

COUNTY-LEVEL COURTS

ANALYSIS OF ACTIVITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 1996

This section contains the court activity of the 254 constitutional county courts, the 172 statutory county courts-at-law, and the 19 statutory probate courts. Three additional statutory county courts-at-law have been authorized by the Legislature to be made operational at a later date.

From the number of cases reported, criminal cases constituted 73.1 percent (486,247) of the 664,904 new cases filed or appealed from lower courts. This figure includes criminal, civil, and juvenile new cases filed and appeals from lower courts, as well as cases filed under probate and mental health. Civil cases accounted for 13.8 percent (93,052), probate cases represented 8.3 percent (55,819), mental health cases represented 3.8 percent (25,403), and juvenile cases represented 0.8 percent (5,383) of the total.

criminal offenses.

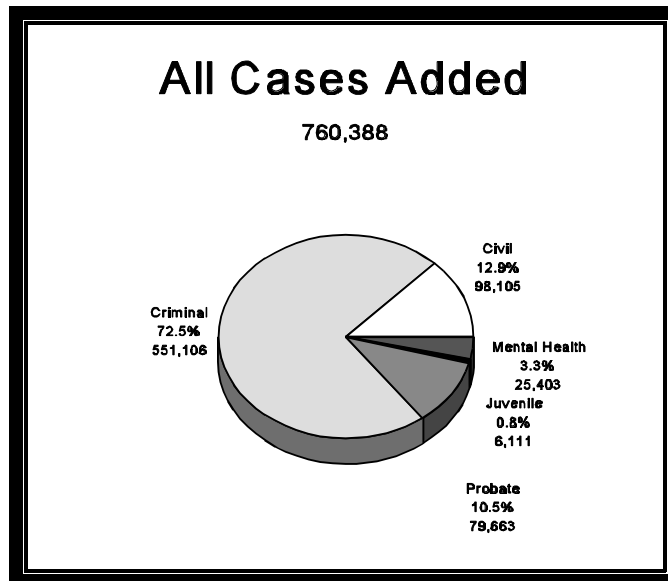
Only 9.1 percent of the total criminal cases added to the county-level court dockets came by way of appeal from justice of the peace or municipal courts rather than being filed originally in the county-level courts or added in another manner.

CIVIL DOCKET

Of the civil cases filed in or appealed to the county-level courts during the year ended August 31, 1996, 30 percent were classified as suits on debt, 20.7 percent concerned personal injury/damage suits, 6.7 percent were divorce suits, 0.2 percent were tax suits, 5.6 percent concerned other family matters, and 36.5 percent were other civil cases.

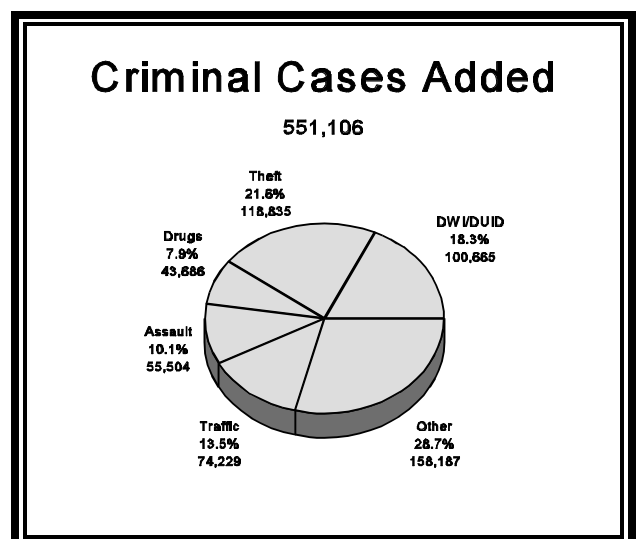
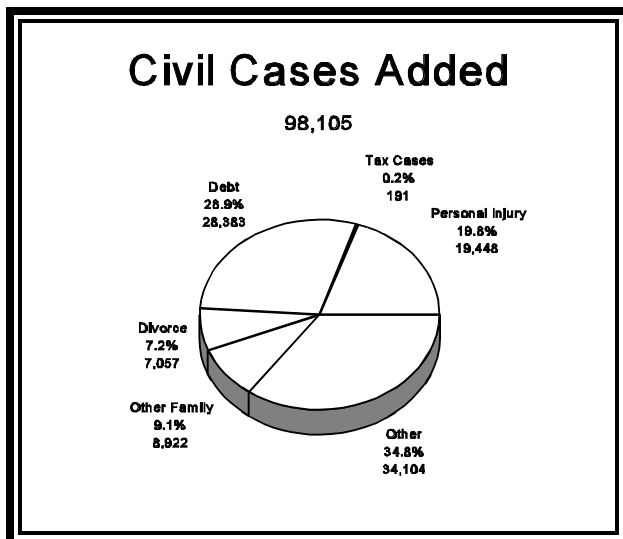
CRIMINAL DOCKET

Concerning the criminal cases only, 21.7 percent of those filed in or appealed to the county-level courts were for theft, 16.3 percent were for driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs (DWI/DUID), 10 percent were for simple assault, 7.8 percent for violations of drug laws, 14.4 percent for traffic offenses (53.6 percent of which were cases appealed from justice of the peace or municipal courts), and 29.6 percent were for other



DISPOSITIONS

During the twelve-month reporting period, the county-level courts of the State disposed of 46.4 percent of the 1,388,083 total criminal, civil, and juvenile cases on their dockets (added during the year or carried over from the previous year). No statistics on the disposition of probate or mental health cases are recorded. The disposition rate was highest for juvenile cases, with 65.5 percent. Forty-nine percent of the criminal cases and 35.8



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(CONTINUED)

percent of the civil cases on the docket were disposed. Of the criminal cases on the docket, 57.4 percent of the drug charges, 65.4 percent of the DWI/DUID charges, 34.9 percent of theft charges, 55.3 percent of assault charges, 56.4 percent of traffic cases, and 56.9 percent of other criminal cases were disposed.

Of the 62,138 motions to revoke probation in criminal cases filed during the year, 27,073 were granted and 16,433 were continued on probation or deferred adjudication. Disposed motions to revoke accounted for 7.9 percent of the total dispositions in criminal cases.

Deferred adjudication accounted for 12.9 percent of the total dispositions. Of the case categories where the defendant was placed on deferred adjudication, traffic offenses was the highest with 27.4 percent and DWI/DUID was the lowest with 0.9 percent.

Excluding probate and mental health, the county-level courts disposed of 671,607 cases, while 655,322 cases were added to their dockets.

Of the criminal cases disposed of in county-level courts, 42.5 percent of the dispositions followed a plea of guilty or nolo contendere. Trials were held in 1.8 percent of the criminal cases disposed of; 7,274 were before the judge alone, and 2,852 were before a jury.

Thirty percent of all criminal dispositions were by dismissal. Within each case category, dismissals accounted for 14.3 percent of the DWI/DUID cases, 45.2 percent of the theft cases, 19.8 percent of the drug cases, 35.8 percent of the assault cases, 38.1 percent of the traffic cases, and 26.2 of the other criminal case dispositions.

With regard to civil cases, 17.1 percent of dispositions involved a trial. Of the civil cases tried, 907 were before a jury and 15,146 were before a judge alone. Default or agreed judgments accounted for 26.8 percent of civil dispositions, and 37.1 percent of all civil cases were dismissed. Of the show cause motions filed in family law cases in the county-level courts, 78.9 percent were disposed.

TOTAL PENDING CASELOADS INCREASE

Total cases pending on the dockets of the county-level courts increased by 0.5 percent from 738,514 on September 1, 1995, to 742,808 on August 31, 1996. This does not include probate or mental health cases.

Cases remaining on the dockets on August 31, 1996, represented a 0.7 percent increase in pending civil cases and a 0.9 percent increase in pending criminal cases during the fiscal year.

