



CAJO

CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS



Virtual Conference Year Programming Report

# Judge Alone Trials: Views from the Bench

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## September 30<sup>th</sup> , 2021

**The Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO)** brings together the region's Chancellors, Chief Justices, Judges, Masters, Registrars, Parish Judges, Magistrates, Tribunal Members, Executive Court Administrators, and other judicial staff. The first meeting of judicial officers across the region took place in June 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and this marked the birth of the CAJO. With its own Constitution and membership, the CAJO was ably headed by Hon Mr Justice Adrian Saunders, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), who served as Chair from 2009 – 2019. The CAJO is led by a Management Committee which comprises judicial officers elected at the Association's Business Meeting held biennially. At present, Hon Mr Justice Peter Jamadar, Judge of the CCJ, serves as Chair of the Association with Hon Mme Justice Vivian Georgis Taylor-Alexander, Judge of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, as Vice-Chair. The Management Committee comprises 15 members from almost all countries in the region. The CAJO is also supported by its Research and Programme Coordinator, Elron Elahie. The CAJO provides a host of judicial education engagements for judicial officers across the region including its Biennial Conference, training programmes and workshops on various topics and areas of law and practice, and a biannual Newsletter, CAJO News.

# Overview

On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September, from 12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. AST, the CAJO hosted the third of its 2021 programming as part of its virtual conference year. Judge Alone Trials: Views from the Bench brought five presenters from across the Caribbean to share their views, insights, and practical tips on judge alone trials. The presenters were:

- Justice Jacob Wit, Judge, Caribbean Court of Justice
- Justice Vivene Harris, Judge, Jamaica
- Justice Carla Brown-Antoine, Judge, Trinidad and Tobago
- Justice Marlene Carter, Judge, Cayman Islands
- His Worship Juan Wolffe, Senior Magistrate, Bermuda

The session also included two commentary segments from the Honourable Chief Justice Bryan Sykes of Jamaica as well as the Honourable Chief Justice (Ag) Roxane George of Guyana. There were also two question and answer segments moderated by the Hon Chief Justices.

Over 100 participants joined the webinar and engaged with the presenters and moderators.

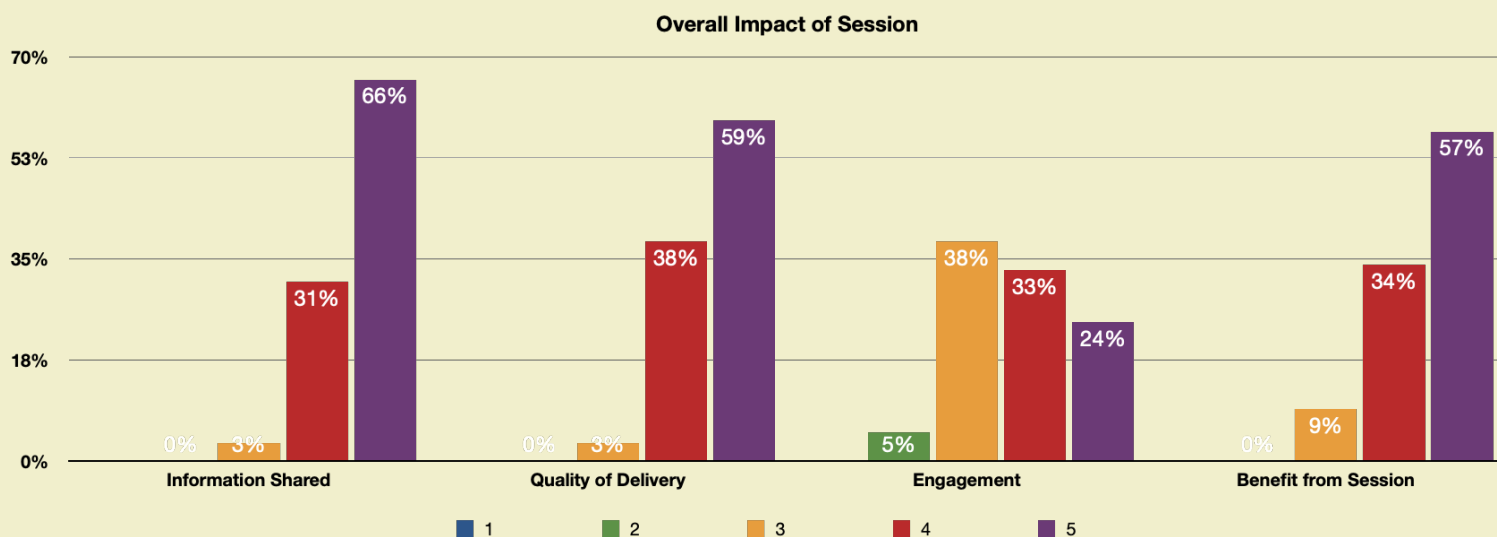
# Insights

After the session, participants were asked to fill and submit a feedback form. With a combination of open-ended, yes/no, and LIKERT scale rating questions, the feedback form sought to ascertain the success of the session in delivering information, provoking engagement, and increasing interest.

Below contains key insights from the data collected from participants. **Judicial Education Impact** details how well participants learned and engaged. **Key Takeaways** explores open-ended feedback on what lasted with participants and what could be done to improve the session.

## Judicial Education Impact

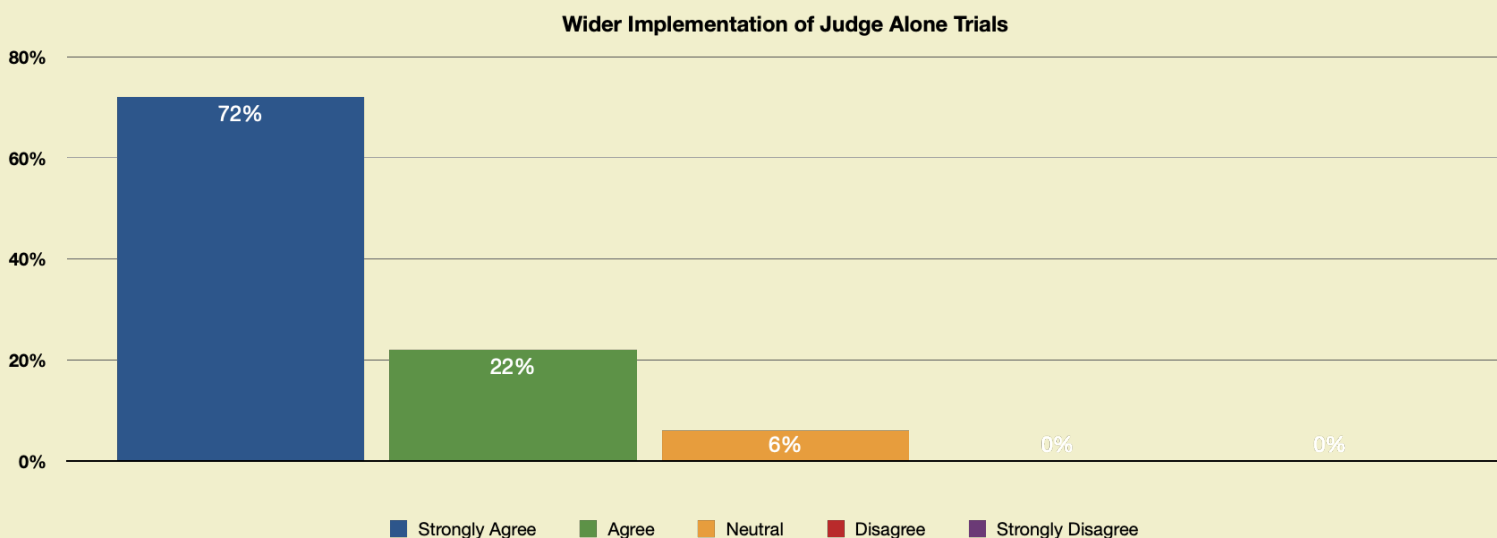
Participants were asked to rate, on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest, four areas of the session: **Information Shared, Quality of Delivery, Engagement, and Benefit from Session**. None of the respondents rated any of these as 1, and, generally, a nominal percent of participants gave a rating 2 and 3 for the second and third areas. Notably, 38% of respondents rated Engagement as 3. **For Information Shared, Quality of Delivery, and Benefit of Session the majority of participants gave a rating of 5.** Fig 1 below shows this.



**Figure 1 - Participant Rating (1-5) of Information Shared, Quality of Delivery, Engagement, and Benefit of Session**

To inform its programming, the CAJO also inquired from participants whether they support the wider implementation of judge alone trials for criminal trials across Caribbean courts. None of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed. **Only 6% were neutral while 22% and 72% agreed and strongly agreed respectively.** Fig 2 shows this data.

## Judicial Education Impact Cont'd

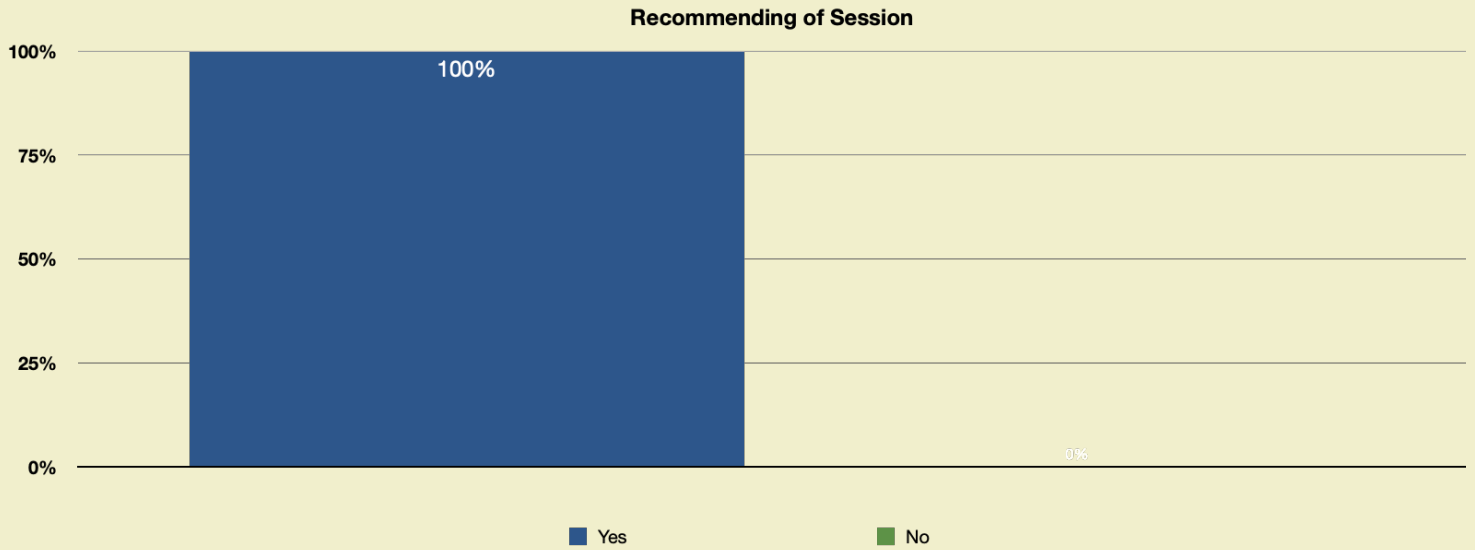


**Figure 2 - Wider Implementation of Judge Alone Trials for criminal trials in Caribbean courts**

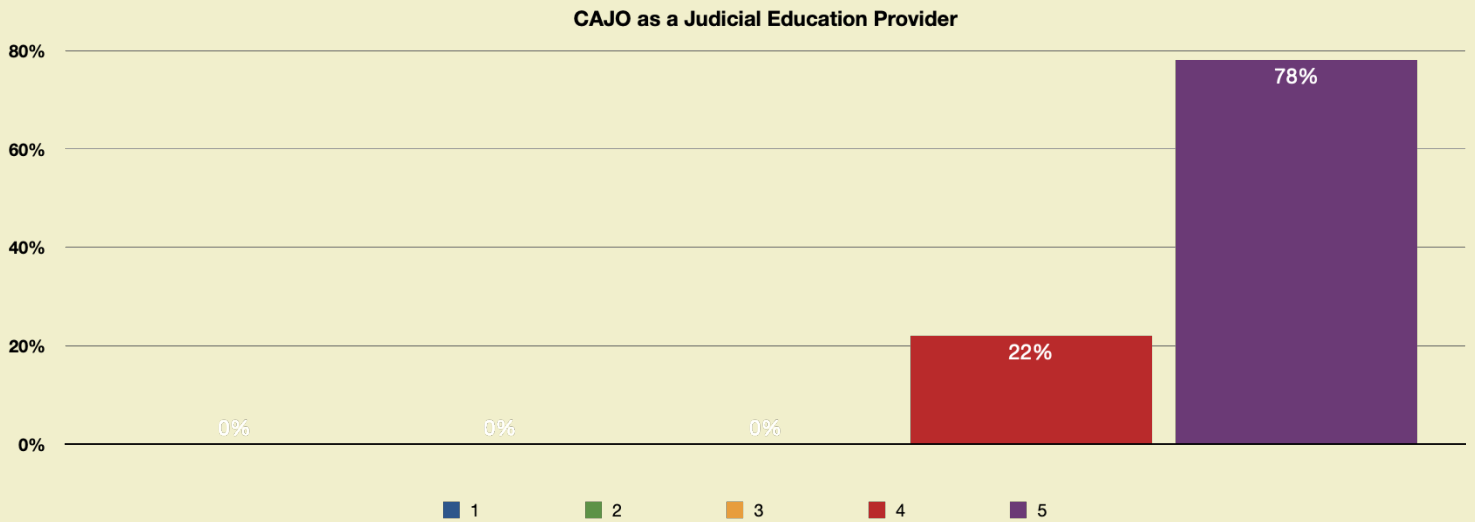
The final two quantitative measures sought to ascertain whether participants would recommend the session to their colleagues as well as the CAJO's performance as a judicial education provider. This latter measure was rated using a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest.

Notably, **100% of participants state that they would recommend the course to their colleagues.** As it relates to the CAJO's performance as a judicial education provider, **22% and 78% rated the CAJO 4 and 5 respectively.** Figures 3 and 4 below show this data.

**Judicial Education  
Impact Cont'd**



**Figure 3 - Recommending of Session**



**Figure 4 - Participant Rating (1-5) of the CAJO as a Judicial Education Provider**

## Key Takeaways

Participants were asked to provide comments in three areas: **what was most useful from the session, a most significant learning, and suggestions to improve the session.** Table 1 below captures a summary of the responses submitted by participants, organised in order of most frequent.

Most Useful	Significant Learning	Suggestions for Improvement
- The practical examples	- How to conduct judge alone trials	- More sessions on the topic
- Perspectives from different jurisdictions	- How to conduct voire dres in a judge alone trial	- Sessions dedicated to key issues
- The analysis of pros and cons of judge alone trials	- The shared challenges and how they can be approached	- More time for presenters to share
- Introduction of a checklist	- The importance of preparation	- Less time for presenters to share
- Discussion around voire dres	- The challenges of jury trials	- None

**Table 1 - Most Useful, Significant Learnings, and Suggestion for Improvement based on the session**

A number of participants also left final comments (which was an optional ask) and all expressed congratulations and gratitude to the CAJO and the presenters and moderators for an excellent session.



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