

Notes on experimental statistics on defendants who failed to appear by police force area

Background

Prior to the Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly: June 2015, information was published on failure to appear (FTA) warrants: statistics were presented on the number of FTA warrants received and executed in each police force area in England and Wales, by category of warrant. During 2015 a steadily smaller proportion of the required data was available across police forces, and it is believed that what is held would not represent a fair national picture, leading to the withdrawal of FTA warrant data from these releases.

This reduction in data availability was related to the abolition of a requirement for police forces to supply this data, which makes it impossible for us to continue to supply robust data on the previous basis. As such, we consulted users in the Update to September 2015 on whether they would like us to include, subject to data quality proving sufficient, a breakdown of court data on failures to appear. Having received a positive response from users, we investigated the feasibility of including this.

Table 1: Experimental statistics: defendants who failed to appear by court and type of offence, England and Wales, 2015

Court	Offence type				
	Indictable only	Triable either way	Summary non-motoring	Summary motoring	All offences
Magistrates' courts	537	49,211	12,831	5,475	68,054
Crown Court	457	2,462	41	19	2,979
All courts	994	51,673	12,872	5,494	71,033

The Excel Tables accompanying this document contains experimental statistics that represent the results of those investigations. Failure to appear court data is provided broken down by police force. The numbers of defendants who failed to appear is provided by the type of court they failed to appear at. Over 95% of failures to appear related to magistrates' courts.

The data provided relates to the calendar year 2015. Totals will not match the failure to appear totals presented in Table 4.4 of the accompanying Overview Tables that relate to the 12 months ending June 2016, because the time periods are not the same. They also will not match the totals for 2015 in Table 4.4 of the Update to December 2015 release, published in May 2016. This is the result of improvements to the data processing undertaken as part of the preparation for releasing these experimental statistics.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of failures to appear are associated with triable-either-way offences and there were around 50,000 failures in 2015 that related to that type of offence. The number of failures to appear associated with indictable offences only is much smaller. The number of failures to appear associated with summary offences (both motoring and non-motoring) is also smaller than the number associated with triable-either-way offences, despite the much larger number of defendants prosecuted for summary offences.

Data are either derived from the LIBRA case management system, which holds the magistrates' courts records, or the Crown Court's CREST system. The data includes offences where there has been no police involvement, such as those prosecutions instigated by government departments, private organisations and individuals.

Data quality and interpretation

These are experimental statistics – we are seeking feedback on the value and accuracy of the statistics with a view to incorporating them into future bulletins, and this can be addressed to:

David Dawson, Head of Criminal Justice Outcomes and Equalities Statistics, Ministry of Justice, 7th Floor, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ Email: CJS_Statistics@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Feedback would be particularly useful if received during 2016.

The data feeding into the Criminal Justice Statistics release have been subject to rigorous quality assurance processes. Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations, such as risks of inconsistent offence coding or erroneous data entry, are taken into account when those data are used.

Data supplier

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