



THE HIGH COURT OF NEW ZEALAND
Te Kōti Matua o Aotearoa

Annual Report

2024

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Foreword

Tēnā koutou katoa



I am pleased to present a short report on events of note in the High Court of New Zealand | Te Kōti Matua o Aotearoa during 2024.

2024 continued a theme of change for the High Court Bench. The Court welcomed seven new appointments, made up of six Judges and one Associate Judge. This reflected appointments to the Court of Appeal, as well as judicial retirements. The

Court also continued to have the benefit of four full-time acting Judges. More details about the Court's 2024 complement can be found at page 8 of this report.

OVER THE 2024 CALENDAR YEAR, THE COURT

Disposed of 177 criminal trials and 1899 criminal appeals; disposed of 2232 civil proceedings and 243 civil appeals; and delivered 3,995 judgments (2,059 civil and 1,936 criminal).

A major change project for the High Court in 2024 was its continuing work on proposed new High Court Rules, which are expected to come into force on 1 January 2026. The changes being introduced will significantly vary the procedural approach to civil litigation in the High Court, and will require a culture change to the way litigation is conducted and managed on the part of counsel and judges alike. Over the course of 2024, a joint judicial/Ministry of Justice working group worked in parallel to the Rules Committee's drafting of the new Rules, providing feedback to the Committee on the new Rules from an operational perspective. The text of the new Rules has since been finalised, and the working group is now focused on the operational steps required to implement the Rules. Profession education sessions will be rolled out later in 2025.

Another important workstream in 2024 was continued work on a Commercial List for the High Court at Auckland, which will be modelled on the New South Wales Supreme Court's Commercial List. All matters in the Auckland Commercial List will be managed and heard by dedicated Commercial List Judges, and the processes to be deployed are expected to considerably reduce the time spent in the interlocutory phases and lead to earlier substantive hearing dates. Over the course of 2024, the judges working on the development of the List met a number of times with representatives from the profession, to discuss and "road test" some of the proposals for the List. This engagement proved extremely beneficial, and has continued in 2025. I thank those members of the profession involved for their helpful and

pragmatic contributions to the planning for the List. It is expected that the Commercial List will become operational in the third quarter of 2025, with profession education sessions rolled out in mid-2025. More details on the Court's criminal work can be found at pages 24 to 26 of this report.

A notable feature of the Court's civil workload in 2024 was the continuing increase in company liquidation and bankruptcy applications, reflecting the state of the economy in recent years. These applications have been increasing steadily since May 2022, and are now much higher than was seen pre-COVID. An additional Associate Judge will commence with the High Court (sitting in Auckland) in mid-2025 to assist with this increasing workload.

More details on the Court's civil work can be found at pages 21 to 23 below.

Turning to the Court's criminal work, category 4 offences (murder, manslaughter, and attempted murder, which must be tried in the High Court) continued to make up a significant proportion of the Court's overall criminal workload: as at 31 December 2024, 79 per cent of all trials on hand were for category 4 offences (compared to, for example, category 4 offences making up only 58 per cent of all trials in 2020). While the overall number of criminal trials on hand as at 31 December 2024 was slightly less than the same time in 2023 (down 12 cases), the average time required for each trial (approximately 17 days) remains very high, reflecting the increased complexity in trials.

Another feature of the Court's criminal workload in 2024 was the continuing record number of appeals being filed (in part due to increased throughput in the District Court). The number of appeals filed in 2024 was 11 per cent up on those filed in 2023, which in turn was 24 per cent up on those filed in 2022. Despite the ongoing increase in new filings, because priority is given to many of these appeals (in particular, those relating to bail and name suppression), disposals largely kept up with new filings.

Finally, an important development in 2024 for all courts, including the High Court, was the release of the Royal Commission of Inquiry's final report into abuse in state and faith based care. The High Court at Wellington already ran a bespoke List to manage proceedings alleging abuse in care (there being approximately 400 such claims before the Court as at 31 December 2024). Following the final report's release, the List has been broadened and refreshed, including to also deal with other types of proceedings that may arise out of the inquiry itself. This will ensure that matters relating to the inquiry are dealt with consistently, and with the same priority as proceedings filed by survivors.

Ngā mihi,

Hon Justice Sally Fitzgerald

Chief High Court Judge | Te Kaiwhakawā Matua o Te Kōti Matua

About the High Court of New Zealand | Te Kōti Matua o Aotearoa

The High Court is a single Court, comprising three home registries — Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. It also sits on circuit in combined registries shared with the District Court in 15 cities across Aotearoa New Zealand.¹

High Court Judges, including the Chief High Court Judge, sit in both the civil and criminal jurisdictions. Associate Judges have a specialist jurisdiction, which is covered on page 15.

The High Court deals with the most serious criminal charges, including murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, and serious sexual, drug and violent offending. It considers all sentencings in which preventive detention is a possible sentence. The High Court also hears all appeals from judge-alone trials in the District Court.

The Court's civil work includes high value and complex commercial disputes, judicial review (that is, where a Judge reviews an action or decision made under a legal power), as well as a range of other civil work such as property and trust related disputes. The Court also hears civil appeals from the District Court (including the Family Court) and other courts and tribunals.

Senior High Court Judges also sit on divisions of the Court of Appeal. In 2024, 27 High Court Judges sat on the Court of Appeal for a total of 76 sitting weeks.

Administrative roles

The Chief High Court Judge is the administrative head of the Court, responsible for ensuring the orderly and efficient conduct of the Court's business. As Head of Bench, she sits on a range of strategic, governance and judicial administration committees.

List Judges oversee the workload in each of the circuits, assisted by the Court Managers, Judicial Resource Managers and the Civil and Criminal Caseflow Managers.

The Chief High Court Judge and the List Judges oversee the operational management of the Court. Specialist list judges oversee specific categories of proceedings, such as Criminal List Judges (who oversee criminal jury trials), Proceeds of Crime List Judges; and list judges for types of cases such as judicial review and civil appeals.

Judges also serve on a broad range of committees relating to the functioning of the Court and the broader judiciary, including legislation and law reform,

¹ Whangārei, Hamilton, Rotorua, Tauranga, Gisborne, New Plymouth, Napier, Whanganui, Palmerston North, Nelson, Blenheim, Greymouth, Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill.

(court) Rules, information governance, property and courthouse design, technology, diversity, judicial wellbeing, judicial education and bench books.

High Court Judges are also regularly part of the faculty for programmes offered by the Institute of Judicial Studies | Te Kura Kaiwhakawā, which provides educational programmes to judges of all jurisdictions.



Judicial appointments and retirements

There were seven new appointments to the High Court in 2024. One judge retired from the Court, and four judges were appointed to the Court of Appeal.

New appointments to the High Court in 2024

Justice Grau 29 January

Justice Wilkinson-Smith 1 February

Justice McHerron 19 March

Justice Boldt 1 May

Justice Blanchard 1 July

Justice Gardiner 21 November

Appointments to the Court of Appeal in 2024

Justice Ellis 15 January

Justice Cooke 19 March

Justice Palmer 1 June

Justice Campbell 21 November

Associate Judge appointments in 2024

Associate Judge Cogswell 21 November

Judicial retirements in 2024

Justice Woolford April 2024

To enable the Court to respond to its increasing workload, there were four full time acting judges in the High Court in 2024:

Justice Moore

Justice Cull

Justice Gordon

Justice Osborne

As at 31 December 2024 there were 40 High Court Judges, four Judges with acting commissions, and seven Associate Judges.

How the High Court operates

The Court must balance the allocation of trial dates for both criminal and civil matters within the constraints of the number of available judges, counsel and party availability, availability of courtrooms, cell capacity and registry staff. This process is known as scheduling.

Criminal Trials

Court of Trial Protocol

Every person charged with a criminal offence makes their first appearance in the District Court, even if their charge will ultimately be heard in the High Court. The High Court hears all category four offences, which are mainly murder, manslaughter and attempted murder charges.

Category three offences are those punishable by imprisonment for two years or more (except for those which are category four offences). The majority of category three charges are heard by the District Court. The Court of Trial Protocol, established under s 66 of the Criminal Procedure Act 2011, identifies cases and classes of category two and three offences which may be considered for transfer to the High Court.

In 2024, 357 cases required a protocol determination by the High Court, three per cent more than in 2023 (346 cases). Of these, 14 were directed to be heard in the High Court, down from 24 in 2023.

A continuing constraint on the number of cases that can be “protocolled” from the District Court to the High Court is the increasing proportion of the High Court’s criminal workload which represents category 4 charges. As at 31 December 2024, 79 per cent of the active criminal cases awaiting trial in the High Court were category 4 offences. Nevertheless, Criminal List Judges actively look to protocol cases from the District Court where that is appropriate, and it is hoped that this can increase going forward, particularly now all COVID-delayed High Court trials have been completed.

The Court of Trial Protocol was reviewed in 2024, and it was agreed by the Chief High Court Judge and Chief District Court Judge that no changes to the Protocol were required. It will be reviewed again in 2026.

Trial date allocation

The Court allocates criminal trial dates on the first date available for the location and expected duration of a trial. The seriousness and complexity of the charges tried in the High Court means that prosecution and defence lawyers usually require a minimum of 12 months to prepare for trial.

Adjournments/retrials

It is important for criminal trials to proceed on their allocated date. This provides certainty for defendants, complainants, witnesses, victims and their whānau. Sometimes, however, adjournments cannot be avoided for fair trial reasons, such as late disclosure by the prosecution of relevant information, unavailability of expert reports, issues concerning a defendant’s fitness to

stand trial, or the Crown and/or defence not being ready to proceed. Criminal List Judges work closely with the Crown and defence to minimise the number of trial adjournments.

Criminal appeals

Bail appeals are the predominant category of criminal appeals heard in the High Court. Bail and name suppression appeals are heard as a priority. Conviction and sentence appeals (whether against conviction, sentence, or both) are the other main categories of appeal. Criminal appeals from the District Court to the High Court reached record numbers in 2024. See below at page 26 for further details.

Civil cases

The Court's civil work includes general proceedings, judicial reviews, originating applications, civil and family appeals from the District and Family Courts, and applications for injunctions and freezing orders. When allocating hearing dates, priority is given to applications for injunctions and freezing orders, appeals from decisions of the Family Court, and certain judicial reviews, particularly when interim orders are sought (as these are time sensitive matters).

Civil trials can be complex, and can require considerable hearing time. Judges' decisions on civil matters are often reserved, and are issued after the hearing has concluded. In 2024, the Court delivered more than 2,000 civil decisions, approximately 92 per cent of which were delivered within three months of the hearing. See below at page 19 for more detail.

Originating applications

Certain proceedings in the High Court are commenced by an "originating

application", as determined by statute or permitted by the Court. For example, applications under the Habeas Corpus Act 2001, the Criminal Proceeds Recovery Act 2009 and ss 100 and 111 of the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 must be commenced by originating application.

Commercial Panel

Clause 5 of the Senior Courts (High Court Commercial Panel) Order 2017 lists the types of commercial proceedings to which a Commercial Panel Judge may be assigned. These proceedings include high-value disputes (over \$2 million), complex matters of commercial law, and proceedings brought by public authorities to enforce regulatory standards of commercial behaviour. Either the plaintiff or defendant may apply for a case to be heard by a Commercial Panel Judge.

The Chief High Court Judge considers these applications and, if they meet the criteria in the Commercial Panel Order, assigns a Judge from the Commercial Panel to manage and hear the case.

The Chief High Court Judge reviews the Commercial Panel membership periodically, as High Court Judges retire or are elevated to the Court of Appeal. As at 31 December 2024, the Commercial Panel comprised: Justices Fitzgerald, Venning, Lang, Peters, Dunningham, Muir, Edwards, Jagose, Gault, Isac, Radich and Osborne.

Circuit reports

Auckland



The Auckland circuit serves five registries – Auckland, Hamilton, Rotorua, Tauranga and Whangārei. Given the size of the Hamilton-Rotorua-Tauranga circuit, the work of that circuit is the subject of a separate report. This report covers Auckland and Whangārei.

In 2024, the Auckland High Court comprised 25 permanent Judges (including the Chief High Court Judge), two Acting Judges and four Associate Judges. As well as hearing Auckland cases, Auckland-based Judges sit on circuit and on Divisional Courts of the Court of Appeal.

The Auckland registry conducted 22 jury trials in 2024. As at 31 December 2024, there were 51 criminal trials on hand. Criminal appeal filings are at a historic high. The Auckland registry disposed of over 700 criminal appeals in 2024, as well as over 1,200 civil matters.

Whangārei

Seven jury trials were conducted in the High Court at Whangārei in 2024. As at 31 December 2024, there were 10 criminal trials on hand. In 2024, the Court at Whangārei disposed of 122 criminal appeals, and 53 civil matters. The disposal of criminal appeals relied substantially on Judges appearing remotely from the High Court at Auckland.

Gault J

Auckland Executive and Civil List Judge

Hamilton-Rotorua-Tauranga

The Hamilton-Rotorua-Tauranga circuit comprises three registries, with judges from Auckland sitting regularly (and judges from Wellington also sitting in this circuit from time to time).

Up to three judges per week sit in Hamilton, and one judge per week sits in Rotorua. Judges sit in Tauranga approximately 15 weeks per year. There are up to four judges who sit in the circuit at any one time.

Court room availability can constrain the ability to schedule criminal and civil work in this circuit. There is no jury enabled court room available to the High Court in Tauranga. All Tauranga jury trials must therefore be heard in Rotorua or Hamilton. Rotorua has only one court room available to the High Court for all criminal and civil work. It is also constrained in the number of multi-defendant trials it can hold, given it has only four cells. These constraints in turn put pressure on scheduling in Hamilton.

Court room constraints are unlikely to improve for some time. While much welcomed work has started on the construction of a new courthouse for Tauranga, construction is unlikely to be complete for four to five years. And while land has been purchased for a new courthouse at Rotorua, the timing for construction is presently unknown.

In 2024, the Hamilton-Rotorua-Tauranga circuit held 12 criminal trials (including a nine-week, 10-defendant murder trial), and disposed of 294 criminal appeals. It also disposed of 242 civil matters.

Tahana J

Hamilton-Rotorua-Tauranga Executive and Civil List Judge



Wellington

The Wellington circuit serves Wellington, Gisborne, Napier, Palmerston North, New Plymouth, Whanganui, Nelson and Blenheim.



In 2024, the Wellington High Court comprised 10 permanent Judges, one acting Judge and one Associate Judge.

The work of the High Court in Wellington is varied. It includes an ongoing range of criminal jury trials for serious alleged offending and significant commercial proceedings. A large part of the civil work in the Wellington Registry itself involves judicial review and appeal proceedings relating to the exercise of public power.

In 2024, the Wellington circuit conducted nine criminal trials, and disposed of 273 criminal appeals. It also disposed of 623 civil matters.

The Wellington Registry also has 400 active cases involving allegations of historic abuse at state institutions. Most of the cases do not require ongoing management (as most are being progressed through alternative dispute resolution processes), but a number of them are being managed to trial.

Isac J

Wellington Executive and Civil List Judge

Christchurch

The Christchurch circuit serves Christchurch, Timaru, Greymouth, Dunedin and Invercargill.

In 2024, the Christchurch High Court comprised five permanent Judges, one acting Judge and two Associate Judges.

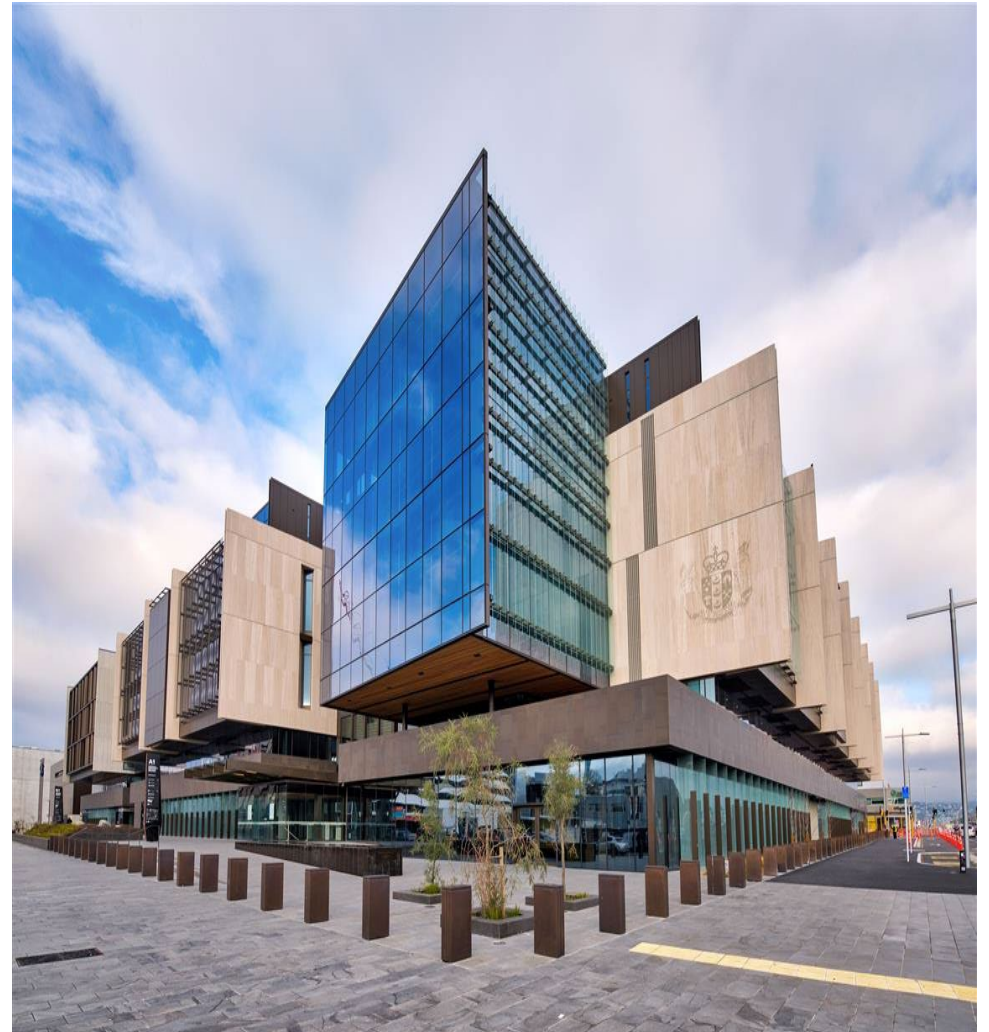
2024 was notable for concluding two lengthy and high profile criminal trials in Christchurch, which attracted considerable media attention. The first was a seven-week murder trial that involved translation of the entire proceeding, done by a team of three translators. The second concerned serious sexual assault allegations made by 15 complainants, and took a record ten days to conclude jury deliberations. The defendant was found guilty on 17 charges.

In terms of civil proceedings, the Christchurch Registry is coming to the end of cases involving earthquake damage claims. There are now only 20 of these being managed on the Earthquake List, a case management process designed to ensure the expeditious progress of such cases to hearing. However, there are now also a small but steadily growing number of cases alleging defective earthquake repairs being managed on the Earthquake List, meaning it will continue to operate for some time to come.

In 2024, the Christchurch circuit held 11 criminal trials, and disposed of 495 criminal appeals. It also disposed of 366 civil matters.

Dunningham J

Christchurch Executive and Civil List Judge



Associate Judges

Associate Judges have a specialist civil jurisdiction. There are presently seven Associate Judges. Associate Judges determine a range of insolvency-related and civil/commercial claims.

Approximately two-thirds of hearings determined by Associate Judges involve:

- where summary judgment is sought;
- applications to sustain caveats;
- applications to strike out claims or stay proceedings on jurisdictional grounds;
- opposed liquidations and bankruptcies; and
- challenges to statutory demands.

The remaining one-third of hearings arise from Associate Judges' case management jurisdiction and include dealing with applications:

- concerning discovery;
- requiring more detailed claims or defences; and
- for security for costs.

Associate Judges conduct much of the day-to-day case management of civil proceedings in the High Court. Associate Judges also deal with without notice applications such as directions as to service and for substituted service. Associate Judges also conduct Judicial Settlement Conferences. This involves the Judge convening a conference with the parties for the

purpose of seeking to reach a settlement of the proceeding, or of any material issue arising in the proceeding.

Insolvency jurisdiction

In their insolvency jurisdiction, Associate Judges hear applications for bankruptcy or to have bankruptcies annulled. They also deal with applications to liquidate companies and a number of other applications under the Insolvency Act 2006 and Companies Act 1993.

Looking ahead

Associate Judges from all three centres have been closely involved in the upcoming reforms to the High Court Rules, which are anticipated to come into effect on 1 January 2026.

The tight economic conditions which have existed in recent years mean the number of applications for company liquidations and bankruptcies continue to increase. The data is set out at page 23 below. The Department of Inland Revenue is actively pursuing recovery action, and this is seen in the insolvency workload.

Increasingly, Associate Judges are conducting hearings by video link in appropriate cases. For example, Christchurch Associate Judges now hear four Auckland cases per month.

Associate Judge Lester

Associate Judge National List Judge

Marine and Coastal Area Act 2011 (MACA) List



The High Court runs a bespoke MACA List, to oversee and case manage the significant number of MACA related claims before the Court. In 2024, the Court sat across 39 weeks of substantive MACA hearings.

There are presently 199 active MACA applications before the Court. Of the 199 applications, there are:

- 59 pending stage one hearing;
- 27 pending stage one judgment;
- Nine pending stage two hearing;
- 33 post stage two judgment;
- 50 not yet ready for hearing; and
- Three which have been disposed of by other means.

Eight active applications that were originally filed under the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004 are deemed under MACA to be priority applications. Four of these are awaiting stage one hearing, three are in post-stage two judgment phase, and one is in Crown engagement.

Significant legislative change proposed

Legislation was introduced to Parliament that, if passed, would amend the test for customary marine title. It also raises the possibility of retrospective amendment of decisions that the Court has already made. At the same time, Te Arawhiti has substantially changed the way in which MACA applications are funded. Both of these factors have had an impact on the Court's ability to dispose of MACA applications in a timely manner. This is for two reasons: some applicants have sought to adjourn hearings because of uncertainty as to how the law might be changed, and other applicants who are ready and wanting to proceed are not able to secure funding. Two substantive hearings scheduled for 2025 were adjourned due to legislative uncertainty.

Churchman J

Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act List Judge

2024 High Court decisions

High Court decisions are available from the [Judicial Decisions Online](#) website. Decisions of public interest from the Court are available on the [Judgments of Public Interest](#) page of the Courts of New Zealand website, where they remain available for 90 days.

The following cases represent a selection of decisions of public interest or other significance issued by the High Court in 2024.

[*Commissioner of Police v Salter* \[2024\] NZHC 3069](#): The Court approved a settlement under s 95 of the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act 2009 in which two defendants were ordered to meet a profit forfeiture order of \$4 million. That order captured the benefits of significant criminal offending contrary to the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 and the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996.

[*G v New Zealand Police* \[2024\] NZHC 189](#): This case was the first referral to the High Court by the Criminal Cases Review Commission. The appellant, a refugee from a war-torn country, was convicted in 2001 of nine offences, the most serious being one charge of male assaults female, and was sentenced to 11 months' imprisonment. At the time the appellant was understood to be 17 years old, however he was in fact only 15 years old, meaning he was dealt with in the wrong court and sentenced to imprisonment when still a young person, an outcome prohibited by legislation.

[*Feed Families Not Pokies Aotearoa Incorporated v Secretary for Internal Affairs* \[2024\] NZHC 217](#): Feed Families Not Pokies sought a declaration as to whether the Gambling Act 2003, as amended in 2013, allows a venue licence to benefit from a minor change in location on approval by the Secretary for Internal Affairs. The Court declared that it does not. A change in the location of a venue will only apply if the territorial authority so consents in accordance with its relocation policy.

[*Body Corporate 366567 v Auckland Council* \[2024\] NZHC 32](#): The Court found that the body corporate for Auckland Harbour Suites has standing to sue Auckland Council for the reasonable cost of remediating several claimed defects within the building.

[*Major Gas Users' Group Inc v Commerce Commission* \[2024\] NZHC 959](#): This case made significant rulings as to the regulation of competition law regarding gas pipeline services in New Zealand.

[*Fluoride Action Network \(NZ\) Inc v Hastings District Council* \[2024\] NZHC 1313](#): In an urgent judicial review application to prevent the re-fluoridation of the Hastings water supply, it was held that the Council had no discretion about whether to comply with a valid fluoridation direction from the Director-General of Health.

[*AW v Minister of Health* \[2024\] NZHC 2279](#): In proceedings under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, asking the Court to read down the Minister's veto on lifting special patient status for a person acquitted of

criminal charges, it was held that there was no available Bill of Rights consistent interpretation that would have allowed the orders sought.

[*Choi v Attorney-General* \[2024\] NZHC 3678](#): In proceedings in which a prosecutor had failed to provide a victim impact statement to the sentencing Judge, the Court made a declaration that the prosecutor had breached the Victims' Rights Act 2002 and the Solicitor-General's prosecution guidelines.

[*Te Iwi o Ngāti Tukorehe Trust v Horowhenua District Council* \[2024\] NZHC 2083](#): In judicial review proceedings challenging a District Council's decision not to treat an iwi group as an affected person in resource consent proceedings, orders were made—following analysis of the cultural interests claimed by the iwi group—that the Council had made reviewable errors.

[*Official Assignee v Honey* \[2024\] NZHC 2216](#): In proceedings by the Official-Assignee over the gifting of the purchase price of Māori freehold land soon before the vendor was adjudicated bankrupt, it was held that even if the gift was regarded as a koha as a matter of tikanga, it remained an insolvent gift. An order was made cancelling the gift.

[*Armstrong v Powell* \[2024\] NZHC 2820](#): In a case stated to the High Court by a Family Court Judge, the Court was required to rule on the Family Court's inherent power to appoint counsel assisting the Court (amicus) and "stand-by counsel". The Court held that the Family Court does have the power to appoint counsel assisting, but (other than in exceptional circumstances) not stand-by counsel.

[*Methanex New Zealand Ltd v Nova Energy Ltd* \[2024\] NZHC 1604](#): Methanex applied to the High Court for urgent relief against Nova Energy's proposal to cease to supply Methanex with any natural gas, used by Methanex in its production of methanol. The application was made in the context of

declining gas production in the New Zealand market, and pending the substantive dispute being determined in arbitration. The Court declined to grant the relief sought.

[*Johnstone v Alpha Insurance* \[2024\] NZHC 725](#): In this proceeding, the Court was required to consider and rule on novel issues not previously considered in New Zealand as to what constitutes "due debts" under s 292(2) of the Companies Act 1993.

[*Red Stag Timber Ltd v Juken New Zealand Ltd* \[2024\] NZHC 1151](#): The proceedings involved detailed consideration of the Building Code requirements for treating framing timber, and application of the Fair Trading Act 1986 to the commercial issues raised - effectively a commercial dispute between competitors. The amounts in issue were between \$83 and \$140 million.

Judgment timeliness

	Total judgments	Civil	Criminal
2024	3,995	2,059	1,936
2023	3,882	2,057	1,825

Judges aim to deliver decisions as promptly as possible. The Court has set a standard of 90% of judgments to be delivered within three months of hearing. This period does not include court vacations.

In 2024, 94.6% of criminal judgments in the High Court were delivered within one month of hearing, and 99.1% within three months.

In 2023, these results were 94% and 98.7% respectively. (For criminal jury trials, verdicts are given at trial.)

In 2024, the High Court delivered 77.3% of civil judgments within one month of hearing, and 92.1% of civil judgments within three months of hearing.

In 2023, these results were 76.3% and 91.4% respectively.

The Chief High Court Judge reports twice yearly on decisions outstanding beyond a reasonable time, as required by s 170 of the Senior Courts Act 2016.

In the absence of extenuating circumstances, the Court considers decisions over six months to be delayed beyond a reasonable time. Of the nearly 4,000 judgments delivered in 2024, there were nine decisions outstanding beyond six months as at 31 March 2024, and 11 as at 30 September 2024.

Median time to trial – general proceedings: 571 days (293 cases)

Down 4 days (-1%) from 2023 (289 cases)

Median time to trial – criminal: 485 days (113 cases)

The measure for median time to trial for criminal cases has changed from 2023, such that a direct comparison with the 2023 measure is not possible. The measure is now time from first appearance in the High Court to first scheduled trial date. See the 2024 [criminal trial waiting time report](#).

Workload at a glance

New business	2023	2024
Civil proceedings	2,097	2,217
Civil appeals	274	244
Criminal trials	167	164
Criminal appeals	1,688	1,913

Disposals	2023	2024
Civil proceedings	2,015	2,232
Civil appeals	237	243
Criminal trials	190	177
Criminal appeals	1,715	1,899

Active cases	2023	2024
Civil proceedings	2,797	2,706
Civil appeals	189	181
Criminal trials	182	170
Criminal appeals	207	229

High Court statistics are published on Courts of New Zealand website annually. For the year ending 31 December 2024, the [following statistical reports](#) are available:

- [National workload statistics overview](#)
- [Criminal trial workload by registry](#)
- [Criminal trial waiting time for scheduled hearings by registry](#)
- [Criminal trials held by registry](#)
- [Criminal appeals workload by registry](#)
- [Civil proceedings workload – general proceedings, originating applications, judicial reviews and total civil cases by registry](#)
- [General proceedings waiting time for scheduled hearings by registry](#)
- [Civil appeals workload by registry](#)
- [Insolvency workload by registry](#)

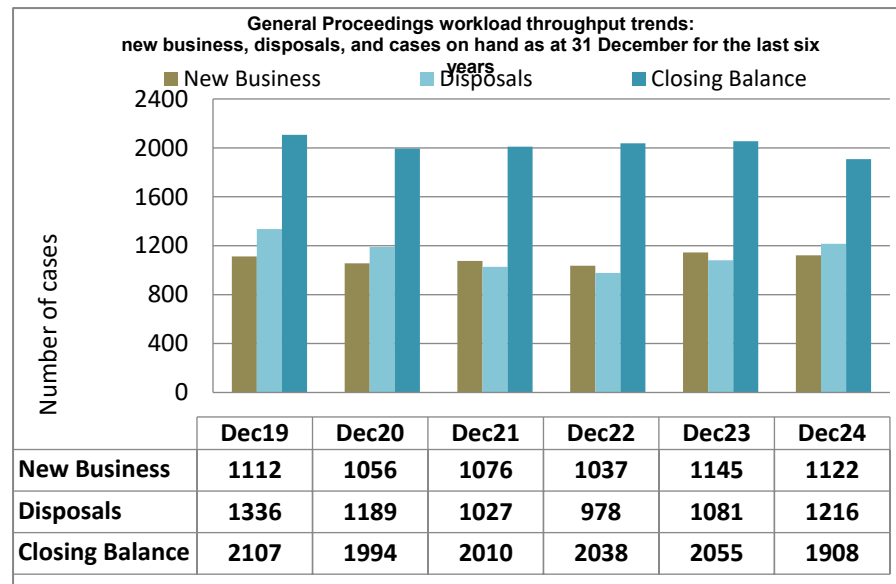
The figures noted above are those reported in year-end statistics. The Ministry of Justice updates these periodically, so changes can occur due to late data entry or error correction.

Civil jurisdiction

General proceedings

Cases on hand is a function of new business and disposals. 2024 saw disposal numbers returning to levels closer to those seen pre-COVID.

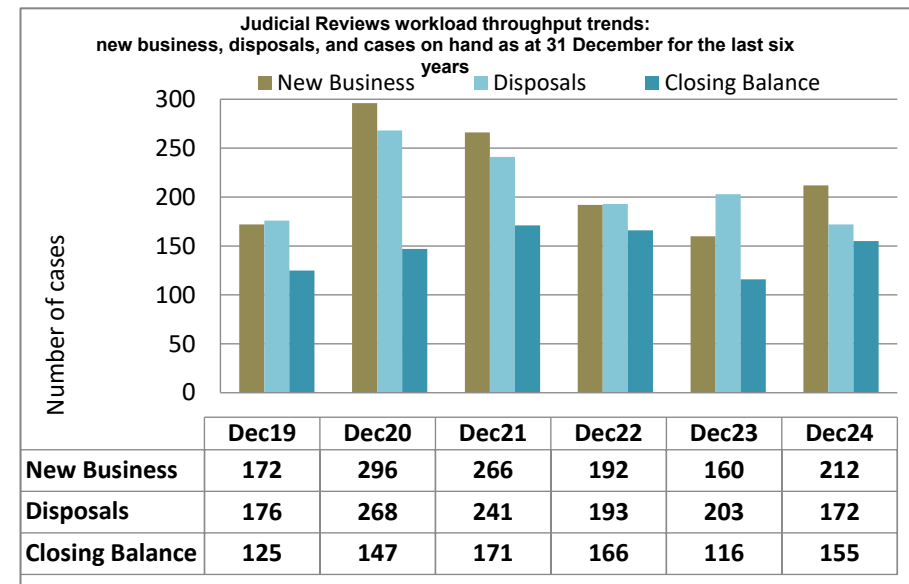
Nationally, general proceedings awaiting hearing or judgment decreased by seven per cent (147 cases) compared to 2023. New business decreased by two per cent (23 cases), and disposals increased by 12 per cent (135 cases). At a circuit level, cases on hand decreased in all three circuits.



Judicial reviews

New judicial review filings and rates of disposal are closely linked as applications often require urgent consideration.

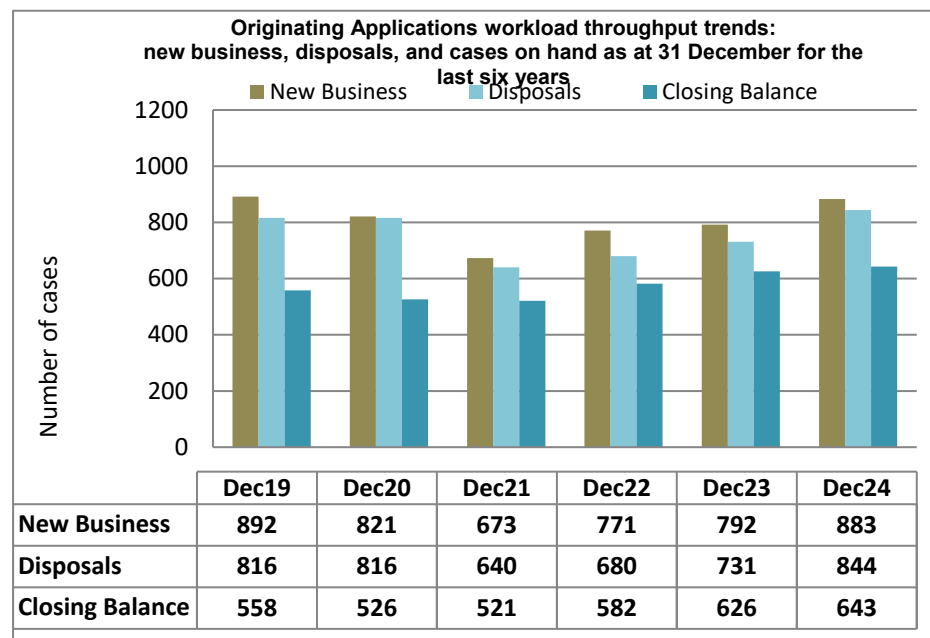
Nationally, judicial reviews awaiting hearing or judgment increased by 34 per cent (39 cases) compared to 2023. New business increased by 33 per cent (52 cases) and disposals decreased by 15 per cent (31 cases). While the new business and cases on hand are lower than the spike of judicial review applications during COVID (2020 and 2021), numbers remain higher than pre-COVID levels.



Originating applications

Nationally, originating applications awaiting hearing or judgment increased by three percent (17 cases) compared to 2023. New business increased by 11 per cent (91 cases) while disposals increased by 15 per cent (113 cases).

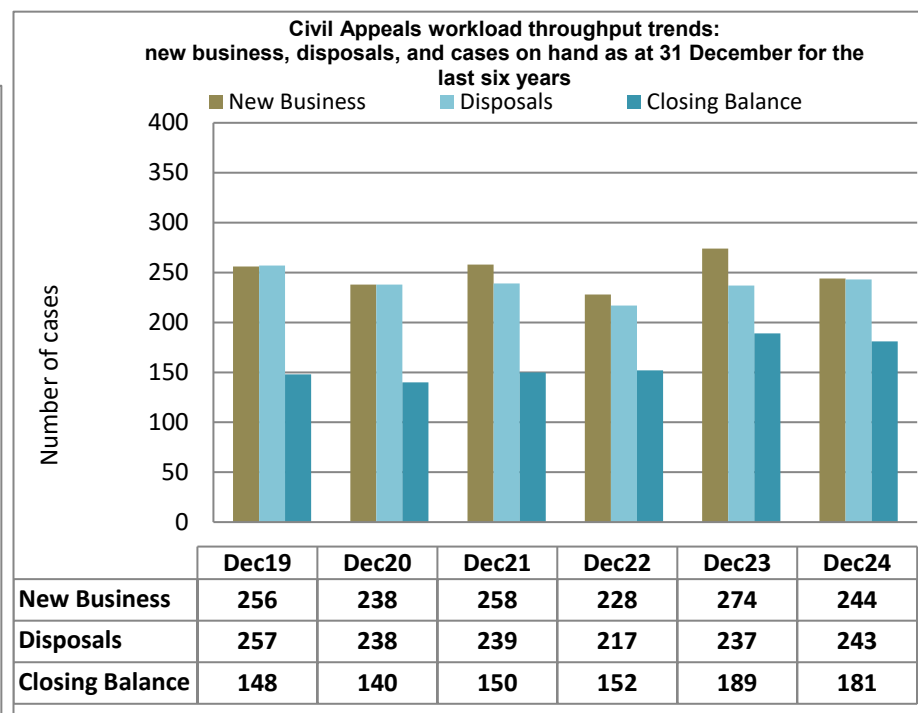
Whether a matter must be commenced by way of originating application is determined by statute. There was a sharp increase in new applications in 2017 (1045 applications) as a result of the requirements of the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 (see page 16). There are still around 200 MACA applications being progressed through the Court, which are included in the figures below. Proceeds of Crime (Recovery) Act 2009 applications are also included in these figures. However, these matters are often not heard until any associated criminal offending proceedings are determined by the courts.



Civil appeals

Civil appeals cover a range of matters; appeals from the Family Court are prioritised.

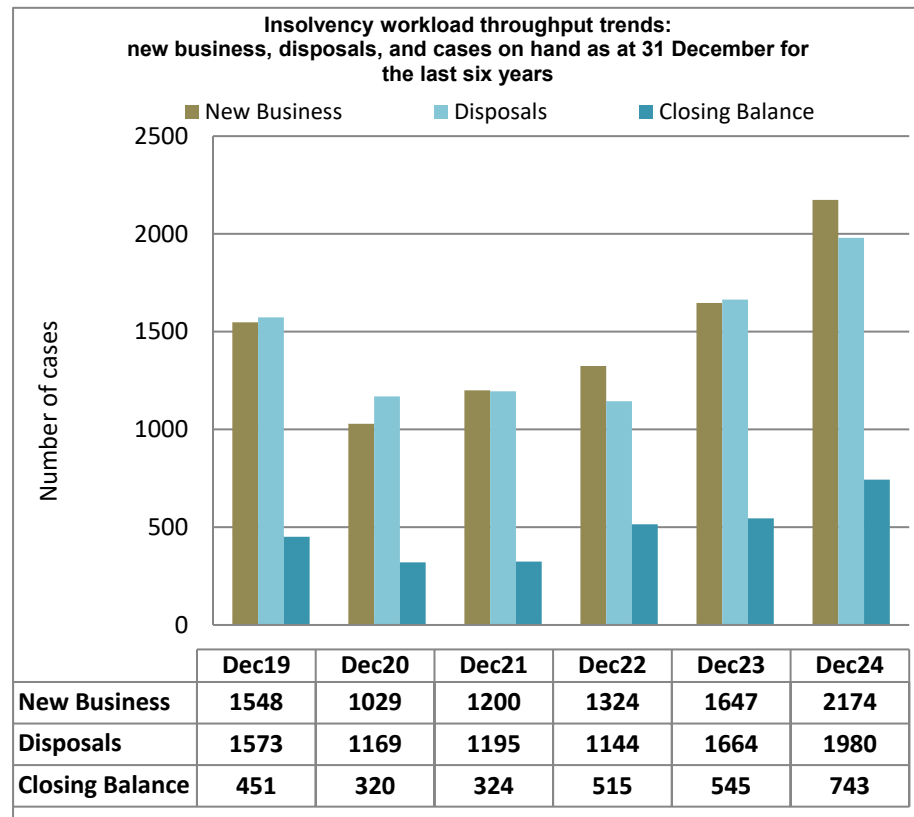
Civil appeals nationally awaiting hearing or judgment decreased by four per cent (eight cases) compared to 2023. New business decreased by 11 per cent (30 cases), and disposals increased by three per cent (six cases).



Insolvency proceedings

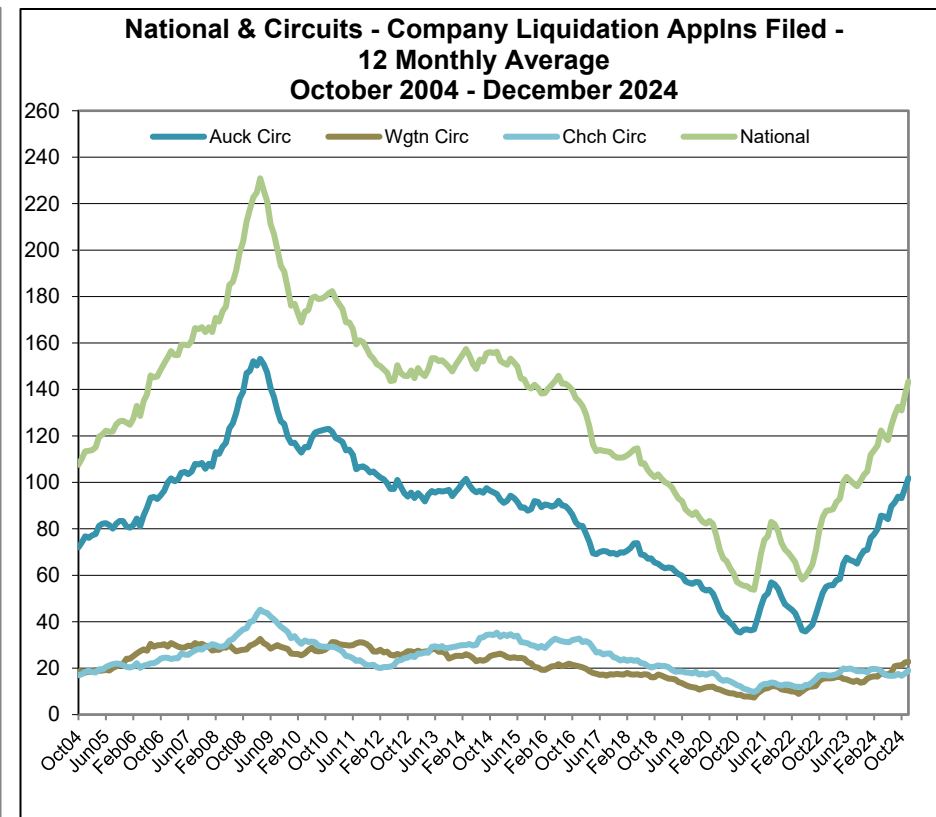
Insolvency proceedings awaiting hearing or judgment increased 36 per cent (198 cases) compared to 2023. Of note, new filings increased 32 per cent (527 cases), and disposals increased by 19 per cent (316 cases).

Insolvency work reflects the state of the economy, with a slight lag. Economic conditions and a more active approach from the Department of Inland Revenue in pursuing actions have contributed to a continuing increase in company liquidations over the past four years.



Company liquidation applications filed

The graph below shows the 12 monthly average for company liquidation application filings from October 2004 to December 2024. The peak period (2008-2009) relates to the Global Financial Crisis. (At that time, the High Court had nine Associate Judges, while presently there are seven.) Whilst monthly filings remain lower than during the Global Financial Crisis, it can be seen that they have been steadily increasing since about May 2022. An additional Associate Judge will join the Court in August 2025 to help manage this growing workload.



Criminal jurisdiction

Criminal trials

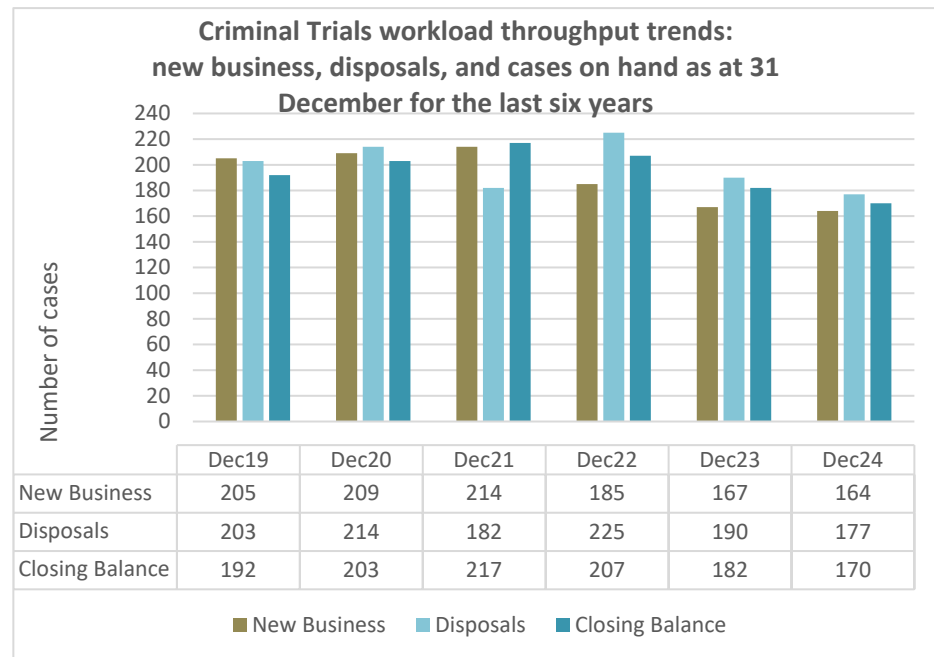
Nationally, criminal trials on hand decreased by seven per cent (12 cases) compared to 2023. Trials awaiting hearing increased – 154 compared to 151 in 2023 – and trials awaiting sentencing decreased by 16, to 23, compared to 39 in 2023.²

New criminal trials decreased by two per cent, or three cases. Disposals also decreased nationally, by seven per cent (13 cases). More category four cases were received in 2024 than in 2023 – 124 compared to 109. Category four cases were also a higher percentage of all new criminal trials in the High Court, at 76 per cent, compared to 65 per cent in 2023.

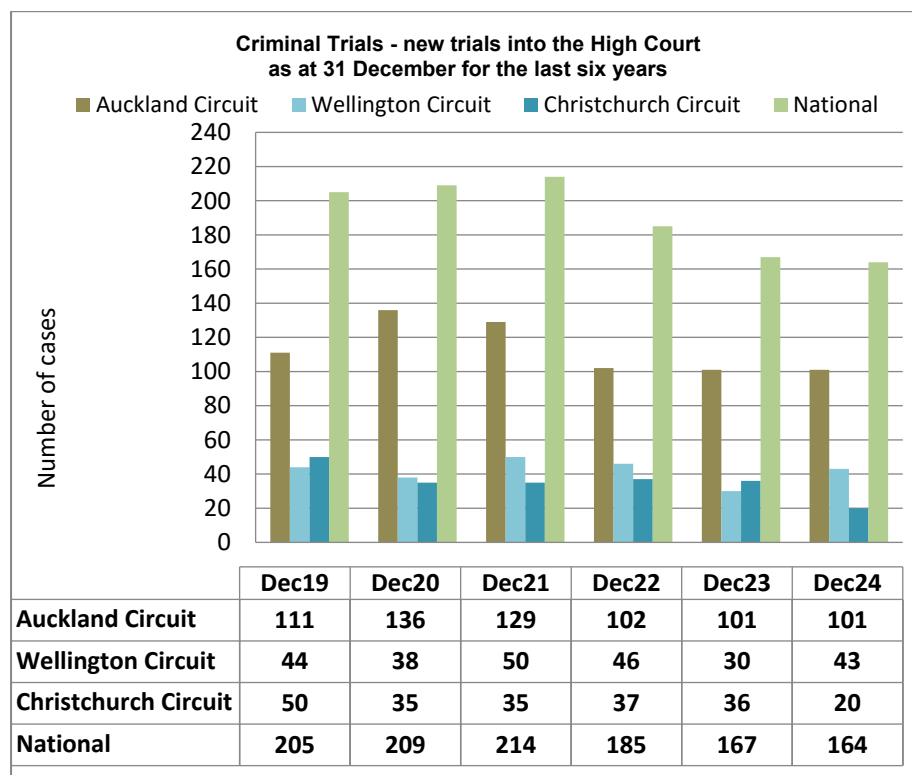
Disposals

Criminal trials can be disposed of in several ways: through verdicts from trials or by guilty pleas, or from other disposals such as s 147 discharges. Thus, criminal trials held is a subset of all criminal trial disposals. 61 criminal trials were held in 2024, compared to 78 in 2023. Cases disposed of by guilty plea

before trial increased (51 compared to 45 cases), and cases disposed of by “other disposal” decreased by two (13 compared to 15 cases). Cases disposed of by guilty plea on the first day of the trial (or during the trial, before verdict) increased slightly (by 1, to 5 cases).



² From January 2023, the way criminal trials are counted by the Ministry of Justice changed, so that all cases are now counted once first received in the High Court. (Previously they were only counted once they reached the trial stage.) A consequence of the change is that the information presented here is based on a different methodology than that used prior to 2023, and so is not easily compared to pre-2023 reports.



As can be seen from the graph above, the number of new trials into the Auckland circuit has been steady for the last three years. The Wellington circuit saw an increase of 13 cases in 2024, after a drop of 16 cases the year previously. In Christchurch, after four years of steady numbers (almost as high as the Wellington circuit), there was a drop in cases in 2024. Nationally, numbers are now lower than during the COVID years, but, as shown in the table opposite, trials are taking longer to hear.

Estimated hearing days and average days per trial

	Cases	Estimated hearing days	Average days per trial
31 Dec 2024	154	2,608	16.9
31 Dec 2023	151	2,704	17.9
31 Dec 2022	138	2,365	17.1
31 Dec 2021	160	2,601	16.3
31 Dec 2020	143	2,173	15.2
31 Dec 2019	123	1,689	13.7
31 Dec 2018	131	1,947	14.9

Criminal appeals

Criminal appeals awaiting hearing or judgment increased by 11 per cent (22 cases) in 2024, compared to 2023. New filings increased by 13 per cent (225 cases) and disposals increased by 11 per cent (184 cases). Like in 2023, criminal appeals are again at record highs.

New business and disposal rates are closely linked for criminal appeals, as bail and name suppression appeals are heard as a priority. The table opposite shows the volume of new criminal appeals by case type for the past three years. There was a large increase in conviction appeals in 2024 (113 per cent or 170 cases) and in suppression appeals (79 per cent or 34 cases), and a small decrease in sentence appeals (12 per cent or 57 cases).

