

NISRA STATISTICAL BULLETIN

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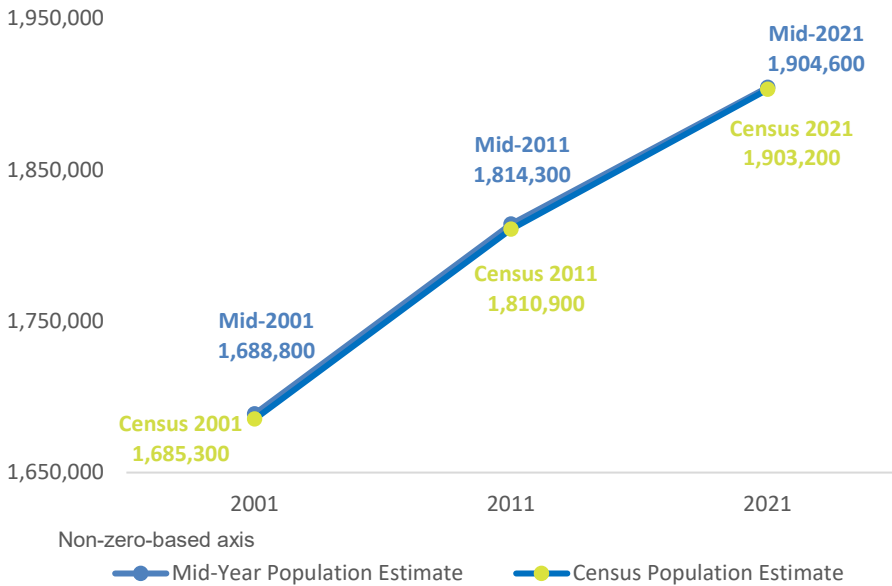
Time period: Mid-2021

2021 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland



This statistical report provides population estimates for Northern Ireland and its Local Government Districts, by age and sex.

2021 Census based Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland - Summary



Northern Ireland population continues to grow

Northern Ireland's population on 21 March 2021 was 1,903,200 people.

On 30 June 2021 Northern Ireland's population was 1,904,600 people.

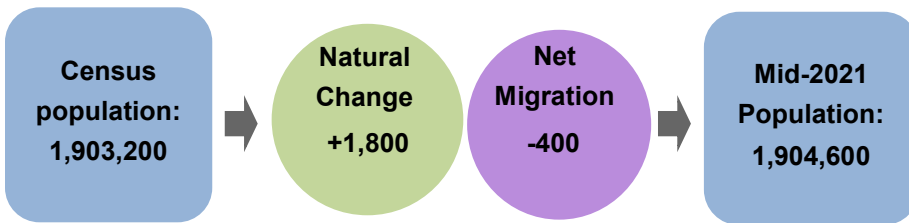
The population increased by 0.1 per cent (1,400 people) between 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021.

Breakdown of population changes between 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021

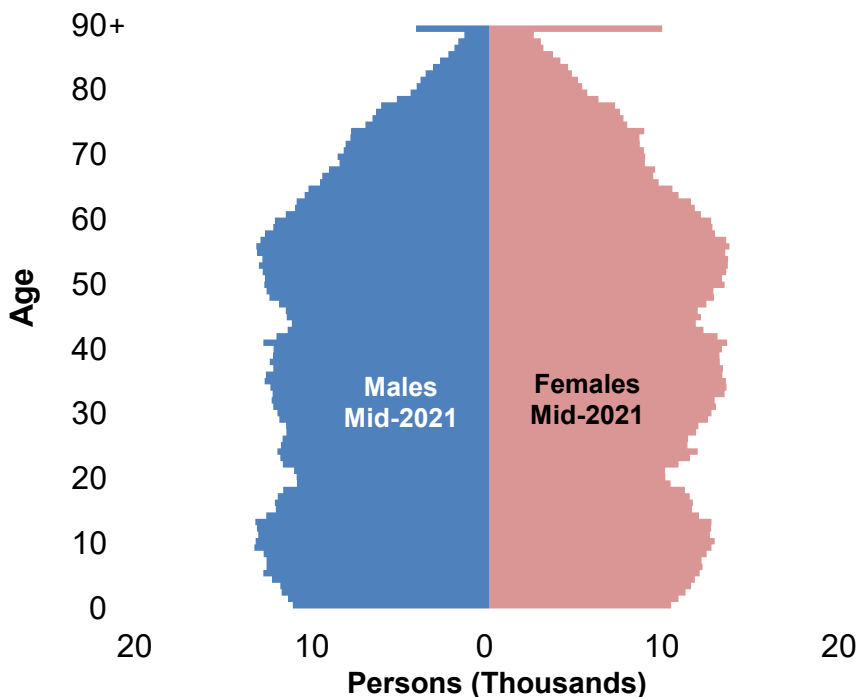
Natural change (births minus deaths) accounted for +1,800.

Net migration for Northern Ireland was negative (-400).

The population increased by 0.1 per cent (1,400 people) between 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021.



Population by age and sex (mid-2021)



The Northern Ireland population continues to age

The population pyramid (left) shows the population structure.

The ageing of the population is evident from the increasing population amongst the older ages.

Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
2	Background.....	4
3	Population Estimates for Northern Ireland.....	4
	Northern Ireland’s population continues to increase.....	5
	Why is the population increasing?	6
4	Population change	7
	Births and Deaths.....	7
5	Where do migrants come from and go to?.....	7
6	The age structure of Northern Ireland’s population	9
	The population of Northern Ireland is ageing.....	9
7	How has the population changed for Local Government Districts?	10
8	Links to related statistics.....	12
9	National Statistics	13
10	Background Notes.....	13
	Population coverage.....	13
	Methodology.....	14
	Quality of administrative data	14
	Census 2021 and Rebasing Exercise of 2012-2020	14
11	Limitations	15

Note:

Throughout the report figures have been presented in a rounded form to ease readability. For example, population figures have been presented to the nearest 100 and percentages have been presented to 1 decimal place. However, all calculations have been undertaken on the basis of unrounded numbers which will, in some instances, give rise to apparent discrepancies.

1 Introduction

This bulletin details the key findings from the 2021 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland and the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) within Northern Ireland, published on 29 November 2022. The majority of this bulletin contains analyses of the population and migration estimates for Northern Ireland and its LGDs. These statistics stand as the first Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland that are based on Census 2021 data.

Detailed tables for Northern Ireland and the 11 LGDs are available on the [NISRA website](#).

Population statistics are used to allocate public funds to the Northern Ireland Executive through the Barnett formula¹. Population estimates are also widely used by Northern Ireland government departments for the planning of services, such as health and education. These statistics are also of interest to those involved in research and academia. They are widely used to express other statistics as a rate, and thus enable comparisons across the United Kingdom and other countries. Furthermore, population estimates form the basis for future population statistics such as population projections².

2 Background

The population estimates refer to the number of people in the population on 30 June each year. Population estimates for Northern Ireland, sub-national levels and small geographical areas are published annually and approximately one year in arrears. Population estimates are based on the most recent Census of population: each year, the population is ‘aged-on’ by one year with the number of births in the year added and the number of deaths in the year subtracted. An adjustment is also made for migration. Subsequent mid-year population estimates then use the previous year’s figures as the base.

The official 2021 mid-year estimates for Northern Ireland, referred to in this bulletin, are based on [Census 2021 data](#), updated to account for population change during the period between census day (21 March 2021) and the mid-year point (30 June 2021).

3 Population Estimates for Northern Ireland

Census 2021 took place on 21 March and census day estimates for Northern Ireland were published in May 2022 with a further release containing more detailed estimates published in

¹ A mechanism used by Her Majesty’s Treasury to adjust the amounts of public expenditure allocated to the Devolved Administrations. For more information see the [NI Assembly website](#).

² For the latest Northern Ireland population projections see the [NISRA website](#).

September 2022. The mid-2021 estimates are the first annual population estimates to be based on Census 2021. They are published in order to:

- ensure the availability of a consistent time series of estimates (population estimates are required for 30 June each year)
- provide a base for revisions to the estimates for mid-2012 to mid-2020. The rebased estimates will take into account the additional information that Census 2021 has provided about how the population of Northern Ireland has changed during the decade. Following the reconciliation process, which will look at the intercensal drift between 2011 and 2021, a set of rebased population estimates for this period will be published (planned for spring 2023). More information is provided in the Background Notes.

Northern Ireland's population continues to increase

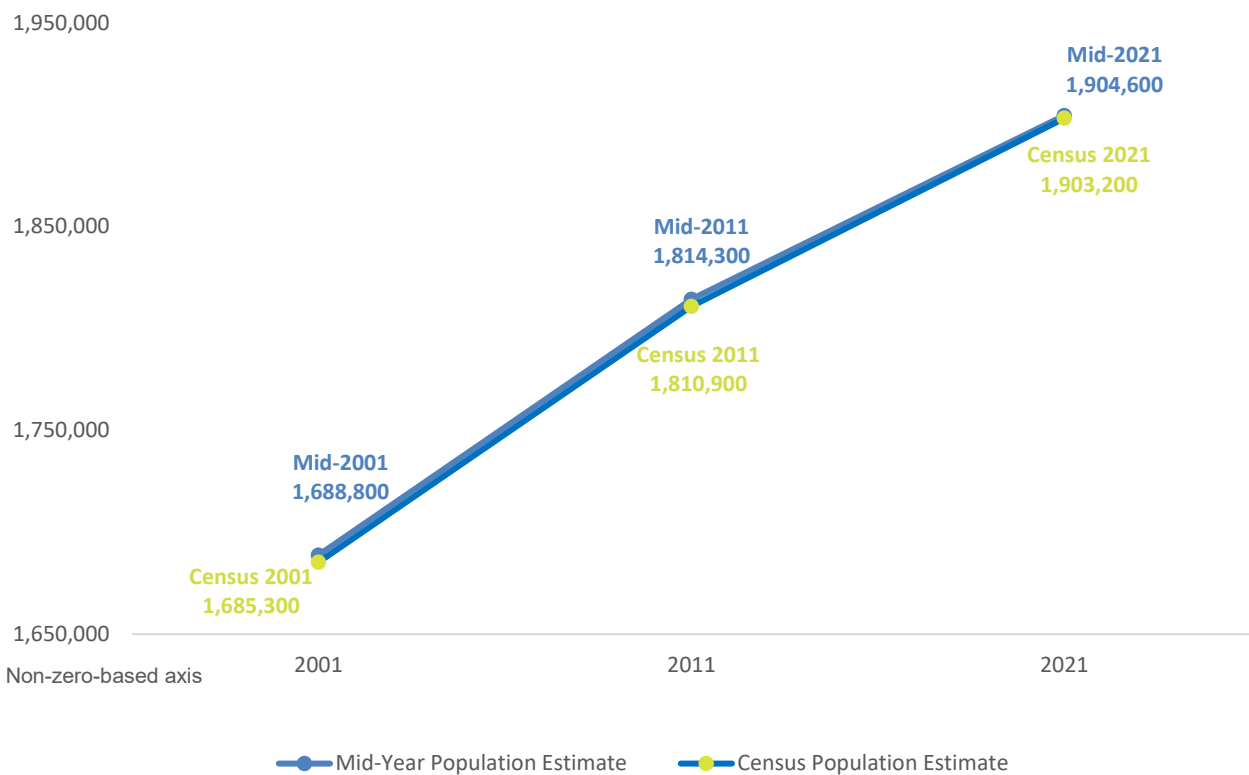


Figure 1: Estimated Population of Northern Ireland, Census 2001 to 2021 and Mid-2001 to Mid-2021.

[Figure 1](#) (XLSX format – 97 KB)

On 30 June 2021, Northern Ireland's population was estimated to be 1,904,600 people. Between 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021, the population of Northern Ireland increased by 1,400 people (0.1 per cent). Just over half of the population were female (50.8 per cent), with 967,700 females compared to 936,800 males (49.2 per cent).

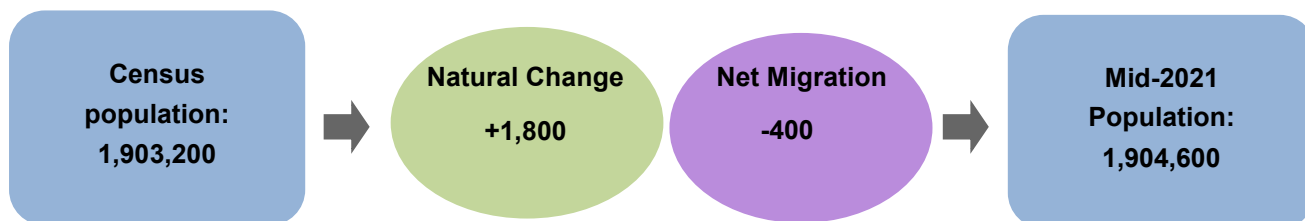
Why is the population increasing?

The two main components of population change are **natural change** and **net migration**. Natural change is the difference between the number of births and deaths, while net migration is the difference between the number of people entering and leaving Northern Ireland. **Other Changes** is a third minor component and takes into account changes in the number of armed forces stationed here. Unlike the standard full-year method, we are not making an adjustment for armed forces period between census day and mid-year. For more information see the mid-year population estimates [methodology paper](#).

The latest increase in the Northern Ireland population was a result of (see Figure 2)³:

1. Positive **natural change** of 1,800 people (5,800 births minus 4,000 deaths).
2. An estimated loss of 400 people due to **net migration** (7,500 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 7,900 people left).
3. There were no **other changes** recorded between 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021.

Figure 2: Contribution of components of change to population increase, 21 March 2021 to 30 June 2021



In the period between 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021 population change totalled 1,400 people. This was a result of positive natural change and negative net migration.

Northern Ireland has experienced negative net migration (i.e., inflows⁴ minus outflows⁵), over the period between 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021 with the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere exceeding those coming to live here by 400 (see Figure 3).

³ Numbers may not add up due to rounding.

⁴ Inflows: the number of people coming to Northern Ireland to live.

⁵ Outflows: the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live elsewhere.

4 Population change

Births and Deaths

There were 5,800 births in Northern Ireland from 21 March 2021 to mid-2021 (30 June 2021) of which 48.1% were females and 51.9% were males.

During the period between 21 March 2021 to 30 June 2021 there were 4,000 deaths in Northern Ireland of which 50.3% were females and 49.7% were males.

NISRA produced a report in October 2022 looking at [excess mortality and Covid-19](#). Excess mortality is considered to be a good measure of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as it does not rely on the availability or interpretation of the (primary and secondary) causes of death. It captures deaths from all causes, which may be related to a range of factors associated with the pandemic.

During the period between 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021, 80 deaths were COVID-19 related which corresponds to 2.0% of total deaths (4,000) in Northern Ireland during that period.

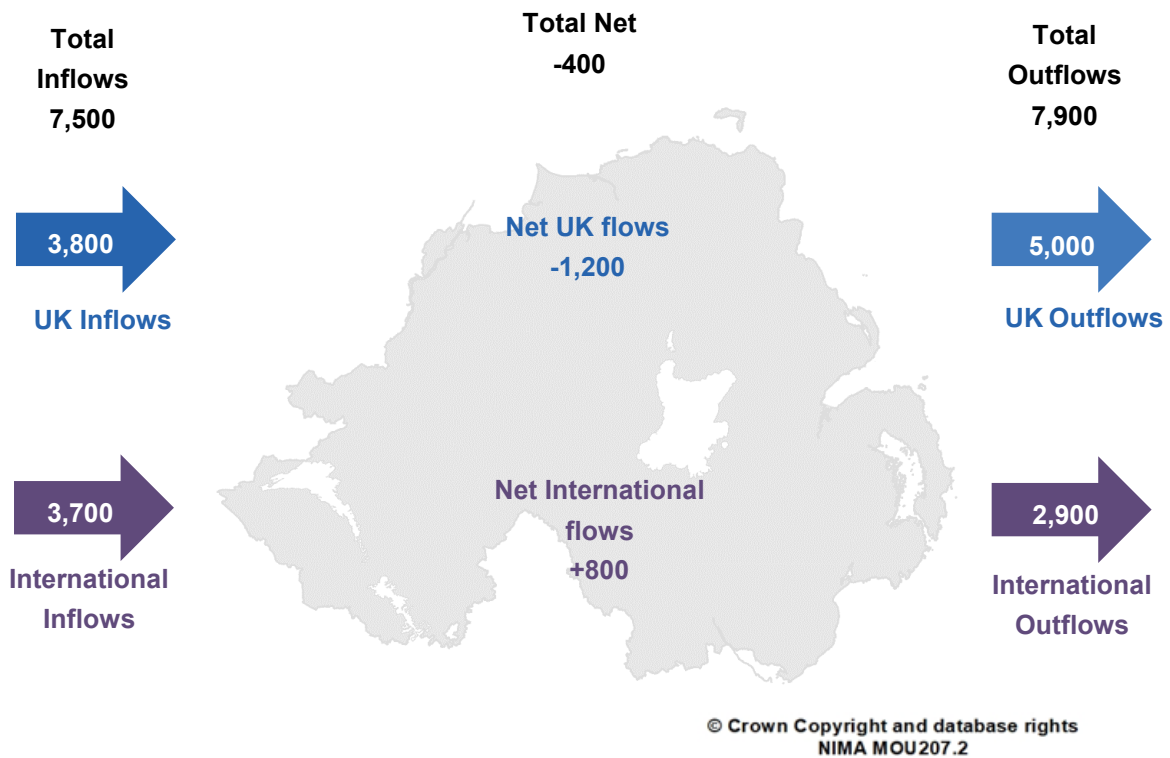
5 Where do migrants come from and go to?

Migration into and out of Northern Ireland can be analysed in two groups, namely:

- Within UK migration – Flows of people between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK
- International migration – Flows of people between Northern Ireland and outside the UK

Figure 3 below shows the number of people migrating into and out of Northern Ireland by type (i.e. whether to/from the UK or International) for the period 21 March 2021 to 30 June 2021.

Figure 3: Migration to and from Northern Ireland by type in the period ending mid-2021



[Figure 3 \(PDF format – 72 KB\)](#)

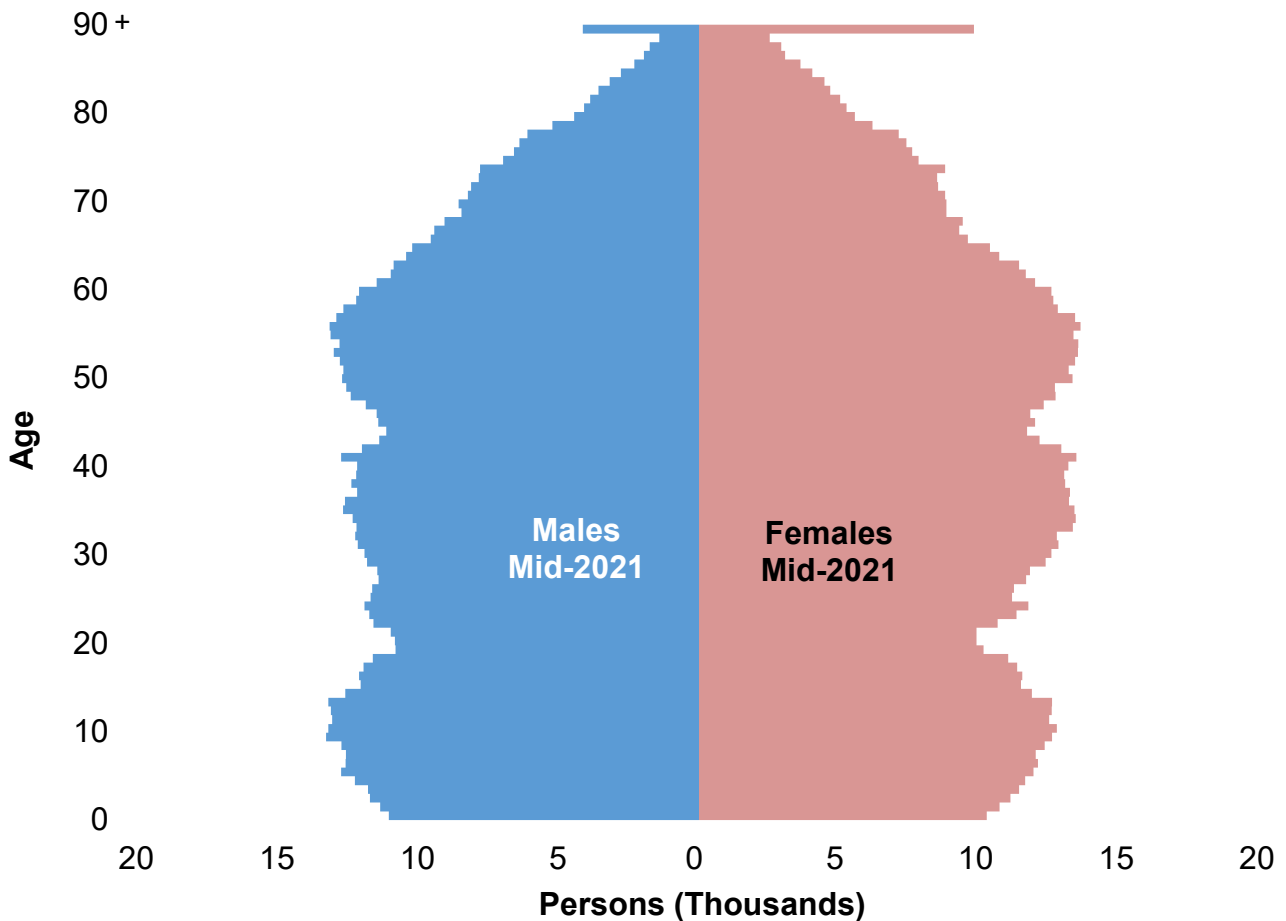
Between the 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live in the rest of the UK was 5,000 people, while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK was 3,800 people. This resulted in a net UK migration loss of -1,200 people.

During the same period, the number of people leaving Northern Ireland to live outside the UK was 2,900, while the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland from outside the UK was 3,700. As a result, during the period 21 March 2021 to 30 June 2021 there was a net inward international migration of 800 people.

6 The age structure of Northern Ireland's population

The population of Northern Ireland is ageing

Figure 4: Population (thousands) by age and sex (mid-2021)



[Figure 4](#) (XLSX format – 106 KB)

Age composition is one of the most important aspects of the population, since changes in different age groups will have varied social and economic impacts. Figure 4 shows the population split by age and sex for mid-2021 in the form of a population pyramid.

Each line in the pyramid represents a single year of age and the length of the line relates to the number of people of that age in the population. The size and composition of the population is determined by the pattern of births, deaths and migration that have taken place in previous years. The median age of the population of Northern Ireland at mid-2021 was 39.8.

7 How has the population changed for Local Government Districts?

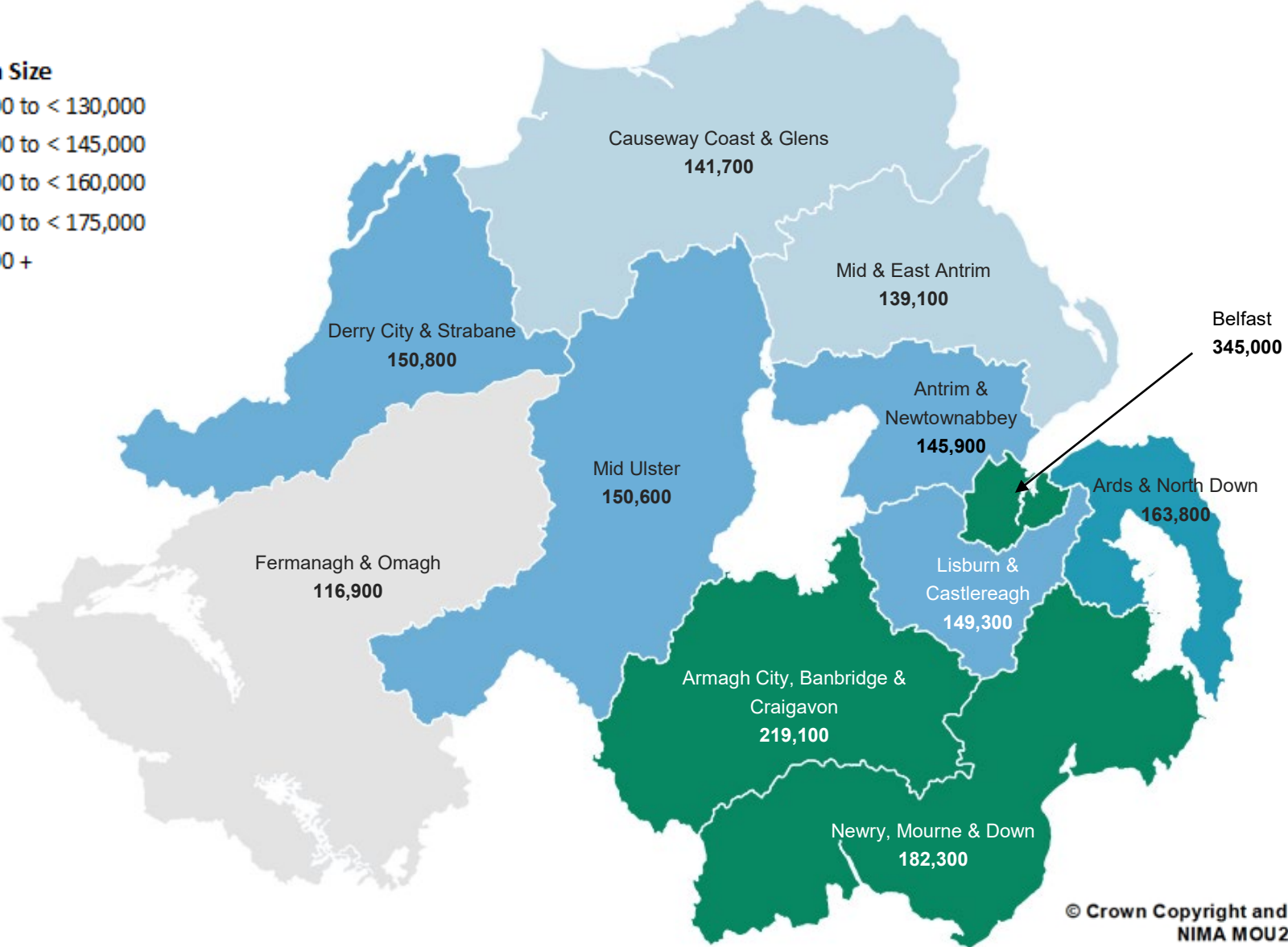
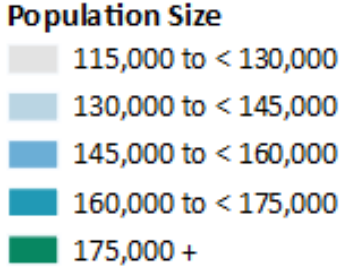
Table 1: Population figures by Local Government District 21 March 2021 and 30 June 2021

	Census Day (21 March 21)			Mid-2021 (30 June 21)		
	<i>All Persons</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>All Persons</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
Antrim and Newtownabbey	145,700	74,200	71,500	145,900	74,300	71,600
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	218,700	110,400	108,300	219,100	110,600	108,500
Belfast	345,400	177,300	168,100	345,000	177,100	167,900
Causeway Coast and Glens	141,700	71,900	69,800	141,700	71,900	69,800
Derry City and Strabane	150,800	77,100	73,700	150,800	77,200	73,600
Fermanagh and Omagh	116,800	58,500	58,300	116,900	58,600	58,400
Lisburn and Castlereagh	149,100	75,800	73,300	149,300	75,900	73,400
Mid and East Antrim	139,000	70,900	68,100	139,100	71,000	68,100
Mid Ulster	150,300	75,000	75,300	150,600	75,100	75,500
Newry, Mourne and Down	182,100	92,000	90,100	182,300	92,200	90,100
Ards and North Down	163,700	84,000	79,700	163,800	84,000	79,800

[Table 1](#) (XLSX format – 88 KB)

The mid-2021 population estimates by Local Government District (LGD) are shown in Map 1. Further information for the LGD population change can be found on [NISRA website](#).

Map 1: Population estimates by Local Government District (mid-2021)



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8 Links to related statistics

The first phase of main statistics results from Census 2021 results are available on the [NISRA website](#).

More detailed population estimates for Local Government Districts are available on the [NISRA website](#).

The [Census 2021 results](#) provide the best available estimates of the population aged 85 and over.

[Population projections for Northern Ireland](#) and [sub-national areas](#) (2018-based) are available from the NISRA website. [2020-based National Interim Population Projections](#) were published at the end of 2021. 2021-based National Population Projections are scheduled to be released at the end of 2023 and sub-national areas in the following year.

[Population estimates for small areas in Northern Ireland](#) up until 2020 are available on the NISRA website. As new statistical geographies are being developed for Census 2021 results, population estimates for small areas in Northern Ireland are also under review.

How to find data and related documents	
What are you looking for?	Where is it?
The tables and figures used throughout this publication in Excel format.	Tables and figures
Population estimates on NISRA data portal can be exported in CSV, JSON-stat, PX, XLSX formats.	NISRA data portal
Quality Report	Background Quality Report

9 National Statistics

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

Population Estimates for Northern Ireland last underwent a full assessment by the Statistics Authority against the [Code of Practice](#) in July 2015. The assessment report can be found on the [NISRA website](#). Following the Statistics Authority assessment the continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in [August 2016](#).

National Statistics status was confirmed subject to NISRA implementing six specific requirements. An action plan outlining how and when NISRA addressed each of these requirements can be found on the [NISRA website](#).

An action plan checklist with supporting documentation can also be found on the [NISRA website](#).

Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Improved clarity and insight by redesigning the statistical bulletin to include a key point's summary for users. In addition, key point headlines have been included throughout the commentary, so users are alerted to key messages.
- The associated data tables for mid-year population estimates are disseminated in a more innovative way by including a flat file and tabular format which users can interact with.
- We improved the accessibility of mid-year population estimates and were publishing data in 3* open data format on Open Data NI. We will publish the mid-2021 population estimates on the data on the NISRA data portal shortly. We have also included a new 'Links to related statistics' section within the bulletin so users can explore the whole population statistics package, including older person estimates, population projections, small area population estimates and a range of other material.

10 Background Notes

Population coverage

Mid-year population estimates relate to the *usually resident* population on 30 June of the reference year and ages relate to a person's age at this mid-year period. Long term international migrants are included in population estimates; however, short term migrants are not. The definition of a long-term migrant which has been adopted from the United Nations is, 'a person

who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence'. Other changes include changes in armed forces personnel stationed in Northern Ireland.

Methodology

Population estimates are usually produced using two separate methods, the components of change and ratio change methods. At the Northern Ireland level population estimates are derived using the components of change method, which updates the latest Census estimates by 'ageing on' populations and adjusting for births, deaths and migration. Population estimates for areas within Northern Ireland are aggregated from Super Output Area level and are generally calculated from an average of the two statistical methods: the ratio change and cohort-component methods. Detailed information on the data sources which inform these two methods and how the estimates are produced is available in the [Methodology Report](#).

Quality of administrative data

Population estimates are produced using a range of administrative data sources, the quality of which have been assessed in detail within the [Population Estimates and Projections Data Quality Document](#). In addition, population estimates are compared to several administrative data sources including, active medical cards, electoral register, benefit claimants and National Insurance Number registrations to assure the quality of outputs. Any significant differences are examined further. NISRA also works closely with colleagues in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and National Records of Scotland (NRS) to assure the quality of population estimates across the UK. A paper comparing the methodological approaches adopted by producers of population statistics across the UK is available on the [ONS website](#).

Census 2021 and Rebasing Exercise of 2012-2020

The decennial census population estimate forms the baseline for the mid-year population estimates going forward. As each year from the baseline passes the accuracy of the population estimates slightly diminishes. These 2021 mid-year population estimates are the first in the series which are based on the results of the 2021 census. Following the reconciliation process, which will look at the intercensal drift between 2011 and 2021, a set of rebased population estimates for this period will be published (planned for spring 2023). The revision of population estimates will likely be more noticeable at smaller geographies such as the Local Government District estimates.

11 Limitations

Migration is the most difficult component of population change to measure due to the absence of an administrative dataset designed specifically for measuring migration. NISRA uses the medical card register as the source in the production of migration estimates, however, there are known deficiencies with this approach. For example, it is recognised that the medical card register is deficient in recording the movements of young adult males; therefore, the age distribution for movements of young adult males is adjusted to be similar to the age distribution for the movements of young adult females. Furthermore, not all outflows are measured fully by the medical card register and therefore outflows are scaled up by an additional 67 per cent. It is assumed only 3 out of 5 people will de register with their GP if they are leaving Northern Ireland (see [Methodology Report](#) for more detail).

England, Wales and Scotland used International Passenger Survey (IPS) for producing official migration statistics. Office for National Statistics (ONS) announced in August 2020 that they would not return to producing official migration statistics from the IPS and instead shift to a new approach that will rely on administrative data first and foremost (admin-based migration estimates (ABMEs)). This shift means that in future they will be basing their estimates on actual patterns of migration, rather than relying on potential migrants to respond to survey questions about whether they are planning to remain in or out of the UK in the next 12 months. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) works closely with ONS to ensure comprehensive and coherent UK and country level migration statistics.

While this means there is a methodological difference for the international migration estimates of Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, NISRA and ONS are content that the methods used for Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK yield robust estimates for the UK as a whole. Furthermore, Northern Ireland migration statistics have been previously assessed by UKSA, who found them to be fit for purpose⁶.

Some data sources used in the production of population estimates for small geographical areas (e.g., School Census, Child Benefits, and Pensions data) rely on the use of postcodes to allocate people to specific small geographical areas. In a small number of cases, postcodes can span more than one small geographical area (3-5 per cent of postcodes). Therefore, properties within the same postcode can be in different small geographical areas. However, all properties with a given postcode are allocated to a single small geographical area based on where the “centre of the postcode” is located. This can give rise to some small inaccuracies in the resultant estimates for small geographical areas and is not unique to Northern Ireland statistics.

⁶ For more detail see the [NISRA website](#).

Enquiries and suggestions

- The revisions policy for Northern Ireland population statistics is available on the [NISRA website](#).
- We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of this release. Please send feedback directly to census@nisra.gov.uk.
- Follow NISRA on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
- All media inquiries should be directed to the DOF Press Office:

Telephone: 028 9081 6724

Email: dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk

- Further statistical information can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services:

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