



**Quarterly Criminal Court Statistics - Report 1 – Quarter 1 2018/19**

**An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland**

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

This is the inaugural statistical bulletin to provide 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 109,881 first instance criminal cases registered in Scottish courts in 2017/18 which is 25% less than the number of cases registered in 2014/15 and 7% less than 2016/17. Most of the reduction in cases registered is attributable to changes in summary crime rather than solemn crime.

The volume of trials scheduled is an indication of system capacity as it shows the outstanding trial business at the end of each financial year. There was improvement in this figure with the number of trials scheduled reducing by 45% when scheduled trials at the end of March 2015 is compared to those still to call as at the end of March 2018.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 5.6% in 2014/15 to 4.1% in 2017/18 – a drop of 1.5 percentage points.

The High Court of Justiciary

The volume of indictments registered in Q4 2017/18 and Q1 2018/19 shows an upward trend. Evidence led trials during the same period show a similar upwards trend. This 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> )

The rise in indictments registered in the last two quarters suggests that trials called and evidence led trials will continue rise in future quarters.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 2.2% in 2014/15 to 0.0% in 2017/18.

### 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. Q1 2018/19 shows an increase of 13% to 2279 petitions when compared to the Q4 2017/18. It is anticipated that this trend will continue due to the increase in prosecution of sexual offending cases.

Q1 2018/19 shows a rise of 9%, from Q4 2017-18, to 1309 registered indictments which indicates an increase in solemn trials in future quarters.

The number of evidence led trials shows an increase of 9% when Q1 2018/19 is compared to Q4 2017/18.

The volume of trials scheduled shows an improvement of 60% over the period from the end of March 2015 to end of March 2018.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 7.1% in 2014/15 to 3.8% in 2017/18 – a drop of 3.3 percentage points.

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### The Sheriff Court – summary business

Summary business in the Sheriff Court has seen an 8% decrease in the volume of complaints registered between 2014/15 and 2017/18, with a 6% increase in cases called for trial.

The volume of evidence led trials dropped by 2% between Q1 2018/19 and Q4 2017/18. The trend is fairly flat.

The volume of trials scheduled at the end of each financial year shows an improvement of 32% over the period.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 6.1% in 2014/15 to 4.7% in 2017/18 – a drop of 1.4 percentage points.

### The Justice of the Peace Court

The Justice of the Peace Court has seen a 42% decrease in the volume of cases registered between 2014/15 and 2017/18.

The volume of evidence led trials dropped by 36% over the period 2014/15 to 2017/18 but by only 3% between 2016/17 and 2017/18 indicating that the volume is stabilising.

The volume of trials scheduled at the end of each financial year shows an improvement of 67% over the period.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 4.0% in 2014/15 to 2.3% in 2017/18 – a drop of 1.7 percentage points.

## Data tables

This link

<http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/aboutscs/reports-and-data/criminal-court-statistics/gcc01/scts-quarterly-criminal-court-statistics---workbook---q1-2018-19.xlsm?sfvrsn=2>

provides an Excel workbook with tables and interactive charts.

## Background

This is the first 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 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

Press enquiries on the contents of this bulletin should be directed to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service communications office

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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 December 2018. 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.

