



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

Paper 74/25

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Information on oral questions

This information is provided to Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in support of their duties, and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as professional legal advice, or as a substitute for it.

1 Introduction

This briefing paper has been prepared following a request from the Committee on Procedures. The committee asked RalSe for information on:

- how many questions are on the list, how many questions are withdrawn by MLAs from the lists and how many times oral questions are grouped together for answer by a Minister.

2 Key findings

The Business Office provided a spreadsheet containing the relevant data from 19 February 2024 to 28 May 2024.

The key findings in relation to **tabled** questions are:

- 494 questions were tabled
- 296 were answered (59.9%)
- 40 were withdrawn (8%)
- On five occasions Members were not in their place
- There were 32 groupings in total (where two or more questions are grouped)

The key findings in relation to **topical** questions are:

- 330 names were pulled from the ballot
- 250 questions were answered (75.7%)
- 25 were withdrawn (7.5%)
- On nine occasions Members were not in their place

3 Statistics by Department

This section provides a breakdown of questions asked by Department and the percentage of **listed questions** answered, beginning with the Department answering the greatest number of questions and ending with the Assembly Commission, which answered one set of questions in the relevant time period.

Seven rounds of questions

Executive Office

	Listed questions					Topical questions		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	Answered	Withdrawn	Not in place
19/02/2024	15	6	2 (4)	3	0	8	0	1
04/03/2024	15	6	1 (2)	3	0	8	2	0
08/04/2024	14	7	1 (2)	2	0	7	1	0
15/04/2024	15	7	1 (2)	2	0	6	3	0

29/04/2024	14	7	-	2	0	7	0	0
13/05/2024	15	8	-	2	0	7	1	0
28/05/2024	14	7	1 (2)	2	0	10	0	0
Total	103	50	6 (12)	14	0	53	7	1

Four rounds of questions

Agriculture & Rural Affairs

	Listed questions					<i>Topical questions</i>		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	Answered	Withdrawn	Not in place
19/02/2024	15	6	2 (4)	0	0	7	2	0

11/03/2024	13	8	2 (4)	1	0	8	1	0
22/04/2024	14	9	1 (4)	0	0	8	0	0
13/05/2024	14	9	-	3	0	8	0	0
Total	56	32	5 (12)	4	0	31	3	0

Communities

	Listed questions					Topical questions		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	Answered	Withdrawn	Not in place
20/02/2024	15	7	1 (2)	0	0	8	1	1
12/03/2024	14	7	1 (2)	1	0	8	2	0
23/04/2024	15	8	-	2	1	9	0	0

20/05/2024	15	11	1 (3)	1	0	9	0	0
Total	59	33	3 (7)	4	1	34	3	1

Three rounds of questions

Economy

	Listed questions					Topical questions		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	Answered	Withdrawn	Not in place
26/02/2024	15	7	1 (2)	1	0	6	0	0
19/03/2024	15	8	1 (2)	0	0	6	0	0
29/04/2024	15	10	-	1	0	6	1	0
Total	45	25	2 (4)	2	0	18	1	0

Education

	Listed questions					<i>Topical questions</i>		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	<i>Answered</i>	<i>Withdrawn</i>	<i>Not in place</i>
26/02/2024	15	6	-	2	1	7	0	2
08/04/2024	14	7	-	3	0	7	1	0
30/04/2024	13	9	2 (4)	0	0	7	0	1
Total	42	22	2(4)	5	1	21	1	3

Finance

	Listed questions					<i>Topical questions</i>		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	<i>Answered</i>	<i>Withdrawn</i>	<i>Not in place</i>
27/02/2024	15	9	1 (2)	1	0	8	1	0
09/04/2024	14	9	2 (4)	1	0	8	0	0
07/05/2024	15	10	1 (2)	1	1	7	2	1
Total	44	28	4 (10)	3	1	23	3	1

Health

	Listed questions					<i>Topical questions</i>		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	<i>Answered</i>	<i>Withdrawn</i>	<i>Not in place</i>
04/03/2024	14	5	-	1	1	7	1	1
15/04/2024	15	6	-	0	0	7	2	0
21/05/2024	14	6	1 (2)	2	0	7	1	0
Total	43	17	1 (2)	3	1	21	4	1

Infrastructure

	Listed questions					<i>Topical questions</i>		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	<i>Answered</i>	<i>Withdrawn</i>	<i>Not in place</i>
05/03/2024	15	7	1 (2)	0	0	8	1	1
16/04/2024	15	8	1 (2)	0	0	10	0	0
14/05/2024	14	8	1 (2)	1	0	8	0	0
Total	44	23	1 (2)	1	0	8	1	1

Justice

	Listed questions					<i>Topical questions</i>		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	<i>Answered</i>	<i>Withdrawn</i>	<i>Not in place</i>
11/03/2024	14	8	1 (2)	1	0	8	0	0
22/04/2024	15	10	-	0	0	8	1	0
20/05/2024	14	8	2 (4)	2	0	7	1	1
Total	43	26	3 (6)	3	0	23	2	1

One round of questions

Assembly Commission

	Listed questions					<i>Topical questions</i>		
Date	Questions tabled	Answered	Number of groupings (number of questions grouped)	Withdrawn	Not in place	<i>Answered</i>	<i>Withdrawn</i>	<i>Not in place</i>
19/03/2024	15	13	2 (5)	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	15	13	2(5)	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Percentage of listed questions answered

Department	Listed questions	Questions answered	% listed questions answered
<i>Seven rounds of questions</i>			
Executive Office	103`	50	48.5
<i>Four rounds of questions</i>			
Agriculture & Rural Affairs	56	32	57.1
Communities	59	33	55.9
<i>Three rounds of questions</i>			
Economy	45	25	55.5
Education	42	22	52.3
Finance	44	28	63.6
Health	43	17	39.5
Infrastructure	44	23	52.2

Justice	43	26	60.4
<i>One round of questions</i>			
Assembly Commission	15	13	86.6