



Quarterly Criminal Court Statistics - Report 4 – Quarter 4 2018/19

An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

Criminal court cases activity from Quarter 1 2014/15 to Quarter 4 2018/19

This is the fourth statistical bulletin providing quarterly Official Statistics on criminal case activity in the High, Sheriff and Justice of the Peace courts in Scotland.

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) aims to provide the people, buildings and services to enable criminal cases to call in court. The statistics show the volume of criminal first instance court cases over time as they flow through court.

The statistics in this bulletin do not have information relating to accused persons in terms of what they were charged with or their resulting conviction or sentence as there are already well-established National Statistics on these aspects of criminal justice. This bulletin does not cover court cases relating to civil business. See the Scottish Government's website for statistics relating to criminal or civil justice:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice>

Commentary on high level trends in criminal court case activity

All Criminal Courts

There were 102,825 first instance criminal cases registered in Scottish courts in 2018/19 which is 6% less than the number of cases registered in 2017/18. Most of the reduction in cases registered is attributable to changes in summary crime rather than solemn crime.

The number of trials scheduled is an indication of system capacity as it shows the volume of trial business at the end of each financial year or quarter. There was improvement in this figure with the number of trials scheduled reducing by 12% to 16,011 when scheduled trials at the end of March 2018 are compared to those still to call as at the end of March 2019.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 5.6% in 2014/15 to 3.5% in 2018/19 – a drop of 2.1 percentage points.

The High Court of Justiciary

The volume of indictments registered in recent quarters continues to be above 200 per quarter. Evidence led trials during the same period continues to be high with a 10% increase apparent when 2018/19 is compared to 2017/18. This trend regarding volume is anticipated to continue due to increased reporting of sexual offending cases. (see 'Recorded Crime in Scotland 2017-18': <https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0054/00540695.pdf>)

There were 268 trials scheduled at the end of Q4 2018/19 which is a 14% rise when compared to Q3 2018/19.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 2.2% in 2014/15 to 1.5% in 2018/19 – a drop of 0.7 percentage points.

The Sheriff Court – solemn business

A change in the volume of petitions registered is a useful indicator of changes in future levels of solemn business as petitions tend to become registered indictments at the High Court or Sheriff Court. Q4 2018/19 shows an increase of 5% to 2430 petitions when compared to Q3 2018/19. It is anticipated that the volume of petitions being registered will continue to be high due to the increase in prosecution of sexual offending cases.

Q4 2018/19 shows an increase from Q3 2018-19 to 1333 registered indictments (4%).

The volume of evidence led trials in Q4 2018/19 is 287 with 2018/19 being 7% higher than 2017/18.

The number of trials scheduled continues to show an upward trend when Q4 2018/19 is compared to the other quarters in 2018/19.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 7.1% in 2014/15 to 2% in 2018/19 – a drop of 5.1 percentage points.

The Sheriff Court – summary business

Summary business in the Sheriff Court has seen a 9% decrease in the volume of complaints registered between 2017/18 and 2018/19 with around 15,000 complaints per quarter being registered. Cases calling for trial during this period mirror this trend with an 11% reduction over the last year.

The volume of evidence led trials rose by 4% between Q4 2018/19 and Q3 2018/19 to 1949 evidence led trials.

The volume of trials scheduled shows a reduction of 6% over the last two quarters but the latest quarter is still less than any other quarter covered by this bulletin.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 6.1% in 2014/15 to 4.0% in 2018/19 – a drop of 2.1 percentage points.

The Justice of the Peace Court

The Justice of the Peace Court has seen a 4% decrease in the volume of cases registered between 2018/19 and 2017/18.

The volume of evidence led trials dropped by 12% over the period 2017/18 to 2018/19 but an increase of 11% is seen when the two most recent quarters are compared.

The volume of trials scheduled at the end of Q4 2018/19 has bucked the upward trend seen in recent quarters and has returned to a comparable level to that seen at the end of March 2018.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 4.0% in 2014/15 to 2.0% in 2018/19 – a drop of 2 percentage points.

Data tables

This [link](#) provides an Excel workbook with tables and interactive charts.

Background

This is the third bulletin in a new series of quarterly reports on criminal court activity and can be viewed within the 'Statistics' section of webpage: <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/reports-data>.

Revisions and corrections

There are no revisions or corrections to report.

Guidance on definitions and data

See the Glossary and Data Notes worksheet within the Excel workbook

Shaping Scotland's Court Services

As part of [Shaping Scotland's Court Services](#) work, a number of courts closed with relevant live business transferring to receiving courts.

Closed Court	Receiving Court
<i>End of November 2013</i>	
Annan JP Court Cumbernauld JP Court Dornoch Sheriff and JP Court Irvine JP Court Kirkcudbright Sheriff and JP Court Motherwell JP Court Portree JP Court Rothesay Sheriff Court Stornoway JP Court Wick JP Court	Dumfries JP Court Coatbridge JP Court Tain Sheriff and JP Court Kilmarnock JP Court Dumfries Sheriff and JP Court Hamilton JP Court Portree Sheriff Court Greenock Sheriff and JP Court Stornoway Sheriff Court Wick Sheriff Court
<i>End of May 2014</i>	
Arbroath Sheriff and JP Court Cupar Sheriff and JP Court Stonehaven Sheriff and JP Court	Forfar Sheriff and JP Court Dundee Sheriff and JP Court Aberdeen Sheriff and JP Court
<i>End of July 2015</i>	
Dingwall Sheriff and JP Court Duns Sheriff and JP Court Haddington Sheriff and JP Court Peebles Sheriff and JP Court	Inverness Sheriff and JP Court Jedburgh Sheriff and JP Court Edinburgh Sheriff and JP Court Selkirk Sheriff and JP Court

Contacts

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Further information about Official and National Statistics in Scotland is available from <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/producingstats>

Access to official statistics in their final form before they are published is restricted. The following list details who received pre-release access to the statistics in their final form within the maximum period of 5 working days before publication:

Chief Operations Officer, Court and OPG Operations, SCTS
Director of Operations - Delivery, SCTS
Principal Clerk of Session & Justiciary, SCTS
Deputy Principal Clerk of Justiciary, SCTS
Head of Corporate Communications, SCTS
Media Officer, Corporate Communications, SCTS
Web developer, Information Technology Unit, SCTS
Head of Policy, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
Statistician, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
Statistician, Justice Analytical Services, Scottish Government
Media Officer, Justice Communications, Scottish Government
Policy Implementation Manager, Criminal Justice Division, Scottish Government

The next quarterly bulletin of Criminal Court statistics will be published in September 2019. The exact date of the report will be announced via the Scottish Government's Forthcoming Publications Schedule - <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/ForthcomingPubs> at least 4 weeks in advance.