

# MASSACHUSETTS SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT

|                      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Justices             | Barbara Lenk  | Ralph Gants   | Elspeth Cypher  | David Lowy  | Frank Gaziano   | Scott Kafker  | Kimberly S. Budd  |
| Confidence Score     | Mild Democrat   | Mild Democrat   | Mild Republican   | Mild Republican   | Indeterminate   | Mild Republican   | Indeterminatet  |
| Opinion Partners     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Dissenting Minority  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Determining Majority |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Lone Dissenter       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

- ▶ Number of justices: **7**
- ▶ Number of cases: **194**
- ▶ Percentage of cases with a unanimous ruling: **98.5% (191)**
- ▶ Justice most often writing the majority opinion: **Justice Kafker (25)**
- ▶ Per curiam decisions: **51**
- ▶ Concurring opinions: **16**
- ▶ Justice with most concurring opinions: **Justice Gants (7)**
- ▶ Dissenting opinions: **1**
- ▶ Justice with most dissenting opinions: **Justice Lowy (1)**

## COURT CONTENTION

### Opinion partners

In 2020, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decided zero cases 5-2. Therefore, it is not possible to discern **opinion partners** from the existing data.

### Dissenting minority

In 2020, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decided zero cases by split decision. Therefore, it is not possible to discern a **dissenting minority** from the existing data.

### Determining majority

In 2020, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decided zero cases by split decision. Therefore, it is not possible to discern a determining majority from the existing data.

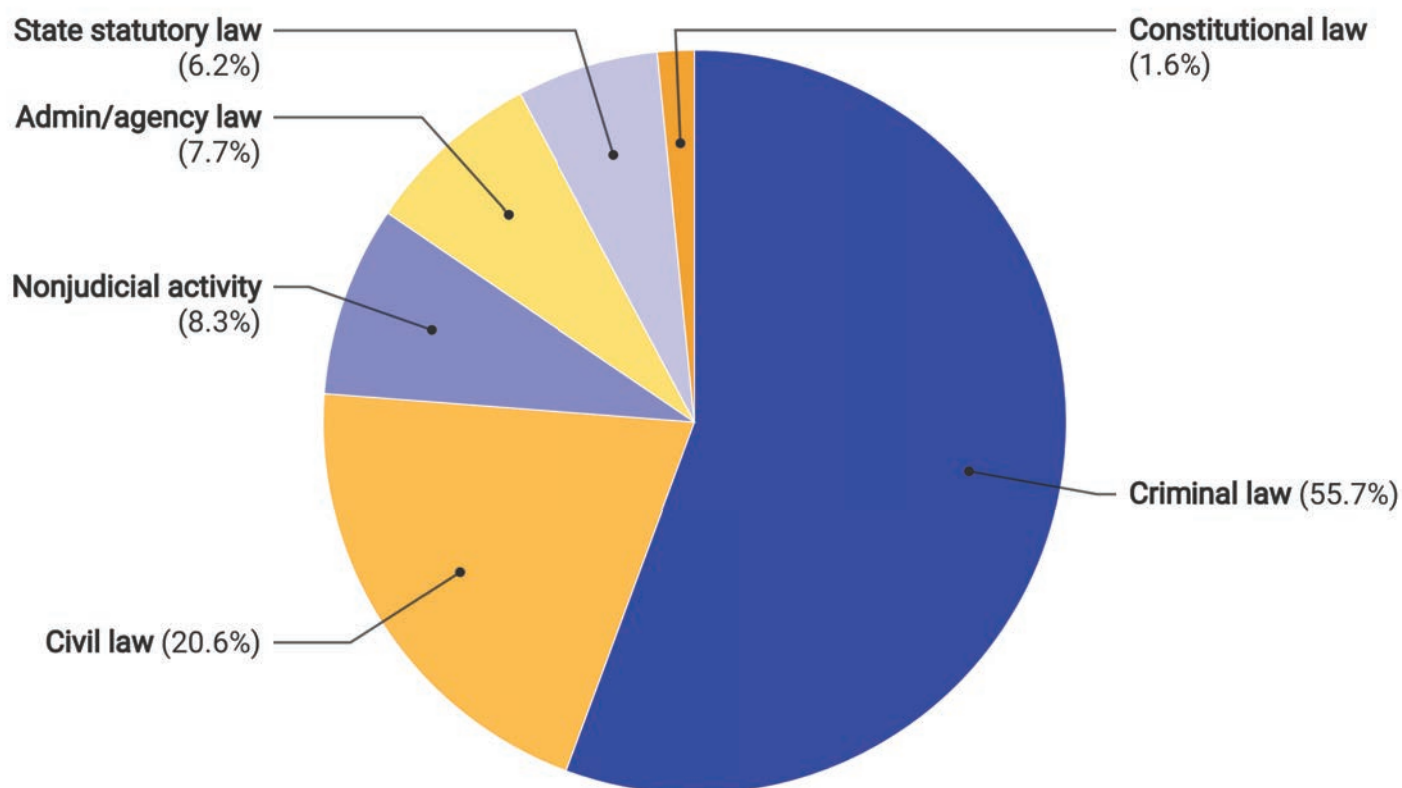
### Lone dissenter

In 2020, there was a lone dissenter in one case before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. Justice Lowy was the lone dissenter in the one case decided 6-1. In our *Ballotpedia Courts: State Partisanship* study, Justice Lowy recorded a Mild Republican Confidence Score.

### COURT JURISDICTION

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has the distinction of being the oldest continuously functioning appellate court in the Western Hemisphere. The court hears appeals of criminal and civil cases. It may also issue advisory opinions if requested by the governor or state legislature. The court is also the administrative head of the state judiciary and bar.

## Case types decided by Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, 2020



The most common cases heard by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in 2020 were criminal cases. Of the 194 cases it heard, 101 were criminal cases, which was 52.1 percent of the court's caseload for the year. A criminal case involves a final criminal appeal before the court of last resort.

The second most common cases that reached the supreme court were civil cases. A civil case is one that involves a dispute between two parties, one of whom seeks reparations or damages. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court heard 40 civil cases in 2020, which was 20.6 percent of its total caseload for the year.

The third most common cases that reached the court were non-judicial. A case is considered nonjudicial activity if it does not involve a formal hearing and discussion before the court. An example of nonjudicial activity before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court is a disciplinary hearing for a lawyer to become disbarred in the state. The court hears such disputes due to its role as administrative head of the state judiciary bar. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court heard 16 cases considered nonjudicial activity in 2020.