

Northern Ireland Census User Needs Consultation Questionnaire

This consultation run by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is designed to seek user feedback on past use of census data, determine future user need for census topics and understand users' views on the use of alternative data sources to support a census in 2031.

There are seven main topics covered in the consultation, each of which contain subtopics as outlined in part 5.1 of the [consultation document](#). You can respond about all subtopics or just about the individual subtopic(s) of interest to you. The questionnaire is split into five sections:

- **Section 1: About you**
Asks questions about you, such as your contact details.
- **Section 2: Census 2021 review**
Asks about your past use of census data to inform a Census 2021 benefits realisation report.
- **Section 3: Future need for existing census subtopics**
Asks about your future need for existing census subtopics, to feed into content development for Census 2031.
- **Section 4: Future need for additional topics**
Asks about any new topics you would like us to consider including in Census 2031.
- **Section 5: Public acceptability of the use of alternative data sources to support the census**
Asks your views about the use of alternative data sources to support Census 2031.

The time to complete the consultation questionnaire will vary depending on how many subtopics/additional topics you choose to respond about. Each should take under 10 minutes to complete.

This document caters for up to five subtopics in Section 3 and two additional topics in Section 4. If you would like to respond about more, please download additional

copies of the Census User Needs Consultation Questionnaire (PDF version or MS Word version) as required. Return the completed questionnaire(s) to:

Email: census2031.consultations@nisra.gov.uk

Post: Census Office

NISRA

Colby House

Stranmillis Court

Belfast

BT9 5RR

If responding as an individual, you may choose whether your name is published.

Contact details will remain confidential and handled in accordance with the [NISRA Privacy Notice](#).

All responses will be read individually. Multiple responses from the same respondent will be counted as one response. Responses that are identical or nearly identical will be grouped and treated as part of a single campaign response. This approach helps maintain the integrity of the consultation process, since the assessment focuses on the content of responses, not the number received.

Section 1: About you

Please note, for your response to be fully considered, you must answer all questions marked with a star (*).

Are you responding to this consultation as an individual or on behalf of an organisation? *

- ☐ Individual
- ☒ Organisation

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please name the organisation:

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

Please provide your contact details.

Name*:

Email*:

Telephone number:

Which of the following best describes the sector you work in or your area of interest? *

This will assist us in monitoring the range of users the consultation has reached.

- ☐ Central government
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ Statutory body (for example, health, education, transport, housing, etc.)
- ☐ Private sector
- ☐ Social/ Academic research
- ☐ Market research/ Data analytics
- ☒ Charity/ Community/ Voluntary
- ☐ Utility provider
- ☐ Press/ media

☐ Genealogist/ Family historian

☐ Other – please specify:

We may need to clarify some aspects of your response. May we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

Would you like to subscribe to receive future updates about Census 2031? *

For example, a link to the results of this consultation, information on future consultations or updated information about Census 2031.

☒ Yes

☐ No

Consent *

To support transparency in our decision-making process, all responses to this consultation will be made public (subject to our [Moderation Policy](#)). This will include the name of the responding organisation (if applicable). However, names of individuals will only be published if you give consent below. Please note that we will not publish your contact details.

☒ Yes, I consent to my name being published with my response

☐ No, please remove my name before publishing my response

All responses will be treated in line with the [NISRA privacy notice](#). Please be aware that any information provided in response to this consultation could be made publicly available if requested under a Freedom of Information request.

Section 2: Census 2021 Review

Questions in this section ask about your **past use of census data** and will help us to understand whether the Census 2021 outputs met your needs.

Please note, for your response to be fully considered, you must answer all questions marked with a star (*).

Census 2021 information is available for a range of topics, including:

1. Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments
2. Demography, Household Structure and Migration
3. Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion
4. Health and Care
5. Sexual Orientation
6. Education/qualifications
7. Labour Market and Travel to work

A reminder of the [Census 2021 questions](#) is available on the NISRA website.

Would you like to tell us about your past use of Census 2021 data? *

Responses to these questions will help us to understand whether the Census 2021 outputs met your needs.

- ☒ Yes (go to question 1)
- ☐ No ([go to Section 3](#))

1. For which topics have you used Census 2021 information? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments
- ☐ Demography, Household Structure and Migration
- ☐ Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion
- ☐ Health and Care
- ☐ Sexual Orientation

- ☐ Education/qualifications
- ☐ Labour Market and Travel to work

2. What have you used Census 2021 information for? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Resource allocation
- ☐ Service planning and delivery
- ☐ Targeting investment
- ☐ Policy development and monitoring
- ☐ Research requirement
- ☐ Financial planning/ funding bids
- ☐ Regional/ local comparisons
- ☐ Equality and diversity assessments
- ☐ Benchmark for other data sources
- ☐ Other purposes – please specify:

3. Please tell us more about how you used Census 2021 information.

Please be specific. Consider:

- *important subtopics used*
- *the level of geography used*
- *requirement for multivariate analysis*
- *requirement for UK/ ROI/ other international comparability*
- *requirement for comparison with previous censuses, etc.*

RCSLT NI was unable to use Census 2021 data to analyse the population of people with communication disabilities because communication difficulty was no longer included as a distinct long-term condition category. The removal of this category meant that people with speech, language and communication needs could not be identified reliably within published census outputs, creating a significant evidence gap. Had communication difficulty been collected, RCSLT NI would have used the data to support service planning, policy development, workforce planning, equality monitoring, research and analysis of inequalities affecting people with communication disabilities across Northern Ireland. The loss of comparability with Census 2011 further prevented analysis of changes in outcomes for this population over time.

4(a) Did the Census 2021 information meet your needs? *

- ☐ Yes, fully
- ☐ Yes, partially
- ☒ No

4(b) If you selected 'Yes, partially' or 'No', please detail any additional information you required.

Census 2021 met many general population data needs but did not meet our needs in relation to communication disability. The absence of a communication difficulty category meant that people with speech, language and communication needs could not be identified as a distinct population group, limiting the usefulness of Census 2021 for service planning, policy development, equality monitoring and research. This also removed the ability to compare findings with Census 2011, where communication difficulty was collected and reported separately.

Section 3: Future need for existing census subtopics

This section asks questions about your **future data needs** based on subtopics collected in the previous census (see part 5.2 of the [Census User Needs Consultation document](#)).

Initially, you will state a subtopic of interest and answer questions relating to your future user needs. Your responses will be used to inform the content development of Census 2031, including question design and testing.

Please complete the questionnaire for every subtopic of interest to you. This questionnaire caters for up to five subtopics. If you would like to respond about more, please download additional copies of the Census User Needs Consultation Questionnaire as required. We kindly ask you to enter the same contact information to allow us to link your responses.

Please note, for your response to be fully considered, you must answer all questions marked with a star (*).

If you have a future need for additional topics (i.e., those not covered in the previous census) you can let us know about them in Section 4.

1. Would you like to tell us about your future data needs for your subtopics of interest for Census 2031? *

Responses to these questions will feed into the content development of Census 2031, including question design and testing.

- ☒ Yes (go to question 2)
- ☐ No (go to [Section 4](#))

2. Please state your first subtopic of interest. *

Health & Care - Long term health conditions

3. What do you need information about this subtopic for? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Resource allocation

- ☒ Service planning and delivery
- ☒ Targeting investment
- ☒ Policy development and monitoring
- ☒ Research requirement

☐ Other purposes – please specify:

4. Specifically, how do you intend to use information about this subtopic and why is it important?

RCSLT NI would request that, as part of this subtopic, communication difficulty is reinstated as a distinct long-term health condition category, as it was in Census 2011. We would use information from this subtopic to understand the population of people with communication disabilities and speech, language and communication needs across Northern Ireland. This information is important for service planning, workforce planning, resource allocation, policy development, equality monitoring and research. Census data provide a unique opportunity to analyse communication disability alongside other characteristics such as age, sex, education, employment, health, deprivation and geography, including at small-area levels that are not available from most other data sources.

Communication difficulty was collected as a distinct long-term condition in Census 2011, enabling people with communication disabilities to be identified and analysed as a separate population group. The inclusion of this category generated dedicated outputs and provided valuable population-level evidence. NISRA subsequently used the communication difficulty data in analysis of employment outcomes, identifying a disability employment gap of 55.9 percentage points for people reporting communication difficulty. This demonstrated the value of being able to identify this population separately and use Census data to understand inequalities and outcomes.

The absence of a communication difficulty category in Census 2021 has created a significant evidence gap, limiting the ability to identify this population, monitor inequalities, undertake multivariate analysis, understand outcomes and assess changes over time. Reinstating communication difficulty within the long-term health conditions subtopic would restore continuity with Census 2011, support evidence-based policy and decision-making, and ensure that people with communication disabilities are visible within official statistics.

5(a) At what geographical level do you need information about this subtopic? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Northern Ireland
- ☒ Regional level (for example, Health and Social Care Trust)
- ☐ Local Government District
- ☐ Assembly Area/ Parliamentary Constituency
- ☐ District Electoral Area
- ☐ Electoral Ward
- ☐ Super Data Zone
- ☐ Data Zone
- ☐ Other – please specify:

5(b) Which of these geographical levels are most important to you?

For us we mainly need a figure for communication difficulties in Northern Ireland as a whole.

**6. Do you need information about this subtopic for population sub-groups?
Please tell us which sub-groups.**

For example, add the name(s) of specific ethnic groups, specific religions, children, pensioners, specific occupation groups, etc.

Age range would be helpful

7. Do you need information about this subtopic for multivariate analysis? *

Multivariate analysis involves examining two or more variables simultaneously to explore relationships, patterns, or effects between them. It allows users to understand how different factors interact and influence outcomes.

☒ Yes

☐ No

8. If yes, which topics would you use information about in combination with this subtopic?

Tick all that apply.

☒ Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments

☒ Demography, Household Structure and Migration

☒ Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion

☒ Health and Care

☐ Sexual Orientation

☒ Education/qualifications

☒ Labour Market and Travel to work

☐ Other – please specify:

9(a) Is UK comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

☒ Yes, essential

☐ Yes, strong need

- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

9(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☒ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the UK)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

10(a) Is Republic of Ireland comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☒ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

10(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☒ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the Republic of Ireland)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

11. Is other international comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☒ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

12(a) For this subtopic, do you intend to compare the Census 2031 outputs with: *

	Yes	No
Census 2021 outputs	☐	☒
Other earlier census outputs	☒	☐

12(b) For this subtopic, have you compared Census 2021 outputs with earlier censuses? *

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Are you aware of other non-census sources of information about this subtopic? *

- ☐ No (go to question 15)
- ☒ Yes – please specify:

Existing sources include health, education and social care administrative datasets, as well as condition-specific research studies and surveys.

14(a) If yes, please tell us whether the alternative source(s) meet your current needs.

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, fully

☐ Yes, partially

☒ No

14(b) If you selected 'Yes partially' or 'No', please tell us what more information you would require.

Existing sources include health, education and social care administrative datasets, as well as condition-specific research studies and surveys. However, these sources do not provide comprehensive population-level information on people with communication disabilities across Northern Ireland. They are often limited to specific services, age groups, diagnoses or localities and do not provide the same level of small-area geography, population coverage, comparability or multivariate analytical potential as Census data.

Communication difficulty was previously identifiable through Census 2011, but equivalent population-level Census data are no longer available following the removal of the communication difficulty category from Census 2021.

15. If NISRA did not collect information about this subtopic in Census 2031, what would be the adverse impact on you/your work? (0 = no impact, 10 = highest possible impact) *

Tick one box.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒

16. Do you have another subtopic of interest? *

- ☒ Yes (go to next page)
- ☐ No (go to [Section 4](#))

1. This question is not applicable.

2. Please state your second subtopic of interest. *

Communication disability / speech, language and communication needs

3. What do you need information about this subtopic for? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Resource allocation
- ☒ Service planning and delivery
- ☒ Targeting investment
- ☒ Policy development and monitoring
- ☒ Research requirement
- ☐ Other purposes – please specify:

4. Specifically, how do you intend to use information about this subtopic and why is it important?

RCSLT NI believe that communication difficulties should be reinstated within the existing Health and Care, long term conditions subtopic as per the 2011 census. However, if not, communication disability should be considered as a distinct additional topic because current proposals do not adequately identify this population.

We would use information from this subtopic to understand the population of people with communication disabilities and speech, language and communication needs across Northern Ireland. This information is important for service planning, workforce planning, resource allocation, policy development, equality monitoring and research. Census data provide a unique opportunity to analyse communication disability alongside other characteristics such as age, sex, education, employment, health, deprivation and geography, including at small-area levels that are not available from most other data sources.

Communication difficulty was collected as a distinct long-term condition in Census 2011 and enabled separate analysis of this population, including subsequent work by NISRA examining employment outcomes. The absence of a communication difficulty category in Census 2021 created a significant evidence gap, limiting the ability to identify this population, monitor inequalities, understand outcomes and assess changes over time. Reinstating communication difficulty within the long-term health conditions subtopic would support evidence-based policy and ensure that people with communication disabilities are visible within official statistics.

5(a) At what geographical level do you need information about this subtopic? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Northern Ireland
- ☒ Regional level (for example, Health and Social Care Trust)
- ☐ Local Government District
- ☐ Assembly Area/ Parliamentary Constituency

- ☐ District Electoral Area
- ☐ Electoral Ward
- ☐ Super Data Zone
- ☐ Data Zone
- ☐ Other – please specify:

5(b) Which of these geographical levels are most important to you?

Northern Ireland as a whole.

6. Do you need information about this subtopic for population sub-groups?

Please tell us which sub-groups.

For example, add the name(s) of specific ethnic groups, specific religions, children, pensioners, specific occupation groups, etc.

Age range

7. Do you need information about this subtopic for multivariate analysis? *

Multivariate analysis involves examining two or more variables simultaneously to explore relationships, patterns, or effects between them. It allows users to understand how different factors interact and influence outcomes.

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

8. If yes, which topics would you use information about in combination with this subtopic?

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments
- ☒ Demography, Household Structure and Migration
- ☒ Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion
- ☒ Health and Care
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☒ Education/qualifications
- ☒ Labour Market and Travel to work
- ☐ Other – please specify:

9(a) Is UK comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☒ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

9(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☒ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the UK)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

10(a) Is Republic of Ireland comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☒ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

10(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☒ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☒ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the Republic of Ireland)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

11. Is other international comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☒ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

12(a) For this subtopic, do you intend to compare the Census 2031 outputs with: *

	Yes	No
Census 2021 outputs	☐	☒
Other earlier census outputs	☒	☐

12(b) For this subtopic, have you compared Census 2021 outputs with earlier censuses? *

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Are you aware of other non-census sources of information about this subtopic? *

- ☐ No (go to question 15)
- ☐ Yes – please specify:

Existing sources include health, education and social care administrative datasets, as well as condition-specific research studies and surveys

14(a) If yes, please tell us whether the alternative source(s) meet your current needs.

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, fully
- ☐ Yes, partially
- ☒ No

14(b) If you selected 'Yes partially' or 'No', please tell us what more information you would require.

Existing sources include health, education and social care administrative datasets, as well as condition-specific research studies and surveys. However, these sources do not provide comprehensive population-level information on people with communication disabilities across Northern Ireland. They are often limited to specific services, age groups, diagnoses or localities and do not provide the same level of small-area geography, population coverage, comparability or multivariate analytical potential as Census data. Communication difficulty was previously identifiable through Census 2011, but equivalent population-level Census data are no longer available following the removal of the communication difficulty category from Census 2021.

15. If NISRA did not collect information about this subtopic in Census 2031, what would be the adverse impact on you/your work? (0 = no impact, 10 = highest possible impact) *

Tick one box.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒

16. Do you have another subtopic of interest? *

- ☐ Yes (go to next page)
- ☒ No (go to [Section 4](#))

1. This question is not applicable.

2. Please state your third subtopic of interest. *

3. What do you need information about this subtopic for? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Resource allocation
- ☐ Service planning and delivery
- ☐ Targeting investment
- ☐ Policy development and monitoring
- ☐ Research requirement
- ☐ Other purposes – please specify:

4. Specifically, how do you intend to use information about this subtopic and why is it important?

5(a) At what geographical level do you need information about this subtopic? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Northern Ireland
- ☐ Regional level (for example, Health and Social Care Trust)
- ☐ Local Government District
- ☐ Assembly Area/ Parliamentary Constituency

- ☐ District Electoral Area
- ☐ Electoral Ward
- ☐ Super Data Zone
- ☐ Data Zone
- ☐ Other – please specify:

5(b) Which of these geographical levels are most important to you?

**6. Do you need information about this subtopic for population sub-groups?
Please tell us which sub-groups.**

For example, add the name(s) of specific ethnic groups, specific religions, children, pensioners, specific occupation groups, etc.

7. Do you need information about this subtopic for multivariate analysis? *

Multivariate analysis involves examining two or more variables simultaneously to explore relationships, patterns, or effects between them. It allows users to understand how different factors interact and influence outcomes.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. If yes, which topics would you use information about in combination with this subtopic?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments
- ☐ Demography, Household Structure and Migration
- ☐ Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion
- ☐ Health and Care
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Education/ qualifications
- ☐ Labour Market and Travel to work
- ☐ Other – please specify:

9(a) Is UK comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

9(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the UK)

☐ Other – please specify:

10(a) Is Republic of Ireland comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

10(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the Republic of Ireland)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

11. Is other international comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

12(a) For this subtopic, do you intend to compare the Census 2031 outputs with: *

	Yes	No
Census 2021 outputs	☐	☐
Other earlier census outputs	☐	☐

12(b) For this subtopic, have you compared Census 2021 outputs with earlier censuses? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Are you aware of other non-census sources of information about this subtopic? *

☐ No (go to question 15)

☐ Yes – please specify:

14(a) If yes, please tell us whether the alternative source(s) meet your current needs.

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, fully
- ☐ Yes, partially
- ☐ No

14(b) If you selected 'Yes partially' or 'No', please tell us what more information you would require.

15. If NISRA did not collect information about this subtopic in Census 2031, what would be the adverse impact on you/your work? (0 = no impact, 10 = highest possible impact) *

Tick one box.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16. Do you have another subtopic of interest? *

☐ Yes (go to next page)

☐ No (go to Section [4](#))

1. This question is not applicable.

2. Please state your fourth subtopic of interest. *

3. What do you need information about this subtopic for? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Resource allocation
- ☐ Service planning and delivery
- ☐ Targeting investment
- ☐ Policy development and monitoring
- ☐ Research requirement

☐ Other purposes – please specify:

4. Specifically, how do you intend to use information about this subtopic and why is it important?

5(a) At what geographical level do you need information about this subtopic? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Northern Ireland
- ☐ Regional level (for example, Health and Social Care Trust)
- ☐ Local Government District
- ☐ Assembly Area/ Parliamentary Constituency

- ☐ District Electoral Area
- ☐ Electoral Ward
- ☐ Super Data Zone
- ☐ Data Zone
- ☐ Other – please specify:

5(b) Which of these geographical levels are most important to you?

**6. Do you need information about this subtopic for population sub-groups?
Please tell us which sub-groups.**

For example, add the name(s) of specific ethnic groups, specific religions, children, pensioners, specific occupation groups, etc.

7. Do you need information about this subtopic for multivariate analysis? *

Multivariate analysis involves examining two or more variables simultaneously to explore relationships, patterns, or effects between them. It allows users to understand how different factors interact and influence outcomes.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. If yes, which topics would you use information about in combination with this subtopic?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments
- ☐ Demography, Household Structure and Migration
- ☐ Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion
- ☐ Health and Care
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Education/ qualifications
- ☐ Labour Market and Travel to work
- ☐ Other – please specify:

9(a) Is UK comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

9(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the UK)

☐ Other – please specify:

10(a) Is Republic of Ireland comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

10(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the Republic of Ireland)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

11. Is other international comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

12(a) For this subtopic, do you intend to compare the Census 2031 outputs with: *

	Yes	No
Census 2021 outputs	☐	☐
Other earlier census outputs	☐	☐

12(b) For this subtopic, have you compared Census 2021 outputs with earlier censuses? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Are you aware of other non-census sources of information about this subtopic? *

☐ No (go to question 15)

☐ Yes – please specify:

14(a) If yes, please tell us whether the alternative source(s) meet your current needs.

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, fully
- ☐ Yes, partially
- ☐ No

14(b) If you selected 'Yes partially' or 'No', please tell us what more information you would require.

15. If NISRA did not collect information about this subtopic in Census 2031, what would be the adverse impact on you/your work? (0 = no impact, 10 = highest possible impact) *

Tick one box.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16. Do you have another subtopic of interest? *

☐ Yes (go to next page)

☐ No (go to [Section 4](#))

1. This question is not applicable.

2. Please state your fifth subtopic of interest. *

3. What do you need information about this subtopic for? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Resource allocation
- ☐ Service planning and delivery
- ☐ Targeting investment
- ☐ Policy development and monitoring
- ☐ Research requirement
- ☐ Other purposes – please specify:

4. Specifically, how do you intend to use information about this subtopic and why is it important?

5(a) At what geographical level do you need information about this subtopic? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Northern Ireland
- ☐ Regional level (for example, Health and Social Care Trust)
- ☐ Local Government District
- ☐ Assembly Area/ Parliamentary Constituency
- ☐ District Electoral Area

- ☐ Electoral Ward
- ☐ Super Data Zone
- ☐ Data Zone

☐ Other – please specify:

5(b) Which of these geographical levels are most important to you?

**6. Do you need information about this subtopic for population sub-groups?
Please tell us which sub-groups.**

For example, add the name(s) of specific ethnic groups, specific religions, children, pensioners, specific occupation groups, etc.

7. Do you need information about this subtopic for multivariate analysis? *

Multivariate analysis involves examining two or more variables simultaneously to explore relationships, patterns, or effects between them. It allows users to understand how different factors interact and influence outcomes.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. If yes, which topics would you use information about in combination with this subtopic?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments
- ☐ Demography, Household Structure and Migration
- ☐ Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion
- ☐ Health and Care
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Education/ qualifications
- ☐ Labour Market and Travel to work
- ☐ Other – please specify:

9(a) Is UK comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

9(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the UK)

☐ Other – please specify:

10(a) Is Republic of Ireland comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

10(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the Republic of Ireland)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

11. Is other international comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this subtopic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

12(a) For this subtopic, do you intend to compare the Census 2031 outputs with: *

	Yes	No
Census 2021 outputs	☐	☐
Other earlier census outputs	☐	☐

12(b) For this subtopic, have you compared Census 2021 outputs with earlier censuses? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Are you aware of other non-census sources of information about this subtopic? *

☐ No (go to question 15)

☐ Yes – please specify:

14(a) If yes, please tell us whether the alternative source(s) meet your current needs.

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, fully
- ☐ Yes, partially
- ☐ No

14(b) If you selected 'Yes partially' or 'No', please tell us what more information you would require.

15. If NISRA did not collect information about this subtopic in Census 2031, what would be the adverse impact on you/your work? (0 = no impact, 10 = highest possible impact) *

Tick one box.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

16. Do you have another subtopic of interest? *

☐ Yes (see note below)

☐ No (go to [Section 4](#))

This is the end of Section 3. If you would like to respond about more subtopics, you can do so by downloading additional copies of this questionnaire as required.

Section 4: Future need for additional topics

In this section, you can let us know about **additional topics you have a future user need for** inclusion on a census.

You can respond about any additional topic of interest to you, including those discussed in part 5.3 of the [Census User Needs Consultation document](#). This questionnaire caters for up to two additional topics. If you would like to respond about more, please download additional copies of the Census User Needs Consultation Questionnaire as required. We kindly ask you to enter the same contact information to allow us to link your responses. You can skip this section if you do not have a future need for additional topics.

Please note, for your response to be fully considered, you must answer all questions marked with a star (*).

1. Would you like to tell us about your future data needs for additional topics for Census 2031? *

This section should be used to discuss topics not covered in Section 3.

Responses to these questions will feed into the content development of Census 2031, including question design and testing.

- ☐ Yes (go to question 2)
- ☐ No (go to [Section 5](#))

2. Please state your first additional topic of interest. *

3. What do you need information about this topic for? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Resource allocation
- ☐ Service planning and delivery
- ☐ Targeting investment

☐ Policy development and monitoring

☐ Research requirement

☐ Other purposes – please specify:

4. Specifically, how do you intend to use information about this topic and why is it important?

5(a) At what geographical level do you need information about this topic? *

Tick all that apply.

☐ Northern Ireland

☐ Regional level (for example, Health and Social Care Trust)

☐ Local Government District

☐ Assembly Area/ Parliamentary Constituency

☐ District Electoral Area

☐ Electoral Ward

☐ Super Data Zone

☐ Data Zone

☐ Other – please specify:

5(b) Which of these geographical levels would be most important to you?

6. Do you need information about this topic for population sub-groups? Please tell us which sub-groups.

For example, add the name(s) of specific ethnic groups, specific religions, children, pensioners, specific occupation groups, etc.

7. Do you need information about this topic for multivariate analysis? *

Multivariate analysis involves examining two or more variables simultaneously to explore relationships, patterns, or effects between them. It allows users to understand how different factors interact and influence outcomes.

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. If yes, which topics would you use information about in combination with this topic?

Tick all that apply.

☐ Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments

☐ Demography, Household Structure and Migration

☐ Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion

- ☐ Health and Care
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Education/ qualifications
- ☐ Labour Market and Travel to work
- ☐ Other – please specify:

9(a) Is UK comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this topic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

9(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the UK)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

10(a) Is Republic of Ireland comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this topic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need

- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

10(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the Republic of Ireland)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

11. Is other international comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this topic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

12. Are you aware of other non-census sources of information about this topic? *

- ☐ No (go to question 14)

- ☐ Yes – please specify:

13(a) If yes, please tell us whether the alternative source(s) meet your current needs.

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, fully

☐ Yes, partially

☐ No

13(b) If you selected 'Yes partially' or 'No', please tell us what more information you would require.

14. If NISRA did not collect information about this topic in Census 2031, what would be the adverse impact on you/your work? (0 = no impact, 10 = highest possible impact) *

Tick one box.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. Would you like to tell us about another additional topic you have a future need for? *

☐ Yes (go to next page)

☐ No (go to [Section 5](#))

1. This question is not applicable.

2. Please state your second additional topic of interest. *

3. What do you need information about this topic for? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Resource allocation
- ☐ Service planning and delivery
- ☐ Targeting investment
- ☐ Policy development and monitoring
- ☐ Research requirement
- ☐ Other purposes – please specify:

4. Specifically, how do you intend to use information about this topic and why is it important?

5(a) At what geographical level do you need information about this topic? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Northern Ireland
- ☐ Regional level (for example, Health and Social Care Trust)
- ☐ Local Government District
- ☐ Assembly Area/ Parliamentary Constituency

- ☐ District Electoral Area
- ☐ Electoral Ward
- ☐ Super Data Zone
- ☐ Data Zone
- ☐ Other – please specify:

5(b) Which of these geographical levels would be most important to you?

6. Do you need information about this topic for population sub-groups? Please tell us which sub-groups.

For example, add the name(s) of specific ethnic groups, specific religions, children, pensioners, specific occupation groups, etc.

7. Do you need information about this topic for multivariate analysis? *

Multivariate analysis involves examining two or more variables simultaneously to explore relationships, patterns, or effects between them. It allows users to understand how different factors interact and influence outcomes.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. If yes, which topics would you use information about in combination with this topic?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Housing, Accommodation and Communal Establishments
- ☐ Demography, Household Structure and Migration
- ☐ Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion
- ☐ Health and Care
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Education/ qualifications
- ☐ Labour Market and Travel to work
- ☐ Other – please specify:

9(a) Is UK comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this topic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

9(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the UK)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

10(a) Is Republic of Ireland comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this topic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

10(b) If yes, please indicate the type of comparisons you would be making.

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Comparisons at similar levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts across countries)
- ☐ Comparisons at different levels (for example, comparing Local Government Districts with the Republic of Ireland)
- ☐ Other – please specify:

11. Is other international comparability a requirement for you/your work for information about this topic? *

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, essential
- ☐ Yes, strong need
- ☐ Yes, some need
- ☐ No

12. Are you aware of other non-census sources of information about this topic? *

- ☐ No (go to question 14)
- ☐ Yes – please specify:

13(a) If yes, please tell us whether the alternative source(s) meet your current needs.

Tick one option.

- ☐ Yes, fully
- ☐ Yes, partially
- ☐ No

13(b) If you selected 'Yes partially' or 'No', please tell us what more information you would require.

14. If NISRA did not collect information about this topic in Census 2031, what would be the adverse impact on you/your work? (0 = no impact, 10 = highest possible impact) *

Tick one box.

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

15. Would you like to tell us about another additional topic you have a future need for? *

- ☐ Yes (see note below)
- ☐ No (go to [Section 5](#))

This is the end of Section 4. If you would like to respond about more topics, you can do so by downloading additional copies of this questionnaire as required.

Section 5: Public acceptability of the use of alternative data sources to support the census

NISRA has used alternative data sources in the past to support census processes, reduce respondent burden and enhance census outputs. For example, in 2021, alternative data sources were used to:

- enhance the 2021 Census Address Register and field operations by identifying households that might need particular support and/or may prefer paper to an online questionnaire (e.g., in areas of limited broadband activity or households with elderly people only living in them);
- support census data processing (e.g., to place students at their term-time address when they were recorded at their home address);
- quality assure census results; and
- remove the need to ask certain questions (i.e., NISRA produced statistics on the number of rooms in each household using information available from the Land and Property Services databases)

Further detail on the use of alternative data sources is available in section 9 of the [Census 2021 General Report](#).

1. Considering the ways that alternative data sources could be used to support the census, would you please indicate to what degree you see them as important or valuable? (0 = not important, 10 = very important)

a) Supporting the public to respond?

Supplementing the census address register with indicators that identify household needs. Tick one option.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐

☐ I don't know

Please give details for your score.

Alternative data sources can play an important role in identifying people and households who may require additional support to participate in the census. This is particularly important for people with disabilities, including communication disabilities, who may experience barriers to understanding, accessing or completing census questionnaires. The use of administrative information to tailor support, improve accessibility and increase participation has the potential to improve coverage and data quality. However, care should be taken to ensure that such approaches complement rather than replace direct collection of important demographic and disability information through the census.

Do you have any other ideas for how alternative data sources could be used to support the public to respond? Please give details.

Administrative data could help identify people who may require accessible information, communication support or alternative response methods. This might include people known to disability, health or education services who may benefit from Easy Read materials, supported completion, accessible digital formats or targeted awareness campaigns. Any such use would need to maintain appropriate privacy safeguards and public trust.

b) Reducing respondent burden?

Using alternative data held by government to remove the need to ask certain questions. Tick one option.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ I don't know

Please give details for your score.

Alternative data sources can help reduce respondent burden where the information is already available from reliable administrative sources and where equivalent quality, coverage and analytical value can be maintained. However, reducing burden should be balanced against the need to collect important information that is not available elsewhere. In the case of communication disability and other disability-related data, alternative administrative and survey sources do not currently provide the same population coverage, small-area geography, comparability or multivariate analytical capability as Census data. Therefore, while alternative sources can be useful for some topics, they should not replace the collection of information where this would create significant evidence gaps.

Do you have any other ideas for how alternative data sources could be used to reduce respondent burden? Please give details.

Alternative data sources may help reduce respondent burden where information is already available from high-quality administrative records and where equivalent outputs can be produced. However, respondent burden should not be reduced at the expense of losing important information about population groups whose needs are not adequately captured elsewhere. Communication disability data are not currently available through alternative sources with the same population coverage, geographic detail and analytical potential as Census data. Where alternative sources are used, they should complement rather than replace the direct collection of information that is necessary for service planning, equality monitoring and research. Communication disability is an example of an area where direct Census collection remains important.

c) To support census data processing?

Using alternative data held by government to assist in the processing of census data to fill gaps in missing information. Tick one option.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ I don't know

Please give details for your score.

Alternative data sources can be valuable in supporting census data processing where they improve data quality, help address missing information and reduce the need for imputation. Their use can help ensure more complete and accurate census outputs. However, this should be undertaken transparently and should complement, rather than replace, the direct collection of information that is important for understanding specific population groups. For topics such as communication disability, direct collection through the census remains important because alternative data sources do not currently provide the same population coverage, geographic detail or analytical capability as census data.

Do you have any other ideas for how alternative data sources could be used to support census data processing? Please give details.

Alternative data sources could be used to improve completeness and quality assurance of census outputs, particularly where they help validate responses or address missing data. Any use of alternative data should be carefully evaluated to ensure it does not reduce the visibility of important population groups. Where data are sourced from administrative systems, consideration should be given to the extent to which particular groups may be under-recorded or absent from those systems. For communication disability, administrative datasets are fragmented across sectors and would not currently provide an adequate substitute for direct census collection.

d) To support quality assuring the census results?

Using alternative data held by government to help quality assure the accuracy of census results. Tick one option.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐

☐ I don't know

Please give details for your score.

Alternative data sources can play a valuable role in quality assuring census results by helping to validate estimates, identify potential gaps or anomalies, and improve confidence in the accuracy of published statistics. Used appropriately, they can complement census responses and strengthen the overall quality of outputs. However, quality assurance should not be used as a substitute for collecting information that is not available elsewhere. For example, communication disability is not currently identifiable through a comprehensive alternative data source with the same population coverage and analytical value as the census. Therefore, while alternative data can support quality assurance, direct collection of important disability information remains necessary.

Do you have any other ideas for how alternative data sources could be used to quality assure census results? Please give details.

Alternative data sources could be used to validate population estimates, assess coverage of particular population groups and identify areas where census responses may be incomplete. This may help improve confidence in census outputs and inform future methodological improvements. However, it is important to recognise that some groups may be under-recorded in administrative systems. For communication disability in particular, information is spread across multiple health, education and social care datasets and would not currently provide a robust alternative to direct census collection. Quality assurance processes should therefore complement, rather than replace, the collection of key disability information.

Trust and Privacy

2(a) How comfortable are you with public bodies sharing anonymised data for statistical purposes?

Tick one option.

- ☐ Very comfortable
- ☒ Somewhat comfortable
- ☐ Not comfortable
- ☐ I'm not sure

Please explain.

RCSLT NI is generally supportive of the use of anonymised data for statistical purposes where there is a clear public benefit, appropriate governance arrangements and robust safeguards to protect privacy and confidentiality. The responsible use of linked and administrative data can improve understanding of population needs, support service planning and strengthen the evidence base for policy development. However, public trust is essential. People should be confident about how their data are being used, why they are being used, who can access them, and what protections are in place. Transparency, clear communication and strong data security arrangements are therefore important prerequisites for the use of anonymised data.

2(b) What concerns, if any, would you have about your data being used in this way?

RCSLT NI's main concerns would relate to privacy, transparency and public trust. People should be confident that any data shared for statistical purposes are appropriately anonymised, securely managed and used only for clearly defined public benefit purposes. There may also be concerns about the potential for certain population groups to be under-represented or misrepresented within administrative datasets, which could affect the quality of resulting statistics. It is important that data sharing arrangements are transparent, proportionate and subject to strong governance and oversight, with clear information available about how data are used and protected.

2(c) What would help you feel more confident that your data is being used responsibly?

Confidence would be strengthened through clear and transparent communication about what data are being used, why they are being used, who can access them, and what safeguards are in place to protect privacy. Independent oversight, strong governance arrangements, robust security measures and regular public reporting on data use would also be important. Demonstrating a clear public benefit from data sharing, alongside meaningful engagement with stakeholders and the public, would help maintain trust and confidence in the responsible use of data for statistical purposes.

Transparency and Control

3. Do you think people should be informed when their data is used to support the collection and production of statistics?

Tick one option.

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

4. When considering the use of alternative data sources to support the delivery of a census or the production of census outputs, what are your top three priorities?

Please use the boxes provided to rank your priorities 1 to 3, with 1 being the most important to you. You may write/type directly into the box.

Minimising respondent burden

Supporting people to respond

2

Accuracy and quality of statistics	1
Increasing the range of statistical outputs	
Data security	3
Trust and privacy	
Transparency	

Please expand on your priorities.

1. Accuracy and quality of statistics: High-quality statistics are fundamental to service planning, resource allocation, policy development, equality monitoring and research. Alternative data sources should only be used where they improve or maintain the quality, completeness and usefulness of census outputs.
2. Supporting people to respond: It is important that all population groups can participate fully in the census. Alternative data sources can help identify people who may require additional support, accessible information or alternative response methods, helping to improve coverage and reduce inequalities in participation.
3. Data security: Public confidence is essential to the successful use of alternative data sources. Strong data security, governance and safeguards are needed to ensure information is protected and used appropriately for public benefit.

5. Do you have any other comments about NISRA's use of alternative data sources to support Census 2031?

☒ No

☐ Yes – please specify:

Additional information

RCSLT NI welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Census 2031 User Needs Consultation and supports NISRA's commitment to ensuring that census content reflects future user needs. We wish to emphasise the importance of reinstating communication difficulty as a distinct category within the long-term health conditions question. Communication difficulty was collected in Census 2011 and generated valuable population-level data, enabling almost 30,000 people with communication disabilities to be identified and analysed as a distinct population group. NISRA subsequently used these data to analyse employment outcomes and identify substantial inequalities, demonstrating their policy, service planning and research value.

The removal of the communication difficulty category from Census 2021 created a significant evidence gap. People with speech, language and communication needs are no longer identifiable within census outputs, limiting the ability to understand prevalence, monitor inequalities, undertake multivariate analysis, support service planning, inform policy development and track outcomes over time. Existing administrative and survey data do not provide an equivalent source of population-level information with the same geographic coverage, consistency and analytical potential as the Census.

Our request also aligns with the developing Northern Ireland disability policy context. In its response to the Draft Disability Strategy, RCSLT NI highlighted the need for disability data collection to include information on communication needs and called for consideration of the inclusion of long-term communication need within future Census data collection ([see our response here](#)). Census 2031 therefore provides an important opportunity to address a recognised evidence gap and improve the visibility of people with communication disabilities within official statistics.

We therefore strongly encourage NISRA to reinstate communication difficulty as a distinct long-term condition category within Census 2031 and to engage with people with lived experience of communication disability, speech and language therapists, and relevant stakeholder organisations during future question development and testing. Doing so would restore continuity with the evidence previously available from Census 2011, strengthen the evidence base available for public services, equality monitoring and policy decision-making, and ensure that people with communication disabilities are appropriately represented in Northern Ireland's official statistics.

Do you have any further comments relevant to this consultation?