

# Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Provisional Figures

October to December 2024

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# 1

## Key Findings

This report provides an overview of Children Order and County, Crown, High and Magistrates' Courts business during October to December 2024 and how it compares with the comparative figures for the same quarter in the previous year. The headline findings are summarised below -

- During the quarter there were 435 Children Order sittings (1,133 total hours sat), 1,123 Children Order Applications received and 1,147 disposed. In terms of orders made, 371 were own motion, 2,312 were interim and 1,536 were final orders.
  - County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,287 days within the County Court. In terms of cases, 59 equity, 207 ejectment, 1,619 small claims and two criminal damage cases were received; 39 equity, 165 ejectment, 1,658 small claims and two criminal damage cases were disposed.
  - In terms of Crown Court business there were 815 sittings with 369 cases and 452 defendants received and 431 cases and 530 defendants disposed.
- There were 561 High Court sitting days. The highest proportion of these was spent on Judicial Reviews and Bails business (17%) with 1,202 writs and originating summons received and 681 disposed.
  - Within the 1,076 Magistrates' sitting days during the quarter, 74% were adult criminal, 5% youth criminal and 21% civil and family days. There were 855 civil and family applications and 9,191 adult and 267 youth defendants received. Corresponding figures for disposals were 818, 8,702 and 281 respectively.

### About this report

This bulletin is produced in accordance with the pillars and principles set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. It presents the following statistics for the Northern Ireland Court and Tribunals Service for the quarter October to December 2024 –

- The number of Children Order applications received and disposed at Family Proceedings Courts, Family Care Centres and the High Court, together with waiting times from lodgment to disposal (section 3);
- Civil and family business received and disposed, waiting times and sitting days in County Courts (section 4);
- The number of cases and defendants received and disposed, waiting times, pleas and findings and sittings at the Crown Court (section 5);
- Business received and disposed, waiting times and sitting days in the Chancery, Queen’s Bench and Family Divisions of the High Court (section 6); and
- The number of youth and adult defendants received and disposed, charges and outcomes, sittings, civil applications received and disposed and waiting times at Magistrates’ Courts (section 7).

Comparative information for the same quarter in the previous year is also provided, along with an indication of whether any change is higher or lower.

It is important to note court activity during 2020 and 2021 was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time the courts made more use of remote audio and video technology.

Background information about the Children Order and the County, Crown, High and Magistrates’ Courts along with methodological information and a glossary is available in the accompanying user guide. Data in the bulletin, along with trend information, are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 2

## Introduction

The next update covering the quarter to 31 March 2025 will be published in May 2025. A full [publication schedule](#) is available on the DoJ website.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

### Children Order Quarterly Business

- Table 1 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 435 sittings (1,133 hours), 1,123 Children Order Applications received and 1,147 disposed.
  - A total of 1,650 children were involved in the applications disposed. Gender and age breakdowns of the children were 51:49 male:female and 27% 0-4 years, 30% 5-8 years, 26% 9-12 years and 17% 13-16 years.
  - Like each of the last five years, the most common reason for transferring Children Order applications during the quarter was Complexity (64%, 144 of 225 reasons). This was followed by Consolidation (38), Jurisdiction (24), Return to Lower Court (14), Convenience (4) and Point of Law (1).
- In terms of orders made –
    - 371 were own motion orders.
    - 2,312 were interim orders.
    - 1,536 were final orders.
  - The average waiting time for applications disposed was 50 weeks for public and 32 weeks for private law.
  - Table 1 shows that applications received decreased, and applications disposed increased. The waiting times for disposal for public law remained constant, and private law decreased slightly when compared with figures for the same quarter in the previous year.

# 3 | Children Order

Table 1: Children Order Business – October to December 2024 compared with October to December 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sittings	435	483	10% ↓
Hours sat	1,133	1,425	20% ↓
Applications received	1,123	1,132	1% ↓
Applications disposed	1,147	1,055	9% ↑
Number of children involved in applications disposed	1,650	1,571	5% ↑
Own motion orders made	371	208	78% ↑
Interim orders made	2,312	2,305	<1% ↑
Final orders made	1,536	1,434	7% ↑
Average waiting time for disposal for public law (weeks)	50.4	50.4	-
Average waiting time for disposal for private law (weeks)	31.7	32.4	2% ↓

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 4

## County Court

### County Court Quarterly Business

- Table 2 on the following pages shows that County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,287 sitting days during the quarter. Within those days 692 were spent on criminal business and 595 days on civil and family business.
- During the quarter –
  - 2,469 Civil bills with notice of intention to defend (NID) were received and 2,908 disposed.
  - In terms of cases 59 equity, 207 ejectment, 1,619 small claims and two criminal damage cases were received; 39 equity, 165 ejectment, 1,658 small claims and two criminal damage cases were disposed.
  - 462 divorce decrees were granted and 402 decrees absolute issued.
  - 89 licence applications were received and 92 disposed.
- Table 2 shows a mixed set of results across most areas of business compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

# 4 | County Court

Table 2: County Court Business – October to December 2024 compared with October to December 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sitting days	1,287	1,233	4%↑
Civil bills with NID received	2,469	2,209	12%↑
Civil bills disposed	2,908	2,515	16%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of civil bill (weeks)	51	66	23%↓
Equity cases received	59	43	37%↑
Equity cases disposed	39	51	24%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases (weeks)	100	104	4%↓
Ejectment cases received	207	158	31%↑
Ejectment cases disposed	165	161	2%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal of ejectment cases (weeks)	35	34	3%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

## 4 | County Court

Table 2 continued: County Court Business – October to December 2024 compared with October to December 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Small claims received	1,619	1,954	17%↓
Small claims disposed	1,658	2,087	21%↓
Average time taken from issue to disposal of small claims cases (weeks)	22	23	4%↓
Criminal damage cases received	2	3	33%↓
Criminal damage cases disposed	2	2	-
Divorce decrees granted	462	327	41%↑
Decree absolute issued	402	296	36%↑
Average time taken from issue to date divorce decree granted (weeks)	46	46	-
Licences applications received	89	66	35%↑
Licences applications disposed	92	63	46%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 5 Crown Court

## Crown Court Quarterly Business

- Table 3 on the following page shows that during the quarter there were 815 sittings (1,605 hours sat). County Court Judges disposed of 99.4% of defendants (527), a figure that has remained relatively stable over the last five years (98-99%).
- There were 369 cases and 452 defendants received during the quarter; 431 cases and 530 defendants were disposed.
- Average time from committal to hearing was 166 days and from conviction to disposal was 79 days.
- In comparison to the same quarter in the previous year the number of cases and defendants received decreased. Average time from committal to hearing decreased and from conviction to disposal increased.
- Figure 1 shows that the majority of defendants disposed were charged with a combination of offences, a similar pattern seen in each of the last five years.

Figure 1: Crown Court defendants disposed by charge type October to December 2024

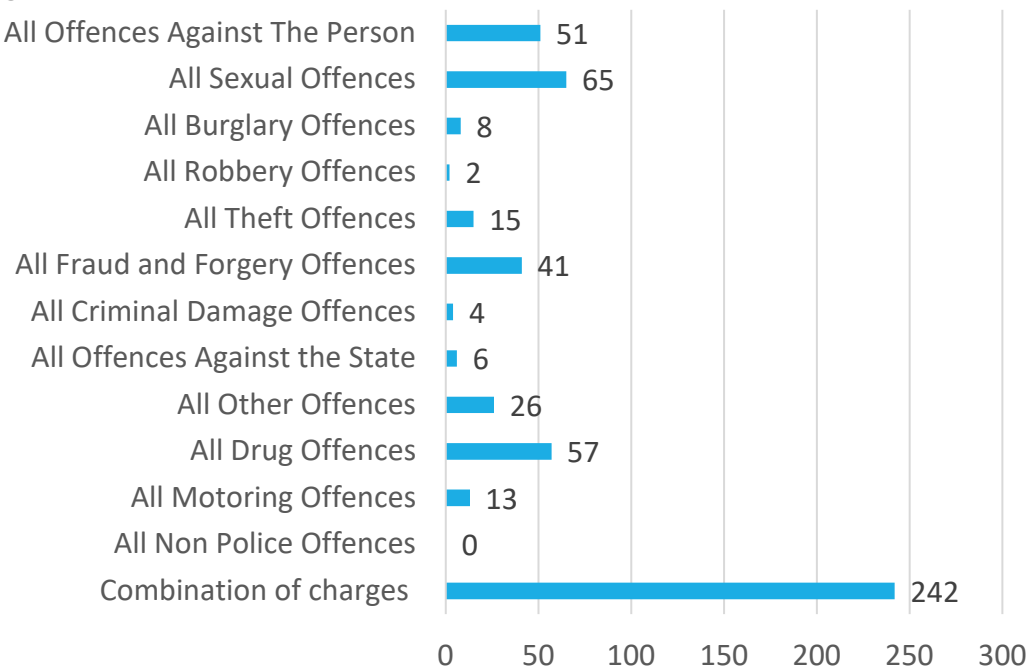


Table 3: Crown Court Business – October to December 2024 compared with October to December 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sittings	815	728	12%↑
Hours sat	1,605	1,444	11%↑
Cases received	369	386	4%↓
Cases disposed	431	361	19%↑
Defendants received	452	493	8%↓
Defendants disposed	530	433	22%↑
Defendants pleading guilty to all charges	113	103	10%↑
Defendants pleading guilty or found guilty of at least one charge	333	273	22%↑
Average time from committal to hearing (days)	166	175	5%↓
Average time from conviction to disposal (days)	79	71	11%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DOJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 6 High Court

## High Court Quarterly Business

- Table 4 on the following pages shows that there were 561 High Court sitting days during the quarter, the highest proportion of which was spent on Judicial Reviews and Bails business (17%).
- King's Bench business included –
  - Receipt of 1,202 and disposal of 681 writs and originating summonses.
  - Receipt of 59 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review; 12 applications for Judicial Review and zero Ancillary application.
- Chancery Division business included –
  - Receipt of 508 (64% of which were Chancery, 22% bankruptcy and 13% companies cases) and disposal of 607 cases.
  - 1,863 grants issued in the Probate office.
- Family Division business included –
  - Receipt of 26 and disposal of 13 adoption cases and applications.
  - 604 divorce petitions received, 265 decrees granted (35% (92) '2 years with consent' and 24% (63) 'combination of grounds or other') and 179 decrees absolute issued.
  - 54 Official Solicitor's Office cases received, 41 disposed and a current caseload of 576 cases at the end of the quarter.

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

## 6

## High Court

Table 4: High Court Business – October to December 2024 compared with October to December 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Sitting days	561	572	2%↓
Writs & originating summonses received	1,202	1,010	19%↑
Writs & originating summonses disposed	681	851	20%↓
Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review received	59	69	14%↓
Applications for Judicial Review received	12	20	40%↓
Ancillary applications received	0	1	100%↓
Chancery, Bankruptcy & Companies cases received	508	518	2%↓
Chancery, Bankruptcy & Companies cases disposed	607	454	34%↑
Grants issued in the Probate office	1,863	1,716	9%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

## 6 | High Court

Table 4 continued: High Court Business – October to December 2024 compared with October to December 2023

	Quarter 2024	Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Adoption cases & applications received	26	33	21%↓
Adoption cases & applications disposed	13	12	8%↑
Average time taken from issue to disposal for adoption case/application (weeks)	15	17	12%↓
Divorce petitions received	604	516	17%↑
Decrees granted in High Court	265	271	2%↓
Decrees absolute issued	179	181	1%↓
Average time taken from issue of divorce petition to date decree granted (weeks)	65	51	27%↑
Official Solicitors Office cases received	54	71	24%↓
Official Solicitors Office cases disposed	41	16	156%↑
Official Solicitors Office caseload at end of quarter	576	420	37%↑

Supplementary data are available from the DOJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 7 | Magistrates' Court

## Magistrates' Court Quarterly Business

- During the quarter there were 1,028 scheduled, 10 additional and 38 special Magistrates' sitting days (Table 5).
- Within the 1,076 total, 74% were adult criminal, 5% were youth criminal and 21% were civil and family days.

Table 5: Magistrates' Court Sitting Days – October to December 2024 compared with October to December 2023

	Adult	Youth	Civil & Family	Total Quarter 2024	Total Quarter 2023	% change from 2023
Scheduled	744	59	225	1,028	1,033	<1% ↓
Additional	9	0	1	10	15	33% ↓
Special	38	0	0	38	37	3% ↑
Total	791	59	226	1,076	1,085	1% ↓

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

## 7

## Magistrates' Court

- There were 855 new civil and family applications and 9,191 new adult and 267 new youth defendants received; corresponding disposals were 818, 8,702 and 281 respectively.
- The average waiting times from first hearing to disposal in the adult and youth criminal courts were 9 weeks and 17 weeks respectively. For civil and family applications it was 21 and 9 weeks respectively from date of receipt to disposal.

Table 6: Magistrates' Court Business – October to December 2024 compared with October to December 2023

	Adult Q4 2024	Adult Q4 2023	% change from 2023	Youth Q4 2024	Youth Q4 2023	% change from 2023	Civil Q4 2024	Civil Q4 2023	% change from 2023	Family Q4 2024	Family Q4 2023	% change from 2023
Defendants or applications received	9,191	9,122	1%↑	267	269	1%↓	83	84	1%↓	772	754	2%↑
Defendants or applications disposed	8,702	9,694	10%↓	281	309	9%↓	76	94	19%↓	742	726	2%↑
Average waiting time (weeks)	9	9	-	17	18	6%↓	21	22	5%↓	9	9	-

Supplementary data are available from the DoJ website in the accompanying spreadsheet.

# 8

## Appendix 1 - Methodology

### Data Source and Coverage

The statistics are produced using administrative data sourced from the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). ICOS is a live operating system used in each court tier to process every part of court business, from receipt of payments through to the production of final orders made. The data are input into this system on a daily basis by court clerks, and this information is checked and confirmed by another member of staff to ensure the data entries are correct.

Full details of data relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, coherence, user need, cost and confidentiality is available in the accompanying background quality report. Details of the data quality checks and processes that DoJ has in place are available in the Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) document on the DoJ website.

### Counting Rules

- **Children Order**

Receipts are counted from the date the case is entered onto ICOS. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'dealt with.'

- **County Court**

Receipts are counted from the date the case is entered onto ICOS and the fees are receipted. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'dealt with'.

# 8

## Appendix 1 - Methodology

- Crown Court

Receipts are counted from the date the case is committed to the Crown Court from the Magistrates court. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'dealt with.'

- High Court

Receipts are counted from the date the case is entered onto ICOS and the fees are receipted. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case, or the date an applicant withdraws or discontinues their application prior to the hearing, changing the case status to 'dealt with'.

- Magistrates' Court

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