

The Annual Statistics Report for the Corporate Area  
Coroner's Court - 2023

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## Executive Summary

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court remains one of the best performing courts in the Jamaican judiciary in 2023, maintaining a net case backlog rate of less than 5%, an average time to disposition of under a month, a case disposal rate of over 90% and a gross case backlog rate of under 10%. This profile places the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in the upper decile among the leading performing courts in the Jamaican judiciary.

In 2023, 479 new cases were filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court, 460 of which were disposed while 479 cases were disposed overall during the year, regardless of the year of filing. 74.44% of the deceased persons involved in cases heard were male while 25.56% were female and the average age of deceased persons in matters heard was 55 years. The most common causes of death as determined by the Coroner were natural causes, gunshot wounds, motor vehicle accidents, stab wounds and hanging. With eight years of extensive data on criminal case activity in the parish courts of Jamaica, the Statistics Unit applied Lagrange multiplier techniques to determine that a successful court must meet the following minimum requirements in order to satisfy an efficiency threshold for the sustainable containment of case backlog and provide optimal service to the public.

The required minimum annual parameters are summarized below:

Parameter	Minimum Required Standard
Case disposal rate	$\geq 75\%$
Case clearance rate	$\geq 95\%$
Case congestion rate	$\leq 115\%$
Trial Date Certainty Rate	$\geq 85\%$
Net case backlog rate	$\leq 5\%$
Gross case backlog rate	$\leq 10\%$
Average number of mentions per case	$\leq 3$

The Statistics Unit has determined that if any court or jurisdiction can consistently achieve these rates, it will attain a high level of efficiency and service excellence.

**Key performance Summary - 2023**

<b>Court</b>	<b>Case Disposal Rate (%)</b>	<b>Case Clearance Rate (%)</b>	<b>Average time to disposition (months)</b>
Corporate Area Coroner's Court	96.03	100	0.45

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to detail the vital statistics on case activity in the Corporate Area Coroners Court in 2023. 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 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

**Chapter 1.0: 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 during the year ended December 31, 2023, 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 period Jan.-Dec. 2023**

**Descriptive Statistics (in days)**

Number of observations	502
Mean	775.56
Median	330.50
Mode	124 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation	1308.864
Skewness	4.597
Std. Error of Skewness	.109
Range	13613
Minimum	11
Maximum	13624

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 Coroners Court in 2023. It is seen that from a sample of 502 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 776 days or 2.1 years. The modal time taken was 124 days or 4.1 months and the median was 330 days or approximately 11 months. The standard deviation stands at a high of 1309 days or 3.6 years, strongly suggesting that the distribution of the times between reporting of death and the date cases open in the court varies widely around the mean. The acutely 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 37 years, while the lowest is 11 days.

**Table 2.0: Case Activity Summary for the year ended December 31, 2023**

<b>Approximate Number of new cases filed</b>	<b>Approximate Number of active cases</b>	<b>Number of disposed cases (from those filed in the year)</b>	<b>Estimated Case disposal rate (%)</b>
479	19	460	96.03

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in 2023. It is shown that 479 new cases were filed over the year, 460 of which were disposed, while 19 remained active at the end of the period. These results yield an impressive, estimated case disposal rate of 96.03%. These disposal rate satisfies the international standard on this measure and suggests that for every 100 cases filed over the period, roughly 97 cases were resolved. The case clearance rate will be examined later in this report.

**Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of Source of cases filed for the period ended December 31, 2023.**

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police	375	76.37
Family	116	23.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>100</b>

A sample of 491 cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court shows that 375 cases or 76.37% of cases filed were filed by the police, while 116 or 23.63% were filed by the family of deceased.

**Table 4.0: Sampling distribution of deaths reported at various Police and brought before the court during the year ended December 31, 2023**

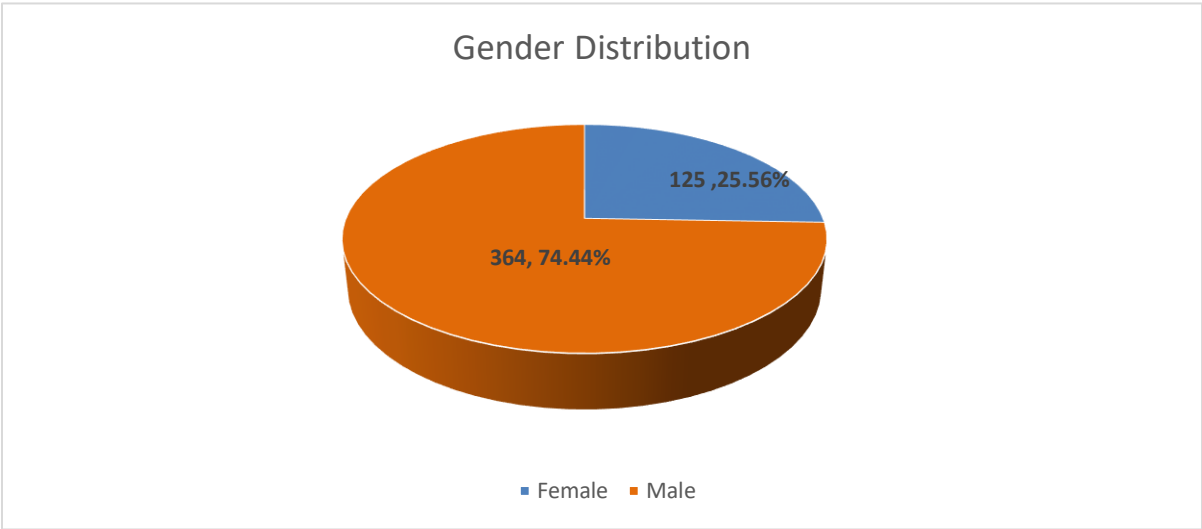
Police Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Half Way Tree police Station	73	14.93
Hunts Bay Police Station	49	10.02
Major Investigations Div	46	9.41
Elleston Road Police Station	43	8.79
Denham Town Police Station	37	7.57
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>51</b>

**Sample of observations (N)= 489**

The data showed a sample of 489 Coroner’s Court cases reported at the different police stations in the Corporate Area which were subsequently brought to the court. Of that number, the Half Way Tree Police Station accounted for the highest proportion of cases filed/investigated during the year with 73 cases or 14.93% of the sample. The Hunts Bay Police Station with 49 or 10.02% ranks next, while the Major investigation Division with 46 or 9.41% and the Elleston Road Police Station followed with 43 cases or 8.79% of the sample. The top five police stations accounting for cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court was rounded off by Denham Town Police Stations with 37 or 7.57% 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 489 deceased persons involved in the cases filed over the 2023 calendar year. It is shown that 364 or 74.44% of the deceased were male, while the remaining 125 or 25.56% were female.

**Table 5.0: Descriptive statistics on the age distribution of the deceased matters filed during the year ended December 31,2023**

**Descriptive statistics (age in years)**

Number of observations	483
Mean	55.66
Median	55.00
Mode	42
Std. Deviation	23.469
Variance	550.793
Skewness	.156
Std. Error of Skewness	.111
Range	97
Minimum	9
Maximum	106

A sample of 483 ages of the deceased involved in the cases filed revealed that the average age is roughly 56 years while the median is 55 years, and one of the most common modal value is 42 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 low positive value, indicating a large cluster of the scores around the mean. The smallest age in the data set is 9 years, while the oldest was 106 years.

**Table 6.0a: Sampling distribution of the causes of death reported for cases filed during the year ended December 31, 2023**

Cause of death	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gunshot wound of chest,head.neck , torso, face, knee and back	68	13.39
Multiple gunshot wounds	38	7.48
Shock and haemorrhage, Polytrauma, Multiple gunshot wounds	34	6.69
Blunt impact trauma of head, neck , chest et sequelae	14	2.76
Myocardial infarction, Hypertension, Dyslipidemia diabetes mellitus	10	1.97
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>32</b>

**Sample size (N)= 508**

The above table is computed using a sample of 508 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 with 68 or 13.39% of the sample and multiple gunshot wounds with 38 or 7.48 followed while Shock and Haemorrhage and Polytrauma Gunshot wound with 34 or 6.69% rank next. Blunt impact trauma of head, neck chest with 14 or 2.76%, and myocardial infraction, hypertension, dyslipidemia diabetes mellitus with 10 or 1.97% rounded off the top five causes of death.

**Table 6.0b: Sampling distribution of the causes of death as officially determined by the coroner for matters disposed during the year ended December 31,2023**

<b>Cause of death determined by Coroner</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Death due to natural causes	254	52.59
Death due to gunshot wounds	181	37.47
Death due to motor vehicle accident	10	2.07
Death due to stab wounds	6	1.24
Death due to hanging	5	1.04
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>94</b>

*Number of observations = (483)*

The above table is computed using a sample of 483 observations of the causes of death as officially determined by the Coroner. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are deaths due to natural causes with 254 or 52.59% of the sample and deaths due to gunshot wounds with 37.47% of the sample. 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 third year ended December 31, 2023**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Section 14	278	56.50
Other	203	41.26
Trial and Judge	8	1.63
Trial and Jury	3	0.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>100.0</b>

During the processing of a case at the Coroner’s Court, a Form D application is made which the judge reviews an 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 that the dominant outcome from Form D applications 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 278 or 56.50% of the outcomes, Trial and Judge and Trial and Jury accounted for 1.63% and 0.61% respectively. While the generic category ‘other outcomes’ accounted for the remaining 203 or 41.26%. These results are typical to the trends observed in the Coroner’s Courts Island wide. The data was computed using a sample of 492 cases.

**Table 8.0: Sampling distribution of the type of hearings during the year ended December 31, 2023**

<b>Type of hearing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Chambers	498	97.5
Trial Judge Only	7	1.4
Trial Judge and Jury	6	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>100</b>

A sample of 511 hearings at the Corporate Area Coroners Court in 2023, reveals that 498 were chamber hearings, 7 were Trial by judge only and the remaining 6 were trial by Judge and Jury.

**Table 9.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of Disposition of matters completed during the year ended December 31, 2023**

Methods of disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	278	55.94
Section 10	211	42.45
Inquest	8	1.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>100</b>

The methods of disposition for a sample of 497 matters which were disposed over the year, revealed that 278 or 55.94% 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 211 or 42.45% of the sample and matters disposed by inquest with 1.61%.

**Table 10.0: Descriptive Statistics on the time to disposition for matters completed during the year ended December 31,2023**

**Descriptive Statistics (in days)**

Number of Observations	483
Mean	13.44
Median	3.00
Mode	1
Std. Deviation	53.773
Skewness	6.179
47Std. Error of Skewness	.111
Range	458
Minimum	1
Maximum	459

The above data shows that the average time taken to dispose of matters during the quarter is approximately 13 days. This was derived from a sample of 483 matters resolved over the year. The data also revealed that the median time taken to dispose of the matters was 3 days and the modal time was 1 day. The standard deviation of 53.77, 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 459 days. The average time taken between the date the file was received and the date of first hearing was 5.79 days.

**Table 11.0: Summary of the incidence of hearings during inquest for matters disposed during the year ended December 31, 2023**

**Descriptive Statistics (in days)**

Number of observations	15
Mean	6.87
Median	7.00
Mode	2
Std. Deviation	6.323
Skewness	1.313
Std. Error of Skewness	.580
Range	21
Minimum	1
Maximum	22

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 15 cases disposed over the year was roughly 6.9, while the median and modal values were both 7 and the mode was 2. The lowest number of hearings was 1 and the highest was 22. The standard deviation suggests that

there is wide variation in the scores, while the low positive skewness suggests that proportionately more of the scores were above the overall average. A lower incidence of hearings is desirable to further reduce the average time to disposition.

**Table 12.0: Case clearance rate summary for the year ended December 31, 2023**

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of disposed cases	Estimated Gross Case clearance rate (%)
479	479	100%

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 level 100% for the year ended December 31, 2023 currently has a net case backlog rate of under 6%. There were 479 new cases filed during the quarter and 479 cases were disposed (regardless of date of origin), leading to the stated clearance rate. It suggests that for every 10 new cases filed, ten cases were disposed of during the same period.

## **Concluding Note**

The Corporate Area 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. The data shows that the case disposal rate is consistently over 90% and its case clearance rate is consistently over 100%, both of which are unmatched in the Jamaican judiciary. It is therefore not surprising that it takes an average of 13 days for a case to be resolved at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court. The court's net backlog rate, which is the share of active cases below 24 months old is also one of the lowest in the Jamaican judiciary, standing at less than 1%. By any measure, The Corporate Area Coroner's court is a model court in terms of its total productivity.



## 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.

*Source:*

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*<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>*

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.

