



## Criminal court statistics quarterly, England and Wales, October to December 2018

*Including statistics on the use of language interpreter and translation services in courts and tribunals*

### Main points

**Receipts and disposals at magistrates' courts continue to fall**



Workload has tended to fall over the past three years - with receipts at their lowest quarterly levels and outstanding cases broadly stable in Q4 2018.

**The Crown Court caseload continues to decrease**



Reductions seen in receipts, disposals and outstanding cases compared to the previous quarter – with outstanding cases (31,848) at the lowest level since 2000 (31,183)

**The average time spent 'at court' remained broadly stable**



In Q4 2018 the average time 'at court' for cases completing at the Crown Court has remained stable at 177 days. Time spent pre-court increased as more 'historical' sexual offence cases were completed.

**Interpreters: The overall success rate fell**



The success rate for completed interpreter service requests fell slightly to 96%.

The technical guide to 'Criminal court statistics' and 'Language interpreter and translation services in courts and tribunals' can be found at the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-criminal-court-statistics>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/guide-to-language-interpreter-and-translation-services>

**We have changed how our quarterly bulletins look, and would welcome any feedback to [commentary.champions@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:commentary.champions@justice.gsi.gov.uk)**

For other feedback related to the content of this publication, please let us know at [CJS\\_Statistics@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CJS_Statistics@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

## Contents

*Click on the sections to navigate to the relevant page*

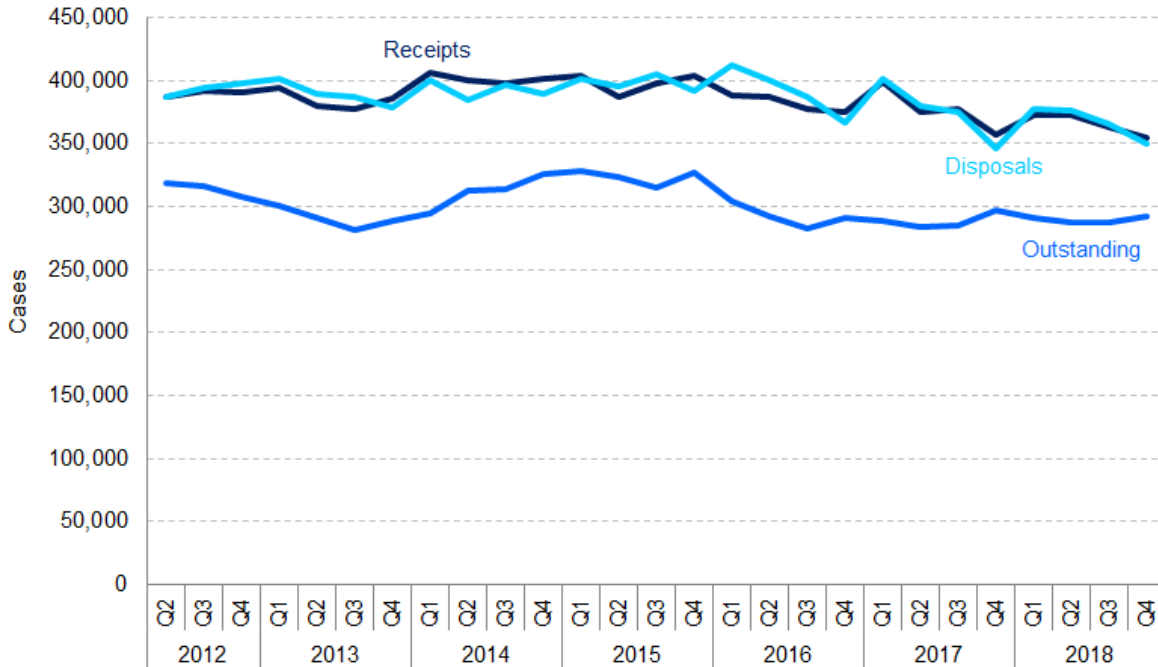
|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts .....                                       | 3  |
| 2. Criminal cases in the Crown Court .....   | 4  |
| 3. Timeliness.....   | 6  |
| 4. Enforcement of financial impositions .....  | 7  |
| 5. The use of language interpreter and translation services in courts and tribunals..... | 8  |
| 6. Further information on criminal courts data .....                                     | 10 |
| Accompanying files .....   | 10 |
| National Statistics status .....   | 10 |
| Experimental Statistics status.....  | 10 |
| Contact.....   | 10 |

# 1. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

## Receipts and disposals at magistrates' courts continue to fall

Magistrates' court workload has fallen over the past three years - with receipts at the lowest quarterly levels in the series (354,644) in Q4 2018. The volume of outstanding cases remained broadly in line with levels seen since Q3 2016.

Figure 1: Magistrates' courts caseload, Q2 2012 to Q4 2018 (Source: Table M1)



## Magistrates' court caseload

Receipts and disposals at the magistrates' court continued to fall (down 2% and 4% respectively) compared to the previous quarter. The volume of outstanding cases increased by 2% on the previous quarter, but remained broadly in line with levels seen over the past 3 years.

Short-term trends are likely to be impacted by seasonal patterns. For example, outstanding case volumes typically increase in Q4 - particularly for higher volume summary motoring offences. This coincides with reduced disposals as courts close over Christmas and receipts for summary motoring offences tending to be at their highest.

When looking at longer-term trends, the magistrates' court workload has tended to fall over the past three years - this is broadly in line with annual decreases reported in the number of offences the police resolve with a charge/summons<sup>1</sup> (down 9% in the 12 months to September 2018) and proceedings at magistrates' court<sup>2</sup> (down 4% over the same period).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

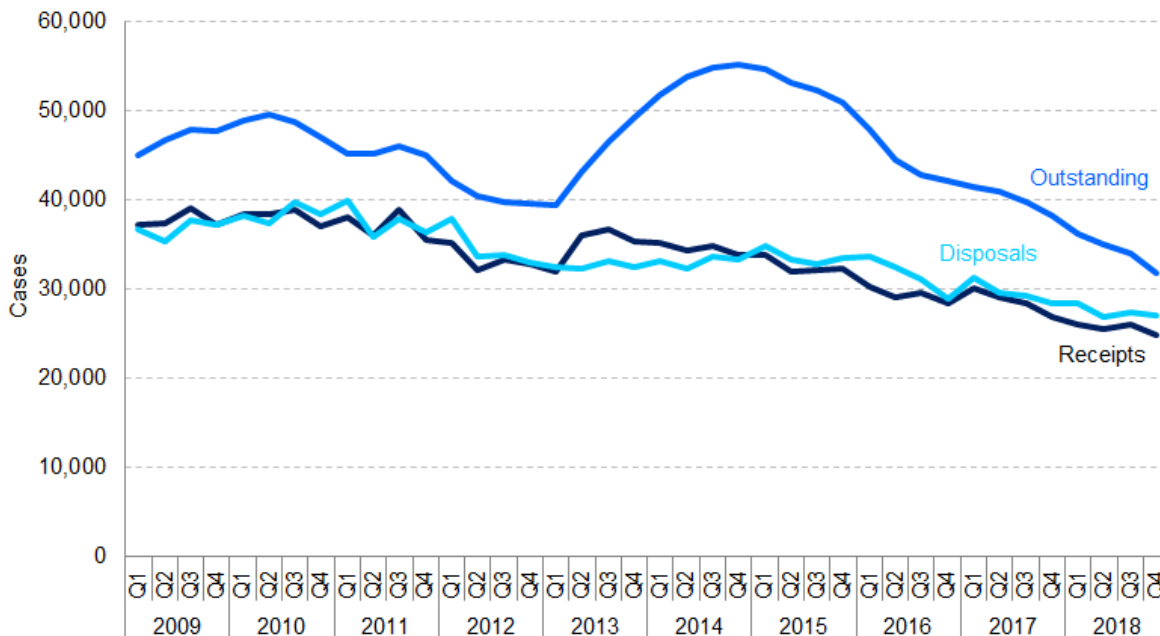
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-september-2018>

## 2. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

### The Crown Court caseload continues to decrease

Reductions seen in receipts, disposals and outstanding cases compared to previous quarter – with outstanding cases (31,848) at the lowest level since 2000 (31,183)

**Figure 2: Crown Court caseload, Q1 2009 to Q4 2018 (Source: Table C1)**



The volume of cases received by the Crown Court fell by 4% between Q3 and Q4 2018, while the amount of cases disposed remained relatively stable. Cases disposed remained higher than those received, meaning that outstanding cases (31,848) fell and are now at the lowest level since 2000 (31,183).

The overall downward trend in the Crown Court workload over the past three years is in line with year-on-year decreases in the number of individuals dealt with in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales<sup>3</sup>. There has been a general decrease in the amount of offences for which the police issue a charges/summons over the past three years<sup>4</sup>, along with a fall in the number of indictable offences being dealt with at the magistrates' court<sup>1</sup> which has a direct impact on the flow of cases into the Crown Court.

### Crown Court receipts, disposals and outstanding cases by offence group

Receipts and outstanding cases fell for all offence groups in Q4 2018 compared to the previous quarter, continuing a general downward trend overall.

For receipts, violence against the person, theft and drug offences continued to be the largest contributing offence groups – and accounted for 76% of the overall fall in receipts.

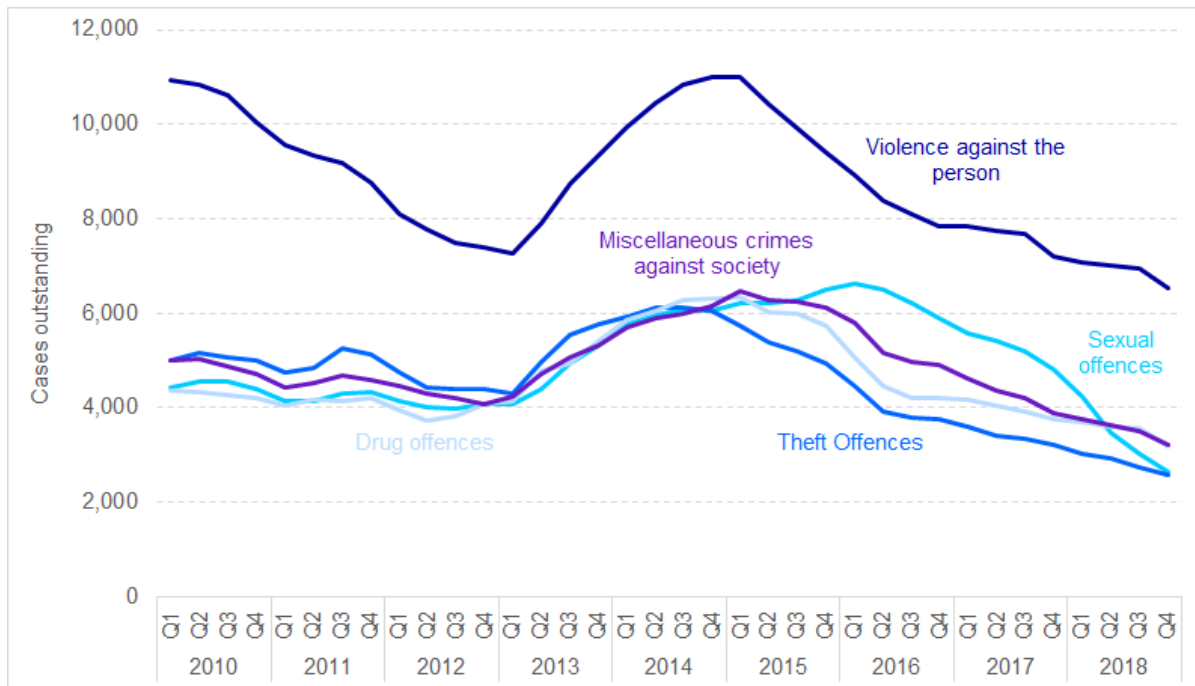
Over the past three years, disposals for all offences types have slowly declined which reflects the decrease in cases being received. Despite total disposals falling, the number of drug and robbery disposals increased compared to Q3 2018 (up by 8% and 6% respectively) – this contributed to increased clearing of outstanding cases for these offence groups.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-september-2018>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-statistics>

For outstanding cases, violence against the person, drug offences and miscellaneous crimes against society were the largest offence groups and accounted for 57% of the overall fall in outstanding cases.

**Figure 3: Outstanding trial cases by selected offence group, Q1 2010 – Q4 2018**  
(Source: Pivot table 1)



Outstanding sexual offence cases continue the fall seen since the start of 2018 (down 11% on the previous quarter). This is a result of decreases in receipts for sexual offences and subsequent disposals contributing to a clearing of backlogged cases.

**Average waiting and hearing time in the Crown Court**

The average waiting time at the Crown Court remained at 14.8 weeks, this is a 5% fall on Q4 2017 but is broadly in line with durations seen since Q2 2017. Defendants remanded on bail tend to wait roughly twice the amount of time that those remanded in custody wait to be dealt with at the Crown Court. Similarly, those that plead not guilty wait around twice as long as those who plead guilty to all counts. Since 2016, the difference in waiting times between those pleading guilty and not guilty has narrowed - from a difference of 17.2 weeks in 2016 to 15.4 weeks in 2018 (13.8 weeks for guilty compared to 29.2 weeks for not guilty).

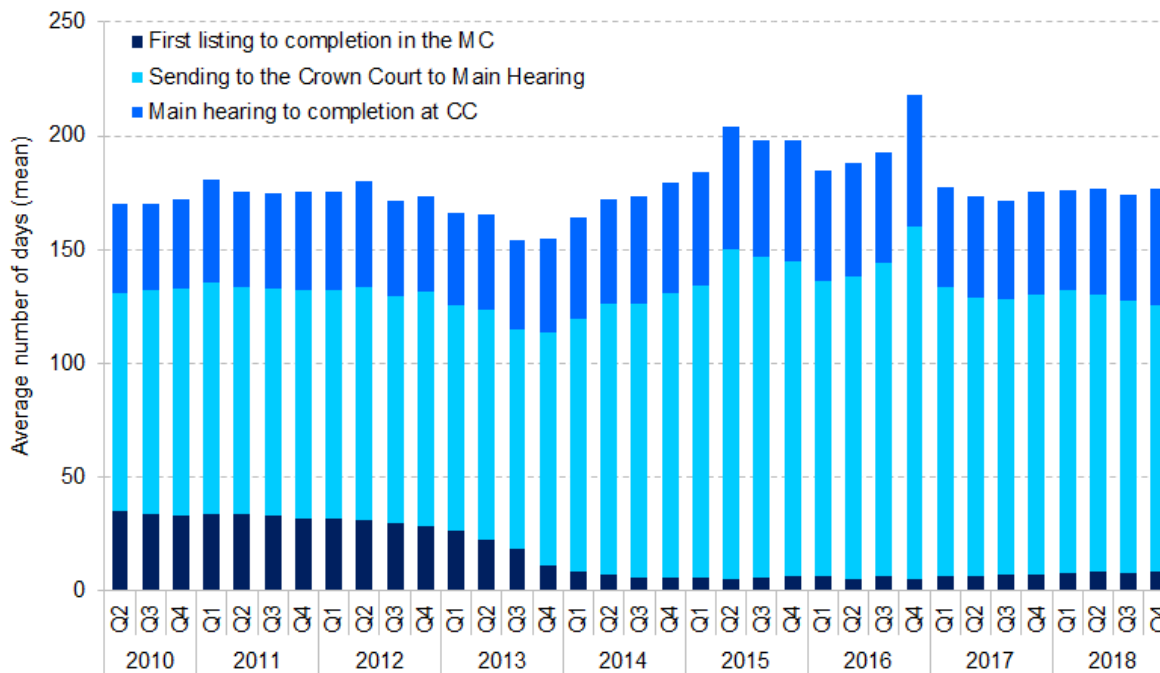
In the most recent quarter the average hearing time for defendants pleading not guilty increased by 4.1 hours (from 14.6 hours in Q3 2018 to 18.7 hours in Q4 2018). The average hearing time tends to be revised downwards by 1.7 hours in the subsequent quarter - this is due to cases being reopened to issue additional orders (e.g. such as bench warrants or confiscation orders). This revision is true across all offence types, and even when accounting for these revisions it is likely that the average hearing time for not guilty pleas will remain at its highest in the series. The increase in hearing time estimates is caused by a small number of more complex, longer running offence types, such as fraud.

### 3. Timeliness

**For cases completing at the Crown Court, the average number of days spent ‘in court’ has remained stable since the start of 2017.**

In Q4 2018, the mean number of days from first listing in the magistrates’ court to completion in the Crown court was 177 days – this has been stable since Q1 2017.

**Figure 4: Average number of days (mean) from first listing to completion in the Crown Court, Q2 2010 to Q4 2018 (Source: Table T4)**



Timeliness data is created by matching magistrates’ courts and Crown Court records to estimate the time taken from the date an alleged offence was committed to the date of a final decision at court.

The average (mean) duration spent ‘in court’ for all cases started at magistrates’ and completed at Crown Court has remained relatively stable since Q1 2017.

The majority of time taken for Crown Court criminal cases is spent prior to reaching court (‘pre-court’), with 66% of the time taken from offence to first listing in Q4 2018. This proportion varies markedly by offence group, ranging from 90% for sexual offences to 31% for possession of weapons offences. Despite a small fall in the latest quarter (6%), the average time taken for Crown Court cases to first reach the magistrates’ courts has tended to increase since 2011 – because of increases in offence to charge.

The time taken for police to reach a charge/summons outcome has increased<sup>5</sup>, however more historical offences being dealt with has been a factor in the increase in ‘pre-court’ time spent.

Sexual offences (256 days) and fraud offences (263 days) continue to take the longest time to complete in the Crown Court.

The number of Single Justice Procedure (SJP)<sup>6</sup> cases have increased each year since implementation in 2015 and these cases are generally listed and completed on the same day.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-statistics>

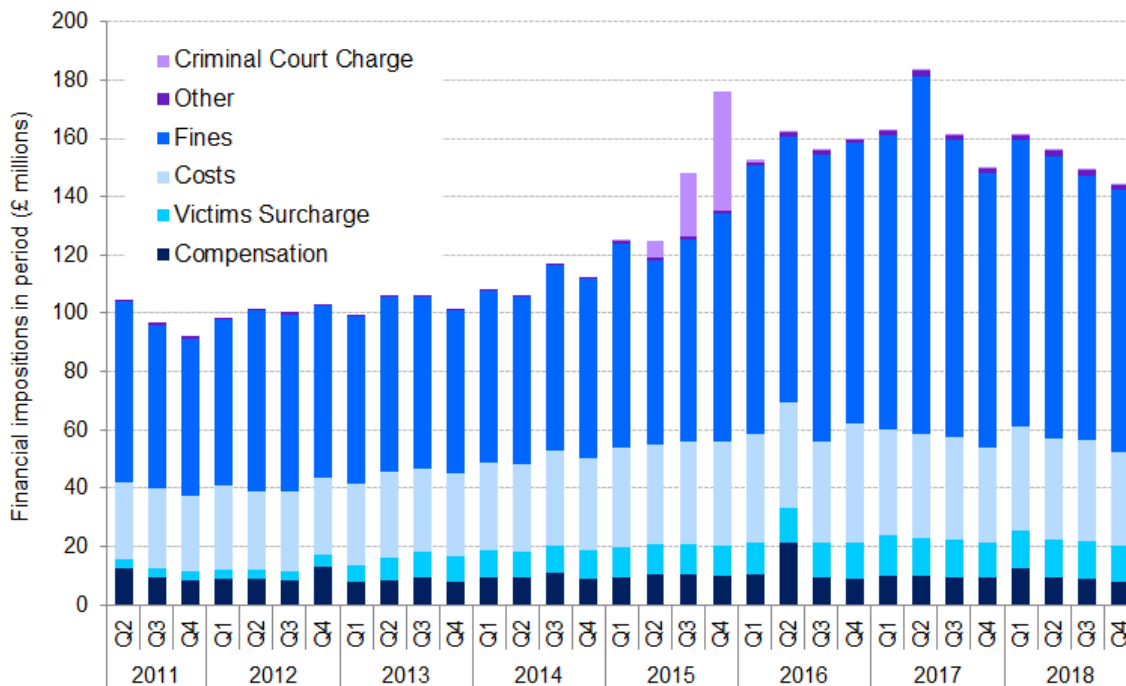
<sup>6</sup> Introduced in June 2015 under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, [SJP offences](#) allow cases involving adults charged with summary offences to be dealt with in a single magistrates’ sitting without a prosecutor or defendant being present.

## 4. Enforcement of financial impositions

### Total financial impositions continued the decreases seen across 2018

Total financial impositions decreased by 3% in Q4 2018 to £144m - this is largely due to a £2.5m (7%) decrease in costs. The value of total outstanding financial impositions continued to rise, reaching £1.1 billion Q4 2018, an increase of 2% from Q3 2018.

**Figure 5: HMCTS management information: Financial impositions by imposition type, England and Wales, Q2 2011 – Q4 2018 (Source: Table A2)**



### Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type

Fines continued to account for the majority of financial impositions (62%) in Q4 2018. However, the value of fine related impositions has decreased by 9% since Q1 2018, from £98.3m to £89.8m in Q4 2018.

Costs<sup>7</sup> are the next largest imposition group making up 22% of all financial impositions in Q4 2018 - in the latest quarter costs have reduced by 7% down to £32.3 million.

### Outstanding financial impositions

In Q4 2018, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £1.1 billion. The amount of outstanding financial impositions has increased markedly from the start of 2015 and has almost doubled since.

<sup>7</sup> This is the amount awarded to the prosecutors to go towards the cost of bringing the case to court. Includes Crown Prosecution Service costs and costs received from Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## 5. Experimental Statistics - The use of language interpreter and translation services in courts and tribunals<sup>8</sup>

### The success rate of completed service fell slightly

A total of 39,360 completed service requests for language interpreter and translation services were made in Q4 2018, with an overall success rate of 96%.

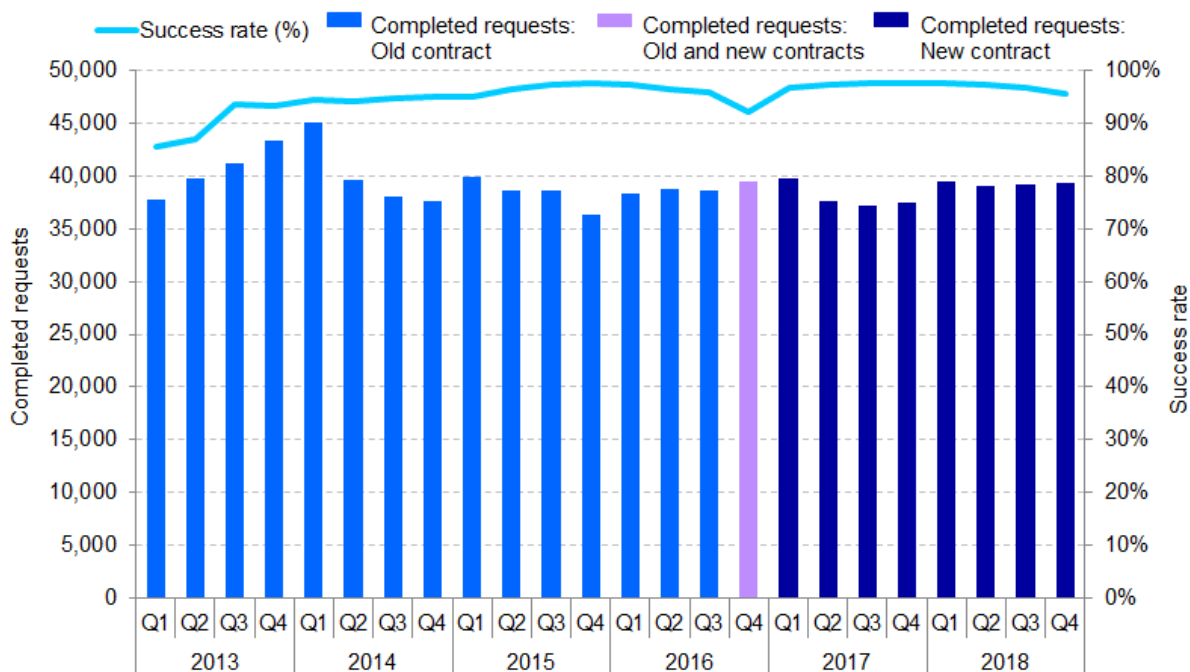
### The complaint rate remained stable at around 1%

The number of complaints (343) in Q4 2018 fell back to levels seen in the first half of 2018 – following a sharp increase in Q3 2018 (479).

### The total number of ‘off contract’ service requests continues to increase

There were 709 completed ‘off-contract’ requests in Q4 2018, an increase of 25% on levels in the previous quarter (568) and more than double that of Q4 2017 (341).

**Figure 6: Number of completed language service requests and overall success rate, Q1 2013 to Q4 2018 (Source: Table L1)**



### Completed service requests

The ‘new contract’ figures comprise data from two separate suppliers, thebigword Group Ltd for face to face interpretation, and Clarion UK Ltd for non-spoken languages (special services).

Criminal courts continue to account for the largest proportion (42%) of all translation service requests. This proportion has fallen since the new contract came into operation (46% in Q4 2016), with increases seen in the percentage of requests for civil and family court (from 15% to 18%) and ‘Other’<sup>9</sup> (from 4% to 10%).

<sup>8</sup> The statistics under the new contracts are ‘Experimental Statistics’ – the series remains in the testing phase and is not yet fully developed.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Other’ includes central Ministry of Justice Shared Services and policy teams within MoJ and the prison service.

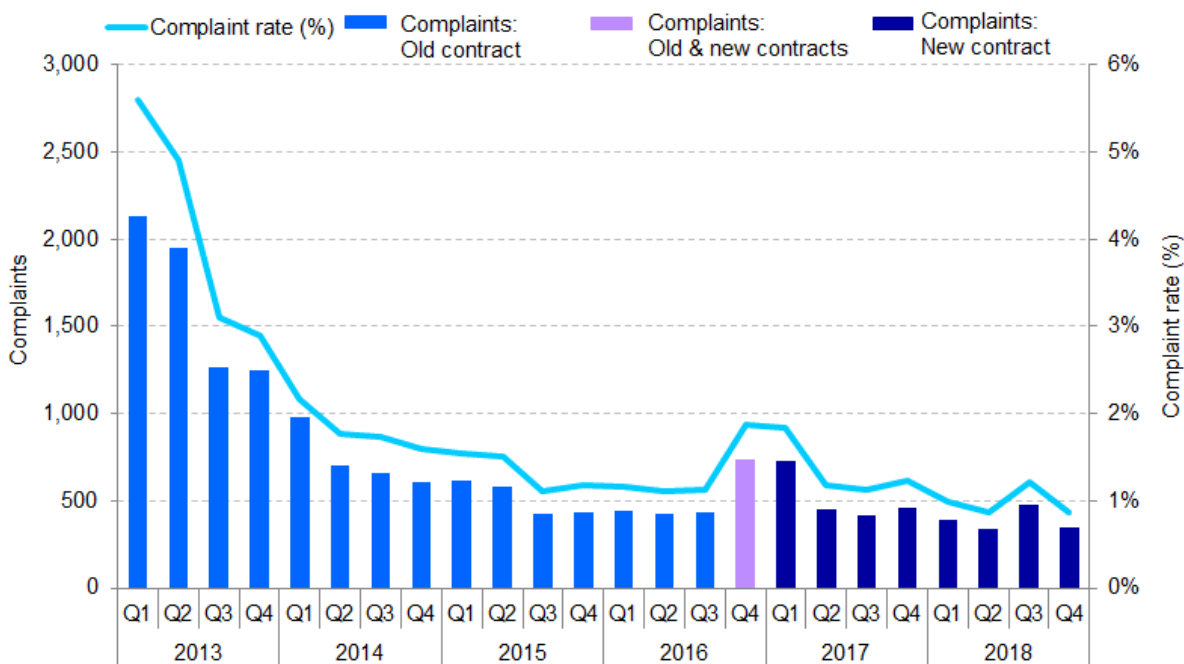


## Success rate

The overall success rate fell slightly in the latest quarter (from 96.7% in Q3 2018 to 95.8% in Q4 2018), the fall is seen across all requester types, e.g. criminal, family & civil and tribunal.

The rate for standard languages remained stable (96%) - this service type accounts for around 90% of all requests. However, both 'languages without DPSI' (87%) and 'special services' (92%) saw success rates fall compared to the previous quarter. The success rate for special services fell by 4 percentage points to the lowest level seen since the new contracts came into operation.

**Figure 7: Number of complaints and complaint rate (%), Q1 2013 to Q4 2018 (Source: Table L2)**



## Number of complaints and complaint rate

The overall complaint rate remained stable – this is true for each service and requestor type. Tribunals continue to account for the highest proportion of complaints (41%) – this is despite only accounting for 30% of total service requests in Q4 2018.

The most common cause of complaint was 'no interpreter available' which accounted for 26% (90) of all complaints made in the latest period. There was a sharp increase in complaints due to 'operational issues'<sup>10</sup>, up from 11 (2%) to 62 (18%) compared to the previous quarter - this increase was seen largely at criminal court and tribunals.

## 'Off contract' requests

An 'off contract' request is a language service request which is procured outside of the contracted services because it cannot be achieved by the supplier.

The number of completed 'off contract' requests (709) continued to rise, increasing by around 25% on the previous quarter (568) and more than doubling on the previous year (341). Tribunals continue to account for the majority of all 'off contract' service requests (69%). The upward trend in 'off-contract' requests is largely due to an increase (35%) in bookings required at immigration and asylum tribunals.

<sup>10</sup> This includes technical, IT and communications issues, instances where details are recorded incorrectly and booking not fulfilled due to linguist competency/language.

## 6. Further information on criminal courts data

The data presented in this publication are provisional. Final data for each calendar year is published in June, following further data cleaning and the incorporation of additional cases not available in our original extracts.

### Accompanying files

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

- Two technical guides providing background information on '[Criminal Court Statistics](#)' and '[Statistics on the use of languages and interpreters in courts and tribunals](#)'.
- A set of overview tables, covering each section of this bulletin.
- 3 CSV files which feature further level breakdowns of published data.

### National Statistics status

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

This bulletin recently underwent a compliance check with the Office for Statistics Regulation and retained its National Statistics status in January 2019.<sup>11</sup> 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 which 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.



### Experimental Statistics status

Experimental statistics are produced under the remit of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are produced impartially and are free from political influence<sup>12</sup>.

### Contact

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**Next update:** 27 June 2019

**URL:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/compliance-check-on-court-statistics/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>