



Published 14 May 2020

Mortgage and Landlord Possession Statistics in England and Wales, January to March 2020 (Provisional)

Main points

<p>Mortgage possession claims have decreased</p>		<p>Compared to the same quarter last year, mortgage possession claims have decreased by 18%. This follows a three-and-a-half-year period of relative stability (since Jan-Mar 2015) and is most likely linked to government and other measures implemented towards the end of March 2020 to limit the impact of Covid19.</p>
<p>Mortgage orders, warrants and repossessions have decreased</p>		<p>Mortgage orders, warrants and repossessions by county court bailiffs have decreased by 16%, 27% and 21% respectively, compared to the same quarter last year.</p>
<p>Mortgage median average time (from claim to repossession) has decreased to 36.1 weeks</p>		<p>Median average time from claim to repossession has decreased to 36.1 weeks (from 39.4 weeks in Jan-Mar 2019). This is within the range of 33-55 weeks seen for the past two years.</p>
<p>Landlord possession actions have all decreased</p>		<p>Landlord possession claims, orders, warrants and repossessions by county court bailiffs have decreased by 20%, 19%, 23% and 16% respectively (compared to the same quarter last year). The general fall across landlord possession actions continues the long-term decreasing trend seen since April-June 2014.</p>
<p>Median timeliness for landlord repossessions has remained stable</p>		<p>Median landlord possession action timeliness for claims to orders and claims to warrants, have slightly decreased, whilst claims to repossessions has increased. The median time taken for a landlord possession claim to reach repossession increased by less than 1 week to 21.1 weeks in Jan-Mar 2020.</p>
<p>Mortgage possession claims and repossession rates remain at low levels</p>		<p>Middlesbrough in the North East had the highest overall rate of mortgage repossessions, at 24 per 100,000 households. No repossessions by county court bailiffs were recorded during this period in 68 local authorities</p>
<p>Landlord possession claims and repossessions highest in London</p>		<p>The highest rates of landlord possession actions are concentrated in London (with 8 of the highest 10 claim rates and 7 of the 10 highest repossession rates).</p>

This publication provides mortgage and landlord possession statistics in January to March 2020, compared to the same quarter the previous year. A data visualisation tool accompanies this bulletin and can be accessed from [here](#). For technical detail, please refer to the accompanying supporting document.

For feedback related to the content of this publication, please contact us at CAJS@justice.gov.uk

1. Statistician's comment

The statistics for this quarter cover the period before and immediately following the Chancellor's announcement on greater protection for tenants and landlords on 17 March 2020, and gives early indications of the impacts of the new Covid-19 measures on mortgage and landlord repossessions (additional details can be found in the supporting annex). Whilst some claims are still being made, these fell sharply towards the end of this quarter, and this can be expected to continue in the short to medium term.

2. Overview of Mortgage Possession

Mortgage possession claims have decreased compared to the same quarter the previous year.

Compared to the same quarter the previous year, there has been a **decrease** in mortgage possession claims of 18% (from 6,158 to 5,028), mortgage orders for possession have decreased by 16% (from 4,296 to 3,615), warrants by 27% (from 4,754 to 3,466) and repossessions by 21% (from 1,315 to 1,036).

Figure 1: Mortgage possession actions (actual and seasonally adjusted) in the county courts of England and Wales, January 2015 to March 2020 (Source: Table 10a)



Mortgage possession claims fell consistently from a peak of 26,419 in April to June 2009 before stabilising in January to March 2015 (when it was 5,643). In the most recent quarter, January to March 2020, there were 5,028 claims for possession; down 18% from the same quarter in 2019.

Orders and warrants for possession followed a similar trend to mortgage claims, falling from a peak of 23,850 orders in July to September 2009 and 21,350 warrants in January to March 2009, and continued to decline to 2,685 orders in July to September 2016 and 3,500 warrants in April to June 2018. Compared to the same quarter of the previous year, orders have decreased by 16% to 3,615. Warrants also decreased by 27% to 3,466 in January to March 2020, the lowest recorded level of the series.

Repossessions by county court bailiffs had also been falling since a high of 9,284 in January to March 2009, in the immediate aftermath of the financial crash, to 934 in July to September 2018, the lowest recorded level of the series. In January to March 2020, 1,036 repossessions were recorded, a decrease of 21% compared to the same period in 2019.

The historical fall in the number of mortgage possession actions since 2008 coincides with lower interest rates, a proactive approach from lenders in managing consumers in financial difficulties

with interventions, such as the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and the introduction of the Mortgage Pre-Action Protocol. Additionally, the downward trend seen mirrors that seen in the proportion of owner-occupiers.

In March 2020, the government announced measures to assist mortgage providers (to reduce mortgage possessions) and passed the Coronavirus Act 2020 to assist renters. Whilst still early, the effects of these measures on mortgage and landlord repossessions are further detailed in the annex on pages 13-17.

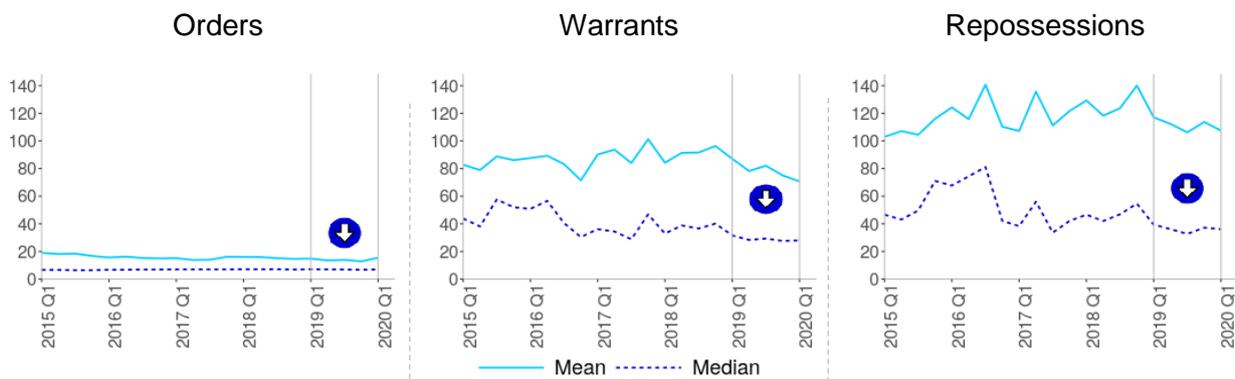
3. Mortgage Possession Action Timeliness

Median timeliness figures have decreased for orders, warrants and repossessions.

The **median** average time from **claim to repossession** has **decreased to 36.1 weeks** (from 39.4 weeks in Jan-Mar 2019). This is at the lower end of the range of 33-55 weeks seen for the past two years.

Figure 2: Average timeliness of mortgage possession actions, January 2015 to March 2020 (Source: Table 3a)

Number of weeks taken from initial Mortgage claim to:



Claims to order median timeliness has decreased from 7.1 (Jan-Mar 2019) to **7.0 weeks (Jan-Mar 2020)**

Claims to warrant median timeliness has decreased from 31.6 (Jan-Mar 2019) to **28.0 weeks (Jan-Mar 2020)**

Claims to repossession median timeliness has decreased from 39.4 (Jan-Mar 2019) to **36.1 weeks (Jan-Mar 2020)**

The above charts illustrate the timeliness of possession claims at different stages of a case. Average time taken from claim to warrant or claim to repossession can fluctuate and is affected by various factors. For example, the final two charts take account of the amount of time between the court order being issued and the claimant, such as the mortgage lender, applying for a warrant of possession.

The long-term increases in the **mean average time** from claim to warrant and claim to repossession were due to an increasing proportion of historical claims (dating from 2007 to 2013) reaching the warrant and repossession stages respectively in recent quarters. This is possibly due to defendants recently breaking the terms of the mortgage agreements put in place at the start of the process. Although these historical outlying cases inflated the mean average, they had less effect on the **median**. The median is still subject to volatility though due to the increasing proportion of historic cases.

The median timeliness from claim to warrant issued has decreased by 3.6 weeks to 28.0 weeks compared to the same quarter the previous year. When broken down by order type, the median time taken from claim to warrant issued was 22.6 weeks for outright orders and 75.3 weeks for suspended orders, up from 21.1 weeks and down from 107.6 weeks in January to March 2019 respectively.

Figure 3: Percentage (cumulative) of mortgage claims that reach each stage (by number of quarters since claim was submitted) (Source: Table 3b)¹

	Proportion of claims to reach each stage					
	In initial 6 months (first two quarters)			5-year period		
	Jan-Mar 2019		Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019		Jan-Mar 2020
Orders	56%	↔	56%	63%	↑	65%
Warrants	12%	↔	12%	30%	↑	34%
Repossessions	4%	↔	4%	14%	↑	17%

Over the last 5 years, 65% of claims received orders of repossession, 34% received warrants, and 17% ended in repossession (by a county court bailiff), an increase for orders, warrants and repossessions in the proportion of cases reaching warrants and repossessions compared to the 5-year period up to January to March 2019.

Overall, a similar proportion of claims have progressed to warrants and repossessions within 6 months of the claim date, and a larger proportion of claims have progressed across all stages over a 5-year period.

¹ The value of tables 3b and 6b for our users, particularly in comparison to the other timeliness data in tables 3a and 6a, is currently being reviewed. If you use these tables, or any timeliness data in this publication, please send your views on their usefulness or clarity to CAJS@justice.gov.uk.

4. Overview of Landlord Possession

The number of landlord possession actions for all court stages have decreased, continuing the long-term decreasing trend seen since April-June 2014.

Compared to the same quarter the previous year, landlord possession **claims** (24,321), **orders** for possession (19,141), **warrants** (12,142) and **repossessions** (7,070) have decreased by 20%, 19%, 23% and 16% respectively.

Figure 4: Landlord possession actions (actual and seasonally adjusted) in the county courts of England and Wales, January 2015 to March 2020 (Source: Table 10b)



In January to March 2020, the greater proportion **58%** (14,119) of all landlord possession claims were **social landlord** claims, **18%** (4,317) were **accelerated** claims and **24%** (5,885) were **private landlord** claims. Since the same quarter last year, the proportion of all claims issued by private landlords increased by 4 percentage points (pp). Social landlord claims decreased by 5pp whereas the proportion of claims that were accelerated claims increased 2pp. These changes were driven by government and other measures to combat the impact of the Covid19 pandemic and further detail on how claims for these different groups have changed is provided in the annex on pages 13-17.

The fall in landlord possession claims is across all regions, with the largest actual decrease seen in London and South East courts. There were 5,984 London court claims and 4,786 South East court claims in January to March 2020, accounting for 25% and 20% of all landlord possession claims respectively. This was a decrease of 17% (from 7,239) for London claims and a decrease of 18% for South East claims (from 5,810) in January to March 2019.

The 23% decrease in warrants in January to March 2020, when compared to the same period in 2019, was driven by decreases seen in London courts and Midland courts (down 20% and 25%, to 3,198 and 2,174 respectively).

The overall fall in landlord repossessions is mainly driven by the London courts where landlord repossessions fell from 2,254 in January to March 2019 to 1,810 in January to March 2020, a fall of 20%.

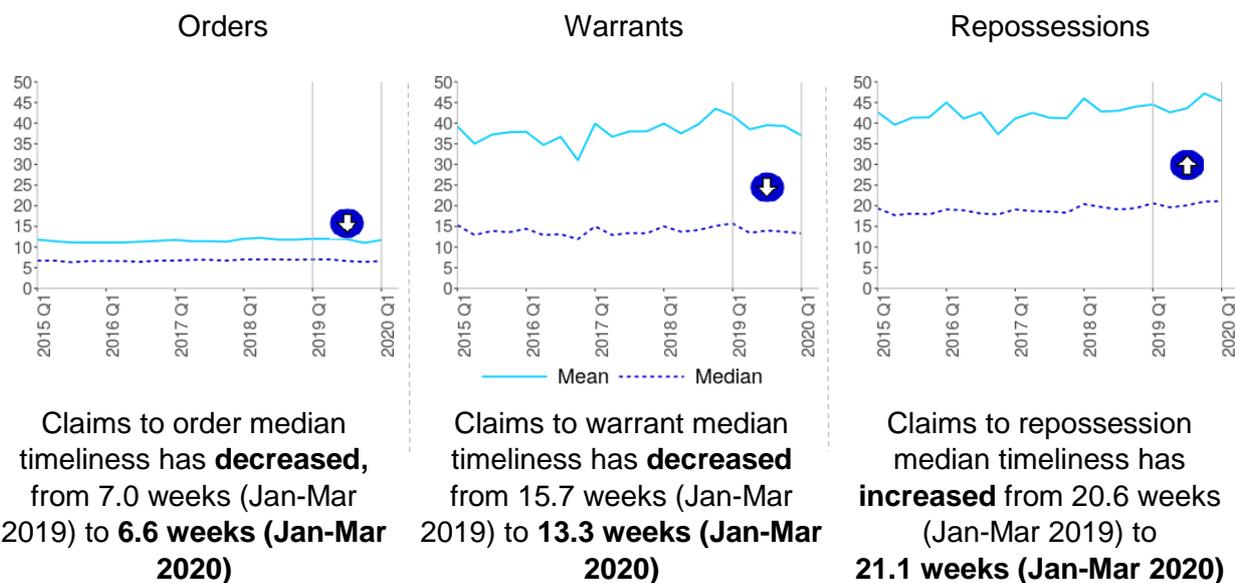
5. Landlord Possession Timeliness²

Time taken for orders and warrants has decreased, whilst time taken for repossessions has increased.

Whilst median average time has decreased for orders and warrants, repossessions has increased. Timeliness for landlord possession actions remains stable across the last five years.

Figure 5: Mean and median average timeliness of landlord possession actions, January 2015 to March 2020 (Source: Table 6a)

Number of weeks taken from initial landlord claim to ...



As shown by Figure 5, median figures are considerably lower than mean figures, demonstrating that on average, the progression from claim to successive stages can be skewed by outlying cases when using a mean measure of average timeliness.

In January to March 2020, the **median average** time taken for a landlord possession **claim to reach the order stage was 6.6 weeks**, but this average varied by landlord tenure type. Over the same period, accelerated landlord possession cases took 5.0 weeks to progress to order, compared with 7.0 and 6.7 weeks for private landlord and social landlord cases respectively.

From **claim to possession warrant**, the **median average** time taken was **13.3 weeks** - again this varied by tenure type, accelerated and private landlord took 10.0 and 10.4 weeks respectively, whilst social landlord cases took 24.9 weeks.

From **claim to repossession** by county court bailiff, the **median average** time taken to progress to possession for all tenure types was **21.1 weeks** - accelerated cases on average took 20 weeks, private landlord took 17.7 weeks, and social landlord 28 weeks.

² The law requires at least 4 and no more than 8 weeks between claim and court hearing. Possession orders stipulate when a tenant must vacate the property - typically within 4 weeks from the date the order was made. Landlords cannot issue a warrant until after this period (if the tenant has failed to comply).

Figure 6: Percentage (cumulative) of landlord claims that reach each stage (by number of quarters since claim was submitted) (Source: Table 6b)³

	Proportion of claims to reach each stage					
	In initial 6 months (first two quarters)			5-year period		
	Jan-Mar 2019		Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019		Jan-Mar 2020
Orders	68%	↑	69%	73%	↑	76%
Warrants	25%	↔	25%	40%	↔	40%
Repossessions	14%	↓	13%	25%	↑	26%

Over the last 5 years, 76% of claims progressed to orders of repossession; 40% to warrants, and 26% ended in repossession. Over the 5-year period to March 2020, when compared to the 5-year period to March 2019, the proportion of claims reaching each possession stage have **increased slightly**.

The **proportion** of landlord possession claims reaching **the order stage increased slightly** in the initial 6 months up to January to March 2020 compared with the same period last year. The proportion of claims reaching **warrant stage remained stable** whereas claims reaching **the repossession** stage decreased slightly over the same period.

³ The value of tables 3b and 6b for our users, particularly in comparison to the other timeliness data in tables 3a and 6a, is currently being reviewed. If you use these tables, or any timeliness data in this publication, please send your views on their usefulness or clarity to CAJS@justice.gov.uk.

6. Regional Possession Claims⁴

City of London had the highest rate of **mortgage** possession claims at 89 per 100,000 households, followed by Merthyr Tydfil in Wales and Christchurch in the South West; with 49 and 46 per 100,000.

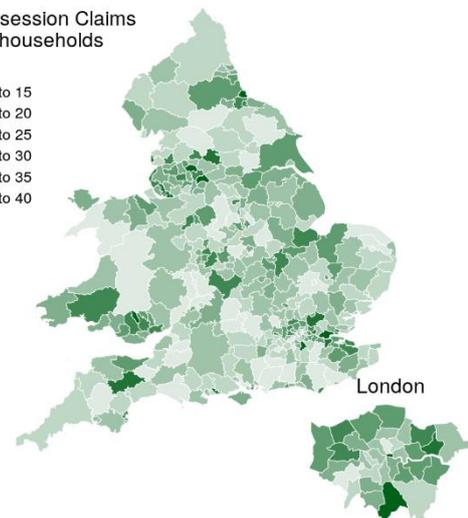
Landlord possession claim rates were highest in **London**, with 9 of the 10 highest rates occurring in the London region. **Brent** in London had the highest rate (289 per 100,000 households).

Figure 7: Possession Claims per 100,000 households, January to March 2020 (Source: map.csv; see supporting guide)

Local Authority	Rate (per 100,000 households)	Actual number
City of London	89	3
Merthyr Tydfil	49	12
Christchurch	46	10

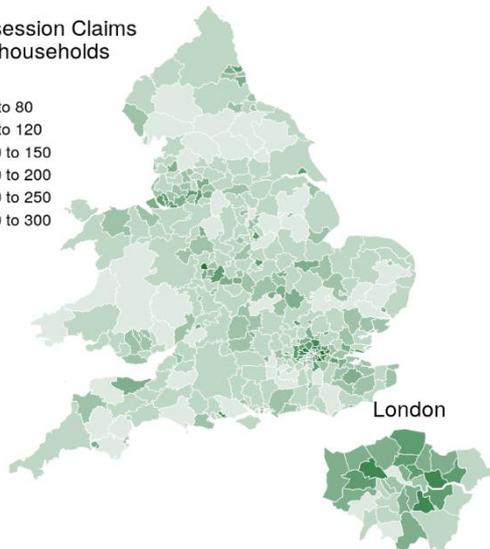
The Isle of Scilly and Melton had no possession claims during this period. Excluding these, **Chiltern** had the lowest rate of mortgage claims (3 per 100,000 households).

Mortgage: highest claim rates



Landlord: highest claim rates

Landlord Possession Claims per 100,000 households



Local Authority	Rate (per 100,000 households)	Actual number
Brent	289	337
Lewisham	278	367
Newham	260	260

London boroughs account for 9 of the 10 local authorities with the **highest rate** of landlord claims.

The Isle of Scilly had no landlord claims during this period. Excluding this, **Mid Suffolk** had the lowest rate of landlord claims (13 per 100,000 households).

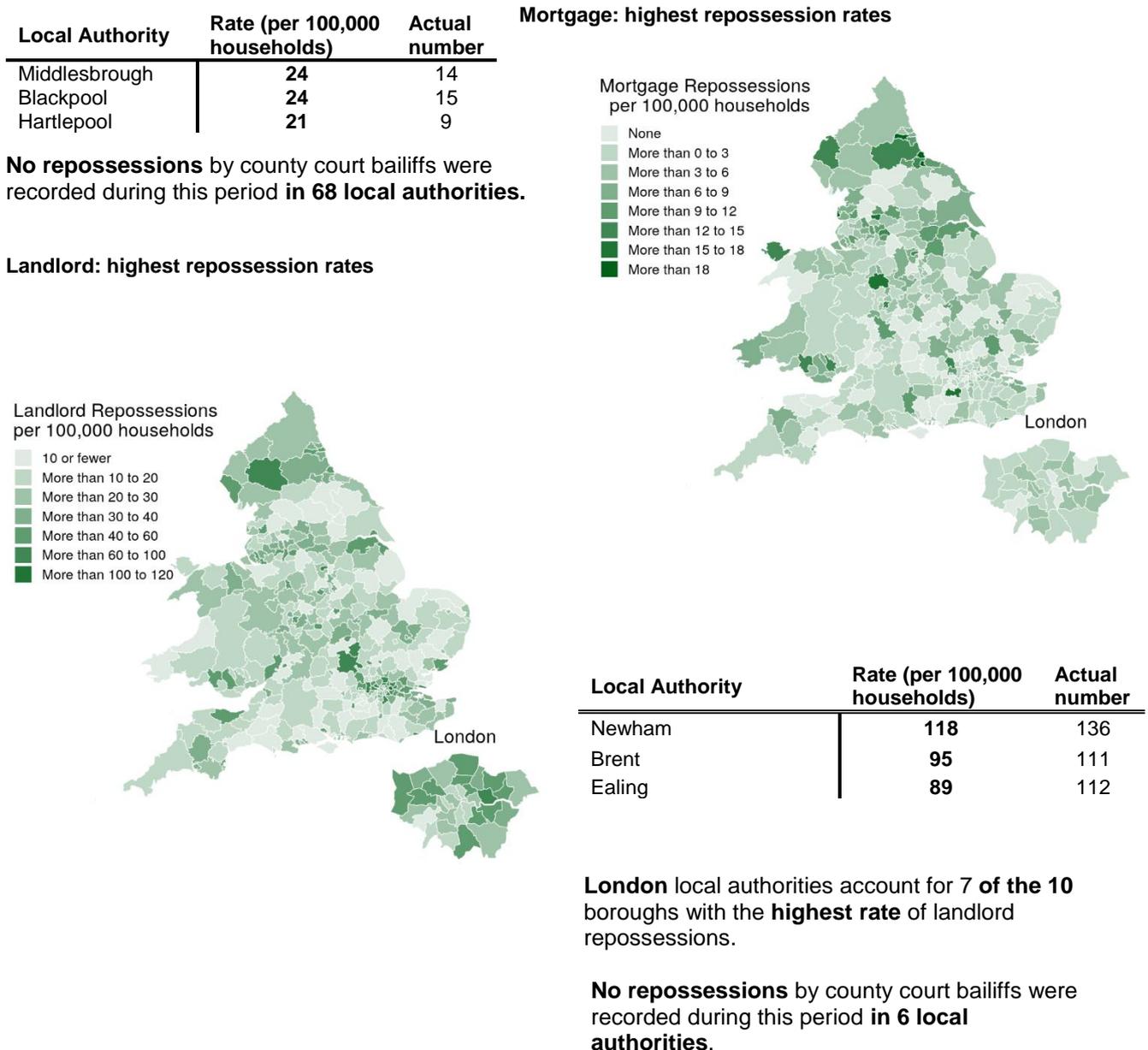
⁴ Local Authority boundaries have recently changed and are reflected in the LA csv but new boundary files from the ONS Geoportal to reflect these changes are not yet available. These maps have thus been created using the old LA boundaries from ONS Geoportal.

7. Regional Repossessions (by County Court Bailiffs)⁴

Middlesbrough in the **North East** had the highest overall rate of mortgage repossessions, at **24 per 100,000** households. **No repossessions** by county court bailiffs were recorded during this period in **68 local authorities**

Landlord repossessions were highest in **Newham** with 118 per 100,000 households. Landlord repossessions were concentrated in **London (7 of the 10 highest rates)**.

Figure 8: Repossessions per 100,000 households, January to March 2020 (Source: map.csv; see supporting guide)



8. Annex: Initial impact of changes in possession process related to Coronavirus

On 17 March 2020 the Chancellor announced additional support, aimed at limiting short-term hardships faced by home owners and renters. This was followed by the passing of the Coronavirus Act by royal assent on 25 March 2020.

These actions have shown an impact on possessions data in the latter part of the first quarter of 2020 and this annex provides further data relating to the initial changes seen. Further analysis of the impact on possession claims will be provided in future publications.

Since the announcement of the first reported case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK on 31 January 2020, several significant changes to the process for both mortgage and landlord possessions have been announced. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) announced on the 20th March 2020⁵ that they expected all lenders to cease any mortgage repossession action. Legislation also came into effect on 26 March 2020⁶ that means landlords will have to give all renters three months' notice if they intend to seek possession (i.e. serve notice that they want to end the tenancy). This means a landlord cannot apply to start the court process until after this period.

From 27 March 2020, the court service suspended all ongoing housing possession actions, meaning that all cases either currently in, or about to enter the system cannot progress to the stage where someone could be evicted. In addition, prior to this time, many mortgage providers and landlords may also have independently chosen to delay repossession measures, as can be noted in figure 9 below.

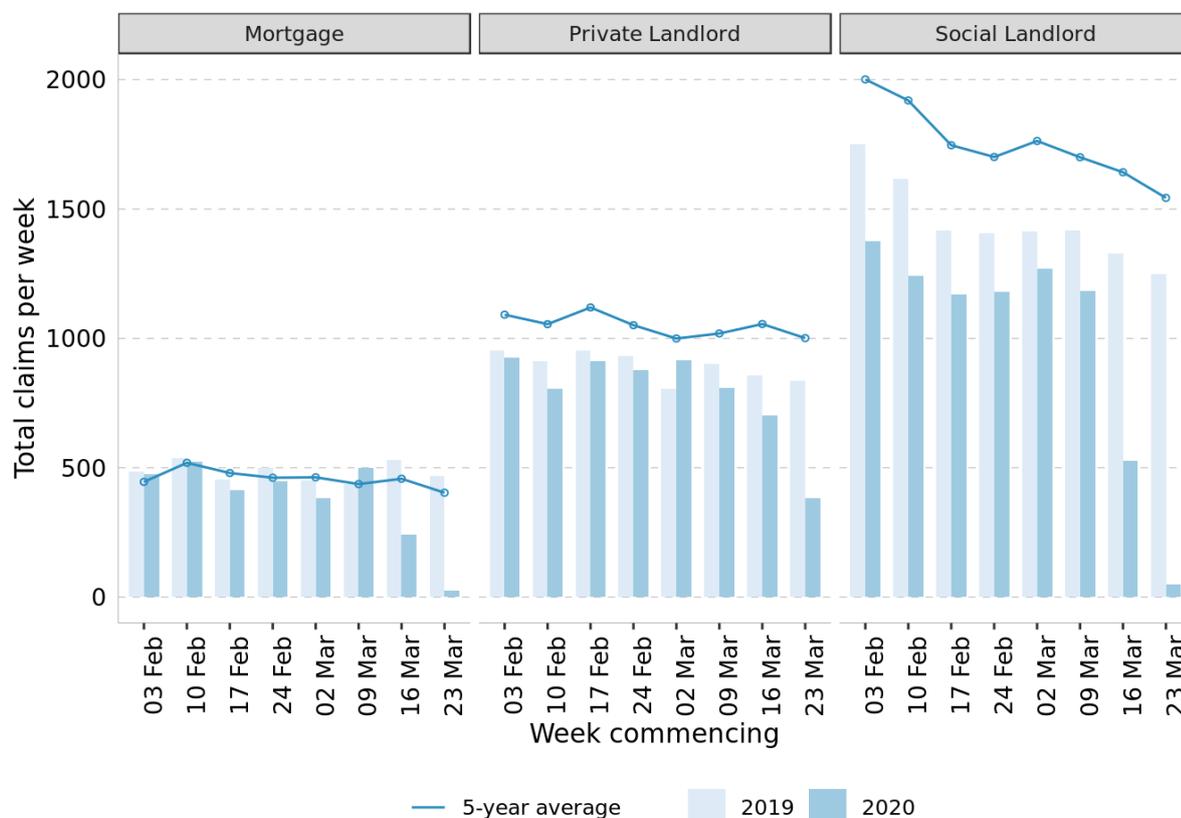
Whilst these measures will impact on these Q1 published statistics, the fact that they were implemented at the end of the quarter means that this effect is not easily distinguishable. For example, claims in Q1 2020 in comparison to the same quarter of 2019 were down 18% for mortgage claims and 20% for landlord claims respectively. However, this overall decrease is not as a result of a consistent drop in claims across the entire time period. For this reason, this annex displays the Q1 2020 data divided into shorter time periods, in order to more clearly show the impact of COVID-19-related action on two stages of the possession process. The initial claim stage and warrant issue stage have been chosen as they are considered to be representative of the early and late stages of a typical possession action.

Alongside the figures for 2019 and 2020, we have presented a 5-year average which can be considered a baseline.

⁵ <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/press-releases/new-guidance-mortgage-providers-lenders-coronavirus>

⁶ **Coronavirus Act 2020**: An Act to make provision in connection with coronavirus; and for connected purposes.

Figure 9: Comparison of all possession action claims by week in the county courts of England and Wales (February and March 2019, 2020 and 5-year average)



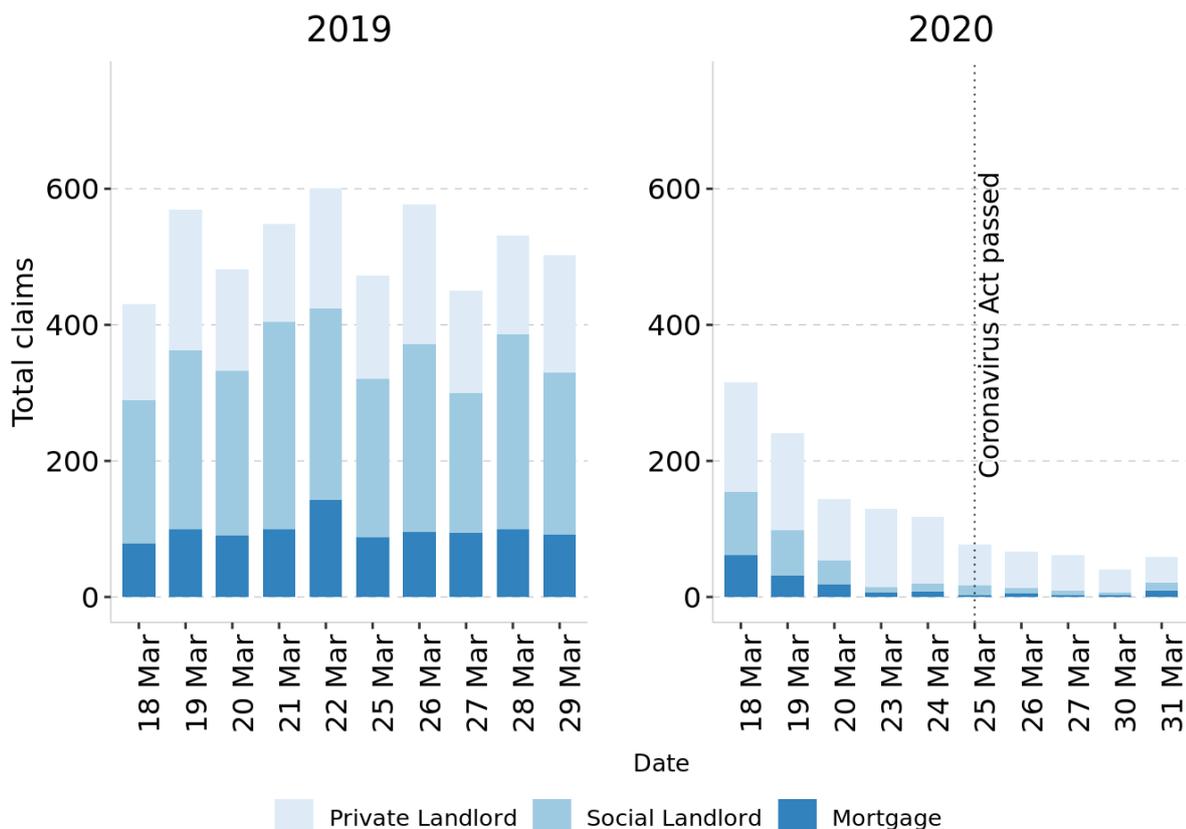
As can be seen in Figure 9, weekly mortgage claims for the 6 weeks commencing (w/c) 3 February to 9 March were generally in line with historical data. However, from w/c 16 March a more noticeable downward trend can be observed, with just 240 mortgage claims registered. This is down 55% and 48% on the equivalent period in 2019⁷ and the 5-year average⁸ respectively. By w/c 23 March, total mortgage claims had dropped to just 24, down 95% and 94% on 2019 and the 5-year average respectively. This is consistent with announcements made by the FCA on 20 March, and suggests that mortgage lenders overwhelmingly complied with the guidance.

In contrast, weekly landlord claims (particularly social landlord claims) for the 6 weeks commencing from 3 February to 9 March were down more significantly on the equivalent period in 2019 (down 13%), and the 5-year average (down 26%). Despite this, a more pronounced downward trend can still be observed from the w/c 16 March, with just 1,230 landlord claims registered. This is down 44% and 54% on the equivalent period in 2019 and the 5-year average respectively. By w/c 23 March, total landlord claims had dropped to 431, down 79% on 2019 and 83% on the 5-year average. Of note is the fact that by w/c 23 March, **private landlord claims made up 88% of total landlord claims** (381 claims), whereas in the equivalent week in 2019 they made up just 40% of all landlord claims. This highlights that social landlords acted much faster in reducing possession claims, making just 50 claims in w/c 23 March 2020 compared to 1,250 claims for the same period in 2019.

⁷ As 2020 was a leap year, the comparative weeks from 2019 will not always commence on the exact same day of the month but will still comprise an equivalent 7-day period.

⁸ 5-year average refers to the statistical mean of the equivalent 5 weeks from 2015 to 2019 inclusive.

Figure 10: Further comparison of all possession action claims in the final 10 weekdays of March 2019 and March 2020



To further underscore the changes noted at the end of March, daily claims data has been provided in Figure 10. However, this data must be interpreted with more caution due to natural daily variations in the number of claims at any given time. In 2019, slight daily variations can be seen, however no directional or consistent trend is evident. In contrast, in 2020 there was a marked decline from 18 March onwards for mortgage and social landlord claims. The number of mortgage claims on 18 March was 61, 38% below the daily average seen for the final 10 weekdays of March 2019. This number drops consistently until 30 March, where it reaches 3; a decrease of 97% on the 2019 average. There is a spike of 9 claims on 31 March 2020 highlighting the natural volatility in daily data.

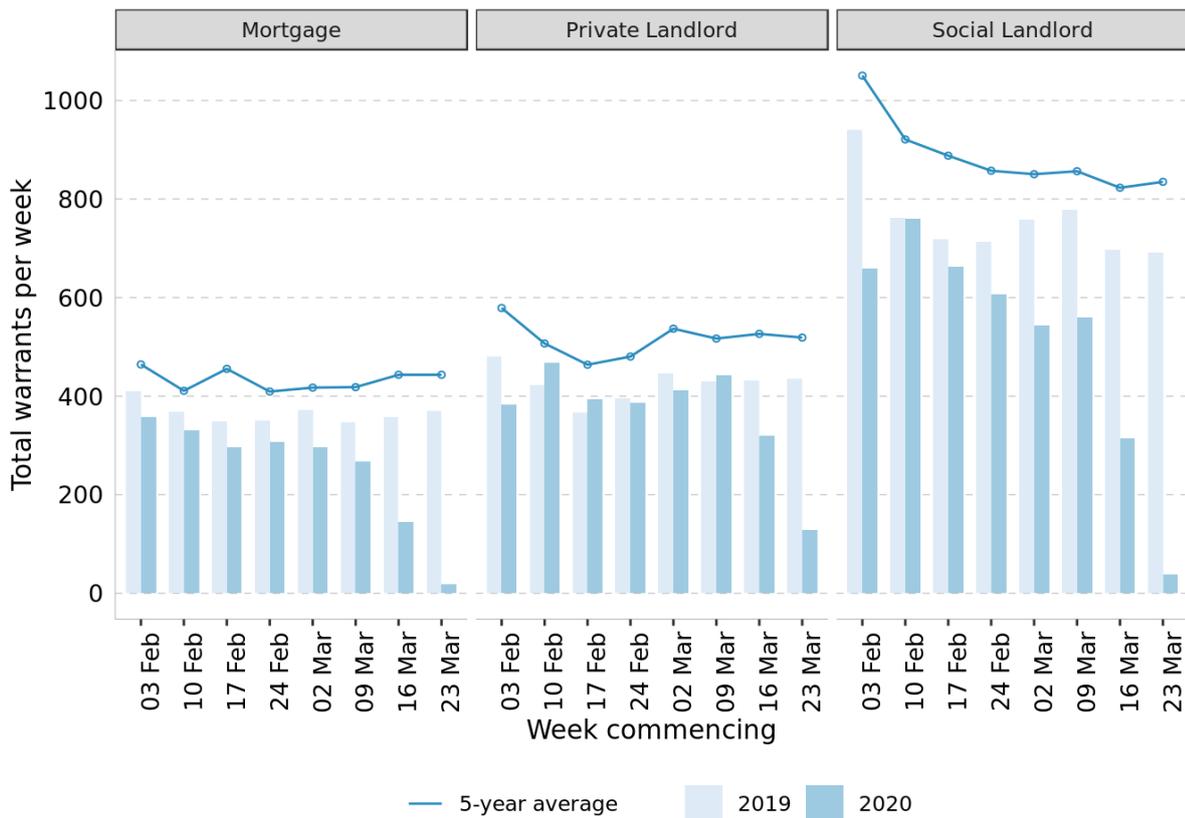
The FCA’s guidance on 20 March had a relatively small impact on the number of claims; while only 6 claims were made on the next working day (23 March), mortgage claim numbers had already fallen from 61 to just 18 between 18 and 20 March. This suggests that most mortgage lenders had already chosen to reduce their claims process before the FCA guidance was issued.

Similar results were seen for social landlord claims. The number of claims fell from 93 on 18 March 2020 to just four claims on 30 March; with a spike of 12 claims on 31 March (again highlighting the natural volatility in daily data). The Coronavirus Act coming into effect on 26 March does not appear to have any significant impact on claim numbers, as social landlord claims had fallen to negligible levels before it came into force.

Private landlord claims, however, did not fall in a similar manner. There were 161 claims on 18 March 2020, 2% below the daily average seen for the final 10 weekdays of March 2019. This number did fall to 38 on 31 March 2020 but that number was more than the combined

figure for mortgage and social landlord claims on that final day of the quarter (21). The implementation of the Coronavirus Act on 26 March had a greater impact on private landlord claims, as these had previously not fallen as much compared to the other categories. Though there are still some claims being recorded at the end of March, this will be where the online system (Possession Claims Online) has accepted new cases from landlords that had given sufficient notice before the new legislation came into effect. However, the new court procedures will not allow such cases to proceed any further.

Figure 11: Comparison of all warrants issued by week in the county courts of England and Wales (February and March 2019, 2020 and 5-year average)

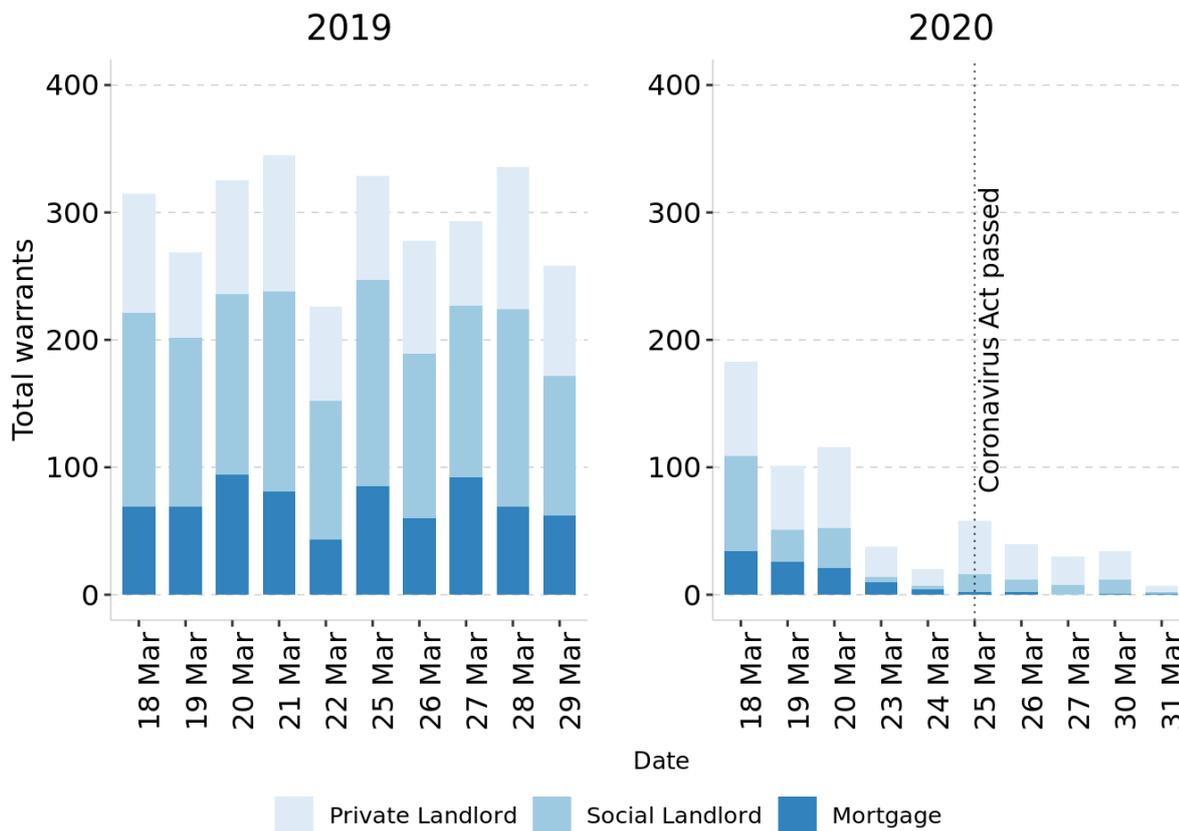


Overall, mortgage warrants issued decreased by 27% in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same quarter of 2019. Landlord warrants issued decreased by 23%. Similar to claims, this decrease was not consistent across the entire quarter. Weekly mortgage warrants for the 6 weeks commencing (w/c) from 3 February to 9 March were down 15% on the equivalent period in 2019, and more significantly on the 5-year average (down 28%). Again, a more noticeable downward trend can be observed from w/c 16 March, with 145 mortgage warrants issued. This is down 59% and 67% on 2019 and 5-year average respectively. By w/c 23 March, total mortgage warrants had dropped to only 18, down 95% on 2019 and 96% on 5-year average.

Weekly landlord warrants issued for the six weeks commencing from 3 February to 9 March were also below the equivalent period in 2019 (down 13%) and the 5-year average (down 26%). Again, a more noticeable downward trend can be observed from w/c 16 March, where 633 landlord warrants were issued. This is down 44% on 2019 and down 53% on 5-year average. Further, by w/c 23 March, total landlord warrants issued had dropped to just 168, down 85% and 88% on 2019 and 5-year average respectively. It is also again notable

that the majority of these were private landlord warrants. **Warrants for private landlords made up 77% of landlord warrants issued** in w/c 23 March (129 warrants), whereas in the equivalent week in 2019 they made up just 39% of landlord warrants. This can again be attributed to the fact that social landlord warrants had fallen at a significantly faster rate, reaching just 39 warrants by w/c 23 March.

Figure 12: Further comparison of all possession warrants issued in the final 10 weekdays of March 2019 and March 2020



The daily trend for warrants issued in the final 10 working days of March again shows a similar pattern to claims. Warrants in 2020 show a marked, although not necessarily consistent, decline from 18 March onwards, whereas daily warrants issued in the corresponding time period in 2019 show no clear pattern. The number of mortgage warrants issued on 18 March was 34, 53% below the average seen for weekdays between 18 and 31 March in 2019. This number drops until 25 March (4 warrants issued) and then fluctuates between 0 and 2 warrants issued, due to the natural volatility of a daily series.

Similarly, landlord warrants match the trends seen for claims: the number of warrants issued on 18 March was 74 for private and 75 for social landlords, respectively. Daily warrants issued remain consistently higher for private landlords than for social landlords, falling to just five for private and one for social landlords respectively. Unlike claims, there is no significant and consistent period of daily decline for either social or private landlords warrants in this time, with numbers fluctuating but still confirming a general downward trend. It should also be noted that though warrants may still be issued where an individual has applied for one, that individual will be informed that no enforcement action can be undertaken at this time.

Further information

The statistics in the latest quarter are provisional and revisions may be made when the next edition of this bulletin is published. If revisions are needed in subsequent quarters, these will be annotated in the tables.

Accompanying files

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

- A supporting guide providing further information on how the data is collected and processed, including a guide to the csv files.
- A set of overview tables, covering key sections of this bulletin.
- CSV files of the map data and the possession action volumes by local authority and county court.
- The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our capacity means we have not updated the data visualisation tool this quarter. The tool updated to Q4 2019 is still available <https://public.tableau.com/profile/moj.analysis>.

National Statistics status

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



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. The Authority 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.

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.

Contact

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