

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIAL SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Report on Judicial Remuneration Review 2026

August 2026

司法人員薪俸及服務條件常務委員會
Standing Committee on Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service

31 August 2026

The Honourable John KC Lee, GBM, SBS, PDSM, PMSM
The Chief Executive
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
People's Republic of China

Dear Sir,

----- On behalf of the Standing Committee on Judicial Salaries and
Conditions of Service, I have the honour to submit a report containing our
findings and recommendations for the Judicial Remuneration Review 2026,
which has been conducted in accordance with the mechanism and
methodology for the determination of judicial remuneration approved by the
Chief Executive-in-Council in May 2008.

Yours faithfully,



(Clement Chen Cheng-jen)
Chairman
Standing Committee
on Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The Standing Committee on Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service (the Judicial Committee) has completed a Judicial Remuneration Review (JRR) for 2026 in accordance with the established mechanism for determining judicial remuneration as approved by the Chief Executive-in-Council in 2008. This Report sets out the considerations that the Judicial Committee has taken into account in the Review and the recommended rate of adjustment for judicial salaries in 2026-27.

The Judicial Committee

1.2 The Judicial Committee is an independent advisory body appointed by the Chief Executive to advise and make recommendations on matters concerning the salary and conditions of service of Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs)¹.

1.3 In 2004, the Judicial Committee was tasked by the Chief Executive to undertake a study on the appropriate institutional structure, mechanism and methodology for the determination of judicial remuneration in Hong Kong. In November 2005, the Judicial

¹ “Judges” refer to officers in the grades of Chief Justice, Court of Final Appeal (CFA); Judge, CFA; Judge of the High Court; and Judge of the District Court (District Judge). “Judicial Officers” refer to officers in the grades of Registrar, High Court; Registrar, District Court; Member, Lands Tribunal; Magistrate; Presiding Officer, Labour Tribunal; Adjudicator, Small Claims Tribunal; Coroner; and Special Magistrate.

Committee completed the study and submitted its Report² (the 2005 Report) to the Chief Executive, who accepted, in May 2008, all the major recommendations in the Report including the expanded terms of reference of the Judicial Committee and its new membership structure, the de-linking of salaries of JJOs (judicial salaries in short) from those of the civil service and the adoption of a balanced approach for the adjustment mechanism of judicial salaries under which both annual reviews and regular benchmark studies will be conducted. The expanded terms of reference and the current membership of the Committee are at **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** respectively.

Judicial Independence

1.4 In reviewing and firming up its recommendation in relation to adjustments for judicial salaries, the Judicial Committee acknowledges and indeed premises its examination on the need to uphold the principle of judicial independence as enshrined in the Basic Law, in accordance with which the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is vested with independent judicial power including that of final adjudication and the courts exercise judicial power independently, free from any interference³. In discharging its functions, the Judicial Committee is always guided by the principle that judicial remuneration should be sufficient to attract and retain talents in the Judiciary, in order to maintain an independent and effective judicial system which upholds the rule of law and commands confidence within and outside Hong Kong. The need to maintain an independent Judiciary with the highest integrity is of utmost importance.

² The 2005 Report can be found on the website http://www.jsscs.gov.hk/en/publications/reports_jscs.htm.

³ Article 2 of the Basic Law states that the National People's Congress authorizes the HKSAR to exercise a high degree of autonomy and enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law. Article 19 states that the HKSAR shall be vested with independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication. The courts of the HKSAR shall have jurisdiction over all cases in the Region, except that the restrictions on their jurisdiction imposed by the legal system and principles previously in force in Hong Kong shall be maintained. Article 85 further states that the courts of HKSAR shall exercise judicial power independently, free from any interference. Members of the judiciary shall be immune from legal action in the performance of their judicial functions.

Judicial Remuneration Mechanism

1.5 Under the current mechanism for JRR, as approved by the Chief Executive-in-Council in May 2008, judicial salaries are reviewed by way of two exercises: an annual review and a benchmark study conducted once every five years or so.

Annual Review

1.6 An annual review on judicial remuneration is conducted in the middle of every calendar year⁴. The Judicial Committee adopts a balanced approach under which a basket of factors (as set out in paragraph 1.7 below), as approved by the Chief Executive-in-Council in 2008, and the views of the Judiciary are examined and considered holistically. The Committee then comes to a recommendation on whether and, if so, how judicial salaries should be adjusted, and puts it forth to the Chief Executive.

1.7 The basket of factors comprises the following –

- (a) the responsibility, working conditions and workload of judges vis-à-vis those of lawyers in private practice;
- (b) recruitment and retention in the Judiciary;
- (c) the retirement age and retirement benefits of JJOs;
- (d) the benefits and allowances enjoyed by JJOs;
- (e) prohibition against return to private practice in Hong Kong;
- (f) public sector pay as a reference;

⁴ No JRR was conducted in 2025. The Financial Secretary announced in the 2025-26 Budget the decision of freezing the pay of JJOs (and other types of public officers including the civil service) for 2025-26. Accordingly, the Judicial Committee then decided that there was no need to conduct the JRR 2025.

- (g) private sector pay levels and trends;
- (h) cost of living adjustments;
- (i) the general economic situation in Hong Kong;
- (j) overseas remuneration arrangements;
- (k) unique features of judicial service; and
- (l) the budgetary situation of the Government.

Benchmark Study

1.8 The annual reviews are complemented by the benchmark study. The latter is conducted by the Judicial Committee at largely a five-yearly interval, the main aim of which is to ascertain the levels of earnings of legal practitioners in private practice, particularly in comparison with the amount of judicial salaries at corresponding levels. The study also seeks to track whether judicial salaries are kept broadly in line with the movements of legal sector earnings over time, i.e. whether the pay relativities between the two have narrowed or broadened, and if so, to what extent. The information so obtained helps inform the Judicial Committee's recommendation as to whether and how judicial salaries at specified or all levels should be adjusted.

1.9 Since the establishment of the new mechanism in 2008, the Judicial Committee has conducted three benchmark studies, in 2010, 2015 and 2020 respectively. The upcoming benchmark study will commence this year⁵. Preparatory work for the study is presently underway. The Judicial Committee hopes to have the findings of the study ready by the middle of next year, and the findings will be considered alongside the basket of factors in the JRR for 2027.

⁵ The last round of the Benchmark Study commenced in 2020, and accordingly, the next round should have started in 2025 if the five-year interval were to be faithfully kept. However, for the same reason as stated in footnote 4, preparations for the 2025 Benchmark Study were put on hold, and the Judicial Committee has resolved to defer that round of the Benchmark Study to a later date. In the light of the Financial Secretary's announcement in the 2026-27 Budget, both the JRR 2026 and the Benchmark Study have proceeded.

Judicial Remuneration Review 2026

1.10 The Judicial Committee commenced the preparatory work for the JRR 2026 earlier this year, by first inviting the Judiciary and the Government to provide relevant data, information and views pertaining to the basket of factors as set out in paragraph 1.7. With the benefit of the information and data provided, the Judicial Committee then exercised its best judgement in analysing and balancing all relevant considerations (including the Judiciary's views) in formulating its recommendation. Having considered all relevant factors, the Judicial Committee **recommends** that for 2026-27, judicial salaries be increased by 2%. The rate of adjustment is to be applied to JJOs at all levels of court, who are remunerated on the Judicial Service Pay Scale (JSPS). The respective ranks of different levels of court in the Judiciary and the JSPS (as at 1 April 2025) are at **Appendix C** and **Appendix D**.

Chapter 2

Annual Review

Annual Review

2.1 The Judicial Committee adopts a balanced approach in taking forward the annual review of judicial remuneration, under which the basket of 12 factors and the views of the Judiciary are analysed and considered holistically for the formulation of recommendation to the Chief Executive for consideration.

Responsibility and Working Conditions

2.2 On the basis of the latest information provided by the Judiciary, the Judicial Committee has not observed any major change in the responsibility and working conditions of JJOs. Members of the Judiciary continue to discharge their functions in maintaining an independent and effective judicial system to uphold the rule of law, safeguard national security and protect the rights and freedoms of the individual.

Workload and Complexity of Judicial Work

2.3 The Judicial Committee notes that the Judiciary had to cope with the challenge of a persistently heavy caseload at various levels of courts in 2025, driven mainly by an increasing number of civil and criminal proceedings, quite a number of which are fairly complex. A complex case not only entails a longer hearing time but considerably more time required for the attending JJOs to handle pre-hearing

preparation, conduct trials and write judgments. In terms of case numbers, the total caseload of 2025 (around 536 600) was about 4% higher than the average of the past five years from 2020 to 2024. This increase in caseload is more pronounced at the District Court level and above, a hike of some 16% over the average in the same five-year period. By definition, cases heard at the District Court level and above are beyond the jurisdictional limit of the lower courts, involving more often greater stakes and being in a sense more complex. Through the concerted efforts of JJOs and support staff, the Judiciary managed to dispose of an overall caseload of around 513 900, which was more than 95% of the caseload received in the year. In fact, the figure is about 4% higher than the average of the past five years. The caseloads at different levels of court between 2021 and 2025 are shown in **Appendix E**.

2.4 The Judicial Committee understands that the heavy criminal caseload was compounded by an increasing number of complex cases (including those relating to the riots in 2019 and the National Security Law). The Judiciary is required by circumstances to accord priority to these cases, which means that the progress of other cases has inevitably been impacted. The Judiciary however expects that the impact will be ameliorated in the coming years. On the civil side, there is an increasing number of cases at both the High Court and District Court. The sustained influx of leave applications for judicial review relating to non-refoulement claims, together with related appeals in both the High Court and the Court of Final Appeal (CFA), further strained judicial resources.

2.5 To expedite the disposal of the large number of leave applications for judicial review relating to non-refoulement claims, in addition to recruiting retired judges to serve as Deputy Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI), the Judiciary launched a special scheme in February 2025, in which eligible practitioners in private practice are appointed as Deputy CFI Judges exclusively for the purpose of handling cases relating to non-refoulement claims. This, together with the streamlining of administrative procedures and presentation of judgments and decision notices, has sped up the handling of these cases. In 2025, the CFI dealt with 3 700 such cases, about

1 000 more than the number of new cases filed in the year and in fact twice as many as the number disposed of in 2024. The Judiciary is eager to sustain its efforts in this regard, hopefully becoming able to clear the backlog of such cases at the CFI level in a few years' time.

2.6 The Judiciary has all along recognised that caseload figures alone do not reflect fully the workload of JJOs. The disposal figures, nature and complexity of cases, duration of trials, and the processing time of cases, which directly affect the amount of time and efforts required of the JJOs to handle the cases, are equally critical indicators of the increasing workload and heavier responsibilities of the JJOs.

2.7 The Judiciary has remarked that the workload of High Court Judges has consistently been compounded by their considerable involvement in providing professional advice and guidance on judicial reforms in court rules and procedures, use of technology in court operations etc., as well as their increasing participation in judicial exchanges. Their workload arising from performing non-judicial functions or statutory duties including handling legal aid appeals, apostilles, and registration of Enduring Power of Attorney has also been impacting considerably on their capacity for judicial work.

Recruitment and Retention

2.8 The overall judicial establishment has remained unchanged since 2023, with certain unfilled vacancies at different levels of court during different times of the year. As at 31 March 2026, against the total establishment of 211 judicial posts, 159 (75%) were substantively filled. The Judiciary has been keeping its judicial establishment under constant review with a view to meeting changing operational needs and ensuring the effective and efficient administration of justice. The establishment and strength of JJOs as at 31 March 2026 are set out in **Table 1** below –

Table 1: Establishment and strength of JJOs

Level of court	As at 31.3.2026	
	Establishment	Strength
CFA ⁶	4	4
High Court ⁷	64	44
District Court ⁸	53	36
Magistrates' Courts and Specialised Tribunals/Court ⁶	90	75
Total	211	159

2.9 The Judicial Committee notes that the Judiciary has been conducting recruitment exercises more frequently for filling judicial vacancies. The latest rounds of recruitment for CFI Judges, District Judges and Permanent Magistrates were launched in November 2024, January 2026 and April 2024 respectively, and as a result, one CFI Judge and seven Permanent Magistrates have been appointed. The recruitment exercise for District Judges is currently in progress. On the other hand, the recruitment of JJOs serving in specialised tribunals will be conducted as and when necessary. For instance, the latest open recruitment exercise for Members of the Lands Tribunal was launched in May 2024, with one candidate appointed (meeting the target number). The Judiciary expects that more judicial appointments can be made later this year.

2.10 Meanwhile, continual efforts are being made to engage temporary judicial manpower including recorders and deputy JJOs from the legal profession to help relieve workload. On average, there are

⁶ The figures exclude one Permanent Judge post created for Non-Permanent Judge (NPJ) of the CFA. In practice, a NPJ is invited to sit in the CFA as required in accordance with the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal Ordinance (Cap. 484).

⁷ For Deputy Registrar vacancies in the Masters' Office of the High Court, the functions are carried out by District Judges (and Principal Magistrates/Magistrates) who are appointed as Temporary Deputy Registrars under the cross-posting policy.

⁸ For judicial offices in the Masters' Office of the District Court and at the Labour Tribunal, Small Claims Tribunal and Coroner's Court, the functions are carried out by Principal Magistrates or Magistrates under the cross-posting policy. The cross-posting policy provides greater flexibility in the posting of judicial officers between various courts to meet operational needs.

around 50 temporary or deputy JJOs (including recorders) to sit at different levels of court at any one time.

Retirement

2.11 Retirement is the main source of “wastage” among JJOs. The anticipated retirement in each of the coming five years ranges from four to 17, amounting to 2.5% to 10.7% of the current strength.

2.12 The Judicial Officers (Extension of Retirement Age) (Amendment) Ordinance came into effect on 6 December 2019, and over 80% of eligible JJOs opted for the new retirement age arrangements by the deadline of December 2021⁹. The new statutory normal retirement ages for JJOs now stand at 65 or 70, depending on the level of court. Beyond that, extension of service may be approved up to the age of 70, 75 or 76, depending on the level of court and subject to consideration on a case-by-case basis. The Judiciary considers that extending the retirement ages of JJOs has helped in attracting quality candidates who are in private practice to join the Bench at a later stage of their career life, in particular at the CFI level, and retaining experienced judicial manpower where appropriate.

2.13 The Judicial Committee trusts that the Judiciary will keep in view the challenges to judicial manpower that are posed by the retirement situation, and that it will continue to attract new entrants and to retain and groom existing talents.

⁹ On statutory retirement ages, the retirement ages of Judges at the High Court level and above as well as Judicial Officers at the magisterial level have generally been extended for five years to 70 and 65 respectively, while that of District Judges is maintained at 65. On discretionary extension of terms of office, the term of office for CFA Judges may be extended by no more than two periods of three years; and for Judges at the High Court and District Court levels and Judicial Officers at the magisterial level, a period of not exceeding five years in aggregate.

Benefits and Allowances

2.14 JJOs are entitled to a range of benefits and allowances in addition to salary. The package of benefits and allowances is an integral part of judicial remuneration, important as it is, that has helped attract capable legal practitioners to join the Bench.

2.15 The Judicial Committee notes that the rate of such benefits and allowances are price-adjusted annually in accordance with the established mechanisms. The present rates of the benefits and allowances are set out in **Appendix F**.

2.16 For retirement benefits, JJOs are either entitled to pension governed by the Pension Benefits (Judicial Officers) Ordinance (Cap. 401), or provident fund governed by the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance (Cap. 485), according to their terms of appointment.

2.17 With a view to attracting more legal practitioners to become CFI Judges, as well as encouraging the most senior and experienced Judges at the High Court or above to extend their service beyond their retirement age, the Judiciary proposed, and the Government approved after consulting this Committee, the following refinements to the remuneration package for Judges at the High Court level and above with effect from 1 August 2025 –

- (a) Judiciary Quarters Allowance (JQA) option for Judges beyond retirement age;
- (b) JQA option during major renovation;
- (c) Non-accountable Cash Allowance option for Judges choosing not to live in Judiciary Quarters (JQs);
- (d) relaxing the “12-day rule” in leave calculation; and
- (e) claiming Medical Insurance Allowance for policies with non-medical insurance elements under specified conditions.

Prohibition Against Return to Private Practice in Hong Kong and Unique Features of the Judicial Service

2.18 The Judiciary is unique in many aspects. A prominent feature is the prohibition against return to private practice. Judges at the District Court and High Court levels must give an undertaking not to practise in future as barristers or solicitors in Hong Kong unless with the permission of the Chief Executive. The Chief Justice and Judges (including permanent and non-permanent judges) of the CFA are prohibited by statute¹⁰ from practising as barristers or solicitors in Hong Kong, either while holding office or at any time after ceasing for any reason to hold office. On the other hand, judges enjoy security of tenure¹¹ and high esteem, which may be seen as attractions for legal practitioners joining the Bench. The Judicial Committee notes that these are established arrangements which continued to apply in the year under the present annual review.

Overseas Remuneration Arrangements

2.19 The Judicial Committee is fully aware that the basket of factors, which are to be considered holistically and are generally factors applicable and relevant to the situations in Hong Kong, are to be examined each year in the review of judicial remuneration. That said, the Committee also accepted in 2008, i.e. the year in which the mechanism specifically tailored for judicial remuneration was put in place, a suggestion from the Government that it will make reference to overseas remuneration arrangements. The Committee has made reference to the status of the judicial remuneration systems in six common law jurisdictions namely, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States since then. As the Judiciary has not recruited JJOs from overseas for its permanent establishment for quite some time, the reference remains to be more or

¹⁰ Section 13 of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal Ordinance (Cap. 484).

¹¹ Any removal from office is subject to detailed statutory procedures, and the removal of the most senior judges (i.e. the Chief Justice, Judges of the CFA and the Chief Judge of the High Court) has to be endorsed by the Legislative Council and reported to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for the record.

less academic. In the year under review, the Committee notes that these jurisdictions continued to review judicial salaries using their established methodologies and they continue to make reference to, among others, the prevailing states of economy, the fiscal positions and private sector pay movements in determining the rates of adjustment.

General Economic Situation and Cost of Living Adjustments in Hong Kong

2.20 The Government has provided a detailed write-up on Hong Kong's economic and fiscal indicators for the Judicial Committee's reference. According to the Government's latest estimates, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew robustly by 4.3% year-on-year in real terms in the second quarter of 2026, following a 5.9% growth in the first quarter. Looking ahead, the economy is projected to pose a solid growth in the second half of 2026. Vibrant global demands for artificial intelligence-related electronic products are expected to continue, supporting Hong Kong's merchandise trade performance and benefitting related logistics services. Exports of services are expected to benefit from a sustained growth in visitor arrivals alongside a steady demand for financial and business services. Domestic demand is expected to stay firm, supported by stable labour market conditions, and solid business and consumer sentiments. Nonetheless, the lingering external headwinds, including geopolitical tensions in the Middle East (which may cause spillovers to the energy markets and global inflation), inflation dynamics in major economies, the policy trajectories of major central banks and trade protectionist measures among major advanced economies, warrant close attention. Risks associated with the rapid expansion of global artificial intelligence investment also require monitoring. For 2026 as a whole, the GDP is projected to grow by 3.5% to 4.5% according to the latest forecast in August. The year-on-year changes in GDP in real terms are shown in **Table 2** below –

Table 2: Changes in GDP in real terms

Year	Quarter (Q)	GDP year-on-year % change
2025	Q1	3.2%
	Q2	3.3%
	Q3	3.8%
	Q4	4.0%
2026	Q1	5.9%
	Q2	4.3%

(Source: Figures published by the Census and Statistics Department in August 2026)

2.21 The labour market remained stable in the second quarter of 2026, with the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate staying at 3.7% in the second quarter, same as that in the preceding quarter.

2.22 On changes in the cost of living, headline consumer price inflation, as measured by the year-on-year rate of change of the Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI), was 1.9% in the second quarter of 2026, up from 1.6% in the preceding quarter¹². Consumer price inflation is expected to rise further in the coming months as the earlier surge in international oil prices continues to feed through. The lingering geopolitical tensions in the Middle East have increased the uncertainty of inflation outlook. Meanwhile, price pressures in other areas remain largely contained, which should keep overall inflation at a moderate level. The underlying and headline consumer price inflation rates for 2026 would be at 2.5% and 2.6% respectively, according to the forecast in August 2026.

Budgetary Situation of the Government

2.23 According to the information provided by the Government, the consolidated surplus for 2025-26 is \$11.2 billion, while a surplus of \$12.8 billion is recorded for the three months ended on 30 June 2026. The fiscal reserves stood at \$678.3 billion as at 30 June 2026.

¹² CCPI reflects the impact of consumer price changes on household in overall terms. The headline consumer price inflation includes the effect of the Government's all relevant one-off relief measures, while the underlying consumer price inflation excludes the effect of these measures.

2.24 The annual staff cost of the Judiciary in 2026-27 is estimated at about \$1.66 billion, which is roughly 0.26% of the Government's total operating expenditure of about \$640.2 billion in the 2026-27 Estimates.

Private Sector Pay Levels and Trends

2.25 The Judicial Committee makes reference to the gross pay trend indicators (PTIs) from the annual Pay Trend Survey (PTS)¹³ commissioned by the Pay Trend Survey Committee as a general reference indicating private sector pay trend.

2.26 According to the findings of the 2026 PTS, the gross PTI for the “upper salary band” (equivalent to the better paid, senior segment of the civil service) was 5.16% for the 12-month period from 2 April 2025 to 1 April 2026.

Public Sector Pay as a Reference

2.27 There used to be a certain form of pegging between judicial salaries and senior civil service salaries. In its 2005 Report, the then Judicial Committee considered that mechanical pegging was not appropriate due to the uniqueness of judicial service¹⁴, on the main grounds that de-linking (i.e. subjecting the two to separate reviews)

¹³ The annual PTS measures the year-on-year average pay movements of full-time employees in the private sector over a 12-month period from 2 April of the previous year to 1 April of the current year. The PTIs derived from the PTS are divided into three salary bands, reflecting the average pay movements of private sector employees in three salary ranges, i.e. –

- (a) lower salary band covering employees in the salary range below \$26,590 per month;
- (b) middle salary band covering employees in the salary range of \$26,590 to \$81,510 per month; and
- (c) upper salary band covering employees in the salary range of \$81,511 to \$163,905 per month.

Since 2009, the Judicial Committee had agreed that in the absence of a comprehensive or representative pay trend survey for the legal sector, reference should be made to the PTIs from the annual PTS reflecting overall private sector pay trend. The PTI for the upper salary band in the PTS is considered a suitable reference for comparison with judicial salaries, which start at JSPS 1 (currently at \$102,315).

¹⁴ For details, please see paragraph 3.14 of the 2005 Report.

would not only strengthen the perception of judicial independence but also provide the necessary safeguard and reassurance to JJOs. We stand by this view.

2.28 Notwithstanding this institutional separation, the Judicial Committee takes the view that public sector pay should remain as one of the factors under the balanced approach for determining judicial remuneration. For 2026-27, the Judicial Committee notes the decision of the Chief Executive-in-Council made in June 2026 in respect of the annual civil service pay adjustment that the pay for civil servants in all salary bands, including the lower, middle and upper salary bands and the directorate, should be increased at the same rate of 2% with retrospective effect from 1 April 2026. The pay adjustment was approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on 26 June 2026.

The Judiciary's Position

2.29 The Judiciary notes that, in arriving at the decision of increasing the pay at 2% across-the-board for all civil servants for 2026-27, the CE-in-Council has thoroughly considered and balanced all relevant factors under the established civil service pay adjustment mechanism, and that the Government needs to be prudent in managing public finance with continuing uncertainty in geopolitical matters. The Judiciary therefore adopts the position that it has no objection to increasing judicial salaries at the same rate of 2% for 2026-27 as in the case of the whole civil service, emphasizing that this position will demonstrate to the community that “the Judiciary understands and is prepared to share the impact of the Government’s fiscal position, the economic situation in Hong Kong and the geopolitical uncertainties”. The Judiciary adds that the position if adopted has no adverse implication on judicial independence. The Judiciary also reiterates that as a matter of principle, there should be no reduction in judicial pay even if the pay is reduced for the civil service for any reasons.

Chapter 3

Recommendation and Acknowledgements

Recommendation

3.1 During the year covered by this report, the Judicial Committee has completed the annual review and formulated its recommendation in respect of the 2026-27 annual adjustment. Taking into account the basket of factors and having balanced all considerations, the Judicial Committee **recommends** that judicial salaries be increased by 2% with retrospective effect from 1 April 2026. In particular, the Judicial Committee considers that this recommended rate of increase does not prejudice in any way the principle of judicial independence.

Acknowledgements

3.2 We would like to express our sincere gratitude to both the Government and the Judiciary for providing the Judicial Committee with comprehensive and valuable information. Their contributions are most useful in facilitating our deliberation on the basket of factors under the approved mechanism for the determination of judicial remuneration. Our appreciation also goes to the Joint Secretariat for their assistance in this review.

Standing Committee on Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service

Terms of Reference

I. The Committee will advise and make recommendations to the Chief Executive on –

- (a) the structure, i.e. number of levels and salary level; and conditions of service and benefits other than salary appropriate to each rank of judges and judicial officers and other matters relating thereto;
- (b) matters relating to the system, institutional structure, methodology and mechanism for the determination of judicial salary and other matters relating thereto which the Chief Executive may refer to the Committee; and
- (c) any other matter as the Chief Executive may refer to the Committee.

II. The Committee will also, when it so determines, conduct an overall review of the matters referred to in I(a) above. In the course of this, the Committee should accept the existing internal structure of the Judiciary and not consider the creation of new judicial offices. If, however, the Committee in an overall review discovers anomalies, it may comment upon and refer such matters to the Chief Justice, Court of Final Appeal.

**Standing Committee on Judicial Salaries
and Conditions of Service**

Membership in 2026

Chairman

Dr Clement Chen Cheng-jen, GBS, JP

Members

Ms Dilys Chau Suet-fung, MH, JP

Ms Daisy Ho Chiu-fung, BBS

Mr Stephen Hung Wan-shun, MH

Ms Miranda Kwok Pui-fong, JP

Professor Paul Lam Kwan-sing, SBS, JP

Mr Jason Pow Wing-nin, SC

Levels of Court and Judicial Ranks

Level of Court	Rank	Pay Scale (JSPS)
Court of Final Appeal	Chief Justice, Court of Final Appeal	19
	Permanent Judge, Court of Final Appeal	18
High Court, Court of Appeal	Chief Judge of the High Court	18
	Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court	17
High Court, Court of First Instance	Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	16
Competition Tribunal		
High Court, Masters' Office	Registrar, High Court	15
	Senior Deputy Registrar, High Court	14
	Deputy Registrar, High Court	13
	Assistant Registrar, High Court ♦	12
District Court	Chief Judge of the District Court	15
	Principal Family Court Judge, District Court	14
	Judge of the District Court	13
District Court, Masters' Office	Registrar, District Court	11
	Deputy Registrar, District Court	10
Lands Tribunal	Member, Lands Tribunal	12
Magistrates' Courts	Chief Magistrate	13
	Principal Magistrate	11
	Magistrate	7 – 10
	Special Magistrate*	1-6
Labour Tribunal	Principal Presiding Officer, Labour Tribunal	11
	Presiding Officer, Labour Tribunal	10
Small Claims Tribunal	Principal Adjudicator, Small Claims Tribunal	11
	Adjudicator, Small Claims Tribunal	10
Obscene Articles Tribunal	Magistrate	7 – 10
Coroner's Court	Coroner	10

♦ There is at present no post in the Assistant Registrar rank at the High Court level.

* The rank of Special Magistrate is being phased out and will be deleted from the list of judicial ranks in due course.

Judicial Service Pay Scale
(with effect from 1 April 2025)

Judicial Service Pay Scale (JSPS)		Rank
Point	\$	
19	423,850	✧ Chief Justice, Court of Final Appeal
18	411,950	✧ Permanent Judge, Court of Final Appeal ✧ Chief Judge of the High Court
17	371,450	✧ Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court
16	354,050	✧ Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court
15	287,100	✧ Registrar, High Court ✧ Chief Judge of the District Court
14	(277,750)	✧ Senior Deputy Registrar, High Court ✧ Principal Family Court Judge, District Court
	(269,700)	
	261,850	
13	(260,100)	✧ Deputy Registrar, High Court ✧ Judge of the District Court ✧ Chief Magistrate
	(252,600)	
	245,300	
12	(223,950)	✧ Assistant Registrar, High Court ✧ Member, Lands Tribunal
	(217,550)	
	211,050	
11	(206,100)	✧ Registrar, District Court ✧ Principal Adjudicator, Small Claims Tribunal ✧ Principal Magistrate ✧ Principal Presiding Officer, Labour Tribunal
	(200,400)	
	194,400	
10	(188,650)	✧ Adjudicator, Small Claims Tribunal ✧ Coroner ✧ Deputy Registrar, District Court ✧ Presiding Officer, Labour Tribunal
	(183,100)	
	177,850	
10	(188,650)	✧ Magistrate
	(183,100)	
	177,850	
9	165,115	
8	161,250	
7	157,405	

Judicial Service Pay Scale (JSPS)		Rank
Point	\$	
6	120,885	✧ Special Magistrate*
5	115,280	
4	109,925	
3	107,360	
2	104,820	
1	102,315	

Note: Figures in brackets (for JSPS 10 – 14) represent increments. An officer may proceed to the first increment after satisfactory completion of two years of service in the rank and to the second increment after satisfactory completion of another three years of service in the rank.

* The rank of Special Magistrate is being phased out and will be deleted from the list of judicial ranks in due course.

Caseloads in Different Levels of Court between 2021 and 2025

No. of Cases Level of Court		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Court of Final Appeal						
- application for leave to appeal		599	728	395	229	243
- appeals		16	18	23	24	11
- miscellaneous proceedings		0	0	0	0	0
Total		615	746	418	253	254
Court of Appeal of the High Court						
- criminal appeals		316	249	251	277	535
- civil appeals		599	501	439	577	1 260
- miscellaneous proceedings		602	556	381	249	261
Total		1 517	1 306	1 071	1 103	2 056
Court of First Instance of the High Court						
- criminal jurisdiction						
• criminal cases		256	223	446	452	447
• confidential miscellaneous proceedings		545	883	749	698	697
• miscellaneous proceedings (criminal)		724	637	882	1 012	1 034
• appeals from Magistrates' Courts		608	460	496	506	458
- civil jurisdiction		15 080	14 412	17 094	20 126	21 051
Sub-total		17 213	16 615	19 667	22 794	23 687
- probate cases		21 978	23 006	26 298	28 335	26 305
Total		39 191	39 621	45 965	51 129	49 992
Competition Tribunal		2	3	3	0	0
District Court						
- criminal cases		1 171	1 193	1 331	1 623	1 876
- civil cases		22 827	21 377	24 826	30 270	31 958
- family cases		18 132	16 802	20 914	20 326	19 205
Total		42 130	39 372	47 071	52 219	53 039

No. of Cases Level of Court	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Magistrates' Courts	372 456	383 512	386 776	379 547	363 567
Lands Tribunal	4 358	3 998	4 739	5 281	6 067
Labour Tribunal	4 278	3 378	4 348	4 879	5 180
Small Claims Tribunal	45 649	41 514	52 304	57 454	56 059
Obscene Articles Tribunal*	38	34	14	163	148
Coroner's Court	154	131	195	138	204
Grand total	510 388	513 615	542 904	552 166	536 566

* The indicator is the number of articles referred to the Obscene Articles Tribunal for determination and classification.

Benefits and Allowances Specifically for Judges and Judicial Officers

Housing Allowances	Rate (as at 1 April 2026)
Judiciary Quarters Allowance (JQA)* (for – • <i>eligible Judges remunerated at or above JSPS⁺ Point 16 where Judiciary Quarters (JQs) are not yet available; or</i> • <i>Judges residing in JQs who are aged 70 or above and opted to vacate their JQs and receive JQA in lieu of staying in JQs; or</i> • <i>the duration of renovation of the JQs which is in need of major renovation, provided that the Judge has been residing in the same JQs for no less than 15 years and he / she will continue to reside in the same JQs for at least five years prior to retirement after renovation.)</i>	\$188,427
Non-accountable Cash Allowance[#] (for JJOs[%] remunerated at JSPS Points 13 to 15 or Judges remunerated at or above JSPS Point 16 who opts out irrevocably from being allocated with JQs on his first appointment to the rank)	\$46,110 to \$61,480
Home Financing Allowance[#] (for JJOs remunerated at JSPS Point 12 or below and commenced to draw Home Financing Allowance on or after 1 April 2026)	\$40,980 to \$46,110

Medical Insurance Allowance*	Rate (as at 1 April 2026)
JJOs at different ages	\$26,826 to \$62,782
Dependent Children	\$22,568

Leave Passage Allowance[@]	Rate (as at 1 April 2026)
Return rate at Level 3 for every 12-month cycle <i>(for Judges remunerated at or above JSPS Point 16)</i>	\$78,410
Return rate at Level 2 for every 12-month cycle <i>(for JJOs remunerated at JSPS Point 15)</i>	\$41,310
Return rate at Level 2 for every 24-month cycle <i>(for JJOs remunerated at JSPS Points 10 to 14)</i>	\$41,310

Judicial Dress Allowance[*]	Rate (as at 1 April 2026)
JJOs at various levels	\$9,483 to \$76,650

Local Education Allowance[^]	Rate (effective from 1 September 2026)
Primary Education	\$53,307
Secondary Forms I to III	\$88,468
Secondary Form IV and above	\$82,150

Note:

⁺ JSPS denotes Judicial Service Pay Scale.

[%] JJOs denotes Judges and Judicial Officers.

^{*} revise annually on 1 April with reference to the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the past 12 months ending 31 December.

[#] revise annually on 1 April with reference to the movements of property prices in the preceding calendar year, but capped by the increase in CPI(A) in the corresponding period ending 31 December.

[@] revise annually on 1 April according to the year-on-year changes in the package tour prices in CPI(C) for the 12-month period ending February.

[^] revise annually on 1 September with reference to the change in the Composite CPI over the past 12 months ending 31 May.

