



Quarterly Criminal Court Statistics - Report 5 – Quarter 1 2019/20

An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

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

This is the fifth statistical bulletin providing quarterly Official Statistics on criminal case activity in the High, Sheriff and Justice of the Peace courts in Scotland. Appeal statistics have been introduced to the bulletin.

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 25,041 cases were registered with significant increases in High Court, Sheriff Court Solemn and Sheriff Court Summary business. Overall there were 102,825 first instance criminal cases registered in Scottish courts in 2018/19 which is 6% less than in 2017/18 - this reduction being due to the continuing drop in business within the Justice of the Peace Courts.

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 rise in the number of trials scheduled of 3% to 16,492 when scheduled trials at the end of March 2019 are compared to those still to call as at the end of June 2019.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 5.6% in 2014/15 to 3.1% in the first quarter of 2019/20 – a drop of 2.5 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 continue to be high with over 100 in each of the last twelve quarters. 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 315 trials scheduled at the end of Q1 2019/20 which is an 18% rise when compared to Q4 2018/19 and a 64% increase when compared to Q1 2018/19.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell slightly from 3.3% in Q4 2018/19 to 3.0% in Q1 2019/20 – a drop of 0.3 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. Q1 2019/20 shows an increase of 3% to 2502 petitions when compared to Q4 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.

Q1 2019/20 shows an increase from Q4 2018-19 to 1385 registered indictments (4%).

The volume of evidence led trials in Q1 2019/20 is 299 which is 4% higher than Q4 2018/19.

The number of trials scheduled shows improvement with a 9% reduction in the volume still to call when the last two quarters are compared. .

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 7.1% in 2014/15 to 2.3% in Q1 2019/20 – a drop of 4.8 percentage points.

The Sheriff Court – summary business

Summary business in the Sheriff Court has seen a 5% rise in the volume of complaints registered between Q1 2019/20 and Q4 2018/19 with nearly 16,000 complaints registered this quarter. 9818 cases called for trial in Q1 2019/20 which is an 11% reduction compared to Q4 2018/19.

The volume of evidence led trials decreased by 6% between Q1 2019/20 and Q4 2018/19 to 1832 evidence led trials.

The volume of trials scheduled shows a rise of 7% over the last two quarters to 12,088 trials still to call as at the end of June 2019.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 6.1% in 2014/15 to 3.5% in Q1 2019/20 – a drop of 2.6 percentage points.

The Justice of the Peace Court

The Justice of the Peace Court has seen a 16% decrease in the volume of cases registered between Q1 2019/20 and Q4 2018/19.

The volume of evidence led trials dropped by 7% over the period when the two most recent quarters are compared.

The volume of trials scheduled at the end of June 2019 has improved by 8% to 3640 trials still to call when compared to Q4 2018/19.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 4.0% in 2014/15 to 1.6% in Q1 2019/20 – a drop of 2.4 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 22nd 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

Registration of appeals at the Sheriff Criminal Appeal Court were 626 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 Q1 2019/20 Excel workbook with interactive tables and charts is located on webpage: <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/official-statistics>

Background

This is the fifth 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:

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 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 and on the SCTS' Official Statistics webpage <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/official-statistics>.