



Census Office
NISRA
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
Belfast
BT9 5RR

Submitted via email to: census2031.consultations@nisra.gov.uk

4th February 2026

Dear Census Office

Re: NI Census User Needs Consultation

Due to pressure of time and workload we are unable to complete a full response to the NISRA's NI Census User Needs consultation. We wish to endorse the responses to this consultation by the Women's Policy Group and by Carers NI.

Please accept this letter as our response highlighting the following issues:

- In terms of availability of data, we wish to raise that Departments are not generating enough of the disaggregated data we need. We use this data in a variety of ways including in consultation responses, in research reports and briefings and to determine policy recommendations. We would like to see more robust data in a number of areas but acknowledge that the Census may not always be the best place to collect this data. We encourage all Government departments and NISRA to investigate the potential for gathering accurate, accessible data in other ways (for example, more detailed information on poverty including deep poverty and destitution, the numbers of people living in poverty who are not in receipt of Free School Meals, eligibility for childcare support to name but a few).
- We note that the consultation document states in relation to 'Income' that NISRA's initial view is 'Do not collect, explore alternative data sources'. We are of the view that more detailed disaggregated data is needed in the area of income particularly in the areas of poverty and socio-economic status. In terms of alternative data sources, the Wealth and Assets Survey for example does not include Northern Ireland. This survey provides important data on assets, savings, debts, pensions, investments and income sources which is used to measure economic wellbeing and wealth distribution. We are particularly interested in the gender breakdowns of this data which for England, Wales and Scotland consistently show a significant gender wealth

gap, with men holding considerably more wealth than women. It would be valuable to have this information for Northern Ireland.

- Following on from our previous points in relation to poverty and income we believe it would be useful to have a question asked on the impact of the wider economy on people's ability to afford the essentials. We understand there may be issues around the definition of 'essentials' but it would be particularly useful to gather data on the ability to afford housing, food and energy costs.
- We welcome that the consultation commits to continuing to collect information regarding the provision of unpaid care, including the number of hours a week it is provided for. We support the assertion by Carers NI that there is a need for further information in this area to reinforce the importance of unpaid care within government policy making. This is especially important in the context of an ageing population, increasing complexity of care provision and increases in the number of hours of unpaid care being provided. We support Carers NI who have called for further questions to be asked on the number of people that an unpaid carer provides care for (which would help to identify the number of 'sandwich' carers providing care for multiple people) and if the person receiving care lives with the unpaid carer or not.
- We support Carers NI who have asked for an additional sub option to be included under Question 29 as follows "*Caring for a child/relative/friend with a long term sickness/disability or terminal condition*" which helps to separate out the provision of childcare from the provision of unpaid care and helps to demonstrate whether a caring role has an impact on the ability to work.
- We would also like to see more disaggregated data on the numbers of young carers who have deferred education or work opportunities due to care, the rate of underemployment of unpaid carers and the numbers of ex-unpaid carers who are economically inactive or unable to reintegrate into the workforce as a result of taking time out to care.
- We support the continued inclusion of a question on sexual orientation within the Census and we also support the inclusion of a question on gender identity. Data on these issues are very important to minoritised groups and we share the Women's Policy Group view that it is essential to gather data "*that will be used to allocate resources and to assess impacts of proposed policies and budgets as part of EQIAs.*"

Kind Regards



Siobhán Harding

Research & Policy Officer, Women's Regional Consortium