



Quarterly Criminal Court Statistics - Report 3 – Quarter 3 2018/19

An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

Criminal court cases activity from Quarter 1 2014/15 to Quarter 3 2018/19

This is the third statistical bulletin providing 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 because there is a far greater volume of summary cases than solemn.

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 or quarter. There was improvement in this figure with the number of trials scheduled reducing by 4.8% to 17,305 when scheduled trials at the end of March 2018 are compared to those still to call as at the end of December 2018.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 5.6% in 2014/15 to 3.5% in the first three quarters of 2018/19 – a drop of 2.1 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 continues to be high although Q3 2018/19 shows the same seasonal dip in volume that occurred in Q3 2017/18. 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 236 trials scheduled at the end of Q3 2018/19 which is a 23% rise compared to the 192 trials scheduled at the end of Q1 2018/19 and a 10% rise when compared to Q2 2018/19.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 2.2% in 2014/15 to 0.9% for the first three quarters of 2018/19 – a drop of 1.3 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. Q3 2018/19 shows an increase of 8% to 2307 petitions when compared to Q2 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.

Q3 2018/19 shows a slight increase from Q2 2018-19, to 1276 registered indictments.

The volume of evidence led trials in Q3 2018/19 is 275 which is similar to Q1 2018/19.

The number of trials scheduled continues to show an upward trend when Q3 2018/19 is compared to Q1 and Q2 2018/19.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 7.1% in 2014/15 to 2.3% in the first three quarters of 2018/19 – a drop of 4.8 percentage points.

The Sheriff Court – summary business

Although summary business in the Sheriff Court has seen an 8% decrease in the volume of complaints registered between 2014/15 and 2017/18, the quarterly volume fluctuates with Q3 2018/19 being 6% higher than Q1 2018/19. There is a fairly flat trend in cases called for trial during the last two quarters while comparing Q3 2018/19 with Q1 2018/19 indicates a downward trend.

The volume of evidence led trials rose by 3% between Q3 2018/19 and Q2 2018/19 to 1876 evidence led trials.

The volume of trials scheduled shows a marginal increase of 2% over the last two quarters but is still less than any other quarter covered by this bulletin.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 6.1% in 2014/15 to 4.0% in the first three quarters of 2018/19 – a drop of 2.1 percentage points.

The Justice of the Peace Court

The Justice of the Peace Court has seen a 6% decrease in the volume of cases registered between Q3 2018/19 and Q2 2018/19.

The volume of evidence led trials dropped by 36% over the period 2014/15 to 2017/18 but shows a stable 425 trials per quarter in Q3 and Q2 of 2018/19.

The volume of trials scheduled at the end of Q3 2018/19 continues to show an upward trend and is 15% higher than the 3,979 scheduled to call at the end of Q1 2018/19.

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time fell from 4.0% in 2014/15 to 2.0% in the first three quarters of 2018/19 – a drop of 2 percentage points.

Data tables

This link <http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/aboutscs/reports-and-data/criminal-court-statistics/qcc03/scts-quarterly-criminal-court-statistics---workbook-q3-2018-19.xlsm?sfvrsn=2> provides an Excel workbook with tables and interactive charts.

Background

This is the third 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

In Report 1 and 2, the volume of evidence led trials for the High Court of Justiciary showed an undercount in quarter 1 and 2 of 2018/19 and the volume of complaints called for first time and complaints called for 'Continued Without Plea' hearing for summary business in the Sheriff Court showed an undercount in quarter 4 of 2015/16. The affected tables have been amended in the current report (Report 3). There are no further 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

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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 June 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.