



Criminal court statistics quarterly, England and Wales, October to December 2022

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

Main points

Magistrates' court: outstanding caseload decreased



Case receipts decreased by 2% on the previous quarter, while disposals increased by 5%. Disposal volumes were above receipts, resulting in outstanding cases falling by 2% on the previous quarter and 4% on the previous year.

Crown Court: outstanding caseload decreased



Disposals increased by 18% on the previous quarter, while receipts decreased by 1%, falling below disposals. As a result, the outstanding caseload fell by 1%, from 62,994 in Q3 2022 to 62,440 in Q4 2022.

Crown Court: rise in outstanding cases open for a year or more



More than a quarter (29%) of outstanding cases have been open for a year or more - a series peak.

Crown Court: ineffective trial rate decreased



The ineffective trial rate at the Crown Court fell back from a series peak of 57% in Q3 2022 to 32% in Q4 2022.

Timeliness stable at the magistrates' court



The median time from offence to completion at the magistrates' court was 177 days, stable on the previous quarter but above pre-COVID levels (162 days in 2019).

Timeliness increased at the Crown Court (end-to-end)



The median time from offence to completion at the Crown Court increased by 6% on the previous quarter (from 351 to 371 days) and remains 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>

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Statistician's comment

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

The figures published today are impacted by the resolution of Criminal Bar Association action in October 2022, mid-way through the quarter. The ineffective trial rate at the Crown Court fell back from the peak seen in the previous quarter but remains above levels seen in the previous year.

Timeliness measures, counted at the point of cases completing were impacted by changes in the underlying case mix. There was a sharp increase in the volume of 'not guilty plea' cases reaching completion due to the resumption of all Criminal Bar Association work and this led to an increase in timeliness at the Crown Court.

The outstanding caseload at the Crown Court fell back from the series peak in the previous quarter and HMCTS MI shows that this downward trend continues into January 2023.

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>

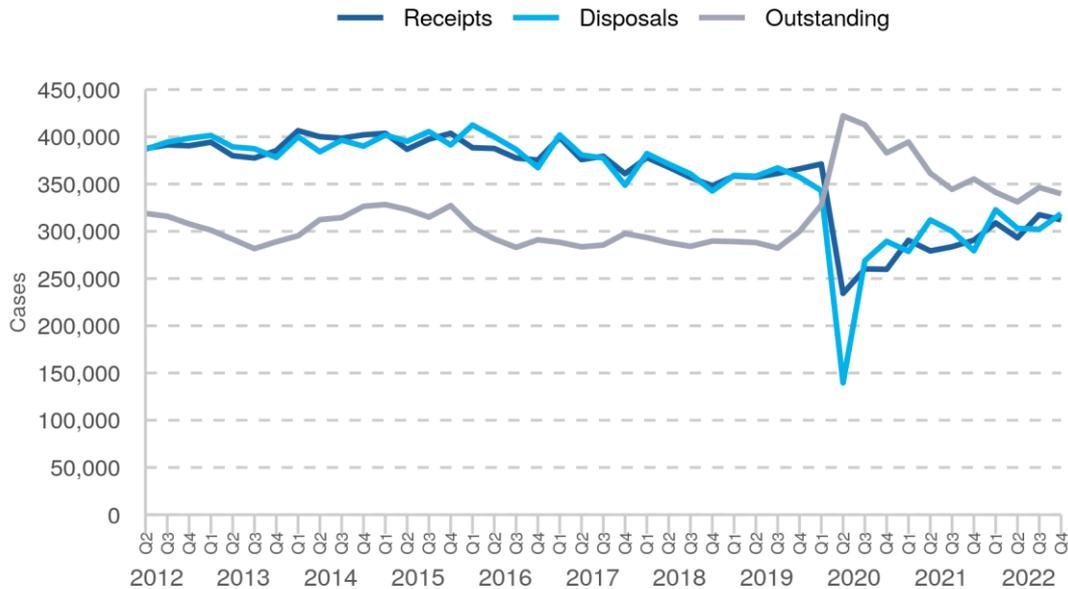
² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-common-platform-participating-criminal-courts>

2. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

Outstanding caseload at the magistrates' courts decreased as disposals volumes increased above cases receipts.

Disposal volumes increased by 5% on the previous quarter while receipts fell by 2%. Disposals exceeded receipts, and as a result the outstanding caseload fell by 2% on the previous quarter.

Figure 1: Magistrates' courts caseload, Q2 2012 – Q4 2022 (Source: Table M1)



Magistrates' court caseload

Receipts and disposals have both tended to rise from series lows in Q2 2020 when the initial measures were put in place to manage the immediate risks of the COVID-19 pandemic in courts³⁴⁵. However, levels continue to remain below those seen prior to the pandemic.

- Receipts into the magistrates' courts for the latest quarter decreased by 2% on the previous quarter but were up by 7% on the corresponding period last year.
- Disposals at the magistrates' court increased by 5% on the previous quarter and by 14% compared with the same quarter last year. The latest quarterly rise is largely due to a 27% increase in 'summary non-motoring' disposals.
- At the end of December 2022 there were 339,771 outstanding cases at the magistrates' courts. This represents a 2% decrease on the previous quarter (346,419) and a 20% decrease on the series peak seen in Q2 2020 (422,158).

³ <https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/message-from-the-lord-chief-justice-latest-covid-19-restrictions/>

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

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-face-to-face-hearings-as-courts-reopen>

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

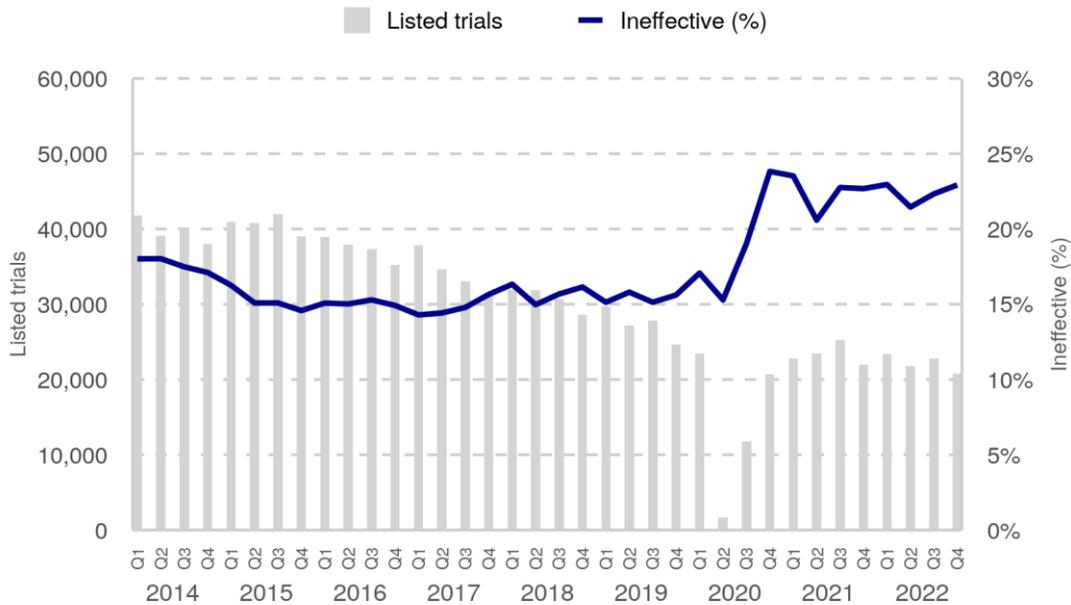
The data to January 2023 shows that disposals increased above receipts, as a result the open caseload continued to fall – down slightly on December 2022 (less than 1%).

Trial efficiency at magistrates' court

There were 20,750 trials listed for Q4 2022, this represents a 9% decrease on the previous quarter (22,771).

- Of trials listed for Q4 2022, the proportion that were ineffective (23%) was stable and remained above pre-COVID levels (~15-17%). Similarly, both the effective trial rate (39%) and the cracked trial rate (38%) remained unchanged on the previous quarter.

Figure 2: Magistrates' courts listed trials and ineffective trial rate (%), Q1 2014 – Q4 2022 (Source: Table M2)



3. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

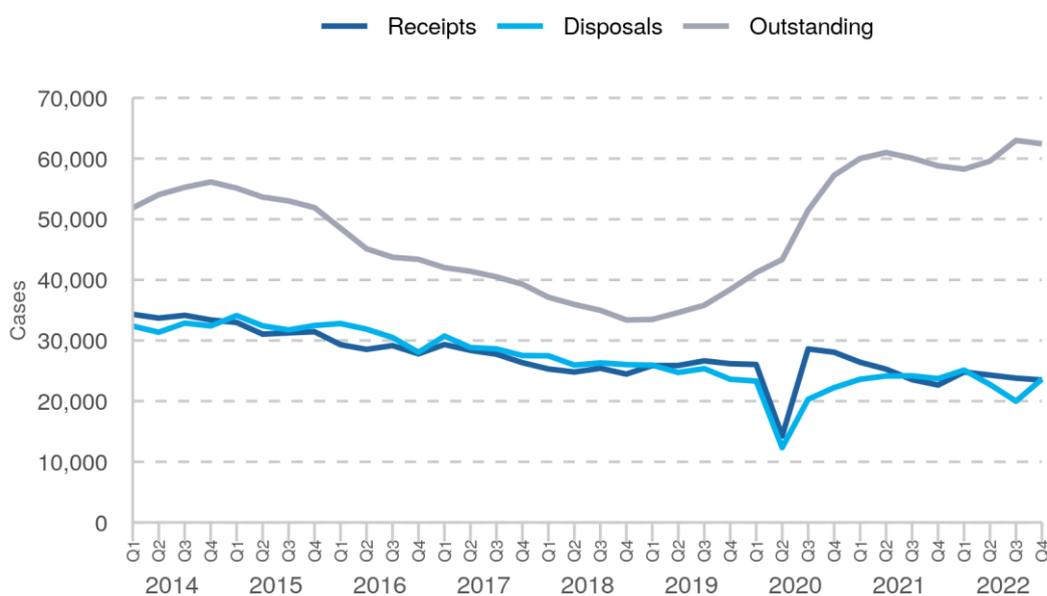
The volume of outstanding cases at the Crown Court increased

Disposal volumes increased by 18% on the previous quarter and are in line with levels seen in the previous year. Receipts decreased by 1% on the previous quarter, falling below disposals. As a result, the outstanding caseload fell by 1% to 62,440.

Crown Court caseload

The increased throughput from the magistrates' courts as part of the initial 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 back and remain broadly stable.

Figure 3: Crown Court caseload, Q1 2014 – Q4 2022 (Source: Table C1)



Following the initial phased reintroduction of jury trials⁶ disposals have gradually increased from a series low in Q2 2020 and returned to pre-COVID levels in Q1 2022. The Criminal Bar Association industrial action starting in April 2022 contributed to disposals falling in Q2 and Q3 2022. The Criminal Bar Association industrial action was resolved in October 2022⁷ following the extension of fee rises⁸ and subsequently disposals at the Crown Court increased in the latest quarter.

- There were 23,494 case receipts into the Crown Court in Q4 2022. This is down 1% on the previous quarter but 4% above levels seen in Q4 2021.
- There were 23,638 case disposals at the Crown Court in Q4 2022. This is an 18% increase on the previous quarter and back to levels seen in the previous year.
- There were 62,440 outstanding cases at the end of Q4 2022. This is down 1% from the series peak of 62,994 in the previous quarter.

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

⁷ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-10-12/HCWS317>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/crime-news-extension-of-fee-rises-after-moj-and-cba-deal>

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

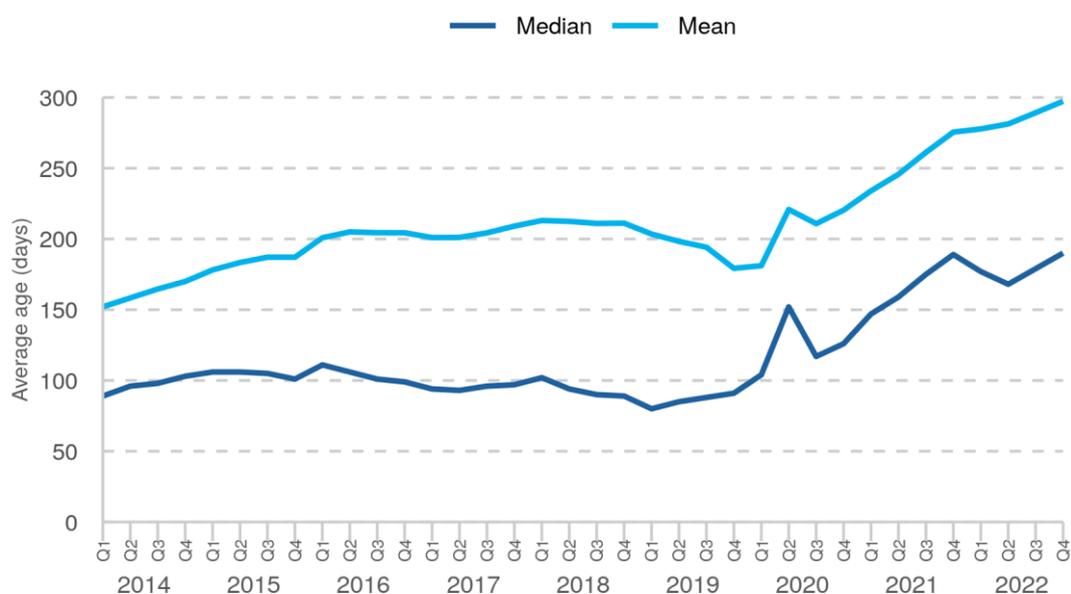
The data to January 2023 shows that disposals increased above receipts in November 2022 and have remained higher through to January 2023. The open caseload has fallen and in the latest month was down 1% on December 2022.

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.

The age of an outstanding case is calculated from receipt at Crown Court to the end of the reporting period.

Figure 4: Age of outstanding cases at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q4 2022 (Source: Table O1)



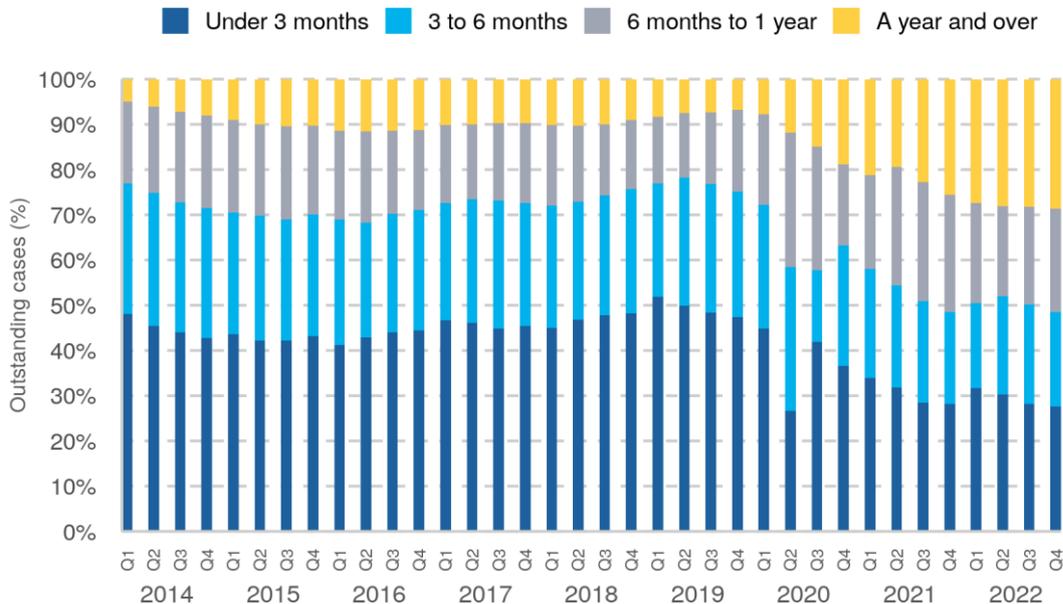
The average age of an outstanding case has increased markedly on pre-COVID levels. Both the median and mean average continued to increase on the previous quarter and report series peaks in Q4 2022.

- In Q4 2022 the median age of all outstanding cases increased by 6% on the previous quarter, from 179 days to 190 days. The quarterly rise in median age is seen across all case types, all regions and most offence groups to varying degrees.

At the end of Q4 2022 there were 17,488 cases that had been outstanding for a year or more. This has tended to increase since Q4 2019 and accounted for 29% of the outstanding caseload in the latest quarter – a series peak.

- Within the 'year or more' grouping there were 5,568 cases which had been outstanding for over two years – this accounts for 9% of the outstanding caseload in Q4 2022.

Figure 5: Proportion of outstanding cases at the Crown Court by grouped age, Q1 2014 – Q4 2022 (Source: Table O3)

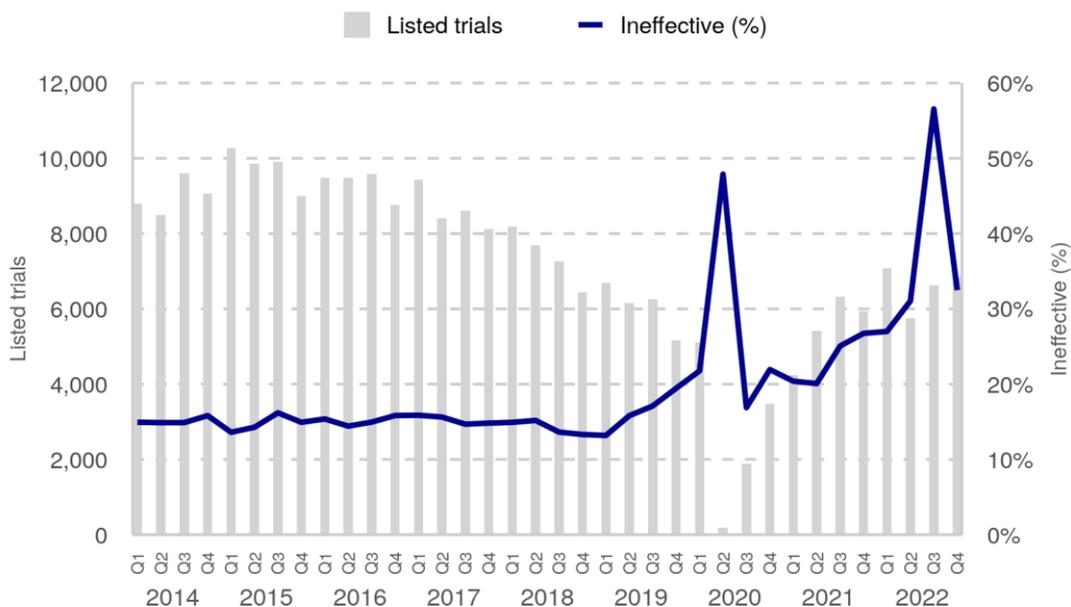


Trial efficiency at Crown Court

The volume of trials listed increased by 3%, with 6,845 listed trials scheduled in Q4 2022.

An ineffective trial does not happen on the day as planned and needs to be rearranged. The proportion of trials that are ineffective fell from a series peak of 56% in Q3 2022 to 32% in the latest period. This fall follows the conclusion of the Criminal Bar Association action in October 2022.

Figure 6: Crown Court listed trials and ineffective trial rate (%), Q1 2014 – Q4 2022 (Source: Table C2)



The 'lack of defence advocate availability' was the largest reason for ineffective trials throughout 2022 and accounted for 22% (484 trials) in Q4 2022, down from 67% (2,498 trials) in the previous quarter.

Guilty plea rate

The guilty plea rate⁹ increased as a result of the immediate COVID-19 response and the suspension of jury trials at the Crown Court.

More recently the guilty plea rate among defendants dealt with in 'for trial' cases at the Crown Court fell back to pre-COVID levels, remaining at 69% in Q4 2022 (in contrast to series peak of 79% in Q2 and Q3 2020).

There were 2,666 defendants dealt with in Q4 2022 who entered a not guilty plea (e.g., went to trial) – this is an increase of 39% on the previous quarter and follows the resolution of the Criminal Bar Association industrial action.

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 time¹⁰ for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court was 9.9 weeks in Q4 2022. This is a 21% increase on the previous quarter (8.1 weeks), a 3% increase on the previous year (9.6 weeks) and remains well above pre-COVID levels (5.3 weeks in Q1 2020).

- The median waiting time for defendants dealt with in 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered increased by 6% compared to the previous quarter, from 36.9 weeks to 39.1 weeks in Q4 2022.

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 time¹¹ of 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered was 12.4 hours (down by 3% on the previous quarter and by 5% on the previous year), in contrast to around one hour for all cases (throughout the series).

⁹ Guilty plea rate is the number of defendants pleading guilty to all counts as a proportion of those with a plea.

¹⁰ The waiting time is the duration between a case being sent to the Crown Court and the first main hearing.

¹¹ 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

Timeliness remained stable at the magistrates' and increased at Crown Court

The median time from offence to completion for cases completing at the magistrates' court was stable, falling by 1 day on the previous quarter, from 178 days to 177 days in Q4 2022. Whereas the time spent from offence to completion at Crown Court increased by 6% on the previous quarter from 351 days to 371 days in Q4 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 Justices open-source statistical '[Splink](#)' package to provide updated end-to-end timeliness estimates.

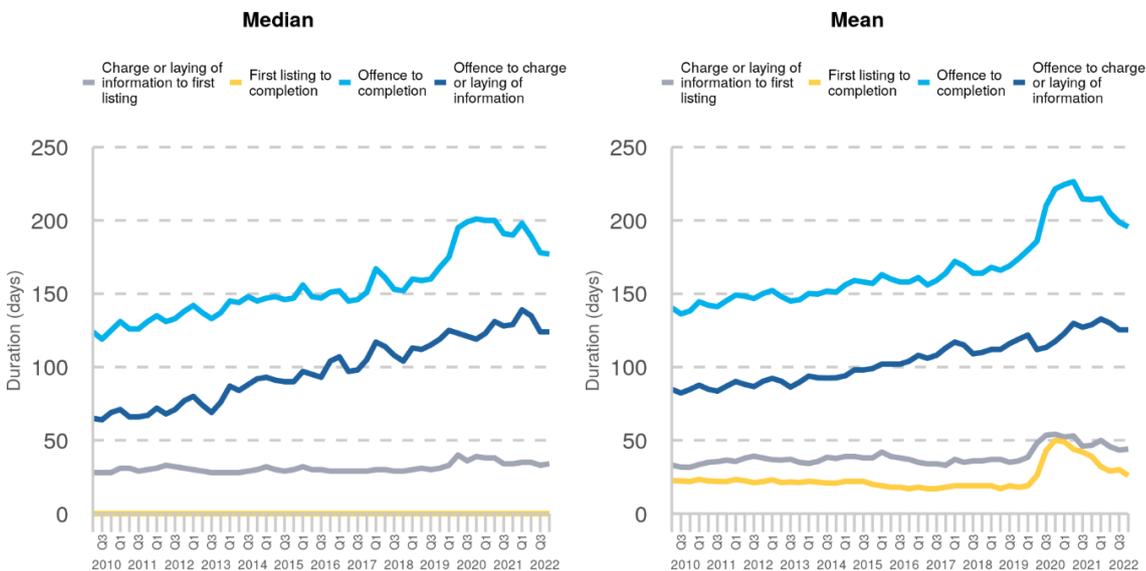
Alongside the gradual development of the experimental end-to-end series we will continue to best meet user demands via more granular data on separate ('unlinked') timeliness estimates for magistrates' courts and Crown Court.

- *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 and subsequent completion of a defendant's case at the magistrates' court.

Figure 7: Average number of days from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the magistrates' courts by stage, Q2 2010 – Q4 2022 (Source: Table T3)



The median duration from offence to completion at the magistrates' courts has fallen back from series highs of around 200 days seen in late 2020 and early 2021. The latest quarterly estimate is broadly stable on the previous quarter, falling 1 day from 178 days in Q3 2022 to 177 days in Q4 2022.

- 'Pre-court': the median time from 'offence to charge' was stable on the previous quarter (124 days) and down 4% on Q4 2021 (129 days). The median time from 'charge to first listing' was 34 days, in line with estimates seen since Q3 2021.
- 'At court': the median estimate remained stable at 0 days, where the first listing and completion occur on the same day. However, the mean duration decreased by 13% from 30 days in Q3 2022 to 26 days in Q4 2022 – this follows sharp increases seen over the COVID period and a peak of 50 days in Q4 2020. Despite the falls seen, the latest estimate remains above pre-COVID levels (e.g., 19 days in Q1 2020).

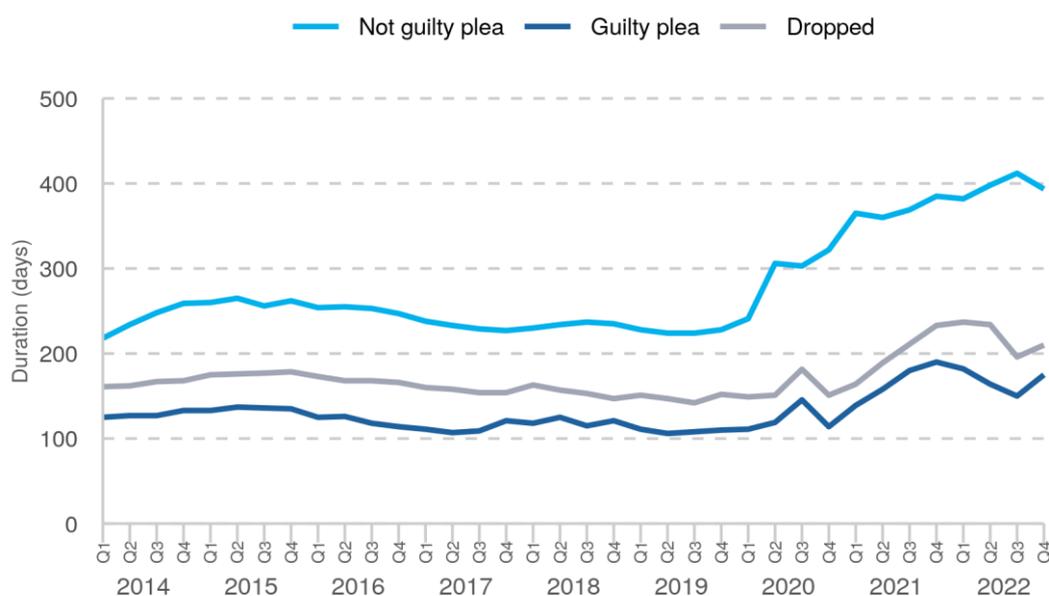
Crown Court timeliness - experimental statistics

'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 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 158 days. This represents an 18% increase on the previous quarter (134 days) but a fall of 4% on the series peak seen in Q4 2021 (165 days).

The quarterly trends in timeliness from receipt to completion will be largely due to changes in the underlying case mix due to the Criminal Bar Association industrial action. For example there was a 40% increase in the proportion of disposed cases which follow a 'not guilty plea' compared to the previous quarter, and which take longer at court.

Figure 8: Median duration from receipt to completion in 'for trial' cases by plea at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q4 2022 (Source: E2)



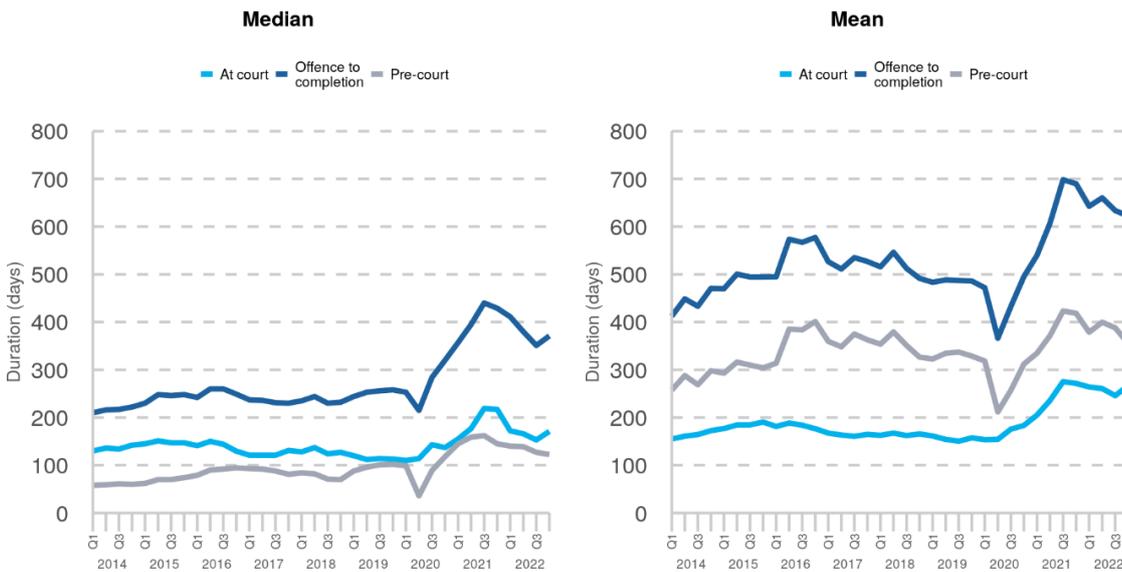
In 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered, the median days from receipt to completion fell by 4% on the previous quarter (from 412 to 394 days).

End-to-end timeliness - experimental statistics

The median duration from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court increased by 6%, up from 351 days in Q3 2022 to 371 days in Q4 2022.

This is the first increase since Q3 2021 and follows a period of small quarterly falls from a series peak of 440 days in Q3 2021. The latest median estimate of 371 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 – Q4 2022 (Source: T4)



- 'Pre-court': the median time from 'offence to first listing' fell 4% from 127 days in Q3 2022 to 123 days in Q4 2022 – this continues falls seen consistently since a series peak of 162 days in Q3 2021.
- 'At court': increases can be seen for the median estimates of time spent from first listing at the magistrates' courts to completion at the Crown Court, rising 12% in the latest quarter from 153 days in Q3 2022 to 171 days in Q4 2022. The latest estimate is down on the series peak seen in Q3 2021 (219 days) but remains well above those seen pre-COVID (110 days in Q1 2020).

5. Enforcement of financial impositions

Total financial impositions increased

The total value of financial impositions made in Q4 2022 was £356.1 million, up sharply on Q3 2022 (£130.5 million). The total value of outstanding financial impositions was £1.42 billion in Q4 2022, up by 3% on the previous quarter (£1.38 billion).

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 Q4 2022 the total value of impositions increased by 176% on the previous quarter – due to a single large fine imposed and collected in the period.

Outstanding financial impositions

In Q4 2022, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £1.42 billion, up 3% on the previous quarter but down by 2% on the series peak of £1.48 billion seen in Q4 2021.

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

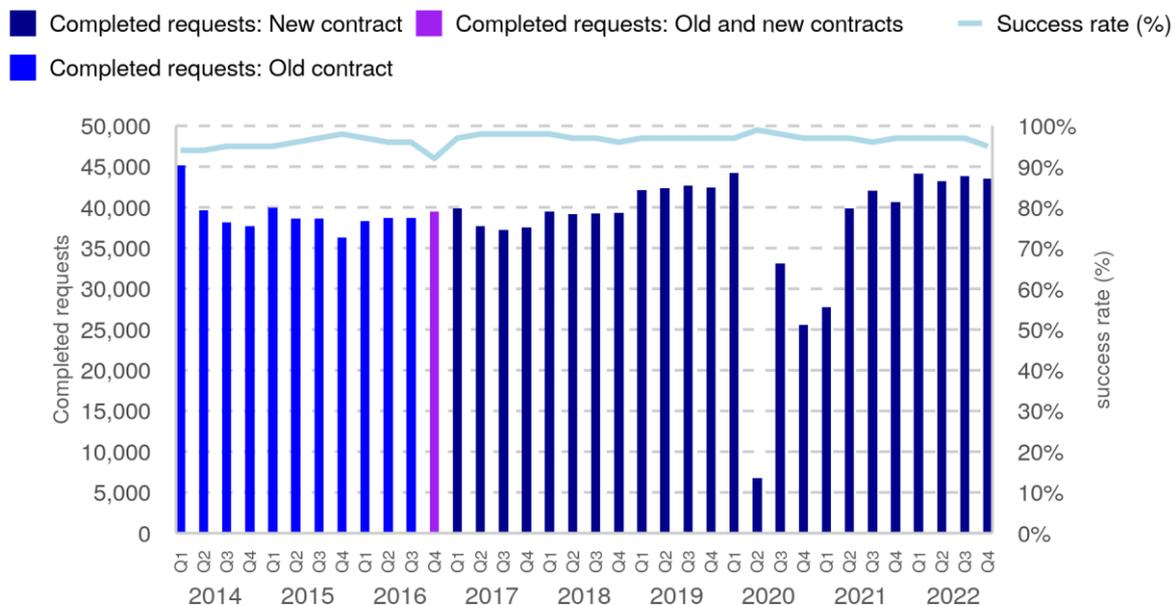
The number of completed language service requests was stable on the previous quarter while the success rate fell slightly.

There were 43,530 completed requests in Q4 2022, down by 1% on the previous quarter. The success rate for requests fell by two percentage points to 95% - the lowest seen since Q4 2016 (92%).

Completed service requests

There were 43,530 completed requests in Q4 2022, a 1% fall on the previous quarter (43,866) but broadly in line with volumes seen over the last year.

Figure 10: Number of completed language service requests and overall success rate, Q1 2013 – Q4 2022 (Source: Table L1)



Success rate

The overall success rate fell from 97% in Q3 2022 to 95% in Q4 2022. This is lowest reported success rate since the 'new contract' was introduced in Q4 2016 (92%). This is the result of a sharp increase in the volume of unfulfilled requests, up 54% from 985 in Q3 2022 to 1,517 in Q4 2022. While the number of cancellations (excluded from the success rate) fell by 12% in the latest quarter from 11,180 in Q3 2022 to 9,873 in Q4 2022.

Complaints and complaint rate

The number of complaints has remained very low since Q2 2020, with 215 complaints made in Q4 2022. This has increased on the previous quarter (182) 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 Q4 2022 decreased by 27% on the previous quarter to 1,340 but remains above levels seen across the series.

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 2019.¹² 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 influence¹³.

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: 29th June 2023

¹² <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/compliance-check-on-court-statistics/>

¹³ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>

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

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