









# Criminal court statistics quarterly, England and Wales, January to March 2022

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

## Main points

<b>COVID-19 and associated actions impacted on most criminal court measures</b>	The recovery at the criminal courts continues following the initial impacts of the COVID-19 response. The latest figures continue to reflect the pandemic response.
<b>Magistrates' court: outstanding case volumes decreased</b>	 Case receipts and disposals increased but remain below pre-COVID levels. Disposal volumes remain above receipts, so outstanding cases fell 5% on the previous quarter and 13% on the previous year.
<b>Crown Court: outstanding case volumes fell</b>	 Receipts (9%) and disposals (5%) increased on the previous quarter, with disposals volumes remaining above receipts. As a result, the outstanding caseload continued to fall, down 1% from 59,026 at end December 2021 to 58,653 at end of March 2022.
<b>Crown Court: increase in outstanding cases open for a year or more</b>	 More than a quarter (27%) of outstanding cases have been open for a year or more, up from 25% in Q4 2021 and 21% in Q1 2021.
<b>Crown Court: ineffective trial rate unchanged</b>	 The ineffective trial rate at the Crown Court remained at 27% - above levels seen between 2014 and 2019 (13%-19%).
<b>Timeliness increased at the magistrates' court</b>	 The time from offence to completion at the magistrates' court increased by 4% on the previous quarter – returning close to peaks seen in 2021.
<b>Timeliness decreased at the Crown Court</b>	 The time from offence to completion at the Crown Court fell by 4% with median estimates down to 412 days in Q1 2022 – this remains well above pre-COVID levels.

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-statistics>

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### Statistician's comment

This report covers the period to the end of March 2022 and continues to reflect court recovery following the restricted operation of courts in the earlier stages of the pandemic.

Disposals at both the magistrates' courts and Crown Courts increased on the previous quarter, remaining above receipts and causing the outstanding caseload to fall. Latest management information from Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) to April 2022 shows a small increase in outstanding volumes at the Crown Court beyond Q1 2022.

The proportion of trials which are rescheduled on the day of trial ('ineffective') at the magistrates' courts and Crown Court has remained above pre-COVID levels.

Timeliness estimates, which reflect the length of time a case has taken at the point of completion and therefore covers the period where the pandemic disrupted court processes, showed a mixed picture. In the magistrates' court, timeliness increased and returned close to peaks seen in 2021. Whereas at the Crown Court timeliness has improved, with small falls seen from peaks in Q3 2021 – however estimates remain well above durations seen pre-COVID.

# 1. Changes to note

## Common Platform and reform to criminal court data<sup>1</sup>

'Common Platform' is a new digital case management system for the magistrates' and Crown Courts. The system seeks to streamline data collection, data accessibility and improve the way criminal cases are processed across the Criminal Justice System. It will eventually replace the existing 'legacy' criminal court systems Libra (magistrates') and XHIBIT (Crown), with a single, streamlined system.

Early adopter courts across England and Wales are testing the system before the subsequent rollout to all criminal courts concludes. Derbyshire magistrates' and Crown Court began this process in September 2020 and the roll out has continued across England and Wales<sup>2</sup>.

New cases entering courts from the point at which they adopt the Common Platform are held on the new system – cases that began at court prior to that court transitioning to Common Platform will remain on the 'legacy' system (e.g., LIBRA or XHIBIT).

Most measures relating to magistrates' courts and Crown Court cases include both 'legacy' and Common Platform estimates on a 'best equivalent' basis. This includes all key breakdowns in published quarterly tables and associated data tools.

Methodologies are as similar as possible however there are areas of known difference. The 'legacy' and 'new' data systems are fundamentally different, they do not record information in the same way and as such it is not possible to exactly replicate the existing published methodologies.

Areas of known difference that impact the statistics in this release include: the allocation of case type (such as triable-either-way, indictable only, committed for sentence and appeal), the inability to account for case transfers, main hearing allocation and changes to case ownership.

However, it has not been possible to include data for a small number of the supplementary annual tables presented in this release. We have included estimates which include the legacy data only and have footnoted the tables accordingly to estimate the impact of this omission. We will seek to improve the coherence of these estimates for the next annual publication.

We will continue to develop data processes from the new system in collaboration with HMCTS and partner agencies as the Common Platform roll out continues. As we continue to develop these solutions, some series may be disrupted, with an increased likelihood of revisions to data in future.

We are committed to ensuring that published statistics remain accurate, robust and coherent for users during the operational transition of data systems at the criminal courts. For further information regarding the extent of the differences summarised above please see the [Guide to criminal court statistics](#).

## Failure to Appear Warrants

Failure to Appear Warrants data is not included in this publication. A substantial proportion of the magistrates' courts casework has moved onto the Common Platform and currently information regarding result codes, which facilitates this dataset, is not extracted from the new case management system. As a result, it is not possible for HMCTS analysts to produce reliable and robust estimates of the failure to appear warrants data. We will keep users updated on HMCTS plans to resume the series.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/common-platform-system-tested-in-criminal-courts>

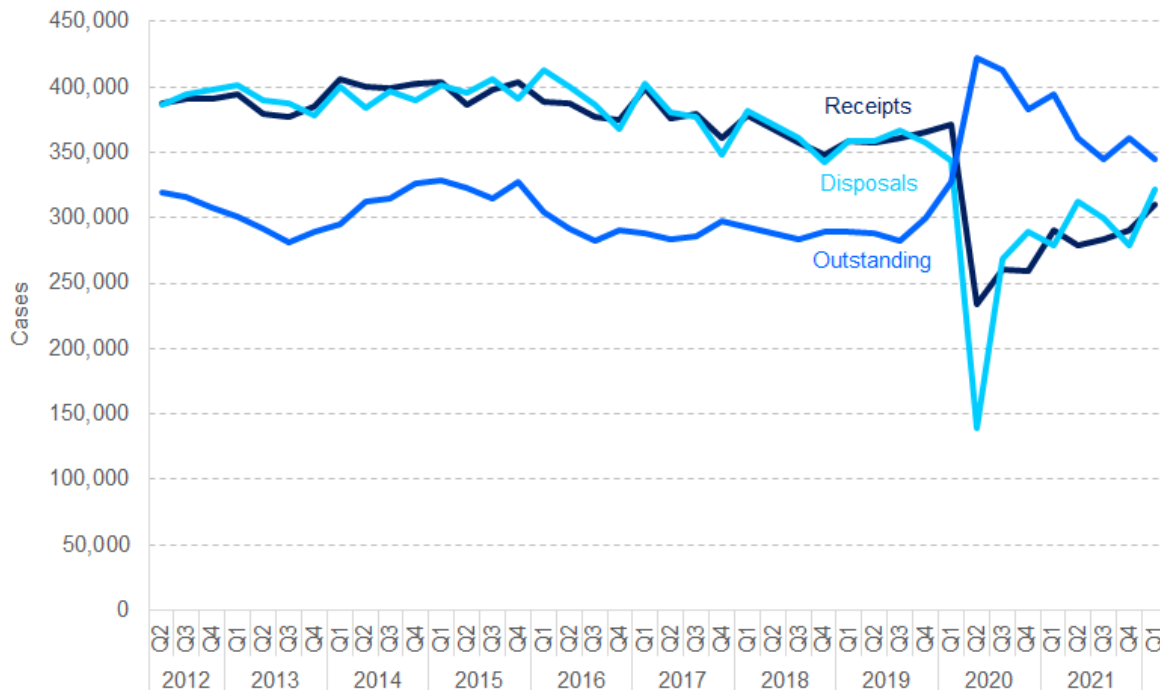
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-common-platform-participating-criminal-courts>

## 2. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

**Disposals at the magistrates' courts increased and outstanding cases decreased but remain above pre-COVID levels.**

Receipts and disposals increased by 7% and 15% respectively. Disposals were above receipts, and as a result outstanding cases decreased by 5% on the previous quarter.

**Figure 1: Magistrates' courts caseload, Q2 2012 – Q1 2022 (Source: Table M1)**



### Magistrates' court caseload

Receipts and disposals have tended to rise from series lows in Q2 2020 when measures were put in place to manage the risks of the pandemic in courts<sup>3</sup>. However, levels remain below those seen prior to the pandemic following the review of court arrangements on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020<sup>4</sup> and the return of restrictions in January 2021<sup>5</sup>.

- Receipts into the magistrates' courts increased by 7% on both the previous quarter and the previous year. Volumes remain around 17% lower than levels seen pre-COVID (e.g., compared to Q1 2020).
- Disposals at the magistrates' court increased by 15% on the previous quarter and 16% on the previous year. The latest quarterly rise is largely due to a 28% increase in 'summary motoring' disposals in the latest quarter, reporting the highest quarterly volumes across the series.
- At the end of March 2022 there were 344,261 outstanding cases at the magistrates' court. This represents a 5% decrease on the previous quarter (360,912) and an 18% decrease on the series peak seen in Q2 2020 (422,169).

The latest published [HMCTS management information](#) provides monthly volumes of receipts, disposals and outstanding cases for all case types at the magistrates' courts (e.g., including civil and enforcement in addition to criminal cases).

Data to April 2022 shows that disposals remained above receipts and as a result, the outstanding caseload continued to fall, down 1% on the previous month.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-face-to-face-hearings-as-courts-reopen>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/review-of-court-arrangements-due-to-covid-19-message-from-the-lord-chief-justice/>

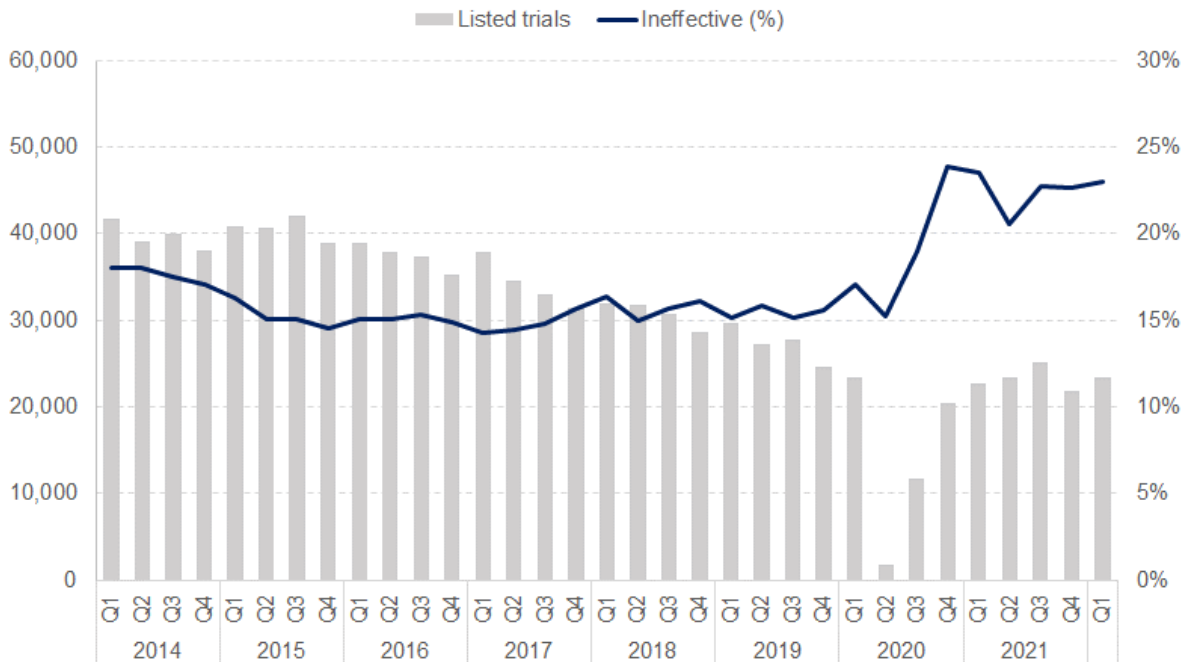
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/message-from-the-lord-chief-justice-latest-covid-19-restrictions/>

## Trial efficiency

There were 23,398 trials listed for Q1 2022, this is an increase of 7% on the previous quarter (21,920).

- Of trials listed for Q1 2022, the proportion that were ineffective (23%) was unchanged on the previous quarter and remained above pre-COVID levels. Correspondingly the effective (40%) and cracked trial rates (37%) also remained unchanged.

**Figure 2: Magistrates' courts listed trials and ineffective trial rate (%), Q1 2014 – Q1 2022 (Source: Table M2)**



Vacated trials are trials which have been removed from the listing before the date of the trial, they are counted in the period the vacation happened rather than the date when they were due to be listed (as for effective, cracked and ineffective estimates).

- There were 5,310 trial vacations in Q1 2022, this represented a decrease of 8% on the previous quarter and has fallen back to levels seen pre-COVID.

### 3. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

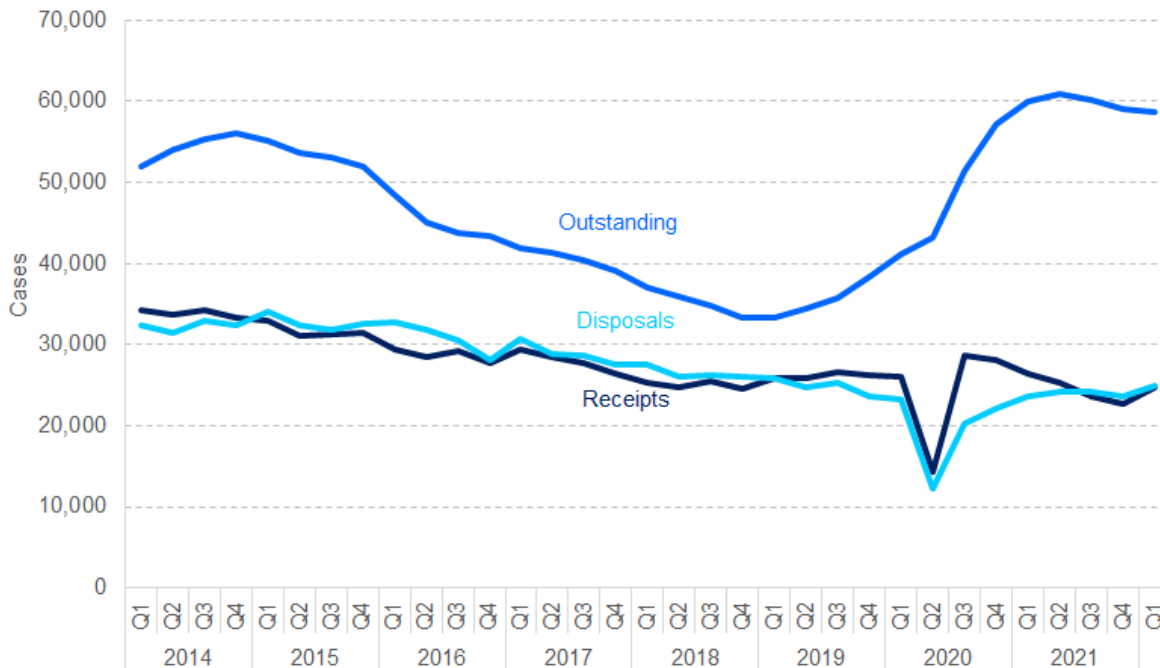
#### The volume of outstanding cases at the Crown Court continued to fall

In Q1 2022 both receipts and disposals at the Crown Court increased on the previous quarter, with disposals above receipts. As a result, the volume of outstanding cases fell by 1% on the previous quarter to 58,653.

#### Crown Court caseload

The increased throughput from the magistrates' courts as part of the ongoing recovery from the pandemic response saw the volume of receipts at the Crown Court exceed pre-COVID levels in late 2020. Subsequently receipts have fallen and are slightly below pre-COVID levels.

Figure 3: Crown Court caseload, Q1 2014 – Q1 2022 (Source: Table C1)



The phased reintroduction of jury trials<sup>6</sup> means disposals at the Crown Court have risen since series lows seen in Q2 2020 and in Q1 2022 volumes were close to levels seen pre-COVID.

- There were 24,812 case receipts into the Crown Court in Q1 2022. This is up 9% on the previous quarter but remains 5% below pre-COVID levels (e.g., compared Q1 2020).
- There were 24,938 case disposals at the Crown Court in Q1 2022. This is up 5% on the previous quarter and in line with levels seen pre-COVID.

The outstanding caseload at the Crown Court continued to fall for the third successive quarter. At the end of Q1 2022 there were an estimated 58,653 outstanding cases at the Crown Court, down 1% on the previous quarter (59,026) and 4% from the peak seen in Q2 2021 (60,970).

The latest published [HMCTS management information](#) provides monthly volumes of receipts, disposals and outstanding cases for all case types at the Crown Court.

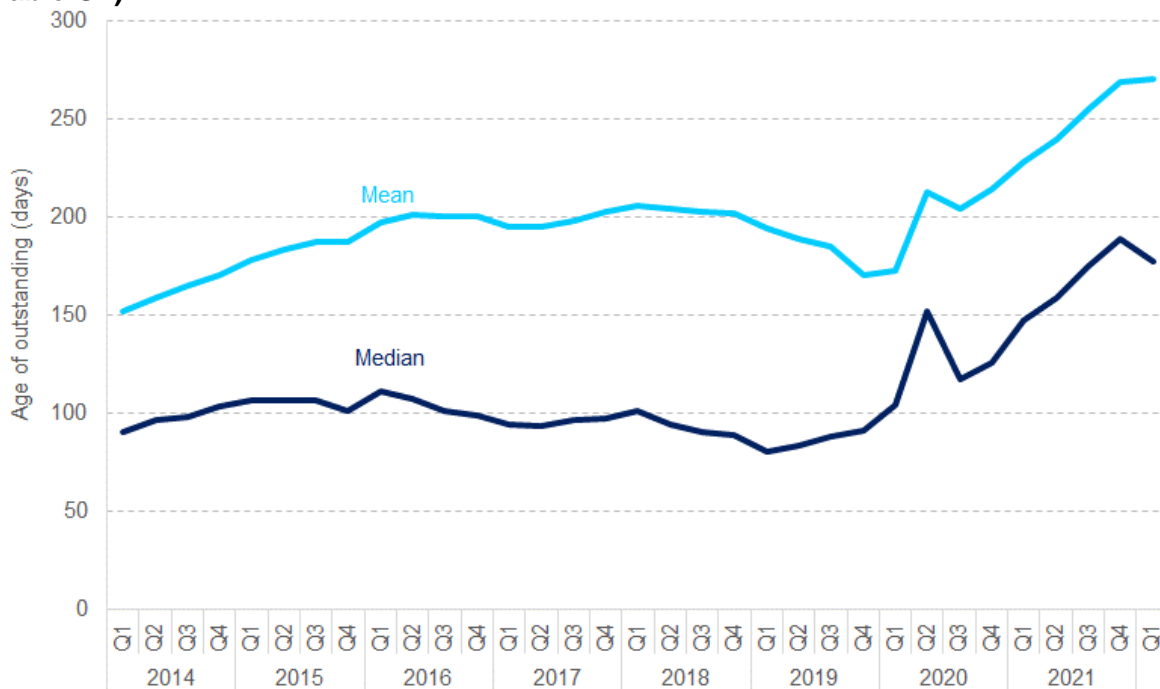
The data to April 2022 shows that receipts rose above disposals. This has caused the outstanding caseload to increase slightly, up 1% compared to March 2022 but down 3% on levels seen in April 2021.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/jury-trial-sites-4/>

## Analysis of the outstanding caseload at the Crown Court – experimental statistics

To address additional interest in the outstanding case estimates at the Crown Court we are continuing to publish ‘experimental statistics’ providing estimates of the average length of time (days) that a case has been outstanding.

**Figure 4: Age of outstanding cases at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q1 2022 (Source: Table O1)**

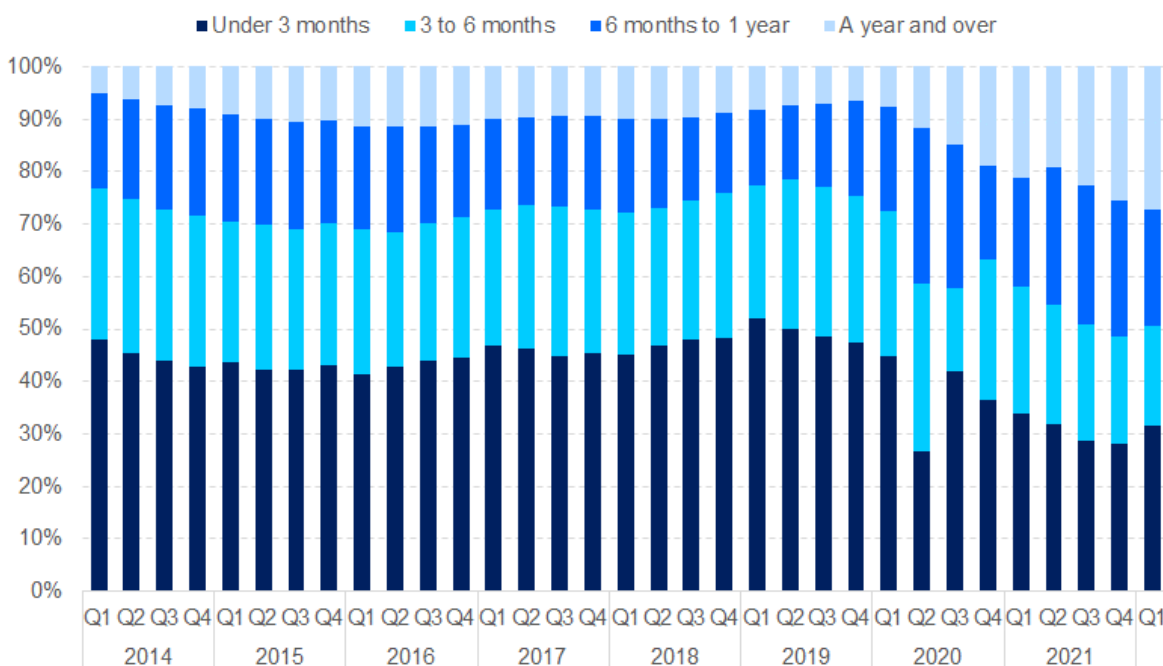


The age of an outstanding case is calculated from the point of receipt into the Crown Court and the latest outstanding date, e.g., as at the end of March 2022.

The average age of an outstanding case has increased sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic period, with small falls seen in the latest reporting period for the median average.

- In Q1 2022 the median age of all outstanding cases fell by 6% on the previous quarter, from 189 days to 178 days. The quarterly decrease in median age is true across all case types to varying degrees, excluding appeals.

**Figure 5: Proportion of outstanding cases at the Crown Court by grouped age, Q1 2014 – Q1 2022 (Source: Table O3)**



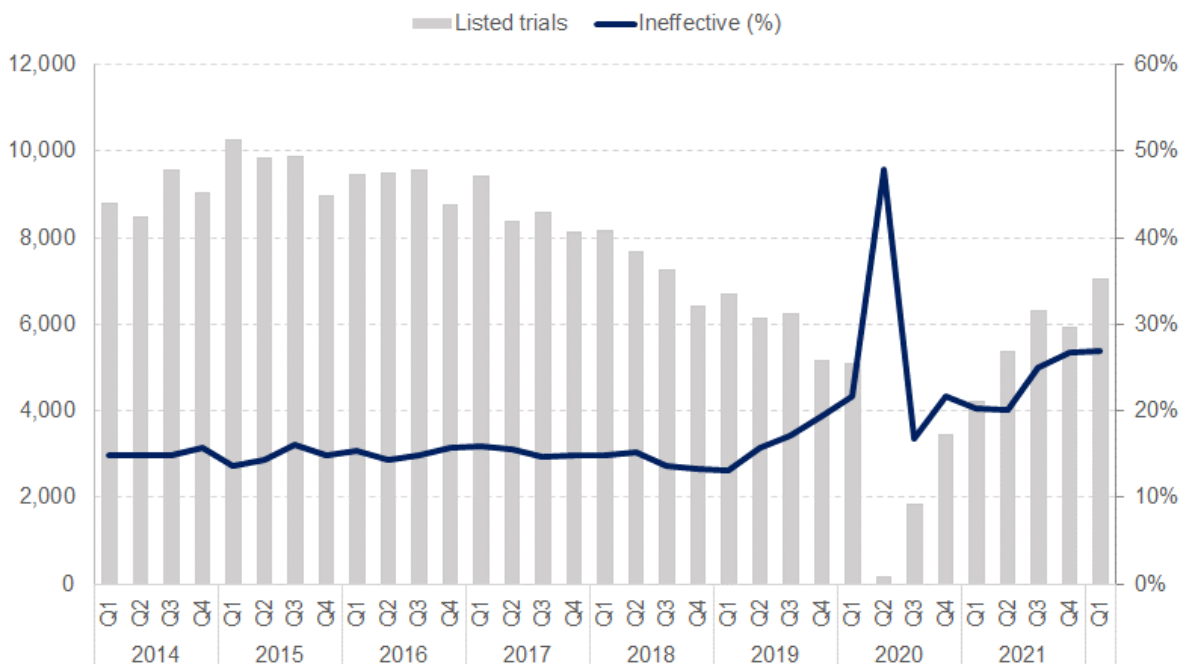
At the end of Q1 2022 there were 15,580 cases that had been outstanding for a year or more, with 4,022 of these cases outstanding for over two years. This has increased sharply following the pandemic response and represents 27% of all outstanding cases in the last period, up from 25% in the previous quarter and is the highest level seen across the series.

### Trial efficiency

The volume of trials at the Crown Court was falling prior to the pandemic, trending down since 2015. There were 7,073 trials listed for Q1 2022, up 19% on the previous quarter and up 68% on the previous year – with volumes exceeding those seen immediately pre-COVID.

The ineffective trial rate was unchanged on the previous quarter at 27%, remaining above the rates typically seen between 2014 and 2019. ‘Overlisting’ and the absence of the defendant remain the largest contributing reasons in Q1 2021.

**Figure 6: Crown Court listed trials and ineffective trial rate (%), Q1 2014 – Q1 2022 (Source: Table C2)**



Vacated trials are trials which have been removed from the listing before the date of the trial. They are counted in the period the vacation happened rather than the date when they were due to be listed (e.g., as for effective, cracked and ineffective estimates).

- There were 4,827 vacated trials in Q1 2022, up by 10% on the previous quarter (4,404) but below the peak of 5,077 seen in Q1 2021.

### Guilty plea rate

The recent pattern of the guilty plea rate reflects the restricted ability of courts to progress jury trials (i.e., cases where a not guilty plea is entered) in the early stages of the pandemic and resulting changes in case mix.

For defendants dealt with in ‘for trial’ cases at the Crown Court in Q1 2022, 67% entered a guilty plea<sup>7</sup>. This has fallen back from a series peak in Q2 2020 (79%) to similar levels seen pre-COVID.

- Of defendants dealt with who entered a guilty plea, 41% entered a plea on the day of trial (‘cracked trial’) – this represents a series peak and has shown quarterly increases since Q4 2020 (31%). Correspondingly the proportion of guilty pleas

<sup>7</sup> Guilty plea rate is the number of defendants pleading guilty to all counts as a proportion of those with a plea.



entered prior to trial has fallen, down from 66% in Q4 2020 to 54% in Q1 2022, a series low.

The volume of defendant dealt with following the entry of a not guilty plea increased in Q1 2022, up 2% on the previous quarter and 47% on the previous year.

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

The waiting time estimates are a 'lagged measure' and defendants are counted at the point of their case being disposed of. As such the waiting time estimates provide a 'backwards' look at the durations spent between receipt and main hearing at the Crown Court.

The median waiting time<sup>8</sup> for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court was 9.7 weeks in Q1 2022. This is similar to the previous quarter (9.6 weeks) but represents a 26% increase on the previous year (7.7 weeks).

- The median waiting time for defendants dealt with in 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered (37.6 weeks) fell 6% on the previous quarters' series peak (40.0 weeks). This remains 10% above levels seen in the previous year (34.3 weeks).

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

The hearing time estimates are a 'lagged measure' and cases are counted at the point of disposal. As such the hearing time estimates provide a 'backwards' look at the duration of hearings at the Crown Court.

The median hearing time<sup>9</sup> of 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered, was 12.4 hours. This is down by 5% on the previous quarter but in line with the levels seen in the previous year.

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<sup>8</sup> The waiting time is the duration between a case being sent to the Crown Court and the first main hearing.

<sup>9</sup> The hearing time is the time a case spends being heard in the Crown Court, including preliminary hearings, main hearings, and hearings where a sentence is given to a defendant.

## 4. Timeliness

### The time from offence to completion increased at the magistrates' courts but decreased at the Crown Court

The median time from offence to completion at the magistrates' court increased by 4% on the previous quarter, up from 190 days to 198 days in Q1 2022. At the Crown Court timeliness fell, down 4% on the previous quarter, down from 427 days to 412 days.

The timeliness measures are based on defendants whose cases have been completed, as such they are 'backwards' looking measures of timeliness between offence and completion at the relevant criminal court jurisdiction.

Experimental statistics using a new data linking methodology have been developed using the Ministry of Justice's open-source statistical '[Splink](#)' package to provide updated end-to-end timeliness estimates.

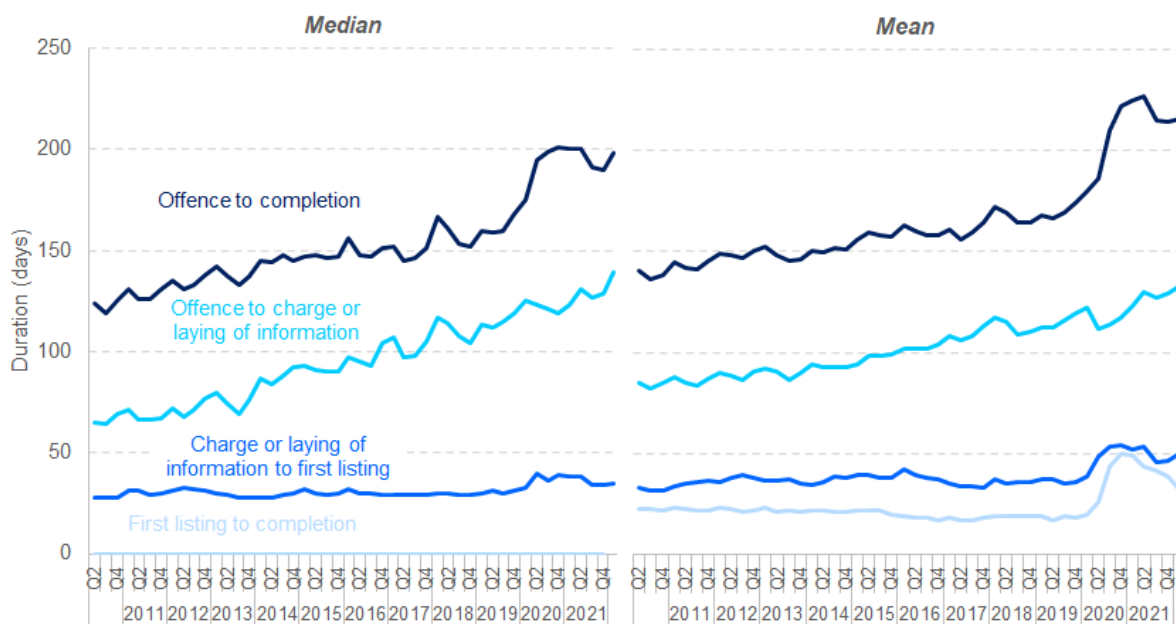
Alongside the gradual development of the experimental end-to-end series we will continue to best meet user demands via more granular data on separate ('unlinked') timeliness estimates for magistrates' courts and Crown Court.

- *Magistrates' court timeliness estimates (T1 – T3)* – providing estimates of the time from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the magistrates' courts.
- *Crown Court timeliness estimates (E1 – E2)* – providing estimates of the time from case receipt at the Crown Court to completion.

### Magistrates' courts timeliness

Timeliness at the magistrates' courts measures the time from an offence being committed through key stages of the criminal justice system including charge, first listing at the magistrates' court and subsequent completion at court.

**Figure 7: Average number of days from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the magistrates' courts by stage, Q2 2010 – Q1 2022 (Source: Table T3)**



The median duration from offence to completion of defendants dealt with at the magistrates' courts increased by 4%, up from 190 days in Q4 2021 to 198 days in Q1 2022 – back close to peak estimates seen in early 2021 (200 days).

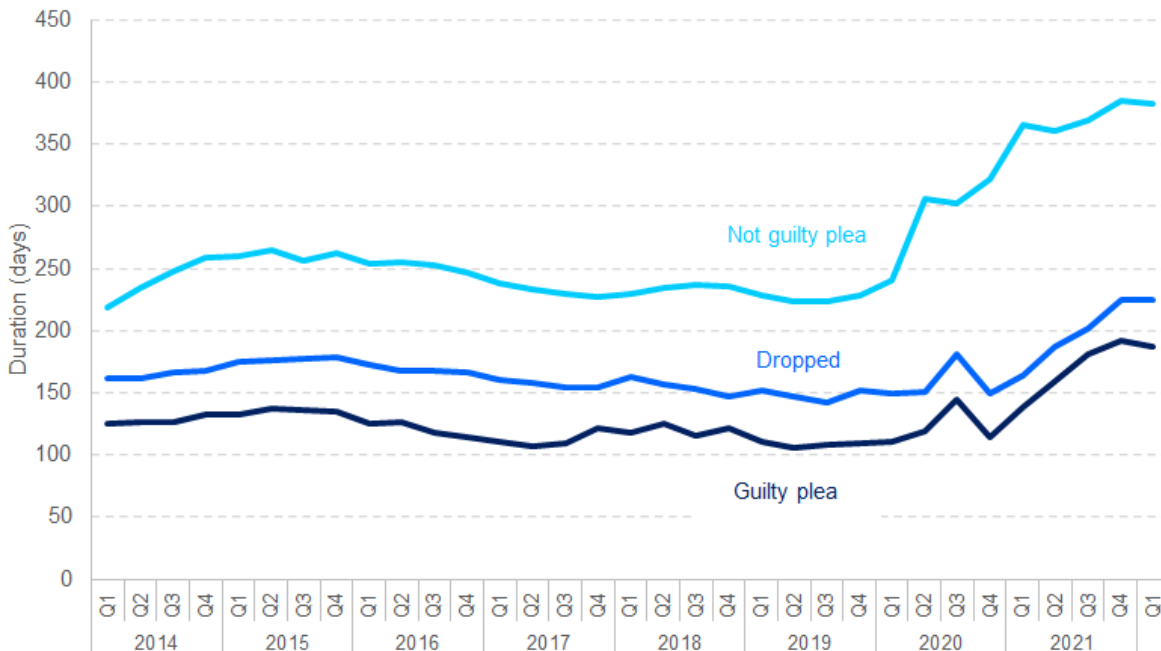
- 'Pre-court' time increased, with the median time from 'offence to charge' up 8% on the previous quarter and 13% on the previous year. The median time from 'charge to first listing' remained reasonably stable at 35 days.
- 'At court' median estimates remained stable at 0 days, where the first listing and completion occur on the same day. However, the mean duration continued to fall down from 39 days to 32 days – this follows sharp increases seen over the COVID period and the latest estimate remains well above levels seen pre-COVID (e.g., 19 days in Q1 2020).

### Crown Court timeliness - experimental statistics

'Unlinked' timeliness estimates at the Crown Court are measured from the point of a case entering a Crown Court, reaching a main hearing and then completing at court. This data series remains in development and as such it is considered 'experimental statistics'. Data presented here is not produced on the same basis as linked end-to-end timeliness data.

The median duration from case receipt to completion at the Crown Court was 163 days, this remained stable with the series peak seen in the previous quarter (164 days).

**Figure 8: Median duration from receipt to completion in 'for trial' cases by plea at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q1 2022 (Source: E2)**



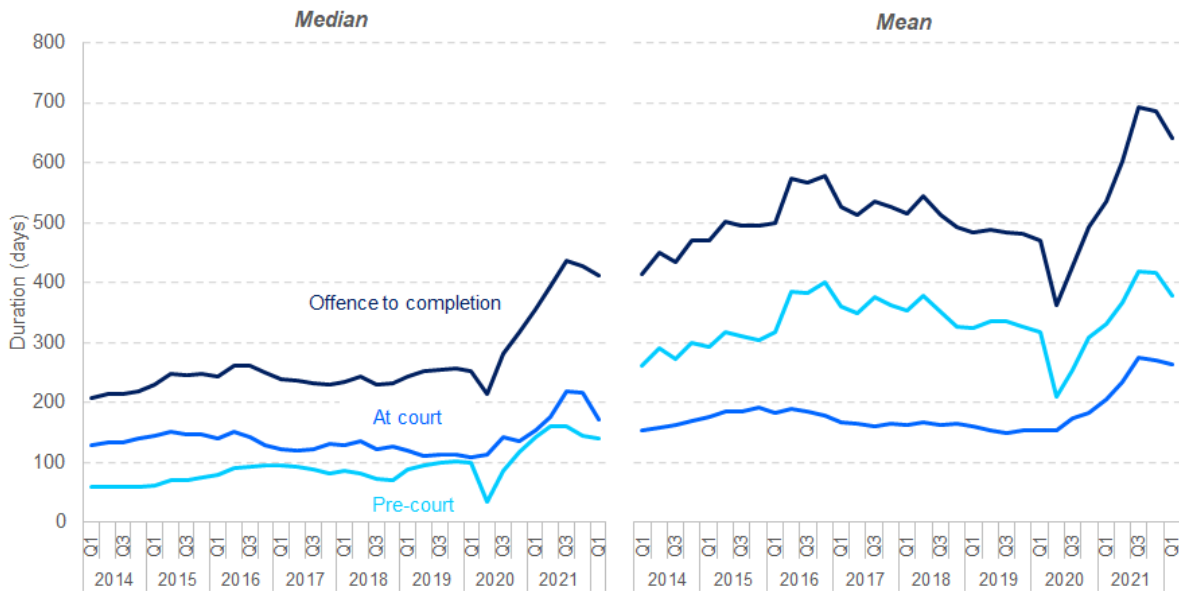
In 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered, the median duration from receipt to completion at the Crown Court fell slightly on the previous quarter, from a peak of 385 days in Q4 2021 to 382 days in Q1 2022. The time from 'receipt to main hearing' fell by 7%, while the time from 'main hearing to completion' increased by 2%.

### End-to-end timeliness - experimental statistics

The median duration from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the Crown fell by 4%, down from 427 days in Q4 2021 to 412 days in Q1 2022.

This continues small quarterly falls since the series peak of 437 days in Q3 2021 which followed sharp increases following the COVID-19 pandemic response. The latest median estimate remains 16% above estimates seen in the previous year (355 days in Q1 2021).

**Figure 9: Average number of days from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q1 2022 (Source: T4)**



A marked decrease can be seen for the median estimate of time spent 'at court' (e.g., from first listing at the magistrates' courts to completion at the Crown Court), falling 21% from 217 days in Q4 2021 to 172 days in Q1 2022. The latest estimate remains 12% above those seen in the previous year (154 days in Q1 2021).

## 5. Enforcement of financial impositions

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### **Total financial impositions fell back from a series peak**

Total financial impositions in Q1 2022 were £139.5 million, up 23% from £113.8 million in Q1 2021. The total value of outstanding financial impositions was £1.42 billion in Q1 2022, down by 2% on the previous quarter.

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### **Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type**

Following the impacts of the COVID-19 response the overall value of impositions has tended to increase from series lows in Q2 2020. In Q1 2022 the value of impositions was up by 23% on the previous year but fell back on the previous quarters peak – this was due a single very high-value fine imposed and collected in Q4 2021.

### **Outstanding financial impositions**

In Q1 2022, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £1.42 billion, down 2% on the previous quarter. However, this remains 17% up on the previous year (£1.21 billion).

The amount of outstanding financial impositions has more than doubled since the start of 2015 (£571m). A change in policy regarding the collection of financial impositions is partially behind this cumulative increase – unpaid accounts are no longer routinely closed and therefore, more outstanding impositions are carried over from previous periods.

## 6. Experimental Statistics - language interpreter and translation services

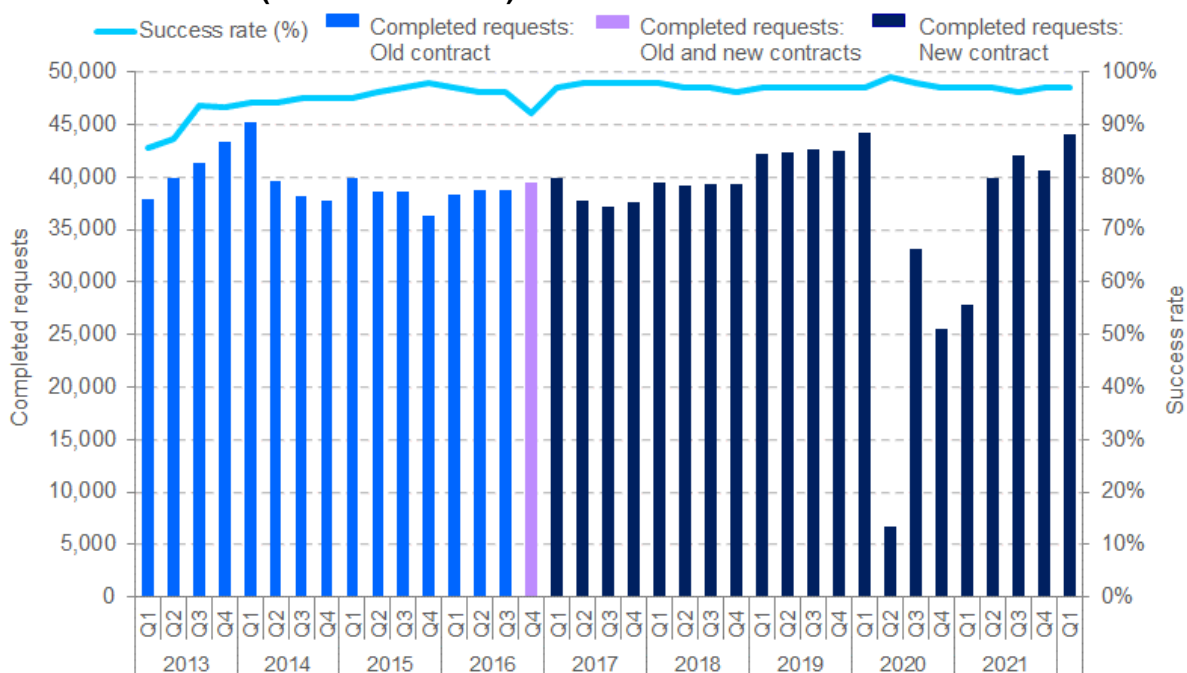
**The number of completed language service requests increased on the previous quarter and the success rate remained broadly stable.**

There were 44,107 completed requests in Q1 2022, up 9% on the previous quarter. The success rate for requests was 97%, broadly stable with the rate seen since 2015.

### Completed service requests

There were 44,107 completed requests in Q1 2022, up 9% on the previous quarter (40,643) and 59% above the volumes seen in the previous year (27,782). The volume of completed request have returned to levels seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Figure 10: Number of completed language service requests and overall success rate, Q1 2013 – Q1 2022 (Source: Table L1)**



### Success rate

The overall success rate of requests was 97% in Q1 2022, this is similar to rates seen since 2015. The proportion of cancellations (which are excluded from the success rate calculation) increased in Q2 2020 to 34% – this has fallen back to 22% in Q1 2022 but remains above pre-COVID proportions (~14% between 2012 and 2019).

### Complaints and complaint rate

The number of complaints has remained very low since Q2 2020, with only 142 complaints made in Q1 2022. This has decreased slightly on the previous quarter (148) and remains well below levels seen pre-COVID (436 complaints in Q1 2020). The overall complaint rate has remained well below 1% since Q3 2020.

### 'Off-contract' requests

The number of 'off-contract' requests in Q1 2022 increased by 11% on the previous quarter to 1,223 and is the highest volume of 'off-contract' requests seen since Q3 2013 (1,349).

## 7. Further information on criminal courts data

The latest 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 and standalone quality guide.
- A set of overview tables, covering each section of this bulletin.
- Pivot tools and underlying data which feature further 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>10</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 also produced impartially and are free from political influence<sup>11</sup>.



### Future publications

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. As part of our continual review and prioritisation, we welcome user feedback on existing outputs including content, breadth, frequency and methodology. Please send any comments you have on this publication including suggestions for further developments or reductions in content to the contacts listed below.

### Contact

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

Tel: 020 3334 3536 Email: [newsdesk@justice.gov.uk](mailto:newsdesk@justice.gov.uk)

Other enquiries and feedback about these statistics should be directed to the 'Data and Evidence as a Service: Courts and People' division of the Ministry of Justice:

Damon Wingfield, Head of Criminal Courts and Sentencing Data and Statistics,  
Ministry of Justice, 10 South Colonnade, London, E14 4PU  
Email: [statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk)

**Next update:** 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022

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

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Alternative formats are available on request from [statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/compliance-check-on-court-statistics/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>