

# Data speak

A look at the District Courts'  
performance during the  
pandemic

**SOUTH  
ZONE**

November 2022

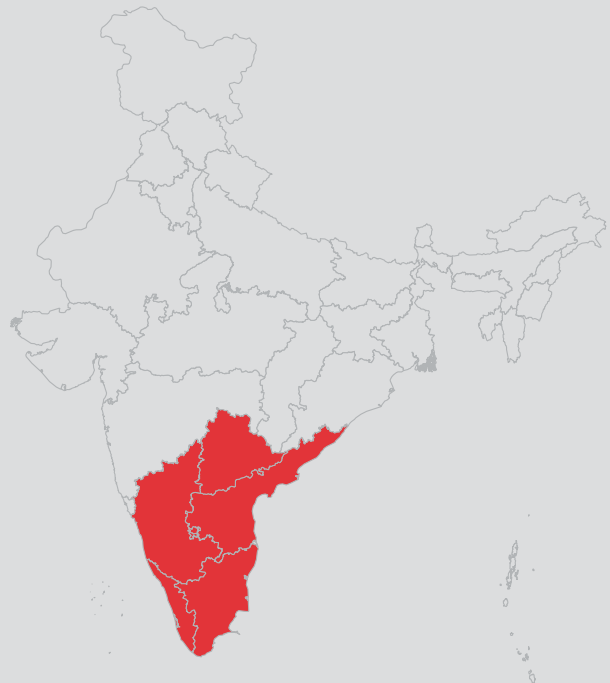


# How did the Courts function during the pandemic?

The data presented in this part of the report concerns the District Courts under the jurisdiction of:

1. The High Court of Andhra Pradesh,
2. The High Court of Karnataka,
3. The High Court of Kerala,
4. The High Court of Judicature at Madras, and
5. The High Court of Telangana

The above jurisdictions have been clubbed and collectively referred to as the 'South Zone'. The following sections contain a detailed analysis of case data from District Courts in the South Zone.



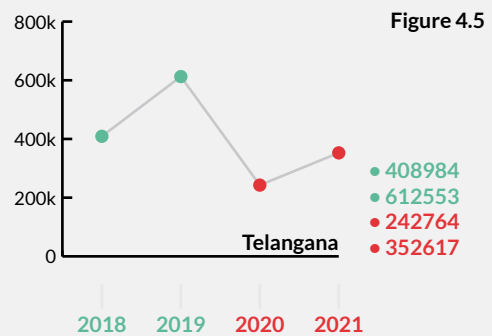
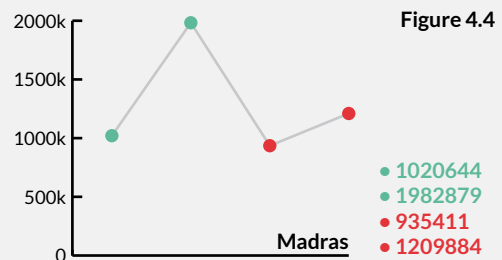
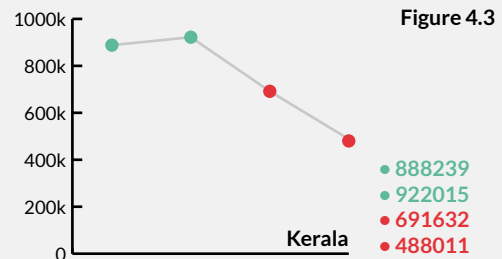
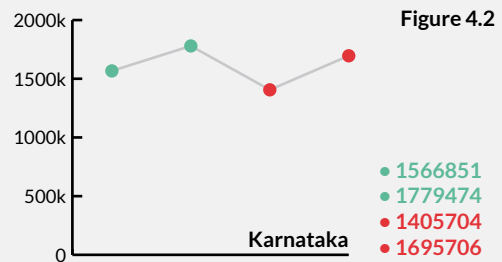
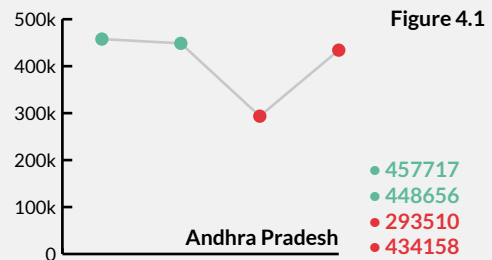
# I

## Case-filing trends during the pandemic

In this section, we look at the yearly filings of cases in the District Courts across the jurisdiction of different High Courts in the South Zone, between 2018 and 2021. Through this analysis, the report aims to present the difference in the filing of cases across all categories before and during the pandemic period.

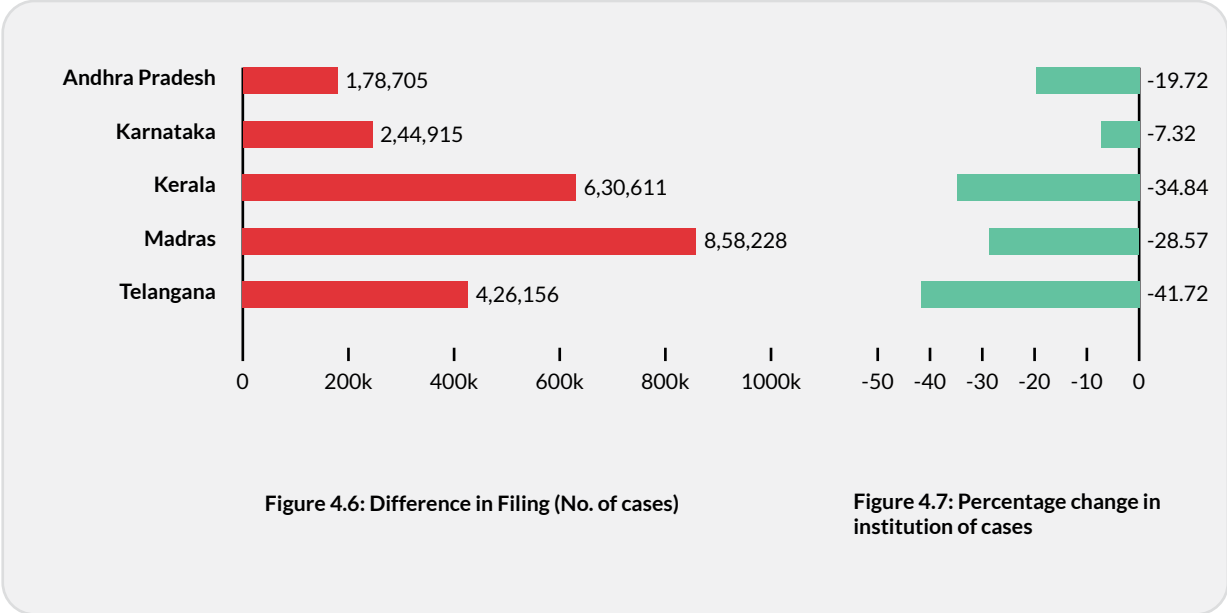
Across the South Zone, District Courts under each High Court jurisdiction saw a drastic drop at the onset of the pandemic in the number of cases instituted. Even though attempts had been made to enable digital filing and virtual functioning of the courts through 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect the institution of cases in most District Courts even a year later, in the second year of the pandemic. However, a recovery can be seen in 2021 for most District Courts in the South Zone, especially the District Courts under the High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, which only saw a total decrease of 1,78,705 and 2,44,915 cases, respectively. District Courts in Andhra Pradesh saw the most improvement from 2020 to 2021 with case filings increasing by 47.92%.

On the other hand, the filings before the District Courts under the High Court of Kerala continued to be on a downward trend. The District Courts saw an even lower number of case filings in 2021 at 4,88,011 compared to the previous year when 6,91,632 cases were filed.



Trend of cases filed before the District Courts between 2018-2021

The South Zone saw a decline of 19,12,459 in case filings during the pandemic period as compared to the previous two years. The following table shows the difference between the number of filings in 2020-2021 vis-a-vis 2018-2019.



Further analysis indicates that the District Courts under the High Court of Judicature at Madras saw a massive increase in case filings from 2018 to 2019 during the pre-pandemic period. Hence, despite the case filings improving from 2020 to 2021 by 29.34%, and the number of cases instituted in 2021 also being higher than 2018, the average number of cases instituted during the pandemic years remained 28.57% lower than the pre-pandemic period. District Courts under the High Court of Telangana were the worst affected with 41.72% reduction in case filings in the pandemic years.

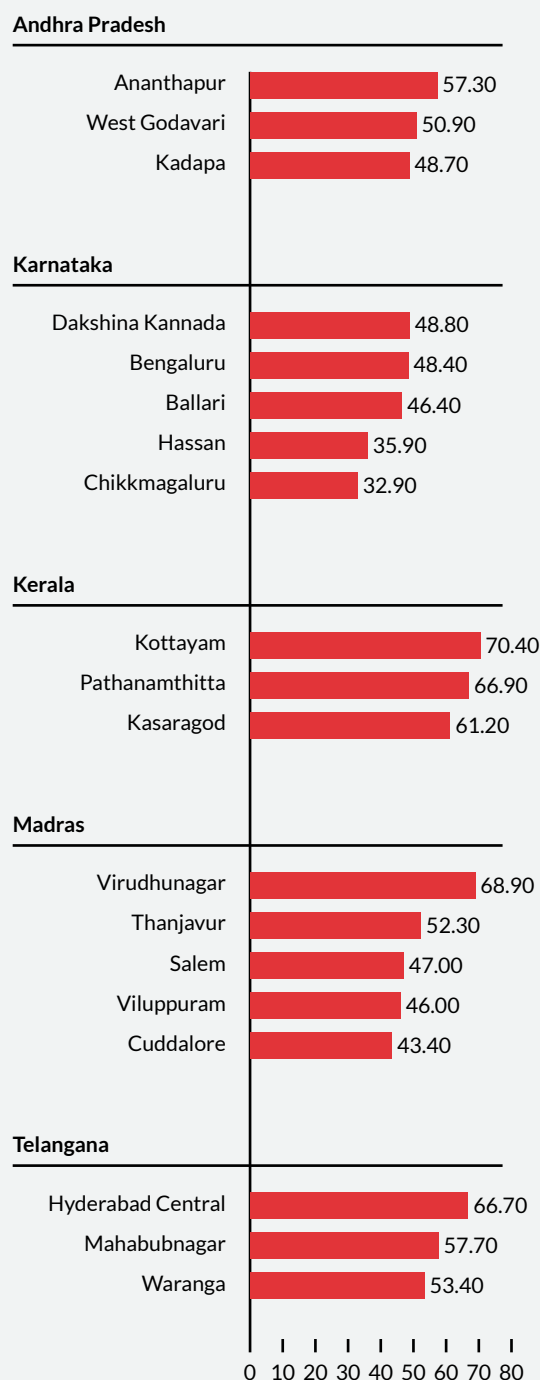
# II

## Disposal of cases during the pandemic

Out of the 103 District Courts from the South Zone analysed, 93 District Courts witnessed a reduction in the number of cases disposed of during the pandemic years. Interestingly, 10 District Courts in the South Zone did not just keep pace with their prior rate of disposal but improved the same during the pandemic years. We have highlighted the worst and best performing districts.

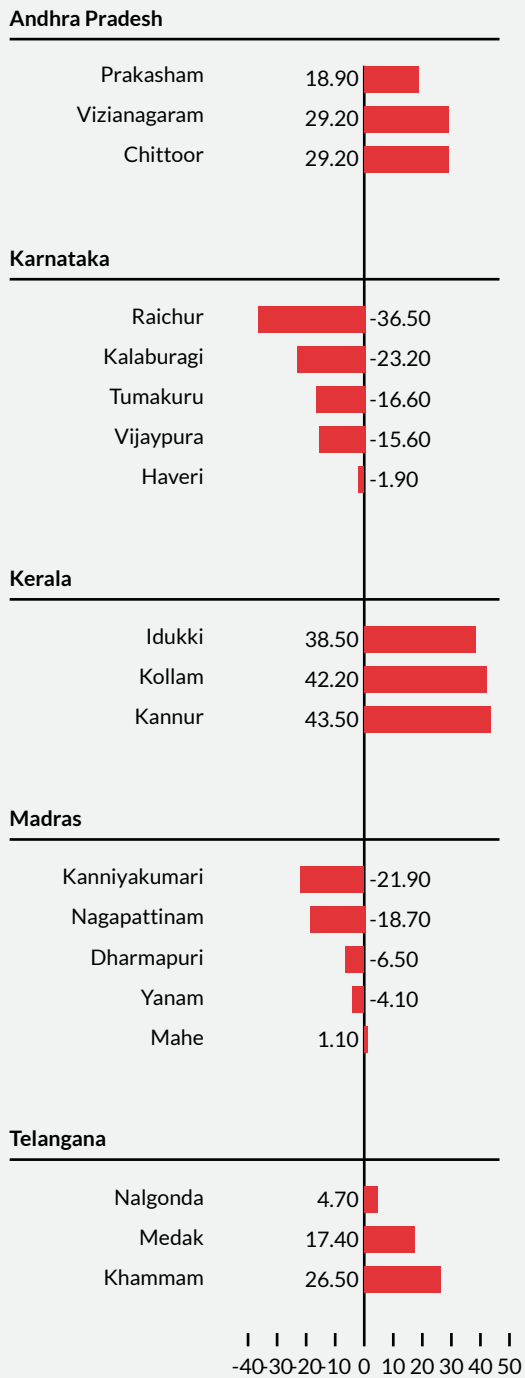
In the South Zone, District Courts under the High Court of Kerala were the worst affected. The worst affected District Court was situated in Kottayam with a 70.6% reduction in disposal rate during the pandemic period. Even the best performing district under the High Court of Kerala disposed 38.5% lesser cases during the pandemic as compared to the pre-pandemic years.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 4.8: Worst Performing Districts in the South Zone



<sup>1</sup> For High Courts having jurisdiction over 20 districts or less, 6 districts have been highlighted in the table. For High Courts having jurisdiction over more than 20 districts but less than 30 districts, 8 districts have been highlighted and for High Courts having jurisdiction over 30 districts, 10 have been highlighted for the analysis, across the Best & Worst performing districts (Figures 4.8 & 4.9).

Figure 4.9: Best Performing Districts in the South Zone



The District Courts under the High Court of Karnataka have performed the best with Districts Courts in Raichur, Kalaburagi, Tumakuru, Vijayapura and Haveri disposing more cases during the pandemic period in comparison to the pre-pandemic period.

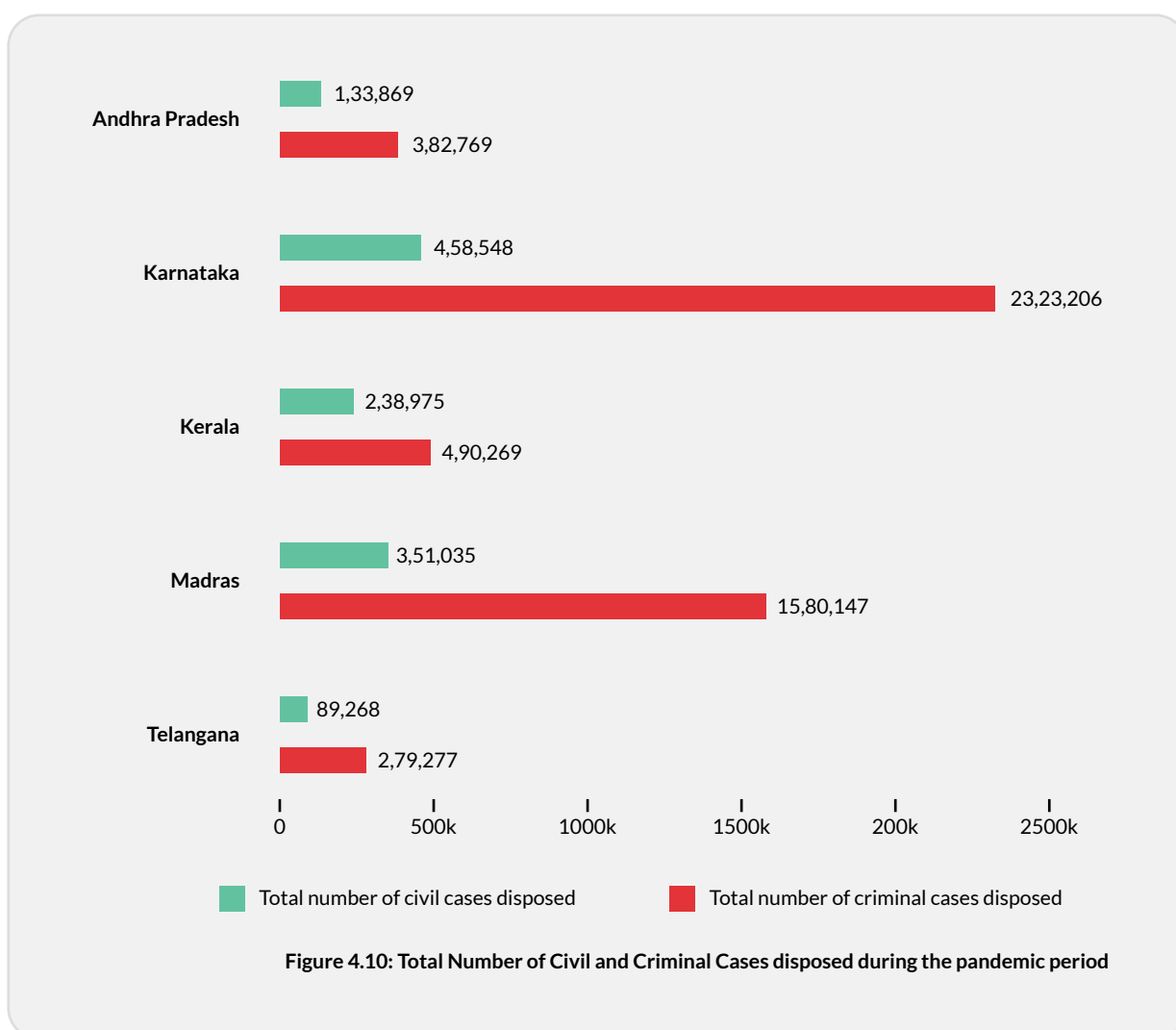
The District Court in Virudhunagar under the High Court of Judicature at Madras is the second worst affected District with a disposal rate reducing by 68.9%. However, the District Courts in Kanniyakumari, Nagapattinam, Dharmapuri and Yanam under the High Court of Judicature at Madras also saw disposal rates improving from the pre-pandemic years.

A detailed list of all the District Courts in the South Zone along with the percentage reduction in their disposal rate in 2020 and 2021, when compared to 2018 and 2019 can be accessed [here](#). This information can be instrumental in identifying the positive interventions adopted by the District Judiciary to dispose cases during the pandemic while also revealing pain points concerning the functioning of virtual courts at the District Judiciary.

# III

## Case types prioritised by Courts during the pandemic

It was observed that the District Courts across the South Zone disposed of more criminal cases than civil cases. The total number of each case type that was disposed in the pandemic period were as follows:



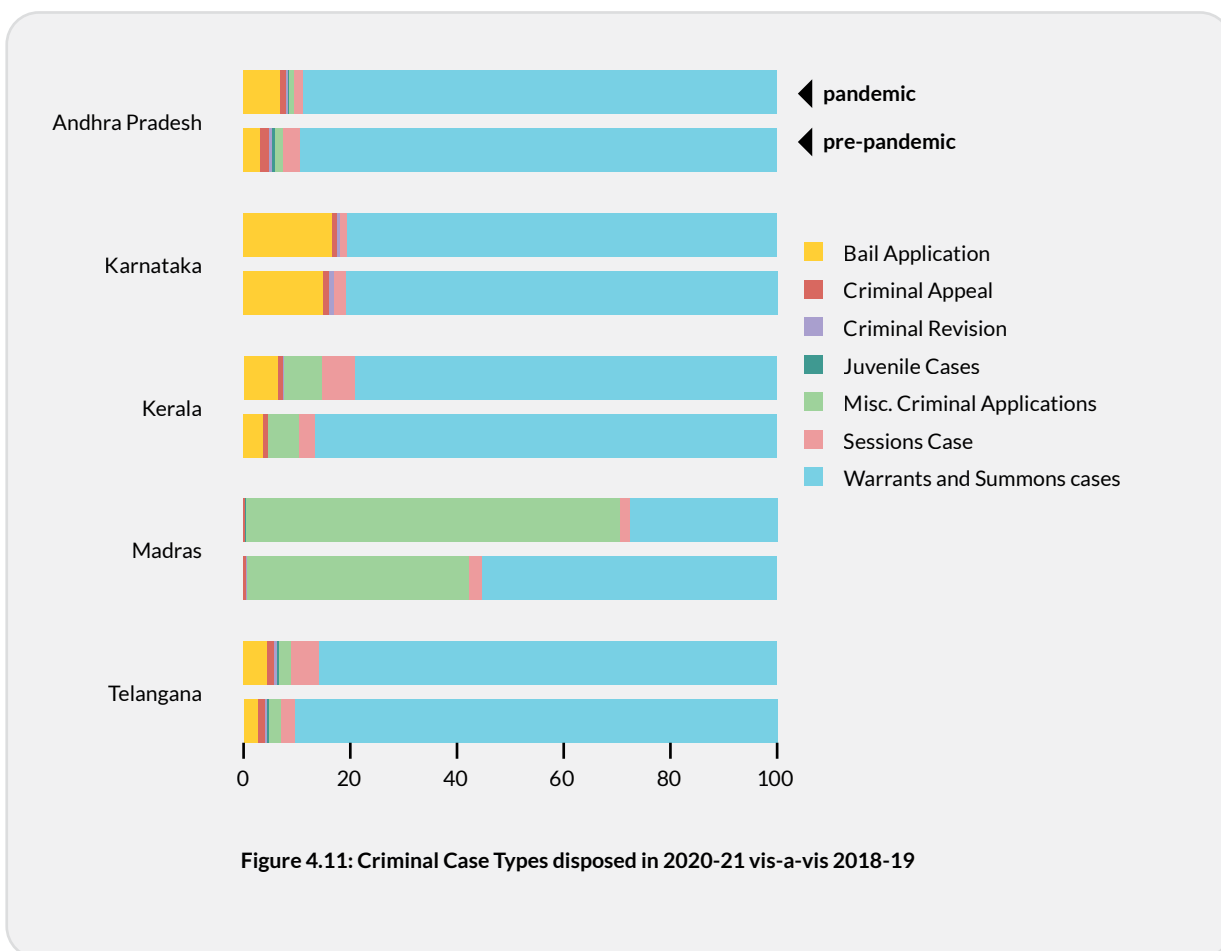
In the following section, we have tried to map the type of cases prioritised across various District Courts in the South Zone during the pandemic period by studying the disposal of cases.

Even though, the District Courts in the South Zone disposed of more criminal cases than civil cases. The number of case types for civil cases was considerably higher than criminal cases. For the purpose of this analysis, the top 9 categories within civil cases in the South Zone have been taken. The rest have been categorized under the head 'Other'. For the complete list of case types in the 'Other' category for the South Zone, refer to Annexure 4.6.

Within the civil cases, the case types which were prioritised for disposal saw minor changes from pre-pandemic years in comparison to pandemic years. While Civil Suits continued to remain a large chunk of the cases disposed of during the pandemic, other types of cases, such as Marriage Petitions were prioritised by the District Courts under the High Court of Andhra Pradesh during the pandemic. Similarly, the District Courts in Telangana disposed more Modified Assured Career Progression Scheme(MACP) cases during the pandemic, in comparison to the previous years.

It is also noteworthy that across the South Zone, in terms of whole numbers, disposal of civil suits suffered the most during the pandemic.

However, in terms of percentage, that is not the case. The District Courts under the High Courts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana saw the biggest reduction in Land Reference cases (88.23%, 61.26% and 65.74%, respectively). The District Courts under the High Court of Judicature at Madras saw the most percentage decrease in disposal of Miscellaneous Civil Application cases (81.47%) and the District Courts under the High Court of Kerala saw the most percentage decrease in disposal of Execution Petitions (62.52%).



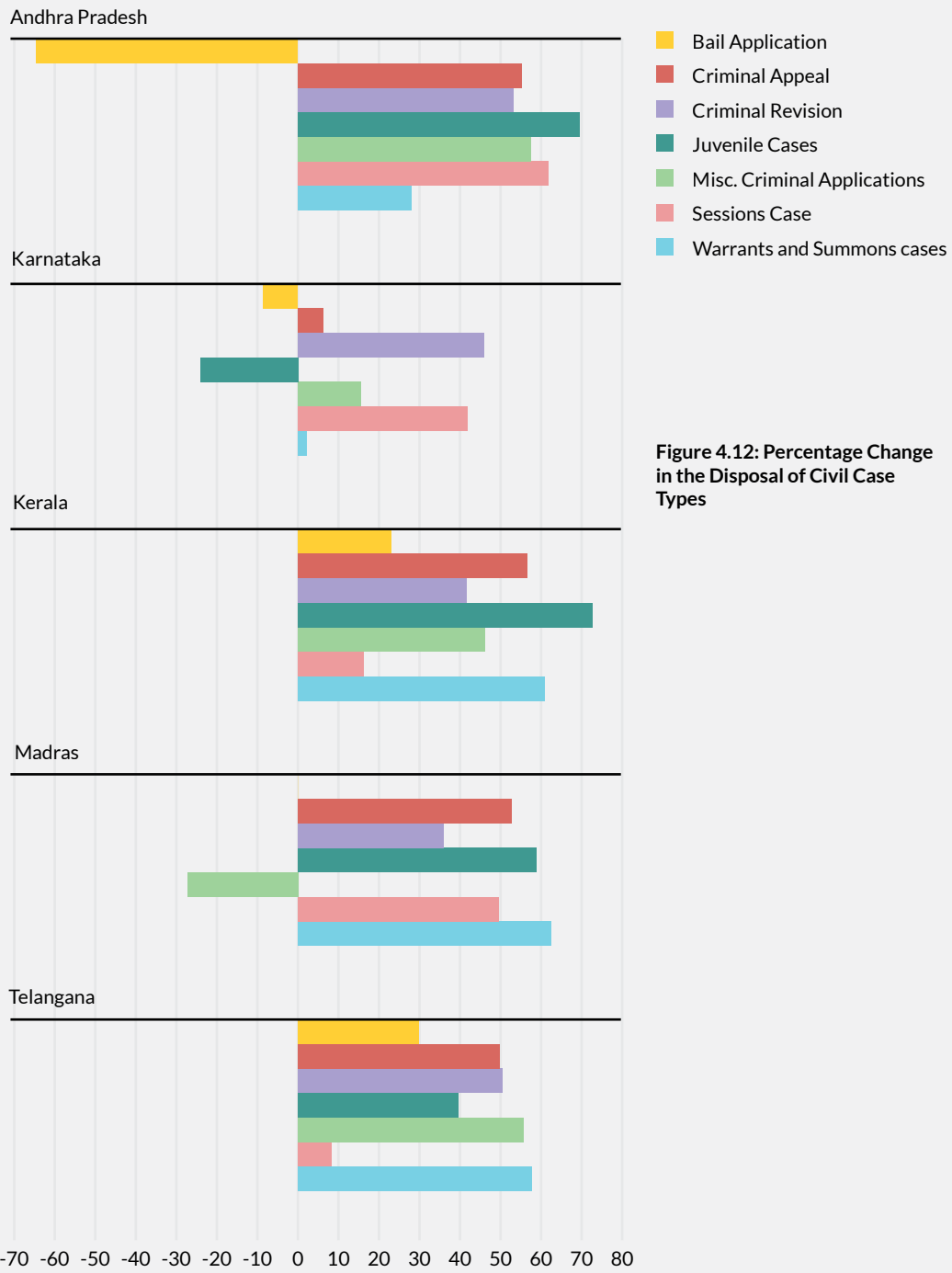


Figure 4.12: Percentage Change in the Disposal of Civil Case Types

In the South Zone, disposal patterns of criminal cases saw a few major changes during the pandemic as compared to pre-pandemic period. Warrants and Summons cases remained the most disposed cases during the pandemic for District Courts under all the High Courts except High Court of Judicature at Madras, which heavily prioritised disposal of Miscellaneous Criminal Applications. Disposal of bail applications saw more prioritisation during the pandemic as compared to pre-pandemic years by the District Courts under all the other High Courts across the South Zone. This shows that despite the capacity of the Courts being severely reduced, they tried to follow the guidelines of the Supreme Court by focusing on bail applications amongst all the criminal cases they were dealing with.

respectively). The District Courts under the High Court of Judicature at Madras and High Court of Telangana saw the most decline in disposal of Warrants and Summons cases (62.36% and 57.72%, respectively). Finally, the District Courts under the High Court of Karnataka saw the most decline in disposal of Criminal Revision cases (45.88%).

In terms of percentage change from pre-pandemic disposal of criminal cases compared to the disposal of cases during the pandemic, the District Courts under the High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Kerala saw the biggest decline in disposal of Juvenile Justice Cases (69.56% and 72.66%,

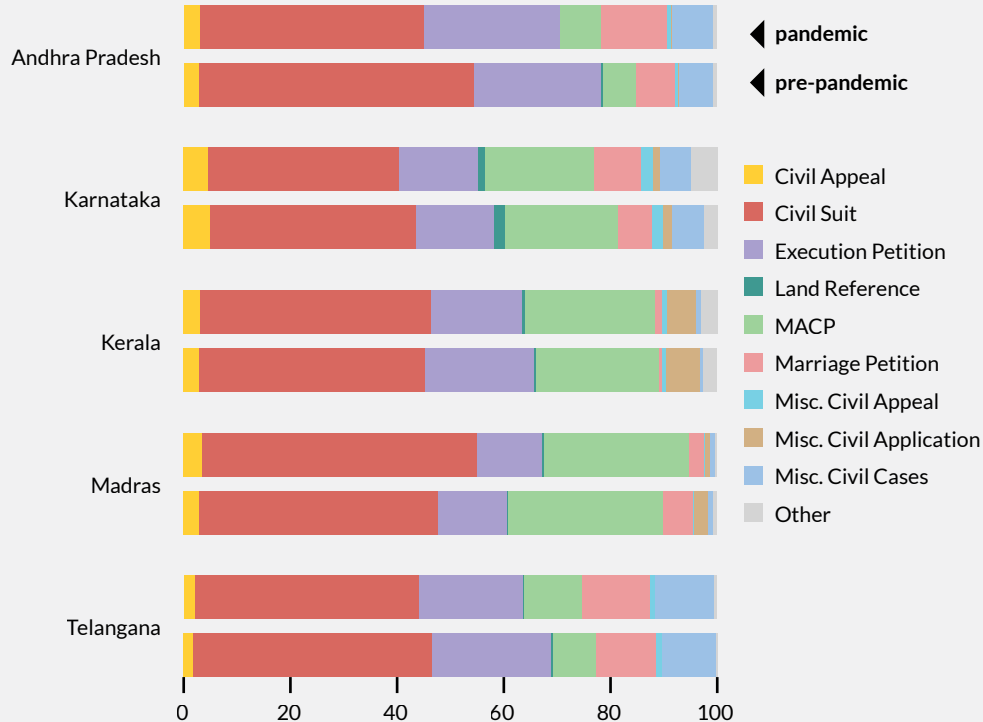
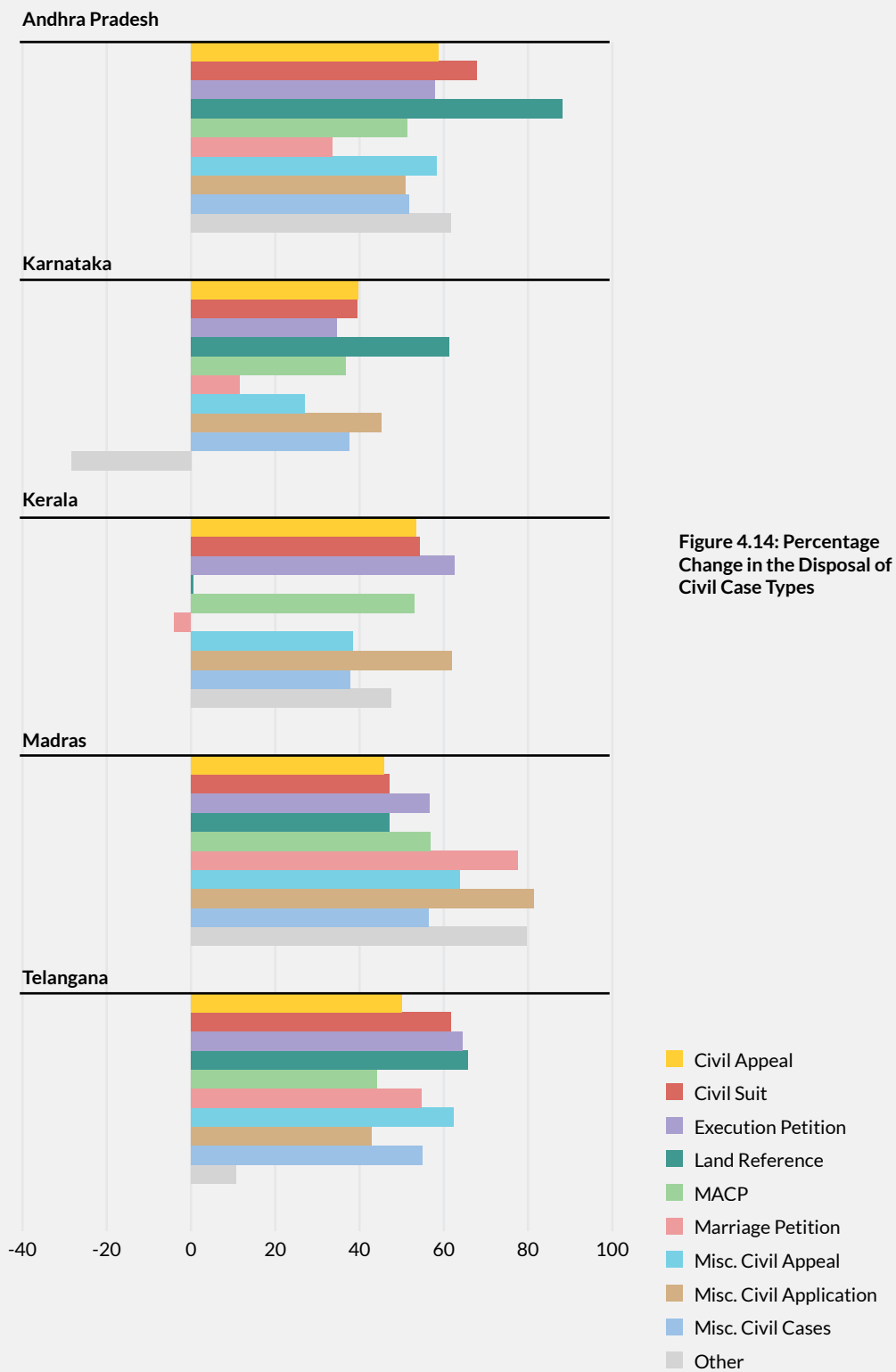


Figure 4.13: Civil Case Types disposed in 2020-21 vis-a-vis 2018-19

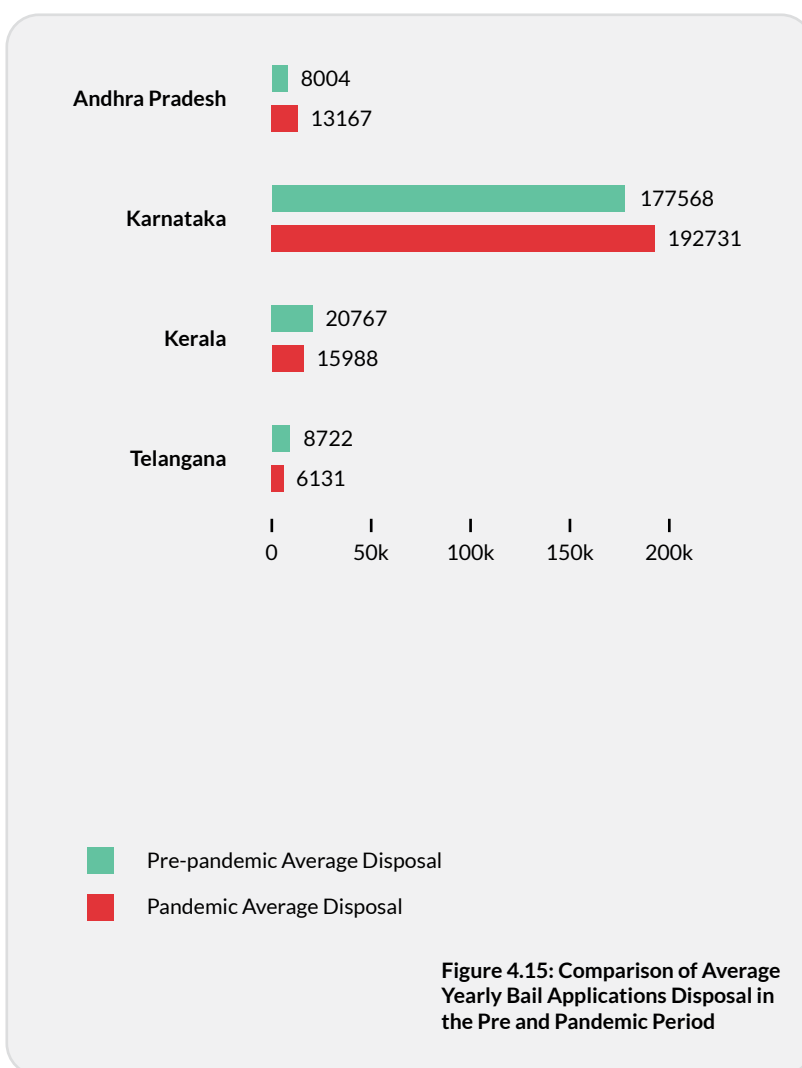


# IV

## Decongestion of jails and prisons during the pandemic

The figure highlights that there was no steep increase or decline in the disposal of bail applications as witnessed in the overall disposal of cases. The District Courts under the jurisdiction of the Karnataka High Court and Andhra Pradesh High Court saw a meagre increase in the disposal of bail applications while District Courts under the Kerala High Court and Telangana High Court saw a small decrease in the number of bail applications disposed during the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

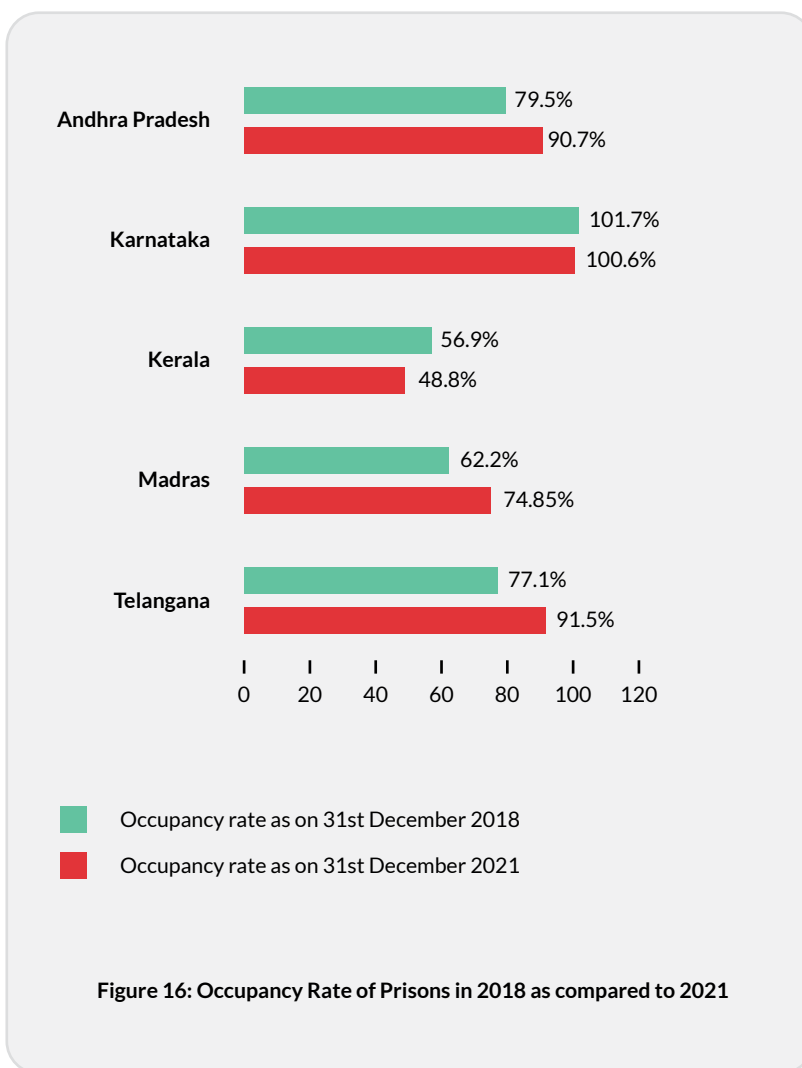
This is in keeping with the overall reduction in disposal rates seen in the District Courts under the High Courts of Kerala and Telangana in Section II.



<sup>2</sup> There was no bail application disposal data both pre-pandemic and during the pandemic available for District Courts in Tamil Nadu on the NJDG website and hence, the same could not be scraped for analysis of this particular section.

The District Courts under the Kerala High Court<sup>3</sup> managed to reduce the occupancy rate in prisons by 8.1% from 2018 to 2021 despite the number of bail applications being disposed during the pandemic years being low. Karnataka was the only other state apart from Kerala that was able to decongest its prisons in 2021 as compared to 2018 by reducing the occupancy rate by 1.1%. This is also in keeping with the 8.53% increase in the disposal of bail applications during the pandemic years by the District Courts under the Karnataka High Court.

All other prisons under the depicted High Courts saw an increase in occupancy rate of prisons. Prisons under the High Court of Telangana and Madras<sup>4</sup> saw the biggest rise in the occupancy rate of their prisons with an increase of 14.4% and 12.65%, respectively.



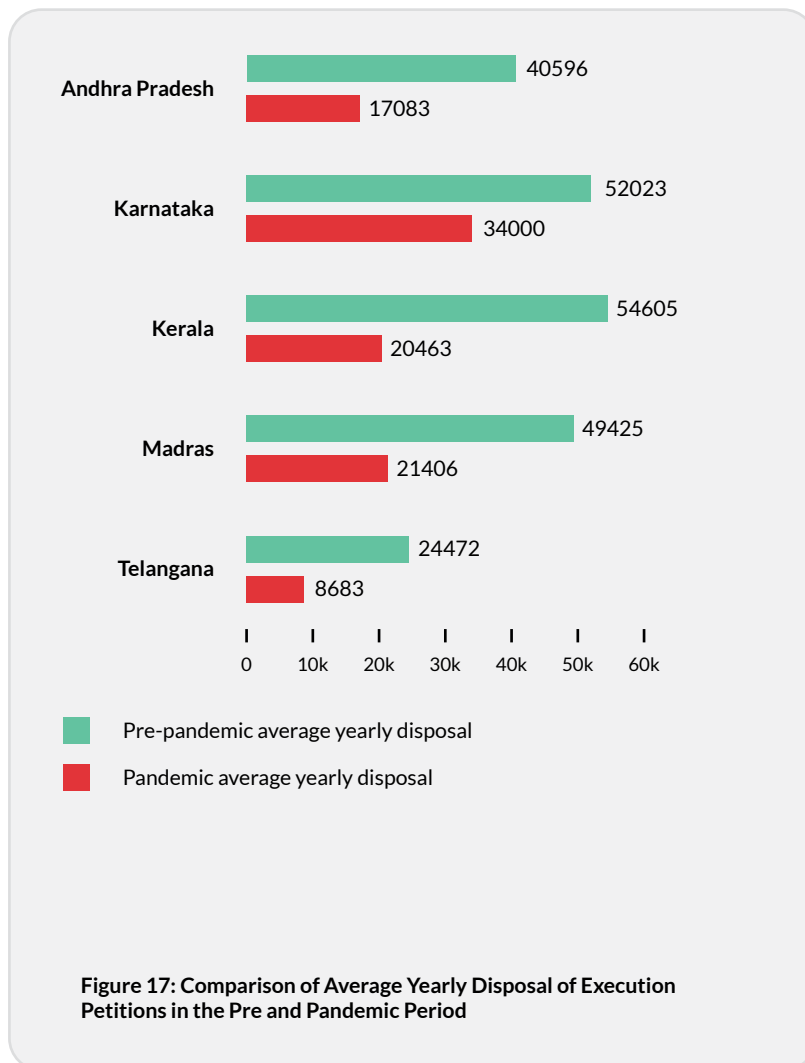
<sup>3</sup> The High Court of Kerala has jurisdiction over the State of Kerala and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep. For the purpose of this analysis, the average of the prison occupancy rate of the State and the Union Territory has been taken. In 2018, the occupancy rate in Kerala was 112.2% and the occupancy rate in Lakshadweep was 1.6%. In 2021, the occupancy rate in Kerala was 89.8% and in Lakshadweep it was 7.8%.

<sup>4</sup> The High Court of Judicature at Madras has jurisdiction over the State of Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry. For the purpose of this analysis, the average of the prison occupancy rate of the State and the Union Territory has been taken. In 2018, the occupancy rate in Tamil Nadu was 60% and the occupancy rate in Puducherry was 64.4%. In 2021, the occupancy rate in Tamil Nadu was 76.4% and the occupancy rate in Puducherry was 73.3%.

# V

## Execution Petitions during the Pandemic

As displayed in the figure, the average disposal of Execution Petitions has reduced significantly across all jurisdictions in the South Zone. The District Courts under the High Court of Telangana and Kerala were the worst affected as there was a reduction of 64.51% and 62.5%, respectively in disposal of Execution Petitions during the pandemic. The District Courts under the High Court of Karnataka were least affected but even they saw a significant reduction of 34.64% during the pandemic period.



# VI

## Justice for the Juveniles

The figure highlights the reduction in the disposal of cases related to children in conflict with the law across most District Courts in the South Zone. Only District Courts under the High Court of Karnataka were not just able to keep pace with the cases in the pre-pandemic years, but actually disposed more juvenile justice cases by 23.96% in a time bound manner in 2020 and 2021. Andhra Pradesh saw the highest reduction in the disposal of juvenile justice cases by 69.55%.

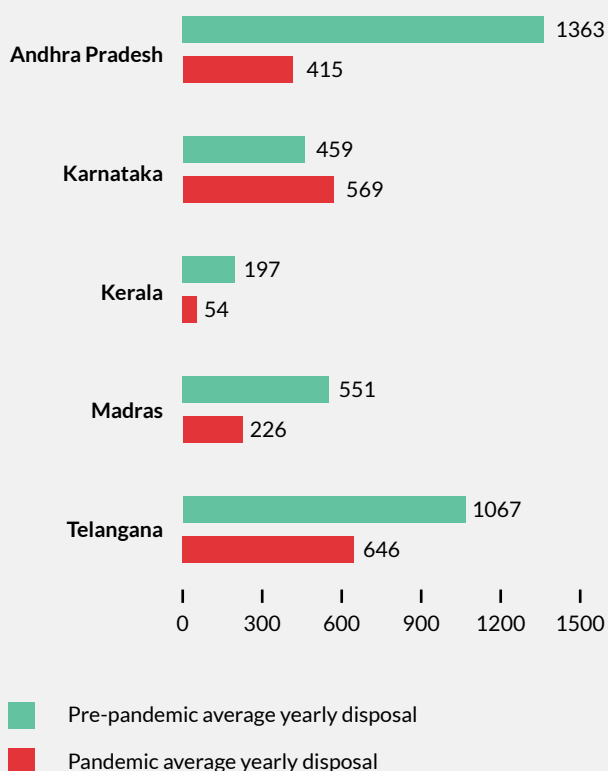


Figure 18: Average Yearly Disposal of Juvenile Justice Cases by the District Courts in the South Zone

# *Annexures*

**Annexure 4.1: Total number of Criminal Cases disposed during the pre-pandemic and pandemic period.**

<b>HC</b>	<b>case type</b>	<b>pre-pandemic total</b>	<b>pandemic total</b>	<b>change</b>
Andhra Pradesh	Bail Application	16008	26334	-64.51
Andhra Pradesh	Warrant or Summons Criminal Cases	472347	339959	28.03
Andhra Pradesh	Criminal Revision	2995	1405	53.09
Andhra Pradesh	Criminal Appeal	9551	4272	55.27
Andhra Pradesh	Misc. Criminal Applications	8035	3413	57.52
Andhra Pradesh	Sessions Case	17115	6556	61.69
Andhra Pradesh	Juvenile Cases	2727	830	69.56
Karnataka	Juvenile Cases	918	1139	-24.07
Karnataka	Bail Application	355136	385463	-8.54
Karnataka	Warrant or Summons Criminal Cases	1912046	1871999	2.09
Karnataka	Criminal Appeal	23591	22128	6.2
Karnataka	Misc. Criminal Applications	990	836	15.56
Karnataka	Sessions Case	49874	29065	41.72
Karnataka	Criminal Revision	23238	12576	45.88
Kerala	Sessions Case	36229	30377	16.15
Kerala	Bail Application	41534	31977	23.01
Kerala	Criminal Revision	1308	763	41.67
Kerala	Misc. Criminal Applications	64675	34895	46.05
Kerala	Criminal Appeal	10645	4631	56.5
Kerala	Warrant or Summons Criminal Cases	991634	387518	60.92
Kerala	Juvenile Cases	395	108	72.66
Madras	Misc. Criminal Applications	872088	1110019	-27.28
Madras	Criminal Revision	2731	1749	35.96
Madras	Sessions Case	54516	27517	49.52
Madras	Criminal Appeal	10168	4801	52.78
Madras	Juvenile Cases	1102	453	58.89
Madras	Warrant or Summons Criminal Cases	1157151	435608	62.36
Telangana	Sessions Case	16163	14816	8.33
Telangana	Bail Application	17445	12262	29.71
Telangana	Juvenile Cases	2135	1292	39.48
Telangana	Criminal Appeal	7961	4004	49.7
Telangana	Criminal Revision	2252	1115	50.49
Telangana	Misc. Criminal Applications	14347	6363	55.65
Telangana	Warrant or Summons Criminal Cases	566273	239425	57.72

**Annexure 4.2: Total number of Civil Cases disposed during the pre-pandemic and pandemic period.**

<b>HC</b>	<b>case type</b>	<b>pre-pandemic total</b>	<b>pandemic total</b>	<b>change</b>
Andhra Pradesh	Marriage Petition	24992	16606	33.55
Andhra Pradesh	Misc. Civil Application	359	176	50.97
Andhra Pradesh	MACP	20852	10156	51.29
Andhra Pradesh	Misc. Civil Cases	21740	10495	51.72
Andhra Pradesh	Execution Petition	81192	34166	57.92
Andhra Pradesh	Misc. Civil Appeal	2173	907	58.26
Andhra Pradesh	Civil Appeal	10083	4161	58.73
Andhra Pradesh	Other	2447	938	61.67
Andhra Pradesh	Civil Suit	174908	56129	67.91
Andhra Pradesh	Land Reference	1147	135	88.23
Karnataka	Other	17479	22445	-28.41
Karnataka	Marriage Petition	45962	40648	11.56
Karnataka	Misc. Civil Appeal	13264	9680	27.02
Karnataka	Execution Petition	104047	68001	34.64
Karnataka	MACP	148260	93788	36.74
Karnataka	Misc. Civil Cases	41692	26035	37.55
Karnataka	Civil Suit	271607	164453	39.45
Karnataka	Civil Appeal	34637	20924	39.59
Karnataka	Misc. Civil Application	12497	6853	45.16
Karnataka	Land Reference	14767	5721	61.26
Kerala	Marriage Petition	3140	3263	-3.92
Kerala	Land Reference	1454	1446	0.55
Kerala	Misc. Civil Cases	3603	2239	37.86
Kerala	Misc. Civil Appeal	3785	2328	38.49
Kerala	Other	13902	7294	47.53
Kerala	MACP	123081	57855	52.99
Kerala	Civil Appeal	15562	7258	53.36
Kerala	Civil Suit	226610	103548	54.31
Kerala	Misc. Civil Application	33723	12817	61.99
Kerala	Execution Petition	109211	40927	62.52
Madras	Civil Appeal	22069	11959	45.81
Madras	Land Reference	2766	1465	47.04
Madras	Civil Suit	342418	181119	47.11
Madras	Misc. Civil Cases	7701	3351	56.49
Madras	Execution Petition	98850	42813	56.69
Madras	MACP	221074	95458	56.82
Madras	Misc. Civil Appeal	354	128	63.84
Madras	Marriage Petition	44107	9919	77.51
Madras	Other	5386	1091	79.74
Madras	Misc. Civil Application	20141	3732	81.47
Telangana	Other	500	447	10.6

HC	case type	pre-pandemic total	pandemic total	change
Telangana	Misc. Civil Application	7	4	42.86
Telangana	MACP	17479	9763	44.14
Telangana	Civil Appeal	3914	1956	50.03
Telangana	Marriage Petition	24821	11263	54.62
Telangana	Misc. Civil Cases	22052	9938	54.93
Telangana	Civil Suit	97855	37454	61.73
Telangana	Misc. Civil Appeal	2330	879	62.27
Telangana	Execution Petition	48944	17367	64.52
Telangana	Land Reference	575	197	65.74

**Annexure 4.3. Total number of cases filed in the South Zone.**

HC	Year	Number of Cases filed
Andhra Pradesh	2018	457717
Andhra Pradesh	2019	448656
Andhra Pradesh	2020	293510
Andhra Pradesh	2021	434158
Karnataka	2018	1566851
Karnataka	2019	1779474
Karnataka	2020	1405704
Karnataka	2021	1695706
Kerala	2018	888239
Kerala	2019	922015
Kerala	2020	691632
Kerala	2021	488011
Madras	2018	1020644
Madras	2019	1982879
Madras	2020	935411
Madras	2021	1209884
Telangana	2018	408984
Telangana	2019	612553
Telangana	2020	242764
Telangana	2021	352617

**Annexure 4.4. Total number of Civil and Criminal Cases disposed in the South Zone.**

<b>HC</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Civil</b>	<b>Criminal</b>
Andhra Pradesh	2018	148755	264129
Andhra Pradesh	2019	191138	264649
Andhra Pradesh	2020	64134	155175
Andhra Pradesh	2021	69735	227594
Karnataka	2018	304795	1089672
Karnataka	2019	399417	1276121
Karnataka	2020	192499	987255
Karnataka	2021	266049	1335951
Kerala	2018	217579	556720
Kerala	2019	316492	589700
Kerala	2020	109086	180833
Kerala	2021	129889	309436
Madras	2018	318887	630619
Madras	2019	445979	1467137
Madras	2020	155282	631668
Madras	2021	195753	948479
Telangana	2018	99869	229613
Telangana	2019	118608	396963
Telangana	2020	32231	95640
Telangana	2021	57037	183637

**Annexure 4.5. Top 9 Civil Case Categories.**

**Top 9 categories**

Civil Appeal  
 Misc. Civil Cases  
 MACP  
 Misc. Civil Appeal  
 Civil Suit  
 Land Reference  
 Execution Petition  
 Misc. Civil Application  
 Marriage Petition

**Annexure 4.6. Cases categorized as 'Other' category for the South Zone.**

**Others**

Arbitration Main and Misc.  
 Misc. Execution  
 Commercial Suit  
 Industrial Court Main Cases  
 Industrial Court Misc. Cases  
 Civil Revision  
 Commercial Appeal  
 Election Petition  
 Labour Court Main Cases  
 Labour Court Misc. Cases

