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Travel Survey for Northern Ireland

Statement of User Needs

2020

**DfI Analysis, Statistics
and Research Branch**

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NISRA

Northern Ireland
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Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitistic agus taighde

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI) is a continuous survey that has been running since 1999. It collects data on how and why people living in Northern Ireland travel. Two main reports are produced annually: [the Headline Report and the In-depth Report](#). A Technical Report detailing survey methodology etc. is published after the Headline Report. As the sample size is relatively small, three years of data need to be combined to ensure the analysis carried out is robust.
2. The In-depth Report was initially the only TSNI report. The first report was published in 2003 for 1999-2001 data. The report has always contained a wide variety of information on trends in personal travel, how people travel, why people travel and some other factors affecting travel. It has expanded over the years to include sections on travel difficulties, the Additional Tables Report (walking, cycling, public transport, Park & Ride) and the Urban-Rural Report.
3. The latest edition of the In-depth Report (2016-2018), published in February 2020, was completely redesigned following a user consultation to reflect current statistical and data visualisation methods. In addition, information was reorganised into themed sections: 'All travel modes', 'Walking', 'Cycling', 'Public transport', 'Driving, driver and passenger trips', 'Journey purpose', 'Travelling to work', 'Shopping' and 'Key tables by urban-rural'. This means that users can easily identify the data they are most interested in.
4. The Headline Report was first produced in 2010 for 2007-2009 TSNI data. It was set up to address a user need of producing key information as soon as possible after the TSNI databases are received from Central Survey Unit. The report contains key results such as number of journeys/ distance travelled/ journey length by mode of travel/ purpose of journey. From 2014-2016, it has included data to monitor Indicator 25 (% of all journeys by walking, cycling and public transport) of the draft Programme for Government 2016-2021. The most recent report, published in July 2019, contains data for 2016-2018. The 2017-2019 edition is currently scheduled for Winter 2020 following a delay in the production and supply of the TSNI databases related to the COVID-19 situation.
5. In recent years, Analysis Statistics and Research Branch (ASRB) has been increasing the use of infographics to present TSNI information. For the 2014-2016 TSNI data, we developed three themed factsheets on walking, cycling and public transport. These have been added to the annual TSNI outputs and the latest factsheets (2016-2018) were published in June 2020.
6. ASRB already has a good understanding of the data needs of their internal policy customers, given their close working relationship on various policy areas.
7. In contrast, less was known about the extent to which the TSNI outputs met the needs of external users (apart from correspondence on ad-hoc data requests). In order to address this gap in knowledge, between September and November 2018, ASRB conducted a number of [face-to-face informal interviews](#) with four key users of TSNI data, both internal and external to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

8. Following these interviews, it was decided to take forward a wider consultation process to engage as many users as possible and gather a wide range of information on TSNi usage and user requirements. This information would be used to develop a way forward in the evolution of the TSNi outputs, ensuring any change supported those expressed needs of users.
9. This report summarises the current uses of the data, the main requirements and themes to emerge from the user engagement exercises and how we hope to address these in the future. It also gives an update on the progress made so far (Table 1.1 List of User Requirements – Completed Actions) and next steps (Table 1.2 List of User Requirements – Planned Actions). The tables list the main needs identified, if/how they will be addressed and likely timescales. Table 1.1 gives the update of actions completed since the publication of the 2019 statement of user needs in September 2019.
10. Given the prime purpose of the TSNi reports is to inform progress against draft PfG indicators and support policy development within DfI and wider NI Departments, they may not always be the most appropriate vehicle to meet a highlighted need. Furthermore, in some instances, a specific piece of analysis was requested by a single user which would not necessarily have a broader appeal to others. Identified needs will be prioritised in line with available resources and this will be kept under review.
11. This statement of user needs will be published online so that users can see our plans and progress. Actions and timescales for implementation will be reviewed on an annual basis. The tables will be updated to reflect work carried out to date (Table 1.1) and plans for the following year (Table 1.2). It is envisaged that a further consultation will occur in future years, to ensure that our understanding of data requirements remains current. The table of planned actions (Table 1.2) will be updated, as necessary, to reflect new data needs identified and how ASRB intend to address them.

CURRENT USES

12. Questions were asked to establish how the available data are currently being used. These formed part of the [TSNi user consultations](#), both the key user interviews with internal and external customers and the later online user consultation survey. In addition, as stated previously, internal customers and their uses of the data, are already firmly established.

Internal user interviews

A variety of internal users, linked to the provision and promotion of various travel modes, make use of the data that comes from the TSNi. As a rich source of a wide variety of travel information going back over nearly 20 years, it is an important part of evidence based policy making. It provides information on areas such as active travel, safe and sustainable travel, accessible transport and equality monitoring. Over the years, the TSNi has been used to provide monitoring data for a number of key Departmental ambitions, most recently for Indicator 25 of the draft Programme for Government. This is therefore a key piece of data for relevant policy sections to monitor the impact of their interventions. Given the disparate nature of NI and its communities, there is a deeper consideration of the information from

TSNI given the need to plan policy across the various sections of society and geographies within NI. TSNI reports and queries responded to each year underpin a lot of the policy development that takes place. Urban / rural and other geographical content are of particular interest, alongside demographic breakdowns particularly age and gender, as well as walking, cycling, public transport, travel to school/work and short journeys.

TSNI output is also used by internal policy colleagues to:

- inform senior management and Ministerial briefing, when required;
- answer queries; and
- help inform Departmental strategies and publications (such as NI Road Safety Strategy to 2020 Annual Statistical Report, Graduated Driver Licensing and Transport Statistics).

External user interviews

External users stated varying degrees of use for the data within the TSNI output. Use is bespoke to their own needs and can range from use of a full document, a specific subset or theme or a single piece of data. Some, such as Belfast City Council, use the data from TSNI as part of their own monitoring systems, while others use it to inform decisions and give context to debate or discussion. Belfast City Council and various other councils are particularly interested in Indicator 25 data at Local Government District (LGD) level. While not interviewed as part of this process, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs use TSNI data in their NI Environmental Statistics annual report and TSNI urban-rural tables are re-published on their website. In general, external users engaged with TSNI output on an ad hoc basis, generally only when needed for work at hand. Accessing TSNI information was mainly through outputs on the DfI website or direct to team members. Users tended to use the higher level data or, at most, LGD level data and not probe too deeply into any further analysis. They do not generally make much use of the Excel tables or any User Guidance available; instead the tables, text and charts included in the main body of the report are of most use.

Online consultation (Internal and External users)

Given the nature of the method, online consultation did not give quite as much detail of user habits as the interviews but reached a wider number of users. It was clear from the results of the survey that both reports produced were among the main sources of TSNI information used and the recently established factsheets had also been picked up and were commonly used. The DfI website and general web searching were the main access points (perhaps somewhat surprising given the focus on and proliferation of social media, although this may be due to the type of person responding to a consultation). Main content used tended to focus on travel modes and journey purpose, with more detailed analysis on age, gender, geographies etc. being less commonly used. This suggests it is the overall NI picture that interests most users and the finer-grained analysis which may give more nuance and understanding of localised issues is not of as much interest. Again this may be due to the nature of the respondent and where their interests lie.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS AND 2020 UPDATES

13. Once their current use of TSNi data had been established, respondents to the online consultation were asked for their views on a number of suggested ways forward in relation to the content in the current outputs. These reflected some of the user needs expressed during the key user interviews in 2018 and mainly met with a largely positive response. Note that the sample size for these questions was reasonably small (30 or 31 respondents) and therefore we can't place the proposals in order of popularity as the majority of results are not significantly different. The only exception to this is the proposal "Themed publications" which received the most positive response.
14. A summary is given below of each of the proposals put forward, the survey results and the 2020 update of actions which have been completed since the publication of the 2019 statement of user needs (see also Table 1.1 on page 10, for a summary). Planned work for the forthcoming year appears in Table 1.2 on page 12 and an update will be given in the 2021 statement of user needs.
15. One of the main developments which has occurred since the 2019 user consultation is the redesign of the In-depth Report for the 2016-2018 edition, published in February 2020. Work carried out as part of this is highlighted in the 2020 updates.

a. Themed reports / sections

From the results of the online public consultation, 94% of respondents agreed with the addition of more themed content. This proposal received the most positive response of all the ideas presented in the survey. This was also a recurring comment when interviewing key users, who have certain specific interests such as particular modes of transport or geographies. As a first step in producing specific themed content, the factsheets on walking, cycling and public transport were developed and released in 2018. From needs expressed in recent user consultations, themed outputs are important to our users and will therefore be a key development in improving TSNi output. This will be considered both in terms of sections within the existing publications as well as possible further development or additions to the factsheets currently produced.

2020 update

The redesign of the 2016-2018 In-depth Report included the reorganisation of data into new themed sections, developed in line with policy and user needs, while retaining all the information previously reported. This means users can easily identify and access the data they are most interested in. The themed sections include: 'All travel modes', 'Walking', 'Cycling', 'Public transport', 'Driving, driver and passenger trips', 'Journey purpose', 'Travelling to work', 'Shopping' and 'Key tables by urban-rural'. In addition, each section can be read as a standalone report on that topic.

b. Time Series / Trend data

As part of development work already started, fuller time series information has been provided to support the draft PfG indicator section in the TSNi Headline Report. The need to understand longer term trends is key for policy development. To improve content and modernise the aesthetics of the report and bring it in line with user need and other ASRB output, 10 year time series charts have been developed to compliment tabular data (see 2020 update below). Consideration will be given to further development of this work. This links in

with point (c) around more graphical content and also reflects best practice as shown in the National Travel Survey. This was supported both in the online consultation (68% agreeing with the proposal, 0% disagree) and in the key user interviews.

2020 update

The redesign of the 2016-2018 In-depth Report incorporated a number of new charts with data over the last 10 years and a trend arrow (up, down, no change) comparing the latest figures with 10 years ago. These charts are at the start of nearly every section and represent the trends, for various key travel modes and journey purposes, in average number of journeys, average distance travelled and, for data by mode, average time spent travelling.

c. Graphical content

Across NISRA, there has been a strong movement away from traditional long form reports towards more accessible, engaging short form graphical reporting. That is not to say there is no place for text, tables, methodological and technical content but it is vital that user needs are up front while other content is still available to those who want/require it. Therefore, alongside existing infographics included within reports and separately through the TSNi factsheets, we will consider developing further graphical content to better communicate the findings expressed in our reports. Again, the proposal “More infographics and less text based reporting” met with support in the online survey (61% agreed, 6% disagreed) and in key user interviews (both internal and external customers).

2020 update

The redesign of the 2016-2018 In-depth Report incorporated a wide range of new charts and some new infographics. These included trend arrows within the charts and next to the commentary summarising the text. Existing line graphs, bar charts and pie charts were all refreshed. In addition, tables were refreshed and, to make results more digestible, large tables were reduced in size:

- Travel modes were grouped, reducing 14 categories to 5 categories including the most commonly used modes
- Journey purposes were grouped, reducing 15 categories to 6 categories of the most commonly used purposes.

Note that the full 14 category mode breakdown and 15 category purpose breakdown are still available in the Excel spreadsheet accompanying the report and are referenced in the appropriate “Further reading” sections within the publication.

d. Accessibility

There was support expressed in the consultation for the proposal to seek increased accessibility to data through the provision of datasets on available Open Data platforms (74% agreed, 0% disagreed). As part of the key users’ interviews, there was also interest in the availability of data through other sources, such as the NI Neighbourhood Information Service. The TSNi databases are complex and there is a responsibility on statisticians to ensure data is handled appropriately and within the boundaries of relevant legislation. Therefore, while the intention is to move towards providing more accessible data, the complexity means this will not be one of the more immediate changes to current practice. However, it is a service that will be under review and could develop in future years.

2020 update

No further developments in this category at this point.

e. Cross-tabulations / data breakdowns

In line with the intentions expressed in the draft PfG, there is increased interest in understanding the sections within our communities alongside the broader NI picture. During the key user interviews, there were needs expressed in relation to geographical and demographic information to help focus in on specific issues that may exist. The consultation also received support for the proposal for more cross-tabulations (65% agreed, 3% disagreed). There are a number of existing tables that do present information of this kind and others are produced for specific requests. Any inclusion of additional content will increase report production timelines so a balance must be struck to achieve timely release while meeting customer need.

2020 update

All the existing sub-population cross-tabulations have been retained in the redesign of the 2016-2018 In-depth Report. No new cross-tabulations were added but some analyses by gender and age group (16-29, 30-59, 60+) were broken down into smaller age groups (16-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+) for new charts.

Sub-population data have been produced showing demographic and geographic breakdowns of Indicator 25 (% of all journeys by walking, cycling and public transport).

f. Comparisons to other UK travel surveys

This is an issue which arose in the key user interviews and, when included in the consultation, received strong support but there were also a number who were opposed (73% agreed, 13% disagreed). TSNI producers will consider the merit of any such inclusion, in particular, the comparability of these data, the value of including such data, the appropriateness of highlighting any such comparisons and the impact it may have on production timescales. However, this proposal is not seen as a priority in the context of other potential improvements highlighted above. It should be noted, to assist users with finding similar UK travel data, links to these data sources have been included in TSNI In-depth Reports since 2015-2017.

2020 update

No further developments in this category at this point.

g. Removal of content from TSNI reports

As part of the consultation, there were two sections within the current TSNI Headline and In-depth Reports that were put forward for removal. These sections were:

- Method of travel to school from the Headline Report; and
- Car ownership from the In-depth Report.

Information on these topics is already produced, for single years, through questions placed on the Continuous Household Survey ([travel to school](#) and [car ownership](#)) and the Young Persons Behaviour and Attitudes Survey ([travel to school](#)). There is potential for resource saving through reducing duplication of work already presented through other sources. For both sections, the majority of respondents reported that removal would not have a negative impact (81% for travel to school and 82% for car ownership) and negative impacts appeared to be addressed by the provision of links to the alternative sources. This will be considered by TSNI producers during the development of future publications.

2020 update

The car ownership table was retained in the “Driving, Driver and Passenger trips” section of the redesigned 2016-2018 In-depth Report. ASRB decided to retain this table as it fits in well to the new section. In addition, it is anticipated that, in the future, this analysis will be less time consuming with the addition of a new question on number of cars/vans to the 2020 household questionnaire (available in 2020-2022 data).

The 2017-2019 Headline Report is scheduled for publication in Winter 2020 and a decision will be made at that time on the removal of the travel to school section.

Note that the “Removal of content from TSNi reports” section will be renamed in future reports to include the “Addition of content to TSNi reports”. This is to reflect that new questions are added to the survey and, after three years of data have been collected, where possible and appropriate these data will be published in the In-depth Report.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

16. ASRB are committed to continuous improvement and the comments given as part of these consultations provide valuable feedback for assessing the value of the TSNi and for future planning. Each of the potential developments identified will be considered; however, as stated previously, it is unlikely that all requests can be met immediately or within available resources.
17. “List of User Requirements – Completed Actions” (Table 1.1, page 10) sets out a summary of the work that has been completed to meet user requirements since the publication of the 2019 statement of user needs. This work has been highlighted in detail in the “Potential Developments and 2020 Updates” section (pages 6-9).
18. “List of User Requirements – Planned Actions” (Table 1.2, page 12) sets out the work planned for the forthcoming year to meet user requirements. The table sets out: the type of amendment/data/analysis requested; whether or not it can be accommodated; how best to address it; and an anticipated timeframe.
19. The statement of user needs will be reviewed prior to the development of each TSNi In-depth Report - it is a living document and will be updated annually with details of progress made against each potential development (Table 1.1 and “Potential Developments” section) and the work that is planned for the upcoming year (Table 1.2).
20. It is essential that users are given the opportunity to continue to provide feedback on our publication and services on an ongoing basis and to make us aware of any further data needs as they arise. Resulting from this, a User Engagement Strategy has been developed and published on [ASRB website](#).

TABLE 1.1: LIST OF USER REQUIREMENTS – COMPLETED ACTIONS

The table below details the work undertaken over the past year to meet user requirements:

User Requirement	ASRB Response & Actions	Timescales	2020 Update¹
Themed reports / sections	The publication of the TSNI factsheets has been a step in the direction of themed outputs. ASRB will reconsider the current layout and presentation of the In-depth Report due in early 2020 to move more in line with the needs expressed in recent consultations and will consider best practice elsewhere.	Include development in 2016-2018 In-depth Report due in early 2020	New themed sections included in the redesign of the In-depth Report 2016-2018 published in February 2020. The sections include: 'All travel modes', 'Walking', 'Cycling', 'Public transport', 'Driving, driver and passenger trips', 'Journey purpose', 'Travelling to work', 'Shopping' and 'Key tables by urban-rural'. Each section can be read as a standalone report on that topic.
More time series / trend data	Identify key indicator tables which could be presented with a longer time series than currently included in reports and present such time series in chart form alongside continued provision of data tables.	Develop time series presentation of data in publication, including selected key variables in 2016-2018 In-depth Report due in early 2020 and additional content development in following years	New charts of trends over the last 10 years for each key indicator included in the redesign of the In-depth Report 2016-2018 published in February 2020 (average number of journeys and average distance travelled for key travel modes and journey purposes, average time spent travelling for key modes). These were added to the start of most sections and included trend arrows (up, down, no change) comparing the latest data with 10 years ago.
Graphical content	The inclusion of infographics within reports and publication of the TSNI factsheets has been a step in the direction of more graphical outputs. ASRB will reconsider the current layout and presentation of the In-depth Report due in early 2020 to move more in line with the needs expressed in recent consultations and will consider best practice elsewhere.	Include development in 2016-2018 In-depth Report due in early 2020	A wide range of new charts and some new infographics were included in the In-depth Report 2016-2018 published in February 2020. These included trend arrows in charts and next to relevant commentary and a refresh of existing tables and charts.

User Requirement	ASRB Response & Actions	Timescales	2020 Update ¹
Accessibility	Consider TSNI databases and data publication requirements with a view to moving to more accessible data provision through relevant platforms.	Keep under review	No further developments at this point
Cross-tabulations / data breakdowns	Identify key indicator tables which could be split out at sub-NI level with a view to including such breakdowns in future statistical reports.	Keep under review with the potential for some inclusion in 2016-2018 In-depth Report and with further development in future reports	All existing sub-population cross-tabulations were retained in the redesigned In-depth Report 2016-2018 published in February 2020. No new cross-tabulations were added but some analyses by gender and age group were broken down into smaller age groups for new charts.
Comparisons to other UK travel surveys	Consider practical value, robustness and suitability of providing such comparisons with available data from other jurisdictions and if value warrants the inclusion of such content.	Keep under review with the potential for some inclusion in 2016-2018 report and with further development in future reports	No further developments at this point
Removal of content from TSNI reports	Consider removal from the headline report of the section on method of travel to school, and removal from the in-depth report of the car ownership section and provision of links to Continuous Household Survey (travel to school and car ownership) and the Young Persons Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (travel to school).	Keep under review with the potential for change in 2016-2018 In-depth Report and with further development in future reports	Car ownership table retained in new "Driving, Driver and Passenger trips" section of the redesigned In-depth Report 2016-2018 published in February 2020.

¹ For details, see relevant sub-section in "Potential Developments and 2020 Updates" section on pages 6-9.

TABLE 1.2: LIST OF USER REQUIREMENTS – PLANNED ACTIONS

ASRB have developed a list of user requirements and actions that we will take forward in the given timescales, as detailed in the table below. The 2021 Statement of User Needs will give an update of this table detailing the work undertaken to meet these requirements.

User Requirement	ASRB Response & Actions	Timescales
Themed reports / sections	The publication of the TSNI factsheets has been a step in the direction of themed outputs. The redesign of the In-depth Report included the reorganisation of data into new themed sections. ASRB will consider making the themed sections of the In-depth Report available as separate reports on the DfI website for ease of access. ASRB will consider if the existing sections in the Headline Report can be more defined. ASRB will consider the production of further themed factsheets, for example, a new factsheet on car travel.	Development and publication of new themed factsheet on car travel by Autumn 2020. Include development in 2017-2019 Headline Report due in Winter 2020. Consider making themed sections available as separate reports for 2017-2019 In-depth Report due in Spring 2021.
More time series / trend data	The redesign of the In-depth Report included the addition of key indicator trend charts for almost every section. ASRB will consider the addition of further trend charts to the In-depth Report e.g. for the Urban-Rural section – the only section which doesn't have trend charts currently. We will consider the addition of average number of journeys and average distance travelled trend charts to the Headline Report	Consider development for 2017-2019 Headline Report due in Winter 2020. Consider further trend charts for the 2017-2019 In-depth Report due in Spring 2021.
Graphical content	The inclusion of infographics within reports and the publication of the TSNI factsheets has been a step in the direction of more graphical outputs. This has been further enhanced by the recent redesign of the In-depth Report. In the new style Headline Report, ASRB will be presenting information in charts that were previously in tables. We will also consider if the addition of further infographics will enhance the new style Headline Report and In-depth Report.	Include developments in 2017-2019 Headline Report due in Winter 2020. Consider further infographics for the 2017-2019 In-depth Report due in Spring 2021.

User Requirement	ASRB Response & Actions	Timescales
Accessibility	Consider TSNI databases and data publication requirements with a view to moving to more accessible data provision through relevant platforms.	Keep under review
Cross-tabulations / data breakdowns	Identify key indicator tables which could be split out at sub-NI level with a view to including such breakdowns in future statistical reports. Consider providing further relevant sub-population cross-tabulations e.g. by age and gender, where sample size is large enough, for the In-depth Report.	Keep under review with the potential for some inclusion in 2017-2019 In-depth Report due in Spring 2021 and with further development in future reports
Comparisons to other UK travel surveys	Consider practical value, robustness and suitability of providing such comparisons with available data from other jurisdictions and if value warrants the inclusion of such content.	Keep under review and consider the potential for inclusion in future reports
Removal of content from TSNI reports/ Addition of content to TSNI reports	Consider removal from the headline report of the section on method of travel to school and provision of links to Continuous Household Survey (travel to school) and the Young Persons Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (travel to school). Consider addition of analysis on new questions, where possible and appropriate, when 3 years of data become available.	Keep under review with the potential for change in 2017-2019 Headline Report due in Winter 2020 and in 2017-2019 In-depth Report due in Spring 2021 and with further development in future reports