


Public Awareness of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) 2018.

Lead Statistician

Norma Broomfield
Statistical Support Branch, NISRA
Colby House,
Stranmillis Court
Belfast, BT9 5RR

 02890 388481

 Norma.Broomfield@nisra.gov.uk

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This report presents findings from the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) on public awareness of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and includes comparisons with public awareness of the Office for National Statistics (ONS), where it is appropriate to do so. The figures presented in this report were obtained from a sample of the population and are therefore estimates (see Appendix A).

This report replaces the biennial **2018 Report on Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics** which has not been produced for this time period, due to an irreparable issue with the source data. The '**Awareness of NISRA**' question was unaffected. For further information see Appendix B.

Key Findings:

- Public awareness of NISRA is low with just over a third (35%) of respondents indicating that they had heard of the Agency before being contacted about the survey.
- There has been no statistically significant change in public awareness of NISRA since 2014.
- Awareness of NISRA is higher among those educated to degree level and those in the 35 – 44 age group.

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Useful Links:

[NISRA website](#)

[Statistics produced by NISRA](#)

[Downloadable Tables \(2016 & 2018\)](#)

[Previous bulletins in this series](#)

[Public Confidence in Official Statistics 2018 \(ONS\)](#)

1. Introduction

NISRA is an Agency within the Department of Finance and is the principal source of official statistics and social research on Northern Ireland. The statistics and research published by NISRA not only inform public policy but also academic and private sector research, and contribute to debate in the wider community. NISRA provides services to a wide range of Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies, as well as Local Councils to assist the policy process and delivery of their objectives and actions. NISRA is also responsible for conducting the decennial Census of Population.

In the UK, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the largest producer of official statistics. Public awareness of ONS is also monitored and this report contains comparisons between NISRA and ONS. The ONS survey covers England, Scotland and Wales. The most recent [ONS survey](#) was conducted in 2018.

2. Awareness of NISRA

Awareness in 2018

Public awareness of NISRA remains low, with only just over one third of respondents (35%) saying they had heard of NISRA.

Awareness over Time

Chart 1 shows that public awareness of NISRA has not changed significantly since 2014.

Comparison with ONS

As was the case in 2014 and 2016, levels of awareness of NISRA remain lower than awareness of ONS. Over two thirds (69%) of respondents in 2018 were aware of ONS (Chart 1). For NISRA, the equivalent figure was 35%.

Awareness by Qualifications

Awareness levels are highest among those educated to degree level and/or above and lowest for those with no qualifications. (Chart 2). This has not changed significantly since 2016.

Chart 1: Awareness of NISRA and ONS, 2014 - 2018

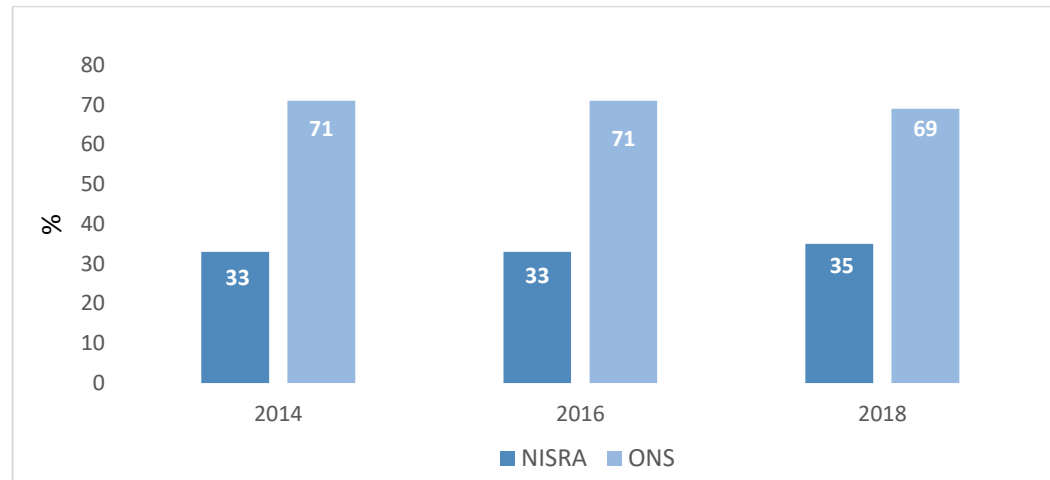
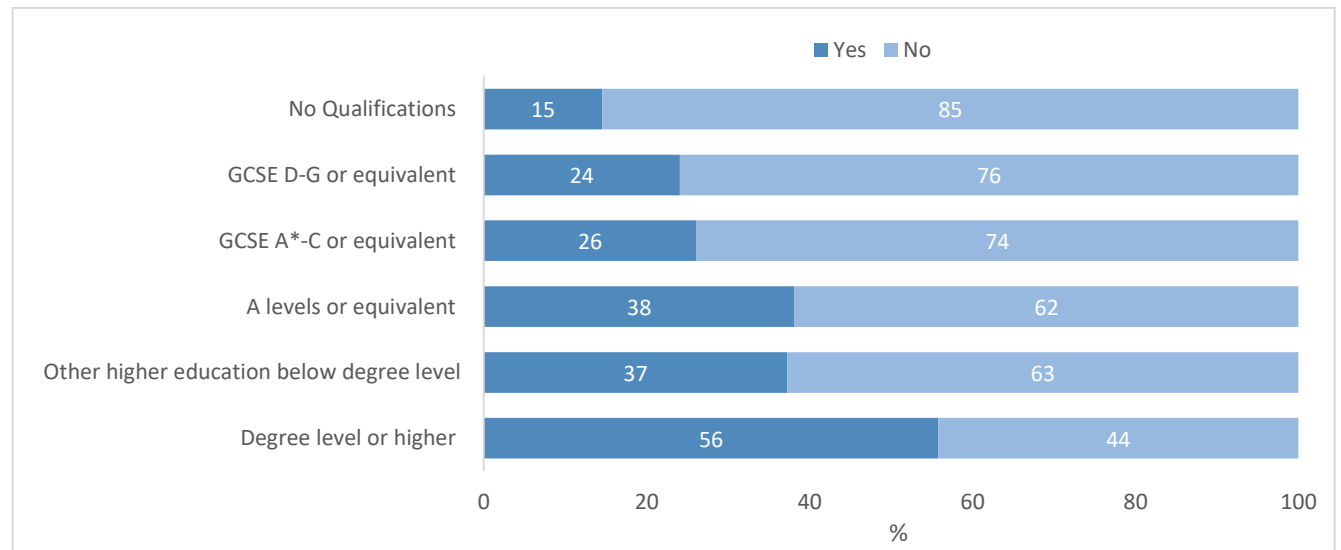


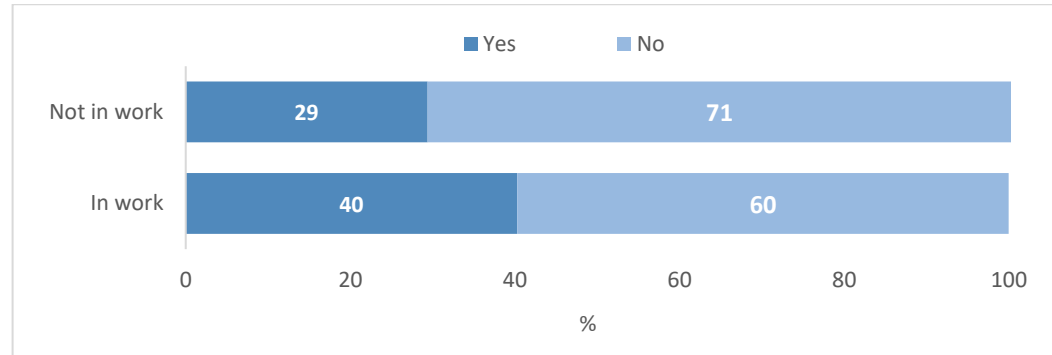
Chart 2: Awareness of NISRA by Qualifications, 2018.



Awareness by Employment Status

The level of awareness of NISRA is higher among those in work compared to those not in work (Chart 3). This was also the case in 2016. There has been no significant change since 2016.

Chart 3: Awareness of NISRA by Employment Status, 2018



Awareness by Age

Awareness of NISRA is lower among those aged 16-24 and older people (75 years and over) whilst it is highest for the 35-44 age group (Chart 4). Awareness of NISRA among the 35-44 age group has increased significantly from 38% to 55% since 2016 (Chart 5).

Chart 4: Awareness of NISRA by Age, 2018

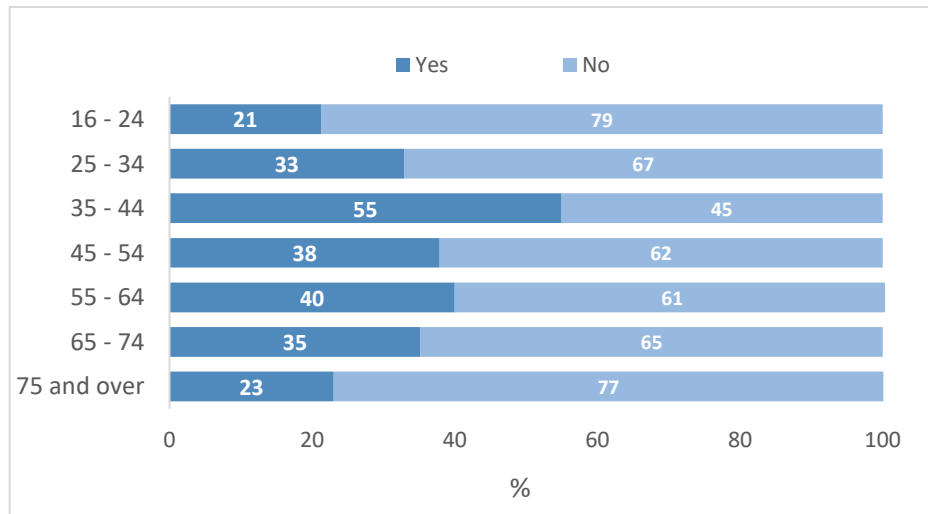
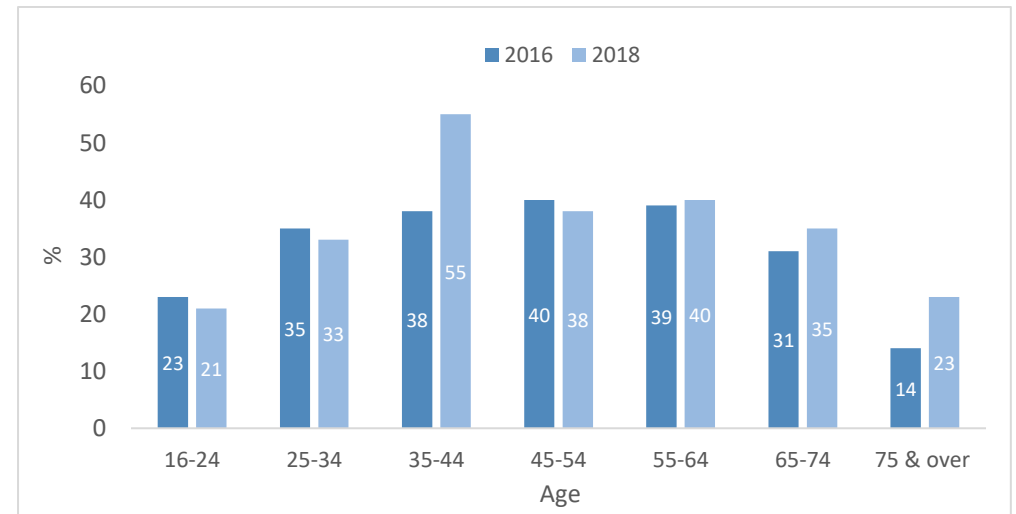


Chart 5: Awareness of NISRA by Age, 2016 and 2018



Appendix A: Methodology and Quality Information

This report presents the findings from the question relating to public awareness of NISRA that was included in the **Continuous Household Survey (CHS)** from October to December 2018. Each year Central Survey Unit, NISRA, sets the content of the Continuous Household Survey questionnaire in consultation with clients. The questionnaire consists of both an overall household interview, and an individual interview with each person aged 16 and over.

Both the household and individual questionnaires consist of core items that are included each year, and modules that recur on a regular cycle. Core items include household and individual demographics, accommodation, tenure, internet access, environmental issues, domestic tourism, participation in sports, arts and leisure, employment status, educational qualifications, health and section 75 classifications. The awareness of NISRA 2018 question was commissioned by NISRA's Statistical Support Branch and is available in Appendix C of this report.

Sample

The Continuous Household Survey is based on a systematic random sample of 9,000 addresses drawn each year from the Pointer list of domestic addresses. Pointer is the address database for Northern Ireland maintained by Land & Property Services (LPS). Data is collected by personal interview using CAPI, and the interviews are spread equally over the 12 months from April to March. Of the 2,250 addresses selected for interview from October to December 2018, 1,421 persons participated in the survey.

Survey Estimates

Surveys gather information from a sample rather than from the whole population. Results from surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. This means that they have a margin of error which can have an impact on how changes in the numbers should be interpreted, especially in the short term. An estimate of the amount of error due to the sampling process can be calculated and used to produce an interval of values known as a confidence interval. This has been taken into account when carrying out significance tests.

Significance tests were carried out to determine if there were differences in responses given by various respondent groups. The significance tests were carried out at 5% significance level and only differences which were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) are included in this report. This means that there is at least a 95% probability that there is a genuine difference between responses given.

Weighting

The Continuous Household Survey aspires to interview everyone aged 16 or over at a selected household, but non-response either by the household as a whole or by individuals within the household introduce non-response bias to the results. To counter this, weights are applied to analysis on the basis of age and gender. Weights are calculated based on how the age and gender profile of the survey respondents differs from that of the latest mid-year population estimates published by NISRA. This weighting process adjusts the results to those that would have been achieved if the sample had been drawn as a random sample of adults rather than of addresses, thus allowing inferences to be made about the population¹. The percentages given in the tables in this report are based on weighted data. The totals in the tables are not weighted.

Rounding

Percentages in tables and charts may not add to 100 due to rounding.

¹ An 'age-only' set of weights have been used for the analysis by age; this improves how closely the adjusted results match the age-profile of the population.

Appendix B: Source data issue affecting questions on Public Trust in Official Statistics

Background

NISRA normally produces a biennial *Report on Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics* which presents findings on public awareness of NISRA and trust in official statistics in Northern Ireland. It also reports on changes in attitudes to official statistics over time and includes comparisons with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), where it is appropriate to do so.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is the main producer of official statistics in Northern Ireland. The data collection, production, presentation and dissemination of official statistics are governed by the Principles within the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). The Code ensures that the statistics published by government serve the public. When producers of official statistics comply with the Code, it gives users of statistics and citizens confidence that published government statistics are of **public value**, are **high quality** and are produced by people and organisations that are worthy of **trust**.

The biennial *Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics* report helps NISRA and the general public, to assess public opinion on how well NISRA and the statistics produced by NISRA align with the objectives of the Code of Practice. The report is based on questions relating to public awareness and trust in official statistics in Northern Ireland. These questions were included in the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) from October to December 2018.

Why was the report not produced?

Due to an irreparable issue with the source data (see below) the *2018 Report on Public Awareness of and Trust in Official Statistics* has not been produced. This is consistent with the Quality pillar of the Code of Practice which states that “Quality means that statistics fit their intended uses, are based on appropriate data and methods, and are not materially misleading”. The **‘Awareness of NISRA’** question was unaffected and as a result this short bulletin summarising the results of this question has been produced. The complete suite of questions will be re-run in the Continuous Household Survey (from October to December 2019) allowing a full report to be produced for 2019.

What was the issue with the source data?

The way in which the trust questions were asked in 2018 differed from previous years (2014 & 2016) and from comparable data (from the Official for National Statistics) in that a show card was not used in 2018. The response categories for these questions are complex (e.g. Trust a great deal, Tend to trust, Tend to distrust and Distrust greatly) and a show card helps respondents to remember and compare the categories before answering the question.

Furthermore, an additional ‘spontaneous don’t know’ option was included in the interviewer’s version of the question and would have appeared on their laptop which may have been shown to the respondents. This response is not normally included as a question option.

Preliminary analysis of the 2018 data showed a disproportionately high number of 'spontaneous don't know' responses in the data, compared with previous years. While some of these would have occurred anyway, it was not possible to determine how many were driven by the lack of a show card and/or by the additional option on the interviewer's screen. Due to the inability to produce comparable results with previous years or the Official for National Statistics data the decision was taken not to publish the results which could potentially be misleading. Instead the survey will be re-run in 2019.

The affected questions were Trust in NISRA; Trust in the Civil Service; Trust in the NI Assembly; Trust in the media; Trust in the statistics produced by NISRA; 'Statistics produced by NISRA are important'; and 'I believe that the statistics produced by NISRA are free from political interference'. The 'Awareness of NISRA' question was unaffected.

Appendix C: 2018 Data Tables^{2,3}

Q: Before being contacted about this survey had you heard of NISRA, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency?

Table 1: Awareness of NISRA

Percentage	
Yes	35
No	64
Don't know (Spontaneous)⁴	0
Number of Respondents	1421

Table 2: Awareness of NISRA by Age Band

Percentage	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 and over
Yes	21	33	55	38	40	35	23
No	79	67	45	62	61	65	77
Number of Respondents	84	182	220	267	238	242	187

Table 3: Awareness of NISRA by Employment Status

Percentage	In Work	Not in Work
Yes	40	29
No	60	71
Number of Respondents	721	699

² These tables and the 2016 tables can be [downloaded](#) from the 2018 Public Awareness of NISRA report page.

³ Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

⁴ This respondent has not been included in the more detailed analysis by Age Band, Employment Status and Highest Educational Qualification

Table 4: Awareness of NISRA by Highest Educational Qualification

Percentage	Degree level or Higher	Other higher education below degree level	A levels or equivalent	GCSE A*- C or equivalent	GCSE D-G or equivalent	No Qualifications
Yes	56	37	38	26	24	15
No	44	63	62	74	76	85
Number of Respondents	425	111	189	252	138	305