

Annual publication

Published: 28 March 2018

DfC Analytical Services Unit

## Main stories

- In 2016/17, there were 2,872 linear feet of records reviewed to assess their suitability for preservation;
- There were 16,357 new items published in PRONI's electronic catalogue in 2016/17 which now contains over 1.5 million item descriptions;
- In 2016/17 there were 19,259 visitors to PRONI for group visits, organised events and to use the search and reading rooms;
- There were 10.8 million page views of PRONI's website in 2016/17.

### PRONI Events



In 2016/17 there were 81 public lectures, 65 group visits and 9 public events and exhibitions held at PRONI.

### New Visitors to PRONI



There were 3,429 new visitors registered in PRONI in 2016/17. The majority (81%) of new visitors cited family history as the main reason for registering.

### Government Files



A total of 1,645 government files were released in 2016/17.

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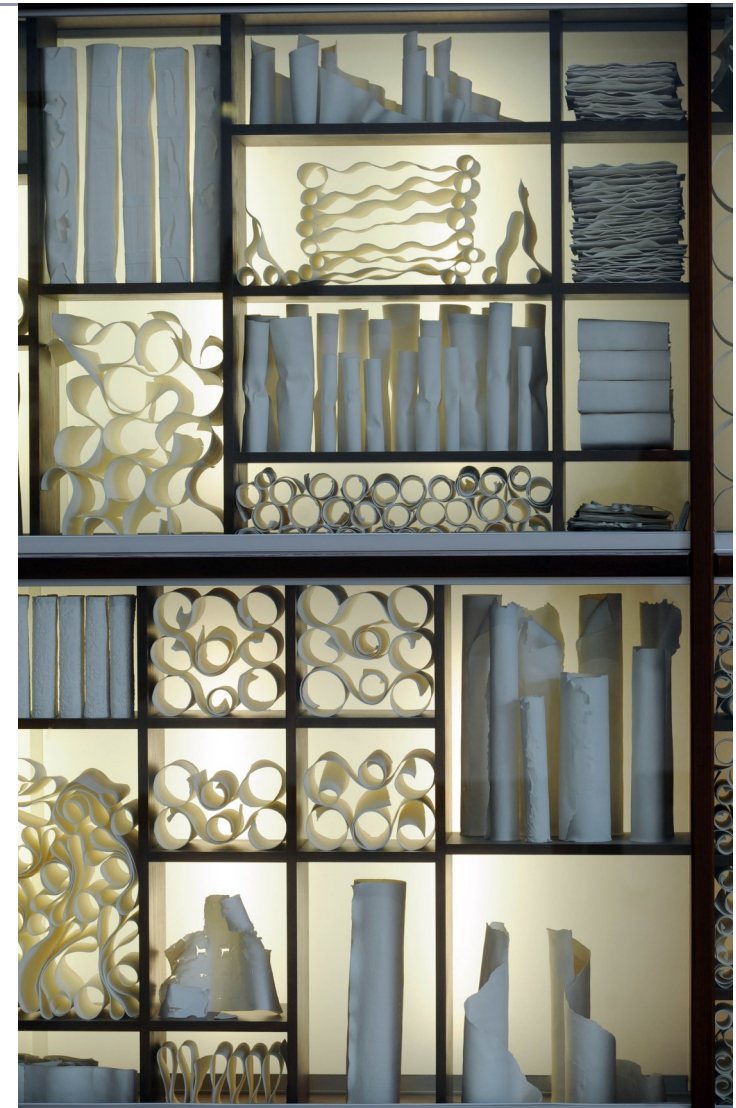
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<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni>

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# Introduction

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) is the official archive for Northern Ireland.

It aims to identify and preserve records of historical, social and cultural importance and make them available for the information, education and enjoyment of the public.

PRONI is the official place of deposit for public records in Northern Ireland. In addition, it collects a wide range of archives from private sources. PRONI also advises on and promotes best practice in archive and records management to ensure that today's records will be available for future generations.

PRONI is located in Titanic Quarter Belfast and provides a reading room and search room for visitors.

There are approximately three million documents stored in the archives at PRONI which fall under the categories of either public or private records. PRONI's oldest document is a bull of Pope Honorius the Third, dated 1219.

PRONI hosts four General Registry Office of Northern Ireland (GRONI) terminals which allow users direct access to GRONI's most up to date Births, Marriages and Deaths database. A Registration of Deeds/House Mortgage Check Service is facilitated by Land & Property Services (LPS) staff in the PRONI Reading Room .

## Methodology and quality of the data

These statistics provide a broad overview of PRONI. The base year is 2016/17 and, where appropriate, other years are also included.

- In September 2010, PRONI began the move of records to new, purpose built accommodation in the Titanic Quarter in Belfast. PRONI was closed to the public from September 2010 until March 2011. As a result, caution should be taken when comparing 2010/11 figures with other years.
- Figures less than 0.5% are denoted by '0', while no responses are represented by '-'.
- Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.
- Data is validated by PRONI on an ongoing basis and quality assured by DfC Analytical Services Unit.



# Receiving and Preserving Records

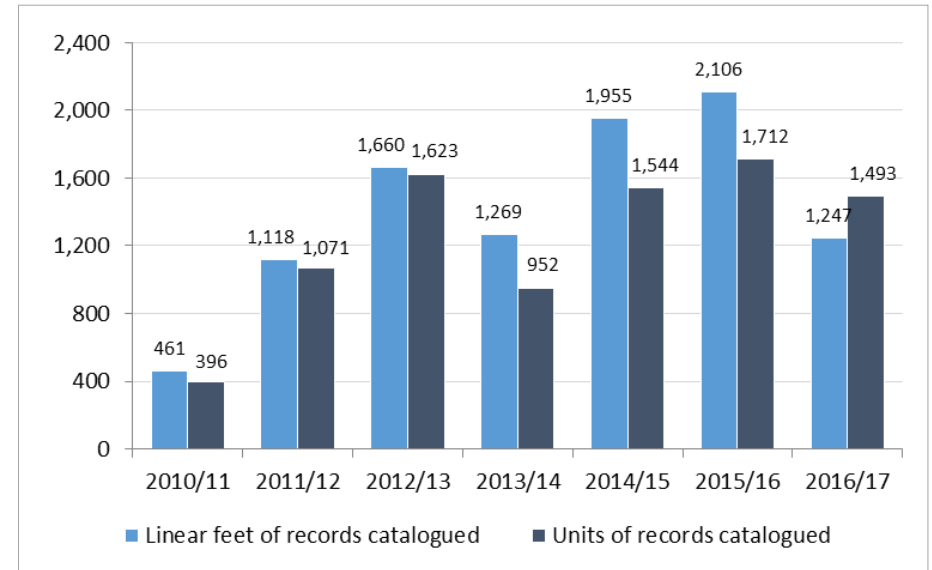
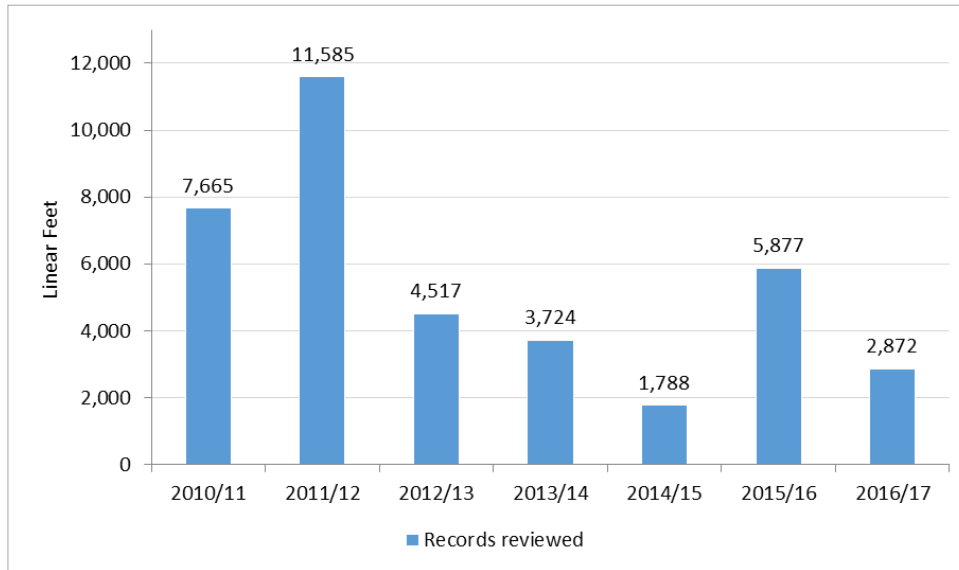
## Records reviewed, catalogued and published

Public authority records which are judged to be of lasting value are moved to PRONI for permanent preservation. PRONI also receives records from non-government sources e.g. churches, businesses, charities and families.

Potential deposits are reviewed to assess their suitability for preservation. Records to be preserved by PRONI are accessioned. This involves assigning a reference number and recording information about the collection e.g. a summary description and relevant dates. Once accessioned the records are stored and catalogued. Cataloguing involves creating descriptions of the record/group of records in the PRONI catalogue.



In 2016/17, there were 2,872 linear feet of records reviewed. A PRONI box equals one linear foot and the measurement demonstrates the amount of space freed up in storage in public bodies. There were 1,247 linear feet of records and 1,493 units of records catalogued in 2016/17.



Source: PRONI, DfC

1. One linear foot is 0.3 of a metre. In 2016/17 875 and 380 linear metres of records were reviewed and catalogued respectively.
2. Unit of records catalogued is calculated using the linear feet weighted by degree of difficulty.
3. An item can be a single letter, volume or file or may relate to a bundle of documents.

# Receiving and Preserving Records

## Records reviewed, catalogued and published

The catalogue summarises the scope and content of PRONI's archives and contains over 1.5 million catalogue item descriptions. A snapshot of the catalogue is made available to the public via PRONI's electronic catalogue (e-CATNI).

There were 13,994 new items added to the PRONI catalogue in 2016/17 and 16,357 items were published in PRONI's electronic catalogue.

## Available Collections

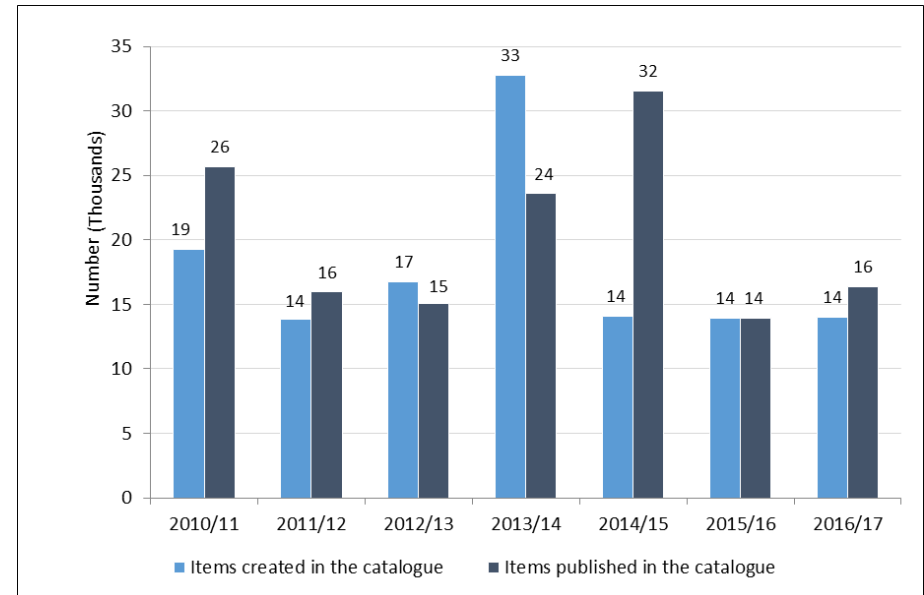
PRONI holds millions of documents that relate chiefly, but not exclusively to Northern Ireland. The records held in PRONI fall into two main categories:

### Public Records

PRONI holds public records mainly dating from the formation of Northern Ireland (1921) to the present day. However, a significant number of records also date back to the nineteenth century and some to the eighteenth century and includes the archives of Courts, Schools, Valuation, Board of Guardians, Ordnance Survey, Land Registry, Hospitals including Asylums, Local Authorities and Prisons.

### Private records

PRONI also holds a diverse range of privately deposited records such as letters, journals, diaries, photographs and albums. There are also extensive archives of churches, landed estates, businesses, charities, sporting bodies, and political parties.



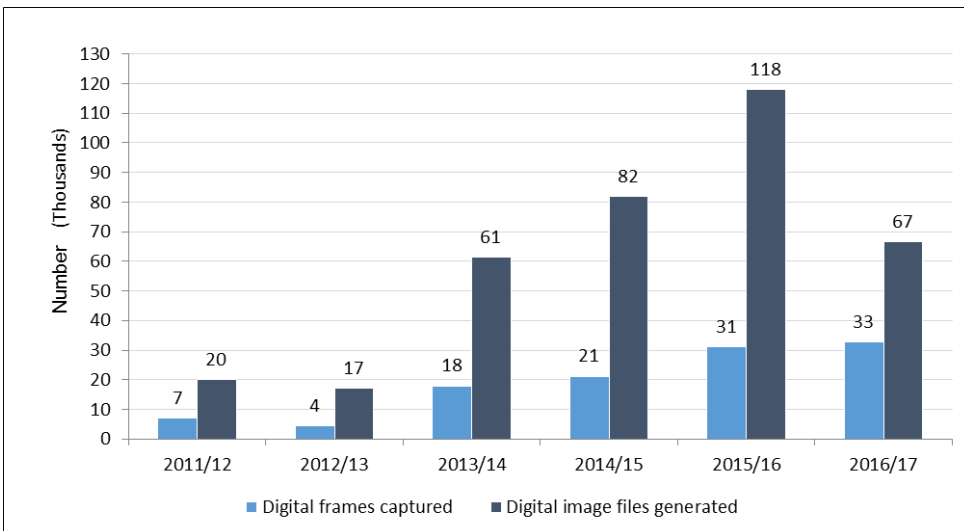
# Receiving and Preserving Records

## Digital Images

One method of preserving is capturing images of the records digitally. Making digital copies allows the records to be accessed without the original record being handled. They can also be viewed by more than one person at a time and many digital collections are now available online. Organisations on occasion contact PRONI requesting that their own collections are digitised.

Increasingly, more time and professional expertise is required to produce an enhanced image suitable for wider access, in addition to the traditional preservation copy. The images generated include the initial image, a high resolution restored image for archival purposes and an image for access purposes.

In 2016/17, there were 32,712 digital frames captured resulting in 66,570 image files being generated.



**Donegall Place (Preservation Copy)  
(c. 1941)**

**Donegall Place (Restored Copy)  
(c. 1941)**

The images above are of Donegall Place showing how buildings were destroyed during the Belfast Blitz in 1941 (PRONI Ref: CAB/3/A/68A). They demonstrate how an original image can be enhanced.

The table below provides a breakdown of the number of digital frames captured for specific collections that were digitised in 2016/17.

<b>Digital frames captured by project 2016/17</b>	
	Unit: Number
	<b>2016/17</b>
Tithe Applotment Books (FIN/5/A)	17,396
Church Records (CR)	9,425
Prison Registers (HMP/2)	2,463
Board of Guardians Indoor Relief Index Books, Belfast (BG/7/GK)	543
Allison Glass Plate Negatives (D2886)	313
Londonderry Papers - photographic collections (D4567)	166
Miscellaneous	2,406
<b>Number of digital images captured</b>	<b>32,712</b>

# Making records available to the public

## Document Production

Anyone can access documents in PRONI. By registering with PRONI, visitors can request documents through the onsite ordering system.

In 2016/17, there were 32,033 documents requested and produced.

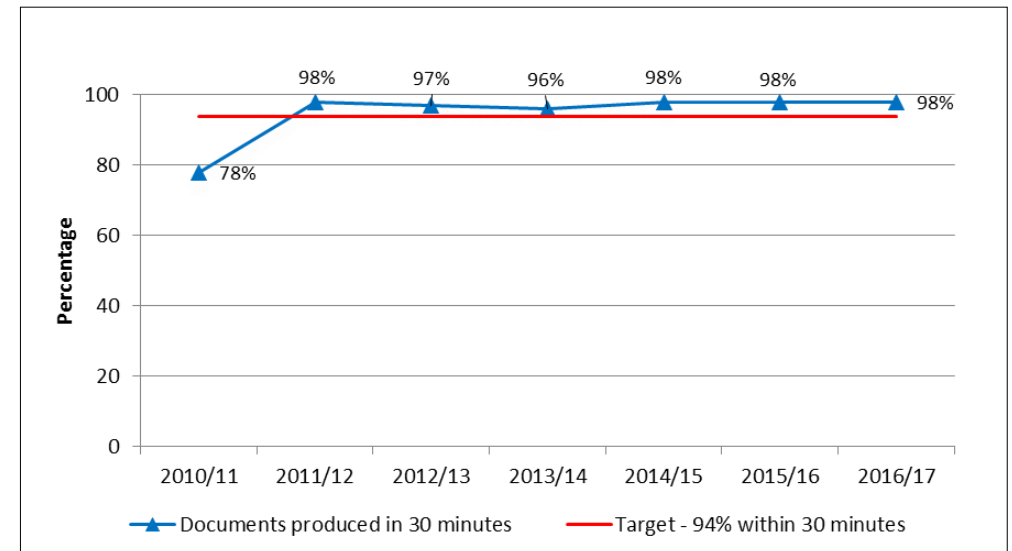
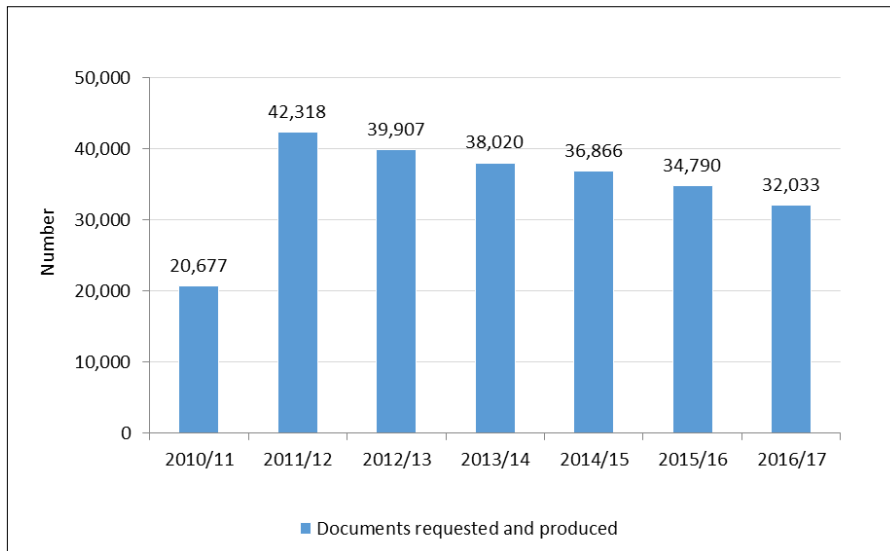
PRONI has a number of targets to measure performance. Original documents requested by visitors are retrieved from the stores, produced in the Reading Room for consultation and then returned to their designated locations in the stores.

The document production target for PRONI states that 94% of documents should be produced within 30 minutes of being requested.

In 2016/17, 98% of documents were produced within 30 minutes. The average retrieval time per order was 13.1 minutes.



**PRONI Search Room**

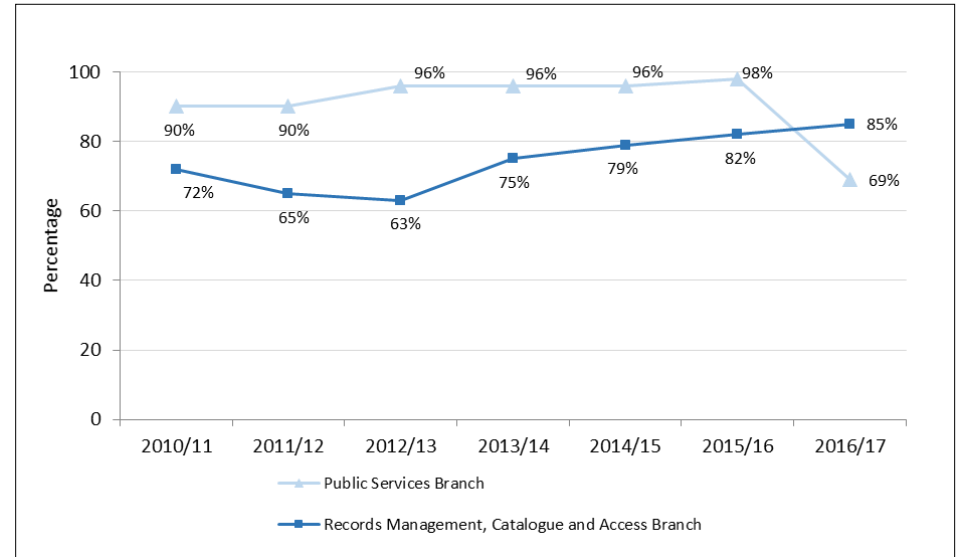


# Making records available to the public

## Written Correspondence

In 2016/17 the written correspondence target for PRONI's Public Services branch stated that 90% of requests should be responded to within 10 days. For Records Management, Catalogue and Access branch 80% of requests should be responded to within 10 days.

In 2016/17, there were 3,207 written enquiries to PRONI's Public Services branch with 69% of responses to written correspondence meeting the target. In comparison 81% of the responses to the 453 written correspondence enquiries to Records Management, Catalogue and Access branch met the target.





# Making records available to the public

PRONI website

## Search the archives online

PRONI has a programme of digitising significant archives to make them accessible to the public online. The PRONI website provides a number of applications allowing users to search the archives:

- [eCatalogue](#)
- [Freeholders Records](#)
- [Londonderry Corporation Records](#)
- [Name Search](#)
- [PRONI Historical Maps viewer](#)
- [PRONI Web Archive](#)
- [Street directories](#)
- [Ulster Covenant](#)
- [Valuation Revision Books](#)
- [Will calendars](#)



**A Digital Workshop**

The eCatalogue is a fully searchable database containing over 1.5 million catalogue entries relating to PRONI's archives which is updated on a quarterly basis. Between April 2016 and March 2017, 608 new collections were added to the PRONI online archive and 10,201 item descriptions were added.

## **Image Gallery**

Images from the PRONI archives are now available to view on the photo-sharing website [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/proni) (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/proni>). Photographs added during 2016/17 include images from the Londonderry Papers (D4567), images of the 1929 R.A.C. Tourist Trophy Races held over the Newtownards Circuit, County Down (D3911) and merged images of Strabane from the Cooper collection (D1422) – which were produced in conjunction with the Strabane & District Camera Club. During 2016-17, PRONI added 123 photographs and four videos to the Flickr photo-stream. This brought the total number of PRONI photographs available to view on Flickr to 2,998.



### Facebook

PRONI publishes a new Facebook post every weekday. Posts include promoting new events, reminders of upcoming events and drawing attention to PRONI's resources and services. Popular posts have included 'Guess the Image' and 'On this Day'.

### Facebook Live & YouTube

PRONI aims to record its public events and talks when possible. These recordings are continuously being collected and added to PRONI's YouTube channel. The public can also subscribe to view talks which are broadcast via Facebook Live.

In 2016-17, an additional 38 talks were made available on PRONI's YouTube channel.

### PRONI Express & Document of the Month

PRONI's monthly eNewsletter, the PRONI Express, includes information of forthcoming talks, events and new resources. Members of the public can subscribe to receive the eNewsletter at the following link: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/subscribe-pronis-enewsletter>.

At the end of 2016-17, 1,124 people had subscribed to receive the eNewsletter.

Document of the month celebrates archival documents within the PRONI collections that are particularly unusual or that tie in to notable dates in the calendar. During 2016-17 PRONI selected 10 Documents of the month, examples included letters from soldiers fighting in the Battle of the Somme and also a document detailing a notorious murder trial that involved the practice of witchcraft.

# Making records available to the public

## Release of Government Files

Each year, PRONI makes historical government records publicly available; generally these are the files of NI Departments and the Northern Ireland Office (Belfast).

The annual release of selected official files continues against a background of greater public access through the Freedom of Information Act (2000), balanced against the need to protect personal information.

Annually since 1976, official records held by PRONI which were 30 years old have been reviewed with a view to making them publicly available ("the 30 year rule"). In September 2011, the Assembly accepted a Legislative Consent Motion to reduce the time limit for release from 30 years to 20 years ("the 20 year Rule"). This is underpinned by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the amendments made to it by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. The 20 year rule is being phased in over 10 years, with two years of records being reviewed and released each year. This year, the records of NI Departments and the NIO with terminal dates of 1989 were brought forward for release during August 2016 and the records of 1990 were brought forward in December 2016. This process involves the referral of the files to the Responsible Authority for sensitivity review. This entails a page by page examination to ensure that a record contains nothing sensitive as defined by the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.

A total of 1,645 government files were released in 2016/17. Of these, 383 files had some information blanked out, with the main reason for this being to protect personal information.

A further 150 government files could not be released at all, again this was usually to protect personal information.

The released files are listed in the [PRONI catalogue](#) and they are available to consult at PRONI.

## PRONI on CAIN

The PRONI at CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) partnership publishes conflict-related documents selected from the Northern Ireland Office and NI Departmental files. [CAIN](#) is hosted by Ulster University. In 2016/17 there were an additional 230 documents posted to CAIN. This brought the number of PRONI documents on CAIN to over 1,700.

# Visitors and Visits

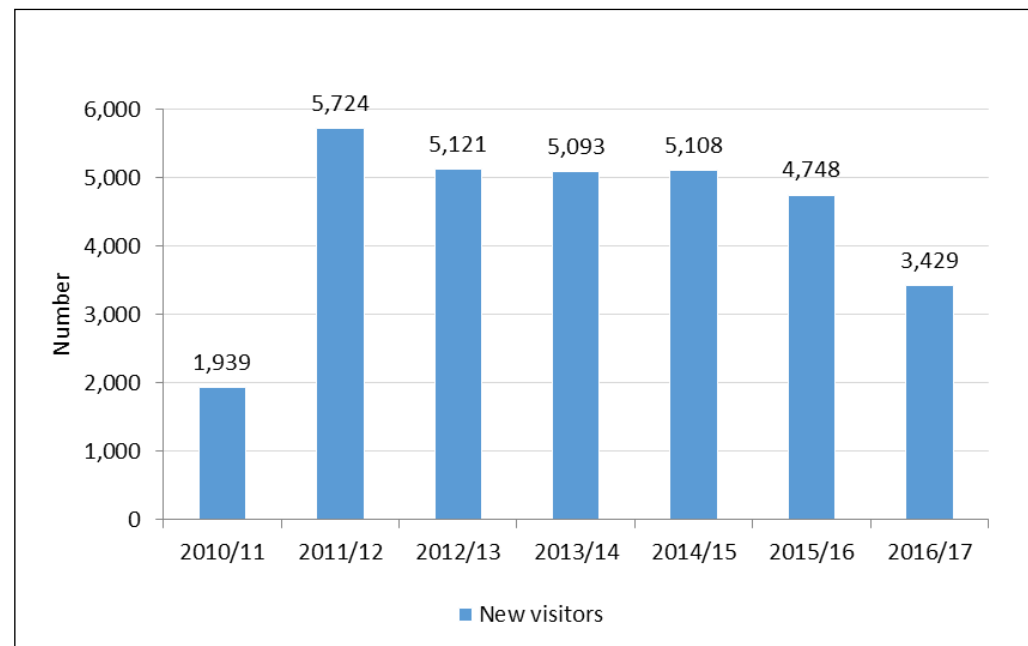
## New Visitors

There were 3,429 new visitors registered in PRONI in 2016/17. In total, 52% of new visitors were female and 48% were male. Fifty six per cent of new visitors registered in 2016/17 were aged between 25 and 64 years whilst 30% were aged 65 years and over and 7% were under 25 years of age<sup>1</sup>.

## Main reason for registering & country of origin

The majority (81%) of new visitors in 2016/17 cited family history as the main reason for registering with PRONI.

In 2016/17, 52% of new visitors were from outside Northern Ireland whilst 15% of new visitors were from the USA and 13% were from England and Wales.



Academic Research - 5%



Family History - 81%

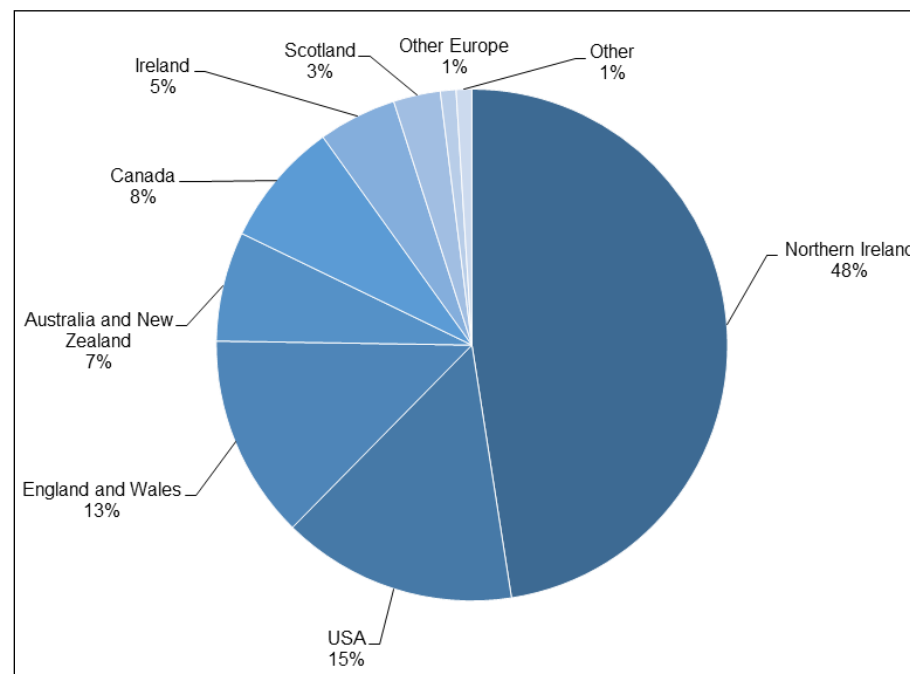


Legal or Business Need - 2%

### Main Reasons for Registering<sup>2</sup>



Local History - 9%



1. 7% of New Visitors did not specify their age when registering.  
 2. 3% of New Visitors did not specify their reason for registering whilst 1% specified 'Other'.

# Visitors and Visits

## Visitors to PRONI

PRONI is committed to improving and increasing cultural participation. A series of public lectures, events and group visits takes place throughout the year.

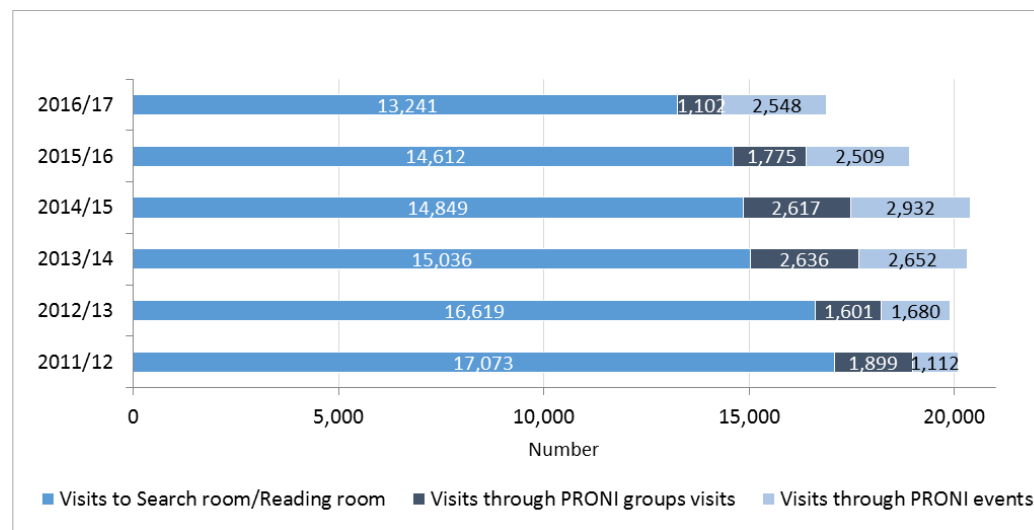
There were 16,891 visits by the public to PRONI in 2016/17. In addition 410 people visited as part of events organised with partner organisations, including Civil Servants week. A number of other events were organised through PRONI’s Facilities Management contractor which were attended by 1,958 people. The overall number of visitors to PRONI in 2016/17 was 19,259.

There were 81 public lectures, 65 group visits and 9 public events and exhibitions held in 2016/17.

There were 13,241 visits by the public to PRONI’s search and reading rooms in 2016/17. 78% of visits by the public were to the Search Room/ Reading room in PRONI, while 15% of people attended PRONI events and 7% attended as part of a group visit.



**‘Battle of Jutland’ conference**

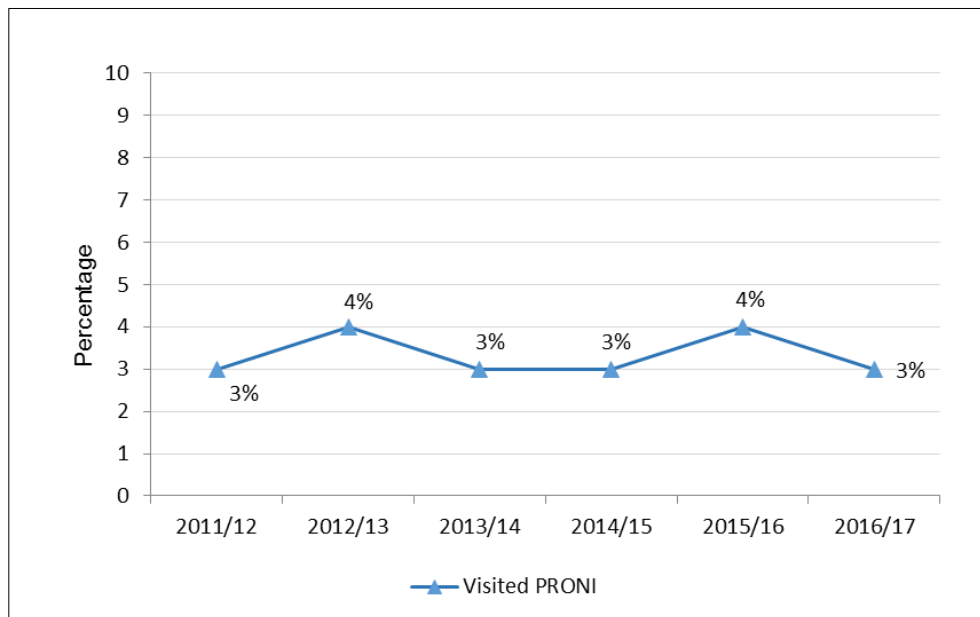


# Visitors and Visits

## Continuous Household Survey

The graph below presents data from the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to visits to PRONI. Visits to PRONI in 2016/17 are based on visits in the year prior to respondents being surveyed. More information relating to the CHS, methodology, definitions and the interpretation of the figures can be found in the report entitled '[Engagement culture, arts and leisure by adults 2016/17](#)' (Definitions and technical notes section).

- In 2016/17, three per cent of adults had visited PRONI within the last 12 months.
- Analysis by all demographic groups available show no differences in the proportions of adults who had visited PRONI. In addition, there are no differences in the proportions of adults who had visited PRONI when analysed by area, urban and rural and by deprivation.



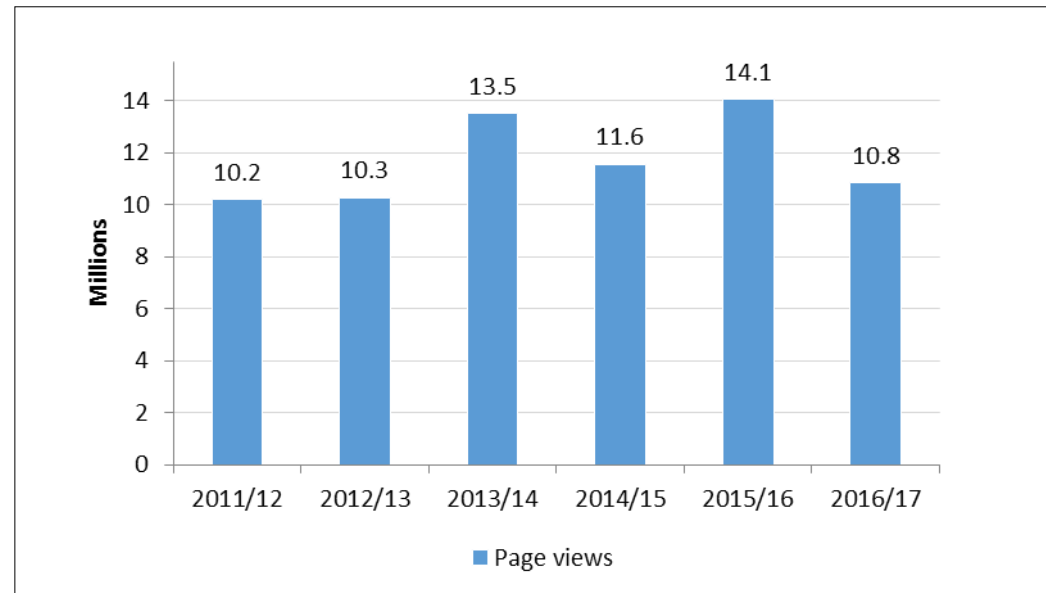
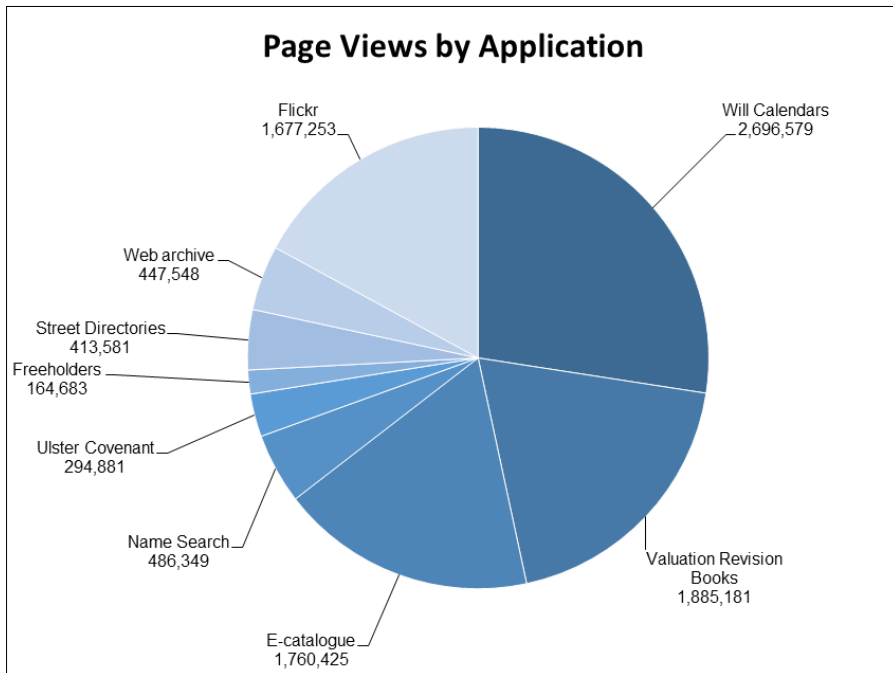
# Visitors and Visits

## PRONI website

There were 10.8 million page views to the PRONI website in 2016/17. A breakdown of page views by application is presented in the chart below.

At the end of 2016-17 PRONI had 2,193 followers on Facebook.

In 2016/17, 621 PRONI photographs on the Flickr photo-stream were favoured, 59 comments were added to photographs and there were 1,677,253 photo views.



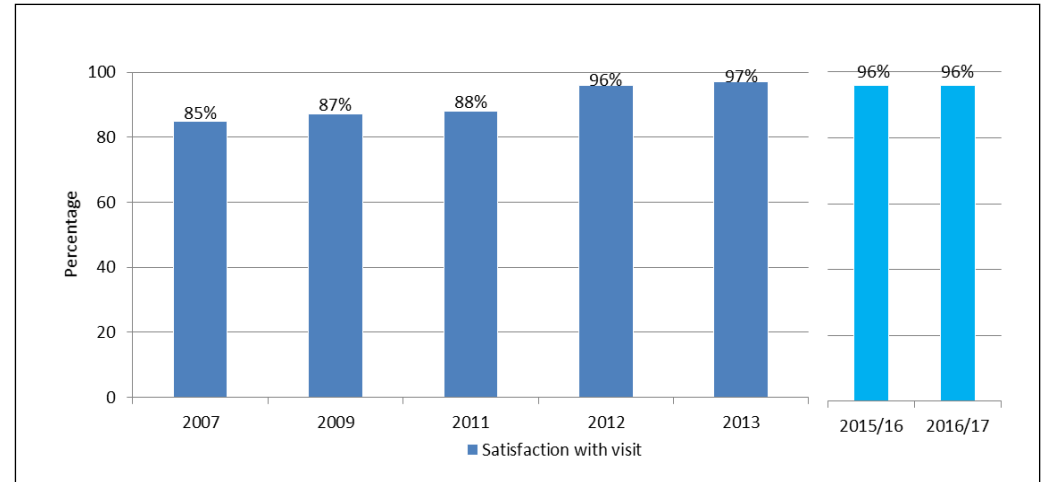
1. A page view is a hit to any file classified as a page.
2. Glossary provides explanations of the categories of pages.
3. The page views total for 2015/16 has been revised.
4. From 2015/16 onwards 'Flickr' page views have been included in the total page views figure.

# Visits and Visitors

## Satisfaction with PRONI

A number of surveys have been used to measure customer satisfaction in PRONI in previous years (see footnote below). In 2016/17 customer satisfaction was measured using customer comment cards and event feedback forms where customers were asked to rate the visit, event or lecture on a scale of 1-5. Figures for 2015/16 and 2016/17 are therefore not directly comparable with other years. In 2016/17, 96% of respondents were satisfied with their visit.

PRONI receives customer feedback via its website (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/forms/feedback?s=/proni>) and by email. A selection of feedback received from customers in 2016/17 is included below.



- *I wanted to say thank you for 'hosting me' this morning. I was very impressed by the knowledge you all have and the very professional and courteous approach you used in dealing with our users/the public!*
- *I recently spent a week in the Titanic Facility viewing files and records, after spending weeks organizing my trip to Belfast. During the month leading up to my trip, ..... spent hours dealing with my lengthy emails and numerous requests and then more requests, and never backed down, and were always cheerful and thorough and knowledgeable. They really came through for me. And once I got to Belfast, ..... remained attentive and responsive. It was a delight to meet them in person and I am truly grateful to them for making my research possible, and for making it so easy. Thank you!*
- *Just dropping you an email to say that we had a superb trip to PRONI thanks to your walk-around – brilliant, and very much appreciated. Great response from the group.*
- *Thanks again, and for those who might like to know, our experience at PRONI was nothing short of outstanding. The facility, the access to information, the cafeteria (scones and cookies - yum!) and above all the people - from the security guards to the people in the research center, all were extremely pleasant and helpful - way beyond any expectations. A really great experience.*
- *Finally, last week at the Federation of Genealogical Societies conference in Springfield, Illinois, FamilySearch's Chief Genealogy Officer, David Rencher, described PRONI as the "the most genealogically friendly in Ireland". He could not have hit the nail on the head more, though personally speaking I would extend that to say the friendliest in the the British Isles - well done Belfast! :)*

1. Customer satisfaction with PRONI has been measured by the Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) survey in 2007, 2009 and 2012 and by the PRONI Customer survey in 2011 and 2013. It includes customers who rated the archive's service as 'Good' or 'Very Good'. In 2015/16 customer satisfaction was measured through feedback forms which accompanied all events and lectures. In 2016/17 customer satisfaction was measured using customer comment cards and event feedback forms. Customers were asked to rate the visit, event or lecture on a scale of 1-5.



## Glossary

Category	Description
E-catalogue	PRONI's electronic catalogue containing over 1.5 million searchable entries.
Freeholders	Searchable database and associated digitised images of pre-1840 registers and poll books listing those entitled to vote at elections.
Name search	A searchable database of indexes for records that no longer exist including pre-1858 wills, diocesan wills; surviving fragments of 1740-66 dissenters petitions; and 1775 dissenters petitions.
Street Directories	Searchable database and associated digitised images of Belfast and Ulster Street Indexes, 1819-1900 listing names of principal inhabitants, merchants, shopkeepers, etc.
Ulster Covenant	Searchable database and associated digitised images relating to the half a million original signatures and addresses of those who signed the Ulster Covenant and Declaration on 28 September 1912.
Valuation revision books	Searchable database of placename index and digitised images of the Valuation Revision Books (VAL/12/B) for the years 1864-1933.
Web archive	Searchable database of c. 150 archived public sector websites.
Will calendars	Searchable catalogue of will calendar entries for the period 1858-1965.



**'Presbyterian Children' Exhibit**