

Analysis of SDT Fines

Introduction and Key Findings

This report briefly summarises fines issued by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT) between 2014 and 2021.

We show that the pattern of fines issued by the SDT has remained reasonably constant since 2014, with a few key observations:

- Across all years only four fines larger than £60,000 have been issued
- For all years at least half of all fines by number were of £10,000 or less
- For all years at least 75% of all fines by number were of £20,000 or less
- The proportion of fines resulting from an agreed outcome, rather than a full hearing has grown from zero in 2014 to approximately half of all fines.
- The largest fines (>£25k) are much more likely to be from full hearings rather than agreed outcomes. However, the median fine amount from agreed outcome and full hearing are very similar. This suggests a similar distribution between the two, with the exception of these relatively few large fines each year.

Fining Statistics by Year

Table 1 below shows some simple summary statistics of fines issued by the SDT by year. There appears to be little change in these figures with time. The minimum fine has remained around £1,000, ranging from £500 to £1,500. Other than four very large fines the maximum fine issued remains around £50,000, ranging from £40,000 to £60,000.

Table 1: Summary of fines by year

Year	Number of fines	Minimum Fine	Maximum Fine	Mean Fine	Median Fine	Number of fines over £60k
2014	29	£1,000	£40,000	£8,741.38	£5,000	0
2015	36	£500	£305,000	£14,444.44	£5,000	1
2016	55	£1,000	£40,000	£7,913.64	£6,000	0
2017	53	£1,000	£500,000	£28,896.25	£10,000	2
2018	83	£1,000	£200,000	£13,784.52	£10,000	1
2019	49	£1,500	£50,000	£14,505.16	£10,000	0
2020	38	£1,500	£60,000	£13,039.61	£9,375	0
2021*	15	£660	£50,000	£11,977.40	£10,000	0

*2021 represents an incomplete year

Figure 1 shows the cumulative distribution of fines issued by the SDT by year. It is important to note that the four very large fines over £60,000 have been removed from the dataset for these plots for ease of visualisation.

The plot shows that in all years more than half of all fines were for £10,000 or less and more than three quarters of all fines were for £20,000 or less.

There is a slight step change in time, with a higher proportion of larger fines from 2017 onwards. This is shown more clearly in Figure 2 where we can see that from 2017 onwards

approximately 50% of the total value of fines was from fines of at least £15,000, whereas in previous years this was closer to 25%.

2017 is a slightly anomalous year, with a larger number of large fines (six at £50,000).

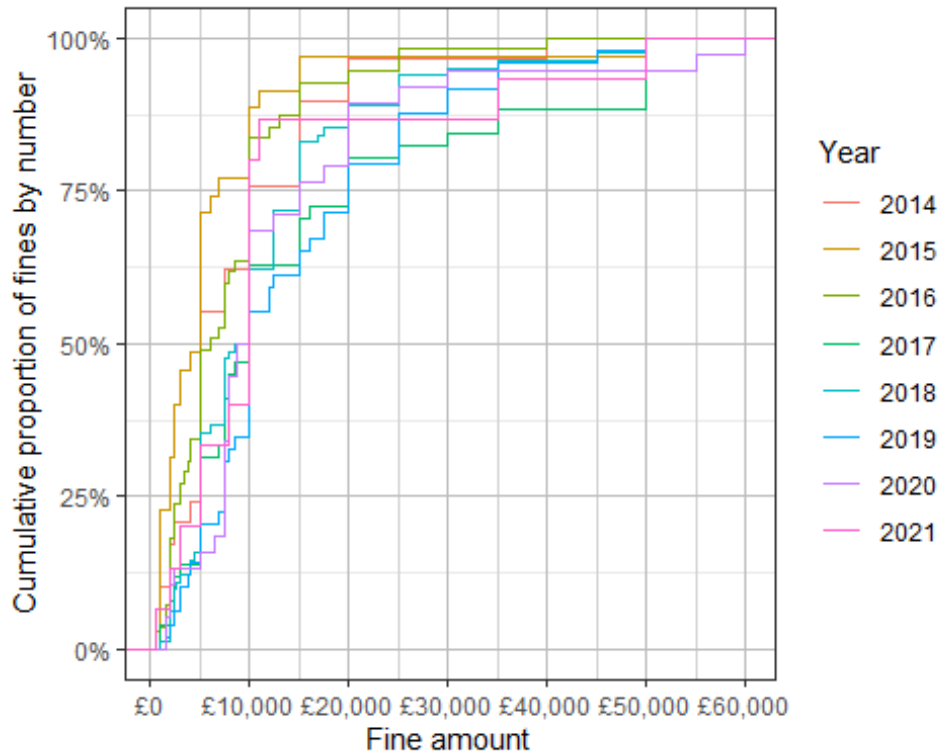


Figure 1: Cumulative distribution of fines by number of fines

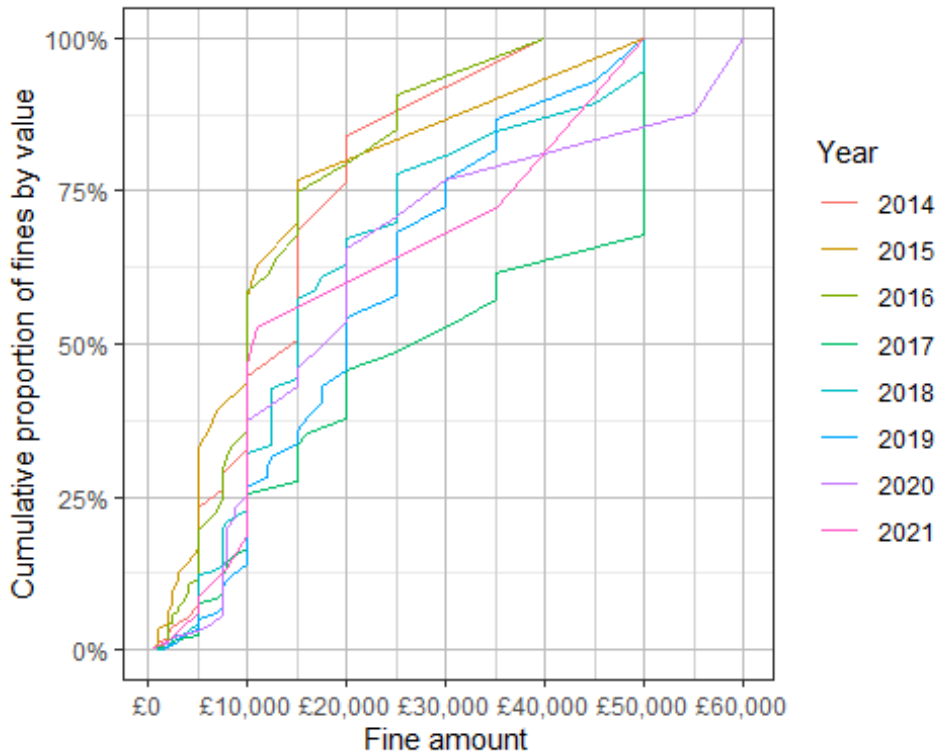


Figure 2: Cumulative distribution of fines by value of fines

Agreed Outcomes

Figure 3 shows a significant growth in the proportion of fines resulting from an agreed outcome with time from zero in 2014 to approximately 50% from 2017 (with the exception of 2019).

Table 2 shows that there is relatively little difference in the distributions of the values of fines between those resulting from an agreed outcome and those from a full hearing, especially since 2018. The largest fines (>£25k) are much more likely to be from full hearings rather than agreed outcomes. However, the median fine amount from agreed outcome and full hearing are very similar. This suggests a similar distribution between the two, with the exception of these relatively few large fines each year.

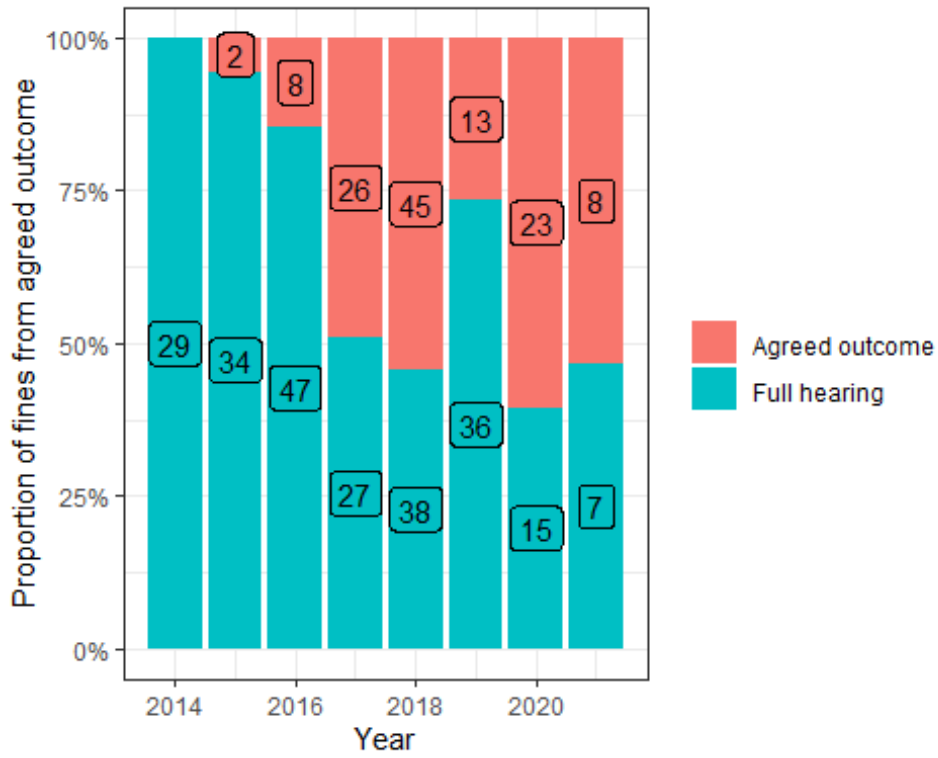


Figure 3: Proportion of fines from an agreed outcome

Table 2: Summary statistics for fines resulting from agreed outcomes vs full hearings

Year	Agreed Outcome	Number of fines	Minimum Fine	Maximum Fine	Mean Fine	Median Fine
2014	Full hearing	29	£1,000	£40,000	£8,741.38	£5,000
2015	Agreed outcome	2	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
2015	Full hearing	34	£500	£305,000	£15,000	£4,500
2016	Agreed outcome	8	£5,000	£15,000	£8,750	£8,750
2016	Full hearing	47	£1,000	£40,000	£7,771.28	£5,000
2017	Agreed outcome	26	£5,000	£500,000	£43,865.42	£10,000
2017	Full hearing	27	£1,000	£50,000	£14,481.48	£8,500
2018	Agreed outcome	45	£1,000	£30,000	£10,255.67	£10,000
2018	Full hearing	38	£2,000	£200,000	£17,963.42	£9,000
2019	Agreed outcome	13	£2,500	£35,000	£13,865.46	£10,000
2019	Full hearing	36	£1,500	£50,000	£14,736.17	£10,000
2020	Agreed outcome	23	£5,000	£25,000	£11,195.87	£8,750
2020	Full hearing	15	£1,500	£60,000	£15,866.67	£10,000
2021	Agreed outcome	8	£3,000	£11,000	£8,375	£10,000
2021	Full hearing	7	£660	£50,000	£16,094.43	£10,000