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Analytical Services Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at Magistrates' 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 1,149 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was similar to the 1,153 in the same period the previous year.
- 10,312 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 10,122 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 7% (from 9,669) and an increase of 5% (from 9,649) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the second lowest number of both adult defendants received and adult defendants disposed during the July to September quarter since the time series began in 2007, the lowest being in July to September 2014.
- The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks, the same as the corresponding period last year.
- 475 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 465 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 1% (from 481) and an increase of 4% (from 447) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of youth defendants received and the second lowest number of youth defendants disposed of during the July to September quarter since 2007.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 11 weeks, the same as the corresponding period last year.
- 1,348 new civil and family applications were received and 1,167 civil applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 6% (from 1,440) and a decrease of 9% (from 1,276) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.
- The average waiting time for a case to progress through the civil and family court from date of receipt to disposal was 8 weeks, compared to 9 weeks in the corresponding period last year.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are twenty-one petty sessions' districts in Northern Ireland. A Magistrates' court (other than a youth court or family proceedings court) is presided over by a district judge (Magistrates' court) sitting alone. The present complement of district judges (Magistrates' court) is twenty-one. The Magistrates' court hears and determines less serious criminal cases, cases involving youth and some civil and domestic cases including family proceedings.

The vast majority of all criminal offences dealt with in Northern Ireland are tried summarily in a Magistrates' court. A significant number of these offences are offences against Road Traffic Orders, such as the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1995 and the Road Traffic Offenders (NI) Order 1996, sometimes described as the 'penalty points' Order.

Magistrates' courts also deal with offences where the defendant can choose trial by jury but decides to have their case heard in the Magistrates' court. If the defendant chooses trial by jury, the case will be passed on to the Crown Court. It is estimated that where the defendant has a choice between summary trial and trial on indictment, approximately three out of four cases are dealt with summarily. This is mainly because this mode of trial is much quicker and the sentencing powers of a District Judge (Magistrates' court) are more restricted than those of a Crown Court Judge - the most serious punishment which a District Judge (Magistrates' court) can impose is 12 months in prison, unless consecutive terms of imprisonment are imposed for more than one offence, when the limit is extended to 18 months.

The youth court deals with young people who have committed criminal offences, and who are aged between 10 and under 18. The youth court is part of the Magistrates' court and cases are generally heard before a panel of three persons, a salaried District Judge (Magistrates' court) and two specially-trained fee-paid lay magistrates. Although the youth court can deal with the full range criminal offences (save for murder), if a young person is charged with a very serious offence, which in the case of an adult is punishable with 14 years imprisonment or more, the youth court can commit them for trial at the Crown Court.

In addition to hearing criminal proceedings the youth court also hears proceedings relating to the care, protection and control of juveniles.

Magistrates' courts can deal with a limited number of civil cases as follows:-

- some civil debts, for example, arrears of income tax, national insurance contributions, VAT arrears, rates
- licences, for example, granting, renewing or taking away licences for pubs and clubs
- some matrimonial problems, for example, maintenance and removing a spouse from the matrimonial home
- welfare of children, for example, local authority care or supervision orders, adoption proceedings and residence orders (known as the Family Proceedings Court).

Data relating to business at the Family Proceedings Court is published on a quarterly basis in the NICTS Children Order Bulletin.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data sources

Information contained in all tables is sourced from 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 Magistrates' Court during 2006, 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.

2.2 Methodology for generating data

Analytical Service Group (ASG) Statisticians based within the NICTS take a download of Magistrates' 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 for official government statistics, 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 an 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 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 Magistrates' 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 criminal 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 to have all records 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.

Data contained in this bulletin are currently provisional and will undergo further validation before being published in their final form in the 2015 edition of Judicial statistics (due to be published on 24th June 2016).

2.5 Counting rules

Receipts are counted from the date a served summons or a charge sheet is received by the Magistrates' Court office. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to dealt with.

2.6 Interpreting trends

Changes to practice within the judicial system in general and the Magistrates' Court in particular, may impact upon business volumes presented in this bulletin. One example would be the introduction of Penalty Notices for Disorder on 6th June 2012. These were new diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court. The impact of this change means that offences previously dealt with by the Magistrates' Court are no longer received in court, but are rather dealt with out of court, contributing to the decrease in Magistrates' Court business over this period. 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 or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days

During July to September 2015 there were 1,074 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 21 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 54 special Magistrates' sitting days. This was an increase of less than 1% (from 1,070), a decrease of 9% (from 23) and a decrease of 10% (from 60) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

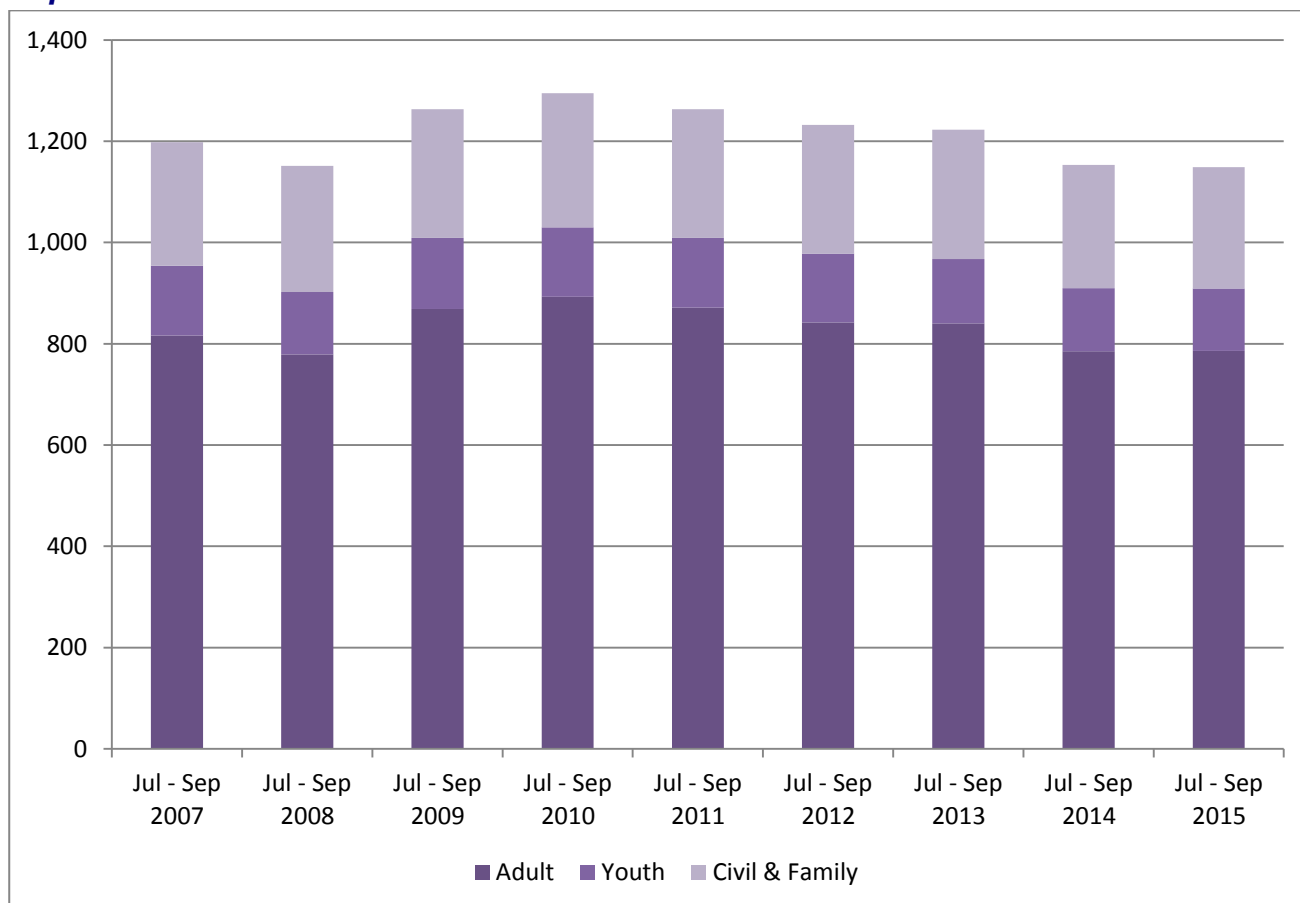
A breakdown of Magistrates' sitting days for July to September 2015 is outlined in the table below:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	717	15	54	786
Youth Criminal	122	1	0	123
Civil & Family	235	5	0	240
Total	1,074	21	54	1,149

Within these 1,149 sitting days, 68% were adult criminal days, 11% were youth criminal days and 21% were civil and family days.

The number of sitting days across each Magistrates' business type has remained fairly stable in the July to September quarter over the last number of years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: July to September 2007 to July to September 2015



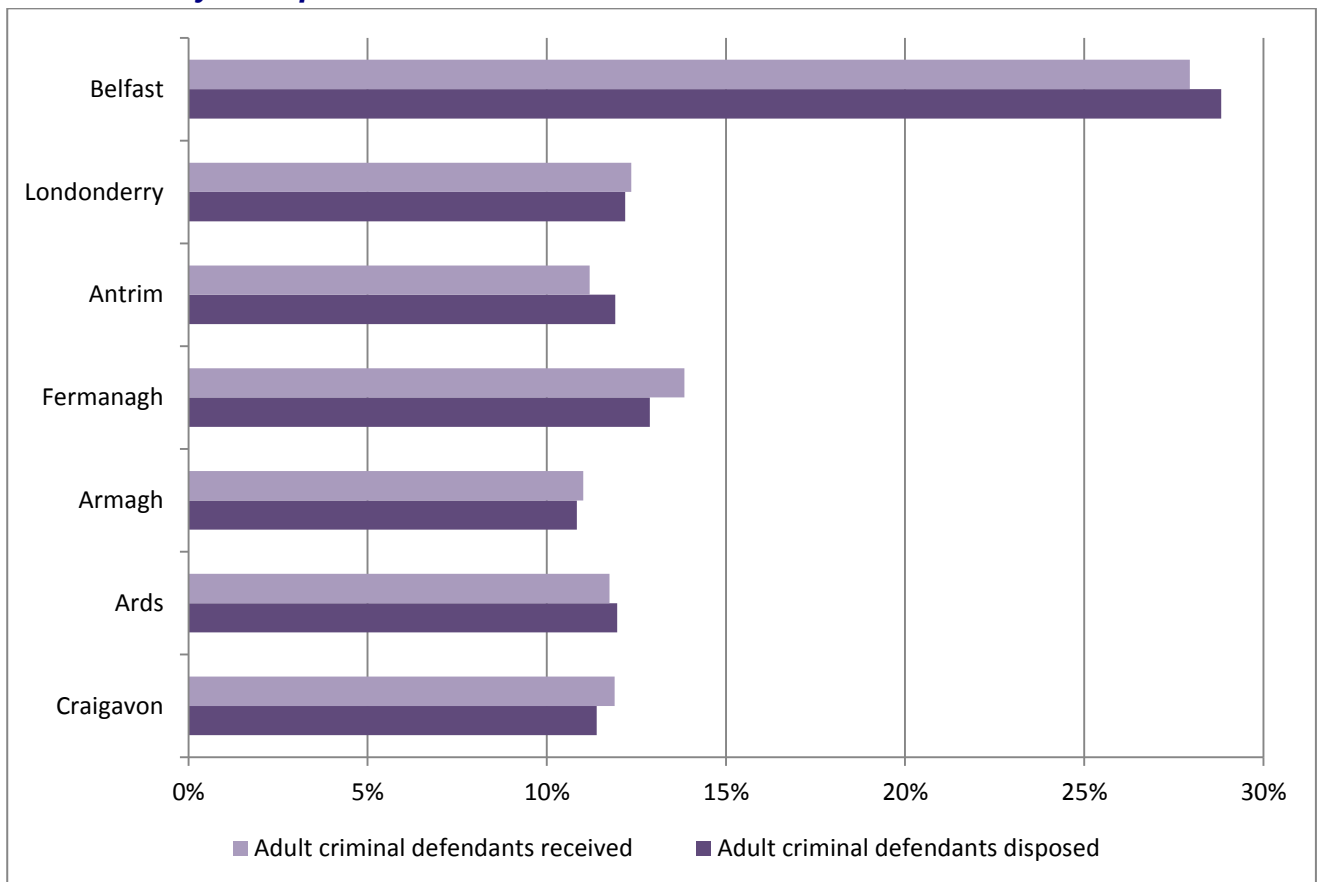
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2015, 10,312 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 10,122 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 7% (from 9,669) and an increase of 5% (from 9,649) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (74%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/PPS (78% in the same period in 2014).

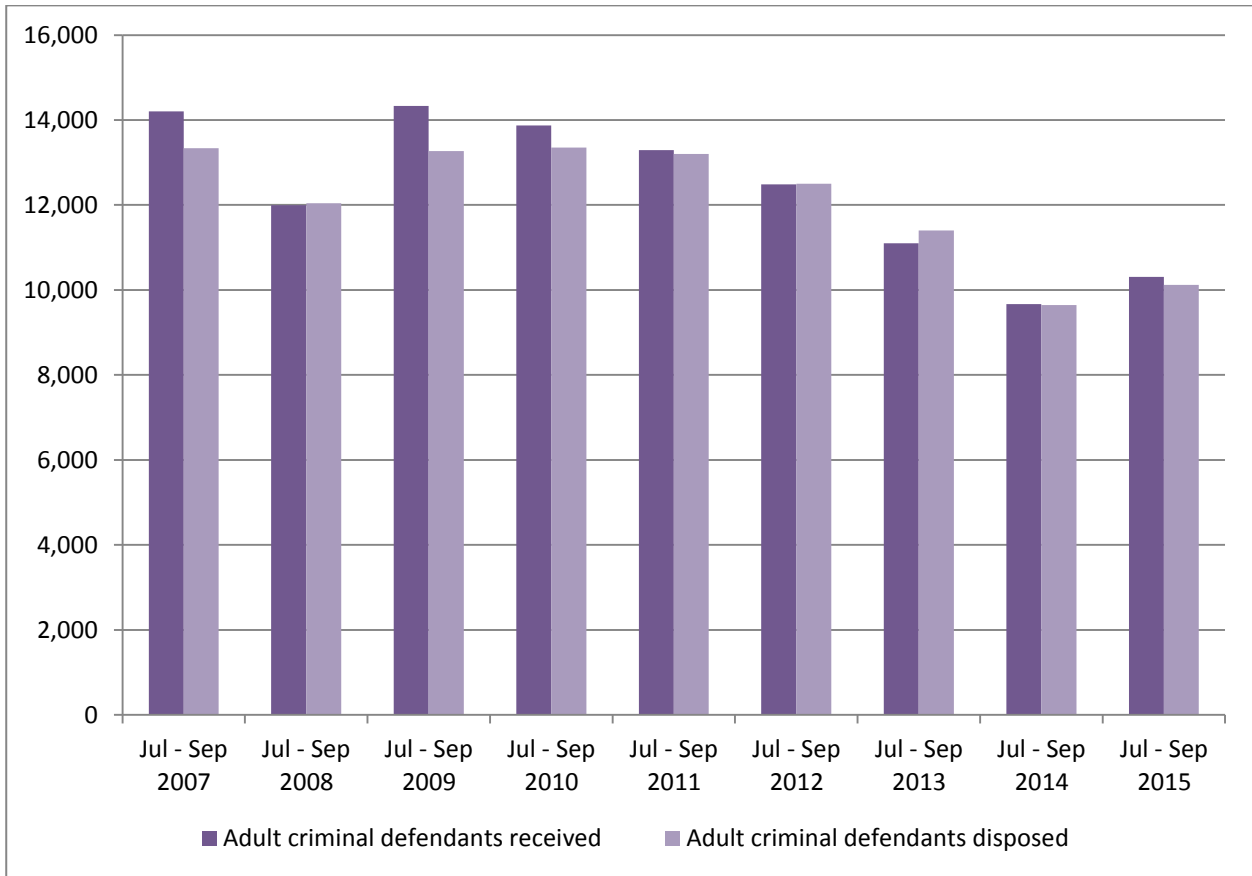
The volume of adult business was highest in the Belfast division (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of adult criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: July to September 2015



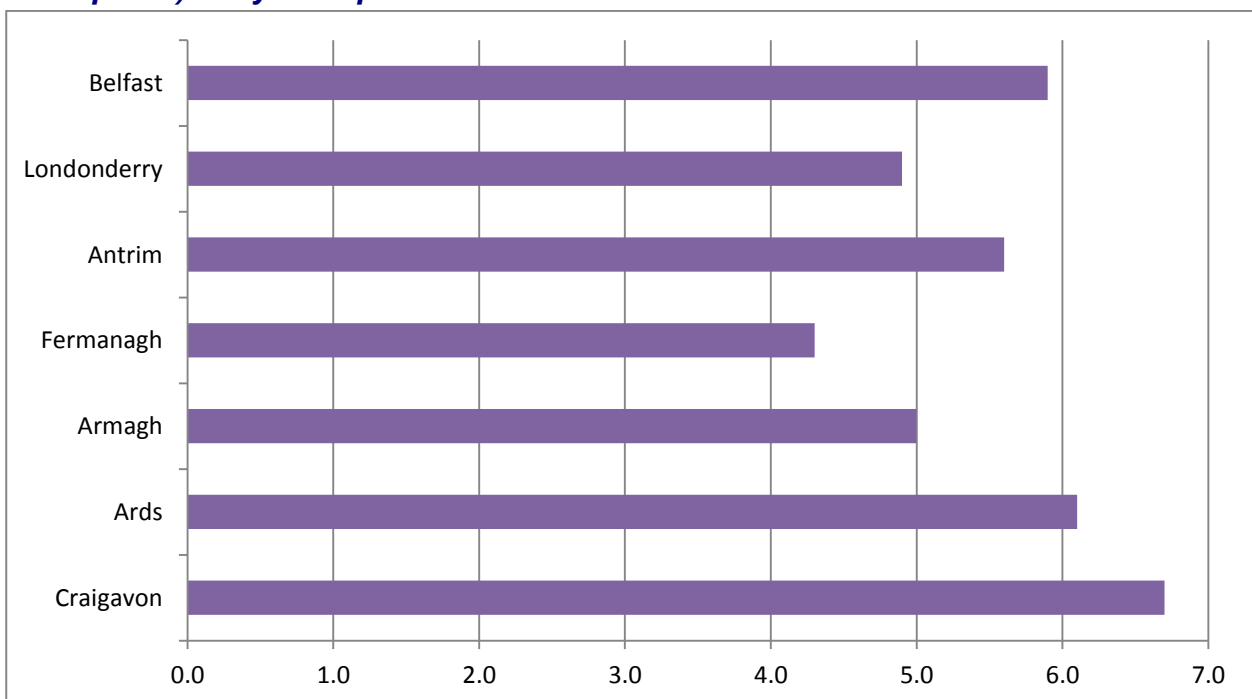
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter July to September since the beginning of the time series in 2007, with numbers increasing slightly between 2014 and 2015 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2015



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks during July to September 2015, the same as that during the same period in the previous year. A breakdown of average waiting times by court division for July to September 2015 is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): July to September 2015



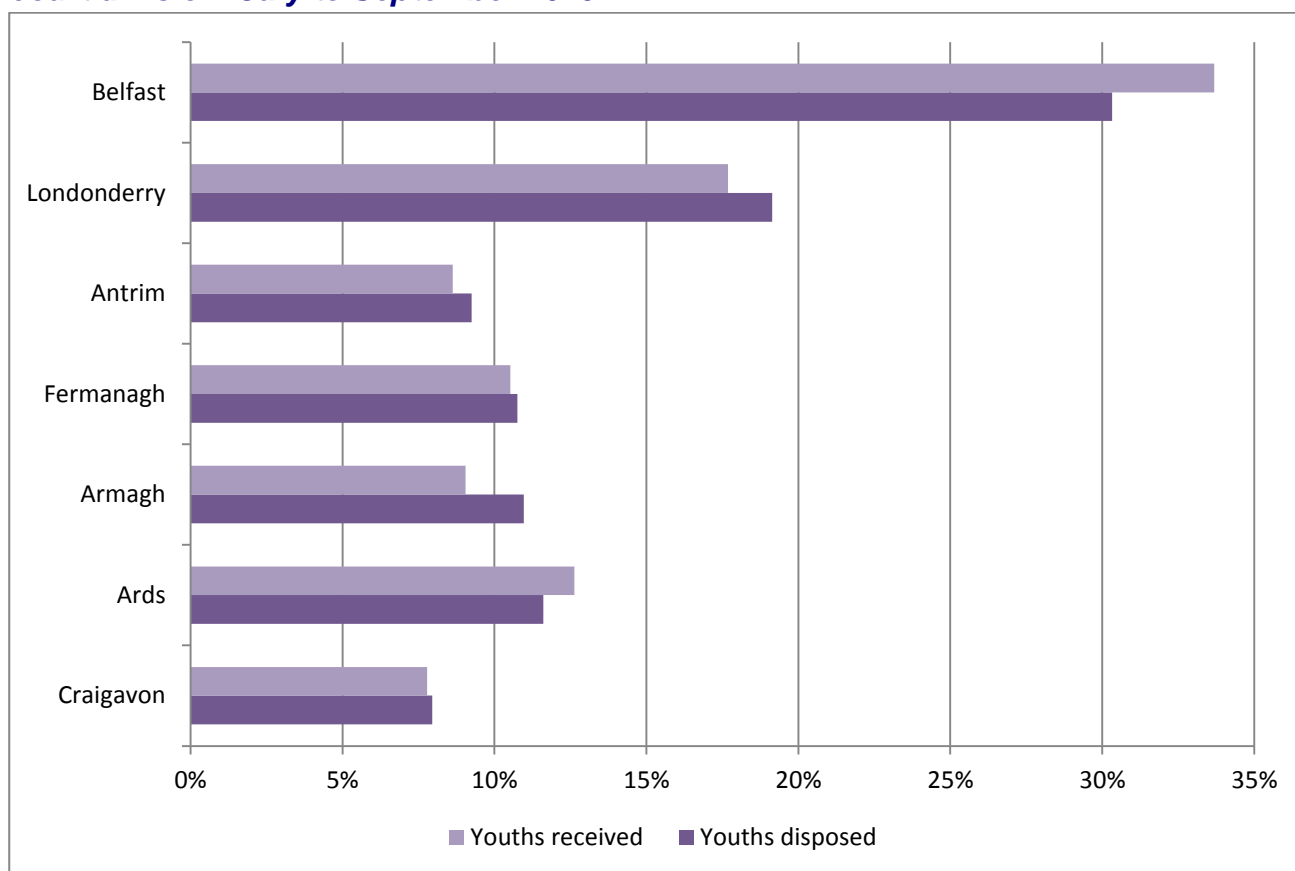
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2015, 475 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 465 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 1% (from 481) and an increase of 4% (from 447) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Almost all prosecutions (99.4%) disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (99.6% in the same period in 2014).

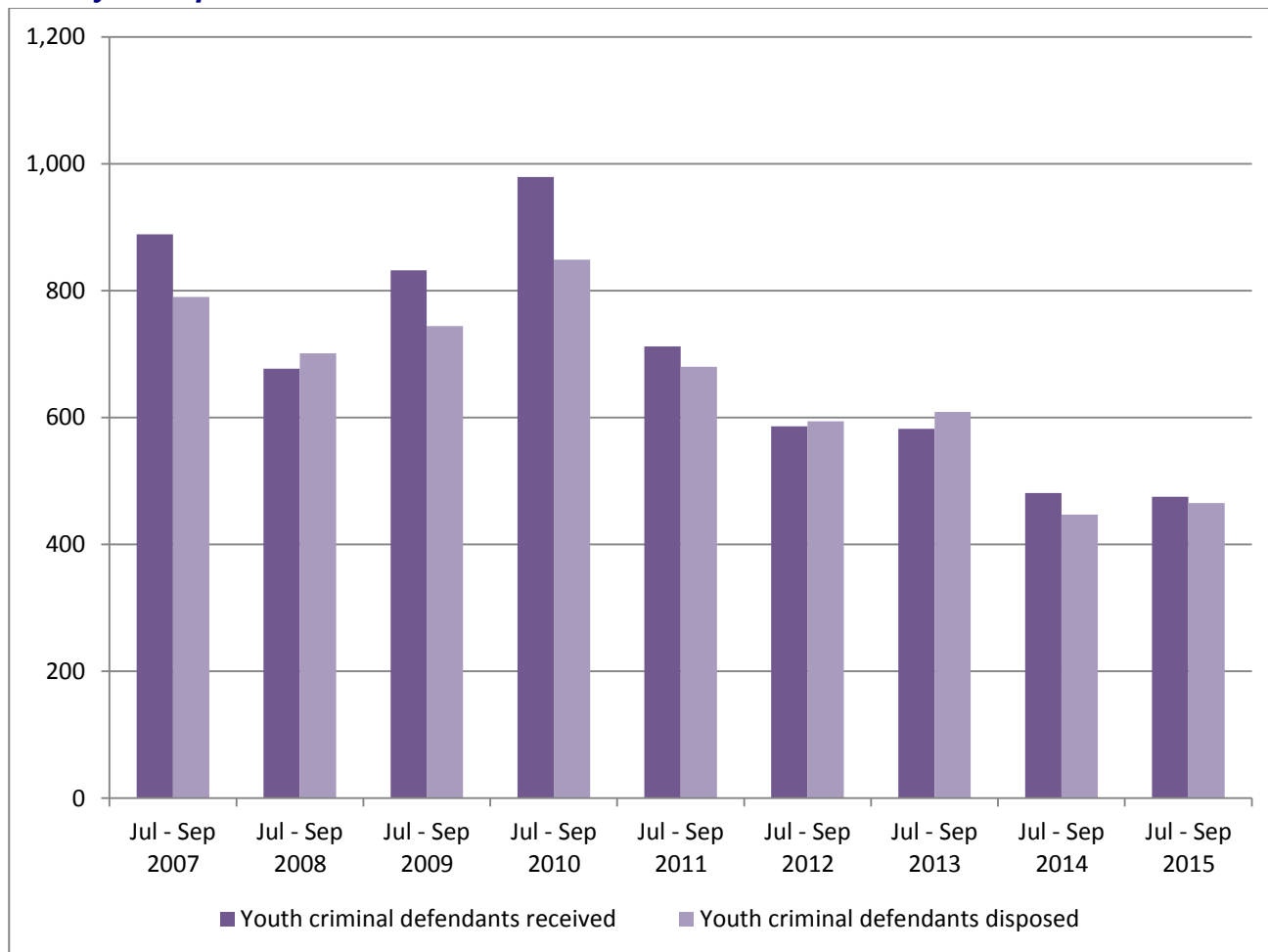
A breakdown of youth business by court division for July to September 2015 is shown in Figure 5 below:

Figure 5: Percentage of youth criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: July to September 2015



The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed fluctuated in the July to September quarter between 2007 and 2010. Volumes of both then decreased year on year in the July to September quarter, with receipts reaching their lowest level since the beginning of the time series in 2007, during July to September 2015 (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2015



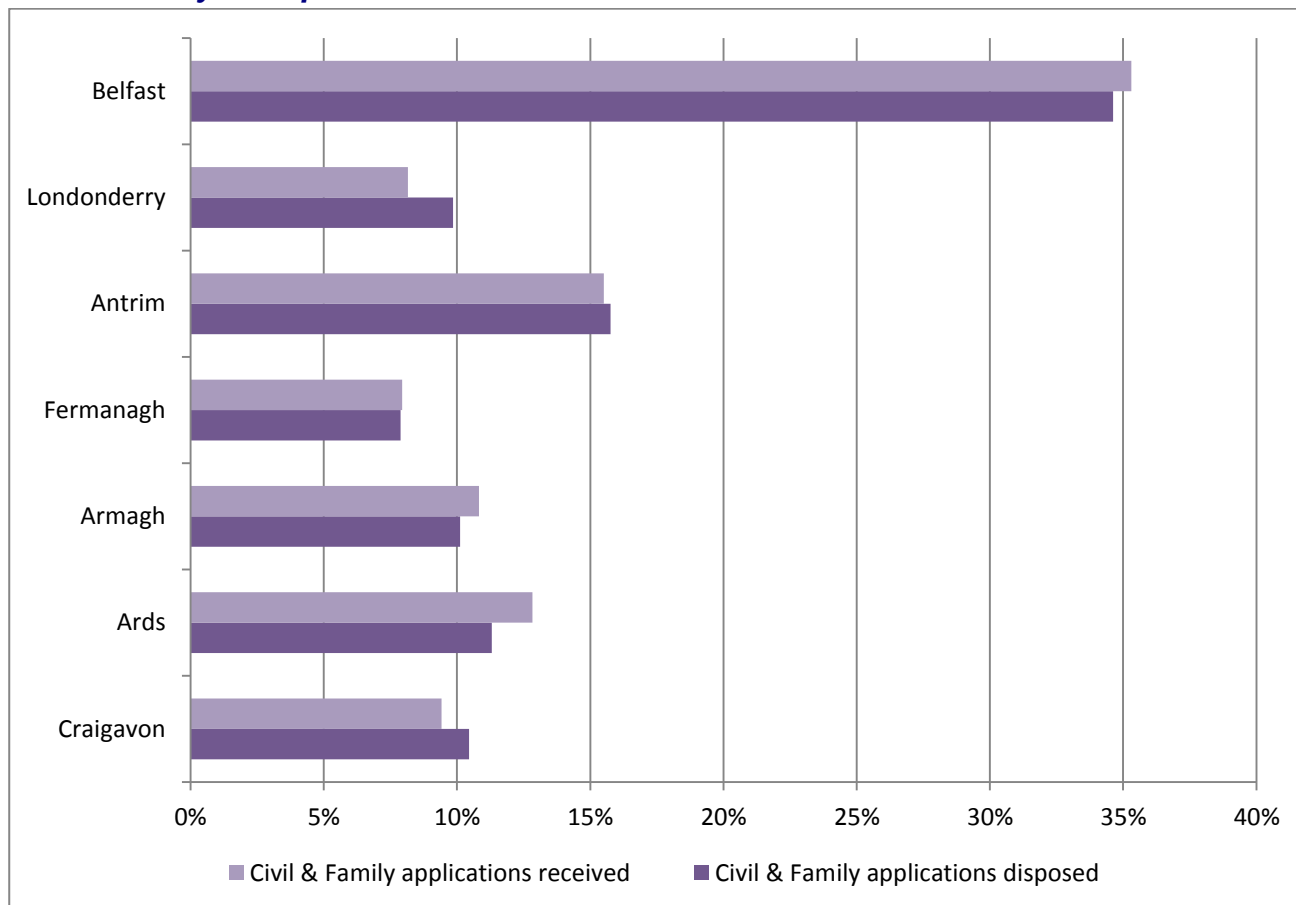
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 11 weeks (also 11 weeks for the same period in 2014).

3.4 Civil and family Magistrates' court

During July to September 2015, 1,348 new civil and family applications were received and 1,167 civil and family applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 6% (from 1,440) and a decrease of 9% (from 1,276) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

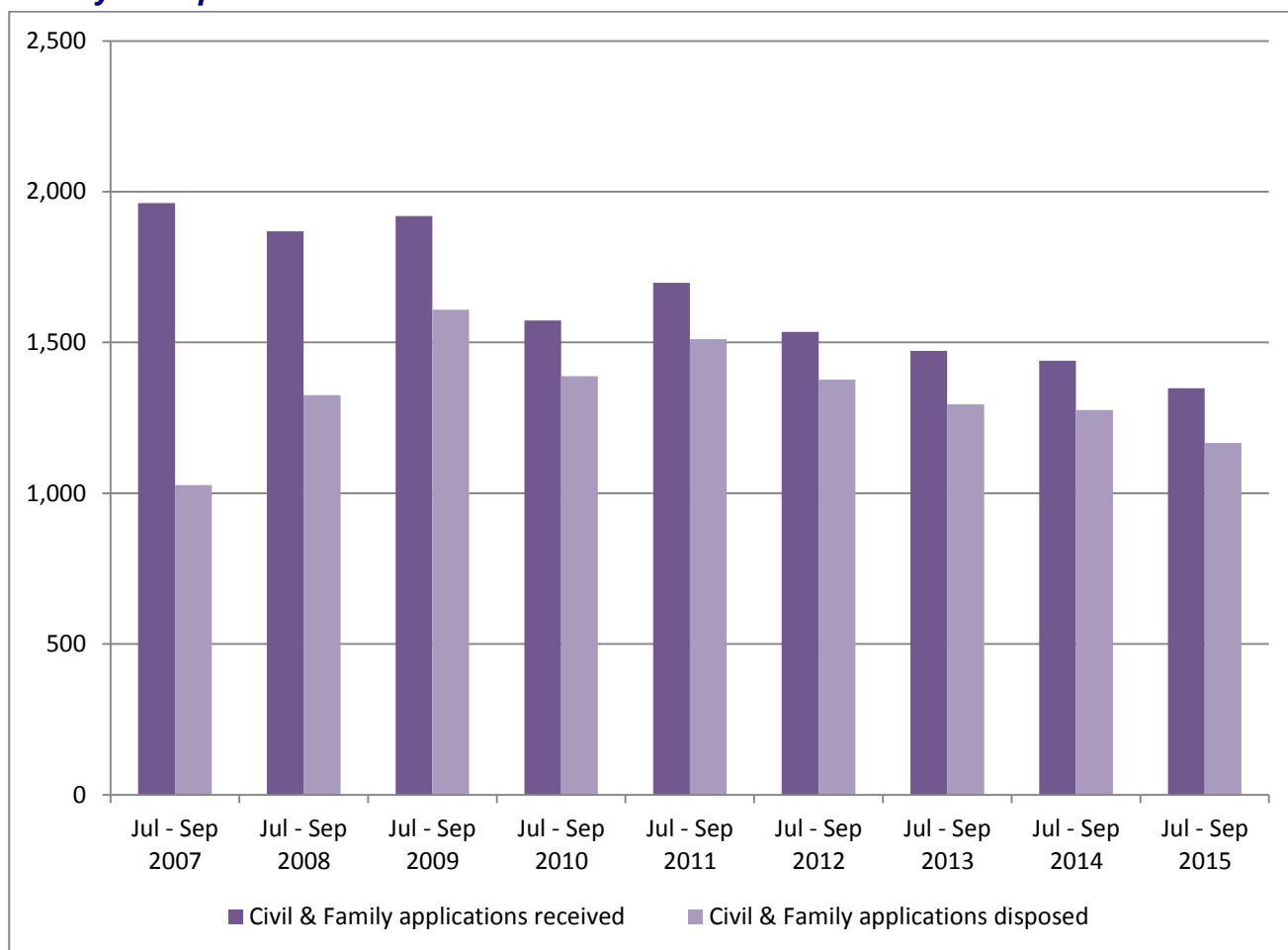
A breakdown of civil and family business by court division for July to September 2015 is shown in Figure 7 below:

Figure 7: Percentage of civil & family applications received and disposed of by court division: July to September 2015



The volume of both civil and family applications received and disposed fluctuated during the quarter July to September between 2007 and 2011 and then decreased year on year in the July to September quarter between 2011 and 2015 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Civil & family applications received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2015



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 8 weeks from date of receipt to disposal (9 weeks for the same period in 2014).

APPENDIX 1 - TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue¹

		Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Belfast	Laganside	211	2:48:23	39	3:15:32	76	3:12:11
	Total	211	2:48:23	39	3:15:32	76	3:12:11
Londonderry	Limavady	14	3:07:08				
	Magherafelt	14	2:29:38	2	2:07:30	2	1:25:00
	Londonderry	62	3:52:34	9	3:48:20	21	4:45:00
	Total	90	3:32:36	11	3:30:00	23	4:27:36
Antrim	Antrim	17	3:45:52	5	3:22:00	4	2:01:15
	Ballymena	27	4:04:26	5	2:37:00	13	3:12:41
	Coleraine	38	3:30:15	7	3:10:00	9	3:32:13
	Total	82	3:44:45	17	3:03:49	26	3:08:27
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	38	3:58:56	6	2:47:30	10	3:09:30
	Strabane	24	3:02:35	3	2:06:40		
	Omagh	26	3:35:20	6	1:59:10	11	2:48:10
	Enniskillen	25	5:20:07	5	3:56:00	1	2:30:00
	Total	113	3:59:30	20	2:44:00	22	2:57:02
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	16	3:57:11	5	3:06:00	1	4:55:00
	Banbridge@Newry	15	3:35:20	3	2:43:20	1	0:05:00
	Newry	35	3:09:13	6	2:04:10	17	3:49:00
	Total	66	3:26:47	14	2:34:38	19	3:40:41
Ards	Downpatrick	24	4:28:55	6	3:43:20		
	Newtownards	60	3:07:05	5	2:56:00	37	3:24:43
	Total	84	3:30:27	11	3:21:49	37	3:24:43
Craigavon	Lisburn	36	4:10:23	6	3:55:50	15	4:11:20
	Craigavon	35	5:06:24	4	2:40:00	17	2:32:56
	Total	71	4:38:00	10	3:25:30	32	3:19:03

Table 1.1a Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland¹

	Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	717	3:30:54	122	3:06:43	235	3:22:57

¹ 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. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue¹

		Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Belfast	Laganside	2	1:21:00		.	2	3:18:30
	Total	2	1:21:00		.	2	3:18:30
Antrim	Ballymena	1	0:55:00		.	1	0:15:00
	Total	1	0:55:00		.	1	0:15:00
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	1	1:15:00		.		.
	Total	1	1:15:00		.		.
Armagh & South Down	Newry	2	0:37:30		.		.
	Total	2	0:37:30		.		.
Ards	Newtownards	3	0:28:20	1	3:30:00	2	0:12:30
	Total	3	0:28:20	1	3:30:00	2	0:12:30
Craigavon	Lisburn	3	0:38:20		.		.
	Craigavon	3	5:20:20		.		.
	Total	6	2:59:20		.		.

Table 1.2a Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland¹

	Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	15	1:41:52	1	3:30:00	5	1:27:24

¹ 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. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue¹

		Adult criminal day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Londonderry	Magherafelt	1	0:15:00
	Londonderry	10	0:35:00
	Total	11	0:33:10
Antrim	Ballymena	7	0:30:00
	Total	7	0:30:00
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	9	0:36:06
	Total	9	0:36:06
Armagh & South Down	Newry	6	0:34:10
	Total	6	0:34:10
Ards	Downpatrick	1	0:45:00
	Newtownards	9	0:33:53
	Total	10	0:35:00
Craigavon	Lisburn	11	0:30:27
	Total	11	0:30:27

Table 1.3a Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland¹

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	54	0:33:08

¹ 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. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue²

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2083	764	11	24	2882
	Division total	2083	764	11	24	2882
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	653	304	1		958
	Limavady Court Office	104	38			142
	Magherafelt Court Office	121	53			174
	Division total	878	395	1		1274
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	242	73	3		318
	Coleraine Court Office	310	136	1	4	451
	Ballymena Court Office	264	121		1	386
	Division total	816	330	4	5	1155
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	269	63			332
	Strabane Court Office	202	75			277
	Enniskillen Court Office	262	57			319
	Dungannon Court Office	364	135			499
	Division total	1097	330			1427
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	209	66	1	1	277
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	155	40	3	1	199
	Newry Court Office	554	105		1	660
	Division total	918	211	4	3	1136
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	666	189	3	2	860
	Downpatrick Court Office	279	73			352
	Division total	945	262	3	2	1212
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	548	125	2	3	678
	Lisburn Court Office	405	139		4	548
	Division total	953	264	2	7	1226

Table 2.1a Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Northern Ireland	7690	2556	25	41	10312

² Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by division & venue²

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2066	832	10	10	2918
	Division total	2066	832	10	10	2918
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	630	281			911
	Limavady Court Office	108	34			142
	Magherafelt Court Office	125	56			181
	Division total	863	371			1234
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	253	91	2		346
	Coleraine Court Office	323	157		2	482
	Ballymena Court Office	262	114	1	1	378
	Division total	838	362	3	3	1206
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	206	68			274
	Strabane Court Office	178	76			254
	Enniskillen Court Office	248	60			308
	Dungannon Court Office	341	126			467
	Division total	973	330			1303
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	189	59	1		249
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	140	44	3	1	188
	Newry Court Office	548	111		1	660
	Division total	877	214	4	2	1097
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	658	184	3	2	847
	Downpatrick Court Office	294	70			364
	Division total	952	254	3	2	1211
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	496	120	2	3	621
	Lisburn Court Office	389	139		4	532
	Division total	885	259	2	7	1153

Table 2.2a Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Northern Ireland	7454	2622	22	24	10122

² Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

Table 2.3: Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by division & venue³

		Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	4.42	4.97	.88	5.85
	Total	4.42	4.97	.88	5.85
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	5.14	4.09	.92	5.01
	Limavady Court Office	4.23	3.89	.76	4.65
	Magherafelt Court Office	5.14	4.23	.46	4.69
	Total	5.03	4.08	.83	4.92
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	5.06	5.46	.58	6.04
	Coleraine Court Office	4.55	4.32	.54	4.86
	Ballymena Court Office	5.36	5.79	.32	6.11
	Total	4.95	5.11	.49	5.59
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	4.77	2.80	.36	3.16
	Strabane Court Office	4.52	3.27	.53	3.80
	Enniskillen Court Office	3.90	4.24	.90	5.14
	Dungannon Court Office	4.85	3.71	.85	4.56
	Total	4.55	3.56	.69	4.25
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4.79	4.57	.56	5.13
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5.00	5.08	.55	5.63
	Newry Court Office	6.36	4.51	.24	4.75
	Total	5.77	4.62	.36	4.99
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	5.55	5.12	.57	5.68
	Downpatrick Court Office	4.44	6.80	.32	7.13
	Total	5.21	5.63	.49	6.12
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	4.11	5.63	.82	6.45
	Lisburn Court Office	4.52	5.92	1.12	7.04
	Total	4.30	5.76	.96	6.72

Table 2.3a Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland³

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	4.80	4.82	.71	5.53

³ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded.

Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area^{2,4}

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
All Offences Against the Person	729	8			737
All Sexual Offences	159			1	160
All Burglary Offences	104				104
All Robbery Offences	14				14
All Theft Offences	512			13	525
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	102	104			206
All Criminal Damage Offences	202				202
All Offences Against the State	264			9	273
All Other Offences	206	487		1	694
All Drug Offences	490				490
All Motoring Offences	2657	566	5		3228
All Non-Police Offences	10	1352	17		1379
All Breach	123	54			177
Combination of charges	1882	51			1933
Total	7454	2622	22	24	10122

² Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

⁴ Please note that as of 07/01/2011 the charge of 'disorderly behaviour' was re-categorised from 'other offences' into 'offences against the state'.

Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	435				435
Plea of guilty on all charges	3258	405			3663
All charges withdrawn	1371	848			2219
Fixed penalty default			22		22
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1925	1292			3217
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	465	77			542
Penalty Notice for Disorder				24	24
Total	7454	2622	22	24	10122

² Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

Table 3.1 Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	159	1	160
	Division total	159	1	160
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	69		69
	Limavady Court Office	5		5
	Magherafelt Court Office	10		10
	Division total	84		84
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	10		10
	Coleraine Court Office	21	2	23
	Ballymena Court Office	8		8
	Division total	39	2	41
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	15		15
	Strabane Court Office	6		6
	Enniskillen Court Office	17	1	18
	Dungannon Court Office	11		11
	Division total	49	1	50
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	7		7
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	9		9
	Newry Court Office	27		27
	Division total	43		43
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	42		42
	Downpatrick Court Office	18		18
	Division total	60		60
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	23		23
	Lisburn Court Office	14		14
	Division total	37		37

Table 3.1a Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Northern Ireland	471	4	475

Table 3.2 Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	140	1	141
	Division total	140	1	141
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	68		68
	Limavady Court Office	8		8
	Magherafelt Court Office	13		13
	Division total	89		89
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	18		18
	Coleraine Court Office	16	2	18
	Ballymena Court Office	7		7
	Division total	41	2	43
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	17		17
	Strabane Court Office	1		1
	Enniskillen Court Office	22		22
	Dungannon Court Office	10		10
	Division total	50		50
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	11		11
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	9		9
	Newry Court Office	31		31
	Division total	51		51
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	43		43
	Downpatrick Court Office	11		11
	Division total	54		54
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	22		22
	Lisburn Court Office	15		15
	Division total	37		37

Table 3.2a Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Northern Ireland	462	3	465

Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by division & venue³

		Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2.44	7.73	3.89	11.62
	Total	2.44	7.73	3.89	11.62
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	3.05	4.27	6.01	10.28
	Limavady Court Office	4.02	.13	5.75	5.88
	Magherafelt Court Office	1.26	15.49	3.07	18.56
	Total	2.92	5.27	5.61	10.88
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	3.73	10.24	2.85	13.09
	Coleraine Court Office	3.04	8.47	2.00	10.47
	Ballymena Court Office	5.71	4.57	1.00	5.57
	Total	3.59	8.88	2.28	11.16
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	4.30	5.58	2.43	8.01
	Strabane Court Office	4.29	.00	9.00	9.00
	Enniskillen Court Office	3.76	6.66	4.50	11.16
	Dungannon Court Office	3.96	7.69	2.80	10.49
	Total	3.98	6.41	3.60	10.01
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	3.33	3.86	3.67	7.52
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2.34	7.26	6.51	13.77
	Newry Court Office	1.63	4.50	2.62	7.12
	Total	2.12	4.85	3.54	8.39
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	3.67	5.59	5.98	11.58
	Downpatrick Court Office	4.27	3.11	1.11	4.22
	Total	3.80	5.04	4.89	9.92
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	3.18	7.46	5.50	12.96
	Lisburn Court Office	3.59	10.55	5.92	16.47
	Total	3.36	8.85	5.69	14.54

Table 3.3a Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland³

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	3.04	6.70	4.31	11.01

³ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally, deferred sentences and youth monitored cases are excluded.

Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area⁴

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	68		68
All Sexual Offences	6		6
All Burglary Offences	8		8
All Robbery Offences	2		2
All Theft Offences	46		46
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	2		2
All Criminal Damage Offences	42		42
All Offences Against the State	32		32
All Other Offences	5		5
All Drug Offences	10		10
All Motoring Offences	35		35
All Non-Police Offences		2	2
All Breach	2	1	3
Combination of charges	204		204
Total	462	3	465

⁴ Please note that as of 07/01/2011 the charge of 'disorderly behaviour' was re-categorised from 'other offences' into 'offences against the state'.

Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	6		6
Plea of guilty on all charges	217	2	219
All charges withdrawn	113		113
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	108		108
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	18	1	19
Total	462	3	465

Table 4.1 Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court by division & venue

		Current Business Area		Total
		Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Belfast	Laganside Courts	19	457	476
	Division total	19	457	476
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	6	99	105
	Magherafelt Court Office		5	5
	Division total	6	104	110
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	2	28	30
	Coleraine Court Office	2	50	52
	Ballymena Court Office	2	125	127
	Division total	6	203	209
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	3	36	39
	Strabane Court Office	2	14	16
	Enniskillen Court Office	3	26	29
	Dungannon Court Office	2	21	23
	Division total	10	97	107
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4	35	39
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3	18	21
	Newry Court Office	11	75	86
	Division total	18	128	146
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	6	120	126
	Downpatrick Court Office	6	41	47
	Division total	12	161	173
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	3	58	61
	Lisburn Court Office	2	64	66
	Division total	5	122	127

Table 4.1a Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Northern Ireland	76	1272	1348

Table 4.2 Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court by division & venue

		Current Business Area		Total
		Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Belfast	Laganside Courts	12	392	404
	Division total	12	392	404
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	9	102	111
	Magherafelt Court Office	1	3	4
	Division total	10	105	115
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	1	27	28
	Coleraine Court Office	1	46	47
	Ballymena Court Office	7	102	109
	Division total	9	175	184
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	1	29	30
	Strabane Court Office	1	15	16
	Enniskillen Court Office	4	25	29
	Dungannon Court Office	1	16	17
	Division total	7	85	92
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	2	30	32
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	18	19
	Newry Court Office	4	63	67
	Division total	7	111	118
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	7	96	103
	Downpatrick Court Office	1	28	29
	Division total	8	124	132
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	2	58	60
	Lisburn Court Office	5	57	62
	Division total	7	115	122

Table 4.2a Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Northern Ireland	60	1107	1167

Table 4.3 Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts by division & venue

		Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	1.57	6.93	8.50
	Total	1.57	6.93	8.50
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	2.12	5.66	7.78
	Magherafelt Court Office	1.29	7.75	9.04
	Total	2.09	5.73	7.82
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	1.15	3.04	4.19
	Coleraine Court Office	1.47	5.12	6.59
	Ballymena Court Office	1.09	6.25	7.34
	Total	1.19	5.47	6.67
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	1.42	1.50	2.93
	Strabane Court Office	1.90	2.81	4.71
	Enniskillen Court Office	1.70	4.88	6.58
	Dungannon Court Office	1.44	.48	1.92
	Total	1.60	2.61	4.20
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	1.62	4.57	6.19
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.53	2.58	4.11
	Newry Court Office	1.76	2.46	4.15
	Total	1.68	3.05	4.70
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	1.60	5.09	6.69
	Downpatrick Court Office	1.89	7.62	9.51
	Total	1.67	5.64	7.31
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	1.14	5.98	7.12
	Lisburn Court Office	.86	7.05	21.94
	Total	1.00	6.52	14.65

Table 4.3a Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland

	Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	1.53	5.66	7.93

Table 4.4 Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland

	New Order					Total
	Granted	Dismissed or refused	Withdrawn	Vary discharge	Other	
Non molestation	672	167	137	98	9	1083
Occupation	3	3	8	1		15
Vary discharge non-mol occupation			3	4		7
Other Family Homes & domestic violence	1			1		2
Total	676	170	148	104	9	1107

APPENDIX 2 - EXPLANATORY NOTES

Acquittal

A judgement or verdict that a person is not guilty of the crime with which they have been charged.

Additional sitting

These are additional court sittings, not included within the regular court calendar, but planned in advance of the date of the sitting.

Adult Magistrates' Business

Magistrates' court criminal business in which the defendant is aged 18 years or over on the date on which they committed the offence.

Applications

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

Charge sheet

A charge sheet is a method by which PSNI can put charge(s) to a defendant and on which they will either release the defendant on police bail to appear at court within 28 days of the charging or they can detain the defendant in custody to produce them before a court at the earliest opportunity.

Civil and Family application

These are applications in relation to Children Order, domestic and family homes and domestic violence proceedings.

Committed to Crown Court

The procedure by which a defendant is returned for trial to the Crown Court by the Magistrates' court, if the Magistrates' court is satisfied that there is a case to answer.

Departmental prosecution

Departmental prosecutions are for criminal offences which are investigated by a department or other non-police body and prosecuted by either the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) or a separate prosecutorial body (e.g. motor tax evasion which is prosecuted by the Department of the Environment).

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.

Domestic proceeding (including FHDV orders, Non molestation, Occupation, Vary discharge)

These are orders made in respect of applications made under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. These orders include non-molestation and/or occupation orders. A non-molestation order is made for the protection of the applicant and may prohibit the respondent from carrying out particular actions or behaviours and may include an exclusion zone. Occupation orders provide for the rights of the application to peacefully occupy a particular property without interference from the respondent. These orders may be varied to add or remove particular requirements and the order can also be discharged by the court to bring the terms of the order to an end.

Family Magistrates' Business

Family business in the Magistrate's Court (the Family Proceedings Court) covers applications brought in respect of the care and welfare of children, domestic proceedings and applications for non-molestation and/or occupation orders.

Finding

This is the date on which a defendant is either found guilty or not guilty of having committed the offence alleged in either the summons or charge sheet.

First hearing

This is the date on which a case first appears in court.

Fixed penalty Default

This is a fixed penalty which has been issued for a minor motoring offence and which has not been paid by the payment due date and has therefore gone into default. At this stage a summons is issued to bring the matter before the court to have a Judge set the default terms for non-payment.

Hybrid charge

This is also referred to as a 'triable-either-way' offence. A criminal offence that may be prosecuted either summarily (in the Magistrates' court) or on indictment (in the Crown Court). In the majority of cases, the prosecution decides how the offence is tried depending on the seriousness of the offence.

Indictable charge

A serious criminal offence where the defendant is usually tried in the Crown Court.

Indictable triable summarily charge

A serious criminal offence where the defendant can be tried in the Crown Court but may in some instances be tried in a Magistrates' court.

Penalty Notice for Disorder

These are diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences, such as non-motoring offences, as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court.

Penalty Notice for Disorder Default

This is a penalty notice for disorder which has been issued for a defined offence and which has not been paid by the payment due date and has therefore gone into default. At this stage a summons is issued to bring the matter before the court to have a Judge set the default terms for non-payment.

PSNI/PPS prosecution

These are prosecutions for criminal offences which are investigated by Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and prosecuted by Public Prosecution Service (PPS).

Received

The date a served summons or a charge sheet is received by the Magistrates' Court office.

Scheduled sitting

This is a regular court sitting that is included within the court calendar.

Sitting

This is a period of work by a judge in a single courtroom on a single day. Several types of business may be heard at one sitting. Business heard in different courtrooms, whether at the same venue or elsewhere, is counted as separate sittings.

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, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 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.

Special sitting

These are additional unplanned court sittings, not included within the regular court calendar, that are required to hear unforeseen business, such a dealing with a defendant on a weekend or public holiday.

Summary charge

This is an offence which is triable in a Magistrates' court.

Summons

This is the method by which a complaint is made to require a defendant to appear before a court in respect of particular charge(s). The details of the charge(s) will be contained on the summons as well as the first date and place at which the defendant is to attend court.

Time intervals

This is the time taken (in weeks) between the case being received by the court and the date it is finally resolved.

Youth Magistrates' Business

Magistrates' court criminal business in which the defendant is aged between 10 and 18 years on the date on which they committed the offence.

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