

## Head 80 — JUDICIARY

**Controlling officer:** the Judiciary Administrator will account for expenditure under this Head.

**Estimate 2026–27** ..... **\$2,906.3m**

**Establishment ceiling 2026–27** (notional annual mid-point salary value) representing an estimated 1 841 non-directorate posts as at 31 March 2026 reducing by 19 posts to 1 822 posts as at 31 March 2027 ..... **\$951.7m**

In addition, there will be an estimated 227 directorate posts as at 31 March 2026 rising by one post to 228 posts as at 31 March 2027, which comprise 13 directorate civil service posts and 215 posts for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs).

### Controlling Officer's Report

#### Programmes

**Programme (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions**      These programmes contribute to Policy Area 12: Administration of Justice (Judiciary Administrator).  
**Programme (2) Support Services for Courts' Operation**

#### Detail

##### Programme (1): Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

	2024–25 (Actual)	2025–26 (Original)	2025–26 (Revised)	<b>2026–27 (Estimate)</b>
Financial provision (\$m)	1,987.8	2,155.9	2,113.5 (–2.0%)	<b>2,228.2</b> (+5.4%)
				(or +3.4% on 2025–26 Original)

#### Aim

**2** The aim is to maintain an independent and effective judicial system which upholds the rule of law, safeguards the rights and freedoms of the individual, and commands confidence within and outside Hong Kong.

#### Brief Description

**3** Under this programme, different levels of court and tribunals hear and adjudicate criminal cases and civil disputes. The objectives are to:

- ensure just and expeditious disposal of cases;
- enhance professional standards;
- ensure the Judiciary and the courts keep abreast with changing times; and
- maintain a bilingual court system in Hong Kong.

**4** In 2025, the operation of courts and tribunals continued to cope with the challenges from a persistently heavy caseload at various levels of court; a considerable number of complex civil and criminal cases requiring long trials, including the remaining cases relating to the 2019 anti-extradition amendment bill incidents (anti-EAB cases) and national security (NS cases); as well as the backlog and continual influx of leave applications for judicial review relating to non-refoulement claims at the High Court.

**5** The Judiciary has been making pro-active and dedicated efforts in tackling the above challenges through multi-pronged measures. These mainly include engaging additional judicial manpower, strengthening case management, promoting the wider use of mediation or other means of alternative dispute resolution where appropriate, making greater use of technology, and enhancing court facilities.

**6** To address the persistent shortage of judicial manpower, the Judiciary extended the statutory retirement ages of JJOs since 6 December 2019, following a major enhancement of their terms and conditions of service in 2017. The remuneration package has been refined as from August 2025 with a view to attracting legal talents and retaining judges at the High Court level or above. As from 2020, the Judiciary has been launching open recruitment exercises for JJOs at more regular intervals, having regard to the judicial manpower situation and operational needs at different levels of court. The recruitment exercises launched in 2023 yielded positive results with a total of 24 judicial appointments made so far. In November 2024, the Judiciary launched the latest round of open recruitment exercises for different levels of JJOs, starting from Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court with one judicial appointment made in September 2025. It will be followed by the recruitment for District Judges and Permanent Magistrates in 2026.

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7 Under this programme, resources are also deployed to perform various statutory functions under the Electoral Affairs Commission Ordinance (Cap. 541), the Interception of Communications and Surveillance Ordinance (Cap. 589) and the Legal Practitioners Ordinance (Cap. 159) in relation to the Higher Rights Assessment Board and related matters.

8 The key performance measures in respect of the courts and tribunals are:

### *Targets*

The waiting time targets have been set in accordance with the recommendations of the Court Users' Committees or are laid down in the respective ordinances or court rules.

	2025 Target	2024 (Actual)	2025 (Actual)	2026 Target
<i>Average Waiting Time</i>	(days)			
Court of Final Appeal				
application for leave to appeal				
criminal—from notice of hearing to hearing.....	45	37	37	<b>45</b>
civil—from notice of hearing to hearing.....	35	31	30	<b>35</b>
substantive appeal				
criminal—from notice of hearing to hearing.....	100	97	92	<b>100</b>
civil—from notice of hearing to hearing.....	120	95	94	<b>120</b>
Court of Appeal of the High Court				
criminal—from setting down of a case to hearing.....	50	47	47	<b>50</b>
civil—from application to fix date to hearing.....	90	66	73	<b>90</b>
Court of First Instance of the High Court				
Criminal Fixture List—from filing of indictment to hearing.....	—	369	368@	—
Civil Fixture List—from application to fix date to hearing.....	180	172	151	<b>180</b>
Civil Running List—from not-to-be-warned date to hearing....	30	16	26	<b>30</b>
appeals from Magistrates' Courts— from lodging of Notice of Appeal to hearing.....	90	131	115§	<b>90</b>
District Court				
criminal—from first appearance of defendants in District Court to hearing.....	100	397	337§	<b>100</b>
Civil Fixture List—from date of listing to hearing.....	120	110	113	<b>120</b>
Civil Running List—from not-to-be-warned date to hearing....	30	14	20	<b>30</b>
Family Court				
dissolution of marriage—from setting down of a case to hearing				
Special Procedure List.....	35	35	34	<b>35</b>
Defended List (all hearings).....	110	42	37	<b>110</b>
financial applications—from setting down of a case to hearing.....	110-140	73	74	<b>110-140</b>
Lands Tribunal—from setting down of a case to hearing				
appeal cases.....	90	6	— <sup>α</sup>	<b>90</b>
compensation cases.....	90	46	52	<b>90</b>
building management cases.....	90	34	55	<b>90</b>
tenancy cases.....	50	18	35	<b>50</b>

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	2025 Target	2024 (Actual)	2025 (Actual)	2026 Target
Magistrates' Courts—from plea to date of trial <sup>Ω</sup>				
summons .....	50	45	41	<b>50</b>
charge cases except for Juvenile Court—				
for defendants in custody .....	30-45	40	40	<b>30-45</b>
for defendants on bail.....	45-60	53	46	<b>45-60</b>
charge cases for Juvenile Court—				
for defendants in custody .....	30-45	54	— <sup>^</sup>	<b>30-45</b>
for defendants on bail.....	45-60	69	57	<b>45-60</b>
Coroner's Court—from date of listing to hearing .....	42	32	32	<b>42</b>
Labour Tribunal—				
from appointment to filing of a case ...	30	36	32 <sup>β</sup>	<b>30</b>
from filing of a case to first hearing....	30	23	23	<b>30</b>
Small Claims Tribunal—from filing of a case to first hearing.....	60	41	41	<b>60</b>
Obscene Articles Tribunal—				
from receipt of application to classification .....	5	3	2	<b>5</b>
from referral by a magistrate to determination.....	21	18	— <sup>#</sup>	<b>21</b>

As only eleven cases have been set down for trial/substantive hearing in the Competition Tribunal since its establishment, the waiting time is inapplicable. The target average waiting time will be considered when more cases are set down for trial/substantive hearing at the Tribunal.

- <sup>@</sup> The average waiting time for criminal hearings in the High Court remained long mainly due to the continued impact of the priority handling of a considerable number of complex criminal cases (including NS and other criminal cases) and of NS cases which tended to require longer time to prepare for trials and longer trials. The impact was augmented by the need for three criminal judges to handle each NS case where requested by the Secretary for Justice. The listing of other criminal cases has inevitably been affected. The target average waiting time for the Criminal Fixture List will be reviewed later at an appropriate juncture.
- <sup>§</sup> The average waiting time for certain types of criminal cases at the High Court and the District Court in 2025 failed to meet the targets mainly due to the priority accorded to complicated anti-EAB and NS cases which are typically more complex, involving more defendants and more lengthy trials, as well as the persistent shortage of judicial manpower. The court waiting time is also contingent upon some factors which are not fully under the control of the court such as the time required by parties for investigation, seeking legal advice and preparation for trial.
- <sup>α</sup> As there was no appeal case filed, the waiting time was inapplicable.
- <sup>Ω</sup> Owing to the design of the case management system in the Magistrates' Courts, the average waiting time shown is calculated on the basis of the duration from plea to the first date of trial and not the first free date which the court can offer to the parties.
- <sup>^</sup> As there was no charge case for the Juvenile Court where the defendant was remanded in custody, the waiting time was inapplicable.
- <sup>β</sup> The average waiting time for filing cases in the Labour Tribunal failed to meet the target mainly because there was a continuous influx of appointments for claims arising from the surge of closedown cases.
- <sup>#</sup> As there was no application for determination filed, the waiting time was inapplicable.

### Indicators

	2024 (Actual)	2025 (Actual)	2026 (Estimate)
<i>Number of Cases</i> <sup>Ψ</sup>			
Court of Final Appeal			
application for leave to appeal .....	229	243	<b>240</b>
appeals.....	24	11	<b>10</b>
miscellaneous proceedings.....	0	0	<b>0</b>
Court of Appeal of the High Court			
criminal appeals .....	277	535	<b>540</b>
civil appeals.....	577	1 260	<b>1 260</b>
miscellaneous proceedings.....	249	261	<b>260</b>

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	2024 (Actual)	2025 (Actual)	2026 (Estimate)
Court of First Instance of the High Court			
criminal jurisdiction			
criminal cases.....	452	447	450
confidential miscellaneous proceedings.....	698	697	700
miscellaneous proceedings (criminal).....	1 012	1 034	1 030
appeals from Magistrates' Courts .....	506	458	460
civil jurisdiction .....	20 126	21 051	21 050
probate cases .....	28 335	26 305	26 310
Competition Tribunal.....	0	0	0
District Court			
criminal cases.....	1 623	1 876	1 880
civil cases .....	30 270	31 958	31 960
family cases.....	20 326	19 205	19 210
Lands Tribunal .....	5 281	6 067	6 070
Magistrates' Courts.....	379 547	363 567	363 570
Coroner's Court.....	138	204	200
Labour Tribunal .....	4 879	5 180	5 180
Small Claims Tribunal .....	57 454	56 059	56 060
Obscene Articles Tribunal.....	163	148	150

Ψ The total caseload of 2025 (around 536 600) was higher than the average in the past five years from 2020 to 2024 (around 515 800).

9 The workload of a court depends not only on the number of cases but also on their nature and complexity. In recent years, there has been an increasing number of complex civil and criminal cases, such as the anti-EAB and NS cases, which generally take a longer time to conclude. While ensuring that the administration of justice will not be unduly compromised, the Judiciary will continue to adopt pro-active and multi-farious measures to enhance the efficiency of court operations and increase judicial resources with a view to expediting the handling of court proceedings.

### *Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2026–27*

10 In 2026–27, the Judiciary will continue to:

- monitor the court waiting times and workload at various levels of court, with a view to putting in place timely and effective measures to expedite the processing of cases without compromising on due administration of justice; and
- support the Family Procedure Rules Committee in making a new set of consolidated and streamlined court procedural rules for the family justice system under the Family Procedure Ordinance (Cap. 646).

### **Programme (2): Support Services for Courts' Operation**

	2024–25 (Actual)	2025–26 (Original)	2025–26 (Revised)	2026–27 (Estimate)
Financial provision (\$m)	623.1	650.3	668.1 (+2.7%)	678.1 (+1.5%)  (or +4.3% on 2025–26 Original)

### *Aim*

11 The aim is to provide efficient and effective services to support court operations.

### *Brief Description*

12 Under this programme, various support services are provided to facilitate legal proceedings and hearing of cases in courts and tribunals at different levels, and to enforce court orders on the application of plaintiffs. The work involves:

- providing effective recording services for court proceedings and producing transcripts for these proceedings;
- ensuring that both Chinese and English languages can be used in the court system, and providing effective court interpretation services;
- providing efficient bailiff services for the enforcement of court orders and service of court documents;
- keeping comprehensive legal references and research materials for the use of JJOs and the legal profession; and
- adopting technology and other modern management tools to enhance the efficiency of court support services.

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13 In 2025, despite the increase in caseload at various levels of court, the overall performance of the programme was generally maintained.

14 The key performance measures in respect of support services for the courts and tribunals are:

### *Indicators*

	2024 (Actual)	2025 (Actual)	2026 (Estimate)
<i>Reporting and Transcription</i>			
cases covered			
criminal .....	251 738	254 145	<b>254 150</b>
civil.....	89 521	95 676	<b>95 680</b>
cases with transcripts produced			
criminal .....	6 030	6 014	<b>6 010</b>
civil.....	1 484	1 376	<b>1 380</b>
<i>Interpretation and Translation</i>			
pages of certification/translation processed .....	201 924	179 202	<b>179 200</b>
<i>Bailiff Service</i>			
executions attempted.....	29 402	30 503	<b>30 500</b>
summons services attempted.....	82 244	79 507	<b>79 500</b>
<i>Library</i>			
library materials acquired and processed .....	27 966	23 969	<b>23 800</b>
attendance at the Library .....	43 196	41 443	<b>42 000</b>

### *Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2026–27*

15 In 2026–27, the Judiciary will continue to:

- implement the Information Technology Strategy Plan by phases to provide electronic filing and related services through the integrated Court Case Management System (iCMS) at different levels of court, and make greater use of technology to enhance efficiency of court operations. Preparatory work is being made to mandate the use of the iCMS for all legally represented litigants in respect of case types where the electronic mode is available;
- facilitate the greater use of remote hearing for legal proceedings at all levels of court where appropriate, and develop all necessary technologies for such purpose;
- provide support to unrepresented litigants at various levels of court through various facilities, including the Resource Centre for Unrepresented Litigants, Small Claims Tribunal Information Centre and enhanced counter services at the Family Court; and
- sustain quality management of services to support court operations.

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### ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PROVISION

	2024-25 (Actual) (\$m)	2025-26 (Original) (\$m)	2025-26 (Revised) (\$m)	2026-27 (Estimate) (\$m)
<b>Programme</b>				
(1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions .....	1,987.8	2,155.9	2,113.5	2,228.2
(2) Support Services for Courts' Operation.	623.1	650.3	668.1	678.1
	2,610.9	2,806.2	2,781.6 (-0.9%)	2,906.3 (+4.5%)
				(or +3.6% on 2025-26 Original)

#### Analysis of Financial and Staffing Provision

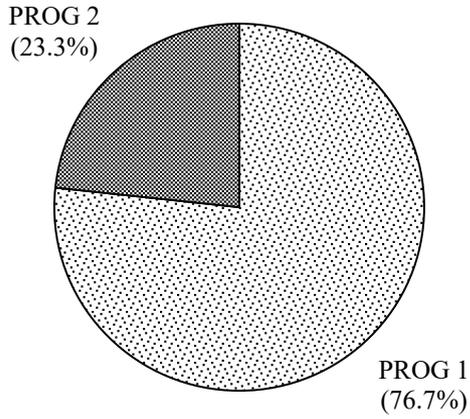
##### Programme (1)

Provision for 2026-27 is \$114.7 million (5.4%) higher than the revised estimate for 2025-26. This is mainly due to the increased provision for filling vacancies and operating expenses for court operations. There will be a net decrease of seven civil service posts in 2026-27.

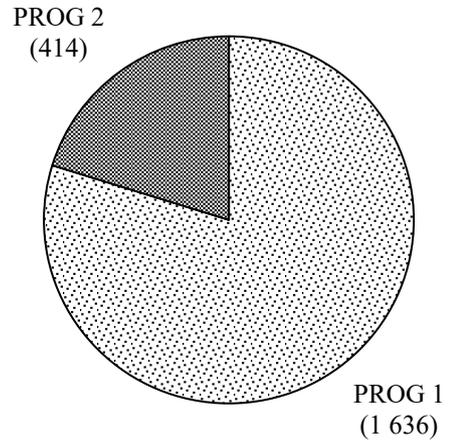
##### Programme (2)

Provision for 2026-27 is \$10.0 million (1.5%) higher than the revised estimate for 2025-26. This is mainly due to the increased provision for filling vacancies and operating expenses to enhance support services for court operations. There will be a net decrease of 11 civil service posts in 2026-27.

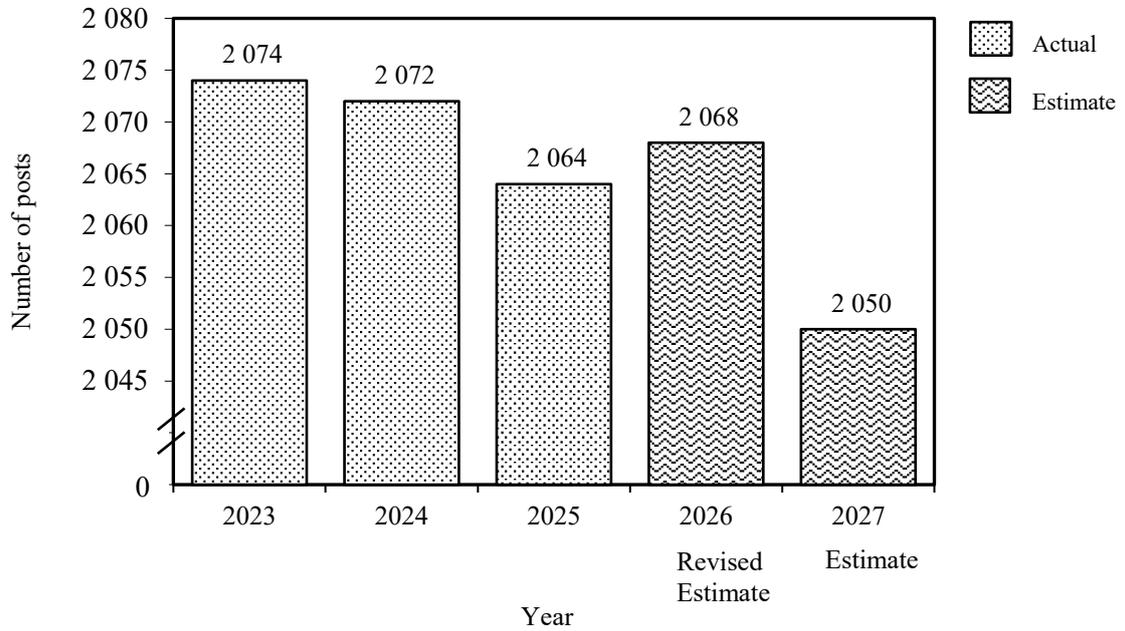
*Allocation of provision  
to programmes  
(2026-27)*



*Staff by programme  
(as at 31 March 2027)*



*Changes in the size of the establishment  
(as at 31 March)*



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Sub-head (Code)	Actual expenditure 2024–25	Approved estimate 2025–26	Revised estimate 2025–26	<b>Estimate 2026–27</b>	
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	<b>\$'000</b>	
<b>Operating Account</b>					
Recurrent					
000	Operational expenses .....	2,568,053	2,765,345	2,740,351	<b>2,862,362</b>
206	Expenses of witnesses and jurors.....	10,339	11,710	12,170	<b>12,170</b>
	Total, Recurrent.....	<u>2,578,392</u>	<u>2,777,055</u>	<u>2,752,521</u>	<b><u>2,874,532</u></b>
	Total, Operating Account .....	<u>2,578,392</u>	<u>2,777,055</u>	<u>2,752,521</u>	<b><u>2,874,532</u></b>
<b>Capital Account</b>					
Plant, Equipment and Works					
661	Minor plant, vehicles and equipment (block vote).....	32,485	29,118	29,110	<b>31,744</b>
	Total, Plant, Equipment and Works.....	<u>32,485</u>	<u>29,118</u>	<u>29,110</u>	<b><u>31,744</u></b>
	Total, Capital Account.....	<u>32,485</u>	<u>29,118</u>	<u>29,110</u>	<b><u>31,744</u></b>
	Total Expenditure .....	<u><u>2,610,877</u></u>	<u><u>2,806,173</u></u>	<u><u>2,781,631</u></u>	<b><u><u>2,906,276</u></u></b>

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### Details of Expenditure by Subhead

The estimate of the amount required in 2026–27 for the salaries and expenses of the Judiciary is \$2,906,276,000. This represents an increase of \$124,645,000 over the revised estimate for 2025–26 and \$295,399,000 over the actual expenditure in 2024–25.

#### *Operating Account*

#### Recurrent

**2** Provision of \$2,862,362,000 under *Subhead 000 Operational expenses* is for salaries, allowances and other operating expenses of the Judiciary.

**3** The establishment as at 31 March 2026 will be 2 068 posts (comprising 1 852 civil service posts and 216 posts for Judges and Judicial Officers). It is expected that there will be a net decrease of 18 posts in 2026–27. Subject to certain conditions, the controlling officer may under delegated power create or delete non-directorate posts during 2026–27, but the notional annual mid-point salary value of all such posts must not exceed \$951,728,000.

**4** An analysis of the financial provision under *Subhead 000 Operational expenses* is as follows:

	2024–25 (Actual) (\$'000)	2025–26 (Original) (\$'000)	2025–26 (Revised) (\$'000)	2026–27 (Estimate) (\$'000)
Personal Emoluments				
- Salaries.....	1,400,817	1,520,559	1,444,439	<b>1,499,078</b>
- Allowances.....	38,238	41,864	37,801	<b>38,502</b>
- Job-related allowances.....	1,386	1,685	1,223	<b>903</b>
Personnel Related Expenses				
- Cash allowances.....	27,864	31,404	27,773	<b>25,960</b>
- Mandatory Provident Fund contribution.....	4,179	5,010	4,311	<b>4,538</b>
- Civil Service Provident Fund contribution.....	76,820	84,242	82,919	<b>92,289</b>
Departmental Expenses				
- Hire of services and professional fees .....	522,305	579,893	614,890	<b>660,374</b>
- General departmental expenses .....	496,444	500,680	526,987	<b>540,710</b>
Other Charges				
- Magistrates poor box .....	—	8	8	<b>8</b>
	2,568,053	2,765,345	2,740,351	<b>2,862,362</b>

**5** Provision of \$12,170,000 under *Subhead 206 Expenses of witnesses and jurors* is for the expenses of witnesses in hearings in criminal cases and in coroners' inquiries, and jurors in both criminal and civil cases and in coroners' inquiries.