

FOI DOF/2026-0341

Request

This is a request, under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) for information produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in the preparation of the 2022-based subnational population projections. The information I am requesting is as follows:

1. Total migration projections for the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) by single year of age (SYA) and sex, including net flows along with gross inflows and outflows.
2. Internal migration projections for the 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs) by single year of age (SYA) and sex, including gross inflows and outflows.
3. Inflows from and outflows to the Rest of the United Kingdom for the 11 LGDs by SYA and sex.
4. Inflows from and outflows to the Rest of the World for the 11 LGDs by SYA and sex.
5. Birth projections for the 11 LGDs by age of mother and sex of births.
6. Death projections for the 11 LGDs by SYA and sex.

Currently, the subnational population projections information published by NISRA does not include the items listed above (the published information can be viewed at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2022-based-population-projections-areas-within-northern-ireland-statistical-bulletin>).

That stands in sharp contrast to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which publishes all of the requested information as a matter of course for Local Authorities in England and Wales. The outputs published by ONS for their 2022-based subnational projections can be viewed at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/subnationalpopulationprojections2022based>.

I see no reason why NISRA should not adopt a similar practice. For example, population projections play an important role in the preparation of land-use development plans; in that regard, they fall within the EIR category of measures or activities affecting the environment. The publication of the requested information would facilitate a fuller understanding of the population projections published by NISRA.

As the requested information falls within scope of the EIR, there is also a presumption of disclosure.

Finally, I note the following. The ONS publishes the information for 309 Local Authorities. Of those, 105 (34%) have a total population which is lower than the smallest Northern Ireland LGD (Fermanagh and Omagh, 117,700 in mid-2024). Only 25 (8%) have a population higher than Northern Ireland's largest LGD (Belfast, 352,400). The remaining 58% have a population which falls within the population range for the 11 Northern Ireland LGDs. There is therefore no argument to be made that Northern Ireland's LGDs are in any way 'too small' for publication of the requested information.

DoF response

Having considered the request, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) have concluded that the information sought relates to demographic and statistical projections rather than environmental information as defined in Regulation 2(1) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. The request has therefore been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I can confirm the Department holds some of the information requested.

Background information (Overview) to information being released.

Population projections for areas within Northern Ireland, also known as Sub-National Population Projections (SNPPs) are produced by the NISRA and are designated as Accredited Official Statistics under the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*. These published outputs include, for each Local Government District (LGD):

- Projected totals for the components of population change (births, deaths and net migration); and
- Projected population by single year of age (SYA) and sex.

The latest 2022-based SNPPs along with detailed background information on methodology and assumptions can be found here: [2022-based Population Projections for Areas within Northern Ireland | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

For context, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes Local Authority population projections for England at a greater level of detail. These are also designated Accredited Official Statistics under the same Act. While broadly similar in approach to NISRA's methodology, there are differences particularly in the inputs used and outputs produced. Further information is available here: [Methodology used to produce the 2022-based subnational population projections for England - Office for National Statistics](#)

NISRA does not publish projections at the level of detail requested. However, **some of the requested information is generated as intermediate outputs** during the production process and is held by NISRA. These outputs are used internally for quality assurance purposes only and do not represent final projections. This information is provided with this response, subject to the important limitations set out below.

- The information provided is **not part of the Accredited Official Statistics**;
- The data have **not been quality assured to the standards required for Accredited Official Statistics** publications, and
- The data represent an **intermediate stage of production**, so should **not** be used in place of the published results.

More information on limitations

Quality assurance of published projections prioritises the overall plausibility of the projected population (by SYA and sex for each LGD), rather than the detailed components of change at the level of disaggregation requested.

The SNPPs model prioritises the population projections contained in the publication – which aligns to identified user needs. Therefore, input data to the model are tailored accordingly and the detailed breakdown of all components by SYA and sex do not form part of the planned outworkings (and hence are not part of the published outputs).

While NISRA holds some of the information requested, it should be noted that differences exist between the data included in this response and the published totals at LGD level within the SNPP publication. Similar differences also arise when comparing these figures with Northern Ireland–level projections published by NISRA and ONS within the National Population Projections (NPPs) release.

In terms of alignment with NPP, the SNPPs LGD-level results are constrained to align with the Northern Ireland totals from the NPPs, ensuring consistency at the national level. However, the model does not constrain all components of change by SYA and sex to their corresponding Northern Ireland–level values.

In terms of alignment within the SNPP, the SYA and sex-specific breakdowns for each LGD do not aggregate exactly to the published SNPPs totals. This reflects the application of a final constraining step at a later stage in the modelling process – and is the reason why **this data should be treated as intermediate model outputs**.

It should also be noted that Local Authority projections published by ONS are constrained by SYA and sex to published national level projections. As a result, the data presented here are not directly equivalent to the ONS published data. The published SNPPs remain the official statistics for projections at LGD level, and the published NPPs remain the official statistics for projections for migration by SYA and sex at Northern Ireland level.

The NPPs can be found here: [2024-based Population Projections for Northern Ireland | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#) and [Zipped population projections data files, Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics](#).

Finally, NISRA's current SNPPs model has been developed in line with established user needs. While there has not previously been a significant demand for the detailed breakdowns requested, NISRA is committed to reviewing its projection system to assess whether it could be adapted to produce such outputs as part of its future Official Statistics releases.

NISRA would be happy to discuss any queries you may have in respect of the information provided with this response. Please contact us at:

Telephone: 028 9025 5156

E-mail: census@nisra.gov.uk

Response to your specific questions

1. Total migration projections (including net, inflows and outflows)

NISRA holds this information subject to the limitations set out above.

Please see the attached spreadsheet:

Spreadsheet No.1 - LGD_ALL_Migration_Summary

Refer to the overview sheet for detailed descriptions and explanations.

2. Internal migration projections (including inflows and outflows)

NISRA holds this information subject to the limitations set out above.

Please see the attached spreadsheet:

Spreadsheet No. 2 - LGD_Internal_Migration.xlsx

Refer to the overview sheet for detailed descriptions and explanations.

3. Inflows from and outflows to the Rest of the United Kingdom

NISRA does not hold this information.

4. Inflows from and outflows to the Rest of the World

NISRA does not hold this information.

For requests 3 and 4, the projection model used by NISRA does not distinguish between migration flows to/from the Rest of the United Kingdom and the Rest of the World. Instead, migration is categorised as:

- Internal migration; and
- External (overseas) migration

Flows to and from the Rest of the United Kingdom and the Rest of the World are combined within the external (overseas) migration category.

Relevant information is provided in the attached spreadsheet:

Spreadsheet No.3 - LGD_Overseas_Migration.xlsx

Please refer to the overview sheet for detailed descriptions and explanations.

These data are subject to the limitations set out above.

5. Birth projections by age of mother and sex of births

NISRA does not hold this information. The projections model used by NISRA does not generate data at this level of detail.

6. Death projections by single year of age and sex

NISRA holds this information, subject to the limitations described above.

Please see attached spreadsheet:

Spreadsheet No.4 - LGD_Deaths.xlsx

Refer to the overview sheet for detailed descriptions and explanations.

Annex B - Internal Reviews

An Internal Review request examines the response based on applied exemptions, search adequacy, or response timeliness.

It is not the following, which will be treated as specified:

- Questions asking for clarification on information provided: Will be treated as part of the original FOI request.
- Additional questions about the information in the response: Will be treated as a new FOI request.
- Questions about the subject not related to the original request: Will be treated as new FOI request.
- Questions regarding how a service operates or why a decision was made: Will be treated as normal business and responded to accordingly.
- Complaints or concerns raised in response to information provided: Will be treated in line with relevant complaints procedure.

To make an Internal Review request:

- **Clearly state:** That you want an internal review of a previous FOI response and provide the necessary details.
- **Follow the timeline:** Be sure to submit your request within 40 working days of receiving the original response. If the Department has not responded at all, you have 40 working days after the original 20-day response period has passed.
- **Wait for a response:** The review is typically completed within 20 working days but can take up to 40 working days in exceptional circumstances. The Department should inform you of any delays.

What the review includes

- A fresh decision based on a reconsideration of all relevant factors.
- An assessment of whether the request was handled correctly and if exemptions were applied appropriately.
- The review will be conducted by someone who was not involved in the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, please email foi@finance-ni.gov.uk or write to FOI/EIR Team, Department of Finance, 2nd Floor, Craigantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SX.