



Ministry
of Justice



Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly, England and Wales

October to December 2014

Ministry of Justice
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Introduction

This is the second edition of a new statistical bulletin presenting statistics relating to activity in criminal cases in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in England and Wales. These statistics were previously published within Court Statistics Quarterly which, after consultation, has been split into separate policy focused publications.

The publication provides provisional figures for the latest quarter (October to December 2014) with accompanying commentary and analysis. The figures themselves give a summary overview of the volume of cases dealt with by these courts over time. The statistics are used to monitor court workloads, to assist in the development of policy, and their subsequent monitoring and evaluation.

Information on the enforcement of financial impositions can be found in [Annex A](#). The annex provides updated management information on the collection of financial imposition through Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

Information about the systems and data included in this publication can be found in the '**A Guide to Criminal Court Statistics**' which is published alongside this report.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-criminal-court-statistics-quarterly

There is also a separate **Glossary** published alongside this which provides brief definitions for the terms used in this report. Information regarding the symbols and conventions used in the bulletin are given in the Explanatory notes section.

The structure and content of this report is continually being reviewed to reflect user requirements. If you have any feedback about these changes, or the report more generally, please contact the production team using the [contact details](#) at the back of this report.

Previous editions of Court Statistics Quarterly can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/court-statistics-quarterly

A number of csv files have been produced alongside this publication; these files provide court level data.

The next publication of Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly is scheduled to be published on 25th June 2015, covering the period January to March 2015.

Changes and revisions in this publication

The data for receipts, disposals and outstanding criminal cases in the magistrates (Table M1) for second quarter 2013 to first quarter 2014 has

been updated due to issues with data processing that were discovered just before this release was published. The largest percentage difference is that receipts of breaches for Q2 2013 increased by 19% when compared with the previously published figure (from 20,456 to 24,351). This affected the volume but not the trend.

In addition, the 'All cases' figures for 2012 were revised as it included the non-published category 'Criminal related' in error.

Key Findings

This report presents statistics relating to activity in criminal cases in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in England and Wales in the fourth quarter of 2014 (October to December).

- The number of outstanding cases in the Crown Courts has risen through 2013 and 2014. Triable-either-way and indictable only cases rose by 76% and 15% respectively in the fourth quarter of 2014 when compared with the first quarter of 2013.

This increase was, in part, driven by the rise in the magistrates' courts workload, which saw a 20% increase in Q3 2013 in the receipt of trial cases when compared with Q1 2013. This led to more cases being sent to the Crown Court for trial and despite disposals rising, it is constantly lower than the number of receipts.

- For cases completing at the Crown Court during the fourth quarter 2014, the number of days from offence to completion increased from 304 to 321 days when compared with the first quarter of 2013. However, over the same period time spent in the magistrates' courts decreased. When comparing the fourth quarter 2014 with the first quarter 2013, the time spent at the magistrates' courts between first hearing and being sent to the Crown Court fell from 26 to 5 days, whereas the time spent at the Crown Court increased from 139 to 172 days. The decrease in the time spent in the magistrates' courts was driven by the national abolition of committal hearings¹.
- The average waiting time between the date of sending a case to the Crown Court and the start of the substantive² hearing has increased for trial cases. Triable-either-way cases have seen an increase of 5 weeks in average waiting times when comparing fourth quarter 2014 with quarter one 2013 while indictable only cases have seen a 3 week increase over the same period. The increase seen in average waiting time is likely to have been driven by the increase seen in the Crown Court workload.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/faster-justice-as-unnecessary-committal-hearings-are-abolished>

² A substantive hearing occurs when i) a defendant pleads guilty to any count on the indictment, ii) a jury is sworn, iii) a bench warrant is issued, and iv) the case is finally disposed of other than by a guilty plea or a verdict e.g. no evidence is offered.

Criminal Courts

At the end of the fourth quarter of 2014, there were around 240 magistrates' courts and approximately 76 Crown Court locations across England and Wales.

1. Criminal cases in the magistrates' courts

Virtually all criminal court cases start in the magistrates' courts. The less serious offences are handled entirely in magistrates' courts, with over 90% of all cases being dealt with in this way. The more serious offences are passed on to the Crown Court, either for sentencing after the defendant has been found guilty in the magistrates' court, or for trial with a judge and jury.

As part of wider measures in the justice system, committal hearings were abolished nationally³ at the end of May 2013. As a result of the change, triable-either-way cases can now be sent straight to the Crown Court as soon as it is clear the matter is serious enough, rather than having to await a committal hearing.

Receipt of "for trial" cases (triable-either-way and indictable only cases) in the magistrates' courts saw a significant rise during 2013. The third quarter of 2013 saw a 20% increase in the receipt of "for trial" cases compared with the first quarter of 2013. This increase was driven by a rise in triable-either-way case receipts, which rose by 21% over this period.

The increase in receipts seen in the magistrates' courts may in part be driven by the increase reported in the police reported crime data for particular crime types including Violence against the Person, Sexual Offences and Shoplifting offences. Latest figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales⁴ (CSEW) showed increasing upward pressures for these offences.

The number of charge/summons reported in the first edition of Crime Outcomes England and Wales⁵ increased by 3% for 2013/14 when compared with the previous financial year. A charge/summons is where a person has been charged or summonsed for the offence and the case has subsequently been taken to court. Figures for 2013/14 also showed an

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/faster-justice-as-unnecessary-committal-hearings-are-abolished>

⁴ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/year-ending-september-2014/stb-crime-in-england-and-wales--year-ending-september-2014.html>

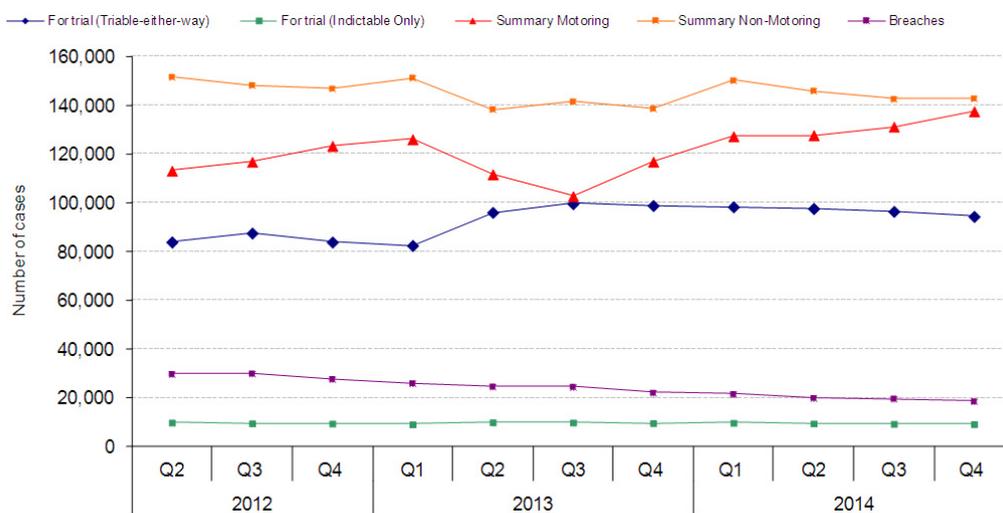
⁵

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/331597/hosb0114.pdf.pdf

increase in charge/summons for Violence against the Person, Sexual Offences and Shoplifting offences when compared with the previous financial year (6%, 17% and 11% respectively).

Increases seen in the magistrates' courts workload during 2013 have since stabilised, but at a higher level. However, summary motoring has continued rising since 2013, increasing by 5% between the fourth quarter of 2014 and same quarter in 2013. Over the same period there was a 2% and 1% decrease in the receipt of triable-either-way and indictable only cases respectively, compared to the previous quarter. Receipts of breach cases fell by 5% while summary non-motoring remained relative stable.

Figure 1: Magistrates' courts receipts by case type, Q2 2012 to Q4 2014



Despite the steadying of receipts into the magistrates' courts the number of outstanding cases has continued to rise across 2013 and 2014 – increasing by 13% between the fourth quarter of 2013 and 2014. Summary motoring had the largest increase in the same period – rising by 30%.

2. Criminal cases in the Crown Court

The Crown Court deals with cases received from the magistrates' courts for sentencing, trial or appeal against magistrates' courts' decision.

Triable-either-way cases can be sent to the Crown Court for trial if the magistrates' courts decide the matter is serious enough or if a defendant elects to be tried by judge and jury. Around 8% of cases are sent to the Crown Court at the election of the defendant

Indictable only cases can only be tried on indictment in the Crown Court as they cannot be heard summarily at the magistrates' courts.

Of those proceeded against in the magistrates' courts, 6% of defendants are sent to the Crown Court for trial.

Committed for sentence cases are transferred to the Crown Court for sentencing only after a defendant has been convicted in a magistrates' court. This would occur where a magistrate believes that their sentencing powers are insufficient to apply an appropriate sanction to the defendant.

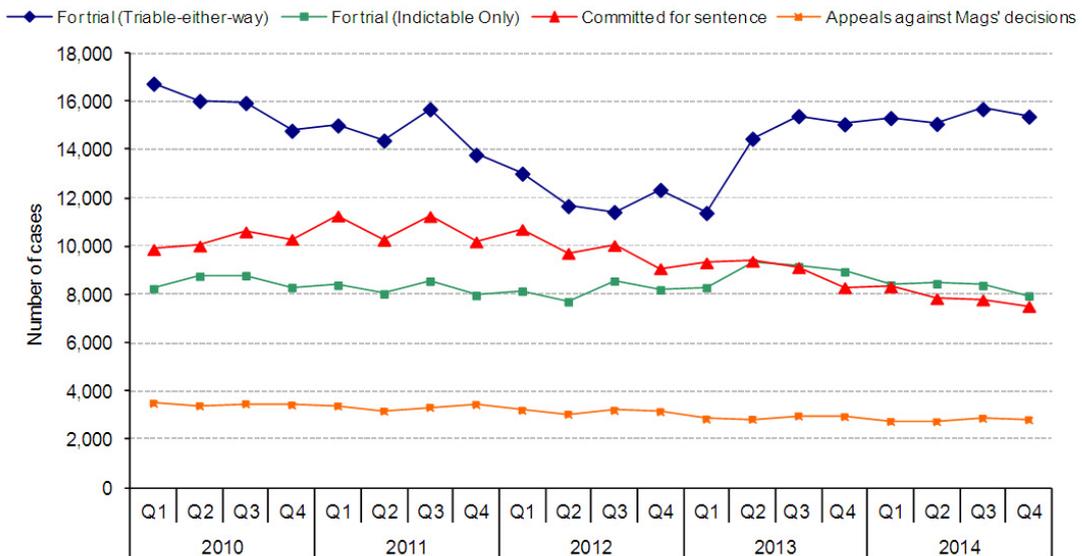
Caseload in the Crown Court

The increase in cases received by the Crown Court throughout 2013 was in part driven by the increase in magistrates' courts workload along with the national abolition of committal hearings.

The second quarter of 2013, when abolition occurred, saw a 13% increase in the receipt of cases in the Crown Court when compared to the previous quarter. This increase was driven by a 27% rise in the receipt of triable-either-way cases over the same period.

The number of cases received by the Crown Court in recent quarters has since stabilised and in the latest period (Q4 2014) triable-either-way receipts decreased by 2% compared to the previous quarter. Over the same period all other cases in the Crown Court saw a 4% fall in receipts.

Figure 2: Crown Court receipts by case type, Q1 2010 to Q4 2014



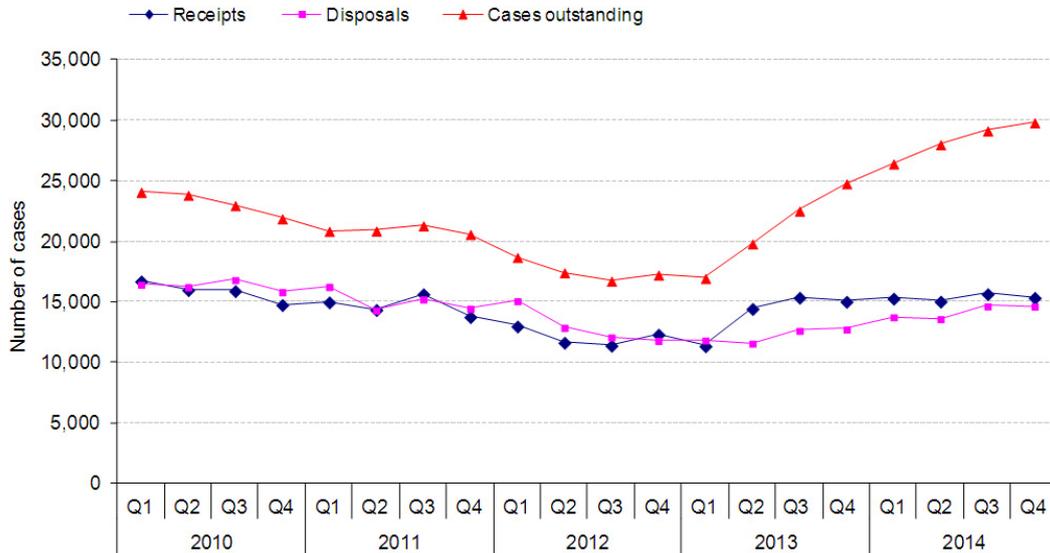
In the second quarter of 2013 the number of indictable only cases rose to 9,346 cases, the highest quarterly figure in the last five years. This has fallen quarter on quarter, and in Q4 2014 there were 15% fewer indictable only cases received by the Crown Court when compared with the second quarter of 2013.

Despite the steadying of receipts, the number of outstanding cases continued to rise quarter on quarter across 2013 and 2014 – increasing by 76% and 15% in Q4 2014 for triable-either-way and indictable only cases respectively compared to the first quarter of 2013.

Disposals of triable-either-way cases have been gradually increasing from the third quarter of 2013. In Q4 2014, disposals increased by 15% for

triable-either-way cases when compared with the same period in 2013 while indictable only cases remained stable.

Figure 3: Receipts, disposals and outstanding triable-either-way cases in the Crown Court, Q1 2010 to Q4 2014



For cases completing at the Crown Court during Q4 2014, the number of days from offence to completion increased from 294 to 321 days when compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

The average waiting time between the date of sending a case to the Crown Court and the start of the substantive hearing has increased for trial cases. Triable-either-way cases have seen an increase of 5 weeks in average waiting times when comparing Q4 2014 with Q1 2013 while indictable only cases have seen a 3 week increase over the same period. The increase seen in average waiting time was in part driven by the increase seen in the Crown Court workload.

Annex A: Enforcement of financial impositions

The following section provides updated management information on the collection of financial impositions through Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS).

Financial impositions are ordered by the criminal courts for payment by offenders at sentencing and include financial penalties such as fines, prosecutors' costs, compensation orders and victim surcharge. Financial penalties are the most commonly used sentence and form a significant part of HMCTS' collection and enforcement business. Accounting centres also enforce penalty notices for disorder and fixed penalty notices registered as fines for enforcement. The financial imposition statistics presented here do not include confiscation orders.

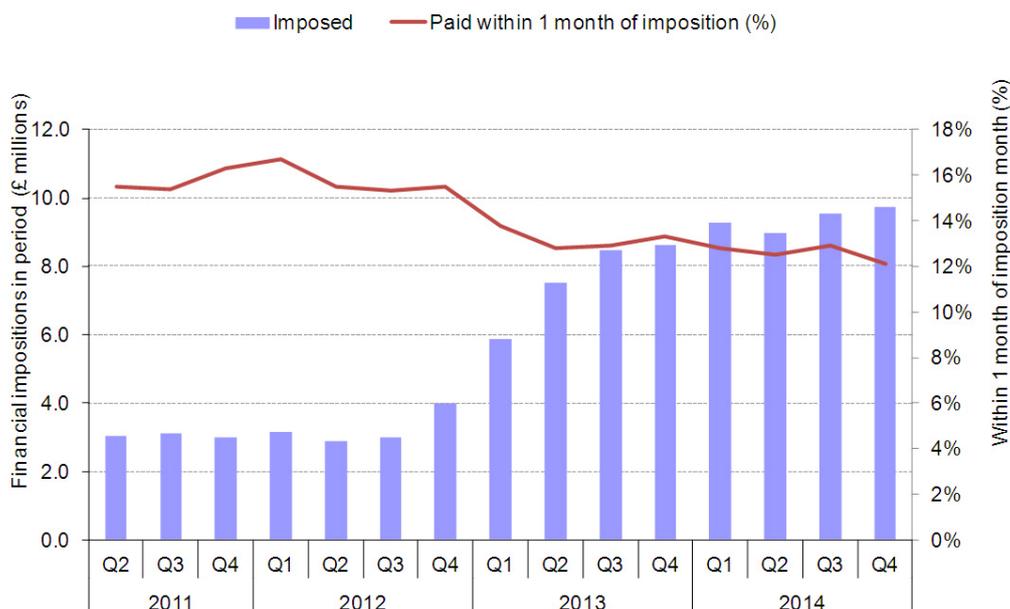
Financial impositions and amounts paid

Financial penalties can be imposed by the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court; however they are all collected and enforced by the HMCTS National Compliance and Enforcement Service.

In the fourth quarter of 2014, the total value of financial penalties paid, regardless of the age of the imposition, was £78 million; a 5% increase when compared with the same quarter in 2013 and a 3% increase on the previous quarter (Table A.1).

The total value of impositions in the fourth quarter of 2014 (£112.6 million) increased by 10% when compared to the same quarter in 2013 and a decrease of 4% with the previous quarter (Table A.2).

Figure A.1: Financial impositions (£ million) for victim surcharge



Victim surcharge is an additional surcharge which is added to the fines that are imposed. The receipts obtained from the collection of these monies by HMCTS are passed to the Justice Policy Group of the MoJ to fund victims' services. The amount imposed has been increasing since its scope and amounts payable were extended in October 2012⁶. The increases seen have slowed and stabilised at this higher level in 2014, with the proportion of impositions collected within one month of imposition stable at around 13%.

In the fourth quarter of 2014, 11% (£12.2 million) of all financial impositions imposed by the criminal courts were paid within the imposition month.

Each year there are a number of financial penalties that are cancelled, either administratively or legally. Legal cancellations can be applied after the case has been reconsidered by a judge or a magistrate and may follow a change in circumstances. Administrative cancellations are only applied in accordance with a strict write off policy, e.g. where the defendant has not been traced; these can then be re-instated if the defendant is then traced.

The latest information shows that around 3% (£3.3 million) of the financial penalties imposed in the third quarter of 2014 had been cancelled – mainly consisting of legal cancellations following appeal and statutory declarations.

Financial imposition accounts opened and closed

An account is opened when a financial penalty is ordered in court and is closed when the imposition against the account has been paid or the imposition is cancelled. Where a defendant has more than one financial penalty and/or account, these can be consolidated into one account.

There were 317,774 accounts opened in the fourth quarter of 2014, an increase of 6% when compared to the same period in the previous year (Table A.3). Of the accounts opened in the fourth quarter of 2014, 11% (35,045) were closed within the month of imposition.

Outstanding financial impositions

The amount outstanding is irrespective of the age of the imposition or the payment terms, and excludes all impositions already paid as well as both legal and administrative cancellations. Payment terms may include arrangements for offenders to pay amounts owed over a period of time.

In the fourth quarter of 2014, the total value of financial impositions outstanding in England and Wales was £565 million. The falling trend observed since April 2011 has stabilised in recent quarters and shows an increase of 2% on the same quarter of the previous year (Table A.4).

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victim-surcharge-circular-october-2012>

Annex B: Planned upcoming changes to publications

From the 18 December 2014 until the 29 January 2015, the MoJ ran a consultation on changes to this publication.

The consultation can be found at:

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/consultation-onchanges-to-moj-statistics>

There were two main proposals in the consultation:

1. Remove existing ten year threshold from validation applied to published timeliness estimates.
2. Remove mean durations as a measure of average end to end timeliness and present the median as the sole average.

There were 4 respondents to the consultation and they all agreed to the proposals.

The consultation has identified that key users of the measure of average end-to-end timeliness are using this as a performance measure for the 2015/16 reporting year and removing it would cause significant reporting issues. Due to resource restraints we are unable to produce both measures in parallel and so will implement this change for the start of 2016/17 reporting year.

Therefore, based on the consultation the MoJ will make the following changes to the Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly Q1 2016 release in June 2016:

- Removing the ten year threshold from the validation scripts applied to published Crown Court timeliness.
- Removing the mean duration as a measure of the average end to end timeliness. The median alone will be supplied.

Annex C: List of Accompanying Tables and CSV

Accompanying this publication are the following tables:

Table M1	Receipts, disposals and outstanding criminal cases in the magistrates' courts in England and Wales, annually 2012 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2012 – Q4 2014
Table M2	Effectiveness of magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2003 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table M3	Key reasons for ineffective magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2006 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table M4	Key reasons for cracked magistrates' courts' trials in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table M5	Average time from offence to completion, percentage of proceedings completed at first listing and average number of hearings for all criminal cases at the magistrates' courts by initial plea, England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q4 2014
Table M6	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for all criminal cases at the magistrates' courts in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q4 2014
Table M7	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for all summary cases at the magistrates' courts in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C1	Receipts, disposals and outstanding cases in the Crown Court in England and Wales, annually 2000 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C2	Effectiveness of Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C3	Key reasons for ineffective Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C4	Key reasons for cracked Crown Court trials in England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C5	Defendants dealt with in trial cases in the Crown Court by plea in England and Wales, annually 2001 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014

Table C6	Defendants dealt with in trial cases by stage at which guilty plea was entered and accepted in the Crown Court, by receipt type, England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C7	Defendants dealt with in trial cases where a guilty plea was entered before, during or at a cracked trial, and accepted in the Crown Court, by receipt type, England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C8	Average waiting times in the Crown Court in England and Wales, annually 2000 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C9	Average waiting times (weeks) in the Crown Court for defendants dealt with in trial cases, by plea and remand type, England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C10	Average hearing and waiting times for trial cases in the Crown Court by plea in England and Wales, annually 2000 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C11	Average hearing times (hours) in the Crown Court for cases disposed of, by case type and plea, England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C12	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for Crown Court criminal cases in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C13	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for criminal cases in England and Wales, annually 2010 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2010 – Q4 2014
Table C14	Average number of days taken from offence to completion for all criminal cases by offence group, in England and Wales, Q4 2013 and Q4 2014
Table C15	Appeals (against decisions of magistrates' courts) dealt with in the Crown Court, by appeal type and result, England and Wales, annually 2007 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014

Annex A: Enforcement of financial penalties

Table A1	Enforcement of financial penalties in the magistrates' courts, England and Wales, annually 2004 - 2014, quarterly Q1 2010 – Q4 2014
Table A2	HMCTS management information: Financial impositions and amounts paid by imposition type, England and Wales, annual 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q4 2014
Table A3	HMCTS management information: Number of financial imposition accounts opened and closed, annually 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q4 2014
Table A4	HMCTS management information: Total amount of financial impositions outstanding, annually 2011 - 2014, quarterly Q2 2011 – Q4 2014

There are also a number of csv files that support this publication, these include:

- National and court level workload activity and case progression data
- National and court level timeliness data

Annex D: Explanatory notes

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The statistics in this bulletin relate to cases in the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in England and Wales. Calendar year statistics are also provided.

Breakdowns of many of the summary figures presented in this bulletin, such as split by court or by HMCTS area, are available in the Comma Separated Value (CSV) files that accompany this publication.

Revisions

The statistics in the latest quarter are provisional, and are therefore liable to revision to take account of any late amendments to the administrative databases from which these statistics are sourced. The standard process for revising the published statistics to account for these late amendments is as follows:

- An initial revision to the statistics for the latest quarter may be made when the next edition of this bulletin is published. Further revisions may be made when the figures are reconciled at the end of the year. If revisions are needed in the subsequent year this will be clearly annotated in the tables.

For more information please see the **[Guide to Criminal Court Statistics](#)**.

Symbols and conventions

The following symbols have been used throughout the tables in this bulletin:

- .. = Not applicable
- = Not available
- 0 = Nil
- (r) = Revised data
- (p) = Provisional data

Contacts

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

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General enquiries about the statistics work of the Ministry of Justice can be emailed to statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from www.statistics.gov.uk

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