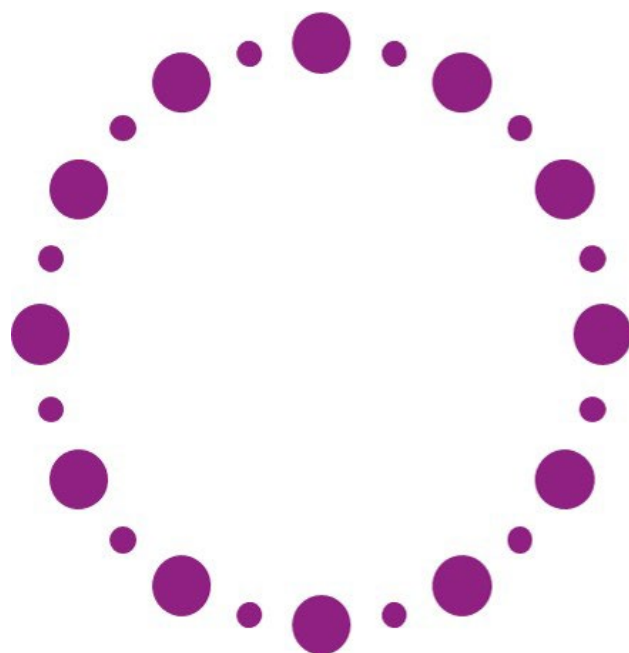


census
2021



Main statistics for Northern Ireland
Statistical bulletin
Place of work or study

21 March 2023



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1. Introduction

On 21 March 2023, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) released further results from Census 2021, which was held on 21 March 2021. The statistics released provide a profile of the Northern Ireland population covering:

- **household relationships:** household composition, living arrangements, marital and civil partnership status and couple relationships within households
- **sexual orientation**
- **labour market:** economic status (e.g. in employment, unemployed, economically inactive), hours worked, industry and occupation
- **qualifications:** highest level of qualifications gained
- **place of work or study:** distance to place of work or study and method of travel
- **communal establishments:** establishments providing supervision of residential accommodation (e.g. student halls of residence, hospitals, care homes)
- **migration:** address one year before the census, and year of arrival for those born outside Northern Ireland

The information covers Northern Ireland and the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs).

This report relates to **place of work or study**. For display purposes figures are appropriately rounded but full figures are available in the [Census 2021 tables](#) on the NISRA website.

Census 2021 took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which will have affected the travel to work and travel to study statistics. Consequently, detailed change over time has not been considered in this report as to do so would require further significant research. The restrictions in place contributed significantly to changes in people working from home and the way people travelled to a place of work or study. For example, between Census 2011 and Census 2021 the percentage of people working mainly at or from home rose from 10.5% to 18.9%,

and the percentage travelling to work together in a car or van pool fell from 9.8% to 0.7%.

2. Key points

The key points relating to **place of work** are as follows:

- There were 813,800 people aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students) who were working in the week before the census (i.e. working). Of these, 153,500 (18.9%) indicated that they worked mainly at or from home. Of the remainder, 545,100 had a workplace within Northern Ireland and 115,100 either had no fixed place of work or worked outside Northern Ireland.
- Just over half (55.0%) of workers had a workplace that was less than 20km from their home, with 14.5% having a workplace less than 2km away.
- Those that worked outside Northern Ireland comprised of 10,500 (1.3% of the working population) working in the Republic of Ireland, 5,600 (0.7%) working in England, Scotland or Wales, and 2,000 (0.2%) working outside the United Kingdom and Ireland.
- Ards & North Down reported the highest percentage of people working from home at 22.6% (15,900 people), while the lowest percentage was in Mid Ulster (15.9% or 10,700 people).
- The most common method of travel to work was 'driving a car or van', with 510,200 people (62.7% of the working population) using this method.

The key points relating to **place of study** are as follows:

- There were 401,800 people of primary school age and over who were in full-time education (i.e. studying) at the time of Census 2021. Of these, the vast majority (95.1% or 382,000 people) had a place of study within Northern Ireland. Of the remainder, 14,800 studied at or from home and 4,900 either had no fixed place of study or studied outside Northern Ireland.
- Around 62% of those studying had a place of study which was less than 5km from their home, with 41.1% having a place of study less than 2km away.
- Those that studied outside Northern Ireland comprised of 700 (0.2% of the studying population) studying in the Republic of Ireland, 400 (0.1%) studying in England, Scotland or Wales, and 200 (0.1%) studying outside the United Kingdom and Ireland.
- The most common method of travel to place of study was 'passenger in a car or van', with 169,800 people (42.3% of the studying population) using this method.

4. Place of work

This section reports statistics for those aged 16 and over and in employment in the week before the census (excluding full-time students). This population is referred to as the **Working Population**.

4.1. Distance to place of work – Census 2021

On Census Day 2021 there were 813,800 people in the working population. Of these, 153,500 (18.9%) were working mainly at or from home and 97,000 (11.9%) had no fixed place of work.

There were 18,100 (2.2%) who had a place of work which was outside Northern Ireland. This comprised 10,500 (1.3%) working in the Republic of Ireland, 5,600 (0.7%) working in England, Scotland or Wales, and 2,000 (0.2%) working outside the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The remaining 545,100 people (67.0%) gave a fixed workplace address which was in Northern Ireland. For these people a calculation was made of the straight-line distance between their place of residence and their place of work, resulting in statistics detailing the distance to place of work in kilometres (km) for a one-way journey.

Table 1 shows the distance to place of work for the working population in Northern Ireland at the time of Census 2021.

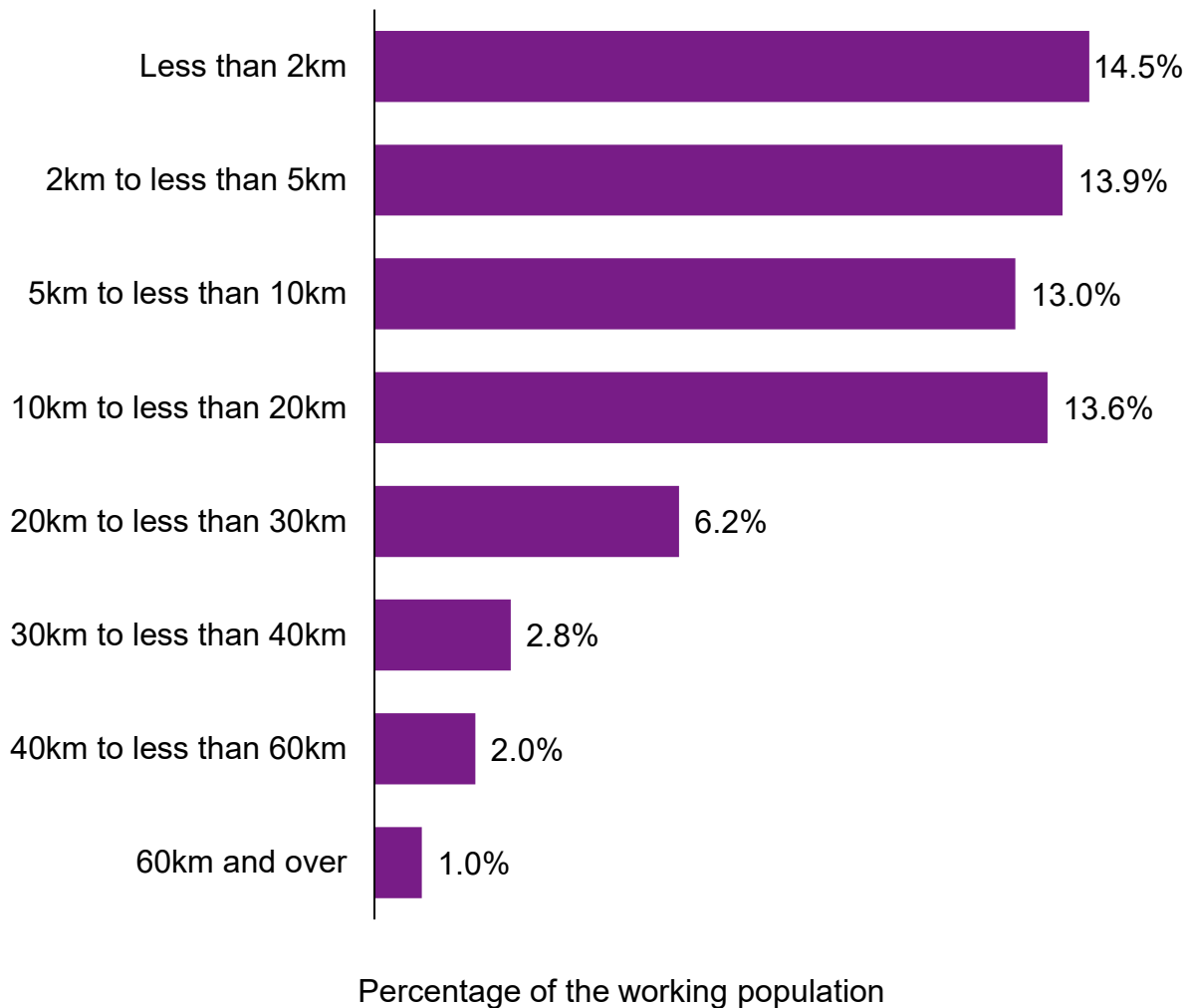
Table 1: Distance to place of work (Census 2021)

Distance to place of work	Population	Percent
Worked mainly at or from home	153,500	18.9%
No fixed place of work	97,000	11.9%
Workplace within Northern Ireland	545,100	67.0%
Less than 2km from home	117,800	14.5%
2km to less than 5km from home	113,400	13.9%
5km to less than 10km from home	105,700	13.0%
10km to less than 20km from home	111,000	13.6%
20km to less than 30km from home	50,200	6.2%
30km to less than 40km from home	22,500	2.8%
40km to less than 60km from home	16,600	2.0%
60km and over from home	7,800	1.0%
Worked outside Northern Ireland	18,100	2.2%
England, Scotland or Wales	5,600	0.7%
Republic of Ireland	10,500	1.3%
Outside the United Kingdom and Ireland	2,000	0.2%
Working population	813,800	100%

Table 1 also shows that more than two-fifths (41.4%) of the working population had a workplace in Northern Ireland which was a relatively short distance (less than 10km) from their home.

The numbers drop significantly as the distance increases above 20km, with only 7,800 (1.0%) having a workplace more than 60km away.

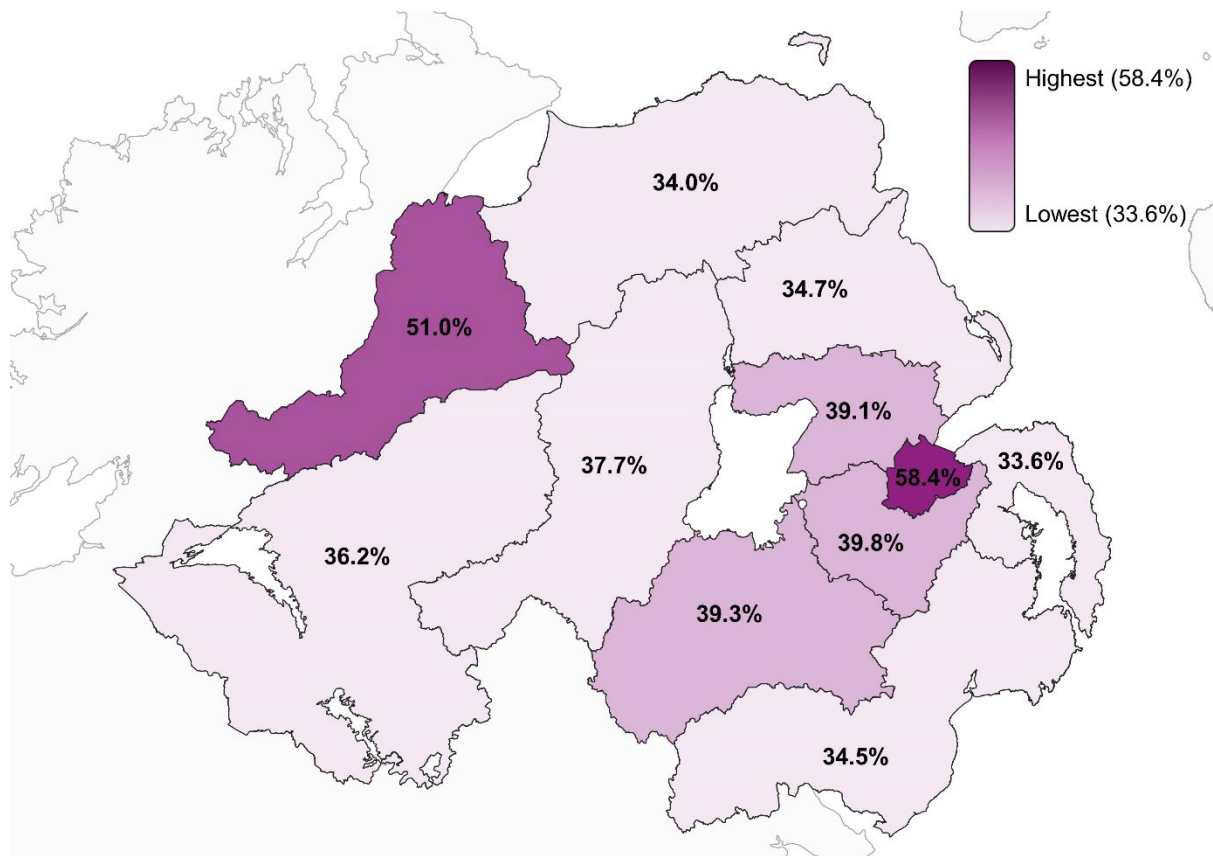
Figure 3: Percentage of the working population by distance to place of work within Northern Ireland (Census 2021)



4.2. Distance to place of work by Local Government District – Census 2021

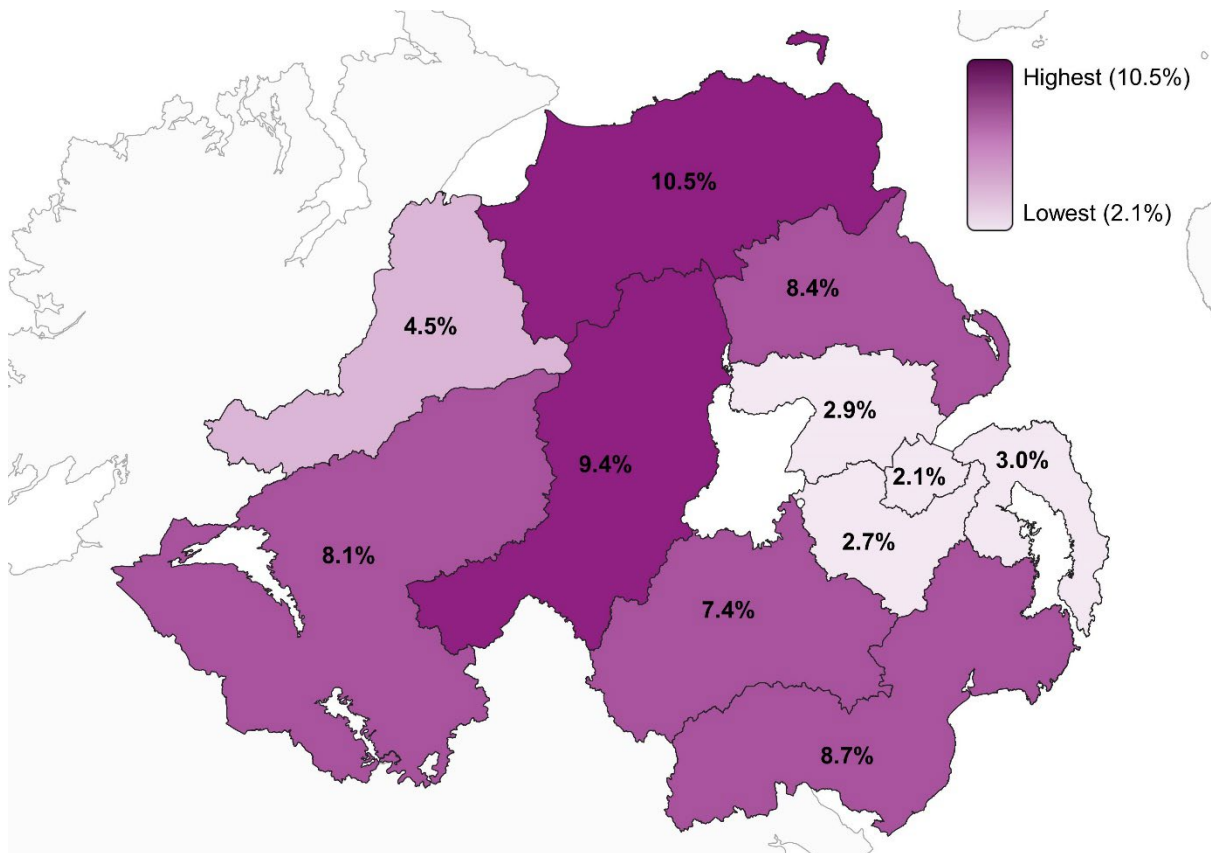
Belfast Local Government District (LGD) had the highest percentage (58.4%) of the working population who had a workplace less than 10km from their home, followed by Derry City & Strabane with 51.0%. Ards & North Down had the lowest percentage (33.6%), with Causeway Coast & Glens having 34.0%. This distribution is mapped in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Percentage of the working population with a workplace less than 10km from their home by LGD (Census 2021)



Conversely, Belfast LGD had the lowest percentage (2.1%) with a workplace which was 30km or more from their home, with Lisburn & Castlereagh having 2.7%. Causeway Coast & Glens had the highest percentage with a workplace which was 30km or more away (10.5%), followed by Mid Ulster with 9.4%. This distribution is mapped in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Percentage of working population with a workplace 30km or more from their home by LGD (Census 2021)



4.3. Method of travel to place of work – Census 2021

Of the working population, around 8 in 10 (81.1% or 660,300 people) usually travelled to a place of work using the methods listed in Table 2. The remaining 18.9% (153,500 people) worked mainly at or from home.

Table 2: Method of travel to place of work (Census 2021)

Method of travel to place of work	Population	Percent
Worked mainly at or from home	153,500	18.9%
In a car or van	555,000	68.2%
Driving a car or van	510,200	62.7%
Passenger in a car or van	39,500	4.9%
Car or van pool shared driving	5,300	0.7%
Public transport	38,300	4.7%
Bus, minibus or coach (public or private)	22,600	2.8%
Taxi	8,100	1.0%
Train	7,700	0.9%
Active travel	59,000	7.2%
Bicycle	6,500	0.8%
On foot	52,500	6.4%
Motorcycle, scooter or moped	1,500	0.2%
Other method	6,600	0.8%
Working population	813,800	100.0%

The most common single method of travel to place of work was ‘driving a car or van’, with 510,200 people (62.7%) of the working population using this method. Combining ‘driving a car or van’ with ‘passenger in a car or van’, and ‘car or van pool shared driving’ shows that over two-thirds (68.2% or 555,000 people) of the working population usually travelled to their place of work in a car or van.

Those travelling on foot or by bicycle (i.e. active travel) accounted for 7.2% of the working population, with 4.7% using public transport (i.e. bus, minibus, coach, taxi or train).

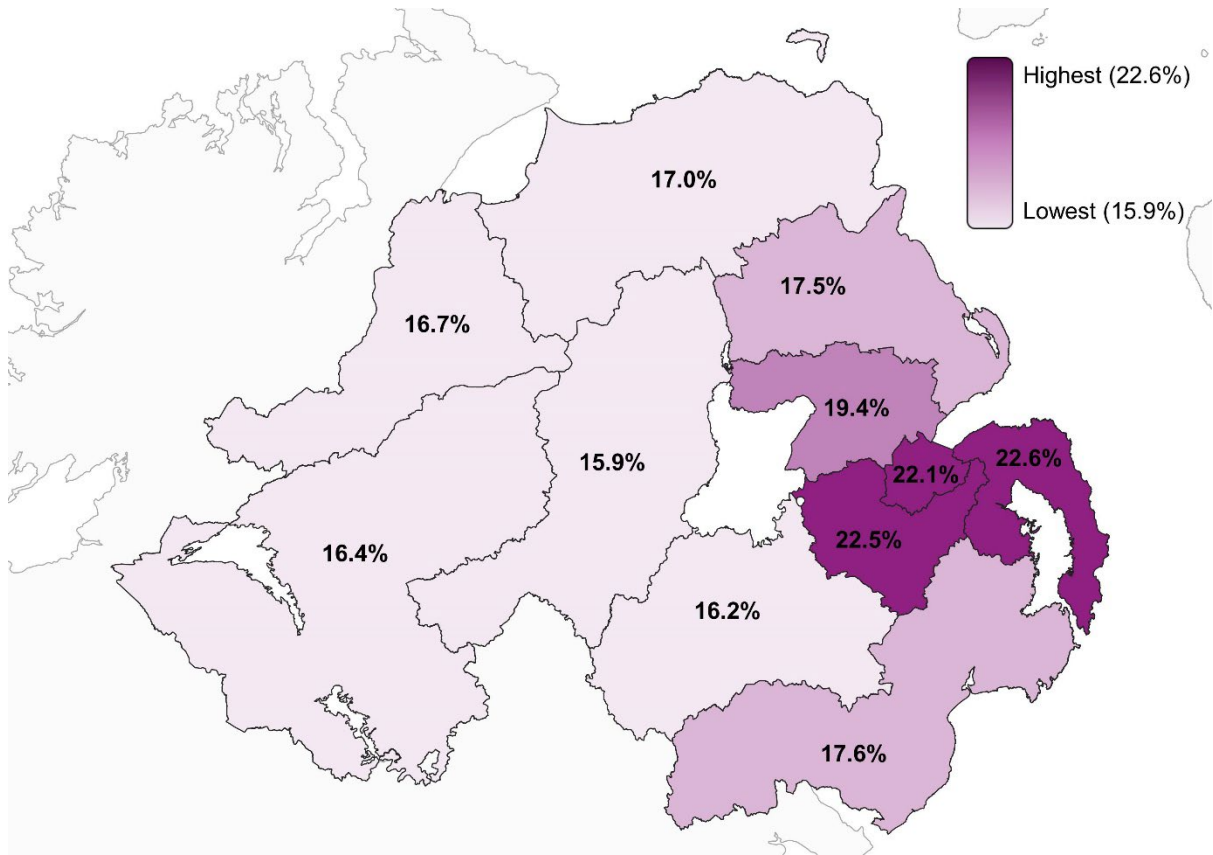
4.4. Method of travel to place of work by Local Government District – Census 2021

'Driving a car or van' was the most common method of travel to work in all 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs). The percentage reporting this method ranged from 70.3% in Fermanagh & Omagh to 47.2% in Belfast.

In all but three of the 11 LGDs, the second most common method of travel was 'on foot', with percentages ranging from 11.5% in Belfast to 4.6% in Lisburn & Castlereagh. The exceptions were Antrim & Newtownabbey, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon, and Mid Ulster, where 'passenger in a car or van' was the second most common method of travel.

Across Northern Ireland the percentage of the working population who worked mainly at or from home varied from a high of 22.6% (15,900 people) in Ards & North Down to a low of 15.9% (10,700 people) in Mid Ulster. This distribution is mapped in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Percentage of working population working mainly at or from home by LGD (Census 2021)



5. Place of study

This section reports statistics for those of primary school age and over, and who were in full-time education. This population is referred to as the **Studying Population**.

5.1. Distance to place of study – Census 2021

On Census Day 2021 there were 401,800 people in the studying population. Of these, 14,800 (3.7%) were studying mainly at or from home and 3,600 (0.9%) had no fixed place of study.

There were 1,300 (0.3%) who had a place of study outside Northern Ireland. This comprised 700 (0.2%) studying in the Republic of Ireland, 400 (0.1%) studying in England, Scotland or Wales, and a further 200 (0.1%) studying outside the United Kingdom or Ireland.

The remaining 382,000 people (95.1%) gave a fixed study address in Northern Ireland. For these people, a calculation was made of the straight-line distance between their place of residence and their place of study, resulting in statistics detailing the distance to place of study in kilometres (km) for a one-way journey.

Table 3 shows the distance to place of study for the studying population in Northern Ireland at the time of Census 2021.

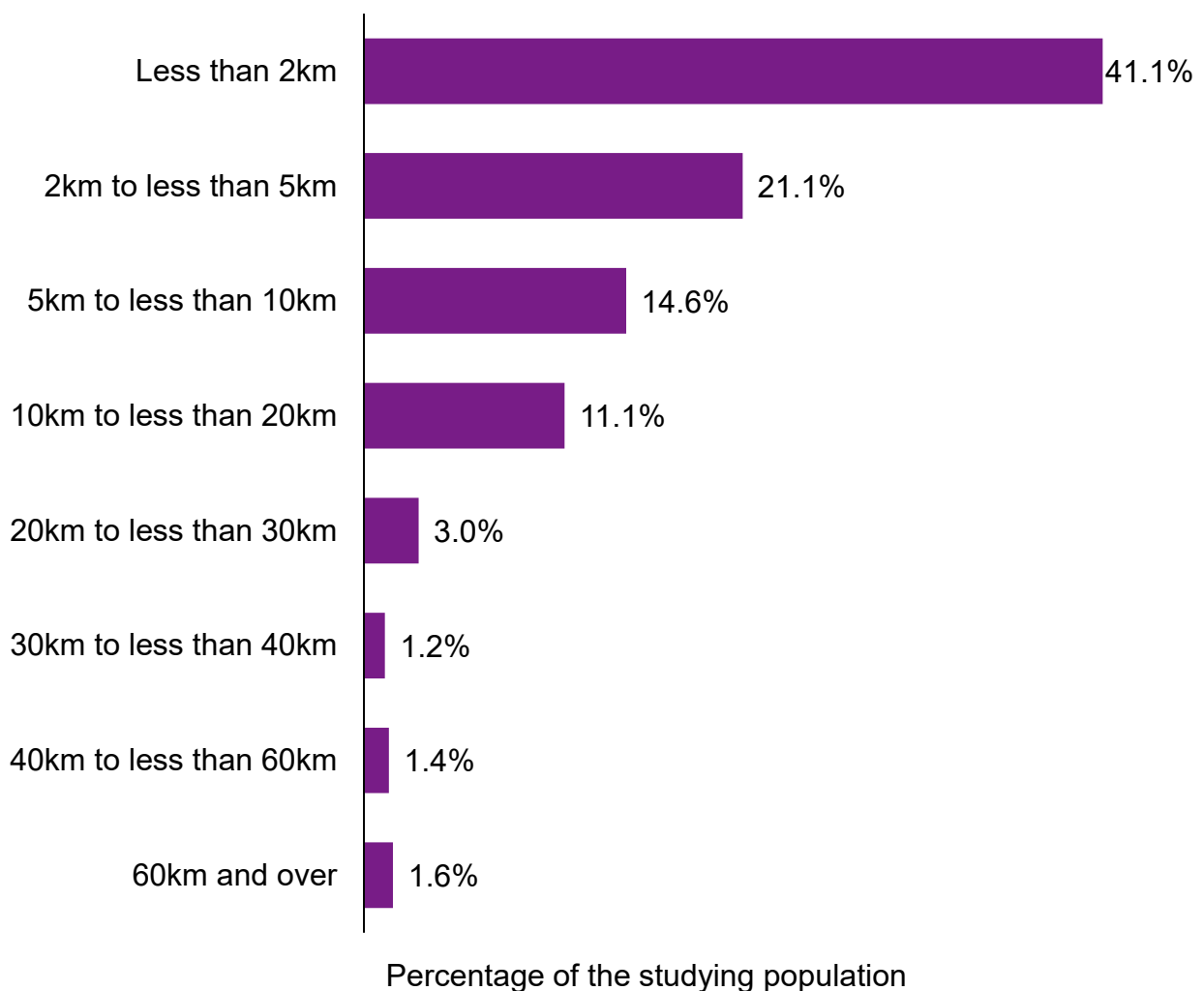
Table 3: Distance to place of study (Census 2021)

Distance to place of study	Population	Percent
Studied mainly at or from home	14,800	3.7%
No fixed place of study	3,600	0.9%
Place of study within Northern Ireland	382,000	95.1%
Less than 2km from home	165,100	41.1%
2km to less than 5km from home	84,600	21.1%
5km to less than 10km from home	58,600	14.6%
10km to less than 20km from home	44,800	11.1%
20km to less than 30km from home	12,200	3.0%
30km to less than 40km from home	4,700	1.2%
40km to less than 60km from home	5,600	1.4%
60km and over from home	6,500	1.6%
Studied outside Northern Ireland	1,300	0.3%
England, Scotland or Wales	400	0.1%
Republic of Ireland	700	0.2%
Outside the United Kingdom and Ireland	200	0.1%
Studying population	401,800	100.0%

Table 3 shows that 41.1% of the studying population (65,100 people) had a place of study in Northern Ireland that was less than 2km from their home.

The numbers drop significantly as the distance increases above 2km, with the number almost halving to 84,600 (21.1%) in the 2km to less than 5km band. There were only 6,500 (1.6%) people with a place of study more than 60km from their home.

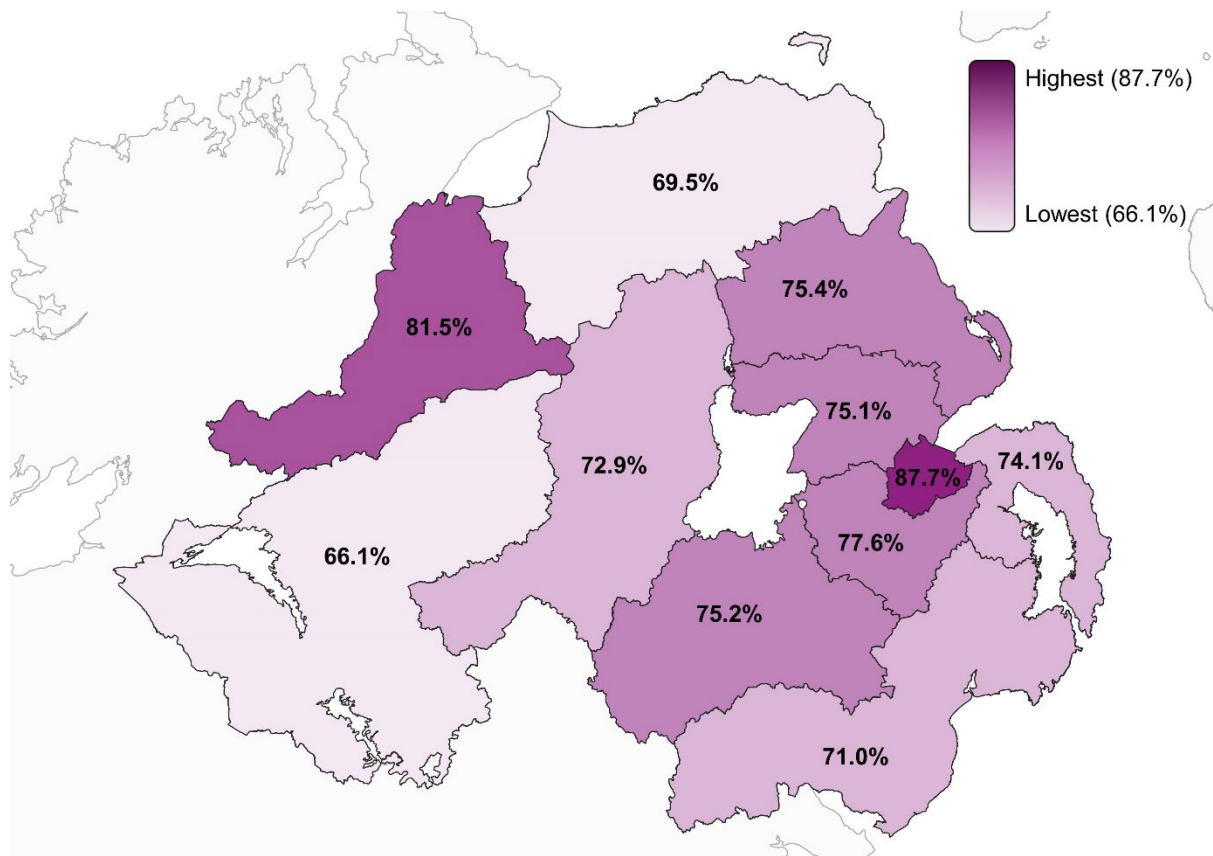
Figure 7: Percentage of the studying population by distance to place of study within Northern Ireland (Census 2021)



5.2. Distanced to place of study by Local Government District – Census 2021

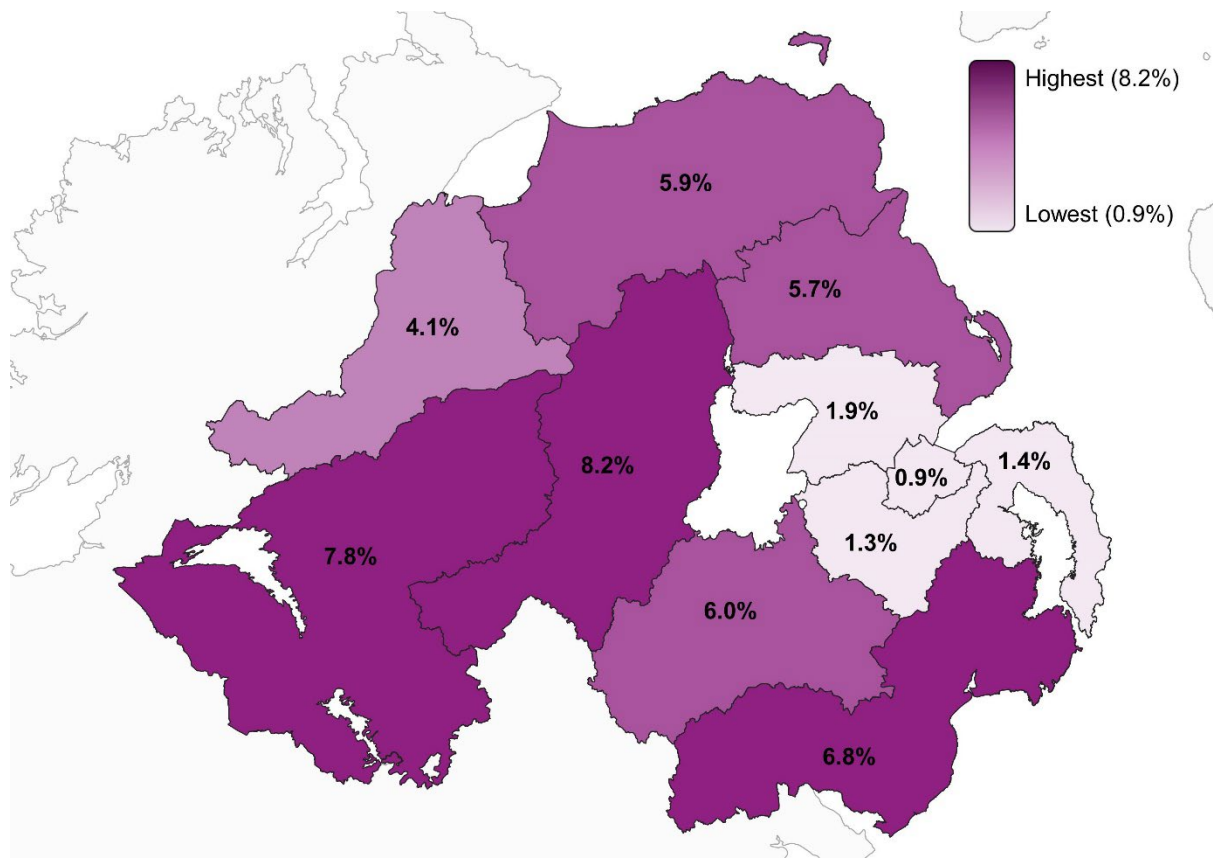
Belfast Local Government District (LGD) had the highest percentage (87.7%) of the studying population who had a place of study which was less than 10 km from their home, followed by Derry City & Strabane with 81.5%. Fermanagh & Omagh had the lowest percentage (66.1%), with Causeway Coast & Glens having 69.5%. This distribution is mapped in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Percentage of studying population with a place of study less than 10km from their home by LGD (Census 2021)



Conversely, Belfast LGD had the lowest percentage (0.9%) with a place of study which was 30km or more from their home, with Lisburn & Castlereagh having 1.3%. Mid Ulster had the highest percentage of students with a place of study which was 30km or more away (8.2%), followed by Fermanagh & Omagh with 7.8%. This distribution is mapped in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Percentage of studying population travelling 30km or more to their place study by LGD (Census 2021)



5.3. Method of travel to place of study – Census 2021

Of the studying population, 96.3% (387,000 people) usually travelled to a place of study using the methods listed in Table 4. The remaining 3.7% (14,800 people) studied mainly at or from home.

Table 4: Method of travel to place of study – Census 2021

Method of travel to place of study	Number	Percent
Studied mainly at or from home	14,800	3.7%
In a car or van	194,000	48.3%
Driving a car or van	23,400	5.8%
Passenger in a car or van	169,800	42.3%
Car or van pool shared driving	700	0.2%
Public transport	106,400	26.5%
Bus, minibus or coach (public or private)	94,900	23.6%
Taxi	5,500	1.40%
Train	6,000	1.5%
Active travel	84,400	21.0%
On foot	82,400	20.5%
Bicycle	2,000	0.5%
Motorcycle, scooter or moped	100	0.0%
Other method	2,100	0.5%
Studying population	401,800	100.0%

The most common single method of travel to place of study was ‘passenger in a car or van’, with 169,800 people (42.3%) of the studying population using this method. Combining ‘driving a car or van’ with ‘passenger in a car or van’, and ‘car or van pool shared driving’ shows that almost half (48.3% or 194,000 people) of the studying population usually travelled to their place of study in a car or van.

Those travelling on foot or by bicycle (i.e. active travel) accounted for 21.0% of the studying population, with 26.5% using public transport (i.e. bus, minibus, coach, taxi or train).

5.4. Method of travel to place of study by Local Government District

In 10 of the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs), the method of travel was the same as for Northern Ireland (i.e. passenger in a car or van). This ranged from 48.6% of the studying population in Lisburn & Castlereagh to 28.3% in Belfast.

Belfast LGD was the exception, where the most common method of travel was 'on foot' (35.3%).

6. Associated outputs

[Census 2021 outputs on travel to place of work or study](#) are available to download from the NISRA website, they include:

- MS-I01 Method of travel to work;
- MS-I02 Method of travel to study;
- MS-I03 Distance travelled to work; and
- MS-I04 Distance travelled to study.

7. Further information

Census statistics are produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency free from political influence. In May 2022, following a full assessment, the United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#) and the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). National Statistics status means that the statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

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.

7.1. Quality of the results

The census data collection operation was supported by an independent [coverage survey](#). The coverage survey along with administrative data and information from the field operation were combined to allow statistical estimates to be made of the small percentage of people who did not make a return. The statistical estimates discussed here, as with all Census 2021 outputs, reflect the full population of Northern Ireland.

Place of study – Quality note

Census Office identified an apparent issue, where some schoolchildren or students in full time education had missing places of study. An exercise was carried out with educational administrative data to, where possible, identify the educational institution

attended. For those records where the educational institution attended could be identified, the census record was updated with the name, address and associated location variables to enable distance travelled to study to be calculated.

Further information on accuracy, coverage and imputation is provided on the NISRA website in the [Census 2021 quality assurance report \(PDF 275 KB\)](#).

7.2. Confidentiality

Census Office has taken steps to ensure that the confidentiality of respondents is fully protected. All published results from the census have been subject to statistical processes to ensure that individuals cannot be identified. For more information, please refer to the [statistical disclosure control methodology](#). These processes may result in very marginally different results between tables for the same statistic.

7.3. Comparability with previous censuses

The census is designed to provide the most accurate possible picture of the population on the day the census is taken.

Census 2021 took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which will have affected the travel to work and travel to study statistics. Consequently, detailed change over time has not been considered in this report as to do so would require further significant research. The restrictions in place contributed significantly to changes in people working from home and the way people travelled to work or study.

7.4. Supporting material

A number of [supporting documents](#) are available on the census pages of the NISRA website. These documents describe the census methodology in more detail, the quality assurance processes applied, the paper questionnaire used in the census, and a full list of definitions and output classifications.

7.5. More details

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
Responsible Statistician: Dr David Marshall

This report was made possible by the co-operation of the public in responding to the census, the commitment of the census field and headquarters staff, and the assistance of many other people and organisations throughout all aspects of the census. The Registrar General for Northern Ireland, who is responsible for the planning, conduct and reporting of the census, would like to thank all of those who contributed to the census.

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