

# DAERA Rural Data Hub User Guide



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

## About This Guide

This guide explains how to use the DAERA Rural Data Hub to explore and compare statistics for rural, urban and mixed areas across Northern Ireland.

It is designed for users with little or no technical experience and will help you to:

- Understand what the Rural Data Hub does
- Select and compare areas
- Create local area profiles
- View and interpret results
- Export data and charts for reporting.

The Rural Data Hub is publicly available and free to use.

## Accessibility

Screenshots throughout this guide are provided to support navigation of the Rural Data Hub.

Alternative text is included for all images to support users of screen readers and other assistive technologies.

## What is the Rural Data Hub?

The DAERA Rural Data Hub is an online tool that allows you to explore and compare population statistics for rural, urban and mixed areas across Northern Ireland.

You can use the Hub to:

- Compare rural, urban and mixed populations
- Create profiles for individual areas or groups of areas
- Examine local demographic, educational, economic and health characteristics
- Compare selected areas with Northern Ireland averages
- Download data and visualisations for reports and presentations.

### Data Coverage and Sources

Most statistics within the Rural Data Hub are derived from the 2021 NI Census of Population.

Population estimates post-2021 are derived from the latest NISRA Mid-Year Population Estimates (MYE).

Data are presented at small-area geographic levels to support detailed local analysis.

Where additional datasets are incorporated in future releases, details will be provided in the Hub's Further Information section.

### Important Information Before You Start

The Rural Data Hub contains **population-level statistics**.

Results show the number of **people** in each category rather than the number of households.

The Hub does not currently provide household-level statistics.

In some cases, your outputs may include categories such as **"No code required"**. These do not represent missing data and usually indicate that a question is not applicable to a particular group of people.

Before using outputs in reports or publications, remember to:

- Review the metadata and supporting information
- Ensure findings are interpreted correctly
- Cite the original source dataset (e.g. '2021 NI Census of Population').

Links to source datasets and metadata are available in the Hub's **Further Information** section.

## Geography Levels Available in the Hub

The Rural Data Hub allows you to select areas at three geographic levels.

**Table 1: Geographies**

| Geography                       | Description                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Data Zone (DZ)                  | Smallest geography available in the Hub    |
| Super Data Zone (SDZ)           | Group of neighbouring Data Zones           |
| Local Government District (LGD) | One of Northern Ireland's 11 council areas |

A more detailed explanation of these geographies is provided in **Appendix A**.

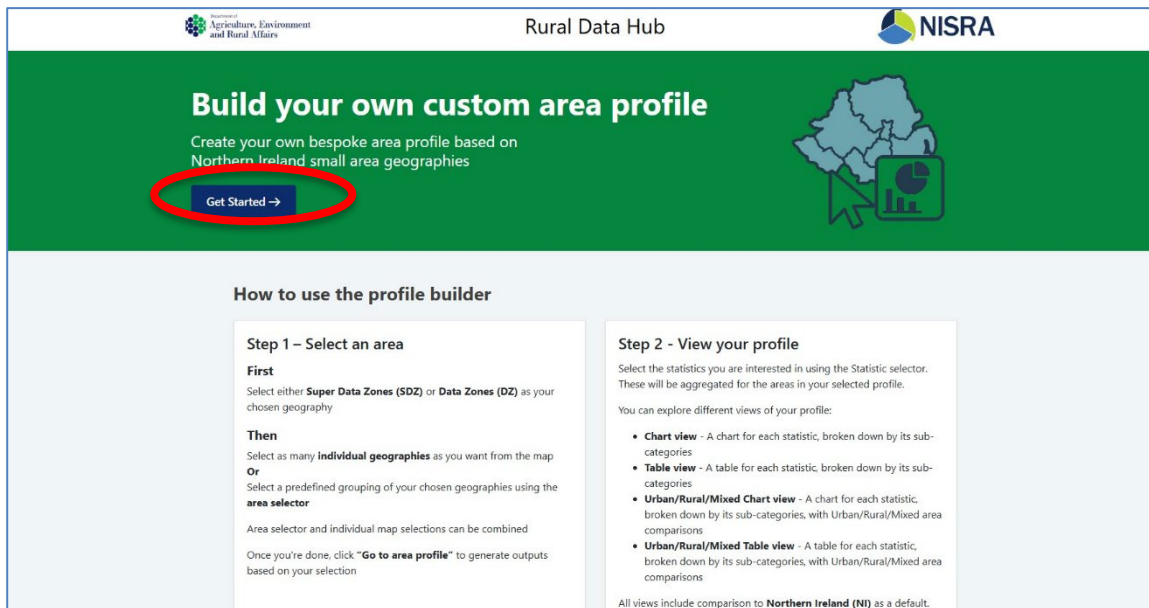
## Getting Started

When you open the Rural Data Hub, you will arrive at the Home Page.

The Home Page provides introductory information and links to datasets.

Select **Get Started** to begin creating an Area Profile.

**Figure 1: Rural Data Hub Home Page**



## Step 1: Select an Area

Choose the geographic area you would like to analyse.

You can select from:

- Data Zones (DZ)
- Super Data Zones (SDZ)
- Local Government Districts (LGD)

You can:

- Select a single area
- Select multiple areas
- Create a customised profile by grouping areas together.

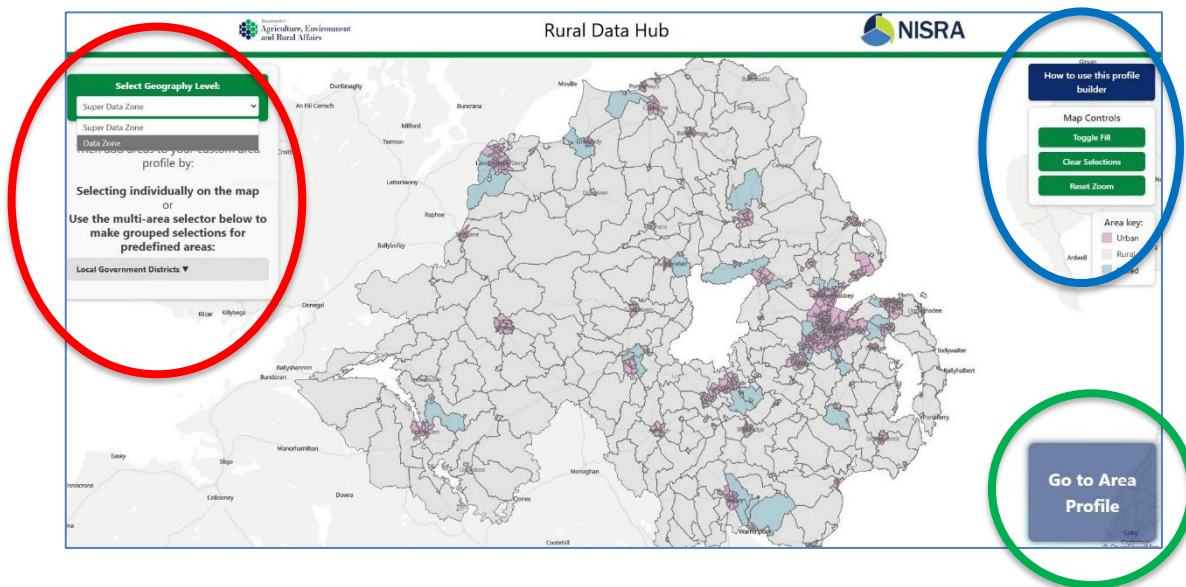
To identify an area on the map, move your cursor over it to display its name.

If you select an area by mistake, select it again to remove it.

Use the controls on the right-hand side of the screen to clear or update your selections.

When you are ready to continue, select **Go to Area Profile**.

**Figure 2: Area selection**



## Step 2: Choose Statistics

After selecting an area, choose the statistics you want to view.

A full breakdown of the statistics available is provided in **Appendix B**.

Statistics are organised into four themes:

- Demography
- Education
- Economy
- Health

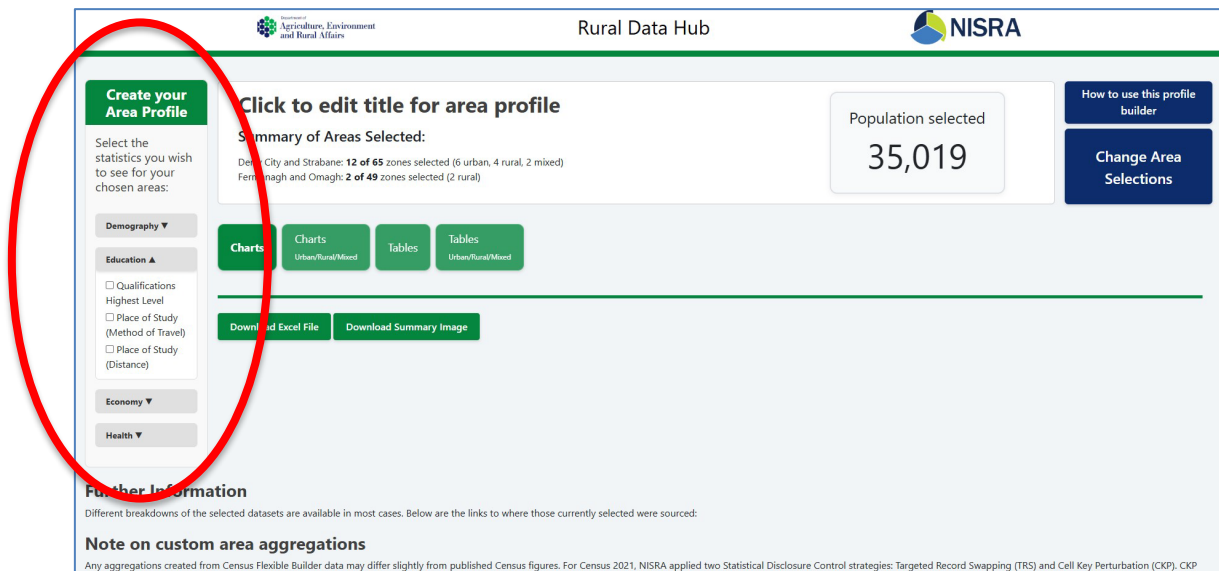
You can select one or more statistics using the checkboxes in the left-hand panel.

To remove a statistic, simply clear the checkbox.

**Important Reminder:** All statistics currently available in the Rural Data Hub are population-level statistics - they describe people rather than households.

If you require household-level analysis, this is available through [NISRA's Census 2021 Flexible Table Builder](#).

**Figure 3: Selecting Statistics**



The screenshot shows the Rural Data Hub interface. At the top, there are logos for 'Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' and 'NISRA'. The main heading is 'Rural Data Hub'. Below this, there's a section titled 'Click to edit title for area profile'. To the left, a sidebar contains a 'Create your Area Profile' button and a list of statistics to select. A red circle highlights this sidebar. The main content area shows a 'Summary of Areas Selected' with details about selected zones and a 'Population selected' of 35,019. There are buttons for 'Charts', 'Tables', 'Download Excel File', and 'Download Summary Image'. On the right, there are buttons for 'How to use this profile builder' and 'Change Area Selections'.

### Step 3: View Your Area Profile

Once you have selected your area and chosen the statistics you want to view, the Rural Data Hub generates an Area Profile.

The Area Profile brings together key information about your selected area, including population totals, summary information, charts and tables for the statistics selected.

Your profile displays:

- Total population
- Selected geography summary
- Charts
- Tables

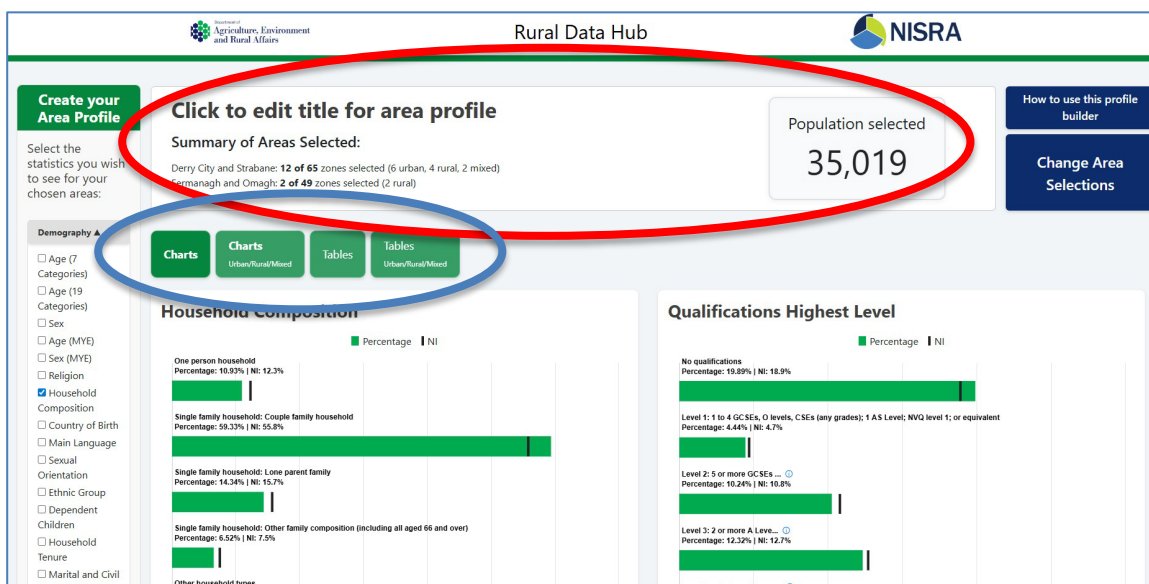
You can view your information as:

- Charts
- Urban/Rural/Mixed Charts
- Tables
- Urban/Rural/Mixed Tables

Use the buttons at the top of the page to switch between these views.

You can also rename your profile by selecting the title and entering a preferred name (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Editing the Area Profile Title**



### Step 4: Download Your Results

You can download your results for further analysis or reporting.

Available options include:

- Select **Download Excel File** to export data to Microsoft Excel.
- Select **Download Image** to save a summary image for reports, presentations or publications.

Downloaded files will reflect the statistics currently displayed in your Area Profile.

## Using Data from the Rural Data Hub

The Rural Data Hub can support:

- Policy development
- Impact assessments
- Local area profiling
- Research and analytical reporting

The **Further Information** section contains links to:

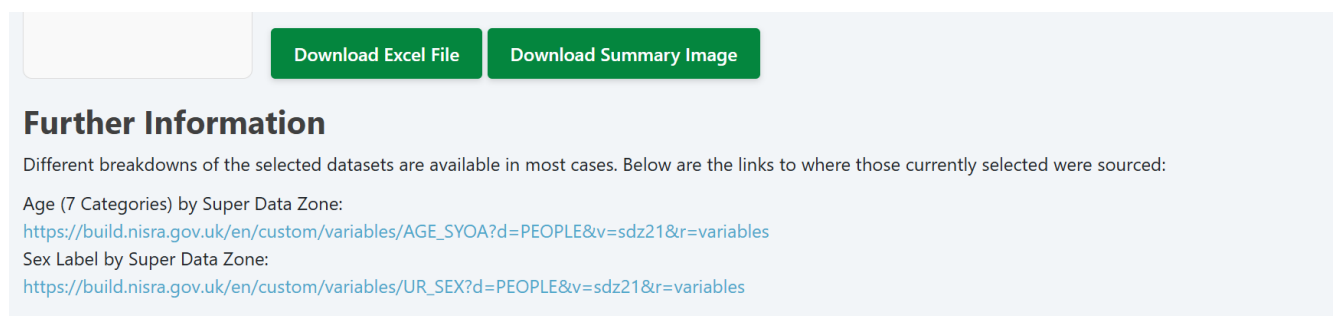
- Source datasets
- Metadata
- Supporting documentation

### Remember to:

Always review accompanying guidance before drawing conclusions from the data.

When citing information, reference the original source dataset rather than the Rural Data Hub itself. An example of dataset source information is provided in Figure 5 below.

**Figure 5: Accessing Source Information**



## Understanding Urban, Rural and Mixed Areas

Each Data Zone is classified as urban, mixed or rural based on where residents live.

**Urban** - At least 90% of residents live within an urban settlement of 5,000 people or more.

Shown in **pink** (Figure 6).

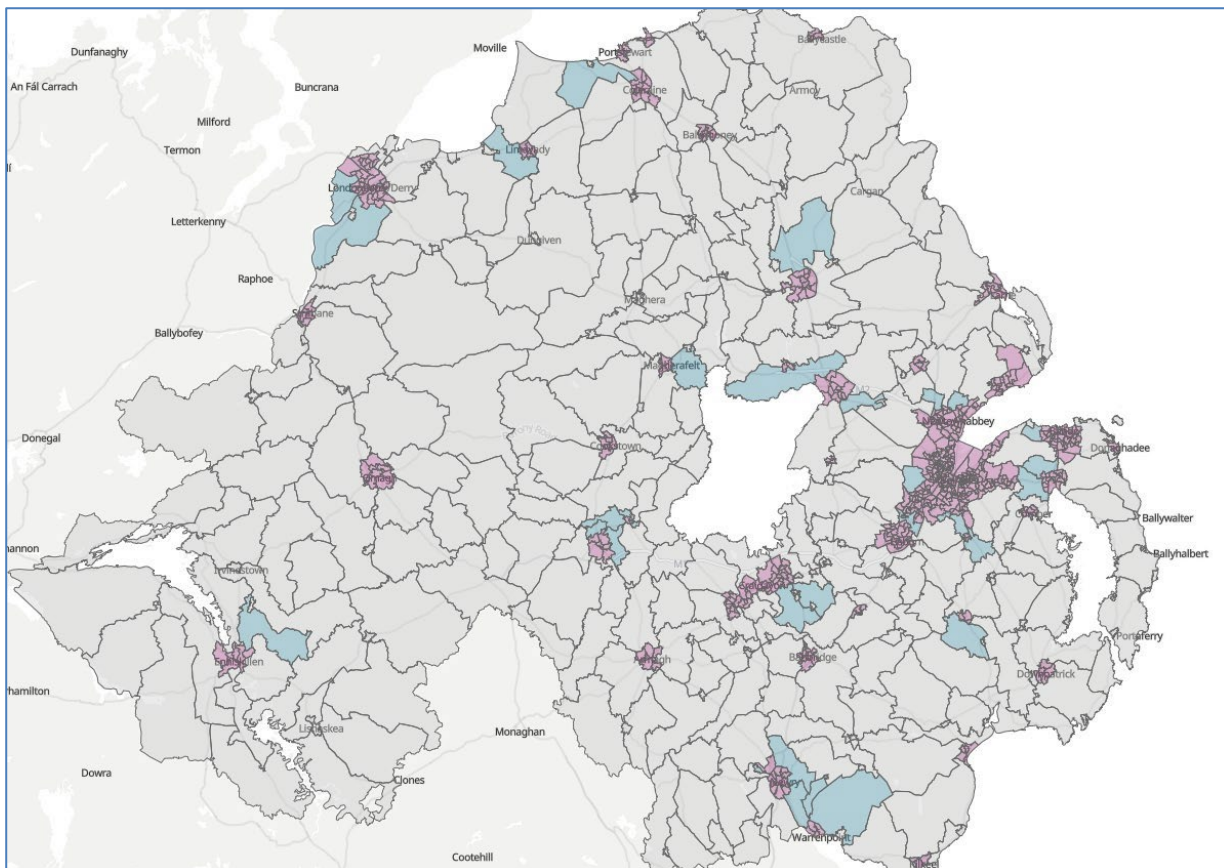
**Mixed** - Between 10% and 90% of residents live within an urban settlement.

Shown in **blue**.

**Rural** - Less than 10% of residents live within an urban settlement.

Shown in **grey**.

### Figure 6: Urban, Mixed and Rural Classifications



### Understanding Data Limitations

#### Example 1: Marital and Civil Partnership Status

When viewing Northern Ireland as a whole, approximately 20% of the population appears in the category "**No code required**".

This reflects people aged under 16 for whom marital and civil partnership status is not applicable.

#### Example 2: Dependent Children

The statistic **Dependent Children** records the number of people living in households with dependent children.

It does not show the number of households with dependent children.

The "**No code required**" category may include people living in communal establishments such as nursing homes where the concept of dependent children does not apply.

### Appendix A: Understanding Census Geographies

The 2021 Census introduced new statistical geographies for Northern Ireland, replacing Output Areas and Super Output Areas with Data Zones and Super Data Zones.

#### Geography Hierarchy

**Data Zone → Super Data Zone → District Electoral Area → Local Government District**

**Note:** District Electoral Areas (DEAs) form part of the official geography hierarchy but cannot currently be selected within the Rural Data Hub.

#### Data Zones (DZ)

- smallest geography available in the Hub
- 3,780 Data Zones across Northern Ireland

#### Super Data Zones (SDZ)

- intermediate geography level
- 850 Super Data Zones across Northern Ireland
- created from groups of Data Zones

#### Local Government Districts (LGD)

- Northern Ireland's 11 Council areas
- highest geography level available within the Hub

Further information:

[Census 2021 Output Geography Information Papers](#)

## Appendix B: Available Statistics

You can create bespoke area profiles and explore demographic, economic, education and health data. Table 2 below provides a list of all currently available statistics in the Rural Data Hub.

**Table 2: Available Statistics**

| Demography                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Education                                                                                                                                                          | Economy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Health                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age (7 categories)</li> <li>• Age (19 categories)</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Age (Mid-Year Estimates)</li> <li>• Sex (Mid-Year Estimates)</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Household Composition</li> <li>• Country of Birth</li> <li>• Main Language</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation</li> <li>• Ethnic Group</li> <li>• Dependent Children</li> <li>• Household Tenure</li> <li>• Marital and Civil Partnership Status</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualifications Highest Level</li> <li>• Place of Study (Method of Travel)</li> <li>• Place of Study (Distance)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Activity</li> <li>• Household Car or Van Availability</li> <li>• Central Heating</li> <li>• Place of Work (Distance)</li> <li>• Place of Work (Method of Travel)</li> <li>• Current Occupation</li> <li>• Renewable Energy Systems</li> <li>• Benefits Recipients</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional or Mental Health Condition</li> <li>• Health Problem or Disability (Long-Term)</li> <li>• Health in General</li> <li>• Provision of Unpaid Care</li> </ul> |

For guidance, feedback or requests for additional statistics, please contact:

DAERA Rural Evidence and Impact Branch  
Clare House  
307 Airport Road, West  
Belfast  
BT3 9ED

Email: [ruralpolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk)

Email: [branch.stats@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:branch.stats@daera-ni.gov.uk)

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®**  
We invest in people Standard