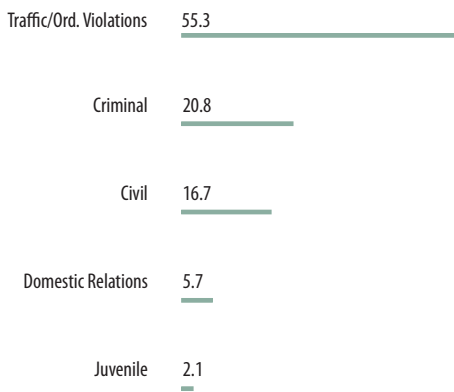


Overview

Aggregate incoming state trial court case-loads—the sum of newly filed, reopened, and reactivated cases—edged up slightly in 2005, exceeding 100 million cases for only the second time in the last ten years. The majority (55 percent) of these cases were non-criminal traffic and ordinance violations cases that, taken individually, have little impact on the workload of state courts. However, with numbers of this magnitude, the drain on state court resources should not be underestimated. The much more resource-intensive case categories of criminal, civil, domestic relations, and juvenile, although fewer in number than traffic, still represent a considerable caseload at a combined 45.3 million cases.

Incoming Caseload Composition in State Courts, 2005 (in millions of cases)



Further disaggregating the national trial court caseload reveals that limited jurisdiction courts handle twice as many cases as do unified and general jurisdiction courts combined. When examining just the four non-traffic caseloads, the table below shows that limited jurisdiction courts processed nearly 26 million cases versus about 20 million in the unified and general jurisdiction courts, where only domestic relations and juvenile cases are more prevalent.

Unified courts are courts of general jurisdiction but differ structurally from the general jurisdiction courts in two-tiered systems. Court cases in states with structurally unified court systems, such as those in Minnesota and Illinois, will all be filed in the same court regardless of monetary value or criminal severity. Inherent in states with two-tiered systems is a certain amount of filing redundancy. For example, a felony case may be filed in a state's limited jurisdiction (e.g., municipal) court for a preliminary hearing. If a judicial officer decides that the state will pursue the charges against an individual, the case is typically "bound over" to the court of general jurisdiction and filed again. This one case may therefore legitimately result in two criminal filings for a state.

Total Incoming Cases in State Courts, by Jurisdiction, 2005 (in millions)

Case Type	Jurisdiction				Total
	Unified	General Jurisdiction	Unified & General	Limited Jurisdiction	
Traffic/Violations	12.3	1.7	14.0	41.3	55.3
Criminal	3.4	3.2	6.6	14.2	20.8
Civil	2.9	4.5	7.5	9.2	16.7
Domestic Relations	1.0	3.1	4.1	1.6	5.7
Juvenile	0.4	1.0	1.4	0.8	2.1
All Cases	19.9	13.6	33.5	67.1	100.6

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

Full-time Judges in Unified and General Jurisdiction Courts, 2005

State	Number of Full-time Judges			Incoming Non-Traffic Cases per Judge	Population Rank
	Total	Added Since 2004	Per 100,000 Population		
Unified Courts					
Illinois	868	+18	6.8	1,482	5
Minnesota	281	+5	5.5	1,967	21
Puerto Rico	324	+4	8.3	744	27
Iowa	195	+3	6.6	1,532	31
District of Columbia	59	–	10.7	2,184	51
North Dakota	42	–	6.6	2,326	49
Kansas	161	–	5.9	1,800	34
Missouri	324	–	5.6	1,923	18
Connecticut	180	–	5.1	2,184	30
South Dakota	38	–	4.9	2,735	47
Wisconsin	241	–	4.4	2,033	20
California	1,498	–	4.1	2,111	1
Median			5.7	2,000	
General Jurisdiction Courts					
Washington	195	+16	3.1	1,539	14
New Mexico	84	+9	4.4	1,390	37
Ohio	387	+7	3.4	2,049	7
North Carolina ¹	109	+3	1.3	3,147	11
New Hampshire	29	+2	2.2	1,822	42
Montana	49	+1	5.2	793	45
Louisiana	231	+1	5.1	1,590	24
Indiana	296	+1	4.7	2,598	15
Utah ²	71	+1	2.9	2,388	35
Michigan	217	+1	2.1	1,542	8
Virginia ²	156	+1	2.1	1,783	12
Texas	425	+1	1.9	2,186	2
New Jersey	407	-1	4.7	3,027	10
Arizona	164	-2	2.8	1,653	17
Vermont	32	–	5.1	1,767	50
Alaska	34	–	5.1	587	48
Oregon	170	–	4.7	2,012	28
Arkansas	115	–	4.1	1,943	33
Maine	49	–	3.7	2,625	41
West Virginia	65	–	3.6	747	38
Hawaii	45	–	3.5	962	43
Pennsylvania	421	–	3.4	1,610	6
Nebraska ²	55	–	3.1	783	39
Alabama	142	–	3.1	1,464	23
Kentucky	130	–	3.1	1,250	26
Florida	527	–	3.0	2,762	4
Colorado	132	–	2.8	1,399	22
Idaho	39	–	2.7	529	40
New York ²	524	–	2.7	910	3
Maryland	146	–	2.6	1,906	19
Tennessee ²	154	–	2.6	1,924	16
Nevada	60	–	2.5	2,143	36
Delaware ¹	19	–	2.3	1,267	46
Georgia ²	193	–	2.1	2,107	9
Rhode Island ¹	22	–	2.0	682	44
Massachusetts ¹	82	–	1.3	357	13
South Carolina ¹	46	–	1.1	4,180	25
Median			3.0	1,653	

¹ These states do not have domestic relations or juvenile jurisdiction in their general jurisdiction courts.² These states do not have domestic relations jurisdiction in their general jurisdiction courts.

Notes: a) Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Wyoming did not provide data for 2005; b) "–" = no change; c) Data from Pennsylvania are preliminary figures provided by the PA AOC.



The affects of structural differences between unified courts and other general jurisdiction courts are further demonstrated on the adjacent table. In addition to the number of full-time judgeships and the change from the prior year, population-adjusted rates and the number of non-traffic cases per judge are also displayed. The median rate of judges per 100,000 state residents in unified courts is nearly twice that of general jurisdiction courts. This is expected, as judges in unified courts must hear their state’s entire caseload rather than just the cases designated to be heard in the general jurisdiction court.

The number of full-time judges in most states remained unchanged from 2004. Sixteen states reported an increase in the number of judges for 2005 and two reported a decrease. Illinois and Washington reported the most new positions with 18 and 16, respectively.

Overall, the total number of judges in all state courts (including limited jurisdiction courts) has increased by 1,135, or an average increase of about 125 judges per year, since 1996. The chart below shows a

decrease of 187 limited jurisdiction judges between 1996 and 2005, but that figure is somewhat misleading. Most of that decrease resulted from the reassignment of judges in California’s limited jurisdiction Municipal Courts to their general jurisdiction Superior Courts upon the completion of court unification. Since that time, limited jurisdiction judgeships have increased by 209 (just over 1 percent) and general jurisdiction judgeships have increased by 318 (about 3 percent).

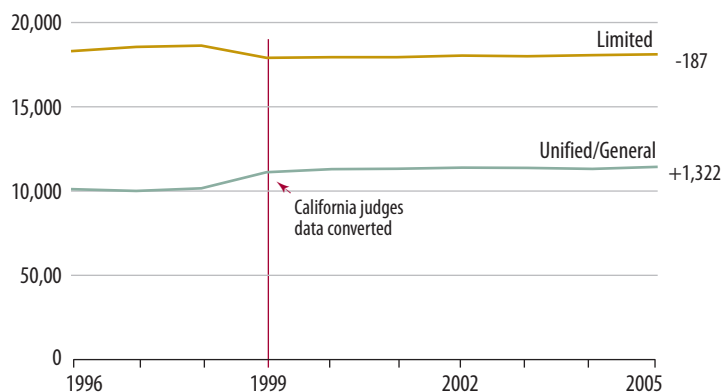
In 2003, the *State Court Guide to Statistical Reporting* recommended that states begin to count and report cases that were either reopened subsequent to an entry of judgment or reactivated after being placed in an inactive status. An event such as a motion for a modification of a judgment would typically trigger a civil case reopening. A criminal case should be placed in an inactive status, for example, if a defendant absconds and a bench warrant is issued. When the defendant is apprehended, the case can be reactivated and continue toward an entry of judgment.

CSP Resource



National Center for State Courts
State Court Structure Charts

Judicial Officers in State Trial Courts, by Jurisdiction, 1996-2005



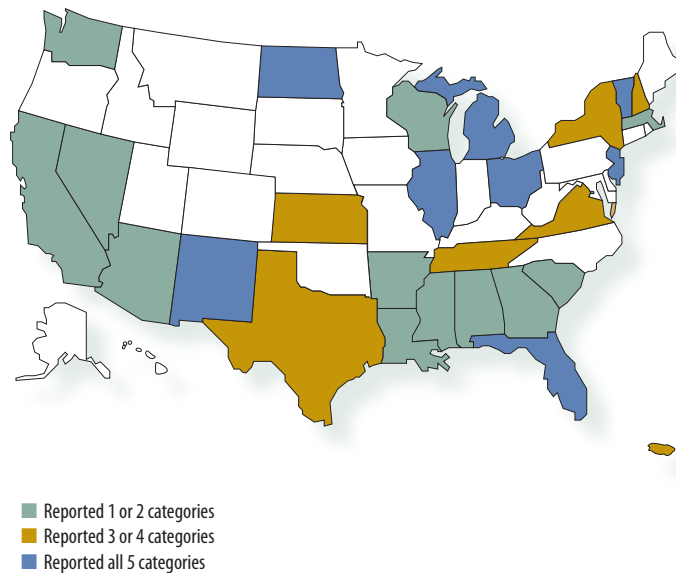
In 2005, 28 states reported reopened and/or reactivated caseloads in at least one major case category and eight of those states plus the District of Columbia reported in all five major categories.

When a court's incoming caseload exceeds its outgoing caseload, the remaining undecided cases become its pending caseload. Cases that are pending beyond an accepted time standard are backlogged. These two terms are not synonymous, as a backlogged case is always pending but a pending case is not necessarily backlogged. The *Guide* makes no provision for reporting backlogged cases at the

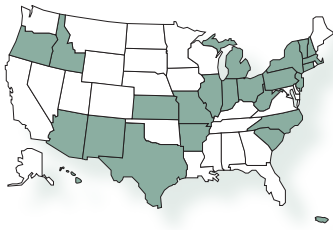
national level as time standards can vary from state to state. The differences in standards would render many states' figures incomparable to one another.

The shaded areas on the adjacent maps show the states whose general jurisdiction courts reported a pending caseload for each of the five major categories of trial court cases. It is important to note that not all states' general jurisdiction courts have jurisdiction over all five case categories (denoted by the gray shading). For example, many states only hear traffic cases in their courts of limited jurisdiction.

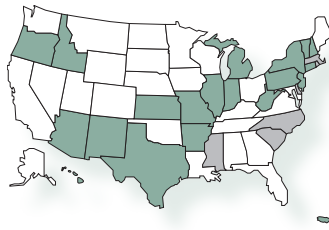
States That Reported Reopened/Reactivated Caseloads in One or More Case Categories, 2005



Civil



Domestic Relations

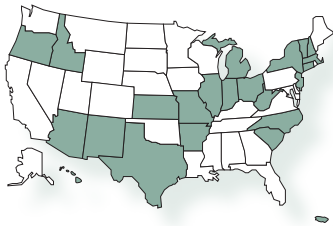


■ No Domestic Relations Jurisdiction

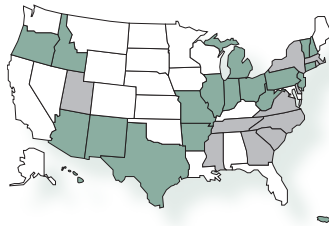


- Civil
- Domestic Relations
- Criminal
- Juvenile
- Traffic

Criminal

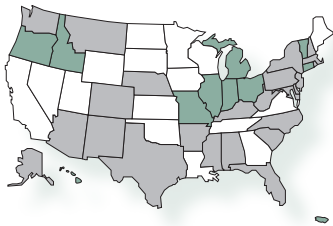


Juvenile



■ No Juvenile Jurisdiction

Traffic



■ No Traffic Jurisdiction