

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Provisional Figures

July to September 2024

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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 2024 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 355 Children Order sittings (899 total hours sat), 1,162 Children Order Applications received and 929 disposed. In terms of orders made, 331 were own motion, 2,064 were interim and 1,283 were final orders.
 - County Court and District Judges sat a total of 730 days within the County Court. In terms of cases, 24 equity, 195 ejectment, 1,962 small claims and two criminal damage cases were received; 18 equity, 146 ejectment, 1,935 small claims and one criminal damage case were disposed.
 - In terms of Crown Court business there were 454 sittings with 344 cases and 397 defendants received and 262 cases and 304 defendants disposed.
- There were 275 High Court sitting days. The highest proportion of these was spent on Bails business (31%) with 1,177 writs and originating summons received and 473 disposed.
 - Within the 1,090 Magistrates' sitting days during the quarter, 72% were adult criminal, 6% youth criminal and 22% civil and family days. There were 859 civil and family applications and 10,007 adult and 290 youth defendants received. Corresponding figures for disposals were 724, 9,370 and 303 respectively.

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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 2024 –

- 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.

It is important to note court activity during 2020 and 2021 was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time the courts made more use of remote audio and video technology.

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.

2 | Introduction

The next update covering the quarter to 31 December 2024 will be published in February 2025. A full [publication schedule](#) is available on the DoJ website.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. 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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Children Order

Children Order Quarterly Business

- Table 1 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 355 sittings (899 hours), 1,162 Children Order Applications received and 929 disposed.
 - A total of 1,278 children were involved in the applications disposed. Gender and age breakdowns of the children were 51:49 male:female and 30% 0-4 years, 31% 5-8 years, 24% 9-12 years and 15% 13-16 years.
 - Like each of the last five years, the most common reason for transferring Children Order applications during the quarter was Complexity (67%, 100 of 150 reasons). This was followed by Consolidation (25), Jurisdiction (12), Return to Lower Court (8), Convenience (3) and Urgency (2).
- In terms of orders made –
 - 331 were own motion orders.
 - 2,064 were interim orders.
 - 1,283 were final orders.
 - The average waiting time for applications disposed was 47 weeks for public and 30 weeks for private law.
 - Table 1 shows that applications received and applications disposed both decreased. The waiting times for disposal for public law 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 – July to September 2024 compared with July to September 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sittings	355	371	4% ↓
Hours sat	899	1,060	15% ↓
Applications received	1,162	1,202	3% ↓
Applications disposed	929	983	5% ↓
Number of children involved in applications disposed	1,278	1,444	11% ↓
Own motion orders made	331	241	37% ↑
Interim orders made	2,064	2,146	4% ↓
Final orders made	1,283	1,362	6% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for public law (weeks)	46.5	38.1	22% ↑
Average waiting time for disposal for private law (weeks)	30.0	26.8	12% ↑

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 730 sitting days during the quarter. Within those days 387 were spent on criminal business and 343 days on civil and family business.
- During the quarter –
 - 2,416 Civil bills with notice of intention to defend (NID) were received and 2,168 disposed.
 - In terms of cases 24 equity, 195 ejectment, 1,962 small claims and two criminal damage cases were received; 18 equity, 146 ejectment, 1,935 small claims and one criminal damage case were disposed.
 - 302 divorce decrees were granted and 212 decrees absolute issued.
 - 62 licence applications were received and 54 disposed.
- Table 2 shows a mixed set of results across most areas of business compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

4 | County Court

Table 2: County Court Business – July to September 2024 compared with July to September 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sitting days	730	735	1%↓
Civil bills with NID received	2,416	1,975	22%↑
Civil bills disposed	2,168	1,956	11%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of civil bill (weeks)	54	63	14%↓
Equity cases received	24	49	51%↓
Equity cases disposed	18	21	14%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases (weeks)	121	116	4%↑
Ejectment cases received	195	214	9%↓
Ejectment cases disposed	146	80	83%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of ejectment cases (weeks)	62	37	68%↑

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

4 | County Court

Table 2 continued: County Court Business – July to September 2024 compared with July to September 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Small claims received	1,962	1,992	2%↓
Small claims disposed	1,935	1,957	1%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of small claims cases (weeks)	28	28	-
Criminal damage cases received	2	3	33%↓
Criminal damage cases disposed	1	2	50%↓
Divorce decrees granted	302	296	2%↑
Decree absolute issued	212	264	20%↓
Average time taken from issue to date divorce decree granted (weeks)	46	44	5%↑
Licences applications received	62	45	38%↑
Licences applications disposed	54	41	32%↑

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

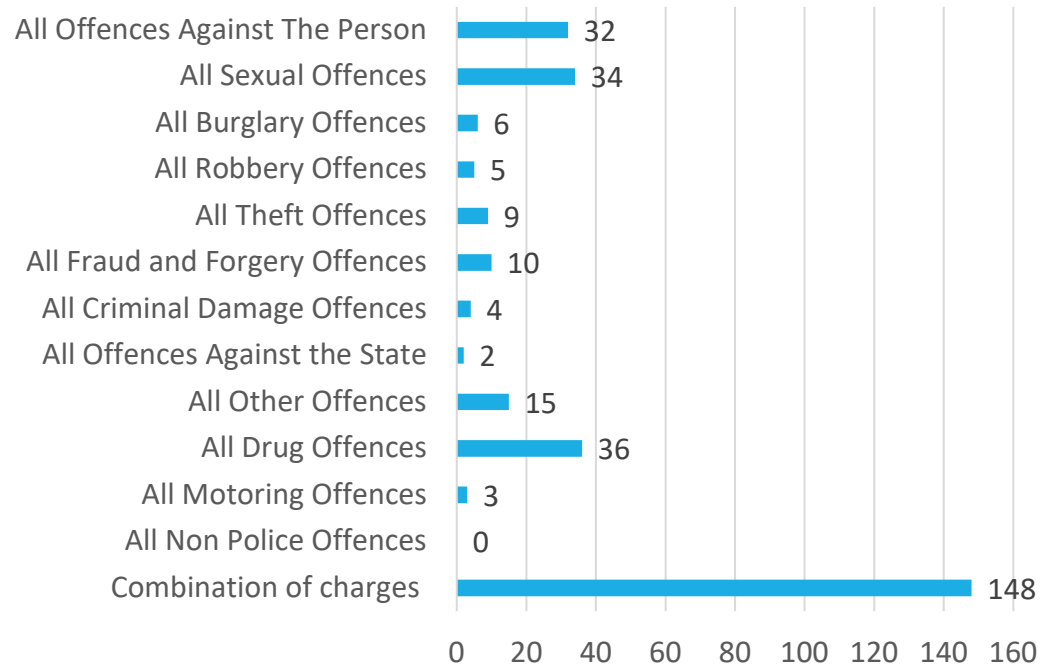
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Crown Court

Crown Court Quarterly Business

- Table 3 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 454 sittings (814 hours sat). County Court Judges disposed of 99.7% of defendants (303), a figure that has remained relatively stable over the last five years (98-99%).
- There were 344 cases and 397 defendants received during the quarter; 262 cases and 304 defendants were disposed.
- Average time from committal to hearing was 121 days and from conviction to disposal was 89 days.
- In comparison to the same quarter in the previous year the number of cases and defendants received decreased. Average time from committal to hearing and from conviction to disposal 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.

Figure 1: Crown Court defendants disposed by charge type July to September 2024



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Crown Court

Table 3: Crown Court Business – July to September 2024 compared with July to September 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sittings	454	433	5%↑
Hours sat	814	755	8%↑
Cases received	344	346	1%↓
Cases disposed	262	261	<1%↑
Defendants received	397	437	9%↓
Defendants disposed	304	303	<1%↑
Defendants pleading guilty to all charges	69	78	12%↓
Defendants pleading guilty or found guilty of at least one charge	212	197	8%↑
Average time from committal to hearing (days)	121	168	28%↓
Average time from conviction to disposal (days)	89	92	3%↓

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 shows that there were 275 High Court sitting days during the quarter, the highest proportion of which was spent on Bails business (31%).
- King's Bench business included –
 - Receipt of 1,177 and disposal of 473 writs and originating summonses.
 - Receipt of 55 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review; one application for Judicial Review and one Ancillary application.
- Chancery Division business included –
 - Receipt of 650 (63% of which were Chancery, 22% bankruptcy and 15% companies cases) and disposal of 351 cases.
 - 1,649 grants issued in the Probate office.
- Family Division business included –
 - Receipt of 19 and disposal of 8 adoption cases and applications.
 - 674 divorce petitions received, 78 decrees granted (37% (29) '2 years with consent' and 26% (20) '5 years separation') and 241 decrees absolute issued.
 - 66 Official Solicitor's Office cases received, 5 disposed and a current caseload of 563 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 – July to September 2024 compared with July to September 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sitting days	275	298	8%↓
Writs & originating summonses received	1,177	957	23%↑
Writs & originating summonses disposed	473	809	42%↓
Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review received	55	103	47%↓
Applications for Judicial Review received	1	5	80%↓
Ancillary applications received	1	1	-
Chancery, Bankruptcy & Companies cases received	650	517	26%↑
Chancery, Bankruptcy & Companies cases disposed	351	247	42%↑
Grants issued in the Probate office	1,649	1,833	10%↓

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

6 | High Court

Table 4 continued: High Court Business – July to September 2024 compared with July to September 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Adoption cases & applications received	19	20	5%↓
Adoption cases & applications disposed	8	6	33%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal for adoption case/application (weeks)	40	27	48%↑
Divorce petitions received	674	558	21%↑
Decrees granted in High Court	78	98	20%↓
Decrees absolute issued	241	237	2%↑
Average time taken from issue of divorce petition to date decree granted (weeks)	63	64	2%↓
Official Solicitors Office cases received	66	37	78%↑
Official Solicitors Office cases disposed	5	28	82%↓
Official Solicitors Office caseload at end of quarter	563	365	54%↑

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

7 Magistrates' Court

Magistrates' Court Quarterly Business

- During the quarter there were 1,033 scheduled, 20 additional and 37 special Magistrates' sitting days (Table 5).
- Within the 1,090 total, 72% were adult criminal, 6% were youth criminal and 22% were civil and family days.

Table 5: Magistrates' Court Sitting Days – July to September 2024 compared with July to September 2023

	Adult	Youth	Civil & Family	Total Quarter 2024	Total Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Scheduled	732	61	240	1,033	1,036	-
Additional	20	-	-	20	22	9%↓
Special	37	-	-	37	40	8%↓
Total	789	61	240	1,090	1,098	1%↓

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

7 | Magistrates' Court

- There were 859 new civil and family applications and 10,007 new adult and 290 new youth defendants received; corresponding disposals were 724, 9,370 and 303 respectively.
- The average waiting times from first hearing to disposal in the adult and youth criminal courts were 8 weeks and 14 weeks respectively. For civil and family applications it was 35 and 8 weeks respectively from date of receipt to disposal.

Table 6: Magistrates' Court Business – July to September 2024 compared with July to September 2023

	Adult Q3 2024	Adult Q3 2023	% change from 2023	Youth Q3 2024	Youth Q3 2023	% change from 2023	Civil Q3 2024	Civil Q3 2023	% change from 2023	Family Q3 2024	Family Q3 2023	% change from 2023
Defendants or applications received	10,007	10,084	1%↓	290	289	-	71	95	25%↓	788	993	21%↓
Defendants or applications disposed	9,370	9,439	1%↓	303	333	9%↓	55	82	33%↓	669	835	20%↓
Average waiting time (weeks)	8	9	11%↓	14	21	33%↓	35	27	30%↑	8	8	-

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

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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'.

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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'.