

Analytical Services Group

County Court Bulletin

January to March 2016

Research and Statistical Bulletin 14/2016

Provisional quarterly figures

R Redmond

13 May 2016

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 January to March 2016 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. During the period January to March 2016:
- There were 1,809 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 7% decrease on the same quarter last year (1,937). In total, 2,393 civil bills were disposed, an increase of 1% on the number disposed during the same period in 2015 (2,377). There were 1,846 outstanding civil bills with a Certificate of Readiness (COR) at the end of the quarter, up 5% on the corresponding figure last year (1,751), and the highest number at the end of the January to March quarter since the time series began in 2007.
- 30 equity cases were received during January to March 2016, one more than the 29 received during the period January to March 2015, while the number of equity cases disposed fell from 31 during the same period last year, to 16 this quarter.
- A total of 270 ejectment cases were received, up 2% on the 264 cases received during January to March 2015, with the number of ejectment cases disposed decreasing by 21%, from 203 in the same quarter last year to 160 this quarter.
- 2,512 small claims were received, down 17% on the 3,039 received during the same quarter last year. The number of small claims cases disposed decreased by 6% from 2,288 during January to March 2015 to 2,157 this quarter.
- Ten criminal damage cases were received, with one case being disposed during the quarter. This compares with six cases received and four cases disposed during the same quarter in 2015.
- A total of 495 divorce decrees were granted in the county court, up 59% on the 311 granted during the same period last year.
- County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,069 sitting days during the quarter, down 14% on the 1,241 sitting days recorded during the period January to March 2015. Some 50% of time was spent on criminal business with 33% spent on civil business and 17% on family business (compared to 58%, 29% and 13% respectively during January to March 2015). The decision of a number of solicitors and counsel to withdraw their representation from a number of Crown Court cases has impacted upon the time spent on criminal business this quarter, the lowest amount since the time series began in 2007. 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: January – March 2007 to January - March 2016	4
Figure 2: Outstanding civil bills with Certificate of Readiness, by Judicial Level: January - March 2007 to January - March 2016	5
Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed: January - March 2007 to January - March 2016	6
Figure 4: Small claims cases disposed, by type of disposal: January - March 2007 to January - March 2016	7
Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed: January - March 2007 to January – March 2016	8
Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type: January - March 2007 to January – March 2016	9
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: January - March 2016	10
Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: January - March 2007 to January - March 2016	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	13
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>	14
<u>Table 9: Equity cases and applications received</u>	15
<u>Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed</u>	15
<u>Table 11: Outstanding equity cases</u>	16
<u>Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity</u>	16
<u>Table 13: Ejectment cases received</u>	16
<u>Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed</u>	17
<u>Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID</u>	17
<u>Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment</u>	17
<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>	18
<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 2016.

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

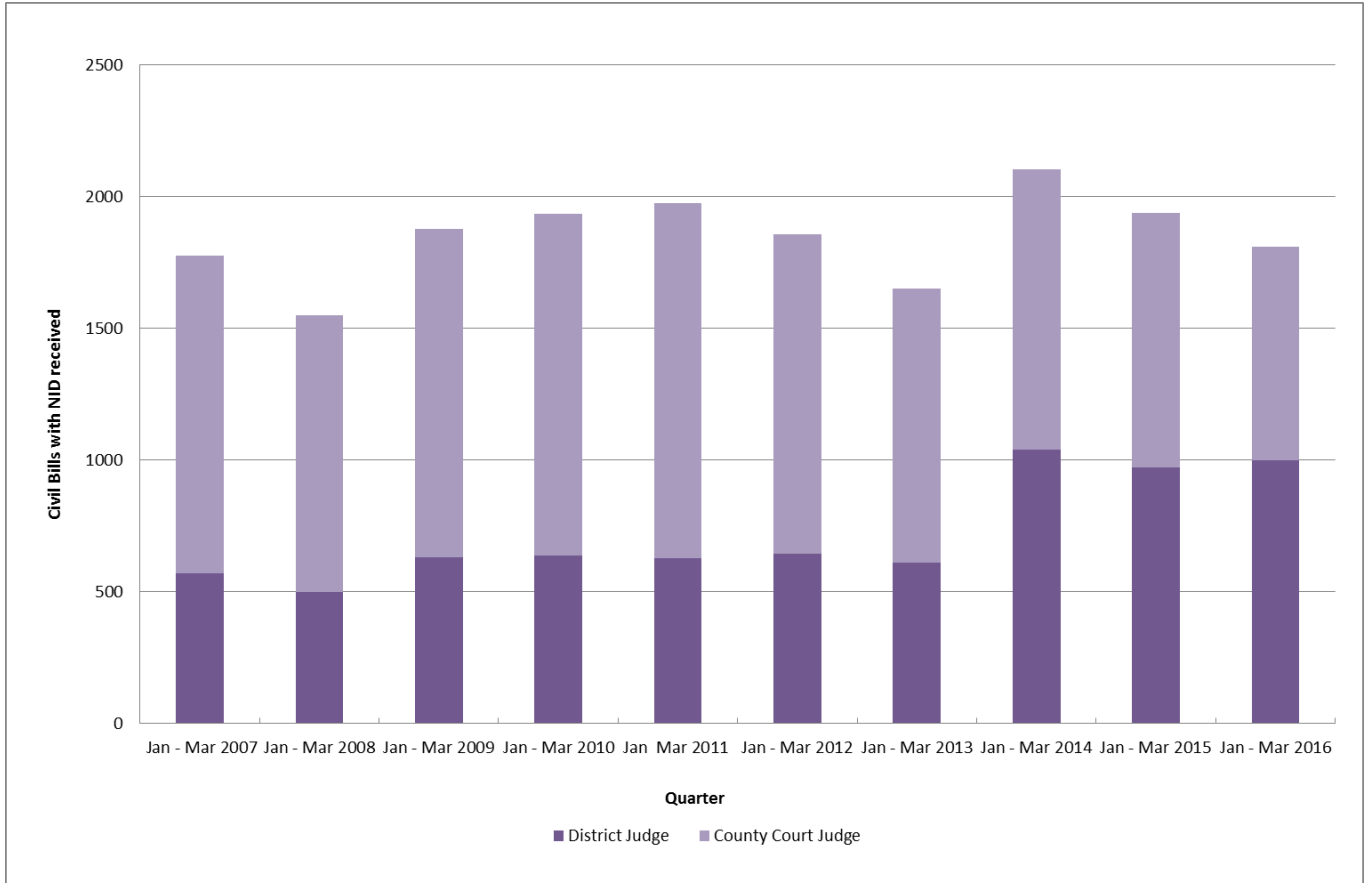
Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note 'Policy Statement on Revisions' which can be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the NICTS website (www.courtsni.gov.uk). Incorrect figures of changes to this publication will be published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

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Ordinary civil bills

There were 1,809 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 7% decrease on the same quarter last year (1,937) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received: January - March 2007 to January - March 2016

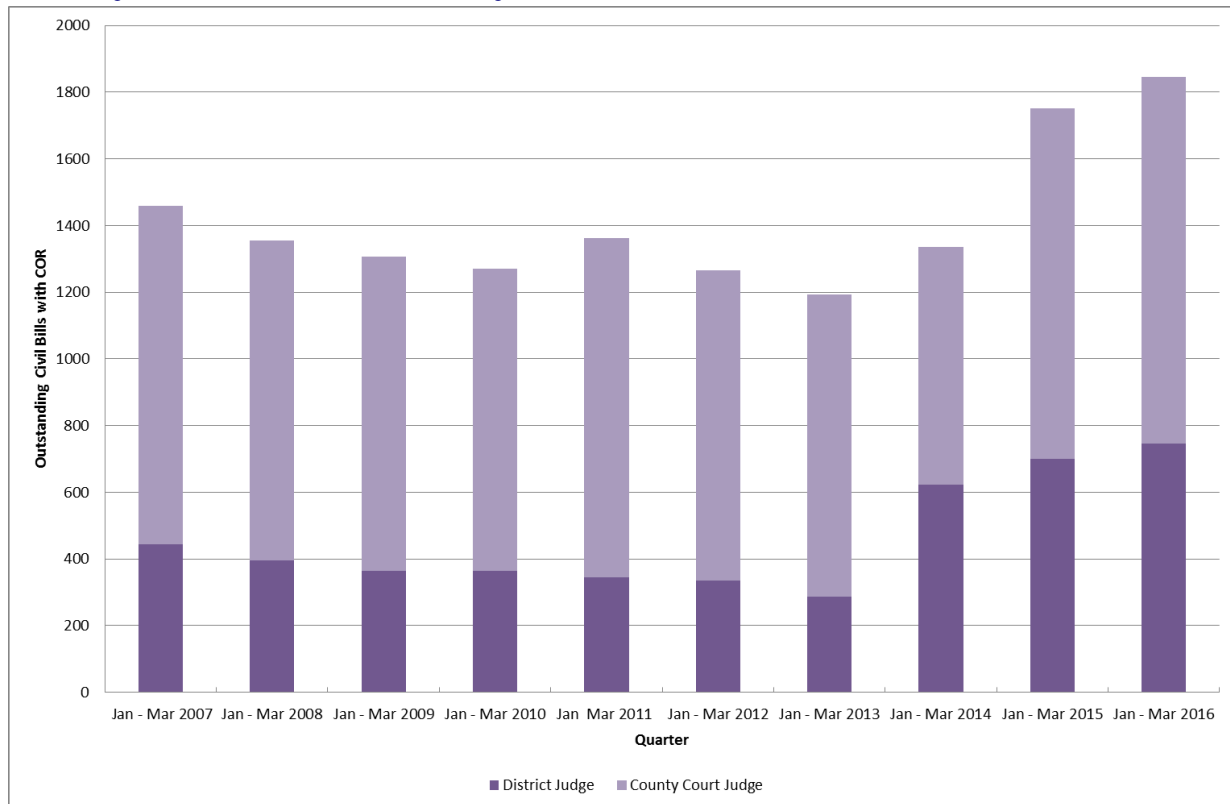


In total, 2,393 civil bills were disposed, an increase of 1% on the number disposed during the same period in 2015 (2,377).

There were 1,846 outstanding civil bills with a Certificate of Readiness (COR) at the end of the quarter, up 5% on the corresponding figure last year (1,751), and the highest number at the end of the January to March quarter since the time series began in 2007. The number of outstanding civil bills with a Certificate of Readiness (COR) remained relatively constant at the end of the January to March quarter from 2007 to 2014, but has increased since then, with a 38% increase being observed between the end of March 2014 and the end of March 2016 (Figure 2).

Of the 1,846 outstanding civil bills with a certificate of readiness, 1,099 (60%) were County Court Judge cases, similar to the 1,052 (60%) County Court Judge cases outstanding at the same stage last year (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Outstanding civil bills with Certificate of Readiness, by Judicial Level: January – March 2007 to January – March 2016



The average time taken from issue to disposal of a civil bill was 56 weeks, compared to the 52 weeks reported for the same quarter in 2015.

3.2 Equity

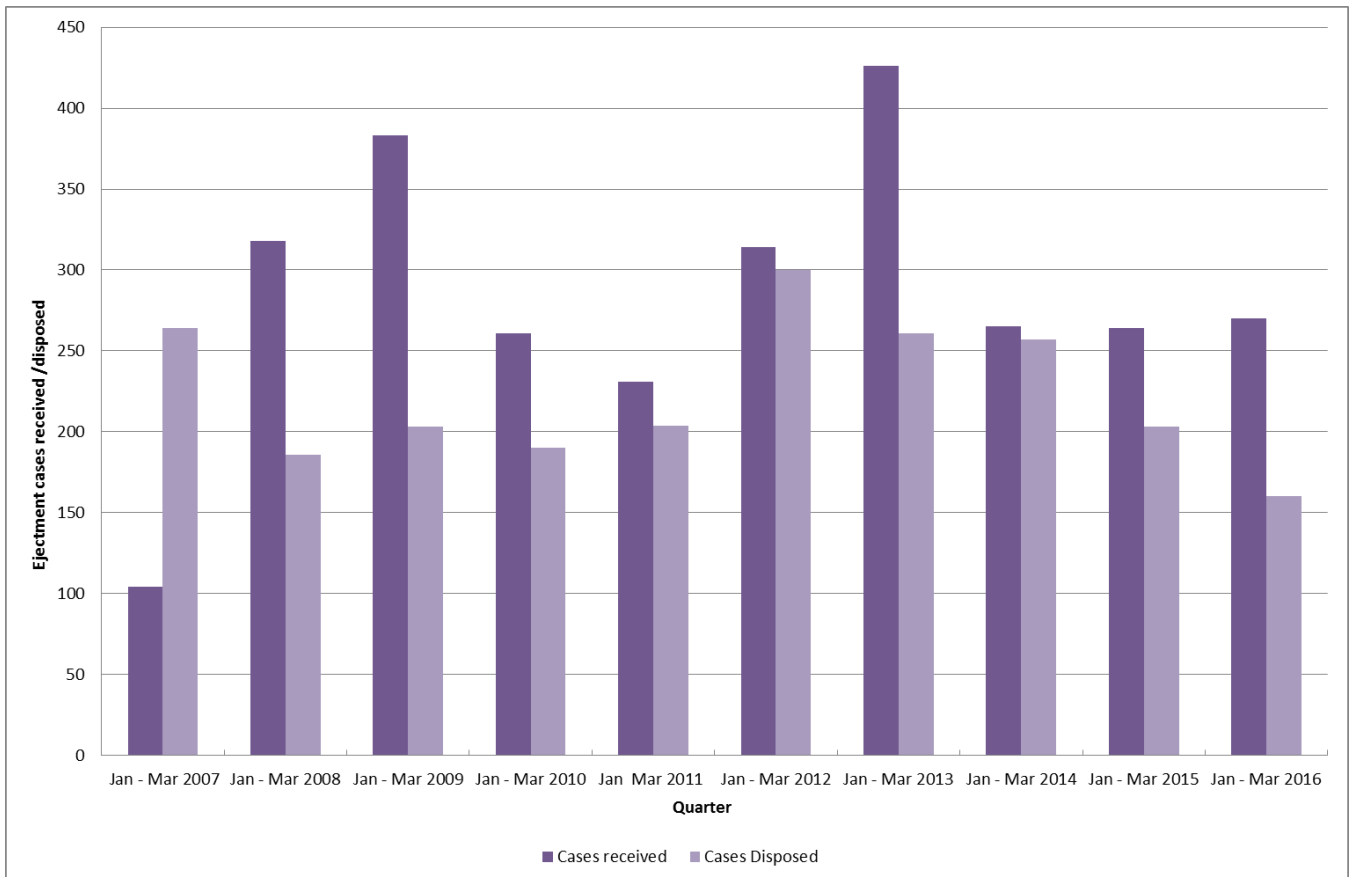
A total of 30 equity cases were received during January to March 2016, one more than the 29 cases received during the period January to March 2015, while the number of equity cases disposed decreased from 31 during the period January to March 2015, to 16 this quarter.

The average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases was 54 weeks, down from 72 weeks during the same period last year. The relatively small number of equity cases disposed each quarter can lead to significant changes in average times observed from issue to disposal.

3.3 Ejectment

A total of 270 ejectment cases were received, up 2% on the 264 cases received during January to March 2015, with the number of ejectment cases disposed decreasing by 21%, from 203 in the same quarter last year to 160 this quarter (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed: January - March 2007 to January – March 2016



The number of outstanding ejectment cases with a Notice of Intention to Defend at the end of the quarter decreased by 22% compared with the end of March 2015 (from 41 to 32).

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 21 weeks, compared to 20 weeks during the January to March quarter in 2015.

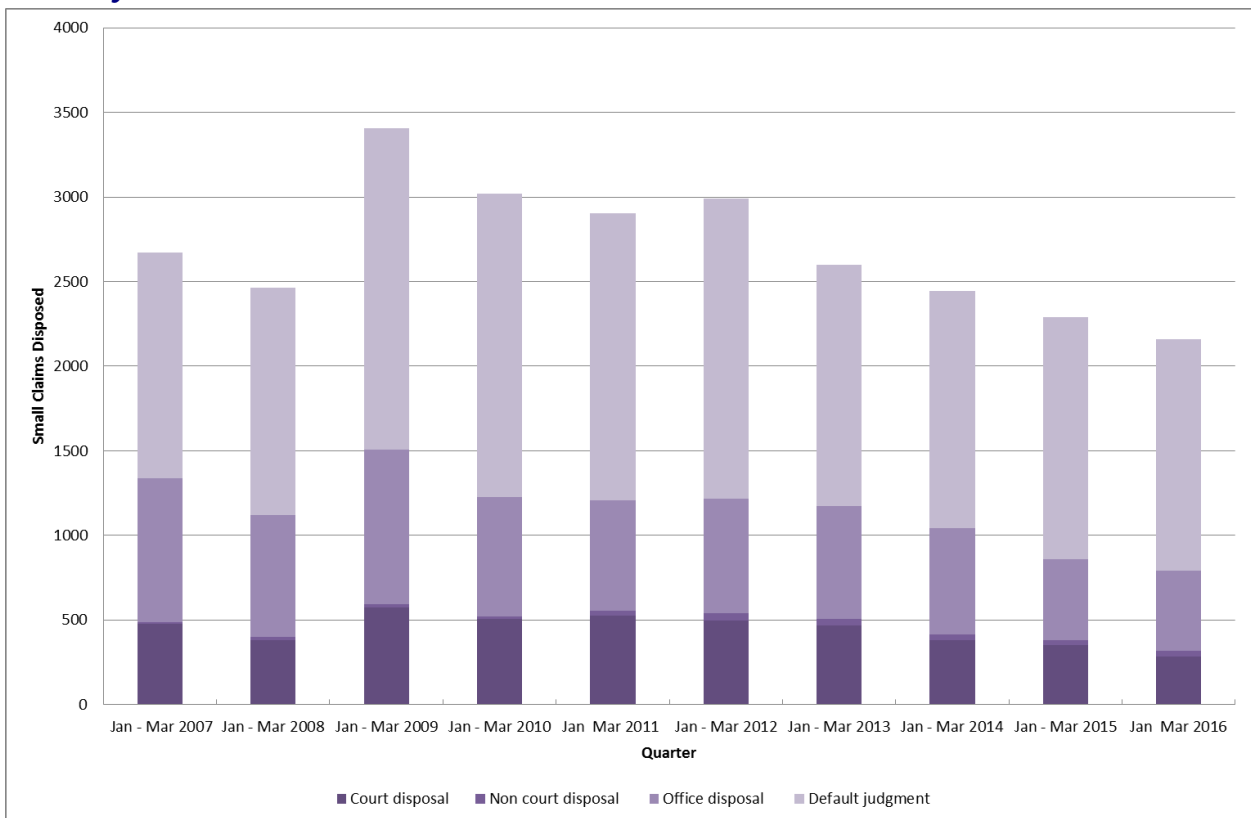
3.4 Small claims

2,512 small claims were received, down 17% on the 3,039, received during the same quarter last year.

The number of small claims cases disposed decreased by 6% from 2,288 during January to March 2015 to 2,157 this quarter, while the number of outstanding small claims with a Notice of Dispute decreased by 14% from 562 at the end of March 2015 to 486 at the end of March 2016.

Of the 2,157 small claims disposed during the quarter, the majority (63%) were disposed by way of default judgment, a situation observed during each of the January to March quarters since the beginning of the time series in 2007 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Small claims cases disposed, by type of disposal: January – March 2007 to January – March 2016

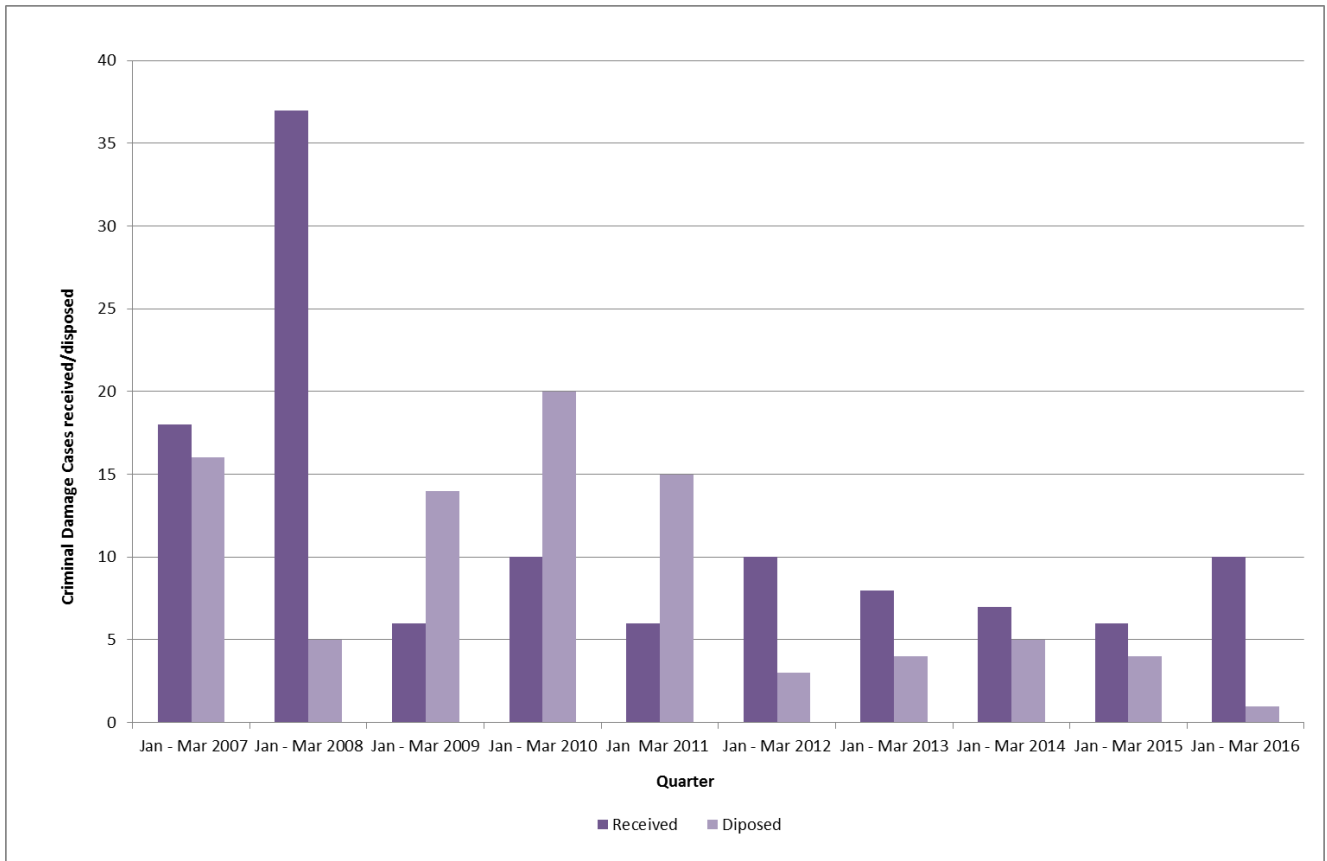


The average number of weeks from issue to disposal for small claims cases was 21 weeks, slightly higher than the 20 weeks reported last year.

3.5 Criminal damage

Ten criminal damage cases were received, with one case being disposed during the quarter. This compares with six cases received and four cases disposed during the same quarter in 2015 (Figure 5), while the number of outstanding criminal damage cases has increased from 71 at the end of the March 2015, to 74 at the end of this quarter.

Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed: January – March 2007 to January – March 2016



The average time taken in weeks from issue to disposal of the Criminal Damage case disposed was 32 weeks, compared to 93 weeks for cases disposed 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.

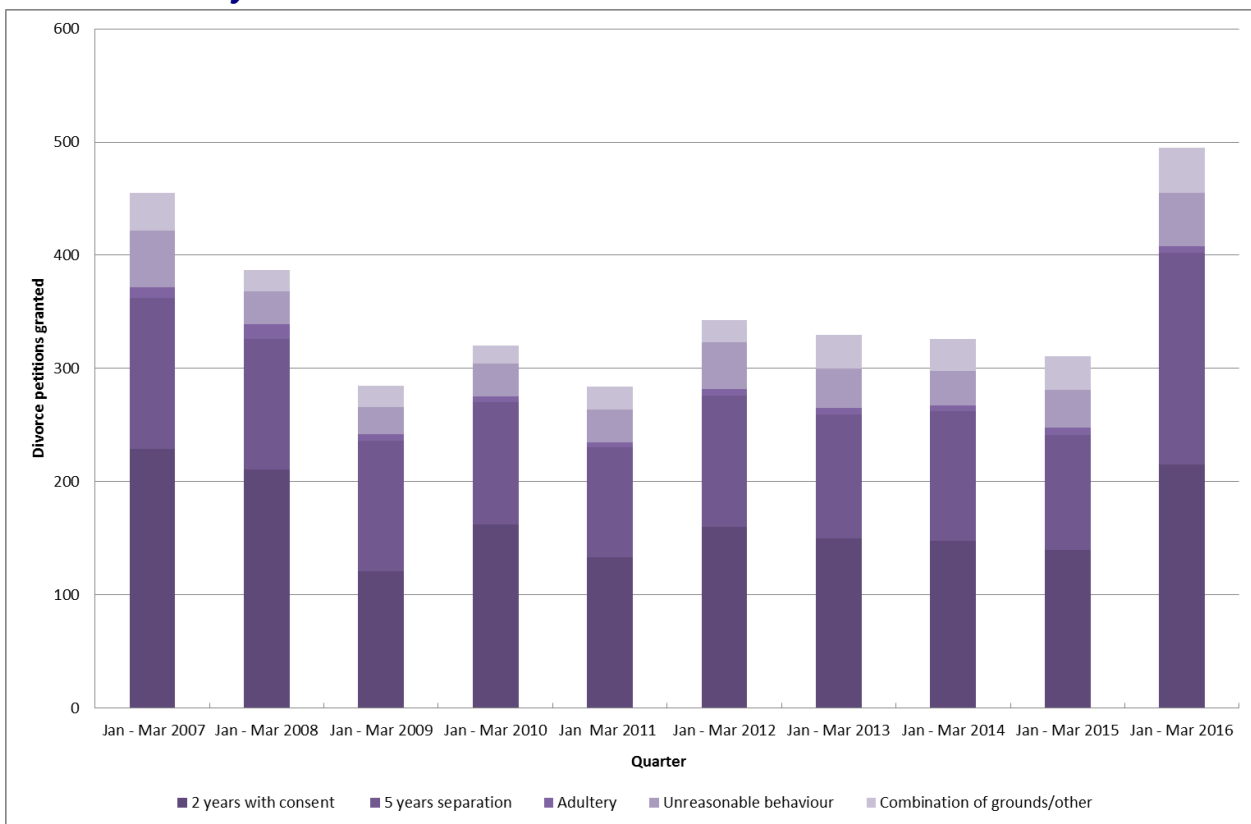
3.6 Divorces

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 495 divorce decrees were granted in the county court, up 59% on the 311 granted during the same period last year and the highest number granted during the January to March quarter since the beginning of the time series in 2007.

The main type of divorce decree granted was '2 years with consent' accounting for 43% of decrees (215), followed by '5 years separation', 38% (187) of decrees (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type: January – March 2007 to January – March 2016



A total of 425 decrees absolute were issued in the county court, an increase of 62% on the 262 issued during the period January to March 2015. Again the most common type of decree absolute was '2 years with consent', accounting for 49% (208) of cases.

The average time taken from issue to the date a divorce decree was granted was 32 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 35 weeks and eight weeks during the same period last year.

3.7 Licences

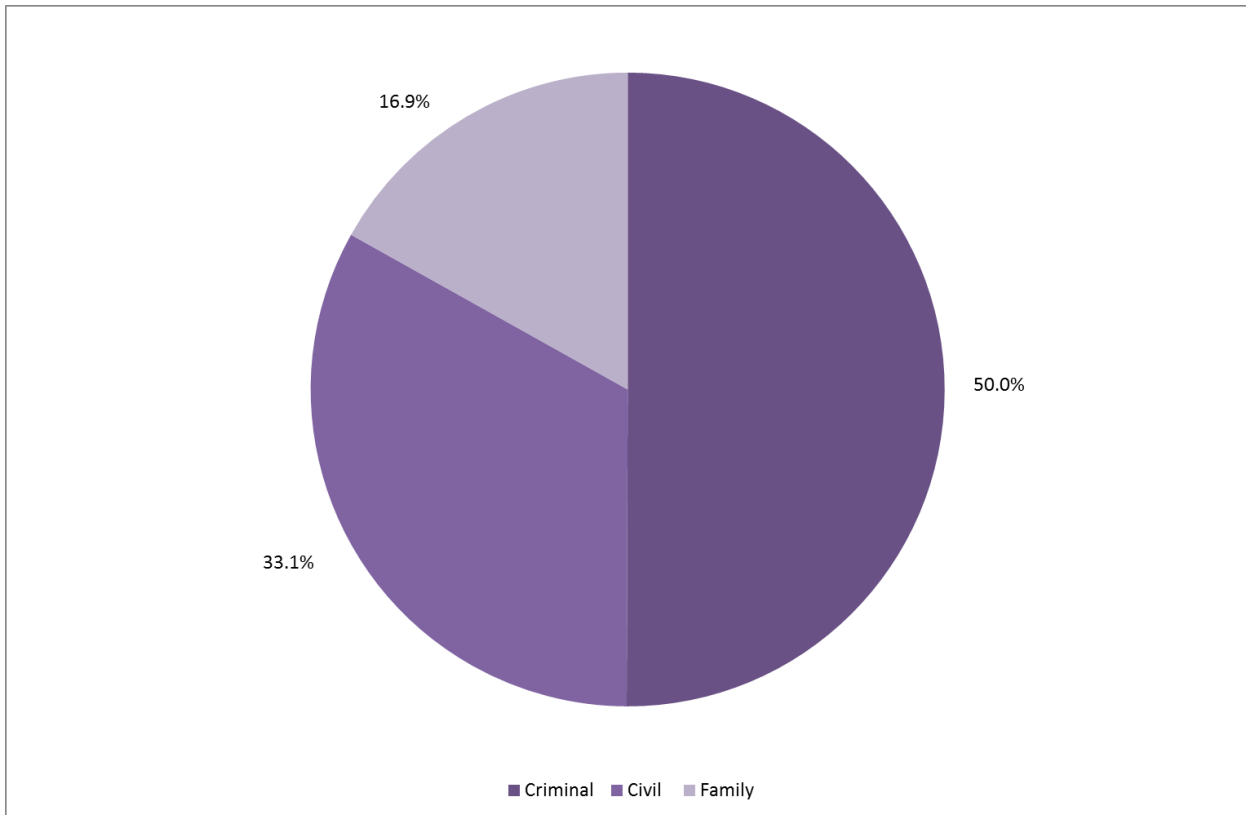
There were 45 licence applications received and 50 disposed, compared to the 53 received and 52 disposed during the same quarter last year.

3.8 Sitting Days

County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,069 sitting days during the quarter, down 14% on the 1,241 sitting days recorded during the period January to March 2015.

Within these 1,069 sitting days, 50% of time was spent on criminal business, 33% of time was spent on civil business and 17% of time was spent on family business (Figure 7).

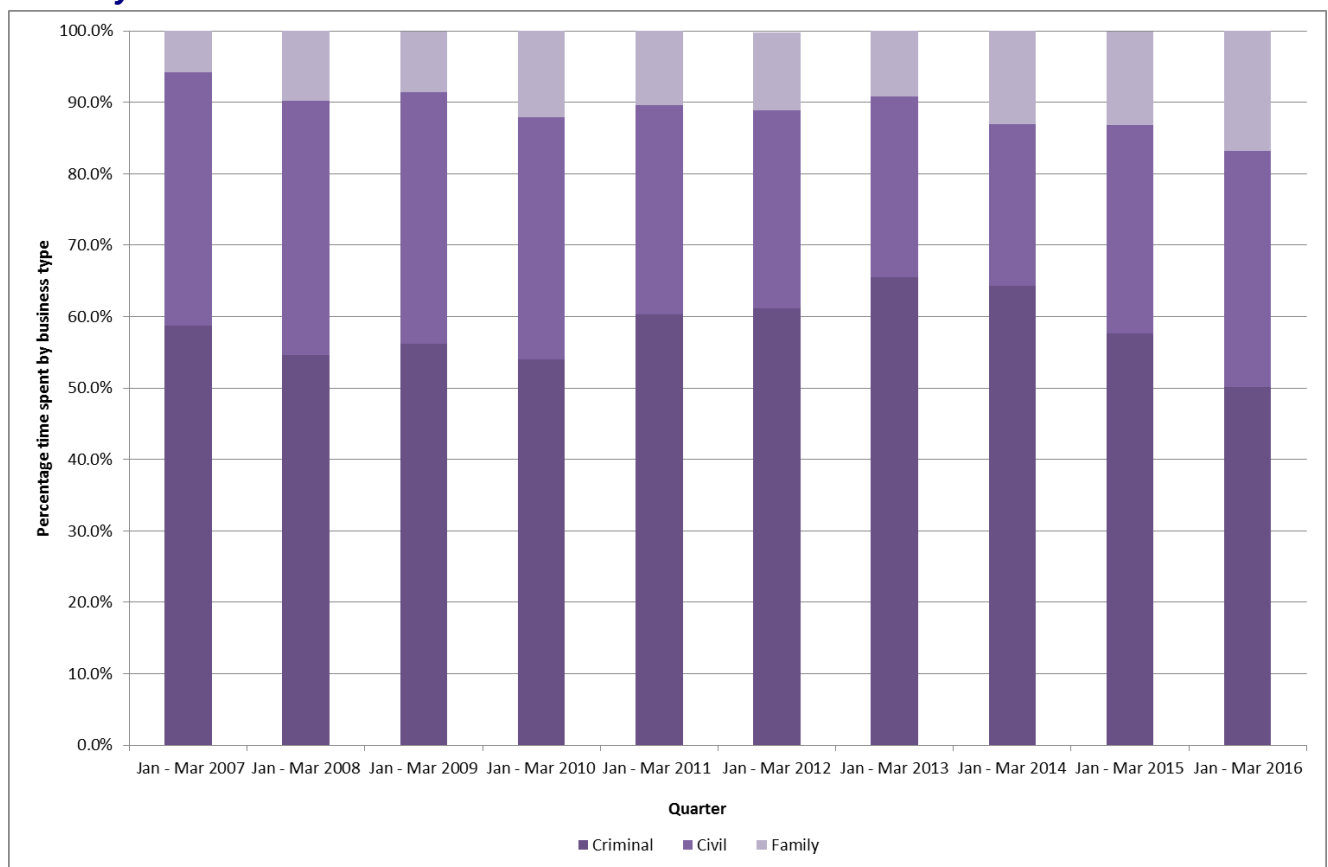
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: January – March 2016



The proportion of time spent on criminal business has displayed a steady increase from 55% during January to March 2008 to 66% during the quarter January to March 2013. This is largely reflective of County Court Judges dealing with increased volumes of cases in the Crown Court over the period. Since then, the proportion of time spent on criminal business has decreased each quarter, down to 58% during January to March 2015 and then 50% this quarter, with time spent on criminal business this quarter being at its lowest since the time series began in 2007.

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. The reduction in criminal business as a consequence of the legal aid dispute has also resulted in the deployment of some County Court Judges to other business areas, such as High Court Bails, resulting in County Court Judges spending 35 sitting days this quarter on High Court Bail business in the Queen’s Bench Division of the High Court.

Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: January – March 2007 to January – March 2016



APPENDIX 1

Civil Bills

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

Case	Antrim	170
	Ards	206
	Armagh and South Down	135
	Belfast	1818
	Craigavon	153
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	134
	Londonderry	118
	Total	2734
Application	Antrim	71
	Ards	161
	Armagh and South Down	95
	Belfast	749
	Craigavon	107
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	58
	Londonderry	98
	Total	1339

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

	County court judge	District judge	Total
Antrim	80	90	170
Ards	47	141	188
Armagh and South Down	45	84	129
Belfast	498	408	906
Craigavon	51	102	153
Fermanagh and Tyrone	51	95	146
Londonderry	38	79	117
Total	810	999	1809

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	48	68	66	4	13	199
	Ards	39	95	50	2	18	204
	Armagh and South Down	50	33	49	0	10	142
	Belfast	633	274	177	2	62	1148
	Civil Processing Centre	0	0	37	217	17	271
	Craigavon	57	38	43	0	10	148
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	35	64	47	3	11	160
	Londonderry	38	44	34	1	4	121
	Total	900	616	503	229	145	2393
Application	Antrim	11	12	23	0	0	46
	Ards	10	17	29	0	0	56
	Armagh and South Down	32	4	37	0	0	73
	Belfast	22	49	185	0	0	256
	Civil Processing Centre	0	0	2	0	0	2
	Craigavon	9	5	45	0	0	59
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	1	7	39	0	0	47
	Londonderry	8	16	33	0	0	57
	Total	93	110	393	0	0	596

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	27	6	29	17	37	116
	Ards	32	9	29	28	36	134
	Armagh and South Down	15	5	24	17	22	83
	Belfast	484	36	133	102	152	907
	Craigavon	29	5	24	19	18	95
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	26	7	15	18	33	99
	Londonderry	32	10	15	6	19	82
	Total	645	78	269	207	317	1516

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	187	179	366
Ards	89	193	282
Armagh and South Down	144	166	310
Belfast	1998	930	2928
Craigavon	149	190	339
Fermanagh and Tyrone	227	219	446
Londonderry	128	164	292
Total	2922	2041	4963

Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR

	County court judge	District judge	Total
Antrim	61	62	123
Ards	34	83	117
Armagh and South Down	48	67	115
Belfast	774	306	1080
Craigavon	60	74	134
Fermanagh and Tyrone	84	93	177
Londonderry	38	62	100
Total	1099	747	1846

Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases²

Case	Issue to disposal
Antrim	49
Ards	32
Armagh and South Down	55
Belfast	59
Craigavon	50
Fermanagh and Tyrone	77
Londonderry	55
Total	56

²Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications²

Application	Issue to disposal
Antrim	9
Ards	18
Armagh and South Down	17
Belfast	12
Craigavon	17
Fermanagh and Tyrone	14
Londonderry	11
Total	14

²Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Equity

Table 9: Equity cases and applications received

Case	Antrim	4
	Ards	2
	Armagh and South Down	3
	Belfast	9
	Craigavon	3
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	8
	Londonderry	1
	Total	30
Application	Antrim	1
	Ards	1
	Armagh and South Down	4
	Belfast	0
	Craigavon	1
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	5
	Londonderry	0
	Total	12

Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Antrim	1	1	0	2
	Ards	2	0	0	2
	Armagh and South Down	2	0	1	3
	Belfast	2	0	0	2
	Craigavon	2	0	1	3
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	3	0	0	3
	Londonderry	1	0	0	1
	Total	13	1	2	16
Application	Ards	0	0	1	1
	Armagh and South Down	1	2	0	3
	Belfast	1	0	0	1
	Craigavon	0	0	1	1
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	4	1	0	5
	Londonderry	0	1	0	1
	Total	6	4	2	12

Table 11: Outstanding equity cases

Case	Antrim	25
	Ards	25
	Armagh and South Down	38
	Belfast	53
	Craigavon	16
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	53
	Londonderry	14
Total		224

Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity

		Issue to disposal
Case	Antrim	63
	Ards	53
	Armagh and South Down	60
	Belfast	29
	Craigavon	12
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	96
	Londonderry	39
	Total	54
Application	Antrim	0
	Ards	0
	Armagh and South Down	11
	Belfast	9
	Craigavon	0
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	3
	Londonderry	5
	Total	6

Ejectment

Table 13: Ejectment cases received

Case	Antrim	12
	Ards	48
	Armagh and South Down	6
	Belfast	153
	Craigavon	23
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	12
	Londonderry	16
	Total	270

Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Antrim	15	0	0	15
	Ards	2	30	1	33
	Armagh and South Down	7	0	1	8
	Belfast	0	64	0	64
	Craigavon	0	14	0	14
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	6	0	0	6
	Londonderry	20	0	0	20
	Total	50	108	2	160

Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID

Case	Antrim	2
	Ards	3
	Armagh and South Down	5
	Belfast	11
	Craigavon	4
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	4
	Londonderry	3
	Total	32

Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment³

		Issue to disposal
Case	Antrim	27
	Ards	18
	Armagh and South Down	20
	Belfast	22
	Craigavon	24
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	21
	Londonderry	18
	Total	21

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

Small Claims

Table 17: Number of small claims cases and applications received

Case	Antrim	33
	Ards	38
	Armagh and South Down	24
	Belfast	2331
	Craigavon	37
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	29
	Londonderry	20
	Total	2512
Application	Antrim	10
	Ards	5
	Armagh and South Down	5
	Belfast	31
	Craigavon	1
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	4
	Londonderry	2
	Total	58

Table 18: Number of small claims cases with NOD received

Case	Antrim	30
	Ards	46
	Armagh and South Down	26
	Belfast	140
	Craigavon	37
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	27
	Londonderry	24
Total	330	

Table 19: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Office disposal	Default judgement	Total
Case	Antrim	40	6	3	0	49
	Ards	27	4	10	1	42
	Armagh and South Down	33	3	2	2	40
	Belfast	108	15	438	1362	1923
	Craigavon	23	2	12	0	37
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	31	0	8	0	39
	Londonderry	24	0	3	0	27
	Total	286	30	476	1365	2157
Application	Antrim	5	3	0	0	8
	Ards	1	3	0	0	4
	Armagh and South Down	2	0	0	0	2
	Belfast	27	0	0	0	27
	Craigavon	2	0	0	0	2
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	2	1	0	0	3
	Londonderry	3	0	0	0	3
	Total	42	7	0	0	49

Table 20: Outstanding small claims with NOD

Antrim	38
Ards	54
Armagh and South Down	36
Belfast	252
Craigavon	31
Fermanagh and Tyrone	39
Londonderry	36
Total	486

Table 21: Time intervals in weeks for small claims³

		Issue to disposal
Case	Antrim	22
	Ards	17
	Armagh and South Down	20
	Belfast	22
	Craigavon	13
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	27
	Londonderry	18
	Total	21
Application	Antrim	7
	Ards	2
	Armagh and South Down	6
	Belfast	6
	Craigavon	7
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	8
	Londonderry	6
	Total	6

³Excludes 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	4
	Craigavon	2
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	2
	Londonderry	1
	Total	10
Application	Antrim	1
	Total	1

Table 23: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Total
Case	Fermanagh and Tyrone	1	0	1
	Total	1	0	1
Application	Antrim	0	1	1
	Total	0	1	1

Table 24: Outstanding criminal damage cases

Antrim	2
Ards	2
Armagh and South Down	6
Belfast	31
Craigavon	14
Fermanagh and Tyrone	14
Londonderry	5
Total	74

Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage²

		Issue to disposal
Case	Fermanagh and Tyrone	32
	Total	32
Application	Antrim	0
	Total	0

²Excludes 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	37	34	0	16	11	98
Ards	29	22	0	4	4	59
Armagh and South Down	14	12	1	10	2	39
Belfast	60	57	3	3	10	133
Craigavon	18	20	1	2	4	45
Fermanagh and Tyrone	28	14	1	3	4	50
Londonderry	29	28	0	9	5	71
Total	215	187	6	47	40	495

Table 27: Divorce petitions by number of absolutes issued

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Antrim	40	33	1	12	13	99
Ards	31	12	1	3	5	52
Armagh and South Down	18	2	1	2	5	28
Belfast	48	40	4	6	3	101
Craigavon	27	14	4	5	2	52
Fermanagh and Tyrone	20	10	0	5	2	37
Londonderry	24	22	1	6	3	56
Total	208	133	12	39	33	425

Table 28: Matrimonial applications received

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Antrim	14	0	2	16
Ards	3	0	1	4
Armagh and South Down	7	2	1	10
Belfast	7	0	31	38
Craigavon	6	0	0	6
Fermanagh and Tyrone	1	0	0	1
Londonderry	7	1	1	9
Total	45	3	36	84

Table 29: Matrimonial applications disposed

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Antrim	10	0	2	12
Ards	6	0	0	6
Armagh and South Down	4	1	1	6
Belfast	5	0	1	6
Craigavon	1	0	1	2
Fermanagh and Tyrone	0	0	0	0
Londonderry	4	1	1	6
Total	30	2	6	38

Table 30: Time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions

	Issue to date decree granted	Date decree granted to date absolute issued
Antrim	26	8
Ards	29	8
Armagh and South Down	29	10
Belfast	38	8
Craigavon	34	7
Fermanagh and Tyrone	34	9
Londonderry	31	7
Total	32	8

Table 31: Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications⁴

	Issue to disposal
Antrim	18
Ards	18
Armagh and South Down	25
Belfast	18
Craigavon	17
Fermanagh and Tyrone	0
Londonderry	33
Total	21

⁴Excludes non-court disposals

Licences

Table 32: Licences received and disposed

	Licences Received	Licences Disposed
Antrim	5	5
Ards	2	9
Armagh and South Down	5	4
Belfast	19	22
Craigavon	8	8
Fermanagh and Tyrone	2	0
Londonderry	4	2
Total	45	50

County Court Judge and District Judge Sitting Days

Table 33: County Court Judge & District Judge Sitting Days^{5,6}

	Total time			Total criminal time	Total civil time	Total family time
	Number of sitting days	Average sitting	Total time			
Antrim	108	2:37:13	283:01:00	176:47:00	89:44:00	16:30:00
Ards	79	2:54:36	229:54:00	135:54:00	84:05:00	9:55:00
Armagh and South Down	134	2:30:21	335:48:00	212:32:00	112:53:00	10:23:00
Belfast	384	2:41:04	1030:54:00	321:45:00	421:55:00	287:14:00
Craigavon	106	2:25:32	257:07:00	110:52:00	57:51:00	88:24:00
Fermanagh and Tyrone	122	3:24:41	416:12:00	296:05:00	88:23:00	31:44:00
Londonderry	101	2:35:01	260:57:00	130:18:00	90:35:00	40:04:00
Queen's Bench Division	35	1:35:56	55:58:00	52:28:00	3:30:00	0:00:00
Total	1069	2:41:04	2869:51:00	1436:41:00	948:56:00	484:14:00

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

⁶During the quarter, a number of High Court Bail applications were heard by County Court Judges in the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court

APPENDIX 2 - EXPLANATORY NOTES

Amount awarded

This relates to the monetary value awarded in cases such as small claims and ordinary civil bills. On occasion the amount awarded may be unliquidated which means that the claim was not made for a specific amount of money, but rather, for example, damage caused to a property, for repairs for damage caused or for faulty workmanship.

Application

The act of applying to a civil court to ask it to do something, for example to start proceedings or make an order.

Case

The proceedings, arguments and evidence in court and the court hearing.

Certificate of Readiness (COR)

When a small claim or civil bill is contested by the respondent, the matter will proceed to the county court for judgment. Before the case can be heard, both parties must contribute to the completion of a Certificate of Readiness (COR) which informs the court that the case is ready to heard and can therefore be listed by the court for hearing.

County Court Judge (CCJ)

This is a judge who sits in the County Court and the Crown Court. In the County Court, they will sit on business such as ordinary civil bills (with a value over £10,000 and up to £30,000), criminal damage, licences, equity, ejectment and divorces.

Court Disposal

Includes all cases issued with a final order by County Court Judge or District Judge.

Criminal Damage

These are cases in which there is an allegation that a property has been destroyed or damaged or where a person is alleged to have made threats, had intent, or was found to have anything on their property with intent to cause damage to another property.

Default Judgment

This is a judgment in favour of one party due to some failure to take action by the other party. In most cases this will be a judgment in favour of the applicant due to the failure of the respondent to contest the claim brought against them. The failure to take action is the default. The default judgment is the relief requested in the party's original petition.

Disposed

The date a case is finally dealt with via a court or non-court result and the case is no longer in the court process.

District Judge (DJ)

This is a judge who sits in the County Court or Magistrates' Court. In the County Court they will sit on business such as small claims and ordinary civil bills (with a value up to £10,000).

Divorces

These are proceedings initiated in order to dissolve a marriage. Dissolutions of civil partnerships are also included within these figures. Following the issue of a divorce petition in the High Court, if it is a defended case it will be heard in the High Court and if it is an undefended case it may be heard either in the High Court or the County Court (depending on the choice of the individuals involved). Initially a Decree Nisi, judicial separation or nullity is granted, which is an initial order for divorce. Providing that no reason is provided to the court to challenge the nisi, a Decree Absolute, which is a final order for divorce that dissolves a marriage and permits an individual party to remarry, is made. A defended divorce is a proceeding in which an individual (the petitioner) applies for a divorce and the other party (the respondent) indicates that they wish to contest a divorce being granted at all, or on the reasons stated by the petitioner.

Equity

Any type of proceeding which seeks a court judgement on disputes relating to property disputes i.e. who owns it, and should damages be paid.

Ejectment

A legal document which seeks to recover possession of land and/or a dwelling house (e.g. where a tenant has stopped paying rent). Similar matters relating to properties owned with a mortgage are dealt with through proceedings within the Chancery Division of the High Court.

Issue

This is the process by which a complaint or claim is lodged with the court. It can also be described as the 'Received Date'.

Licences

These are applications for intoxicating liquor licences and certificates of registration for public houses and clubs, enabling their legal operation.

Matrimonial Application

These are applications attached to divorce proceedings such as Ancillary Relief applications that relate to financial relief to one or both parties following a petition for divorce, for example, maintenance and the division of property/finances.

Notice of Dispute (NOD)

When a small claim is taken by an applicant against a respondent, the respondent may contest the claim and signal their intention to dispute the claim through a Notice of Dispute. This means that the case will then be listed before a judge in court for resolution.

Non court disposal

Includes all disposals not completed in court, for example settlements or withdrawals.

Notice of Intention to Defend (NID)

When a civil bill is taken by an applicant against a respondent, the respondent may contest the claim and signal their intention to dispute the claim through a Notice of Intention to Defend. This means that the case will then be listed before a judge in court for resolution.

Ordinary civil bills

A legal document which seeks to recover damages for (i) personal injury claims (injuries caused by negligence), for example, traffic accidents, falls on pavements and accidents at work and (ii) consumer disputes, for example, faulty goods or services. There have been a number of changes in the threshold for ordinary civil bills in recent years. Until 25 February 2013 ordinary civil bills related to cases seeking damages between £3,000 and £15,000 (prior to May 2011, the lower limit was £2,000). Following changes made on 25 February 2013, the upper limit for civil bills was extended to include cases seeking damages between £3,000 and £30,000.

Outstanding case

A case that is currently active within the County Court system, for example, live cases not yet disposed.

Received

The date the papers are lodged with the court and the fees receipted.

Sitting Days

A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It is a period of work by a judge on a single day. Multiple sittings on one calendar date will be aggregated into one sitting day based on the Judicial officer, venue and sitting date. Several types of business may be heard within one sitting day. Days are classified on the basis of the majority business undertaken, except for the Magistrates court, when it is based in the first instance, on the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for two or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers.

Small claims

Small claims allow certain types of claims to be decided informally by the county court, usually without the need of a solicitor or barrister. In general a small claim is one where the value to be claimed is not more than £3,000 (before May 2011 the upper limit was £2,000). Examples of small claims are (i) compensation for faulty services by, for example, builders, dry cleaners and garages (ii) compensation for faulty goods such as electrical goods (iii) disputes between landlords and tenants for rent arrears or compensation for not doing repairs and (iv) debts or wages owed or money in lieu of notice.

Time intervals

This is the time taken (in weeks) between the case, application or claim being received by the court and the date it is finally resolved, by either the court, an arrangement between parties out of court or by being withdrawn by the applicant.

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