Guide to local authority and court-level information

Background

The local authority and court-level information provide the user with local authority and court-level breakdowns of claims, orders, warrants and county court bailiff repossessions for the full amount of time for which data is available. This aim at maximising the usage of data by users so analytical work can be carried out independently.

The data is provided in a comma separated value (CSV) machine-readable format so that it can easily be imported into analytical software packages. This format enables the user to manipulate and aggregate the published data in different ways.

The two sites below are examples of some of the ways that possessions data has been used by customers:

england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/housing_databank

data.london.gov.uk/datastore/applications/focus-london-housing

These analyses are not products of the Ministry of Justice and are referenced for illustrative purposes only.

Below there is a full description of the variables and the list of possible values for each dataset provided. At the end there is also a short guide on how to load these files onto a database package, such as R. R is not the only package which can manipulate this data, but it is an open source package and can be downloaded at

www.r-project.org/

Local Authority level data variables

year: This is the year to which the data relates. The earliest year from which any of the data is available is 2003 because there of quality concerns around the allocation of claims to a particular local authority prior to that date.

quarter: Each year is divided into four quarters and this is the quarter to which the data relates.

possession_type: This summarises whether the type of claim relates to a landlord or mortgage possession. Landlord possessions are broken down by the type of landlord and the procedure used: social landlord, private landlord, or accelerated procedure.

procedure: This describes what the number relates to: claims, orders, warrants or repossession by a county court bailiff. Orders, in turn, are broken down by whether they were outright orders or suspended orders.

la_code: This is a code assigned to each local authority across government. This facilitates the incorporation of data from government departments at the local level that use the same code.

local_authority: The data is presented in two separate data-sets. The first provides court-level breakdowns, and the second provides local authority breakdowns. This is the local authority of the defendant, derived from the defendant's address. Local authorities have been re-organised over time, and claims cannot be retrospectively be allocated. This means that the local authority boundaries used are the boundaries used today even for past years. This allows for a like-for-like comparison of claim numbers in an authority over time.

county_ua: Where a local authority is a district within a county, the county is provided also, to allow county-level aggregation. Where the local authority is unitary in nature, the description in the county variable will be the same as in the local authority variable.

region: The region in which the local authority is located is provided.

value: This provides the number e.g. the number of claims that were issued in that local authority during that quarter. Where the value is actually less than 3, the value is given as 0, to protect the confidentiality of those involved in the claim, order, warrant or repossession. For this reason, the national total number of claims, orders etc from this data-set will not match the actual total, although the differences are generally small.

Court level data

The court data-set consists of seven variables. This is the court where the claim was issued.

year: This is the year to which the data relates. The earliest year from which any of the data is available is 1999 for claims and orders. For warrants and repossessions the earliest year is 2000. This reflects improvements in the data quality over time.

quarter: Each year is divided into four quarters and this is the quarter to which the data relates.

possession_type: This summarises whether the type of claim relates to a landlord or mortgage possession. Landlord possessions are broken down by the type of landlord and the procedure used: social landlord, private landlord, or accelerated procedure.

procedure: This describes what the number relates to: claims, orders, warrants or repossession by a county court bailiff. Orders, in turn, are broken down by whether they were outright orders or suspended orders.

court: This is the court through which the claim was issued.

region: This is the region in which the court lies. The regional breakdown used is from the Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) which allocates all courts to an administrative region. This is different from the regional breakdown used in the local authority CSV which is the Government Office regional breakdown which allocates all local authorities to a region.

value: This provides the number e.g. the number of claims that were issued in that local authority during that quarter. Where the value is actually less than 3, the value is given as 0, to protect the confidentiality of those involved in the claim, order, warrant or repossession. For this reason, the national total number of claims, orders etc from this data-set will not match the actual total, although the differences are generally small.

Loading data to R Statistical package

Loading the court CSV file into an R dataset called csv_court:

```
csv_court <- read.csv('csv_court_2013_Q1.csv', header = T)
```

Example of analysis: creating data underlying Table 1 (Mortgage possessions) and 3 (Landlord possessions):

```
aggregate(value ~ quarter + year + possession_action +
    possession_type, data = csv_court, sum)
```

Example of analysis: Court breakdown of 2013 Q1 data for Landlords and Mortgages:

```
csv_court_13_q1 <- csv_court [which(csv_court$year==2013 &
    csv_court$quarter == "Q1"),]

aggregate(value ~ possession_action  + court +
    possession_type, data = csv_court_13_q1, sum)
```