

EXPLANATION OF SELECTED TERMS

VACANT JUDGESHIP MONTHS

“Vacant judgeship months” is the total number of months that vacancies occurred in any judgeship position in a circuit or district. On September 30, 2007, a total of 31 vacancies existed in the district courts, and 16 vacancies existed in the U.S. courts of appeals (excluding the Federal Circuit).

VISITING JUDGE ACTIVITY

Court profiles for both the courts of appeals and district courts reflect only caseloads for judges within the circuit/district; the profiles do not address judges’ activity when visiting other circuits/districts. Detailed data on visiting judges can be found in Tables V-1 and V-2 of *Judicial Business of the United States Courts*.

SUPERVISED RELEASE HEARINGS

Beginning with *2002 Federal Court Management Statistics*, data on hearings on violations of supervised release and probation are included in the district court profiles. These hearings, which are conducted when defendants violate the terms of supervised release or probation, can result in the modification of conditions or the revocation of supervision. In addition to providing data for the category of supervised release hearings filed per authorized judgeship, data on these hearings are included in the totals for overall filings and terminations, filings and terminations per authorized judgeship, and weighted filings per authorized judgeship. These changes to the district court profiles were approved by the Judicial Conference Subcommittee on Judicial Statistics.

WEIGHTED FILINGS

Weighted filings statistics account for the different amounts of time district judges require to resolve various types of civil and criminal actions. The federal Judiciary has employed techniques for assigning weights to cases since 1946. In 2004, the Judicial Resources Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States approved a new civil and criminal case weighting system proposed by the Federal Judicial Center. On a national basis, weighted filings did not change significantly after the implementation of the new case weights. More than two-thirds of all district courts saw their weighted filings change by 10 percent or less. Average civil cases or criminal defendants each receive a weight of approximately 1.0; for more time-consuming cases, higher weights are assessed (e.g., a death-penalty habeas corpus case is assigned a weight of 12.89); and cases demanding relatively little time from judges receive lower weights (e.g., a defaulted student loan case is assigned a weight of 0.031). Probation revocation hearings (both evidentiary and non-evidentiary) are included as part of the weighted filings statistics. For comparative analysis in this report, the totals for weighted civil and criminal filings for prior years have been revised based on the new case weighting system. The weighted totals for criminal defendants include reopenings and transfers. Data on civil cases arising by reopening, remand, and transfer to the district by order of the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation are not included among the totals for weighted filings.

MEDIAN TIMES: CIVIL

“Median times” are the median time intervals between the filing of cases and their disposition. Civil median times exclude data for civil cases involving land condemnation, prisoner petitions, deportation reviews, recovery of overpayments, and enforcements of judgments. Because courts can quickly process cases involving the recovery of overpayments (which primarily address veterans’ benefits) and enforcements of judgments (which primarily address student loans), including data on these cases would shorten the civil median times for some courts to the point of giving an inaccurate impression of the time usually required to process a case in the federal courts. For fiscal year 2007, the national median time from filing to disposition for civil cases was markedly affected by the termination of more than 6,000 oil refinery explosion cases in the Middle District of Louisiana (LA-M). Many of these cases had been pending in LA-M for more than 10 years. Excluding these cases, the national median time from filing to disposition was 8.2 months, and the LA-M median time was 9.8 months.

MEDIAN TIMES: FROM FILING TO TRIAL

The median time for civil cases from filing to trial is calculated from the date a case was filed to the date trial began. For any reopened civil case resulting in a second completed trial, the median time remains based on the original filing date and the date the trial was completed.

CIVIL CASES OVER THREE YEARS OLD

Data for cases pending three years or more may not match those presented in the Civil Justice Reform Act (CJRA) reports because the profiles presented herein include data for cases on appeal in other courts (i.e., the Supreme Court, courts of appeals, other district courts, and state courts), whereas the CJRA reporting guidelines exclude such data.

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL FELONY FILINGS BY NATURE OF SUIT/OFFENSE

Prior to 2005, alphabetical codes corresponded to different offenses and natures of suit. Therefore, data for 2005 and thereafter are not comparable to data for earlier years.