

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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MAINE JUDICIAL BRANCH



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

MISSION: To administer justice by providing a safe, accessible, efficient, and impartial system of dispute resolution that serves the public interest, protects individual rights, and instills respect for the law.

MAINE STATE COURTS: AT A GLANCE



| | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| POPULATION OF MAINE..... | 1,405,012 |
| GEOGRAPHIC AREA..... | 30,843 sq. mi. |
| COURT LOCATIONS..... | 31 |

**Judicial Branch Operations..... \$79,790,115**

Personal Services..... \$60,098,544

All Other Operational Expenses..... \$19,691,571

Debt Service..... \$16,533,656

Guardians ad Litem and Psychological Exams..... \$9,320,013

Maine Civil Legal Services Fund..... \$1,300,000

FY24 EXPENDITURES TOTAL: \$106,943,784**% of State General Fund:..... 2.1%****FY24 REVENUE TOTAL: \$23,405,414**

Deposited to Maine's General Fund..... \$14,534,793

Deposited to Revenue Accounts..... \$8,870,621

**JUDICIAL OFFICERS & STAFF TOTAL: 628**

Staff totals are as of June 30, 2024.

JUDGES (Total)..... 67

District Court Judges..... 42

Superior Court Justices..... 18

Supreme Judicial Court Justices..... 7

FAMILY LAW MAGISTRATES..... 8*STAFF..... 553**

Administration..... 26

Clerks..... 254

Court Operations..... 14

Court Reporters/Tech Asst..... 15

Executive Assistants..... 2

Finance, HR, Facilities..... 26

Information Technology..... 30

Judicial Admins..... 12

Law Clerks..... 32

Security..... 116

Service Center..... 26

Magistrates: one-third General Fund, two-thirds federally funded.*FY24 CASES FILED TOTAL: 132,651**

Violations Bureau..... 54,193

Unified Criminal Docket..... 42,168

District Court..... 33,031

Superior Court..... 2,639

Supreme Judicial Court..... 620

2024 in Review

The Move Toward a Right-Sized Court System Continues

In 2024 the Judicial Branch continued to focus on our plan to right-size the Branch by filling the new positions created by the Legislature and by implementing Maine eCourts, Maine's electronic court case management and eFiling system.

From July 2023 through the end of 2024, the Judicial Branch hired additional clerks, deputy marshals, and courtroom technology assistants to strengthen the court system and keep our dockets moving. Although job retention remains a challenge, we have seen a marked improvement in retention rates this year.

Status of the Backlog

Judges and staff worked hard to reduce the case backlog precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The case backlog refers to the number of pending cases above the 2019 baseline average. The charts inside this report provide additional information about the backlog.

One obstacle to reducing the backlog of criminal and family cases is the shortage of attorneys available to take court-appointed cases. Fewer available defense attorneys have strained the courts' ability to appoint counsel in these cases in a timely manner. Although we are working with the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services (MCPDS) to provide regular lists of cases in which attorneys are needed, the shrinking list of attorneys has made it harder to reduce the backlog. Courts cannot hear the merits of these cases unless the parties have counsel. Chief Justice Stanfill has championed efforts to recruit more MCPDS rostered attorneys with the Maine Bar and will continue to do so.

Maine eCourts and eFiling Moves Forward

Also in 2024, the Judicial Branch continued to deploy Maine eCourts for all civil case types in Rumford, Farmington, and South Paris courts, followed by Protection from Abuse and Harassment cases in all Region 3 courts and Bangor.

Planning for the implementation of criminal and juvenile case types in Region 3 began in 2024. We expect to begin deploying these case types in 2025.

Continued on next page

THE COURTS OF MAINE

SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT



From Left to Right: Justice Wayne R. Douglas, Justice Catherine R. Connors, Justice Andrew M. Mead, Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill, Justice Andrew M. Horton, and Justice Rick E. Lawrence

CHIEF JUSTICE & TRIAL CHIEFS



From Left to Right: Deputy Chief Judge of the District Court Eric Walker, Chief Judge of the District Court Brent Davis, Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court Valerie Stanfill, and Chief Justice of the Superior Court Robert Mullen

STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR



Amy A. Quinlan, Esq.

Year in Review — Continued

Civics Outreach with Maine Schools

The Judicial Branch has continued its outreach efforts with Maine schools to help students learn how justice is administered, and to make them aware of the various career opportunities that exist within the Judicial Branch. The Maine Supreme Judicial Court heard oral arguments at three Maine high schools in October 2024, thereby giving students a chance to witness the appellate process firsthand. Also, high school students from around the state visited courts in Portland, Augusta and Bangor to watch trial court proceedings, tour a courthouse, and visit with a judge or justice about how a court docket is administered. The Judicial Branch continues to welcome school and community groups into our courthouses.

TOTAL FY24 COURT CASE FILINGS: 132,031

CRIMINAL FILINGS: 38,812

| | |
|--|--------|
| Unified Criminal Docket (UCD) | 35,946 |
| Probation Revocations (UCD)..... | 2,803 |
| Superior Court Probation Revocations | 63 |

DISTRICT COURT FAMILY DIVISION: 17,302

| | |
|--|-------|
| Protection from Abuse | 5,465 |
| Divorce | 4,207 |
| Family Matters Post-Judgment | 3,337 |
| Parental Rights & Responsibilities | 1,363 |
| Juvenile | 1,129 |
| Child Protection..... | 928 |
| Adoptions | 438 |
| Other Family Matters | 102 |
| Guardianships | 110 |
| Foreign Judgments | 92 |
| Emancipations..... | 83 |
| Grandparents' Rights | 38 |
| Name Changes | 10 |

CIVIL FILINGS: 14,248

| | <u>SUPERIOR</u> | <u>DISTRICT</u> |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| FEDs (Evictions) | 4,843 | |
| Small Claims | 2,267 | |
| Money Judgments | 612 | |
| Other Civil | 1,165 | 643 |
| Tort | 757 | 107 |
| Contract | 342 | 2,760 |
| Foreclosure | 312 | 440 |
| TOTAL(S): | 2,576 | 11,672 |

OTHER COURT ACTIONS: 7,476

| | |
|--|-------|
| Civil Violations (UCD) | 3,419 |
| Protection from Harassment (District Court)..... | 2,838 |
| Mental Health (District Court) | 1,219 |

SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT

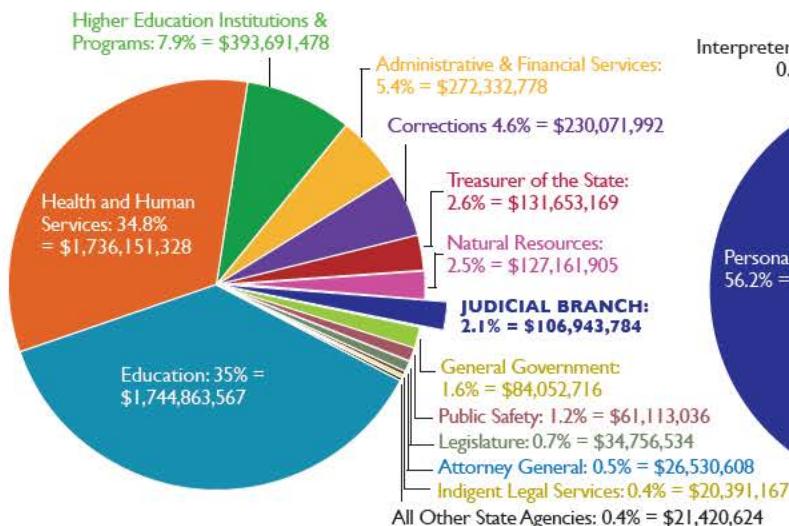
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|------------------------------|-----|
| Supreme Judicial Court | 620 |
|------------------------------|-----|

VIOLATIONS BUREAU

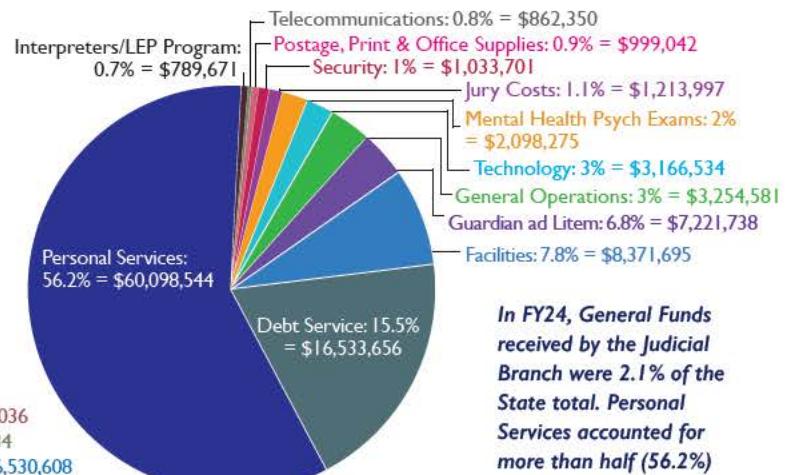
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|---------------------------|--------|
| Traffic Infractions | 54,193 |
|---------------------------|--------|

FISCAL INFORMATION

GENERAL FUND AND JUDICIAL BRANCH EXPENDITURES



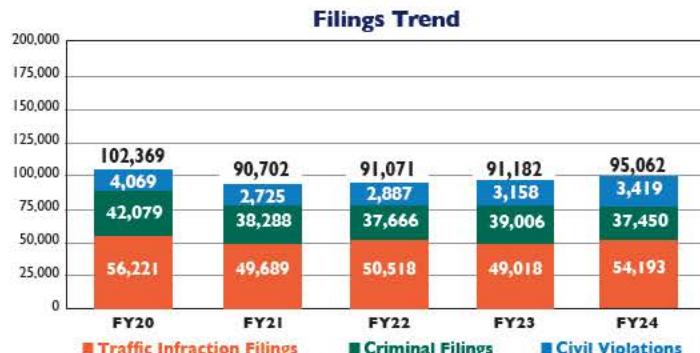
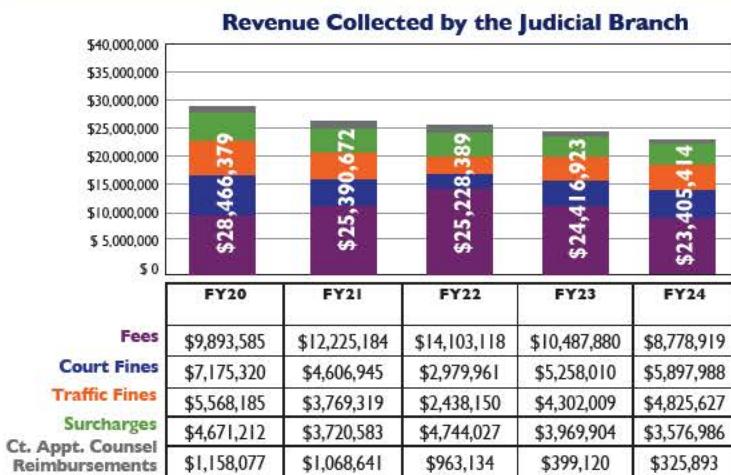
STATEWIDE GENERAL FUND
FY24 EXPENDITURES
Total: \$4,980,442,401



JUDICIAL BRANCH GENERAL FUND
FY24 EXPENDITURES
Total: \$106,943,784

In FY24, General Funds received by the Judicial Branch were 2.1% of the State total. Personal Services accounted for more than half (56.2%) of all Judicial Branch expenditures. The total includes 1.3M that is passed through to Civil Legal Services. This pass through is not reflected in the expenditures pie chart.

FY24 REVENUE



REVENUE DISTRIBUTED BY THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

FY24 Revenue Distribution
Total: \$23,405,414

Deposited to Maine's General Fund.....\$14,534,793
Deposited to Dedicated Revenue Accounts.....\$8,870,621

Revenue collected by the Judicial Branch is deposited into the State's General Fund and to other State-dedicated accounts as required by Maine Statutes.



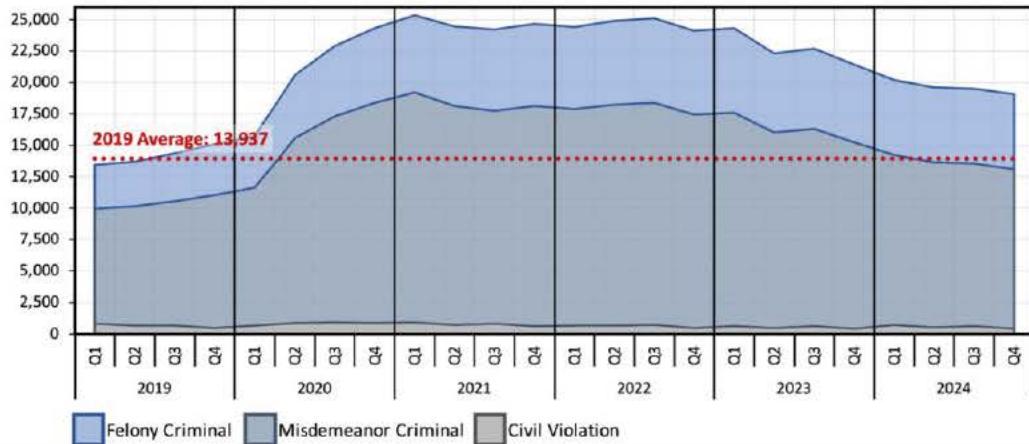
PENDING CASE BACKLOG

The charts on this page provide a high-level summary of the changes to the Judicial Branch's pending caseload, highlighting both the progress that has been made and the persistence of the backlog in some areas. The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruption to the daily functioning of Maine courts. The courts adopted the CDC guidelines regarding personal contact, which limited the number of in-person proceedings, especially jury trials, that the courts could safely conduct during the pandemic. As the Judicial Branch adapted to the challenges of operating in the pandemic and adopted technology to facilitate remote hearings, it slowly regained capacity to hear all case types. However, significant backlogs of pending cases remain in the UCD and family matters docket.

While there are numerous contributing factors to the pending case backlog that can't be captured in this overview, at least some of the backlog in UCD and family matters cases is attributable to a shortage of lawyers handling criminal, juvenile, and protective custody court-appointed work.

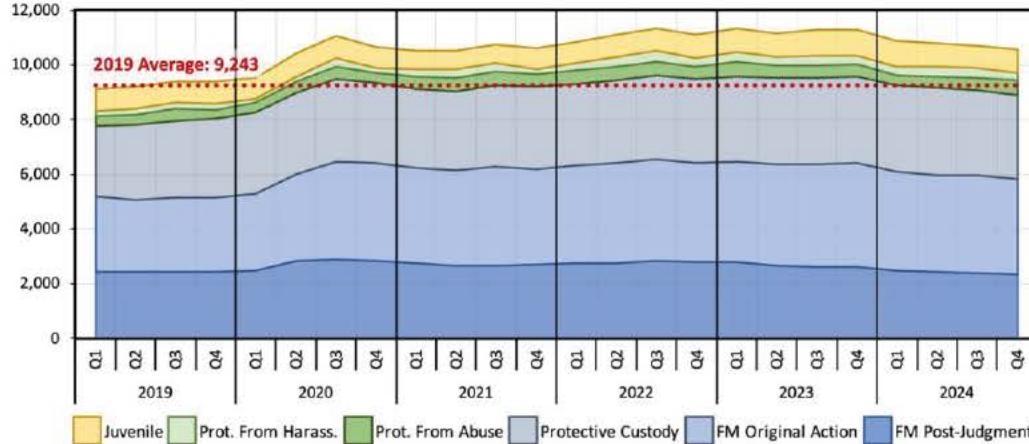
The courts have made progress in addressing the backlog of cases in civil matters, as the charts below show.

PENDING UNIFIED CRIMINAL DOCKET CASES 2019 - 2024



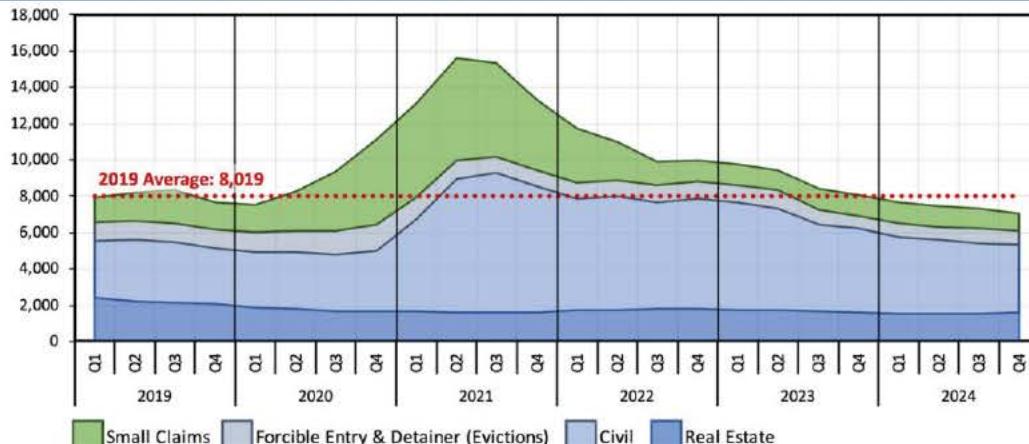
| | Pending Cases at End of Quarter | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|------|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| 2019 | 13,457 | 13,706 | 14,387 | 15,075 | |
| 2020 | 15,720 | 20,600 | 22,907 | 24,331 | |
| 2021 | 25,375 | 24,493 | 24,239 | 24,690 | |
| 2022 | 24,429 | 24,900 | 25,087 | 24,108 | |
| 2023 | 24,303 | 22,329 | 22,716 | 21,409 | |
| 2024 | 20,198 | 19,605 | 19,498 | 19,070 | |

PENDING FAMILY MATTERS CASES 2019 - 2024



| | Pending Cases at End of Quarter | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|------|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| 2019 | 9,138 | 9,202 | 9,417 | 9,387 | |
| 2020 | 9,546 | 10,441 | 11,081 | 10,662 | |
| 2021 | 10,536 | 10,505 | 10,732 | 10,602 | |
| 2022 | 10,840 | 11,109 | 11,337 | 11,130 | |
| 2023 | 11,341 | 11,149 | 11,273 | 11,299 | |
| 2024 | 10,878 | 10,782 | 10,715 | 10,561 | |

PENDING CIVIL CASES 2019 - 2024



| | Pending Cases at End of Quarter | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|------|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| 2019 | 7,910 | 8,207 | 8,318 | 7,667 | |
| 2020 | 7,502 | 8,300 | 9,388 | 11,155 | |
| 2021 | 13,125 | 15,611 | 15,365 | 13,313 | |
| 2022 | 11,733 | 11,005 | 9,914 | 9,957 | |
| 2023 | 9,747 | 9,395 | 8,369 | 8,082 | |
| 2024 | 7,656 | 7,449 | 7,304 | 7,064 | |

COURTHOUSE FACILITIES

Planning is Underway for New Courthouse Facilities

In 2024, the Maine Legislature granted authority to the Judicial Branch to use bond proceeds in the amount of \$205M issued by the Maine Governmental Facilities Authority (MGFA) to build or expand three courthouses in Hancock, Somerset, and Androscoggin counties. The courthouse facilities presently serving these counties are out of date. They do not have adequate room and infrastructure to accommodate modern technology, modern security features, and additional courtrooms needed to serve their communities. Upon completion of each project, court services will be moved from the current location into each new facility, consolidating operations of the two trial courts for each county.

Hancock Judicial Center (HJC)

The Hancock Judicial Center is a new courthouse construction project. It will be built in Ellsworth and will house both the Superior Court and the District Court for Hancock County, and a court clerk's office for both courts. The HJC will be fully ADA compliant, with ample room for public parking, more courtrooms and conference rooms, and other features to provide for the comfort and safety of the public. The Judicial Branch expects to break ground on the project in the summer of 2026.



The Hancock County Courthouse will be returned to the County when a new courthouse is built.

Somerset Judicial Center (SJC)

The Judicial Branch will add onto the current building housing the Skowhegan District Court to create the SJC. The expansion will include jury trial courtrooms, conference rooms, enhanced safety and technology features, and more space for the clerk's office. The SJC will be fully ADA compliant. The Judicial Branch expects to break ground on this facility in the summer of 2026.



An addition will expand and consolidate the Skowhegan District Court and Somerset County Superior Court into one building.

Androscoggin Judicial Center (AJC)

The Judicial Branch expects to begin work on the new Androscoggin Judicial Center, which will house both the Lewiston District Court and Androscoggin Superior Court, in the summer of 2027. The AJC will be located on Lisbon Street in Lewiston, comprising the current location of the District Court and the building adjacent to it (the former Depositors Trust/KeyBank building). The project will involve renovating the new building and connecting it to the current District Court building. The new facility will have both jury and non-jury courtrooms, additional conference room and hearing room space, and be fully equipped with updated safety and technology features. As with the other projects, the AJC will be fully ADA compliant.



Lewiston District Court will be expanded to allow for the consolidation with the Androscoggin County Superior Court into one courthouse facility.



State Court Administrator Amy Quinlan and Facilities Director Jeremy Gray discuss the facilities projects before the Legislature.



Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill and State Court Administrator Amy Quinlan meet with the public regarding the projects.

COURT REGIONS AND CASES FILED

REGION 5

CASE TOTAL 11,818
REGIONAL POPULATION 172,798
COURT LOCATIONS 5

PENOBCOT 3,397 sq. miles/pop. 155,312

Bangor Superior 245
 Penobscot UCD 5,932
 Bangor District 3,200
 Newport District 774
 Lincoln/Millinocket District 547

PISCATAQUIS 3,961 sq. miles/pop. 17,486

Dover-Foxcroft Superior 24
 Piscataquis UCD 679
 Dover-Foxcroft District 417

REGION 4

CASE TOTAL 11,595
REGIONAL POPULATION 178,561
COURT LOCATIONS 3

SOMERSET 3,924 sq. miles/pop. 51,302

Skowhegan Superior 63
 Somerset UCD 2,016
 Skowhegan District 1,476

KENNEBEC 868 sq. miles/pop. 127,259

Augusta Superior 318
 Kennebec UCD 3,698
 Augusta District 2,371
 Waterville District 1,653

REGION 3

CASE TOTAL 12,804
REGIONAL POPULATION 204,498
COURT LOCATIONS 5

FRANKLIN 1,697 sq. miles/pop. 30,828

Farmington Superior 37
 Franklin UCD 1,070
 Farmington District 684

OXFORD 2,077 sq. miles/pop. 59,905

South Paris Superior 114
 Oxford UCD 1,847
 South Paris District 687
 Rumford District 537

ANDROSCOGGIN 468 sq. miles/pop. 113,765

Auburn Superior 227
 Androscoggin UCD 4,017
 Lewiston District 3,584

REGION 2

CASE TOTAL 13,137
REGIONAL POPULATION 310,230
COURT LOCATIONS 2

CUMBERLAND 835 sq. miles/pop. 310,230

Portland Superior 669
 Cumberland UCD 7,389
 Portland District 4,228
 Bridgton District 851

REGION 1

CASE TOTAL 11,324
REGIONAL POPULATION 218,586
COURT LOCATIONS 1

YORK 991 sq. miles/pop. 218,586

Biddeford Superior 340
 York UCD 6,347
 Biddeford District 4,637

CASE TOTAL 4,723

REGIONAL POPULATION 67,351
COURT LOCATIONS 5

AROOSTOOK 6,671 sq. miles/pop. 67,351

Caribou/Houlton Superior 160
 Aroostook UCD 2,805
 Caribou District 344
 Presque Isle District 608
 Houlton District 484
 Fort Kent/Madawaska District 322

REGION 7

CASE TOTAL 4,466
REGIONAL POPULATION 88,081
COURT LOCATIONS 3

HANCOCK 1,587 sq. miles/pop. 56,526

Ellsworth Superior 90
 Hancock UCD 1,458
 Ellsworth District 1,129

WASHINGTON 2,563 sq. miles/pop. 31,555

Machias Superior 44
 Washington UCD 1,040
 Machias District 433
 Calais District 272

REGION 6

CASE TOTAL 7,971
REGIONAL POPULATION 155,617
COURT LOCATIONS 5

WALDO 730 sq. miles/pop. 40,620

Belfast Superior 98
 Waldo UCD 985
 Belfast District 886

KNOX 365 sq. miles/pop. 40,977

Rockland Superior 80
 Knox UCD 1,020
 Rockland District 1,005

LINCOLN 456 sq. miles/pop. 36,507

Wiscasset Superior 85
 Lincoln UCD 1,013
 Wiscasset District 626

SAGADAHOC 254 sq. miles/pop. 37,513

Bath Superior 45
 Sagadahoc UCD 852
 West Bath District 1,276

TRAFFIC INFRACTIONS

Total: 54,193



KEY

- District Court
- Superior Court
- ▲ District and Superior in the same city/town
- ★ District and Superior Court occupy the same building

Counties grouped together by color are part of a single court **REGION**, where resources and scheduling are coordinated.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more information about the Courts

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS**
PO Box 4820
Portland, ME 04112-4820
(207) 822-0792 711 (Maine Relay)

Visit the website: courts.maine.gov
or scan the QR code

