

Annual publication

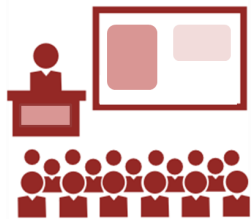
Published: 28 March 2019

DfC Analytical Services Unit

## Main stories

- In 2017/18, there were 2,939 linear feet of records reviewed to assess their suitability for preservation.
- There were 11,493 new items published in PRONI's electronic catalogue in 2017/18 which now contains over 1.5 million item descriptions.
- In 2017/18 there were 19,437 visitors to PRONI for group visits, organised events and to use the search and reading rooms.
- There were 10.4 million page views of PRONI's website in 2017/18.

### PRONI Events



In 2017/18, there were 63 public lectures, 96 group visits and 6 temporary exhibitions held at PRONI.

### New Visitors to PRONI



There were 3,798 new visitors registered in PRONI in 2017/18. The majority (77%) of new visitors cited family history as the main reason for registering.

### Government Files



A total of 1,430 government files were released in 2017/18.

# Contents

Introduction

Receiving and Preserving Records

Records Reviewed, Catalogued and Published

Available Collections

Digital Images

Making Records available to the Public

Document Production

Written Correspondence

PRONI website

Release of Government files

PRONI on CAIN

Visits and Visitors

New Visitors

Visitors to PRONI

Continuous Household Survey

PRONI website

Satisfaction with PRONI

Glossary

Page

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

11

11

12

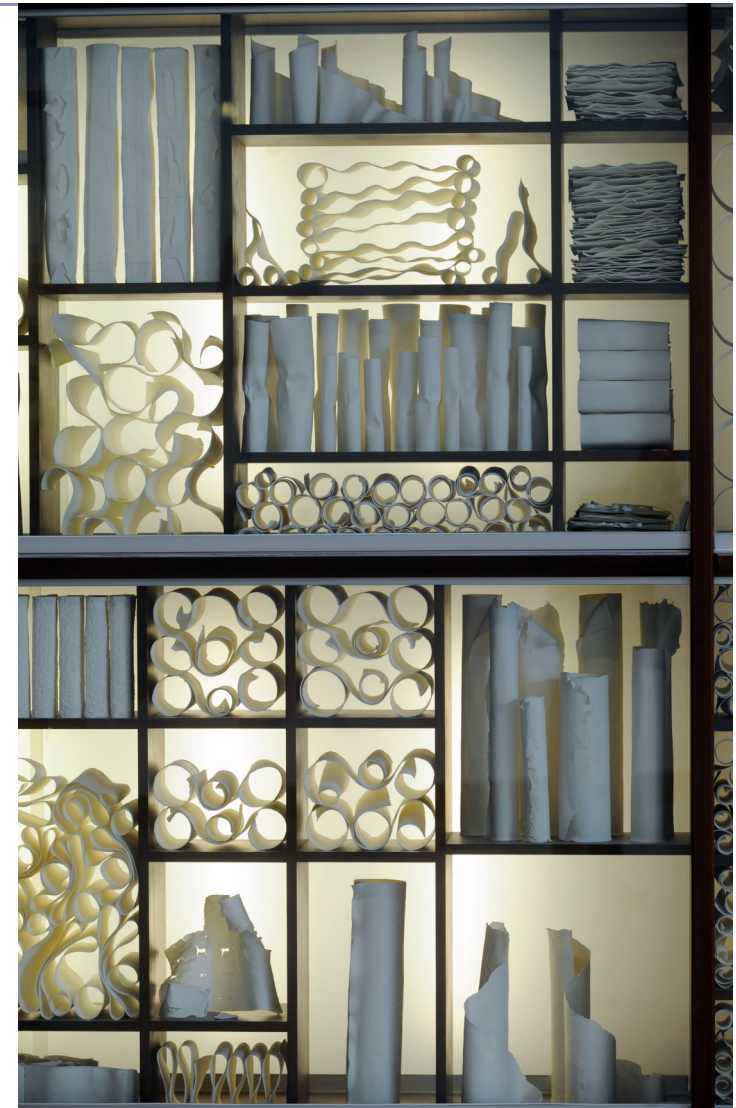
13

14

15

16

17



## Contact Information

Statistician:

Clair Stewart

[asu@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:asu@communities-ni.gov.uk)

## Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

2 Titanic Boulevard,

Belfast,

BT3 9HQ

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

Published: 28 March 2019

## 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 2017/18 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

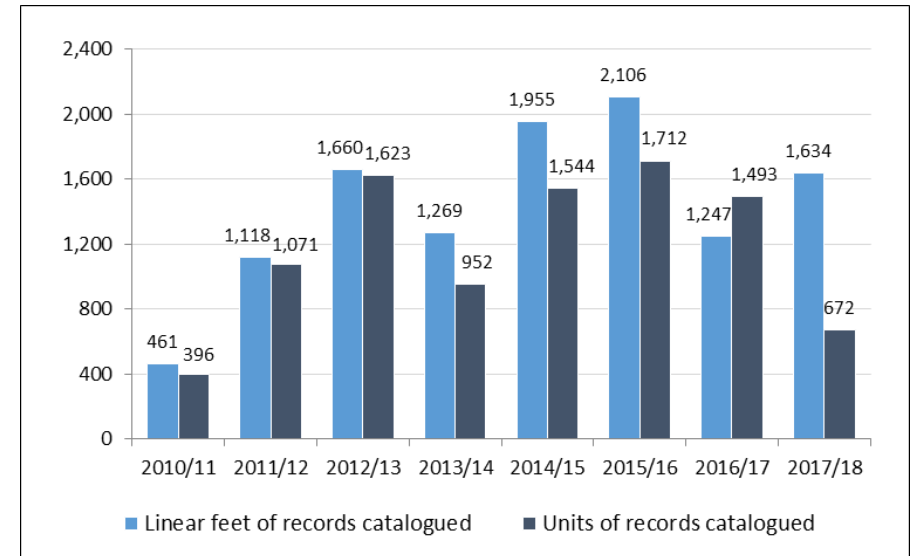
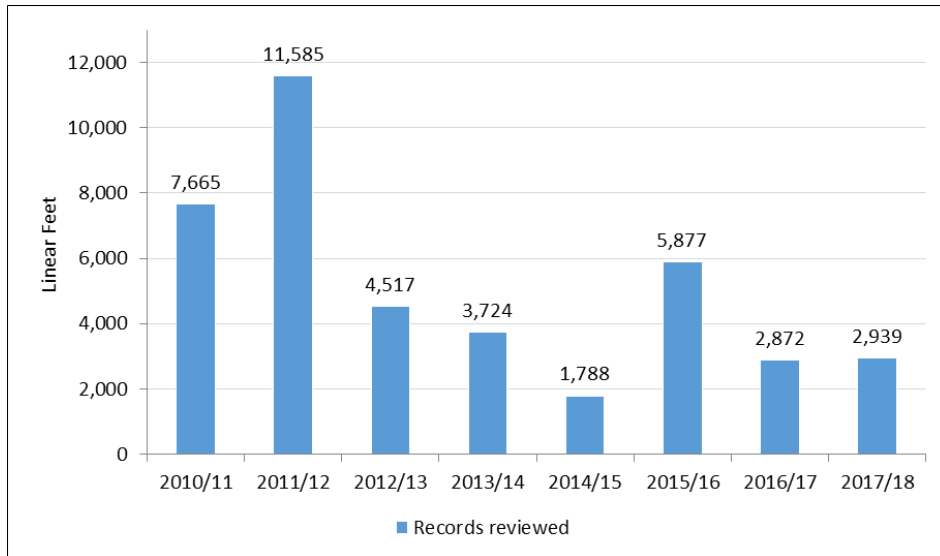
## Records reviewed, catalogued and published

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 2017/18, there were 2,939 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 1,634 linear feet of records and 672 units of records catalogued in 2017/18.



Source: PRONI, DfC

1. One linear foot is 0.3 of a metre. In 2017/18, 896 and 498 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.

# 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 10,610 new items added to the PRONI catalogue in 2017/18 and 11,493 items were published in PRONI's electronic catalogue.

## Available Collections

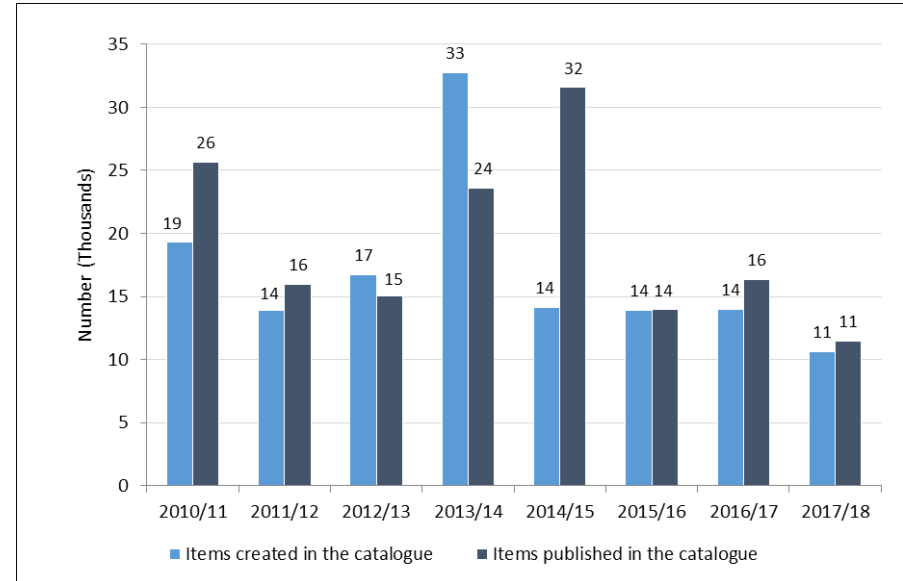
PRONI holds millions of documents that relate chiefly, but not exclusively to Northern Ireland. The records held in PRONI fall into two main categories:

### 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.



Source: PRONI, DfC

1. An item can be a single letter, volume or file or may relate to a bundle of documents.



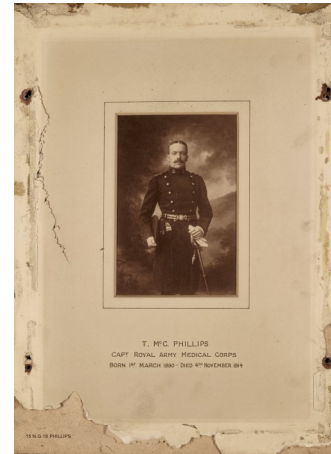
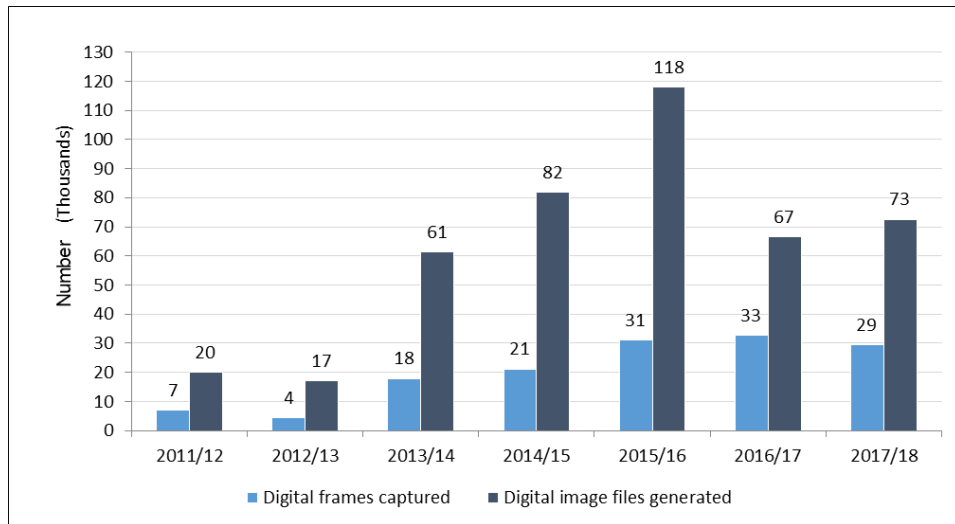
# Receiving and Preserving Records

## 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.

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 2017/18, there were 29,340 digital frames captured resulting in 72,559 image files being generated.



**T. McC. Philips (Preservation Copy)**



**T. McC. Philips (Restored Copy)**

The images above are of T. McC. Philips, Captain of the Royal Army Medical Corps (PRONI Ref: D4641/1/3). 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 2017/18.

<b>Digital frames captured by project 2017/18</b>	
	Unit: Number
	<b>2017/18</b>
Church Records (CR)	11,005
Absent Voters Lists / 1918 Electoral Registers	387
Belfast Board of Guardians Indoor Relief Registers Index Books	8,877
HMP Belfast Prison Registers	658
Images to be used in exhibitions (Reformation, Suffrage, Women in Sport)	1,541
Campbell College WW1 Photographic portraits	436
Top 10 most ordered documents	468
Young & Mackenzie architectural collection	106
Miscellaneous	5,862
<b>Number of digital images captured</b>	<b>29,340</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 2017/18, there were 29,802 documents requested and produced.

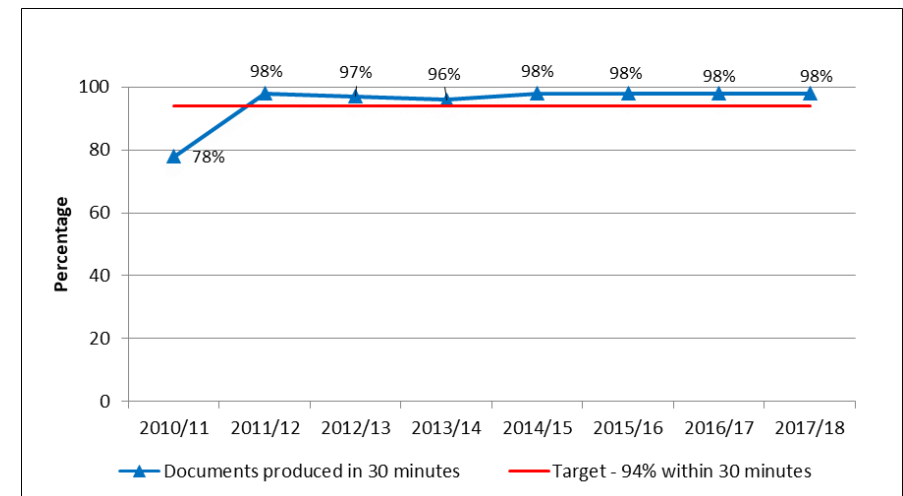
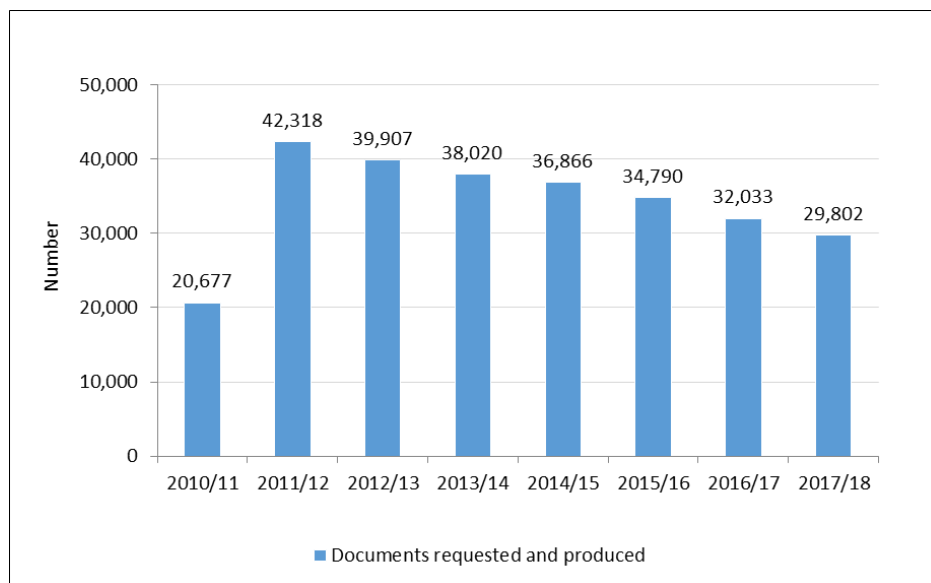
PRONI has a number of targets to measure performance. Original documents requested by visitors are retrieved from the stores, produced in the Reading Room for consultation and then returned to their designated locations in the stores.

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

In 2017/18, 98% of documents were produced within 30 minutes. The average retrieval time per order was 14.59 minutes.



**PRONI Search Room**

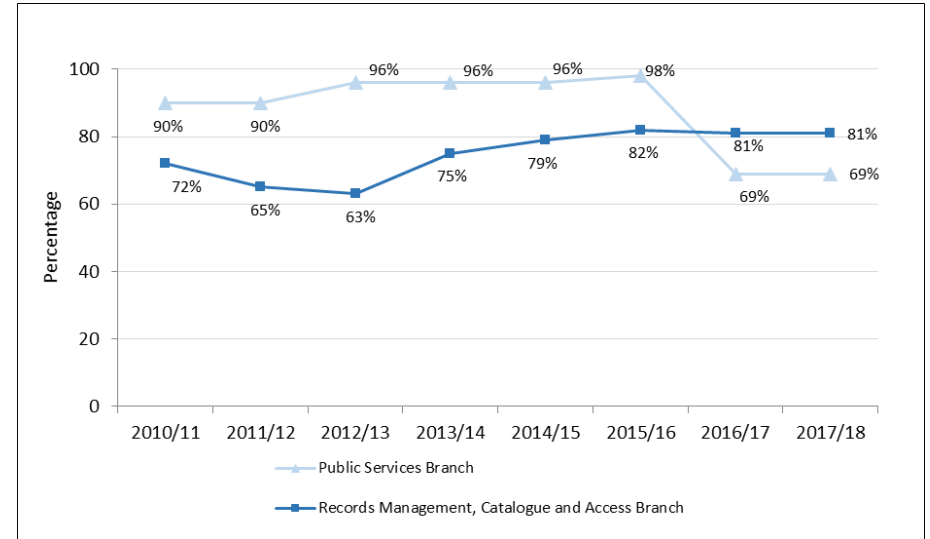


# Making records available to the public

## Written Correspondence

In 2017/18, 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 2017/18, there were 3,903 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 387 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



**An Online 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 2017 and March 2018, 904 new collections were added to the PRONI online archive and 10,610 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>). Photographs added during 2017/18 include images from the Londonderry Papers (D4567), merged images and digital animations of the Belfast Blitz (CAB/3/A/68), and images relating to the PRONI exhibitions 'Women in Sport' and 'From the Medieval to the Modern'. During 2017-18, PRONI added 79 photographs and two videos to the Flickr photo-stream. This brought the total number of PRONI photographs and videos available to view on Flickr to 3,079.



### 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'.

### 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. In 2017-18, 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 2017-18, a total of 2,367 people had subscribed to receive the eNewsletter.

Document of the month celebrates archival documents within the PRONI collections that are particularly unusual or relate to notable dates in the calendar. During 2017-18, PRONI selected six Documents of the month, including records relating to the movie Odd Man Out, The Belfast Blitz, Lady Londonderry's Rose Garden, Women in Sport and the Reformation.

# 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 1991 were brought forward for release during August 2017 and the records of 1992 were brought forward in December 2017. 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 1,430 government files were released in 2017/18. Of these, 347 files had some information blanked out, with the main reason for this being to protect personal information.

A further 137 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. No documents were added to CAIN during 2017-18, however further records will be added in 2018-19. Over 1,700 PRONI documents are currently available on CAIN.

# Visitors and Visits

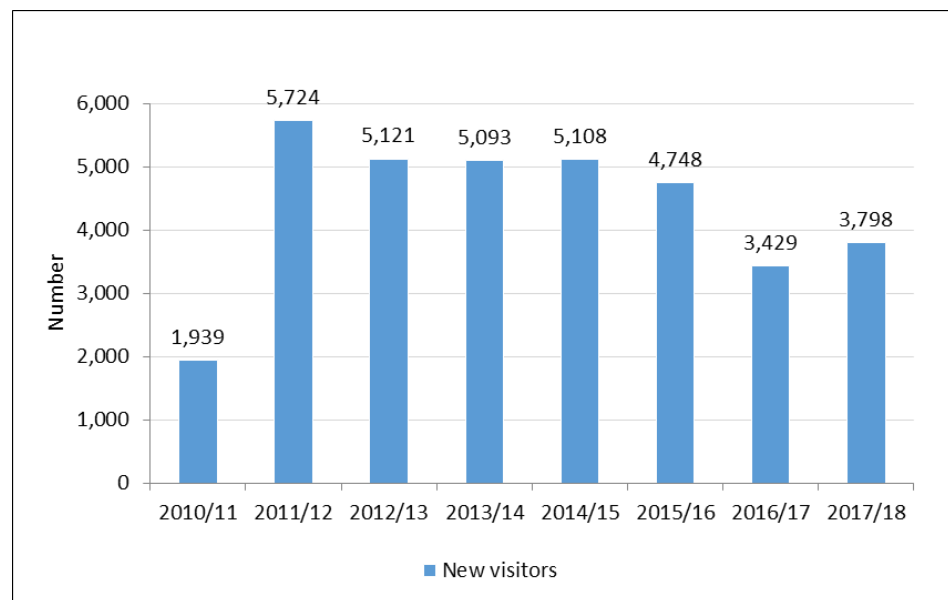
## New Visitors

There were 3,798 new visitors registered in PRONI in 2017/18. In total, 50% of new visitors were female and 50% were male. Fifty five per cent of new visitors registered in 2017/18 were aged between 25 and 64 years, whilst 33% were aged 65 years and over and 5% were under 25 years of age<sup>1</sup>.

## Main reason for registering & country of origin

The majority (77%) of new visitors in 2017/18 cited family history as the main reason for registering with PRONI.

In 2017/18, 55% of new visitors were from outside Northern Ireland, with 17% from the USA and 12% from England and Wales.



Academic Research - 8%



Family History - 77%

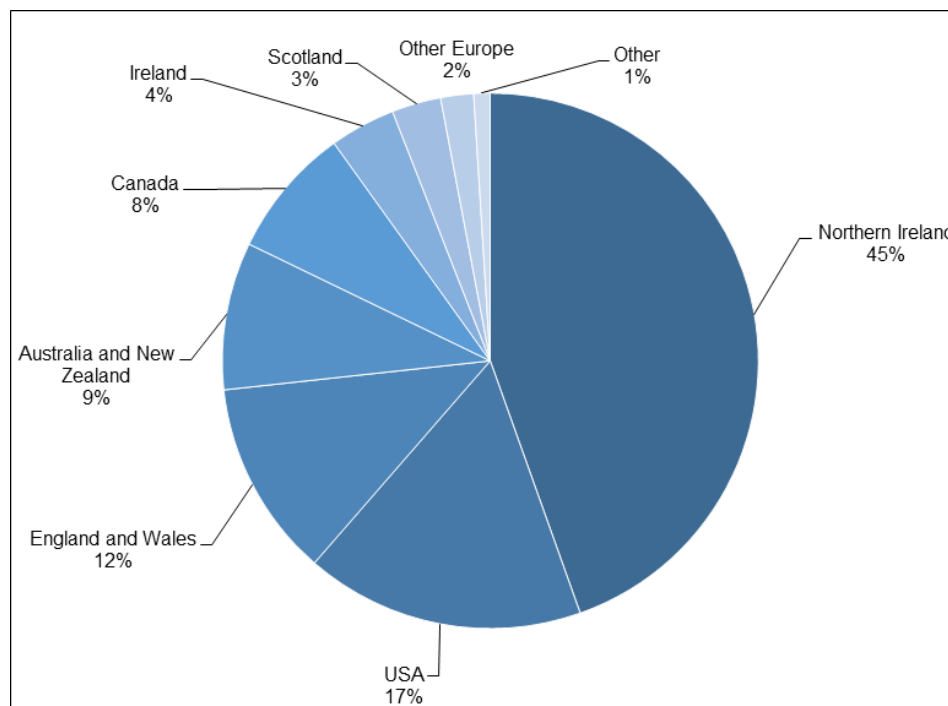


Legal or Business Need - 3%

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



Local History - 7%



1. 7% new visitors did not specify their age when registering.  
 2. 4% of new visitors did not specify their reason for registering.

# 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.

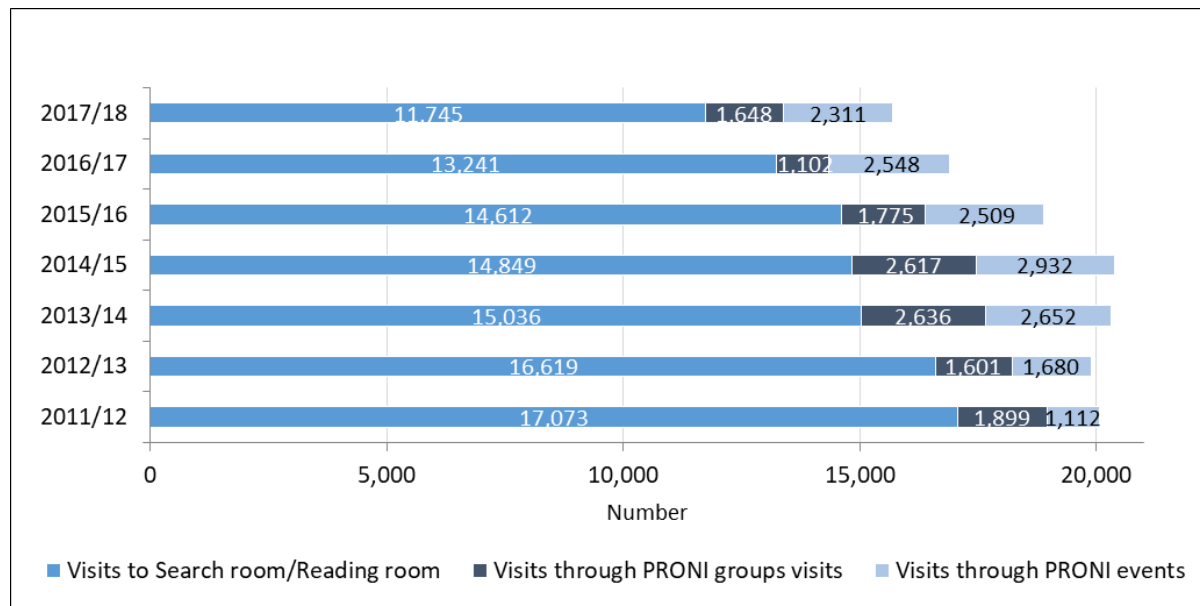
There were 15,704 visits by the public to PRONI in 2017/18. The majority (75%) of visits by the public were to the Search Room / Reading room in PRONI, while 15% of people attended PRONI events and 10% attended as part of a group visit.

In addition, 740 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 2,993 people. The overall number of visitors to PRONI in 2017/18 was 19,437.

There were 63 public lectures, 96 group visits and 6 temporary exhibitions held in 2017/18.



Titanic Society visitors

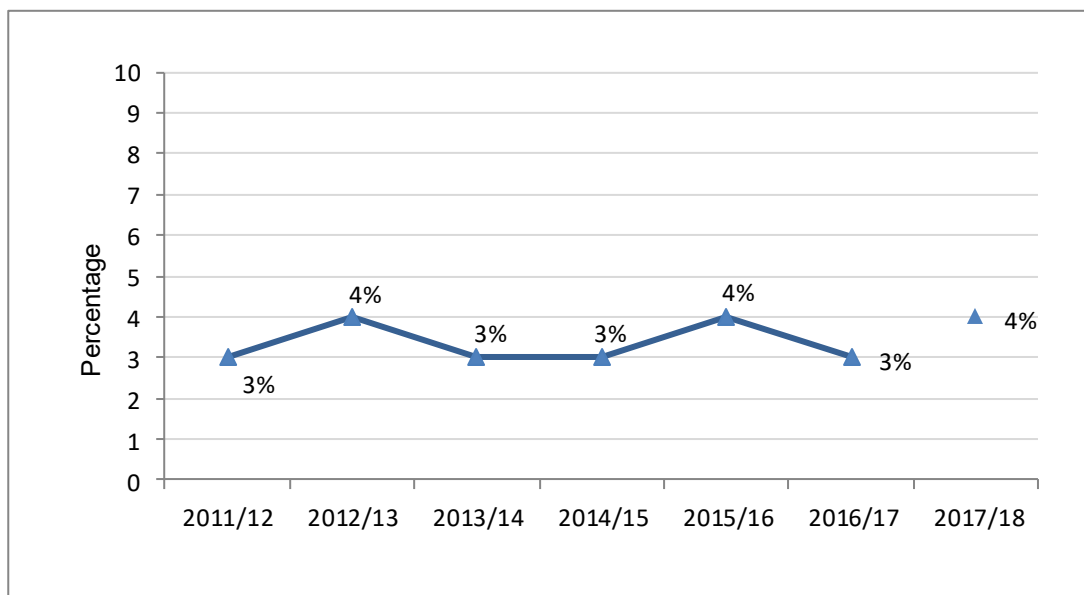


# Visitors and Visits

## Continuous Household Survey

The graph below presents data from the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to visits to and use of PRONI services. In 2017/18, the PRONI question was extended to include contact with PRONI both online and by telephone as well as visiting PRONI. Given the change in the 2017/18 question to capture full utilisation of PRONI services, previous years' figures cannot be directly compared with 2017/18 figures. More information relating to the CHS, methodology, definitions and the interpretation of the figures can be found in the report entitled '[Engagement in culture, arts and sports by adults 2017/18](#)' (Definitions and technical notes section).

- In 2017/18, 4% of adults had used PRONI services within the last 12 months.
- Analysis by age show some differences in the proportions of adults who had visited PRONI, older adults aged 45 years and over (5%) were more likely to have visited PRONI or used their services than younger adults aged 16-44 (3%). In addition, adults who lived in the least deprived areas were more likely to have visited PRONI or used PRONI services than those who live in the most deprived areas (5% and 2% respectively).
- In 2017/18, respondents were also asked how often they have used PRONI service over the previous year. Almost all adults (4%) who had visited PRONI or used PRONI services in the previous year had done so at least once in the year but not more than once a month.



Note: The figure for 2017/18 is not directly comparable to previous years given the change to the question relating to PRONI in the Continuous Household Survey 2017/18.

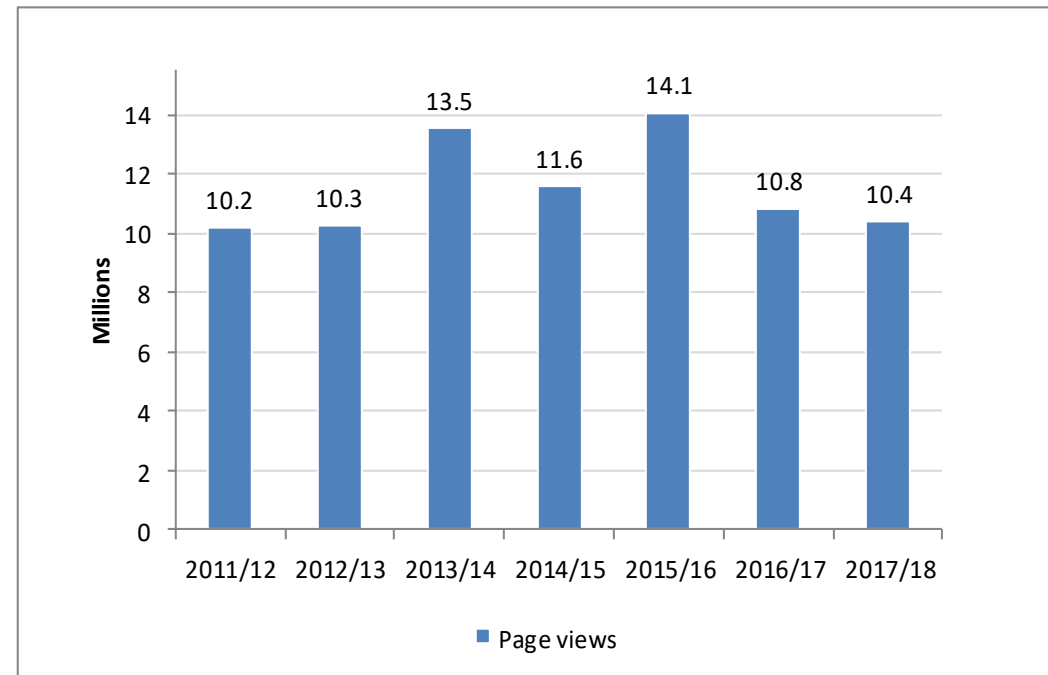
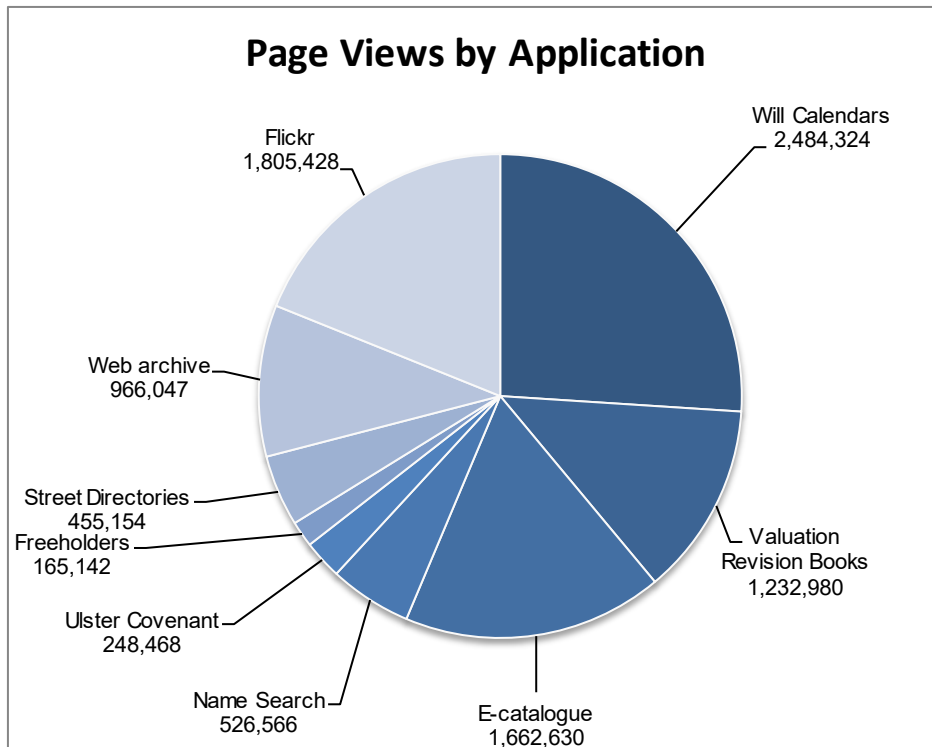
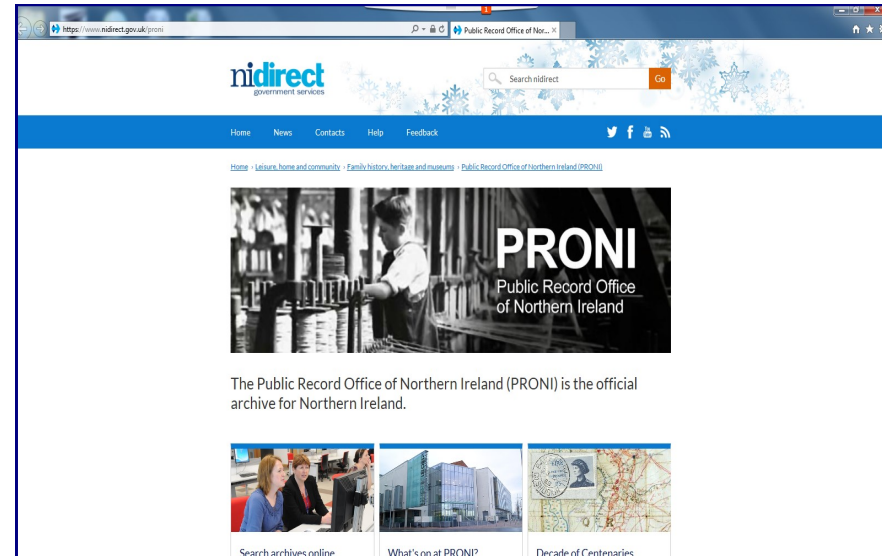
# Visitors and Visits

## PRONI website

There were 10.4 million page views to the PRONI website in 2017/18. A breakdown of page views by application is presented in the chart below.

At the end of 2017-18 PRONI had 2,743 followers on Facebook.

In 2017/18, 553 PRONI photographs on the Flickr photo-stream were favoured, 67 comments were added to photographs and there were 1,805,428 photo views.



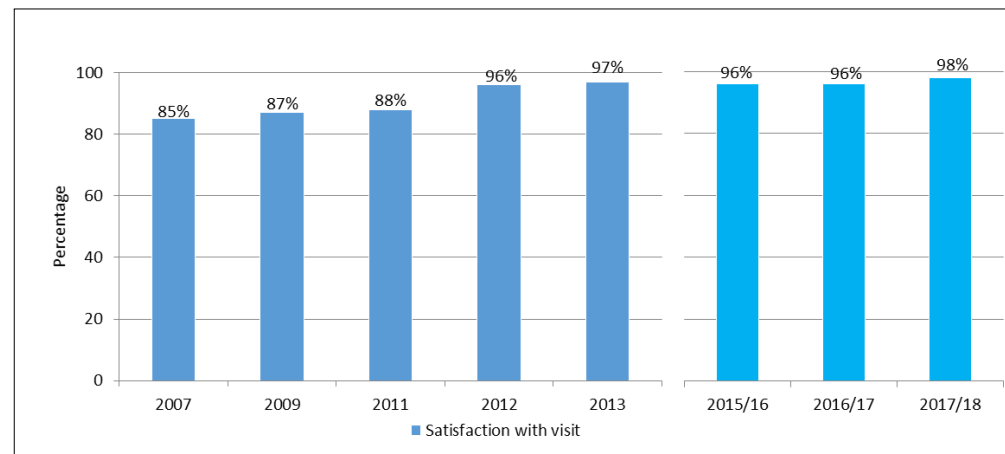
1. A page view is a hit to any file classified as a page.
2. Glossary provides explanations of the categories of pages.
3. The page views total for 2015/16 has been revised.
4. From 2015/16 onwards 'Flickr' page views have been included in the total page views figure.

# 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 2017/18, 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 5 point scale. In 2017/18, 98% of customers who provided feedback rated their visit as 'Excellent'/'Good' or 4 or 5 out of 5 (1 being the lowest, 5 being the highest).

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 2017/18 is included below.



- I just wanted to send a quick email to say thank you very much for the tour of PRONI this morning. The volunteers and I had a really lovely time and we found the session extremely informative . I certainly feel as though you've inspired us all to better use PRONI as a resource! Thanks again.*
- I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank all the staff who assisted my husband and I today. It was our first visit we hadn't a clue where to begin. From the second we entered the building (which is amazing) we were treated exceptionally well. Every member of staff we came in contact with went above and beyond their duties in trying to help us. From the reception desk, to the search room and all in between, we were made to feel very valued and given all the help and assistance we needed, the gentleman in the search room showed us how to work the printer and helped in lots of other ways too. We are now home with loads of information to process and no doubt will be back again soon to continue our search, this time with less trepidation, more enthusiasm.*
- Just a brief but heartfelt email of thanks to you and your team at PRONI for such a friendly, helpful and professional assistance during my visit on Tuesday. The documents provided, especially the H&W Minutes of Board, were both fascinating and illuminating for my research and I am indebted to you. Hope to return to wonderful Belfast soon.*
- My thanks to you both for your kind help and assistance during my visit to PRONI yesterday. I was delighted with the information I found, but more importantly very glad to have been able to order the two death certificates I came up from Armagh to get. Your help with that is very much appreciated. I hope to be able to call back again some day soon.*

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 and 2017/18 customer satisfaction was measured using customer comment cards and event feedback forms. Customers were asked to rate the visit, event or lecture on a 5 point scale.



# 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.



**BBC's Robbie Meredith with the 'Assembly Books' Exhibit**