

# Counting Intellectual Property cases at the High Court in 2015-2016



Research commissioned by the Intellectual Property Office and carried out by Powell Gilbert LLP.

This is an independent report commissioned by the Intellectual Property Office (IPO). Findings and opinions are those of the researchers not necessarily the views of the IPO or the Government.

The data in this paper was collected and prepared by Powell Gilbert LLP, a firm of solicitors in London specialising in IP litigation. The project was led by Moz Mohammad (Head of Legal Support and Technical Operations), assisted by Antti Vainikka (Paralegal). Between them they have over a decade of experience on multijurisdictional patent disputes and have worked on several notable cases at all levels of the UK civil courts.

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# **Executive Summary**

This Project Completion Report includes data on intellectual property (IP) cases commenced in the UK courts, and the methodology applied to collect that information. Also discussed are any limitations and issues encountered, and how improvements have been made to the docketing of cases through the court's electronic filing system, CE-File.

In Part 4 of this report, we detail the results obtained from IP cases commenced in the Chancery Division, Intellectual Property and Enterprise Court (IPEC), and Patents Court during 2015 and 2016.

Below are the key learning outcomes from the data collection:

- 1. 2016 saw a 26 per cent decrease in the number of substantive IP cases issued when compared with 2015, from 494 to 669 cases.
- 2. Nearly half of all IP cases commenced contain a claim for copyright infringement.
- 3. The majority of copyright infringement cases are commenced in the Chancery Division, and allege infringement of music and television broadcasting rights.
- 4. Trade marks were the second most frequently litigated IP right after copyright, with 163 cases in 2015, and 147 cases in 2016. Most trade mark cases are issued in the IPEC.
- 5. There were 137 cases in 2015 containing a claim for passing off, and 114 cases in 2016.
- 6. There were 75 patent and SPC cases issued in 2015, and 63 issued in 2016. The majority of cases concerned European Patents (EPs).
- 7. Registered designs were the subject of 28 cases issued in 2015, and 30 cases issued in 2016.
- 8. A small number of cases also concerned infringement of unregistered design rights.

# **Data Collection Methodology**

At the beginning of the project, a set of variables was agreed for which data would be collected for IP cases. The variables cover the main types of IP related claims that are asserted in the UK courts.

Data was collected from the three primary courts in which IP cases are commenced at first instance; the Chancery Division, the IPEC, and the Patents Court.

The Chancery Division handles disputes of a commercial nature as well as intellectual property matters.

The Patents Court primarily handles cases relating to patents and registered designs, and is generally suitable for more complex cases and where the amount of damages sought is over £500,000.

The IPEC handles disputes concerning all types of intellectual property matters. The IPEC is generally suitable for cases where the amount of damages sought is £500,000 or less. Data has not been collected for cases commenced in the small claims track of the IPEC.

Most of the data required was available through the court's electronic filing system, CE-File. The court provided access to the case records for the three courts, and a data collection team reviewed each relevant case sequentially to gather the relevant information.

Data collection was primarily focused on the number of IP cases commenced in the three courts, the number of registered rights in issue in each case, and the claims and counterclaims asserted.

The rights have been categorised as follows.

- Copyright Cases containing a claim for copyright infringement.
- Trade marks Cases containing a claim for infringement or revocation of a UK or European registered trade mark.
- Passing off Cases containing a claim for passing off.
- Patents and SPCs Cases containing a claim for infringement, declaration of noninfringement, or revocation of an EP or GB patent, or a supplementary protection certificate (SPC).
- Registered designs Cases containing a claim for infringement or revocation of a UK or EU registered design.
- Unregistered designs Cases containing a claim for infringement of a UK or European unregistered design right.

The issues above are the most frequently disputed in respect of the IP rights covered in this report. Other issues have been pleaded, but in such small numbers they have been excluded from this report.

In each section, two methods were used to quantify the number of cases commenced. The first method involved calculating the total number of cases commenced by issue of a claim with the court, and therefore allocated a unique claim number. The second method takes into account any relevant counterclaims asserted in an existing case.

In addition to data on cases commenced, high level observations were made in respect of the outcomes of each case issued. Given the relatively short period between the date on which cases were issued, and the date when they were reviewed by the data collection team, a large proportion of cases had yet to reach a definitive conclusion.

Each case was assigned one of the following outcome categories, according to which category best described the overall outcome of the dispute at the time of data collection.

'Judgments' only include substantive judgments where there was a finding by the court on the merits of the case. Such judgments include those handed-down following trial of the issues, and include other judgments given at any point throughout the proceedings, for example summary judgments and judgments in default.

'Settled' cases are cases where all relevant issues were settled by agreement between the parties, and as a result, the proceedings were stayed or closed.

'Concluded' cases are those cases which ended by any other means. Such cases include, for example, discontinued and withdrawn cases, dismissed cases, and cases which have been transferred out to other courts, and therefore no longer fall within the remit of the court in which the case was issued.

Many cases are still noted as 'Open' on the court file, particularly in respect of cases issued in 2016. Unless there was a clear conclusion to the proceedings by one of the means above, no inferences were drawn as to the status of those proceedings, and an open status was noted. A future review of open cases would likely impact all other outcomes recorded.

## **Data Collection Observations**

A few factors limited the ability to collect comprehensive data for the relevant cases. These are discussed below. We do not consider these to have a significant impact on the figures obtained, and overall, data has been collected with a high degree of accuracy.

#### Comprehensiveness of court files

CE-File has significantly improved the process by which parties issue and file documents with the court. In addition, the system has streamlined the way in which the court maintains cases and monitors the progress of actions.

All documents lodged must now meet a predefined set of criteria. By providing a finite number of filing options, record management and naming conventions are rationalised, and ultimately, inconsistencies in the court files are minimised. Along with the implementation of electronic filing, a single, sequential claim numbering system was introduced for each court.

In most cases, the court records contained a comprehensive set of documents for each case. There were some instances where documents were not available for inspection, and therefore data collection was not possible in these situations. Given this occurred in a small minority of cases, we do not consider the absence of such documents to have a significant impact on the figures obtained.

#### Court documents

Whilst there are rules which govern the form and structure of documents filed with the court, there is still an element of discretion in document drafting. Parties who may be less familiar with the relevant procedures may present their case in a less conventional form. Collecting data can be difficult where the rights, or cause of action, are not clearly apparent. Despite the inconsistencies, data was still obtained with a good degree of accuracy.

#### **Duration of cases**

The duration of intellectual property cases can vary significantly depending on the nature of the dispute, its complexity, and procedural matters that have taken place. Data collection for 2015 and 2016 was carried out in the third and fourth quarters of 2017. The information is therefore accurate at the date at which each case was accessed and reviewed during that period.

# **Conclusion of proceedings**

Many cases do not progress to a substantive trial on the issues.

In some instances, the court file contained only a claim form, suggesting that the claim was never served on the defendant, or that the defendant failed to respond to the claim. This introduces uncertainty as to whether a defence and / or counterclaim had ever been filed in that action.

For example, a case recorded as 'open', where a claim had been issued but no further action had been taken, is likely to have concluded, as any relevant timeframe for service or response to that claim would have lapsed by the time data collection was being completed. Nevertheless, inferences were never drawn on the outcome of these cases unless there was a clear conclusion to the proceedings.

# **Data Collection Results**

The data collection results are broken down into three main areas:

- Total number of cases issued in the courts This section identifies the total number of cases issued in the Chancery Division, IPEC and Patents Court, irrespective of subject matter.
- Total number of substantive IP cases issued This section identifies the total number of substantive IP cases issued according to the project methodology.
- Number of cases issued by IP right This section identifies the number of cases issued according to the rights in issue or cause of action.

#### Total number of cases issued in the courts

The figures below show the total number of cases commenced in the Chancery Division, IPEC and Patents Court, irrespective of subject matter.

Table 1 – Total number of cases issued in each court

	2015	2016
Chancery Division	5263	3711
IPEC	221	203
Patents Court	68	71
Total	5552	3985

Given the more general nature of the Chancery Division, the court had the highest number of cases issued, though only a small proportion involved a substantive IP issue.

Further, whilst most of the cases issued in the Patents Court and IPEC deal with intellectual property matters, the cases do not all necessarily fall within the scope of this report. Such cases were categorised as follows:

- Non-applicable cases These include cases opened in error and cases which do not include, on the face of it, an IP issue.
- Non-variable cases These include cases with an IP issue that is ancillary to the
  main cause of action, and cases where the claim or counterclaim did not contain at
  least one of the IP variables covered in the data collection methodology.

All other cases that contained one or more of the IP variables were treated as substantive IP cases and therefore included in the following results.

#### Total number of substantive IP cases issued

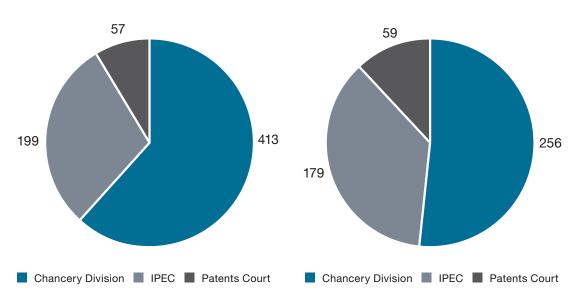
Taking into account the data collection methodology above, table 2 shows the total number of substantive IP cases issued across each of the three courts.

Table 2 – Total number of substantive cases issued

	2015	2016
Chancery Division	413	256
IPEC	199	179
Patents Court	57	59
Total	669	494

2015 2016

Total no. of substantive cases issued: 669. Total no. of substantive cases issued: 494.



The figures indicate that the Chancery Division handles a significant amount of IP cases, despite the availability of the two specialists IP courts, the IPEC and the Patents Court.

The data also shows that 2016 saw a 26 per cent decrease in the number of substantive IP cases commenced, when compared to the previous year.

# Number of cases issued by IP right

Table 3 below shows the total number of cases commenced that contained a claim for one or more of the following IP rights (or cause of action, in the case of passing off).

The total number of cases below will equal more than the total number of substantive cases commenced in each court, as shown in table 2 above. This is because cases often assert multiple rights simultaneously. For example, a trade mark case could also include a claim for passing off and a claim for copyright infringement.

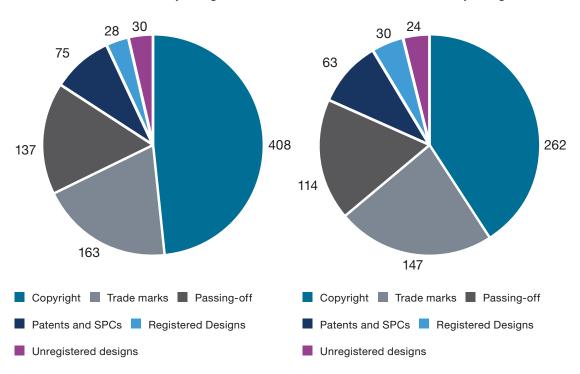
Table 3 - Number of cases issued by IP right

	2015	2016
Copyright	408	262
Trade marks	163	147
Passing off	137	114
Patents and SPCs	75	63
Registered designs	28	30
Unregistered designs	30	24

2015 2016

Number of cases issued by IP right.

Number of cases issued by IP right.



# Copyright

Below are the total number of cases commenced in each of the three courts containing a claim for copyright infringement.

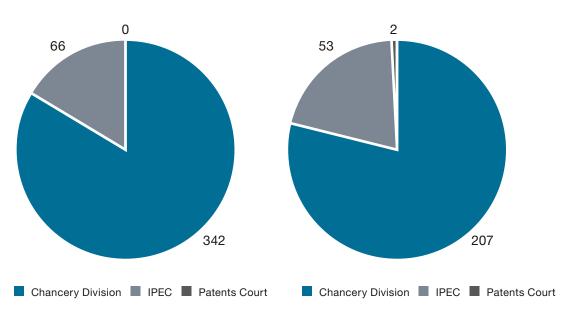
Table 4 – Total number of copyright infringement cases issued

	2015	2016
Chancery Division	342	207
IPEC	66	53
Patents Court	0	2
Total	408	262

2015 2016

Total number of copyright infringement cases issued: 408.

Total number of copyright infringement cases issued: 262.



In both years, more than three quarters of cases containing a claim for copyright infringement were issued in the Chancery Division. Of those cases, approximately 85 per cent concerned infringement of music and television broadcasting rights, which were issued by a small number of agencies representing the IP rights holders.

In addition to copyright infringement, a small number of cases concern copyright ownership disputes and claims seeking declarations of non-infringement, which fall outside the scope of this report.

The table below shows the total number of copyright infringement cases, including claims and counterclaims, across all three courts.

Table 5 – Total number of copyright infringement cases (including counterclaims)

	2015					2016
	Claim	Counterclaim	Total	Counterclaim	Counterclaim	Total
Infringement cases	408	3	411	262	4	266

# Outcomes of copyright infringement cases

The below outcomes were obtained from all copyright infringement cases commenced in the three courts.

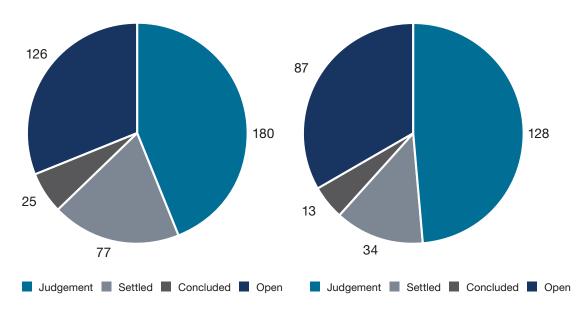
The methodology for categorising case outcomes is covered in Part 2 of this report.

Table 6 – Overview of outcomes of copyright infringement cases

	2015	2016
Judgment	180	128
Settled	77	34
Concluded	25	13
Open	126	87
Total	408	262

2015 2016

Outcomes of copyright infringement cases. 
Outcomes of copyright infringement cases.



As discussed above, a significant proportion of copyright cases issued in the Chancery Division concern infringement of music and television broadcasting rights. Such cases very rarely end with a judgment following a trial of the issues, but usually result in summary judgments being entered in favour of the claimants, or judgments in default ordered against the defendants. Consequently, there is a relatively high number of judgments recorded for copyright infringement cases.

## **Trade Marks**

The table below shows the total number of substantive registered trade mark cases issued in the Chancery Division, Patents Court and IPEC.

The figures include any case that contains a claim concerning a registered UK or EU trade mark. Often, a single case includes claims covering both UK and EU registrations.

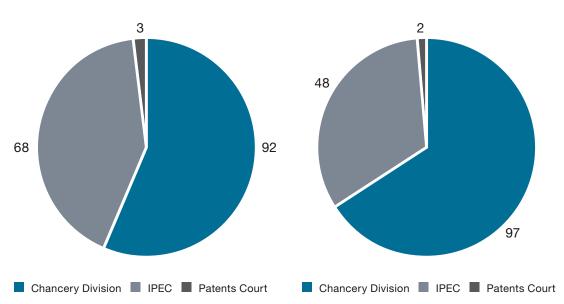
Table 7 – Total number of trade mark cases issued

	2015	2016
IPEC	92	97
Chancery Division	68	48
Patents Court	3	2
Total	163	147

2015 2016

Total number of trade mark cases issued: 163.

Total number of trade mark cases issued: 147.



Other types of claims concerning registered trade marks include those seeking declarations of non-infringement and claims relating to unjust threats of infringement. However, such cases only form a small proportion of trade mark cases commenced.

# **UK** registered trade marks

The figures below show the number of cases containing a claim or counterclaim for infringement or revocation of a UK registered trade mark. The results show data compiled from all three courts.

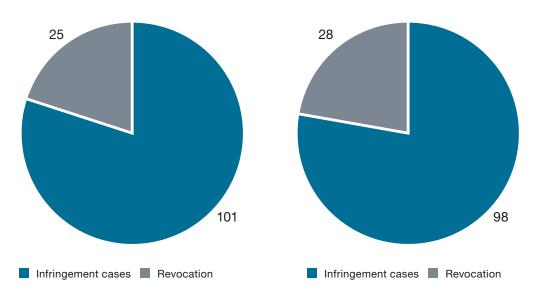
Table 8 – Total number of UK trade mark infringement and revocation cases (including counterclaims)

	2015				2016	
	Claim	Counterclaim	Total	Claim	Counterclaim	Total
Infringement cases	97	4	101	96	2	98
Revocation cases	9	16	25	15	13	28

# 2015 2016

Number of UK trade mark infringement and revocation cases.

Number of UK trade mark infringement and revocation cases.



A significant proportion of trade mark actions concern infringement, although there are still a number of cases seeking revocation of an opponent's mark or marks. The raw data showed that a small subset of cases allege trade mark infringement in conjunction with seeking revocation of the opponent's registered marks.

# EU registered trade marks

The figures below show the number of cases containing a claim or counterclaim for infringement or revocation of an EU registered trade mark. The results show data compiled from all three courts.

Table 9 – Total number of EU trade mark infringement and revocation cases (including counterclaims)

	2015				2016	
	Claim	Counterclaim	Total	Claim	Counterclaim	Total
Infringement cases	118	1	119	93	2	95
Revocation cases	0	5	5	2	7	9

2015 2016

Number of EU trade mark infringement and revocation cases.

Number of EU trade mark infringement and revocation cases.



The data indicates there are a similar number of UK and EU trade mark infringement cases. However, it is less common for parties to seek revocation of an EU trade mark than a UK trade mark.

#### Outcomes of trade mark cases

The following outcomes were obtained from all registered trade mark cases commenced in the Chancery Division, IPEC, and Patents Court.

The methodology for categorising case outcomes is covered in Part 2 of this report.

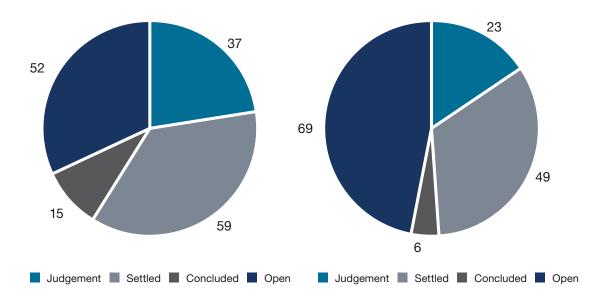
Table 10 - Overview of outcomes of trade mark cases issued

	2015	2016
Judgment	37	23
Settled	59	49
Concluded	15	6
Open	52	69
Total	163	147

2015 2016

Outcomes of trade mark cases.

Outcomes of trade mark cases.



# **Passing Off**

Many trade mark cases also include a claim for passing off. However, it is not uncommon for passing off cases to be commenced without the assertion of any registered rights, and therefore passing off cases have been separately tallied.

Table 11 - Total number of cases commenced with a claim for passing off

	2015	2016
IPEC	76	77
Chancery Division	58	35
Patents Court	3	2
Total	137	114

Total number of passing off cases issued: 137.

Total number of passing off cases issued: 114.

Total number of passing off cases issued: 114.

Table 12 below shows the total number of cases containing a claim or counterclaim for passing off. The figures have been compiled from all three courts.

■ IPEC ■ Chancery Division ■ Patents Court

Table 12 – Total number of passing off cases (including counterclaims)

■ IPEC ■ Chancery Division ■ Patents Court

			2015			2016
	Claim	Counterclaim	Total	Claim	Counterclaim	Total
Passing off	137	7	144	114	7	121

# Outcomes of passing off cases

The following outcomes were obtained from all passing off cases issued in the Chancery Division, IPEC, and Patents Court.

The methodology for categorising case outcomes is covered in Part 2 of this report.

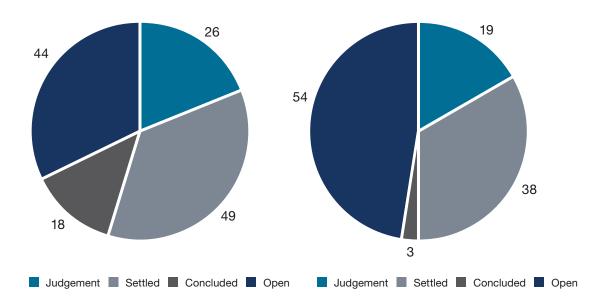
Table 13 - Overview of outcomes of passing off cases issued

	2015	2016
Judgment	26	19
Settled	49	38
Concluded	18	3
Open	44	54
Total	137	114

2015 2016

Outcomes of passing off cases.

Outcomes of passing off cases.



# **Patents and SPCs**

The table below shows the total number of substantive patent and SPC cases issued in the Chancery Division, Patents Court and IPEC.

Table 14 - Total number of patent and SPC cases

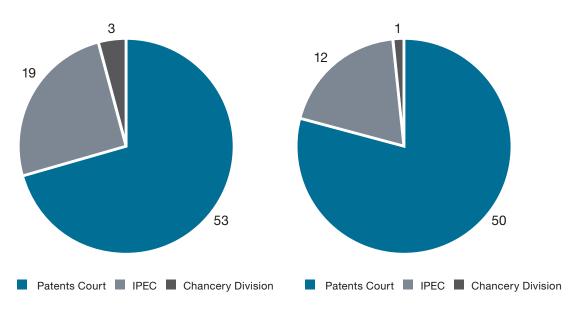
	2015	2016
Patents Court	53	50
IPEC	19	12
Chancery Division	3	1
Total	75	63

#### 2015

# Total number of patent and SPC cases issued: 75.

#### 2016

Total number of patent and SPC cases issued: 63.



The Patents Court continues to be the forum of choice for patent related disputes, with all SPC cases being commenced exclusively in this court. The majority of patent cases concerned European Patents.

The figures below show the number of patent and SPC cases which contain a claim or a counterclaim for infringement, revocation or a declaration of non-infringement. These cases take account of any action concerning an EP or GB patent, or SPC.

Table 15 – Total number of patent and SPC cases by cause of action (including counterclaims)

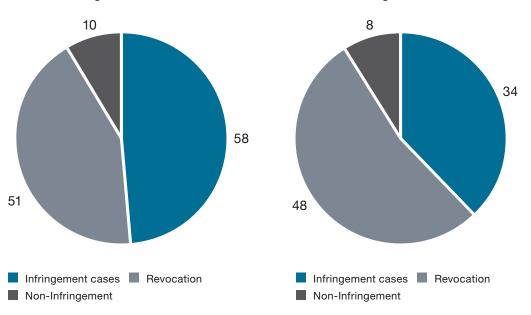
	2015				2016	
	Claim	Counterclaim	Total	Claim	Counterclaim	Total
Infringement	41	17	58	26	8	34
Revocation	33	18	51	31	17	48
Non-infringement	10	0	10	7	1	8

#### 2015

# Number of infringement, revocation and non-infringement cases.

#### 2016

Number of infringement, revocation and non-infringement cases.



Other types of patent related claims are occasionally pleaded, for example, ownership disputes and patent amendment claims. As they only form a very small proportion of cases, they have been excluded from this report.

#### **Outcomes of Patent and SPC Cases**

The following outcomes were obtained from patent and SPC cases issued in the Chancery Division, IPEC and Patents Court.

The methodology for categorising case outcomes is covered in Part 2 of this report.

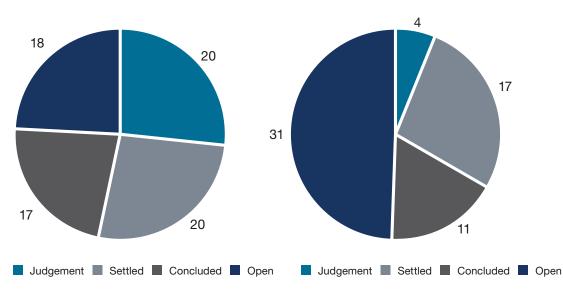
Table 16 - Overview of outcomes of Patent and SPC Cases issued

	2015	2016
Judgment	20	4
Settled	20	17
Concluded	17	11
Open	18	31
Total	75	63

2015 2016

Overview of Patent and SPC Outcomes.

Overview of Patent and SPC Outcomes.



# **Registered Designs**

The table below shows the total number of substantive design right cases issued in the Chancery Division, Patents Court and IPEC. These figures include all cases that contain a claim concerning a UK or EU design registration.

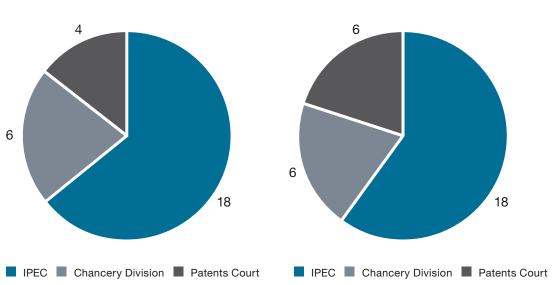
Table 17 – Total number of registered design right cases

	2015	2016
IPEC	18	18
Chancery Division	6	6
Patents Court	4	6
Total	28	30

2015 2016

Total number of registered design right cases issued: 28.

Total number of registered design right cases issued: 30.



There was a similar number of registered design cases commenced in 2015 and in 2016, with the majority of cases being issued in the IPEC.

# **UK** registered designs

The figures below show the total number of cases containing a claim or counterclaim for infringement or revocation of a UK registered design. The figures are compiled from all three courts.

Table 18 – Total number of UK registered design infringement and revocation cases (including counterclaims)

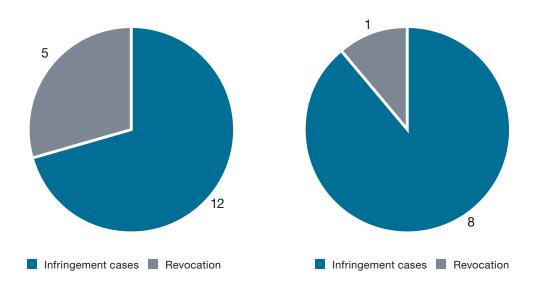
	2015			2016		
	Claim	Counterclaim	Total	Claim	Counterclaim	Total
Infringement cases	12	0	12	8	0	8
Revocation cases	1	4	5	0	1	1

#### 2015

Number of UK registered design infringement and revocation cases.

#### 2016

Number of UK registered design infringement and revocation cases.



2016 saw a reduction in the total number of UK registered design cases issued. The number of infringement cases fell in 2016, as did the proportion of infringement claims that were met with a revocation counterclaim.

# EU registered designs

The figures below show the number of cases containing a claim or counterclaim for infringement or revocation of an EU registered design. The figures are compiled from all three courts.

Table 19 – Number of EU registered design infringement and revocation cases (including counterclaims)

	2015					2016
	Claim	Counterclaim	Total	Claim	Counterclaim	Total
Infringement cases	18	0	18	24	1	25
Revocation cases	0	2	2	0	3	3

#### 2015

Number of EU registered design infringement and revocation cases.

#### 2016

Number of EU registered design infringement and revocation cases.



In contrast to the figures for UK registered designs, 2016 saw an increase in the number of cases concerning EU registered designs. Whilst no revocation cases were commenced on issue, a small number of infringement cases were met with a revocation counterclaim.

# Outcomes of registered design cases

The following outcomes were obtained from all registered design cases issued in the Chancery Division, IPEC and Patents Court.

The methodology for categorising case outcomes is covered in Part 2 of this report.

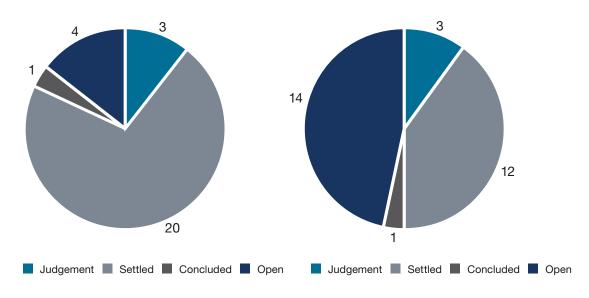
Table 20 - Overview of outcomes of registered design cases issued

	2015	2016
Judgment	3	3
Settled	20	12
Concluded	1	1
Open	4	14
Total	28	30

2015 2016

Outcomes of registered design cases.

Outcomes of registered design cases.



# **Unregistered Designs**

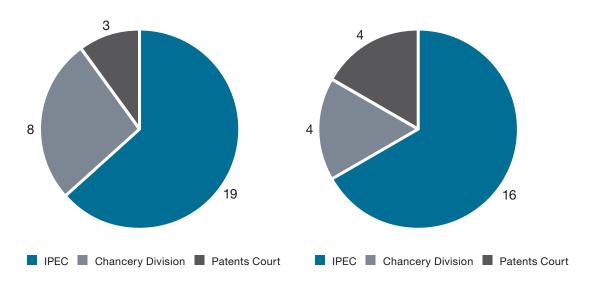
Some registered design cases also assert unregistered design rights. However, several cases claim infringement on unregistered design rights alone. Figures for unregistered design rights have therefore been recorded separately.

Table 21 – Total number of unregistered design rights cases issued

	2015	2016
IPEC	19	16
Chancery Division	8	4
Patents Court	3	4
Total	30	24

Total number of unregistered design cases issued: 30.

Total number of unregistered design cases issued: 24.



The data indicates there is a similar number of cases on registered design rights as on unregistered design rights. There is some overlap in the figures as both registered and unregistered design rights can be asserted either independently or jointly in a case.

Below are the total number of cases containing a claim or counterclaim for either a UK or EU unregistered design right. The figures are compiled from all three courts.

Table 22 – Number of UK and EU unregistered design cases (including counterclaims)

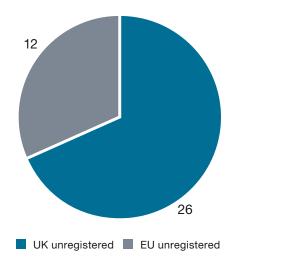
	2015					2016
	Claim	Counterclaim	Total	Claim	Counterclaim	Total
UK unregistered	23	3	26	17	2	19
EU unregistered	10	2	12	12	0	12

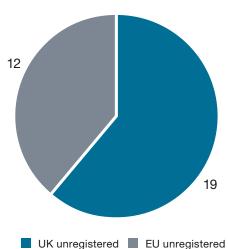
#### 2015

# Number of UK and EU unregistered design cases.

#### 2016

Number of UK and EU unregistered design cases.





Several cases asserted both UK and EU unregistered design rights. Very rarely, the pleadings on file failed to distinguish the jurisdiction in which the design right was claimed to subsist. Where unspecified, the assumption was that the parties were relying on unregistered design rights subsisting in the UK.

# Outcomes of unregistered design cases

The following outcomes were obtained from all unregistered design cases issued in the Chancery Division, IPEC and Patents Court.

The methodology for categorising case outcomes is covered in Part 2 of this report.

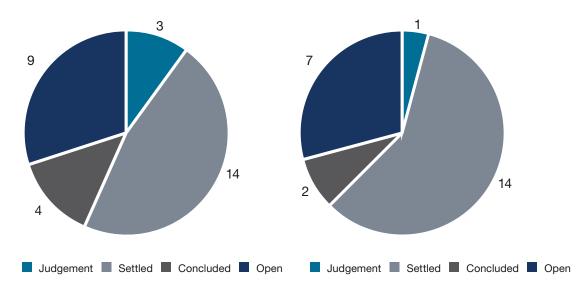
Table 23 - Overview of outcomes of unregistered design cases issued

	2015	2016
Judgment	3	1
Settled	14	14
Concluded	4	2
Open	9	7
Total	30	24

2015 2016

Outcomes of unregistered design cases.

Outcomes of unregistered design cases.



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