

The Sixth Circuit and Pro Se Appellants in FY 2014

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Just over half—51%—of appeals nationwide are commenced by pro se appellants, and last year, we endeavored to see how these pro se appellants fared in the Sixth Circuit. This year's official federal court statistics give further insight into the Circuit's overall pro se caseload.

The Sixth Circuit slightly outpaced the national trend with a pro se caseload of 54.4%. Thus, although the Sixth Circuit ranked sixth last fiscal year in terms of appeals commenced, it ranked fifth for number of pro se appeals. Nationwide, pro se appeals were down 2.6% from FY 2013 to FY 2014, the same percentage decrease as overall federal caseload, and the Sixth Circuit followed this trend. Indeed, the number of pro se appeals commenced in the Sixth Circuit decreased year-over-year by just over 100. However, as a percentage of the Circuit's caseload, pro se appeals increased, from 52% in FY 2013 to this year's 54.4%.

Private civil and prisoner petitions by far make up the largest part of the Sixth Circuit's caseload (48% combined), but private prisoner petitions are a distant first among pro se appeals, at 36.6%. Although it is likely not surprising that prisoner petitions make up over a third of pro se appeals in the Sixth Circuit, it is worth noting that this fraction of the Circuit's pro se caseload is second only to the Fifth Circuit, for whom prisoner petitions make up 37.6% of pro se appeals. Ryan Goellner is the author of this article.

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