



Criminal court statistics quarterly, England and Wales, January to March 2019

Including statistics on the use of language interpreter and translation services in courts and tribunals

Main points

Magistrates' court: receipts and disposals continue to fall year-on-year	↓	Workload has fallen over the past three years - with small falls in receipts and disposals seen in Q1 2019 compared to Q1 2018. The volume of outstanding cases remained in line with levels seen since Q2 2016.
Crown Court: outstanding cases continue to fall	↓	After a peak in Q4 2014, outstanding cases have been falling, reaching the lowest level in the quarterly series (31,916) in Q1 2019.
Average waiting times at the Crown Court continue to fall	↓	The median waiting time reached a series low of 6.1 weeks in Q1 2019. This is over a week less than the waiting time in Q1 2018 (7.3 weeks) and less than half of the peak wait in Q2 2015 (13.0 weeks).
The average time spent 'at court' remained broadly stable	↔	In Q1 2019, the mean number of days from first listing in the magistrates' court to completion in the Crown Court was 178 days.
Interpreters: Completed requests increased	↑	7% increase in completed requests saw volumes reach the highest level since the new contact was introduced in 2016 (42,136).

The technical guide to 'Criminal court statistics' and 'Language interpreter and translation services in courts and tribunals' can be found at the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-criminal-court-statistics>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/guide-to-language-interpreter-and-translation-services>

This edition of the 'Criminal courts statistics quarterly' publication includes additional tables, transparency files and pivot table tools produced on an annual basis only.

We have changed how our quarterly bulletins look, and would welcome any feedback to commentary.champions@justice.gsi.gov.uk

For other feedback related to the content of this publication, please let us know at CJS_Statistics@justice.gsi.gov.uk

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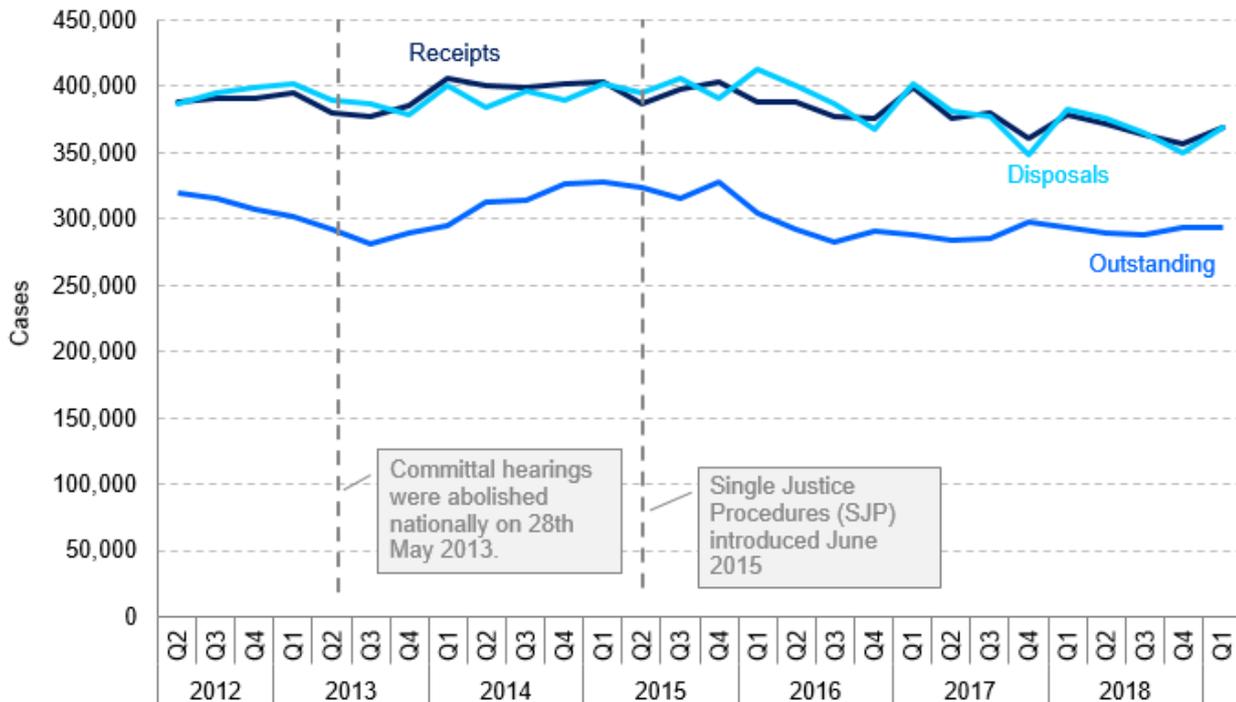
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1. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

Receipts and disposals at magistrates' courts continue to fall

Magistrates' court workload has fallen over the past three years - with small falls in receipts and disposals seen in Q1 2019 compared to Q1 2018. The volume of outstanding cases remained broadly in line with levels seen since Q3 2016.

Figure 1: Magistrates' courts caseload, Q2 2012 - Q1 2019 (Source: Table M1)



Magistrates' court caseload

The magistrates' court workload has tended to fall over the past three years, with consistent falls in 'for trial' cases. Receipts of 'for trial' cases (triable-either-way and indictable only cases) have fallen by 10% in 2018 compared to the previous year. This is broadly in line with annual decreases reported in the number of offences the police resolve with a charge/summons¹ (down 9% in the 12 months to December 2018) and proceedings at magistrates' court² (down 10% over the same period).

Despite the overall falls seen, the summary motoring caseload has tended to increase from a series low of 111,701 disposals in Q4 2013. In the latest period 152,758 cases were disposed, up 1% on Q1 2018 and 5% on the previous quarter.

Short-term trends are likely to be impacted by seasonal patterns. For example, volumes of case receipts and disposals typically increase in Q1 (January – March) - particularly for higher volume summary motoring offences.

Trial efficiency

The total number of trials in magistrates' courts has tended to fall since a peak in 2007, with 123,023 trials in 2018 the lowest in the series (2003-2018).

Of these trials, the proportion that are effective had been gradually increasing between 2003 and 2015, after which point the proportion has stayed level at around 45% to 46% of all trials listed. The proportion of ineffective trials has mirrored the trends in that of effective -

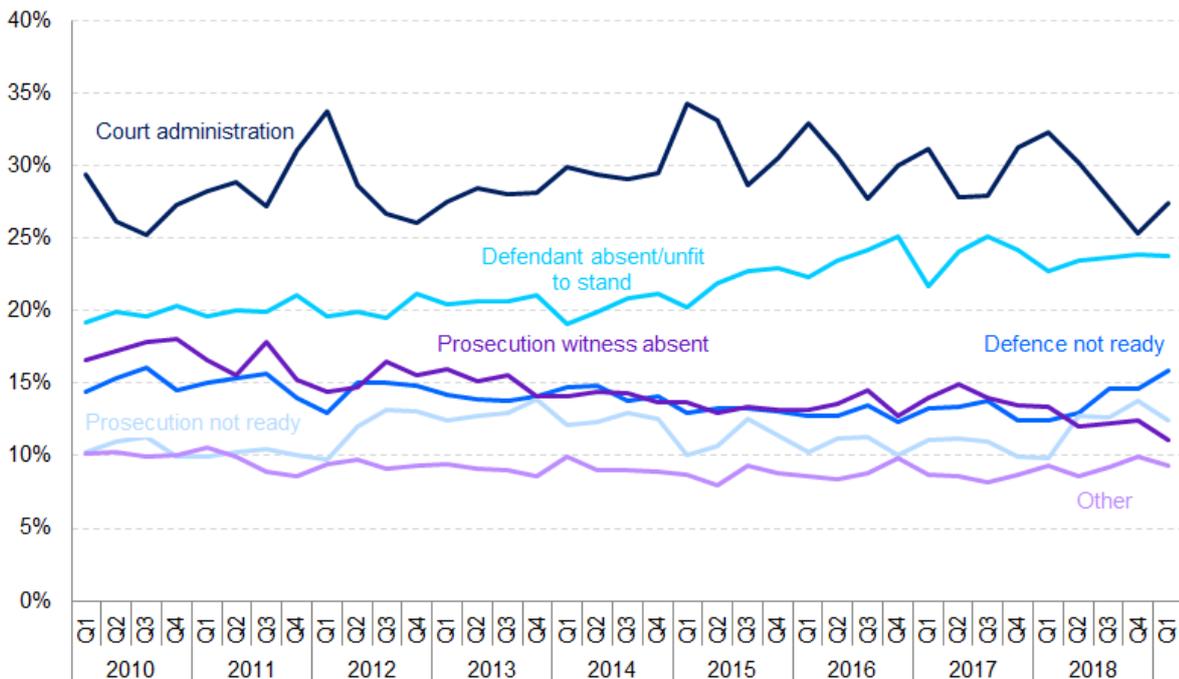
¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-september-2018>

falling between 2003 and 2015, after which it levelled at around 15% to 16% up to the current quarter.

The proportion of trials that crack has remained stable at around 37% and 39% between 2003 and 2018. Over half (59%) of cracked trials in Q1 2019 were due to 'acceptable guilty plea(s) entered late' and 'acceptable guilty plea to alternative new charge'.

Figure 2: Magistrates' courts ineffective trials by reason, Q1 2010 - Q1 2019 (Source: Table AM2)



The most common reasons for an ineffective trial in Q1 2019 continue to be 'court administration' (27%) and 'defendant absent/unfit to stand' (24%). The proportion of ineffective trials where the reason was 'defendant absent/unfit to stand' has tended to increase since 2014, up from 19% in Q1 2014 to 24% in Q1 2019.

Estimates of magistrates' courts caseloads have been revised following the identification of some omitted cases from the published totals and underlying management information.

Following the introduction of automated track case management (ATCM) cases in April 2017 a small number of summary non-motoring cases were misclassified and therefore not included in published totals. Approximately 12,000 cases between Q1 2017 and Q1 2018 have been added into the latest published revised estimates, accounting for less than 1% of total receipts and 2% of summary non-motoring receipts during this period.

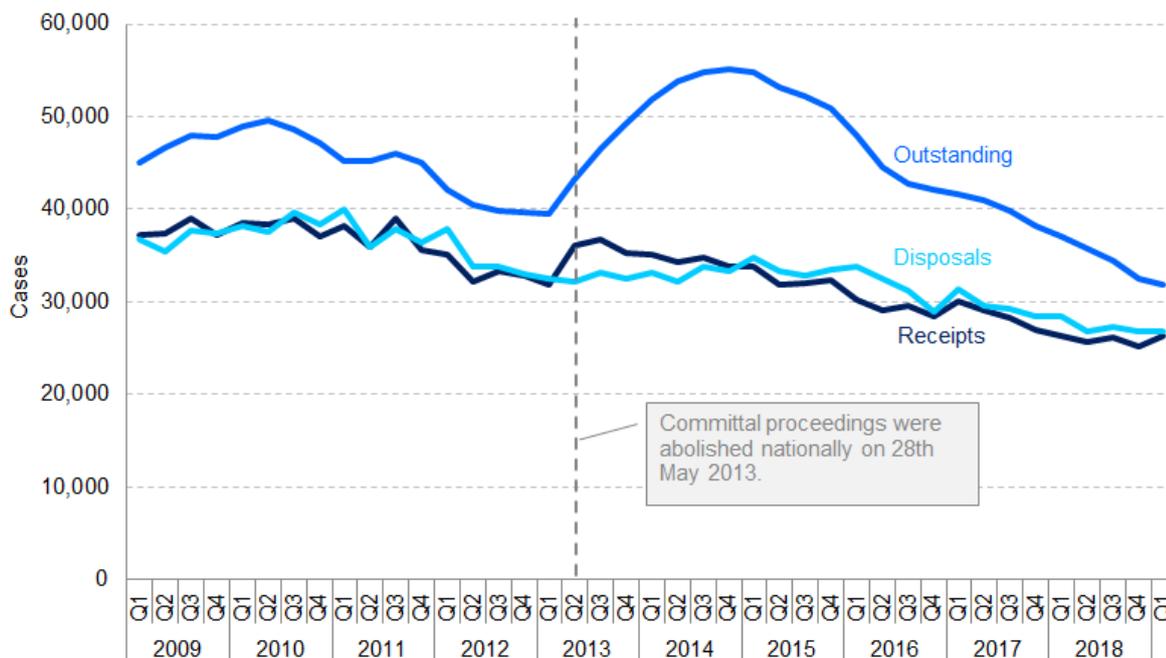
The revisions have only a minimal impact on published trends.

2. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

Outstanding cases in Crown Court have continued to fall

After a peak in Q4 2014, outstanding cases have been falling, reaching the lowest level in the quarterly series (31,916) in Q1 2019. Over the past year, case receipts and disposals have remained broadly stable at around 26,000 and 27,000 cases each quarter respectively.

Figure 3: Crown Court caseload, Q1 2009 - Q1 2019 (Source: Table C1)



Crown Court caseload (Table C1)

Compared to the previous quarter, the volume of cases receipts rose (up 5%) while disposals remained stable in Q1 2019. Despite this, disposals remained slightly higher than receipts and the number of outstanding cases continued to fall (down 3%).

Following the abolition of committal hearings in May 2013, triable-either-way cases could be sent from the magistrates' courts to the Crown Court more quickly. The effect of this procedural change can be seen in the increase in receipts in Q2 2013 - which pushed receipts above disposals for around two-years and saw outstanding cases increase. Since 2015 the volume of disposals has been higher than receipts and as a result the volume of outstanding cases began to decline, and continue to fall. Case receipts and disposals have been stabilising over the past year and are now at very similar volumes.

The overall downward trend in the Crown Court workload over the past three years is in line with year-on-year decreases in the number of individuals dealt with in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales³. There has been a general decrease in the amount of offences for which the police issue a charges/summons over the past three years⁴, along with a fall in the number of indictable offences being dealt with at the magistrates' court¹ which has a direct impact on the flow of cases into the Crown Court.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2018>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-statistics>

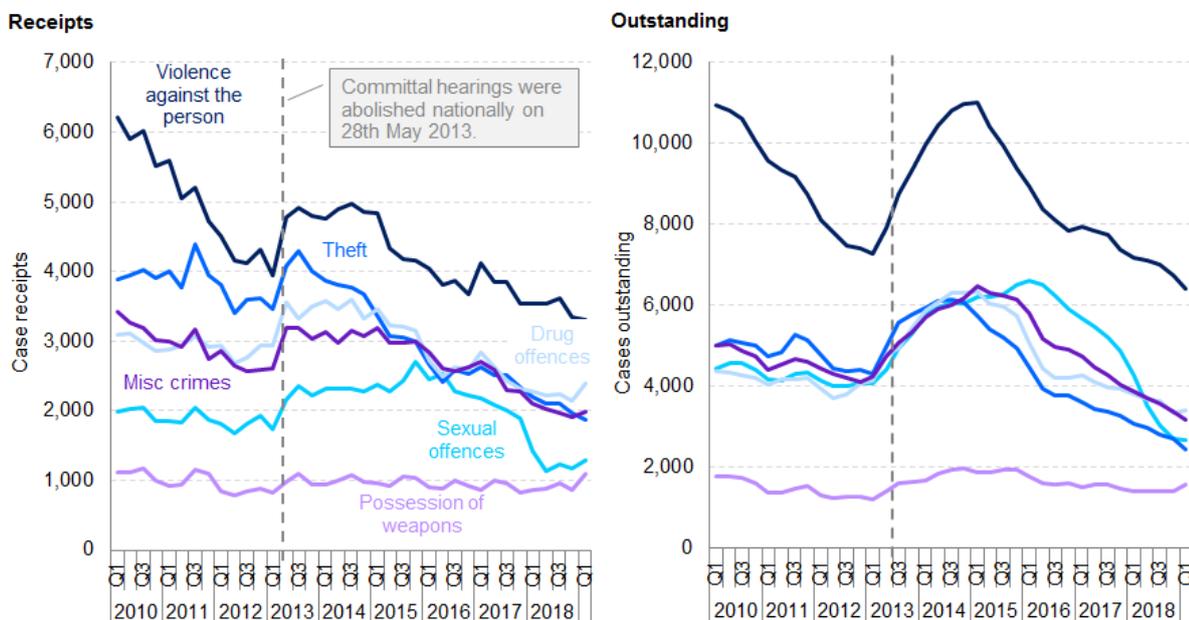
Crown Court receipts, disposals and outstanding cases by offence group

There was an increase in cases received for drug offences and possession of weapons cases in the latest quarter – up 12% and 27% respectively on the previous quarter. Prior to the most recent quarter, receipts for possession of weapons cases had been broadly stable for the past 6 years despite the wider falls seen in receipts for other offence groups.

Violence against the person continues to be the largest offence group at the Crown Court, making up around a quarter of the court’s caseload. Since the end of 2014, the amount of cases received, disposed and outstanding for this offence group have been slowly decreasing in line with overall Crown Court figures.

Receipts for sexual offence cases increased between 2013 and 2015, as a result the number of outstanding sexual offence cases peaked in Q1 2016 (6,614 cases). Since then, the caseload for sexual offence cases has fallen – most clearly seen by the lowest levels of outstanding cases across the series (2,671 cases in Q1 2019).

Figure 4: Receipts and outstanding for trial cases by selected offence group, Q1 2010 – Q1 2019 (Source: Crown Court cases received, disposed and outstanding tool)



Effectiveness of trials at the Crown Court (Tables C2, AC2, AC3)

Roughly half of all trials listed in the Crown Court were effective and went ahead as planned, this has been true since 2013. Of the other half of cases listed, around 35% were cracked, while the remaining 15% were ineffective and did not go ahead due to a failing of the defence, prosecution or court.

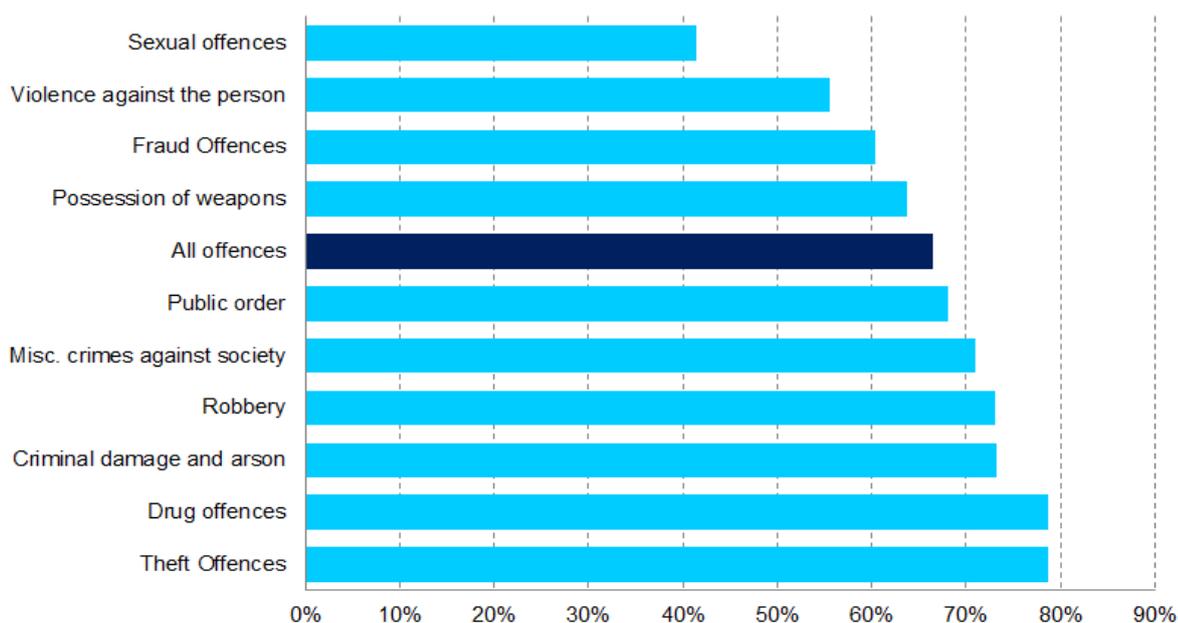
Court administration and the defendant being absent or unfit to stand continue to be the prevailing reasons leading to trial ineffectiveness, being cited as the reason for 24% and 27% of ineffective cases in 2018 respectively.

Guilty plea rates by offence group in the Crown Court

In Q1 2019, around 66% of defendants⁵ entered a guilty plea to all the counts against them at the Crown Court. The guilty plea rate at the Crown Court has been stable over the past four years.

For most offence groups, over 60% of defendants plead guilty to all counts against them. However, the rate for sexual offences is notably lower (41% in Q1 2019). Theft and drug offences continue to have the joint highest guilty plea rate (79%).

Figure 5: Guilty plea rate by offence group, Q1 2019 (Source: Crown Court plea tool)



Average total hearing time at the Crown Court by offence group

Over the past three quarters, the median average⁶ total hearing time⁷ in trial cases has remained stable at about 1.5 hours.

Defendants who plead not guilty have a median hearing time around eight-times longer than those that plead guilty to all counts – this reflects the need to try defendants who plead not guilty to determine a verdict. Across the time series, the median hearing time for cases with a not guilty plea has been slowly rising, reaching a series high in the current quarter (8.6 hours).

For cases where there was a not guilty plea, the total median hearing time for fraud cases (14.4 hours) rose by 2.6 hours to surpass sexual offences (13.3 hours) for the first time as the offence group with the highest median hearing time. Prior to Q2 2019 sexual offence cases have consistently had the longest hearing time, with median hearing times tending to be between 12 and 14 hours.

⁵ The guilty plea rate is calculated as a proportion of the number of defendants who plead guilty out of the total number of defendants who entered a plea (guilty or not guilty).

⁶ The reporting on waiting and hearing times has changed to incorporate median as well as mean averages. This is due to a small number of cases with long waiting and hearing times disproportionately influencing mean averages and subsequent revisions. The median average is not as impacted by these extreme cases. Full details of this addition can be found in the accompanying '[Guidance to criminal court statistics](#)'

⁷ The average hearing time is calculated as the total sum of all hearings in all cases divided by the number of cases and therefore represents the average time of all hearings combined in a case rather than a singular hearing.

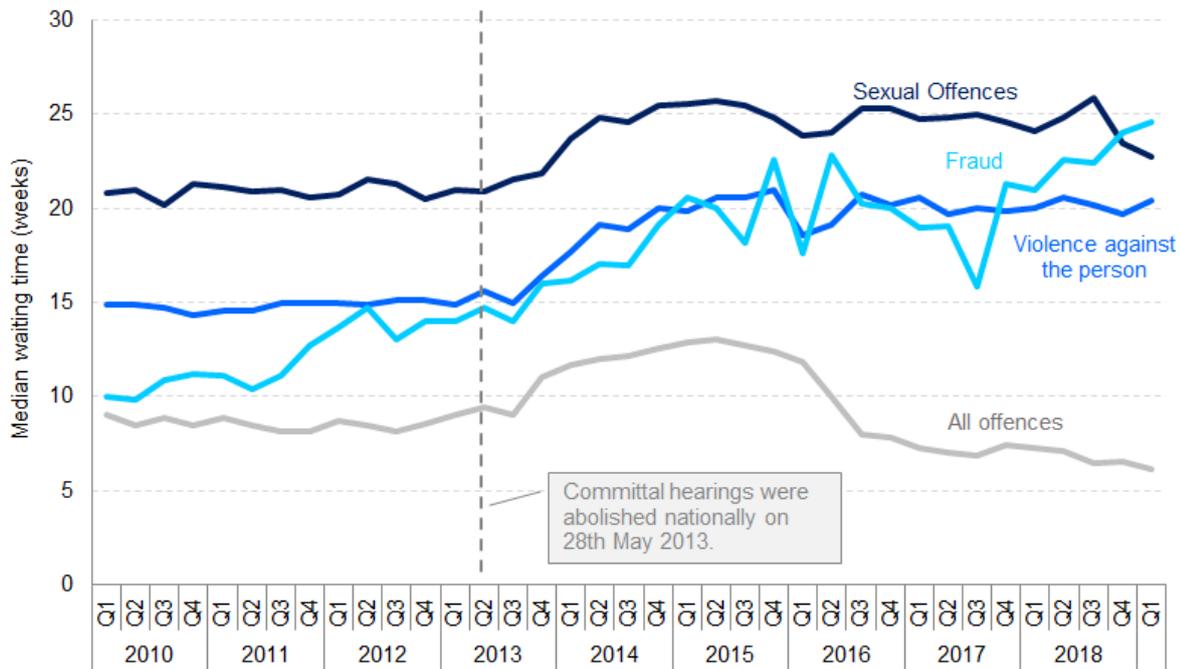
Average waiting time in the Crown Court by offence group

Overall, the median average waiting time⁸ for defendants at the Crown Court continued to fall, reaching a series low of 6.1 weeks in Q1 2019. This is over a week less than the waiting time in Q1 2018 (7.3 weeks) and has more than halved since the series peak in Q2 2015 (13.0 weeks).

Defendants that plead not guilty (24.7 weeks) wait on average around five-times longer than those that plead guilty in Q1 2019 (5.4 weeks).

Defendants remanded on bail (18 weeks) tend to wait around double the amount of time that those remanded in custody wait (9 weeks). For defendants remanded in custody, the waiting time in sexual offence cases has fallen sharply since Q2 2018 and reached a series low at just under 14 weeks in Q1 2019.

Figure 6: Median waiting time for all defendants by selected offence groups, Q1 2010 – Q1 2019 (Source: Crown Court waiting and hearing time tool)



The overall median waiting time for sexual offence cases has tended to be the highest – this is likely impacted by the lower guilty plea rate in sexual offence cases compared to other offence groups. Since a peak in Q3 2018 (25.9 weeks) the average waiting time for defendants in sexual offence cases has fallen by 12% to 22.7 weeks in Q1 2019. In the last quarter waiting times for fraud offences continued to increase and had the highest waiting time of 24.5 weeks.

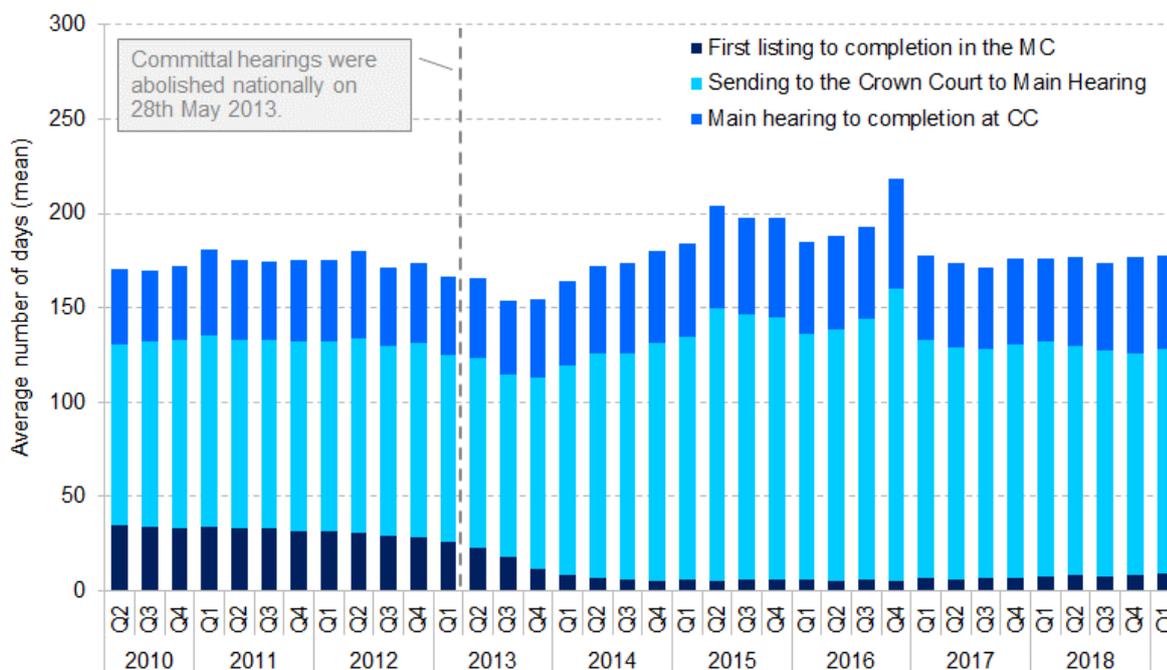
⁸ The waiting time is the duration in weeks between a case being committed to the court and the first main hearing. A value for this is determined for each defendant dealt with during the period and an average calculated.

3. Timeliness

For cases completing at the Crown Court, the average number of days spent ‘in court’ has remained stable since the start of 2017.

In Q1 2019, the mean number of days from first listing in the magistrates’ court to completion in the Crown Court was 178 days.

Figure 7: Average number of days (mean) from first listing to completion in the Crown Court (‘in court’), Q2 2010 - Q1 2019 (Source: Table T4)



Timeliness data is created by matching magistrates’ courts and Crown Court records to estimate the time taken from the date an alleged offence was committed to the date of a final decision at either court.

The average (mean) duration spent ‘in court’ for all cases started at magistrates’ and completed at the Crown Court has remained relatively stable since Q1 2017.

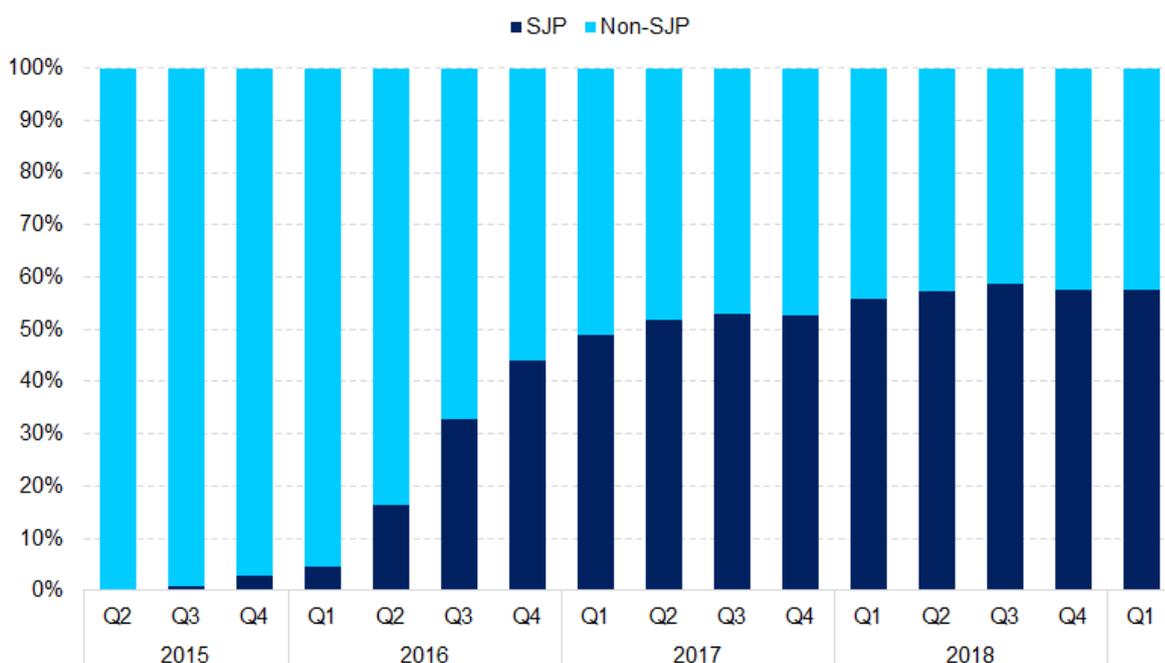
The majority of time for Crown Court criminal cases is spent prior to reaching the magistrates’ courts (‘pre-court’), with 67% of the time taken from offence to first listing in Q1 2019. This proportion varies markedly by offence group, ranging from 91% for sexual offences to 29% for criminal damage and arson.

The average time spent ‘pre-court’ fell 7% in the latest quarter (357 days) compared to the previous year (385 days) – this follows consistent increases seen since 2011 due to longer periods from offence to charge.

The time taken for police to reach a charge/summons outcome has increased⁹, however more historical offences being dealt with at court has been a substantial factor in the increase in average ‘pre-court’ time.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-statistics>

Figure 8: Percentage of cases completed by Single Justice Procedures at the magistrates' courts (excluding those sent to the Crown Court), Q2 2015 - Q1 2019
 (Source: Tables T1, T3)



Introduced in June 2015 under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, [Single Justice Procedure \(SJP\) notices](#) allow cases involving adults charged with summary offences to be dealt with in a single magistrates' sitting without a prosecutor or defendant being present.

The number of SJP cases have increased each year since implementation in 2015, accounting for 57% of all completions at the magistrates' courts in Q1 2019.

Since its introduction, the majority (87%) of SJP cases are listed and completed at the magistrates' courts on the same day.

The impact of the SJP notice introduction can be seen across several measures for summary non-motoring cases completing at the magistrates' court, including:

- An increase in the proportion of cases dealt with at the first hearing;
- A decrease in the average number of hearings required for cases to complete;
- A fall in the mean duration from first listing to completion;
- A marked variation in the plea entry at the magistrates' courts, with a sharp increase in the percentage of defendants who enter no plea and a corresponding reduction in the percentage of guilty pleas entered.

4. Juror statistics

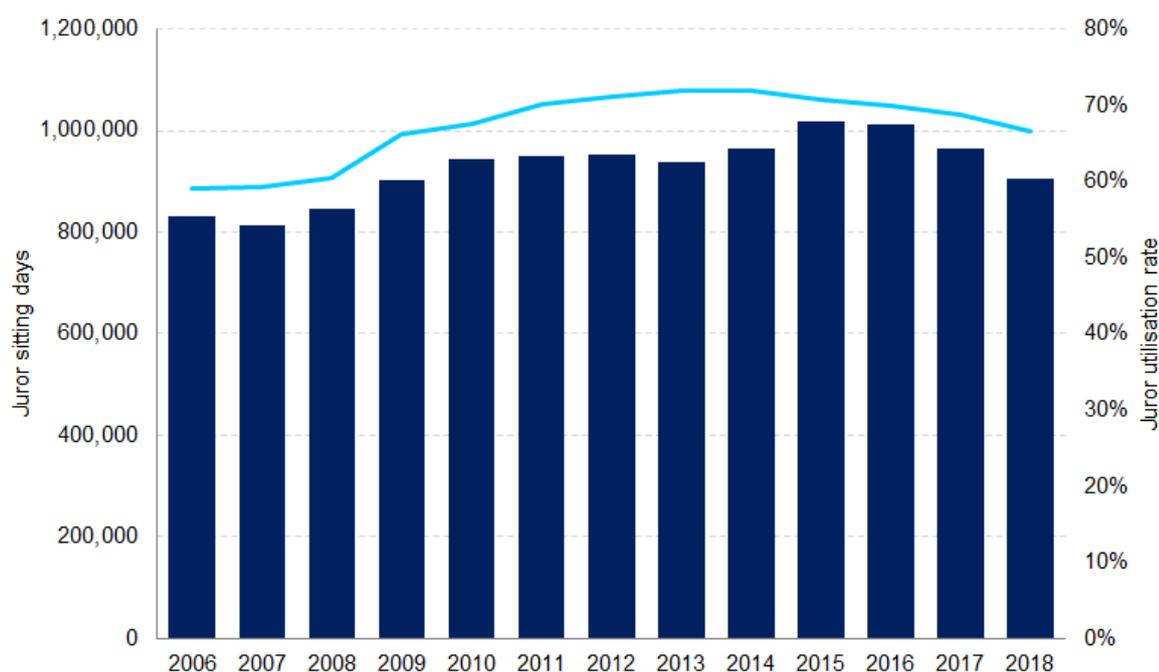
The volume of jurors summoned remained roughly the same in 2018, whilst the amount disqualified from service fell.

363,065 juror summons were issued in 2018 – in line with 2017 totals. There was a 23% fall in disqualifications from jury service compared to 2017, reaching the lowest level in the series at 89,348 disqualifications.

Since 2014, the juror utilisation rate (the number of sitting days divided by the sum of sitting, non-sitting and non-attendance days) has been falling year-on-year from 72% to 67% in 2018.

26,244 fewer jurors summoned were disqualified from serving in 2018 compared to 2017, this follows a general downward trend in the number of disqualifications since a peak in 2008.

Figure 9: Juror sitting days and juror utilisation rate, 2006 - 2018 (Source: Table J2)



The Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly publication covering Q2 (April-June) 2018 included a table titled 'Jury summoning figures in the Crown Court by age group,' for the first time, which detailed an age breakdown of jurors and whether they served, did not serve, were disqualified or did not respond. Discrepancies between the juror summons age-group breakdown and the overall juror summoning estimates have since been identified as part of routine checks for the latest publication. As a result, a decision has been made by the Head of Profession for Statistics to remove the juror age-group estimates from the latest published statistics until further reassurance can be sought.

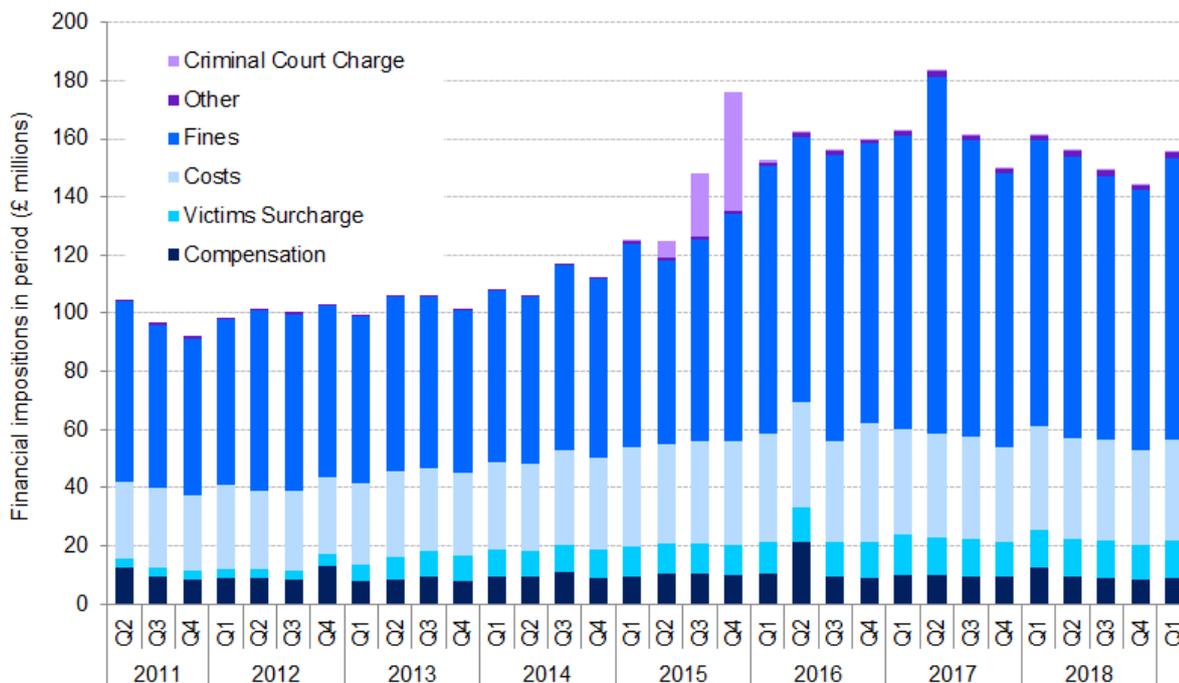
We will continue to investigate the quality of the underlying data and methodologies used with data suppliers and system owners to better understand the identified discrepancies.

5. Enforcement of financial impositions

Total financial impositions rose in Q1 2019

Total financial impositions increased by 8% in Q1 2019 to £155m - this is largely due to a £7.5m (8%) increase in fines. The value of total outstanding financial impositions continued to rise, reaching £1.14 billion in Q1 2019.

Figure 10: HMCTS management information: Financial impositions by imposition type, England and Wales, Q2 2011 – Q1 2019 (Source: Table A2)



Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type

Fines continued to account for the majority of financial impositions (62%) in Q1 2019, marking a £7.5m (8%) increase compared to the previous quarter. This is contrary to the falls in the value of fine-related impositions that have been observed over the last two years.

Costs¹⁰ are the next largest imposition group making up 22% of all financial impositions in Q1 2019 - in the latest quarter costs have increased by 6% to £34.5 million.

Outstanding financial impositions

In Q1 2019, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £1.14 billion. The amount of outstanding financial impositions has increased markedly from the start of 2015 (when they were at £571million) and has almost doubled since. A change in policy regarding the collection of financial impositions is partially behind this cumulative increase – unpaid accounts are no longer routinely closed and therefore more outstanding impositions are carried over from previous periods.

¹⁰ This is the amount awarded to the prosecutors to go towards the cost of bringing the case to court. Includes Crown Prosecution Service costs and costs received from Scotland and Northern Ireland.

6. Experimental Statistics - The use of language interpreter and translation services in courts and tribunals¹¹

The amount of completed language service requests and success rate¹² increased.

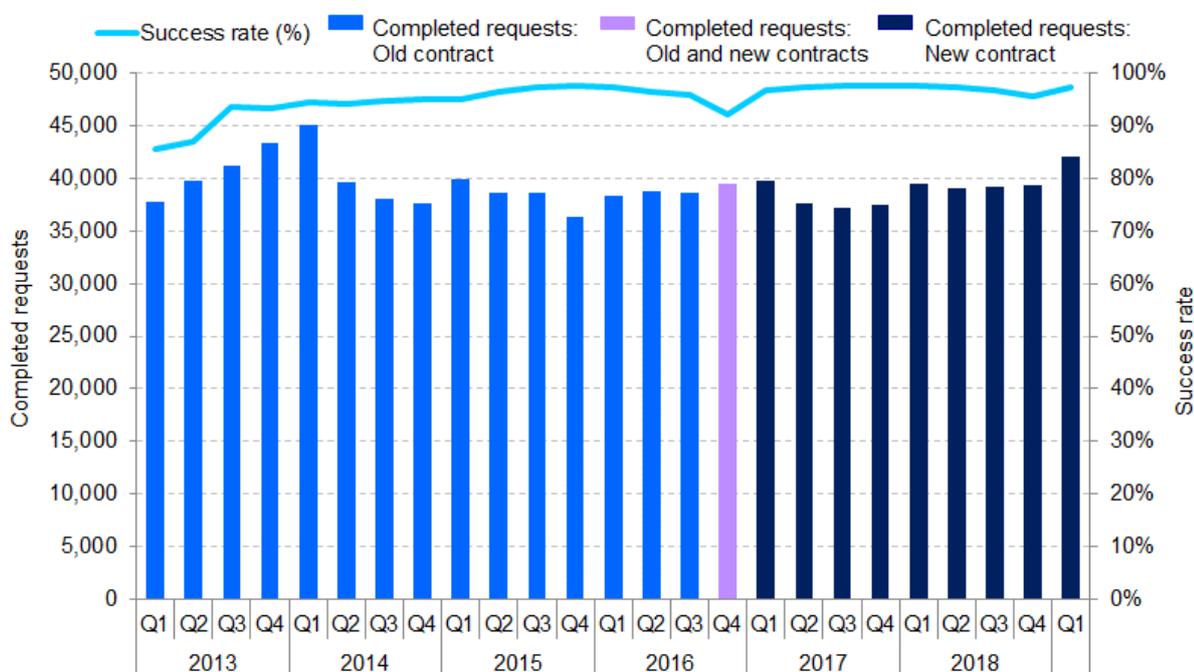
In Q1 2019, a 7% increase in completed language service requests saw volumes reach the highest level since the new contract¹³ was introduced in 2016. The success rate also increased by one percentage point to 97%.

Completed service requests

Compared to the previous quarter, the volume of completed service requests has increased across all requestor types and is the highest level seen under the new contracts.

The largest increases have been seen in requests from tribunal courts (9%) and criminal courts (7%) which account for most of the service requests increase in Q1 2019. The service requests for special services dropped slightly between Q4 2018 and Q1 2019, however they remain 30% higher than Q1 2018.

Figure 11: Number of completed language service requests and overall success rate, Q1 2013 – Q1 2019 (Source: Table L1)



Success rate

After small decreases over the previous two quarters, the overall success rate has increased to 97%. The success rate for non-DPSI¹⁴ languages (86%) remains substantially lower than the rate for standard languages (98%), while a five percentage point increase in the rate for special services in Q1 2019 brought it in line with the overall rate (97%).

¹¹ The statistics under the new contracts are 'Experimental Statistics' – the series remains in the testing phase and is not yet fully developed.

¹² The amount of requests that were fulfilled divided by the total fulfilled and unfulfilled (excludes cancelled requests)

¹³ The 'new contract' figures comprise data from two separate suppliers, thebigword Group Ltd for face to face interpretation, and Clarion UK Ltd for non-spoken languages (special services).

¹⁴ The Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) is a standard qualification required of interpreter; languages covered by it are termed 'Standard' languages. Those not covered in the DPSI require separate qualifications and are termed 'non-DPSI' languages.

Complaints and complaint rate

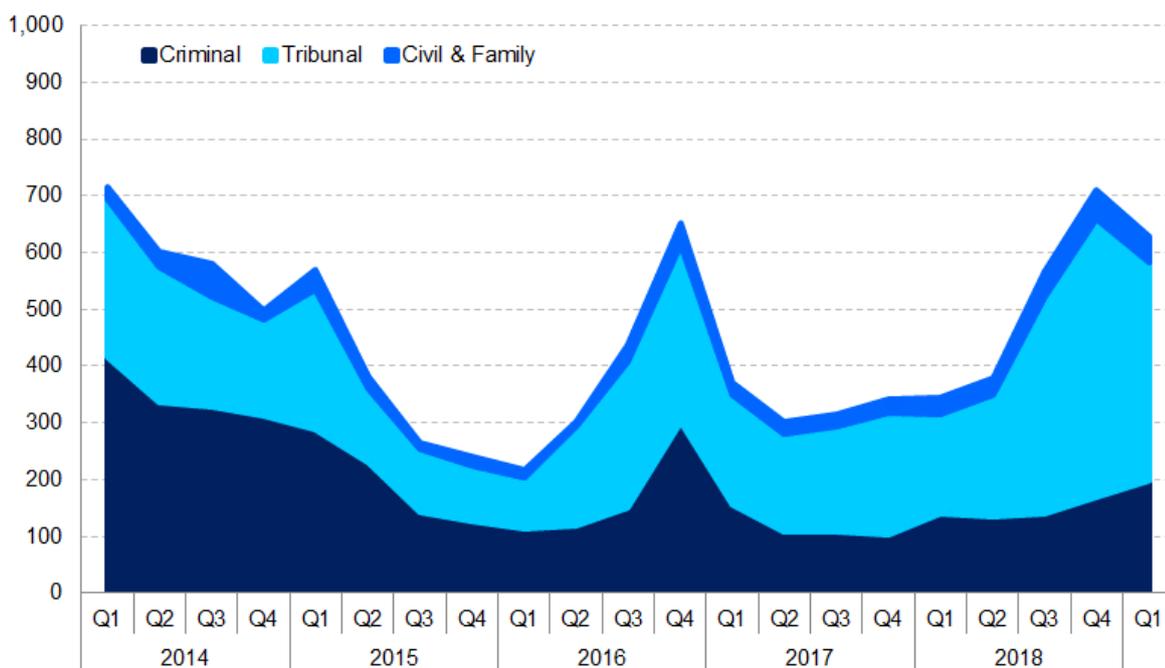
The overall complaint rate remained stable – this is true for each service and requestor type. Tribunals continue to account for the highest proportion of complaints (49%), despite only accounting for 31% of total service requests in Q1 2019.

‘No interpreter available’ continued to be the most common complaint, which accounted for 29% (111) of all complaints made in the latest period. After a temporary spike in the amount of complaints due to operational issues in Q4 2018 (18%), the amount of these complaints has fallen back down to 6% (21), this is due to a recurring technical issue with one of the suppliers which has now been resolved.

‘Off-contract’ requests

Following increases from Q1 to Q4 2018, the number of off contract requests has decreased in Q1 2019 by 12% (from 709 to 627 compared to the previous quarter). This remains 82% higher than level record in the same quarter of the previous year (345).

Figure 12: Completed ‘off-contract’¹⁵ language service requests by requestor type, Q1 2014 – Q1 2019 (Source: Table L3)



The rising and then recent falling trend in overall off-contract requests over the past year has largely been due to changes in the number of requests immigration tribunals. In 2018 there was a problem with fulfilment for language service requests at the Immigration and Asylum Chamber (IAC) which resulted in more requests going ‘off-contract.’ The MoJ has been working with the IAC and language service suppliers to address fulfilment issues and booking practices which has resulted in an improved fulfilment rate and the fall in off-contract requests for immigration tribunals seen in the most recent quarter.

¹⁵ ‘Off-contract’ request are language service requests fulfilled directly by the Ministry of Justice out of or ‘off’ the language service contracts currently in place. This occurs when a contractor (thebigword group or Clarion UK) has been unable to fulfil a booking. As the process for recording off-contract requests has not changed between contracts, they remain official statistics and are not experimental.

7. Further information on criminal courts data

The latest quarterly data presented in this publication are provisional. Final data for each calendar year is published in June, following further data cleaning and the incorporation of additional cases not available in our original extracts.

Accompanying files

As well as the bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- Two technical guides providing background information
- A set of overview tables, covering each section of this bulletin.
- 8 pivot tools and underlying data which feature further breakdowns of published data.

National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

This bulletin recently underwent a compliance check with the Office for Statistics Regulation and retained its National Statistics status in January 2019.¹⁶ All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm which considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. It is the Ministry of Justice's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected for National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.



Experimental Statistics status

Experimental statistics are produced under the remit of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are also produced impartially and are free from political influence¹⁷.

Contact

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Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to the Justice Statistics Analytical Services division of the Ministry of Justice:

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Ministry of Justice, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

Email: statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk

Next update: 26th September 2019

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

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¹⁶ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/compliance-check-on-court-statistics/>

¹⁷ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>