

Colorado Judicial Branch

Cases and Parties without Attorney Representation in Civil Cases

Fiscal Year 2024



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Cases and Parties without Attorney Representation in Civil Cases FY2024

Providing appropriate resources for pro se parties in the courts is important both as an access to justice issue for citizens and for the efficient operation of courts across the state.

The following tables identify the volume of parties and cases that come before the court without attorney representation. All of these measures have been limited on the time period the case was initially filed; in this sample, the time period is fiscal year 2024 (July 2023 through June 2024). There are several similar, but distinct ways to measure this activity.

Case Level Pro Se Rate: The first measure calculates the number of cases in which no attorney has entered an appearance on the case- meaning neither side has representation. This measure is significant because it illustrates the number of cases in which it is possible no one involved in the case has had experience with the courts or the legal system.

Party Level Pro Se Rate: The second measure calculates the number of parties without representation involved in court cases. This measure allows us to more fully illustrate the number of litigants who come into the court without representation. This measure can also provide further direction for court policy and resources as it can demonstrate which side of a case has representation in various case types.

Caveats and limitations: These measures are based on the moment in time the data was extracted from the court's database. The attorney representation numbers will change over time. A party that did not have an attorney on the day the data was extracted may get an attorney in the future. At the same time, a person who had an attorney at the beginning of their case may choose to proceed without an attorney in the future. Due to the way the data must be extracted, once an attorney has entered an appearance for a party, that party and case will still be measured as having an attorney. This data was extracted in Sep 6, 2024.

We have calculated these measures in three civil case classes: domestic relations, county civil and district civil. These three case classes are highlighted due to the higher volume of pro se litigant participation historically. However, it is important to note that these three case classes represent only a fraction of the cases filed in Colorado in Fiscal Year 2024. In fact, the cases included in this analysis (187,881) account for only 33% of the total number of cases filed in Fiscal Year 2024 (573,834). Therefore this report does not represent all pro se litigant activity in the State of Colorado, but rather offers a glimpse into pro se activity in a few key areas. More detailed analysis follows.

This report does not include Denver County Court filings.

Domestic Relations Cases Filed in FY2024

Judicial District	Total Cases	Total Cases without Attorney	Case Level Pro Se Rate	Total Parties	Total Parties without Attorney	Party Level Pro Se Rate
1	2,497	1,553	62%	5,083	3,586	71%
2	3,880	2,769	71%	8,022	6,430	80%
3	144	107	74%	305	252	83%
4	5,443	3,642	67%	11,054	8,304	75%
5	467	280	60%	953	662	69%
6	319	211	66%	640	469	73%
7	661	482	73%	1,350	1,076	80%
8	1,698	1,110	65%	3,471	2,541	73%
9	485	287	59%	1,007	728	72%
10	1,063	761	72%	2,251	1,801	80%
11	493	368	75%	1,009	801	79%
12	362	262	72%	737	588	80%
13	456	331	73%	938	756	81%
14	272	175	64%	551	394	72%
15	120	89	74%	243	190	78%
16	230	187	81%	490	433	88%
17	3,240	2,259	70%	6,626	5,171	78%
18	4,899	3,016	62%	9,963	7,065	71%
19	2,027	1,296	64%	4,198	3,092	74%
20	1,197	763	64%	2,429	1,747	72%
21	958	637	66%	2,010	1,524	76%
22	168	140	83%	336	293	87%
Total	31,079	20,725	67%	63,666	47,903	75%

Domestic Relations cases include dissolutions of marriage and civil unions, allocation of parental responsibility, administrative support orders, marriage invalidity, as well as legal separation. The parties included in this measure were petitioner, co-petitioner, and respondent. As this table demonstrates, 67% of the domestic relations cases filed in fiscal year 2024 had no attorney on the case, meaning that every party involved was pro se. However, within that group of cases filed, there were 63,666 parties and of those parties, 75% did not have representation when the data was extracted. When this data was broken out by specific case types, the party pro se rate was fairly consistent with the overall rate.

District Civil Cases Filed in FY2024

Judicial District	Total Cases	Total Cases without Attorney	Case Level Pro Se Rate	Total Parties	Total Parties without Attorney	Party Level Pro Se Rate
1	1,633	158	10%	5,045	1,808	36%
2	4,437	764	17%	13,353	5,329	40%
3	77	9	12%	239	121	51%
4	2,545	359	14%	7,327	2,745	37%
5	496	31	6%	2,308	1,231	53%
6	254	33	13%	738	298	40%
7	333	47	14%	1,167	462	40%
8	1,019	72	7%	3,188	1,158	36%
9	330	33	10%	1,045	336	32%
10	475	38	8%	1,338	515	38%
11	318	42	13%	1,070	521	49%
12	177	30	17%	589	290	49%
13	244	42	17%	716	287	40%
14	262	30	11%	856	307	36%
15	62	19	31%	176	75	43%
16	108	11	10%	317	144	45%
17	2,025	121	6%	5,839	2,201	38%
18	3,671	368	10%	10,630	3,756	35%
19	896	57	6%	2,915	1,104	38%
20	1,346	73	5%	8,668	1,422	16%
21	408	56	14%	1,125	422	38%
22	61	8	13%	178	70	39%
Total	21,177	2,401	11%	68,827	24,602	36%

In this case class both tax liens (distrainment warrants) and residential foreclosures (Rule 120s) have been excluded from the measure. Tax lien cases are filed administratively with no attorney, and have experienced volatile filing volumes in the past several years, skewing the pro se numbers in this category. Similarly, foreclosure cases almost always have an attorney representing the filing party, which is generally a bank, while the responding party (the homeowner) rarely does. The parties included in these cases were plaintiff/petitioner (including 3rd, 4th, 5th party plaintiffs), respondent/defendant (including 3rd, 4th, 5th party defendants) and intervenors and interpleaders (included as filing parties).

This table demonstrates that in 11% of cases no party has an attorney. More dramatically, the table shows that of the 68,827 parties involved in these cases, 36% were not represented when the data was extracted.

County Civil Cases Filed in FY2024

Judicial District	Total Cases	Total Cases without Attorney	Case Level Pro Se Rate	Total Parties	Total Parties without Attorney	Party Level Pro Se Rate
1	13,005	1,653	13%	28,385	16,672	59%
3	482	140	29%	1,020	656	64%
4	22,752	4,101	18%	49,113	29,413	60%
5	1,101	316	29%	2,390	1,517	63%
6	1,194	483	40%	2,510	1,741	69%
7	2,057	487	24%	4,366	2,705	62%
8	7,231	1,291	18%	15,612	9,370	60%
9	1,639	363	22%	3,590	2,232	62%
10	5,794	1,225	21%	12,830	7,696	60%
11	1,786	509	28%	3,792	2,440	64%
12	1,416	491	35%	2,954	1,977	67%
13	1,693	410	24%	3,567	2,238	63%
14	677	216	32%	1,478	980	66%
15	441	195	44%	940	676	72%
16	852	340	40%	1,850	1,320	71%
17	22,484	2,314	10%	49,412	28,714	58%
18	30,651	3,341	11%	66,986	38,836	58%
19	9,981	1,341	13%	21,664	12,764	59%
20	5,118	1,135	22%	10,754	6,493	60%
21	4,636	1,379	30%	9,881	6,504	66%
22	635	258	41%	1,380	965	70%
Total	135,625	21,988	16%	294,474	175,909	60%

County Court civil cases are made up primarily of collection cases (“money”). In addition, county court civil cases include eviction cases (“forcible entry and detainer”), as well as restraining order and name change cases. Parties included in this measure were plaintiffs, petitioners, defendants and respondents. While only 16% of county civil cases had no attorney, 60% of parties had no representation at the time the data was extracted. Denver County Court is not included in this report.

Pro Se Rate by Party Type - Cases Filed in FY2024

Filing Parties - Petitioner, Co-Petitioner, Plaintiff (including 3rd, 4th, 5th), Intervenors and Interpleaders

Case Class	Total Parties	Total Parties with Attorney	Total Parties without Attorney	Party Level Pro Se Rate
Domestic Relations	44,710	11,166	33,544	75%
District Civil	29,540	25,566	3,974	13%
County Civil	140,181	113,142	27,039	19%
Total	214,431	149,874	64,557	30%

Responding Parties - Defendant, Respondent (including 3rd, 4th, 5th)

Case Class	Total Parties	Total Parties with Attorney	Total Parties without Attorney	Party Level Pro Se Rate
Domestic Relations	19,630	5,150	14,480	74%
District Civil	39,309	18,663	20,646	53%
County Civil	154,389	5,428	148,961	96%
Total	213,328	29,241	184,087	86%

What these two tables demonstrate is while the total number of parties in county civil without attorneys is 60%, the total number of responding parties in the case without representation is 96%. This gives us a more accurate picture of the number of cases in which one party is represented, most often the filing party, while the other is not. At the same time, it is interesting to note in domestic relations cases, the pro se party rate is similar for both filing and responding parties.

As stated previously, the value of this analysis is in helping the courts to better anticipate and serve the needs of those seeking the services of the courts, regardless of whether they are represented by an attorney or not. For further information or questions about this data, please contact courtdatarequests@judicial.state.co.us.