

SUPREME COURT

THE JUDICIARY

REPUBLIC OF PALAU

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PRESS RELEASE # 158

May 25, 2023

*(It is our duty at the Judiciary to inform the people what we do.
This Press Release is one way to achieve that responsibility.)*

The Palau Judiciary is publishing today A REVIEW OF THE 2019 / 2020 FAMILY LAW & FAMILY PROTECTION ACT COURT USER SURVEY and this can be accessed here <http://www.palausupremecourt.net/upload/P1408/23525114133254.pdf>.

Family protection legislation, and the court's role in implementing it, form part of a national response to ending family and other violence against women and girls.

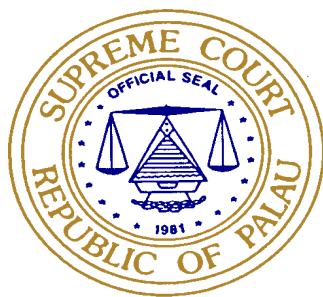
The introduction of the Family Protection Act (**FPA**) in Palau in 2012 marked a significant step towards protecting women and girls from violence. The FPA allows for swift steps to be taken by victims of violence to seek restraining orders.

The Court has been presenting data on these cases filed under the FPA, along with data on family law cases more generally (including divorce, child custody and child support). The data is presented in the Court's **Annual Reports** and is effective in demonstrating trends in the volume of cases and the Court's capacity to deal with them. The data also provides an insight into outcomes and accessibility of the courts to vulnerable groups, including people with a disability.

The publication of this data provides critical information to support Government stakeholders and Non-Government Organisations in their understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved to provide the best service to women, girls, boys and men who come to the courts for restraining orders and other family law outcomes when faced with family violence.

In order to compliment this existing work with information on client perspectives, the Court decided to undertake the 2019/2020 court user survey. The aim of the survey was to improve access to the courts with a focus on family law matters and violence against women and children. The court user survey focuses on both family law cases and domestic violence cases given the recognised relationship between the two.

The court user surveys were conducted between 25 November 2019 and 31 January 2020 at the court building in Koror. There were 65 survey respondents. The Pacific Justice Sector Programme (PJSP) worked with the Palau Judiciary on development of the survey instrument with a focus on



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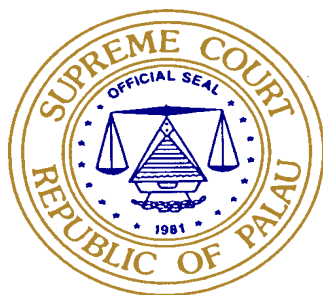
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family law and Family Protection Act cases in Palau. The Court User Survey report was compiled by PJSP based on the survey data.

The 10 Key findings from the survey are:

1	Majority of survey respondents were female: 87% of survey respondents were female. This is because women initiate nearly 8 out of 10 applications for restraining orders, and 7 out of 10 family law cases.
2	Almost 40% of survey respondents faced difficulties in going to the police or courts: The most common difficulty was delays in police serving a restraining order. Other difficulties included a lack of knowledge and fear of stigma or physical attacks.
3	Survey respondents reported that a different response from police would have made things easier for someone else in their situation: When given an opportunity to provide a free text response, survey respondents made suggestions around improving services provided by police. For example, suggestions were made around communication and training.
4	However, after going to the police or court, survey respondents reported getting the results they wanted: 96% of survey respondents got all or part of the result they wanted after going to the police or attending court and
5	Survey respondents had positive things to say about the police and the courts: 89% of survey respondents were impressed by some particularly good service offered by the police or courts. For example, one respondent noted a 'feeling of being protected from the government'.



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6	<p>Family & friends play an important role in bringing people to court:</p> <p>Almost 3 out of 4 survey respondents decided to go to court because of family members, or friends / word of mouth.</p> <p>40% of survey respondents went to other people or organisations to seek help before they went to the police or courts. Of these, most approached a family member or friend.</p>
7	<p>More than eight out of ten respondents reported being informed if their hearing was postponed:</p> <p>This means they are not attending court (and incurring the associated expenses) unnecessarily.</p>
8	<p>More than half of the respondents found the Court's website useful:</p> <p>However, nearly half did not. This may be because they did not use the website, however it may be that further work can be done to make the court website more useful for petitioners in family law and Family Protection Act cases.</p>
9	<p>Nearly nine out of ten respondents reported being able to get their court business done in a reasonable time.</p>
10	<p>Majority of survey respondents had a positive experience at court:</p> <p>More than 9 out of 10 respondents reported feeling safe and feeling that their case was handled fairly.</p> <p>They also reported being treated with courtesy and respect by judicial officers and court staff, being able to find the court house and that the judge had enough information to make a good decision.</p>