



Department of
Justice

www.dojni.gov.uk

Analytical Services Group

County Court Bulletin

July to September 2015

Research and Statistical Bulletin 25/2015

Provisional quarterly figures

R Redmond

13 November 2015

Produced by Analytical Services Group,
Department of Justice.

For further information write to:

**Analytical Services Group,
NI Courts and Tribunals Service,
4th Floor, Laganside House,
23-27 Oxford Street,
Belfast BT1 3LA**

Telephone: 028 9072 8920

Email: rodney.redmond@courtsni.gov.uk

This bulletin is available on the Internet at:

www.courtsni.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at County Courts in Northern Ireland during the period July to September 2015 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. During the period July to September 2015.
- There were 1,934 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 3% decrease on the same quarter last year (1,987). In total, 1,876 civil bills were disposed, a decrease of 5% on the number disposed during the same period in 2014 (1,968). There were 2,085 outstanding civil bills with a Certificate of Readiness (COR) at the end of the quarter, up 18% on the corresponding figure last year (1,761), and the highest number at the end of the July to September quarter over the time series from 2007.
- 30 equity cases were received during July to September 2015, the same as the number received during the period July to September 2014, while the number of equity cases disposed decreased by 42% from 26 during the period July to September 2014, to 15 this quarter.
- A total of 259 ejectment cases were received, down 3% on the 266 cases received during July to September 2014, with the number of ejectment cases disposed increasing by 44%, from 135 in the same quarter last year to 195 this quarter
- 2,636 small claims were received, down 8% on the 2,867 received during the same quarter last year. The number of small claims cases disposed increased by 5% from 2,314 during July to September 2014 to 2,436 this quarter.
- Eight criminal damage cases were received, with six cases being disposed during the quarter. This compares with seven cases received and two cases disposed during the same quarter in 2014.
- A total of 523 divorce decrees were granted in the county court, up 57% on the 334 granted during the same period last year.
- County Court and District Judges sat a total of 707 sitting days during the quarter, down 6% on the 752 sitting days recorded during the period July to September 2014. Some 47% of time was spent on criminal business with 36% spent on civil business and 17% on family business (compared to 50%, 32% and 18% respectively during July to September 2014). While the proportion of time spent on criminal business has been decreasing each July to September quarter since 2012, the decision of a number of solicitors and counsel to withdraw their representation from a number of Crown Court cases appears to have impacted upon the time spent on criminal business this quarter. This action was in response to the introduction, in May 2015, of new rules in relation to legal aid remuneration.

CONTENTS

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	2
3. Findings	4
3.1 Ordinary civil bills	
3.2 Equity	
3.3 Ejectment	
3.4 Small Claims	
3.5 Criminal Damage	
3.6 Divorces	
3.7 Licences	
3.8 Sittings	
Appendix 1 – Tables	12
Appendix 2 – Explanatory Notes	25
Figure	Page
Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received: July - September 2007 to July - September 2015	4
Figure 2: Outstanding civil bills with Certificate of Readiness, by Judicial Level: July - September 2007 to July - September 2015	5
Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed: July - September 2007 to July - September 2015	6
Figure 4: Small claims cases disposed, by type of disposal: July - September 2007 to July - September 2015	7
Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed: July - September 2007 to July - September 2015	8
Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type: July - September 2007 to July - September 2015	9
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: July - September 2015	10
Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: July - September 2007 to July - September 2015	11
Table	Page
Table 1: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications received	12
Table 2: Number of ordinary civil bill cases with NID received by Judicial Level	12
Table 3: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications disposed	13
Table 4: Number of ordinary civil bill cases by amount awarded	13
Table 5: Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR	14
Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR	14
Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases	14

<u>Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications</u>	15
<u>Table 9: Equity cases and applications received</u>	15
<u>Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed</u>	16
<u>Table 11: Outstanding equity cases</u>	16
<u>Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity</u>	17
<u>Table 13: Ejectment cases received</u>	17
<u>Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed</u>	17
<u>Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID</u>	18
<u>Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment</u>	18
<u>Table 17: Number of small claims cases and applications received</u>	18
<u>Table 18: Number of small claims cases with NOD received</u>	19
<u>Table 19: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed</u>	19
<u>Table 20: Outstanding claims with NOD</u>	19
<u>Table 21: Time intervals in weeks for small claims</u>	20
<u>Table 22: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received</u>	20
<u>Table 23: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed</u>	20
<u>Table 24: Outstanding criminal damage cases</u>	21
<u>Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage</u>	21
<u>Table 26: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted</u>	21
<u>Table 27: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued</u>	22
<u>Table 28: Matrimonial applications received</u>	22
<u>Table 29: Matrimonial applications disposed</u>	22
<u>Table 30: Time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions</u>	23
<u>Table 31: Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications</u>	23
<u>Table 32: Licences received and disposed</u>	23
<u>Table 33: County Court Judge & District Judge Sitting Days</u>	24

1. INTRODUCTION

In Northern Ireland, there are seven county court divisions with seventeen county court judges and four district judges. 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 use data that are inputted onto 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. 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. As data on licence applications received and disposed are not recorded on ICOS, these data are compiled manually by each county court office and submitted on a quarterly basis.

2.2 Methodology for generating data

Analytical Service 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 Oracle Discoverer 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 and names and addresses are not held. These statistical files are not transmitted outside the NICTS statistical team. ASG statisticians based in the NICTS import these 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 the data are reliable and robust.

2.3 Baseline and Time period

Data contained within this bulletin relate to the time series 2007, when ICOS was adopted as the source of county court data, to the current calendar year 2015.

2.4 Data quality and validation

ASG statisticians based in the NICTS have invested significant time and effort creating and 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 the potential problems which are circulated to each county court venue as a validation report.

Each court division has a Case Progression Officer who is responsible for: monitoring accuracy levels on ICOS, by carrying out sample checks on data entry and court resulting; ensuring all validations on ICOS and manual statistics returns are completed in a timely manner; providing advice and identifying training needs; monitoring the confirmation of ICOS court resulting, including the inputting of adjournment codes; and promoting awareness of the impact error can have, its wide ranging consequences and the negative impact on the reliability of management information.

The Case Progression Officer is given a two week period from the date the validation report issues until all records are amended on ICOS. This ensures that the corrections are updated before the next download of files. After the files have been refreshed each weekend, all the data are then downloaded again, with the new download reflecting amendments made as a result of the validation reports. If any errors have not been corrected, they will continue to appear in the validation reports until the necessary amendments are made on ICOS.

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.

2.5 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.

2.6 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.

2.7 Revisions

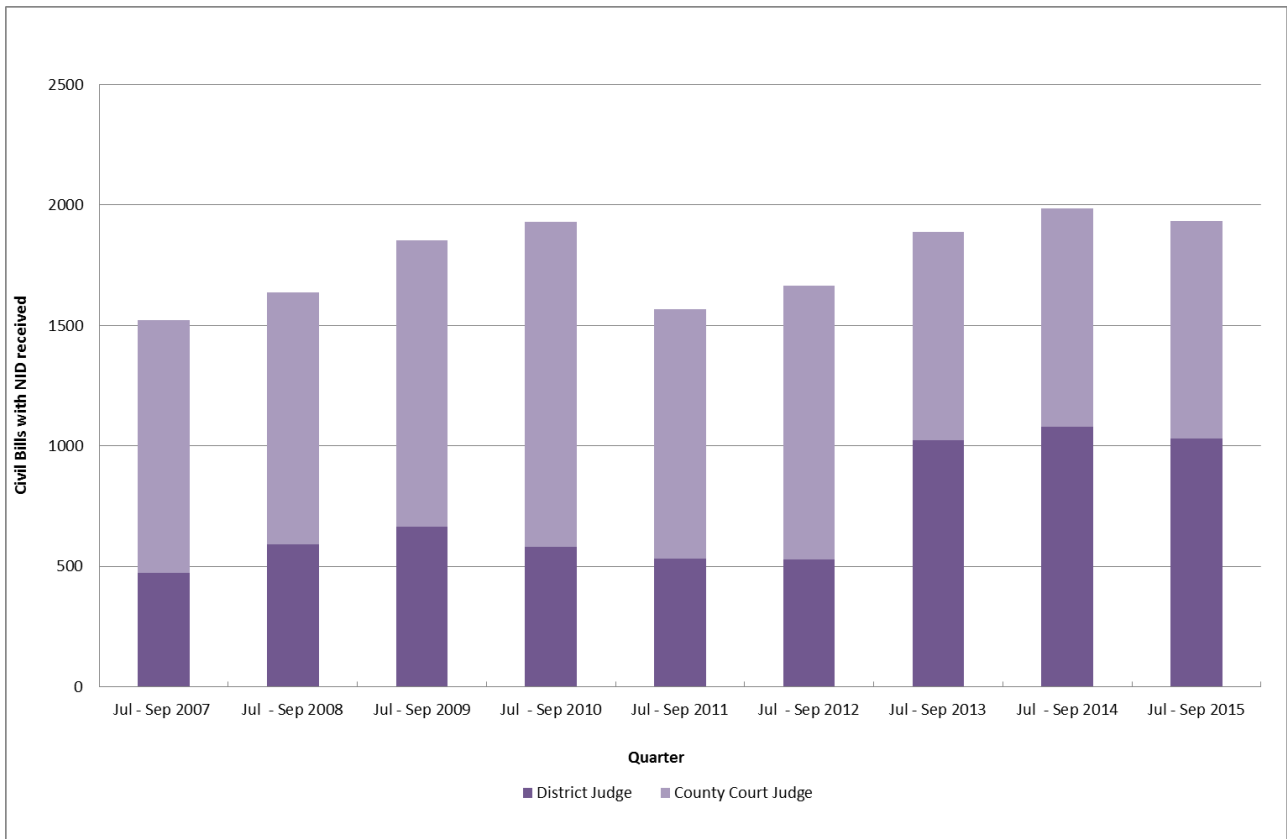
Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note 'Policy Statement on Revisions' which can be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the NICTS website (www.courtsni.gov.uk). Incorrect figures of changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Ordinary civil bills

There were 1,934 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 3% decrease on the same quarter last year (1,987). The proportion of receipts with a NID that fall within the civil jurisdiction of District Judges has increased since the changes introduced on 21st February 2013, which increased the upper limit of civil bills from £15,000 to £30,000, with District Judges dealing with cases up to the value of £10,000 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received: July – September 2007 to July – September 2015

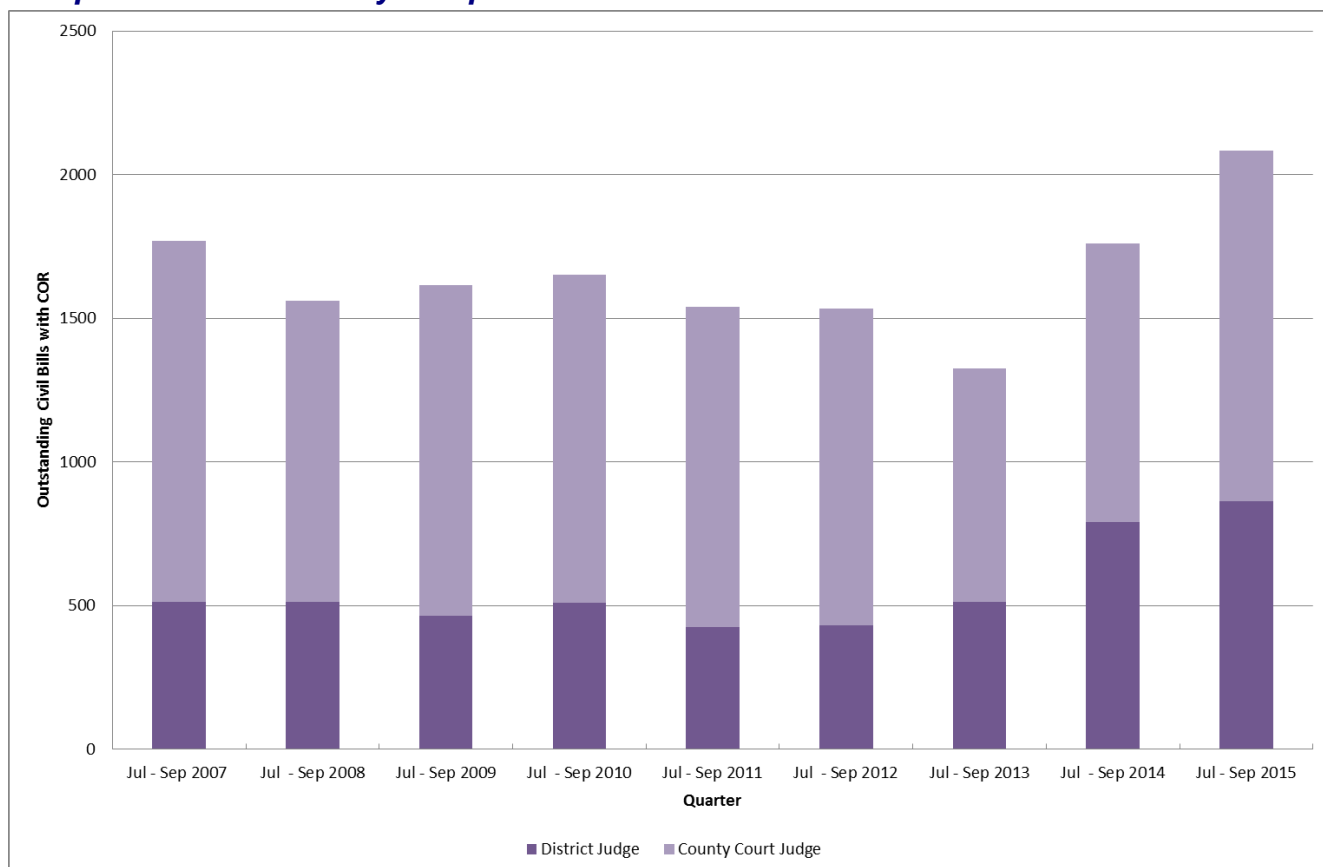


In total, 1,876 civil bills were disposed, a decrease of 5% on the number disposed during the same period in 2014 (1,968).

There were 2,085 outstanding civil bills with a Certificate of Readiness (COR) at the end of the quarter, up 18% on the corresponding figure last year (1,761), and the highest number at the end of the July to September quarter over the time series from 2007.

Of the 2,085 outstanding civil bills with a certificate of readiness, 1,222 (59%) were County Court Judge cases, significantly higher than the 971 (55%) County Court Judge cases outstanding at the same stage last year (Figure 2). This is largely due to an increase in outstanding civil bills with a COR, that relate to Hearing Loss (Police Hearing Loss, Breach of Statutory Duty and Negligent Employer cases), civil bills that have claimed for amounts that have fallen within the threshold of County Court Judges.

Figure 2: Outstanding civil bills with Certificate of Readiness, by Judicial Level: July – September 2007 to July – September 2015



The average time taken from issue to disposal of a civil bill was 52 weeks, compared to the 46 weeks reported for the same quarter in 2014.

3.2 Equity

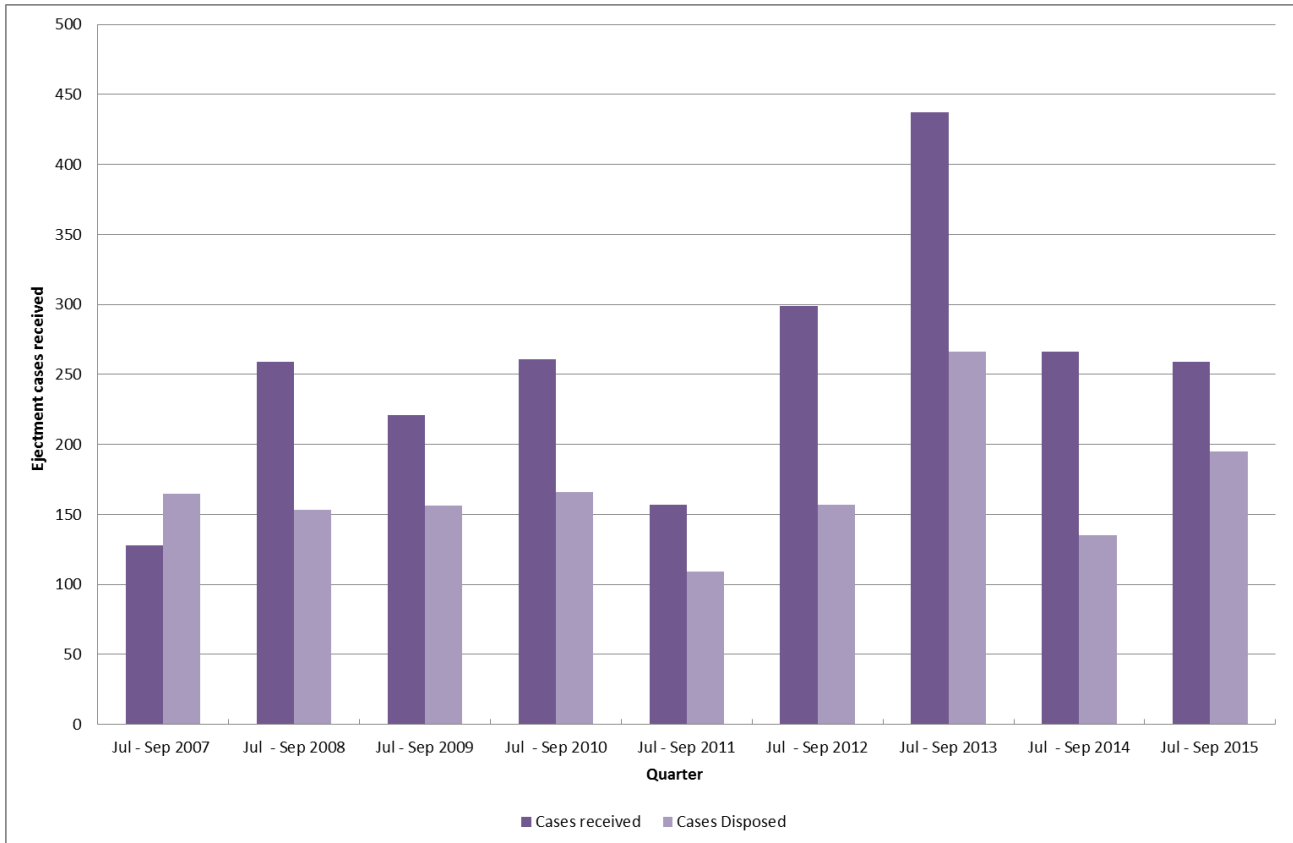
A total of 30 equity cases were received during July to September 2015, the same as the number received during the period July to September 2014, while the number of equity cases disposed decreased by 42% from 26 during the period July to September 2014, to 15 this quarter.

The average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases was 87 weeks, up from 63 weeks during the same period last year.

3.3 Ejectment

A total of 259 ejectment cases were received, down 3% on the 266 cases received during July to September 2014, with the number of ejectment cases disposed increasing by 44%, from 135 in the same quarter last year to 195 this quarter (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed: July – September 2007 to July – September 2015



The number of outstanding ejectment cases with a Notice of Intention to Defend at the end of the quarter decreased by 34% compared with the end of June 2014 (from 44 to 29).

The overall trend in ejectment cases received since 2007 is similar to the number of mortgage cases received in the High Court over the same time and is likely to be due to the economic conditions of this period.

The average time taken from issue to disposal for ejectment cases was 19 weeks, compared to 20 weeks during the July to September quarter in 2014.

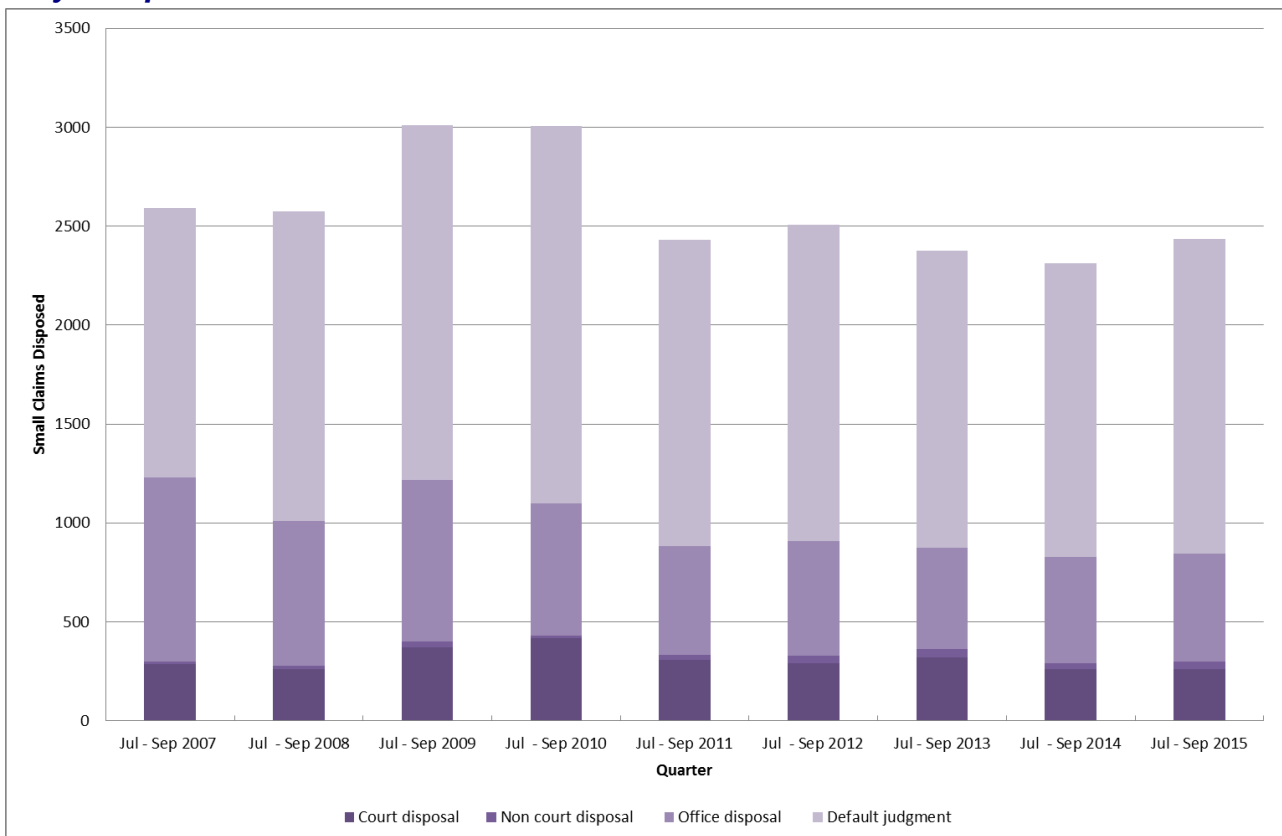
3.4 Small claims

2,636 small claims were received, down 8% on the 2,867 received during the same quarter last year.

The number of small claims cases disposed increased by 5% from 2,314 during July to September 2014 to 2,436 this quarter, while the number of outstanding small claims with a Notice of Dispute decreased by 12% from 611 at the end of September 2014 to 535 at the end of September 2015.

Of the 2,436 small claims disposed during the quarter, the majority (65%) were disposed by way of default judgment, a situation observed during each of the July to September quarters since the beginning of the time series in 2007 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Small claims cases disposed, by type of disposal: July – September 2007 to July – September 2015

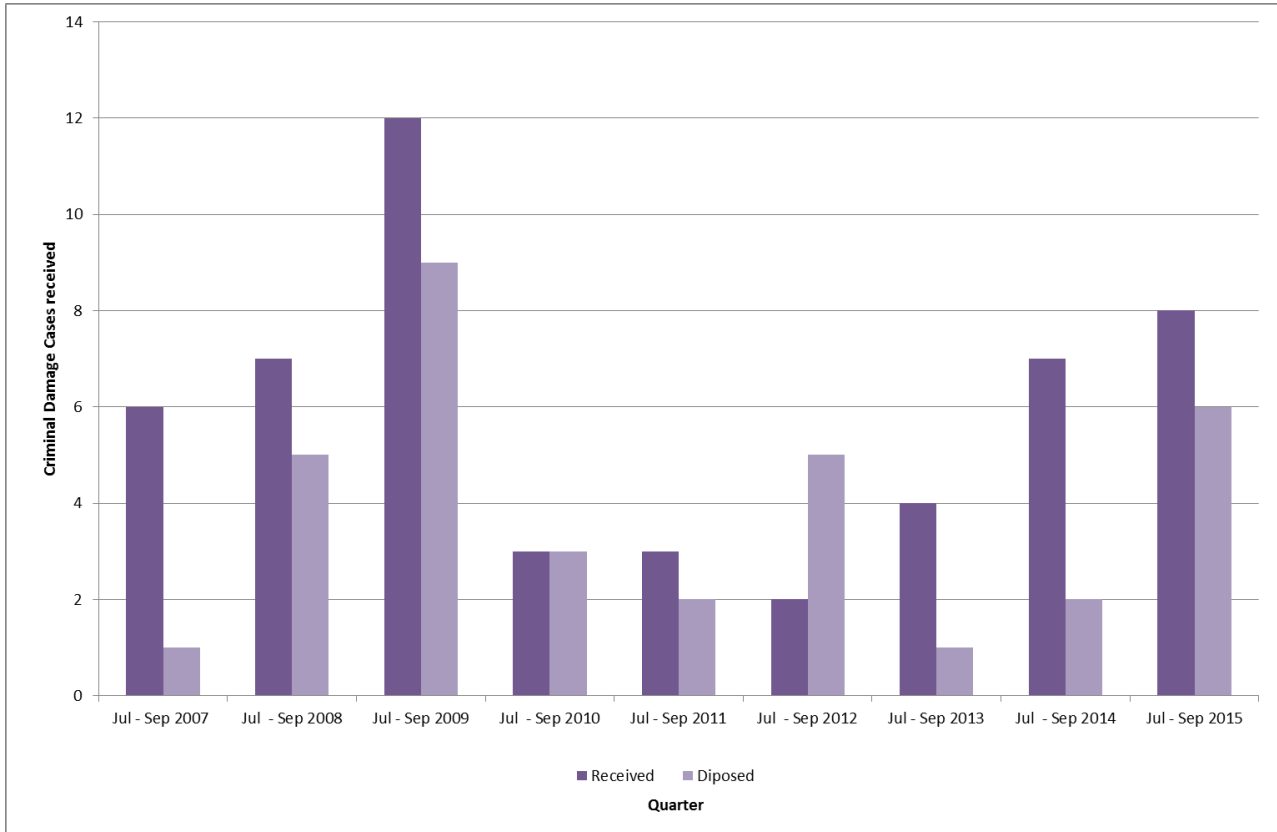


The average number of weeks from issue to disposal for small claims cases was 22 weeks, slightly higher than the 21 weeks reported last year.

3.5 Criminal damage

Eight criminal damage cases were received, with six cases being disposed during the quarter. This compares with seven cases received and two cases disposed during the same quarter in 2014 (Figure 5), while the number of outstanding criminal damage cases has decreased from 79 at the end of the September 2014, to 70 at the end of this quarter.

Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed: July – September 2007 to July – September 2015



The average time taken in weeks from issue to disposal of Criminal Damage cases was 117 weeks, up from 78 weeks during the same period last year. The relatively small number of cases disposed each quarter can lead to significant changes in average times observed from issue to disposal.

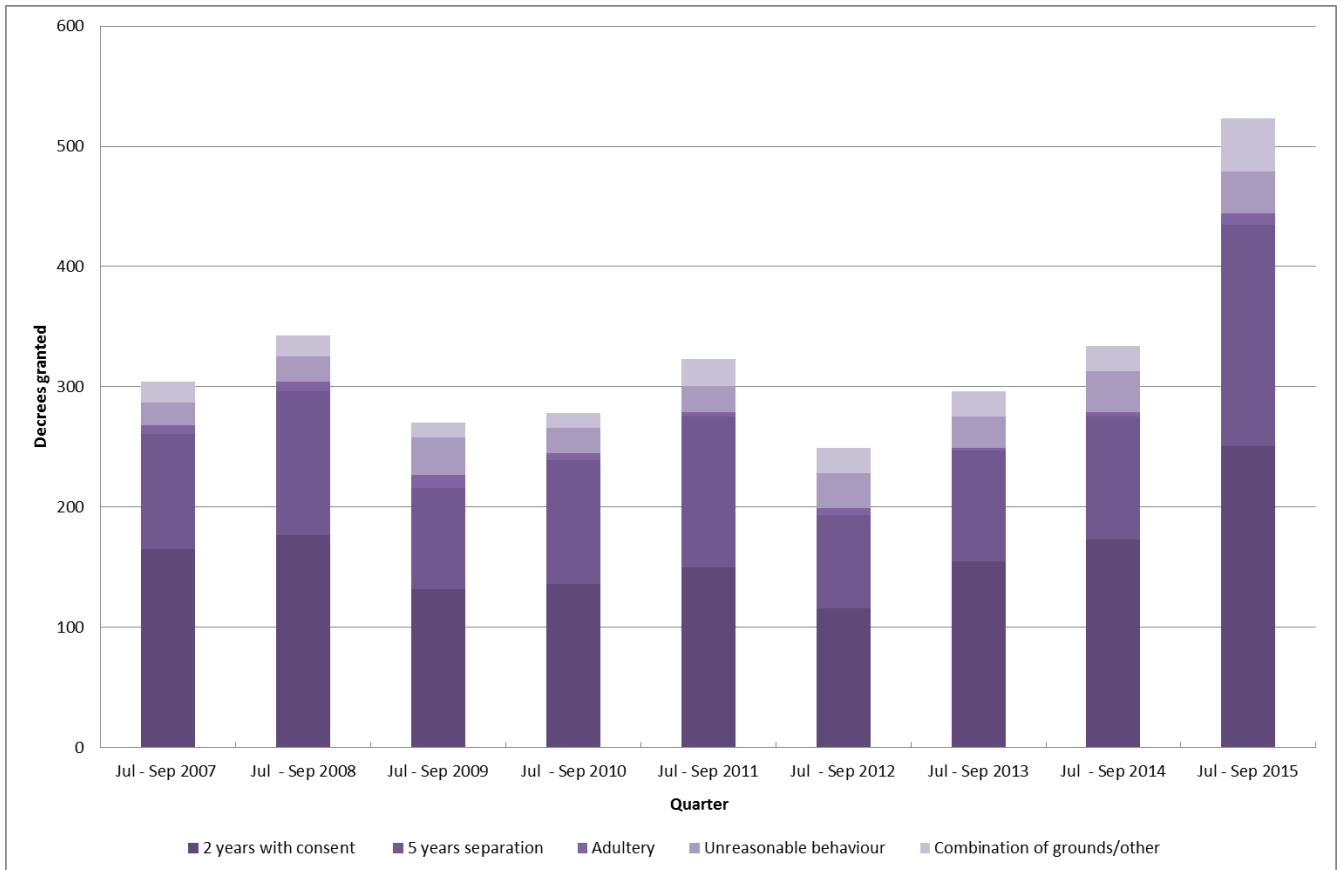
3.6 Divorces

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

A total of 523 divorce decrees were granted in the county court, up 57% on the 334 granted during the same period last year. This may be attributable in part to an increase in business in Belfast County Court Division during the period, designed to clear an existing backlog in divorce cases.

The main type of divorce decree granted was '2 years with consent' accounting for 48% of decrees (251), followed by '5 years separation', 35% (184) of decrees (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type: July – September 2007 to July – September 2015



A total of 353 decrees absolute were issued in the county court, a slight decrease on the 355 issued during the period July to September 2014. Again the most common type of decree absolute was '2 years with consent', accounting for 44% (157) of cases.

The average time taken from issue to the date a divorce decree was granted was 35 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 33 weeks and eight weeks during the same period last year.

3.7 Licences

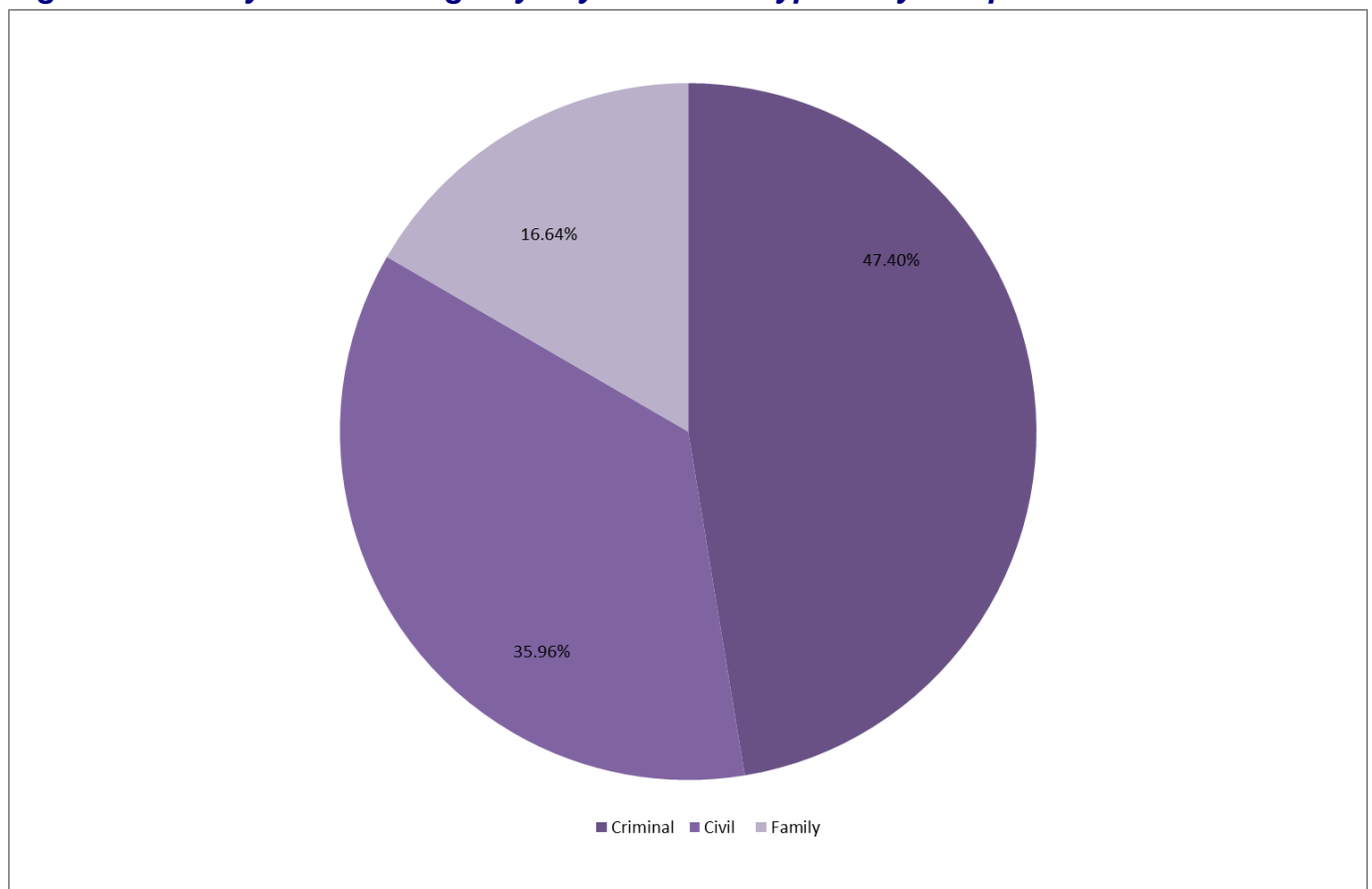
There were 31 licence applications received and 22 disposed, compared to the 36 received and 30 disposed during the same quarter last year.

3.8 Sitting Days

County Court and District Judges sat a total of 707 sitting days during the quarter, down 6% on the 752 sitting days recorded during the period July to September 2014.

Within these 707 sitting days, 47% of time was spent on criminal business, 36% of time was spent on civil business and 17% of time was spent on family business (Figure 7).

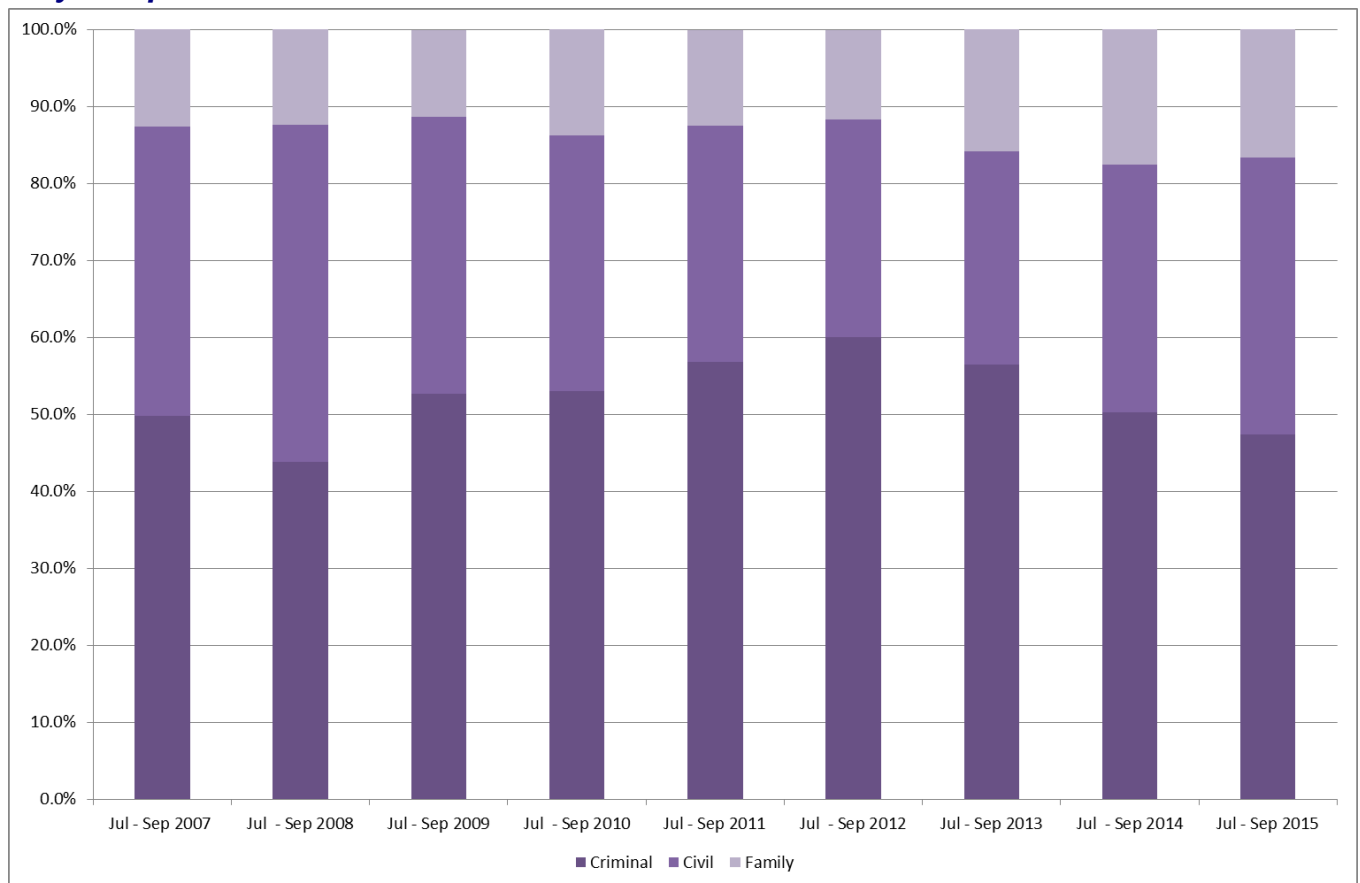
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: July – September 2015



The proportion of time spent on criminal business has displayed a steady increase from 50% during July – September 2007 to 60% in July – September 2012. This is largely reflective of County Court Judges dealing with increased volumes of cases in the Crown Court over the period. Since then, the proportion of time spent on criminal business has decreased each quarter, down to 47% during July – September 2015, with time spent on criminal business being at its lowest since the July – September quarter in 2008.

While this was initially due to an increase in civil and family business, the decrease over the last year is likely to have been an impact of the reduction in criminal business undertaken by County Court Judges as a consequence of a number of solicitors and counsel withdrawing their representation from a number of Crown Court cases. This action was in response to the introduction, in May 2015, of new rules in relation to legal aid remuneration.

Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: July – September 2007 to July – September 2015



APPENDIX 1

Civil Bills

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

Case	Antrim	183
	Ards	221
	Armagh and South Down	123
	Belfast	1878
	Craigavon	152
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	126
	Londonderry	111
	Total	2794
Application	Antrim	84
	Ards	158
	Armagh and South Down	85
	Belfast	680
	Craigavon	67
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	79
	Londonderry	59
	Total	1212

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

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Antrim	96	67	163
Ards	181	58	239
Armagh and South Down	96	55	151
Belfast	390	569	959
Craigavon	106	55	161
Fermanagh and Tyrone	86	55	141
Londonderry	75	45	120
Total	1030	904	1934

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

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Default judgement	Office disposal	Total
Case	Antrim	34	33	58	1	11	137
	Ards	48	112	69	6	15	250
	Armagh and South Down	27	36	31	7	10	111
	Belfast	352	217	176	6	57	808
	Civil Processing Centre	0	0	26	221	28	275
	Craigavon	43	0	33	2	14	92
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	16	36	31	2	10	95
	Londonderry	23	53	19	0	13	108
	Total	543	487	443	245	158	1876
Application	Antrim	8	9	28	0	0	45
	Ards	10	19	42	0	0	71
	Armagh and South Down	6	11	21	0	0	38
	Belfast	12	38	169	0	0	219
	Civil Processing Centre	0	0	7	0	0	7
	Craigavon	4	0	26	0	0	30
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	1	6	30	0	0	37
	Londonderry	6	12	23	0	0	41
	Total	47	95	346	0	0	488

Table 4: Number of ordinary civil bills cases by amount awarded¹

		No value	Less than £1000	£1000-2999	£3000-4999	Over £5000	Total
Case	Antrim	10	6	17	10	24	67
	Ards	24	9	43	36	48	160
	Armagh and South Down	16	2	16	12	17	63
	Belfast	333	16	84	69	67	569
	Craigavon	11	4	8	9	11	43
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	17	6	10	10	9	52
	Londonderry	27	4	19	15	11	76
	Total	438	47	197	161	187	1030

¹Excludes cases that were adjourned generally, default judgements or had office disposals

Table 5: Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR

	County Court judge	District judge	Total
Antrim	177	169	346
Ards	105	221	326
Armagh and South Down	146	162	308
Belfast	2105	845	2950
Craigavon	137	192	329
Fermanagh and Tyrone	230	210	440
Londonderry	131	170	301
Total	3031	1969	5000

Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR

	County Court judge	District judge	Total
Antrim	67	91	158
Ards	60	61	121
Armagh and South Down	60	85	145
Belfast	822	412	1234
Craigavon	75	69	144
Fermanagh and Tyrone	106	97	203
Londonderry	32	48	80
Total	1222	863	2085

Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases²

	Issue to disposal	
Case	Antrim	46
	Ards	30
	Armagh and South Down	44
	Belfast	59
	Craigavon	46
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	56
	Londonderry	56
	Total	52

²Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications²

		Issue to disposal
Application	Antrim	5
	Ards	8
	Armagh and South Down	6
	Belfast	11
	Craigavon	12
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	13
	Londonderry	8
	Total	9

²Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Equity

Table 9: Equity cases and applications received

Case	Antrim	1
	Ards	4
	Armagh and South Down	8
	Belfast	4
	Craigavon	3
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	7
	Londonderry	3
	Total	30
Application	Antrim	0
	Ards	1
	Armagh and South Down	6
	Belfast	2
	Craigavon	0
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	4
	Londonderry	1
	Total	14

Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Antrim	0	1	0	1
	Ards	1	0	0	1
	Armagh and South Down	0	0	1	1
	Belfast	2	0	1	3
	Craigavon	1	0	0	1
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	2	0	0	2
	Londonderry	5	1	0	6
	Total	11	2	2	15
Application	Antrim	1	0	0	1
	Ards	1	0	0	1
	Armagh and South Down	2	0	3	5
	Belfast	0	0	2	2
	Craigavon	0	0	0	0
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	0	1	0	1
	Londonderry	0	0	1	1
	Total	4	1	6	11

Table 11: Outstanding equity cases

Case	Antrim	18
	Ards	27
	Armagh and South Down	33
	Belfast	51
	Craigavon	10
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	48
	Londonderry	15
Total	202	

Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity

		Issue to disposal
Case	Antrim	123
	Ards	65
	Armagh and South Down	0
	Belfast	99
	Craigavon	53
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	99
	Londonderry	83
	Total	87
Application	Antrim	17
	Ards	1
	Armagh and South Down	18
	Belfast	0
	Craigavon	0
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	7
	Londonderry	0
	Total	12

Ejectment

Table 13: Ejectment cases received

Case	Antrim	14
	Ards	26
	Armagh and South Down	5
	Belfast	178
	Craigavon	24
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	5
	Londonderry	7
	Total	259

Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Antrim	15	0	2	17
	Ards	10	29	0	39
	Armagh and South Down	4	0	0	4
	Belfast	7	93	0	100
	Craigavon	3	12	0	15
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	8	0	2	10
	Londonderry	9	0	1	10
	Total	56	134	5	195

Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID

Case	Antrim	4
	Ards	4
	Armagh and South Down	5
	Belfast	3
	Craigavon	3
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	5
	Londonderry	5
Total		29

Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment³

		Issue to disposal
Case	Antrim	20
	Ards	21
	Armagh and South Down	49
	Belfast	18
	Craigavon	16
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	17
	Londonderry	17
	Total	19

³Excludes default judgements, non-court disposals and office disposals

Small Claims

Table 17: Number of small claims cases and applications received

Case	Antrim	43
	Ards	35
	Armagh and South Down	22
	Belfast	2467
	Craigavon	24
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	27
	Londonderry	18
	Total	2636
Application	Antrim	7
	Ards	6
	Armagh and South Down	3
	Belfast	27
	Craigavon	4
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	5
	Londonderry	5
	Total	57

Table 18: Number of small claims cases with NOD received

Case	Antrim	44
	Ards	44
	Armagh and South Down	27
	Belfast	152
	Craigavon	22
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	26
	Londonderry	25
Total		340

Table 19: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Office disposal	Default judgement	Total
Case	Antrim	34	2	9	1	46
	Ards	39	4	15	1	59
	Armagh and South Down	25	3	2	2	32
	Belfast	85	20	507	1583	2195
	Craigavon	25	2	4	1	32
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	25	4	4	2	35
	Londonderry	29	0	7	1	37
	Total	262	35	548	1591	2436
Application	Antrim	2	0	0	0	2
	Ards	2	1	0	0	3
	Armagh and South Down	1	0	0	0	1
	Belfast	25	5	0	0	30
	Craigavon	4	0	0	0	4
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	0	1	0	0	1
	Londonderry	6	0	0	0	6
	Total	40	7	0	0	47

Table 20: Outstanding small claims with NOD

Antrim	48
Ards	37
Armagh and South Down	47
Belfast	285
Craigavon	32
Fermanagh and Tyrone	46
Londonderry	40
Total	535

Table 21: Time intervals in weeks for small claims

		Issue to disposal
Case	Antrim	19
	Ards	16
	Armagh and South Down	20
	Belfast	25
	Craigavon	25
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	24
	Londonderry	20
	Total	22
Application	Antrim	3
	Ards	6
	Armagh and South Down	17
	Belfast	7
	Craigavon	13
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	0
	Londonderry	5
	Total	7

Excludes default judgements, non-court disposals and office disposals

Criminal Damage

Table 22: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received

Case	Armagh and South Down	1
	Belfast	3
	Craigavon	1
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	3
	Total	8

Table 23: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Total
Case	Belfast	0	2	2
	Londonderry	3	1	4
	Total	3	3	6

Table 24: Outstanding criminal damage cases

Antrim	1
Ards	2
Armagh and South Down	6
Belfast	28
Craigavon	9
Fermanagh and Tyrone	16
Londonderry	8
Total	70

Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage

		Issue to disposal
Case	Belfast	30
	Londonderry	160
	Total	117

Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Divorces

Table 26: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Antrim	42	38	2	5	8	95
Ards	45	23	1	2	9	80
Armagh and South Down	19	18	2	4	3	46
Belfast	80	56	1	11	10	158
Craigavon	28	23	3	4	7	65
Fermanagh and Tyrone	17	6	0	1	3	27
Londonderry	20	20	0	8	4	52
Total	251	184	9	35	44	523

Table 27: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Antrim	30	25	1	8	8	72
Ards	14	7	0	3	2	26
Armagh and South Down	12	15	0	3	2	32
Belfast	43	37	2	6	6	94
Craigavon	22	12	0	2	5	41
Fermanagh and Tyrone	14	10	0	1	1	26
Londonderry	22	24	1	12	3	62
Total	157	130	4	35	27	353

Table 28: Matrimonial applications received

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a Master	Other	Total
Antrim	12	1	0	13
Ards	3	0	0	3
Armagh and South Down	7	0	1	8
Belfast	7	0	17	24
Craigavon	2	1	1	4
Fermanagh and Tyrone	2	0	0	2
Londonderry	1	1	2	4
Total	34	3	21	58

Table 29: Matrimonial applications disposed

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a Master	Other	Total
Antrim	7	1	0	8
Ards	0	0	0	0
Armagh and South Down	5	0	1	6
Belfast	4	1	0	5
Craigavon	3	0	1	4
Fermanagh and Tyrone	4	0	0	4
Londonderry	7	0	3	10
Total	30	2	5	37

Table 30: Time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions

	Issue to date petition granted	Date petition granted to date absolute issued
Antrim	29	7
Ards	31	7
Armagh and South Down	32	8
Belfast	32	8
Craigavon	35	7
Fermanagh and Tyrone	65	9
Londonderry	42	7
Total	35	8

Table 31: Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications⁴

	Issue to disposal
Antrim	24
Ards	0
Armagh and South Down	34
Belfast	93
Craigavon	20
Fermanagh and Tyrone	69
Londonderry	70
Total	51

⁴Excludes non-court disposals

Licences

Table 32: Licences received and disposed

	Licences Received	Licences Disposed
Antrim	2	2
Ards	2	1
Armagh and South Down	3	0
Belfast	11	9
Craigavon	4	4
Fermanagh and Tyrone	5	3
Londonderry	4	3
Total	31	22

County Court Judge and District Judge Sitting Days

Table 33: County Court Judge & District Judge Sitting Days⁵

	Total time			Total criminal time	Total civil time	Total family time
	Number of sitting days	Average sitting	Total time			
Antrim	77	2:24:31	185:29:00	115:37:00	56:20:00	13:32:00
Ards	76	2:29:10	188:57:00	95:22:00	88:35:00	5:00:00
Armagh and South Down	75	2:44:42	205:53:00	110:32:00	86:39:00	8:42:00
Belfast	272	2:37:52	715:42:00	267:42:00	260:12:00	187:48:00
Craigavon	78	2:55:33	228:14:00	122:40:00	53:11:00	52:23:00
Fermanagh and Tyrone	64	3:32:30	226:40:00	137:05:00	76:11:00	13:24:00
Londonderry	65	2:42:39	176:13:00	64:30:00	71:57:00	39:46:00
Total	707	2:43:32	1927:08:00	913:28:00	693:05:00	320:35:00

⁵A 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 be 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.

Analytical Services Group,
Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service,

Department of Justice

4th Floor, Laganside House
23-27 Oxford Street,
Belfast BT1 3LA

Email: Rodney.redmond@courtsni.gov.uk

Telephone: 028 9072 8920

www.courtsni.gov.uk