

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

Annual Report for 2008



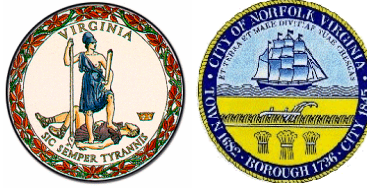
Clerk of Court
George E. Schaefer

Chief Deputy
Thomas A. Larson

Executive Assistant
Cheryl Dougherty

Comptroller
Nicholas D. Georges

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
DaVida M. Davis

Civil
Anthony Fuller

**Licenses, Permits and
Finance**
Gerald L. Stokes

**Wills, Estates and
Deeds**
Michele M. Evans

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: April 1, 2009

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 6th 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.

2008 continued with the downturn in the housing market. The Clerk's Office felt the sting of the national economic crises as evidenced in the revenue generated for the City of Norfolk and the Commonwealth of Virginia. To briefly summarize;

- a. Divorce filings are down 7%
- b. Civil suit filings are down 4.4%
- c. Criminal cases commenced is down 23%
- d. Clerk's Office receipts are down 6.6%
- e. Clerk's fees are down 21.3%
- f. Concealed weapons permits showed a significant rise of over 11%
- g. Probate matters showed the largest increase at 25.3%
- h. Land record transaction saw a decrease of almost 22% resulting in the significant reduction in revenue.

The trend in home sales has slowed significantly. We saw an 21.7% decrease in land record transactions over 2007. This figure is in line with the national average. This decrease has direct impact on revenue resulting in lower revenue of just under \$1,000,000 from the previous year. Recent increases in home sales and the federal stimulus package should result in a slight increase in revenue through 2009.

Working closely with Sheriff's Office staff, we have been able to "forgive" over \$230,000.00 dollars in court cost debt in exchange for community service work performed by 276 inmates in the Sheriff's Office Work Release Program.

Cash flow through this office hit just under \$57 million dollars in calendar year 2008, a 12% decrease over 2007.

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.

Continuing my commitment to increased productivity, reduced costs and enhanced public access to the courts, my office has digitized and redacted Land Records and marriage licenses back 40+ years. We will have all criminal case files from 1997 to present digitized by the end of 2009. This process will result in a savings of over \$2,000,000.00 in construction costs for the new courthouse. Our partnership with the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia has seen an explosion across the Commonwealth as 39 courts began adopting the methods that my office has put in place. Some of these methods are outlined below:

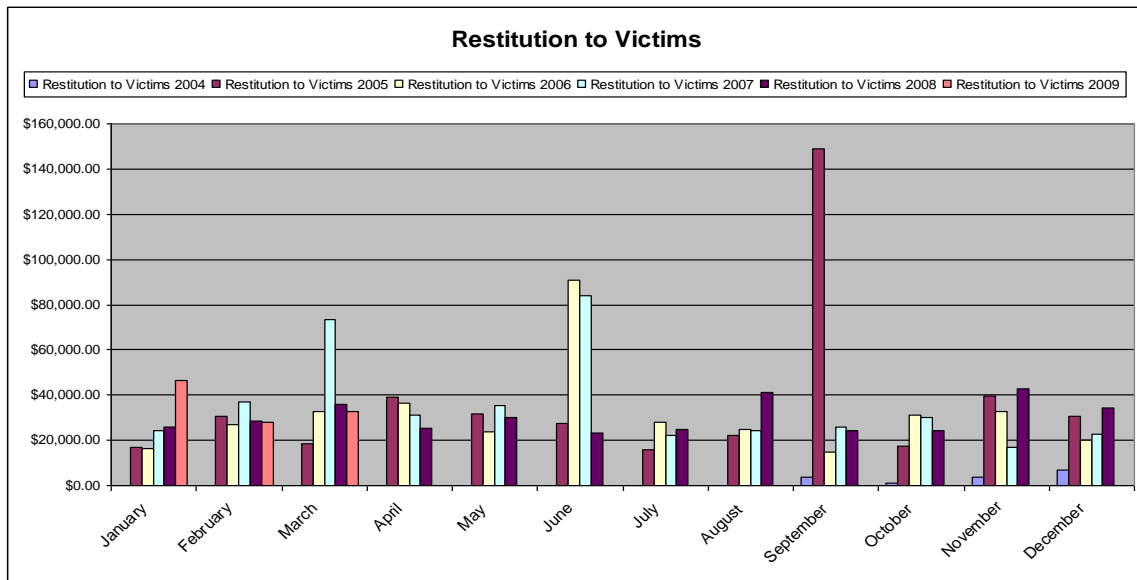
1. E-filing of court documents – We will begin e-filing civil cases in the 4th quarter of 2009. Software development is almost complete and will be launched in the 4th Circuit for testing and evaluation.
2. Digital Document Control – This has been the single largest contributor of productivity savings to date. We continue to digitize our files and have reached the following milestones:
 - a. Criminal files – 1999 through 2003, 2006 through present day files digitized
 - b. Civil files digitized back to January 1, 2006
 - c. Land Records – Digitized back to January 1968
 - d. Marriage Licenses – Digitized back to April 1968
 - e. Judgments – Digitized back to January 1990
 - f. Finance Statements, Miscellaneous and Wills – Digitized back to March 1993
 - g. General Miscellaneous files – Digitized back to March 1930
3. Case View – Testing a development has been completed for all criminal and civil case files. Enhancements are being completed for a new release of the case file view software increasing capacity, speed and usability.
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. We continue to examine areas throughout the court system that will further enhance our ability to provide necessary services to the citizens of the City of Norfolk as well as reduce costs.

2008 was a relatively stable year as far as the number of cases commenced and completed. We recorded only a slight downturn in the number of civil and criminal cases as 2007.

As General Receiver my office has continued to provide the best value to the 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 have developed additional steps in conjunction with the judiciary and implemented with the assistance of the Commonwealth's Attorney to ensure collection capabilities for restitution. The Clerk's Office has collected and disbursed over \$360,000.00 to victims in the 4th Circuit.



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 at no cost.

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 CY08: 9,882 (down 11.6%)

Civil Cases opened in CY08: 6,839 (up 7.1%)

Will documents processed in CY08: 10,666 (up 20.1%)

Land Record documents processed in CY08: 37,277 (down 21.7%)

Other (marriage license, weapons permits, trade names, etc.): 66,701 (up 6%)

Back scanning of documents in CY08: 1,329,854

The back scanning of almost a million and a half images was accomplished entirely in house with current staff. The back scanning accomplished brings our total digital image count to nearly 8 million images.

As you can readily see from the numbers above, our overall case filings are stable.

Passport Services continue to be in demand. We have processed 361 passport applications this year.

We have implemented an online customer satisfaction survey and placed numerous forms and instructions on the web. My office has also implemented the ability to transmit electronic documents of previously filed cases to the court.

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 2008. 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.

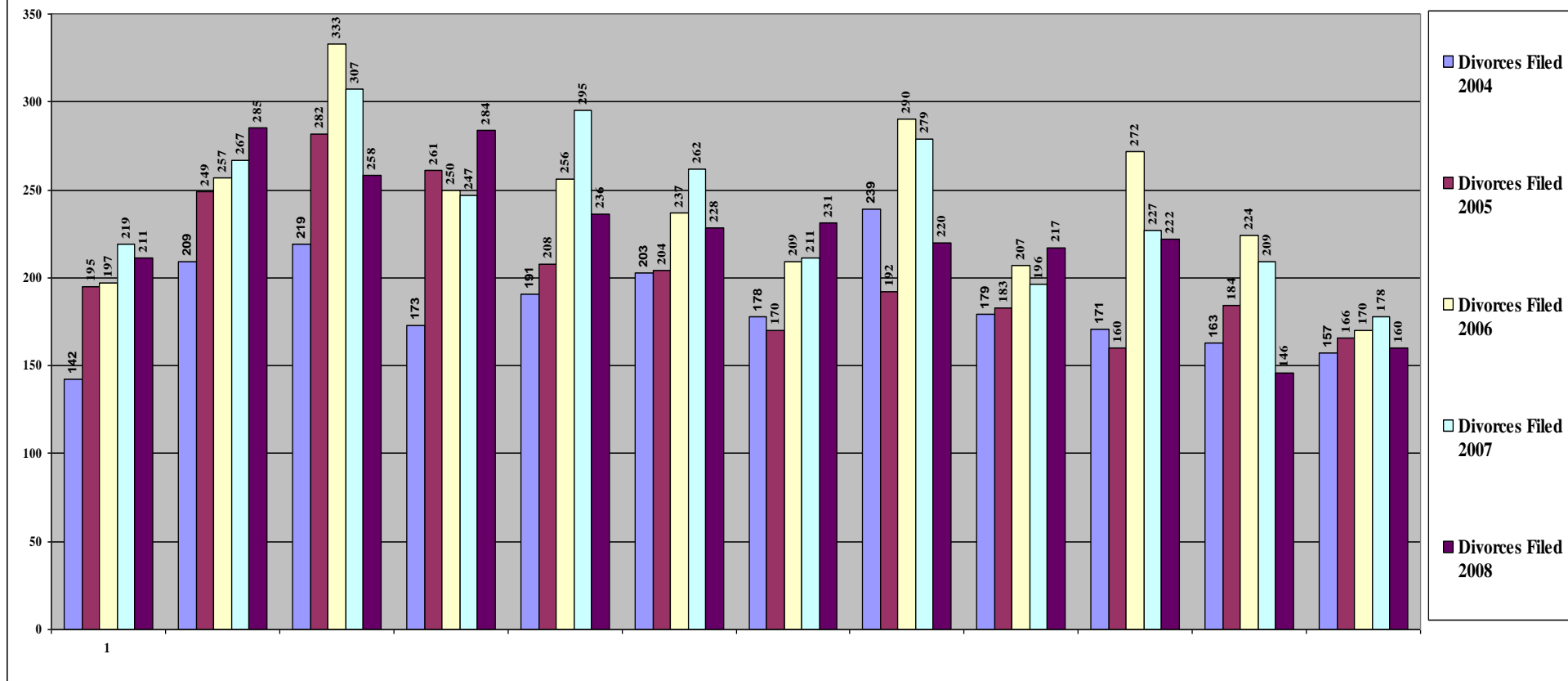
Very truly yours;



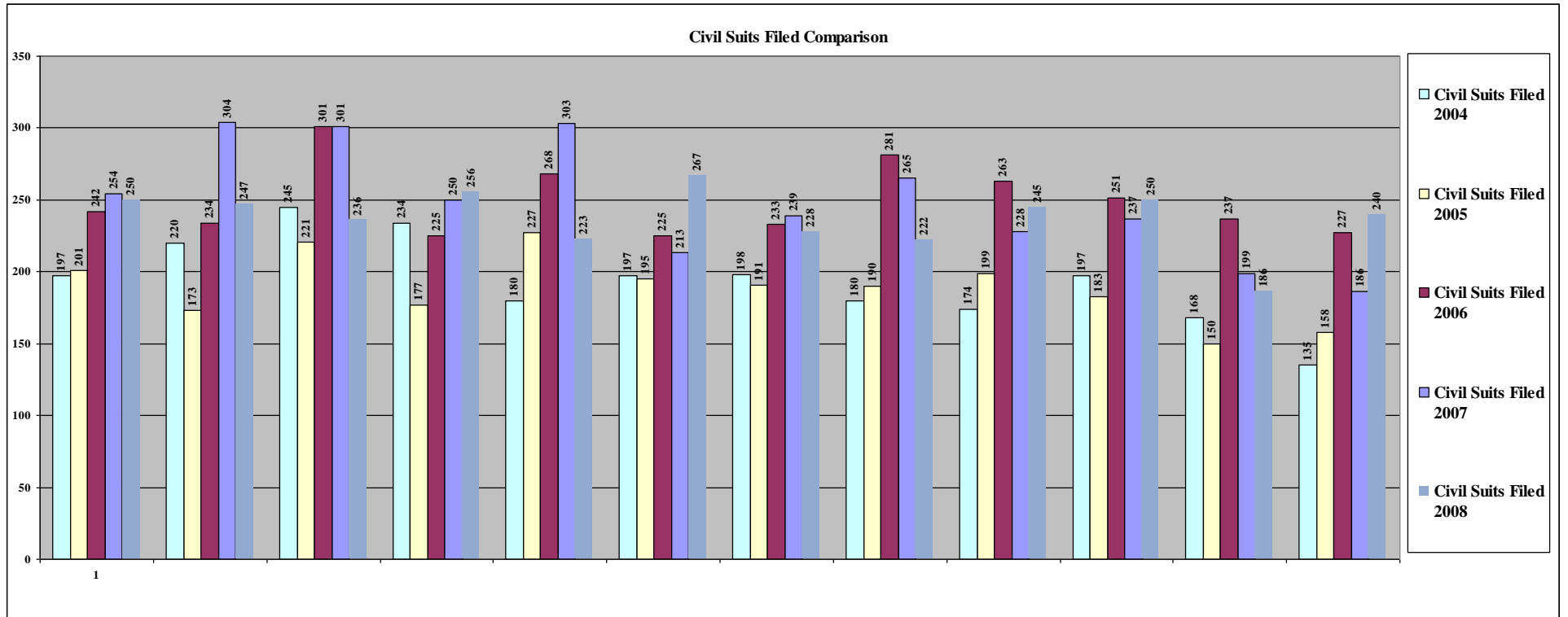
George E. Schaefer
Clerk of Circuit Court

Divorce filings are down 7% from 2007

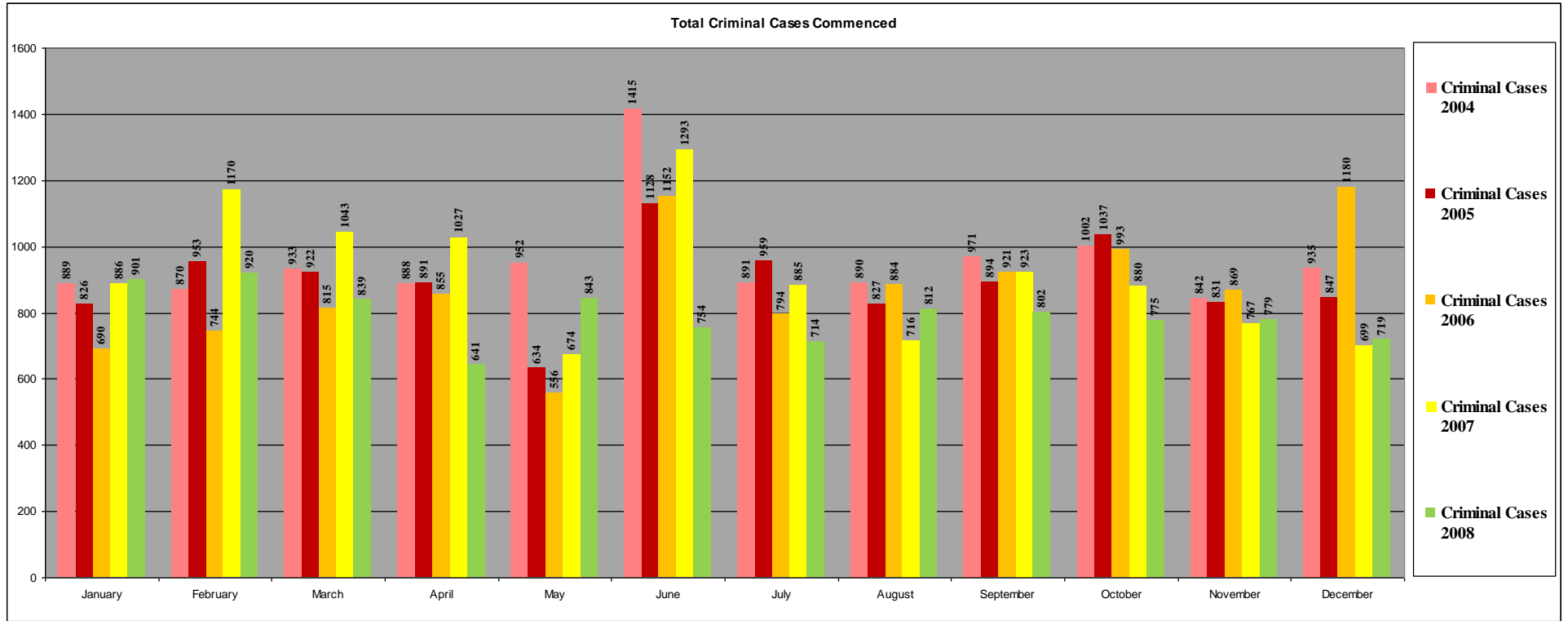
Divorces Filed Comparison



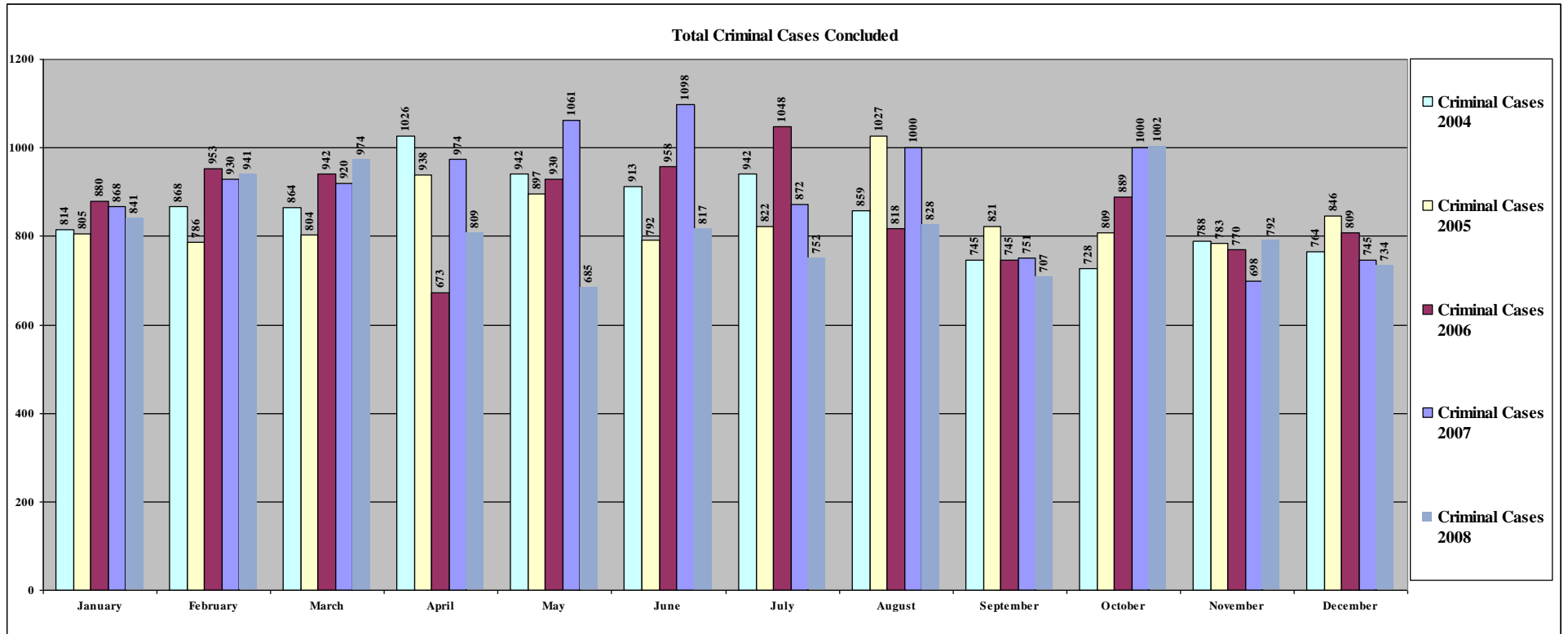
Civil Suit filings were down 4.4 % over 2007



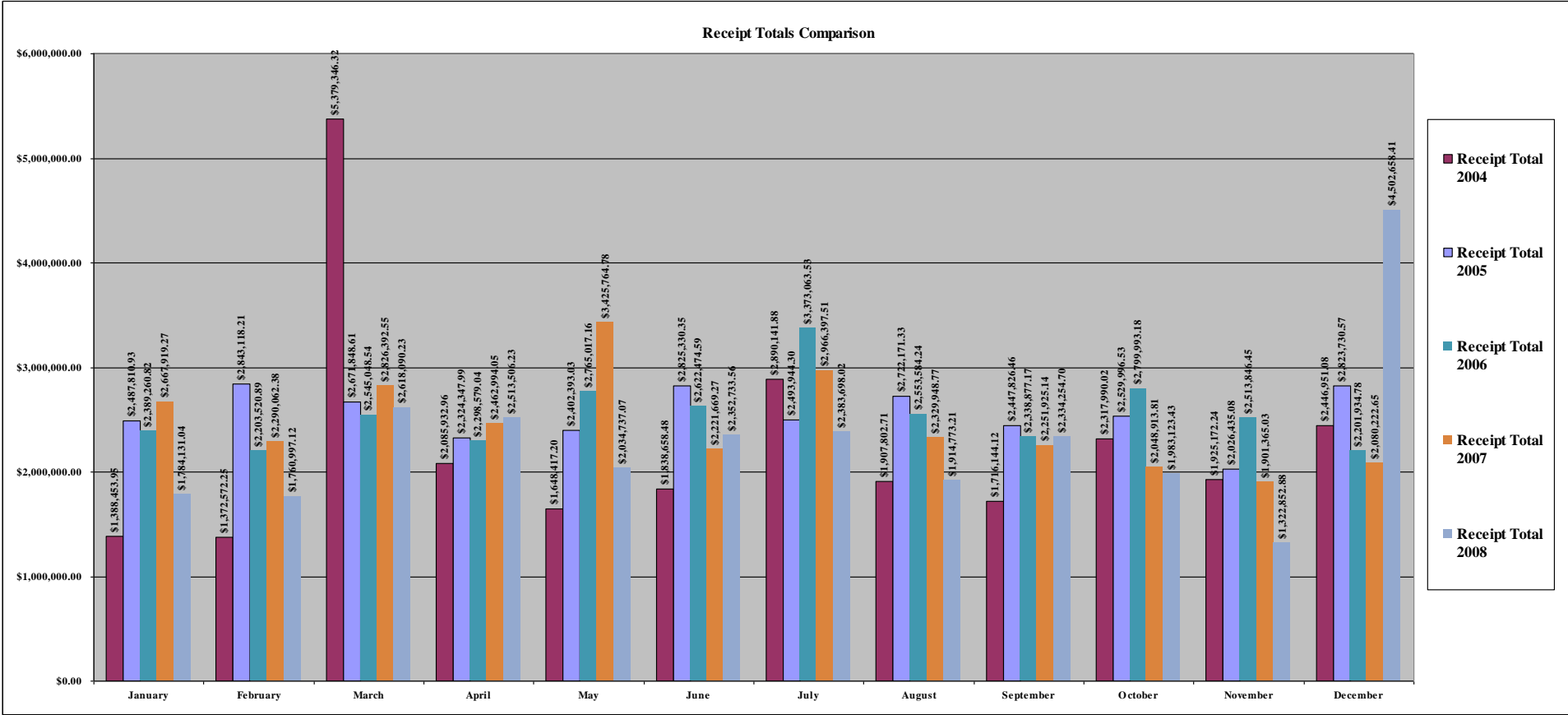
Criminal Cases commenced was down 23% over 2007



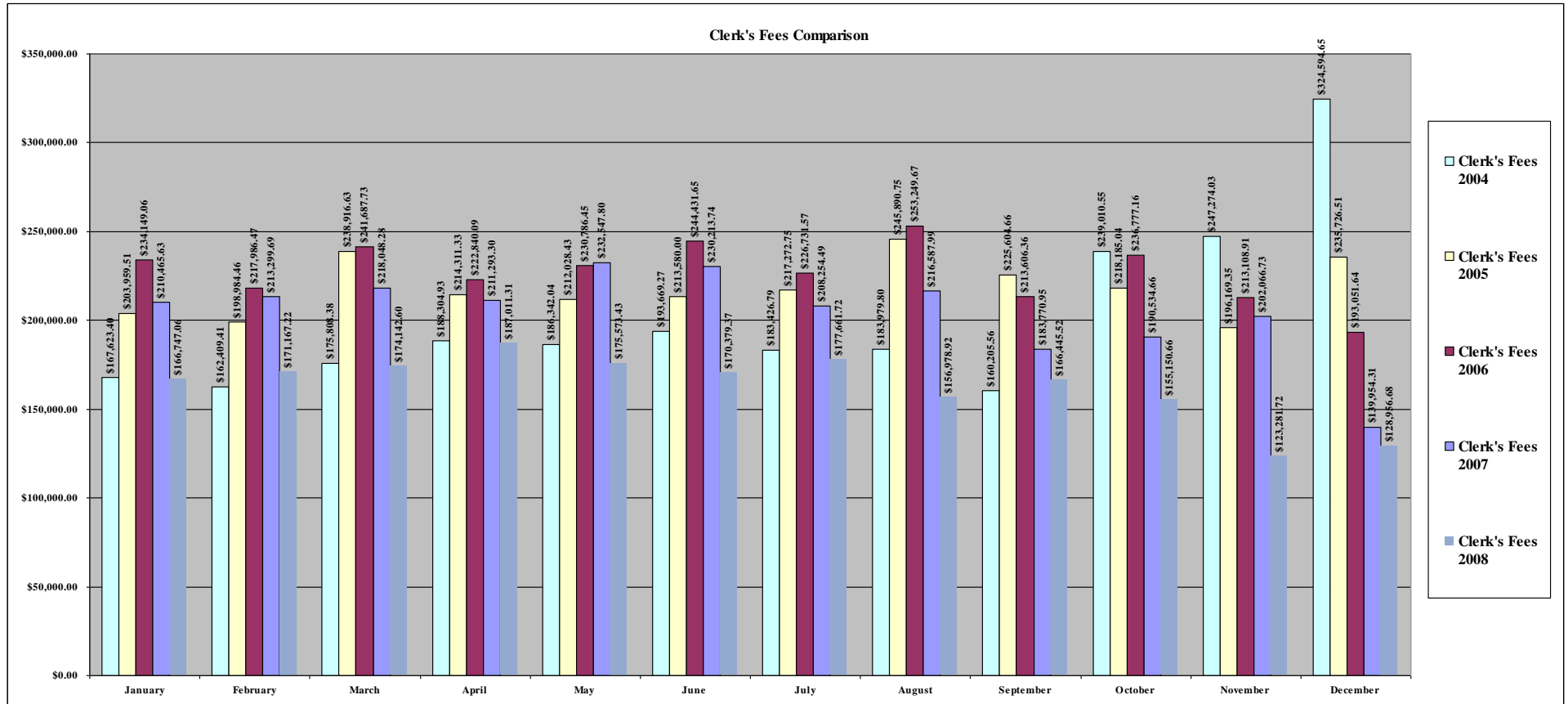
Completed Criminal Cases were down 9.5 % from 2007



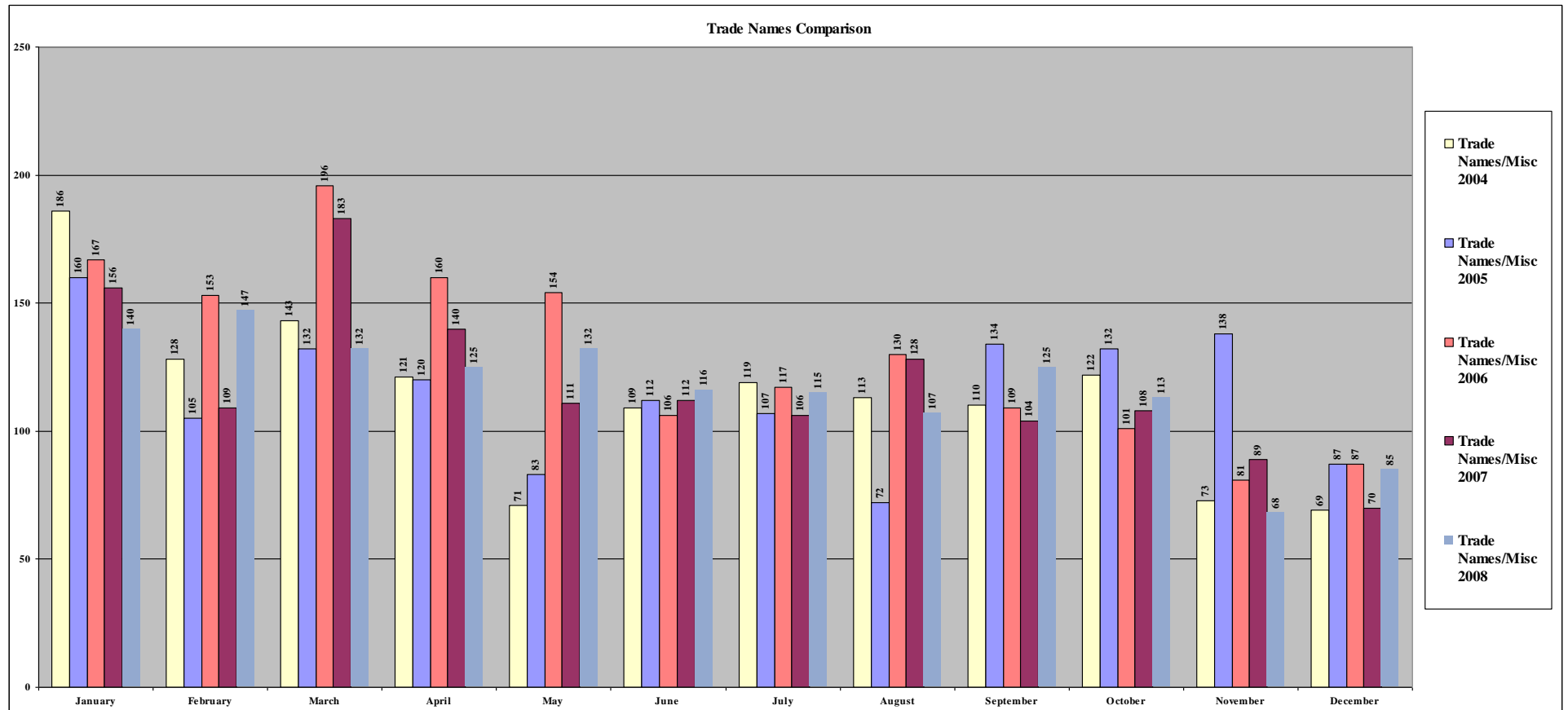
Clerk's Office receipts showed a decrease of 6.6% over 2007



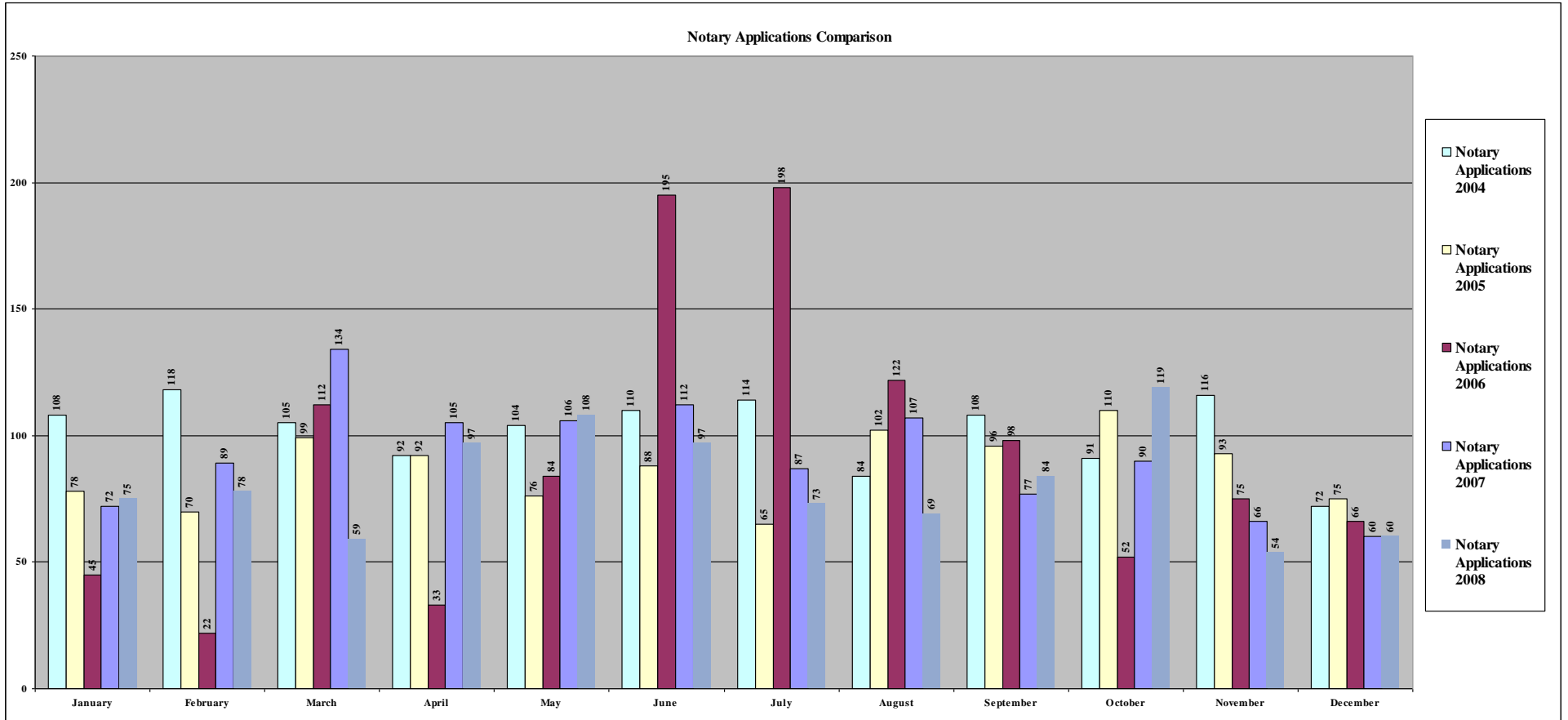
Similarly, Clerk's Fees dropped 21.3% over 2007



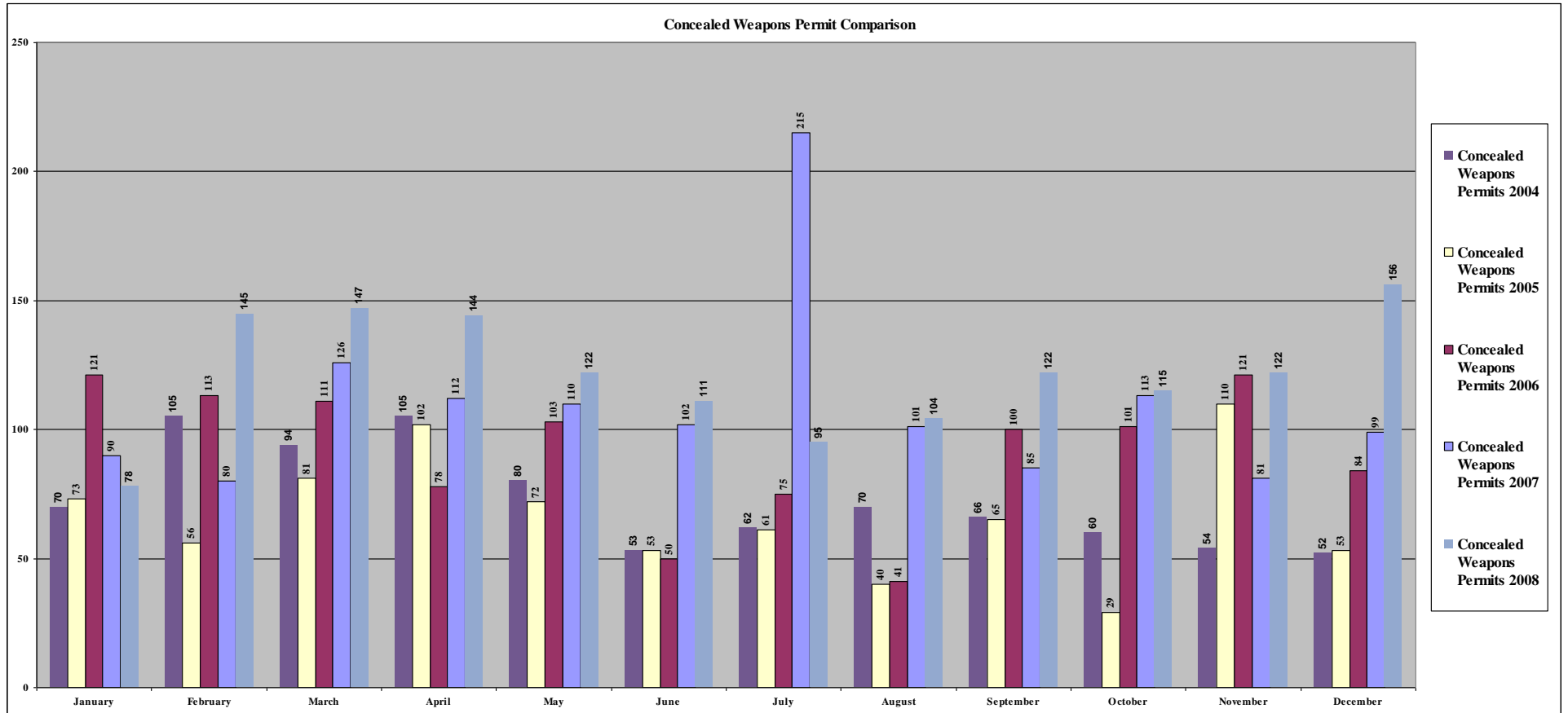
Trade Names held steady with a less than 1% decrease over 2007



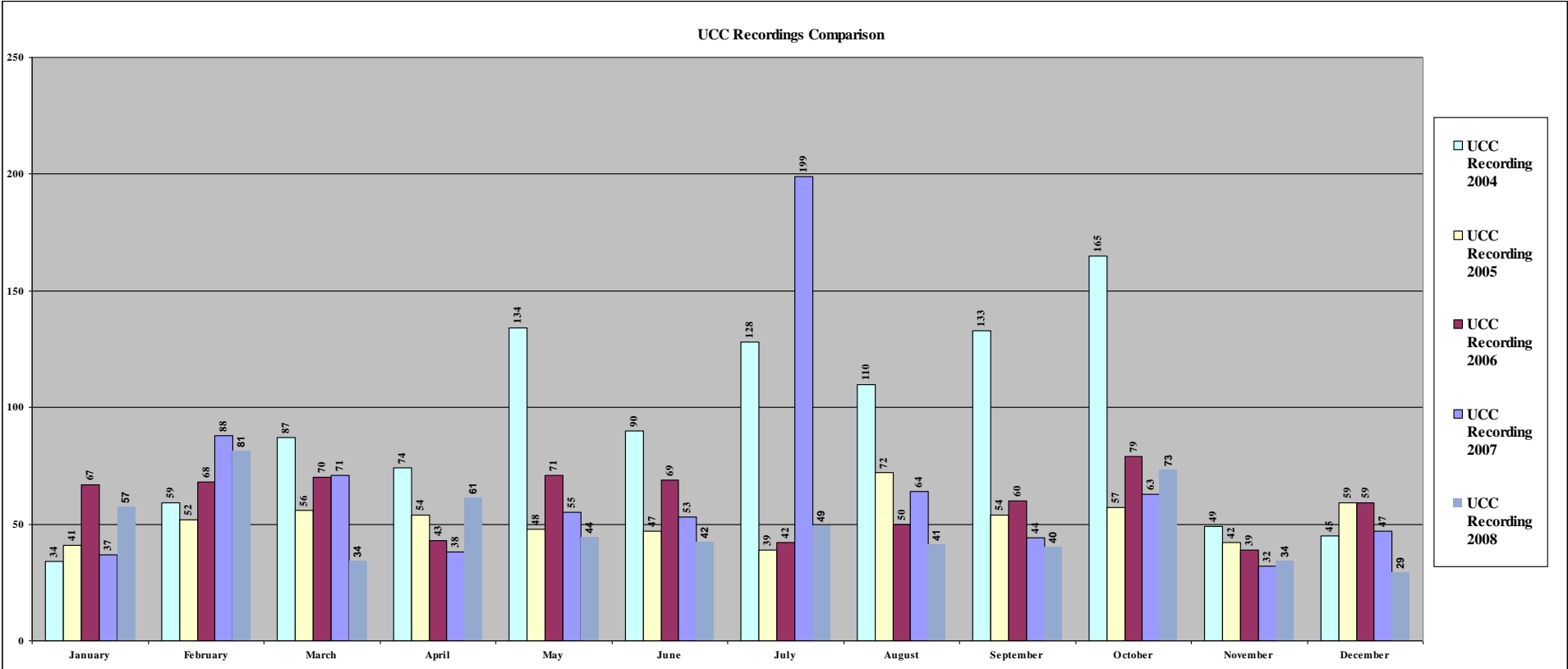
Notary applications are down 12% over 2007



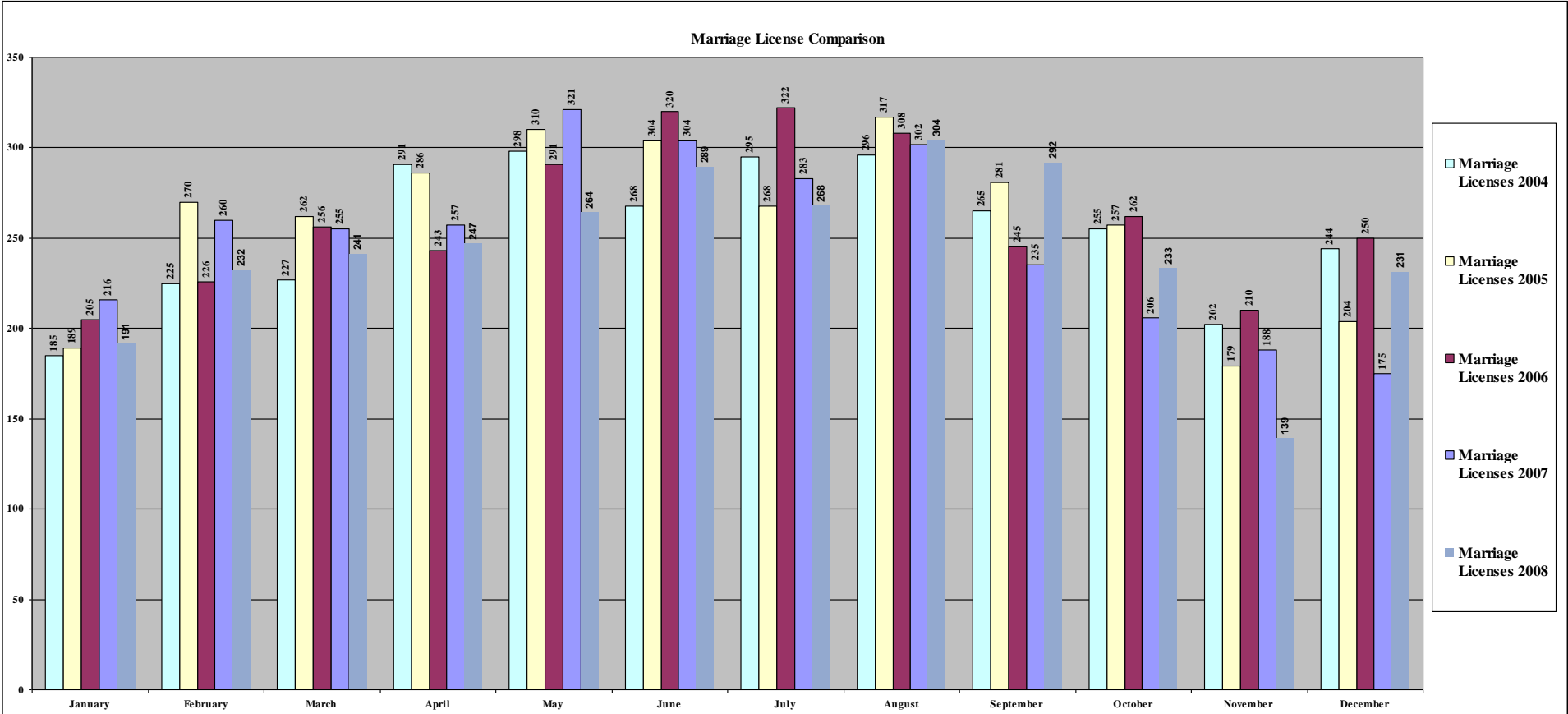
Concealed Weapons permits issued increased 11.2 % over 2007



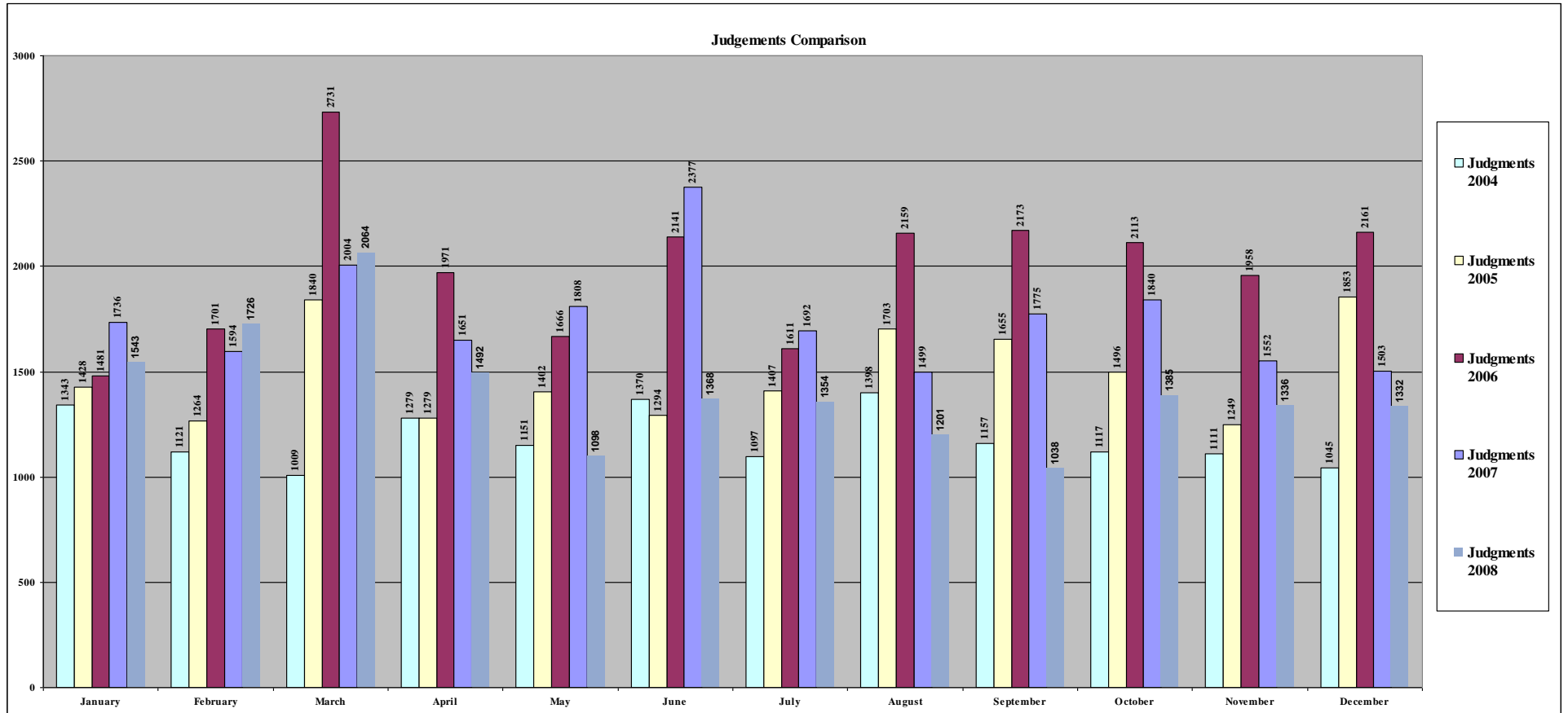
UCC filings down 26% from 2007



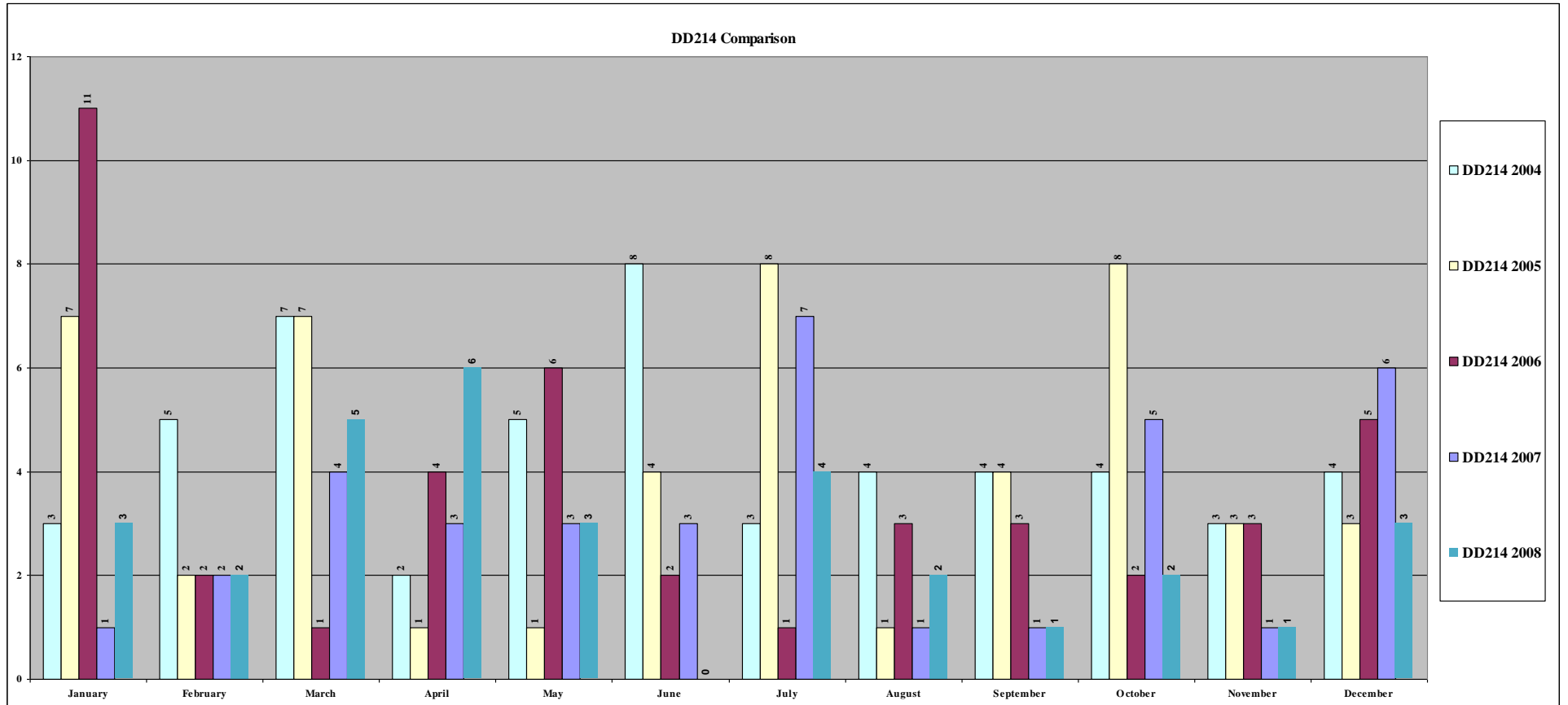
Marriage Licenses issued was down slightly by 2.4% from 2007



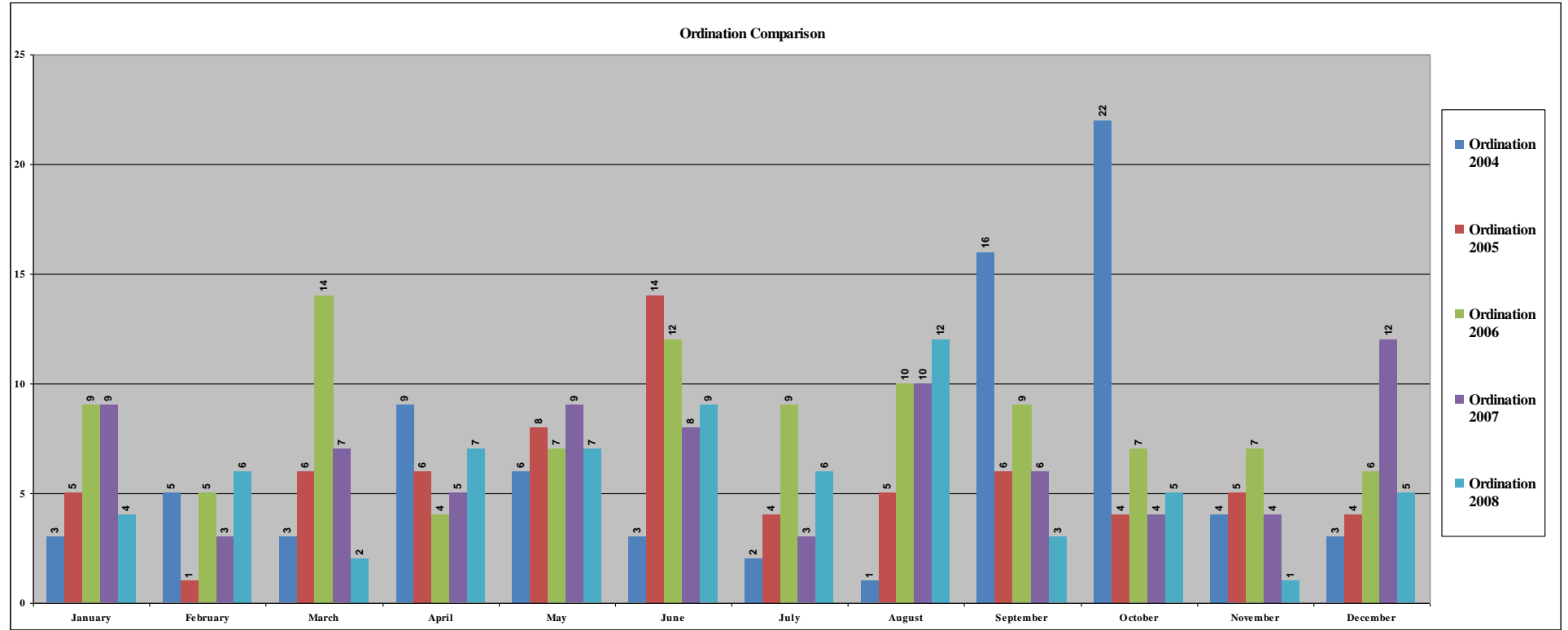
Despite the downturn in the economy, judgments filed decrease 20% over 2007



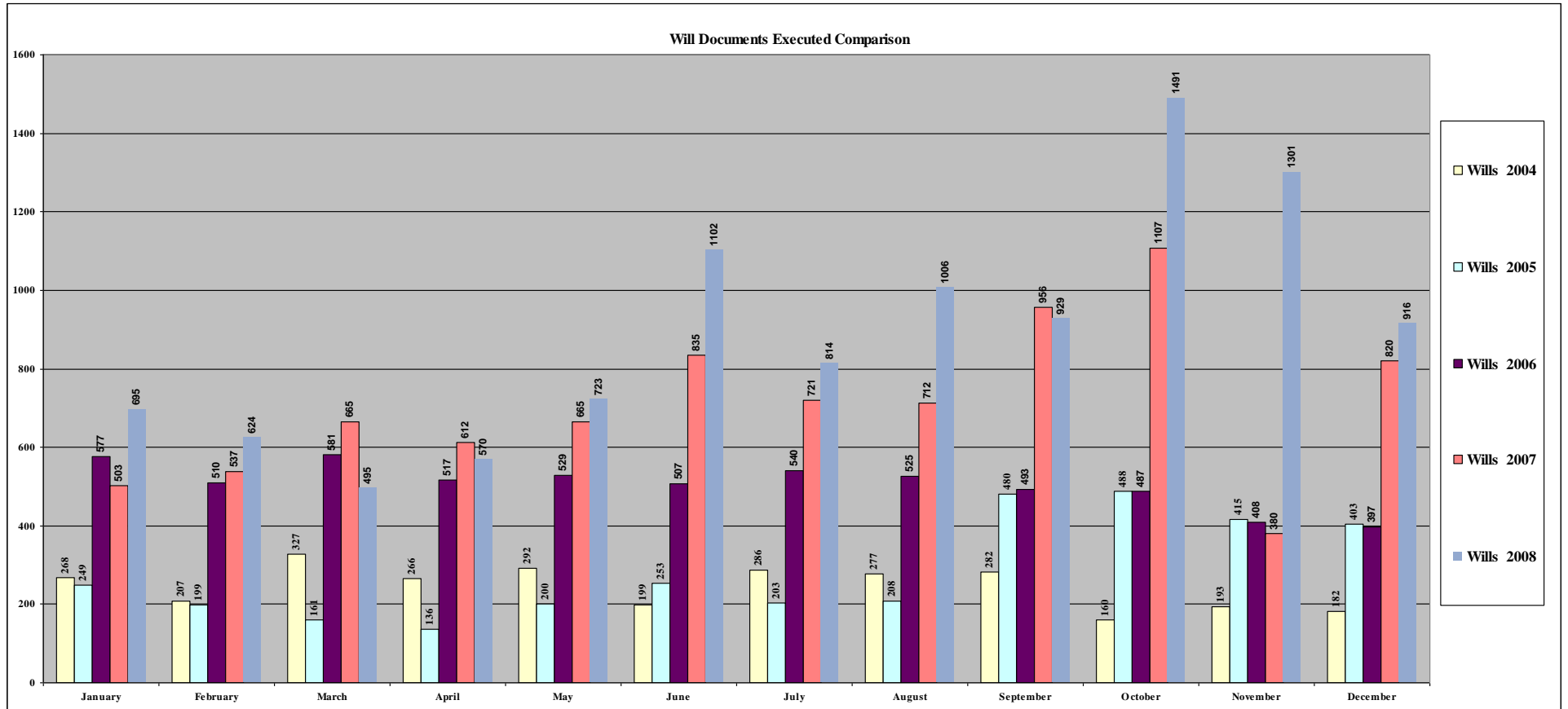
DD214 filings remained stable



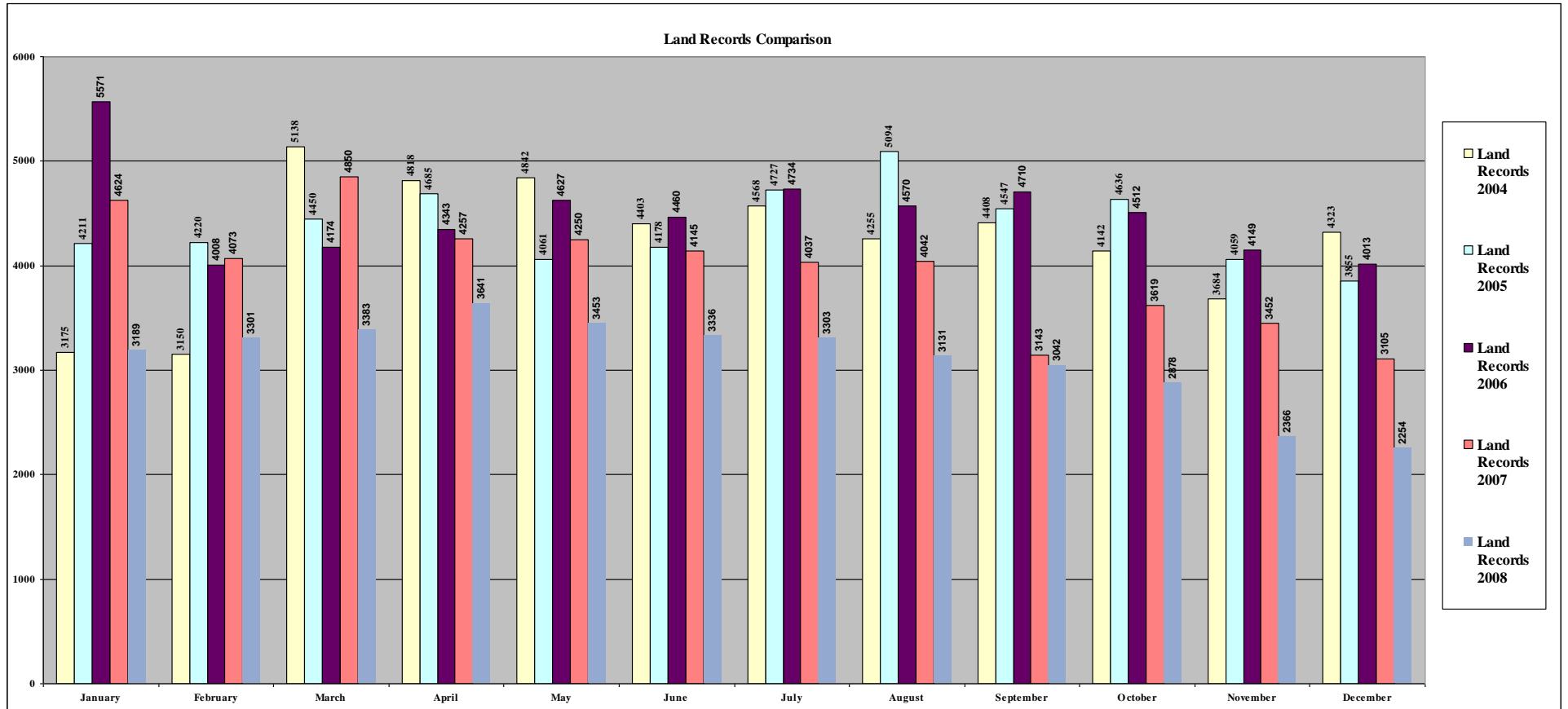
Ordinations dropped 16.7% over 2007



Probate matters increased significantly at 25.3% over 2007



The largest decrease as it relates to revenue was seen in Land Record transactions which fell 21.7% over 2007



Liens have seen an increase of 62% over 2007

