The 2023 Third Quarter Report for the Corporate Area Coroner's Court

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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 within three years and among the bests in the World in six years.

The report is focused on the Corporate Area Coroner's Court – one of the island's specialized courts. The results of this report reaffirm the standing of this courts as a technically backlog free court, with a net backlog rate, that is, the proportion of active cases over 24 months old of under 1%. In the third quarter of 2023, the Corporate Area Coroner's Court registered a case clearance rate of 108.26% while recording a disposal rate of 96.69%, rates that are typical to its quarterly output. The majority of the 121 new cases filed during the period were filed by the police, accounting for 81.67% while family members accounted for the remaining 18.33%. The average time taken to dispose of the cases resolved during the quarter was 14 days and the main causes of death determined by the Coroner were death due to natural causes, death due to gunshot wounds and death due to asphyxia and blunt force injury to head. The majority of case outcomes were by way of Section 14, accounting for 57.85%. The Coroner's Court has already accomplished many of the key quantitative objectives which have been set out in the judiciary's strategic plan and is expected to continue to make a significant contribution in this regard.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to detail the vital statistics on case activity in the Corporate Area Coroners Court in the third quarter of 2023. The report includes a range of productivity and time lag measures of the courts as well as related resource allocation and usage and other miscellaneous measurements. Ultimately, these measures seek to tell the story of the case flow in the Corporate Area Coroners Court, 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 third quarter ended September 30, 2023, as well as the associated measurements of productivity in the disposal of cases, time lag measures outlining the average times between important events on the case flow continuum, as well as other supplementary measurements and information.

Table 1.0: Summary of time interval between date death reported and date case opened for the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	121
Mean	683.52
Std. Error of Mean	105.615
Median	295.00
Mode	188
Std. Deviation	1161.763
Skewness	4.064
Std. Error of Skewness	.220
Range	7856
Minimum	24
Maximum	7880

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 third quarter ended September 30, 2023. It is seen that from a sample of 121 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 684 days or 1.9 years. The modal time taken was 188 days or 6.3 months and the median was 295 days or approximately 10 months. The standard deviation stands at a high of 1161 days or 3.2 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 21 years, while the lowest is 24 days.

Table 2.0: Case Activity Summary for the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

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 (%)
121	4	117	96.69

The above table provides a summary of the cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court in the third quarter ended September 30, 2023. It is shown that 121 new cases were filed during the quarter, 117 of which were disposed of in the quarter. These results yield an impressive, estimated case disposal rate of 96.69%. These disposal rate satisfies the international standard on this measure and suggests that for every 100 cases filed over the period, roughly 97 cases were resolved. The case clearance rate will be examined later in this report.

Table 3.0: Sampling distribution of Source of cases filed in the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Police	98	81.67
Family	22	18.33
Total	**120**	**100**

A sample of 120 cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court shows that 98 cases or 81.67%

of cases filed were filed by the police, while 22 or 18.33% 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 third quarter ended September 30, 2023
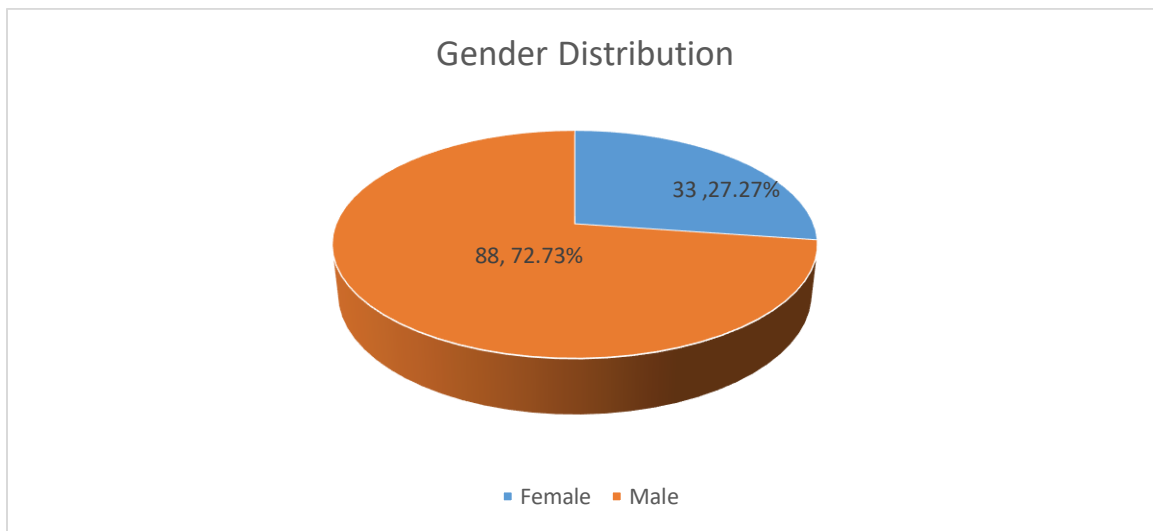
Police Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Elleston Road Police Station	21	17.36
Half Way Tree police Station	15	12.40
Hunts Bay Police Station	12	9.92
Allman Town Police Station	11	9.09
Central Police Station	8	6.61
Denham Town Police Station	8	6.61
Total	**75**	**62**

Sample of observations (N)= 121

The data showed a sample of 121 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

Elletson Road Police Station accounted for the highest proportion of cases filed/investigated

within the quarter with 21 cases or 17.36% of the sample. The Half Way Tree Police Station with

15 or 12.40% ranks next, while the Hunts Bay police station with 12 or 9.92% and the Allman Town Police Station followed with 11 cases or 9.09% of the sample. The top five police stations accounting for cases filed at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court was rounded off by both the Central and Denham Town Police Stations with 8 or 6.61% 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 121 deceased persons involved in the cases filed during the third quarter ended September 30, 2023. It is shown that 88 or 72.73% of the deceased were male, while the remaining 33 or 27.27% were female.

Table 5.0: Descriptive statistics on the age distribution of the deceased in cases filed in the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Descriptive statistics (age in years)

Number of observation	121
Mean	56.53
Std. Error of Mean	2.120
Median	56.00
Mode	49[a]
Std. Deviation	23.325
Skewness	.078
Std. Error of Skewness	.220
Range	87
Minimum	13
Maximum	100

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

A sample of 121 ages of the deceased involved in the cases filed revealed that the average age is roughly 57 years while the median is 56 years, and one of the most common modal value is 49 years. The standard deviation stands at a moderate value of 23 years, indicating some amount of variation of the scores around the mean, while the skewness is low positive value, indicating a large cluster of the scores around the mean. The smallest age in the data set is 13 years, while the oldest was 100 years.

Table 6.0a: Sampling distribution of the causes of death reported for cases filed during the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Cause of Death	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Multiple Gunshot Wounds	10	8.26
Shock and haemorrhage, Polytrauma, Multiple gunshot wounds	7	5.79
Gunshot wounds of head	6	4.96
Gunshot wounds of chest	2	1.65
Acute cerebrovascular accident, atherosclerotic disease, hypertension, Ischemic heart disease	2	1.65
Sub-Total	**27**	**21**

Sample size (N)= 121

The above table is computed using a sample of 121 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 with 10 or 8.26% of the sample and Shock and Haemorrhage and shock, Polytrauma Gunshot wound with 7 or 5.79%. Gunshot wounds of the head rank next with 6 or 4.96%, followed by Gunshot wounds to the chest with 2 or 1.65%.

Table 6.0b: Sampling distribution of the causes of death as officially determined by the coroner for matters disposed during the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Cause of death determined by coroner	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Death due to natural causes	69	58.97
Death due to gunshot wounds	44	37.61
death due to asphyxia and blunt force injury to head	1	0.85
Death due to motor vehicle accident	1	0.85
Death due to road accident	1	0.85
Death due to stabbing	1	0.85
Total	**117**	**100**

The above table is computed using a sample of 117 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 69 or 58.97% of the sample and deaths due to gunshot wounds with 37.61% of the sample. It is important to note that there may often be variances between the causes of death as reported and the causes of death as determined by the Coroner.

Table 7.0: Sampling distribution of the Summary of outcomes of Form D applications made during the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Outcomes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	70	57.85
Other	51	42.15
Total	**121**	**100**

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 70 or 57.85% of the outcomes, while the generic category

'other outcomes' accounted for the remaining 51 or 42.15%. These results are typical to the

trends observed in the Coroner's Courts Island wide. The data was computed using a sample of

121 cases.

Table 8.0: Sampling distribution of the type of hearings in the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Type of hearing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Chambers	118	97.52
Judge and Jury	3	2.48
Total	**121**	**100**

A sample of 121 hearings at the Corporate Area Coroners Court during the third quarter ended

September 30, 2023, reveals that 118 were chamber hearings and the remaining 3 were hearings

by Judge and Jury.

Table 9.0: Sampling distribution of the methods of Disposition of matters completed during the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Methods of disposition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Section 14	74	56.92
Section 10	55	42.31
Inquest	1	0.77
Total	**130**	**100**

The methods of disposition for a sample of 130 matters which were disposed during the quarter ended September 30, 2022, revealed that 74 or 56.92% 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 55 or 42.31% of the sample and matters disposed by inquest and open court verdict with 0.77%.

Table 10.0: Descriptive Statistics on the time to disposition for matters completed during the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Descriptive Statistics (in days)

Number of observations	132
Mean	13.74
Std. Error of Mean	5.321
Median	3.00
Mode	1
Std. Deviation	61.135
Skewness	6.709
Std. Error of Skewness	.211
Range	458
Minimum	1
Maximum	459

The above data shows that the average time taken to dispose of matters during the quarter is approximately 14 days. This was derived from a sample of 132 matters resolved during the period. The data also revealed that the median time taken to dispose of the matters was 3 days and the modal time was 1 day. The standard deviation of 61.14, however, suggests that there is a wide variation in the individual scores and the high positive skewness indicates that a larger proportion of the scores fell below the overall mean. The minimum time taken was a day, with the maximum time taken being 459 days. The average time taken between the date the file was received and the date of first hearing was 3.82 days.

Table 12.0: Case clearance rate summary for the third quarter ended September 30, 2023

Approximate number of new cases filed	Approximate number of disposed cases	Estimated Gross Case clearance rate (%)
121	131	108.26

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 108.26% for the third quarter ended September 30, 2023 currently has a net case backlog rate of under 4%. There were 121 new cases filed during the quarter and 131 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.

Concluding Note

The Corporate Area Coroner's Court continues to stand out as one of the leading performing courts in the Jamaican court system. It's case disposal rate is consistently over 90% and its case clearance rates is consistently over 100%, both of which are unmatched in the Jamaican judiciary. It is therefore not surprising that it takes an average of 14 days for a case to be resolved at the Corporate Area Coroner's Court. The court's net backlog rate, which is the share of active cases below over 24 months old is also one of the lowest in the Jamaican judiciary, standing at less than 1%. By any measure, the Corporate Area Coroner's Court is a model court in terms of its total productivity.

Glossary of Terms

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

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

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

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

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

Note: A persistent case clearance rate of less than 100% will eventually lead to a backlog of cases in the court system.[ii]

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

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

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

Case File Integrity Rate: Measures the proportion of time that a case file is fully ready and available in a timely manner for a matter to proceed. Hence, any adjournment, which is due to the lack of readiness of a case file or related proceedings for court at the scheduled time, impairs the case file integrity rate. The international benchmark for the 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
[i] *Source:*
http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/bestpractice/BestPracticeCaseAgeClearanceRates.pdf

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

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

Continuance and Adjournment: In a general sense, any delay in the progression of a hearing in which a future date/time is set or anticipated for continuation is a form of adjournment. However, in order to make a strict distinction between matters which are adjourned for procedural factors and those which are generally avoidable, court statistics utilizes the terms 'continuance' and 'adjournment'. Here, 'continuance' is used strictly to describe situations in which future dates are set due to procedural reasons and 'adjournments' is used to describe the circumstances in which future dates of appearance are set due to generally avoidable reasons. For example, adjournments for another stage of hearing, say from a plea and case management hearing to a trial hearing or from the last date of trial to a sentencing date are classified as 'continuance' but delays for say, missing or incomplete files, due to outstanding medical reports

or attorney absenteeism are classified as 'adjournments'. Adjournments as defined in this document have an adverse effect on hearing date certainty rates but continuances do not.