

# Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Provisional Figures

July to September 2022

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25 November 2022



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# 1

## Key Findings

This report provides an overview of Children Order and County, Crown, High and Magistrates' Courts business during July to September 2022 and how it compares with the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year. The headline findings are summarised below -

- During the quarter there were 431 Children Order sittings (1,190 total hours sat), 1,067 Children Order Applications received and 1,037 disposed. In terms of orders made, 469 were own motion, 2,150 were interim and 1,383 were final orders.
  - County Court and District Judges sat a total of 755 days within the County Court. In terms of cases 32 equity, 186 ejectment, 1,623 small claims and one criminal damage case were received; 21 equity, 111 ejectment, 1,549 small claims and 3 criminal damage cases were disposed.
  - In terms of Crown Court business there were 444 sittings with 303 cases and 388 defendants received and 254 cases and 319 defendants disposed.
- There were 327 High Court sitting days. The highest proportion of these was spent on Bails business (24%) with 919 writs and originating summons received and 306 disposed.
  - Within the 1,102 Magistrates' sitting days during the quarter, 72% were adult criminal, 5% youth criminal and 22% civil and family days. There were 1,067 civil and family applications and 9,983 adult and 287 youth defendants received. Corresponding figures for disposals were 872 civil and family, 9,554 adult and 204 youth defendants.

## 2 | Introduction

### About this report

This bulletin is produced in accordance with the pillars and principles set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. It presents the following statistics for the Northern Ireland Court and Tribunals Service for the quarter July to September 2022 –

- The number of Children Order applications received and disposed at Family Proceedings Courts, Family Care Centres and the High Court, together with waiting times from lodgment to disposal (section 3);
- Civil and family business received and disposed, waiting times and sitting days in County Courts (section 4);
- The number of cases and defendants received and disposed, waiting times, pleas and findings and sittings at the Crown Court (section 5);
- Business received and disposed, waiting times and sitting days in the Chancery, Queen’s Bench and Family Divisions of the High Court (section 6); and
- The number of youth and adult defendants received and disposed, charges and outcomes, sittings, civil applications received and disposed and waiting times at Magistrates’ Courts (section 7).

Comparative information for the same quarter in the previous year is also provided, along with an indication of whether any change is higher or lower.

Background information about the Children Order and the County, Crown, High and Magistrates’ Courts along with methodological information and a glossary is available in the accompanying user guide. Data in the bulletin, along with trend information, are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

The next update covering the quarter to 31 December 2022 will be published in February 2023. A full [publication schedule](#) is available on the DoJ website.

## 2 | Introduction

It is important to note court activity during the quarter covered in this report has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the courts continue to make more use of remote audio and video technology, the impact of COVID-19 can be seen in the figures. It is expected that the limited operation of the courts during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have an impact on many of the published figures in this and future releases.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the coronavirus contingency arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (Integrated Court Operations System known as ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

# 3

## Children Order

### Children Order Quarterly Business

- Table 1 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 431 sittings (1,190 hours), 1,067 Children Order Applications received and 1,037 disposed.
  - A total of 1,476 children were involved in the applications disposed. Gender and age breakdowns of the children were 50:50 male:female and 31% 0-4 years, 32% 5-8 years, 24% 9-12 years and 14% 13-16 years.
  - Like each of the last five years, the most common reason for transferring Children Order applications during the quarter was Complexity (70%, 90 of 128 reasons). This was followed by Consolidation (26), Jurisdiction (7), Urgency (3), Gravity (1) and Convenience (1).
- In terms of orders made –
    - 469 were own motion orders.
    - 2,150 were interim orders.
    - 1,383 were final orders.
  - The average waiting time for applications disposed was 43.2 weeks for public and 31.3 weeks for private law.
  - Table 1 shows that applications received and applications disposed both decreased. The waiting times for disposal for public and private law were lower than the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year.

### 3 Children Order

Table 1: Children Order Business – July to September 2022 compared with July to September 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sittings	431	449	4% ↓
Hours sat	1,190	1,307	9% ↓
Applications received	1,067	1,161	8% ↓
Applications disposed	1,037	1,113	7% ↓
Number of children involved in applications disposed	1,476	1,623	9% ↓
Own motion orders made	469	401	17% ↑
Interim orders made	2,150	2,343	8% ↓
Final orders made	1,383	1,557	11% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for public law (weeks)	43.2	50.2	14% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for private law (weeks)	31.3	33.6	7% ↓

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 4

## County Court

### County Court Quarterly Business

- Table 2 on the following pages shows that County Court and District Judges sat a total of 755 sitting days during the quarter. Within those days 60% of time was spent on criminal business, 21% on civil business and 19% on family business.
- During the quarter –
  - 1,608 Civil bills with notice of intention to defend (NID) were received and 1,807 disposed.
  - In terms of cases 32 equity, 186 ejectment, 1,623 small claims and one criminal damage case were received; 21 equity, 111 ejectment, 1,549 small claims and 3 criminal damage cases were disposed.
  - 333 divorce decrees were granted, 305 decrees absolute issued.
  - 54 licence applications were received and 52 disposed.
- Table 2 shows that there was a general increase in the number of cases received and disposed across most business areas and a general decrease in time taken to disposal compared with figures for the same quarter in the previous year. The decrease in the average time from issue to disposal of small claims cases is due to the resumption of cases being dealt with in the courts.



# 4 | County Court

Table 2: County Court Business – July to September 2022 compared with July to September 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sitting days	755	857	12%↓
Civil bills with NID received	1,608	1,593	1%↑
Civil bills disposed	1,807	1,794	1%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of civil bill (weeks)	65	73	11%↓
Equity cases received	32	44	27%↓
Equity cases disposed	21	16	31%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases (weeks)	133	135	1%↓
Ejectment cases received	186	89	109%↑
Ejectment cases disposed	111	49	127%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of ejectment cases (weeks)	60	45	33%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 4 | County Court

Table 2 continued: County Court Business – July to September 2022 compared with July to September 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Small claims received	1,623	1,425	14%↑
Small claims disposed	1,549	1,266	22%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of small claims cases (weeks)	40	50	20%↓
Criminal damage cases received	1	2	50%↓
Criminal damage cases disposed	3	3	-
Divorce decrees granted	333	285	17%↑
Decree absolute issued	305	356	14%↓
Average time taken from issue to date divorce decree granted (weeks)	41	38	8%↑
Licences applications received	54	49	10%↑
Licences applications disposed	52	38	37%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

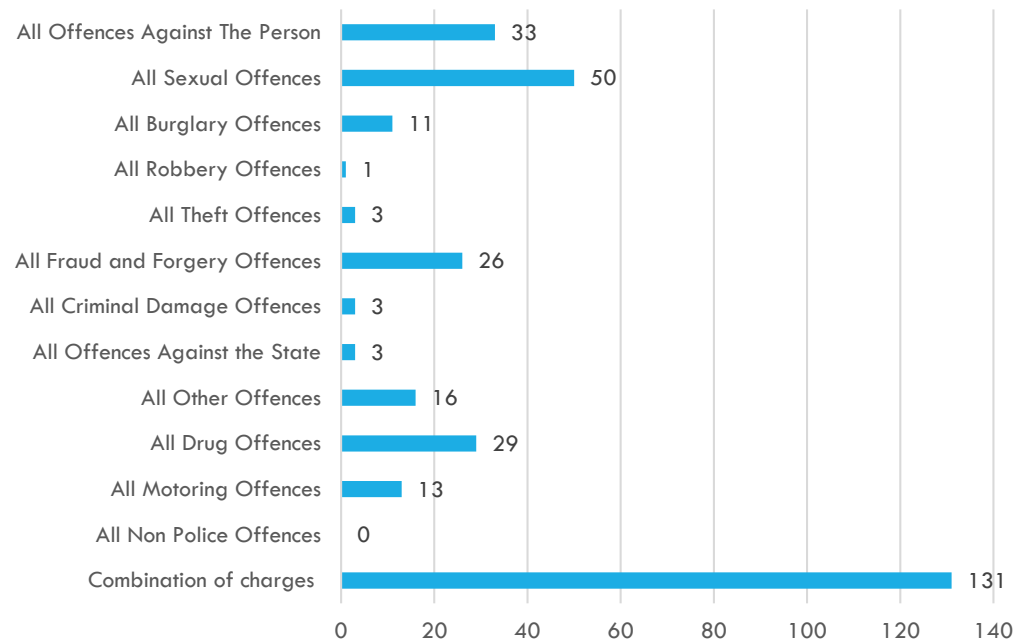
# 5

## Crown Court

### Crown Court Quarterly Business

- Table 3 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 444 sittings (1,088 hours sat). County Court Judges disposed of 99% of defendants (315), a figure that has remained relatively stable over the last five years (98-99%).
- There were 303 cases and 388 defendants received during the quarter; 254 cases and 319 defendants were disposed.
- Average time from committal to hearing was 178 days and from conviction to disposal was 91 days.
- In comparison to the same quarter in the previous year the number of cases and defendants received decreased while the numbers disposed increased.
- Figure 1 shows that the majority of defendants disposed were charged with a combination of offences, a similar pattern seen in each of the last five years. Average time from committal to hearing and from conviction to disposal both increased. These figures will be affected by the delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: Crown Court defendants disposed by charge type July to September 2022



# 5 | Crown Court

Table 3: Crown Court Business – July to September 2022 compared with July to September 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sittings	444	461	4%↓
Hours sat	1,088	935	16%↑
Cases received	303	412	26%↓
Cases disposed	254	241	5%↑
Defendants received	388	501	23%↓
Defendants disposed	319	290	10%↑
Defendants pleading guilty to all charges	91	84	8%↑
Defendants pleading guilty or found guilty of at least one charge	204	174	17%↑
Average time from committal to hearing (days)	178	128	39%↑
Average time from conviction to disposal (days)	91	78	17%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 6 High Court

## High Court Quarterly Business

- Table 4 on the following pages show that there were 327 High Court sitting days during the quarter, the highest proportion of which was spent on Bails business (24%).
- Queen's Bench business included:
  - 919 writs and originating summonses were received, 306 were disposed.
  - 71 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review, 19 applications for Judicial Review and no ancillary applications were received.
- Chancery Division business included:
  - Receipt of 285 (74% of which were Chancery, 13% bankruptcy and 13% companies cases) and disposal of 138 cases; and
  - 1,983 grants issued in the Probate office.
- Family Division business included –
  - 26 adoption cases and applications received and 10 disposed;
  - 623 divorce petitions received, 93 decrees granted (mainly '2 years with consent' (39, 42%) and 'combination of grounds or other' (23, 25%)) and 157 decrees absolute issued;
  - 575 new referrals in the Patients section; and
  - 25 Official Solicitor's Office cases received, 41 disposed and a current caseload of 360 cases at the end of the quarter.

## 6 High Court

Table 4: High Court Business - July to September 2022 compared with July to September 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sitting days	327	333	2%↓
Writs & originating summonses received	919	888	3%↑
Writs & originating summonses disposed	306	297	3%↑
Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review received	71	87	18%↓
Applications for Judicial Review received	19	29	34%↓
Ancillary applications received	0	1	100%↓
Chancery cases received	285	315	10%↓
Chancery cases disposed	138	187	26%↓
Grants issued in the Probate office	1,983	2,163	8%↓

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 6 | High Court

Table 4 continued: High Court Business - July to September 2022 compared with July to September 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Adoption cases & applications received	26	23	13%↑
Adoption cases & applications disposed	10	12	17%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal for adoption case/application (weeks)	59	43	37%↑
Divorce petitions received	623	567	10%↑
Decrees granted in High Court	93	117	21%↓
Decrees absolute issued	157	129	22%↑
Average time taken from issue of divorce petition to date decree granted (weeks)	53	51	4%↑
Patients section referrals received	575	582	1%↓
Official Solicitors Office cases received	25	36	31%↓
Official Solicitors Office cases disposed	41	8	413%↑
Official Solicitors Office caseload at end of quarter	360	345	4%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 7 | Magistrates' Court

## Magistrates' Court Quarterly Business

- During the quarter there were 1,041 scheduled, 23 additional and 38 special Magistrates' sitting days (Table 5).
- Within the 1,102 total, 72% were adult criminal, 5% were youth criminal and 22% were civil and family days.

Table 5: Magistrates' Court Sitting Days - July to September 2022 compared with July to September 2021

	Adult	Youth	Civil & Family	Total Quarter 2022	Total Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Scheduled	740	59	242	1,041	1,025	2%↑
Additional	18	0	5	23	19	21%↑
Special	38	0	0	38	36	6%↑
Total	796	59	247	1,102	1,080	2%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.



## 7 | Magistrates' Court

- There were 1,067 new civil and family applications and 9,983 new adult and 287 new youth defendants received; corresponding disposals were 872, 9,554 and 204 respectively.
- The average waiting times from first hearing to disposal in the adult and youth criminal courts were 10 weeks and 14 weeks respectively. For civil and family applications it was 19 and 8 weeks respectively from date of receipt to disposal.

Table 6: Magistrates' Court Business - July to September 2022 compared with July to September 2021

	Adult Q3 2022	Adult Q3 2021	% change from 2021	Youth Q3 2022	Youth Q3 2021	% change from 2021	Civil Q3 2022	Civil Q3 2021	% change from 2021	Family Q3 2022	Family Q3 2021	% change from 2021
Defendants or applications received	9,983	9,570	4%↑	287	254	13%↑	99	51	94%↑	968	1,025	6%↓
Defendants or applications disposed	9,554	9,257	3%↑	204	210	3%↓	77	69	12%↑	795	989	20%↓
Average waiting time (weeks)	10	10	-	14	19	26%↓	19	24	21%↓	8	10	20%↓

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 8

## Appendix 1 - Methodology

### Data Source and Coverage

The statistics are produced using administrative data sourced from the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). ICOS is a live operating system used in each court tier to process every part of court business, from receipt of payments through to the production of final orders made. The data are input into this system on a daily basis by court clerks, and this information is checked and confirmed by another member of staff to ensure the data entries are correct.

Full details of data relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, coherence, user need, cost and confidentiality is available in the accompanying background quality report. Details of the data quality checks and processes that DoJ has in place are available in the Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) document on the DoJ website.

### Counting Rules

- Children Order

Receipts are counted from the date the case is entered onto ICOS. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'dealt with.'

- County Court

Receipts are counted from the date the case is entered onto ICOS and the fees are receipted. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'dealt with'.

# 8

## Appendix 1 - Methodology

- Crown Court

Receipts are counted from the date the case is committed to the Crown Court from the Magistrates court. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'dealt with.'

- High Court

Receipts are counted from the date the case is entered onto ICOS and the fees are receipted. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case, or the date an applicant withdraws or discontinues their application prior to the hearing, changing the case status to 'dealt with'.

- Magistrates' Court

Receipts are counted from the date a served summons or a charge sheet is received by the Magistrates' Court office. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'dealt with'.