

**Analytical Services Group**

# **County Court Bulletin**

**July to September 2019**

**Research and Statistical Bulletin**

**Provisional quarterly figures**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at County Courts in Northern Ireland during the period July to September 2019 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2010. On 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016, a single County Court Division called “The County Court of Northern Ireland” replaced the seven existing County Court Divisions. As a consequence of this change, data contained in the County Court Bulletin is now disaggregated by Court Office (Processing Office). During the period July to September 2019:
- There were 1,939 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 14% increase on the same quarter last year (1,702). In total, 1,946 civil bills were disposed, a decrease of 1% on the number disposed during the same period in 2018 (1,960).
- 39 equity cases were received during July to September 2019, up by fourteen cases compared to the 25 cases received during the period July to September 2018, while 18 equity cases were disposed, compared with 23 equity cases disposed during the same period last year.
- A total of 263 ejectment cases were received, down 6% on the 279 cases received during July to September 2018, with the number of ejectment cases disposed decreasing by 9%, from 234 in the same quarter last year to 214 this quarter.
- 2,382 small claims were received, up 11% on the 2,142 cases received during the same quarter last year. The number of small claims cases disposed increased by 24% from 1,933 during July to September 2018 to 2,390 this quarter.
- Seven criminal damage cases were received, compared to three received during the period July to September 2018. One criminal damage case was disposed during the quarter, compared with three during the same quarter last year.
- A total of 402 divorce decrees were granted in the County Court, up 51% on the 267 granted during the same period last year.
- County Court and District Judges sat a total of 705 sitting days during the quarter, up 4% on the 680 days recorded during the period July to September 2018. Some 54% of time was spent on criminal business with 30% spent on civil business and 17% on family business (compared to 49%, 31% and 20% respectively during July to September 2018).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Civil cases are commenced in the County Court if the value of the case is less than £30,000. The financial limit in the County Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on the 25 February 2013. However, for claims concerning matrimonial property or compensation for criminal injuries or criminal damage to property, there is no financial limit. The County Court also has jurisdiction to hear applications for adoptions and undefended divorces. Applications for intoxicating liquor licences and certificates of registration for clubs are also made to the County Court. In addition to its original civil jurisdiction, the County Court hears appeals under a number of statutory provisions from the Magistrates' Courts or from other tribunals.

County courts can deal with a wide range of cases, but the most common ones are:-

- landlord and tenant disputes, for example, possession (eviction), rent arrears, repairs
- consumer disputes, for example, faulty goods or services
- personal injury claims (injuries caused by negligence), for example, traffic accidents, falling into holes in the pavement, accidents at work
- undefended divorce cases, but only in some county courts
- some domestic violence cases, but these may also be heard in the magistrates court
- race and sex discrimination cases
- debt problems, for example, a creditor seeking payment
- employment problems, for example, wages or salary owing or pay in lieu of notice.

The County Court also deals with small claims. In general, a small claim is one where the value of the claim is not more than £3,000. This limit was increased from £2,000 in May 2011.

The most common types of claim dealt with in the Small Claims Court are:

- compensation for faulty services provided, for example, by builders, dry cleaners and garages
- compensation for faulty goods, for example, televisions or washing machines which go wrong
- disputes between landlords and tenants, for example, rent arrears or compensation for not doing repairs
- wages owed or money in lieu of notice.

All claims arising from regulated credit agreements must be started in the County Court, whatever their value.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Data sources**

Data contained in Tables 1 to 31 and Table 33 uses information inputted into the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). This system was implemented across the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) over a two-year period from 2005 to 2007. While ICOS was introduced in the County Court during 2005, data derived from ICOS has been used as the source for official government statistics since 2007, when the implementation of ICOS across all court tiers was completed. 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. Data is inputted into this system, by court clerks on a daily basis and information is checked and confirmed by another member of staff to ensure data entries are correct. As data on licence applications received and disposed is not recorded on ICOS, these figures are compiled manually by each County Court Office and submitted on a quarterly basis.

### **2.2 Methodology for generating data**

Analytical Services Group (ASG) statisticians based within the NICTS take a download of County Court information from ICOS on a monthly basis. The information is downloaded using a package called Sharepoint, which extracts all the relevant data from ICOS into text files, which are refreshed with up to date information each weekend. The text files are downloaded onto a secure internal facility that only specified statistical personnel have access to. The data contained in the files are identified only by numbers; names and addresses are not held. These statistical files are not transmitted outside the NICTS statistical team. ASG statisticians based in the NICTS import data into the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is then used to perform extensive data validations to identify potential errors in the data and to ensure data is reliable and robust.

### **2.3 Baseline and Time period**

Data contained within this bulletin relates to the current calendar year 2019. The time series for this information dates back to 2007 when ICOS was adopted as the source of County Court data, however, within this publication, comparisons of trends are viewed over a 10-year period.

### **2.4 Frequency of Publication**

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the fourth quarter of 2019 and will be published on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

### **2.5 Data quality and validation**

ASG statisticians based in the NICTS have invested significant time and effort creating an extensive computer programme within SPSS to validate the information downloaded from ICOS. The programme includes over 100 checks against downloaded court data to (i)

check consistency over time and between variables, (ii) assess the reliability of data using logic checks, (iii) check that variables fall within accepted ranges, and (iv) check with the ICOS Support Team in the event of any major discrepancies that have occurred since the last download. The validation program produces user friendly tables highlighting potential problems which are circulated to each County Court venue as a validation report.

The NICTS statistics team then ensure that all validations relating to the reporting period are amended prior to publication. Once these amendments have been checked, SPSS syntax programming is then used to generate the tables in the publication. Data contained in this bulletin are currently provisional and will undergo further validation before being published in their final form within the relevant edition of Judicial Statistics (published in June of each year for the previous calendar year).

## **2.6 Counting rules**

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'. On 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016, a single County Court Division called "The County Court of Northern Ireland" replaced the seven existing County Court Divisions. As a consequence of this change, data contained in the County Court Bulletin is now disaggregated by Court Office (Processing Office) as at the time of data download.

## **2.7 Interpreting trends**

Care should be taken when comparing data trends before and after 2005, when ICOS was introduced as the source for the majority of County Court data. Additionally, due to on-going changes to the legal jurisdiction of the County Court, users should be cautious of comparing trends in small claims and ordinary civil bills. Changes made to the upper limit of small claims in May 2011 (from £2,000 to £3,000) will have resulted in some claims that would have previously been ordinary civil bills becoming small claims. Also, changes to jurisdiction to increase the upper limit of ordinary civil bills during February 2013 (from £15,000 to £30,000) will have resulted in some cases that were previously High Court writs becoming ordinary civil bills. For further advice on differences in data between years, please contact the statistician responsible for this bulletin.

## **2.8 Revisions**

Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note 'Policy Statement on Revisions' which can be found at ([www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/p\\_pd\\_stats\\_PolicyStatementRevisions.pdf](http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/p_pd_stats_PolicyStatementRevisions.pdf)).

Incorrect figures of changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

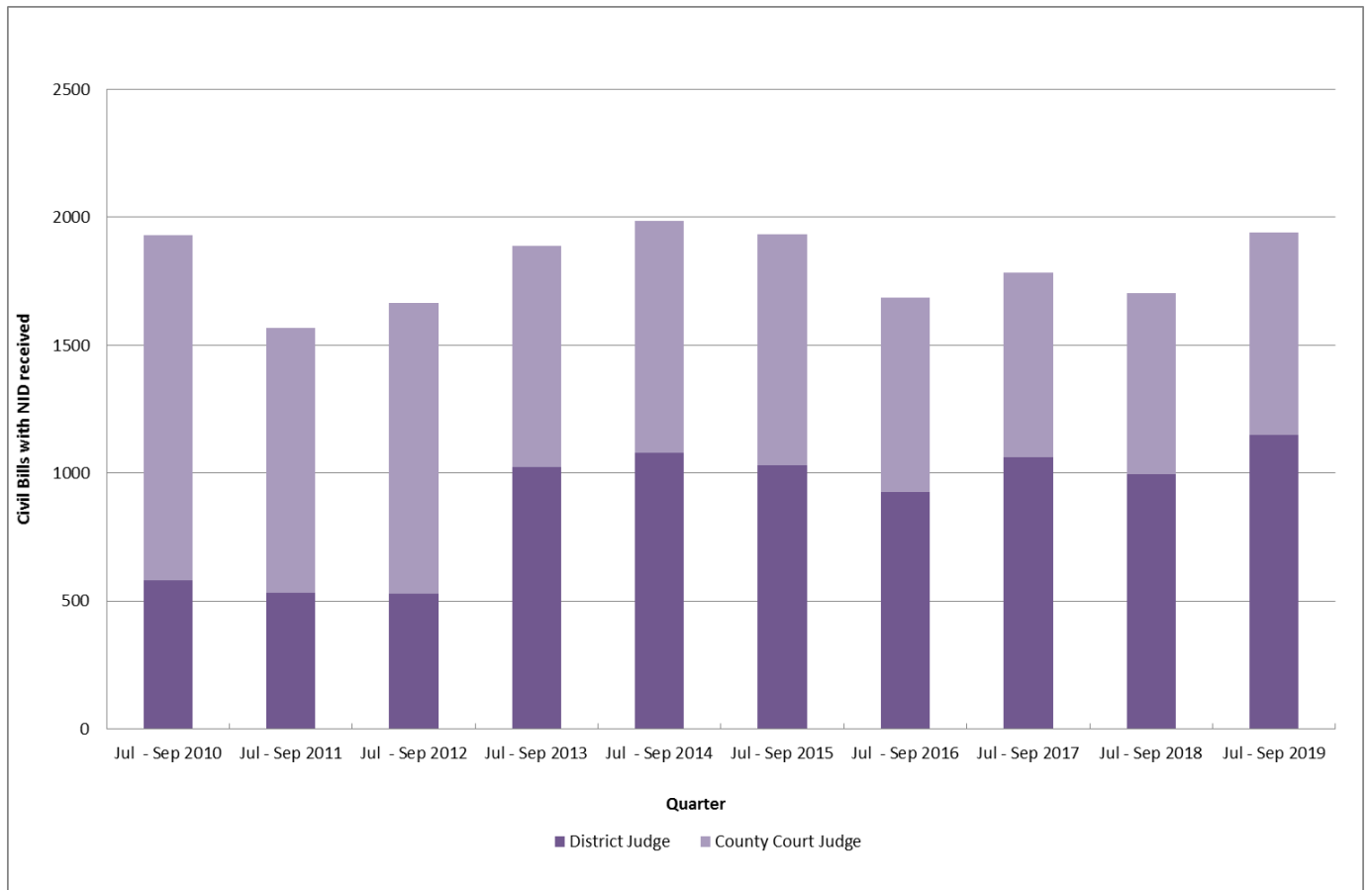


### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Ordinary civil bills

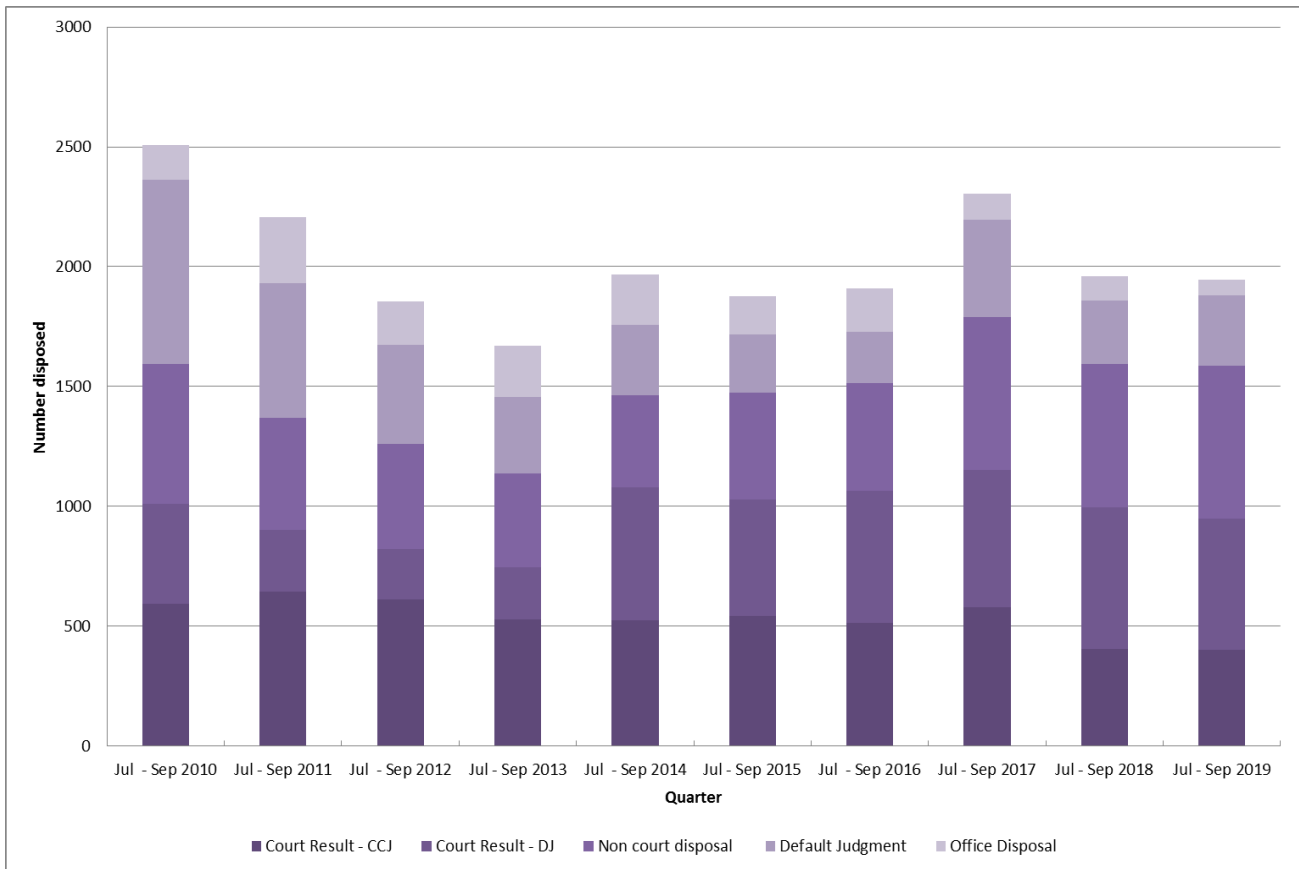
There were 1,939 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 14% increase on the same quarter last year (1,702) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received – July to September 2010 to July to September 2019**



In total, 1,946 civil bills were disposed, a 1% decrease on the 1,960 disposed during the same period in 2018 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Civil bills disposed, by method of disposal – July to September 2010 to July to September 2019**



The average time taken from issue to disposal of a civil bill was 52 weeks, compared to the 54 weeks reported for the same quarter in 2018.

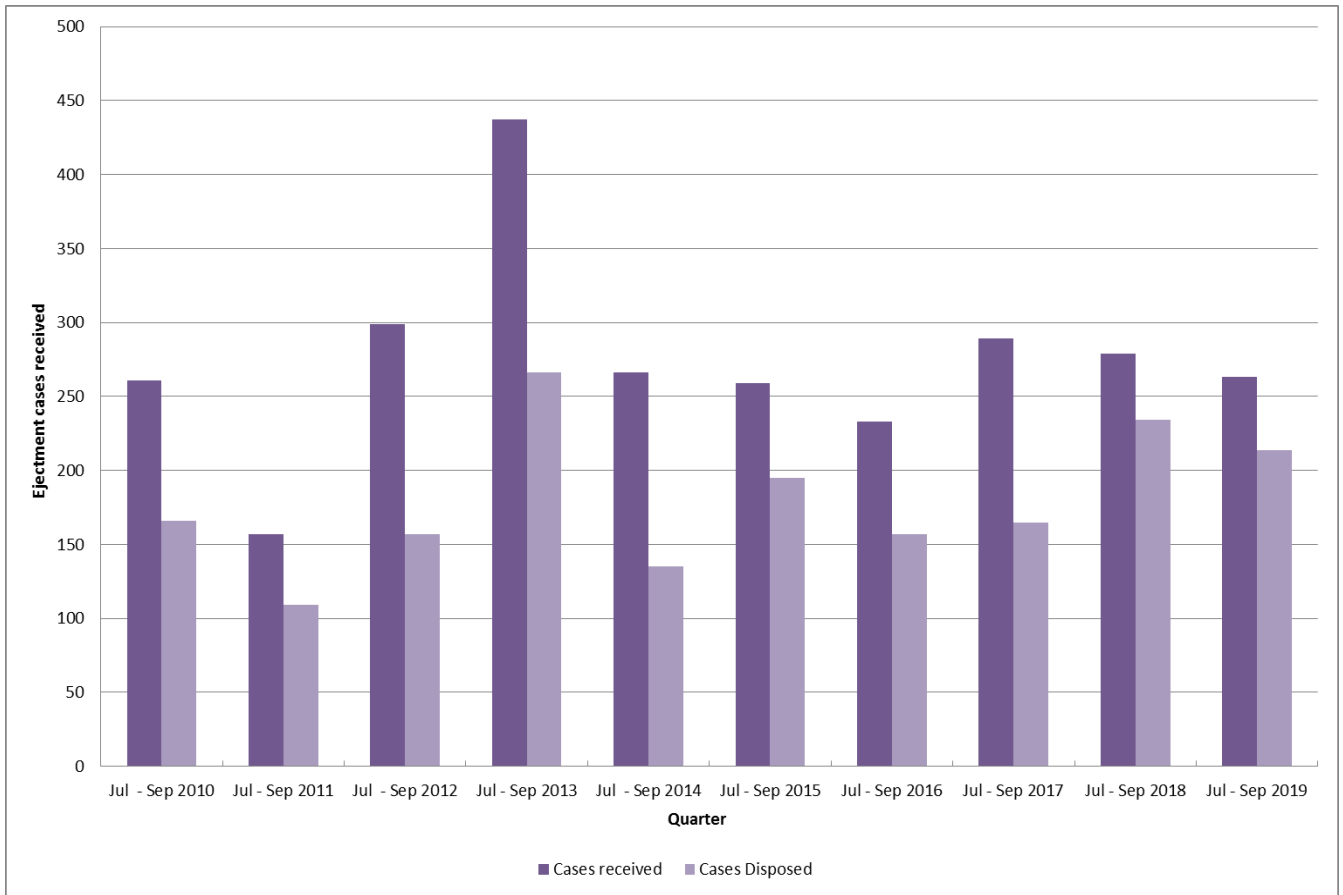
### 3.2 Equity

A total of 39 equity cases were received during July to September 2019, fourteen more than the number received during the period July to September 2018 (25). The number of equity cases disposed decreased from 23 during the period July to September 2018, to 18 this quarter. The average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases was 67 weeks, up from 65 weeks during the same period last year. The relatively small number of equity cases disposed each quarter can lead to significant changes in average times observed from issue to disposal.

### 3.3 Ejectment

A total of 263 ejectment cases were received, down 6% on the 279 cases received during July to September 2018, with the number of ejectment cases disposed decreasing by 9%, from 234 in the same quarter last year to 214 this quarter (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed – July to September 2010 to July to September 2019**

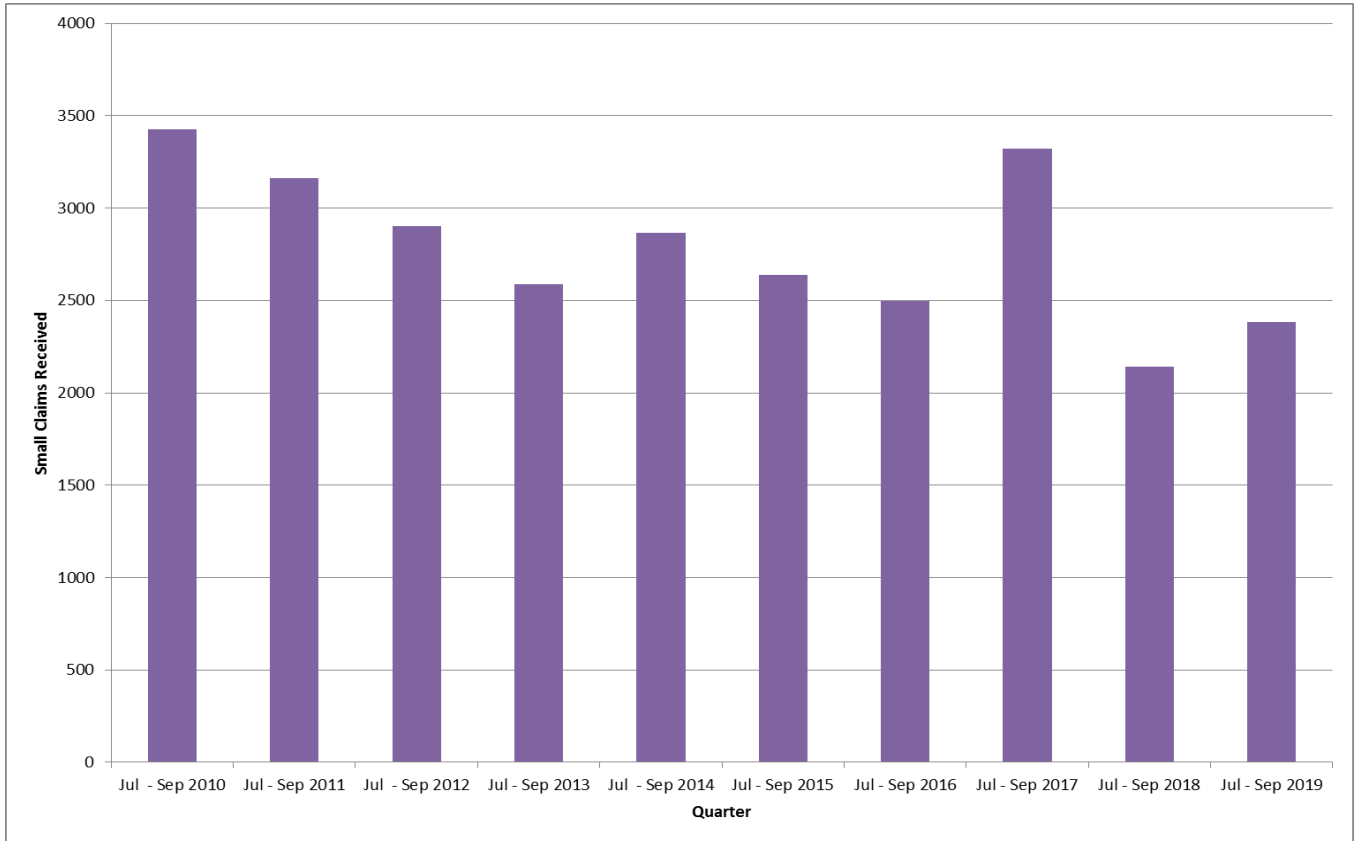


The average time taken from issue to disposal for ejectment cases was 23 weeks, a decrease on the 24 weeks taken during the July to September quarter in 2018.

### 3.4 Small claims

2,382 small claims were received, up 11% on the 2,142 received during the same quarter last year (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Small claims cases received – July to September 2010 to July to September 2019**



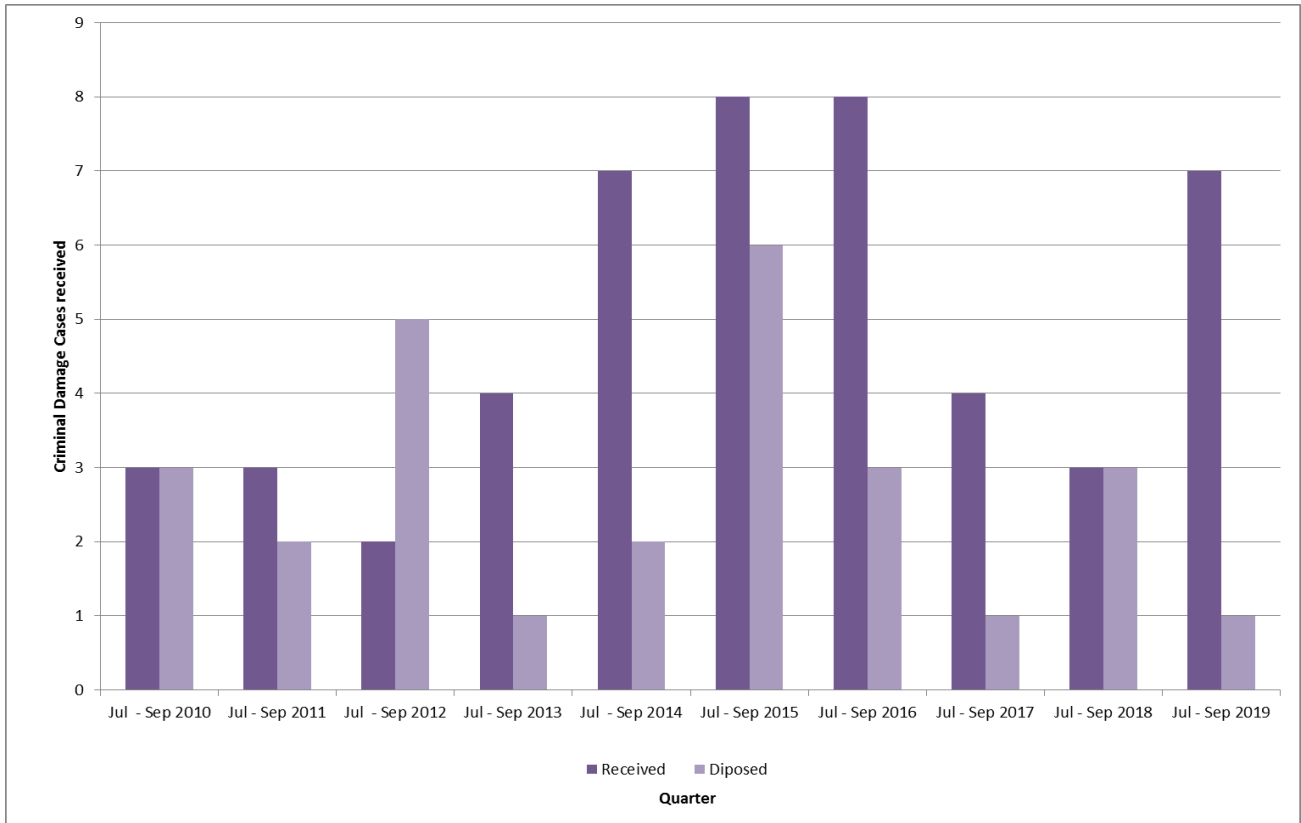
The number of small claims cases disposed increased by 24% from 1,933 during July to September 2018 to 2,390 this quarter. Of the 2,390 small claims disposed during the quarter, the majority (68%) were disposed by way of default judgment.

The average number of weeks from issue to disposal for small claims cases was 25 weeks, an increase on the 23 weeks taken in the corresponding quarter last year.

### 3.5 Criminal Damage

Seven criminal damage cases were received, with one disposed during the quarter. This compares with three cases received and three cases disposed during the same quarter in 2018 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed – July to September 2010 to July to September 2019**



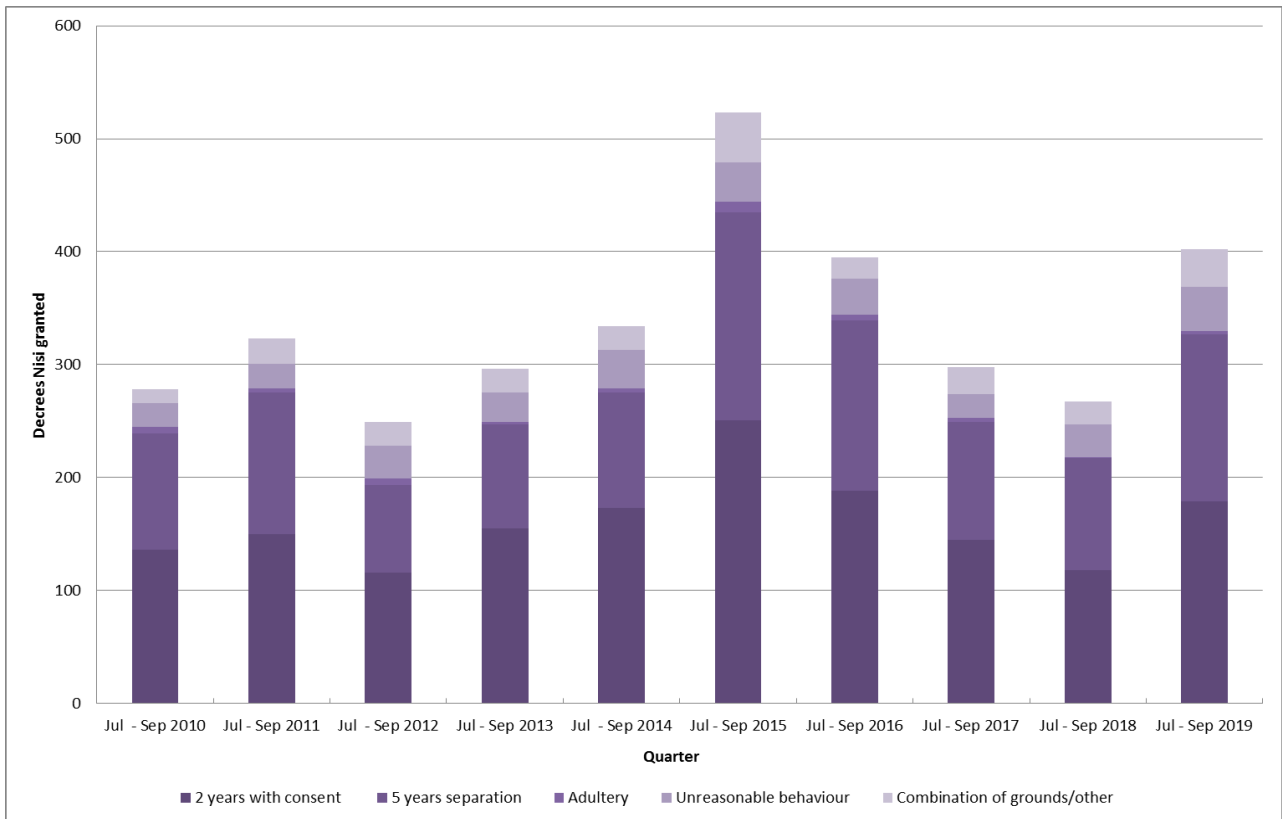
### 3.6 Divorces

While all divorces are received in the High Court, divorce decrees are also granted and decrees absolute are also issued in the County Court for less contentious and undefended cases.

A total of 402 divorce decrees were granted in the County Court, up 51% on the 267 granted during the same period last year.

The main type of divorce decree granted was '2 years with consent' accounting for 45% of decrees (179), followed by '5 years separation', accounting for 37% of decrees (148) (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type – July to September 2010 to July to September 2019**



A total of 311 decrees absolute were issued in the County Court, an increase of 6% on the 294 issued during the period July to September 2018. The most common type of decree absolute was ‘2 years with consent’, accounting for 46% (142) of cases.

The average time taken from issue to the date a divorce decree was granted was 34 weeks, with an average of eight weeks from the date the decree was granted until the date the decree absolute was issued. This compares to 32 weeks and eight weeks during the same period last year.

### 3.7 Licences

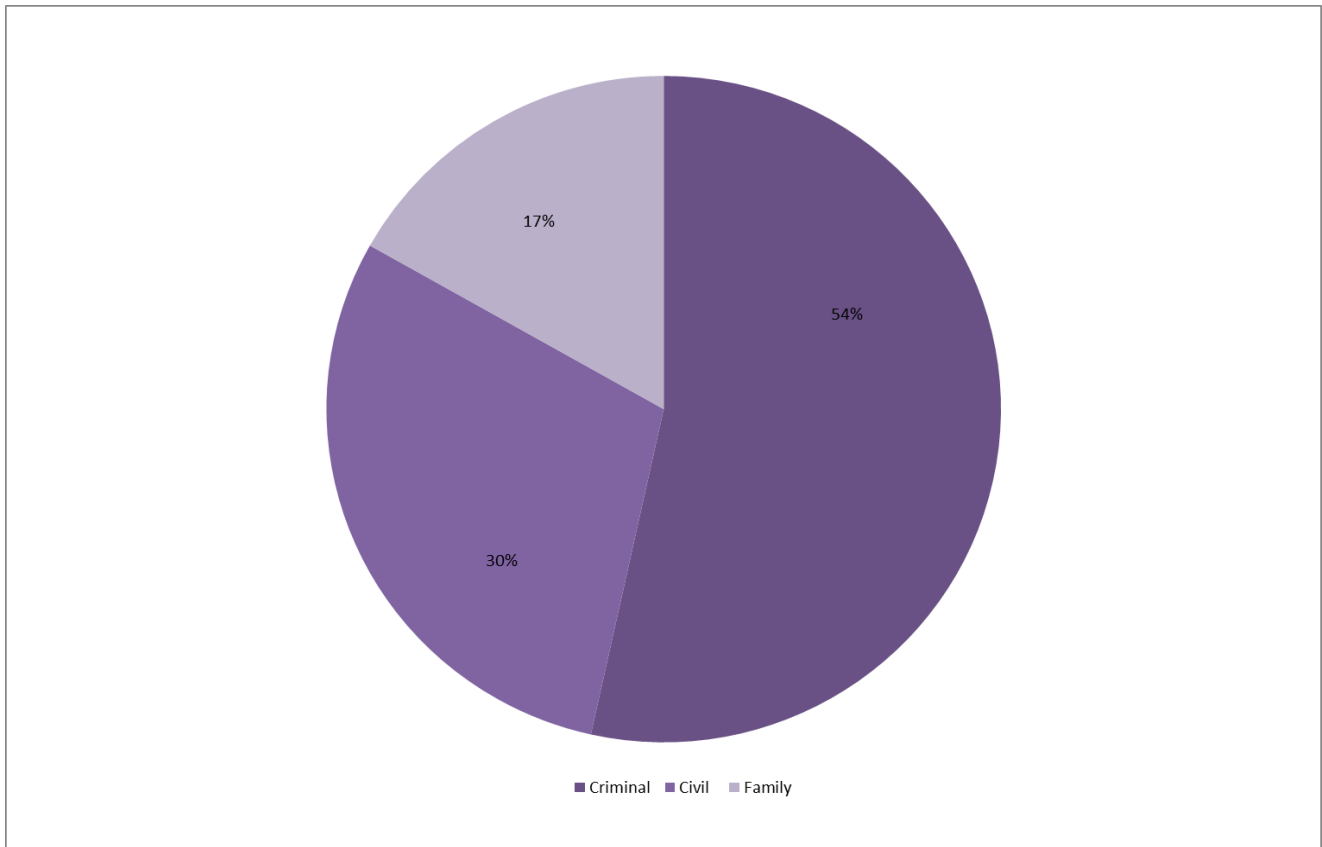
There were 38 licence applications received and 23 disposed, compared to the 30 received and 23 disposed during the same quarter last year.

### 3.8 Sitting Days

County Court and District Judges sat a total of 705 sitting days during the quarter, up 4% on the 680 sitting days recorded during the period July to September 2018.

Within these 705 sitting days, 54% of time was spent on criminal business, 30% of time was spent on civil business and 17% of time was spent on family business (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type – July to September 2019**

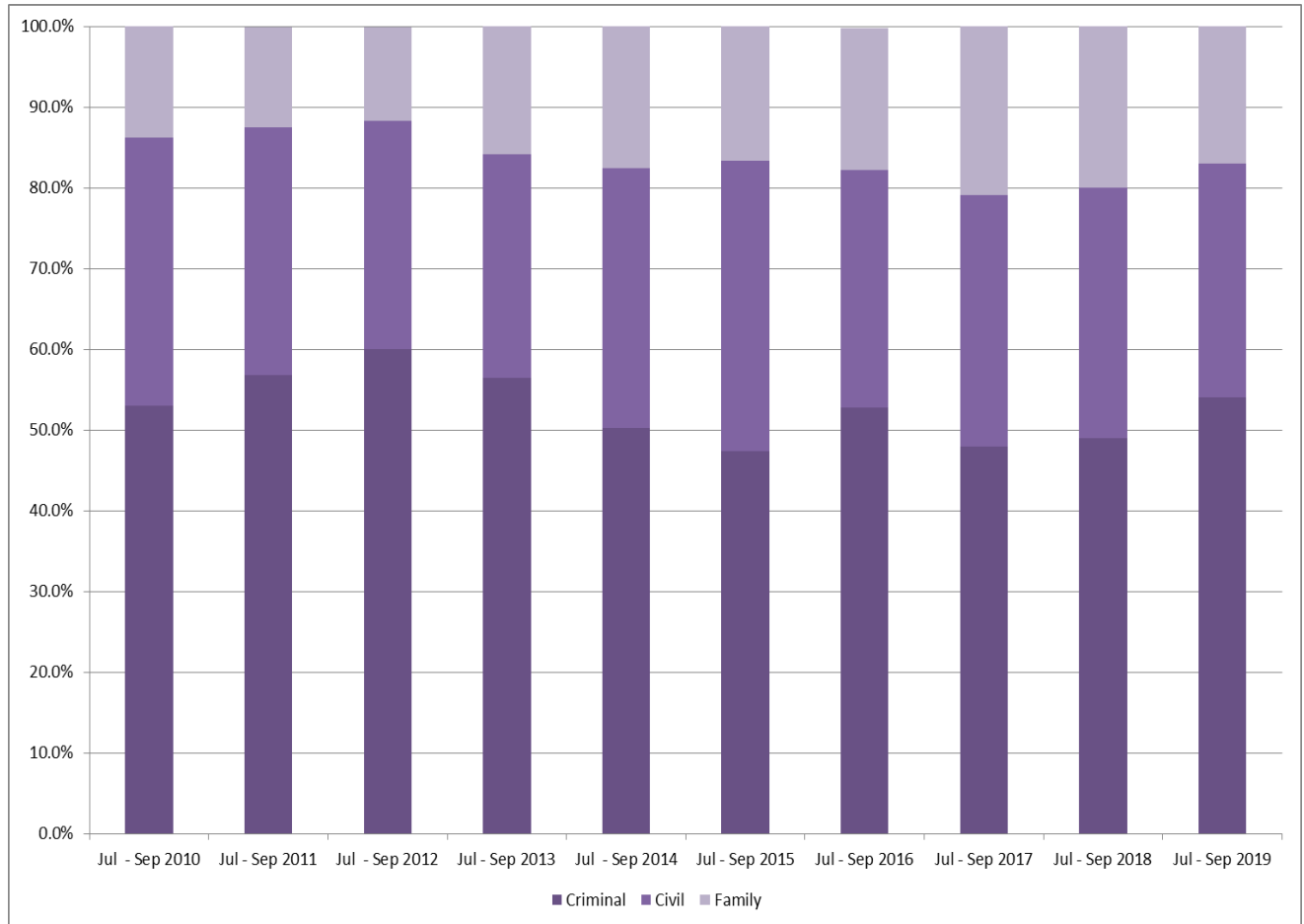


Due to rounding, the percentages may not add up to 100%

The proportion of time spent on criminal business has fluctuated during July to September quarter since 2007, peaking at 60% during the quarter July to September 2012. This is largely reflective of County Court Judges dealing with increased volumes of cases in the Crown Court over that particular period. The proportion of time spent on criminal business then decreased to 47% during July to September 2015, which was reflective of the action taken by a number of solicitors and counsel who withdrew their representation from a number of Crown Court cases in response to the introduction, in May 2015, of new rules in relation to legal aid remuneration. Following resolution of this dispute in February 2016, activity in the Crown Court has fluctuated slightly with the proportion of time spent by County Court Judges on criminal business increasing to 53% of sittings during July to September 2016, while the backlog of cases arising from the dispute was being addressed. Progress made in addressing the backlog has meant the proportion of time spent on

criminal business fell below 50% in both 2017 and 2018, with the proportion of time spent on criminal business rising to 54% this quarter.

**Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type – July to September 2010 to July to September 2019**





## APPENDIX 1 – TABLES

### Civil Bills

Table 1: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications received

<b>Case</b>	Laganside Courts	398
	Newtownards Court Office	117
	Downpatrick Court Office	40
	Craigavon Court Office	58
	Armagh Court Office	17
	Omagh Court Office	66
	Strabane Court Office	3
	Antrim Court Office	26
	Londonderry Court Office	56
	Enniskillen Court Office	4
	Coleraine Court Office	43
	Newry Court Office	78
	Magherafelt Court Office	10
	Ballymena Court Office	30
	Lisburn Court Office	57
	Dungannon Court Office	17
	Civil Processing Centre	1743
<b>Total</b>	<b>2763</b>	
<b>Application</b>	Laganside Courts	321
	Newtownards Court Office	74
	Downpatrick Court Office	12
	Craigavon Court Office	72
	Armagh Court Office	8
	Omagh Court Office	63
	Antrim Court Office	5
	Londonderry Court Office	51
	Coleraine Court Office	35
	Newry Court Office	54
	Ballymena Court Office	10
	Lisburn Court Office	32
	Civil Processing Centre	511
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1248</b>

**Table 2: Number of ordinary civil bill cases with NIDs received by judicial level**

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	306	294	600
Newtownards Court Office	121	22	143
Downpatrick Court Office	24	33	57
Craigavon Court Office	56	34	90
Armagh Court Office	11	6	17
Omagh Court Office	56	37	93
Strabane Court Office	1	3	4
Antrim Court Office	21	15	36
Londonderry Court Office	69	27	96
Enniskillen Court Office	8		8
Coleraine Court Office	35	35	70
Newry Court Office	74	46	120
Limavady Court Office	1		1
Magherafelt Court Office	7	5	12
Ballymena Court Office	20	21	41
Lisburn Court Office	56	25	81
Dungannon Court Office	16	12	28
Civil Processing Centre	267	175	442
<b>Total</b>	<b>1149</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>1939</b>

**Table 3: Number of ordinary civil bills cases and applications disposed**

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Default judgement	Office disposal	Total
<b>Case</b>	<b>Laganside Courts</b>	264	238	233	11	20	766
	<b>Newtownards Court Office</b>	6	81	60	2	2	151
	<b>Downpatrick Court Office</b>	5	4	16	1	4	30
	<b>Craigavon Court Office</b>	20	21	48	3	2	94
	<b>Armagh Court Office</b>	2	10	5		1	18
	<b>Omagh Court Office</b>	22	38	54	2	5	121
	<b>Strabane Court Office</b>			1			1
	<b>Antrim Court Office</b>	5	2	9		1	17
	<b>Londonderry Court Office</b>	15	35	28		5	83
	<b>Enniskillen Court Office</b>			6			6
	<b>Coleraine Court Office</b>	14	28	46	3	7	98
	<b>Newry Court Office</b>	25	47	51	2	7	132
	<b>Magherafelt Court Office</b>			4			4
	<b>Ballymena Court Office</b>	3	4	4	2		13
	<b>Lisburn Court Office</b>	20	36	45	3	2	106
	<b>Dungannon Court Office</b>	2	2	7			11
	<b>Civil Processing Centre</b>			21	265	9	295
<b>Total</b>	403	546	638	294	65	1946	
<b>Application</b>	<b>Laganside Courts</b>	42	12	107			161
	<b>Newtownards Court Office</b>	13	2	18			33
	<b>Downpatrick Court Office</b>	2		3			5
	<b>Craigavon Court Office</b>	5	4	21			30
	<b>Armagh Court Office</b>	1					1
	<b>Omagh Court Office</b>	3	8	22			33
	<b>Antrim Court Office</b>	2	1	1			4
	<b>Londonderry Court Office</b>	4	4	18			26
	<b>Coleraine Court Office</b>	5	6	9			20
	<b>Newry Court Office</b>	4	4	16			24
	<b>Ballymena Court Office</b>			2			2
	<b>Lisburn Court Office</b>	4	2	1			7
	<b>Civil Processing Centre</b>			40			40
<b>Total</b>	85	43	258			386	

Table 4: Number of ordinary civil bills cases by amount awarded

			No value	Less than £3000	£3000-14999	£15000-29999	£30000 and over	Total
Case	Processing Office	Laganside Courts	154	93	240	12	3	502
		Newtownards Court Office	17	33	37			87
		Downpatrick Court Office		2	6	1		9
		Craigavon Court Office	8	9	23	1		41
		Armagh Court Office	3	6	2	1		12
		Omagh Court Office	14	19	24	3		60
		Antrim Court Office	1	1	5			7
		Londonderry Court Office	11	16	22		1	50
		Coleraine Court Office	12	13	17			42
		Newry Court Office	12	21	34	5		72
		Ballymena Court Office	2	2	3			7
		Lisburn Court Office	14	18	22	2		56
		Dungannon Court Office		1	2	1		4
Total			248	234	437	26	4	949

Table 5: Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	811	1236	2047
Newtownards Court Office	126	29	155
Downpatrick Court Office	41	97	138
Craigavon Court Office	83	77	160
Armagh Court Office	14	11	25
Omagh Court Office	172	201	373
Strabane Court Office	2	6	8
Antrim Court Office	33	39	72
Londonderry Court Office	140	116	256
Enniskillen Court Office	6	1	7
Coleraine Court Office	120	123	243
Newry Court Office	103	96	199
Limavady Court Office	1		1
Magherafelt Court Office	10	7	17
Ballymena Court Office	42	38	80
Lisburn Court Office	83	60	143
Dungannon Court Office	18	24	42
Central Office		1	1
Civil Processing Centre	366	266	632
Total	2171	2428	4599

**Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR**

	District judge	County court judge	Total
<b>Laganside Courts</b>	353	585	938
<b>Newtownards Court Office</b>	70	4	74
<b>Downpatrick Court Office</b>	3	57	60
<b>Craigavon Court Office</b>	65	33	98
<b>Armagh Court Office</b>	5	7	12
<b>Omagh Court Office</b>	85	79	164
<b>Strabane Court Office</b>		1	1
<b>Antrim Court Office</b>	11	12	23
<b>Londonderry Court Office</b>	55	46	101
<b>Enniskillen Court Office</b>	2		2
<b>Coleraine Court Office</b>	67	71	138
<b>Newry Court Office</b>	73	57	130
<b>Limavady Court Office</b>	1		1
<b>Magherafelt Court Office</b>	4	2	6
<b>Ballymena Court Office</b>	12	12	24
<b>Lisburn Court Office</b>	40	31	71
<b>Dungannon Court Office</b>	7	6	13
<b>Civil Processing Centre</b>	4	2	6
<b>Total</b>	857	1005	1862

**Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases**

		Issue to disposal
<b>Case</b>	<b>Laganside Courts</b>	57
	<b>Newtownards Court Office</b>	32
	<b>Downpatrick Court Office</b>	26
	<b>Craigavon Court Office</b>	38
	<b>Armagh Court Office</b>	46
	<b>Omagh Court Office</b>	65
	<b>Antrim Court Office</b>	51
	<b>Londonderry Court Office</b>	46
	<b>Coleraine Court Office</b>	57
	<b>Newry Court Office</b>	48
	<b>Ballymena Court Office</b>	68
	<b>Lisburn Court Office</b>	43
	<b>Dungannon Court Office</b>	150
	<b>Total</b>	52

Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications

			Issue to disposal
Application	Processing Office	Laganside Courts	16
		Newtownards Court Office	10
		Downpatrick Court Office	0
		Craigavon Court Office	17
		Armagh Court Office	0
		Omagh Court Office	9
		Antrim Court Office	13
		Londonderry Court Office	7
		Coleraine Court Office	11
		Newry Court Office	7
		Lisburn Court Office	10
		Total	

## Equity

Table 9: Equity cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	11
	Newtownards Court Office	1
	Downpatrick Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	5
	Londonderry Court Office	2
	Coleraine Court Office	3
	Newry Court Office	1
	Civil Processing Centre	15
	Total	39
Application	Laganside Courts	3
	Newtownards Court Office	2
	Downpatrick Court Office	1
	Craigavon Court Office	3
	Omagh Court Office	3
	Londonderry Court Office	3
	Civil Processing Centre	2
	Total	17

**Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed**

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	2		1	3
	Craigavon Court Office	1	1	1	3
	Omagh Court Office	2		1	3
	Londonderry Court Office			1	1
	Coleraine Court Office	5			5
	Newry Court Office	1		1	2
	Lisburn Court Office	1			1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>
Application	Laganside Courts			2	2
	Newtownards Court Office	1			1
	Craigavon Court Office			3	3
	Omagh Court Office	2			2
	Newry Court Office	1			1
	Lisburn Court Office			1	1
	Civil Processing Centre			1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>

**Table 11: Outstanding equity cases**

Case	Laganside Courts	36
	Newtownards Court Office	4
	Downpatrick Court Office	6
	Craigavon Court Office	3
	Armagh Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	64
	Strabane Court Office	1
	Londonderry Court Office	22
	Enniskillen Court Office	2
	Coleraine Court Office	23
	Newry Court Office	31
	Ballymena Court Office	5
	Lisburn Court Office	5
	Dungannon Court Office	2
	Civil Processing Centre	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	

Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	28
	Craigavon Court Office	76
	Omagh Court Office	48
	Coleraine Court Office	63
	Newry Court Office	156
	Lisburn Court Office	100
	Total	67
Application	Newtownards Court Office	7
	Omagh Court Office	7
	Newry Court Office	19
	Total	10

## Ejectment

Table 13: Ejectment cases received

Case	Laganside Courts	53
	Newtownards Court Office	9
	Craigavon Court Office	3
	Armagh Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	3
	Londonderry Court Office	4
	Coleraine Court Office	3
	Newry Court Office	7
	Ballymena Court Office	5
	Lisburn Court Office	9
	Civil Processing Centre	166
	Total	263



Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Laganside Courts		104	1	105
	Newtownards Court Office		22		22
	Craigavon Court Office	1	4		5
	Armagh Court Office		1		1
	Omagh Court Office		11	1	12
	Londonderry Court Office	2	12		14
	Coleraine Court Office	4	7		11
	Newry Court Office		13	1	14
	Ballymena Court Office		2	1	3
	Lisburn Court Office		27		27
	Total	7	203	4	214

Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID

Case	Laganside Courts	15
	Newtownards Court Office	3
	Downpatrick Court Office	5
	Omagh Court Office	7
	Antrim Court Office	1
	Londonderry Court Office	5
	Enniskillen Court Office	1
	Coleraine Court Office	3
	Newry Court Office	2
	Lisburn Court Office	1
	Civil Processing Centre	9
	Total	52

Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	21
	Newtownards Court Office	24
	Craigavon Court Office	27
	Armagh Court Office	23
	Omagh Court Office	27
	Londonderry Court Office	30
	Coleraine Court Office	18
	Newry Court Office	15
	Ballymena Court Office	21
	Lisburn Court Office	30
	Total	23

## Small Claims

Table 17: Number of small claims cases and applications received

<b>Case</b>	Laganside Courts	81
	Newtownards Court Office	26
	Craigavon Court Office	13
	Armagh Court Office	6
	Omagh Court Office	13
	Londonderry Court Office	11
	Coleraine Court Office	20
	Newry Court Office	10
	Ballymena Court Office	8
	Lisburn Court Office	3
	Civil Processing Centre	2191
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2382</b>
	<b>Application</b>	Laganside Courts
Newtownards Court Office		4
Craigavon Court Office		1
Omagh Court Office		3
Londonderry Court Office		3
Coleraine Court Office		4
Newry Court Office		2
Civil Processing Centre		5
<b>Total</b>		<b>34</b>

Table 18: Number of small claims cases with NODs received

<b>Case</b>	Laganside Courts	101
	Newtownards Court Office	31
	Downpatrick Court Office	1
	Craigavon Court Office	17
		6
	Omagh Court Office	16
	Londonderry Court Office	18
	Enniskillen Court Office	1
	Coleraine Court Office	20
	Newry Court Office	14
	Ballymena Court Office	11
	Lisburn Court Office	5
	Civil Processing Centre	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	

**Table 19: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed**

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Office disposal	Default judgement	Total
<b>Case</b>	Laganside Courts	61	7	43	7	118
	Newtownards Court Office	29	2	7		38
	Downpatrick Court Office	4				4
	Craigavon Court Office	15	15	1		31
	Armagh Court Office	5				5
	Omagh Court Office	8	2	2	1	13
	Londonderry Court Office	10		6	1	17
	Enniskillen Court Office	2	1			3
	Coleraine Court Office	11	1	4	2	18
	Newry Court Office	11	2	2	1	16
	Ballymena Court Office	4		1		5
	Lisburn Court Office	5	4	2		11
	Dungannon Court Office			1		1
	Civil Processing Centre		2	504	1604	2110
	<b>Total</b>	165	36	573	1616	2390
<b>Application</b>	Laganside Courts	9	2			11
	Newtownards Court Office	2	1			3
	Craigavon Court Office	1	3			4
	Omagh Court Office	3				3
	Londonderry Court Office	1				1
	Coleraine Court Office	1				1
	Newry Court Office	1				1
	Civil Processing Centre		1			1
	<b>Total</b>	18	7			25

**Table 20: Outstanding small claims with NOD**

Laganside Courts	185
Newtownards Court Office	13
Craigavon Court Office	25
Armagh Court Office	10
Omagh Court Office	34
Londonderry Court Office	18
Coleraine Court Office	45
Newry Court Office	33
Ballymena Court Office	15
Lisburn Court Office	6
Civil Processing Centre	21
<b>Total</b>	405

Table 21: Time intervals in weeks for small claims

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	22
	Newtownards Court Office	22
	Downpatrick Court Office	12
	Craigavon Court Office	53
	Armagh Court Office	17
	Omagh Court Office	32
	Londonderry Court Office	17
	Enniskillen Court Office	21
	Coleraine Court Office	24
	Newry Court Office	21
	Ballymena Court Office	21
	Lisburn Court Office	23
	Total	25
	Application	Laganside Courts
Newtownards Court Office		3
Craigavon Court Office		3
Omagh Court Office		5
Londonderry Court Office		10
Coleraine Court Office		4
Newry Court Office		5
Total		5

## Criminal Damage

Table 22: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	3
	Omagh Court Office	3
	Londonderry Court Office	1
	Total	7
Application	Laganside Courts	1
	Total	1

Table 23: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed

		Court disposal	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	1	1
	Total	1	1
Application	Laganside Courts	1	1
	Total	1	1

**Table 24: Outstanding criminal damage cases**

Laganside Courts	19
Newtownards Court Office	2
Armagh Court Office	1
Omagh Court Office	11
Londonderry Court Office	2
Coleraine Court Office	5
Newry Court Office	7
Ballymena Court Office	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

**Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage**

		<b>Issue to disposal</b>
<b>Case</b>	Laganside Courts	53
	<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Application</b>	Laganside Courts	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>

Excludes default judgements, non court disposals and office disposals

## **Divorces**

**Table 26: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted**

	<b>2 years with consent</b>	<b>5 years separation</b>	<b>Adultery</b>	<b>Unreasonable behaviour</b>	<b>Combination of grounds/other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Laganside Courts	73	67	1	10	14	165
Downpatrick Court Office	7	7		1	1	16
Craigavon Court Office	26	7	1	5	6	45
Armagh Court Office		1				1
Omagh Court Office	22	13		2	2	39
Londonderry Court Office	18	13	1	10	6	48
Coleraine Court Office	20	28		7	2	57
Newry Court Office	13	11		4	2	30
Dungannon Court Office		1				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>402</b>

**Table 27: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued**

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Laganside Courts	48	47	2	3		100
Newtownards Court Office						1
Downpatrick Court Office	12	7	1	1	1	22
Craigavon Court Office	15	12	1	8	4	40
Armagh Court Office	2			1		3
Omagh Court Office	14	8		1	3	26
Londonderry Court Office	17	9	1	10	5	42
Coleraine Court Office	25	24		6	5	60
Newry Court Office	8	2		4	1	15
Dungannon Court Office		2				2
<b>Total</b>	142	111	5	34	19	311

**Table 28: Matrimonial applications received**

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	5	1		6
Newtownards Court Office	2			2
Craigavon Court Office	4		1	5
Omagh Court Office	3			3
Londonderry Court Office		1	2	3
Coleraine Court Office	7			7
Newry Court Office	6			6
Dungannon Court Office	1			1
<b>Total</b>	28	2	3	33

**Table 29: Matrimonial applications disposed**

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	5	1		6
Newtownards Court Office	2			2
Craigavon Court Office	3		1	4
Armagh Court Office	1			1
Omagh Court Office	3			3
Londonderry Court Office	3			3
Coleraine Court Office	7		1	8
Newry Court Office	5			5
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>32</b>

**Table 30: Time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions**

	Issue to date decree granted	Date decree granted to date absolute issued
Laganside Courts	29	8
Downpatrick Court Office	32	7
Craigavon Court Office	34	9
Armagh Court Office	25	
Omagh Court Office	45	8
Londonderry Court Office	39	8
Coleraine Court Office	30	7
Newry Court Office	44	7
Dungannon Court Office	70	
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>8</b>

**Table 31: Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications**

	Issue to disposal
Laganside Courts	20
Newtownards Court Office	22
Craigavon Court Office	16
Armagh Court Office	27
Omagh Court Office	55
Londonderry Court Office	23
Coleraine Court Office	49
Newry Court Office	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

Excludes non-court disposals

## Licences

Table 32: Licences received and disposed

Court Office	Licences Received	Licences Disposed
Coleraine	2	1
Newtownards	10	1
Newry	3	2
Laganside Courts	13	12
Craigavon	2	2
Omagh	2	2
Londonderry	6	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>23</b>

## County Court and District Judge Sitting Days

Table 33: County Court Judge & District Judge Sitting Days

	Total time			Total criminal time	Total civil time	Total family time
	Number of sitting days	Average sitting	Total time			
Antrim	46	2:46:28	127:38:00	108:36:00	17:22:00	1:40:00
Ballymena	6	2:31:40	15:10:00	0:00:00	12:05:00	3:05:00
Laganside	308	2:31:55	779:51:00	334:37:00	250:43:00	194:31:00
Armagh	12	3:15:00	39:00:00	0:00:00	39:00:00	0:00:00
Lisburn	12	2:05:45	25:09:00	13:59:00	11:10:00	0:00:00
Magherafelt	2	1:25:00	2:50:00	0:00:00	2:50:00	0:00:00
Dungannon	32	4:07:11	131:50:00	109:45:00	10:10:00	11:55:00
Downpatrick	21	2:59:31	62:50:00	53:40:00	8:00:00	1:10:00
Craigavon	78	2:05:53	163:39:00	113:41:00	17:25:00	32:33:00
Strabane	6	2:52:30	17:15:00	3:30:00	13:05:00	0:40:00
Omagh	38	2:59:31	113:42:00	59:36:00	25:50:00	28:16:00
Enniskillen	4	2:52:30	11:30:00	0:00:00	10:35:00	0:55:00
Coleraine	12	3:52:25	46:29:00	3:30:00	36:39:00	6:20:00
Londonderry	62	2:28:01	152:58:00	112:42:00	24:07:00	16:09:00
Newtownards	34	1:51:30	63:11:00	24:41:00	38:15:00	0:15:00
Newry	32	1:20:22	42:52:00	24:36:00	12:37:00	5:39:00
<b>Total</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>2:32:50</b>	<b>1795:54:00</b>	<b>962:53:00</b>	<b>529:53:00</b>	<b>303:08:00</b>

A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers.



## **APPENDIX 2 - EXPLANATORY NOTES**

### **Amount awarded**

This relates to the monetary value awarded in cases such as small claims and ordinary civil bills. On occasion, the amount awarded may be unliquidated which means that the claim was not made for a specific amount of money, but rather, for example, damage caused to a property, for repairs for damage caused or for faulty workmanship.

### **Application**

The act of applying to a civil court to ask it to do something, for example to start proceedings or make an order.

### **Case**

The proceedings, arguments and evidence in court and the court hearing.

### **Certificate of Readiness (COR)**

When a small claim or civil bill is contested by the respondent, the matter will proceed to the county court for judgment. Before the case can be heard, both parties must contribute to the completion of a Certificate of Readiness (COR) which informs the court that the case is ready to heard and can therefore be listed by the court for hearing.

### **County Court Judge (CCJ)**

This is a judge who sits in the County Court and the Crown Court. In the County Court, they will sit on business such as ordinary civil bills (with a value over £10,000 and up to £30,000), criminal damage, licences, equity, ejection and divorces.

### **Court Disposal**

Includes all cases issued with a final order by County Court Judge or District Judge.

### **Criminal Damage**

These are cases in which there is an allegation that a property has been destroyed or damaged or where a person is alleged to have made threats, had intent, or was found to have anything on their property with intent to cause damage to another property.

### **Default Judgment**

This is a judgment in favour of one party due to some failure to take action by the other party. In most cases, this will be a judgment in favour of the applicant due to the failure of the respondent to contest the claim brought against them. The failure to take action is the default. The default judgment is the relief requested in the party's original petition.

## **Disposed**

The date a case is finally dealt with via a court or non-court result and the case is no longer in the court process.

## **District Judge (DJ)**

This is a judge who sits in the County Court or Magistrates' Court. In the County Court they will sit on business such as small claims and ordinary civil bills (with a value up to £10,000).

## **Divorces**

These are proceedings initiated in order to dissolve a marriage. Dissolutions of civil partnerships are also included within these figures. Following the issue of a divorce petition in the High Court, if it is a defended case it will be heard in the High Court and if it is an undefended case it may be heard either in the High Court or the County Court (depending on the choice of the individuals involved). Initially a Decree Nisi, judicial separation or nullity is granted, which is an initial order for divorce. Providing that no reason is provided to the court to challenge the nisi, a Decree Absolute, which is a final order for divorce that dissolves a marriage and permits an individual party to remarry, is made. A defended divorce is a proceeding in which an individual (the petitioner) applies for a divorce and the other party (the respondent) indicates that they wish to contest a divorce being granted at all, or on the reasons stated by the petitioner.

## **Equity**

Any type of proceeding which seeks a court judgement on disputes relating to property disputes i.e. who owns it, and should damages be paid.

## **Ejectment**

A legal document which seeks to recover possession of land and/or a dwelling house (e.g. where a tenant has stopped paying rent). Similar matters relating to properties owned with a mortgage are dealt with through proceedings within the Chancery Division of the High Court.

## **Issue**

This is the process by which a complaint or claim is lodged with the court. It can also be described as the 'Received Date'.

## **Licences**

These are applications for intoxicating liquor licences and certificates of registration for public houses and clubs, enabling their legal operation.

### **Matrimonial Application**

These are applications attached to divorce proceedings such as Ancillary Relief applications that relate to financial relief to one or both parties following a petition for divorce, for example, maintenance and the division of property/finances.

### **Notice of Dispute (NOD)**

When a small claim is taken by an applicant against a respondent, the respondent may contest the claim and signal their intention to dispute the claim through a Notice of Dispute. This means that the case will then be listed before a judge in court for resolution.

### **Non court disposal**

Includes all disposals not completed in court, for example settlements or withdrawals.

### **Notice of Intention to Defend (NID)**

When a civil bill is taken by an applicant against a respondent, the respondent may contest the claim and signal their intention to dispute the claim through a Notice of Intention to Defend. This means that the case will then be listed before a judge in court for resolution.

### **Ordinary civil bills**

A legal document which seeks to recover damages for (i) personal injury claims (injuries caused by negligence), for example, traffic accidents, falls on pavements and accidents at work and (ii) consumer disputes, for example, faulty goods or services. There have been a number of changes in the threshold for ordinary civil bills in recent years. Until 25 February 2013 ordinary civil bills related to cases seeking damages between £3,000 and £15,000 (prior to May 2011, the lower limit was £2,000). Following changes made on 25 February 2013, the upper limit for civil bills was extended to include cases seeking damages between £3,000 and £30,000.

### **Outstanding case**

A case that is currently active within the County Court system, for example, live cases not yet disposed.

### **Received**

The date the papers are lodged with the court and the fees receipted.

### **Sitting Days**

A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It is a period of work by a judge on a single day. Multiple sittings on one calendar date will be aggregated into one sitting day based on the Judicial Officer, venue and sitting date. Several types of business may be heard within one sitting day. Days are classified on the basis of the majority business undertaken, except for the Magistrates' Court, when it is based in the first instance, on the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for two or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers.

### **Small claims**

Small claims allow certain types of claims to be decided informally by the County Court, usually without the need of a solicitor or barrister. In general a small claim is one where the value to be claimed is not more than £3,000 (before May 2011 the upper limit was £2,000). Examples of small claims are (i) compensation for faulty services by, for example, builders, dry cleaners and garages (ii) compensation for faulty goods such as electrical goods (iii) disputes between landlords and tenants for rent arrears or compensation for not doing repairs and (iv) debts or wages owed or money in lieu of notice.

### **Time intervals**

This is the time taken (in weeks) between the case, application or claim being received by the court and the date it is finally resolved, by either the court, an arrangement between parties out of court or by being withdrawn by the applicant.

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