



Ministry  
of Justice



# **Criminal court statistics quarterly, England and Wales**

July to September 2015

Ministry of Justice  
Statistics bulletin

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## Introduction

### **The statistical bulletin**

This is the fifth edition of the statistical bulletin, Criminal court statistics quarterly (CCSQ) presenting statistics relating to activity in criminal cases in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in England and Wales. These statistics were previously published within Court Statistics Quarterly which, after consultation, has been split into separate policy focused publications.

The publication provides provisional figures for the latest quarter (July to September 2015) with accompanying commentary and analysis. The figures themselves give a summary overview of the volume of cases dealt with by these courts over time. The statistics are used to monitor court workloads, to assist in the development of policy, and their subsequent monitoring and evaluation.

Information on the enforcement of financial impositions can be found in Annex A. Figures on the criminal courts charge, introduced on 13 April 2015, are separately identified within the publication for the first time. The annex provides updated management information on the collection of financial imposition through Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

### **Criminal Courts; an overview**

#### **Magistrates' courts**

Virtually all criminal court cases start in the magistrates' courts. The less serious offences are handled entirely in magistrates' courts, with over 90% of all cases being dealt with in this way. The more serious offences are passed on to the Crown Court, either for sentencing after the defendant has been found guilty in the magistrates' court, or for trial with a judge and jury.

As part of wider measures in the justice system, committal hearings were abolished nationally<sup>1</sup> at the end of May 2013. As a result of the change, triable-either-way cases can now be sent straight to the Crown Court as soon as it is clear the matter is serious enough, rather than having to await a committal hearing.

#### **The Crown Court**

The Crown Court deals with cases received from the magistrates' courts for sentencing, trial or appeal against magistrates' courts' decision.

Of those proceeded against in the magistrates' courts, 7% of defendants are sent to the Crown Court for trial.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/faster-justice-as-unnecessary-committal-hearings-are-abolished](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/faster-justice-as-unnecessary-committal-hearings-are-abolished)

Triable-either-way cases can be sent to the Crown Court for trial if the magistrates' courts decide the matter is serious enough or if a defendant elects to be tried by judge and jury.

Indictable only cases can only be tried on indictment in the Crown Court as they cannot be heard summarily at the magistrates' courts.

Committed for sentence cases are transferred to the Crown Court for sentencing only after a defendant has been convicted in a magistrates' court. This would occur where a magistrate believes that their sentencing powers are insufficient to apply an appropriate sanction to the defendant.

In its appellate jurisdiction the Crown Court deals mainly with appeals against conviction and/or sentence in respect of criminal offences, including consequential orders, e.g. disqualification from driving, and against the making of certain stand alone orders, e.g. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. The Crown Court may dismiss or allow the appeal and vary all or any part of the sentence. Appeals are usually heard by a Circuit Judge sitting with no more than four lay magistrates (normally two).

### **Average waiting time at the Crown Court**

'Average waiting time' is the time between sending a case to the Crown Court and the start of the substantive hearing.

### **Average hearing time at the Crown Court**

The 'average hearing time' relates to the average duration of all hearings heard in the Crown Court, including preliminary hearings, main hearings, and hearings where a sentence is given to a defendant.

## **Data and court processes**

Information about the systems and data included in this publication can be found in the '**A guide to criminal court statistics**' which is published alongside this report. It also includes a **glossary** which provides brief definitions for the terms used in this report.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-criminal-court-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-criminal-court-statistics)

## Changes and revisions in this publication

### **Inclusion of criminal court charge within enforcement tables (Annex A)**

The criminal courts charge, which came into force on 13 April 2015, has been included as a separate entity for the first time within this CCSQ release. It applies only to offences committed from that date onwards, and therefore data are currently available for Q2 and Q3 2015.

The last CCSQ covered the period April to June 2015 and Table A2 included the following imposition types: compensation, costs, fine, victims surcharge and 'other'. Other included vehicle excise back duty, vehicle excise arrears and forfeited recognisance. It also included criminal court charge which is now shown as a separate breakdown.

## Key Findings

This report presents statistics relating to activity in criminal cases in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in England and Wales in the third quarter of 2015 (July to September).

- At magistrates' courts, the number of disposals at Q3 2015 continues to remain higher than receipts. Outstanding cases have continued to decrease since Q1 2015.
- Following a steady increase in the number of outstanding cases in the Crown Court from Q1 2013, there has been a decrease since Q4 2014. This reflects that Crown Court receipts have been declining, with a decrease of 9% from the same quarter in the previous year, whilst the number of disposals continues to remain higher than receipts.
- For Crown Court cases, the mean time from first listing at the magistrates' court to receipt by the Crown Court fell substantially, from 22 days in Q2 2013 to 5 days in Q3 2014 and has remained consistent since then.
- Time from receipt by the Crown Court to main hearing and main hearing to completion have increased, resulting in the overall number of days from first listing to completion increasing from 164 to 204 days between Q3 2013 and Q2 2015, although there has been a small decrease to 195 days in Q3 2015.
- Across a two-year period, average waiting times for triable-either-way cases and indictable only cases have increased by 6.6 weeks and 4.9 weeks respectively. Waiting times have remained fairly steady in non-trial cases.

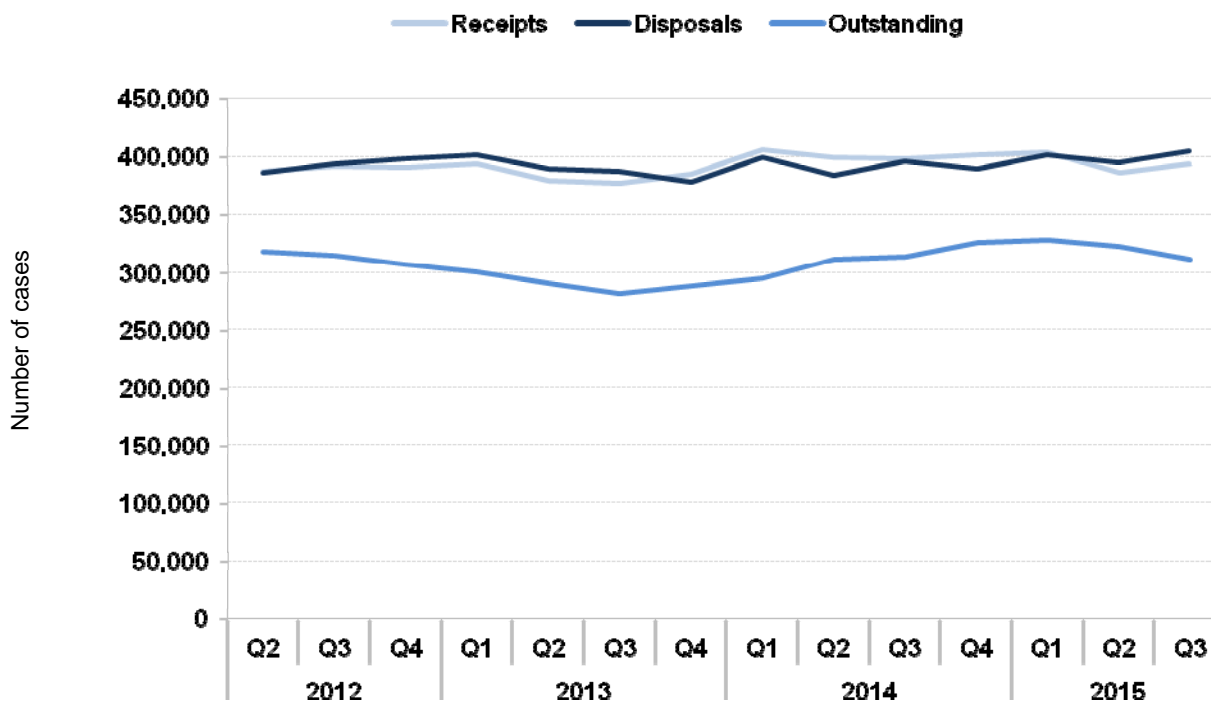
## Criminal Courts

At the end of the fourth quarter of 2014, there were around 240 magistrates' courts and approximately 80 Crown Court locations across England and Wales.

### 1. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

Figure 1 below shows the magistrates' courts caseload for England and Wales.

Figure 1: Magistrates' courts caseload, Q2 2012 to Q3 2015



#### Receipts in the magistrates' courts (figure 1)

Following a rise in receipts in the magistrates' courts between Q3 2013 and Q1 2014, receipts remained stable up to early 2015. Since Q1 2015 however, receipts have decreased by 2%.

#### Disposals (figure 1)

Disposals have fluctuated since 2013 and indicate a slight rise overall more recently; in Q3 2015 there was a 2% increase when compared to the same quarter in 2014, and a 3% increase compared to Q2 2015. The number of disposals at Q3 2015 has been higher than receipts for the last two quarters.

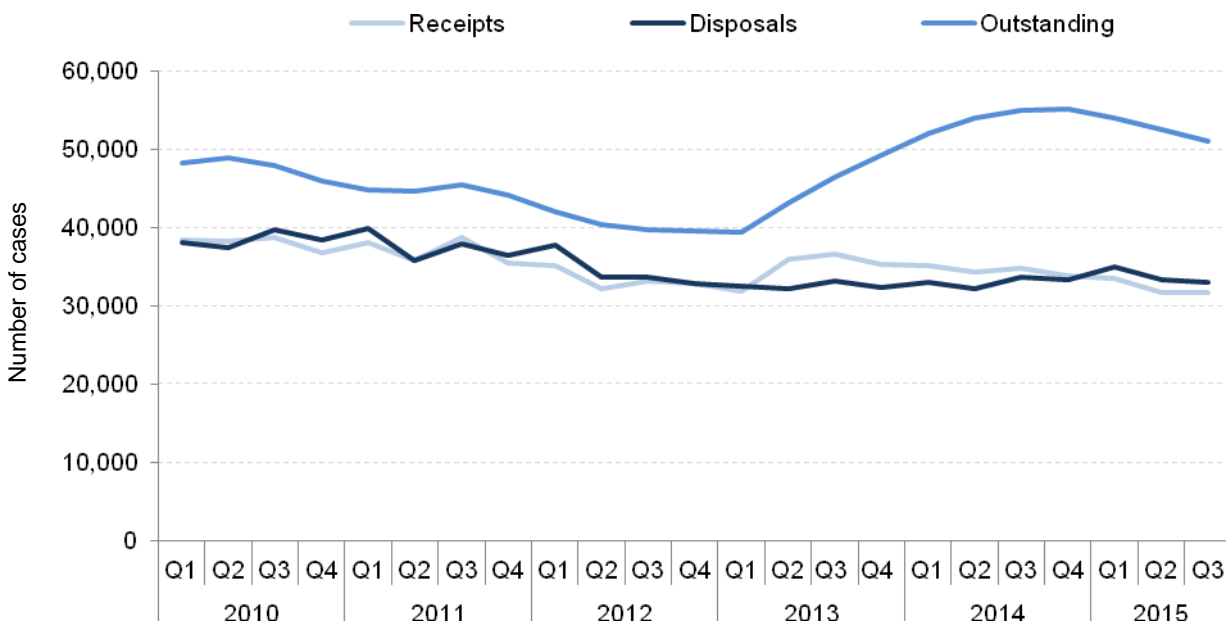
### Outstanding cases (figure 1)

The number of outstanding cases rose in late 2013 and into 2015, with an overall increase of 11% between Q3 2013 and Q3 2015, although there are signs of a decrease since the start of 2015.

## 2. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

Figure 2 below shows the Crown Court caseload for England and Wales.

Figure 2: Crown Court caseload, Q1 2010 to Q3 2015



### Receipts in the Crown Court (figure 2)

Following a peak in the number of cases received by the Crown Court in Q3 2013, there has been a downward trend in the overall number of receipts in the subsequent time periods until Q2 2015. They have remained at around 32,000 cases into Q3 2015, a decrease of 13% since the peak at Q3 2013.

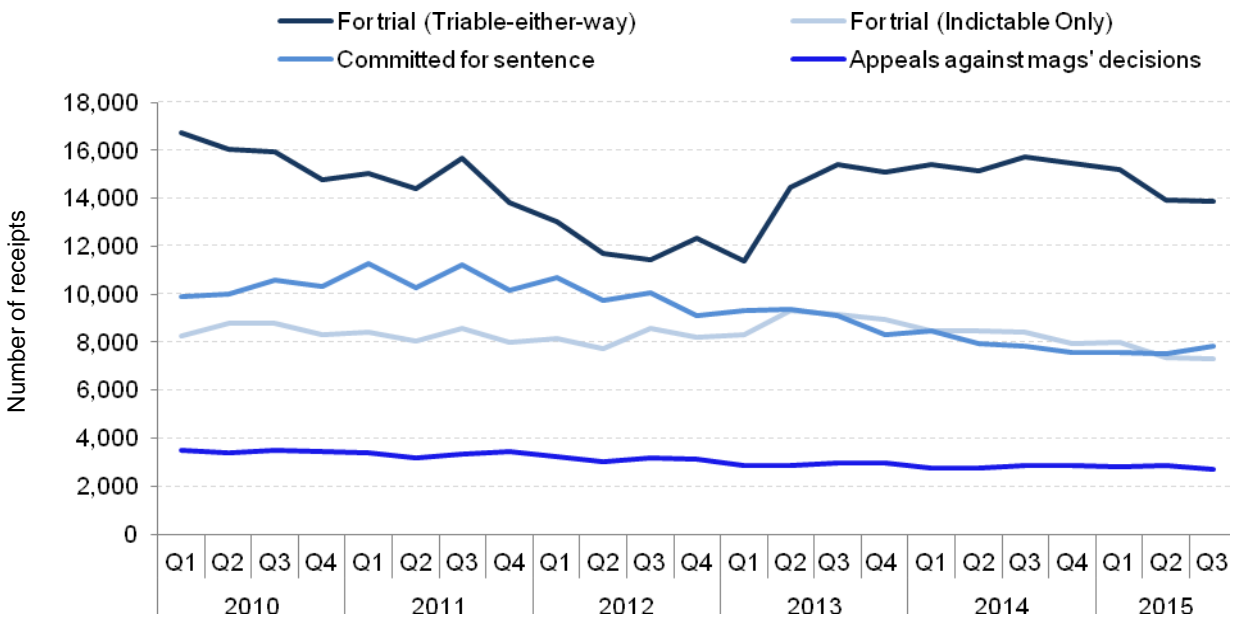


**Receipts by case type** (figure 3)

Triable-either-way cases increased throughout 2013, steadied in early 2014 and then decreased by 11% between Q3 2014 and Q2 2015. Figures for Q3 2015 have remained at a similar level to Q2 2015 but are still higher than early 2013.

There have been downward trends in receipts for indictable only cases over the last couple of years, representing a decrease of 20% between Q3 2013 and Q3 2015. Cases committed for sentence meanwhile decreased by 14% over the same period. There was, however, a rise of 5% for cases committed for sentence from the previous quarter, the first rise since Q1 2014.

**Figure 3: Crown Court receipts by case type, Q1 2010 to Q3 2015**



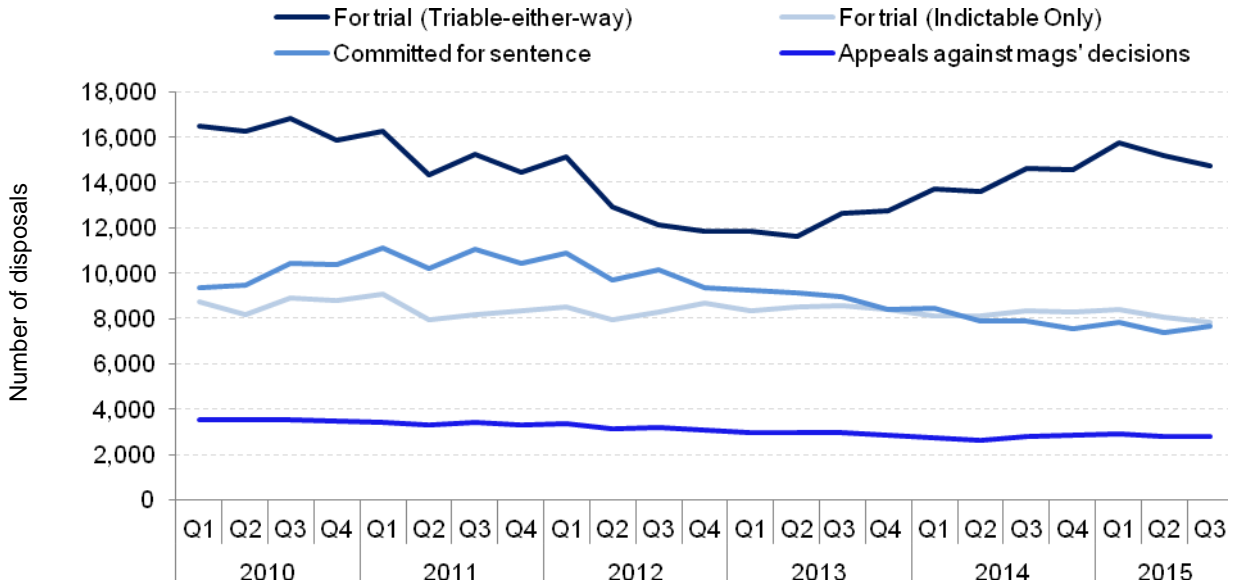
**Disposals in the Crown Court** (figure 2)

Disposals remained fairly steady in late 2012 and 2013 before increasing across 2014 until the peak in early 2015. Disposals have decreased in recent quarters and at Q3 2015 are at the same level as Q1 2014.

**Disposals by case type** (figure 4)

Disposals of triable-either-way cases have increased by 16% since Q3 2013 but have decreased by 7% since Q1 2015. Indictable only disposals remained relatively stable throughout both these time periods, but are showing signs of decrease, with figures at Q3 2015 being the lowest across the time series.

**Figure 4: Crown Court disposals by case type, Q1 2010 to Q3 2015**



**Outstanding cases in the Crown Court (figure 2)**

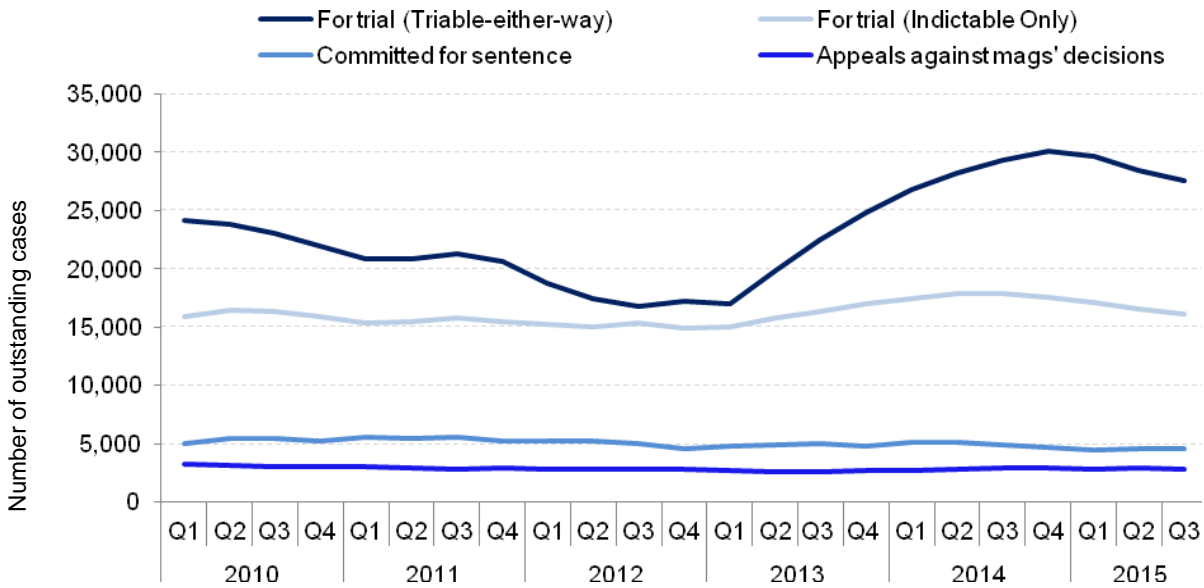
There were 51,117 outstanding cases in the Crown Court in Q3 2015, a decrease of 8% from Q4 2014. This decline reflects the number of disposals being higher than receipts over the last three quarters.

**Outstanding cases by case type (figure 5)**

The trend in triable-either-way outstanding cases has followed a similar trend to the overall number of outstanding cases, with a substantial increase from Q1 2013 up to Q4 2014 followed by a declining trend thereafter. Overall this represents an increase of 62% since the first quarter of 2013, but a decrease of 7% since Q1 2015.

Outstanding indictable only cases also increased after Q1 2013 but declined by 10% from Q3 2014.

**Figure 5: Crown Court outstanding cases by type, Q1 2010 to Q3 2015**



### 3. Timeliness

#### Offence to completion in the magistrates' courts

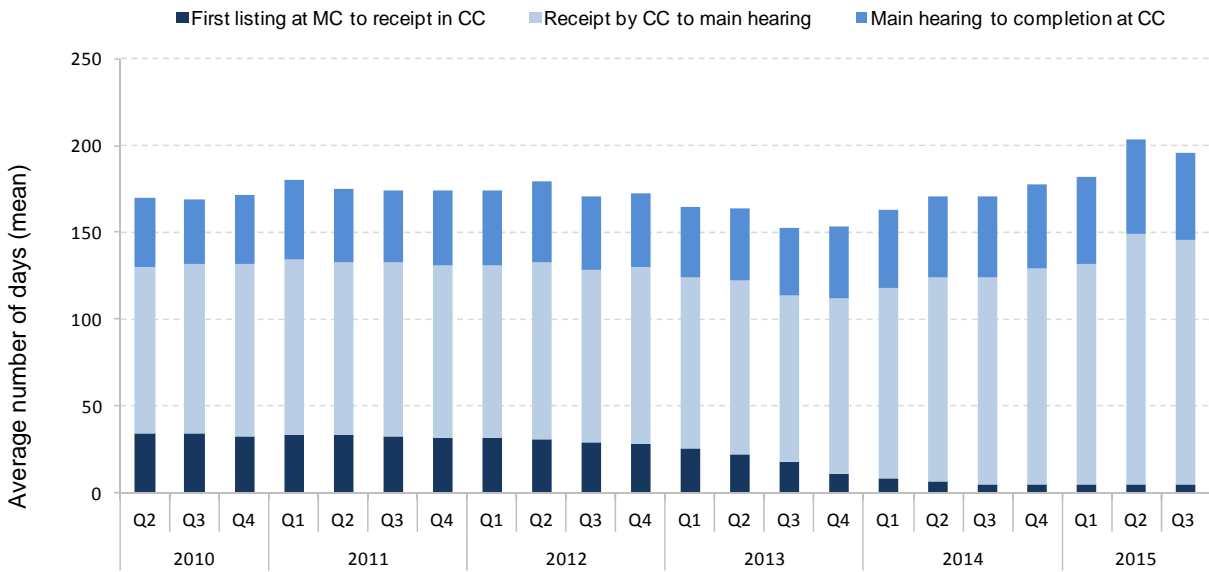
For cases dealt with entirely in the magistrates' courts, the number of days from offence to completion increased overall from 149 days to 158 days in the 12 months to Q3 2015.

#### Crown Court criminal cases - First listing in the magistrates' courts to completion in the Crown Court (figure 6)

For cases committed for trial at the Crown Court, the mean time from first listing at the magistrates' court to receipt by the Crown Court fell substantially, from 22 days in Q2 2013 to 5 days in Q3 2014, and has remained consistent since then.

However, time from receipt by the Crown Court to main hearing and main hearing to completion have increased, resulting in the overall number of days from first listing to completion increasing from 164 to 204 days between Q3 2013 and Q2 2015, although there has been a small decrease to 195 days in Q3 2015.

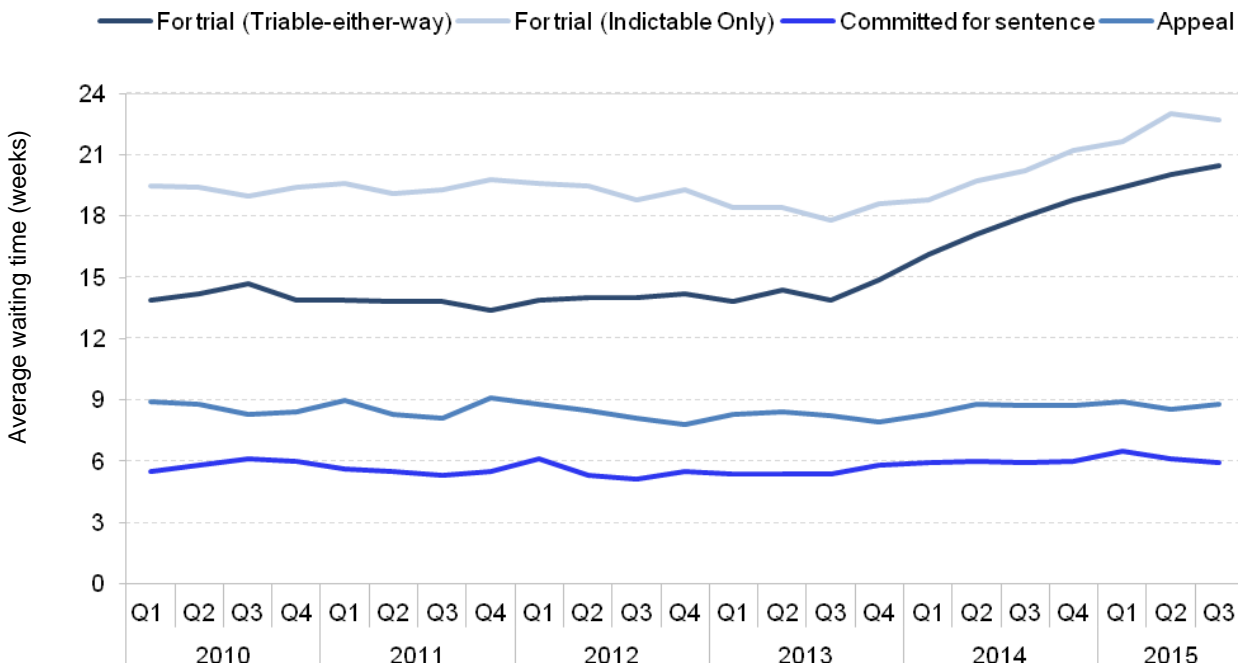
**Figure 6: Average number of days (mean) from first listing in the magistrates' courts to completion in the Crown Court, for Crown Court criminal cases, Q2 2010 to Q3 2015**



**Average waiting times at Crown Court (figure 7)**

Average waiting times increased for all trial cases between Q3 2013 and Q2 2015, but showed a slight decrease in Q3 2015 for indictable only cases. Across a two-year period, triable-either-way cases and indictable only cases have increased overall by 6.6 weeks and 4.9 weeks respectively. Waiting times have remained fairly steady in non-trial cases.

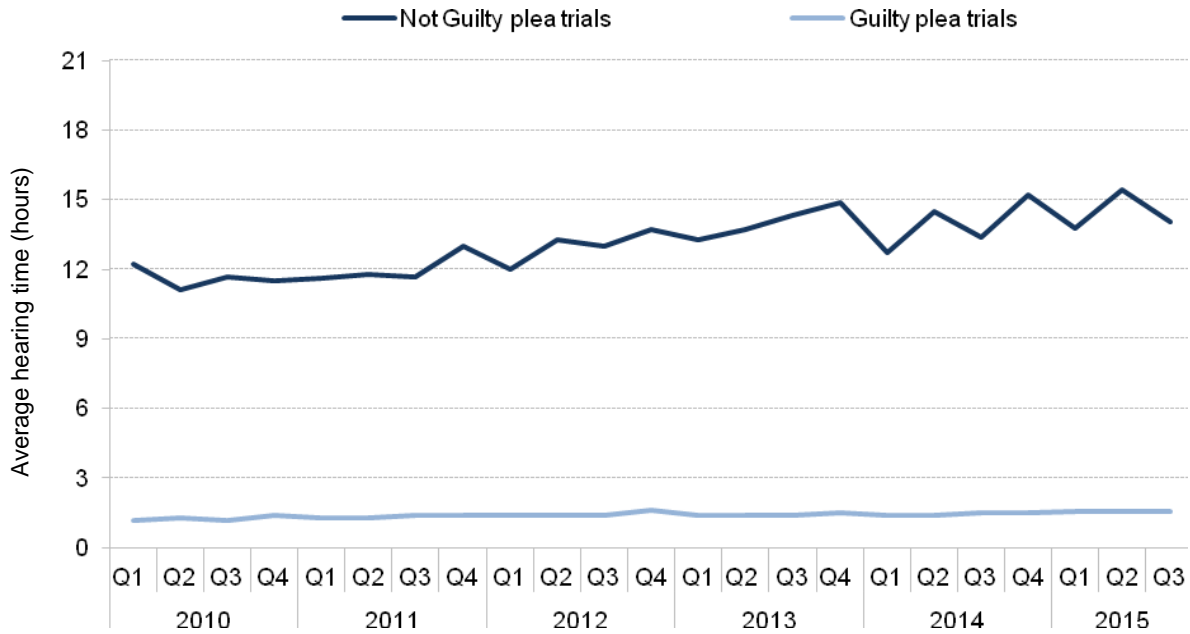
**Figure 7: Average waiting time (weeks) at the Crown Court, Q1 2010 to Q3 2015**



**Average hearing times at Crown Court (figure 8)**

Since Q1 2014, the trend in average hearing times for not guilty plea trials has slowly increased, whereas for guilty plea trials they have remained steady. At Q3 2015, the average hearing time for trials involving a not guilty plea was 14.1 hours.

**Figure 8: Average hearing time (hours) at the Crown Court, Q1 2010 to Q3 2015**



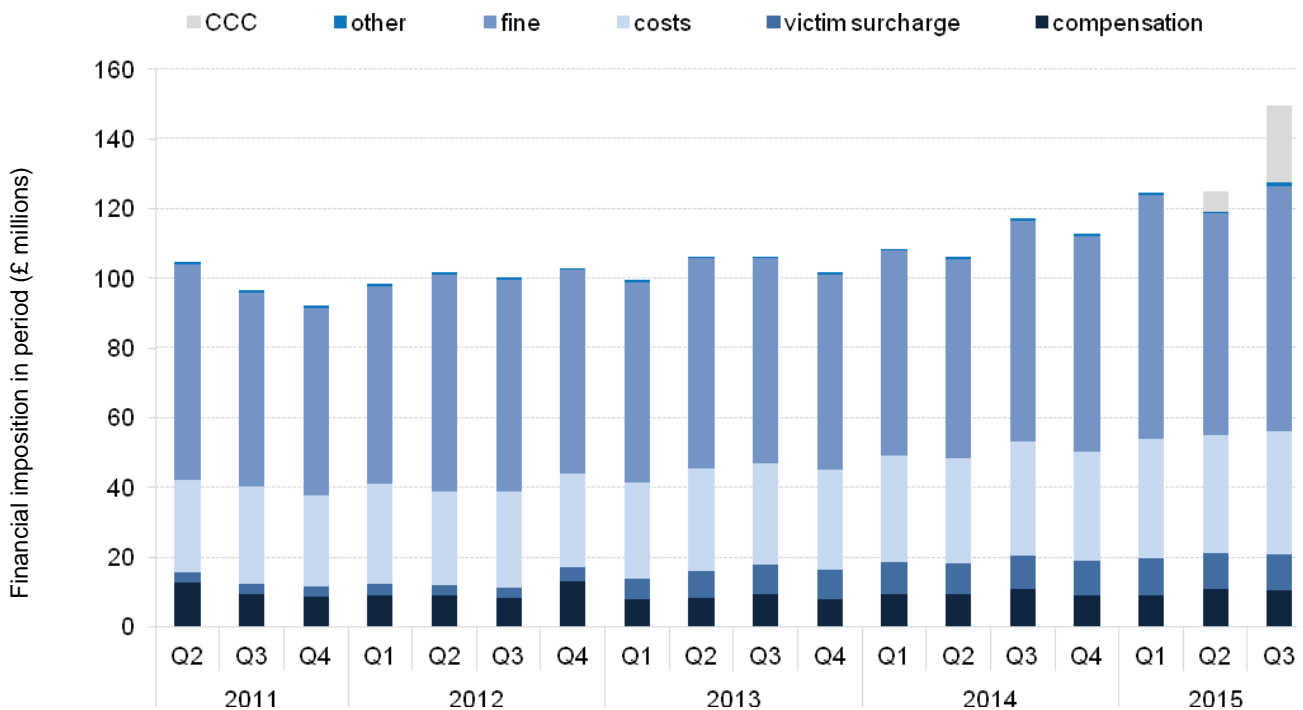
## Annex A: Enforcement of financial impositions

The following section provides updated management information on the collection of financial impositions through Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). For the first time, figures on criminal courts charge are shown separately. Following the announcement by the Secretary of State for Justice on 3 December this charge will cease to be imposed from 24 December 2015. This bulletin will continue to record impositions up to that date and anything owed and collected thereafter.

Financial impositions are ordered by the criminal courts for payment by offenders at sentencing and include financial penalties such as fines, prosecutors’ costs, compensation orders and victim surcharge. Financial penalties are the most commonly used sentence and form a significant part of HMCTS’ collection and enforcement business. Accounting centres also enforce penalty notices for disorder and fixed penalty notices registered as fines for enforcement. The financial imposition statistics presented here do not include confiscation orders.

Figure 9 shows the total fines for each quarter split by imposition type.

**Figure 9: HMCTS management information: Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type, England and Wales, Q2 2011 - Q3 2015**



## **Financial impositions and amounts paid (Table A1)**

Financial penalties can be imposed by the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court; however they are all collected and enforced by the HMCTS National Compliance and Enforcement Service.

In Q3 2015, the total value of financial penalties paid, regardless of the age of the imposition, was £91 million; a 20% increase when compared with the same quarter in 2014, and a 6% increase since Q1 2015.

## **Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type (Table A2)**

The total value of impositions in Q3 2015 (£149.5 million) increased by 20% when compared to Q2 2015. This is mainly due to the implementation of the criminal courts charge, which was introduced in April 2015. In Q3 2015, 10% (£15.2 million) of all financial impositions imposed by the criminal courts were paid within the imposition month.

In Q2 2015, the first quarter showing the criminal courts charge, £5.7 million was imposed, compared to £22 million in Q3 2015. Within the first month of imposition at Q3 2015, 4% of the charge was collected.

## ***Financial impositions (£ million) for victim surcharge (Table A2)***

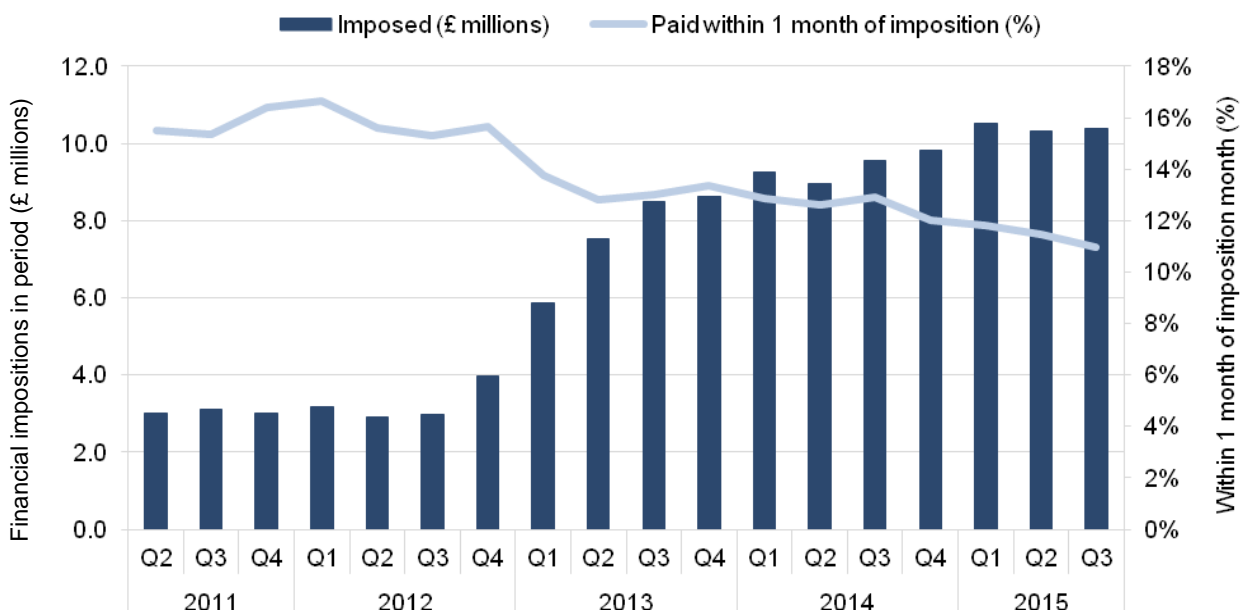
Victim surcharge is an additional surcharge which is added to the fines that are imposed. The receipts obtained from the collection of these monies by HMCTS are passed to the Justice Policy Group of the MoJ to fund victims' services. The amount imposed has been increasing since its scope and amounts payable were extended in October 2012<sup>2</sup>. The increases seen have slowed and stabilised at this higher level from 2014, with the proportion of impositions collected within one month of imposition at around 11%.

Each year there are a number of financial penalties that are cancelled, either administratively or legally. Legal cancellations can be applied after the case has been reconsidered by a judge or a magistrate and may follow a change in circumstances. Administrative cancellations are only applied in accordance with a strict write off policy, e.g. where the defendant has not been traced; these can then be re-instated if the defendant is then traced.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/victim-surcharge-circular-october-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victim-surcharge-circular-october-2012)

**Figure 10: Financial impositions (£ million) for victim surcharge, Q2 2011 to Q3 2015**



**Financial imposition accounts opened and closed (Table A3)**

An account is opened when a financial penalty is ordered in court and is closed when the imposition against the account has been paid or the imposition is cancelled. Where a defendant has more than one financial penalty and/or account, these can be consolidated into one account.

There were 325,603 accounts opened in Q3 2015, an increase of 3% when compared to the same period in the previous year. Of the accounts opened in Q3 2015, 9% (29,679) were closed within the month of imposition.

**Outstanding financial impositions (Table A4)**

The amount outstanding is irrespective of the age of the imposition or the payment terms, and excludes all impositions already paid as well as both legal and administrative cancellations. Payment terms may include arrangements for offenders to pay amounts owed over a period of time.

In Q3 2015, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £624 million. Although they had been decreasing from April 2011 they have been increasing since the beginning of 2014, and show an increase of 12% since Q3 2014.



## Annex B: List of Accompanying Tables and CSV

Accompanying this publication are the following tables:

Table M1	Receipts, disposals and outstanding criminal cases in the magistrates' courts in England and Wales, annually 2012 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2012 – Q3 2015
Table M2	Effectiveness of magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2003 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table M3	Key reasons for ineffective magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2006 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table M4	Key reasons for cracked magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C1	Receipts, disposals and outstanding cases in the Crown Court in England and Wales, annually 2000 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C2	Effectiveness of Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C3	Key reasons for ineffective Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C4	Key reasons for cracked Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C5	Defendants dealt with in trial cases in the Crown Court by plea in England and Wales, annually 2001 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C6	Defendants dealt with in trial cases by stage at which guilty plea was entered and accepted in the Crown Court, by receipt type, England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C7	Defendants dealt with in trial cases where a guilty plea was entered before a trial, during trial or at a cracked trial, and accepted in the Crown Court, by receipt type, England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C8	Average waiting times in the Crown Court in England and Wales, annually 2000 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C9	Average waiting times (weeks) in the Crown Court for defendants dealt with in trial cases, by plea and remand type, England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C10	Average hearing and waiting times for trial cases in the Crown Court by plea in England and Wales, annually 2000 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table C11	Average hearing times (hours) in the Crown Court for cases disposed of, by case type and plea, England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015

Table C12	Appeals (against decisions of magistrates' courts) dealt with in the Crown Court, by appeal type and result, England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table T1	Average number of days from offence to completion, percentage of proceedings completed at first listing and average number of hearings for criminal cases at the magistrates' courts by initial plea, England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q3 2015
Table T2	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for all criminal cases at the magistrates' courts in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q3 2015
Table T3	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for all summary cases at the magistrates' courts in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q3 2015
Table T4	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for Crown Court criminal cases in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q3 2015
Table T5	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for criminal cases in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q3 2015
Table T6	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for all criminal cases by offence group, in England and Wales, Q4 2013 and Q3 2015
Table A1	Enforcement of financial penalties in the magistrates' courts, England and Wales, annually 2004 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q3 2015
Table A2	HMCTS management information: Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type, England and Wales, annual 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q3 2015
Table A3	HMCTS management information: Number of financial imposition accounts opened and closed, annually 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q3 2015
Table A4	HMCTS management information: Total amount of financial impositions outstanding, annually 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q3 2015

There are also a number of csv files that support this publication, these include:

- National and court level workload activity and case progression data
- National and court level timeliness data

## Annex C: Explanatory notes

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics, it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The statistics in this bulletin relate to cases in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in England and Wales. Calendar year statistics are also provided.

Breakdowns of many of the summary figures presented in this bulletin, such as split by court or by HMCTS area, are available in the Comma Separated Value (CSV) files that accompany this publication.

### Revisions

The statistics in the latest quarter are provisional, and are therefore liable to revision to take account of any late amendments to the administrative databases from which these statistics are sourced. The standard process for revising the published statistics to account for these late amendments is as follows:

- An initial revision to the statistics for the latest quarter may be made when the next edition of this bulletin is published. Further revisions may be made when the figures are reconciled at the end of the year. If revisions are needed in the subsequent year this will be clearly annotated in the tables.

For more information please see the **[Guide to criminal court statistics](#)**.

### Symbols and conventions

The following symbols have been used throughout the tables in this bulletin:

- .. = Not applicable
- = Not available
- 0 = Nil
- (r) = Revised data
- (p) = Provisional data

## Previous editions

Previous editions of Court Statistics Quarterly can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/court-statistics-quarterly#court-statistics-quarterly-reports](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/court-statistics-quarterly#court-statistics-quarterly-reports)

## Future publication

The next publication of Criminal court statistics quarterly is scheduled to be published on 31 March 2016, covering the period October to December 2015.

## Contacts

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General enquiries about the statistics work of the Ministry of Justice can be emailed to [statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

## Feedback

The structure and content of this report is continually being reviewed to reflect user requirements. If you have any feedback about these changes, or the report more generally, please contact the production team through the Justice Statistics Analytical Services division of the Ministry of Justice:

Email: [statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

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