



Ministry of
JUSTICE

Statistical notice

Mortgage and landlord possession action statistics

Published: August 2009

Statistical notice – mortgage and landlord possession action statistics

1. On 15 May 2009, the Ministry of Justice sought users' views on two proposed changes to the National Statistics on mortgage and landlord possession actions in England and Wales. In summary, the proposed changes were as follows:
 - A change to the definitional basis of the published National Statistics on the number of possession orders made in the county courts of England and Wales. We proposed publishing the number of possession claims that lead to an order, rather than number of possession orders as at present.
 - The inclusion of a new, additional local authority level breakdown of the published National Statistics for both the 'claims' and 'orders' series. This disaggregation is based on the physical location of the property which is the subject of the possession action.
2. It was proposed that these changes should come into effect for the Q2 2009 edition of the statistics, due to be published in August 2009. The document explaining the proposed changes in more detail can be found on the Ministry of Justice website at www.justice.gov.uk/publications/mortgatelandlordpossession.htm

User responses to the proposed changes

3. Two organisations provided feedback on the proposed changes: (the Department for) Communities and Local Government, and the Legal Services Commission.

Change in definitional basis of key 'orders' statistics

4. Just one response was received from users as regards moving from a count of all individual possession orders made to a count of possession claims that lead to an order being made, from Communities and Local Government (CLG). CLG supported the change, highlighting that “the new ‘orders’ measure will eliminate duplicate records and therefore one of the main reasons why the figures shown in the series gives a somewhat inflated impression of the number of households affected by repossession through the courts”. They also noted that the change in measure should provide increased resilience to administrative changes, thus increasing the long-term efficacy of the statistics. However, CLG noted that “the change will not eliminate all instances of multiple orders on a single household since a homeowner who is in arrears on more than one mortgage loan account can be subject to a court possession order on each account”.

Disaggregation of possession actions series

5. Both responses commented on the plans to publish possession data disaggregated by local authority either instead of, or in addition to, the breakdown by county court that is currently produced.
6. The Legal Services Commission stated that it would be useful for the statistics to continue to be broken down by court. CLG said that they would “very much welcome the move to publish these data at a local authority level as this will greatly facilitate analysis of regional and sub-regional variation and allow CLG analysts to compare these data with a wide range of other data which is already collected by local authority. We believe that local authorities and regional assemblies will be very interested in these data and find them valuable. We would be content with county court-level detail being excluded from the quarterly release and available only on request”.
7. The Ministry of Justice also proposed to publish the local authority statistics expressed not just as absolute counts but also on a per-1,000-households basis. CLG felt that the statistical bulletin should make clear that not all local authorities would have the same proportion of mortgaged properties, although they were not aware of a data series that would provide this information.

Approach to be adopted

8. The Ministry of Justice proposes to adopt all the changes proposed, with effect from the next edition of the Mortgage and Landlord Possession Statistics bulletin, due to be published on 14th August 2009.

Change in definitional basis of key 'orders' statistics

9. Although the new measure will eliminate all instances of multiple orders on the same claim, we concur with the view that it will not eliminate all instances of multiple orders on a single household, since a homeowner who is in arrears on more than one mortgage loan account could be subject to more than one claim. However, the number of households subject to more than one claim is likely to be very small.
10. The August 2009 edition of the National Statistics bulletin will therefore publish series for both mortgage and landlord possession orders on the basis of the new count, with back-data on the new measure to be published as standard back to 2004 on a quarterly basis and 1999 on an annual basis. Back-data will also be available back to 1999 on a quarterly basis upon request.
11. The old number of orders measure will be discontinued completely from the August 2009 edition. However, this edition will contain a table showing a historical comparison of the two measures from 1999 onwards on an annual basis and from 2004 onwards on a quarterly basis.

Disaggregation of possession actions series

12. The Ministry of Justice will also publish new tables providing mortgage and landlord possession data expressed as absolute counts, and the number per 1,000 households, disaggregated by local authority, with effect from the next edition of the statistical bulletin on 14th August 2009.
13. In the previous edition in May, the 12-page statistical report presented three summary tables of national-level statistics, while tables providing the breakdown by court were available in a separate spreadsheet published at the same time. It is proposed to keep the format of the tables in the bulletin the same for the August edition, but the new tables providing the local authority breakdown will be added to the accompanying spreadsheet. One of the respondents highlighted the continuing usefulness of the court-level breakdown of the figures, which will continue to be included in the spreadsheet.
14. While it is useful for the new local authority statistics to be expressed per 1,000 households as well as in absolute terms, we note the point made by CLG that not all local authorities will necessarily have the same

For queries, comments or further information, please contact:

Constitution and Access to Justice Analysis
Ministry of Justice
8.03
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ
Tel: 020 3334 3090
Email: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General enquiries about the statistical 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

