

Where are we after year one?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

At the beginning of the fiscal year in 2019/20 fiscal year, the Jamaican Court system established a set of critical quantitative targets geared towards monitoring the progress towards becoming the best court system in the Caribbean Region by the end of the 2021/22 fiscal year and among the bests in the world by the end of 2025/2026. Two of these primary targets are the attainment of a court-wide case clearance rate of 130% by the end of the 2025/2026 fiscal year and a court-wide trial date certainty rate of 95% over the same period. It has been computed that achieving these targets will reduce the net case backlog rate to below 5% and thus ensure that the average time to disposition across the court remains under two (2) years.

This document focuses on highlighting where we are as a court system after the first of the six year track as well as where we need to be at the end of year two (i.e. the 2020/21 fiscal year) in order to stay on course with the key clearance and trial certainty rate targets. Importantly, the document also highlights vital statistics for the related average time to disposition and net case backlog rates for various courts and business lines.

The document details the baseline and actual rates at the beginning of the 2019/2020 fiscal year for the various courts and business lines using the key metrics of the case clearance and trial date certainty rates. The required rates at the end of year one and the actual rates registered will also be detailed, providing the necessary insights into the lead and lag measures on these vital statistics. The average time taken to dispose of cases across various business lines and courts will also be presented, thereby forming the basis for the establishment of lead and lag measures for the various business lines and courts.

The statistical estimation and mathematical tools applied in generating the ensuing output includes regression analyses, method of moments, Lagrange multipliers and Laplace transformations.

Table 1.0: Estimated gross backlog rate – where is the Jamaican Court system

Jurisdiction	Estimated baseline gross backlog rate (%)	Estimated gross backlog rate at the end of year 1 (%)	Required gross case backlog rate as at March 31, 2026 (%)
Parish Courts*	29.19	23.17	<=10%
Supreme Court	30.25	29.15	<=10%

**Traffic Courts are excluded from this estimate.*

NB: The margin of error of the estimates is $\pm 5\%$

Table 2.0: Estimated net case backlog rate – where is the Jamaican Court system

Jurisdiction	Estimated baseline net case backlog rate (%)	Estimated net case backlog rate at the end of year 1 (%)	Required bet case backlog rate as at March 31, 2026 (%)
Parish Courts*	17.38	16.97	<=5%
Supreme Court	27.95	25.91	<=5%

**Traffic Courts are excluded from this estimate.*

NB: The margin of error of the estimates is $\pm 5\%$

The above data summarizes the progress made by the courts after year one towards reducing the gross and net backlog rates to below 10% and 5% respectively.

Table 3.0: Estimated average time taken to dispose cases in the Jamaican Court system

Jurisdiction	Estimated mean time to disposition	Standard deviation
Parish Courts	1 year and 3 months	5.6 months
Supreme Court	2 years and 3 months	9.6 months

**Traffic Courts are excluded from this estimate.*

NB: The margin of error of the estimates is $\pm 4.5\%$

The above table summarizes the average time taken to dispose of cases in the Parish Courts.

“While a lag measure tells you if you've achieved the goal, a lead measure tells you if you are likely to achieve the goal. No matter what you are trying to achieve, your success will be based on two kinds of measures: Lag and Lead. Lag measures track the success of your wildly important goal”

REVIEW OF COURTS AND BUSINESS LINES AFTER THE COMPLETION OF YEAR ONE 2019/2020

PARISH COURTS – CRIMINAL DIVISION

Table 4.0: Parish Court Criminal – Case Clearance Rate as at March 31, 2020

Parish Court	Baseline Case Clearance Rate (%)	Variance between actual and required (%)	Required Clearance Rate After Year 1 (%)	Actual Clearance Rate After Year 1 (%)	Deficit/Surplus after year 1	Desired minimum clearance rate at the end of year 2 (%)	Desire Average Case Clearance Rate as at March 31, 2026 (%)
Manchester	62.99	66.18	80.25	101.22	+20.97	90.01	129.17
Clarendon	37.73	94.9	78.06	90.92	+12.86	85.80	132.63
St. Catherine	81.23	52.83	96.78	108.65	+11.87	104.54	132.06
St. Thomas	75.5	57	83.15	94.13	+10.98	93.72	145.50
Portland	68.02	46.01	81.12	110.97	+29.85	89.17	114.03
St. Mary	71.47	58.04	80.15	125.43	+45.28	88.54	129.51
St. James	78.75	43.75	80.13	107.20	+27.07	89.58	122.50
Corporate Area Court- Criminal Division	76.25	47.86	84.56	100.6	+16.30	91.97	124.11
Westmoreland	85.36	37.72	100.54	94.42	-6.12*	110.25	123.08
Hanover	75.98	51.72	83.24	108.22	+24.98	90.63	127.70
St. Elizabeth	65.1	56.25	83.41	97.70	+14.29	91.89	121.35
St. Ann (including Brown's Town)	68.33	53.63	78.16	86.45	+8.29	87.32	121.96
Trelawny	58.53	67.11	76.34	86.73	+10.39	89.11	125.64
Weighted averages	71.15	56.98	84.89	100.62	+15.73	92.79**	128.13

**The Westmoreland Parish Court had the highest target of all parish courts for year 1, largely on account of its consistently high performances over the three years preceding.*

***Revised downwards by 1.77 percentage points.*

Note: All rates represent standardized weighted averages

Overall the criminal division of the parish courts exceeded the targeted case clearance rate by 15.73 percentage points, having averaged 100.62% at the end of year 1. The targeted case clearance rate for year 2 is 92.79% and the targeted rate for March 31, 2026 is 128.13%, the figure required to bring the net case backlog rate below 5%.

Table 5.0: Required minimum average number of cases to be resolved in the criminal courts

Parish Court	Required number of case resolutions
Manchester	2372
Clarendon	2759
St. Catherine	4921
St. Thomas	1582
Portland	1480
St. Mary	1510
St. James	2913
Corporate Area Court- Criminal Division	6871
Westmoreland	2659
Hanover	1110
St. Elizabeth	1754
St. Ann (including Brown's Town)	2614
Trelawny	1312
Total	33857

NB: The expected number of new cases to be filed in year 2 is 31416

The criminal division of the parish courts will need to dispose a minimum of 33857 cases in order to achieve the case clearance rate of 92.79%.

Table 6.0: Parish Court Criminal – Trial date certainty rates as at March 31, 2020

Parish Court	Baseline Trial Date Certainty Rate	Variance between baseline and required rates	Required rate at the end of year 1	Actual rate at the end of year 1	Deficit/Surplus after year 1	Required rate at the end of year 2	Required rate at the as at March 31, 2026
Manchester	74	20	77	81	+4	80.95	94
Clarendon	72	23	75	89	+14	81.15	95
St. Catherine	78	14	81	83	+2	84.98	92
St. Thomas	68	28	72	87	+15	78.05	96
Portland	77	16	80	98	+18	82.98	93
St. Mary	67	29	73	73	NIL	82	96
St. James	80	11	82	96	+14	82.92	91
Corporate Area Court-Criminal Division	65	30	68	55	-13	75.62	95
Westmoreland	85	5	87	88	+1	87	90
Hanover	66	29	73	52	-21	76.14	95
St. Elizabeth	71	22	74	91	+17	74.96	93
St. Ann (including Brown's Town)	74	19	77	83	+6	79.85	94
Trelawny	72	21	76	95	+19	77.26	93
Overall Weighted Averages	73.02	20.54	76.54	82.38	+5.84	80.30	93.51

Note: All rates represent standardized weighted averages

Overall the criminal division of the parish courts exceeded the targeted trial date certainty rate by 5.84 percentage points, having averaged 82.38% in year 1. The targeted case trial date certainty rate for year 2 is 93.51% and the targeted rate for March 31, 2026 is 93.51%, the figure required to bring the net case backlog rate below 5%.

PARISH COURTS – CIVIL DIVISION

Table 7.0: Parish Court – Case Clearance rate on civil cases as at March 31, 2020

Parish Court	Baseline Case Clearance Rate	Variance between actual and required clearance rate	Required clearance rate after year 1	Actual clearance rate at the end of year 1	Deficit/Surplus at the end of year 1	Required rate at the end of year 2	Required rate as at March 31, 2026
Manchester	60.15	71.08	72.45	55.94	-16.51	83.51	127.23
Clarendon	46.15	86.26	60.16	125.72	+65.56	75.05	132.41
St. Catherine	78.54	44.67	85.16	80.83	-4.33	97.78	123.45
St. Thomas	71.50	53.62	76.58	90.20	+13.62	80.01	125.12
Portland	69	57.12	73.45	126.54	+53.09	77.99	126.12
St. Mary	68.12	57.2	72.13	117.83	+45.70	80.05	125.32
St. James	74.34	49.16	76.31	97.13	+20.82	82.47	123.50
Corporate Area Court-Civil Division	70.15	52.32	76.15	159.97	+83.82	80.17	122.47
Westmoreland	76.15	43.43	80.78	98.54	+17.76	89.01	119.58
Hanover	71.21	52.24	75.23	131.73	+56.50	83.88	123.45
St. Elizabeth	64.32	60.03	70.16	60.89	-9.27	78.95	124.35
St. Ann (including Brown's Town)	67.25	56.71	74.13	108.11	+33.98	84.07	123.96
Trelawny	60.50	67.31	65.17	92.06	+26.89	81.23	127.81
Weighted Weighted Means	69.98	54.56	75.98	103.50	+27.52	82.63	124.54

Note: All rates represent standardized weighted averages

Overall the civil division of the parish courts exceeded the targeted case clearance rate by 27.52 percentage points, having averaged 103.50%. The targeted case clearance rate for year 2 is 82.63% and the targeted rate for March 31, 2026 is 124.54%, the figure required to bring the net case backlog rate below 5%.

Table 8.0: Required minimum average number of cases to be resolved in the civil courts (year 2)

Parish Court	Required number of case resolutions
Manchester	1083
Clarendon	900
St. Catherine	3637
St. Thomas	684
Portland	429
St. Mary	779
St. James	1926
Corporate Area Court- Civil Division	7812
Westmoreland	636
Hanover	255
St. Elizabeth	1397
St. Ann (including Brown's Town)	1628
Trelawny	965
Total	22131

NB: The expected number of new cases to be filed in year 2 is 26783

The civil division of the parish courts will need to dispose 22131 cases in order to realize targeted case clearance rate in years 2.

Table 9.0: Parish Court Civil – Trial date certainty rates as at March 31, 2020

Parish Court	Baseline Trial Date Certainty Rate	Variance between baseline and required rates	Required rate after year 1	Actual rate after year 1	Deficit/Surplus after year 1	Required rate at the end of year 2	Required rate at the as at March 31, 2026
Manchester	72	20	77	76.65	-0.35	80.95	95
Clarendon	71	23	75	89*	+14	81.15	95
St. Catherine	76	14	81	88.07	+7.07	84.98	94
St. Thomas	66	28	72	77.21	+5.21	78.05	95
Portland	74	16	80	82.91	+2.91	82.98	94
St. Mary	69	29	73	68.75	-4.25	82	95
St. James	79	11	82	86.08	+4.08	82.92	93
Corporate Area Court-Civil Division	64	30	68	89.48	+21.48	75.62	93
Westmoreland	86	5	87	83.78	-3.22	87	94
Hanover	66	29	73	73.15	+0.15	76.14	95
St. Elizabeth	69	22	74	86.15	+12.15	74.96	93
St. Ann (including Brown's Town)	75	19	77	87.72	+10.72	79.85	94
Trelawny	70	21	76	88.80	+12.80	77.26	95
Overall Weighted Averages	73.02	20.54	76.54	82.90	+6.36	80.30	94.23

Note: All rates represent standardized weighted averages

**Crude estimate*

Overall the civil division of the parish courts exceeded the targeted trial date certainty rate by 6.36 percentage points, having averaged 82.90%. The targeted trial date certainty rate for year 2 is 80.30% and the targeted rate for March 31, 2026 is 94.23%, the figure required to bring the net case backlog rate below 5%.

SUPREME COURT

Table 10.0: Clearance rate summary for the Divisions of the Supreme Court, the Gun Court and the Revenue Court at March 31, 2020

Division of the Supreme Court	Baseline Clearance Rate (%)	Variance between baseline and required case clearance rate	Required rate after year 1	Actual Rate After Year 1	Deficit/Surpluses after year 1	Required rate at the end of year 2	Required rate as at March 31, 2026
High Court Civil Division	24.18	121.31	55.50	22.94	-32.56	84.61	145.49
Home Circuit Court	33.49	106.41	50.14	73.64	+23.50	77.81	139.90
Matrimonial Division	74.06	41.50	80.14	83.61	+3.47	89.25	115.56
Probate Division	83.83	25.87	90.12	100.15	+10.03	92.98	109.70
Gun Court	97.49	7.79	100.50	104.61	+4.11	102.92	105.28
Revenue Court	73	24.50	78.10	83.33	+5.23	82.81	97.50
Commercial Division	60.00	54	70.21	31.70	-38.51	77.85	114.00
Weighted Averages	62.23	55.47	74.35	61.76	-12.59	86.80	118.50

NB: The baseline index is based on data over the period 2016-2018. This measure takes into account the relative caseload of the different Divisions of the Supreme Court.

Overall the Supreme Court fell short of the targeted case clearance rate by 12.59 percentage points, having averaged 61.76%. The targeted case clearance rate for year 2 is 74.35% and the

targeted rate for March 31, 2026 is 118.50%, the figure required to bring the net case backlog rate below 5%.

Table 11.0: Required minimum average number of cases to be resolved in the Divisions of the Supreme Court (year 2)

Division of the Supreme Court	Required number of case resolutions
High Court Civil Division	4442
Home Circuit Court	350
Gun Court	523
Matrimonial Division	3511
Probate Division	2417
Commercial Division	389
Revenue Division	15
Total	11647

NB: The expected number of new cases to be filed in year 2 is 13418

The Supreme Court will need to dispose of a minimum of 11646 cases in year 2 in order to realize the targeted case clearance rate.

Table 12.0: Supreme Court – Trial date certainty rates as at March 31,

Division of the Supreme Court	Baseline Trial Date Certainty Rate	Variance between actual and required trial date certainty rate (%)	Required rate at the end of year 1	Actual rate at the end of year 1	Deficit/Surplus after year 1	Required rate at the end of year 2	Required rate as at March 31, 2026
High Court Civil Division	63.91	34.09	70.12	43.73	-26.39	79.24	98
Home Circuit Court	67.26	27.74	73.12	64.77	-8.35	75.99	95
Matrimonial Division	78.07	13.93	84.17	43.75	-40.42	91.45	92

Probate Division	75.53	14.47	80.11	57.44	-22.67	87.13	90
Gun Court	55.93	39.07	65.17	62.28	-2.89	77.93	95
Commercial Division	91.73	3.27	92.12	56.86	-35.26	94.98	95
Revenue Court	72.19	21.81	80.05	48.12	-31.93	84.95	94
Weighted Averages	69.41	25.69	81.87	53.80	-28.07	84.50	95.10

NB: The baseline index is based on data over the period 2016-2018. This measure takes into account the relative caseload of the different Divisions of the Supreme Court.

Overall the Supreme Court fell short of the targeted trial date certainty rate by 28.07 percentage points, having averaged 53.80%. The targeted trial date certainty rate for year 2 is 84.50% and the targeted rate for March 31, 2026 is 95.01%, the figure required to bring the net case backlog rate below 5%.

SPECIALIZED COURTS/SELECTED BUSINESS LINES

Table 13.0: Clearance rate projections for the Specialized Parish Courts/Business Lines

Parish Court/Business Line	Baseline Trial Date Certainty Rate (%)	Variance between actual and required case clearance rates	Required clearance rate at the end of year 1	Actual clearance rate at the end of year 1	Deficit/Surplus after year 1	Required clearance rate at the end of year 2	Required clearance rate as at March 31, 2026
Corporate Area Tax Court	72.15	45.08	79.06	124.25	+45.19	96.34	117.23

Drug Court – Corporate Area	75.12	44.91	84.05	78.25	-5.8	97.87	120.03
Corporate Area Family Court	72.01	47.13	82.18	102.25	+20.07	97.11	119.14
Western Regional Family Courts	74.17	43	81.15	89.15	+8.00	95	117
Corporate Area Coroner’s Court	79	27	82	82.83	+0.83	91	106
Special Coroner’s Court	71.12	37.24	80.05	74.43	-5.62	90.12	111.24
Traffic Courts*	35.25	290.07	100.67	39.31	-61.36	134.54	315.32
Western Regional Gun Court	54.19	78.65	75.56	45.48	-30.08	80.51	132.84
Weighted Averages	74.12	40.01	80.91	79.49	-1.42	88.13	114.34

NB: The baseline index is based on data over the period 2016-2018. This measure takes into account the relative caseload of the different Divisions of the Supreme Court.

*Due to the large number of warrants, the clearance rates quoted are net output. If warrants are isolated the rates become considerably higher. In fact, the average baseline clearance rate across the Traffic Courts exceeds 85% when the net rate is applied. The gross rates quoted above are therefore largely a reflection of the considerable problems experienced with the issuance and return of warrants.

Table 14.0: Required minimum average number of cases to be resolved in the specialized courts (year 2)

Parish Court	Required number of case resolutions
Corporate Area Family Court	3317
Western Regional Family Courts	5474
Corporate Area Coroner's Court	273
Special Coroner's Court	129
Traffic Courts	269080
Western Regional Gun Court	152

COURT OF APPEAL

Table 15.0: Clearance rate projections for the Court of Appeal (including matters with outstanding transcripts and civil record proceedings)

Court	Baseline Case Clearance Rate	Variance between the baseline and required case clearance rates	Required case clearance rate at the end of year 1	Actual case clearance rate at the end of year	Deficit/Surplus at the end of year 1	Required case clearance rate at the end of year 2	Required case clearance rate as at March 31, 2026
Court of Appeal	67	65.15	84.25	69.93	- 14.32	95.01	132.15

**Figure adjusted*

NB: The baseline index is based on data over the period 2015-2018.

When transcripts and civil record proceedings which are outstanding on new cases filed in 2019 are included, the Court of Appeal registered a case clearance rate of 69.93% during the year. This represents a shortfall of 14.32 percentage points when compared the targeted rate of 84.25% for the first year of the six year monitoring exercise. After six years, the Court of Appeal should acquire a clearance rate of 132.15% in order to reduce its gross case backlog rate to below the desired rate of 10%.

Table 16.0: Clearance rate projections for the Court of Appeal (excluding matters with outstanding transcripts and civil record proceedings)

Court	Baseline case clearance rate	Variance between the baseline and desired case clearance rates	Required case clearance rate at the end of year 1	Actual case clearance rate at the end of year 1	Deficit/Surplus at the end of year 1	Required case clearance rate at the end of year 2	Required case clearance rate as at March 31, 2026
Court of Appeal	73*	38.48*	79.78	170.80	+91.02	90.55	111.48

**Figures adjusted*

NB: The baseline index is based on data over the period 2015-2018.

This information shows that when transcripts and civil records proceedings are isolated, the case clearance rate after the end of the first year of the six year monitoring period is 170.80% an indication that the number of outstanding transcripts and civil record proceedings has a potentially severe impact on the productivity of the Court of Appeal.

Table 17.0: Required minimum average number of cases to be resolved in the Court of Appeal (year 2)

Condition	Required number of case resolutions
With Transcripts and Civil Record of Proceedings Included	266
With Transcripts and Civil Record of Proceedings Excluded	254

REGRESSION AND CORRELATION ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

A correlation analysis was done on the various courts exploring the nature of the explanatory relationship between trial date certainty rates and clearance rates. In theory, higher trial date certainty rates are expected to be associated with higher clearance rates and shorter time to disposition of cases. The empirical outcomes from parish court sample data revealed that only about 19% (*adjusted R² = 0.189*) of the changes in the case clearance rates were explained by trial date certainty rates. The figure was notably higher for the Supreme Court which for which the output suggests that roughly 37% (*Adjusted R² = 0.3714*) of the changes in case clearance rates can be explained by the trial date certainty rates.

**The Statistics Unit
Supreme Court of Jamaica**

