

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Provisional Figures

April to June 2024

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23 August 2024



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Key Findings

This report provides an overview of Children Order and County, Crown, High and Magistrates' Courts business during April to June 2024 and how it compares with the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year. The headline findings are summarised below -

- During the quarter there were 480 Children Order sittings (1,342 total hours sat), 1,193 Children Order Applications received and 1,212 disposed. In terms of orders made, 304 were own motion, 2,293 were interim and 1,720 were final orders.
 - County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,376 days within the County Court. In terms of cases, 43 equity, 173 ejectment, 2,067 small claims and zero criminal damage cases were received; 36 equity, 158 ejectment, 1,982 small claims and three criminal damage cases were disposed.
 - In terms of Crown Court business there were 883 sittings with 408 cases and 474 defendants received and 433 cases and 526 defendants disposed.
- There were 610 High Court sitting days. The highest proportion of these was spent on Bails business (17%) with 1,341 writs and originating summons received and 1,011 disposed.
 - Within the 1,057 Magistrates' sitting days during the quarter, 72% were adult criminal, 6% youth criminal and 22% civil and family days. There were 793 civil and family applications and 9,726 adult and 247 youth defendants received. Corresponding figures for disposals were 771, 9,472 and 255 respectively.

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Introduction

About this report

This bulletin is produced in accordance with the pillars and principles set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. It presents the following statistics for the Northern Ireland Court and Tribunals Service for the quarter April to June 2024 –

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

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

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

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

2 | Introduction

The next update covering the quarter to 30 September 2024 will be published in November 2024. A full [publication schedule](#) is available on the DoJ website.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

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Children Order

Children Order Quarterly Business

- Table 1 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 480 sittings (1,342 hours), 1,193 Children Order Applications received and 1,212 disposed.
 - A total of 1,800 children were involved in the applications disposed. Gender and age breakdowns of the children were 52:48 male:female and 31% 0-4 years, 29% 5-8 years, 24% 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 (75%, 146 of 194 reasons). This was followed by Consolidation (16), Jurisdiction (15), Return to Lower Court (11), Convenience (3), Urgency (2) and Gravity (1).
- In terms of orders made –
 - 304 were own motion orders.
 - 2,293 were interim orders.
 - 1,720 were final orders.
 - The average waiting time for applications disposed was 56 weeks for public and 34 weeks for private law.
 - Table 1 shows that applications received decreased slightly and applications disposed increased. 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 2024 compared with April to June 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sittings	480	479	-
Hours sat	1,342	1,351	1% ↓
Applications received	1,193	1,199	1% ↓
Applications disposed	1,212	1,135	7% ↑
Number of children involved in applications disposed	1,800	1,671	8% ↑
Own motion orders made	304	500	39% ↓
Interim orders made	2,293	2,259	2% ↑
Final orders made	1,720	1,580	9% ↑
Average waiting time for disposal for public law (weeks)	55.5	57.9	4% ↓
Average waiting time for disposal for private law (weeks)	34.4	34.9	1% ↓

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 1,376 sitting days during the quarter. Within those days 755 were spent on criminal business and 621 days on civil and family business.
- During the quarter –
 - 2,355 Civil bills with notice of intention to defend (NID) were received and 2,720 disposed.
 - In terms of cases 43 equity, 173 ejectment, 2,067 small claims and zero criminal damage cases were received; 36 equity, 158 ejectment, 1,982 small claims and three criminal damage cases were disposed.
 - 210 divorce decrees were granted and 364 decrees absolute issued.
 - 82 licence applications were received and 83 disposed.
- Table 2 shows a mixed set of results across most areas of business compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

4 | County Court

Table 2: County Court Business – April to June 2024 compared with April to June 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sitting days	1,376	1,217	13%↑
Civil bills with NID received	2,355	1,795	31%↑
Civil bills disposed	2,720	2,343	16%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of civil bill (weeks)	53	58	9%↓
Equity cases received	43	34	26%↑
Equity cases disposed	36	32	13%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases (weeks)	110	126	13%↓
Ejectment cases received	173	191	9%↓
Ejectment cases disposed	158	223	29%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of ejectment cases (weeks)	35	33	6%↑

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

4 | County Court

Table 2 continued: County Court Business – April to June 2024 compared with April to June 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Small claims received	2,067	2,144	4%↓
Small claims disposed	1,982	2,303	14%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of small claims cases (weeks)	23	22	5%↑
Criminal damage cases received	-	1	100%↓
Criminal damage cases disposed	3	4	25%↓
Divorce decrees granted	210	301	30%↓
Decree absolute issued	364	304	20%↑
Average time taken from issue to date divorce decree granted (weeks)	51	41	24%↑
Licences applications received	82	76	8%↑
Licences applications disposed	83	76	9%↑

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

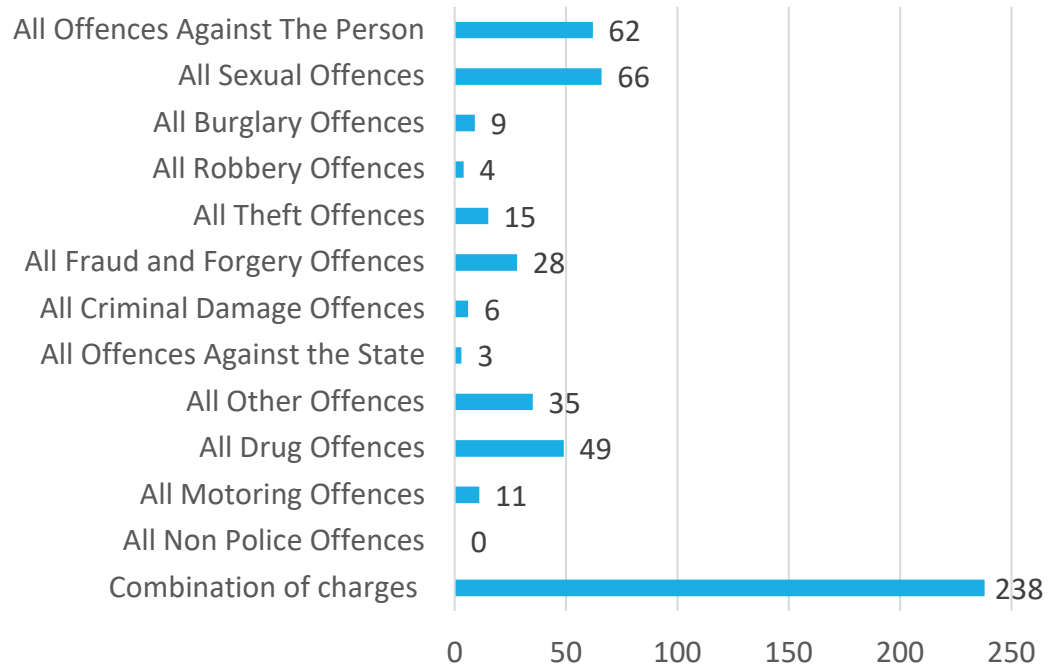
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Crown Court

Crown Court Quarterly Business

- Table 3 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 883 sittings (1,801 hours sat). County Court Judges disposed of 99% of defendants (523), a figure that has remained relatively stable over the last five years (98-99%).
- There were 408 cases and 474 defendants received during the quarter; 433 cases and 526 defendants were disposed.
- Average time from committal to hearing was 141 days and from conviction to disposal was 81 days.
- In comparison to the same quarter in the previous year the number of cases and defendants received increased. Average time from committal to hearing and from conviction to disposal decreased.
- Figure 1 shows that the majority of defendants disposed were charged with a combination of offences, a similar pattern seen in each of the last five years.

Figure 1: Crown Court defendants disposed by charge type April to June 2024



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Crown Court

Table 3: Crown Court Business – April to June 2024 compared with April to June 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sittings	883	720	23%↑
Hours sat	1,801	1,491	21%↑
Cases received	408	349	17%↑
Cases disposed	433	388	12%↑
Defendants received	474	412	15%↑
Defendants disposed	526	472	11%↑
Defendants pleading guilty to all charges	113	106	7%↑
Defendants pleading guilty or found guilty of at least one charge	348	303	15%↑
Average time from committal to hearing (days)	141	192	27%↓
Average time from conviction to disposal (days)	81	90	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 shows that there were 610 High Court sitting days during the quarter, the highest proportion of which was spent on Bails business (17%).
- King's Bench business included –
 - Receipt of 1,341 and disposal of 1,011 writs and originating summonses.
 - Receipt of 64 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review and 10 applications for Judicial Review.
- Chancery Division business included –
 - Receipt of 640 (68% of which were Chancery, 19% bankruptcy and 14% companies cases) and disposal of 540 cases.
 - 2,128 grants issued in the Probate office.
- Family Division business included –
 - Receipt of 15 and disposal of 29 adoption cases and applications.
 - 610 divorce petitions received, 262 decrees granted (33% (86) '2 years with consent' and 25% (66) '5 years separation') and 216 decrees absolute issued.
 - 73 Official Solicitor's Office cases received, 8 disposed and a current caseload of 502 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 – April to June 2024 compared with April to June 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sitting days	610	552	11%↑
Writs & originating summonses received	1,341	910	47%↑
Writs & originating summonses disposed	1,011	659	53%↑
Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review received	64	79	19%↓
Applications for Judicial Review received	10	24	58%↓
Ancillary applications received	-	1	100%↓
Chancery, Bankruptcy & Companies cases received	640	496	29%↑
Chancery, Bankruptcy & Companies cases disposed	540	371	46%↑
Grants issued in the Probate office	2,128	2,321	8%↓

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

6 | High Court

Table 4 continued: High Court Business – April to June 2024 compared with April to June 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Adoption cases & applications received	15	15	-
Adoption cases & applications disposed	29	28	4%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal for adoption case/application (weeks)	24	22	9%↑
Divorce petitions received	610	632	3%↓
Decrees granted in High Court	262	251	4%↑
Decrees absolute issued	216	198	9%↑
Average time taken from issue of divorce petition to date decree granted (weeks)	60	55	9%↑
Official Solicitors Office cases received	73	35	109%↑
Official Solicitors Office cases disposed	8	66	88%↓
Official Solicitors Office caseload at end of quarter	502	356	41%↑

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

7 Magistrates' Court

Magistrates' Court Quarterly Business

- During the quarter there were 996 scheduled, 29 additional and 32 special Magistrates' sitting days (Table 5).
- Within the 1,057 total, 72% were adult criminal, 6% were youth criminal and 22% were civil and family days.

Table 5: Magistrates' Court Sitting Days – April to June 2024 compared with April to June 2023

	Adult	Youth	Civil & Family	Total Quarter 2024	Total Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Scheduled	698	64	234	996	1,018	2%↓
Additional	26	2	1	29	21	38%↑
Special	32	-	-	32	38	16%↓
Total	756	66	235	1,057	1,077	2%↓

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

7 | Magistrates' Court

- There were 793 new civil and family applications and 9,726 new adult and 247 new youth defendants received; corresponding disposals were 771, 9,472 and 255 respectively.
- The average waiting times from first hearing to disposal in the adult and youth criminal courts were 8 weeks and 15 weeks respectively. For civil and family applications it was 22 and 11 weeks respectively from date of receipt to disposal.

Table 6: Magistrates' Court Business – April to June 2024 compared with April to June 2023

	Adult Q2 2024	Adult Q2 2023	% change from 2023	Youth Q2 2024	Youth Q2 2023	% change from 2023	Civil Q2 2024	Civil Q2 2023	% change from 2023	Family Q2 2024	Family Q2 2023	% change from 2023
Defendants or applications received	9,726	9,944	2%↓	247	343	28%↓	79	80	1%↓	714	850	16%↓
Defendants or applications disposed	9,472	9,126	4%↑	255	284	10%↓	99	66	50%↑	672	777	14%↓
Average waiting time (weeks)	8	9	11%↓	15	15	-	22	38	42%↓	11	9	22%↑

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'.