



BRIEFING PAPER

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Acts and Statutory Instruments: the volume of UK legislation 1850 to 2019

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Summary

While the number of Acts has generally been in decline over the last 40 years, the number of Statutory Instruments (many of which are not considered by or laid before Parliament) has increased.

This paper looks at the volume of legislation. It covers both primary and secondary (or delegated) legislation. Figures are shown for calendar years and Parliamentary sessions, the length of which varies depending on the timing of general elections and Queen's Speeches.

The paper is intended to deal with questions frequently asked of the Library; it does not consider the detailed background to any trends shown.

UK Public General Acts

Primary legislation consists of Acts of Parliament passed in the Westminster Parliament and by Acts and Measures passed by devolved bodies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The average number of Acts passed each year increased between 1950 and 1970 but it has since exhibited a downward trend. An average of 33 UK Acts of Parliament were passed annually from 2006 to 2018, compared to 62 in the 1950s.

In 1999 the Scottish Parliament received primary legislative powers, i.e. the power to pass Acts. From 2000 to 2018, the Scottish Parliament passed an average of 14 Acts each year.

The National Assembly of Wales has passed 62 Acts and Measures since 2008.

The Northern Ireland Assembly passed 173 Acts from 2000 to its suspension in 2017. No Orders in Council have been issued since 2016.

Statutory Instruments

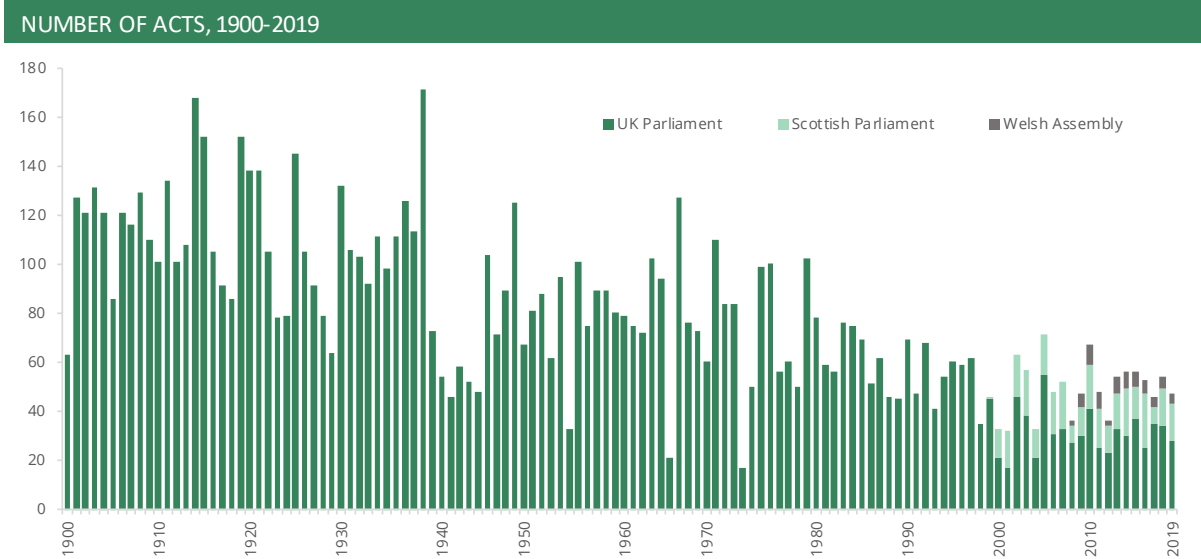
Statutory Instruments (SIs) are a form of secondary, or delegated legislation. They are usually issued by Ministers under the powers granted by Acts of Parliament. An average of around 2,500 UK SIs have been issued from 1950 to 2019. In 2018, 1,423 UK SIs were issued and 393 Scottish SIs (SSIs).

Sessional data

Statistics on Parliamentary sessions include information on how many public and private members' bills were introduced and how many received Royal Assent. In 2015/16, 26 Government bills were considered in the House of Commons, 18 of which started in the Commons and 8 of which started in the Lords. 23 of these became law. Of the 188 Private Members Bills that started in the House of Commons or were brought to the Commons from the House of Lords in 2015/16, 6 gained Royal Assent.

1. UK Parliament

1.1 Acts



Source: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>; Roger Mortimore and Andrew Blick, *Butler's British political facts* (Palgrave, 2018), 307-310 and House of Commons Sessional data

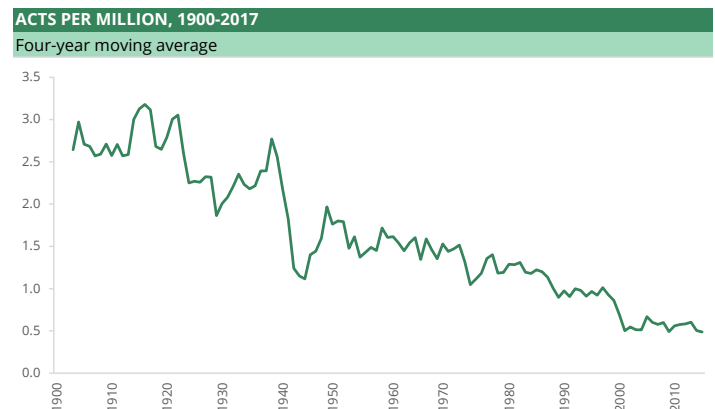
There has been a downward trend in the number of Acts passed in the UK from 1900 to present. From 1900 to 1939, an average of 112 Acts were passed each Parliamentary session. This declined to 78 Acts each session in the 1950s and 1960s, with each subsequent decade to 2010 experiencing a slight fall compared to the previous. In the 1970s, 73 Acts were passed each session on average, falling to 62 in the 1980s, 54 in the 1990s, 47 in the 2000s. The current decade which is coming to an end has bucked this trend with an average of 52 Acts each year. Data relating to 2019 is correct as of November 2019, and includes legislation passed in Edinburgh and Cardiff within its totals. Data for the Parliament for Northern Ireland (1921-72) is incomplete, and not included here.

WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT LEGISLATION			
	Acts	Bills	% Success
1950-2019	4,140	9,478	30%
1900-1949	5,528	9,840	36%
1800-1884	28,053	-	-
1688-1800	13,600	20,805	67%
1485-1688	2,700	-	-

Sources: Julian Hoppit, 'Patterns of Parliamentary Legislation', *Historical Journal* (1996), John Prest, *Liberty and Locality* (Oxford, 1990), Roger Mortimore and Andrew Blick, *Butler's British political facts* (Palgrave, 2018), 307-310, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>.

An approximate total of 4,200 Acts have been passed from 1950 to 2019, whilst around 13,200 proposed bills have been presented in Westminster, Edinburgh and Cardiff: a success rate of 32%.

The chart on the right shows that although the total number of Acts has fallen slowly since the 1940s, if measured against population growth, the fall is even greater. From 1950 to 1970, an average of 1.2 Acts per million were passed each Parliamentary session, but from 2000 to 2019 an average of 0.8 Acts per million were passed in each session. This is compared to a pre-1939 average of 2.6 Acts per million per session.



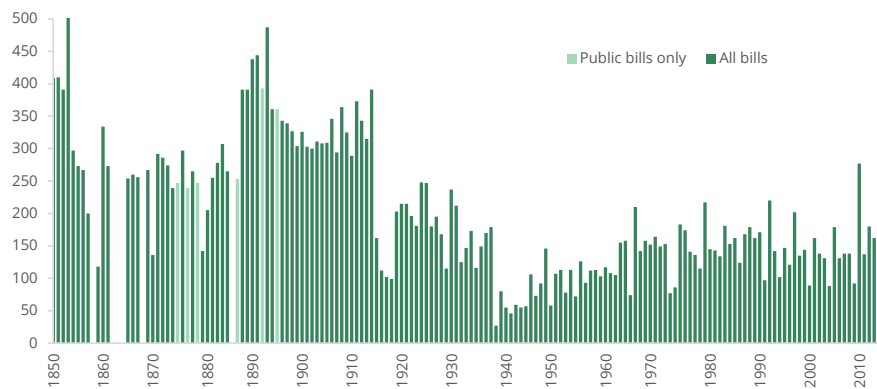
Source: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>; Roger Mortimore and Andrew Blick, *Butler's British political facts* (Palgrave, 2018), 307-310, ONS, [Mid-year population estimates](https://www.ons.gov.uk/), House of Commons Sessional Data

1.2 Bills

The involvement of Parliamentarians and Governments in legislating may also be measured through counting the number of bills proposed in any given session.

The number of bills, of all types, introduced into the Westminster Parliament have averaged around 150 per session since 1980, a rise from the average of 115 per session from 1945 to 1970. This compares to an average of 226 from 1900 to 1939 and 308 from 1870 to 1900. An average of 148 Public bills were presented from 1801 to 1835 per session.

NUMBER OF BILLS PRESENTED TO THE WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT 1850-2019

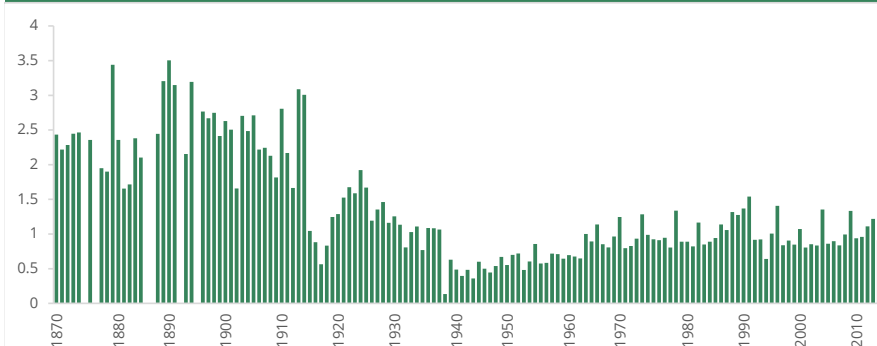


Notes: Data for some pre-1900 sessions is incomplete.

Sources: *Sessional Returns to the House of Commons (1987-2017)*, *Public Bills: Return to Orders (1900-30, 1947-87)*, *List of Bills, Reports, Estimates, Accounts and Papers (1854-1900)*, *Return of Number of Divisions (1834-46)*, *Return of Number of Public Bills presented to House of Commons (1822-1835)*.

When taking account of the varying lengths of Parliamentary Sessions, the fall in legislation compared to the nineteenth century continues to be present. An average of 2.4 bills were presented per sitting day from 1870 to 1900, falling to an average of 1.6 bills per sitting day from 1900 to 1939. This halved from 1945 to 1980, with an average of 0.8 bills presented per sitting day from 1947 to 1980. This rose to 1.0 bill per sitting day from 1980 to 2017.

NUMBER OF BILLS PRESENTED TO WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT PER SITTING DAY, 1870-2019



Note: some pre-1900 sessional data is incomplete.

Sources: *Number of Divisions (1834-46)*, *Return of Number of Public Bills presented to House of Commons (1822-1835)*, *Return of Number of Days on which House of Commons sat in each Month of Sessions 1831-81 (1881)*, *Return of Number of Days on which House of Commons sat in Session (1871-1889)*, *Sittings of the House (1888-1901)*, *Business of the House (days occupied) (1901-31)*, [Parliamentary Trends \(2009\)](#), [Sittings of the House \(2010\)](#), *Sessional Returns (to 2017)*, *Sessional Returns to the House of Commons (1987-2017)*, *Public Bills: Return to Orders (1900-30, 1947-87)*, *List of Bills, Reports, Estimates, Accounts and Papers (1854-60, 1870-1900)*, Roger Mortimore and Andrew Blick, *Butler's British political facts* (Palgrave, 2018), 307-310.

Legislative activity in European Union Parliaments may be found in the Library Briefing Paper [How Much Legislation Comes from Europe?](#)

1.3 Private Members' Bills

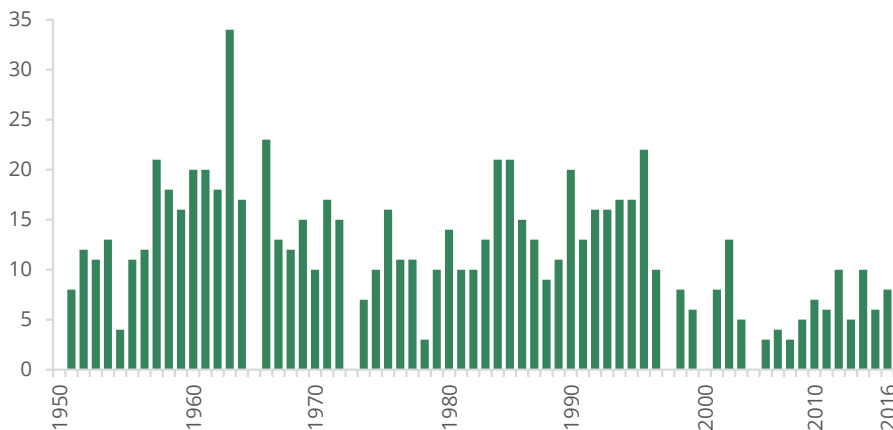
Backbench MPs tend to introduce more bills than Government ministers, but also have far lower levels of success in turning bills into Acts.

During the 2016/17 session, the Government introduced 27 bills, 24 of which became law (89%), whilst backbenchers introduced 117 Private Members Bills (PMBs), of which 8 (7%) became law.¹ The chart to the right shows that from 1997 to 2017, Government bills tended to have a success rate of above 80%, with a lowest success-rate of 65.6% in the 2004/5 session. The best success rate for PMBs was in 2002/3, when 12.7% became law. In terms of numbers of bills given royal assent, 13 PMBs became Acts in 2002/3, and 10 became Acts in 1997/8, 2012/13 and 2014/15.

The chart below shows that the largest number of PMBs passed in any one session after 1948 was in 1966/7, when 34 PMBs became Acts. An average of 17 PMBs became Acts each year in the 1960s, falling to 10 a year on average in 1970s, before rising to around 13 for the 1980s and 1990s. The average of 5 successful PMBs a year in the 2000s is thus below the average for the previous fifty-year period.

Success Rates: PMBS and Govt Bills		
1997-2017		
	PMB	Government
1997/98	6.4%	98.1%
1998/99	7.7%	87.1%
1999/2000	5.8%	97.5%
2000/01	0.0%	80.8%
2001/02	7.0%	100.0%
2002/03	12.7%	91.7%
2003/04	5.2%	91.7%
2004/05	0.0%	65.6%
2005/06	2.6%	91.4%
2006/07	4.2%	88.2%
2007/08	2.8%	93.8%
2009/10	4.1%	84.6%
2010/11	9.1%	100.0%
2011/12	2.6%	85.7%
2012/13	7.5%	82.4%
2013/14	2.8%	80.6%
2014/15	6.1%	96.3%
2015/16	3.7%	85.2%
2016/17	4.9%	89.3%

SUCCESSFUL PMBS 1948-2017



Sources: House of Commons Library, [Successful Private Members' Bills since 1983](#), [Bills Gaining Royal Assent since 1997](#), House of Commons Information Office, [The success of Private Members Bills](#)

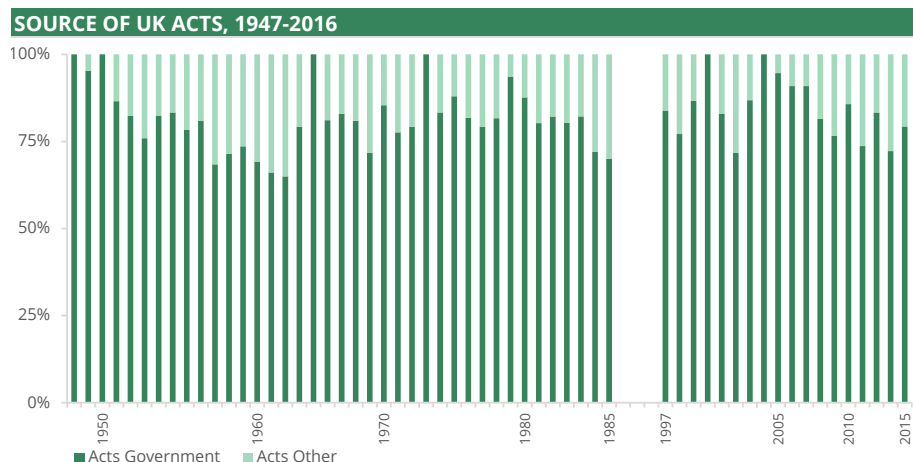
Sources: House of Commons Library Papers [Successful Private Members' Bills since 1983](#), [Bills Gaining Royal Assent since 1997](#), House of Commons Information Office, [The Success of Private Members Bills](#)

1.4 Success and Failure: Government and Backbench legislation

The below chart shows that Government strength in legislating has been present throughout the post-war period, with at least 75% of Acts in the majority of sessions originating with the Government. A low point was reached around 1960, coinciding with the highest number of

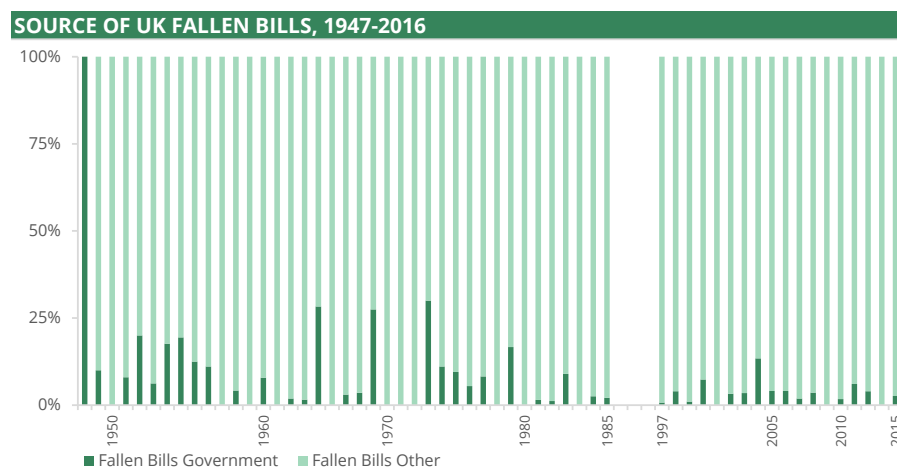
¹ Hansard Society, ['Backbench Activity'](#) (2018)

successful PMBs, when only 65% of Acts originated with the Government.



Sources: House of Commons [Sessional Returns](#) (1997-present) and *Public bills. Return to an order* (1947-1985/6)

Failed or fallen legislation has tended to come from non-Government sources, being responsible for 95% of fallen legislation in the surveyed sessions from 1947 to 2016/17. The highest number of legislative failures on the Government side was in 1967 (responsible for 28% of fallen legislation) and 1974 (responsible for 30% of fallen legislation). 2004 was the only surveyed session since 1980 that Government success was below 90%, at an 87% success rate.



Sources: House of Commons [Sessional Returns](#) (1997-present) and *Public bills. Return to an order* (1947-1985/6)

The differential rate of legislative success is closely related to the Government’s greater control of the Parliamentary timetable, greater support given to ministers in the drafting of legislation, and the expectation of majority support for Government bills in the House of Commons.²

1.5 Legislative topics

The Institute for Government’s [Whitehall Monitor](#) (2014) found that from 2010 to 2014, the Treasury passed more Government bills than any other department, being responsible for 29 bills, three times as many as any other. The Home Office passed the second-largest number

² Institute For Government, [Parliamentary Monitor](#) (2018), 83-5.

of bills, at 9.³ In 2016/17, the Treasury continued to be responsible for the largest number of bills, with the Home Office second.⁴

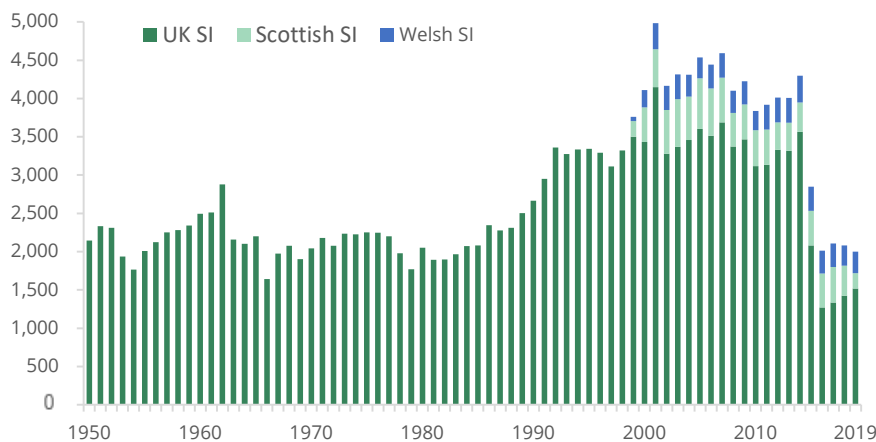
The Treasury was responsible for passing the greatest number of pages of legislation, introducing one-third of all pages of Government legislation from 2010 to 2014 (c. 3,500). The Home Office added the second largest number of pages, at around 1,200.⁵

The Institute for Government's [Whitehall Monitor](#) (2019) showed that the Government has passed 28 Acts that were not related to Brexit during the current session of 2017/19. Of these, 5 were related to finance, 6 related to Northern Ireland, and 17 dealt with specific policy areas, such as capping some energy tariffs and new GDPR rules.⁶

1.6 Statutory Instruments

Secondary legislation, most of which are Statutory Instruments or SIs, is made by ministers and some public bodies in powers delegated to them under Acts of Parliament. Statutory Instruments vary enormously in their scope from substantial pieces of legislation to considerable numbers of orders temporarily restricting traffic on particular local roads. Because the principles of the act have been approved in primary legislation, SIs are generally subject to less scrutiny than bills.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, 1950-2019



Note: Estimate based on the highest-numbered SI for each calendar year published on legislation.gov.uk

Source: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>.

In comparison to the slow decline in Acts, the number of SIs have grown slowly during the second half of the twentieth century, before rapidly rising in the 1990s, peaking in the 2000s, and declining sharply after 2015. An average of 2,100 UK SI were issued annually from the 1950s to around 1990. This then rose to an annual average of 3,200 in the 1990s, 4,200 in the 2000s, and fell to around 3,000 a year on average during the 2010s (to June 2019).

³ Institute For Government, [Whitehall Monitor](#) (2014), 102.

⁴ Institute For Government, [Whitehall Monitor](#) (2018), 71.

⁵ Institute For Government, [Whitehall Monitor](#) (2014), 102.

⁶ Institute For Government, [Whitehall Monitor](#) (2019), 77.

The House of Commons Library has estimated that an average of 13.2% of UK instruments were EU-related each year between 1993 and 2014.⁷

Trends in Welsh and Scottish SI are set out further in later sections.

The right-hand chart shows that during the 2015/16 Parliamentary session, the largest numbers of SIs came from the Treasury (99), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (73) and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (70). The DWP's high number related to acting on behalf of the Northern Ireland Department for Social Development. 'Other' bodies laying SIs included the Local Government Boundary Commission, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

The Hansard Society estimates that between 1950 and 2017, the House of Commons has rejected 11 SIs, and the House of Lords, 6. This is a rejection rate of 0.01% of the total number laid from 1950 to 2017.⁸

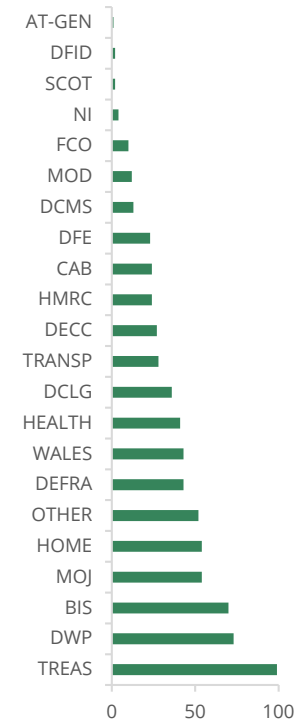
1.7 Devolution and UK Parliament Legislation

Since 1999, Westminster has only rarely passed legislation for the devolved nations. The Institute for Government in their Report [Westminster and Whitehall](#) has calculated that in the 20 years before devolution, Westminster passed an average of 5 Acts a year for Scotland. By contrast, only 7 Acts for Scotland have been passed by Westminster for Scotland from 1999 to 2018, including 2 to expand the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

Because historically Wales was treated as part of England when legislating and administering law, fewer-Welsh specific Acts were passed. From 1979 to 1999, the Westminster Parliament passed 10-Welsh specific Acts from 1979 to 1999, including the act to establish the Welsh Assembly. Since 2011, the Welsh Assembly has been able to pass its own laws, and only 2 further Acts have been passed at Westminster specifically for Wales since then, both expanding the Assembly's powers.

The UK-Parliament passed 24 Acts for Northern Ireland from 1979 to 1999, and ministers approved 415 'Orders in Council'. After the Assembly was suspended in 2002 and direct rule was re-established until 2007, the UK Parliament passed 15 Acts and ministers approved 104 Orders in Council. From 2007 until the suspension of the Assembly in 2017, Westminster passed a further 6 Acts specifically relating to Northern Ireland. Between the suspension of the Assembly in January 2017 and March 2019, a further 9 Acts have been passed specifically for Northern Ireland. Because the UK Government has not imposed formal direct rule from Westminster, no use of Orders in Council has been made.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS UK Parl, 2015-16 Session



Hansard Society, ['Parliament and delegated legislation in the 2015-16 Session'](#), (2017), 13.

⁷ House of Commons Library, [EU Obligations: UK Implementing Legislation since 1993](#)

⁸ Hansard Society, ['Parliament and delegated legislation in the 2015-16 Session'](#), (2017), 5.

Topics of legislation that the UK Parliament has considered or passed in recent sessions may be found [here](#).

1.8 Legislative Consent Motions

The 'Sewel Convention', that was first suggested in 1998, states that the Westminster Parliament would not normally legislate in an area transferred to one of the devolved institutions without the consent of the Assembly or Parliament.

The Institute for Government has estimated that there were 202 Acts of Parliament from 1999 to March 2019 subject to the Sewel Convention, including 17 Private Member's Bills. 155 of these involved Scotland, 61 Wales, and 65 Northern Ireland.⁹ Multiple consents may be needed to pass a single bill. 352 legislative consent motions have been put to the devolved Parliaments and Assemblies from 1999 to March 2019, and of these, 10 have been denied consent, either partially or in full. Seven of these occurred in Wales, one in Northern Ireland, and two in Scotland. Figures for Northern Ireland are likely to be lower than if the Assembly had not been suspended in 2002-2007 and 2017-2019.

1.9 'English Votes for English Laws'

In 2015, the Cameron Government reformed the legislative process to give English MPs a veto over any laws (or parts of laws) that apply only to England. This process has been used on 35 bills between 2015 and March 2019, the largest proportion being in relation to Housing and Local Government (which are devolved).¹⁰

1.10 Amendments

The academics Philip Cowley and Meg Russell examined 4,361 proposed amendments to 12 bills presented from 2005-2012 and found that 886 came from Government ministers.

Of those Government amendments Cowley and Russell defined as 'substantial', as opposed to technical and clarificatory in nature, 60% were traceable to nongovernment Parliamentarians.¹¹

Of the 117 substantive Government amendments, at least 50 were also 'at least partly traceable' to a Select Committee.¹² This sample of amendments suggests that backbenchers, especially those from the Government benches, have had substantial impacts on legislation in recent years.

⁹ Institute for Government, '[Westminster and Whitehall](#)' (2019)

¹⁰ Institute for Government, '[Westminster and Whitehall](#)' (2019)

¹¹ Meg Russell and Philip Cowley, '[The policy power of the Westminster Parliament: The "Parliamentary State" and the empirical evidence](#)', *Governance* (2016), 121-37, at 129-30.

¹² *Ibid*, 131.

2. Scottish Parliament

2.1 Acts

Since the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, the Parliament has held the right to legislate on a range of topics, but which exclude international relations and aspects of the constitution. Several areas within finance, social security, transport, media and culture and home affairs are reserved to Westminster. A detailed list of what powers have been reserved to Westminster, and a history of devolution in Scotland since 1999, can be found in the House of Commons Library briefing paper [‘The settled will’](#).

Since 1999, the Scottish Parliament has passed 292 Acts, an average of 14.6 per calendar year. Excluding 1999, the year the Parliament first met, the least number of Acts have been passed in 2008 and 2017 (both 7), both being years immediately following an election. Scottish Parliament election years tended to see some of the highest number of Acts passed: 22 Acts were passed in 2016, 18 in 2007 and 17 in 2003.

2.2 Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSI)

The chart on the right also tracks the number of Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs) created since 1999, estimated from the highest-numbered SSI on legislation.gov.uk. There have been 9,958 in total.

SSIs are legislation made by Scottish ministers or a regulatory authority in exercise of powers delegated to them by Scottish Parliament Acts.

2.3 Success and Failure of Bills

Proposed bills are introduced into the Scottish Parliament by Ministers, but also by Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), committees, and private individuals. The below table shows that Government failure rate for proposed legislation was low, regardless of Government type (Coalition from 1999 to 2007, minority from 2007 to 2011 and 2016-21 and single-party (2011-16)). Governments have seen a very low failure rate in the legislation that they have proposed.

Backbench MSPs, committees and private-bill promoters experienced a lower rate of success in sessions from 1999 to 2016, ranging from seeing 46% bills succeed in 2003-2007, to around 60-65% in the other three sessions prior to 2016 for which we have complete data.¹³ In total, 54 Acts passed by the Scottish Parliament since devolution have come from outside the Executive, a higher number and proportion of all Acts than Westminster during the same period.

ACTS AND SSIs		
Scottish Parliament, 1999-2019		
	Acts	SSIs
1999	1	203
2000	12	453
2001	15	494
2002	17	570
2003	17	623
2004	15	565
2005	17	663
2006	20	616
2007	18	584
2008	7	441
2009	12	455
2010	18	471
2011	16	458
2012	11	360
2013	14	366
2014	19	385
2015	13	450
2016	22	441
2017	7	466
2018	15	393
2019	6*	201*

Note: figures to June 2019 only.
Source: legislation.gov.uk, [SSI](#) and Scottish Parliament Information Centre, [‘Scottish Parliament legislation, sessions 1-5’](#)

¹³ In the Scottish Parliament, a private bill can be introduced by an individual, group, or company that relate to the status or property of the promoter. In recent years, this has included the Scottish National Gallery and Railway improvement bills- see [‘Bills explained’](#)

ACTS AND BILLS					
Scottish Parliament, 1999-2019, by parliament and origin					
	1999-2003	2003-2007	2007-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021*
Acts					
Executive	50	53	42	67	26
MSP	8	3	7	6	2
Private	1	9	2	5	4
Committee	3	1	2	1	0
Total	62	66	53	79	32
Bills (Withdrawn or Fallen)					
Executive	1	0	3	0	0
MSP	8	15	6	7	0
Private	2	0	0	0	0
Committee	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	15	9	7	0
Success Rate (Executive)	98%	100%	93%	100%	100%
Success Rate (others)	60%	46%	65%	63%	100%

Source: Scottish Parliament Information Centre, '[Scottish Parliament legislation, sessions 1-5](#)'

Notes: Session 2016-2021 has data for years to June 2019.

Amendments to Government bills in the 1999-2003 Scottish Parliament were also more successful if they originated with ministers or the backbenchers of the then- Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition. Of the 6,105 successful amendments in the first post-1999 Scottish Parliament, 93% came from members of the two governing parties.¹⁴

2.4 Legislative topics

SUBJECTS OF LEGISLATION						
Scottish Parliament Acts, by Parliament date						
	1999-2003	2003-2007	2007-2011	2011-2016	2016-2021*	Total
Health and social services	6	15	8	8	3	40
Law regulation	8	4	8	13	3	36
Justice, prisons, fire and policing	5	9	6	8	6	34
Civil service, public bodies and elections	9	3	5	11	2	30
Budget & taxation	4	4	4	10	5	27
Transport	2	9	4	3	2	20
Environment & planning	6	5	5	2	1	19
Agriculture & Crofting	7	3	1	5	1	17
Housing	4	2	4	4	1	15
Education	4	6	2	3		15
Culture & sport	1	2	3	5	1	12
Local Government	3	1	2	5		11
Social Security, Pensions & child support				2	4	6
Economic development		3			2	5
Employment and skills	3		1			4
Brexit					1	1
Total	62	66	53	79	32	292

Source: Scottish Parliament Information Centre, '[Scottish Parliament legislation, sessions 1-5](#)'

Notes: Session 2016-2021 has data for years to June 2019.

¹⁴ Mark Shephard and Paul Cairney, '[The impact of the Scottish Parliament in amending legislation](#)', *Political Studies* (2005), 10.

The Scottish Parliament has legislated most actively in the field of health and social services, the regulation of law, courts and contracts, and regulating the conduct of public bodies (including the Parliament and elections), with at least 30 Acts passed relating to each of these topics. Acts can be classified under multiple subjects, but only the single most relevant has been selected here. The Scotland Act 2015/16 provided for the devolution of powers over air passenger duty, certain aspects of welfare, speed limits, the British Transport Police and the Crown estate.¹⁵ Several of these powers also experienced a delay in their introduction.¹⁶

¹⁵ House of Commons Library, [Scotland Bill 2015-16](#), 4 June 2015

¹⁶ House of Commons Library, ['The Settled Will: Devolution in Scotland, 1998-2018'](#), 33.

3. Welsh Assembly

3.1 Measures and Acts

Under the 1998 Government of Wales Act, the Welsh Assembly was able only to make delegated legislation under Westminster Acts. From May 2007, the Assembly's legislative powers were enlarged to enable it to make 'Measures' which, in effect, could do anything that could be done by an Act of Parliament in specified fields. The National Assembly's powers were enlarged again from May 2011, and it can now make Assembly Acts – in effect primary legislation. Since then, 49 Acts have been passed.

Assembly bills and Measures have tended to originate with the Welsh Government, though 6 successful Measures and bills have been passed by Welsh Assembly members (AM's) since 2009. The five failed or fallen bills since 2010 were introduced by AM's. One act originated with the Assembly Commission, and was passed in 2012.

The figures for 'fallen legislation' in the table only include Measures and bills that are formally introduced to the Assembly, excluding other proposals from backbench AMs. In the 2011-16 Assembly, 55 proposals were put forward for consideration, which were then put to a series of ballots by AM's.¹⁷ So far in the 2016-21 Assembly, 43 proposals have been put forward to a ballot.¹⁸

3.2 Welsh Statutory Instruments

Since 1999, the Welsh Government has created 5,963 Statutory Instruments. This is an estimate, based on the highest-numbered Welsh SI each year on legislation.gov.uk.

3.3 Legislative topics

The legislative powers of the Welsh Assembly have expanded since the creation of the Assembly from the 1998 Government of Wales Act. The 2017 Wales Act granted the Assembly and Welsh Government Ministers new powers over elections, business rates, road transport and equal opportunities. The National Assembly website has a detailed list of all [reserved powers](#). The House of Commons Library briefing paper further sets out the changing nature of devolution in Wales: "[A process, not an event](#)".

Since 2008, the Welsh Assembly has passed the greater number of Measures and Acts relating to education, health and social services, and housing. The present Assembly is due to run until 2021, and these totals are likely to change. It is important to note that counting Acts is only a

ACTS AND MEASURES				
Welsh Assembly, 2008-19				
	Introducer			Rejected/ Fallen bills
	Welsh Government	Assembly Member	Assembly Commission	
2008	2			
2009	4	1		
2010	7	1		1
2011	6	1		
2012	1		1	
2013	6	1		1
2014	7			2
2015	6			
2016	4	1		
2017	4			
2018	5			
2019*	2	1		1

*2019 data only to June 2019

Source: Welsh Assembly, [Legislation](#), accessed 18 June 2019

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS	
Wales, 1999-2019	
1999	56
2000	225
2001	339
2002	317
2003	323
2004	285
2005	271
2006	313
2007	318
2008	288
2009	301
2010	249
2011	323
2012	324
2013	322
2014	351
2015	316
2016	301
2017	305
2018	266
2019	170*

Note: figures to June 2019 only.

Source: Legislation.gov.uk, [Welsh statutory instruments](#)

¹⁷ [Pre-ballot proposals- Fourth Assembly](#) (2011-2016), accessed 12 June 2019

¹⁸ [Pre-ballot proposals- Fifth Assembly](#) (2016-2021), accessed 12 June 2019

proxy measure for the concern of the Assembly for an issue, as Measures and Acts are not equal in their scope, importance or effect. Acts can be classified under multiple subjects, but only the single most relevant has been selected here.

SUBJECTS OF LEGISLATION				
Welsh Assembly Acts and Measures, by Assembly date				
	Assembly			Total
	2016-19*	2011-16	2008-11	
Education		6	5	11
Health and social services	2	5	3	10
Housing	3	3	2	8
Environment & planning	1	4	1	6
Social Security, Pensions & child support	1		3	4
Civil service & public bodies	1	1	2	4
Local Government		2	2	4
Transport		1	2	3
Budget & Finance	1	1		2
Economic development		1	1	2
Justice, prisons and policing		2		2
Employment and skills	2			2
Culture & sport		1	1	2
Brexit	1			1
Total	12	27	22	61

*2019 data only to June 2019.

Source: [Welsh Assembly Legislation](#), accessed 12 June 2019

4. Northern Ireland Assembly

4.1 Acts, Rules and Orders

Legislation takes three forms in Northern Ireland: Acts passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly after 2000, 'Statutory Rules', which are a form of statutory instrument laid by ministers, and 'Orders in Council', an additional form of statutory instrument laid by UK ministers.

ACTS, ORDERS AND STATUTORY ROLES			
Northern Ireland, 1999-2019			
	Acts	Statutory Rules	Orders in Council
1999	-	372	11
2000	5	282	3
2001	17	324	3
2003	Assembly suspended Oct 2002- May 2007	456	19
2004		386	23
2005		462	20
2006		426	22
2007		3	410
2008	13	361	2
2009	9	342	2
2010	16	431	0
2011	29	442	0
2012	5	462	0
2013	10	308	0
2015	10	424	1
2016	30	427	1
2017	Assembly suspended Jan 2017-present	241	0
2018		211	0
2019*		117	0

*2019 data only to June 2019

Source: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk>

A relative period of stability between May 2007 and early 2017 allowed the Assembly to pass 137 Acts, an average of 13.7 per year. The most legislatively-productive years were 2011, with 29 Acts, and 2016, with 30 Acts. The Assembly was suspended from October 2002 to May 2007, and again from January 2017 onwards, meaning no Acts were passed. From 2002 to 2007, 95 Orders in Council were approved, an

average of 19 per year. Since 2008, only 6 Orders in Council have been approved.

In total, 142 bills were presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly from 1999 to 2011, all but 16 being introduced by members of the Executive. Of these 16 non-Executive bills, 5 became law (31%). 23 of the 126 bills proposed by the Executive failed to become Acts (18%).¹⁹

In the 2011-2016 mandate, only 4 Executive bills failed, with 56 succeeding (93%) and 7 non-Executive bills of 14 were passed (50%).²⁰

4.2 Legislative topics

Legislating on topics relating to the constitution, international relations, defence, immigration, and UK-wide taxation and currency, is reserved to the UK Parliament. For more on the nature of devolution in Northern Ireland see the House of Commons Library briefing paper [Devolution in Northern Ireland, 1998-2018](#)

SUBJECTS OF LEGISLATION			
Northern Ireland Acts, 2000-17			
	2000-2002	2007-2017	Total
Budget	6	23	29
Environment & planning	2	18	20
Social Security, Pensions & child support	7	12	19
Health and social services	2	15	17
NI civil service & public bodies	2	16	18
Economic development	5	10	15
Civil law regulation	6	9	15
Transport	1	9	10
Housing	2	7	9
Justice, prisons and policing	1	6	7
Local Government	1	4	5
Education	0	4	4
Employment and skills	1	3	4
Culture & sport	0	1	1
Total	36	137	173

Source: Northern Ireland Assembly, [Legislation](#), accessed 12 June 2019 and House of Commons Library calculations.

The subjects of Assembly Acts are shown in the table. Acts can be classified under multiple subjects, but only the single most relevant has been selected here. The table suggests that amongst the subjects devolved to the Assembly, aside from budgetary and civil Government matters, it has been most legislatively active in the fields of economic policy, social security, health and social services. It is important to note, however, that counting Acts is only a proxy measure for the concern of the Assembly for an issue: these figures do not include fallen bills, and Acts passed are not equal in their scope, importance or effect.

¹⁹ Northern Ireland Assembly, '[Bills introduced in the Assembly, 1991-2011](#)'

²⁰ Northern Ireland Assembly, [2011-2016 Mandate Acts](#) and [Primary Legislation- Bills that fell at the end of the 2011-2016 Mandate](#)

5. Pages of Legislation

5.1 Pages in UK Government Acts

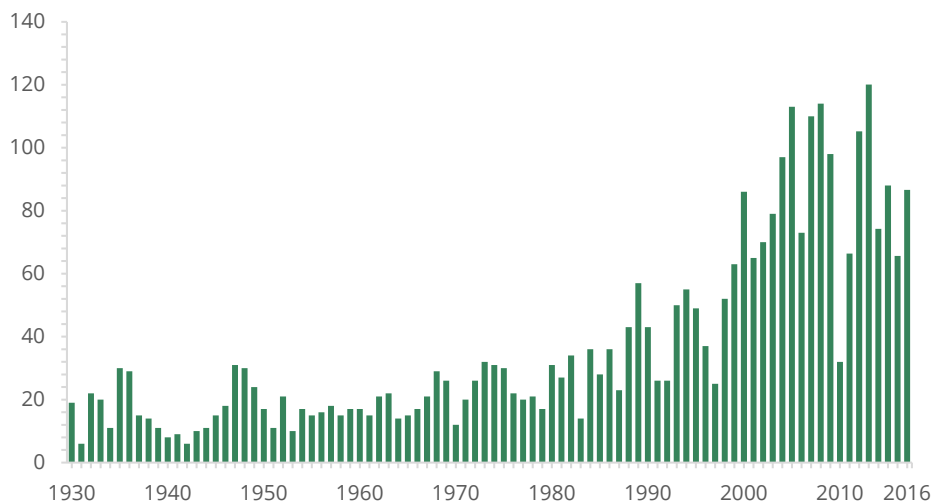
An alternative measure of the volume of legislation passed by Parliament is the number of pages of legislation. The following chart shows the average number of pages in UK Government Acts from 1930 to 2016.

Whilst there was an average of 16 pages per act from 1930 to 1950, this rose to 21 (1950-80), 33 (1980-90), 46 (1990-2000), to reach 85 (2000-2010).

From 2010 to 2016, the average number of pages on UK Public Acts were 86, compared to 82 from 1997 to 2010.²¹

The Institute for Government has found that legislation passed between 2007 and 2015 typically grew in length by around 40% due to amendments made during the bill's passage through both houses.²²

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PAGES IN UK GOVERNMENT ACTS, 1930-2016



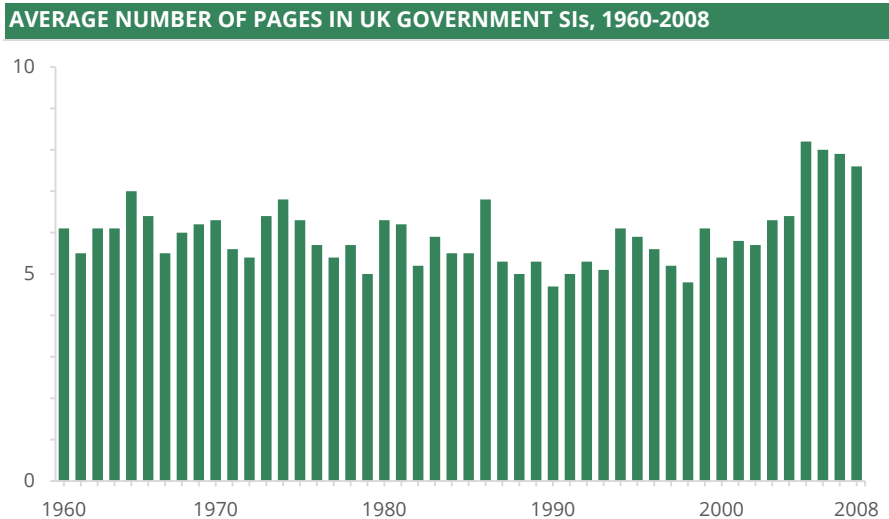
Sources: House of Lords Library, [Volume of Legislation](#) (2011); <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>

²¹ Stationary Office, Annual volumes of Acts

²² Institute For Government, [Parliamentary Monitor](#) (2018), 39.

5.2 Pages in UK SIs

The following chart shows the average number of pages in UK Government SIs from 1961 to 2008. These have remained roughly constant in size, averaging 6 pages in length.

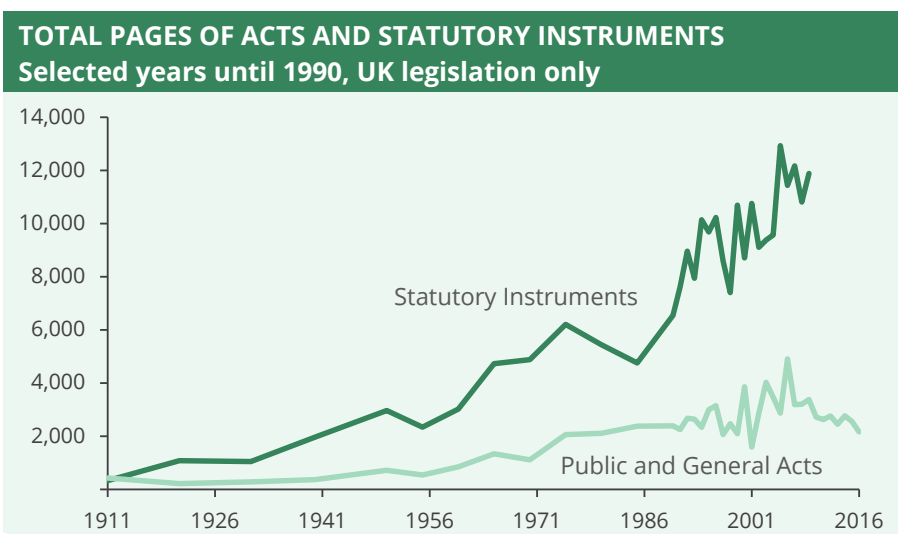


Note: 2009 is the last year for which figures in this data series are available due to changes in the way statutory instruments were published.

Source: House of Lords Library, [Volume of Legislation](#) (2011).

5.3 Annual totals of pages in UK Acts and SIs

The below graph shows the total number of pages added to the statute-book each year by UK SIs and Public and General Acts for selected years until 1990, and each year from 1990 to 2016. 2006 saw the largest number of pages added to the statute book, of 4,911 through Acts, whilst 1921 saw the lowest of the sampled years (220 pages).



Source: Annual volumes of Acts and SIs published by The Stationery Office.
Notes: The figures for Statutory Instruments relate to the number of pages in the Stationery Office bound set - this excludes some local and unpublished Instruments and, from 2000, those made by the Welsh ministers. The figures do not include Northern Ireland (Stormont) Acts, Orders in Council or Statutory Rules. Pre-1987 figures are adjusted to current page sizes.

The largest number of pages added to the statute book in one year by UK SIs was 2005 (12,933), whilst the lowest number added in the sampled years was 1911 (330).

6. Sessional data

6.1 Bills and Acts

Some statistics are also available for Parliamentary sessions, which vary in length. The latest available figures are for the 2016/17 session. The table counts the bills that started in the House of Commons or were brought to the Commons having started in the House of Lords.

PUBLIC BILLS BY SESSION, 1997/8 TO 2016/17					
		<i>Sitting days</i>	Bills introduced (a)	Of which Government	Received Royal Assent
1997-98	7 May 97-19 Nov 98	241	202	53	62
1998-99	24 Nov 98-11 Nov 99	149	135	31	35
1999-00	17 Nov 99-30 Nov 00	170	144	40	45
2000-01	6 Dec 00-14 May 01	83	89	26	21
2001-02	13 Jun 01-7 Nov 02	201	162	39	47
2002-03	13 Nov 02-20 Nov 03	162	138	36	46
2003-04	26 Nov 03-18 Nov 04	157	131	36	38
2004-05	23 Nov 04-7 Apr 05	65	88	32	21
2005-06	11 May 05-8 Nov 06	208	179	58	56
2006-07	15 Nov 06-30 Oct 07	146	131	34	33
2007-08	6 Nov 07-26 Nov 08	165	138	32	33
2008-09	3 Dec 08-12 Nov 09	136	138	26	27
2009-10	18 Nov 09-12 Apr 10	60	92	23	30
2010-12	25 May 10-1 May 12	296	277	46	49
2012-13	9 May 12-23 April 13	143	137	34	38
2013-14	8 May 13-14 May 14	162	180	31	30
2014-15	4 June 14-26 March 15	133	162	26	36
2015-16	18 May 15-12 May 16	158	142	23	29
2016-17	18 May 16- May 17	142	144	24	32

(a) Bills that started in the Commons or were brought from the Lords.

Source: [House of Commons Sessional Returns](#), various years

Bills fall into two main types: Government Bills and Private Members' (back-bench) Bills. Almost all Government Bills are debated and subsequently become law (having passed through both Houses of Parliament); generally these receive Royal Assent in the same session in which they are introduced, but in some cases Bills can be carried forward to the next session. Bills, including Government Bills, may be "lost" at the end of a session, especially when there is a General Election.

Many Private Members' Bills are introduced but are not discussed at all and, of those that are allocated time for debate, relatively few are passed.

6.2 Private bills

Private Bills are a separate category of legislation. They are proposals to give specific powers over and above the general law, usually to corporate bodies. The numbers introduced into the House of Commons or brought from the House of Lords, and the numbers becoming law, were as follows.

PRIVATE BILLS BY SESSION, 1997/8 TO 2016/17				
		<i>Sitting days</i>	Bills introduced (a)	Received Royal Assent
1997-98	7 May 97-19 Nov 98	241	17	9
1998-99	24 Nov 98-11 Nov 99	149	9	4
1999-00	17 Nov 99-30 Nov 00	170	12	7
2000-01	6 Dec 00-14 May 01	83	7	5
2001-02	13 Jun 01-7 Nov 02	201	9	7
2002-03	13 Nov 02-20 Nov 03	162	7	5
2003-04	26 Nov 03-18 Nov 04	157	6	6
2004-05	23 Nov 04-7 Apr 05	65	6	0
2005-06	11 May 05-8 Nov 06	208	5	4
2006-07	15 Nov 06-30 Oct 07	146	6	3
2007-08	6 Nov 07-26 Nov 08	165	12	3
2008-09	3 Dec 08-12 Nov 09	136	7	1
2009-10	18 Nov 09-12 Apr 10	60	10	3
2010-12	25 May 10-1 May 12	296	10	4
2012-13	9 May 12-23 April 13	143	7	4
2013-14	8 May 13-14 May 14	162	6	4
2014-15	4 June 14-26 Mar 15	133	2	1
2015-16	18 May 15-12 May 16	158	2	1
2016-17	18 May 16- May 17	142	5	2

(a) Introduced into the House of Commons or brought from the House of Lords; includes suspended or revived Bills (those carried over from one session to the next)

Sources: [House of Commons Sessional Diaries from 2001](#)

6.3 Delegated legislation – Statutory Instruments

The extent of Parliamentary involvement in delegated legislation, most of which is carried out using Statutory Instruments, varies; it depends on the terms of the parent Act. Many SIs (for example, local instruments which have only to be formally signed off by a Minister and published to become law) receive no Parliamentary scrutiny. Others are laid before Parliament and are subject to the scrutiny of a (two-House) Joint

Committee on Statutory Instruments²³ to determine whether they are within the powers given to ministers under their parent Act and whether they are properly drafted. Most SIs are, in practice, not subsequently debated and, of those that are, the majority are discussed not on the floor of the House of Commons but in a Committee,²⁴ after which they are simply reported to the House.

Most SIs presented to Parliament are subject to the negative procedure. This means that Parliament is not required to approve the SI for it to become law. But if either House passes a motion within a specified period (usually 40 days), then the SI is annulled. The last time an SI was annulled by the Commons was 1978.²⁵ When being subject to the Affirmative procedure, a draft SI is laid before the [Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments \(JCSI\)](#), which scrutinises the SI to ensure that it does not go beyond the powers specific in the parent Act.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS LAID BEFORE MPs, 1997/8 TO 2016/17

	<i>Sitting days</i>	Laid before House	Considered in House	Considered in Committee	
1997-98	7 May 97-19 Nov 98	241	1,856	34	215
1998-99	24 Nov 98-11 Nov 99	149	1,479	22	178
1999-00	17 Nov 99-30 Nov 00	170	1,456	21	175
2000-01	6 Dec 00-14 May 01	83	868	15	122
2001-02	13 Jun 01-7 Nov 02	201	1,788	15	258
2002-03	13 Nov 02-20 Nov 03	162	1,474	13	244
2003-04	26 Nov 03-18 Nov 04	157	1,281	9	187
2004-05	23 Nov 04-7 Apr 05	65	793	6	118
2005-06	11 May 05-8 Nov 06	208	1,885	19	273
2006-07	15 Nov 06-30 Oct 07	146	1,361	12	202
2007-08	6 Nov 07-26 Nov 08	165	1,319	17	212
2008-09	3 Dec 08-12 Nov 09	136	1,302	12	231
2009-10	18 Nov 09-12 Apr 10	60	823	12	160
2010-12	25 May 10-1 May 12	296	1,809	22	336
2012-13	9 May 12-23 April 13	143	964	11	208
2013-14	8 May 13-14 May 14	162	1,173	11	224
2014-15	4 June 14-26 Mar 15	133	1,378	27	315
2015-16	18 May 15-12 May 16	158	757	20	103
2016-17	18 May 16- May 17	142	725	10	155

Sources: [House of Commons Sessional Returns](#), various years

²³ Instruments which are required to be laid only before the Commons – generally those relating to taxation – are considered by the Commons Select Committee on SIs.

²⁴ Generally the Delegated Legislation Committee, but can be the Scottish or NI Grand Committee.

²⁵ [Statutory Instrument procedure in the House of Commons](#), accessed 18 June 2019.

6.4 Time Spent Debating Legislation, UK Parliament

The table shows the length of time spent debating legislation in the House of Commons Chamber in each session from 1997/98 to 2015/16, both in aggregate and as averages per sitting day. The table does not include debates in Public Bill and other Committees – the bulk of the detailed debate on most Bills takes place in Committee – and the figures can, therefore, be affected by the Committee stages of some bills being taken on the floor of the House.²⁶ There has been a general downward trend in both the time spent debating legislation and in the percentage of the House's sitting time taken up with legislative debate.

TIME SPENT DEBATING LEGISLATION IN HOUSE OF COMMONS CHAMBER							
1997-2016							
	Government Bills	Private Members' bills (a)	Private Bills	Statutory Instruments	Total	As % of sitting time	
<i>Hours:minutes</i>							
1997-98	780:57	64:19	6:33	43:05	894:54	42.3%	
1998-99	396:38	60:36	8:24	37:02	502:40	36.5%	
1999-00	560:00	70:13	8:58	32:28	671:39	46.6%	
2000-01	242:35	38:50	7:39	26:22	315:26	45.7%	
2001-02	475:55	63:19	12:31	24:58	576:43	44.5%	
2002-03	415:02	63:02	6:25	18:12	502:41	39.1%	
2003-04	388:24	62:58	0:00	14:35	465:57	38.3%	
2004-05	198:49	19:26	0:00	9:30	227:45	42.5%	
2005-06	631:27	55:42	0:00	18:09	705:18	44.9%	
2006-07	298:11	61:17	2:32	18:01	380:01	34.0%	
2007-08	373:36	61:57	7:55	27:38	471:06	36.1%	
2008-09	257:50	61:11	3:56	19:37	342:34	32.5%	
2009-10	156:00	24:24	7:32	16:31	204:27	37.8%	
2010-12	652:14	75:40	16:27	30:18	774:39	33.0%	
2012-13	285:42	61:18	5:10	11:01	363:11	32.0%	
2013-14	337:27	62:04	7:07	5:56	412:34	32.4%	
2014-15	193:54	61:11	5:46	16:79	278:10	28.1%	
2015-16	289:46	61:29	2:42	7:49	361:46	29.8%	
<i>Average minutes per sitting day</i>							
1997-98	194	16	2	11	223		
1998-99	160	24	3	15	202		
1999-00	198	25	3	11	237		
2000-01	175	28	6	19	228		
2001-02	142	19	4	7	172		
2002-03	154	23	2	7	186		
2003-04	148	24	0	6	178		
2004-05	184	18	0	9	210		
2005-06	182	16	0	5	203		
2006-07	123	25	1	7	156		
2007-08	136	23	3	10	171		
2008-09	114	27	2	9	151		
2009-10	156	24	8	17	204		
2010-12	132	15	3	6	157		
2012-13	120	26	2	5	152		
2013-14	125	23	3	2	153		
2014-15	87	28	3	8	125		
2015-16	110	28	1	4	163		

Source: House of Commons Sessional Information Digest and Sessional Diaries

²⁶ See [Bills whose Commons committee stage has been taken in committee of the whole House](#) Parliamentary Information List SN/PC/5435.

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