



The Third Quarter Report for the Corporate Area  
Coroner's Court - 2020

	JULY TO SEPTEMBER
	<u>2020</u>
Gross Case Disposal rate (%):	<b>89.42</b>
Gross Case Clearance Rate (%)	<b>116.35</b>

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to detail the vital statistics on case activity in the Corporate Area Coroners Court in the third quarter of 2020. 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 Corporate Area Coroner's Court, particularly with respect to the disposals, case delay factors and other important elements of case progression management and outcomes. The Coroner's Court operates in all parishes across the island, however this report is focused on the Corporate Area Coroner's Court. The Coroner's 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 Coroner's 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.

**Table 1.0: Summary of time interval between date death reported and date case opened for the quarter September 30, 2020**

### Descriptive statistics (in days)

Number of observations	71
Mean	594.15
Std. Error of Mean	56.879
Median	458.00
Mode	345 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation	479.269
Skewness	1.348
Std. Error of Skewness	.285
Range	2259
Minimum	54
Maximum	2313

The table above provides a descriptive summary of the time taken between the date deaths were reported and the date that the cases for investigation of causes of death were opened in court at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in the third quarter of 2020. It is seen that from a sample of 71 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 594 days or roughly 1.7 years. The modal time taken was 345 days or 11.5 months and the median was 458 days or 1.3 years. The standard deviation stands at a relatively large 479 days, suggesting that the distribution of the times between reporting of death and the date the case opens in the court had some variation around the mean. The positive skewness further suggests that decisively more of the scores fall below the overall average. The maximum time shown between date deaths reported and date case opened is approximately 6.4 years, while the lowest is 54 days.

**Table 2.0: Primary case activity summary for the third quarter ended September 30, 2020**

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of active cases	Approximate number of disposed or inactive cases (from those filed in the quarter)	Estimated Case Disposal Rate (%)
104	11	93	89.42

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in the third quarter of 2020. It is shown that 104 new cases were filed over the quarter, 93 of which were disposed or became inactive and 11 remained active at the end of the quarter. These results yield an estimated case disposal rate of 89.42%, which is comparatively high, suggesting that for every 10 cases filed over the period, roughly 9 were disposed. This impressive outcome is consistent with the general trend in the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court which has been reported

over the past two years. This trend ranks the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court among the better performing courts on this measure in island over the comparable period. The case clearance rate will be examined later in this document.

**Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of the source of cases filed in the quarter ended September 30, 2020**

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police	60	69.77
Family	25	29.07
Other	1	1.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A sample of 86 cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court during the third quarter of 2020 shows that 60 or 69.77% were filed by the police, while 25 or 29.07% were filed by the family of deceased. The remaining 1.16% of cases were filed by other entities.

**Table 4.0: Sampling distribution of deaths reported at various Police Stations which were brought before the court during the third quarter ended September 30, 2020.**

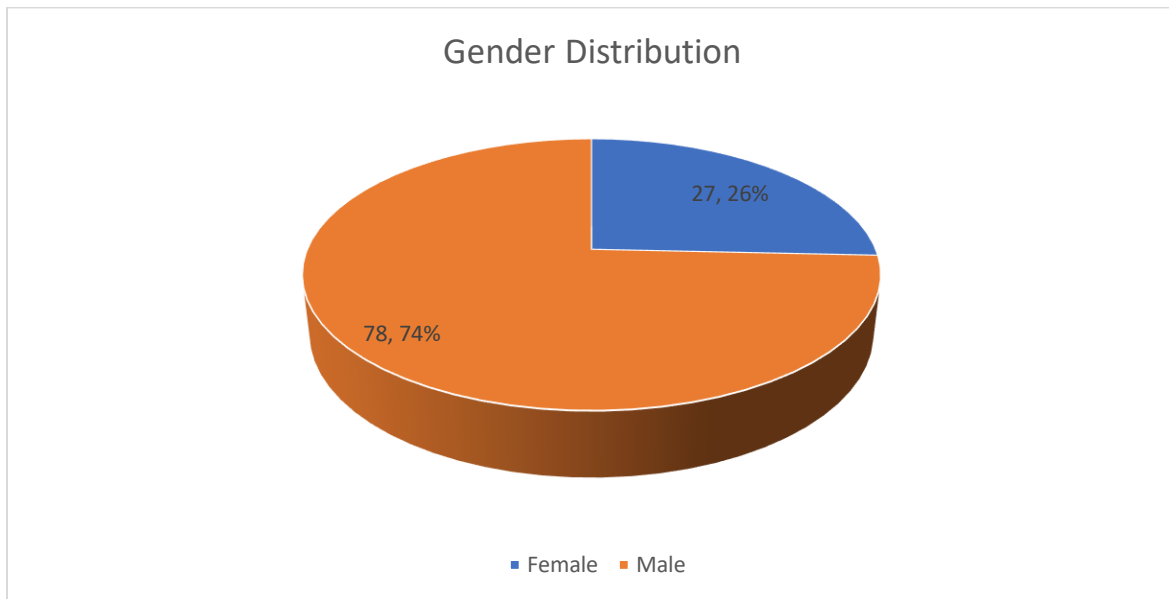
Police Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Denham Town Police Station	22	22.45
Hunts Bay Police Station	11	11.22
Central Police Station	8	8.16
Matilda’s Corner Police Station	6	6.12
Papine Police Station	6	6.12
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54.08</b>

**Sample of police stations (n) = 98**

The data showed a sample of 98 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 highest proportion of cases

filed/investigated within the quarter with 22 cases or 22.45% of the sample. The Hunts Bay Police Station accounted for 11 or 11.22% of the cases, followed by the Central Police Station with 8 or 8.16%. The top five police stations accounting for cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court was rounded off by the Matilda's Corner Police Station and the Papine Police Station with 6 cases or 6.12% each 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 105 deceased persons involved in the cases filed during the third quarter of 2020. It is shown that 78 or 74% of the deceased were male, while 27 or 26% were female.

**Table 5.0: Descriptive Statistics on the age distribution of the deceased in cases filed in the third quarter ended September 30,2020**

**Descriptive statistics (age in years)**

Number of observations	87
Mean	53.62
Std. Error of Mean	2.427
Median	50.00
Mode	50 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation	22.639
Skewness	.129
Std. Error of Skewness	.258
Range	92
Minimum	8
Maximum	100

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

A sample of 87 ages of the deceased involved in the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in the third quarter of 2020, revealed that the average age is roughly 54 years, while the median and the modal ages were both 50 years. The standard deviation stands at a moderate value of 23 years, indicating some amount of variation of the scores around the mean, while the skewness is a low positive value, indicating that a larger proportion of the scores in the series are clustered around the mean, though slightly more may be above it. The smallest age in the data set is about 8 years, while the oldest was 100 years.

**Table 6.0a: Sampling distribution of the causes of death reported for cases filed during the third quarter ended September 30,2020**

Cause of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gunshot wound of head, neck, chest, face	12	11.65
Hemorrhage and shock, Multiple gunshot wounds to the chest, head	9	8.74
Multiple gunshot wounds	5	4.85
Acute Cardiac Failure	4	3.88

Multiple Blunt Impact Trauma	3	2.91
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32.04</b>

**Sample size (n)= 103**

The above table is computed using a sample of 103 observations of the causes of death associated with cases. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are death caused by gunshot wounds of the head, neck, chest and face with 11.65% of the sample, hemorrhage and shock, multiple gunshot wounds to the chest and head with 9 or 8.74% and multiple gunshot wounds with 5 or 4.85% of the sample. Death caused by acute cardiac failure with 4 or 3.88% and multiple blunt Impact trauma with 2.91% rank next. 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 6.0b: Sampling distribution of the causes of death as officially determined by the Coroner for matters disposed during the third quarter ended September 30,2020**

<b>Cause of death determined by coroner</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Death due to natural causes	31	43.66
Death due to gunshot wounds	14	19.72
Death due to gunshot wounds to the head	2	2.82
Death due to heart attack	2	2.82
Death due to stab wounds	2	2.82
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>71.83</b>

**Sample size (n)= 71**

The above table is computed using a sample of 71 observations of the causes of death as determined by the Coroner for cases resolved at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court during the third quarter of 2020. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are death due natural causes with 31 or 43.66%, death due to gunshot wounds with 14 or 19.72% of

the sample. Death due to gunshot wounds to the head, death due to heart attack and death due to stab wounds accounted for 2 or 2.82% each of the sample.

**Table 7: Sampling distribution of the summary of outcomes of Form D applications made during the third quarter ended September 30, 2020.**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Section 14	50	70.42
Other	21	29.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</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, with 50 or 70.42% of the sample, which means that the matter was accepted for an Inquest to be carried out by the Coroner. The generic category ‘other outcomes’ accounted for the remaining 21 or 29.58% of the sample. These results are typical to the trends observed in the Coroner’s Courts Island wide. The data was computed using a representative sample of 104 new cases filed in the third quarter of 2020.

**Table 8.0: Sampling distribution of the type of hearings in the third quarter ended September 30, 2020**

<b>Type of hearing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Chambers	106	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A sample of 106 hearings at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in the third quarter of 2020, revealed that all were chamber hearings.



**Table 9.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of disposition of matters completed during the third quarter ended September 30, 2020**

Methods of Disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	80	65.57
Section 10	42	34.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The methods of case disposition for a sample of 122 matters, which were disposed during third quarter of 2020, revealed that 80 or 65.57% 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 42 or 34.43% of the sample.

**Table 11.0: Summary of the incidence of hearings during Inquest for matters disposed during the third quarter ended September 30,2020**

**Descriptive Statistics (in days)**

Number of observations	134
Mean	1.3582
Std. Error of Mean	.12143
Median	1.0000
Mode	1.00
Std. Deviation	1.40570
Skewness	4.697
Std. Error of Skewness	.209
Range	9.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	10.00

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 roadblock 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 1.4, while the median and modal values were both 1. The lowest number of hearings was 1 and the highest was 10. The standard deviation suggests there is a wide variation in the scores and affirmed by the positive skewness which suggests that a larger proportion of the scores fell below the series average. This result is quite commendable and implies the existence of judicious scheduling and case management practices.

**Table 12: Case clearance rate summary for the third quarter ended September 30,2020**

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of cases disposed	Estimated Case Clearance Rate (%)
104	121	116.35

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 will also make considerable strides in reducing its net case backlog rate to an acceptable rate of under 5% of active cases. The Corporate Area Coroner’s Court with an estimated case clearance rate of 116.35%, exceeds the above-mentioned range for the quarter. There were 104 new cases filed during the quarter and 121 cases were disposed (regardless of year of origin), leading to the stated clearance rate. It suggests that for every 10 new cases filed between 11 and 12 cases were disposed over the same period, an impressive finding by any measure, which again affirms the standing of the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court among the best performing single courts in the island at present.

## **Conclusion**

By virtue of consistently exceeding the international standards and prescriptions on the important measures of case disposal and case clearance rates and by maintaining a low incidence of hearings per Inquest and a low net case backlog rate, the Corporate Area Coroner's Court ranks as one of the best performing single courts in the island and is on course to meet the quantitative targets outlined in the judiciary's strategic plan over the next 2-3 years, which aim to place the Jamaican court system among 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 a 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.

*Source:*

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

<sup>i</sup> *Source:*

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

**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.

**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.