THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S FISCAL YEAR STATISTICS REPORT 2023/2024

The Corporate Area Coroner's
and
The Special Coroner's Court

(April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024)

OVERALL QUANTITATIVE HIGHLIGHTS April 1, 2023 - MARCH 31, 2024

Court	Case Disposal Rate (%)	Case Clearance Rate (%)	Average time to Disposition (months)
Corporate Area Coroner's Court	97.23	107.31	2.31
Corporate Area Special Coroner's Court	27.27	424.24	45.18
Weighted Average	92.95	126.72	12

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF CHARTS

**CHIEF JUSTICE'S MESSAGE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023/2024,
CORPORATE AREA CORONER'S AND SPECIAL CORONER'S COURT**

The Corporate Coroner's and Special Coroner's Courts have been making steady progress in providing coronial services to Jamaica. These courts are charged with the responsibility of enquiring into deaths to determine the cause and manner of death in circumstances where it is not clear that homicide has been committed.

It is of concern to note that the Special Coroner's Court is taking 45.18 months, on average, to dispose of cases. The number of older cases, in part, accounts for this long delay. This is so despite an impressive clearance rate of 424.24 for which the Special Coroner and staff must be commended. This clearance rate reflects great effort and commitment to improve productivity. This is even more impressive because the clearance rate (424.24%) of the Special Coroner's Court exceeded the projected clearance rate (101.35%). This performance shows that the past history is not a shackle but a guide to likely future conduct.

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court has performed quite well. Its case clearance rate (107.31%) exceeded the forecast (101.35%). The average time for disposition is 2.31 months. This is by any measure an exceptional performance. We will not rest on this outstanding performance and say there is nothing more to be done.

The Judiciary will be undertaking a review of the processes, practices, procedures and the law to determine how coronial services can be improved.

**The Honourable Mr. Justice Bryan Sykes, OJ, CD
Chief Justice of Jamaica**

Executive Summary

This report offers a comprehensive analysis of case activity within the Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Court for the fiscal year 2023/2024. Key performance indicators, including the case disposal rate, case clearance rate, and average time to disposition, were examined to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of these courts.

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court achieved a case disposal rate of 97.23%, meaning that for every 100 new cases filed in the fiscal period April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, 97 of those cases were resolved in said period. The Court also recorded a case clearance rate of 107.31%, exceeding international standards. During the reporting period, 543 cases were disposed of, while 506 new cases were filed. The average time to disposition stood at 2.33 months, reflecting the Court's efficient case processing.

The Special Coroner's Court filed 33 new cases and disposed of nine cases during the fiscal year. Efforts to resolve the older cases resulted in 140 disposals during the reporting period. However, the average time of disposition was 45.18 months, highlighting significant delays. continue to be taken to address these delays moving forward. The majority of the cases handled during the 2023/2024 fiscal period originated from Kingston (41.86%), Clarendon (18.60%), and Trelawny (6.98%).

Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Highlights:

A total of 683 new cases were filed across both courts, with 501 cases disposed of during the period. The overall average time to disposition was 12 months. The average case disposal rate was 92.95%, while the average case clearance rate stood at 126.72% for the reporting period.

Table i. Key Performance Summary-Fiscal Year 2023/2024

COURT	Disposal Rate (%)	Case Clearance Rate (%)	Average time to disposition (months)
Corporate Area Coroner's Court	97.23	107.31	2.31
Special Coroner's Court	27.27	424.24	45.18
Weighted Average	**92.95**	**126.72**	**12**

The report also delves into the sources of cases, causes of death, gender distribution, and age demographics. Notably, in the Corporate Area Coroner's Court, 80.31% of cases were filed by the police, and 70.38% of the deceased were male, with gunshot wounds being the leading cause of death.

Regarding Form D applications, most (59.85%) outcomes were in line with Section 14[1], indicating that an inquest was deemed unnecessary. Despite delays, primarily due to part-heard matters (40.48 %) and incomplete or pending medical certificates (28.57%), the Corporate Area Coroner's Court maintained strong overall performance for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

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[1] Section 14 of the Coroners Act grants coroners the discretion to forgo an inquest if the cause of death is clearly established, there is no suspicion of foul play, or an inquest would not provide further insights. This provision aims to improve efficiency, avoid unnecessary burdens on families, and ensure judicial resources are used effectively.

For the Special Coroner's Court, 76.74% of cases were related to incidents involving the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), while 23.26% involved Custodial Institutions Male victims accounted for 98% of cases in the 2023/ 2024 fiscal period. The Special Coroner's Court recorded a clearance rate, significantly above international standards, of 424.24%.

Table ii. Comparative Analysis of Actual and Forecasted Case Clearance Rates

COURT	2023/2024 Average Case Clearance Rate (%)	2023/2024 Forecasted Case Clearance Rate (%)	Residual	Squared Error	Absolute Percentage Error
Corporate Area Coroner's Court	107.31	101.35	5.96	35.52	5.55
Special Coroner's Court	424.24	104.92	319.32	101965.26	75.27
Weighted Average	**126.72**	**103.14**			

The table presents a statistical comparison of actual and forecasted case clearance rates for 2023/2024 across Corporate Area Coroner's Court and Special Area Coroner's Court, alongside their weighted averages.

The actual case clearance rate for the Corporate Area Coroner's Court (107.31%) exceeded the forecasted rate (101.35%) by a residual of 5.96. The squared error, representing the square of the residual, was calculated as 35.52, and the absolute percentage error stood at 5.55%.

The Special Coroner's Court exhibited a significant deviation, with the actual case clearance rate (424.24%) far surpassing the forecasted rate (104.92%). The residual for this court was 319.32, contributing to an exceptionally high squared error of 101,965.26 and an absolute percentage error of 75.27%.

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court displayed minor deviations between actual and forecasted rates, indicating relatively accurate predictions for the fiscal period April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024. Conversely, the Special Coroner's Court experienced substantial disparities, likely impacting the overall weighted average.

The findings underscore one disadvantage of forecasting, that is, the assumption that historical patterns will continue. However, these results also support the concept that employing data driven strategies in the management of court processes can significantly improve the actual outcomes of a courts case clearance rates.

Introduction

The Coroner's court is the judicial body tasked with determining the cause of death in diverse circumstances. This report provides a detailed overview of key statistics related to case activity within the Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Courts for the fiscal year 2023/2024. It encompasses metrics on productivity, time delays, resource utilisation, and other relevant performance indicators. The aim is to offer valuable insights into the case flow dynamics within these courts, including case disposals, factors contributing to case delays, and other crucial aspects of case progression management and outcomes.

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court is responsible for cases within the Corporate Area, while the Special Coroner's Court focuses on deaths caused by individual or institutional state actors or occurring under state care Although based in Kingston, the Special Coroner's Court holds sittings across all parishes.

Chapter 1.0: The Corporate Area Coroner's Court

This subsection on the Corporate Area Coroner's Court details information on the case activity in this court for the fiscal year 2023/2024, as well as the associated measurements of productivity in the disposal of cases, time lag measures outlining the average times between important events on the case flow continuum, as well as other supplementary measurements and information.

Table 1. 1 Summary of the time interval between date death reported and date case opened for the fiscal year 2023/2024

Descriptive Statistics (in days)	
Number of observations	520
Mean	765.10
Median	300.00
Mode	135
Std. Deviation	1214.226
Skewness	3.443
Std. Error of Skewness	0.107
Range	8129
Minimum	11
Maximum	8140

The table above provides a descriptive summary of the time taken between the date deaths were reported and the date that the cases for investigation of causes of death were opened in court at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court for the fiscal year 2023/2024. From a sample of 520 observations, the average time between reporting a death and opening the case was roughly 765 days (or 2.1 years). The most common (modal) time was 135 days (or 4.5 months), while the median was 300 days (or 10 months).

The standard deviation of 1214 days (or 3.3 years indicates significant variability in the time it takes for cases to open. The acutely high positive skewness of 3.443 further suggests that more scores decisively fall below the overall average, which is expected considering that the modal and median values are significantly lower than the mean. The maximum delay recorded was approximately 22 years, while the minimum was 11 days.

Table 1. 2 Case Activity Summary for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Approximate Number of new cases filed	Approximate Number of active cases	Number of disposed or inactive cases (from those filed in the quarter)	Estimated Case disposal rate (%)
506	13	492	97.23

The above table summarises the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in the fiscal year 2023/2024. It is shown that 506 new cases were filed over the period. There were 492 disposed cases, while 13 remained active at the end of the period. These results yield an estimated case disposal rate of 97.23%. This disposal rate satisfies the international standard of this measure and suggests that for every 100 cases filed over the period, roughly 97 cases were resolved. The case clearance rate will be examined later in this report.

Table 1. 3 Sampling distribution of Source of cases filed for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police	416	80.31
Family	102	19.69
Total	**136**	**100**

A sample of 518 cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court shows that 416 cases, or 80.31% of cases filed, were filed by the police, while 102, or 19.69%, were filed by the family of the deceased.

Table 1. 4 Sampling distribution of deaths reported at various Police and brought before the court Fiscal Year 2023/2024.

Police Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Half Way Tree Police Station	81	15.67
Elleston Road Police Station	47	9.09
Denham Town Police Station	45	8.70
Hunts Bay Police Station	39	7.54
Major Investigations Division	39	7.54
Sub-Total	**251**	**49**

Sample of observations (N) = 517

The data showed a sample of 517 Coroner's Court cases reported at the different police stations in the Corporate Area, which were subsequently brought to the court. Of that number, the Half Way Tree Police Station accounted for the highest proportion of cases filed/investigated during the period with 81 or 15.67%, while the Elleston Road Police Station ranks next with 47 or 9.09%, and the Denham Town Police Station followed with 45 cases or 8.70% of the sample. The top five police stations accounting for cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court were rounded off by Hunts Bay Police Stations and Major Investigations Division, each with 39 or 7.54% of the sample.

Chart 1. 1 Distribution of gender of the deceased for new cases filed in the Fiscal Year 2023/2024
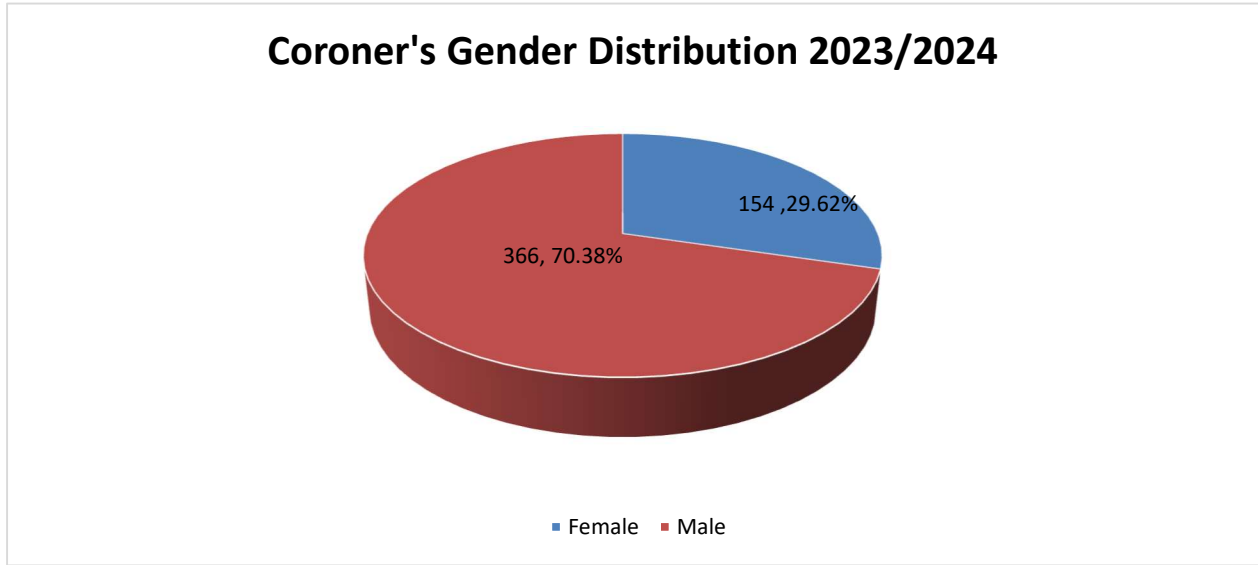
The above chart summarises gender distribution using a sample of 520 deceased persons involved in the cases filed during the fiscal year 2023/2024. It shows that 366, or 70.38%, of the deceased were male, while the remaining 154, or 29.62%, were female.

Table 1. 5 Descriptive Statistics on the age of the deceased in cases filed during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Descriptive statistics (age in years)	
Number of observations	508
Mean	57.51
Median	56.50
Mode	69
Std. Deviation	23.622
Skewness	0.059
Std. Error of Skewness	0.108
Range	97
Minimum	9
Maximum	106

A sample of 508 ages of the deceased involved in the cases filed revealed that the average age is roughly 58 years, the median is 57 years, and one of the most common modal values is 69 years. The standard deviation stands at a moderate value of approximately 24 years, indicating some variation of the scores around the mean, while the skewness is a low positive value, indicating a small cluster of the scores around the mean. The smallest age in the data set is 9 years, while the oldest was 106.

Table 1. 6 i Sampling distribution of the causes of death reported for cases filed during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Cause of death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gunshot wounds of the head, neck, chest, abdomen, face and back	73	14.09
Multiple gunshot wounds	24	4.63
Shock and haemorrhage, Polytrauma, Multiple gunshot wounds	15	2.90
Blunt impact trauma of the head, neck et sequelae	11	2.12
Undetermined	8	1.54
Sub-Total	**131**	**25**

Sample size (N) = 518

The above table is computed using a sample of 518 observations of the causes of death associated with cases. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are death caused by gunshot wounds to the neck, chest, abdomen and face with 73 or 14.09% of the sample, and multiple gunshot wounds with 24 or 4.63% followed. Shock and haemorrhage Polytrauma with 15 or 2.90% ranked next, Blunt impact trauma of the head, neck et sequelae with 11 or 2.12% followed, and undetermined with 8 or 1.54% rounded off the top five causes of death.

Table 1. 6 ii Sampling distribution of the causes of death as officially determined by the coroner for matters disposed of during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Cause of death as determined by Coroner	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Death due to natural causes	280	54.69
Death due to gunshot wounds	183	35.74
Death due to motor vehicle accident	16	3.13
Cause of death unknown	6	1.17
Death due to hanging	5	0.98
Sub-Total	**490**	**96**

Number of observations N= (512)

The above table is computed using a sample of 512 observations of the causes of death as officially determined by the Coroner. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported in the fiscal year 2023/2024 are deaths due to natural causes, with 280 or 54.69% of the sample and deaths due to gunshot wounds, with 183 or 35.74% of the sample. It is important to note that there may often be variances between the causes of death as reported and the causes of death as determined by the Coroner.

Table 1. 6 Sampling distribution of the Summary of Outcomes of Form D applications made during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024.

Outcomes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14[2]	310	59.85
Other	197	38.03
Trial and Judge	10	1.93
Trial and Jury	1	0.19
Total	**518**	**100**

During the processing of a case at the Coroner's Court, a Form D application is made, in which the judge reviews an order to determine the direction of the case thereafter. The above table summarises the outcomes of these applications over the period under examination. It is seen that the dominant outcome from Form D applications was decisions in accordance with Section 14, accounting for 310 or 59.85% of the outcomes. Trial and Judge accounted for 10 or 1.93% and Trial and Jury accounted for 1 or 0.19%. Meanwhile, the generic category 'other outcomes' accounted for the remaining 197, or 38.03%. These results are typical of the trends observed in the Coroner's Courts Island-wide. The data was computed using a sample of 518 cases.

Table 1. 7 Sampling distribution of reasons for adjournment/continuance during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Reasons for adjournment/continuance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Part-heard	17	40.48
File incomplete/awaiting medical certificate	12	28.57
Mention/Awaiting Jury Panel	7	16.67
Other	3	7.14
Transfer to another court/return to sender	3	7.14
Total	**42**	**100**

In the reporting period, 42 matters were adjourned/continued. Continuances (delays attributable to case progression stages) by way of part-heard matters accounted for the highest portion of the sample, with 17 or 40.48%.

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[2] Section 14 of the Coroners Act grants coroners the discretion to forgo an inquest if the cause of death is clearly established, there is no suspicion of foul play, or an inquest would not provide further insights. This provision aims to improve efficiency, avoid unnecessary burdens on families, and ensure judicial resources are used effectively.

Adjournments due to incomplete files/awaiting medical certificate and continuances for mention/awaiting jury panel accounted for 12 or 28.57% and 7 or 16.67%, respectively.

Table 1. 8 Sampling distribution of the type of hearings for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Type of hearing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chambers	506	97.31
Trial Judge Only	12	2.31
Trial Judge and jury	2	0.38
Total	**520**	**100**

A sample of 520 hearings at the Corporate Area Coroners Court for the fiscal year 2023/2024 reveals that 506, or 97.31%, were chamber hearings, while 12 or 2.31% accounted for Trial and Judge only. The remaining 2, or 0.38%, were accounted for by Trial and jury.

Table 1. 9 Sampling distribution of the methods of Disposition of matters completed during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Methods of disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14[3]	328	58.16
Section 10	227	40.25
Inquest	8	1.42
Open Court Verdict	1	0.18
Total	**564**	**100**

The methods of disposition for a sample of 564 matters, which were disposed of over the period, revealed that 328 or 58.16% of matters were disposed of under the provisions of Section 14 of the Coroner's Court Act. Matters disposed under the provision of Section 10 of the Coroner's Court Act followed this with 227 or 40.25% of the sample, and matters disposed of by inquest or open court verdict accounted for 1.42% and 0.18% of the sample, respectively.

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[3] Section 14 of the Coroners Act grants coroners the discretion to forgo an inquest if the cause of death is clearly established, there is no suspicion of foul play, or an inquest would not provide further insights. This provision aims to improve efficiency, avoid unnecessary burdens on families, and ensure judicial resources are used effectively.

Table 1. 10 Time to Disposition Summary for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	570
Mean	69.9772
Median	8.0000
Mode	7.00
Std. Deviation	275.06157
Skewness	5.369
Std. Error of Skewness	.102
Range	2688.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	2689.00

The above data shows that the average time to dispose of matters during the fiscal year 2023/2024 is approximately 70 days. This was derived from a sample of 570 matters resolved. The data also revealed that the median time to dispose of the matters was eight (8) days, and the modal time was seven (7) days. The standard deviation of 275 highlights a significant variation in the time taken to resolve cases. The high positive skewness of 5.369 indicates that a more significant proportion of the cases were disposed of within a shorter timeframe than the overall mean. The shortest time recorded was 1 day, while the longest was 2689 days (or 7.4 years). The average time between the date the file was received, and the date of the first hearing was 14.21 days.

Table 1. 11 Case Clearance Rate Summary for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Approximate Number of new cases filed	Approximate Number of cases disposed or inactive	Estimated Case clearance rate (%)
506	543	107.31

Courts that consistently maintain an average case clearance rate of between 90% and 110% will, at a minimum, have their disposals keeping up with the number of new cases filed but may also likely make considerable strides in reducing their case backlog rate to an acceptable level of under 10% of its active cases. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court achieved a case clearance rate of 107.31% for the fiscal year 2023/2024, placing it firmly within this range. This performance reflects a well-managed caseload with a net case backlog rate of under 5%. During the reporting period, 506 new cases were filed, and 543 were disposed of, regardless of their date of origin. This suggests that for every 100 new cases filed, approximately 107 cases were disposed of during the period.

Chapter 2.0: The Special Coroner's Court

This section provides a detailed summary of case activity and events as well as case outcomes and related factors at the Special Corner's Court during the fiscal year 2023/2024

Table 2. 1a: Case Activity Summary for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024 in the Special Coroner's Court

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of active cases	Approximate number of disposed or inactive cases (from those filed in the period)	Estimated Case disposal rate (%)
33	3	9	27.27

Note 1: There were 21 new pending cases at the end of the fiscal year 2023/2024

The above table summarises the cases filed at the Cooperate Area Special Coroner's Court. It shows that 33 new cases were filed during the fiscal year 2023/2024, nine (9) were disposed of, and three (3) active cases remain at the end of the period. The disposal rate stood at 27.27%.

Table 2. 2: Sampling distribution of the Parish of Origin of matters filed during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Parish Origin	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Kingston	18	41.86
Clarendon	8	18.60
Trelawny	3	6.98
St James	3	6.98
St Catherine	2	4.65
St. Elizabeth	2	4.65
Westmoreland	2	4.65
St. Thomas	2	4.65
Portland	1	2.33
St. Andrew	1	2.33
St. Ann	1	2.33
Total	**43**	**100**

As a parish court, the Special Coroners Court has a single location in Kingston but operates island-wide to hear cases from various parishes. The above table summarises the 'parish of origin' for cases filed in the Special Coroner's Court. Kingston, with 41.86% of the cases filed; Clarendon and Trelawny,

with approximately 19% and 7%, respectively. These three parishes accounted for the largest share of new cases filed in the Special Coroner's Court during the fiscal year 2023/2024.

Table 2. 3: Sampling Distribution of the source of matters filed during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
INDECOM	43	100

A sample of 43 matters filed at the Special Coroner's Court during the fiscal year 2023/2024 shows that all cases were filed by INDECOM.

Table 2. 4: Sampling Distribution on the Type of Death by Institution for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Type of death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
JCF	33	76.74
Custodial Institutions	10	23.26
Total	**43**	**100**

The above table shows that matters filed in the fiscal year 2023/02024 were related to JCF deaths (33 or 76.74%) and custodial institutions (10 or 23.26%), respectively. The majority of the causes of death, as reported in the cases filed during the reporting period, were stated as "haemorrhage and shock" or "gunshot wound to the body," accounting for 48.83% of the sample.

Chart 2. 1 Gender distribution of the deceased in cases filed during the fiscal year 2023/2024
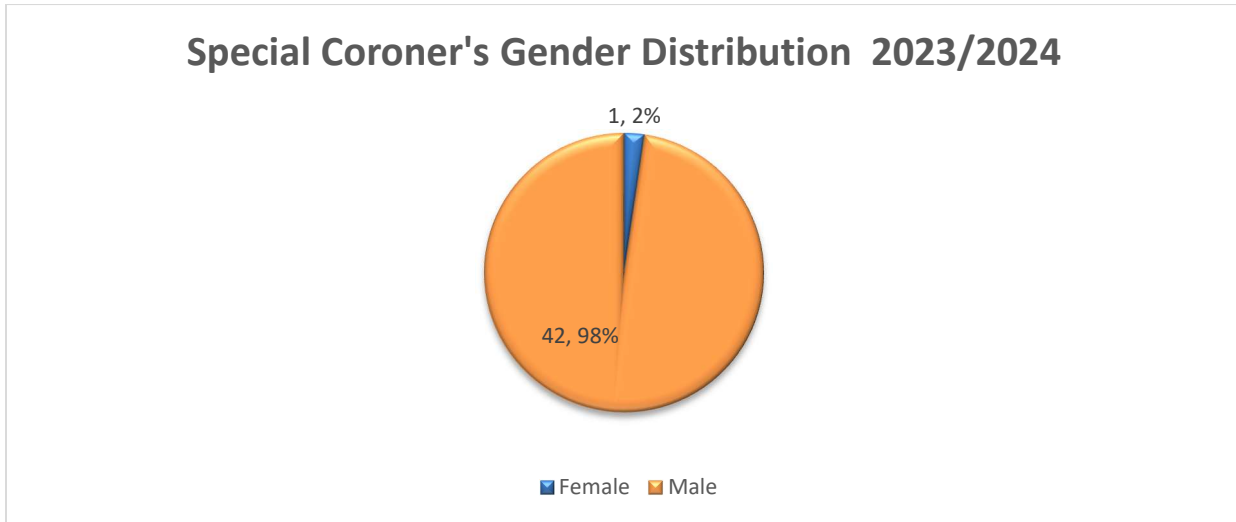
The gender distribution of the deceased involved in the 43 cases filed in fiscal year 2023/2024, shows that 98% were males and the remaining 2% were females.

Table 2. 5: Descriptive Statistics on the Age of the Deceased in cases filed during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Descriptive Statistics (in Days)

Number of observations	43
Mean	30.33
Median	24.00
Mode	17[a]
Std. Deviation	14.130
Skewness	.979
Std. Error of Skewness	.361
Range	51
Minimum	15
Maximum	66

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The above descriptive summary on the age of the deceased involved in cases filed during the fiscal year 2023/2024 revealed that from a sample of 43 observations, the average age was roughly 30 years, while one of the most frequently occurring age was 17 years old. The highest age recorded was 66, while the lowest was 15. The moderate standard deviation of roughly 14 years suggests a modest variation of the individual ages from the overall mean, while the positive skewness shown indicates that proportionately, more of the scores fell below the overall mean.

Table 2. 6: Sampling Distribution of the Methods of Disposition for matters resolved during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Methods of distribution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14[4]	23	56.10
Section 16	18	43.90
Total	**41**	**100.0**

The methods of disposition for a sample of 165 matters, which were disposed of during the fiscal year 2023/2024, revealed that 114 or 56.10% of matters were disposed of under the provisions of Section 14 of the Coroner's Court Act. Matters disposed under the provision of Section 16 of the Coroner's Court Act followed this with 51 or 30.90% of the sample.

The remainder were matters disposed of by way of Inquest under the provision of Section 16 of the Coroner's Court Act with 2 or 2.44% of the sample.

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[4] Section 14 of the Coroners Act grants coroners the discretion to forgo an inquest if the cause of death is clearly established, there is no suspicion of foul play, or an inquest would not provide further insights. This provision aims to improve efficiency, avoid unnecessary burdens on families, and ensure judicial resources are used effectively.

Table 2. 7: Descriptive Statistics on the time to disposition for matters completed during the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Descriptive Statistics (Days)	
Number of observations	164
Mean	1355.29
Median	1386.00
Mode	124
Std. Deviation	979.263
Skewness	0.527
Std. Error of Skewness	0.190
Range	4315
Minimum	29
Maximum	4344

The above table uses a sample of 164 cases disposed of in the fiscal year 2023/2024, revealing an estimated average of roughly 45 months, with a maximum of approximately 12 years and a minimum of 29 days. The low positive skewness indicates that proportionately, more of the scores in the distribution were clustered around the series mean. At the same time, the moderate standard deviation shows some variation in the data points around the overall mean.

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Table 2. 8: Descriptive statistics on the age of active cases for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	17
Mean	193.41
Median	151.00
Mode	60[a]
Std. Deviation	191.799
Skewness	3.417
Std. Error of Skewness	.550
Range	837
Minimum	60
Maximum	897

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The above data is based on a sample of 17 active Special Coroner's matters during the fiscal year 2023/2024. The average age of these matters was roughly 193 days or approximately six months, while the lowest, most frequently occurring age in the distribution was 60 days. The standard deviation of roughly 191 days suggests a large dispersion in the individual scores from the average, while the positive skewness indicates that there were more scores in the data set, which fell below the overall average age of the active cases. The oldest active matter is 897 days old or 2.5 years, while the youngest case is 60 days.

Table 2. 9: Case Clearance Rate Summary for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of cases disposed	Estimated Case clearance rate (%)
33	140	424.24

Note 1: There were 0 pending cases at the end of the period
Note 2: there were 0 inactive cases for the end of the period

Courts that consistently maintain an average case clearance rate of 90%-110% for a prolonged period ensure that disposals keep up with the number of new cases filed. These courts are also more likely to make considerable strides in reducing their case backlog rate to an acceptable level of under 5% of active cases. The Corporate Area Special Coroner's Court achieved a case clearance rate of 424.24% for the fiscal year 2023/2024, which exceeds the typical range. This reflects a well-managed caseload. During the reporting period, 33 new cases were filed, and 140 cases were disposed of (regardless of their date of origin), resulting in the noted clearance rate.

Aggregate Case Activity Summary

Table 2. 10: Aggregate Case Flow Performance Estimates for the Fiscal Year 2023/2024

Metric	Corporate Area Coroner's Court	Corporate Area Special Coroner's Court	Total/Weighted Average
Approximate number of new cases	506	33	**539**
Approximate number of disposed cases	492	9	**501**
Approximate gross number of disposed cases (regardless of date of origin)	543	140	**683**
Estimated Case Disposal Rate (%)	97.23	27.27	**92.95**
Estimated Case Clearance Rate (%)	107.23	424.24	**126.72**
Average Time to Disposition	2.33	45.18	**12**

The above table summarises aggregate case activity across the featured specialised Coroner's Court and Special Coroner's Court during the fiscal year 2023/2024. It is shown that 539 new cases were filed in these courts, while 501 were disposed of, leading to an estimated weighted case disposal rate of 92.95%. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court achieved an estimated case disposal rate of 97.23%, which is impressive. The table also shows that 683 cases were disposed of in the period, leading to an estimated weighted case clearance rate of 126.72%. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court recorded a case clearance rate of 107.23%, and the Special Coroner's Court had an estimated case clearance rate of 424.24%. Both showed impressive results that exceeded the international standard.

Concluding Note

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Court continue to play a pivotal role in reducing the overall net case backlog rate and enhancing judicial efficiency. For the fiscal year 2023/2024, the combined weighted average time to disposition was 12 months. Across both courts, the estimated case disposal rate was 92.95%, and the estimated case clearance rate was 105.94% during the reporting period.

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court has consistently maintained high case disposal and clearance rates, towards the judiciary's goal of reducing the backlog to under 5%. These sustained high case disposal and clearance rates are essential in positioning the Jamaican judiciary as one of the most efficient globally. Data for the reporting period reveals that the Special Coroner's Court filed 10 new cases, none of which were disposed of during the period. However, when considering all cases disposed of regardless of their date of origin, the Special Coroner's Court recorded an impressive case clearance rate of 424.24%, reflecting considerable efforts to resolve older cases. The average time to disposition for the Special Coroner's Court was 45.18 months in the fiscal year 2023/2024.

In contrast, the Corporate Area Coroner's Court filed 506 new cases during the reporting period. It disposed of 543 cases irrespective of their date of origin, resulting in a case clearance rate of 107.23%. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court remains an outstanding performer, resolving 492 out of the 506 new cases filed (97.23%) in the fiscal year 2023/2024, with an average case to disposition of 2.33 months.

Efficient case resolution in Coroner's Courts offers significant benefits, including economic stability and public trust. Timely handling of legal matters provides closure for families and boosts confidence in the judicial system. This aligns with Jamaica's Vision 2030 National Goal 2, "The Jamaican Society is Secure, Cohesive and Just," and, by extension, the 2030 Global Agenda Goal 16, "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions." In addition, reducing backlogs and improving case clearance rates also free up resources for other legal matters.

Economically, coroner case delays can negatively impact insurance claims, estate settlements, and compensation processes. As seen in the UK and Australia, efficient coronial inquests improve public safety by addressing systemic issues and reducing future incidents and costs. A well-functioning judicial system attracts investors, with studies showing that nations with timely legal resolutions experience higher foreign direct investment (FDI) due to increased predictability and reduced risks. For Jamaica, the strong performance of its Coroner's Courts enhances its reputation for upholding the rule of law, fostering economic growth[5].

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Court have shown high clearance rates and targeted efforts towards reduced backlogs for the fiscal year 2023/2024, contributing to judicial efficiency and economic development. These achievements position the Jamaican judiciary as a global model of efficiency and fairness.

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[5] World Bank. (2020). Doing Business 2020: Comparing Business Regulation in 190 Economies. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Glossary of Terms

Sampling Distribution: A sampling distribution represents the distribution of frequencies of possible outcomes for a given statistic based on a sample drawn from a population. The population refers to the entire pool from which a statistical sample is drawn.

Range: This measures the spread of values in a data set, calculated as the difference between the highest and lowest values. A more extensive range indicates a wider spread of values in the data set.

Standard Deviation: This quantifies how widely spread the scores in a data set are around the average value of that data set (mean). A higher standard deviation indicates a more significant variation from the mean. In contrast, a low standard deviation indicates that the scores in a data set are clustered close to the mean.

Outlier: An outlier is a significantly smaller or larger value relative to the majority of scores/trends in a data set, which may distort the overall trend.

Skewness: This measures the distribution of scores in a data set. It gives an idea of where the more significant proportion of the scores in a data set can be found. Generally, if skewness is positive, as revealed by a positive value for this measure, this suggests that a more significant proportion of the scores in the data set are at the lower end. If the skewness is negative, as revealed by a negative value for this measure, it generally suggests that a more significant proportion of the scores are at the higher end. If the skewness measure is approximately 0, then there is a roughly equal distribution of scores on both the higher and lower ends of the average figure.

Clearance Rate: The ratio of incoming to outgoing cases or of new cases filed to cases disposed of, regardless of when the disposed cases originated. For example, 100 new cases were filed in a given Term, and 110 were disposed of (including cases originating before that Term), so the clearance rate is 110/100 or 110%.

- **Note:** The clearance rate could, therefore, exceed 100%, but the disposal rate has a maximum value of 100%. A persistent case clearance rate of less than 100% will eventually lead to a backlog of cases in the court system. The inferred international benchmark for case clearance rates is an annualised average of 90%—110. This is a critical foundation for backlog prevention in the court system.[i]

Disposal Rate: As distinct from the clearance rate, the disposal rate is the proportion of new cases filed which have been disposed of in a particular period. For example, if 100 new cases are filed in a specific Term and 80 of those cases are disposed of in said Term, then the disposal rate is 80%.

- **Note:** A persistent case clearance rate of less than 100% will eventually lead to a backlog of cases in the court system.[ii]

Case Congestion Rate: The ratio of pending cases to cases disposed of in a given period. It indicates how fatigued a court is, given the existing state of resources and degree of efficiency. A case congestion rate of 150%, for example, suggests that given the resources currently at a court's disposal and its degree of efficiency, it is carrying 1.5 times its capacity.

Trial/Hearing Date Certainty: This is the proportion of scheduled trial or hearing dates that proceed without adjournment. For example, if 100 trial dates are set in a particular Term and 40 are adjourned, the trial certainty rate would be 60%. The international standard for this measure is between 92% and 100%.

Case File Integrity Rate: Measures the proportion of time a case file is fully prepared and available on time for court proceedings. Hence, any adjournment due to the lack of readiness of a case file or related proceedings for the court at the scheduled time impairs the case file integrity rate. The international benchmark for the case file integrity is 100%.

Courtroom Utilisation Rate: This refers to the time that courtrooms are in active use daily, or the daily hours utilised in a courtroom. The international standard for this rate is 100%.

Case Backlog: A case that has been in the court system for more than two years without disposition. There are two types of backlog rates:

- **Gross Backlog Rate:** measures the proportion of all cases filed within a given period that remain unresolved for over two years.

- **Net Backlog Rate**: measures the proportion of active cases filed in a given period that has been unresolved for over two years.

Continuance and Adjournment: Generally, any delay in the progression of a hearing in which a future date/time is set or anticipated for continuation is a form of adjournment. However, court statistics utilise the terms' continuance' and' adjournment' to make a strict distinction between matters which are adjourned for procedural factors and those which are generally avoidable. Here, 'continuance' is used strictly to describe situations in which future dates are set due to procedural reasons and 'adjournments' is used to describe the circumstances in which future dates of appearance are set due to generally avoidable reasons. For example, adjournments for another stage of the hearing, say from a plea and case management hearing to a trial hearing or from the last date of trial to a sentencing date, are classified as 'continuance' but delays for, say, missing or incomplete files, due to outstanding medical reports or attorney absenteeism are classified as 'adjournments.' Adjournments, as defined in this document, have an adverse effect on hearing date certainty rates, but continuances do not.

Percentile Rank: This refers to the percentage of scores that are equal to or less than a given score. Percentile ranks, like percentages, fall on a continuum from 0 to 100. For example, a percentile rank of 45 indicates that 45% of the scores in a distribution of scores fall at or below the score at the 35th percentile. Percentile ranks are helpful when you want to quickly understand how a particular score compares to the other scores in a distribution of scores. For instance, knowing a court disposed of 300 cases in a given period doesn't tell you much. You don't know how many case disposals were possible, and even if you did, you wouldn't see how that court's score compares to the rest of the courts. If, however, you were told that the court scored at the 80th percentile, then you would know that this court did as well or better than 80% of the courts in case disposals.

Difference Between Percentage and Percentage Points: The difference between percentage and percentage points, the latter is strictly used to compare two percentages. For example, if the clearance rate in 2018 was 89% and the clearance rate in 2019 is 100%, then the appropriate expression to compare these would be "an 11 percentage points increase". However, if we are comparing two absolute numbers, say, 1000 cases were disposed in 2018, and 1500 in 2019, then there would be a 50% increase in cases disposed.

Weighted Average: Weighted average is a calculation that considers the varying degrees of significance of the groups or numbers in a data set. In calculating a weighted average for a particular variable, each group's scores or averages are multiplied by the group's weight or number of observations and summed. The outcome is then divided by the summation of the number of observations in all groups combined. For example, if we wish to calculate the weighted average clearance rate for the parish courts, the product of the clearance rate and number of cases for each court are computed, added, and then divided by the total number of cases across all the parish courts. This means that a court with a more extensive caseload has a more significant impact on the case clearance rate than a smaller court. A weighted average can be more accurate than a simple average in which all numbers in a data set are assigned an identical weight.

Exponential Smoothing: Exponential smoothing of time series data assigns exponentially decreasing weights for the newest to oldest observations. In other words, the older data, the less priority ("weight") the data is given; newer data is seen as more relevant and is assigned more weight.

Smoothing parameters (smoothing constants) – usually denoted by a- determine the weights of the observations.

Exponential smoothing is usually used to make short-term forecasts, as longer-term forecasts utilising this technique can be quite unreliable.

- **Simple (single) Exponential Smoothing** uses a weighted moving average with exponentially decreasing weights.

- **Holt's Trend-Corrected Double Exponential Smoothing** is usually more reliable for handling data showing trends than the single procedure.

- **Triple Exponential Smoothing** (the Multiplicative Holt-Winters) is usually more reliable for parabolic trends or data showing trends and seasonality.

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[i] Source :
http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/bestpractice/BestPracticeCaseAgeClearanceRates.pdf

[ii] Source :
http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/bestpractice/BestPracticeCaseAgeClearanceRates.pdf