

## Definitions and Explanatory Notes

Note: Caseload figures contained in this publication are based on information provided to the Office of State Courts Administrator by the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and Circuit Court. Population data was supplied by the Bureau of the Census and the Missouri Office of Budget and Planning.

**Chapter 517:** Also referred to as associate civil cases. Civil cases heard under procedures outlined in Chapter 517, RSMo, 1986. Included are cases in which the amount in dispute does not exceed \$25,000; hardship driving; replevin; forcible entry and unlawful detainer; and landlord-tenant actions. Trials de novo, counted in the General Civil category, are permitted on cases where the amount in question is \$5,000 or less.

**Civil Case:** The unit of count is the petition. A single case may include multiple parties. Included in total civil cases are general civil, domestic relations, Chapter 517, and small claims cases.

**Criminal Case:** The unit of count is the complaint, information or indictment. A single case may include multiple defendants and/or charges. A case is not counted as disposed until all charges against all defendants have been disposed.

Included in total criminal cases are felonies, felony preliminaries, and misdemeanors. Traffic offenses are also a type of criminal case. Municipal and county ordinance cases, which are quasi-criminal matters, are included in some tables.

**Disposition to Filing Ratio:** Compares the number of cases disposed with the number of cases filed during the year to give an indication of how well the court is keeping up with its workload. Ratios of 1.00 or greater indicate that the court disposed at least as many cases as were filed. Ratios greater than 1.00 mean the court disposed more cases than were filed during the year, thus achieving a reduction in its pending caseload. Ratios which are less than 1.00 indicate that the court disposed fewer cases than were filed and experienced an increase in its pending caseload.

This ratio is calculated by dividing the number of cases disposed by the number of cases filed.

**Domestic Relations:** Includes dissolution of marriage; legal separation, annulment, separate maintenance; URESA; adult abuse; motions to modify; motions for contempt in domestic relations cases; contested actions involving administrative support orders of the Department of Social Services; child protection orders; paternity; writs of habeas corpus in child custody cases; registrations of foreign domestic relations judgments; and miscellaneous domestic relations cases.

**Felony:** Information or indictment alleging commission of a felony offense. Includes felony cases which were reduced to misdemeanors.

**Felony Preliminary:** Felony complaint. If probable cause is found, the defendant is bound over for arraignment and trial. Includes felony complaints which were reduced to misdemeanors and disposed in the associate divisions.

**Fine Collection Center (FCC):** The Fine Collection Center processes certain traffic, watercraft, and conservation violations for courts in participating counties statewide. Missouri created the processing Center to reduce the administrative burden on local court clerks and free up some of their time for other court duties. The Center also offers uniform fines, producing a fairer system for people across the state. As courts volunteer to use this resource, they achieve additional benefits including better accountability and improved collection rates.

**General Civil:** Also referred to as circuit civil cases. Among the specific actions included are civil cases involving amounts over \$25,000; Chapter 517, RSMo, and small claims trials de novo; administrative review cases; condemnations; extraordinary remedy cases, such as habeas corpus and injunctions; change of name cases; registrations of foreign judgment; tax actions; and motions for post conviction relief (Supreme Court Rules 24.035 and 29.15).

**Justice Information System (JIS):** JIS is an automated case management software designed by Affiliated Computer Services (ACS). This software was selected as the sole Missouri standard software and all state courts are now moving toward implementation as budget resources allow. Currently, more than half of the state courts use the system.

**Juvenile:** During FY 2003, the definitions for filed, disposed and pending were changed for juvenile cases. In addition to revising definitions, procedures on case processing for some courts using JIS were changed during FY 2003 to eliminate subcases or supplemental filings. These courts were "retrofitted" with upgraded JIS software and new procedures. Because of these changes, juvenile filing, disposition and pending data for original petitions and supplementals are not counted consistently across all courts in the state. July 2005 is the scheduled completion date to retrofit all courts using JIS.

Juveniles are individuals under 17 years of age. The unit of count is the petition. More than one child, as well as multiple allegations may be included in one petition. However, for case management purposes, courts are encouraged to open separate files for each child for Abuse/Neglect, Termination of Parental Rights, Juvenile Delinquency and Status Offenses. Multiple children who are being adopted by a party should be counted as one case. Referrals to the juvenile officer or the juvenile court in which no petition is filed are not included. Additional petitions or motions to modify filed under an existing case number after a disposition has been rendered on the original petitions are supplemental filings. Cases are considered closed when the child is no longer under jurisdiction of the court. Cases are considered pending if the child is still under jurisdiction of the court. Because dispositions are no longer reported on supplemental filings, the disposed to filing ratio will not accurately reflect the actual case processing of the court.

The table below provides a summary of what is counted in the annual report for the courts using different case processing systems. Circuits using the three different case management systems to process and report data are as follows:

Circuits using SWJIS are: 2, 4, 7, 10, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31, 36, 39, 40, 41, 43, and 44. Due to database constraints, the 16th circuit reports data to SWJIS but Supplemental dispositions are counted. Circuits using JIS Retrofit are: 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 28, 34, 37, 38, 42 and 45. Circuits using JIS without the Retrofit are: 5, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, and 35.

<b>Case Management System</b>	<b>Filings</b>	<b>Dispositions</b>	<b>Pending</b>
SWJIS – Original Petitions	Counted	Counted	Counted
SWJIS – Supplemental	Counted	NOT Counted	NOT Counted
JIS – Retrofit – Original Petitions	Counted	Counted	Counted
JIS – Retrofit – Supplemental	Counted	NOT Counted	NOT Counted
JIS – NO Retrofit – Original Petitions	Counted	Counted	Counted
JIS – NO Retrofit – Supplemental	Counted	Counted	Counted

**Mental Health Petition:** Petition for 21 days, 30 days, 90 days or one-year involuntary detention, treatment or rehabilitation for a mental disorder or abuse of alcohol and/or drugs.

**Misdemeanor:** Complaint or information alleging commission of a misdemeanor offense. Includes cases originally filed in either the circuit or associate division of the Circuit Court. A request for jury trial may or may not result in the case being certified from the associate to the circuit division, depending on local practice. Non-traffic infractions and conservation/watercraft offenses are included in the misdemeanor count.

**Ordinance:** Ordinance violation cases in which the municipality has elected to have its ordinance cases heard and determined by an associate circuit judge. This category also includes violations of county ordinances. Only those cases for which clerical support is provided by the state are included. Ordinance cases heard by an associate judge at a location staffed by the municipality are not reported.

**Pending:** Pending end figures reported for one year may not equal the pending beginning figures for the next year due to pending audits conducted at the court.

**Pending to Disposition Ratio:** Compares the number of cases pending with the number of cases disposed. The ratio provides an estimate of the number of years that would be required to dispose all pending cases if these cases were disposed at the same rate and by the same manners of disposition as the cases disposed during the year.

Ratios of 1.00 or greater indicate that at least one year would be needed to dispose all pending cases. Ratios of less than 1.00 indicate that the pending caseload could be eliminated in under one year. For example, a ratio of 0.50 means that approximately a half year would be required to dispose all pending cases.

The pending to disposition ratio is calculated by dividing the number of cases pending at the end of the year by the number of cases disposed.

**Probate:** Total cases include decedents' estates; minors' guardianships and conservatorships; incapacitated/disabled persons' guardianships and conservatorships; mental health petitions; and sexual predator cases.

**Small Claims:** The jurisdictional limit is \$3,000. Small claims trials de novo are General Civil cases. Petitioners may not file more than six cases in one year. Clerks of the court are required to assist petitioners in filing their cases.

**Statewide Judicial Information System (SWJIS):** The data collection system established in 1974 and maintained by the Office of State Courts Administrator used to collect caseload data from all circuit and associate divisions of the circuit court in Missouri. Approximately one-half of all filings and dispositions are reported to SWJIS.

**Traffic:** Violations of state traffic laws. Does not include the more serious traffic violations, such as driving while intoxicated, leaving the scene of an accident or driving while license is suspended or revoked. These cases are reflected in the numbers of misdemeanors, felonies and felony preliminary cases.