

Caseload Highlights

U.S. Courts of Appeals

- Filings in the regional appeals courts increased 3 percent to an all-time high of 62,762.
- A 23 percent jump in appeals of administrative agency decisions arose mostly from filings involving the Board of Immigration Appeals.
- Original proceedings grew 13 percent in response to increases in second and successive motions for habeas corpus relief.
- Criminal appeals rose 4 percent.
- Civil appeals decreased 4 percent, as did bankruptcy appeals.

U.S. District Courts

- Total filings of criminal and civil cases in the district courts climbed 9 percent to 352,360.

Civil Filings

- Civil filings increased 11 percent to 281,338, mainly in response to a 16 percent increase in federal question jurisdiction cases, most of which involved high-risk mortgage loans in one district.
- Diversity of citizenship filings rose 11 percent, largely because personal injury/product liability filings soared 62 percent.
- Filings with the United States as plaintiff or defendant declined 2 percent.
- The median time from filing of a case to disposition declined from 9.3 months in 2003 to 8.5 months in 2004.

Criminal Filings

- Criminal case filings increased by 380 cases to 71,022, and defendants grew by 635 to 93,349 (both numbers include transfers).
- Immigration case filings rose 11 percent, with 69 percent of these cases originating in the five southwestern border districts.

- Sex offense cases jumped 24 percent, and firearms cases increased 3 percent.
- Drug case filings decreased 3 percent, and defendants in those cases dropped 1 percent.

U.S. Bankruptcy Courts

- Bankruptcy filings declined 3 percent, but continued to exceed 1.6 million.
- Nonbusiness petitions dropped 3 percent, and business petitions decreased 4 percent.
- Filings grew 2 percent under chapter 11, but fell 2 percent under chapter 7, 4 percent under chapter 13, and 66 percent under chapter 12.

Federal Probation and Pretrial Services System

- On September 30, 2004, the number of persons under post-conviction supervision grew 2 percent above the previous year's number, reaching a new record of 112,883.
- Persons serving terms of supervised release after leaving prison rose 4 percent and accounted for 70 percent of all persons under supervision.
- Defendants in cases opened in the pretrial services system, including pretrial diversion cases, increased 3 percent to 100,005, the highest total ever reported.
- Pretrial hearings grew 1 percent to 223,092.