

Judicial Statistics



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Glossary of terms

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is an agency within the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland.

The NICTS carries out the court administrative functions previously undertaken by the Northern Ireland Court Service. The Court Service became part of the Department of Justice upon the devolution of policing and justice and its functions transferred to the Department (by virtue of the Northern Ireland Court Service (Abolition and Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2010 made under section 78 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002).

The principal functions of the NICTS are:

- Providing administrative support for Northern Ireland's courts and tribunals.
- Enforcing civil court judgments through the Enforcement of Judgments Office.
- Providing support for the judiciary.
- Providing advice to the Minister for Justice on matters relating to the operation of the courts and tribunals and the Enforcement of Judgments Office.
- Providing, managing and maintaining court and tribunal buildings.
- Acting as the Central Authority under certain international Conventions.

This publication provides statistical information in relation to the criminal, civil and family business conducted by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) and the work of some associated offices.

The criminal, civil and family justice systems are impartial and the numbers that are processed through the courts and the corresponding time for processing this information are related to a number of factors. For instance, in relation to criminal cases this may include the seriousness of the offence, the availability of the witnesses and the complexity of individual cases.

For civil cases, this might include external factors such as the state of the economy in relation to mortgage cases received and disposed. The complexity of individual cases and the nature of individual claims may also be factors here.

The Court Structure in Northern Ireland

The Supreme Court

Final Court of Appeal on points of law for the United Kingdom in civil cases.
Final Court of Appeal on points of law for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in criminal cases.

The Court of Appeal

Deals with appeals in civil cases from the High Court and with appeals in criminal cases from the Crown Court. Hears appeals on points of law from the county courts and the magistrates' courts.

The High Court

Hears complex or important civil cases in three divisions and also appeals from county courts.

Queen's Bench
Division

Chancery
Division

Family
Division

County Courts

(including family care centres)
(7 Divisions)

Hear a wide range of civil actions and also appeals from magistrates' courts.

Small Claims Courts

Hear consumer claims and minor civil cases.

Coroners' Courts

Investigate the circumstances of sudden, violent or unnatural deaths.

The Crown Court

Hears all serious criminal cases.

Magistrates' Courts

(including youth courts and family proceedings courts) (21 petty sessions districts)

Conduct preliminary hearings in more serious criminal cases.

Hear and determine less serious criminal cases, cases involving youths and some civil and domestic cases, including family proceedings.

The Enforcement of Judgments Office

Enforces money and other judgments.

Social Security Commissioners and Child Support Commissioners

Hear appeals from unified Appeal Tribunals in matters arising from social security, child support, tax credits etc.

Users

Who will be interested in this publication?

The information presented in this publication will be of interest to a wide variety of people. For example the statistics within and those derived from this bulletin are currently used by NICTS policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for Justice to discharge his duties; by the NI Assembly and Justice committee; by students conducting research into Justice issues; and by the media.

Users of Judicial Statistics

This publication is disseminated directly to approximately 30 users. In addition, it is also published on the NICTS' website and the Department's website and the UK Government Statistics Release Calendar (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements>). Users include policy colleagues in NICTS, academics, researchers, members of the public, the NI Assembly, other government departments and other interested parties and individuals.

The publication and further analysis of the data provide an evidence base that is used in a number of NICTS policies, strategies and reviews. Some of the most recent examples are:

- Equality Screening Form - Consultation on proposals to close Hearing Centres at Bangor, Larne, Limavady, Magherafelt and Strabane Courthouses
http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Public_Consultation/Pages/default.aspx
- Increasing the Jurisdictional Limits of the County Courts in Northern Ireland
http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Public_Consultation/Pages/default.aspx
- Consultation on proposals to close Hearing Centres
http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Public_Consultation/Pages/default.aspx
- Consultation on proposals for the rationalisation of the court estate
http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Public_Consultation/Pages/default.aspx
- Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2014-2015
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Accounts/Pages/default.aspx>

In addition, NICTS data are used within other NI departments and their agencies. Some of the most recent examples are: -

- Department of Justice Digest of information on the NI Criminal Justice system
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/compendia-publications>
- Department for Social Development – Northern Ireland Housing Statistics
https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/search?query=NI+Housing+Statistics&edit-submit-button=Go&as_sfid=AAAAAAUwCINmHdOyfM4lh72uXxWI7xtJoPcHqytHzuphKXBRqE9WbqJR2Xcixxv3-Aj_P0Qe7joK0n1blruTJjtCVzzEAo_zlGeegEK3l4_iScO6Hw%3D%3D&as_fid=NSrvzmoG8NrbSsrFl8oT

Around 250 statistical enquiries per year are received by the NICTS from various sources. These include requests for further breakdowns by specific offence codes, specific legislation and court outcomes. In addition, approximately 100 Assembly Questions (either written or oral) and Freedom of Information requests relating to statistical data are received by the NICTS each year.

Levels of Reporting

Due to the extensive volume of information contained within this publication it has not been possible to provide comparisons across all case types, County Court Divisions and processing offices. At the beginning of each chapter a summary section detailing five year trend data at the Northern Ireland level has been included, along with key facts. Within the chapters a further breakdown by County Court Division (for the Crown and County Court Chapters) and processing office for the (Magistrates and Children Order Chapters) has been provided.

The principle users of this publication are internal business managers and court administrators. Both these users are primarily interested in the regional breakdowns by processing office and County Court Division of court business for the most recent calendar year. This information is used to assess volumes of court business at a regional level to assist in the decisions around staffing levels, prepare business cases for additional sitting days and inform the setting of operational targets.

Each chapter details the figures for 2015 and direct comparisons to 2014 have been outlined within the text. Detailed figures for 2014 can be accessed by following the link to the Judicial Statistics 2014 publication within the summary section of each chapter or by accessing the link below.

Judicial Statistics 2014:

<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

More information in relation to technical terms throughout the publication can be found within the Glossary section.

Databases

This section will cover how the databases are constructed from the data input stage through to the full validated datasets which are used to produce the figures contained within this publication. This section is split into the following subsections:

1. Data sources
2. Data downloads
3. Data validation
4. Quality assurance
5. Data extract
6. Accessibility
7. Comparability
8. Revisions
9. Other useful information

1. Data sources

This publication uses data which is primarily based on data input onto the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). This system was implemented across the NICTS over a two year period from 2005 to 2007.

In 2005, ICOS was introduced in the High Court and county court. As regular downloads of information were available from the new system, more detailed information across all court tiers was included in Judicial Statistics. The High Court and county court sections have been completed based on ICOS since 2005 and caution should be taken when comparing Judicial Statistics from publications prior to this.

During 2006, ICOS was introduced in the Crown Court and criminal magistrates' court. Caution should be taken when comparing figures prior to this.

During 2007, the civil and family module of ICOS was completed. This affected the information in the civil and family magistrates' court section and also in the Children Order section from publications prior to this.

For further advice on the differences between 2015 figures and previous years, please contact the statistics and research team.

The ICOS system is a live operating system used in each court tier to process every part of the 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.

Other data are also used to compile the information presented in Section G: Miscellaneous in this publication. The Enforcement of Judgments Office use a specially designed system to capture all applications to enforce called the Judgment Enforcement Management System (JEMS). The information in this publication has been extracted from this system. Manual spreadsheets on Excel are used to record information that relate to the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland and the Social Security and Child Support Commissioners. These systems are suitable to extract the data for this publication. Like ICOS, the information is recorded on these databases on a daily basis. The

information is validated internally by staff in these offices who check that the system and databases hold the correct information. The statistics and research team within the NICTS check the data that are provided from these systems to ensure that they are robust. However, the statistics and research team do recognise that as the information is input manually there is the potential for errors to occur.

2. Data downloads

The statistics and research team receive a download of information on a monthly basis from the ICOS system. The information is downloaded using a package called Oracle Discoverer. This package 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 by the statistics and research team on a monthly basis, using a weekly rotation based on each court tier, as shown below.

Week	Files Downloaded
1	Magistrates' court – civil and family business areas
2	Crown Court and Magistrates' court – criminal business areas
3	High Court – including Queens Bench, Bails, Chancery, Judicial Reviews, Matrimonial and Wardship & Adoption business areas. County Court – all business areas.
4	Magistrates' court – children order business area. Sittings – all court sittings information

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 branch.

The statistics and research team import the data into a program called SPSS (Statistics Package for Social Sciences). SPSS is then used to perform extensive data validations to identify potential errors in the data and ensure the data are reliable and robust.

3. Data validation

The statistics and research team have invested a lot of time and effort into writing an extensive computer program within SPSS to validate the information downloaded from ICOS. The program includes over 100 checks against each business area.

- (i) checking consistency over time and between variables;
- (ii) reliability of data using logic checks;
- (iii) checking that variables fall within accepted ranges; and
- (iv) checking with the ICOS Support Team in the event of any major discrepancies that have occurred since the last download.

The validation program runs in unison with the download program, for example in week 1 the magistrates' civil and family information is downloaded and the corresponding validation checks

are run on the newly downloaded information. This pattern follows for all the court tiers and business areas.

The validation program is designed to produce user friendly tables highlighting the potential problems with data in the title of the table, and the case numbers of the records affected. A validation report is compiled for each court venue and circulated to the Case Progression Officer for amendment. 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 that all validations on ICOS and manual statistical 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;
- Promoting awareness of the impact error can have, its wide ranging consequences and 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 by the statistics and research team. After the files have been refreshed each weekend all the data is then downloaded again (in accordance with the schedule) and this new download will reflect the 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 the ICOS system.

The statistics and research team then ensure that all validations in relation to the reporting period are amended prior to publication. Once these amendments have been checked, computer syntax is then used to produce the tables in this publication.

4. Quality assurance

Once computed, the figures in the report are checked carefully prior to publication. The data are broken down by court location as this is the established way of producing and presenting these data. The table below indicates the quality of the data prior to the full years' validation schedule being completed, and then again after the final year figures have been produced. This has been based on the numbers of defendants / cases disposed during the period. As shown, the percentage changes in the figures remain consistently low across all major business areas, typically less than 1%.

Court Tier	Business Area	Disposals (provisional data as published in quarterly bulletins)	Disposals (final year data)	% change
High Court	Chancery	1524	1510	-0.9%
	Bankruptcy	1843	1843	-
	Companies	577	568	-1.6%
	Queen's Bench Writs	3908	3808	-2.6%
	Judicial Reviews	356	352	-1.1%
	Probate Grants	6551	6550	-0.0%
	Divorces	813	812	-0.1%
	Wardship & Adoption	76	75	-1.3%
	Bails	1356	1347	-0.7%
Crown Court	Cases Disposed	1080	1080	-
	Defendants Disposed	1398	1394	-0.3%
County	Appeals	3532	3532	-
	Civil Bills	9396	9193	-2.2%
	Ejectment	841	834	-0.8%
	Small Claims	9893	9751	-1.4%
	Divorces – Decrees Granted	1612	1613	+0.1%
Magistrates	Adult Defendants Disposed	41869	41868	-0.0%
	Youth Defendants Disposed	1870	1874	+0.2%
	Civil / Family Applications Disposed	4554	4478	-1.7%
Children Order	Applications Disposed	5115	5140	+0.5%

5. Data extract

The statistics in this report are taken from the latest available data that are held on the NICTS systems as of 3 June 2015. The NICTS statistics and research team check all data that are to be published carefully in order to provide a high level of quality assurance in relation to the data. However, NICTS does acknowledge that some errors may occur due to the inputting of incorrect data on to the ICOS. Most of these errors are detected and corrected by the validations that are computed by the statistics and research team before publication. Nonetheless, there is scope for error to occur. There is also scope for error in relation to the report itself. The information here is manually typed and there is the possibility of transcription errors here.

6. Accessibility

In order that the information provided in this publication is accessible to all groups of people, it is available on the NICTS website in a number of formats – pdf, Excel and html. This publication also complies with the NICTS's Internet Accessibility policy. Requests for the information in different formats can be made by contacting the communicationsgroup@courtsni.gov.uk. A charge may apply for formats not routinely used and individuals will be made aware of any charges and asked to confirm their willingness to pay prior commencement of the work.

7. Comparability

The court structure of Northern Ireland does not equate to the court structures of England and Wales, Scotland or the Republic of Ireland, and therefore no comparisons have been made between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK and Ireland.

Direct comparisons can be made for data across all court tiers over a nine year period, as the ICOS roll out was complete by 2007, except for tables F4, F5 and F6 within the Children Order section.

The recording of orders made within the Children Order courts have been reported at the participant level since 2007, and the introduction of ICOS. Children Order data in relation to orders made, is recorded on ICOS at the **application level**. The data is then extracted based on the **participants** selected on ICOS which indicate all relevant parties to whom the order applies.

Following an operational review of recording practices surrounding the selection of participants to whom orders apply in November 2013, a training program was implemented by operational colleagues. This training was delivered in early 2014 to ensure all relevant participants were being consistently applied on ICOS. This has had a knock-on effect on the numbers of own motion, interim and final orders being reported within the Children Order courts, with figures showing large increases since 2014.

Following a National Statistics consultation with users (for more information click on the following link: <http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

a change in the reporting of the orders being made within the Children Order courts from the participant level to the application level from 2016 onwards has been introduced, (and final year figures for 2015 have prepared using this new methodology) to overcome issues surrounding the inconsistent recording of participants to whom the orders apply and provide more user friendly data in terms of relating the orders made to the applications being received and disposed. Application level data counts distinct orders made during the court process. This new methodology has been introduced to cover own motion, interim and final orders and will affect the numbers reported in Tables F4, F5 and F6 in this publication.

The numbers of orders made will not be comparable with those published in Judicial Statistics in previous years. To assist with comparisons over time, a back series of orders data from April 2007 to the end of 2015 are available on the Court and Tribunals website at the following link:

<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Before September 2009 all the courthouses opened from 9am to 5pm from Monday to Friday each week (excluding public holidays). In September 2009 5 of the 23 courthouses became "Hearing Centres" because they were not fully utilised when the courts weren't sitting and NICTS needed to make better use of their courthouses and staff.

These courthouses were Bangor, Larne, Limavady, Magherafelt and Strabane. They were only open on the day that court hearings take place, and the rest of the time they remain closed.

When the Hearing Centres were opened they offered all of the usual services. However, when the Hearing Centres closed people had to access these services:-

- At other courthouses

- On the telephone
- Over the internet

The NICTS financial situation is different from what it was in 2009. They are now being asked to operate within tighter financial limits but are still required to provide the same range and standard of services.

In March 2013 two of these hearing centres were closed permanently – Larne and Bangor and the court business for these two venues was moved to Ballymena and Newtownards respectively. Caution should therefore be taken when comparing figures for 2015 with preceding years for Larne and Bangor court houses. For more information on the consultation exercise under taken, please use the link below:

Consultation on proposals to close Hearing Centres

http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Public_Consultation/Pages/default.aspx

8. Revisions

Any revisions to data will be applied in light of the NICTS Statistical Notice ‘Policy Statement on Revisions’. Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice. For further information, please see the following web link:

https://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Policy_and_Policy_Development/Documents/Policy%20Statement%20on%20Revisions/p_pd_stats_PolicyStatementRevisions.pdf

9. Other Useful Information

The court structure of Northern Ireland does not equate to the court structures of England and Wales, Scotland or the Republic of Ireland.

Further information on judicial and court statistics for England and Wales can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/court-statistics-quarterly>

Further information on crime and justice statistics in Scotland can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice>

Information on court statistics from the Republic of Ireland can be found at:

<http://www.courts.ie/courts.ie/library3.nsf/PageCurrentWebLookUpTopNav/STATISTICS?opendocument>

The following web links contain details of information that relates to other criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland:

Department of Justice (Northern Ireland)

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/doj-statistics-and-research>

Police Service of Northern Ireland

<https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/>

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland

<http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/statistics--research-5021.html>

Youth Justice Agency

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/youth-justice>

Northern Ireland Prison Service

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/doj-statistics-and-research>

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

<http://www.pbni.org.uk/about-us/statistics-research/>

Key Highlights

High Court

- Between 2011 and 2015 the number of chancery cases received decreased by 61%, peaking in 2012 with 4,094 cases received. There was a decrease of 51% in the number of chancery cases received between 2014 and 2015. These figures reflect a decrease of 58% in applications received in relation to mortgages between 2014 and 2015. (Mortgage applications made up 80% of cases received into the Chancery division in 2015). The Council of Mortgage Lenders have also reported that the mortgage annual arrears rate is at its lowest level for almost a decade.
- Queen's Bench writs received have decreased each year between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 54%. The number of writs received decreased by 49% between 2012 and 2015 and this decrease may be partly due to the increase in the financial limit within the County Court during 2013. In 2013 approximately 1,800 ordinary civil bills were received into the County Court for an amount over £15,000 with an equivalent figure of 2,976 in 2014 and 2,689 in 2015, and these cases would previously have been received as Queen's Bench Writs. There was a 35% decrease in the number of Queen's Bench writs disposed of between 2011 and 2015. However, caution should be taken when comparing 2015 figures with other years as a manual exercise was carried out to deal with a number of old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court.

Crown Court

- Figure C.1 outlines the number of Crown Court defendants committed and disposed of during the last 5 years. The trend in the number of defendants committed between 2011 and 2013 has shown a steady increase, with an increase of 13%. However the trend reversed in 2014 and 2015 with a 22% decrease. The fall in defendants committed over the last two years indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of defendants committing more serious offences, which as a result must be tried in the Crown Court. As indicated in table E.3, indictable charges in the Magistrates' Court have decreased by 29% between 2013 and 2015 (from 4,003 to 2,860).
- There was an increase of 33% in the number of defendants disposed of between 2011 and 2013, before decreasing by 46% between 2013 and 2015. In late 2012 an extra County Court Judge was introduced into Belfast Crown Court division to tackle outstanding legacy cases. As a result the numbers of defendants being disposed has overtaken the numbers being received in 2013 and 2014. However, in 2015 this trend reversed, with a 36% drop in disposals and 24% more defendants received than disposed. The introduction of new rules in May 2015 in relation to legal aid remuneration resulted in a number of solicitors and counsel withdrawing their representation from a range of court cases. This has affected defendants' access to legal aid representation and has had an impact on disposals and delay within the Crown Court process during the period.

County Court

- Ordinary civil bill cases received fluctuated between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 14%. Caution must be taken when interpreting this data as the financial limit in the County Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on 25 February 2013. As a result, claims for amounts over £15,000 and up to £30,000 are now received into the County Court as a civil bill, were they would previously have been entered into the High Court as a Queen's Bench Writ. These claims amounted to approximately 2,976 cases in 2014 and approximately 2,689 cases in 2015. Civil bills disposed decreased by 22% between 2011 and 2013 and then increased by 9% between 2013 and 2015. There was an overall decrease of 14% between 2011 and 2015.

- Ejectment cases received and disposed fluctuated over the last 5 years. However in 2012 both increased sharply, with increases of 49% and 52% respectively, with further increases of 34% and 31% between 2012 and 2013. (The increases in 2012 were partly due to a manual exercise completed to dispose of old legacy cases within the system). Between 2013 and 2015 both the receipts and disposals declined with decreases of 39% and 40% respectively. The sharp increases and declines in ejectment cases disposed are likely to be due to the adverse economic conditions experienced during the period. Ejectment cases include landlord and tenant disputes in relation to possession (eviction) and rent arrears, whereas the Chancery division of the High Court deals with possession (eviction) in mortgage actions. A similar trend in evictions completed by the EJO (summary table 14) was also experienced over the same period.

Magistrates' Court

- Adult and Youth criminal defendants received have decreased by 20% and 36% respectively between 2011 and 2015 with an increase of 2% and a decrease of 13% being observed respectively between 2014 and 2015. The decreases over the last three years are largely a result of the introduction of Penalty Notices of Disorder which were introduced on 6th June 2012. These are new diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court. The number of defendants received is also affected by crime rates, police arrests and the decision by the PPS to prosecute.
- Average waiting times between a summons/charge and disposal in both the Adult and Youth courts decreased by 16% and 12% respectively between 2011 and 2015. However between 2014 and 2015 average waiting times increased by 3% and 10% respectively.

The Children Order

- Applications lodged increased between 2011 and 2012 by 7%, before decreasing year on year between 2012 and 2015. Applications lodged decreased by 8% overall between 2011 and 2015.
- Applications disposed fluctuated between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 4%.
- The number of children involved also fluctuated between 2011 and 2015. There was an overall increase of 13% between 2011 and 2015, however approximately 90% (815 out of 909) of this increase was due to a change in measurement of 'children involved' introduced in 2012 to include those children entered as 'respondent child' on the ICOS system.
- **A change in the counting methodology for orders made was introduced in 2016, and therefore a comparison of figures in tables F.4, F.5 and F.6 with previous Judicial Statistics publications should not be made. A back series of data based on the new counting methodology is available via the following link:**
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>
For more information please see details on page 18 or alternatively contact the statistician responsible for this publication.

Part A: Court Of Appeal

The Court of Appeal normally sits at the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. The judges of the Court of Appeal are the Lord Chief Justice (who is the President) and three Lord Justices of Appeal. The Court of Appeal hears appeals in criminal matters from the Crown Court and in civil matters from the High Court. It also hears appeals on points of law from the County Courts, Magistrates' Courts and certain Tribunals. A Court of Appeal case will usually be heard by three judges but can be heard by two. Incidental matters may be heard by one Court of Appeal judge.

Key Facts

- Criminal Appeals received have fluctuated between 2011 and 2015, peaking at 117 in 2013. Between 2012 and 2013 there was a 77% increase in Criminal Appeal receipts, followed by a decrease of 15% in 2014 and a further decrease of 6% between 2014 and 2015.
- Criminal Appeals disposed increased by 49% between 2011 and 2012 and then remained relatively stable between 2012 and 2014 before increasing by 14% between 2014 and 2015.
- Civil Appeals received have fluctuated over the period with an overall increase of 8% between 2011 and 2015. Civil Appeals disposed fluctuated between 2011 and 2014, and decreased by 28% between 2014 and 2015.
- Civil Appeal Court sitting days have remained stable over the period, apart from a peak in 2014 with 111 sitting days. Between 2014 and 2015 the number of civil appeals sitting days decreased by 8%, from 111 to 102 days. Criminal Appeal Court sitting days have fluctuated during the period, with an overall increase of 49%. The highest number of Criminal Appeal Court sitting days occurred in 2015, which was also when the highest number of Criminal Appeals were disposed over the period.

Summary Table 1: Court of Appeal 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Criminal Appeals Received	74	66	117	99	93
Criminal Appeals Disposed	63	94	89	96	109
Civil Appeals Received	92	115	92	87	99
Civil Appeals Disposed	91	96	81	97	70
Criminal Appeal Court Sitting Days	61	86	77	85	91
Civil Appeal Court Sitting Days	102	102	104	111	102

Section 1: Criminal appeals

The number of criminal appeals lodged decreased from 99 in 2014 to 93 in 2015 (Table A.1).

Table A.1: Criminal appeals lodged and disposed of in 2015

	Lodged	Disposed of
	93	109

In 2015, there were 55 appeals lodged against sentence only, 19 were against conviction, 18 were against both conviction and sentence and 1 was an appeal pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) order 2004. This compares with 74 appeals lodged against sentence only, 14 against conviction, 10 against both conviction and sentence and 1 appeal pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) order 2004 in 2014. Of the 93 appeals lodged during 2015, 4 resulted from trials dealing with scheduled offences (Table A.2)

Table A.2: Types of criminal appeals lodged in 2015

	Appeal pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004	Appeal against			Total
		Sentence	Conviction	Conviction and sentence	
Scheduled	1	3	-	-	4
Non-Scheduled	-	52	19	18	89
Total	1	55	19	18	93

There were 39 successful appeals (where either the conviction was quashed or the sentence was varied) in 2015 with 2 appeals refused, and 23 appeals abandoned or withdrawn (Table A.3). In comparison, there were 37 successful appeals in 2014, with 2 appeals refused and 17 appeals abandoned or withdrawn.

Table A.3: Results of criminal appeals by type in 2015

	Appeal pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004	Conviction only or conviction & sentence		Sentence only		Total
		Scheduled	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Non-Scheduled	
Conviction Quashed	-	-	10	-	-	10
Appeal Dismissed – Sentence Affirmed	1	1	9	2	32	45
Sentence Varied	-	-	4	2	23	29
Withdrawn/Abandoned	-	-	5	2	16	23
Refused	-	-	1	-	1	2
Total	1	1	29	6	72	109

Section 2: Civil appeals

There were 99 civil appeals received in 2015, 12 more than the 2014 total of 87. As in previous years, the main source of civil appeals was the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court with 54 cases received. A total of 70 appeals were disposed of during the year (Table A.4) which compares with the 97 appeals disposed of in 2014.

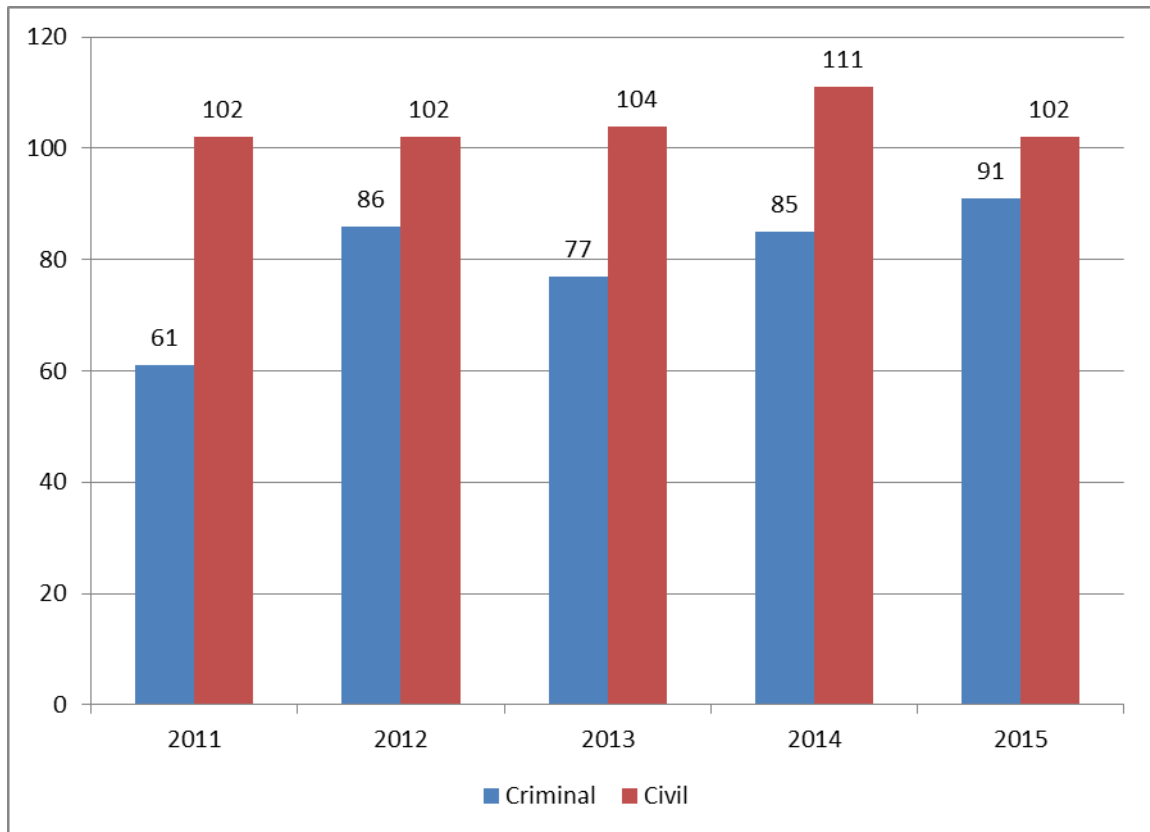
Table A.4: Appeals received and disposed of by origin and type in 2015

	Received	Disposed
Chancery Division: Final	12	10
Chancery Division: Interlocutory	3	1
Family Division: Final	5	7
Family Division: Interlocutory	3	-
Queen's Bench Division:		
Judicial Review: Final	17	13
Judicial Review: Interlocutory	5	4
Commercial: Final	3	3
Commercial: Interlocutory	1	1
Other: Final	25	15
Other: Damages	-	-
Other: Interlocutory	3	3
Magistrates' court (Section 44 of Judicature Act)	-	-
Court of Appeal Cross Appeal	-	-
Case Stated		
Court of Appeal (Appeal or Case Stated)	11	10
Requisition to Judge to State a Case	1	-
By Outside Body	-	-
By Lands Tribunal	-	-
By High Court Judge	-	-
By County Court Judge	3	1
By District Judge	4	2
By District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	3	-
Determination of pensions: Pension appeal	-	-
Immigration Tribunal	-	-
Motions on Notice	-	-
Proceeds of crime	-	-
Master (EJO)	-	-
Other	-	-
Total	99	70

Section 3: Court sitting times

The number of court sitting days spent on criminal appeals (by majority type of work) increased from 85 days in 2014 to 91 days in 2015. A total of 198 hours were spent in court hearing criminal appeals in 2015 compared with 139 court hours in 2014. There were 102 court sitting days (by majority type of work) spent on civil appeals during 2015, compared with 111 in 2014. A total of 159 hours were spent in court hearing civil appeals in 2015 compared with 186 court hours during 2014 (Figure A.1 & Table B.42).

Figure A.1: Number of court sitting days (majority days) in the Court of Appeal from 2011 to 2015



Part B: The High Court

The High Court sits at the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. It consists of the Lord Chief Justice (who is the President of the High Court), and three Lords Justices of Appeal along with ten High Court Judges. The High Court hears high value and complex civil cases and deals with civil cases, hears appeals in criminal cases, and also has the power to review the actions of individuals or organisations to make sure they have acted legally and justly. The High Court comprises three Divisions: the Chancery Division, Queen's Bench Division and Family Division.

This section is separated into 4 Sections: Section 1: Chancery Division

- 1.1 Key Facts
- 1.2 Chancery Division - 2015 Data

Section 2: The Queen's Bench Division

- 2.1 Key Facts
- 2.2 Queens' Bench Division - 2015 Data

Section 3: Family Division

- 3.1 Key Facts
- 3.2 Family Division - 2015 Data

Section 4: Sitting Days

- 4.1 Key Facts
- 4.2 Sitting Days - 2015 Data

Section 1: The Chancery Division

The Chancery Division deals with four main areas of business: Chancery, Bankruptcy, Companies and Probate.

Chancery Office

The main area of business in the Chancery office relates to disputes involving land and property. These include disputes between vendors, purchasers, landlords and tenants; mortgage repossession actions; trespass; right of way; construction of a lease; and squatters. Most actions begin with the issue of a claim or originating proceedings by the claimant against the defendant. The Chancery section also deals with disputes involving copyright; partnerships; patents; execution of trusts; charities; inheritance; and the administration of estates.

People can get into housing debt for a variety of reasons:

- Change in circumstances like job loss, reduction in working hours, sickness or relationship breakdown
- Accessing high cost credit / mortgages from non-traditional lenders and securing it on their homes
- Over borrowing during the property boom

The NICTS produced guidelines for lenders known as Pre-Action Protocols for Mortgage Possession Proceedings. They have been in operation since October 2009 and were revised in August 2011. The Protocols ensure that possession action against homeowners is taken only as a last possible resort (<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Pages/InformationOnRepossession.aspx>).

Bankruptcy Office

The Bankruptcy Office deals with all matters relating to insolvency. These include applications to set aside statutory demands; petitions (by creditors and debtors) and voluntary arrangements.

If you cannot repay the debts that you owe, you may be made bankrupt. The most common situations in which you can be made bankrupt are at the request of someone to whom you owe money (a creditors petition) and at your own request (a debtor's petition).

Companies Office

The Companies Office deals with all matters relating to the Companies Order including winding up petitions; insolvent partnerships; and disqualification of directors.

If the Court makes an order to wind up a company it means that the company has gone into compulsory liquidation. The court will then appoint an Official Receiver (OR) to act as liquidator for the company.

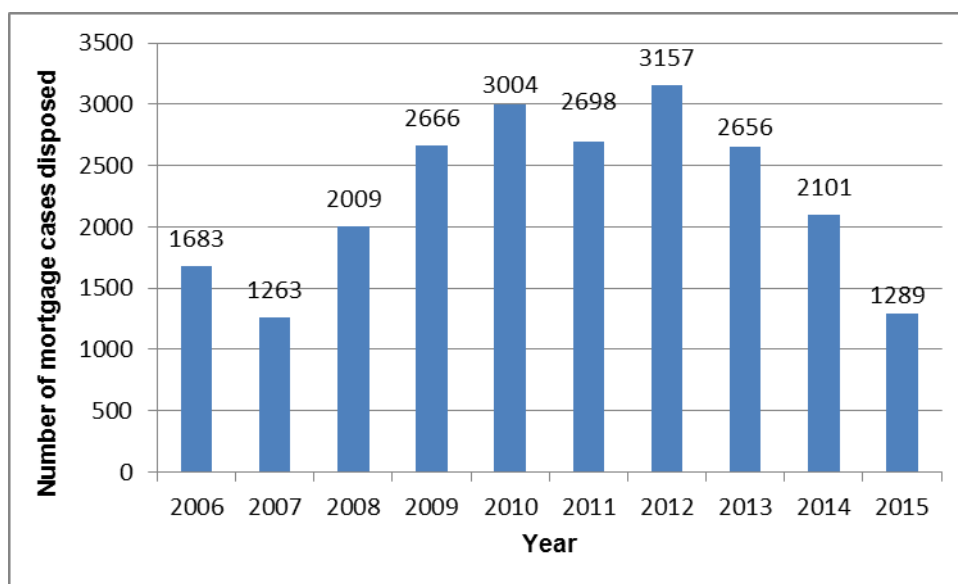
Probate Office

The principal business assigned to the Probate Office includes Contentious and Non-contentious Probate applications, leading to the issue of a Grant of Representation in the estate of the deceased person, to facilitate the gathering in and distribution of the assets of the deceased's estate.

1.1 Key Facts

- Between 2011 and 2015 the number of chancery cases received decreased by 61%, peaking in 2012 with 4,094 cases received. There was a decrease of 51% in the number of chancery cases received between 2014 and 2015. These figures reflect a decrease of 58% in applications received in relation to mortgages between 2014 and 2015. (Mortgage applications made up 80% of cases received into the Chancery division in 2015). The Council of Mortgage Lenders have also reported that the mortgage annual arrears rate is at its lowest level for almost a decade.
<https://www.cml.org.uk/news/press-releases/lowest-arrears-rate-for-more-than-a-decade-in-2015/>
- The graph below indicates the trend for the last 10 years of Mortgage cases disposed in the High Court. There has been a general upward trend from 2006 to 2012, with dips in 2007 and again in 2011. From 2012 to 2015, there was a 59% decrease in mortgage cases disposed. There were sharp increases each year between 2007 and 2010 as the decline in the wider economic climate continued, before peaking in 2012.
- The 39% decline in the number of mortgage cases disposed between 2014 and 2015 is in keeping with the declining figures published by the Council of Mortgage Lenders in 'Arrears in mortgages'.
<https://www.cml.org.uk/news/press-releases/lowest-arrears-rate-for-more-than-a-decade-in-2015/>

Figure B.1: Mortgage cases disposed from 2006 to 2015



- There has been a downward trend in the number of bankruptcy cases received between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 31%.
- There has been a similar trend in Bankruptcy cases disposed with disposals decreasing each year between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 26% over the period. Figures published by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, Northern Ireland (DETINI) show that individual insolvencies in Northern Ireland have decreased by 21% between 2014 and 2015. This is consistent with the 10% decrease in Bankruptcy disposals in 2015.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/insolvency-statistics-january-to-march-2016>

- The number of companies cases received decreased by 21% overall between 2011 and 2014, before increasing by 3% between 2014 and 2015. The number of companies cases disposed experienced a decrease each year between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decline of 10% over the period.
- Probate grants received increased each year between 2011 and 2013, before decreasing by 8% in 2014 and then increasing again by 8% in 2015.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2014:
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Summary Table 2: Chancery Division cases received 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Chancery	4,003	4,094	4,023	3,189	1,548
Bankruptcy	2,586	2,260	2,139	2,266	1,779
Companies	727	678	586	573	589
Probate grants	6,169	6,202	6,569	6,054	6,550

Summary Table 3: Chancery Division cases disposed 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Chancery	2,980	3,429	2,889	2,307	1,510
Bankruptcy	2,498	2,279	2,072	2,043	1,843
Companies	631	661	566	564	568

1.2 Chancery Division - 2015 Data

Table B.1 shows that during 2015, a total of 1,548 Chancery cases were received. This was a decrease of 51% from 3,189 in 2014. Mortgage suits accounted for the majority (80%) of cases received in 2015. The number of mortgages received has decreased by 58% during 2015 (2,910 in 2014 compared with 1,232 in 2015).

Table B.1: Chancery cases and applications received in 2015

Cases	Mortgages	1232
	Other land and property	40
	Trade and business	9
	Trusts	2
	Other	265
	Total	1548
Applications	Notice of appointment	1163
	Summons	783
	Notice of motion	40
	Exparte application	208
	Injunction	14
	Other	-
	Transfer to Commercial List	4
	Total	2212

There were 2,530 cases and applications disposed of in 2015 compared with 3,585 in 2014, representing a 29% decrease. Mortgages accounted for the majority of disposals with 1,289 cases disposed of (Table B.2).

Table B.2: Chancery cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		High Court Judge	Master	Office disposal	Total
Cases	Mortgages	11	1268	10	1289
	Other land and property	33	3	5	41
	Trade and business	8	1	5	14
	Trusts	3	-	-	3
	Other	104	44	15	163
	Total	159	1316	35	1510
Applications	Notice of appointment	6	127	-	133
	Summons	64	593	-	657
	Notice of motion	24	3	-	27
	Ex-parte application	13	182	-	195
	Injunction	7	-	-	7
	Transfer to Commercial List	-	1	-	1
	Other	-	-	-	-
	Total	114	906	-	1020

Bankruptcy

There were 2,602 bankruptcy cases and applications received in 2015 compared with 3,064 in 2014 – a decrease of 15%. In 2015 these included 1,523 bankruptcy petitions, 59% of which were creditor petitions (petition by another person). Figures for 2014 revealed that there were 1,912 bankruptcy petitions, of which 54% were creditor petitions. In 2015, other bankruptcy proceedings included 180 originating applications and 737 ordinary applications (Table B.3). Corresponding figures were 246 and 740 respectively in 2014.

Table B.3: Bankruptcy cases and applications received in 2015

Cases	Petition by another person	902
	Petition by debtor	553
	Other petition	68
	Originating application	180
	Other	76
	Total	1779
Applications	Notice of motion	5
	Ordinary application	737
	Certificate of automatic discharge	70
	Other	11
	Total	823

The Master dealt with a total of 2,425 bankruptcy cases and applications in 2015 compared with 2,616 the previous year, a decrease of 7%. The main area of work disposed of by the Master was bankruptcy petitions, a total of 1,535 in 2015 (Table B.4). This was a 13% decrease on the 1,768 bankruptcy petitions disposed of by the Master in 2014.

Table B.4: Bankruptcy cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		High Court Judge	Master	Office disposal	Total
Cases	Petition by another person	-	900	31	931
	Petition by debtor	1	578	7	586
	Other petition	-	57	-	57
	Originating application	3	170	1	174
	Other	1	94	-	95
	Total	5	1799	39	1843
Applications	Notice of motion	1	-	-	1
	Ordinary application	3	616	1	620
	Certificate of automatic discharge	-	2	64	66
	Other	1	8	-	9
	Total	5	626	65	696

Companies

Table B.5 and B.6 show the companies cases and applications received and disposed of in 2015. There were 686 companies cases and applications received and 658 disposed of. This represented a 1% increase for cases and applications received (680) and a 3% increase for cases and applications disposed of (638) in 2014.

Table B.5: Companies cases and applications received in 2015

Cases	Winding up petition	323
	Other petitions	31
	Originating summons	28
	Other	207
	Total	589
Applications	Notice of motion	3
	Ordinary application	89
	Other	5
	Total	97

Table B.6: Companies cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		High Court Judge	Master	Office disposal	Total
Cases	Winding up petition	3	315	-	318
	Other petitions	-	26	-	26
	Originating summons	5	26	-	31
	Other	11	182	-	193
	Total	19	549	-	568
Applications	Notice of motion	2	-	-	2
	Ordinary application	2	81	-	83
	Other	1	4	-	5
	Total	5	85	-	90

Table B.7 shows the average time intervals in weeks for cases and applications in the Chancery Division for the three business areas. A chancery case took on average 57 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal in 2015, fourteen weeks more than in 2014 (43). It took 14 weeks on average for a bankruptcy case from date of issue to date of disposal in 2015, two weeks more than in 2014 (12), and 11 weeks for a companies' case (17 weeks in 2014).

Table B.7: Average time intervals in weeks for business in the Chancery Division in 2015

	Chancery		Bankruptcy		Companies	
	Cases	Applications	Cases	Applications	Cases	Applications
Issue to first listing	45	7	6	3	7	4
First listing to disposal	13	9	8	3	4	14
Issue to disposal	57	16	14	6	11	18

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Probate

The number of grants of probate issued during 2015 increased by 8% from 6,054 in 2014 to 6,550 in 2015 (Table B.8).

Table B.8: Probate grants issued in non-contentious proceedings in 2015

	District Registry		Probate		Northern Ireland
	By solicitor	Personal	By solicitor	Personal	
Grant of administration	1	-	8	-	9
Pendente Lite	-	-	-	-	-
Letters of administration with will annexed	30	1	140	8	179
Letters of administration with will annexed (DBN)	4	-	11	-	15
Letters of administration	160	25	920	170	1275
Grant of probate	599	35	4008	412	5054
Letters of administration (DBN)	5	-	13	-	18
Total grants issued	799	61	5100	590	6550

Section 2: The Queen's Bench Division

The Queen's Bench Division comprises of a number of business areas, namely: the Writ Office, Appeals & Lists Office; Judicial Reviews Office; Commercial Office; and Bail Office. Collectively these Offices are referred to as The Central Office.

The principal business dealt with by the Queen's Bench Division is;

- Claims for damages
- Medical Negligence actions
- Commercial actions
- Matters involving contract
- Personal injury actions
- Appeals from the County Court
- Judicial Reviews
- Bail applications
- Admiralty matters
- Injunctions

Each business area within the Queen's Bench Division has discrete functions, namely;

Writ Office

The primary function of the office is to manage the 'Writ Process' for actions in the Queen's Bench Division, from commencement of proceedings until the trial of the action or final determination. This involves a review process which is initiated approximately 9 months after the last notification by a defendant that they intend to dispute the claim. The aim of the reviews is to progress cases to trial by dealing with matters between the parties which may delay the case being set-down for trial. The Office is also responsible for providing adequately trained staff to act as Court registrars in all Queen's Bench Courts. The Queen's Bench Division deals with large value and/or complex claims for damages including libel and slander actions which may require a jury.

The lower threshold for claims to the High Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on 25 February 2013. Cases previously received into the Writ Office for claims between £15,000 and £30,000 are now processed by the County Court. Care should therefore be taken when comparing Writs data before and after this date.

Appeals & Lists Office

The office has overall responsibility for compiling the daily Court List. This involves collating business listed across all the High Court Divisions on a daily basis. The Listing Officer must ensure that business is allocated to appropriate Judges and that adequate courtrooms are available.

Commercial Office

Deals with business relating to a 'business or commercial transaction' such as building contracts, sales of goods, insurance, banking or carriage of goods, may be assigned to the Commercial list, if so directed by the Commercial Judge. One of the ten puisne Judges has been assigned as the Commercial Judge. The Judge carries out regular reviews of actions entered into the Commercial List to ensure that the action is progressed to trial in a timely manner.

Judicial Reviews Office

Judicial Reviews are cases where the court considers if the decision reached by an inferior court, Tribunal, public body or Government Minister followed the proper procedure. The applicant must first apply to the Court for leave to apply for Judicial Review if leave is granted then the applicant has 14 days to apply for a full hearing of the matter.

Bail Office

This office deals with repeat bail applications, i.e. an application to release a defendant from custody who has been refused bail by the Magistrates Court. The Bail Order normally requires the defendant to comply with various conditions and may require money to be lodged or security to be given.

2.1 Key Facts

- Queen's Bench writs received have decreased each year between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 54%. The number of writs received decreased by 49% between 2012 and 2015 and this decrease may be partly due to the increase in the financial limit within the County Court during 2013. In 2013 approximately 1,800 ordinary civil bills were received into the County Court for an amount of £15,000 or over with an equivalent figure of 2,976 in 2014 and 2,689 in 2015, and these cases would previously have been received as Queen's Bench Writs.
- There was a 35% decrease in the number of Queen's Bench writs disposed of between 2011 and 2015. A peak in disposals was observed in 2011 however, this was due to a special exercise carried out to progress post-traumatic stress disorder cases. These cases accounted for approximately 1,500 cases disposed during the period. Caution should also be taken when comparing 2015 figures with other years as a manual exercise was carried out to deal with a number of old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court.
- There was a 17% decrease in the number of Judicial Review applications received and a 12% decrease in the number disposed of between 2011 and 2015. The number of cases received and disposed increased by 1% and decreased by 26% respectively between 2014 and 2015.
- The number of High Court bail applications received decreased by 38% between 2011 and 2015. There was a 20% decrease and an 11% decrease respectively, in receipts and disposals between 2014 and 2015.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2014:
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Summary Table 4: Queen's Bench cases received 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Queen's Bench Division - writs	6,617	5,959	4,490	3,658	3,062
Commercial List set-down	42	31	78	43	105
Judicial Reviews (applications)	116	108	110	95	96
Masters' appeals	92	86	84	89	67
High Court bails (applications)	2,368	2,226	1,781	1,818	1,458

Summary Table 5: Queen's Bench cases disposed 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Queen's Bench Division – writs	5,902 ^[1]	5,103	4,240	4,858 ^[2]	3,808 ^[2]
Commercial List	188	261	251	168	170
Judicial reviews (applications)	89	90	113	106	78
Masters' appeals	85	80	86	81	72
High Court bails (applications)	2,136	1,966	1,546	1,516	1,347

^[1] A special exercise was carried out to progress post-traumatic stress disorder cases. These cases accounted for approximately 1,500 cases disposed during the period.

^[2] Please note a manual exercise was carried out during the period to deal with a number of old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court.

2.2 Queen's Bench Division - 2015 Data

There were 5,877 Queen's Bench cases and applications received during 2015, 52% of these were made up of writs and originating summonses. These were less than the data relating to 2014, when there were 6,672 cases and applications received of which 55% were writs and originating summonses. There has been a 16% decrease in the number of writs received from 3,658 in 2014 to 3,062 in 2015 (Table B.9).

Table B.9: Queen's Bench cases and applications received in 2015

Writs and originating summonses	Negligence	1535
	Breach	167
	Road injuries	556
	Personal injuries	298
	Monies due	270
	Other	236
	Total	3062
Miscellaneous	Foreign judgment	173
	Other	47
	Total	220
Applications	Summons/interlocutory applications	1446
	Remittals and removals	421
	Exparte applications	287
	Other	441
	Total	2595

Table B.10 shows the breakdown of the amount claimed in writs and originating summonses in 2015. The majority of writs and originating summonses were unliquidated in 2015 – 94%, compared with 91% in 2014.

Table B.10: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses received by amount claimed in 2015

	No Value	Less than £1,000	£1,000-2,999	£3,000-14,999	£15,000 and over	Total
Negligence	1534	-	-	-	1	1535
Breach	166	-	-	-	1	167
Road injuries	552	-	-	-	4	556
Personal injuries	297	-	-	-	1	298
Monies due	107	-	3	18	142	270
Other	236	-	-	-	-	236
Total	2892	-	3	18	149	3062

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount claimed recorded on ICOS.

There were 697 Queen's Bench writs (excluding commercial actions) set-down for trial during 2015 (Table B.11) compared with 833 the previous year, which represented a decrease of 16%.

Table B.11: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses set-down by amount claimed in 2015

	No Value	£1,000-2,999	£3,000-14,999	£15,000 and over	Total
Negligence	470	-	-	4	474
Breach	11	-	1	3	15
Road injuries	127	-	-	1	128
Personal injuries	32	-	2	3	37
Monies due	3	-	-	15	18
Other	24	-	1	-	25
Total	667	-	4	26	697

Excludes commercial actions.

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount claimed recorded on ICOS.

There were 1,170 writs dealt with in court and 2,473 writs disposed of as office disposals. Please note however that a manual exercise was carried out during the period to deal with a number of old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court. Actions set-down as negligence constituted 56% of writs disposed of (Table B.12). In 2014, there were 1,252 writs dealt with in court and 3,321 writs disposed of as office disposals while negligence accounted for 53% of writs disposed.

Table B.12: Queen's Bench cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		High Court Judge	Master	Office Disposal ^[1]	Default judgment	Total
Writs and originating summonses	Negligence	575	56	1479	32	2142
	Breach	18	1	44	4	67
	Road injuries	189	9	747	4	949
	Personal injuries	180	43	143	2	368
	Monies due	19	3	25	109	156
	Other	67	10	35	14	126
	Total	1048	122	2473	165	3808
Miscellaneous	Foreign judgment	-	-	2	-	2
	Other	9	1	-	-	10
	Total	9	1	2	-	12
Applications	Summons/interlocutory applications	117	1268	1	-	1386
	Remittals and removals	3	436	1	-	440
	Exparte applications	15	210	-	-	225
	Other	180	172	2	-	354
	Total	315	2086	4	-	2405

Excludes commercial actions.

^[1] Please note a manual exercise was carried out during the period to deal with a number of old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court.

Of the 1,335 writs disposed of in 2015, either in court or by way of a default judgment, 39% were for £15,000 or more (Table B.13). The proportion of writs disposed of that were £15,000 and over in 2014 was 34% (523).

Table B.13: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses disposed by amount in 2015

		No Value	Less than £1,000	£1,000-2,999	£3,000-14,999	£15,000 and over	Total
High Court Judge	Negligence	220	-	8	106	241	575
	Breach	13	-	-	2	3	18
	Road injuries	33	-	-	25	131	189
	Personal injuries	147	-	1	7	25	180
	Monies due	19	-	-	-	-	19
	Other	52	-	-	-	15	67
Master	Negligence	50	-	1	2	3	56
	Breach	1	-	-	-	-	1
	Road injuries	8	-	-	-	1	9
	Personal injuries	43	-	-	-	-	43
	Monies due	3	-	-	-	-	3
	Other	10	-	-	-	-	10
Default judgments	Negligence	28	-	-	-	4	32
	Breach	2	-	-	-	2	4
	Road injuries	4	-	-	-	-	4
	Personal injuries	2	-	-	-	-	2
	Monies due	3	-	1	22	83	109
	Other	6	-	-	1	7	14
Total		644	-	11	165	515	1335

Excludes commercial actions and office disposals.

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount awarded recorded on ICOS. No amount awarded can arise when a case has been settled and the value was not notified to the court or the terms of the settlement do not include a monetary value.

In 2015, the average length of time for a writ from first listing to disposal was 30 weeks (Table B.14). In 2014, this was 25 weeks.

Table B.14: Average time intervals in weeks for Queen's Bench cases and applications in 2015

	Writs and originating summonses	Miscellaneous	Applications
Issue to first listing	145	2	3
First listing to disposal	30	5	5
Issue to disposal	175	7	9

Excludes default judgments and office disposals.

Due to rounding and not all writs and originating summonses having a set-down date, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Tables B.15, B.16 and B.17 show the number of commercial actions received, set-down and disposed of. During 2015, there were 105 cases set-down compared with 43 in 2014. In 2015, 170 cases were disposed of with 145 of these disposed of by a High Court Judge. Comparable figures in 2014 were 168 and 154 respectively.

Table B.15: Queen's Bench commercial actions received in 2015

Negligence	89
Breach of Contract	36
Personal injuries	-
Monies due	40
Other	22
Total	187

Table B.16: Queen's Bench commercial actions set-down in 2015

Negligence	41
Breach of Contract	26
Personal injuries	-
Monies due	25
Other	13
Total	105

Table B.17: Queen's Bench commercial actions disposed of in 2015

	High Court Judge	Master	Office disposal	Default judgment	Total
Negligence	55	-	6	1	62
Breach of Contract	31	-	3	-	34
Personal injuries	-	-	-	-	-
Monies due	45	-	7	-	52
Other	14	-	8	-	22
Total	145	-	24	1	170

In 2015, the average length of time for a commercial action from first listing to disposal was 38 weeks (Table B.18). In 2014, this was 36 weeks.

Table B.18: Average time intervals in weeks for commercial actions in 2015

	Commercial actions
Received to Entry to commercial list	78
Entry to commercial list to first listing	30
First listing to disposal	38
Received to disposal	146

Excludes default judgments and office disposals.

Due to rounding and not all writs and originating summonses having a set-down date, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Judicial Reviews

Tables B.19 to B.21 are in relation to Judicial Reviews. There were 96 applications for Judicial Review in 2015 compared with 95 in 2014. There were 88 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review granted (32%). The proportion in 2014 for this was also 32%. Of the 78 applications for Judicial Review that were disposed in 2015, 21% were granted. In 2014, there were 106 applications for Judicial Review and 27% of these were granted.

Table B.19: Judicial Review applications received in 2015

Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review	351
Applications for Judicial Review	96
Ancillary applications	2

Table B.20: Judicial Review applications disposed of in 2015

	Granted	Withdrawn/ Refused/ Dismissed	Other	Total
Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review	88	145	41	274
Applications for Judicial Review	16	40	22	78
Ancillary applications	-	-	-	-

In 2015, the average length of time from issue to disposal of applications for Judicial Review was 41 weeks (Table B.21) which was a decrease on the 43 weeks in 2014.

Table B.21: Average time intervals in weeks for Judicial Review applications in 2015

	Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review	Applications for Judicial Review	Ancillary applications
Issue to first listing	8	26	-
First listing to disposal	6	15	-
Issue to disposal	14	41	-

Due to rounding and not all applications having a court date, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Masters' appeals

There were 67 Masters' appeals received and 72 Masters' appeals disposed of in 2015 (Tables B.22 and B.23). This compares with the 89 Masters' appeals received and the 81 Masters' appeals disposed of in 2014.

Table B.22: Masters' appeals received in 2015

Queen's Bench Masters' appeals	33
Chancery Masters' appeals	34
Total	67

Table B.23: Masters' appeals disposed of in 2015

Queen's Bench Masters' appeals	37
Chancery Masters' appeals	35
Total	72

High Court Bails

There were 1,458 applications for bail received in the High Court during 2015, a decrease of 20% from 1,818 in 2014. Of the 1,145 applications disposed in court in 2015, 54% were granted (Table B.26). In 2014, 1,270 applications were disposed in court. Of these, 52% were granted.

Table B.24: Number of bail applications received in 2015

Bail applications	1090
Bail pending appeals to the county court	30
Compassionate bail applications	31
Miscellaneous applications	2
Applications to revoke bail	3
Schedule 2 breaches	-
Time extension	-
Bail variations	302
Total	1458

Table B.25: Number of bail applications disposed of in chambers in 2015

	Granted	Refused	Revoke	Other	Total
Bail applications	2	-	-	-	2
Bail pending appeals to the county court	-	-	-	1	1
Compassionate bail applications	1	-	-	-	1
Application to revoke bail	-	-	-	-	-
Bail variations	154	4	-	40	198
Total	157	4	-	41	202

Table B.26: Number of bail applications disposed of in court in 2015

	Granted	Refused	Revoke	Other	Total
Bail applications	513	418	4	53	988
Bail pending appeals to the county court	16	7	-	3	26
Compassionate bail applications	15	11	-	2	28
Miscellaneous applications	2	-	-	-	2
Application to revoke bail	-	1	2	-	3
Schedule 2 breaches	-	-	-	-	-
Bail variations	67	22	-	9	98
Total	613	459	6	67	1145

Section 3: Family Division

The Family Division comprises of four key business areas, namely: -

- The Matrimonial Office
- The Office of Care and Protection (Children's Section)
- The Office of Care and Protection (Patient's Section)
- The Official Solicitor's Office

The Matrimonial Office

The Matrimonial Office deals with the following: -

Petitions for divorce - to obtain a decree of divorce the marriage must be proved to have broken down irretrievably with proof of one or more of the following facts:

- adultery
- behaviour with which the petitioner cannot reasonably be expected to live
- desertion of at least two years
- two years separation where the respondent consents
- five years separation without consent

No petition may be made for divorce within the first year of marriage.

Petitions for nullity - a Decree of Nullity of Marriage is granted where the petitioner proves that the marriage is either void or voidable.

A void marriage is one that is legally invalid because, for example:

- either party was under the age of sixteen at the time of the marriage
- either party was already married
- the parties are prohibited from marrying, for example father and daughter

A voidable marriage is one which is legal but may be nullified by order of the court because, for example:

- it is not consummated due to incapacity or wilful refusal (most nullities are on these grounds)
- where one party was suffering from a venereal disease in a communicable form, or was pregnant by someone else at the time of marriage

Judicial separation - an alternative to divorce is a decree of judicial separation. This does not dissolve the marriage but absolves the parties from the obligation to live together. This procedure might, for instance, be used if religious beliefs forbid or discourage divorce.

Ancillary relief applications - During or after a divorce, the annulment of a marriage (nullity) or judicial separation, there may still be a need for the court to settle disputes over money or property. The court can make a financial order. This is known as ancillary relief and may deal with the sale or transfer of property, maintenance payments (for example weekly or monthly maintenance), a lump sum payment and/or a pension sharing or attachment order.

Dissolution of a Civil Partnership - You can apply to end ('dissolve') your civil partnership if you have been in the partnership for at least a year.

There are 3 main steps to ending a civil partnership:

- File a dissolution petition - you have to apply to court for permission to end your civil partnership, and show reasons why you want to split up.
- Apply for a conditional order - if your civil partner agrees to the petition, you'll get a document saying there's no reason you can't divorce.
- Apply for a final order - this legally ends your civil partnership - you need to wait 6 weeks after you get the conditional order before you can apply.

The Office of Care and Protection (OCP) (Children's Section)

The principal business assigned to this Office is: -

- Guardianship and Wardship of children
- Adoption
- Applications under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Applications under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998

Wardship and Adoption - The principal business assigned to Wardship and Adoption office includes applications in relation to the Guardianship and Wardship of children, Adoption applications and applications under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

Family Homes and Domestic Violence - The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998, is designed to offer civil protection against domestic violence. The 1998 Order provides a single set of remedies which are available in all court tiers. Two main remedies were created: the non-molestation order and the occupation order. Both of these orders can be applied for by way of an ex parte application - that is without the respondent or alleged perpetrator of the violence being present. The number of these type of applications are relatively small in the High Court, and are usually dealt with at this court tier, as they are linked to other proceedings being held in the High Court.

The Office of Care and Protection (OCP) (Patients Section)

Responsibility for the management of the property and affairs of people in Northern Ireland who, through mental disorder, are incapable of managing their own financial affairs is vested in the High Court under the provisions of Part VIII of the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The '**Patient**' is the name given by the Order to a person who is suffering from mental disorder and whose financial affairs are subject to the Court's control. A '**Controller**' is the name given to those appointed by court order to manage a Patient's financial affairs.

The Office of Care and Protection, commonly referred to as OCP is the department of the High Court in which administrative work relating to a Patient's case is dealt with under the supervision of the Master (Care and Protection). The Master is the judicial officer of the Court who is authorised to exercise any discretion, power or other functions of the Court and s/he may also, in particular cases, refer a question to the Judge for decision.

A Controller is a person appointed by the Court to deal with the day-to-day management of the Patient's financial affairs. He or she can be a relative, a friend, or perhaps a professional adviser. If there is no one else suitable or willing to act, an officer of the Court or the Official Solicitor can be appointed in the last resort.

The OCP reviews accounts operated by the Controller (on behalf of the Patient) on an annual basis.

The OCP is also responsible for the registration of Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPA).

The Official Solicitors Office

The Official Solicitor (OS) is an independent statutory officer holder appointed under section 75 of the Judicature (NI) Act 1978 (as amended by section 103 of the Courts Act 2003).

The OS has a wide range of functions primarily necessitating acting as next friend, guardian ad litem or 'Controller' of last resort (for certain minors or adults (known as 'patients') who lack mental capacity to manage their own financial affairs by reason of 'mental disorder' under Part VIII of the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 ('the 1986 Order'). The OS also represents the interests of minors in a range of legal proceedings at the request of the judiciary.

Key Facts

- The number of divorce petitions received have fluctuated between 2011 and 2015, with an overall increase of 1%. The number of divorce petitions received increased by 19% between 2014 and 2015. Between 2011 and 2015, the number of divorce petitions granted decreased by 20% overall. Divorce petitions granted peaked in 2012, before decreasing each year between 2012 and 2015. While all divorce petitions are received in the High Court, divorces are granted in both the High Court and County Court.
- Over the last five years the Orders issued in Mental Health Proceedings have generally been fluctuating, peaking in 2014. Orders issued decreased by 9% between 2014 and 2015.

Summary Table 6: High Court Family cases received 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Divorce petitions ^[1]	2,699	2,769	2,444	2,281	2,714
Wardship and adoption	112	144	89	83	89
Family Homes & Domestic Violence	50	42	56	46	46
Mental Health Proceedings (Orders Issued)	1,256	1,197	1,196	1,366	1,241
Official Solicitor's Office – live patient cases	338	308	249	213	165
Official Solicitor's Office – current Minor cases	74	100	53	60	68

[1] Data include civil partnership petitions.

Summary Table 7: High Court Family cases disposed 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Divorce petitions granted ^[1]	1,017	1,111	1,036	900	812
Wardship and adoption	92	116	114	63	75
Family Homes & Domestic Violence	43	44	37	48	44
Official Solicitor's Office – Minors' cases disposed	70	41	66	77	48

[1] Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

Foot Note – Decrees nisi – a provisional order for divorce, which may be made 'absolute' provided no reason is provided to the court to say otherwise.

3.2 Family Division – 2015 Data

Matrimonial

The number of divorce petitions received increased by 19%, from 2,281 in 2014 to 2,714 in 2015 (Table B.27). 39% (1,062) of the divorce petitions received in 2015 were as a result of 2 years separation with consent, similar to the 41% in 2014 (930).

Table B.27: Divorce petitions received in 2015

		Filed by			Total
		Wife	Husband	Unknown	
Divorce Petitions	2 years with consent	611	451	-	1062
	5 years separation	436	392	-	828
	Adultery	22	9	-	31
	Unreasonable behaviour	344	72	1	417
	Combination of grounds/other	274	102	-	376
Total		1687	1026	1	2714

Data include civil partnership petitions.

There were 812 decrees granted in the High Court during 2015, a decrease of 10% on the 900 granted during 2014. The most common ground for dissolution continued to be separation (2 years with consent) accounting for 32% of all decrees granted in 2015 (Table B.28), slightly more than the 31% in 2014.

Table B.28: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted in 2015

		Wife	Husband	Both	Total
Decrees Nisi	2 years with consent	153	102	-	255
	5 years separation	76	79	-	155
	Adultery	14	8	-	22
	Unreasonable behaviour	149	24	3	176
	Combination of grounds/other	115	57	20	192
Nullity	2 years with consent	-	1	-	1
	Combination of grounds/other	6	1	-	7
Judicial Separation	2 years with consent	-	-	-	-
	5 years separation	-	1	-	1
	Adultery	-	-	-	-
	Unreasonable behaviour	3	-	-	3
	Combination of grounds/other	-	-	-	-
Total		516	273	23	812

Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

Table B.29: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued in 2015

		Found by			Total
		Wife	Husband	Both	
Divorce Petitions	2 years with consent	163	112	-	275
	5 years separation	86	82	-	168
	Adultery	9	5	-	14
	Unreasonable behaviour	165	17	4	186
	Combination of grounds/other	135	84	26	245
Total		558	300	30	888

Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

During 2015, there were 1,203 matrimonial applications received, 6% less than the 1,278 received in 2014. In total, 40% of applications were for ancillary relief in 2015 (Table B.30) a similar proportion to the 43% in 2014.

Table B.30: Matrimonial applications received in 2015

Applications	Combination of grounds/other	20
	Ancillary relief	478
	Matrimonial application	669
	Other	36
Total		1203

Of the 1,125 matrimonial applications disposed of during 2015, 498 (44%) were for ancillary relief (Table B.31). The corresponding number of matrimonial applications disposed of in 2014 was 1,178 of which 574 (49%) were for ancillary relief.

Table B.31: Matrimonial applications disposed of in 2015

		Judge	Master	Total
Applications	Combination of grounds/other	8	-	8
	Ancillary relief	5	493	498
	Matrimonial application	19	592	611
	Other	6	2	8
Total		38	1087	1125

The average time from the issue of a petition to the date the decree was granted was 46 weeks in 2015 (Table B.32) compared with 43 weeks in 2014.

Table B.32: Average time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions in 2015

	Divorce Petitions
Issue to first listing	42
First listing to date decree granted	3
Issue to date decree granted	46

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

During 2015, the average time from issue to disposal of a matrimonial application was 9 weeks which was the same figure as the previous year. Applications for ancillary relief took on average 75 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal in 2015 (Table B.33) which was more than the 55 weeks in 2014.

Table B.33: Average time intervals in weeks for matrimonial applications in 2015

	Combination of grounds/other	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial applications	Other
Issue to first listing	1	21	6	2
First listing to disposal	18	54	4	46
Issue to disposal	19	75	9	49

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Wardship and Adoption

During 2015, adoption order applications accounted for 57% (51) of the total applications received (Table B.34) compared with 45% (37) in 2014.

Table B.34: Adoption cases and applications received in 2015

Adoption Order Applications	51
Child Abduction Originating Summonses	6
Children (NI) Order Application	2
Freeing Order Applications	5
Originating Summons (General)	2
Human Fertilisation Originating Summons	3
Interlocutory Applications	7
Wardship Originating Summonses	13
Total	89

Of the cases disposed in 2015, 92% were disposed of by a High Court Judge. The majority of applications disposed of (56%) were adoption order applications (Table B.35). In 2014, 87% of cases were disposed by a High Court Judge with 57% (36) being adoption order applications.

Table B.35: Adoption cases and applications disposed of in 2015

	High Court Judge	Master	Total
Adoption Order Applications	42	-	42
Child Abduction Originating Summonses	4	-	4
Children (NI) Order Application	-	-	-
Freeing Order Applications	13	-	13
Originating Summons (General)	2	-	2
Human Fertilisation Originating Summons	4	-	4
Interlocutory Applications	2	-	2
Wardship Originating Summonses	2	6	8
Total	69	6	75

Ex-parte applications for occupation/non-molestation orders accounted for 63% (29) of the total number of Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications received in 2015 (Table B.36). The number of ex-parte applications was higher in 2014 at 33, and accounted for 72% of cases and applications received.

Table B.36: Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications received in 2015

Applications for Occupation/Non-Molestation	11
Ex-parte Applications for Occupation/Non-Molestation	29
Application to Extend/Discharge/Vary Occupation/Non-Molestation	6
Article 11 Occupation order	-
Total	46

The Master disposed of 98% (43) of the total number of Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications during 2015 compared with 96% (46) in 2014. Table B.37 shows that 73% (32) of all cases in 2015 were ex-parte compared with 56% (27) the previous year.

Table B.37: Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications disposed of in 2015

	High Court Judge	Master	Total
Applications for Occupation/Non-Molestation	1	7	8
Ex-parte Applications for Occupation/Non-Molestation	-	32	32
Application to Extend/Discharge/Vary Occupation/Non-Molestation	-	4	4
Article 11 Occupation order	-	-	-
Total	1	43	44

Table B.38 shows the average time in weeks for adoption and Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications during 2015. It took on average 36 weeks for an adoption case from date of issue to date of disposal in 2015. The corresponding figure for 2014 was 27 weeks.

Table B.38: Average time intervals in weeks for Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications in 2015

	Adoption	Family Homes And Domestic Violence
Issue to first listing	19	1
First listing to disposal	18	17
Issue to disposal	36	18

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Care and Protection

There were 1,661 patients referred to the Office of Care and Protection in 2015 for investigation under the Mental Health Order, representing a 63% increase on the 2014 total of 1,018 patients. The total live caseload for 2015 was 1,763 (Table B.39) which was a similar number in the previous year (1,775).

Table B.39: Office of Care and Protection – Mental Health proceedings in 2015

New referrals	1661
Enduring Power of Attorney applications received	777
Orders issued	1241
Certificates issued	6850
Reviews completed	1625
Visits^[1]	81
Live Caseload at 31st December^[2]	1763

^[1]The figure for 'visits' represents the number of visits made to patients by the Lord Chief Justice's General Visitors. From June 2015, visits to patients whose affairs are managed by the Official Solicitor were added to the General Visitors annual schedule hence the significant increase.

^[2] Live caseload is the number of active Full Controller Orders at 31 December 2015.

Official Solicitor's Office

Tables B.40 and B.41 demonstrate the caseload of the Official Solicitor's Office. There were 165 live cases relating to patients and 68 current cases relating to minors in 2015. In 2014, there were 213 live cases relating to patients and 60 current cases relating to minors.

Table B.40: Official Solicitor's Office – Patient caseload in 2015

Referrals	9
Orders	1672
Ad. Interim orders	1
Controller orders	-
Dismissals	23
Live cases	165 ^[1]
Incoming correspondence	7675
Cases referred to the OS for a specific issue	206 ^[2]

^[1]This figure reflects the number of cases at 4 February 2016 where the OS is Full Controller.

^[2]Cases referred for a specific issue – this figure now encompasses all live cases at 4 February 2016 where the OS is Full Controller together with other cases in which the OS has been asked to assist i.e. OCP/matrimonial/bankruptcy where the OS has been instructed to deal with a specific aspect but is not Full Controller. Involvement in a case may last a considerable time and therefore some of the cases may have been reflected in previous reports and may continue to be reflected in future reports.

Table B.41: Official Solicitor's Office – Minors' caseload in 2015

	Received	Current Caseload	Disposed
Guardian of the Fortune	1	1	-
Article 13 Children Order - Relocation	1	1	-
Care Proceedings	1	1	-
Article 8 Children Order	48	30	18
Parental Incapacity	22	14	8
Declaration of Parentage	3	-	3
Next Friend	2	1	1
Child Abduction	4	3	1
Declaratory Proceedings	17	10	7
Judicial Review	3	1	2
Chancery (Estate)	1	1	-
Queen's Bench	1	1	-
House Purchase	2	2	-
Non-Molestation	5	1	4
Adoption	-	-	-
Nominal Respondent	3	-	3
Personal Injury	-	-	-
Wardship	2	1	1
Miscellaneous	-	-	-
Total	116	68	48

Live case load only include those cases where specific actions are actively being taken to progress matters. These cases are recorded as 'disposed of' when the said actions have come to an end. A minor's case is closed when he/she reaches the age of 18 yrs.

Section 4: Sitting Days

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. In the High Court the Judiciary are made up of the Lord Chief Justice, three Lords Justices of Appeal and ten High Court Judges.

They sit on a variety of business types as shown in Table B.42, and a sitting day is classified on the basis of the business type on which the majority of time was spent.

4.1 Key Facts

- The number of days sat by High Court judges have been decreasing year on year for the past five years, falling by 3% between 2014 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 13% between 2011 and 2015.
- Overall sitting times have generally decreased over the five year period, decreasing by 2% over the last year, and decreasing by 25% when compared with 2011.

Summary Table 8: High Court Judge Sitting Days 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Court Sitting Days	2,178	2,010	1,998	1,957	1,890
Total Court Sitting Time (hrs:mins)	5611:55	4921:17	4649:25	4320:58	4222:34

4.2 Sitting Days – 2015 Data

Court sitting days and court sitting times

High Court Judges sat on a total of 1,890 court sitting days, a decrease of 3% on the 1,957 days sat during 2014. By majority type of work, High Court Judges sat for a total 581 days hearing Queen's Bench business and 131 in the Crown Court in 2015 (Table B.42). In 2014, High Court Judges sat for a total of 563 days hearing Queen's Bench business and 158 in the Crown Court.

Table B.42 High Court Judges court sitting days and court sitting times in 2015 (hrs : mins)

	Court sitting days	Total court sitting time
Crown	131	265:53
Queen's Bench	581	1476:40
Judicial Reviews	278	642:05
Children Order	185	450:35
Other Family	73	158:00
Appeals	10	11:12
Chancery	194	415:44
Bails	245	444:58
Court of Appeal - Civil	102	159:24
Court of Appeal - Criminal	91	198:03
Total	1890	4222:34

Days are classified on the basis of the majority business undertaken.

Total court sitting time is classified on the basis of all court sitting time spent on each business area. 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.

Part C: The Crown Court

The Crown Court has exclusive jurisdiction to try offences charged on indictment. Offences tried on indictment are more serious offences. The Lord Chief Justice is President of the Crown Court and the Lords Justices of Appeal, High Court Judges and county court judges all sit in the Crown Court.

Trial on indictment in the Crown Court follows after the accused has been returned for trial at committal proceedings in a magistrates' court. The Public Prosecution Service is responsible for preparing a formal document called an indictment, stating the charges which the accused will face. The matters are then tried before a judge sitting with a jury.

The Crown Court normally sits at seven different venues throughout Northern Ireland and the trial of non-scheduled offences takes place at the sitting of the Crown Court determined by the District Judge who committed the accused. This is usually the Crown Court acting for the county court division in which the offence is alleged to have been committed.

Appeal from the Crown Court is to the Court of Appeal. If a person wishes to appeal against conviction on a question of fact, the permission of either the Crown Court Judge or the Court of Appeal is required. To appeal against sentence he or she needs the leave of the Court of Appeal.

All persons convicted of a scheduled offence tried on indictment can appeal against conviction to the Court of Appeal on any grounds and without leave. This automatic right of appeal is a safeguard built into the system because in these cases there is no jury.

The prosecution has no right to appeal against the acquittal of a defendant who has been tried on indictment. The Attorney-General can refer a point of law to the Court of Appeal for its opinion, but even if the Court of Appeal considers that the trial judge made an error of law resulting in an acquittal, the acquittal still stands. The reference and subsequent ruling is useful in guiding the prosecution of future trials.

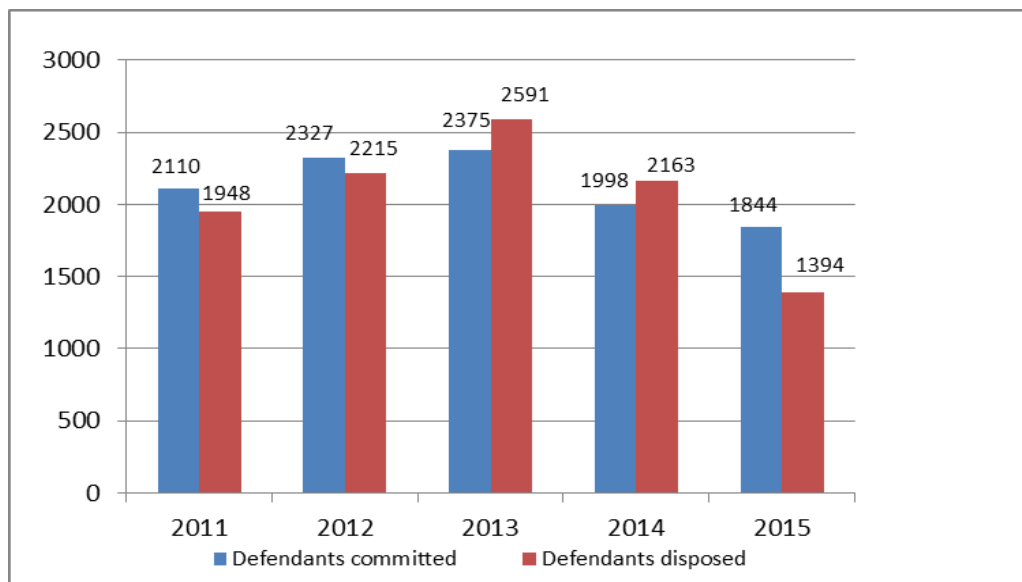
In 2008 the NICTS appointed Case Progression Officers to work with other criminal justice agency officials and the judiciary to minimise delay in the Criminal Courts. Case listing and management are the responsibility of the court; however Case Progression Officers provide support and work with other agency representatives to ensure that all procedural matters are effectively progressed by the parties in the case, therefore reducing unnecessary delay within the system. This includes addressing issues such as:-

- Checking the availability of witnesses
- Managing the arrangements for special measures
- Monitoring disclosure applications
- Ensuring that courtroom technology and interpreter facilities are available
- Monitoring the completion of specialist reports

Key Facts

- Figure C.1 outlines the number of Crown Court defendants committed and disposed of during the last 5 years. The trend in the number of defendants committed between 2011 and 2013 has shown a steady increase, with an increase of 13%. However the trend reversed in 2014 and 2015 with a 22% decrease. The highest number of committals to the Crown Court occurred in 2013 (2,375), a 2% increase from 2012 (2,327). The fall in defendants committed over the last two years indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of defendants committing more serious offences, which as a result must be tried in the Crown Court. As indicated in table E.3, indictable charges in the Magistrates' Court have decreased by 29% between 2013 and 2015 (from 4,003 to 2,860).
- There was an increase of 33% in the number of defendants disposed of between 2011 and 2013, before decreasing by 46% between 2013 and 2015. Up until 2012, disposals have not increased at the same rate as defendants committed suggesting an increase in active Crown Court defendants waiting to be dealt with. In late 2012 an extra County Court Judge was introduced into Belfast Crown Court division to tackle outstanding legacy cases. As a result the numbers of defendants being disposed has overtaken the numbers being received each year from 2013. However in 2015 this trend reversed, with a 36% drop in disposals and 24% more defendants received than disposed. **The introduction of new rules in May 2015 in relation to legal aid remuneration resulted in a number of solicitors and counsel withdrawing their representation from a range of court cases. This has affected defendants' access to legal aid representation and has had an impact on disposals and delay within the Crown Court process during the period.**

Figure C.1: Crown Court defendants committed and disposed from 2011 to 2015



- Average waiting times between committal and start of trial remained fairly stable between 2011 and 2013 before decreasing by 18% in 2014 to 113 days – the lowest level over the last 5 years. The trend then increased slightly in 2015 (from 113 days to 114 days).
- Crown Court sittings have fluctuated over the last 5 years, with an overall decrease of 12% between 2011 and 2015. Between 2012 and 2013 there was an 11% increase and this is partly due to the introduction of an additional County Court Judge into the Belfast division. County Court Judges deal with 98% of all Crown Court business on average (see table C.6).
- Experimental statistics on cracked and ineffective trials at the Crown Court are available in Appendix 2.

- The link below provides comparison figures for 2014:
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Summary Table 9: Crown Court 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Cases received	1,621	1,742	1,794	1,551	1,492
Cases disposed	1,486	1,677	1,953	1,688	1,080
Defendants committed	2,110	2,327	2,375	1,998	1,844
Defendants disposed	1,948	2,215	2,591	2,163	1,394
Average time from committal to start of trial (days)	135	139	137	113	114
Average time from conviction to disposal (days)	51	57	56	51	100
Sittings	2,637	2,477	2,745	2,636	2,326

Foot Note – Committed – the procedure by which a person is returned for trial to the Crown Court by the magistrates' court.

Crown Court – 2015 Data

Section 1: Cases received and disposed of

Table C.1 shows the number of cases received in 2015. There were 1,492 cases received in 2015 compared with 1,551 in 2014, a decrease of 4%. In 2015, there were 1,080 cases disposed of (Table C.2), a 36% decrease on the 1,688 disposed of in 2014.

Table C.1: Crown Court cases received in 2015

	Justice & Security Act ^[1]	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Total
Antrim	-	194	-	194
Ards	-	214	-	214
Armagh & South Down	-	165	-	165
Belfast	13	359	-	372
Craigavon	-	177	-	177
Fermanagh & Tyrone	-	199	-	199
Londonderry	-	171	-	171
Total	13	1479	-	1492

^[1] Refers to cases to be tried under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

Table C.2: Crown Court cases disposed of in 2015

	Justice & Security Act ^[1]	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Total
Antrim	-	161	-	161
Ards	-	129	-	129
Armagh & South Down	-	125	-	125
Belfast	17	295	-	312
Craigavon	-	116	-	116
Fermanagh & Tyrone	-	133	-	133
Londonderry	-	104	-	104
Total	17	1063	-	1080

^[1] Refers to cases to be tried under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

Table C.3 Defendants committed to Crown Court in 2015

	Justice & Security Act ^[1]	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Total
Antrim	-	242	-	242
Ards	-	257	-	257
Armagh & South Down	-	213	-	213
Belfast	24	438	-	462
Craigavon	-	223	-	223
Fermanagh & Tyrone	-	237	-	237
Londonderry	-	210	-	210
Total	24	1820	-	1844

^[1] Refers to cases to be tried under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

In 2015, there were 1,844 defendants committed to the Crown Court (Table C.3). This was an 8% decrease on the 1,998 committed in 2014. There was a total of 1,394 defendants disposed of during 2015 (Table C.4). This was a decrease of 36% when compared with the 2,163 defendants disposed of in 2014.

Table C.4: Crown Court defendants disposed of in 2015

	Justice & Security Act ^[1]	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Total
Antrim	-	211	-	211
Ards	-	167	-	167
Armagh & South Down	-	158	-	158
Belfast	25	393	-	418
Craigavon	-	150	-	150
Fermanagh & Tyrone	-	173	-	173
Londonderry	-	117	-	117
Total	25	1369	-	1394

^[1] Refers to cases to be tried under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

Section 2: Crown Court waiting times

The average waiting time between committal to start of trial was 114 days (Table C.5). This was an increase of less than 1% on the 113 days in 2014. The average waiting time between conviction to disposal was 100 days, 96% more than in 2014 (51 days).

Table C.5: Average waiting time in the Crown Court in days in 2015

	Committal to start of trial – days	Conviction to disposal – days	Total defendants disposed of
Antrim	141	75	203
Ards	93	71	162
Armagh & South Down	102	55	120
Belfast	112	57	389
Craigavon	90	53	147
Fermanagh & Tyrone	149	64	163
Londonderry	96	489	111
Total	114	100	1295

Excludes defendants who had a bench warrant or deferred sentence.

Section 3: Defendants disposed of

The majority of defendants were disposed of by a county court judge (98%) (Table C.6). This was also the case in 2014 when 98% of defendants were disposed of by a county court judge.

Table C.6: Crown Court defendants disposed of by judge type in 2015

	Judicial Level		Total
	County Court Judge	High Court Judge	
Antrim	210	1	211
Ards	165	2	167
Armagh & South Down	158	-	158
Belfast	402	16	418
Craigavon	149	1	150
Fermanagh & Tyrone	171	2	173
Londonderry	117	-	117
Total	1372	22	1394

Table C.7: Crown Court defendants disposed of by charge type in 2015

All Offences Against the Person	212
All Sexual Offences	114
All Burglary Offences	44
All Robbery Offences	25
All Theft Offences	38
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	69
All Criminal Damage Offences	18
All Offences Against the State	12
All Other Offences	85
All Drug Offences	179
All Motoring Offences	34
All Non-Police Offences	2
Combination of Charges	562
Total	1394

In total, 32% of defendants made a plea of guilty on all charges (37% in 2014) and 15% were acquitted on all charges (16% in 2014). (Table C.8).

Table C.8: Outcome of Crown Court defendants in 2015

	Plea of guilty on all charges	Plea of not guilty on at least one charge – found guilty on at least one charge	Plea of not guilty – acquitted on all charges	All charges withdrawn	Total
Antrim	75	104	30	2	211
Ards	58	93	15	1	167
Armagh & South Down	37	99	22	-	158
Belfast	127	225	66	-	418
Craigavon	49	81	20	-	150
Fermanagh & Tyrone	53	85	35	-	173
Londonderry	46	56	15	-	117
Total	445	743	203	3	1394

Section 4: Crown Court sittings and times

There were 2,326 sittings in the Crown Court in 2015. This was a 12% decrease on the number in 2014 (2,636). The total time spent on Crown Court business (5768:30) has decreased by 24% from 2014 (7559:35).

Table C.9: Crown Court sittings and total Crown Court time in 2015 (hrs : mins)

	Number of sittings	Total time
Antrim	327	761:00
Ards	247	628:34
Armagh & South Down	345	918:03
Belfast	661	1559:04
Craigavon	251	550:25
Fermanagh & Tyrone	295	883:15
Londonderry	200	468:09
Total	2326	5768:30

Crown Court sittings refer to a sitting where any Crown Court business is heard.

Total Crown time includes all time spent on Crown business.

High Court Judges & county court judges sit on Crown business.

Due to rounding individual Crown Court Sitting times may not add up to the total time.

Part D: The County Court

In Northern Ireland, there are seven county court divisions with eighteen 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.

The number of cases received and disposed in the county court between 2011 and 2015 is documented in Summary Tables 10 and 11 respectively.

Key Facts

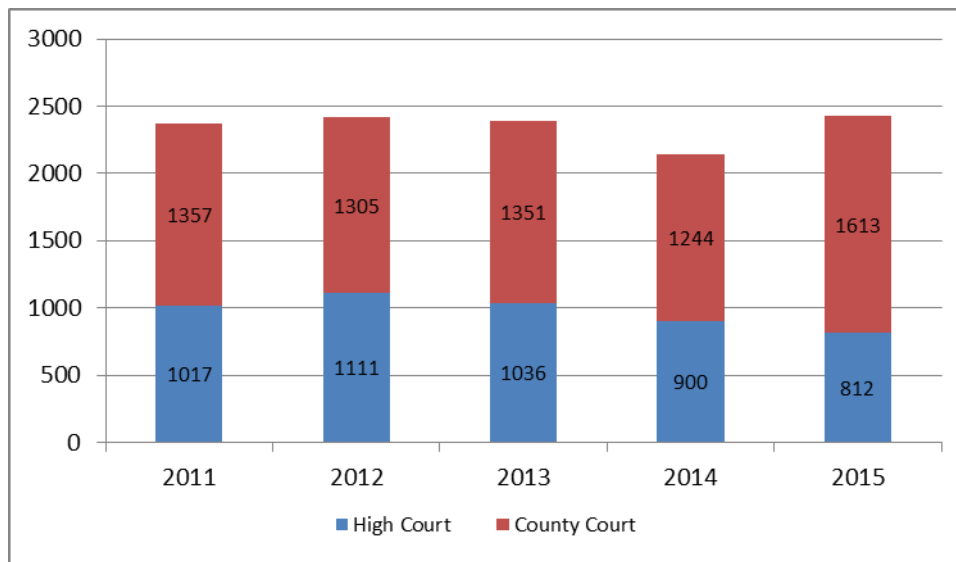
- The number of appeals from the magistrates' courts received and disposed in the County Court decreased by 7% and 5% respectively between 2011 and 2015. Both the receipts and disposals increased between 2011 and 2012, by 7% and 10% respectively, before decreasing each year between 2012 and 2015.
- Ordinary civil bill cases received fluctuated between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 14%. Caution must be taken when interpreting this data as the financial limit for ordinary civil bills in the County Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on 25 February 2013, while the lower limit for ordinary civil bills increased from £2,000 to £3,000 in May 2011. As a result, claims for amounts over £15,000 and up to £30,000 are now received into the County Court as a civil bill, where they would previously have been entered into the High Court as a Queen's Bench Writ. These claims amounted to approximately 2,976 cases in 2014 and approximately 2,689 in 2015. Civil bills disposed decreased by 22% between 2011 and 2013 and then increased by 9% between 2013 and 2015. There was an overall decrease of 14% between 2011 and 2015.
- Ejectment cases received and disposed fluctuated over the last 5 years. However, in 2012 both increased sharply, with increases of 49% and 52% respectively, with further increases of 34% and 31% between 2012 and 2013. (The increases in 2012 were partly due to a manual exercise completed to dispose of old legacy cases within the system). Between 2013 and 2015 both the receipts and disposals declined with decreases of 39% and 40% respectively. The sharp increases and declines in ejectment cases disposed are likely to be due to the adverse economic conditions experienced during the period. A similar trend in mortgage cases received and disposed in the High Court was also experienced over the same period.
- Equity cases received fluctuated between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 25%. Equity cases disposed increased by 31% between 2011 and 2012 before decreasing each year between 2012 and 2015, with a decrease of 46%.
- Despite the limit of the small claims court increasing from £2,000 to £3,000 in May 2011, the number of small claims received has continued to decrease on a yearly basis since 2011, with the number received decreasing by 15% overall. There has been a decreasing trend in the number of small claims disposed between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 7%.
- While all divorce petitions are received in the High Court, divorces can be granted in either the High Court or the County Court. Decrees granted in the County Court fluctuated between 2011 and 2015 with an overall increase of 19% during the period. The number of decrees granted across the High Court and County Court increased between 2011 and 2015 by 2% overall. The number of decrees granted in the County Court was at its highest level in 2015 while in the High Court it was at its lowest level in 2015 across the 5 year time series (see Figure D.1).
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2014:
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Summary Table 10: County court cases received 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Appeals from the magistrates' courts	3,908	4,197	4,025	3,738	3,647
Criminal damage cases	22	27	32	36	27
Licences	211	260	179	277	206
Ordinary civil bills	12,817	10,936	11,091	11,675	11,064
Equity	173	139	111	135	130
Ejectment	803	1,200	1,607	982	973
Small claims	12,903	12,153	11,944	11,514	11,002

Summary Table 11: County court cases disposed 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Appeals from the magistrates' courts	3,707	4,085	3,682	3,662	3,532
Criminal damage cases	38	22	8	20	22
Licences	163	216	167	253	185
Ordinary civil bills	10,704	10,216	8,401	9,120	9,193
Equity	151	198	124	112	106
Ejectment	693	1,056	1,388	799	834
Small claims	10,488	11,163	10,374	10,112	9,751
Divorce cases (decrees absolute)	1,334	1,365	1,391	1,358	1,479
Divorce cases (decrees granted)	1,357	1,305	1,351	1,244	1,613

Figure D.1: Decrees granted in the High Court and County Court from 2011 to 2015

Foot Note – Decrees granted– a provisional order for divorce, which may be made 'absolute' provided no reason is provided to the court to say otherwise.

County Court – 2015 Data

Section 1: Appeals from magistrates' courts

There were a total of 3,647 appeals received during 2015 (Table D.1) and 3,532 appeals disposed of in the county court during 2015 (Table D.2).

Table D.1: Appeals received in 2015

	Appeals received
Antrim	428
Ards	410
Armagh and South Down	298
Belfast	682
Craigavon	718
Fermanagh and Tyrone	686
Londonderry	425
Total	3647

The number of appeals received in 2015 (3,647) decreased from 3,738 in 2014 – a decrease of 2%. The highest number of appeals received was in the Craigavon division (718) which represented 20% of cases. In 2014, Belfast division was the highest and represented 21% of cases.

Table D.2: Appeals disposed of in 2015

	Appeals disposed
Antrim	431
Ards	345
Armagh and South Down	269
Belfast	735
Craigavon	657
Fermanagh and Tyrone	699
Londonderry	396
Total	3532

The number of appeals disposed of in 2015 (3,532) decreased from 3,662 in 2014 – a decrease of 4%. The highest number of appeals disposed was in the Belfast division (735) which represented 21% of cases. In 2014, this division also represented 21% of cases.

Tables D.3 to D.5 show the result of appeals against conviction and sentence, appeals against sentence only and civil appeals. The vast majority of appeals (99%) dealt with in court in 2015 were criminal cases, and 1% were civil cases, the same proportion as 2014. Of the criminal appeals, 76% were against sentence only and 24% were against conviction and sentence in 2015. These percentages were 72% and 28% respectively in 2014.

Table D.3: Number of magistrates' court appeals against conviction and sentence in 2015

	Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed	Appeal Allowed – Order Varied on Appeal	Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order	Appeal Abandoned/ Withdrawn	Total
Antrim	11	32	15	4	62
Ards	14	18	23	21	76
Armagh and South Down	17	38	15	10	80
Belfast	69	78	57	31	235
Craigavon	34	94	36	11	175
Fermanagh and Tyrone	22	72	40	25	159
Londonderry	13	21	10	7	51
Total	180	353	196	109	838

The number of appeals against conviction and sentence decreased by 18% from 2014 – 838 compared with 1,027.

The number of appeals against conviction and sentence in 2015 which resulted in the appeal being allowed and in an Order being varied was 353 – 42% of all appeals against conviction and sentence. This was a slightly lower proportion than the 44% in 2014.

Table D.4: Number of magistrates' court appeals against sentence only in 2015

	Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed	Appeal Allowed – Order Varied on Appeal	Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order	Appeal Abandoned/ Withdrawn	Total
Antrim	3	203	117	42	365
Ards	2	65	86	113	266
Armagh and South Down	-	120	56	8	184
Belfast	-	192	278	24	494
Craigavon	3	188	246	32	469
Fermanagh and Tyrone	12	326	156	40	534
Londonderry	-	150	110	83	343
Total	20	1244	1049	342	2655

The number of appeals against sentence increased by 3% from 2014 – 2,655 compared with 2,581.

The number of appeals against sentence only in 2015 which resulted in the appeal being allowed and in an Order being varied was 1,244 – 47% of all appeals against sentence only. In 2014, the corresponding proportion was 50%.

Table D.5: Number of magistrates' court civil appeals in 2015

	Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order	Appeal Allowed – Order Varied	Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed	Appeal Withdrawn	Total
Antrim	-	1	2	1	4
Ards	1	-	1	1	3
Armagh and South Down	2	-	-	3	5
Belfast	2	2	-	2	6
Craigavon	1	1	5	6	13
Fermanagh and Tyrone	2	1	2	1	6
Londonderry	1	-	1	-	2
Total	9	5	11	14	39

The number of civil appeals in 2015 (39) decreased by 28% from the number of civil appeals in 2014 (54).

Section 2: Criminal damage cases

There were 27 criminal damage cases received during 2015, a decrease of 25% on the 36 received in 2014. Belfast accounted for 44% of all cases received in 2015 (39% in 2014). Table D.7 shows that there were 22 criminal damage cases disposed of in 2015, compared with 20 disposed of in 2014.

Table D.6: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received in 2015

Cases	Antrim	-
	Ards	2
	Armagh and South Down	3
	Belfast	12
	Craigavon	1
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	9
	Londonderry	-
	Total	27
Applications	Antrim	3
	Ards	-
	Armagh and South Down	-
	Belfast	-
	Craigavon	-
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	-
	Londonderry	1
	Total	4

Table D.7: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Total
Cases	Antrim	1	-	1
	Ards	-	-	-
	Armagh and South Down	-	-	-
	Belfast	8	2	10
	Craigavon	-	-	-
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	6	1	7
	Londonderry	3	1	4
	Total	18	4	22
Applications	Antrim	-	3	3
	Ards	-	-	-
	Armagh and South Down	-	-	-
	Belfast	-	-	-
	Craigavon	-	-	-
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	-	-	-
	Londonderry	-	1	1
	Total	-	4	4

The average time from issue to disposal for criminal damage cases was 104 weeks in 2015. The corresponding time interval was 136 weeks in 2014. Caution needs to be exercised in comparing these figures due to the small number of cases.

Table D.8: Time intervals in weeks (average) for criminal damage cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	71
	Ards	-
	Armagh and South Down	-
	Belfast	105
	Craigavon	-
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	74
	Londonderry	160
	Total	104
Applications	Antrim	-
	Ards	-
	Armagh and South Down	-
	Belfast	-
	Craigavon	-
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	-
	Londonderry	-
	Total	-

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, and office disposals.

Section 3: Licences

There were 206 licence applications received in the county court in 2015, 26% less than were received in 2014 (277).

In 2015, 185 licence applications were disposed of, a decrease of 27% from the previous year (253). Belfast division accounted for 35% of licences received and 37% of licences disposed of in 2015, compared to 29% and 34% respectively in 2014.

Table D.9: Licences received and disposed of in 2015

	Licences received	Licences disposed of
Antrim	25	15
Ards	23	25
Armagh and South Down	16	18
Belfast	73	69
Craigavon	19	19
Fermanagh and Tyrone	23	21
Londonderry	27	18
Total	206	185

Section 4: Ordinary civil bills

There were 11,064 ordinary civil bill cases received in 2015. There were also 5,036 applications received during the same period. The data in respect of cases and applications are less than those of 2014, when there were 11,675 cases received and 5,124 applications received. This represents a decrease in the number of cases by 5% and a decrease in the number of applications by 2%.

Belfast received 63% of ordinary civil bill cases compared with 4% in Londonderry, similar to 2014 (63% and 5% respectively).

Table D.10: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications received in 2015

Cases	Antrim	759
	Ards	986
	Armagh and South Down	584
	Belfast	6997
	Craigavon	669
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	612
	Londonderry	457
	Total	11064
Applications	Antrim	329
	Ards	555
	Armagh and South Down	319
	Belfast	2810
	Craigavon	388
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	340
	Londonderry	295
	Total	5036

The number of ordinary civil bill cases where Notices of Intention to Defend were received has decreased from 8,204 in 2014 to 7,626 in 2015, representing a 7% decrease in business (Table D.11). The civil bills are assigned to each judge type based on the amount claimed, and the distribution of civil bills changed alongside the increase in the financial limit of the County Court to £30,000, in February 2013. At this point the upper threshold for a district judge case moved from £5,000 to £10,000 and as a result District Judges were assigned 52% of civil bills with an NID lodged in 2015, as opposed to 33% in 2012.

Table D.11: Number of ordinary civil bill cases with Notice of Intention to Defend by judicial level in 2015

	County court judge level	District judge level	Total
Antrim	268	413	681
Ards	215	676	891
Armagh and South Down	205	344	549
Belfast	2378	1543	3921
Craigavon	219	365	584
Fermanagh and Tyrone	254	315	569
Londonderry	156	275	431
Total	3695	3931	7626

The number of cases disposed of increased by 1%, from 9,120 cases in 2014 to 9,193 in 2015. Of the ordinary civil bill cases disposed of in 2015, 10% were default judgments. A further 28% were disposed of at district judge level compared with 34% disposed of at county court judge level (Table D.12). Comparable figures for 2013 were 10%, 27% and 33% respectively.

Table D.12: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Default judgment	Total
Cases	Antrim	280	178	307	4	769
	Ards	205	544	336	3	1088
	Armagh and South Down	134	269	214	5	622
	Belfast	1947	998	924	6	3875
	Civil Processing Centre	-	-	176	921	1097
	Craigavon	312	60	266	10	648
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	161	229	158	4	552
	Londonderry	102	283	152	5	542
	Total	3141	2561	2533	958	9193
Applications	Antrim	62	35	114	-	211
	Ards	49	63	139	-	251
	Armagh and South Down	37	48	94	-	179
	Belfast	68	183	693	-	944
	Civil Processing Centre	-	-	36	-	36
	Craigavon	39	6	148	-	193
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	22	27	144	-	193
	Londonderry	18	57	109	-	184
	Total	295	419	1477	-	2191

CCJ and DJ split based on the judicial level assigned to the final sitting date, i.e. CCJ will include DJ sitting as a DCCJ.

Table D.13 shows the amount awarded for ordinary civil bills during 2015. Almost a fifth of civil bills (18%) were awarded between £1000-2999. This is a decrease on the percentage in 2014 (22%).

Table D.13: Number of ordinary civil bill cases by amount awarded in 2015

		No Value	Less than £1000	£1000-2999	£3000-4999	Over £5000	Total
Cases	Antrim	101	25	98	74	160	458
	Ards	138	38	195	180	198	749
	Armagh and South Down	102	25	95	70	111	403
	Belfast	1774	86	376	312	397	2945
	Craigavon	96	26	92	66	92	372
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	95	26	100	57	112	390
	Londonderry	140	24	82	63	76	385
	Total	2446	250	1038	822	1146	5702

Excludes cases that were adjourned generally, withdrawn, dismissed, default judgments or had office disposals.

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount awarded recorded on ICOS. No amount awarded can arise when a case has been settled and the value was not notified to the court or the terms of the settlement do not include a monetary value.

On average, it took 52 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal for civil bill cases to progress through the county court in 2015 (Table D.14). This compares with the 47 weeks the previous year.

Table D.14: Average time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases disposed of in 2015

		Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	46
	Ards	32
	Armagh and South Down	49
	Belfast	58
	Craigavon	47
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	62
	Londonderry	57
	Total	52

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, office disposals and cases dealt with by the Civil Processing Centre.

The average time interval in weeks for civil bill applications disposed of in 2015 was 11 weeks, 2 weeks more than the length of time for applications disposed of in 2014, which was 9 weeks.

Table D.15: Average time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications disposed of in 2015

		Issue to disposal
Applications	Antrim	10
	Ards	8
	Armagh and South Down	13
	Belfast	13
	Craigavon	13
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	10
	Londonderry	6
	Total	11

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, office disposals and cases dealt with by the Civil Processing Centre.

Section 5: Equity

During 2015, there were 130 equity cases received, a decrease of 4% from 2014 (135 equity cases). There were also 64 equity applications received during 2015, an increase of 2% from 2014 (63 equity applications).

Table D.16: Equity cases and applications received in 2015

Cases	Antrim	11
	Ards	16
	Armagh and South Down	25
	Belfast	30
	Craigavon	8
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	26
	Londonderry	14
	Total	130
Applications	Antrim	5
	Ards	11
	Armagh and South Down	15
	Belfast	6
	Craigavon	3
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	19
	Londonderry	5
	Total	64

Table D.17 shows that there were 106 equity cases disposed of in 2015 which is 5% less than the 112 cases disposed of in 2014. During 2015, the majority of equity cases were disposed of in court (89%). 79% of cases were disposed of in court during 2014.

Table D.17: Equity cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		Court result	Non court disposals	Total
Cases	Antrim	9	4	13
	Ards	11	1	12
	Armagh and South Down	6	2	8
	Belfast	32	1	33
	Craigavon	5	-	5
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	20	3	23
	Londonderry	11	1	12
	Total	94	12	106
Applications	Antrim	3	2	5
	Ards	8	-	8
	Armagh and South Down	8	3	11
	Belfast	2	3	5
	Craigavon	1	2	3
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	13	3	16
	Londonderry	3	2	5
	Total	38	15	53

Table D.18 shows the time intervals for equity cases and applications from date of issue to date of disposal for each county court division. On average, for cases disposed of during 2015, it took 77 weeks for an equity case to progress through the county courts. In 2014, the corresponding figure was 74 weeks.

Table D.18: Average time intervals in weeks for equity cases disposed of in 2015

		Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	83
	Ards	61
	Armagh and South Down	63
	Belfast	59
	Craigavon	71
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	108
	Londonderry	96
	Total	77
Applications	Antrim	34
	Ards	9
	Armagh and South Down	17
	Belfast	15
	Craigavon	1
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	11
	Londonderry	20
	Total	14

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, and office disposals.

Section 6: Ejectment

There were 973 ejectment cases received during 2015 compared with 982 in 2014 – a decrease of 1% (Table D.19).

58% of ejectment cases were received in Belfast in 2015, the same percentage as the previous year (58%).

Table D.19: Ejectment cases received in 2015

Cases	Antrim	67
	Ards	137
	Armagh and South Down	31
	Belfast	565
	Craigavon	86
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	42
	Londonderry	45
	Total	973

In 2015, there were 834 ejectment cases disposed of in the county court compared with 799 the previous year – an increase of 4% (Table D.20). The majority of ejectment cases were disposed of in court – 98% of cases in 2015 and 97% of cases in 2014.

Table D.20: Ejectment cases disposed of in 2015

		Court result	Non court disposals	Total
Cases	Antrim	58	5	63
	Ards	128	-	128
	Armagh and South Down	27	1	28
	Belfast	452	3	455
	Craigavon	85	-	85
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	32	4	36
	Londonderry	34	5	39
	Total	816	18	834

Table D.21 shows the average time in weeks for ejectment cases to progress through the courts during 2015. On average, it took 19 weeks for a case from date of issue to date of disposal in 2015. This was the same number of weeks as the previous year.

Table D.21: Average time intervals in weeks for ejectment cases disposed of in 2015

		Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	17
	Ards	17
	Armagh and South Down	21
	Belfast	19
	Craigavon	19
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	19
	Londonderry	15
	Total	19

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, and office disposals.

Section 7: Small claims

Table D.22 shows that the number of small claims cases received was 11,002 in 2015, a decrease of 4% from 11,514 in 2014. There were 208 applications received in small claims during 2015 compared with 250 in 2014 – a decrease of 17%.

Table D.22: Number of small claims cases and applications received in 2015

Cases	Antrim	174
	Ards	218
	Armagh and South Down	133
	Belfast	10090
	Craigavon	118
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	139
	Londonderry	130
	Total	11002
Applications	Antrim	20
	Ards	16
	Armagh and South Down	12
	Belfast	103
	Craigavon	21
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	14
	Londonderry	22
	Total	208

In 2015, there were 1,415 small claims cases with a Notice of Dispute received which was a decrease of 10% from the previous year (1,569).

Table D.23: Number of small claims cases with a Notice of Dispute received in 2015

Cases	Antrim	172
	Ards	194
	Armagh and South Down	117
	Belfast	586
	Craigavon	97
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	134
	Londonderry	115
Total	1415	

In total, 9,751 small claims cases were disposed of in 2015. This was a decrease of 4% on the 10,112 cases disposed of during 2014 (Table D.24).

Table D.24: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed of in 2015

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Default judgment	Total
Cases	Antrim	134	48	4	186
	Ards	146	66	1	213
	Armagh and South Down	118	17	5	140
	Belfast	460	210	18	688
	Civil Processing Centre	-	1847	6236	8083
	Craigavon	117	24	3	144
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	122	23	6	151
	Londonderry	129	15	2	146
	Total	1226	2250	6275	9751
Applications	Antrim	9	2	-	11
	Ards	13	3	-	16
	Armagh and South Down	11	1	-	12
	Belfast	67	15	-	82
	Civil Processing Centre	-	2	-	2
	Craigavon	16	2	-	18
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	6	2	-	8
	Londonderry	15	1	-	16
	Total	137	28	-	165

Table D.25 shows that during 2015, it took on average 22 weeks for a small claims case to progress from date of issue to date of disposal, more than in 2014 (20 weeks).

Table D.25: Average time intervals in weeks for small claims cases disposed of in 2015

		Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	20
	Ards	18
	Armagh and South Down	26
	Belfast	23
	Craigavon	22
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	23
	Londonderry	22
	Total	22
Applications	Antrim	7
	Ards	5
	Armagh and South Down	9
	Belfast	7
	Craigavon	9
	Fermanagh and Tyrone	8
	Londonderry	6
	Total	7

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, office disposals and cases dealt with by the Civil Processing Centre.

Section 8: Divorce cases

There were 1,613 decrees granted in undefended divorce cases in the county court in 2015 (Table D.26). The number of decrees granted has increased by 30% from 1,244 in 2014.

Table D.26: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted in 2015

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/ other	Total
Antrim	149	121	7	38	29	344
Ards	112	61	2	14	20	209
Armagh and South Down	60	46	4	16	11	137
Belfast	192	149	7	29	28	405
Craigavon	100	74	6	15	24	219
Fermanagh and Tyrone	60	42	-	9	10	121
Londonderry	76	65	1	24	12	178
Total	749	558	27	145	134	1613

Table D.27: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued in 2015

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/ other	Total
Antrim	124	101	6	29	25	285
Ards	89	50	1	14	15	169
Armagh and South Down	53	39	3	19	7	121
Belfast	196	145	6	26	28	401
Craigavon	88	62	4	18	24	196
Fermanagh and Tyrone	62	41	-	11	9	123
Londonderry	71	60	3	34	16	184
Total	683	498	23	151	124	1479

In 2015, there were 1,479 decrees absolute issued compared with 1,358 the previous year – an increase of 9%.

Tables D.28 and D.29 show that there were 244 matrimonial applications received and 148 disposed of during 2015. Comparable figures in 2014 were 295 and 181 respectively.

Table D.28: Matrimonial applications received in 2015

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application	Other	Total
Antrim	44	2	3	49
Ards	12	-	-	12
Armagh and South Down	30	-	4	34
Belfast	17	1	74	92
Craigavon	15	1	4	20
Fermanagh and Tyrone	12	-	2	14
Londonderry	18	1	4	23
Total	148	5	91	244

Table D.29: Matrimonial applications disposed of in 2015

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application	Other	Total
Antrim	36	1	3	40
Ards	5	-	-	5
Armagh and South Down	20	-	3	23
Belfast	13	1	2	16
Craigavon	14	2	2	18
Fermanagh and Tyrone	16	-	2	18
Londonderry	22	-	6	28
Total	126	4	18	148

County court divorce petitions took on average 33 weeks from date of issue to the date decree nisi granted in 2015, the same as in 2014. Matrimonial applications took on average 38 weeks to progress through the county courts during 2015 compared to 53 weeks in 2014.

Table D.30: Average time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions in 2015

	Issue to date decree nisi granted	Date decree nisi granted to date absolute issued
Antrim	29	11
Ards	34	10
Armagh and South Down	30	12
Belfast	31	10
Craigavon	37	10
Fermanagh and Tyrone	42	12
Londonderry	36	12
Total	33	11

Table D.31: Average time intervals in weeks for matrimonial applications in 2015

	Issue to disposal
Antrim	23
Ards	25
Armagh and South Down	31
Belfast	50
Craigavon	28
Fermanagh and Tyrone	53
Londonderry	59
Total	38

Section 9: Court sitting days and court sitting times

Table D.32 shows that there were 4,170 court sitting days in 2015. This is a 4% decrease on the 4,339 court sitting days in 2014.

54% of the county court judges and district judges sitting time was spent on criminal cases, 31% of time was spent on civil cases and 16% of time was spent on family cases in 2015. In 2014, the proportion of time spent on each of these court areas was 59%, 27% and 14% respectively.

Table D.32: County court judge and district judge sitting days and court sitting times in 2015 (hrs : mins)

	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Total court time	Total court criminal time	Total court civil time	Total family time
Antrim	466	2:38	1228:10	838:14	334:48	55:08
Ards	409	2:38	1079:27	658:59	397:32	22:56
Armagh and South Down	476	2:59	1416:23	951:40	420:56	43:47
Belfast	1466	2:51	4178:59	1676:10	1473:26	1029:23
Craigavon	464	2:51	1322:34	683:27	288:55	350:12
Fermanagh and Tyrone	465	3:18	1533:53	981:59	406:04	145:50
Londonderry	413	2:33	1055:47	528:58	336:15	190:34
High Court	11	1:48	19:50	19:50	0:00	0:00
Total	4170	2:50	11835:03	6339:17	3657:56	1837:50

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.

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

Part E: The Magistrates' Court

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. Over half 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 of 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.

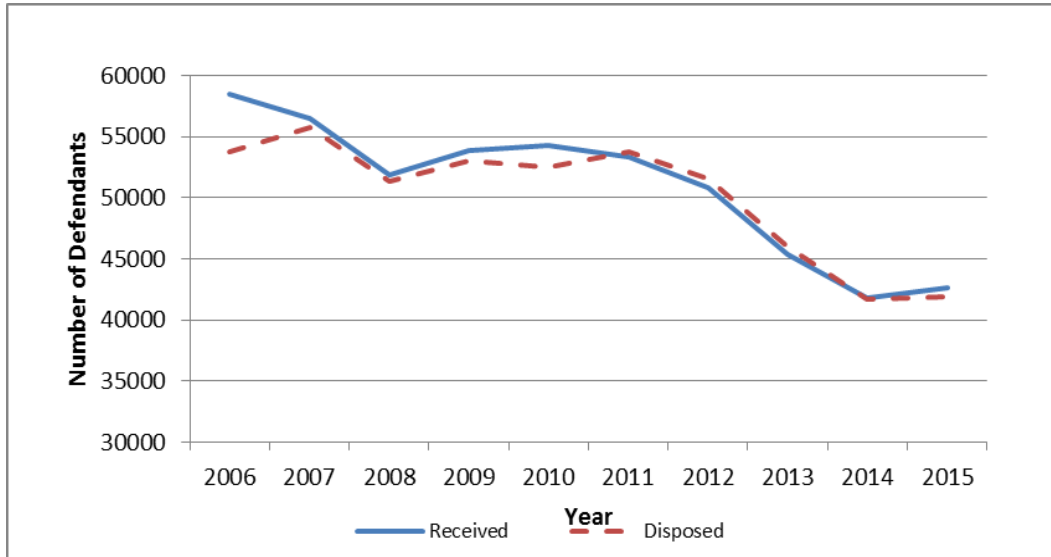
Magistrates' courts can deal with a limited number of civil cases as follows:-

- 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.

Key Facts

- Adult criminal defendants received and disposed have fluctuated over the last 10 years, with peaks in the numbers of defendants received in 2006, and in the number disposed in 2007 (see Figure E.1).

Figure E.1: Criminal Adult Magistrates Defendants Received and Disposed from 2006 to 2015



- Adult and Youth criminal defendants received have decreased by 20% and 36% respectively between 2011 and 2015 with an increase of 2% and a decrease of 13% being observed respectively between 2014 and 2015. The decreases since 2012 are largely a result of the introduction of Penalty Notices of Disorder which were introduced on 6th June 2012. These are new diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court. The number of defendants received is affected by crime rates, Police arrests and the decision by the PPS to prosecute. For more information on Police and PPS figures, please follow the links below:
http://www.psnipolice.uk/index/updates/updates_statistics.htm
<http://www.ppsni.gov.uk>
- Adult criminal disposals have decreased by 22% and Youth disposals have decreased by 38% between 2011 and 2015 with an increase of less than 1% and a decrease of 9% being observed respectively between 2014 and 2015.
- Average waiting times between a summons/charge and disposal in both the Adult and Youth courts decreased by 16% and 12% respectively between 2011 and 2015. However between 2014 and 2015 average waiting times increased by 3% and 10% respectively.
- Civil & Family business received decreased year on year between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 22%. Between 2014 and 2015 Civil & Family business received decreased by 11%. Disposals have followed the same pattern as the receipts, decreasing each year between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 22%. Between 2014 and 2015 disposals have also decreased by 11%.

Note: Received – number of defendants received into court by way of Summons or Police charge sheet.
 Disposed – number of defendants who have reached the end of the court process.

- Average waiting times between first hearing and disposal for Civil & Family business have fluctuated over the last five years, with an overall increase of 2% between 2011 and 2015.
- Experimental statistics on cracked and ineffective trials at the magistrates' court, relating to both Adult and Youth criminal defendants, have been published in Appendix 2.
- The link below provides comparative figures for 2014:
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Summary Table 12: Adult, youth and civil magistrates' courts 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Adult criminal defendants received	53,320	50,813	45,313	41,764	42,645
Adult criminal defendants disposed	53,772	51,522	45,944	41,709	41,868
Average waiting time between summons/charge and disposal – adults (wks)	12.5	11.3	10.6	10.2	10.5
Youth criminal defendants received	2,799	2,413	2,241	2,035	1,780
Youth criminal defendants disposed	3,023	2,486	2,256	2,050	1,874
Average waiting time between summons/charge and disposal – youths (wks)	16.2	15.0	13.9	13.0	14.3
Civil & Family business received	6,380	6,192	5,768	5,569	4,962
Civil & Family business disposed	5,755	5,453	5,187	5,057	4,478
Average civil and family waiting time between first hearing to disposal (wks) ^[1]	6.1	5.8	6.5	6.2	6.2

[1] Information on the average civil and family waiting time is only available from 2007 onwards when this information was recorded on the ICOS system.

Magistrates Court – 2015 Data

Section 1: Business volumes received in the magistrates' court

In 2015, there were 42,645 adult defendants received, which represents a 2% increase from the 41,764 received in 2014. In the youth court, there were 1,780 defendants received, a 13% decrease from the 2,035 received in 2014 (Table E.1).

Table E.1: Business volumes received in adult criminal, youth and civil courts in 2015

		Number of adult defendants	Number of youth defendants	Number of civil applications
Antrim	Antrim	1455	50	158
	Ballymena	1668	41	398
	Coleraine	2074	63	188
	Division Total	5197	154	744
Ards	Downpatrick	1512	53	129
	Newtownards	3399	185	468
	Division Total	4911	238	597
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	1084	30	117
	Banbridge@ Newry	767	23	100
	Newry	2700	105	291
	Division Total	4551	158	508
Belfast	Belfast	12321	579	1799
	Division Total	12321	579	1799
Craigavon	Craigavon	2739	86	231
	Lisburn	2168	60	227
	Division Total	4907	146	458
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	2035	64	90
	Enniskillen	1250	76	116
	Omagh	1348	51	109
	Strabane	1103	22	71
	Division Total	5736	213	386
Londonderry	Limavady	661	20	12
	Londonderry	3630	236	436
	Magherafelt	731	36	22
	Division Total	5022	292	470
Northern Ireland		42645	1780	4962

Section 2: Adult criminal business disposed of

There were 41,868 defendants disposed of in 2015, an increase of less than 1% from the 41,709 disposed of in 2014. Belfast accounted for 29% of the business; in contrast, Armagh and South Down division disposed of 11% of adult defendants (Table E.2). Corresponding figures for 2014 were 29% and 10% respectively.

Table E.2: Number of adult defendants disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2015

		Number of adult defendants	Divisional % of NI Total
Antrim	Antrim	1434	
	Ballymena	1622	
	Coleraine	2011	
	Division Total	5067	12.1
Ards	Downpatrick	1552	
	Newtownards	3447	
	Division Total	4999	11.9
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	1014	
	Banbridge@Newry	781	
	Newry	2623	
	Division Total	4418	10.6
Belfast	Belfast	11970	
	Division Total	11970	28.6
Craigavon	Craigavon	2654	
	Lisburn	2169	
	Division Total	4823	11.5
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	2063	
	Enniskillen	1188	
	Omagh	1324	
	Strabane	1110	
	Division Total	5685	13.6
Londonderry	Limavady	669	
	Londonderry	3550	
	Magherafelt	687	
	Division Total	4906	11.7
Northern Ireland		41868	100

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

Table E.3 shows the types of charges disposed of in 2015. In total, there were 88,932 charges disposed of, which is an increase of less than 1% from 88,833 in 2014. PSNI/PPS prosecutions accounted for 84% of charges in 2015 (75,142), less than the 87% in 2014 (77,112).

Table E.3: Number and type of charges brought for defendants disposed of in 2015

	PSNI/PPS Prosecution	Departmental Prosecution	Fixed Penalty	Penalty notice for Disorder	Total
Indictable charges	2855	5	-	-	2860
Hybrid charges	25347	2125	-	4	27476
Indictable triable summarily charges	11127	42	-	40	11209
Summary charges	35813	11420	112	42	47387
Total	75142	13592	112	86	88932

Figures are based on the number of charges disposed.

The class on ICOS is based on the police classification. Major & minor motoring charges have been counted in either summary, indictable, indictable triable summarily or hybrid.

Table E.4 shows the outcomes of defendants disposed of in 2015. 37% of defendants pleaded guilty on all charges compared with 41% in 2014.

Tables E.4: Outcomes of defendants disposed of in 2015

	PSNI/PPS Prosecution	Departmental Prosecution	Fixed Penalty	Penalty notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to Crown Court	1829	-	-	-	1829
Plea of guilty on all charges	13734	1707	-	-	15441
All charges withdrawn	5793	3589	-	-	9382
Fixed Penalty default	-	-	112	-	112
Penalty Notice for Disorder Default	-	-	-	86	86
Plea not guilty – found guilty on at least one charge	7787	5192	-	-	12979
Plea not guilty – acquitted on all charges	1769	270	-	-	2039
Total	30912	10758	112	86	41868

Figures are based on the number of defendants disposed.

Table E.5 shows there were 114,351 final orders granted in the magistrates' adult court in 2015, a decrease of 1% from 115,617 in 2014.

Table E.5: Types of disposals from the magistrates' adult court in 2015

	Northern Ireland
Community Orders	4900
Custodial Orders	11917
Monetary Orders	31800
Non-Custodial Orders	5035
Road Traffic Orders	16100
Withdrawn	26432
Other Final Orders	18167
Total	114351

Figures are based on the number of final orders.

Table E.6 shows the average waiting time in Northern Ireland for adult defendants disposed of in 2015 between the date of summons and the date of first hearing was 5 weeks (5 weeks in 2014 also). The average waiting time between the date of first hearing and disposal was 6 weeks. This was the same as in 2014.

Table E.6: Average waiting times in weeks for adult defendants disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2015

		Summons/ charge to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Summons to disposal (weeks)
Antrim	Antrim	5.2	4.0	4.7	9.9
	Ballymena	5.4	5.9	6.8	12.2
	Coleraine	4.9	3.9	4.5	9.3
	Division Total	5.1	4.6	5.3	10.4
Ards	Downpatrick	4.9	6.5	7.1	12.0
	Newtownards	5.1	5.0	5.6	10.6
	Division Total	5.0	5.4	6.1	11.1
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	4.5	5.1	5.6	10.2
	Banbridge@ Newry	4.6	5.4	5.9	10.4
	Newry	5.7	5.0	5.3	11.0
	Division Total	5.2	5.1	5.5	10.7
Belfast	Belfast	4.6	4.6	5.4	10.0
	Division Total	4.6	4.6	5.4	10.0
Craigavon	Craigavon	4.8	6.1	6.8	11.7
	Lisburn	4.9	6.0	7.0	11.9
	Division Total	4.9	6.0	6.9	11.8
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	4.6	7.0	7.9	12.5
	Enniskillen	4.0	4.3	5.1	9.0
	Omagh	4.9	3.2	3.5	8.4
	Strabane	4.5	4.0	4.6	9.0
	Division Total	4.5	5.0	5.6	10.1
Londonderry	Limavady	4.7	3.5	4.2	8.9
	Londonderry	4.8	4.8	5.7	10.5
	Magherafelt	5.2	3.8	4.4	9.6
	Division Total	4.8	4.5	5.3	10.1
Northern Ireland		4.8	5.0	5.7	10.5

Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences are excluded.

Section 3: Youth criminal business disposed of

In 2015, there were 1,874 youth defendants disposed of, with 33% disposed of in Belfast compared to 9% in Craigavon (Table E.7). This represents a 9% decrease from the total disposed of in 2014 (2,050), when 36% were disposed of in Belfast and 8% in Craigavon.

Table E.7: Number of defendants disposed of in the youth court in 2015

		Number of youth defendants	Divisional % NI Total
Antrim	Antrim	54	
	Ballymena	52	
	Coleraine	67	
	Division Total	173	9.2
Ards	Downpatrick	59	
	Newtownards	214	
	Division Total	273	14.6
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	31	
	Banbridge@ Newry	24	
	Newry	98	
	Division Total	153	8.2
Belfast	Belfast	625	
	Division Total	625	33.4
Craigavon	Craigavon	94	
	Lisburn	80	
	Division Total	174	9.3
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	54	
	Enniskillen	76	
	Omagh	47	
	Strabane	25	
	Division Total	202	10.8
Londonderry	Limavady	19	
	Londonderry	210	
	Magherafelt	45	
	Division Total	274	14.6
Northern Ireland		1874	100

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

Table E.8 shows the types of charges disposed of in 2015 for youth defendants. In total, there were 4,661 charges disposed of in 2015. This represents a 0.1% increase from 4,657 charges disposed in 2014.

Table E.8: Number and type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of in 2015

	PSNI/PPS Prosecution	Departmental Prosecution	Fixed Penalty	Total
Indictable charges	144	-	-	144
Hybrid charges	2030	7	-	2037
Indictable triable summarily charges	852	-	-	852
Summary charges	1614	14	-	1628
Total	4640	21	-	4661

Figures are based on the number of charges disposed.

The class on ICOS is based on the police classification. Major & minor motoring charges have been counted in either summary, indictable, indictable triable summarily or hybrid.

Table E.9 shows the outcomes for youth defendants disposed of in 2015. 47% of youth defendants pleaded guilty on all charges compared with 45% in 2014.

Table E.9: Outcomes for youth defendants disposed of in 2015

	PSNI/PPS Prosecution	Departmental Prosecution	Fixed Penalty	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	21	-	-	21
Plea of guilty on all charges	877	5	-	882
All charges withdrawn	503	3	-	506
Fixed Penalty default	-	-	-	-
Plea not guilty – found guilty on at least one charge	373	-	-	373
Plea not guilty – acquitted on all	89	3	-	92
Total	1863	11	-	1874

Figures are based on the number of defendants disposed.

Table E.10 shows there were 5,658 final orders granted in the magistrates' youth court in 2015. This represents a 2% increase from 5,524 granted in 2014.

Table E.10: Types of disposals from the youth courts in 2015

	Northern Ireland
Community Orders	1519
Custodial Orders	735
Monetary Orders	210
Non-Custodial Orders	468
Road Traffic Orders	318
Withdrawn	1536
Other Final Orders	872
Total	5658

Figures are based on the number of final orders.

Table E.11 shows the average waiting time in Northern Ireland for youth defendants disposed of in the youth courts in 2015. The average waiting time between the date of summons to the date of first hearing in 2015 was 3 weeks (3 weeks in 2014). The average waiting time between the date of first hearing and finding was 7 weeks (6 weeks in 2014). The average waiting time from date of first hearing to date of disposal was 11 weeks (10 weeks in 2014).

Table E.11: Average waiting times in weeks for youth defendants disposed of in the youth courts in 2015

		Summons/ charge to first hearing	First hearing to finding (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Summons to disposal (weeks)
Antrim	Antrim	4.0	7.6	9.9	13.9
	Ballymena	3.2	10.0	11.4	14.6
	Coleraine	2.6	6.8	9.8	12.5
	Division Total	3.3	7.9	10.2	13.5
Ards	Downpatrick	3.5	5.3	8.4	11.9
	Newtownards	3.3	6.4	11.0	14.3
	Division Total	3.4	6.2	10.4	13.8
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	3.4	3.7	7.0	10.5
	Banbridge@ Newry	3.3	6.5	10.4	13.7
	Newry	2.5	4.0	8.2	10.7
	Division Total	2.8	4.3	8.3	11.1
Belfast	Belfast	2.4	7.6	12.6	15.0
	Division Total	2.4	7.6	12.6	15.0
Craigavon	Craigavon	2.7	8.3	12.2	14.8
	Lisburn	3.0	12.0	15.6	18.6
	Division Total	2.8	10.1	13.8	16.6
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	4.8	5.2	8.7	13.5
	Enniskillen	3.7	7.2	12.4	16.2
	Omagh	3.7	4.6	7.3	10.9
	Strabane	4.1	8.3	9.8	13.9
	Division Total	4.0	6.2	9.8	13.8
Londonderry	Limavady	4.0	1.9	5.6	9.6
	Londonderry	3.2	4.8	10.5	13.7
	Magherafelt	3.2	9.1	15.9	19.2
	Division Total	3.3	5.2	10.9	14.2
Northern Ireland		3.0	6.9	11.3	14.3

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

Section 4: Civil & Family business disposed of

There were 4,478 applications disposed of during 2015 (Table E.12). This represents an 11% decrease from 5,057 applications disposed of in 2014.

Table E.12: Number of civil & family applications disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2015

		Total
Antrim	Antrim	147
	Ballymena	369
	Coleraine	177
	Division Total	693
Ards	Downpatrick	146
	Newtownards	434
	Division Total	580
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	105
	Banbridge@ Newry	98
	Newry	274
	Division Total	477
Belfast	Belfast	1551
	Division Total	1551
Craigavon	Craigavon	205
	Lisburn	199
	Division Total	404
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	86
	Enniskillen	102
	Omagh	93
	Strabane	63
	Division Total	344
Londonderry	Limavady	9
	Londonderry	395
	Magherafelt	25
	Division Total	429
Northern Ireland		4478

Table E.13 shows the average waiting time in Northern Ireland in the civil and family magistrates' court from the date of issue to first hearing was 2 weeks (also 2 weeks in 2014). The average waiting time from the date of first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks. This was also 6 weeks in 2014. The average waiting time from date of issue to disposal was 8 weeks, this was 9 weeks in 2014.

Table E.13: Average waiting times in weeks in the civil and family magistrates' courts in 2015

		Date of issue to first hearing (weeks)	Date of first hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of issue to disposal (weeks)
Antrim	Antrim	1.4	5.6	7.1
	Ballymena	1.2	7.5	8.7
	Coleraine	1.9	5.1	7.0
	Division Total	1.4	6.5	7.9
Ards	Downpatrick	2.6	14.0	16.7
	Newtownards	1.8	6.3	8.1
	Division Total	2.0	8.3	10.2
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	1.6	4.6	6.2
	Banbridge@ Newry	2.1	4.5	6.6
	Newry	2.0	3.9	5.9
	Division Total	2.0	4.2	6.1
Belfast	Belfast	1.8	5.9	7.7
	Division Total	1.8	5.9	7.7
Craigavon	Craigavon	1.9	7.0	9.1
	Lisburn	0.7	9.8	14.9
	Division Total	1.3	8.4	11.9
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	2.1	2.5	4.6
	Enniskillen	1.9	6.5	11.0
	Omagh	1.8	2.4	4.1
	Strabane	1.2	2.6	3.8
	Division Total	1.8	3.7	6.2
Londonderry	Limavady	0.8	1.4	2.3
	Londonderry	1.8	5.9	7.7
	Magherafelt	1.8	7.2	9.0
	Division Total	1.8	5.9	7.7
Northern Ireland		1.7	6.2	8.2

There were 4,171 applications under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Order disposed of in 2015 (Table E.14), a 12% decrease from the 4,719 disposed of in 2014. The majority of applications were granted (60%) in 2015. This proportion was also 60% (2,810) the previous year.

Table E.14: Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in 2015

	Granted	Dismissed or refused	Withdrawn	Vary discharge	Other	Total
Non molestation	2501	618	593	367	15	4094
Occupation	13	6	19	1	1	40
Combination non-mol occupation	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vary discharge non-mol occupation	-	8	9	15	-	32
Other Family Homes & Domestic Violence	1	-	1	2	1	5
Total	2515	632	622	385	17	4171

Section 5: Court sittings and court sitting times

Tables E.15 and E.16 show the number of scheduled, additional and special court sittings and court sitting times in the magistrates' court in 2015. There were 4,317 scheduled and additional court sittings in the magistrates' court, a decrease of 3% from 4,443 scheduled and additional court sittings in 2014. The average court sitting time was 3 hours 25 minutes compared with 3 hours 29 minutes in 2014. There were 206 special court sittings in 2015, with an average sitting time of 35 minutes, compared to 243 special sittings in 2014 with an average sitting time of 32 minutes.

Table E.15: Scheduled and additional sittings and average sitting times in the magistrates' courts by division and venue in 2015 (hrs : mins)

		Adult		Youth		Civil & Family		Total number of sittings	
		Number of sittings	Average sitting time	Number of sittings	Average sitting time	Number of sittings	Average sitting time	Number of sittings	Average sitting time
Antrim	Antrim	68	3:54	22	2:31	23	2:05	113	3:16
	Ballymena	96	3:46	22	2:44	58	3:07	176	3:25
	Coleraine	147	3:32	25	2:25	40	3:40	212	3:25
	Total	311	3:41	69	2:33	121	3:06	501	3:23
Ards	Downpatrick	104	4:21	20	3:14	2	1:18	126	4:07
	Newtownards	248	3:09	24	3:21	151	2:45	423	3:01
	Total	352	3:30	44	3:18	153	2:44	549	3:16
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	78	4:01	18	2:40	2	3:20	98	3:46
	Banbridge@Newry	57	3:34	12	3:31	1	0:05	70	3:31
	Newry	144	3:00	20	2:18	68	3:38	232	3:08
	Total	279	3:24	50	2:44	71	3:35	400	3:21
Belfast	Belfast	850	2:52	151	3:18	313	3:12	1314	3:00
	Total	850	2:52	151	3:18	313	3:12	1314	3:00
Craigavon	Craigavon	149	5:08	19	3:12	65	3:04	233	4:24
	Lisburn	150	4:01	23	2:22	61	3:40	234	3:46
	Total	299	4:34	42	2:44	126	3:22	467	4:05
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	152	4:09	21	2:26	38	2:51	211	3:45
	Enniskillen	100	4:51	23	3:44	4	3:48	127	4:37
	Omagh	102	3:48	21	1:37	43	2:43	166	3:15
	Strabane	89	3:49	11	2:28	-	-	100	3:40
	Total	443	4:10	76	2:37	85	2:50	604	3:47
Londonderry	Limavady	51	3:00	-	-	-	-	51	3:00
	Londonderry	240	3:57	34	3:39	87	4:44	361	4:06
	Magherafelt	52	2:31	14	1:14	4	1:34	70	2:13
	Total	343	3:35	48	2:57	91	4:36	482	3:43
Northern Ireland		2877	3:33	480	2:56	960	3:16	4317	3:25

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 based on the earliest scheduled sitting, except when the start time for two or more sittings is the same, in which case the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Table E.16: Special sittings and average sitting times in the magistrates' courts by division and venue in 2015 (hrs : mins)

		Adult Criminal	
		Number of sittings	Average sitting time
Antrim	Ballymena	31	00:26
	Division Total	31	00:26
Ards	Downpatrick	1	00:45
	Newtownards	39	00:33
	Division total	40	00:33
Armagh & South Down	Newry	26	00:38
	Division Total	26	00:38
Belfast	Belfast	-	-
	Division Total	-	-
Craigavon	Lisburn	29	00:28
	Division Total	29	00:28
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	1	00:25
	Omagh	38	00:41
	Division Total	39	00:41
Londonderry	Londonderry	39	00:41
	Magherafelt	2	00:23
	Division Total	41	00:40
Northern Ireland		206	00:35

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 based on the earliest scheduled sitting, except when the start time for two or more sittings is the same, in which case the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Part F: The Children Order

The primary aim of the Children Order is to promote the welfare of children. The Order creates a clear, practical and consistent code of law governing the care, protection and upbringing of children and the provision of services to them and their families. It confers concurrent jurisdiction on all three tiers of the courts (High Court, county courts and magistrates' courts) so that subject to certain limited exceptions, any court can make any of the orders available under the Order. Under the Order the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration. When dealing with children, courts try to ensure that delay is avoided, and may only make an order if to do so is better than making no order at all.

All children order matters are dealt with at Family Proceedings Courts (which are part of the magistrates' courts), at Family Care Centres (which are part of the county courts) or in the Family Division (Office of Care & Protection) of the High Court. Matters affecting children are split into public and private law applications;

Public Law applications: are those brought by local authorities and include matters such as care, supervision and emergency protection orders.

Private Law applications: are those brought by private individuals, generally in connection with divorce or the parents' separation. Order types include parental responsibility, residence, financial provision and article 8 contact applications.

Key facts

- Applications lodged increased between 2011 and 2012 by 7%, before decreasing year on year between 2012 and 2015. Applications lodged decreased by 8% overall between 2011 and 2015.
- Applications disposed fluctuated between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 4%. Between 2014 and 2015 applications disposed decreased by 10%.
- The number of children involved also fluctuated between 2011 and 2015. There was an overall increase of 13% between 2011 and 2015, however approximately 90% (815 out of 909) of this increase was due to a change in measurement of 'children involved' introduced in 2012 to include those children entered as 'respondent child' on the ICOS system.
- **A change in the counting methodology for orders made was introduced in 2016, and therefore a comparison of figures in tables F.4, F.5 and F.6 with previous Judicial Statistics publications should not be made. A back series of data based on the new counting methodology is available via the following link:**
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>
For more information please see details on page 18 or alternatively contact the statistician responsible for this publication.
- The number of court sitting days decreased by 8% between 2011 and 2012 but then increased each year between 2012 and 2015. There was an overall increase of 7% between 2011 and 2015.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2014:
<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Summary Table 13: Children Order 2011 to 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Applications lodged	5,689	6,091	5,777	5,715	5,223
Applications disposed	5,357	5,460	5,373	5,734	5,140
Children involved ^[1]	6,777	7,668	7,591	8,413	7,686
Number of court sitting days	1,814	1,673	1,712	1,815	1,936

^[1] In 2012, there was a change in measurement of children involved to include children entered as 'respondent child' on ICOS. In 2014 this accounted for 950 children and in 2015 this accounted for 815 children of the total.

Children Order – 2015 Data

Section 1: Applications entered and disposed of

Tables F.1 and F.2, show that a total of 5,223 applications were received in designated courts in 2015. This was a decrease of 9% from 5,715 in 2014. The majority of business (94%) was lodged in family proceedings courts, with 3% lodged in the High Court and 3% lodged in family care centres. In 2014, 93% of business was lodged in family proceedings courts, 3% in the High Court and 4% lodged in family care centres.

Of the 5,140 applications disposed of in 2015, the family proceedings court accounted for 85% of all business dealt with, the High Court accounted for 3% and family care centres accounted for 12%. In 2014, 89% of business was dealt with in the family proceedings court, while the High Court accounted for 2% and family care centres accounted for 9%. The total number of applications disposed of in 2015 decreased by 10% compared with 2014 (5,734).

Table F.1: Applications received and disposed of in 2015

		Number of applications received	Number of disposals
Public Law^[1]	Family Proceedings Court	615	476
	Family Care Centre	35	189
	High Court	23	40
	Total	673	705
Private Law^[2]	Family Proceedings Court	4276	3897
	Family Care Centre	130	429
	High Court	144	109
	Total	4550	4435

^[1]Public law = care, supervision, child assessment, education supervision, emergency protection orders, extensions, contact with children in care, secure accommodation.

^[2]Private law = residence, contact, specific issues, prohibited steps, parental responsibility, financial contribution, guardianship, family assistance, non-molestation and occupation orders.

Table F.2: Applications received and disposed of by venue in 2015

		Public Law ^[1]		Private Law ^[2]	
		Number of applications entered	Number of disposals	Number of applications entered	Number of disposals
Family Proceedings Court	Antrim	-	-	17	14
	Armagh	-	-	1	2
	Ballymena	63	52	439	390
	Belfast	186	141	1396	1243
	Coleraine	-	-	24	19
	Craigavon	43	21	306	235
	Downpatrick	-	-	6	5
	Dungannon	73	62	215	195
	Enniskillen	-	-	2	1
	Lisburn	37	24	414	384
	Londonderry	72	57	437	378
	Newry	53	32	311	324
	Newtownards	87	86	701	699
	Omagh	1	1	7	8
	Venue total	615	476	4276	3897
Family Care Centre	Belfast	19	108	89	276
	Craigavon	11	59	34	120
	Dungannon	5	9	4	10
	Londonderry	-	13	3	23
	Venue total	35	189	130	429
High Court	Royal Courts of Justice	23	40	144	109
	Venue total	23	40	144	109
Northern Ireland		673	705	4550	4435

^[1]Public law = care, supervision, child assessment, education supervision, emergency protection orders, extensions, contact with children in care, secure accommodation.

^[2]Private law = residence, contact, specific issues, prohibited steps, parental responsibility, financial contribution, guardianship, family assistance, non-molestation and occupation orders.

Section 2: Reasons for transfer

Complexity accounted for 65% of the reasons quoted for the transfer of cases between courts in 2015 (Table F.3) – 2 percentage points more than in 2014 when 63% (424 out of 677 transfers) were recorded.

Table F.3: Reasons for transfer in 2015

	Complexity	Consolidation	Convenience	Gravity	Jurisdiction	Returned to Lower Court	Separate Representation for Child	Urgency	Point of Law	Public Interest	Other	Total
Family Proceedings Court	352	78	4	7	61	-	3	14	7	1	-	527
Family Care Centre	45	8	8	2	6	9	-	3	1	-	-	82
High Court	-	1	1	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	6
Northern Ireland	397	87	13	9	67	13	3	17	8	1	-	615

Where a court tier / venue is omitted, this indicates a nil return for the period to date.

There may be more than one reason for each case.

From April 2009 data collection methods for transfers changed to incorporate a wider range of reasons.

Section 3: Own motion orders and interim orders

There were 758 own motion orders granted in 2015 based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level. This was a decrease of 31% when comparing with revised figures for 2014 (based on the new methodology) when 1,093 own motion orders were granted at the application level. To view the back series of orders data using the new methodology please click on the link below Table F.4 below. Appointment of Guardian ad Litem accounted for 24% and Article 8 Contact orders accounted for 20% of orders made while residence orders and care orders both accounted for 8% of own motion orders in 2015 (Table F.4).

Table F.4: Own motion orders granted in 2015 (application level)

	Own motion orders
Appointment of Guardian ad Litem	179
Article 8 Contact	151
Care	62
Child Assessment	7
Contact with a child in care	-
Declaration of Parentage	-
Education Supervision	6
Emergency Protection	2
Extension of Emergency Protection Order	2
Family Assistance	1
Non-Molestation Order	-
Occupation Articles	-
Other orders, applications etc	210
Parental Responsibility	8
Prohibited Steps	23
Recovery	1
Residence	62
Secure Accommodation	8
Specific Issues	31
Supervision	5
Total	758

These figures may also include some interim orders.

Please note that a new methodology to count orders at the **application level** was introduced. For more information please see page 18 of this publication. Comparisons with previous Judicial Statistics Publications should not be made. A back series of data using the new counting methodology is available at the following location:

<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

There were 8,851 interim orders made during 2015, which was a decrease of 7% on the previous year (9,535) based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level, 39% were interim care orders and 48% were interim/short term Article 8 Contact orders (Table F.5). To view the back series of orders data using the new methodology please click on the link below Table F.5 below.

Table F.5: Interim orders granted in 2015 (application level)

	Interim orders
Appointment of Guardian ad Litem	-
Article 8 Contact	4257
Care	3486
Child Assessment	-
Contact with a child in care	-
Contact with a child in care - refusal	1
Contribution and other Financial	-
Education Supervision	-
Emergency Protection	-
Extension of Emergency Protection Order	-
Family Assistance	-
Financial Provision	-
Non-Molestation Order	2
Occupation Articles	-
Other orders, applications etc	-
Parental Responsibility	15
Prohibited Steps	171
Recovery	-
Residence	567
Secure Accommodation	153
Specific Issues	16
Supervision	183
Total	8851

Please note that a new methodology to count orders at the **application level** was introduced. For more information please see page 18 of this publication. Comparisons with previous Judicial Statistics Publications should not be made. A back series of data using the new counting methodology is available at the following location:

<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Section 4: Final Orders Made

There were 7,547 final orders made in 2015, a decrease of 11% from 8,482 in 2014 based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level (Table F.6). In 2015, Article 8 Contact orders accounted for 27% and residence orders 14%. To view the back series of orders data using the new methodology please click on the link below Table F.6 below.

Table F.6: Final Orders Made – 2015 (application level)

Adjourn Generally	24
Article 3 Legal Aid granted	454
Article 8 Contact	2025
Care Order	280
Contact with a child in care	26
Declaration of Parentage	32
Discharge of a Care Order	41
Discharge Interim Contact Order	68
Discharge Non-Molestation/Occupation Order	1
Discharge Prohibited Steps Order	29
Discharge Residence Order	18
Dismissed	347
Education Supervision	63
Emergency Protection Order	58
Emergency Protection Order – out of hours	7
Extension of an Emergency Protection Order	23
Family Assistance Order	11
Financial Provision	19
Leave to change surname by which the child is known	7
Non-molestation order	4
Order of No Order (Final Order)	67
Other Order	1096
Parental Responsibility Order	145
Prohibited steps	185
Recovery of a child	12
Refusal of Article 3 Legal Aid Certificate	36
Residence Order	1082
Residence and Contact Order	12
Secure Accommodation Order	20
Specific Issues	211
Strike Out Order	168
Supervision Order	66
Terminating Appointment of Guardian Ad Litem	374
Withdrawn	536
Total	7547

NB C18 Final Orders were removed as an order on ICOS in September 2009.

Please note that a new methodology to count orders at the **application level** was introduced. For more information please see page 18 of this publication. Comparisons with previous Judicial Statistics Publications should not be made. A back series of data using the new counting methodology is available at the following location:

<http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Section 5: Age and gender of children

There were a total of 7,686 children involved in Children Order cases during 2015. In total, 37% of these were aged 0-4 and 31% were aged 5-8 (Table F.7).

Table F.7: Age and gender of children in applications disposed of in 2015

	0-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	Total
Male	1505	1205	806	459	3975
Female	1351	1201	702	445	3699
Unknown	8	1	2	1	12
Total ^[1]	2864	2407	1510	905	7686

^[1] In 2012, there was a change in measurement of children involved to include children entered as 'respondent child' on ICOS. In 2015 this accounted for 815 children of the total.

Section 6: Average time in weeks from lodgement to disposal by venue

The average disposal times for private law cases in 2015 was 31 weeks in the High Court, 51 weeks in the family care centres and 21 weeks in the family proceedings courts. In 2014, the corresponding average disposal times were 23 weeks in the High Court, 38 weeks in family care centres and 22 weeks in the family proceedings courts. Disposal times of cases in the High Court and the family care centres will include the time spent at the lower courts if cases were transferred (Table F.8).

Table F.8: Average time in weeks from lodgement to disposal by venue in 2015

		Public law		Private law	
		Average time weeks	Number of cases	Average time weeks	Number of cases
Family Proceedings Court	Antrim	-	-	10.7	14
	Armagh	-	-	17.5	2
	Ballymena	40.6	52	26.0	390
	Belfast	26.2	141	18.5	1243
	Coleraine	-	-	10.4	19
	Craigavon	29.4	21	14.1	235
	Downpatrick	-	-	9.3	5
	Dungannon	27.8	62	14.9	195
	Enniskillen	-	-	0.0	1
	Lisburn	21.8	24	17.2	384
	Londonderry	35.4	57	30.4	378
	Newry	25.5	32	24.7	324
	Newtownards	23.8	86	24.7	699
	Omagh	2.0	1	13.8	8
	Total	28.5	476	21.4	3897
Family Care Centre	Belfast	44.5	108	50.9	276
	Craigavon	54.4	59	51.8	120
	Dungannon	46.3	9	38.5	10
	Londonderry	72.8	13	59.6	23
		Total	49.6	189	51.3
High Court	Royal Courts of Justice	63.1	40	30.8	109
	Total	63.1	40	30.8	109
Northern Ireland		36.1	705	24.5	4435

The time shown will include the time taken at the first court tier.

Section 7: Court sittings and court sitting times

Table F.9 shows the number of sittings where any Children Order business was heard in court. During 2015, the family proceedings courts sat for over 2,807 hours, a decrease of 14% on the 3,268 hours in 2014. This was 58% of the total court sitting time for the Children Order in 2015 (61% in 2014).

Table F.9: Court sittings and court sitting times in 2015 (hrs : mins)

		Total court sitting time	Average Children Order court sitting time	Number of court sittings
Family Proceedings Court	Antrim	55:25	2:13	25
	Armagh	0:15	0:15	1
	Ballymena	162:55	2:51	57
	Banbridge@Newry	0:20	0:20	1
	Belfast	857:43	3:13	267
	Coleraine	140:05	3:53	36
	Craigavon	157:55	3:13	49
	Downpatrick	0:05	0:05	1
	Dungannon	115:30	2:53	40
	Lisburn	198:15	2:41	74
	Londonderry	407:45	4:41	87
	Magherafelt	2:35	2:35	1
	Newry	222:40	3:29	64
	Newtownards	371:25	2:34	145
	Omagh	114:53	2:44	42
Venue total	2807:46	3:09	890	
Family Care Centre	Antrim	1:03	0:32	2
	Belfast	940:43	2:33	370
	Craigavon	304:40	2:38	116
	Dungannon	55:33	3:16	17
	Lisburn	0:15	0:15	1
	Londonderry	134:04	3:12	42
	Newry	4:35	4:35	1
	Omagh	35:55	2:46	13
	Venue total	1476:48	2:38	562
High Court	Royal Courts of Justice	581:08	1:12	484
	Venue total	581:08	1:12	484
Northern Ireland		4865:42	2:31	1936

A court sitting 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.

Children Order sittings refer to a sitting where any Children Order business is heard. Total Children Order time includes all time spent on Children Order business.

High Court Judges, county court judges and district judges (magistrates' court) sit on Children Order business.

Part G: Miscellaneous

The Enforcement of Judgments Office

The Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO) is essentially a centralised unit for enforcing judgments of the courts. The EJO's powers and procedures are contained in the Judgments Enforcement (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, and Judgment Enforcement Rules (Northern Ireland) 1981. The EJO also enforces other types of civil judgments such as those that are connected with the possession of land and property.

Social Security Commissioners and Child Support Commissioners

Social Security Commissioners hear appeals from Appeal Tribunals in relation to matters arising under the social security system. Child Support Commissioners hear appeals from Child Support Appeal Tribunals.

Pensions Appeal Tribunal

This Tribunal hears appeals from ex-servicemen or women who have had their claims for a War Pension rejected by the Secretary of State for Defence. Its jurisdiction covers Northern Ireland. The Tribunal is independent from the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. Hearings have been in existence, as part of the Lord Chancellor's responsibility, since the War Pensions Act 1919.

The War Pensions Scheme started in 1918 and continues in respect of injuries that occurred before 5 April 2005. For injuries after 5 April 2005 a new Scheme, the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme applies. The Tribunal deals with appeals for both Schemes.

The War Pensions Scheme

- Whether a person is entitled to a War Pension;
- The percentage at which the War Pensions Agency has assessed a person's disablement; or
- Whether a person is entitled to an allowance e.g. for mobility needs.

Or

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

- Whether a person is entitled to an award; or
- The amount of the award.

These Tribunals deal with appeals against certain decisions the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency have made on War Disablement Pensions. A Tribunal normally consists of three members – a qualified lawyer, a qualified medical practitioner and a member who served in the armed forces. **It is independent of the Government and, in particular, the Ministry of Defence.** The law about rights to appeal is set out in the Pensions Appeal Tribunals Acts 1943 and 1949 (as amended), known as 'the Acts' and in the Armed Forces (Pensions and Compensation) Act 2004. You can appeal to the Tribunal against certain decisions taken by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. The decisions you can appeal against are set out in the Acts.

In general terms, Pensions Appeal Tribunals hear appeals under both the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and the War Pensions Scheme. The War Pensions Scheme has three main types of appeals- “entitlement appeals”, “assessment appeals” and “specified decision appeals”.

What is an entitlement appeal?

An entitlement appeal is concerned with whether a person qualifies for a pension. For example, an entitlement appeal might decide whether or not your (or your late husband’s or wife’s) medical condition was caused, or made worse, by service in the armed forces or the merchant navy.

What is an assessment appeal?

An assessment appeal is about the percentage of disablement caused or made worse by service. This affects the amount, if any, of War Disablement Pension which might be paid but the Pensions Appeal Tribunal does not itself make decisions about the amount of money to be paid.

What is a specified decision appeal?

A specified decision appeal is concerned with entitlement to various allowances, supplements, extra pensions, awards, expenses, maintenance, deductions and payments. In this publication we cannot set out every specified decision, but a complete list is given in the Pensions Appeal Tribunals (Additional Rights of Appeal) Regulations 2001 (S.I.2001 No. 1031).

Coroners

Coroners are independent judicial officers who are available to deal with matters relating to deaths that may require further investigation to establish the cause of death.

Coroners in Northern Ireland can either be barristers or solicitors and are appointed by the Lord Chancellor.

What do Coroners do?

Coroners inquire into deaths reported to them that appear to be:

- unexpected or unexplained,
- as a result of violence,
- an accident,
- as a result of negligence,
- from any cause other than natural illness or disease, or
- in circumstances that require investigation.

The Coroner will seek to establish the cause of death and will make whatever inquiries are necessary to do this e.g. ordering a postmortem examination, obtaining witness statements and medical records, or holding an inquest.

The Coroners Service is headed by a High Court Judge and there are three Coroners. In addition, there are three salaried judges who hold the role of coroner concurrently with their other judicial post

Key facts

- The number of notices of intention to enforce lodged and the number of applications for enforcement accepted both fluctuated over the last 5 years, and peaked in 2013 for notices of intention to enforce and peaked in 2014 for applications for enforcement accepted. This is a reflection of the decline in the wider economic climate in recent years. Between 2011 and 2015 notices of intention to enforce lodged decreased by 49% and applications for enforcement accepted decreased by 45%.
- The number of applications for leave to appeal to the Social Security Commissioners lodged and the number cleared have both fluctuated over the last five years. The number lodged increased by 6% overall between 2011 and 2015 and the number cleared increased by 8% overall.
- The number of appeals to Social Security Commissioners lodged decreased by 33% and the number cleared decreased by 36% in the last five years, with both at their highest levels in 2011.
- The number of inquests held relating to the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland decreased year on year between 2011 and 2015, with an overall decrease of 43%.

Summary Table 14: Enforcement of Judgments Office, Social Security Commissioners, Pension Appeal Tribunals and Coroners 2011 to 2015

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
EJO	Intention to enforce lodged	20,011	16,540	20,750	19,564	10,184
	Applications for enforcement accepted	12,133	9,755	11,667	12,651	6,623
	Repossessions Completed ^[1]	938	1,102	1,522	1,216	646
Social Security Commissioners	Leave to appeal to Commissioners lodged	154	165	133	178	163
	Leave to appeal to Commissioners cleared	141	175	155	161	152
	Appeals to Commissioners lodged	118	101	108	82	79
	Appeals to Commissioners cleared	120	104	86	95	77
Pension Appeal Tribunals ^[2]	Entitlement Appeals lodged	47	40	33	50	49
	Entitlement Appeals cleared	59	46	39	34	33
	Assessment Appeals lodged	71	58	54	73	50
	Assessment Appeals cleared	92	89	48	45	47
	Specified Decision Appeals lodged	14	7	10	13	9
	Specified Decision Appeals cleared	12	10	7	10	8
	Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Appeals lodged	16	5	21	16	14
	Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Appeals cleared	7	13	17	10	8
Coroners	Number of deaths reported	3,526	3,797	3,967	3,910	3954
	Number of inquests held	162	151	139	120	93
	No inquest with post mortem	1,092	1,095	1,130	1,078	1171
	No inquest and no post mortem	1,772	1,887	1,929	1,949	2004
	Other disposals of registered entries	514	717	761	647	669

^[1]Figures for Repossessions Completed from 2007 to 2012 have been revised due to the removal of duplicate records identified within the dataset. The changes to the figures have been slight and in accordance with our revisions policy these have been updated and marked as having been revised. (Repossessions were previously referred to as evictions).

For more information on our revisions policy click here:

http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Policy_and_Policy_Development/Documents/Policy%20Statement%20on%20Revisions/p_pd_stats_PolicyStatementRevisions.pdf

A back series of revised figures can be viewed by clicking here:

http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Targets_and_Performance/Documents/revised-EJO-evictions/revised-EJO-evictions-07-12.html

^[2]NICTS took over responsibility for Pension Appeal Tribunals in 2007.

Miscellaneous – 2015 Data

Section 1: Enforcement of Judgments Office

Since the early 1970s, the task of enforcing civil judgments in Northern Ireland has been simplified by the creation of the Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO), which operates under the supervision of the Master (Enforcement of Judgments), assisted by the Chief Enforcement Officer. In 2015, 10,184 notices of intention to enforce were lodged and 6,623 applications for enforcement were accepted (Table G.1), a decrease of 48% from 19,564 and a decrease of 48% from 12,651 respectively in 2014.

Table G.1: Enforcement orders made and applications for enforcement in 2015

Method of search	
By EJO staff	351
On-line (by customers)	62998
Notices of intention:	
Notices Issued	10184
Applications for enforcement:	
Applications accepted	6623
Types of application	
Article 23 discovery	227
Money judgment	5409
Possession judgment	986
Possession of Goods	1
Total	6623

Table G.2 shows the 'Debt Ratio' which is the amount of debt recovered for every £1 paid in enforcement fees. In 2015, this was £8.15 whereas in 2014 this was £3.73.

Table G.2: Money judgments and debt ratio in 2015

Original debt lodged	£11,193,719.06
EJO fees paid	£1,198,474.50
Total debt registered	£12,392,193.56
Total debt recovered	£9,764,204.62
% of debt recovered	78.79%
Debt ratio	£8.15

A possession file is deemed 'completed' when –

- A repossession takes place.
- The creditor withdraws their application.
- An official arrangement between the creditor and debtor is made (these cases may be re-activated if the arrangement breaks down).

Table G.3 shows that during 2015, 1,047 cases were completed. This represents a decrease of 47% from the 2014 figure of 1,959, with repossessions also decreasing by 47% over the last year, from 1,216 in 2014 to 646 in 2015.

Table G.3 Possession judgments in 2015

Repossessions completed^[1]	646
Cases withdrawn	65
Arrangement in place (case held)	336
Total	1047

^[1] Repossessions completed were previously referred to as evictions completed

Section 2: Social Security Commissioners and Child Support Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals

There were 163 applications for leave to appeal to the Social Security Commissioners lodged during 2015, 15 less than the 178 lodged during 2014. There were 152 applications for leave cleared in 2015 compared with 161 cleared during 2014 (Table G.4).

Table G.4: Social Security Commissioners' applications for leave to appeal to the Commissioners in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	163	11	141	152

The number of appeals to the Commissioners lodged decreased from 82 in 2014 to 79 in 2015. In total, 77 were cleared in 2015 compared with 95 in 2014 (Table G.5).

Table G.5: Social Security Commissioners' appeals to the Commissioners in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	79	26	51	77

Table G.6 shows the number of applications to the Commissioners for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal in 2015.

Table G.6: Social Security Commissioners' Applications to the Commissioners for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	1	-	1	1

Tables G.7 to G.13 show the caseload of Pensions Appeal Tribunals in 2015. 33 entitlement appeals and 47 assessment appeals were dealt with in 2015. Corresponding figures for 2014 were 34 and 45 respectively. The majority of assessment appeals (87%) were dealt with after a hearing compared to 82% in 2014.

Table G.7: Pensions Appeal Tribunals entitlement appeals in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	49	23	10	33

Table G.8: Pensions Appeal Tribunals assessment appeals in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	50	41	6	47

Table G.9: Pensions Appeal Tribunals specified decision appeals in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	9	5	3	8

Table G.10: Pensions Appeal Tribunals armed forces compensation scheme appeals in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	14	7	1	8

Table G.11: Pensions Appeal Tribunals late appeals in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	4	2	-	2

Table G.12: Pensions Appeal Tribunals jurisdiction appeals in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	2	-	-	-

Table G.13: Pensions Appeal Tribunals leave to appeal applications in 2015

	Lodged	Cleared		
		After hearing	Without hearing	Total Cleared
2015	1	1	-	1

Section 3: Coroners Service for Northern Ireland

Table G.14 shows the Coroners' caseload for 2015. There was a 1% increase in the number of deaths reported to the Coroner between 2014 and 2015 (3,954 in 2015 compared to 3,910 in 2014). The number of inquests decreased from 120 in 2014 to 93 in 2015.

Table G.14: Coroners' caseload in 2015

Number of deaths reported	3954
Number of inquests held	93
No inquest with post mortem	1171
No inquest and no post mortem	2004
Other disposals of registered entries	669

Appendix 1: Judge court sitting days

Judge type	Business area ^[1]	Sitting days
High Court Judge	Crown	131
	Queen's Bench	581
	Children Order	185
	Other Family	73
	Appeals	10
	Chancery	194
	Bails	245
	Callover	-
	Judicial Reviews	278
	Court of Appeal - Civil	102
	Court of Appeal - Criminal	91
Total		1890
County Court Judge	Crown Court	2040
	County court judge day	1273
District Judge	County court judge day	111
	District judge day	687
Deputy District Judge	District judge day	21
Deputy County Court Judge	County court judge day	38 ^[2]
Total		4170
District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	Criminal	3083
	Youth	480
	Civil/Family	960
Total		4523
Social Security Commissioners	Oral hearings	29
Total		29
Total number of sitting days		10612

^[1]Days are classified on the basis of the majority business undertaken, except for the Magistrates' court. In the Magistrates' court, days are classified based on the earliest scheduled sitting, except when the start time for two or more sittings is the same, in which case the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

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.

^[2]Includes 15 days were a Deputy County Court Judge sat on Crown Court Business.

Appendix 2: Experimental Statistics on Cracked and Ineffective Trials in the Crown and Magistrates' Court

What are experimental statistics?

Experimental statistics are new official statistics undergoing evaluation. The statistics are in the testing phase and are not fully developed, but they are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

According to the Office of National Statistics - When are statistics experimental?

Defining what is experimental and non-experimental is largely a matter of statistical judgment, but typically experimental series arise when:

- they are being produced part way through a well-defined development program - whether these statistics are new or changed versions of existing statistics
- statistics are new but still subject to testing in terms of their volatility and ability to meet customer needs;
- the statistics do not yet meet the rigorous quality standards of National Statistics, or
- a rich variety of new measures are available from a new set of statistics, with components that have considerable immediate value to users. These users are aware of the statistics' theoretical quality and can make use before all operational testing is completed. The testing is designed to fully validate the measures to the standard expected of National Statistics.

Data sources

These statistics carry the status of 'experimental statistics', as they are still in the development phase. They should, therefore, be treated with caution. The statistics presented in this section are derived from the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). The datasets are downloaded directly from ICOS, and the data are validated and subject to the same stringent checks outlined within the Introduction section.

The ICOS system is a live operating system, used to process every part of court business from the receipt of payments through to the production of final orders made. The system is therefore not specifically designed as a statistical data collection tool, and the data extracted are subject to complex computations using SPSS syntax. The data are being published as an experimental statistics series, so remain in a developmental phase and subject to review. The user should take appropriate caution when using them.

User Consultation

These statistics are experimental and after their first publication in Judicial Statistics 2013 a full consultation with users was undertaken. Details on the feedback from this consultation can be found at: <http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Services/Statistics%20and%20Research/Pages/default.aspx>

Why are these 'experimental statistics' being published? The NICTS have agreed to develop and publish this data upon recommendation by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate for Northern Ireland in their report 'The use of Early Guilty Pleas.

Within this report there are a number of recommendations for various Criminal Justice Agencies to consider implementing. As shown below, one of these recommendations refers directly to the implementation of a data collection system to facilitate the recording of cracked and ineffective trials in a similar manner to England and Wales.

Recommendation 3 Para1.36 -

Inspectors recommend that data is collected by NICTS (on the same basis as that in England and Wales) on cracked, effective and ineffective trials and that this is made available publicly on an annual basis (more often for justice agencies by arrangement).

Action

The NICTS will develop a statistical methodology to closely replicate the collection of cracked and ineffective trials undertaken in England and Wales through the secondary analysis of data currently collected.

Target Date

June 2014

Cracked and Ineffective trials

The purpose of the collection and accurate reporting of the Cracked and Ineffective and Trials data is to provide accurate information as to the main reason (i) why trials do not take place when listed; (ii) why they have been taken out of the list before the trial date; and (iii) why pleas of guilty are not made earlier. This will assist in efficient management of cases, and improve public confidence in the effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System (CJS).

While it is not possible to exactly replicate these data in Northern Ireland without the implementation of a dedicated data collection system similar to England and Wales, a secondary analysis of data recorded on ICOS can provide some data on cracked and ineffective trials. **However, these statistics carry the status of 'experimental statistics', as they are still in the development phase. They should, therefore, be treated with caution.**

Cracked Trial - on the trial date, the defendant offers acceptable pleas or the prosecution offers no evidence. A cracked trial requires no further trial time, but as a consequence the time allocated has been wasted, and witnesses have been unnecessarily inconvenienced thus impacting confidence in the system.

On the basis of this definition used in England and Wales, we recommend that cracked trials in Northern Ireland should be measured as follows:

((Defendants who changed their plea to guilty + defendants who plead not guilty but guilty of a lesser offence + defendants who had all charges withdrawn) / (All Defendants dealt with who were listed for trial)) * 100

Ineffective Trial - on the trial date, the trial does not go ahead due to action or inaction by one or more of the prosecution, the defence or the court and a further listing for trial is required.

On the basis of this definition used in England and Wales, we calculated that ineffective trials in Northern Ireland should be measured as follows:

((Defendants who were adjourned on their first listing for trial / (All Defendants dealt with who were listed for trial)) * 100

Cracked Trials - Experimental Data

Crown Court

Cracked trials in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2011 to 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of cracked trials	% cracked trials	Reason for cracked trial			
				Plea of guilty on day of contest	%	All charges withdrawn	%
2011	1121	449	40.1%	444	98.9%	5	1.1%
2012	1147	399	34.8%	392	98.2%	7	1.8%
2013	1509	521	34.5%	517	99.2%	4	0.8%
2014	1215	406	33.4%	400	98.5%	6	1.5%
2015	848	273	32.2%	270	98.9%	3	1.1%

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Cracked trials in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of cracked trials	% cracked trials	Reason for cracked trial			
				Plea of guilty on day of contest	%	All charges withdrawn	%
Antrim	130	53	40.8%	51	96.2%	2	3.8%
Ards	97	32	33.0%	31	96.9%	1	3.1%
Armagh & South Down	103	36	35.0%	36	100%	0	0%
Belfast	265	68	25.7%	68	100%	0	0%
Craigavon	79	19	24.1%	19	100%	0	0%
Fermanagh & Tyrone	116	42	36.2%	42	100%	0	0%
Londonderry	58	23	39.7%	23	100%	0	0%
Total	848	273	32.2%	270	98.9%	3	1.1%

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Adult Magistrates' Court

Cracked trials in the magistrates' adult court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2011 to 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of cracked trials	% cracked trials	Reason for cracked trial			
				Plea of guilty on day of contest	%	All charges withdrawn	%
2011	9507	3720	39.1%	2054	55.2%	1666	44.8%
2012	8773	3329	37.9%	1838	55.2%	1491	44.8%
2013	7885	3083	39.1%	1769	57.4%	1314	42.6%
2014	6985	2552	36.5%	1526	59.8%	1026	40.2%
2015	6981	2309	33.1%	1395	60.4%	914	39.6%

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Cracked trials in the magistrates' adult court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of cracked trials	% cracked trials	Reason for cracked trial			
				Plea of guilty on day of contest	%	All charges withdrawn	%
Antrim	797	262	32.9%	175	66.8%	87	33.2%
Ards	940	337	35.9%	194	57.6%	143	42.4%
Armagh & South Down	682	195	28.6%	98	50.3%	97	49.7%
Belfast	2014	584	29.0%	345	59.1%	239	40.9%
Craigavon	861	281	32.6%	183	65.1%	98	34.9%
Fermanagh & Tyrone	1103	395	35.8%	243	61.5%	152	38.5%
Londonderry	584	255	43.7%	157	61.6%	98	38.4%
Total	6981	2309	33.1%	1395	60.4%	914	39.6%

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Youth Magistrates' Court

Cracked trials in the magistrates' youth court in Northern Ireland by reason: 2011 to 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of cracked trials	% cracked trials	Reason for cracked trial			
				Plea of guilty on day of contest	%	All charges withdrawn	%
2011	828	365	44.1%	128	35.1%	237	64.9%
2012	696	301	43.2%	115	38.2%	186	61.8%
2013	551	265	48.1%	110	41.5%	155	58.5%
2014	446	193	43.3%	90	46.6%	103	53.4%
2015	421	170	40.4%	83	48.8%	87	51.2%

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Cracked trials in the magistrates' youth court in Northern Ireland by reason and Division: 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of cracked trials	% cracked trials	Reason for cracked trial			
				Plea of guilty on day of contest	%	All charges withdrawn	%
Antrim	42	17	40.5%	7	41.2%	10	58.8%
Ards	67	27	40.3%	8	29.6%	19	70.4%
Armagh & South Down	13	7	53.8%	2	28.6%	5	71.4%
Belfast	184	65	35.3%	44	67.7%	21	32.3%
Craigavon	33	16	48.5%	7	43.8%	9	56.3%
Fermanagh & Tyrone	54	26	48.1%	8	30.8%	18	69.2%
Londonderry	28	12	42.9%	7	58.3%	5	41.7%
Total	421	170	40.4%	83	48.8%	87	51.2%

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Ineffective Trials - Experimental Data

Crown Court

Ineffective trials in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2011 to 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of ineffective trials	% ineffective trials	Reason for ineffective trial					
				Prosecution Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Defence Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Court Reasons	% of all ineffective trials
2011	1121	193	17.2%	56	29.0%	76	39.4%	61	31.6%
2012	1147	191	16.7%	47	24.6%	87	45.5%	57	29.8%
2013	1509	283	18.8%	68	24.0%	115	40.6%	100	35.3%
2014	1215	218	17.9%	55	25.2%	91	41.7%	72	33.0%
2015	848	122	14.4%	40	32.8%	51	41.8%	31	25.4%

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Ineffective trials in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of ineffective trials	% ineffective trials	Reason for ineffective trial					
				Prosecution Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Defence Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Court Reasons	% of all ineffective trials
Antrim	130	28	21.5%	18	64.3%	9	32.1%	1	3.6%
Ards	97	8	8.2%	0	0%	6	75.0%	2	25.0%
Armagh & South Down	103	19	18.4%	10	52.6%	8	42.1%	1	5.3%
Belfast	265	36	13.6%	7	19.4%	11	30.6%	18	50.0%
Craigavon	79	6	7.6%	1	16.7%	3	50.0%	2	33.3%
Fermanagh & Tyrone	116	17	14.7%	3	17.6%	9	52.9%	5	29.4%
Londonderry	58	8	13.8%	1	12.5%	5	62.5%	2	25.0%
Total	848	122	14.4%	40	32.8%	51	41.8%	31	25.4%

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Adult Magistrates' Court

Ineffective trials in the magistrates' adult court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2011 to 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of ineffective trials	% ineffective trials	Reason for ineffective trial					
				Prosecution Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Defence Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Court Reasons	% of all ineffective trials
2011	9507	2858	30.1%	1429	50.0%	976	34.1%	453	15.9%
2012	8773	2505	28.6%	1344	53.7%	815	32.5%	346	13.8%
2013	7885	1928	24.5%	1020	52.9%	672	34.9%	236	12.2%
2014	6985	1491	21.3%	767	51.4%	512	34.3%	212	14.2%
2015	6981	1570	22.5%	856	54.5%	524	33.4%	190	12.1%

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Ineffective trials in the magistrates' adult court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of ineffective trials	% ineffective trials	Reason for ineffective trial					
				Prosecution Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Defence Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Court Reasons	% of all ineffective trials
Antrim	797	164	20.6%	86	52.4%	54	32.9%	24	14.6%
Ards	940	282	30.0%	144	51.1%	109	38.7%	29	10.3%
Armagh & South Down	682	116	17.0%	74	63.8%	24	20.7%	18	15.5%
Belfast	2014	502	24.9%	285	56.8%	161	32.1%	56	11.2%
Craigavon	861	260	30.2%	146	56.2%	80	30.8%	34	13.1%
Fermanagh & Tyrone	1103	133	12.1%	58	43.6%	49	36.8%	26	19.5%
Londonderry	584	113	19.3%	63	55.8%	47	41.6%	3	2.7%
Total	6981	1570	22.5%	856	54.5%	524	33.4%	190	12.1%

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Youth Magistrates' Court

Ineffective trials in the magistrates' youth court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2011 to 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of ineffective trials	% ineffective trials	Reason for ineffective trial					
				Prosecution Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Defence Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Court Reasons	% of all ineffective trials
2011	828	258	31.2%	148	57.4%	91	35.3%	19	7.4%
2012	696	201	28.9%	124	61.7%	60	29.9%	17	8.5%
2013	551	114	20.7%	68	59.6%	35	30.7%	11	9.6%
2014	446	103	23.1%	66	64.1%	28	27.2%	9	8.7%
2015	421	108	25.7%	57	52.8%	38	35.2%	13	12.0%

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Ineffective trials in the magistrates' youth court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2015¹

	Number of defendants listed for trial	Number of ineffective trials	% ineffective trials	Reason for ineffective trial					
				Prosecution Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Defence Reasons	% of all ineffective trials	Court Reasons	% of all ineffective trials
Antrim	42	7	16.7%	4	57.1%	3	42.9%	0	0%
Ards	67	16	23.9%	6	37.5%	9	56.3%	1	6.3%
Armagh & South Down	13	2	15.4%	1	50.0%	0	0%	1	50.0%
Belfast	184	48	26.1%	24	50.0%	18	37.5%	6	12.5%
Craigavon	33	17	51.5%	12	70.6%	3	17.6%	2	11.8%
Fermanagh & Tyrone	54	11	20.4%	5	45.5%	4	36.4%	2	18.2%
Londonderry	28	7	25.0%	5	71.4%	1	14.3%	1	14.3%
Total	421	108	25.7%	57	52.8%	38	35.2%	13	12.0%

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Glossary of terms

Adjourn Generally

A putting off or postponing of proceedings.

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.

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.

Ancillary application

An additional application made in existing proceedings.

Ancillary relief application

During or after a divorce, the annulment of a marriage (nullity) or judicial separation, there may still be a need for the court to settle disputes over money or property. The court can make a financial order. This is known as ancillary relief and may deal with the sale or transfer of property, maintenance payments (for example weekly or monthly maintenance), a lump sum payment and/or a pension sharing or attachment order.

Application

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

Application for leave to apply for judicial review

The first step in the judicial review procedure involves the mandatory 'leave stage'. At this stage an application for leave to bring judicial review proceedings must first be made. The leave stage is used to identify and filter out, at an early stage, claims which may be trivial or without merit.

Appointment of Guardian ad Litem

Appointment of a guardian by the court - The High Court or a county court may appoint an individual to be a child's guardian if the child has no parent with parental responsibility for him or a residence order has been made with respect to the child in favour of a parent or guardian of his who has died while the order was in force. A person appointed as a guardian under this Article shall have parental responsibility for the child.

Arraignment

The procedure by which the defendant has criminal charges formally put to him before the judge at the Crown Court and he enters his plea of guilty or not guilty.

Article 53 Contact with a child in care

Where a child is in care of an authority, the authority shall (subject to the provisions of this article) allow the child reasonable contact with: (a) parents; (b) any guardian; (c) persons named in residence orders made immediately prior to the child being placed in care; and (d) persons who had care of the child by virtue of an order made in the exercise of the High Court's inherent jurisdiction immediately before the care order was made.

Article 8 Contact

Relates to Article 8 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. A 'contact order' means an order requiring the person with whom a person lives, or is to live, to allow the child to visit or stay with a person named in the order, or for that person and the child to have contact with each other.

Bail variation

A change in the conditions of bail.

Call-over

An occasion in court where dates for all the cases in the next few months are fixed. It is important for the parties or their lawyers to attend the call-over.

Care Order

A care order places a child in the care of a designated authority. A court may only make a care order if it is satisfied the child is suffering or at risk of harm etc.

Case

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

Child Assessment

Application by an authority to request an order to authorise an assessment of a child's circumstances.

Certificate of automatic discharge (Bankruptcy)

A document certifying the period of bankruptcy is at an end

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 cases is ready to heard and can therefore be listed by the court for hearing.

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.

Commercial actions

The definition of 'commercial action' is broad and so a wide range of cases may be dealt with under those arrangements. Broadly speaking, they include any transaction or dispute of a commercial or business nature.

Committal

The procedure by which a person 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.

Compassionate bail application

An application for bail, usually for a short period of time, for personal reasons, such as to attend a family funeral.

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, ejection and divorces.

Court Disposal

Includes all cases issued with a final order by a Judge.

Court order

The enforceable decision of the court.

Creditor

A person who is owed money by a debtor.

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.

Day sat

This is a day on which a judge sat to hear court business. The information is organised into the various types of court business that a judge hears. The judge's day may consist of one or more sittings, at one or more court venues.

Declaration of Parentage order

Order made to determine parentage on foot of an application for maintenance in respect of a person who denies that he/she is a parent of the child.

Debtor

A person who owes money to a creditor.

Decree Absolute

The decree absolute is the legal document that ends your marriage. You need to wait at least 6 weeks after the date of the decree nisi before you can apply for a decree absolute.

Decree Nisi

A document that says that the court doesn't see any reason why you can't divorce.

If your husband or wife doesn't agree to the divorce, you can still apply for a decree nisi. However, you'll have to go to a hearing at the court to discuss the case, where a judge will decide whether to grant you a decree nisi.

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.

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 the 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.

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 bring the terms of the order to an end.

Education Supervision order

Puts the child under the supervision of a designated education and library board. The education and library board may make an application in respect of a child of compulsory school age who is not being educated properly.

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.

Emergency Protection order

Gives the applicant parental responsibility for a child under the age of 18. It authorises the removal of the child at any time to accommodation provided by or on behalf of the applicant, and being kept there. The court may make 'an emergency protection order' if it is satisfied that there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is likely to suffer significant harm.

EPA applications

Application to register an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA).

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.

Ex-parte application

An application made to a judge by a party to a case without the other parties being required to be there.

Family Assistance order

This is a short term order made by agreement, under which an authority is required to make available a suitably qualified person to advise, assist and (where appropriate) befriend any person named in the order.

Family Business

Non-criminal court proceedings generally relating to matters between a husband and wife, common-law partners, or children.

Family Care Centre

A county court which generally hears appeals from Family Proceedings Courts, or family cases which are more complex in nature.

Family Proceedings Court

A court of summary jurisdiction (constituted as a Youth Magistrates Court) which hears proceedings under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 e.g. residence, contact with children.

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.

Financial Provision order

An order requiring either or both parents to make periodical payments or a lump sum payment to the applicant (the person with whom the child resides) for the benefit of the child.

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.

First listing

The date of first hearing of a case.

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.

Foreign judgement

An Act to make provision for the enforcement in the United Kingdom of judgments given in foreign countries, which accord reciprocal treatment to judgments given in the United Kingdom, and vice versa.

Hearing

The trial of a case or preliminary issue in court.

High Court Judge (HCJ)

A judge who sits in the High Court and Crown Court to hear and determine civil, family and criminal business.

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 a defendant can be tried in the Crown Court but may in some instances be tried in a magistrates' court.

Injunction

A legal order which stops someone from doing or continuing to do something, or which requires them to take certain positive action.

Interlocutory application

An application made at any time after proceedings have issued and before the final hearing. For example, a challenge to one party's refusal to give discovery, or an application for substituted service are interlocutory applications.

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'.

Judicial Review

A procedure by which someone can challenge in the High Court, the decisions or actions of:-

- A Government Department
- A public body
- The Magistrates' Court
- The County Court
- Certain tribunals

Judicial Review is only available if there is no other legal remedy.

Judicial separation

An alternative to divorce is a decree of judicial separation. This does not dissolve the marriage but absolves the parties from the obligation to live together. This procedure might, for instance, be used if religious beliefs forbid or discourage divorce.

Justice & Security Act 2007

Legislation which replaced the Terrorism Act 2000 which makes provision for non-jury trials.

Leave to change surname by which child is known

An application for leave (permission) to change a child's name without a parent's consent. The court will give permission if it believes it is in the child's best interests to allow the name change.

Licences

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

Lodge documents

Send documents to the court office.

Master

A judicial post, where the individual must have been a legal practitioner for at least 10 years. The Master determines a range of court proceedings in the High Court, and manages procedural elements of more complex cases before they are heard by a High Court judge.

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.

Monies due

Financial compensation or money owed.

Negligence

Conduct that falls below the standards of behaviour established by law for the protection of others against unreasonable risk of harm. A person has acted negligently if he or she has departed from the conduct expected of a reasonably prudent person acting under similar circumstances.

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.

Non molestation order

This order prevents a person from molesting another person with whom they have had a relationship or they are related to.

Molestation encompasses any form of serious pestering or harassment and applies to any conduct which could properly be regarded as such a degree of harassment as to call for the intervention of the court. A 'non-molestation' order may contain one or both of the following:

- (a) A provision prohibiting a person from molesting another person.
- (b) A provision prohibiting the respondent from molesting a child.

Notice of appointment

The notification of a date, time and location for a court hearing.

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 go to the court for resolution.

Notice of motion

A notification issued to one or more parties by the individual or company that has filed a motion before a court, with a date for hearing which will take place on the date stated on the notice.

No Value

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount awarded recorded on ICOS. No amount awarded can arise when a case has been settled and the value was not notified to the court or the terms of the settlement do not include a monetary value.

Nullity

A Decree of Nullity of Marriage is granted where the petitioner proves that the marriage is either void or voidable. A void marriage is one which should never have been celebrated (by reason of the relationship or incapacity of the parties and which therefore never had legal status). A voidable marriage is one which is legal but may be nullified by order of the court.

Occupation order

Occupation orders declare, confer or regulate occupation (not ownership) rights in the family home between those in certain family or domestic relationships. These orders, if combined with a non-molestation order, may be used for protective purposes. Alternatively, they may be used to declare or regulate the right of occupation in the home in cases where protection is not an issue. An occupation order is available between parties who have had a relationship or are related.

Office disposal

See 'Non court disposal'.

Order 53 Statement

The document which starts a judicial review case. It is named after Order 53 of the Rules of the Court of Judicature, which states what must be in an Order 53 Statement.

Ordinary application

See 'Application'.

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.

Originating application

The first, provisional, or primary application in a legal process.

Originating motion

A document which starts some kinds of High Court cases, described in Rules of the Court of Judicature Order 5, rule 5 and Order 8.

Originating summons

A document which starts some kinds of High Court cases, described in Rules of the Court of Judicature Order 5, rule 3 and Order 8.

Outstanding case

A case that is currently active, for example, live cases not yet disposed.

Parental Responsibility order

Outlines the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his / her property. It may also include certain rights which a guardian may exercise.

Party

The plaintiff, defendant or third or other party in a court case.

Petition

The document which starts a divorce or civil partnership dissolution case, and some other kinds of cases, described in Rules of the Court of Judicature, Order 9 and the Family Proceedings Rules.

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.

Plea

The response a defendant gives after criminal charges have been put to him e.g. "guilty" or "not guilty."

Proceedings

A shorthand term for all the court procedures and documents before the final court order.

Prohibited steps order

An order which prevents a parent from taking specific actions as part of their normal parental responsibilities to a child.

PSNI/PPS prosecution

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

Received

The date papers are lodged with the court.

Recovery order

An order which generally directs the return of a child who has been taken away unlawfully; has run away or is missing. The order may permit certain actions to be taken (like entering property) to enable it to be carried out.

Remittal

The process of transferring a case to a lower court e.g. transferring a case from the High Court to the County Court.

Removal

The process of transferring a case to a higher court e.g. transferring a case from the County Court to the High Court.

Residence order

An order detailing with whom a child shall live. This is generally following the breakdown of a relationship, but can arise in other circumstances e.g. if the child's parents have died.

Revoke

To invalidate or cause to no longer be in effect, as by voiding or canceling.

Scheduled

A scheduled offence is one which is listed in Schedule 9 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and which, if it is tried on indictment, will be heard by a judge sitting without a jury. This has been replaced by the Justice and Security Act 2007.

Scheduled sitting

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

Secure Accommodation order

Accommodation provided for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, designed to restrict liberty.

Setting down

Telling the court office a case is ready for hearing.

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 the majority business undertaken, except for the Magistrates court. It is based in the first instance, on the earliest scheduled sitting and 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.

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.

Special sitting

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

Specific issue order

An order which addresses a specific matter that has arisen relating to the parental responsibility of a child e.g. which school shall they attend; what religion shall they be brought up in.

Strike out order

Striking out means the court ordering written material to be deleted so that it may no longer be relied upon.

Summary charge

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

Summons (civil)

A summons is served on a person involved in a legal proceeding and it indicates legal action may be in progress against the person, or the person's presence as witness may be required.

The summons usually announces a date by which the person or persons summoned must either appear in court, or respond in writing to the court or the opposing party or parties.

Summons (criminal)

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.

Supervision Order

Puts a child under the supervision of a designated authority. A supervision order may require a child:

- (i) To comply with direction given by a supervisor as regards residence, reporting and participating in activities.
- (ii) To keep the supervisor informed of any change in address and allow the supervisor to visit at the place where he is living.

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.

Unliquidated

An unliquidated sum is one for which the precise amount owed cannot be determined from the terms of the contractual agreement or another standard.

Winding up petition

An application to court seeking the liquidation of a company.

Withdrawn

An order which removes a case from court, for a variety of reasons. The court action then ceases.

Writ

A document which starts a case in the Queen's Bench Division.

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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