



Kentucky CDL Adjudication Pilot and Compliance Needs Study

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Kentucky Transportation Center
College of Engineering, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky

in cooperation with
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
Commonwealth of Kentucky

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Research Report

KTC-26-22

Kentucky CDL Adjudication Pilot and Compliance Needs Study

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16. Abstract This report examines trends in how Kentucky District Courts have adjudicated charges related to commercial driver's license (CDL) and commercial motor vehicles (CMVs). Using court data, researchers evaluated historical patterns in charge filing volumes as well as conviction, dismissal, amendment, and diversion rates. Between 2002 and 2024, conviction rates declined and dismissals increased. Convictions peaked in the mid-70% range in the early 2000s, but fell to the mid-50% range by 2024. Speeding and other serious traffic violations — many of which are advanceable offenses — were dismissed or amended at rates that could have substantively affected the integrity of CDL holder driving records. Building on this evaluation, researchers completed an in-depth case study of the Hardin County District Court's adjudication practices and surveyed local law enforcement agencies about inspection and citation practices, knowledge of state and federal regulations, and the availability and effectiveness of equipment and training. Based on the findings of these analyses, researchers propose several recommendations to strengthen the adjudication process. These include holding annual trainings for local law enforcement focused on state and federal requirements for CDL holders, development of guidance for judges and county attorneys that describes different types of CDL- and CMV-related violations and their impacts on safety, updating the state's uniform citation form so it more clearly indicates whether an offender holds a CDL, and expanding representation on the state's CDL Advisory Committee to include local law enforcement officers as well as judges and county attorneys from rural areas.			
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Executive Summary

Kentucky has made significant investments in weigh stations along major corridors to keep unsafe commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) and commercial driver's license (CDL) holders off state roadways. The state has added fixed weigh stations and virtual screening facilities and replaced outdated equipment to help law enforcement officers identify high-risk vehicles for detailed inspections. Many inspections at weigh stations and roadside locations have resulted in the issuance of citations. Wanting to further improve enforcement of CDL- and CMV-related regulations, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) commissioned this study on historical trends in how district courts have adjudicated CDL- and CMV-related charges.

Analysis of statewide court data from 2002 to 2024 showed that conviction rates for CDL- and CMV-related infractions peaked in the early 2000s in the mid-70% range. Conviction rates since then have fluctuated but trended downward overall, dropping to roughly 55% in 2024. To understand why these rates have fallen and to identify strategies for boosting conviction rates, researchers conducted a detailed case study of adjudication practices in the Hardin County District Court.

Hardin County is a good candidate for a case study because it has a fixed weigh station and sees high CMV volumes due to several major roadways that pass through the county (Interstate 65, Western Kentucky Parkway, Bluegrass Parkway). Between 2017 and 2024, conviction rates in Hardin County exhibited significant interannual variability, ranging from the mid-60% range in 2017 to just below 30% in 2024. Researcher observations of court proceedings and discussions with judicial system stakeholders revealed major challenges judges and county attorneys confront when handling CDL- and CMV-related charges that can reduce conviction rates. These include district courts lacking access to information on a defendant's CDL history during trials, staffing and resource constraints (an especially acute problem in rural areas), handling instances when a defendant fails to appear in court, focusing narrowly on the most serious charges associated with a case, and inconsistent interpretations of statutes that are specific to CMV operations.

To document challenges local law enforcement officers face when enforcing CDL- and CMV-related regulations and to identify equipment needs that could improve enforcement, researchers administered an online survey that was completed by 52 local law enforcement officials. Most survey respondents said they never or very rarely conduct CMV stops for traffic or criminal violations. This could be explained in part by the fact that 66% of respondents said they are somewhat or very unfamiliar with state and federal regulations that apply to CDL holders. And while 60% of respondents said they are satisfied or very satisfied with equipment provided in their law enforcement vehicles, 87% said these technologies were not helpful or only somewhat helpful for executing CDL- and CMV-related traffic stops. Equipment and technology needs identified by respondents included handheld ID scanners, radars, laser speed detection devices, preliminary breath test devices, improved internet connectivity, and better access to systems that house information on CMVs and motor carriers.

Based on the analyses summarized above, this report makes four recommendations for strengthening enforcement of CDL- and CMV-related laws in Kentucky:

- Conduct annual trainings targeting local law enforcement officers that focus on federal and state requirements for CDL holders.
- Develop practical guidance county judges and county attorneys can consult that describes CDL- and CMV-related violations, safety implications, and the potential results of noncompliance.

- Revise the uniform citation form so it clearly indicates whether an offender holds a CDL. Make systematic enhancements to improve citation design and data consistency.
- Improve communication among agencies and expand representation on Kentucky’s CDL Advisory Committee to include local law enforcement officers, as well as judges and county attorneys from rural areas and courts that handle a high volume of CDL- and CMV-related charges.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) play a vital role in Kentucky's economy by supporting freight movement and connecting the state to national supply chains. Crashes that involve CMVs pose heightened safety risks due to their size, weight, and operating characteristics. Research has consistently shown that although CMVs constitute a relatively small share of registered vehicles, they are overrepresented in fatal crash statistics, with most fatalities being occupants of passenger vehicles. This underscores the importance of effective enforcement and adjudication of violations committed by commercial driver's license (CDL) holders.

CDL holders are held to a higher legal standard than non-commercial driver's license holders because of the potential consequences associated with unsafe CMV operation. Federal regulations (e.g., 49 CFR Parts 383 and 384) specify major offenses, serious traffic violations, and out-of-service violations that can disqualify CDL holders from operating a CMV temporarily or permanently. Many of these violations are *advanceable offenses*, meaning that repeat convictions within a specified time period carry progressively severe penalties. To enable proper enforcement of advanceable offenses, federal law prohibits the masking or deferral of CDL convictions in ways that would prevent them from appearing on a driver's record. Accurate reporting to the Commercial Driver's License Information System (CDLIS) is essential for ensuring that unsafe drivers are appropriately identified and, when necessary, disqualified from operating CMVs.

Enforcement does not end when a citation is issued. Prosecutors and judges retain discretion in adjudicating cases and have the authority to dismiss or amend charges when warranted by the facts and law. As a result, the disposition of CDL- and CMV-related charges significantly influences whether a driver's record accurately reflects the underlying conduct and whether federal disqualification provisions are triggered.

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) commissioned this study to examine CDL adjudication trends in Kentucky district courts from 2017 through 2024, using charge-level data from the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts. Our analysis evaluates filing volumes, adjudication outcomes, amendment patterns, variations across judicial districts, and differences in outcomes among individual judges. By comparing recent data with historical trends, we identify shifts in conviction and dismissal rates over the past two decades and explore how these changes may affect CDL enforcement efforts.

To provide additional context, we present a detailed case study of Hardin County District Court, a jurisdiction with a high volume of CMV traffic and a fixed weigh station. Court observations and discussions with judges and prosecutors offered insight into practical challenges associated with adjudicating CDL- and CMV-related charges, including time constraints, varying levels of familiarity with federal regulations among judges and prosecutors, and challenges associated with balancing public safety against the economic consequences of suspending or permanently revoking CDLs. Because effective CDL enforcement requires coordination beyond the courtroom, we also surveyed law enforcement officers from across Kentucky to document enforcement frequency, familiarity with CDL regulations, technology usage, training practices, and equipment needs. Based on our findings, we propose several recommendations to strengthen CDL and CMV enforcement and adjudication practices.

Chapter 2 CDL Adjudication Trends in Kentucky District Courts

We requested data from the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) on all cases filed between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2024, that included at least one charge from the provided list of 669 UOR codes for defendants holding a CDL. An average of 3,200 charges were filed each year during the study period. Although filings declined initially, they rebounded sharply in the latter half of the period. While the number of citations issued indicates the level of enforcement activity related to CMV operations, issuance of a citation does not represent the final outcome of an enforcement action. If a charge is amended to a less severe charge or dismissed, a CDL holder's driving record may not accurately reflect their actual behavior.

Crashes that involve CMVs are more likely to result in fatalities and severe injuries than crashes that involve only passenger vehicles. CMV-involved crashes account for approximately 11 percent of all highway fatalities, despite comprising just 4 percent of registered motor vehicles. In CMV-involved crashes, passenger vehicle occupants are disproportionately affected, making up 70 percent of fatalities. This disparity is attributable primarily to differences in vehicle size and weight, which expose smaller passenger vehicles to greater forces during collisions. CMVs have stronger structural frames and higher ground clearances, creating the potential for passenger vehicles to underwrite the truck, increasing occupant vulnerability (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2022).¹

49 CFR § 383.51 describes major offenses, serious traffic violations, railroad-highway grade crossing offenses, and violations of out-of-service orders that can disqualify CDL holders from operating CMVs. Repeated violations of offenses listed in this regulation carry increasingly severe penalties (i.e., advanceable offenses). For example, the first conviction for excessive speeding — defined as driving 15 mph or more over the posted limit — typically requires a driver to pay a fine and court costs. If a driver commits the same offense within a three-year period, regardless of the type of vehicle being operated the driver must be disqualified from operating a CMV for 60 days in addition to paying fines and fees. A third conviction within three years results in a 120-day disqualification. Because repeated convictions for advanceable offenses trigger more severe penalties, dismissing or amending a charge without clear justification undermines federal efforts to keep unsafe CDL holders off the road through temporary or lifetime disqualification.

Federal regulations contain an anti-masking provision that reinforces this intent. Specifically, “The State must not mask, defer imposition of judgment, or allow an individual to enter into a diversion program that would prevent a CDL driver's conviction from appearing on their driving record” (49 CFR § 384.226). This means that a state cannot dismiss citations in exchange for traffic school attendance, deferring judgment, entering a diversion program, or reducing a charge to keep it off a driving record. CDL convictions must be reported to CDLIS within 10 days to ensure accurate tracking of each driver's record and facilitate cooperation among enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, and state licensing agencies.

Prosecutors and courts can dismiss or amend charges when they conclude it is warranted. This chapter examines adjudication trends for CDL- and CMV-related charges in Kentucky using district court data and explores whether geographic variations exist that may require additional attention and targeted interventions.

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2012). Traffic safety facts 2011 data: Large trucks (DOT HS 811 701). U.S. Department of Transportation.

2.1 Data Overview and Key Statistics

CDL- and CMV-related charges filed in Kentucky district courts declined sharply between 2017 and 2018 (Table 2.1). After trending further downward, charges gradually increased beginning in 2021, reaching nearly 4,000 in 2024.

Table 2.1 Number of CDL- and CMV-Related Charges (2017 – 2024)

Year	Charge Count
2017	4,169
2018	2,833
2019	2,862
2020	2,355
2021	2,139
2022	3,519
2023	3,803
2024	3,944

Table 2.2 classifies CDL- and CMV-related charges of interest into 19 groups. They are listed in order of frequency of filings during the study period.

Table 2.2 Types of CDL- and CMV-Related Charges

Charge Category	Description
Restraints and protective equipment	• Failure to wear a seatbelt is the most common charge in this category.
Speeding	• Includes multiple speeding violations, with UOR codes differing based on the location of the violation, such as school zones or work zones. In cases of excessive speeding — specifically 15 mph or more over the posted speed limit — federal regulations prescribe disqualification from operating a CMV for a specified period. The first violation typically results in fines and court fees without disqualification, while subsequent convictions may lead to 60-day and 120-day disqualifications.
Failure to obey	• Includes disregarding a stop sign, traffic light, or officers directing traffic.
Reckless, careless, negligent driving	• Under Kentucky Revised Statutes § 281A.010, reckless driving is defined as operating a vehicle in willful or wanton disregard of the safety of persons or property. A second conviction for one of these offenses within a three-year period results in a 60-day disqualification from operating a CMV, and a third conviction within the same period results in a 120-day disqualification.
Passing	• Includes improper passing or misuse of the left lane.
Alcohol and drug	• Operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The first conviction results in a one-year disqualification from

Charge Category	Description
	operating a CMV, the second a three-year disqualification, and the third a lifetime disqualification.
Financial Responsibility	Includes failure of a CMV owner or operator to maintain the required level of insurance coverage.
Driving after withdrawal	Operating a CMV while a CDL is revoked, suspended, or canceled due to a prior violation is considered a major offense under 49 CFR § 383.51. A first conviction results in a one-year disqualification from operating a CMV, and a second conviction results in a lifetime disqualification.
Driver's license regulation and duties	Operating a CMV without a valid or proper class of license falls under this category. It also includes violations related to failure to report a traffic accident.
Misrepresentations	Common violations include failing to notify the Department of Transportation of an address change and possessing more than one CDL.
Prohibited actions	Includes theft or disposition of contents from vehicles.
Following improperly	Includes failure to notify the Department of Transportation of an address change and possession of more than one CDL.
Improper lane or location	Includes disregarding compulsory turn lanes, improper lane usage, and erratic lane changes.
Improper turns	Violations related to illegal or unsafe turns.
Hit and run	Includes failure to notify the owner of damage to an unattended vehicle or leaving the scene of an accident.
Failure to yield	Includes failure to yield to emergency vehicles, pedestrians, funeral processions, or other vehicles with the right of way.
Failure to use equipment	Includes failure to illuminate headlamps or dim headlights.
Wrong way or side	Includes operating a vehicle on the incorrect side of the road.
Miscellaneous maneuvers	Violations that do not fit into the categories above.

Figure 2.1 presents the number of charges in each category for 2017 – 2024. Restraints and protective equipment violations accounted for the most charges (7,845) followed closely by speeding (6,716). Other commonly cited categories include failure to obey (2,092), reckless or careless driving (1,501), passing violations (1,471), and miscellaneous maneuvers (1,406). Overall, a small number of violation types made up the majority of charges, while many others were relatively uncommon.

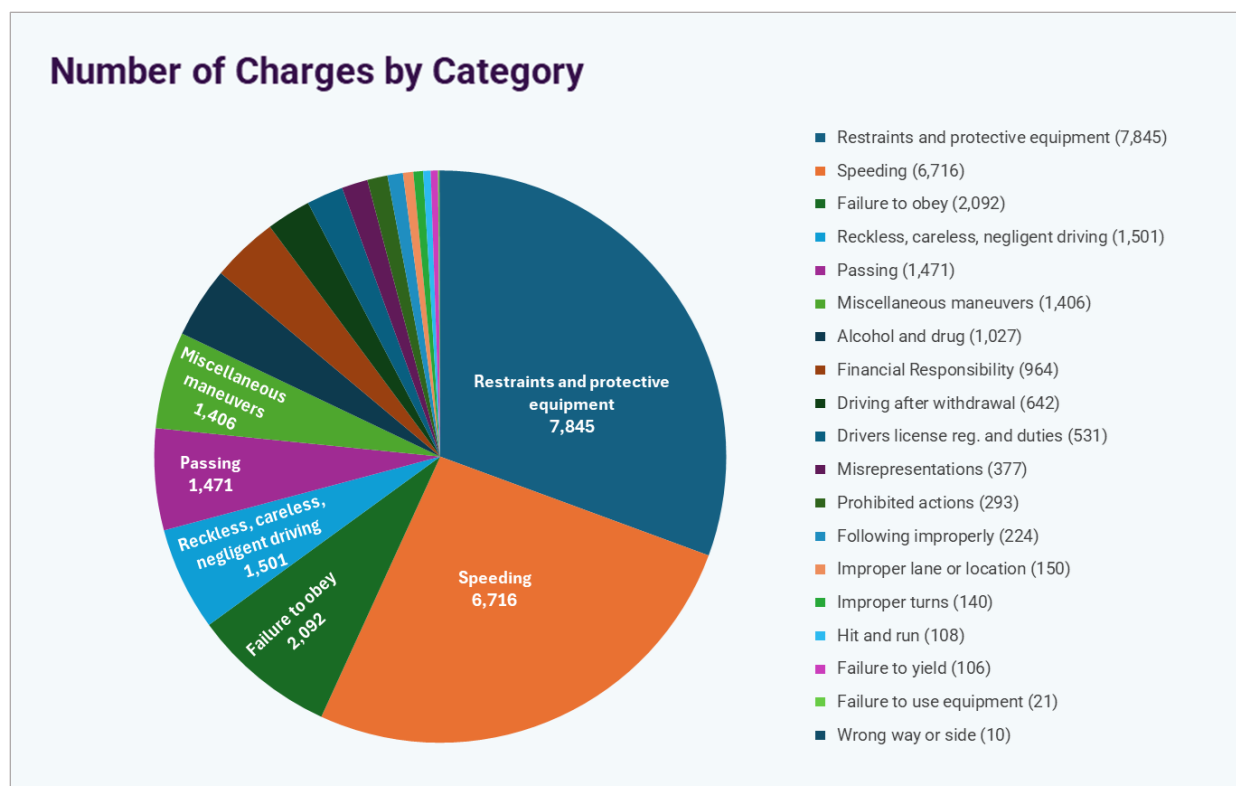


Figure 2.1 Number of Charges by Category (2017 – 2024)

2.2 Adjudication Results for CDL- and CMV-Related Charges

We compared rates for adjudication outcomes during two time periods: 2017 – 2024 and 2002–2016 (reported in Martin et al., 2021)² to identify long-term trends (Figure 2.2). Conviction was the most common outcome. From a starting point in the mid-70% range in the early 2000s, rates fluctuated downward, eventually hitting the mid-50% range in 2024. Dismissals showed the opposite pattern. Starting at under 10% in 2002, dismissals rose consistently through the 2010s and peaked in 2020. Amendments exhibited more modest variation, generally ranging between 10% and 17%, with a slight downward trend after 2016. Diversions remained very low — mostly below 3% — with only minor variations. Overall, there has been a clear shift away from convictions and toward dismissals over the past 20 years, with amendments and diversions remaining relatively stable.

² Martin, A., Koo, J., and Walton, J. (2021). Commercial Driver's License Prosecution, Adjudication, and Data Transmission. https://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2727&context=ktc_researchreports

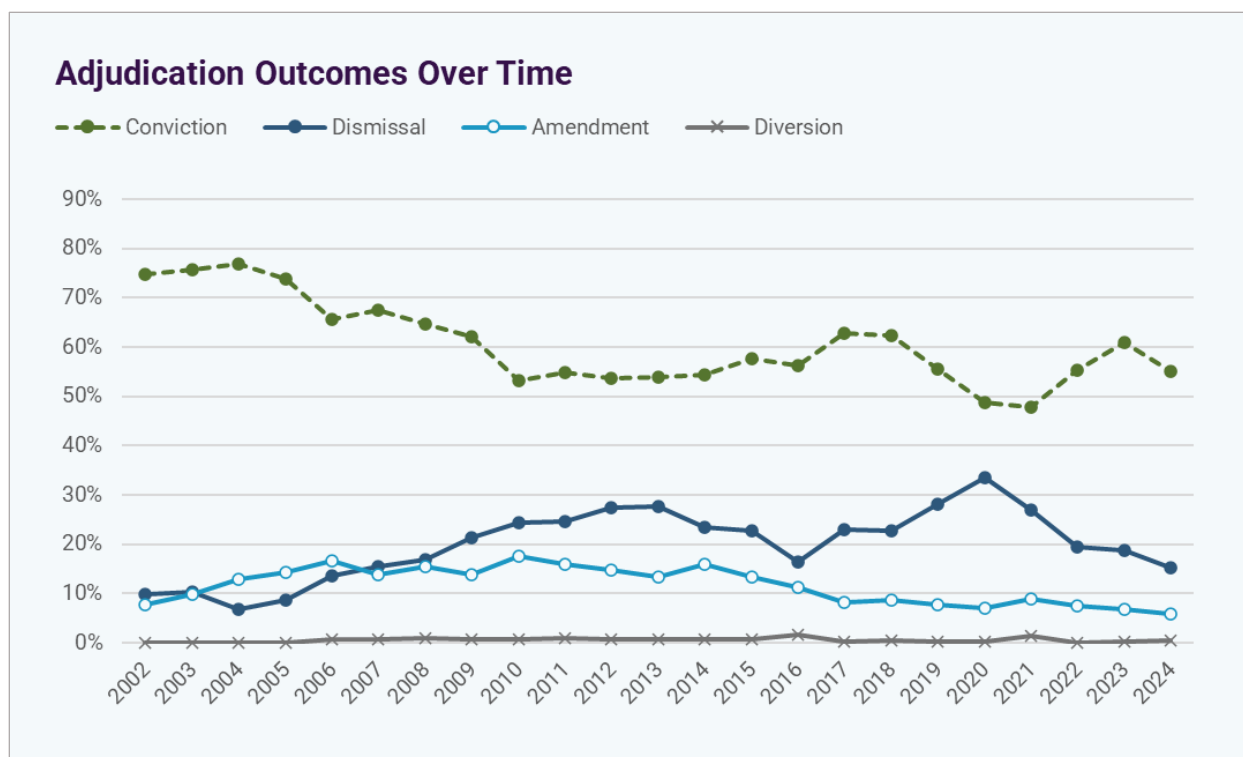


Figure 2.2 Adjudication Outcomes Over Time (2002 – 2024)

To help judges and prosecutors understand the importance of upholding charges, Kentucky has organized training sessions and delivered presentations at conferences to improve understanding of CDL requirements and strengthen enforcement consistency.

Figure 2.3 documents changes in outcomes over the course of 2021 and indicates when outreach and training events occurred. Outreach events included the Mastering Masking Training with the National Traffic Law Center the virtual Kentucky Prosecutor’s Conference, and presentations at the Kentucky Impaired Driving Summit and District Judge Judicial College, which discussed findings from the CDL enforcement study. To reach local prosecutors, Regional CDL Conferences were held in Henderson County and Fayette County. Prior to outreach events, conviction rates fluctuated between 40% and 55%, while dismissal rates ranged from 20% to 35%. Amendment and diversion rates remained comparatively low and stable. After the District Judge Judicial College event, the conviction rate increased to nearly 60% but declined to under 50% by the end of the year (even after multiple subsequent events).

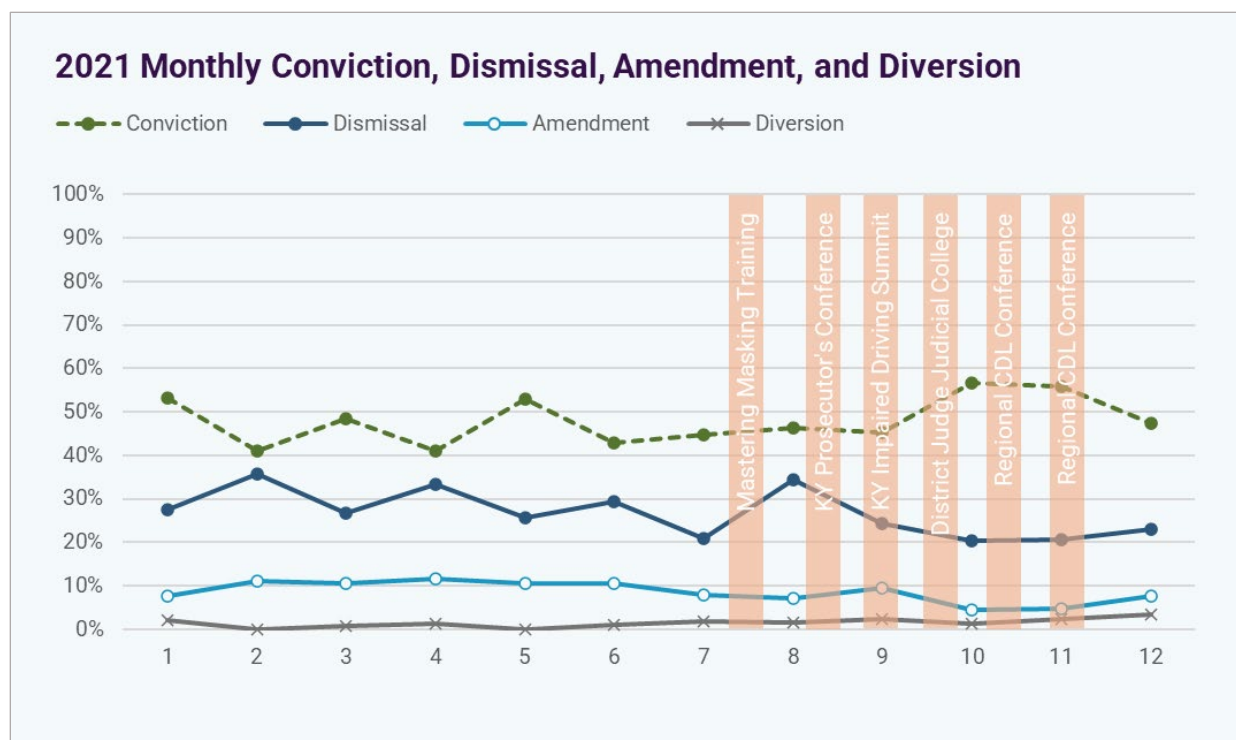


Figure 2.3 Monthly CDL/CMV Adjudication Outcomes with Key Outreach and Training Events

We also examined adjudication outcomes by charge category to determine whether meaningful differences exist among them. Figure 2.4 highlights the five categories with the largest number of charges filed annually; red lines represent the overall conviction rate for each year, providing a benchmark for comparison. In 2024, for example, the overall conviction rate was 55 percent. Seatbelt-related violations had conviction rates exceeded this average, while reckless and careless driving charges had lower rates. During the six-year period, seatbelt violations consistently had the highest conviction rates, whereas reckless or negligent driving had the lowest. While the figure does not show dismissal rates, they followed an inverse pattern to conviction rates. Dismissal rates varied considerably by category: seatbelt-related violations generally had lower dismissal rates, while categories such as reckless driving and speeding exhibited higher dismissal rates that often exceed the overall average.

Differences in conviction and dismissal rates across charge categories likely reflect the distinct legal standards, evidentiary considerations, and statutory consequences associated with each type of violation. Seatbelt-related violations have high conviction rates because these offenses involve more straightforward factual determinations, and they are prepayable citations that can be resolved without a court appearance. In contrast, charges such as reckless, careless, or negligent driving may involve more complex circumstances and carry harsher penalties (e.g., a mandatory 60-day disqualification for a second conviction), which can influence how these cases move through the judicial process. While each judge and prosecutor exercises discretion based on the facts presented and applicable law, they have to be aware of the safety implications associated with major offenses and serious traffic violations involving CMV operators.

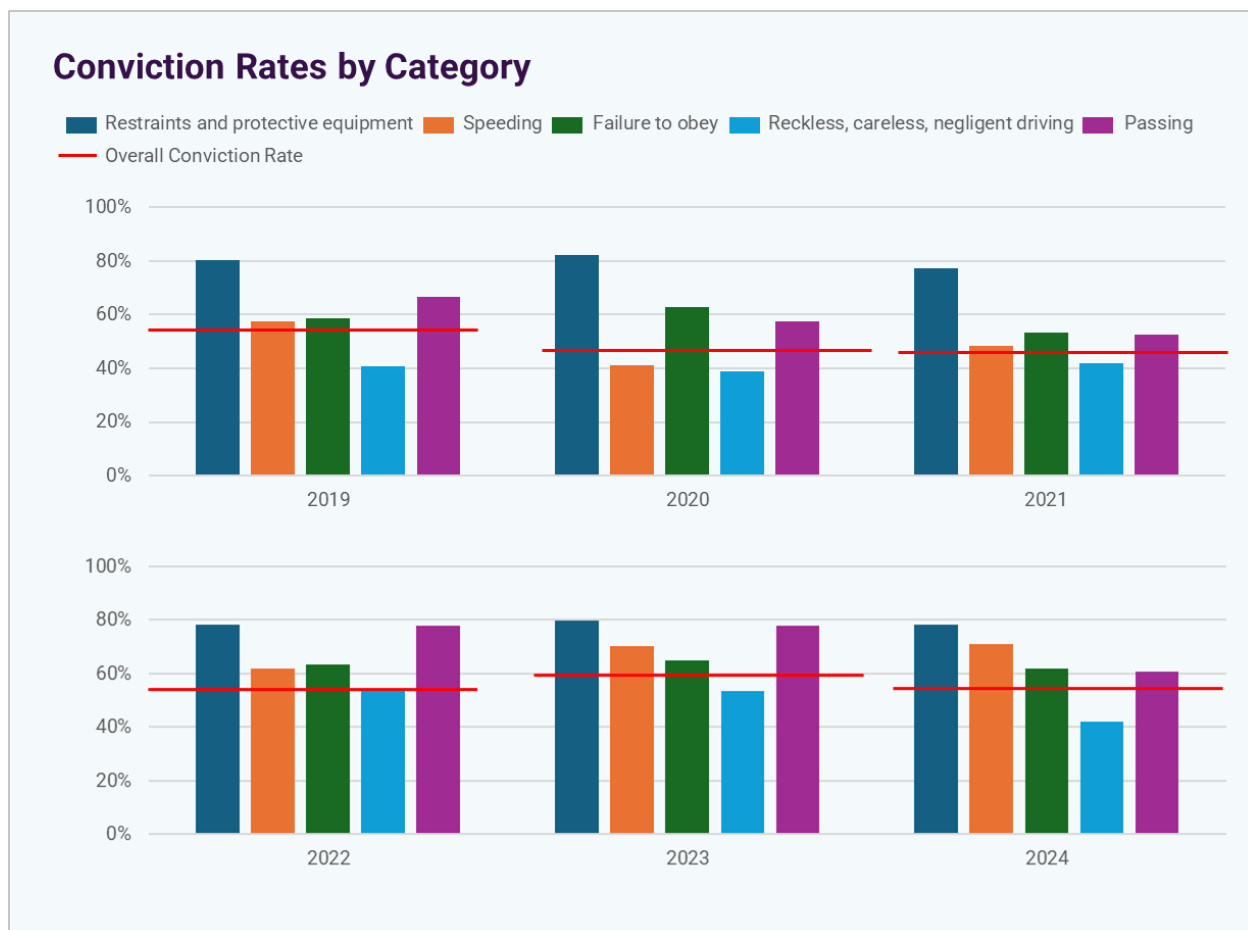


Figure 2.4 Conviction Rates for Five Charge Categories with Highest Filing Volumes (2019 – 2024)

2.3 Analysis of Charge Amendments

Although most CDL- and CMV-related charges over the past two decades have resulted in either conviction or dismissal, 10% – 17% were amended. Because amendments can increase or decrease the seriousness of a charge we evaluated direction of change to determine how district courts have handled CDL- and CMV-related charges across both general and specific categories.

Figure 2.5 shows amendment rates for the five categories under which charges are filed most frequently each year. The red line is the overall amendment rate for the year. Speeding consistently had the highest amendment rates, ranging from 10% to 16%. Other categories, such as failure to obey and reckless, careless, or negligent driving, had lower and more variable amendment rates, generally below 6%. Passing violations were amended at moderate rates in 2019 (11%) and 2021 (9%), but they declined substantially in later years. The average amendment rate declined gradually, from 7.6% in 2019 to 5.9% in 2024.

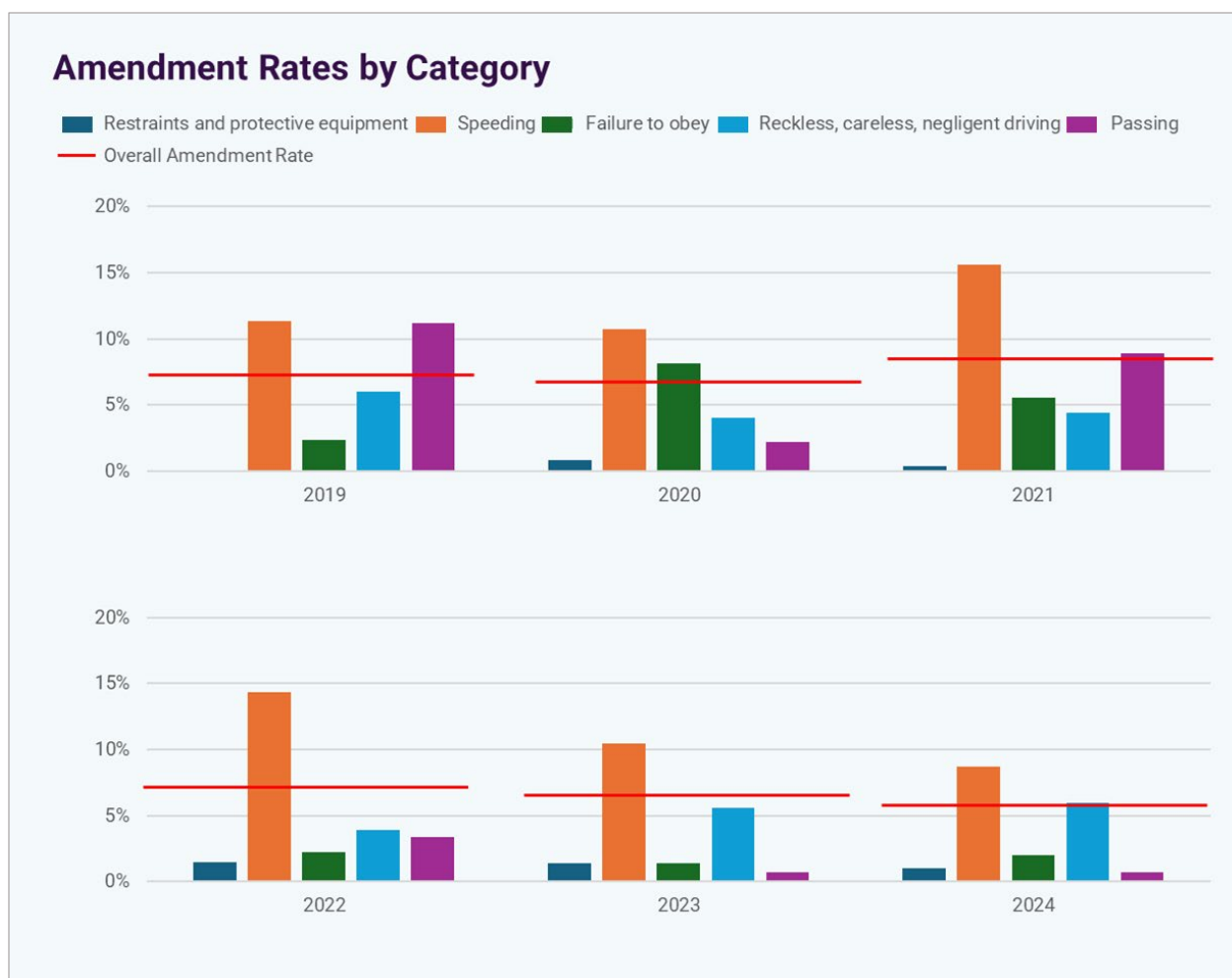


Figure 2.5 Amendment Rates for Five Charge Categories with Highest Filing Volumes (2019 – 2024)

Of the 637 charges amended between 2017 and 2021, most were amended once (612 cases) and the rest twice. Speeding-related charges accounted for most amendments (363 cases), followed by alcohol- and drug-related offenses and driving after license withdrawal (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Number of Amended Charges by Category (2017 – 2021)

Category	Charge Count	Percent
Speeding	363	56.99
Alcohol and drug	97	15.23
Driving after withdrawal	79	12.4
Financial Responsibility	17	2.67
Failure to obey	16	2.51
Reckless, careless, negligent driving	16	2.51
Driver's license reg. and duties	15	2.35
Hit and run	12	1.88
Prohibited actions	12	1.88
Failure to yield	5	0.78

Category	Charge Count	Percent
Misrepresentations	2	0.31
Restraints and protective equipment	1	0.16
Passing	1	0.16
Improper turns	1	0.16
Total	637	100

Approximately 80 percent of charges were downgraded to less serious offenses in the first round of amendments. Because the vast majority of amendments reduced severity, district court judges appeared to prefer amendments to outright dismissal, which may serve as a middle-ground approach — leveling consequences for a violation while mitigating the potential impact on a driver’s livelihood. Although amending a charge to a less serious offense can limit the extent to which a driving record reflects the original violation, this is a more restrained and judicious alternative to dismissal, particularly given that a conviction on the original charge could result in CDL disqualification and the loss of employment. Table 2.4 lists common examples of amendments.

Table 2.4 Examples of Amended Charges

Original Charge	Amended Charge
Commercial driver license – not licensed	License to be in possession
Leaving the scene of an accident/failure to render aid or assistance	Careless driving
Speed 17 mph over (limited access)	Speed 10 mph over (limited access)
Commercial driver license – operate vehicle while suspended	License to be in possession
Reckless driving	Careless driving

2.4 Variation in Adjudication Results Among Kentucky's Judicial Districts

KYTC and the Kentucky State Police (KSP) operate 14 fixed weigh stations and four virtual screening facilities across the state to monitor and enforce CMV credentialing and safety regulations. These facilities are strategically located along major interstate corridors and other high-volume truck routes to ensure robust oversight of CMV operations. When a fixed weigh station is open, all trucks must enter for screening, where they are checked against multiple databases to verify compliance with vehicle registration requirements, fuel tax obligations, weight-distance tax, and other applicable regulations. If the Kentucky Automated Truck Screening (KATS) system flags a vehicle for potential non-compliance, weigh station officers may direct the driver to pull over for a more detailed inspection. During inspections violations may be identified, often resulting in the issuance of citations.

Judicial districts that are home to fixed weigh stations recorded higher volumes of CDL- and CMV-related citations between 2017 and 2024 (Figure 2.6). Some districts handled only a few dozen cases while others processed several thousand.

District 56 (Caldwell, Livingston, Lyon, and Trigg counties) recorded the highest number of charges (3,011), followed by District 27 (Knox and Laurel counties) with 2,741, District 28 (Pulaski and Rockcastle counties) with 2,053, and Jefferson County (District 30) with 1,700. Overall, there were significant regional differences in CDL and CMV enforcement activity across Kentucky.

District courts in counties with weigh stations tend to handle higher volumes of CDL- and CMV-related charges, so judges and county attorneys deal with them more frequently. Repeated exposure deepens their knowledge of the safety risks and public impacts associated with the violations that lead to citations. Greater familiarity with common charges may also contribute to a stricter judicial approach, although judges and prosecutors have to may be more lenient in cases where the penalty could negatively impact a driver's livelihood.

Figure 2.7 demonstrates significant variation in conviction rates across judicial districts. Districts with fixed weigh stations generally had higher conviction rates, although exceptions exist (e.g., Floyd County, which had a 36.2 percent conviction rate).

Total Number of Charges by Judicial District (2017-2024)

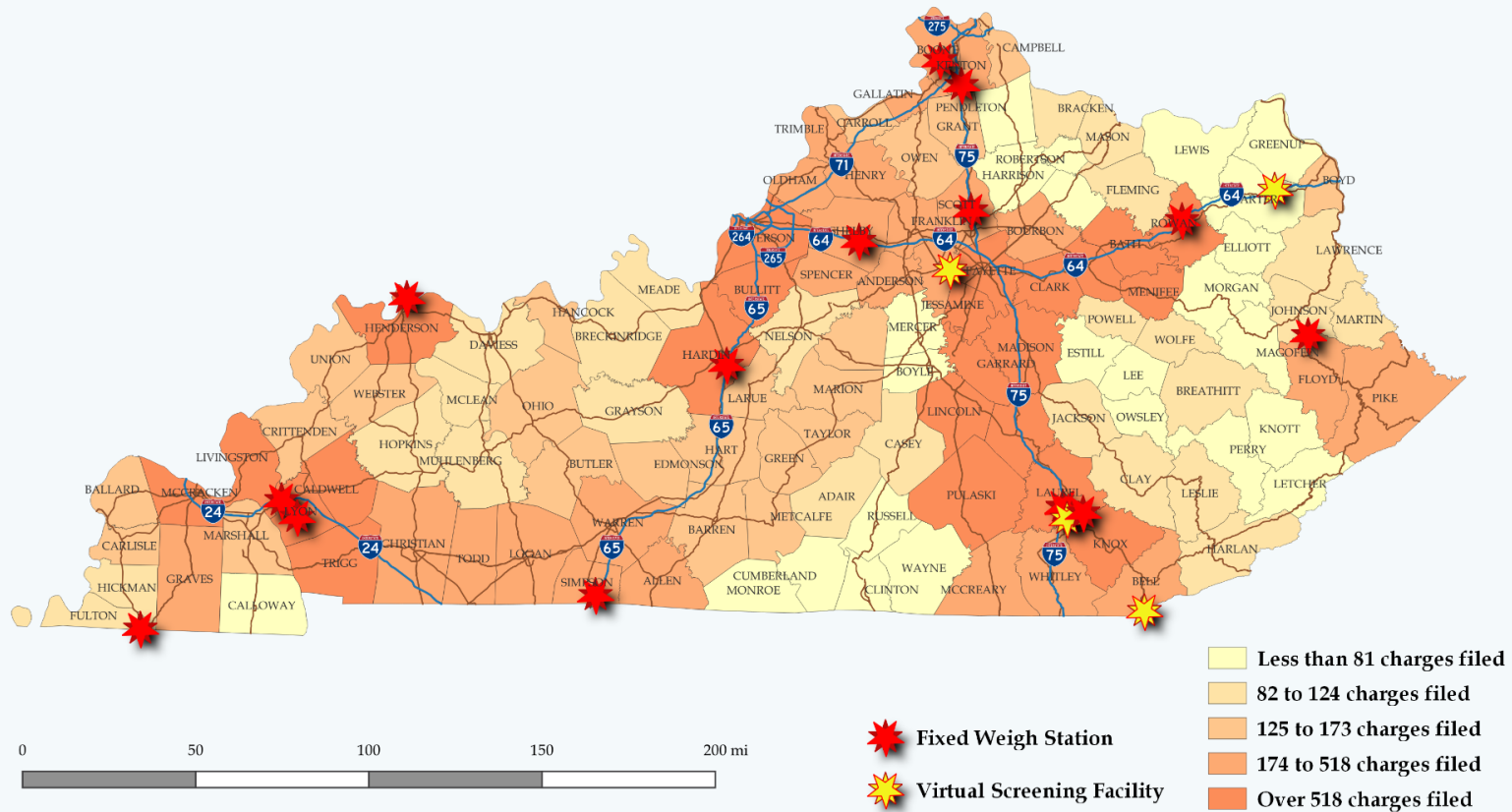


Figure 2.6 Map of CDL- and CMV-Related Charges Filed Across Kentucky Judicial Districts (2017 – 2024)

Conviction Rates by Judicial District (2017-2024)

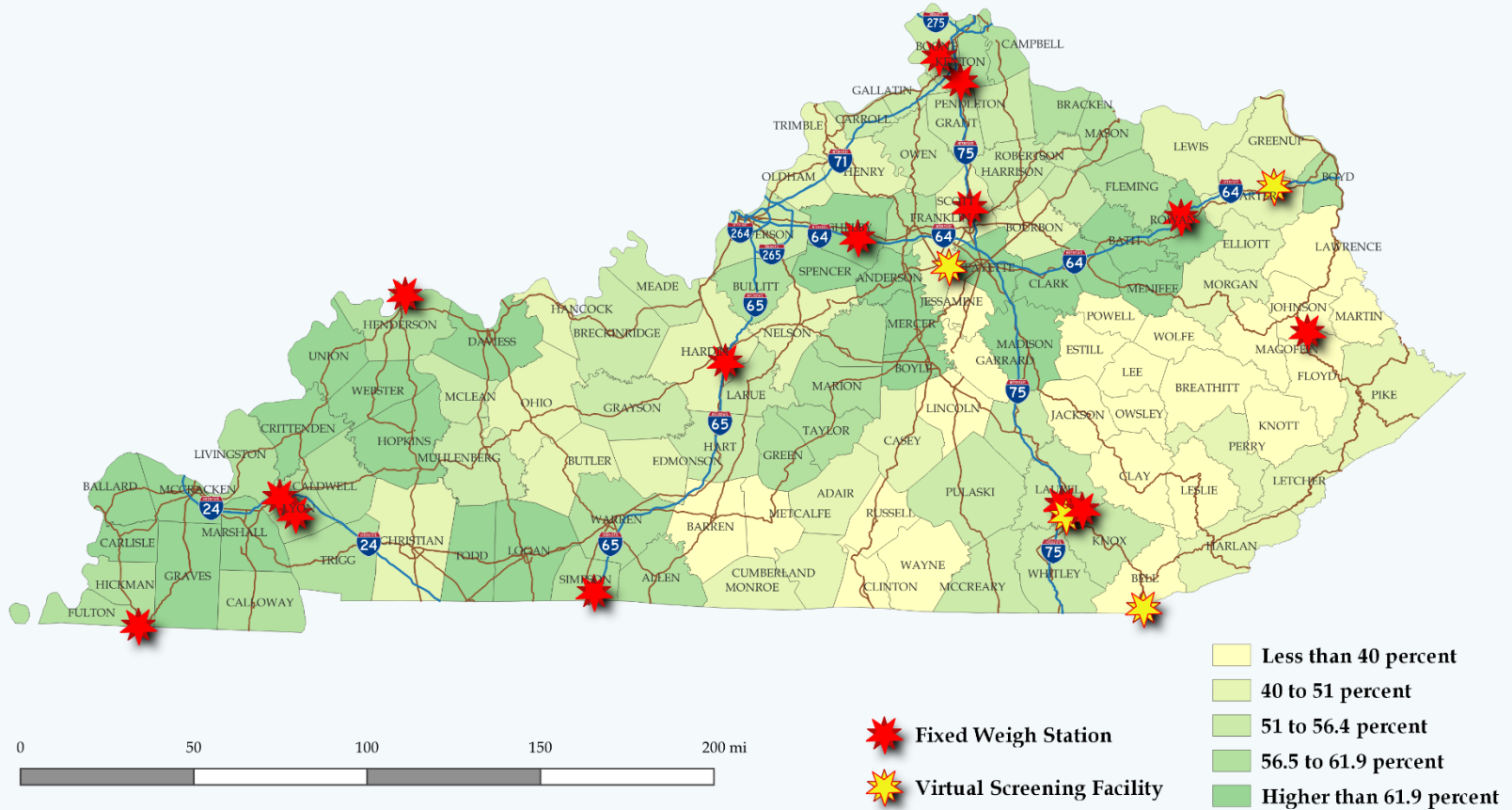


Figure 2.7 Map of Conviction Rates for CDL- and CMV-Related Charges Across Kentucky Judicial Districts (2017 – 2024)

Court data from 2017 to 2020 include detailed charge-level information (e.g., filing year, county, charge type, UOR code, offense description, judge at sentencing). Judge identities are anonymized using numeric identifiers. However, due to coding being done in a consistent manner, we were able to explore variations in how judges adjudicate CDL- and CMV-related charges. During this period, 61 judges handled more than 10 CDL- and CMV-related charges, making them suitable for comparison.

Figure 2.8 plots conviction rate (x-axis) against dismissal rate (y-axis) for each judge; each dot represents one judge. Several notable patterns stand out:

- Thirty-one judges had a 100 percent conviction rate. Because multiple judges had this outcome, several points are stacked in the lower-right portion of the graph.
- Conviction rates for most judges were between 78% and 100%, with dismissal rates below 21%.
- A small number of judges are outliers, including two judges with exceptionally high dismissal rates of 35% and 43%.
- Overall, conviction rates were high and fairly consistent across most judges. A minority exhibited markedly different adjudication tendencies, which may reflect differences in judicial philosophy, local court practices, or case characteristics.

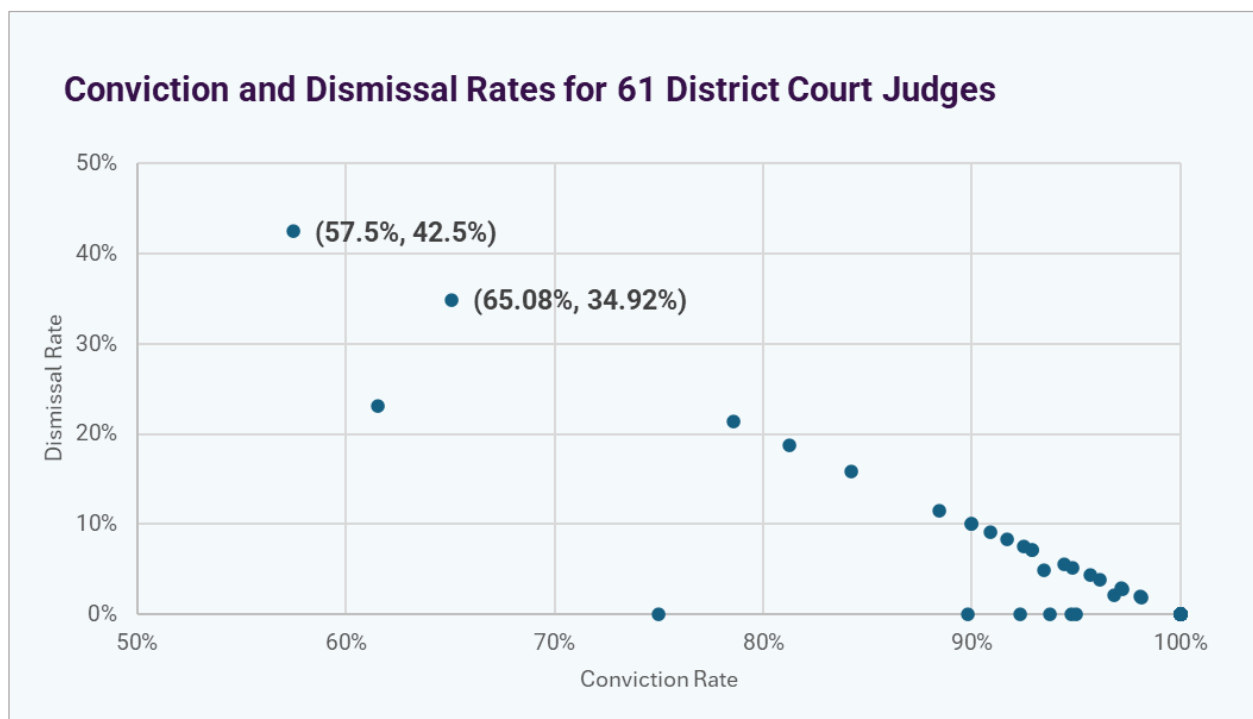


Figure 2.8 Conviction and Dismissal Rates for 61 District Court Judges (2017 – 2020)

Figure 2.9 illustrates disposition patterns for the two judges with low conviction rates, with a focus on charges related to speeding, restraints and protective equipment, and alcohol and drugs. Unlike colleagues who frequently amended speeding charges to lesser offenses, these judges did not amend alcohol- or drug-related charges and instead dismissed a substantial portion of speeding cases. This pattern suggests their lower overall conviction rates were driven primarily by speeding cases, not being lenient on alcohol- or drug-related violations.

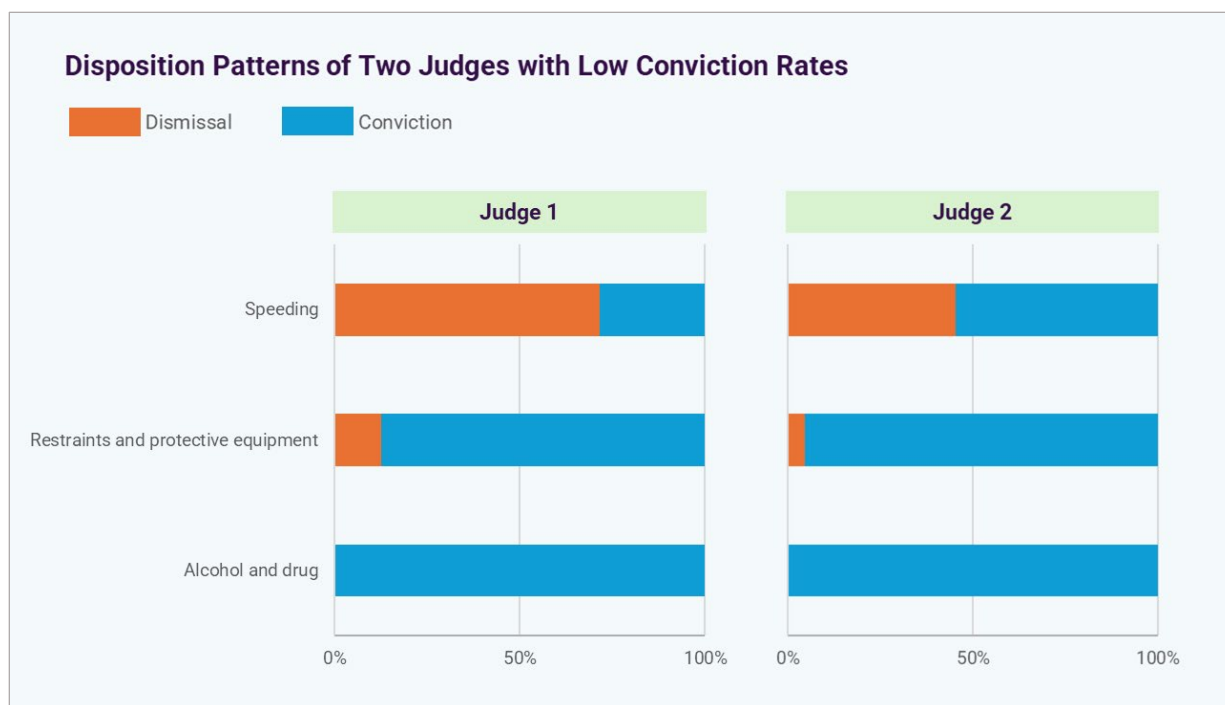


Figure 2.9 Distribution of Disposition Outcomes for Two Judges with Low Conviction Rates

2.5 Conclusion

Between 2002 and 2024 conviction rates declined and dismissals increased. Speeding and other serious traffic violations — many of which are advanceable offenses — were dismissed or amended at rates that could have materially affected the integrity of CDL driver records. This weakens the effectiveness of federal disqualification provisions. Our analysis also highlights that meaningful variation exists across judicial districts and among individual judges. Districts that have fixed weigh stations generally logged more charges and had higher conviction rates, suggesting that familiarity with CMV enforcement and safety risks may influence adjudication outcomes. A small number of judges had disproportionately high dismissal rates, which can be traced to speeding cases rather than leniency toward alcohol- or drug-related offenses.

Our findings attest to the importance of improving training for judges and prosecutors, data-driven monitoring, and interagency collaboration to ensure that CDL- and CMV-related adjudication practices align with federal safety objectives and support consistent, fair, and effective enforcement across Kentucky.

Chapter 3 Case Study of CDL Adjudication in Hardin County District Court

Kentucky's 59 judicial districts handle traffic offenses, misdemeanors, violations, small claims up to \$2,500, and other matters. Judges and county attorneys are elected officials who serve four-year terms and operate independently of the executive and legislative branches as well as county and city governments. Because judges and prosecutors make independent decisions based on the law and the facts of each case, outcomes for similar cases inevitably vary across judicial districts.

To explore how district courts process CDL- and CMV-related charges, we asked several district court judges if we could observe court proceedings and participate in follow-up discussions. Following virtual observations of multiple court proceedings, we zeroed in on the Hardin County District Court due to the high volume of CDL- and CMV-related charges. We relied on a mix of virtual and in-person observations and discussions to document how CDL- and CMV-related charges are handled, types of violations filed most often, common issues encountered during adjudication, and types of assistance judges and prosecutors could benefit from to further improve their knowledge charges and their safety impacts.

3.1 Overview of Hardin County

Hardin County has one fixed weigh station equipped with a KATS system, including a USDOT/KYU reader, a license plate reader, parking and monitoring systems, and a driver-focused camera. The county sees a high volume of CMV traffic due to the convergence of several major roadway systems that connect the county to regional and national freight networks. The weigh station is located on Interstate 65 southbound, which is a major north–south highway linking the Southeast and Midwest (Figure 3.1). The Bluegrass Parkway connects Elizabethtown to Interstate 64 and the Lexington region, channeling freight traffic toward eastern Kentucky and Interstate 65. And the Western Kentucky Parkway links Elizabethtown to freight routes in the western portion of the state and provides direct access to Interstate 65 near the Hardin County weigh stations.

Hardin County Weigh Station

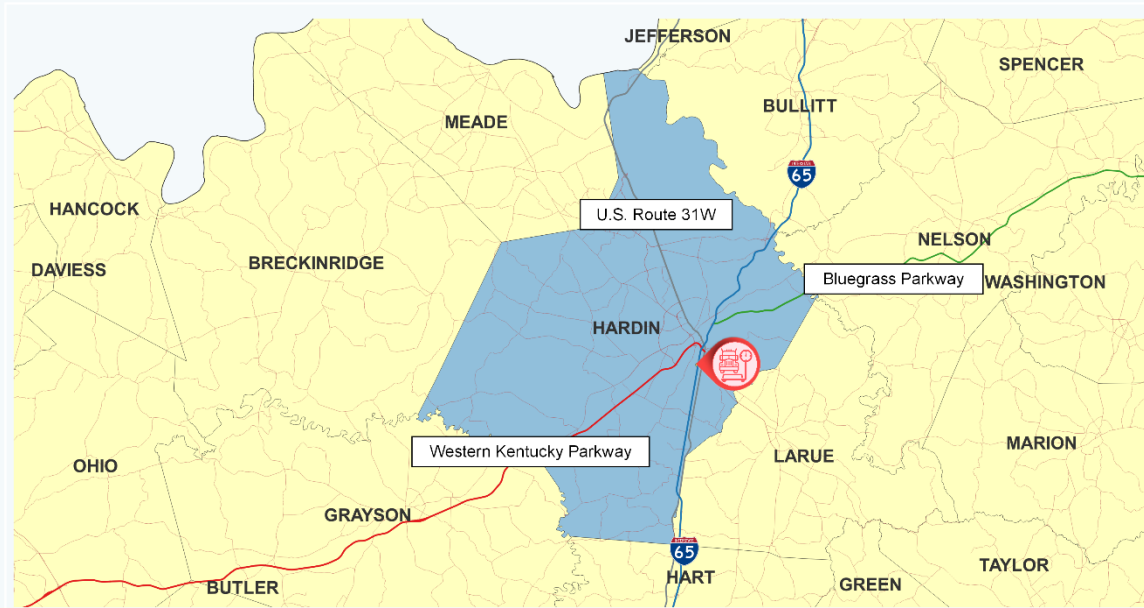


Figure 3.1 Hardin County Weigh Station Locations and Major Roadways

Between 2017 and 2024, Hardin County accounted for 1 – 5% of statewide charges each year (Figure 3.2). In 2017 and 2020, it recorded 4.3% and 4.5% of statewide charges, respectively, which coincided with periods of intensified enforcement activity and higher truck volumes. The number of charges declined in 2021, potentially due to staffing shortages at weigh stations and other enforcement constraints. More recently (2022 – 2024), Hardin County’s charge counts rose, stabilizing at approximately 2% of the statewide total.

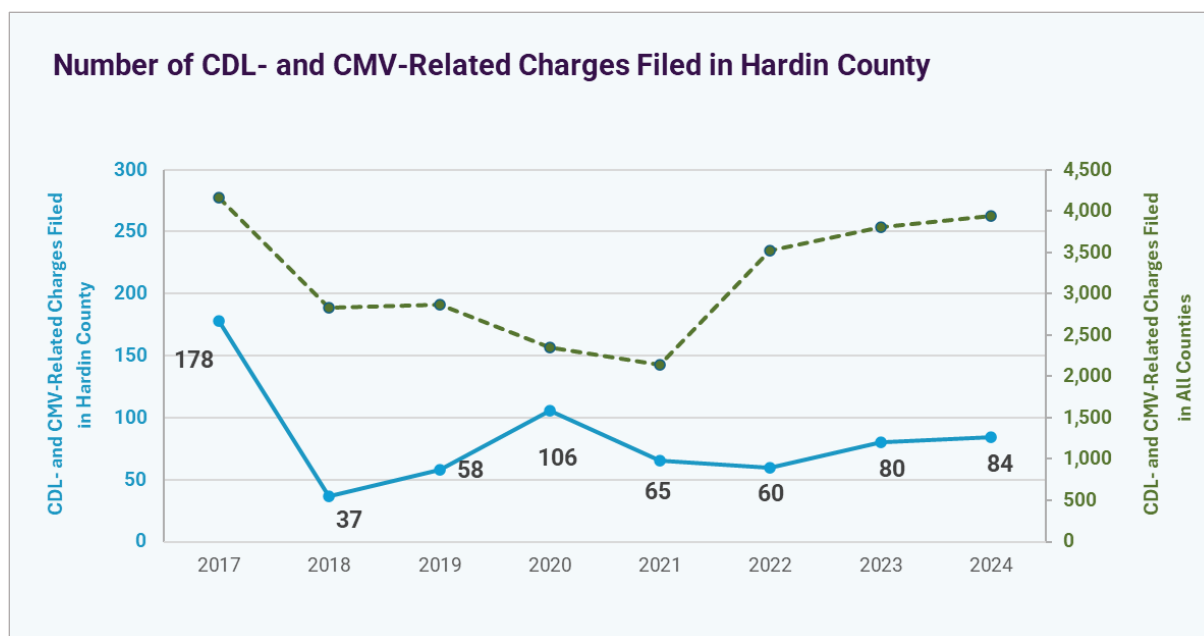


Figure 3.2 Volume of CDL- and CMV-Related Charges Filed in Hardin County District Court

Conviction rates in Hardin County District Court exhibited interannual variability and differed from statewide averages (Figure 3.3). In some years, its conviction rate was lower than the statewide rate, while in others it approached or exceeded it. Divergence between local and statewide conviction trends suggests that case outcomes are influenced not only by the nature of the violations but also by how cases are presented, interpreted, and adjudicated in district courts.

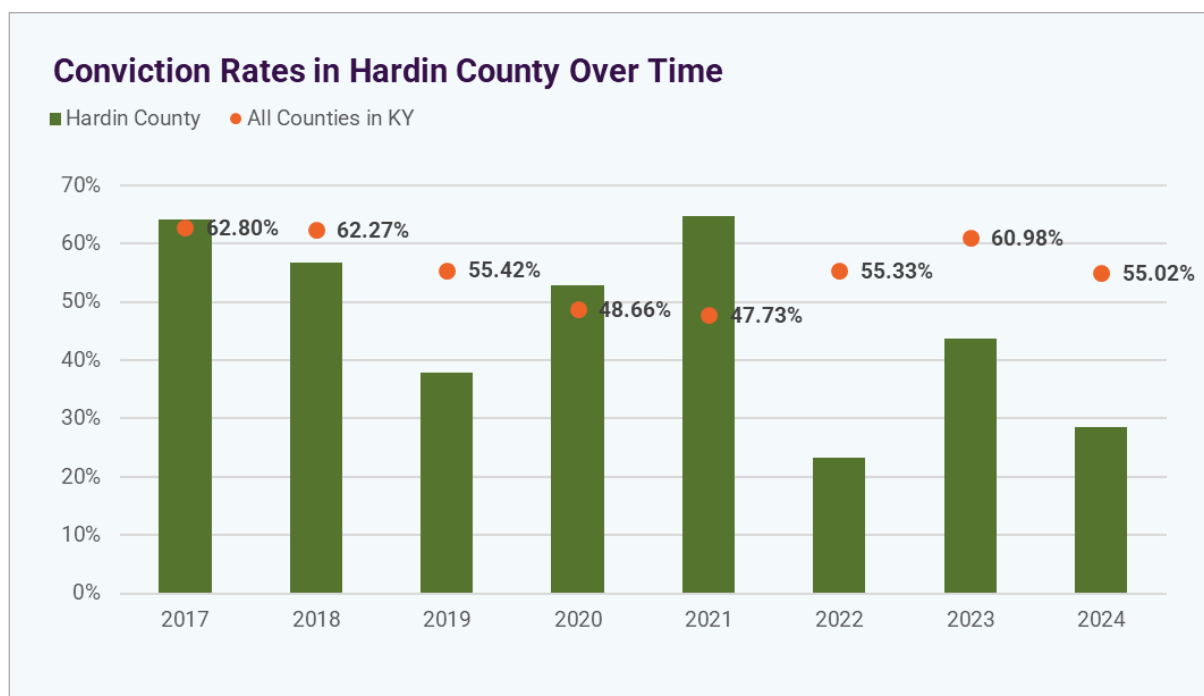


Figure 3.3 Conviction Rate of CDL- and CMV-Related Charges in Hardin County (2017-2024)

3.2 Adjudication Challenges for CDL- and CMV-Related charges in District Court

Based on our observations of Hardin County District Court, this section reviews factors that can affect the adjudication process.

Limited Access to Driver and Compliance Information

When a prosecutor and defense counsel hold a conference, they have time to contact KYTC Division of Driver Licensing staff to obtain more information about a defendant's CDL history. However, during trials district courts lack access to detailed information about a defendant's license, even though it may be critical for determining whether the charged offense is a repeat violation.

Insufficient License Type Information on Citation Forms

Multiple procedural safeguards are in place to ensure proper identification of CDL holders: law enforcement officers are required to verify license type when issuing a citation; court clerks are expected to confirm license status before court proceedings; and additional screening steps are taken to prevent CDL holders from being mistakenly allowed to attend traffic school or defensive driving programs that could result in dismissal of charges. Despite these efforts, further improvements can be made.

UNIFORM CITATION

OFFENDER / VIOLATOR	AGENCY BOWLING GREEN POLICE		OFFENSE 1140100		COURT
	NAME: LAST, FIRST, M, F, JIAL MARTIN, JACKSON		ATTN: _____ HOME PHONE _____		
	ALIAS NAME: LAST, FIRST, M, F, JIAL		EMERGENCY PHONE UNKNOWN		
	ADDRESS (NUMBER, NAME, SUFFIX) [REDACTED]		KENTUCKY RESIDENT STATUS ☒ F. FULL-TIME ☐ P. PART-TIME ☐ N. NON-RESIDENT		
VEHICLE	CITY BOWLING GREEN		STATE KY		MARITAL STATUS SINGLE
	ZIP CODE/EXTENSION 42101		VICTIM'S RELATIONSHIP TO OFFENDER GIRLFRIEND		
	ID TYPE OPERATOR'S LICENSE	ID ST KY	ID NUMBER [REDACTED]	S. S. NUMBER [REDACTED]	
	☐ COMMERCIAL VEHICLE ☐ PLACARDED HAZARDOUS VEHICLE		HEIGHT 5' 11"		
DATE / TIME	WEIGHT 165		HAIR COLOR BROWN		EYE COLOR BROWN
	ETHNIC ORIGIN ☐ HISPANIC ☒ NON HISPANIC		ALCOHOL/DRUG INVOLVEMENT ☐ ALCOHOL ☐ DRUGS ☐ UNKNOWN		
	B.A. RESULTS		BREATH		
	BLOOD		URINE		
CHARGES AND POST-ARREST COMPLAINT	VEHICLE MAKE [REDACTED]		VEHICLE MODEL [REDACTED]		VEHICLE IDENTIFERS MPH N MPH ZONE VIOL KEY
	VEH. YEAR [REDACTED]		VEHICLE COLOR [REDACTED]		
	VEH. TYPE [REDACTED]		REGISTRATION STATE, YEAR, NUMBER [REDACTED]		
	VIOLATION DATE 11/19/2022		VIOLATION TIME 2:08 PM		
COURT	EXACT LOCATION OF VIOLATION 1310 STATE ST		MILES [REDACTED]		CITY BOWLING GREEN
	ARREST DATE 11/19/2022		TIME OF ARREST 10:12 PM		
	EXACT LOCATION OF ARREST 911 KENTUCKY ST		MILES [REDACTED]		
	COUNTY WARREN		SECTOR 10		
CASE	NUMBER 1 of 5		VIOLATION CODE 10060		POST-ARREST COMPLAINT Charge 1: KIDNAPPING-ADULT Charge 2: STRANGULATION 1ST DEGREE Charge 3: ASSAULT, 4TH DEGREE (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) MINOR INJURY Charge 4: TERRORISTIC THREATENING, 3RD DEGREE On Saturday, November 19th, 2022, the victim came to the Bowling Green Police Department to report she had been assaulted. The victim advised she had been hanging out with her boyfriend, Jackson Martin, and his friend at her residence overnight. The victim advised that Martin started to get upset and angry while having an argument. The victim advised Martin's friend was able to get Martin to leave the residence around 0600 hours. The victim stated she then locked the doors so Martin could not come back in. The victim advised around 0700 hours, Martin returned to her residence and came in through the bedroom window. The victim advised when Martin did this, she asked him to leave, but then he stayed inside of her residence. The victim advised around 1200 hours, she attempted to pick up her house and then went to take a shower. The victim stated when she was done with her shower, Martin came into the bathroom and started yelling at her. The victim stated when she attempted to get out of the bathroom, Martin would push her into the shower and not let her leave. The victim advised at one point, she was able to get out of the shower, and Martin grabbed her and pulled her back into the bathroom. The victim stated she was eventually able to get out of the bathroom and go to her bedroom. The victim advised when she did this, she was able to get her phone and start a video. The victim stated when she did this, she hid her phone, so Martin would not see it. The victim
	ASCF 0		STATUTE/ORD. 509.040		
	CHARGE(S) 1		STARTING CASE [REDACTED]		
	ENDING CASE [REDACTED]		DRUG TYPE [REDACTED]		
CASE	COURT DATE [REDACTED]		COURT TIME [REDACTED]		COURT LOCATION WARREN
	ARRESTED [REDACTED]		☐ PAYABLE ☒ COURT		
	COURT CASE NUMBER [REDACTED]		TOTAL PREPAYABLE AMOUNT [REDACTED]		
	WITNESS 1 NAME: LAST, FIRST, M, F, JIAL [REDACTED]		STATE [REDACTED]		
CASE	WITNESS 1 ADDRESS (NUMBER, STREET, SUFFIX) [REDACTED]		CITY [REDACTED]		ZIP CODE [REDACTED]
	WITNESS 2 NAME: LAST, FIRST, M, F, JIAL [REDACTED]		STATE [REDACTED]		
	WITNESS 2 ADDRESS (NUMBER, STREET, SUFFIX) [REDACTED]		CITY [REDACTED]		
	[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]		
CASE	☐ SERVING WARRANT FOR OTHER AGENCY SPECIFY: _____		☒ VIDEO ☐ FINGERPRINTS ☐ PHOTOS ☐ EVIDENCE HELD		YEAR 22
	OFFICER SIGNATURE Poore213606, M.		BADGE/D. NUMBER 210		
	ASSIGNMENT PATROL		CONTROL NUMBER ED09644		
	TYPE 2				

Figure 3.4 Commonwealth of Kentucky Uniform Citation

Figure 3.4 is the uniform citation form used by judges and county attorneys in court proceedings. The section identifying license type occupies a very small area (red box). During fast-moving trial sessions, this information is at risk

of being overlooked. Modifying the citation form (e.g., adding a large, light-gray *CDL* watermark across citations issued to CDL holders to improve visibility) would improve awareness of license type.

Resource and Staffing Constraints

Workloads in Kentucky district courts have increased (Figure 3.5). The number of cases closed in Kentucky district courts increased by over 25% between 2020 and 2024. Because Hardin County District Court is larger than courts in more rural areas, it has staff who can verify violation codes entered by law enforcement officers and make corrections when necessary (e.g., when codes have changed or been updated). The court also has staff who verify that driver's license numbers associated with traffic school enrollment are not CDL numbers.

It is not reasonable to expect smaller, rural district courts with limited staff to manually verify and correct license and violation information, particularly when CDL- and CMV-related cases make up only a small portion of their case-loads. This limitation highlights the need for a more systematic approach at the citation stage to ensure that law enforcement officers enter accurate and complete information when citations are issued.

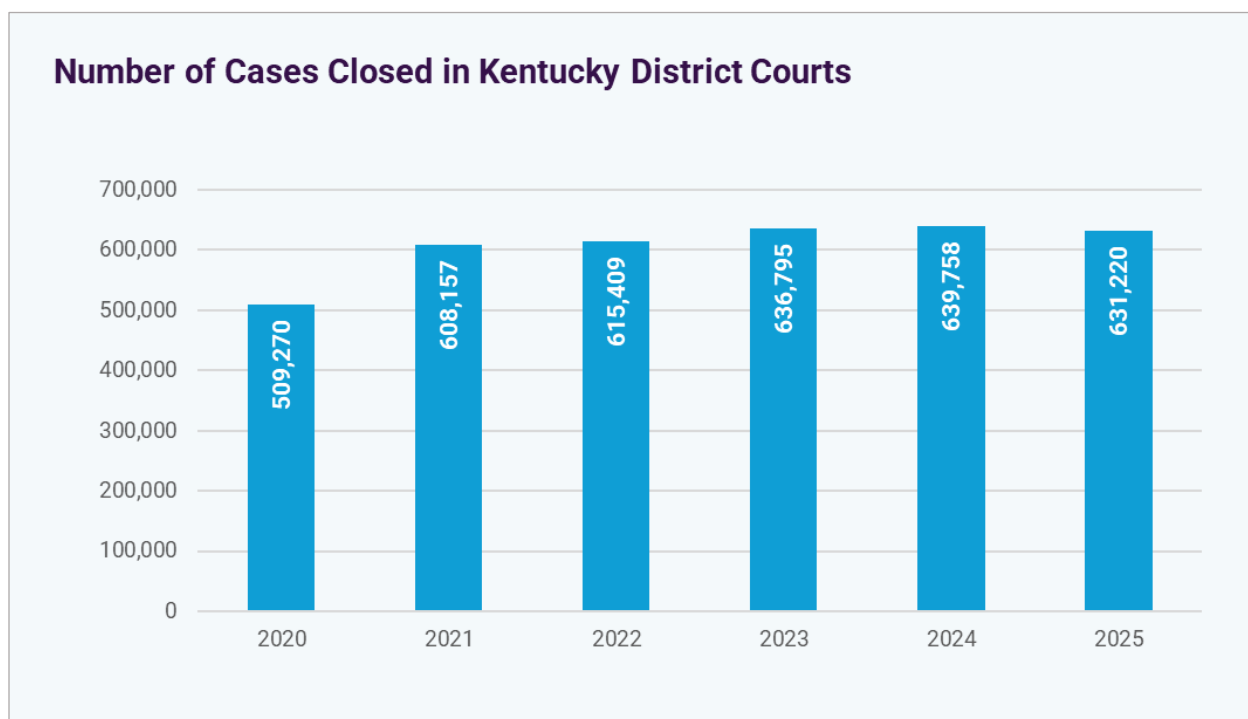


Figure 3.5 Number of Cases Closed in Kentucky District Courts

Statutory and Regulatory Constraints on Adjudication

Courts are authorized to mark a Failure to Appear (FTA) for serious offenses (e.g., reckless driving or excessive speeding involving a CDL) when a defendant fails to appear on a scheduled court date. An FTA automatically triggers license suspension or disqualification. Courts have expressed interest in examining whether the range of charges eligible for license suspension recommendations should be expanded, as suspension often has a greater impact on drivers than a bench warrant because it directly affects their ability to continue working in the trucking industry.

Dealing with charges that involve non-Kentucky CDL holders also presents challenges. When an FTA is entered for an out-of-state CDL holder who fails to appear in court, KYTC relays the FTA decision to the driver's licensing state. However, complications arise when the court later recalls the FTA (e.g., if a defendant contacts the court and is

granted an additional opportunity to appear) and then issues another FTA if the defendant again fails to appear. For Kentucky drivers, multiple FTAs can be processed and appropriate follow-up actions taken. But for non-Kentucky drivers, KYTC typically notifies the licensing state only once, as the system is not designed to transmit repeated FTAs for the same charge. This limitation highlights the need to identify additional actions or procedural improvements that courts can use to address violations involving non-Kentucky CDL holders more effectively.

Reliance on Plea Bargaining and Outcome Measurement

Our research team's perspective differed from the perspectives of judges and county attorneys. We analyzed enforcement outcomes using individual charges as the unit of analysis. In contrast, judges and county attorneys evaluate cases as the unit of analysis, regardless of the number of charges filed as part of a case. For the court system, the primary objective is to resolve cases in a consistent and efficient manner. As long as at least one charge in a case results in a conviction, the case is counted as a convicted case.

Courts often focus on one or two of the most serious charges associated with a case while dismissing less serious charges. Because the unit of analysis differs, courts perceive conviction rates to be relatively high. We encourage paying greater attention to individual charges because the practice of prioritizing only the most serious charge may be appropriate for regular driver's license holders but is less suitable for CDL holders. Although district courts are hampered by resource constraints, CDL- and CMV-related violations merit additional attention due to their outsized impact on public safety.

Inconsistent Interpretation of CDL/CMV Violation Severity

District courts handle a wide range of CDL- and CMV-related charges, and the list of potential violations is long. For common moving violations (e.g., speeding, reckless driving, improper lane changes) determining the severity of an offense is generally straightforward and requires little deliberation. But many violations are specific to the trucking industry. With limited time to interpret industry-specific terminology and CMV operations, judges and prosecutors may find it decision making challenging.

Types of cases where interpretation can be particularly difficult or inconsistent include those related to motor carrier-specific taxes (e.g., International Fuel Tax Agreement, International Registration Plan, and Kentucky Weight Distance Tax [KYU]), truck-specific vehicle safety issues (e.g., leaking air hoses, improper trailer air connections, fuel line leaks), and violations that could apply only to CDL holders (e.g., failure to perform pre-trip inspections, operating with an expired medical certificate, hours of service violation). Even for familiar moving violations, perceived safety risks can be misgauged if judges and prosecutors do not account for the full context of CMV operations.

3.3 Potential Strategies to Improve CDL and CMV Adjudication in District Courts

District court judges and prosecutors said they need materials to deepen their understanding of CDL- and CMV-related charges. They emphasized the importance of distributing materials to courts in rural areas, accompanied by a training session to help users effectively apply their content.

Because trial sessions move quickly, judges have a short amount of time to examine each violation and would benefit from a bench card — a concise, quick-reference guide designed for use during court proceedings without reliance on lengthy statutes or explanations.

County attorneys requested a more detailed reference document that provides additional information on each type of violation, including associated safety concerns and the potential severity of harm resulting from noncompliance.

A desk reference guide could outline violations applicable to CDL holders and CMV drivers. These can be categorized as violations related to federal out-of-service orders, driver safety, vehicle safety, credentialing and permit issues, hazardous materials, overweight and over-dimensional issues, and miscellaneous violations. Categories can be divided into subcategories that provide additional details on violations in each group (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1 Categories of Violations Identified During Inspections

Category		Violation Description
1. Federal Out-of-Service Violation	—	—
2. Driver Safety Violation	2.1	Commercial Driver's License
	2.2	Age Requirement Violation
	2.3	Language Limitation
	2.4	Hours of Service of Drivers/Logbook Violation
	2.5	Seatbelt
	2.6	Drugs and Alcohol
	2.7	Smoking
	2.8	Physically Unqualified (Fatigue/ Illness)
	2.9	Moving Violation
3. Vehicle Safety Violation	3.1	Oil and Grease Leak
	3.2	Lamps, Reflective Devices, and Electrical Wiring
	3.3	Brakes
	3.4	Window
	3.5	Fuel System Violation
	3.6	Coupling Devices and Towing Methods Violation
	3.7	Tires
	3.8	Rear-Vision Mirrors
	3.9	Horn
	3.1	Speedometer
	3.11	Exhaust Systems
	3.12	Floors
	3.13	Emergency Equipment
	3.14	Frames
	3.15	Cab and Body Components
	3.16	Wheels
	3.17	Suspension Systems
	3.18	Steering Wheel Systems
	3.19	Battery
	3.2	Vehicle Access Requirement
	3.21	Improper Load Securement
	3.22	Miscellaneous; Vehicle Safety Violation
4. Credentialing and Permitting Issues	4.1	Registration

Category		Violation Description
	4.2	Periodic Inspection
	4.3	Temporary Permit
	4.4	Leasing Issue
	4.5	Invalid USDOT#/MCS-150
	4.6	KYU
	4.7	UCR
	4.8	IFTA
	4.9	KIT
	4.1	IRP
	4.11	Failure to Transfer Title
	4.12	Insurance
	4.13	Change of Address
	4.14	Display Issue
	4.15	Bill of Lading/Shipping Paper; Non-Hazmat
	4.16	Miscellaneous; Credentialing and Permitting Issues
5. Hazardous Materials	5.1	Hazardous Materials Violation
	5.2	Registration
	5.3	Invalid USDOT#
	5.4	Labeling and Placarding
	5.5	Shipping Paper
	5.6	Miscellaneous; Hazardous Materials
6. Overweight/Over-Dimension	6.1	Overweight
	6.2	Over-dimension
7. Miscellaneous Violation	—	—

Prosecutors emphasized the need for clear, plain-language explanations of each violation. The desk reference guide could include explanations such as the following:

- Federal out-of-service violations
 - Drivers or vehicles may be placed under an out-of-service order due to serious safety issues, such as major vehicle defects or driver-related violations. These conditions must be fully corrected before a vehicle or driver is legally permitted to resume operations.
- Hours-of-service (HOS) violations
 - The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) establishes limits for driving time, including an 11-hour driving limit, a required 30-minute break after 8 cumulative hours of driving, and a 60-hour limit over a 7-day period. These rules are intended to prevent driver fatigue, a contributing factor in many CMV crashes.
- Improper load securement
 - CMV drivers must use a minimum number of tie-downs to secure cargo and inspect load securement before beginning a trip and at regular intervals (every 3 hours, every 150 miles, or at each stop). These regulations are designed to prevent cargo from shifting, load loss, and roadway hazards.

- KYU violations
 - Motor carriers operating vehicles with a combined licensed weight exceeding 59,999 pounds must pay a mileage-based tax for travel in Kentucky. Carriers engaged in regular operations must obtain a KYU license and file and pay the tax each quarter. For temporary operations, a carrier may purchase a 10-day permit. Failure to obtain the proper license or permit, or failure to file and pay required taxes, may result in a KYU violation.
- Hazardous materials violations
 - Common hazardous materials violations include failure to properly secure packages within a vehicle, enabling them to move or shift during transport. Other frequent violations involve damaged, obscured, or missing placards, which are critical for emergency response and public safety.

Developing a list of the most serious violations can help courts determine which charges warrant the most attention, especially for a cases that involve multiple charges. Analyzing factors that contribute to CMV-involved crashes can help identify violations that pose the greatest safety risk. Examining the violation histories of CMVs involved in crashes over the past five years could also reveal common patterns associated with high-risk carriers or drivers. Findings from these analyses can be used to develop a prioritized list of violations to include in both the prosecutor desk reference guide and judge bench cards, increasing awareness of charges with the most profound safety implications.

Chapter 4 Local Law Enforcement Technology Needs for CDL Enforcement

Local law enforcement officers play a critical role in enforcing CDL- and CMV-related violations. While the Kentucky State Police Division of Commercial Vehicle Enforcement (KSP-CVE) operates weigh stations across the state and along major highways, local law enforcement officers are strongly encouraged to stop CMVs and conduct roadside inspections when warranted. However, most local officers have limited experience inspecting CMVs for vehicle safety issues or handling CDL-related violations. They interact with CMVs and CDL holders far less frequently than with standard driver's license holders. Limited exposure, being unfamiliar with federal requirements (49 CFR Parts 383 and 384), and lack of suitable locations to safely stop and inspect CMVs often constrains local officers' ability to conduct enforcement activities.

To understand challenges local law enforcement officers face in enforcing CDL- and CMV-related regulations and to identify equipment needs that could improve enforcement efficiency, we administered an online 11-question survey via the Qualtrics platform. We distributed survey links via the Kentucky Sheriffs' Association listserv and the Kentucky Association of Chiefs of Police listserv. On June 13, 2025, a board member with each association sent out a letter soliciting participation. A reminder email was sent two weeks after the initial distribution, and the survey closed on July 31, 2025. We received 52 responses.

Figure 4.1 shows the locations of survey respondents. Responses came from jurisdictions in densely populated urban areas and more rural regions with limited CMV traffic. The broad spatial coverage indicates the survey captured perspectives from a diverse range of local law enforcement agencies operating under varying roadway, traffic, and enforcement conditions. Below, we summarize responses to each question.

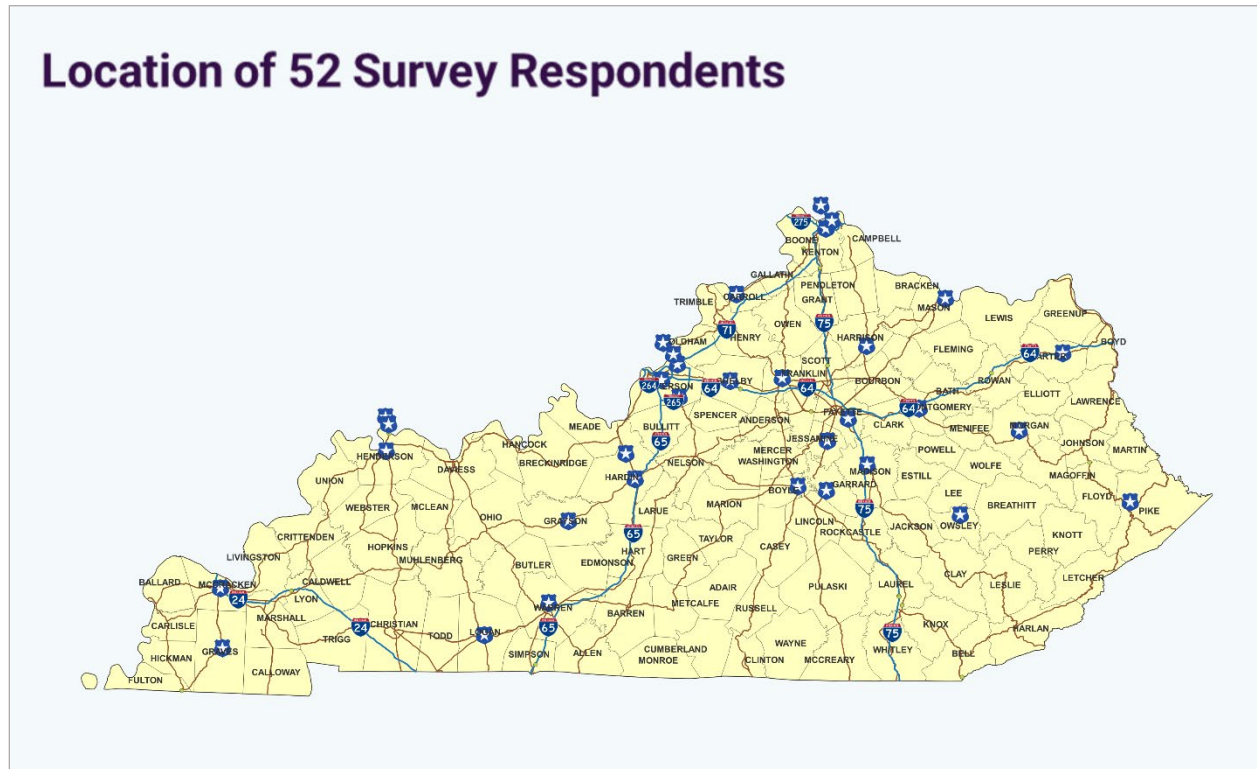


Figure 4.1 Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents

Question 1 — Frequency of CMV Traffic Stops

The first survey question examined how frequently respondents conduct traffic stops involving commercial motor vehicles for traffic or criminal violations. The results indicate considerable variation in enforcement activity. Nearly half of respondents (44%) reported that they never conduct such stops, suggesting that a substantial portion of the surveyed population is not regularly involved in CMV enforcement.

Among those who do engage in these stops, 40% indicated they conduct them one to two times per month, making this the most common level of enforcement activity among active respondents. A smaller share (13%) reported conducting stops three to six times per month, while only 2% indicated doing so more than seven times per month. Overall, the findings demonstrate that while most respondents either do not conduct commercial motor vehicle traffic stops or do so infrequently, a smaller group engages in this enforcement activity on a more regular basis.

Although local law enforcement officers are authorized to enforce CMV-related violations, limited familiarity with CMV regulations often results in hesitation when stopping and inspecting commercial motor vehicles. To address this challenge, the FMCSA provides specialized training, awareness programs, and technological resources to support local enforcement efforts. By focusing on priority behaviors—such as speeding, following too closely, improper lane changes, texting or cell phone use, and impaired driving—FMCSA encourages local law enforcement officers to participate in initiatives aimed at disqualifying CDL holders for repeated major violations. FMCSA training materials also outline proper procedures for safely stopping CMVs, including considerations for longer stopping distances and officer safety, and offer grant programs and systems (e.g., MCSAP and PRISM) to support the effective identification of unsafe carriers. In addition, the KYTC and KTC provide annual training sessions for KSP–Commercial Vehicle Enforcement (KSP-CVE) and select police departments; expanding these training opportunities to agencies that have not previously participated could further increase local law enforcement engagement.

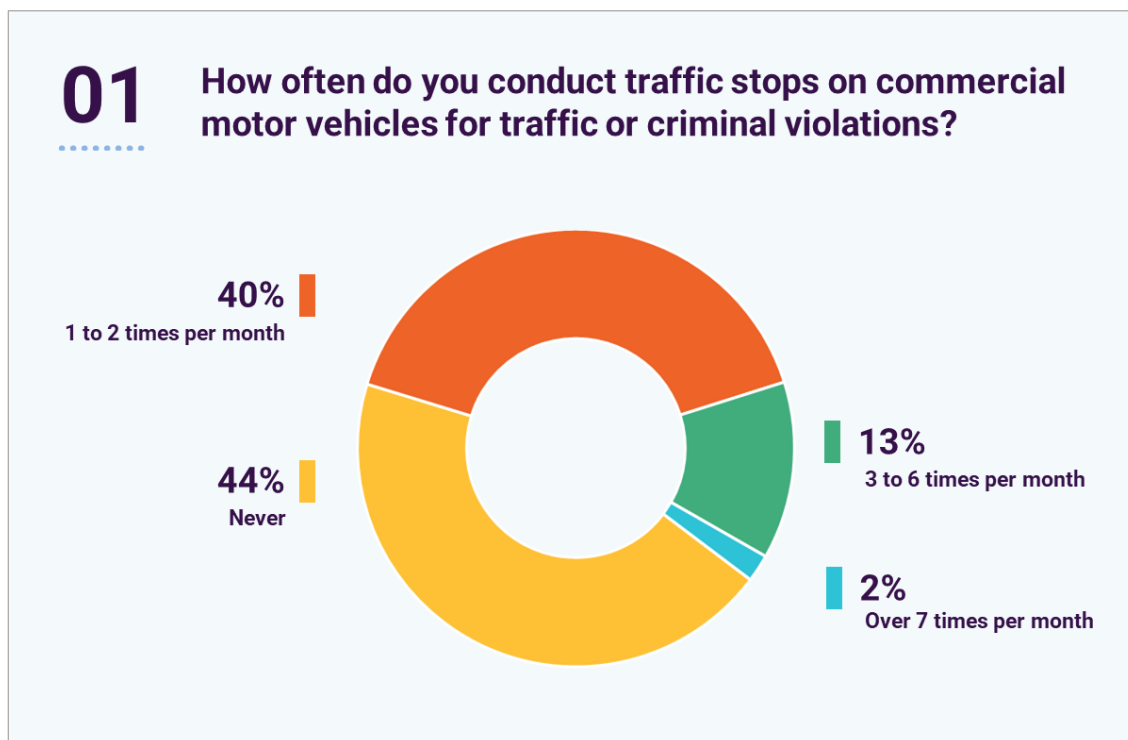


Figure 4.2 Reported Frequency of CMV Traffic Stops by Local Law Enforcement

Question 2 — Knowledge of CDL Regulations

The survey question on CDL regulatory familiarity assessed respondents' understanding of federal and state requirements applicable to CDL holders, including key areas such as medical certification, hours-of-service regulations, and pre-trip inspection requirements. Survey results indicate a widespread lack of familiarity with these regulations. Overall, 66 percent of respondents reported being unfamiliar with CDL requirements, including 42 percent who described themselves as very unfamiliar and 24 percent who indicated they were somewhat unfamiliar.

In contrast, only 34 percent of respondents reported some level of familiarity with CDL regulations. Of this group, 27 percent identified as somewhat familiar, while only 7 percent reported being very familiar. These findings highlight a substantial knowledge gap among surveyed respondents and suggest a need for enhanced training, education, or outreach efforts focused on core CDL regulatory requirements.

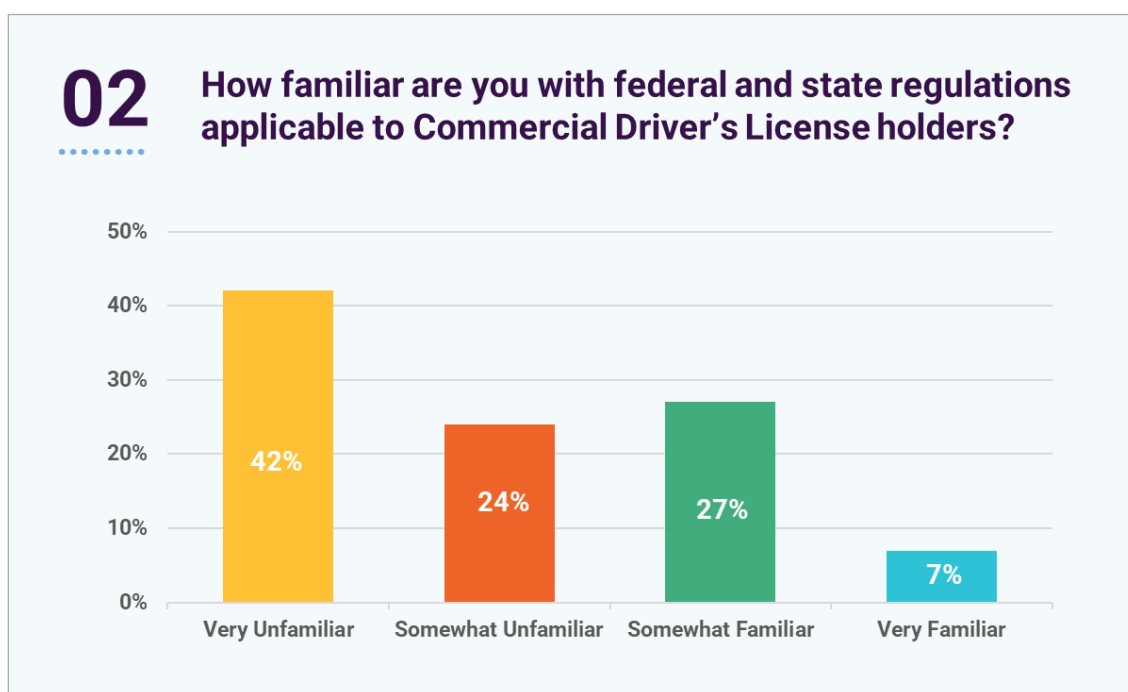


Figure 4.3 Reported Familiarity with CDL-Related Regulations Among Local Law Enforcement

Question 3 — Use of Warnings and Citations for CDL Violations

We also examined how often written or verbal warnings are issued in lieu of formal citations for CDL violations. The results show a wide spectrum of enforcement practices, reflecting differing levels of discretion among respondents. The most common response—reported by 42 percent of participants—was that warnings are issued 50 percent or more of the time. This suggests that a substantial share of enforcement personnel frequently choose warnings over citations, indicating a notable reliance on educational or corrective approaches in many enforcement situations.

In contrast, a significant portion of respondents reported much stricter enforcement practices. More than one-quarter (27 percent) indicated that warnings are issued less than 10 percent of the time, while an additional 16 percent stated that they issue no warnings at all, relying exclusively on citations. Combined, these responses represent 43 percent of participants and point to a strong preference for direct citation. Intermediate practices were relatively uncommon, with only 4 percent reporting warnings issued 10 to 24 percent of the time and 11 percent reporting 25

to 49 percent. Overall, the findings highlight substantial variation in how CDL violations are addressed, ranging from warning-heavy approaches to predominantly citation-based enforcement.

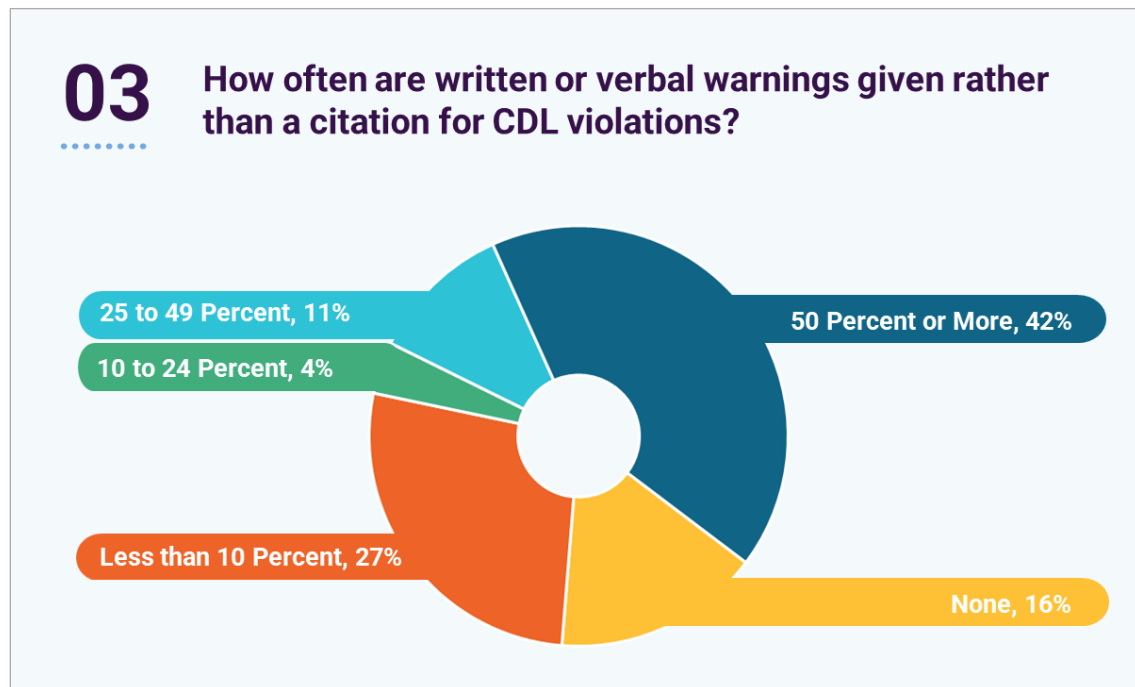


Figure 4.4 Frequency of Verbal Warnings as an Alternative to Citation Issuance

Question 4 — Use of the Kentucky Open Portal System (KyOPS) e-Citation System

The survey also assessed the extent to which respondents use the e-citation system within the Kentucky Open Portal System (KyOPS) when issuing citations. Use of the KyOPS e-citation system grew more common among local law enforcement agencies in the late 2000s due to its technological benefits and funding becoming available to purchase necessary equipment. The e-citation program offers six key benefits:

- Citation data delivered to courts within 24 hours
- Adoption of a standardized citation format
- Built-in edit checks that prevent omissions
- Potential data entry errors flagged by the system
- Law enforcement agencies can access information on pending cases
- Data integration, which ensures citation data are transmitted to the courts in a timely manner and that law enforcement can access charge disposition information.³

Seventy-eight percent of respondents reported that 100% of their citations are issued electronically, indicating near-universal reliance on the e-citation system. This level of usage suggests that the system is well integrated into daily enforcement operations and is viewed as an effective and reliable tool for processing citations.

³ Florey, M., Hollingsworth, T., Scopatz, R., Thompson, R., and Zwonechek, F. (2007). Traffic Records Assessment. https://transportation.ky.gov/HighwaySafety/KTRAC/Documents/2012_TRAFFIC_RECORDS_ASSESSMENT.pdf

High utilization is further reinforced by the fact that an additional 16 percent of respondents reported issuing 90 to 99 percent of their citations through KyOPS. Taken together, these results show that 94 percent of respondents rely on the e-citation system for at least 90 percent of their citation activity. Only a small minority reported lower levels of use, with 2 percent issuing citations electronically 70 to 89 percent of the time and 4 percent reporting usage below 70 percent. Overall, the results indicate that the Kentucky e-citation system has been widely adopted and functions as the primary citation method for most participating enforcement entities.

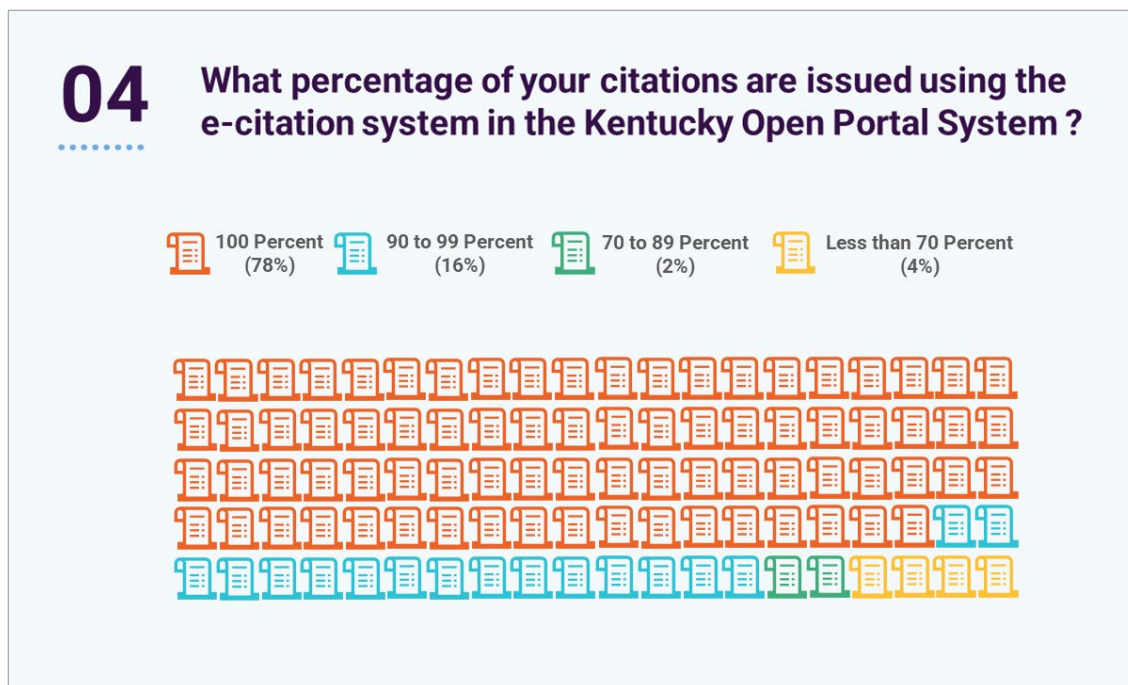


Figure 4.5 Extent of E-Citation System Use Among Local Law Enforcement Officers

Question 5 — Satisfaction With Technology and Equipment in Law Enforcement Vehicles

The next question asked respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with the technology and equipment provided in their law enforcement vehicles. Overall, the results reflect a generally positive perception of in-vehicle technology. A clear majority of respondents (60%) reported being satisfied with the equipment provided, including 47% who indicated they were “Satisfied” and an additional 13% who reported being “Very Satisfied.” This strong positive response suggests that, for most law enforcement personnel, the technology and equipment available in their vehicles effectively support their operational needs.

At the same time, the survey results indicate opportunities for improvement. A smaller but notable share of respondents (18%) reported being “Dissatisfied” with the current technology and equipment, while 22% expressed a neutral stance, indicating neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction. These findings suggest that although overall satisfaction is high, a meaningful portion of officers either experience challenges with existing technology or perceive opportunities for enhancement. Collectively, the results point to broad contentment with in-vehicle technology, alongside targeted areas where upgrades or additional support may be warranted.

05
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How satisfied are you with the current technology and equipment provided to you in your law enforcement vehicle?

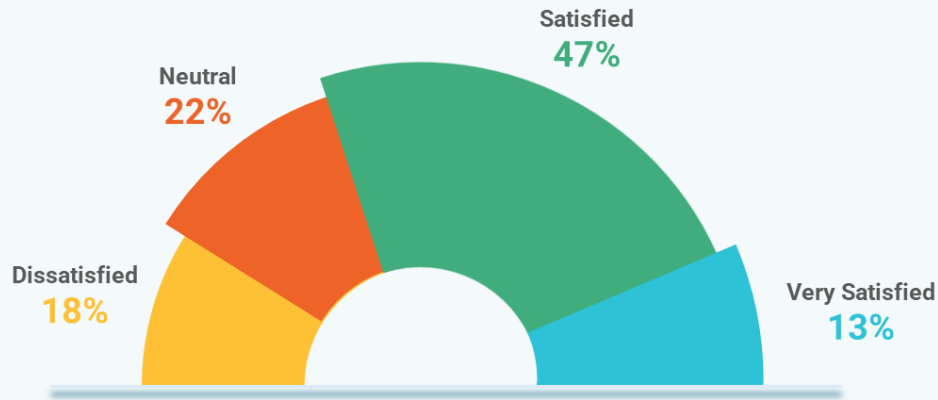


Figure 4.6 Perceived Satisfaction Levels with Technology Provided in Police Vehicles

Question 6 — Satisfaction With Technology and Equipment in Law Enforcement Vehicles for CMV Stops

Officers' perceptions of the effectiveness of current in-vehicle technology and equipment for conducting CMV traffic stops indicate notable dissatisfaction. As illustrated in Figure 4.7, nearly half of respondents (47%) reported that the technology is "Not at all" helpful in supporting safe and effective CMV traffic stops. An additional 40% indicated that the technology is only "Somewhat helpful," suggesting that while existing systems provide limited assistance, they fall short of fully addressing operational needs in the field. Together, these responses reflect a broad concern that current vehicle-based technologies are insufficient for the complexity and risk associated with CMV enforcement.

Only a small share of officers—13%—rated the current technology and equipment as "Very helpful," underscoring the gap between available tools and officer expectations. This distribution points to a pervasive perception among law enforcement personnel that existing in-vehicle systems are not adequately designed or integrated to support CMV traffic stop activities. The findings highlight clear opportunities for modernization and targeted investment in technology enhancements that could improve officer safety, situational awareness, and overall effectiveness during CMV enforcement operations.

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How well do you feel the current technology and equipment installed in a law enforcement vehicle help you perform CMV traffic stops safely and effectively?

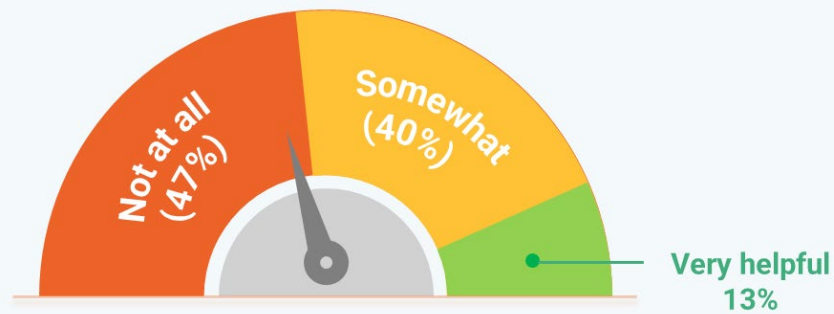


Figure 4.7 Perceived Satisfaction Levels with Technology Police Vehicles for CMV Traffic Stop

Question 7 — Equipment Needed to Carry Out Job Duties

This question asked respondents to identify one or more pieces of equipment or technologies they need to carry out their job duties but which they currently lack access to. The most frequently cited category was *Other* (34%) (Figure 4.8). Needs that fall under this category include access to certified inspectors, better internet connectivity, CDL handbooks, commercial trucking company history and related data, CMV-specific information, and access to systems such as IFTA, KYU, and NCIC. Among the listed options, handheld ID scanners were selected most often (29%), followed by laser technologies (20%), radar (11%) and Preliminary Breath Test (PBT) devices (6%)

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Are there any specific pieces of equipment or technology that you feel are lacking for your job duties?

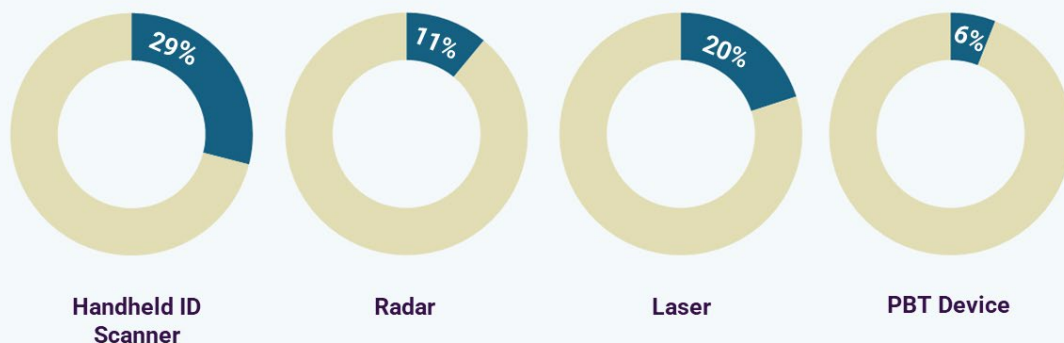


Figure 4.8 Equipment and Technology Needs for Conducting CMV Traffic Stops

Question 8 — Training for New Equipment and Technologies

Most respondents (56%) reported receiving periodic training on new equipment and technologies, typically as required by policy or certification standards (Figure 4.9). Thirty-six percent of respondents said they receive introductory training when new technology or equipment is first implemented. However, 9% of respondents reported never receiving training. Due to lack of training, members of this group may be underutilizing available technologies, diminishing their effectiveness.

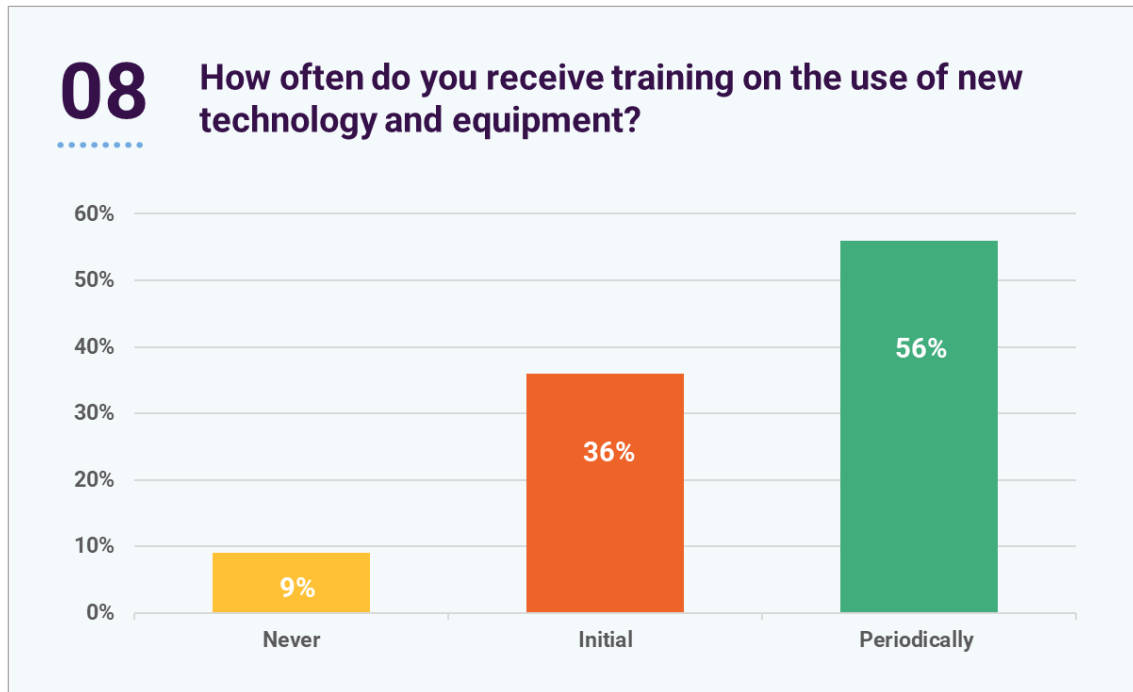


Figure 4.9 Frequency of Training on New Technology and Equipment

Question 9 — Maintenance/Repair of Equipment and Technologies

A strong majority of respondents (78%) rated their offices as effective or very effective in their maintenance and repair practices, suggesting that most agencies have dependable processes in place to support technology management (Figure 4.10). Only 6% of respondents said maintenance efforts were ineffective or very ineffective. Overall, most respondents are confident in their agencies' abilities to maintain and repair critical technological assets, which supports operational continuity and minimizes enforcement disruptions.

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How well do you feel your office ensures the proper maintenance and repair of technology and equipment?

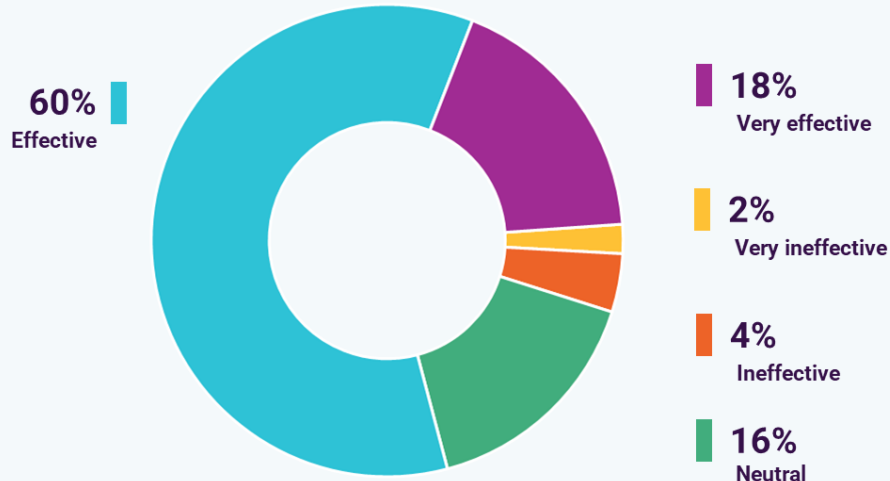


Figure 4.10 Perceived Effectiveness of Office Technology Maintenance and Repair

Question 10 — Concerns and Suggestions Related to Equipment and Technologies

Many respondents commented that their agencies lack the financial resources to acquire, store, and maintain essential technologies, including body-worn and in-car cameras, radar and laser speed detection devices, and updated PBT equipment. Respondents from smaller agencies, in particular, reported that the burden of funding both initial acquisitions and upkeep limits their ability to modernize equipment, resulting in outdated or insufficient equipment being used in daily operations.

Several respondents highlighted the critical role that grant funding could play in closing these gaps. Some agencies must independently fund new technology purchases, which significantly delays adoption and, in some cases, prevents upgrades altogether. Examples included the continued use of standard laptop computers, instead of more durable rugged devices, as well as limited access to specialized tools such as portable fingerprint readers that could improve on-scene identification and efficiency.

Respondents also pointed to broader system-level needs in the areas of communication and interagency coordination. Several emphasized the importance of transitioning to a modern, statewide radio system to improve access to trained CMV enforcement officers, enhance mutual aid capabilities, and support safer and more efficient operations. Others remarked on the need for improve access to CMV and trucking company information to support enforcement activities.

Concerns voiced by respondents underscore the ongoing challenges agencies face in addressing operational demands with limited resources and highlight opportunities for targeted investment and grant support to strengthen technological capacity across jurisdictions.

Question 11 — Willingness to Use Federal Funding for Equipment Purchases

Sixty-six percent of respondents would be likely or very likely to use federal funding if it were available to acquire equipment essential for enforcing CDL and CMV regulations (Figure 4.11). Only 16% of respondents said they were unlikely or very unlikely to leverage federal funds for this purpose. We do not have insights into why they would be disinclined to use funding. But if given the opportunity, most respondents are willing to use additional resources to facilitate effective and consistent regulatory oversight.

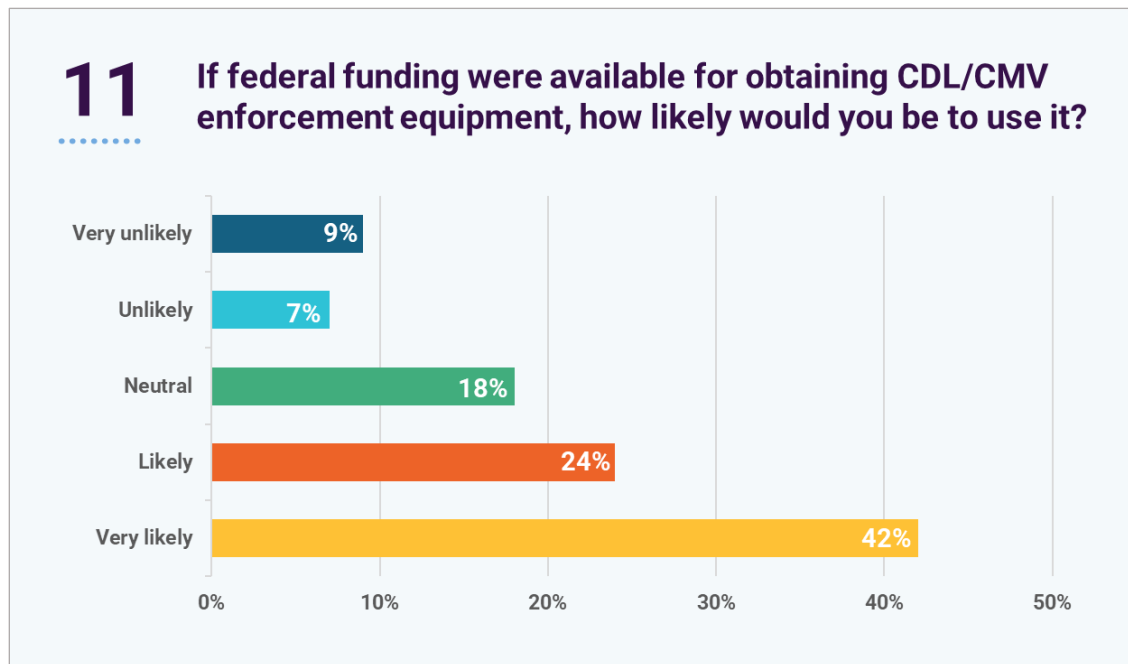


Figure 4.11 Willingness to Use Federal Funding for CDL/CMV Enforcement Equipment

Chapter 5 Recommendations

Kentucky has made significant investments in weigh stations along major corridors to keep unsafe CMVs and drivers off state roadways. Fixed weigh stations and virtual screening facilities have been added, and outdated equipment has been replaced with more efficient tools to assist law enforcement officers in identifying high-risk vehicles for detailed inspections. Inspections at weigh stations and roadside locations have proven effective, with a substantial portion resulting in citations being issued.

Recording violations and issuing citations serves as a warning to motor carriers and CMV drivers. But violations are only reflected on a CDL record if the charges result in a conviction. Conviction rates for CDL- and CMV-related infractions peaked in the mid-70% range in the early 2000s. Since then, they have trended downward, and sat at approximately 55% in 2024. Although this is slightly above the low points of 2020 and 2021, when conviction rates were in the high-40% range. To understand why conviction rates have fallen and identify strategies for increasing conviction rates, we analyzed court data, conducted a detailed case study of adjudication practices in the Hardin County District Court, and surveyed law enforcement about inspection and citation practices as well as equipment needs. Based on our findings, we advance four recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Targeted Outreach and Training for Local Law Enforcement Officers

Annual trainings for local law enforcement officers should cover federal and state requirements applicable to CDL holders, including medical certification, hours-of-service regulations, pre-trip inspection requirements, and other key areas. Training sessions that clearly explain commonly cited charges and review those that pose significant safety risks can help keep unsafe drivers off Kentucky roadways. Joint agency training or discussion sessions involving court personnel and law enforcement officers can provide a venue in which they can share their concerns, align expectations, and identify mutually beneficial solutions.

Recommendation 2: Develop a CDL/CMV Desk Guide and Judicial Bench Card

District courts adjudicate a wide range of CDL- and CMV-related charges. Decisions must account for industry-specific terminology, regulations, and operational practices that are not at issue when adjudicating traffic violations that involve non-commercial vehicles. While dealing with common moving violations is generally straightforward, violations related to motor carrier taxation, vehicle safety, and driver qualification require specialized knowledge to fully evaluate their severity and safety implications.

To address this challenge, we recommend developing a bench card for judges and a detailed desk reference guide for prosecutors. The bench card should provide a concise, plain-language summary of the most serious and safety-critical violations so judges can quickly identify charges that warrant the closest attention during court proceedings. The prosecutors' desk reference guide should include comprehensive explanations of violations, associated safety concerns, and potential consequences of noncompliance. Both tools should prioritize violations based on Kentucky-specific CMV crash data and historical violation patterns. Distributing these materials statewide and pairing them with brief training sessions will support more consistent adjudication outcomes grounded in sound interpretation of the law. Rural courts will especially benefit from these materials.

Recommendation 3: Revise the Uniform Citation Form and Implement Systematic Improvements

Crashes that involve CMVs often result in severe safety consequences due to vehicle size and weight. As such, CDL holders are held to higher standards under federal and state laws. Multiple procedural safeguards exist (license verification by law enforcement when a citation is issued, confirmation by court clerks before proceedings, and

screening to prevent improper diversion or traffic school eligibility), but CDL status can still be overlooked in practice, particularly during fast-moving trials.

The current uniform citation form contains information on license type, but it has a small footprint on the form and is easily overlooked. Revising the form to make CDL status more visually prominent (e.g., by adding a clearly visible *CDL* watermark or other standardized indicator) would ensure that judges and prosecutors immediately recognize a defendant's CDL status. Coupled with broader systematic enhancements to citation design and data consistency, these revisions will reduce misclassification, improve adjudication outcomes, and strengthen compliance with CDL-specific enforcement requirements.

Recommendation 4: Expand Formal Communication Channels Across Agencies

Kentucky's CDL Advisory Committee meets quarterly for 60 – 90 minutes to discuss policy changes, enforcement challenges, and adjudication trends. Participating organizations include:

- KYTC Department of Vehicle Regulation
- KSP Commercial Vehicle Enforcement
- KSP Traffic Safety Review Program (TSRP)
- Judicial Liaison (Retired District Court Judges)
- National Traffic Law Center
- Circuit Clerks
- KYTC Office of Information Technology
- Kentucky Trucking Association
- FMCSA
- KTC

Committee membership should be expanded to include additional local law enforcement officers, current judges, and county attorneys from rural areas and courts with high caseloads. Broader representation is a first step toward improving the consistency of adjudication outcomes, ensuring CDL records accurately reflect driver behavior and safety risk, and strengthening enforcement and CDL- and CMV-related laws.

Appendix A Disposition Rates of CDL- and CMV-Related Charges in Kentucky (2022 – 2024)

County	Conviction Rate	Dismissal Rate	Amendment Rate	Other Rate	Total Charges Filed
ADAIR	69.23%	11.54%	3.85%	15.38%	52
ALLEN	55.56%	25.93%	7.41%	11.11%	54
ANDERSON	52.63%	21.05%	15.79%	10.53%	38
BALLARD	81.63%	10.20%	4.08%	4.08%	98
BARREN	57.14%	30.95%	11.90%	0.00%	84
BATH	75.00%	18.75%	0.00%	6.25%	32
BELL	18.33%	65.28%	3.33%	13.06%	360
BOONE	55.56%	19.35%	4.30%	20.79%	279
BOURBON	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	16
BOYD	55.56%	35.19%	1.85%	7.41%	108
BOYLE	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8
BRACKEN	54.55%	18.18%	0.00%	27.27%	22
BREATHITT	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	75.00%	8
BRECKINRIDGE	46.15%	30.77%	15.38%	7.69%	25
BULLITT	55.08%	36.36%	4.28%	4.28%	374
BUTLER	38.46%	23.08%	0.00%	38.46%	26
CALDWELL	80.00%	6.67%	0.00%	13.33%	30
CALLOWAY	66.67%	6.67%	3.33%	23.33%	60
CAMPBELL	68.18%	22.73%	2.27%	6.82%	88
CARLISLE	50.00%	13.46%	28.85%	7.69%	104
CARROLL	72.73%	9.09%	9.09%	9.09%	22
CARTER	50.00%	30.00%	0.00%	20.00%	20
CASEY	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	2
CHRISTIAN	39.69%	25.95%	3.05%	31.30%	131
CLARK	55.56%	25.64%	7.69%	11.11%	468
CLINTON	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	6
CRITTENDEN	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	66.67%	6
CUMBERLAND	22.22%	44.44%	0.00%	33.33%	18
DAVIESS	62.50%	25.00%	8.33%	4.17%	48
ESTILL	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%	8
FAYETTE	76.51%	10.94%	4.67%	7.88%	1369

County	Conviction Rate	Dismissal Rate	Amendment Rate	Other Rate	Total Charges Filed
FLEMING	80.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	10
FLOYD	25.00%	48.75%	2.50%	23.75%	160
FRANKLIN	50.82%	27.87%	13.93%	7.38%	244
FULTON	56.25%	31.25%	6.25%	6.25%	32
GALLATIN	57.02%	21.05%	7.89%	14.04%	114
GARRARD	11.76%	44.12%	13.24%	30.88%	136
GRANT	33.33%	46.67%	6.67%	13.33%	30
GRAVES	76.29%	15.12%	0.69%	7.90%	291
GRAYSON	38.46%	30.77%	7.69%	23.08%	26
GREEN	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10
GREENUP	14.29%	42.86%	0.00%	42.86%	14
HANCOCK	33.33%	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	12
HARDIN	32.66%	22.37%	16.78%	28.19%	447
HARLAN	36.84%	52.63%	0.00%	10.53%	38
HARRISON	55.56%	11.11%	11.11%	22.22%	18
HART	50.00%	11.36%	11.36%	27.27%	88
HENDERSON	53.31%	2.09%	30.89%	13.70%	859
HENRY	42.62%	16.39%	3.28%	37.70%	61
HICKMAN	75.00%	8.33%	4.17%	12.50%	48
HOPKINS	84.00%	8.00%	8.00%	0.00%	50
JACKSON	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2
JEFFERSON	61.08%	6.94%	21.19%	10.79%	1037
JESSAMINE	42.86%	52.38%	4.76%	0.00%	42
JOHNSON	27.78%	61.11%	0.00%	11.11%	36
KENTON	62.22%	17.78%	14.81%	5.19%	270
KNOTT	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8
KNOX	16.13%	74.19%	3.23%	6.45%	124
LARUE	61.11%	11.11%	5.56%	22.22%	36
LAUREL	61.49%	24.53%	2.26%	11.72%	3232
LAWRENCE	44.44%	27.78%	11.11%	16.67%	36
LEE	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2
LESLIE	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4
LETCHER	42.86%	28.57%	14.29%	14.29%	28

County	Conviction Rate	Dismissal Rate	Amendment Rate	Other Rate	Total Charges Filed
LEWIS	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	16
LINCOLN	35.71%	14.29%	14.29%	35.71%	28
LIVINGSTON	85.86%	4.01%	0.84%	9.28%	474
LOGAN	70.48%	6.67%	11.43%	11.43%	209
LYON	45.56%	3.38%	0.77%	50.29%	3784
MADISON	50.79%	15.87%	9.52%	23.81%	126
MAGOFFIN	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2
MARION	72.73%	18.18%	0.00%	9.09%	22
MARSHALL	88.40%	8.29%	1.10%	2.21%	181
MARTIN	15.38%	46.15%	23.08%	15.38%	26
MASON	50.00%	27.78%	5.56%	16.67%	36
MCCRACKEN	70.54%	13.69%	9.19%	6.59%	1154
MCCREARY	23.08%	38.46%	0.00%	38.46%	26
MCLEAN	33.33%	50.00%	16.67%	0.00%	12
MEADE	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8
MERCER	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	2
METCALFE	54.55%	36.36%	9.09%	0.00%	22
MONROE	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%	0.00%	12
MONTGOMERY	70.00%	20.00%	5.00%	5.00%	40
MORGAN	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%	0.00%	9
MUHLENBERG	40.00%	28.00%	12.00%	20.00%	50
NELSON	30.25%	25.21%	20.17%	24.37%	119
NICHOLAS	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8
OHIO	53.23%	17.74%	20.97%	8.06%	124
OLDHAM	37.50%	37.50%	12.50%	12.50%	16
OWEN	37.50%	50.00%	0.00%	12.50%	16
PENDLETON	71.43%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	14
PERRY	21.43%	21.43%	21.43%	35.71%	28
PIKE	53.27%	33.64%	2.80%	10.28%	214
POWELL	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2
PULASKI	68.18%	22.73%	4.55%	4.55%	44
ROCKCASTLE	60.27%	30.19%	0.58%	8.96%	1027
ROWAN	66.32%	19.97%	0.86%	12.85%	1167

County	Conviction Rate	Dismissal Rate	Amendment Rate	Other Rate	Total Charges Filed
RUSSELL	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	8
SCOTT	44.36%	17.12%	22.96%	15.56%	514
SHELBY	54.10%	39.34%	3.28%	3.28%	122
SIMPSON	68.78%	11.60%	2.21%	17.40%	362
SPENCER	66.67%	0.00%	33.33%	0.00%	6
TAYLOR	67.86%	21.43%	10.71%	0.00%	112
TODD	35.29%	11.76%	11.76%	41.18%	34
TRIGG	86.41%	5.83%	5.83%	1.94%	206
TRIMBLE	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%	0.00%	6
UNION	59.38%	9.38%	3.13%	28.13%	64
WARREN	60.32%	17.46%	7.94%	14.29%	126
WASHINGTON	58.71%	11.01%	12.84%	17.43%	102
WAYNE	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	40.00%	20
WEBSTER	38.89%	38.89%	0.00%	22.22%	36
WHITLEY	52.41%	29.66%	6.90%	11.03%	145
WOLFE	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2
WOODFORD	64.00%	8.00%	12.00%	16.00%	50