



Civil Justice Statistics Quarterly, England and Wales, January to March 2020 (provisional)

Main points

Decrease in County Court claims driven by specified money claims	↓	In January to March 2020, County Court claims decreased by 9% on the same period in 2019 to 489,000. Of these, 430,000 were specified money claims (down 8%).
Unspecified money claims were also down 8% to 30,000	↓	The decrease in unspecified money claims was driven by a decrease in Personal Injury claims (down 11% to 27,000).
The number of claims defended and number of trials has increased	↑	There were 77,000 claims defended (up 5%) and 17,000 claims that went to trial in January to March 2020 (up 7%).
Mean time taken from claim to hearing has increased	↑	The mean time taken for small claims and multi/fast track claims to go to trial was 39.7 and 59.6 weeks, up 2.8 weeks and 1.1 weeks respectively compared to the same period in 2019.
Judgments fell by 17%, whilst default judgments also decreased slightly	↓	Judgments decreased by 17% (to 300,000) in January to March 2020 compared to the same period in 2019; the proportion that were default judgments decreased slightly when compared to the same quarter in 2019 (90%).
23,000 enforcement applications and 16,000 enforcement orders made	↔ ↓	Enforcement applications remained stable, while Enforcement orders decreased by 13%.
108,000 warrants were issued	↑	Warrants issued increased by 12% when compared to same quarter in 2019 - driven by an increase in warrants of control.
The Ministry of Justice had the most Judicial Reviews lodged against them of any Dept/Public Body in 2019	↓	The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) had 1,100 Judicial Reviews against them in 2019, down 7% on 2018. The Home Office had the second largest number with 976 JRs in 2019 (down 17% on 2018).

This publication gives civil county court statistics for the latest quarter (January to March 2020), compared to the same quarter of the previous year. The judicial review figures cover the period January to March 2020, and The Royal Courts of Justice statistics (published annually) cover the period July to December 2019. For more details, please see the supporting document.

Statistics on the Business and Property Court for England and Wales have also been published alongside this quarterly bulletin as Official Statistics. For technical detail, please refer to the accompanying support document.

1. Statistician's Comment

The Civil Justice System enables citizens to resolve a vast array of disputes fairly, proportionately and affordably – from small personal debt to high-value commercial litigation which contributes significantly to the UK economy.

The total number of County Court claims has fallen across almost all case types in the last year. The fall has been driven largely by money claims and in particular specified money claims (which fell by 35,000 claims, or 8%). The proportion of claims defended has increased by 5% to 77,000 and of those 55% had legal representation for both claimant and defendant. In the latest quarter, almost all (96%) unspecified money defences had legal representation for both the defendant and claimant.

There was a fall in judgements, of 17% to 300,000, in the year to January to March 2020, with an accompanying fall in warrants. The number of repossessions of property and enforcement orders continue the fall that has been seen since 2009.

The period covered by this publication is January to March 2020 (pre-Covid-19) and will therefore include only minimal Covid-19-related impact on the activities of the courts.

2. Claims Summary

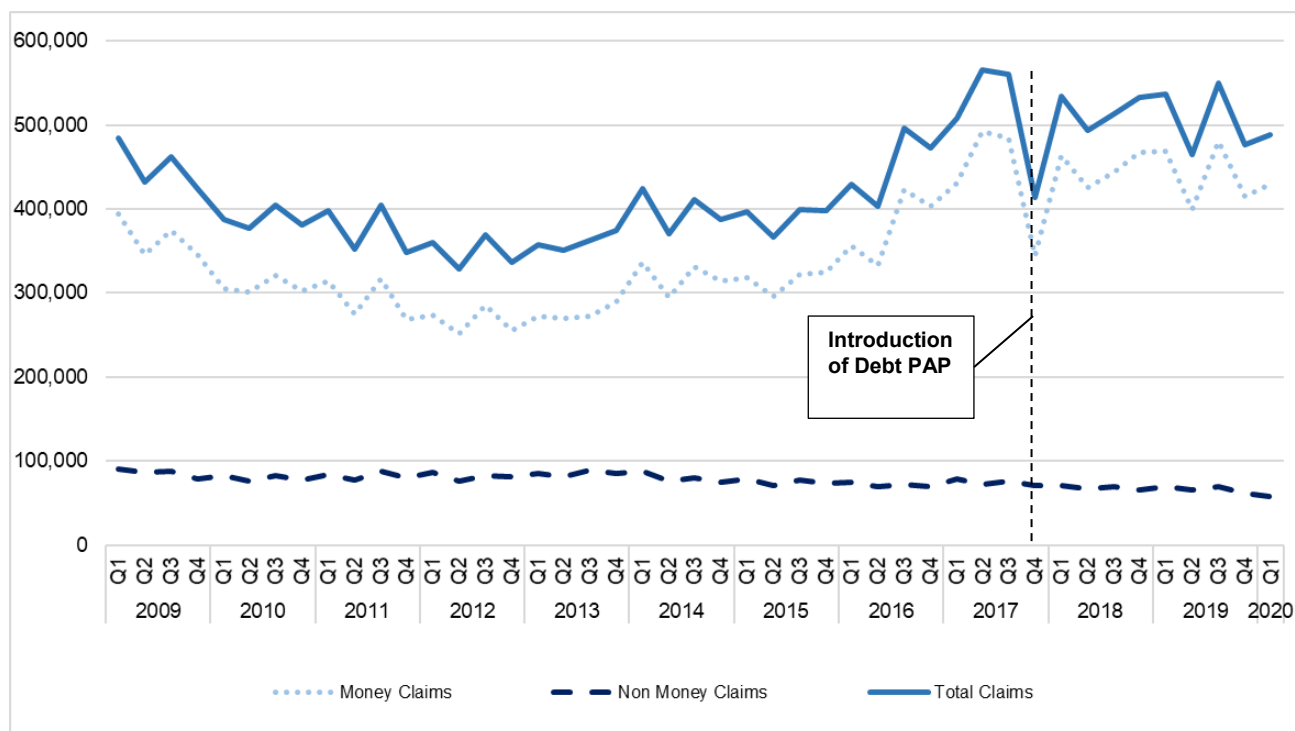
County court claims decreased by 9% on the same quarter of 2019, with the decrease driven by money claims

There were 489,000 County Court claims lodged in January to March 2020. Of these, 430,000 were money claims (down 8% from January to March 2019).

Non-money claim volumes were at 58,000, down 16% when compared to the same quarter last year.

Mortgage and landlord possession claims decreased by 20% over the same period to 29,000, 'other non-money claims' decreased by 11% to 27,000 and claims for return of goods decreased by 22% to 2,300.

Figure 1: County Court claims by type, Q1 (January to March) 2009 to Q1 (January to March) 2020 (Source: table 1.2)



County Court claims had been generally increasing since a low of 328,000 in April to June 2012, reaching a peak of 565,000 claims in April to June 2017. This increase was driven by a rise in money claims, which make up the majority of claims received. In this most recent quarter, claims have decreased by 9% compared to the same period in 2019 (from 538,000 to 489,000). Of these, 430,000 were money claims, down 8% from January to March 2019 (from 468,000). The recent volatility in money claims over the last three quarters has been driven by a few “bulk issuers” slowing down and then ramping up their volume of claims. This trend will be monitored to see if it is a change in business model for these businesses.

Non-money claims have been generally decreasing since the peak of 89,000 in July to September 2013. In the current quarter, this decreased by 16% (from 69,000 to 58,000) compared to the same period in 2019, the lowest in the time series.

Within non-money claims, ‘other’ non-money claims have generally increased from a low of 26,000 in April to June 2014 but started to fall in 2018. In the most recent quarter, ‘other’ non-money claims decreased by 11% (from 30,000 to 27,000) compared to the same period in 2019.

The overall trend in Mortgage and Landlord Possession claims has been decreasing since a peak of 60,000 in January to March 2014. There were 29,000 claims in January to March 2020, down 20% compared to the same quarter of 2019 (37,000 claims). This decrease has been driven by a fall in all claims types in March 2020 due to actions following Coronavirus (COVID-19), please see the Mortgage and Landlord Possessions publication annex (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-january-to-march-2020>) for further details on this.

In contrast, claims for return of goods have been generally increasing since a low of 810 in April to June 2014 to a peak of over 3,000 in April-June 2019, although this trend has shown a general decline in the last year. The decline continues this quarter, with claims decreasing from 3,000 to 2,300 (down 22%) in January to March 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.

3. Money Claims

Specified money claims have decreased by 8% to 400,000 claims in January to March 2020 compared to the same quarter in 2019, driving the decrease seen in overall money claims.

Specified money claims of up to (and including) £1,000 decreased 17% over this period to 247,000, driving the overall decrease in specified money claims.

Unspecified claims have decreased by 8% to 30,000, driven by a fall in personal injury claims (down 11% to 27,000) compared to the same quarter in 2019.

Personal Injury claims accounted for 88% of all unspecified money claims in the most recent quarter

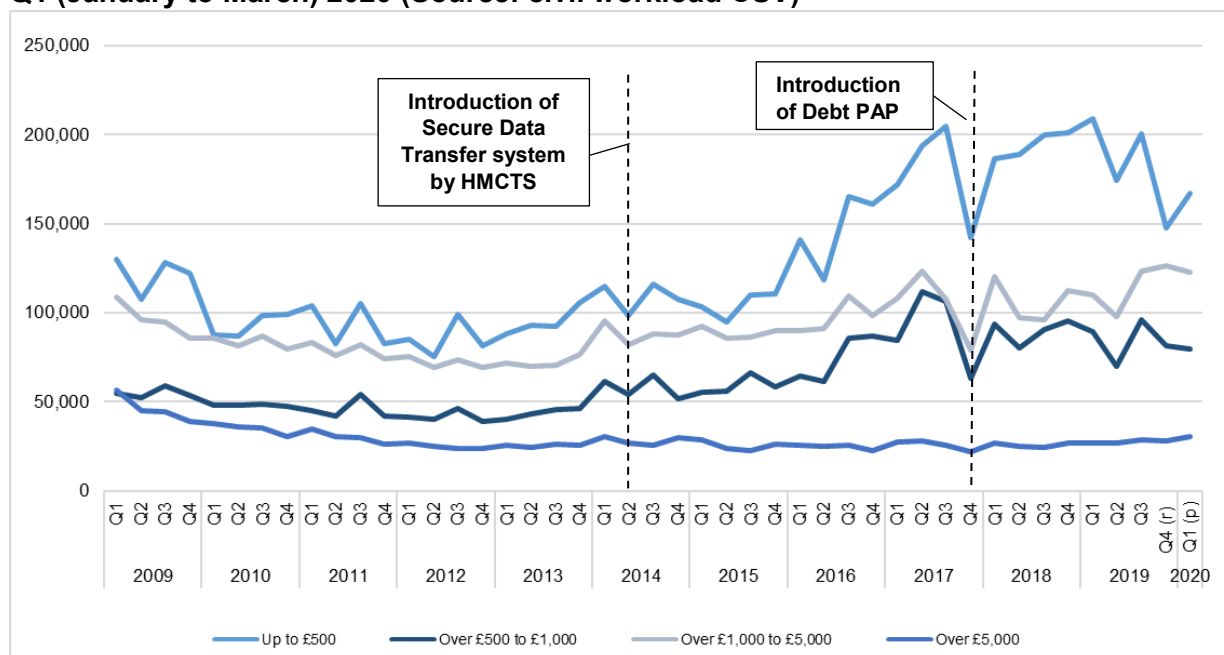
The majority (82%) of specified money claims are processed and issued at the County Court Business Centre (CCBC). There were 330,000 such claims at the CCBC in January to March 2020 (down 11% on the same quarter in the previous year).

Historically, specified money claims increased from a low in April to June 2012 (210,000 claims), up to a peak in October to December 2017. Following this, the implementation of the Pre-Action Protocol (PAP) for Debt¹ Claims in October 2017 led to a sharp drop in claims. The increasing trend resumed the following quarter, suggesting that the impact of the PAP on claim volumes was temporary. The main aim of the protocol is to encourage early engagement between parties to resolve disputes without needing to start court proceedings. In the most recent quarter (January to March 2020), there was a decrease of 8% on the same quarter in 2019 from 436,000 to 400,000 claims.

The decrease in specified money claims is driven by lower value claims (up to and including £1,000). These decreased by 17% in the period January to March 2020, compared to a year earlier, to 247,000 claims and account for 65% of total specified money claims in the most recent quarter. When compared to the same quarter in the previous year, the next claim band (above £1,000 up to and including £5,000) has increased 11% to 123,000 claims.

¹ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/courts/procedure-rules/civil/pdf/protocols/pre-action-protocol-for-debt-claims.pdf>

Figure 2: Specified money claims by monetary value, Q1 (January to March) 2009 to Q1 (January to March) 2020 (Source: civil workload CSV)



Unspecified money claims have fluctuated between 30,000 and 40,000 claims each quarter over the last five years (since January to March 2015). More recently, the volumes have decreased, falling by 8% to 30,000 in January to March 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 (from 33,000). The fall was driven by a decrease in personal injury, down 11% from 30,000 to 27,000, and can be attributed to the impact of previous Government reform to tackle the costs of civil litigation through measures included in part 2 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (and other related reforms).

Allocations (table 1.3)

In January to March 2020, 42,000 money claims were allocated to track, down 14% (from 49,000) on the same period in 2019. A decrease was seen across all tracks, with fast- and multi-track showing a larger decline than small claims. Compared to January to March 2019, of these allocations:

- 25,000 were allocated to small claims, a decrease of 9%, accounting for 60% of all allocations;
- 14,000 were allocated to fast track, a decrease of 21%, accounting for 33% of all allocations;
- 2,800 were allocated to multi-track, a decrease of 18%, accounting for 7% of all allocations.

3. Defences (including legal representation) and Trials

The number of claims defended increased by 5% to 77,000 compared to the same quarter in 2019.

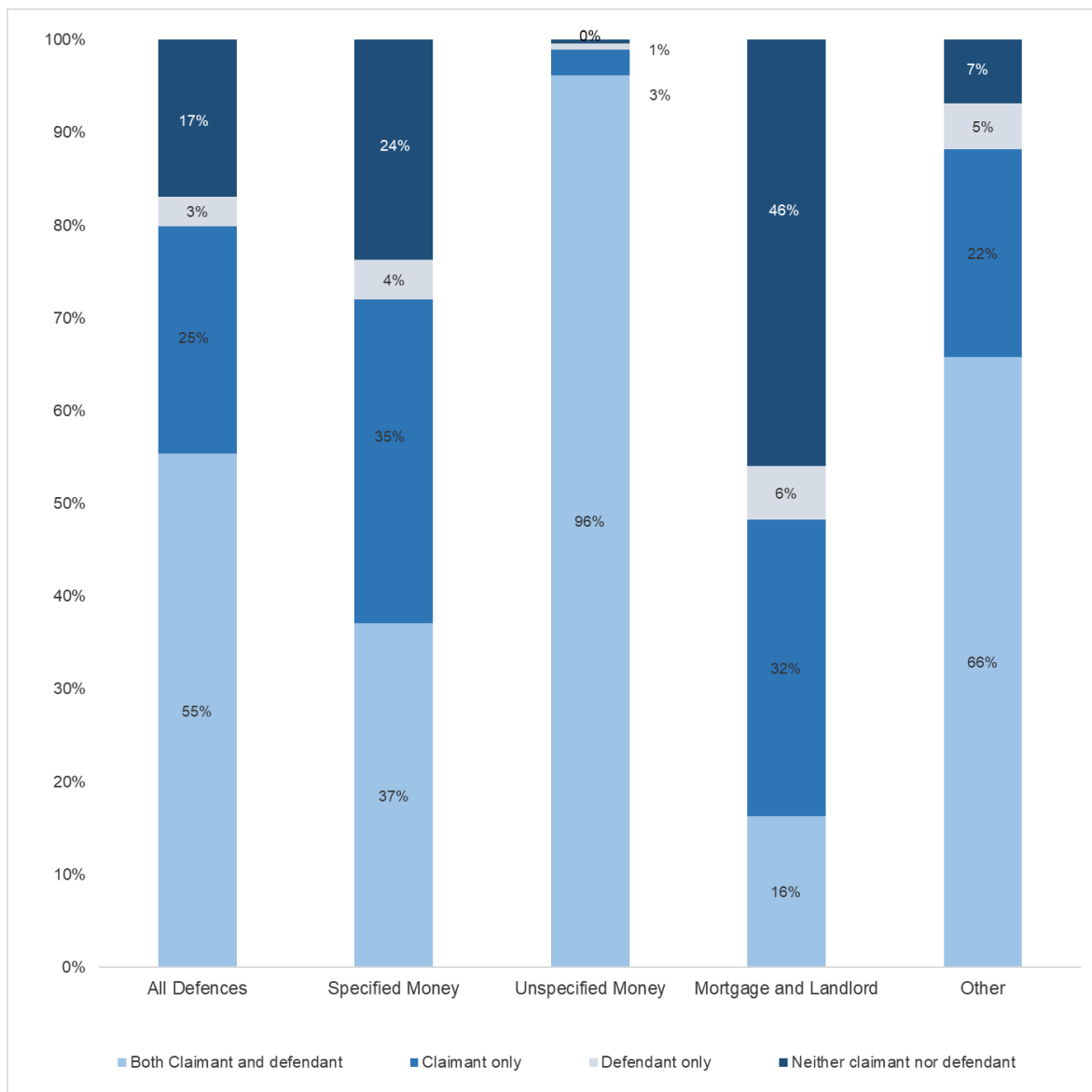
Of those claims defended, 55% had legal representation for both claimant and defendant, 25% had representation for claimant only, and 3% for defendant only.

The number of trials has increased by 7% to 17,000 and average time taken from claim to trial has also increased.

Average time taken for small claims has increased to 39.7 weeks (up 2.8 weeks compared to the same quarter in 2020) and for multi and fast track claims it has increased to 59.6 weeks (up 1.1 weeks).

In January to March 2020, almost all (96%) unspecified money defences had legal representation for both the defendant and claimant, compared with just over a third (37%) of specified money defences.

Figure 3: Proportion of civil defences and legal representation status, January to March 2020 (Source: table 1.6)

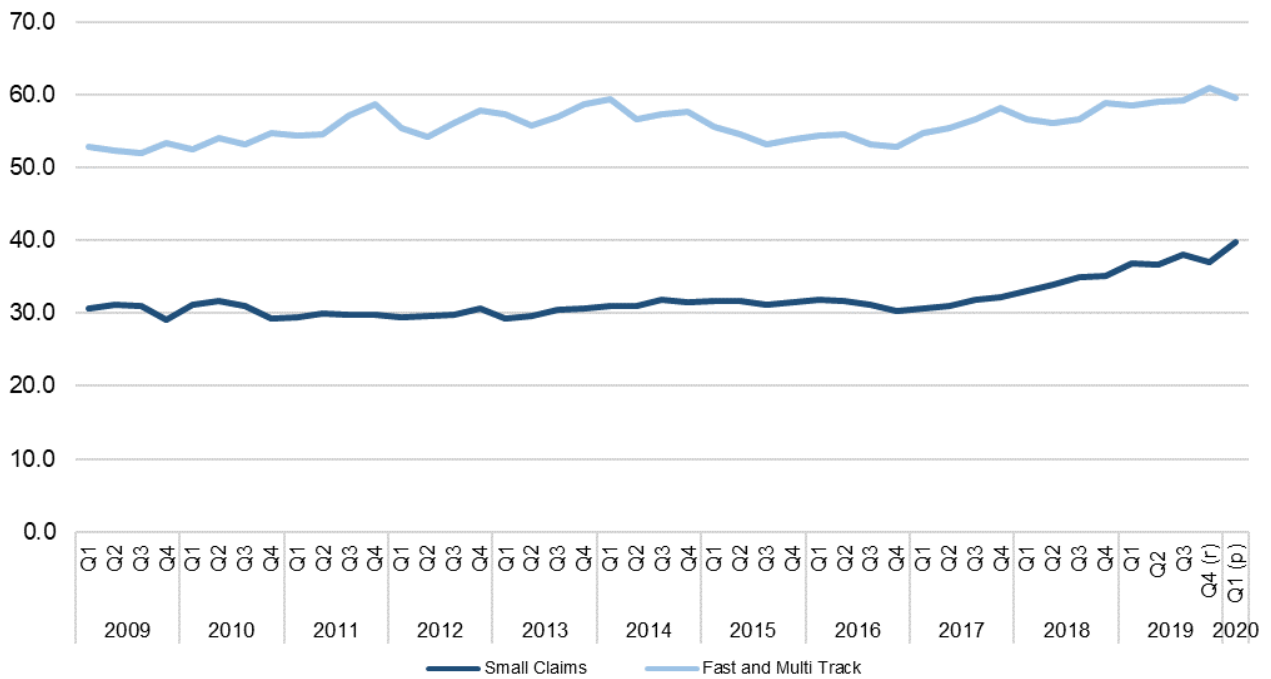


The total number of claims defended increased by 5% in January to March 2020 compared to the same quarter in 2019, from 73,000 to 77,000 cases. This was driven by increases in specified money claims being defended (up 11% from 44,000 to 48,000).

Trials and Time Taken to Reach Trial (table 1.5)

Defended cases which are not settled or withdrawn generally result in a trial. In total, there were 17,000 trials in January to March 2020, an increase of 7% compared to the same period in the previous year. Of the claims that went to trial, 13,000 (75%) were small claims trials (up 15% compared to the same quarter in 2019) and 4,200 (25%) were fast and multi-track trials (down 10% from the same quarter of 2019).

Figure 4: Average number of weeks from claim being issued to initial hearing date, Q1 (January to March) 2009 to Q1 (January to March) 2020 (Source: table 1.5)



In January to March 2020, it took an average of 39.7 weeks between a small claim being issued and the claim going to trial, 2.8 weeks longer than in the same period in the previous year. A sustained period of increasing receipts has increased the time taken to hear civil cases and caused delays to progress cases.

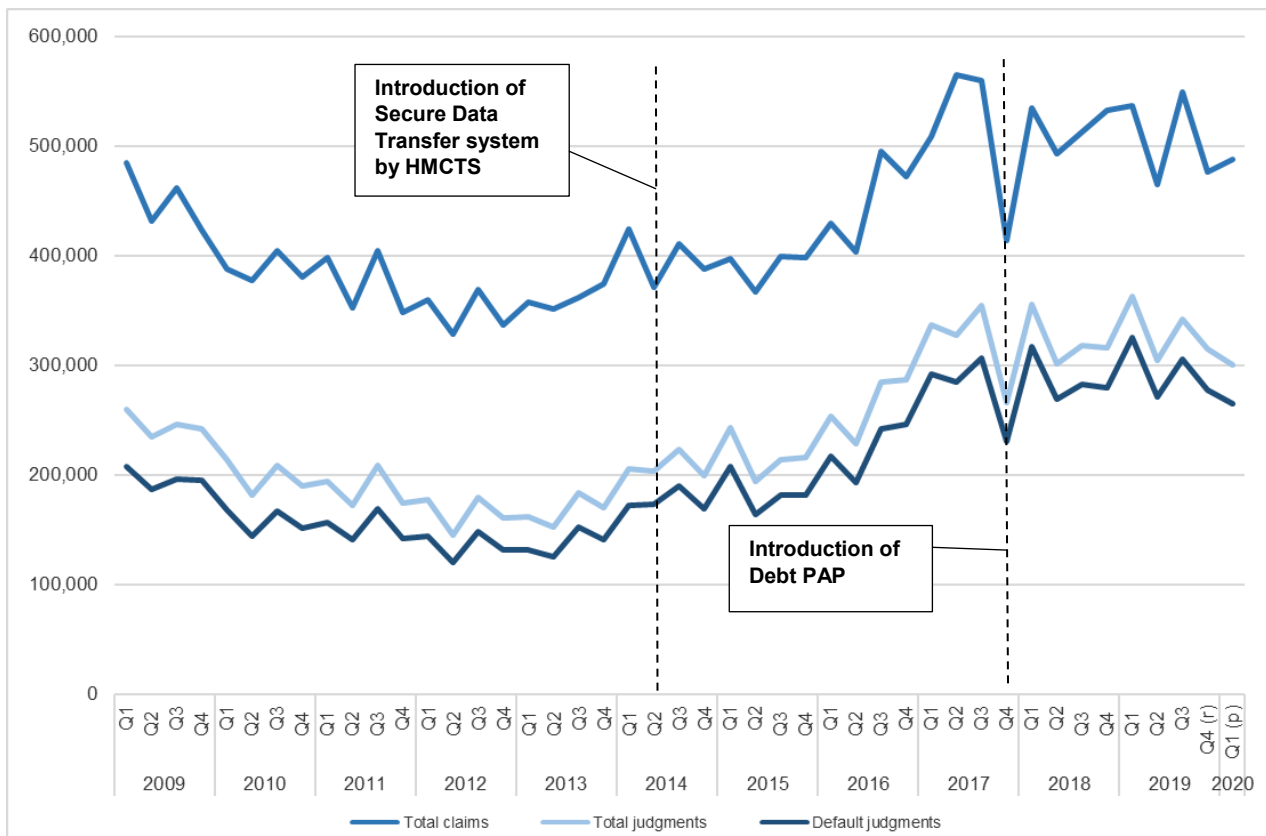
For multi/fast track claims, it took on average 59.6 weeks to reach a trial, 1.1 weeks longer than in January to March 2019 – continuing to exceed the upper limit of the long-term range (52-59 weeks).

4. Judgments

Judgments decreased 17% compared to same quarter in 2019

There were 300,000 judgments made in January to March 2020, down from 363,000 in the same quarter of 2019. Of these judgements, 265,000 (88%) were default judgments, a slight decrease when compared to the percentage of default judgements in the same quarter of 2019 (90%).

Figure 5: All claims, judgments and default judgments, Q1 (January to March) 2009 to Q1 (January to March) 2020 (Source: tables 1.2 and 1.4)



There were 300,000 judgments made in January to March 2020, a decrease of 17% compared to the same quarter of 2019. Of these, 88% were default judgments, a slight decrease on the same quarter of the previous year (90%). The number of default judgments decreased by 18% (from 325,000 to 265,000) on the same quarter of 2019.

The second largest type of judgment was 'admissions', of which there were 21,000 in January to March 2020, down 10% on the same quarter in 2019. Admission judgments accounted for 7% of all judgments, remaining at a similar level to that seen in January to March 2019.

5. Warrants and Enforcements

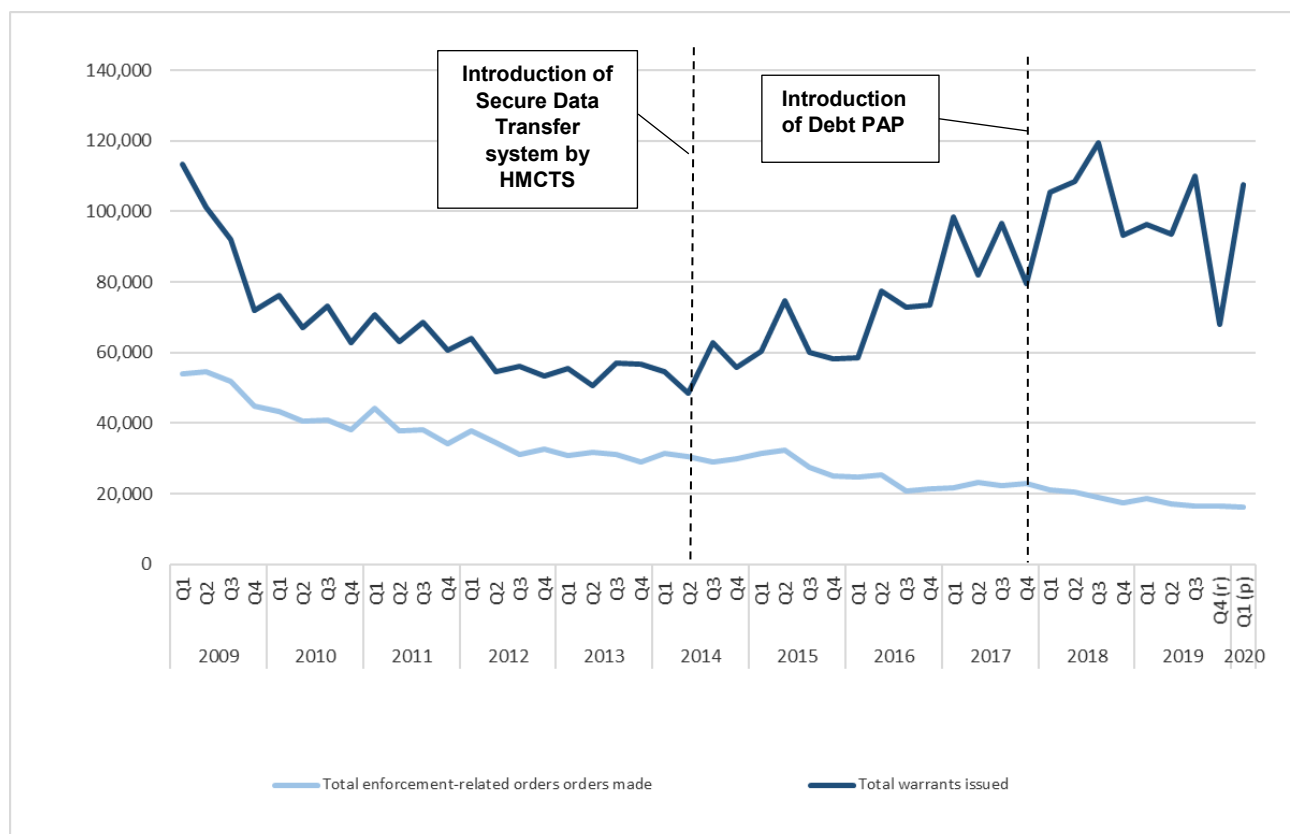
Warrants issued increased by 12% when compared to same quarter in 2019 - driven by an increase in warrants of control

In January to March 2020, 108,000 warrants were issued, up from 96,000 in the same quarter of 2019. Of these, 91,000 (85%) were warrants of control, up 22% compared to the same period in 2019.

Enforcement applications remained stable and enforcement orders decreased by 13% when compared to same quarter in 2019

While significant variations were seen across some application categories, attachment of earnings (AoE) applications remained relatively stable (down 2% to 14,000). The fall in orders was driven by the decrease in AoE orders (down 19% to 7,200).

Figure 6: Warrants and enforcements issued – Q1 (January to March) 2009 to Q1 (January to March) 2020 (Source: tables 1.7 and 1.8)



Warrants (table 1.7)

Historically, yearly warrants issued fell between 2000 and 2013, from a high of 616,000 to a low of 220,000. Since April to June 2014 there has been a rise in warrants issued by quarter from a low of 48,000 in April to June 2014, to a peak of 120,000 in July to September 2018.

In the latest quarter (January to March 2020) there were 108,000 warrants issued, up 12% (from 96,000) on the same quarter in 2019. This is a significant increase, and possibly marks a recovery following the generally low numbers seen across the whole of 2019, in particular in the previous quarter. These will be monitored carefully going forward.

Enforcements (table 1.8)

In January to March 2020, there were 22,000 enforcement-related order applications (which include attachment of earnings orders, charging orders, third party debt orders, administration orders, and orders to obtain information) and 16,000 enforcement-related orders made, which remained stable and decreased by 13% respectively when compared to the same period in the previous year. Of applications, there was a slight fall in both attachment of earnings cases (down 2% to 14,000) and charging order applications (down 1% to 7,300). The fall in orders has been driven by a decrease in attachment of earnings orders (down 19% to 7,200), and only partially offset by a 3% increase in charging orders (to 6,800).

Over the longer term, as shown in figure 6, there has been a decreasing trend in enforcement-related applications received and orders made since 2009, possibly due to claimants' preference for using warrants instead to retrieve money, property or goods.

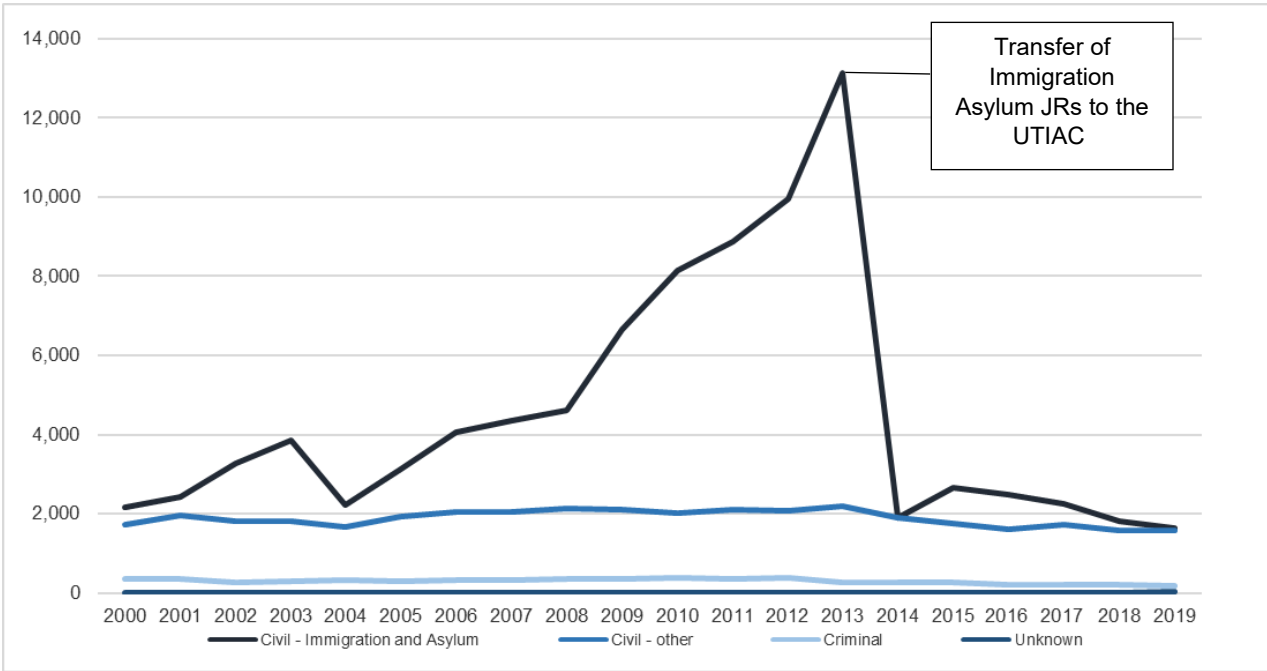
6. Judicial Reviews²

Compared to all other government departments/bodies in 2019, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) had the highest number of Judicial review applications lodged against it.

The Ministry of Justice had 1,100 Judicial Reviews against it in 2019, down 7% on 2018. The Home Office had the second largest number with 976 JRs in 2019 (down 17% on 2018).

There have been 798 judicial review applications received in 2020 so far, down 14% when compared to the same period in 2019 (from 930). In 2019, there were 3,400 applications received in total, down 6% on 2018.

Figure 7: Annual Judicial Review Applications, by type; calendar year 2000-2019 (Source: table 2.1)



Of the 3,400 judicial review applications received in 2019, 1,600 were civil immigration and asylum applications, 1,600 were civil (other) and 170 were criminal, down 9%, 0% and 19% respectively on the same period of 2018. 53 of the civil immigration and asylum cases have since been transferred to the UTIAC. Judicial review applications for criminal cases peaked at 380 in 2012 and have decreased since then to 210 in 2018. They continued to decrease in 2019, falling to 170 cases.

Judicial review figures, broken down by defendant type (i.e. individual government department or public body), are published annually. This information is derived from the 'defendant name' free text field, which is then grouped by defendant type. As this is a manually typed field, it is open to inputting errors and therefore should be used with caution.

The key findings from the 2019 figures are:

- The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) was the department/body with the largest number of JR applications lodged against them, with 1,100 applications (down 7% on 2018).

² The judicial review data are Official Statistics

124 applications were granted permission to proceed to the final hearing stage (12% of applications) and 20 (2%) were found in favour of the claimant.

- Of the MoJ JR applications, 729 were specifically against Tribunals (69% of all MoJ JRs). The number of JR cases against tribunals increased by 5% when compared to the number of applications lodged in 2018.
- The second largest recipient of JR cases was the Home Office, with 976 cases received (a 17% decrease on the previous year). Of these, 158 were granted permission to proceed to final hearing (16% of applications) and of these, 12 (1%) were found in favour of the claimant.
- The third largest recipient was Local Authorities, having 586 applications lodged against them, down 10% on the previous year. Of these cases, 210 were granted permission to proceed to final hearing (36% of applications), and of these, 27 (5%) were found in favour of the claimant.

7. Royal Courts of Justice

Annual court activity statistics for the various appeal courts that are administered by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) - key findings covering the year to 2019 are summarised below:

The Court of Appeal Criminal Division saw a 10% decrease over the year in the number of applications received, from 5,100 in 2018 to 4,600 in 2019. Decreases were recorded across all three appeal application types (conviction, sentence and other¹ appeal applications, down 10%, 8% and 36% respectively). (Table 3.7)

Court of Appeal Civil Division had 769 appeals filed in 2019, down 10% on 2018. Of the appeals filed in 2018, the largest number (201 appeals) came from the Immigration and Asylum section (26% of all appeals filed). The number of disposals in 2019 decreased by 22% to 898, when compared to 2018, with Immigration and Asylum cases also making up the largest category (270 cases, 30% of all disposals). (Table 3.9)

Civil Division Timeliness showed large decreases in average time taken at all stages. Mean time taken from “Notice Filed” to Permission to Appeal (PTA) decision has fallen by 38% to 20 weeks and from PTA Granted to Hand Down of Judgement is 41 weeks (down 23 % on 2018). (Table 3.10)

Within the **London Chancery Division** total proceedings was unchanged from 2018 at 4,000. All proceedings covered by the Chancery Division increased by 4% to 14,200 proceedings started. (Table 3.12).

The High Court – The Queen’s Bench – had 4,600 proceedings started in 2019, 3% more than in 2018. Of these proceedings, the most common types in 2019 were for personal injury actions, clinical negligence and other negligence, which made up 25%, 21% and 20% of all proceedings respectively. (Table 3.20)

Commercial Court claims have continued their long term downward trend with 479 claims in 2019, down 10% on 2018 and down 64% from the peak of 1,331 seen in 2011. The largest category of claim remains “General commercial contracts and arrangements, including agency agreements”, with 163 such claims issued in 2019. (Table 3.28)

Days sat by Judge - there were 300,000 days sat by judges in 2019, down from 310,000 (a decrease of 2.6%) compared to 2018. Across court types, this decrease was driven by a decrease in Crown Court sitting days, which fell by 12% (from 102,000 to 89,000 sitting days). Due to incorrect classifications in some of the data we are unable to provide a split by judge type; this will be published once the classifications can be corrected and quality assured. (Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

For further information on these summarised figures or on the statistics available in relation to the appeals courts’, please see the accompanying tables; ‘Royal Courts of Justice, 2019’.

¹ See footnote on the Royal Courts of Justice table 3.7 for the full list of other receipt applications

Further information

Provisional data and revisions

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 document providing further information on how the data is collected and processed, as well as information on the revisions policy and legislation relevant to civil justice.
- The quality statement published with this guide sets out our policies for producing quality statistical outputs for the information we provide to maintain our users' understanding and trust.
- RCJ tables which cover annual court activity for the various appeal courts that are administered by HM Courts and Tribunals Service
- A set of tables providing statistics on the Business and Property Courts of England and Wales.
- A set of overview tables and CSV files, covering each section of this bulletin.
- The Sankey case progression tool, which has been updated with annual figures up to 2018.

Rounding convention

Figures greater than 10,000 are rounded to the nearest 1,000, those between 1,000 and 10,000 are rounded to the nearest 100 and those between 100 to 1,000 are rounded to the nearest 10. Less than 100 are given as the actual number.



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 Official 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.

Contacts

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Next update: 3 September 2020

For any feedback on the layout or content of this publication or requests for alternative formats, please contact ESD@justice.gov.uk