

Legal Aid in Canada

The annual legal aid report presents data on legal aid delivery in Canada. This infographic presents trend data over five years from 2019-20 to 2023-24.

In 2023-24 legal aid expenditures were at pre-pandemic levels and administrative costs increased, up 16% from last year.*

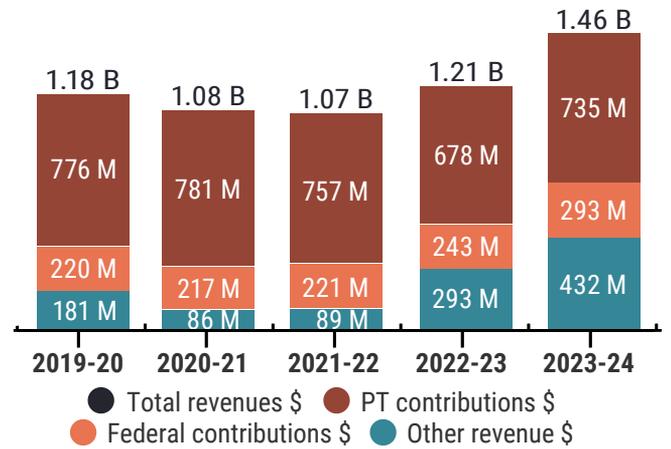


↑ Expenditures*¹
\$1.14 billion
 in 2023-24

↑ Admin Costs*
\$132 million
 in 2023-24

*Expenditures, costs, and revenue reported in 2024 constant dollars calculated on March 19, 2025.

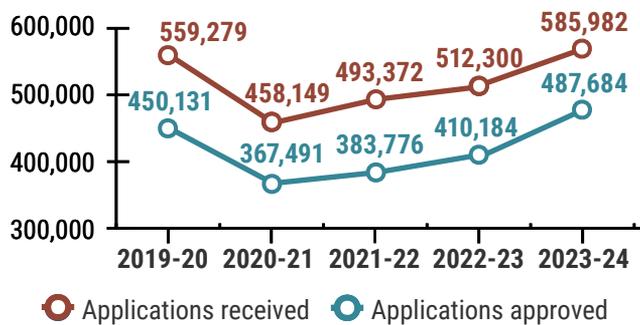
In 2023-24 legal aid revenues were up 24% compared to five years ago, with federal contributions up 34% in the same time period.



Source: Table 1 - Legal aid plan revenues, by type of revenue, 2019-20 to 2023-24 (Figure uses constant 2024 dollars as calculated March 19, 2025).

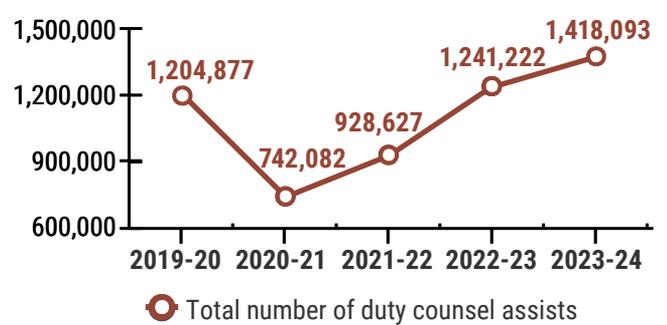
In 2023-24 applications for legal aid were up 14% from the previous year – continuing an upward trend and surpassing pre-pandemic numbers. Similarly, the provision of duty counsel services has surpassed pre-pandemic levels, with the total number of duty counsel assists up 18% in 2023-24 compared to five years ago.

Total Applications Received



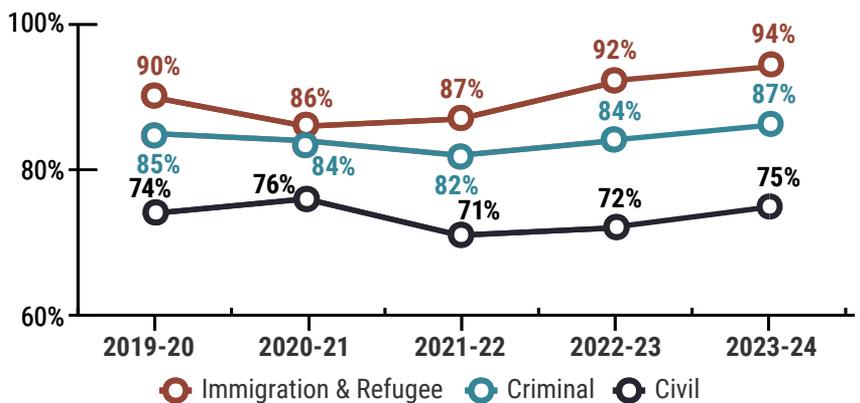
Source: Legal Aid in Canada reports 2019-20 to 2023-24 - Table 3 and Table 4.

Duty Counsel Assists²



Source: Legal Aid in Canada reports 2019-20 to 2023-24 - Table 9.

Percentage of Approved Applications



Source: Legal Aid in Canada reports 2019-20 to 2023-24 - Table 3 and 4.

The overall approval rate for all applications increased slightly in 2023-24 to 83%. There has been a small upward trend over the past three years in the approval rate by application type, with approval rates for all types up in 2023-24.

Application Characteristics³

Applicants for legal aid tend to be male and young. Overall, 6 in 10 applicants were male, while 4 in 10 applicants were young adults between the ages of 18-34. These proportions have remained consistent over the past five years.

Slightly more than half of applications are for criminal matters and the most common reason for refusing an application is financial ineligibility. Application type has remained stable, and the proportion of applications refused for financial ineligibility has increased slightly over time.



Male applicants (60%³)



Applicants aged 18-34 (41%³)



Criminal applications (52%³)



Main reason for application refusal (57%³)

Notes:

- Expenditures: payments made by legal aid plans to private law firms for the delivery of legal services and the costs of legal services delivered by legal aid plan staff.
- Duty counsel assists: services provided by a lawyer at a location other than a legal aid office, generally at court or a place of detention. Most often, the services provided are brief, and pertain to provision of summary services, docket court appearances, or representation at a first appearance or plea court.
- 5-year average proportion.