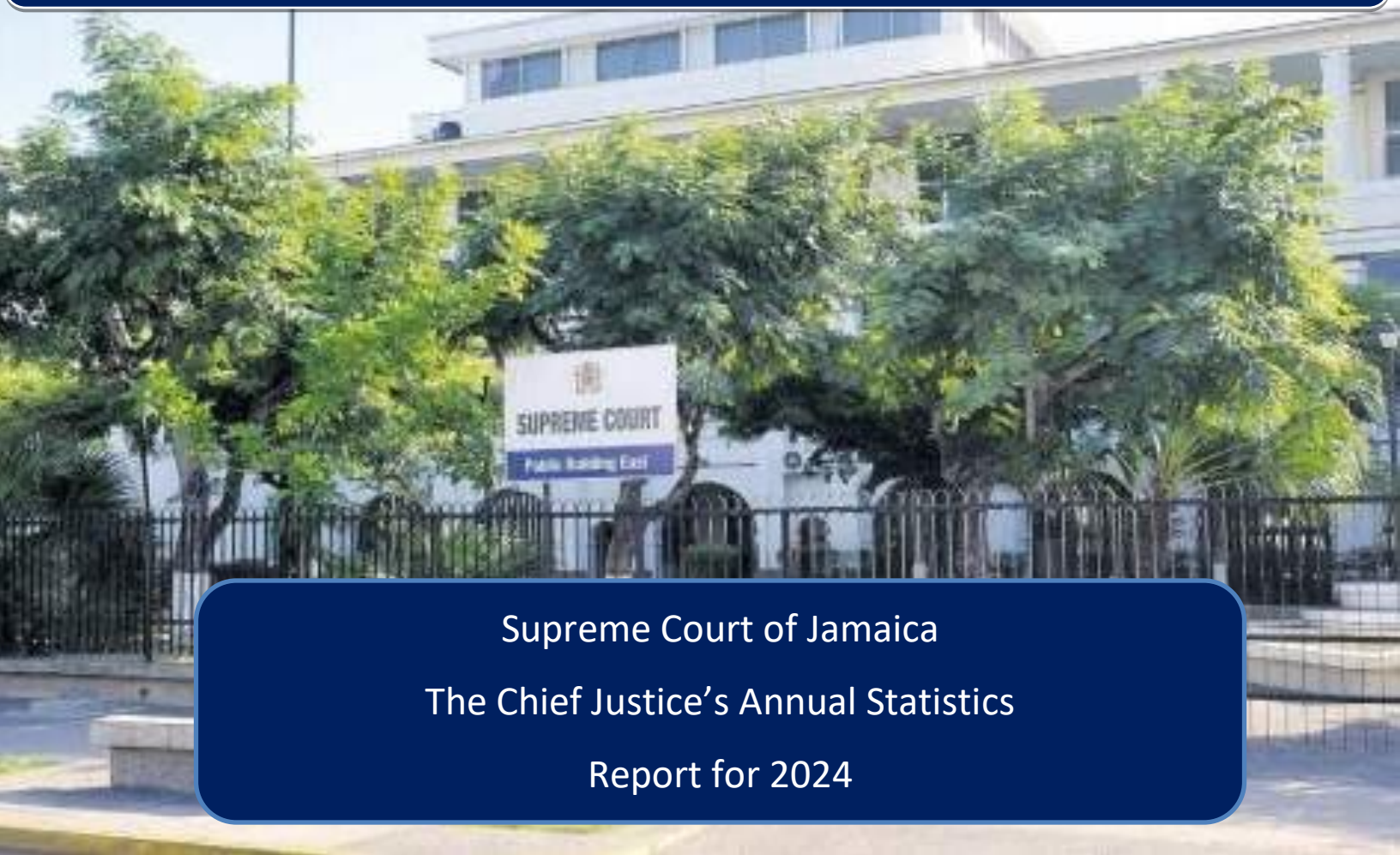


THE CHIEF JUSTICE’S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT  
FOR 2024



Supreme Court of Jamaica  
The Chief Justice’s Annual Statistics  
Report for 2024

OVERALL QUANTITATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Case clearance rate (%)	83.00	76.56	74.95
Hearing date certainty rate (%)	77.45	74.39	75.04
Case file integrity rate (%)	96.76	97.47	96.53
Average time to disposition of cases (years)	2.79	2.76	2.39
Clearance rate on outstanding Judgments (%)	112.96	115.66	142.47

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE’S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chief Justice’s Message .....	2
Executive Summary .....	4
Methodology and Structure of Report .....	13
Chapter 1.0: High Court Civil Division.....	15
Chapter 2.0: Family Division .....	31
Chapter 3.0: Estate Division.....	51
Chapter 4.0: Home Circuit Court.....	70
Chapter 5.0: High Court Division of the Gun Court .....	63
Chapter 6.0: Commercial Division .....	79
Chapter 7.0: Aggregate Case Activity, Judgments, Courtroom Utilization .....	89
Chapter 8.0: Conclusion.....	95
Glossary of Terms.....	98

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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## **CHIEF JUSTICE'S MESSAGE**

This year's Annual Statistical Report records an important milestone in the history of the Supreme Court. For the first time in its recorded history since 2016 (when reliable data began to be developed) the overall clearance rate was 83%, an increase of 6.44% over 2023. This is the first time the court as a whole exceeded 80%. This was largely due to the significant improvement in the Family Division with a clearance rate of 109.38% followed by the equally significant improvement in the Commercial Division of 94.48% (also a significant first for that division) and the High Court Division of the Gun Court at 81.82%. The Criminal Division continues to lag at a mere 56.11%, which is simply not good enough. The High Court Civil Division had a clearance rate of 63.54%, the third consecutive year that it passed 60%. This performance by the civil division is much better than the sub 30% of a few years ago. Despite the improved clearance rate the Supreme Court continues to be in a state of backlog and will remain so until the clearance rate gets to at least 115% - 120%. The court is still 35% to 40% from where it needs to be for the backlog to be eliminated.

It is crucial to note that none of the divisions reached the average required clearance rate for the year as stated in the Judiciary's Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028

The average time to disposition in the civil division of the court was 49.55 months which is twice the time standard of 24 months. The overall on time case completion rate for cases in the Supreme Court in 2024 was 60.43%, a 4% decline compared to 2023. There is much work to be done here.

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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The report highlights the impact of third-party activity on the efficiency of the court. The high number of requisitions (85 per 100 files) and low response rate of 5.05% in the Family Division is a critical factor hampering the efficiency of that division. If more accurate documents were submitted the first time, then less time would be spent identifying errors.

The Judiciary's final phase of restructuring the registries should be completed this calendar year. This new structure should bring about improved case processing time and completion of cases. The impact of the process improvements should begin to be seen clearly by the middle of 2026.

The High Court Civil Division should see a full docket system introduced by January 2026 with cases allocated to teams of judges with the appropriate support staff that will ensure near 100% case file integrity, better case management and case flow management, earlier hearing dates and earlier disposal of cases.

I wish to thank the court staff, judges, attorneys at law and other important stakeholders for the modest improvements made in 2024. Overall, the trend is in the right direction. The completion of the reforms should see even greater gains.

**The Honourable Chief Justice Mr. Bryan Sykes, CD, OJ.**

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# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2024 Chief Justice's Annual Statistics Report for the Supreme Court is yet another confirmation that this court has found a new, higher equilibrium point in productivity. The overall case clearance rate for the Supreme Court outstripped the 80% mark for the first time in recorded history. All Divisions of the Supreme Court also recorded case clearance rates above the 55% mark for the first time on record, with all except one exceeding 60%. These signs suggest that a range of operational reforms currently being pursued in the Supreme Court are making positive progress, even though the overall dent in the case backlog rate is still relatively slow. A higher equilibrium case clearance rate is required for significant inroads to be made into the case backlog, however with persistent reforms and strategic interventions, continuously guided by the data and the infusion of technology to bolster scientific scheduling, it is conceivable that within the foreseeable future, a more decisive shift in the total productivity of the Supreme Court will be seen.

This annual report contains a range of data and performance measurements on all Divisions of the Supreme Court in addition to the High Court Division of the Gun Court and the Revenue Court which are both housed at the Supreme Court and utilizes its resources. The report is extensive, covering several major areas of case flow progression and therefore provides important insights, which can potentially inform the operational efficiency of the Supreme Court and the policy design of the relevant state actors.

A total of 13,872 new cases entered the Supreme Court across all Divisions/sections in 2024 while 11,513 cases were disposed. The total number of new cases filed in 2024 increased by

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# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

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2.60% compared to the previous year and is among the largest intake in a single year in at least the past decade. The number of cases disposed in 2024 also increased when compared to the previous year, climbing by a noticeable 10.81%. The Family and High Court Civil Divisions with 4252 and 4934 respectively of the total number of new cases filed accounted for the largest share of new cases filed in 2024. As was the case in the previous five years, the Family Division accounted for the largest share of disposals with 4651 or 40.37% of all disposed cases in the Supreme Court in 2024, while the High Court Civil Division with 3135 or 27.21% of the cases disposed ranks next.

Among the major findings from this Annual Statistics Report is that the weighted average case clearance rate across the Divisions/Sections was roughly 83.0, an increase of 6.44 percentage points when compared to the previous year, the highest overall annual case clearance rate on record for the Supreme Court for the second year in a row. The case clearance rate provides a measure of the number of cases disposed, for every new case entered/filed. The average of roughly 83% across the divisions/sections suggests that for every 100 new cases entered in the period, roughly 83 were also disposed (not necessarily from the new cases entered). The case clearance rates for 2024 range from a low of 56.11% in the Home Circuit Court to a high of 109.38% in the Family Division. The Commercial Division had the second highest case clearance rate in the Supreme Court with a notable 94.48%; the largest improvement for 2024, followed by the High Court Division of the Gun Court with 81.82%. The case clearance rate result of 63.54% for the High Court Civil Division is also noteworthy as it has surpassed the 60% mark for the third consecutive year, emerging from sub-30% averages.

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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The report also generated the estimated times to disposition for matters disposed in the respective Divisions of the Supreme Court in 2024. Among the larger divisions/areas of operation, the estimated average times taken for cases to be disposed, range from a low of approximately 16.50 months in the High Court Division of the Gun Court to a high of roughly 49.55 months in the High Court Civil Division. The overall average time to disposition for the Divisions of the Supreme Court in 2024 was approximately 33.52 months, which is roughly the same as the previous year.

The standard definition of a case backlog, which has been adopted by the Jamaican Court system, is a case that has been in the system/jurisdiction for more than two years without being disposed. Using this yardstick, the overall on-time case processing rate for cases disposed in the Supreme Court in 2024 was approximately 60.43% which suggests that roughly 60 of every 100 cases disposed were done within two years, representing a roughly 4 percentage points decline compared to the previous year. This result implies that roughly 39.57% of the cases disposed in 2024 were in a state of backlog at the time of disposition, representing a crude proxy of the overall gross case backlog rate for the Supreme Court. The Estate Division and the High Court Division of the Gun Court with 82.30% and 79.74% respectively had the highest on-time case processing rates for 2024, thus also having the lowest crude gross case backlog rates at the end of the year with 17.70% and 20.26% respectively.

The hearing date certainty rate is a vital measure of the robustness of the case management and scheduling apparatus in the court system. It provides an indication of the likelihood that dates set for hearings will proceed on schedule without adjournment. In the long run, the

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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hearing date certainty rate will be positively correlated with the case clearance rate, thus the higher the hearing date certainty rates, the higher the clearance rates in the long run. Similarly, in the long run higher hearing date certainty rates will correlate with lower case backlog rates, thus there is a negative association between these two variables. The hearing date certainty, which computes the rate of adherence to hearing dates scheduled, ranges from an approximate low of 69.00% in the Home Circuit Court to a high of 85.84% in the High Court Civil Division in 2024. The weighted average hearing date certainty across all the Divisions of the Supreme Court in 2024 was roughly 77.45%, which is an indication that there was a roughly 77% probability that a matter scheduled for hearing will go ahead without adjournment. This result represents an approximate 3 percentage points improvement compared to the previous year. Similar data on the estimated trial date certainty rates in isolation are also provided in the relevant chapters of the report. The estimated trial date certainty rates are generally lower than the overall hearing date certainty rates in the Divisions of the Supreme Court.

This report demonstrates decisively that external factors and third parties continue to account for a sizeable share of the reasons for adjournment of cases and hence increased waiting time or delays in case dispositions. The prominent reasons for adjournment in 2024 are similar to those observed over the past several years of statistical reporting, although a few which are more within the direct control of the court, such as files not found have fallen off the top decile of the lists. Among the common reasons for adjournment cited in this report are the non-appearance of parties and/or attorneys, absenteeism of witnesses and investigating officers, statements outstanding, ballistic, forensic and medical reports outstanding.



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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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The case file integrity rate measures the proportion of cases which are scheduled for court and are able to proceed in a timely manner without being adjourned for reasons of missing, lost or incomplete files, matters wrongly listed for court and other related factors which are attributable to the inefficient handling of records and case scheduling by the court's registries. Using the High Court Civil Division as a proxy, the data reveals that the case file integrity rate was 96.76%, a slight decline of 0.71 percentage points when compared to the previous year. This result suggests that for every 100 case files that were part of court hearings in 2024, roughly 97 were able to proceed without being adjourned due to one of the named factors which impair case file integrity. The prescribed international standard for the case file integrity rate measure is 98% - 100%.

Apart from the high frequency of adjournments, the relatively high incidence of requisitions is an impediment to the speed of disposition of civil matters. Among the civil divisions, the incidence of requisitions in 2024 was highest in the Family Division with a ratio of 85 requisitions per 100 case files while the High Court Civil Division with 2 requisitions per 100 case files had the lowest incidence. Continuous reductions in the incidence of requisitions issued is crucial to ongoing efforts to bolster efficiency in especially the Family and Estate Divisions of the Supreme Court.

One of the most positive outcomes for the Supreme Court in 2024 was the continued progress in the clearance of outstanding judgments. In this regard, the Supreme Court recorded another strong year with a rate judgments clearance rate of 112.96%. This result suggests that for every 10 new judgments reserved during the year, roughly 11 judgements were delivered, which is

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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roughly the same as the previous year. The general trend over the past three years is consistent with the Chief Justice's thrust to have judgments reserved being delivered within three months, except for complex judgments which should take a maximum time of six months after being reserved to be delivered.

It is forecasted that in 2025, 14389 new cases will be filed across the divisions/sections of the Supreme Court while it is projected that 11226 will be disposed. Thus, the overall forecasted clearance rate for the Supreme Court in 2025 is 78.02% which would be roughly 5 percentage points below the actual rate in 2024.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

See below Supreme Court case activity summary for 2024:

Division	New cases Filed	Aggregate number of cases disposed	Clearance Rate (%)	Average time To Disposition (months)	Hearing Date Certainty Rate (%)
High Court Civil (HCV)	4934	3135	63.54	49.55	85.84
Family	4252	4651	109.38	46.06	74.74
Estate	3540	2809	79.35	19.26	77.32
Commercial	471	445	94.48	30.79	81.25
Home Circuit Court	301	169	56.15	39	69
Gun Court	363	297	81.82	19.26	74.00
Revenue Court	3	1	33.33%	-	-
Insolvency	6	4	67%	12	-
Admiralty	2	2	100%	18	-
Gross/Weighted Average	13872	11513	83.00	33.42	77.45

See below summary of the on-time case processing rate and the proxy case backlog rate (%)

Among other important performance metrics, which allow for the tracking of court performance are:

(i) The on time case processing rate

(ii) Crude proxy case backlog rate

The on time case processing rate provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which are being disposed within the predefined time standard. The case backlog rate provides an estimated measurement of the proportion of cases, which are unresolved for more than two years as at end of 2024. These measures are summarized in the table below:

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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**Selected performances metrics for the Supreme Court in 2024**

Division of the Supreme Court	Resolved/Disposed cases	Unresolved cases which had some administrative or court activity in 2024	Number of cases disposed within 2 years	On-time case processing rate (%)	Crude Proxy Case backlog rate (%)
High Court Civil (HCV)	3135	9178	1105	35.25	64.75
Family Division	4651	5765	3182	68.41	31.59
Estate Division	2809	4279	2312	82.30	17.70
Commercial Division	455	800	271	60.90	39.10
Home Circuit Court	169	1189	-	36	64
Gun Court	297	426	521	79.74	20.26
Total/Weighted Average	11516	21637	7391	60.43	39.57

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

## Vital Forecasts:

### Forecast of case activity in the Divisions of the Supreme Court in 2025

Division	Forecasted number of new cases	Forecasted number of disposed cases	Forecasted Case Clearance Rate (%)
High Court Civil Division	5090	3212	63.10
Family Division	4515	4176	92.49
Estate Division	3628	2999	82.66
Home Circuit Court	324	208	64.20
High Court Division of the Gun Court	321	298	92.83
Commercial Division	499	324	64.93
Revenue Division	6	5	83.33
<b>Total/Weighted Average</b>	<b>14383</b>	<b>11223</b>	<b>77.70</b>

*Note: Forecasting done using the method of exponential smoothing*

The above table provides a forecast of the number of cases filed and disposed in each division/section of the Supreme Court in 2025 as well as the projected case clearance rates. The forecasted number of new cases entering the Supreme Court in 2025 is 14383 while the forecasted number of disposed cases across the divisions/sections is 11223. These predicted values would produce a weighted case clearance rate of 77.70% in 2025.

### Forecast for Judgments Reserved and Delivered in 2025

Forecasted number of Judgments Reserved	Forecasted number of Judgments Delivered	Forecasted clearance rate on Judgments (%)
287	291	101.39

*Note: Forecasting done using the method of exponential smoothing*

The Supreme Court is expected to sustain its positive direction in clearing outstanding judgments in 2025. Using the method of exponential smoothing, with a smoothing constant  $>0.50$ , it is forecasted that 291 judgments will be delivered by the Supreme Court in 2025 and 287 new ones will be reserved. This produces a forecasted clearance rate on judgments of 101.39% in 2025, which suggests that for every 10 judgments reserved in that year, roughly 10 judgments are expected to be delivered.

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# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

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## **METHODOLOGY**

Guaranteeing the reliability and validity of the data used to produce the periodic statistics 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. In the Supreme Court, each Division has a set of data entry officers whose daily responsibility is to enter data on new cases and as necessary update all case activity and events as the matters traverse the courts. For the civil divisions, such updates are done electronically using the Judicial Enhancement Management Software (JEMS) software, which has been evolved to cater for a wider range of data capture and reporting needs. In the High Court Division of the Gun Court, the Home Circuit Court and the Revenue Court, the new Judicial Case Management System (JCMS) is utilized. In all divisions, live court data is also recorded in the systems from inside court by the Court Clerks. In order to assure the integrity of the data that is entered into the systems, data validators are specially assigned to scrutinize case files on a daily basis to ensure consistency with the electronic data and adequacy of data capture.

Once all data for the periods of interest are entered into the systems, and the necessary checks and balances completed, the data is then migrated to a Microsoft Excel friendly platform, from where it is extracted, the statistical data processed and reports generated, primarily using the RStudio, Maple and SPSS software. Statistical reports are generated for each of the three Terms, which constitutes the operating year for the Supreme Court, as well as for the vacation period mainly for the Civil Registries. These reports culminate with an Annual Statistics Report. Such

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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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.

### **Structure of Report**

This is a comprehensive statistical report on case activity in the various Divisions of the Supreme Court in 2024. Each of the first six chapters focus on case activity and performance metrics in the High Court Civil (HCV) Division, the Matrimonial Division, the Probate Division, the Commercial Division, the Home Circuit Court and the High Court Division of the Gun Court. The last chapter summarizes the aggregate case activity across the Divisions of the Supreme Court, presents the 2024 clearance rate for civil Judgements and the courtroom utilization rate estimates. In each chapter, a wide range of measurements and other information are presented which places case and court activity in each Division in their peculiar perspectives and context. A glossary of statistical terms and key performance measures used in his reports are also outlined at the end of the report. The report is meant to be more of an information piece for both internal and external stakeholders, forming the basis for interventions geared at enhancing efficiency and fostering a culture of court excellence.

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# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

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## **CHAPTER 1.0: HIGH COURT CIVIL (HCV) DIVISION**

The ensuing analysis examines the various measures of the efficiency of case handling in the High Court Civil (HCV) Division for the year ended December 31, 2024. The below chart provides a summary of the breakdown of new cases filed in the High Court Civil Division across the different Terms/periods in 2024.

A total of 4934 new cases were filed in the High Court Civil Division in 2024, representing an increase of 15.71% compared to the previous year. Sample data from the new cases filed further reveals that approximately 53% of this cases were filed by way of Claim Forms while roughly 37% were filed by way of Fixed Date Claim Forms and 10% were filed by way of Notices of Application. In general, the number of matters filed by way of Claim Forms tend to outstrip those filed annually by way of Fixed Date Claim Forms and Notices of Application in the High Court Civil Division of the Supreme Court. The method by which a case is filed, be it by way of a Claim Form, Fixed Date Claim Form or Notice of Application has an impact on the path that the matters travel in the court. Matters filed by way of Claim Forms tend to have more processes along the case flow continuum and tend on average to take a longer time to be disposed than those filed by way of Fixed Date Claim Forms and Notices of Application, both of which tend to follow a very similar path.

The table below provides an analysis of the reasons for adjournment or continuance of High Court Civil cases in 2024.



# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 1.0: Leading reasons for adjournment for year ended December 31, 2024**

Reasons for adjournment	Frequency	Percentage
Claimant to file documents	2846	19.0
Parties having discussion	1006	6.7
Defendant to file documents	836	5.6
Claimant's documents not served or short served	795	5.3
Claimant to comply with comments from NEPA	783	5.2
No parties appearing	665	4.4
Judge unavailable	506	3.4
Claimant not available	457	3.0
Letter indicating no objection outstanding	415	2.8
Matter referred to mediation	406	2.7
Pending settlement	374	2.5
Claimant's attorney absent	365	2.4
For Mediation	319	2.1
Defendant not available	312	2.1
File not found	310	2.1

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

Defendant's attorney absent	249	1.7
Defendant's Document not served	233	1.6
To produce documents	224	1.5
Natural Disaster	206	1.4
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>11503</b>	<b>77.0</b>

***Total number of adjournments/continuance = 14,984***

There were total of 14,984 incidence of adjournments in 2024, an increase of 14.34% when compared to the previous year. The above table summarizes the leading reasons for adjournment for the year ended December 2024 in which it is seen that the three dominant reasons for adjournment were claimants to file documents with 2846 or 19.0% of all events of the adjournments, adjournments for parties to have discussions with 1006 or 6.70% of the adjournments and adjournments for defendants to file documents with 836 or 5.60%. Adjournments due to claimant's documents not being served or short served with 5.30% and adjournments for claimant to comply with comments from NEPA with 5.20% rounds off the five leading reasons for adjournment in 2024. The top fifteen reasons for adjournment enumerated above, accounts for approximately 77.0% of the total reasons for case adjournment/continuance during the year. Notably, two of the three leading reasons for adjournment in this year's report also featured in the previous year's report. Similar to the previous reports, it is evident that a significant proportion of the total adjournments were due

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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to factors related to the lack of readiness or preparedness of case files and cases themselves and the absenteeism of parties and attorneys for court hearings.

There are currently several ongoing projects and reforms in the High Court Civil Division which have been engineered by the Chief Justice and a dedicated backlog reduction team. These initiatives are expected to turnaround the productivity of the High Court Civil Division marked over the next 18-24 months, bringing unpresented case clearance rates to the Division.

**Table 2.0: Case File Integrity Rate for the year ended December 31, 2024**

<b>Number of adjournments/continuance</b>	<b>Number of adjournments due to missing files, matters wrongly listed and matters left off the court list</b>	<b>Proxy Case File Integrity Rate (%)</b>
<b>14,984</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>96.76%</b>

In the very strictest sense, the 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. Case file integrity is based on three pillars - availability, completeness and accuracy. In the above table, the number of adjournments resulting from missing files, matters wrongly listed for court and matters left off the court list is used to compute a proxy rate for the case file integrity. The table shows that there were 486 combined incidences of adjournments due to these deficiencies in 2024, resulting in a case file integrity rate of 96.76%, which means that roughly 3.24% of the total

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

adjournments were due to one or more of factors that affect case file integrity. The case file integrity rate declined by 0.98 percentage points compared to the previous year.

**Table 3.0: Selected trial and pre-trial case counts for the year ended December 31, 2024**

<b>Trial matters/hearings</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Open Court Trials	255	49.80
Motion Hearing	26	5.08
Assessment of Damages	144	28.13
Trial in Chambers	87	16.99
<b>Total trial matters</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows the breakdown of the case counts associated with selected HCV pre-trial and trial hearings in the High Court Civil Division in 2024. The table shows a 512 combined cases which were heard across the four listed types of hearings, of which open court trials with 255 or 49.80% accounted for the largest share while assessments of damages with 144 or 28.13% of the total ranked next. The list is rounded off by trial in chambers and motion hearings with 16.99% and 5.08% respectively.

**Table 4.0 Sampling distribution of hearing date certainty for the year ended December 31, 2024**

<b>Hearing dates set</b>	<b>Hearing dates adjourned (excluding adjournments for continuance)</b>	<b>Hearing date certainty (%)</b>
16856	3102	81.60

The overall hearing date certainty of a court provides a good metric of the extent to which dates, which are scheduled for hearings are adhered to and therefore speaks to the reliability of

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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the case scheduling process. A representative sample of 16856 dates scheduled for either trial or various pre-trial hearings, both in Court and in Chamber, revealed that 3102 were 'adjourned' on the date set for commencement. The resulting estimated overall hearing date certainty figure of 81.60% suggests that there is a roughly 82% probability that a date set for a matter to be heard would proceed without adjournment for reasons other than some form of 'continuance' or settlement. This result represents a marginal decline of 0.14 percentage points compared to the previous year. When trials in open court is isolated, the trial certainty rate for the HCV Division for 2024 is estimated at 71.20%, an improvement of 2.45 percentage points compared to the previous year and when trial in chambers is isolated the estimate rate is 72.45%, an increase of 1.25 percentage points compared to the previous year.

The ensuing analysis will go further into explaining where on the continuum of a matter traversing the system adjournments are most likely to occur. This will involve an analysis, termed a breakout analysis that will examine the incidence of adjournments particularly at assessment of damages and case management conference hearings.

The below tables provide indices of scheduling efficiency in the Supreme Court by measuring the number of days of matters being scheduled for assessment of damages and court trials respectively compared to the number of available court days.

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

**Table 5.0a: Index of scheduling efficiency for Assessment of Damages in the HCV Division for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Number of available court days in 2024	Number of days' worth of assessment of damages scheduled	Approximate ratio
219	225	1.03

An important indicator of the problems associated with the scheduling of HCV matters comes from an assessment of the number of court days which were available for the Supreme Court in 2024, 219 all told and the number of days' worth of assessment of damages which were scheduled (a total of 225). It is shown that for every court day available, approximately 1 days' worth of matters were scheduled, an improvement of over half a day when compared to the previous year; reflective of better use of judicial time. These results reflect continued improvement in the effectiveness of scheduling and management of the assessment of damages court which was once plagued by inefficient scheduling practices and low case clearance rates.

**Table 5.0b: Index of scheduling efficiency for court trials in the HCV Division for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Number of available court days in 2024	Number of days' worth of court matters scheduled for court trial per court	Approximate ratio
219	408	1.86

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

Another important indicator of the problems associated with the scheduling of HCV matters comes from an assessment of the number of court days which were available for the Supreme Court in the 2024, 219 all told, and the number of days' worth of court trials which were scheduled per court (a total of 408). It is shown that for every day available, 1.86 days' worth of matters were scheduled, a notable increase of almost a day when compared to the previous year; reflective of a slight worsening of scheduling practices in the trial courts in the High Court Civil Division in 2024. There continues to be a need to implement a more scientific method of scheduling which simultaneously accounts for a number of probabilistic variables. The anticipated implementation of an advanced case management system will be tremendously useful in this respect.

**Table 6.0: Probability distribution of the incidence of adjournments/continuance for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Type of Hearing	Incidence	Percentage
Case Management Conference	220	7.15
Pre-Trial Review	187	6.07
Trial in open court	444	14.42
Trial in chamber	218	7.08
Assessment of damages	157	5.10
Judgment Summons Hearing	149	4.84
Applications	1704	55.34
Sample size	<b>3044</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table takes a large, representative sample of reasons for adjournment and records the stages of the case flow process at which they are observed. The results here are broadly

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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similar to those which were observed in the previous two years. Trial hearings account for a combined 21.50% of the adjournments in the sample while case management conferences account for 7.15% but it was the incidence of adjournments at the applications stage which again took the spotlight, accounting for 55.34% of the total incidence of adjournments. Pre-trial reviews and judgment summons hearings 5.10% and 4.84% respectively of the sample rounds off the list. As stated earlier, continued improvements in the overall scheduling apparatus of the High Court Civil (HCV) Division will be crucial to reducing the persistently high incidence of adjournments which delay the disposition of cases and contribute to a sizeable case backlog.

**Table 7.0: Hearing date certainty for Assessment of damages for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Hearing dates set	Dates adjourned (excluding adjournments for continuance)	Hearing date certainty (%)
408	76	81.37%

There has been a noticeable reduction in the number of dates scheduled for matters of assessments of damages over the past three year. Despite a slight decline of 0.17 percentage points in hearing date certainty, there was a commendable case clearance rate of 81.37% in 2024. The recent advances in efficiency in scheduling and progression of assessment of damages matters represents a significant turnaround and has contributed to the general improvements in the productivity of the High Court Civil Division.



# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 8.0: Hearing date certainty for Case Management Conferences for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Hearing dates set	Dates adjourned (excluding adjournments for continuance)	Hearing date certainty (%)
1158	164	85.84

Case management conferences form an important part of the preparation of cases for further judicial activities. Matters scheduled for case management conferences will typically be set for a fixed time and day in accordance with the available resources. These matters had a hearing date certainty of 85.84% in 2024, an improvement of 2.37 percentage points when compared to the previous year.

**Table 9.0: Requisitions for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Action	Frequency
Requisitions Issued	374
Responses to requisitions	77
Requisition clearance rate	20.59%
Requisitions per 100 case files (approximation)	2

In considering the efficiency with which civil matters flow through the court system, the number of requisitions and the ratio of requisitions to case files is an important metric. The rate at which responses to requisitions are filed and the share quantum of requisitions issued can have a profound impact on the length of time that it takes for some civil matters to be disposed. In the table above it is shown that there were 361 requisitions for the year. The requisition clearance rate for 2024 was 20.59% which is 3.69 percentage points higher than the

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

previous year. Continuous interventions aimed at increasing public sensitization on the proper and timely completion of documents filed by litigants and their attorneys at the various stages along the civil case flow continuum are vital to creating and sustaining improved outcomes in this area.

**Table 10.0: Methods of disposition for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Methods of Disposition	Frequency	Percent
Agreed to pay by installment	1	.0
Application Granted	210	6.7
Application Refused	51	1.6
Attorney Admitted to Bar	81	2.6
Claim form expire	88	2.8
Claim Form Invalid	39	1.2
Company complied	2	.1
Consent Judgment	24	.8
Consent Order	46	1.5
Damages Assessed	67	2.1
Discontinuances	512	16.30
Dismissed	687	21.90
Disposed SC12	2	.1
Final Order	356	11.4
Fixed date Claim form expire	6	.2
Judgment	27	.9
Judgment Delivered	79	2.5
Judgment in Default of Defence	1	.0
Matter Withdrawn	37	1.2
Med - Settled Fully in Mediation	3	.1
Med - Settled Partially in Mediation	1	.0
On Paper Claim form expire	11	.4
Order (Chamber Court)	33	1.1
Order Granted for Transfer	1	.0

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

Settled	510	16.3
Settlement Order	12	.4
Struck Out	214	6.8
Matters Transferred	21	.1
Written Judgment Delivered	13	.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>3135</b>	<b>100.0</b>

An understanding of the distribution of the methods of case disposal is an essential metric to gaining insights into the efficiency of case handling in the courts and into operational planning. The data reveals that the High Court Civil Division disposed an unprecedented number of cases in 2024, numbering a comparatively impressive 3135; representing an increase of 15.85% compared to the previous year. The largest proportion of the cases disposed were by way of matters dismissed which accounted for 687 or 21.90% while matters settled ranked next with 510 or 16.30%. Cases resolved by way of notices of discontinuances noted and final orders each with 356 or 11.40% as well as cases resolved by application granted rounds off the top five methods of disposition in the High Court Civil Division in 2025.

**Table 11.0: Time to disposition for the year ended December 31, 2024**  
**Descriptive Statistics (months)**

Number of observation	3135
Mean	49.548
Median	30.0000
Mode	10.00
Std. Deviation	38.5678
Skewness	1.5205
Range	333.00
Minimum	< 2
Maximum	301

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

One of the most important metrics, which can be used in assessing the efficiency of case handling, is the time to disposition. An understanding of this measure is crucial to influencing both internal and external policies, necessary to bolster the timely delivery of justice. The above table provides crucial insights on the average time to disposition of matters in the HCV Division for 2024. The 3135 cases disposed in the year reveal an estimated average time to disposition was 49.55 months or roughly 4 years and 1 month. The oldest matter disposed in the year was 301 months old or roughly 10 years old while the lowest time that a matter took to disposition was roughly two months. The median time to disposition was forty months or approximately 30 months while the mode was 10 months. The positive skewness of roughly 1.52 suggests that there were proportionately more disposals, which took lower time to disposition than those which took higher than the average time.

**Table 12.0: Breakdown of time to disposition for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Time Interval (months)	Frequency	Percent
0 - 12	567	18.1
13 - 24	538	17.15
25 - 36	375	11.95
37 - 47	282	9
48 & over	1373	43.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>3135</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table provides a more detailed breakdown of the average time to disposition. It is seen that of the 3135 matters disposed in the year, the largest proportion, 1373 or 43.80% took four years or more to be disposed. 567 cases or roughly 18.10% of the cases disposed took a

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

year or less while 538 or 17.15% took between 13 and 24 months to be disposed. The remaining proportion of the cases disposed was accounted for by the intervals 37 – 47 months with 9.0% and the 25 – 36 months' interval with 11.75% of the disposals. It is of note that roughly 35.25% of the matters disposed of in 2024 took two years or less, compared to approximately 64.75%, which took more than two years during the year. Deficiencies including frequent adjournments, low trial/hearing certainty and the attendant problems with date scheduling certainty as well as the incidence of requisitions may be among the factors accounting for the majority of matters taking more than two years to be disposed. As indicated earlier, a number of new process re-engineering initiatives are underway in the High Court Civil (HCV) Division, which are expected to eventually contribute appreciably to a reduction in the average time to disposition for the High Court Civil (HCV) Division.

**Table 13.0: Clearance rate for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Cases filed	Cases disposed	Case clearance rate
4934	3135	63.54%

**\*248 or 5.03% of the cases disposed, originated in 2024**

The case clearance rate is an important metric, which complements the case disposal rate. It is calculated as the ratio of incoming active cases to disposed cases. A ratio of 100% is an indication that for every new case filed, a pre-existing case is also disposed. It is an important measure in placing the time to disposition of matters into context and to providing a deeper understanding the case carriage burden that is being faced by the different Divisions. In 2024, the High Court Civil Division recorded a case clearance rate of 63.54%, which is a mere 0.08

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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percentage points higher than that of the previous year but the trend over the past year indicates that the High Court Civil Division has now made a decisive positive change in course. In the past three years, the weighted average case clearance rate in the High Court Civil division has consistently exceeded 60%. Despite the fact that this is still below the desired 100% and over to start making serious inroads into the case backlog, it nonetheless represents a major milestone as the years preceding saw annual case clearance rates average below 30%; sometimes falling below 20%. The progress noted is as a result of several simultaneous projects which are being engineered by the backlog reduction committee which is spearheaded by the Honourable Chief Justice of Jamaica, Mr. Bryan Sykes.

#### **Other performance measures**

Among other important performance, which allow for the tracking of court performance are:

- (i) The on time case processing rate**
- (ii) The case turnover ratio**
- (iii) The disposition days**
- (iv) The crude proxy case backlog rate**

The on time case processing provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which are being disposed within the predefined time standard. The case turnover rate is the number of cases resolved, for every unresolved case in a given period while the disposition days provide a measure of the estimated length of time that it will take the unresolved cases in that period to

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

be disposed. Additionally, the crude proxy case backlog rate provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which have been active for over two years as at the end of 2024. These measures are summarized in the table below:

**Table 14.0: Selected performances metrics for the High Court Civil (HCV) Division in 2024**

Resolved cases	Unresolved cases	Case turnover rate (%)	Estimated disposal days for unresolved cases	Number of cases disposed within 2 years	Total number of cases disposed	On-time case processing rate (%)	Crude Proxy Case backlog rate (%)
3135	9178	0.34	1074	1105	3135	35.25	64.75

The results in the above table show a case turnover rate of 0.34, which is an indication that for every 100 cases, which were ‘heard’ in 2024 and still active at the end of the year, another 34 were disposed, an improvement of 9 percentage points when compared to the previous year. This result forms part of the computation of the case disposal days which reveals that the cases that went to court which were unresolved at the end of the year will on average take 1074 days (approximately 3 years) to be disposed, barring special interventions or other unanticipated circumstances.

A case is considered to be in a backlog classification if it is unresolved in the courts for over two years. Based on this general criterion, a case that is resolved within two years is considered to have been resolved on time. The on time case-processing rate for the High Court Civil Division in 2024 is 34.70%, which reflects the proportion of High Court Civil cases in the year, which were disposed within 2 years. Conversely, the crude proxy case backlog rate is estimated at

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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64.75%, an indication that an estimated annual proportion of 65% of cases are likely to fall into a backlog classification based on the current case disposition and case clearance rates. The results suggest that of the 9178 cases, which had some court activity in 2024 and were still active at the end of the year, roughly 5943 are expected to be in a backlog classification before being disposed.



# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

## **CHAPTER 2.0: FAMILY DIVISION**

The ensuing analysis examines the various measures of the efficiency of case handling in the Family Division for the year ended December 2024.

A total of 4252 new Family cases were filed in 2024, a decrease of 5.49% when compared to 2023. 309 or 7.27% of these cases were filed at the Western Regional Registry in the second city of Montego Bay while the remaining 3943 or 92.73% were filed at the Supreme Court Registry in Kingston. The number of new cases filed at the Western Regional Registry in Montego Bay represents a decline of 9 or 2.83% when compared to 2023 while the number of new cases filed in the Supreme Court Registry in Kingston fell by 5.39% when compared to 2023.

It is of note that as a whole, 29.91% of the Family cases filed involved children, a decline of 2.71 percentage points when compared to the previous year. Additionally, 0.26% of the new cases filed were nullity cases and 3853 cases were divorce cases, accounting for 90.62% of new case activity in the Family Division of the Supreme Court.

**Table 15.0: Petitions filed for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Type of petition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Petition for dissolution of marriage*	3853	55.15
Amended petition for dissolution of marriage	3123	44.70
Petition for Nullity	11	0.16
<b>Total Petitions filed</b>	<b>6987</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of amendments per petition	<b>0.81</b>	

\*Includes petitions involving children

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

The above table summarizes petitions filed in 2024. It is shown that a total of 6987 Petitions for either dissolution of marriage or Nullity (new or amended) were filed, 3853 or 55.15% were petitions for dissolution of marriage, compared to 3123 or 44.70% which were amended or further amended petitions for dissolution of marriage. The analysis further suggests that the ratio of petitions to amended petitions is 0.81 or in other words for every 100 Petitions for dissolution of marriage there is roughly 81 amended Petitions for dissolution of marriage in 2023, a slight decline of 1 percentage point when compared to the previous year. There was a decline in both the incidence of petitions and amended filed in 2024 when compared to 2023. The Family Division of the Supreme Court continues to make impressive strides with the turnaround of cases. Currently, any case filing which meet the required standards of accuracy and completeness as published on the website of the Supreme Court will quite probably be able to obtain a disposal within 4-6 months.

**Table 16.0: Decrees Nisi and Decrees Absolute filed for the year ended December 31, 2024**

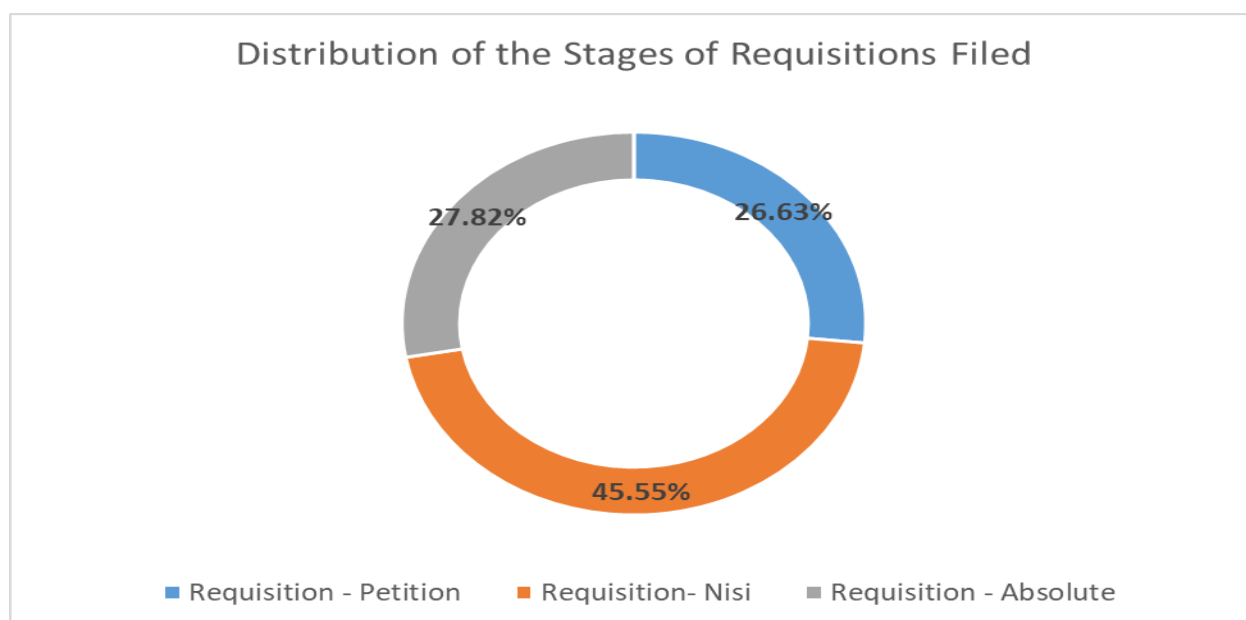
Case Status	Frequency
Decree Absolute	5998
Decree Nisi for dissolution of marriage	5808
Decree Nisi for nullity of marriage	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>11816</b>
<b>Ratio of Decrees Nisi to Decrees Absolute Filed</b>	<b>1.03</b>

It is seen in the above table that for every 100 Decrees Nisi filed there were roughly 103 Decrees Absolute filed in 2024, a notable increase of 7 percentage points when compared to the previous year. One caveat to note is that Decrees Nisi and Decrees Absolute would have

originated at various times outside of this specific period of analysis. The data suggests that the number of Decrees Absolute filed fell by 3.59% while the number of Decrees Nisi filed fell by 4.57% when compared to the previous year. The stage of a matter at which requisitions have mostly occurred has an impact on the production rate for both Decrees Nisi and Decrees Absolute Granted.

A sampling distribution of the incidence of requisitions at the key stages of the typical lifecycle of a matrimonial matter - Petition, Decrees Nisi and Decrees Absolute is shown in the chart below.

**Chart 1.0: Distribution of the stages of requisitions for the year ended December 31, 2024**



The data suggests that a total of 12,292 requisitions were issued at the three primary stages of a divorces case at the Kingston and Western Regional Supreme Court Registries combined, an increase of 8.15% when compared to 2023, representing the second consecutive year of

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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increase. The number of requisitions filed at the petition stage increased by 10.39% when compared to the previous year, while the number filed at the Decree Nisi increased by 5.82%. The number of requisitions filed at the Decree Absolute stage increased by 9.99% when compared to the previous year. As with previous reports, it is seen in the above chart that there is a greater probability that a requisition will be made at the stage of Decree Nisi, with an approximately 45.55% incidence while petitions filed at the Decrees Absolute and Petition stages accounted for approximately 27.82% and 26.63% respectively of the total. The data continues to suggest that specific interventions are needed particularly at the stage of Decrees Nisi in order to bolster the speed of disposition of matters by reducing the incidence of requisitions. These advances will be crucial to ensuring that the divorce matters can be concluded ideally within 4-6 months or at most 8-12 months of filing.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 17.0: Methods of Disposals for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Methods of Disposition	Frequency	Percent
Claimant/Petitioner Deceased	1	.0
Consent Judgment	1	.0
Consent Order	8	.2
Decree Absolute Granted	3395	73.0
Decree Absolute set aside	7	.2
Decree Nullity Granted	4	.1
Dismissed	7	.2
Disposed*	44	.9
Final Order	205	4.4
Finalized by death of Respondent	5	.1
Fixed date Claim form expire	10	.2
Grant of administration signed	1	.0
Judgment	1	.0
Matter Withdrawn	5	.1
Notice of Discontinuance noted	228	4.9
Petition Refused	1	.0
Settled	2	.0
Struck Out	379	8.1
Transfer to family division (Ordered)	1	.0
WR Decree Absolute Granted	332	7.1
WR Notice of Discontinuance noted	14	.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4651</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*NB: WR means Western Regional Registry*

*NB: 492 or 10.94 % of the cases disposed in 2022 were originated in said year.*

*\*Exact method unspecified*

The above table reveals that 4651 Family cases were disposed in 2024, an increase of 14.19% when compared to 2023. A proportion of 80.10% or 3727 were attributable to Decrees Absolute Granted (Western Regional and Kingston Registries combined) while 379 or 8.10% were due to Notices of Discontinuance filed, accounting for the top two methods of disposition

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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in 2023. Matters disposed by notices of discontinuance and final orders accounted for the next largest proportions of the methods of disposition with 5.46% and 4.40% respectively of the methods of disposition. It is of note that 530 or 11.4% of the cases disposed of in 2024, actually originated in said year, a decline of 7.72% when compared to the previous year. This further represents 12.46% of the new cases filed in 2024, an increase in proportion of 1.52 percentage points when compared to the previous year. The ongoing process flow re-engineering and enhanced engagement of stakeholders should continue to drive improvements in this area in 2025 and by the end of said year, it is forecasted that up to 20% of new cases filed will be disposed in the same year of filing. The current trends suggest that the Family Division could conceivably realise the target of disposing the majority of cases filed within 6-8 months, however the case progression mechanism has to work with a high degree of efficiency for this to happen and the cooperation of the attorneys and litigants in properly filing documents and expeditiously responding to requisitions will be crucial.

It is of note that 4305 or 92.56% of the 4651 family cases disposed were attributable to the Kingston Registry while 346 or 7.66% were accounted for by the Western Regional Registry in Montego Bay. The Kingston Registry experienced a 14.46% increase in the number of cases disposed while the Western Regional Registry experienced a 10.89% increase.

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THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT	2024
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**Table 18.0: Requisitions summary for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Action	Frequency
Requisitions Issued	12,292
Number of requisitions per 100 files	85
Number of responses to requisitions	3788
Requisition response rate	5.05%

The incidence of requisitions is especially important in assessing the efficiency with which Family matters move through the court system. A total of 12292 requisitions were issued in 2024 while there were 3788 responses to requisitions. The number of requisition responses in 2024 represents a significant increase of approximately 560% when compared to the previous year. This made a major contribution to the aggressive gains in case clearance rate recorded by the Family Division in 2024. The number requisitions issued per 100 case files handled in 2024 also fell significantly when compared to 2023, despite the overall increase in the number of requisitions issued in 2024. More particularly, the number of requisitions issued fell by 66.53% when compared to 2023, further indicating that the Family Division was moving in the right direction as far as its total productivity is concerned.

Below is an outline of the ideal delivery standard and process flow for the disposition of divorce matters in the Matrimonial Division of the Supreme Court.

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

**Table 19.0: Outline of ideal delivery time standard and process flow for the disposition of divorce matters**

Stage 1	Task	Existing Staff	Current time (days)	Proposed Staff	Proposed Time (days)
<b>Petition/      Decree Nisi/   Decree absolute</b>	Receive document and record skeleton party and document information in JEMS	2	3	3	1
	Enter and scanning of documents in JEMS  Update of case party information in JEMS	3		3	
	Retrieve file and maintain filing room (Records officer)	0		2	
	Sorting of manual documents – punching and placing of documents on file, writing of party information and suit number on file jacket	0	3	4	1
	Record in JEMS file location and move manual file to physical location.  Updating and scanning of signed petition in JEMS.  Issuing notice via email.	0	3	2	1



<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

	Vetting and signing of petition by Deputy Registrar	1	5	1	2
	Mandatory waiting period for service of petition and filing of application for decree nisi (14-84 days)		14		14
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Task</b>				
<b>Decree Nisi</b>	Vetting of Decree Nisi by Deputy Registrar & legal officers	1	40	2	20
	Vetting and signing of Decree Nisi by Judge		14		1
	Mandatory waiting period between granting of decree nisi and application for decree absolute		30		30
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Task</b>				
<b>Decree Absolute</b>	Vetting of Decree Absolute by Senior officer	0	14	2	7
	Vetting and signing of Decree Absolute by Judge		5		1
<b>Total</b>			131 (26wks)		78 (16wks)

### Notes

1. At stage one the current staff and proposed staff is the same three, this is so as formally the matrimonial department has three data entry clerk. However, these clerks are

currently assigned to attend court and chambers full time. The proposed is with the view of these data entry clerk be relieved of court duties.

2. At stage two in addition to the existing deputy registrar and legal officer, the proposal is for one additional legal officer (GLG/LO1) for the proposed time line to be achieved.
3. At stage two, if the signing of decree nisi by judge/master within one day is to be achieved, files must be processed by judge/master on the day and within the time the decree nisi is scheduled and return to the matrimonial registry on the same day.
4. At stage two – for the processing decree nisi with 20 days is to be achieved it is proposed that two senior officers are available at stage one, sorting and vetting, to pre vet application for decree nisi
5. At stage three, if the signing of decree absolute by judge within one day is to be achieved, judges must process files on the day and within the time the decree absolute is scheduled and return to the matrimonial registry on the same day.
6. The proposal supports the following standards
  - a. Upon filing of petition, the matrimonial department will respond within **5 working days**. The response will be communicated by email if available or manual notice in the notice box, for the signed petition to be collected or to collect requisition to petition.
  - b. Upon filing of application for decree nisi, the matrimonial department will respond within **23 working days**. The response will be communicated by email if available or manual notice in the notice box, for the signed decree nisi to be collected or to collect requisition to decree nisi.
  - c. Upon filing of application for decree absolute, the matrimonial department will respond within **11 working days**. The response will be communicated by email if available or manual notice in the notice box, for the signed decree absolute to be collected or to collect requisition to decree absolute.
7. This model is built on the assumption of expeditious responses from the attorneys and their clients so as to eliminate delays.

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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**Table 20.0: Court/Chamber hearings for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Action	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Applications	1521	73.48
Case Management Conference	339	16.38
Motion Hearing	25	1.21
Pre-trial Hearing	32	1.55
Trial	153	7.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>2070</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows the distribution of the types of matters brought before the Court for the period under examination. The data shows that an incidence of 2070 hearings either before open court or chamber, an increase of 28.97% when compared to the previous year. The largest proportion, 1521 or 73.48% were applications followed by 339 or 16.38%, which were Case Management Conference (CMCs) matters. The event with the third highest incidence in this category is trials (chamber and open court combined), which accounts for 153 or 7.93% of the total. Pre-trial hearings with 32 or 1.55% and motion hearings with 25 or 1.21% of the total rounds off the top 5 events enumerated in this category. The probability distributions of the events in this table are broadly consistent with that which was observed in the previous two years.

**Table 21.0: Leading applications in the year ended December 31, 2024**

Application type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Application for division of property	342	22.65
Applications to manage affairs	141	9.34
Application to appoint legal guardian	121	8.01

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

Application for maintenance	48	3.18
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**Sample size/number of observations =1510**

Further analysis of the types of application brought before the Court suggests that applications for division of property with 342 or 22.65% accounted for the largest share. This is followed by applications to manage affairs with 141 or 9.34% of the observations, while applications to appoint legal guardian with 121 or 8.01% and applications for maintenance with 48 or 3.18% each of the applications round off the top four applications.

**Table 22.0: Leading reasons for adjournment for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Reasons for Adjournment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Claimant to file documents	161	22.74
Defendant to file documents	65	9.18
Referred to mediation	59	8.33
Claimant's application/documents not in order	39	5.51
Parties having discussions with a view to settlement	38	5.37
Claimant's documents not served or short served	35	4.94

**Total incidence of adjournments (N) = 708**

As with all Divisions of the Supreme Court, an important metric of court efficiency are the reasons for adjournment of court matters. The data suggests that there were 708 incidence of adjournments in the Family Division for chamber and open court hearings in 2024, representing an increase of 12.38% when compared to the previous year. The largest proportion of these adjournments were for claimants to file documents with 161 or 22.74%, defendant to file documents with 65 or 9.18% and referrals to mediation with 59 or 8.33% rounding off the top three incidence. The listed reasons for adjournment account for 56.07% of the total incidence

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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of adjournments in 2024. Continued effort to improve internal efficiency and to improve overall case management and external stakeholder engagement are critical to reducing delay and improving the timely resolution of cases which are heard in chamber or open court.

**Table 23.0: Hearing date certainty for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Sample of Court/Chamber hearing dates set	Hearing dates Date adjourned	Hearing date certainty rate (%)
1987	502	74.74

The possible over-scheduling of cases is affirmed by the above table, which computes the date scheduling certainty of the Family Division. It is seen that of the sample of 1987 combined incidence of Court and Chamber hearings in 2024, 502 were adjourned for reasons other than intrinsic procedural factors. This produces a moderate 74.74% hearing date certainty rate, an increase of 3.56 percentage points when compared to the previous year. For every 100 hearing dates scheduled, the approximate number that proceeded without adjournment in 2024 is 74. When trial matters are isolated, the trial date certainty rate is an estimated 67%, the same as that of 2023.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 24.0: Time to disposition for the year ended December 31, 2024**

## Descriptive Statistics (months)

Number of observation	4651
Mean	46.0684
Median	17.0000
Mode	10.00
Std. Deviation	78.04226
Skewness	2.569
Std. Error of Skewness	.036
Range	428.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	429.00

The overall average time to disposition of all cases resolved in the Family Division in 2024 is roughly 46 months, an increase of 21 months when compared to the corresponding period in the previous year. The mean was affected by a significant number of older matters which were disposed during the year. Notably, the modal or most frequent time to disposition during the year was 10 months, while the median was 17 months. The acutely high positive skewness suggests that a substantial portion of the cases disposed were resolved in less than the overall average time. In situations like these, the median is thought to be a better measure of central tendency than the mean.

The oldest matter disposed was approximately 36 years old while on the other end of the spectrum there were matters filed which disposed within a three months, most likely due to discontinuances or open court proceedings. The scores had a standard deviation of roughly 78 months, which indicates a wide variation in the distribution of the times to disposition in the period.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 25.0: Breakdown of times to disposition for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Time Interval (months)	Frequency	Percent
0 - 12	1811	38.9
13 - 24	1371	29.5
25 - 36	517	11.1
37 - 47	185	4.0
48 & over	767	16.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>4651</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Note: The average time taken to dispose of cases resolved in 0 -12 is 9 months.*

The above table provides a more detailed breakdown of the estimated times to disposition for family matters in 2024. It is seen that of the 4651 matters disposed in 2024, the largest proportion, 1811 or roughly 38.90% were disposed within a year, followed by the 1371 or 29.50% which were disposed in 13 – 24 months. Taken together this result suggests that 3051 or 68.40% of Family Division matters which were disposed during the year were done in two years or less from the time of initiation, which is 5.6 percentage points below that of the previous year. 517 or roughly 11.10% of all Family matters disposed in 2024 took between 25 and 36 months to be disposed, while 185 or 4.00% took between 37 and 47 months to be disposed. It is of note that 767 or 16.50% of the cases disposed in the Family Division in 2024 took four or more years to be resolved, largely on account of lengthy delays in external filings from case parties. As with the previous three years, the estimates however clearly suggest that a decidedly larger proportion of matters, which were disposed of during the year, took two years or less. It has been established that under near ideal circumstances, Family cases can be disposed within 4-6 months after filing, however in 2024 less than 15% of the cases resolved

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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satisfied this target, largely on account of the often slow rate of compliance with requisitions issued and the attendant errors in filings submitted to the registry by external parties. The Family Division continues to work on achieving optimal efficiency in its internal processes in order to guarantee the public that if filings made by litigants and attorneys meets the requisite standards and are requisitions are responded to in a timely manner then divorce cases can be resolved without delay.

**Table 26.0a: Case clearance rate for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Cases filed	Cases disposed	Case clearance rate
4252	4651	109.38%

\* It is of note that 530 or 11.40% of the cases disposed of in 2024, actually originated in that year. This further represents a mere 12.46% of the new cases filed in 2023, an increase in proportion of 0.43 percentage points when compared to the previous year.

The above table shows that there were 4252 new cases filed in 2024 while 4651 were disposed. This produces a case clearance rate of 109.38%, suggesting that for every 100 new cases; roughly 109 were disposed in the year. An important caveat is that the cases disposed did not necessarily originate in the stated year. The result represents an impressive 18.85 percentage points improvement in the case clearance rate when compared to the previous year. The clearance rates for family matters may also be broken down by location of registry, as shown below:



# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 26.0b: Case clearance rate for the year ended December 31, 2024 (by registry location)**

Registry location	Number of new cases filed	Cases disposed	Case clearance rate
Kingston Registry	3943	4305	109.18%
Montego Bay Registry	309	346	111.97%

The above table shows that when the case clearance rate is done by registry location, the Family Registry in Kingston cleared roughly 109 cases for every 100 new cases filed while the Western Regional Registry in Montego Bay cleared approximately 112 for every 100 cases filed. Both registries recorded improvements when compared to the previous year. The Western Registry in Montego Bay has not historically had the same relatively seamless access to Judges and Masters as the Kingston registry for review of matters at the relevant stages; however, this situation is improving and should have a positive impact on their clearance rate in the coming periods. Both registries continue to make operational improvements which will have a profound impact the efficient progression of cases.

## **Other performance measures**

Among other important performance, which allow for the tracking of court performance are:

- (i) **The on time case processing rate**
- (ii) **The case turnover ratio**
- (iii) **The disposition days**
- (iv) **The crude proxy case backlog rate**

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

The on time case processing provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which are being disposed within the predefined time standard. The case turnover rate is the number of cases resolved, for every unresolved case, in a given period while the disposition days provide a measure of the estimated length of time that it will take the unresolved cases in that period to be disposed. Additionally, the crude proxy case backlog rate provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which have been active for over two years as at the end of 2024. These measures are summarized in the table below:

**Table 27.0: Selected performances metrics for the Family Division in 2024**

Resolved cases	Unresolved cases	Case turnover rate (%)	Estimated Disposition days for unresolved cases	Number of cases disposed within 2 years	Total number of cases disposed	Approximate On-time case processing rate (%)	Approximate Crude Proxy Case backlog rate (%)
4651	5765	0.81	451 days	3182	4651	68.41	31.59

The results in the above table show a case turnover rate of 0.81, which is an indication that for every 100 cases, which were handled in, 2024 and still active at the end of the year, another 81 were disposed. This result forms part of the computation of the case disposal days which reveals that the cases that went to court which were unresolved at the end of the year will on average take 451 days or roughly 1.25 more years to be disposed, barring special interventions.

A case is considered to be in a backlog classification if it is unresolved in the courts for over two years. Based on this general criterion, a case that is disposed within two years is considered to have been resolved on time. The on time case-processing rate for the Family Division in 2024 is

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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approximately 68.41.00%, which reflects the proportion of Family cases in 2024, which were disposed within 2 years. Conversely, the proxy case backlog rate is approximately 31.59%, an indication that an estimated annual proportion of 32% of cases are likely to fall into a backlog classification based on the current case disposition and case clearance rates. This further suggests that of the 5765 cases, which had some court activity in 2024 and were still active at the end of the year, 3943 are expected to be in a backlog classification before being disposed.

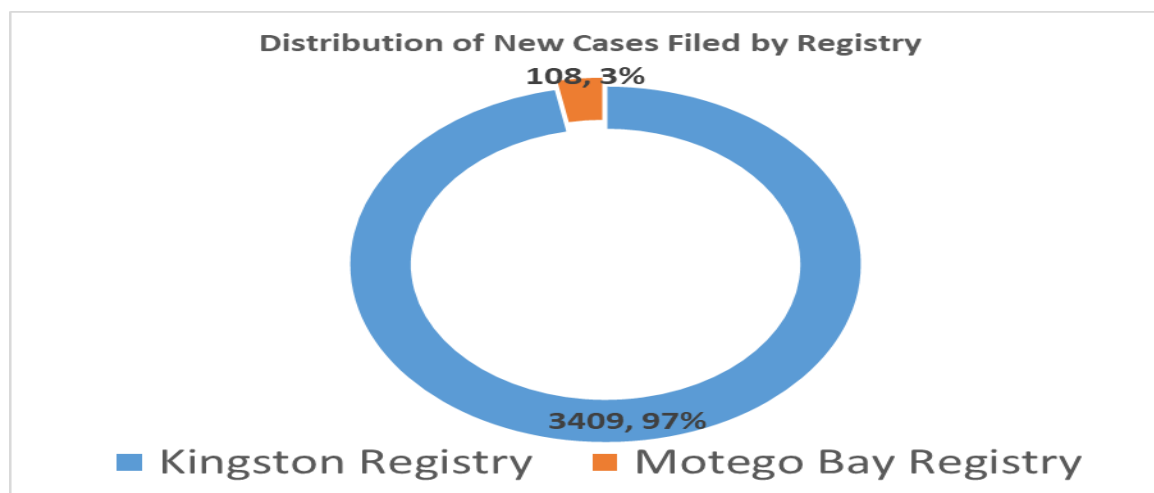
## **CHAPTER 3.0: ESTATE DIVISION**

This section turns to the analysis of the progression of matters in the Estate Division for the year ended December 31, 2024.

A total of 3540 new Estate cases were filed in the Estate Division in the year ended December 2024, an increase of 2.55% when compared to the previous year. 108 of these new cases were filed at the Western Regional Registry, a decrease of 17.50% when compared to the previous year while the remaining 3409 were filed at the Registry in Kingston. The output for the Kingston Regional Registry represents a 2.65% decrease in the number of new cases filed when compared to the previous year.

Separately, there were 96 instruments of administration filed in 2024, representing 2.71% of all new matters handled by the Estate Division during the year. The 3540 new estate cases filed in 2024 represent roughly 50% of all cases handled by the Estate Division in 2024.

**Chart 2.0: Distribution of Estate cases filed, by Registry in the year ended December 31, 2023**



# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

As shown in the above chart, 3409 or 97% of the new Estate cases filed in 2024 took place at the Registry in Kingston while the remaining 108 or 3.00% were filed at the Western Regional Registry in Montego Bay. This percentage distribution is roughly similar to the results in the previous year.

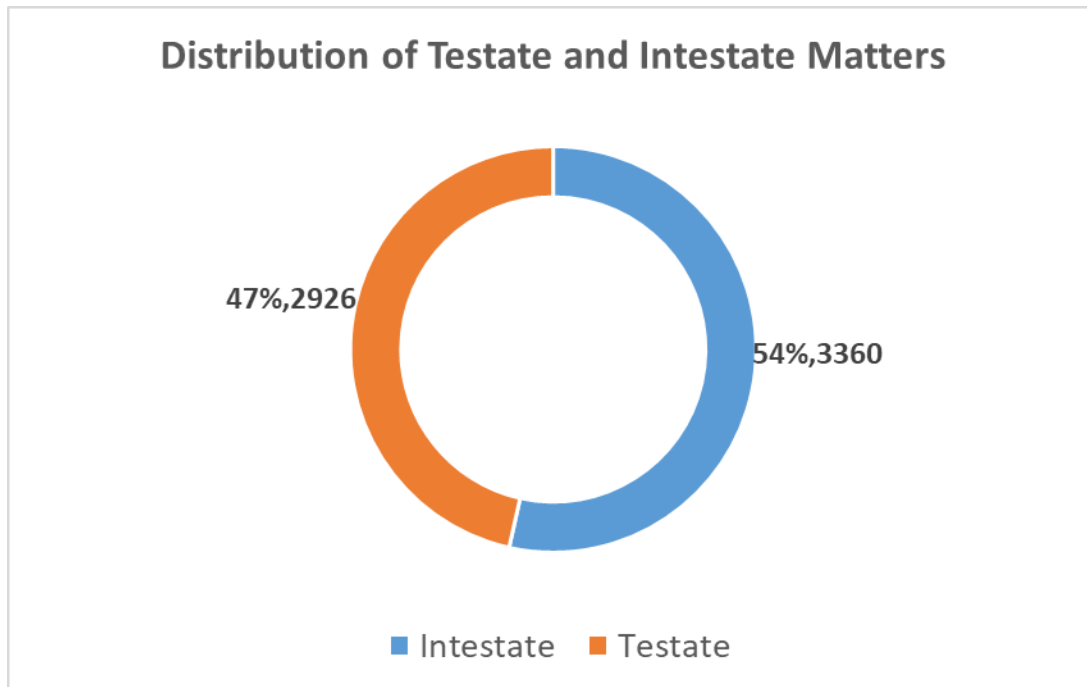
**Table 18.0: Summary of Oaths filed during the year ended December 31, 2024**

Oaths	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Supplemental Oaths	2781	0.44
Oaths	3540	0.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>6321</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Ratio</b>	<b>0.80</b>	

The above table suggests there were a total of 6321 combined Oaths and supplemental Oaths filed in 2024, of which 3540 or 56% were initial Oaths filed, compared to 2781 or 44% which were Supplemental Oaths. The ratio of Oaths to Supplemental Oaths is 0.79, which suggests that for every 100 Oaths there were 79 Supplemental Oaths filed during the year, 1 percentage points lower than the previous year. It is of note that the Supplemental Oaths in this data set are not all related to the cases filed in 2024 and also includes further Supplemental Oaths filed. Continued intervention to reduce the incidence of Supplemental Oaths are an important part of the way forward as the Division seeks to persist in improving its productivity and becoming backlog free in the shortest possible time.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT 2024 ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Chart 3.0: Sampling Distribution of Testate and Intestate cases filed as at December 31, 2024**



**Sample size = 3400**

The above chart shows that an estimated 47% of the new cases filed in the Estate Division in 2024 were Testate matters (matters with a Will in place prior to death) and 54% were Intestate (having no Will in place). These estimates were derived using a sample of 3400 cases filed in 2024.

**Table 19.0: Action sequence for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Action Status	Frequency
*Granted	2683
*Grants Signed	2679
<b>Ratio of Granted Applications to Grants Signed (Approximately)</b>	<b>1.00</b>

*\* Some of these relate to cases originating before 2024. \*Excludes Applications Granted.*

In the process of disposing a typical matter handled by the Deputy Registrar, a case will be granted after satisfactory review and then the Grant is signed which closes the case. In the

<h1 style="margin: 0;">THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</h1>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">2024</h1>
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above data we elucidate the ratio of granted applications to Grants signed which reveals a ratio of approximately 1.00, suggesting that for every 100 granted applications, there were an equivalent number of Grants signed (though not necessarily from the number granted). This outstanding result is 5 percentage points above the previous years' figure.

**Table 20.0: Case action and requisitions summary for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Action Status	Frequency
Number of cases actioned	7088
Requisitions Issued	5927
Number of responses to requisitions	4238
Number of requisitions issued per 100 case files actioned	84
Requisitions clearance rate	71.50%
Average days between final requisition filed and Grant of Probate/Administration	19

The number of requisitions made, the length of time that it takes for requisitions to be returned and the time to disposition after issuing requisitions, are important to understanding the efficiency of the flow of matters in the Estate Division. It is seen that there were 5927 requisitions issued while 7088 individual matters were actioned in the period, representing a ratio of 84 requisitions per 100 case files actioned, a rise of 24 percentage points when compared to the previous year. Further analysis suggests that the average time from the issuing of final requisitions to the Grant of Probate was 19 days, an improvement of 1 day when compared to the previous year.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 21.0: Methods of Disposal for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Methods of Disposition	Frequency	Percent
Application Granted	40	1.4
Application Refused	1	.0
Consent Order	2	.1
Fixed date Claim form expire	1	.0
Grant by Representation signed	1	.0
Grant of Admin De Bonis Non signed	11	.4
Grant of Admin De Bonis Non W/A signed	16	.6
Grant of administration signed	1293	46.0
Grant of Double Probate signed	2	.1
Grant of probate signed	1068	38.0
Grant of Resealing signed	104	3.7
Judgment	2	.1
Judgment Delivered	1	.0
Letters of Administrator with W/A signed	78	2.8
Matter Withdrawn	1	.0
Notice of Discontinuance noted	97	3.5
Struck Out	4	.1
Transfer to Civil (filed in wrong Dept.)	2	.1
Transfer to Probate (Filed in wrong Dept.)	1	.0
WR Grant of administration signed	56	2.0
WR Grant of probate signed	23	.8
WR Grant of Resealing signed	3	.1
WR Notice of Discontinuance noted	2	.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2809</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*WR is Western Registry, \*\*W/A is with Will Annex

The summary of the methods of disposal for the Estate Division for the year are contained in the above table. It is shown that of the 2809 cases disposed in 2024, an increase of 1.12% when compared to the previous year. The largest proportion, 2809 or 90.67% was a result of various Grants Signed. Notices of Discontinuance and matters disposed by an applications granted



<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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accounted for the next highest shares of cases disposed with 99 or 3.52% and 75 or 1.46% respectively. Grants of Administration signed and Grants of Probate signed with 1349 or 48.02% and 1091 or 38.87% accounts for the largest share of Grants Signed.

**Table 22.0: Dominant reasons for adjournment of Estate matters for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Reasons for adjournment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Claimant to file documents	202	53.02
Defendant to file documents	52	13.65
Claimant to comply with order	37	9.71
Claimant to serve documents	27	7.09
Parties having discussion with a view to settlement	24	6.30
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>89.77</b>

**Total number of adjournments = 381**

The leading reasons for adjournment for Estate matters that went to court in 2024 are summarized in the above table above. It is shown that of the 202 incidence of adjournments in the period, the largest proportion were for the reasons of 'claimant to file documents' which accounted for 202 or 53.02% of the total. This was followed by adjournments for defendants to file documents and claimant to comply with order which accounted for 52 or 13.65% and 37 or 9.71% respectively of the total number of adjournments. The top five reasons for adjournment is rounded off by claimants to serve documents and parties having discussions with a view to settlement which accounted for 7.09% and 6.30% respectively of the top five reasons for adjournments in the Estate Division during the year. As with previous reports, most of these reasons also featured prominently in the list of reasons for adjournment in the Family and High Court Civil Divisions during the year.

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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**Table 23.0: Leading applications for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Application	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Application to prove copy will	199	26.53
Application to be declared spouse	84	11.20
Application for directions	49	6.53

*Sample size = 750 applications*

The above provides a deeper analysis of the dominant types of applications made in 2024. It is shown that applications to prove copy will account for the largest proportion of applications with 199 or 26.53% of the total, followed by application to be declared spouse with 84 or 11.20% of the total number of applications and applications for directions with 49 or 6.53%. This data set was derived from a sample of 750 application incidences.

**Table 24.0: Hearing date certainty for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Estimated number of Court/Chamber hearing dates set	Hearing dates adjourned (excluding continuance)	Hearing date certainty (%)
1120	254	77.32

The above table addresses the extent of adherence with dates set for court/chamber matters in the Estate Division for 2024. It is shown that there were an estimated 1120 incidences of dates scheduled for Chamber or Court, 254 of which were adjourned for reasons other than 'continuance'. This produces an overall hearing date certainty rate of 77.32%, an indication that for 2024 there was a roughly 77% chance that a matter set for court would proceed without the date being adjourned. This is an increase of roughly 0.80 percentage points when compared to

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

the previous year. When trial matters are isolated, the trial date certainty rate is roughly 71%, 4 percentage points above the figure in the previous year.

**Table 25.0: Age of matters disposed for the year ended December 31, 2024**

**Descriptive Statistics (in months)**

Number of observations	2809
Mean	19.2553
Median	13.0000
Mode	11.00
Std. Deviation	22.04815
Skewness	6.308
Std. Error of Skewness	.046
Range	362.00
Minimum	2.00
Maximum	364.00

The above table provides a summary measure of the overall estimated times to disposition for the 2809 cases disposed during the year. The estimated average time to disposition is roughly 19 months or approximately 1.6 years, a month higher than that of the previous year. This result was however acutely positively skewed by the existence of a few large times to disposition, which have markedly increased the average. This large positive skewness therefore suggests that the substantially larger proportion of the times to disposition were below the overall average time. This is supported by the results for the estimated median time to disposition of 13 months and the most frequently occurring time to disposition of just 11 months. The reasonably large standard deviation of 22.05 months supports the deduction that

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

there were scores that varied widely from the mean, in this case skewing the average upwards. The oldest Estate matter disposed in the year was 364 months old or approximately 30 years old while there were a few matters, which took under three months to be disposed, representing the lowest times to disposition in the year. Of the 2809 Estate cases disposed of in 2024, a notable 679 or 24.17% originated in that year, roughly 3 percentage points below the previous year.

**Table 26.0: Breakdown of times to disposition for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Time Interval (months)	Frequency	Percent
0 - 12	1367	48.7
13 - 24	945	33.6
25 - 36	256	9.1
37 - 47	94	3.3
48 & over	147	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2809</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Note: The average time taken to dispose of cases resolved in 1 year in the above table is approximately 8.5 months.*

The above table shows that of the 2809 estate matters disposed in the year, the majority, 1367 or 48.70% were disposed of in 12 months or less, followed by 945 or 33.60%, which were disposed of within a time interval of 13 to 24 months. Taken together this data suggests that an impressive approximated 82.30% of Estate Division matters which were disposed of in 2024 took two years or less. 9.10% each of the cases were disposed within an estimated time frame of between 25 and 36 months, 3.30% took between 37 and 47 months and 5.20% took an estimated time of over 48 months or more than four years to be disposed. The relatively high proportion of cases disposed within a year and two years respectively continues to augur well for the current efforts to significantly reduce the length of time that it takes for cases to be

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

disposed and potentially eliminate case backlog in the foreseeable future. These gains should improve public confidence in judicial processes geared towards at resolving Estate matters in the country and also have a positive effect on economic activity through higher real estate investments in shorter period of time.

**Table 27.0: Case clearance rate for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Cases filed	Cases disposed	Case clearance rate
3540	2809	79.35%

*\*679 or 24.17% of the cases disposed originated in 2024, roughly 3 percentage point below 2023. This represents the case disposal rate.*

Using the data on the number of cases filed and disposed in the period under examination, a case clearance rate of approximately 79.35%, a decline of 1.12 percentage point when compared to the previous year. The result suggests that for every 100 cases filed and active in the 2024, roughly 79 were disposed.

The Estate Division continues to reinforce its standing as one of the top performing divisions in the Supreme Court on most of the key performance indicators.

## **Other performance measures**

Among other important performance, which allow for the tracking of court performance are:

**(i) The on time case processing rate**

**(ii) The case turnover ratio**

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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**(iii) The disposition days**

**(iv) The crude proxy case backlog rate**

The on time case processing provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which are being disposed within the predefined time standard. The case turnover rate is the number of cases resolved, for every unresolved case, in a given period while the disposition days provide a measure of the estimated length of time that it will take the unresolved cases in that period to be disposed. Additionally, the crude proxy case backlog rate provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which have been active for over two years as at the end of 2024. These measures are summarized in the table below:

**Table 29.0: Selected performances metrics for the Estate Division in 2024**

Resolved cases	Unresolved cases	Case turnover rate (%)	Estimated case disposition days for the unresolved cases	Number of cases disposed within 2 years	Total number of cases disposed	On-time case processing rate (%)	Crude Proxy Case backlog rate (%)
2809	4279	0.66	553	2312	2809	82.30	17.70

The results in the above table shows a case turnover rate of 0.66, which is an indication that for every 100 cases, which were ‘heard’ in 2024 and still active at the end of the year, another 66 were disposed. This result forms part of the computation of the case disposal days which reveals that the cases that went to court which were unresolved at the end of the year will on average take 553 days or just over a year, barring special interventions.

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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A case is considered to be in a backlog classification if it is unresolved in the courts for over two years. A case that is resolved within two years is considered to have been resolved on time. The on time case-processing rate for the Estate Division in 2024 is 82.30%, which reflects the proportion of cases in 2024, which were disposed within 2 years. Conversely, the case backlog rate is 17.70%, an indication that an estimated annual proportion of roughly 18% of cases are likely to fall into a backlog classification based on the current case disposition and case clearance rates. This output is roughly the same as that of the previous year. The data further suggests that of the 4279 cases, which had some court activity in 2024 and were still active at the end of the year, 757 are expected to be in a backlog classification before being disposed.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

## **CHAPTER 4.0: THE HOME CIRCUIT COURT (Summary Report)**

The analysis now turns to a look at case activity in the Home Circuit Court for 2024. A total of 301 new cases filed in 2024 while 169 cases were disposed. This produced an estimated case clearance rate of 56.15%, a marginal increase of 2.72 percentage points compared to the previous year. The leading charges heard in the Home Circuit Court in 2024 includes murder, rape and sexual intercourse with a person under 16, which is typical of the trend over the past several years.

On an annual basis, there are a number of factors which affect the progression of criminal cases towards disposition. The below table uses a sample of hearings in 2024 to identify the most common reasons for adjournment.

**Table 30.0: Leading reasons for adjournment/continuance for the year ended December 2023**

Reason for adjournment	Frequency	Percentage
Defence and prosecution to engage in discussion	210	5.15
Defense Counsel Absent	205	5.03
For Disclosure	141	4.35
Crown to take instruction	136	3.14
For Investigating Officer to attend Court	136	2.75
To settle legal representation	119	2.15
For bail application	122	2.09
Matter not reached	116	2.08
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1185</b>	<b>26.74</b>

**Sample size = 2151**

From the data sampled, the above table summarizes some of the most common reasons for adjournment in cases heard in the Home Circuit Court in 2024. Using a sample of 2151



incidences of adjournments, it is shown that adjournments for the defence and prosecution to engage in discussions, defence counsel absent and for disclosure were the leading reasons for adjournment during the year. Overall, a significant proportion of the reasons for adjournment imply third party responsibility. Apart from the reasons for adjournment listed in the table above, other factors such as statement outstanding, ballistic certificate outstanding, forensic report outstanding and SOC CD (CFCD) outstanding also featured noticeably on the list of common reasons for adjournment of cases, the responsibility for which is largely shared in some proportion by the police and relevant state lab facilities. Adjournments for files to be completed, which also featured, is a further example of third party responsibility for case adjournments in the Home Circuit Court. In such instances, the prosecution bears primary responsibility.

The leading reasons for adjournment listed in the above Table accounts for 26.74% of total incidences of adjournments/continuance in the Home Circuit Court in 2024. The data suggest that there were roughly 3.41 adjournments per case heard in the Home Circuit Court in 2024, which is 0.14 percentage points lower than the previous year.

Given that there are a number of factors which impact on the efficient progression of cases through the Home Circuit Court, it is vital to examine the hearing date certainty rate at various key stages of the case flow continuum (that is, for various types of hearings). These are detailed in the table below.

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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**Table 31.0: Hearing date certainty summary for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Type of hearings	Hearing date certainty rate (%)
Mention and/Plea and Case Management Hearing	84
Bail Applications	66
Sentencing hearings	71
Trial hearings	55
<b>Total/Overall Average</b>	<b>69.00</b>

The date scheduling certainty for each Division of the Supreme Court is an important metric, which examines the extent to which dates, which are set for various types of hearings, are adhered. A low result has implications for the capacity of the court to adequately estimate the duration of a matter, for the capacity of courtrooms and Judges to absorb certain caseload and for the general system of scheduling. The Home Circuit Court recorded an overall hearing date certainty rate of 69.00%, an improvement of 1.75 percentage points when compared to the previous year. This is another way of saying that for every 100 criminal matters scheduled for court, roughly 69 were able to proceed without adjournment for reasons other than those procedural, for example for Trial, Bail Application, Pre-trial hearing, Sentencing and Plea and Case Management. When trial matters are isolated, the trial certainty rate revealed is 55%, an improvement of 4 percentage points compared to the previous year, while Plea and Case Management Conferences had a hearing date certainty rate of 84%, an increase of 3 percentage points compared to 2023.

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# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

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The two years of successive decline in both trial date certainty rate and overall hearing date certainty rate is a combined result of third party issues outlined earlier and potentially deficits in internal case management, signalling a potential need for further training interventions. There is also the need to revisit the manner in which cases are scheduled as overbooking of courtrooms continues to be a problem. Enhancing the use of the Judicial Case Management System (JCMS) and the development and application of Differentiated Case Management (DCM) tracks for criminal cases in the high court are possible paths that can be pursued in optimizing improving hearing and trial date certainty going forward.

As indicated earlier, a total of 169 cases were disposed in the Home Circuit Court in 2024. Among the most common methods of disposition for the year are disposals by way of no evidence offered, persons found guilty, persons found not guilty and guilty pleas. The estimated conviction rate for 2024 is 17.40%, which suggests that there is a roughly 17% probability that a matter could end in a guilty outcome, using 2024 as a proxy year. This represents an increase of 3.19 percentage points when compared to the previous year. Specifically, the estimated conviction rate for charges of sexual intercourse with a person under 16 is 30.50%, a marginal increase of 1.27% compared to the previous year while murder matters recorded an estimated case conviction rate of 16%, a decline of 0.67 percentage points compared to the previous year. Rape matters recorded an estimated case clearance rate of 9.75% for 2024, an increase of roughly 2 percentage points when compared to the previous year.

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THE CHIEF JUSTICE’S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT	2024
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Overall, it took an average of 39 months or 3.25 years for criminal cases resolved in 2024 in the Home Circuit Court to be disposed. This was a month better than the result in 2023. An estimated 10% of the of cases resolved in the Home Circuit Court in 2024 were completed within 1 year, while roughly 36% took two years or less to be disposed. An estimated 34.25% of the cases resolved took four years or more to be disposed.

**Table 32.0: Case clearance rate for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Cases filed	Cases disposed	Case clearance rate (%)
301	169	56.15%

The case clearance rate of 56.15% shown above is an indication that more cases entered than those that were disposed in the Home Circuit Court in 2024. The result suggests a ratio of roughly 56 cases disposed for every 100 new ones brought, an improvement of approximately 3 percentage points when compared to the previous year. This is the third time that the annual case clearance rate for the Home Circuit Court has been below 70% over the past five years. The Honourable Chief Justice Mr. Bryan Sykes has set a target of improving the trial and hearing date certainty rate to 95% for the divisions of the Supreme Court. The attainment of this target is an important cornerstone for higher disposal and clearance rates and a more efficient judicial system.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

## Other performance measures

Among other important performance, which allow for the tracking of court performance are:

(i) The on time case processing rate

(ii) The case turnover ratio

(iii) The disposition days

(iv) The crude proxy case backlog rate

The on time case processing provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which are being disposed within the predefined time standard. The case turnover rate is the number of cases resolved, for every unresolved case, in a given period while the disposition days provide a measure of the estimated length of time that it will take the unresolved cases in that period to be disposed. Additionally, the crude proxy case backlog rate provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which have been active for over two years as at the end of 2024. These measures are summarized in the table below:

**Table 33.0: Selected performances metrics for the Home Circuit Court in 2024**

Resolved cases	Unresolved cases	Case turnover rate (%)	Disposition days	On-time case processing rate (%)	Crude Proxy Case backlog rate (%)
169	1189	0.14	2607	36	64

The results in the above table shows a case turnover rate of 0.14, which is an indication that for every 100 criminal cases, which were 'heard' or handled in 2024 and still active at the end of

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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the year, another 14 was disposed. This result forms part of the computation of the case disposal days, which reveals that the cases that went to court which were unresolved at the end of the year will on average take 2607 or roughly 7 more years to be disposed, barring special interventions or other peculiar circumstances.

A case is considered to be in a backlog classification if it is unresolved in the courts for over two years. A case that is resolved within two years is considered to have been resolved on time. The on time case-processing rate for the Home Circuit Court in 2024 is approximately 36.00%, which reflects the proportion of cases resolved in 2024, which were disposed within 2 years. Conversely, the proxy case backlog rate is approximately 64%, an indication that an estimated proportion of 64% of cases are likely to fall into a backlog classification based on the current case disposition and case clearance rates. This further suggests that of the 1189 cases, which had some court activity in 2024 and were still active at the end of the year, roughly 761 are expected to be in a backlog classification before being disposed.

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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### **CHAPTER 5.0: HIGH COURT DIVISION OF THE GUN COURT**

The ensuing analyses provide an overview of case activity in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in the year ended December 31, 2024. In particular, this section outlines data related to matters initiated, matters disposed, adjournments and the distribution of trial and mention matters during the year.

As with previous years, the leading charges filed in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in 2024 were possession of prohibited weapon, unauthorized possession of ammunition, shooting with intent, assault at common law and robbery with aggravation.

The number of new cases filed in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in 2024 was 363, an increase of 7.40% compared to the previous year. 297 cases were resolved, producing a case disposal rate of 81.82% for 2024.

A total of 743 cases were heard in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in 2023, the largest proportion of which were trials and matters new before the court with an estimated 26% and 21% respectively, followed by mentions and case management conferences with 19% and 17% respectively. Cases with sentencing hearings accounted for 10% of hearings while cases with part heard hearings accounted for 7% of hearings throughout the year. The progression of matters through the court towards disposition is affected by a number of delay factors. The leading delay factors in 2024 are summarized in the below list of reasons for adjournment.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 34.0: Most frequently occurring reasons for adjournment for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Reason for adjournment	Percentage (%)
For file to be completed	15.5
Ballistic Certificate Outstanding	7.21
For disclosure	5.9
Statement Outstanding	4.98
Scene of Crime (SOC) Statement Outstanding	4.0
Scene of Crime CD Outstanding	3.9
Defence Counsel Absent	2.9
Matter Not Reached	2.7
Crown Not Ready	2.7
Medical Certificate Outstanding	2.5

***Number of hearings sampled = 3954***

The above table outlines the top reasons for adjournment in the Gun Court for 2024, derived using a sample of 3954 hearings conducted during the year. As with the Home Circuit Court, the list affirms a major role of third party entities in delayed case progression in the High Court Division of the Gun Court. It is seen for example that outstanding ballistic certificates for which combined responsibility lies with the police and state lab services accounts for one of the highest share of adjournment incidences, accounting for 7.21% of the sample. Outstanding medical reports, defence counsel absent, Scene of Crime CD and statement outstanding are all examples of other prominent reasons for adjournment which contribute in a profound way to delays in the High Court Division of the Gun Court. However, it is interesting that for the second consecutive year, the leading reason for adjournment during the year were adjournments for files to be completed, accounting for roughly 15.50% of the sample. This is an example of



shared internal and external responsibility as a prominent reason for adjournment. It is clear from this list that the Gun Court, which is currently one of the top performing entities in the Jamaican court system, can be more efficient with greater enforcement and compliance with the required standards from external stakeholders and stronger internal case progression management in order to curtail this relatively high incidence of adjournments.

**Table 35.0: Proxy trial date certainty summary for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Type of hearing dates	Sample of hearing days set across trial courts	Number of hearings days adjourned across trial courts	Trial date certainty rate (%)
Trial	1105	287	74%

The Gun Court utilizes three dedicated courtrooms for trial. In 2024, these three rooms tallied a staggering 1105 days' worth of trial dates set which is an average of 368 days per court. This is an implausible outcome since there were only approximately 219 days available for court activity in the year. This suggests that courtrooms were often overbooked for trial which invariably also contributes to the relatively high incidence of adjournments observed. Not surprisingly therefore 287 of the trial days' set were adjourned but this would have also included a number of adjournments which are due to external factors discussed earlier in the analysis of reasons for adjournment. The resulting trial date certainty rate for the Gun Court in 2024 was therefore 74%, suggesting that roughly 7 in every 10 trial dates set were able to

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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proceed on schedule without being postponed. This result of 74% is an improvement of 3 percentage points compared to 2023.

Interestingly, the overall hearing date certainty in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in 2024 was also roughly 74%.

As indicated earlier, a total of 287 cases were resolved in the High Court Division of the Gun Court. The most common methods of disposition recorded for these cases were the methods of no evidence offered and no further evidence offered as well as guilty verdicts and not guilty verdicts. The below table summarizes the conviction rate for charges resolved in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in 2024.

**Table 36.0: Estimated Conviction rate in the Gun Court for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Number of charges disposed	Number of Guilty outcomes (i.e. guilty verdicts and guilty pleas	Conviction rate (%)
847	214	25.27

The overall conviction rate in the Gun Court is summarized in the above table. It is seen that of the sample of 847 disposed charges in 2024, an estimated 214 were a result of either a guilty plea or a guilty verdict. This produces an overall conviction rate of 25.27, which is a slight decline of 0.93 percentage points compared to the previous year. The estimated conviction rates for the leading charges heard during the year, namely illegal possession of firearm and illegal possession of ammunition were 27.55% and 41.25% respectively, while shooting with

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THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT	2024
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intent recorded a conviction rate of 7.96%. The below tables provide a summary the time taken to dispose the cases which were resolved in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in 2024.

The following tables summarise the times to disposition for cases resolved in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in 2024.

**Table 37.0: Time to disposition (from case file date) for cases disposed of in the year ended December 31, 2024**

**Descriptive Statistics**

Number of observations	847
Mean	16.50
Median	12.00
Mode	9.00
Std. Deviation	14.567
Skewness	0.9267
Std. Error of Skewness	.088
Minimum	1
Maximum	120.00

The above table summarizes the time taken to dispose of cases in the Gun Court in 2024 counting from the date cases were filed. It is seen that the estimated average time to disposition from the date of case is approximately 16.50 months, just over a month higher than the previous year. The dataset exhibits a positive skewness, indicating that there was a significantly greater proportion of times to disposition fell below the overall series mean. The estimated maximum time to disposition for the data set is approximately 120 months or 10 years. The estimated minimum time to disposition from the date of filing was roughly a month. The modal and median times to disposition were approximately 12 and 9 months respectively,

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

promising signs for the ability of the Gun Court to dispose a significant proportion of its cases before they fall into a state of backlog.

**Table 38.0: Breakdown of times to disposition (from case file date) for the charges disposed in the year ended December 31, 2024**

Time Interval (months)	Frequency	Percent
0 – 12	436	51.5
13 – 24	239	28.24
25 – 36	84	9.9
37 – 47	27	3.15
48 & over	61	7.21
<b>Total</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table provides a further breakdown of the estimated time to disposition for the charges disposed in 2024, counting from the case file date. The positive skewness displayed in the previous table is affirmed, as the scores here are mostly concentrated towards the lower intervals in the distribution. The data shows that the largest proportion of the disposals using this method took a year or less. This interval accounted for 436 or 51.50% of the disposals and was followed by charges taking between 13 and 24 months to be disposed with 239 charges or 28.24%. A further 9.90% of the matters were disposed within 25-36 months, 7.21% took four or more years to be disposed and the remaining 3.15% took between 37 and 47 months. A proportion of 79.40% of the cases disposed took two years or less from the case file date, a decline of 1.86 percentage points when compared to the previous year.

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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**Table 39.0: Case clearance rate for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Cases filed	Cases disposed	Case clearance rate
363	297	81.82%

*\*31 or 11.23% of the 275 disposed cases originated in 2023. This percentage represents the disposal rate.*

Three hundred and sixty-three new cases were filed in the High Court Division of the Gun Court in 2024 while 297 were also disposed or inactivated (including many which originated before the Term) leading to a clearance rate of 81.82% for the year, an increase of 0.46 percentage points compared to the previous year. This result translates into a generalization that an estimated 8 Gun Court cases were resolved for every 10 new cases entered during the year and despite being a commendable outcome it is the Gun Court's lowest output in over 5 calendar years. Nevertheless, the Gun Court continues to maintain its enviable standing among the elite performing courts in the Jamaican judiciary.

#### **Other performance measures**

Among other important performance, which allow for the tracking of court performance are:

- (i) The on time case processing rate**
- (ii) The case turnover ratio**
- (iii) The disposition days**
- (iv) The crude proxy case backlog rate**

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

The on time case processing provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which are being disposed within the predefined time standard. The case turnover rate is the number of cases resolved, for every unresolved case, in a given period while the disposition days provide a measure of the estimated length of time that it will take the unresolved cases in that period to be disposed. Additionally, the crude proxy case backlog rate provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which have been active for over two years as at the end of 2024. These measures are summarized in the table below:

**Table 40.0: Selected performances metrics for the Gun Court in 2024**

Resolved cases	Unresolved cases	Case turnover rate	Estimated disposition days for unresolved cases	On-time case processing rate (%)	Crude Proxy case backlog rate (%)
297	426	0.70	521	79.74	20.26

The results in the above table shows a case turnover rate of 0.70, which is an indication that for every 100 cases which were ‘heard’ in 2024 and still active, 70 pre-existing cases were disposed. This result forms part of the computation of the case disposal days which reveals that the cases that went to court which were unresolved at the end of the year will on average take a year to be disposed, barring special interventions or other unanticipated circumstances. This result reflects a trend of sustained improvements over the past eight years.

A case is considered to be in a backlog classification if it is unresolved in the courts for over two years. A case that is resolved within two years is considered to have been resolved on time.

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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The on time case-processing rate for the Gun Court in 2024 is approximately 79.74%, which reflects the proportion of Gun Court cases in 2024, which were disposed within 2 years. Conversely, the crude proxy case backlog rate is 20.26%, an indication that an estimated annual proportion of about 20% of cases are likely to fall into a backlog classification based on the current case disposition and case clearance rates. This is an increase of roughly 2 percentage points when compared to the previous year and suggests that of the 426 cases, which had some court activity in 2024 and were still active at the end of the year, roughly 105 are expected to be in a backlog classification before being disposed.

## **CHAPTER 6.0: COMMERCIAL DIVISION**

This chapter presents data on case activity in the Commercial Division in 2024 as well as important performance measurements and year on year comparisons where applicable.

**Table 41.0: Cases filed in the Commercial Division in 2024**

Division	Number of new cases filed
Commercial	471

2017 and 2018 were record years for the Commercial Division in terms of the number of new cases filed with 667 and 675 respectively. 2019 and 2020 saw successive years of decline however 2021 saw an increase of 8.90% in the number of new cases filed when compared to 2020. In 2022, 609 new cases were filed in the Commercial Division, an increase of 5.36% over 2021 and in 2023 610 new commercial cases were filed, an increase of 0.16%.

2024 experienced a decline in the number of new cases filed with 471 new cases registered, a decline of 22.79% when compared to the previous year.

Admiralty and Insolvency cases also fall under the Commercial Division. In 2024, there were two new admiralty cases filed, while two cases were also disposed, leading to a case clearance rate of 100%. Additionally, six new Insolvency cases were filed in 2024 while 4 cases were disposed, leading to a case clearance rate of approximately 67%.

The productivity of the Commercial Division is important in sending signals to economic agents in a country and thus forms an essential pillar in economic growth and development.



# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024**

## ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 42.0: Sampling distribution of the leading reasons in the Commercial Division for adjournment of commercial cases for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Reasons for adjournment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Claimant's documents short served	83	14.54
Defendant to file documents	54	9.46
Parties having discussion	46	8.06
Pending settlement	27	4.73
Defendant to file documents	27	4.73
Defendant's documents not served or short served	25	4.38
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>45.88</b>

*Number of observations (N) = 571*

The above table provides a sampling distribution of the top six reasons for adjournment in the Commercial Division for 2024. A total of 571 such incidences sampled reveal that claimant's documents not served or short served with 83 or 14.54%, defendant to file documents with 54 or 9.46% and parties having discussions with a view to settlement with 27 or 4.73% accounted for the top three reasons for adjournment in the Commercial Division in 2024. The listed reasons for adjournment documented from the sample accounts for 45.88% of the total.

**Table 43.0: Sampling distribution of cases with chamber hearings for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Hearings	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Applications (Various)	860	65.35
Case Management Conferences	293	22.26
Pre-Trial Review	134	10.18
Judgment summons hearing	29	2.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>1316</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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The above table summarizes a sample of 1316 cases which had chamber hearings in the Commercial Division during 2024. As with the High Court Civil (HCV) Division, the hearing of various applications for relief sought dominates the list with roughly 65.35% of the matters with chamber hearings. Case Management Conferences with 293 or 22.26% rank next and Pre-Trial Reviews with an incidence of 134 or 10.18% rounds off the top three chamber hearings in the Commercial Division for 2024.

**Table 44.0a: Sampling distribution of hearing date certainty in the Commercial Division for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Type of hearings	Estimated Hearing date certainty rate (%)
Case Management Conferences	85.15
Trial	65.15
All hearings combined	<b>81.25</b>

The above table breaks down the hearing date certainty rates for two significant types of hearings and also gives the overall rate for 2024. It is shown that Case Management Conferences had an estimated hearing date certainty rate of 85.15%, an increase of 1.65 percentage points when compared to the previous year, while the combined weighted hearing date certainty rate for trials is estimated to be 65.15%, an improvement of 25.50 percentage points when compared to the previous year. The overall hearing date certainty rate when all types of hearings are considered is approximately 81.25%, an increase of 3.75 percentage points when compared to the previous year. The improvements noted are indicative of growing

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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efficiency in the commercial division which augurs well for the productivity of the Supreme Court and signals for business confidence in the economy.

**Table 45.0b: Sample case flow process transition summary**

Number of cases on which defences were filed	Number of cases referred to Mediation	Mediation Report Return Rate (%)	Average time between filing of a defence and referral to mediation [for matters on which defence was filed]	Average time between referral to mediation and receipt of mediation report
115	56	15.25%	65 days	5.5 months

*Note: The above data represents sample estimates based on data available at the time of reporting*

*Note that the number of mediation referrals and the number of cases referred to mediation are not necessary equivalents*

*Note that the number of cases on which defences were filed and the number of defences filed are not necessary equivalents*

Using a sample of 115 cases on which defences were filed and 56 cases which were referred to mediation, the data suggests that the Commercial Division had a mediation report return rate of 15.25% which means that for every 10 matters referred to mediation during the year, or between 1 and 2 were returned (not necessarily from the stock of referrals during the year), representing an increase of 2.75 percentage points when compared to the previous year. This result suggests that the availability of mediation reports is falling well behind the rate at which matters were referred to mediation. Considering that a mediation report should take on average 90 days to be returned by the relevant mediation centre, this is an interesting statistic which gives insights into the delays in the mediation process, a potential impediment to the progression of cases in the Commercial Division. The average time taken to return a mediation report for the matters which were referred to mediation during the year was roughly 5.5 months, which is almost twice the expected time but the overall average time can be a bit longer. The transition between the filing of a defence and referral to mediation by the Division appears to be slower than desired and may also be inimical to case flow progression. The statistics on the time interval between the filing of a defence and mediation referral is also

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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quite insightful. The data shows that on average it took approximately 65 days or just over two months after a defence is filed. The overall success rate of mediation for the past four years for matters referred from the Commercial Division is less than 26.50%.

**Table 46.0: Requisitions summary for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Requisitions Issued	Requisition Reponses	Requisitions clearance Rate	Requisitions issued per 100 case files
193	136*	70.47%	16

\*This figure includes requisitions filed on matters originating prior to 2023

The above table provides a summary of the response rate for requisitions issued in the Commercial Division in 2024. It is shown that 193 requisitions were issued in the year, which represents a decline of 15.72% when compared to the previous year, while there were 136 responses filed, thus producing a requisitions clearance rate of 70.47%, a reduction of 24.29 percentage points when compared to 2023. This requisition clearance rate suggests that during the year, for every 10 requisitions issued, roughly 7 were filed. Additionally, there was an average incidence of 16 requisitions per 100 case files in the Commercial Division for the year, a decline of 2 percentage points when compared to the previous year.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 47: Methods of disposition for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Methods of Disposition	Frequency	Percent
Agreed to pay by installment	5	1.1
Application Granted	7	1.6
Application Refused	4	.9
Claim form expire	5	1.1
Consent Judgment	11	2.5
Consent Order	7	1.6
Dismissed for Want of Prosecution	7	1.6
Judgment	23	5.2
Judgment Delivered	11	2.5
Judgment in Default of Ack. of Service	95	21.3
Judgment in Default of Defence	17	3.8
Judgment on Admission	15	3.4
Matter Discontinued	142	31.9
Matter Withdrawn	8	1.8
Settled	17	3.8
Settlement Order	2	.4
Struck Out	11	2.5
Matter Transferred	55	12.30
Written Judgment Delivered	3	.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The data suggests that 445 cases in the Commercial Division were disposed in 2024, an impressive increase of 37.35% when compared to the previous year. Disposals by way of notices of discontinuances with 142 or 31.90% and judgments in default of acknowledgment of service with 95 or 21.30% were the leading methods of disposition during the year, while matters transferred with 12.30% and judgments delivered with 5.20% rank next. The top three methods of disposition were rounded off by applications granted with 20 or 6.20%.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

**Table 49.0: Time to disposition for Commercial cases disposed in the year ended December 31, 2024**

**Descriptive Statistics (months)**

Number of observation	445
Mean	30.7888
Median	21.0000
Mode	18.00
Std. Deviation	23.33183
Skewness	1.822
Std. Error of Skewness	.116
Range	158.00
Minimum	8.00
Maximum	166.00

The above table shows that the estimated average time to disposition for the 445 commercial cases disposed in 2024 is approximately 31 or just over 2.6 years, an increase of roughly 11 months when compared to the previous year. The maximum time to disposition observed from these cases is almost 14 years old while the lowest is roughly 8 months. It is of note that the median time to disposition for 2024 is 21 months while significantly the modal value is 18 months. 73 or 16.40% of the commercial cases disposed in 2024 originated in said year, an improvement of 5.60% when compared to the previous year.

**Table 50.0: Breakdown of times to disposition for Commercial cases in 2024**

**Descriptive Statistics (months)**

Time Interval (months)	Frequency	Percent
0 - 12	68	15.3
13 - 24	203	45.6
25 - 36	45	10.1
37 - 47	31	7.0
48 and over	98	22.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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The above table provides a breakdown of the times to disposition for the cases disposed in the Commercial Division in 2024. It is seen that the largest proportion of these cases were disposed of within 13 – 24 months, accounting for 45.60%% of the disposals. This is immediately followed by the 98 or 22.0% which took 48 months or more to be disposed and 68 or 15.30%, which were disposed within a year. Taken together, the data suggest that 60.90% of the cases disposed, were resolved within two years.

**Table 51.0: Case clearance rate for the Commercial Division for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Cases filed	Cases disposed	Case clearance rate
471	445*	94.48%

*\*This figure includes cases filed before 2024. 73 or 16.40% of the cases filed in 2024 were disposed.*

Four hundred and seventy-one new cases were filed in the Commercial Division in 2024, while 445 cases were disposed, yielding an impressive case clearance rate of 94.48%, an increase of 41.37 percentage points compared to the previous year. This result suggests that for every 100 new cases filed in the year, roughly 93 were disposed. Again, the cases disposed were not necessarily from those filed, as the clearance rate is simply a productivity ratio. This is the highest annual case clearance rate on record for the Commercial Division, representing a reversal of trends over the past four years and defying the mathematical forecasts.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

## Other performance measures

Among other important performance, which allow for the tracking of court performance are:

(i) The on time case processing rate

(ii) The case turnover ratio

(iii) The disposition days

(iv) The crude proxy case backlog rate

The on time case processing provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which are being disposed within the predefined time standard. The case turnover rate is the number of cases resolved, for every unresolved case, in a given period while the disposition days provide a measure of the estimated length of time that it will take the unresolved cases in that period to be disposed. Additionally, the case backlog rate provides a measurement of the proportion of cases, which have been active for over two years as at the end of 2024. These measures are summarized in the table below:

**Table 52.0: Selected performances metrics for the Commercial Division for 2024**

Resolved cases	Unresolved cases	Case turnover rate (%)	Disposition days	Number of cases disposed within 2 years	Total number of cases disposed	Approximate On-time case processing rate (%)	Approximate Crude Proxy Case backlog rate (%)
455	800	0.57	640 days	271	455	60.90	39.10



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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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The results in the above table shows a case turnover rate of 0.57, which is an indication that for every 100 cases which were 'heard' in 2024 and still active, 57 were disposed, an increase of 23 percentage points when compared to the previous year. This result forms part of the computation of the case disposal days which reveals that the cases that went to court which were unresolved at the end of the year will on average take an estimated 21 months to be disposed, barring special interventions and other outcomes.

A case is considered to be in a backlog classification if it remains unresolved for over two years. A case that is resolved within two years is considered to have been resolved on time. The on time case-processing rate for the Commercial cases in 2024 is 60.90%, which reflects the proportion of Commercial cases in 2024, which were disposed within 2 years. Conversely, the crude proxy case backlog rate stands at 24% of active cases, an indication that an estimated annual proportion of roughly 39% of cases are likely to fall into a backlog classification based on the current case disposition and case clearance rates. This further suggests that of the 800 cases which had some court activity in 2024 and were still active at the end of the year, 312 are expected to be in a backlog classification before being disposed.

**CHAPTER 7.0: Aggregate Case Activity, Outstanding Judgments and Courtroom Utilization**

**Aggregate Case Clearance Rate**

Analysis of the productivity of the judiciary, subject to its resource constraints is an important metric for gauging efficiency and for informing policy and operational interventions. Among the key measures of court productivity is the case clearance rate. The below table provides a summary of the collective case clearance rate for the Divisions of the Supreme Court in 2024.

**Table 53.0: Gross case clearance rate for the year ended December 31, 2024**

Total cases filed	Total cases disposed	Gross Case clearance rate (%)
13879	11520	83.00

The above table provides an aggregate summary of the clearance rates in the Divisions of the Supreme Court in 2024. The data suggests that 13879 new cases were filed/entered across the Divisions reviewed in 2024, an increase of 2.59 percentage points compared to the previous year. These results yield a gross clearance rate of roughly 83.0, representing an increase of 6.44 percentage points when compared to the previous year and suggesting that that for every 100 cases filed/entered during the year, roughly, 83 were also disposed.

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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Aggregate Case Activity for the past two calendar years

**Table 54.0: Summary of new cases filed and cases disposed in the Supreme Court (2023 – 2024) [Selected Divisions]**

Division	Aggregate number of new cases filed in 2024	Aggregate number of cases disposed in 2024	Case Clearance Rate (%) - 2024	Aggregate number of new cases filed in 2023	Aggregate number of cases disposed in 2023	Case Clearance Rate (%) - 2023
High Court Civil (HCV)	4934	3135	63.54	4264	2706	63.46
Family	4252	4651	109.3	4499	4073	90.53
Estate	3540	2809	79.35	3452	2778	80.47
Commercial	471	445	94.48	610	324	53.11
Home Circuit Court	301	169	56.15	350	187	53.43
Gun Court	363	297	81.82	338	275	81.36
Revenue Court	3	1	80.00	8	9	112.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>13864</b>	<b>11507</b>	<b>83.00</b>	<b>13521</b>	<b>10352</b>	<b>76.56</b>

*Note: Excludes Insolvency and Admiralty Cases and thus deviates from the overall aggregates*

THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT	2024
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### Case Activity Summary for 2024

The below table provides a summary of core case activity for each Divisions of the Supreme Court in 2024.

**Table 55.0: Aggregate case activity in 2024**

Division	New cases Filed	Aggregate number of cases disposed	Clearance Rate (%)	Average time To Disposition (months)	Hearing Date Certainty Rate (%)
High Court Civil (HCV)	4934	3135	63.54	49.55	85.84
Family	4252	4651	109.38	46.06	74.74
Estate	3540	2809	79.35	19.26	77.32
Commercial	471	445	94.48	30.79	81.25
Home Circuit Court	301	169	56.15	39	69
Gun Court	363	297	81.82	19.26	74.00
Revenue Court	3	1	33.33%	-	-
Insolvency	6	4	67%	12	-
Admiralty	2	2	100%	18	-
Gross/Weighted Average	13872	11513	83.00	33.42	77.45

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
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The above table provides an important summary of case activity in the Supreme Court in 2024. It is shown that 13872 new cases were filed/entered across the divisions of the Supreme Court during the year, one of the highest outcomes in at least the last decade. The High Court Civil Division retook the position of the registry with the highest number of new cases filed with 4934, switching places with the Family Division which recorded 4252 new cases.

The High Court Civil and Family Divisions had the highest share of cases disposed in the Supreme Court in 2024 with roughly 40.40% and 27.23% respectively of the total, followed by the Estate Division with 24.40% of the disposals. For the second consecutive year, the Family Division recorded the highest case clearance rate, with 109.38%, followed by the Commercial Division with 94.48% and the High Court Division of the Gun Court with 81.82%. It was the first time on record that the Supreme Court as a whole recorded a case clearance rate exceeding 80%, netting an output of 83%. The High Court Civil (HCV) Division accounted for the longest average time to disposition with cases taking an average of approximately 50 months to be disposed. The Family Division was next with an average time to disposition of approximately 46 months while among the major areas of operation, the Gun Court and the Estate Divisions with estimated average times to disposition of 16.50 months 19 months respectively took the shortest time on average to dispose of the cases resolved. The overall weighted average time taken to dispose of the cases resolved in 2024 is approximately 33 and a half months, roughly the same as the previous year. As with the previous year, none of the Divisions of the Supreme Court met the international standard on hearing date certainty in 2024. The overall weighted

<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE’S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

average hearing date certainty rate was 77.45%, an increase of 3.06 percentage points compared to the previous year. The High Court Civil Division and the Commercial Division with hearing date certainty rates of 85.84% and 81.25% respectively, accounted for the highest hearing date certainty rates in 2024.

### Judgments Reserved and Judgments Delivered

This sub-section provides a summary of the civil judgments reserved and delivered in 2024

**Table 56.0: Summary of Judgments Reserved and Delivered in 2024**

Number of Judgments reserved on cases	Number of Judgments delivered on cases	Clearance rate for case Judgments (%)	Number of Judgments reserved on applications	Number of judgments/rulings delivered on applications	Clearance rates for rulings on application (%)
294	332	112.93	264	271	102.65

A total of 294 judgements were reserved in 2024, an increase of 4.63% when compared to the previous year, while 332 judgments were delivered, an increase of 2.15% when compared to the previous year. This output led to a clearance rate of roughly 112.93%, a decline 2.73 percentage points when compared to the previous year. This result means that for every 10 judgments which were reserved in 2024, 11 judgments were delivered. Although this result is a decline when compared to the previous year, it is reflective of overall enhancement in the productivity of the Supreme Court in delivering timely judgments. The average age of cases on which judgments were delivered in 2024 was roughly 2.5 years and the overwhelming majority delivered were reserved prior to said year. The Chief Justice has set a standard for all judgments

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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reserved in the Supreme Court to be delivered within three months of reservation, except for complex cases which should take a maximum time of six months after reservation to be delivered.

Various applications are made during the life of a civil case on which judgments may be reserved. The analysis of the clearance rate on judgments on applications is an important supplement to the analysis of judgments and the overall outcome of a case as timely rulings on applications have a direct correlation with the timely delivery of judgments on substantive cases. The data suggests that there were 264 judgments reserved on applications in 2024 while 271 were delivered. This produced a clearance rate for judgments on applications of 102.65%, a slight decline of 0.13 percentage points compared to the previous year.

#### **Estimated Courtroom/Hearing Utilization Rate in 2024**

Using a sample of cases heard in open court in 2024, the courtroom utilization rate for the Supreme Court was estimated to be 62%, a slight increase of 3 percentage points compared to the previous year; suggesting that just about 3 of every 5 available hours for hearings were utilized in 2024. The significant and successful use of virtual hearings, particularly in relation to civil matters in the Supreme Court has essentially eliminated available physical courtroom space as a resource constraint to total productivity of the Supreme Court as whole and the civil divisions in particular. This is expected to contribute positively to the utilization of judicial time going forward.

# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

## Modes of hearing in the Civil, Estate and Family Divisions in 2024

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Supreme Court started moving a significant proportion of its hearings online in order to mitigate potentially crippling effects on court operations. Since then virtual hearings have steadily become a mainstream part of the daily operations of the court, the story of which in 2024 is summarized below.

**Table 57.0: Sampling distribution of the modes of hearing for civil matters in the Supreme Court in 2024**

Mode of Hearing	Frequency	Percent
Hybrid	128	.7
In person	1011	5.5
Teleconference	28	.2
Virtual	17229	93.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>18396</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It is seen in the above sample summary that the overwhelming majority of hearings conducted in the combined High Court Civil, Commercial, Matrimonial and Probate Divisions of the Supreme Court were done by video conference, accounting for an estimated 93.70% of hearings conducted, while in-person hearings with 5.50% ranked next. The general improvement in hearing date certainty rate in the High Court Civil Division over the past three years is partly a result the mass movement of cases online. It has essentially removed courtroom space as a constraint on court productivity, paving the way for greater efficiency in the court's operation.



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# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

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## **CHAPTER 8.0: CONCLUSION**

The Supreme Court of Jamaica continued its transformational journey in 2024. The past five years has seen significant improvements in efficiency and productivity across most divisions. The emergence of the High Court Division of the Gun Court as a model of operating efficiency in the Jamaican court system, the outstanding gains made by the High Court Civil Division in improving case clearance rate and reducing average time to disposition and the emergence of the Family Division as model of consistency and performance leader in the Supreme Court are some examples of the impact of aggressive transformational leadership in the Supreme Court over the past five years. Despite the persistence of some weaknesses and the need to bolster overall case clearance rate and backlog reduction and to cut the overall average time to disposition, 2024 cemented the general positive direction of the Supreme Court, including the recording of some historic firsts. For the first time in recorded history, the Supreme Court registered an overall case clearance rate in excess of 80%, netting out at 83%. The Family Division which has emerged as a top performing division in the Supreme Court over the past two years was the leader with an impressive 109.38%; in so doing also increasing the proportion of cases being resolved within six months. Despite the adverse effects of changing legislation which has contributed to reducing the conviction rates over the past two years, the High Court Division of the Gun Court continues to maintain a creditable performance level, recording the third highest case clearance rate in the Supreme Court for 2024 with 81.82%. Of great interest is the emergence of the Commercial Division in 2024 where it gained over 40 percentage points in case clearance rate, registering a record output of 94.48% on this metric,

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<b>THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT</b>	<b>2024</b>
--	-------------

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representing positive signals for economic activity. All divisions of the Supreme Court, except the Criminal Division/Home Circuit Court recorded case clearance rates in excess of 60% in 2024. One of the most impressive turnarounds in the performance of the Supreme Court over the past five years is the efficiency with which judgments are delivered; judgments now take much less time to be delivered and the rate of delivery of both final judgments and judgments on applications per hundred judgments reserved has increased tremendously. The output in 2024 saw a clearance rate on judgments in excess of 100%, the continuation of five years of an about-turn in this area of performance.

Overall, the Supreme Court is on course to become a beacon of excellence in the Caribbean and Latin American region. Despite the persistence of the areas of concern indicated, the general trajectory is positive and with continued strong leadership, persistent stakeholder engagement and the motivation of the staff and Judges, it is expected that in the foreseeable future, the Jamaican Supreme Court will be the best in the region.

### 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. <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 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.

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# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

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**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:*

<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>

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THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON THE SUPREME COURT	2024
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**Hilary Term:** The first of the High Court Terms, usually spanning the period from early January to just before the start of Easter. In 2019, the Easter Term ran from January 07 – April 12.

**Easter Term:** The second of the High Court Terms, usually spanning some days after the end of Easter through to the end of July. In 2019, the Easter Term was between April 25 and July 31.

**Michaelmas Term:** The Term in the High Court which usually spans a period from mid-September through to a few days before Christmas. In 2019, the Michaelmas Term spanned September 16 through to December 20.

**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.

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# THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT **2024** ON THE SUPREME COURT

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**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.

**Crude Proxy:** A rough estimate