

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Provisional Figures

January to March 2022

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1

Key Findings

This report provides an overview of Children Order and County, Crown, High and Magistrates' Courts business during January to March 2022 and how it compares with the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year. The headline findings are summarised below -

- During the quarter there were 539 Children Order sittings (1,507 total hours sat), 1,145 Children Order Applications received and 1,143 disposed. In terms of orders made, 401 were own motion, 2,296 were interim and 1,511 were final orders.
 - County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,456 days within the County Court. In terms of cases 46 equity, 186 ejectment, 2,374 small claims and zero criminal damage cases were received; 25 equity, 86 ejectment, 1,728 small claims and 3 criminal damage cases were disposed.
 - In terms of Crown Court business there were 837 sittings with 343 cases and 423 defendants received and 353 cases and 450 defendants disposed.
- There were 614 High Court sitting days. The highest proportion of these was spent on Judicial Reviews business (19%).
 - Within the 1,099 Magistrates' sitting days during the quarter, 70% were adult criminal, 7% youth criminal and 23% civil and family days. There were 939 civil and family applications and 8,998 adult and 240 youth defendants received. Corresponding figures for disposals were 934 civil and family, 8,548 adult and 248 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 January to March 2022 –

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

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

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

The next update covering the quarter to 30 June 2022 will be published in August 2022. 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 539 sittings (1,507 hours), 1,145 Children Order Applications received and 1,143 disposed.
- A total of 1,634 children were involved in the applications disposed. Gender and age breakdowns of the children were 52:47 male:female and 32% 0-4 years, 30% 5-8 years, 23% 9-12 years and 16% 13-16 years.
- Like each of the last five years, the most common reason for transferring Children Order applications during the quarter was Complexity (74%, 158 of 214 reasons). This was followed by Consolidation (30), Jurisdiction (9), Returned to Lower Court (5), Urgency (4) and Point of Law(3).
- In terms of orders made –
 - 401 were own motion orders.
 - 2,296 were interim orders.
 - 1,511 were final orders.
- The average waiting time for applications disposed was 53.9 weeks for public and 38.1 weeks for private law.
- Table 1 shows that applications received decreased whilst applications disposed remained stable. The waiting times for disposal for both public law and private law were higher than the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year.

3

Children Order

Table 1: Children Order Business - January to March 2022 compared with January to March 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sittings	539	584	8% ↓
Hours sat	1,507	1,581	5% ↓
Applications received	1,145	1,291	11% ↓
Applications disposed	1,143	1,134	1% ↑
Number of children involved in applications disposed	1,634	1,638	<1% ↓
Own motion orders made	401	350	15% ↑
Interim orders made	2,296	2,308	1% ↓
Final orders made	1,511	1,550	3% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for public law (weeks)	53.9	46.9	15% ↑
Average waiting time for disposal for private law (weeks)	38.1	34.0	12% ↑

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

4 | County Court

County Court Quarterly Business

- Table 2 on the following pages shows that County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,456 sitting days during the quarter. Within those days 51% of time was spent on criminal business and 49% of days was spent on civil business.
- During the quarter –
 - 1,738 Civil bills with notice of intention to defend (NID) were received and 2,276 disposed.
 - In terms of cases 46 equity, 186 ejectment, 2,374 small claims and zero criminal damage cases were received; 25 equity, 86 ejectment, 1,728 small claims and 3 criminal damage cases were disposed.
 - 529 divorce decrees were granted, 384 decrees absolute issued.
 - 42 licence applications were received and 44 disposed.
- Table 2 shows that there was a general increase in the number of cases received and disposed and a general increase in time taken to disposal compared with figures for the same quarter in the previous year. The decrease in the average time from issue to disposal of small claims cases is due to the resumption of cases being dealt with in the courts.

4 | County Court

Table 2: County Court Business - January to March 2022 compared with January to March 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sitting days	1,456	1,115	31%↑
Civil bills with NID received	1,738	1,688	3%↑
Civil bills disposed	2,276	2,110	8%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of civil bill (weeks)	70	61	15%↑
Equity cases received	46	33	39%↑
Equity cases disposed	25	31	19%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases (weeks)	91	82	11%↑
Ejectment cases received	186	72	158%↑
Ejectment cases disposed	86	66	30%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of ejectment cases (weeks)	43	48	10%↓

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

4 | County Court

Table 2 continued: County Court Business - January to March 2022 compared with January to March 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Small claims received	2,374	1,342	77%↑
Small claims disposed	1,728	1,399	24%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of small claims cases (weeks)	40	55	27%↓
Criminal damage cases received	0	1	100%↓
Criminal damage cases disposed	3	0	-
Divorce decrees granted	529	283	87%↑
Decree absolute issued	384	359	54%↑
Average time taken from issue to date divorce decree granted (weeks)	40	37	8%↑
Licences applications received	42	44	5%↓
Licences applications disposed	44	42	5%↑

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

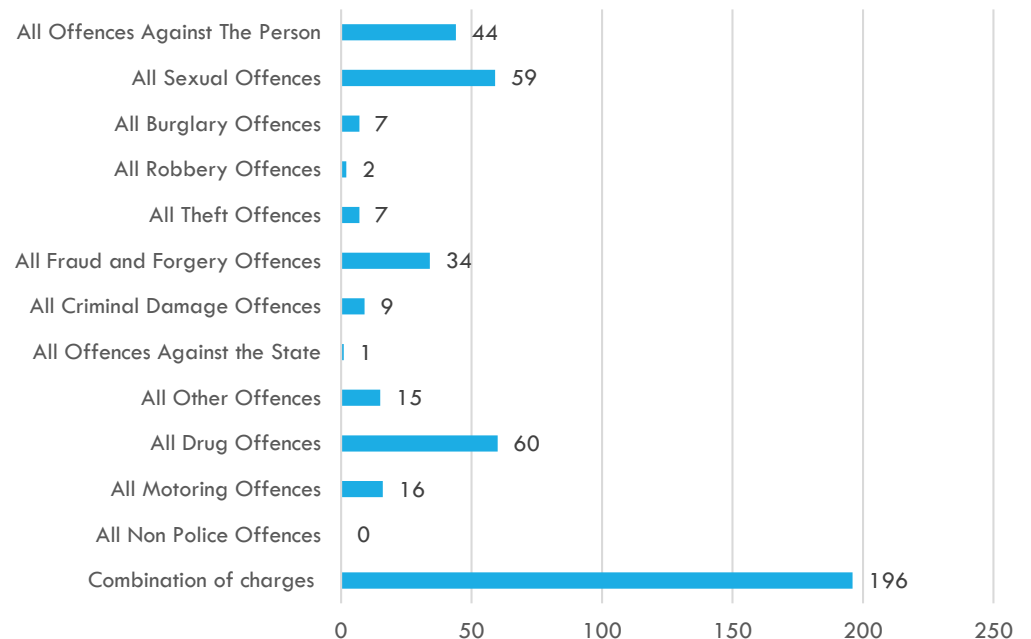
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Crown Court

Crown Court Quarterly Business

- Table 3 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 837 sittings (1,910 hours sat). County Court Judges disposed of 99% of defendants (446), a figure that has remained relatively stable over the last five years (98-99%).
- There were 343 cases and 423 defendants received during the quarter; 353 cases and 450 defendants were disposed.
- Average time from committal to hearing was 174 days and from conviction to disposal was 74 days.
- In comparison to the same quarter in the previous year the number of cases and defendants received decreased while the numbers disposed increased slightly.
- 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. This is due to the delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: Crown Court defendants disposed by charge type January to March 2022



5 | Crown Court

Table 3: Crown Court Business - January to March 2022 compared with January to March 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sittings	837	513	63%↑
Hours sat	1,910	1,177	62%↑
Cases received	343	445	23%↓
Cases disposed	353	346	2%↑
Defendants received	423	543	22%↓
Defendants disposed	450	416	8%↑
Defendants pleading guilty to all charges	111	129	14%↓
Defendants pleading guilty or found guilty of at least one charge	278	241	15%↑
Average time from committal to hearing (days)	174	117	49%↑
Average time from conviction to disposal (days)	74	48	54%↑

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 614 High Court sitting days during the quarter, the highest proportion of these was spent on Judicial Reviews business (19%).
- Queen's Bench business included:
 - 874 writs and originating summonses were received, 456 were disposed.
 - 75 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review, 27 applications for Judicial Review and one ancillary application received.
- Chancery Division business included:
 - Receipt of 316 (80% which were Chancery, 12% bankruptcy and 8% companies cases) and disposal of 385 cases; and
 - 1,976 grants issued in the Probate office.
- Family Division business included –
 - 22 adoption cases and applications received and 27 disposed;
 - 665 divorce petitions received (439 (66%) lodged by the wife), 243 decrees granted (mainly '2 years with consent' (94, 39%) and '5 years' separation' (57, 23%)) and 205 decrees absolute issued;
 - 510 new referrals in the Patients section; and
 - 39 Official Solicitor's Office cases received, 26 disposed and a current caseload of 377 cases at the end of the quarter.

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

6 High Court

Table 4: High Court Business - January to March 2022 compared with January to March 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Sitting days	614	544	13%↑
Writs & originating summonses received	874	937	7%↓
Writs & originating summonses disposed	456	440	4%↑
Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review received	75	78	4%↓
Applications for Judicial Review received	27	34	21%↓
Ancillary applications received	1	2	50%↓
Chancery cases received	316	165	92%↑
Chancery cases disposed	385	170	126%↑
Grants issued in the Probate office	1,976	1,476	34%↑

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

6 | High Court

Table 4 continued: High Court Business - January to March 2022 compared with January to March 2021

	Quarter 2022	Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Adoption cases & applications received	22	20	10%↑
Adoption cases & applications disposed	27	7	286%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal for adoption case/application (weeks)	36	45	20%↓
Divorce petitions received	665	657	1%↑
Decrees granted in High Court	243	183	33%↑
Decrees absolute issued	205	172	19%↑
Average time taken from issue of divorce petition to date decree granted (weeks)	50	50	0%=
Patients section referrals received	510	603	15%↓
Official Solicitors Office cases received	39	24	63%↑
Official Solicitors Office cases disposed	26	48	46%↓
Official Solicitors Office caseload at end of quarter	377	294	28%↑

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

7 Magistrates' Court

Magistrates' Court Quarterly Business

- During the quarter there were 1,028 scheduled, 33 additional and 38 special Magistrates' sitting days (Table 5).
- Within the 1,099 total, 70% were adult criminal, 7% were youth criminal and 23% were civil and family days.

Table 5: Magistrates' Court Sitting Days - January to March 2022 compared with January to March 2021

	Adult	Youth	Civil & Family	Total Quarter 2022	Total Quarter 2021	% change from 2021
Scheduled	711	73	244	1,028	1,094	6%↓
Additional	21	0	12	33	44	25%↓
Special	38	0	0	38	31	23%↑
Total	770	73	256	1,099	1,169	6%↓

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

7 | Magistrates' Court

- There were 939 new civil and family applications and 8,998 new adult and 240 new youth defendants received; corresponding disposals were 934, 8,548 and 248 respectively.
- The average waiting times from first hearing to disposal in the adult and youth criminal courts were 10 and 20 weeks respectively. For civil and family applications it was 33 and 10 weeks respectively from date of receipt to disposal.
- All parameters except new adult defendants received and number of special sitting days were lower than the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year.

Table 6: Magistrates' Court Business - January to March 2022 compared with January to March 2021

	Adult Q1 2022	Adult Q1 2021	% change from 2021	Youth Q1 2022	Youth Q1 2021	% change from 2021	Civil Q1 2022	Civil Q1 2021	% change from 2021	Family Q1 2022	Family Q1 2021	% change from 2021
Defendants or applications received	8,998	8,566	5%↑	240	296	19%↓	55	74	26%↓	884	1,074	18%↓
Defendants or applications disposed	8,548	9,225	7%↓	248	315	21%↓	67	55	22%↑	867	1,020	15%↓
Average waiting time (weeks)	10	15	33%↓	20	24	17%↓	33	37	11%↓	10	12	17%↓

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'.