



# Executive Office of the Trial Court Case Flow Metrics Report

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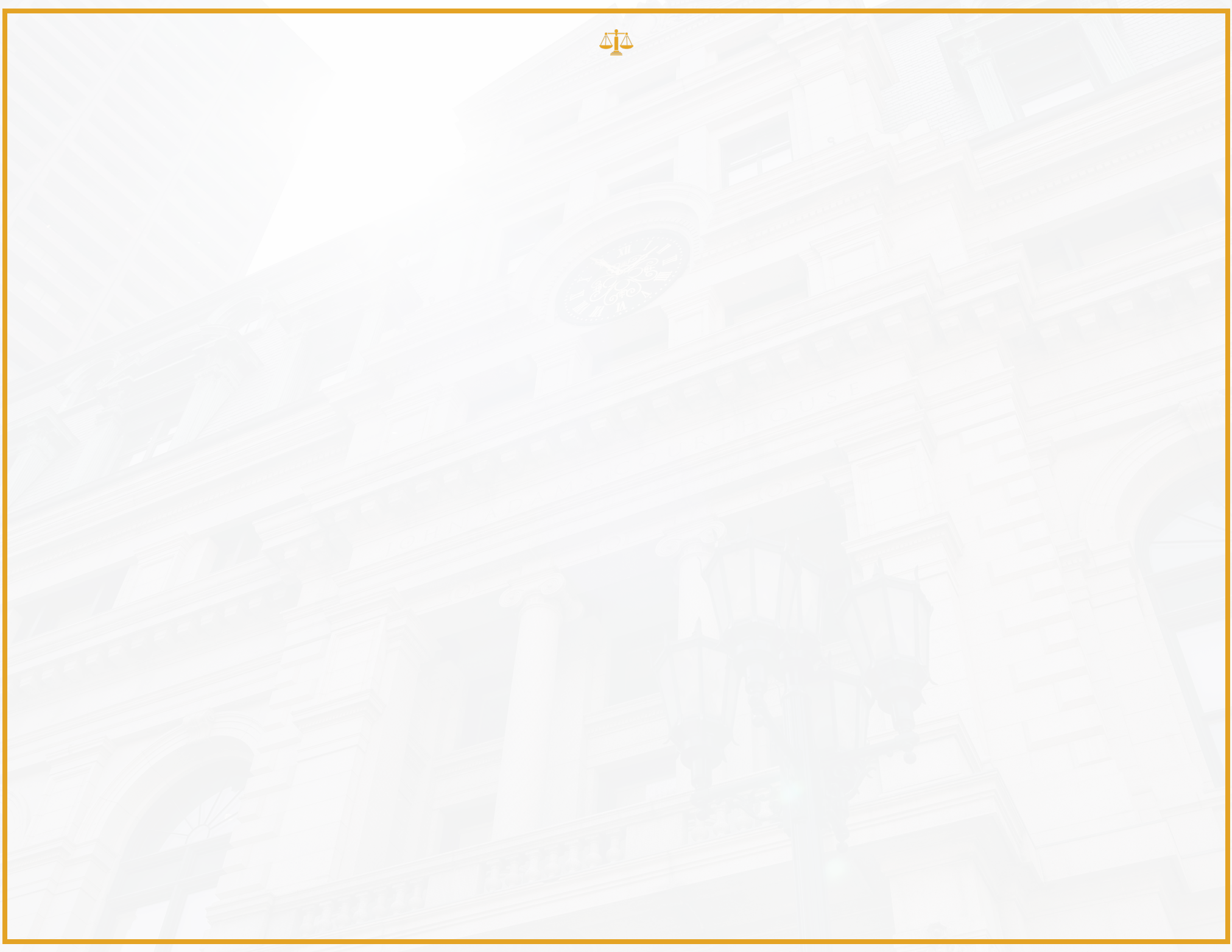
Fiscal Year 2023

Honorable Jeffrey A. Locke  
Chief Justice of the Trial Court

Thomas G. Ambrosino  
Court Administrator











## Message from the Trial Court Chief Justice and Court Administrator

*This fiscal year, the Massachusetts Trial Court continued its efforts in disposing of its pending caseload, as we marked one year since our return to full staffing and operations following the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Many aspects of case processing changed to respond to the needs of the legal community and public. The results of the case flow metrics showcase the Trial Court's commitment to addressing the backlog created by the pandemic. They also reflect how we as a court system use data to improve our day-to-day operations.*

*Our commitment to data-driven decision making reflects widespread cooperation from the Trial Court community and members of the bar. We would also like to express our gratitude to the legislature for its continued support.*

*For more information about Trial Court data, please visit the Court Data, Metrics and Reports webpage at the following link: <https://www.mass.gov/court-data-metrics-reports>.*

A blue ink signature of Jeffrey A. Locke.

**Jeffrey A. Locke**  
Chief Justice of the Trial Court

A blue ink signature of Thomas G. Ambrosino.

**Thomas G. Ambrosino**  
Court Administrator







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# Executive Summary

The Trial Court's case flow metrics reflect key components of the Court's mission -- justice with dignity and speed. The metrics encourage transparency and accountability in the management of Trial Court operations. This report presents a year-over-year comparison of the Trial Court's key case flow metrics and reflects changes in its operations as it emerged from the pandemic.

- Fiscal Year 2023 marked the first full year since the pandemic without restrictions on Trial Court operations and staffing.
- Case flow metrics for FY 2023 reflect a major effort by all departments to prioritize backlogged cases and decrease the size of the pending caseload, which peaked in FY 2021 as a result of the pandemic.
- Early in the pandemic, reduced numbers of metric case filings allowed courts to pivot and shift focus onto the pending caseload. From FY 2021 to FY 2023, the case backlog declined by 144,872 or 31.9 percent.
- Metric case filings increased 4.8% over the prior fiscal year to 669,407 cases in FY 2023, as the number of cases disposed or completed increased to 697,616, an 8.1% increase in the same period. Since FY 2021, metric case filings have increased by 16.5% or 94,697 cases, signaling a return to pre-pandemic levels.
- The FY 2023 clearance rate – a measure of outgoing cases to incoming cases – surpassed 100% for the second consecutive year, which reflects that courts are resolving or disposing of more cases than the number of cases received. This indicates that they are addressing the backlog of aged cases.
- Overall, 362,573 cases, or 69.5% of those subject to time standards, were disposed on a timely basis (within the time standards) in FY 2023, a 6.5% improvement from the prior year. The average rate of growth in the pending caseload dropped by approximately 4,000 cases per month.
- The number of cases pending beyond time standards decreased by 22.1%. Of 309,886 pending cases, 148,087 were pending beyond time standards. At the end of the prior fiscal year, 190,103 cases were pending beyond time standards.
- During FY 2023 more than 1.8 million events were scheduled, of which 68.5% were held. Events may not be held for a variety of reasons, including requests by litigants or agreements to resolution. Our hope with the implementation of this new metric is that it allows for better data collection and insight into best practices for scheduling matters across the Trial Court.





## Case Flow Metrics

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The Trial Court implemented case flow metrics in 2006 for use by court leaders, staff, and judicial officers to manage court operations with transparency and accountability. The four case flow metrics, adapted from the National Center for State Courts' CourtTools, are a set of performance measures used to manage the timely disposition of cases. Timely disposition is determined by time standards which provide benchmarks for assessing performance. Time standards are promulgated through the standing orders of each department.

The Massachusetts courts have continued to refine the use of case flow metrics to assist court leaders and the state is a national leader in the use of court metrics. Case flow metrics are closely intertwined and need to be considered in totality, rather than separately, to accurately understand case flow. The Trial Court's four key case flow metrics are:

### **Clearance Rate**

A measure of outgoing cases to the number of incoming cases. Its purpose is to determine if the court is disposing cases at the same rate as the number of cases filed.

### **Time to Disposition**

The rate of cases disposed or resolved within established time standards. Its purpose is to assess the length of time it takes a court to process cases.

### **Age of Pending Cases**

A measure of active, pending cases that are beyond the disposition date set by the time standards. Its purpose is to assess whether there are delays in case processing.

### **Event Date Certainty**

A measure of court events with recorded outcomes compared to total court events scheduled. An event may not be held by request of a litigant or attorney or by agreement to an informal resolution. Its purpose is to assess the court's capacity to hold case events.





## Response to the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Case Management

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trial Court implemented a variety of strategies to manage and dispose of its caseload including virtual hearings as an option to attend court hearings and remote services such as e-Notice delivery. The decline in metric case filings early in the pandemic enabled the Trial Court to pivot and prioritize backlogged cases which peaked in FY 2021. From FY 2021 to FY 2023, the case backlog declined by 144,872 or 31.9 percent. In FY 2023 the average rate of pending caseload growth dropped by approximately 4,000 cases per month. The drop in the pending caseload reflects the Trial Court's commitment to timely court operations.

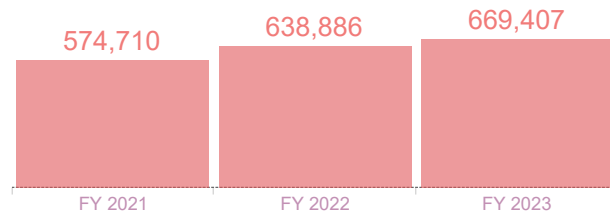




## TRIAL COURT CASE FLOW METRICS, 3-YEAR COMPARISON

Annual Percent Change in New Metric Case Filings

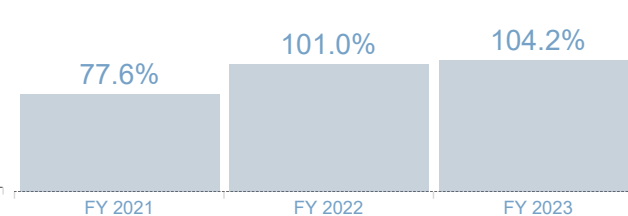
**4.8%**



How many cases have been filed?

Annual Rate Change in Clearance Rate

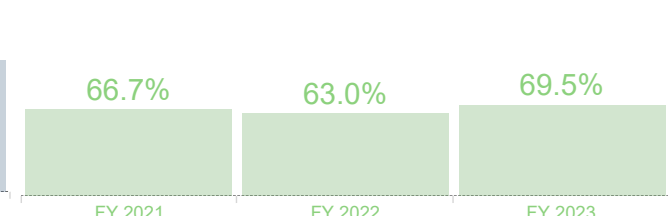
**3.2% points**



What percent of cases have been disposed?

Annual Rate Change in Disposed W/ Time Standards

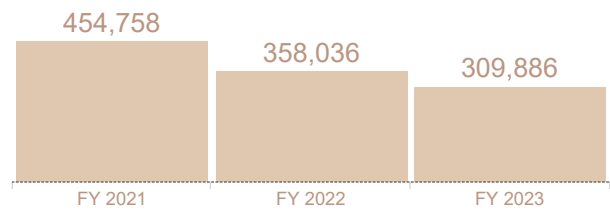
**6.5% points**



What percent of disposed cases are current?

Annual Percent Change in Pending Cases

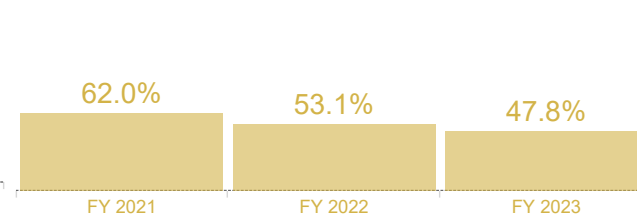
**-13.4%**



How many cases remain?

Annual Rate Change in Pending Beyond Time Standards

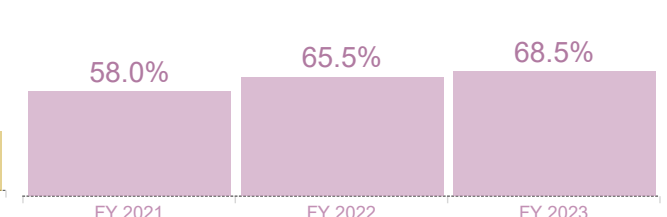
**-5.3% points**



What percent of cases are aged?

Annual Rate Change in Event Date Certainty

**3.0% points**



What percent of events were held?

### Data Notes:

\*Event Date Certainty measures the number of events resulted to the number of events held before the court. There are reasons an event may be resulted but not held, including but not limited to, by request of a litigant or attorney, by agreement to an informal resolution, or for emergency or weather-related matters.

\*\*Annual percent change measures the year-over-year change in case volume, whereas annual rate change measures the year-over-year difference in rate percentage points.





## Clearance Rate

### New Metric Case Filings and Disposed Cases (Year-Over-Year)

New Metrics Cases			Disposed Metrics Cases		Clearance Rate		
By Department	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Change
Boston Municipal Court	53,872	54,088	52,444	55,646	97.3%	102.9%	5.5%
District Court	421,147	435,507	439,876	461,962	104.4%	106.1%	1.6%
Housing Court	27,722	39,577	26,034	36,816	93.9%	93.0%	-0.9%
Juvenile Court	24,512	27,232	22,997	27,989	93.8%	102.8%	9.0%
Land Court	7,347	9,630	6,667	8,846	90.7%	91.9%	1.1%
Probate and Family Court	78,230	81,546	76,389	85,055	97.6%	104.3%	6.7%
Superior Court	26,056	21,827	20,910	21,302	80.3%	97.6%	17.3%
Total	638,886	669,407	645,317	697,616	101.0%	104.2%	3.2%

New Metrics Cases			Disposed Metrics Cases		Clearance Rate		
By General Case Type	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Change
Civil Matters	267,205	279,372	272,233	307,193	101.9%	110.0%	8.1%
Criminal Matters	275,856	290,643	273,400	287,118	99.1%	98.8%	-0.3%
Domestic Relations	35,417	35,376	33,206	37,366	93.8%	105.6%	11.9%
Juvenile Matters	21,814	24,484	20,035	24,960	91.8%	101.9%	10.1%
Traffic / Ordinance	38,594	39,532	46,443	40,979	120.3%	103.7%	-16.7%
Total	638,886	669,407	645,317	697,616	101.0%	104.2%	3.2%

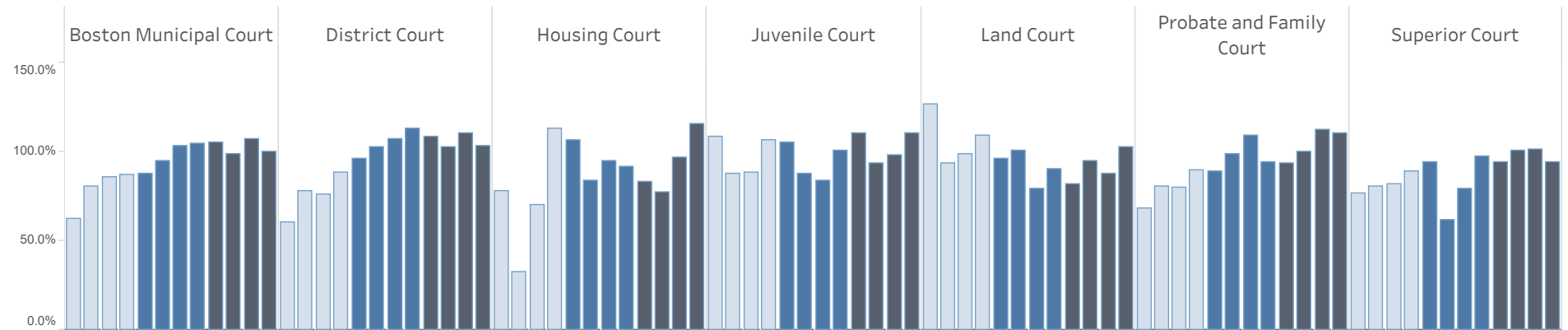


# Clearance Rate

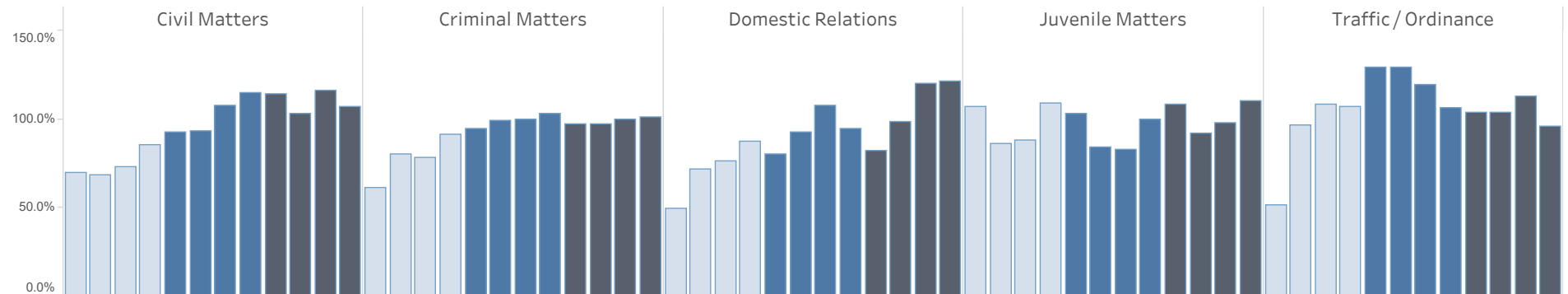
Color Legend: Fiscal Year

FY 2021 FY 2022 FY 2023

Clearance Rate by Court Department  
Most Recent 12 Quarters



Clearance Rate by General Case Type  
Most Recent 12 Quarters







## Time to Disposition Disposed Cases, Disposed Within Time Standards (Year-Over-Year)

Disposed Cases subject to Time Standards			Disposed Within Time Standards		Timely Disposed Rate		
By Department	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Change
Boston Municipal Court	35,074	38,160	21,686	25,291	61.8%	66.3%	4.4%
District Court	327,183	342,573	202,378	239,054	61.9%	69.8%	7.9%
Housing Court	26,034	36,816	19,546	29,984	75.1%	81.4%	6.4%
Juvenile Court	13,864	16,701	7,958	9,557	57.4%	57.2%	-0.2%
Land Court	1,646	1,537	1,012	951	61.5%	61.9%	0.4%
Probate and Family Court	60,804	67,956	41,725	48,054	68.6%	70.7%	2.1%
Superior Court	17,543	17,742	9,639	9,682	54.9%	54.6%	-0.4%
Total	482,148	521,485	303,944	362,573	63.0%	69.5%	6.5%

Disposed Cases subject to Time Standards			Disposed Within Time Standards		Timely Disposed Rate		
By General Case Type	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Change
Civil Matters	261,279	291,728	155,182	190,606	59.4%	65.3%	5.9%
Criminal Matters	139,995	147,413	104,932	117,121	75.0%	79.5%	4.5%
Domestic Relations	23,616	27,770	11,157	13,747	47.2%	49.5%	2.3%
Juvenile Matters	10,791	13,593	5,600	7,118	51.9%	52.4%	0.5%
Traffic / Ordinance	46,467	40,981	27,073	33,981	58.3%	82.9%	24.7%
Total	482,148	521,485	303,944	362,573	63.0%	69.5%	6.5%

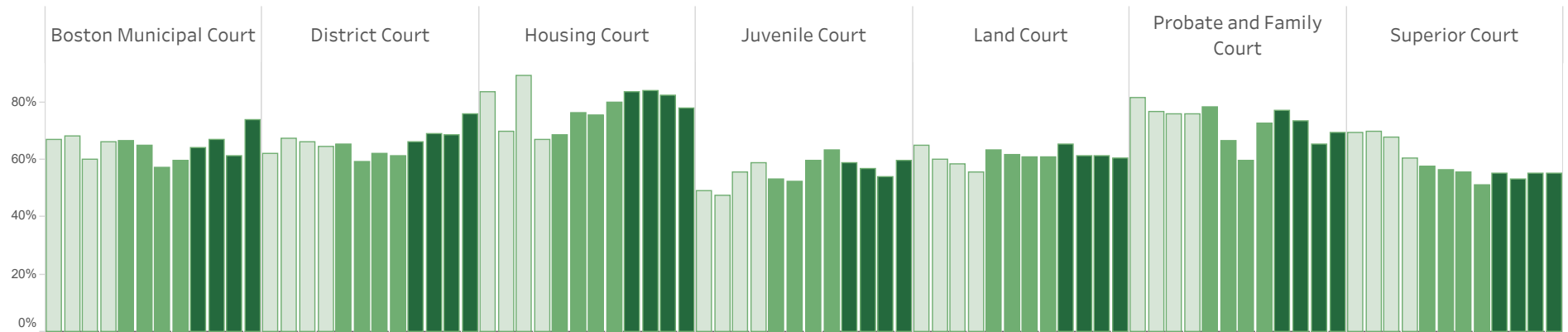


# Time to Disposition

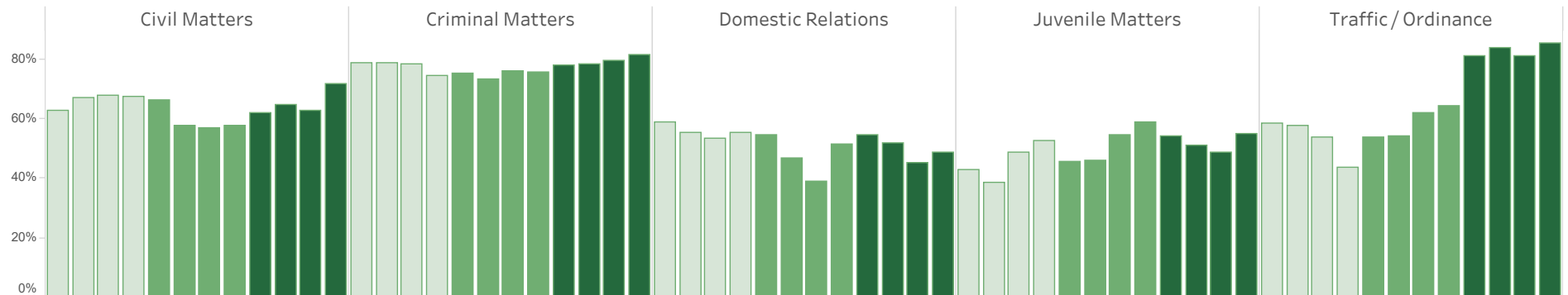
Color Legend: Fiscal Year

FY 2021 FY 2022 FY 2023

Percent of Cases Disposed Within Time Standards by Court Department  
Most Recent 12 Quarters



Percent of Cases Disposed Within Time Standards by General Case Type  
Most Recent 12 Quarters







## Age of Cases

### Pending Cases, Pending Beyond Time Standards (Year-Over-Year)

Pending Cases subject to Time Standards			Pending Beyond Time Standards		Pending Beyond Rate		
By Department	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Change
Boston Municipal Court	33,616	29,456	21,954	18,218	65.3%	61.8%	-3.5%
District Court	213,356	172,786	124,025	86,765	58.1%	50.2%	-7.9%
Housing Court	10,938	13,108	4,517	5,902	41.3%	45.0%	3.7%
Juvenile Court	9,890	11,135	2,598	3,987	26.3%	35.8%	9.5%
Land Court	4,362	4,583	2,281	2,655	52.3%	57.9%	5.6%
Probate and Family Court	46,285	40,689	19,651	16,847	42.5%	41.4%	-1.1%
Superior Court	39,589	38,129	15,077	13,713	38.1%	36.0%	-2.1%
Total	358,036	309,886	190,103	148,087	53.1%	47.8%	-5.3%

Pending Cases subject to Time Standards			Pending Beyond Time Standards		Pending Beyond Rate		
By General Case Type	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Change
Civil Matters	209,420	175,918	132,510	98,200	63.3%	55.8%	-7.5%
Criminal Matters	74,923	66,959	20,496	15,758	27.4%	23.5%	-3.8%
Domestic Relations	33,174	30,311	13,988	12,488	42.2%	41.2%	-1.0%
Juvenile Matters	8,739	9,859	2,179	3,470	24.9%	35.2%	10.3%
Traffic / Ordinance	31,780	26,839	20,930	18,171	65.9%	67.7%	1.8%
Total	358,036	309,886	190,103	148,087	53.1%	47.8%	-5.3%

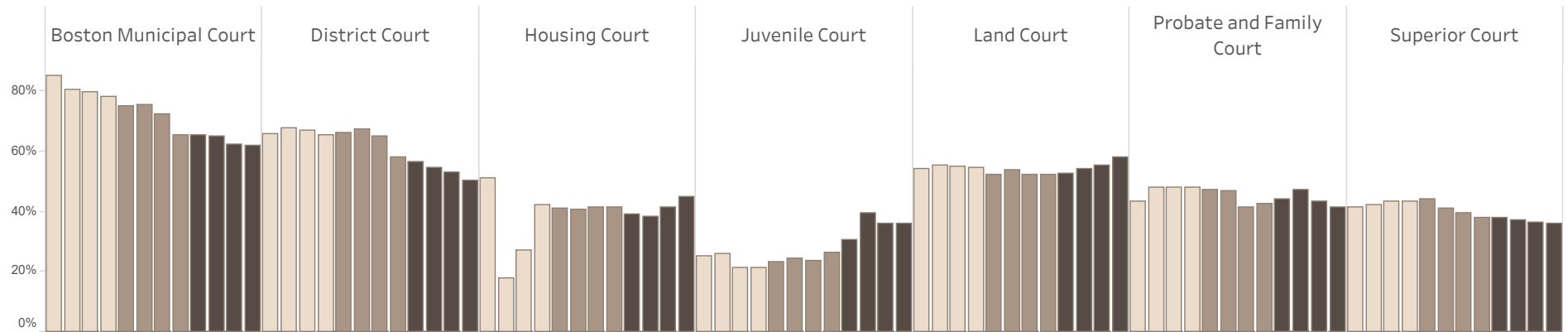


# Pending Beyond Caseload

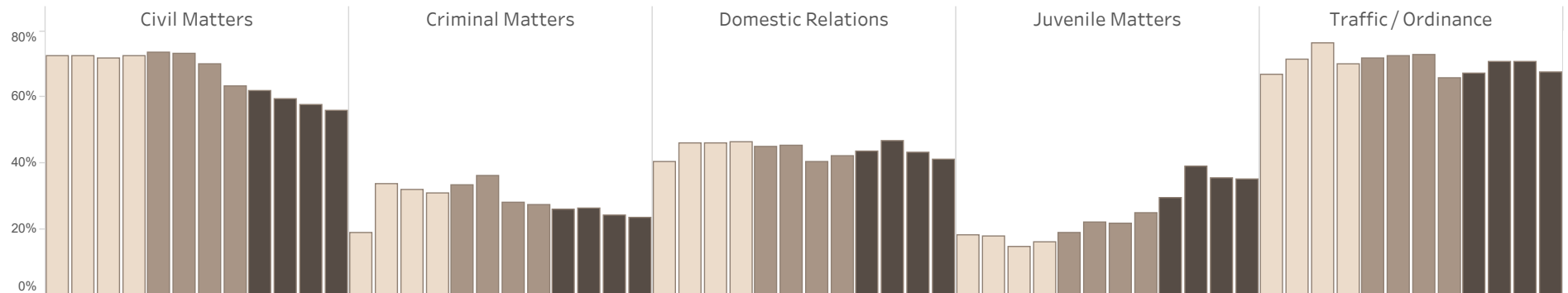
Color Legend: Fiscal Year

FY 2021 FY 2022 FY 2023

Percent of Cases Pending Beyond Time Standards by Court Department  
Most Recent 12 Quarters



Percent of Cases Pending Beyond Time Standards by General Case Type  
Most Recent 12 Quarters







## Event Date Certainty Events Resulted, Events Held (Year-Over-Year)

Events Resulted			Events Held		Event Date Certainty		
By Department	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Change
Boston Municipal Court	182,168	174,766	129,114	127,273	70.9%	72.8%	1.9%
District Court	1,187,419	1,162,744	766,917	789,525	64.6%	67.9%	3.3%
Housing Court	58,308	74,331	31,379	45,488	53.8%	61.2%	7.4%
Juvenile Court	164,319	171,004	101,926	110,626	62.0%	64.7%	2.7%
Land Court	4,038	3,852	2,700	2,588	66.9%	67.2%	0.3%
Probate and Family Court	152,027	174,159	124,050	146,480	81.6%	84.1%	2.5%
Superior Court	132,406	135,636	75,615	77,653	57.1%	57.3%	0.1%
Total	1,880,685	1,896,492	1,231,701	1,299,633	65.5%	68.5%	3.0%

Events Resulted			Events Held		Event Date Certainty		
By General Case Type	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Change
Civil Matters	401,370	419,329	272,805	291,912	68.0%	69.6%	1.6%
Criminal Matters	1,168,255	1,146,880	734,910	762,342	62.9%	66.5%	3.6%
Domestic Relations	110,095	126,920	86,288	103,127	78.4%	81.3%	2.9%
Juvenile Matters	148,027	155,371	92,863	101,753	62.7%	65.5%	2.8%
Traffic / Ordinance	52,938	47,992	44,835	40,499	84.7%	84.4%	-0.3%
Total	1,880,685	1,896,492	1,231,701	1,299,633	65.5%	68.5%	3.0%

**Data Notes:**

\*Event Date Certainty measures the number of events resulted to the number of events held before the court. There are reasons an event may be resulted but not held, including but not limited to, by request of a litigant or attorney, by agreement to an informal resolution, or for emergency or weather-related matters.

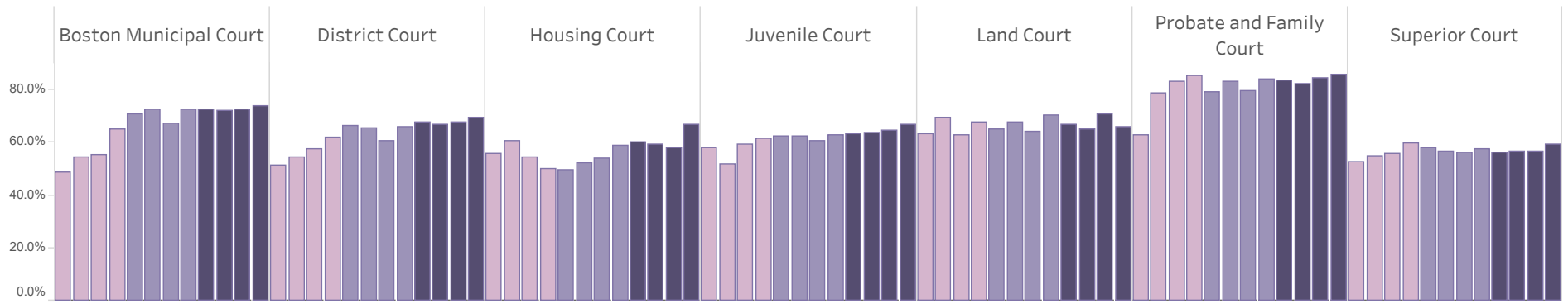


# Event Date Certainty

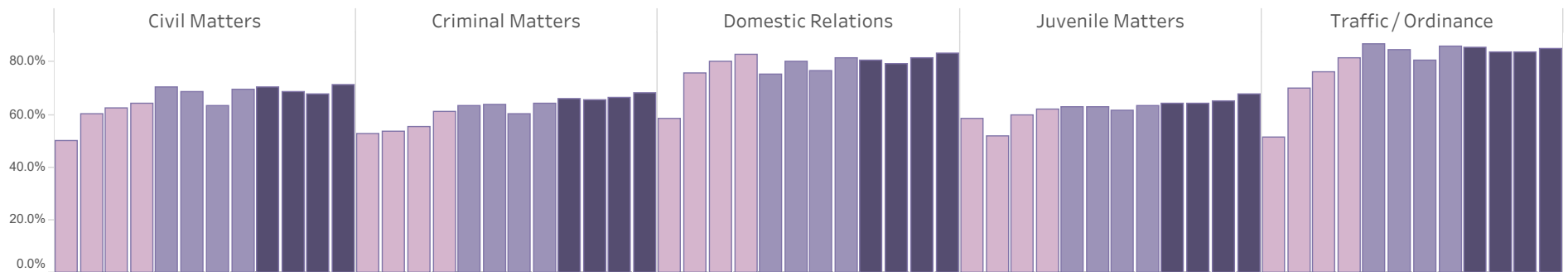
Color Legend: Fiscal Year

FY 2021 FY 2022 FY 2023

Event Date Certainty by Court Department  
Most Recent 12 Quarters



Event Date Certainty by General Case Type  
Most Recent 12 Quarters



## Data Notes:

\*Event Date Certainty measures the number of events resulted to the number of events held before the court. There are reasons an event may be resulted but not held, including but not limited to, by request of a litigant or attorney, by agreement to an informal resolution, or for emergency or weather-related matters.



## CASE FLOW METRICS, PERFORMANCE RATES, YEAR-OVER-YEAR COMPARISON

By Department	By General Case Type	Clearance Rate		Timely Disposed Rate		Pending Beyond Rate		Event Date Certainty	
		Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year	Last Year	This Year
Boston Municipal Court	Civil Matters	100.9%	110.6%	53.1%	59.6%	80.1%	74.6%	73.3%	74.9%
	Criminal Matters	96.3%	98.0%	69.6%	70.3%	28.9%	29.2%	70.1%	72.0%
	Traffic / Ordinance	87.4%	111.3%	79.6%	85.9%	74.9%	83.3%	87.9%	87.2%
District Court	Civil Matters	106.1%	117.6%	51.7%	58.2%	73.0%	63.7%	70.2%	71.3%
	Criminal Matters	100.4%	99.5%	77.2%	82.2%	23.3%	18.1%	62.1%	66.3%
	Juvenile Matters	1100.0%						13.9%	
	Traffic / Ordinance	124.0%	102.9%	57.1%	83.1%	64.5%	65.6%	85.0%	84.4%
Housing Court	Civil Matters	94.3%	92.8%	76.8%	82.6%	39.4%	43.7%	54.8%	62.0%
	Criminal Matters	99.5%	94.7%	55.7%	68.9%	57.3%	53.2%	41.4%	44.9%
	Traffic / Ordinance	50.1%	108.6%	37.1%	26.3%	94.9%	95.9%	38.8%	62.5%
Juvenile Court	Civil Matters	119.5%	119.0%	66.6%	66.2%	44.1%	50.6%	56.2%	57.0%
	Criminal Matters	126.5%	105.9%	52.7%	74.1%	31.7%	32.5%	30.5%	33.7%
	Domestic Relations	95.0%	96.7%	97.5%	98.2%	23.0%	22.0%	64.4%	69.9%
	Juvenile Matters	91.8%	102.1%	51.9%	52.4%	24.9%	35.2%	62.7%	65.5%
Land Court	Civil Matters	90.7%	91.9%	61.5%	61.9%	52.3%	57.9%	66.9%	67.2%
Probate and Family Court	Civil Matters	100.7%	103.1%	82.6%	85.7%	42.7%	41.3%	89.0%	91.1%
	Domestic Relations	93.7%	105.9%	44.7%	47.4%	42.4%	41.4%	78.6%	81.4%
Superior Court	Civil Matters	83.7%	106.8%	61.7%	62.1%	33.6%	31.3%	50.8%	48.6%
	Criminal Matters	71.9%	80.9%	16.9%	19.1%	63.3%	62.6%	59.8%	60.9%
	Juvenile Matters	88.1%	72.5%					53.4%	53.3%

### Data Notes:

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