

9 August 2024

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Our ref: OIA 113666

Tēnā koe Chris

### **Official Information Act request: Coroners Court case statistics**

Thank you for your email of 1 July 2024 requesting statistical information about Coroners Court cases under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

On 29 July 2024, the Ministry of Justice (the Ministry) wrote to you to advise that it had decided to grant your request with some further time required to prepare the information for release. Thank you for your patience while the Ministry has prepared the information in response to your request.

Please find your requests, and responses, set out below.

- 1. From 2015 - 2023 and to include the half-yearly numbers in 2024 can you please provide Total Number of Cases Referred to the Coroner*

The Ministry has interpreted 'cases referred to the coroner' to be those cases where the coroner has accepted jurisdiction of the death in accordance with the Coroners Act 2006. In response to this part of your request please see Table 1, attached, which provides the number of new cases accepted into the Coroners Court jurisdiction, by year, from 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2024. This data includes active and closed cases. Active cases are those currently under investigation by the coroner. Closed cases have been heard by the coroner and findings have been issued.

- 2. Of the above cases can you split this into Total Number of Cases Investigated*
- 3. Total Number of Cases whereby it was Notified of Coroner's Decision not to open inquiry*

In response to questions 2 and 3 of your request, the Ministry has interpreted Coroners Court cases investigated to be inquiry cases and non-investigated to be cases where no inquiry was opened (non-inquiry cases).

I am advised the Ministry initially believed that the information in response to your first request, could be broken down to respond to parts 2 and 3 of your request. However, when further progressing the request, the Ministry identified that information in part 1 of your request is not broken down into the level of detail you have requested in parts 2 and 3 of your request as a part of regular reporting.

Table 1 provides information on both active and closed cases. The Ministry does not report on active inquiry cases and non-inquiry cases due to the way Coroners Court cases progress. This is because a coroner may decide whether to open and conduct an inquiry sometime after the death occurred. In addition, due to the way a coroner's decision not to open inquiry is recorded in the Case Management System used by the Coroners Court, non-inquiry cases may not be recorded until the case is closed. The Ministry therefore does not hold the information requested and these parts of your request are refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as there are no grounds for believing that the information is held by another department, Minister of the Crown, organisation, or local authority subject to the Act. I apologise that this was not communicated to you sooner.

The Ministry does hold information on the number of Coroners Court non-inquiry and inquiry cases, closed by the coroner in the period 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2024. This information is provided to you in Table 2, attached. The data in Table 2 is counted based on the year the case was closed by the coroner, which can be different to the date the case is notified to the coroner, or the date of death. As such, the data contained in Table 2 is not comparable to the data in Table 1.

*4. Can you also provide number of active Coronial cases per month, per year since 2015 until today's date Average age in days to complete the cases?*

In response to these parts of your request, please see Tables 3 and 4, attached:

- Table 3 provides the number of active Coroners Court cases, by month, from 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2024.
- Table 4 provides the average age, in days, of Coroners Court cases closed in the 12 month periods ending January 2015 to June 2024.

If you require any further information, please contact Media & Social Media Manager Joe Locke at [media@justice.govt.nz](mailto:media@justice.govt.nz).

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: [justice.govt.nz/about/official-information-act-requests/oia-responses/](https://justice.govt.nz/about/official-information-act-requests/oia-responses/).

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Act. The Office of the Ombudsman may be contacted by email to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by phone on 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Jacquelyn Shannon

**Group Manager, Courts and Tribunals, Regional Service Delivery**

**Table 1: Number of new cases accepted into Coroners Court jurisdiction, by calendar year, from 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2024**

Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	*2024
Cases	3,336	3,365	3,556	3,583	3,850	3,507	3,591	3,864	3,807	1,699

**Notes for Table 1:**

- This data may differ from previously released or published data and was extracted from the Case Management System used by the Coroners Court on 17 July 2024.
- This data includes only Coroners Court cases, which are cases where the coroner accepts jurisdiction for the death. This data excludes advice cases, which are those where the coroner declines jurisdiction and a doctor certifies the death.
- Cases are included based on the date the case was notified to the coroner, which can differ from the date of death.
- This data includes active and closed cases. Active cases are those currently under investigation by the coroner. Closed cases have been heard by the coroner and findings have been issued.
- This data is counted by calendar year.
- \*2024 is a partial year covering 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

**Table 2: Number of Coroners Court non-inquiry, inquiry, and ‘other’ cases, closed by the coroner, by calendar year, from 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2024**

Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	*2024
Non-inquiry cases	1,863	1,719	1,860	1,944	1,967	1,766	2,041	1,993	2,193	1,065
Inquiry cases	1,164	1,131	1,030	1,094	996	1,095	1,213	1,039	1,389	1,009
Other	191	189	155	205	170	187	167	150	164	81

**Notes for Table 2:**

- This data may differ from previously released or published data and was extracted from the Case Management System used by the Coroners Court on 17 July 2024.
- This data includes only Coroners Court cases, which are cases where the coroner accepts jurisdiction for the death. This data excludes advice cases, which are those where the coroner declines jurisdiction, and a doctor certifies the death.
- This data includes only closed cases, which have been heard by the coroner and findings have been issued.
- Cases are included based on the date the case was closed by the coroner, which can differ from the date the findings were issued.
- Cases with non-inquiry issued refers to cases where a COR2 (non-inquiry) certificate of findings was issued.
- Cases with inquiry refers to cases where a COR7 (inquiry) certificate of findings was issued.
- Other refers to cases where a COR9 (criminal investigation) or COR10 (other investigation) certificate of findings was issued. COR9 certificate of findings are issued by the coroner when an inquiry will not be opened or resumed, because the inquiry has been dealt by prosecution criminal proceedings. COR10 certificate of findings are issued by the coroner when an inquiry will not be opened or resumed because the inquiry has been dealt by another agency, for example the Health and Disability Commissioner, or the Transport Accident Investigation Commission.
- This data is counted by calendar year.
- \*2024 is a partial year covering 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

**Table 3: Number of active Coroners Court cases, by month, from 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2024**

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2015	2,934	2,948	3,027	3,101	3,121	3,164	3,117	3,168	3,084	3,067	3,104	3,032
2016	3,027	3,043	3,077	3,127	3,133	3,188	3,267	3,277	3,280	3,293	3,311	3,421
2017	3,469	3,555	3,517	3,618	3,618	3,636	3,692	3,769	3,754	3,795	3,810	3,878
2018	3,973	3,966	3,997	4,042	4,051	4,105	4,155	4,173	4,244	4,276	4,210	4,227
2019	4,325	4,360	4,533	4,554	4,526	4,655	4,562	4,580	4,677	4,744	4,829	4,939
2020	4,982	4,966	5,099	5,279	5,247	5,241	5,282	5,237	5,208	5,224	5,277	5,380
2021	5,407	5,441	5,458	5,485	5,555	5,518	5,524	5,559	5,551	5,513	5,506	5,539
2022	5,658	5,771	5,824	5,973	6,059	6,154	6,123	6,107	6,120	6,112	6,125	6,230
2023	6,384	6,451	6,407	6,472	6,498	6,528	6,544	6,404	6,302	6,274	6,190	6,216
2024	6,192	6,043	5,964	5,933	5,847	5,858	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Notes for Table 3:**

- This data may differ from previously released or published data and was extracted from the Case Management System used by the Coroners Court on 17 July 2024.
- This data includes only Coroners Court cases, which are cases where the coroner accepts jurisdiction for the death. This data excludes advice cases, which are those where the coroner declines jurisdiction, and a doctor certifies the death.
- Example interpretation: At the end of January 2024, there were 6,192 active Coroners Court cases.
- This data is counted by calendar year.
- 2024 is a partial year covering 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

**Table 4: Average age, in days, of Coroners Court cases closed in the periods ending 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2024**

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2015	361	358	332	333	334	337	333	328	328	319	318	316
2016	320	322	323	317	316	312	308	310	310	313	310	309
2017	307	303	304	307	308	312	325	325	322	320	324	324
2018	325	335	340	344	346	346	341	341	343	348	346	349
2019	354	347	344	339	342	342	342	338	343	347	349	347
2020	352	352	352	357	356	381	400	420	434	448	457	466
2021	464	476	490	488	492	477	471	479	476	473	477	479
2022	489	493	493	494	497	498	503	500	499	488	487	492
2023	488	491	487	488	495	495	499	499	508	527	536	551
2024	556	574	588	596	602	611	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Notes for Table 4:**

- This data may differ from previously released or published data and was extracted from the Case Management System used by the Coroners Court on 17 July 2024.
- This data includes only Coroners Court cases, which are cases where the coroner accepts jurisdiction for the death. This data excludes advice cases, which are those where the coroner declines jurisdiction, and a doctor certifies the death.
- Average completed time represents the active days between the date the death was notified to the coroner and the date the final findings were issued.
- Example interpretation: In the 12 months ending January 2024, the average age of Coroners Court cases at the date final findings were issued was 556 days.
- 2024 is a partial year covering 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.