

Health Survey Northern Ireland 2022/23

Things users need to know

NISRA suspended all face-to-face household interviews in the middle of March 2020 due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In the reporting period April 2022 – March 2023 all interviews carried out on the Health Survey Northern Ireland were conducted by telephone. This is the same format as the reporting period April 2021 – March 2022 and April 2020 – March 2021, but in the years prior to this the survey was carried out as face-to-face household interviews.

There are a number of factors which users should take into consideration when interpreting the 2022/23 results and care should be taken when comparing these with previously published findings from the survey.

1. While survey methodology changed, the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the resultant introduction of new public health regulations, guidance and advice may have also fundamentally changed peoples' behaviour and attitudes. It is difficult to separate out change caused by the methodological adjustments and actual behavioural change at this point in time.
2. The change in data collection mode from face-to-face to telephone may have altered how people responded to the survey;
3. The change in data collection mode also necessitated some streamlining of the questionnaire and changes to how some questions were asked or presented as well as the response categories associated with them. This may also have implications for how people responded to the survey;
4. The achieved 2022/23 response rate on the survey in telephone mode is 56%, which has returned to the normal achieved response rates prior to COVID-19 that were in face-to-face mode.
5. The demographic profile of the achieved sample has an under-representation of people aged 16-34. The 2021/22 and 2022/23 results are based on information that has been weighted by sex and age and whilst the weighting should reduce bias in the results they cannot eliminate all forms of bias which may be present in the data (to note, the 2020/21 health survey weight was based on sex, age and Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) as the sample had fewer households from the most deprived areas and more households from the least deprived areas in comparison with previous years. The weights for previous years were based on sex and age).

Any changes within the 2022/23 data compared with previous years have to be considered in the context of all of the above.

Care should be taken in reaching any conclusions based on 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 data and comparisons with previous years. It would be advisable to look at changes in behaviour or attitudes contained in these results over the next couple of years, particularly when data collection on the survey returns to face-to-face mode and society returns to normal, to see if they are part of a permanent changing trend.