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[Northern Ireland Court Service Statistical Publications](#)

Executive Summary

This report covers data from January to March 2021, so court activity during this period has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Figures published show that although courts continue to carry out urgent business and make more use of remote audio and video technology, the impact of COVID-19 is evident. It is expected that the limited operation of the county courts during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have an impact on many of the published figures in this and future releases.

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at County Courts in Northern Ireland during the period January to March 2021 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2012. On 31st 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 January to March 2021:
- There were 1,688 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 9% decrease on the same quarter last year (1,856). In total, 2,110 civil bills were disposed, a decrease of 4% on the number disposed during the same period in 2020 (2,197).
- 33 equity cases were received during January to March 2021, up by eight cases compared to the 25 cases received during the period January to March 2020, while 31 equity cases were disposed, compared with 26 equity cases disposed during the same period last year.
- A total of 72 ejectment cases were received, down 78% on the 325 cases received during January to March 2020, with the number of ejectment cases disposed decreasing by 70%, from 217 in the same quarter last year to 66 this quarter.
- 1,342 small claims were received, down 44% on the 2,385 cases received during the same quarter last year. The number of small claims cases disposed decreased by 27% from 1,928 during January to March 2020 to 1,399 this quarter.
- One criminal damage case was received, compared to two received during the period January to March 2020. No criminal damage cases were disposed during the quarter, a decrease on the 4 disposed during the same quarter last year.
- A total of 283 divorce decrees were granted in the County Court, down 13% on the 324 granted during the same period last year.

- County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,115 sitting days during the quarter, the same number that was recorded during the period January to March 2020. Some 44% of time was spent on criminal business with 27% spent on civil business and 28% on family business (compared to 56%, 25% and 19% respectively during January to March 2020).

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 (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

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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 2021. 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 second quarter of 2021 and will be published on 13th August 2021.

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 31st 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, [Northern Ireland Court Service Statistical Publications](#)

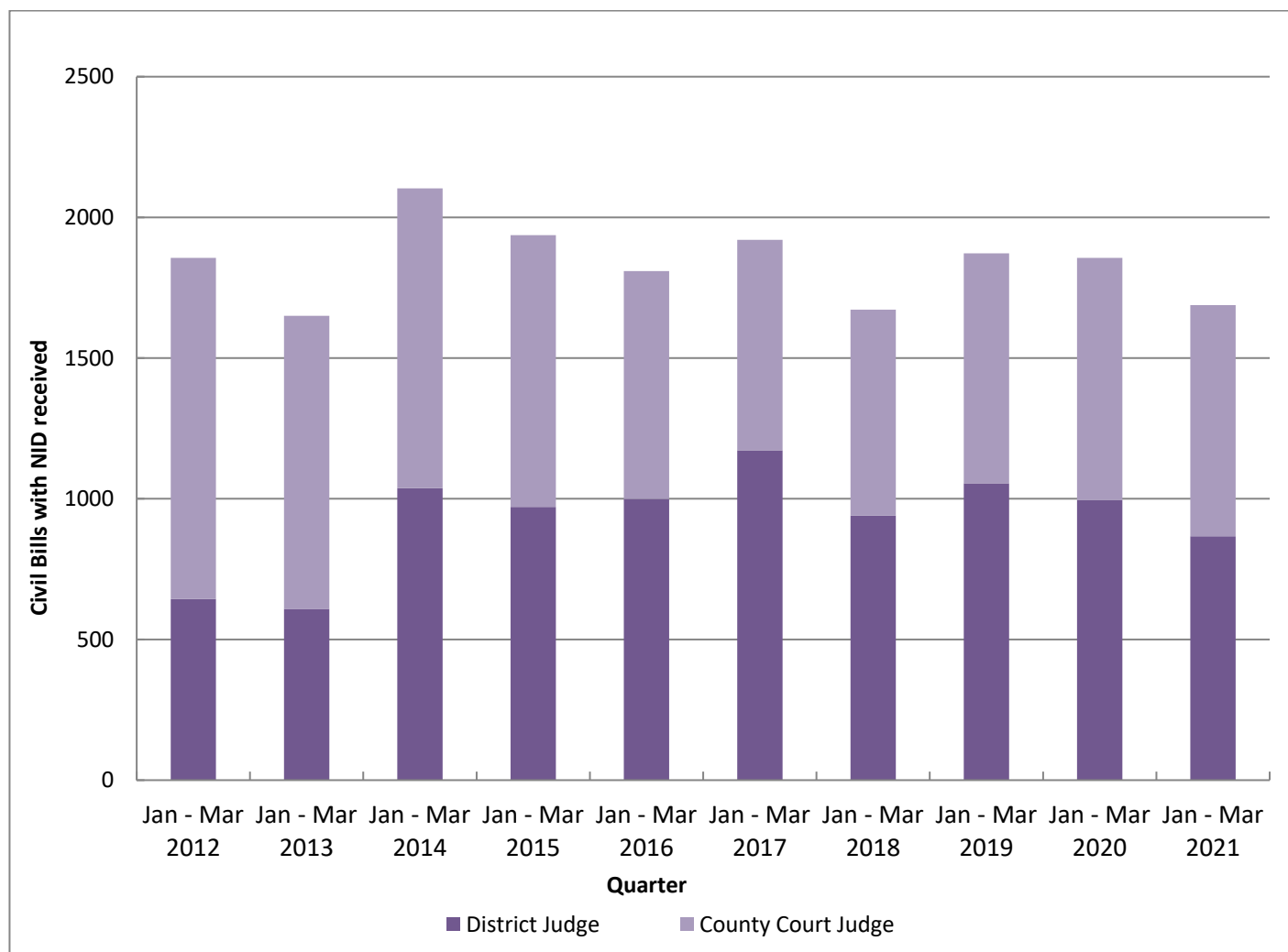
Incorrect figures of changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Ordinary civil bills

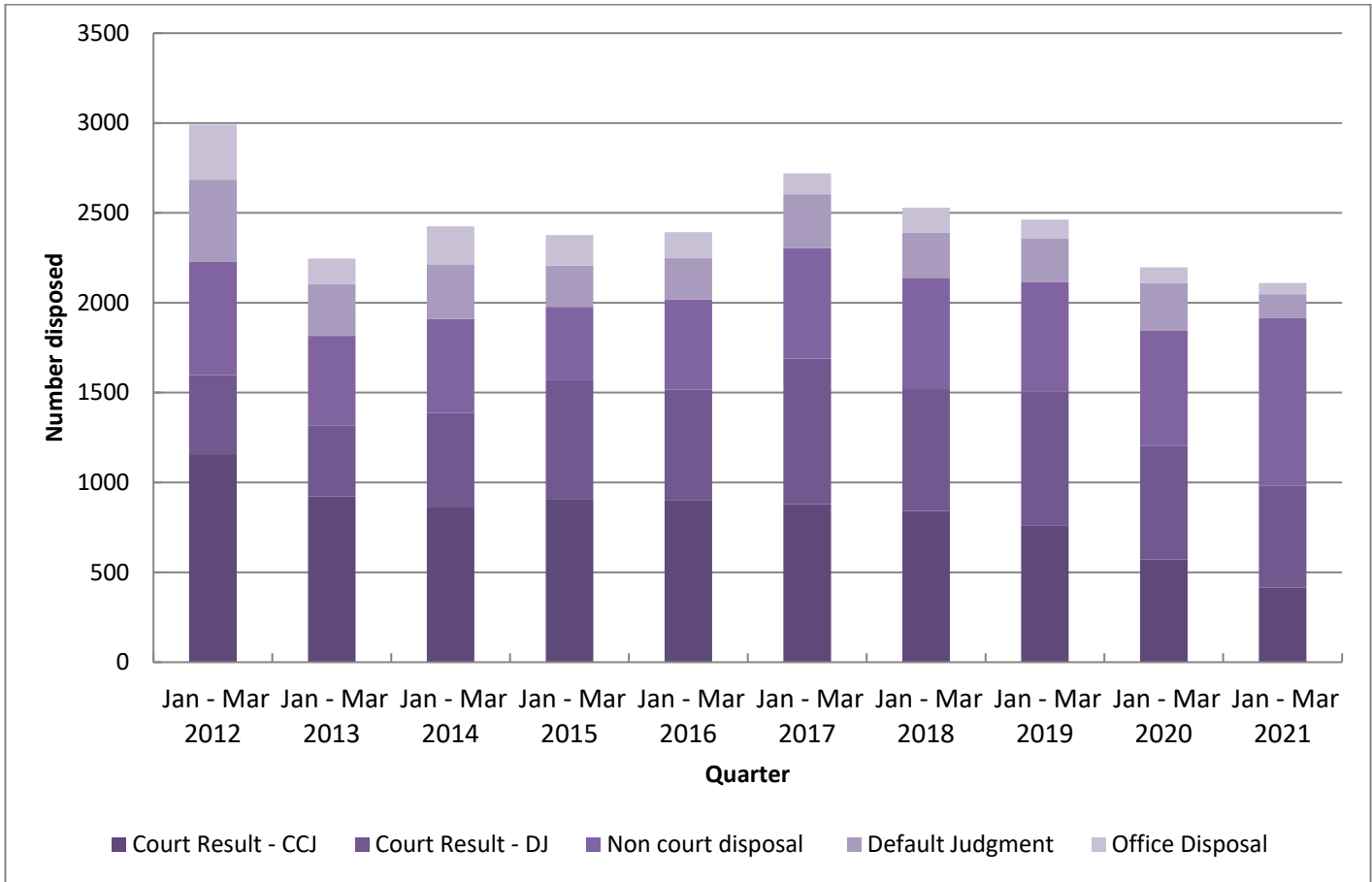
There were 1,688 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 9% decrease on the same quarter last year (1,856) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received – January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



In total, 2,110 civil bills were disposed, a 4% decrease on the 2,197 disposed during the same period in 2020 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Civil bills disposed, by method of disposal – January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



The average time taken from issue to disposal of a civil bill was 61 weeks, compared to the 51 weeks reported for the same quarter in 2020.

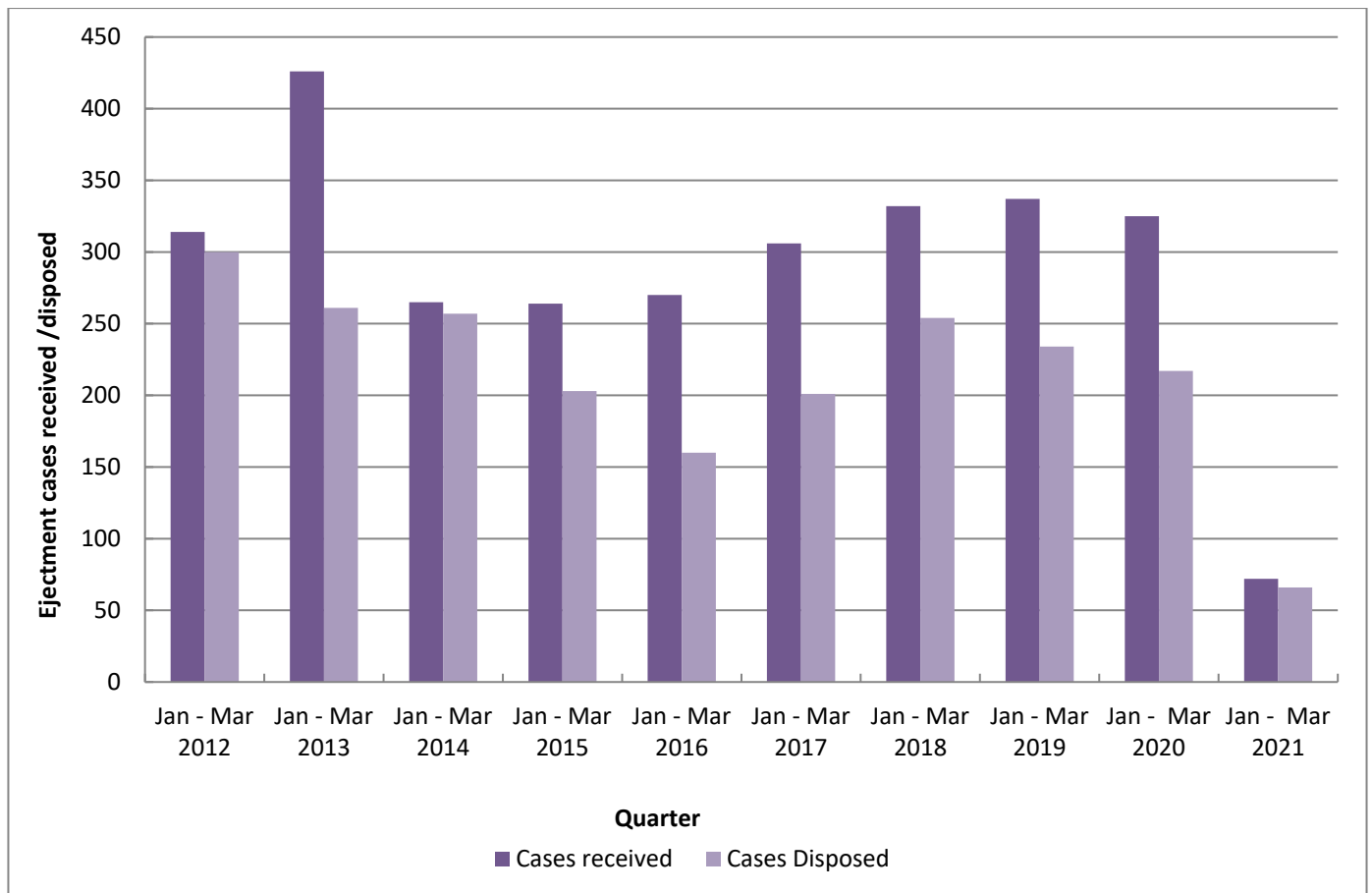
3.2 Equity

A total of 33 equity cases were received during January to March 2021, eight more than the number received during the period January to March 2020 (25). The number of equity cases disposed increased from 26 during the period January to March 2020, to 31 this quarter. The average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases was 82 weeks, up from 70 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 72 ejectment cases were received, down 78% on the 325 cases received during January to March 2020, with the number of ejectment cases disposed decreasing by 70%, from 217 in the same quarter last year to 66 this quarter (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed – January to March 2012 to January to March 2021

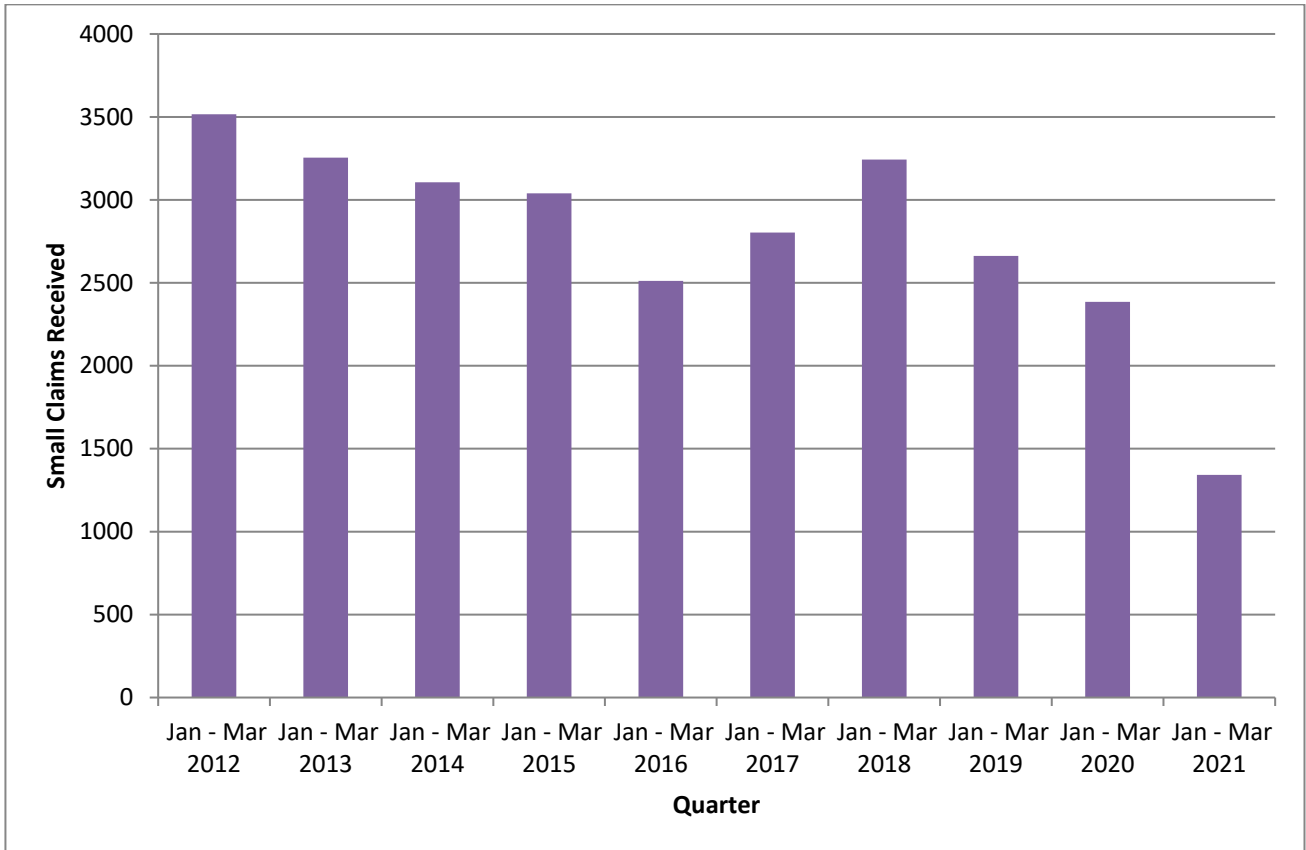


The average time taken from issue to disposal for ejectment cases was 48 weeks, an increase on the 23 weeks taken during the January to March quarter in 2020.

3.4 Small claims

1,342 small claims were received, down 44% on the 2,385 received during the same quarter last year (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Small claims cases received – January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



The number of small claims cases disposed decreased by 27% from 1,928 during January to March 2020 to 1,399 this quarter. Of the 1,399 small claims disposed during the quarter, the majority (58%) were disposed by way of default judgment.

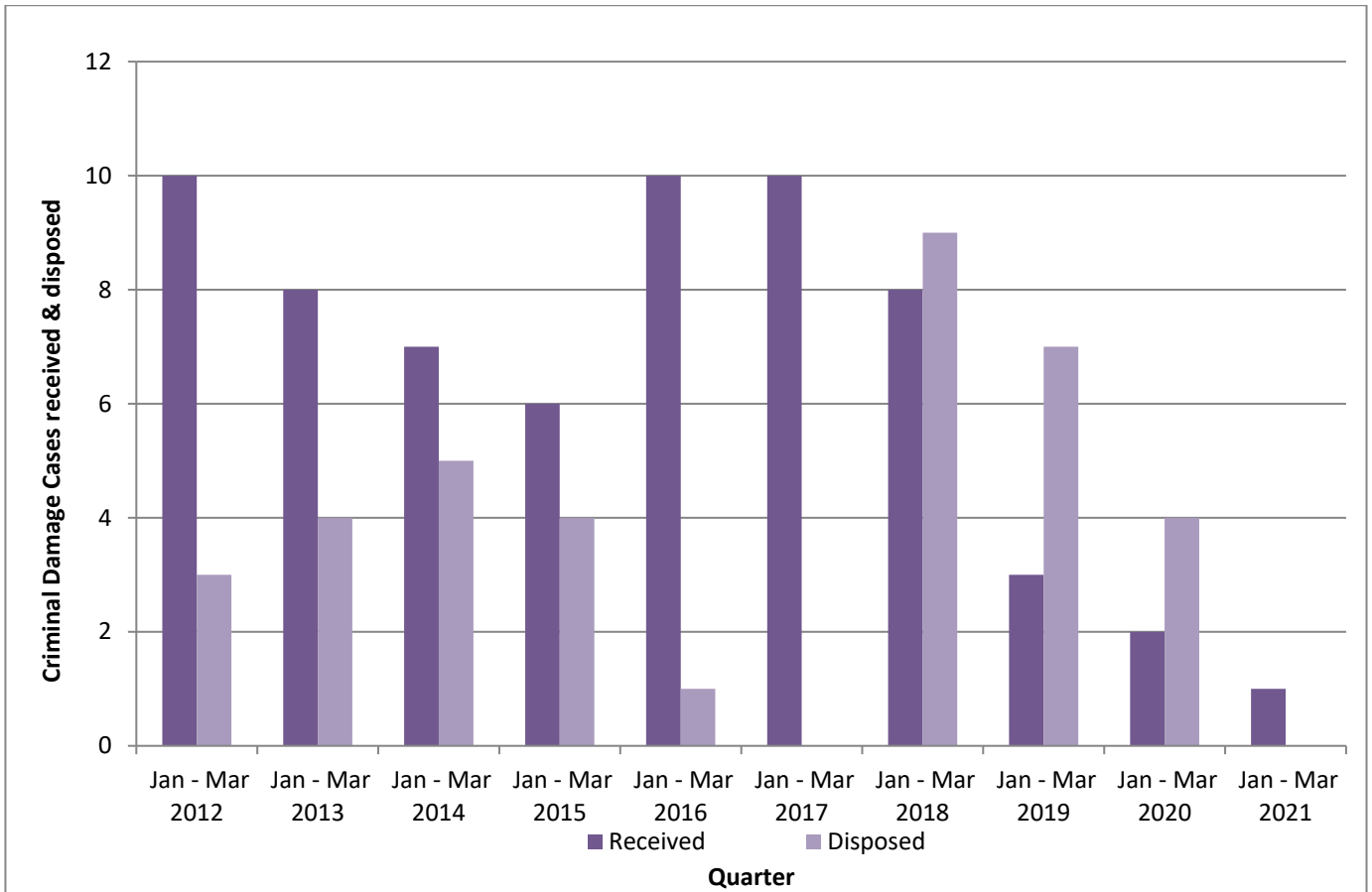
The average number of weeks from issue to disposal for small claims cases was 55 weeks, an increase on the 19 weeks taken in the corresponding quarter last year.

There were three small claims court disposals during the period January to March 2021.

3.5 Criminal Damage

One criminal damage case was received with none disposed during the quarter. This compares with two cases received and four cases disposed during the same quarter in 2020 (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed – January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



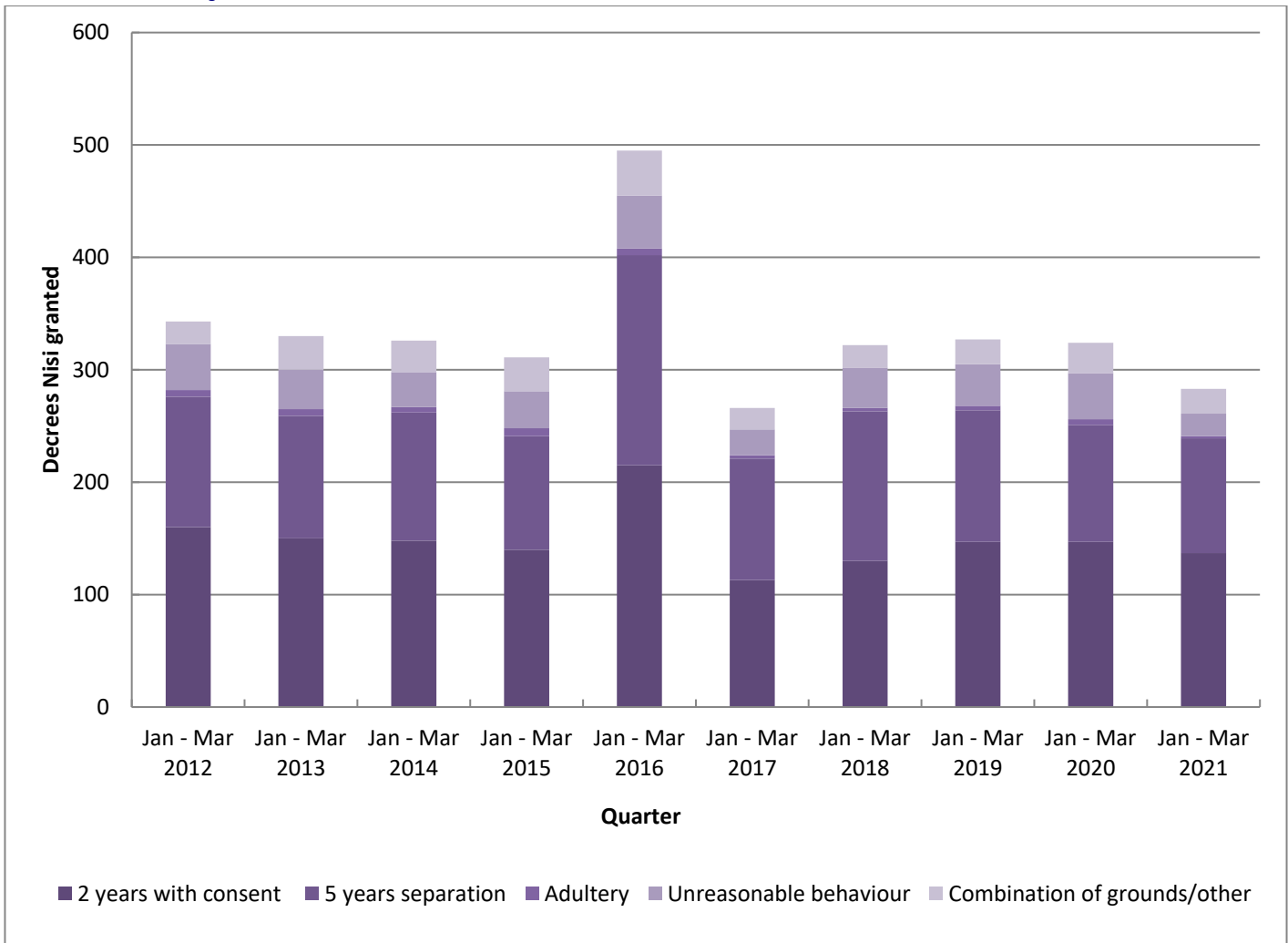
3.6 Divorces

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 283 divorce decrees were granted in the County Court, down 13% on the 324 granted during the same period last year.

The main type of divorce decree granted was ‘2 years with consent’ accounting for 48% of decrees (137), followed by ‘5 years separation’, accounting for 36% of decrees (102) (Figure 6)

Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type – January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



A total of 359 decrees absolute were issued in the County Court, a decrease of 3% on the 371 issued during the period January to March 2020. The most common type of decree absolute was ‘2 years with consent’, accounting for 50% (181) of cases.

The average time taken from issue to the date a divorce decree was granted was 37 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 31 weeks and eight weeks during the same period last year.

3.7 Licences

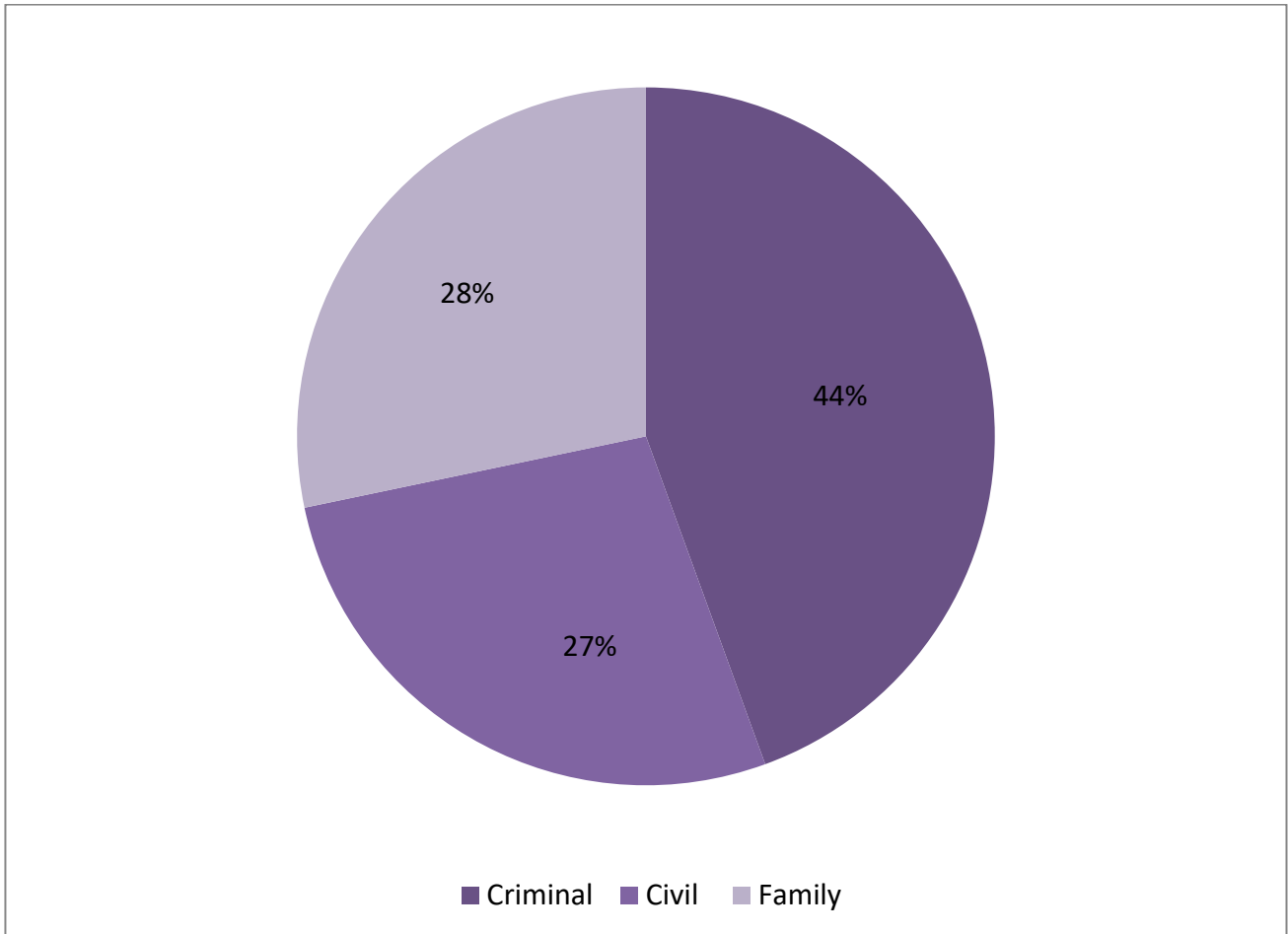
There were 44 licence applications received and 42 disposed, compared to the 49 received and 38 disposed during the same quarter last year.

3.8 Sitting Days

County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,115 sitting days during the quarter, the same number of sitting days recorded during the period January to March 2020.

Within these 1,115 sitting days, 44% of time was spent on criminal business, 27% of time was spent on civil business and 28% of time was spent on family business (Figure 7).

Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type – January to March 2021

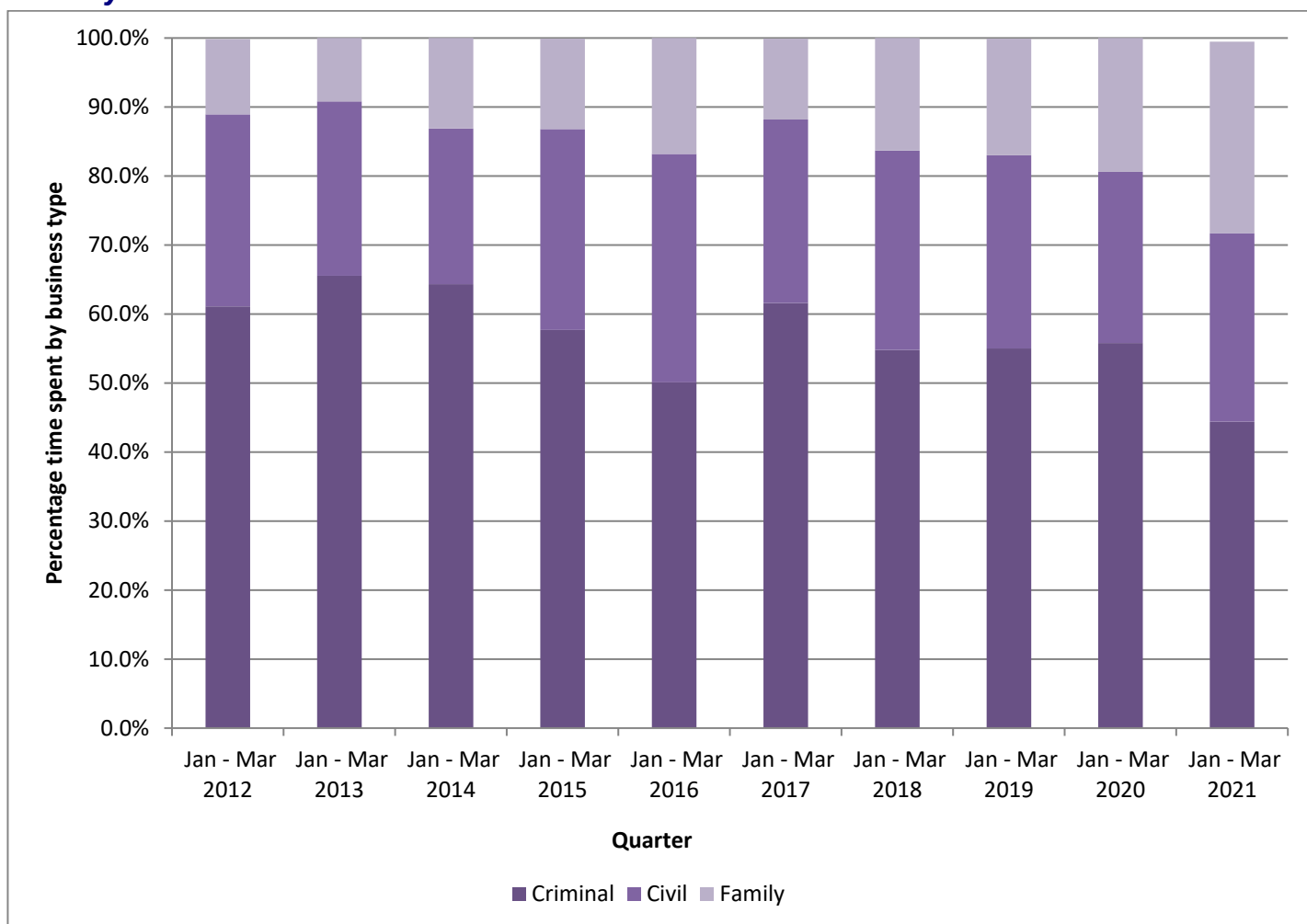


Due to rounding, the percentages may not add up to 100%

The proportion of time spent on criminal business has fluctuated during January to March quarter since 2007, peaking at 66% during the quarter January to March 2013. 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 50% during January to March 2016, 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 62% of sittings during January to March 2017, 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 to the mid-fifties percentages in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The proportion of time spent on criminal business (44%) this quarter is the lowest since the time series began.

Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type – January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



APPENDIX 1 – TABLES.

Civil Bills

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

Type	Processing Office	Total	
Case	Laganside Courts	443	
	Newtownards Court Office	93	
	Downpatrick Court Office	56	
	Craigavon Court Office	56	
	Armagh Court Office	28	
	Banbridge Court Office	1	
	Omagh Court Office	55	
	Antrim Court Office	36	
	Londonderry Court Office	51	
	Coleraine Court Office	53	
	Newry Court Office	77	
	Limavady Court Office	1	
	Magherafelt Court Office	11	
	Ballymena Court Office	29	
	Lisburn Court Office	47	
	Dungannon Court Office	42	
	Civil Processing Centre	1409	
	Total	2488	
	Application	Laganside Courts	200
		Newtownards Court Office	78
Downpatrick Court Office		24	
Craigavon Court Office		21	
Armagh Court Office		139	
Omagh Court Office		30	
Antrim Court Office		2	
Londonderry Court Office		63	
Coleraine Court Office		48	
Newry Court Office		9	
Ballymena Court Office		1	
Lisburn Court Office		15	
Civil Processing Centre		399	
Total		1029	

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

Processing Office	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	307	344	651
Newtownards Court Office	87	14	101
Downpatrick Court Office	14	52	66
Craigavon Court Office	37	37	74
Armagh Court Office	18	16	34
Banbridge Court Office	2	-	2
Omagh Court Office	41	35	76
Antrim Court Office	17	29	46
Londonderry Court Office	46	36	82
Coleraine Court Office	35	22	57
Newry Court Office	56	57	113
Limavady Court Office	1	-	1
Magherafelt Court Office	11	5	16
Ballymena Court Office	18	29	47
Lisburn Court Office	37	18	55
Dungannon Court Office	22	37	59
Civil Processing Centre	118	90	208
Total	867	821	1688

Table 3 - Number of ordinary civil bills cases and applications disposed

Type	Processing Office	Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Default judgement	Office disposal	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	143	124	391	4	16	678
	Newtownards Court Office	1	103	76	3	2	185
	Downpatrick Court Office	17	-	41	-	3	61
	Craigavon Court Office	34	33	49	-	2	118
	Armagh Court Office	6	17	14	1	1	39
	Omagh Court Office	37	80	43	4	4	168
	Strabane Court Office	2	-	-	-	-	2
	Antrim Court Office	10	17	31	-	-	58
	Londonderry Court Office	31	35	46	1	6	119
	Enniskillen Court Office	2	4	2	-	-	8
	Coleraine Court Office	39	36	55	1	5	136
	Newry Court Office	47	60	65	2	8	182
	Limavady Court Office	-	1	2	-	-	3
	Magherafelt Court Office	6	2	9	-	-	17
	Ballymena Court Office	12	25	34	-	3	74
	Lisburn Court Office	20	23	35	3	1	82
	Dungannon Court Office	9	8	6	-	1	24
	Civil Processing Centre	-	-	31	114	11	156
	Total	416	568	930	133	63	2110
Application	Laganside Courts	79	9	102	-	-	190
	Newtownards Court Office	8	-	18	-	-	26
	Downpatrick Court Office	9	-	12	-	-	21
	Craigavon Court Office	1	-	7	-	-	8
	Armagh Court Office	7	1	21	-	-	29
	Omagh Court Office	4	2	15	-	-	21
	Antrim Court Office	-	-	2	-	-	2
	Londonderry Court Office	7	1	18	-	-	26
	Coleraine Court Office	19	3	30	-	-	52
	Newry Court Office	3	1	4	-	-	8
	Ballymena Court Office	-	-	1	-	-	1
	Lisburn Court Office	3	-	3	-	-	6
	Civil Processing Centre	-	-	34	-	-	34
	Total	140	17	267	-	-	424

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

Processing Office	No value	Less than £3000	£3000-14999	£15000-29999	Total
Laganside Courts	74	57	128	8	267
Newtownards Court Office	20	31	52	1	104
Downpatrick Court Office	4	1	11	1	17
Craigavon Court Office	14	14	35	4	67
Armagh Court Office	11	4	7	1	23
Omagh Court Office	24	31	56	6	117
Strabane Court Office	1		1		2
Antrim Court Office	7	5	14	1	27
Londonderry Court Office	14	19	31	2	66
Enniskillen Court Office	-	2	4	-	6
Coleraine Court Office	22	18	27	8	75
Newry Court Office	30	21	53	3	107
Limavady Court Office	-	-	1	-	1
Magherafelt Court Office	1		6	1	8
Ballymena Court Office	9	12	15	1	37
Lisburn Court Office	12	7	22	2	43
Dungannon Court Office	-	5	10	2	17
Total	243	227	473	41	984

Excludes cases that were adjourned generally, default judgements or had office disposals

Table 5 - Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR

Processing Office	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	1133	1860	2993
Newtownards Court Office	121	14	135
Downpatrick Court Office	17	191	208
Craigavon Court Office	83	90	173
Armagh Court Office	29	48	77
Banbridge Court Office	1		1
Omagh Court Office	150	193	343
Strabane Court Office	2	4	6
Antrim Court Office	32	61	93
Londonderry Court Office	144	135	279
Enniskillen Court Office	12	7	19
Coleraine Court Office	69	109	178
Newry Court Office	124	137	261
Limavady Court Office	1		1
Magherafelt Court Office	10	11	21
Ballymena Court Office	38	66	104
Lisburn Court Office	100	67	167
Dungannon Court Office	31	91	122
Civil Processing Centre	215	191	406
Total	2312	3275	5587

Table 6 - Outstanding civil bills with COR

Processing Office	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	416	554	970
Newtownards Court Office	82		82
Downpatrick Court Office	4	66	70
Craigavon Court Office	28	34	62
Armagh Court Office	14	14	28
Banbridge Court Office	2		2
Omagh Court Office	84	83	167
Strabane Court Office	1	4	5
Antrim Court Office	17	30	47
Londonderry Court Office	52	32	84
Enniskillen Court Office	1	5	6
Coleraine Court Office	35	49	84
Newry Court Office	59	59	118
Magherafelt Court Office	6	5	11
Ballymena Court Office	19	23	42
Lisburn Court Office	29	21	50
Dungannon Court Office	8	14	22
Civil Processing Centre	6	13	19
Total	863	1006	1869

Table 7 -Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases

Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Laganside Courts	67
Newtownards Court Office	50
Downpatrick Court Office	52
Craigavon Court Office	60
Armagh Court Office	53
Omagh Court Office	77
Strabane Court Office	63
Antrim Court Office	69
Londonderry Court Office	63
Enniskillen Court Office	48
Coleraine Court Office	62
Newry Court Office	49
Limavady Court Office	24
Magherafelt Court Office	39
Ballymena Court Office	52
Lisburn Court Office	53
Dungannon Court Office	41
Total	61

Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Table 8 -Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications

Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Laganside Courts	30
Newtownards Court Office	0
Downpatrick Court Office	12
Craigavon Court Office	4
Armagh Court Office	5
Omagh Court Office	12
Londonderry Court Office	33
Coleraine Court Office	30
Newry Court Office	8
Lisburn Court Office	14
Total	25

Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Equity

Table 9 -Equity cases and applications received

Type	Processing Office	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	7
	Downpatrick Court Office	4
	Craigavon Court Office	2
	Armagh Court Office	2
	Omagh Court Office	4
	Londonderry Court Office	3
	Newry Court Office	6
	Civil Processing Centre	5
	Total	33
	Application	Laganside Courts
Downpatrick Court Office		2
Craigavon Court Office		2
Omagh Court Office		5
Londonderry Court Office		2
Coleraine Court Office		2
Newry Court Office		4
Civil Processing Centre		1
Total		22

Table 10 - Equity cases and applications disposed

Type	Processing Office	Court result - CCJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	4	-	4
	Craigavon Court Office	1	1	2
	Armagh Court Office	1	-	1
	Omagh Court Office	5	3	8
	Londonderry Court Office	2	1	3
	Coleraine Court Office	6	-	6
	Newry Court Office	5	-	5
	Dungannon Court Office	2	-	2
	Total	26	5	31
	Application	Laganside Courts	2	-
Newtownards Court Office		-	1	1
Downpatrick Court Office		1	2	3
Craigavon Court Office		-	1	1
Omagh Court Office		-	2	2
Londonderry Court Office		3	-	3
Coleraine Court Office		2	-	2
Newry Court Office		-	2	2
Civil Processing Centre		-	1	1
Total		8	9	17

Table 11 - Outstanding equity cases

Processing Office	Total
Laganside Courts	56
Newtownards Court Office	2
Downpatrick Court Office	28
Craigavon Court Office	13
Armagh Court Office	4
Omagh Court Office	60
Strabane Court Office	1
Antrim Court Office	1
Londonderry Court Office	22
Enniskillen Court Office	2
Coleraine Court Office	19
Newry Court Office	34
Ballymena Court Office	3
Lisburn Court Office	5
Dungannon Court Office	10
Civil Processing Centre	22
Total	282

Table 12 - Time intervals in weeks for equity

Type	Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	80
	Craigavon Court Office	25
	Armagh Court Office	124
	Omagh Court Office	107
	Londonderry Court Office	73
	Coleraine Court Office	109
	Newry Court Office	52
	Dungannon Court Office	39
	Total	82
	Application	Laganside Courts
Downpatrick Court Office		7
Londonderry Court Office		51
Coleraine Court Office		2
Total		22

Ejectment

Table 13 - Ejectment cases received

Processing Office	Total
Laganside Courts	13
Newtownards Court Office	1
Craigavon Court Office	3
Armagh Court Office	1
Londonderry Court Office	1
Coleraine Court Office	4
Newry Court Office	2
Civil Processing Centre	47
Total	72

Table 14 - Ejection cases disposed

Processing Office	Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Laganside Courts	2	13	5	20
Newtownards Court Office	-	9	-	9
Craigavon Court Office	1	2	-	3
Armagh Court Office	-	2	-	2
Antrim Court Office	-	-	1	1
Londonderry Court Office	-	9	1	10
Enniskillen Court Office	-	1	-	1
Coleraine Court Office	-	7	1	8
Newry Court Office	-	6	-	6
Lisburn Court Office	-	5	-	5
Civil Processing Centre	-	-	1	1
Total	3	54	9	66

Table 15 - Outstanding ejection cases with NID

Processing Office	Total
Laganside Courts	16
Downpatrick Court Office	6
Craigavon Court Office	3
Armagh Court Office	1
Omagh Court Office	5
Strabane Court Office	1
Londonderry Court Office	5
Enniskillen Court Office	1
Coleraine Court Office	3
Newry Court Office	7
Ballymena Court Office	1
Lisburn Court Office	1
Civil Processing Centre	8
Total	58

Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejection

Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Laganside Courts	56
Newtownards Court Office	41
Craigavon Court Office	49
Armagh Court Office	36
Londonderry Court Office	48
Enniskillen Court Office	26
Coleraine Court Office	42
Newry Court Office	60
Lisburn Court Office	39
Total	48

Excludes default judgements, non court disposals and office disposals

Small Claims

Table 17 - Number of small claims cases and applications received

Type	Processing Office	Total	
Case	Laganside Courts	41	
	Newtownards Court Office	5	
	Downpatrick Court Office	12	
	Craigavon Court Office	3	
	Armagh Court Office	5	
	Omagh Court Office	7	
	Antrim Court Office	6	
	Londonderry Court Office	13	
	Enniskillen Court Office	3	
	Coleraine Court Office	21	
	Newry Court Office	3	
	Ballymena Court Office	10	
	Lisburn Court Office	12	
	Dungannon Court Office	2	
	Civil Processing Centre	1199	
	Total	1342	
	Application	Laganside Courts	9
		Newtownards Court Office	1
		Omagh Court Office	9
Londonderry Court Office		2	
Ballymena Court Office		1	
Lisburn Court Office		1	
Civil Processing Centre		11	
Total		34	

Table 18 - Number of small claims cases with NODs received

Processing Office	Total
Laganside Courts	53
Newtownards Court Office	3
Downpatrick Court Office	21
Craigavon Court Office	5
Armagh Court Office	8
Omagh Court Office	12
Antrim Court Office	6
Londonderry Court Office	17
Enniskillen Court Office	4
Coleraine Court Office	28
Newry Court Office	4
Ballymena Court Office	13
Lisburn Court Office	15
Dungannon Court Office	2
Civil Processing Centre	6
Total	197

Table 19 - Number of small claims cases and applications disposed

Type	Processing Office	Court disposal	Non court disposal	Office disposal	Default judgement	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	3	5	14	4	26
	Newtownards Court Office	-	2	2	-	4
	Downpatrick Court Office	-	-	-	1	1
	Craigavon Court Office	-	-	1	-	1
	Antrim Court Office	-	-	1	-	1
	Londonderry Court Office	-	-	1	1	2
	Coleraine Court Office	-	2	1	-	3
	Lisburn Court Office	-	-	1	1	2
	Civil Processing Centre	-	1	550	808	1359
	Total		3	10	571	815
Application	Laganside Courts	7	4	-	-	11
	Newtownards Court Office	-	1	-	-	1
	Omagh Court Office	-	6	-	-	6
	Coleraine Court Office	-	2	-	-	2
	Ballymena Court Office	-	1	-	-	1
	Total		7	14	-	-

Table 20 - Outstanding small claims with NOD

Processing Office	Total
Laganside Courts	267
Newtownards Court Office	9
Downpatrick Court Office	102
Craigavon Court Office	36
Armagh Court Office	13
Omagh Court Office	58
Antrim Court Office	6
Londonderry Court Office	49
Enniskillen Court Office	8
Coleraine Court Office	76
Newry Court Office	48
Ballymena Court Office	27
Lisburn Court Office	57
Dungannon Court Office	3
Civil Processing Centre	123
Total	882

Table 21 - Time intervals in weeks for small claims

Type	Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	55
	Total	55
Application	Laganside Courts	34
	Total	34

Excludes default judgements, non-court disposals and office disposals

Criminal Damage

Table 22: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received

Processing Office	Total
Laganside Courts	1
Total	1

Table 23 - Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the amounts as they are based on court disposals.

Table 24 - Outstanding criminal damage cases

Processing Office	Total
Laganside Courts	15
Newtownards Court Office	1
Omagh Court Office	8
Londonderry Court Office	4
Newry Court Office	1
Dungannon Court Office	1
Total	30

Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the time interval calculations as they are based on court disposals, and DJ and non-court disposals are excluded.

Divorces

Table 26 - Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted

Processing Office	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Laganside Courts	23	31	-	3	5	62
Downpatrick Court Office	17	10	-	4	1	32
Craigavon Court Office	23	11	-	7	4	45
Omagh Court Office	13	8	1	-	4	26
Londonderry Court Office	22	15	-	2	3	42
Coleraine Court Office	16	11	-	3	3	33
Newry Court Office	22	16	1	1	2	42
Dungannon Court Office	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	137	102	2	20	22	283

Table 27 - Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued

Processing Office	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Laganside Courts	53	32	2	8	5	100
Downpatrick Court Office	27	13	-	4	-	44
Craigavon Court Office	18	11	1	3	3	36
Omagh Court Office	18	11	-	6	-	35
Londonderry Court Office	19	12	-	3	3	37
Coleraine Court Office	29	16	1	6	7	59
Newry Court Office	16	17	-	6	4	43
Ballymena Court Office	-	-	-	-	1	1
Dungannon Court Office	1	3	-	-	-	4
Total	181	115	4	36	23	359

Table 28 - Matrimonial applications received

Processing Office	Ancillary relief	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	8	-	8
Craigavon Court Office	1	-	1
Armagh Court Office	4	-	4
Omagh Court Office	1	-	1
Londonderry Court Office	4	1	5
Coleraine Court Office	5	2	7
Newry Court Office	1	-	1
Ballymena Court Office	1	-	1
Total	25	3	28

Table 29 - Matrimonial applications disposed

Processing Office	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	4	-	-	4
Newtownards Court Office	1	-	-	1
Craigavon Court Office	3	1	-	4
Armagh Court Office	2	-	1	3
Omagh Court Office	3	-	-	3
Londonderry Court Office	3	1	1	5
Coleraine Court Office	13	-	1	14
Newry Court Office	8	-	-	8
Total	37	2	3	42

Table 30 - Time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions

Processing Office	Issue to date decree granted	Date decree granted to date absolute issued
Laganside Courts	42	7
Downpatrick Court Office	31	8
Craigavon Court Office	36	8
Omagh Court Office	40	9
Londonderry Court Office	32	7
Coleraine Court Office	44	7
Newry Court Office	27	8
Dungannon Court Office	224	-
Total	37	8

Table 31 - Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications

Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Laganside Courts	35
Newtownards Court Office	6
Craigavon Court Office	60
Armagh Court Office	12
Omagh Court Office	29
Londonderry Court Office	41
Coleraine Court Office	43
Newry Court Office	53
Total	41

Excludes non-court disposals

Licences

Table 32 - Licences received and disposed

Processing Office	Licences Received	Licences Disposed
Coleraine	4	4
Newtownards	4	5
Newry	5	3
Laganside Courts	12	12
Craigavon	4	4
Omagh	13	10
Londonderry	2	4
Total	44	42

County Court and District Judge Sitting Days

Table 33 - County Court Judge & District Judge Sitting Days

Processing Office	Number of sitting days	Average sitting	Total time	Total criminal time	Total civil time	Total family time
Antrim	88	3:07:15	274:39:00	201:24:00	58:15:00	15:00:00
Ballymena	3	3:21:00	10:03:00	10:03:00	0:00:00	0:00:00
Laganside	383	2:30:09	958:31:00	444:38:00	167:44:00	346:09:00
Armagh	138	2:46:26	382:49:00	1:14:00	137:22:00	244:13:00
Lisburn	18	1:14:23	22:19:00	0:15:00	22:04:00	0:00:00
Dungannon	65	2:06:56	137:31:00	111:39:00	3:40:00	22:12:00
Downpatrick	45	2:23:57	107:58:00	3:42:00	97:56:00	6:20:00
Craigavon	58	3:13:43	187:16:00	181:59:00	0:30:00	4:47:00
Omagh	101	1:56:14	195:41:00	18:42:00	113:19:00	63:40:00
Coleraine	11	2:31:21	27:45:00	0:30:00	18:05:00	9:10:00
Londonderry	115	2:10:06	249:22:00	133:42:00	70:00:00	45:40:00
Newtownards	35	1:48:17	63:10:00	0:00:00	63:00:00	0:10:00
Newry	55	2:13:04	121:59:00	114:51:00	0:31:00	6:37:00
Total	1115	2:27:23	2739:03:00	1222:39:00	752:26:00	763:58:00

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 (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

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, ejectment 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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