

THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON
CRIMINAL MATTERS IN THE PARISH COURTS



Parish Courts of Jamaica
The Chief Justice's Annual Statistics
Report for 2017

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CHIEF JUSTICE'S MESSAGE

Over the last two years significant success has been achieved in developing and deploying electronic data capture systems in the parish courts which are aimed at capturing data on a range of variables which chart the progression of criminal cases from initiation to disposition. This was done with the assistance of a statistician, working closely with the information technology and other court staff and staff assigned by the Ministry of Justice. This project has so far been successfully applied for the capture of data on criminal matters in all parish courts and is supported by a robust data validation system. This initiative forms part of a broader, ongoing court-wide effort to digitize all records. As a result of these initiatives, the parish courts are now in a position to extract and report on a range of statistical data, including case load, case clearance and disposal rates and the length of time that it takes for matters to be disposed. Among other things, such data provide the parish courts with an opportunity to establish common time standards for the delivery of justice.

It has always been my desire to create a data driven court system where statistics form the basis of informing both operational and policy decisions and the recent progress made has been exceptional. I anticipate that in the coming years these improvements will have a transformational impact on the Jamaican judiciary, by strengthening and enhancing the timeliness for the delivery of justice to our citizens.

A comprehensive Statistical Report is prepared on case activity on criminal matters in all parish courts on a monthly and quarterly basis, in addition to an annual report. The Quarterly and Annual Statistical Reports are publicly available on the website of the Supreme Court.

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This Annual Statistical Report for 2017 is the first comprehensive Statistical Report of its kind for the Parish Courts and therefore represents a significant step. It presents a summary of essential data on criminal case activity in all Parish Courts. The statistical team is committed to working towards the improvement of our Justice sector in this important area of record keeping.

I would like to thank all members of staff and stakeholders who have contributed to the steady strides being made in improving data collection and statistics as well as critical supporting processes such as records and case flow management.

Hon Zaila McCalla, OJ

Chief Justice

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This statistical report on criminal matters in the Parish Courts of Jamaica is for the year ended December 31, 2017. This report interrogates a number of vital measures which provides insights into the operations of the parish courts on both an individual and an aggregated basis. The report forms an important basis for understanding criminal case activity in the parish courts as well as demographic characteristics of criminal cases. The report disaggregates case activity summaries for the four quarters and also outlines a range of aggregate measures of case progression in all Parish Courts.

The aggregate new case count in the parish courts for the year was 32266 cases, 9034 of which were filed in the first quarter, 8426 in the second quarter, 7968 in the third quarter and 6671 in the fourth quarter. The larger share of the new cases filed took place in the first half of the year with 17204 cases while 15062 were filed in the second half. The largest proportion of the new cases filed in 2017 is accounted for by the Corporate Area Parish Court- Criminal Court with roughly 6628 or 20.54% of the total, followed by the St. Catherine and St. James Parish Courts with 4785 or 14.83% and 3324 or 10.30% respectively. The parish courts of Hanover, St. Elizabeth and Trelawney, all with under 4% of the total case load in 2017, account for the lowest proportion of the total case load. The average monthly number of new criminal cases filed across all parish courts in 2017 was 2689.

The overall average disposal rate for cases originating in 2017 was 69.75%, which is fair by International standards. In many developed jurisdictions, the average annual case disposal rate

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is 80% and over and 75% and over in many of the better performing developing countries. The Westmoreland Parish Court had the highest criminal disposal rate for 2017, disposing of an impressive 83.52% of cases filed during the year. The James Parish Court and the St. Catherine Parish Courts are also pace setters in this respect with case disposal rates of roughly 80.78% and 79.33% respectively, results which are quite interesting considering that these three courts are among those with the largest criminal case load. The parish courts of Clarendon, Trelawny and Manchester show overall case disposal rates of fewer than 60% for matters originating in 2017, with the Clarendon Parish Court recording the lowest rate of 37.66%. These disposal rates are based only on cases which originated in 2017 and should be interpreted within the context that many cases which were disposed of in the courts would have originated in prior years. Nevertheless, the results provide important insights into the movement of cases and thus into the potential build-up of a criminal case backlog in the respective courts. Despite a standard deviation of roughly 12% in the case disposal rates across the Parish Courts, the results are indicative of the potential of the courts to make meaningful inroads into any pre-existing backlog of cases. It must be reiterated that these disposal rates are for matters originating in 2017 and may not therefore be seamlessly used for generalization. Nevertheless, they provide critical insights.

A measure which is closely related to the case disposal rate is the case clearance rate which provides a measure of the number of cases disposed of for every new case filed in the same period. This is simply a productivity index as the disposed cases which are included in its computation could have originated before the period of focus. As with the disposal rates, the

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figures show decisively that most of the parish courts demonstrated moderate to high case clearance rates for 2017. The Westmoreland and St. Catherine Parish Courts are the leaders in this respect with clearance rates of 85.36% and 81.23% respectively. They are closely followed by the Corporate Area Parish Court – Criminal Division which had a case clearance rate of 76.25% for the year. The parish courts of Clarendon and Trelawny with case clearance rates of 37.73% and 58.53% respectively rank the lowest, while the Manchester Parish Court has the next lowest figure with 62.99%. The overall average case clearance rate for the year is roughly 71.53%, suggesting that approximately 72 cases were disposed for every 100 new ones filed. There is a direct association between the case disposal and case clearance rates as a poor case disposal rate will result from the persistence of a poor case clearance rates. The overall average case clearance rate is well below the typical standard of 85% and over which is observed in many developed jurisdictions and of 80% and over in many of the better performing developing countries. It is important to point out that a persistent case clearance rate of fewer than 100% will accelerate the case backlog and therefore the standard which should be attained on an annual basis is between 90% and 110%, based on International best practices.

The overall average age of cases originating in 2017 which were pending at the end of the year was 157.37 days or just over 5 months. The Clarendon Parish Court with an average age of such pending cases of 216.86 days or just over 7 months has the highest outcome, an unsurprising result based on the low case clearance and case disposal rates outlined earlier for this court. The St. James Parish Court with an average age of 186.63 days or just over 6 months ranks next. The parish courts of Westmoreland and St. Catherine had the lowest average age of pending

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cases which originated in 2017 with 115.09 days or just under 4 months and 130.42 days or 4.5 months respectively. It is of note that the standard deviation is roughly 24 days or 0.8 of a month which is considered relatively low and suggests that there isn't a major difference in this variable among the parish courts as a whole.

The overall average time taken to dispose of criminal cases which originated across the Parish Courts in 2017 was 157.37 days or just over 5 months. The standard deviation among the courts was however only 9 days, suggesting that in general a relatively similar length of time was taken to dispose of criminal cases originating in 2017. The Manchester, Portland and St. Ann Parish Courts demonstrate the highest time to disposition for criminal cases originating in 2017 while the Cooperate Area Parish Court – Criminal Division and the St. James and Hanover Parish Courts have the lowest average times to disposition.

The largest proportion of cases disposed of in the year was by way of cases dismissed with approximately 21.04% of disposals. This was followed by cases ending in either a guilty verdict or guilty plea, together accounting for approximately 19.45% of the cases disposed, representing the criminal conviction rate in the parish courts for 2017. In terms of the distribution of case types, the report highlights that the largest proportion of the criminal cases filed in the courts were summary matters with approximately 36.64% of all charges. This is followed by indictments with a roughly equivalent 36.62% and petty sessions with approximately 15.55% of the total. It is of note that committal proceedings accounted for 8.17% of all criminal matters filed in the parish courts in 2017.

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An important factor which affects the efficiency with which cases move towards disposition is the incidence of adjournments in the parish courts. The report suggests that apart from adjournments due to some form of 'continuance' or for sentencing, the dominant reasons for adjournments for the year were parties not appearing with an estimated 11.77% of all adjournments, no evidence offered with an estimated 9.65%, reissued application with approximately 8% and matters and matters transferred with an estimated 7.27% of the total.

The four most frequent criminal charges filed in the parish courts in 2017 were unlawful wounding, assault occasioning bodily harm, threats and possession of an offensive weapon. The overwhelming majority of offences were committed by males, accounting for an estimated 80.43% of all charges filed during the year. The dominant age group of offenders was the 18 - 26 and 27 – 36 age groups accounting for roughly 31.05% and 27.36% respectively of all offences filed in the Parish Courts in 2017. The most up to date estimated backlog of criminal cases in the parish courts is 30719 cases which is close to the annual case load. A criminal case is considered to be in backlog if it has been in the courts for two or more years without disposal.

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METHODOLOGY

Guaranteeing the reliability and validity of the data used to produce the periodic statistical reports for the Jamaican Courts is of utmost importance as we seek to produce a data driven enterprise for policy making and operational decisions. As a result, a robust and verifiable system of data production has been created in both the parish courts and the Supreme Court. At the parish courts, a data capture system for criminal matters, called the CISS (Case Information Statistical System) has been fully operational in all courts for the past 18 months. This system captures a wide range of data on the progression of criminal cases from initiation to disposition and is manned by at least one dedicated Data Entry Officer in each court. The Data Entry Officers update the system on a daily basis so that the data produced is as close as possible to real time. The electronic data sheets for each parish court are then validated and backed-up to the network at the end of each month and the data submitted to a centralized, secure medium for processing by the Statistical Unit of the Supreme Court. A robust data validation mechanism is in place to periodically sample criminal case files in all parish courts on a quarterly basis. A representative sample of case files are taken in each case and cross-checked against the electronic data to detect and eliminate errors of omission and commission.

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

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Structure of report

The report is divided into two main sections. Chapter 1.0 explores case activity statistics by examining the case load carried by each Parish Court in aggregate and by quarter as well the associated disposal rates or clearance rates, as appropriate. This section also examines the distribution of the different types of cases filed in the respective courts as well as the most commonly occurring charges and the aggregate case clearance rates. The common reasons for adjournment and the distribution of the methods of case disposition are also examined in this section along with the overall conviction rate.

Chapter 2.0 examines case demographics including age and gender distribution of offenders as well as a sample estimate of the geographical distribution of charges based the police station where matters are reported.

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Chapter 1.0: Criminal Case Activity Statistics in the Parish Courts in 2017

Table 1.0a: Aggregate case statistics for each parish court for 2017

Parish Court	Number of new cases filed	Number of inactive cases	Number of disposed cases	Active Pending case load	Case Disposal Rate (%)
Manchester	2357	527	853	977	58.54
Clarendon	2700	156	861	1683	37.66
St. Catherine	4785	692	3104	989	79.33
St. Thomas	1471	109	946	416	71.72
Portland	1466	216	738	512	65.08
St. Mary	1358	214	716	428	68.48
St. James	3324	609	2076	639	80.78
Corporate Area Criminal	6628	1509	3584	1535	76.84
Westmoreland	2106	348	1411	347	83.52
Hanover	1077	27	763	287	73.35
St. Elizabeth	1202	130	627	445	62.98
St. Ann	2500	594	938	968	61.28
Trelawny	1292	68	690	534	58.67
Total/Average	32266	5199	17307	9760	69.75

The above table shows the aggregate case load statistics for each parish court for the 2017 calendar year. The table shows that 32226 cases were filed in the courts in the year. The top

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three parish courts with the largest case load during the year were the Corporate Area Court-Criminal Division and the St. Catherine Parish Court with 20.54% and 14.83% respectively of the total case load and the St. James Parish Court with 10.30%. On the other hand, the bottom three parish courts with the smallest case load were the Hanover Parish Court with 3.34%, the St. Elizabeth Parish Court with 3.74% and the Trelawny Court with 4.0%. The Westmoreland Parish Court and the St. Catherine Parish Court with 83.50% and 79.40% respectively and the Corporate Area Court- Criminal Division with 76.80% were the courts with the highest recorded case disposal rates for the year. On the other hand, the parish courts of Clarendon with 37.66%, Trelawny with 58.66% and St. Ann with 61.28% had the lowest case disposal rates. It is of interest to note that some of the parish courts with the larger caseloads also rank among those with the higher disposal rates. The overall average disposal rate across all parish courts was approximately 69.75% for 2017. The Clarendon Parish Court, the Corporate Area Parish Court – Criminal Division and the St. Catherine Parish Court had the highest absolute number of cases pending at year end, from those which originated in 2017.

Table 1.0b: Aggregate case statistics for each Parish Court for the first quarter of 2017

Parish Court	Number of new cases filed	Number of inactive cases	Number of disposed cases	Case Clearance Rate (%)
Manchester	637	35	143	27.94
Clarendon	878	39	254	33.37
St. Catherine	1279	127	594	56.37
St. Thomas	449	16	183	44.32

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Portland	381	22	149	44.88
St. Mary	437	53	136	43.25
St. James	756	98	365	61.24
Corporate Area Criminal	1947	352	833	60.86
Westmoreland	592	51	258	52.2
Hanover	284	8	129	48.24
St. Elizabeth	351	32	118	42.74
St. Ann	764	114	174	37.7
Trelawny	284	17	111	45.07
Total/Average	9034	964	3447	48.83

The above table shows the aggregate case load statistics for each parish court for the first quarter, spanning January-March 2017. The table shows that 9,034 new cases were filed in the quarter. The top three parish courts with the largest case load in the quarter were the Corporate Area Parish Court- Criminal Division with 21.55%, the St. Catherine Parish Court with 14.16% and the Clarendon Parish Court with 9.72% of the total case load. On the other hand, the bottom three parish courts with the smallest case load in the quarter were the parish courts of Hanover and Trelawny, each with 3.14% of the total case load and the St. Elizabeth Parish Court with 3.89%. The Westmoreland Parish Court and the Corporate Area Parish Court- Criminal Division with 61.24% and 60.86% respectively and the St. Catherine Parish Court with 56.37% were the courts with the highest case clearance rates in the quarter. On the other hand, the Parish Courts of Manchester with 27.94%, Clarendon with 33.37% and St. Ann with 37.69% had the lowest case clearance rates. It is again of interest to note that some of the parish courts

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with the larger caseloads also rank among those with the higher disposal rates. The overall average clearance rate across all parish courts was approximately 48.88% during the quarter.

Table 1.0c: Aggregate case statistics for each Parish Court for 2017

Parish Court	Number of new cases filed	Number of inactive cases	Number of disposed cases	Case Clearance Rate (%)
Manchester	609	52	201	41.54
Clarendon	783	39	297	42.91
St. Catherine	1496	201	960	77.61
St. Thomas	399	26	217	60.9
Portland	377	61	144	54.38
St. Mary	280	53	176	81.79
St. James	659	155	325	72.84
Corporate Area Criminal	1704	392	922	77.11
Westmoreland	534	106	357	86.7
Hanover	297	4	171	58.92
St. Elizabeth	300	32	135	55.67
St. Ann	625	148	205	56.48
Trelawny	363	17	204	60.88
Total/Gross	8426	1286	4314	66.46

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The above table shows the aggregate case load statistics for each parish court for the second quarter, spanning April-June 2017. The table shows that 8426 new cases were filed in the quarter. The top three parish courts with the largest case load in the quarter were the Corporate Area Parish Court- Criminal Division with 20.22%, the St. Catherine Parish Court with 17.75% and the Clarendon Parish Court with 9.29% of the total new case load. On the other hand, the bottom three Parish courts with the smallest case load in the quarter were again the St. Mary Parish Court with 3.32%, the Hanover Parish Court with 3.52% and the St. Elizabeth Parish Court with 3.56% of total new case load. The Westmoreland Parish Court and the St. Mary Parish Court with 86.70% and 81.78% respectively and the St. Catherine Parish Court with 77.60% were the courts with the highest case clearance rates in the quarter. On the other hand, the parish courts of Manchester with 41.54%, Clarendon with 42.29% and Portland with 54.38% had the lowest case clearance rates. The overall average case clearance rate across all parish courts was approximately 66.46% during the quarter.

Table 1.0c: Aggregate case statistics for each Parish Court for the third quarter of 2017

Parish Court	Number of new cases filed	Number of inactive cases	Number of disposed cases	Case Clearance Rate (%)
Manchester	637	75	257	52.12
Clarendon	537	39	165	37.99
St. Catherine	1075	179	808	91.81
St. Thomas	333	41	287	98.5
Portland	427	63	207	63.23

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St. Mary	354	54	212	75.14
St. James	855	144	566	83.04
Corporate Area Criminal	1599	303	1014	82.36
Westmoreland	524	112	368	91.6
Hanover	292	7	247	86.99
St. Elizabeth	299	33	169	67.56
St. Ann	645	167	265	66.98
Trelawny	391	17	221	60.87
Total/Average	7968	1234	4786	75.55

The above table shows the aggregate case load statistics for each parish court for the third quarter, spanning July-September 2017. The table shows that 7,968 cases were filed in the quarter. The top three parish courts with the largest case load in the quarter were the Corporate Area Court- Criminal Division with 20.07%, the St. Catherine Parish Court with 13.49% and the St. James Parish Court with 10.73% of the total case load. On the other hand, the bottom three parish courts with the smallest case load in the quarter were the Hanover Parish Court with 3.66%, the St. Elizabeth Parish Court with 3.75% and the St. Thomas Parish Court with 4.18% of total case load. The St. Thomas Parish Court and the St. Catherine Parish Court with 98.49% and 91.81% respectively and the Westmoreland Parish Court with 91.60% were the courts with the highest case clearance rates in the quarter. On the other hand, the parish courts of Clarendon with 37.98%, Manchester with 52.11% and Trelawny with 60.86% had the lowest case clearance rates. The overall average case clearance rate across all parish courts was approximately 75.55% during the quarter.

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Table 1.0d: Aggregate case statistics for each Parish Court for the fourth quarter of 2017

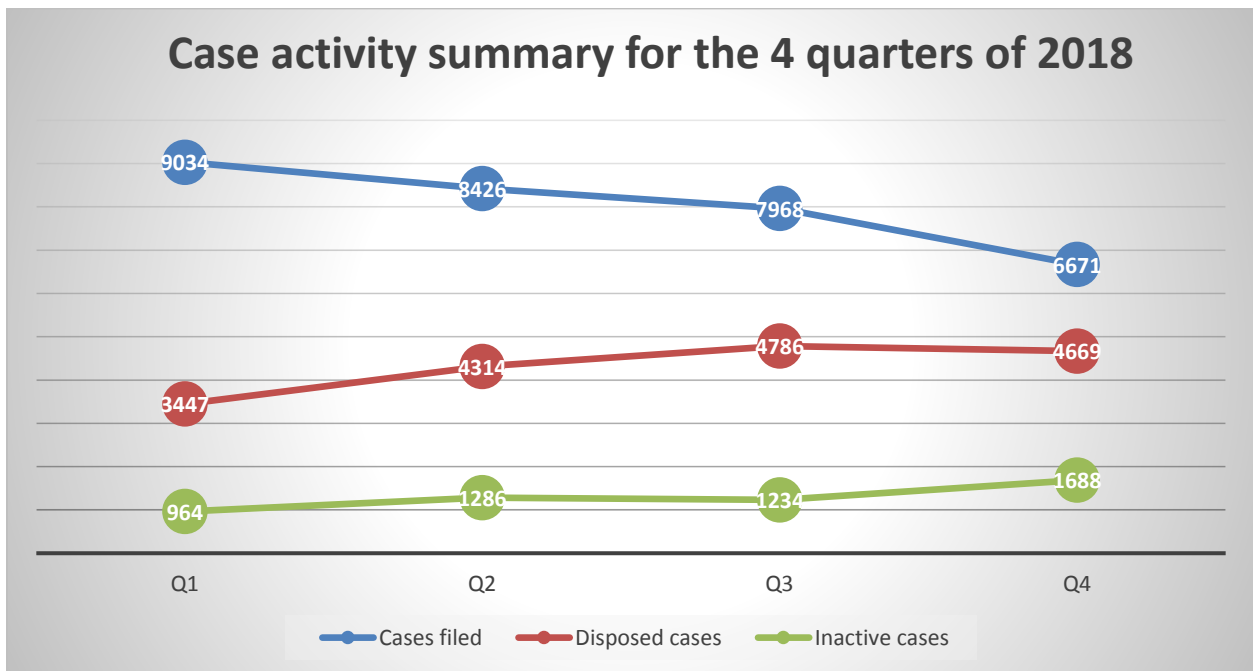
Parish Court	Number of new cases filed	Number of inactive cases	Number of disposed cases	Case Clearance Rate (%)
Manchester	474	365	253	130.38
Clarendon	502	39	145	36.65
St. Catherine	935	185	742	99.14
St. Thomas	290	26	259	98.28
Portland	281	70	238	109.61
St. Mary	287	54	192	85.71
St. James	1054	212	820	97.91
Corporate Area Criminal	1378	462	815	92.67
Westmoreland	456	78	428	110.96
Hanover	204	8	216	109.8
St. Elizabeth	252	33	205	94.44
St. Ann	304	139	202	112.17
Trelawny	254	17	154	67.32
Total/Average	6671	1688	4669	95.29

The above table shows the aggregate case load statistics for each parish court for the fourth quarter, spanning from October-December 2017. The table shows that 6671 cases were filed in the quarter. The top three parish courts with the largest case load in the quarter were the Corporate Area Court- Criminal Division, the St. James Parish Court and the St. Catherine Parish Court with 20.66%, 15.80% and 14.02% of the total case load respectively. On the other hand,

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the bottom three parish courts with the smallest case load in the quarter were the Hanover Parish Court with 3.06%, the St. Elizabeth Parish Court with 3.78% and the Trelawny Parish with 3.81% of total case load. The Manchester Parish Court and the St. Ann Parish Court with 130.16% and 112.17% respectively and the Westmoreland Parish Court with 110.96% were the courts with the highest case clearance rates in the quarter. On the other hand, the parish courts of Clarendon with 36.65%, Trelawny with 67.32% and St. Mary with 85.71% had the lowest case clearance rates. The overall average case clearance rate across all Parish Courts was approximately 95.29% during the quarter.

Chart 1.0: Criminal case activity summary for the four quarters of 2017



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The above chart summarizes the number of new cases filed, disposed and inactive across the four quarters of 2017. It is seen that the number of new cases filed throughout the year experienced a consistent decline across the four quarters, with the highest number recorded in the first quarter. The number of cases disposed however showed an increasing trend over the first three quarters, with a particularly sharp rise seen between the first and second quarters. A slight decline occurred between the third and fourth quarters. The number of inactive cases saw a sharp increase between the first and second quarters and remained relatively stable in the fourth quarter, before rising sharply in 2017.

Table 2.0: Average monthly case statistics for each Parish Court for 2017

Parish Court	Total number of cases	Number of cases inactive	Number of cases disposed	Active pending case load	Case disposal rate
Manchester	196	44	71	81	58.54
Clarendon	225	13	72	140	37.66
St. Catherine	399	58	259	82	79.33
St. Thomas	123	9	79	35	71.72
Portland	122	18	62	43	65.08
St. Mary	113	18	60	36	68.48
St. James	277	51	173	53	80.78
Corporate Area Criminal	552	126	299	128	76.84
Westmoreland	176	29	118	29	83.52
Hanover	90	2	64	24	73.35
St. Elizabeth	100	11	52	37	62.98

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St. Ann	208	50	78	81	61.28
Trelawny	108	6	58	45	58.67
Total/Gross	2689	433	1442	813	69.75

*** The averages are calculated using table 1:0a and are approximations.

The above table shows the average monthly case load statistics for each parish court for the 2017 calendar year. The Corporate Area Parish Court-Criminal Division and St. Catherine Parish Court with 552 and 399 cases respectively and the St. James Parish Court with 277, had the highest average monthly case load during the year. Similarly, the three courts with the lowest average monthly case load are the parish courts of Hanover and St. Elizabeth with 90 and 100 cases respectively and the Trelawny Parish Court with 108 cases.

Case Types

Table 3.0a: Types of charges for each Parish Court for 2017

Parish Court	Case Types									Total
	Indictment	Petty Sessions	Committal Proceedings	Summary Matters	Traffic	Tax	Miscellaneous	LRF	NS	
Manchester	1469	946	368	780	0	216	0	40	0	3819
Clarendon	1321	670	351	1440	0	0	0	0	24	3806
St. Catherine	2278	1013	608	3042	0	152	1	0	0	7094
St. Thomas	781	236	243	798	0	46	0	0	0	2104
Portland	971	321	87	655	0	0	0	0	2	2036
St. Mary	898	321	334	302	0	66	1	0	0	1922
St. James	1341	617	192	2721	0	0	211	0	0	5082
Corporate Area Criminal	4379	1564	734	4822	82	0	0	0	16	11597
Westmoreland	1044	405	356	976	0	148	2	0	0	2931
Hanover	683	272	126	447	0	0	0	0	3	1531
St. Elizabeth	833	219	195	421	7	134	0	17	0	1826

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St. Ann	1306	747	286	1004	0	313	0	0	0	2656
Trelawny	762	338	149	670	0	0	10	0	0	1929
Total	18066	7669	4029	18078	89	1075	225	57	45	49333
Percentage	36.62	15.55	8.17	36.64	0.18	2.18	0.46	0.12	0.09	100

*Total number of charges in the sample = 49,333. **LRF means Law Reform Fraudulent Transaction, ***NS means not stated

The above table provides a breakdown of the different types of charges entered before each parish court for the 2017 calendar year. The majority of the charges were Summary Matters (36.64%); this was followed by Indictments (36.62%), Petty Sessions (15.55%) and Committal Proceedings with 8.17% of the total. The largest share of both Summary Matters and Indictments were accounted for by the Corporate Area Court- Criminal Division followed by the parish courts of St. Catherine and St. James. The largest proportion of Petty Sessions were also filed at the Corporate Area Parish Court – Criminal Division followed by the parish courts of St. Catherine and Manchester. The Corporate Area Parish Court- Criminal followed by the parish courts of St. Catherine and Manchester, account for the largest individual shares of Committal Proceedings. As for criminal matters which are traffic related, the only incidence of these in the year was in the Corporate Area Parish Court – Criminal Division and the parish court of St. Elizabeth.

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Offence Types

Table 4.0: Most frequently occurring charges across the parish courts for 2017

Charges	Count	Percentage (%)
Unlawful wounding	3882	7.87
Assault occasioning bodily harm	3208	6.50
Threat	2809	5.69
Possession of offensive weapon	2603	5.28
Armed with an offensive weapon	2345	4.75
Malicious destruction of property	1926	3.90
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	1797	3.64
Exposing goods for sale	1455	2.95
Possession of ganja	1455	2.95
Dealing in ganja	1172	2.38
Disorderly conduct	1105	2.24
Simple larceny	849	1.72

***Total number of charges = 49,333

The above table shows the distribution of the twelve most commonly occurring types of charges across all parish courts for the 2017 calendar year. It is shown that unlawful wounding with 3882 or 7.87% of the total number of charges is the most frequently occurring. This was followed by assault occasioning bodily harm with 3208 or 6.50% and threat with 2809 or 5.69%. The top five is rounded off by possession of offensive weapon with 2603 or 5.28% and armed with an offensive weapon with 2345 or 4.75% of the total count of charges filed in the

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parish courts during the calendar. These twelve most frequently occurring types of charges account for approximately 50% of the total incidence of charges in 2017.

Table 5.0: Average age of active charges for each parish court for 2017

Parish Court	Average Age of Active charges (days)
Manchester	158.11
Clarendon	216.86
St. Catherine	135.42
St. Thomas	157.09
Portland	150.82
St. Mary	158.9
St. James	186.63
Corporate Area Criminal	151.65
Westmoreland	115.09
Hanover	145.62
St. Elizabeth	154.24
St. Ann	163.82
Trelawny	151.59
Overall Average	157.37
Standard Deviation	24.09

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The above table shows that the average age of active charges for each parish court as at the end of 2017, for cases originating in said year. The parish courts of Clarendon, St. James, St. Mary and Manchester rank highest on the list. On the contrary, the lowest outcomes were observed for in the parish courts of Westmoreland, St. Catherine, Hanover and St. James.

Table 5.0: Average age of disposed charges for each parish court for 2017

Parish Court	Average Age of Disposed charges (days)
Manchester	104.83
Clarendon	92.26
St. Catherine	90.18
St. Thomas	91.46
Portland	98.03
St. Mary	87.23
St. James	74.82
Corporate Area Criminal	73.99
Westmoreland	78.90
Hanover	77.48
St. Elizabeth	90.07
St. Ann	96.55
Trelawny	81.02
Overall Average	87.44
Standard Deviation	9.60

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The above table shows that the average time taken to dispose of criminal cases in 2017 which were filed in the Parish Courts is 87.44 days or just less than 3 months. The low standard deviation of roughly 10 days is an indication that on average the variation of the scores was not significant. This means that the courts generally experienced similar times to disposition in 2017. The Manchester Parish Courts with 104.83 days or roughly 3.5 months and the Portland Parish Court with 98.03 days or approximately 3.3 months account for the longest times to disposition for cases originating in 2017. The Corporate Area Parish Court with roughly 74 days or 2.5 months and the St. James Parish Court with roughly 75 days or 2.5 months account for the lowest times taken to dispose of the cases originating in the year.

Methods of Disposal and Criminal Conviction Rate

Table 6.0a: Sampling distribution of the methods of disposal for 2017

Method of Disposal	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dismissed	5161	21.04
Guilty Verdict	2896	11.80
Not Guilty	1877	7.65
Transferred	1122	4.57
Mediated settlement	1090	4.44
Committed to Circuit	351	1.43
Plea bargain	6	0.02
Total	24533	100

Total sample size = 24,533

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The above table shows a sampling distribution of the methods of disposition across all parish courts for the 2017 calendar year. Using this distribution, it is seen that the majority of matters disposed of during the year were by way of dismissals with 21% of the disposals, followed by guilty verdicts with 11.80%. Not guilty verdict with 7.65%, matters transferred with 4.57%, matters transferred and mediated settlements with 4.44% account for the remaining methods of disposal in the year. The combined 19.45% of the cases disposed by way of guilty outcomes represents the criminal conviction rate in the parish courts for the year.

Common Reasons for Adjournment

Table 7.0: Sampling distribution of the most frequently occurring reasons for adjournment across all parish courts for 2017

Reasons for Adjournment	Count	Percentage
Continuance	4598	19.840
Defendant Not Appearing (DNA) warrant issued	2728	11.771
Sentencing	2619	11.301
No evidence offered	2246	9.691
Re-issue application	1858	8.017
Transferred	1684	7.266
Warrant to issue	915	3.948
Withdrawn	814	3.512
File to be completed	722	3.115
No order made	627	2.706

Total sample size =23,175

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The above table shows that from a sample of 23,175 adjournments in the 2017 calendar year, the majority 19.84% were as a result of matters part-heard which were therefore adjourned for continuance. Matters adjourned due to DNA warrant issued (non-appearance of the accused) with 11.77% and matters adjourned due to sentencing with 11.30% of the sample rounds off the top three reasons for adjournment during the year. Adjournments due to no evidence offered with 9.69% of the sample and re-issued applications with 8.01% complete the top five reasons for adjournment for the year.

Table 8.0: Clearance rates for charges filed in the parish courts in 2017

Parish Court	Clearance rate (%)
Manchester	62.99
Clarendon	37.73
St. Catherine	81.23
St. Thomas	75.5
Portland	68.02
St. Mary	71.47
St. James	78.75
Corporate Area Criminal	76.25
Westmoreland	85.36
Hanover	75.98
St. Elizabeth	65.1
St. Ann	68.33
Trelawny	58.53
Overall average clearance rate	71.53

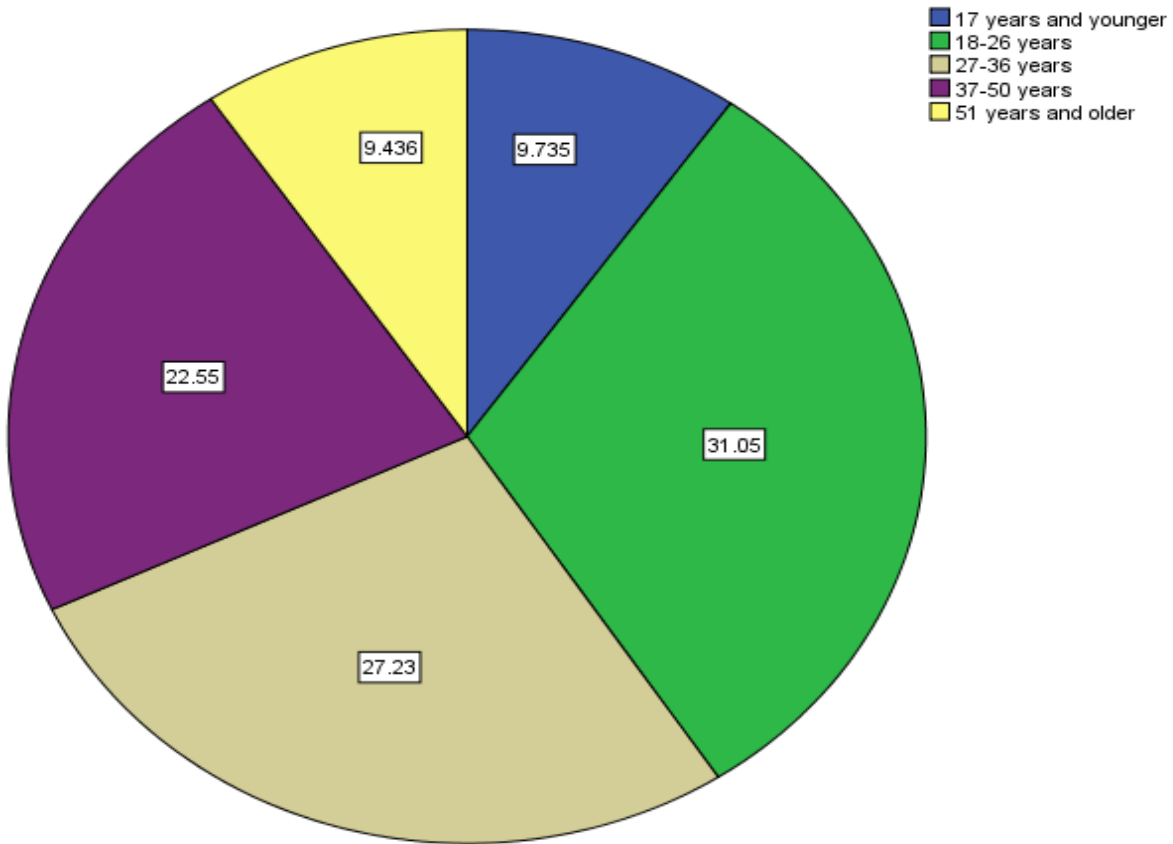
THE CHIEF JUSTICE'S ANNUAL STATISTICS REPORT ON CRIMINAL MATTERS IN THE PARISH COURTS

The case clearance rate provides a measure of the ratio of incoming to disposed cases within a given period of time. The table above shows that for 2017 the overall average clearance rate is 71.53% which is an indication that for every 100 new charges filed during the year, roughly 72 were disposed. The parish court with the highest clearance rate for the year was Westmoreland with 85.36%, followed by St. Catherine with 81.23% and St. James with 78.75%. On the other hand, the Clarendon Parish Court with 37.73% and the Trelawny Parish Court with 58.53% recorded the lowest case clearance rates. Based on earlier analysis, these results are not surprising as there appear to be some direct correlation between the case disposal rate and the clearance rate. The parish courts with higher case disposal rates generally also have higher case clearance rates.

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Chapter 2.0: Criminal Case Demographics in the Parish Courts in 2017

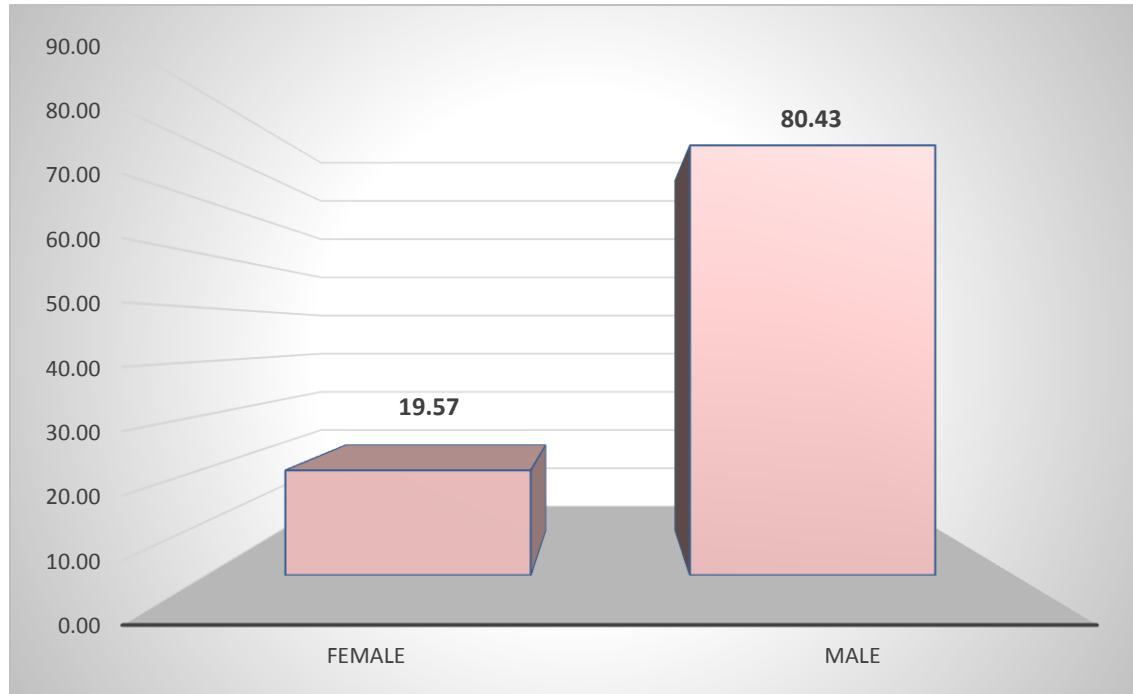
Chart 1.0: Aggregate age distribution of offenders for all parish courts for 2017



The chart above shows the aggregate age distribution of offenders for all parish courts for the 2017 calendar year. The majority of the offenders were between the ages 18 and 26 and the ages of 27 and 36 years, accounting for 31% and 27% respectively of the total number of offences filed. This is followed by the age category of 37-50 years old with 22.55%, 17 years and younger with 9.7% and the oldest age group of 51 years and older accounted for the smallest proportion with 9.4% of the offenders.

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Chart 2.0: Aggregate gender distribution of offenders for all parish courts for 2017



The above chart shows the gender distribution of offender for all parish courts for the year ended December 31, 2017. As shown, the majority of the offenders were males accounting for 80.43% of the total while female offenders account for the remaining 19.57% of the cases brought before the courts.

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Table 9.0: Sampling distribution of the most frequently occurring charges by gender for 2017

Charge	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Unlawful wounding	2998	77.49	871	22.51	3869	100.00%
Assault occasioning bodily harm	2431	75.68	781	24.32	3212	100.00%
Threat	2108	76.49	648	23.51	2756	100.00%
Possession of offensive weapon	2415	92.96	183	7.04	2598	100.00%
Armed with an offensive weapon	2210	94.69	124	5.31	2334	100.00%
Malicious destruction of property	1484	77.33	435	22.67	1919	100.00%
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	1289	71.89	504	28.11	1793	100.00%
Possession of ganja	1212	83.07	247	16.93	1459	100.00%
Exposing goods for sale	869	72.06	337	27.94	1206	100.00%
Dealing in ganja	967	82.23	209	17.77	1176	100.00%
Disorderly conduct	708	64.42	391	35.58	1099	100.00%
Assault at common law	698	86.17	112	13.83	810	100.00%
Indecent language	572	75.46	186	24.54	758	100.00%

***The gender of offenders was not available for every matter that was filed in the parish courts

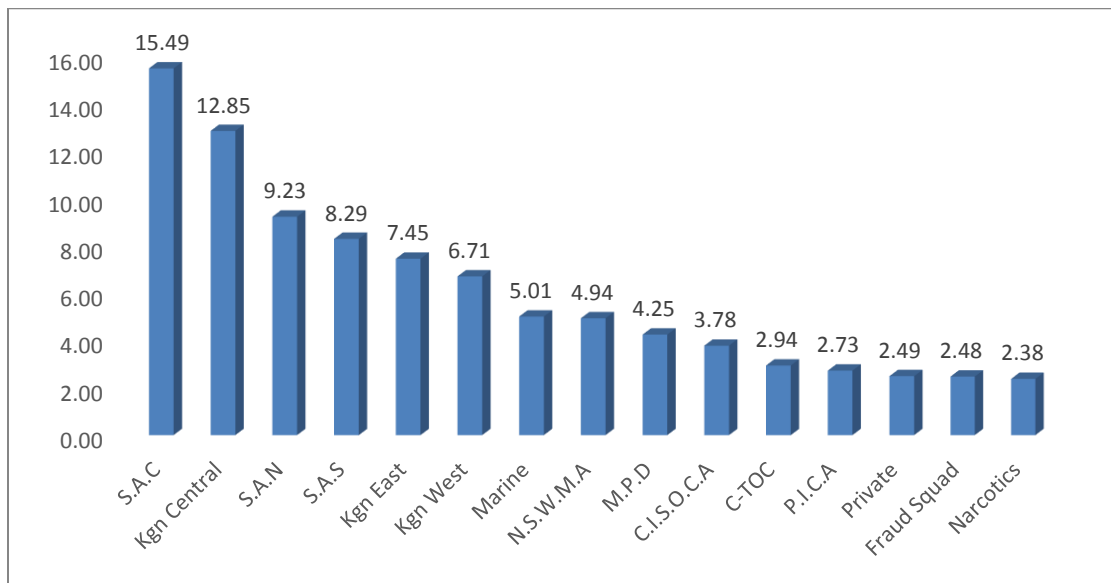
The above table provides a sampling distribution of the most frequently occurring charges by gender in the 2017 calendar year. Based on the data shown in chart 2.0, it is not surprising that males account for the dominant proportion of all these charges. Among the offences listed with the greatest imbalance in the gender distribution are armed with an offensive weapon and possession of offensive weapon for which over 90% of the offenders were male. Disorderly conduct, assault occasioning bodily harm and exposing goods for sale saw the highest incidence of female involvement among the offences which appeared most frequently.

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Sampling distribution of offences by police station for all parish courts for 2017

A series of charts are displayed below for the 2017 calendar year which provides the distribution of criminal charges based on the police stations at which the matters were reported in each parish.

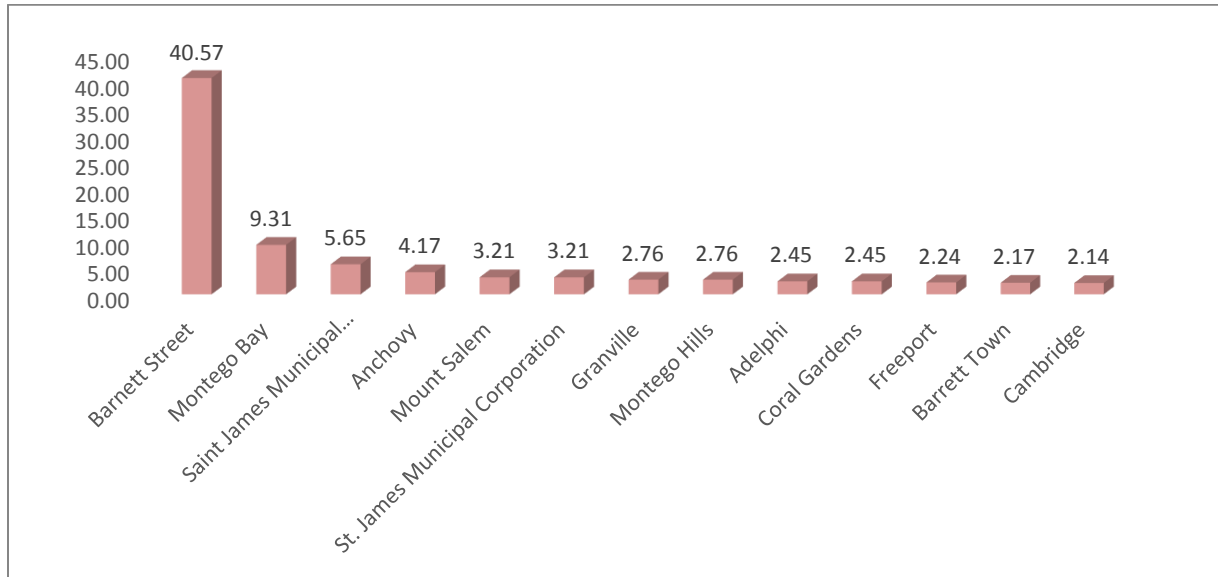
Chart 3a: Distribution of criminal offences by the police station of origin at the Corporate Area Criminal Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes at the Corporate Area Parish Court - Criminal Division using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 11,107 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year the majority of criminal matters, 15.49%, which were brought before the Court, were reported at S.A.C. This was followed by the Kingston Central Police Station which accounts for 12.85% of total matters reported. The top three was rounded off by the S.A.N Police Station with 9.23%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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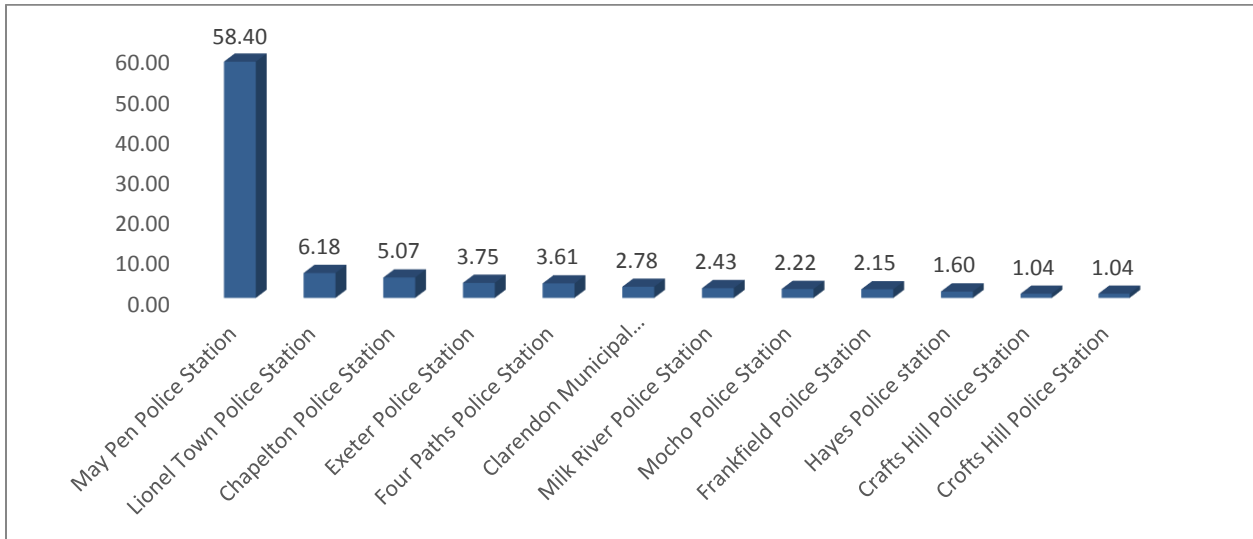
Chart 3b: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the St. James Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of St. James using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 2901 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year, the majority of criminal matters, 40.57%, which were brought before the St. James Parish Court, were reported in Barnett Street. This was followed by the Montego Bay Police Station which accounts for 9.31% of total matters reported. The top three was rounded off by the Saint James Municipal Police Station with 5.65%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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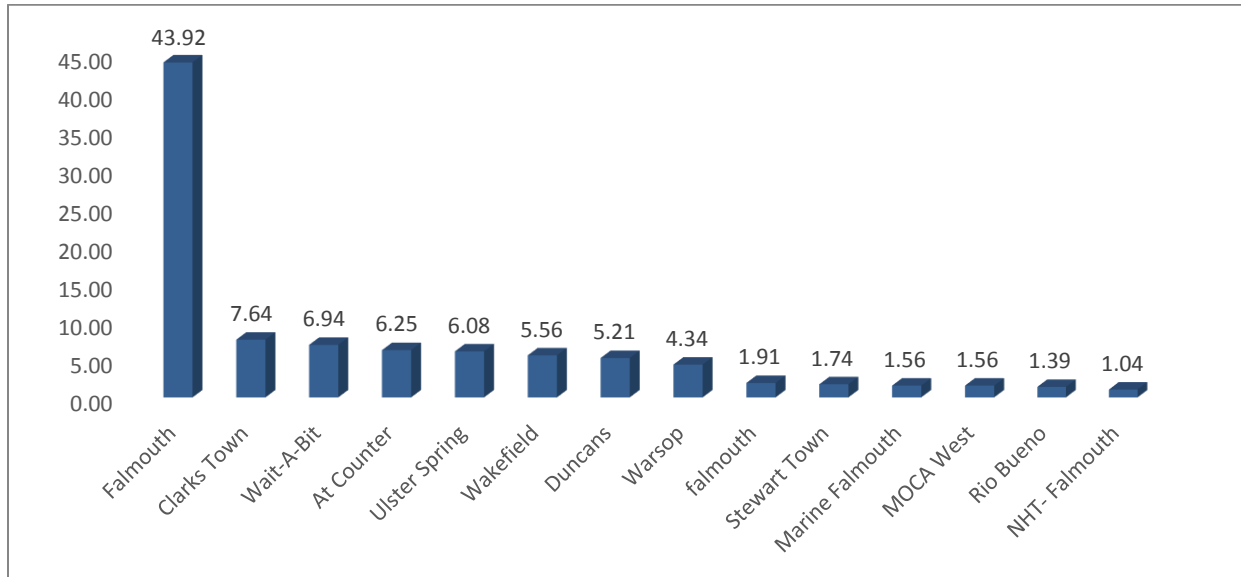
Chart 3c: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the Clarendon Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of Clarendon using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 1440 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year, the majority of criminal matters, 58.40%, which were brought before the Clarendon Parish Court were reported in May Pen. This was followed by the Lionel Town Police Station which accounts for 6.18% of total matters reported. The top three was rounded off by the Chapelton Police Station with 5.07%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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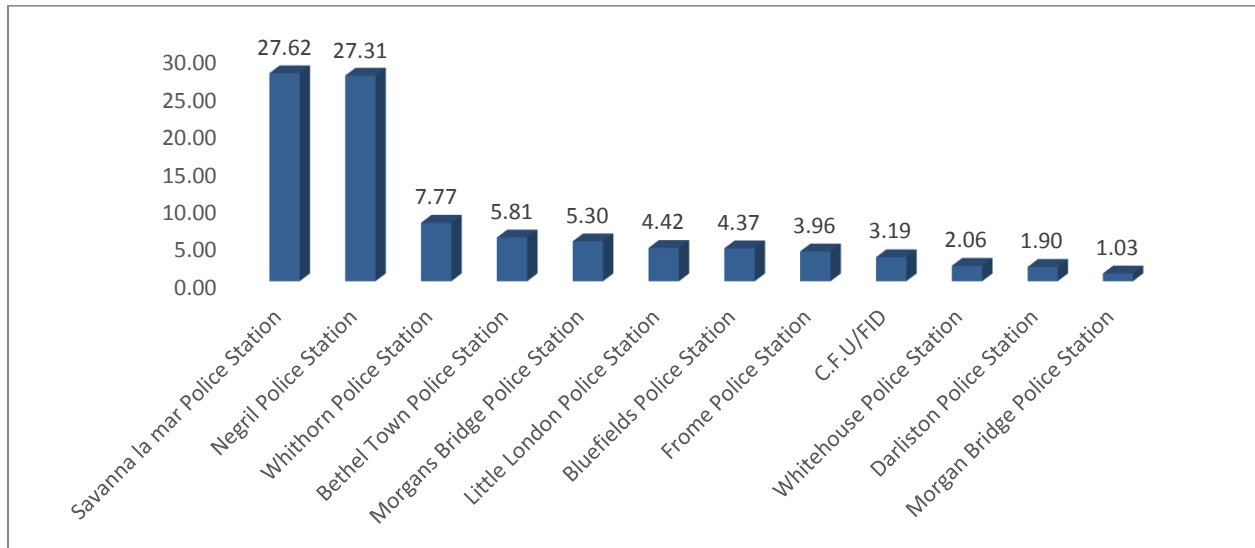
Chart 3d: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the Trelawny Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of Trelawny using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 576 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year the majority of criminal matters, 43.92%, which were brought before the Trelawny Parish Court, were reported in Falmouth. This was followed by the Clarks Town Police Station which accounts for 7.64% of total matters reported. The top three was rounded off by the Wait-A-Bit Police Station with 6.94%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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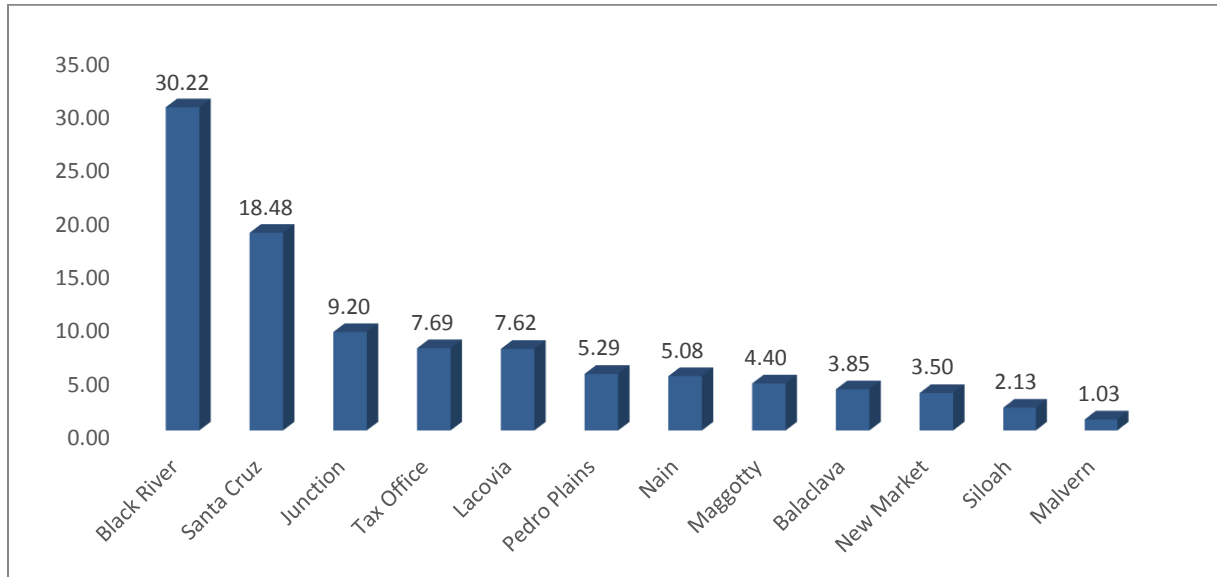
Chart 3e: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the Westmoreland Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of Westmoreland using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 1944 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year the majority of criminal matters, 27.62%, which were brought before the Westmoreland Parish Court, were reported at the Savanna- La-Mar Police Station. This was followed by the Negril Police Station which accounts for 27.31% of total matters reported. The top three was rounded off by the Whithorn Police Station with 7.77%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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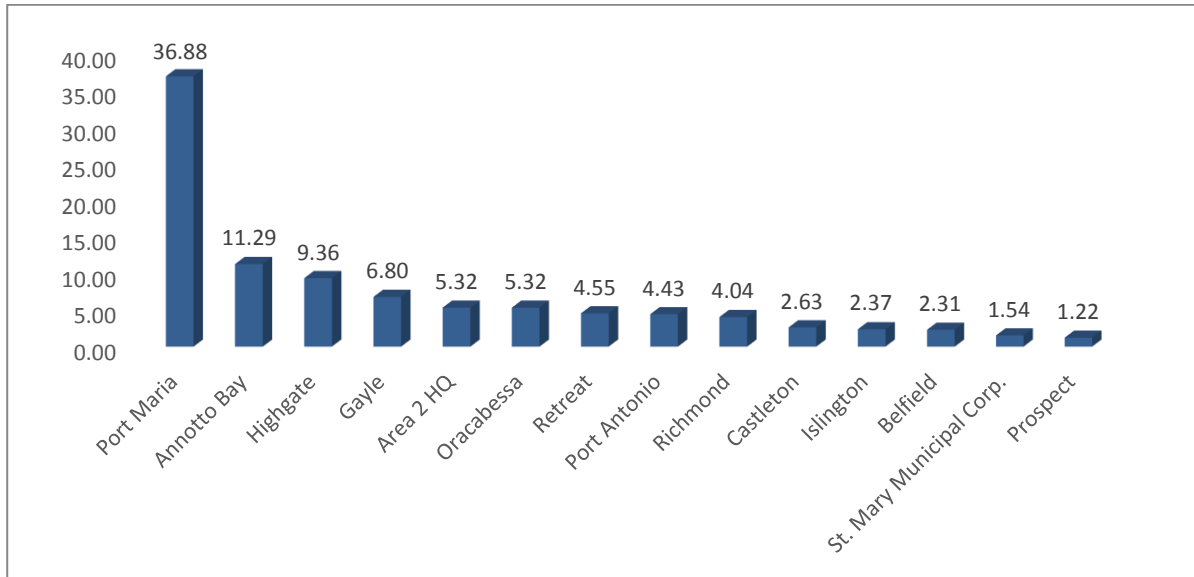
Chart 3f: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the St. Elizabeth Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of St. Elizabeth using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 1456 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year the majority of criminal matters, 30.22%, which were brought before the St. Elizabeth Parish Court, were reported in Black River. This was followed by the Santa Cruz Police Station which accounts for 18.48% of total matters reported. The top three was rounded off by the Junction Police Station with 9.20%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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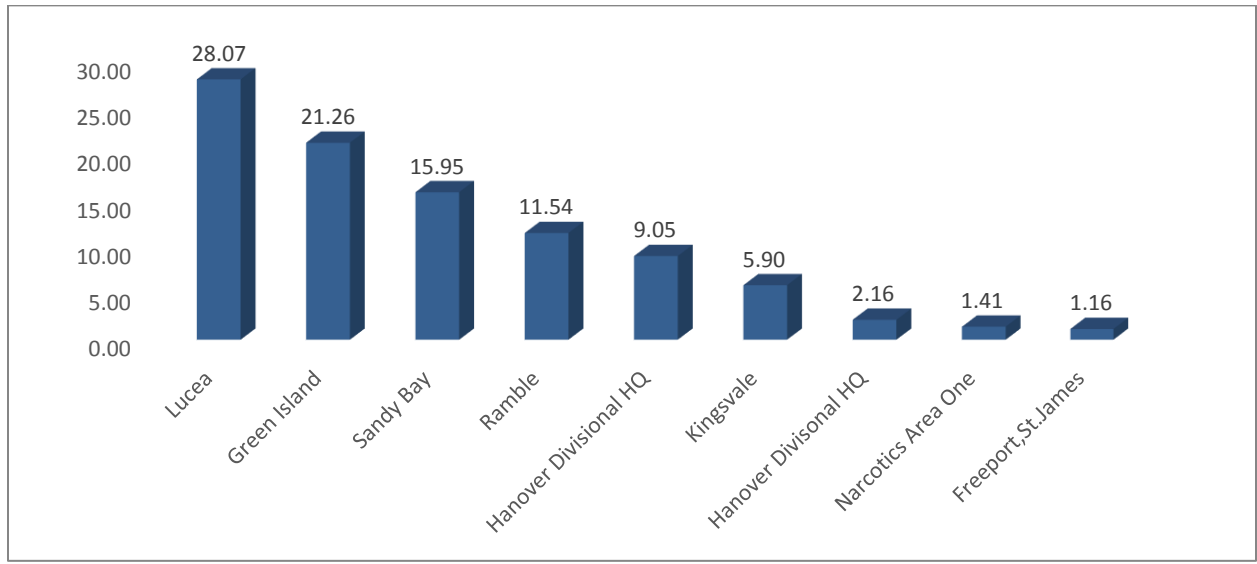
Chart 3g: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the St. Mary Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of St. Mary using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 1559 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year the majority of criminal matters, 36.88%, which were brought before the St. Mary Parish Court, were reported in Port Maria. This was followed by the Annotto Bay Police Station which accounts for 11.29% of total matters reported. The top three was rounded off by the Highgate Police Station with 9.36%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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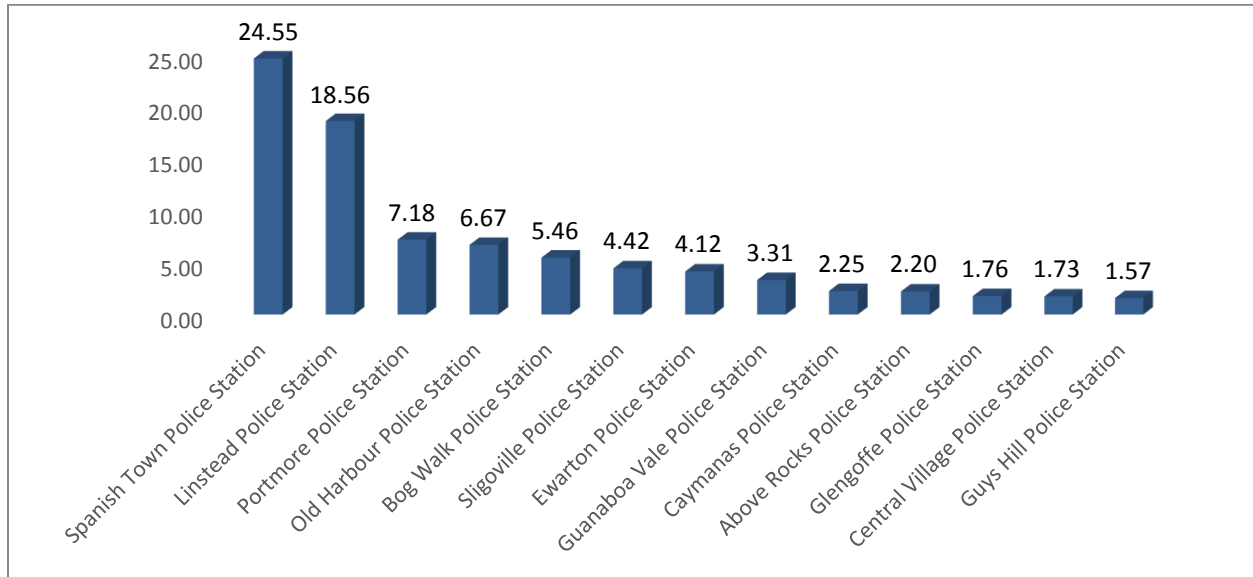
Chart 3h: Distribution of criminal offences by the police station of origin at the Hanover Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of Hanover using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 1204 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year, the majority of criminal matters, 28.07%, which were brought before the Hanover Parish Court, were reported in Lucea. This was followed by the Green Island Police Station which accounts for 21.26% of total matters reported. The top three was rounded off by the Sandy Bay with 15.95%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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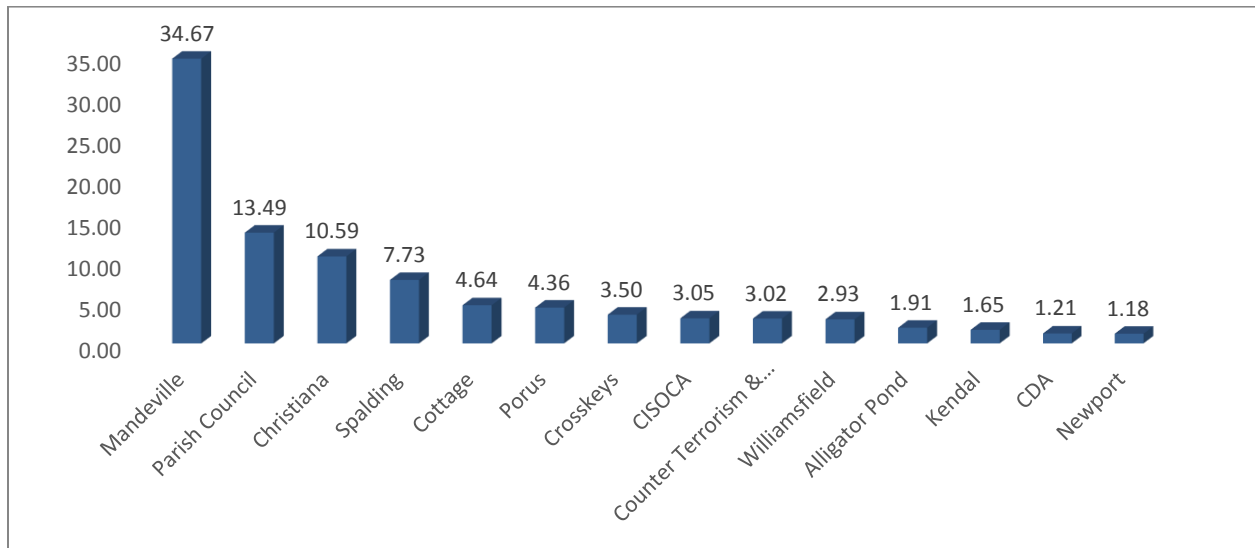
Chart 3i: Distribution of criminal offences by the police station of origin at the St. Catherine Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of St. Catherine using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 6354 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year the majority of criminal matters, 24.55%, which were brought before the St. Catherine Parish Courts, were reported in Spanish Town. This was followed by the Linstead Police Station which accounts for 18.56% of total matters reported and the Portmore Police Station with 7.18%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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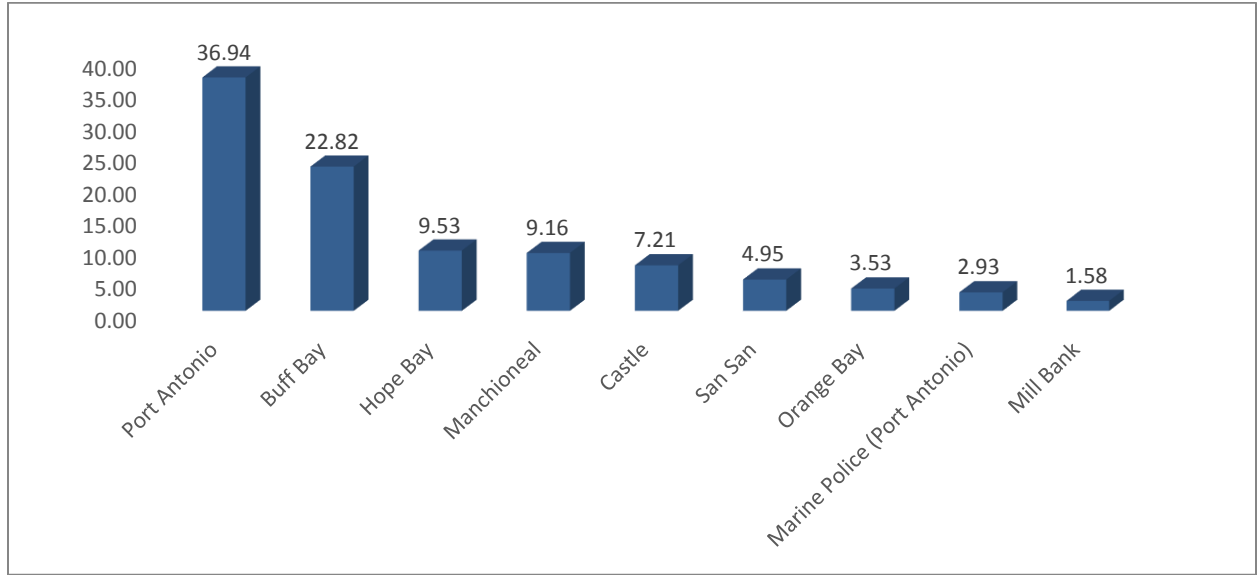
Chart 3j: Distribution of criminal offences by the police station of origin at the Manchester Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of Manchester using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 3144 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year the majority of criminal matters, 34.67%, which were brought before the Manchester Parish courts, were reported in Mandeville. This was followed by the Parish Council which accounts for 13.49% of total matters reported and the Christiana Police Station with 10.59%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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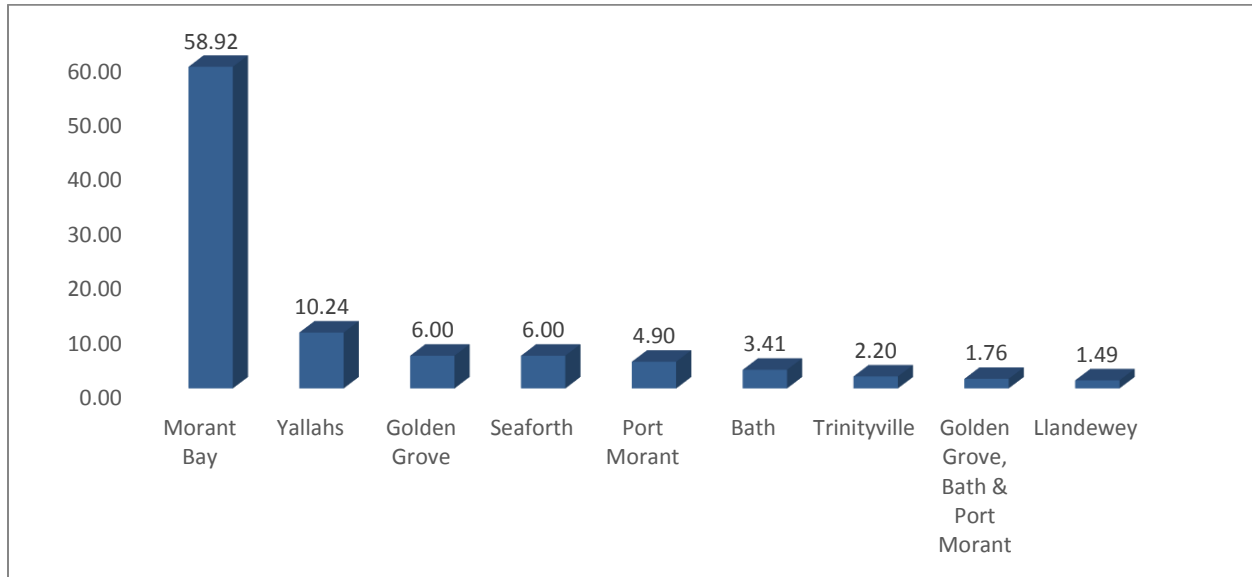
Chart 3k: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the Portland Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of Portland using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 1332 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year, the majority of criminal matters, 36.94% of which were brought before the Portland Parish Court were reported at the Port Antonio Police Station. This was followed by the Buff Bay Police Station which accounts for 22.82% of total matters reported and the Hope Bay Police Station with 9.53%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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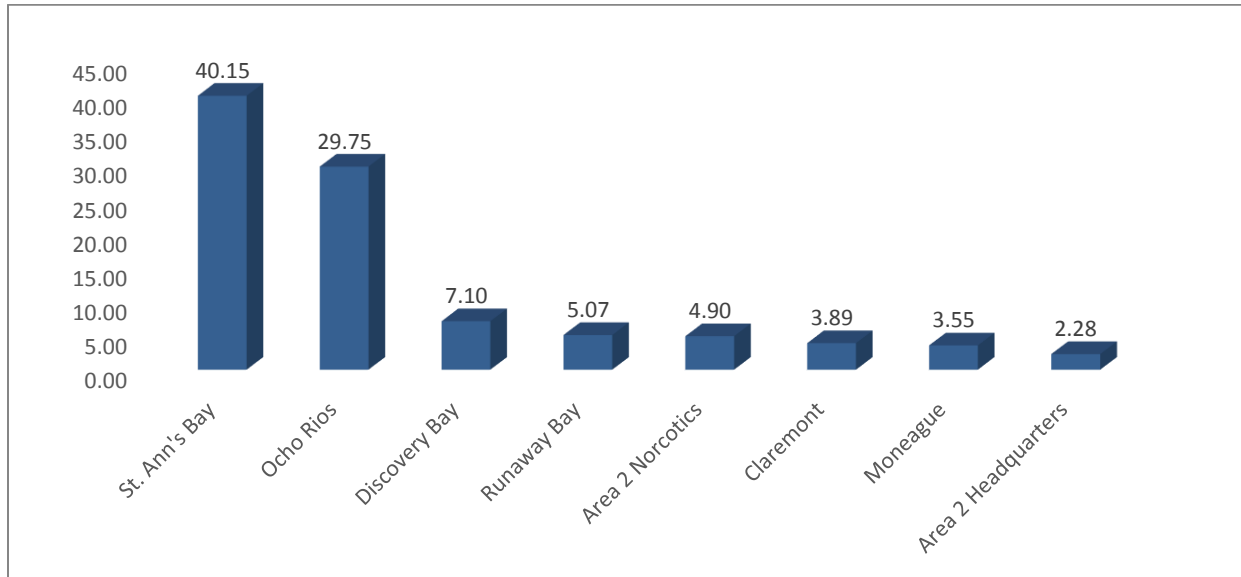
Chart 3I: Distribution of Criminal Offences by the Police station of Origin at the St. Thomas Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish St. Thomas using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 1816 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year, the majority of criminal matters, 58.92%, which were brought before the St. Thomas Parish Court, were reported in Mordant Bay. This was followed by the Dallas Police Station which accounts for 10.24% of total matters reported and the Golden Grove Police Station with 6%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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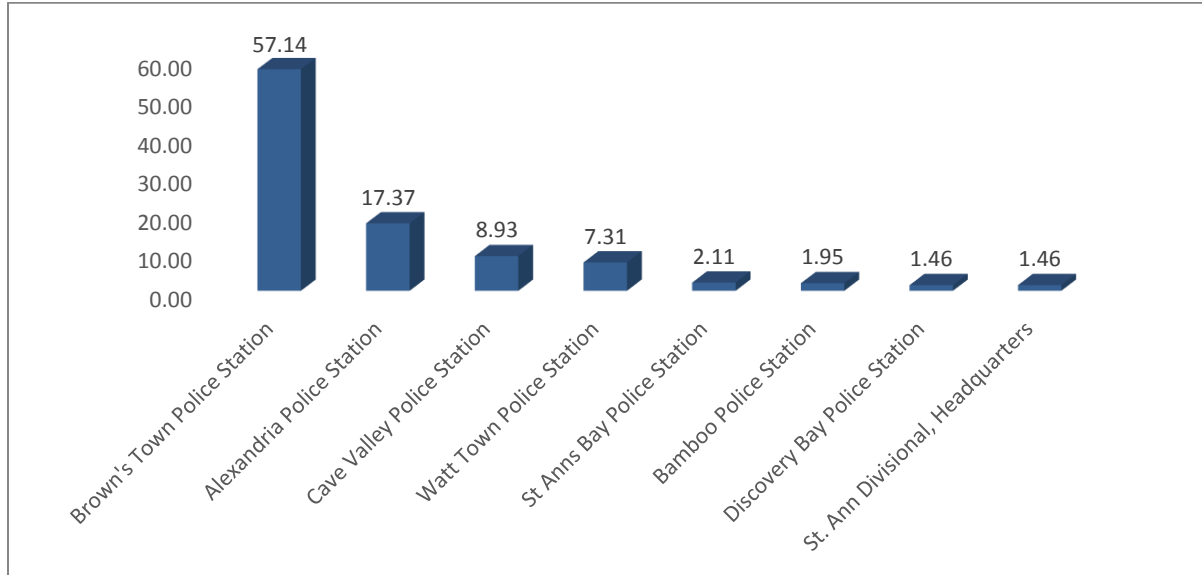
Chart 3m: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the St. Ann Parish Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the parish of St. Ann using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 1183 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year, the majority of criminal matters 40.15%, which were brought before the St. Ann Parish Courts, were reported at the St. Ann’s Bay Police Station. This was followed by the Coho Rios Police Station which accounts for 29.75% of total matters reported and the Discovery Bay Police Station with 7.10%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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Chart 3m: Distribution of criminal charges by the police station of origin at the Brown’s Town Court



The above chart shows the distribution of crimes in the Brown’s Town area using the police stations at which the matters were reported. The data available from a total of 616 records indicate that for the 2017 calendar year, the majority of criminal matters 57.14%, which were brought before the Brown’s Town Courts, were reported in Brown’s Town Police Station. This was followed by the Alexandria Police Station which accounts for 17.37% of total matters reported and the Cave Valley Police Station with 8.93%. This data provides important insights into the geographical distribution of criminal offences committed in the parish.

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Conclusion and Recommendations

This report provides a range of essential insights into case activity in the parish courts for the year ended December, 2017. Among other things, it allows for the establishment of a firm indication of the case load being carried by the different parish courts as well as the relative clearance and disposal rates and the current estimated criminal case backlog. An understanding of the key contributors to the adjournment of cases, the distribution of case types and methods of disposal are also clearly established. Also established are the dominant offence types and important demographics measures, among other indicators. Several vital findings emerged from the report, among which is that some of the courts with the larger caseloads also generally have the higher disposal and clearance rates and some with the smallest caseloads have the lower case disposal and clearance rates. Among the highlights of this report is that the parish courts of Westmoreland and St. James with disposal rates of over 80% for matters originating in 2017, are broadly in line with the commonly benchmarked International standard in many developed jurisdictions. Similarly, the Westmoreland and St. Catherine Parish Courts with case clearance rates of over 80% are also generally consistent with some International benchmarks. More generally, the data suggests that many of the parish courts are showing good potential with the disposal and clearance of criminal cases, though there is much room for improvement. The exceptional performance of the Westmoreland Parish Court seems to be due in part to its strong use of mediation a method of disposition, decidedly outdoing all other parish courts in this regard.

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Among the findings which have the greatest implications for the efficiency with which matters progress through the courts system is that a large proportion of the reasons for adjournment are due to the non-attendance of the accused, medical reports outstanding and files to be completed. These deficiencies require special operational interventions and stakeholder collaboration to produce the desired solutions. The proportionately large incidence of male and youth involvement in nearly all types of criminal offences are also quite telling from a demographic and social standpoint. It is also notable that the ratio of mediated settlements to other methods of disposition is generally quite low, which could suggest either an under-usage of existing provisions for mediation or a high incidence of failed attempts at mediation.

These findings could form the nucleus of important operational and policy interventions which are needed to bolster efficient flow of criminal cases throughout the court system and therefore constitute the basis for an empirically driven approach to case management in the courts.

The recent employment of Case Progression Officers (CPOs) in the parish courts with responsibility for aiding the readiness of cases for court is a step in the right direction. The Case Information Statistical System (CISS) supports the work of the CPOs and case management more generally in the courts through the wide range of data that it provides. I strongly recommend that a Case Management Steering Committee (CMSC) be formed to establish targets, monitor case management progression in the respective parish courts and undertake special interventions which are necessary to strengthen the support mechanisms. This Steering

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Committee will need to be supported by a Judge led Case Management Subcommittees in each court. A clearly articulated and widely communicated backlog reduction strategy will also need to be advanced as part of the work of the CSMC.

The fact that the high disposal and clearance rates seen at the Westmoreland Parish Court are at least partly a result of their heavy use of mediation as a method of disposition, suggests that this area needs to be explored and more robustly utilized, along with dispute resolution facilities more generally. Additionally, there needs to a strong engagement of external stakeholders such as the police and hospitals to reduce the incidence of adjournments which are due to investigative deficiencies and medical reports outstanding respectively. There also needs to be a greater standardization of case flow and record keeping processes across the parish courts, thus the argument for stronger support for the work of the existing Case Management Team. A general revisiting of infrastructural capacity of the different courts and a more efficient alignment of resources to the specific needs of these courts also need to be aggressively pursued. The plethora of statistical data which is currently being produced in the court system should inform an empirically driven approach to Court and Case Management at both the operational and policy levels.