

2022 Caseload Highlights

Incoming State Trial Court Cases

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The Court Statistics Project (CSP) has collected annual caseload data for over 40 years, but the trends of the last few years are unlike any seen before. In 2022, state courts handled 64.6 million incoming cases, a 2% increase from 2021, but caseloads are still down by 18.7 million cases when compared to the 2019 total of 83.2 million.¹

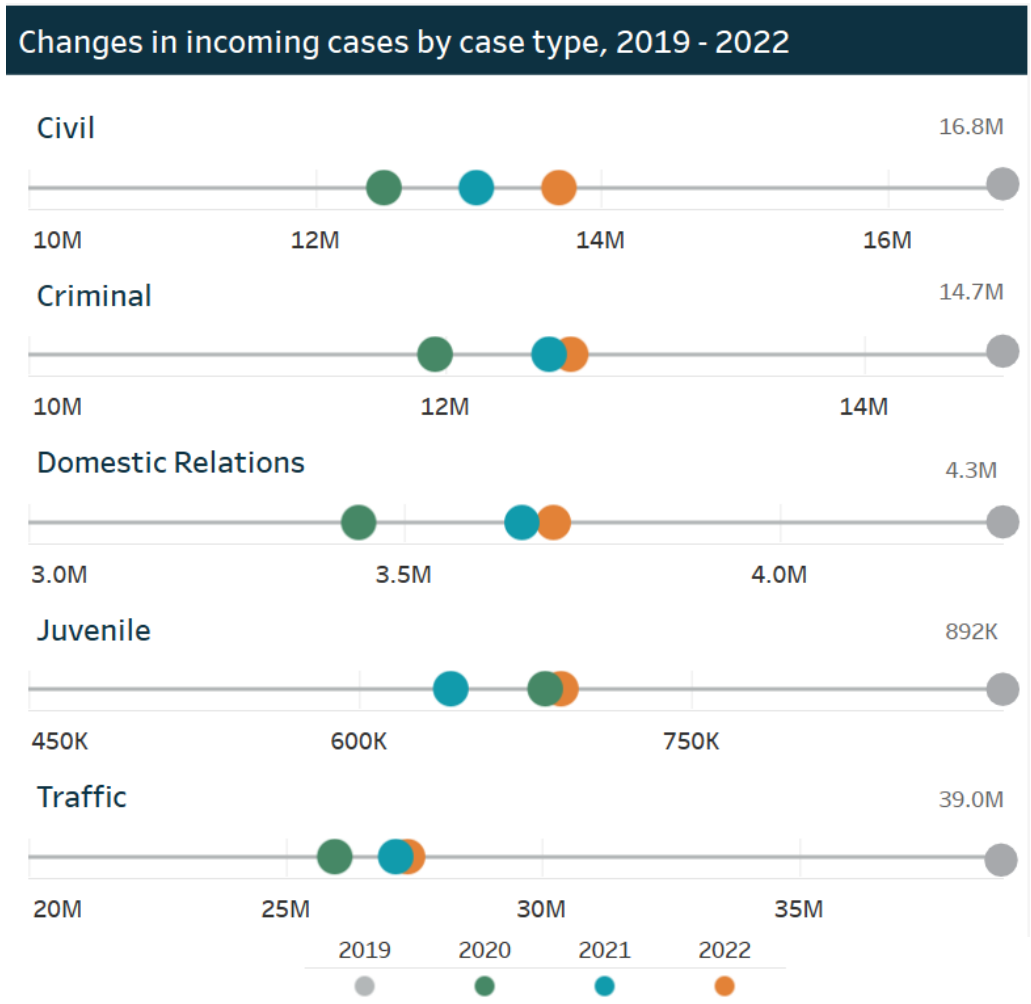
Figure 1

[As previously reported](#),

2020 represented a historic low for incoming caseloads. Courts started seeing a rebound in 2021 and 2022. Incoming civil cases were up 5% from 2021 to 2022, domestic relations and criminal cases were up 2%, and incoming traffic cases increased by 1%. Juvenile cases, in contrast to the overall trend, experienced a further decline in incoming cases from 2020 to 2021, before showing a 7% increase in 2022. Nearly all of the increase in juvenile cases was a result of increased incoming delinquency cases, reversing a downward trend over the

last five years. Despite this

one-year increase, the number of delinquency filings in 2022 were still down 23% compared to 2019.



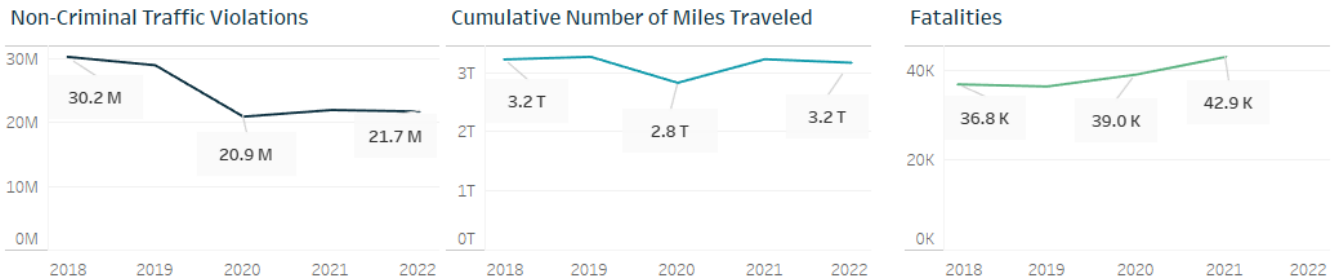
¹ All figures refer to totals of limited and general jurisdiction caseloads, with the unit of analysis at the court level. Due to this, there may be some differences between data in this report and the public dashboards.

² Data on cumulative number of miles traveled can be found here: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/travel_monitoring/tvt.cfm

Traffic and Local Ordinance

Traffic and local ordinance case filings increased 1% in 2022 compared to 2021, with 26.8 million incoming cases in 42 states. However, incoming cases are still down 29% from 2019 filing levels. According to the Federal Highway Administration, cumulative travel on roads and streets increased by .9% in 2022, with 3,169.4 billion vehicle miles of travel, as seen in Figure 2.² Even as traffic filings have decreased, miles driven and fatalities have increased, suggesting that the decrease in incoming traffic cases may not be because of safer driving.³

Figure 2

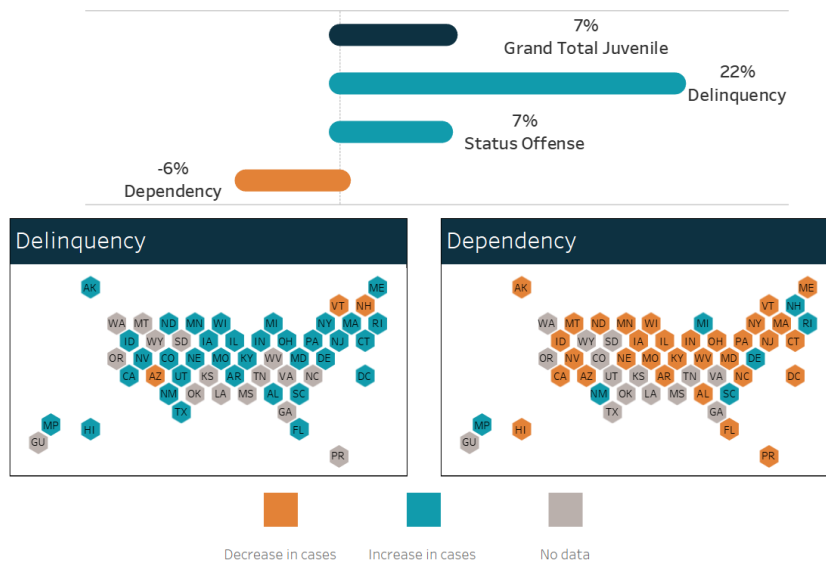


Juvenile

The number of incoming juvenile cases increased in 2022, as seen in Figure 3. Almost 745,000 juvenile cases were reported from 46 states reporting in 2022. This increase was driven by the increase in delinquency cases, up 22% in 2022 to 353,000 cases in 42 states. Previously, incoming delinquency cases had decreased 13% in 2021 and are still down 36% from 2019. Incoming dependency cases, which are those alleging abuse or neglect of a child, decreased in 2022 by 6% to 284,000 cases in 44 states. Status offenses, including truancy, saw an increase of 7% to almost 50,000 in 28 states. The increase in delinquency cases was true across the country, with only Arizona, New Hampshire, and Vermont reporting a decrease in cases. Only seven states reported an increase in dependency cases.

Figure 3

Percent change in incoming cases for select juvenile case types, 2021 - 2022



² Data on cumulative number of miles traveled can be found here: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/travel_monitoring/tvt.cfm
³ Data on fatalities was derived from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Fatality Analysis Reporting System. More information can be found here: <https://www.ihs.org/topics/fatality-statistics/detail/yearly-snapshot>

Civil

Civil cases saw an increase in 2022, rising 5% from 2021. Within the major CSP case categories, there were notable differences in incoming caseloads among case types, as shown in Figure 4. Incoming caseloads in real property, contract, civil appeals, mental health, and probate/estate all increased in 2022. Only tort and small claims continued to decrease compared to 2021. As shown in Figure 5, incoming civil cases have fluctuated over time, but remain below pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 4

Percent change in incoming cases for civil case types, 2021 - 2022

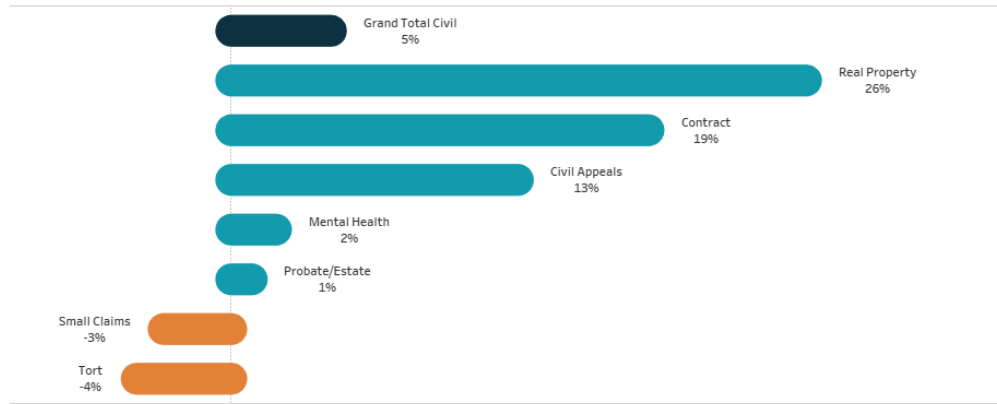
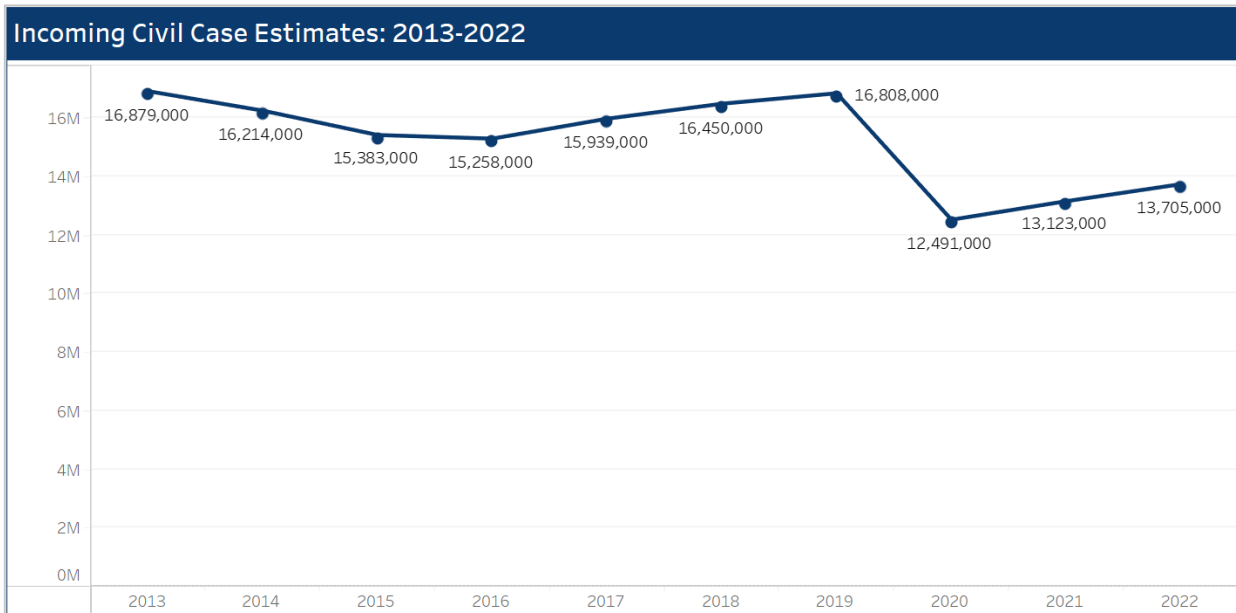


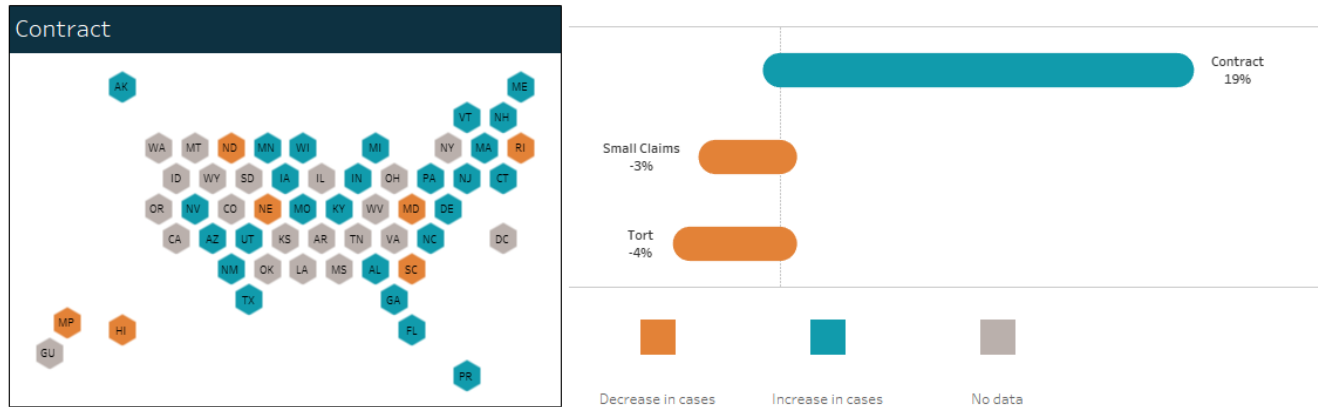
Figure 5



Contract cases made up the largest category of civil cases in 2022, with 39 states reporting 3.6 million incoming cases. Contract cases include employment, landlord/tenant, mortgage foreclosure, and debt collection cases. Contract cases showed a one year increase of 19% in 2022 but are still down 20% since 2019. Increases were seen in most states, as seen in Figure 6. Small claims cases made up the next largest category of civil cases, with 41 states reporting 2.2 million incoming cases for 2022. Nationally, small claims cases showed a small decrease in 2022, falling 3% from 2021, and down 21% from 2019. Torts are a much smaller proportion of the caseload, with 40 states reporting 517,800 incoming cases in 2022. This was a one-year drop of 4% and a drop of 10% from 2019. The number of incoming tort cases decreased in most states.

Figure 6

Change in incoming cases for civil contract case types, 2021 - 2022

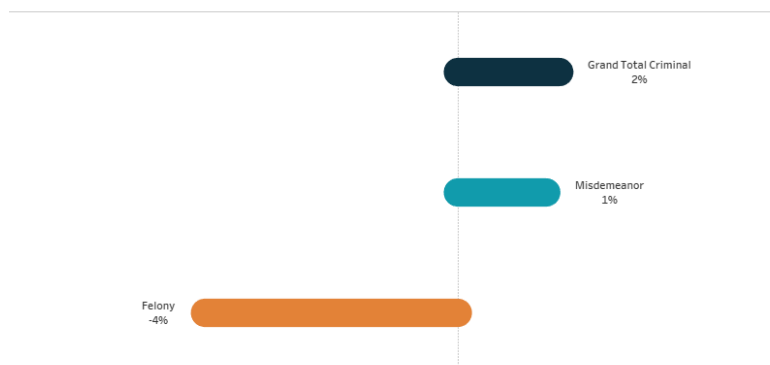


Criminal

Criminal cases saw a slight increase in 2022. They were up 2% from 2021, although still down 14% from 2019 (Figure 7). In total, 46 states reported 13.7 million incoming criminal cases in 2022. Ten million incoming misdemeanor cases (defined as those crimes with a maximum punishment of one year in jail and/or fines) were reported for 44 states, an increase of 1% from 2021 and a 16% drop from 2019. Felony cases showed a 4% decrease from 2021 to 2.9 million cases. This is 10% below 2019 levels for incoming felony cases.

Figure 7

Change in incoming cases for select criminal case types, 2021 - 2022

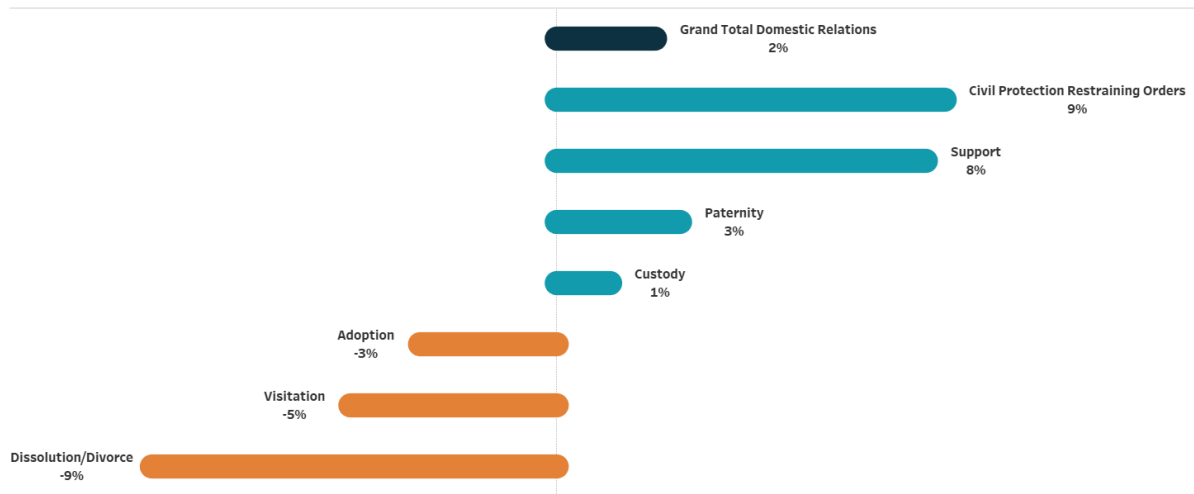


Domestic Relations

Civil protection restraining orders, support, paternity, and custody cases all saw increases in 2022 over 2021, from 1% in custody to 9% in civil protection orders (Figure 8). However, incoming cases across all domestic relations case types remain 14% below 2019 levels with decreases in all case types compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 8

Percent change in domestic relation case types, 2021 - 2022



Dissolution/divorce cases showed the largest decrease compared to 2021, dropping 9%, to levels 2% lower than in 2020. Only five states showed increases in divorce filings. Adoption case filings were down 3% in 46 states compared to 2021 and visitation cases were down 5% in 20 states. Case filings for civil protection orders increased 9% over 2020 but were down 3% compared to 2019.

The Court Statistics Project is the only source for comparable annual state court caseload data, with court data published at www.courtstatistics.org. For more information about 2012-2021 court data, please see our website at www.courtstatistics.org/court-statistics/interactive-caseload-data-displays/csp-stat. NCSC is available to provide training or assistance! Contact CSP Staff at csp@ncsc.org for more information.