

# **Annex B**

## **Experimental Statistics:**

### **New methodology for end-to-end timeliness in criminal courts**

April to June 2016

Ministry of Justice

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## Introduction

Following a consultation in early 2015, a proposal was agreed to make changes to the end-to-end case timeliness methodology applied within the Criminal Courts Statistics Quarterly (CCSQ) publication. The proposed change was to remove the 10 year threshold from the validation scripts applied to published estimates. We confirmed our intention, in our most recent bulletin released in June 2016, to implement the changes within this release on 29 September 2016.

As part of this publication, tables based on both the existing and new methodologies have been produced. The tables containing statistics based on the existing methodology are labelled 'Table T1' up to 'Table T6b', whilst tables containing statistics based on the new methodology are labelled as 'Annex T1' up to 'Annex T6b'.

This annex document aims to provide users with a detailed explanation of the change in approach and comparisons between statistics produced under the two methodologies.

### Experimental statistics

The statistics produced using the new methodology are badged as "experimental statistics" and do not display the National Statistics logo, as data are still being evaluated and remain subject to further testing in terms of their reliability and ability to meet customer needs.

Subject to user feedback on these experimental statistics, the intention is to produce both methodologies for this release only, after which we will only present statistics and commentary based solely on the new methodology.

### Summary of methodology change

The existing end-to-end timeliness methodology is described within '[A guide to criminal court statistics](#)', which is published alongside this report. This covers the data sources, data matching, quality assurance and data cleaning processes, including the removal of cases with recorded durations of over ten years as a means of ensuring the average times reported are not distorted by incorrect data.

The methodology change applied to new estimates within this annex is to remove the 10 year threshold from the validation scripts. This change of approach includes cases validly taking over 10 years to progress from offence to completion in court, but with the introduction of additional quality assurance checks applied to cases falling in this category to safeguard against the inclusion of incorrect data within the calculation. The methodology thus excludes a small number of cases with identified data quality issues, alongside breach cases.

## Analysis of impacts (based on Q2 2016 data)

### Change to volume of defendants included within the measure

By including cases taking over 10 years from offence to completion, there are approximately 500 to 700 additional defendants included within the calculation of average timeliness measures each quarter. For context, Figure 1 below shows the number of defendants included in the overall timeliness measure (for cases completing at each tier of court) in Q2 2016 by their length of time from offence to completion.

**Figure 1: Volume of defendants included in overall timeliness measure for all completed criminal cases (underpinning statistics in table 'Annex T5'), by duration of offence to completion, Q2 2016**

Offence to completion length	Number of defendants	Proportion of defendants
Less than 5 years	365,826	99.6%
5 to 10 years	670	0.2%
10 years and over	666	0.2%
<i>of which:</i>		
10 - 20 years	326	
20 - 30 years	145	
30 - 40 years	134	
40 - 50 years	53	
50 - 60 years	8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>367,162</b>	<b>100%</b>

Further, approximately three-quarters of the additional defendants included in the new methodology in Q2 2016 were accused of a sexual offence (503 out of 656<sup>1</sup>), which constituted a 20% increase in the number of defendants contributing towards timeliness figures for sexual offences. Figure 2 below shows the number of defendants included in the overall timeliness measure for both the existing and new methodologies by offence group.

<sup>1</sup> Note the new methodology also excludes a small number of cases with durations shorter than ten years with identified data quality issues. This explains why the difference between the number of defendants included within each methodology (656) is not equal to the number of defendants with cases taking 10 years or over to complete (666) as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 2: Defendants included in the existing and new overall timeliness measure for all completed criminal cases (underpinning statistics in tables T5 and 'Annex T5'), by offence group, Q2 2016**

Offence group	Defendants included in existing methodology (T5) *	Defendants included in new methodology (Annex T5)	Additional defendants in new methodology *	Percent increase in defendants included
Violence against the person	9,471	9,491	20	0.2%
Sexual offences	2,579	3,082	503	19.5%
Robbery	1,750	1,751	1	0.1%
Theft offences	31,301	31,304	3	0.0%
Criminal damage and arson	811	812	1	0.1%
Drug offences	12,679	12,680	1	0.0%
Possession of weapons	3,400	3,400	-	0.0%
Public order offences	4,569	4,570	1	0.0%
Miscellaneous crimes against society	8,071	8,089	18	0.2%
Fraud offences	2,941	2,992	51	1.7%
Summary non-motoring	151,627	151,663	36	0.0%
Summary motoring	137,307	137,328	21	0.0%
<b>All criminal cases</b>	<b>366,506</b>	<b>367,162</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>0.2%</b>

\* Note the new methodology also excludes a small number of cases with durations shorter than ten years with identified data quality issues. This explains why the difference between the number of defendants included within each methodology (656) is not equal to the number of defendants with cases taking 10 years or over to complete (666) as shown in Figure 1.

### **Comparison of timeliness statistics under the existing methodology (exclusion of long cases) and the new methodology (inclusion of long cases)**

#### *Summary*

By including cases with a duration of over 10 years, more historical offences are included within the measure, and as a result, the mean duration of cases has increased. This particularly affects the pre-court stage of offence to charge. There are also some increases in the charge to completion stage, as the offences newly included are offences from more serious categories (the majority sexual offences), which are often more complex cases and take longer on average to proceed through the courts.

#### *Cases completing at magistrates' courts, including cases committed to the Crown Court (tables T2 and Annex T2a)*

For cases completing in the magistrates' courts in Q2 2016, the (mean) average duration for offence to completion increased by 15 days, from 162 days when cases over 10 years were excluded to 177 days when longer cases were included.

### Cases completing at the Crown Court (tables T4 and Annex T4)

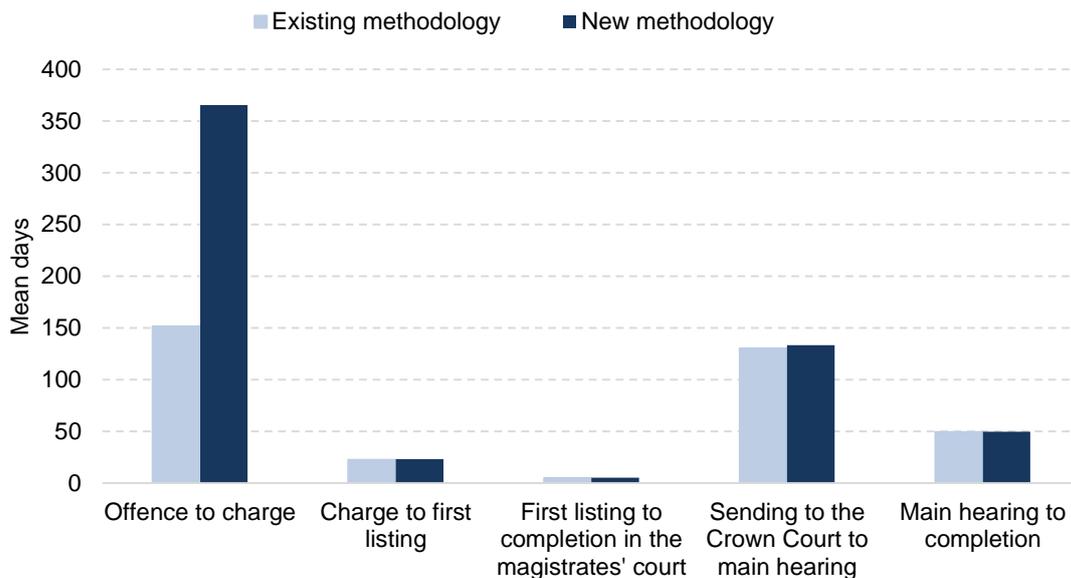
For cases completing at the Crown Court in Q2 2016, the (mean) average duration for offence to completion increased by over 7 months (218 days), from 359 days when cases over 10 years were excluded to 576 days when longer cases were included.

The impact on median time was much smaller; the median average duration for offence to completion for cases completing at the Crown Court in Q2 2016 increased by 8 days, from 249 days under the existing methodology compared to 257 days under the new methodology.

### By stage – for cases completing at the Crown Court (tables T4 and Annex T4)

The difference in mean durations was quite marked at different court stages, as shown in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Mean (average) days from offence to completion for cases completing at the Crown Court, Q2 2016**



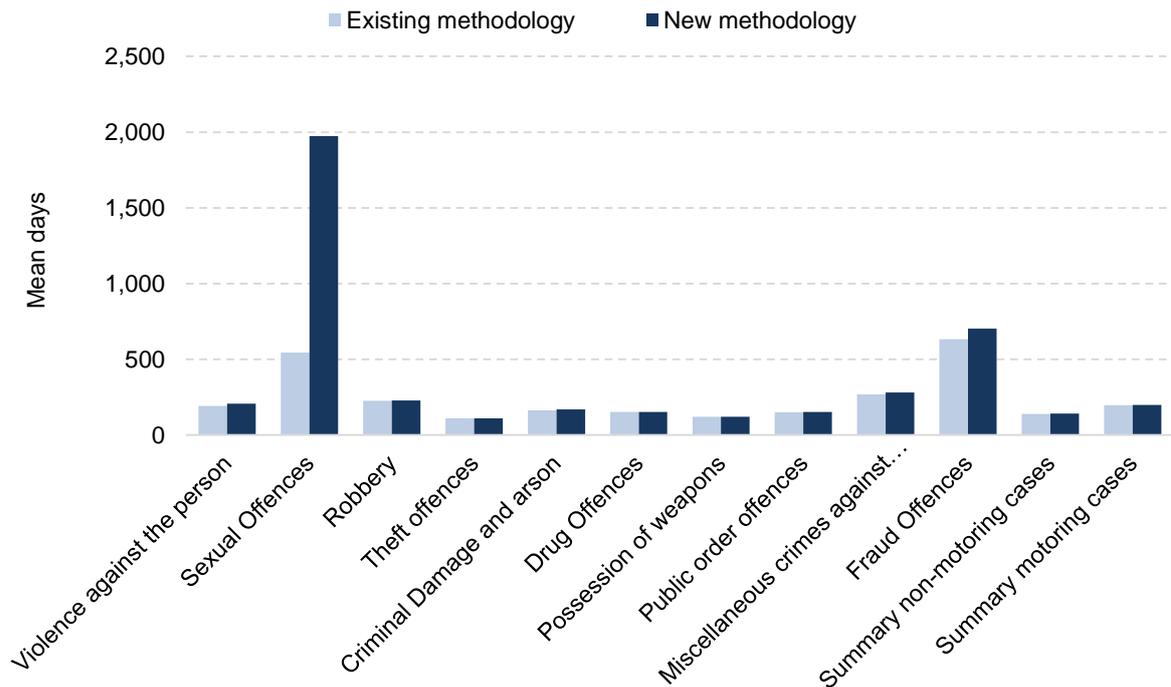
The main impact of including longer cases was on the pre-court stage of offence to charge, which increased by over 7 months (214 days) from 151 days when longer cases were excluded to 365 days when they were included.

At the Crown Court stage, there was only a small effect when cases over 10 years were included. The average (mean) time from receipt by the Crown Court to completion increased by 3 days from 180 days at Q2 2016 when longer cases were excluded, to 183 days when longer cases were included. These increases are likely to be driven by longer cases being made up of more serious cases and therefore taking slightly more court time on average.

*By offence type – for all criminal cases (tables T6a and Annex T6a)*

The main impact of including longer cases was on the mean duration of sexual offence cases; in Q2 2016, the mean offence to completion for sexual offence cases increased by approximately 4 years (1,429 days), from 1.5 years (545 days) when longer cases were excluded to 5.5 years (1,973 days) when longer cases were included.

**Figure 4: Mean days from offence to completion for all criminal cases (based on T6a and Annex T6a), Q2 2016**



The biggest impact on sexual offence cases was at the pre-court stage, offence to charge, which increased by 1,408 days (approximately 4 years), whilst charge to first listing increased by 2 days and first listing to completion increased by 19 days.

## Contacts

Press enquiries on the contents of this annex should be directed to the Ministry of Justice or Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) press offices:

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General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

### **Feedback**

If you have any feedback on the changes to the methodology, or the report more generally, please contact the production team through the Justice Statistics Analytical Services division of the Ministry of Justice:

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