



## Quarterly Criminal Court Statistics - Report 6 – Quarter 2 2019/20

### An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

#### Criminal court cases activity from Quarter 1 2014/15 to Quarter 2 2019/20

This is the sixth statistical bulletin providing quarterly Official Statistics on first and second instance criminal case activity in the High, Sheriff, Justice of the Peace and Sheriff Criminal Appeal 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 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 most recent quarter shows that 26,726 first instance criminal cases were registered which is a 7% rise when compared to the first quarter of 2019/20.

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 a 6% rise to 17,430 trials when scheduled trials at the end of June 2019 are compared to those still to call as at the end of September 2019.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 5.6% in 2014/15 to 2.9% in the first two quarters of 2019/20 – a drop of 2.7 percentage points.

##### The High Court of Justiciary

The volume of indictments registered in recent quarters continues to be above 200 per quarter with a rise of 10% to 272 over the last two quarters. Evidence led trials during the same period continue to be high with over 100 in each of the last thirteen quarters. This trend regarding volume is anticipated to continue due to increased reporting of sexual offending cases. (see 'Recorded Crime in Scotland 2018-19':

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2018-19> )

There were 304 trials scheduled at the end of Q2 2019/20 which is a 3% drop when compared to the end of Q1 2019/20.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 3.0% in Q1 2019/20 to 0.9% in Q2 2019/20 – a drop of 2.1 percentage points.

#### 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. Q2 2019/20 is comparable to Q1 2019/20 at 2,506 petitions. 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.

Q2 2019/20 shows a 4% decrease from Q1 2019/20 to 1,327 registered indictments.

The volume of evidence led trials in Q2 2019/20 is 291 which is 3% less than Q1 2019/20.

The number of trials scheduled shows a 9% increase in the number scheduled to call when the last two quarters are compared.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 2.3% in Q1 2019/20 to 1.1% in Q2 2019/20 – a drop of 1.2 percentage points.

#### The Sheriff Court – summary business

Summary business in the Sheriff Court has seen a 6% rise in the volume of complaints registered between Q2 2019/20 and Q1 2019/20 with 16,793 complaints registered this quarter. The volume of cases called for trial in Q2 2019/20 is 9,787 which is similar to Q1 2019/20.

The volume of evidence led trials decreased by 5% between Q2 2019/20 and Q1 2019/20 to 1,734 evidence led trials.

The volume of trials scheduled shows a rise of 9% over the last two quarters to 13,186 trials still to call as at the end of September 2019.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 3.5% in Q1 2019/20 to 2.9% in Q2 2019/20 – a drop of 0.6 percentage points.

#### The Justice of the Peace Court

The Justice of the Peace Court has seen an 11% increase in the volume of cases registered between Q2 2019/20 and Q1 2019/20.

The volume of evidence led trials dropped by 17% to 362 when the two most recent quarters are compared.

The volume of trials scheduled at the end of September 2019 has improved by 5% to 3,452 trials still to call when compared to the end of June 2019.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time rose from 1.6% in Q1 2019/20 to 2.5% in Q2 2019/20 – a rise 0.9 percentage points.

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

### All criminal appeals

The volume of criminal appeals registered has dropped between 2014/15 and 2018/19 by 18%.

Of the appeals registered in 2018/19, 16% relate to appeal solely against conviction, 67% to appeal solely against sentence and 17% to a joint appeal against conviction and sentence showing that appeals solely against sentence are the most common type.

Sustained appeals expressed as a percentage of registered appeals rises from 11% in 2014/15 to 16% in 2018/19. Most of this change relates to appeals solely against sentence which was 13% in 2014/15 and 21% in 2018/19.

The most successful type of appeal is solely against sentence which account for 88% of all sustained appeals in 2018/19.

51% of appeals registered in 2018/19 relate to summary business and 49% relate to solemn business. 87% of summary appeals are from Sheriff Court cases.

### Appeals at the High Court of Justiciary

Since the Sheriff Criminal Appeal Court commenced on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2015, registration of appeals at the High Court of Justiciary sits at the anticipated levels following the introduction of the new appeal Court. Approximately 600 appeals per year are being received. Three in five relate to appeals solely against sentence.

Less than 8% of High Court appeals are sustained. The most common type of successful appeal in 2018/19 is solely against sentence at 81%.

### Appeals at the Sheriff Criminal Appeal Court

The Sheriff Criminal Appeal Court saw 626 appeals registered in 2018/19 which is 11% lower than the 700 registered in 2016/17 – the first full financial year since the new appeal court commenced in September 2015. Three in four relate to appeal solely against sentence.

In 2018/19, 23% of appeals registered at the Sheriff Criminal Appeal Court were sustained. The most common type of successful appeal is solely against sentence at 90% of sustained appeals.

## Data tables

The Q2 2019/20 Excel workbook with interactive tables and charts is located on webpage: <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/official-statistics>

## Background

This is the sixth 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

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 March 2020. 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>.