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# I N F O R M A T I O N

## B U L L E T I N

## Magistrates' Courts Waiting Times on the Day and User Reaction Surveys, 2001

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### INTRODUCTION

Two distinct quality of service surveys are carried out by magistrates' courts in England and Wales. One survey measures the time adult defendants in criminal cases wait on the days of their hearings, and the other survey collects data on the satisfaction of court users with non-judicial aspects of the service received. In 2000 for the first time the surveys were carried out twice, in

April and October. Previously they were conducted annually, normally in October.

This bulletin presents the results from the 2001 surveys, and is in four sections. The first two sections present results from the surveys. The last two sections contain tables of detailed results from the most recent and earlier surveys, and methodological notes and further information.

### MAIN POINTS

#### Waiting times on the day survey

- **Average waiting time has fallen:** The average time defendants had to wait at court before the start of hearings was 66 minutes in both April and October 2001, a decrease from 71 minutes in October 2000.
- **A decrease in the proportion of defendants waiting more than one hour:** Thirty nine per cent of defendants waited more than 1 hour in both April and October 2001 compared to 42 per cent in October 2000.
- **No significant change in use of block listing:** The proportion of defendants reporting at or after 11 am remained at 33 per cent in April and October 2001. Average waiting times tended to be lower in areas making more use of block listing.

#### User reaction survey

- **Satisfaction with facilities broadly unchanged:** The proportion of court users reporting that the quality of facilities provided at the courts were satisfactory or very good remained at 71 per cent in April and October 2001.
- **Increase in satisfaction with information and assistance:** 90 per cent of respondents reported that the quality of information and assistance was satisfactory or very good in October 2001 compared with 89 per cent in October 2000 and April 2001.

# Waiting times on the day survey

## Introduction

1. Since 2000 this survey has been conducted by magistrates' courts in April and October, having previously been run once each year normally in October. The survey records how long adult defendants in criminal cases wait on the day of the court hearing before their case is heard. Results from both the April 2001 and October 2001 surveys have been circulated to courts. More details on the survey methodology can be found in the notes section.

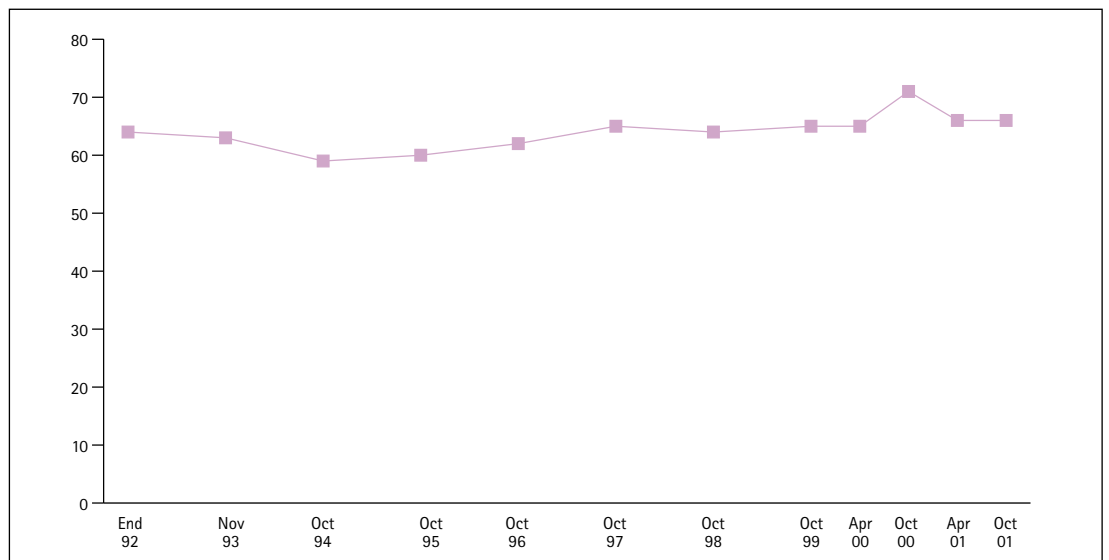
2. Magistrates' courts (Petty Sessions Areas or PSAs) record the time at which defendants in criminal cases report to court and the time at which hearings begin. The report time is defined as the time they are required to attend court or the time they actually attend, whichever is later. The difference between the report time and the start of the hearing is taken to be the defendant's waiting time.

## Average waiting times

3. In April and October 2001 the average waiting time was 66 minutes as shown in figure 1 and table 1, a decrease from 71 minutes in October 2000. This average waiting time for October 2000 was the highest over the period since 1992. The survey results for 2001 suggest that this increase which occurred in October 2000 was only temporary in nature.

4. In line with the decrease in average waiting time, the proportion of defendants waiting over 2 hours fell from 17 per cent in October 2000 to 15 per cent in April and October 2001. The proportion of defendants waiting 1 hour and up to 2 hours also decreased from 25 per cent in October 2000 to 24 per cent in April and October 2001. These results can be seen in table 2.

FIGURE 1: Average waiting time on the day for defendants (minutes), 1992 to 2001



### Analysis by MCC areas

5. Amongst Magistrates' Courts Committees (MCCs) the most common average waiting time in April 2001 was between 60 minutes and 70 minutes, as shown in figure 2. This fell in October 2001 where the most common average waiting time was between 50 minutes and 60 minutes. In April 2001, defendants waited over an hour on average in 76 per cent of MCCs, a decrease from 79 per cent in October 2000. This fell further to 67 per cent in October 2001.

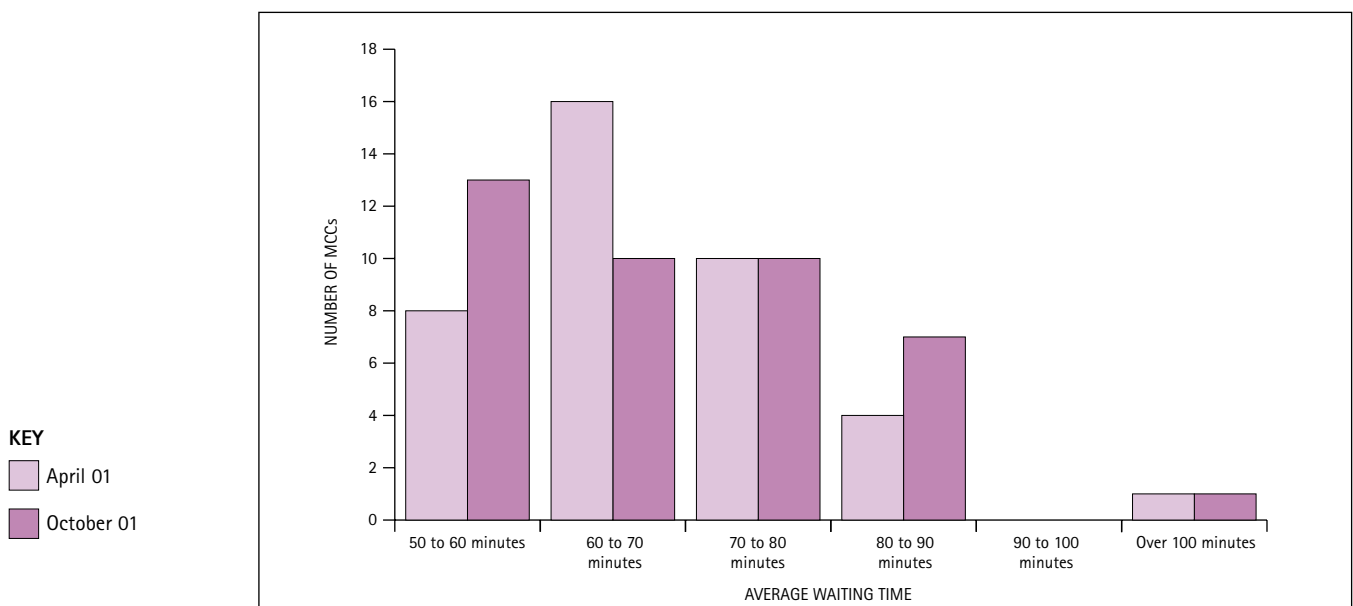
6. The results according to individual MCCs are shown in table 5. In October 2001, the average time defendants had to wait at court before the start of hearings varied from 49 minutes in Devon and Cornwall and 50 minutes in Greater Manchester to 105 minutes in Wiltshire. Defendants in Greater London waited 53 minutes on average, some 13 minutes less than the overall average in England and Wales.

7. The greatest improvements in average defendant waiting times between October 2000 and October 2001 were in Lancashire (a decrease from 74 minutes to 53 minutes) and South Wales (a fall from 77 minutes to 59 minutes). In contrast average waiting times lengthened most in Warwickshire (a increase from 56 minutes to 74 minutes) and West Yorkshire (a rise from 56 minutes to 71 minutes).

### Listing times

8. The waiting times on the day survey enables an analysis to be made of the times when defendants in criminal cases report. Figure 3 and table 3 show that the proportion of defendants within the various report times remains almost unchanged in April and October 2001 compared with October 2000. The proportion of defendants reporting before 11am has remained constant at 67 per cent in October 2000, April 2001 and

FIGURE 2 : Magistrates' Courts Committees by average waiting time, April and October 2001



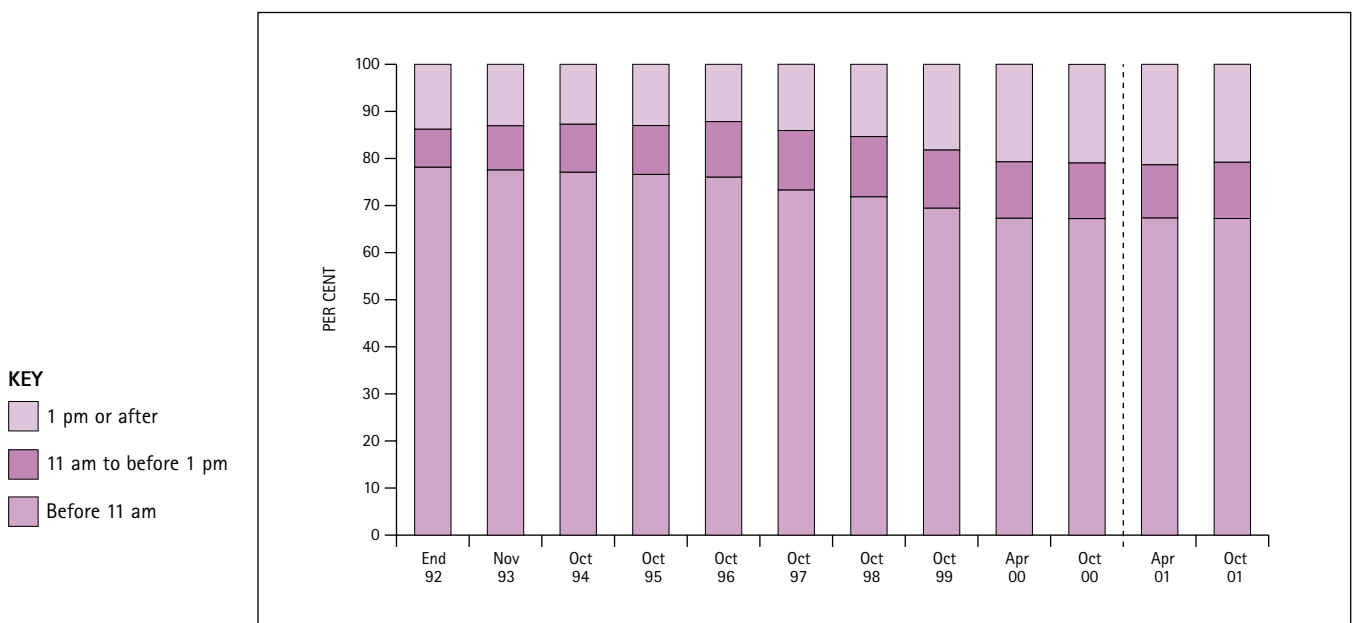
October 2001. The same is true for the proportion of defendants reporting at 1 pm or after, unchanged at 21 per cent. There was a slight decrease in the proportion of defendants reporting from 11am to before 1 pm from 12 per cent in October 2000 to 11 per cent in April 2001. However, this had resumed to 12 per cent in October 2001. The most recent survey results suggest that the gradual decline, since October 1994, in the proportion of defendants reporting before 11am has come to an end.

9. The results of different listing practices used by the PSAs are shown in figure 4 and table 4. There are three possible blocks during which defendants can report: before 11 am, from 11 am to before 1 pm and 1 pm or after (the same as the intervals used in figure 3). For the purposes of this analysis the number of blocks used in a PSA is defined as the number of these time periods which contained report times for more than

15 per cent of defendants. In October 2001, the average waiting time for defendants in PSAs which under this definition used one block, was 80 minutes. This compares with 64 minutes for PSAs using two blocks and 52 minutes for PSAs using all three blocks. There is therefore a tendency for average waiting times to be lower in areas making more use of block listing.

10. Table 4 also shows the proportions of PSAs using 1, 2 or 3 blocks. The proportion of PSAs that made use of just 1 block was 25 per cent in April 2001 and 26 per cent in October 2001 compared to 24 per cent in October 2000. The proportion of PSAs that used 2 blocks was 60 per cent in both April and October 2001 compared with 61 per cent in October 2000. Eleven per cent of PSAs made use of 3 blocks in October 2001 and 12 per cent in April 2001 compared with 10 per cent in October 2000.

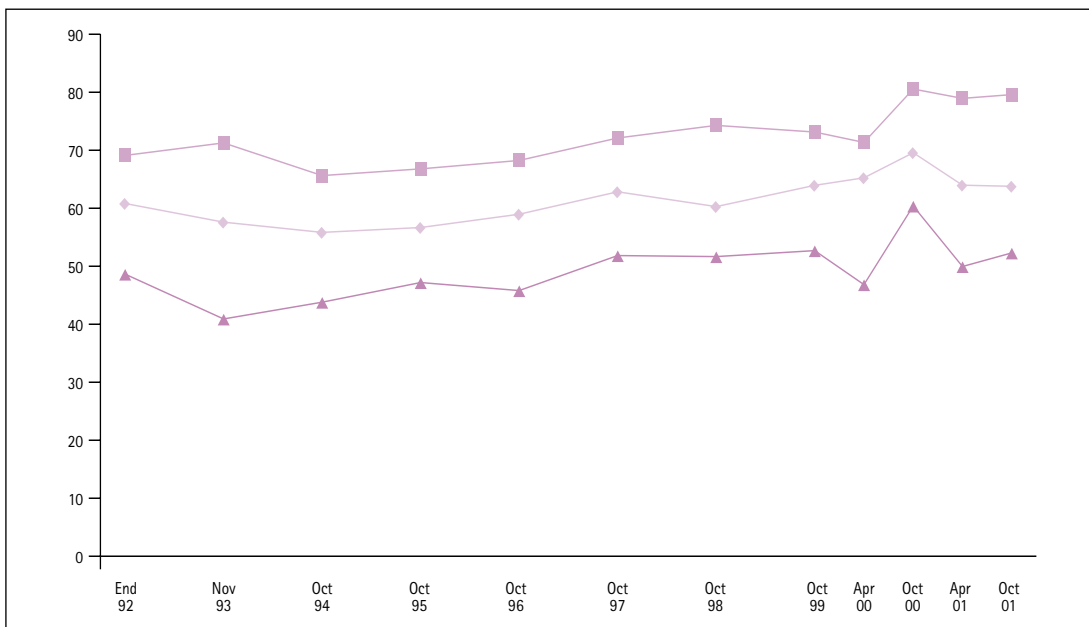
FIGURE 3: Proportion of defendants with report times before 11 am, from 11 am to before 1 pm and 1 pm or after, 1992 to 2001



**FIGURE 4 : Average waiting time on the day for defendants (minutes), by number of reporting blocks PSAs used, 1992 to 2001<sup>1</sup>**

1 Note: PSAs with sample sizes less than 20 are excluded from the analysis shown in the graph.

**KEY**  
 ■ 1 block  
 ◆ 2 blocks  
 ▲ 3 blocks



## USER REACTION SURVEY

### Introduction

11. The magistrates' courts user reaction survey records the views of court users about non-judicial aspects of the service received. From 1999 onwards the survey covered all court users, prior to this it only covered those who were non-professional. Since 2000 the survey has been carried out twice a year (in April and October), previously being conducted annually, normally in October. Results from both 2001 surveys have been circulated to courts. More details on the survey methodology can be found in the notes section.

12. The user reaction survey asks court users to answer a total of eleven questions. Six of the questions deal with the quality of the facilities provided at the court, and the other five relate to the information and assistance received before and during the court visit. The survey requests that court users rate their views on a scale comprising very good, satisfactory and poor. The subjects of the questions are:

#### *Facilities*

- Comfort of the waiting area
- Amount of seating in the waiting area
- Privacy in the waiting area
- Toilet facilities
- Refreshment facilities
- Availability of telephones

#### *Information and assistance*

- Quality of information provided in advance
- Quality of information provided by ushers or other court officials on arrival

- The readability and helpfulness of documents and forms
- The availability of court staff to deal with queries
- The helpfulness and friendliness of court staff

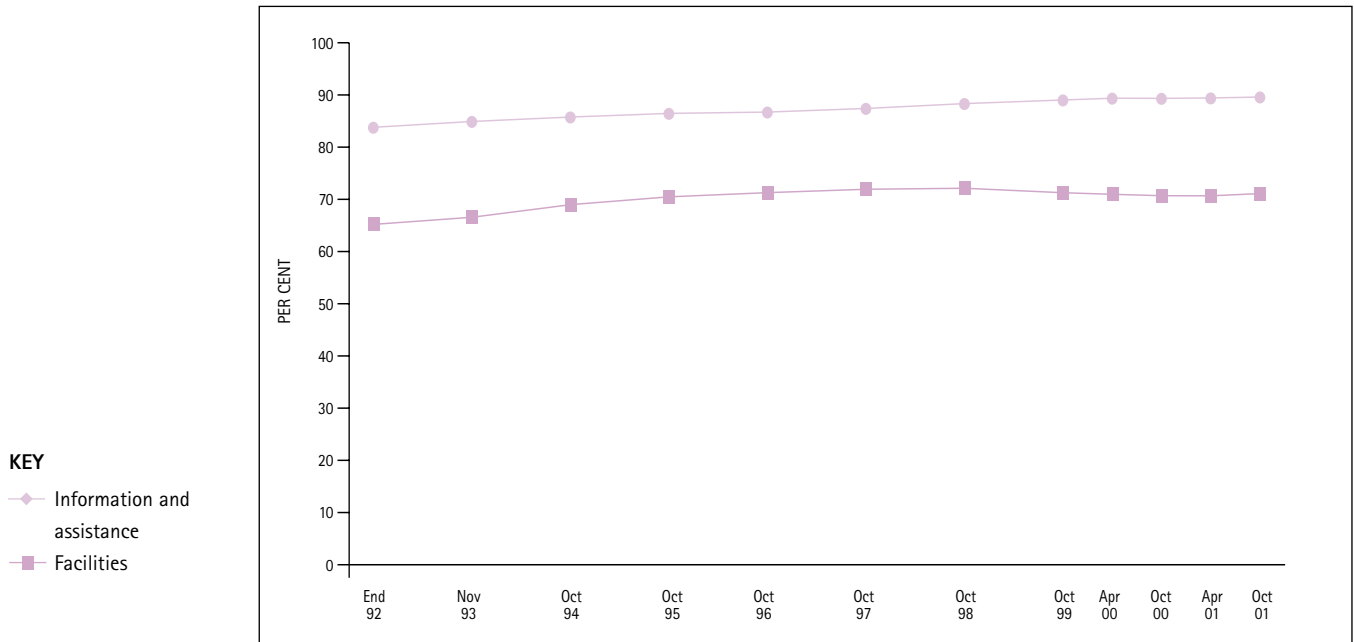
### Overall results on facilities, and information and assistance

13. Court users generally rate the quality of the information and assistance they receive more highly than the quality of facilities provided at the court, as shown in figure 5. An average of 89 per cent of responses to quality of information and assistance questions were either satisfactory or very good in October 2000 and April 2001. This increased to 90 per cent in October 2001. Seventy one per cent of responses to questions on the quality of facilities were satisfactory or very good in the 3 surveys between October 2000 and October 2001 (see tables 7 and 8).

### Responses to individual questions on facilities

14. Figure 6 shows the responses to individual questions on facilities for the April and October 2001 surveys combined. The highest quality rating in 2001 was given to the amount of seating in the waiting area with 83 per cent of respondents giving this a rating of satisfactory or very good, a slight increase from 82 per cent in 2000. By far the most criticised aspect of the court's facilities was the privacy of the waiting area. However, the proportion of respondents rating this aspect as satisfactory or very good rose slightly from 45 per cent in both 2000 surveys and April 2001 to 47 per cent in October 2001.

**FIGURE 5: Very good and satisfactory responses to questions on facilities, and information and assistance, 1992 to 2001**



15. The rating attached to toilet facilities decreased to 79 per cent in 2001 from 80 per cent in 2000. Ratings for all other aspects remained unchanged over the same period. 75 per cent for comfort of the waiting area, 70 per cent for refreshment facilities, and 73 per cent for availability of telephones. More detailed results regarding each survey can be found in table 7.

**Responses to individual questions on information and assistance**

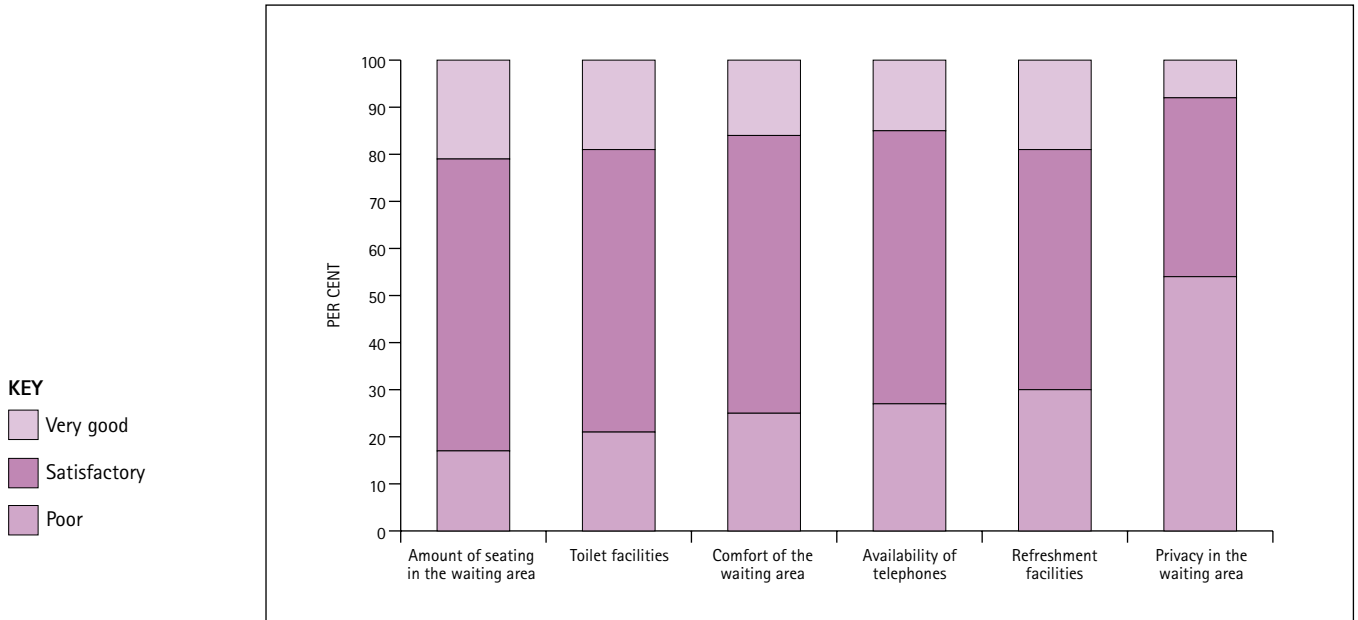
16. Figure 7 shows the responses to individual questions on information and assistance for the April and October 2001 surveys combined. As in previous years, respondents gave the highest quality rating in 2001 to the helpfulness and friendliness of court staff, as shown in figure 7 and table 8. The proportion of respondents rating this aspect of the service given by magistrates' courts as at least satisfactory was 95 per cent in

both April and October 2001 as in all surveys since October 1998. Fifty two per cent provided a rating of very good in October 2001, slightly lower than April 2001 (54 per cent).

17. The quality of information provided in advance has consistently been given the lowest rating by respondents since the survey started. Eighty one per cent of respondents considered it at least satisfactory in both April and October 2001, the same proportion as in October 2000.

18. Among the other aspects of information and assistance, the proportion of respondents rating these as satisfactory or very good in 2001 were 91 per cent for the availability of court staff to deal with queries, 90 per cent for the quality of information provided by ushers or other court officials on arrival, and 88 per cent for the readability and helpfulness of forms. Ratings for all aspects of information and assistance remain

**FIGURE 6 :** Responses to individual questions on facilities, 2001 (April and October combined)



unchanged when comparing the combined surveys for 2001 with 2000.

**Types of court user**

**19.** From 1999 onwards the survey involved all magistrates' court users including professionals, previously only being completed by non-professionals. As shown in table 6, those appearing in a professional capacity accounted for 17 per cent of responses in both April and October 2001, compared to 16 per cent in both April and October 2000.

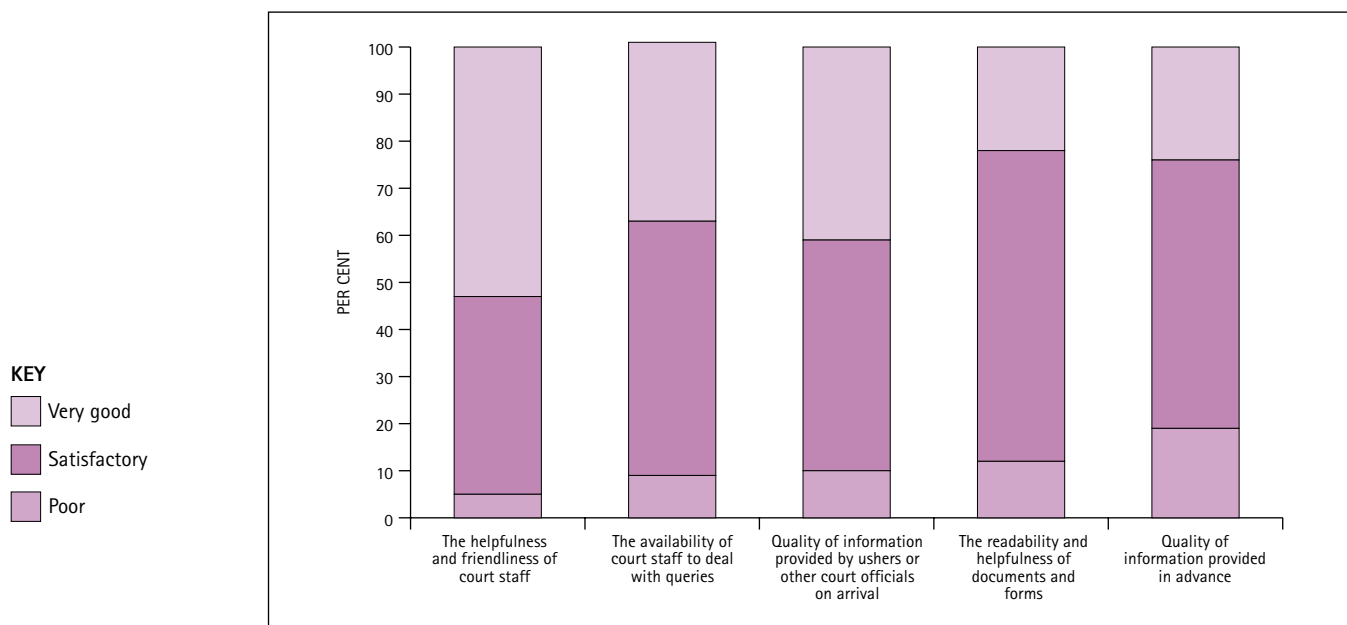
**20.** Table 9 shows that the responses to the questions varied between the different types of court user. In October 2001 as in previous surveys, the most satisfied of all court users were those who attended in connection with a liquor licence with an overall 86 per cent of responses being either satisfactory or very good. The least satisfied type of court users were those appearing in

court charged with an offence, with 78 per cent of responses to all questions being either satisfactory or very good.

**21.** Prosecution witnesses have consistently shown a higher degree of satisfaction than defence witnesses. 83 per cent of responses from prosecution witnesses in October 2001 gave a rating of either satisfactory or very good compared with 80 per cent from defence witnesses.

**22.** A similar proportion of respondents gave a rating of satisfactory or very good in October 2001 regardless of whether the user was professional or non-professional. However professionals gave lower than average ratings to the quality of facilities (67 per cent compared with 71 per cent on average) and higher than average ratings to the quality of information and assistance (95 per cent compared with 90 per cent on average).

**FIGURE 7 :** Responses to individual questions on information and assistance, 2001 (April and October combined)



### Ethnic origin of court user

23. From 1999 onwards respondents have been requested to describe their ethnic origin. In 2001 the ethnic origin classifications were redefined and results presented under these new categories. The vast majority of court users who did describe their ethnic origin described themselves as White British, 86 per cent in October 2001 and 84 per cent in April 2001 as shown in table 10. Table 11 shows that in October 2001 those describing their ethnic origin as White British were the most satisfied, with 81 per cent of responses indicating at least satisfaction. In April 2001 the same was true for those who described their ethnic origin as Indian. Those who described their ethnic origin as Bangladeshi were the least satisfied in both surveys – 67 per cent of responses in April 2001 and 70 per cent in October 2001 gave a rating of satisfactory or very good.

### Analysis by MCC areas

24. Table 12 shows results in October 2001 by MCC with a relatively high proportion of responses providing a rating of satisfactory or very good in Leicestershire (88 per cent), Nottinghamshire (87 per cent) and West Mercia (86 per cent). A relatively low proportion of responses indicated at least satisfaction in Gloucestershire (70 per cent), Derbyshire (75 per cent) and Gwent (76 per cent).

## DETAILED RESULTS<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Note: Individual figures may not sum to totals due to rounding.

### Waiting times on the day survey

**TABLE 1: Average time defendants had to wait at court before start of hearings, 1994 to 2001**

|                      | Minutes and numbers |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                      | Oct 94              | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 | Apr 00 | Oct 00 | Apr 01 | Oct 01 |
| Average time         | 59                  | 60     | 62     | 65     | 64     | 65     | 65     | 71     | 66     | 66     |
| Number of defendants | 27,614              | 27,170 | 30,561 | 32,747 | 32,049 | 31,234 | 39,454 | 30,943 | 28,475 | 28,176 |

**TABLE 2: Proportion of defendants waiting 1 hour or less, over 1 hour and up to 2 hours and over 2 hours before start of hearings, 1992 to 2000**

|                               | Percentages |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                               | Oct 94      | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 | Apr 00 | Oct 00 | Apr 01 | Oct 01 |
| One hour or less              | 64          | 64     | 63     | 62     | 63     | 62     | 62     | 58     | 61     | 61     |
| Over 1 hour and up to 2 hours | 23          | 23     | 23     | 23     | 23     | 23     | 23     | 25     | 24     | 24     |
| Over 2 hours                  | 13          | 13     | 14     | 15     | 15     | 14     | 15     | 17     | 15     | 15     |

**TABLE 3: Defendants analysed by report time, 1994 to 2001**

|                      | Percentages |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|----------------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                      | Oct 94      | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 | Apr 00 | Oct 00 | Apr 01 | Oct 01 |
| Before 11 am         | 77          | 77     | 76     | 73     | 72     | 69     | 67     | 67     | 67     | 67     |
| 11 am to before 1 pm | 10          | 10     | 12     | 13     | 13     | 12     | 12     | 12     | 11     | 12     |
| 1 pm or after        | 13          | 13     | 12     | 14     | 15     | 18     | 21     | 21     | 21     | 21     |

**TABLE 4: Average waiting time for defendants analysed by number of reporting blocks PSAs used and proportion of PSAs in each block, 1992 to 2000<sup>(2)</sup>**

| Average waiting times | Minutes |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|-----------------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                       | Oct 94  | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 | Apr 00 | Oct 00 | Apr 01 | Oct 01 |
| 1 block               | 66      | 67     | 68     | 72     | 74     | 73     | 71     | 81     | 79     | 80     |
| 2 blocks              | 56      | 57     | 59     | 63     | 60     | 64     | 65     | 70     | 64     | 64     |
| 3 blocks              | 44      | 47     | 46     | 52     | 52     | 53     | 47     | 60     | 50     | 52     |

| Proportions of PSAs in each block <sup>3</sup> | Percentages |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|--|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|  | Oct 94      | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 | Apr 00 | Oct 00 | Apr 01 | Oct 01 |
| 1 block  | 46          | 49     | 51     | 38     | 37     | 29     | 24     | 24     | 25     | 26     |
| 2 blocks                                       | 45          | 43     | 41     | 53     | 50     | 56     | 65     | 61     | 60     | 60     |
| 3 blocks                                       | 5           | 5      | 6      | 7      | 10     | 11     | 9      | 10     | 11     | 12     |

2 Note: Defendants in PSAs with sample sizes less than 20 are excluded from the analyses shown in the tables

3 Note: Figures do not sum to 100 per cent because some PSAs have been excluded due to low sample sizes (see also note 2).

**TABLE 5: Average time defendants had to wait at court before the start of hearings, by Magistrates' Courts Committee area, 1998 to 2001**

1 See paragraph 13 of the notes section for details of MCC amalgamations. Results for these MCCs are based on the results of amalgamations of old MCCs.

|  | Average number of days from: |           |           |           |           |           |
|--|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|  | Oct 98                       | Oct 99    | Apr 00    | Oct 00    | Apr 01    | Oct 01    |
| Avon and Somerset <sup>(1)</sup>           | 70                           | 73        | 50        | 78        | 74        | 87        |
| Bedfordshire                               | 52                           | 58        | 60        | 58        | 62        | 68        |
| Cambridgeshire                             | 69                           | 58        | 64        | 95        | 84        | 87        |
| Cheshire                                   | 65                           | 62        | 68        | 67        | 72        | 66        |
| Cleveland                                  | 56                           | 56        | 61        | 68        | 64        | 59        |
| Cumbria                                    | 61                           | 63        | 58        | 55        | 68        | 54        |
| Derbyshire                                 | 65                           | 59        | 60        | 68        | 47        | 52        |
| Devon Et Cornwall <sup>(1)</sup>           | 42                           | 57        | 54        | 57        | 48        | 49        |
| Dorset                                     | 77                           | 79        | 72        | 85        | 65        | 76        |
| Durham                                     | 61                           | 54        | 53        | 57        | 64        | 58        |
| Dyfed Powys <sup>(1)</sup>                 | 83                           | 79        | 97        | 100       | 77        | 83        |
| Essex                                      | 79                           | 78        | 68        | 77        | 59        | 77        |
| Gloucestershire                            | 60                           | 53        | 50        | 51        | 54        | 61        |
| Greater London <sup>(1)</sup>              | 60                           | 58        | 59        | 61        | 59        | 53        |
| Greater Manchester <sup>(1)</sup>          | 61                           | 64        | 59        | 66        | 51        | 50        |
| Gwent                                      | 73                           | 74        | 78        | 73        | 83        | 81        |
| Hampshire and Isle of Wight <sup>(1)</sup> | 78                           | 74        | 73        | 89        | 70        | 72        |
| Hertfordshire                              | 73                           | 66        | 74        | 67        | 60        | 71        |
| Humberside                                 | 55                           | 50        | 49        | 60        | 61        | 53        |
| Kent                                       | 79                           | 52        | 74        | 73        | 76        | 70        |
| Lancashire                                 | 73                           | 60        | 67        | 74        | 67        | 53        |
| Leicestershire                             | 62                           | 60        | 65        | 74        | 71        | 70        |
| Lincolnshire                               | 54                           | 62        | 54        | 53        | 60        | 58        |
| Merseyside <sup>(1)</sup>                  | 46                           | 57        | 64        | 64        | 56        | 57        |
| Norfolk                                    | 64                           | 65        | 64        | 58        | 68        | 59        |
| North Wales                                | 59                           | 69        | 63        | 66        | 69        | 65        |
| North Yorkshire                            | 80                           | 71        | 64        | 77        | 72        | 66        |
| Northamptonshire                           | 49                           | 53        | 37        | 64        | 52        | 51        |
| Northumbria <sup>(1)</sup>                 | 46                           | 54        | 58        | 73        | 55        | 66        |
| Nottinghamshire                            | 58                           | 89        | 57        | 75        | 66        | 67        |
| South Wales <sup>(1)</sup>                 | 69                           | 60        | 81        | 77        | 67        | 59        |
| South Yorkshire <sup>(1)</sup>             | 61                           | 59        | 70        | 64        | 58        | 60        |
| Staffordshire                              | 59                           | 68        | 55        | 92        | n/a       | 84        |
| Suffolk                                    | 77                           | 72        | 80        | 92        | 78        | 85        |
| Surrey                                     | 87                           | 87        | 72        | 89        | 81        | 75        |
| Sussex <sup>(1)</sup>                      | 62                           | 62        | 59        | 75        | 81        | 80        |
| Thames Valley <sup>(1)</sup>               | 69                           | 72        | 65        | 76        | 69        | 79        |
| Warwickshire                               | 50                           | 41        | 65        | 56        | 79        | 74        |
| West Mercia <sup>(1)</sup>                 | 73                           | 69        | 59        | 69        | 76        | 72        |
| West Midlands <sup>(1)</sup>               | 68                           | 73        | 65        | 77        | 70        | 69        |
| West Yorkshire <sup>(1)</sup>              | 59                           | 72        | 67        | 56        | 68        | 71        |
| Wiltshire                                  | 82                           | 92        | 88        | 111       | 108       | 105       |
| <b>All England and Wales</b>               | <b>64</b>                    | <b>65</b> | <b>65</b> | <b>71</b> | <b>66</b> | <b>66</b> |

## USER REACTION SURVEY

**TABLE 6: Type of court user responding to the survey, 1992 to 2000**

1 From 1999 onwards the type of witness (prosecution or defence) has been collected and users appearing as professionals (i.e. barristers, solicitors etc) have been included. Therefore comparisons of surveys from 1999 onwards with those from earlier years shown in the table above should not be made. See paragraph 19 in the main text for more details. 'n/a' in the table means results not available.

|   | Percentages of those giving a reason and numbers |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|   | Oct 94   | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 <sup>(1)</sup> | Apr 00 <sup>(1)</sup> | Oct 00 <sup>(1)</sup> | Apr 01 <sup>(1)</sup> | Oct 01 <sup>(1)</sup> |
| Appearing in court charged with an offence                              | 47   | 48     | 49     | 49     | 48     | 41                    | 39                    | 41                    | 39                    | 40                    |
| Appearing in court as a witness   | 13   | 12     | 11     | 11     | 12     | 9                     | 13                    | 12                    | 12                    | 13                    |
| Appearing in court as a defence witness                                 | n/a  | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 2                     | 3                     | 3                     | 3                     | 3                     |
| Appearing in court as a prosecution witness                             | n/a  | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 7                     | 9                     | 9                     | 9                     | 10                    |
| Applying in connection with a liquor licence                            | 6  | 6      | 5      | 6      | 5      | 4                     | 4                     | 4                     | 5                     | 4                     |
| A party in a matrimonial case   | 3  | 3      | 3      | 3      | 3      | 2                     | 2                     | 2                     | 1                     | 2                     |
| Accompanying a friend or relative who is appearing in court today       | 23   | 23     | 24     | 24     | 24     | 21                    | 19                    | 19                    | 19                    | 19                    |
| Appearing in court in a professional capacity                           | n/a  | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 17                    | 16                    | 16                    | 17                    | 17                    |
| Attending for any other reason  | 8  | 8      | 9      | 8      | 8      | 7                     | 6                     | 6                     | 7                     | 7                     |
| <i>Number of respondents where type of court user was known (=100%)</i> | 23,166   | 27,310 | 25,742 | 25,185 | 21,659 | 20,216                | 20,977                | 19,291                | 19,705                | 18,856                |
| <i>Number of respondents where type of court user was unknown</i>       | 907  | 1,976  | 2,436  | 2,098  | 1,902  | 1,422                 | 1,399                 | 1,247                 | 928                   | 800                   |
| <i>Total number of respondents</i>                                      | 24,073   | 29,286 | 28,178 | 27,283 | 23,561 | 21,638                | 22,376                | 20,538                | 20,633                | 19,656                |

**TABLE 7 : Responses to questions on facilities, 1994 to 2001**

|  | Percentages |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|--|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|  | Oct 94      | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 | Apr 00 | Oct 00 | Apr 01 | Oct 01 |
| <b>Comfort of the waiting area</b>           |             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Very good                                    | 14          | 16     | 16     | 17     | 17     | 16     | 16     | 16     | 15     | 16     |
| Satisfactory                                 | 58          | 59     | 59     | 58     | 59     | 60     | 60     | 59     | 59     | 59     |
| Poor   | 27          | 26     | 25     | 24     | 24     | 24     | 25     | 25     | 25     | 25     |
| <b>Amount of seating in the waiting area</b> |             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Very good                                    | 19          | 21     | 22     | 22     | 23     | 22     | 21     | 21     | 21     | 21     |
| Satisfactory                                 | 61          | 60     | 60     | 61     | 60     | 61     | 61     | 61     | 61     | 62     |
| Poor   | 21          | 19     | 19     | 17     | 17     | 17     | 18     | 18     | 17     | 18     |
| <b>Privacy in the waiting area</b>           |             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Very good                                    | 6           | 7      | 7      | 8      | 8      | 7      | 8      | 8      | 8      | 8      |
| Satisfactory                                 | 34          | 35     | 36     | 37     | 38     | 36     | 37     | 38     | 38     | 39     |
| Poor   | 60          | 58     | 58     | 56     | 54     | 57     | 55     | 55     | 55     | 53     |
| <b>Toilet facilities</b>                     |             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Very good                                    | 22          | 24     | 24     | 24     | 23     | 22     | 20     | 20     | 19     | 19     |
| Satisfactory                                 | 61          | 60     | 60     | 59     | 61     | 60     | 60     | 60     | 60     | 60     |
| Poor   | 17          | 16     | 16     | 16     | 17     | 18     | 20     | 20     | 21     | 21     |
| <b>Refreshment facilities</b>                |             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Very good                                    | 20          | 20     | 22     | 21     | 21     | 21     | 20     | 19     | 19     | 19     |
| Satisfactory                                 | 47          | 49     | 50     | 50     | 49     | 51     | 50     | 50     | 50     | 51     |
| Poor   | 33          | 31     | 27     | 29     | 29     | 28     | 30     | 31     | 30     | 30     |
| <b>Availability of telephones</b>            |             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Very good                                    | 16          | 16     | 17     | 17     | 17     | 15     | 15     | 15     | 15     | 14     |
| Satisfactory                                 | 56          | 56     | 56     | 57     | 58     | 57     | 58     | 57     | 58     | 58     |
| Poor   | 28          | 27     | 27     | 25     | 26     | 28     | 27     | 27     | 27     | 27     |
| <b>All facilities questions combined</b>     |             |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Very good                                    | 16          | 17     | 18     | 18     | 18     | 17     | 17     | 17     | 16     | 16     |
| Satisfactory                                 | 53          | 53     | 53     | 54     | 54     | 54     | 54     | 54     | 54     | 55     |
| Poor   | 31          | 30     | 29     | 28     | 28     | 29     | 29     | 29     | 29     | 29     |

**TABLE 8: Responses to questions on information and assistance, 1994 to 2001**

|   | Percentages |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |        |
|---|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
|   | Oct 94      | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 | Apr00 | Oct00 | Apr01 | Oct 01 |
| Quality of information provided in advance                                    |             |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |        |
| Very good   | 22          | 22     | 23     | 24     | 24     | 24     | 23    | 23    | 24    | 23     |
| Satisfactory  | 53          | 55     | 54     | 54     | 56     | 56     | 57    | 58    | 57    | 58     |
| Poor  | 25          | 23     | 23     | 22     | 21     | 20     | 19    | 19    | 19    | 19     |
| Quality of information provided by ushers or other court officials on arrival |             |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |        |
| Very good   | 38          | 38     | 38     | 39     | 40     | 42     | 41    | 42    | 42    | 41     |
| Satisfactory  | 49          | 50     | 50     | 50     | 50     | 48     | 49    | 49    | 48    | 50     |
| Poor  | 12          | 12     | 12     | 11     | 10     | 10     | 10    | 10    | 10    | 9      |
| The readability and helpfulness of documents and forms                        |             |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |        |
| Very good   | 17          | 18     | 19     | 20     | 21     | 22     | 23    | 22    | 22    | 23     |
| Satisfactory  | 67          | 67     | 67     | 67     | 67     | 66     | 65    | 66    | 66    | 65     |
| Poor  | 16          | 15     | 14     | 13     | 12     | 12     | 12    | 12    | 12    | 12     |
| The availability of court staff to deal with queries                          |             |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |        |
| Very good   | 30          | 30     | 31     | 33     | 34     | 38     | 38    | 38    | 38    | 37     |
| Satisfactory  | 58          | 58     | 57     | 56     | 56     | 53     | 54    | 53    | 53    | 54     |
| Poor  | 12          | 12     | 11     | 11     | 10     | 9      | 8     | 9     | 9     | 8      |
| The helpfulness and friendliness of court staff                               |             |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |        |
| Very good   | 47          | 47     | 46     | 48     | 49     | 54     | 53    | 53    | 54    | 52     |
| Satisfactory  | 47          | 47     | 47     | 46     | 46     | 41     | 42    | 43    | 41    | 44     |
| Poor  | 6           | 6      | 6      | 6      | 5      | 5      | 5     | 5     | 5     | 5      |
| All information and assistance questions combined                             |             |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |        |
| Very good   | 31          | 31     | 32     | 33     | 34     | 37     | 36    | 36    | 37    | 36     |
| Satisfactory  | 55          | 55     | 55     | 54     | 55     | 53     | 53    | 53    | 53    | 54     |
| Poor  | 14          | 14     | 13     | 13     | 12     | 11     | 11    | 11    | 11    | 10     |

**TABLE 9 : Overall responses to all questions by type of court user, 1994 to 2001**

1 From 1999 onwards the type of witness (prosecution or defence) has been collected and users appearing as professionals (i.e. barristers, solicitors etc) have been included. Therefore comparisons of surveys from 1999 onwards with those from earlier years shown in the table above should not be made. 'n/a' in the table means results not available.

|  | Percentages |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Oct 94      | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 <sup>(1)</sup> | Apr 00 <sup>(1)</sup> | Oct 00 <sup>(1)</sup> | Apr 01 <sup>(1)</sup> | Oct 01 <sup>(1)</sup> |
| <b>Appearing in court charged with an offence</b>                        |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | 23          | 22     | 22     | 23     | 23     | 24                    | 22                    | 22                    | 22                    | 21                    |
| Satisfactory   | 53          | 56     | 56     | 56     | 56     | 56                    | 56                    | 57                    | 57                    | 57                    |
| Poor   | 25          | 22     | 22     | 21     | 21     | 20                    | 22                    | 22                    | 22                    | 22                    |
| <b>Appearing in court as a witness (defence or prosecution)</b>          |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | 24          | 26     | 27     | 29     | 29     | 29                    | 28                    | 28                    | 27                    | 27                    |
| Satisfactory   | 55          | 53     | 53     | 53     | 52     | 53                    | 54                    | 54                    | 54                    | 55                    |
| Poor   | 21          | 21     | 20     | 19     | 19     | 18                    | 17                    | 18                    | 19                    | 18                    |
| <b>Appearing in court as a defence witness<sup>(1)</sup></b>             |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 24                    | 23                    | 22                    | 22                    | 21                    |
| Satisfactory   | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 56                    | 55                    | 56                    | 53                    | 58                    |
| Poor   | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 20                    | 22                    | 22                    | 24                    | 20                    |
| <b>Appearing in court as a prosecution witness<sup>(1)</sup></b>         |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 31                    | 30                    | 29                    | 29                    | 28                    |
| Satisfactory   | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 53                    | 54                    | 53                    | 54                    | 54                    |
| Poor   | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 17                    | 16                    | 17                    | 18                    | 17                    |
| <b>Applying in connection with a liquor licence</b>                      |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | 29          | 31     | 32     | 35     | 33     | 30                    | 30                    | 32                    | 30                    | 30                    |
| Satisfactory   | 55          | 54     | 54     | 53     | 54     | 56                    | 56                    | 55                    | 55                    | 56                    |
| Poor   | 16          | 15     | 14     | 13     | 13     | 14                    | 14                    | 13                    | 15                    | 14                    |
| <b>A party in a matrimonial case</b>                                     |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | 25          | 26     | 28     | 28     | 26     | 24                    | 28                    | 24                    | 30                    | 24                    |
| Satisfactory   | 54          | 56     | 53     | 54     | 56     | 56                    | 56                    | 55                    | 51                    | 57                    |
| Poor   | 20          | 18     | 19     | 18     | 18     | 21                    | 17                    | 21                    | 19                    | 19                    |
| <b>Accompanying a friend or relative who is appearing in court today</b> |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | 21          | 23     | 23     | 23     | 24     | 24                    | 22                    | 23                    | 23                    | 23                    |
| Satisfactory   | 52          | 53     | 54     | 54     | 54     | 54                    | 55                    | 54                    | 55                    | 56                    |
| Poor   | 27          | 25     | 24     | 23     | 22     | 22                    | 23                    | 23                    | 22                    | 21                    |
| <b>Appearing in court in a professional capacity<sup>(1)</sup></b>       |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 33                    | 33                    | 32                    | 33                    | 32                    |
| Satisfactory   | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 48                    | 48                    | 47                    | 46                    | 47                    |
| Poor   | n/a         | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | n/a    | 19                    | 20                    | 21                    | 21                    | 21                    |
| <b>Attending for any other reason or reason for attendance not known</b> |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | 23          | 27     | 27     | 29     | 28     | 28                    | 29                    | 29                    | 28                    | 30                    |
| Satisfactory   | 58          | 50     | 50     | 50     | 50     | 52                    | 49                    | 51                    | 52                    | 51                    |
| Poor   | 19          | 23     | 23     | 22     | 22     | 20                    | 22                    | 20                    | 20                    | 19                    |
| <b>All types of court users combined</b>                                 |             |        |        |        |        |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| Very good  | 23          | 24     | 24     | 25     | 25     | 26                    | 25                    | 25                    | 25                    | 25                    |
| Satisfactory   | 54          | 54     | 54     | 54     | 54     | 53                    | 54                    | 54                    | 54                    | 54                    |
| Poor   | 23          | 22     | 22     | 21     | 21     | 21                    | 21                    | 21                    | 21                    | 21                    |

**TABLE 10: Ethnic origin, 2001<sup>(1)</sup>**

|  |                           | Percentages of those giving ethnic origin and numbers |        |
|--|---------------------------|---|--------|
|  |                           | Apr 01  | Oct 01 |
| White  | British                   | 84  | 86     |
|  | Irish                     | 3   | 2      |
|  | Other White               | 3   | 1      |
| Black or Black British   | African                   | 1   | 1      |
|  | Caribbean                 | 2   | 2      |
|  | Other Black               | -   | -      |
| Asian or Asian British   | Indian                    | 2   | 2      |
|  | Pakistani                 | 1   | 2      |
|  | Bangladeshi               | 1   | 1      |
|  | Other Asian               | -   | -      |
| Chinese or Other ethnic group  | Chinese                   | -   | -      |
|  | Any other                 | -   | -      |
| Mixed  | White and Asian           | 1   | 1      |
|  | White and Black African   | -   | 1      |
|  | White and Black Caribbean | 1   | 1      |
|  | Any other Mixed           | -   | -      |
| <i>Number of respondents where ethnicity of court user was known (=100%)</i> |                           | 19,640  | 18800  |
| <i>Number of respondents where ethnicity of court user was unknown</i>       |                           | 993   | 856    |
| <i>Total number of respondents</i>   |                           | 20633   | 19,656 |

'-' in the table means less than half of one per cent

**TABLE 11: Overall responses to all questions by ethnic origin, 2001<sup>(1)</sup>**

|                        |                            | Percentages |        |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|--------|
|                        |                            | Apr 01      | Oct 01 |
| White                  | British                    |             |        |
|                        | Very good                  | 26          | 25     |
|                        | Satisfactory               | 55          | 55     |
|                        | Poor                       | 20          | 19     |
|                        | Irish                      |             |        |
|                        | Very good                  | 28          | 23     |
|                        | Satisfactory               | 48          | 51     |
|                        | Poor                       | 25          | 26     |
|                        | Other White                |             |        |
| Very good              | 29                         | 30          |        |
| Satisfactory           | 47                         | 48          |        |
| Poor                   | 24                         | 22          |        |
| Black or Black British | African                    |             |        |
|                        | Very good                  | 25          | 25     |
|                        | Satisfactory               | 52          | 52     |
|                        | Poor                       | 23          | 23     |
|                        | Caribbean                  |             |        |
|                        | Very good                  | 20          | 19     |
|                        | Satisfactory               | 51          | 55     |
|                        | Poor                       | 29          | 25     |
|                        | Other Black <sup>(2)</sup> |             |        |
|                        | Very good                  | 24          | 30     |
|                        | Satisfactory               | 49          | 45     |
|                        | Poor                       | 26          | 25     |

1 In 2001 the ethnic origin classifications were redefined. Previous surveys are not shown in this table and comparisons of surveys from 2001 onwards with those from earlier years should not be made.

2 Sample size in one or more surveys is less than 100 defendants. Figures relating to small sample sizes will be subject to greater sampling error and therefore should be treated more cautiously than others in the table.

**TABLE 11: Overall responses to all questions by ethnic origin, 2001<sup>(1)</sup> (continued)**

|                                 |  | Percentages |        |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------|--------|
|                                 |  | Apr 01      | Oct 01 |
| Asian or Asian British          | Indian                                 |             |        |
|                                 | Very good                              | 28          | 26     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 54          | 55     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 19          | 20     |
|                                 | Pakistani                              |             |        |
|                                 | Very good                              | 19          | 23     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 52          | 50     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 29          | 27     |
|                                 | Bangladeshi                            |             |        |
|                                 | Very good                              | 25          | 21     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 41          | 49     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 33          | 30     |
| Chinese or Other ethnic group   | Other Asian <sup>(2)</sup>             |             |        |
|                                 | Very good                              | 27          | 35     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 53          | 43     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 20          | 21     |
|                                 | Chinese <sup>(2)</sup>                 |             |        |
|                                 | Very good                              | 26          | 20     |
| Satisfactory                    | 49                                     | 51          |        |
| Poor                            | 25                                     | 29          |        |
| Mixed                           | Any other <sup>(2)</sup>               |             |        |
|                                 | Very good                              | 45          | 30     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 34          | 45     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 22          | 25     |
|                                 | White and Asian                        |             |        |
|                                 | Very good                              | 21          | 19     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 53          | 56     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 26          | 25     |
|                                 | White and Black African <sup>(2)</sup> |             |        |
|                                 | Very good                              | 16          | 25     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 54          | 50     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 31          | 25     |
| White and Black Caribbean       |  |             |        |
| Very good                       | 26                                     | 22          |        |
| Satisfactory                    | 49                                     | 51          |        |
| Poor                            | 25                                     | 27          |        |
| Any other Mixed <sup>(2)</sup>  |  |             |        |
| Very good                       | 30                                     | 26          |        |
| Satisfactory                    | 43                                     | 53          |        |
| Poor                            | 27                                     | 22          |        |
| Unknown                         | Very good                              | 24          | 23     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 48          | 50     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 28          | 27     |
| All types of ethnicity combined | Very good                              | 25          | 25     |
|                                 | Satisfactory                           | 54          | 54     |
|                                 | Poor                                   | 21          | 21     |

1 In 2001 the ethnic origin classifications were redefined. Previous surveys are not shown in this table and comparisons of surveys from 2001 onwards with those from earlier years should not be made.

2 Sample size in one or more surveys is less than 100 defendants. Figures relating to small sample sizes will be subject to greater sampling error and therefore should be treated more cautiously than others in the table.

**TABLE 12: Overall responses to all questions by Magistrates' Courts Committee area, 2001**

|                              | Percentages |                            |           |           |                              |           |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
|                              | Very good   | April 2001<br>Satisfactory | Poor      | Very good | October 2001<br>Satisfactory | Poor      |
| Avon and Somerset            | 26          | 57                         | 17        | 28        | 54                           | 18        |
| Bedfordshire                 | 34          | 52                         | 14        | 28        | 57                           | 15        |
| Cambridgeshire               | 21          | 57                         | 22        | 24        | 55                           | 22        |
| Cheshire                     | 27          | 55                         | 18        | 30        | 48                           | 23        |
| Cleveland                    | 18          | 59                         | 23        | 16        | 61                           | 23        |
| Cumbria                      | 34          | 50                         | 16        | 33        | 49                           | 18        |
| Derbyshire                   | 22          | 52                         | 26        | 25        | 50                           | 25        |
| Devon and Cornwall           | 31          | 54                         | 15        | 29        | 53                           | 19        |
| Dorset                       | 22          | 52                         | 27        | 25        | 54                           | 21        |
| Durham                       | 22          | 51                         | 27        | 26        | 53                           | 21        |
| Dyfed Powys                  | 25          | 47                         | 28        | 28        | 50                           | 22        |
| Essex                        | 20          | 55                         | 25        | 23        | 57                           | 20        |
| Gloucestershire              | 26          | 51                         | 23        | 18        | 52                           | 30        |
| GLMCA                        | 27          | 50                         | 23        | 26        | 52                           | 21        |
| Greater Manchester           | 29          | 52                         | 19        | 28        | 52                           | 20        |
| Gwent                        | 20          | 51                         | 28        | 15        | 61                           | 24        |
| Hampshire and Isle of Wight  | 26          | 55                         | 19        | 25        | 55                           | 20        |
| Hertfordshire                | 28          | 54                         | 18        | 21        | 58                           | 22        |
| Humberside                   | 18          | 59                         | 23        | 20        | 58                           | 22        |
| Kent                         | 27          | 55                         | 18        | 22        | 57                           | 21        |
| Lancashire                   | 28          | 53                         | 19        | 22        | 56                           | 22        |
| Leicestershire               | 34          | 54                         | 12        | 33        | 54                           | 12        |
| Lincolnshire                 | 25          | 52                         | 23        | 24        | 53                           | 23        |
| Merseyside                   | 28          | 51                         | 21        | 24        | 55                           | 21        |
| Norfolk                      | 28          | 56                         | 15        | 27        | 58                           | 15        |
| North Wales                  | 19          | 55                         | 26        | 25        | 56                           | 20        |
| North Yorkshire              | 26          | 50                         | 23        | 24        | 54                           | 22        |
| Northamptonshire             | 26          | 56                         | 18        | 22        | 60                           | 18        |
| Northumbria                  | 24          | 57                         | 19        | 23        | 58                           | 19        |
| Nottinghamshire              | 28          | 59                         | 13        | 31        | 56                           | 13        |
| South Wales                  | 22          | 56                         | 22        | 23        | 54                           | 24        |
| South Yorkshire              | 29          | 55                         | 16        | 26        | 56                           | 18        |
| Staffordshire                | n/a         | n/a                        | n/a       | 31        | 50                           | 18        |
| Suffolk                      | 17          | 58                         | 25        | 16        | 60                           | 24        |
| Surrey                       | 26          | 57                         | 16        | 25        | 58                           | 17        |
| Sussex                       | 27          | 51                         | 22        | 26        | 55                           | 19        |
| Thames Valley                | 20          | 56                         | 24        | 22        | 56                           | 22        |
| Warwickshire                 | 28          | 55                         | 17        | 23        | 58                           | 19        |
| West Mercia                  | 31          | 53                         | 15        | 36        | 49                           | 14        |
| West Midlands                | 23          | 52                         | 26        | 21        | 56                           | 24        |
| West Yorkshire               | 22          | 52                         | 25        | 20        | 58                           | 22        |
| Wiltshire                    | 28          | 56                         | 16        | 29        | 51                           | 20        |
| <b>All England and Wales</b> | <b>25</b>   | <b>54</b>                  | <b>21</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>54</b>                    | <b>21</b> |

'n/a' in the table means results not available.

## NOTES

### Introduction

1. In 2000 for the first time magistrates' courts in England and Wales conducted 2 surveys of waiting times on the day and user reaction. Previously being carried out annually since 1991, the surveys were conducted in the weeks beginning 10 April and 2 October at Petty Sessions Area (PSA) level.

2. The quality of service surveys were set up by the Home Office. With the transfer of responsibility for magistrates' courts to LCD these surveys were also moved to LCD, although the Home Office continued to provide support for the analysis of results up to the 1994 surveys.

### Waiting times on the day survey

3. For the waiting times on the day survey, PSAs are asked to record the time at which the defendant was required to arrive (or the time the defendant actually arrived, whichever is later) and the time the case actually started for all adult criminal cases during the sample period. Exceptionally in cases where the hearing is postponed for another day no details are recorded. The information is requested for each courtroom in a PSA for two consecutive days or six consecutive court sittings, whichever is the greater. Since the 1993 survey PSAs have been asked to record information on at least 40 defendants and should normally carry on recording until this has been achieved. Since 1994 courts have been asked to undertake the survey in October. Before this, in 1993 the instructions were to undertake the survey in November and for the 1992 survey courts were asked to undertake the survey before January 1993.

4. This bulletin does not present the results of the 1991 survey since a change to the survey instructions means that the 1991 figures are not directly comparable with later years. The change affected the way the report time was collected. In 1991 courts were asked to merely collect the time defendants were asked to arrive but from 1992 onwards the survey has asked for the later of defendants' report or arrival time. This change will have reduced recorded waiting times.

5. The waiting times results in this bulletin differ from those published in 1997 and earlier years (covering 1996 and earlier surveys) in that custody cases have been dealt with differently in the analysis. In the analysis for results published in 1997 and earlier years custody cases were treated as having zero waiting time: the idea being that defendants in custody cases did not lose any free time while they waited for their case to be heard. Before 1996 courts were asked to record if a defendant was in custody by marking the form appropriately but from 1996 onwards a separate tick-box was added to the form for courts to record that a defendant was in custody. The new box resulted in a much greater number of defendants being recorded as in custody – which since custody defendants were treated as having zero waiting time depressed the overall reported average. From bulletin 3/99 onwards the results (including all previous years' presented) relate to the full recorded waiting time for all defendants including those in custody. This also has the advantage of better reflecting the overall time that non-defendant parties to cases, for example, the police, lawyers and witnesses wait.

6. For the block analysis in this bulletin the number of reporting blocks used by a PSA is defined as the number of the time periods (before 11 am, from 11 am to before 1 pm and 1 pm or after) which contained report times for more than 15 per cent of defendants in that PSA. This is the same methodology as used in all bulletins since bulletin 3/99. All previous analyses required more than 20 per cent of defendants.

### User reaction survey

7. From 1999 onwards, the user reaction survey was designed to be completed by all magistrates' court users including professionals (i.e. barristers, solicitors etc) and also requested users to describe their ethnic origin. Previously it was only completed by non-professional court users (for example: defendants, defendants' friends or relatives, witnesses, parties in matrimonial cases, licensees, etc.). In 2001 the ethnic origin classifications were redefined.

8. Court users are asked to answer a two page self-completion questionnaire. Courts are free to choose how best to conduct the survey but the most popular method is to distribute the forms to court users as they wait for their case to be heard. PSAs are asked to carry out the survey for a whole week. To help ensure each PSA has a representative sample, they are asked to collect at least 40 forms. If a PSA fails to collect sufficient forms, then they are asked to continue the survey until they do so. The 1991 results are not

consistent with the trend established since 1991 and are not included in the tables in this bulletin. However they can be found in a previous bulletin (no. 3/97) issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

### Quality and completeness of the data

9. The waiting times on the day collection forms and user reaction survey questionnaires are returned to Magistrates' Courts Division at the Lord Chancellor's Department. The forms are now processed electronically by data inputters who come to us so the inputting can be better quality assured. LCD's Information Management Unit then checks the computerised records for consistency and corrects them where necessary.

10. The figures from the surveys conducted in October 1999 that are shown in this bulletin are slightly different to those shown by bulletin 1/2001. The differences are mainly due to revisions that take account of data inputted since bulletin 2/2000 was published.

11. Some PSAs are unable to participate in the collection of data due to local circumstances. The proportion of PSAs supplying data has decreased since October 2000 when they were the highest since the surveys began. The sample size for the waiting times on the day survey in October 2001 was the lowest since October 1995. The user reaction survey contained the fewest participants in October 2001 since the surveys started.

### Proportion of PSAs making returns and sample sizes, 1991 to 2000

|                                   | Percentages and number |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                   | Oct 94                 | Oct 95 | Oct 96 | Oct 97 | Oct 98 | Oct 99 | Apr 00 | Oct 00 | Apr 01 | Oct 01 |
| <b>Waiting times on the day</b>   |                        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Proportion of PSAs making returns | 91                     | 88     | 92     | 98     | 94     | 88     | 93     | 99     | 95     | 94     |
| Number of defendants              | 27,614                 | 27,170 | 30,561 | 32,747 | 32,049 | 31,234 | 39,454 | 30,943 | 28,475 | 28,176 |
| <b>User reaction</b>              |                        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
| Proportion of PSAs making returns | 80                     | 93     | 91     | 98     | 92     | 86     | 91     | 98     | 93     | 94     |
| Number of respondents             | 24,073                 | 29,286 | 28,178 | 27,283 | 23,561 | 21,638 | 22,376 | 20,538 | 20,633 | 19,656 |

12. PSA level results have been disseminated to local areas. These are available upon request from the contact listed in paragraph 17.

13. In the text and tables, figures may not sum exactly to totals because the numbers in this bulletin have been rounded independently of each other.

### MCC amalgamations

14. Since bulletin 1/2001 MCCs have been presented on the 42 MCC basis that came into effect on 1 April 2001. Results for new MCCs are based on the results of amalgamations of old MCCs.

### Further information

15. Information Bulletin 3/97 (covering all surveys to 1996) was the first bulletin produced on the magistrates' courts waiting times on the day and user reaction surveys by the Lord Chancellor's Department. It includes a list of

references to previous publications both containing results and related to the setting up of the surveys. Information Bulletin 3/99 covers results from the 1997 and 1998 surveys, 2/2000 covers 1999 surveys and 1/2001 covers 2000 surveys.

16. The Home Office Research Bulletin No. 38 (1996): User satisfaction and waiting times in magistrates' courts – written by Patricia Morgan – provides analysis of earlier surveys.

17. This bulletin has been prepared by the Information Management Unit and Magistrates' Courts Administration Division in the Lord Chancellor's Department. Comments on this publication or suggestions would be welcomed. If you have any enquiries about figures in this bulletin or wish to request further analysis of the data (a fee may be charged) contact Jo Peacock at the address below:

### MCC amalgamations, 1997 to 2001

| Date         | Amalgamated MCCs                  | Old MCCs  |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 April 1997 | North and West Greater Manchester | Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Salford, Wigan  |
| 1 April 1999 | Devon and Cornwall                | Devon, Cornwall   |
| 1 April 1999 | Merseyside                        | Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton, Wirral  |
| 1 April 1999 | Thames Valley                     | Berkshire and Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire  |
| 1 April 1999 | West Midlands                     | Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton  |
| 1 April 2000 | Avon and Somerset                 | Avon, Somerset  |
| 1 April 2000 | Dyfed Powys                       | Dyfed, Powys  |
| 1 April 2000 | Hampshire and Isle of Wight       | Hampshire, Isle of Wight  |
| 1 April 2000 | Northumbria                       | Gateshead, Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Northumberland, Sunderland  |
| 1 April 2000 | South Wales                       | South Wales, West Glamorgan   |
| 1 April 2000 | West Yorkshire                    | Calderdale, Leeds, West Riding  |
| 1 April 2001 | Greater London                    | Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, City of London, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Inner London, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton, Waltham Forest |
| 1 April 2001 | Greater Manchester                | Manchester, North and West Manchester, Oldham, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford  |
| 1 April 2001 | South Yorkshire                   | Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield   |
| 1 April 2001 | Sussex                            | East Sussex, West Sussex  |
| 1 April 2001 | West Mercia                       | Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire  |

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