NI Road Safety Strategy to 2020 - Annual Statistical Report: Statement of User Needs

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy to 2020 (NIRSS) sets out a vision to improve road safety in Northern Ireland over the ten year period from 2011 – 2020. Its framework concentrates on four high-level outcomes (targets) and then a further 20 key performance indicators (KPIs) that are used to track the progress of the underlying road safety performance behind the casualty figures. The NIRSS Statistical Report monitors the progress of the targets and KPIs set out in the NIRSS.

ASRB already had a keen understanding of the data needs of internal policy customers, given the close working relationship on various road safety research projects, including the development of the Statistical Report. In contrast, much less was known about the extent to which the report met the needs of external users. While many users would have had the opportunity to provide feedback on road safety statistics and research through membership of the Road Safety Forum, or via the Road Safety Readership Survey[1], there had been no direct dialogue between ASRB and external users.

In order to address this gap in knowledge, in May and June 2016, ASRB conducted a number of face-to-face consultations with external users of road safety data. A wide range of users were met with to reflect the different user types: a road safety advertiser; groups representing young people; a group representing older people; road safety charities; and an insurance company. This report summarises the main requirements to emerge from these meetings and how we hope to address these in the future. It begins by briefly highlighting the current uses of the data, followed by an examination of the specific data needs that are not met by the statistical report. There were several key themes regarding gaps in knowledge that emerged from the meetings which are discussed separately. A table is then provided, listing the main needs identified, how they will be addressed and likely timescales. Given the prime purpose of the report is to monitor the NIRSS, it may not always be the most appropriate vehicle to meet a highlighted need. Furthermore, in some instances, a specific piece of analysis was requested by a single user which would not necessarily have a broader appeal to others or is already available on request from other data owners such as PSNI. In such cases, the user has been directed to the most appropriate source. Identified needs will be prioritised in line with available resources and will be kept under review. This statement of user needs will be published online so that users can see our plans and progress. Timescales for implementation will be reviewed on an annual basis, and the User Requirement table updated to reflect work carried out to date. It is envisaged that external users will be consulted on an ongoing basis to ensure that ASRB understanding of data requirements remains current. Again, the table will be updated, as necessary, to reflect new data needs identified and how ASRB plan to address them.

---

[1] https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/road-safety-customer-satisfaction-survey-report

CURRENT USES

In each meeting with the users, it was first determined how the available data are currently being used. Consultation meetings were held with external customers only; however, as stated previously, internal customers and their uses of the data, are already firmly established.

<u>Internal users</u>

A Strategy Delivery Board reports to the DfI Minister; it has the lead responsibility for monitoring and reporting on progress towards delivery of the Strategy and as such is the main internal user. The Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy to 2020 Annual Statistical Report provides the main source of information for the Delivery Board to assess progress being made against the Strategy and whether its various action measures are delivering the desired road safety benefits. Data from all targets and indicators are therefore highly relevant and used extensively for this purpose. Aside from this primary use, the report is also used by internal policy colleagues to:
- inform senior management and Ministerial briefing;
- answer queries; and
- help evaluate other Departmental strategies and initiatives (such as Graduated Driver Licensing and Drink/Drug Driving legislation).

<u>External users</u>

Each of the external users consulted have varying degrees of use for the data within the NIRSS Statistical Report. Some, such as the advertising company, could be classed as sophisticated users, creating their own analysis directly from available data sources. In these cases, a substantial proportion of the targets and indicators are of use as they seek to determine which road user groups are at particular risk, and hence can target their campaigns accordingly. In other cases, only a small subset of the targets and indicators are relevant to the user and in summary form (for example, only those that concerned children and young people are of use to the groups representing younger people). Generally such groups would be involved in lobbying Government to effect road safety improvements for the road users which they represent. Both types of user (sophisticated and limited user) stated that they do not generally make much use of the Excel tables or User Guidance available; instead the tables, text and charts included in the main body of the report are regarded as being of most use. The User Guidance would typically only be consulted if a user felt they had a specific issue or query surrounding a particular indicator.

In some cases, the user was not overly aware of the NIRSS Statistical Report, despite being members of the Road Safety Forum, and being on the circulation list

for notification when the report is published. However, the meetings were still useful in alerting these customers to the data that is currently available. This suggests a need for better marketing of the report. Indeed, the meetings with all users were useful for this purpose: where users were not fully aware of the range of data available aside from the NIRSS Statistical Report, they were informed of the additional products and sources available, e.g. NI Road Safety Monitor, Problem Profile, Seat Belt Survey, etc.

KEY THEMES

Once their current use of road safety data had been established, users were asked whether they had any specific road safety data needs that were not met by the statistical report. Below provides a summary of the key themes that arose in these conversations. A fuller list of user requirements can be found at the end of this report.

1. Context

A number of users indicated that an explanation behind trends or spikes in KSI or indicator data would be useful. This echoed one of the required improvements that the UK Statistics Authority highlighted was necessary in order to fully comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and to enable designation as National Statistics: "Improve the presentation and commentary to aid user interpretation providing contextual information and pointers to where richer data may be found".[2]

A section presenting key contextual trends in a user friendly way (incorporating infographics) was included at the beginning of the 2016 NIRSS Statistical Report, and this has been updated and expanded upon in subsequent years. Examples include: miles travelled by mode of travel; the number of driving test applications and licences held; fixed penalty notices for speeding; convictions for drink-driving; and advertising spend. It is important to avoid straying into speculation or attributing indicator changes to specific policy initiatives or actions. Instead, the types of factors that could be influencing trends are highlighted leaving readers to draw their own conclusions as to their relative impact versus that of the various Strategy actions.

2. Geography

A number of users indicated that a geographical breakdown of Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) data would be beneficial. Specific geographies mentioned included postcode and county. In addition, there were specific needs for data at different geographies alongside other variables, including age; date of collision; and cause of

---

[2]https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Assessment-Report-323-Northern-Ireland-Road-Safety-Strategy-to-2020-Annual-Statistical-Report.pdf

collision. Specific mention was made of the searchable map of road traffic collisions that is available on the RSA website[3].

Subsequent discussions with statistical colleagues in PSNI alerted us to the availability of a searchable KSI map on the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information System (NINIS) website. Users were alerted to this source and a summary map and link to the detailed interactive map were included in the main Statistical Report in 2016. A wide range of geographical analyses of KSI data are available from PSNI (the data owners) on request and users were alerted to this source.

3.   Mobile phones

The third most frequently requested information need was with regards to KSI collisions caused by mobile phone use. There is growing opinion that using a hand-held or hands-free mobile phone while driving is a significant distraction; however, data for the number of KSI collisions that have been caused by mobile phone use is difficult to source.

Collision causation is input by PSNI officers investigating the collision - if the principal cause identified is, for example, inattention or attention diverted; wrong course/position; driving too close; excessive speed; drink-driving, then mobile phone usage may be under-reported. In these instances mobile phone may be recorded as a secondary cause; however, it is worth highlighting that by the time police attend the scene, the phone may be removed or secured elsewhere. It is only in the case of a fatality that police powers to examine a phone are held to be reasonable and proportionate to the potential intrusion that a mobile phone examination would entail. So, whilst theoretically it would be possible for ASRB to produce analysis on collisions where mobile phone usage has been identified as a cause; in practice any output would not be considered robust. Any analysis produced for mobile-phone usage would have to carry the appropriate caveats and its utility would be low; as such, ASRB are reluctant to devote any resource to the issue at present unless there is a change in the way the causation fields are populated.

There were some questions on mobile phone usage while driving included on the 2018/19 Continuous Household survey (CHS). Results of this module were published in 2019[4] and users alerted to the publication via email. The same question set was included in the 2019/20 CHS, with results to be published in 2021. Historically, there were data available on mobile phone usage from the Road Safety Monitor and Seat Belt Survey, although both of these surveys were last carried out in

---

[3] https://www.rsa.ie/RSA/Road-Safety/RSA-Statistics/Collision-Statistics/Ireland-Road-Collisions/
[4] https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/road-safety-issues-northern-ireland-201819

2014 and there are no current plans for them to run again in the near future. Users that requested data on mobile phones have been directed to the most recent reports.

4. Miscellaneous

The remaining data needs identified from the user consultations can be grouped into 'Other', having only been requested by a single user. In some cases the requests were very specific to the user in question and it is unlikely that ASRB could devote resource to such niche analysis. In other cases, however, ASRB can see a wider benefit and will consider making the analysis available on their website as resources permit.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

ASRB are committed to continuous improvement and the comments given as part of these current consultations, as well as future consultations, provide valuable feedback for assessing the value of our RSS Statistical Report and for future planning. Each of the gaps in data identified will be considered; however, as stated previously, it is unlikely that all requests can be met within current resources. The list of user requirements (Table 1, page 8) summarises the various user requests, including those mentioned in the Key Themes above. The table sets out: the type of data/analysis requested; whether or not it can be accommodated; how best to address it; and an anticipated timeframe. The list will be reviewed at the beginning of each business year - it is a living document and will be updated annually with details of progress made against each request and with work that is planned for the upcoming year. Completed requests will be removed; however, previous versions of the document will remain online for reference.

It is essential that users are given the opportunity to continue to provide feedback on our publication and services on an ongoing basis and to make us aware of any further data needs as they arise. All of the users consulted were content with their current channels of engagement with the Department with respect to their information needs (principally via the Road Safety Forum) and did not express any desire to participate in a dedicated Road Safety Statistics User Group. Although some did feel that the existing Transport Statistics Users Group could perhaps serve this purpose, this Group has now been wound up following a formal review. Most transport statistics users indicated that they preferred to be consulted with informally via one-to-one meetings, supplemented with periodic readership surveys and good feedback facilities on ASRB website. Resulting from this, a new User Engagement Strategy has been developed and published on ASRB website (see https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/asrb-user-engagement-strategy). In line with this Strategy, an overall Statement of User Needs covering all of ASRB's user base, will be developed and updated on a regular basis.

TABLE 1: LIST OF USER REQUIREMENTS

User Requirement	ASRB Response & Actions	Timescales	2020 Update
Develop data around mobile phone usage and KSIs.	*See Key Theme 3.* Module on Mobile Phone Usage while Driving included on the 2017/18 Continuous Household Survey. Link to report will be included in publication, when available.	Link included in 2019 Report.	The data was published in 2020 and a link included in NIRSS 2020. Further data will be available in 2021 (CHS 2019/20 results).
Develop and provide access to casualty risk exposure data (e.g., robust travel distances/times by age and travel mode, licensing data, etc.)	1) ASRB already has plans in place to address the lack of robust exposure data across a greater range of road user categories and ages. This will involve pooling Travel Survey for NI (TSNI) samples across years to create larger and hence statistically more robust sample sizes.	1) Work commenced in 2016/17 – further work carried out in 2017/18 and 2018/19. Nothing further planned.	1) ASRB's investigation, using pooled TSNI samples, revealed that more recent large changes that were reported in distance travelled for both cyclists and motorcyclists since the baseline period were statistically significant. This is an important finding as it means that we can then be confident that any change in a KSI rate which is based on a statistically significant change in distance travelled (from the baseline period), **is a real change**. A workshop with ROI colleagues to explore this issue is took place in Oct 2017. Findings from this workshop were examined in 2018/19 to determine whether any of the recommendations could be applied to NI data; however, it was concluded that our currently published analysis was as robust as possible with the data available to us.

	2) ASRB will investigate providing direct user access to an anonymised DVA licensing dataset or pre-defined detailed tables if individual records are not feasible.	2) 2019/20	2) A new replacement driver system (the RDS) was implemented by DVA licensing in Nov 2016. The feasibility of producing an anonymised dataset for secondary analysis will be investigated during 2019/20 once the new system has properly bedded in. This will also be subject to resource considerations.
Analysis of collisions/casualties occurring while driving to/from work.	These data are not currently available, however, as of April 2016, the variable is available on PSNI Case Report Forms (CRF) and the information is now being collected. PSNI are aware of our interest and the variable will be included in the 2017 Information Sharing Agreement to allow future analysis.	Nothing further planned.	A new 'Reason for Journey' variable was included in 2016. However, it has since become apparent that there are a range of data quality issues present: Firstly, the variable has been attached to the casualty rather than the vehicle, which means that it is only if the driver is injured can we determine the reason for journey. Secondly, the data that is available is very poorly populated, with approximately 70% of KSIs having their reason for journey recorded as 'Unknown'. Unfortunately, these issues combined mean that no meaningful analysis can be carried out.
Analysis on the number of drivers saved because they have been wearing their seatbelt.	Internal estimates already available using data from GB and seatbelt wearing rates from NI Seatbelt Survey. Will consider including these in future Seatbelt Survey reports if/when it is next carried out.	Keep under review.	Keep under review.