

Long-term Insights Briefing 2025

Future Operation of the Courts and Justice Services

Outcomes we want to achieve



TRUSTED &
LEGITIMATE

A court system that can be easily navigated and that provides appropriate pathways depending on people's need and the inherent risk in their issues



ACCESSIBLE
& EFFECTIVE

A court system that delivers timely access to justice for its users

A court system that delivers justice efficiently and more affordably for the user



SAFE & PROSPEROUS
SOCIETY

A court system that is safe for all participants

A court system that is resilient to demographic and technological changes and to unforeseen shocks

What is already underway



Policy and process

Disputes Tribunal threshold
Timely Access to Justice programme
Legal aid review
Family Court pilots



Digital

Te Au Reka
Remote participation
AI pilots



Physical infrastructure

New court builds



People and capability

Te Ao Mārama – Enhancing Justice for All
Navigation support (e.g. Kaiārahi)
Other judicial officers (e.g. Family Court Associates)

Some key strategic choices

- ➡ Should we find ways to address unmet legal need?
- ➡ Should we undertake structural reform to the court system?
- ➡ Should we substantially increase navigation assistance?
- ➡ Should we look at more ambitious uses for AI?
- ➡ Should we make greater use of remote participation?
- ➡ Should we more actively shape the future workforce for the court system?

Key long-term trends and challenges

➡ General trends and challenges

Population changes

The New Zealand population will become more diverse and older over time, but the criminal justice population is likely to stay disproportionately younger

Technological advancements

Rapid AI developments present opportunities to improve access but also present new legal issues
Ongoing risk of digital exclusion

Challenges to existing institutions and social cohesion

Declining trust in public institutions
Increasing foreign interference and online misinformation

Resilience

Ongoing risk of earthquakes, pandemics, extreme weather events

➡ System trends and challenges

Complexity

Efforts to respond to different user needs have resulted in a complex system

Volume

Generally lower criminal volumes but more complex and serious cases, and higher civil volumes

Timely Access to Justice

System is sensitive to shocks (e.g. COVID-19) and dependent on resourcing
Timely access to justice initiatives are starting to show results

Cost

A demand driven and human-centric system

➡ Access barriers

Financial and unmet legal need

The cost of taking forward a legal issue is prohibitive for many and legal aid is tightly targeted

Geographic barriers

Rural and isolated communities are not able to access all services, and may not be able to access digital services

Disability and health

People participating in court processes will have more diverse and complex needs over time, particularly youth offenders who are often victims themselves

Societal and cultural

Court processes can be seen as intimidating, not culturally accommodating, and traumatising for victim-survivors in particular