



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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NUTS III Regions

1 Introduction

This paper provides a brief discussion of NUTS III regions and how they are identified.

2 NUTS III Regions

The NUTS Classification refers to “Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics”. As stated by Eurostat it is a hierarchical system for dividing up the economic territory of the EU for the purpose of:

- The collection, development and harmonisation of European regional statistics;
- Socio-economic analyses of the regions;
 - NUTS I: major socio-economic regions;
 - NUTS II: basic regions for the application of regional policies;
 - NUTS III: small regions for specific diagnoses.
- Framing of EU regional policies.

There are 98 regions listed as NUTS I, 276 regions at NUTS II and 1,342 at NUTS III level.

The NUTS regulation defines maximum and minimum population thresholds for the size of the NUTS regions. This can be seen in Table 1 below.¹

Table 1: Minimum and maximum population thresholds for NUTS regions

Level	Minimum	Maximum
NUTS I	3 million	7 million
NUTS II	800,000	3 million
NUTS III	150,000	800,000

Eurostat regularly reviews NUTS regions and in its most recent publication it states that different criteria can be used to subdivide national territories into regions. These are broken down into two types of criteria:²

- **Normative regions** are the expression of political will; their limits are fixed according to the tasks allocated to the territorial communities, according to the sizes of population necessary to carry out these tasks efficiently and economically, and according to historical, cultural and other factors; and
- **Analytical (or functional) regions** are defined according to analytical requirements; they group together zones using geographical criteria (e.g. altitude or type of soil) or using socio-economic criteria (e.g. homogeneity, complementarities, or polarity of regional economies).

Eurostat goes on to state that:

For practical reasons to do with data availability and the implementation of regional policies, NUTS is based primarily on the institutional divisions currently in force in the Member States (normative criteria).

In terms of the actual breakdown into NUTS regions the classification is based on the administrative divisions applied in the Member States that generally comprise two main regional levels. The additional third level is created by aggregating administrative units.

For the UK, this corresponds to the following divisions:

- **NUTS I:** Government Office Regions; Country (12 in total);
- **NUTS II:** Counties (some grouped); Inner and Outer London; Groups of unitary authorities (40 in total); and
- **NUTS III:** Upper tier authorities or groups of lower tier authorities (unitary authorities or districts) (173 in total).

¹ Eurostat, NUTS –Principles and Characteristics, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/principles-and-characteristics>

² Eurostat, 2011, Regions in the European Union, Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics NUTS 2010/EU-27, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/5916917/KS-RA-11-011-EN.PDF/2b08d38c-7cf0-4157-bbd1-1909bebab6a6?version=1.0>

Examination of the ONS guidance on NUTS regions finds the following:³

Table 2: Relationship of NUTS Areas to UK Administrative Geographies

NUTS Level	1	2	3
England	Government Office Regions (GORs)*	Counties/Groups of counties	Counties/Groups of unitary authorities
Scotland	Scotland	Combinations of council areas, LECs and parts thereof	Combinations of council areas, LECs and parts thereof
Wales	Wales	Groups of unitary authorities	Groups of unitary authorities
Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	Groups of district council areas

This can be seen in the maps below. Figure 1 highlights the NUTS III regions in Northern Ireland. Figure 2 shows the council areas both prior to and after reform.

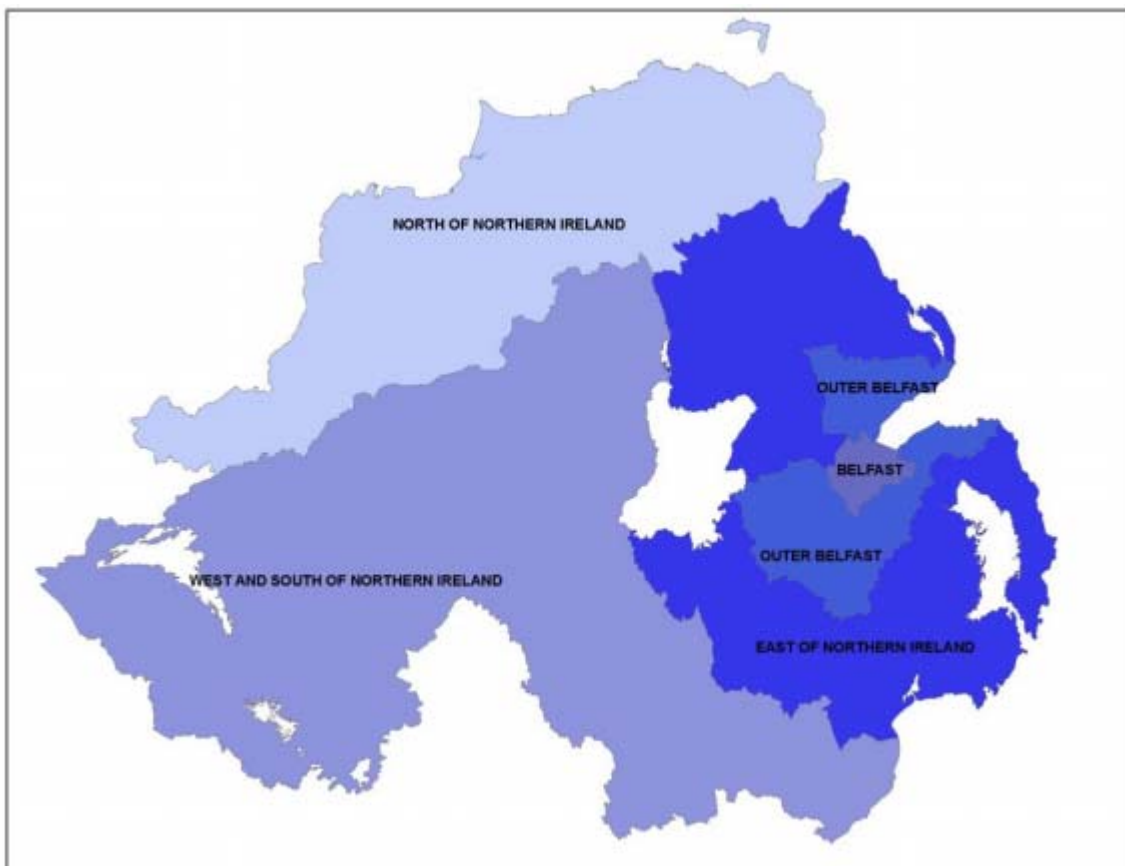


Figure 1: Northern Ireland NUTS III regions

³ ONS, Relationship of NUTS Areas to UK Administrative Geographies, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/beginner-s-guide/eurostat/relationship-of-nuts-to-uk-administrative-geographies.html>

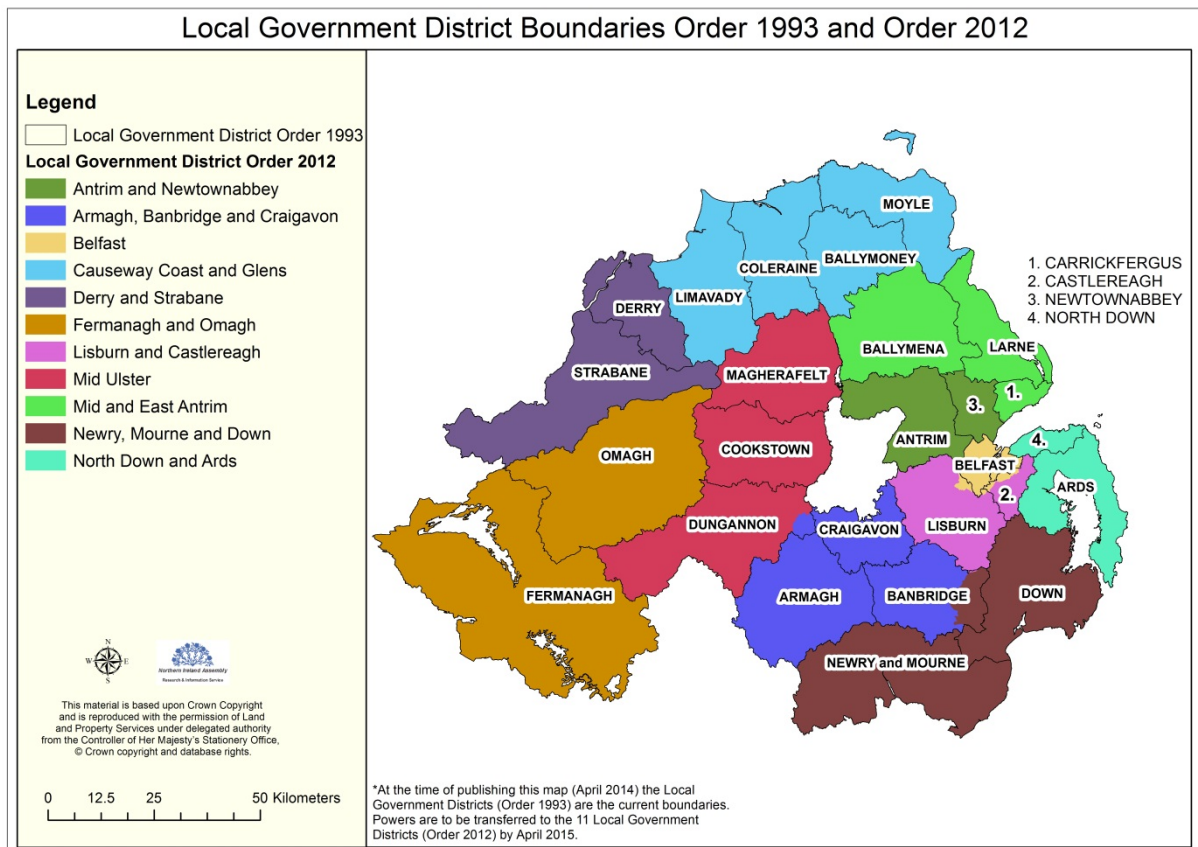


Figure 2: Local Government District Boundaries, 1993 and 2012

As can be seen above, the NUTS III regions match the 1993 local government boundaries:

- North of Northern Ireland – Strabane, Derry, Limavady, Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle;
- East of Northern Ireland – Antrim, Ballymena, Larne, Craigavon, Banbridge, Down and Ards;
- Outer Belfast – Lisburn, Castlereagh, North Down, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus;
- Belfast – Belfast; and
- West and South of Northern Ireland – Newry and Mourne, Armagh, Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh and Fermanagh.