
Director General for Regulation

Donna McLarnon
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
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29 May 2018

Dear Donna,

CONFIRMATION OF NATIONAL STATISTICS DESIGNATION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY MAIN REPORT

We have reviewed the actions that you and your team have taken to address the requirements in Assessment Report number 330: *Statistics from the Northern Ireland House Condition Survey*.

On behalf of the Board of the UK Statistics Authority, I am pleased to confirm the designation of the *Northern Ireland House Condition Survey Main Report* as National Statistics. The Preliminary Report was previously designated as National Statistics in March 2017.

I welcome the way in which your team has embraced the Code of Practice and the many proactive steps the team has taken to enhance the trustworthiness, quality and value of the publication. For instance, the detailed quality information in the report and supporting documents gives users a good understanding of the quality of the statistics. It is also encouraging that the team continues to have conversations with users to understand their needs.

We have included more detail about our judgement in an annex to this letter. I, or my team, would be very happy to talk you or your colleagues through any aspects of this letter or Code compliance more generally.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value and is something to be celebrated. We invite you to include a statement alongside the statistics which reflects the National Statistics status.

I am copying this letter to John Pullinger, the National Statistician, Michelle Crawford at Department for Communities, and Siobhan Carey, the Chief Statistician in Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

Annex: Review of actions taken by NIHE in response to Assessment Report 330 on Northern Ireland House Condition Survey

Requirement	Actions taken by NIHE to meet Requirement	Office for Statistics Regulation evaluation of evidence in meeting Requirement
<p>Requirement 1 (Value)</p> <p>To enhance the public value of these statistics by increasing users' understanding of the quality, NIHE should ensure that published details of the strengths and limitations of the statistics are comprehensive, and are easy to find and understand in all published outputs.</p>	<p>The NIHCS 2016 Main report contains a user guide to help users better understand the NIHCS statistics and to aid interpretation of the statistics. The guide includes information on the survey objectives, the NIHCS sample, response rates, weighting and grossing, quality, definitions and the strengths and weaknesses of the statistics.</p> <p>The section on strengths and weaknesses outlines the issues with the sample size, non-response to specific questions, and changes to the sample frame, as well as the steps NIHE took to limit these weaknesses in the data. It also includes an overview of key strengths of the data.</p> <p>The section on the NIHCS sample contains explanations of the sample size, sample frame and sample design. It also includes an explanation of confidence intervals (CIs), along with a table of CIs for the NIHCS sample.</p>	<p>Requirement met</p> <p>We welcome the detailed quality information included in the main report. The summary of strengths and weaknesses is open and transparent, highlighting the key issues that users should be aware of. The information on the NIHCS sample is clearly written, explaining the methods used and the reasons why these methods were chosen; for instance, the team chose to use some resampling to allow longitudinal analysis.</p>
<p>Requirement 2 (Value)</p> <p>To enhance accessibility and maximise potential use of the NIHCS data, NIHE should provide data tables in an open format.</p>	<p>The NIHCS Main report contains tables in an appendix. The tables are also available as a set of Excel files on the NIHE website.</p>	<p>Requirement met</p> <p>We welcome publication of Excel tables as a route for users to access the statistics but the team should continue to consider whether a more open format would further increase the value of this output for users.</p>
<p>Requirement 3 (Quality)</p> <p>In order to enhance users' understanding of the quality of the statistics, NIHE should review and improve the reporting of quality and methodology information in all NIHCS reports to ensure appropriate information is available to users. This should include publishing:</p> <p>a) more-detailed information on the methodology used to produce the statistics, written in a clear and understandable way for non-technical users</p>	<p>NIHE published:</p> <p>a) information on weighting and grossing in the NIHCS Main report, which gives an overview of the design, calculation and validation of statistical weights for the survey</p> <p>b) a background quality report, which contains detailed information on each of the ESS aspects of quality</p> <p>c) a quality assurance report, which covers quality assurance at each stage of the data journey, including administrative data, training of surveyors, fieldwork and data analysis</p> <p>d) the up to date information on the survey methodology is covered across the three documents outlined in a -c.</p>	<p>Requirement met</p> <p>The detailed quality information included in the main report and supporting documents gives users a good understanding of all aspects of the quality of the statistics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The section on weighting and grossing provides a high-level and accessible outline of the processes involved • The background quality report nicely brings together all the additional information that has been added to the website as part of the assessment process • The quality assurance report is comprehensive and easy to understand

<p>b) information on the ESS's five aspects of quality</p> <p>c) comprehensive information on NIHCS statistics quality assurance procedures for each stage of the data journey</p> <p>d) up-to-date information on the survey methodology</p>		
<p>Requirement 4 (Trustworthiness)</p> <p>To demonstrate the trustworthiness of these statistics NIHE should:</p> <p>a) ensure pre-release access to each of the NIHCS statistical reports is restricted to those people essential for production and publication, or for quality assurance and operational purposes</p> <p>b) publish lists of those people given restricted pre-release access to each of the NIHCS statistical reports;</p> <p>c) publish the Pre-Release Compliance statement, which outlines arrangements in place for pre-release access.</p>	<p>a) There are only 3 people on the pre-release access list: the NIHE Chief Executive (who is also the Head of Profession), the NIHE Head of Communications and a Senior Communications Manager. The NIHCS Steering Group also receives pre-release access but for quality assurance purposes only.</p> <p>In addition, the NIHE Visual Communications team sees the data in advance of publication to advise on layout and formatting. This team is considered to be part of the statistical production process, so does not need to be added to the pre-release access list. NIHE sent the team information on the Code of Practice, particularly in relation to release practices, and made clear that they are being given access for production purposes only and should not pass on the data, or any indication of the substance of the report, to any other individual</p> <p>b) NIHE published a pre-release access list for the NIHCS Main report and the Preliminary report</p> <p>c) NIHE published a compliance statement, which sets out NIHE's operational arrangements for giving Ministers and officials pre-release access to official statistics. It meets the standards for National Statistics publications</p>	<p>Requirement met</p>
<p>Requirement 5 (Trustworthiness)</p> <p>To demonstrate its trustworthiness, NIHE should:</p> <p>a) set out documentation on how those who produce the statistics</p>	<p>NIHE published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an integrity statement, which explains NIHE's role as executive non-departmental public body and its independence from the Department for Communities, and outlines the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the production of official statistics 	<p>Requirement met</p>

<p>are protected from any pressures that might influence the methods, content or timing of the outputs on NIHCS statistics</p> <p>b) publish documentation on how it ensures the integrity of official statistics, for example, its revisions policy and confidentiality statement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a confidentiality and access statement, which sets out the arrangements the NIHE Research Unit has put in place to ensure the confidentiality of the data it holds • a revisions policy, which describes how planned and unplanned revisions to the statistics will be published 	
<p>Requirement 6 (Trustworthiness)</p> <p>To ensure that statistical reports are released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes trustworthiness and public confidence, and gives equal access to all users, NIHE should:</p> <p>a) publish a timetable of releases for these statistics 12 months in advance and ensure that these statistics can be accessed from the Statistics Release Calendar</p> <p>b) ensure that NIHCS statistics are issued at 9.30am on the day of release</p> <p>c) publish the name and contact details of the responsible statistician in the statistical reports</p>	<p>a) NIHE announced the publication date of the NIHCS Main report on gov.uk on 2nd May 2018, at least four weeks in advance of the release. It also announced the publication date on the NIHE website.</p> <p>b) NIHE has a digital engagement team, which is responsible for putting information on the website. The final report will be sent to a digital engagement e-mail address which only members of that team can access. A specific member of the team has been tasked with putting the report on the website at 9.30am on May 31st, but there is also a back-up in place in case that person is for some reason unavailable at that time. If that happens, another member of the team will be responsible for adding the report to the website.</p> <p>c) The NIHCS Main report includes the name and contact details of the responsible statistician.</p>	<p>Requirement met</p>