

Liquor Licences in Northern Ireland – Background Quality Report (BQR)

Background

Analytic Division (AD) of the Department for Communities produces the publication *Liquor Licences in Northern Ireland*. The publication is produced on an annual basis and provides information on the number of liquor licences held by public houses and off-licences.

The publication is available to the general public. It is produced as a response to a legislative requirement (see Annex 1) for the Department to publish annually the number of liquor licences held by public houses, disaggregated by District Electoral Area (DEA), the number of liquor licences held by off-licences, and any observed trends in relation to the data.

Data Quality

Relevance

The publication is of relevance to those in government who are responsible for monitoring the provision of liquor licences and the wider public.

Accessibility and clarity

Publications are published on the Department's website. The publication is produced in html format and accompanying tables are produced in Excel and ODS. As these are Official Statistics publications, an assessment of administrative data included in the publication has been carried out.

Accuracy

The publication is produced using administrative data supplied by Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS). AD carries out the following quality checks on the data:

- Cross-checking data across tables provided (where applicable);
- Re-calculating totals presented in tables (where applicable);
- Comparisons with data from previous year.

It is anticipated that as more data becomes available, further comparisons with data received in previous years will be possible and incorporated into the quality check process.

Figures in the publication are collated by the statistician producing the report and quality assured by the Deputy Principal and G7 Statisticians responsible for the work area.

Timeliness

Publications are produced on an annual basis, normally with a data lag of three months. For the 2025 report, publication was delayed allowing for additional quality assurance of source data, with the data lag increasing to seven months.

Coherence and comparability

NICTS has defined procedures in place for producing the data included in the publication. This ensures that data are comparable over time. Data returns are produced by NICTS staff using a standard reporting template. This template provides information on the number of liquor licences held by off-licences as per records held by District Courts. Locational data in respect of public houses is hosted on a central database. An extract of this database is sent to the Department for the purposes of the publication.

Further information

For further information relating to the quality of the *Liquor Licences in Northern Ireland* publication please contact: analyticsdivision@communities-ni.gov.uk.

Document last reviewed: 2 July 2026

Annex 1: Extract from Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 states that the Department for Communities must, as soon as reasonably practicable, publish a statement of each of the following at 31 December in the previous year:

- (a) the number of licences in force for premises of a kind mentioned in Article 5(1)(a) of the Licensing Order;
- (b) the number of licences in force for premises of a kind mentioned in Article 5(1)(b) of the Licensing Order;
- (c) the number of premises of a kind mentioned in Article 5(1)(a) of the Licensing Order in each district electoral area or, if the Department considers that it is feasible to reckon the number of such premises by reference to smaller areas, in each of those areas;
- (d) the trends which may be observed from the numbers referred to in paragraphs (a) to (c).

Premises under article 5(1)(a) are premises in which the business carried on under the licence is the business of selling intoxicating liquor by retail for consumption either in or off the premises i.e. public houses.

Premises under article 5(1)(b) are premises in which the business carried on under the licence is the business of selling intoxicating liquor by retail for consumption off the premises i.e. off-licences.