



Business Services
Organisation

Family Practitioner Services

FAMILY PRACTITIONER SERVICES KEY FACTS STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND ANNUAL STATISTICS 2023 - 2024

Published July 2024



NISRA

Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde



Purpose

This is a supplementary document combining key facts from the previously released 2023/24 publications relating to the four main areas within Family Practitioner Services.

They represent a range of general medical, dental, ophthalmic and pharmaceutical services, and the statistics are based on registration activity and claims submitted from within primary care to the Business Services Organisation (BSO). They do not cover secondary and private care.

Data for each of the four service areas detailed in this publication are available in full using the following link: [Family Practitioner Services](#)

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We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to: Info.BSO@hscni.net

Additional information about these statistics is located at the back of this publication.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the OSR. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the [OSR website](#).

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Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

Key Facts

Introduction

This publication provides key facts in relation to general medical, dental, ophthalmic and pharmaceutical services and statistics in Northern Ireland between April 2023 and March 2024. It is a supplementary document summarising each of the standalone reports previously published in June 2024. These full reports are available to download from the [BSO FPS website](#) and provide detail on the definitions and sources of the information presented in this summary compendium.

This publication is based on payment claims submitted by primary care dentists and opticians, community pharmacists, dispensing doctors and appliance suppliers to Family Practitioner Services (FPS). The information does not include private work or secondary care activity.

General medical information is based on patient records on the National Health Application and Infrastructure Services (NHAIS) system and GP information from the Common Practitioner Model (CPM), but does not contain data on the treatment of patients which is not available to BSO.

This publication has been produced by independent statisticians within the FPS Information Unit. They are on secondment from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Further information about the work of FPS and the manner in which these statistics were produced can be found at the back of this publication.



This is an Accredited Official Statistics publication

Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. Visit [OSR Accredited Official Statistics](#) for further explanation of this terminology.

These official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in May 2022. The reports referred to within this publication were also awarded National Statistics status. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'. All accredited official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. The OSR considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

Key Facts Overview

The complete 2023/24 FPS Statistics reports can be viewed on the [BSO FPS website](#).

General Medical Services



- **There were 312 active GP practices in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2024**
Approximately 11% decrease (or 38 practices) on 2014.
- **There were 1,454 registered GPs (excluding Locums)**
A 23% increase (or 274 GPs) on 2014. In 2024, 60.5% of GPs were female and 39.5% were male, a shift in gender profile from 2014 (45.5% / 54.5%).
- **More than 2.05 million registered patients**
This included 51,860 new patient registrations.
- **BSO processed £347.1m of payments towards the cost of GP Services**
The average payment per registered patient was £169, an increase of £6 per patient on the previous year.

Dental Services



- **There were 364 health service dental practices in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2024**
An increase of 1 practice in comparison to 2023.
- **There were 1,195 registered dentists**
More than 13% of an increase (or 142 dentists) since 2014.
- **Over two-thirds (68%) of the Northern Ireland population are registered with a practising health service dentist**
A reduction of 2 percentage points on the previous year.
- **The gross cost of dental services in 2023/24 was £121.6m**
This included £21.4m in patient contributions.

Ophthalmic Services



- **There were 264 ophthalmic practices carrying out health service eye tests in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2024**
A decrease of six practices from 2023. This equates to approximately 13.9 practices per 100,000 population.
- **There were 686 registered ophthalmic practitioners**
A decrease of 2% (or 14 practitioners) on the previous year.
- **The total number of health service eye tests carried out was 467,376**
Around 79% of these were for patients aged under 16 or over 60.
- **The total cost for ophthalmic services in 2023/24 was £25.3m**
A 7% increase on 2022/23.

Pharmaceutical Services



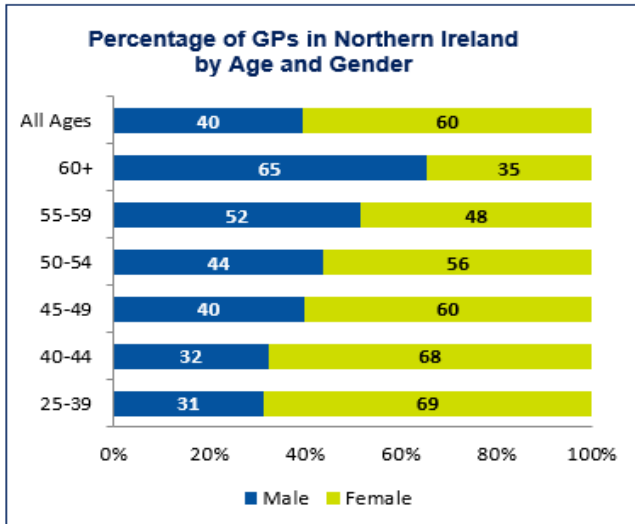
- **There were 511 pharmacies in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2024**
A reduction of 14 pharmacies on 2023 and lowest figure recorded in the last ten years.
- **There were 45.4m items dispensed in 2023/24 (all contractors)**
An increase of 1.7% on 2022/23.
- **BSO processed 25.7m pharmacy forms in 2023/24**
An increase of 2% on the previous year and up 11% since 2017/18.
- **The total ingredient cost for all items dispensed in Northern Ireland before discount was £501.3m**
An increase of almost 3% on 2022/23.

Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

General Medical Services Key Facts

The complete 2023/24 General Medical Services Statistics report can be viewed on the [BSO FPS website](#).

Workforce



Local Government District	GP Practices per 100,000 Registered Patients
Newry, Mourne & Down	17.4
Belfast	16.9
Causeway Coast & Glens	16.4
Mid Ulster	16.2
Fermanagh & Omagh	15.2
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	15.1
Mid & East Antrim	15.0
Ards & North Down	14.4
Derry City & Strabane	12.4
Lisburn & Castlereagh	12.2
Antrim & Newtownabbey	11.7
Northern Ireland	15.2

*Patients assigned to LGDs based on practice location not their home address

Patients

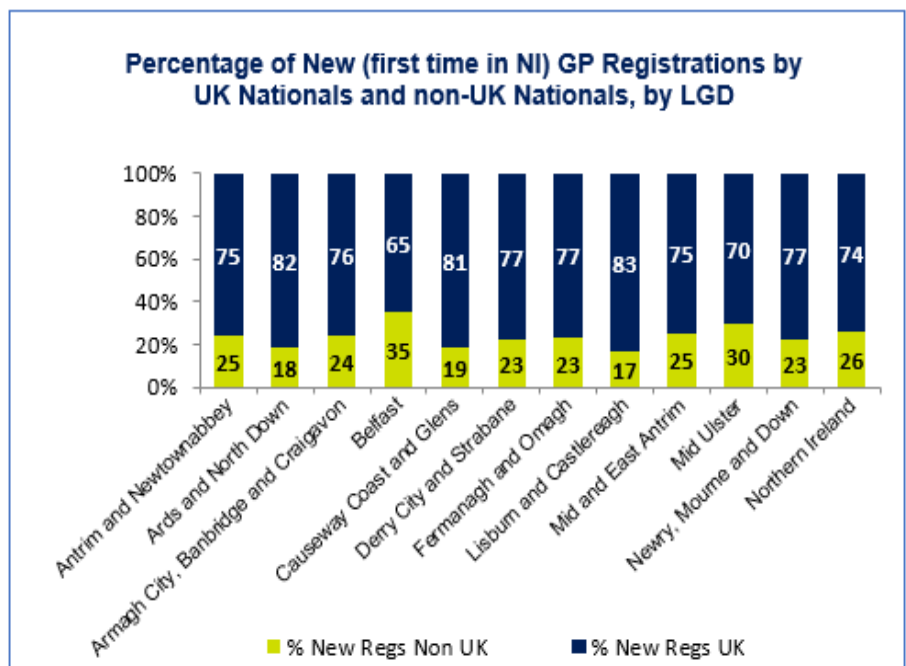
Almost 2,055,000 patients were registered with a GP practice.

There were approximately 52,000 new patient registrations and 41,000 patients transferred between GP practices.

The total number of patients registered at a GP practice in NI has increased by almost 7% since 2014.

Average number of patients per practice was 6,586.

Almost 98% of the population live within 5 miles of a GP practice, 88% live within 3 miles.



Payments

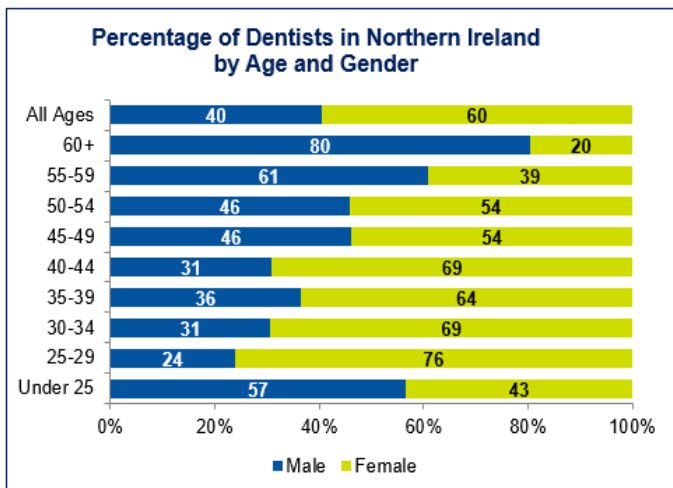
Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust)	BSO payment towards GP services (£m)	Average payment per patient (£)
Northern	80.4	165
Belfast	78.8	176
Southern	70.0	160
Western	60.3	178
South Eastern	57.5	168
Northern Ireland	347.1	169

Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

Dental Services Key Facts

The complete 2023/24 Dental Services Statistics report can be viewed on the [BSO FPS website](#).

Workforce



Local Government District	Dental Practices per 100,000 Resident Patients
Belfast	24.3
Mid and East Antrim	23.0
Newry, Mourne & Down	22.5
Fermanagh & Omagh	21.4
Ards & North Down	17.7
Causeway Coast & Glens	17.6
Derry City & Strabane	17.2
Lisburn & Castlereagh	16.7
Mid Ulster	15.9
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	15.1
Antrim & Newtownabbey	13.7
Northern Ireland	19.1

Patients

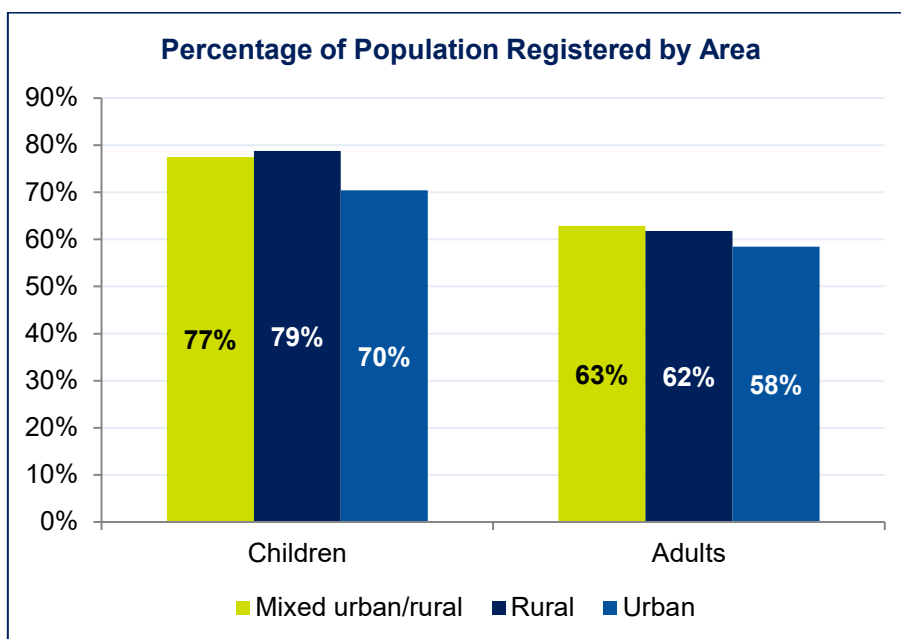
There is an average of 62.7 dentists per 100,000 resident population in Northern Ireland.

71% of females are registered to a dentist compared to 65% of males.

Over 94% of the population live within 5 miles of a dental practice.

Almost 560,000 adults were seen for treatment, a 2% increase on 22/23.

Just under 97,000 children received dental treatment in excess of the basic treatments covered under capitation, similar to 22/23.



Payments

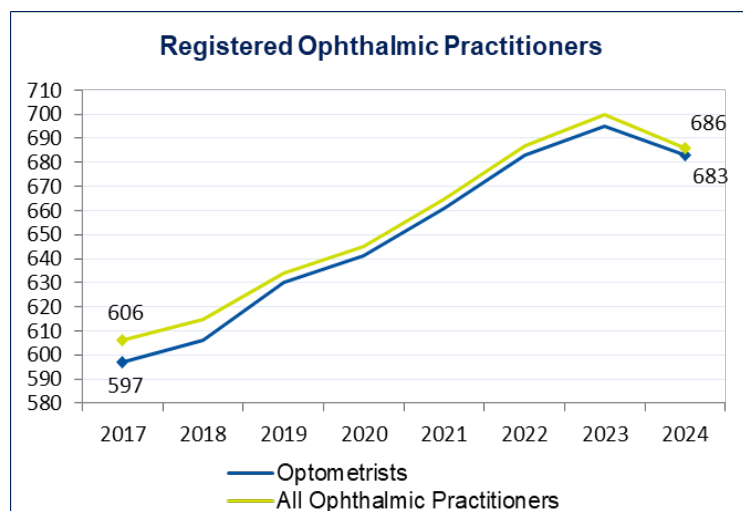
Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust)	HSCNI payment towards dental services (£m)	Average payment per resident (£)
Northern	24.0	50.10
Belfast	23.6	64.90
Southern	19.3	49.20
South Eastern	15.4	41.80
Western	14.7	48.70
Unknown	3.2	-
Northern Ireland	100.2	52.60

Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

Ophthalmic Services Key Facts

The complete 2023/24 Ophthalmic Services Statistics report can be viewed on the [BSO FPS website](#).

Workforce



Local Government District	Ophthalmic Practices per 100,000 Population
Fermanagh and Omagh	19.7
Antrim and Newtownabbey	16.5
Mid Ulster	14.6
Derry City and Strabane	14.6
Causeway Coast and Glens	14.1
Belfast	13.3
Mid and East Antrim	12.9
Ards and North Down	12.8
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	12.8
Newry, Mourne and Down	12.6
Lisburn and Castlereagh	11.4
Northern Ireland	13.9

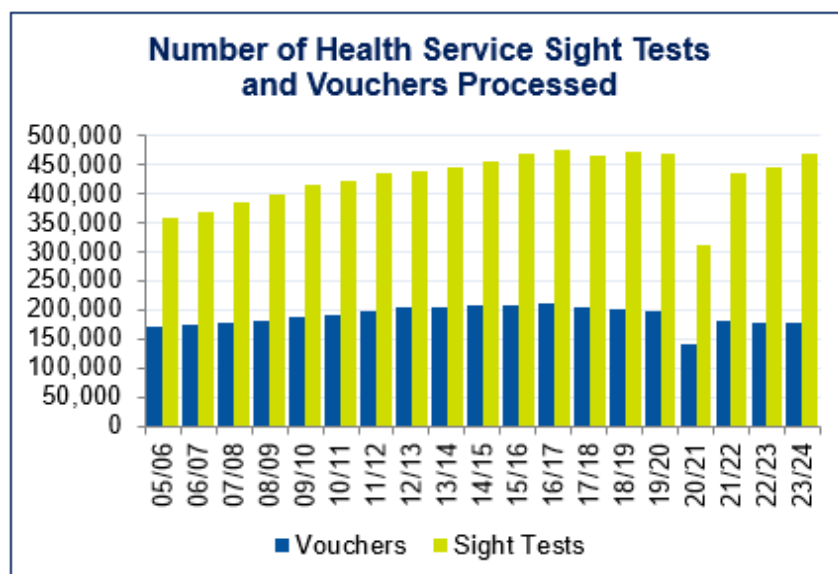
Patients

Just over 94% of the population live within 5 miles of an ophthalmic practice.

The number of optical vouchers paid for in 23/24 was 177,989 a decrease of almost 14% on 13/14.

25% of the female population received a sight test in 23/24 compared to 21% of males.

49,652 unique patient assessments were carried out at NI PEARS, 9% more than in 22/23. 44,512 (or 90%) of these were first assessments.



Payments

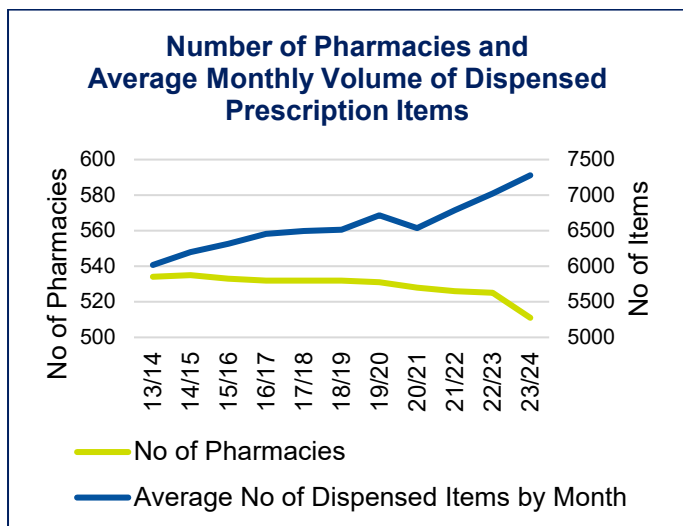
Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust)	Payment towards Ophthalmic services (£m)	Average payment per head of population (£)
Northern	6.2	12.90
Southern	5.0	12.80
South Eastern	4.8	13.00
Belfast	4.6	12.60
Western	4.3	14.20
Unknown	0.5	-
Northern Ireland	25.3	13.30

Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

Pharmaceutical Services – Community Pharmacy Key Facts

The complete 2023/24 Pharmaceutical Services Statistics report can be viewed on the [BSO FPS website](#).

Workforce



Local Government District	Community Pharmacies per 100,000 Population
Fermanagh & Omagh	39.3
Belfast	36.2
Derry City & Strabane	28.5
Newry, Mourne & Down	28.0
Causeway Coast & Glens	26.8
Mid Ulster	24.6
Ards & North Down	23.2
Mid & East Antrim	21.6
Antrim & Newtownabbey	21.3
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	21.0
Lisburn & Castlereagh	17.4
Northern Ireland	26.8

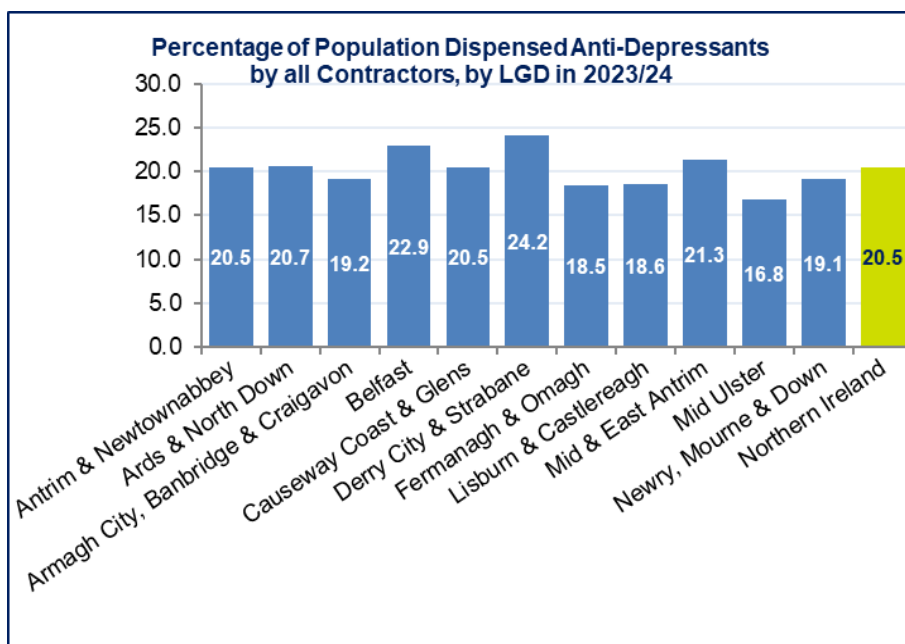
Patients

Almost 117,000 people were dispensed diabetes medication and/or products in 2023/24. An increase of 22.7% since 2019/20.

Over 99% of the population live within 5 miles of a community pharmacy and 72% of all people live within 1 mile of their nearest pharmacy.

Average dispensing volumes were highest in Mid & East Antrim, where pharmacies dispensed an average of 8,899 items per month.

Fermanagh & Omagh had the lowest average at 5,360 items.



Average Items and Ingredient Cost per Pharmacy

Local Commissioning Group (Health Trust)	Average total number of items per pharmacy (000's)	Average total ingredient cost (before discount) per pharmacy (£000's)
Northern	95.1	1,028.9
South Eastern	93.6	1,083.3
Southern	91.1	933.5
Western	84.8	861.0
Belfast	75.3	817.8
Northern Ireland	87.3	937.3

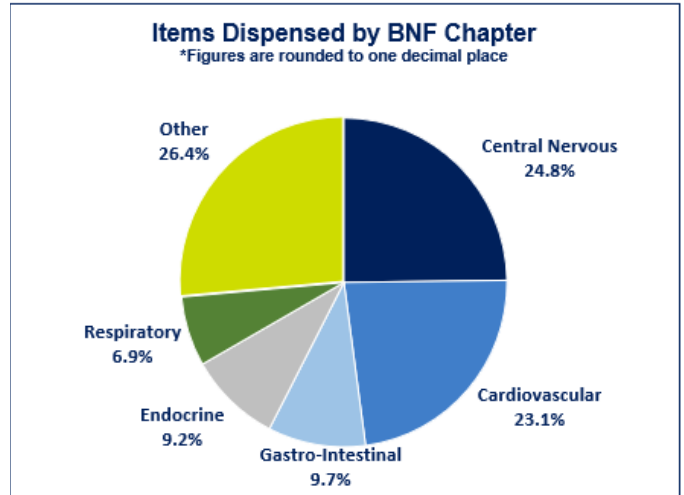
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Pharmaceutical Services – Pharmacy Dispensing Key Facts

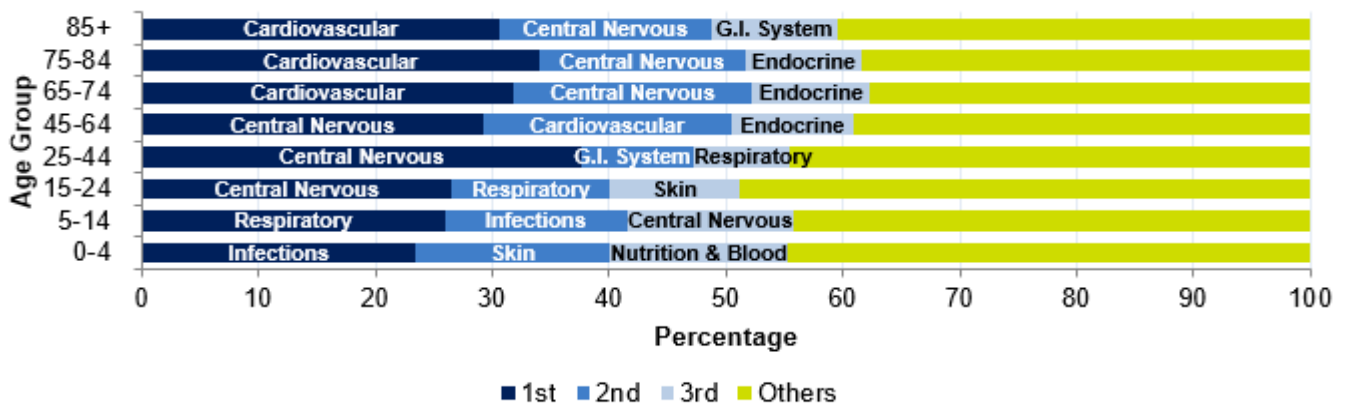
Dispensing

Top 10 most commonly dispensed medications

Medication	Items Dispensed (000s)	Typical Use
Atorvastatin	1,710	Treatment of high blood cholesterol
Omeprazole	1,481	Treatment of excess stomach acid
Co-codamol	1,251	Pain relief
Levothyroxine	1,115	Treatment for thyroid hormone deficiency
Sertraline	1,004	Treatment for depression & anxiety
Bisoprolol	873	Treatment for hypertension
Salbutamol	849	Treatment for respiratory conditions
Lansoprazole	826	Treatment of excess stomach acid
Amlodipine	814	Treatment for hypertension / angina
Aspirin	763	Pain relief / heart attack prevention

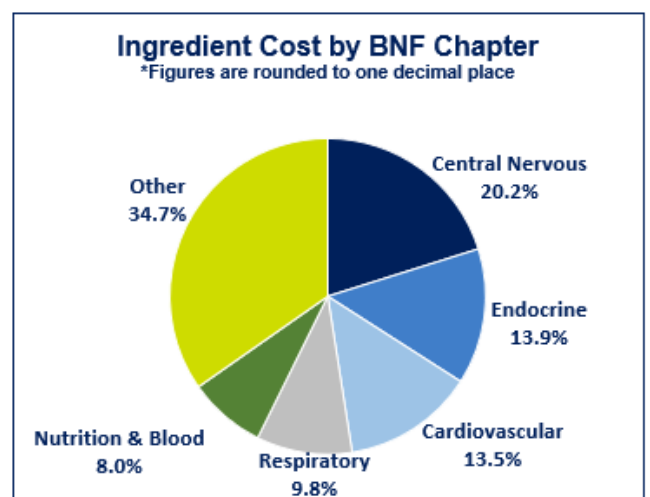


Three Most Commonly Dispensed Chapters by Age Group



Top 10 Medications with the Highest Total Ingredient Cost

Medication	Ingredient Cost (£ millions)	Typical Use
Apixaban	12.3	Treatment and prevention of blood clots
Dapagliflozin	8.6	Treatment for type 2 diabetes mellitus
Sacubitril + Valsartan	8.3	Treatment for heart failure
Omeprazole	7.3	Treatment for excess stomach acid
Empagliflozin	6.7	Treatment for type 2 diabetes mellitus
Budesonide + Formoterol	6.4	Treatment for asthma
Melatonin	5.9	Treatment for insomnia
Atorvastatin	5.0	Treatment for high blood cholesterol
Semaglutide	4.7	Treatment for type 2 diabetes / obesity
Insulin aspart	4.7	Treatment for diabetes mellitus



Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

Key Facts

Publication Notes

Family Practitioner Services

Family Practitioner Services (FPS) is part of the Business Services Organisation's (BSO) Operations Directorate. It provides a range of essential services to Health and Social Care organisations, primary care contractors and patients.

FPS calculates payments to health professionals in the dental, pharmacy, general medical and ophthalmic sectors throughout Northern Ireland. It also maintains the central register of patients registered with GP Practices in Northern Ireland, issuing medical cards and processing changes such as name, address and doctor.

It provides professional advice, support and information to customers and members of the public and maintains the pharmaceutical, dental, ophthalmic and the Northern Ireland Primary Medical Performers lists. FPS also provides the call and recall services for cervical and bowel cancer screening in Northern Ireland.

About this publication

This report has been produced by independent statisticians within the FPS Information Unit. They are on secondment from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). This publication has been compiled in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics. For detailed tables relating to this report visit the [BSO FPS website](#) to select the relevant service area and annual statistics tables required.

Next edition

This compendium publication is issued annually. It is expected that the next edition shall be published early July 2025 following the next release of the individual annual reports in June 2025. In the interim, quarterly tables are published separately on the [BSO FPS website](#), accessible via the relevant services area. The quarterly figures are provisional until the annual publication for that year issues, at which point they are finalised. A [publication timetable](#) for future statistical publications is also available.

Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

Key Facts

Technical Notes

Target Audience

The target audience for this publication has been defined as: The Department of Health, Strategic Planning and Performance Group, HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland, health professionals, academics, HSC Stakeholders, the media and the general public.

Main usages

This publication contains official statistics on general medical, dental, ophthalmic and pharmaceutical activity for the most recent financial year (and earlier years where available on a comparable basis). It provides a broad overview of activity across the service areas, highlighting where more detailed breakdowns can be obtained.

The detailed information underpinning this summary can be used to support decision making, inform policy, provide advice to ministers, answer a wide range of Assembly Questions and Freedom of Information requests, for national and local press articles and, where appropriate, for international comparison.

Data Quality Summary

The data has been primarily sourced from the Family Practitioner Payment System (FPPS) in respect of FPS activity and payment information. Resident population data has been sourced from official NISRA demographic statistics.

The FPPS is a business-critical payment system which is subject to periodic audit. The data quality is assessed as very good based on the low percentage of claims which have to be adjusted following payment.

As an administrative data system, there will inevitably be some manual entry errors and, even for automated processes, there may be errors within the claims submitted by primary care contractors.

The extensive validation that occurs prior to payments being made, coupled with the consistency and variance checks carried out during the compilation of this publication means that the data provides a good representation of FPS activity for the years covered by the report.

Further information in relation to the background data quality reports and the Quality Assurance of Administrative Data Reports for the four service areas can be found on the relevant service area page of the [BSO FPS website](#).

Further Information

This is a supplementary document combining summary information from the previously released 2023/24 annual publications relating to the four main areas within FPS: general medical, dental, ophthalmic and pharmaceutical services.

Detailed information on **data sources, definitions and coverage** can be found within the relevant annual reports using the following links:

[General Medical Services](#)

[Dental Services](#)

[Ophthalmic Services](#)

[Pharmaceutical Services](#)

Or by visiting the [BSO FPS website](#).

Further information about Northern Ireland and its health services which may assist readers in interpreting this publication is available from [Family Practitioner Services](#).

Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2023/24

Key Facts

This statistical bulletin, the full annual Family Practitioner Services reports and others published by Information Unit within BSO are available to download from the [Business Services Organisation's Family Practitioner Services Internet site](#).