

# TRIAL COURT FACT SHEET

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The *Statistical Reference Guide to Florida's Trial Courts* was released in February 2005. Incorporated in the guide is statistical data from both the circuit and county court systems on filings, dispositions, and special proceedings for fiscal year 2003-2004. This is the fourth guide published since its inception.

Florida's circuit courts are comprised of 5 divisions: criminal, civil, domestic relations, probate and juvenile. Circuit court case filings increased in fiscal year 03-04 from the previous year by 2.4% (see *Table 1*), which is consistent with growth rates in circuit court filings over the past several years. Since fiscal year 01-02, total case filings have increased by 3.0%. The county court system of Florida also experienced growth with a 3.7% increase in county criminal filings and a 9.2% increase in county civil filings since fiscal year 03-04. County civil traffic infractions continue to impact growth rates as improved datasets become more readily available from the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

**Circuit court filings increased by 2.4%.**

**Table 1**

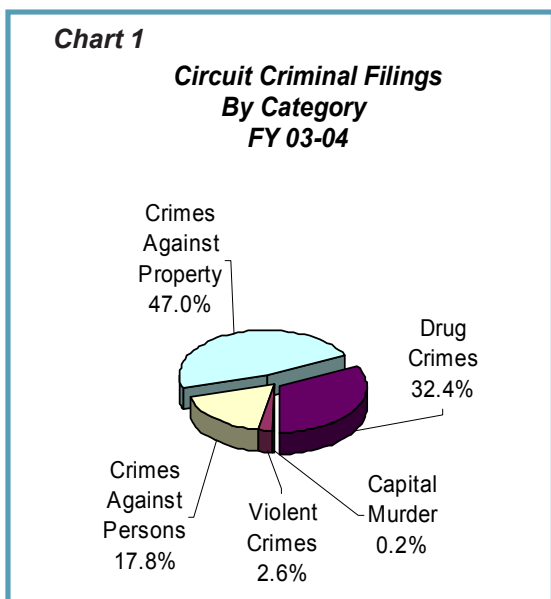
Circuit Court Filings						
Fiscal Years 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04						
Division	FY01-02	FY02-03	FY03-04	% Change FY01-02 to FY02-03	% Change FY02-03 to FY03-04	% Change FY01-02 to FY03-04
Circuit Criminal	179,757	182,893	193,870	1.74%	6.00%	7.85%
Circuit Civil	186,218	184,858	178,970	-0.73%	-3.19%	-3.89%
Circuit Domestic Relations	280,457	276,966	284,522	-1.24%	2.73%	1.45%
Circuit Probate	96,712	101,736	108,183	5.19%	6.34%	11.86%
Circuit Juvenile	91,504	92,686	93,907	1.29%	1.32%	2.63%
Total	834,648	839,139	859,452	0.54%	2.42%	2.97%

## *Circuit Criminal Filings: A Driving Force*

A significant rise in circuit criminal filings is a driving force behind the overall increase in circuit court filings during the previous fiscal year (03-04). The division experienced a 6% increase from fiscal year 02-03 (see *Table 2*). Within the circuit criminal division there are 5 major case type categories: capital murder, violent crimes, crimes against persons, crimes against property, and drug crimes. Only two of the five case type categories actually experienced a



rise in filings during the past year: crimes against property and drug crimes. The other categories decreased. However, crimes against property and drug crimes together accounted for 79.4% of all criminal filings during fiscal year 03-04 (see *Chart 1*). These in turn caused the entire circuit criminal division to increase.



**Increase in crime against property and drug crime filings.**

Crimes against property case filings increased by 7.1% and drug crime case filings increased by 12.9% from the previous fiscal year and increased by 9.1% and 16.1%, respectively, since fiscal year 01-02. Crimes against property include cases regarding burglary, theft, forgery, fraud, worthless checks, and other crimes against property. Drug crimes include, but are not limited to, criminal cases involving drug trafficking, drug possession, and drug smuggling.

**Table 2**

Circuit Criminal Filings						
Fiscal Years 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04						
Case Type	FY01-02	FY02-03	FY03-04	% Change FY01-02 to FY02-03	% Change FY02-03 to FY03-04	% Change FY01-02 to FY03-04
Capital Murder	409	469	427	14.67%	-8.96%	4.40%
Violent Crimes	5,408	5,498	4,951	1.66%	-9.95%	-8.45%
Crimes Against Persons	36,324	36,248	34,582	-0.21%	-4.60%	-4.80%
Crimes Against Property	83,499	84,997	91,064	1.79%	7.14%	9.06%
Drug Crimes	54,117	55,681	62,846	2.89%	12.87%	16.13%
Total Circuit Criminal	179,757	182,893	193,870	1.74%	6.00%	7.85%

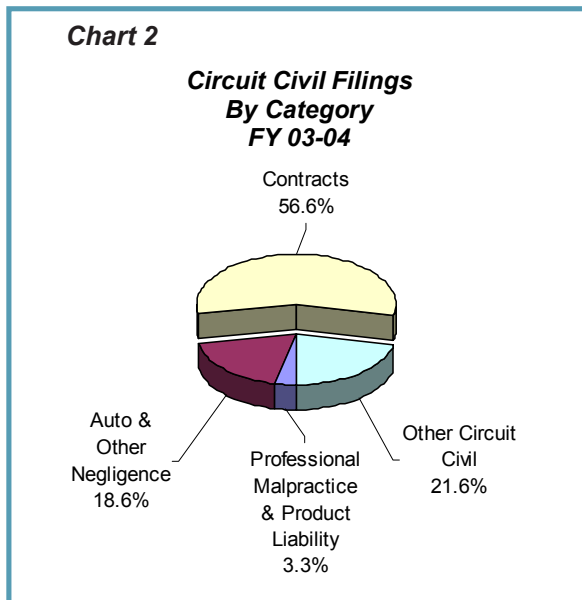
**Circuit Civil Filings: Continued Decline**

In contrast with criminal filings, circuit civil filings have been declining over the past several years. In fiscal year 03-04 civil filings decreased by 3.2%. Since fiscal year 01-02 filings have decreased by 3.9%. Nearly all categories of civil case filings have experienced declines since fiscal year 2001-02 (see *Table 3*), with the exception of auto negligence and other circuit civil filings (example filings include injunctions, bond estreatures, replevins and forfeitures).

**Table 3**

Circuit Civil Filings Fiscal Years 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04						
Case Type	FY01-02	FY02-03	FY03-04	% Change FY01-02 to FY02-03	% Change FY02-03 to FY03-04	% Change FY01-02 to FY03-04
Professional Malpractice	2,530	2,405	2,236	-4.94%	-7.03%	-11.62%
Products Liability	4,871	2,536	3,593	-47.94%	41.68%	-26.24%
Auto Negligence	18,345	19,299	19,847	5.20%	2.84%	8.19%
Other Negligence	14,191	13,129	13,386	-7.48%	1.96%	-5.67%
Condominium	361	277	191	-23.27%	-31.05%	-47.09%
Contract & Indebtedness	31,660	32,638	31,331	3.09%	-4.00%	-1.04%
Real Property Mortgage Foreclosure	79,647	79,429	69,759	-0.27%	-12.17%	-12.41%
Eminent Domain	3,536	2,803	2,825	-20.73%	0.78%	-20.11%
Other	31,077	32,342	35,802	4.07%	10.70%	15.20%
<b>Total Circuit Civil</b>	<b>186,218</b>	<b>184,858</b>	<b>178,970</b>	<b>-0.73%</b>	<b>-3.19%</b>	<b>-3.89%</b>

Contracts & indebtedness plus real property mortgage foreclosure together comprise 57% of all filings for fiscal year 2003-04 (see chart 2). Declines in these categories had a significant impact on the circuit civil division. Contracts & indebtedness case filings decreased by 4.0% and real property mortgage foreclosure case filings decreased by 12.2% from the previous fiscal year and together decreased by 13.4%, since fiscal year 01-02.



**12.2% decline in mortgage foreclosure filings.**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

To receive a copy of the Statistical Reference Guide or to access other trial court statistics, contact the Florida Office of the State Courts Administrator, Court Services Unit at 850.922.5094 or visit our web site at [www.flcourts.org](http://www.flcourts.org).

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