



The 2021 First Quarter Report for the Corporate  
Area Coroner's and the Special Coroner's Court

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## **Executive Summary**

This report is a continuation of the expansion of the range of business lines formally reported on in the Jamaican Court system. Empirical measurements of court performance are crucial from several perspectives – among which is its use as an instrument of accountability and for informing policy and operational decisions. Such, are very important within the context of the qualitative and quantitative targets set out by the Chief Justice of Jamaica in establishing the Jamaican court system as the best in the Caribbean region within three years and among the bests in the World in the coming years.

This report provides vital insights into the operation of the Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Court, drawing on analysis of case activity for the first quarter of 2021. Among the most critical findings from the report are the high case disposal rates observed for both Courts. The Coroner's Court had a case disposal rate of 96.35% over the period while for the Special Coroner's Court the figure was 100%, placing these courts in the top quintile among the better performing in the court system on this measure for the period. The Coroner's Court also recorded a case clearance rate of 118.25% in the quarter while the Special Coroner's Court recorded a rate of 122.99%. 132 new cases were filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in the quarter, while 87 were filed in the Special Coroner's Court. The estimated average time taken to dispose of matters at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court over the period of interest was roughly a month, while the figure was 19.7 months for the Special Coroner's Court. The most common reasons for adjournment/continuance observed for the Corporate Area Coroner's Court over the period were adjournments for hearing of applications and due the lack of file readiness while a range of incidence of outstanding documents such as biological reports, chemical reports,

ballistic reports and other scientific reports featured prominently as causes for adjournment for the Special Coroner’s Court.

In terms of basic case demographics, the average age of the deceased for matters filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court over the period is 50 years while the figure stood at 26 years for the Special Coroner’s Court. Further, males accounted for roughly 74% of deaths in the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court, while accounting for all deaths in the Special Coroner’s Court which were handled in the first quarter of 2021. In both courts, the causes of death reported varied widely, but most centered on gun related deaths. The police filed most of the cases originating in the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in the quarter while the Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI) accounted for the largest proportion of cases filed in the Special Coroner’s Court. The vast majority of deaths heard by the Special Coroner’s Court were related to the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). The parishes of Kingston, St. Catherine and St. James accounted for the largest of cases filed in the Special Coroner’s Court in the first quarter of 2021.

**Key Performance Summary- First quarter 2021**

<b>Court</b>	<b>Case Disposal Rate (%)</b>	<b>Case Clearance Rate (%)</b>	<b>Average time to disposition (months)</b>
<b>Corporate Area Coroner's Court</b>	<b>96.35</b>	<b>118.25</b>	<b>0.8</b>
<b>Corporate Area Special Coroner's Court</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>122.99</b>	<b>19.7</b>

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to detail the vital statistics on case activity in the Corporate Area Coroners Court and the Special Coroners Courts in the first quarter of 2021. The report includes a range of productivity and time lag measures of the courts as well as related resource allocation and usage and other miscellaneous measurements. Ultimately, these measures seek to tell the story of the case flow in the Coroners and Special Coroners Courts, particularly with respect to the disposals, case delay factors and other important elements of case progression management and outcomes. The Coroners Court operates in all parishes across the island, however this report is focused on the Corporate Area Coroners Court. The Coroners Court is the arm of the courts that rules on the cause of death of individuals under various circumstances. It is distinguished from the Special Coroners Court, which focuses on the cause of death of individuals at the hands of individual or institutional state actors or while being under the care of state Institutions. There is a single Special Coroners Court in the island, located in Kingston and St. Andrew, but which moves around the island and hold special sittings in all parish courts.

## The Corporate Area Coroner's Court

This subsection on the Corporate Area Coroner's Court will detail information on the case activity in this court for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021, 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 1.0: Summary of time interval between date death reported and date case opened for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

### Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	83
Mean	1033.28
Std. Error of Mean	208.039
Median	292.00
Mode	133
Std. Deviation	1895.327
Skewness	3.035
Std. Error of Skewness	.264
Range	9216
Minimum	70
Maximum	9286

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 Coroners Court for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021. It is seen that from a sample of 83 observations, the average time taken between the date deaths were reported and the date that the associated cases were opened in Corporate Area Coroner's Court was roughly 1033 days or 2.9 years. The modal time taken was 133 days or 4.4 months and the

median was 292 days or approximately 10 months. The standard deviation stands at a high of 1895 days or 5.2 years, strongly suggesting that the distribution of the times between reporting of death and the date the case opens in the court varies widely around the mean. The high positive skewness further suggests that decisively more of the scores fall below the overall average, a result that is not surprising considering that the modal and median values are significantly below the overall mean. The maximum time shown between date deaths reported and date case opened is approximately 26 years, while the lowest is 70 days.

**Table 2.0: Case Activity Summary for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

<b>Number of new cases filed</b>	<b>Number of active cases</b>	<b>Number of disposed or inactive cases (from those filed in quarter)</b>	<b>Estimated Case disposal rate (%)</b>
137	5	132	96.35

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in the first quarter ended March 31, 2021. It is shown that 137 new cases were filed during the quarter, 76 cases or 124.59% more than the 61 cases filed in the similar first quarter of 2020, 132 of which were disposed or became inactive and 5 remained active cases at the end of the first quarter. These results yield an estimated case disposal rate of 96.35%, a 0.37 percentage points decline when compared to the first quarter of 2020. This high disposal rate satisfies the international standard on this measure and suggests that for every 10 cases filed over the period, roughly an equivalent number was disposed. This outcome augurs well for the productivity of the Coroner’s court. The case clearance rate will be examined later in this report.

**Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of Source of cases filed in the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police	82	59.42
Family	55	39.86
Other	1	0.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100</b>

A sample of 138 cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court shows that 82 cases or 59.42% of cases filed were filed by the police, while 55 or 39.86% were filed by the family of deceased and the 0.72% remaining were filed by other entities.

**Table 4.0: Sampling distribution of deaths reported at various Police and brought before the court during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

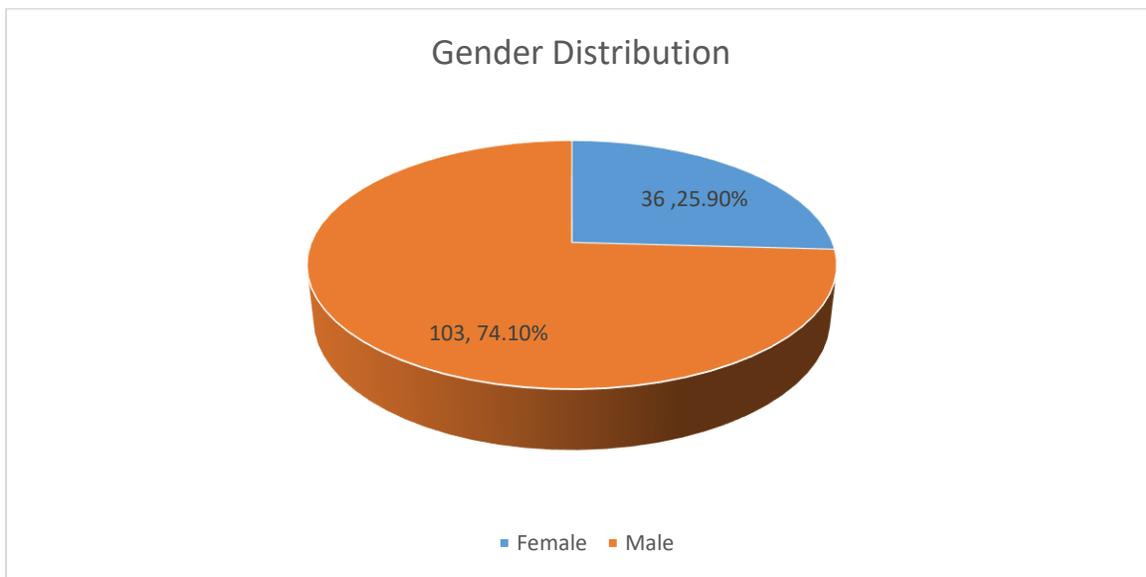
Police Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Denham Town Police Station	20	19.23
Central Police Station	16	15.38
Elleston Road Police Station	15	14.42
Constant Spring Police Station	8	7.69
Rollington Town Police Station	5	4.81
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>61.53</b>

**Sample of observations (N)=104**

The data showed a sample of 104 Coroner’s Court cases reported at the different Police stations in the Corporate Area which were subsequently brought to the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court. Of that number, the Denham Town police station accounted for the majority of cases filed/investigated within the quarter with 20 cases or 19.23% of the sample. This was similar to the first quarter of 2020 where Denham Town Police Station also accounted for the majority of

cases filed in that quarter with 6 cases or 10% of the sample. The Central police station with 16 or 15.38% ranks next, while Elletson Road police station followed with 15 cases each or 14.42% of the sample. The top five police stations accounting for cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court was rounded off by the Constant Spring Police Station and Rollington Town Police station with 8 or 7.69% and 5 or 4.81% respectively of the sample.

**Chart 1.0: Distribution of gender of the deceased for new cases filed**



The above chart summarizes gender distribution, using a sample of 139 deceased persons involved in the cases filed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021. It is shown that 103 or 74.10% of the deceased were male, while the remaining 36 or 25.90% were female. In the similar first quarter of 2020, males accounted for 44 or 71% of the total while the remaining 29% were accounted for by female.

**Table 5.0: Descriptive Statistics on the age distribution of the deceased in cases filed in the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

**Descriptive statistics (age in years)**

Number of observations	135
Mean	50.4649
Std. Error of Mean	2.09145
Median	50.0000
Mode	27.00
Std. Deviation	24.30047
Skewness	.143
Std. Error of Skewness	.209
Range	95.23
Minimum	.77
Maximum	96.00

A sample of 135 ages of the deceased involved in the cases filed, revealed that the average age is roughly 50 years, while the median is 50 years and the modal value is 27 years. The standard deviation stands at a moderate value of 24 years, indicating some amount of variation of the scores around the mean, while the skewness is a low positive value, indicating that most of the scores are clustered around the mean, though slightly more may be above it. The smallest age in the data set is 40 weeks, while the oldest was 96 years.

**Table 6.0a: Sampling distribution of the causes of death reported for cases filed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Cause of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Multiple gunshot wounds	9	6.62
Gunshot wound of head	7	5.15
Gunshot wound of torso	6	4.41
Multiple Blunt Force Trauma	6	4.41
Gunshot wound to chest	4	2.94
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23.53</b>

**Sample size=136**

The above table is computed using a sample of 136 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 multiple gunshot wounds with 9 or 6.62%, gunshot wound to the head with 7 or 5.15% and gunshot wound to the torso and multiple blunt force trauma each accounted for 4.41% of the sample. Gunshot wound to the chest accounted for 4 or 2.94% of the sample.

**Table 6.0b: Sampling distribution of the causes of death as officially determined by the coroner for matters disposed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

<b>Cause of death determined by coroner</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Death due to natural causes	49	64.47
Death due to gunshot wounds	8	10.53
Death due to complication to blunt impact trauma to the neck	2	2.63
Death due to hanging	2	2.63
Death due to motor vehicle accident	2	2.63
Death due to stab wound	2	2.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>85.52</b>

**Sample size (N)=76**

The above table is computed using a sample of 76 observations of the causes of death as officially determined by the Coroner associated with cases. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are death due to natural causes 49 or 64.47% and death due gunshot wounds with 10.53% rank next. Death due to complication to blunt impact trauma to the neck, death due to hanging, death due to motor vehicle accident and death due to stab wound with 2.63% each complete the top causes in the quarter. 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 7.0: Sampling distribution of the Summary of outcomes of Form D applications made during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Section 14	63	82.89
Other	13	17.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

During the processing of a case at the Coroner’s Court, a Form D application is made which the judge reviews in order to determine the direction of the case thereafter. The above table provides a summary of the outcomes of these applications over the period under examination. It is seen in the above table that the dominant outcome from the Form D application were decisions in accordance with Section 14, which means that the matter was accepted for an Inquest to be carried out by the Coroner. Section 14 accounts for 63 or 82.89% of the outcomes, while the generic category ‘other outcomes’ accounted for 13 or 17.11%. These results are typical to the trends observed in the Coroner’s Courts Island wide. The data was computed using a sample of 76 cases.

**Table 8.0: Sampling distribution of reasons for adjournment/continuance during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

<b>Reasons for adjournment/continuance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Other	69	84.15
Part-heard (continuance)	10	12.20
File incomplete/awaiting medical certificate	2	2.44
Hearing of application	1	1.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100.00</b>

A summary of 82 matters adjourned/continued over the time revealed that 69 or 84.15% were accounted for under reasons for adjournment pooled under the term, “other”. Continuances (delays intrinsic to the progression of a case) by way of part heard matters with 10 or 12.20% and adjournments due to incomplete files with 2.44% of the sample rank next. Adjournments for the hearing of an application accounted for the remaining 1.22% of the sample.

**Table 9.0: Sampling distribution of the type of hearings in the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Type of hearing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chambers	139	100.0

A sample of 139 hearings at the Corporate Area Coroners Court during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021, reveals that 100% of matters were chamber hearings.

**Table 10.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of Disposition of matters completed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Methods of disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	71	66.36
Section 10	33	30.84
Inquest	2	1.87
Open Court Verdict	1	0.93
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The methods of case disposition for a sample of 107 matters which were disposed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021, revealed that 71 or 66.36% of matters were disposed by way of an Inquest under the provisions of Section 14 of the Coroner’s Court Act. Matters disposed by way of inquest under the provision of Section 10 of the Coroner’s Court Act followed this with 33

or 30.84% of the sample. Matters disposed by inquest accounted for 1.87% of the sample, the remaining 0.93% were disposed by open court verdicts. Compared to the similar first quarter of 2020, 71% of matters were disposed of by way of inquest under the provisions of section 14 of the Coroners' Act.

**Table 11.0: Descriptive Statistics on the time to disposition for matters completed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

**Descriptive Statistics (in days)**

Number of observations	91
Mean	24.36
Std. Error of Mean	10.087
Median	2.00
Mode	1
Std. Deviation	96.223
Skewness	5.685
Std. Error of Skewness	.253
Range	721
Minimum	1
Maximum	722

The above data shows that the average time taken to dispose of matters during the quarter is 24 days. This was derived from a sample of 91 matters disposed over the quarter. The data also revealed that the median time taken to dispose of the matters was 2 days and the modal time was 1 day. The standard deviation of 96.22, however, suggests that there is a wide variation in the individual scores and the high positive skewness indicates that a larger proportion of the scores fell below the overall mean. The minimum time taken was a day, with the maximum time taken being 722 days or approximately 2 years. The average time taken between the date the file was received and the date of first hearing was 20.7 days.

**Table 12.0: Summary of the incidence of hearings during inquest for matters disposed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

**Descriptive Statistics (in days)**

Number of observations	134
Mean	2.3582
Std. Error of Mean	.15691
Median	2.0000
Mode	2.00
Std. Deviation	1.81640
Skewness	4.305
Std. Error of Skewness	.209
Range	13.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	14.00

The frequency with which cases are heard potentially slows down the rate of case clearance and the average time taken to dispose of cases and is therefore, a vital statistical indicator of both the probability of case disposition and roadblocks to case progression. In the above table, it is seen that the average number of hearings in inquest from a sample of 134 cases disposed over the quarter was roughly 2.4, while the median and modal values were both 2. The lowest number of hearings was 1 and the highest was 14. The standard deviation suggests there is a large variation in the scores and affirmed by the high positive skewness, which suggests that proportionately more of the scores fell below the overall average. A lower incidence of hearings is desirable to further reduce the average time to disposition.

**Table 13.0: Case clearance rate summary for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

<b>Approximate number of new cases filed</b>	<b>Approximate number of cases disposed or inactive</b>	<b>Estimated Gross Case clearance rate (%)</b>
137	162	118.25

Courts that consistently maintain an average case clearance rate of between 90%-110% long enough will at a minimum have its disposals keeping up with the number of new cases filed but may also likely make considerable strides in reducing its case backlog rate to an acceptable rate of under 10% of active cases. The Corporate Area Coroner’s Court with a case clearance rate of 118.25% for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021, exceeds the above-mentioned range which is indicative of good caseload management. This rate is 6.34 percentage points below the 124.59% recorded in the first quarter of 2021. There were 137 new cases filed during the quarter and 162 cases were disposed or became inactive (regardless of date of origin), leading to the stated clearance rate. It suggests that for every 10 new cases filed, between eleven and twelve cases were disposed of during the same quarter.

## Chapter 2.0: The Special Coroner's Court

As was the case above with the Corporate Area 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 Coroner's Court in the first quarter of 2021.

**Table 1.0a: Case activity summary for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021 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 quarter)	Estimated Case disposal rate (%)
87	0	87	100

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Cooperate Area Special Coroner's Court. It is shown that 87 new cases were filed during the quarter, all of which were either disposed or became inactive at the end of the quarter. These results yield an estimated case disposal rate of 100%, suggesting that for every 10 cases filed over the period, an equivalent number were also disposed. This rate is also 1.04 percentage points above the rate recorded for the first quarter of 2020. This outcome augurs well for the productivity of the Special Coroner's court.

**Table 2.0: Sampling distribution of the parish of origin of matters filed during the first quarter ended March 1, 2021**

Parish of Origin	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Kingston	33	33.67
St James	19	19.39
St Catherine	17	17.35
Westmoreland	9	9.18
Clarendon	4	4.08
St Ann	4	4.08
St Mary	3	3.06
Manchester	2	2.04
St Elizabeth	2	2.04
Trelawny	2	2.04
Hanover	1	1.02
Portland	1	1.02
St Andrew	1	1.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.00</b>

As a parish court, the Special Coroner’s Court has a single location in Kingston but is deployed island wide to hear cases originating set in the various parishes. The above table provides a summary of the ‘parish of origin’ of cases filed in the Special Coroner’s Court. It is seen that Kingston with 33.67% of the cases filed, St. James with 19 or 19.39% and St. Catherine with approximately 17.35% accounted for the largest share of new cases heard by the Special Coroner’s Court over the first quarter of 2021.

**Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of the source of matters filed over the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
INDECOM	11	11.22
Bureau of Special Investigations	87	88.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.00</b>

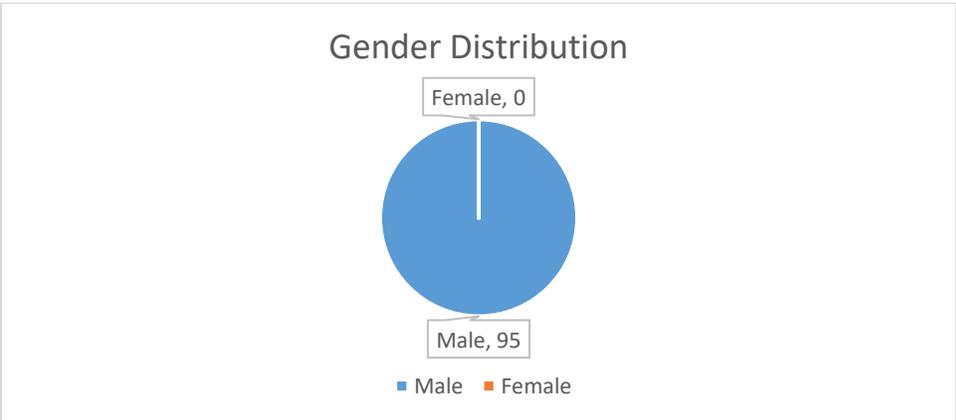
A sample of 98 matters filed at the Special Coroners Court during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021, shows that the majority, 88.78% were filed by the Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI) and the remaining 11.22% from INDECOM.

**Table 4.0: Sampling distribution on the type of death by Institution for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Type of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)	96	97.96
Custodial Institutions	1	1.02
Jamaica Defence Force (JDF)	1	1.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It is seen in the above table, that the overwhelming majority of the 98 matters filed over the first quarter of 2021 were matters related to JCF deaths, accounting for 96 or 97.96% of the sample. The remaining matters were accounted for deaths relating to custodial institutions and relating to JDF with 1.02% each of the sample. The vast majority of the causes of death as reported in the cases filed during the quarter were stated as ‘multiple gunshot wounds’ or ‘gunshot wound to the body’, accounting for 90% of the matters.

**Chart 1.0: Gender distribution of the deceased in cases filed in the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**



The gender distribution of the deceased involved in 95 cases filed over the first quarter of 2021, shows that all were male.

**Table 5.0: Descriptive Statistics on the age of the deceased in cases filed over the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

**Descriptive Statistics (age in years)**

Number of observations	95
Mean	25.7263
Std. Error of Mean	.92404
Median	24.0000
Mode	20.00
Std. Deviation	9.00643
Skewness	2.367
Std. Error of Skewness	.247
Range	61.00
Minimum	15.00
Maximum	76.00

The above descriptive summary on the age of the deceased involved in cases filed over the first quarter of 2021 revealed that from a sample of 95 observations, the average age was roughly 26 years, while the most frequently occurring age was 20 years old. The highest age recorded was 76 years, while the lowest is 15 years old. The moderate standard deviation of roughly 9 years suggests that there was a modest variation of the individual ages from the overall mean, while the positive skewness shown is an indication that proportionately more of the scores fell below the overall mean.

**Table 6.0: Sampling distribution of the reasons for adjournment/continuances for matters heard in the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Reasons for adjournment/continuance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Other	110	89.43
Failure of Witness to Attend	11	8.94
Not Reached	2	1.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100.00</b>

A sample of adjournments in the above table reveals that there were 123 incidences of adjournments. Majority of the adjournments were pooled under the category, “other”, with 89.43% of the sample. Adjournments due to failure of the witness to attended with 8.94% rank next, followed by not reached with 1.63% of the sample.

**Table 7.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of disposition for matters completed in the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Type of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 16(1)	14	60.87
Section 14	9	39.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The methods of case disposition for a sample of 23 matters which were disposed during the quarter, revealed that 14 or 60.87% of matters were disposed by way of an Inquest under the provisions of Section 16 of the Coroner’s Court Act. Matters disposed by way of inquest under the provision of Section 14 of the Coroner’s Court Act followed this with 9 or 39.13% of the sample.

**Table 8.0: Descriptive statistics on the times to disposition for matters resolved during the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

**Descriptive Statistics (Days)**

Number of observations	22
Mean	592.8182
Std. Error of Mean	92.95562
Median	433.5000
Mode	356.00 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation	436.00051
Skewness	1.828
Std. Error of Skewness	.491
Range	1854.00
Minimum	126.00
Maximum	1980.00

<sup>a</sup> Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The above table uses a sample of 22 cases disposed in the first quarter of 2021 and reveals an estimated average of roughly 20 months, with a maximum of approximately 5.5 years and a minimum of 4 months. The modest positive skewness is an indication that slightly more of the scores in the distribution fell below the series mean while the moderately high standard deviation shows some amount variation in the data points around the overall mean.

**Table 9.0: Descriptive statistics on the age of active cases as at the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

**Descriptive Statistics (Days)**

Number of observations	109
Mean	609.5046
Std. Error of Mean	44.91741
Median	531.0000
Mode	394.00
Std. Deviation	468.95148
Skewness	3.791
Std. Error of Skewness	.231
Range	3447.00
Minimum	19.00
Maximum	3466.00

The above data is based on sample of 109 active Special Coroner’s matters at the end of the first quarter of 2021. The average age of these matters was roughly 610 days or 20 months, while the most frequently occurring age in the distribution was 394 days. The standard deviation of roughly 469 days suggests that there is some dispersion in the individual scores around the average, while the positive skewness seen is an indication 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 3466 days old or 9.6 years, while the youngest case is 19 days.

**Table 10.0: Case clearance rate summary for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of cases disposed or inactive	Estimated Case clearance rate (%)
87	107	122.99

Courts that consistently maintain an average case clearance rate of between 90%-110% for long enough will at a minimum, have its disposals keeping up with the number of new cases filed but may also likely make considerable strides in reducing its case backlog rate to an acceptable rate of under 10% of active cases. The Corporate Area Special Coroner’s Court with a case clearance rate of 122.99% for the first quarter of 2021 meets the above-mentioned range which shows promising signs of a well- managed caseload. There were 87 new cases filed during the quarter and 107 cases were disposed or became inactive (regardless of date of origin), leading to the stated clearance rate. It suggests that for every 10 new cases filed between twelve and thirteen cases were disposed over the same period.

## Aggregate Case Activity Summary

**Table 1.0: Aggregate case flow performance estimates for the first quarter ended March 31, 2021**

Parish Court	Approximate number of new cases	Approximate number of disposed and inactive cases	Approximate gross number of disposed cases (regardless of date of origin)	Estimated Case Disposal Rate (%)	Estimated Case Clearance Rate (%)
Corporate Area Coroner's Court	137	132	162	96.35	118.25
Corporate Area Special Coroner's Court	87	87	107	100.00	122.99
<b>Total/Weighted Average</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>97.77</b>	<b>120.09</b>

The above table provides a summary of aggregate case activity across the featured specialized Coroner's court and Special Coroner's court in the first quarter of 2021. It shows that a total of 224 new cases were filed in these courts, while 219 of these cases were disposed or became inactive, leading to an estimated weighted case disposal rate of 97.77%. The Corporate Area Coroner's court recorded a disposal rate of 96.35% and the Special Coroner's court had an estimated case disposal rate of 100%, both impressive results. The table also shows that a gross number of 269 cases were disposed or became inactive in the quarter, leading to an estimated weighted case clearance rate of 120.09%. The Corporate Area Coroner's court recorded a case clearance rate of 118.25% and the Special Coroner's court had an estimated case clearance rate of 120.09%, both impressive results which satisfies the international standard.

## **Concluding Note**

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Court continues to make a profound contribution to the fulfillment of the goal of the judiciary of reducing the overall net case backlog rate to under 5% within the next few years. Accomplishing this task requires sustaining consistently high rates of case disposal and case clearance. This first quarter report affirms the position of both of these courts among those in the Jamaican court system with the highest rates of both case disposal and case clearance. The Special Coroner's Court for example recorded a case clearance rate of 122.99% in the quarter while the Corporate Area Coroner's Court recorded a rate of 118.25%, both among the highest in the island on this vital metric in the period. Based on current trend, these two courts are poised to reduce their case backlog to below 5% of active cases by the end of 2022, thus making an appreciable contribution to the target set out by the Chief Justice for the Jamaican court system to becoming the best in the region and one of the most productive in the world.

## 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.

**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. <sup>i</sup>

**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. <sup>ii</sup>

**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%.

**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 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.

**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%

**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.

**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.

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

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*<http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/bestpractice/BestPracticeCaseAgeClearanceRates.pdf>*

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A weighted average can be more accurate than a simple average in which all numbers in a data set are assigned an identical weight.

**Continuance and Adjourment:** 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 adjourment. 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 'adjourment'. 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.

**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.

