DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD AND WORKLOAD
December 2023

Quick Overview

- **51** district court judges spread throughout 22 judicial districts
  - Mix of urban districts with multiple judges and single-judge multi-county districts
  - Clerks of Court are elected county officials
  - Space is statutorily provided by counties

- District Courts hear primarily 13 case types – about 25% of the caseload "drive the bus" either through constitutional or legislative priorities

- Workload is different from Caseload
  - Caseload is the number of cases filed in each case type
  - Workload is the amount of time needed to process each case type
    - A child abuse and neglect case requires double the judicial time as a civil case
    - The three most time-consuming cases are child abuse and neglect (DN), criminal (DC), and domestic relations (DR)

- Pressure points:

  - Continue to see a decline in DN cases but the significant changes in the 2023 Legislature have increased the complexity – time will tell how much

  - Criminal cases are stabilizing or decreasing although the 13th Judicial District remains an outlier

  - Jury trial issue impacted criminal case processing

  - Domestic relations cases involve many pro se clients – ongoing efforts to manage that workload – Court Help Program, mediation program, IDRT, forms, etc.

  - 2023 caseload and workload numbers will be available in January and will drive the decision to add new judges

  - New judges require support from our county partners, who are responsible for courtroom and chambers space

2023 District Court Case Filing Review

The following tables summarize District Court case filings by major case category for calendar years 2013 – 2022. The sparkline is a trendline. Tables include: ALL Judicial Districts and summaries for JD 1, 4, 8, 11, 13, and 18.

District Court Case Filings - ALL

Case Category	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018	CY2019	CY2020	CY2021	CY2022	Sparkline	Avg. Case Filings 2013-2022
Adoption	665	840	764	715	791	870	924	739	782	665		776
Child Abuse and Neglect	1,527	1,609	2,321	2,433	2,667	2,519	2,382	2,114	1,750	1,414		2,074
Civil	18,899	20,113	20,197	17,988	15,703	19,842	21,262	23,984	18,640	17,384		19,401
Commitment of a Person with a Mental Illness	1,240	1,213	1,295	1,344	1,237	1,166	1,045	1,178	1,030	964		1,171
Commitment of a Person with Dev. Disability	50	50	27	29	24	19	23	25	25	22		29
Criminal	9,147	9,339	10,707	11,774	12,378	12,850	12,582	12,383	12,948	12,892		11,700
Domestic Relations	10,732	10,438	10,731	10,926	10,644	10,958	10,333	9,276	8,910	9,634		10,258
Drug & Other Treatment Courts	344	405	391	369	447	409	554	566	499	607		459
Guardian/Conservator	1,061	1,124	1,047	1,105	1,104	1,160	1,129	1,071	1,198	1,133		1,113
Investigative Subpoena/Search Warrant	3,525	3,519	3,666	3,948	4,441	4,317	4,398	5,212	4,812	5,497		4,334
Juvenile	1,565	1,379	1,310	1,271	1,226	1,071	1,009	839	780	980		1,143
Paternity	70	73	51	41	48	50	35	51	27	30		48
Probate	3,624	3,485	3,708	3,436	3,601	3,528	3,482	3,679	4,053	4,057		3,665
Total	**52,449**	**53,587**	**56,215**	**55,379**	**54,311**	**58,759**	**59,158**	**61,117**	**55,454**	**55,279**		**56,171**

*Child Abuse and Neglect, Civil, Criminal, Drug & other Treatment Courts, and Juvenile are typically the most time intensive case types.

District Court Case Filings - JD1

Case Category	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018	CY2019	CY2020	CY2021	CY2022	Sparkline	Avg. Case Filings 2013-2022
Adoption	63	64	51	68	79	75	66	40	73	46		63
Child Abuse and Neglect	88	110	141	131	135	122	126	153	123	75		120
Civil	2,020	2,299	2,560	2,251	1,532	2,485	3,604	4,367	2,687	2,536		2,634
Commitment of a Person with a Mental Illness	101	79	87	99	79	56	60	68	63	61		75
Commitment of a Person with Dev. Disability	8	4	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	0		2
Criminal	833	936	893	988	956	1,083	1,098	1,164	1,088	976		1,002
Domestic Relations	1,193	1,059	1,083	1,045	1,017	1,099	991	940	904	1,078		1,041
Drug & Other Treatment Courts	11	24	33	18	26	26	30	43	34	39		28
Guardian/Conservator	64	76	65	47	74	67	82	64	68	68		68
Investigative Subpoena/Search Warrant	214	234	234	257	257	294	280	310	243	273		260
Juvenile	142	88	63	53	62	61	73	89	80	63		77
Paternity	0	4	1	0	0	4	4	2	1	2		2
Probate	204	196	222	205	238	225	208	233	250	251		223
Total	**4,941**	**5,173**	**5,434**	**5,164**	**4,455**	**5,598**	**6,623**	**7,473**	**5,615**	**5,468**		**5,594**

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2023 District Court Case Filing Review

District Court Case Filings - JD11

Case Category	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018	CY2019	CY2020	CY2021	CY2022	Sparkline	Avg. Case Filings 2013-2022
Adoption	56	85	64	66	73	98	70	43	78	63		70
Child Abuse and Neglect	92	90	146	137	129	138	159	126	69	72		116
Civil	2,076	2,026	2,006	1,694	1,670	1,903	2,092	2,223	2,051	2,029		1,977
Commitment of a Person with a Mental Illness	179	142	127	134	137	151	84	102	44	38		114
Commitment of a Person with Dev. Disability	8	6	2	4	4	0	0	0	0	0		2
Criminal	935	829	1,020	1,192	1,247	1,046	975	1,021	1,220	1,263		1,075
Domestic Relations	1,234	1,257	1,293	1,384	1,386	1,419	1,432	1,186	1,093	1,022		1,271
Drug & Other Treatment Courts	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	13	19	12		5
Guardian/Conservator	107	99	116	119	117	99	117	109	131	158		117
Investigative Subpoena/Search Warrant	276	307	305	408	431	408	455	482	433	424		393
Juvenile	277	205	147	138	100	94	141	94	106	69		137
Paternity	5	2	1	3	2	3	2	4	3	1		3
Probate	245	257	411	281	328	336	351	400	414	400		342
Total	**5,490**	**5,305**	**5,638**	**5,560**	**5,624**	**5,695**	**5,886**	**5,803**	**5,661**	**5,551**		**5,621**

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District Court Case Filings - JD13

Case Category	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018	CY2019	CY2020	CY2021	CY2022	Sparkline	Avg. Case Filings 2013-2022
Adoption	137	153	149	125	158	161	195	119	140	139		148
Child Abuse and Neglect	266	223	512	626	755	678	464	533	521	372		495
Civil	2,885	3,141	3,048	2,845	2,597	3,074	3,025	3,422	2,771	2,491		2,930
Commitment of a Person with a Mental Illness	113	137	168	221	187	135	154	159	98	97		147
Commitment of a Person with Dev. Disability	4	8	2	1	4	4	4	3	4	3		4
Criminal	1,601	1,695	2,291	2,622	2,867	3,163	2,687	2,826	3,211	3,400		2,636
Domestic Relations	2,035	1,808	1,968	2,044	1,993	2,034	1,701	1,499	1,392	1,758		1,823
Drug & Other Treatment Courts	132	110	110	124	135	101	163	185	163	204		143
Guardian/Conservator	177	237	223	217	201	253	227	207	230	210		218
Investigative Subpoena/Search Warrant	798	799	639	666	883	1,038	861	833	987	1,119		862
Juvenile	350	313	350	384	411	305	218	173	193	244		294
Paternity	27	23	11	9	7	14	9	7	9	12		13
Probate	365	378	389	383	369	374	404	420	486	452		402
Total	**8,890**	**9,025**	**9,860**	**10,267**	**10,567**	**11,334**	**10,112**	**10,386**	**10,205**	**10,501**		**10,115**

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2023 District Court Case Filing Review

District Court Case Filings - JD18

Case Category	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018	CY2019	CY2020	CY2021	CY2022	Sparkline	Avg. Case Filings 2013-2022
Adoption	46	63	73	56	68	58	74	73	58	46		62
Child Abuse and Neglect	45	63	71	80	78	88	94	112	65	57		75
Civil	1,534	1,839	1,727	1,517	1,500	1,877	2,234	2,444	1,983	1,827		1,848
Commitment of a Person with a Mental Illness	87	70	74	45	98	55	49	90	85	65		72
Commitment of a Person with Dev. Disability	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0		0
Criminal	580	666	711	927	1,041	1,070	1,100	1,094	983	671		884
Domestic Relations	912	941	917	888	819	1,095	1,115	1,119	1,127	1,016		995
Drug & Other Treatment Courts	22	29	29	20	22	22	22	27	16	21		23
Guardian/Conservator	59	76	62	77	72	82	67	81	82	70		73
Investigative Subpoena/Search Warrant	293	310	365	445	521	337	419	372	388	380		383
Juvenile	67	39	33	52	50	47	53	81	32	31		49
Paternity	1	4	3	1	4	2	2	4	2	1		2
Probate	192	183	213	218	188	167	169	190	210	244		197
Total	**3,838**	**4,283**	**4,278**	**4,326**	**4,461**	**4,900**	**5,399**	**5,688**	**5,031**	**4,429**		**4,663**

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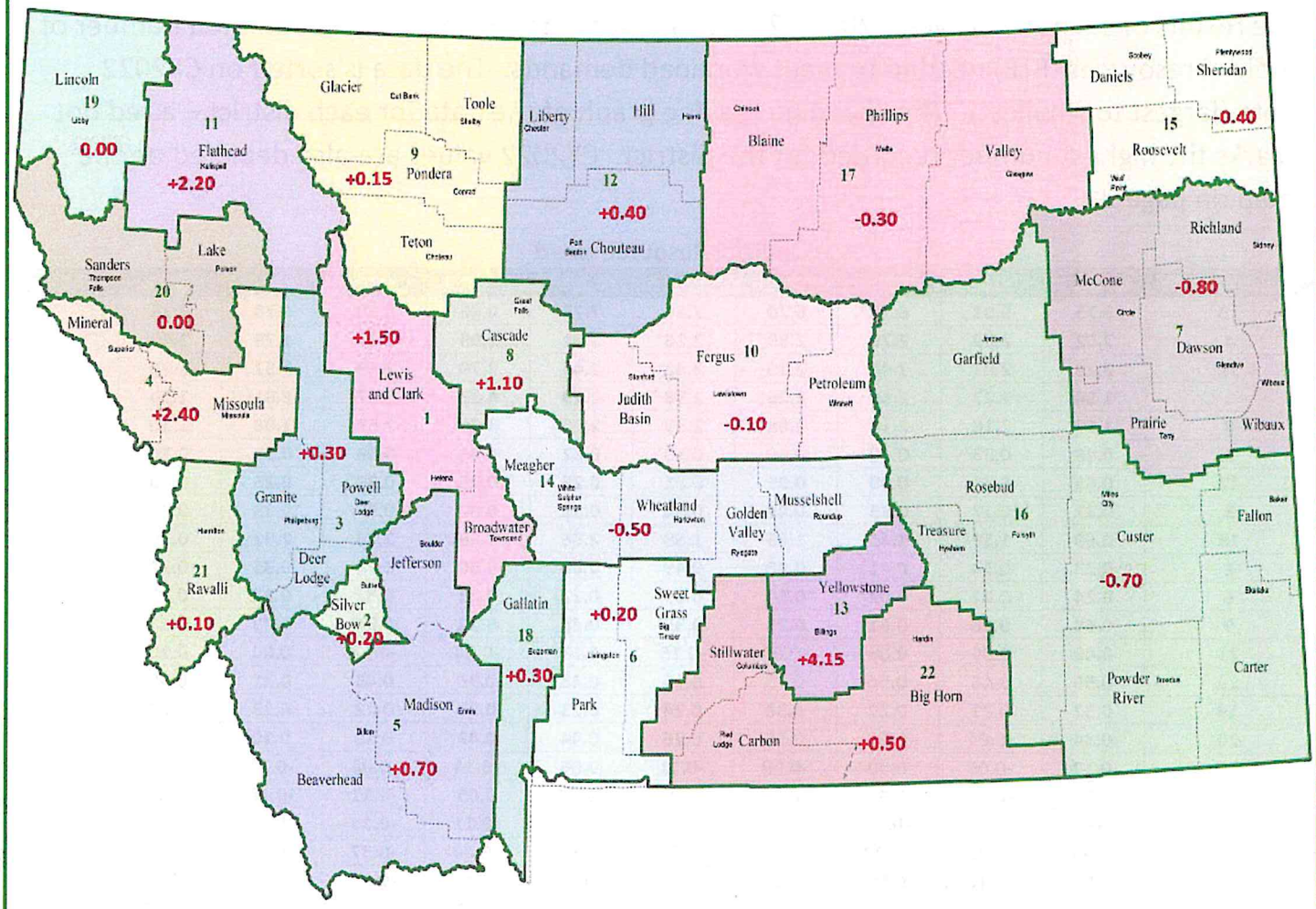
2023 District Court Workload Review

Judicial Resource Needs

2023 Judicial Resource Needs Map

State of Montana Judicial Districts

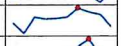
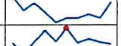
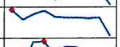
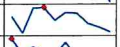
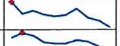
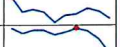
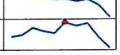


2023 District Court Workload Review

Judicial Resource Needs

The District Court Council tracks and reviews judicial resource needs using case filing statistics and a weighted workload formula approved by the Council. The following table summarizes the results of each review year, 2013 - 2022. The number represents the estimated number of judicial resources (FTE) needed to meet workload demands. The data is sorted on CY2022 data (largest to smallest). The sparkline is a line graph of the data for each district – a red dot marks the highest number recorded for the district. CY2022 values are also depicted on the map on page 2.

Judicial Resource Need

Judicial District	CY2013	CY2014	CY2015	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018	CY2019	CY2020	CY2021	CY2022	Sparkline
13	3.75	5.01	6.18	6.70	7.14	7.75	4.46	5.18	4.73	4.15	
4	2.02	2.59	2.70	2.39	2.26	3.01	2.03	2.17	1.79	2.40	
11	2.29	2.01	2.44	2.39	2.42	2.44	2.70	2.59	2.51	2.20	
1	1.84	2.27	2.66	2.25	1.38	2.79	4.12	5.27	2.91	1.50	
8	1.67	2.16	2.14	2.08	2.39	2.35	3.60	2.59	1.08	1.10	
5	0.48	0.33	0.40	0.40	0.59	0.52	0.43	0.53	0.52	0.70	
12	0.45	0.33	0.39	0.31	0.21	0.25	0.25	0.29	0.25	0.40	
3	0.31	0.17	0.33	0.49	0.34	0.52	0.32	0.37	0.33	0.30	
18	0.69	1.50	1.43	1.45	1.58	2.36	2.89	3.28	2.31	0.30	
2	0.23	0.33	0.41	0.28	0.49	0.80	0.80	0.74	0.35	0.20	
6	0.24	0.02	0.02	0.14	0.05	0.22	0.23	0.32	0.22	0.20	
9	0.68	0.58	0.61	0.25	0.35	0.48	0.22	0.34	0.23	0.15	
21	0.40	0.06	0.06	-0.05	-0.15	0.11	-0.04	-0.12	0.00	0.10	
22	0.50	0.46	0.54	0.25	0.15	0.43	0.36	0.43	0.31	0.05	
19	0.32	0.21	0.27	0.32	0.24	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.23	0.00	
20	0.34	-0.04	0.55	0.55	0.26	0.44	0.43	0.19	0.10	0.00	
10	0.10	-0.09	0.00	-0.09	-0.11	0.06	-0.14	-0.08	-0.22	-0.10	
17	0.18	-0.04	0.02	-0.05	-0.09	-0.06	0.05	-0.11	-0.18	-0.30	
15	-0.07	0.00	-0.04	-0.14	-0.16	-0.16	-0.11	-0.13	-0.22	-0.40	
14	-0.22	-0.42	-0.38	-0.42	-0.56	-0.46	-0.44	-0.37	-0.41	-0.50	
16	0.06	-0.10	0.00	0.00	-0.13	-0.06	0.07	-0.02	-0.27	-0.70	
7	0.34	0.32	0.47	0.22	0.08	0.11	-0.02	0.08	-0.22	-0.80	
All	16.60	17.63	21.20	19.72	18.73	24.13	22.44	23.76	16.35	10.95	