



An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

Criminal court cases activity from Quarter 1 2014/15 to Quarter 3 2022/23

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 showing custody and remand rates; crime and offence breakdowns; protected characteristics (sex, ethnicity and age) and criminal appeals are also provided.

Notice

In October 2020, to meet the needs of justice partners, court users and the media, the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service commenced the publication of a monthly workbook of Management Information showing interim monthly business volumes and trends for first instance criminal cases calling at Scottish courts during the pandemic. The monthly workbook, which is not designated as Official Statistics, may be used alongside these quarterly Official Statistics. <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/official-statistics>

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

There were 20,237 first instance criminal cases registered in Scottish courts in Q3 2022/23, which is a 3% decrease from the number registered in Q2.

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 decrease of 10% to 30,305 trials when scheduled trials at the end of December 2022 are compared to those still to call as at the end of September 2022 (33,594). This reduction relates to Summary business.

In Q3 2022/23, the number of trials called was 19,477, a drop of 5% from the previous quarter.

Evidence led trials were up 4% on the previous quarter with 2,219 taking place in Q3 2022/23 compared to Q2 2022/23 (2,127).

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time has gone up from 1.9% in Q2 2022/23 to 2.1% in Q3 2022/23 – an increase of 0.2 percentage points, but remains lower than the pre-COVID position of 2.9% in 2019/20.

21,862 cases were concluded in Q3 2022/23 – a decrease of 8% from Q2 2022/23.

The High Court of Justiciary

The volume of indictments registered in the latest quarter has fallen by 6% to 237 in Q3 2022/23 from 251 in Q2 2022/23.

Evidence led trials in Q3 2022/23 have seen a decrease of 7% from the previous quarter, with 136 evidence led trials occurring in the period.

Trials scheduled at the end of December 2022 have risen by 9% to 698 when compared to trials scheduled as at the end of September 2022 (641).

In Q3 2022/23, 195 indictments were concluded, which is broadly consistent with the previous quarter.

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. Q3 2022/23 shows a fall of 3% to 2,741 petitions when compared to Q2 2022/23.

In this reporting quarter, the number of indictments registered is 1,415, which is 6% lower than the 1,512 registered in Q2 2022/23.

As at the end of December 2022, the number of trials scheduled is 2,438, an increase of 5% when compared with the volume scheduled as at the end of September 2022 (2,331).

The number of evidence led trials in Q3 2022/23 has fallen by 3% when compared to Q2 2022/23.

1,397 indictments were concluded in Q3 2022/23, which is a 2% decrease from the number concluded in Q2 2022/23 (1,421).

The Sheriff Court – summary business

In Q3 2022/23 there has been an increase of 3% in the volume of registered complaints to 13,957 from 13,546 in Q2 2022/23.

95% of domestic abuse court cases are heard at the Sheriff Summary Court. In Q3 2022/23, 23% of the total summary complaints registered in the Sheriff Court were domestic abuse cases. This proportion is similar to previous quarters.

The number of Sheriff Summary cases called for trial in Q3 2022/23 is 14,750 which is a reduction of 6% from Q2 2022/23. Evidence led trials has increased by 6% for the reporting period, with 1,558 evidence led trials taking place.

Trials adjourned due to lack of court time increased to 1.8% in Q3 2022/23 compared with 1.2% in Q2 2022/23.

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

As at the end of December 2022, the volume of Sheriff Summary trials scheduled is 22,235, which is 10% lower than at the end of September 2022. Domestic abuse scheduled trials decreased by 9% (419 trials) to 4,386 scheduled trials over the same period.

Q3 2022/23 saw 14,752 complaints concluded which is a reduction of 6% compared to the volume concluded in Q2 2022/23. A quarter of these conclusions were domestic abuse cases.

The Justice of the Peace Court

For the reporting quarter, the number of cases registered has fallen by 15% on the previous quarter to 4,628.

The number of evidence led trials is 271 in Q3 2022/23, which is 12% higher than in Q2 2022/23.

0.9% of trials were adjourned due to lack of court time in Q3 2022/23, which is similar to the previous quarter (0.8%).

As at the end of December 2022, the number of trials scheduled has decreased by 17% to 4,934 when compared to the end of September 2022.

5,518 complaints were concluded in the latest quarter, 12% less than the number of complaints concluded in Q2 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 and 16.

Data tables

The Q3 2022/23 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 June 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>.