



The First Quarter Statistics Report for the Corporate  
Area Coroner's and the Special Coroner's Court -  
2022

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## **Executive Summary**

This report is a continuation of the expansion of the range of business lines formally reported on in the Jamaican Court system. Empirical measurements of court performance are crucial from several perspectives – among which is its use as an instrument of accountability and for informing policy and operational decisions. Such, are very important within the context of the qualitative and quantitative targets set out by the Chief Justice of Jamaica in establishing the Jamaican court system as the best in the Caribbean region and among the bests in the World in the coming years.

This report provides vital insights into the operation of the Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Court, drawing on analysis of case activity for the first quarter of 2022. Among the most critical findings from the report is the high case disposal rate for the Corporate Area Coroner's Court of 98.13%, one of the highest recorded in any quarter in the Jamaican judiciary. Both the Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Court exceeded the 100% case clearance rate during the first quarter of 2022, with rates of 154.84% and 132.71% respectively, some of the top output in the Jamaican judiciary for the period. 107 new cases were filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court during the quarter, while 31 were filed in the Special Coroner's Court. The estimated average time taken to dispose of matters at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court during the period was roughly 8 days, while the figure was approximately 20 months for the Special Coroner's Court. The most common reasons for any delays observed for the Corporate Area Coroner's Court over the period were adjournments due the lack of file completeness/readiness while a range of incidence of outstanding documents such as biological reports, chemical reports, ballistic reports and other scientific reports and the failure of witness to attend featured prominently as causes for adjournment for the Special Coroner's Court.

In terms of basic case demographics, the average age of the deceased for matters filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court over the period is 53 years while the figure stood at 37 years for the Special Coroner’s Court. Further, males accounted for roughly 74% of deaths in the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court, while accounting for 94% of the deaths in the Special Coroner’s Court which were handle in the first quarter of 2022. In both courts, the causes of death reported varied widely, but most centered on gun or violence related and natural deaths. The police filed most of the cases originating in the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court during the quarter while INDECOM accounted for the largest proportion of cases filed in the Special Coroner’s Court. The vast majority of deaths heard by the Special Coroner’s Court were related to the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). Matters disposed through the provisions of sections 10 and 14 accounted for the largest share of cases disposed in Corporate Area Coroner’s Court while the provisions of sections 14 and 16 accounted for the largest shares of cases disposed in the Special Coroner’s Court.

**Key Performance Summary- First quarter of 2022**

<b>Court</b>	<b>Case Disposal Rate (%)</b>	<b>Case Clearance Rate (%)</b>	<b>Average time to disposition (months)</b>
Corporate Area Coroner's Court	98.13	132.71	0.27
Corporate Area Special Coroner's Court	NA	154.84	19.53

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to detail the vital statistics on case activity in the Corporate Area Coroners Court and the Special Coroners Courts in the first quarter of 2022. The report includes a range of productivity and time lag measures of the courts as well as related resource allocation and usage and other miscellaneous measurements. Ultimately, these measures seek to tell the story of the case flow in the Coroners and Special Coroners Courts, particularly with respect to the disposals, case delay factors and other important elements of case progression management and outcomes. The Coroners Court operates in all parishes across the island, however this report is focused on the Corporate Area Coroners Court. The Coroners Court is the arm of the courts that rules on the cause of death of individuals under various circumstances. It is distinguished from the Special Coroners Court, which focuses on the cause of death of individuals at the hands of individual or institutional state actors or while being under the care of state Institutions. There is a single Special Coroners Court in the island, located in Kingston and St. Andrew, but which moves around the island and hold special sittings in all parish courts.

## Chapter 1.0: The Corporate Area Coroner’s Court

This subsection on the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court will detail information on the case activity in this court for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022, as well as the associated measurements of productivity in the disposal of cases, time lag measures outlining the average times between important events on the case flow continuum, as well as other supplementary measurements and information.

**Table 1.0: Summary of time interval between date death reported and date case opened for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

### Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	102
Mean	793.2157
Median	334.0000
Mode	46.00 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation	1598.41347
Skewness	5.008
Std. Error of Skewness	.239
Range	12414.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	12415.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The table above provides a descriptive summary of the time taken between the date deaths were reported and the date that the cases for investigation of causes of death were opened in court at the Corporate Area Coroners Court for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022. It is seen that from a sample of 102 observations, the average time taken between the date deaths were reported and the date that the associated cases were opened in Corporate Area Coroner’s Court

was roughly 793 days or 2.2 years. The modal time taken was 46 days or 1.5 months and the median was 334 days or approximately 11.1 months. The standard deviation stands at a high of 1598 days or 4.4 years, strongly suggesting that the distribution of the times between reporting of death and the date cases open in the court varies widely around the mean. The acutely high positive skewness further suggests that decisively more of the scores fall below the overall average, a result that is not surprising considering that the modal and median values are significantly below the overall mean. The maximum time shown between date deaths reported and date case opened is approximately 34 years, while the lowest is 1 day.

**Table 2.0: Case Activity Summary for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Approximate Number of new cases filed	Approximate Number of active cases	Number of disposed cases (from those filed in the quarter)	Estimated Case disposal rate (%)
107	1	105	98.13

**Note 1: There was 1 new pending case at the end of the quarter**

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court in the first quarter ended March 31, 2022. It is shown that 107 new cases were filed during the quarter, 30 cases or 21.90% less than the 137 cases filed in the similar first quarter of 2021, 105 of which were disposed of in the quarter. These results yield an impressive, estimated case disposal rate of 98.13%. These disposal rate satieties the international standard on this measure and suggests that for every 100 cases filed over the period, roughly 98 cases were resolved. The case clearance rate will be examined later in this report.

**Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of Source of cases filed in the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police	93	86.11
Family	15	13.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.00</b>

A sample of 108 cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court shows that 93 cases or 86.11% of cases filed were filed by the police, while 15 or 13.89% were filed by the family of deceased.

**Table 4.0: Sampling distribution of deaths reported at various Police and brought before the court during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

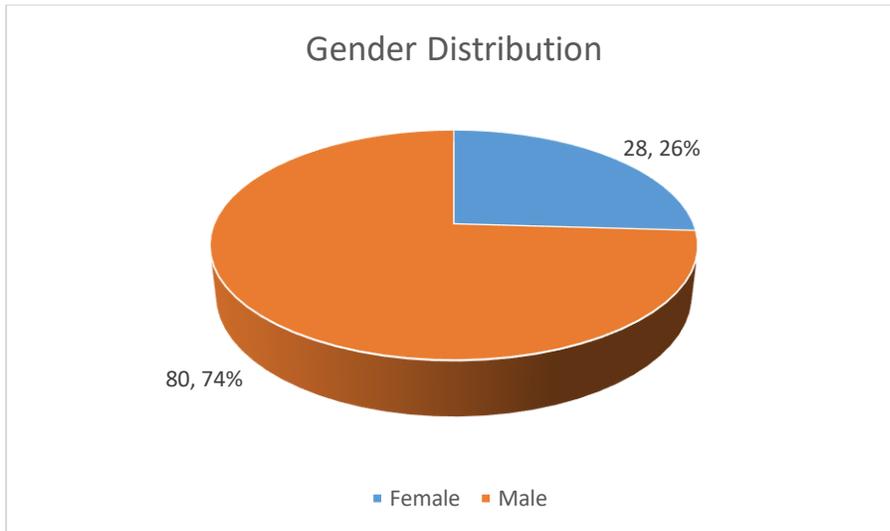
Police Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Half-Way-Tree police Station	16	14.95
Papine Police Station	11	10.28
Hunts Bay Police Station	10	9.35
Denham Town Police Station	9	8.41
Elleston Road Police Station	8	7.48
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>50.47</b>

**Sample of observations (N)= 107**

The data showed a sample of 107 Coroner’s Court cases reported at the different police stations in the Corporate Area which were subsequently brought to the court. Of that number, the Half-Way-Tree Police Station accounted for the highest proportion of cases filed/investigated within the quarter with 16 cases or 14.95% of the sample. The Papine Police station with 11 or 10.28% ranks next, while the Hunt’s Bay police station with 10 or 9.35% and the Denham Town Police Station followed with 9 cases or 8.41% of the sample. The top five police stations accounting for

cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court was rounded off by the Elleston Road Police Station with 8 or 7.48% of the sample.

**Chart 1.0: Distribution of gender of the deceased for new cases filed**



The above chart summarizes gender distribution, using a sample of 108 deceased persons involved in the cases filed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022. It is shown that 80 or 74% of the deceased were male, while the remaining 28 or 26% were female. In the similar first quarter of 2021, males also accounted for 103 or 74% of the total sample, while the remaining 26% were accounted for by female.

**Table 5.0: Descriptive statistics on the age distribution of the deceased in cases filed in the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

**Descriptive statistics (age in years)**

Number of observations	108
Mean	53.4722
Median	53.5000
Mode	71.00
Std. Deviation	21.84416
Skewness	.094
Std. Error of Skewness	.233
Range	90.00
Minimum	14.00
Maximum	104.00

A sample of 108 ages of the deceased involved in the cases filed revealed that the average age is roughly 53 years while the median is 56.50 years, and the modal value is 71 years. The standard deviation stands at a moderate value of 22 years, indicating some amount of variation of the scores around the mean, while the skewness is low positive value, indicating a large cluster of the scores around the mean. The smallest age in the data set is 14 years, while the oldest was 104 years.

**Table 6.0a: Sampling distribution of the causes of death reported for cases filed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Cause of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Multiple gunshot wound of chest, head, neck, torso	16	14.81
Blunt impact trauma of the head, chest, abdomen and pelvis	6	5.56
Hypertension, Diabetes	4	3.70
Cardiac arrest, Congested cardiac failure, Acute Renal failure	4	3.70
Shock and haemorrhage, Polytrauma, Multiple Blunt force trauma	3	2.78
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30.56</b>

**Sample size (N)= 108**

The above table is computed using a sample of 108 observations of the causes of death associated with cases. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are death caused by multiple gunshot wounds to head, neck, chest, torso with 16 or 14.81% of the sample and blunt impact trauma of the head, chest, abdomen and pelvis with 6 or 5.56%. Hypertension and diabetes as well as cardiac arrest, congested cardiac failure, acute renal failure rank next with 4 or 3.70% each, followed by shock and hemorrhage, polytrauma, multiple blunt force trauma with 3 or 2.78%.

**Table 6.0b: Sampling distribution of the causes of death as officially determined by the coroner for matters disposed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

<b>Cause of death determined by coroner</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Death due to natural causes	62	58.49
Death due to gunshot wounds	28	26.42
Death due to motor vehicle accident	8	7.55
Death due to burns	2	1.89
Death due to blunt force impact	1	0.94
Death due to Drowning	1	0.94
Death due to fall from building	1	0.94
Death due to H.I.V	1	0.94
Death due to shock and hemorrhage	1	0.94
Death due to stabbing	1	0.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The above table is computed using a sample of 106 observations of the causes of death as officially determined by the Coroner. It is shown that among the most common causes of death reported are deaths due to natural causes with 62 or 58.49% of the sample and deaths due

gunshot wounds with 26.42% of the sample. Deaths due to motor vehicle accident with 7.55% and deaths due burns with 1.89% rank next. It is important to note that there may often be variances between the causes of death as reported and the causes of death as determined by the Coroner.

**Table 7.0: Sampling distribution of the Summary of outcomes of Form D applications made during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Section 14	74	69.16
Other	33	30.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100.00</b>

During the processing of a case at the Coroner’s Court, a Form D application is made which the judge reviews an order to determine the direction of the case thereafter. The above table provides a summary of the outcomes of these applications over the period under examination. It is seen that the dominant outcome from Form D applications were decisions in accordance with Section 14, which means that the matter was accepted for an Inquest to be carried out by the Coroner. Section 14 accounts for 74 or 69.16% of the outcomes, while the generic category ‘other outcomes’ accounted for the remaining 33 or 30.84%. These results are typical to the trends observed in the Coroner’s Courts Island wide. The data was computed using a sample of 107 cases.

**Table 8.0: Sampling distribution of the type of hearings in the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

<b>Type of Hearing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Chambers	108	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100</b>

A sample of 108 hearings at the Corporate Area Coroners Court during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022, reveals that all were chamber hearings.

**Table 9.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of Disposition of matters completed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Methods of Disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	88	61.54
Section 10	54	37.76
Open Court Verdict	1	0.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The methods of disposition for a sample of 143 matters which were disposed during the quarter ended March 31, 2022, revealed that 88 or 61.54% of matters were disposed by way of an Inquest, under the provisions of Section 14 of the Coroner’s Court Act. Matters disposed by way of inquest under the provision of Section 10 of the Coroner’s Court Act followed this with 54 or 37.76% of the sample and matters disposed by open court verdict with 0.70% of the sample.

**Table 10.0: Descriptive Statistics on the time to disposition for matters completed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

**Descriptive Statistics (in days)**

Number of observations	136
Mean	8.0882
Median	2.0000
Mode	1.00
Std. Deviation	28.36677
Skewness	6.132
Std. Error of Skewness	.208
Range	240.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	241.00

The above data shows that the average time taken to dispose of matters during the quarter is approximately 8 days. This was derived from a sample of 136 matters resolved during the period. The data also revealed that the median time taken to dispose of the matters was 2 days and the modal time was 1 day. The standard deviation of 28.37, however, suggests that there is a wide variation in the individual scores and the high positive skewness indicates that a larger proportion of the scores fell below the overall mean. The minimum time taken was a day, with the maximum time taken being 241 days. The average time taken between the date the file was received and the date of first hearing was 1.82 days.

**Table 11.0: Summary of the incidence of hearings during inquest for matters disposed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

**Descriptive Statistics (in days)**

Number of observations	145
Mean	2.1931
Median	2.0000
Mode	2.00
Std. Deviation	1.06260
Skewness	6.437
Std. Error of Skewness	.201
Range	11.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	12.00

The frequency with which cases are heard potentially slows down the rate of case clearance and the average time taken to dispose of cases and is therefore, a vital statistical indicator of both the probability of case disposition and roadblocks to case progression. In the above table, it is seen that the average number of hearings in inquest from a sample of 145 cases disposed over the quarter was roughly 2.2, while the median and modal values were both 2. The lowest number

of hearings was 1 and the highest was 12. The standard deviation suggests that there is some variation in the scores, while the high positive skewness suggests that proportionately more of the scores were below the overall average. A lower incidence of hearings is desirable to further reduce the average time to disposition.

**Table 12.0: Case clearance rate summary for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of disposed cases	Estimated Gross Case clearance rate (%)
107	142	132.71

Courts that consistently maintain an average case clearance rate of between 90%-110% long enough will at a minimum have its disposals keeping up with the number of new cases filed but may also likely make considerable strides in reducing its case backlog rate to an acceptable level of under 5% of active cases. The Corporate Area Coroner’s Court with a case clearance rate of 132.71% for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022 currently has a net case backlog rate of under 5%. There were 107 new cases filed during the quarter and 142 cases were disposed (regardless of date of origin), leading to the stated clearance rate. It suggests that for every 10 new cases filed, between twelve and thirteen cases were disposed of during the quarter.

## Chapter 2.0: The Special Coroner’s court

As was the case above with the Corporate Area Coroner’s Court, this section provides a detailed summary of case activity and events as well as case outcomes and related factors at the Special Coroner’s Court in the first quarter of 2022.

**Table 1.0a: Case activity summary for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022, in the Special Coroner’s Court**

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of active cases	Approximate number of disposed or inactive cases (from those filed in quarter)	Estimated Case disposal rate (%)
31	0	0	NA

*Note 1: There were 31 new pending cases at the end of the quarter*

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Cooperate Area Special Coroner’s Court. It is shown that 31 new cases were filed over the quarter, however, there were no disposed cases in the period, hence, a disposal rate is not reportable.

**Table 2.0: Sampling distribution of the parish of origin of matters filed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Parish of Origin	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Kingston	10	28.57
Clarendon	4	11.43
St Andrew	4	11.43
St Elizabeth	4	11.43
St James	4	11.43
St Catherine	3	8.57
Manchester	2	5.71
Hanover	1	2.86
Portland	1	2.86
St Ann	1	2.86
St Thomas	1	2.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>

As a parish court, the Special Coroners Court has a single location in Kingston but is deployed island wide to hear cases originating in the various parishes. The above table provides a summary of the ‘parish of origin’ of cases filed in the Special Coroner’s Court. It is seen that Kingston with 28.57% of the cases filed, St. James, Clarendon, St. Andrew and St. Elizabeth with approximately 11.43% each accounted for the largest share of new cases filed in the Special Coroner’s Court during the first quarter of 2022.

**Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of the source of matters filed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
INDECOM	35	97.22
Other	1	2.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00</b>

A sample of 36 matters filed at the Special Coroners Court during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022, shows that the majority, 97.22% were filed by INDECOM and the remaining 2.78% were from other entities.

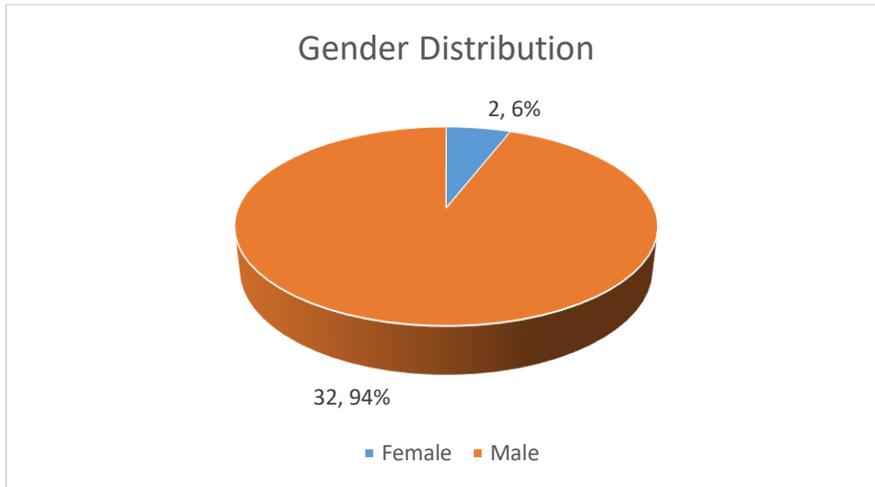
**Table 4.0: Sampling distribution on the type of death by Institution for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Type of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)	27	77.14
Custodial Institutions	7	20.00
Jamaica Defence Force (JDF)	1	2.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It is seen in the above table, that the overwhelming majority of the matters filed over the first quarter of 2022 were matters related to JCF deaths, accounting for 27 or 77.14% of the sample. The remaining matters were accounted for deaths relating to custodial institutions with 20% of

the sample and the JDF with 2.86%. The majority of the causes of death as reported in the cases filed during the quarter were stated as “multiple gunshot wounds” or “gunshot wound to the body”, accounting for 64% of the sample.

**Chart 1.0: Gender distribution of the deceased in cases filed in the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**



The gender distribution of the deceased involved in 34 cases filed during the first quarter of 2022, shows that 32 or 94% were male, while 2 or 6.0% were female.

**Table 5.0: Descriptive Statistics on the age of the deceased in cases filed over the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

**Descriptive Statistics (age in years)**

Number of observations	29
Mean	36.5517
Median	33.0000
Mode	27.00
Std. Deviation	11.52818
Skewness	1.020
Std. Error of Skewness	.434
Range	44.00
Minimum	22.00
Maximum	66.00

The above descriptive summary on the age of the deceased involved in cases filed during the first quarter of 2022 revealed that from a sample of 29 observations, the average age was roughly 37 years, while the most frequently occurring age was 27 years old. The highest age recorded was 66 years, while the lowest is 22 years old. The moderate standard deviation of roughly 12 years suggests that there was a modest variation of the individual ages from the overall mean, while the positive skewness shown is an indication that proportionately more of the scores fell below the overall mean.

**Table 6.0: Sampling distribution of the reasons for adjournment/continuances for matters heard in the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Reasons for adjournment/continuance	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Failure of witness to attend	4	5.33
Ballistic report outstanding	2	2.67
Not reached	1	1.33
Other	68	90.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.00</b>

A sample of adjournments in the above table reveals that there were 75 incidences of adjournments. The majority of the adjournments were pooled under the category, “other”, with 90.67% of the sample. Adjournments due to failure of the witnesses to attend with 5.33% rank next, followed by those due to outstanding ballistic reports with 2.67% and matters not reached with 1.33% of the sample.

**Table 7.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of disposition for matters resolved during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Methods of disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	29	63.04
Section 16	17	36.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The methods of case disposition for a sample of 46 matters, which were disposed of during first quarter of 2022, revealed that 29 or 63.04% of matters were disposed by way of an inquest under the provisions of Section 14 of the Coroner’s Court Act. Matters disposed by way of Inquest under the provision of Section 16 of the Coroner’s Court Act followed this with 17 or 36.96% of the sample.

**Table 8.0: Descriptive Statistics on the time to disposition for matters completed during the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

**Descriptive Statistics (Days)**

Number of observations	13
Mean	586.2308
Median	737.0000
Mode	777.00
Std. Deviation	406.26595
Skewness	.062
Std. Error of Skewness	.616
Range	1327.00
Minimum	27.00
Maximum	1354.00

The above table uses a sample of 13 cases disposed in the first quarter of 2022 and reveals an estimated average of roughly 19.5 months, with a maximum of approximately 3.8 years and a minimum of 27 days. The low positive skewness is an indication that proportionately more of the scores in the distribution were clustered around the series mean, while the moderate standard deviation shows some amount variation in the data points around the overall mean.

**Table 9.0: Descriptive statistics on the age of active cases as at the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

**Descriptive Statistics (Days)**

Number of observations	97
Mean	849.0928
Median	896.0000
Mode	443.00
Std. Deviation	485.38233
Skewness	1.654
Std. Error of Skewness	.245
Range	3451.00
Minimum	87.00
Maximum	3538.00

The above data is based on sample of 97 active Special Coroner’s matters at the end of the of first quarter of 2022. The average age of these matters was roughly 849 days or 28 months, while the most frequently occurring age in the distribution was 443 days. The standard deviation of roughly 485 days suggests that there is a large dispersion in the individual scores from the average, while the positive skewness seen is an indication that there were more scores in the data set which fell below the overall average age of the active cases. The oldest active matter is 3538 days old or 9.8 years, while the youngest case is 87 days.

**Table 10.0: Case clearance rate summary for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of cases disposed	Estimated Case clearance rate (%)
31	48	154.84

*Note 1: There were 30 pending cases in the quarter*

*Note 2: there were 3 inactive cases in the quarter*

Courts that consistently maintain an average case clearance rate of between 90%-110% for long enough will at a minimum, have its disposals keeping up with the number of new cases filed but

may also likely make considerable strides in reducing its case backlog rate to an acceptable level of under 5% of active cases. The Corporate Area Special Coroner’s Court with a case clearance rate of 154.84% for the first quarter of 2022, exceeds the above-mentioned range, which shows promising signs of a well- managed caseload. There were 31 new cases filed during the quarter and 48 cases were disposed (regardless of date of origin), leading to the stated clearance rate.

**Aggregate Case Activity Summary**

**Table 1.0: Aggregate case flow performance estimates for the first quarter ended March 31, 2022**

<b>Parish Court</b>	<b>Approximate number of new cases</b>	<b>Approximate number of disposed cases</b>	<b>Approximate gross number of disposed cases (regardless of date of origin)</b>	<b>Estimated Case Disposal Rate (%)</b>	<b>Estimated Case Clearance Rate (%)</b>
Corporate Area Coroner's Court	107	105	142	98.13	132.71
Corporate Area Special Coroner's Court	31	0	48	N/A	154.84
<b>Total/Weighted Average</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>76.09</b>	<b>137.68</b>

The above table provides a summary of aggregate case activity across the featured specialized Coroner’s Court and Special Coroner’s Court in the first quarter of 2022. It is shown that a total of 138 new cases were filed in these courts, while 105 of these cases were disposed of, leading to an estimated weighted case disposal rate of 76.09%. The Corporate Area Coroner’s Court had an estimated case disposal rate of 98.13%, an impressive result. The table also shows that a gross number of 190 cases were disposed of in the quarter, leading to an estimated weighted case clearance rate of 137.68%. The Corporate Area Coroner’s Court recorded a case clearance rate

of 132.71% and the Special Coroner's Court had an estimated case clearance rate of 154.84%, both impressive results which exceed the international standard.

### **Concluding Note**

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court and the Special Coroner's Court continues to make a profound contribution to the fulfillment of the goal of the judiciary of reducing the overall net case backlog rate to under 5% within the next few years. Accomplishing this task requires sustaining consistently high rates of case disposal and case clearance. The data shows that both courts are among the top performing in the Jamaican judiciary with respect to case clearance rate for the reporting period. The Special Coroner's Court recorded a case clearance rate of 154.84% during the period while the Corporate Area Coroner's Court recorded a case clearance rate of 132.71%. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court has already attained an overall net case backlog rate of under 5% while the Special Coroner's Court is also poised to reach this goal in the coming year, thus making an appreciable contribution to the target set out by the Chief Justice for the Jamaican court system to becoming the best in the region and one of the most productive in the world. The Corporate Area Coroner's Court is one of the courts in the Jamaican judiciary which disposes of new cases filed the fastest and empirically there is strong association between the rate of case disposition and the overall case clearance rate and the net case backlog rate. That is, the faster new cases are being disposed in a court, *ceteris paribus* the higher the case disposal and case clearance rates and the lower the net case backlog rate.

## Glossary of Terms

**Sampling Distribution:** A sampling distribution of a given population is the distribution of frequencies of a range of outcomes that could possibly occur for a statistic of a population. A population is the entire pool from which a statistical sample is drawn.

**Clearance rate:** The ratio on incoming to outgoing cases or of new cases filed to cases disposed, regardless of when the disposed cases originated. For example, in a given Term 100 new cases were filed and 110 were disposed (including cases originating before that Term) the clearance rate is 110/100 or 110%.

**Note:** The clearance rate could therefore exceed 100% but the disposal rate has a maximum value of 100%.

A persistent case clearance rate of less than 100% will eventually lead to a backlog of cases in the court system. The inferred international benchmark for case clearance rates is an average of 90%-110 annualized. This is a critical foundation to backlog prevention in the court system. <sup>i</sup>

**Disposal rate:** As distinct from clearance rate, the disposal rate is the proportion of new cases filed which have been disposed in a particular period. For example, if 100 new cases are filed in a particular Term and 80 of those cases were disposed in said Term, then the disposal rate is 80%.

**Note:** A persistent case clearance rate of less than 100% will eventually lead to a backlog of cases in the court system.<sup>ii</sup>

**Trial/hearing date certainty:** This is the proportion of dates set for trial or hearing which proceed without adjournment. For example, if 100 trial dates are set in a particular Term and 40 are adjourned, then the trial certainty rate would be 60%. The international standard for this measure is between 92% and 100%.

**Courtroom utilization rate:** The proportion of courtrooms in full use on a daily basis or the proportion of hours utilized in a courtroom on a daily basis. The international standard for this rate is 100%.

**Case congestion rate:** The ratio of pending cases to cases disposed in a given period. It is an indication of how fatigued a court is, given the existing state of resources and degree of efficiency. A case congestion rate of 150% for example, is an indication that given the resources currently at a court's disposal and its degree of efficiency, it is carrying 1.5 times its capacity.

**Case File Integrity Rate:** Measures the proportion of time that a case file is fully ready and available in a timely manner for a matter to proceed. Hence, any adjournment, which is due to the lack of readiness of a case file or related proceedings for court at the scheduled time, impairs the case file integrity rate. The international benchmark for the case file integrity is 100%

**Standard deviation:** This is a measure of how widely spread the scores in a data set are **around** the average value of that data set. The higher the standard deviation, the higher the variation of the raw scores in the data set, from the average score. A low standard deviation is an indication that the scores in a data set are clustered around the average.

**Outlier:** An outlier is a value that is too small or too large, relative to the majority of scores/trend in a data set.

**Skewness:** This is measure of the distribution of scores in a data set. It gives an idea of where the larger proportion of the scores in a data set can be found. Generally, if skewness is positive as

revealed by a positive value for this measure, this suggests that a greater proportion of the scores in the data set are at the lower end. If the skewness is negative as revealed by a negative value for this measure, it generally suggests that a greater proportion of the scores are at the higher end. If the skewness measure is approximately 0, then there is roughly equal distribution of scores on both the higher and lower ends of the average figure.

**Range:** This is a measure of the spread of values in a data set, calculated as the highest minus the lowest value. A larger range score may indicate a higher spread of values in a data set.

**Case backlog:** A case that is in the court system for more than two years without disposition.

*Source:*

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

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

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

A weighted average can be more accurate than a simple average in which all numbers in a data set are assigned an identical weight.

**Continuance and Adjourment:** In a general sense, any delay in the progression of a hearing in which a future date/time is set or anticipated for continuation is a form of adjourment. However, in order to make a strict distinction between matters which are adjourned for procedural factors and those which are generally avoidable, court statistics utilizes the terms 'continuance' and 'adjourment'. Here, 'continuance' is used strictly to describe situations in which future dates are set due to procedural reasons and 'adjournments' is used to describe the circumstances in which future dates of appearance are set due to generally avoidable reasons. For example, adjournments for another stage of hearing, say from a plea and case management hearing to a trial hearing or from the last date of trial to a sentencing date are classified as 'continuance' but delays for say, missing or incomplete files, due to outstanding medical reports or attorney absenteeism are classified as 'adjournments'. Adjournments as defined in this document have an adverse effect on hearing date certainty rates but continuances do not.

**Weighted Average:** Weighted average is a calculation that takes into account the varying degrees of significance of the groups or numbers in a data set. In calculating a weighted average for a particular variable, the individual scores or averages for each group are multiplied by the weight or number of observations in each of those groups, and summed. The outcome is then divided by the summation of the number of observations in all groups combined. For example, if we wish to calculate the weighted average clearance rate for the parish courts, the product of the clearance rate and number of cases for each court are computed, added, and then divided by the total number of cases across all the parish courts. This means that a court with a larger caseload has a greater impact on the case clearance rate than a smaller court.

