



District Court of New Zealand  
Te Kōti-ā-Rohe o Aotearoa



District Court of New Zealand | Te Kōti-ā-Rohe o Aotearoa

# Annual Report 2023



# Contents

Foreword	3
Report of the Chief District Court Judge	4
Report of the Principal Family Court Judge	6
Report of the Principal Youth Court Judge	8
Report of the National Executive Judge	10
Te Ao Mārama	12
Addressing the Backlog	15
District Court Judges Triennial Conference 2023	18
Roles and Statistics	20
Overview	20
Criminal Court	22
Family Court	28
Youth Court	31
Civil Court	35
Specialist Courts	38
Judicial Performance Measures	40
Judicial Officers List	44

# Foreword

TĒNĀ KOUTOU KATOĀ.

**Te Kōti-ā-Rohe o Aotearoa | District Court of New Zealand is the largest court in Australasia. This annual report gives readers an insight into the work of the court and its judicial officers, spanning the criminal, family, youth and civil jurisdictions and 59 courthouses and hearing centres across the country.**

It contains reports from each jurisdiction and discusses the priorities and pressing concerns of our court in 2023. You will find statistics on the volumes of work coming in and out of our courts, alongside vignettes of judges in each jurisdiction that give a more personal sense of the daily work involved in our court.

This year, whenever I sat in courts around the country, I experienced court days that were fast paced and highly pressured. It was extremely reassuring to feel the collegial support, sheer hard work, dedication and commitment of my judicial colleagues.

I acknowledge the remarkable effort of those colleagues – alongside that of court staff, counsel and wider stakeholders – in ensuring our courts continued to operate throughout the

past three extremely challenging years. At times, we had to find innovative solutions to deal with unprecedented circumstances and in some cases, such as our local solutions framework, we have adapted those solutions and continued to use them.

This year, we have had to contend with the aftermath of the pandemic, as well as extreme weather. It has been a time of stress and heavy workload for everyone in the justice sector and that has taken its toll on people's wellbeing.

Amid that, the court has continued to conduct its business and to make significant progress on our important projects, as detailed in this report. That is a result of the resolve and effort of many.

Thank you to my judicial colleagues for performing a difficult role under trying circumstances. Thank you also to our court staff, members of the legal profession and Ministry of Justice, Police, Ara Poutama Aotearoa | Department of Corrections and Oranga Tamariki staff who support the operation of the court. You all make an immense contribution. I also extend my thanks to those who have helped us begin the process of becoming a court that is better connected to the communities we serve.

Ngā mihi nui.

**Heemi Taumaunu**  
**Chief District Court Judge**



| JUDGE HEEMI TAUMAUNU

## Report of the Chief District Court Judge

**It was pleasing to begin the year with a sense of renewal, after three years in which the operations of the court were severely affected by the global pandemic. From early January, we held a series of judicial swearing-in ceremonies, a judicial induction programme and a swearing-in ceremony for new community magistrates. In all, nineteen judges and eight community magistrates joined us in the 2023 calendar year – including two swearing-in ceremonies on marae – bringing to our court a rich mix of backgrounds and experience.**

However, the new year also delivered fresh challenges. Extreme weather affected court operations in Auckland, Northland, Coromandel, Tairāwhiti and Hawke’s Bay. Local judiciary, court staff, the legal profession and justice sector colleagues went to tremendous lengths to keep the business of the court going in difficult circumstances. The local solutions framework developed during COVID-19 has proved durable as it was deployed again to great effect in response to the local issues that arose for each affected region.

Our triennial judicial conference came in the aftermath of the bad weather and marked the first time in five years we have been able to gather in person as a bench. In 2023, we focused on enhancing the mana of our courts, raising public understanding about what we do and building stronger connections to the communities we serve, hence our 2023 conference theme of “serving our communities”.

I was privileged to see community connection in action during a visit to Samoa in March for the inaugural Inter-Bench Judicial Exchange between the District Court of New Zealand and the District and Supreme Courts of Samoa. Judge Jacquelyn Moran, Judge Ida Malosi and I were accompanied by Judges Lope Ginnen, Robyn von Keisenberg and Mike Mika. We built our understanding of fa'a Samoa and how it is reflected in the operation of the courts, lessons that will help us shape a culturally responsive District Court in places with large Samoan communities.

Currently, the communities we serve face delays in accessing justice through the District Court because of a backlog of cases. The existing case backlog worsened during the pandemic, particularly in the criminal and family divisions. In Auckland District Court, we lost a year's worth of jury trial time due to longer COVID-19 lockdowns and extreme weather events.

During the year, we continued to address the issue, developing a new approach to rostering and scheduling with a particularly sharp focus on Auckland. Managing the backlog will remain a top priority in 2024 and beyond but it needs to be balanced with consideration for the wellbeing of all, including those waiting for their cases to be heard and those responsible for ensuring the cases are heard. You can read more about this and the progress made on page 15.

Other initiatives such as the development of a digital case management system, Te Au Reka, will be critical to improving timeliness and the efficient running of the court.

Timely justice is fundamental to Te Ao Mārama – Enhancing Justice for All, the District Court's response to many years of calls for transformative change to the justice system. We have developed and consulted on a Te Ao Mārama Best Practice



Chief Judge Taumaunu talking to media during the judicial visit to Samoa.

Framework, a user-friendly guide to Te Ao Mārama in the family, youth and criminal divisions of the District Court. You can read more about Te Ao Mārama on page 12.

There was also change and renewal within the leadership of the District Court. In late 2022, we welcomed Judge Malosi into the role of Principal Youth Court Judge with a special sitting at the Fale o Samoa in Māngere, South Auckland. In June 2023, Judge Russell Collins brought his many years of judicial experience to take up the role of National Executive Judge.

Finally, I acknowledge the immense contribution of judicial colleagues across the country in what was another extremely demanding year. As the Chief District Court Judge, I have continued to encourage the pursuit of a vision to play our part in making this country a better place to live in, a modern-day expression of Te Ao Mārama. In doing so, we must all remain conscious of the need to ensure the ongoing wellbeing of our judges and the wider workforce as we transform our court and ensure the timely delivery of quality justice in New Zealand.



JUDGE JACQUELYN MORAN

## Report of the Principal Family Court Judge

**With children and whānau at the heart of all the Family Court does, it is not surprising that every day in our court we see so starkly a snapshot of the issues facing our communities. The challenges of recent years again made themselves apparent in the Family Court in 2023 and I am proud of how the judiciary, court staff, counsel and others continued to respond to the needs of whānau.**

A highlight of the 2023 calendar year was welcoming new judges Caroline Hickman, Susie Houghton, Tania Sharkey and Tania Williams Blyth to the Family Court. They bring with them a deep experience of family law, strong professional attributes and connections into their different communities.

It was extremely satisfying to see the new Family Court Associate role come to fruition with legislation passed in June. Family Court Associates will fulfil a vitally important role in the hierarchy of decision-making in the Family Court. They will take on some of a Family Court judge's workload, including decisions made at the early stages of proceedings and interlocutory hearings. In addition, a Family Court Associate will be able to exercise all the powers of a court registrar.

We look forward to welcoming them to the court from 2024.

In addition, we now have 51 kaiārahi or Family Court navigators across the country working to provide information and support to parents, caregivers and whānau on how to navigate the court system or access out-of-court services. As well as the local support they provide, kaiārahi connect with each other and form a network that holds in-depth information and knowledge of the court. National data from the enquiries they are dealing with provides another perspective on common issues court users are experiencing.

In addition to these new roles, I have clear priorities for the Family Court and have developed a work programme that brings together 47 initiatives to help the court provide safer, swifter, more sustainable and successful family justice processes.

A legislative change, the Family Court (Supporting Children in Court) Legislation Act 2021, came into force in August, amending the Care of Children Act 2004 and the Family Dispute Resolution Act 2013 so greater emphasis is placed on a child's right to understand and be involved in proceedings and decisions that affect them. This gives the Family Court the opportunity to further the emphasis it has always had on children and whānau participation.

New evidence regulations supporting the use of victim video statements in the Family Court came into force in 2023 and from 2024 the Family Court will have greater access to police video evidence of adult complainants. The new regulations provide flexibility around where and how victim video statements can be viewed in Family Court proceedings and will better support victims of violence in the Family Court.

Improving the court experience of victims of violence is also the intention of the Family Violence Operating Model being established initially in Christchurch.



We now have 51 kaiārahi or Family Court navigators to provide information and support.

Implementing Te Ao Mārama – Enhancing Justice for All in the Family Court is a priority, with the primary focus on care and protection. We want to prevent children from needing to go into care and to ensure early support and services for whānau. The Te Ao Mārama Best Practice Framework has been developed setting out best practice approaches, court lists and processes for the Family Court (and other jurisdictions).

During 2023, I continued in my role as the New Zealand Hague Network Judge and attended the Eighth Special Commission on the Practical Operation of the 1980 Child Abduction Convention and the 1996 Child Protection Convention. These conventions ensure children wrongly removed are returned as quickly as possible or the case is determined as quickly as possible with the best interest of the child at the forefront.



JUDGE IDA MALOSI

## Report of the Principal Youth Court Judge

**The Youth Court has been a ‘house of innovation’ for the District Court for 35 years. This was never truer than in 2023 as practices pioneered in the Youth Court continued to shape the wider District Court’s Te Ao Mārama – Enhancing Justice for All kaupapa.**

A key element of Te Ao Mārama has operated successfully in the Youth Court since it was established in 1989. It involves meaningful engagement with a young person and their whānau to understand what has happened in the young person’s life to lead them to offend, addressing those circumstances while holding the young person to account for their offending, and

through that process of accountability ensuring the interests of victims are met.

The Youth Court is renowned internationally for its innovation and solution-focused judging. In July, I was invited to visit Malaysia to share these practices with judges, politicians and officials there, and the following month a Malaysian delegation (including their first Children’s Commissioner, Dr Farah Nini) came to New Zealand to learn more.

Throughout the year, I engaged remotely with the Singaporean judiciary delivering education sessions, and in December I travelled to Sydney to meet with my Australian counterparts. That meeting included a valuable discussion about our respective roles on the South Pacific Council of Youth and Children’s Courts (which among other things supports the development of youth justice in the Pacific) and I am looking forward to co-leading this work.

It is a tribute to our youth justice system that other countries continue to look to us for guidance.

However, there was no room for complacency in 2023. Although we got off to a strong start with our Youth Court judges' triennial conference in March, it was a challenging year across the whole of the youth justice sector. While the vast majority of young people who offend are dealt with by alternative action taken by Police Youth Aid officers, those who end up before the Youth Court are our most serious offenders, who invariably present with a complex web of issues, including severe trauma, neuro-disabilities, intellectual disability, mental health issues, addictions and lack of engagement in education.

The impacts of offending by young people were evident when in July I attended a regular cross-agency meeting in Auckland with national and local Indian community leaders. At these meetings and elsewhere, not just in relation to retail crime, it is inspiring to see community leaders come together with Police, Oranga Tamariki and other agencies to keep communities safe. Such collaboration is a cornerstone of the youth justice system.

Police statistics show there were more than 150 fewer ram raids in the first 10 months of 2023 than in the same period in 2022. The Ministry of Justice Youth Justice Indicators Summary released in April 2023 was also encouraging. Over the past decade (between 2011/12 and 2021/22), offending by 12- to 13-year-olds and 14- to 17-year-olds decreased by 63% and 64% and there were similar decreases for Māori over the same period. There were also substantial decreases in reoffending rates, including for Māori.

But we cannot lose sight of the fact Māori continue to be overrepresented in the youth justice system, with 67% of all first Youth Court appearances being Māori during 2022/23, although this had decreased from 70% in 2021/22. Also of concern is that in the 12 months up to August 2023 we saw the highest number of young people remanded in Police custody, many of whom were Māori. Clearly, there is work ahead of us.



The Youth Court draws on a wide range of participants at its hearings.

Still, at the end of November there were 1,100 young people before the Youth Court, a long way from the 10,000 or so in the youth justice system in 1989.

Over more than three decades, the Youth Court has stayed the course and applied the provisions of the visionary legislation that established it and has achieved success in many areas.

We rely heavily on information and support from a wide range of people, including Youth Court staff, Youth Aid officers, social workers, youth workers, mentors, youth advocates, lay advocates, youth forensic nurses, alcohol and drug clinicians, education officers, communication assistants and a host of expert report writers. I acknowledge all their contributions in 2023, along with those of our 60 Youth Court judges, whose support I am particularly grateful for.

The work done up and down the country in the mainstream Youth Court, our 16 Te Kōti Rangatahi | Rangatahi Courts, two Pasifika Courts, the Christchurch Youth Drug Court and crossover courts is inspired and inspiring.



| JUDGE RUSSELL COLLINS

# Report of the National Executive Judge

**As National Executive Judge, I support the Chief District Court Judge, Principal Family Court Judge and Principal Youth Court Judge in their administrative and other duties.**

A key part of my job is connecting the court's national leadership with the wider bench around the country. This includes chairing or being a member of several District Court committees and liaising with the 16 executive judges and six court liaison judges who lead and/or represent the judges in the courts for which they are responsible.

I also provide legal, operational and strategic policy advice to the Chief Judge and Principal Judges.

I became National Executive Judge in June, succeeding Judge Ida Malosi after she became Principal Youth Court Judge. I previously sat in the criminal and civil jurisdictions based at Napier District Court.

Since starting my new role, I have been especially focused on the strategy to improve the timeliness of District Court hearings and reduce the case backlog that was exacerbated by court closures during COVID-19 and extreme weather. You can read about the progress we are making with the backlog on page 15.



Executive judges and court liaison judges are responsible for a wide range of things, including connecting with their local communities, convening meetings with the legal profession and other stakeholders, and providing advice on local solutions to enhance the efficient disposal of the court's business.

In addition to my administrative roles, I continue to sit in court regularly.

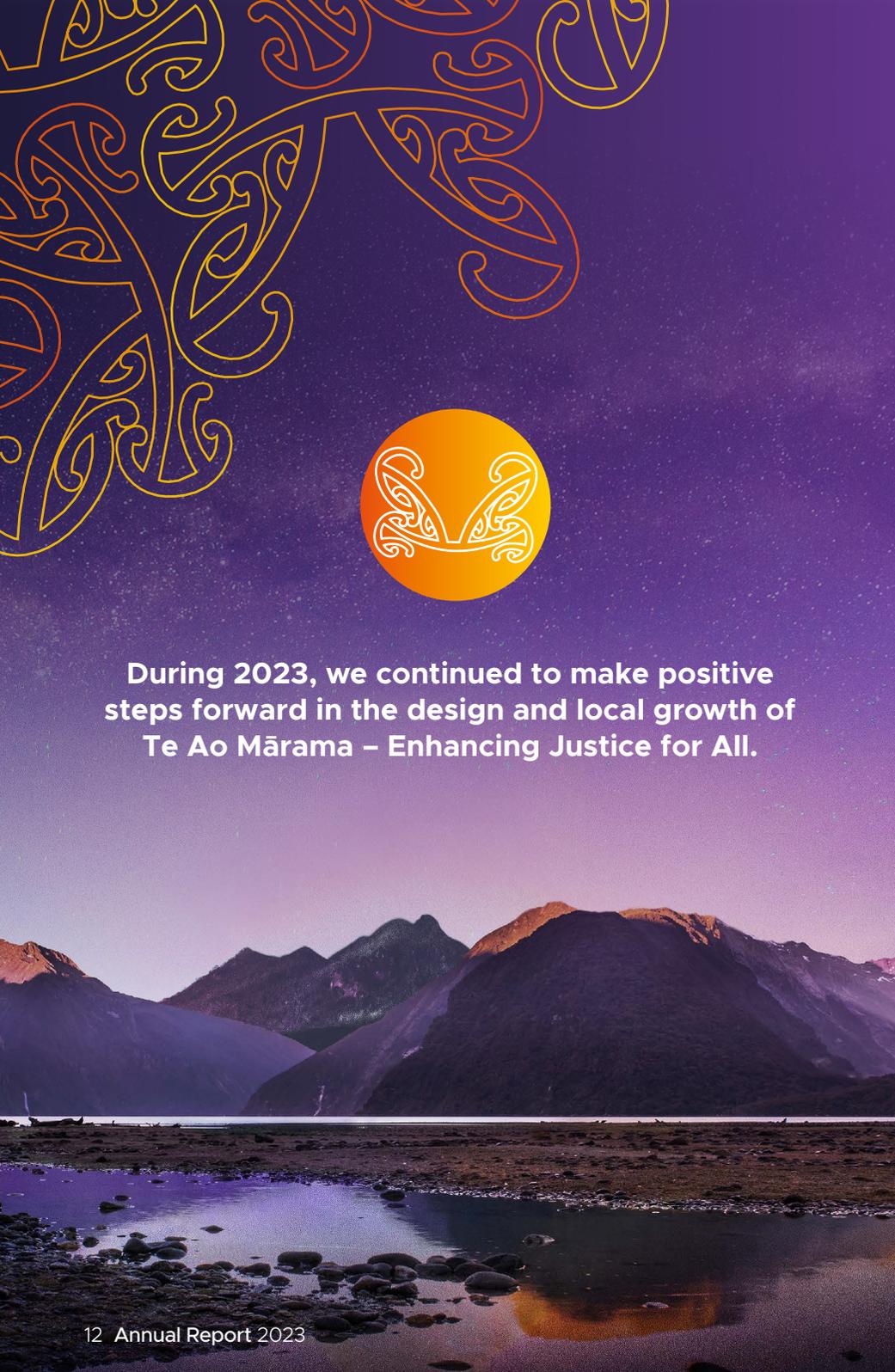
The National Executive Judge role is a rewarding one, especially as the District Court undergoes the transformational change promised by Te Ao Mārama – Enhancing Justice for All and associated initiatives such as the Criminal Process Improvement Programme and the Te Au Reka technology upgrade.

I am honoured to have been entrusted with the role and to support the Chief Judge and Principal Judges at such an important time for the District Court.

I would particularly like to thank the executive judges and court liaison judges with whom I work for all they do for their courts and the communities they serve. To the public, their role is largely an unsung one, but it is an essential one much appreciated by their court colleagues.



Judge Hana Ellis speaking at Auckland District Court's open day for the local community.



During 2023, we continued to make positive steps forward in the design and local growth of Te Ao Mārama – Enhancing Justice for All.

# Te Ao Mārama

**Te Ao Mārama is a judicially led kaupapa that encourages local communities and justice sector agencies to work together with the court to support people who need it and ensure they can understand and better participate in the cases that relate to them.**

Te Ao Mārama responds to repeated calls for transformative change over the past four decades.

It acknowledges the District Court does not consistently meet the needs of defendants, victims and whānau and many people find court processes confusing, alienating, disempowering and retraumatising.

Te Ao Mārama takes best practice approaches from specialist and solution-focused courts such as the Young Adult List, Youth Court, Te Kōti Rangatahi | Rangatahi Court and Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court, and applies them in the mainstream District Court.

It brings the strength of iwi and communities into the court by encouraging them to work with relevant justice agencies to establish support services tailored to meet each location's different needs.

In Budget 2022, the then Government committed to financially support Te Ao Mārama over four years (1 July 2022 – 30 June 2026).

In 2023, the business case for Te Ao Mārama was approved and a programme team started to be established.

Three locations have been announced (Gisborne District Court, Kaitiāia District Court and Hamilton District Court). We are actively engaging

with five other areas and more will follow in a sequenced way in coming months and years.

**The locations will generally have as a minimum:**

- Care and Protection and Family Violence Lists in the family jurisdiction
- Te Kōti Rangatahi and a Pasifika Court (if sufficient local need) in the youth jurisdiction
- Young Adult and Family Violence Lists in the criminal jurisdiction.

**All District Court locations are encouraged to adopt Te Ao Mārama best practice approaches of:**

- Enhancing connection to communities
- Improving the quality of information available to judges
- Improving processes for victims and complainants
- Encouraging people to feel heard in the courtroom
- Establishing alternative courtroom layouts
- Using plain language to improve understanding
- Toning down formalities
- Adopting ‘solution-focused’ judging – ie asking “what has happened to this person to bring them to this point in their life?” and then addressing those causes.

Some District Court locations are already working in ways that contribute to Te Ao Mārama. Examples include specialist courts (see page 38) and Whakaorangia te Mana Tangata at Kaitiāia

District Court, Gisborne District Court and Kaikohe District Court, a whānau-centred initiative designed and provided by local iwi or iwi-mandated service providers to support Māori defendants, victims and whānau through the criminal court process.

Te Ao Mārama is being introduced alongside other changes designed to improve timely disposition of cases, including improvements to rostering of judges, scheduling of work, court processes and case management technology (eg Criminal Process Improvement Programme and Te Au Reka).



Members of the local community entering Waimanoni Marae for the launch of Te Ao Mārama at Kaitiāia District Court.



Clockwise from top left, Oamaru, Manukau, Masterton and Christchurch District Courts are among our 59 courthouses and hearing centres around the country.

# Addressing the Backlog

**Many people are experiencing delays in having their cases heard in the District Court. This has a human cost on the lives of defendants, victims, witnesses and their families. Addressing the backlog was a priority in 2023 and it was pleasing to see progress.**

## BACKGROUND

The District Court backlog has been growing since 2015, particularly in the criminal and family jurisdictions. In 2015, 22% of criminal cases were backlogged and that grew to 44% in early 2022, before tracking down slightly.

The increase was driven by a range of factors, including changes in behaviour such as fewer people making early guilty pleas and more people choosing jury trials, as well as constraints on resources such as courtrooms, court staff and judicial officers. The existing backlog was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and more recently by extreme weather and court staff industrial action. Half the backlog is concentrated

in the Auckland Metro courts, where COVID-19 lockdowns were the longest.

## MEASURES TO IMPROVE TIMELINESS

The reasons for the backlog are complex and justice sector-wide. In 2023, the District Court worked on solutions alongside the Ministry of Justice as well as Police and Ara Poutama New Zealand | Department of Corrections.

The range of initiatives included the Criminal Process Improvement Programme (CPIP), an existing judicial initiative set up in 2020 to pilot in a number of courts measures to improve timeliness and make every appearance meaningful. In 2023, CPIP made improvements across areas such as case management, bail applications and improved documentation. In the six months to August 2023, CPIP courts had reduced their judge-alone trial adjournment rate by 28%.

Another key initiative to improve timeliness is priority-based rostering and scheduling, a judicially driven change to how the rostering of judicial officers and scheduling of cases are managed. It focuses on the District Court locations with the largest backlogs

across all jurisdictions by providing additional judicial resource and ensuring all courtrooms are in use. It was introduced in May 2023 and is now the 'business as usual' approach.

## PROGRESS

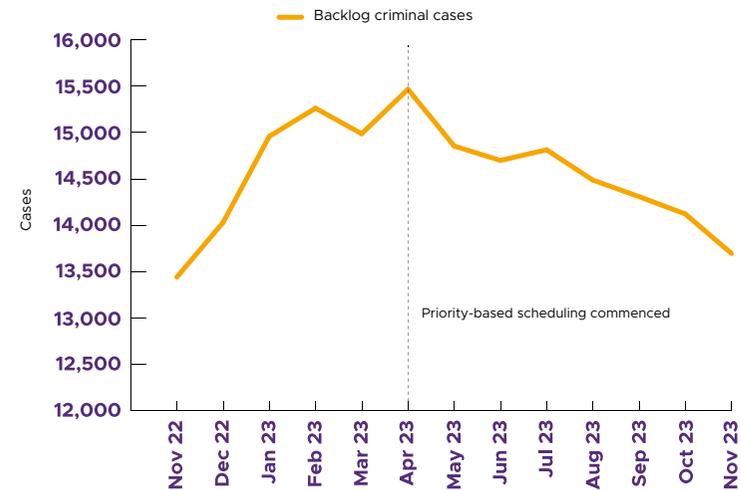
There were indications in 2023 to suggest the measures put in place are starting to have an impact. Between May – when priority-based rostering and scheduling commenced – and the end of November, the national criminal backlog reduced by 1,770 cases (11%) down to 13,700 criminal cases. The backlog in November 2023 was still 2% higher than at the same point in 2022, but this represents a smaller annual increase than seen in recent years and indicates a potential turning point. This trajectory is shown in the graph.

The Family Court backlog tracked down from April to August 2023; however, by the end of November, it was up by 550 cases (6%) on the same point in 2022.

## NEXT STEPS

Improving District Court timeliness remains our top priority. Priority-based rostering and scheduling will continue in 2024 and we are looking at additional national and local strategies. The progress in 2023 in stopping the increase in the criminal backlog and beginning to reduce it is a good result, but only represents a brief period of time. In other words, it is early days. We will continue to strive to reduce the backlog and deliver more timely justice.

BACKLOG CRIMINAL CASES IN THE DISTRICT COURT







Judges Tony Zohrab and Michelle Duggan.



## DISTRICT COURT JUDGES' Triennial Conference 2023

The theme of our February 2023 triennial judicial conference was 'Serving our communities'. Because of COVID-19, it was, in fact, five years since our judges had all been able to gather in person. The four-day event was an opportunity to explore how we can better connect and work with communities to address the underlying causes of offending, particularly through our Te Ao Mārama – Enhancing Justice for All initiative. The conference was also a chance for judges to reconnect with each other and share their experiences and insights since the previous conference. The pictures here were taken during the conference.



Judges Turitea Bolstad, left, and Keryn Broughton.



Judges Dugald Matheson, left, and Philip Crayton.



District Court judges at their first in-person gathering in five years.



# Roles and Statistics

## OVERVIEW

**Throughout the 2022–23 financial year, numerous events affected the operation of the District Court. Our ability to hold hearings was disrupted by factors such as the continuing protocols under the COVID-19 Protection Framework, which was in place until September 2022, COVID-19-related illness among staff and judiciary, the industrial action by court staff in November 2022, and extreme weather in early 2023.**

Cyclone Gabrielle initially shut four courthouses on the east coast of the North Island: Napier, Hastings, Gisborne and Wairoa. While court events were disrupted, we continued to provide access to justice. This included strategies such as arrest matters being dealt with by neighbouring courts and the use of audio-visual link (AVL) technology for people in custody.

In 2022–23, in the District Court across all jurisdictions, there were over 922,000 events and almost 69,000 of these were AVL events.

Overall, the number of active cases in the District Court has increased. The overarching reasons for this are that new work has increased at a higher rate than cases resolved, and cases are taking longer to dispose of than in previous years (with the numerous disruptive events over the year contributing to both these factors).

DISTRICT COURT

# Workload at a glance

(Figures have been rounded)

## NEW WORK (12 months ending 30 June 2023)

<b>105,200</b>	Criminal cases
<b>59,000</b>	Family Court applications
<b>21,100</b>	Civil cases
<b>4,300</b>	Youth Court cases

## ACTIVE WORKLOAD (as at 30 June 2023)

<b>37,400</b>	Criminal cases
<b>27,200</b>	Family Court applications
<b>10,200</b>	Civil cases
<b>1,000</b>	Youth Court cases

## RESOLUTIONS (12 months ending 30 June 2023)

<b>101,800</b>	Criminal cases
<b>57,700</b>	Family Court applications
<b>20,500</b>	Civil cases
<b>4,000</b>	Youth Court cases

## RESOURCES (as at 30 June 2023)

<b>163</b>	District Court judges*
<b>17</b>	Community magistrates
<b>59</b>	Courthouses and hearing centres

## NOTES

**NEW WORK:** new cases and applications that flow into courts.

**RESOLUTIONS:** disposal of cases and applications.

**ACTIVE WORKLOAD:** number of cases or applications on hand at the end of the reporting period that have not been resolved.

\*This number excludes the Chief District Court Judge, Principal Family Court Judge, Principal Youth Court Judge, National Executive Judge and 12 District Court judges (plus four vacancies) performing different roles such as Environment Court judges and senior Government roles such as Chair of the Independent Police Conduct Authority. Five judges were funded for COVID-19 relief. All District Court judges and community magistrates, including those performing different roles, are listed later in this report.



Judge Evangelos (Barney) Thomas sitting at the high-profile Whakaari–White Island trial in Auckland.

## CRIMINAL COURT | TE KŌTI TAIHARA

The District Court is the primary court where criminal cases begin.

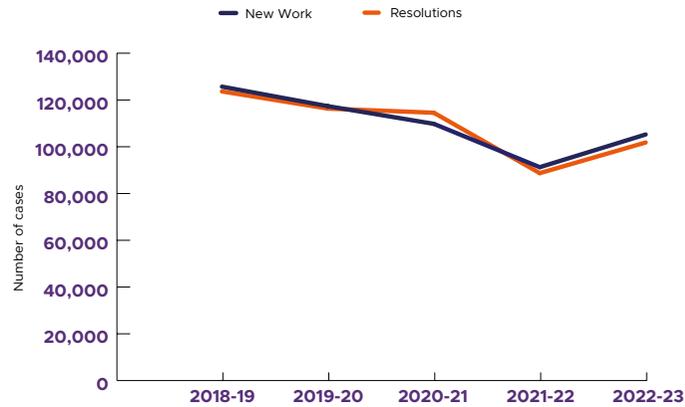
Every person charged with a criminal offence makes their first appearance in the District Court, even if their charge is ultimately heard in the High Court. Many defendants go through the entire justice process in the District Court, from first appearance until sentencing if they are convicted, whether they plead guilty or not guilty.

Criminal cases are categorised according to the crime with which the defendant is charged. This includes cases across the full spectrum of complexity and seriousness:

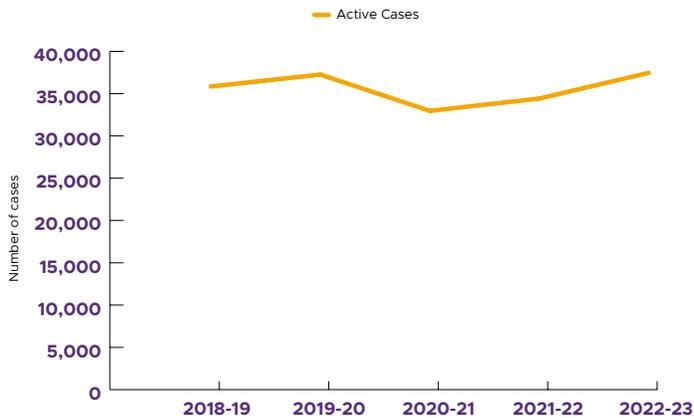
- **Category 1 or 2 crimes:** For less serious crimes, the only trial option is a judge-alone trial. Depending on the nature of the crime, the case will be heard either by a judge, community magistrate or judicial justice of the peace. There will be no jury.
- **Category 3 crimes:** For these crimes, there is a choice of a judge-alone trial or a jury trial within the District Court.
- **Category 4 crimes:** For these, there will be a jury trial at the High Court.

Criminal statistics are recorded by number of cases rather than people because each case may involve several charges or people. Some cases may be managed together. Criminal statistics in this section exclude Youth Court matters.

### CRIMINAL CASES – NEW WORK AND RESOLUTIONS



### CRIMINAL CASES – ACTIVE CASES



	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
New Work	125,697	117,360	109,797	91,260	105,246
Resolutions	123,659	116,321	114,546	88,714	101,823
Active Cases	35,850	37,254	32,965	34,417	37,463

Note that the figures above count new work and resolutions as the total number of cases over a 12-month period ending 30 June of each year. Active cases are as at 30 June for the associated year.

In the 2022–23 financial year, active cases increased steadily from July 2022 to February 2023, reflecting the combined impact of increased new work and decreased court capacity during the disruptive events of the year. However, the number of active cases decreased in May and June. This coincided with the start of a new priority-based rostering and scheduling approach focused on the Auckland Metro courts. Resolutions in May and June 2023 were 20% higher than average monthly resolution volumes over the previous 12 months.

During the year, Category 3 cases increased by volume, as well as a proportion of total active cases (from 64% to 66%). As Category 3 cases require more court events and take longer to resolve, it puts pressure on the court system.



**Compared with the previous financial year:**

New work increased by  
**13,986** cases (+15%)

Resolutions increased by  
**13,109** cases (+15%)

Active cases increased by  
**3,046** cases (+9%)

Active cases since April decreased by  
**1,404** (-4%)

---

**In 2022–23, the active criminal caseload became more complex, with a higher proportion of Category 3 cases. This is driven both by increases in new Category 3 cases surpassing increases in resolutions of Category 3 cases and the fact the time taken to dispose of Category 3 cases is increasing at a greater rate than for other case categories.**



## JURY TRIALS

All New Zealanders have a right to choose trial by jury if they are charged with a serious offence punishable by two or more years in prison. This right is protected by the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. Jury trials are an important aspect of the criminal justice system. Members of the jury are the factfinders in a case, determining whether guilt has been proved beyond reasonable doubt. Sitting on a jury allows members of the public to participate in the court process and be directly involved in the administration of justice and the rule of law.

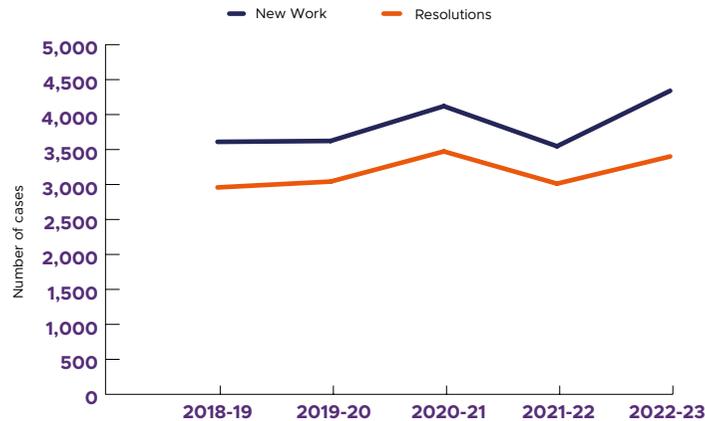
Each jury is comprised of 12 New Zealanders selected at random. To reach a decision, all members of the jury must agree. However, there are certain cases where a decision may be reached with the agreement of 11 jurors. If jurors return a guilty verdict, a judge will then sentence the offender.

Most jury trials in New Zealand are heard in the District Court. As at 30 June 2023, we had 107 full-time District Court judges holding jury trial warrants and another 24 acting warranted judges who could preside over jury trials.

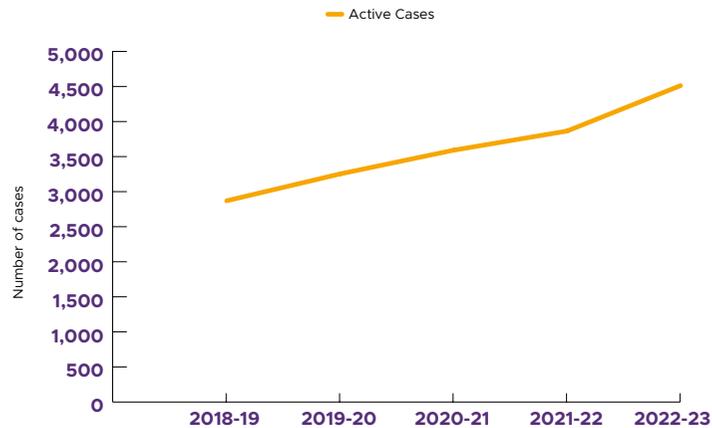
The disruptive events of the 2022–23 financial year significantly impacted the District Court’s ability to hold jury trials, reflected in the number of jury trial resolutions made throughout the year.

As new cases electing a jury trial have been consistently higher than the resolutions of jury trials over the past five years and trial cases are taking longer to dispose of than in previous years, active caseload has been steadily increasing. During the year, active jury trial cases increased 17% to 4,512 as at 30 June 2023.

### JURY TRIAL CASES – NEW WORK AND RESOLUTIONS



### JURY TRIAL CASES – ACTIVE CASES



	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
New Work	3,556	3,569	4,066	3,493	4,286
Resolutions	2,904	2,988	3,419	2,958	3,347
Active Cases	2,870	3,253	3,591	3,864	4,512

Note that the figure on the left counts new work and resolutions as the total number of cases over a 12-month period ending 30 June of each year. Active cases are as at 30 June for the associated year.

### Compared with the previous financial year:

New jury trial cases increased by **793** cases (+23%)

Resolutions increased by **389** cases (+13%)

Active cases awaiting trial or awaiting sentencing increased by **648** cases (+17%)

Active cases awaiting trial increased by **511** cases (+16%)

Active cases awaiting trial in the Auckland Metro courts increased by **366** (+31%)

The increase in new work was predominantly driven by Auckland Metro courts, which account for almost 50% of new cases nationally. This means active case numbers in the region steadily increased during the year, following a similar national trend and reaching 1,964 active jury trial cases as at 30 June 2023.

## MEET TWO OF OUR JUDGES

### Judge Maree MacKenzie

Criminal Court  
Rotorua



When Judge MacKenzie joined the bench in 2008, “you didn’t talk to a defendant. The convention was you heard from them through their lawyer. That’s all changed”. As an example of the greater understanding today of the challenges court participants may face, she says: “I’m starting a criminal judge-alone trial this morning and there are two communication assistants – one for the key Crown witness and one for the defendant. In 2008, that would have been virtually unheard of. That’s very much a move in the right direction.” Another, she says, is the increased diversity of the bench. “One of the things I got constantly in 2008 was ‘You don’t look like a judge’. We’ve evolved a lot since then. We’re here to represent the community and it’s important our bench reflects that.”

Judge MacKenzie, who also sits in the Youth Court, had judicial approaches she admired when she was a lawyer. “There was one judge in particular,” she says. “He was fair but firm, had an excellent knowledge of the law and had excellent interpersonal skills. I thought, ‘If I can be half the judge he is then I’ll be doing okay.’”

### Judge Noel Cocurullo

Criminal Court  
Hamilton



“A lot of people are hurting out there,” says Judge Cocurullo (Ngāti Pikiao), who also sits in the Youth Court, including Waikato’s Te Kōti Rangatahi | Rangatahi Courts. “I sense COVID-19 has thrown up an added degree of vulnerability within the community. If there were ever a need to be sensitive in what we do, as we always strive to, COVID has really brought that into focus.”

Judge Cocurullo joined the bench in 2007 and has seen the judge’s role evolve from “simply the formalities of the law to one where we are in a much better position to understand all the world of those who come before us and try to react to that”. He has always believed “the person in front of me is not a bad person, it’s just sometimes the things they have done are bad, they have made wrong decisions. And sometimes a heavy part of that is the background and circumstances in life from which they have come”. Judge Cocurullo sees a lot of sad lives and situations, but says: “My job is not to join the sadness. Sadness is not far away from chaos and confusion and if people come before me with those dynamics the best thing I can do is hand them clarity, comfort, certainty, leadership and direction.”

## FAMILY COURT | TE KŌTI WHĀNAU

The Family Court is the second busiest division of the District Court after the criminal division.

The Family Court Act was passed in 1980, introducing a new forum to deal with what were seen as inherently family matters, including dissolution of marriage, disputes over relationship property and the care of children.

As society has changed over the past 40 years, so has the court's jurisdiction. Nowadays, its responsibilities include family violence matters, compulsory mental health and addiction treatment, civil unions and minors seeking to marry.

The Family Court hears applications under more than 30 statutes, which reflect the wide range of issues and problems affecting the lives of families, and where the court may be asked or required to assist or adjudicate when there is a dispute. These issues range from adoption, surrogacy, guardianship, child abduction and state care and protection to wills and estates, and the protection of personal and property rights of the vulnerable and elderly.

The court values the ability of parties to resolve their own matters too, and counselling, conciliation and mediation are an integral part of its work. Such a wide jurisdiction means the Family Court sees a huge number of applications, with around 60,000 filed each year.



Judge Christine Montague sitting in the Family Court in Wellington.

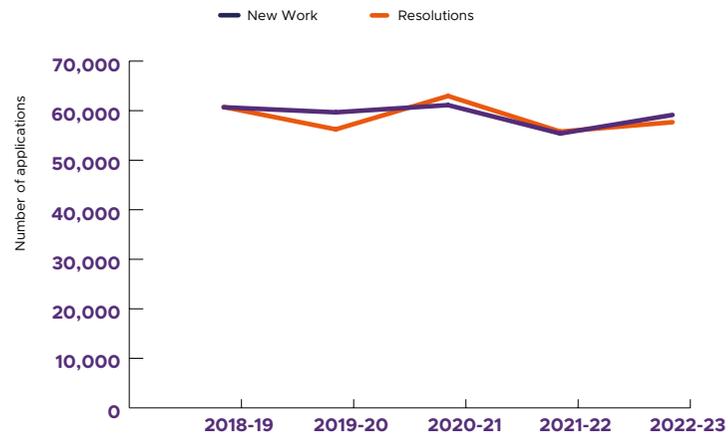
Overall, active applications before the Family Court were lower than the 2019–20 financial year (before COVID-19). However, in the past two financial years active applications have increased due to more applications being filed than being resolved.

Additionally, applications that are defended have increased, resulting in more court time and effort required.

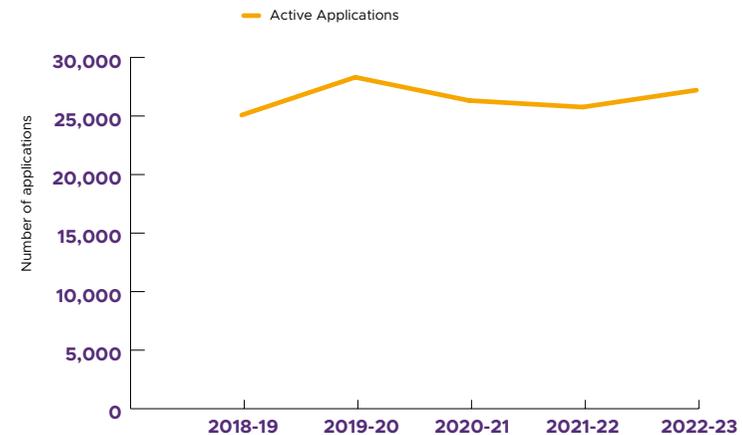
In 2022–23, Care of Children Act (CoCA) applications made up more than half of all applications before the Family Court, of which a high proportion (70%) were defended.

The number of aged CoCA applications (ie over 12 months old) reduced by 182 (-3%) to 5,149 applications as at 30 June 2023. These represented 36% of total CoCA applications, compared with 38% as at 30 June 2022. The reduction resulted in a decrease of 10 days in the average age of CoCA applications (-3%) as at 30 June 2023.

### FAMILY COURT – NEW WORK AND RESOLUTIONS



### FAMILY COURT – ACTIVE APPLICATIONS



	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
New Work	60,683	59,666	61,125	55,388	59,138
Resolutions	60,746	56,229	62,958	55,775	57,671
Active Applications	25,079	28,311	26,323	25,761	27,206

Note that the figures above count new work and resolutions as the total number of applications over a 12-month period ending 30 June of each year. Active applications are as at 30 June for the associated year.

### Compared with the previous financial year:

New work increased by **3,750** applications (+7%)

Resolutions increased by **1,896** applications (+3%)

Active applications increased by **1,445** applications (+6%)

All case types saw an increase in active applications. The largest was family violence applications, which increased to 3,796 (+17%).

New work increased by 3,750 applications (+7%) and was driven by a 12% increase in new family violence applications and a 9% increase in new Care of Children Act applications.

Resolutions increased by 1,896 applications (+3%) to 57,671, driven by a 4% increase in undefended resolutions.

Defended active applications increased by 10%, reaching 14,258, the majority of which were defended Care of Children Act applications (70%).

## MEET TWO OF OUR JUDGES

### Judge Russell Walker

Family Court  
Invercargill



In a small provincial court, you all chip in, so Judge Walker sits in the Family Court and Youth Court as well as the adult criminal court. “You might sit in the criminal court on a Monday and the Family Court on the Tuesday,” he says. “Frequently, we have people in both jurisdictions one after the other and they get quite a surprise to see the same person they saw yesterday in the criminal court when they turn up for their Family Court matter.” Judge Walker moved to Invercargill from Palmerston North when he joined the bench in 2019; he is now a poster child for the city, he says. “I love it.” Being a Family Court judge can provide a useful broader perspective. “You know what’s happening to people facing criminal charges who have family disputes. And a lot of the young people I see in the Youth Court also have Family Court files.” Family Court judges are looking for the right solution to a problem and it’s not always the tried-and-tested one, says Judge Walker. “You’ve got to be thinking all the time about what’s going to work for the individual or this particular family. It’s not one size fits all.”

### Judge Michelle Howard-Sager

Family Court  
Kaikohe



Judge Howard-Sager (Te Whakatōhea, Ngāpuhi), who also sits in the adult criminal court, joined the bench in 2020 just as New Zealand and the rest of the world went into COVID-19 lockdowns. “It has been stop and start since then but in 2023 it felt like the court was back in a rhythm.” The satisfaction of Family Court work for her comes from achieving good outcomes for tamariki and whānau. In court, she tries to make participants feel at ease and to leave feeling as if they have been heard and have understood the proceedings, even if the outcome wasn’t what they wanted. “You can tell from their body language, the way they are nodding – they have got it.” Te Ao Mārama – Enhancing Justice for All is beginning to be introduced in the Far North and she relishes solution-focused approaches. “It’s like detective work – what do we need to do to stop this person coming back before the court?” Respect for those who come to court is a key ingredient for Judge Howard-Sager. “You don’t have to step on anyone’s mana to get your point across.”

## YOUTH COURT | TE KŌTI TAIOHI

The Youth Court is a specialist division of the District Court and is overseen by the Principal Youth Court Judge.

It primarily deals with offending by young people aged 14–17 years, except for some serious offending by 17-year-olds that is transferred automatically to the adult criminal division of the District Court. In certain circumstances, the Youth Court also deals with serious offending by children aged 12–13 years.

The Youth Court is not just the District Court for young people. It has all the hallmarks of a ‘solution-focused’ court, centred on rehabilitation, wraparound support, addressing the underlying causes of offending, and diversion away from court. A team of dedicated specialists assist young people to actively engage and participate in proceedings.

Only 20–30% of Police apprehensions come before the Youth Court. This allows judges to focus on cases involving serious offending by young people with complex needs.

A unique feature of the Youth Court process is the family group conference, which involves a gathering of the young person, their family, victims, Police Youth Aid, the young person’s youth advocate (lawyer) and other professionals. The parties establish a plan to address the offending and underlying causes, provide for victims’ interests and help the young person to take responsibility for their actions.

Not all Youth Court proceedings occur in a traditional courtroom. Te Kōti Rangatahi | Rangatahi Courts and Pasifika Courts are held

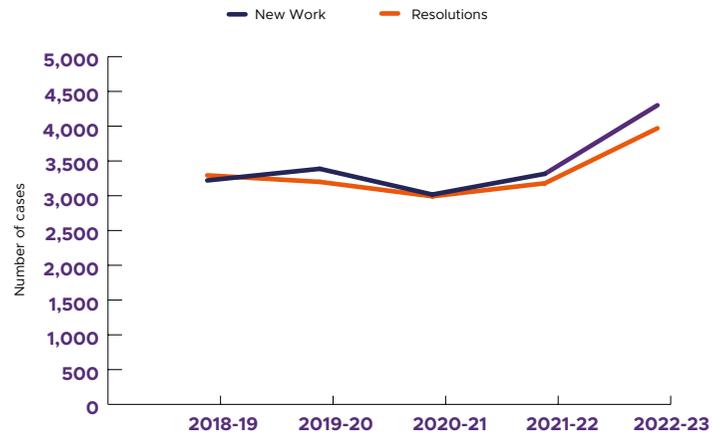
at marae or a community venue and Māori or Pasifika customs and cultural practices are used as part of the court process. There are 16 Te Kōti Rangatahi nationwide and two Pasifika Courts based in Auckland.

These courts were established to address the over-representation of Māori and Pasifika in the youth justice system. This has had visible positive effects. The number of Māori children and young people in court is decreasing, and at a faster rate than other ethnicities.

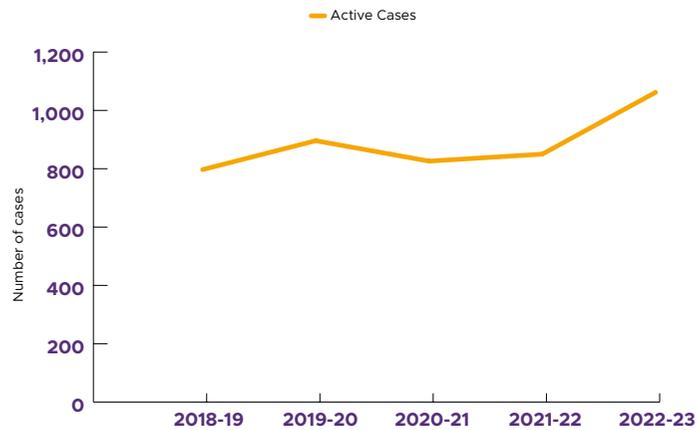
The number of young people appearing before the Youth Court has significantly decreased over the past decade. In the 2022–2023 financial year, however, youth justice proceedings overall increased. Nationally, the proportion of police proceedings that went to court increased from 20% of all youth justice proceedings to 26%. This was driven by robbery, extortion and theft offences.

The largest increases in Youth Court appearances were in Canterbury and the Auckland Metro region. In Auckland Metro, the increase started in early 2022 (following the end of extended COVID-19 lockdown in the region). This growth continued, increasing from 774 first Youth Court appearances in the year to 30 June 2022 to 983 in the year to 30 June 2023 (+27%). For Canterbury, there was an increase from 257 first Youth Court appearances in the year to 30 June 2022 to 601 in the year to 30 June 2023 (+134%).

### YOUTH COURT CASES – NEW WORK AND RESOLUTIONS



### YOUTH COURT CASES – ACTIVE CASES



	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
New Work	3,220	3,387	3,017	3,315	4,301
Resolutions	3,293	3,199	2,992	3,179	3,970
Active cases	797	896	826	850	1,062

Note that the figures above count new work and resolutions as the total number of cases over a 12-month period ending 30 June of each year. Active cases are as at 30 June for the associated year. Note that many active cases were not awaiting a hearing but were being monitored by a judge.



Judge Greg Davis (sixth right) at Terenga Paraoa Marae with some of the social workers, lawyers, police prosecutors, kaumātua, kuia, court staff and others involved in Taitamariki Court, as Te Kōti Rangatahi is known in Whangārei. Image: NZME/Mike Cunningham

## Compared with the previous financial year:

New cases increased by

**986** cases (+30%)

Resolutions increased by

**791** cases (+25%)

Active cases increased by

**212** cases (+25%)

Active cases in the Auckland  
Metro courts increased by

**85** (+37%)

---

Within the national trend of a growing active caseload, there was variation across individual courts. We saw a particularly high growth in Christchurch, where active cases almost doubled to 139 as at 30 June 2023.

Trends in young people's first appearances in the Youth Court in Canterbury indicate the rise was driven by a growth in theft cases, which more than doubled during the year.



## MEET TWO OF OUR JUDGES

### Judge Ophir Cassidy

Youth Court  
Waitākere



Before joining the bench in 2021, Judge Cassidy (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Whātua) was a youth advocate, lawyer for child and teacher. “Where I feel most at home is with young people and children; being a judge has just made me more passionate about them,” she says. Judge Cassidy often sits at Te Kōti Rangatahi | Rangatahi Courts held at various marae in the Auckland region. Hoani Waititi Marae runs a tikanga-based programme for young people called Whiti ki te ora and she has had “young people who’ve never spoken a word of te reo Māori in their life” stand at their graduation feeling proud to be Māori and reciting their pepeha. Connecting with tikanga is essential for them, says Judge Cassidy, who also sits in the adult criminal court. The court connecting with the community it serves is essential too, she says. “We’re all on the same waka. We all want the same outcomes. Which is for young people not to be coming before the court. We want them to have dreams and goals and aspirations. We want them to be proud of who they are and where they come from. To have a sense of responsibility for themselves and for the community. To reach their true potential.”

### Judge Lance Rowe

Youth Court  
Palmerston North



For Judge Rowe, who joined the bench in 2016, seeing positive change in a young person is the most satisfying aspect of his job. “The Youth Court encourages young people to positively address what’s brought them to court,” he says. “It’s about finding lasting solutions, drawing on the strengths of immediate and wider whānau that might not have been relied on in the past, but also supporting them to provide those strengths. It becomes a collaborative way of holding a young person accountable, on terms that are most likely to prevent reoffending and give them a better opportunity to identify and achieve their goals and aspirations.” The Youth Court’s strength is it is mana focused, says Judge Rowe. “The court appropriately addresses the mana of a young person within their whānau and wider family group, and the mana of victims. All are involved or invited to be involved in designing outcomes that endure and put things right for victims.” Judge Rowe, who also sits in the adult criminal court, says the Youth Court is “challenging, because you’re dealing with immature brains, but we get some wonderful results. Of any system, it stands the best chance of turning things around for young people and offering them chances they may not have been open to or aware of.”

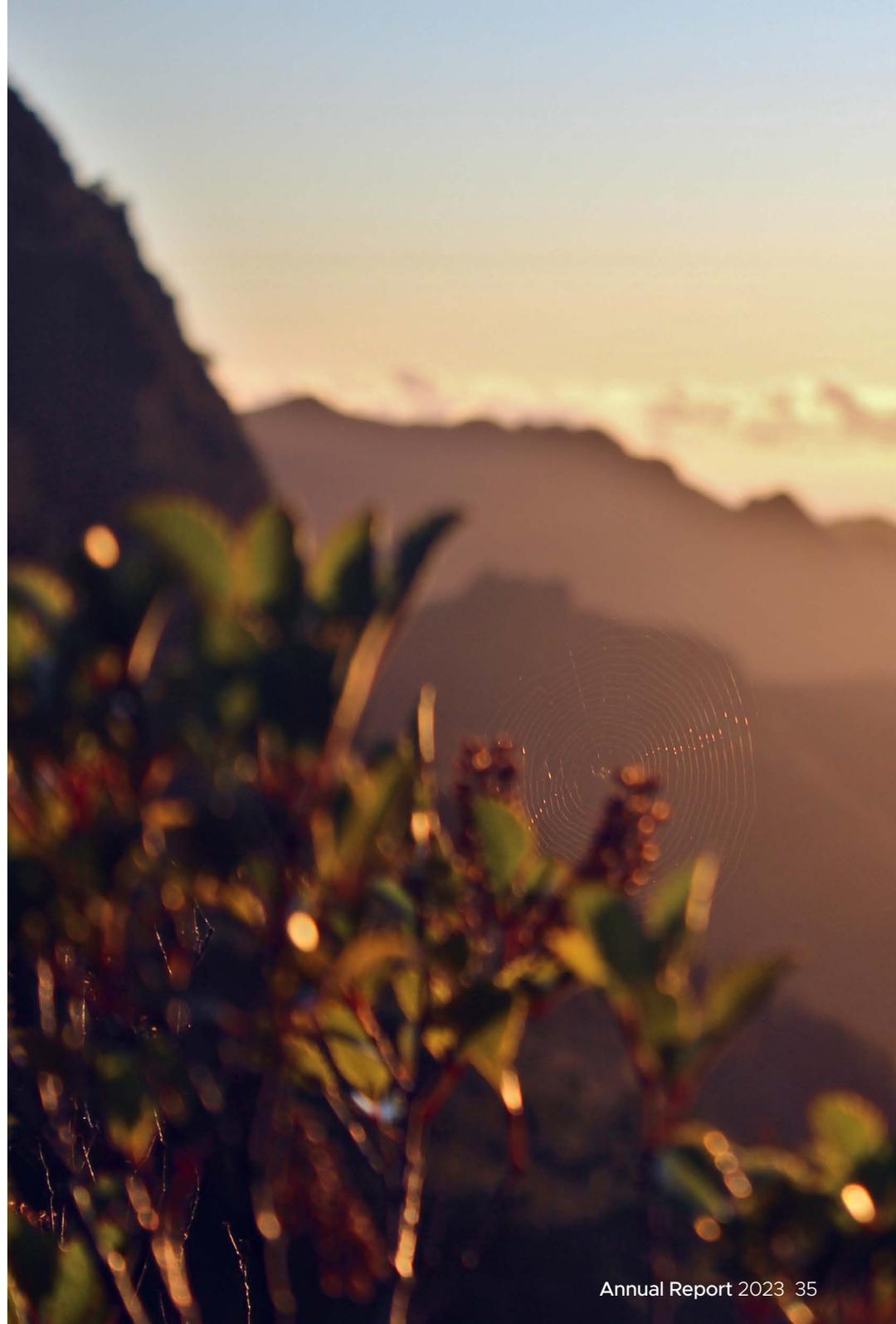
## CIVIL COURT | TE KŌTI HIWHIRI

In its civil jurisdiction, the District Court resolves disputes between individuals and/or organisations. Someone who feels they have been wronged may bring a claim and, if successful, be awarded a remedy such as compensation.

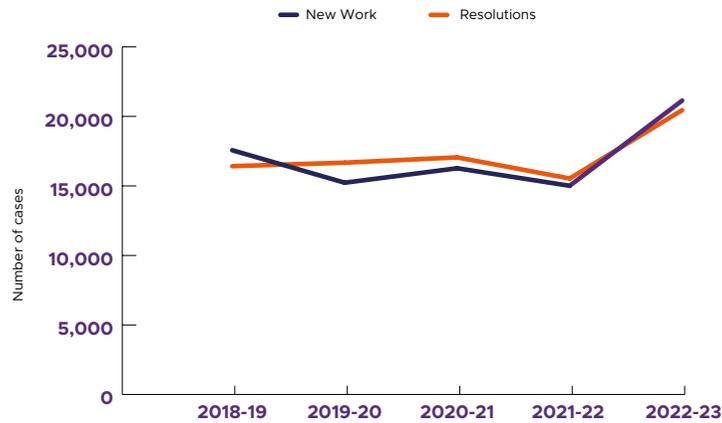
The District Court can hear claims up to a value of \$350,000. Examples of common claims in the District Court include contractual disputes (where one party has not performed their obligations under an agreement), negligence (such as where services have not been provided with reasonable skill) and restraining orders (where a person is seeking an order to prevent harassment). The District Court does not have jurisdiction to hear disputes regarding the recovery of land (with some exceptions), interpretation of wills or judicial review.

New work and resolutions increased in the District Court's civil jurisdiction in the 2022–23 financial year. Increased debt collection cases are prominent among the new work.

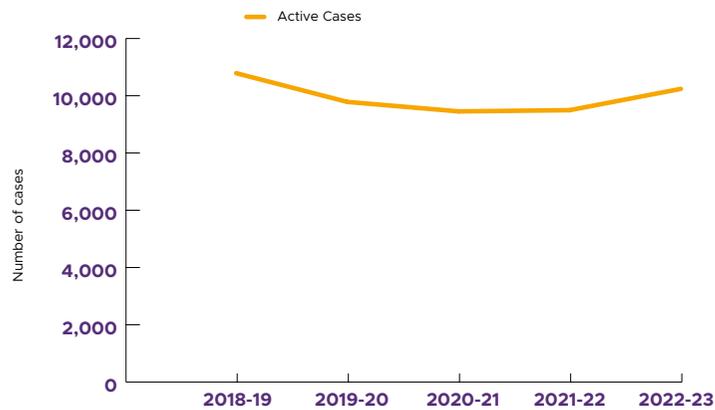
During the year, the active civil caseload increased by 8% to 10,240 as at 30 June 2023 due to a higher increase in new cases than cases resolved.



### CIVIL – NEW WORK AND RESOLUTIONS



### CIVIL – ACTIVE CASES



### Compared with the previous financial year:

New work increased by  
**6,132** cases (+41%)

Resolutions increased by  
**4,917** cases (+32%)

Active cases increased by  
**744** cases (+8%)

While both new work and resolutions increased nationally, the number of new cases was higher than the number of cases resolved, resulting in increased active cases. In contrast, Auckland and Manukau saw a decrease in active cases because of an increased volume of undefended cases that were resolved.

Although there were 10,240 active civil cases, not all required court or judge time. Cases that require judicial attention make up a small volume of overall civil cases (10%). The active load of these cases in court has been decreasing over the past five years.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
New Work	17,568	15,231	16,272	15,010	21,142
Resolutions	16,421	16,672	17,055	15,535	20,452
Active Cases	10,788	9,784	9,454	9,496	10,240

Note that the figures on the right count new work and resolutions as the total number of cases over a 12-month period ending 30 June of each year. Active cases are as at 30 June for the associated year.

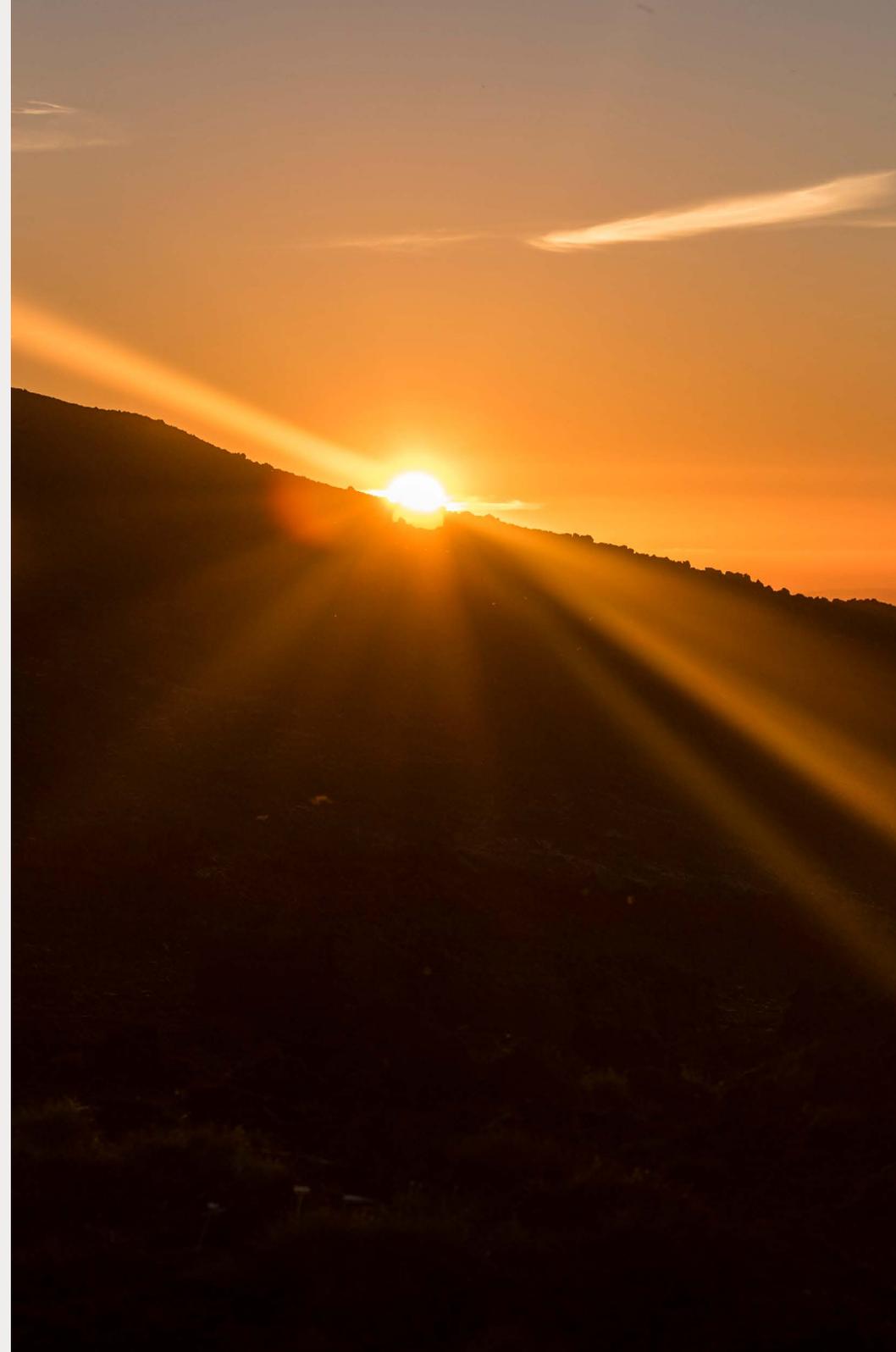
## MEET ONE OF OUR JUDGES

### Judge Tom Gilbert

Civil Court  
Christchurch



Civil jurisdiction duties take up about 15% of Judge Gilbert's time, with the rest devoted to the adult criminal court. He likes having civil cases as part of his mix. As well as contractual disputes between individuals and/or organisations, cases include appeals from tribunals and restraining order applications. Since Judge Gilbert joined the bench in 2016, he has seen an increase in self-represented litigants, often for both sides in a case. "Some are capable and focused," he says, "but generally they lack a bit of understanding of process. I think the increase reflects access to justice issues and the cost of lawyering up." Judge Gilbert particularly enjoys resolving cases through mediation at a judicial settlement conference, thereby saving litigants the financial and emotional cost of potentially a long, drawn-out court case. "Litigants are often relieved when they walk out of a conference," he says. "Suddenly, they can look forward rather than keep looking back. Even if they haven't got a result they are delighted about, as long as it's a result they can live with, at least they can get on with their life."



## SPECIALIST COURTS

As well as the Family Court and Youth Court, specialist courts and dedicated lists within the District Court include the following (in chronological order of establishment):

### Family Violence Court

Established in 2001 at Waitākere District Court, this court is now available in seven locations and brings a multi-agency approach to dealing with the underlying causes of family violence.

### Christchurch Youth Drug Court

Established in 2002 to address the links between alcohol and drug use and youth offending, this court refers offenders with a dependency to appropriate services and treatment.

### Te Kōti Rangatahi | Rangatahi Court

Established in Gisborne in 2008, this court within the Youth Court sits on marae in 16 locations. The same laws and consequences apply as in the Youth Court but Te Kōti Rangatahi incorporates Māori cultural practices to reconnect Māori offenders to their heritage and better involve whānau, hāpū and iwi in court processes. It is not, however, exclusively for Māori.



New Beginnings Court coordinator Carmel Claridge with one of the offenders who has successfully gone through the court. Image: RNZ

### Pasifika Court

Inspired by the success of Te Kōti Rangatahi, this court sits in two locations after being established in 2010 in Māngere, South Auckland. The court sits in Pasifika churches or community centres and follows Pasifika cultural processes to reconnect Pasifika offenders to their heritage and better involve families and communities in court processes. It is not, however, exclusively for Pasifika.

### **New Beginnings Court**

Established in 2010 at Auckland District Court, this court (like the Special Circumstance Court in Wellington) addresses low-level offending by people who are homeless and/or have impaired decision making because of such things as mental illness, intellectual disability and addiction. It provides rehabilitation plans monitored and overseen by judges.

### **Matariki Court**

This court was established in 2011 at Kaikohe District Court to address the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system and increase Māori perspectives and involvement in the court process. It engages the offender's whānau, hapū and iwi in the sentencing stage, encourages use of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori, and facilitates wraparound services and alternative pathways to address the underlying causes of offending. It is not, however, exclusively for Māori.

### **Special Circumstances Court**

Established in 2012 at Wellington District Court, this court (like the New Beginnings Court in Auckland) addresses low-level offending by people who are homeless and/or have impaired decision making because of such things as mental illness, intellectual disability and addiction. It provides rehabilitation plans monitored and overseen by judges.

### **Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court**

Established at Auckland District Court and Waitākere District Court in 2012, and since 2021 also available at Hamilton District

Court, this court combines justice, health and social services to address the drivers of crime through recovery from addiction.

### **Family Violence Intervention Court**

Established in 2018 at Gisborne District Court, this court seeks to reduce family violence by investing time early in the court process to refer defendants facing family violence-related charges to relevant programmes to address their behaviour.

### **Young Adult List**

Established in 2020 at Porirua District Court and since 2022 also available at Gisborne District Court and Hamilton District Court, this list is for 18- to 25-year-olds and recognises the challenges and needs this age group often bring with them to court. The goal is for everyone to understand what is happening and to feel understood themselves so they can fully participate in the court process.

### **Criminal Procedure (Mentally Impaired Persons) List**

Established in 2020 at Auckland District Court, this list holds dedicated hearings for defendants whose sanity or fitness to enter a plea may need to be determined.

### **Personal Individual Needs Court**

Inspired by the success of other specialist courts and established in 2020 at Masterton District Court, this court works with Police, probation officers and other agencies to support offenders in addressing the underlying causes of their offending.

## JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

District Court judges are committed to reporting on appropriate measures to enhance public awareness and confidence in the judiciary. Performance measures presented are appeals and reserved judgments.

### District Court Appeals

Decisions that are successfully appealed to the senior courts are a common measure of judicial performance. In the 2022–23 financial year, there were 535 successful appeals from 1,547 appeals heard following District Court decisions (506 were criminal proceedings appealed to either the High Court or Court of Appeal, 19 Family Court and 10 civil).

While the number of appeals heard increased or remained stable, there was a decrease in the proportion of successful appeals across all divisions of the District Court.

### Criminal Appeals

In the 2022–23 financial year, there were 1,718 appeals made following criminal case decisions. Therefore, around 1 in 50 cases resulted in an appeal.

Of the total amount of appeals, 1,449 were heard, with the rest being withdrawn or abandoned. Of the appeals heard, 35% were successful. This is a decrease of six percentage points from the previous year.

	Appeals Heard	% of Successful Appeals	% of Unsuccessful Appeals
2021-22	1,322	41%	59%
2022-23	1,449	35%	65%

Note that successful and unsuccessful appeals are calculated as percentages of appeals heard. Total District Court appeals include cases appealed to both the High Court and the Court of Appeal. The appeals here were made in the 2022–23 financial year but may have been heard later.



### Family Appeals

In the 2022–23 financial year, 92 appeals were made in the Family Court, which is around 1% of defended applications resulting in appeals. Of the appeals, only 54 were heard, with 35% of these having a successful outcome. The proportion of successful appeals decreased by 11 percentage points compared with the previous year.

	Appeals Heard	% of Successful Appeals	% of Unsuccessful Appeals
2021-22	56	46%	54%
2022-23	54	35%	65%

### Civil Appeals

In the 2022–23 financial year, 50 appeals were made against civil case decisions, which is around 2% of civil cases that required judicial attention\* resulting in appeals. Of the appeals, 44 were heard, with 23% of these having a successful outcome. The proportion of successful appeals decreased by 23 percentage points compared with the previous year.

	Appeals Heard	% of Successful Appeals	% of Unsuccessful Appeals
2021-22	35	46%	54%
2022-23	44	23%	66%

Note that successful and unsuccessful appeals are calculated as percentages of appeals heard. Total District Court appeals include cases appealed to both the High Court and the Court of Appeal. The appeals here were made in the 2022–23 financial year but may have been heard later.

\*Civil cases that require judicial attention are ones dealt with in court, as opposed to being dealt with in the Central Registry.

## Timely Delivery of Judgments

Judges sometimes defer announcing their decision at the end of a hearing because of the complexity of the case and/or their workload. These decisions are reserved and delivered at a later time, usually in writing.

Parties involved can find information on the status of a reserved judgment by enquiring at the court where the proceedings were held.

Wherever possible, the court aims to deliver judgment, or reasons for judgment, within one month of the conclusion of the hearing. There is an expectation that 90% of all judgments or reasons for judgments will be delivered within three months.

	0-1 month	1-3 months	3-6 months	6-9 months	9-12 months	12 months above
Civil	102	32	19	8	2	2
Criminal	185	116	70	16	5	2
Family	441	197	83	17	4	1

## Judgments on our Website

We have published District Court judgments on our website since 2016 and these are available for anyone to read. Our publications team uses selection criteria to manage the large volume of judgments, with the aim of publishing a representative subset: mainly criminal, with a smaller selection of family, youth and civil. We give priority to judgments of high public interest. For example, in 2023, all the judgments in the Whakaari–White Island criminal trial were published. [www.districtcourts.govt.nz](http://www.districtcourts.govt.nz)

## In the 2022–23 financial year:

**82%** of all reserved judgments were delivered within three months from the date of hearing.

**76%** of reserved criminal judgments were delivered within three months from the date of hearing.

**86%** of reserved Family Court judgments were delivered within three months from the date of hearing.

**81%** of reserved civil judgments were delivered within three months from the date of hearing.

Delays beyond the 90-day delivery standard are likely to be because of the effects of the year's industrial action and extreme weather events.



Pictured at Te Rau Karamu marae at Massey University in Wellington, during the second of 2023's two judicial induction events, are, from left, new judges Kate Davenport KC, Caroline Hickman, Susie Houghton, Ngaroma Tahana, Nicola Wills, Katie Elkin, Tania Sharkey, Tania Warburton, Sandra Alofivae and Tania Williams Blyth.

# Judicial Officers List

1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023

\* denotes retired

\*\* denotes elevated to High Court

## District Court

### Kaikohe

Judge Michelle Howard-Sager  
*Te Whakatōhea, Ngāpuhi*

Judge Brandt Shortland  
*Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi, Ngāiterangi,  
Ngāti Ranginui*

### Whangārei

Judge Taryn Bayley  
*Ngāti Mutunga*

Judge Greg Davis  
*Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Tai, Ngāti Raukawa,  
Ngāti Kahungunu*

Judge Hana Ellis  
*Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou*  
(Until June 2023)

Judge La-Verne King  
*Ngāti Kahu ki Whangaroa, Ngāti Paoa*

Judge Deidre Orchard

Judge Philip Rzepecky

Judge Gene Tomlinson

Judge Tania Williams Blyth  
*Ngāti Pūkenga, Te Arawa*

## North Shore

Judge Clare Bennett

Judge Anna Fitzgibbon

Judge Simon Maude

Judge Dianne Partridge  
*Ngāti Kahungunu*

## Waitākere

Judge Ophir Cassidy  
*Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara*

Judge Sarah Morrison  
*Te Arawa, Te Whānau-a-Apanui,  
Ngāti Mutunga*

Judge Maria Pecotic  
*Ngāti Whakaue*

Judge Emma Parsons

Judge Terry Singh

Judge Lisa Tremewan

## Auckland

Judge Debra Bell  
*Ngāpuhi*

Judge John Bergseng

Judge Stephen Bonnar KC

Judge David Burns

Judge David Clark  
*Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Hāua ki  
Taumarunui*

Judge Kate Davenport KC

Judge Lex de Jong  
(Until April 2023)

Judge Hana Ellis  
*Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou*  
(From June 2023)

Judge Tony Fitzgerald

Judge Sarah Fleming

Judge Grant Fraser\*

Judge Brooke Gibson

Judge Kevin Glubb

Judge Denese Henare\*  
*Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi*

Judge June Jelaš

Judge Simon Lance

Judge Kirsten Lummis

Judge Andrea Manuel

Judge Nicola Mathers

Judge Kathryn Maxwell

Judge Kevin Muir

Judge Belinda Pidwell

Judge Claire Ryan

Judge Belinda Sellars KC  
*Ngāi Te Rangī, Ngāi Tūkairangi*

Judge David Sharp

Judge Mary-Elizabeth Sharp

Judge Allison Sinclair

Judge Pippa Sinclair

Judge Anna Skellern  
*Ngāpuhi*

Judge Evangelos (Barney) Thomas

Judge Robyn von Keisenberg

Judge Peter Winter

#### **Manukau**

Judge Gus Andrée Wiltens\*

Judge Tini Clark  
(Until May 2023)

Judge Richard Earwaker  
(Until May 2023)

Judge Janey Forrest

Judge Lope Ginnen

Judge Alan Goodwin

Judge Karen Grau

Judge Antony Mahon

Judge Richard McIlraith

Judge David McNaughton

Judge Soana Moala  
*Ngāti Awa*

Judge Jonathan Moses

Judge Sharyn Otene  
*Ngāpuhi*

Judge Sanjay Patel

Judge Margaret Rogers

Judge Ngaroma Tahana  
*Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Mākinō, Tapuika*

Judge Kiriana Tan  
*Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Mutunga*

Judge Gabrielle Wagner

Judge Nick Webby

Judge Mina Wharepouri  
*Taranaki, Te Ātiawa, Tonga*

Judge Yelena Yelavich

#### **Papakura**

Judge Alexander Laurenson  
*Ngāi Tahu, Ngāi Tūmapuhia-a-rangi,  
Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangi, Ngāti Rangī,  
Ngāti Tūwharetoa*

Judge Gerard Winter

#### **Hamilton**

Judge Dean Blair

Judge Denise Clark  
*Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa*

Judge Stephen Clark  
*Ngāti Hāua ki Taumarunui,  
Ngāti Maniapoto*

Judge Tini Clark  
*Waikato-Tainui*  
(From May 2023)

Judge Noel Cocurullo  
*Ngāti Pikiao*

Judge Garry Collin

Judge Philip Crayton

Judge Brett Crowley

Judge Jonathan Down

Judge Nicky Grimes

Judge Glen Marshall

Judge Rachel Paul

*Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Hokopū,  
Ngāti Rangataua, Ngāti Manawa,  
Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāti Moewhare*

Judge Kim Saunders

### **Tauranga**

Judge Louis Bidois

*Te Arawa*

Judge David Cameron\*

Judge Christina Cook

Judge Stephen Coyle

Judge Lex de Jong

(From April 2023)

Judge Paul Geoghegan

Judge Chris Harding

Judge Tom Ingram

Judge Bill Lawson

Judge Melinda Mason

*Ngāti Tama, Te Ātiawa, Te Arawa*

### **Rotorua**

Judge Melinda Marama Broek

*Ngāi Tai, Ngāti Koata*

Judge Greg Hollister-Jones

Judge Maree MacKenzie

Judge Eddie Paul

*Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Hokopū,  
Ngāti Rangataua, Ngāti Manawa,  
Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāti Moewhare*

Judge Tony Snell

Judge Alayne Wills

*Kāi Tahu, Kāti Mamoe, Waitaha*

### **Gisborne**

Judge Turitea Bolstad

*Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāruahine*

Judge Warren Cathcart

Judge Haamiora Raumati

*Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Toa, Te Ātiawa,  
Ngāti Kahungunu*

### **Napier**

Judge Peter Callinicos

Judge Russell Collins

(Until June 2023)

Judge Richard Earwaker

(From May 2023)

Judge Bridget Mackintosh

Judge Geoff Rea\*

### **Hastings**

Judge Jacqueline Blake

*Ngāti Konohi, Ngāti Porou,  
Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki, Te Whānau-a-Kai*

Judge Gordon Matenga

*Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Rongomaiwahine,  
Ngāi Tāmanuhiri*

### **New Plymouth**

Judge Tony Greig

Judge Lynne Harrison

Judge Gregory Hikaka

*Ngā Ruahine, Ngāti Tamaahuroa,  
Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Maniapoto,  
Ngāti Ruanui*

### **Whanganui**

Judge Keryn Broughton

*Ngā Rauru Kiihahi, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāruahine*  
(From June 2023)

Judge Ian Carter

*Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Te Rangī*  
(Until February 2023)

Judge Justin Marinovich

Judge Dugald Matheson

### **Palmerston North**

Judge Keryn Broughton

*Ngā Rauru Kiihahi, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāruahine*  
(Until June 2023)

Judge Stephanie Edwards

Judge Caroline Hickman

Judge Jonathan Krebs

Judge Jill Moss

Judge Bruce Northwood

*Te Aupūri*

Judge Lance Rowe

**Masterton**

Judge Barbara Morris

**Porirua**

Judge James Johnston  
*Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-a-Apanui*

**Hutt Valley**

Judge Mike Mika

**Wellington**

Judge Andrew Becroft\*\*

Judge Jennifer Binns

Judge Tim Black

Judge Ian Carter  
*Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Te Rangī*  
(From February 2023)

Judge Bruce Davidson  
*Ngāi Tahu*

Judge Katie Elkin

Judge Stephen Harrop

Judge Bill Hastings

Judge Peter Hobbs

Judge Jan Kelly  
*Ngāti Kahungunu*

Judge Kevin Kelly

Judge Alison McLeod

Judge Christine Montague

Judge Andy Nicholls

Judge Mary O'Dwyer\*

Judge Noel Sainsbury

Judge Arthur Tompkins

Judge Nicola Wills

**Nelson**

Judge Garry Barkle

Judge Joanne (Jo) Rielly

Judge Richard Russell

Judge Tony Zohrab

**Christchurch**

Judge Mark Callaghan

Judge Tony Couch\*

Judge Michael Crosbie

Judge Michelle Duggan

Judge Jane Farish

Judge Alistair Garland\*

Judge Tom Gilbert

Judge Jo Hambleton

Judge Quentin Hix  
*Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Māmoē, Waitaha,  
Rapuwaiti and Hāwea*

Judge Murray Hunt  
*Ngāi Tahu*

Judge Paul Kellar

Judge Sarah Lindsay

Judge Gerard Lynch

Judge Traicee McKenzie

Judge Jane McMeeken

Judge Raoul Neave

Judge Stephen O'Driscoll

Judge Paul Shearer

**Timaru**

Judge Dominic Dravitzki

Judge Joanna Maze\*

Judge Campbell Savage

**Dunedin**

Judge Dominic Flatley

Judge David Robinson

Judge Emma Smith

Judge Michael Turner

**Invercargill**

Judge Catriona Doyle

Judge Bernadette Farnan

Judge Russell Walker

**Chief District Court Judge's Chambers**

Chief Judge Heemi Taumaunu  
*Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Konohi, Ngāi Tahu*

Judge Jacquelyn Moran

Judge Ida Malosi

Judge Russell Collins  
(From June 2023)

Judge John Walker\*

### Environment Court

Judge Jane Borthwick

Judge Melinda Dickey

Judge John Hassan

Judge David Kirkpatrick

Judge Lauren Semple

Judge Jeff Smith

Judge Pru Steven KC

Judge Sheena Tepania  
*Ngāti Kahu ki Whangaroa, Ngāti Kuri,  
Te Aupouri, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi*

### Chief Coroner

Judge Anna Tutton

### Immigration and Protection Tribunal Chair

Judge Martin Treadwell  
*Ngāpuhi*

### Independent Police Conduct Authority Chair

Judge Colin Doherty\*

### Office of the Children's Commissioner

Judge Frances Eivers  
*Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato-Tainui*  
(returned to District Court –  
1 November 2023)

### Alcohol Regulatory and Licensing Authority

Judge Phil Connell (Acting Warranted  
Judge) Chair

Judge Simon Menzies (Acting Warranted  
Judge) Deputy Chair

### Secondments 1 July – 31 December 2023

#### Vanuatu

Judge Bill Hastings

### Judges retiring 1 July – 31 December 2023

#### Auckland

Judge Sarah Fleming

#### Hamilton

Judge Jonathan Down

### Tauranga

Judge Chris Harding

Judge Tom Ingram

### Whanganui

Judge Dugald Matheson

### Wellington

Judge Bruce Davidson  
*Ngāi Tahu*

### New judge appointments 1 July – 31 December 2023

#### Manukau

Judge Sandra Alofivae

Judge Tania Sharkey

#### Wellington

Judge Susie Houghton

Judge Tania Warburton

### Acting Warranted Judges

Judge Ema Aitken

Judge Gus Andree Wiltens

Judge John Brandts-Giesen\*

Judge Brian Callaghan

Judge David Cameron

Judge Philip Connell

Judge Phillip Cooper

Judge Tony Couch

Judge Nevin Dawson

Judge Keith de Ridder

Judge Timothy Druce\*

Judge Brian Dwyer

Judge Patrick Grace\*

Judge Duncan Harvey

Judge Denese Henare  
*Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi*

Judge Lawry Hinton  
*Te Arawa*

Judge Jim Large

Judge Jane Lovell-Smith

Judge Paul Mabey KC

Judge John McDonald

Judge Chris McGuire

Judge Ian McHardy

Judge Alisdair Menzies

Judge Ian Mill

Judge Jocelyn Munro

Judge Laurie Newhook

Judge Mary O'Dwyer

Judge Kevin Phillips

Judge Geoff Rea

Judge Philip Recordon\*

Judge David Ruth

Judge Laurence Ryan

Judge Ajit Singh

Judge David Smith

Judge Maureen Southwick KC

Judge Lee Spear

Judge Peter Spiller

Judge Chris Sygrove

Judge Craig Thompson\*

Judge Chris Tuohy

Judge John Walker

Judge Anthony Walsh\*

Judge Noel Walsh

### New Acting Warranted Judges 1 July – 31 December 2023

Judge Bruce Davidson  
*Ngāi Tahu*

Judge Sarah Fleming

Judge Chris Harding

Judge Tom Ingram

### Acting Warrants expired 1 July – 31 December 2023

Judge Chris McGuire

Judge Laurence Ryan

Judge Chris Sygrove

\*denotes warrant expired during the period

## Community Magistrates

CM Russell Bagley

CM Terry Bourke

CM Sherida Cooper

CM Shaun Cole

CM Kaye Davies  
*Ngātiwai, Ngāti Porou*

CM Rosemary Fitzpatrick

CM Janet Holmes

CM Lesley Jensen

CM Philippa King

CM Lauolefale Lemalu

CM Ngaire Mascelle  
*Te Whakatōhea, Ngāti Porou,  
Ngāti Whakaue, Te Rarawa*

CM Brenda Midson

CM Lavinia Nathan  
*Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whātua*

CM Carla na Nagara

CM Sally O'Brien

CM Jo Sihamu

CM Fenella Thomas

## New Community Magistrate appointments 1 July – 31 December 2023

CM Elder Robati

CM Sarah Steele

CM Jodie Winterburn  
*Ngāpuhi*







District Court of New Zealand  
Te Kōti-ā-Rohe o Aotearoa