



Department of
Justice

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

Analytical Services Group

County Court Bulletin

April to June 2020

Research and Statistical Bulletin

Provisional quarterly figures

P McLarnon

14 August 2020

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: Patrick.McLarnon@courtsni.gov.uk

This bulletin is available on the Internet at:

www.justice-ni.gov.uk/courts-and-tribunals

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers data from April to June 2020, so court activity during this period has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is expected that the limited operation of the county courts during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have an impact on many of the published figures in this and future releases.

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at County Courts in Northern Ireland during the period April to June 2020 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2011. On 31st October 2016, a single County Court Division called “The County Court of Northern Ireland” replaced the seven existing County Court Divisions. As a consequence of this change, data contained in the County Court Bulletin is now disaggregated by Court Office (Processing Office). During the period April to June 2020:
- There were 1,177 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 41% decrease on the same quarter last year (1,982). In total, 663 civil bills were disposed, a decrease of 73% on the number disposed during the same period in 2019 (2,462).
- 31 equity cases were received during April to June 2020, down by six cases compared to the 37 cases received during the period April to June 2019, while 4 equity cases were disposed, compared with 32 equity cases disposed during the same period last year.
- A total of 18 ejectment cases were received, down 94% on the 287 cases received during April to June 2019, with the number of ejectment cases disposed decreasing from 265 in the same quarter last year to one this quarter.
- 406 small claims were received, down 86% on the 2,824 cases received during the same quarter last year. The number of small claims cases disposed decreased by 78% from 2,370 during April to June 2019 to 525 this quarter.
- Two criminal damage cases were received, the same as during the period April to June 2019. No criminal damage cases were disposed during the quarter, compared with one during the same quarter last year.
- A total of 235 divorce decrees were granted in the County Court, down 26% on the 316 granted during the same period last year.
- County Court and District Judges sat a total of 269 sitting days during the quarter, down 78% on the 1,201 sitting days recorded during the period April to June 2019. Some 44% of time was spent on criminal business with 3% spent on civil business and 53% on family business (compared to 55%, 25% and 20% respectively during April to June 2019).

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 Sitting Days	
Appendix 1 – Tables	12
Appendix 2 – Explanatory Notes	28

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received: April to June 2011 to April to June 2020	4
Figure 2: Civil bills disposed, by method of disposal: April to June 2011 to April to June 2020	5
Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed: April to June 2011 to April to June 2020	6
Figure 4: Small claims cases received: April to June 2011 to April to June 2020	7
Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed: April to June 2011 to April to June 2020	8
Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type: April to June 2011 to April to June 2020	9
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: April to June 2020	10
Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: April to June 2011 to April to June 2020	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	13
Table 3: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications disposed	14
Table 4: Number of ordinary civil bill cases by amount awarded	15
Table 5: Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR	15
Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR	16
Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases	16
Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications	17
Table 9: Equity cases and applications received	17

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

1. INTRODUCTION

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 uses information inputted into 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. Data is inputted into this system, by court clerks on a daily basis and information is checked and confirmed by another member of staff to ensure data entries are correct. As data on licence applications received and disposed is not recorded on ICOS, these figures are compiled manually by each County Court Office and submitted on a quarterly basis.

2.2 Methodology for generating data

Analytical Services 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 Sharepoint, 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; names and addresses are not held. These statistical files are not transmitted outside the NICTS statistical team. ASG statisticians based in the NICTS import 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 data is reliable and robust.

2.3 Baseline and Time period

Data contained within this bulletin relates to the current calendar year 2020. The time series for this information dates back to 2007 when ICOS was adopted as the source of County Court data, however, within this publication, comparisons of trends are viewed over a 10-year period.

2.4 Frequency of Publication

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the third quarter of 2020 and will be published on 13th November 2020.

2.5 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 potential problems which are circulated to each County Court venue as a validation report. 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. Data contained in this bulletin are currently provisional and will undergo further validation before being published in their final form within the relevant edition of Judicial Statistics (published in June of each year for the previous calendar year).

2.6 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. On 31st October 2016, a single County Court Division called “The County Court of Northern Ireland” replaced the seven existing County Court Divisions. As a consequence of this change, data contained in the County Court Bulletin is now disaggregated by Court Office (Processing Office) as at the time of data download.

2.7 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.

2.8 Revisions

Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note ‘Policy Statement on Revisions’ which can be found at (www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/p_pd_stats_PolicyStatementRevisions.pdf).

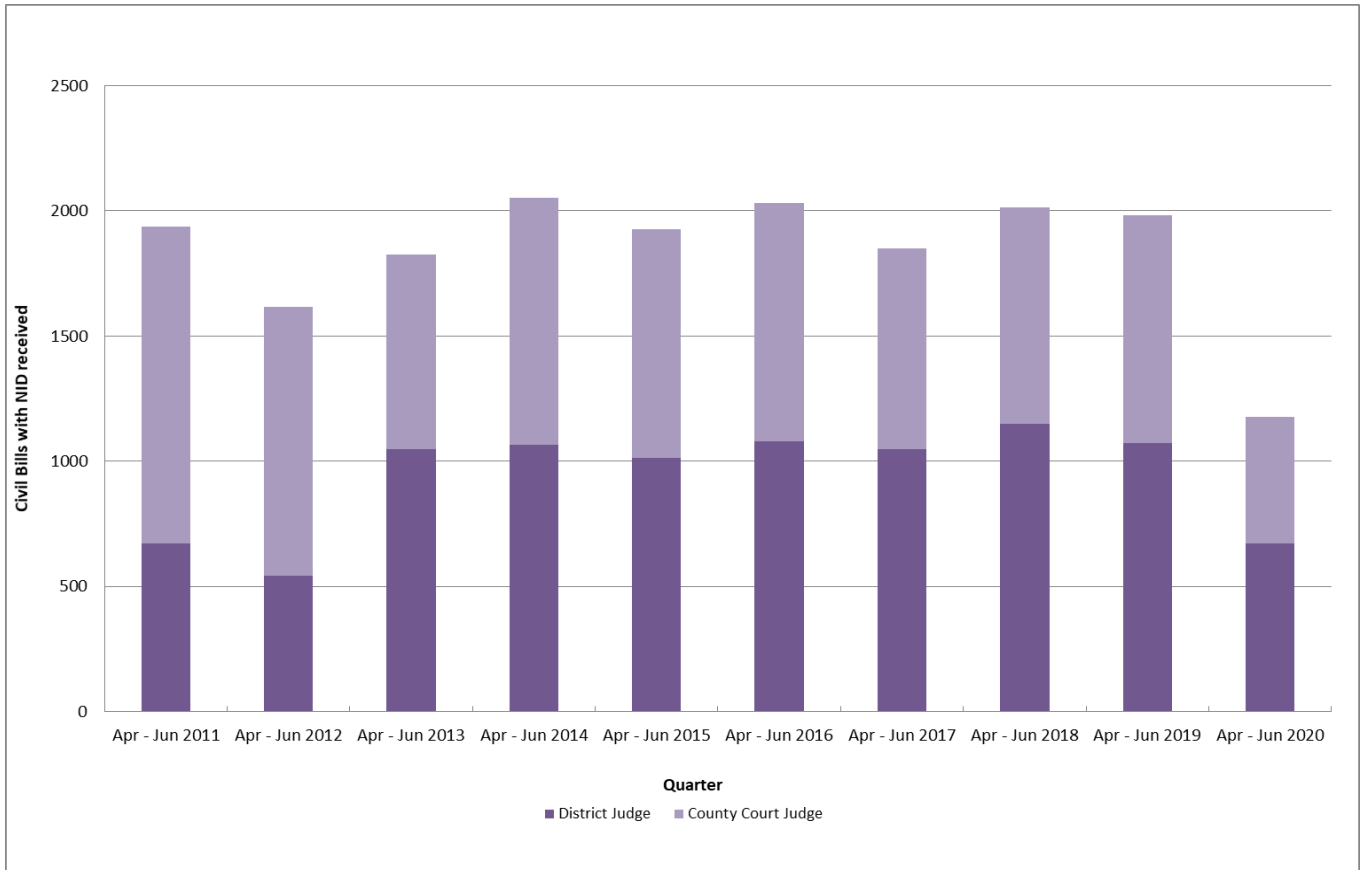
Incorrect figures of changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Ordinary civil bills

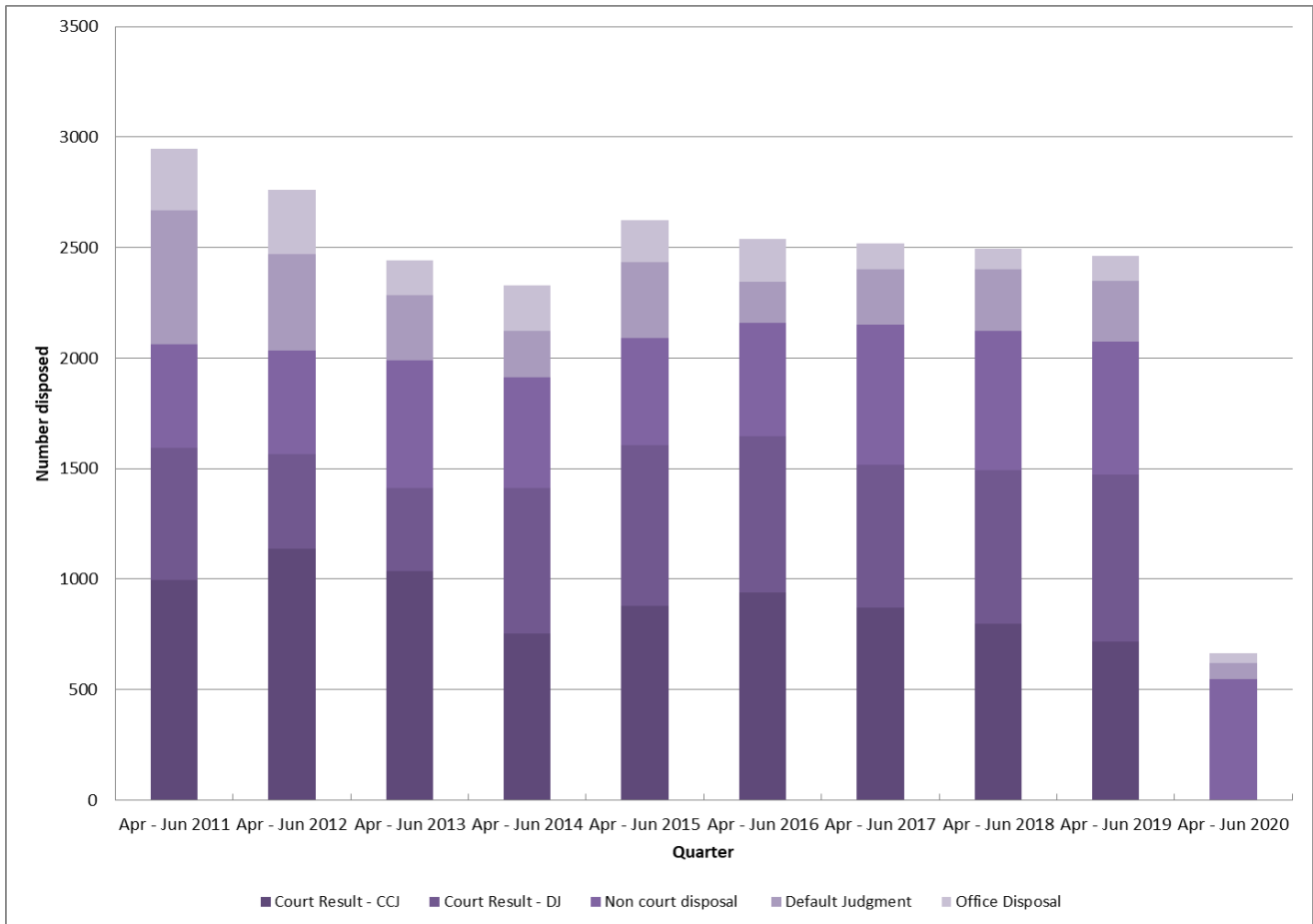
There were 1,177 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 41% decrease on the same quarter last year (1,982) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received – April to June 2011 to April to June 2020



In total, 663 civil bills were disposed, a 73% decrease on the 2,462 disposed during the same period in 2019 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Civil bills disposed, by method of disposal – April to June 2011 to April to June 2020



Due to the COVID_19 pandemic restrictions on business, it was not possible to determine the average time taken from issue to disposal of a civil bill.

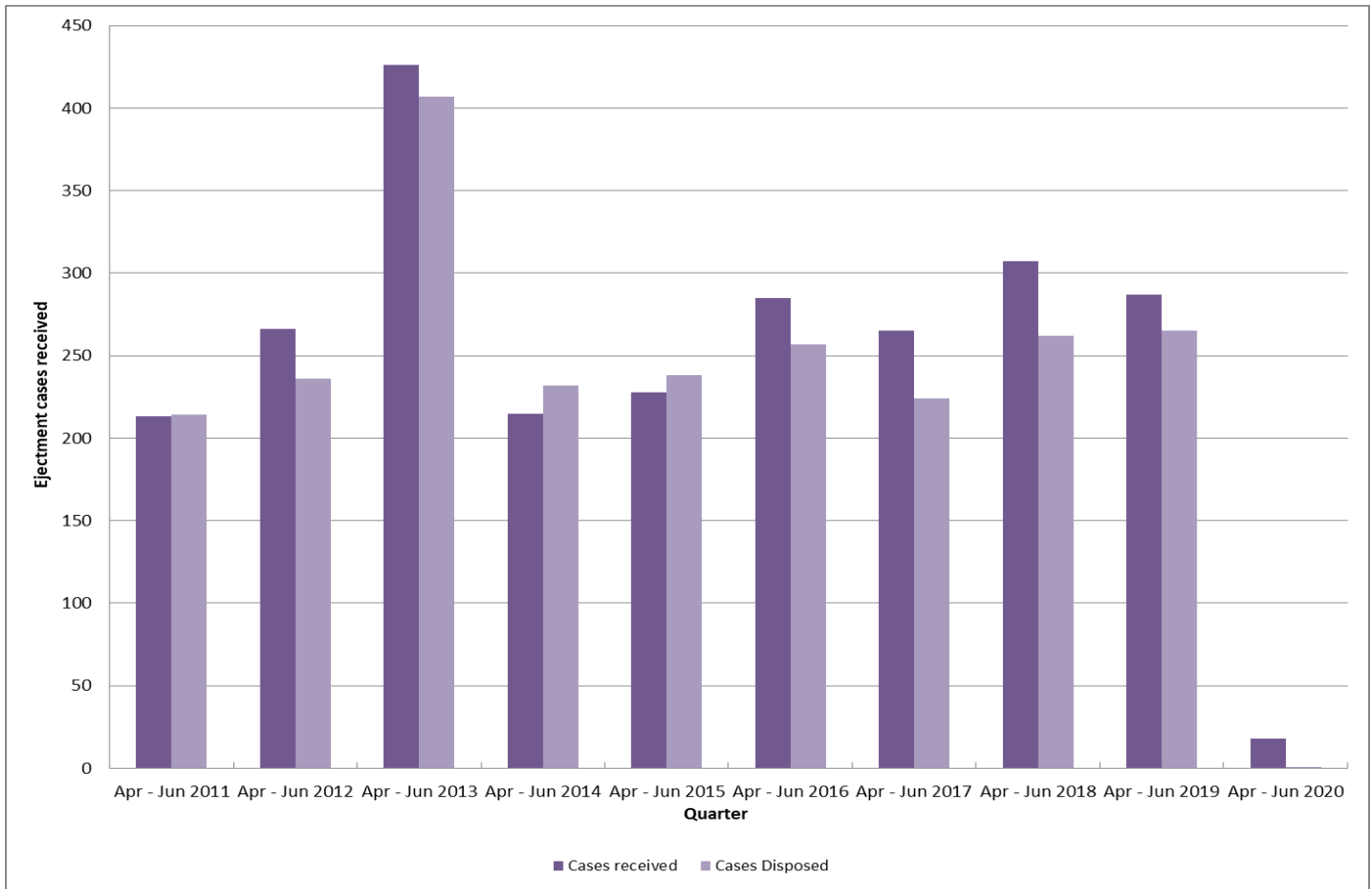
3.2 Equity

A total of 31 equity cases were received during April to June 2020, six less than the number received during the period April to June 2019 (37). The number of equity cases disposed decreased from 32 during the period April to June 2019, to 4 this quarter. Due to the COVID_19 pandemic restrictions on business, it was not possible to determine the average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases.

3.3 Ejectment

A total of 18 ejectment cases were received, down 94% on the 287 cases received during April to June 2019, with the number of ejectment cases disposed decreased from 262 in the same quarter last year to one this quarter (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed – April to June 2011 to April to June 2020

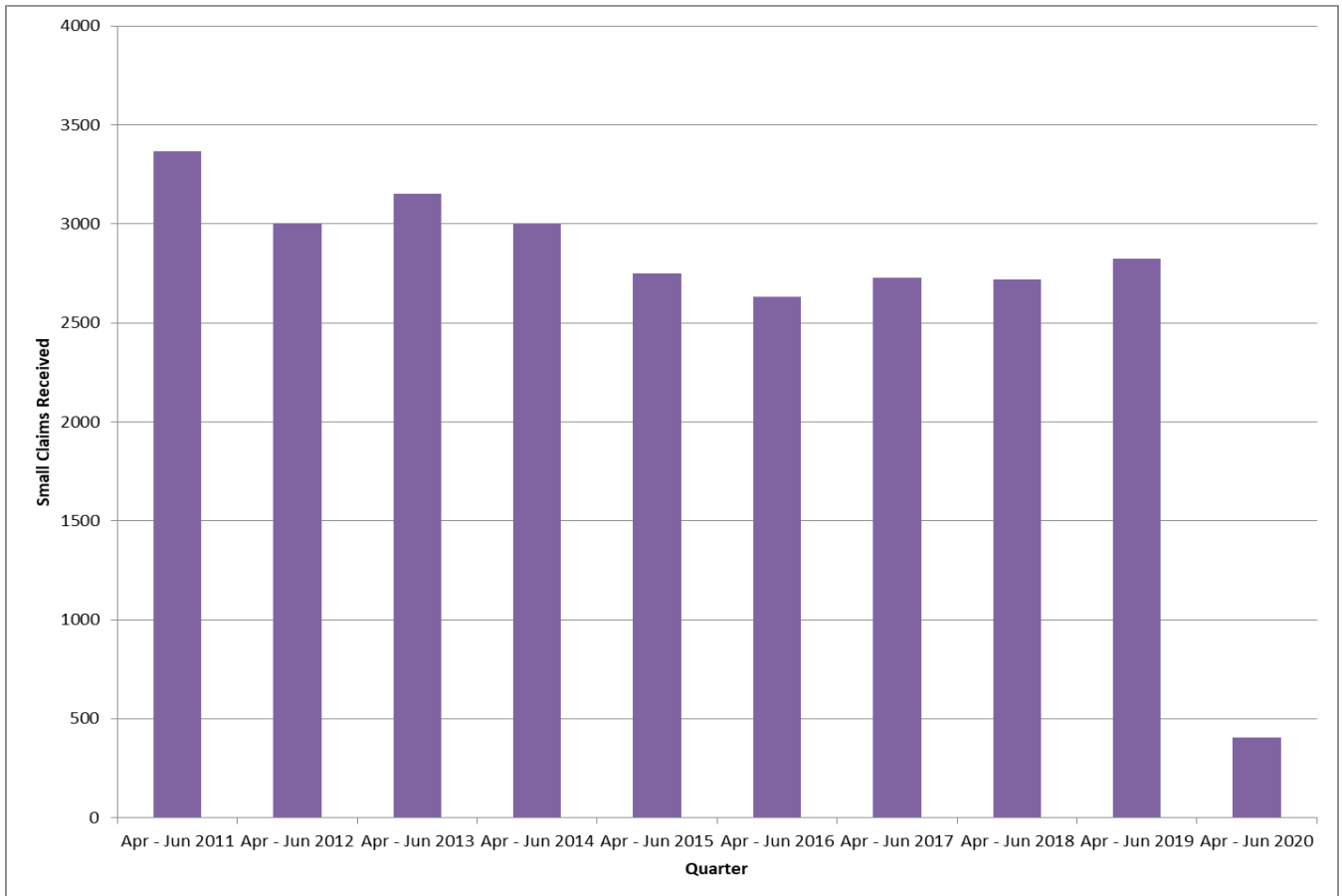


Due to the COVID_19 pandemic restrictions on business, it was not possible to determine the average time taken from issue to disposal for ejectment cases.

3.4 Small claims

406 small claims were received, down 86% on the 2,824 received during the same quarter last year (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Small claims cases received – April to June 2011 to April to June 2020



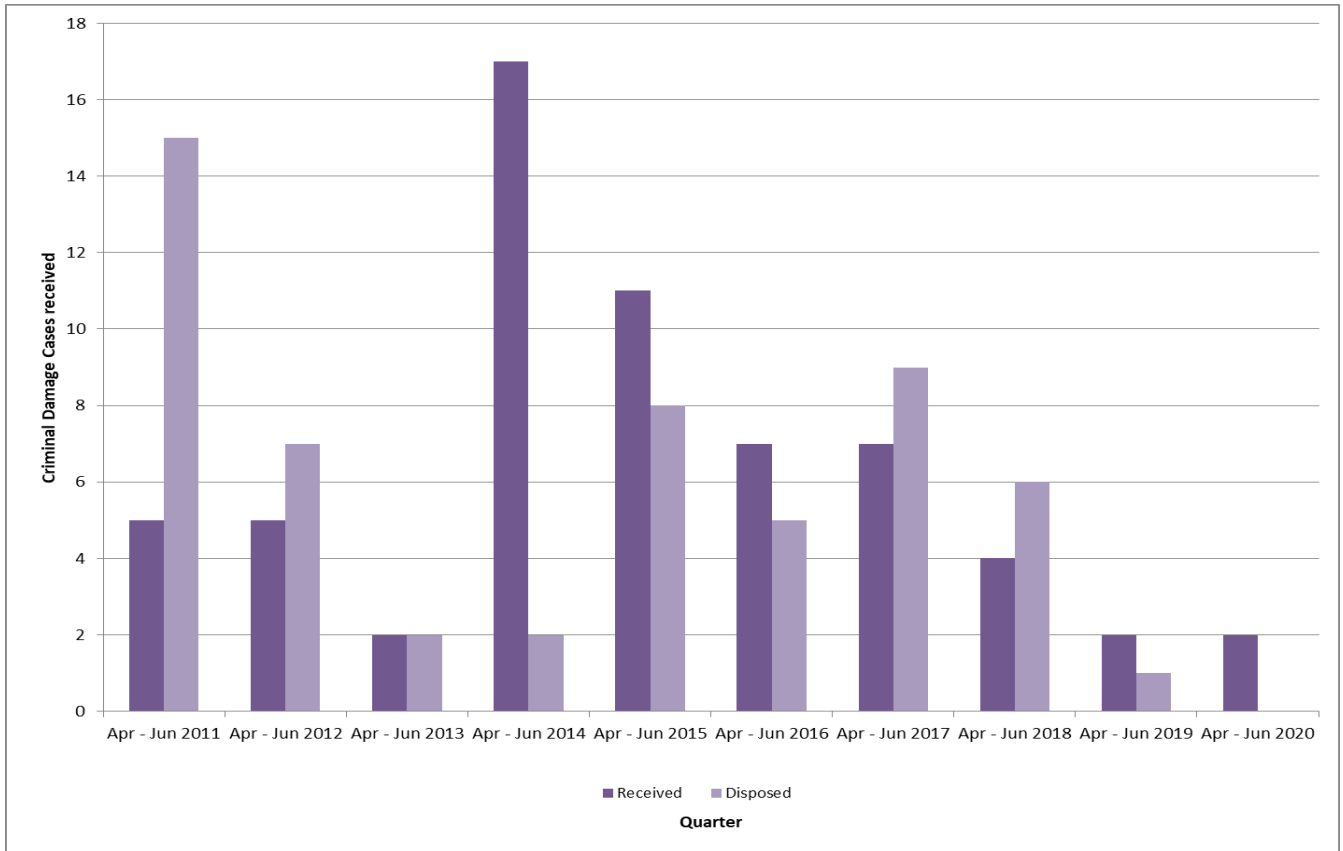
The number of small claims cases disposed decreased by 78% from 2,370 during April to June 2019 to 525 this quarter. Of the 525 small claims disposed during the quarter, the majority (66%) were disposed by way of default judgment.

Due to the COVID_19 pandemic restrictions on business, it was not possible to determine the average number of weeks from issue to disposal for small claims cases.

3.5 Criminal Damage

Two criminal damage cases were received, with none disposed during the quarter. This compares with two cases received and one case disposed during the same quarter in 2019 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed – April to June 2011 to April to June 2020



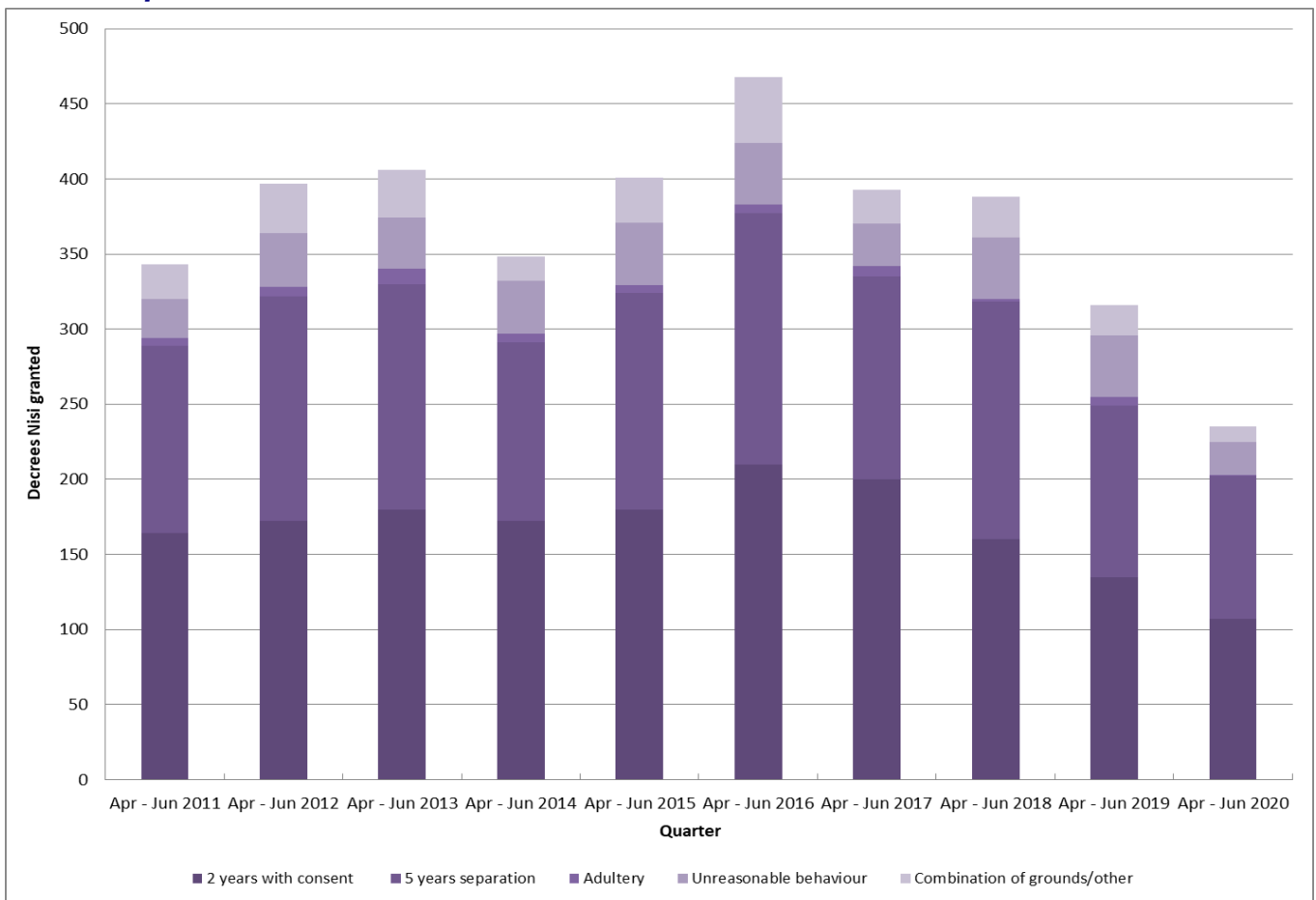
3.6 Divorces

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

A total of 235 divorce decrees were granted in the County Court, down 26% on the 316 granted during the same period last year.

The main type of divorce decree granted was '2 years with consent' accounting for 46% of decrees (107), followed by '5 years separation', accounting for 40% of decrees (95) (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type – April to June 2011 to April to June 2020



A total of 130 decrees absolute were issued in the County Court, a decrease of 57% on the 304 issued during the period April to June 2019. The most common type of decree absolute was ‘2 years with consent’, accounting for 44% (57) of cases.

The average time taken from issue to the date a divorce decree was granted was 40 weeks, with an average of six 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

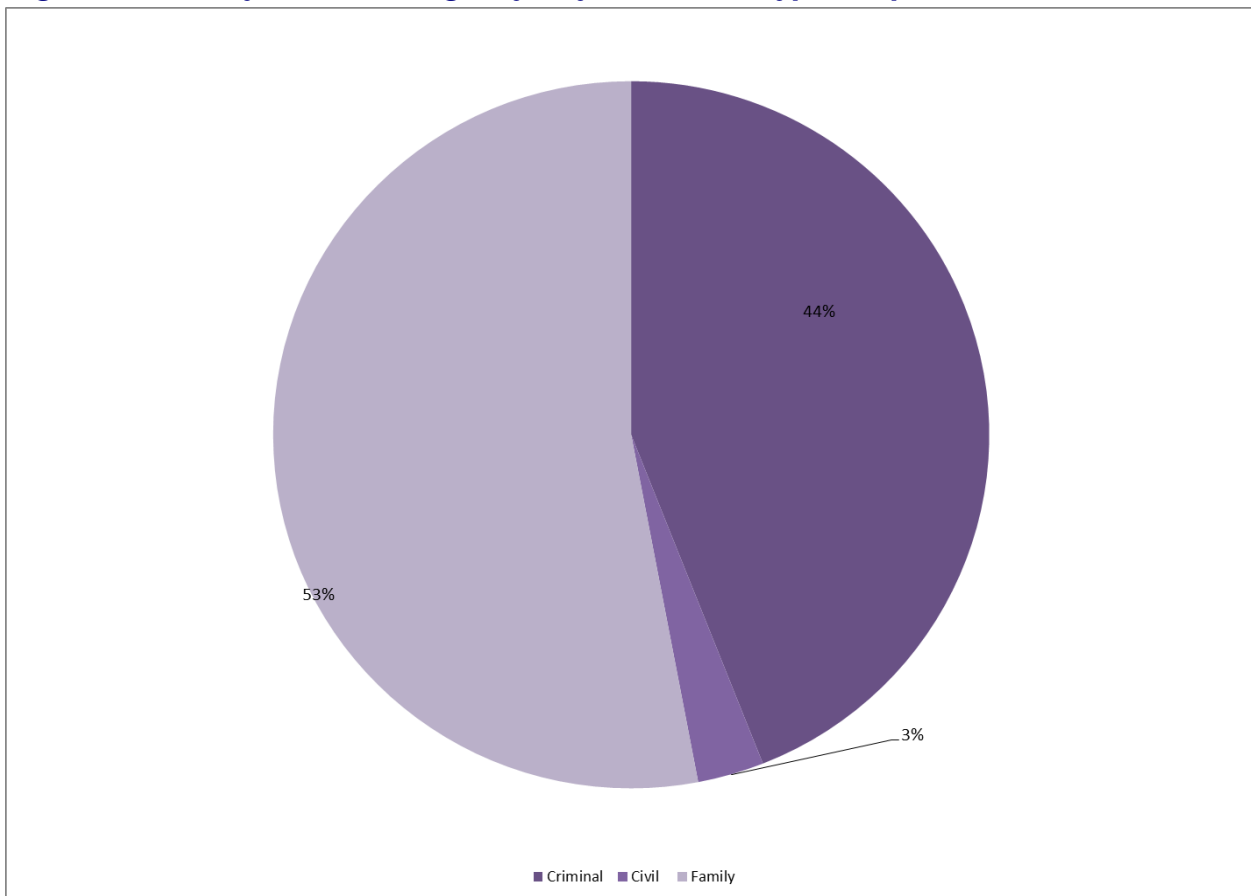
There were six licence applications received and 5 disposed, compared to the 90 received and 84 disposed during the same quarter last year.

3.8 Sitting Days

County Court and District Judges sat a total of 269 sitting days during the quarter, down 78% on the 1,201 sitting days recorded during the period April to June 2019.

Within these 269 sitting days, 53% of time was spent on family business, 44% of time was spent on criminal business and 3% of time was spent on civil business (Figure 7).

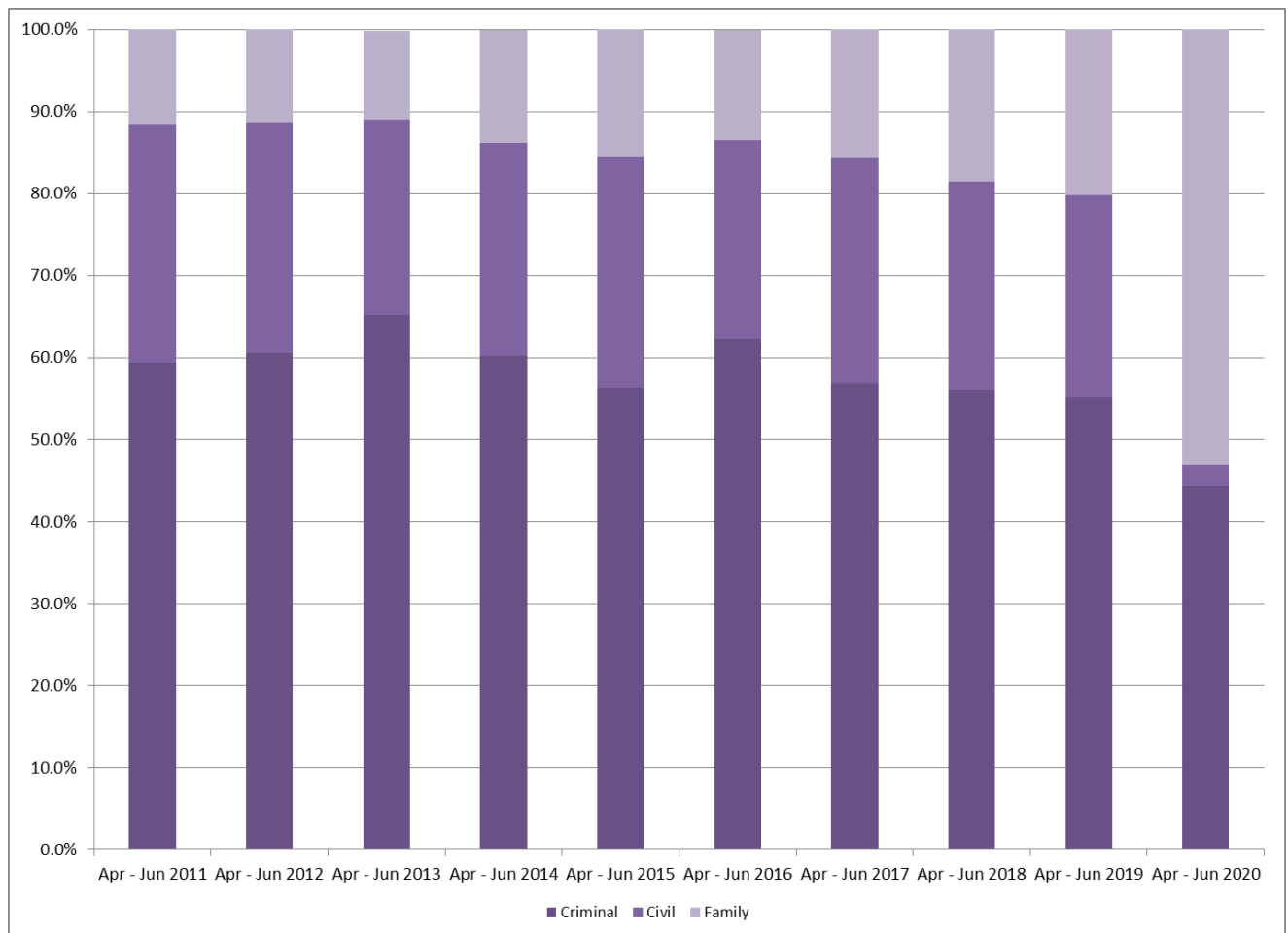
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type – April to June 2020



The proportion of time spent on criminal business has fluctuated during April to June quarter since 2007, peaking at 65% during the quarter April to June 2013. This is largely reflective of County Court Judges dealing with increased volumes of cases in the Crown Court over that particular period. The proportion of time spent on criminal business then decreased to 56% during April to June 2015, which was reflective of the action taken by a number of solicitors and counsel who withdrew their representation from a number of Crown Court cases in response to the introduction, in May 2015, of new rules in relation to legal aid remuneration. Following resolution of this dispute in February 2016, activity in the Crown Court increased, with the proportion of time spent by County Court Judges on criminal business increasing to 62% of sittings during April to June 2016, while the backlog

of cases arising from the dispute was being addressed. Progress made in addressing the backlog has meant the proportion of time spent on criminal business decreased over the last four April to June quarters, with the proportion of time spent on criminal business falling to 44% this quarter. The effects of the COVID_19 pandemic across all three-business areas, during this quarter, should be emphasised.

Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type – April to June 2011 to April to June 2020



APPENDIX 1 – TABLES

Civil Bills

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

Case	Laganside Courts	432
	Newtownards Court Office	55
	Downpatrick Court Office	67
	Craigavon Court Office	65
	Armagh Court Office	17
	Banbridge Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	38
	Strabane Court Office	3
	Antrim Court Office	24
	Londonderry Court Office	57
	Enniskillen Court Office	16
	Coleraine Court Office	54
	Newry Court Office	98
	Magherafelt Court Office	8
	Ballymena Court Office	25
	Lisburn Court Office	45
Dungannon Court Office	50	
Civil Processing Centre	531	
Total	1586	
Application	Laganside Courts	97
	Newtownards Court Office	12
	Downpatrick Court Office	14
	Craigavon Court Office	25
	Omagh Court Office	13
	Antrim Court Office	1
	Londonderry Court Office	11
	Coleraine Court Office	18
	Newry Court Office	23
	Ballymena Court Office	1
	Lisburn Court Office	6
	Civil Processing Centre	376
	Total	597

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

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	220	220	440
Newtownards Court Office	52	3	55
Downpatrick Court Office	17	39	56
Craigavon Court Office	40	26	66
Armagh Court Office	12	7	19
Omagh Court Office	30	19	49
Strabane Court Office	1		1
Antrim Court Office	14	11	25
Londonderry Court Office	38	25	63
Enniskillen Court Office	7	9	16
Coleraine Court Office	36	17	53
Newry Court Office	64	38	102
Magherafelt Court Office	10	7	17
Ballymena Court Office	15	10	25
Lisburn Court Office	29	19	48
Dungannon Court Office	28	20	48
Civil Processing Centre	60	34	94
Total	673	504	1177

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

		Court result - CCJ	Non court disposals	Default judgement	Office disposal	Total
Case	Laganside Courts		181	3	11	195
	Newtownards Court Office		32	1	2	35
	Downpatrick Court Office		23		5	28
	Craigavon Court Office		35	1	1	37
	Armagh Court Office		9			9
	Omagh Court Office		44			44
	Antrim Court Office		12		2	14
	Londonderry Court Office		23		3	26
	Enniskillen Court Office		6			6
	Coleraine Court Office		28		4	32
	Newry Court Office		53	1	4	58
	Magherafelt Court Office		5			5
	Ballymena Court Office		15		1	16
	Lisburn Court Office		43			43
	Dungannon Court Office		10		1	11
Civil Processing Centre		30	65	9	104	
Total			549	71	43	663
Application	Laganside Courts	2	43			45
	Downpatrick Court Office	1	4			5
	Craigavon Court Office		11			11
	Omagh Court Office	1	6			7
	Antrim Court Office		1			1
	Londonderry Court Office		4			4
	Coleraine Court Office	1	4			5
	Newry Court Office		11			11
	Lisburn Court Office		7			7
	Civil Processing Centre		17			17
	Total	5	108			113

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

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the amounts as they are based on court disposals.

Table 5: Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	960	1434	2394
Newtownards Court Office	147	15	162
Downpatrick Court Office	30	155	185
Craigavon Court Office	102	106	208
Armagh Court Office	25	32	57
Omagh Court Office	179	202	381
Strabane Court Office	3	2	5
Antrim Court Office	43	54	97
Londonderry Court Office	145	121	266
Enniskillen Court Office	15	13	28
Coleraine Court Office	130	133	263
Newry Court Office	121	128	249
Limavady Court Office	1		1
Magherafelt Court Office	11	10	21
Ballymena Court Office	67	53	120
Lisburn Court Office	94	65	159
Dungannon Court Office	55	46	101
Civil Processing Centre	154	120	274
Total	2282	2689	4971

Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	359	497	856
Newtownards Court Office	99	11	110
Downpatrick Court Office	5	52	57
Craigavon Court Office	47	28	75
Armagh Court Office	7	9	16
Omagh Court Office	80	84	164
Strabane Court Office	1	5	6
Antrim Court Office	16	14	30
Londonderry Court Office	79	41	120
Enniskillen Court Office	8	2	10
Coleraine Court Office	55	38	93
Newry Court Office	76	70	146
Limavady Court Office	2	1	3
Magherafelt Court Office	11	7	18
Ballymena Court Office	24	14	38
Lisburn Court Office	34	28	62
Dungannon Court Office	10	2	12
Civil Processing Centre	18	17	35
Total	931	920	1851

Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the time interval calculations as they are based on court disposals, and DJ and non-court disposals are excluded.

Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications

			Issue to disposal
Application	Processing Office	Laganside Courts	0
		Downpatrick Court Office	1
		Omagh Court Office	0
		Coleraine Court Office	0
	Total		0

Equity

Table 9: Equity cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	5
	Newtownards Court Office	1
	Downpatrick Court Office	1
	Craigavon Court Office	3
	Armagh Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	6
	Londonderry Court Office	3
	Newry Court Office	8
	Dungannon Court Office	1
	Civil Processing Centre	2
Total		31
Application	Omagh Court Office	6
	Newry Court Office	5
	Civil Processing Centre	1
	Total	

Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Laganside Courts		1	1
	Craigavon Court Office		1	1
	Omagh Court Office		1	1
	Newry Court Office		1	1
	Total		4	4
Application	Omagh Court Office	2	2	4
	Londonderry Court Office		2	2
	Total	2	4	6

Table 11: Outstanding equity cases

Case	Laganside Courts	47
	Newtownards Court Office	5
	Downpatrick Court Office	15
	Craigavon Court Office	9
	Armagh Court Office	4
	Omagh Court Office	56
	Strabane Court Office	1
	Londonderry Court Office	27
	Enniskillen Court Office	3
	Coleraine Court Office	16
	Newry Court Office	31
	Ballymena Court Office	7
	Lisburn Court Office	5
	Dungannon Court Office	6
Civil Processing Centre	24	
Total	256	

Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the time interval calculations as they are based on court disposals, and DJ and non-court disposals are excluded.

Ejectment

Table 13: Ejectment cases received

Case	Downpatrick Court Office	1
	Craigavon Court Office	2
	Civil Processing Centre	15
	Total	18

Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed

		Non court disposals	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	1	1
	Total	1	1

Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID

Case	Laganside Courts	15
	Downpatrick Court Office	4
	Craigavon Court Office	2
	Omagh Court Office	4
	Londonderry Court Office	4
	Enniskillen Court Office	1
	Coleraine Court Office	2
	Newry Court Office	4
	Civil Processing Centre	6
Total	42	

Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the time interval calculations as they are based on court disposals, and DJ and non-court disposals are excluded.

Small Claims

Table 17: Number of small claims cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	13
	Newtownards Court Office	6
	Craigavon Court Office	2
	Omagh Court Office	3
	Londonderry Court Office	1
	Enniskillen Court Office	1
	Coleraine Court Office	5
	Newry Court Office	8
	Ballymena Court Office	3
	Lisburn Court Office	8
	Civil Processing Centre	356
	Total	406
	Application	Londonderry Court Office
Coleraine Court Office		1
Civil Processing Centre		7
Total		9

Table 18: Number of small claims cases with NODs received

Case	Laganside Courts	33
	Newtownards Court Office	8
	Downpatrick Court Office	3
	Craigavon Court Office	2
	Armagh Court Office	2
	Omagh Court Office	5
	Londonderry Court Office	2
	Coleraine Court Office	6
	Newry Court Office	8
	Ballymena Court Office	4
	Lisburn Court Office	11
Civil Processing Centre	36	
Total	120	

Table 19: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed

		Non court disposal	Office disposal	Default judgement	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	1	6	1	8
	Newtownards Court Office	1			1
	Craigavon Court Office			1	1
	Omagh Court Office		1		1
	Coleraine Court Office		1		1
	Civil Processing Centre		168	345	513
	Total	2	176	347	525

Table 20: Outstanding small claims with NOD

Laganside Courts	169
Newtownards Court Office	29
Downpatrick Court Office	8
Craigavon Court Office	17
Armagh Court Office	7
Omagh Court Office	22
Antrim Court Office	1
Londonderry Court Office	17
Enniskillen Court Office	2
Coleraine Court Office	31
Newry Court Office	34
Ballymena Court Office	6
Lisburn Court Office	23
Civil Processing Centre	50
Total	416

Table 21: Time intervals in weeks for small claims

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the time interval calculations as they are based on court disposals, and DJ and non-court disposals are excluded.

Criminal Damage

Table 22: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	1
	Omagh Court Office	1
	Total	2

Table 23: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the amounts as they are based on court disposals.

Table 24: Outstanding criminal damage cases

Laganside Courts	16
Newtownards Court Office	1
Omagh Court Office	8
Londonderry Court Office	3
Coleraine Court Office	1
Newry Court Office	1
Dungannon Court Office	1
Total	31

Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the time interval calculations as they are based on court disposals, and DJ and non-court disposals are excluded.

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
Laganside Courts	27	33		8	1	69
Downpatrick Court Office	13	10		2	3	28
Craigavon Court Office	14	10		3		27
Omagh Court Office	12	7		1	2	22
Londonderry Court Office	1	2	1	1		5
Coleraine Court Office	25	22		5	4	56
Newry Court Office	14	10		2		26
Lisburn Court Office	1	1				2
Total	107	95	1	22	10	235

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
Laganside Courts	16	14	1	4	2	37
Downpatrick Court Office	1					1
Craigavon Court Office	6	6		1		13
Armagh Court Office		1			1	2
Omagh Court Office	3	3	1	2	2	11
Londonderry Court Office	8	3		1	4	16
Coleraine Court Office	12	15	1	5	2	35
Newry Court Office	10	4				14
Lisburn Court Office	1					1
Total	57	46	3	13	11	130

Table 28: Matrimonial applications received

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	1		1	2
Downpatrick Court Office			1	1
Londonderry Court Office	1	1		2
Coleraine Court Office	1			1
Newry Court Office	4			4
Total	7	1	2	10

Table 29: Matrimonial applications disposed

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Total
Laganside Courts	2	1	3
Newry Court Office	1		1
Total	3	1	4

Table 30: Time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions

	Issue to date decree granted	Date decree granted to date absolute issued
Laganside Courts	33	6
Dow npatrick Court Office	35	
Craigavon Court Office	45	
Om agh Court Office	38	
Londonderry Court Office	61	
Coleraine Court Office	44	
Newry Court Office	47	
Lisburn Court Office	15	
Total	40	6

Table 31: Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications

Due to COVID-19 there have been no court disposals during the period, and therefore it has not been possible to produce the time interval calculations as they are based on court disposals, and DJ and non-court disposals are excluded.

Licences

Table 32: Licences received and disposed

Court Office	Licences Received	Licences Disposed
Coleraine	0	0
Newtownards	3	1
Newry	0	0
Laganside Courts	3	3
Craigavon	0	0
Omagh	0	1
Londonderry	0	0
Total	6	5

County Court and District Judge Sitting Days

Table 33: County Court Judge & District Judge Sitting Days

	Total time			Total criminal time	Total civil time	Total family time
	Number of sitting days	Average sitting	Total time			
Antrim	2	0:47:30	1:35:00	0:05:00	0:30:00	1:00:00
Laganside	170	1:09:17	196:19:00	113:53:00	7:06:00	75:20:00
Magherafelt	1	0:05:00	0:05:00	0:00:00	0:05:00	0:00:00
Dungannon	22	2:18:54	50:56:00	24:10:00	0:15:00	26:31:00
Craigavon	44	1:38:01	71:53:00	6:05:00	0:21:00	65:27:00
Londonderry	29	0:33:04	15:59:00	5:04:00	0:45:00	10:10:00
Newtownards	1	0:05:00	0:05:00	0:00:00	0:05:00	0:00:00
Total	269	1:15:08	336:52:00	149:17:00	9:07:00	178:28:00

A 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 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: Patrick.McLarnon@courtsni.gov.uk
Telephone: 028 9072 8920
www.justice-ni.gov.uk/courts-and-tribunals