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ABOUT THE DATA
The national totals reported here may 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 state's data can only be provided by that state. The underlying data can be found on the CSP DataViewer at courtstatistics.org.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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Although several states have removed specific traffic-related caseloads (e.g., parking) from the purview of the courts and placed them under the control of administrative agencies, Traffic/Violations cases still exceed the combined total of all other trial court caseloads at the national level. Nonetheless, Traffic caseloads have continued to decline while non-Traffic caseloads leveled off in 2017.

Disaggregation of the non-traffic caseloads show some interesting differences despite each of the four categories that comprise these caseloads having declined noticeably over the last decade. Civil and Criminal are each 18 percent lower than in 2008 but Civil, unlike any of the other three categories, saw a 4 percent increase in 2017, its first in eight years.

Domestic Relations and Juvenile caseloads together account for less than 8 percent of all incoming cases in state trial courts (see following display). However, these cases can often be the most complex and resource intensive among a court's caseload. Both categories saw precipitous declines between 2010 and 2014 (-15% and -31%, respectively) but have edged down only slightly since that time.
State trial courts reported over 83 million cases in 2017. These cases are distributed between the general and limited jurisdiction courts of the 42 states and territories with two-tier court systems and the 11 states with a single-tier system. The differences in composition for the national total and each of the three distinct kinds of courts are shown in these charts.

An examination of Civil caseload composition in 22 states clearly shows how distinct their Civil caseloads can be. In the aggregate, contract cases represent exactly half of these Civil caseloads while small claims—which are often contractual in nature—contribute an additional 18 percent. When combined, contract and small claims cases represent no less than 44 percent and as much as 87 percent of the Civil caseload among these 22 states.
CIVIL

Contract, small claims, probate/estate, and tort cases combine to comprise the majority (83%) of Civil caseloads. In an effort to reveal what is driving the increase in Civil caseloads reported in 2017, the individual trends for those four case types from the states able to report this level of specificity for the latest five years are shown here.

In most instances, the caseloads for these four case types had been either in decline or flat prior to 2017 but each is now shown to be rising to varying degrees. Contracts, which could account for as many as 8 million cases nationally, increased in these 22 states by nearly 100,000 cases (3%) in 2017. Small claims, the next most common type of Civil case, increased by 9 percent in 36 states, followed by probate at +1 percent and torts at +2 percent.

Overall, state trial courts reported over 680,000 more Civil cases in 2017 than the previous year. The available data suggest that caseloads for all Civil case types increased, even if only modestly, defying a trend of decline seen since 2009.

In a more detailed look at contract cases, data from 12 states show a breakdown into the three case types that constitute the majority of contract caseloads: landlord/tenant disputes, seller plaintiff (debt collection) cases, and mortgage foreclosure, plus a residual "other" category. Overall, landlord/tenant and seller plaintiff each account for about 40 percent of contract cases, but composition can vary dramatically from state to state.

Tort cases garner a great deal of public interest but generally account for only about 4 percent of Civil caseloads and about 1.5 percent of all non-Traffic caseloads. In the 20 states that provided a composition of tort case types, i.e., auto, malpractice, product liability, and other torts (which include slip and fall, slander, and intentional acts), most are dominated by automobile accident cases. Malpractice, both medical and other professional, accounts for 4 percent of torts, and product liability cases comprise only 2 percent.
Domestic Relations (DR) cases account for 6 percent of all trial court cases nationally or about 12 percent of the non-Traffic caseload. DR includes divorce, civil protection orders (CPO), child support, custody, paternity, adoption, and other domestic issues. The Domestic Relations caseload peaked in 2010 at about 5.9 million cases, but by 2017 had declined by one million cases.

This bar chart shows the composition of DR caseloads in the 18 states able to report this level of detail. In the aggregate, about 30 percent of cases involve divorce/dissolution and about 25 percent are filings of civil protection orders. Nonetheless, the range of percentages for these two case types is quite large: 17 percent to 57 percent for divorce and 10 percent to 55 percent for CPOs.

As shown in the previous bar chart, the largest portion of Domestic Relations caseloads is typically comprised of divorce/dissolution cases. Data from 31 states for the latest five years indicate an 8 percent decrease for the entire period with half of that decrease occurring in 2017.

These maps separate 39 states with available data into two metrics: divorce as a percentage of total DR caseload, and number of incoming divorce cases per 100,000 adults in the state, respectively. Each metric divides the states into three groups. With a range of 9 percent (DE) to 58 percent (CO), nearly three-quarters of these 39 states have divorce caseloads in the middle group comprising 20 percent-39 percent of DR caseloads. In contrast, the range of divorce filings per 100,000 adults was 264 (IL) to 929 (NV) with about half falling in the middle group of 400-600 filings per 100,000 adults.
Civil Protection Order Caseloads in 29 States 2013–2017

The 2 percent overall decline in DR caseloads seen between 2016 and 2017 seems to be largely attributable to the decrease in divorce cases (-4%). Civil protection order cases, often the second most common among DR cases, held steady in 2017 after increasing the previous two years.

The median percentage of civil protection order (CPO) cases in DR caseloads is 24 percent, with an average slightly higher at 27 percent (not shown). However, as the chart above clearly shows, in these 37 states CPOs can account for as much as 55 percent and as little as 2 percent of a state’s DR caseload.

Civil Protection Order Cases as a Proportion of Total DR Caseloads in 37 States 2017

Total Incoming Criminal Cases in State Trial Courts, All States 2008–2017

Criminal caseloads comprise person cases (including homicide), property cases, drug cases, weapons cases, DUI/DWI cases, and others. The U.S. has seen state trial court Criminal caseloads drop at an average annual rate of about 2 percent for the last 9 years. There was a slight increase reported in 2013 but caseloads continued the decline in the following year.

Incoming Felony and Misdemeanor Caseloads in 26 States 2013–2017

States broadly classify their Criminal caseloads into three subcategories of cases: felonies, misdemeanors, and a residual “other” category that includes appeals from limited jurisdiction courts. The chart above focuses on Criminal caseload data from 26 states for the last five years and shows not only the difference in volume between misdemeanor and felony cases (presently about 3.5-to-1) but also that the decrease in overall Criminal caseloads has been driven primarily by a decline in misdemeanor cases.
Incoming Felony-Person Caseloads and Rates in 26 States 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Incoming Total Cases</th>
<th>Percent of Felony Caseload</th>
<th>Cases per 100k Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>2,368</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>7,159</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>1,356</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>1,251</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>35,336</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>7,462</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>8,265</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>5,269</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>3,248</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>10,204</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>2,865</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>2,120</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>87,492</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3,248</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

States that process felonies in both court tiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Incoming Total Cases</th>
<th>Percent of Felony Caseload</th>
<th>Cases per 100k Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>23,279</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>12,842</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>32,167</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>14,360</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>11,537</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>2,226</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>59,452</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>16,082</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>21,492</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>10,639</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>18,441</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>28,989</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>252,646</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>16,082</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criminal person cases include murder, rape, robbery, sex offenses, and other crimes against people. Felony person cases are the most serious of these offenses carrying with them the potential for substantial prison time and fines. This table distinguishes 26 states into two groups: 13 that process all felony cases in their court of general jurisdiction and 13 that can process, and in some instances dispose of, felony cases in either their limited or general jurisdiction courts. Depending on the laws, many of the states in this second group may conduct felony preliminary hearings in their lower court and then, if adequate evidence exists, bind over the case for trial in the upper tier, legitimately counting it in both tiers.

Felony Caseload Composition in 25 States 2017

The State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting defines 10 different types of felony cases. As this chart shows, nearly 80 percent of felony cases fall into one of three case types: drug, property, and person (including domestic violence and elder abuse). The remaining 21 percent of cases, here aggregated into the “all other” category contain weapons, public order, motor vehicle/DUI, and other felony cases.

Variation among the 25 states comprising the felony composition at the top is noticeable. The chart above is sorted by percent of person cases — the most serious types of cases — but, in the aggregate, the third most common. However, the widest range of felony case percentages among these states is in drug cases, from a high of 47 percent in Arizona to a low of 5 percent in Alaska. The opioid crisis may be contributing to increased numbers of drug cases filed in some states and not affecting caseloads in others.
**CRIMINAL**

Misdemeanor Caseload Composition in 21 States 2017

The case types subsumed beneath the misdemeanor category of Criminal cases are the same as those that comprise felonies. However, a closer inspection of the misdemeanor composition in 21 states shows clear differences between felony and misdemeanor caseloads. The first and most apparent difference is that nearly half of all misdemeanors in these 21 states are motor vehicle cases comprising DWI/DUI, reckless driving, and other criminal offenses relating to the operation of a motor vehicle. Since very few of these types of offenses are charged as felonies, they are often, but not always, the most common type of misdemeanor. The person case type includes domestic violence and elder abuse cases. Contained within the "Other" misdemeanor category in these charts are weapons cases, public order (e.g., public drunkenness, disorderly conduct), protection order violations, and other unspecified misdemeanors.

Juvenile Caseload Composition in 27 States 2017

Juvenile caseloads are divided primarily into four subcategories: delinquency (cases that would be considered criminal were it not for the defendant's age), dependency (cases alleging abuse or neglect, or without proper adult supervision), status offense (misbehavior only by virtue of the defendant's minor status, such as curfew violation or truancy), and other. In the 27 states able to report this level of specificity for 2017, delinquency represents the largest share of the aggregate at 45 percent, followed by dependency at 39 percent. However, as the chart above shows, there is considerable composition variation in the individual states comprising this total.

Total Incoming Juvenile Cases in State Trial Courts 2008–2017

Although Juvenile cases presently account for just 1.5 percent of all state trial court caseloads and slightly over 3 percent of total non-Traffic caseloads, they are unquestionably among the most important and resource intensive type of cases processed by state courts. For reasons not entirely clear, Juvenile caseloads declined from over 2.1 million cases in 2008 to less than 1.3 million cases in 2014 but have remained mostly stable since that time.
Delinquency and Dependency Caseloads in 23 States 2013–2017

Delinquency cases have historically accounted for the majority of Juvenile caseloads but there are signs that may be changing. In the 23 states able to provide a delinquency/dependency breakdown for the last 5 years, delinquency caseloads have fallen 23 percent, including 6 percent in 2017. Conversely, dependency caseloads have increased an average of 3 percent annually in the last 3 years. If these trends continue, dependency may overtake delinquency as the dominant Juvenile case category within the next few years.

Juvenile Delinquency Composition in 18 States 2017

Juvenile dependency each comprise several case types. Similarly to Criminal, delinquency is reported in person, property, drug, public order, and a residual other category. Unlike Criminal, the State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting does not specify an individual case type for DUI and weapons cases, both of which are reported here as “other” delinquency. The vast majority of dependency cases result from an allegation of abuse/neglect, but a small percentage (6%) determine dependency without specifically faulting the parent or guardian. Termination of parental rights (TPR) cases comprise 17 percent of dependency caseloads and arise from an abuse/neglect case, but here the TPR is counted as an additional separate case.

Total Incoming Traffic/Violations Caseloads Reported by State Trial Courts 2008–2017

State trial court caseloads are dominated by Traffic/Violations cases. Despite a fairly precipitous drop during the last decade (-24%), they still comprised over 50 percent of all cases processed in state courts in 2017. Part of this decrease over time is likely the result of some states removing jurisdiction for all or most of their parking cases from the courts to administrative agencies, which are not captured by the CSP.

Incoming Traffic/Violations Caseload Composition in 20 States 2017

Traffic/Violations cases comprise the largest portion of trial court caseloads while having the fewest constituent case types: Non-Criminal traffic, ordinance violation, parking, and a residual other category. Data from the 20 states able to report complete Traffic/Violations caseload compositions suggest that 3 of 4 cases, or roughly 33 million cases nationally, may be non-Criminal traffic in nature. These include moving violations, such as speeding or running a stop light, and driving with an expired license.
Given the consistent decline in trial court caseloads over the last decade, it is not surprising that appellate court caseloads would follow suit. The reported incoming appeals from all state appellate courts show a 14 percent decline since 2008, consistent with the 19 percent decline in non-Traffic trial court caseloads at the beginning of this report.

This chart displays the individual trends for Courts of Last Resort (COLR) and Intermediate Appellate Courts (IAC). It shows not only that caseloads in COLRs are dropping at a slightly higher rate, but also the volume relationship between the caseloads in each level of court. IACs are typically the first level of review for cases appealed from trial courts, and in many states a case must first pass through that process before it is eligible for a final review in the COLR.

Distribution of Incoming Appellate Caseloads 2017

Every state has at least one Court of Last Resort (COLR) but 11 states—mostly smaller, less populous ones—have no Intermediate Appellate Courts (IAC). Nonetheless, 70 percent of the roughly 241,000 appeals cases reported in 2017 were filed in state IACs.

Composition of Incoming Appeals in State Appellate Courts 2017

Appellate court caseloads are primarily divided into two types of cases: appeals (both by right and by permission) and original proceedings, (i.e., cases that are not appeals from trial courts but originate in a court of appeals). Although IACs have caseloads nearly 2.4 times greater than those of COLRs, the actual number of original proceedings in each type of court are quite similar (13,700 v. 12,400, respectively).

Distribution of Appellate Caseloads, by Category 2017

Appeals by right are cases that must be accepted for review by an appellate court. Appeals by permission are not guaranteed a review and only accepted into the appellate process if the court chooses to hear it. More than 80 percent of cases processed in IACs are appeals by right and mandated for review. In contrast, slightly over one-third of COLR caseloads are appeals by right, the bulk of their caseloads having to be granted permission to be reviewed.
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*This section covers data only for states with an intermediate appellate court.*
This brief overview of state court caseload statistics is supplemented by more detailed information and analyses online at courtstatistics.org.

As part of the redesigned CSP reporting structure, 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 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.