

INTRODUCTION

The *Court Statistics Report (CSR)* is published annually by the Judicial Council of California and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The CSR combines 10-year statewide summaries of superior court filings and dispositions with similar workload indicators for the California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal. The appendixes to this report provide detailed information on filings and dispositions in the superior courts for the most recent fiscal year, 2009–2010.

The CSR is designed to fulfill the provisions of article VI, section 6 of the California Constitution, which requires the Judicial Council to survey the condition and business of the California courts.

The CSR is published on the California Courts website at www.courts.ca.gov/13421.htm.

Snapshot of Court Caseload

The *Court Statistics Report* contains essential information about the annual caseload of the California judicial branch, with a particular emphasis on the number and types of cases that are filed and disposed of in the courts. This information is submitted to the California Legislature and used in numerous judicial branch reports. As with any published data, the numbers in this report represent a snapshot of the most complete and reliable information available at the time of compilation.

To ensure that the statistics used for making policy decisions are as accurate as possible, courts may amend the data they submit to the AOC should new, more detailed or more complete information become available. For this reason, the data in this report may change slightly over time as courts revise their calculations and submit new caseload estimates.

Variations in Data Totals

Statewide trends in filings and dispositions may be influenced by a number of factors. For example, changes in the number of filings and dispositions may reflect shifting needs or behavior of residents of a court's service area as well as new policy emphases in the work of justice system partners. The following are some of the more common causes of statistical variations.

Missing Data

Statewide totals in the CSR may be influenced by missing data for certain courts. Typically, when courts do not report data to the AOC, it is because they have encountered difficulties generating automated reports from their case management systems. Filings data submitted by the courts tend to be more complete than disposition data. (See Appendix A for a list of courts that have not submitted data to the AOC for FY 2009–2010.)

Incomplete Data

The reporting of incomplete data typically occurs when courts transmit partial data totals for a particular case type because of the limits of their case management systems. It should be noted that incomplete data are more difficult to spot in the tables that follow, but in general they will cause downward shifts in the number of filings and dispositions. (Incomplete data for FY 2009–2010 are also detailed in Appendix A.)

Variation in Local Business Practices

Data reported in the CSR are compiled in a data warehouse, the Judicial Branch Statistical Information System (JBSIS). Because many different case management systems are used in the courts, data must be “mapped” from local systems into the standard categories used for reporting purposes. One essential function of JBSIS is to standardize the basic definitions of case types and case events across all courts in California. Another important aspect of JBSIS is its role in the extraction of court data through different transmission methods that include manual reports, automated JBSIS reports, and increasingly California Court Case Management System (CCMS) reports. Through this process JBSIS contributes to the warehousing of this data in a structure that is comparable from one court to another.

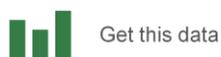
Maintaining quality control over the data contained in the JBSIS data warehouse involves:

- Training court staff on the standards for the classification, entry, and reporting of data;
- Providing information to the courts for resolving technical questions associated with data definitions, processing, and aggregation;
- Developing and adopting a new case management system infrastructure in the courts; and
- Documenting and disseminating information related to changes in the ways that courts define or report data.

Although a growing number of courts now transmit their data electronically from the case management system to the AOC, there continue to be differences among superior ‘courts’ case processing and other business practices that reflect the histories of individual courts and the unique needs of the communities they serve. These differences may influence the ways in which superior courts report data to the AOC. On that basis, while the filings and disposition data reported by any one court are largely comparable to data from other courts, some local variations in the classification and reporting of cases still occur.

Changes to 2011 Court Statistics Report

The 2011 *Court Statistics Report* reflects several design improvements and organizational changes to make the document more user-friendly—primarily a more graphical presentation of the material and more accurate organization of the work of the branch by case type and subject matter. The electronic PDF version of the 2011 CSR also offers access to the raw data underlying many of the graphical charts by clicking the data icon:



The major organizational change in the 2011 CSR is to distinguish descriptive caseload indicators such as filings and dispositions, and basic standards and measures of judicial administration. These measures, such as time to disposition and caseload clearance rate, allow the courts to assess case-processing practices and ensure efficient allocation of resources. Engaging in an ongoing assessment of performance measurement furthers many of the branchwide strategic goals—such as access to justice, accountability, and quality of justice and service to the public—that are vital to the effective administration of justice in California.

Judicial Administration Standards and Measures

Government Code section 77001.5 (Sen. Bill 56 [Dunn]; Stats. 2006, ch. 390) requires the Judicial Council to adopt and annually report on “judicial administration standards and measures that promote the fair and efficient administration of justice, including, but not limited to, the following subjects: (1) providing equal access to courts and respectful treatment for all court participants; (2) case processing, including the efficient

use of judicial resources; and (3) general court administration.” The judicial administration standards and measures included in the 2011 CSR further the branch’s commitment to the goals and measures outlined in Government Code section 77001.5.

CalCourTools

CalCourTools is a set of judicial administration standards and measures linked to technical assistance available from the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The CalCourTools program builds on the CourTools measures developed by the National Center for State Courts and endorsed by the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators

Statistical Overview

This section contains summaries of filings and dispositions for the California Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, and superior courts for fiscal year 2009–2010.

Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court issued 96 written opinions during the year.
- 9,652 matters were filed with the court, with 9,439 matters disposed of during the same period.
- The court received 5,131 petitions seeking review from a Court of Appeal decision in an appeal or an original writ proceeding and disposed of 5,141 such petitions.
 - 1,225 of these petitions for review arose from appeals in civil matters, and 3,906 from appeals in criminal matters.
 - The court disposed of 1,244 civil petitions and 3,897 criminal petitions.
- The court received 3,680 petitions seeking original writ relief and disposed of 3,548 of these matters.
 - Of the petitions seeking original writ relief, 323 arose out of civil matters and 3,357 arose out of criminal matters.
 - The court disposed of 314 civil and 3,234 criminal petitions.
- A total of 29 automatic appeals were filed with the court following a judgment of death, and the court disposed of 26 of these appeals by written opinion.
- The court received 34 habeas corpus petitions related to automatic appeals and disposed of 34 such petitions.
- A total of 688 State Bar matters were filed with the court, and 690 such matters were disposed of during the year.
- The Supreme Court ordered four Court of Appeal opinions depublished in this fiscal year.

Courts of Appeal

- Contested matters for the Courts of Appeal totaled 22,515, and dispositions totaled 24,442.
- Contested matters included 13,738 records of appeal and 8,777 original proceedings.
- The 13,738 filings of records of appeal comprised 4,539 civil cases, 6,549 criminal cases, and 2,650 juvenile cases. The 8,777 filings of original proceedings included 2,017 civil, 6,305 criminal, and 455 juvenile cases.

- Filings of notices of appeal in the superior court totaled 15,738: 6,122 civil cases, 6,857 criminal cases, and 2,759 juvenile cases.
- Disposition of notices of appeal included 5,856 civil, 6,821 criminal, and 2,847 juvenile cases.
 - Dispositions of notices of appeal by written opinion totaled 10,270: 3,056 civil cases, 5,399 criminal cases, and 1,815 juvenile cases.
 - Dispositions without written opinion totaled 3,453 cases: 1,338 civil, 1,182 criminal, and 933 juvenile.
 - Dispositions of notices of appeal with no record filed totaled 1,801 cases: 1,462 civil, 240 criminal, and 99 juvenile.
- Disposition of filings of original proceedings is composed of 2,049 civil, 6,393 criminal, and 476 juvenile cases.
 - Disposition of original proceedings decided with written opinion totaled 609 cases: 149 civil cases, 221 criminal cases, and 239 juvenile cases.
 - Disposition of original proceedings without written opinion totaled 8,309 cases: 1,900 civil, 6,172 criminal, and 237 juvenile.
- Of the cases disposed of by written opinion, 8,743 were affirmed, 990 were reversed, and 289 were dismissed.
- Of those cases affirmed by the Courts of Appeal, 7,001 received full affirmance, while 1,742 received affirmance with modification.
- Statewide, 9 percent of Court of Appeal majority opinions were published in this fiscal year.

Superior Court

Superior court case filings across all case categories totaled 10,074,941 cases, while dispositions numbered 8,782,281. Within these aggregate numbers, the following totals by major case category and case type were recorded:

Civil Cases. Civil filings totaled 1,152,926 and civil dispositions totaled 1,113,606, with a caseload clearance rate of 85% attained over all family law case types in this fiscal year.

- **UNLIMITED:** Civil unlimited filings totaled 220,631 cases, while civil unlimited dispositions numbered 195,335.
 - Method of disposition for civil unlimited cases: 138,965 cases disposed of before trial and 32,922 after trial.
 - Caseload clearance rate for civil unlimited cases: 89%.
 - Case processing time for civil unlimited cases was 72% within 12 months, 87% in 18 months, and 93% in 24 months.
- **LIMITED:** Civil limited filings totaled 720,308 cases, while civil limited dispositions numbered 703,350.
 - Method of disposition for civil limited trials: 521,215 cases were disposed of before trial and 47,833 after trial.
 - The caseload clearance rate for civil limited cases was 98%.
 - Case processing time for civil limited was as follows: 88% in 12 months, 97% in 18 months, and 99% in 24 months.

- **SMALL CLAIMS:** Small claims filings reached a total of 211,987 cases, while small claims dispositions numbered 214,921.
 - Method of disposition for small claims cases: 76,067 cases were disposed of before trial and 119,338 after trial.
 - The caseload clearance rate for small claims cases was 101%.
 - Case processing time in small claims cases was as follows: 61% in 70 days, 73% in 90 days.

Criminal Cases. Criminal filings totaled 8,270,215 and criminal dispositions numbered 7,116,013, with a caseload clearance rate of 86% attained over all criminal case types in this fiscal year.

- **FELONIES:** Felony filings reached a total of 248,340 cases, while felony dispositions numbered 238,511.
 - Method of disposition: 231,713 felony cases were disposed of before trial and 6,620 after trial.
 - Caseload clearance rate for felony cases was 96%.
 - Case processing time in felony cases resulting in bindovers or certified pleas: 46% in 30 days, 57% in 45 days, 73% in 90 days—with 88% of all felonies disposed of in less than 12 months.
- **MISDEMEANORS:** Misdemeanor filings reached a total of 1,323,154 cases, while misdemeanor dispositions numbered 1,021,428.
 - Method of disposition: 1,008,737 misdemeanor cases were disposed of before trial and 11,984 after trial.
 - Caseload clearance rate for misdemeanor cases ranged from 71% for traffic misdemeanors to 88% for nontraffic misdemeanors.
 - Case processing time for misdemeanors: 62% in 30 days, 78% in 90 days, and 83% in 120 days.
- **INFRACTIONS:** Infraction filings reached a total of 6,698,721 cases, while infraction dispositions numbered 5,856,074.
 - Method of disposition: 5,483,238 infraction cases were disposed of before trial and 369,589 after trial.
 - The caseload clearance rate for infraction cases ranged from 87% for traffic infractions to 92% for nontraffic infractions.

Family Law. Family law filings totaled 452,671, and family law dispositions numbered 383,547, with a caseload clearance rate of 85% attained over all family law case types in this fiscal year.

- **FAMILY LAW (MARITAL):** Family law (marital) filings reached a total of 154,534 cases, while this type of family law dispositions numbered 144,628.
 - Method of disposition: 143,212 family law (marital) cases were disposed of before trial and 1,335 after trial.
 - The caseload clearance rate for family law (marital) cases was 94%.
- **FAMILY LAW PETITIONS:** Family law petition filings reached a total of 298,137 cases, while this type of family law dispositions numbered 238,919.
 - Method of disposition: 237,706 family law petition cases were disposed of before trial and 910 after trial.

- The caseload clearance rate for family law petition cases was 80%.

Juvenile Law. Juvenile filings totaled 127,387, and juvenile dispositions numbered 109,970.

- **JUVENILE DELINQUENCY:** Juvenile delinquency filings reached a total of 90,303 cases, while juvenile delinquency dispositions numbered 80,121.
 - Method of disposition: 11,848 juvenile delinquency cases were disposed of before hearing and 68,186 after hearing.
 - The caseload clearance rate for juvenile delinquency cases ranged from 86% for original hearings to 95% for subsequent hearings, with an average of 89% for this case type.
- **JUVENILE DEPENDENCY:** Juvenile dependency filings reached a total of 37,084 cases, while juvenile dependency dispositions numbered 29,849.
 - Method of disposition: 6,835 juvenile dependency cases were disposed of before hearing and 22,919 after hearing.
 - The caseload clearance rate for juvenile dependency cases ranged from 90% for original hearings to 33% for subsequent hearings, with an average of 80% for this case type.

Probate and Mental Health Cases.

- **PROBATE:** Probate (estate, guardianship, and conservatorship) filings reached a total of 42,220 cases, while probate dispositions numbered 33,349.
 - Method of disposition: 15,901 probate cases were disposed of before hearing and 17,401 after hearing.
 - The caseload clearance rate for all types of probate cases was 79%.
- **MENTAL HEALTH:** Mental health filings reached a total of 15,802 cases, while mental health dispositions numbered 13,938.
 - Method of disposition: 4,359 mental health cases were disposed of before hearing and 9,579 after hearing.
 - The caseload clearance rate for all types of mental health cases was 88%.

Trials, By Type of Proceeding

- **JURY TRIALS:** A total of 11,047 jury trials were recorded across all case types. Jury trials held in the superior courts in fiscal year 2009–2010 included 6,016 felony, 3,404 misdemeanor, 1,400 civil unlimited, 190 civil limited, and 37 probate and mental health cases.
- **ALL COURT TRIALS:** A total of 470,529 court trials were recorded across all the case types detailed above (excluding small claims). These included 604 felony, 378,169 misdemeanor and infractions, 25,500 civil unlimited, 47,643 civil limited, and 18,613 probate and mental health cases.
- **SMALL CLAIMS TRIALS:** A total of 119,338 small claims court trials were recorded, which may be distinguished from criminal and civil court trials for their tendency to be resolved in a single hearing.

Trial Court Workload and Judicial Resources

- Authorized judicial positions in the California courts in fiscal year 2009–2010 totaled 2,022: 1,646 judges and 376 subordinate judicial officers.
- The judicial position equivalent (JPE) total for the year was 2,118, while the assessed number of judges needed (AJN) was 2,352.

The California Court System

California's court system serves a population of more than 38 million people—about 12.5 percent of the total U.S. population—and processed more than 10 million cases in fiscal year 2009–2010. The judicial branch budget of \$3.7 billion represents a little more than 3 percent of the California state budget and makes possible the case-processing activity detailed above while also providing the basis of support for approximately 2,000 judicial officers and more than 22,000 court employees statewide.

The vast majority of cases in the California courts begin in one of the 58 superior, or trial, courts, which reside in each of the state's 58 counties. With facilities in some 532 locations, these courts hear both civil and criminal cases as well as family, probate, mental health, and juvenile cases. The equivalent of more than 2,000 judicial positions statewide address the full range of cases heard each year by the superior courts, as reflected in the sheer number of case filings and dispositions reported here. The superior courts report summaries of their case filing counts to the AOC, and the CSR reports those figures here in aggregate form.

The next level of court authority within the state's judicial branch resides with the Courts of Appeal. Most of the cases that come before the Courts of Appeal involve the review of a superior court decision that is being contested by a party to the case. The Legislature has divided the state geographically into six appellate districts, each containing a Court of Appeal. Currently, 105 appellate justices preside in nine locations in the state to hear matters brought for review. Totals of Court of Appeal case filings are forwarded to the AOC; these are summarized in the tables that follow.

The Supreme Court sits at the apex of the state's judicial system, and has discretion to review decisions of the Courts of Appeal in order to settle important questions of law and resolve conflicts among the courts of appeal. Although the Supreme Court generally has considerable discretion in determining in which cases to grant review, it must review the appeal in any case in which a trial court has imposed the death penalty. The Supreme Court sends the AOC its annual case filing figures, which are reported here in summary form.

Terminology and Rules for Counting Filings

Technical definitions of most terms used in this CSR can be found in the appendixes. Some core definitions are presented here in more detail.

Appellate Courts

APPEAL. An *appeal* is a proceeding undertaken to have a decision reconsidered by bringing it from a lower to a higher court of authority. A *notice of appeal* is a written notification filed with a superior court and intended to initiate the appeal of a judgment to a higher court. A *fully briefed* appeal is one in which all briefs have been filed with the court. *Dismissal* of an appeal involves the termination of a case for reasons other than its merit. An appeal that is awaiting a final decision is said to be *pending*. **Each notice of appeal is counted as one new filing.**

PETITION FOR REVIEW. A *petition for review* is filed in the California Supreme Court to ask that court to exercise its discretion to review a decision issued by a Court of Appeal in an appeal or an original proceeding. The Supreme Court has a total of 90 days to consider a petition for review, after which it loses jurisdiction.

AUTOMATIC APPEAL. An *automatic appeal* is the appeal of a judgment of guilt in a case involving the death penalty. This type of appeal is unique because it moves directly from a superior court to the Supreme Court without first being reviewed by a Court of Appeal. Like other types of appeals, **an automatic appeal is counted as one new filing.**

ORIGINAL PROCEEDING. An *original proceeding* is an action filed and heard for the first time in an appellate court. This action is not an appeal; rather, it is ordinarily a petition for a writ. Examples of original proceedings include a writ of mandamus, which instructs a lower court to perform mandatory duties correctly; a writ of prohibition, or an order that forbids certain actions; and a writ of habeas corpus, which may be issued to bring a party before the court. **Each original proceeding is counted as one new filing.**

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS. A petition for the issuance of a *writ of habeas corpus* is typically filed to contest the legality of a party's imprisonment. An original habeas corpus petition may be filed at any level of court. **Each habeas corpus petition is counted as one new filing.**

WRITTEN OPINION. A *written opinion* is a statement issued by an appellate court to explain the terms and reasoning its final judgment in a case. The written opinion includes a statement of the legal facts in the case, relevant points of law, and the rationale for the decision. Written opinions may or may not accompany final judgments and are not counted separately from case filings in tracking workload.

DISPOSITIONS. The appellate court may dispose of a case by affirming or reversing the action of the lower court, or it may send the case back to the lower court for further proceedings if appropriate.

RECORD OF APPEAL. A *record of appeal* is the compilation of documents and transcripts associated with a given superior court case under review by an appellate court. The record is a component of a new appellate case and as such **is not counted separately from the initial appeal.**

REVERSAL OF CASE DECISION. A *reversal* is the overturning of a lower court's decision by an appellate court. For purposes of tracking the court's workload, case reversals are not counted separately from dispositions of these matters.

Superior Courts

FILING. In the most general sense, a *filing* is the initiation of a legal action with the court through a carefully prescribed legal procedure.

How Filings Are Counted. The procedure used to count filings for this report follows a set of rules consistent with national standards for statistical reporting. These rules differ according to case type:

- Each filing in a *civil case* pertains to the complaint or petition that has been submitted to the court for action. A given civil complaint may name one or more individuals or groups as its object. However, **regardless of the number of parties named in a case, each civil case is reported as one filing or one disposition.**
- Each filing in a *criminal case* is associated with a single defendant against whom criminal charges have been filed. Multiple criminal charges may occur in a case where different charges have been brought against the same defendant, but **only the single most severe charge against a defendant in a**

given case is counted as a new criminal filing. When multiple defendants are charged with a crime, multiple filings are respectively reported.

- Each filing in a *juvenile* case pertains to a minor who is the subject of a petition made to the court for adjudication. A minor may have an initial filing that brought him or her to the attention of the court, and subsequent filings if new petitions or charges are filed over time. This practice continues until termination of the dependency or delinquency jurisdiction by the court or when the minor has reached the legal definition of adulthood. **In a single case involving multiple minors, each minor is counted as a separate filing.**

DISPOSITION. In a general sense, a *disposition* may be described as a final settlement or determination in a case. A disposition may occur either before or after a civil or criminal case has been scheduled for trial. A final judgment, a dismissal of a case, and the sentencing of a criminal defendant are all examples of dispositions. In certain case types, however, a disposition may merely signal the beginning of the court's authority over a case. For example, after the petition to appoint a conservator is disposed of in conservatorship cases, the court assumes control over that case. Rules for counting and reporting dispositions mirror those for filings, although a case filed in one year may be disposed of by the court in a subsequent year.

California Judicial Branch: Structure and Duties

The Courts

CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT

www.courts.ca.gov/supremecourt.htm

- Has discretionary authority to review decisions of the Courts of Appeal; jurisdiction to review original petitions for writ relief; direct responsibility for automatic appeals after death penalty judgments
- Hears oral arguments in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Sacramento

COURTS OF APPEAL

www.courts.ca.gov/courts-of-appeal.htm

- Review the majority of appealable orders or judgments from the superior courts; jurisdiction to review original petitions for writ relief
- Six districts, 19 divisions, 9 court locations

SUPERIOR COURTS

www.courts.ca.gov/superiorcourts.htm

- Have trial jurisdiction over all criminal and civil cases filed in their respective counties; guided by state and local laws that define crimes and specify punishments, as well as defining civil duties and liabilities
- A total of 58 courts—one for each California county—each operating in 1 to 55 branches depending on county population, total local caseload, and other factors

Branch and Administration Policy

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

www.courts.ca.gov/policyadmin-jc.htm

The constitutionally created policymaking body of the California courts

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS (AOC)

www.courts.ca.gov/policyadmin-aoc.htm

The staff agency to the Judicial Council

Branch Agencies

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

www.courts.ca.gov/5367.htm

Confirms gubernatorial appointments to the Supreme Court and appellate courts

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE

<http://cjp.ca.gov>

Responsible for maintaining statewide standards for administration of justice and empowered with disciplinary authority to effect the censure, removal, retirement, or private admonishment of judges and commissioners

Decisions subject to review by the California Supreme Court

HABEAS CORPUS RESOURCE CENTER

www.courts.ca.gov/5361.htm

Handles state and federal habeas corpus proceedings; provides training and support for private attorneys who take these cases

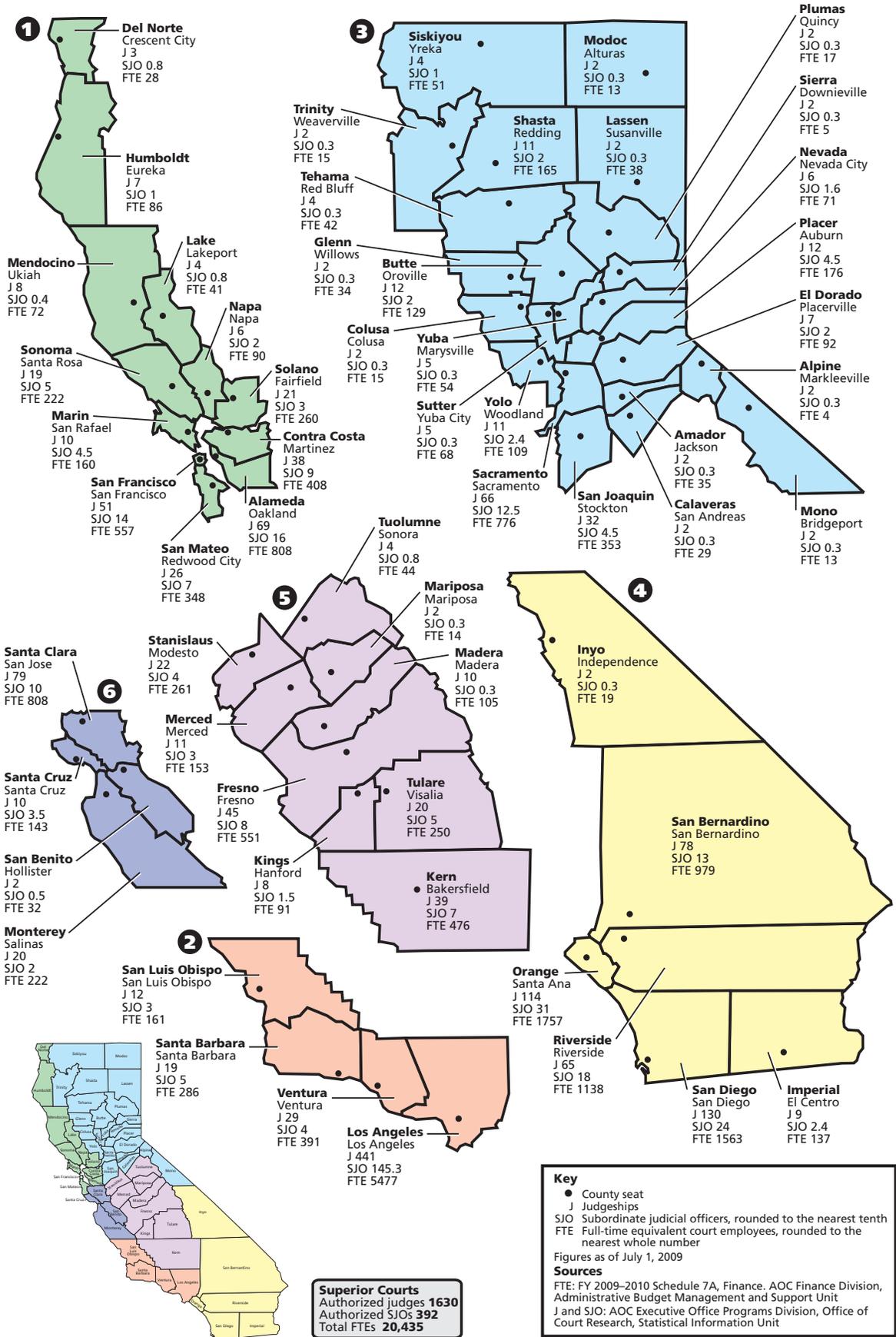
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