



Criminal court statistics quarterly, England and Wales, April to June 2019

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

Main points

Magistrates' court: receipts and disposals stabilise following falls



Workload has fallen over the past three years - with volumes stabilising at lower levels in Q2 2019. The volume of outstanding cases remained in line with levels seen since Q2 2016.

Crown Court: Small increase following a four-year decline



After a peak in Q4 2014, outstanding cases have fallen consistently until the latest period when there was a 1% increase since Q1 2019.

Average waiting times at the Crown Court continue to fall



The median waiting time reached a series low of 5.7 weeks in Q2 2019. This is over a week less than the waiting time in Q2 2018 (7.1 weeks) and less than half of the peak wait in Q2 2015 (13.0 weeks).

The average time spent at Crown Court' fell



In Q2 2019, the mean number of days from first listing in the magistrates' court to completion in the Crown Court was 163 days, 8% down on the previous year.

Interpreters: Completed requests remained stable



The number of completed requests in Q2 2019 (42,384) showed little change compared with last quarter.

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>

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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Next publication – 12 December 2019

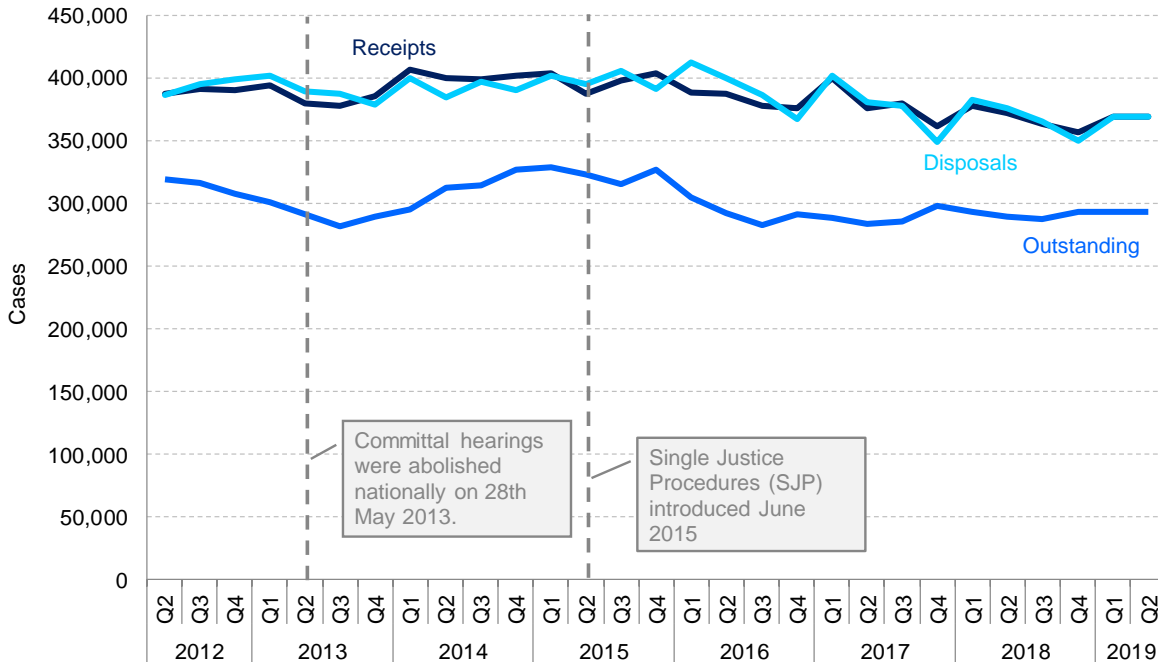
In the next edition of Criminal Courts Statistics Quarterly we will publish statistics on Failure to Appear (FTA) warrants issued in magistrates' courts. These will be [experimental statistics](#), developed alongside colleagues in Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) in response to user demand and will be subject to further development, in line with users' views.

1. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

Magistrates' courts caseload has stabilised following falls

Magistrates' court workload has fallen over the past three years - with volumes stabilising at lower levels since 2018. The volume of outstanding cases remained broadly in line with levels seen over the last three years.

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



Magistrates' court caseload

The magistrates' court workload has tended to fall over the past three years. Quarterly receipts for 'trial cases' (triable either way and indictable cases) fell from a peak in Q3 2013 (109,194 case) to a series low in Q4 2018 (74,038 cases) and have stabilised at these lower levels with 75,343 for trial case receipts in Q2 2019.

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 155,025 cases were disposed, up 6% on the previous year and accounting for 42% of all disposals at the magistrates' court.

Trial efficiency

The total number of trials in magistrates' courts has tended to fall, with 27,199 trials listed in Q2 2019 – the lowest level seen since the quarterly series began in 2010.

Of these trials, the proportion that are effective gradually increased between 2003 and 2015, after which the proportion has stayed level at around 45% to 46% of all trials listed. The proportion of ineffective trials has been the inverse to the trends in that of effective - falling between 2003 and 2015, after which it levelled out at around 16% up to the current quarter.

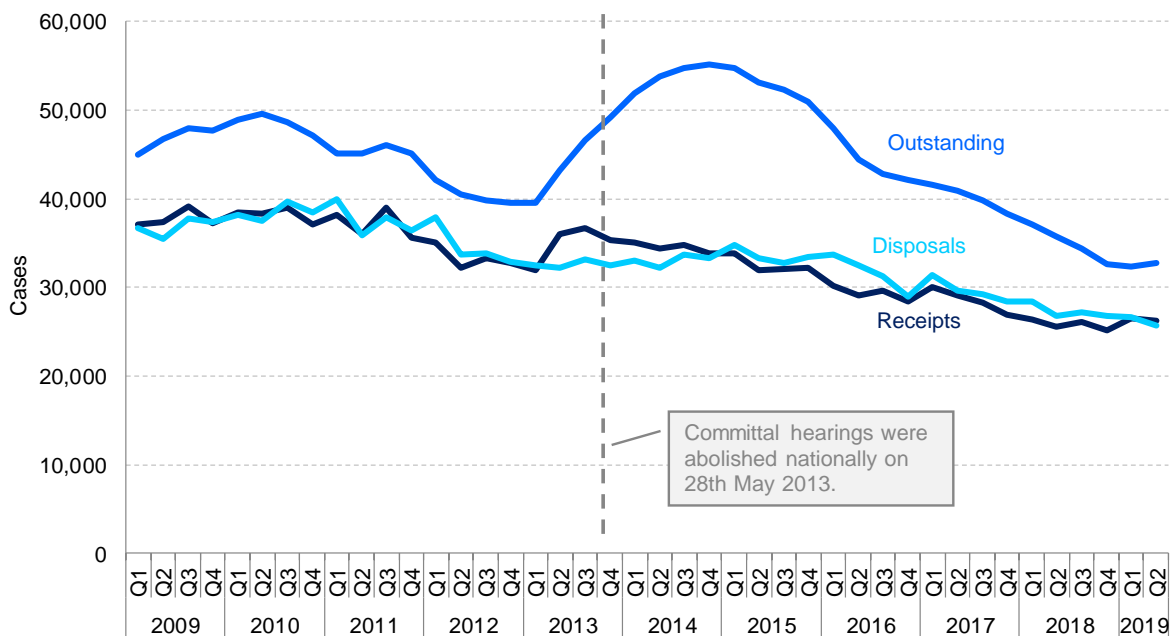
The proportion of trials that crack has remained stable at around 37% to 39% between 2003 and 2018. Over half (57%) of cracked trials in Q2 2019 were due to 'acceptable guilty plea(s) entered late' and 'acceptable guilty plea to alternative new charge'.

2. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

Outstanding cases in the Crown Court have slightly increased this quarter following a four-year decline.

After a peak in Q4 2014, outstanding cases have fallen consistently until the latest period when there was a 1% increase to 32,708.

Figure 3: Crown Court caseload, Q1 2009 – Q2 2019 (Source: Table C1)



Crown court caseload (Table C1)

Compared to the previous year, the volume of case receipts has increased slightly (3%) to 26,276 in Q2 2019, while disposals decreased by 4% to 25,720 over the same period.

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 outstanding cases fell, initially sharply. 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 Wales¹. There has been a general decrease in the number of offences for which the police issue a charges/summons over the past three years², 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.

Crown Court receipts, disposals and outstanding cases by offence group (cc_rdos_tool)

There was an increase in cases received for possession of weapons cases in the latest quarter – up 24% on the previous year, and 3% on the previous quarter. Prior to Q1 2019, 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. Disposals of possession of

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2018>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-statistics>

Changes to Crown Court data:

Improvements to the Crown Court administrative systems being rolled out during 2019 have necessitated a change in data source. The published estimates in this release remain largely from the 'old' CREST system, however it includes seven courts that have transitioned to the 'new' XHIBIT system. Where possible the sources have been combined to provide national estimates. Following analysis of trends, methodologies and outputs, we believe estimates are accurate and robust, with no trends unduly impacted by the system change.

Outstanding estimates for the seven courts are based on a slightly different methodology due to the system change. An assessment of the outstanding series excluding these seven courts indicates a similar change over the quarter and since last year, so the overall trend over time is not affected. We intend to produce more detail on the impact of this for the July to September release to be published in December 2019.

The remaining Crown Courts are expected to transition to the new system by the end of September 2019 and so the first quarterly extracts of solely 'new' data will be published in March 2020. Between these periods we will continue to work with system owners, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals staff, data engineers and operational teams to ensure clear and transparent publications and robust series.

3. Timeliness

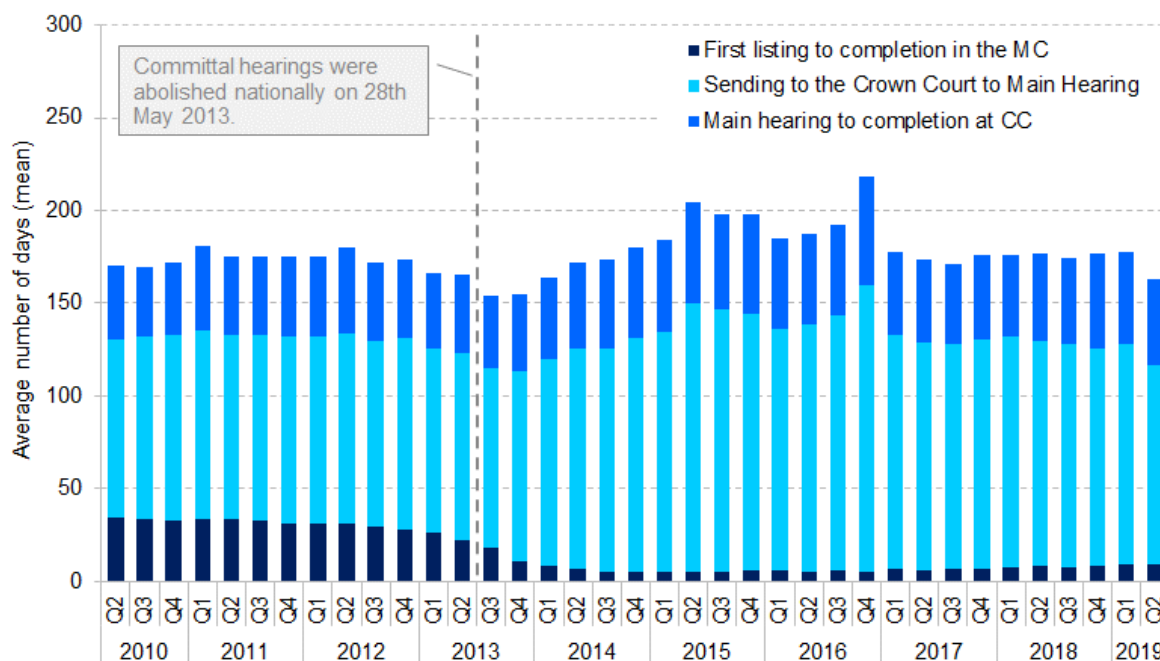
For cases completing at the Crown Court, the average number of days spent ‘in court’ fell.

In Q2 2019, the number of days from first listing in the magistrates’ court to completion in the Crown Court was 163 days, down 8% on the previous year (177 days).

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.

In the latest quarter, the average number of days taken from first listing in the magistrates’ court to completion in the Crown Court was 163 days, a decrease of 8% since the same quarter in the previous year. This fall can be attributed to a reduction in the time taken from sending to the Crown Court to the main hearing, decreasing 10% from 119 to 107 days since Q2 2018. This fall is seen across all offences except criminal damage and arson. The largest decrease was seen for possession of weapons offences, decreasing by 19% from 107 days to 87 since last year.

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



The average (mean) duration spent ‘in court’ for all cases started at magistrates’ and completed at the Crown Court has fallen following relative stability since Q1 2017.

The majority of time for Crown Court criminal cases is spent prior to reaching the magistrates’ courts (‘pre-court’), with 69% of the time taken from offence to first listing in Q2 2019. This proportion varies markedly by offence group, ranging from 31% for criminal damage and arson to 91% for sexual offences – influenced largely by the complexity of police investigations and reporting of historical offences.

Across all cases dealt with at the Crown Court, the average time spent ‘pre-court’ fell 12% in the latest quarter (to 362 days) compared to the previous year (407 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 increased⁶, however more

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-statistics>

historical offences being dealt with at court has been a substantial factor in the increase in average 'pre-court' time.

Changes to Crown Court timeliness estimates:

As a result of the reform to the Crown Court administrative systems since March 2019 and the switch of systems from CREST to XHIBIT (see [Guide to Criminal Court Statistics](#)), the timeliness estimates for seven Crown Courts have been excluded from national estimates for Q2 2019. The impact of removing these courts on the estimated national averages is relatively minor, with estimated small increases based on the previous quarter of around 2% in mean time from offence to completion and an increase of less than 1% in median estimates.

It is also possible that changes to the way that data is recorded in the underlying administrative systems may impact on the existing timeliness methodology at the Crown Court. We are continuing to work with HMCTS to quantify and differences and will highlight this as part of the next publication in December 2019.

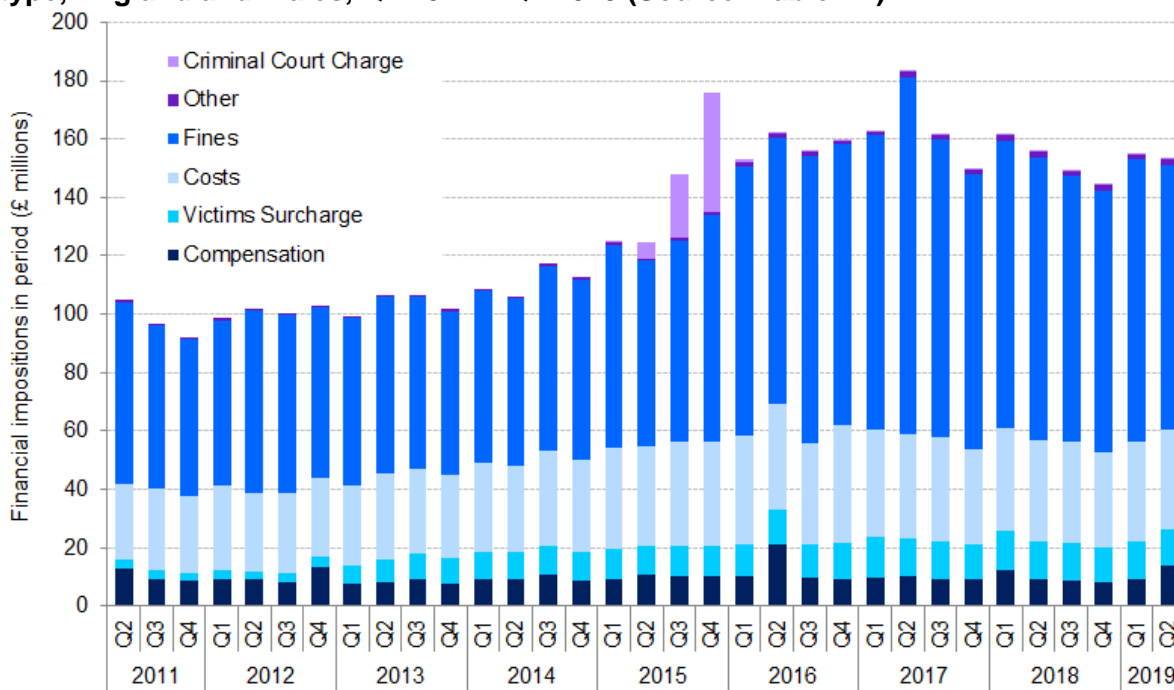
Analysis has been conducted and has shown that excluding the seven migrated courts has had minimal impact on the timeliness trends presented in this release.

4. Enforcement of financial impositions

Total financial impositions fell slightly in Q2 2019

Total financial impositions fell slightly (down 2%) in Q2 2019 to £153m compared with the previous year – this is largely due to a 7% decrease in fines. The value of total outstanding financial impositions continued to rise, reaching £1.16 billion in Q2 2019.

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



Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type

Fines continued to account for the majority of financial impositions (59%) in Q2 2019 (£90.2m), marking a £6.3m (7%) decrease compared to the previous quarter. Conversely, impositions for compensation increased by 44% from £9.5m in Q2 2018 to £13.7m in Q2 2019.

Costs⁷ are the second largest imposition group making up 23% of all financial impositions in Q2 2019 – in the latest quarter costs have remained broadly stable at around £34.5m.

Outstanding financial impositions

In Q2 2019, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £1.16 billion. The amount of outstanding financial impositions has almost doubled since the start of 2015 (when they were at £571 million). 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.

⁷ 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.

5. Experimental Statistics - The use of language interpreter and translation services in courts and tribunals⁸

The number of completed language service requests and success rate⁹ remained broadly stable¹⁰.

In Q2 2019, the number of completed language service requests remained broadly stable since last quarter. The success rate of requests remained stable at 97%.

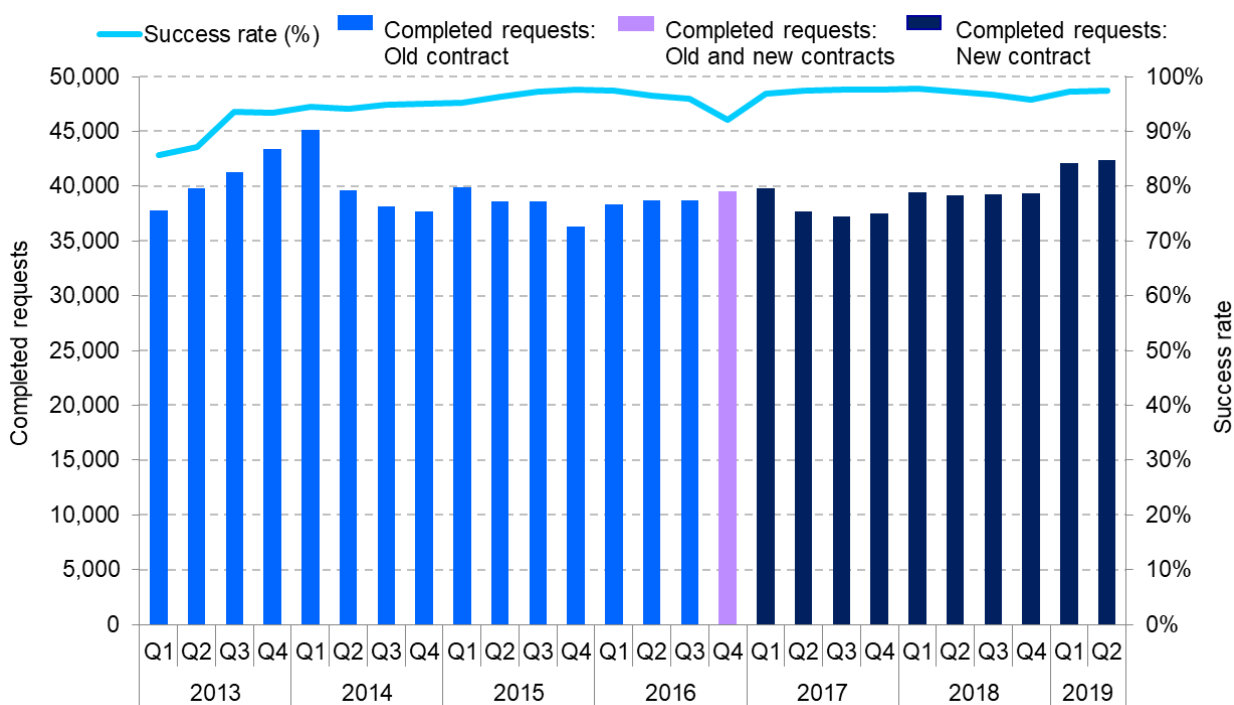
Completed service requests

The overall number of requests in Q2 2019 has remained broadly stable (<1% increase) since last quarter, however it has increased by 8% since the same quarter in 2018.

Criminal court requests continue to account for the largest proportion of language service requests (42% in Q2 2019), and have increased by 8% since Q2 2018 (from 16,434 to 17,669). Requests from civil and family courts have also increased (up 15%) since the same quarter in 2018, whereas the number of requests from tribunal courts has remained stable.

The number of requests for special services dropped 15% between Q1 and Q2 2019 (from 889 to 760), however, remains 52% higher than Q2 2018.

Figure 11: Number of completed language service requests and overall success rate, Q1 2013 – Q2 2019 (Source: Table L1)



Success rate

The overall success rate of requests has remained broadly stable since the same quarter last year, at 97%. The success rate for non-DPSI¹¹ languages has remained lower than the rate for standard languages since 2014 and in Q2 2018, it was 90%, compared to 98% for

⁸ The statistics under the new contracts are 'Experimental Statistics' – the series remains in the testing phase and is not yet fully developed.

⁹ The number of requests that were fulfilled divided by the total fulfilled and unfulfilled (excludes cancelled requests)

¹⁰ These figures relate to the 'new contract', comprising of data from two separate suppliers, thebigword Group Ltd for face to face interpretation and Clarion UK Ltd for non-spoken languages (special services).

¹¹ 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.

standard languages. Special service request success remained stable and in line with the overall success rate at 97%.

Complaints and complaint rate

The overall number of complaints increased to 564 in Q2 2019, the highest level since Q1 2017 and an increase of 66% since the same quarter in the previous year.

This increase in complaints is believed to be attributed to an initiative to increase awareness of the complaints process conducted by contractors and MoJ. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of complaints of ‘no interpreter available’, (from 111 to 340 in the latest quarter), and this complaint type accounted for 60% of complaints in Q2 2019. However, this has not affected the overall success rate which remained stable at 97%, giving further indication that the increase in complaints is driven by an improvement in the measure rather than an underlying shift in satisfaction. The overall complaint rate has remained at 1% since Q2 2017.

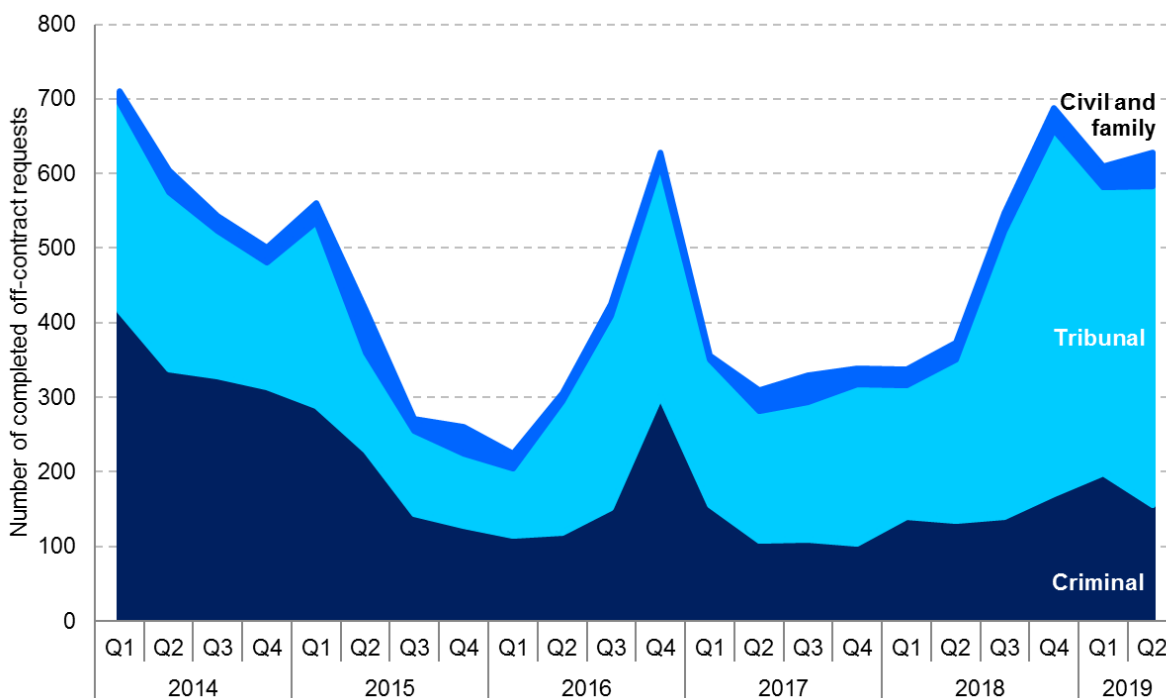
Tribunals continue to account for the highest proportion of complaints (59%) despite only accounting for 30% of total service requests in Q2 2019.

‘Off-contract’ requests

Following a decrease in the previous quarter, the number of off-contract requests increased in Q2 2019 by 3% (from 627 to 647). This remains 71% higher than level record in the same quarter of the previous year (378).

Approximately two thirds (66%) of ‘off contract’ requests were made by tribunal courts. The changing trend over the last year continue to be mostly attributed to the changes in the number of requests involving immigration tribunals, which increased again this quarter.

Figure 12: Completed ‘off-contract’¹² language service requests by requestor type, Q1 2014 – Q2 2019 (Source: Table L3)



¹² ‘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 Ltd or Clarion UK Ltd) 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.

6. Further information on criminal courts data

The latest 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.
- 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 2019.¹³ 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 influence¹⁴.

Future publications

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. As part of our continual review and prioritisation, we welcome user feedback on existing outputs including content, breadth, frequency and methodology. Please send any comments you have on this publication including suggestions for further developments or reductions in content to the contacts listed below.

Contact

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

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Other enquiries and feedback 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

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

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Alternative formats are available on request from statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk

¹³ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/compliance-check-on-court-statistics/>

¹⁴ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>