



An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

Criminal court cases activity from Quarter 1 2014/15 to Quarter 1 2023/24

This statistical bulletin is part of a series providing quarterly Official Statistics on first instance criminal case activity in the High, Sheriff and Justice of the Peace courts. Annual statistics for custody and remand, crime and offence breakdowns and criminal appeals are also provided.

Notice

On 1st April 2023, the planned recovery resource switch from summary to solemn business occurred meaning ten fewer Sheriff summary trial courts, two additional High Court and six additional Sheriff Solemn trial courts.

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 and second 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 first instance criminal court case activity

All Criminal Courts

The volume of first instance criminal cases registered in Scottish courts has risen by 1% from the previous quarter with 22,642 cases registered in the period.

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 has been an increase of 2% to 28,073 trials when scheduled trials at the end of June 2023 are compared to those still to call as at the end of March 2023 (27,406).

16,461 trials were called in Q1 2023/24 which is a 19% drop on the volume called in Q4 2022/23 (20,329)

Evidence led trials were down 17% on the previous quarter with 2,055 taking place in Q1 2023/24 compared to Q4 2022/23 (2,488).

In Q1 2023/24, the percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time remained consistent with the previous quarter at 2.5%, and lower than the pre-COVID position of 2.9% in 2019/20.

The number of cases concluded is 11% lower than Q4 2022/23, with 22,311 cases concluded in Q1 2023/24.

The High Court of Justiciary

The volume of indictments registered is 11% lower for Q1 2023/24 (203) compared to Q4 2022/23 (227).

There was a 12% increase in evidence led trials from 170 in Q4 2022/23 to 190 in Q1 2023/24. Since 1st April 2023, there have been two additional trial courts available. Trials scheduled at the end of June 2023 is 654, a decrease of 5% when compared to 687 scheduled at the end of March 2023.

A total of 273 indictments were concluded in Q1 2023/24, which is a rise of 30% from the number concluded in Q4 2022/23 (210).

The Sheriff Court – solemn business

The volume of petitions registered is a useful indicator of future levels of solemn business as petitions tend to become registered indictments at the High Court or Sheriff Court. The number of petitions registered in Q1 2023/24 is 2,928. This is an 8% drop from the 3,189 reported in Q4 2022/23.

Indictments registered in Q1 2023/24 is 1,906, an increase of 18% from 1,616 registered in Q4 2022/23.

In Q1 2023/24, the volume of evidence led trials (325) has increased by 8% when compared to Q4 2022/23 (302). Since 1st April 2023, there have been six additional trial courts available.

As at the end of June 2023, the number of trials scheduled is 2,223 a 7% reduction when compared to the volume scheduled as at the end of March 2023 (2,389).

1,964 indictments were concluded in Q1 2023/24, which is a 4% increase from the 1,889 concluded in Q4 2022/23.

The Sheriff Court – summary business

There has been a rise of 4% in the volume of registered complaints from 15,394 in Q4 2022/23 to 16,023 in Q1 2023/24.

95% of domestic abuse court cases are heard at the Sheriff Summary Court. In Q1 2023/24, 22% of the total summary complaints registered in the Sheriff Court were domestic abuse cases. This proportion is similar to previous quarters.

There were 12,125 Sheriff Summary cases called for trial in Q1 2023/24, down 23% from Q4 2022/23 (15,692). The number of evidence led trials has decreased by 26% to 1,295 in the latest quarter compared to 1,757 in the previous quarter. From 1st April 2023 there were ten fewer trial courts available for summary business.

Trials adjourned due to lack of court time increased to 2.6% in Q1 2023/24 compared to 2.2% in Q4 2022/23.

Domestic abuse cases account for 27% of Sheriff Summary trials called and 33% of those Sheriff Summary trials in which evidence was led.

The volume of Sheriff Summary trials scheduled as at the end of June 2023, has risen by 6% since the end of March 2023 to 21,202. Domestic abuse scheduled trials increased by 3% to 4,234 over the same period.

Q1 2023/24 saw 15,184 complaints concluded which is a reduction of 13% compared to the volume concluded in Q4 2022/23. 22% of these conclusions were domestic abuse cases.

The Justice of the Peace Court

The number of cases registered in the reporting period fell by 11% to 4,510 when compared to Q4 2022/23.

The volume of evidence led trials is 245 for Q1 2023/24 a 5% decrease on Q4 2022/23 (259). 1.0% of trials were adjourned due to lack of court time in Q1 2023/24, which is a drop from the previous quarter (1.3%).

As at the end of June 2023, the number of trials scheduled has decreased by 6% to 3,994 when compared to the end of March 2023.

4,890 complaints were concluded in the latest quarter, 12% less than the number of complaints concluded in Q4 2022/23.

Commentary on high level trends in second instance criminal court case activity

Commentary is provided once a year when the annual update is made to the appeals data tables. Please see QCC bulletins 4, 8, 12, 16 and 20.

Data tables

The Q1 2023/24 Excel workbook with interactive tables and charts is located on webpage: <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/official-statistics>

Background

This is the latest bulletin in a series of quarterly reports on criminal court activity and can be viewed on webpage: <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/official-statistics>

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:

Executive Director, Court Operations, SCTS
Director of Operations Delivery, SCTS
Principal Clerk of Session & Justiciary, SCTS
Deputy Principal Clerk of Justiciary, SCTS
Director of Corporate Communications, SCTS
Media Officer, Corporate Communications, SCTS
Web developer, Change and Digital Innovation, 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 December 2023. 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 and on the SCTS' Official Statistics webpage <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/official-statistics>.