



Criminal court statistics quarterly, England and Wales, July to September 2022

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

Main points

Magistrates' court: outstanding case volumes increased	↑	Case receipts increased by 8% on the previous quarter, while disposals remained at similar levels to last quarter. Disposal volumes were below receipts, resulting in outstanding cases rising by 5% on the previous quarter and 1% on the previous year.
Crown Court: outstanding case volumes increased	↑	Receipts (2%) and disposals (12%) fell on the previous quarter, with disposals below receipts. As a result, the outstanding caseload increased by 6% from 59,473 at the end of June 2022 to 62,766 at end of September 2022.
Crown Court: slight rise in outstanding cases open for a year or more	→	More than a quarter (28%) of outstanding cases have been open for a year or more, remaining at a series peak reached in the previous quarter.
Crown Court: ineffective trial rate increased	↑	The ineffective trial rate at the Crown Court increased from 31% in the previous quarter to a series peak (56%) in Q3 2022 – well above levels seen between 2014 and 2019 (13%-19%). A lack of defence advocate availability was the primary reason for ineffective trials in the latest quarter, influenced by Criminal Bar Association action.
Timeliness fell at the magistrates' court	↓	The time from offence to completion at the magistrates' court fell by 6% compared with the previous quarter, from 189 to 178 in Q3 2022 median days, but remains above pre-COVID levels (162 days for 2019).
Timeliness fell at the Crown Court (end-to-end)	↓	The time from offence to completion at the Crown Court fell by 8% on the previous quarter, with median estimates down to 349 days in Q3 2022 – this remains well above pre-COVID levels (252 days in 2019).

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>

Contents

Click on the sections to navigate to the relevant page

1. Changes to note.....	3
2. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts	4
3. Criminal cases in the Crown Court	6
4. Timeliness.....	11
5. Enforcement of financial impositions	14
6. Experimental Statistics - language interpreter and translation services	15
7. Further information on criminal courts data	16
Accompanying files	16
National Statistics status	16
Experimental Statistics status.....	16
Future publications	16
Contact.....	16

Statistician's comment

This report covers the period to the end of September 2022.

The figures published today highlight the position at the end of September 2022, when CBA action was having an impact on criminal court activity, particularly at the Crown Court. For example, the outstanding caseload increased as disposals fell below receipts in the Crown Court, and the ineffective trial rate rose to a series peak, with defence barrister availability being a key factor.

The CBA action ceased in the autumn, and the HMCTS management information (highlighted in this report) indicates the outstanding caseload at Crown Courts began falling again from November.

The length of time criminal cases take (timeliness) decreased in both Magistrates and Crown Court but remain above pre-COVID levels. Because timeliness is measured at the point of completion for cases, it is likely that the reduction in timeliness in the latest quarter is due to the short-term effect of more shorter cases completing during the period of CBA action.

1. Changes to note

Common Platform and reform to criminal court data¹

'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 Wales².

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).

All 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.

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](#).

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

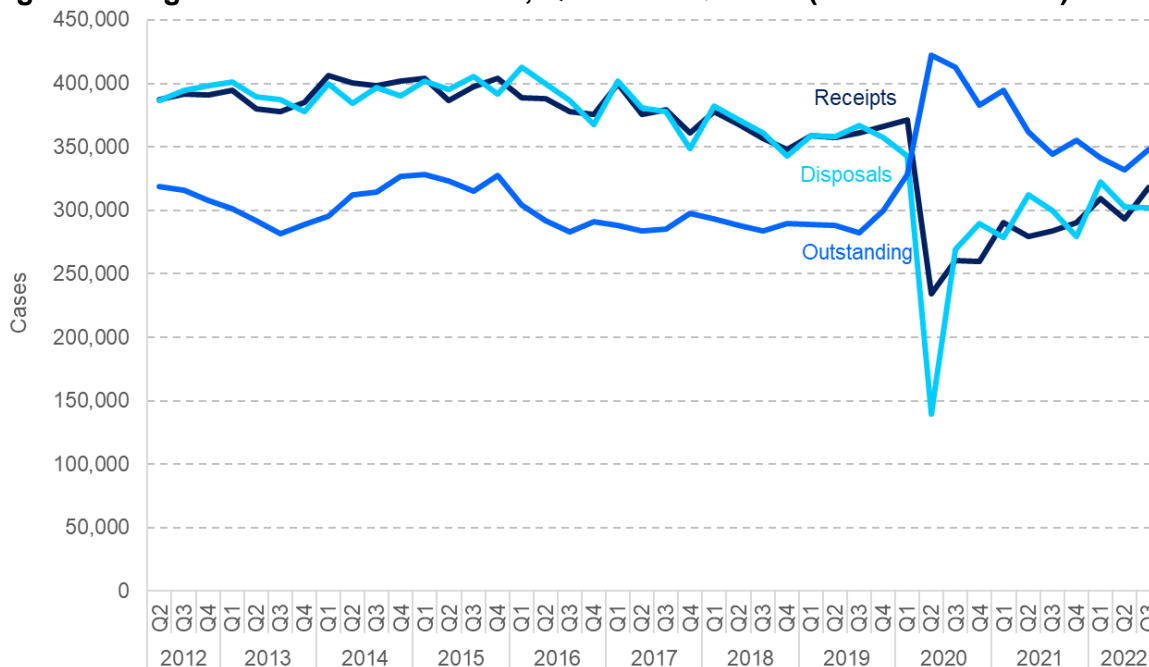
² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-common-platform-participating-criminal-courts>

2. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

Outstanding cases at the magistrates' courts increased as receipts were above disposals.

Receipts increased by 8% and disposals remained stable on the previous quarter. Receipts exceeded disposals, and as a result outstanding cases increased by 5% on the previous quarter.

Figure 1: Magistrates' courts caseload, Q2 2012 – Q3 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 courts³. However, levels remain below those seen prior to the pandemic following the review of court arrangements on the 23rd March 2020⁴ and the return of restrictions in January 2021⁵.

- Receipts into the magistrates' courts increased by 8% on the previous quarter and by 12% on the previous year.
- Disposals at the magistrates' court showed little change on the previous quarter or the previous year. Overall, disposals remain below levels seen pre-COVID (Q1 2020).
- At the end of September 2022 there were 347,820 outstanding cases at the magistrates' court. This represents a 5% increase on the previous quarter (331,596) but an 18% decrease on the series peak seen in Q2 2020 (422,158).

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

The data to November 2022 shows that disposals rose above receipts in November 2022, as a result the open caseload fell by 2% compared to September 2022.

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

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

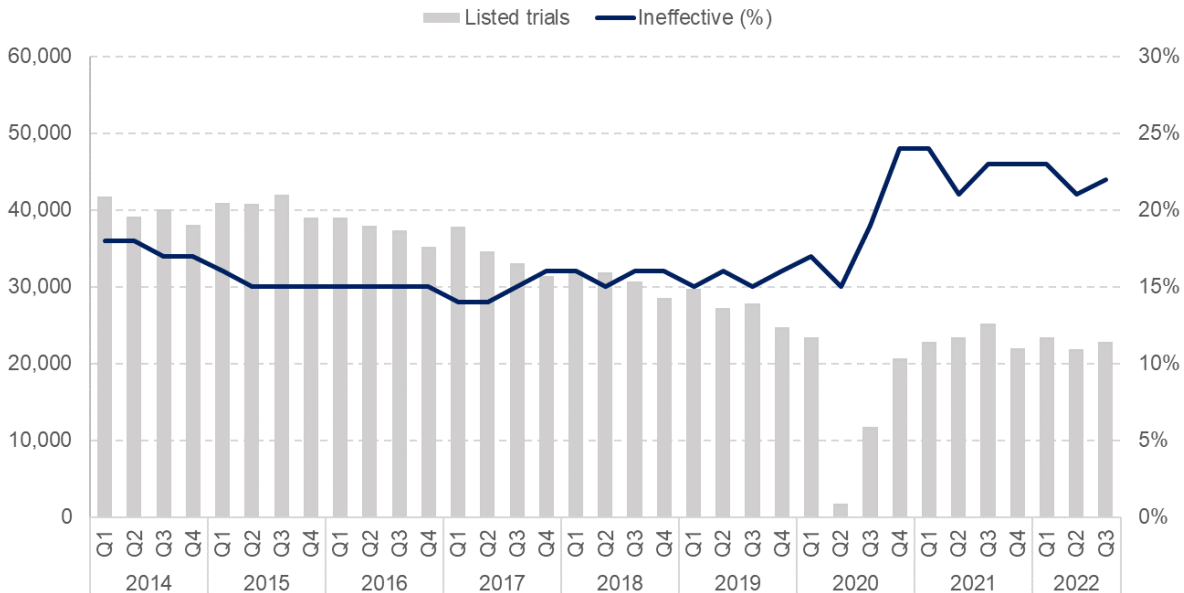
⁵ <https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/message-from-the-lord-chief-justice-latest-covid-19-restrictions/>

Trial efficiency at magistrates' court

There were 22,771 trials listed for Q3 2022, this is an increase of 4% on the previous quarter (21,805), but a fall of 10% compared with a year earlier.

- Of trials listed for Q3 2022, the proportion that were ineffective (22%) remained above pre-COVID levels (around 15-17%). Both the effective (40%) rate and the cracked trial rate (38%) remained stable on the previous quarter.

Figure 2: Magistrates' courts listed trials and ineffective trial rate (%), Q1 2014 – Q3 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 5,528 trial vacations in Q3 2022, this represented an increase of 6% on the previous quarter and remains similar to levels seen pre-COVID.

3. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

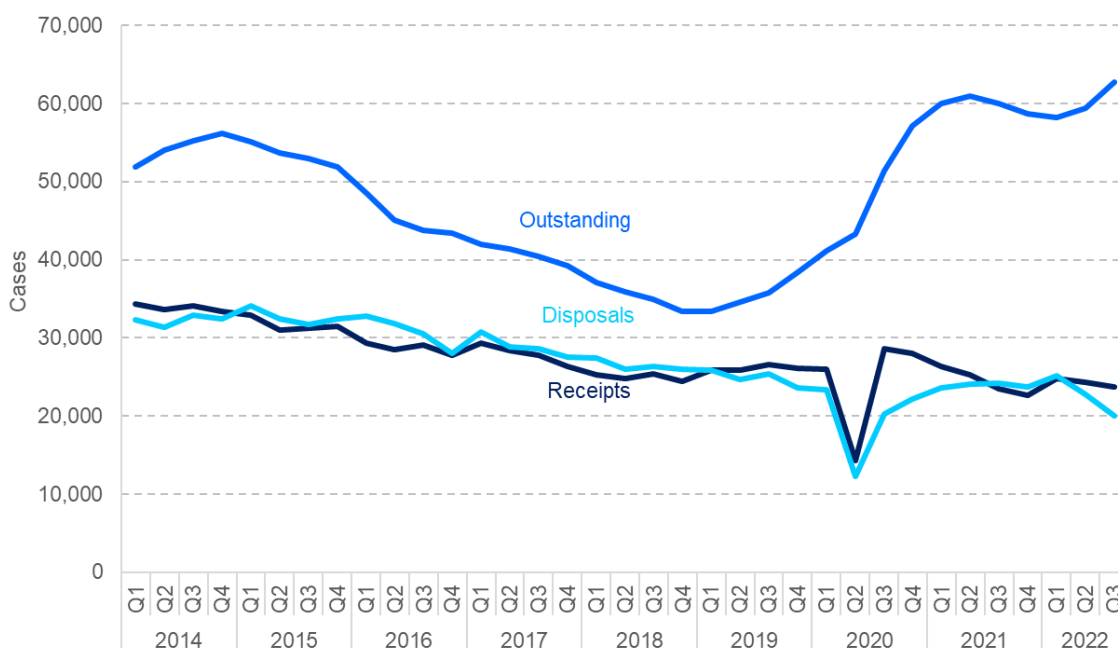
The volume of outstanding cases at the Crown Court continued to increase

Having returned close to pre-COVID levels in Q1 2022, case receipts and, in particular, disposals fell for a second consecutive quarter. In Q3 2022 disposals fell by 12% on the previous quarter and remained below receipts. As a result, the volume of outstanding cases increased by 6% on the previous quarter, to 62,766.

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 remain slightly below pre-COVID levels.

Figure 3: Crown Court caseload, Q1 2014 – Q3 2022 (Source: Table C1)



The phased reintroduction of jury trials⁶ resulted in a gradual rise in disposals at the Crown Court up to Q1 2022. In the latest quarter Criminal Bar Association action continued to contribute to disposals falling below receipts, and well below pre-COVID levels.

- There were 23,751 case receipts into the Crown Court in Q3 2022. This is a fall of 2% on the previous quarter.
- There were 20,044 case disposals at the Crown Court in Q3 2022. This represents a fall of 12% on the previous quarter (the sharpest fall since the initial pandemic impact in Q2 2020) and remains below pre-COVID levels.

The outstanding caseload at the Crown Court increased for a second consecutive quarter. At the end of Q3 2022 the number of estimated outstanding cases reached a new series peak, with 62,766 such cases at the Crown Court (up from 59,473 (6%) on the previous quarter).

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

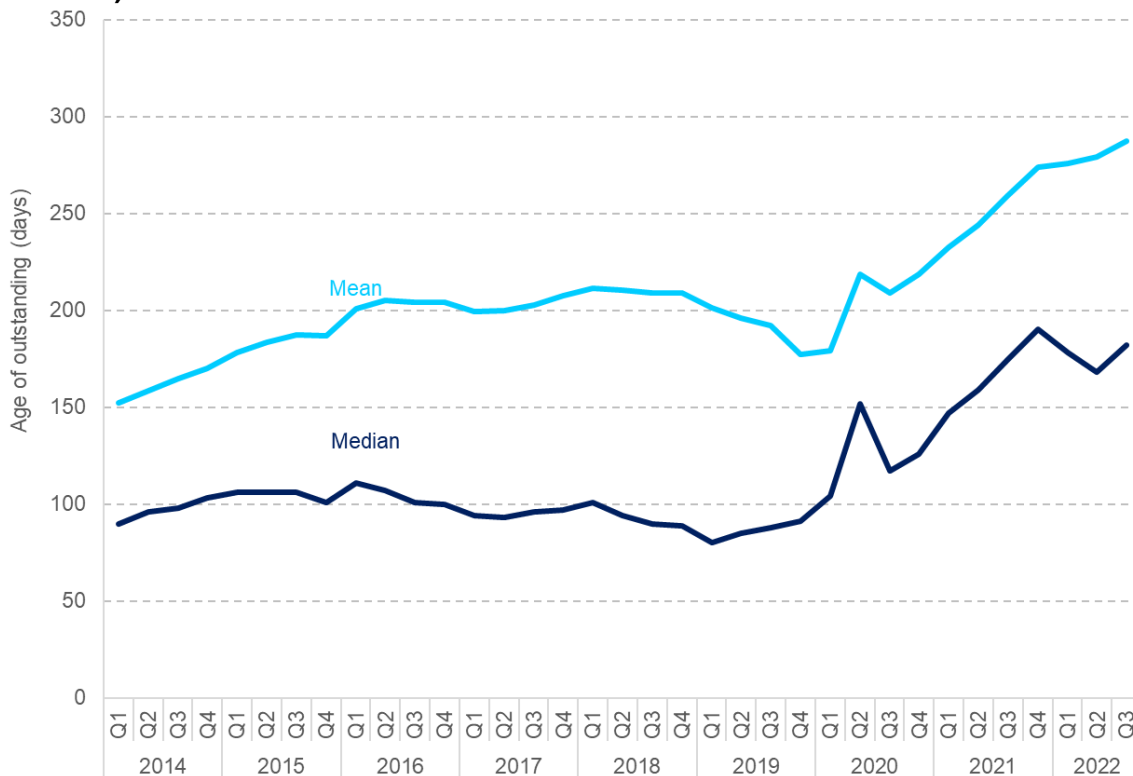
The latest published [HMCTS management information](#) provides monthly volumes of receipts, disposals and open cases for all case types at the Crown Court.

The data to November 2022 shows that disposals rose above receipts in October 2022 and have remained higher in November 2022, following the end of the CBA action. As a result the open caseload in the latest month fell was 1% lower than September 2022.

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 – Q3 2022 (Source: Table O1)

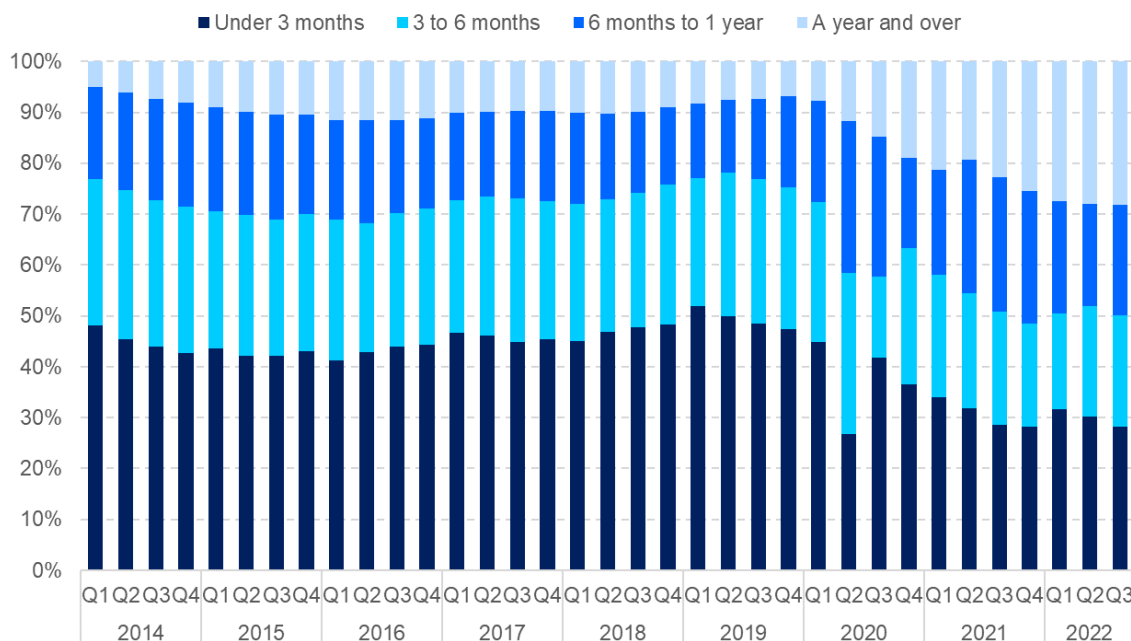


The age of an outstanding case is calculated from receipt at Crown Court to the end of the reporting period, e.g., from receipt at Crown Court to the end of September 2022.

The median average age of an outstanding case increased sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic period, with falls seen in the first two quarters of 2022. At the end of Q3 2022, both the median and mean average increased on the previous quarter.

- In Q3 2022 the median age of all outstanding cases increased by 7% on the previous quarter, from 168 days to 179 days. The quarterly rise in median age is seen across all case types to varying degrees.

Figure 5: Proportion of valid outstanding cases at the Crown Court by grouped age, Q1 2014 – Q3 2022 (Source: Table O3)



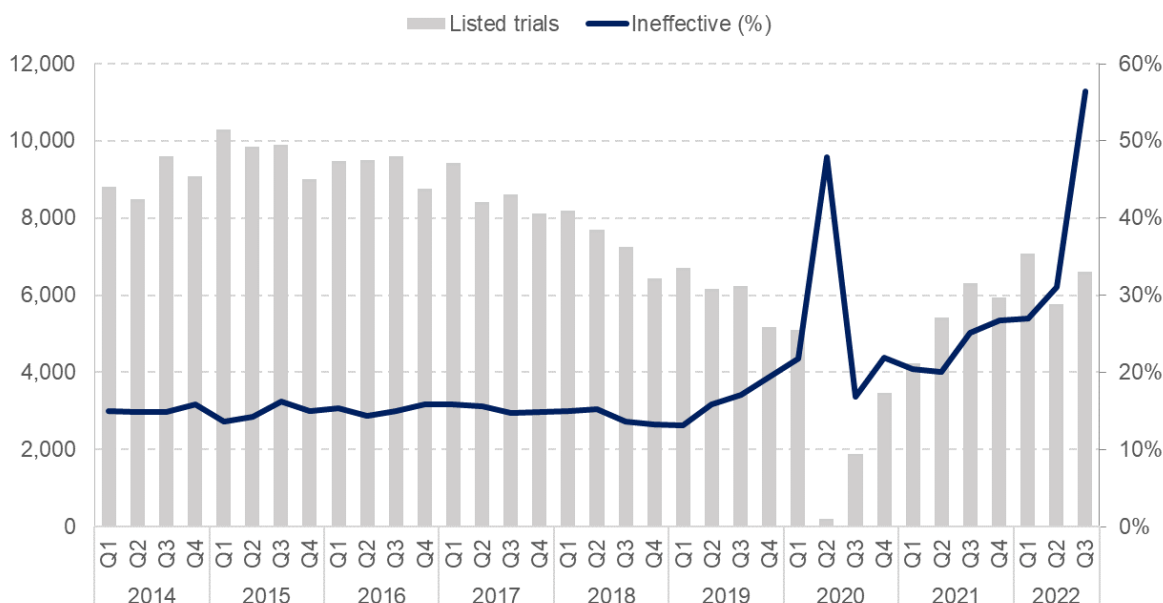
At the end of Q3 2022 there were 17,353 cases that had been outstanding for a year or more, with 4,893 of these cases outstanding for over two years. This has increased sharply following the pandemic response and represents 28% of all outstanding cases in the latest quarter, the same proportion as in the previous quarter and remained at a series peak.

Trial efficiency at Crown Court

The volume of trials listed increased by 15% in the latest quarter, to 6,616 in Q3 2022. While there has been an increase in the number of listed trials and a return to pre-COVID levels, the proportion of trials that are ineffective reached a new series peak of 56% (having previously peaked in Q2 2020 at 48%).

Following the CBA action, a lack of defence barrister availability became the primary reason for ineffective trials in Q2 2022, and this has continued in the latest quarter – the proportion of trials ineffective due to defence barrister ‘failure to attend’ increased from 20% to 67% (366 to 2,502 ineffective trials in Q3 2022).

Figure 6: Crown Court listed trials and ineffective trial rate (%), Q1 2014 – Q3 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 they were scheduled for (e.g., as for effective, cracked and ineffective estimates).

- There were 3,828 vacated trials in Q3 2022, down by 10% on the previous quarter (4,269) and below the series peak of 5,077 seen in Q1 2021.

Guilty plea rate

In the early stages of the pandemic, the guilty plea rate⁷ reflected the restricted ability of courts to progress jury trials (i.e., cases where a not guilty plea is entered) and resulting changes in case mix.

More recently (Q3 2021 onwards) the guilty plea rate among defendants dealt with in ‘for trial’ cases at the Crown Court fell back to pre-COVID levels, remaining at 67% in Q3 2022 (in contrast to series peak in Q2 and Q3 2020 of 79%).

- Of the 7,814 defendants dealt with who entered a guilty plea, 34% entered a plea on the day of trial (‘cracked trial’) – a slight reduction on the previous quarter (35%) and similar to pre-COVID levels (35% in Q1 2020). Correspondingly the proportion of guilty pleas entered prior to trial increased slightly to 60% in Q3 2022, but levels remained similar to pre-COVID (63% in Q1 2020).
- There were 1,914 defendants dealt with who entered a not guilty plea in Q3 2022, down by 29% on the previous quarter and down by 32% 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 time⁸ for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court was 8.0 weeks in Q3 2022. This represents a 5% fall on the previous quarter (8.4 weeks) and a 10% fall on the previous year (8.9 weeks), but remains above pre-COVID levels (5.3 weeks in Q1 2020).

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

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

- The median waiting time for defendants dealt with in 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered decreased by 5% (to 36.9 weeks) compared to the previous quarter (39 weeks), and by 7% on the previous year (39.7 weeks Q3 2021).

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 time⁹ of 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered was 12.8 hours (up by 4% on both the previous quarter and year), in contrast to around one hour for all cases (throughout the series).

⁹ 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 fell at the magistrates' courts and at Crown Court (end-to-end)

The median time from offence to completion for cases completing at the magistrates' court decreased by 6% on the previous quarter, from 189 days to 178 days in Q3 2022. At the Crown Court, end-to-end timeliness from offence to completion fell by 8%, from 379 to 349 days in Q3 2022.

The timeliness measures are based on defendants whose cases have been completed and as such 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.

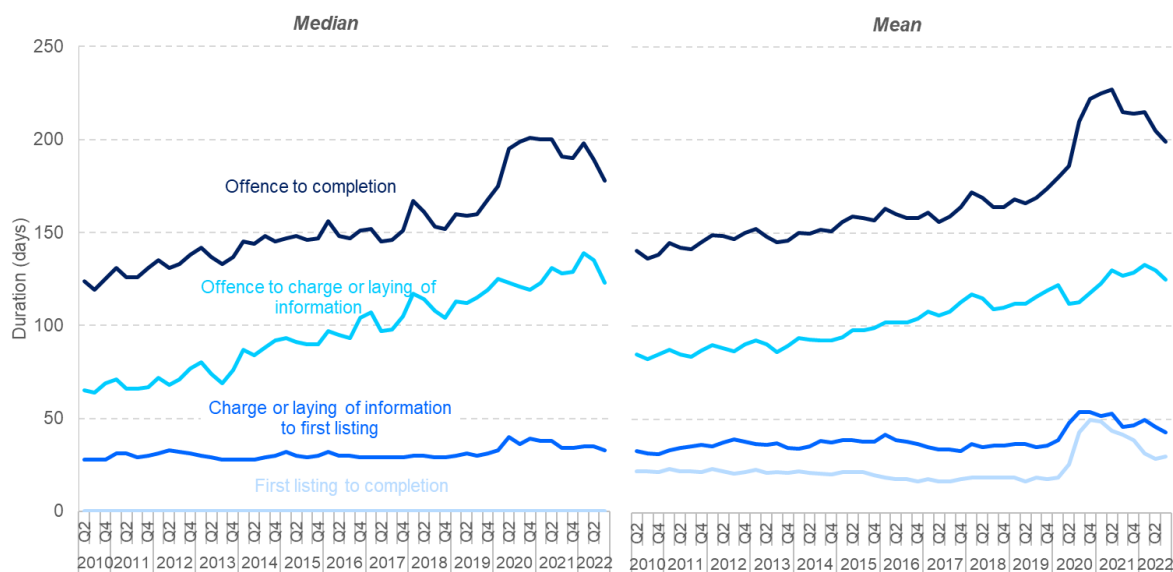
Alongside the gradual development of the experimental end-to-end series we will continue to best meet user demands via more granular data on separate ('unlinked') timeliness estimates for magistrates' courts and Crown Court.

- *Magistrates' court timeliness estimates (T1 – T3)* – providing estimates of the time from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the magistrates' courts.
- *End-to-end timeliness estimates (T4)* – providing estimates of the time from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at Crown Court.
- *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 – Q3 2022 (Source: Table T3)



The median duration from offence to completion of defendants dealt with at the magistrates' courts decreased by 6% from 189 days in Q2 2022 to 178 days in Q3 2022.

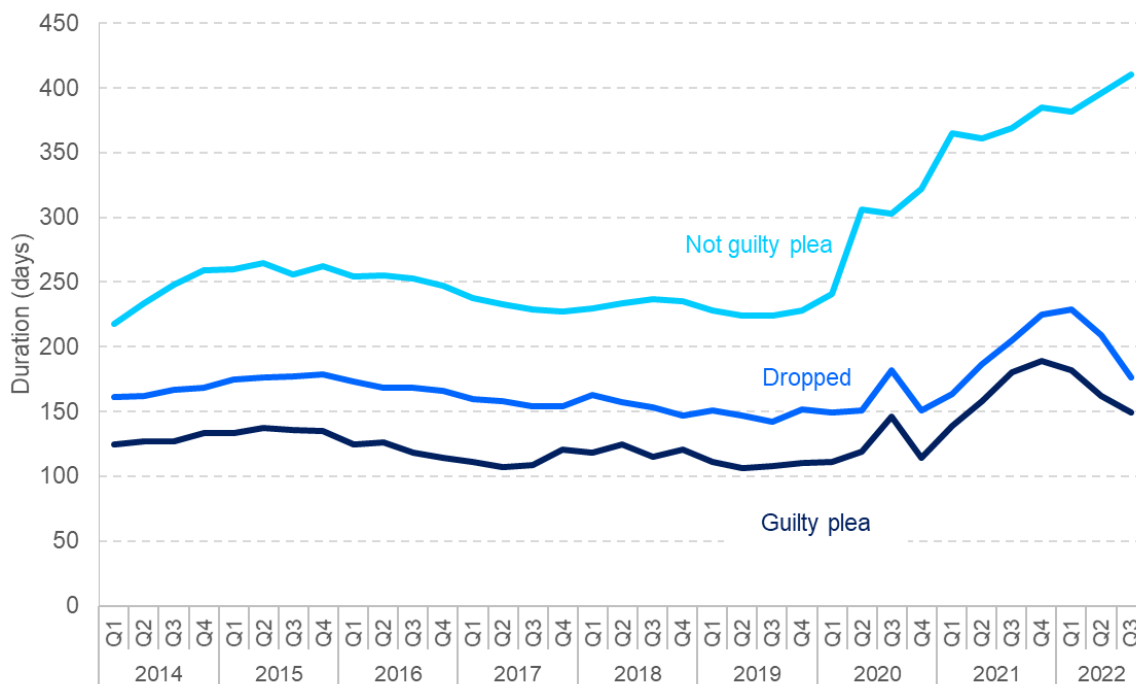
- 'Pre-court' time fell, with the median time from 'offence to charge' down 9% on the previous quarter and down 4% on Q3 2021. The median time from 'charge to first listing' was 33 days, down by 6% on the previous quarter and down 3% on Q3 2021.
- 'At court' median estimates remained stable at 0 days, where the first listing and completion occur on the same day. However, the mean duration increased by 1 day on the previous quarter, up from 29 days to 30 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) but below levels during the 2021.

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 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 for all cases was 132 days, a reduction on the previous quarter (143 days).

Figure 8: Median duration from receipt to completion in 'for trial' cases by plea at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q3 2022 (Source: E2)



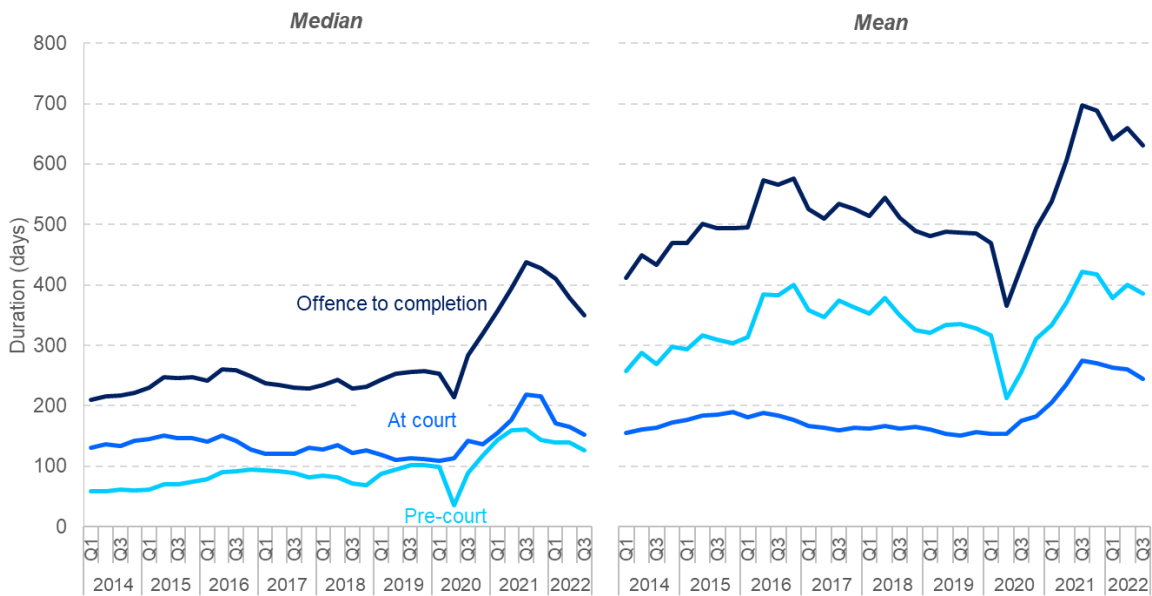
In 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered, the median duration from receipt to completion at the Crown Court increased by 4% on the previous quarter, reaching a new peak of 410 days in Q3 2022. Compared to Q2 2022 both the time from 'receipt to main hearing' and the time from 'main hearing to completion' remained stable at 285 days and 49 days respectively.

End-to-end timeliness - experimental statistics

The median duration from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court fell by 8%, down from 379 days in Q2 2022 to 349 days in Q3 2022.

This continues small quarterly falls since the series peak of 438 days in Q3 2021 which followed sharp increases following the COVID-19 pandemic response. The latest median estimate of 349 days remains well above pre-COVID levels (253 days in Q1 2020).

Figure 9: Average number of days from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q3 2022 (Source: T4)



A continued 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 8% in the latest quarter from 165 days in Q2 2022 to 152 days in Q3 2022. The latest estimate remains well above those seen pre-COVID (109 days in Q1 2020).

5. Enforcement of financial impositions

Total financial impositions fell

Total financial impositions in Q3 2022 were £130.4 million, down by 46% on Q3 2021 (£243.5 million) and by 2% on Q2 2022 (£132.7m). The total value of outstanding financial impositions was £1.38 billion in Q3 2022, up by 1% on the previous quarter.

Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type

The overall value of impositions has recently stabilised close to pre-COVID levels but fluctuates quarterly. In Q3 2022 the value of impositions was down by 2% compared with Q2 2022.

Outstanding financial impositions

In Q3 2022, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £1.38 billion, up 1% on the previous quarter and the previous year.

The amount of outstanding financial impositions has more than doubled since Q1 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

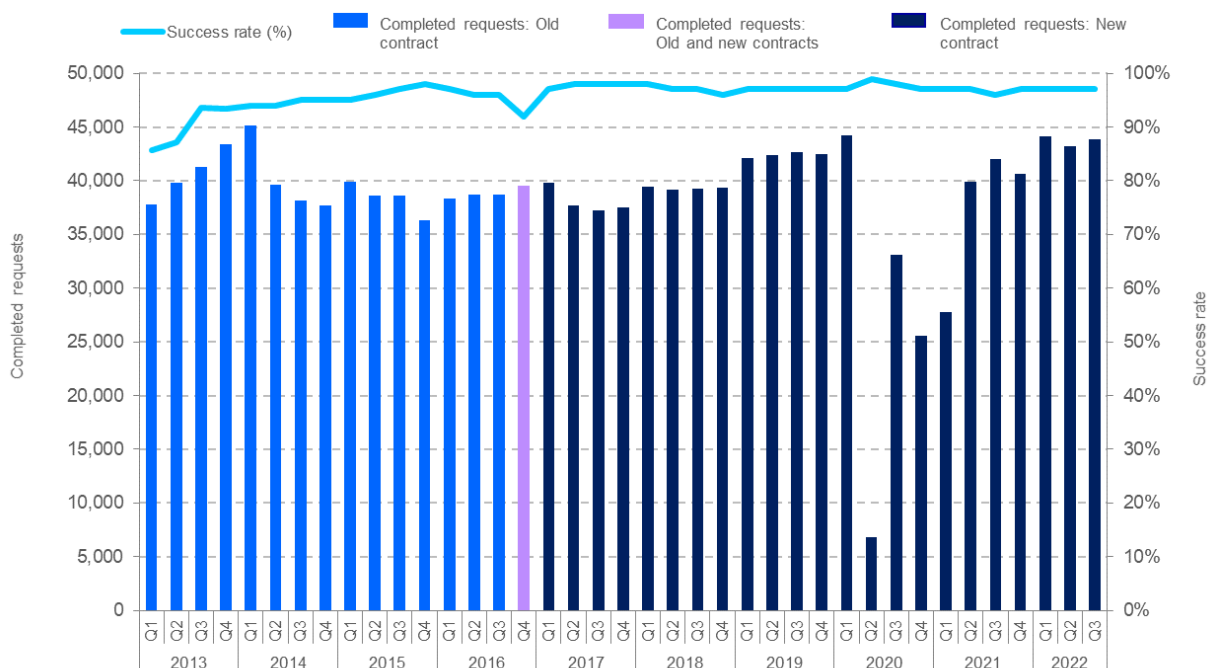
The number of completed language service requests increased on the previous quarter and the success rate remained broadly stable.

There were 43,866 completed requests in Q3 2022, up 1% on the previous quarter. The success rate for requests was 97%, broadly stable with the rate seen since 2015.

Completed service requests

There were 43,866 completed requests in Q3 2022, up 1% on the previous quarter (43,220) and 4% above the volumes seen in the same quarter of the previous year (42,059). The volume of completed requests has returned to levels seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 10: Number of completed language service requests and overall success rate, Q1 2013 – Q3 2022 (Source: Table L1)



Success rate

The overall success rate of requests was 97% in Q3 2022, this is similar to rates seen since 2015. The number of cancellations (which are excluded from the success rate calculation) has increased in the latest quarter, by 13%.

Complaints and complaint rate

The number of complaints has remained very low since Q2 2020, with 182 complaints made in Q3 2022. This has increased on the previous quarter (89) but remains well below levels seen pre-COVID (436 complaints in Q1 2020). The overall complaint rate has remained considerably below 1% since Q3 2020.

'Off-contract' requests

The number of 'off-contract' requests in Q3 2022 increased by 16% on the previous quarter to 1,825. This has surpassed the previous series high of 1,571 'off-contract' requests seen in the previous quarter.

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 2019.¹⁰ 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 influence¹¹.



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.gsi.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.gsi.gov.uk

Next update: 30th March 2023

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

© Crown copyright

Produced by the Ministry of Justice

Alternative formats are available on request from statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

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

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