

Background Quality Report for Equality Statistics in the Northern Ireland Civil Service

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This background quality report provides information about the quality of the data used to produce the Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service 2024, and any statistics derived from these data.

Introduction – Context for the quality report

This report provides an overview of the equality profile of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) at 1 January 2024 and how it has changed over time. It includes an analysis of composition by sex, community background, age, disability status and ethnicity, and how that composition has changed over time.

The primary data source, with the exception in part of the NIPS, was HRConnect, the Human Resource Service for the NICS. Data for NIPS staff not on HRConnect was obtained from NIPS's own personnel data systems. Figures are based on actual staff in post at 1 January each year.

Relevance – the degree to which the statistical product meets user needs in both coverage and context.

Covers the composition of NICS staff at 1 January 2024 by sex, community background, age group, ethnicity and disability. Comparative information has been included from 2000 onwards.

Disability and ethnicity data are missing for 44.5% and 9.1% of staff respectively. Information on sexual orientation is missing for 66.4% of staff, while information on dependants is missing for 64.5% of staff. The low coverage for these two categories means that it would not be appropriate to present figures with the same level of detail as other categories due to uncertainty about the representativeness of the staff for whom information is available.

Accuracy and Reliability - The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value.

Coverage of staff is 100%, but ethnicity and disability are affected by missing data.

Ethnicity data are missing for 9.1% of staff. Of staff for whom ethnicity is available, 0.6% were from ethnic minorities. While the true proportion of minority ethnic staff could be as high as 9.7% (on the most extreme scenario where all missing data related to minority ethnic staff), there is no evidence that the ethnicity of staff whose information is missing differ from those whose is recorded, and so the actual proportion of staff from a minority ethnic background is unlikely to differ substantially from the reported figure of 0.6%.

Disability data are missing for 44.5% of staff. Some 6.1% of all staff were recorded as disabled. Potentially, therefore, the true proportion of disabled staff could be as high as 50.6% (on the most extreme scenario where all missing data related to disabled staff). The reported proportion of 6.1% should therefore be considered as a minimum – some staff whose disability information is missing may have a disability, and some others who are recorded as not having a disability may have developed a disability since the information was provided. Both of these scenarios would mean a larger proportion of all staff having a disability.

Sexual orientation data are missing for 66.4% of NICS staff. Of those staff for whom data are available 3.5% described their orientation as towards someone of the same sex, 2.4% towards both sexes and 94.1% towards someone of different sex.

However, since coverage is limited to a relatively small proportion of staff, staff with a recorded sexual orientation may not be representative of the whole NICS and so it would not be appropriate to use these figures as an estimate of the NICS profile.

Data on dependants are missing for 64.5% of NICS staff. For those staff with data on dependants, 62.1% identify as having no dependants, with 37.9% stating they have dependants. However, since coverage is limited to a relatively small proportion of staff, staff with recorded information on dependants may not be representative of the

whole NICS and so it would not be appropriate to use these figures as an estimate of the NICS profile.

Data on marital status are missing or unknown for 7.6% of NICS staff. For those staff for whom data are available, 35.0% are recorded as single and 57.6% as married.

The NICS does not collect data on the political opinion of staff.

Aggregation can conceal inequalities Imagine, for example, an organisation with 500 staff, 100 of whom are science and technology professionals, and 400 of whom are teaching and research professionals. Suppose 10 of the science professional were female and 240 of the technology professionals were female.

Whilst the overall sex composition is 50% female, women are underrepresented among science and technology professionals where they constitute 10% of staff (compared with the Census figure of 18%) and are also under-represented among teaching and research professionals where they constitute 60% of staff (compared with the Census figure of 65%).

Timeliness and punctuality:- Timeliness refers to the time gap between publication and the reference period. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.

The report relates to 1 January 2024, and is published on 26 March 2024. The gap includes the time it takes to resolve various data quality issues.

Accessibility and Clarity - Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.

The report is available on the NISRA website and contains contact details for further information.

Explanatory information including sources, discontinuities and missing data have been included.

Data tables to accompany the charts in the report are available on the website in a non-proprietary open format.

Coherence and Comparability - Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.

Counts of staff depend on the reference date, whether staff are permanent or casual, whether those on a career break are included, and whether secondees are included.

There are two alternative sources of information on the equality composition of the NICS – the Quarterly Employment Survey Supplement (sex), and the annual Monitoring Report published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (community background). The Quarterly Employment Survey differs from this report in that it relates to data captured at a different point in time. The annual Monitoring Report differs from our report in that it includes additional employee groupings.

There have been various changes in the scope of the NICS over the past decade as a result of the transfer of functions (and the associated staff) to new bodies outside the NICS, or from outside bodies to the NICS.

Previous editions of this report have compared the NICS position with the current year's position in GB. GB information relating to 2023 was not available at the time of initial publication (March 2024).

The overall contextual figures given in this report relate to the economically active population, and do not take account of the occupational profile of the NICS. They therefore give only a broad general comparison and cannot be used to conclude that there is under- or over-representation of any equality group. Accordingly, more detailed analysis is required in order to make such an assessment. For example, Census data from 2021 on people in employment show that women constituted 14% of engineering occupations, but 73% of teaching and research professionals. Comparisons need to be at the level of specific occupations. For community

background, such analysis is undertaken for “Article 55” reviews. The most recent review can be accessed at [Article 55 Reviews](#).

Trade-offs between Output Quality Components - Trade-offs are the extent to which different aspects of quality are balanced against each other.

Coverage of staff is 100% although as previously highlighted information for the disability and ethnicity variables is not complete. The main computer system from which the data are extracted is also used to pay staff.

Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions - The processes for finding out about users and uses, and their views on the statistical products.

When this publication was first being developed, we conducted a consultation with key stakeholders – NICS Corporate HR, the Equality Commission, Civil Service Commissioners, Departments, the trade union NIPSA, and the Statistics Advisory Committee. The consultation letter offered a meeting, and several of the bodies consulted took up this offer. Responses to the illustrative draft in the consultation were very favourable; specific suggestions were taken on board where feasible.

As part of the wider effort to operate within these financial constraints, the Human Resource Consultancy Services (HRCS) team within NISRA, reviewed the content and format of a number of publications in 2023 including the annual Equality Statistics for the NICS. Following a User Consultation and in the face of constrained resources, it was decided to scale back the content of written report to focus on Composition (Staff-in-Post) only until further notice.

The report currently contains contact details in case users wish to provide feedback, comments or queries on the publication.

Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden - The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output.

The annual operational cost (staff time) of producing the report is approximately £8,000.

There is no respondent burden, since the data are held on an administrative system.

Confidentiality, Transparency and Security - The procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices.

Suppression would be applied where the number of cases in a cell containing personal information is disclosive; this is described in table footnotes. If appropriate, cells are merged.

Data are held on a network that is only accessible to the few statisticians who need access.