

# Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Provisional Figures

October to December 2022

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24 February 2023



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# 1

## Key Findings

This report provides an overview of Children Order and County, Crown, High and Magistrates' Courts business during October to December 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 508 Children Order sittings (1,436 total hours sat), 1,056 Children Order Applications received and 1,121 disposed. In terms of orders made, 629 were own motion, 2,237 were interim and 1,501 were final orders.
  - County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,219 days within the County Court. In terms of cases 27 equity, 224 ejectment, 1,557 small claims and 2 criminal damage cases were received; 35 equity, 124 ejectment, 1,676 small claims and one criminal damage cases were disposed.
  - In terms of Crown Court business there were 724 sittings with 329 cases and 389 defendants received and 353 cases and 440 defendants disposed.
- There were 593 High Court sitting days. The highest proportion of these was spent on Judicial Reviews business (19%) with 1,020 writs and originating summons received and 812 disposed.
  - Within the 1,108 Magistrates' sitting days during the quarter, 74% were adult criminal, 6% youth criminal and 20% civil and family days. There were 944 civil and family applications and 9,027 adult and 277 youth defendants received. Corresponding figures for disposals were 911 civil and family, 9,223 adult and 301 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 October to December 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 March 2023 will be published in May 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 508 sittings (1,436 hours), 1,056 Children Order Applications received and 1,121 disposed.
  - A total of 1,685 children were involved in the applications disposed. Gender and age breakdowns of the children were 50:50 male:female and 31% 0-4 years, 30% 5-8 years, 26% 9-12 years and 13% 13-16 years.
  - Like each of the last five years, the most common reason for transferring Children Order applications during the quarter was Complexity (72%, 123 of 172 reasons). This was followed by Consolidation (22), Jurisdiction (17), Return to Lower Court (5), Urgency (2), Gravity (2) and Point of Law (1).
- In terms of orders made –
    - 629 were own motion orders.
    - 2,237 were interim orders.
    - 1,501 were final orders.
  - The average waiting time for applications disposed was 58.7 weeks for public and 40.3 weeks for private law.
  - Table 1 shows that applications received and applications disposed both decreased. The waiting times for disposal for public law were lower and private law were higher than the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year.

## 3

## Children Order

Table 1: Children Order Business – October to December 2022 compared with October to December 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sittings	508	546	7% ↓
Hours sat	1,436	1,701	16% ↓
Applications received	1,056	1,130	7% ↓
Applications disposed	1,121	1,288	13% ↓
Number of children involved in applications disposed	1,685	1,868	10% ↓
Own motion orders made	629	390	61% ↑
Interim orders made	2,237	2,329	4% ↓
Final orders made	1,501	1,720	13% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for public law (weeks)	58.7	65.5	10% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for private law (weeks)	40.3	38.5	5% ↑

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 1,219 sitting days during the quarter. Within those days 57% of time was spent on criminal business, 22% on civil business and 21% on family business.
- During the quarter –
  - 1,797 Civil bills with notice of intention to defend (NID) were received and 2,224 disposed.
  - In terms of cases 27 equity, 224 ejectment, 1,557 small claims and 2 criminal damage cases were received; 35 equity, 124 ejectment, 1,676 small claims and one criminal damage cases were disposed.
  - 384 divorce decrees were granted, 386 decrees absolute issued.
  - 54 licence applications were received and 61 disposed.
- Table 2 shows that there is no consistent pattern in comparison with figures for the same quarter in the previous year.



# 4 | County Court

Table 2: County Court Business – October to December 2022 compared with October to December 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sitting days	1,219	1,341	9%↓
Civil bills with NID received	1,797	1,609	12%↑
Civil bills disposed	2,224	2,418	8%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of civil bill (weeks)	66	70	6%↓
Equity cases received	27	40	33%↓
Equity cases disposed	35	37	5%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases (weeks)	108	86	26%↑
Ejectment cases received	224	130	72%↑
Ejectment cases disposed	124	78	59%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of ejectment cases (weeks)	42	40	5%↑

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

# 4 | County Court

Table 2 continued: County Court Business – October to December 2022 compared with October to December 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Small claims received	1,557	1,566	1%↓
Small claims disposed	1,676	1,380	21%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of small claims cases (weeks)	27	53	49%↓
Criminal damage cases received	2	2	-
Criminal damage cases disposed	1	2	50%↓
Divorce decrees granted	384	432	11%↓
Decree absolute issued	386	351	10%↑
Average time taken from issue to date divorce decree granted (weeks)	42	45	7%↓
Licences applications received	54	53	2%↑
Licences applications disposed	61	61	-

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

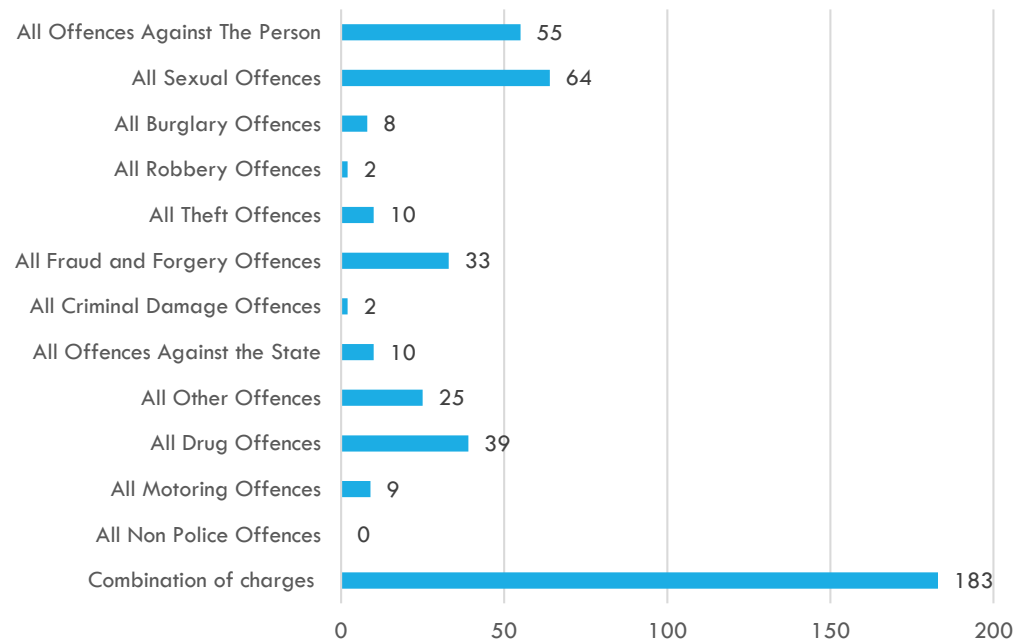
# 5

## Crown Court

### Crown Court Quarterly Business

- Table 3 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 724 sittings (1,703 hours sat). County Court Judges disposed of 98% of defendants (432), a figure that has remained relatively stable over the last five years (98-99%).
- There were 329 cases and 389 defendants received during the quarter; 353 cases and 440 defendants were disposed.
- Average time from committal to hearing was 190 days and from conviction to disposal was 79 days.
- In comparison to the same quarter in the previous year the number of cases and defendants received and disposed decreased.
- 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 October to December 2022



# 5 | Crown Court

Table 3: Crown Court Business – October to December 2022 compared with October to December 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sittings	724	756	4%↓
Hours sat	1,703	1,705	<1%↓
Cases received	329	404	19%↓
Cases disposed	353	415	15%↓
Defendants received	389	545	29%↓
Defendants disposed	440	510	14%↓
Defendants pleading guilty to all charges	117	155	25%↓
Defendants pleading guilty or found guilty of at least one charge	241	297	19%↓
Average time from committal to hearing (days)	190	178	7%↑
Average time from conviction to disposal (days)	79	61	30%↑

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 593 High Court sitting days during the quarter, the highest proportion of which was spent on Judicial Reviews business (19%).
- King's Bench business included:
  - 1,020 writs and originating summonses were received, 812 were disposed.
  - 77 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review, 26 applications for Judicial Review and two ancillary applications were received.
- Chancery Division business included:
  - Receipt of 258 (61% of which were Chancery, 27% bankruptcy and 12% companies cases) and disposal of 243 cases; and
  - 1,737 grants issued in the Probate office.
- Family Division business included –
  - 13 adoption cases and applications received and 30 disposed;
  - 627 divorce petitions received, 288 decrees granted (31% (89) '2 years with consent' and 25% (71) 'Combination of grounds or other') and 148 decrees absolute issued;
  - 588 new referrals in the Patients section; and
  - 38 Official Solicitor's Office cases received, 12 disposed and a current caseload of 386 cases at the end of the quarter.

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

## 6 High Court

Table 4: High Court Business - October to December 2022 compared with October to December 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sitting days	593	575	3%↑
Writs & originating summonses received	1,020	890	15%↑
Writs & originating summonses disposed	812	491	65%↑
Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review received	77	107	28%↓
Applications for Judicial Review received	26	28	7%↓
Ancillary applications received	2	2	-
Chancery cases received	258	324	20%↓
Chancery cases disposed	243	350	31%↓
Grants issued in the Probate office	1,737	2,213	22%↓

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

# 6 | High Court

Table 4 continued: High Court Business - October to December 2022 compared with October to December 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Adoption cases & applications received	13	17	24%↓
Adoption cases & applications disposed	30	11	173%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal for adoption case/application (weeks)	36	45	20%↓
Divorce petitions received	627	627	-
Decrees granted in High Court	288	224	29%↑
Decrees absolute issued	148	179	17%↓
Average time taken from issue of divorce petition to date decree granted (weeks)	61	55	11%↑
Patients section referrals received	588	565	4%↑
Official Solicitors Office cases received	38	33	15%↑
Official Solicitors Office cases disposed	12	14	14%↓
Official Solicitors Office caseload at end of quarter	386	364	6%↑

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

# 7 Magistrates' Court

## Magistrates' Court Quarterly Business

- During the quarter there were 1,021 scheduled, 51 additional and 36 special Magistrates' sitting days (Table 5).
- Within the 1,108 total, 74% were adult criminal, 6% were youth criminal and 20% were civil and family days.

Table 5: Magistrates' Court Sitting Days - October to December 2022 compared with October to December 2021

	Adult	Youth	Civil & Family	Total Quarter 2022	Total Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Scheduled	736	64	221	1,021	1,026	>1%↓
Additional	45	0	6	51	19	168%↑
Special	36	0	0	36	33	9%↑
Total	817	64	227	1,108	1,078	3%↑

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



## 7 Magistrates' Court

- There were 944 new civil and family applications and 9,027 new adult and 277 new youth defendants received; corresponding disposals were 911, 9,223 and 301 respectively.
- The average waiting times from first hearing to disposal in the adult and youth criminal courts were 10 weeks and 15 weeks respectively. For civil and family applications it was 16 and 9 weeks respectively from date of receipt to disposal.

Table 6: Magistrates' Court Business - October to December 2022 compared with October to December 2021

	Adult Q4 2022	Adult Q4 2021	% change from 2021	Youth Q4 2022	Youth Q4 2021	% change from 2021	Civil Q4 2022	Civil Q4 2021	% change from 2021	Family Q4 2022	Family Q4 2021	% change from 2021
Defendants or applications received	9,027	8,951	1%↑	277	188	47%↑	79	89	11%↓	865	989	13%↓
Defendants or applications disposed	9,223	9,073	2%↑	301	255	18%↑	81	89	9%↓	830	996	17%↓
Average waiting time (weeks)	10	11	9%↓	15	15	-	16	27	41%↓	9	10	10%↓

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'.