



Ministry  
of Justice

## Consultation on changes to the Crown Court data processing in Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly

### Introduction

The publication of criminal court statistics presents volumes and trends in activity at the criminal courts in England and Wales, with a range of measures produced focusing on performance at the Crown Court.

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) use the Crown Court data to produce analysis which supports policy development, performance management, capacity planning and resource bidding and allocation within the Criminal Justice System (CJS), in addition to a range of wider uses amongst external stakeholders across government and beyond, including the public.

This consultation reflects the development and implementation of a more consistent and coherent approach to how we produce Crown Court data in the MOJ.

A proposed change to the publication is put forward in this document, highlighting the limited impact it may have. Users' views are invited on these changes and suggestions will be considered before any changes are confirmed.

### The key questions for users are:

1. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the criminal court statistics publication?
2. Are there any additional statistical tables you would like to see included in the publication?

### How to contact us with your comments

This consultation will run from **25 June 2020** until **25 July 2020**

Enquiries and responses in relation to this consultation should be sent to the address below.

Please put 'Consultation Response' in the title of any emails:

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

### What we will do with your comments

We will publish a response to the consultation and confirm any changes to the publication in the next edition of the bulletin due for publication in September 2020.

## Proposed changes for future editions of criminal court statistics quarterly

It is proposed that the MOJ changes the way in which it sources data and subsequently how the existing Crown Court measures are calculated in the Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly release.

### Background

Published Crown Court measures are produced using the Crown Court management information system, a data warehousing facility drawing data directly from court-based administrative systems owned by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS). Data shown in the published tables has been sourced from the administrative systems (previously CREST and now Xhibit), used by court staff for case management purposes.

### Proposed change

Currently the Crown Court measures are produced individually from the underlying Crown Court data. Each measure has its own set of acceptance criteria and as such not all cases are included consistently across all measures. We intend to move away from this method and produce measures on the same counting basis.

The proposed approach provides a single cohort of case and defendant information that will allow us to summarise and cross-tabulate data more easily.

The proposed change forms part of a wider initiative to simplify and streamline the way that the department sources administrative data to better align with the principles<sup>1</sup> set out in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Data Strategy<sup>2</sup>. This proposed change would see a more consistent approach taken by all MOJ analysts in how we source, process and produce estimates of Crown Court activity. This approach will be taken across published National Statistics, forecasts and wider evaluation of the Criminal Justice System – the impacts outlined here only relate the published measures in criminal court statistics quarterly.

### Key changes to published measures

*Same cohort across all measures:* The proposed change will allow for same group of people to be counted throughout the Crown Court measures. This will result in an increase in the volume of 'unknown' or 'other' values in some data categories as a result of including more defendants, providing a fuller and more coherent picture of the criminal courts system. These instances would previously have been filtered out and therefore falling out of any further analysis. Records will be included in the counts unless there is an absence of key information (e.g. no defendant information) or identified data quality concerns, (e.g. a disposal date before the receipt date).

*Transfers in/out:* The proposed change would count a small proportion of additional cases that move between Crown Courts in different locations, whereas the existing method

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/datastrategy/dataprinciples>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/datastrategy>

excludes these from disposal counts (including all measures derived from disposals) and uses a net transfer figure as part of the receipt counts.

*Data availability:* In September 2019 the Crown Court administrative systems changed, moving from the old CREST system to Xhibit. Data from 2014 has been migrated from CREST to Xhibit and we believe it is of sufficient data quality. The proposed approach will provide data from 2014 onwards, giving six years of comparable statistics. Any like-for-like comparison with published estimates prior to 2014 will not be possible.

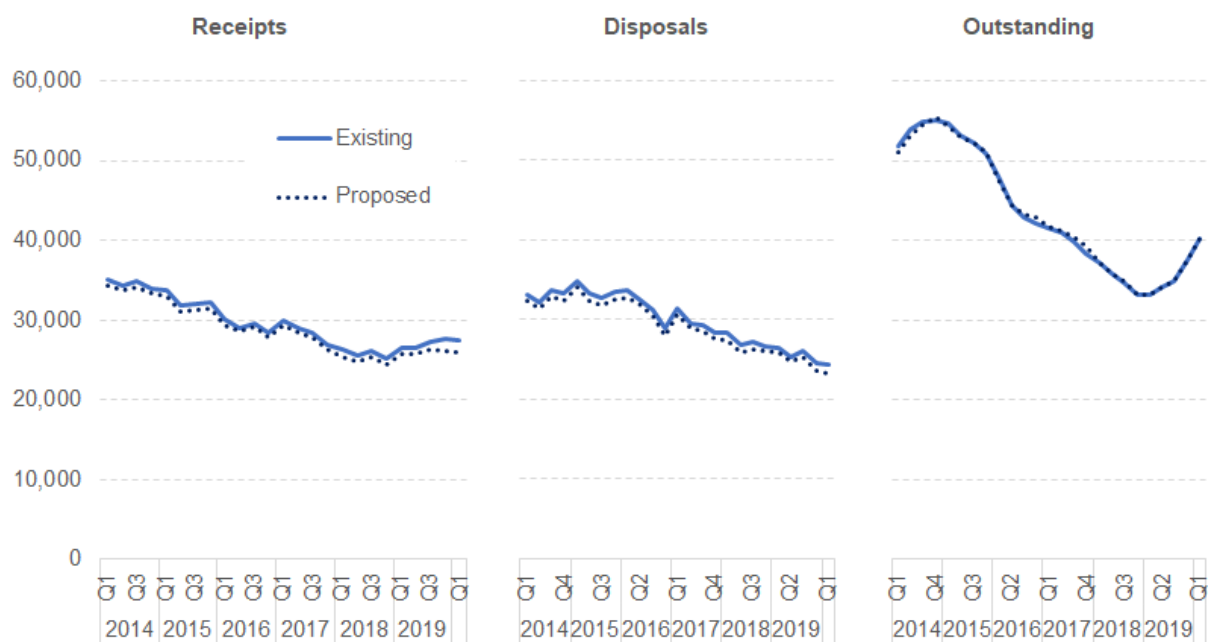
### Impacts on published figures

The change of approach will result in small changes to published figures.

A set of headline estimates from Q1 2014 to Q1 2020 have been published alongside this consultation based on the new data – they provide key quarterly measures related to the activity of the Crown Court using the proposed approach.

The estimated differences in volumes are relatively small and trends across all measures remain broadly in line with existing published estimates – some observed variation in more recent periods is expected due to data revisions and continuing adjustment to the change in administrative systems from September 2019.

**Figure 1 – Comparison of estimates for receipts, disposals and outstanding cases at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q1 2020**



A review has been carried out to compare the two approaches and understand the impacts of the different assumptions and exclusion criteria applied. This review has allowed for methodological improvements to be carried into the new estimates. We will continue to regularly review the methodologies used and seek to continually improve the published estimates.

There is not expected to be any substantial loss or change of published information contained within the existing quarterly tables and associated tools because of this change.

We will continue to regularly review the presentation and breakdown of headline measures ahead of a fuller release of the new approach in September 2020.

**Other published sources of criminal court data**

Some of the Crown Court measures are also published as management information by HMCTS<sup>3</sup>. The proposals outlined in this consultation relate only to the published Criminal court statistics quarterly and not to the estimates released by HMCTS.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmcts-management-information>