

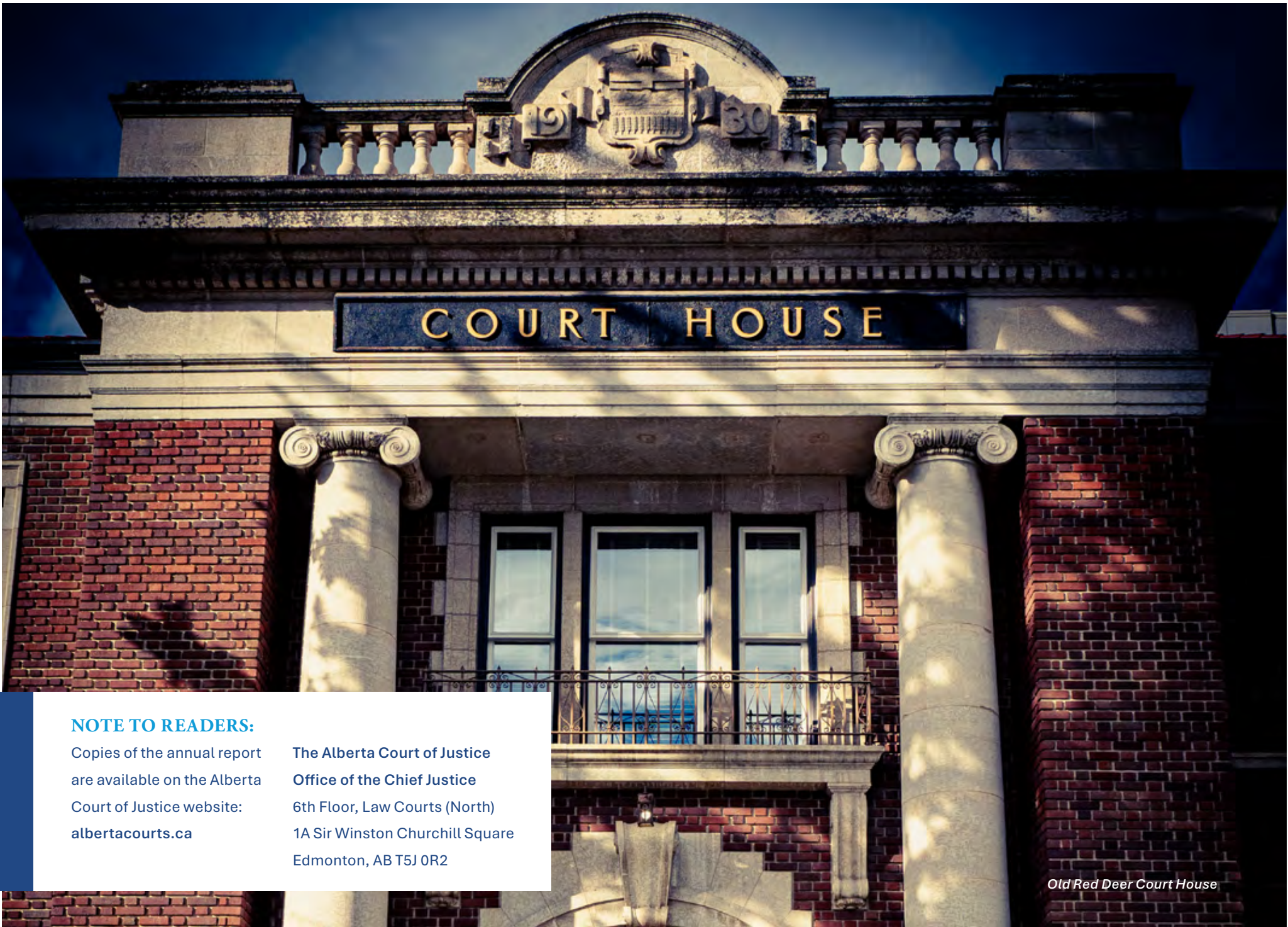
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ALBERTA COURT OF JUSTICE

Biennial Report

APRIL 1, 2023 – MARCH 31, 2025





NOTE TO READERS:

Copies of the annual report are available on the Alberta Court of Justice website: albertacourts.ca

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Old Red Deer Court House

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Message from the Chief Justice of the Alberta Court of Justice



Introduction

This report reflects both the operational and judicial achievements of the Alberta Court of Justice over the past two years and reaffirms our continued commitment to the principles that underlie a strong and independent judiciary: fairness, accessibility, transparency, and public confidence in the rule of law.

The reporting period has been marked by both progress and challenges. We continue to navigate an evolving legal landscape shaped by rapid social, technological, and economic change. Through decades of change and evolution, the Court remains steadfast in its commitment to deliver justice independently, impartially, and efficiently to all Albertans.

Upholding Judicial Independence and Public Confidence

Judicial independence is the cornerstone of our constitutional democracy. It is not a privilege granted to judges, but a right afforded to every citizen. It ensures that legal disputes are resolved fairly and free from external influence. In the past two years, we have seen increasing public discourse on the role of courts in society. While scrutiny is both healthy and welcome in a democratic system, it is essential that this discourse be informed by an understanding of the judiciary's constitutional role and the principles that safeguard its independence.

To this end, we continue to promote transparency and foster public understanding of the work we do. The Court has taken steps to make our decisions more accessible, our reasons more understandable, and our processes more transparent. These efforts go beyond improving access to information - they are aimed at strengthening public trust in the justice system.

Working alongside the province's superior courts, we have initiated outreach to journalism schools,

offering educational events designed to enhance students' understanding of court processes, media access, and legal reporting responsibilities. These efforts aim to promote informed and accurate journalism, contributing to a more knowledgeable and engaged public.

Enhancing Access to Justice

Access to justice remains one of the most pressing challenges in our legal system. It is not enough that justice be done; it must be accessible to those who seek it. Whether due to financial barriers, complexity of legal procedures, or geographic limitations, many Albertans continue to face significant obstacles in accessing the courts.

We have responded by enhancing the use of technology to bring the Court closer to the people it serves. Remote hearings, electronic filing, and digital courtrooms have become integral components of our judicial operations. Although these innovations were accelerated out of necessity during the pandemic, they have since become embedded in the way we deliver justice. This court constantly innovates and strives to make the system more accessible to all. Our goal is not merely to modernize for efficiency, but to ensure that our justice system is inclusive, adaptable, and responsive to the needs of a diverse and evolving population.

In response to the Supreme Court of Canada's landmark ruling in *R v Tayo Tompouba*, 2024 SCC 16, the Court of Justice has made significant

strides in upholding the language rights of court participants. Over the past year, there has been an increase in requests for French and bilingual trials across the province. To ensure these matters proceed efficiently and in full compliance with the law, the Court implemented new documentation and procedures that support informed language choice and respect the constitutional right of all participants.

Indigenous Justice

The Alberta Court of Justice was the first court in Canada to enact an Indigenous Justice Strategy, doing so under the leadership of my predecessor Chief Justice Derek Redman. In the past two years, we have begun work in putting that strategy into action. In conversation with Indigenous leaders throughout the province, we have developed additional Indigenous Courts, including ones in St. Paul and in Lethbridge. In addition we are meeting with other nations to expand cooperation and services. In addition, we are meeting with other nations to expand cooperation and services — the Enoch Cree Nation and Yellowhead Tribal Community Corrections Society are the latest participants. We have expanded our Indigenous Legal Career Days and continue to listen to and learn from members of Indigenous communities.

Judicial Education

We continue to prioritize judicial education, mentorship, and ethical excellence as essential pillars of a responsive and informed judiciary.

Ongoing education is critical to maintaining judicial competence and public confidence.

Looking Ahead

The next two years will present both opportunities and responsibilities. We will continue to evaluate how we deliver justice, how we communicate with the public, and how we fulfill our role within Canada's constitutional framework. The law is not static, nor is the society it serves. As we look ahead, the Alberta Court of Justice is committed to preserving the foundational values of justice while embracing innovation, dialogue, and change.

As I mark two years in my role as Chief Justice of the Alberta Court of Justice, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all of the judicial officers with whom I have the privilege to work, as well as to the dedicated staff who support the work of the Court. I also extend my appreciation to the members of the legal profession and the public who engage with us constructively, thoughtfully, and with respect for the rule of law. I believe that we are fortunate to collectively serve one of the finest trial-level courts in the world.

Respectfully,

James A. Hunter

Chief Justice of the Alberta Court of Justice

The Alberta Court of Justice

Overview

The Alberta Court of Justice is one of the three levels of court in Alberta's judicial system, alongside the Court of King's Bench and the Alberta Court of Appeal. Formerly known as the Provincial Court of Alberta, it was renamed in 2023 to better reflect its judicial role and responsibilities. As the primary point of contact for most Albertans entering the legal system, the Court plays a vital role in the administration of justice across the province.

The Court has jurisdiction in several key areas: criminal law, family and child protection law, civil claims, traffic and bylaw matters, and youth justice. It handles the majority of criminal matters in Alberta, including bail hearings, trials for summary offences and some indictable offences, and preliminary inquiries for select indictable offences. In family and child protection law, the Court deals with matters such as child custody, support, guardianship, and protection orders. The Alberta Court of Justice does not hear divorce or property matters, as they fall under the jurisdiction of the Court of King's Bench.

In civil matters, the Alberta Court of Justice hears disputes involving claims up to a monetary limit of \$100,000. This makes it an accessible and efficient option for resolving lower-value disputes.

Justices of the Peace oversee the Provincial Hearing Office, which operates around the clock, every day of the year. Their responsibilities include hearing applications for judicial interim release, reviewing applications for judicial authorizations, responding to emergency matters under provincial legislation, and presiding over traffic and bylaw-related proceedings.

Operating in more than 70 locations across Alberta, including urban centers, rural communities, remote northern regions, and Indigenous communities, the Court ensures broad access to justice. Justices, appointed by the provincial government, are responsible for ensuring that court proceedings are conducted fairly and in accordance with the law. The Court also promotes accessibility through self-help services and online resources to assist individuals who are representing themselves.

With a focus on timely, fair, and efficient case resolution, the Alberta Court of Justice plays a central role in upholding the rule of law and ensuring justice is accessible to all Albertans. It continues to evolve in response to legal reforms, technological advancements, and the changing needs of the public.

Regions & Divisions

The Court of Justice is organized into distinct regions and divisions to support access to justice throughout the province:

- Northern Region
- Edmonton Region
- Edmonton Criminal Division
- Edmonton Family & Youth Division
- Central Region
- Calgary Criminal & Regional Division
- Calgary Family & Youth Division
- Civil Division – Calgary & Edmonton
- Southern Region

Justices assigned to regional areas travel to designated circuit points to hear cases. They routinely preside over matters across all areas of the Court's jurisdiction, including civil, family and child protection, youth criminal, and adult criminal proceedings.

Specialized Courts

Recognizing that the traditional adversarial process may not be suitable for all individuals or circumstances, the Alberta Court of Justice has established a range of specialized courts that adopt a therapeutic and culturally informed approach to justice. Operating in communities

across the province, these courts are designed to respond to the unique needs of Albertans who come into contact with the justice system.

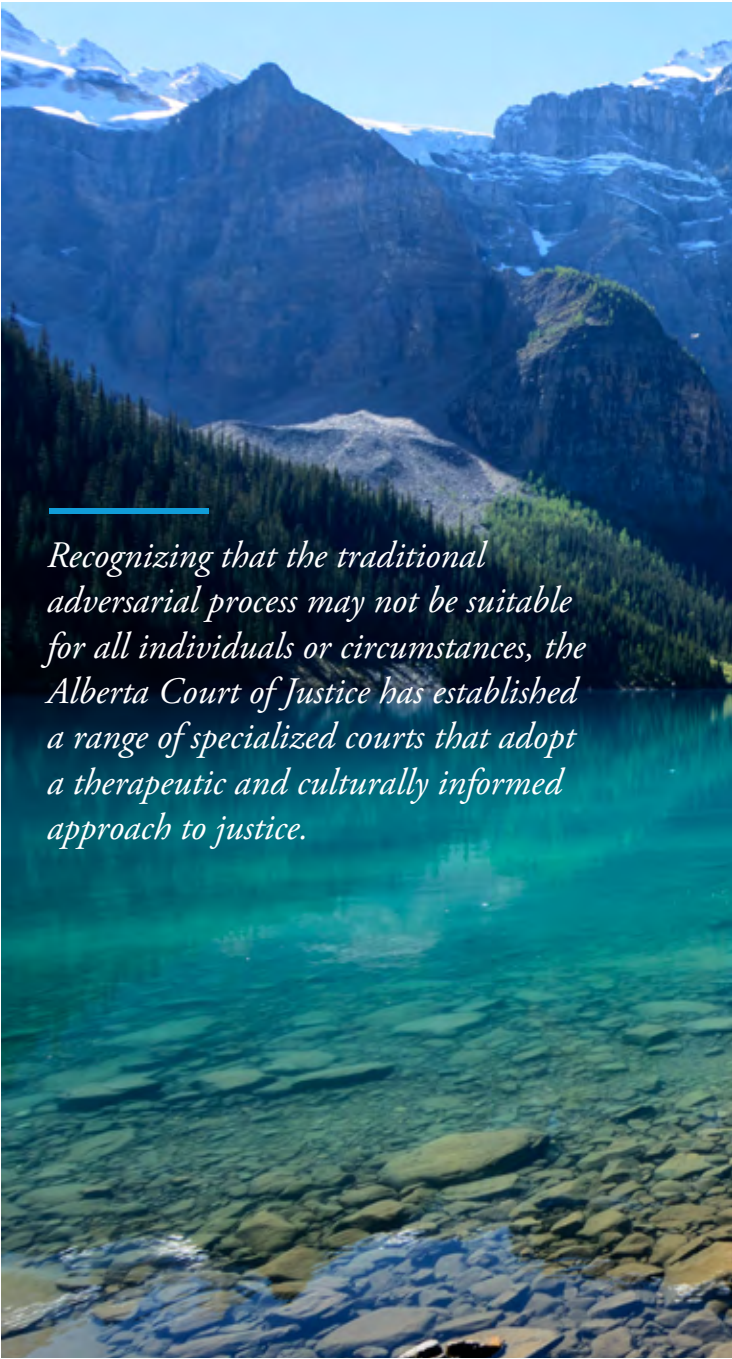
Their goal is to promote healing, accountability, and community support, while addressing the underlying factors that contribute to justice system involvement.

Mental Health Court

Mental Health Court addresses the overrepresentation of individuals with mental illness in the justice system by focusing on the underlying conditions that often contribute to repeated criminal behaviour. It supports adults charged with criminal offences who have ongoing mental health conditions.

Eligibility requires a diagnosed mental illness or neurological condition, a connection between the condition and the offence, the accused's consent to participate, and confirmation that the offence is not excluded under court criteria (e.g., murder, certain drug offences, domestic violence, cases handled by Specialized Prosecutions, breaches of long-term offender orders, or specific peace bonds).

Unlike traditional courts, Mental Health Court takes a collaborative approach and is



Recognizing that the traditional adversarial process may not be suitable for all individuals or circumstances, the Alberta Court of Justice has established a range of specialized courts that adopt a therapeutic and culturally informed approach to justice.

supported by a multidisciplinary team, including legal counsel, a mental health worker, a social navigator, and a psychiatrist. Mental Health Court currently operates in Edmonton and sits three days a week at the Edmonton Law Courts.

Efforts to establish additional Mental Health Courts across the province are ongoing.

Drug Treatment Courts

Drug Treatment Court offers eligible individuals charged with non-violent offences an alternative to incarceration through structured treatment and support.

Operating in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, and Grande Prairie, the program aims to reduce drug-related crime through judicial supervision, addiction treatment, frequent drug testing, very strict bail monitoring and access to social services.

Each participant's journey is tailored to their individual needs. Those accepted into the program must be willing to abide by a significant number of conditions and complete the necessary waivers. The average length of stay for both graduates and non-graduates varies across the province. Typically, the program lasts 12 to 24 months and

includes a series of requirements that the participant must fulfill in order to graduate.

Calgary's Drug Treatment Court also offers an Early Intervention stream in addition to the traditional High Risk/High Needs program.

The program is intended to break the cycle of addiction-driven criminal behaviour.

Intimate Partner Violence Courts

Intimate Partner Violence Courts in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie address the unique dynamics of family violence. These courts prioritize early and effective intervention to enhance victim safety and support offender rehabilitation.

They hear cases involving intimate partner violence, harassment, elder abuse, and crimes against children under the age of 16. Working closely with social service agencies, the Intimate Partner Violence Courts provide victim support and require offenders to take responsibility by engaging in monitoring and counselling, alongside legal sanctions.

This integrated approach has achieved significantly reduced recidivism and increased confidence in the justice system among participants.

Honourable Beverley Browne - Wiyasôw Iskweêw - Restorative Justice

The Restorative Justice Project is a court-connected program aimed at referring appropriate matters before the courts to a restorative justice process. The first phase of the project focuses on criminal matters, with the intention to expand restorative practices into family and civil matters in future phases.

To support this program, the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service has developed referral guidelines to provide context and transparency for justice system participants. These guidelines explain what restorative justice is, outline its benefits, and describe how referrals can be made.

Any individual charged with a criminal offence who accepts responsibility for the harm caused may be eligible for a referral to a restorative justice process. Referrals can occur at any stage, from post-charge to pre-sentencing.

The committee that organized this project includes justices from the Court of King's Bench and the Alberta Court of Justice, Crown prosecutors, defence counsel, Indigenous groups, victims' rights groups, restorative justice practitioners, policing agencies, and many other community stakeholders.



St. Paul Healing to Wellness Court Grand Opening June 2024



Siksika Courthouse



Lethbridge Indigenous Courtroom

Indigenous Justice Strategy

The Alberta Court of Justice adopted the Indigenous Justice Strategy in September 2022. The strategy contains 20 action items, referred to as “Responses”. In alignment with the Court’s Strategic Plan, the Strategy reflects a commitment to providing a culturally relevant, restorative, and holistic system of justice for Indigenous individuals including accused persons, offenders, victims, families, youth, and children as well as those Indigenous communities impacted by those who come before the Court.

The following section provides an overview of some of the Court’s efforts to implement the action items outlined in the Indigenous Justice Strategy.

Indigenous Courts

At the time of this publication, urban Indigenous Courts have been established in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, and in St. Paul. Additional Indigenous Courts are located on Siksika Nation and Tsuut’ina Nation. Across the province, several other courts incorporate Indigenous cultural practices. The Alberta Court of Justice continues to collaborate with Indigenous communities to expand these initiatives throughout Alberta.

Indigenous Courts primarily hear bail and sentencing hearings and include Healing to Wellness Plans tailored to participants, connecting them with cultural supports and community resources. To date, hundreds of participants have participated in Indigenous Courts across the province.



Red Deer Indigenous Courtroom

The Alberta Court of Justice also has courthouses in Indigenous communities, including locations such as Alexis and Chateh, which incorporate some elements of Indigenous courts.



ST. PAUL

The St. Paul Healing to Wellness Court opened on June 20, 2024. The celebration began with a sacred Pipe Ceremony, followed by a grand entry led by Elders, drummers, and dancers. The opening ceremony featured speeches and concluded with a traditional feast. The St. Paul Healing to Wellness Court serves individuals from the surrounding communities, including Good Fish Lake, Saddle Lake, Elk Point, Ashmont, Bonnyville, and Frog Lake.

SIKSIKA

In 2024, the Siksika Courthouse underwent significant renovations. The courtroom now features Indigenous artwork that reflects the

cultural heritage of the Siksika Nation, and includes a round table representing the equality of all participants. A grand opening and blessing ceremony was held on November 8, 2024.

LETHBRIDGE

Although this reporting period predates the event, we are pleased to announce that the Lethbridge Indigenous Court officially opened on November 10, 2025.

Access to Justice Through an Indigenous Lens Committee

The Access to Justice Through an Indigenous Lens Committee was established in support of Response 5 of the Indigenous Justice Strategy. Response 5 commits the Court to:

- Work to understand the structures, systems and processes that impede access to justice; and
- Work with Indigenous communities and Court and Justice Services to reduce and overcome these issues.

The Committee consists of more than 40 committee members, including representatives from First Nations, Métis Nation, various stakeholder organizations serving the Indigenous population, as well as provincial and federal organizations across the province.

The Committee meets regularly and published its first report on Access in February 2025. It hosted

its first in-person symposium in Red Deer, Alberta, on June 19, 2024, and held its second symposium in Red Deer in June 2025.

Indigenous Legal Career Day

Indigenous Legal Career days are held annually in both Edmonton and Calgary. These events invite Indigenous students to the courthouses for a day of observation and engagement. Activities vary by location and have included conversations with Justices, courtroom tours, presentations, and career fairs featuring organizations such as law enforcement, Court and Justice Services, and a variety of government and private law firms. The Calgary Indigenous Legal Career Day took place on September 24, 2024, followed by the Edmonton event on October 3, 2024.

Indigenous Judicial Shadowing Program

The Alberta Court of Justice Indigenous Judicial Shadowing Program, established in 2023, continues to provide valuable opportunities for Indigenous lawyers, articling students, and law students to gain exposure to the judicial system. Participants meet with and shadow Justices and Justices of the Peace to gain insights into the front-line workings of the courts. As of March 31, 2025, the program has received approximately 38 applicants, with 28 Justices and two Justices of the Peace volunteering to be mentors.

The Alberta Court of Justice remains committed to providing ongoing education for Justices, Justices of the Peace, and staff on Indigenous matters.

10th Anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In honour of the 10th anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Alberta Court of Justice produced a documentary titled, “Reconciling the Truth – The Truth about Reconciliation”. The film features interviews with Indigenous Justices and individuals directly involved with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

To commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2024, judicial support staff, legal counsel, and law students were encouraged to wear orange shirts as a symbol of remembrance and solidarity. In addition, all judicial support staff, legal counsel, and law students were invited to attend a private screening of “The Secret Path”, the animated adaptation of Gord Downie’s album and Jeff Lemire’s graphic novel. Participants were also encouraged to attend community events held on September 30 and review various reference materials that were made available to deepen understanding and reflection.



Education

The Alberta Court of Justice remains committed to providing ongoing education for Justices, Justices of the Peace, and staff on Indigenous matters. As part of this commitment, the Court has undertaken a redesign of its internal website to enhance access to educational resources and materials.

Relationship Building

The Chief Justice, Deputy Chief Justice, Assistant Chief Justices, and numerous other Justices continue to engage in meaningful dialogue with Indigenous leaders and communities to strengthen relationships and enhance access to justice.

The Court of Justice is organized into distinct regions and divisions to support access to justice throughout the province.

Justices assigned to regional areas travel to designated circuit points to hear cases. They routinely preside over matters across all areas of the Court's jurisdiction, including civil, family and child protection, youth criminal, and adult criminal proceedings.

MORE
THAN
70
LOCATIONS



Judicial Administration

The Role of Justices

As of March 31, 2025, the Court's complement included more than 140 full time equivalent Justices. These Justices are appointed by the Government of Alberta under the Court of Justice Act.

To be appointed, an applicant must first be approved by both the Alberta Judicial Council and the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee. The names of approved candidates are then forwarded to the Minister of Justice, who makes a recommendation to Cabinet. If Cabinet concurs, the Lieutenant Governor issues an Order in Council, formally appointing the new Justice.

The Court is a court of statutory jurisdiction, meaning its Justices may exercise authority only in areas defined by statute. Although all Justices may hear cases in any area within which the Court has jurisdiction, the Court operates through divisions organized by subject matter and geographic region.

The Role of Justices of the Peace

Justices of the Peace are authorized to conduct a broad range of court proceedings. Their responsibilities include issuing search and arrest warrants, processing Informations, conducting bail hearings, and hearing emergency child and family protection applications. They also handle matters related to human trafficking victims or missing persons. In addition, Justices of the Peace preside

over traffic court, provincial offence matters, and municipal bylaw hearings.

As of March 31, 2023, the Court's complement included 44 Justices of the Peace, serving in full-time, part-time, and ad hoc capacities. The selection process for Justices of the Peace now mirrors that of Court Justices. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis, then screened and interviewed by Judicial Council followed by a further interview with the Alberta Judicial Nominating Committee. Candidates approved by both bodies are placed on an eligibility list, from which the Minister of Justice selects appointees.

During the reporting period, Justices of the Peace are appointed for ten-year terms and, during this reporting period, could continue to serve as ad hoc Justices of the Peace on an annual basis for up to five additional years. Recent amendments under the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Bill 14) allow Justices of the Peace to continue in office for additional five-year terms with the approval of Judicial Council. A temporary rule also permits current ad hoc Justices of the Peace to apply for longer part-time terms, helping prevent gaps in these essential roles. While further recruitment is still needed to meet provincial demand, these changes offer greater stability and help maintain timely access to justice services in the interim.



Judicial Education

The Alberta Court of Justice places strong emphasis on judicial education, underscoring its commitment to ensuring that Justices and Justices of the Peace are well-prepared to serve in a dynamic legal and social environment.

This commitment is guided by the Court's Judicial Education Plan, which is structured around four key pillars:



Substantive Law

Covers core areas such as criminal, civil, family, youth, evidence, administrative, and constitutional law. Judicial Officers are expected to maintain expertise and stay current with legal developments.



Judicial Skill

Focuses on courtroom communication, case management, judgment writing, dispute resolution, and technology. Training is provided through seminars, mentorship, and ongoing updates, especially in response to technological changes like remote hearings.



Social Context

Promotes understanding of the diverse backgrounds of court participants, including Indigenous histories, cultural competency, mental health, and trauma-informed judging. Regular updates and community engagement support effective application in court.



Judicial Development

Supports lifelong learning, wellness, and ethical conduct. It includes training for leadership roles, mentorship, stress management, and guidance on judicial ethics in evolving contexts such as social media and self-represented litigants.

Newly appointed Justices and Justices of the Peace receive structured onboarding, including mentorship and shadowing opportunities. During their first five years, they also participate in specialized education programs tailored for new appointees.

All full-time Judicial Officers are expected to engage in ongoing education, with a minimum of 10 days annually dedicated to attend formal programming. Additional learning opportunities include internal presentations, province-wide seminars (both in-person and virtual), access to an internal judicial education website, and external programs offered by national organizations such

as the National Judicial Institute, the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice and the Canadian Association of Provincial Court Judges.

Judicial education is essential to keeping adjudicators current in a rapidly evolving legal system, strengthening public confidence, and enhancing decision-making through improved legal knowledge, practical skills, and social awareness. The Alberta Court of Justice takes a structured, multi-dimensional approach to education, supporting Judicial Officers from initial appointment through every stage of their careers.

Language & Language Education

Section 530 of the *Criminal Code* guarantees any accused person in Canada the right to have their trial conducted in their official language of choice, English or French, or, when appropriate, in both languages.

To uphold this right, the Alberta Court of Justice has implemented processes to inform individuals of their language rights and ensure resources are available for proceedings in the chosen language.

The Court also operates a French Program, where Judicial Officers receive specialized French language training through provincial and national training programs. Federally funded, the program continues to expand in-house training and improve efficiency, reflecting the Court's commitment to bilingual justice.

Judicial Accountability & Independence

Judicial independence is a foundational principle of Canada's legal system. It ensures that judges are free to decide cases based solely on the law and the evidence, without interference from political actors, public opinion, or private interests. This independence is not a privilege of the judiciary but rather a protection for the public, guaranteeing that justice is administered fairly and impartially.

At its core, judicial independence allows courts to uphold the Rule of Law. This means that all individuals and institutions are subject to the same legal standards. It is through this lens that justice is applied equally, and the rights of all who appear before the Court are protected.

There are two dimensions to judicial independence: individual and institutional. Individual independence refers to the ability of each judge to make decisions without fear of reprisal or expectation of reward. Institutional independence ensures that the judiciary as a whole operates autonomously, with authority over its own processes, administration, and decision-making structures. Together, these dimensions create a system where judges can carry out their duties with integrity and impartiality.

To preserve judicial independence, three key safeguards exist:



Security of Tenure

Judges are appointed until the mandatory retirement age and cannot be removed without cause, ensuring they are not vulnerable to political pressure.



Financial Security

Judicial compensation is protected from arbitrary changes, preventing economic manipulation.



Administrative Independence

Courts manage their own operations, including scheduling, case assignments, and internal governance, without interference from external bodies.

These safeguards are essential to maintaining the impartiality of the judiciary. They enable judges to serve the public interest without compromise and to apply the law fairly, regardless of the parties involved.

However, independence must be balanced with accountability. Judges hold significant authority, and with that comes a responsibility to act ethically, transparently, and in accordance with the law. Public confidence in the justice system depends not only on the independence of judges but also on their accountability.

Accountability is reflected in several ways. First, judicial decisions are subject to review by appellate courts. This ensures that errors can be corrected and that legal standards are applied consistently across the system. Second, judges are expected to uphold high standards of conduct, both in their professional duties and in their personal interactions. These standards reflect the values of fairness, respect, and integrity that underpin the justice system.

Judges must also be mindful of the diverse communities they serve. The justice system must be accessible and responsive to all Canadians, including Indigenous Peoples, racialized communities, and individuals who are self-represented. Awareness of these perspectives strengthens the legitimacy of the courts and reinforces public trust.

In addition to external review, the judiciary is subject to internal oversight. Complaints about judicial conduct are reviewed through formal processes that are designed to be fair, transparent, and respectful of both the public interest and judicial independence. These mechanisms ensure that judges are held accountable for their actions and that concerns about conduct are addressed appropriately.

The ethical landscape for judges continues to evolve. New technologies, changing social norms, and increased public engagement present both opportunities and challenges. Judges must navigate these developments while remaining grounded in the principles that define their role. This includes maintaining impartiality, avoiding conflicts of interest, and ensuring that their conduct reflects the dignity of their office.

Judicial independence does not mean isolation from society. Judges are part of the broader social and legal context, and their decisions have real impacts on peoples' lives. They must remain informed, empathetic, and committed to the values of justice and equality. At the same time, they must maintain a clear boundary between their judicial role and external influences, preserving the integrity of the decision-making process.

Ultimately, judicial independence and accountability are not opposing forces – they are complementary pillars of a trusted legal system. Independence ensures that judges can uphold the law without fear or favour. Accountability ensures that they do so with integrity, transparency, and respect for the communities they serve.

Together, these principles form the foundation of public confidence in the courts. They affirm that justice in Alberta is not only impartial and fair, but also ethical, responsive, and worthy of trust.

Judicial Complaints

Members of the public who have concerns about the conduct or competence of a Justice or Justice of the Peace may direct a complaint to either the Chief Justice or the Alberta Judicial Council. Both have the authority, under the *Court of Justice Act* and the *Judicature Act*, to review and respond to complaints.

Depending on the nature and findings of the review, a range of actions may be taken. These include dismissing the complaint, implementing corrective measures, issuing a reprimand, or referring the matter to an inquiry process.

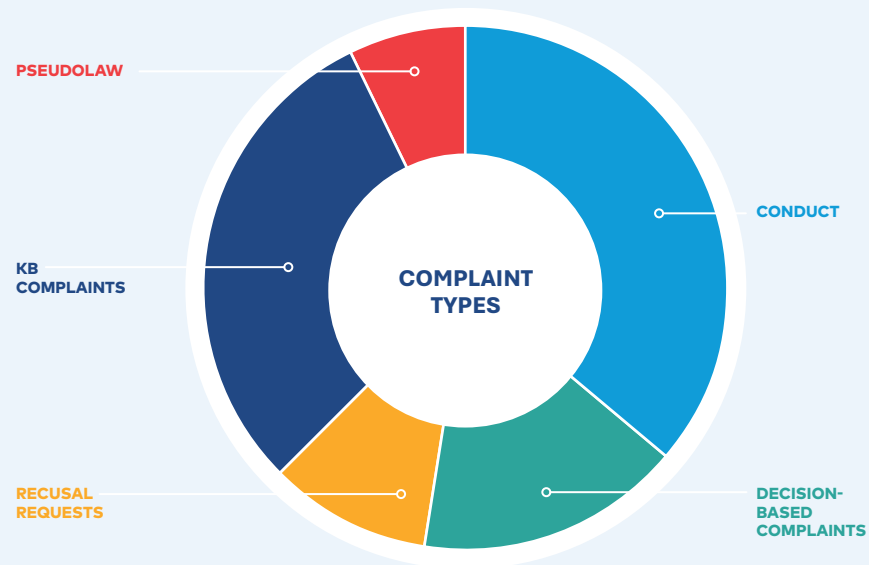
Every individual who submits a complaint receives a written response outlining the outcome of the review, along with the reasons for the decision. This process reflects the

The ethical landscape for judges continues to evolve. New technologies, changing social norms, and increased public engagement present both opportunities and challenges. Judges must navigate these developments while remaining grounded in the principles that define their role.

commitment of the judiciary to transparency, accountability, and maintaining public confidence in the administration of justice.

In the period from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2025 (since the publication of the previous biennial report), the Chief Justice has reviewed 147 complaints. Of these, 51 were determined to fall within the scope of a complaint as judicially defined and were subject to review. The remaining complaints were variously classified as pertaining to the decision of the Justice or Justice of the Peace, requests for recusal or alternate Justices, dealing with pseudolaw, dealing with justices of other courts, or otherwise not a judicial complaint.

Of the 51 complaints reviewed during this period, 49 required no further action, one resulted in corrective measures being implemented, and one was referred to an inquiry.



CONDUCT | 36.0%

Complaints relating to the Judicial Officer's perceived tone, attitude, or commentary. This also applies to concerns regarding bias or favouritism.

DECISION-BASED COMPLAINTS | 16.0%

Complaints that primarily pertain to dissatisfaction with the decision made by the Judicial Officer.

"NOT A JUDICIAL COMPLAINT" | 10.0%

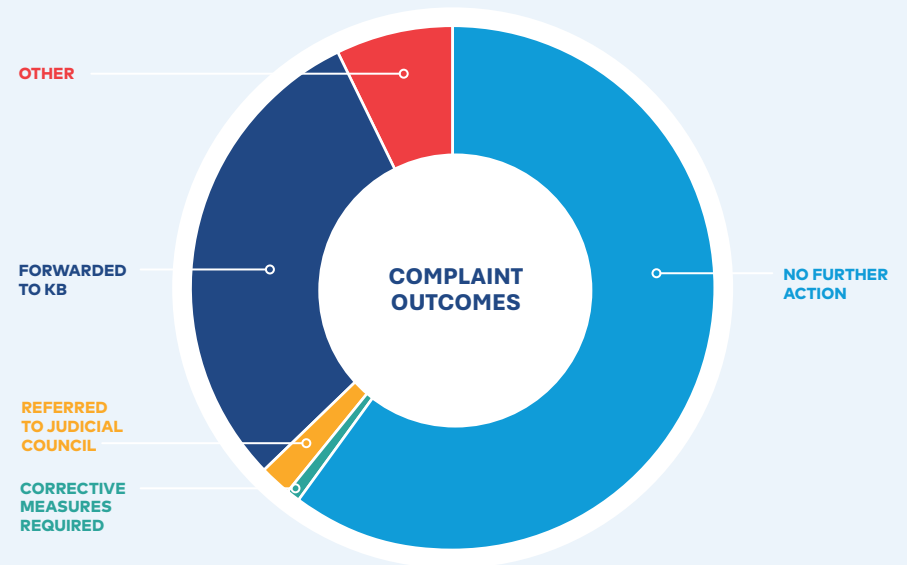
Complaints that do not pertain to a Judicial Officer but rather general grievances about the legal system as a whole such as Crown Prosecutors, Legal Aid or Police Officers.

COURT OF KING'S BENCH COMPLAINTS 30.0%

Complaints pertaining to matters in the Court of King's Bench.

PSEUDOLAW | 7.0%

Complaints that contain legalese and false rules that purport to be law. For example, Freemen-on-the-Land, Detaxers, Organized Pseudo legal Commercial Argument Litigants, etc.



NO FURTHER ACTION | 60.0%

The complaint has been investigated and the allegations are unsubstantiated, or the complaint is not within the scope of the Chief Justice or Judicial Council.

CORRECTIVE MEASURES REQUIRED | 0.6%

The complaint has been investigated and allegations of misconduct are substantiated. Corrective measures will be initiated or are in progress.

REFERRED TO JUDICIAL COUNCIL | 2.0%

FORWARDED TO THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH | 30.0%

The complaint has been forwarded to the Court of King's Bench and the complainant has been advised of the same.

OTHER | 7.0%

This category includes complaints that were not responded to for reasons including anonymity or circumstances involving vexatious or repeated complaints.

The proceedings include the administration of the oath, which may be sworn or affirmed, and may incorporate cultural elements, such as the use of an eagle feather.



Bar Admissions

Bar admissions in the Alberta Court of Justice mark a significant milestone for new lawyers, blending tradition with modern values of accessibility and inclusivity. These ceremonies are a proud moment for families, friends, and principals, celebrating the formal beginning of a legal career.

Held year-round in both major centres and regional locations, each ceremony is presided over by a Justice and conducted individually. The proceedings include the administration of the oath, which may be sworn or affirmed, and may incorporate cultural elements, such as the use of an eagle feather.

Over the past two years, more than 200 ceremonies have been conducted annually

across Alberta. Admissions are distributed across various divisions and regions, ensuring that new lawyers from all parts of the province are welcomed into the profession. This geographic reach reflects Alberta's commitment to accessibility and regional representation.

The Court continues to adapt the bar admission process by offering virtual attendance options and integrating cultural practices to ensure each ceremony is inclusive and respectful. Remote participation is available for guests, and the process is supported by coordinated efforts between judicial clerks, the Law Society of Alberta, and principals.

Bar admissions exemplify the Court's dedication to preserving the dignity of this professional

milestone while responding to the evolving needs of Alberta's legal community. The combination of tradition, efficient administration, and virtual access ensures each ceremony is meaningful and welcoming.

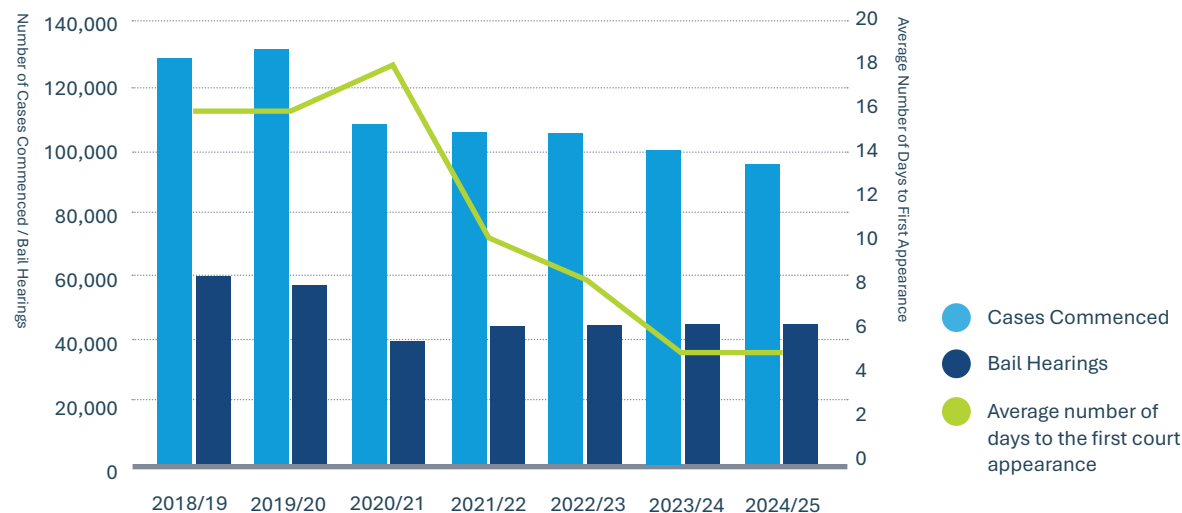
As Alberta's legal landscape continues to evolve, the Court remains committed to supporting new lawyers and maintaining a bar admission process that serves as a proud and inclusive gateway to the profession.

Statistics

Over the previous two-year reporting period, the Alberta Court of Justice experienced a steady increase in matters appearing before the Court across all jurisdictions, including criminal, civil, family, youth, and traffic court. This statistical summary provides an overview of court activity during that period and highlights key trends affecting the administration of justice in Alberta. The data indicates that growth in court workload has occurred consistently across regions and case types, reflecting

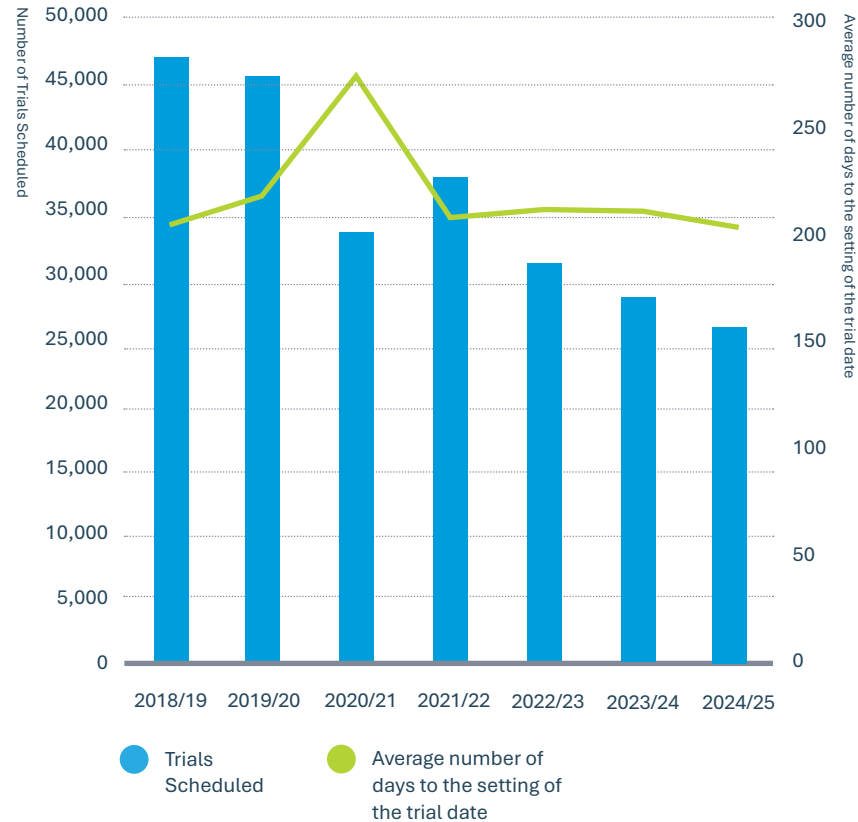
broader demographic and social changes within the province. In particular, the rise in court activity closely corresponds with Alberta's increasing population, suggesting that demand for judicial services has grown in step with population expansion. These statistics offer valuable insight into patterns of court utilization and resource demands, and they support informed planning and decision-making to ensure the Court continues to deliver timely, fair, and accessible justice to Albertans.

Cases Commenced, Bail Hearings, and Average Number of Days to First Appearance

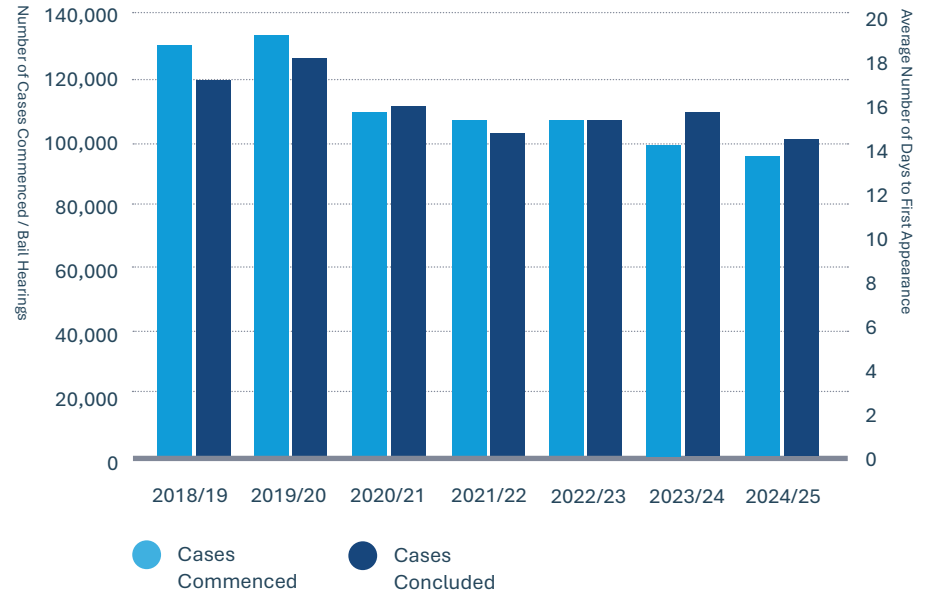


Many statistics show unusual numbers during the 2020-2021 period. Due to closures and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, court processes experienced significant delays and interruptions. As a result, data from these years is not representative of the Court's normal functioning.

Trials Scheduled and Average Number of Days to Setting Trial Date



Cases Commenced, Bail Hearings, and Average Number of Days to First Appearance



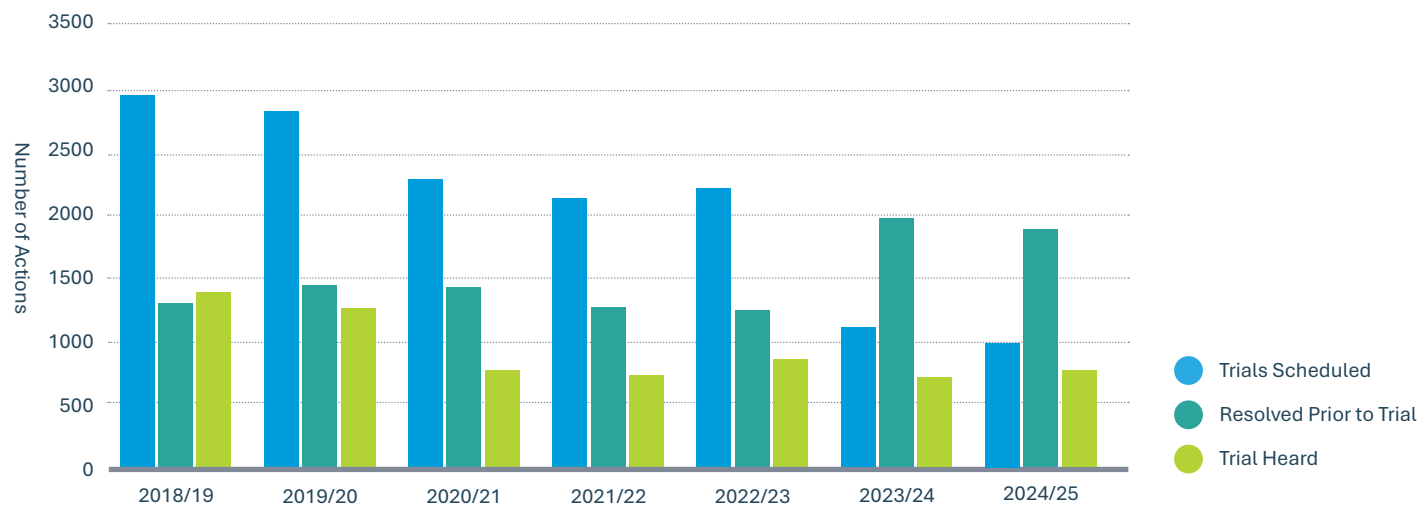
Criminal Division Statistics

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
ARREST	Number of cases commenced	115,921	120,876	129,364	132,302	108,519	106,051	105,515	97,825	95,144
BAIL HEARING	Number of bail hearings	65,121	57,583	60,537	57,737	39,744	44,802	45,310	44,463	43,906
FIRST COURT APPEARANCE	Average number of days to the first court appearance	12	12	16	16	18	10	8	5	5
PRE-TRIAL APPEARANCES	Average number of appearances for cases resolved prior to setting a trial date	4.7	4.8	5.1	5.4	6.4	7.1	7.5	8	7
	Number of cases resolved prior to setting a trial date.	82,540	86,191	85,454	89,967	84,337	75,420	75,883	75,420	74,104
	Percentage of cases resolved prior to setting a trial date	71.2%	71.3%	66.1%	68.0%	77.7%	71.1%	71.9%	77.1%	77.9%
	Average number of days for cases resolved prior to setting a trial date	165	157	141	145	146	183	249	213	192
TRIAL DATE SET	Number of trials scheduled	30,719	39,950	33,314	35,006	34,408	34,056	37,323	29,333	26,909
	Average number days to the setting of the trial date	152	148	207	225	273	210	216	217	211
TRIAL PREPARATION	Number of cases resolved after trial date set and prior to the trial	26,227	25,937	28,561	30,866	23,088	21,808	24,126	22,350	20,957
	Percentage of cases resolved after trial date set and prior to trial	85.4%	64.9%	85.7%	88.2%	67.1%	64.0%	64.6%	76.2%	77.9%
TRIAL	Number of trials heard	5,446	5,105	4,890	4,784	2,884	4,421	5,222	5,099	4,778
	Percentage of cases commenced where a trial is conducted	4.7%	4.2%	3.8%	3.6%	2.7%	4.2%	4.9%	5.2%	5.0%
	Average number of days to trial date	374	404	219	246	309	219	236	209	196
	Average number of appearances for cases where a trial is held	6.8	6.8	7	7.2	8.7	9.7	10.1	10.2	10.7
CASE CONCLUDED	Number of cases concluded	113,259	116,141	118,347	125,617	110,320	101,667	105,402	109,345	99,927
	Change in the total inventory in the court system	2,662	4,735	11,017	6,685	-1,801	4,384	3,848	-11,520	-4,783
	Clearance rate — Cases concluded as a percentage of cases commenced	97.7%	96.1%	91.5%	94.9%	101.7%	95.9%	99.89%	107.7%	114.9%

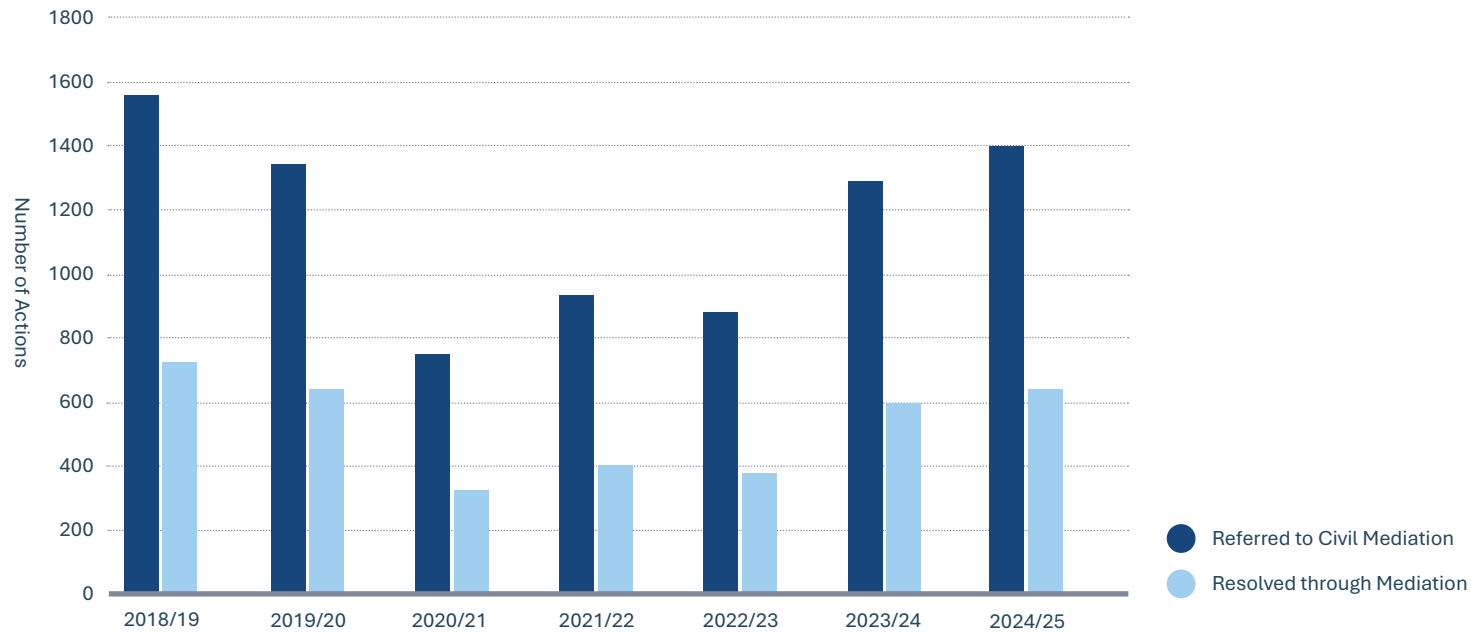
Civil Division Statistics

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
FILE CIVIL CLAIM	Number of claims commenced	17,980	16,182	15,740	14,692	9,197	9,863	10,741	12,334	13,591
FILE DISPUTE NOTE / COUNTER CLAIM	Number of dispute note/counter claims filed by defendant	5,697	5,883	5,257	4,916	3,544	3,280	3,378	4,214	4,586
	Number of cases where defendant is noted in default	6,574	6,617	5,666	2,410	1,471	1,467	1,612	1,542	1,576
CIVIL MEDIATION	Number of cases mediated	2,394	2,355	2,341	2,104	1,235	933	897	1,279	1,389
	Number of cases resolved through mediation	847	797	720	634	322	413	393	554	586
JUDICIAL TRIAGE	Number of cases resolved prior to trial	2,109	1,955	1,297	1,445	1,425	1,271	1,244	1,121	995
	Number of trials scheduled where a resolution has not been reached	3,176	2,971	2,941	2,819	2,278	2,128	2,210	1,977	1,896
TRIAL	Number of trials conducted	1,067	1,016	1,387	1,264	769	733	855	741	787
	Trials Scheduled	3,176	2,971	2,941	2,819	2,278	2,128	2,210	1,121	995
	Resolved Prior to Trial	2,109	1,955	1,297	1,445	1,425	1,271	1,244	1,977	1,896
	Trial Heard	1,067	1,016	1,387	1,264	769	733	855	741	787

Trials scheduled, actions resolved prior to Trial and Trials Heard



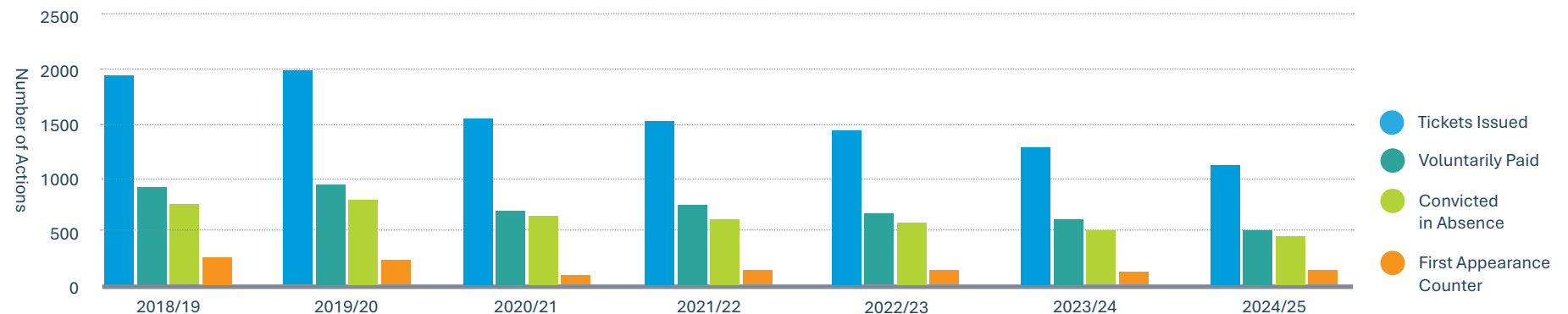
Actions Referred to Civil Mediation and Actions Resolved through Mediation



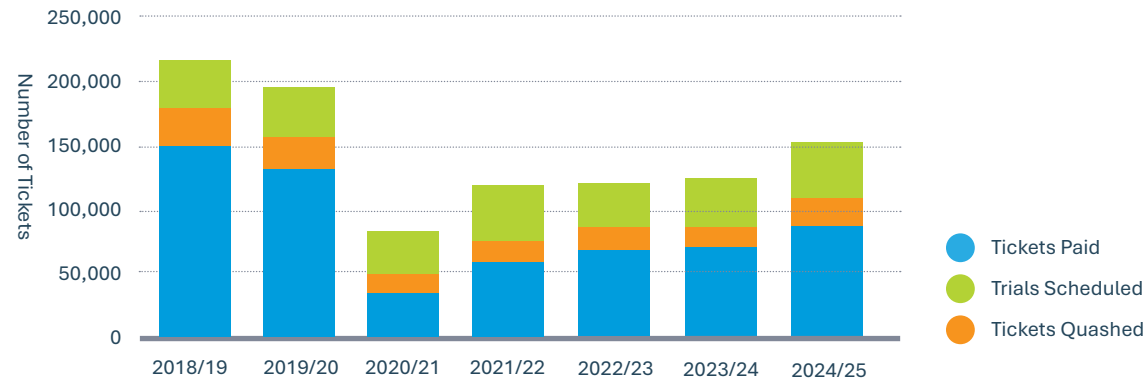
Traffic Division

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
TICKETS ISSUED	Number of tickets issued	2,144,270	2,020,452	1,941,982	1,998,082	1,561,598	1,508,690	1,428,388	1,261,975	1,118,712
VOLUNTARILY PAID	Number of tickets paid without appearing at the counter	1,037,363	991,851	941,748	968,298	722,302	751,928	666,384	596,334	528,775
	Percentage paid without appearance	48.4%	49.1%	48.5%	48.5%	46.3%	49.8%	46.7%	47.3%	47.3%
CONVICTED IN ABSENCE	Number of individuals not appearing by the day specified and found guilty in absence	908,589	864,943	807,988	861,695	685,156	671,882	584,234	528,132	437,933
	Percentage of tickets issued	42.4%	42.8%	41.6%	43.1%	43.9%	44.5%	40.9%	41.8%	39.1%
TICKET PAID	Number of tickets paid after consulting prosecutor	168,973	157,930	151,742	132,453	34,381	58,986	67,208	71,028	88,146
	Percentage paid at counter	7.9%	7.8%	7.8%	6.6%	2.2%	3.9%	4.7%	5.6%	7.9%
TICKET QUASHED	Number of quashed tickets based on further information presented	48,673	33,173	29,132	24,348	14,739	15,965	19,297	15,288	18,991
TRIAL DATE SET	Number of traffic trial dates set	37,131	35,116	36,022	38,339	33,191	42,988	32,969	39,529	45,105
TRIALS HEARD	Number of trials held	4,566	3,680	2,472	2,099	34	3,552	908	5,571	3,425
	Percentage of traffic trials heard	12.3%	10.5%	6.9%	5.5%	0.1%	8.3%	2.8%	14.1%	7.6%

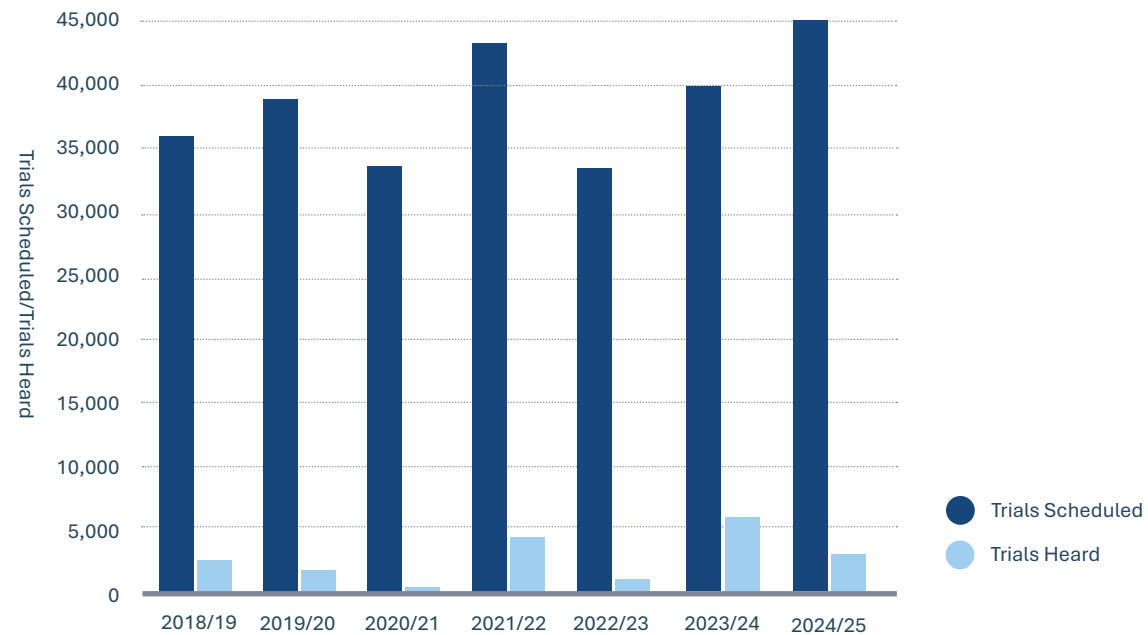
Number of Tickets Issued, Voluntarily Paid and Convicted in Absence and Appearances at the Counter



First Appearance Counter Tickets



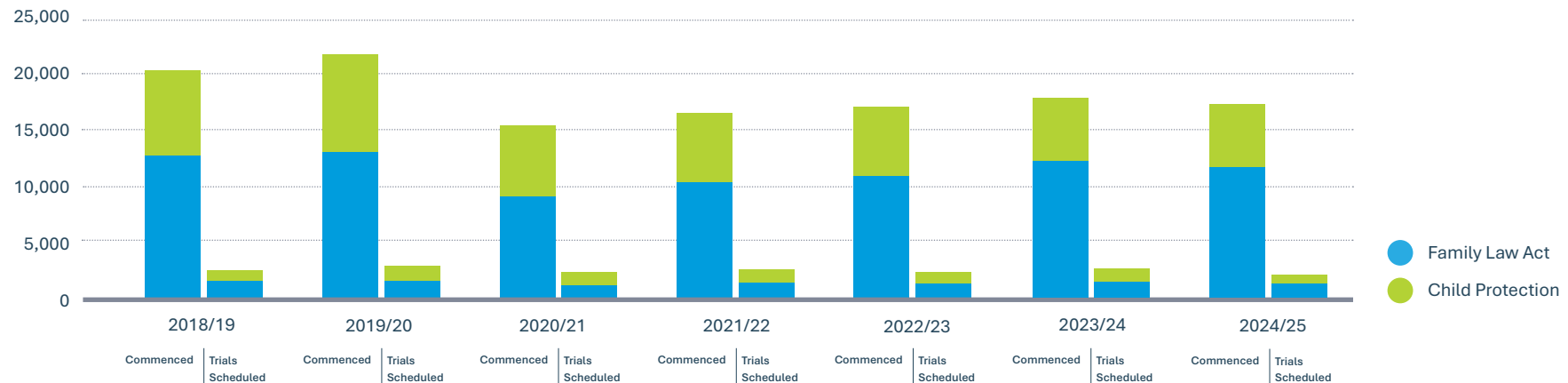
Trials Scheduled and Trials Heard



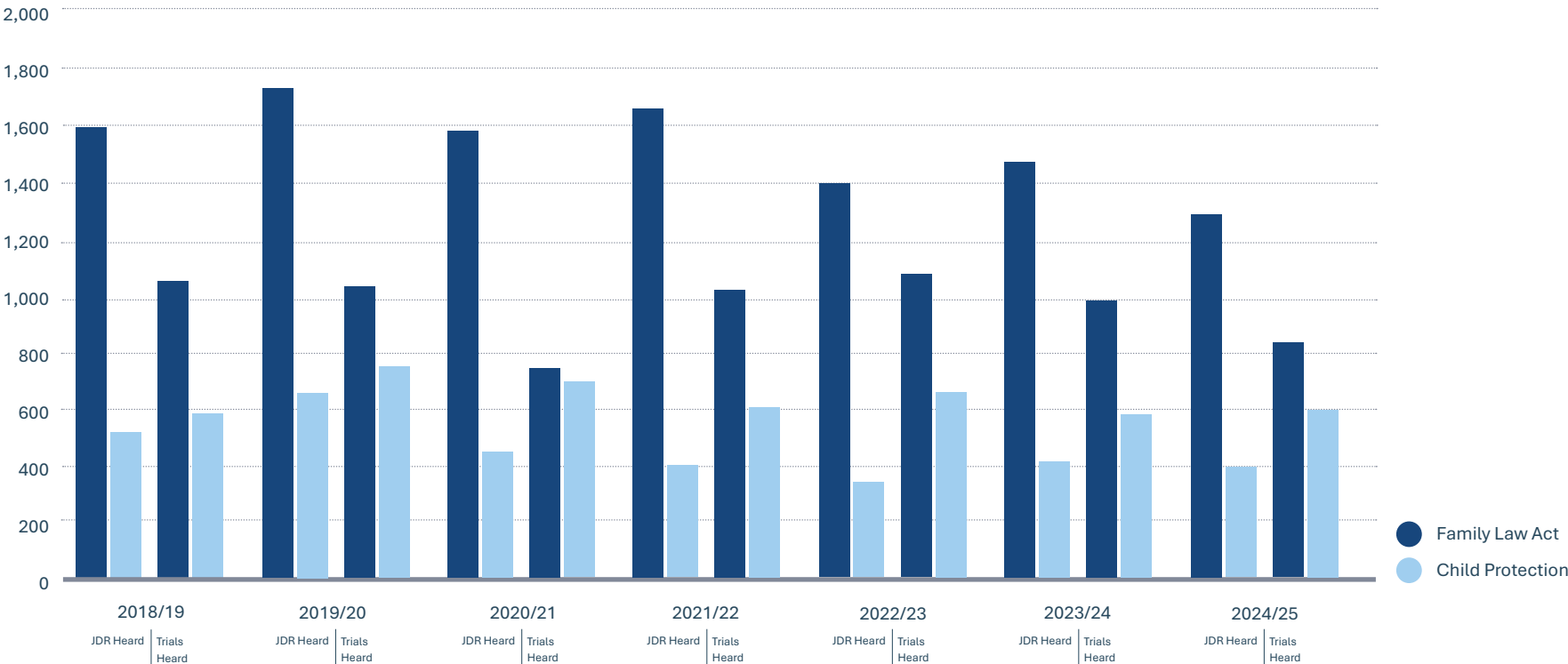
Family Statistics

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
APPLICATION FILING	Number of actions commenced									
	Family Law Act	10,528	11,508	12,813	13,167	9,236	10,625	11,182	11,826	11,257
	Child Protection	6,970	7,165	7,554	8,707	6,316	6,131	6,029	5,734	5,695
TRIAL SET	Number of trial dates set									
	Family Law Act	1,303	907	1,602	1,718	1,235	1,518	1,465	1,390	1,200
	Child Protection	754	899	913	1,283	1,192	1,130	1,064	1,016	936
JUDICIAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION	Number of actions resolved through Judicial resolutions									
	Family Law Act	1,483	1,470	1,588	1,724	1,574	1,650	1,383	1,461	1,282
	Child Protection	385	472	511	647	444	394	334	416	404
TRIAL	Number of trials conducted									
	Family Law Act	793	907	1,042	1,023	740	1,015	1,073	1,006	828
	Child Protection	441	558	576	748	690	601	655	582	599

Family Law Act and Child Protection Files Commenced and Trials Scheduled



Judicial Dispute Resolutions Heard and Trials Heard



Family Justice Strategy:

In January 2024, the Alberta Court of Justice implemented a new Family Justice Strategy. The Strategy has played a significant role in strengthening the Family Court Counsellor program and enhancing pre-court services for families. By prioritizing early intervention and accessible supports, it has helped many families resolve disputes outside the traditional adversarial court

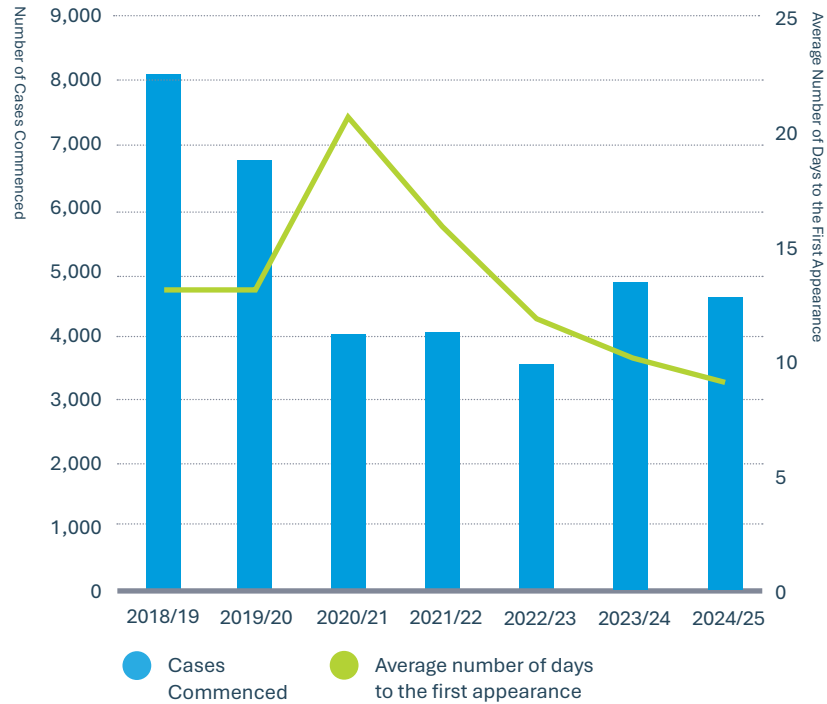
process or approach court in a more focused, less confrontational way. Services such as Brief Conflict Intervention (BCI), Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and specialized Family Violence supports provide timely, practical assistance that helps address conflict before it escalates. The Strategy’s emphasis on coordination and community connection is also reflected in the

expansion of services in the Edmonton region, drawing inspiration from the Grande Prairie model developed through the Reimagining Family Justice process. Sustaining resources across these interconnected services will be essential to maintaining momentum and ensuring that families continue to benefit from a more responsive, less adversarial system.

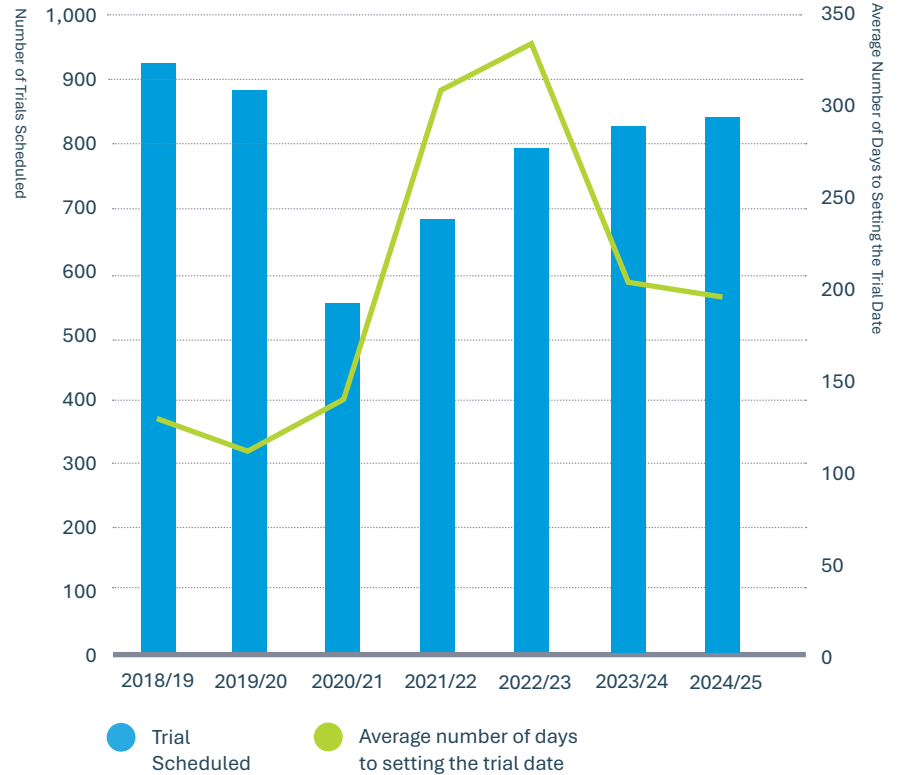
Youth Statistics

	DESCRIPTION	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
ARREST	Number of cases commenced	7,906	7,811	8,101	6,784	4,020	4,091	3,559	4,843	4,677
FIRST COURT APPEARANCE	Average number of days to the first court appearance	15	15	13	13	21	16	12	10	9
PRE-TRIAL APPEARANCES	Average number of appearances for cases resolved prior to setting a trial date	6.1	5.9	6.1	6.9	7.3	7.8	7.5	7.7	7.2
	Number of cases resolved prior to setting a trial date.	7,403	7,239	7,339	6,658	4,129	3,386	3,629	4,003	4,063
	Percentage of cases resolved prior to setting a trial date	93.6%	92.7%	90.6%	98.1%	102.7%	82.8%	102.0%	82.7%	86.9%
	Average number of days for cases resolved prior to setting a trial date	103	99	110	112	115	111	87	60	57
TRIAL DATE SET	Number of trials scheduled	1,354	1,153	931	885	554	679	796	834	842
	Average number of days to the setting of the trial date	118	127	130	112	142	298	332	202	195
TRIAL	Number of trials heard	223	183	161	141	89	100	112	104	83
	Average number of days to trial date	245	255	268	250	286	354	373	336	331
CASE CONCLUDED	Number of cases concluded	8,757	8,187	8,220	7,305	4,893	3,798	4,092	4,499	4,510
	Clearance rate — Cases concluded as a percentage of cases commenced	110.8%	104.8%	101.5%	107.7%	121.7%	92.8%	115.0%	92.9%	96.4%

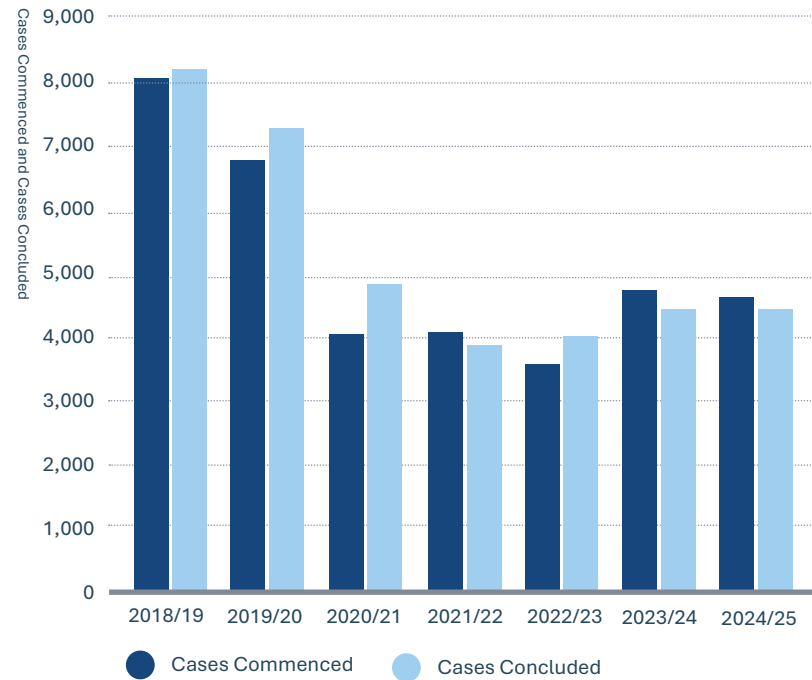
Youth Cases Commenced and Average Number of Days to the First Appearance



Youth Trials Scheduled and Average Number of Days to setting the Trial Date



Youth Cases Commenced and Cases Concluded



Total Number of Annual Bar Admissions

MONTH	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
JANUARY	2	3	5	4	7	2	3	1
FEBRUARY	3	2	4	3	2	2	4	0
MARCH	1	6	1	0	2	1	4	0
APRIL	3	2	0	1	0	3	9	2
MAY	3	5	4	4	0	4	10	3
JUNE	8	5	17	8	10	9	15	8
JULY	16	12	19	31	31	17	70	67
AUGUST	24	27	20	27	25	43	60	64
SEPTEMBER	14	7	15	13	6	17	13	28
OCTOBER	6	3	8	6	3	3	11	20
NOVEMBER	3	6	5	2	2	1	9	9
DECEMBER	3	4	5	13	11	3	17	9
TOTAL	86	82	103	112	99	105	225	211

Fatality Inquiries

	DISTINCT COUNT OF FILE NUMBER
	1
2023-2024	26
2024-2025	48
GRAND TOTAL	74



An Evolving Court

Over the past two years, the Alberta Court of Justice has continued to grow and evolve, adopting new technologies, processes, and responsibilities. These changes include improvements that make court services more accessible to Albertans, regardless of where they live in the province.

The Alberta Court of Justice is a modern, independent, and accountable court that delivers fair, accessible, efficient,

and innovative justice to all Albertans. The Court's leadership believes that the justice system must adapt to remain relevant and aligned with the community it serves.

The following are some of the key highlights from the past two years.

French Language Procedures

In Canada, accused persons have a fundamental right to be tried in English, French or, if the circumstances warrant, both official languages. This protection reflects Canada's commitment to bilingualism and ensures fairness and full participation in the justice system. Under Sections 530 and 530.1 of the *Criminal Code*, an accused may request that their trial be conducted in either official language or both official languages. Once such an order is made, the Court must provide a justice, prosecutor, and court staff who are fluent in the chosen language or languages.

This right is not merely procedural; it is rooted in the principle that an accused person must be able to understand the case against them and communicate effectively with counsel and the Court. It also aligns with broader constitutional protections found in Section 19 of the *Charter* and the *Official Languages Act*, which guarantee access to federal courts in either language.

Importantly, the choice of trial language does not depend on the accused's fluency in the other official language. The decision is personal and cannot be challenged by the prosecution. By ensuring trials can proceed entirely in English, French or both official languages, Canada promotes equality before the law and reinforces linguistic duality as a core national value.

In 2024, the Supreme Court of Canada issued a landmark ruling in the case of *R v Tayo Tompouba*, 2024 SCC 16, ordering a new trial in French after finding that the accused was never informed of his Section 530 rights. Chief Justice Wagner, writing for the majority, held that the failure to provide this notice constitutes an error of law and creates a presumption that the accused's fundamental right to a trial in their chosen official language was violated.

In response, the leadership at the Alberta Court of Justice acted proactively to implement new procedures in criminal courts, ensuring that all accused persons are informed of their right to a trial in either official language at the outset of proceedings. Additional online resources were developed to support French-language trial requests, and the request process was streamlined.

French-language trials present logistical challenges in Alberta. Trials must be scheduled so that French-speaking justices, Crown prosecutors, clerks, and sheriffs are all available. To address this, the Court introduced new scheduling procedures for such trials.

In the year following *R v Tayo Tompouba*, the number of French-language trial requests increased as more accused became aware of their rights. In 2024, the Court also adopted procedures

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to track the number of French-language trials and requests, enabling accurate reporting on the resources required to support this change.

New Appointments & Growing Workload

Over the past two years, Alberta's population has increased by more than 300,000 individuals, representing a growth of approximately seven percent. At the same time, the complexity of cases before the Alberta Court of Justice has intensified, accompanied by a notable rise in the number of self-represented litigants. These factors have collectively exerted significant pressure on the workload of both the Court's Justices and Justices of the Peace.

Between April 1 2023, and March 31 2025, there were 11 new Justices appointed to the Alberta Court of Justice. This figure closely aligns with the number of retirements and transitions to part-time status. Despite these appointments,

11

JUSTICES APPOINTED

as of March 31, 2025, the Court remains below its target Judicial Complement of 143 Justices, with only a total of 137 full-time equivalent Justices on the bench.

At the end of the most recent reporting period, the financial limit on civil filings within the Alberta Court of Justice increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000. This adjustment represents a welcome and necessary development, enhancing access to cost-effective dispute resolution for Albertans. However, it has also contributed to an increased workload for the Court.

Criminal, family, and civil filings continue to impose growing demands on scheduling, courtroom availability, and decision-writing timelines. Justices are managing heavier dockets characterized by complex evidentiary issues, a greater proportion of self-represented litigants, and time-sensitive matters.

The role of Justices of the Peace has continued to expand beyond their traditional responsibilities, which include presiding over bail hearings, issuing warrants, and conducting initial appearances.

Combined, these trends create sustained strain on judicial resources, requiring enhanced administrative support, technological upgrades, and long-term staffing strategies to maintain timely and accessible justice across Alberta's communities.

Journalism Education Outreach

Over the past two decades, the media landscape in Alberta has undergone significant changes, which have had a direct impact on the courts.

In keeping with the open court principle, it is essential that justice is not only done but is seen to be done. Journalists serve as the eyes and ears of the public in courtrooms, making their presence an important part of the court process. To fulfill this role effectively, journalists must understand court procedures, how to access information, the role of the courts in society, and the fundamentals of how matters progress through the court system.

Journalism has become a career characterized by high turnover rate, with most journalists leaving for other careers within three years.



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Consolidation within the industry has further compounded this challenge, as individual journalists are now required to cover multiple beats, leaving fewer reporters dedicated to court coverage.

This issue is especially pronounced in rural and remote areas of Alberta, where the Alberta Court of Justice holds sittings that other levels of court do not. Newspapers in these regions often hire the majority of their staff from the province's two major journalism schools.

Recognizing this turnover as a challenge to the efficient operation of justice and to public understanding of court matters, the Alberta Court of Justice, in collaboration with the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Alberta Court of King's Bench, initiated outreach programs to Alberta-

based journalism schools in late 2023. The goal was to ensure that new generations of journalists covering court begin their careers with a solid foundation.

Significant discussion and research were undertaken to identify the most common mistakes made by inexperienced journalists covering court matters. Based on these findings, a curriculum was developed in the spring of 2024.

In September 2024, the three Courts hosted the first outreach event at Mount Royal University in Calgary. Justices from each court, along with representatives from Court and Justice Services, provided in-person instruction. Sessions included guidance on accessing court documents, understanding Alberta's bail system, and managing publication bans.

This journalism outreach program is expected to continue, with a planned event at MacEwan University in Edmonton in January 2026 and a return to Mount Royal University later in 2026.

Procedural Modernization

Through the Justice Digital initiative, the Court has introduced multiple online services to streamline interactions for both the public and legal professionals.

On the case-management front, the Court Case Management (CCM) program offers a

more efficient, client-centered model. Instead of relying on traditional docket courts crowded with administrative tasks, CCM moves simpler proceedings into a structured Case Management Office. While these offices have existed for much of the past decade, their use has expanded significantly over the past two years. This approach frees judicial time for substantive work, reduces wait time, lowers costs (for example, by decreasing prisoner transport), and improves clarity and access for those facing charges.

The Court is also embracing more flexible hearing formats, including remote video appearances for certain proceedings, guided by a conduct framework for lawyers.

Looking ahead, the Alberta Court of Justice will continue to evolve by expanding accessibility, modernizing procedures, and leveraging technology to better serve a growing and diverse population. As Alberta changes, the Court is expected to increase its use of digital tools—such as virtual hearings, electronic filing, and AI-supported administrative systems—to make justice more efficient and affordable. It will also strengthen cultural and linguistic capacity, including services for Indigenous and francophone communities, ensuring fair access for all Albertans. Ongoing modernization of

The Court is also embracing more flexible hearing formats, including remote video appearances for certain proceedings, guided by a conduct framework for lawyers.

facilities, expansion of specialized and Indigenous courts, and a commitment to transparency and public engagement will help the Court remain responsive, effective, and trusted well into the future.





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