



## Jury Trials

### Eligibility

In Iowa, residents are selected at random for jury service from current voter registration lists and current motor vehicle operator lists in the area served by the court. To serve or be considered for jury service, a person must meet the following minimum criteria:

- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Be a citizen of the United States.
- Be able to understand the English language in a written, spoken, or manually signed mode.
- Be able to receive and evaluate information such that the person is capable of rendering satisfactory juror service.

### Types of Juries

There are two types of juries in Iowa. The first is a grand jury. This jury consists of a group of seven citizens convened for the purpose of determining whether there is sufficient evidence for a person who is accused of a crime to be brought to trial, as opposed to the county attorney filing a criminal charge. A grand jury may meet at times specified by order of a District Court Judge, at the request of the County Attorney, or at the request of the majority of the grand jurors. The County Attorney is responsible for presenting evidence to the grand jury. Grand jury proceedings are closed to the public.

A petit jury acts as the fact finder when a party in a civil case or a defendant in a criminal case has requested a jury. In criminal trials, 12 jurors sit on a jury. In civil trials, eight jurors comprise the jury. If a jury has not been requested, the judge acts as the fact finder.

### Reimbursement

Reimbursement for both grand and petit jurors includes pay, mileage, and parking. A grand juror and a petit juror in all courts receive \$30 per day for each day of service or attendance, including the selection process. If the jury service exceeds seven days, then the compensation rate is \$50 per day. A grand juror and a petit juror in all courts also receive reimbursement for mileage expenses at a rate set by the Supreme Court for each mile traveled (currently \$0.45) each day to and from the residence of the juror to the place of service or attendance and receive reimbursement for actual costs of parking. While employers are not required to pay the salaries of employees on jury duty, many do so in recognition of the importance of jury service.

The county pays all costs and expenses incurred by a grand jury. Costs and expenses for a petit jury are paid from the [Jury and Witness Fee Revolving Fund](#). Money is transferred from a General Fund appropriation to the Judicial Branch and deposited in the Jury and Witness Revolving Account. Clerks of Court request money on an as-needed basis to pay jury and witness expenditures.

### Jury Trial Statistics

**Chart 1** (on the following page) shows the number of jury trials in Iowa District Court from 1993 through 2012. Prior to 2009, "jury trial" was defined as any disposed case in which a jury had been selected (even if the case settled or a defendant pleaded guilty before a witness was sworn in). In 2009, "jury trial" was redefined to capture only cases with a jury verdict entered.

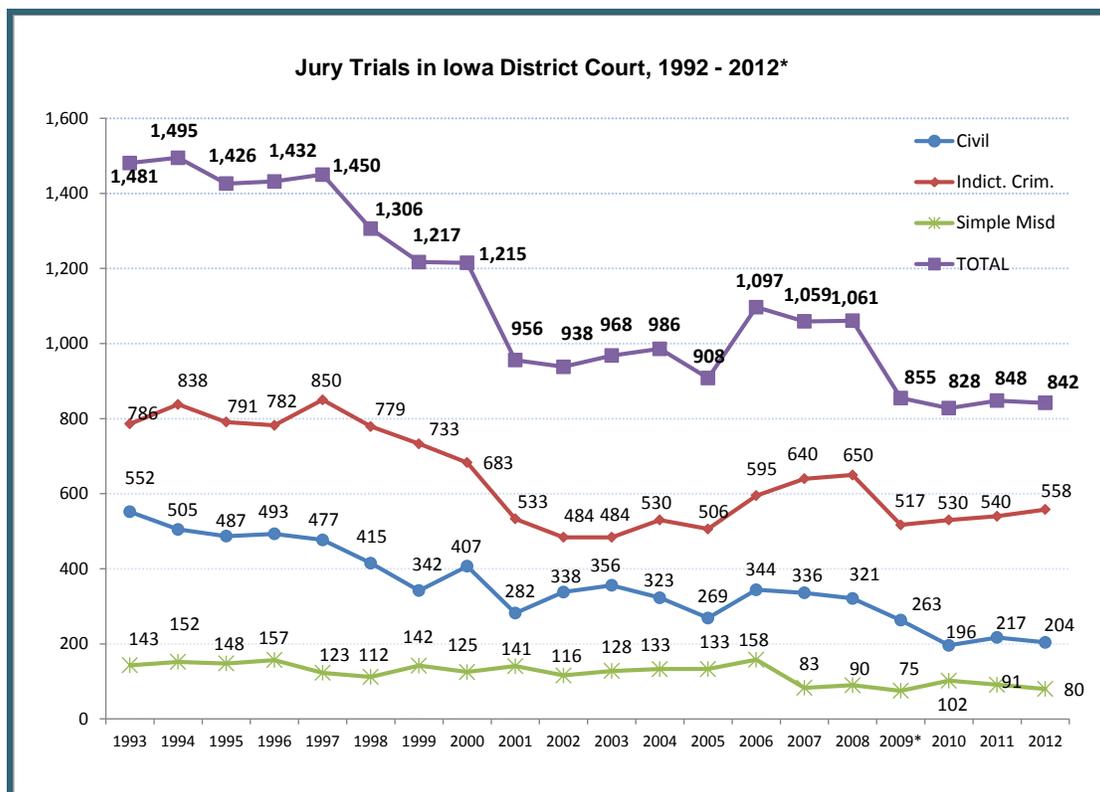
### More Information

Iowa Judicial Branch: <http://www.iowacourts.gov/>

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/index.aspx>

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Chart 1



**Decline in Jury Trials**

According to **Chart 1**, jury trials peaked in 1994. According to the Judicial Branch, in the past the term “jury trial” was used for any case in which the jury was empanelled or sworn in, even if the case was settled or the defendant pleaded guilty before the jury was allowed to enter a verdict. This is not a disposition type but rather a case event and may have been coded in the past as a settlement (civil case) or a guilty plea (criminal case).

Jury trials began to decline noticeably from 1997 to 1998. This decline coincides with statewide implementation of the Iowa Court Information System (ICIS). Cases again declined from 2000 to 2001. This decline coincides with statewide implementation of automated caseload statistics reports. The disposition code “BTJR” (by trial to jury) was used for cases in which a jury verdict was entered rather than for any time a jury was empanelled. In 2006, the Judicial Branch instructed clerks to check statistics related to the number of jury trials reported in the automated reports. The manual check in each county increased the number of jury trials (juries empanelled) by 20.0-30.0% compared to the number reported in the automated statistics reports. In 2009, due to budget cuts, the Judicial Branch redefined the “BTJR” disposition code to mean “jury verdict entered” rather than “case disposed after a jury was empanelled.” There is a large drop in cases from 2008 to 2009 and the Judicial Branch has determined that this drop is entirely due to the change in how the BTJR disposition type was defined.

In summary, some of the decline in the number of jury trials is due to automation and the lack of standardization in using the BTJR disposition code for all cases that had a jury empanelled. Since 2009, the lower jury trial numbers are due to the way the Judicial Branch redefined “jury trial” to mean “jury verdict entered.”

The [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC) has also been tracking and documenting a decline in jury trials around the country so the resulting decline in Iowa jury trials may not be entirely due to the statistical and data entry issues. The Court Statistics Project showed the number of criminal juries in state courts dropped 15.0% in 23 states, and civil juries were down 32.0% in 22 states.<sup>1</sup>

**Related Statutes**

Iowa Code sections [602.1302](#) and [602.1303](#)

Iowa Code chapter [607A](#)

<sup>1</sup> [Center Court](#), Vol. 8, No. 1 Winter 2005, Publication of the NCSC