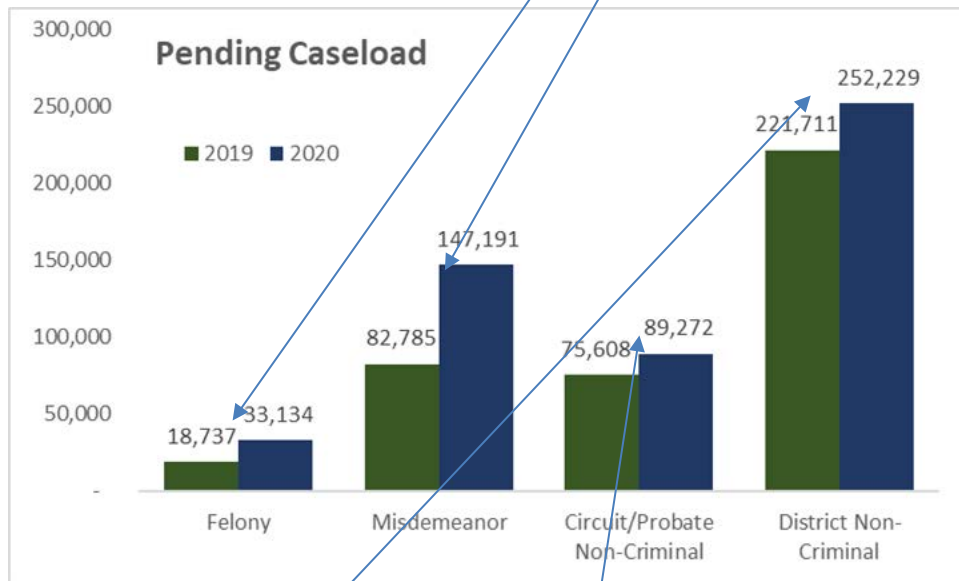


**Michigan Supreme Court
State Court Administrative Office
Trial Court Backlogs Backgrounder, March 2021**

Michigan Data

- Comparing the end of 2019 to the end of 2020, the number of pending felony and misdemeanor criminal dispositions both **grew by more than 75 percent**.



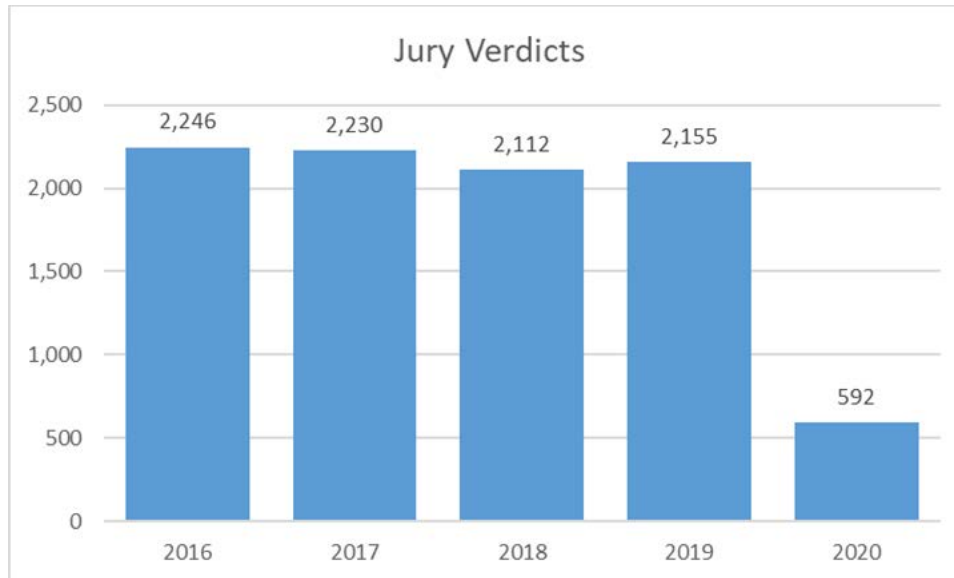
- Looking at the growth in pending non-criminal (civil, juvenile, domestic relations) cases, the increase is roughly 14 percent (district) to 18 percent (circuit/probate).
- Drilling into the criminal caseload numbers we see that the pending case backlog is of particular concern in Wayne County.

Percentage increase in pending **criminal** caseload from 12/31/2019 to 12/31/2020
(Largest counties in region listed. See regional map below.)

173%	Wayne County		Region 1
59%	Middle of Michigan	Saginaw, Midland +	Region 3
45%	Southwest Michigan	Kent, Kalamazoo +	Region 5
38%	UP & Northern Lower Peninsula	Grand Traverse +	Region 4
34%	Southeast Michigan	Macomb, Oakland, Lapeer, and St. Clair counties	Region 6
24%	South Central Michigan	Washtenaw, Livingston, Genesee, Ingham +	Region 2

- Of especially pressing concern is the **backlog of jury trials** (see chart on p. 2). In this case, the issue is not just the number of pending trials, but the impact of those pending trials on many thousands of pending criminal cases that would typically be resolved with a guilty plea. Until criminal jury trials resume, these cases remain in limbo.
- In 2020, looking at all case types, there were **only 592 jury verdicts compared to 2,155 jury verdicts** in 2019 (see chart on p. 2).





- Given the number of variables involved, it would be very difficult to estimate the backlog of criminal jury trials. For example, given that jury trials have yet to resume in most courts, there is a scenario in which the number of criminal jury trials over the next year would have to nearly double in order for the system to catch up. However, short of a specific estimate, we can safely say that resolving the backlog involves substantial additional investment in judges, personnel, and other related expenses.
- For example, in Wayne County alone, there are typically more than 400 criminal jury trials each year. In 2020, there were only 83 jury verdicts.
- Additional data by county available upon request.

National Overview – Backlog is Nationwide Problem

- Michigan is not alone in having to tackle a substantial backlog of pending cases as a result of the pandemic. A recent [report](#) by the Court Statistics Project (at the National Center for State Courts) analyzed a survey of 12 states nationwide and documented the problem is a nationwide concern that must be addressed.
- In criminal cases, the challenge is pending dispositions. The report notes that while experts do not predict a surge in criminal filings following the pandemic, “the large number of pending criminal and traffic cases at the end of 2020 presents a significant challenge for courts.”
- In civil cases, the challenge is an expected surge in the future: “The number of case filings in civil, domestic relations, and dependency is expected to surge and may pose a significant challenge to courts in 2021 and beyond. They note that in particular, increases are expected in debt, foreclosure, and eviction cases as a result of the pandemic. Moreover, as schools return to in-person classes, we would expect dependency case filings (related to abuse and neglect) to rise. And, as mobility returns following the pandemic, there is an expected increase in domestic relations cases.