



Ministry  
of Justice



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

January to March 2015

Ministry of Justice  
Statistics bulletin

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## Introduction

This is the third edition of a statistical bulletin 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 (January to March 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](#). The annex provides updated management information on the collection of financial imposition through Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). Information on legal representation of defendants (experimental statistics) can be found in Annex B.

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)

Information regarding the symbols and conventions used in the publication are given in the explanatory notes section at the end of this bulletin.

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 using the [contact details](#) at the back of this report.

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)

A number of csv files have been produced alongside this publication; these files provide court level data.

The next publication of Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly is scheduled to be published on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015, covering the period April to June 2015.

## **Changes and revisions in this publication**

### *Breakdown of case type in magistrates' courts is not included in this publication*

The Ministry of Justice receives information from the magistrates' court database, Libra, via two different routes. Information on defendants feeds into the Court Proceedings Database (CPD) and underpins the Criminal Justice System (CJS) quarterly publication. Information on caseload feeds into the Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Services' (HMCTS) Performance Database and underpins this publication, CCSQ.

A difference has been identified between the way that certain offence types are classified within the two data sources of the CPD and the HMCTS Performance Database. This results in slightly different trends in the number of cases at sub group case type level when making comparisons between the two National Statistics publications.

Work is underway, working with colleagues in HMCTS, to investigate both data sources and devise a solution of how best to present the data in both publications and ensure consistent messaging around trends.

We are aiming to devise a solution to the issue ahead of the next CJS quarterly publication in August and we will then publish tables, including the breakdowns by case types, within the next quarterly publication of CCSQ, pre-announced for 24 September 2015.

In the meantime, if users wish to use data on case type, provisional data up to December 2014 can be found in the previous publication, which can be accessed at the link below:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2014](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2014)

### *Annual tables*

Annual tables, including breakdowns by region, will be available in the next publication, due for release on 24th September 2015.

The changes are explained in a separate statistical notice published separately on the website.

## 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 first quarter of 2015 (January to March).

- Following a steady increase in the number of outstanding cases in the Crown Court, there has been a small decrease in quarter 1 2015. For the first time since the beginning of 2013, the number of disposals in the first quarter of 2015 was higher than the number of receipts, resulting in a 4% drop in outstanding cases from the previous quarter.
- The overall number of days from offence to completion increased from 304 days to 328 days between quarter 1 of 2013 and quarter 1 of 2015. Although the time spent at the magistrates' courts has fallen substantially since the abolition of committals, from 26 days to 5 days, the time from receipt in the Crown Court to completion has increased, resulting in an overall increase to timeliness.
- The average waiting time between the date of sending a case to the Crown Court and the start of the substantive hearing has increased for trial cases. Triable-either-way cases have seen an increase of 5.6 weeks in average waiting times when comparing quarter 1 of 2015 with quarter 1 of 2013 while indictable only cases have seen a 3.3 week increase over the same period.

## 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.

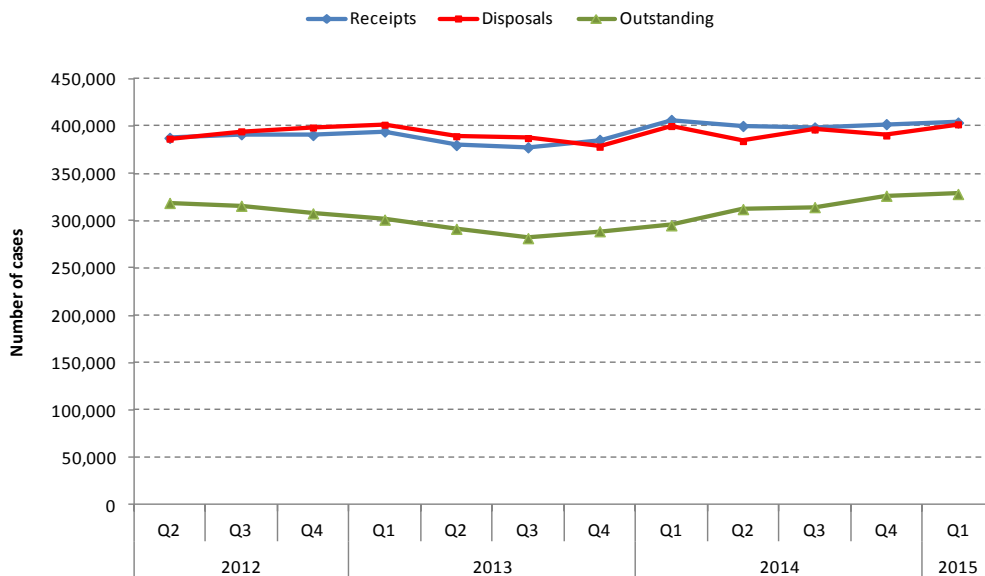
### 1. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

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

**Figure 1: Magistrates' courts caseload, Q2 2012 to Q1 2015**



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/faster-justice-as-unnecessary-committal-hearings-are-abolished>

*Receipts in the magistrates' courts*

Receipts in the magistrates' courts saw a rise in late 2013/early 2014 followed by stabilisation but at a higher level compared to 2012 and 2013. Receipts in the first quarter of 2015 were broadly similar to the last quarter of 2014.

*Outstanding cases and disposals*

Despite the recent steadying of receipts into the magistrates' courts, the number of outstanding cases has continued to rise across 2014 and 2015 – increasing by 11% between the first quarter of 2014 and 2015.

Disposals remained fairly stable in 2014 and into quarter 1 of 2015.

*Timeliness*

For cases dealt with in the magistrates' courts during quarter 1 2015, the number of days from offence to completion increased from 148 to 156 days when compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

## 2. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

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

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.

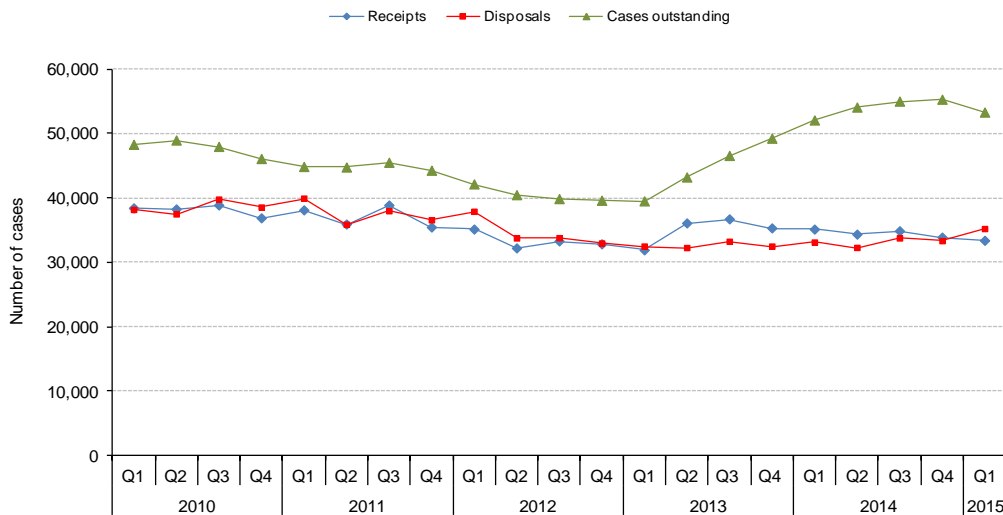
Indictable only cases can only be tried on indictment in the Crown Court as they cannot be heard summarily at the magistrates' courts.

Of those proceeded against in the magistrates' courts, 6% of defendants are sent to the Crown Court for trial.

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.

The graph below shows the Crown Court caseload for England and Wales.

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



### Caseload in the Crown Court

#### *Receipts in the Crown Court*

Following a peak in the number of cases received by the Crown Court in the third quarter of 2013, partly driven by the national abolition of committal hearings, there has been a downward trend in the number of receipts in the subsequent time periods. There were 33,357 cases received by the Crown Court in the first quarter of 2015, a decrease of 5% from the same quarter in 2014.

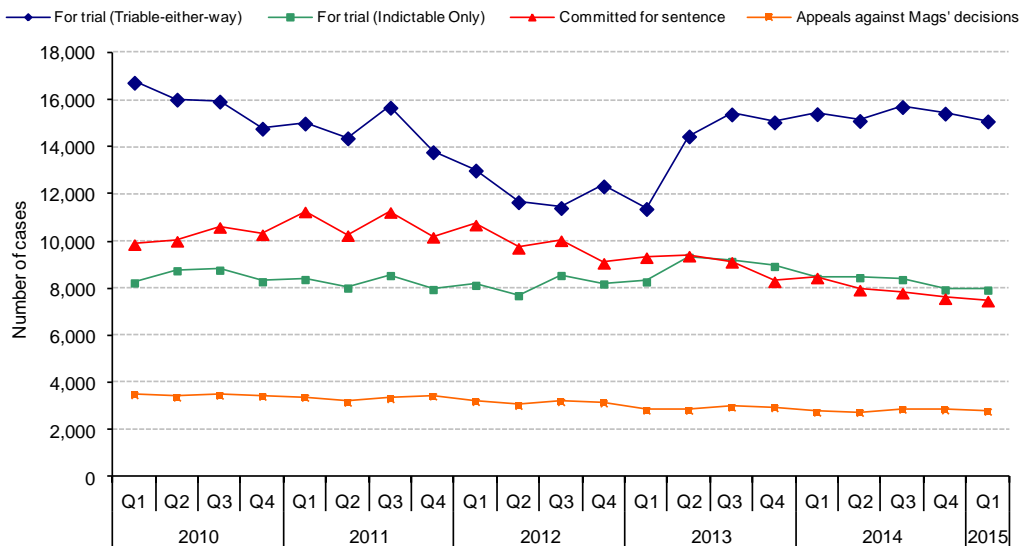


*Receipts in the Crown Court by case type*

There was an increase in triable-either-way cases throughout 2013, as a result of the national abolition of committal hearings, but the trend has steadied in the following quarters (see Figure 3).

There have been downward trends in receipts for indictable only cases and for cases committed for sentence, with decreases of 6% and 12% respectively between quarter 1 of 2014 and quarter 1 of 2015, and decreases of 4% and 20% respectively between quarter 1 of 2013 and quarter 1 of 2015. These decreases have driven the overall downward trend in total receipts in the Crown Court.

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



*Disposals in the Crown Court*

The number of disposals has been fairly steady over the last couple of years, although there has been an increase in the first quarter of 2015, a rise of 6% compared to the first quarter of 2014.

*Disposals in the Crown Court by case type*

Disposals of triable-either-way cases have increased since the second quarter of 2013. In the first quarter of 2015, disposals for triable-either-way cases increased by 16% from the same quarter in 2014, and increased by 37% from the second quarter of 2013. Indictable only disposals have remained stable over this time period.

*Outstanding cases in the Crown Court*

Following a steady increase in the number of outstanding cases up to the fourth quarter of 2014, there has been a small decrease in Q1 2015. This 4% decrease since the last quarter reflects disposals being higher than receipts for the first time since quarter 1 2013.

*Outstanding cases in the Crown Court by case type*

The trend in triable either way outstanding cases has followed a similar trend to total outstanding cases, with a substantial increase from quarter 1 of 2013 up to the end of 2014 but with a small decrease in the first quarter of 2015. Overall this represents an increase of 72% since the first quarter of 2013.

Outstanding indictable only cases have also increased during the last two years with a small decrease in the first quarter of 2015. They have risen by 13% since the first quarter of 2013.

*Timeliness*

Since the abolition of committals, the time from first listing at the magistrates' court to receipt by the Crown Court has fallen substantially, from 26 days in quarter 1 of 2013 to 5 days in quarter 1 of 2015. Time from receipt by the Crown Court to main hearing and main hearing to completion have increased, though, resulting in the overall number of days from offence to completion increasing from 304 to 328 days when compared with the same period.

*Waiting times*

The average waiting time between the date of sending a case to the Crown Court and the start of the substantive hearing has increased for trial cases. Triable-either-way cases have seen an increase of 5.6 weeks in average waiting times when comparing quarter 1 2015 with quarter 1 2013 while indictable only cases have seen a 3.3 week increase over the same period.

## 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).

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.

### **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 the first quarter of 2015, the total value of financial penalties paid, regardless of the age of the imposition, was £86 million; a 15% increase when compared with the same quarter in 2014 and a 10% increase on the previous quarter.

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

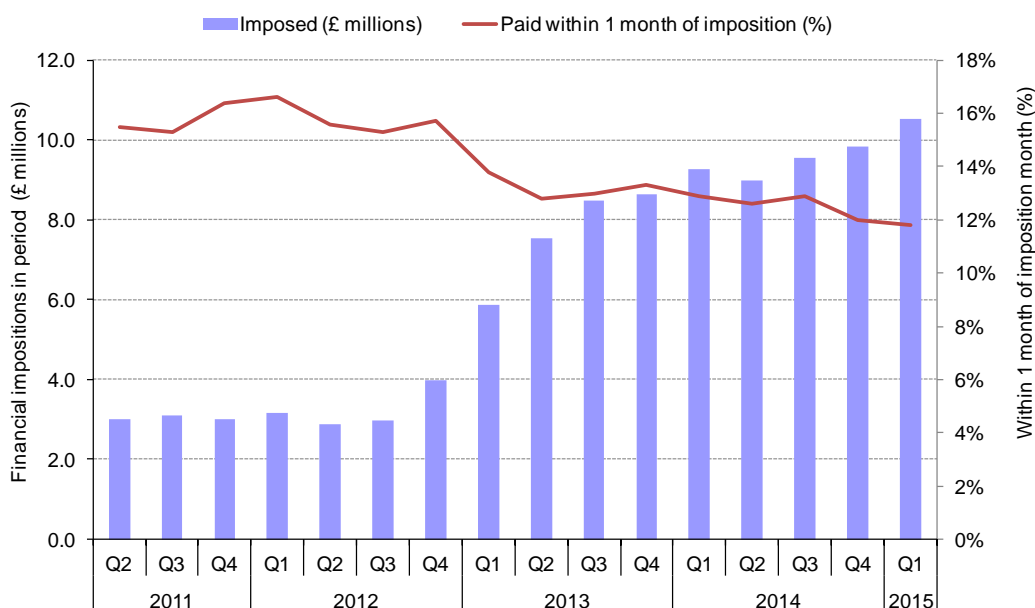
The total value of impositions in the first quarter of 2015 (£124.9 million) increased by 15% when compared to the same quarter in 2014 and increased by 11% with the previous quarter.

In the first quarter of 2015, 13% (£15.9 million) of all financial impositions imposed by the criminal courts were paid within the imposition month.

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 in 2014, with the proportion of impositions collected within one month of imposition stable at around 12%.

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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 A.1: Financial impositions (£ million) for victim surcharge**

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.

### 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 331,346 accounts opened in the first quarter of 2015, an increase of 4% when compared to the same period in the previous year. Of the accounts opened in the first quarter of 2015, 11% (35,702) 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 the first quarter of 2015, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £572 million. The falling trend observed since April 2011 has stabilised in recent quarters and shows an increase of 3% on the same quarter of the previous year.

Annex B on legal representation (experimental statistics) is a separate document.

## Annex C: 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 – Q1 2015
Table M2	Effectiveness of magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2003 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 2015
Table M3	Key reasons for ineffective magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2006 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 2015
Table M4	Key reasons for cracked magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 2015
Table M5	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 – Q1 2015
Table M6	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 – Q1 2015
Table M7	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 – Q1 2015
Table C1	Receipts, disposals and outstanding cases in the Crown Court in England and Wales, annually 2000 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 2015
Table C2	Effectiveness of Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 2015
Table C3	Key reasons for ineffective Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 2015

Table C4	Key reasons for cracked Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 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 – Q1 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 – Q4 2014
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 – Q1 2015
Table C8	Average waiting times in the Crown Court in England and Wales, annually 2000 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 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 – Q1 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 – Q1 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 – Q1 2015
Table C12	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for Crown Court criminal cases in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q1 2015
Table C13	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for criminal cases in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q1 2015
Table C14	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for all criminal cases by offence group, in England and Wales, Q4 2013 and Q1 2015
Table C15	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 – Q1 2015
Table A1	Enforcement of financial penalties in the magistrates' courts, England and Wales, annually 2004 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q1 2015

Table A2	HMCTS management information: Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type, England and Wales, annual 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q1 2015
Table A3	HMCTS management information: Number of financial imposition accounts opened and closed, annually 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q1 2015
Table A4	HMCTS management information: Total amount of financial impositions outstanding, annually 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q1 2015
Table B1	Advocate and solicitor representation, at first hearing, of defendants dealt with in the Crown Court, England and Wales, annually 2010 – 2014
Table B2	Representation status, at first hearing, of defendants dealt with in the Crown Court, England and Wales, annually 2010 – 2014
Table B3	Number of hearings in the Crown Court, by representation status at first hearing, England and Wales, annually 2010 – 2014

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 D: 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



## Contacts

Press enquiries on the contents of this bulletin should be directed to the Ministry of Justice or Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) press offices:

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

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