

Northern Ireland Gambling Licensing and Industry Data – Background Quality Report (BQR)

21 October 2026

Background

Analytics Division (AD) of the Department for Communities produces the publication *Northern Ireland Gambling Licensing and Industry Data*. The publication was first produced in December 2023 and is updated on an annual basis. It provides information on:

- The number of gaming machines in operation and the number of gaming machine permits;
- The number of amusement arcade permits;
- The number of lottery certificates and society lotteries;
- The number of track betting licences;
- The number of bingo clubs, bookmaking offices and bookmakers' licences;
- The number of registered gambling businesses;
- The number of people employed in the gambling industry;
- The volume of gambling turnover; and
- The volume of betting and gaming duty.

The publication is available to the general public. It is produced in response to a request from Social Policy Unit (SPU) of DfC to publish statistics in relation to gambling. It is anticipated that the data will help support policy development and will be of interest to other key stakeholders, including elected representatives.

Data Quality

Relevance

The publication is of relevance to those in government who are responsible for monitoring the various gambling licences that are operational and the economic impact of gambling, and also to the wider public.

Accessibility and clarity

The publication is released 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. The Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) is available [here](#).

Accuracy

The publication is produced using: administrative data supplied by Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS); administrative data supplied by each of the eleven local councils; Official Statistics publicly available; and additional data provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) on request. Analytics Division 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 years.

As more data has become available, it has been possible to make further comparisons with data in previous years and these checks have been incorporated into the quality assurance process.

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

Timeliness

Data relating to gambling licences and permits is for the calendar year, so the release on 21 October 2026 is ten months from when the data relates to. The report is published on an annual basis and going forward it will be released in the summer where possible. This will allow for the release of other relevant official statistics, so they may be included in the report to provide a wider picture of the industry.

Coherence and comparability

Data from NICTS was initially provided to SPU. Statisticians from AD met with staff in NICTS to discuss the processes in place in each courthouse in relation to the issuing and recording of the various gambling licences that the publication covers. NICTS staff use a paper-based records system to capture and monitor information in relation to gambling licences. As such, each courthouse completed a manual count of the various types of gambling licences that they held as well as the additional pieces of data that were requested. This was provided to SPU in excel form and collated to arrive at an overall Northern Ireland figure. Staff in each courthouse are familiar with the types and numbers of licences issued.

Furthermore, AD statisticians are in contact with NICTS regarding the roll out of an electronic records system which will replace the current paper-based system. It is anticipated that the electronic system should become active across the NICTS throughout 2026 and 2027. Once implemented it will allow for central reporting on gambling licences and will remove the need for manual searches.

Data on amusement permits was provided by the eleven local councils. Statisticians from AD met with representatives from two of the eleven councils to discuss the process in relation to the issue of amusement permits. This process was then summarised and emailed to the other nine councils for their review. Councils were asked to confirm if their processes were broadly similar. There was overall consensus on the issue of amusement permits, the provision of annual visits to said premises, and the use of electronic systems to record data on amusement permits. Council staff are aware of the importance of collecting data in relation to amusement permits and gaming machines. However, data on gaming machines has been incomplete each year, where it has only been available for ten of the eleven councils. Where this was the case the most recent year of complete data available for that council has been used, or where no data was available a total of zero was used. Local councils have reported that inspection officers will be encouraged to record all relevant information, including the number of gaming machines, at each visit to help mitigate incomplete counts. This may result in more accurate data and complete data in future.

Further Information

For further information relating to the quality of the *Northern Ireland Gambling Licensing and Industry Data* publication please contact: analyticsdivision@communities-ni.gov.uk