



The Chief Justice's Annual Statistics
Report for 2020

(Corporate Area Coroner's and Special Coroner's
Courts)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary 2

Methodology..... 5

Introduction 07

Chapter 1.0: Corporate Area Coroner’s Court 08

Chapter 2.0: Special Coroner’s Court 18

Chapter 3.0: Conclusion 24

Chapter 4.0: Glosary of Terms 25

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 in the next 2-3 years and among the bests in the world in 4-5 years.

Both the Corporate Area Coroner's and the Special Coroner's Court made substantial contributions to the judiciary's key quantitative targets in 2020, exceeding both the internationally prescribed case disposal and case clearance rates. In the case of the Corporate Area Coroner's Court, a case disposal rate of 99.42% and a case clearance rate of 124.35% were recorded in 2020, representing increases of 40.42 and 37.53 percentage points respectively. The Special Coroner's Court on the other hand recorded a case disposal rate of 98.06% and a case clearance rate of 120.83%, both of which were also sizeable increases when compared to 2019. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court recorded an average time to disposition of roughly three months for cases resolved in 2020 while the Special Coroner's Court recorded a mean disposal time of approximately 14 months. 345 new cases were filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in 2020, while 96 were filed at the Special Coroner's Court, the bulk of which were in St. James, St. Catherine and Westmoreland.

The largest proportion of deaths determined by the Coroner in 2020 were due to natural causes, gunshot wounds, heart attack and motor vehicle accidents while the average age of the deceased

in such cases was 50 years with 76% being male. The largest proportion of cases disposed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in 2020 were through the provisions of Section 14, followed by those disposed through Section 10. At the Special Coroner’s Court, the dominant causes of death as determined by the Special Coroner in 2020 were multiple gunshot wounds, hemorrhage, shock and blunt force trauma. The average age of the deceased involved in cases heard at the Special Coroner’s Court in 2020 was 29 years while 99% were male. Cases disposed through the provisions of Section 16(1) and Section 14 were most common among the resolved cases in 2020 at the Special Coroner’s Court.

Key Performance Summary – 2020

Court	Case Disposal Rate (%)	Case Clearance Rate (%)	Average time to disposition (months)
Corporate Area Coroner’s Court	99.42	124.45	3
Special Coroner’s Court	98.06	120.83	14

METHODOLOGY

Guaranteeing the reliability and validity of the data used to produce the periodic statistical reports for the Jamaican Courts is of utmost importance as we seek to produce a data driven enterprise for policymaking and operational decisions. As a result, a robust and verifiable system of data production has been created in both the parish courts and the Supreme Court. At the parish courts, a data capture system for criminal matters, called the CISS (Case Information Statistical System) has been operational in all courts for the past two years. This system captures a wide range of data on the progression of criminal cases from initiation to disposition and is manned by at least one dedicated Data Entry Officer in each court. The Data Entry Officers update the system on a daily basis so that the data produced is as close as possible to real time. The electronic data sheets for each parish court are then validated and backed-up to the network at the end of each month and the data submitted to a centralized, secure medium for processing by the Statistics Unit at the Supreme Court. A robust data validation mechanism is in place to periodically sample criminal case files in all parish courts on a quarterly basis. A representative sample of case files are taken in each case and crosschecked against the electronic data to detect and eliminate errors of omission and commission.

Monthly statistical data is processed using the data submissions, culminating in Quarterly Reports and eventually the Annual Report of this nature. All Quarterly and Annual Parish Court reports are published on the website of the Supreme Court; however, interim data required by stakeholders may be requested through the Office of the Chief Justice.

Disclaimer

The numbers that are reflected in the case activity summaries in the annual statistics 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 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 year ended December, 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 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 over the year ended December 31, 2020, 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 year ended December 31, 2020

Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	217
Mean	722.2995
Std. Error of Mean	70.14712
Median	429.0000
Mode	377.00 ^a
Std. Deviation	1033.33166
Skewness	4.949
Std. Error of Skewness	.165
Range	9052.00
Minimum	30.00
Maximum	9082.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

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 2020. It is seen that from a sample of 217 observations, that 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 722 days or 2 years. The modal time taken was 377 days or 12.6 months and the median was 429 days or approximately 14.3 months. The standard deviation stands at a high of 1033 days or 2.9 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 25 years, while the lowest is 30 days.

Table 2.0: Case Activity Summary for the year ended December 31, 2020

Number of new cases filed	Number of active cases	Number of disposed or inactive cases (from those filed in year)	Estimated Case Disposal Rate (%)
345	2	343	99.42

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in 2020. It is shown that 345 new cases were filed during the year, 45 cases or 13.04% more than the 300 cases filed in 2019, 343 of which were disposed or became inactive and 2 remained active cases at the end of the year. These results yield a case disposal rate of 99.42%, which is 40.42 percentage points above the 59% recorded in 2019. This high disposal rate satisfies the international standard on this measure and suggests that for every 10 cases filed over the period, 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 the source of cases filed for the year ended December 31, 2020

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police	210	60.17
Family	132	37.82
Other	7	2.01
Total	349	100.0

A sample of 349 cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court shows that 210 cases or 60.17% of cases filed were filed by the police, while 132 or 37.82% were filed by the family of deceased and the remaining 2.01% were filed by other entities.

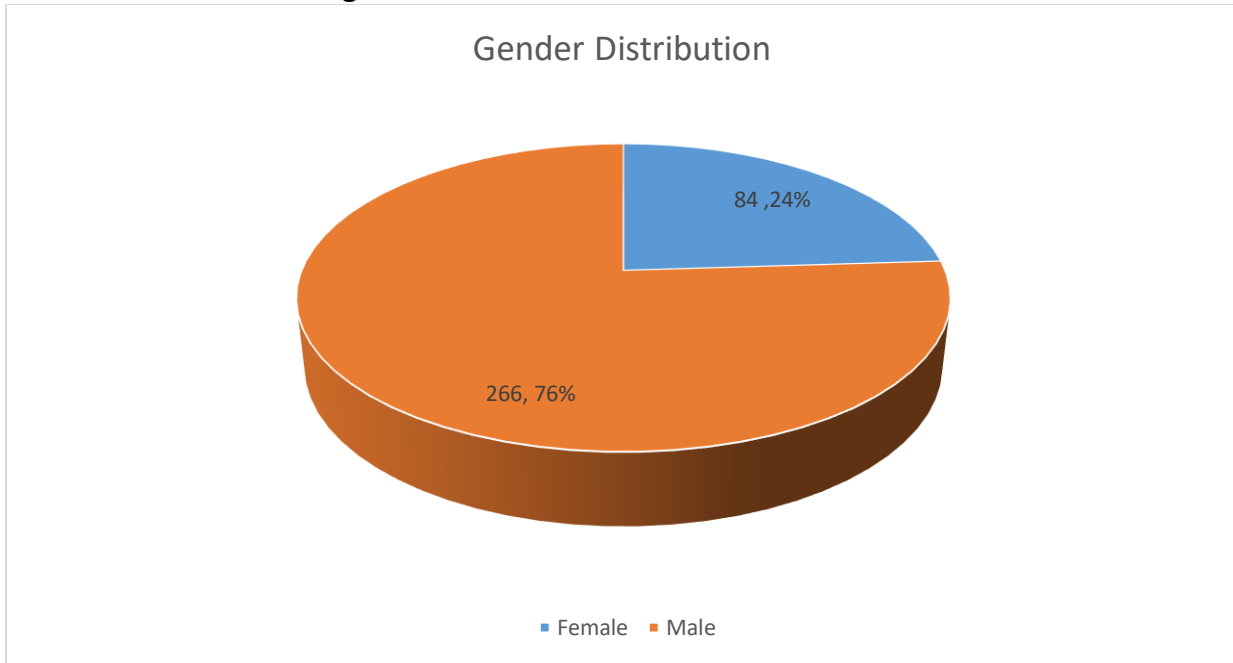
Table 4.0: Sampling distribution of deaths reported at various Police and brought before the court during the year ended December 31, 2020

Police Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Denham Town Police Station	54	17.76
Half Way Tree Criminal Investigation Branch	36	11.84
Hunts Bay Criminal Investigation Branch C.I.B	33	10.86
Elleston Road Police Station	22	7.24
Central C.I.B Police Station	20	6.58
Sub-Total	145	47.7

Number of observations sampled (N)=304

The data showed a sample of 304 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 year with 54 cases or 17.76%. This was similar in 2019 where Denham Town Police Station also accounted for the majority of cases filed in that period with 40 cases or 14.34%. The Half-Way-Tree investigating branch with 36 or 11.84% ranks next, while Hunts Bay Criminal Investigation Branch followed with 33 cases or 10.86% of the sample. The top five police stations accounting for cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court was rounded off by the Elleston Road Police Station and Central Police station with 22 or 7.24% and 20 or 6.58% 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 350 deceased persons involved in the cases filed over the 2020 calendar year. It is shown that 266 or 76% of the deceased were male, while 84 or 24% were female. In the 2019 calendar year males accounted for 266 or 76% of the total while the remaining 24% were accounted for by female.

Table 5.0: Descriptive Statistics on the age distribution of the deceased in cases filed during the year ended December 31, 2020

Descriptive statistics (age in years)

Number of observations	324
Mean	50.3921
Std. Error of Mean	1.18351
Median	49.0000
Mode	50.00
Std. Deviation	21.30315
Skewness	.327
Std. Error of Skewness	.135
Range	106.96
Minimum	.04
Maximum	107.00

A sample of 324 ages of the deceased involved in the cases filed, revealed that the average age is roughly 50 years, while the median is 49 years, and the modal value is 50 years. The standard deviation stands at a moderate value of 21 years, indicating some amount of variation of the scores around the mean, while the skewness is a low positive value, indicating that a significant proportion of the scores are clustered around the mean, though slightly more may be above it. The smallest age in the data set is 13 days, while the oldest was 107 years.

Table 6.0a: Sampling distribution of the causes of death reported for cases filed during the year ended December 31, 2020

Cause of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Shock and haemorrhage Poly trauma, multiple blunt force injuries, multiple gunshot wounds to the body	50	14.33
Gunshot wound to chest, head, torso, neck	40	11.46
Multiple gunshot wounds	33	9.46
Multiple Blunt Force Trauma to head, abdomen, chest	18	5.16
Acute Cardiac Failure	12	3.44
Sub-total	153	43.84

Sample size (N) =349

The above table is computed using a sample of 349 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 shock and haemorrhage, poly trauma due to multiple blunt force injuries and multiple gunshot wounds with 50 or 14.33%, gunshot wound to chest, head, torso, neck with 40 or 11.46% and multiple gunshot wounds with 33 or 9.46% of the sample. Multiple blunt force trauma to head, abdomen, chest with 18 or 5.16% and acute cardiac failure with 3.44% follow. In 2019 the leading cause of death was gunshot wound of the head neck and chest accounting for 7.74% from a sample size of 310 reported matters. 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 filed during the year ended December 31, 2020

Cause of death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Death due to natural causes	71	33.02
Death due to gunshot wounds	65	30.23
Death due to heart attack	11	5.12
Death due to motor vehicle accident	11	5.12
Death due to stab wounds	7	3.26
Sub-total	165	76.74

Sample size (N)=215

The above table is computed using a sample of 215 observations of the causes of death as determined by the Coroner. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are death due natural causes with 71 or 33.02%, deaths due to gunshot wounds with 65 or 30.23% of the sample. Deaths due to heart attack and deaths due to motor vehicle accident each accounted 11 or 5.12% of the sample while deaths due to stab wounds accounted for 3.26% of the sample.

Table 7: Sampling distribution of the summary of outcomes of Form D applications made during the year ended December 31, 2020

Outcomes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	142	66.05
Other	73	33.95
Total	215	100

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 142 or 66.05% 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 73 or 33.95% of the sample. These results are typical to

the trends observed in the Coroner’s Courts Island wide. The data was computed using a sample of 215 new cases filed in 2020.

Table 8.0: Sampling distribution of reasons for adjournment/continuance for cases heard in the year ended December 31, 2020

Reasons for adjournment/continuance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Other	137	91.33
Part-heard (continuance)	12	8.00
File incomplete/awaiting medical certificate	1	0.67
Total	150	100.00

A summary of 150 matters adjourned/continued over the time revealed that 137 or 91.33% 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 12 or 8% and adjournments due to incomplete files with 0.67% of the sample rounds off the list.

Table 9.0: Sampling distribution of the type of hearings in the year ended December 31, 2020

Type of hearing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chambers	351	100.0

A sample of 351 hearings at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in the 2020 calendar year, revealed that all were chamber hearings.

Table 10.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of disposition of matters completed during the year ended December 31, 2020

Methods of disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	182	60.07
Section 10	113	37.29
Open Court Verdict	7	2.31
Inquest	1	0.33
Total	303	100.00

The methods of case disposition for a sample of 303 matters which were disposed over the year, revealed that 60.07% 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 113 or 37.29% of the sample. Matters disposed by open court verdict accounted for 7 or 2.31% of the sample, while matters disposed by inquest accounted for 0.33% of the sample. Compared to the similar period in 2019, 96.60% of matters were disposed of by way of inquest under the provisions of section 14 of the Coroners’ Act, while the remaining 3.40% was disposed by way of inquest under the provision of Section 10 of the Coroners’ Act.

Table 11.0: Descriptive Statistics on the time to disposition for matters completed during the year ended December 31, 2020

Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	50
Mean	89.8200
Std. Error of Mean	22.61960
Median	4.0000
Mode	4.00
Std. Deviation	159.94472
Skewness	2.082
Std. Error of Skewness	.337
Range	608.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	609.00

The above data shows that the average time taken to dispose of 50 matters during the year is 90 days or roughly 3 months. The data also revealed that the median time taken to dispose of the matters and modal time were both 4 days. The standard deviation however suggests that there is a wide variation in the individual scores and the moderately high positive skewness indicates that a larger proportion of the scores fell below the overall mean. The minimum time taken was 1 day, with the maximum time taken being 609 days or approximately 1.7 years.

Table 12.0: Summary of the incidence of hearings during inquest for matters disposed during the year ended December 31, 2020

Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	314
Mean	1.5382
Std. Error of Mean	.09717
Median	1.0000
Mode	1.00
Std. Deviation	1.72191
Skewness	4.483
Std. Error of Skewness	.138
Range	12.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	13.00

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 314 cases disposed over the year was roughly 1.5, while the median and modal values were both 1. The lowest number of hearings was 1 and the highest was 13. The standard deviation suggests there is a large variation in the scores and affirmed by the high positive skewness, which suggests that most of the scores were below the average. A lower incidence of hearings is desirable to further reduce the average time to disposition.

Table 13: Case clearance rate summary for the year ended December 31, 2020

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of cases disposed or inactive	Estimated gross case clearance rate (%)
345	429	124.35

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 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 124.35% for the 2020 goes beyond the above-mentioned range which shows promising signs of a well- managed caseload. This rate is 50.02 percentage points above the 74.33% recorded in the 2019 calendar year. There were 345 new cases filed during the year and 429 cases were disposed or became inactive (regardless of year of origin), leading to the stated gross clearance rate. It suggests that for every 10 new cases filed between twelve and thirteen cases were disposed or became inactive over the same period.

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 2020 calendar year.

Table 1.0: Case activity summary for the year ended December 31, 2020 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 year)	Estimated Case disposal rate (%)
96	1	95	98.96

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Cooperate Area Special Coroner's Court. It is shown that 96 new cases were filed over the year, 95 of which were either disposed or became inactive and 1 remained active at the end of the year. These results yield a case disposal rate of 98.96%, suggesting that for every 10 cases filed over the period, roughly 10 were disposed. This rate is 37.53 percentage points above the rate recorded for the 2019 calendar year. This outcome will augur well for the productivity of the Special Coroner's court.

Table 2.0: Sampling distribution of the parish of origin of matters filed during year ended December 31, 2020

Parish of Origin	Frequency	Percentage (%)
St James	26	23.85
St Catherine	20	18.35
Westmoreland	19	17.43
Kingston	13	11.93
Trelawny	7	6.42
Clarendon	6	5.50
Hanover	5	4.59
St Mary	4	3.67
Manchester	3	2.75
St Elizabeth	2	1.83
St Thomas	2	1.83
St Andrew	1	0.92
St Ann	1	0.92
Total	109	100.00

As a parish court, the Special Coroners Court has a single location in Kingston but is deployed island wide to hear cases originating 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 St. James with 23.85% of the cases filed, St. Catherine with 20 or 18.35% and Westmoreland with approximately 17.43% accounted for the largest share of new cases filed by the Special Coroner’s Court in the 2020 calendar year.

Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of the source of matters filed over the year ended December 31, 2020

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
INDECOM	105	96.33
Bureau of Special Investigations	4	3.67
Total	109	100.00

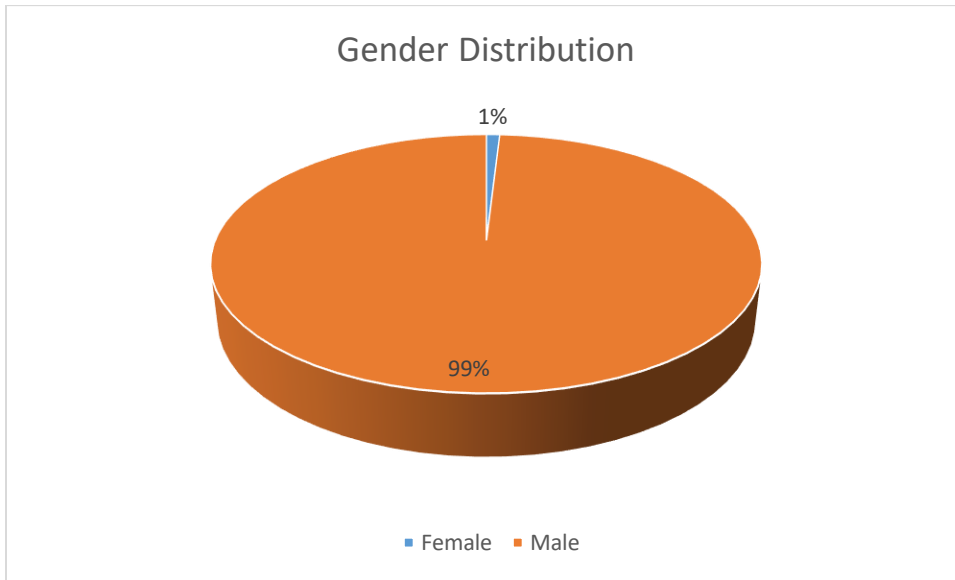
A sample of 109 matters filed at the Special Coroners Court over the year ended December 31, 2020, shows that the majority, 96.33% were filed by INDECOM and the remaining 3.67% from the Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI).

Table 4.0: Sampling distribution on the type of death by Institution for the year ended December 31, 2020

Type of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)	104	95.41
Custodial Institutions	5	4.59
Total	109	100.00

It is seen in the above table, that the overwhelming majority of the matters filed over the 2020 calendar year were matters related to JCF deaths, accounting for 104 or 95.41%. The remaining matters were accounted for deaths relating to custodial institutions with 4.59% of the sample. A significant proportion of the causes of death as reported in the cases filed during the year were stated as ‘multiple gunshot wounds’, accounting for 43% of the matters. Cases filed with haemorrhage and shock and blunt force trauma also featured prominently.

Chart 1.0 Gender distribution of the deceased in cases filed in the year ended December 31, 2020



The gender distribution of the deceased involved in 108 cases filed over the 2020 calendar year, shows that 107 or 99% were males and 1% was female.

Table 5.0: Descriptive Statistics on the age of the deceased in cases filed over the year ended December 31, 2020

Descriptive Statistics (age in years)

Number of observations	107
Mean	28.5607
Std. Error of Mean	.97736
Median	26.0000
Mode	21.00 ^a
Std. Deviation	10.10994
Skewness	1.485
Std. Error of Skewness	.234
Range	55.00
Minimum	13.00
Maximum	68.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The above descriptive summary on the age of the deceased involved in cases filed during the 2020 calendar year revealed that from a sample of 107 observations, the average age was roughly 29 years, while the most frequently occurring age was 21 years old. The highest age recorded was 68 years, while the lowest is 13 years old. The moderate standard deviation of roughly 10

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 year ended December 31, 2020

Reasons for adjournment/continuance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Failure of Witness to Attend Court	8	7.48
Not Reached	3	2.80
Ballistic Report Outstanding	2	1.87
Other	94	87.85
Total	107	100.00

A sample of 107 reasons for adjournment revealed that the largest proportion of adjournments were pooled under the category, “other”, with 87.85% of the sample. Adjournments due to failure of the witnesses to attend court with 7.48% rank next, followed by matters not reached with 2.80% and ballistic report outstanding with 1.87% of the sample.

Table 7.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of disposition for matters completed in the year ended December 31, 2020

Type of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 16 (1)	13	54.17
Section 14	11	45.83
Total	24	100.00

The methods of case disposition for a sample of 24 matters which were disposed over the year, revealed that 13 or 54.17% 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 11 or 45.83% of the sample.

Table 8.0: Descriptive statistics on the age of active cases as at the year ended December 31, 2020

Descriptive Statistics (Days)

Number of observations	68
Mean	437.2206
Std. Error of Mean	22.37033
Median	345.5000
Mode	304.00
Std. Deviation	184.47043
Skewness	1.690
Std. Error of Skewness	.291
Range	743.00
Minimum	274.00
Maximum	1017.00

The above data is based on sample of 68 active Special Coroner’s matters at the end of the 2020 calendar year. The average age of these matters was roughly 437 days, while the most frequently occurring age in the distribution was 304 days. The standard deviation of roughly 184 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 1017 days old or 2.9 years, while the youngest case is 274 days.

Table 9.0: Descriptive statistics on the times to disposition for matters resolved during the year ended December 31, 2020

Descriptive Statistics (Days)

Number of observations	24
Mean	408.9167
Median	352.0000
Mode	629.00
Std. Deviation	311.04158
Variance	96746.862
Skewness	.317
Std. Error of Skewness	.472
Range	952.00
Minimum	14.00
Maximum	966.00

The above table uses a sample of 24 cases disposed in 2020 and reveals an estimated average of roughly 14 months, with a maximum of approximately 2.7 years and a minimum of 14 days. 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 10: Case clearance rate summary for the year ended December 31, 2020

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of cases disposed or inactive	Estimated case clearance rate (%)
96	116	120.83

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 120.83% for the 2020 calendar year exceeds the above-mentioned range which shows promising signs of a well- managed caseload. There were 96 new cases filed during the year and 116 cases were disposed or became inactive (regardless of year 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.

Concluding Note

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Courts were among several courts in the Jamaican court system which showed positive and promising results on several key performance metrics in 2020. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court recorded a case disposal rate of 99.42% in 2020 which was a significant 40.42 percentage points increase when compared to 2019, while also recording a case clearance rate of 124.35%, up by 50.02 percentage points when compared to the 74.33 percentage points recorded in 2019. Cases resolved in the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in 2020 took an impressive average of three months to be resolved while the average number of hearings per Inquest in 2020 was 1.5, which is excellent. The Special Coroner's Court recorded an estimated case disposal rate of 98.06% in 2020, up by 37.53 percentage points from the 60.53% recorded in 2019 while also recording an estimated case clearance rate of 120.83% and an estimated average time to disposition of 14 months during the year. It is evident from this report that despite the novel challenges in 2020 which are associated with the general downturn in case activity resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, both the Corporate Area Coroner's and the Special Coroner's Courts demonstrated significant resilience and remain on course to making an appreciable contribution to the strategic goals of the judiciary.

Glossary of Statistical Terms

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

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 casefile 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 either 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. 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 (both active and inactive cases).

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.

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.

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.

Exponential Smoothing: Exponential smoothing of time series data assigns exponentially decreasing weights for newest to oldest observations. In other words, the older the 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 for 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/BestPracticeCaseAgeClearanceRate>

