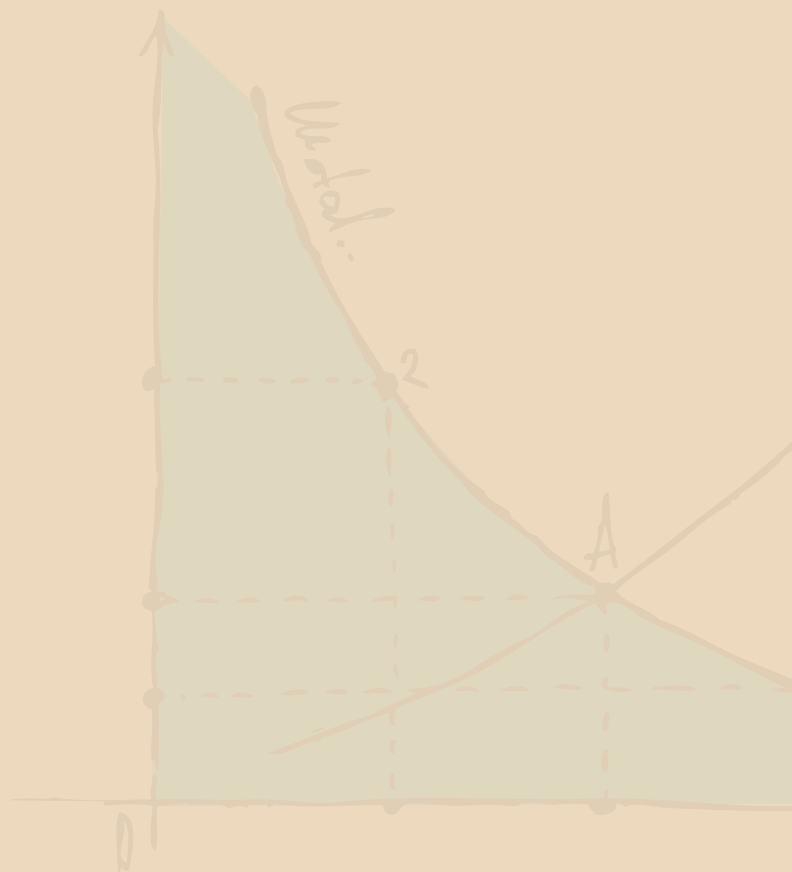
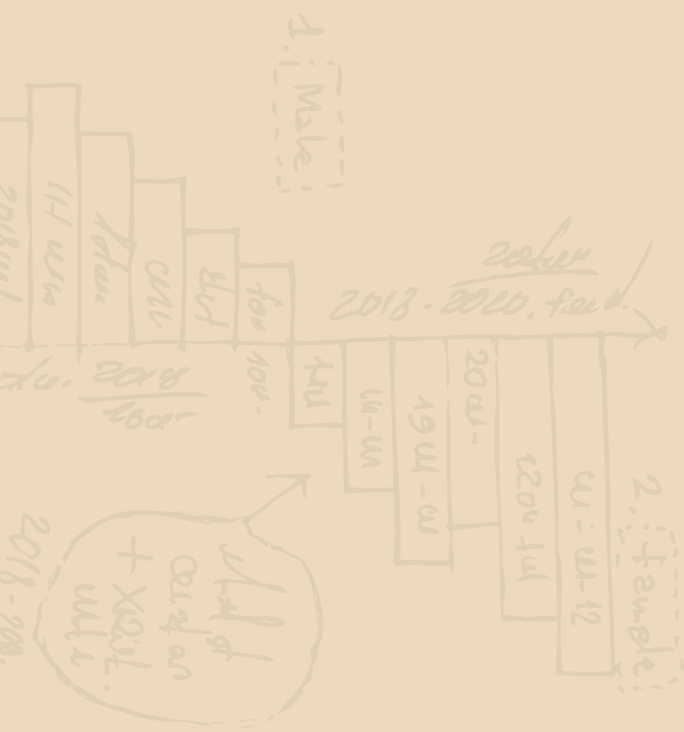


EXAMINING THE WORK OF STATE COURTS

AN OVERVIEW of 2015 STATE COURT CASELOADS

Court Statistics Project
National Center for State Courts



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EXAMINING THE WORK OF STATE COURTS

AN OVERVIEW OF 2015 STATE COURT CASELOADS



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A joint project of the Conference of State Court Administrators and the National Center for State Courts.

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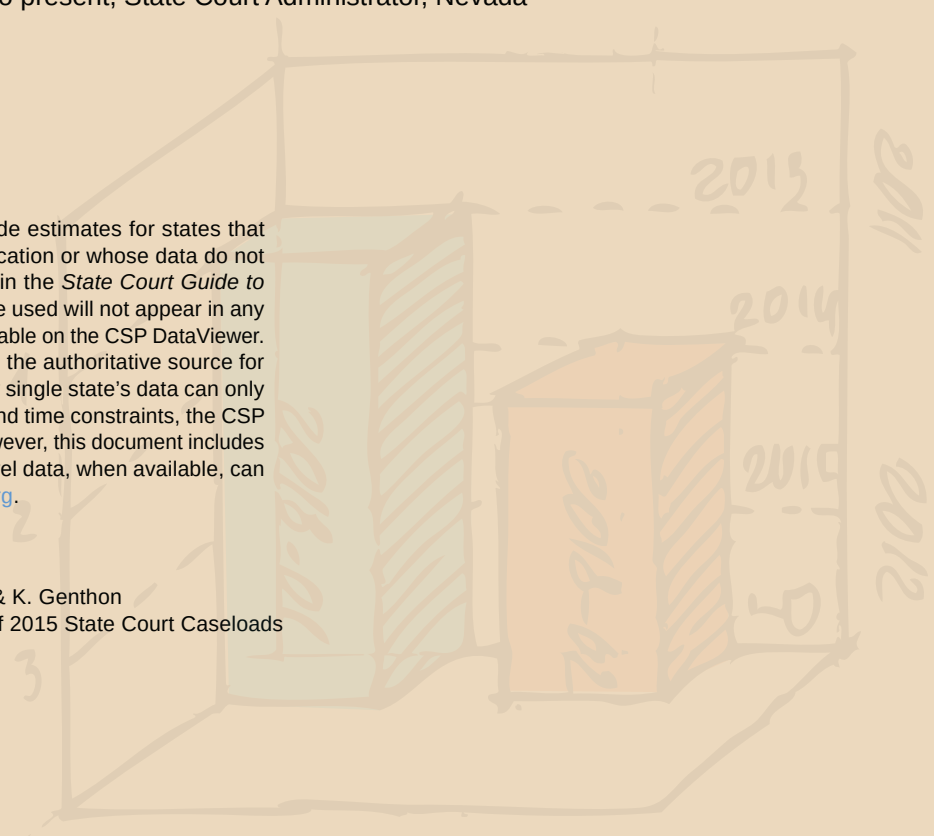
About the Data

The national totals reported in this publication include estimates for states that were unable to report caseload data in time for publication or whose data do not strictly conform to the reporting guidelines set forth in the *State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting*. States for whom estimates were used will not appear in any state-level tables in this document or any displays available on the CSP DataViewer. While the CSP statistical reports endeavor to provide the authoritative source for national caseload statistics, the official version of any single state's data can only be provided by that state. Finally, due to publication and time constraints, the CSP did not produce a report specifically for 2014 data. However, this document includes 2014 data in all trend analyses and the 2014 state-level data, when available, can be found on the CSP DataViewer at courtstatistics.org.

Suggested Citation

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Reporting Excellence Awards

Improvements for 2014

Arkansas

Arkansas developed and implemented the *Arkansas State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting*. Consequently, Arkansas has increased their percentage of publishable trial court case types from 27 percent for 2013 data to 55 percent for 2014.

Massachusetts

As a result of renewed focus on statistical reporting, Massachusetts was able to report 71 additional publishable case types. This improvement raised their publishable percentage from 9 percent to 81 percent, the biggest single year leap for trial court data ever seen by the CSP.

New Hampshire

With the implementation of a new appellate case management system and the work of the Clerk, the Supreme Court now reports 100 percent publishable incoming appellate data. Previously, the court was able to report only a total caseload number without any distinctions among case types.

Utah

The Utah Supreme Court increased the percentage of submitted publishable incoming appellate case types from 16 percent for 2013 data to 100 percent for 2014, and the Court of Appeals has seen an increase from 9 percent for 2013 to 100 percent for 2014.

Improvements for 2015

Alabama

The Clerk of the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals engaged additional resources to conduct case-by-case reviews to determine the case types of all appellate cases filed and disposed during the year. This review resulted in the Court being able to report 100 percent publishable data. The Clerk of the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals also engaged additional resources to conduct case-by-case reviews enabling the Court to report 100 percent publishable data, as well as information on the manner of disposition and case outcomes, for those cases disposed during the year.

Connecticut

With support from their state court administrator, two Connecticut data specialists were able to accurately and fully map all trial court case types to the *State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting*. Connecticut, therefore, is the first state to report 100 percent publishable incoming trial court data.

Delaware

Delaware took advantage of CSP technical assistance to gain a better understanding of how existing trial court data could be restructured to improve CSP reporting. Their subsequent data submission increased publishable incoming trial court data by 32 percent. In addition, a similar examination and rethinking of Supreme Court appellate data produced an increase in that court's publishable incoming percentage from 14 to 100 percent.

District of Columbia

District of Columbia's data specialist disaggregated the trial court's caseload data and now reports all tort, contract, domestic relations, and juvenile delinquency case types. This effort resulted in the District of Columbia's publishable incoming data increasing by 49 percent.

Minnesota

For 2015, Minnesota achieved full implementation of the NCSC's methodology for counting cases involving self-represented litigants, reporting publishable data for cases with self-represented litigants for all five major trial court case categories.

Nevada

After years of stakeholder meetings, conducting in-depth reviews of each case type category, and with technical assistance from CSP staff, Nevada rolled out its revised data model to all counties, and the resulting incoming data is 92 percent publishable for general jurisdiction trial courts.

A Comment from the Chair

The purpose of the Court Statistics Project (CSP) is to provide comprehensive and comparable national-level data on state trial and appellate court caseloads. In order to accomplish this goal, a set of reporting guidelines are outlined in the *State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting* to standardize the unit of count, case type definitions, and structure of caseload data collected for reporting state caseload statistics to the CSP. As a result, the CSP is the only source of comparable and reliable national data on the caseloads of the state courts, essential information for court managers, policy makers, and the public. For more in-depth and state-level statistics, we encourage you to look into the interactive CSP *DataViewer* available at www.courtstatistics.org.

As you will see, many states have diligently worked with the CSP to provide statewide data in the format necessary for comparison. We continually strive for 100 percent participation and thank those states that have made such great strides in providing their data. If your state needs assistance providing complete data, we encourage you to seek free technical assistance by connecting with CSP staff through the CSP web site.

The staff of the Court Statistics Project and the members of the Conference of State Court Administrators' Court Statistics Committee invite you to review *Examining the Work of State Courts*. We also urge you to encourage others to give the publication a careful read and to use the CSP *DataViewer* tool on the web site for additional detailed analyses of state court caseloads. Wide readership and critical analysis will lead to stronger and better managed courts.



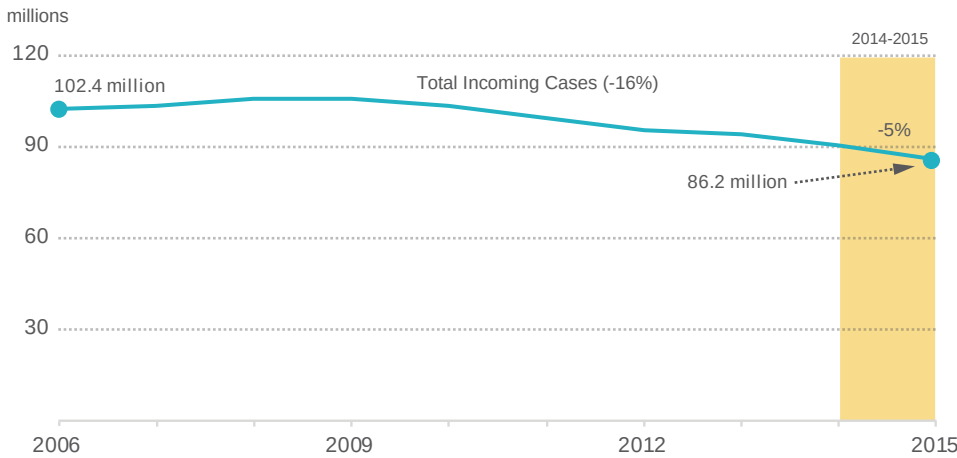
Pamela Harris

Chair, Court Statistics Committee
Conference of State Court Administrators

National Trial Court Overview

Since 2006, total state trial court caseloads have dropped by over 16 million cases.

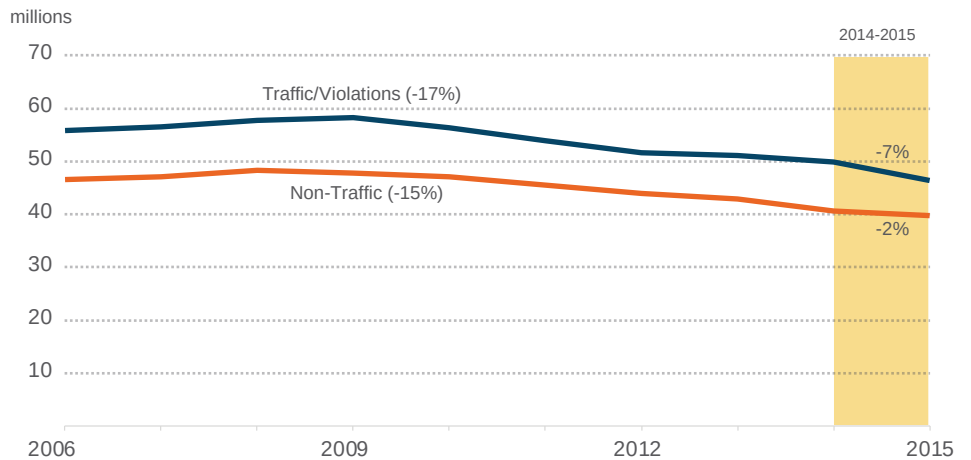
Incoming Caseloads, 2006-2015



Following two years of positive growth and one year of stability, aggregate incoming caseloads have declined at an average of nearly 3.5 percent per year since 2009. Trial court caseloads comprise Civil, Domestic Relations, Criminal, Juvenile, and Traffic/Violations cases.

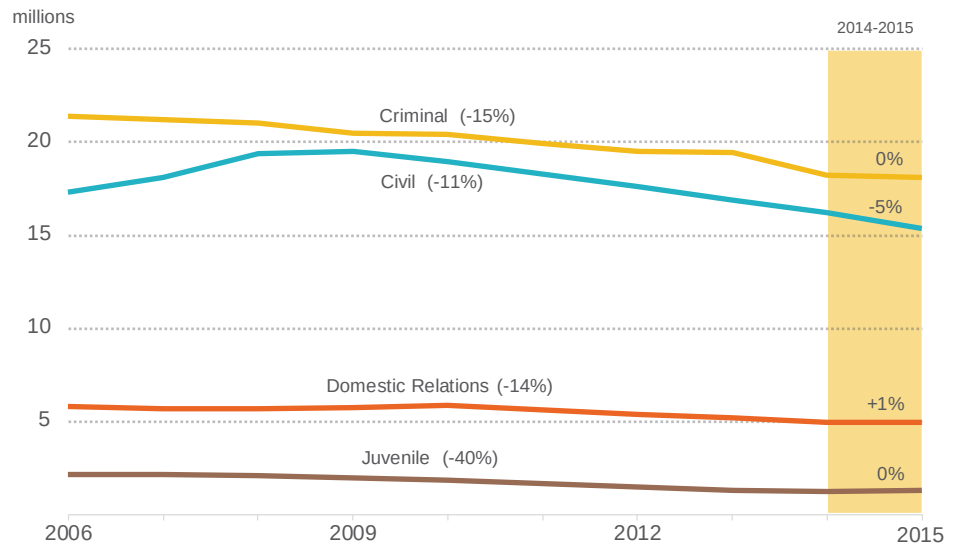
Traffic/Violations cases account for more than half (54%) of all incoming cases and therefore exert a powerful influence on the aggregate caseload trend. That influence can be seen when comparing the charts on this page. Combined non-Traffic caseloads (i.e., Civil, Domestic Relations, Criminal, Juvenile) fell by only 2 percent between 2014 and 2015, but the 7 percent decline in the larger Traffic caseload generated the overall 5 percent decrease seen above.

Total Incoming Traffic v. Non-Traffic Caseloads, 2006-2015

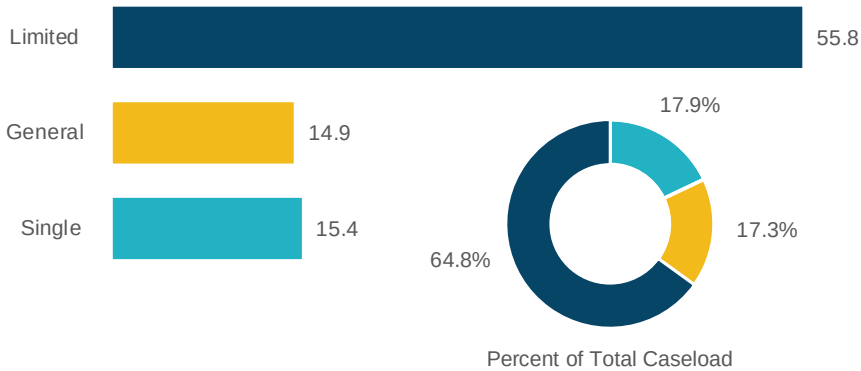


Here we can see the disaggregated total incoming caseloads for each of the four non-Traffic categories for the last 10 years. Though all four have declined substantially over this period, Civil is the only category that continued to fall in the last year.

Total Incoming Non-Traffic Caseloads, by Case Category, 2006-2015



Total Incoming Cases, by Tier, 2015 (in millions)



In order to properly contextualize some state court data presented in this report, it is important to be aware of distinctions in how the courts are structured and how their data may be presented. Eight states (CA, ID, IL, IA, ME, MN, MO, VT) plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam, which account for 23 percent of the U.S. population, have what are referred to here as “single-tiered” court systems, i.e., their caseloads are reported as one statewide figure for every case category. The remaining 42 states have “two-tiered” systems that divide their caseloads—often in different ways—between a general jurisdiction and a limited jurisdiction tier. Often, particularly for Civil and Criminal, both tiers may have jurisdiction over the same category of cases, with the determining factor as to which case gets processed in which tier being specific case type, dollar value, case complexity, or severity of charged crime(s).

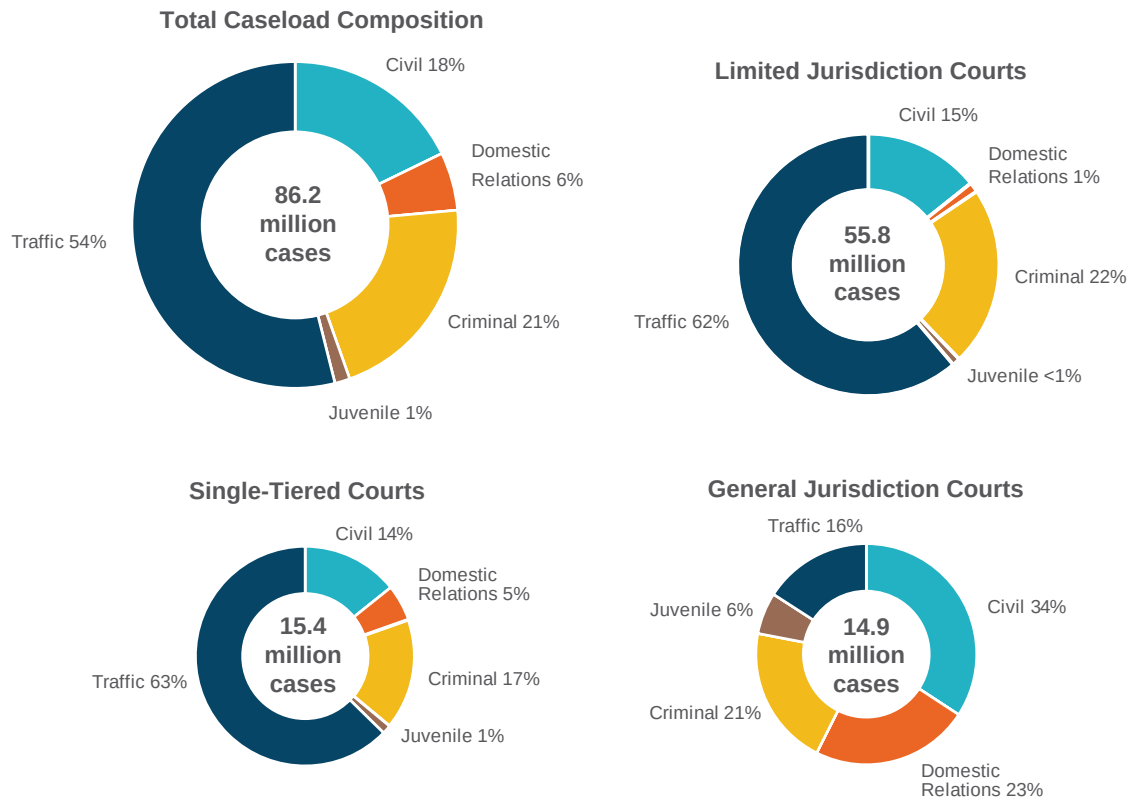
Total Incoming Caseloads, by Case Category and Tier, 2015 (in millions)

Case Type	Single Tier	Two Tier		Total	Percent of Total
		General	Limited		
Civil	2.2	5.1	8.1	15.4	18%
Domestic Relations	0.8	3.5	0.7	5.0	6%
Criminal	2.5	3.1	12.5	18.1	21%
Juvenile	0.2	0.9	0.2	1.3	1%
Traffic/Violations	9.7	2.4	34.3	46.4	54%
All Cases	15.4	14.9	55.8	86.2	100%
Number of States*	11	42		53	
Population (in millions)	74.6	250.3		324.9	
Percent of Population	23%	77%		100%	

* Includes District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico

The estimated number and percentage of incoming cases by tier and case category are shown in greater detail.

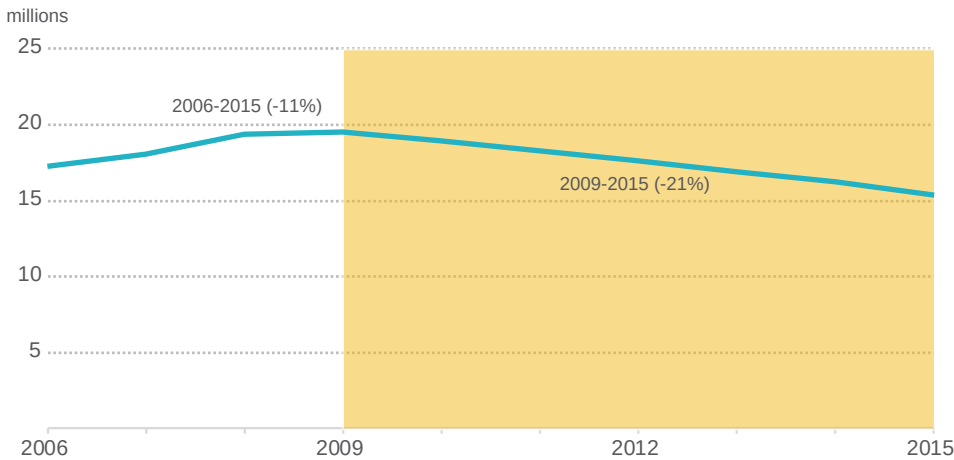
Caseload Composition, Total by Tier, 2015



Civil

Civil Caseloads Continue a 6-Year Decline.

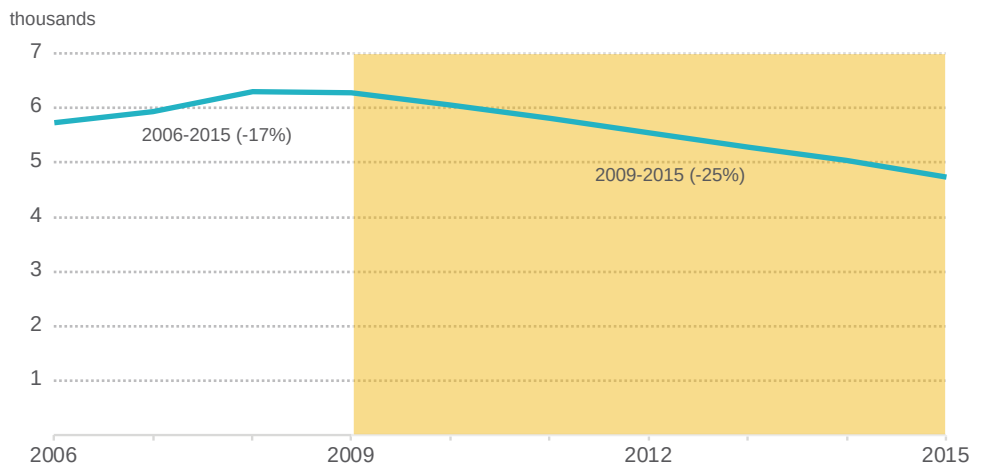
Total Incoming Civil Caseloads, 2006-2015



Civil caseloads, which include case types such as tort, contract, real property, mental health, and small claims, began a decline shortly after the onset of the 2008 recession. Though the decrease in incoming Civil cases was 11 percent for the entire 10-year period, caseloads have declined 21 percent since reaching an apex of 19.5 million cases in 2009 – an average of about -3.5 percent per year.

Caseloads that increase at a rate comparable to that of the population (about 1 percent per year) will, when adjusted for population, appear as a flat line. The Civil caseload grew at a rate much higher than that of the population in 2007 and 2008, was about the same in 2009, but since then has dropped precipitously (-25 percent).

Total Incoming Civil Cases per 100,000 Population, 2006-2015



Statewide Incoming Civil Caseloads and Rates in 38 States, 2015

State	Incoming Cases		Percent of All Cases	Civil Cases per 100k Population
	Civil	Total		
Maryland	988,232	2,004,051	49%	16,453
New Jersey	783,918	6,852,147	11%	8,751
District of Columbia	55,533	95,611	58%	8,261
New York	1,419,459	3,498,540	41%	7,171
Georgia	711,036	3,141,812	23%	6,961
Michigan	622,687	3,552,668	18%	6,275
Delaware	59,256	497,710	12%	6,264
Nebraska	116,910	466,629	25%	6,166
Indiana	399,805	1,404,980	28%	6,040
South Dakota	49,941	216,445	23%	5,817
Texas	1,595,525	12,534,037	13%	5,808
Colorado	304,570	964,878	32%	5,582
Nevada	157,579	858,867	18%	5,451
Connecticut	192,443	760,873	25%	5,359
Montana	50,522	308,069	16%	4,891
Kansas	141,766	820,833	17%	4,869
Kentucky	215,067	915,171	24%	4,860
Ohio	531,198	3,275,593	16%	4,574
Massachusetts	297,909	732,751	41%	4,385
Arizona	288,906	2,006,440	14%	4,231
Idaho	66,473	361,984	18%	4,017
Missouri	243,647	2,367,530	10%	4,005
Louisiana	183,915	1,426,333	13%	3,938
New Mexico	81,805	360,193	23%	3,923
Utah	115,214	673,752	17%	3,846
Iowa	117,735	714,140	16%	3,769
Washington	266,991	2,385,135	11%	3,724
West Virginia	66,658	399,584	17%	3,615
Florida	727,816	3,419,253	21%	3,590
Wisconsin	205,213	1,309,667	16%	3,556
Pennsylvania	440,167	3,624,205	12%	3,438
Alaska	23,707	124,790	19%	3,210
New Hampshire	41,365	144,862	29%	3,109
Minnesota	168,818	1,336,682	13%	3,075
Arkansas	85,901	1,030,201	8%	2,884
Hawai'i	39,448	525,811	8%	2,756
Maine	29,965	198,571	15%	2,254
California	848,949	7,183,530	12%	2,169
Average			21%	4,975
Median			17%	4,308

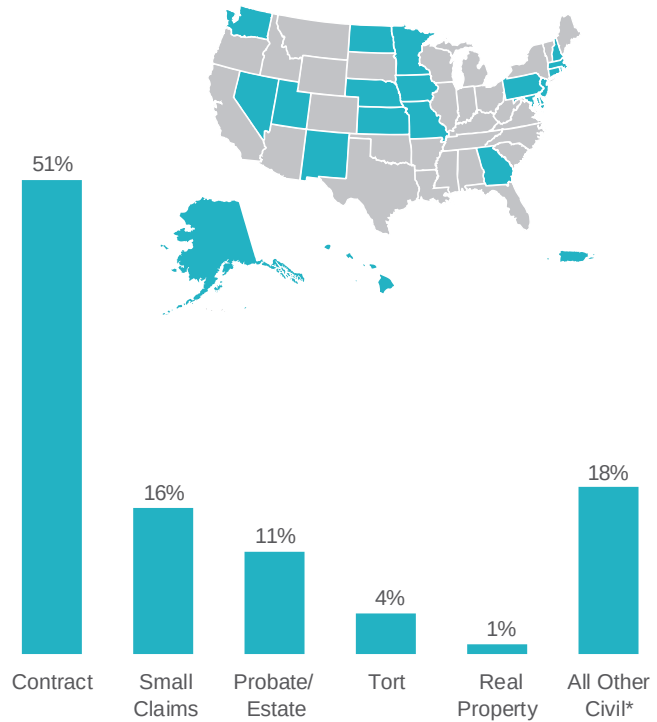
More state-level information like this can be found in the DataViewer on the Court Statistics Project Website: www.courtstatistics.org. The DataViewer always contains the most current information available.

Contract Cases Dominate Civil Caseloads.

Data from 22 states, representing about 28 percent of the U.S. population, suggest that more than half of all Civil cases filed in state courts are contractual in nature. Contract caseloads include debt collections, mortgage foreclosures, landlord/tenant disputes, fraud, buyer plaintiff, and employment disputes. Additionally, many of the small claims cases that comprise another 16 percent of Civil caseloads are also based on contract disputes, but due to their lesser financial value are counted and processed separately.

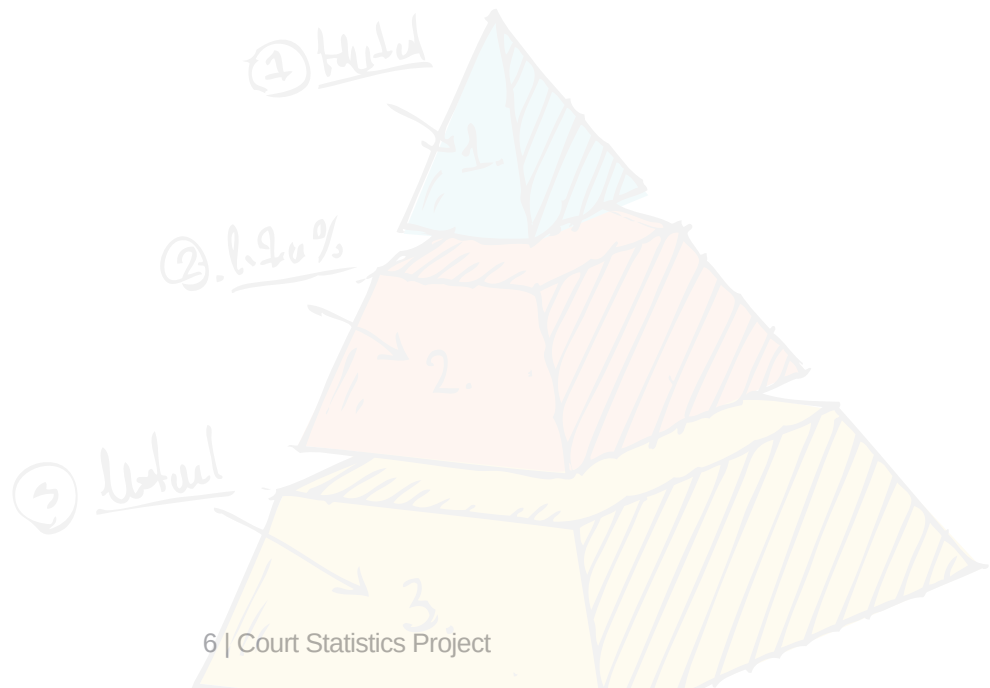
Conservatorship, guardianship, and other types of probate actions are collectively known as Probate/Estate cases. Though accounting for just under 11 percent of all Civil cases, many of these actions, particularly guardianship cases, are of critical importance to the litigants involved and are resource intensive for the courts. Tort cases, including automobile, medical malpractice, product liability, fraud, and premises liability, together account for just 4.2 percent of all Civil cases in these 22 states.

Civil Caseload Composition in 22 States, 2015



* All Other Civil includes mental health, civil appeals, habeas corpus, writs, and other miscellaneous civil cases.

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.



Statewide Incoming Contract Caseloads and Rates in 29 States, 2015

State	Incoming Cases		Percent of All Civil	Contracts per 100k Population
	Contract	Civil		
Maryland	704,258	988,232	71%	11,725
District of Columbia	38,269	55,533	69%	5,693
Nebraska	89,365	116,910	76%	4,713
New Jersey	412,321	783,918	53%	4,603
Georgia	383,716	711,036	54%	3,756
Delaware	35,401	59,256	60%	3,742
Kansas	108,401	141,766	76%	3,723
Rhode Island	35,787	49,147	73%	3,388
Kentucky	136,533	215,067	63%	3,085
Nevada	85,761	157,579	54%	2,967
Utah	73,514	115,214	64%	2,454
Missouri	148,228	243,647	61%	2,436
Michigan	225,775	622,687	36%	2,275
North Dakota	15,164	32,464	47%	2,003
Washington	121,477	266,991	45%	1,694
Indiana	95,105	399,805	24%	1,437
Hawai'i	20,072	39,448	51%	1,402
New Mexico	27,674	81,805	34%	1,327
Pennsylvania	168,059	440,167	38%	1,313
Connecticut	47,047	192,443	24%	1,310
Florida	247,534	727,816	34%	1,221
Texas	313,804	1,595,525	20%	1,142
Massachusetts	72,615	297,909	24%	1,069
Puerto Rico	36,305	192,157	19%	1,045
Maine	12,229	29,965	41%	920
Iowa	27,276	117,735	23%	873
Alaska	6,002	23,707	25%	813
New Hampshire	10,654	41,365	26%	801
Minnesota	27,642	168,818	16%	504
Average			45%	2,532
Median			45%	1,694

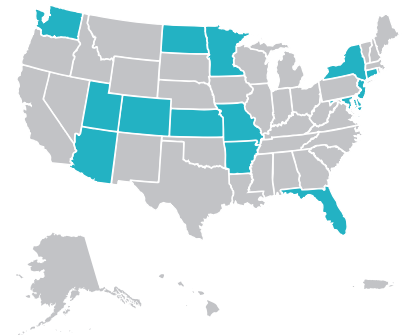
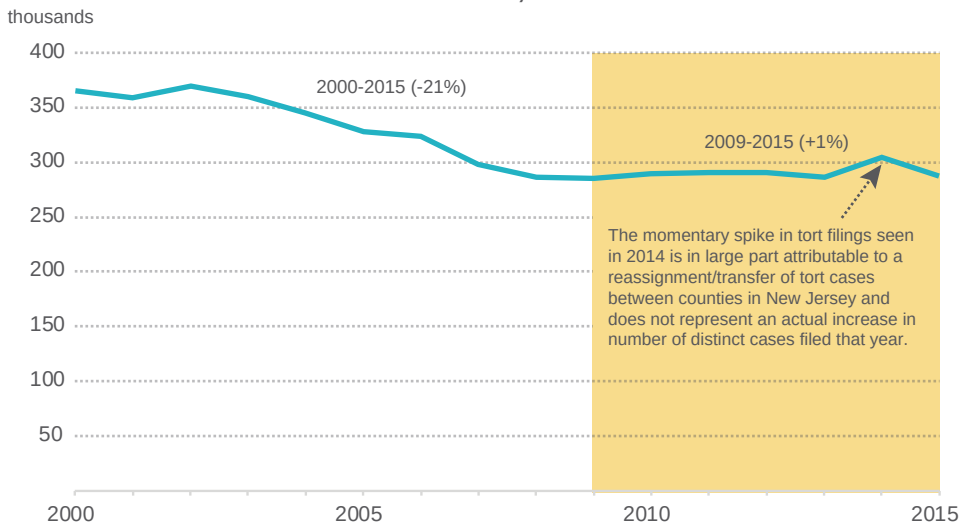
This table shows the proportion of Civil and the population-adjusted rate of contract cases in 29 states, representing one-half of the U.S. population. The variation in percentage and rate is likely the result of a number of factors, such as density of population and potential litigants (corporations, industry, landlords, banks, etc.), financial solvency of the state's inhabitants, and the maximum value for small claims cases in the state.

Torts Are Often a Small Percentage of Civil Caseloads and Have Recently Stabilized.

Statewide Incoming Tort Caseloads and Rates in 28 States, 2015

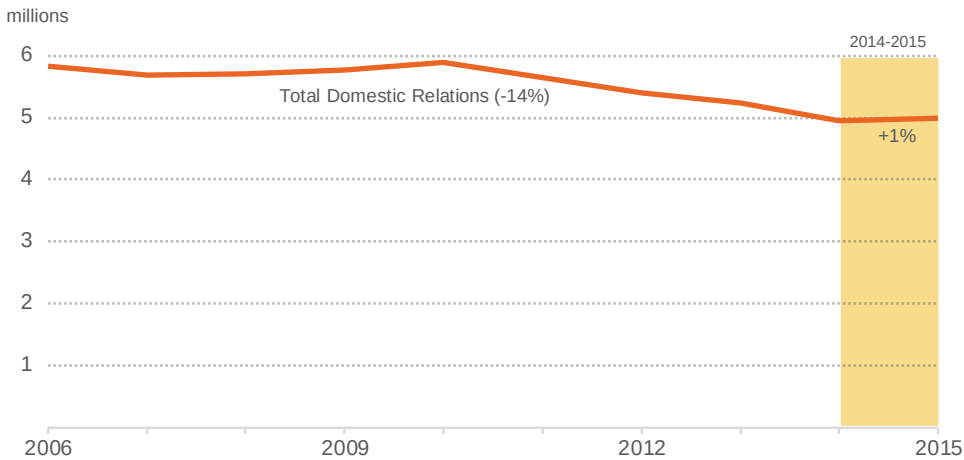
State	Incoming Cases		Percent of All Civil	Torts per 100k Population
	Tort	Civil		
New Jersey	54,708	783,918	7.0%	611
District of Columbia	3,090	55,533	5.6%	460
Connecticut	14,922	192,443	7.8%	416
Maryland	22,802	988,232	2.3%	380
Nevada	9,321	157,579	5.9%	322
Pennsylvania	34,816	440,167	7.9%	272
New Mexico	4,722	81,805	5.8%	226
South Carolina	11,025	275,393	4.0%	225
Missouri	13,330	243,647	5.5%	219
Rhode Island	2,290	49,147	4.7%	217
Texas	57,229	1,595,525	3.6%	208
Ohio	22,492	531,198	4.2%	194
Georgia	17,148	711,036	2.4%	168
Washington	11,970	266,991	4.5%	167
Puerto Rico	5,511	192,157	2.9%	159
Massachusetts	10,200	297,909	3.4%	150
Kentucky	5,710	215,067	2.7%	129
Alaska	870	23,707	3.7%	118
Nebraska	2,084	116,910	1.8%	110
Iowa	3,266	117,735	2.8%	105
Kansas	2,988	141,766	2.1%	103
Hawai'i	1,458	39,448	3.7%	102
New Hampshire	1,139	41,365	2.8%	86
Maine	1,022	29,965	3.4%	77
Minnesota	3,811	168,818	2.3%	69
Utah	2,061	115,214	1.8%	69
North Dakota	433	32,464	1.3%	57
Idaho	734	66,473	1.1%	44
Average			3.8%	195
Median			3.5%	163

Incoming Tort Caseloads in the General Jurisdiction Tiers of 18 States, 2000-2015



Domestic Relations

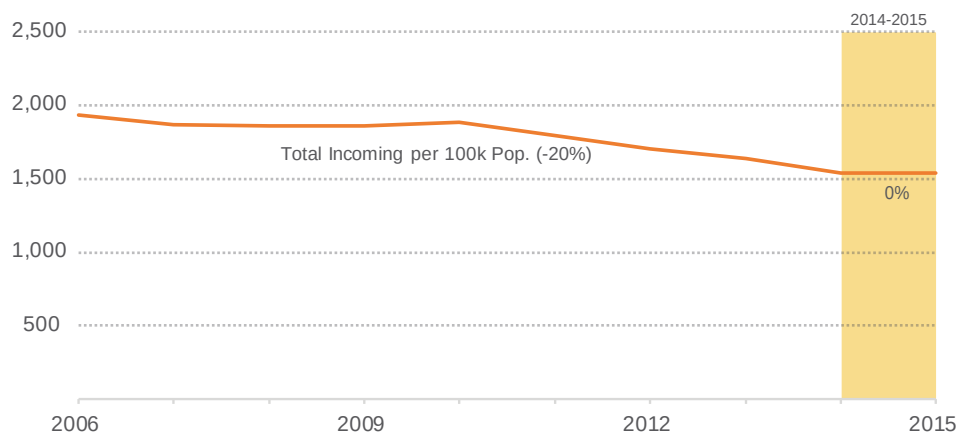
Total Incoming Domestic Relations Caseloads, 2006-2015



Domestic Relations (DR) caseloads showed a slight increase (+1%) in 2015 after five consecutive years of decline.

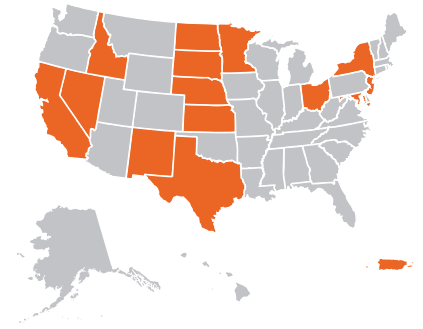
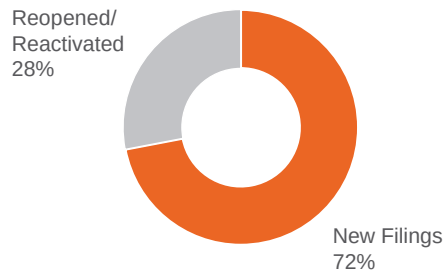
With a steady annual increase in total U.S. population of approximately 1 percent, the drop in population-adjusted DR caseloads since 2010 is magnified. However, from 2014 to 2015 the total number of DR cases rose the same 1 percent as the U.S. population resulting in no change between the 2014 and 2015 rate.

Total Incoming Domestic Relations Cases per 100,000 Population, 2006-2015



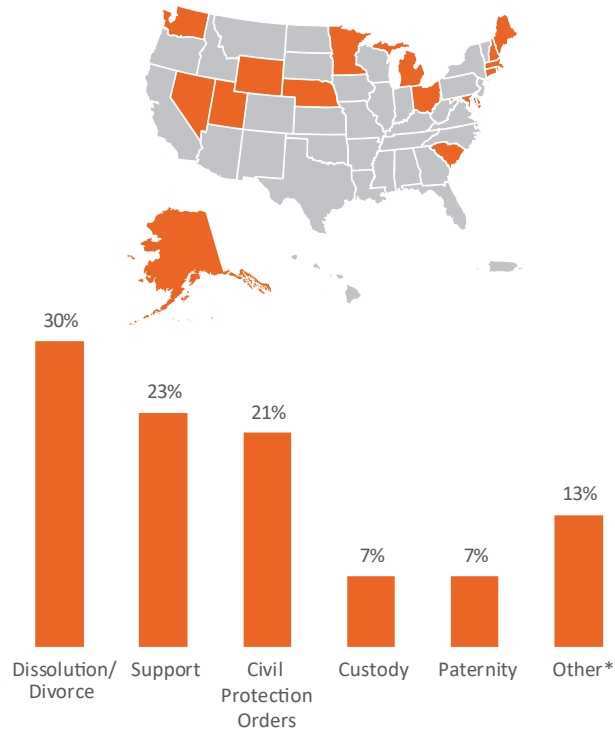
Domestic Relations cases, especially support and custody (not shown separately), are often returned to the court's docket for additional action after the first disposition. In the 15 states able to distinguish reopened/reactivated cases from new filings, the former represent more than one quarter of the total caseload.

New Filings vs Reopened/Reactivated Domestic Relations Caseloads in 15 States, 2015



Dissolution/Divorce cases are perennially the most common DR case type.

Domestic Relations Caseload Composition in 18 States, 2015



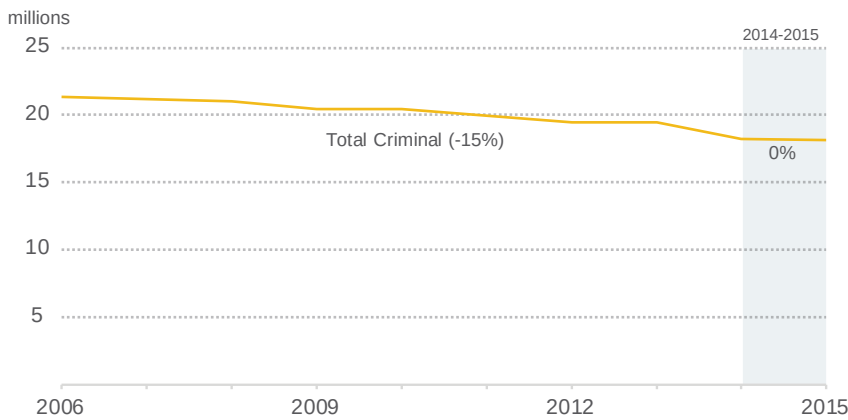
*Other includes Adoption, Visitation, as well as cases that could not be identified into a more specific CSP category.

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

Criminal

Aggregate Criminal Caseloads Unchanged in 2015.

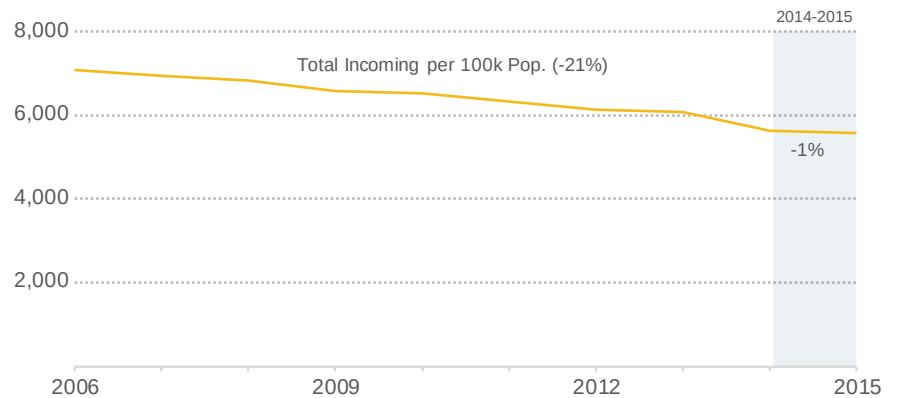
Total Incoming Criminal Caseloads, 2006-2015



In 2015, the estimated 18.1 million incoming Criminal cases reported by state courts accounted for 21 percent of all cases, second only to Traffic/Violations cases. Despite a generally slow but steady decline from 2006 to 2014, the total Criminal caseload remained unchanged from 2014 to 2015.

When adjusted to the ever-increasing U.S. population (averaging about +1 percent per year), the rate of Criminal cases has declined even more noticeably.

Total Incoming Criminal Cases per 100,000 Population, 2006-2015

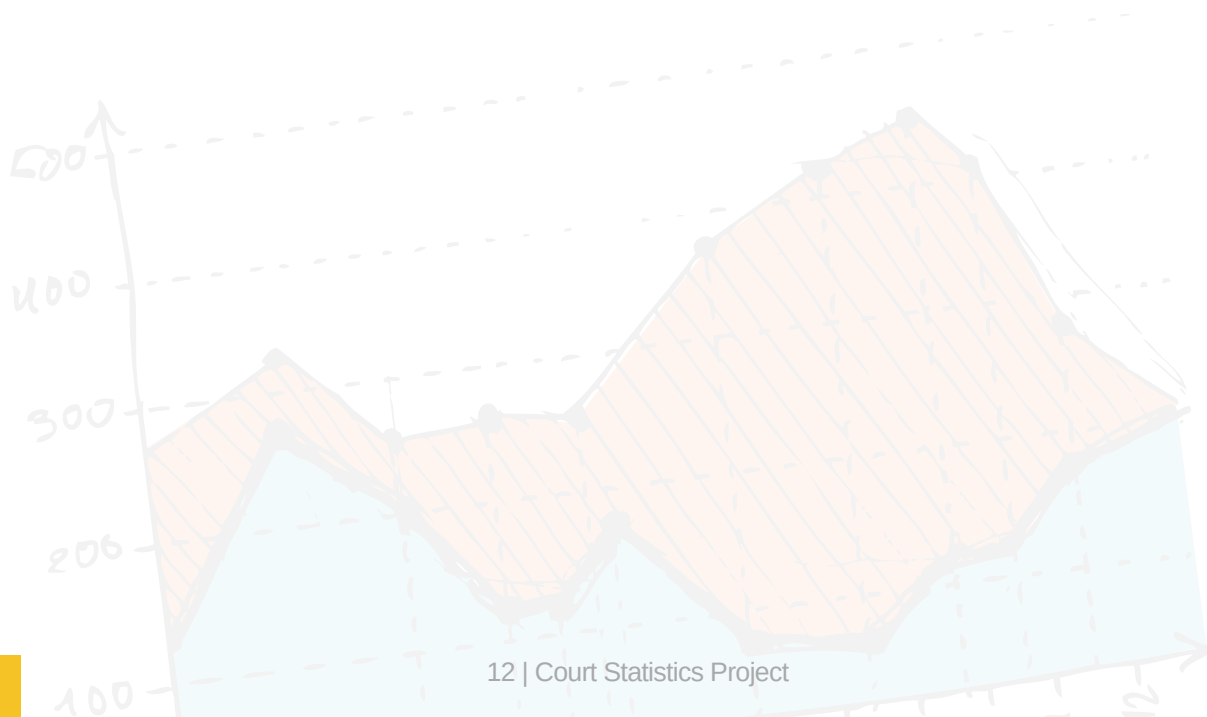
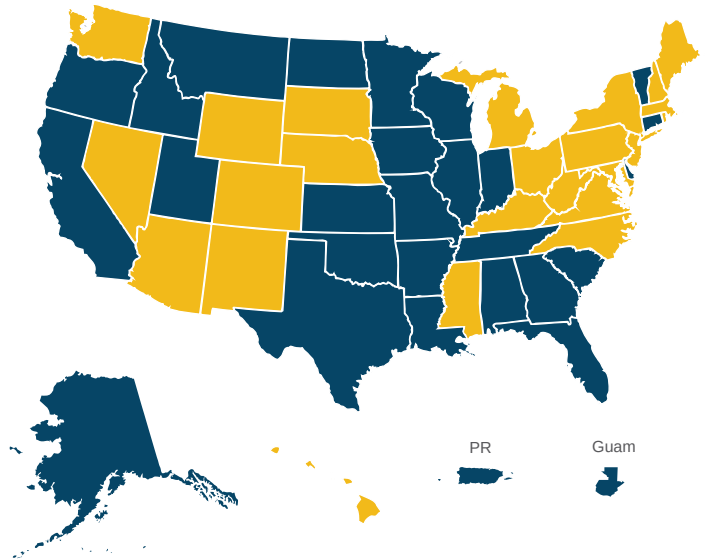


Method of Felony Processing Affects Caseload Composition.

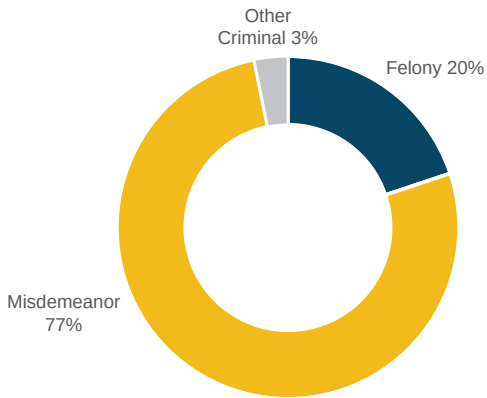
A matter of significant importance when examining Criminal caseloads in state courts is the method by which each state processes and reports felony caseload data. States primarily fall into one of two categories: 1) those that process felonies entirely within the general tier or in “one-stage”; and, 2) those that hold preliminary hearings in the limited jurisdiction tier and—if sufficient evidence exists—bind the case over for trial in the general jurisdiction tier or “two-stage.” This latter two-stage process will correctly count some of these felonies twice since processing does occur in both court tiers, and because of this potential double counting, states with a two-stage process may have a higher statewide percentage of Criminal and felony cases than courts that process and report felonies in one stage. It is important to note that not all felonies are double counted in two-stage systems. Cases that are dismissed or reduced to a misdemeanor may not proceed to the second stage of processing. Additionally, in some states, preliminary hearings are not held for every felony, and may only occur in some individual court locations or for only some types of felonies.

Most States Process Felony Cases in a Single Stage

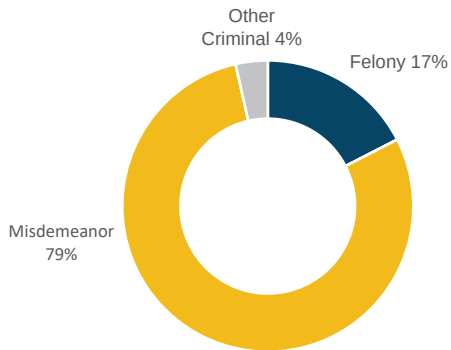
- States that Process Felonies in 1 Stage
- States that Process Felonies in 2 Stages



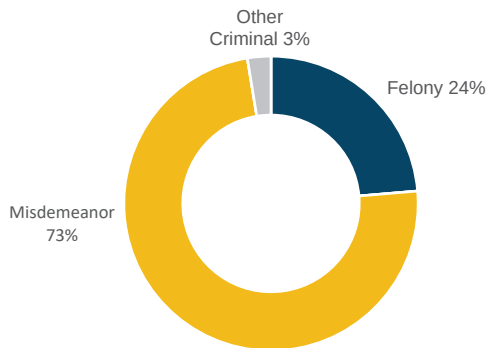
Criminal Composition in 30 States



Criminal Composition in 16 States That Process Felonies in 1 Stage



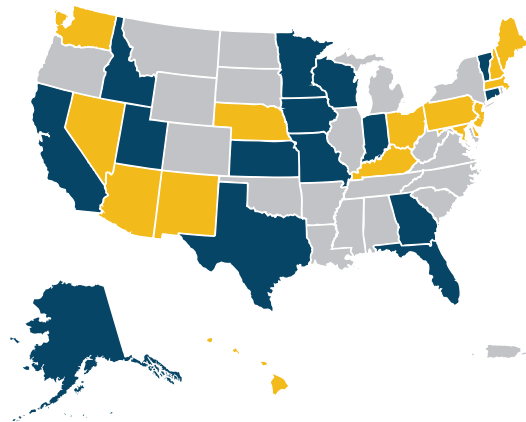
Criminal Composition in 14 States That Process Felonies in 2 Stages



Thirty states were able to report publishable data for incoming felony, misdemeanor, and total criminal caseloads. In these states, felonies accounted for 20 percent of the criminal caseload, regardless of their felony process.

Once these 30 states are separated into one-stage and two-stage processing, a difference in caseload composition becomes apparent, with states that process felonies in two stages reporting a noticeably higher percentage of felony cases. Despite the potential for double counting, the percentage of felonies in two-stage processing states is not necessarily double that of the one-stage processing states because some felony cases do not proceed past the preliminary hearing stage. This can be the result of pleas, reduction of charges, dismissals, and differences in which court locations have jurisdiction over preliminary hearings in individual states.

- 16 States that Process Felonies in 1 Stage
- 14 States that Process Felonies in 2 Stages



The following table displays the criminal data for the same 30 states.

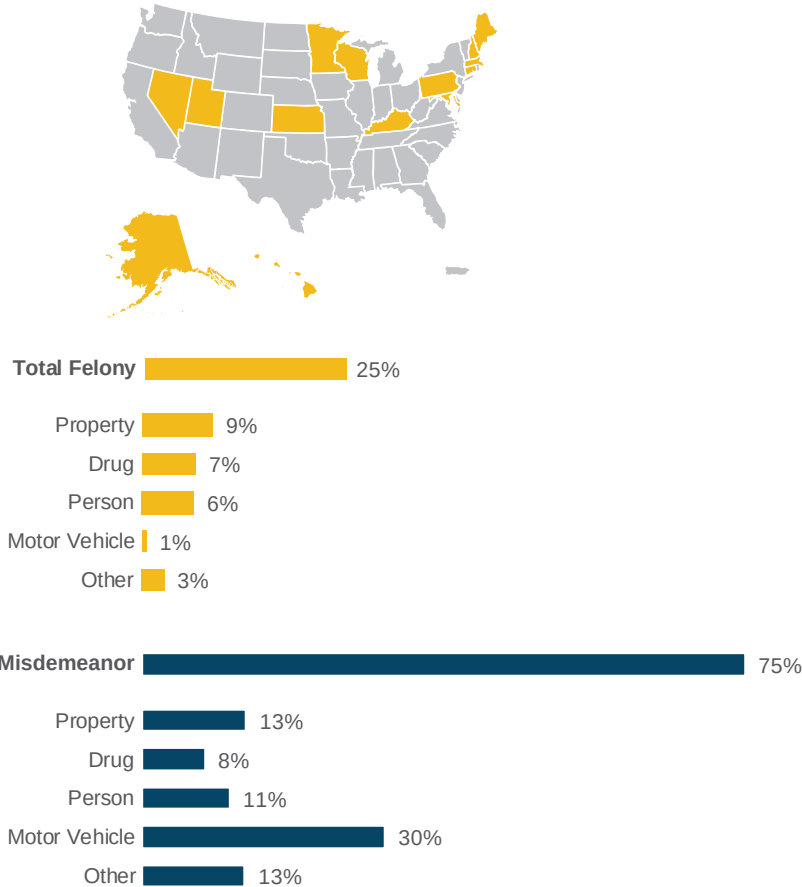
More state-level information like this can be found in the DataViewer on the Court Statistics Project Website: www.courtstatistics.org. The DataViewer always contains the most current information available.

Statewide Incoming Criminal Caseloads and Rates in 30 States, by Felony Processing, 2015

State	Total Incoming		Percent of All Cases	Criminal Cases per 100k Population
	Criminal	All Cases		
States that Process Felonies in 1 Stage				
Texas	2,989,073	12,534,037	24%	10,882
Idaho	93,771	361,984	26%	5,666
Georgia	540,394	3,141,812	17%	5,290
Alaska	30,883	124,790	25%	4,182
Utah	122,154	673,752	18%	4,077
Indiana	269,331	1,404,980	19%	4,069
Iowa	121,835	714,140	17%	3,900
Minnesota	207,477	1,336,682	16%	3,779
District of Columbia	25,288	95,611	26%	3,762
California	1,437,324	7,183,530	20%	3,672
Florida	739,440	3,419,253	22%	3,648
Missouri	212,206	2,367,530	9%	3,488
Connecticut	116,011	760,873	15%	3,231
Vermont	16,092	138,641	12%	2,570
Wisconsin	111,422	1,309,667	9%	1,931
Kansas	47,360	820,833	6%	1,627
Average			17%	4,111
Median			18%	3,771
States that Process Felonies in 2 Stages				
Arizona	588,442	2,006,440	29%	8,618
New Jersey	711,618	6,852,147	10%	7,944
Kentucky	336,778	915,171	37%	7,611
Nebraska	139,016	466,629	30%	7,331
Ohio	763,578	3,275,593	23%	6,575
Nevada	189,549	858,867	22%	6,557
Maryland	315,550	2,004,051	16%	5,254
Hawai'i	73,788	525,811	14%	5,154
New Mexico	106,630	360,193	30%	5,114
Pennsylvania	517,672	3,627,095	14%	4,044
Maine	48,535	198,571	24%	3,651
New Hampshire	45,763	144,862	32%	3,439
Washington	245,080	2,385,135	10%	3,418
Massachusetts	204,941	732,751	28%	3,016
Average			23%	5,552
Median			24%	5,204

Felonies Are More Likely to Involve Person, Property, or Drug Crimes, While Misdemeanors Are More Likely to be Related to Motor Vehicles.

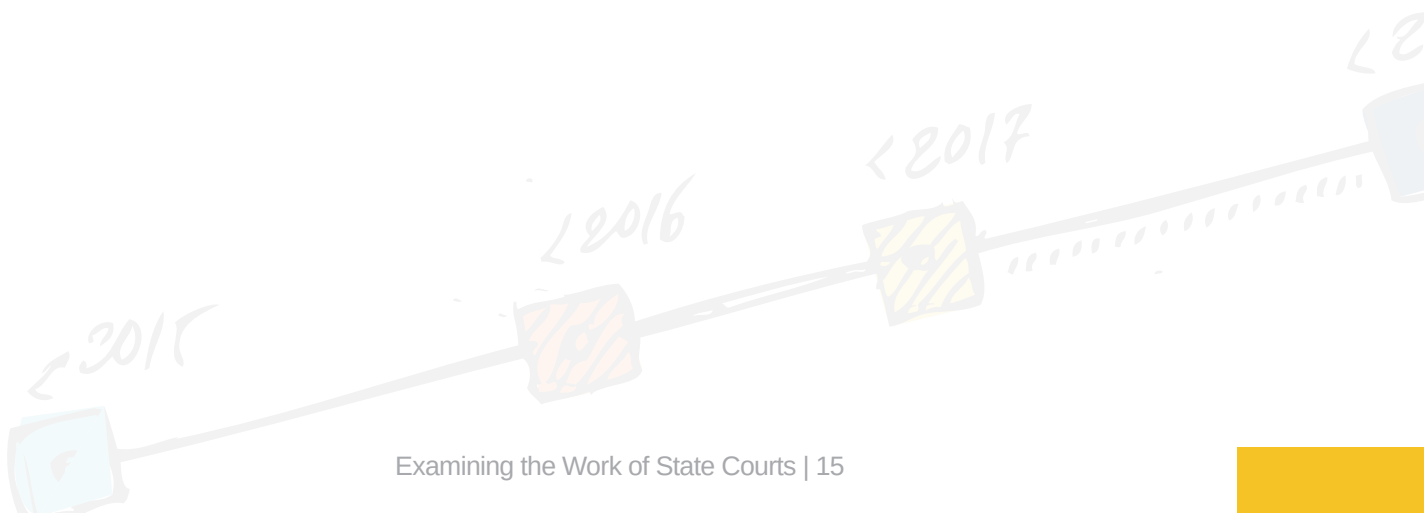
Composition of Incoming Criminal Caseloads by Felony and Misdemeanor Case Type in 14 States, 2015



Fourteen states provided publishable data for the discrete case types that comprise the misdemeanor and felony categories. The incoming felony caseload is predominantly property, drug, and person offenses, while the incoming misdemeanor caseload is dominated by motor vehicle cases, a case type that makes up only a small portion of the incoming felony caseload.

* Other includes Weapon, Public Order, and Violations of Protection Orders, as well as Criminal cases that do not fall into a more specific CSP category.

Note: Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

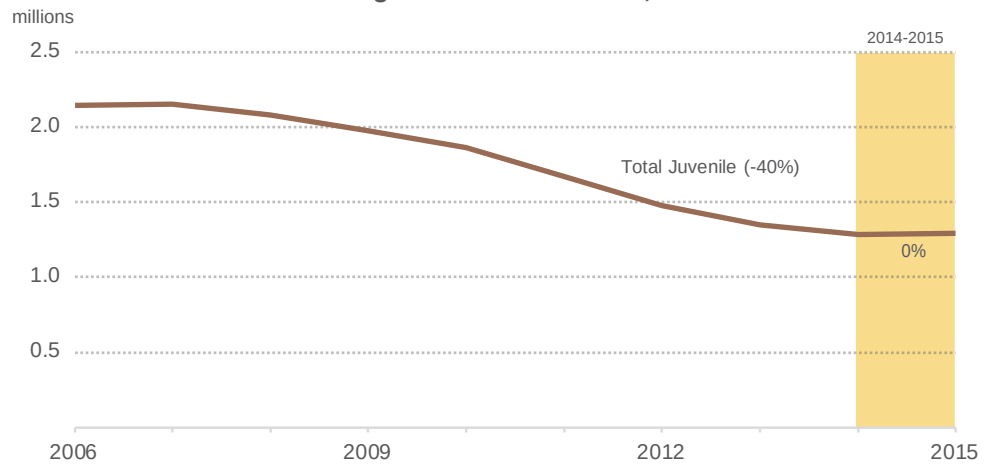


Juvenile

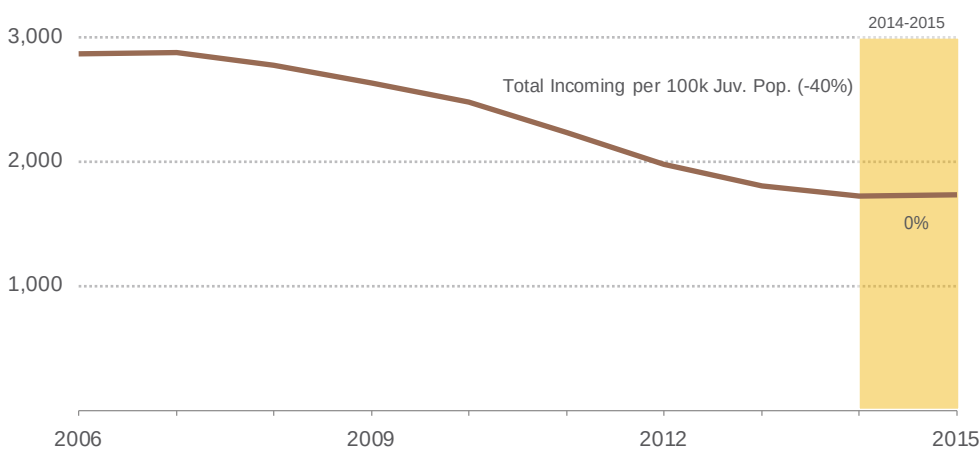
Although Juvenile caseloads have declined sharply in the last decade—more so than any other category of trial court cases—the last few years suggest they are leveling off nationally. In fact, 2015 is the first year since 2007 that the aggregate caseload did not drop from the previous year.

However, despite the flat appearance of the most recent data, about 40 percent of the states reported an increase in Juvenile cases in 2015 (not shown).

Total Incoming Juvenile Caseloads, 2006-2015



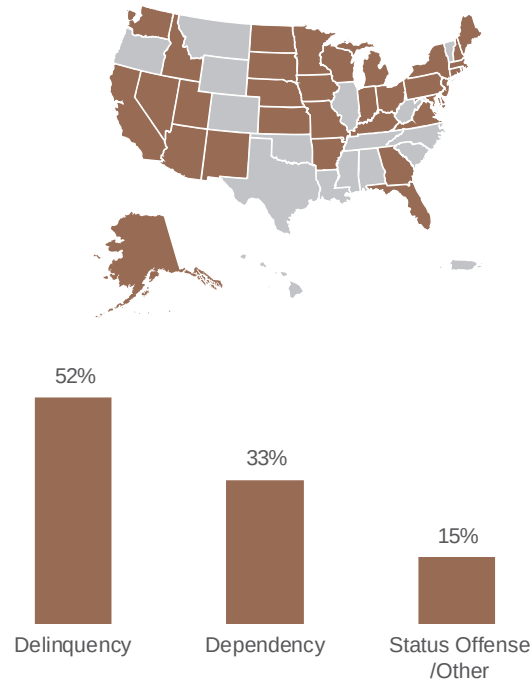
Total Incoming Juvenile Cases per 100,000 Juveniles, 2006-2015



Unlike the total U.S. population that continues a gradual but steady growth, juvenile population over the past 10 years has remained essentially unchanged. Hence, the number of Juvenile cases per 100,000 juveniles has decreased at the same rate (-40%) as the total Juvenile caseload since 2006.

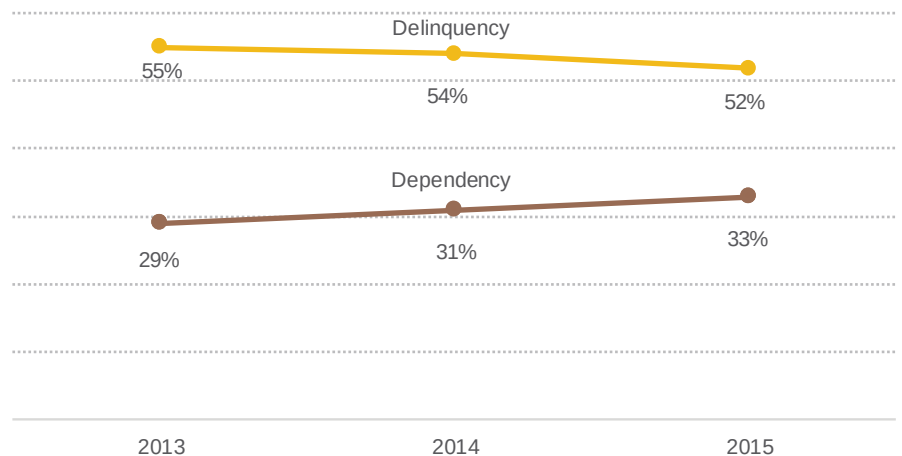
While Delinquency continues to be the largest segment of the Juvenile caseload...

Juvenile Caseload Composition in 35 States, 2015



...the proportions have recently begun to change, with Dependency cases now accounting for one-third of the Juvenile caseload.

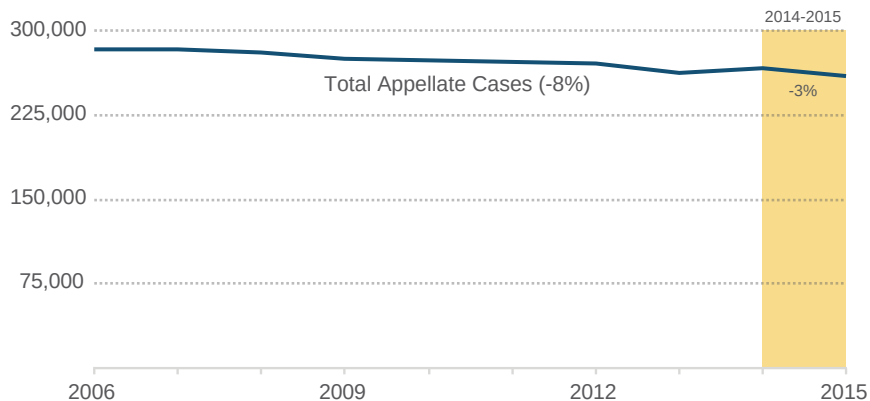
Delinquency v. Dependency in 35 States, 2013-2015



From 2013 to 2015, the number of delinquency cases in 35 states decreased while the number of dependency cases in the same states increased. This resulted in the percentage of Delinquency cases falling from 55 percent to 52 percent and Dependency cases rising from 29 percent to 33 percent in 2015.

Appellate Courts

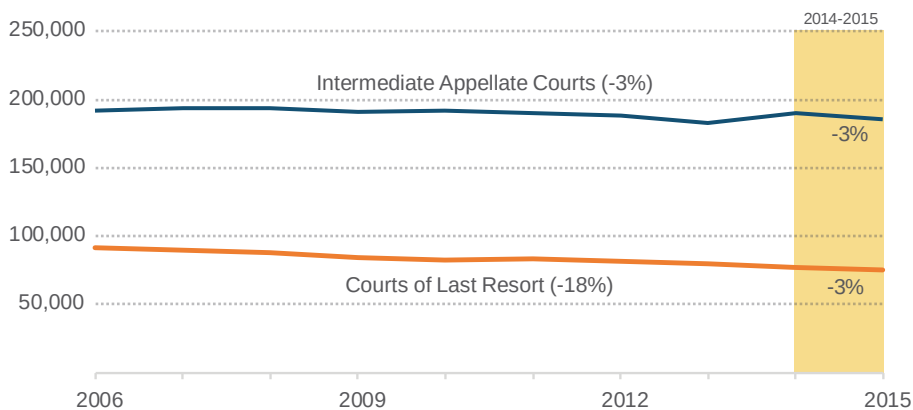
Total Incoming Caseloads Reported by State Appellate Courts, 2006-2015



State appellate courts reported 260,027 incoming cases in 2015. These cases include appeals of cases from lower tribunals (i.e., trial courts and administrative agencies) as well as original proceedings, which are cases filed in the appellate courts in the first instance (e.g., writs of habeas corpus, advisory opinions). After a slight increase in 2014, state appellate court caseloads dropped 3 percent between 2014 and 2015. Over the 10-year period from 2006-2015, total appellate caseloads declined 8 percent.

While the caseloads in the two types of appellate courts fell by 3 percent between 2014 and 2015, the 10-year decline in each court's caseload is very different. Incoming caseloads in courts of last resort have fallen by 18 percent, from approximately 92,000 cases in 2006 to a little less than 75,000 cases in 2015. Intermediate appellate courts saw caseloads decline from almost 192,000 cases in 2006 to just over 185,000 cases in 2015.

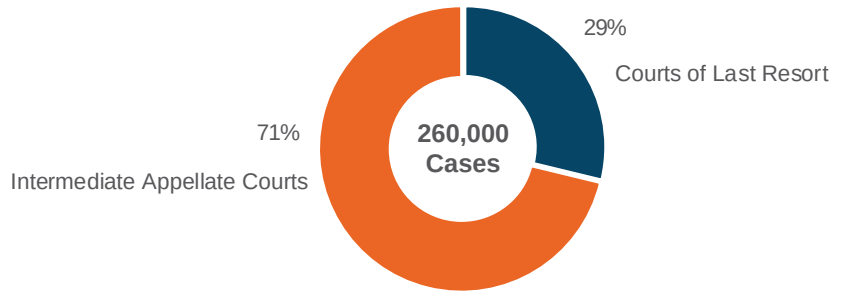
Incoming Appellate Court Cases, by Court Level, 2006-2015



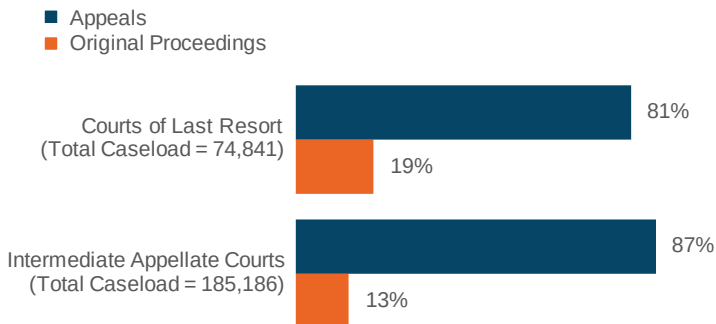
Appellate Caseload Distribution

Intermediate appellate courts have a much higher volume of cases than do courts of last resort. In fact, only 29 percent of the total appellate caseload – less than 75,000 of the 260,000 cases filed in 2015 – were filed in courts of last resort.

Distribution of Incoming Appellate Caseloads, 2015



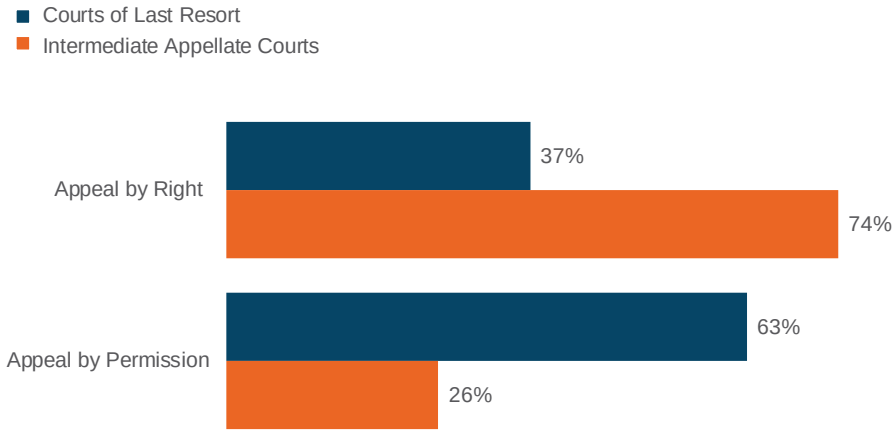
Distribution of Caseloads, by Case Category, 2015



Courts of last resort have a slightly higher percentage of original proceeding cases as these courts are more likely to have jurisdiction for the licensing and disciplining of professionals such as judges, attorneys, interpreters, and guardians. They are also more likely to have jurisdiction for certified questions and advisory opinions, cases in which the court is asked to interpret or resolve a question of law.

Appeal Composition

Composition of Incoming Appeals in State Appellate Courts, 2015



Appellate courts have two types of jurisdiction: case type and review type. Case type jurisdiction is the more familiar of the two, and it determines which appeals and original proceedings can be filed in each court. Review type jurisdiction refers to the mandatory or discretionary jurisdiction of the court, and it applies to each case type for which the court has case type jurisdiction. When a court has mandatory review for a case type, it means that the court is obligated to hear those cases. A court with discretionary review, on the other hand, can decide whether or not to consider the cases that are filed.

For the purposes of national reporting, a court's appeals caseload is divided by review type jurisdiction between those cases that are appeal by right (i.e., the court exercises mandatory review) and appeal by permission (i.e., the court exercises discretionary review).

While both courts typically have jurisdiction for both types of review, intermediate appellate courts tend to hear more cases as a matter of right than do courts of last resort. In 2015, 74 percent of the intermediate appellate court total appeal caseload (119,646 of 161,088 cases) were appeals by right. In contrast, only 37 percent of the courts of last resort total appeal caseload (22,369 of 60,694 cases) were appeals by right.

Where to Get More Detailed CSP Data

This brief overview of state court caseload statistics is supplemented by more detailed information and analyses at the Court Statistics Project website, www.courtstatistics.org.

As part of the redesigned CSP reporting infrastructure, detailed caseload data can be accessed at the CSP website using DataViewer. This interactive tool allows users to create custom views of state court statistics.

Using Dataviewer, users can filter data by state(s) or caseloads to create their own comparisons. To facilitate comparison, data can also be sorted. These user-defined views of the data can then be exported for use in reports and presentations.



Examine the work of state courts in greater detail with CSP DataViewer at

www.courtstatistics.org

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