



THE HIGH COURT OF NEW ZEALAND
Te Kōti Matua o Aotearoa

Annual Report

2025

Published May 2026

High Court of New Zealand Te Kōti Matua o Aotearoa
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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 2025.

2025 continued a busy period for the Court, and also a period of change.

There were five judicial appointments to the High Court Bench in 2025, details of which can be found on page 8.

The Court, in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice, continued its detailed work to prepare for the coming into force on 1 January 2026 of new High Court Rules governing how general proceedings are managed and progressed through the Court. These are very substantial changes, which will require a culture change on the part of parties, their lawyers and judges alike. It is hoped that the new regime will bring a closer and earlier focus to the real issues in dispute between the parties, and the best means of ensuring a claim proceeds to a hearing or otherwise resolves as efficiently and expeditiously as possible.

The Court's criminal work continued to be busy. More details can be found at page 25 below. Two features of the criminal workload which continued in 2025 were the historically high number of days now required for each jury trial (sitting at around 17 to 18 days per trial), and the record number of criminal appeals filed (see page 27 below).

In the Court's civil jurisdiction, all work types saw increased new filings in 2025 compared to 2024 (see pages 21 – 24 below). Corporate insolvency filings also continued at high levels, details of which can be found at page 23 below.

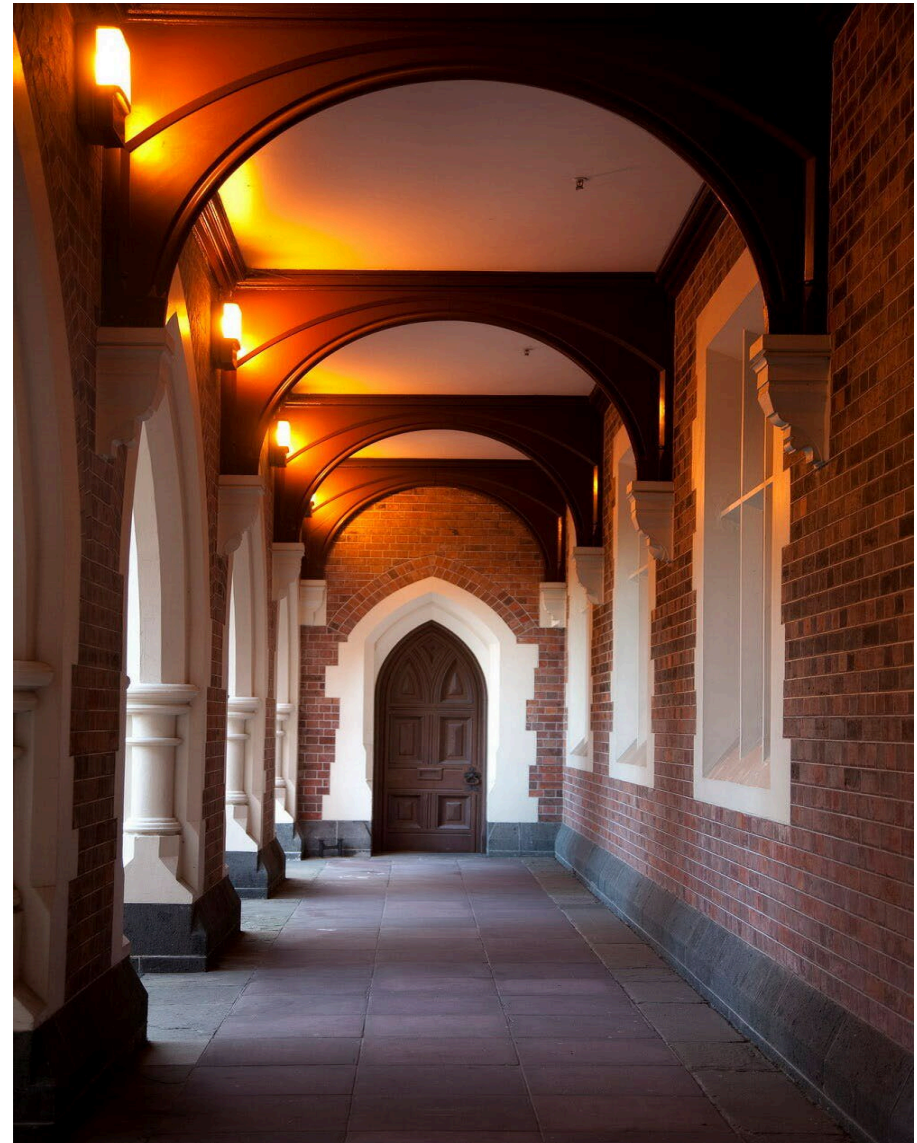
OVER THE 2025 CALENDAR YEAR, THE COURT disposed of 158 criminal trials and 1,949 criminal appeals; disposed of 2,252 civil proceedings and 289 civil appeals; and delivered 4,128 judgments (2,191 civil and 1,937 criminal).

A key development in the Court's civil work was the commencement in October 2025 of the Auckland Commercial List. This is a bespoke list to case manage and hear commercial disputes which meet the criteria for entry onto the List. The List is overseen by two dedicated Commercial List Judges. While it is relatively early days in the List's operation, it is already working well, with matters progressing with some speed through the interlocutory phases and materially earlier substantive hearing fixtures being allocated.

Finally, a key focus in 2025 (for all courts, and supported by the Ministry of Justice) was safety and security in the courts. In March a Security Forum, co-chaired by Justice Dale La Hood from the High Court in Wellington,¹ was established to oversee a number of important workstreams targeted at health and safety in the courts. The membership of the Forum comprises representatives from the judiciary, the Ministry of Justice and the profession. The Forum is also supported by an independent health and safety adviser.

Hon Justice Sally Fitzgerald

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



¹ The other co-chair is from the Ministry of Justice.

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

The High Court is a single Court, comprised of three home registries in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. It also sits on circuit in combined registries shared with the District Court in 15 cities across Aotearoa New Zealand.²

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 16.

The High Court deals with the most serious criminal charges, including murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, and serious sexual, drug and violent offending. It deals with 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, as well as all “third-strike” trials and sentencings.³

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 2025, 23 High Court Judges sat on the Court of Appeal for a total of 80 sitting weeks.

Administrative roles

The Chief High Court Judge is the administrative head of the Court, responsible to the Chief Justice 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.

Executive Judges oversee the workload in each of the three home registries, assisted by the local Court Managers, Judicial Resource Managers and the Civil and Criminal Caseflow Managers. The Chief High Court Judge and the Executive Judges oversee the operational

² Whangārei, Hamilton, Rotorua, Tauranga, Gisborne, New Plymouth, Napier, Whanganui, Palmerston North, Nelson, Blenheim, Greymouth, Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill.

³ Pursuant to the Sentencing (Reinstating Three Strikes) Amendment Act 2024. More details can be found at page 9 below.

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. There are also circuit liaison judges for each of the Whangārei and Hamilton/Rotorua/Tauranga circuits.

High Court 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, (court) Rules, information governance, property and courthouse design, technology, AI, diversity, judicial wellbeing, security, 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 five new appointments to the High Court in 2025. Three judges retired from the Court, and one judge was appointed to the Court of Appeal.



Above: detail from judicial robes.

New appointments to the High Court in 2025

Justice Mount 1 June 2025

Justice MacGillivray 1 August 2025

Justice Paulsen 15 November 2025

Justice Arthur 1 December 2025

Associate Judge appointments in 2025

Associate Judge Gellert 21 July 2025

Judicial retirements in 2025

Justice Muir 30 May 2025

Justice Gwyn 14 November 2025

Justice Brewer 15 November 2025

Appointments to the Court of Appeal in 2025

Justice Whata 1 August 2025

To enable the Court to respond to its increasing workload, there was one full-time and three part-time acting judges in the High Court in 2025:

Justice Cull

Justice Gordon

Justice Osborne

Justice Gendall (as of July 2025)

As at 31 December 2025 there were 40 High Court Judges, four Judges with acting commissions, and eight 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 4 offences, which are mainly murder, manslaughter and attempted murder charges.

Category 3 offences are those punishable by imprisonment for two years or more (except for those which are category four offences). The majority of category 3 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 2 and 3 offences which may be considered for transfer to the High Court.

In 2025, 277 cases required a protocol determination by the High Court, 22 per cent less than in 2024 (357 cases). Of these, 16 were directed to be heard in the High Court, up from 14 in 2024.

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 2025, 80 per cent of the active criminal cases awaiting trial in the High Court were category 4 offences.

Third strikes

The “three strikes” regime was re-introduced by the Sentencing (Reinstating Three Strikes) Amendment Act 2024, which came into force on 17 June 2025. “Third strike” trials, and sentencings, must be heard in the High Court. As previous “strikes” have been re-activated for qualifying offences under the new regime, there have already been a number of third-strike matters transferred from the District Court to the High Court.

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 remain the predominant category of criminal appeals heard in the High Court, though it is of note that since April 2023, conviction and sentence, conviction only and sentence only appeals to the High Court have increased by 82 per cent. Overall, criminal appeals from the District Court to the High Court reached record numbers again in 2025. See below at page 27 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 2025, the Court delivered more than 2,000 civil decisions, approximately 90 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 List

As noted in the introduction to this Report, a new Commercial List was launched at the High Court in Auckland in October 2025. The List represents a significant shift in the case management and hearing of commercial cases, by prioritising speed and efficiency, reducing interlocutory delays and moving cases to substantive hearings faster. The List (modelled on the highly successful Commercial List of the New South Wales Supreme Court) was developed in conjunction with a profession working group, made up of senior members of the profession specialising in commercial litigation.

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 2025, the Commercial Panel comprised: Justices Fitzgerald, Venning, Lang, Peters, Dunningham, Edwards, Jagose, Gault, Walker, Isac, Tahana, Radich, Anderson and Osborne.



Above: Fred Graham (Ngāti Koroki, Tainui) "Untitled" (1991) High Court, Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau.

Circuit reports

Auckland | Tāmaki Makaurau

The Auckland circuit serves five registries – Auckland, Whangārei, Hamilton, Rotorua and Tauranga.



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 2025, the Auckland circuit comprised 25 permanent High Court Judges including the Chief High Court Judge; one part-time Acting High Court Judge and five Associate Judges. As well as hearing Auckland cases, Auckland-based judges sit on circuit.

The Auckland circuit's criminal work in 2025 has seen homicide cases dominating the trial and pre-trial work. Many have been high-profile and complex matters, involving a combination of factors such as gang affiliations of the defendants and/or victims, other significant security risks, and mental health issues that needed to be managed.

The Auckland registry conducted 19 trials in 2025. As at 31 December 2025, there were 47 criminal trials on hand. It disposed of 715 criminal appeals in 2025, and 1,207 civil matters.

Whangārei

The Whangārei circuit had an unusually high number of homicide proceedings on hand in 2025 which affected time to trial.

Four jury trials were held in the High Court at Whangārei in 2025, with several more resolving shortly before trial. As at 31 December 2025 there were 13 criminal trials on hand (all category 4 matters), up from 10 in 2024, and from 7 in 2022. In 2025, the High Court at Whangārei disposed of 147 criminal appeals and 60 civil matters.

Gault J

Auckland Executive and Civil List Judge

Hamilton | Kirikiriroa-Rotorua-Tauranga

The Hamilton-Rotorua-Tauranga circuit serves the Waikato Bay of Plenty region. The circuit comprises three registries, with judges from Auckland sitting regularly.



There are generally at least three High Court judges sitting in the circuit each week, with four judges sitting at times during 2025. In addition, an Associate Judge sits in each of Hamilton, Rotorua and Tauranga for up to a week every four to six weeks.

While Hamilton has a dedicated courthouse, in Rotorua and Tauranga, courtrooms are shared with the District Court. There are two jury-enabled courtrooms available to the High Court in Hamilton and one in Rotorua. There is no jury-enabled courtroom available to the High Court in Tauranga.

In 2025, there were two Tauranga multi-defendant murder trials in the circuit. An eight-week, four-defendant murder trial was heard in Rotorua and a four-week, five-defendant murder trial was heard in Hamilton. Tauranga jury trials are therefore heard in Hamilton or Rotorua.

A further jury-enabled courtroom will become available to the High Court in this circuit when the new courthouse in Tauranga is built. Construction is progressing well and is scheduled to finish in late 2028.

During 2025, the circuit saw a material increase in the number of proceedings requiring criminal jury trials. The number of trials on hand in 2025 was 48 – more than the number on hand in Auckland in 2025. This in turn is creating pressure on the time to trial in this circuit, due to the limited number of jury courtrooms available to the High Court. Hearings are now scheduled across the circuit to maximise availability of hearing time. In addition, for short or procedural hearings, and where appropriate, there is increasing use of remote hearings.

In 2025, the Hamilton-Rotorua-Tauranga circuit held 12 criminal trials, and disposed of 304 criminal appeals. It also disposed of 234 civil matters.

Tahana J

Hamilton-Rotorua-Tauranga Executive and Civil List Judge

Wellington | Te Whanganui a Tara

The Wellington circuit now serves six registries — Wellington, Gisborne, Napier, Palmerston North, New Plymouth and Whanganui. Until their transfer to the Christchurch circuit in November 2025, Wellington judges also sat in Nelson and Blenheim.



Above: Sheree Pattison “Sandblasted Panels” (1992) entrance to Courtroom 1, High Court, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington.

In 2025, the Wellington High Court comprised 10 permanent Judges, two Acting High Court Judges and one Associate Judge.

The work of the High Court in Wellington is varied. In 2025 judges conducted several notable criminal trials, including that following the 2023 Loafers Lodge fire.

The judges in Wellington also determined a number of judicial review proceedings of significant public interest. These included [Kapa-Kingi v Tamihere](#), where interim relief was granted reinstating Ms Kapa-Kingi as a member of Te Pāti Māori pending determination of her proceeding; [Wellington Civic Trust v Wellington City Council](#), in which judicial review of the Wellington City Council’s decision to demolish the City to Sea Bridge was declined; and [Te Ohu Kai Moana Trustee Ltd v Attorney-General](#), in which the Court granted declarations that the Crown’s obligation under the 1992 fisheries settlement not to expropriate settlement quota without compensation remains binding.

In 2025, the Wellington circuit conducted 15 criminal trials and disposed of 300 criminal appeals. It also disposed of 588 civil matters.

Isac J

Wellington Executive and Civil List Judge

Christchurch | Ōtautahi

The Christchurch circuit serves the entirety of the South Island, and its judges sit in Invercargill, Dunedin, Timaru, Greymouth, Christchurch and, since November 2025, Nelson and Blenheim.



In 2025, the Christchurch circuit comprised five permanent High Court Judges, one Acting High Court Judge and two Associate Judges.

The range of civil work in the Christchurch circuit continues to be varied, although the stream of Christchurch earthquake-related work is almost at an end. In one of the circuit's longest running earthquake-related cases (filed in 2015, and twice having gone to the Court of Appeal) the substantive claim was heard in August 2025.

In 2025, the constitutionally significant case of *Tau and Ors v Attorney-General* was heard in Christchurch over an eight-week period. It concerns the

entitlements and rights Ngāi Tahu claim over freshwater in their tribal area (most of the South Island). The decision will issue in 2026.

While the number of criminal trials in the Christchurch registry decreased slightly in 2025, the criminal work remains varied, with a number of homicide trials, as well as significant proceedings concerning a multi-million dollar drug operation (which resulted in the arrest of all patched members of the Christchurch Chapter of the Comancheros gang). Other significant criminal proceedings involved charges arising out of the operation of a large Ponzi scheme, as well as an appeal in relation to serious alleged sexual offending in the hospitality industry.

In 2025, the Christchurch circuit conducted 9 criminal trials and disposed of 474 criminal appeals. It also disposed of 440 civil matters.

Dunningham J

Christchurch Executive and Civil List Judge

Associate Judges

Associate Judges have a specialist civil jurisdiction. As of July 2025, there are eight Associate Judges sitting in the High Court.

Associate Judges determine a range of insolvency-related and civil/commercial claims. Approximately two-thirds of hearings determined by Associate Judges involve:

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

Presently, 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.

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 continues active recovery action, and this is seen in the insolvency workload.

Remote hearings

Associate Judges are increasingly conducting hearings by video link in appropriate cases. For example, in 2025 Christchurch Associate Judges were scheduled to hear four Auckland cases per month via audio-visual link.

Looking ahead

Associate Judges from all three centres have been closely involved in the reforms to the High Court Rules, which came into effect on 1 January 2026. It is anticipated that the rules changes will mean that the work of Associate Judges will, over time, be refocused on the judicial issues conferences at the heart of the reforms.

Associate Judge Lester

Associate Judge National List Judge

2025 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 2025. They highlight the broad range of disputes that come before the Court.

[Muhammad v Te Kōti Kaitirotiro Matewhawhati Ki Te Ōtautahi \[2025\] NZHC 3082](#) was an application for judicial review of the Coroner's decision to call the offender as a witness to the coronial inquest into the Christchurch mosque terror attack.

In [Department of Internal Affairs v Christchurch Casinos Ltd \[2025\] NZHC 2933](#), the Christchurch Casino agreed to pay a \$5,000,000 penalty for breaches of the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Act 2009.

In [D & Ors v Attorney-General \[2025\] NZHC 4028](#), the Court held that prisoners in Units 12 and 13 at Auckland Prison were being unlawfully denied their statutory minimum of one hour of daily outdoor exercise and that this entitlement may be restricted only in genuine emergencies or where safety or security is threatened, not because of staffing or facility shortages. The Court granted an order in the nature of mandamus requiring the Chief Executive of Corrections to comply with s 70 of the Corrections Act 2004 in administering the conditions of detention in Units 12 and 13.

[Brown v Police \[2025\] NZHC 708](#) was an unsuccessful appeal against refusal to grant a discharge without conviction on a charge of displaying prohibited gang insignia in a public place under s 7 of the Gangs Act 2024.

[New Zealand Greyhound Racing Association Inc v The Attorney-General \[2025\] NZHC 2665](#) was an unsuccessful application for interim relief pending substantive judicial review of the Government's decision to ban greyhound racing.

In [Re Taueki \(Ngāti Tamarangi\) & Ors \[2025\] NZHC 1488](#), the Court determined applications under the Marine and Coastal Area Act 2011 for recognition of customary title along the coast from the Rangitīkei River to Whareroa, including Kapiti Island.

[Richards v Attorney-General \[2025\] NZHC 2833](#) was an unsuccessful application for judicial review and declaratory judgment in respect of decisions made by Cabinet establishing a redress scheme for survivors of torture of the Child and Adolescent Unit of Lake Alice Psychiatric Hospital.

In [Talley's Group Ltd v Television New Zealand Ltd \[2025\] NZHC 4006](#), the Court found that TVNZ's publication of its 3 July 2021 broadcast conveyed a defamatory meaning, but, because Talley's had not proved the publication had caused, or was likely to cause, pecuniary loss to Talley's, the proceeding failed.

[Professional Association for Transgender Health Aotearoa Incorporated v Minister of Health \[2025\] NZHC 4045](#) concerned regulations banning new prescriptions of gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogues (puberty blockers) for puberty suppression in children or adolescents with gender incongruence or gender dysphoria, which were due to come into force on

19 December 2025. The application sought urgent orders to suspend the regulations pending further order of the Court. The applicant also filed a judicial review application seeking a declaration that the regulations are unlawful and an order quashing the regulations. The Court issued a declaration that the Crown should take no steps to enforce the regulations pending the judicial review being determined.

[Green & McCahill Holdings Ltd v Williams & Ors \[2025\] NZHC 2581](#) arose from a long-running joint venture to develop a large coastal subdivision at Weiti Bay, north of Auckland, which collapsed after funding shortfalls and a breakdown in relations between the landowner and the developer. The Court dismissed claims of misrepresentation, breach of mortgagee sale duties and equitable contribution, finding no wrongdoing and holding that the lender was entitled to recover the full residual debt plus interest.



Above: Anton Parsons, 'Alphabeti' (1992), Wellington Te Whanganui-a-Tara High Court jury room

[Financial Markets Authority v CBL Corporation Ltd \(in liq\) \[2025\] NZHC 295](#) and [\[2025\] NZHC 1691](#) was a pecuniary penalty proceeding by the Financial Markets Authority alleging involvement by the CFO of CBL in five contraventions of fair dealing and continuous disclosure provisions of the Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013. The Court made determination as to

the elements of accessory liability, and declarations of contravention in relation to three causes of action. A pecuniary penalty was imposed of \$641,250, plus costs of \$606,216.53.

[Financial Markets Authority v Du Val Capital Partners Ltd \[2025\] NZHC 655; \[2025\] NZHC 1920; and Re Financial Markets Authority \[2025\] NZHC 2010](#) involved several decisions stemming from the FMA investigation into the Du Val Group of companies and its principals, Kenyon and Charlotte Clarke. These included the on-notice hearing of the FMA's application for freezing orders, a decision requiring the Clarkes to attend for examination by the receivers appointed under the orders (under appeal), and a decision concluding that the Court had no jurisdiction to issue a further search warrant covering the same material covered by an existing warrant of doubtful validity.

In [Taylor v Roper \[2025\] NZHC 30](#), the High Court dismissed a claim for exemplary damages against the Royal New Zealand Air Force arising out of the sexual abuse and false imprisonment suffered during service in the RNZAF in the 1980s.

[Whakaari Management Ltd v WorkSafe New Zealand \[2025\] NZHC 288](#) concerned a successful appeal against conviction by Whakaari White Island licensee under s 48 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

In [MB Technology Ltd v Orbis Blockchain Technologies Ltd \[2025\] NZHC 1012](#), the Court ordered share register rectification and compensation to recognise a cryptocurrency advisor's investment in its client. All other claims were dismissed.

Judgment timeliness

	Total judgments	Civil	Criminal
2025	4,128	2,191	1,937
2024	3,995	2,059	1,936

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

In 2025, the High Court delivered 77.7% of civil judgments within one month of hearing, and 90.4% of civil judgments within three months of hearing.

In 2024, these results were 77.3% and 92.1% respectively.

In 2025, 93.8% of criminal judgments in the High Court were delivered within one month of hearing, and 98.5% within three months.

In 2024, these results were 94.6% and 99.1% respectively.
(For criminal jury trials, verdicts are given at trial.)

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 over 4,000 judgments delivered in 2025, there were 16 decisions outstanding beyond six months as at 31 March 2025, and 21 as at 30 September 2025.

Workload at a glance

New business	2024	2025
Civil proceedings	2,217	2,435
Civil appeals	244	311
Criminal trials	164	162
Criminal appeals	1,913	1,974

Disposals	2024	2025
Civil proceedings	2,232	2,252
Civil appeals	243	289
Criminal trials	177	158
Criminal appeals	1,899	1,949

Active cases	2024	2025
Civil proceedings	2,706	2,842
Civil appeals	181	194
Criminal trials	170	173
Criminal appeals	229	273

High Court statistics are published on Courts of New Zealand website annually.⁴

For the year ending 31 December 2025, the following [statistical reports](#) are available:

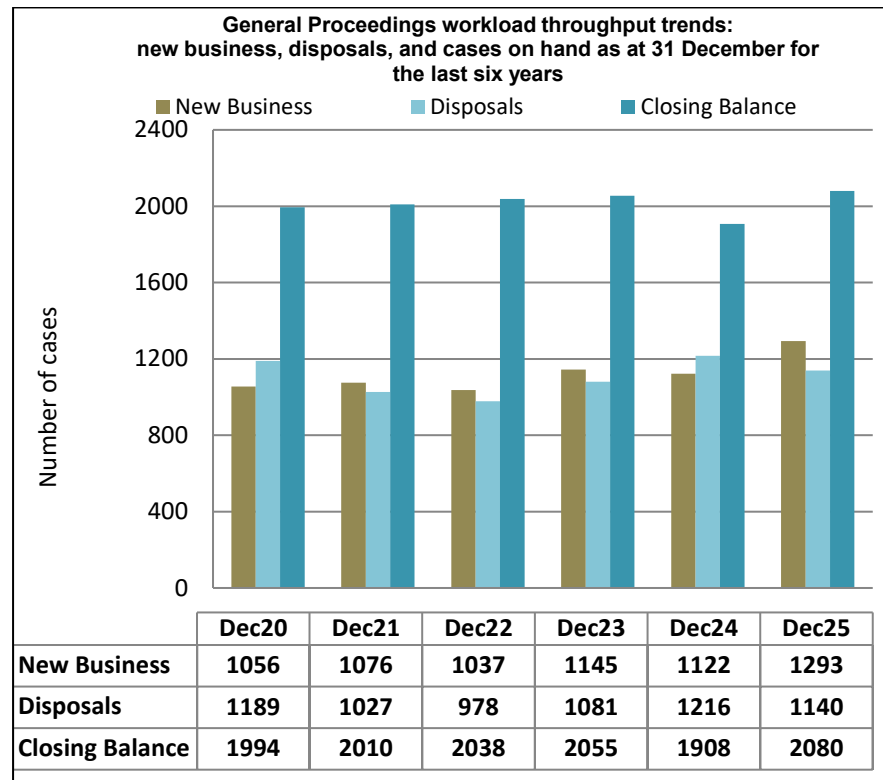
- [National workload statistics overview](#)
- [Criminal trial workload by registry](#)
- [Criminal trial waiting time for scheduled hearings by registry](#)
- [Criminal trials held by registry](#)
- [Criminal appeals workload by registry](#)
- [Civil proceedings workload – general proceedings, originating 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](#)

⁴ 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

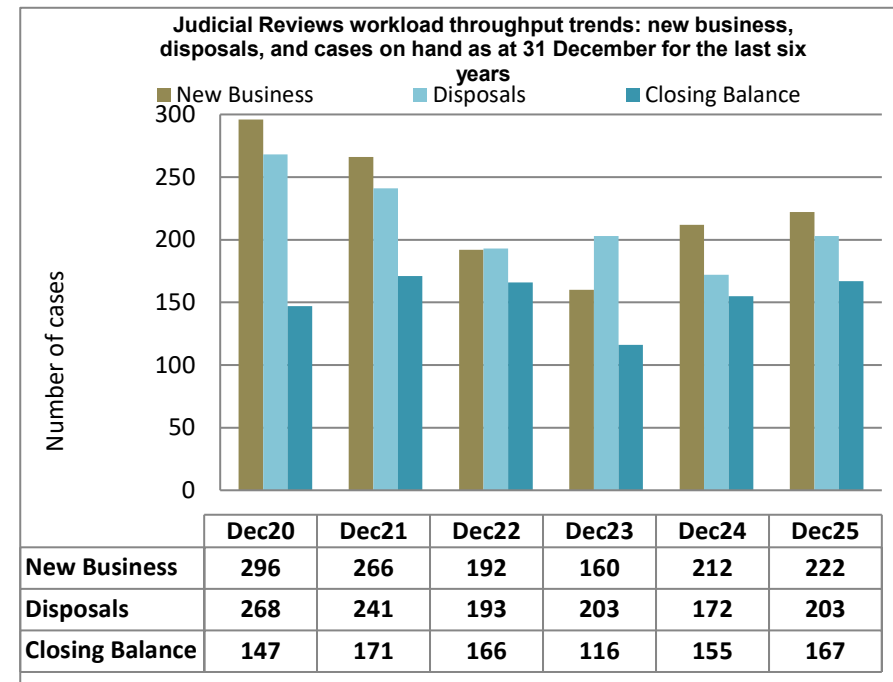
General proceedings

Cases on hand is a function of new business and disposals. Nationally, general proceedings awaiting hearing or judgment increased by nine per cent (172 cases) compared to 2024. New business increased by 15 per cent (171 cases), and disposals decreased by six per cent (76 cases). At a circuit level, cases on hand increased in Auckland and Christchurch, and decreased in Wellington.



Judicial reviews

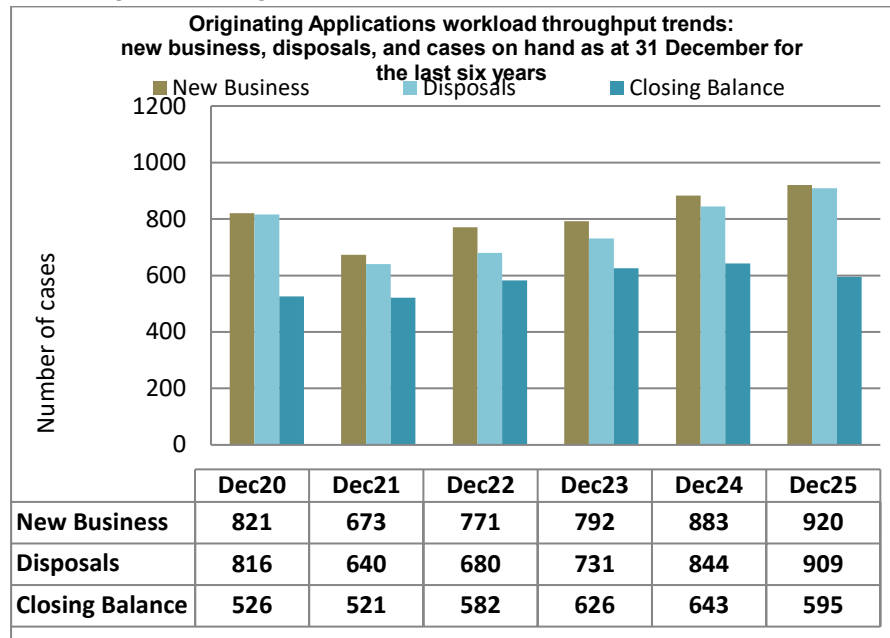
New judicial review filings and rates of disposal are closely linked as applications often require urgent consideration. Nationally, judicial reviews awaiting hearing or judgment increased by eight per cent (12 cases) compared to 2024. New business increased by five per cent (10 cases) and disposals increased by 18 per cent (31 cases). While new business remains lower than the spike of judicial review applications during COVID (2020 and 2021), numbers continue to sit at higher levels than pre-COVID.



Originating applications

Nationally, originating applications awaiting hearing or judgment decreased by seven percent (48 cases) compared to 2024. New business increased by four per cent (37 cases) while disposals increased by eight per cent (65 cases).

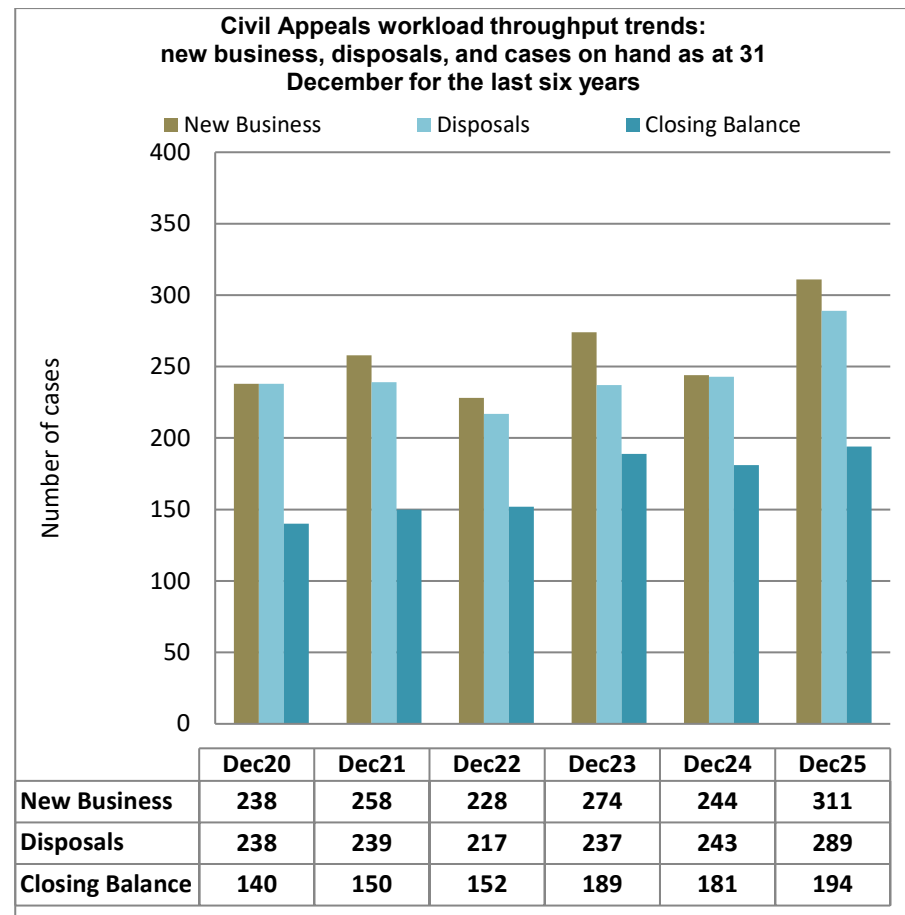
Whether a matter must be commenced by way of originating application is determined by statute. There are still almost 200 MACA applications being progressed through the Court, which are included in the figures below. Some MACA matters will also need to be reheard in 2026/2027 as a result of recent amendments to the MACA legislation. Proceeds of Crime (Recovery) Act 2009 applications are also included in the figures below. However, these matters are often not heard until any associated criminal offending proceedings have been determined by the courts.



Civil appeals

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

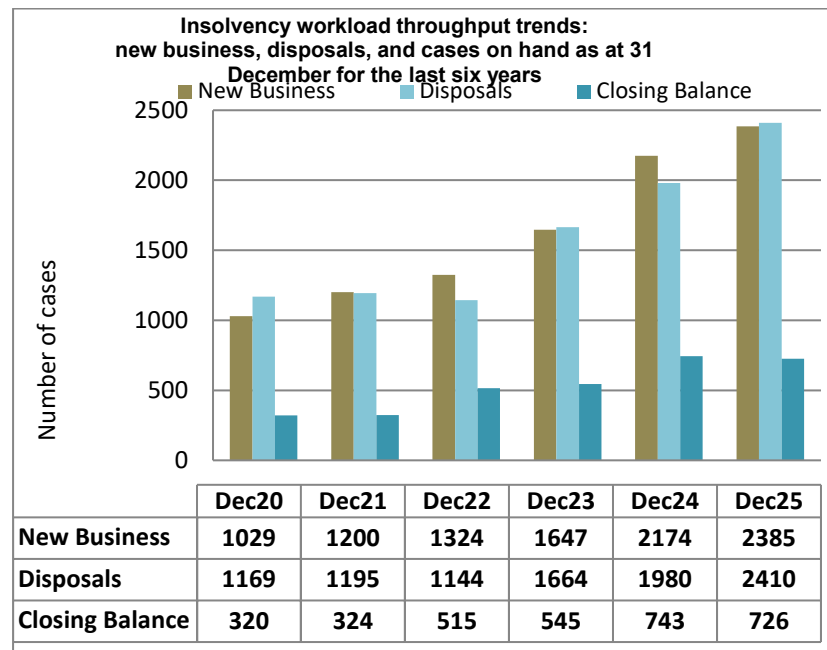
Civil appeals nationally awaiting hearing or judgment increased by seven per cent (13 cases) compared to 2024. New business increased by 27 per cent (67 cases), and disposals increased by 19 per cent (46 cases).



Insolvency proceedings

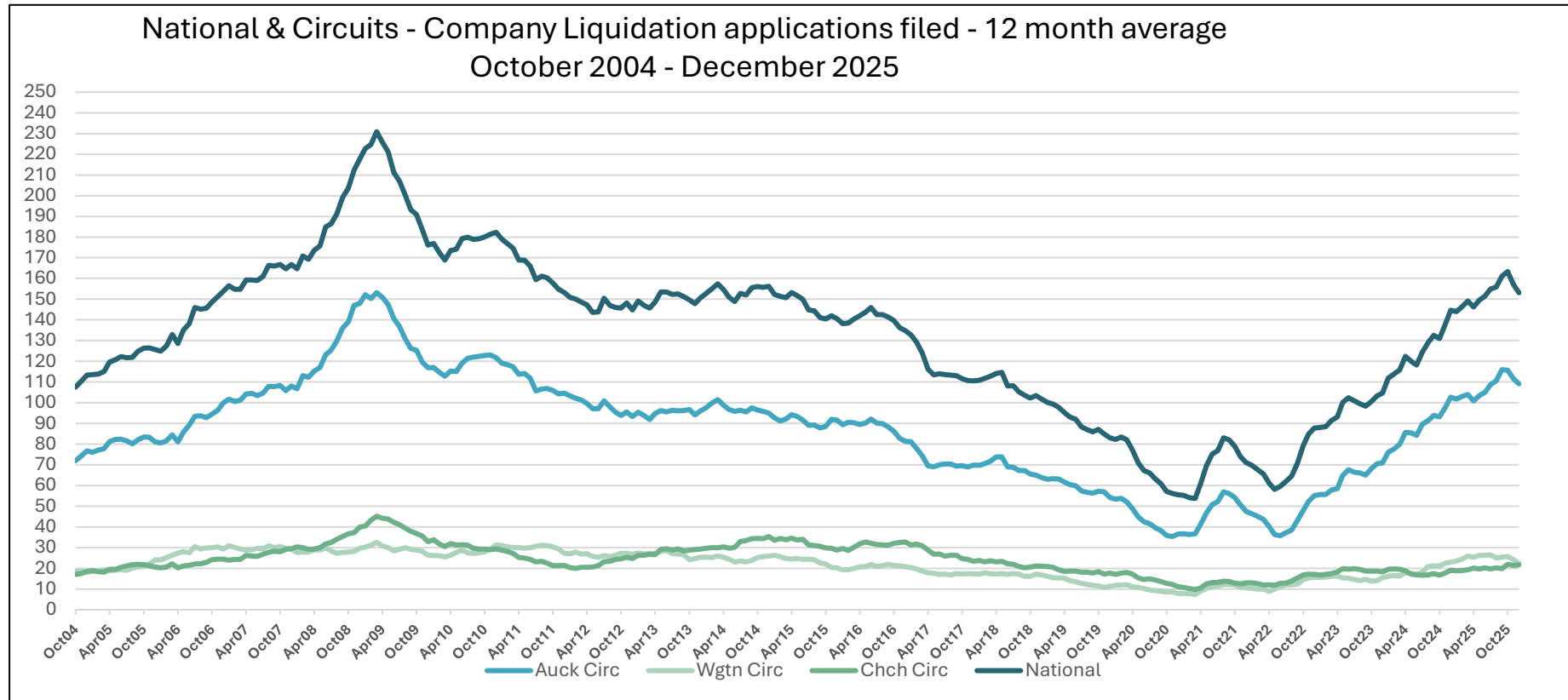
Insolvency proceedings awaiting hearing or judgment decreased two per cent (17 cases) compared to 2024. New filings increased 10 per cent (211 cases), and disposals increased by 22 per cent (430 cases), with the result that the closing balance is a little lower than in 2024, despite the increased number of filings.

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



Above: Lonnie Hutchinson (Ngāti kuri ki Ngāi Tahu, Faleilili, Celtic), “Kahu Matarau” (2016)
Christchurch Justice and Emergency Services Precinct.

Company liquidation applications filed



The graph shows the 12 monthly average for company liquidation application filings from October 2004 to December 2025. The peak period (2008-2009) relates to the Global Financial Crisis. (At that time, the High Court had nine Associate Judges.) 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 joined the Court in August 2025 to help manage this growing caseload.

Criminal jurisdiction

Criminal trials

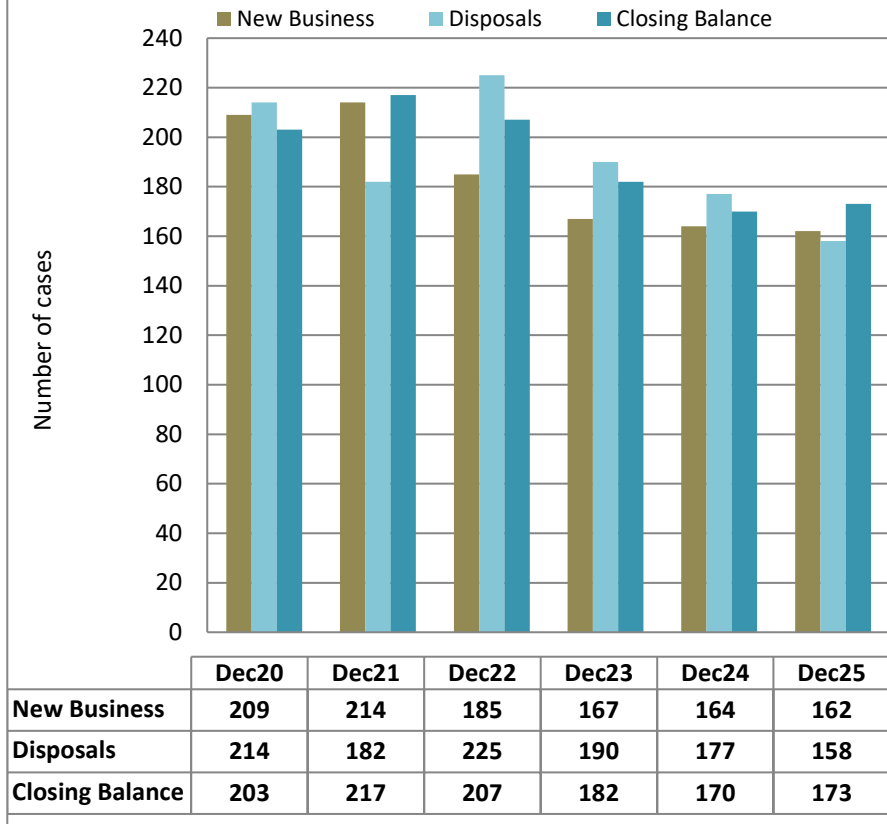
Nationally, criminal trials on hand increased by two per cent (three cases) compared to 2024. Trials awaiting hearing decreased – 153 compared to 154 in 2023 – and trials awaiting sentencing increased by four, to 20, compared to 16 in 2024.⁵

New criminal trials decreased by one per cent, or two cases. Disposals also decreased nationally, by 11 per cent (19 cases). Fewer category 4 cases were received in 2025 than in 2024 – 122 compared to 124. Category 4 cases made up 75 per cent of all new criminal trials in the High Court in 2025, compared to 76 per cent in 2024.

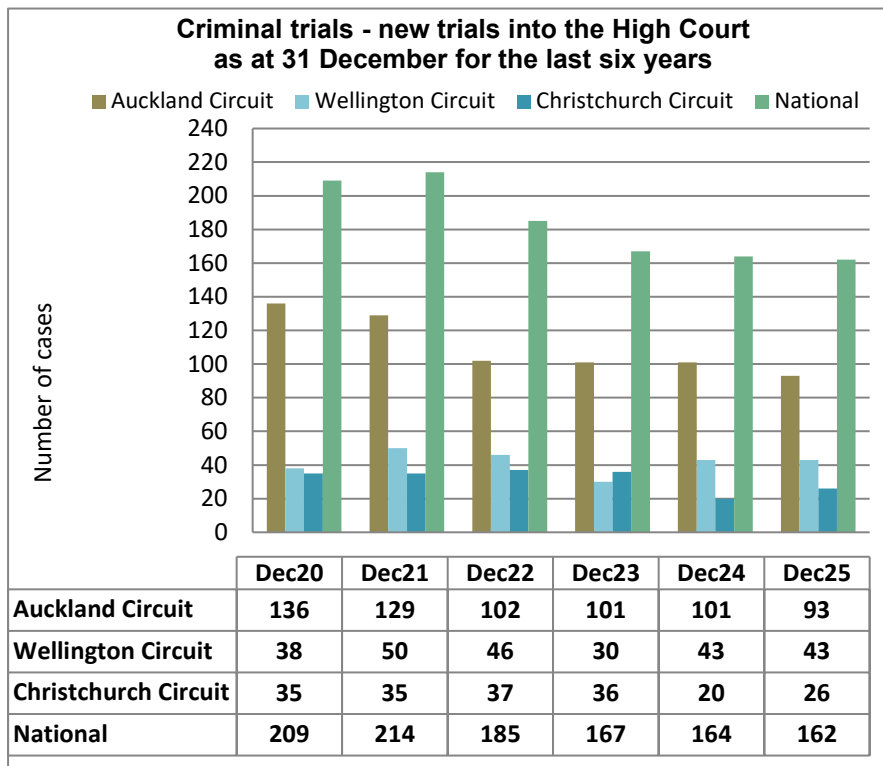
Disposals

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. There were 59 criminal trials held in 2025, compared to 61 in 2024. Cases disposed of by guilty plea before trial increased (59 compared to 51 cases), and cases disposed of by “other disposal” decreased by one (12 compared to 13 cases). Cases disposed of by guilty plea on the first day of the trial (or during the trial, before verdict) remained the same (five cases).

Criminal trials workload throughput trends: new business, disposals, and cases on hand as at 31 December for the last six years



⁵ 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 nationally has been relatively stable for the last three years, and remains lower than the peak during and immediately following the COVID years. New trials in Wellington have sat at the same level for the last two years, whereas there has been an almost corresponding increase in Christchurch trial numbers to the decrease in Auckland in 2025, keeping overall numbers similar to last year.⁶

⁶ Note that as of November 2025, the Nelson and Blenheim registries became part of the Christchurch circuit.

Estimated hearing days and average days per trial

	Cases	Estimated hearing days	Average days per trial
31 Dec 2025	153	2,647	17.3
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

As the above table shows, the average number of days per trial continues to sit at historically high levels. This reflects the increasing complexity of criminal trials before the High Court.

Criminal appeals

Criminal appeals awaiting hearing or judgment increased by 19 per cent (44 cases) in 2025, compared to 2024. New filings increased by three per cent (61 cases) and disposals increased by three per cent (50 cases). As in 2023 and 2024, criminal appeals continue 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. Of particular note is an increase in sentence appeals in 2025 (59 per cent or 242 cases).

