA is aware that NISRA has some concerns about Option 2, centred on issues for consistency and comparison, as well as cost and timeliness implications, but the Association is of the view that many of these concerns can be satisfactorily addressed, as set out below:

- Historically NISRA policy has been to publish census results using geographies based on electoral boundaries in place at that time. NILGA sees no reason as to why this policy should change. The RPA was the single biggest change to electoral boundaries in Northern Ireland in over 40 years, and the majority of our member councils believe it is important to reflect our new structures. This is an opportunity to ensure that the small geographies are designed to be useful at local level, which is currently not the experience for many of our councils.
- NISRA officials have flagged up in conversation that there will be other boundary reviews in the future which might impact on consistency, and have presented this as a reason for maintaining current geographies. While future changes will undoubtedly occur, it is also true that there have been other boundary reviews in the past that NISRA has taken into account without apparent difficulty. Future boundary reviews are highly unlikely to be of the scale associated with the 2015 RPA-led boundary review. NILGA does not therefore believe that this is a relevant issue.
- There is a 50m grid square geography that is provided by NISRA which remains unaffected by boundary changes and which has been provided since 1971, allowing comparison since then. NILGA is of the view that many of the concerns about consistency and comparison over time could be addressed by wider knowledge of and access to this layer of data.
- NILGA is aware that to review the current geographies may cost more and take longer, impacting on the timeliness of provision of outputs after the Census takes

place. We would highlight that a review of Community Plans is required in 2021, as is a review of the Programme for Government. The information garnered in the 2021 census would not be available at that stage anyway, and first use of this data would be further to the 2023 local government elections, potentially for the 11 new suites of council corporate plans and strategies. Allowing for potential slippage, it is questionable whether useable data would be available even then, so there appears to be no material time advantage in maintaining current geographies.

- We note that the proposals outlined in the NISRA consultation document are based on current knowledge and understanding of several issues, including the current understanding of affordability. NILGA is of the view however, that short term cost savings in relation to provision of Census and other data (e.g. by maintaining current geographies) could result in much greater cost to Northern Ireland in the longer term and is likely to be a false economy. - *NILGA Executive Committee*.

- The organisation's preference would certainly be for Option 2 which would allow the production of 2021 Census results for a new set of statistical geographies consistent with the 2015 revision of local government boundaries. This new geography would nest within the new Electoral Wards.

We would require data that reflects our administrative boundaries and mirrors our new electoral wards.

If at all possible we would also like both the 2001 and 2011 Census to be retrospectively reproduced at Ward2014 level. - *Newry, Mourne and Down District Council*.

- The Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council request that 2021 Census data be released for statistical geographies consistent with the 2015 revision of Local Government boundaries and that nest into current electoral wards.

The Council would like to reiterate issues highlighted in previous submissions to NISRA consultations on the multiple deprivation measures. Council believes that the use of Super Output Areas (SOAs) may mask small yet significant pockets of deprivation. In addition, it is our experience they may not correlate with locally identified neighbourhoods. This can add to tensions and confusion especially in the allocation of funding.

The Council welcomes the creation of a new small area geography that will nest into current boundaries and request that in redesigning this new small area geography NISRA take into account and align with neighbourhoods where possible.

It would be useful if NISRA could consider how to aid user (including funding bodies) understanding of new small areas, including design, how they nest within other geographies and what geographical areas they cover. Helping to raise awareness of the potential for small yet significant pockets of deprivation being masked at SOA level and informing a conversation on how this is prevented in the future. - *Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council*.

- Whatever format is selected some form of continuity would be desirable. – *Terry Johnston*.

- Comparability is vitally important. I have spent considerable effort analysing historical NI census material and comparing across the census in various ways. - *Johanne Devlin Trew*.

- It is very important not to obliterate changes over time which can be meaningful and assist in predicting e.g. changes at the right levels of granularity between 2000 and the present day. - *Professor Karen Corrigan*.

- Assuming that the same SOA and SA geographies in 2021 are used as in 2011 then I could live with the new wards being used as output units for the 2021 Census. And, of course, there will be grid-square data along in 2023 sometime? - *Ian Shuttleworth*.

- It does not make sense to continue with old boundaries. At some point it will become fruitless using 'old' geographies and you will encounter the same issue regarding comparability - you are simply delaying the inevitable. Also, my understanding is that there is only a small number of geographies which would present issues for disclosure risks. Therefore would an alternative option be to produce both comparisons but excluding those small number that carry risk. This 'double reporting' would only be necessary for this first year. The census is such an important data/research piece that it seems silly not to use the data to its fullest scope. - *Patricia Flynn*.

- There is no ideal answer here, but I have a concern that user acceptability and widespread buy-in to the 2021 data will necessitate a strong tie to contemporary small area geography - for example as the basis for future multivariate and deprivation indicators. Assuming that the grid square product continues to be available to support analyses of change over time, re-basing on the 2015 ward geography is probably the best of the two options offered here for the main statistical series. The best alternative would be to continue to use 2001-2011 small areas but produce a series of non-disclosive official estimates for (at least) new local government districts. - *Prof David Martin*.

- It simply doesn't make sense to produce outputs for a geography that no longer exists - in fact, it would appear to be a waste of public resources. If anything, option 1 appears to have been included as it is easier for NISRA staff. - *Anonymous*.

Grid Square Product

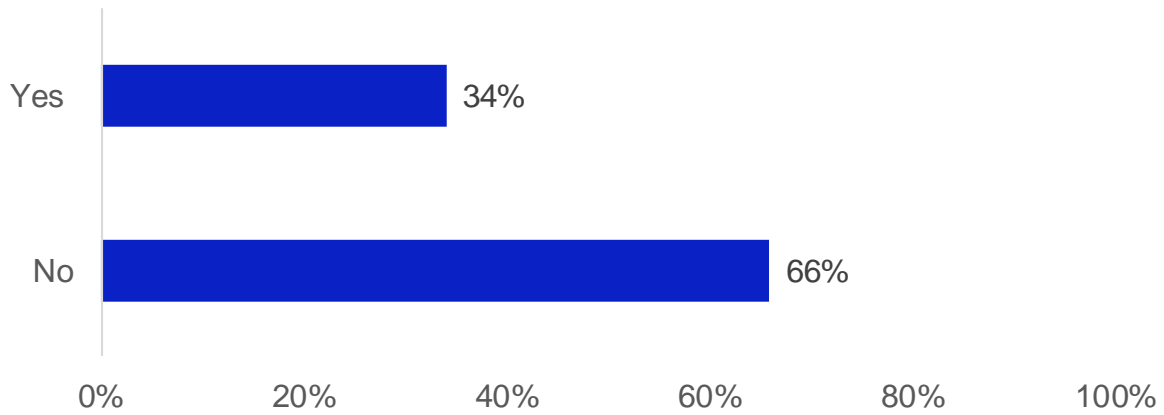
Historically, census outputs have been presented as statistical aggregates for given geographic areas, which themselves are based on local government boundaries. This can lead to difficulties when considering trends over time as these boundaries are reviewed and revised.

In order to permit the examination of trends over time for consistent spatial units, NISRA has made available grid square statistics for every census since 1971. The geographic base for these outputs is the Irish Grid, and Census statistics are produced for 100m and 1km grids. It is the intention of NISRA to continue this time series and produce a 2021 grid square product.

We wanted to know if users used the 2011 Census grid square product.

Number of responses to question	47
Key findings	66% of respondents stated that they did not use the 2011 Census grid square product. 34% stated that they did.

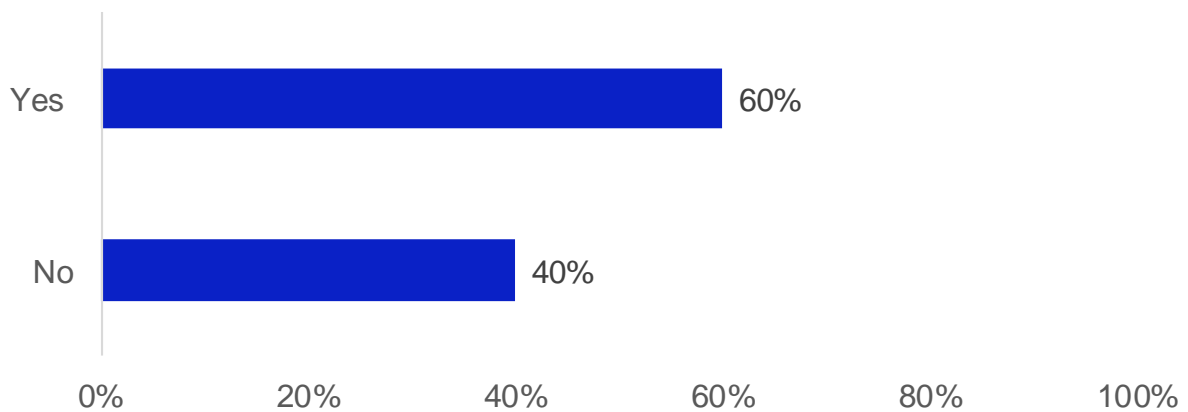
Figure 24 – Responses to the question “Did you use the 2011 Census grid square product?”



We wanted to identify users’ interest if a 2021 Census grid square product were made available.

Number of responses to question	45
Key findings	60% of respondents stated that they would use a 2021 Census grid square product if it were made available. 40% stated that they would not.

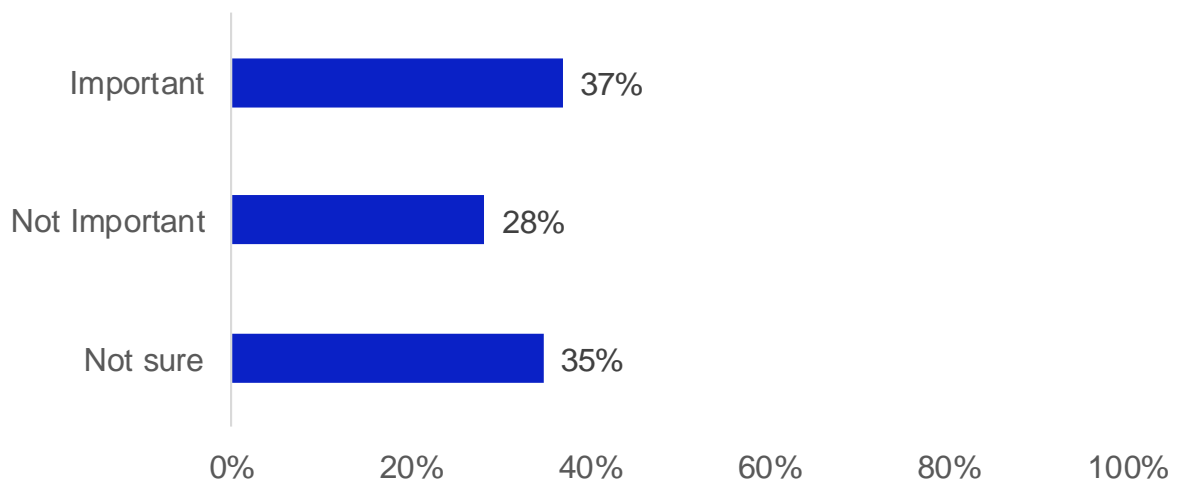
Figure 25 – Responses to the question “Would you use a 2021 Census grid square product if it were made available?”



We also wanted to identify how important it is to users' work to have a 2021 Census grid square product.

Number of responses to question	46
Key findings	<p>37% of respondents stated that it was important for them to have a 2021 Census grid square product for their work.</p> <p>35% of respondents stated that they were not sure.</p> <p>29% of respondents stated that it was not important.</p>

Figure 26 – Responses to the question “How important is it to your work to have a 2021 Census grid square product?”



8. 2021 Census Specialist Products

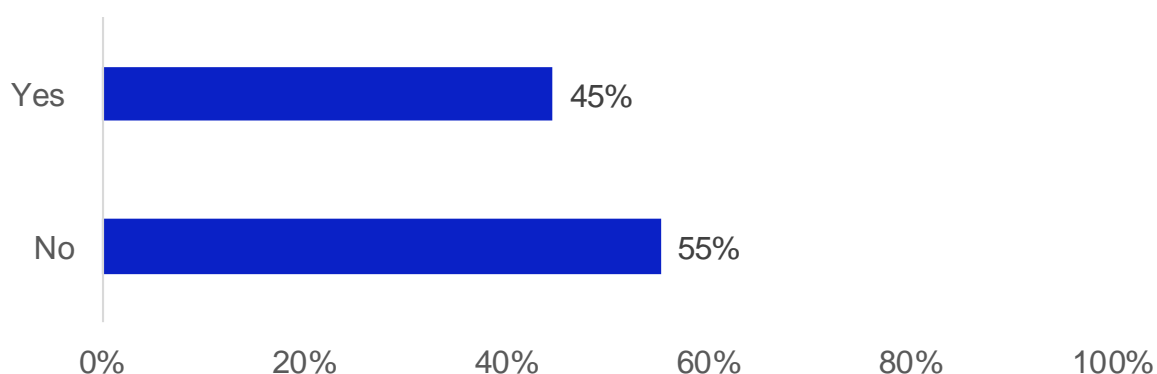
Origin and Destination Data

Origin and destination (flow) data produced following the 2011 Census shows the flows of people from one place to another. A large number of the origin and destination outputs were produced at the UK level, providing flows for usual residents within and between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We wanted to know if users used the 2011 Census origin and destination data.

Number of responses to question	47
Key findings	55% of respondents stated that they did not use the 2011 Census origin and destination data. 45% stated that they did.

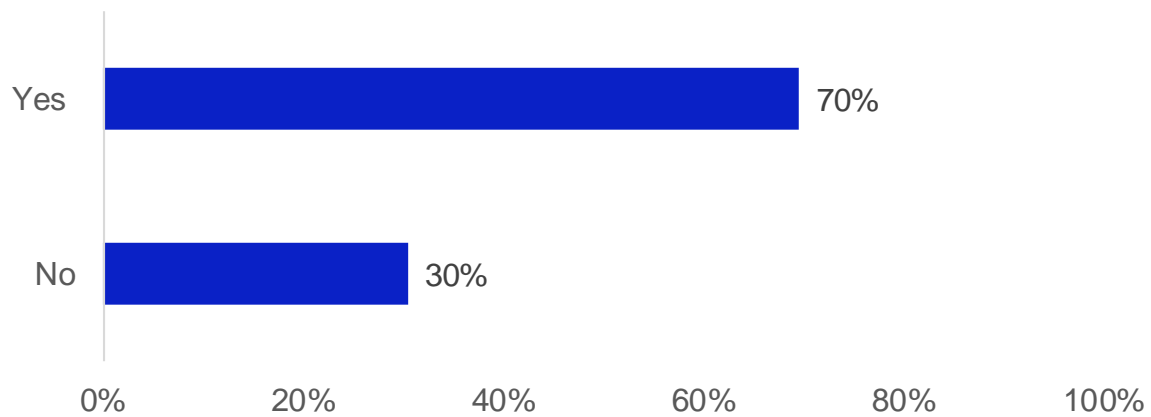
Figure 27 – Responses to the question “Did you use 2011 Census origin and destination data?”



We wanted to identify users' interest if 2021 Census origin and destination data were made available.

Number of responses to question	46
Key findings	70% of respondents stated that they would use 2021 Census origin and destination data if it were made available. 30% stated that they would not.

Figure 28 – Responses to the question “Would you use 2021 Census origin and destination data if it were made available?”



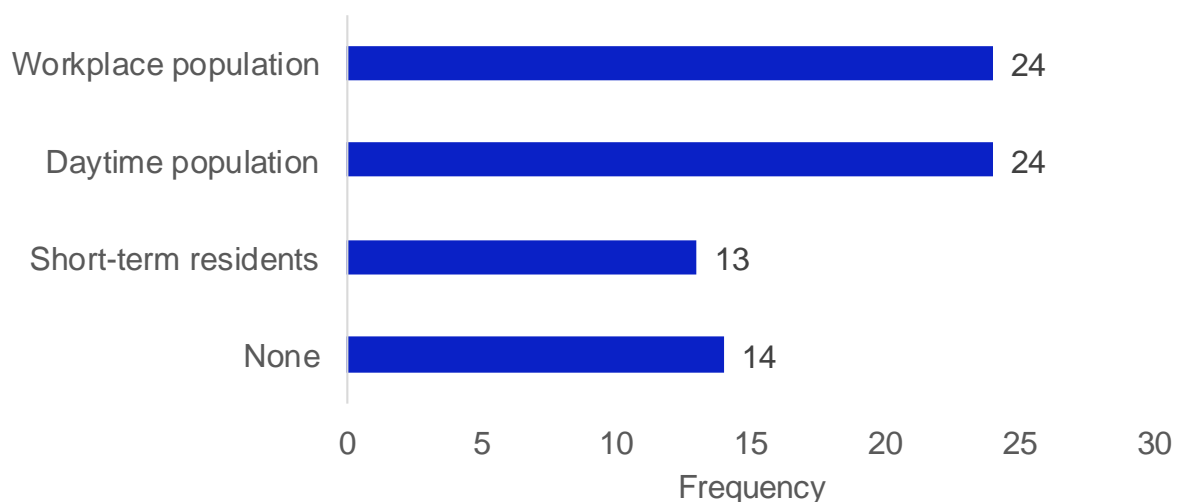
Alternative Populations

In 2011, statistics were made available for three alternative populations: short-term residents, daytime population and workplace population. NISRA are currently reviewing whether these data should be produced as part of the 2021 Census outputs.

We wanted to know which alternative population statistics were used in 2011.

Number of responses to question	45
Key findings	Respondents were most interested in Daytime population and Workplace population statistics in 2011.

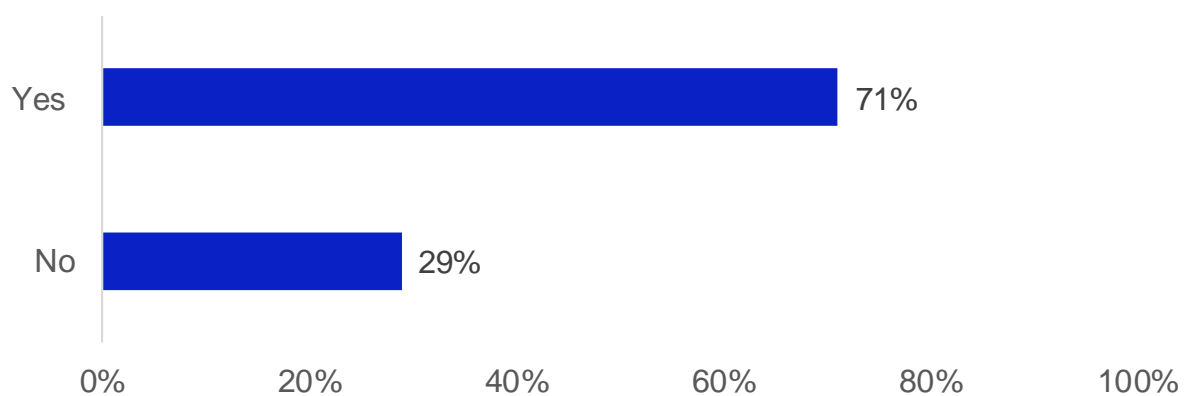
Figure 29 – Responses to the question “In 2011, which alternative population statistics did you use?”



We wanted to identify users' interest if 2021 Census alternative population data were made available.

Number of responses to question	45
Key findings	71% of respondents stated that they would use 2021 Census alternative population data if they were made available. 29% stated that they would not.

Figure 30 – Responses to the question “Would you use 2021 Census alternative population data if they were made available?”



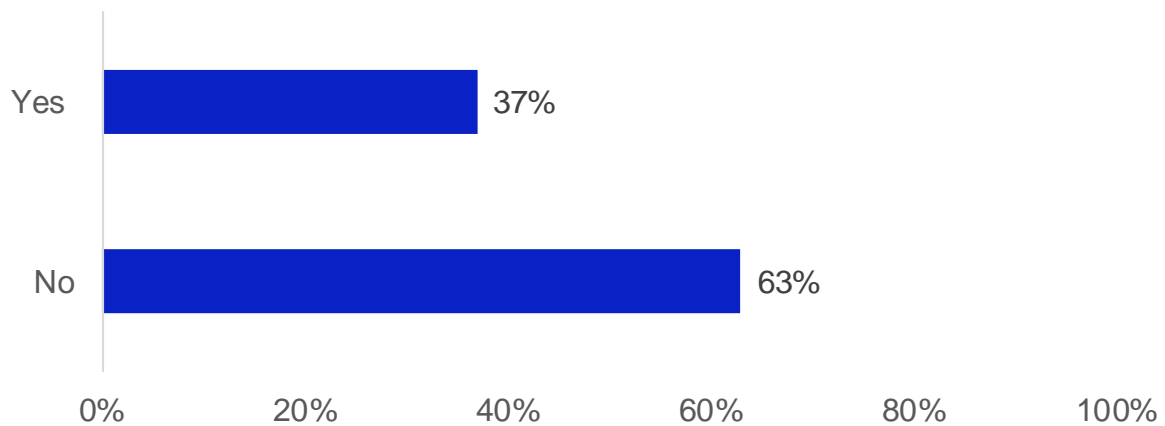
Bulk Download

In 2001 and 2011 NISRA provided a facility to download all released tables through a bulk download. It is the intention of NISRA to continue the provision of this bulk download facility.

We wanted to know if users used the 2011 Census bulk download facility.

Number of responses to question	46
Key findings	63% of respondents stated that they did not use the 2011 Census bulk download facility. 37% stated that they did.

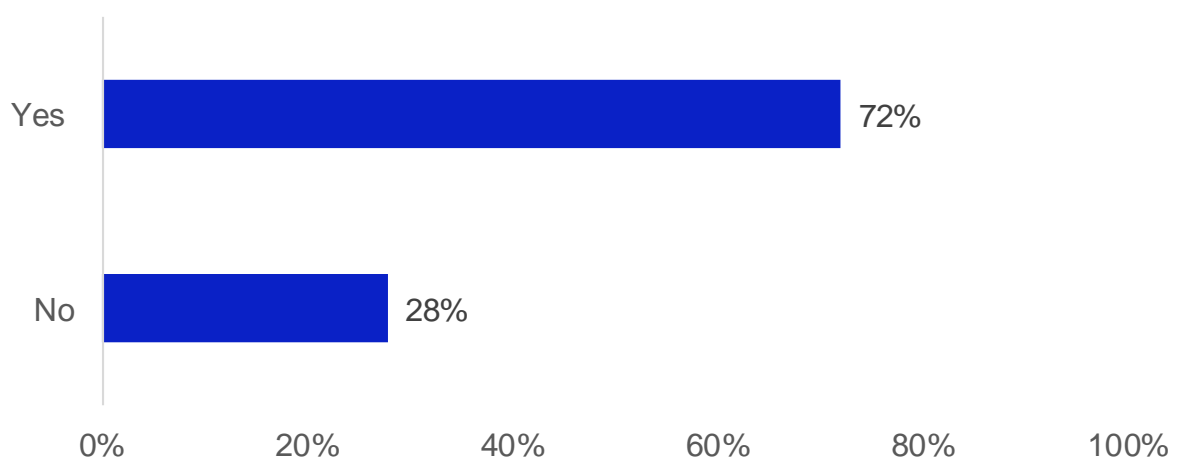
Figure 31 – Responses to the question “Did you use 2011 Census bulk download facility?”



We wanted to identify users’ interest if a 2021 Census bulk download facility were made available.

Number of responses to question	43
Key findings	72% of respondents stated that they would use a 2021 Census bulk download facility if it were made available. 28% stated that they would not.

Figure 32 – Responses to the question “Would you use a 2021 Census bulk download facility if it were made available?”



Microdata

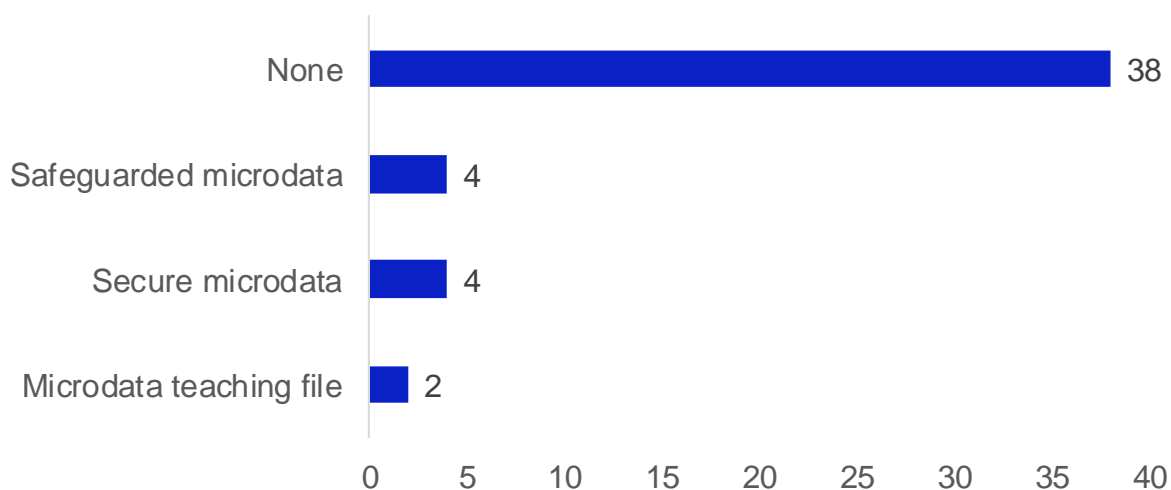
Microdata products are small samples of data for whole households and individuals, which include some associated census characteristics but no information that could identify a household or individual. Microdata products enable researchers to look at combinations of characteristics that are not generally available from the standard census tables, and to perform different types of analyses not possible from standard tabulations.

In 2011, NISRA produced three microdata products: microdata teaching file, secure microdata and safeguarded microdata.

We wanted to know which microdata products were used in 2011.

Number of responses to question	44
Key findings	Respondents mostly stated that they had not previously used any of our microdata products.

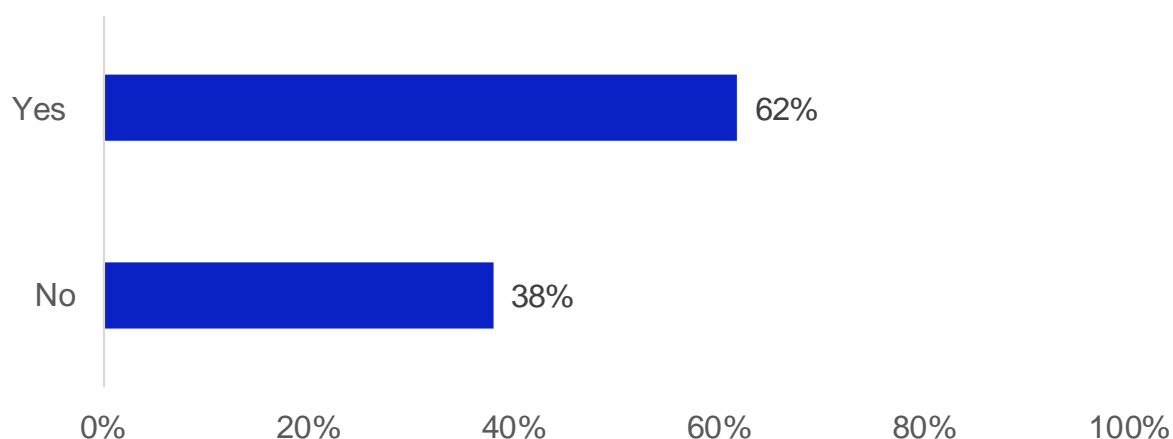
Figure 33 – Responses to the question “In 2011, which microdata products did you use?”



We wanted to identify users' interest if 2021 microdata products were made available.

Number of responses to question	42
Key findings	62% of respondents stated that they would use 2021 microdata products if they were made available. 38% stated that they would not.

Figure 34– Responses to the question “Would you use 2021 microdata if it were made available?”



Respondents were given the opportunity to detail any other requirements for Census specialist products. Two comments were provided which related to their ability to access this data while the remaining comments related to **User Acceptability** which resulted in a number of requests being made as to what kind of data users would like to gain access to including; service provision data, linked administrative data, deprivation, qualifications, disability and historical census data.

- Monitoring the Community Planning outcomes is partly dependant on having verified statistics. There is a concern that as we do not have a NISRA statistician in-house we would not be able to access some of this information. The Census Office will need to make sure that all data users have equal access to this information. - *Catharine McWhirter, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.*

- I would certainly use microdata especially if it was possible to access them via the secure data laboratory in Colby House. - *Ian Shuttleworth.*

- Possible research combining Census data with administrative data to look at the impact that our Strategic Growth Plan is having after a five to ten-year period of time has elapsed. *Hugh McNickle, Derry City and Strabane District Council.*

- Service provision in our organisation may require market segmentation analysis. Any NISRA data that would be able to help in relation to this would be useful. - *Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.*

- Ability to combine files such as deprivation, age and academic qualifications in a postcode area. – *Terry Johnston.*

- Households with a person who has particular disabilities. – *Roy McConkey.*

- Historical census material from 1926-1991, including 1981 as although many people consider that not a viable census because of the non-response issue, aspects of the data are less likely to have been subject to that problem so are still

useful e.g. country of birth and migration data - figures indicate for example that immigrants were less likely to be among the non-respondent population. – *Johanne Devlin Trew.*

- Was a user of 2011 and 2001 census -linked NI Longitudinal Study and would want to use 2021-linked LS data. - *Prof David Martin.*

9. Final Comments

At the end of the consultation, respondents were invited to provide any final comments about the proposed 2021 Census Outputs Strategy. A varied mix of additional comments were provided but each will be reviewed in relation to the categories identified within our evaluation strategy.

Accessibility and Flexibility

A number of positive comments were received in relation to the data that is made available from the Census and our attempts to try and make this data accessible and fit for purpose. Some respondents identified some additional data that they would like to see included as part of our 2021 Census results including coding the place of work, school or college and the digitisation and publication of a range of historical census data.

- The identification, analysis, use, visualisation and communication of data in Community Planning was identified as a challenge by the eleven Community Planning Partnerships in Northern Ireland. The challenges cited ranged from a lack of data, with some key data sets only being available at an all-Northern Ireland level, to too much data – with large volumes of data on some thematic areas making prioritisation in policymaking difficult. A lack of analytical capacity at local government level and a lack of awareness of the importance of good quality data for the accuracy of decision-making by senior colleagues and elected members were also highlighted.

The Trust therefore welcomes the work being undertaken by NISRA on improving the availability of data at local authority level; the presentation of monitoring data; facilitating partnerships between local authorities and Northern Ireland Executive Departments to undertake research or analysis through the Administrative Data Centre; and supporting reporting on Outcomes Based Accountability, as outlined at the first #REDACTED# peer to peer learning event – *Anonymous.*

- The information provided via the Census has always been of strategic importance to councils and has grown further in importance since the local government reform of 2014-15 gave councils responsibility for community planning, development planning and other enhanced responsibilities.

Councils' understanding of the need for robust evidence-based policy and strategy has developed enormously, particularly in the last four years; as has their understanding of what is required from the providers of that information (such as NISRA). The 11 post-RPA councils in Northern Ireland are keen to ensure that they

have access to accurate and useful statistics that will assist them to provide a sound evidence base for their work, and in which they can have confidence.

It is a priority that information made available must be useable, useful and accessible; NILGA therefore welcomes the strategic objective of NISRA to ensure that the 2021 Census statistical output is fit for purpose and reflects the needs of users.

We welcome the NISRA aim to improve the quality of outputs, provide comparability in response to user need and deliver information that is relevant in 2021 and beyond. To this end we also strongly welcome the intent of NISRA to link administrative data with the 2021 census data to produce enhanced outputs, noting the proposed criteria for design of output content.

NILGA notes and strongly supports the evaluation criteria for the design of 2021 Census output content, including the criterion related to timeliness of release, notwithstanding the above comments on review of geographies. - *NILGA Executive Committee.*

As has been done for Census 2016, CSO will also produce information from Census 2021 on persons who are usually resident in Ireland and commute to Northern Ireland. This will involve coding the place of work school or college of these commuters - *Eoin Whelan, Central Statistics Office*

- Just the issue already mentioned about the historical NI census books- please digitise them and make them available on your site - similar to the way the CSO in Dublin does. Also very much appreciate that NISRA has digitised all the Registrar General reports going way back - very useful for teaching as well as research. – *Johanne Devlin Trew.*

User Acceptability

Several respondents took this opportunity to stress again their need for data at certain geographical levels with particular reference to LGD2014 and grid square products. It was also noted within one of these comments that the data must be understandable to all.

- In addition to the overall NI measure, NISRA provided #REDACTED# with analysis of 2011 data at LGD level. This data was used to provide baselines to projects that ultimately received funding to deliver the objectives within #REDACTED# . While a 2021 comparable measure at LGD is highly desirable, it is not critical and its unavailability is unlikely to result in serious consequences. - *Michael Power*

- Additional resource and identification of the 'grid square' product is essential. These square 'tiles' can be utilised to help provide historical trends for small, local areas without the fear of being constrained by arbitrary administrative and, possibly, some statistical geography boundaries.

This would go a long way in easing the conflict between the proposals being presented in Option 1 and Option 2 as well as any potential delay resulting from future changes to electoral boundaries that may occur under any legislative boundary review in the period 2017 – 2021.

It should be made clear that further boundary changes are indeed possible, after the release of the Census data, and the likely impact that these changes could have on the adoption of either Option 1 or Option 2. – *John Kelpie, SOLACE.*

- The Council feels strongly that the Census must provide information in line with the current geographical boundaries i.e. LGD14 – DEA14 – Ward14. Only with this information can we get a full and consistent profile of the district.

In addition, we would stress that consideration be given to the end user. In the current environment, where the demand for evidence is ever increasing, the definition of end-users is now broad, including lay-users. Everything produced from the 2021 Census should be developed with this in mind. - *Alan Mitchell, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.*

- We are concerned about the either/or choice given at Q32. The issue here lies within the outcome of the Boundary Review 2018 and whether or not the new PC boundaries are adopted. If they are not adopted, we require the current existing geographies, including the old electoral wards. However if the new PC boundaries are put in place, we will require the new geographies. – *Robert Barry, NI Assembly.*

Public Confidence

A mixture of comments were received in relation to public confidence with one respondent stating that we ask too much within the census while another respondent reflected the benefits of gaining access to census data. It should be noted however that questions were being asked as to whether input could be provided in relation to the topics being asked within the census even though a topic consultation was carried out in 2015.

- I believe there is a presumption that far more questions should be asked of people than is justified. I believe questions should not be collected about 'religion', 'community background', which tend to encourage sectarian responses. Likewise I do not feel questions around gender and sexuality are justified in a poll people are legally compelled to complete, nor is it sensible particularly in this political climate. This is not to say such questions are not useful, or useful to some, helpful to some, etc.

One could think of many requests that could be legally compelled which may have a benefit, but be offensive to the concept and promotion of freedom and basic rights, without too much imagination.

The fact this consultation does not ask what should be collected, or invite comment as to this by suggesting questions, is a cause for concern. – *Carl McClean.*

- I think the census is such an important endeavour and while I acknowledge that it could be improved in a number of respects, there are very strong arguments for keeping such a decennial programme of analysing the demographic characteristics of Northern Ireland. – *Professor Karen Corrigan.*

- I appreciate the focus of this consultation is on outputs but will there be a further opportunity to comment on the questions to be asked in the census? – *Roy McConkey.*