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TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

February 8, 2024

By

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Statistics Request Description

On January 5, 2024, the Administrative Office of the Courts Data Officer directed the division of Research & Statistics to create a report examining trends over time in the rate of filing of cases including charges of violent felony offenses.

CourtNet, which provides a summary of court cases statewide, was queried for Circuit Criminal cases filed between 1/1/2004 and 12/31/2023 with including charges of offenses associated with the Categories *Felony – Homicide* and *Felony – Violent* as used previously in the Kentucky Court of Justice Judicial Workload Assessment¹. A list of applicable offenses is attached to this document.

Statistical Report

The following visualizations demonstrate an overall increase in cases and charges of violent crime over the last twenty years. Some regions and types of crime have shown signs of decline in frequency, while others have increased.

¹ Ostrom, B. J., Kleiman, M. K., Lee, C. G., Sturtevant, D., Dufek, J., Garrison, C. (2020). Judicial Workload Assessment 2020. Microsoft OneDrive Shared Directory.
https://kcoj-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/danielsturtevant_kycourts_net/Eoo0Q8Rsa3FOn2By0WiGWPoBldPTceeUu8JqROgHxUoPdQ?e=Wq8HBS retrieved February 7, 2024.

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

Figure 1: Circuit Criminal Cases filed statewide CY 2004-2023 containing at least one violent felony charge

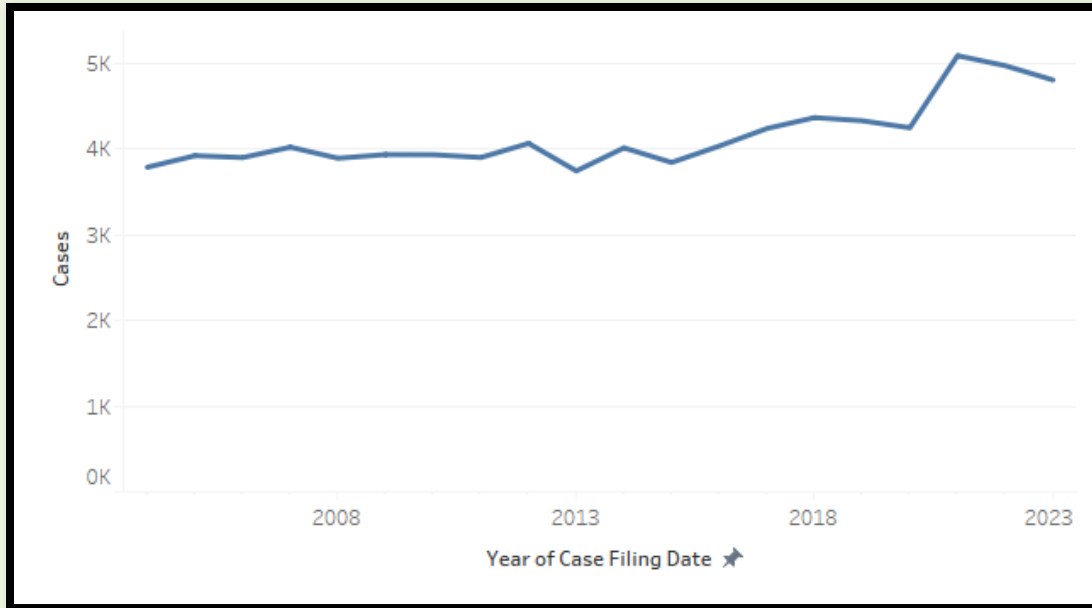


Table 1 provides this data in table format along with comparisons to 2004 for each year.

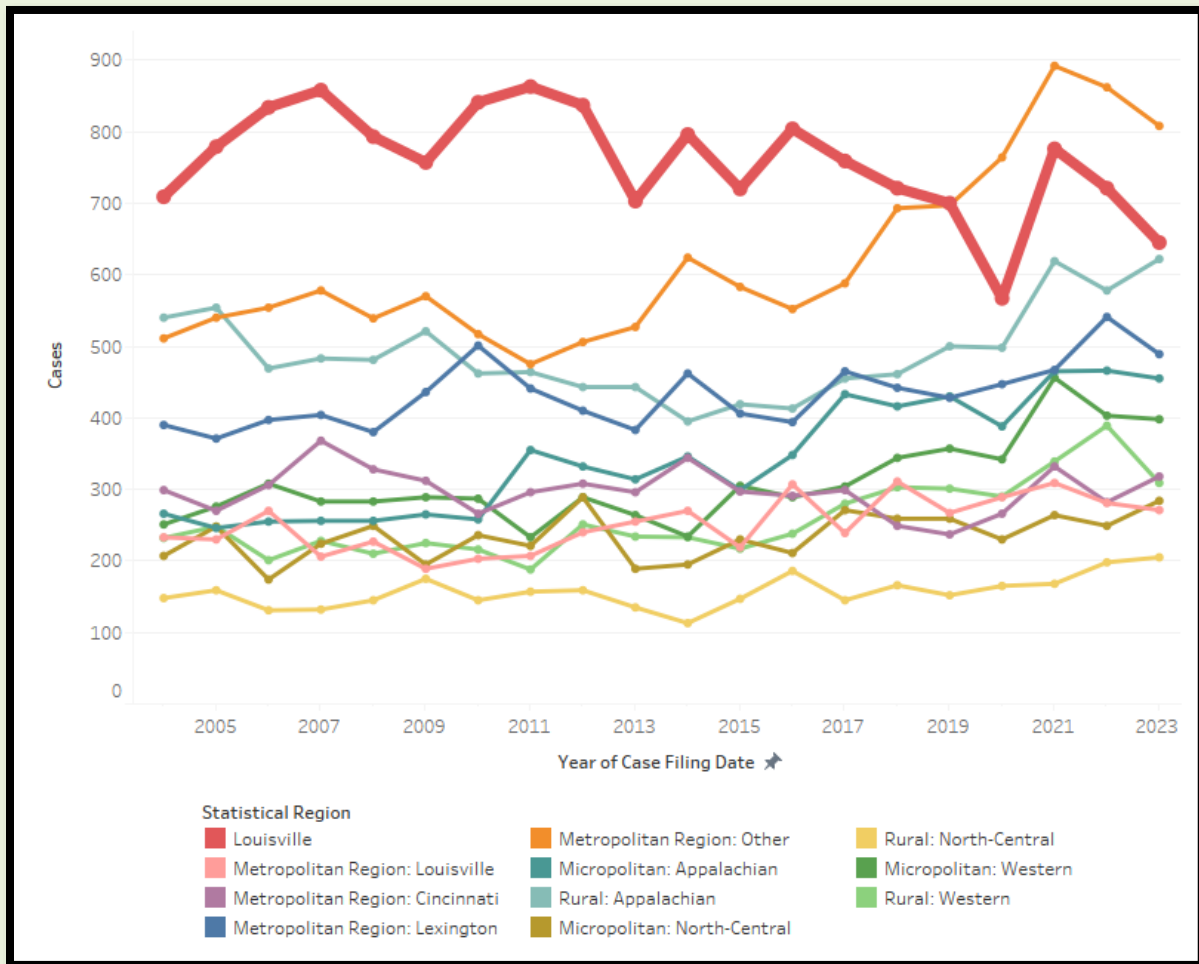
The number of Circuit Criminal cases filed from 2004 to 2015 including charges of violent offenses was relatively stable, after which there were three consecutive years of increases. This was the only time that there were consecutive year-over-year increases from 2004-2023. There was a slight decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, followed by a spike in 2021 and a decline in 2022 and 2023. The co-author's conjecture is that the spike in 2021 is likely in part procedural, with cases that would have otherwise been filed earlier being delayed until the restoration of criminal jury trials in 2021.

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

Figure 2: Cases filed CY 2004-2023 containing at least one violent felony charge, separated by Statistical Region



This visualization allows for the comparison of relative trends for violent crime across geographic regions. The line chart presents the number of cases filed in each year for each region, with vertical position representing the number cases filed. The size of the marks for the Louisville region is increased for emphasis. The associated numbers of cases and percent differences for 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2023 are included in Table 2 along with percent difference comparisons for these years compared to 2004. A map of statistical regions can be found in figure 3.

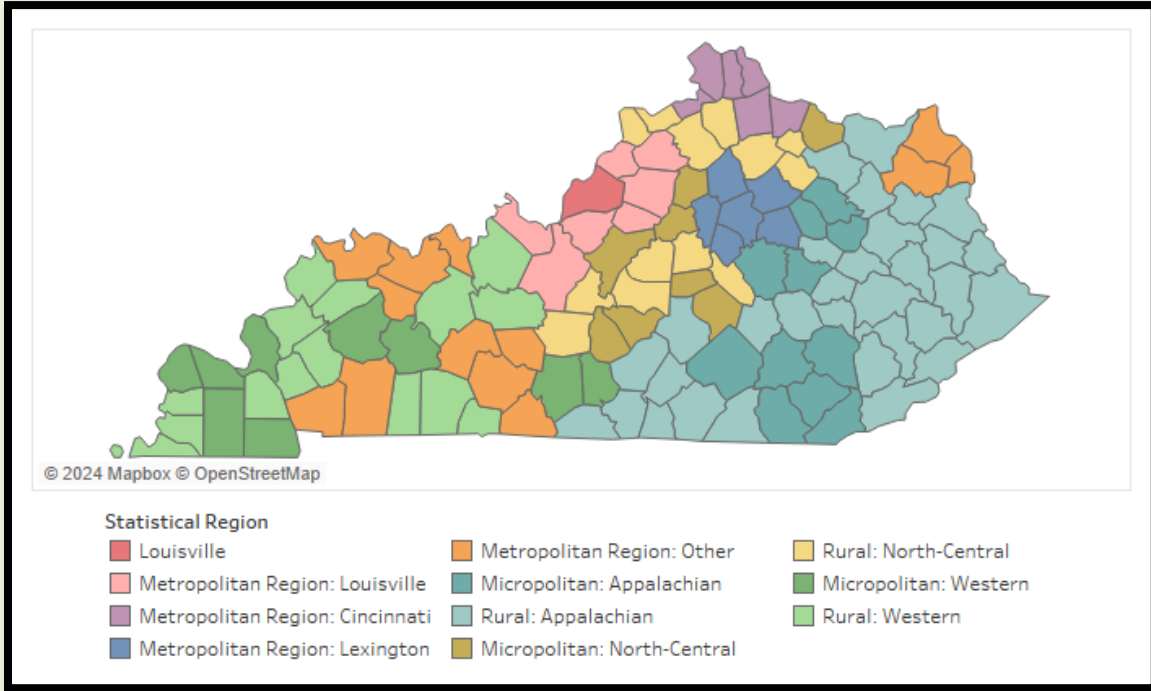
Comparing 2004 to 2023, every statistical region had a higher quantity of violent felony cases in 2023 than in 2004, with the notable exception of Louisville. Within the timeframe of 2004-2023, 2023 had the second lowest count of violent felony cases in a year for Louisville, with the only year bearing a lower count being 2020. Throughout most of the years listed, Louisville had more charges than any other region. However, beginning with 2020 and continuing to the present, Metropolitan Region: Other surpassed Louisville in violent felony case count. The region had a 58.32% increase from 2004 to 2023. The largest increase by a region was Micropolitan: Appalachian, which experienced a 70.68% increase from 2004 to 2023.

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

Figure 3: Statistical Regions

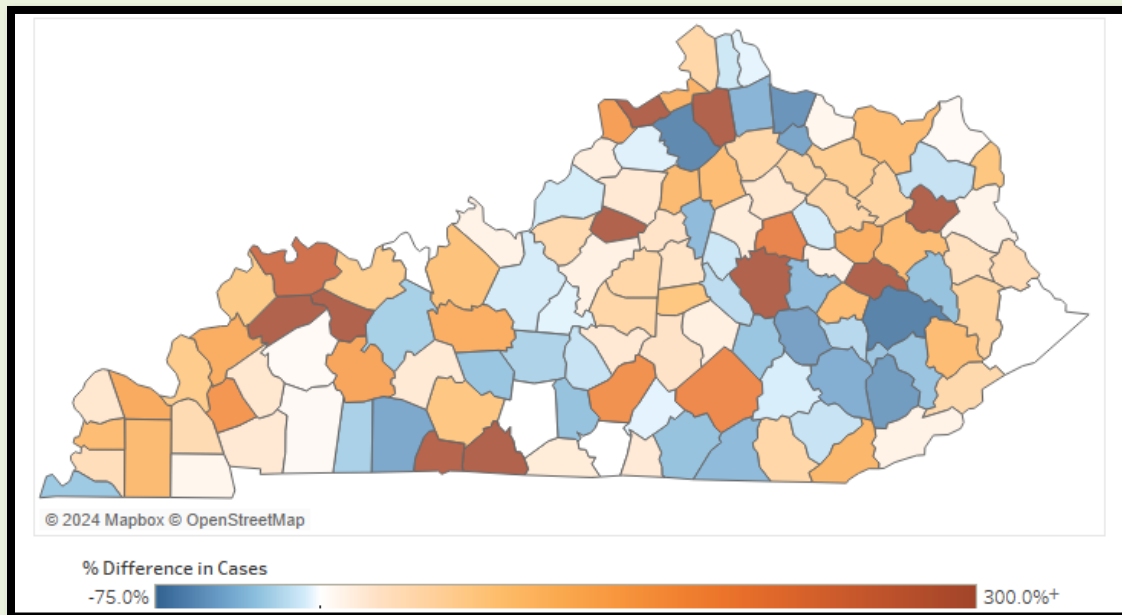


TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

Figure 4: Percentage difference in count of cases containing at least one violent felony charge between CY 2023 and 2004 by county.



This visualization allows for the comparison of relative trends for violent crime across counties. The map presents the percentage difference in case count between 2004 and 2023, with the color of the county representing the change in count of cases filed. As some small counties had as much as a 700% increase, all counties with a 300% increase or more are represented with the darkest orange hue. Table 3 provides this data in table form.

There were 37 counties with fewer Circuit Criminal cases containing a violent charge filed in 2023 when compared to 2004, four counties that had the exact same number of cases, and 79 counties that saw an increase in violent cases. Some of the notable counties with decreases were Jefferson (9.03% decrease, 709 cases to 645 cases) and Kenton (11.40% decrease, 114 cases to 101 cases). The largest decrease for a county was Breathitt with 70.59%, but it should be noticed that the decrease was from 17 cases to 5 cases. As such, small sample size can likely be attributed to part of the decrease.

Sample size can also be attributed to the largest increase, Grant County, which went from 2 cases in 2004 to 16 cases in 2023 for a 700% increase. In this situation, it would appear that the count in 2004 was an abnormally low outlier, as there were 15 cases in 2005. Rural counties with small populations and case counts are more susceptible to outliers. Some notable increases in counties with relatively large populations include Henderson (245.71% increase, 31 cases to 121 cases), Madison (366.67% increase, 30 cases to 140 cases), Franklin (102.38% increase, 42 cases to 85 cases), and Pulaski (181.48% increase, 27 cases to 76 cases).

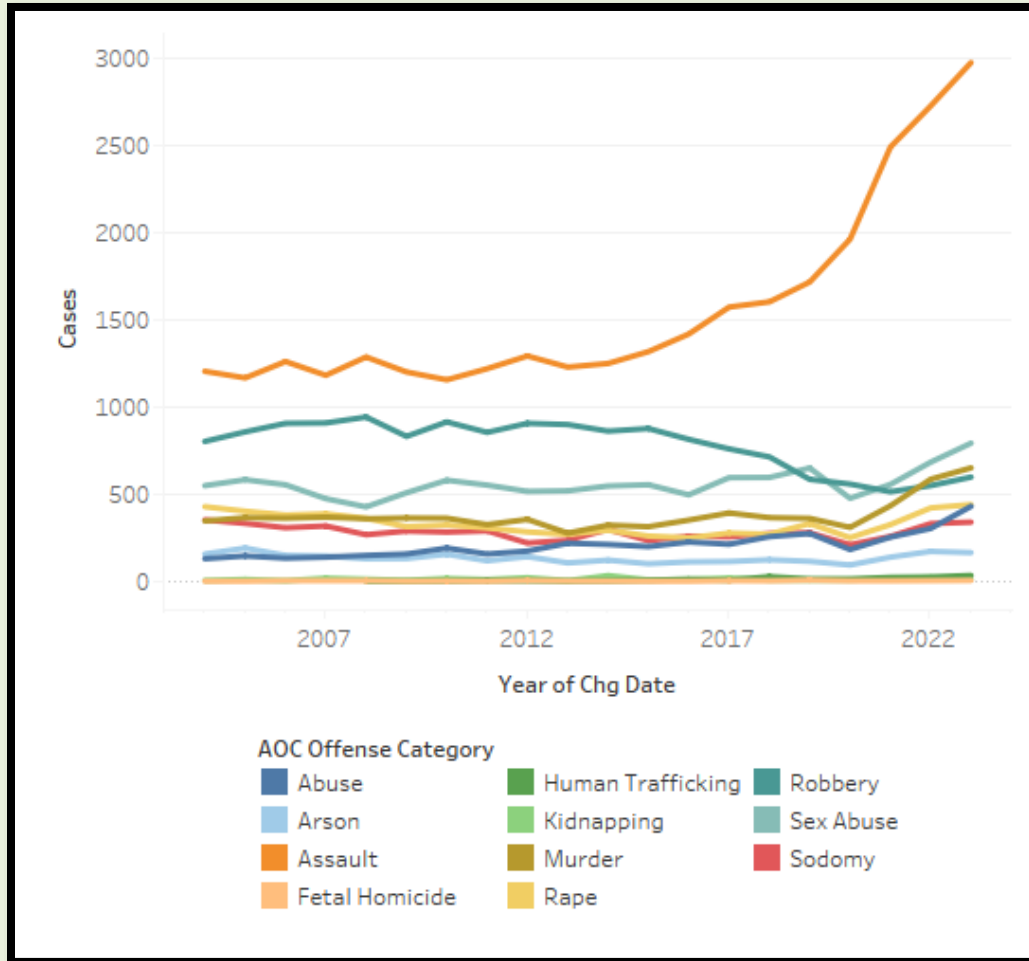
Some geographic trend clustering can be seen on the map, with several counties in eastern Kentucky observing a reduction in the number of cases filed. A smaller cluster of counties in west-central Kentucky around the Henderson-Owensboro area can be seen as having an increase from 2004.

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

Figure 5: Violent charges filed CY 2004-2023 by AOC Offense Category



This visualization shows trends in the AOC Offense Categories of violent charges from 2004-2023. Table 4 provides this data in table form.

Since 2013, there has been an increase in the quantity of Circuit Criminal cases with assault charges every year. In 2023, 3021 cases contained at least one assault charge compared to 1,207 cases in 2004. In 2004, 37% of Circuit Criminal cases including at least one violent offense included an Assault charge. In 2023, this percentage was 55%. The proportion of cases including charges from the relatively small Abuse category more than tripled during the reported period. The majority of this increase is associated with an increase following the pandemic of cases including charges of Criminal Abuse in the First Degree involving a child aged 12 or younger under KRS 508.100(1)(c)². Several categories are seen to dip in 2020 before having a rise in the following years. Robbery (804 cases to 419 cases) and Arson (153 cases to 118 cases) were the two categories with fewer Circuit Criminal cases containing charges in 2023 than in 2004. There were 804 cases with at least one Robbery charge

² KRS 508.100: Criminal abuse in the first degree. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=52562> retrieved February 7, 2024.

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

in 2004 compared to 419 in 2023. Additionally, Sodomy had a negligible increase of 2 circuit criminal cases with at least one case filed when comparing 2004 and 2023.

Tables on the subsequent pages present additional information. Table 1 includes the underlying numbers associated with the data presented in Figure 1. Table 2 corresponds to Figure 2, Table 3 corresponds to Figure 4, and Table 4 corresponds to Figure 5.

Statistical Analysis Considerations:

- These statistics represent a snapshot in time as of the date the data was queried (2/8/2024).
- All counts provided in this report represent counts of distinct cases. A single case may have one or more charges and an individual may be defendant in more than one case within a period of time.

Table 1: Number of cases and percent difference in number of cases filed relative to cases filed in CY 2004

Year of Case Filing Date	% Dif from 2004	Cases
2004	0.00%	3,786
2005	3.57%	3,921
2006	2.98%	3,899
2007	6.18%	4,020
2008	2.77%	3,891
2009	3.91%	3,934
2010	3.86%	3,932
2011	3.01%	3,900
2012	7.34%	4,064
2013	-1.14%	3,743
2014	5.97%	4,012
2015	1.48%	3,842
2016	6.52%	4,033
2017	11.94%	4,238
2018	15.29%	4,365
2019	14.32%	4,328
2020	12.15%	4,246
2021	34.36%	5,087
2022	31.27%	4,970
2023	26.89%	4,804

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

Table 2: Circuit Criminal cases including violent charges by region for the years 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2023.

Statistical Region		Year of Case Filing Date				
		2004	2009	2014	2019	2023
Louisville	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	6.77%	12.27%	-1.27%	-9.03%
	Cases	709	757	796	700	645
Metropolitan Region: Louisville	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	-18.88%	15.88%	14.59%	16.31%
	Cases	233	189	270	267	271
Metropolitan Region: Cincinnati	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	4.35%	15.05%	-20.74%	6.35%
	Cases	299	312	344	237	318
Metropolitan Region: Lexington	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	11.79%	18.46%	9.74%	25.38%
	Cases	390	436	462	428	489
Metropolitan Region: Other	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	11.55%	22.11%	36.40%	58.12%
	Cases	511	570	624	697	808
Micropolitan: Appalachian	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	-0.38%	30.08%	61.65%	71.05%
	Cases	266	265	346	430	455
Rural: Appalachian	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	-3.52%	-26.85%	-7.41%	15.19%
	Cases	540	521	395	500	622
Micropolitan: North-Central	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	-5.80%	-5.80%	25.12%	37.20%
	Cases	207	195	195	259	284
Rural: North-Central	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	18.24%	-23.65%	2.70%	38.51%
	Cases	148	175	113	152	205
Micropolitan: Western	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	15.14%	-6.77%	42.23%	58.57%
	Cases	251	289	234	357	398
Rural: Western	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	-3.02%	0.43%	29.74%	33.19%
	Cases	232	225	233	301	309
Statewide	% Dif from 2004	0.00%	3.91%	5.97%	14.32%	26.89%
	Cases	3,786	3,934	4,012	4,328	4,804

Table 2 includes the number of violent Circuit Criminal cases filed for each statistical region in the years 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2023. Additionally, the percentage difference in case count for each year when compared to 2004 is provided.

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

Table 3: Circuit Criminal cases including violent charges by county for CY 2023

County Name	2023	County Name	2023	County Name	2023
ADAIR	171.43% 38	GRANT	700.00% 16	MCLEAN	500.00% 6
ALLEN	520.00% 31	GRAVES	102.63% 77	MEADE	13.33% 17
ANDERSON	29.41% 22	GRAYSON	122.22% 40	MENIFEE	125.00% 9
BALLARD	25.00% 10	GREEN	-14.29% 12	MERCER	30.00% 13
BARREN	0.00% 44	GREENUP	4.55% 23	METCALFE	-33.33% 8
BATH	55.56% 14	HANCOCK	0.00% 8	MONROE	20.00% 12
BELL	111.54% 55	HARDIN	-8.65% 95	MONTGOMERY	-8.70% 21
BOONE	53.42% 112	HARLAN	12.50% 36	MORGAN	100.00% 24
BOURBON	25.00% 15	HARRISON	53.85% 20	MUHLENBERG	138.46% 31
BOYD	84.38% 59	HART	-23.08% 20	NELSON	13.46% 59
BOYLE	81.25% 29	HENDERSON	245.71% 121	NICHOLAS	57.14% 11
BRACKEN	-60.00% 2	HENRY	-5.88% 16	OHIO	-25.71% 26
BREATHITT	-70.59% 5	HICKMAN	40.00% 7	OLDHAM	16.67% 28
BRECKINRIDGE	90.00% 19	HOPKINS	4.55% 46	OWEN	-66.67% 3
BULLITT	48.65% 55	JACKSON	-52.63% 9	OWSLEY	-20.00% 4
BUTLER	21.74% 28	JEFFERSON	-9.03% 645	PENDLETON	-41.18% 10
CALDWELL	25.00% 15	JESSAMINE	-11.90% 37	PERRY	-32.43% 25
CALLOWAY	8.70% 25	JOHNSON	36.84% 26	PIKE	0.00% 38
CAMPBELL	-4.76% 80	KENTON	-11.40% 101	POWELL	15.00% 23
CARLISLE	100.00% 6	KNOTT	100.00% 8	PULASKI	185.19% 77
CARROLL	328.57% 30	KNOX	-13.79% 25	ROBERTSON	-50.00% 2
CARTER	-14.71% 29	LARUE	-5.00% 19	ROCKCASTLE	-31.58% 13
CASEY	30.77% 17	LAUREL	-7.50% 37	ROWAN	57.89% 30
CHRISTIAN	5.43% 136	LAWRENCE	11.11% 10	RUSSELL	-5.26% 18
CLARK	200.00% 48	LEE	100.00% 8	SCOTT	100.00% 46
CLAY	-44.12% 19	LESLIE	-55.56% 8	SHELBY	22.58% 38
CLINTON	21.43% 17	LETCHER	50.00% 69	SIMPSON	290.00% 39
CRITTENDEN	125.00% 9	LEWIS	100.00% 6	SPENCER	340.00% 22
CUMBERLAND	0.00% 7	LINCOLN	15.38% 15	TAYLOR	22.58% 38
DAVISS	71.76% 146	LIVINGSTON	75.00% 7	TODD	-25.00% 12
EDMONSON	-31.58% 13	LOGAN	-48.15% 28	TRIGG	22.22% 11
ELLIOTT	350.00% 18	LYON	163.64% 29	TRIMBLE	150.00% 5
ESTILL	-36.36% 7	MADISON	366.67% 140	UNION	77.78% 16
FAYETTE	18.51% 333	MAGOFFIN	-33.33% 8	WARREN	80.73% 197
FLEMING	71.43% 12	MARION	53.85% 40	WASHINGTON	54.55% 17
FLOYD	60.71% 45	MARSHALL	45.83% 35	WAYNE	-33.33% 30
FRANKLIN	102.38% 85	MARTIN	44.44% 13	WEBSTER	300.00% 16
FULTON	-29.41% 12	MASON	9.09% 24	WHITLEY	54.55% 51
GALLATIN	116.67% 13	MCCRACKEN	130.77% 150	WOLFE	400.00% 25
GARRARD	-18.18% 9	MCCREARY	-37.50% 20	WOODFORD	-37.50% 10

Table 3 includes the number of violent Circuit Criminal cases filed for each county in the year 2023 and the percentage difference in case count when compared to 2004.

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Statistical Report

Table 4: Violent Circuit Criminal case counts by charge year and AOC offense category.

Year of Case Filing Date	AOC Offense Category											Grand Total
	Assault	Robbery	Sex Abuse	Murder	Rape	Sodomy	Abuse	Arson	Kidnapping	Human Trafficking	Fetal Homicide	
2004	1,196	804	476	364	402	322	132	153	4		2	3,230
2005	1,168	847	561	340	401	326	132	183	12			3,325
2006	1,161	937	494	356	346	286	127	143	5		3	3,257
2007	1,189	880	464	361	399	300	146	144	18		6	3,299
2008	1,284	876	400	336	343	253	145	109	11	1	3	3,192
2009	1,164	814	494	361	330	287	178	147	8	1	2	3,215
2010	1,146	887	557	347	317	277	183	134	17	2	4	3,245
2011	1,229	901	542	293	283	272	141	115	7	4	1	3,188
2012	1,307	903	478	367	265	215	178	131	22	4	3	3,285
2013	1,157	834	486	291	261	222	204	107	4	3	1	3,020
2014	1,272	905	513	327	284	278	208	115	32	3		3,258
2015	1,270	779	529	334	263	237	199	96	8	8	1	3,102
2016	1,434	807	473	376	235	236	222	99	14	15	2	3,273
2017	1,554	743	546	388	249	240	193	112	16	6	6	3,409
2018	1,604	633	584	355	270	273	251	135	10	26	5	3,481
2019	1,764	540	607	336	319	276	266	112	7	14	6	3,551
2020	2,031	536	455	342	254	211	196	112	6	19	3	3,557
2021	2,559	513	535	454	318	250	244	144	15	16	1	4,335
2022	2,519	460	639	426	396	330	287	136	21	23	4	4,382
2023	2,502	418	747	507	438	324	339	118	11	31	4	4,585
Grand Total	30,510	15,017	10,580	7,261	6,373	5,415	3,971	2,545	248	176	57	69,189

Table 4 includes the number of cases including violent charges grouped by AOC Offense Category and year of Case Filing Date. Cases with more than one Category of charge are counted separately for each category and only once in the Grand Total. Note that KRS 529.100³, which defines Human Trafficking offenses, went into effect in 2007.

Data Fields

Database	Data Variable	Description
CourtNet	JWAC Time Study Category	<p>A classification of Circuit Criminal cases according to the seriousness of the charged offenses as related to the required judicial time associated with different types of cases as used in the reporting of the Judicial Workload Assessment Committee (see citation on page 1). This report is limited to Circuit Criminal cases with at least one charge in one of the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felony – Homicide • Felony – Violent

³ KRS 529.100: Human trafficking. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=50288> Retrieved February 7, 2024.

TWENTY-YEAR FILING TRENDS OF VIOLENT FELONY CASES

CIRCUIT CRIMINAL CASES FILED CY 2004-2023 CONTAINING VIOLENT FELONY CHARGES STATEWIDE

Data Fields		
Database	Data Variable	Description
	Case Category	Cases in this report are limited to Circuit Criminal cases, which are cases in Circuit Court including at least one felony charge following an indictment by Grand Jury or Information.
	Case County	The county in which a case was filed.
	Case Filing Date	The date a case is filed in Circuit Court, which may be later than the date of the alleged offense. Case Filing Date is reported using Calendar Year (CY, January 1 st through December 31 st).
	AOC Offense Category	Similar criminal offenses grouped together for the purpose of statistical reporting.
	Cases	The number of unique cases. Each case may include one or more charges.
	Statistical Region	Based on county population size ranking , county trial court case filing counts, and judicial Circuit and District membership, along with socioeconomic commuting patterns and cultural ties, the 120 Kentucky counties have been delineated into eleven geographic regions as shown in Figure 3. Region is primarily based on Core Based Statistical Areas as calculated by the US Census Bureau

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