

Norfolk Circuit Court Clerk's Office



GEORGE E. SCHAEFER, III
CLERK

2005 ANNUAL REPORT

Clerk of Court
George E. Schaefer

Chief Deputy
Thomas A. Larson

Executive Assistant
Cheryl Dougherty

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE CLERK FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT NORFOLK CIRCUIT COURT

100 Saint Paul's Boulevard
Norfolk, Virginia 23510
(757) 664-4580

Supervising Deputies

Criminal
Gerald L. Stokes

Civil
Michele M. Evans

**Licenses, Permits and
Finance**
DaVida M. Davis

**Wills, Estates and
Deeds**
Anthony Fuller

To: The Honorable City Council and City Manager
From: George Schaefer, Clerk of Circuit Court

CC: Budget Director, Circuit Court Chief Judge

Subj: Annual State of the Circuit Court Clerk's Office Report

Date: January 15, 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Another year has passed in my term as Clerk of the Circuit Court. As I begin my third year in office, I would like to start out by thanking each of you for the tremendous support you have given over this past year.

Since the Annual Report of 2004, great strides have been taken to meet the goals I have set for this office.

As you may recall from last year's Report, according to the State Compensation Board Staffing Standards our Circuit Court Clerk's Office has a shortage of 19 full-time employee positions. Realizing 19 new employees were probably not on the horizon; I ordered a comprehensive work-study to include actual-time measurements for specific job functions, bottom-up review of business processes and implemented technology enhancements to improve the productivity of my office staff. The goal was to find ways to allow the public easier access to services and broader access to public records without compromising statutory requirements.

Our findings were reported to the Compensation Board and as a result of our work, the Clerk Staffing Standards, developed in 1975, have been modified and updated across the Commonwealth. The shortage of 19 employees based on our workload in 2004 has now been

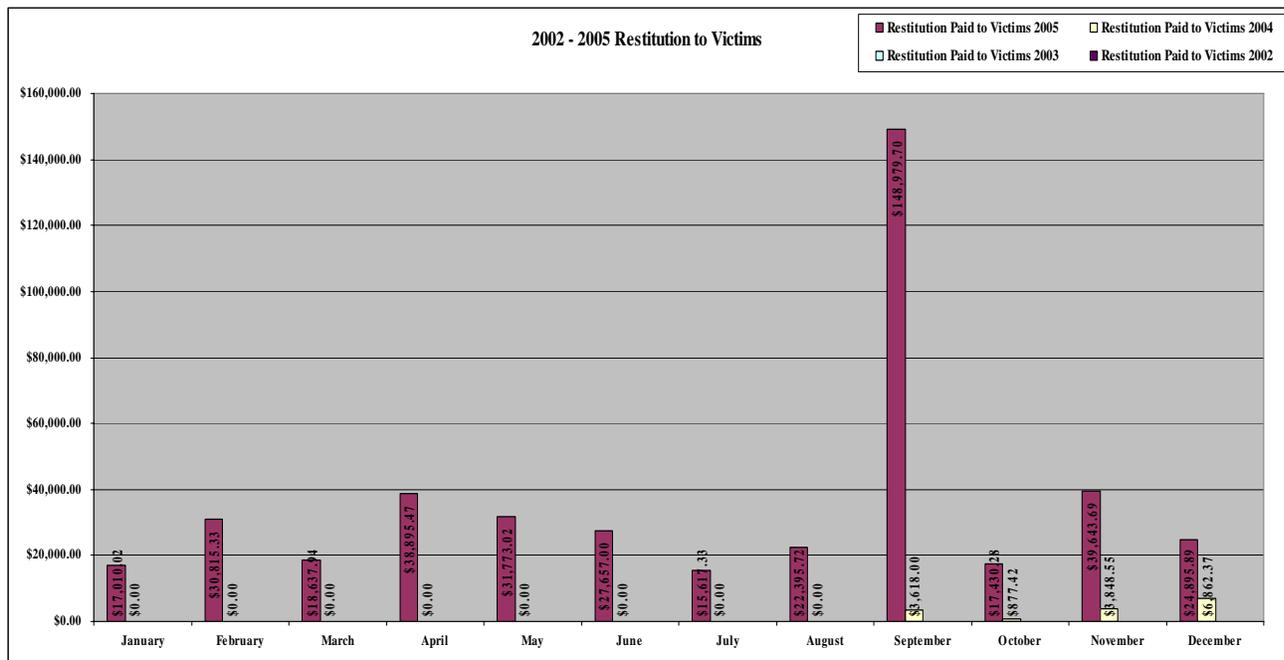
reduced to nine utilizing the revised staffing standards. While additional staff would be welcome, this office has experienced no reduction in services; instead we have added services such as passports, restitution- tracking, and secure remote access to land records.

Along with these efficiencies, I directed my staff to reimburse the equipment rental portion of our budget with the copy account fees that we collect, prior to transmission to the state, resulting in a budget savings of roughly \$15,000 per year.

Some of the technology enhancements added are:

- High speed, duplex scanners
- High speed, expanded network storage for Land Records and Remote Access
- Indexing and electronic storage capabilities for Civil and Criminal filings
- Revisable PDF forms for staff and public use
- Self service copiers with PIN codes for authorized account holders
- Increased presence on Internet
- Credit Card processing for court costs and restitution payments

In 2005 we began fully tracking victim restitution payments. In the past, crime victims were forced to monitor their own restitution from defendants. Many never received the promised payments. Now all restitution payments are collected and distributed to the appropriate victim by the Clerk’s Office. As a result of this procedural change, we distributed nearly \$500,000 in restitution to victims in 2005 and another \$40,000 to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund. This change allows us to track court-ordered restitution payments and provide timely information to the Commonwealth’s Attorney for the collection of these funds.



We continue to make improvements in our service delivery to our customers. We now provide Secure Remote Access of land records to over 200 authorized non-government users. We also provide remote access at no charge to numerous city, state and federal agencies including: City Attorney, Real Estate Assessor's Office, Building and Codes Administration, Virginia Attorney General, and the United States Attorney.

We are also continuing the process of back-scanning our land records to reduce the need for physical storage space of paper files. We have digitized all land records back to 1987 and expect to have a full 40 years in digital format within the next year.

This calendar year we are pushing for the implementation of electronic filing of land records and some criminal and civil filings. This office has been, and continues to be, an integral part of the Electronic Recording Workgroup through the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA) as well as the electronic data exchange group established by the United States Office of Justice Programs (USOJP) through the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

Based on the total number of cases filed this past year, both criminal and civil, as well as the ever-increasing number of marriage licenses, concealed weapons permits, judgments, restitution and time-to pay plans processed by this office, participation in these groups is vital.

Examples:

- Criminal Cases concluded in CY05: 10,132 (down 4.6%)
- Civil Cases opened in CY05: 6,527 (up 12%)
- Will documents processed in CY05: 3,395 (up 15%)
- Land Record documents processed in CY05: 52,723 (up 4.6%)
- Other (marriage license, weapons permits, trade names, etc.): 39,179 (up 22%)

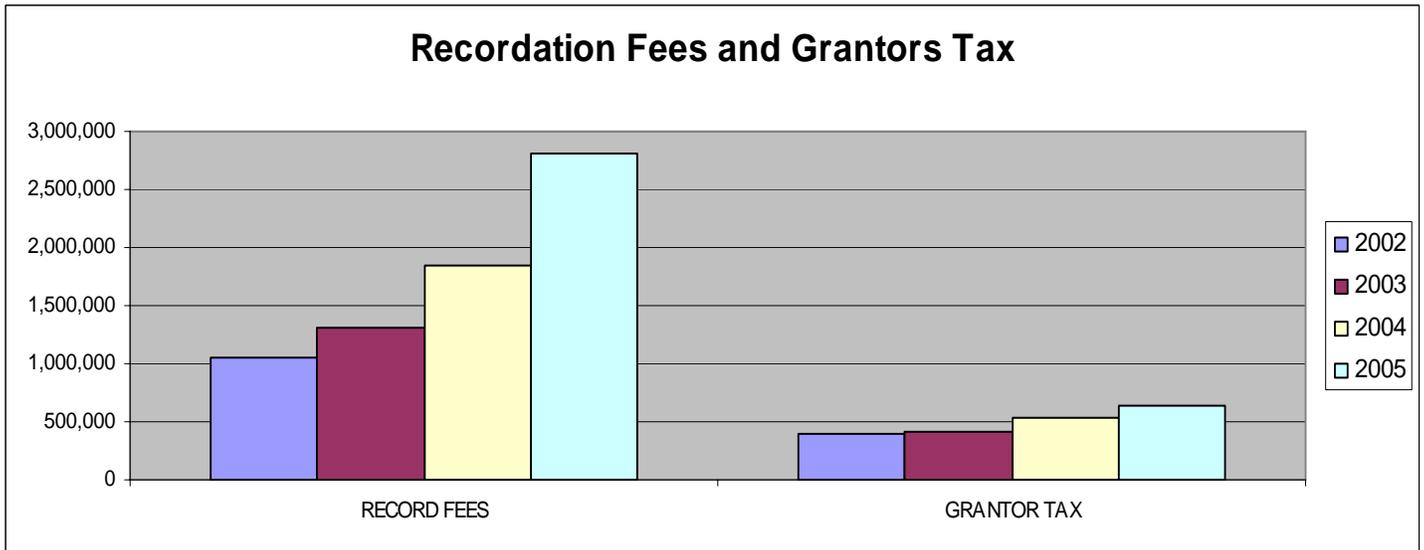
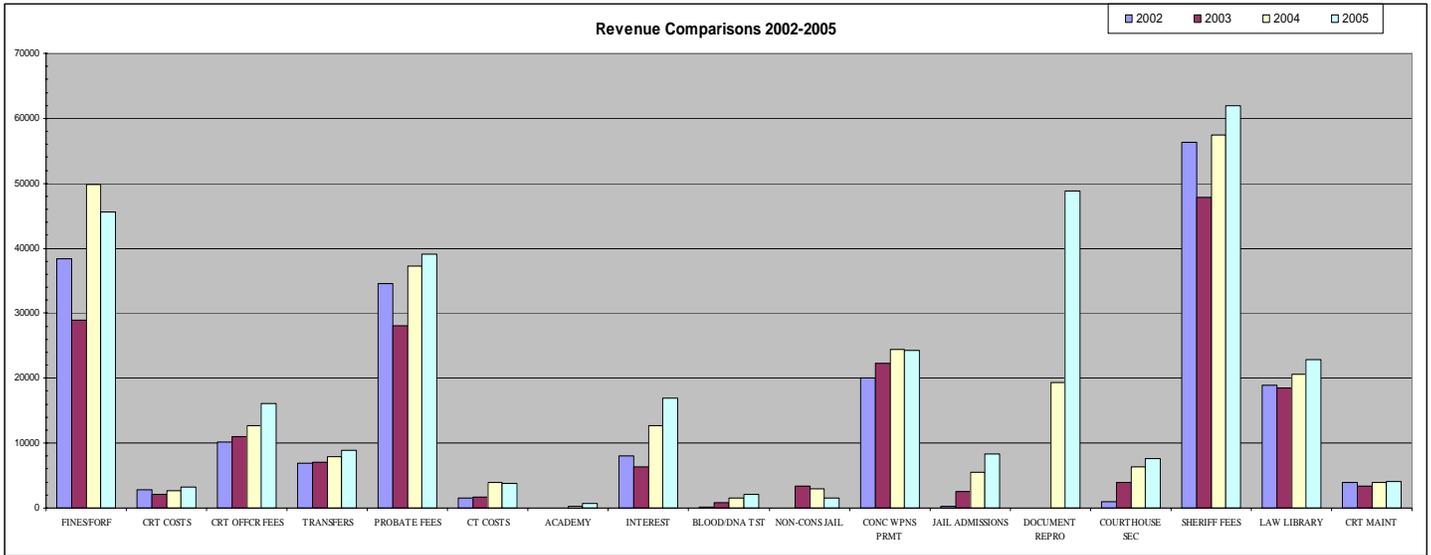
While Criminal filings are down slightly from 2004 (under 5%), Civil filings have jumped. We experienced a 12% increase in the number of civil filings from 2004. Technology and process improvement, coupled with the continual monitoring of staff resources has allowed us to absorb this increase with little impact.

State Senate Bill 1118, effective January 1, 2006, abolished the Chancery side of Court mandating all Law and Equity cases be filed in a unified "Civil" Division. The last two months of 2005 found us preparing for the merger. While little impact is expected on the public, additional time will be required of staff to review new filings, ensure proper documents are included and correct fees are being charged.

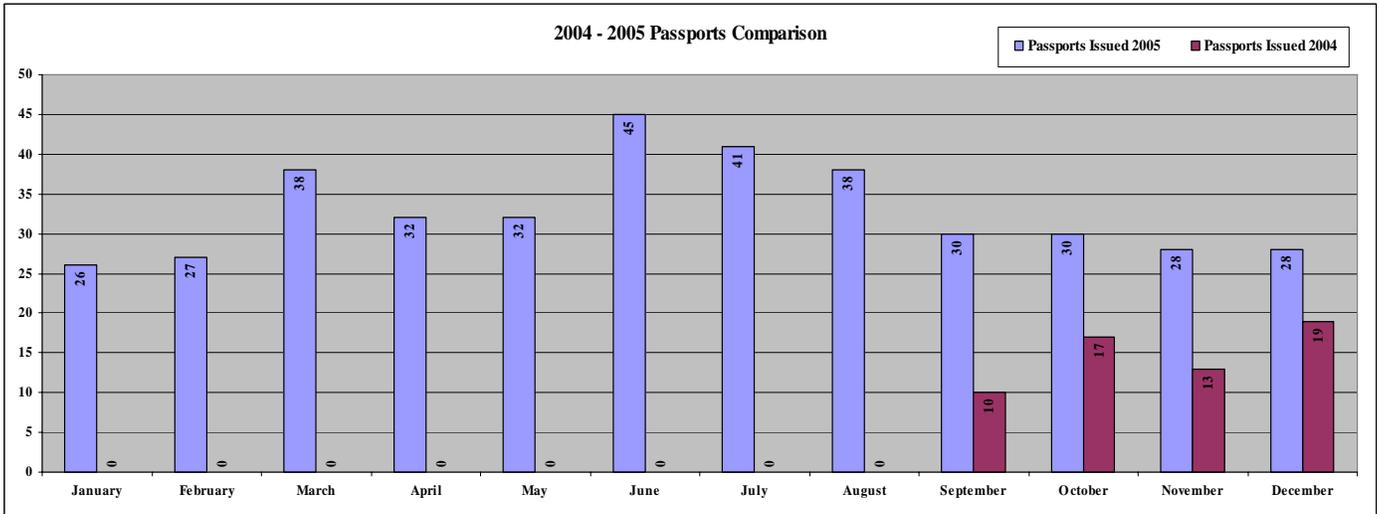
The upward trend in home refinances continues, however, we are seeing a slow-down as interest rates continue to rise. We saw a 5% increase in land record transaction over 2004. Of greater concern is the substantial increase (15%) in probate (wills and estates) documents processed over 2004.

Working closely with Sheriff's Office staff, we have been able to "forgive" almost \$250,000 in court cost debt in exchange for community service work performed by inmates in the Sheriff's Office Work Force Program.

We continue to review every area of revenue on both the state and local level to ensure the maximum collection of funds for the city and state treasury. With the increase in recordation tax, we saw a significant rise in city and state revenue. This trend should slow only slightly during CY 2006 if additional housing units come available and interest rates stabilize.



Passport Services continue to be popular with the public. In 2005 the Clerk’s Office processed 400 passport applications. Working in concert with the State Department, there was no reduction in turn-around time despite the destruction of our assigned passport facility in New Orleans.



Cash flow through this office continues to exceed \$60 Million. Granting my request for funding a full-time uniformed and armed Deputy Sheriff tightened office security. Although some security issues remain, mostly due to building layout, citizen conduct, as well as the overall feeling of security, has greatly improved because of the presence of that Deputy.

The transition to the city pay plan was completed in 2005 and has paid immediate rewards; allowing us to retain and recruit a higher-quality staff. Also, in keeping with my campaign promise to have a diverse office of Norfolk residents, I am proud to report 75% of Clerk's Office employees reside within the City of Norfolk and 50% are African-American (including 50% of all management positions).

This past year we moved from manual processing of the monthly reimbursement from the Compensation Board to electronic processing to include the electronic transfer of the reimbursed funds.

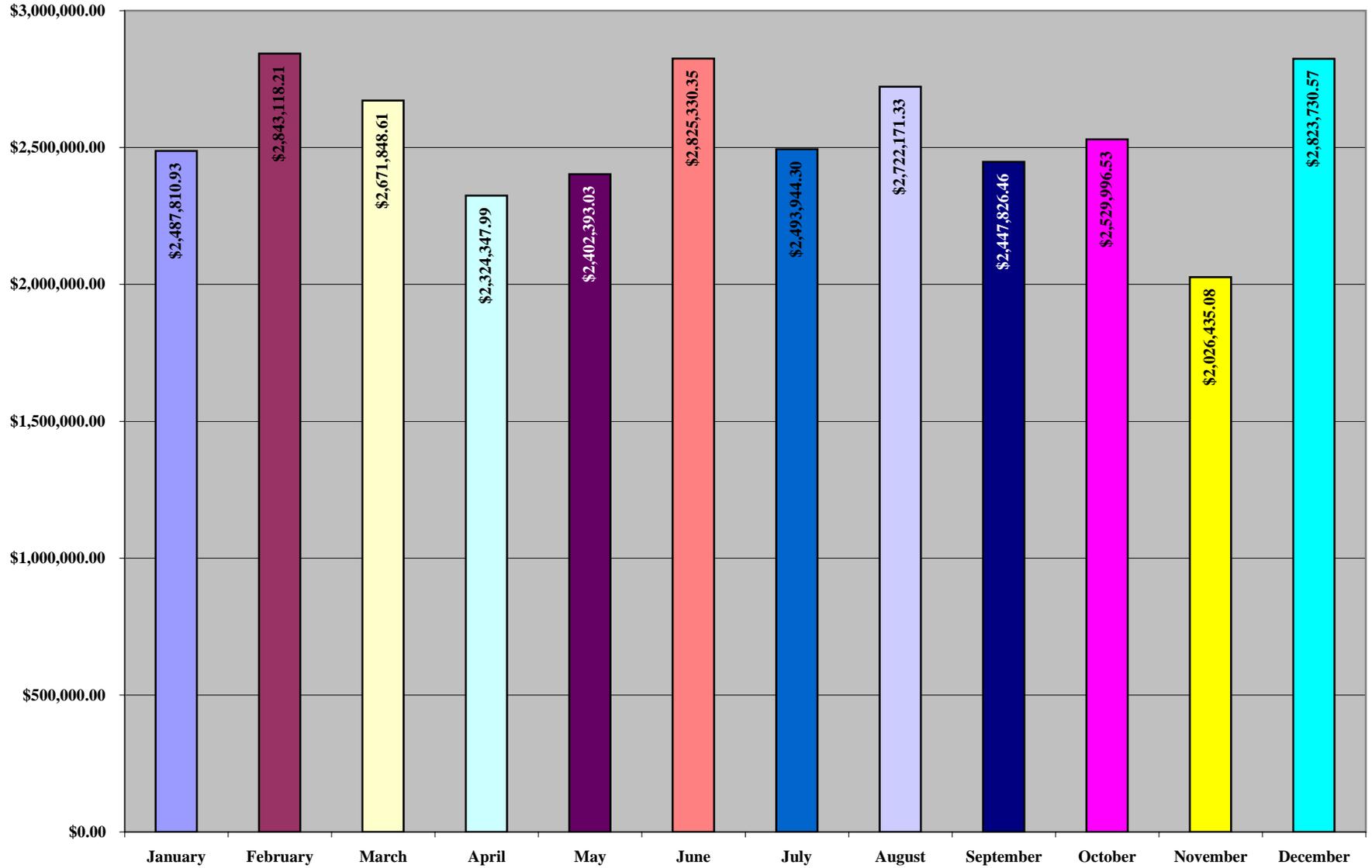
Please find attached statistics from 2005. I have included, as a part of this package, graphs that we employ to determine the ebb and flow of the activities at the courthouse. This gives us the ability to manage our staff efficiently and foresee problem areas.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to a continued partnership between the Circuit Court and the City we serve.

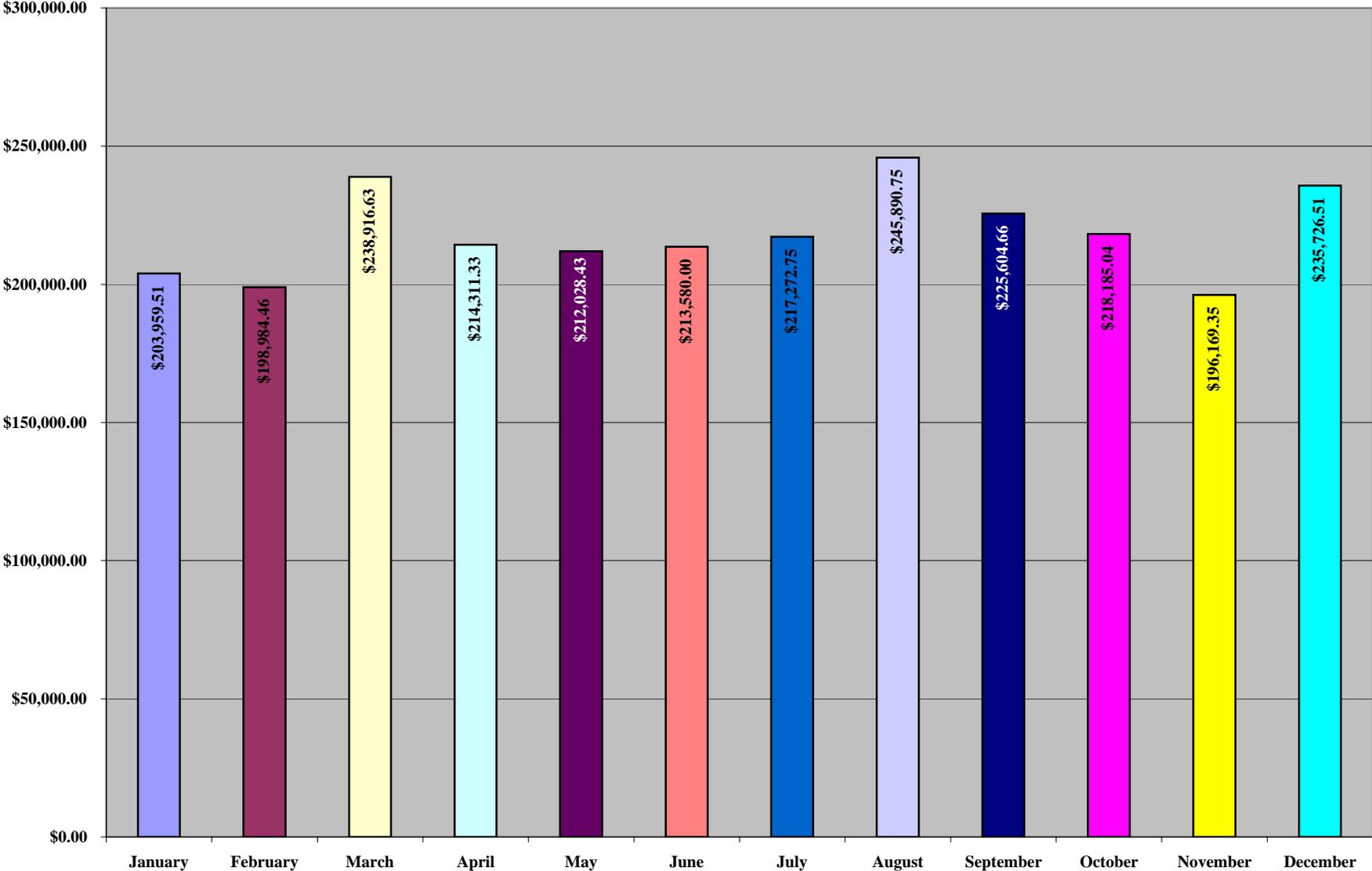
Sincerely,

George E. Schaefer
 Clerk
 Norfolk Circuit Court

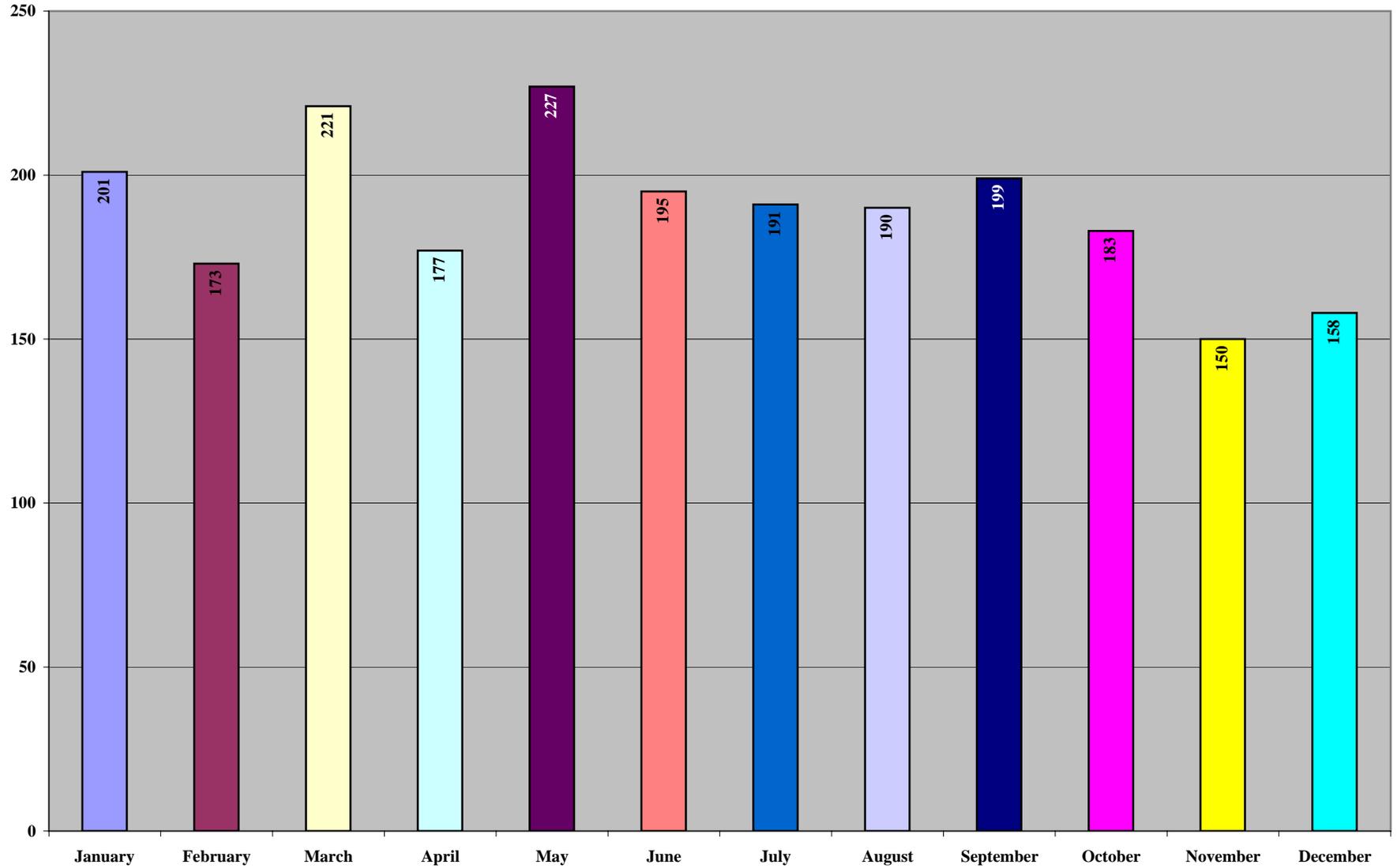
2005 Receipt Totals



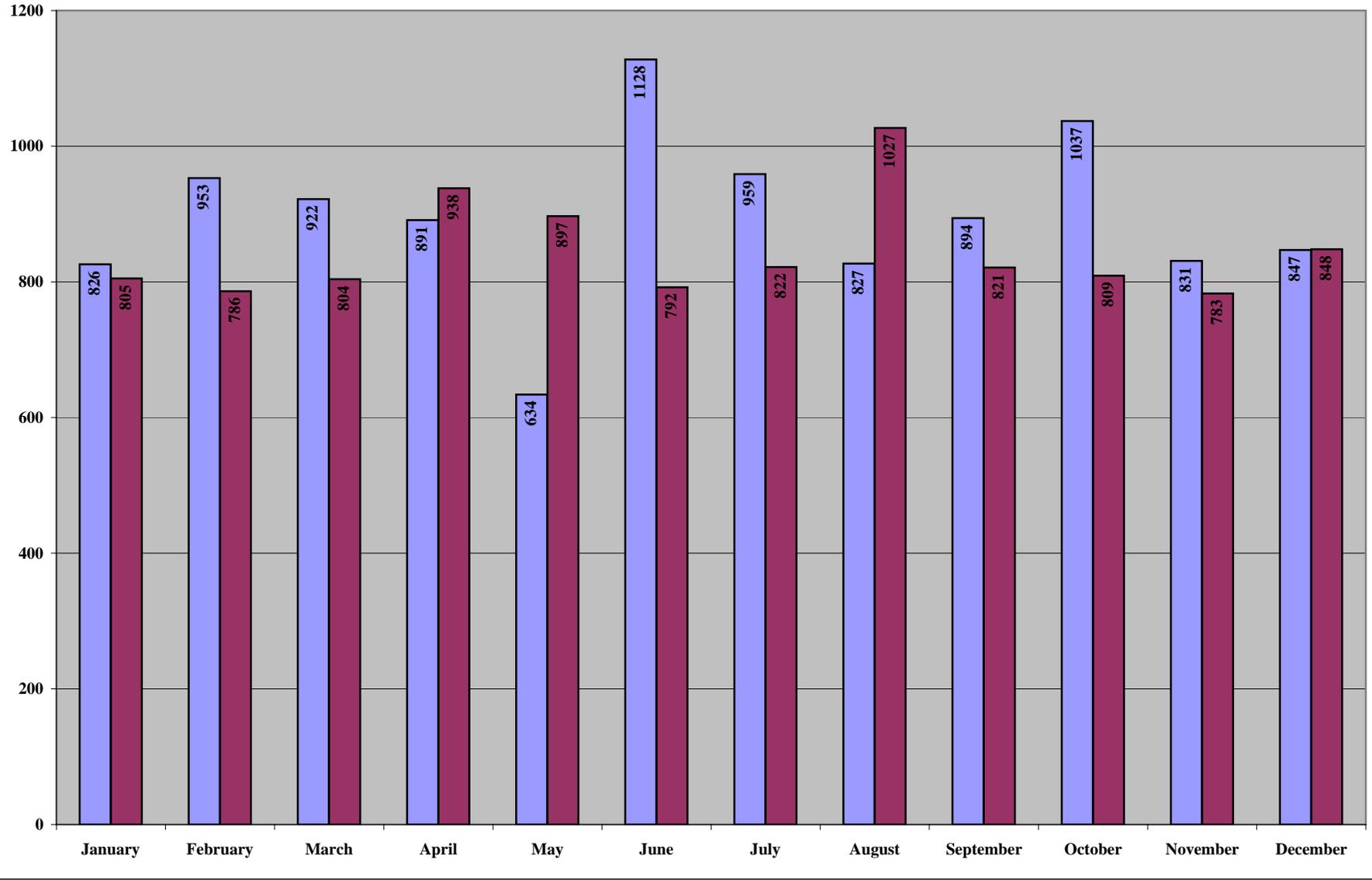
2005 Clerk's Fees



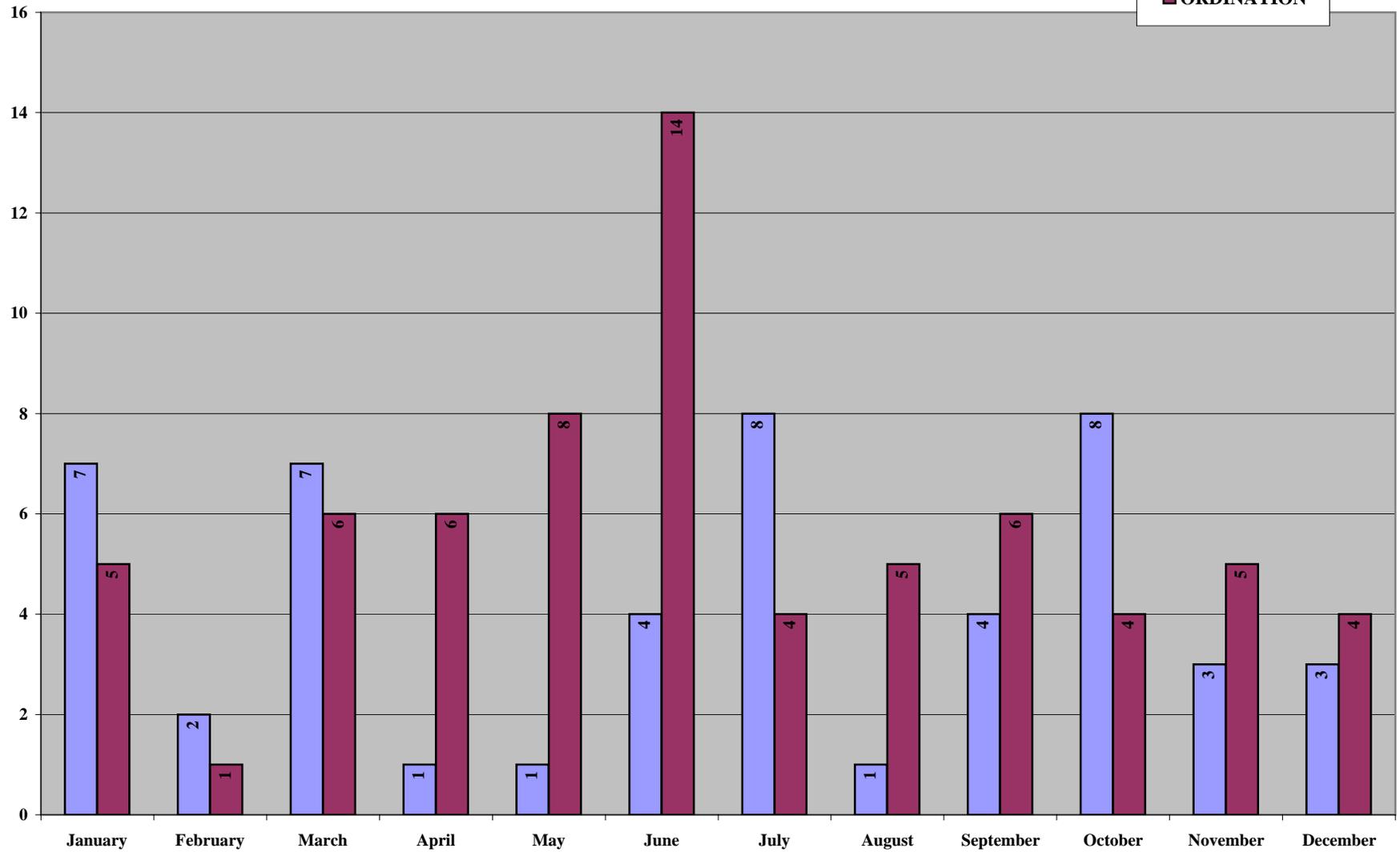
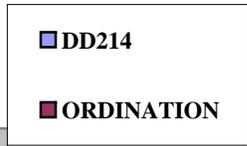
2005 Civil Suits Filed



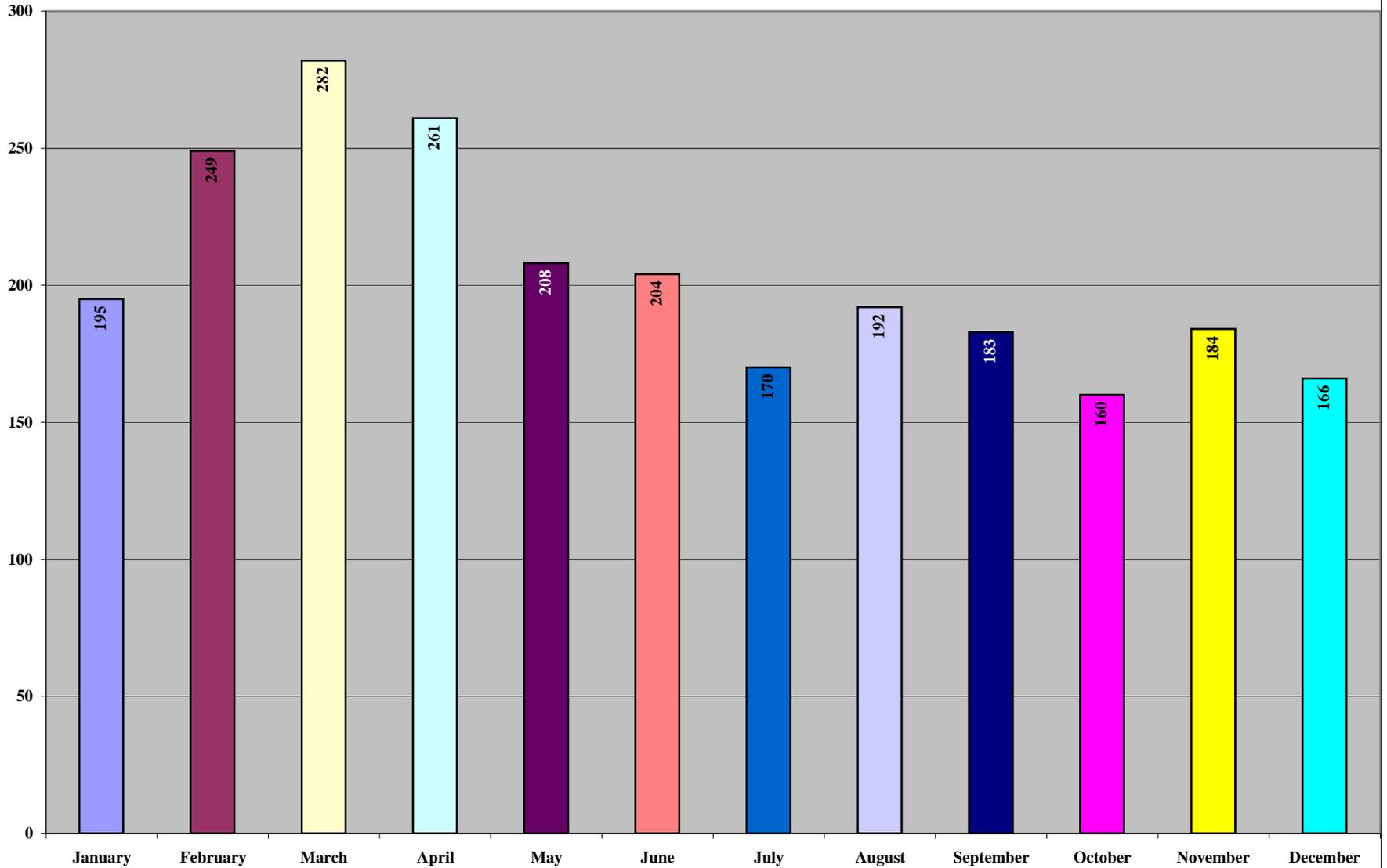
2005 Total Criminal Cases Commenced/Concluded



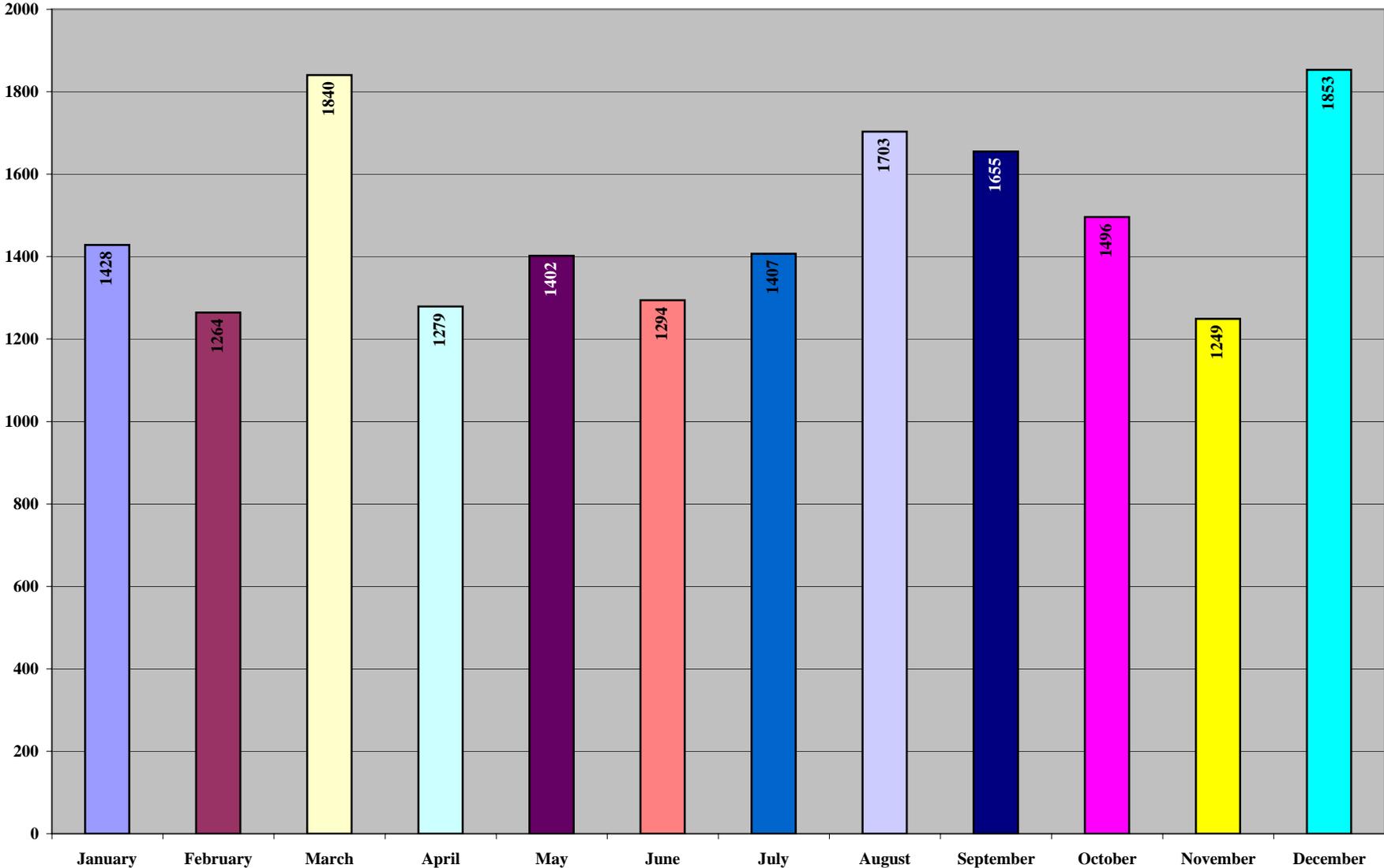
2005 - DD214 & Ordinations



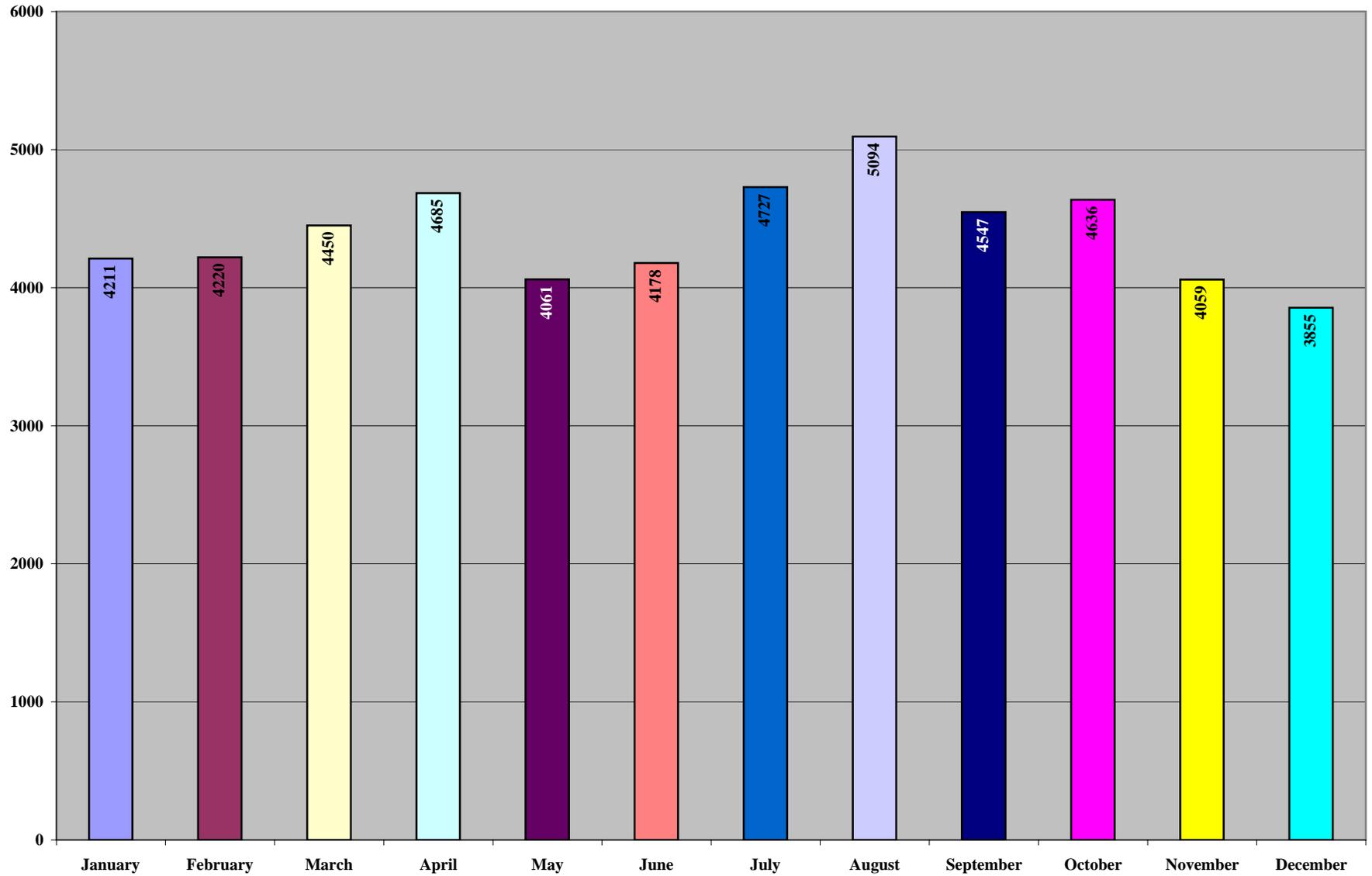
2005 Divorces Filed



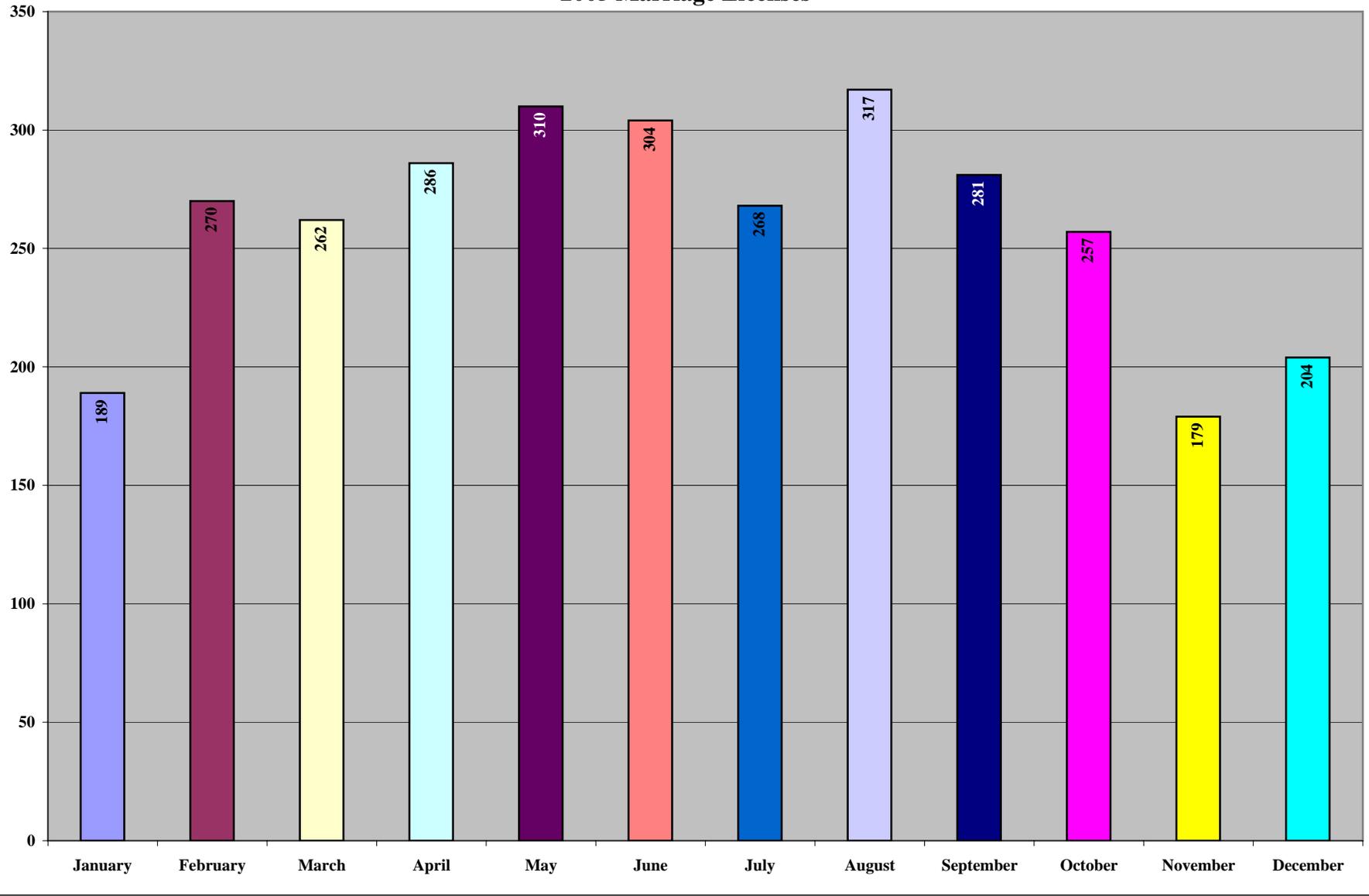
2005 Judgements



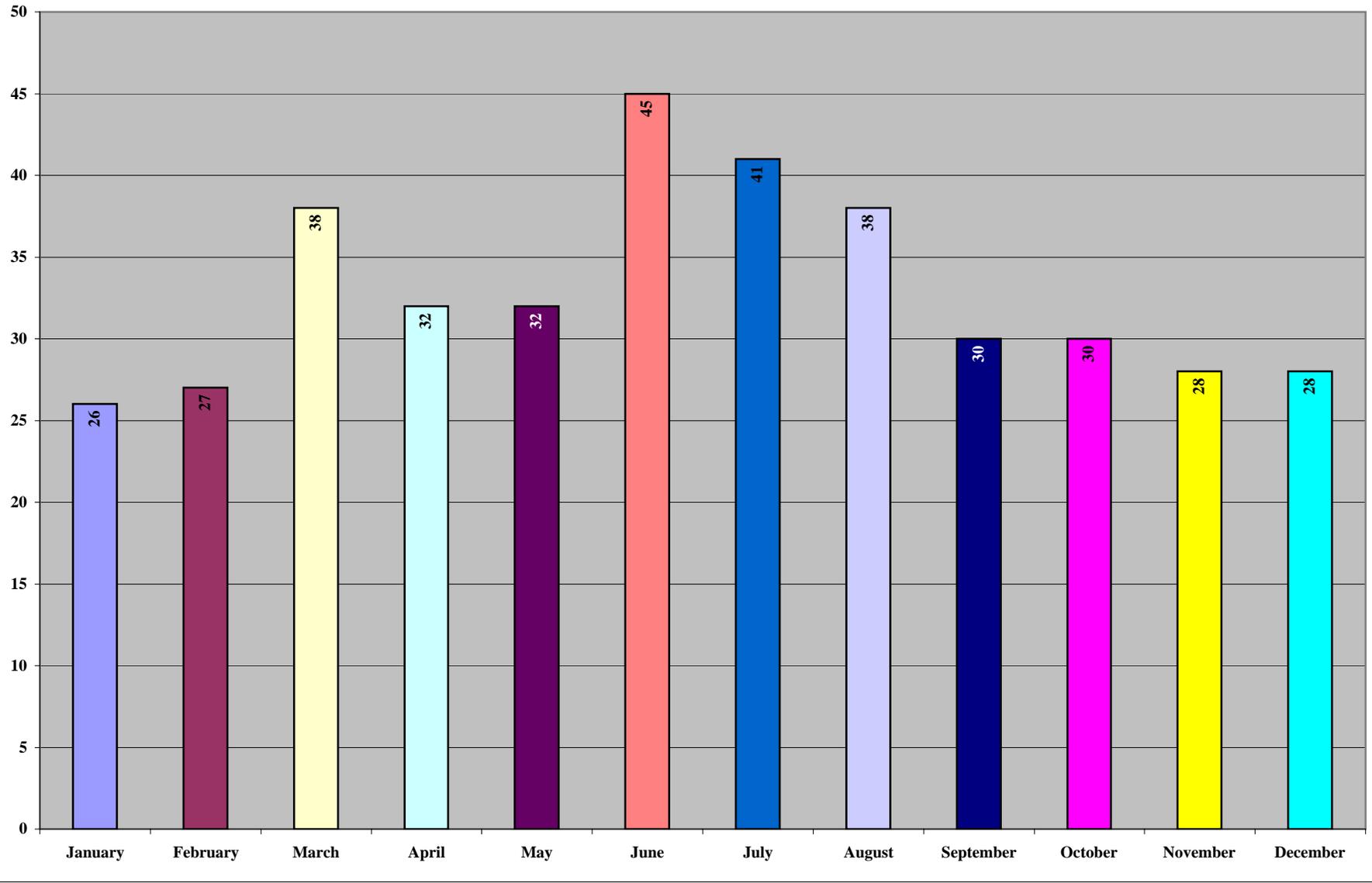
2005 Land Records



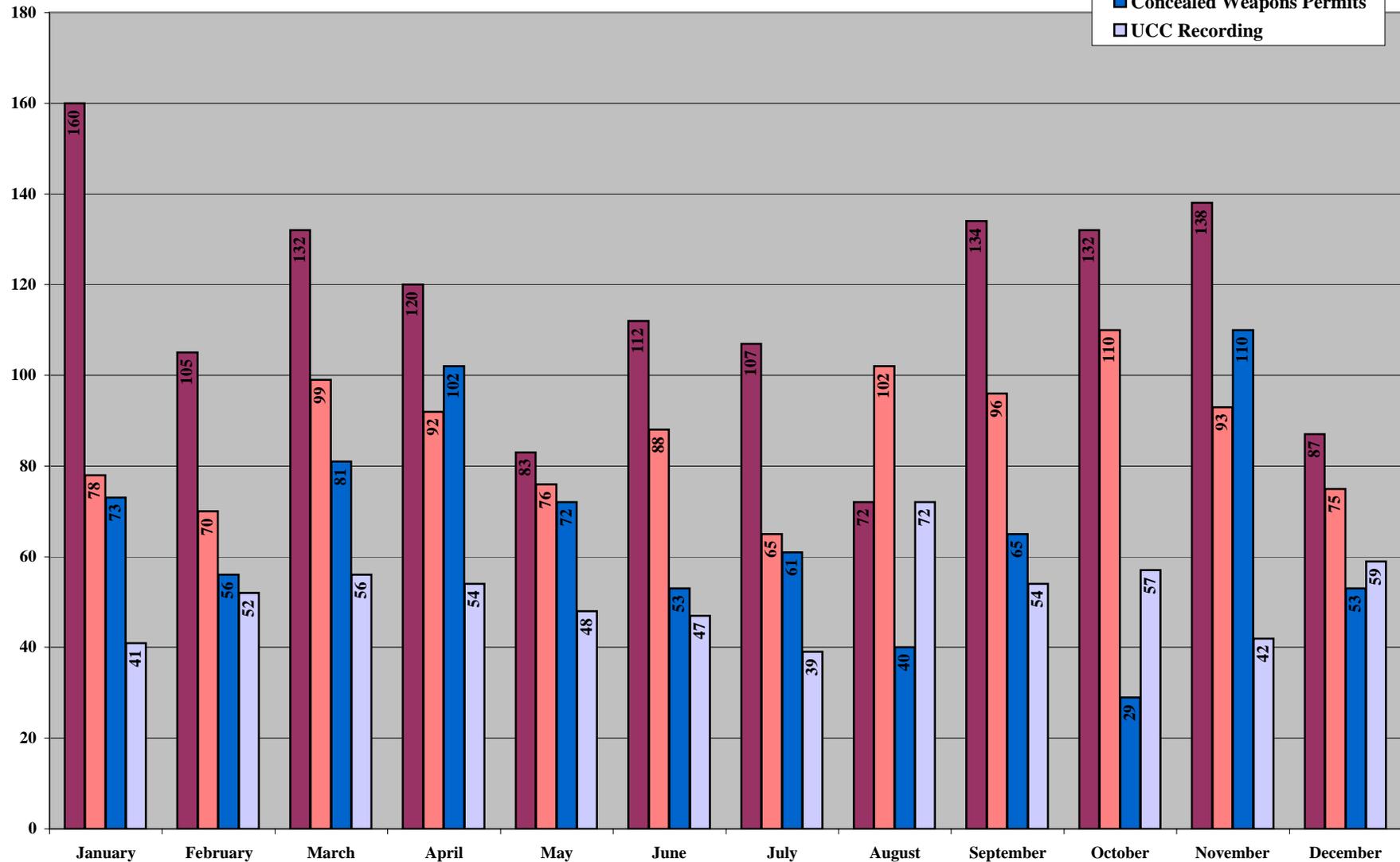
2005 Marriage Licenses



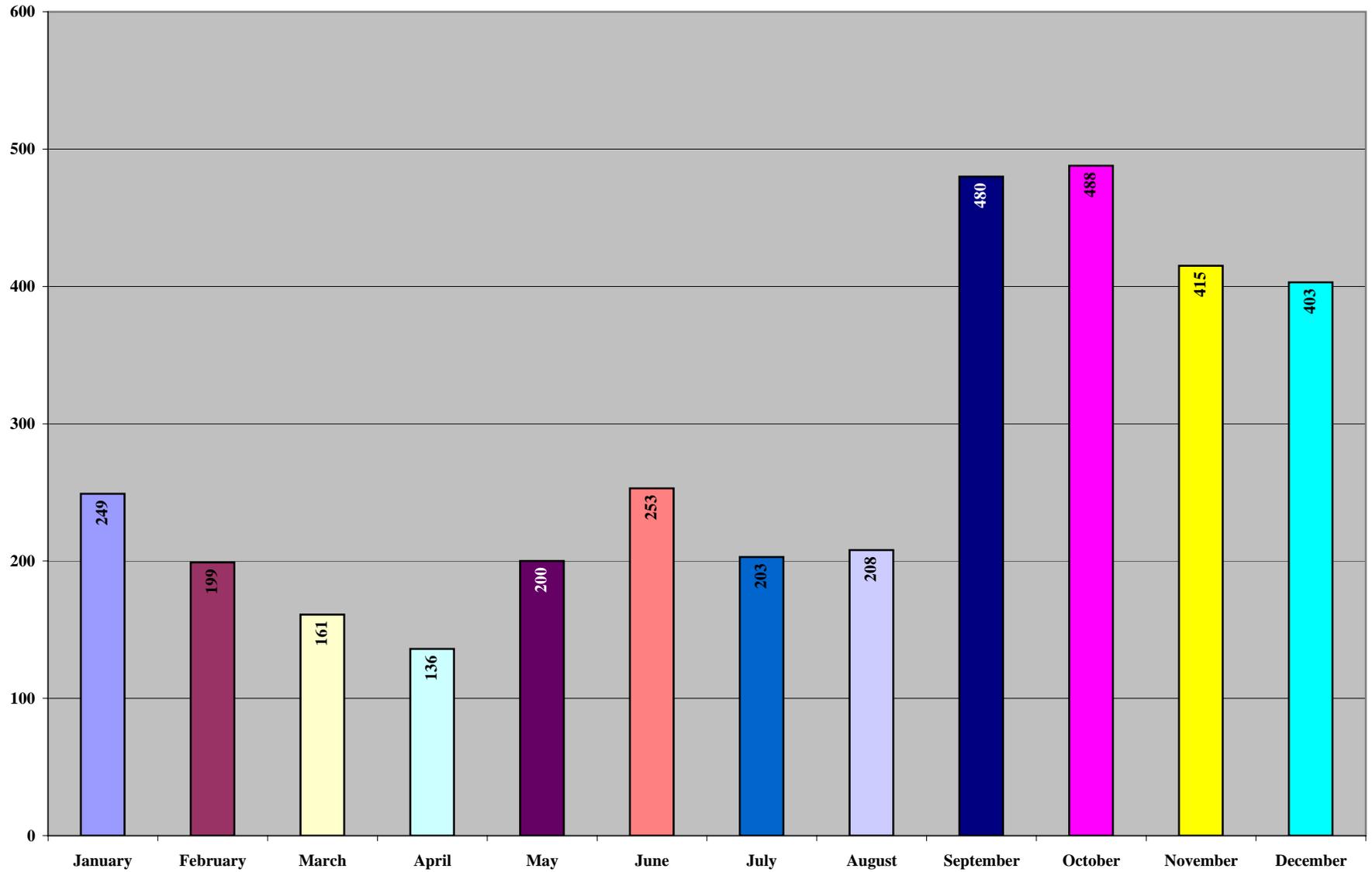
2005 Passports



Trade Names, Notaries, Concealed Weapons Permits, UCC Recordings

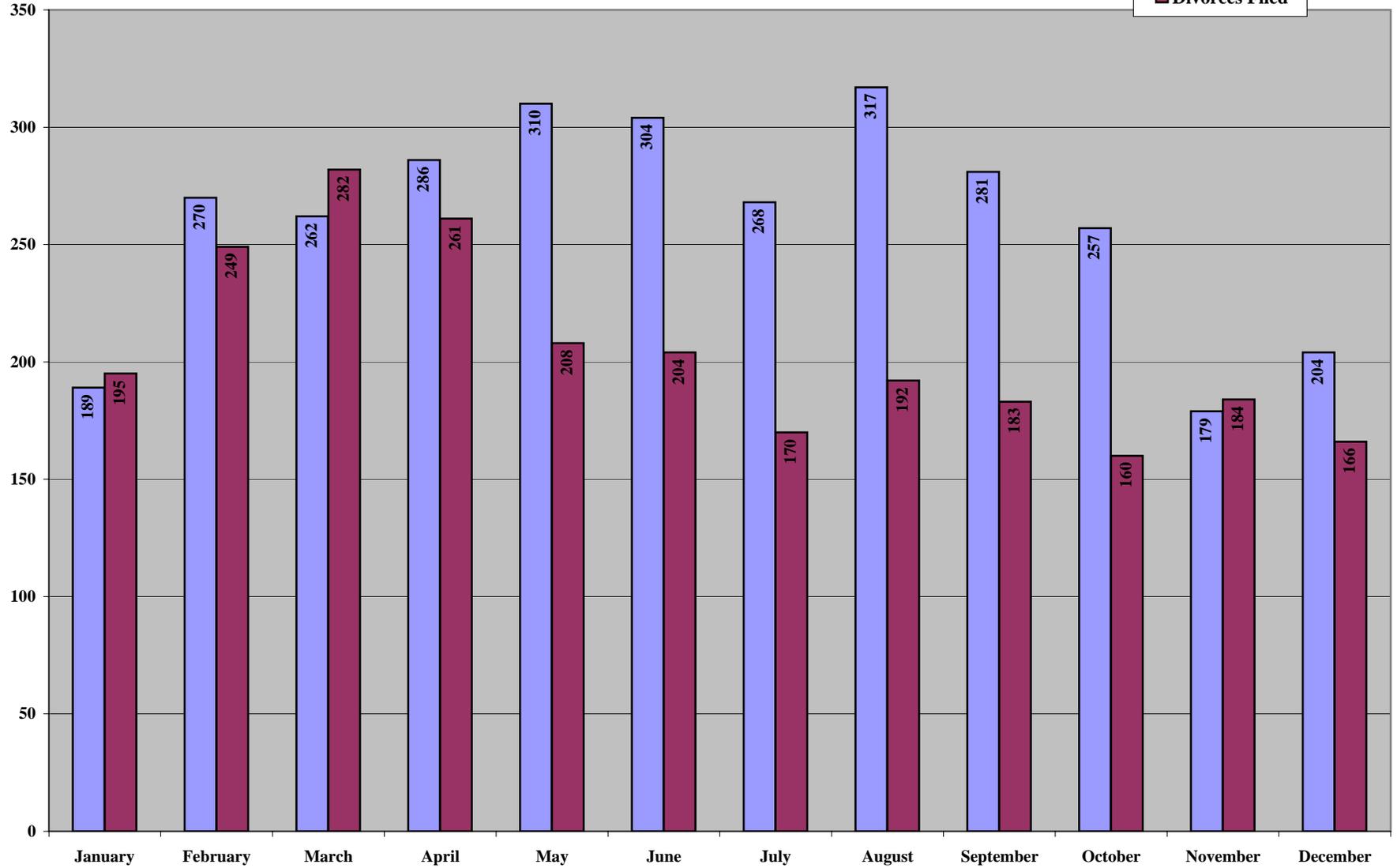


2005 Will Documents Executed

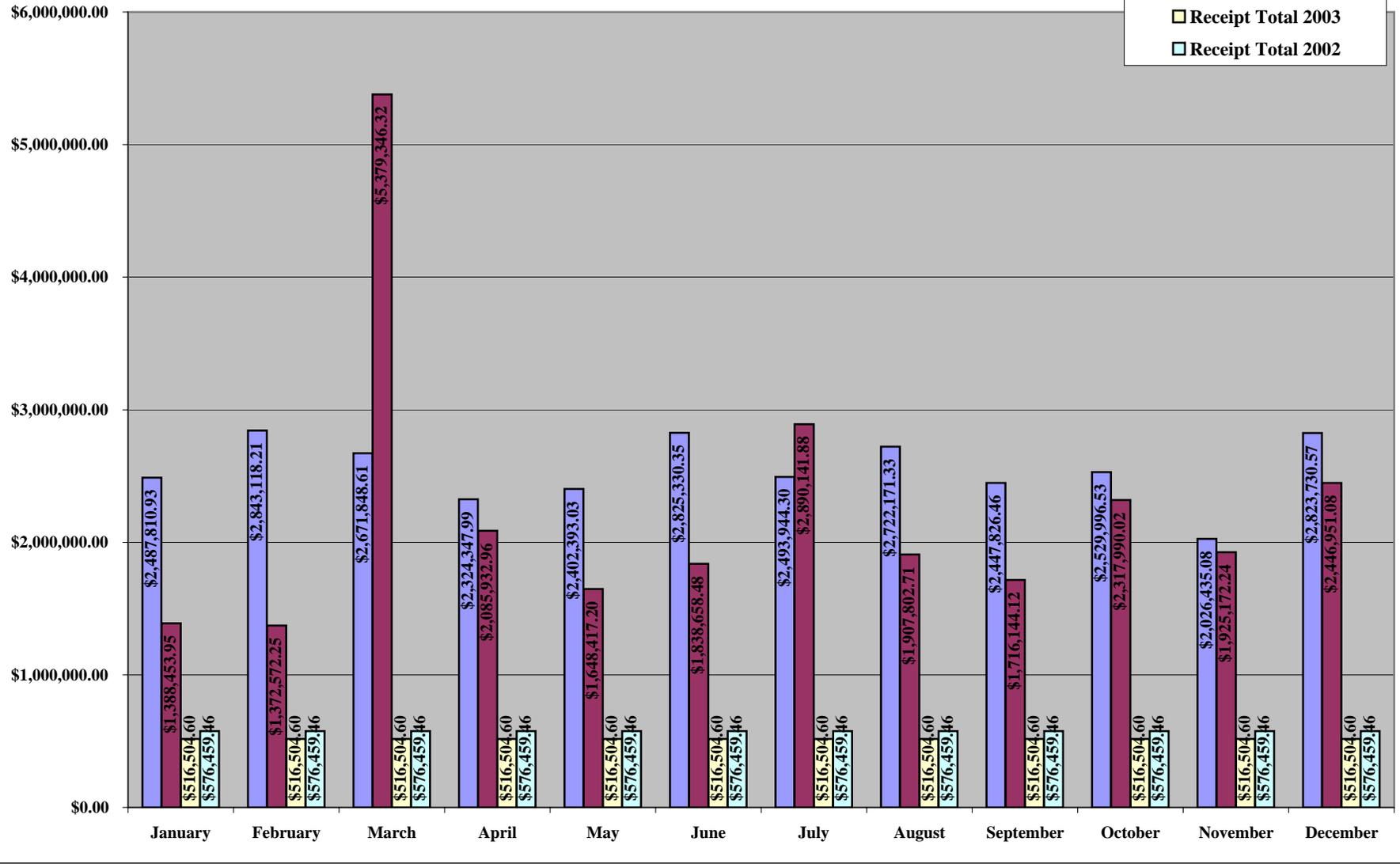
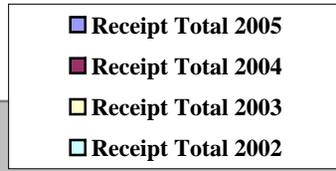


2005 Marriage Licenses and Divorces

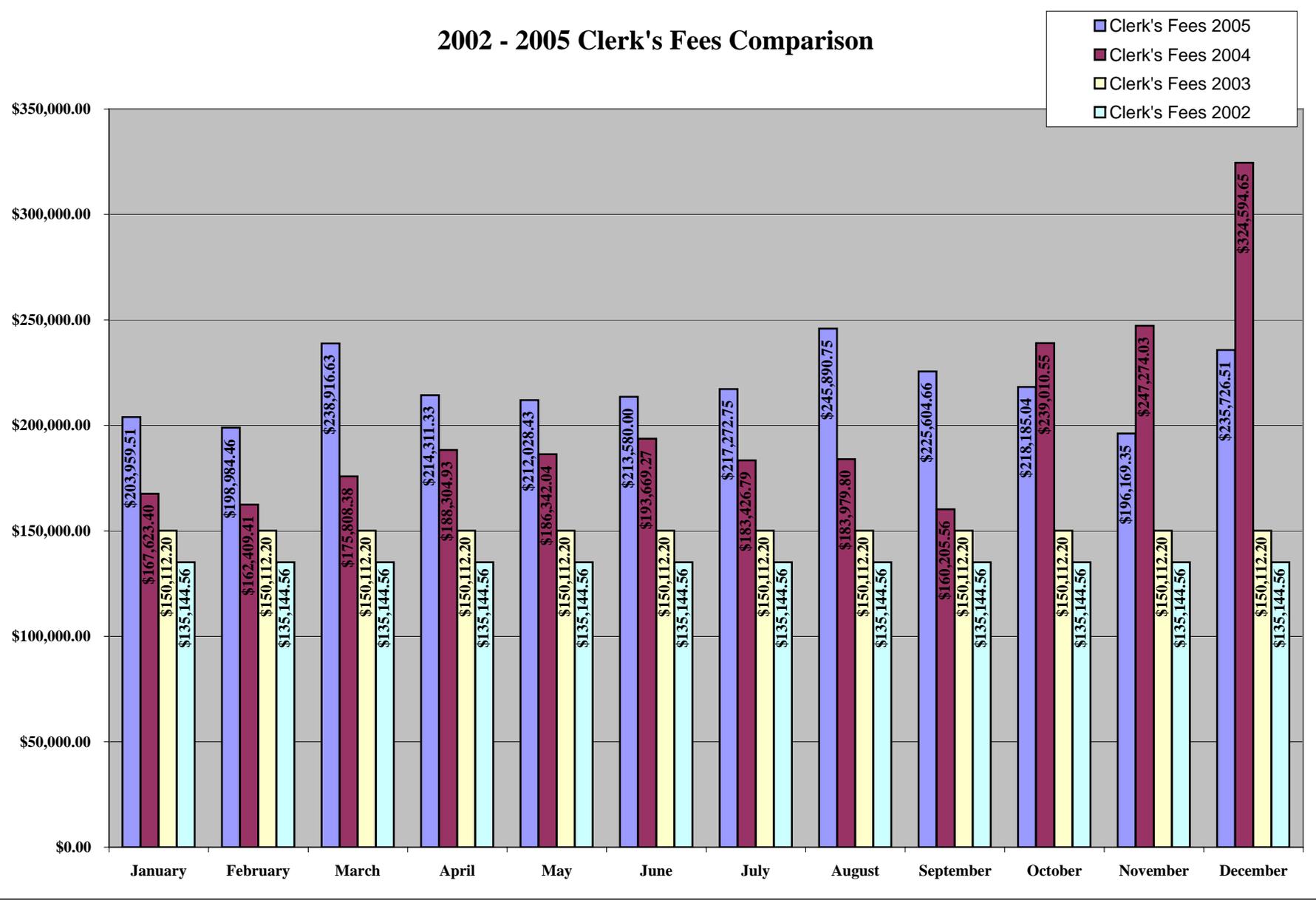
■ Marriages
■ Divorces Filed



2002 - 2005 Receipt Totals Comparison

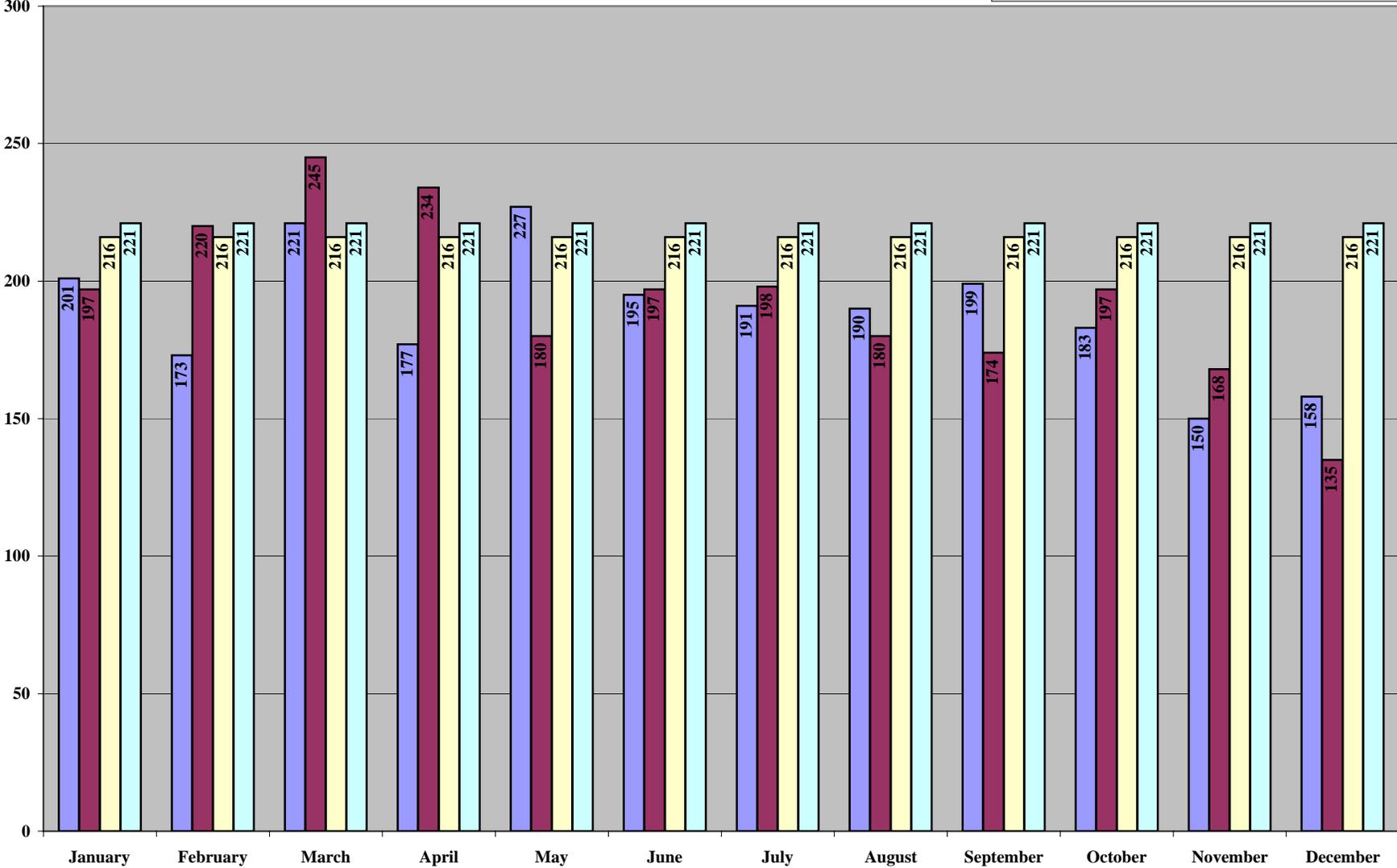


2002 - 2005 Clerk's Fees Comparison



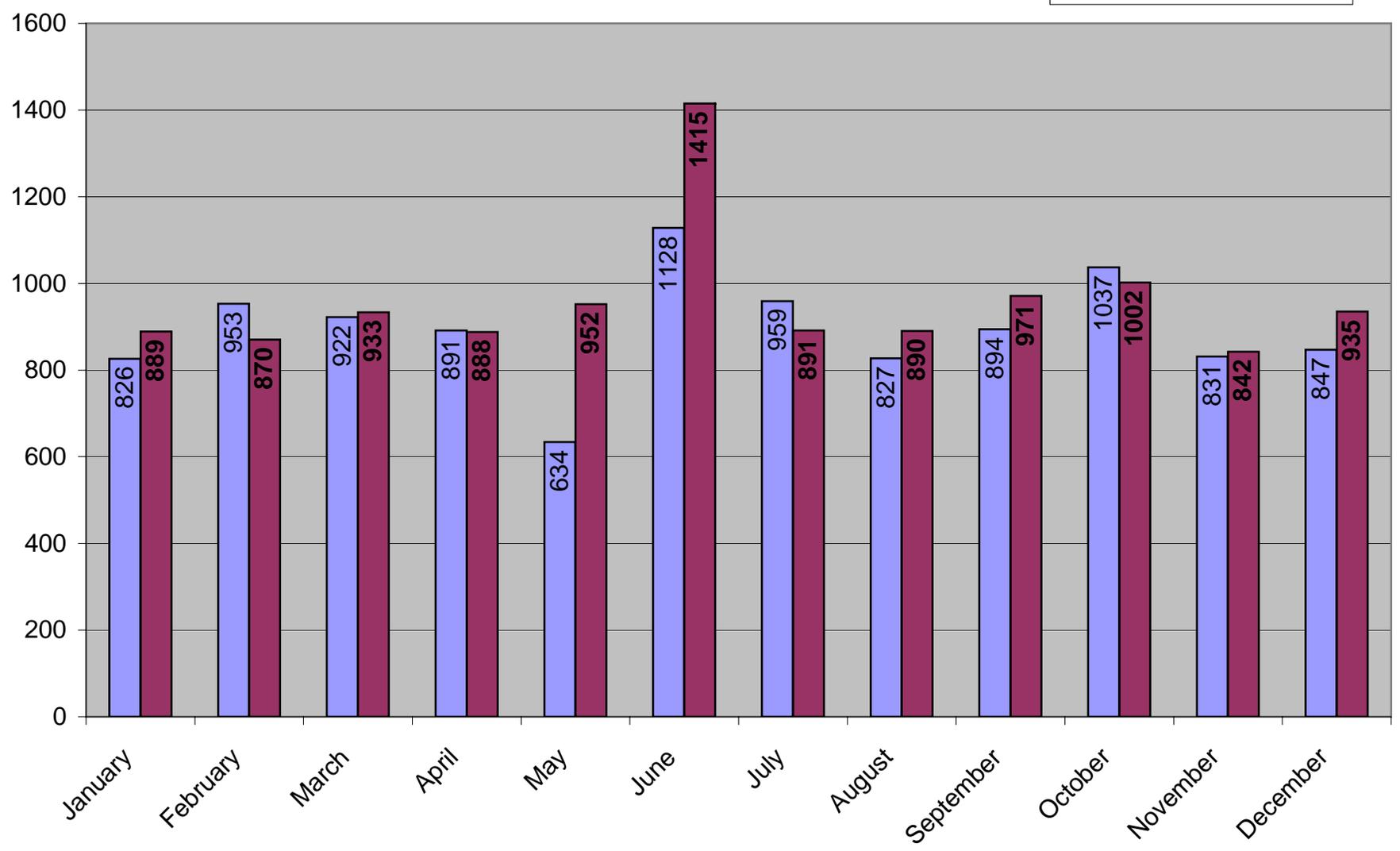
2002 - 2005 Civil Suits Filed Comparison

- Civil Suits Filed 2005
- Civil Suits Filed 2004
- Civil Suits Filed 2003
- Civil Suits Filed 2002

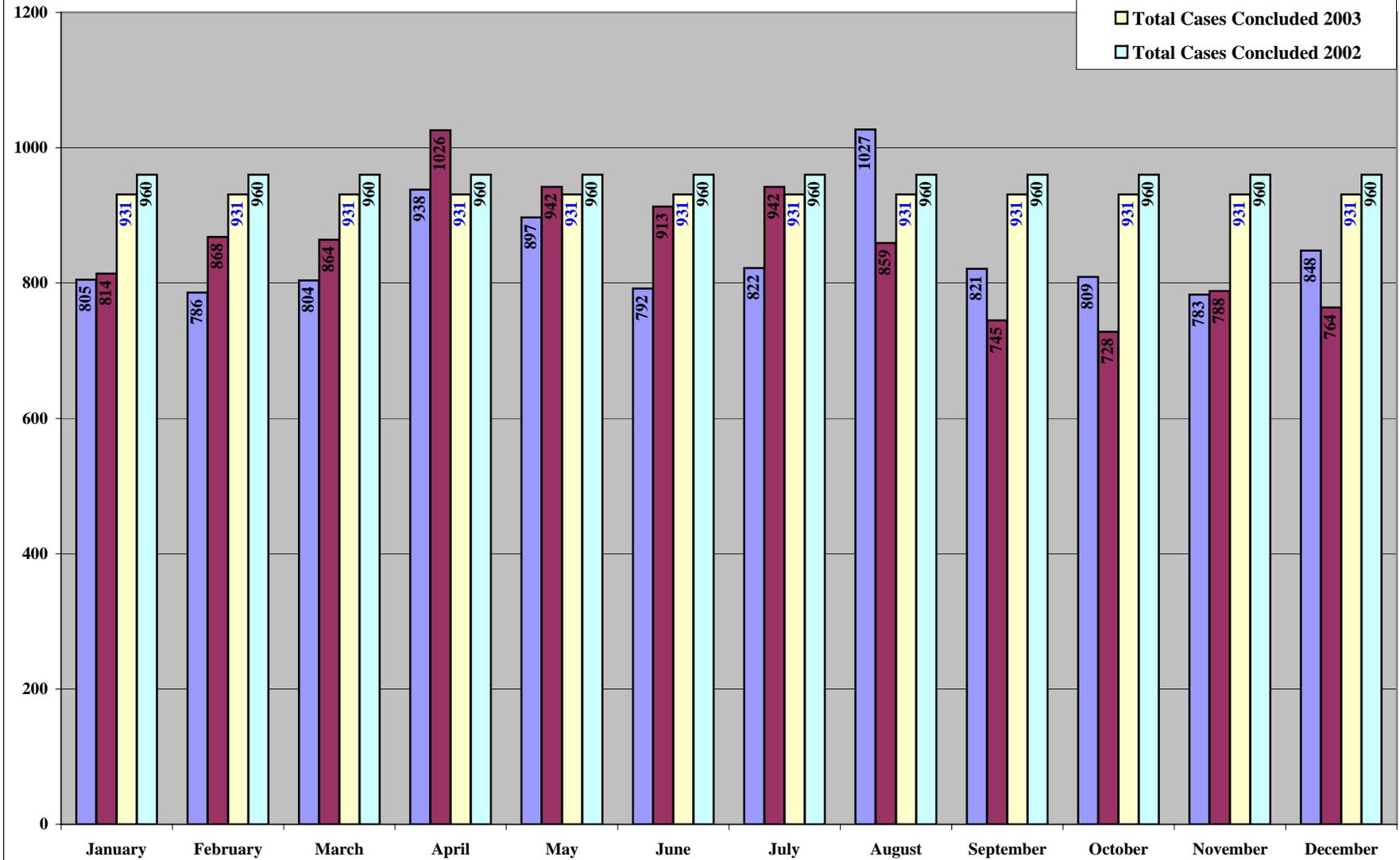


Criminal Cases Commenced

■ Total Cases Commenced 2005
■ Total Cases Commenced 2004

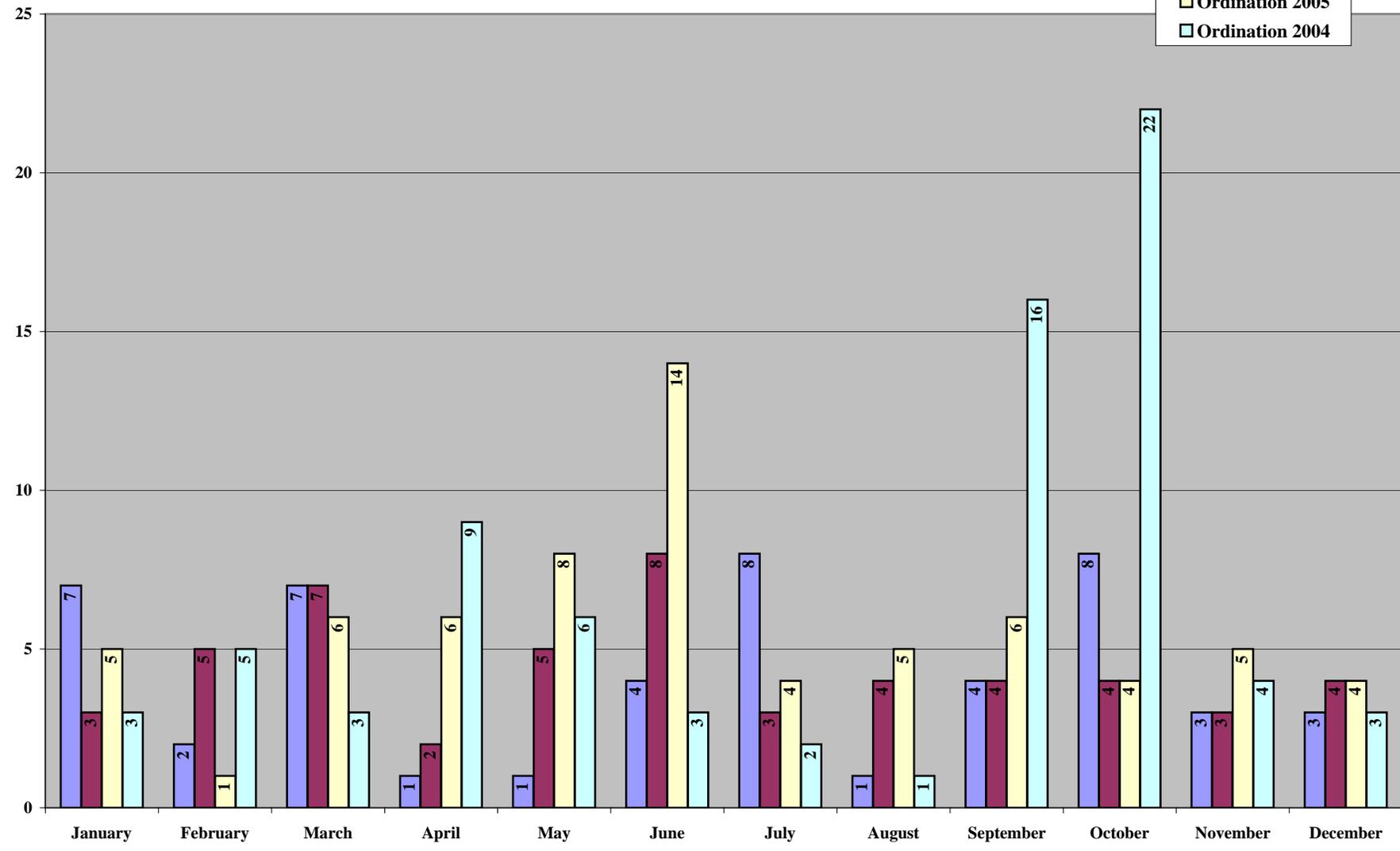


2002 - 2005 Total Criminal Cases Concluded



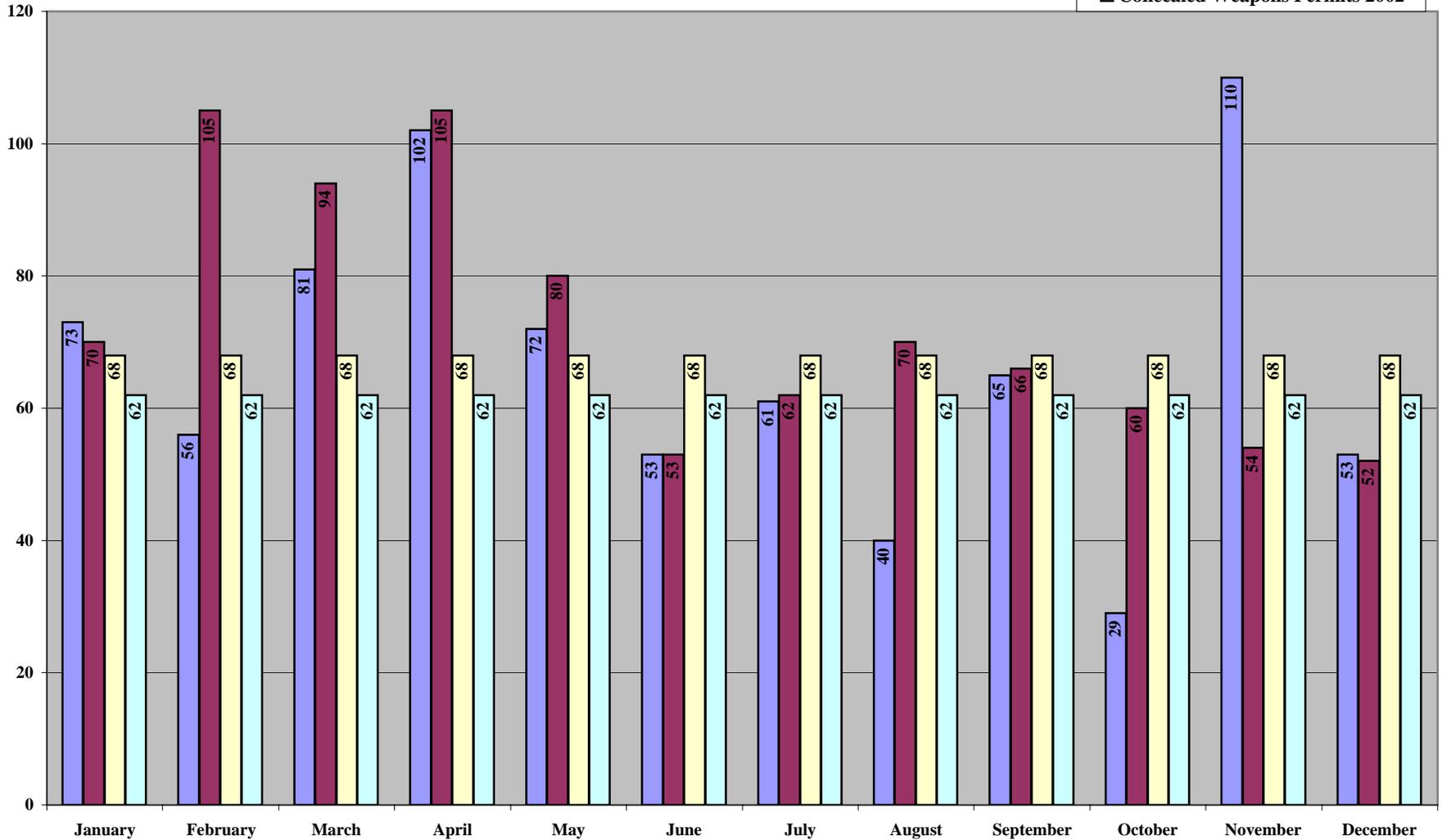
2004 - 2005 - DD214 & Ordinations Comparison

- DD214 2005
- DD214 2004
- Ordination 2005
- Ordination 2004

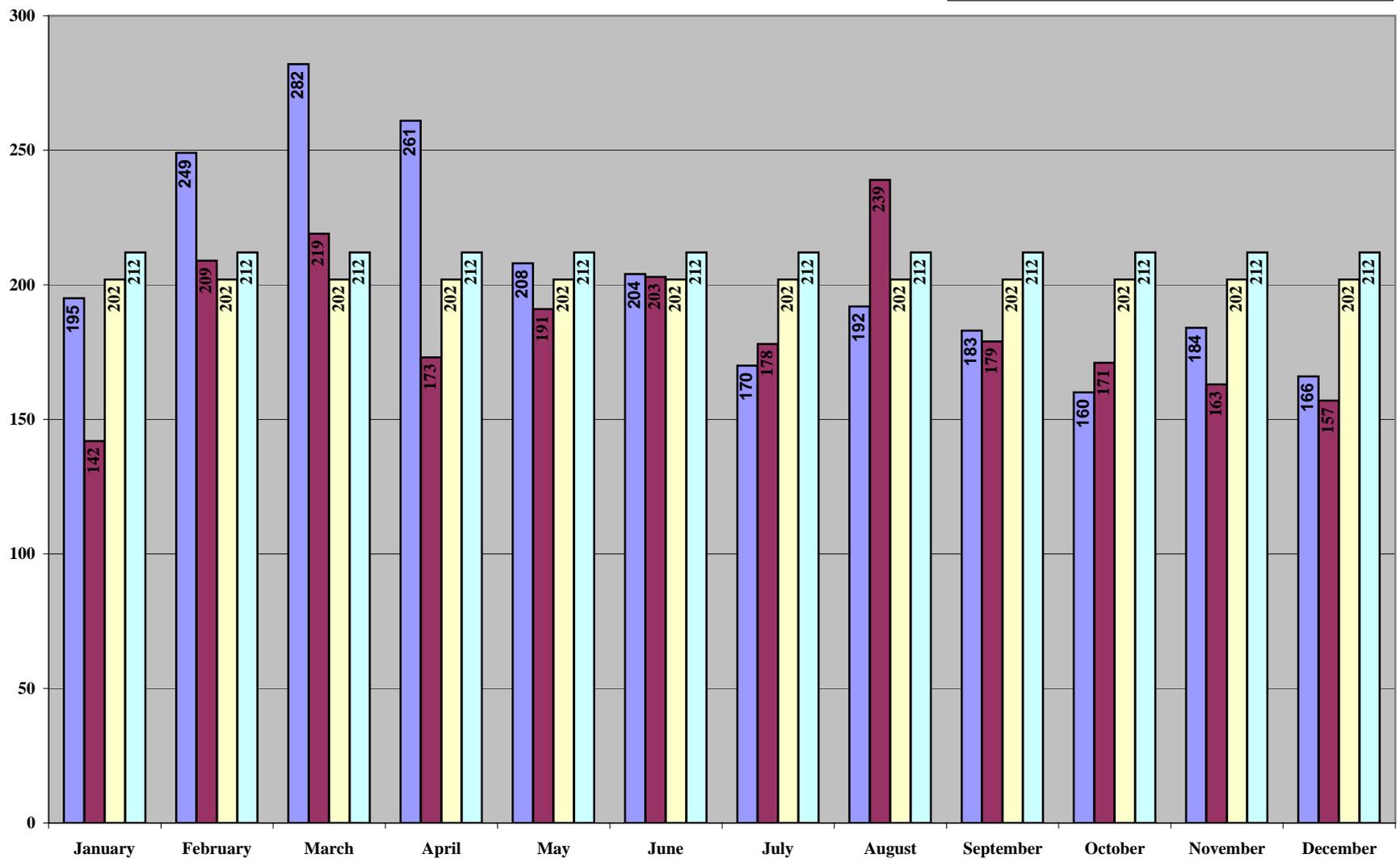


2002 - 2005 Concealed Weapons Permit Comparison

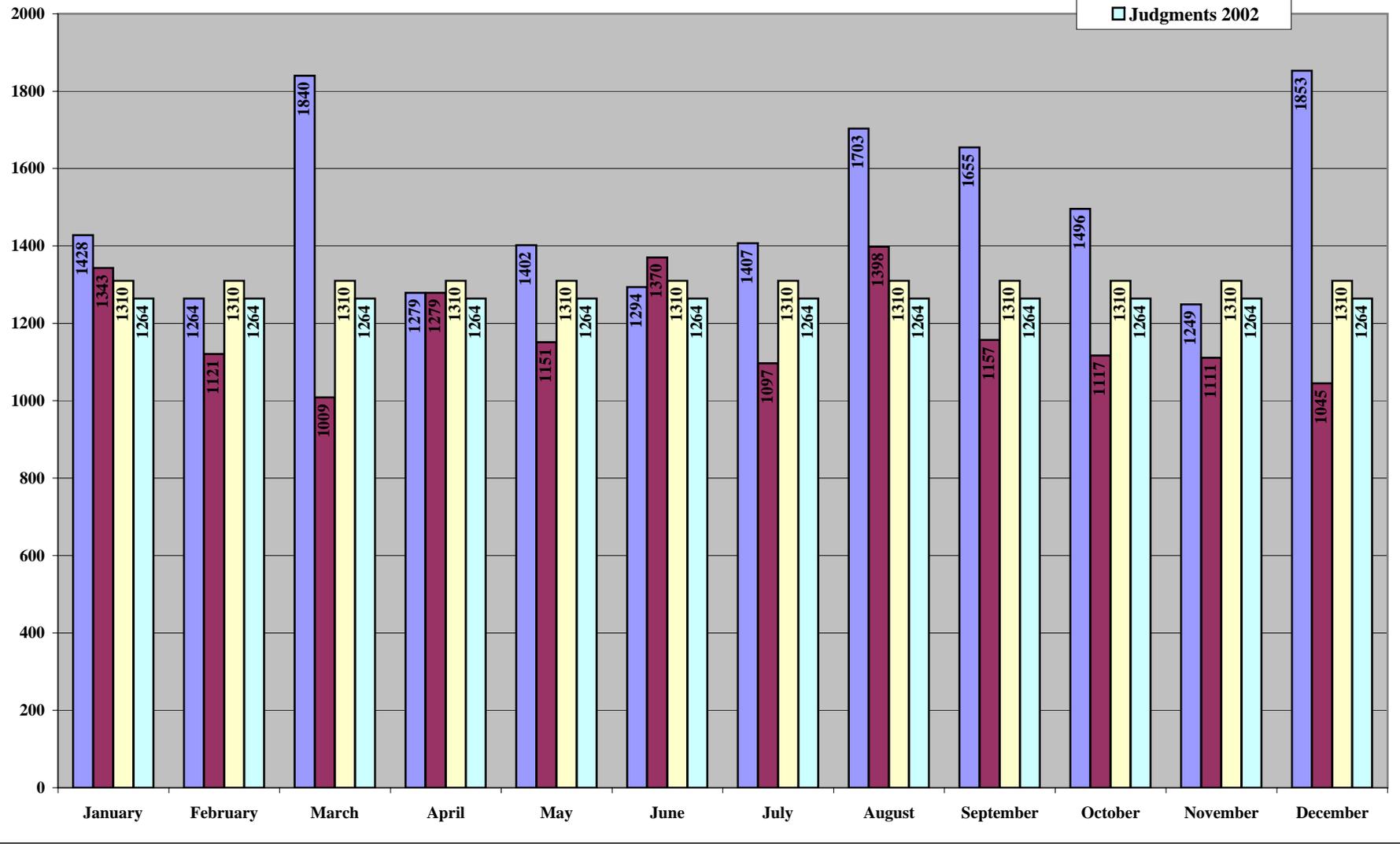
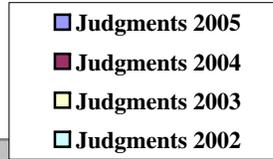
- Concealed Weapons Permits 2005
- Concealed Weapons Permits 2004
- Concealed Weapons Permits 2003
- Concealed Weapons Permits 2002



2002 - 2005 Divorces Filed Comparison

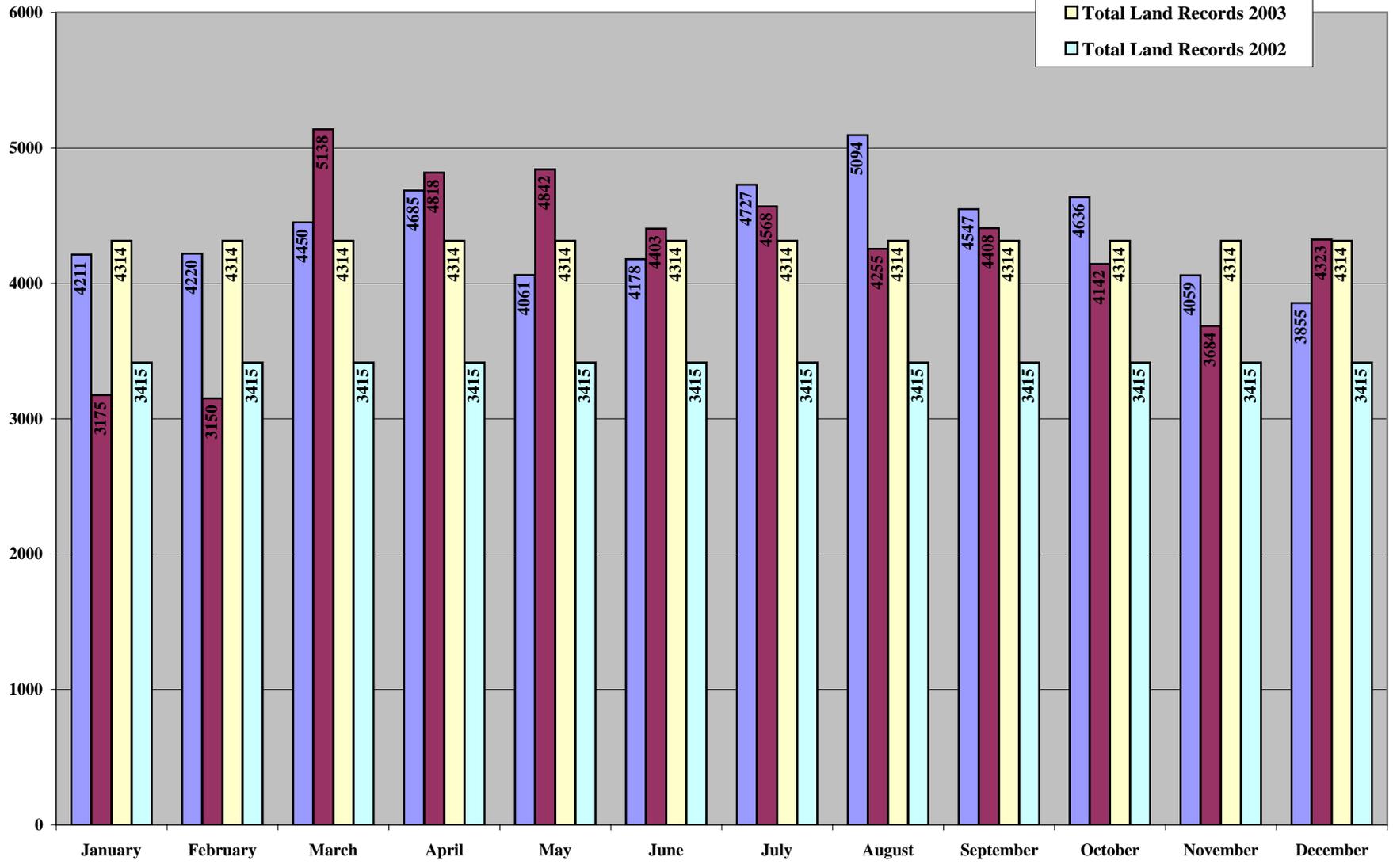


2002 - 2005 Judgements Comparison

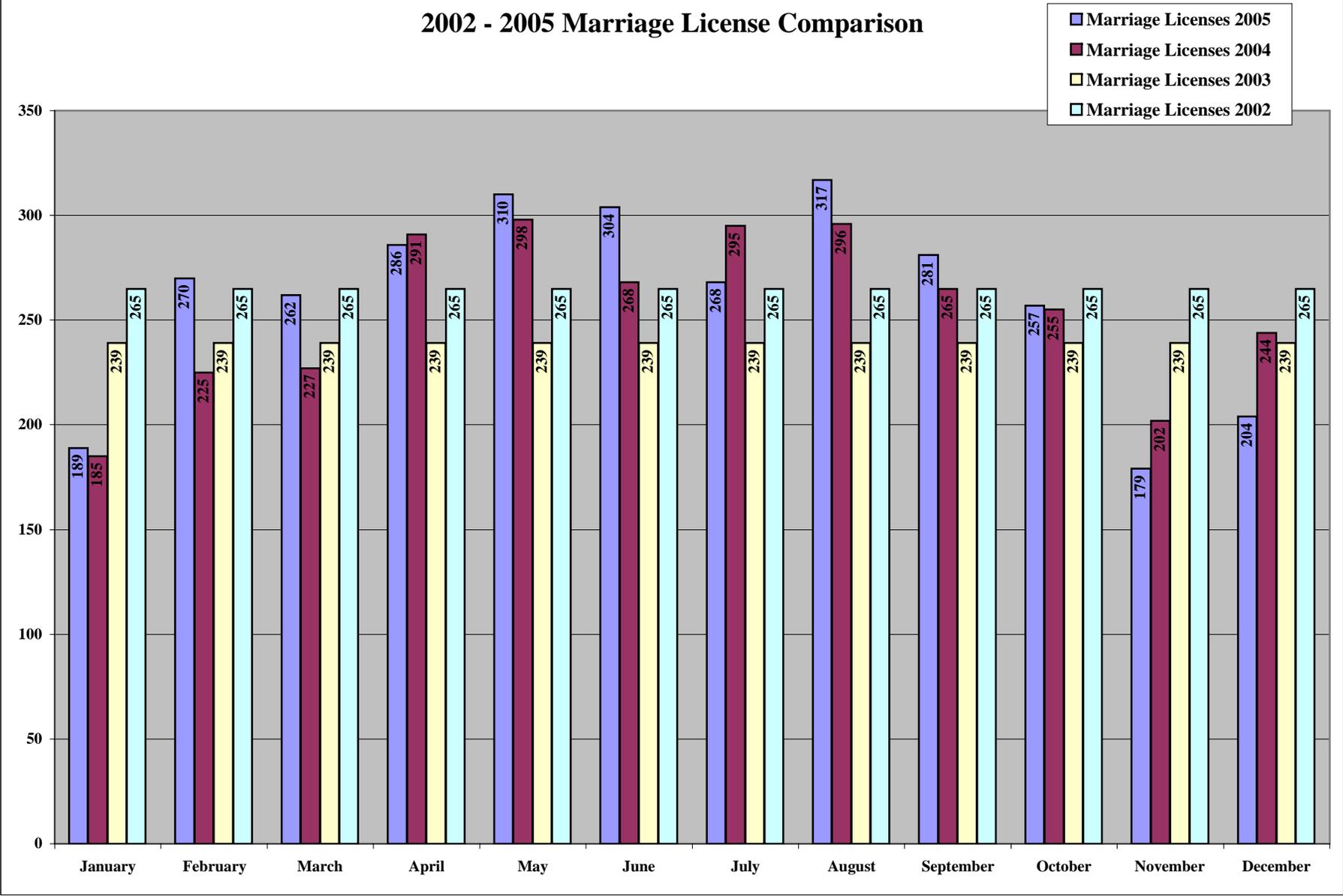


2002 - 2005 Land Records Comparison

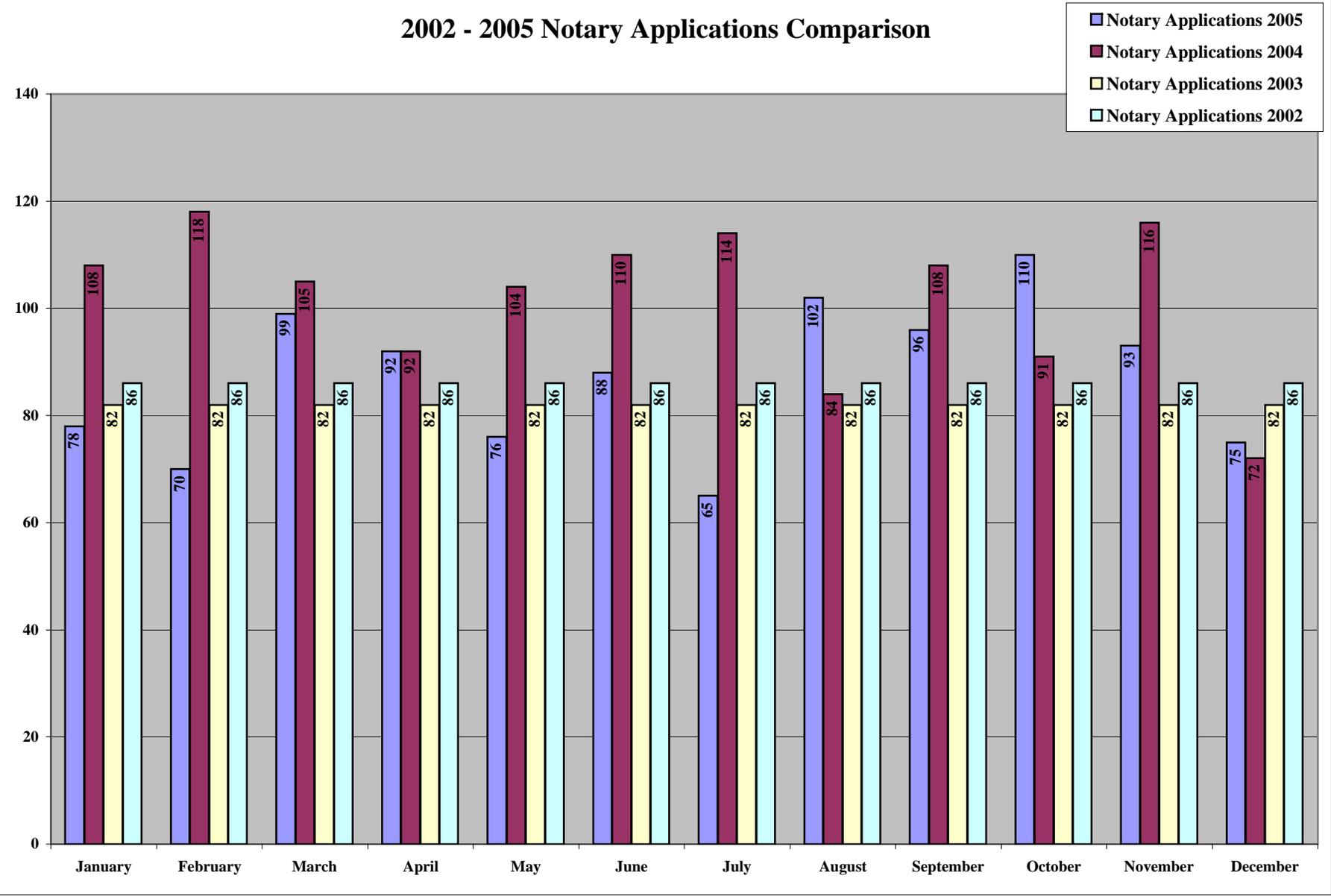
- Total Land Records 2005
- Total Land Records 2004
- Total Land Records 2003
- Total Land Records 2002



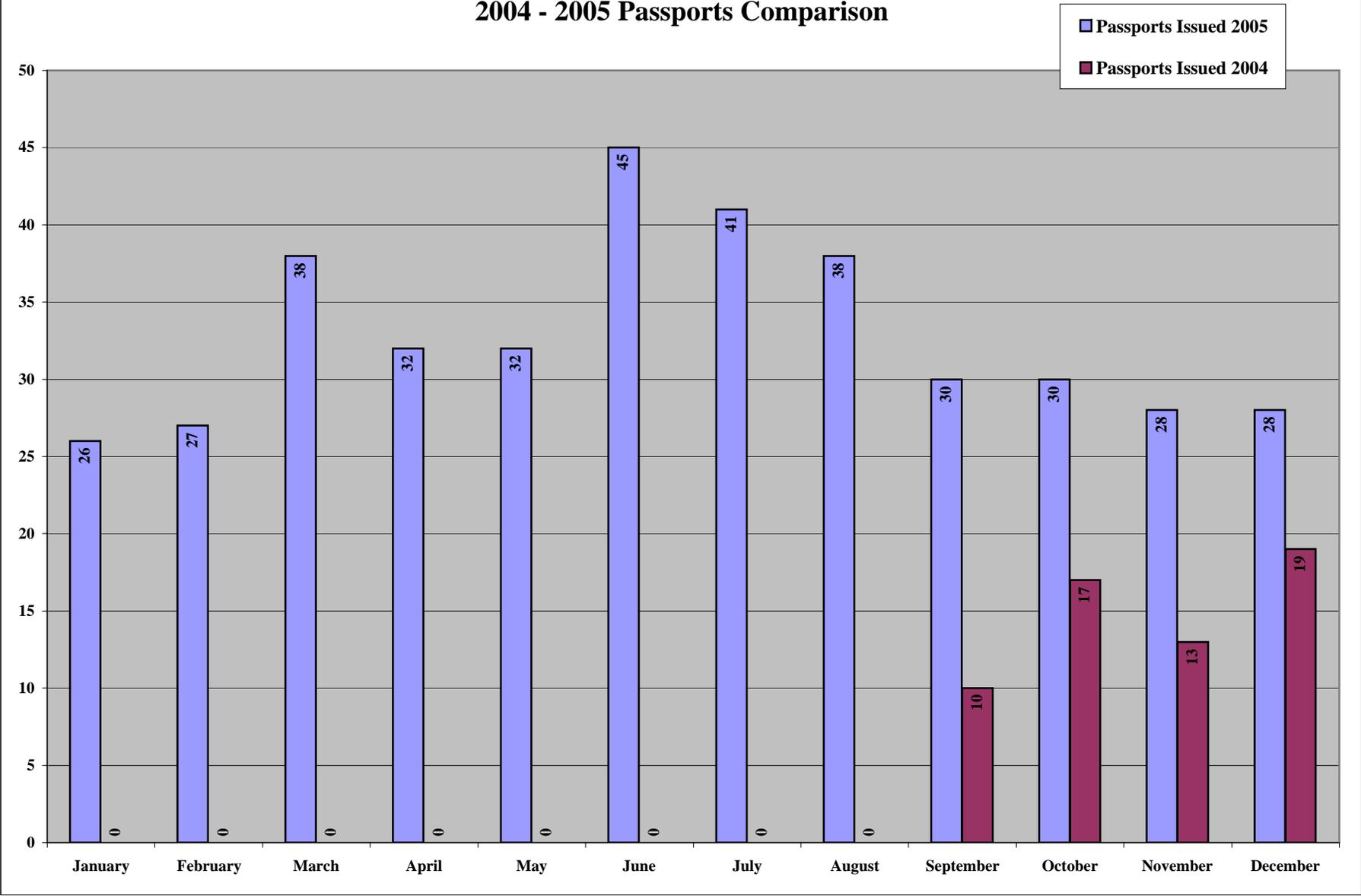
2002 - 2005 Marriage License Comparison



2002 - 2005 Notary Applications Comparison

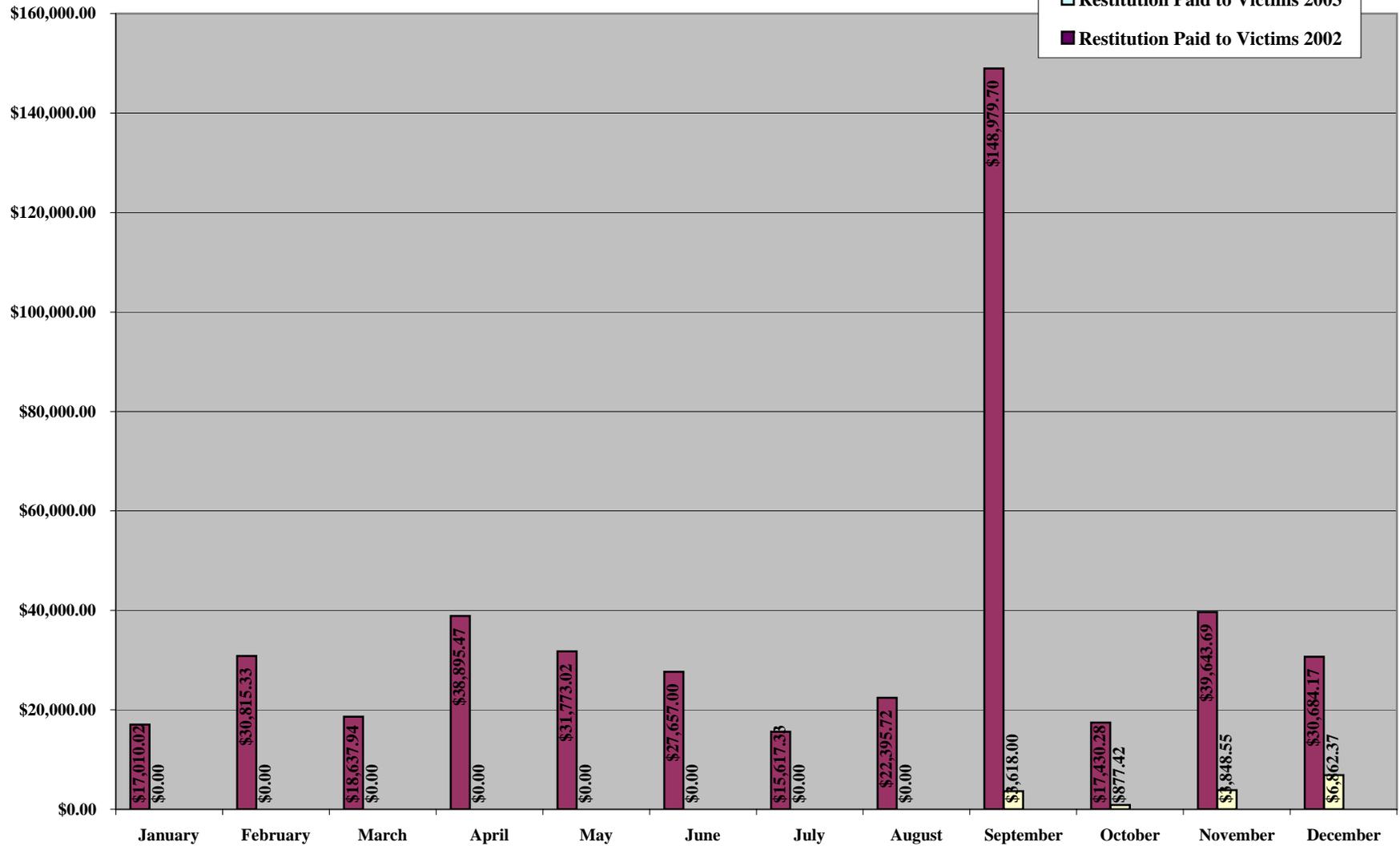


2004 - 2005 Passports Comparison

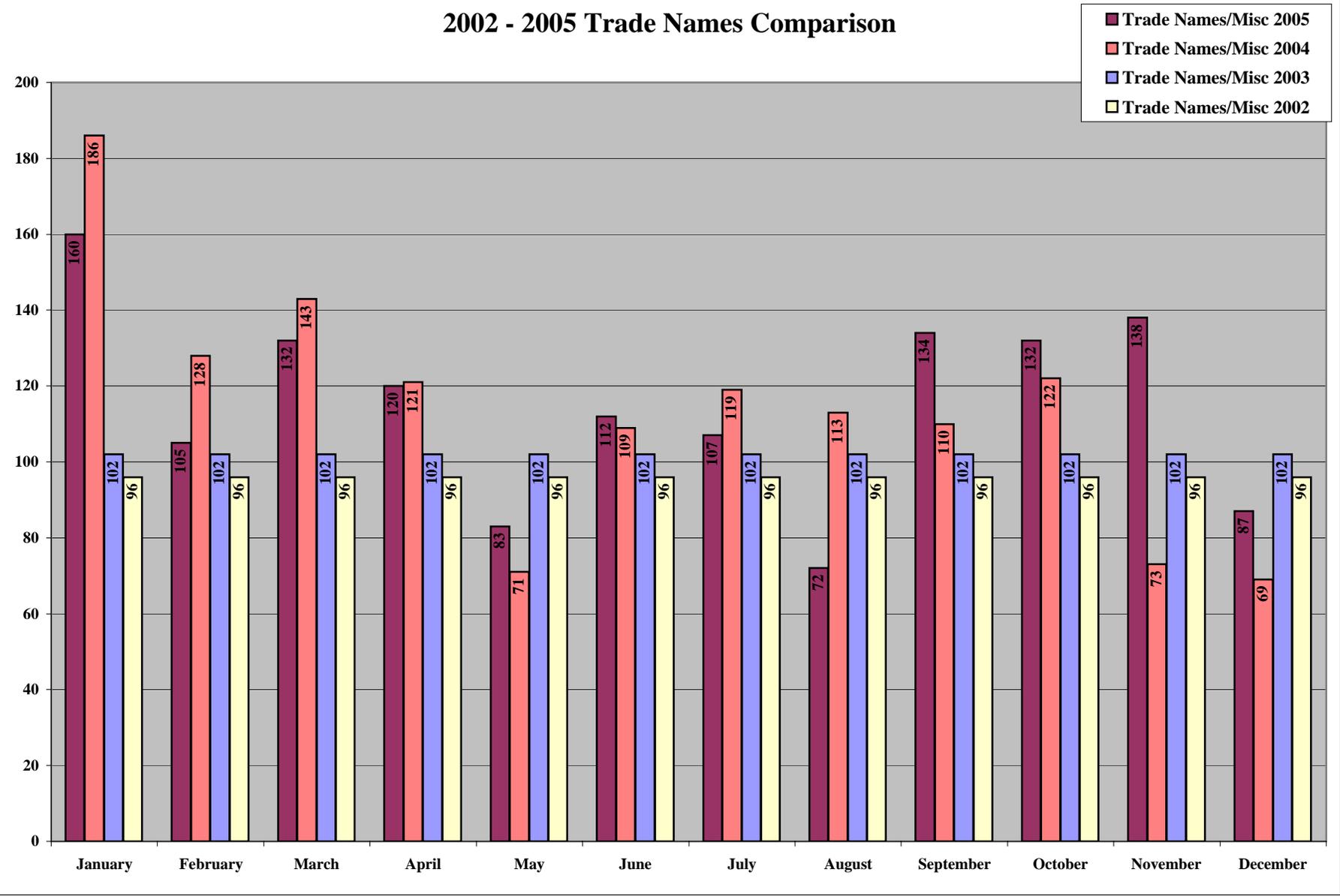


2002 - 2005 Restitution to Victims

- Restitution Paid to Victims 2005
- Restitution Paid to Victims 2004
- Restitution Paid to Victims 2003
- Restitution Paid to Victims 2002

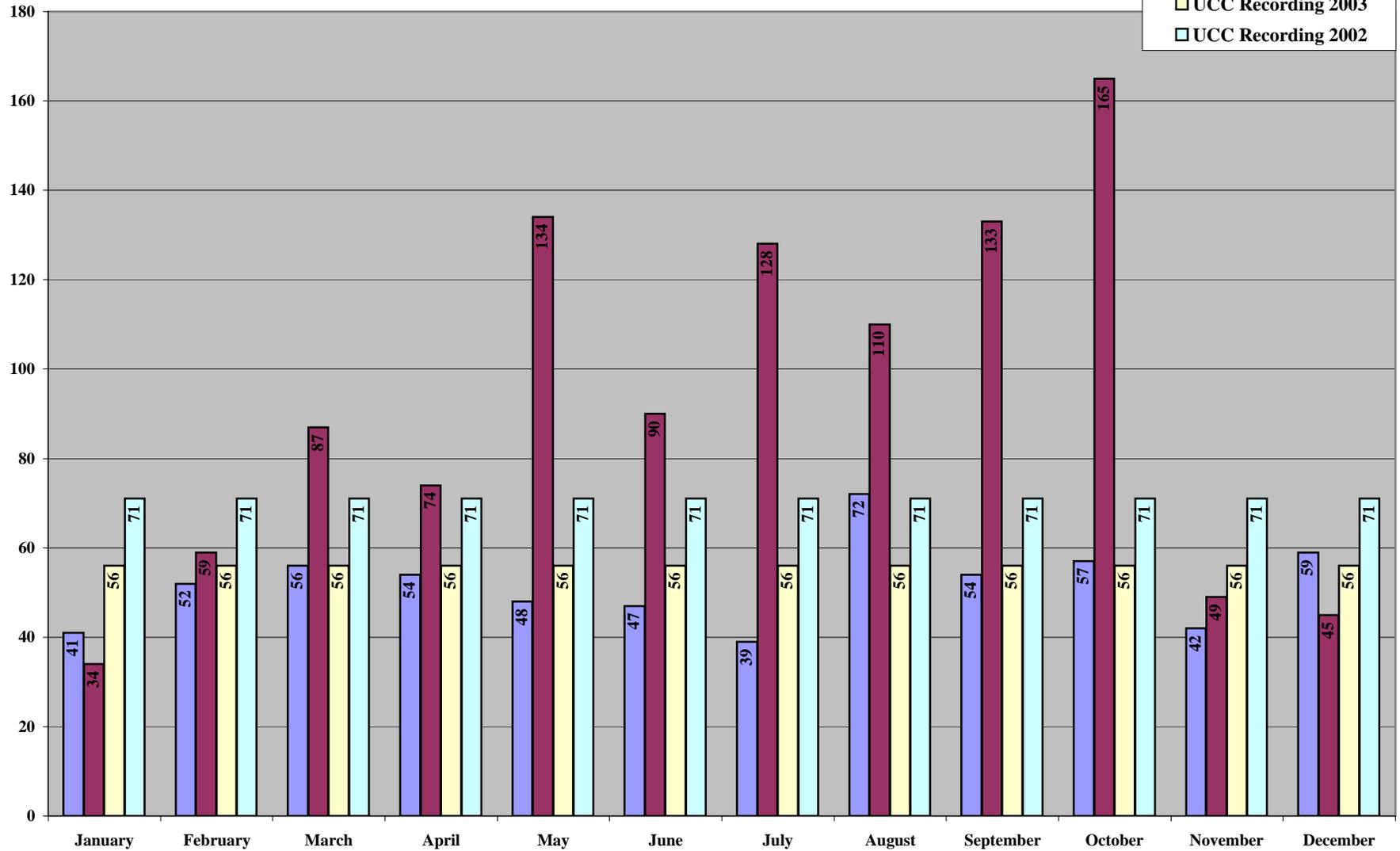


2002 - 2005 Trade Names Comparison



2002 - 2005 UCC Recordings Comparison

- UCC Recording 2005
- UCC Recording 2004
- UCC Recording 2003
- UCC Recording 2002



2002 - 2005 Will Documents Executed Comparison

- Will Documents Executed 2005
- Will Documents Executed 2004
- Will Documents Executed 2003
- Will Documents Executed 2002

