



Criminal court statistics quarterly, England and Wales, January to March 2023

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

Main points

Magistrates' court: outstanding caseload decreased



Case receipts increased by 6% on the previous quarter, while disposals increased by 5%. Disposal volumes (up 6%) exceeded receipts (up 5%), resulting in outstanding cases falling by 1% on the previous quarter.

Crown Court: outstanding caseload decreased



Receipts and disposals increased by 6% on the previous quarter, with disposals remaining above receipts. As a result, the outstanding caseload fell by 0.4%, from 62,511 in Q4 2022 to 62,235 in Q1 2023.

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



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

Crown Court: effective trial rate increased



The effective trial rate at the magistrates' courts and Crown Court continued to increase, both standing at 42%.

Timeliness increased at the magistrates' court



The median time from offence to completion at the magistrates' court increased by 6% on the previous quarter (from 177 to 187 days) and remains above pre-COVID levels (175 days in Q1 2020)

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



The median time from offence to completion at the Crown Court increased by 8% on the previous quarter (from 370 to 398 days) and remains above pre-COVID levels (254 days in Q1 2020).

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 2023.

The figures published today continue to reflect the impacts on the criminal court caseload following the resolution of Criminal Bar Association action in October 2022.

The effective trial rate increased at both magistrates' and Crown Courts, while the volume of 'not guilty plea' disposals (i.e., those following a trial) increased markedly. Timeliness estimates at both magistrates' and Crown Court continue to increase, a result of cases completing including those impacted by the Criminal Bar Association action and in some cases, the suspension of jury trial during the pandemic.

The outstanding caseload at the Crown Court fell back slightly compared to the previous quarter but His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) Management Information for April 2023 shows the first increase seen since October 2022.

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.

Derbyshire magistrates' and Crown Court began the roll out 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, this includes: 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.

It has not been possible to develop a robust series for all published annual tables.

- This includes tables detailing measures such as the representation status of defendants dealt with at the Crown Court and the manner of acquittals and convictions made by juries at the Crown Court.

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](#).

Outstanding caseload and duration revision

We have worked to refine the way in which we identify and exclude instances where a defendant has been out of the court on a bench warrant in our outstanding caseload estimates. The processes applied to the series are now more closely aligned with HMCTS partners and provide a more robust estimate of the outstanding caseload within the court and removes cases where an often-large portion of time has been spent outside of the courts remit.

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

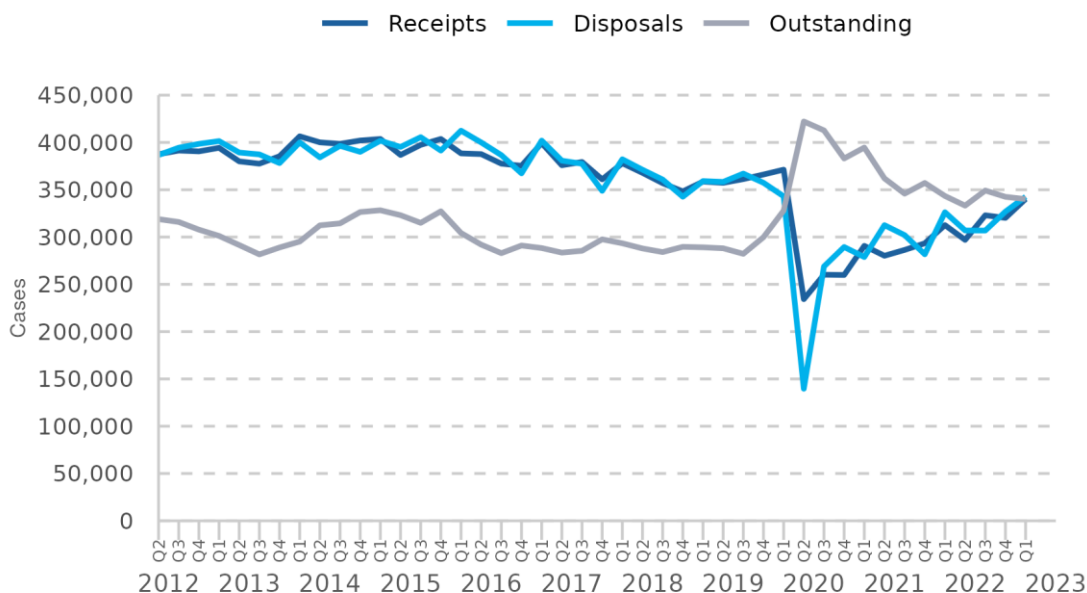
² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-common-platform-participating-criminal-courts>

2. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

Outstanding caseload at the magistrates' courts decreased as disposals volumes remained above case receipts.

Both receipts and disposals increased on the previous year and previous quarter. Disposals continued to exceed receipts, and as a result the outstanding caseload fell by 1% on the previous quarter.

Figure 1: Magistrates' courts caseload, Q2 2012 – Q1 2023 (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, despite continued increases seen the levels remain below those seen prior to the pandemic.

- Receipts into the magistrates' courts increased by 9% compared to the previous year and by 6% compared to the previous quarter.
- Disposals at the magistrates' court increased by 5% on the previous year and 5% on the previous quarter. The latest annual rise is largely due to a 29% increase in 'summary non-motoring' disposals.
- At the end of March 2023 there were 340,126 outstanding cases at the magistrates' courts. This represents a 1% decrease on the previous quarter (342,505) and a 19% decrease on the series peak seen in Q2 2020 (422,156).

The latest [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) beyond the published period. The data to April 2023 shows that disposals fell below receipts, as a result the open caseload increased – up 2% on the previous month and 3% on the previous year.

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/>

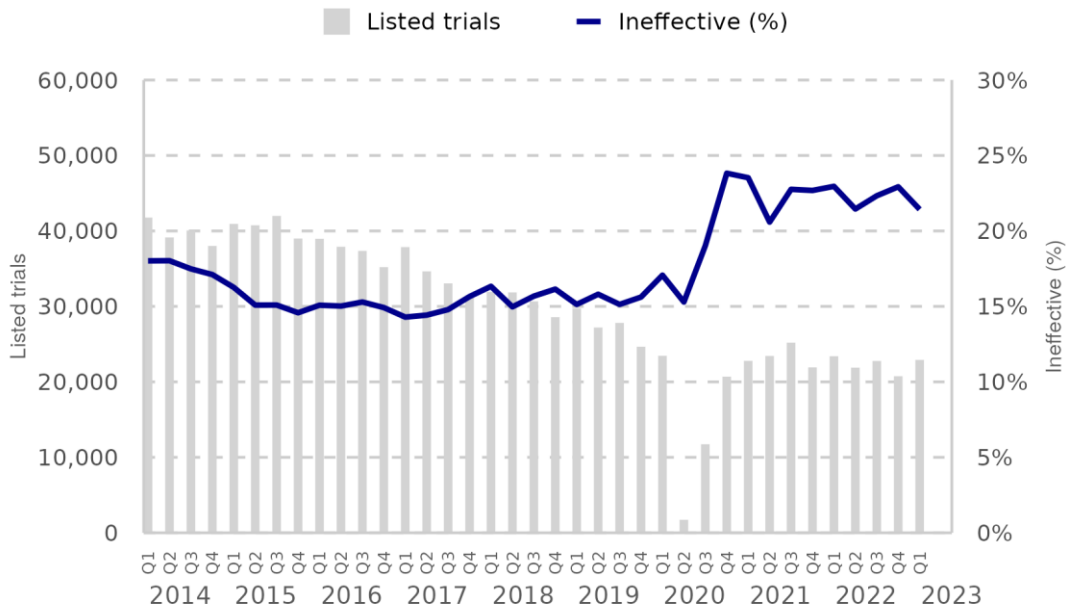
⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-face-to-face-hearings-as-courts-reopen>

Trial efficiency at magistrates' court

There were 20,908 trials listed for Q1 2023, this represents a 2% decrease on the previous year (23,398).

- Of trials listed for Q1 2023, the proportion that were effective increased on the previous quarter, from 39% to 42%. Correspondingly the ineffective rate (21%) fell but remained above pre-COVID levels (~15-17%).

Figure 2: Magistrates' courts listed trials and ineffective trial rate (%), Q1 2014 – Q1 2023 (Source: Table M2)



3. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

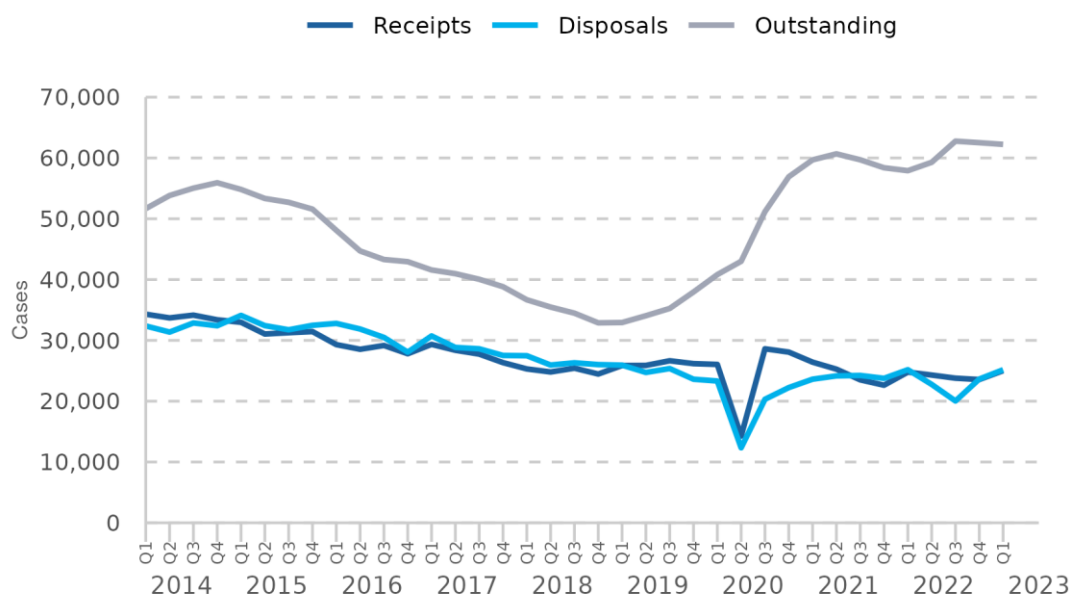
Small fall in the outstanding caseload at the Crown Court

Receipts and disposals increased on the previous quarter and are both in line with volumes seen a year ago. Disposals remained above receipts, so the outstanding caseload fell slightly, down by 0.4% in March 2023 compared to December 2022.

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 – Q1 2023 (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.

- There were 25,012 case receipts into the Crown Court in Q1 2023. This is up 6% on the previous quarter and 1% above levels seen in Q1 2022.
- There were 25,169 case disposals at the Crown Court in Q1 2023. This is a 6% increase on the previous quarter and back to levels seen in the previous year.
- There were 62,235 outstanding cases at the end of Q1 2023. This is down by 0.4% on the previous quarter (62,511 cases at the end of Q4 2022).

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 April 2023 shows that disposals fell below receipts in April 2023 and the open caseload has **increased**, up 1% on March 2023 and 7% on April 2022.

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

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

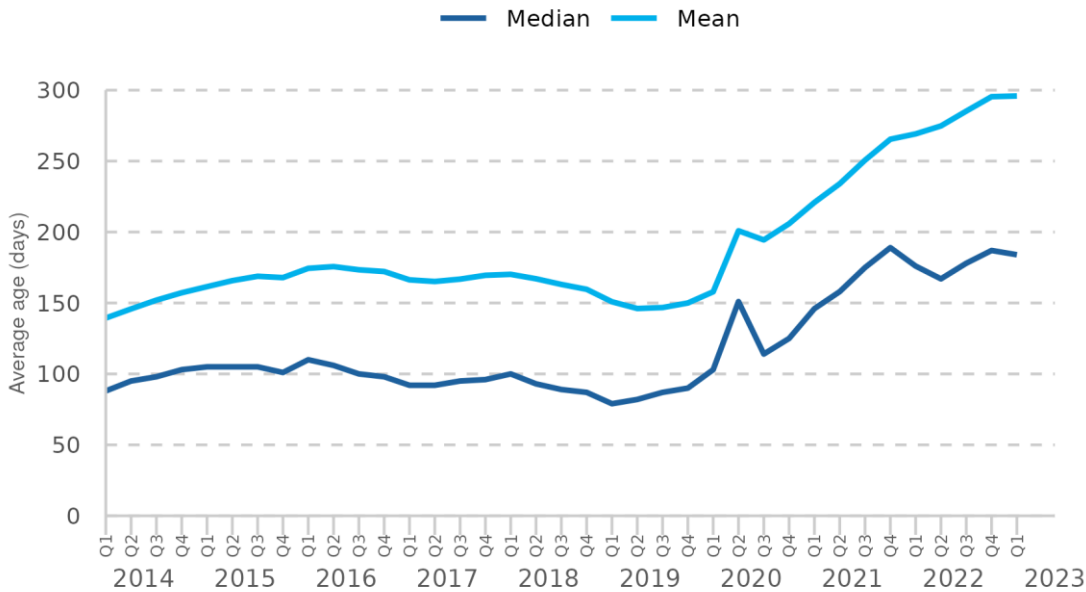
⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/crime-news-extension-of-fee-rises-after-moj-and-cba-deal>

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.

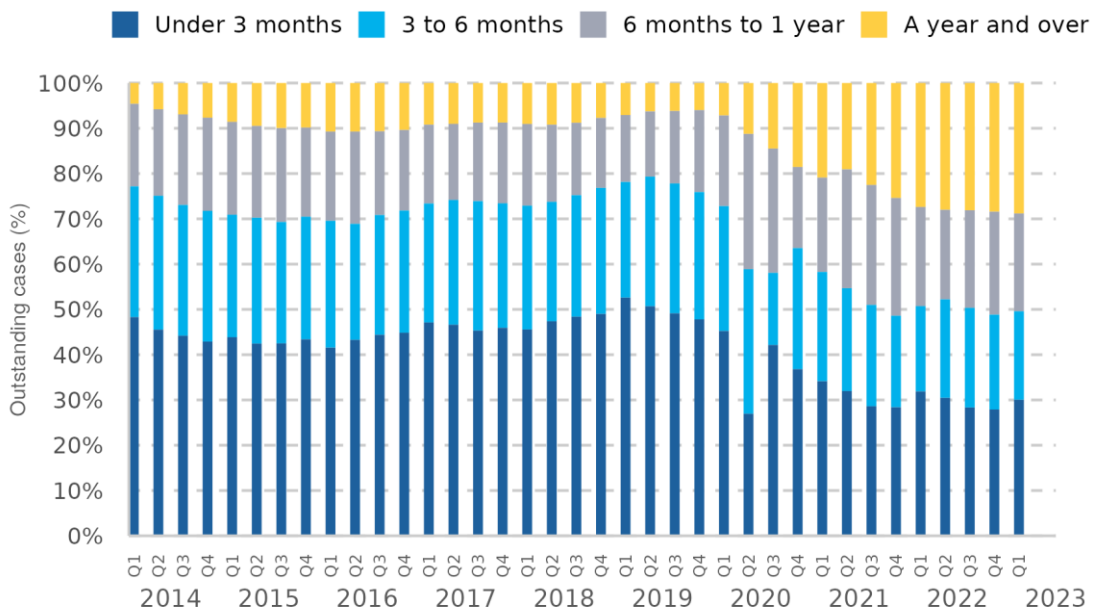
Figure 4: Age of outstanding cases at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q1 2023 (Source: Table O1)



The average age of an outstanding case has increased markedly on pre-COVID levels. Both the median and mean averages fell slightly on the previous quarter but remain close to series peaks.

- In Q1 2023 the median age of all outstanding cases decreased by 2% on the previous quarter, from 187 days to 184 days.

Figure 5: Proportion of outstanding cases at the Crown Court by grouped age, Q1 2014 – Q1 2023 (Source: Table O3)



At the end of Q1 2023 there were 17,284 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 6,073 cases which had been outstanding for over two years – this accounts for 10% of the outstanding caseload.

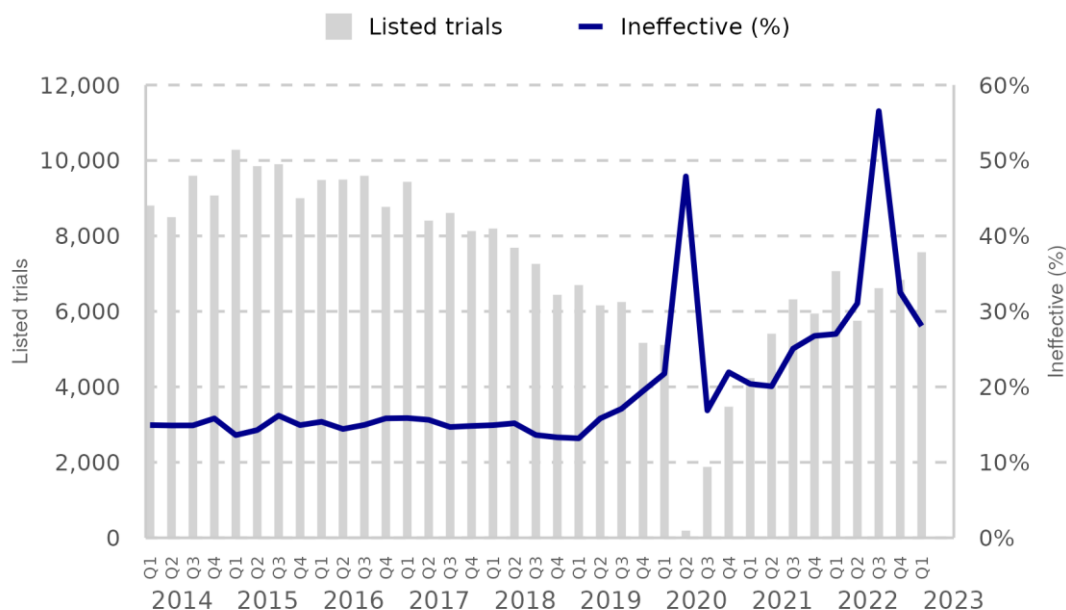
Trial efficiency at Crown Court

The volume of trials listed increased by 11% on the previous quarter and 7% on the previous year, with 7,569 listed trials scheduled in Q1 2023.

The effective trial rate continued to increase from a series low seen in Q3 2022 (25%), increasing on the previous quarter from 38% to 42%. There was a corresponding fall seen in the ineffective trial rate.

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 28% 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 – Q1 2023 (Source: Table C2)



'Overlisting (insufficient cases drop out/floater/backer not reached)' was the largest reason for ineffective trials, accounting for 20% (434 trials) in Q1 2023. This follows sharp falls in the volume of ineffective trials due to defence advocate availability following the conclusion of the Criminal Bar Association action in October 2022.

Guilty plea rate

The guilty plea rate⁹ increased sharply following the immediate COVID-19 response and the suspension of jury trials at the Crown Court. More recently it has fallen back to pre-COVID levels as the volume of 'not guilty plea' cases being disposed of has increased.

- In Q1 2023 the guilty plea rate was 66%, down from 69% in Q4 2022.
- There were 3,285 defendants dealt with in Q1 2023 who entered a not guilty plea (e.g., went to trial) – this is an increase of 23% on the previous quarter and

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

continues to increase following the resolution of the Criminal Bar Association industrial action which saw a dip in the series during Q3 2022 (1,917 defendants).

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 10.1 weeks in Q1 2023. This represents a 3% increase on the previous quarter (9.9 weeks), a 4% increase on the previous year (9.7 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 fell slightly, down 3% compared to the previous quarter - from 39.1 weeks in Q4 2022 to 38.0 weeks in Q1 2023. This remains well above pre-COVID levels (25.4 weeks in Q1 2020).

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 remained stable at 12.4 hours (in line with levels seen in the previous quarter and previous year), in contrast to around one hour for all cases (e.g., for trial, sentence and appeal cases).

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 increased at both the magistrates' court and Crown Court

The median time from offence to completion for cases completing at the magistrates' and Crown Court both increased on the previous quarter, up 6% and 8% respectively.

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.

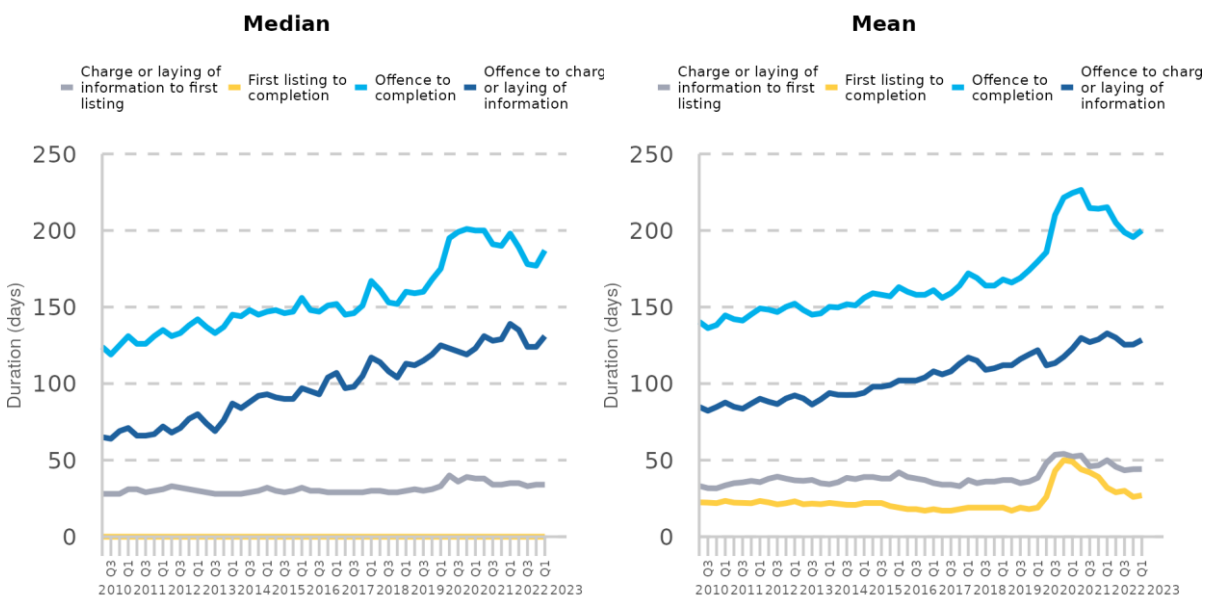
Alongside the gradual development of the experimental end-to-end series we will continue to best meet user demands via more granular data on separate ('unlinked') timeliness estimates for magistrates' courts and Crown Court.

- *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 – Q1 2023 (Source: Table T3)



The median duration from offence to completion at the magistrates' courts has tended to fall back from series highs of around 200 days seen in late 2020 and early 2021. However, the latest quarterly estimates increased by 6% on the previous quarter, up from 177 days in Q4 2022 to 187 days in Q1 2023.

- 'Pre-court': the median time from 'offence to charge' was up 6% on the previous quarter (131 days). The median time from 'charge to first listing' was 34 days, broadly 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 remained stable at 27 days – 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).

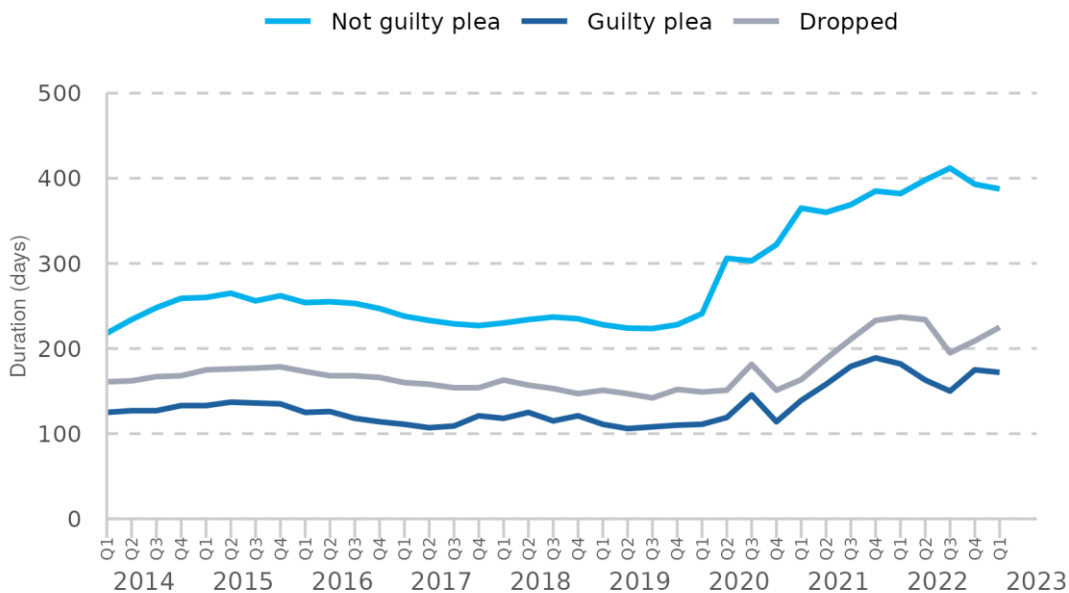
Crown Court timeliness - experimental statistics

'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 163 days. This represents a 3% increase on the previous quarter (159 days) and is close to the series peak seen in Q4 2021 (164 days).

The quarterly trends in timeliness from receipt to completion will be largely due to changes in the underlying case mix. There was a 23% increase in the volume of disposed cases which follow a 'not guilty plea' compared to the previous quarter, and which take longer to complete at court.

Figure 8: Median duration from receipt to completion in 'for trial' cases by plea at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q1 2023 (Source: E2)



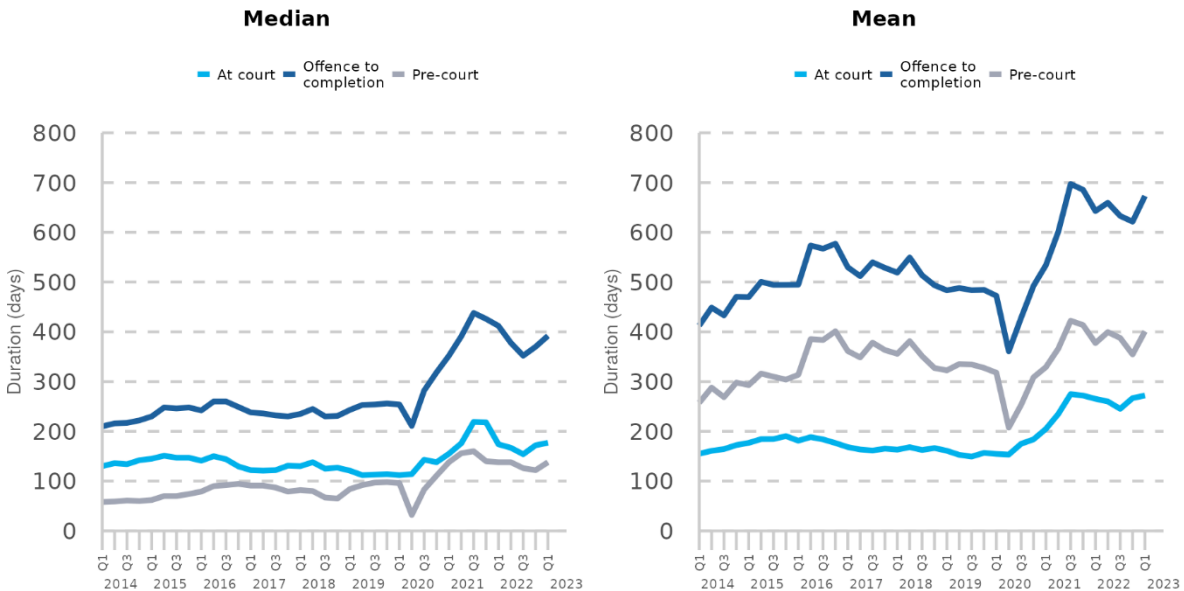
In 'for trial' cases where a not guilty plea was entered, the median duration from receipt to completion continued to fall, down 1% on the previous quarter (from 393 to 388 days).

End-to-end timeliness - experimental statistics

The median duration from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court increased by 8%, up from 370 days in Q4 2022 to 398 days in Q1 2023.

This is the second successive quarterly increase and follows a period of small quarterly falls from a series peak of 438 days in Q3 2021. The latest median estimate of 398 days remains well above pre-COVID levels (254 days in Q1 2020).

Figure 9: Average number of days from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court, Q1 2014 – Q1 2023 (Source: T4)



- 'Pre-court': the median time from 'offence to first listing' increased by 15% from 122 days in Q4 2022 to 140 days in Q1 2023 – this is the first quarterly increase seen since a series peak of 160 days in Q3 2021.
- 'At court': the median time from first listing at the magistrates' courts to completion at the Crown Court increased by 5%, from 172 days in Q4 2022 to 180 days in Q1 2023. Despite the increases seen the latest estimate is below the series peak seen in Q3 2021 (219 days) but remains well above levels seen pre-COVID (112 days in Q1 2020).

5. Enforcement of financial impositions

Total financial impositions fell

The total value of financial impositions made in Q1 2023 was £164.2 million, down sharply on Q4 2022 (£355.8m) but up 18% on the previous year (£139.4m).

The total value of outstanding financial impositions was £1.47 billion in Q1 2023, up by 3% on the previous quarter (£1.42 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 Q1 2023 the total value of impositions fell sharply on the previous period – this is due to the impact of a single large fine imposed and collected in Q4 2022.

The latest imposition figure is 18% above that seen in the previous year, with increases seen across all imposition types – most notably a near doubling in the amount imposed for victim surcharge, up from £13.6m in Q1 2022 to £27.0m in Q1 2023. This follows changes to rate of victim surcharge from June 2022.

Outstanding financial impositions

In Q1 2023, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £1.47 billion, up 3% on the previous quarter and 4% on 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

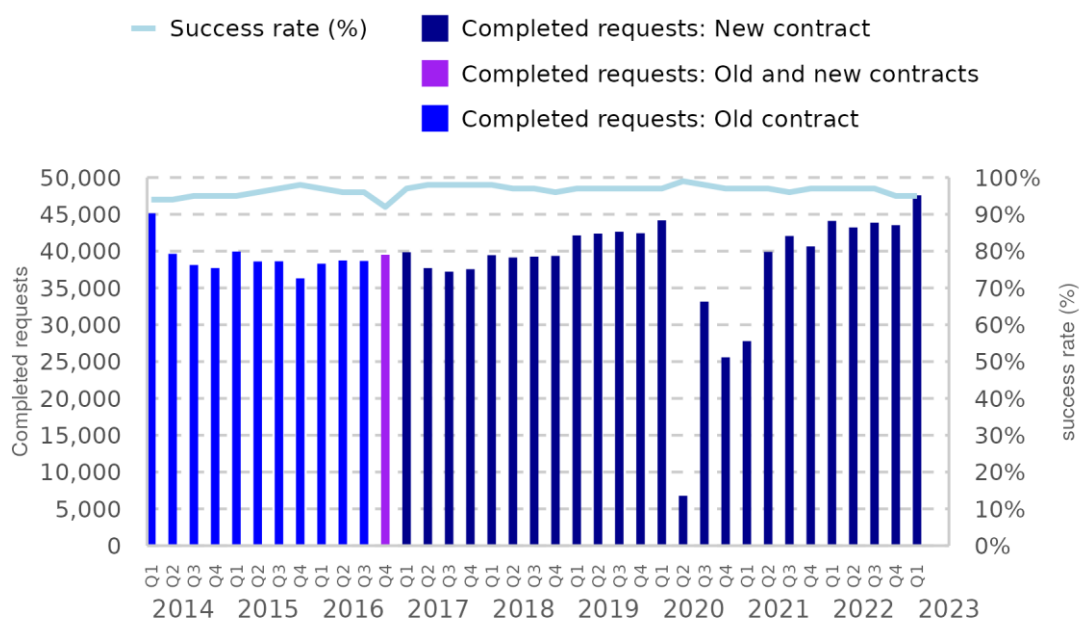
The number of completed language service requests increased to a series high while the success rate remained at 95%.

There were 47,585 completed requests in Q1 2023, up by 9% on the previous quarter. The success rate remained stable at 95% - the lowest seen since Q4 2016 (92%).

Completed service requests

The volume of completed service requests increased markedly and the latest levels represent a series peak. There were 47,585 completed requests in Q1 2023, a 9% increase on the previous quarter (43,530).

Figure 10: Number of completed language service requests and overall success rate, Q1 2014 – Q1 2023 (Source: Table L1)



Success rate

The overall success rate in Q1 2023 was 95% - this fell from 97% in Q3 2022 to 95% in Q4 2022 and remains unchanged. This is lowest reported success rate since the 'new contract' was introduced in Q4 2016 (92%) and reflects a sharp increase in the volume of unfulfilled requests, up 54% from 985 in Q3 2022 to 1,763 in Q1 2023.

Cancellations (excluded from the success rate) increased by 7% on the previous quarter and represents 22% of bookings. This is similar to most periods since it peaked at 34% in Q2 2020 but above levels seen pre-COVID.

Complaints and complaint rate

The number of complaints has remained low since Q2 2020, with 230 complaints made in Q1 2023. This has increased on the previous quarter (215) but remains well below levels seen pre-COVID (436 complaints in Q1 2020). The overall complaint rate was 0.5% in Q1 2023 and has remained below 1% since Q3 2020.

'Off-contract' requests

The number of 'off-contract' requests in Q1 2023 increased by 50% on the previous quarter from 1,340 in Q4 2022 to 2,015 in Q1 2023 – this is the second highest reported value (Q2 2013 peak of 2,929 requests).

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.gov.uk

Other enquiries and feedback about these statistics should be directed to the 'Data & Analysis: Courts and People' division of the Ministry of Justice:

Criminal Courts and Sentencing Data and Statistics,
Ministry of Justice, 10 South Colonnade, London, E14 4PU
Email: criminal_court_sta@justice.gov.uk

Next update: 28th September 2023

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

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

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