



CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE

Annual Report

for the period April 1998 - March 1999

from the Director of Public Prosecutions
to the Attorney General

Presented to Parliament in pursuance of
section 9 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, Chapter 23

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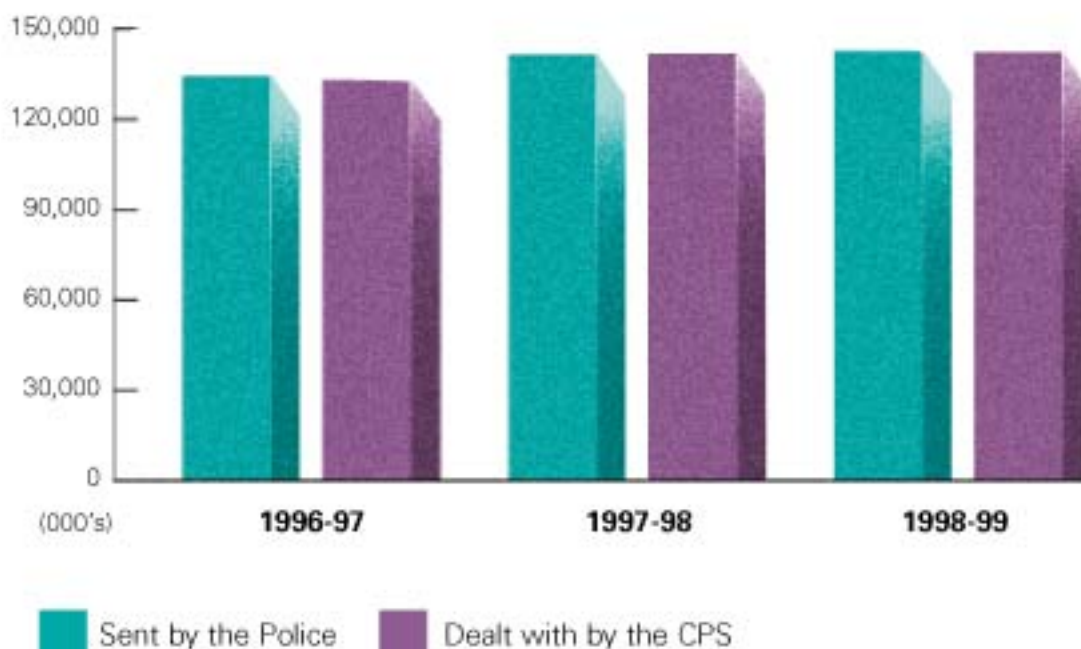
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Chart 1

Magistrates' courts: caseload



	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Sent by the police	1,344,184	1,415,232	1,426,085
Dealt with by the CPS	1,330,317	1,418,801	1,423,200

Chart 1 shows as **sent by the police** the number of defendants whose case was received from the police during the year, and as **dealt with by the CPS** the number of completed cases in 1998-99 and the two preceding years. Both totals include cases in which the CPS advised the police before proceedings began.

Our caseload was almost unchanged over the last year. The number of cases the police sent to us during 1998-99 rose by 0.8% compared with 1997-98 and the number we dealt with rose by 0.3%.

Several factors may affect the number of cases sent to the CPS, including the number of arrests, the number of offences cleared up by the police, and the number of offenders cautioned by the police.

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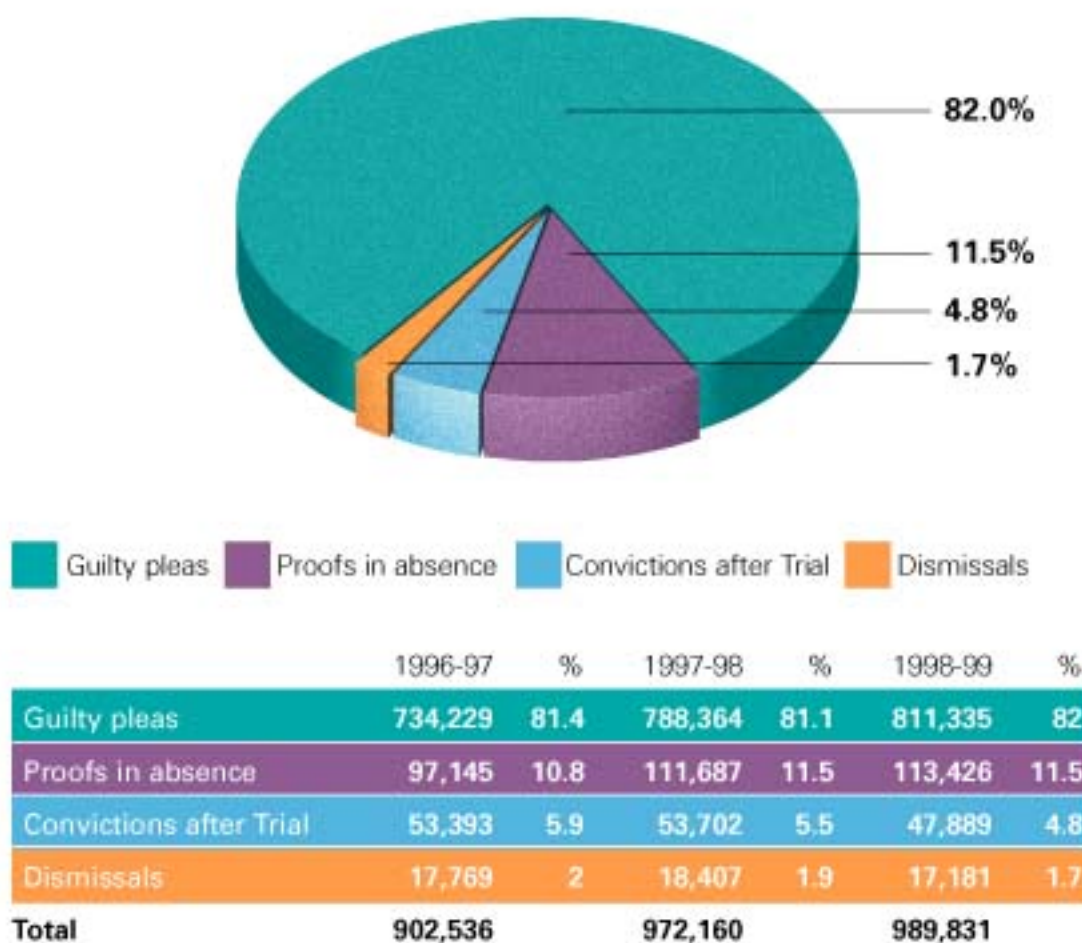
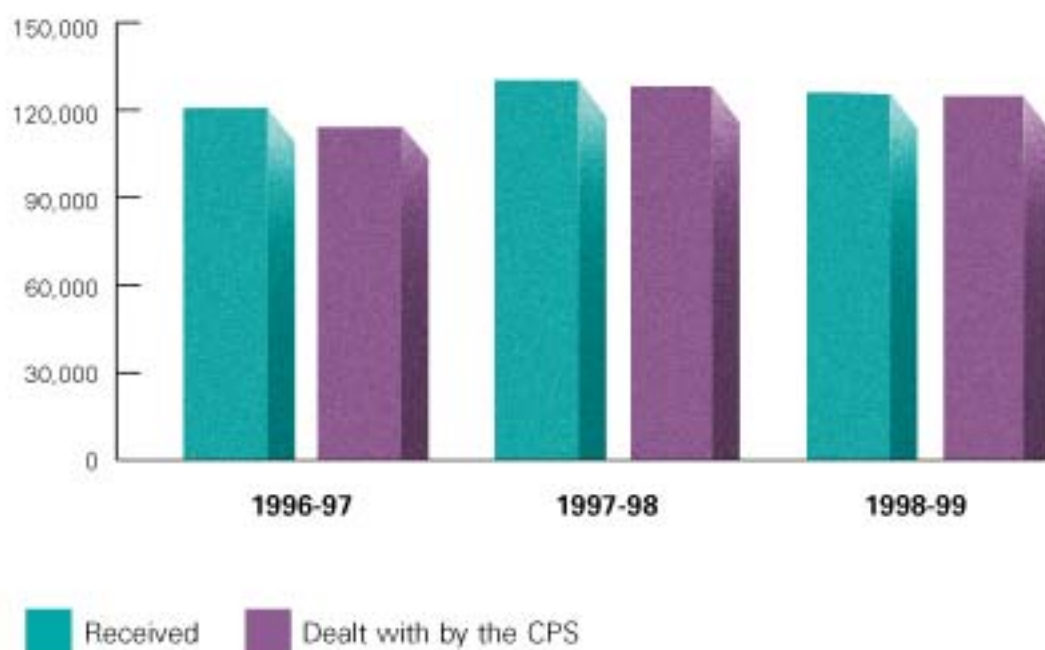
Chart 4:**Magistrates' courts: case results**

Chart 4 shows the outcome of the 72.8% of cases which proceeded to a hearing, divided into guilty pleas, cases proved in the absence of the defendant, convictions after trial and dismissals.

98.3% of hearings resulted in a conviction, compared with 98% in 1996-97 and 98.1% in 1997-98. In cases resulting in conviction, the proportion in which the defendant pleaded guilty was 95.1%, compared with 94.4% for the previous year.

Chart 5:**Crown Court caseload**

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Received	120,716	130,328	126,014
Dealt with by the CPS	114,540	128,064	124,781

Chart 5 shows as received the number of defendants who came before the Crown Court and as dealt with the number whose case was completed.

The number of cases received during 1998/99 fell by 3.3% compared with the previous year, while the number dealt with fell by 2.6%. Case numbers have fallen as a result of the Plea Before Venue procedure, introduced with effect from October 1997, which has led to more cases being completed in the magistrates' courts rather than committed to the Crown Court.

Chart 6:
Crown court case categories

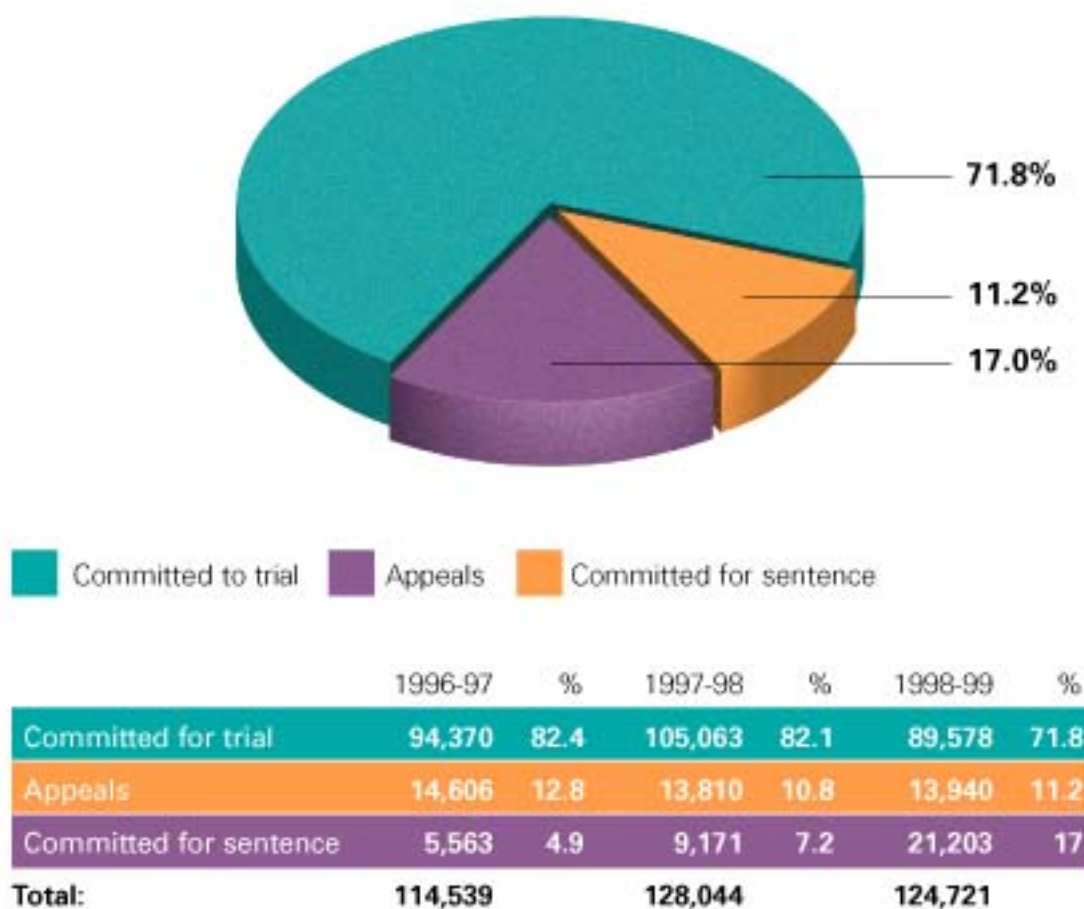


Chart 6 shows the categories of cases handled in the Crown Court:

committed for trial:all indictable only cases, and some either way cases, are sent (committed) from magistrates' courts for trial in the Crown Court;

appeals:defendants tried in magistrates' courts may appeal to the Crown Court against their conviction and/or sentence;

committed for sentence:some defendants tried and convicted by the magistrates are committed to the Crown Court for sentence, if the magistrates' decide that greater punishment is needed than they can impose.

The increase in committals for sentence during 1998-99 represents either way cases in which the defendant pleaded guilty in magistrates' courts under the Plea Before Venue procedure, and was subsequently sent to the Crown Court for sentence.

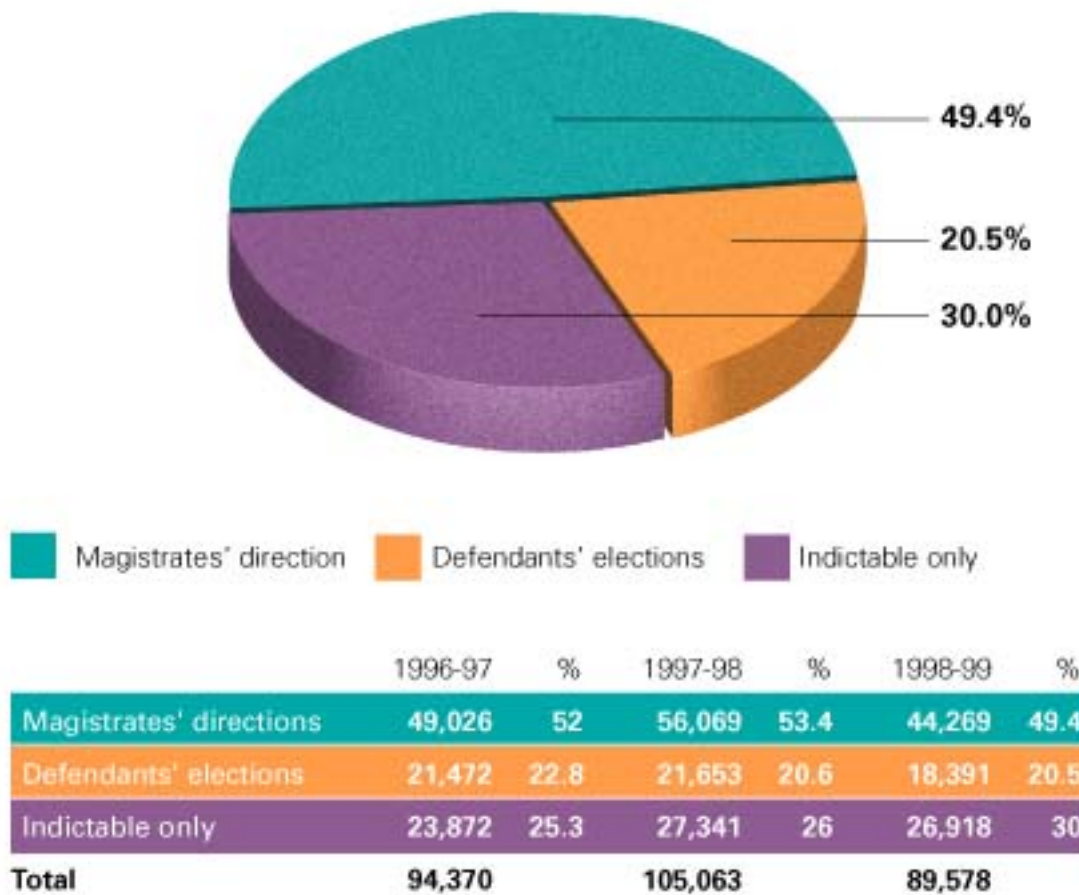
Chart 7:**Crown Court: source of committals for trial**

Chart 7 shows the source of committals for trial in the Crown Court

Magistrates' direction: these are either way cases which the magistrates thought were serious enough to call for trial in the Crown Court;

Defendants' elections: these are either way cases in which the defendant chose Crown Court trial;

Indictable only: these are cases which can only be tried in the Crown Court.

Indictable only cases are the most serious of all. In 1998-99, these rose to 30% of the total compared with 18.2% in 1991/92.

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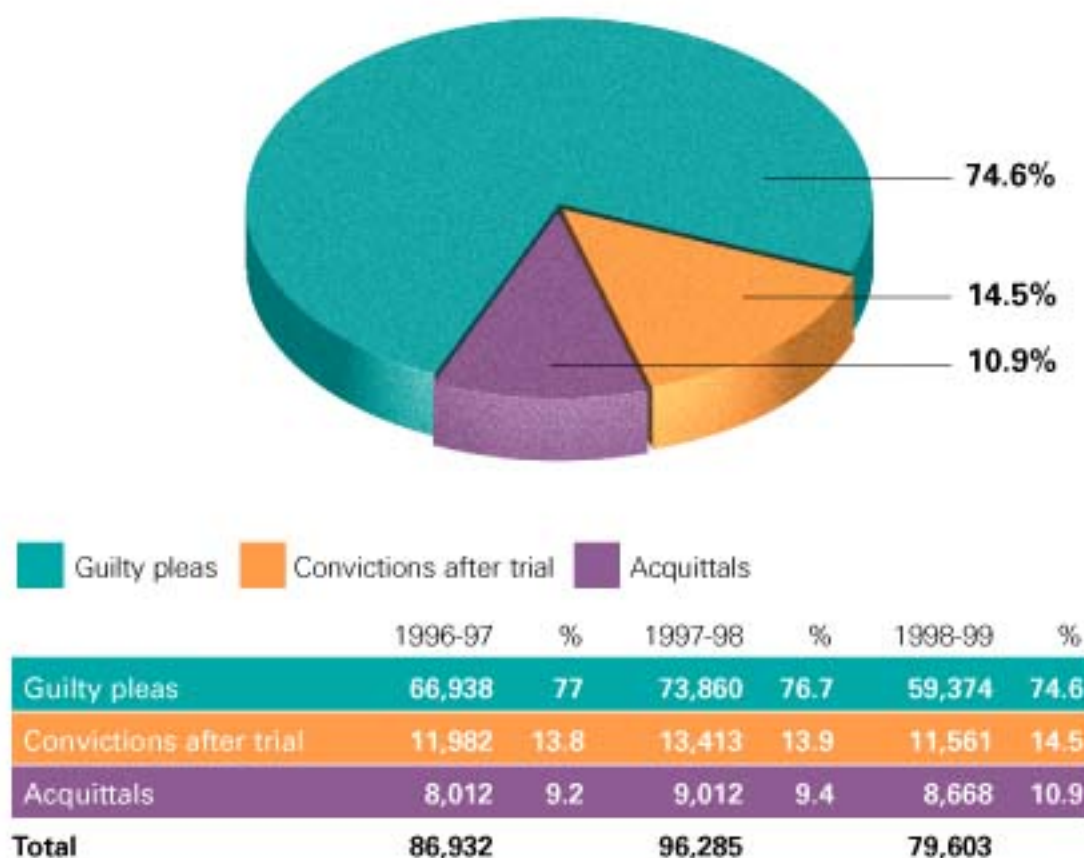
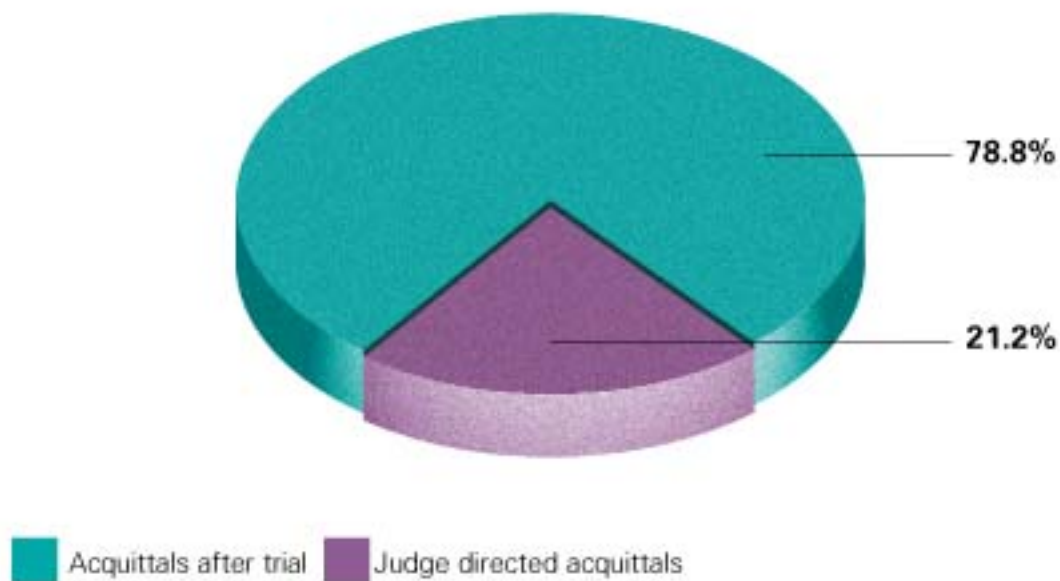
Chart 9:**Crown Court: case results**

Chart 9 shows the outcome of the 87% of cases which proceeded to trial. These are divided into guilty pleas, convictions after full trial, and acquittals. 89.1% of cases resulted in conviction, compared with 90.6% in 1997-98. In cases where defendants were convicted, the proportion pleading guilty fell from 88.2% in 1991-92 to 83.7% in 1998-99. The proportion of convictions in contested hearings following a plea of not guilty has risen over the same period from 54.6% to 57.2%.

However, during 1998-99 there was a fall in the proportion of guilty pleas (from 76.7% to 74.6% of hearings), and a corresponding increase in acquittals (from 9.4% of hearings to 10.9%). This was because the Plea Before Venue procedure has led to more guilty pleas in either way cases being entered in magistrates' courts rather than in the Crown Court.

Chart 10:**Crown Court acquittals**

	1996-97	%	1997-98	%	1998-99	%
Acquittals after trial	6,364	79.4	7,170	79.6	6,829	78.8
Judge directed acquittals	1,648	20.6	1,842	20.4	1,839	21.2
Total	8,012		9,012		8,668	

10.9% of defendants were acquitted in Crown Court trials. Chart 10 shows the number of these acquitted by the jury at the end of the trial, and the number acquitted at the direction of the judge at the conclusion of the prosecution case. Judge directed acquittals fell from 2,532 in 1991-92 (11.9% of contested hearings) to 1,839 (9.1%) in 1998-99.

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