

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Provisional Figures

April to June 2023

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1

Key Findings

This report provides an overview of Children Order and County, Crown, High and Magistrates' Courts business during April to June 2023 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 479 Children Order sittings (1,351 total hours sat), 1,199 Children Order Applications received and 1,135 disposed. In terms of orders made, 500 were own motion, 2,259 were interim and 1,580 were final orders.
 - County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,217 days within the County Court. In terms of cases 34 equity, 191 ejectment, 2,144 small claims and one criminal damage case were received; 32 equity, 223 ejectment, 2,303 small claims and 4 criminal damage cases were disposed.
 - In terms of Crown Court business there were 720 sittings with 349 cases and 412 defendants received and 388 cases and 472 defendants disposed.
- There were 552 High Court sitting days. The highest proportion of these was spent on Judicial Review business, 104 days (19%).
 - Within the 1,077 Magistrates' sitting days during the quarter, 73% were adult criminal, 5% youth criminal and 22% civil and family days. There were 930 civil and family applications and 9,944 adult and 343 youth defendants received. Corresponding figures for disposals were 843 civil and family, 9,126 adult and 284 youth defendants.

2 | Introduction

About this report

This bulletin is produced in accordance with the pillars and principles set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. It presents the following statistics for the Northern Ireland Court and Tribunals Service for the quarter April to June 2023 –

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

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

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

The next update covering the quarter to 30 September 2023 will be published in November 2023. A full [publication schedule](#) is available on the DoJ website.

2 | Introduction

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

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

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Children Order

Children Order Quarterly Business

- Table 1 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 479 sittings (1,351 hours), 1,199 Children Order Applications received and 1,135 disposed.
 - A total of 1,671 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 (70%, 116 of 166 reasons). This was followed by Consolidation (28), Jurisdiction (11), Gravity (5), Return to Lower Court (2), Point of Law (2) and Convenience (2).
- In terms of orders made –
 - 500 were own motion orders.
 - 2,259 were interim orders.
 - 1,580 were final orders.
 - The average waiting time for applications disposed was 57.9 weeks for public and 34.9 weeks for private law.
 - Table 1 shows that applications received increased and applications disposed decreased. The waiting times for disposal for public law and private law were lower than the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year.

3

Children Order

Table 1: Children Order Business – April to June 2023 compared with April to June 2022

	Quarter 2023	Quarter 2022	% change from 2022
Sittings	479	509	6% ↓
Hours sat	1,351	1,659	19% ↓
Applications received	1,199	1,022	17% ↑
Applications disposed	1,135	1,192	5% ↓
Number of children involved in applications disposed	1,671	1,760	5% ↓
Own motion orders made	500	373	34% ↑
Interim orders made	2,259	2,295	2% ↓
Final orders made	1,580	1,643	4% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for public law (weeks)	57.9	58.2	1% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for private law (weeks)	34.9	37.9	8% ↓

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

4

County Court

County Court Quarterly Business

- Table 2 on the following pages shows that County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,217 sitting days during the quarter. Within those days 58% of time was spent on criminal business, 23% on civil business and 20% on family business.
- During the quarter –
 - 1,795 Civil bills with notice of intention to defend (NID) were received and 2,343 disposed.
 - In terms of cases 34 equity, 191 ejectment, 2,144 small claims and one criminal damage case were received; 32 equity, 223 ejectment, 2,303 small claims and 4 criminal damage cases were disposed.
 - 301 divorce decrees were granted, 304 decrees absolute issued.
 - 76 licence applications were received and 76 disposed.
- Table 2 shows that there was a mixed outcome in the number of cases received and disposed across most business areas and a general decrease in time taken to disposal compared with figures for the same quarter in the previous year.

4 | County Court

Table 2: County Court Business – April to June 2023 compared with April to June 2022

	Quarter 2023	Quarter 2022	% change from 2022
Sitting days	1,217	1,254	3%↓
Civil bills with NID received	1,795	1,575	14%↑
Civil bills disposed	2,343	2,365	1%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of civil bill (weeks)	58	69	16%↓
Equity cases received	34	45	24%↓
Equity cases disposed	32	37	14%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases (weeks)	126	93	35%↑
Ejectment cases received	191	149	28%↑
Ejectment cases disposed	223	127	76%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of ejectment cases (weeks)	33	39	15%↓

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

4 | County Court

Table 2 continued: County Court Business – April to June 2023 compared with April to June 2022

	Quarter 2023	Quarter 2022	% change from 2022
Small claims received	2,144	2,104	2%↑
Small claims disposed	2,303	1,623	42%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of small claims cases (weeks)	22	28	21%↓
Criminal damage cases received	1	1	-
Criminal damage cases disposed	4	3	33%↑
Divorce decrees granted	301	383	21%↓
Decree absolute issued	304	524	42%↓
Average time taken from issue to date divorce decree granted (weeks)	41	43	5%↓
Licences applications received	76	83	8%↓
Licences applications disposed	76	87	13%↓

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

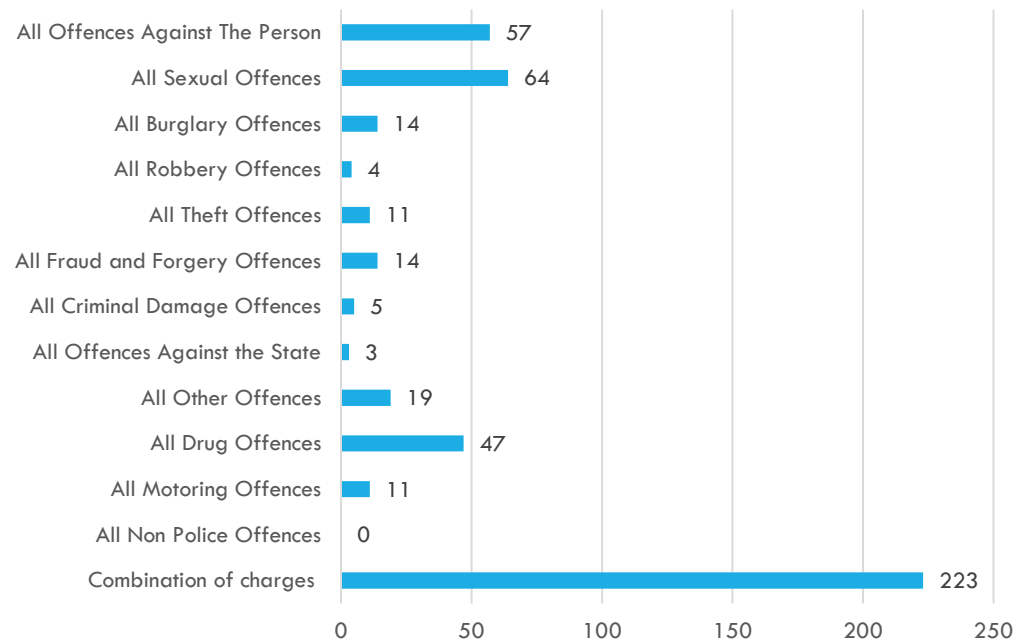
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Crown Court

Crown Court Quarterly Business

- Table 3 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 720 sittings (1,491 hours sat). County Court Judges disposed of 96% of defendants (453), a figure that has remained relatively stable over the last five years (96-99%).
- There were 349 cases and 412 defendants received during the quarter; 388 cases and 472 defendants were disposed.
- Average time from committal to hearing was 192 days and from conviction to disposal was 90 days.
- In comparison to the same quarter in the previous year the number of cases and defendants received increased while the numbers disposed decreased.
- Figure 1 shows that the majority of defendants disposed were charged with a combination of offences, a similar pattern seen in each of the last five years. Average time from committal to hearing and from conviction to disposal both increased. These figures will be affected by the delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: Crown Court defendants disposed by charge type April to June 2023



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Crown Court

Table 3: Crown Court Business – April to June 2023 compared with April to June 2022

	Quarter 2023	Quarter 2022	% change from 2022
Sittings	720	748	4%↓
Hours sat	1,491	1,814	18%↓
Cases received	349	323	8%↑
Cases disposed	388	449	14%↓
Defendants received	412	394	5%↑
Defendants disposed	472	559	16%↓
Defendants pleading guilty to all charges	106	138	23%↓
Defendants pleading guilty or found guilty of at least one charge	303	360	16%↓
Average time from committal to hearing (days)	192	154	25%↑
Average time from conviction to disposal (days)	90	82	10%↑

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

6 High Court

High Court Quarterly Business

- Table 4 on the following pages show that there were 552 High Court sitting days during the quarter, the highest proportion of which was spent on Judicial Review business, 104 days (19%).
- King's Bench business included:
 - 910 writs and originating summonses were received, 659 were disposed.
 - 79 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review, 24 applications for Judicial Review and one ancillary application were received.
- Chancery Division business included:
 - Receipt of 496 (67% which were Chancery, 20% bankruptcy and 12% companies cases) and disposal of 371 cases; and
 - 2,321 grants issued in the Probate office.
- Family Division business included –
 - 15 adoption cases and applications received and 28 disposed;
 - 632 divorce petitions received, 251 decrees granted (mainly '2 years with consent' (91, 36%) and 'combination of grounds or other' (69, 27%)) and 198 decrees absolute issued;
 - 603 new referrals in the Patients section; and
 - 35 Official Solicitor's Office cases received, 66 disposed and a current caseload of 356 cases at the end of the quarter.

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

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High Court

Table 4: High Court Business - April to June 2023 compared with April to June 2022

	Quarter 2023	Quarter 2022	% change from 2022
Sitting days	552	573	4%↓
Writs & originating summonses received	910	1,047	13%↓
Writs & originating summonses disposed	659	532	24%↑
Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review received	79	67	18%↑
Applications for Judicial Review received	24	27	11%↓
Ancillary applications received	1	0	100%↑
Chancery cases received	496	295	68%↑
Chancery cases disposed	371	294	26%↑
Grants issued in the Probate office	2,321	1,816	28%↑

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

6 | High Court

Table 4 continued: High Court Business - April to June 2023 compared with April to June 2022

	Quarter 2023	Quarter 2022	% change from 2022
Adoption cases & applications received	15	27	44%↓
Adoption cases & applications disposed	28	26	8%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal for adoption case/application (weeks)	22	22	-
Divorce petitions received	632	655	4%↓
Decrees granted in High Court	251	183	37%↑
Decrees absolute issued	198	230	14%↓
Average time taken from issue of divorce petition to date decree granted (weeks)	55	56	2%↓
Patients section referrals received	603	511	18%↑
Official Solicitors Office cases received	35	36	3%↓
Official Solicitors Office cases disposed	66	37	78%↑
Official Solicitors Office caseload at end of quarter	356	376	5%↓

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

7 Magistrates' Court

Magistrates' Court Quarterly Business

- During the quarter there were 1,018 scheduled, 21 additional and 38 special Magistrates' sitting days (Table 5).
- Within the 1,077 total, 73% were adult criminal, 5% were youth criminal and 22% were civil and family days.

Table 5: Magistrates' Court Sitting Days - April to June 2023 compared with April to June 2022

	Adult	Youth	Civil & Family	Total Quarter 2023	Total Quarter 2022	% change from 2022
Scheduled	728	59	231	1,018	994	2%↑
Additional	16	-	5	21	20	5%↑
Special	38	-	-	38	35	9%↑
Total	782	59	236	1,077	1,049	3%↑

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

7 | Magistrates' Court

- There were 930 new civil and family applications and 9,944 new adult and 343 new youth defendants received; corresponding disposals were 843, 9,126 and 284 respectively.
- The average waiting times from first hearing to disposal in the adult and youth criminal courts were 9 weeks and 15 weeks respectively. For civil and family applications it was 38 and 9 weeks respectively from date of receipt to disposal.
- Changes from the previous year were mixed - youth defendant applications received and disposed increased while receipts for adults increased but disposals decreased. Waiting times in all business areas decreased.

Table 6: Magistrates' Court Business - April to June 2023 compared with April to June 2022

	Adult Q2 2023	Adult Q2 2022	% change from 2022	Youth Q2 2023	Youth Q2 2022	% change from 2022	Civil Q2 2023	Civil Q2 2022	% change from 2022	Family Q2 2023	Family Q2 2022	% change from 2022
Defendants or applications received	9,944	9,373	6%↑	343	223	54%↑	80	78	3%↑	850	875	3%↓
Defendants or applications disposed	9,126	9,228	1%↓	284	229	24%↑	66	67	1%↓	777	820	5%↓
Average waiting time (weeks)	9	11	18%↓	15	17	12%↓	38	47	19%↓	9	10	10%↓

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'.