

George E. Schaefer, III, Clerk
Norfolk Circuit Court Clerk's Office

Annual Report for 2007

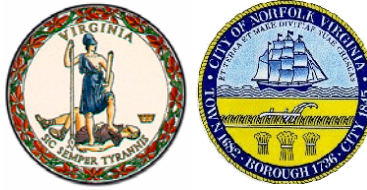


Clerk of Court
George E. Schaefer

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 Members 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: March 6, 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with great pleasure that I present this report on the state of the Circuit Court Clerk's Office to you. As I enter my 5th year as the Circuit Court Clerk, I can only express to you my sincere appreciation for the partnership that we have developed with virtually every department within the city.

2007 was a difficult year due to the downturn in the housing market and uncertainly caused by the turnover of a number of our judges.

Throughout this past year, my office has been involved in several initiatives designed to make the 4th Circuit a more efficient operation providing increased services to the citizens of Norfolk and to streamline operations for our professional clients. We continue to partner with the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia on initiatives ensuring value for the entire Commonwealth Judicial System. To that end, I have included below a brief description of these initiatives and the current status of each one.

1. E-filing of court documents – We have had our kick-off meeting with the Supreme Court of Virginia, Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court, General District Court, Public Defender, Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Corrections and others. We have identified the majority of the business process to allow the programmers to begin building the application. As this system will need to interact with multiple government

agencies that we deal with as well as the private bar, we estimate a first phase delivery of the product in early 2009.

2. Digital Document Control – This has been the single largest contributor of productivity savings to date. We continue to digitize our files and have reached the following milestones:
 - a. Criminal and Civil files – Digitized back to January 1, 2007
 - b. Land Records – Digitized back to August 1985
 - c. Marriage Licenses – Digitized back to January 1, 1988
 - d. Judgments – Digitized back to January 11, 1990
 - e. Finance Statements, Miscellaneous and Wills – Digitized back to March 1, 1993

Because of this effort, we have seen a 12% increase in staff productivity and an even greater satisfaction from the citizens.

3. Case View – We have completed the transition to digital dockets and digital case files in court. In the very near future we will have a case view system in place for viewing criminal and civil case filings via a secure connection over the Internet. Additionally, this office is making available the technology necessary to expand the digital capabilities to the lower courts as well, increasing efficiencies in those courts and reducing file storage space.
4. We continue to be an integral part of the redesign of the Supreme Court Case and Financial Management Systems, Electronic Recording Workgroup 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).

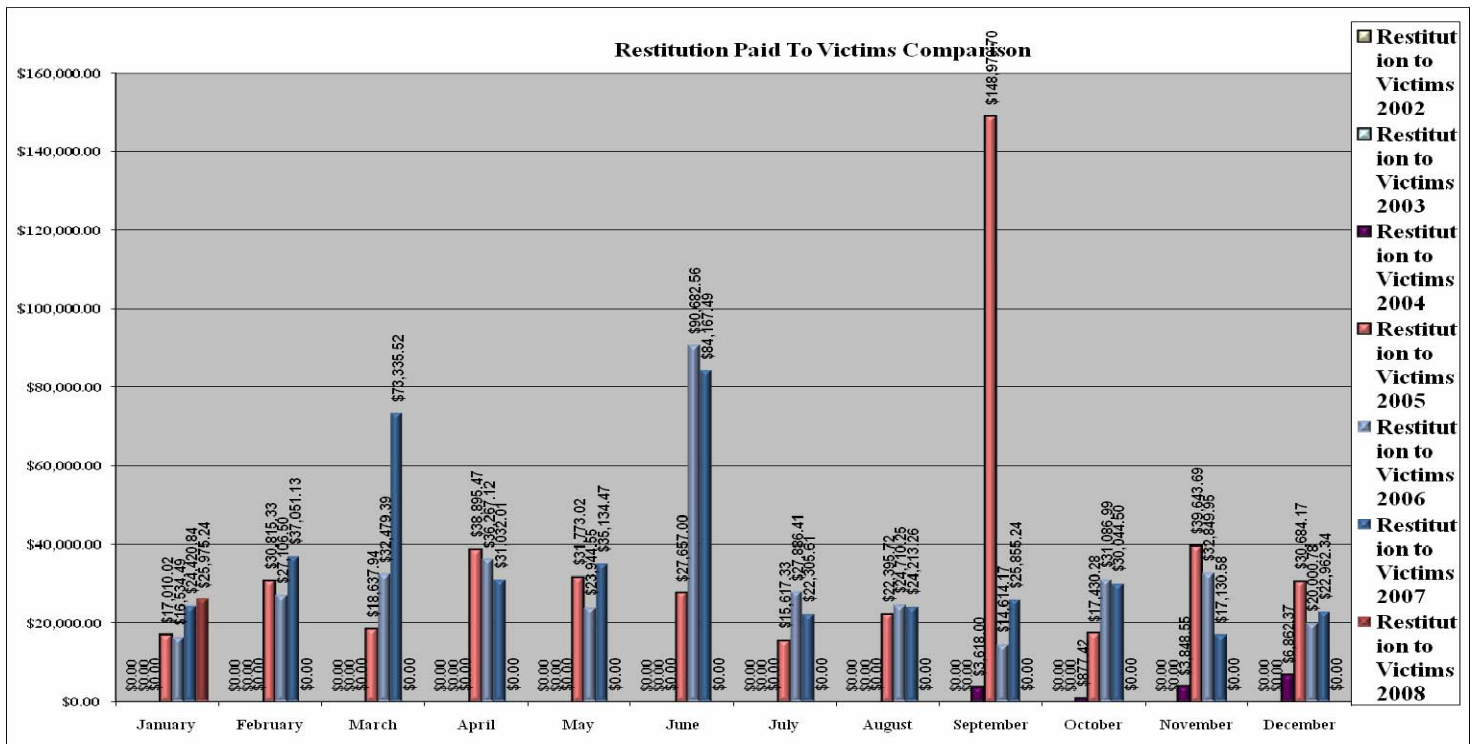
The technology enhancements that we have put in place continue to realize significant savings in both staff time and response time to citizen requests. In the past, we have had to write down the questions, retrieve the paper file, call the individual back and then answer their questions. This process took anywhere from one hour to the next day, depending on the location of the paper file. These questions are now answered immediately by simply pulling the digital file from the system.

2007 was a very stable year as far as the number of cases commenced and completed. This court commenced and completed roughly the same number of civil and criminal cases as 2006. However, we have seen a tremendous rise in Concealed Weapons Permits and Will documents executed during the past year. Deed recordings are down significantly as a result of the collapse of the housing market directly contributing to the decrease in revenue of just over \$400,000 dollars from 2006.

The changeover of the General Receiver duties from Glasser and Glasser to my office has proven fruitful to those citizens for which we are holding funds. By lowering the costs associated with the management of those funds and negotiating a higher interest rate, we have been able to add roughly 6% to each of the 450 individual accounts that we manage.

We continue receipting and disbursing restitution payments to victims. Since actively pursuing funds through the Tax Set-off program, we have been able to recoup more funds owed to victims. We also developed additional steps now being put in place by the Commonwealth's

Attorney to ensure collection capabilities for restitution. The Clerk's Office has collected and disbursed over \$425,000.00 to victims in the 4th Circuit; a 12% increase over 2006.



Secure Remote Access to Real Estate records continues to be popular with Title Examiners, Attorneys, Law Enforcement and the Federal and State Government. We remain in partnership with several City of Norfolk Departments such as the City Attorney, Real Estate, Planning and Codes Administration, HRUBS, Health and Human Services; providing access as needed.

This office 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).

The importance of our participation in these groups is evidenced by the total number of cases, both criminal and civil filed this past year as well as the ever increasing numbers of marriage licenses, concealed weapons permits, judgments, restitution, time to pay plans, etc. that are processed by this office.

Examples:

- Criminal Cases concluded in CY07: 11,189 (up 6.5%)
- Civil Cases opened in CY07: 6,347 (down 0.5%)
- Will documents processed in CY07: 8,513 (up 28.7%)
- Land Record documents processed in CY07: 47,597 (down 11.6%)
- Other (marriage license, weapons permits, trade names, etc.): 62,701 (up 12%)
- Back scanning of documents in CY07: 423,693

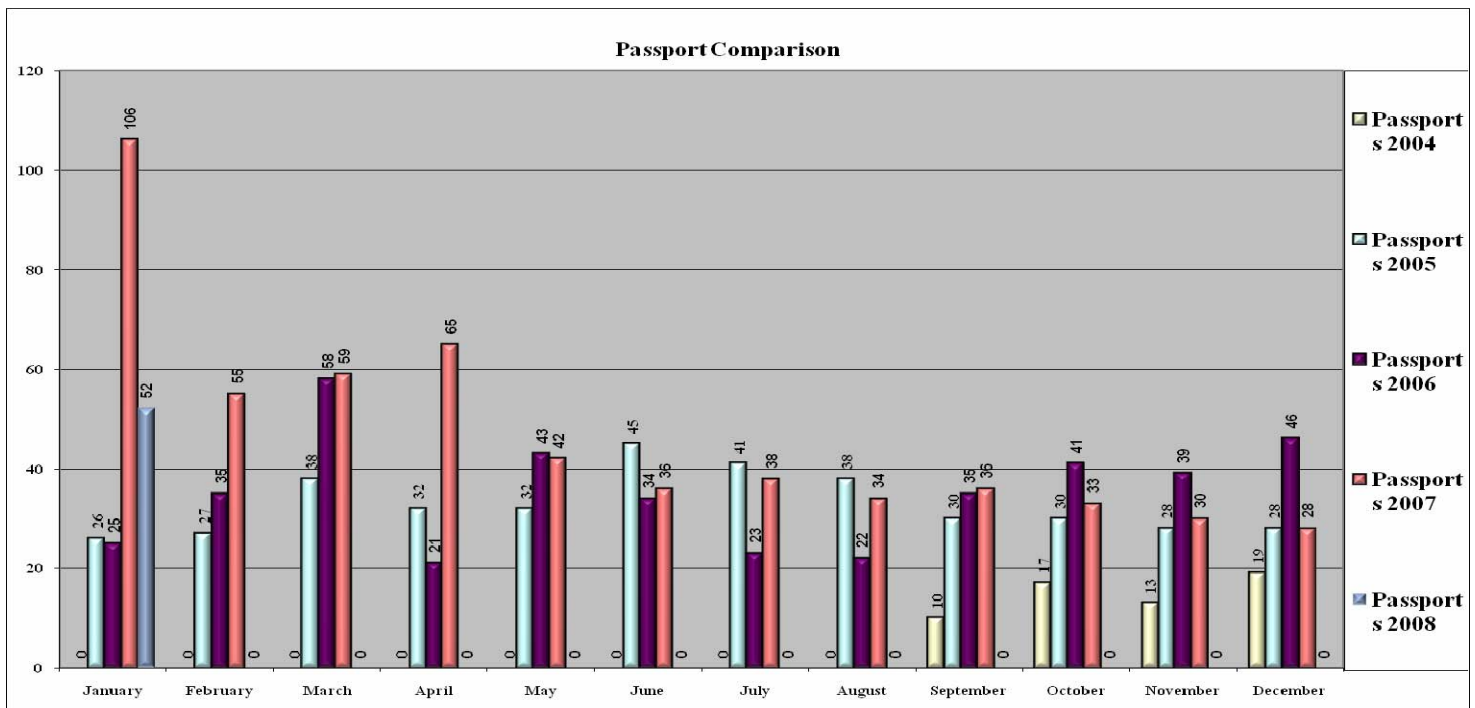
The back scanning of almost a half million images was accomplished entirely in house with current staff. The back scanning accomplished brings our total digital image count to nearly 5.5 million images.

As you can readily see from the numbers above, our overall case filings continue to rise. Much of this is attributed to changes in procedures and allowing the citizens to play a larger role.

The trend in home sales has slowed significantly. We saw an 11.6% decrease in land record transactions over 2006. This figure is in line with the national average. This decrease has direct impact on revenue resulting in a loss of \$400,000 from the previous year. Without significant changes to the economy, we can expect this number to continue its downward trend through the current calendar year. Considering the age of our population we anticipate an increase in probate documents processed (up 46% from 2005).

Working closely with Sheriff’s Office staff, we have been able to “forgive” over \$200,000.00 dollars in court cost debt in exchange for community service work performed by 322 inmates in the Sheriff’s Office Work Release Program.

We continue to review each area of revenue on both the state and local level, ensuring a maximum collection of costs for the city and state treasury.



Passport Services continue to be in demand. We have processed 562 passport applications this year; an increase of 26 %.

Cash flow through this office hit just under \$65 million dollars in calendar year 2007, a 7.2% decrease over 2006.

Lastly, due to staff turnover and my continued preference toward Norfolk citizens, I am proud to announce that 92% of my staff calls Norfolk home.

Please find attached statistics from 2007. 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.

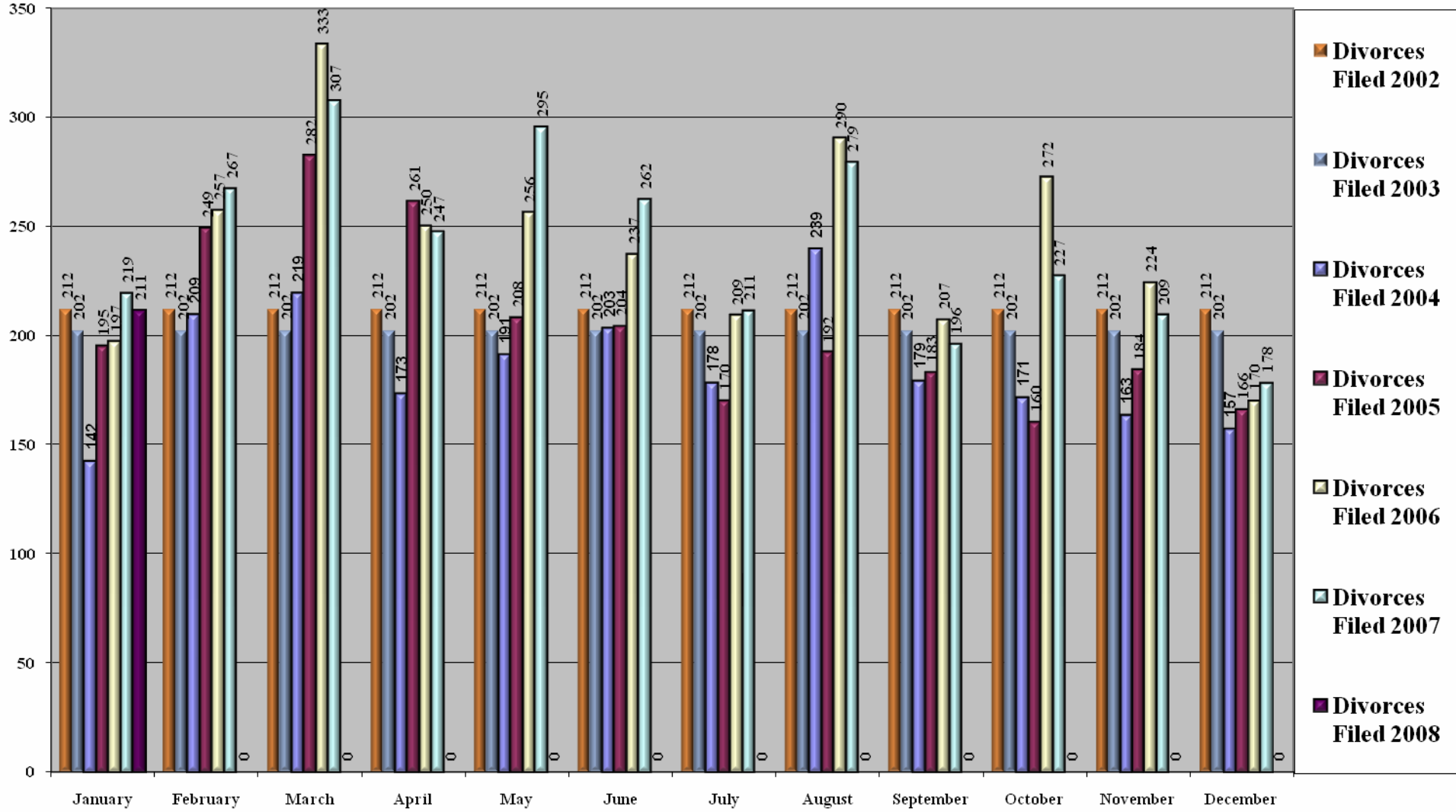
Thank you for your time and I look forward to a continued partnership between the Circuit Court and the City we serve.

Very truly yours;

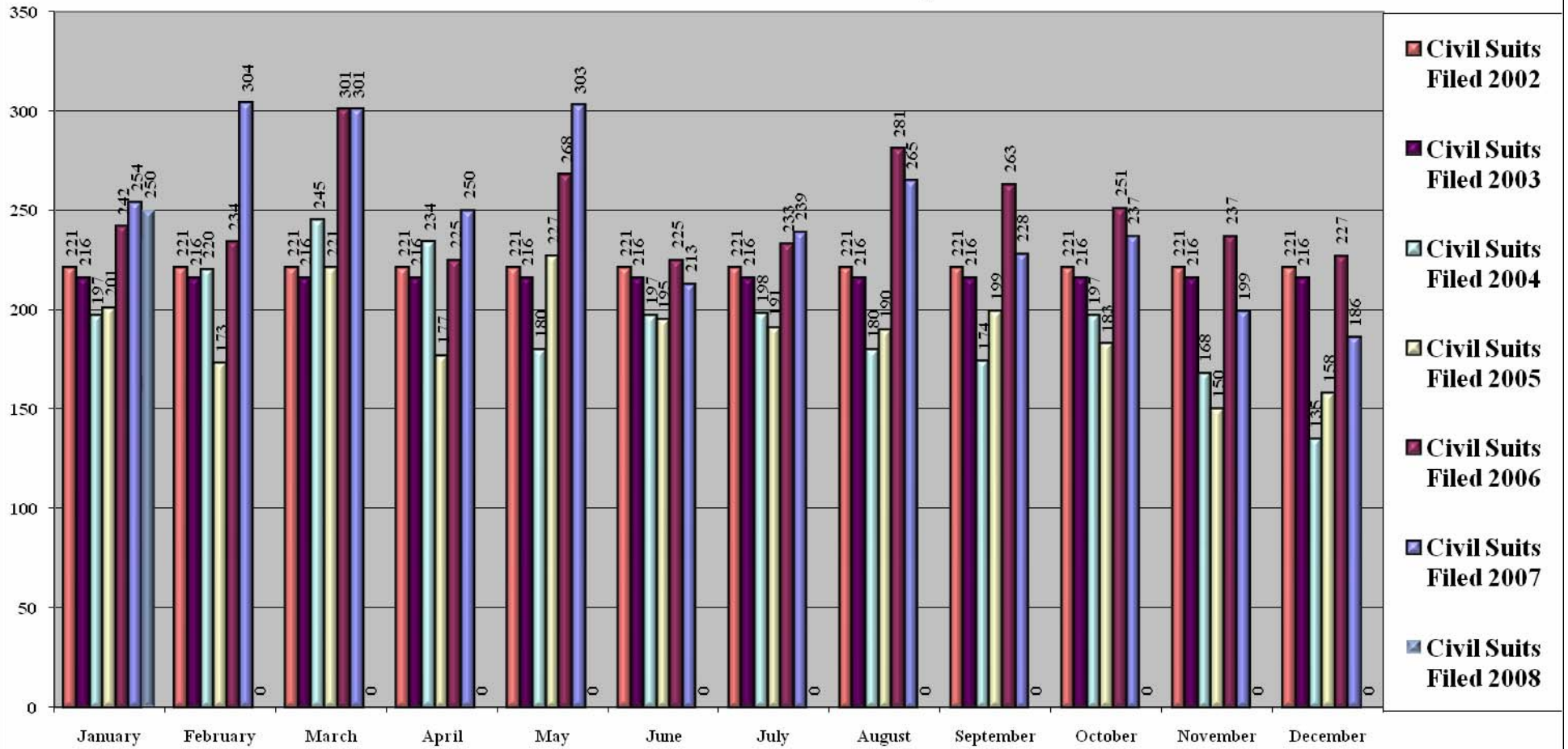
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George E. Schaefer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and "S".

George E. Schaefer
Clerk of Circuit Court

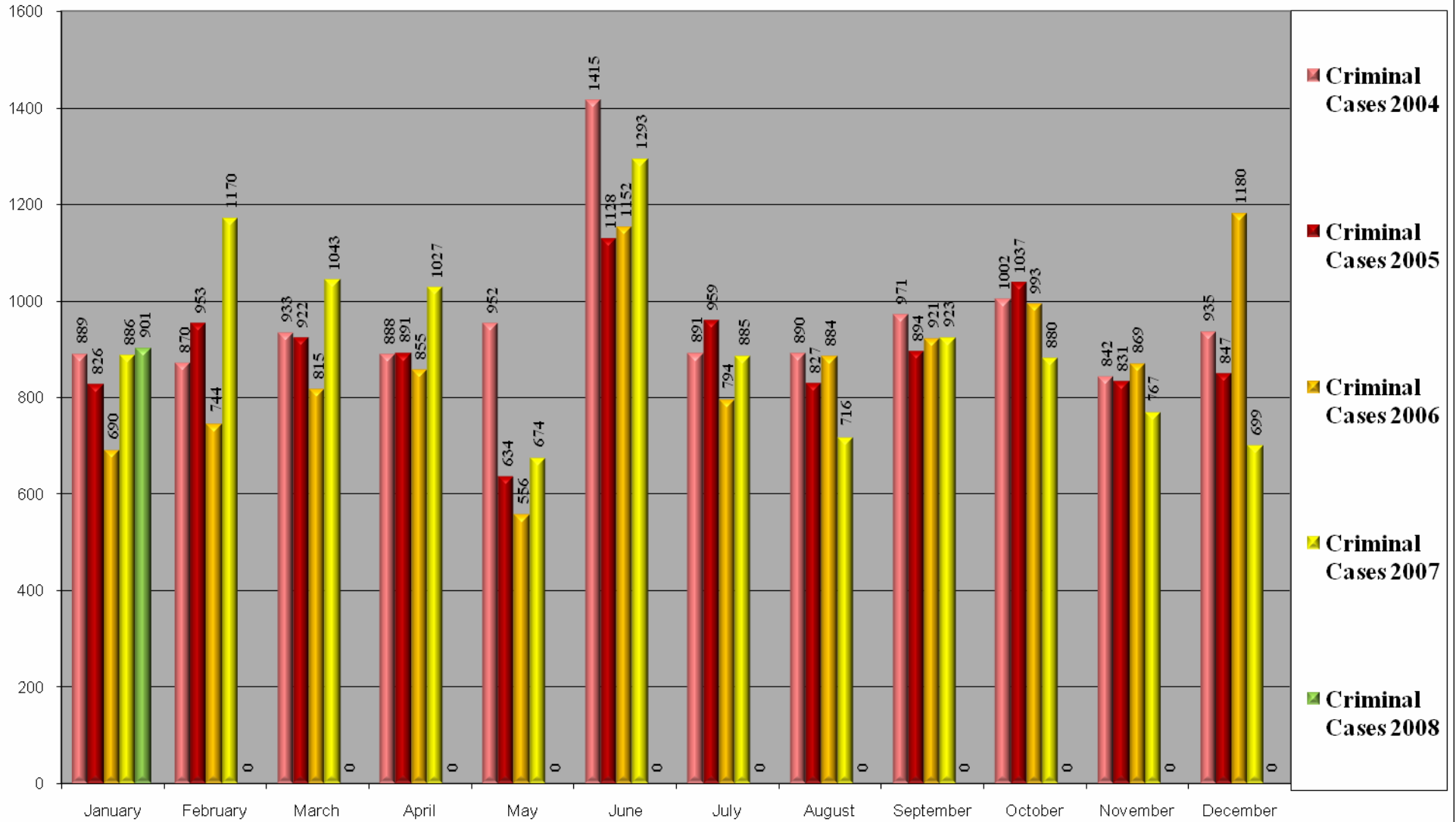
Divorces Filed Comparison



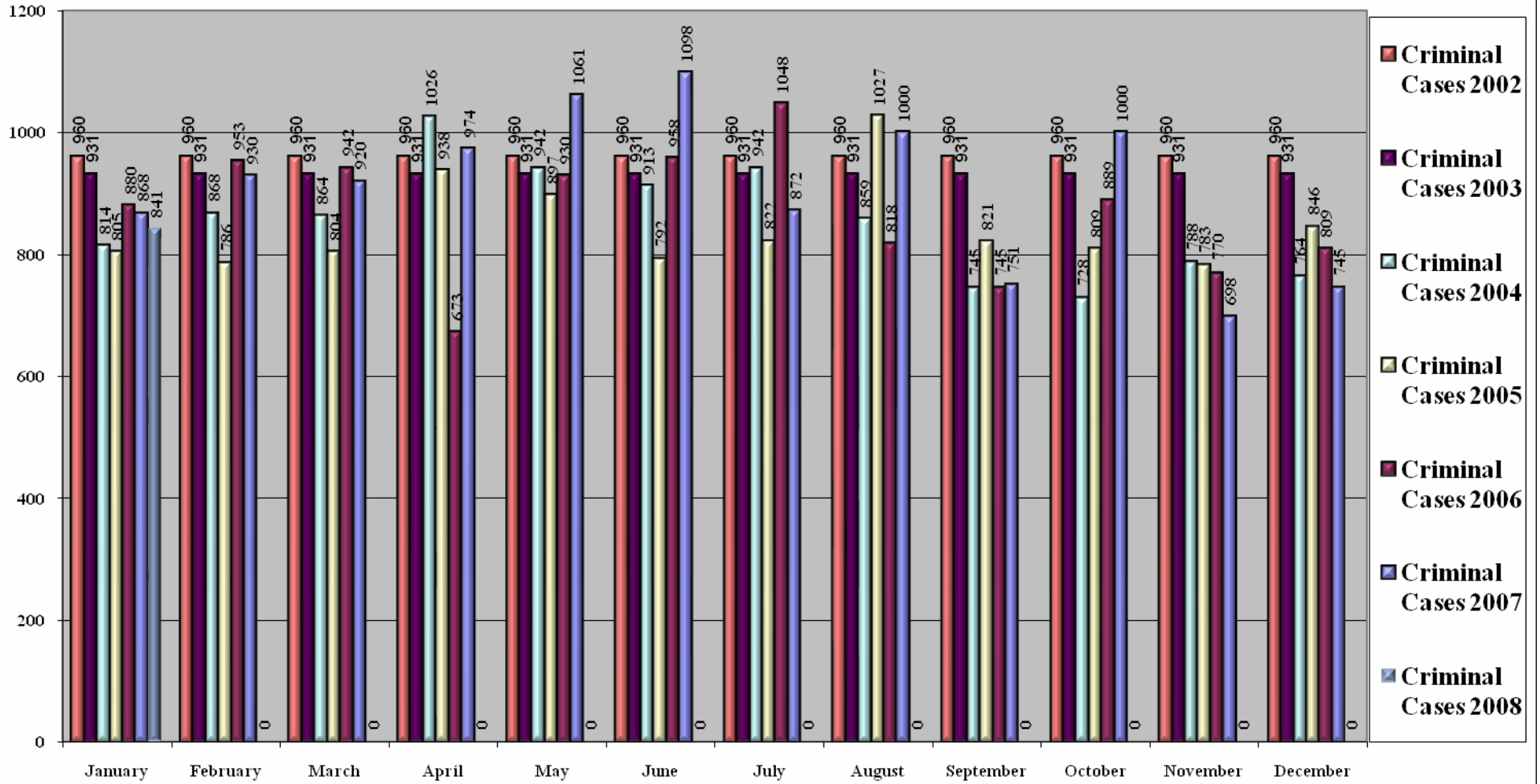
Civil Suits Filed Comparison



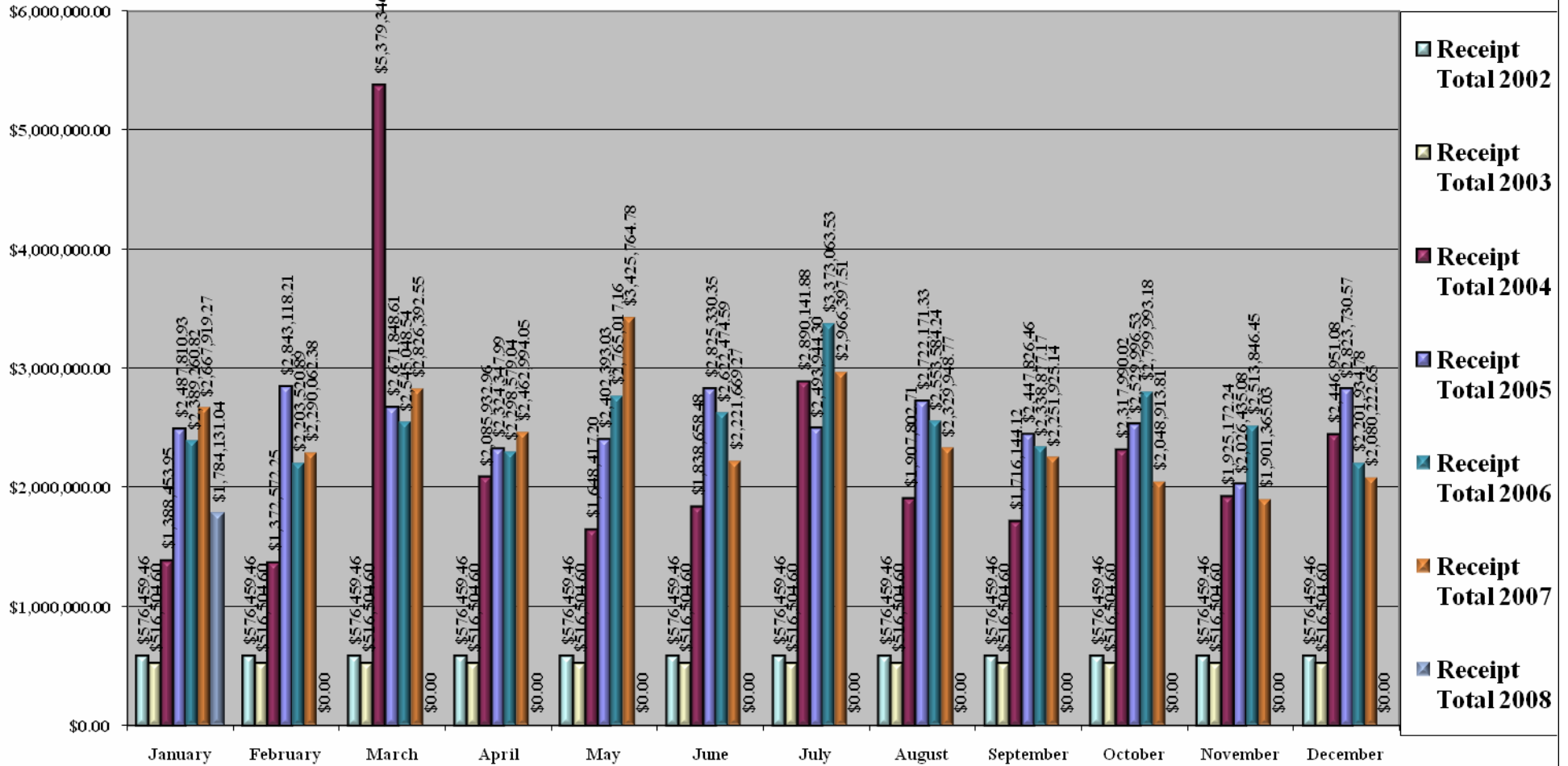
Total Criminal Cases Commenced



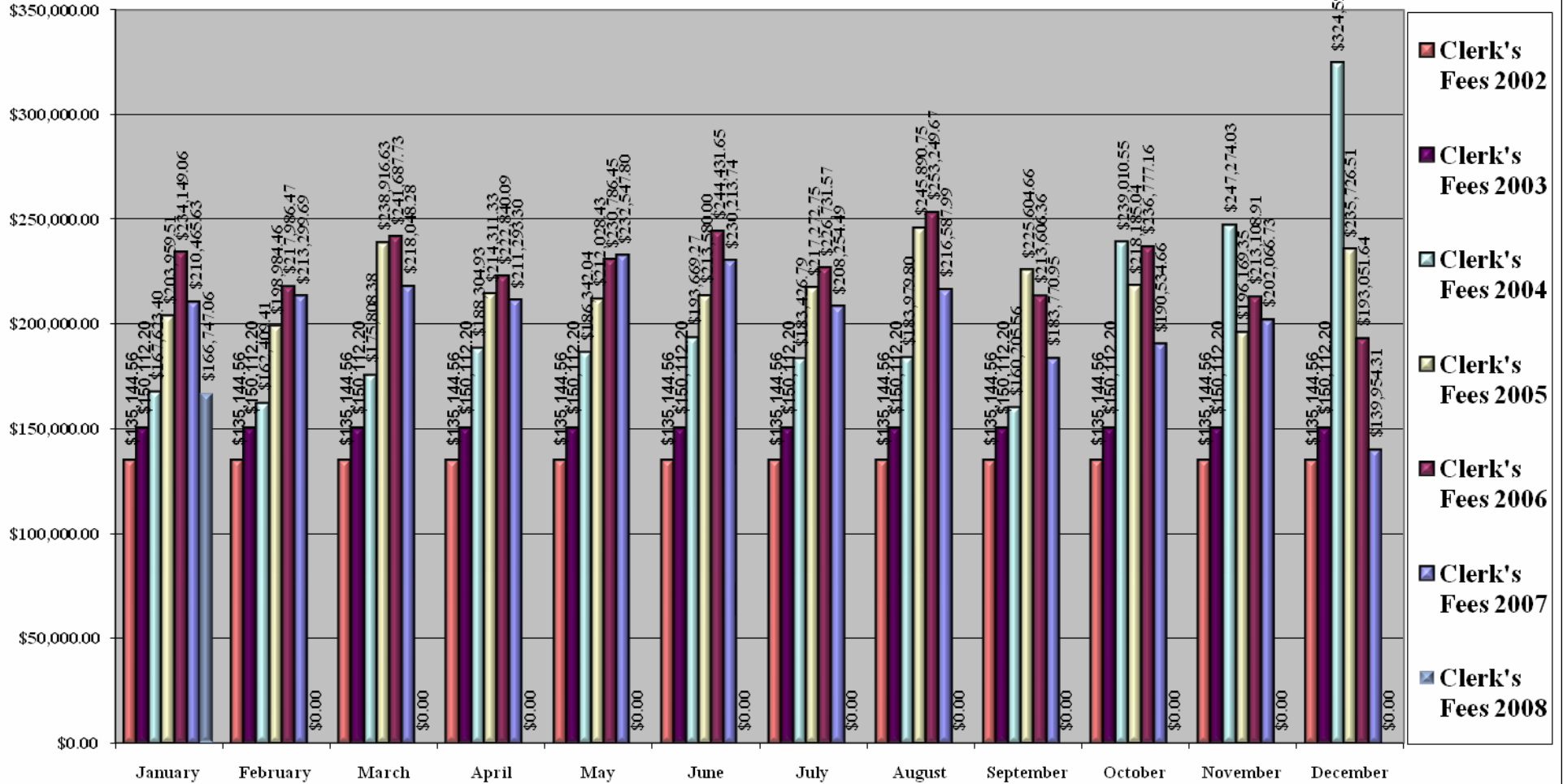
Total Criminal Cases Concluded



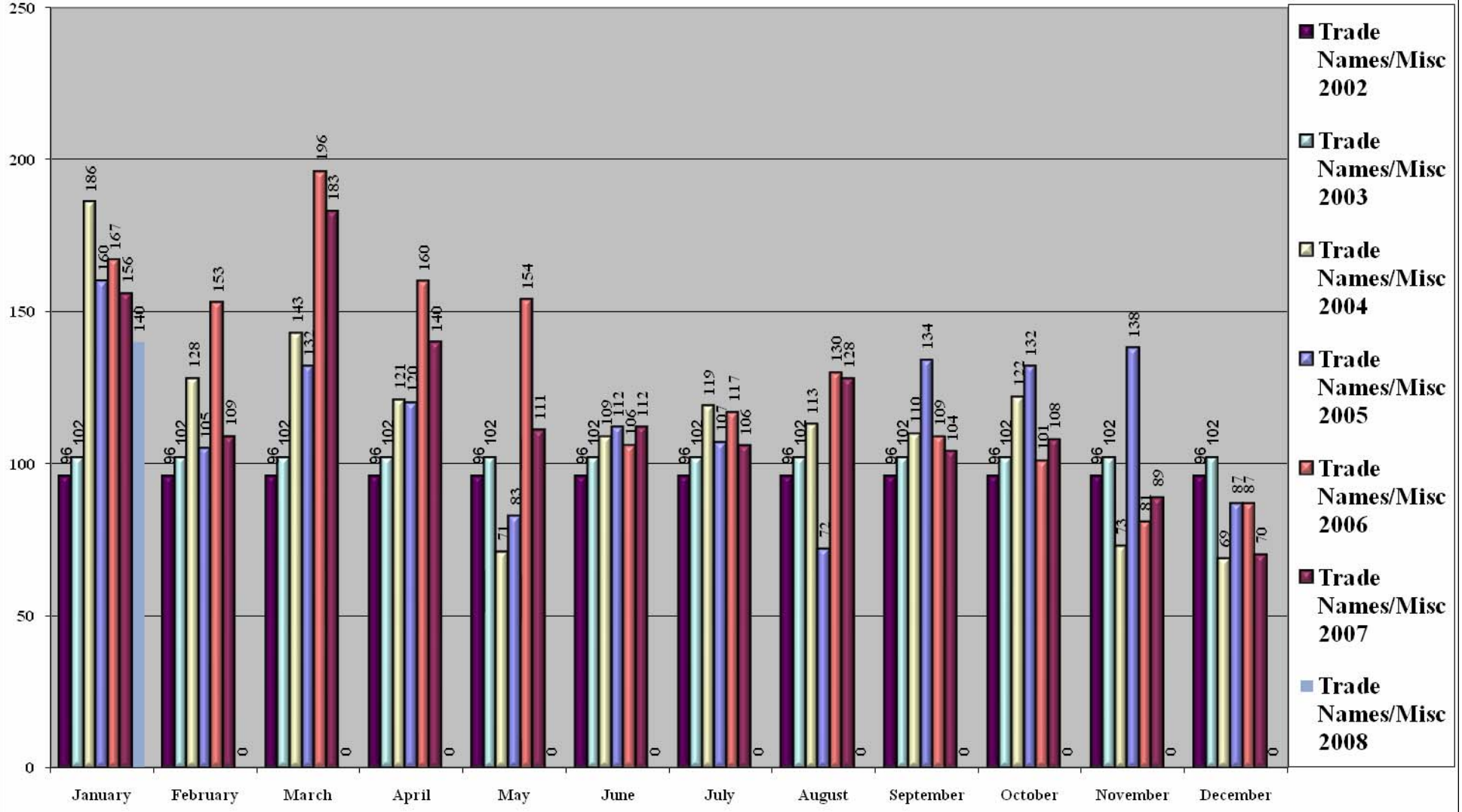
Receipt Totals Comparison



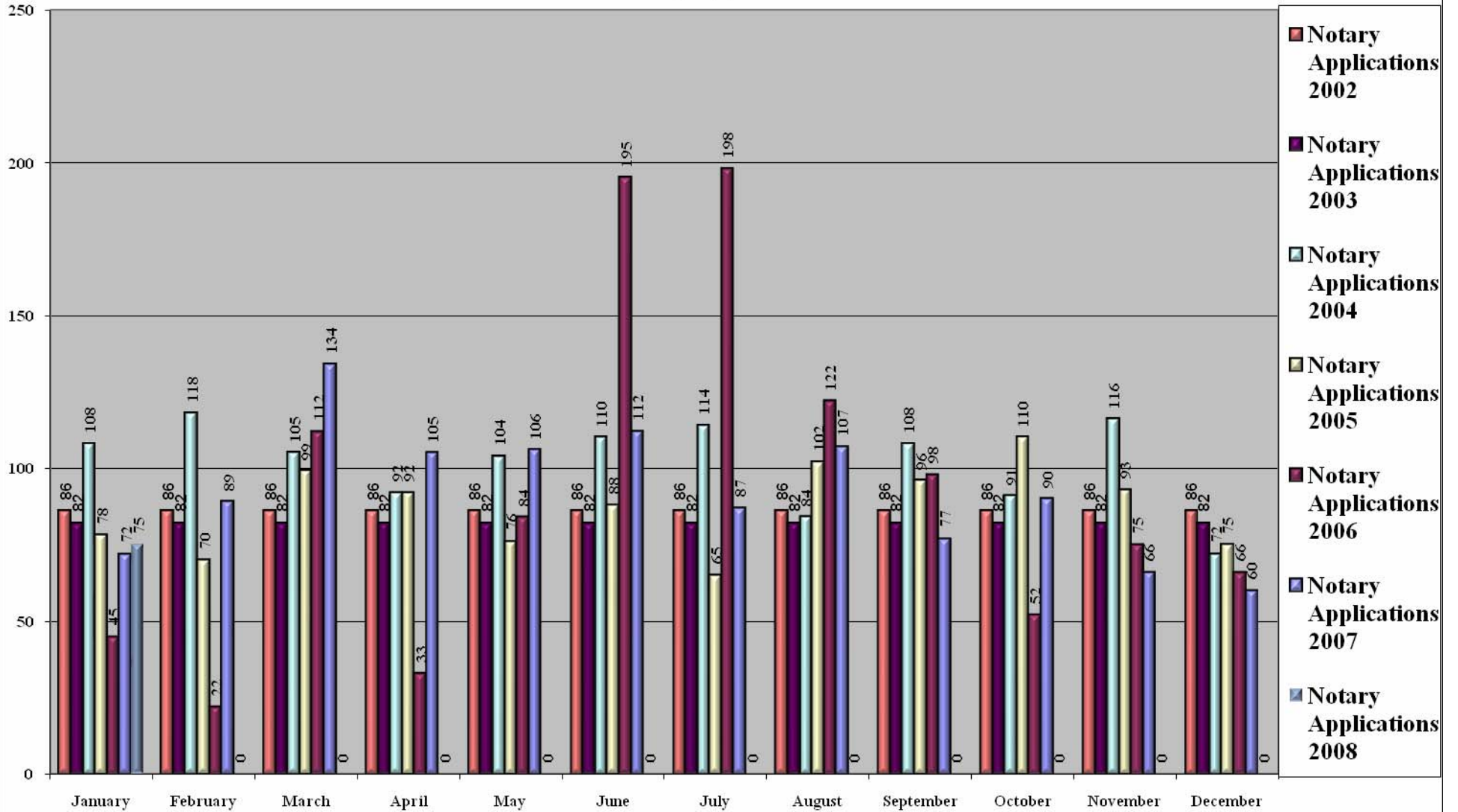
Clerk's Fees Comparison



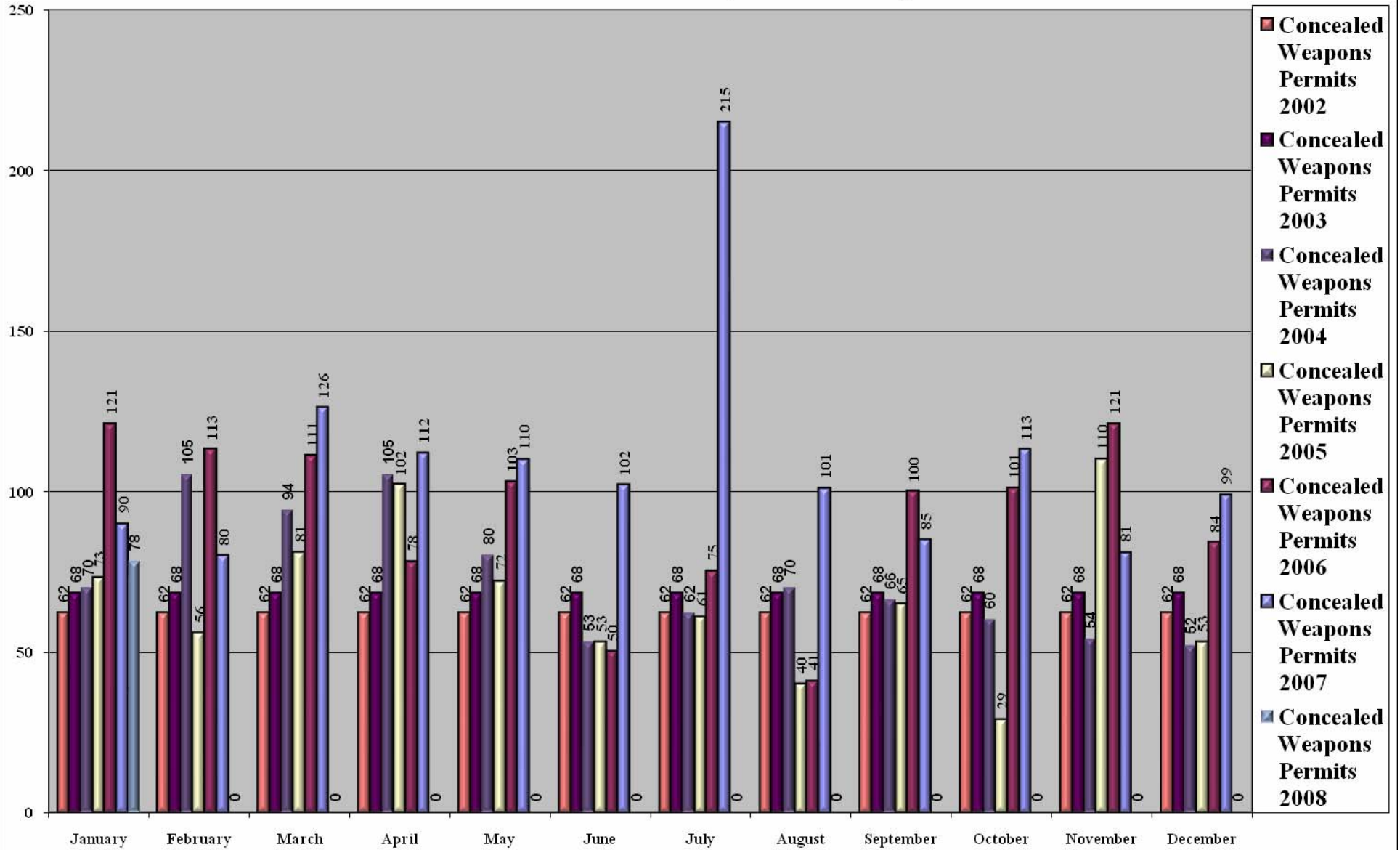
Trade Names Comparison



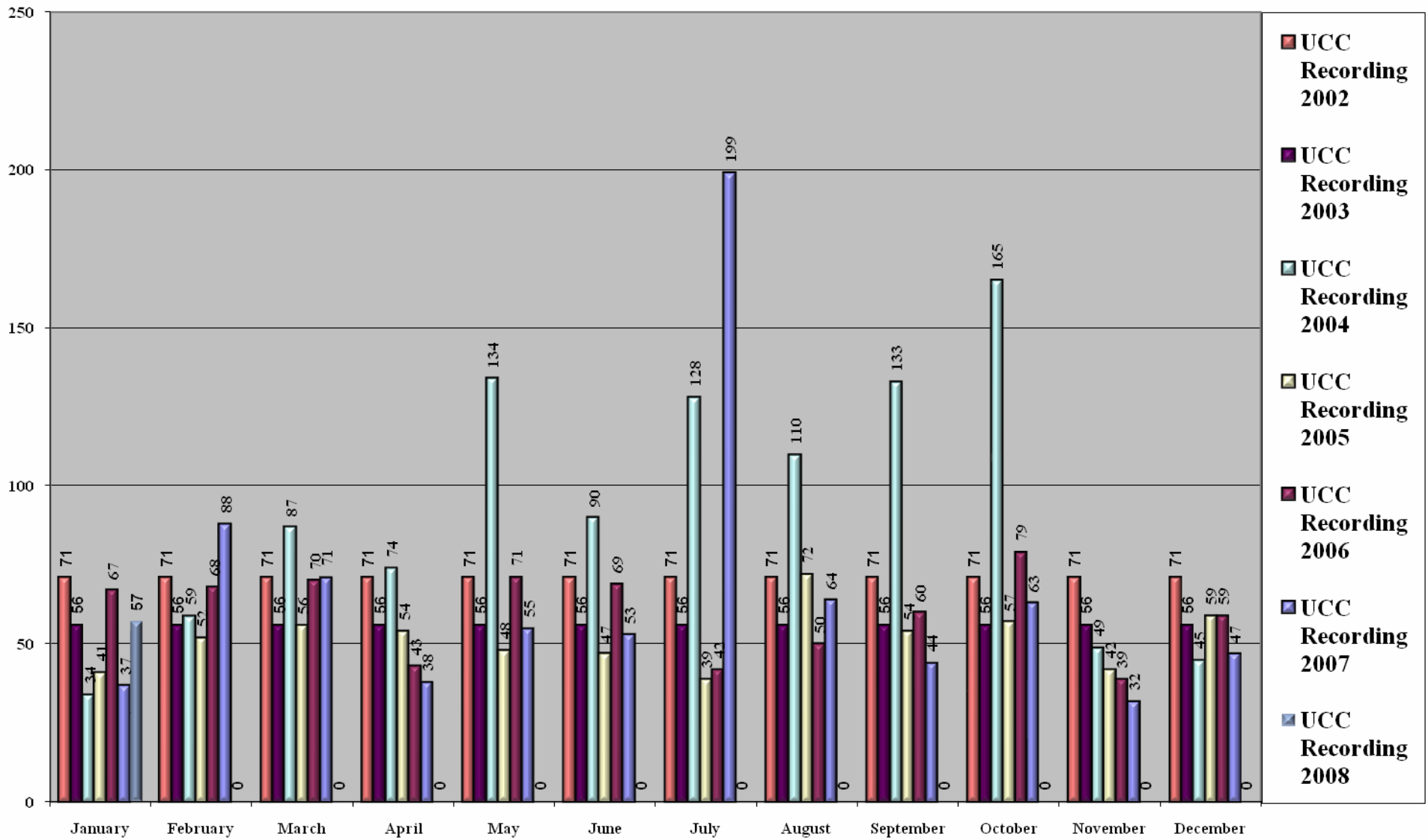
Notary Applications Comparison



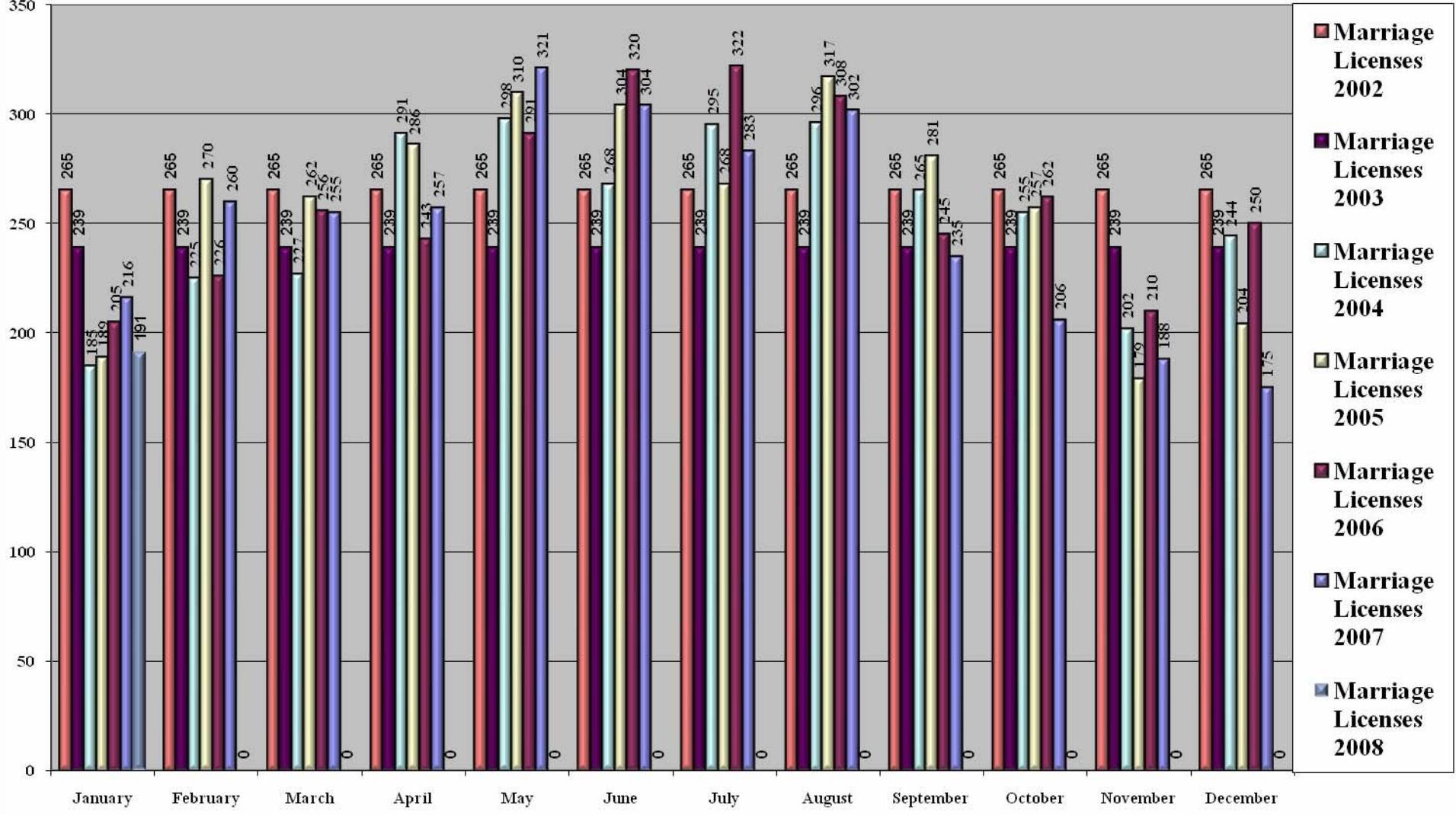
Concealed Weapons Permit Comparison



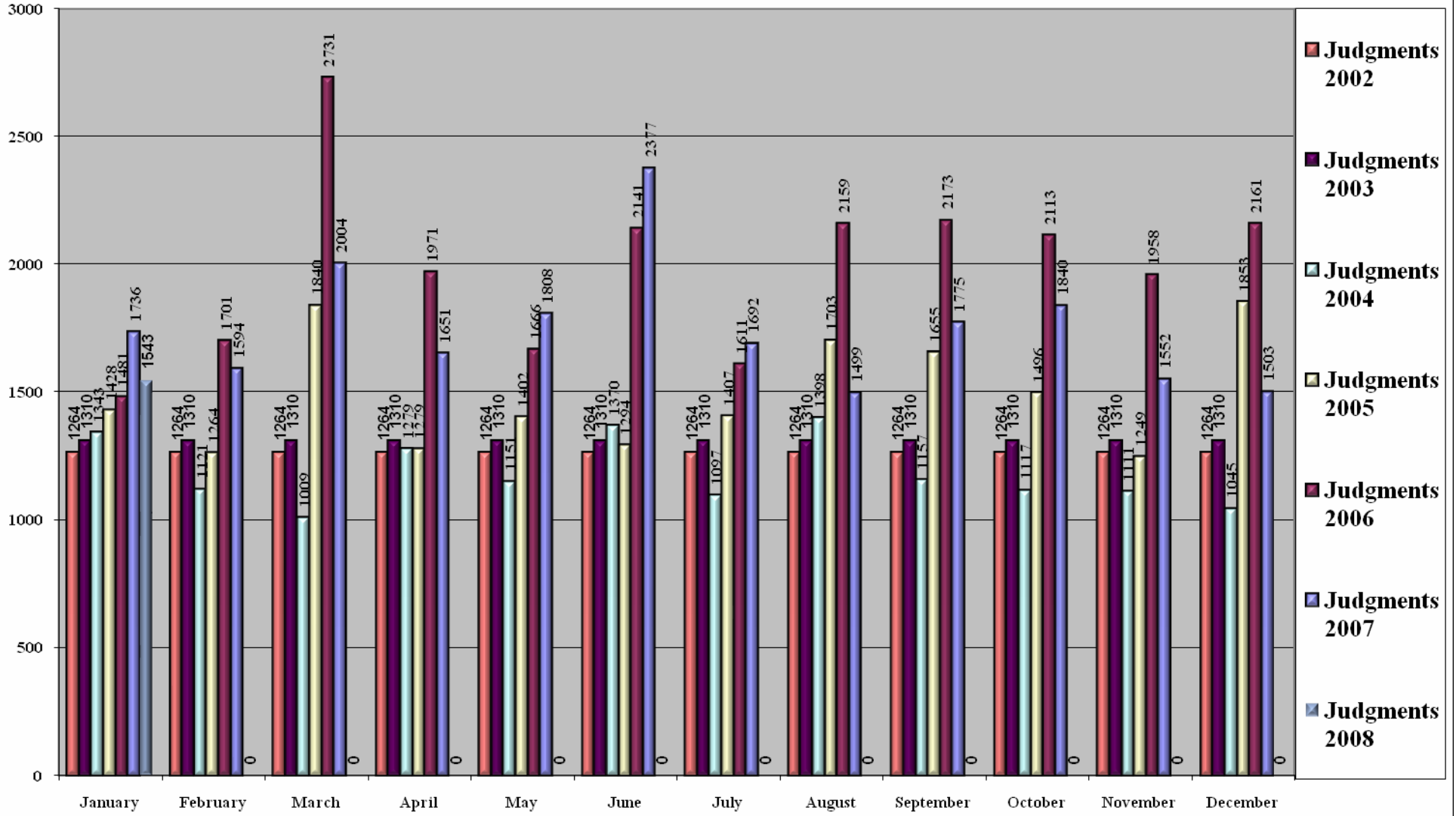
UCC Recordings Comparison



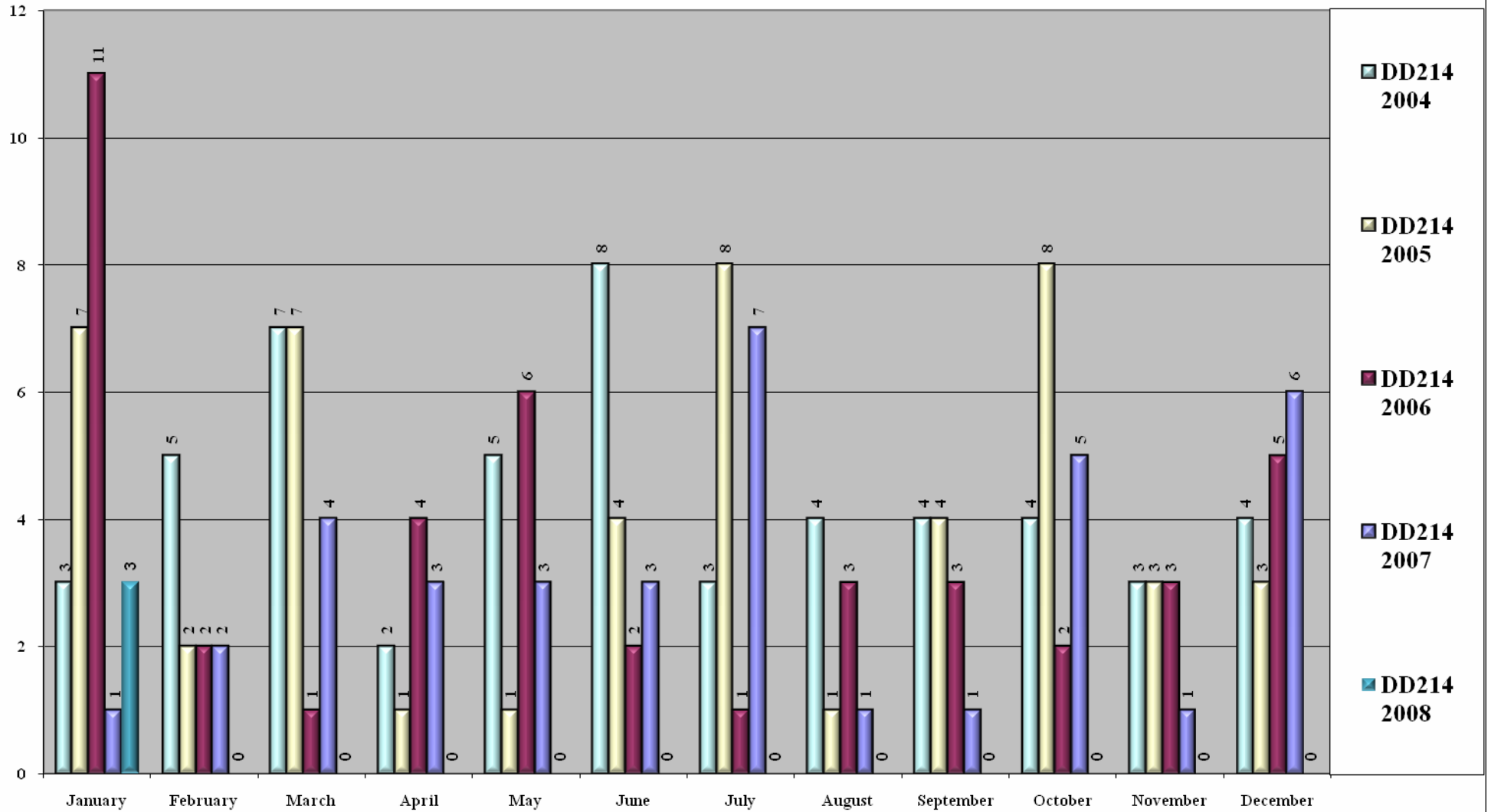
Marriage License Comparison



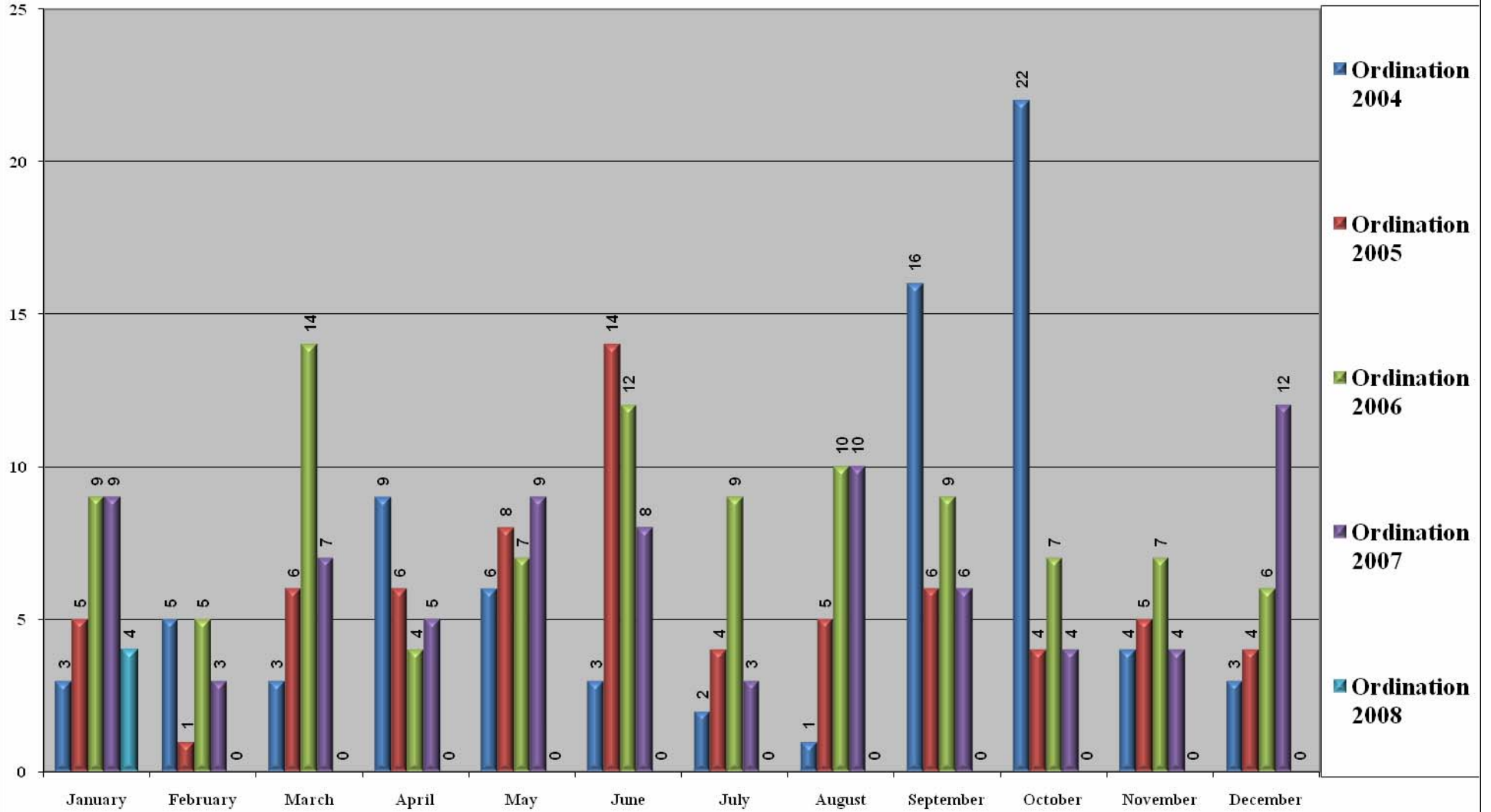
Judgements Comparison



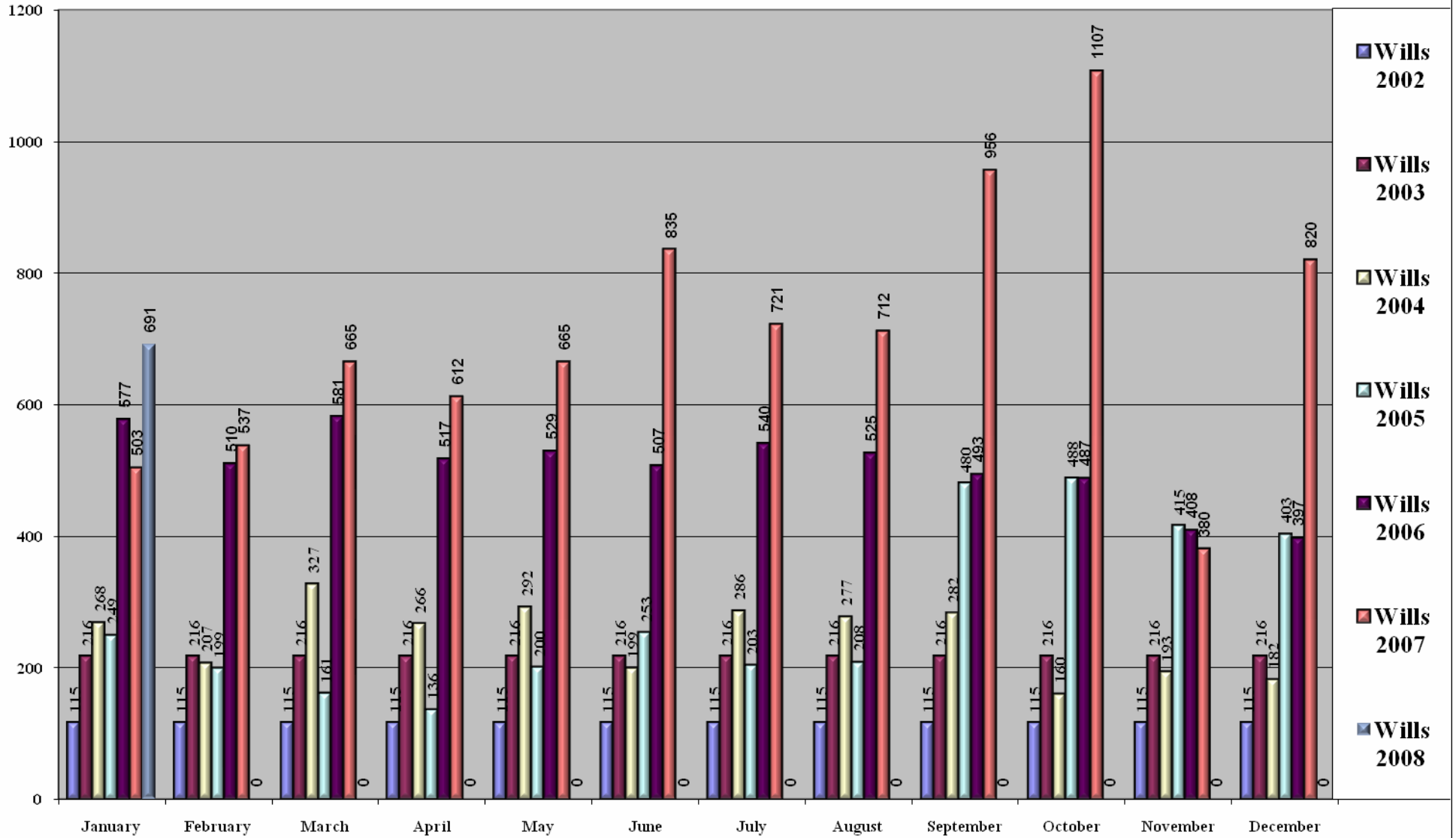
DD214 Comparison



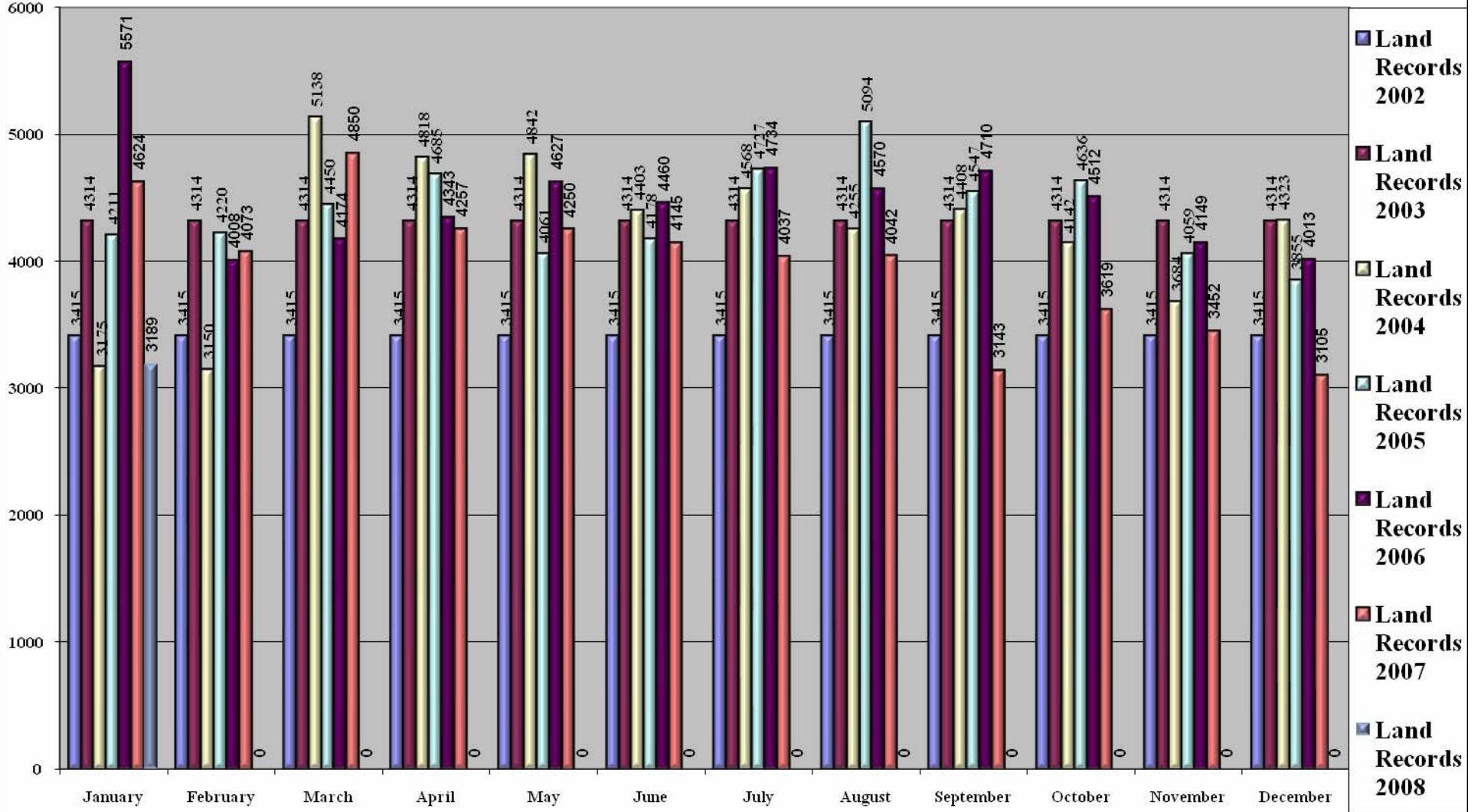
Ordination Comparison



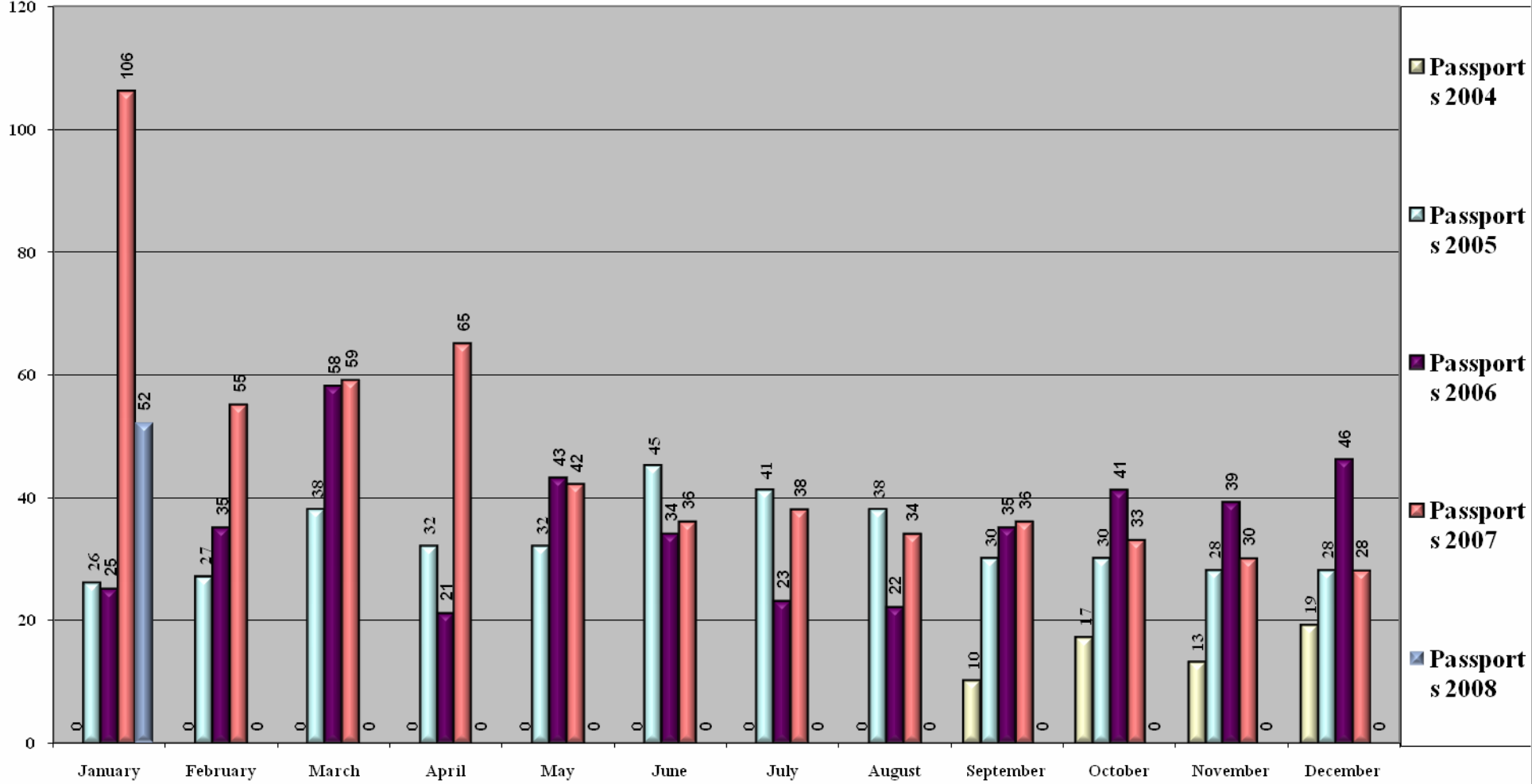
Will Documents Executed Comparison



Land Records Comparison



Passport Comparison



Restitution Paid To Victims Comparison

