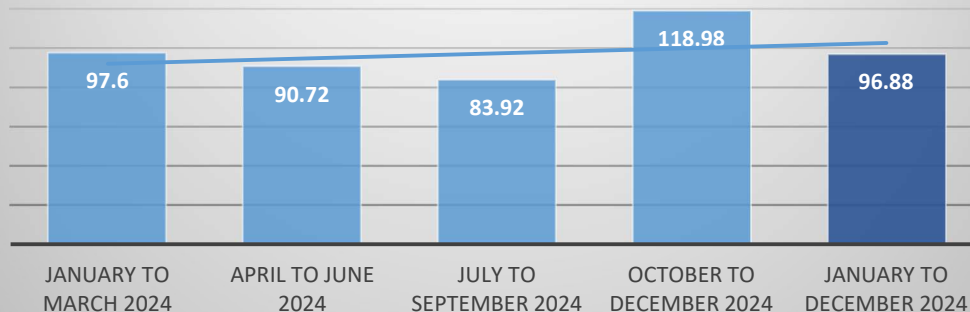


THE SPECIALISED FAMILY COURTS OF JAMAICA

(January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024)

SPECIALISED FAMILY COURTS OF JAMAICA 2024 HIGHLIGHTS CASE CLEARANCE RATE (%)



The case clearance rate measures a courts ability to manage its incoming cases effectively and is essential for preventing backlog.

The International benchmark for the rate is an annual average of 90% to 110%.

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CHIEF JUSTICE'S MESSAGE FIRST QUARTER, FAMILY COURT 2024

The Specialised Family Courts (SFC) continue to provide important services to our country. It is a critical part of what is now increasingly called therapeutic justice. These courts are a vital part of our judicial legal framework. These courts operate in an environment of high emotional stress. It is important to recognise the sensitivity of matters addressed by these court and when accompanied by high emotion they may not proceed as quickly along the case flow continuum as a criminal or civil matter. With this in mind there is still the need to keep an eye on the case clearance rate because the longer cases take to be resolved, the greater the uncertainty that hangs over the matter and higher the financial and emotional cost of participating in the judicial process.

The overall clearance rate was 96.88%. This is a particularly important metric because it indicates whether a court is getting into backlog, getting out of backlog, or sustaining the present situation. The literature indicates that two consecutive years of clearances rates under 100% may add 23 days to the average time it takes to dispose of matters. An efficient court that is backlog free needs to keep its clearance rate no lower than 100%. Once it gets below 100% for any given year and remains there then the stage is set for a backlog build up.

It is important that every effort is made to get the clearance rate up to at least 100% or greater, *while also adhering to the established time standards*. Despite the sensitive nature of these cases and the emotions that accompany them, the courts must seek to address them in accordance with these standards. Failure to do so will result in a denial of justice.

The Judiciary will be looking at the processes involved to see where process improvements can be made to reduce the time taken to hear and determine matters in the Family Courts.

I wish to thank the judges, staff, and all stakeholders who enabled these courts to achieve a clearance rate of 96.88%. The new year should see better levels of performance and consequently delivering these important services in a timely manner.

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

Executive Summary

The Specialized Family Courts in Jamaica play a critical role in advancing key performance goals established by the Honourable Chief Justice, aimed at positioning the Jamaican judiciary among the world's most efficient and effective legal systems. A pivotal target in achieving the strategic vision of backlog-free courts is ensuring that the net case backlog rate remains under 5%. Meeting this benchmark is not only crucial for enhancing court excellence but also instrumental in fostering a more conducive environment for business growth, investment, and broader socio-economic development.

A judiciary that minimizes delays in case resolutions is central to maintaining public confidence in the legal system, improving access to justice, and ensuring timely legal outcomes. The emphasis on efficiency is in line with global judicial best practices, which highlight the importance of reducing case backlogs to promote fairness and economic stability. Courts that operate without significant delays are better equipped to manage the increasing complexities of family law, protect vulnerable populations, and ensure swift justice in matters related to children, domestic issues, and support cases.

Moreover, a judicial system that effectively manages its caseload attracts both local and international investment, as businesses often seek jurisdictions with transparent and predictable legal processes. Delays in court proceedings can lead to increased legal costs, business uncertainties, and hinder the enforcement of contracts, all of which can negatively affect the business climate. Thus, the Jamaican family courts' efforts to meet and exceed these targets align not only with improving judicial efficiency but also with the country's broader economic ambitions.

Achieving a net case backlog rate of less than 5% reflects the judiciary's commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to the needs of citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders. As a service-based institution, the courts are key players in Jamaica's socio-economic development strategy, where efficient legal systems support stable governance and economic growth. In short, the success of specialized family courts in meeting these ambitious goals serves as a vital foundation for fostering court excellence, enhancing the rule of law, and creating a robust environment for investment and socio-economic progress.

For the period January through December 2024, the Specialised Family Courts of Jamaica, recorded a total of 8656 new cases filed. Case activity that was either disposed or inactive amounted to 8386 producing an overall case clearance rate of 96.88%. The Corporate Area Family Court accounted for the largest share of new cases filed for the period (January 1 to December 31, 2024) with 2571 or 29.70%. the St. James Family followed accounting for 2547 or 29.42% of new cases filed and Westmoreland with 1538 or 17.77%. The lowest share of new cases filed for the 2024 calendar year were with the family courts of Manchester 727 (8.40%), Hanover 672 (7.76%) and Trelawny 601 (6.94%).

Classified among the most critical measures of court productivity and efficiency is the case clearance rate. Clearance rate measures the courts' ability to manage its incoming case load effectively. This measurement is important in preventing case backlog; through, monitoring clearance rates, courts can identify and address potential backlogs before they escalate. If a court is disposing fewer cases than filed a severe backlog of cases is certain; that is, a persistent case clearance rate of less than 100% will eventually lead to a backlog of cases in the court system. In 2024, the highest ratio of new cases filed to cases disposed among the specialised family courts in Jamaica was recorded in

the Corporate Area Family Court producing a weighted average case clearance rate of 106.34%. The Westmoreland Family Court ranked second with 101.37%, followed by Trelawny with 95.67%, Manchester with 92.98%, St. James with 89.87% and Hanover with 82.29%.

The current rate of case clearance is influenced by both the efforts of the courts in case management and factors outside of direct control of the courts. The overall weighted mean clearance rate of 96.88 for the year (Jan.-Dec. 2024) satisfies the international minimum standard for this metric (90% - 100%).

Positioned towards reducing backlog, the family courts remain determined to maintain at minimum disposing as many, as the number of new cases being filed. To this effect, the Specialised Family Courts in Jamaica continue to engage external parties and stakeholders in an effort to reduce the general incidence of delays brought about by factors such as the absenteeism of applicants and or respondents for hearings, outstanding scientific reports, among other reasons.

Table i. Aggregate Case Flow Performance Estimates for the year Ended December 31, 2024

| Family Court | Number of new cases | Gross number of disposed cases | Gross number of inactive cases | Weighted average case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Corporate Area Family Court | 2571 | 2640 | 94 | 106.34 |
| St. James Family Court | 2547 | 2218 | 71 | 89.87 |
| Westmoreland Family Court | 1538 | 1468 | 91 | 101.37 |
| Manchester Family Court | 727 | 666 | 10 | 92.98 |
| Hanover Family Court | 672 | 536 | 17 | 82.29 |
| Trelawny Family Court | 601 | 565 | 10 | 95.67 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 8656 | 8093 | 293 | 96.88 |

The above table provides a summary for the 2024 calendar year. It shows that a total of 8656 new cases were filed in these courts, while 293 became inactive and 8093 were disposed, leading to an estimated weighted case clearance rate of 96.88%. The Corporate Area Family Court recorded the highest overall weighted case clearance rate among the featured courts with 106.34%, followed by the Westmoreland Family Court with 101.37%, Trelawny Family Court with 95.67%, while the Manchester Family Court recorded a clearance rate of 92.98% and the St. James Family Court following behind with 89.87% to round off the top five courts in 2024.

Methodology

The report covers the performance of the Corporate Area Family Court, Hanover Family Court, St. James Family Court, Westmoreland Family Court, Trelawny Family Court, and Manchester Family Court. Case data were categorised by type—criminal, family matters, domestic violence, child welfare, civil, and enforcement activities. The performance metrics are calculated using a weighted average approach, a measure of court performance based on caseload variations. In addition, the comparative analysis of forecasts with actual measures using squared error and absolute percentage error provides valuable insights into the accuracy and reliability of forecasting methods, facilitating a more comprehensive assessment of the forecasting model's performance.

Disclaimer

The numbers that are reflected in the case activity summary in the annual report may vary slightly from those quoted in the individual quarterly reports throughout the year due to occasional constraints with timely access to all records and other mitigating factors. Methodological adjustments may also result in slight variations in comparative figures across periods.

Introduction

The specialised Family courts, within the Jamaican judicial system, operate as comprehensive service hubs, offering on-site counselling, off-site referrals, extensive open court hearings, adjudication, and logistical support for payments and pay-outs, particularly in maintenance matters. Catering to diverse case types, including criminal, civil, domestic violence, and family and child welfare, these courts play a pivotal role in safeguarding the welfare of families, especially children.

The Judicature Family Court Act (1975) indicates the primary duty of the Family Court is to prevent family breakdowns and ensure the welfare of its members, particularly children, a mandate reflected in the multifaceted functions it performs. As outlined in the Act, the Family Court handles a wide range of family matters, including adoption, custody, maintenance, affiliation, juvenile care and protection, and divorce. This underscores the importance of the Family Courts in maintaining societal cohesion and promoting justice within families. Statistical reporting of the activities of the specialised family courts not only enhances this courts' productivity but also fosters public understanding and appreciation of its vital role and provisions.

The critical importance of the rule of law and the judiciary as principal components of a high quality of life is represented in Vision 2030 Jamaica National Goal 2 "The Jamaican Society is Secure, Cohesive and Just". This statistics report underscores the invaluable use of empirical-based knowledge in creating the Jamaica we want: "Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business." The report, provides insights into various case-related activities during the 2024 calendar year and offers detailed insights into seven specialised family courts in Jamaica namely:

- The Corporate Area Family Court
- The Western Regional Family Courts
 - St. James Family Court
 - Hanover Family Court
 - Westmoreland Family Court
- The Trelawny Family Court
- The Manchester Family Court

Chapter 1.0: The Corporate Area Family Court

This chapter will examine a summary of selected output and performance measurements for matters in the Corporate Area Family Court in 2024. It includes analyses of caseload, case type distribution and case clearance rates for the different business lines of the family court.

Case Activity Summary in the Criminal Section (A Division of the Children's Court)

Table 1.1: Summary of Criminal Case Activity for Cases for the year Ended December 31,2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Committal | 69 | 44 | 2 | 66.67 |
| Indictments | 78 | 82 | 15 | 124.36 |
| Summary | 50 | 49 | 7 | 112.00 |
| Petty Session | 27 | 13 | 3 | 59.26 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 224 | 188 | 27 | 95.98 |

The above table shows the sample of 224 criminal cases filed at the Corporate Area Family Court in 2024. Of these, 78 or 34.82% were indictment matters, 69 or 30.80% were committal, 50 or 22.32% were summary matters. There was a total of 188 criminal cases disposed while 27 became inactive during the year. Of these, 82 indictment matters were disposed while 15 became inactive. There were 49 summary matters disposed, and 7 became inactive. there were 44 committal matters disposed, 2 became inactive while 13 petty session matters were disposed and 3 became inactive. This led to an estimated weighted clearance rate of 95.98% for these types of cases which does not satisfy the international standards on this vital metric.

Case Activity on Child Welfare Matters (A Division of the Children's Court)

This section examines case activity for matters classified as child welfare in the Corporate Area Family Court in 2024. Matters falling under child welfare are uncontrollable child and childcare and protection cases.

Table 1.2: Summary of Child Welfare Case Activity for the year Ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Child care protection | 97 | 111 | 1 | 115.46 |
| Uncontrollable Child | 76 | 52 | 1 | 69.74 |
| Total Weighted Average | 173 | 163 | 0 | 94.22 |

There were 36 child welfare cases filed at the Corporate Area Family Court in 2024, the larger proportion of which were child care protection cases which accounted for 97 or 56.07%, while the remaining proportion were uncontrollable child cases with 76 or 43.93%. A total of 163 child welfare cases were disposed of during the year. These results led to estimated case clearance rates of 111.46% for child care and protection cases and 69.74% for uncontrollable child cases, further yielding a weighted average case clearance rate of 94.22%, which satisfies international standard of 90 and above on this vital metric.

Family Matters Case Activity Summary for The Corporate Area Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024

This section examines case activity for matters classified under the broad category of family matters in the Corporate Area Family Court in 2024. Matters falling under this broad case category included in this report are maintenance, custody, legal guardianship, access, and declaration of paternity.

Table 1.3: Summary of Family Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Subtype | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Custody | 525 | 557 | 16 | 109.14 |
| Declaration of Paternity | 307 | 312 | 10 | 104.89 |
| Maintenance | 636 | 696 | 34 | 114.78 |
| Access | 10 | 3 | 0 | 30.00 |
| Legal Guardianship | 89 | 75 | 4 | 88.76 |
| Total | 1567 | 1643 | 64 | 108.93 |

The 1567 new cases filed at the Corporate Area Family Court in 2024 revealed that maintenance matters accounts for the largest proportion of cases filed (with 636 cases or 40.59%). This was followed by cases of custody with 525 or 33.50%. There were 307 declaration of paternity cases or 19.59%. A total of 1707 cases falling under the broad family category were disposed of or became inactive in 2024. This is broken down into 1643 disposed and 64 inactive cases. Maintenance cases accounted for 696 of the disposed cases and 34 inactive cases while custody accounted for 557 disposed cases and 16 inactive cases. There were 312 disposed declaration of paternity cases while 10 became inactive and 75 legal guardianship cases while 4 became inactive. This led to an overall estimated weighted average 108.93%. Maintenance cases recorded the highest clearance rate with 114.78%, custody cases with 109.14% and declaration of paternity cases recorded a clearance rate of 104.89%.

Summary of Case Activity for Domestic Violence Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024, at the Corporate Area Family Court

The subsection below provides a basic summary of case activity for Domestic Violence cases filed at the Family Court in Corporate Area for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Table 1.4: Summary of Domestic Violence Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Order Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Weighted case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Protection Order | 517 | 546 | 3 | 106.19 |
| Occupation Order | 90 | 100 | 0 | 111.11 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 607 | 646 | 3 | 106.92 |

The data shows that there was a total of 607 new domestic violence cases filed in 2024 at the Corporate Area Family Court. The larger proportion of which were protection order cases which accounted for 517 or 85.17%, while cases of occupation order with 90 or 14.83% accounted for the remaining proportion. A total of 646 Domestic Violence cases were disposed of in the year. There were 546 protection order cases disposed of during the year, while 100 occupation order cases were also disposed of. These results led to estimated case clearance rates of 106.19% for protection order cases and 111.11% for occupation order cases, further yielding a weighted average case clearance rate of 106.92%, which is above international standards on this vital metric.

Table 1.5: Sampling Distribution/Post Disposal Activity for the Corporate Area Court for the year Ended December 31, 2024

| Post disposal activity/Enforcement | New entries | Inactive matters | Disposed matters | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Vary Orders | 377 | 74 | 338 | 109.28 |
| Disobedience of Maintenance | 136 | 155 | 299 | 333.82 |
| Total/ Weighted Average | 513 | 229 | 637 | 168.81 |

Apart from substantive case activity, it is important to note that Vary Orders accounted for 377 or 73.49% of post disposal activity in the Corporate Area Family Court and the remaining 136 or 26.51% entered the enforcement stage (by way of disobedience of maintenance matters) during the year. A total of 412 vary orders were disposed of or became inactive in the period and 454 enforcements were either disposed of or became inactive producing a gross case clearance rate of 168.81% for these matters.

Chapter 2.0: The St. James Family Court

This chapter will examine a summary of selected output and performance measurements for matters in the St. James Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Such will involve analyses of caseload, case type distribution and case clearance rates for the different business lines of the family court.

Case Activity Summary in the Criminal Section (A Division of the Children's Court)

Table 2.1: Summary of Criminal Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Summary | 58 | 38 | 2 | 68.97 |
| Indictments | 45 | 29 | 2 | 68.89 |
| Petty Session | 20 | 9 | 1 | 50.00 |
| Committal | 13 | 23 | 1 | 184.62 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 136 | 99 | 6 | 77.21 |

The above table shows the sample of 136 criminal cases filed at the St. James Family Court in 2024. Of these, 58 or 42.65% were summary matters. Indictment matters accounted for 45 or 33.09%, while petty session matters accounted for 20 or 14.71%. The remaining 13 or 9.56% was accounted for by committal cases. There was a total of 105 criminal cases disposed of or became inactive during the year ended December 31, 2024. Of these, summary matters accounted for 38 disposed cases while 2 became inactive. Indictment matters had 29 disposed cases, while matters of committal accounted for 23 disposed cases. Petty session cases accounted for 9 disposed cases while 1 became inactive. This led to an estimated weighted clearance rate of 77.21% for these types of cases.

Case Activity on Child Welfare Matters (A Division of the Children's Court)

This section examines case activity for matters classified as child welfare in the St. James Family Court for the year 2024. Matters falling under child welfare are uncontrollable child and childcare and protection cases.

Table 2.2: Summary of Child Welfare Case Activity for the Year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Child care protection | 180 | 141 | 5 | 81.11 |
| Uncontrollable Child | 106 | 78 | 14 | 86.79 |
| Total Weighted Average | 286 | 219 | 19 | 83.22 |

There were 56 child welfare cases filed at the St. James Family Court in 2024, the larger proportion of which were childcare and protection cases which accounted for 180 or 62.94%, while cases of uncontrollable child with 106 or 37.06% accounted for the remaining proportion. A total of 219 child welfare cases were disposed while 19 became inactive during the year. There were 141 child care and protection cases, and 78 uncontrollable child cases disposed of during the period Jan.-Dec.2024 at the St. James Family Court. These results led to estimated case clearance rates of 81.11% for child care and protection cases and 86.79% for uncontrollable child cases, further yielding a weighted average case clearance rate of 83.22%, which is below international standards on this vital metric.

Family Matters Case Activity Summary for the St. James Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024

This section examines case activity for matters classified under the broad category of family matters in the St. James Family Court in 2024. Matters falling under this broad case category included in this report are maintenance, custody, legal guardianship, access, and declaration of paternity.

Table 2.3: Summary of Family Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Subtype | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Maintenance | 575 | 431 | 13 | 77.22 |
| Custody | 392 | 422 | 14 | 111.22 |
| Declaration of Paternity | 182 | 176 | 2 | 97.80 |
| Access | 43 | 6 | 2 | 18.60 |
| Legal Guardianship | 26 | 23 | 0 | 88.46 |
| Adoption | 11 | 9 | 0 | 81.82 |
| Declaration of Maternity | 7 | 2 | 0 | 28.57 |
| Total | 1236 | 1069 | 31 | 89.00 |

The 1236 new cases filed at the St. James Family Court in 2024, revealed that maintenance matters with 575 cases or 46.52% accounts for the largest proportion of cases filed. This was followed by Custody with 392 or 31.72%. There were 182 Declaration of Paternity cases or 14.72%, there were 43 access cases, 26 declaration of legal guardianship cases ,11 cases of adoption and 7 cases of declaration of maternity. A total of 153 cases falling under this broad family category were disposed of (1069) or became inactive (31) during the Jan.-Dec 2024 period. Maintenance cases accounted for 431 of the disposed cases and 13 inactive cases while cases of custody accounted for 422 disposed cases while 14 became inactive. There were 176 disposed cases concerning declaration of paternity case. There were also 23 disposed cases of legal guardianship. This led to an overall estimated weighted average case clearance rate of 89.00% for the broad family case type.

The highest case clearance rate of family case activities in the St. James Family court was for custody cases with 111.12%; followed by declaration of paternity cases with 97.80%, cases of legal guardianship accounted for 88.46%. cases of adoption with 81.82% rounded off the top 5 case subtype in this category.

Summary of Case Activity for Domestic Violence Cases in the year ended December 31, 2024, at the St. James Family Court

The below subsection provides a basic summary of case activity for Domestic Violence cases filed at the Family Court in St. James for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Table 2.4: Summary of Domestic Violence Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Weighted case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Protection Order | 646 | 573 | 6 | 89.63 |
| Occupation Order | 165 | 146 | 3 | 90.30 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 811 | 719 | 9 | 89.77 |

The data above shows that there were a total of 811 new domestic violence cases filed in of 2024 at the St. James Family Court. Protection order cases accounted for the larger proportion with 646 or 79.65%, while occupation order cases accounted for the remaining proportion with 165 or 20.35%. A total of 728 domestic cases were disposed of or became inactive in the year. There were 573 protection order cases disposed of while 6 became inactive. There were 146 disposed cases of occupation order while 3 became inactive. These results led to estimated case clearance rates of 89.63% for protection order cases and 90.30% for occupation order cases, further yielding a weighted average case clearance rate of 89.77%, which does not satisfy international standards on this vital metric.

Summary of Case Activity for Civil Matters at the St. James Family Court

The below subsection provides a basic summary of case activity for civil matters at the St. James Family Court in 2024.

Table 2.5: Summary of Civil Case Activity for Cases filed in the year ended December 31, 2024

| Number of New Cases Filed | Number of Cases Disposed | Number of Inactive Cases | Weighted Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 78 | 112 | 6 | 151.28 |

The data above shows that there were a total of 78 new civil cases filed in 2024. There were also a total 112 civil cases which were disposed of in 2024 at the St. James Family Court, while 6 became inactive. This produced an estimated case clearance rate of 151.28%, which satisfies the international standard on this metric.

Table 2.6: Sampling Distribution Enforcement/Post Disposal Activity for the St. James Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Post disposal activity/Enforcement | New entries | Disposed matters | Inactive matters | Estimated clearance rate (%) |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Vary Orders | 248 | 159 | 53 | 85.48 |
| Disobedience of Maintenance | 102 | 54 | 32 | 84.31 |
| Warrants of Distress | 290 | 2 | 17 | 6.55 |
| Warrants of Arrest | 141 | 19 | 9 | 19.86 |
| Judgement Summons | 2 | 0 | 1 | 50.00 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 783 | 234 | 112 | 44.19 |

It is important to note that, apart from substantive case activity, vary orders accounted for 248 or 31.67% of post disposal activity in the St. James family court while 535 or 68.33% entered the enforcement stage (by way of disobedience of maintenance matters, distress, and arrest warrants and judgement summons) during the year Jan.-Dec. 2024. There were 159 vary orders disposed of in the period while 53 became inactive, and 134 enforcements were disposed of or made inactive, producing an estimated case clearance rate of 44.19% on these matters.

Chapter 3.0: The Hanover Family Court

This chapter will examine a summary of selected output and performance measurements for matters in the Hanover Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Such will involve analyses of caseload, case type distribution and case clearance rates for the different business lines of the family court.

Case Activity Summary in the Criminal Section (A Division of the Children's Court)

Table 3.1: Summary of Criminal Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case clearance rate (%) |
|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Summary | 32 | 13 | 0 | 40.63 |
| Indictments | 30 | 15 | 3 | 60.00 |
| Committal | 12 | 2 | 0 | 16.67 |
| Petty Session | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100.00 |
| Total | 76 | 32 | 3 | 46.05 |

The above table shows the sample of 76 criminal cases filed at the Hanover Family Court in 2024. Summary matters accounted for the largest share with 32 or 42.11% of the total followed by Indictments matters with 30 cases or 39.47%. There were 12 criminal cases disposed of in 2024, resulting in a clearance rate of 46.05% which is below the international standard on this metric.

Case Activity on Child Welfare Matters (A Division of the Children's Court)

This section examines case activity for matters classified as child welfare in the Hanover Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Matters falling under child welfare are uncontrollable child and childcare and protection cases.

Table 3.2: Summary of Child Welfare Case Activity for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Child care protection | 83 | 40 | 0 | 48.19 |
| Uncontrollable Child | 22 | 9 | 3 | 54.55 |
| Total Weighted Average | 105 | 49 | 3 | 49.52 |

There were 105 child welfare cases filed at the Hanover Family Court in 2024, the larger proportion of which were child care protection cases which accounted for 83 or 79.05%, while January-December 31, 2024. There were 52 child welfare case disposed of or became inactive producing an estimated case clearance rate of 49.52%; this is below the international standards on this vital metric.

Family Matters Case Activity Summary for the Hanover Family Court in the year ended December 31, 2024

This section examines case activity for matters classified under the broad category of family matters in the St. James Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Matters falling under this broad case category included in this report are maintenance, custody, legal guardianship, access, and declaration of paternity.

Table 3.3: Summary of Family Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Subtype | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Maintenance | 126 | 109 | 2 | 88.10 |
| Custody | 110 | 104 | 4 | 98.18 |
| Declaration of Paternity | 21 | 19 | 0 | 90.48 |
| Access | 17 | 15 | 2 | 100.00 |
| Legal Guardianship | 7 | 8 | 0 | 114.29 |
| Total | 281 | 255 | 8 | 93.59 |

The 281 new Family cases filed at the Hanover Family Court in 2024 disaggregated by case subtype showed maintenance matters accounted for the largest proportion with 126 cases or 44.84%. This was followed by custody cases with 110 or 39.15% and declaration of paternity with 21 or 7.47%. There were also 17 new case filed in the period concerning cases of access. A total of 263 cases falling under this broad family category were disposed of or became inactive in 2024. For 104 disposed custody cases, 19 disposed cases declaration of paternity and 15 disposed cases of access. This produced an overall estimated weighted average case clearance rate of 93.59% for the broad family case type; The highest rate recorded was for legal guardianship cases with 114.29%, followed by access with 100% and custody cases with 98.18%.

Summary of Case Activity for Domestic Violence Cases in the Year ended December 31, 2024, at the Hanover Family Court

The subsection below provides a basic summary of case activity for Domestic Violence cases filed at the Family Court in Hanover for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Table 3.4: Summary of Domestic Violence Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Order Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Weighted case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Protection Order | 156 | 157 | 2 | 101.92 |
| Occupation and protection | 26 | 17 | 1 | 69.23 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 182 | 174 | 3 | 97.25 |

The data above shows that there were a total of 182 new domestic violence cases filed in 2024 at the Hanover Family Court. The majority of the cases were protection order cases with 156 cases or 85.71% while the remainder of 26 or 14.29% was accounted for by cases of occupation order. During the year, the Hanover Family court disposed a total 174 Domestic Violence cases. This outcome produced case clearance rates of 97.25% which does not satisfy international standards on this vital metric.

Summary of Case Activity for Civil Matters at the Hanover Family Court

The subsection below provides a basic summary of case activity for civil matters at the Hanover Family Court in 2024.

Table 3.5: Summary of Civil Case Activity for Cases in year ended December 31, 2024

| Number of New Cases Filed | Number of Cases Disposed | Number of Inactive Cases | Weighted Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 28 | 26 | 0 | 92.86 |

The data above shows that there were a total of 28 new civil cases filed in the year ended December 31, 2024. There were also a total of 26 civil cases which were disposed of in the year at the Hanover Family Court. This produced an estimated case clearance rate of 92.86%, which satisfies international standards for this metric.

Table 2.6: Sampling Distribution Enforcement/Post Disposal Activity for the Hanover Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Post disposal activity/Enforcement | New entries | Disposed matters | inactive matters | Estimated Clearance Rate (%) |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Vary Orders | 92 | 63 | 3 | 71.74 |
| Disobedience of Maintenance | 36 | 30 | 5 | 97.22 |
| Warrants of Distress | 201 | 89 | 112 | 100.00 |
| Warrants of Arrest | 133 | 8 | 125 | 100.00 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 462 | 190 | 245 | 94.16 |

It is important to note that, apart from substantive case activity, vary orders accounted for 92 or 19.91% of post disposal activity in the St. James family court while 370 or 80.09% entered the enforcement stage (by way of disobedience of maintenance matters, distress, and arrest warrants) during the quarter. There were 63 vary orders disposed of in the period while 3 became inactive, and 127 enforcements were disposed while 242 made inactive, producing an estimated case clearance rate of 94.16% on these matters.

Chapter 4.0: The Westmoreland Family Court

This chapter will examine a summary of selected output and performance measurements for matters in the Westmoreland Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Such will involve analyses of caseload, case type distribution and case clearance rates for the different business lines of the family court.

Case Activity Summary in the Criminal Section (A Division of the Children's Court)

Table 4.1: Summary of criminal case activity for cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Petty Session | 104 | 59 | 20 | 75.96 |
| Indictments | 63 | 35 | 1 | 57.14 |
| Summary | 58 | 37 | 10 | 81.03 |
| Committal | 30 | 44 | 1 | 150.00 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 255 | 175 | 32 | 81.18 |

The above table shows the sample of 255 criminal cases filed at the Westmoreland Family Court in 2024. Of these, 104 or 40.78% were petty session matters, 63 or 24.71% were indictment matters, while summary matters accounted for 58 cases or 22.75%. Committal proceedings accounted for the remaining 30 matters or 11.76%. There were a total of 207 criminal cases disposed of or became inactive during the year ended December 31, 2024. Of the total cases disposed petty session and committal matters accounted for 59 and 44 cases respectively, while summary matters accounted for 37 cases. There were 35 disposed indictment matters. A total of 32 inactive matters were recorded during the period with petty session recording the highest amount of 20 cases with summary matters following with 10. This produced an estimated weighted clearance rate of 81.18% for the cases in the Westmoreland family court classified as criminal.

Case Activity on Child Welfare Matters (A Division of the Children's Court)

This section examines case activity for matters classified as child welfare in the Westmoreland Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Matters falling under child welfare are uncontrollable child and childcare and protection cases.

Table 4.2: Summary of Child Welfare Case Activity for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Child care protection | 118 | 121 | 0 | 102.54 |
| Uncontrollable Child | 99 | 66 | 8 | 74.75 |
| Total Weighted Average | 217 | 187 | 8 | 89.86 |

There were 217 child welfare cases filed at the Westmoreland Family Court in 2024, Child care protection cases accounted for the greater share with 118 or 54.38% and the remainder were uncontrollable child cases 99 or 45.62%. A total of 195 child welfare cases were disposed or became inactive during the year. Cases concerning childcare and protection accounted for 121 disposed cases and the remaining 66 disposed cases were matters related to uncontrollable child care. The 8 inactive cases recorded in the period were classified as uncontrollable child. This result produced a weighted average case clearance rate of 89.86%, which satisfies international standards on this vital metric.

Family Matters Case Activity Summary for the Westmoreland Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024

This section examines case activity for matters classified under the broad category of family matters in the Westmoreland Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Matters falling under this broad case category included in this report are maintenance, custody, legal guardianship, access, and declaration of paternity.

Table 4.3: Summary of Family Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Subtype | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Maintenance | 304 | 291 | 21 | 102.63 |
| Custody | 245 | 269 | 15 | 115.92 |
| Declaration of Paternity | 95 | 105 | 3 | 113.68 |
| Access | 49 | 30 | 0 | 61.22 |
| Legal Guardianship | 17 | 6 | 0 | 35.29 |
| Adoption | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100.00 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 712 | 703 | 39 | 104.21 |

The 712 new cases filed at the Westmoreland Family Court in 2024 revealed that the largest proportion were maintenance matters with 304 cases or 42.70%. This was followed by custody cases, accounting for 245 or 34.41% and cases concerning declaration of paternity, 95 or 13.34%. There were also 49 or 6.88% access cases and 17 or 2.38% cases regarding legal guardianship and 2 cases of adoption. A total of 742 cases falling under the broad family category were disposed or became inactive in the period ended December 31, 2024. This is broken down in 291 disposed and 21 inactive maintenance cases, 269 disposed and 15 inactive custody cases, 105 disposed declarations of paternity cases and 3 inactive. Additionally, there were 30 disposed cases of access, 6 legal guardianship and 2 disposed cases of adoption. This produced an overall estimated weighted average case clearance rate of 104.21% for the broad family case type.

Cases classified as custody, recorded the highest case clearance rate of 115.92%, declaration of paternity cases followed with 113.68%, maintenance cases with 102.63% and cases concerning adoption recorded a clearance rate of 100%.

Summary of Case Activity for Domestic Violence Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

The subsection below provides a basic summary of case activity for Domestic Violence cases filed at the Family Court in Westmoreland for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Table 4.4: Summary of Domestic Violence Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Weighted case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Protection Order | 260 | 288 | 9 | 114.23 |
| Occupation Order | 37 | 40 | 1 | 110.81 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 297 | 328 | 10 | 113.80 |

The data above shows that there were a total of 297 new domestic violence cases filed in 2024 at the Westmoreland Family Court. The larger proportion of which were protection order cases, accounting for 260 or 87.54%, while the remaining proportion were cases regarding occupation orders with 37 or 12.45%. A total of 338 domestic violence cases were disposed of or inactive during the period. There were 288 protection cases disposed of during the quarter, while the remaining 7 disposed cases were occupation orders. These outcomes produced estimated case clearance rates of 82.54% for protection order cases and 77.28% for occupation order cases, further yielding a weighted average case clearance rate of 81.94%, which is below international standards on this vital metric.

Summary of Case Activity for Civil Matters at the Westmoreland Family Court

The subsection below provides a basic summary of case activity for civil matters at the Westmoreland Family Court in 2024.

Table 4.5: Summary of Civil Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Number of New Cases Filed | Number of Cases Disposed | Number of Inactive Cases | Weighted Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 57 | 75 | 2 | 135.09 |

The data above shows that there were a total of 57 new civil cases filed in 2024. There were also a total of 77 civil cases which were disposed of or became inactive in the period at the Westmoreland Family Court. This produced an estimated case clearance rate of 135.09%, which is above international standards on this metrics.

Table 4.6: Sampling Distribution Enforcement/Post Disposal Activity for the Westmoreland Family Court for the Quarter Ended June 30, 2024

| Post disposal activity/Enforcement | New entries | Disposed matters | Inactive matters | Clearance rate (%) |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Vary Orders | 142 | 145 | 4 | 104.93 |
| Disobedience of Maintenance | 88 | 117 | 35 | 172.73 |
| Warrants of Distress | 87 | 50 | 26 | 87.36 |
| Warrants of Arrest | 84 | 16 | 42 | 69.05 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 401 | 328 | 107 | 108.48 |

Apart from substantive case activity, it is important to note that vary orders accounted for 142 or 35.41% while 101 or 64.59% entered the enforcement stage (by way of disobedience of maintenance matters, distress, and arrest warrants) during the period. In the report period 145 vary orders were disposed of while 286 enforcements were disposed or became inactive, this resulted in a case clearance rate of 108.48% on these matters.

Chapter 5.0: The Trelawny Family Court

This chapter will examine a summary of selected output and performance measurements for matters in the Trelawny Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Such will involve analyses of caseload, case type distribution and case clearance rates for the different business lines of the family court.

Case Activity Summary in the Criminal Section (A Division of the Children's Court)

Table 5.1: Summary of Criminal Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Indictments | 32 | 19 | 0 | 59.38 |
| Summary | 22 | 18 | 3 | 95.45 |
| Committal | 17 | 19 | 0 | 111.76 |
| Petty Session | 9 | 7 | 0 | 77.78 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 80 | 63 | 3 | 82.50 |

The above table shows the sample of 80 criminal cases filed at the Trelawny Family Court in 2024. Of these, indictments matters accounted for 32 or 40%, summary matters accounted for 22 or 27.50%. Committal matters accounted for 17 or 21.25% of the total, there were 9 cases of petty session. There were a total of 66 disposed and inactive cases during the year ended December 31, 2024, 19 of which were accounted for by indictment and committal matters with summary matters accounting for 18. This produced an estimated weighted case clearance rate of 82.50% for criminal case activities in the Trelawny Family Court.

Case Activity on Child Welfare Matters (A Division of the Children's Court)

This section examines case activity for matters classified as child welfare in the Trelawny Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Matters falling under child welfare are uncontrollable child and childcare and protection cases.

Table 5.2: Summary of Child Welfare Case Activity for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Child care protection | 98 | 87 | 0 | 88.78 |
| Uncontrollable Child | 11 | 6 | 0 | 54.55 |
| Total/ Weighted Average | 109 | 93 | 0 | 85.32 |

There were 109 new child welfare cases filed at the Trelawny Family Court in 2024, the larger proportion of which were child care protection cases which accounted for 98 or 89.91%, while the remaining 11 were uncontrollable child matters. A total of 93 child welfare cases were disposed of during year ended December 31, 2024. Of the 93 cases disposed, 87 were child care protection and 6 were uncontrollable child case. These results produced estimated case clearance rates of 88.78% for child care protection cases and 54.55% for uncontrollable child, further yielding a weighted average case clearance rate of 85.32%, which is below international standards on this vital metric.

Family Matters Case Activity Summary for the Trelawny Family Court in the year ended December 31, 2024

This section examines case activity for matters year ended December 31, 2024. Matters falling under this broad case category included in this report are maintenance, custody, legal guardianship, access, and declaration of paternity.

Table 5.3: Summary of Family Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Subtype | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Maintenance | 134 | 120 | 2 | 91.04 |
| Custody | 65 | 67 | 1 | 104.62 |
| Declaration of Paternity | 47 | 52 | 0 | 110.64 |
| Access | 23 | 20 | 0 | 86.96 |
| Legal Guardianship | 7 | 8 | 0 | 114.29 |
| Adoption | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100.00 |
| Total | 278 | 269 | 3 | 97.84 |

The 278 new cases filed at the Trelawny Family Court in 2024 revealed that the largest proportion were maintenance matters with 134 cases or 48.20% and custody matters with 65 cases or 23.38%. Declaration of paternity matters followed accounting for 47 or 16.91% of new family cases filed with access cases accounting for 23. A total of 272 cases falling under this broad family category were disposed of or became inactive in 2024. Of the total disposed cases, 120 were concerning maintenance, 67 custody cases, 52 declaration of paternity cases, 20 cases of access and 8 case of legal guardianship and 2 cases of adoption. This produced an overall estimated weighted average case clearance rate of 97.84% for the broad family case type. Legal guardianship cases had the highest case clearance rate of 200%, followed by matters classified as custody with 114.29%, declaration of paternity with 110.64%, custody with 104.62%, adoption with 100.00% and maintenance with 91.04%.

Summary of Case Activity for Domestic Violence Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024, at the Trelawny Family Court

The subsection below provides a basic summary of case activity for Domestic Violence cases filed at the Family Court in Trelawny for the year ended September 30, 2024.

Table 5.4: Summary of Domestic Violence Case Activity for Cases for the Year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Weighted case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Protection Order | 128 | 125 | 4 | 100.78 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 128 | 125 | 4 | 100.78 |

The data above shows that there were a total of 128 new domestic violence cases filed in 2024 at the Trelawny Family Court. A total 129 Domestic Violence cases were disposed of or became inactive during 2024. All new cases filed were protection orders which accounted for 100%. These results produced estimated case clearance rates of 100.78% for the period; this result satisfies the international standards on this vital metric.

Summary of Case Activity for Civil Matters at the Trelawny Family Court

The subsection below provides a basic summary of case activity for civil matters at the Trelawny Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Table 5.5: Summary of Civil Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | weighted case clearance rate (%) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 6 | 15 | 0 | 250 |

The data above shows that there were 6 new civil case filed in 2024. However, there were a total of 15 civil cases which were disposed of in the period. This led to a clearance rate of 250%.

Table 5.6: Sampling Distribution Enforcement/Post Disposal Activity for the Trelawny Court for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Post disposal activity/Enforcement | New entries | Inactive matters | Disposed matters | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Warrants of Arrest | 99 | 67 | 63 | 131.31 |
| Warrants of Distress | 88 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Vary Orders | 86 | 80 | 1 | 94.19 |
| Disobedience of Maintenance | 53 | 51 | 10 | 115.09 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 326 | 198 | 74 | 83.44 |

It is important to note that, apart from substantive case activity, vary orders accounted for 86 or 26.38% of post disposal activities in the Trelawny Family Court and the remaining 240 or 73.62% entered the enforcement stage (by way of disobedience of maintenance matters, distress, and arrest warrants) during the January to December 2024 period. There were 80 vary orders disposed, while 191 enforcements were disposed or became inactive in the period, producing a gross case clearance rate of 83.44% on these matters.

Chapter 6.0: The Manchester Family Court

This chapter will examine a summary of selected output and performance measurements for matters in the Manchester Family Court in 2024. Such will involve analyses of caseload, case type distribution and case clearance rates for the different business lines of the family court.

Case Activity Summary in the Criminal Section (A Division of the Children's Court)

Table 6.1: Summary of Criminal Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed in the period | Overall Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases which became inactive in the period | Case clearance rate (%) |
|--------------|---|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Summary | 34 | 27 | 3 | 88.24 |
| Committal | 11 | 2 | 0 | 18.18 |
| Total | 45 | 29 | 3 | 71.11 |

The above table shows the sample of 45 criminal cases filed at the Manchester Family Court in 2024. Summary matters accounted for 34 cases files or 75.56%, while committal accounted for the remaining 11 new case filed or 24.44%. There were a total of 32 criminal cases disposed of or became inactive during the January to December 2024 period, summary matters accounted for 27 disposed matters while committal accounted for 2 cases. This produced an estimated weighted case clearance rate of 71.11% for matters classified as criminal in the Manchester Family Court.

Case Activity on Child Welfare Matters (A Division of the Children's Court)

This section examines case activity for matters classified as child welfare in the Manchester Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Matters falling under child welfare are uncontrollable child and childcare and protection cases.

Table 6.2: Summary of Child Welfare Case Activity for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Uncontrollable Child | 46 | 28 | 6 | 73.91 |
| Child care protection | 24 | 16 | 1 | 70.83 |
| Total Weighted Average | 70 | 44 | 7 | 72.86 |

There were 70 new child welfare cases filed at the Manchester Family Court in 2024, the larger proportion of which were uncontrollable child cases, accounted for 46 or 65.71%, while cases classified as child care protection accounted for the remaining proportion, 24 or 32%. A total of 51 child welfare cases were disposed of or became inactive during the year. There were 28 child care and protection cases disposed of during the quarter, and 6 became inactive, while 16 cases of uncontrollable child were disposed of. These results produced estimated case clearance rates of 73.91% for child care protection cases, and 70.83% for uncontrollable child cases. Further yielding a weighted average case clearance rate of 72.86%, which is 0.53 percentage points below the international standards on this vital metric.

Family Matters Case Activity Summary for the Manchester Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024

This section examines case activity for matters classified under the broad category of family matters in the Manchester Family Court for the year ended December 31, 2024. Matters falling under this broad case category included in this report are maintenance, custody, legal guardianship, access, and declaration of paternity.

Table 6.3: Summary of Family Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Case Subtype | Number of new cases filed | Overall Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases within the period | Case Clearance Rate (%) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Maintenance | 365 | 364 | 0 | 99.73 |
| Custody | 74 | 92 | 0 | 124.32 |
| Access | 52 | 36 | 0 | 69.23 |
| Declaration of Paternity | 26 | 25 | 0 | 96.15 |
| Adoption | 8 | 7 | 0 | 87.50 |
| Total | 525 | 524 | 0 | 99.81 |

The 525 new cases filed at the Manchester Family Court in 2024 showed 69.52%; custody matters followed with 74 or 14.10% of new cases filed. There were also 52 matters of access, 26 declaration of paternity and 8 matters of adoption filed in the reporting period. A total of 524 cases falling under this broad family category were disposed of in the period. Maintenance cases accounted for 364 of the disposed cases while custody cases accounted for 92 disposed cases. There were 36 disposed cases related to access and 25 disposed declaration of paternity cases. This produced an overall estimated weighted average case clearance rate of 99.81% for the broad family case type. Cases of Custody recorded the highest clearance rate of 124.32%. Maintenance cases followed with 99.73%. Declaration of paternity followed with 96.15%.

Summary of Case Activity for Domestic Violence Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024, at the Manchester Family Court

The subsection below provides a basic summary of case activity for Domestic Violence cases filed at the Family Court in Manchester for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Table 6.4: Summary of Domestic Violence Case Activity for Cases for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Order Type | Number of new cases filed | Number of cases disposed | Number of inactive cases | Weighted case clearance rate (%) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Protection Order | 81 | 68 | 0 | 83.95 |
| Occupation Order | 6 | 1 | 0 | 16.67 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 87 | 69 | 0 | 79.31 |

The data above shows that there were a total of 87 new domestic violence cases filed in 2024 at the Manchester Family Court. Protection order accounted for 81 or 93.10% while the remaining 6 or 6.90% was accounted for by occupation order. A total 69 Domestic Violence cases were disposed of during the period of which protection order cases accounted for 68 of these while the remaining 1 was accounted for under occupation order. These outputs produced an overall clearance rate of 79.31% which is below the international standards on this vital metric.

Table 6.5: Sampling Distribution Enforcement/Post Disposal Activity for the Manchester Court for the year ended December 31, 2024

| Post disposal activity/Enforcement | New entries | Inactive matters | Disposed matters | Case clearance weight (%) |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Disobedience of Maintenance | 115 | 73 | 7 | 69.57 |
| Vary Orders | 105 | 72 | 0 | 68.57 |
| Warrants of Arrest | 71 | 37 | 2 | 54.93 |
| Warrants of Distress | 69 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Total/Weighted Average | 360 | 182 | 9 | 53.06 |

It is important to note that, apart from substantive case activity, vary orders accounted for 105 or 29.17% of post disposal activities in the Manchester family court and the remaining 255 or 70.83% entered the enforcement stage (by way of disobedience of maintenance matters, distress, and arrest warrants) during the year 2024 in the Manchester Family Court. In the report period 72 vary orders were disposed and 119 enforcement matters were disposed or became inactive; this produced a case clearance rate of 53.06%the for these matters.

Conclusion

The Specialised Family Courts of Jamaica recorded an overall case clearance rate of 96.88% for the year ended December 31, 2024, indicating that approximately 97 cases were disposed of for every 100 new cases filed. This level of performance is within the internationally accepted benchmark range of 90% - 110% and reflects the courts' ongoing efforts to manage caseloads efficiently and prevent backlog accumulation.

There was notable variation in performance across the Specialised Family Courts. The Corporate Area Family Court achieved the highest case clearance rate of 106.34%, followed by Westmoreland at 101.37% and Trelawny at 95.67%. Manchester, with a rate of 92.98%, remained within the internationally accepted benchmark range of 90%–110%. In contrast, St. James (89.87%) and Hanover (82.29%) recorded case clearance rates below the minimum international standard, suggestive of operational constraints that could benefit from further assessment and targeted intervention.

Clearance rates by case type demonstrated a broad spectrum of outcomes. High clearance rates were consistently recorded in maintenance, custody, and protection order matters. However, challenges remained in criminal and child welfare matters, as well as in enforcement and post-disposal activities, particularly in the issuance and execution of warrants and in maintenance enforcement.

These statistical outcomes serve as a measurement of progress toward the Judiciary's strategic annual target, established by the Chief Justice, for the next five years (2024 - 2028). A sustained case clearance rate of $\geq 106.39\%$ for the Specialised Family Courts of Jamaica has been determined as necessary to achieve and maintain a sustainable net backlog rate of under 5%; a foundational objective and essential pillar in the drive toward a backlog-free court system and long-term efficiency within the justice sector. The data reinforce the Judiciary's commitment to service excellence, timeliness, and continuous performance monitoring.

The Specialised Family Courts, as frontline institutions for family justice, remain pivotal to ensuring access to justice for vulnerable populations. The 2024 performance metrics affirm the courts' potential to achieve and maintain international standards and highlight the critical role they play in safeguarding the rights and well-being of families across Jamaica.

In the broader national and global context, the effective functioning of the courts directly supports Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Goal 2: “The Jamaican Society is Secure, Cohesive and Just”, and contributes to the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”. The statistical insights from 2024 thus not only inform internal planning but also underscore the importance of a robust, accountable, and accessible justice system in advancing Jamaica's development priorities.

Glossary of Terms

Sampling Distribution: A sampling distribution of a given population is the distribution of frequencies of a range of outcomes that could possibly occur for a statistic of a population. A population is the entire pool from which a statistical sample is drawn.

Range: This is a measure of the spread of values in a data set, calculated as the highest minus the lowest value. A larger range score may indicate a higher spread of values in a data set.

Standard deviation: This is a measure of how widely spread the scores in a data set are around the average value of that data set. The higher the standard deviation, the higher the variation of the raw scores in the data set, from the average score. A low standard deviation is an indication that the scores in a data set are clustered around the average.

Outlier: An outlier is a value that is too small or too large, relative to the majority of scores/trend in a data set.

Skewness: This is measure of the distribution of scores in a data set. It gives an idea of where the larger 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 greater 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 greater proportion of the scores are at the higher end. If the skewness measure is approximately 0, then there is roughly equal distribution of scores on both the higher and lower ends of the average figure.

Clearance rate: The ratio on incoming to outgoing cases or of new cases filed to cases disposed, regardless of when the disposed cases originated. For example, in a given Term 100 new cases were filed and 110 were disposed (including cases originating before that Term) 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 average of 90% - 110 annualized. This is a critical foundation to backlog prevention in the court system.ⁱ

Disposal rate: As distinct from clearance rate, the disposal rate is the proportion of new cases filed which have been disposed in a particular period. For example, if 100 new cases are filed in a particular Term and 80 of those cases were disposed 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 in a given period. It is an indication of how fatigued a court is, given the existing state of resources and degree of efficiency. A case congestion rate of 150% for example is an indication 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 dates set for trial or hearing which proceed without adjournment. For example, if 100 trial dates are set in a particular Term and 40 are adjourned, then 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 that a case file is fully ready and available in a timely manner for a matter to proceed. Hence, any adjournment, which is due to the lack of readiness of a case file or related proceedings for court at the scheduled time,

impairs the case file integrity rate. The international benchmark for the case file integrity is 100%.

Courtroom utilization rate: The proportion of courtrooms in full use on a daily basis or the proportion of hours utilized in a courtroom on a daily basis. The international standard for this rate is 100%.

Case backlog: A case that is in the court system for more than two years without disposition.

The **gross backlog rate** measures the proportion of all cases filed within a given period which remain unresolved for a period of over two years.

The **net backlog rate** on the other hand measures the proportion of active cases filed in a given period which are unresolved for over two years.

Continuance and Adjournment: In a general sense, 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, in order to make a strict distinction between matters which are adjourned for procedural factors and those which are generally avoidable, court statistics utilizes the terms 'continuance' and 'adjournment'. 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 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 45th percentile. Percentile ranks are useful 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 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 know how that court's score compared 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 percentile changes: 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 takes into account the varying degrees of significance of the groups or numbers in a data set. In calculating a weighted average for a particular variable, the individual scores or averages for each group are multiplied by the weight or number of observations in each of those groups 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 larger caseload has a greater 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 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 α – determine the weights of the observations.

Exponential smoothing is usually used to make short term forecasts, as longer term forecasts using 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 that shows trends, compared to the single procedure.
- **Triple exponential smoothing** (also called the Multiplicative Holt-Winters) is usually more reliable for parabolic trends or data that shows trends and seasonality.

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>

Appendix

Table A1.1:
Forecast of Case Clearance Rates 2023/24 – 2032/33 – Specialised Family Courts (%)

| Family Court | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Corporate Area | 110.91 | 109.90 | 109.98 | 107.71 | 107.89 |
| St. James | 108.09 | 107.81 | 106.67 | 105.67 | 106.78 |
| Hanover | 103.40 | 103.56 | 103.98 | 104.01 | 102.89 |
| Westmoreland | 107.82 | 105.45 | 106.01 | 104.67 | 105.34 |
| Trelawny | 104.56 | 104.48 | 105.59 | 104.67 | 105.67 |
| Manchester | 101.01 | 102.03 | 103.54 | 102.81 | 101.67 |
| Chapelton | 102.34 | 102.56 | 104.45 | 105.56 | 105.67 |

| Family Court | 2028/29 | 2029/30 | 2030/31 | 2031/32 | 2032/33 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Corporate Area | 106.61 | 106.78 | 105.51 | 105.67 | 106.03 |
| St. James | 107.56 | 106.76 | 106.78 | 105.88 | 104.67 |
| Hanover | 103.89 | 105.91 | 103.71 | 103.51 | 101.01 |
| Westmoreland | 103.71 | 104.04 | 105.05 | 103.04 | 103.76 |
| Trelawny | 106.67 | 107.71 | 105.71 | 105.87 | 105.98 |
| Manchester | 103.91 | 103.56 | 102.54 | 102.34 | 101.56 |
| Chapelton | 105.67 | 104.78 | 103.31 | 104.56 | 100.99 |

Table A2.1:
**Mean Case Clearance Rate required to maintain a net backlog rate of under 5%
2023/24 – 2032/33 – Specialised Family Courts**

| Family Court | Required Average Rate (%) (2023/24 - 2032/33) | Expected Average Rate (%) (2023/24 - 2032/33) | Variance |
|----------------|---|---|----------|
| Corporate Area | 110.04 | 107.699 | 2.341 |
| St. James | 109.43 | 106.667 | 2.763 |
| Hanover | 103.05 | 103.587 | -0.537 |
| Westmoreland | 106.54 | 104.889 | 1.651 |
| Trelawny | 107.23 | 105.691 | 1.539 |
| Manchester | 103.01 | 102.497 | 0.513 |
| Chapelton | 105.42 | 103.989 | 1.431 |

Note: A positive variance implies that the required average case clearance rate exceeds the expected case clearance rate over the next 10 fiscal years. On the contrary, a negative variance implies that the expected average case clearance rate exceeds the required average case clearance rate.