



An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

Criminal court cases activity from Quarter 1 2014/15 to Quarter 3 2023/24

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 for custody and remand, crime and offence breakdowns and criminal appeals are also provided.

Notice

On 1st April 2023, the planned recovery resource switch from summary to solemn business occurred meaning ten fewer Sheriff summary trial courts, two additional High Court and six additional Sheriff Solemn trial courts.

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 23,040 first instance criminal cases registered in Scottish courts in Q3 2023/24, which is a 1% 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 a decrease of 1% to 27,565 cases with a scheduled trial at the end of December 2023 compared to those with a scheduled trial as at the end of September 2023 (27,911).

In Q3 2023/24, the number of trials called was 16,670, a rise of 2% from the previous quarter.

Evidence led trials were down 1% on the previous quarter with 2,089 taking place in Q3 2023/24 compared to Q2 2023/24 (2,117).

The percentage of trials adjourned due to lack of court time has gone down from 2.5% in Q2 2023/24 to 2.2% in Q3 2023/24 – a decrease of 0.3 percentage points, and remains lower than the pre-COVID position of 2.9% in 2019/20.

22,812 cases were concluded in Q3 2023/24 – an increase of 1% from Q2 2023/24.

The High Court of Justiciary

The volume of indictments registered in the latest quarter has risen by 12% to 248 in Q3 2023/24 from 222 in Q2 2023/24.

Evidence led trials in Q3 2023/24 have seen a decrease of 8% from the previous quarter, with 154 evidence led trials occurring in the period.

Trials scheduled at the end of December 2023 have remained consistent at 649 when compared to trials scheduled as at the end of September 2023 (651).

In Q3 2023/24, 241 indictments were concluded, which is a 2% decrease from 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 2023/24 shows a fall of 13% to 2,543 petitions when compared to Q2 2023/24.

In this reporting quarter, the number of indictments registered is 1,880, which is consistent with the 1,874 registered in Q2 2023/24.

As at the end of December 2023, the number of trials scheduled is 1,945, a decrease of 5% when compared with the volume scheduled as at the end of September 2023 (2,056).

The number of evidence led trials in Q3 2023/24 (297) has fallen by 12% when compared to Q2 2023/24 (337).

1,918 indictments were concluded in Q3 2023/24, which is an 8% decrease from the number concluded in Q2 2023/24 (2,089).

The Sheriff Court – summary business

In Q3 2023/24 there has been a decrease of 3% in the volume of registered complaints to 16,124 from 16,623 in Q2 2023/24.

95% of domestic abuse court cases are heard at the Sheriff Summary Court. In Q3 2023/24, 21% 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 2023/24 is 12,602 which is a rise of 4% from Q2 2023/24. Evidence led trials have increased by 1% for the reporting period in comparison to the previous quarter, with 1,412 evidence led trials taking place.

Trials adjourned due to lack of court time decreased to 2.1% in Q3 2023/24 compared with 2.6% in Q2 2023/24.

Domestic abuse cases account for 29% of Sheriff Summary trials called and 32% of the Sheriff Summary trials in which evidence was led.

As at the end of December 2023, the volume of Sheriff Summary trials scheduled is 21,611, which is 1% lower than at the end of September 2023. Domestic abuse scheduled trials decreased by 5% (225 trials) to 3,966 scheduled trials over the same period.

Q3 2023/24 saw 15,694 complaints concluded which is an increase of 1% compared to the volume concluded in Q2 2023/24. 23% of these conclusions were domestic abuse cases.

The Justice of the Peace Court

For the reporting quarter, the number of cases registered has risen by 5% on the previous quarter to 4,788.

The number of evidence led trials is 226 in Q3 2023/24, which is 3% higher than in Q2 2023/24 (219).

1.7% of trials were adjourned due to lack of court time in Q3 2023/24, compared to 0.9% in the previous quarter.

As at the end of December 2023, the number of trials scheduled has decreased by 2% to 3,360 when compared to the end of September 2023 (3,412).

4,959 complaints were concluded in the latest quarter, 8% more than the number of complaints concluded in Q2 2023/24.

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, 16 and 20.

Data tables

The Q3 2023/24 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 2024. 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>.