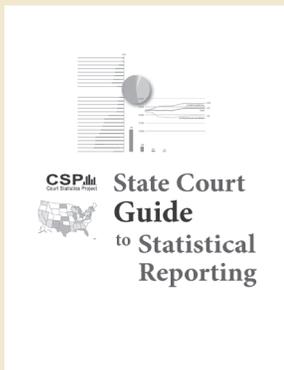


Caseload Highlights

www.courtstatistics.org

What is the *Guide*?

The *State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting* (the *Guide*) is a standardized reporting framework for state court caseload statistics designed to promote intelligent comparisons among state courts. The *Guide* is divided into two sections—one for trial courts and one for appellate courts.



The essential and complete resource for standardized reporting of state court caseload statistics is available at www.courtstatistics.org.

State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting *Revised and Expanded*

Trial Court Statistical Reporting in the *Guide*

Sometimes referred to as courts of first instance or courts of original jurisdiction, the term “trial court” is used broadly in the *Guide*, and encompasses unified courts, courts of general and limited jurisdiction, and courts of special jurisdiction (e.g., water court, probate court, and small claims court), regardless of whether they hold trials or not. Courts of general jurisdiction go by many names—superior court, circuit court, district court, court of chancery, court of common pleas, and more—but whatever their name, they are the highest level trial court in the state. Felony criminal cases and high-stakes civil cases are heard in these courts. Courts of limited jurisdiction (which also go by many names, including some that overlap those used for general jurisdiction courts) typically have jurisdiction over misdemeanors and ordinance violations, and civil cases whose remedies have a lesser dollar-value than those in the general jurisdiction court. Juvenile and domestic relations cases are heard in both general and limited jurisdiction courts depending on the state.

The *Guide* reports trial court caseload matters in five major categories: Civil, Domestic Relations, Criminal, Juvenile, and Traffic/Parking/Ordinance Violations. Within each case category, the *Guide* contains specific definitions of case types and rules for how cases should be counted.

Who is responsible for publishing the *Guide*?

Reporting state court data through this framework is a collaborative effort by the Court Statistics Project (CSP) at the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), with financial support from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Since 1975, the CSP has served as the national level archive of state court caseload information.

Why is the *Guide* important?

Comparable data from the state courts allows the CSP to publish national trends and analyze caseload statistics for use by state court leaders, policy makers, and local court managers. Being able to put each state’s caseload into a jurisdictional, regional, or national context provides useful, empirical insights that inform policy, budgetary, and court management decisions.

What’s new in this version of the *Guide*?

The appellate section of the *Guide* is completely new, and is the result of close collaboration between the NCSC and the National Conference of Appellate Court Clerks (NCACC). Minor revisions will be found in the trial court section, including expanded definitions and examples of Reopened and Reactivated cases, along with a new Set for Review case status category.

How is the *Guide* used?

The reporting framework described in the *Guide* is used for reporting the caseloads of trial and appellate courts to the Court Statistics Project. That reporting is accomplished either through the Extensible Mark-up Language (XML)-based reporting protocol defined in the Court Statistics Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD), or through spreadsheets sent by the CSP to the states.



RESEARCH DIVISION
800.616.6109

Court Statistics Project

Since 1975, the Court Statistics Project (CSP) has provided a comprehensive analysis of the work of state courts by gathering caseload data and creating meaningful comparisons for identifying trends, comparing caseloads, and highlighting policy issues. The CSP is supported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and obtains policy direction from the Conference of State Court Administrators. A complete annual analysis of the work of the state trial and appellate courts will be found in *Examining the Work of State Courts, 2007*.

Appellate Court Statistical Reporting in the revised *Guide*

Appellate courts review cases appealed from trial courts, intermediate appellate courts, and administrative agencies; preside over original proceedings and disciplinary matters involving the bench and bar; and serve in a supervisory capacity in the administration of the lower courts. Appellate courts include both courts of last resort (often called supreme courts) and intermediate appellate courts.

The revised appellate court reporting framework was developed in collaboration with the National Conference of Appellate Court Clerks and divides the work of the appellate courts into four major categories: Appeal by Right, Appeal by Permission, Death Penalty, and Original Proceeding/Other Appellate Matter. Definitions of the various types of appellate matters are provided, along with rules for counting cases. The new framework will provide a more detailed, objective, and accurate picture of appellate court caseloads across all states.



**National Center
for State Courts**

300 Newport Avenue
Williamsburg, VA 23185-4147

PRESIDENT
Mary Campbell McQueen
VICE PRESIDENT RESEARCH DIVISION
Thomas M. Clarke

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COURT STATISTICS PROJECT STAFF

DIRECTOR
Richard Y. Schauffler
SENIOR COURT RESEARCH ANALYSTS
Robert C. LaFountain
Shauna M. Strickland
COURT RESEARCH ANALYSTS
Chantal G. Bromage
Sarah A. Gibson
Ashley N. Mason
William E. Raftery
PROGRAM SPECIALIST
Brenda G. Otto
INFORMATION DESIGN
Neal B. Kauder, VisualResearch, Inc.

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