Department of Management
Division of Data, Planning, and Improvement

EZA Dashboard Migration Project

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary 2
History of EZA 3
The Need for Evolution 4
The EZA Dashboard Migration Project 7
Summary 10
Visuals- 11

Executive Summary

For State Fiscal Year 2025, the Department of Management released its strategic plan outlining several departmental priorities. These priorities align with and facilitate the achievement of priorities[1] detailed by Gov. Kim Reynolds at the start of the 2024 legislative session. This strategic plan highlighted the following opportunities:

- To enhance the availability of data for decision making.
- To increase the use of performance management and measurement with data.
- To increase visibility into technology investments.

In alignment with these priorities, the Department of Management identified a need to enhance the accessibility, availability, and interactivity of justice data within the Easy Access to Juvenile Court Data (EZAJCD) and the Easy Access to Adult Criminal Data (EZAACD) web applications.

Technology advancements in data storage, availability, and reliability, as well as increased user expectations around data accessibility, necessitate improved methods for data access and presentation. Interactive dashboards offer increased availability and usability which enables users to effectively leverage data for decision making. Further, dashboards will increase transparency around Iowa's justice data.

By establishing a series of data dashboards, the Department of Management hopes to increase access to criminal and juvenile justice data and present this information in a more intuitive format than the previous format of standard data tables. Visualizations such as charts and graphs, in combination with the interactivity afforded by web-based dashboards, allow users to explore and analyze data in ways that encourage a more data-driven approach to justice system information.

Initiated in the summer of 2025, the EZA Dashboard Migration Project aimed to enhance the interactivity and accessibility of the EZAJCD and EZAACD by leveraging Google Looker Studio Pro as the standard business intelligence platform for data presentation.

This report details the EZA Dashboard Migration project and documents the development of multiple dashboards, highlighting key decision points and trends within adult and juvenile court data. The established dashboards can be found at the following link: Justice Data | Department of Management (https://dom.iowa.gov/justice-data)

[1] DOM Strategic Plan FY2025-2027

History of EZA

The implementation of the Easy Access application (EZA) represented a pivotal era in the modernization of Iowa's juvenile justice data infrastructure. Initiated in late 2015, the project officially entered its contractual phase in February 2016. Due to the high quality and readiness of the existing datasets, implementation proceeded efficiently concluding the primary development cycle by July 2016, two months ahead of the September 2016 contracted end date. Once the Juvenile Court EZA was implemented, the Adult Court EZA shortly followed.

The EZA application originated out of a need to address the high volume of data requests received by the Department of Human Rights (DHR)[2]. To alleviate this burden, a decentralized, self-service model of data access was needed. The solution was inspired by the data request model developed by the National Center for Juvenile Justice and its EZA web application. The primary objective of the EZA was to transition the DHR from a reactive approach, manually fulfilling individual data requests, to a proactive model in which stakeholders could independently access needed information.

At its inception, the EZA delivered data in an aggregated format. While this approach lacked the granularity of modern interactive systems, it represented the most sophisticated and secure method for distributing justice data at that time.

Although the EZA was a transformative starting point, it was not a comprehensive solution. As user data literacy increased and technology evolved, the limitations of static aggregate tables became apparent. Users increasingly required more robust, user-friendly interfaces that supported deeper analytical exploration.

Ultimately, EZA served as an important step towards data democratization and bridging the gap between manual reporting and the highly interactive, timely dashboards that would later become available. The EZA's reliance on aggregate data tables and limited analytical functionality helped motivate the development of a more robust set of tools to support adult and juvenile justice data.

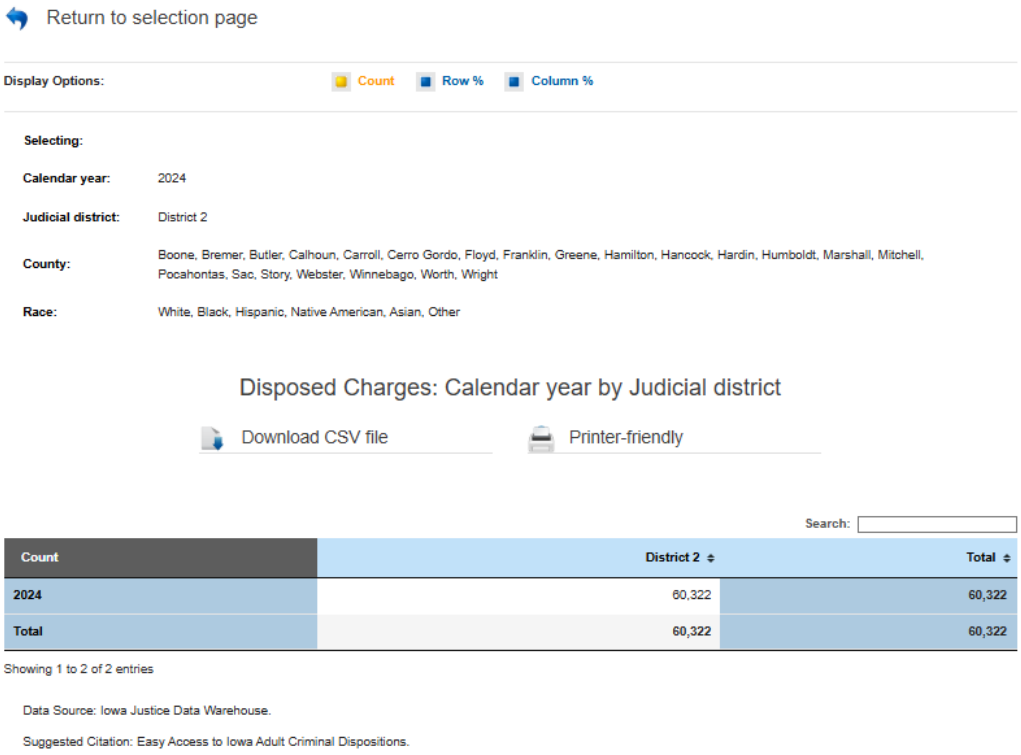
[2] In 2023, the State of Iowa realigned its Executive Branch agencies. DHR was eliminated but its personnel and functions became part of HHS. In 2024, the data team including the JDW and EZA became part of the Department of Management, by interagency agreement.

The Need for Evolution

The Easy Access to Adult Criminal Data (EZAACD) and Easy Access to Juvenile Court Data (EZAJCD) systems allowed users to view aggregate reports based on specific selection criteria, which were presented in tabular form. This was sufficient at the time of implementation but as technology and user needs evolve, the systems must evolve with it. Interpreting the data tables produced by the EZA systems (Figure 1) often required a higher level of analytical expertise than was typical for many users.

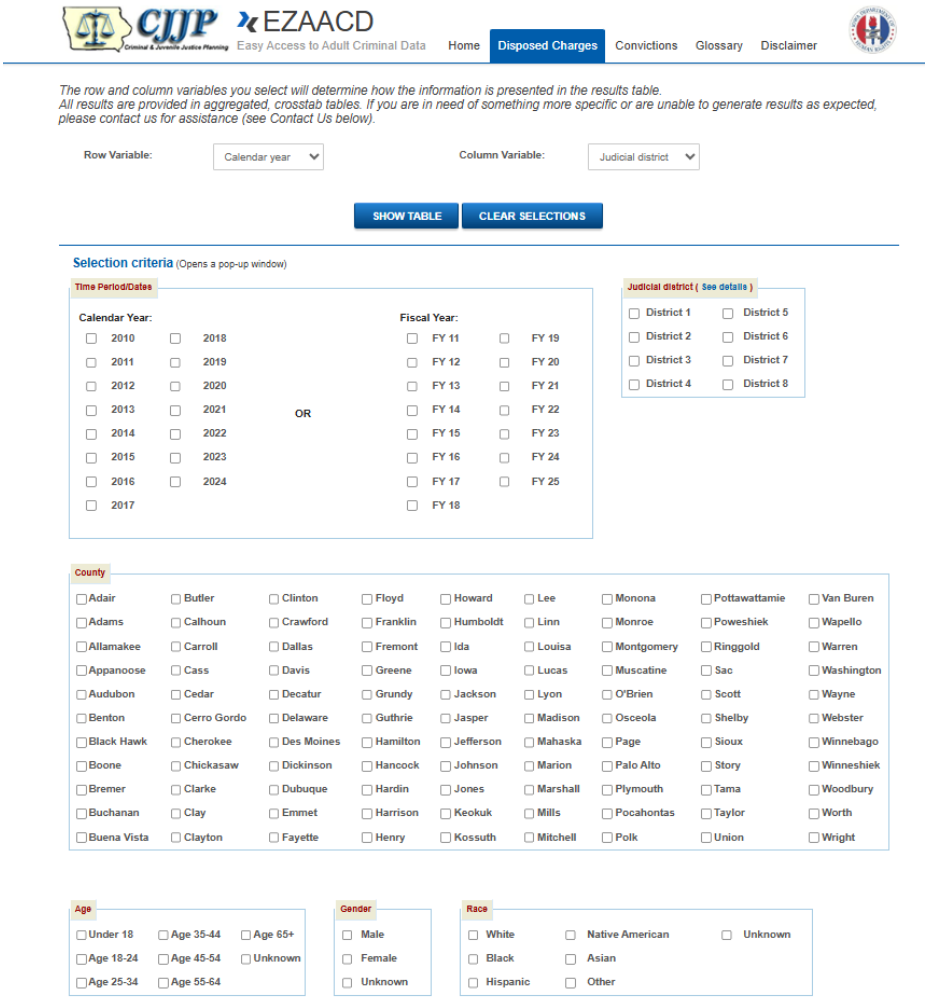
Aggregated values provide a partial view of the underlying information. When users sought disaggregated data or wished to examine multiple metrics simultaneously, the EZA tool was unable to support these needs.

Figure 1: EZA Data Table



The EZA application (Figure 2) also relied on a cumbersome system for engaging with the user-selected criteria. Using a series of checkboxes organized by category, users were required to make precise selections before generating the desired data table. Any changes to the selected metrics required another refresh of the table, requiring users to reselect the relevant criteria.

Figure 2: EZA Selection Criteria Page



These drawbacks, along with recognized benefits of dashboard utilization, highlight the need for system evolution. Furthermore, dashboards reduce cognitive load through the use of visual displays rather than static data tables and dashboards provide interactive “drill-down” capabilities.

The transition from standard data tables to graphical dashboards enables users to process information in a more natural and intuitive manner. By reducing cognitive load, dashboards allow users to focus more quickly on problem solving and facilitating data-informed discussions, as less time is required to interpret the information presented.

Interactive “drill-down” capabilities allow users to interact with data in transformative ways by moving from a macro-level summary of data down to granular detail. The shift from aggregated data tables to interactive dashboards enables users to move beyond simply observing *what* happened to exploring *why* outcomes occurred. As a result, features such as drill-down analysis allow for more nuanced and meaningful discussions around data, an investigative process that was

difficult to achieve using the previous format. Additionally, dashboards allow users to seamlessly filter and cross-reference multiple data points simultaneously on a single interface, without requiring data reloads or a separate request.

These benefits support the implementation of dashboards as part of the EZA Dashboard Migration Project and directly address a primary opportunity identified in the Department of Management Strategic Plan: "*To enhance the availability of data for decision making.*"

By reducing cognitive load through clear visualizations and implementing dashboarding features that promote transparency and effective communication, the project enhances the availability, accessibility, and understanding of data, thereby supporting improved data-driven decision making.

The EZA Dashboard Migration Project

At the start of the EZA Dashboard Migration Project, several potential dashboard topics were identified as opportunities to expand data literacy and analysis. Some of the proposed dashboard topics included:

- Prison Profile (a comparison of metrics for prison admits for two different time periods)
- Diversions
- Milestones
- Probation
- Consent Decrees
- Adjudications
- Adult Court Waivers and Reverse Waivers
- Youth in Placement and Placement Recidivism
    - Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP)
    - Detention
    - Shelter
    - State Training School (STS)
- Interstate Compact Caseload

Enhancing the interactivity of the adult and juvenile justice data in the Justice Data Warehouse first required a tool to facilitate the interaction between the data and the user. Looker Studio is a Google product and was selected as the tool in which the series of dashboards would be established due to its position as a leading low-cost solution to data visualization and analysis. The partnership between Google's cloud storage infrastructure and Looker Studio meant a seamless pairing of secured and accessible data assets with a powerful visualization tool.

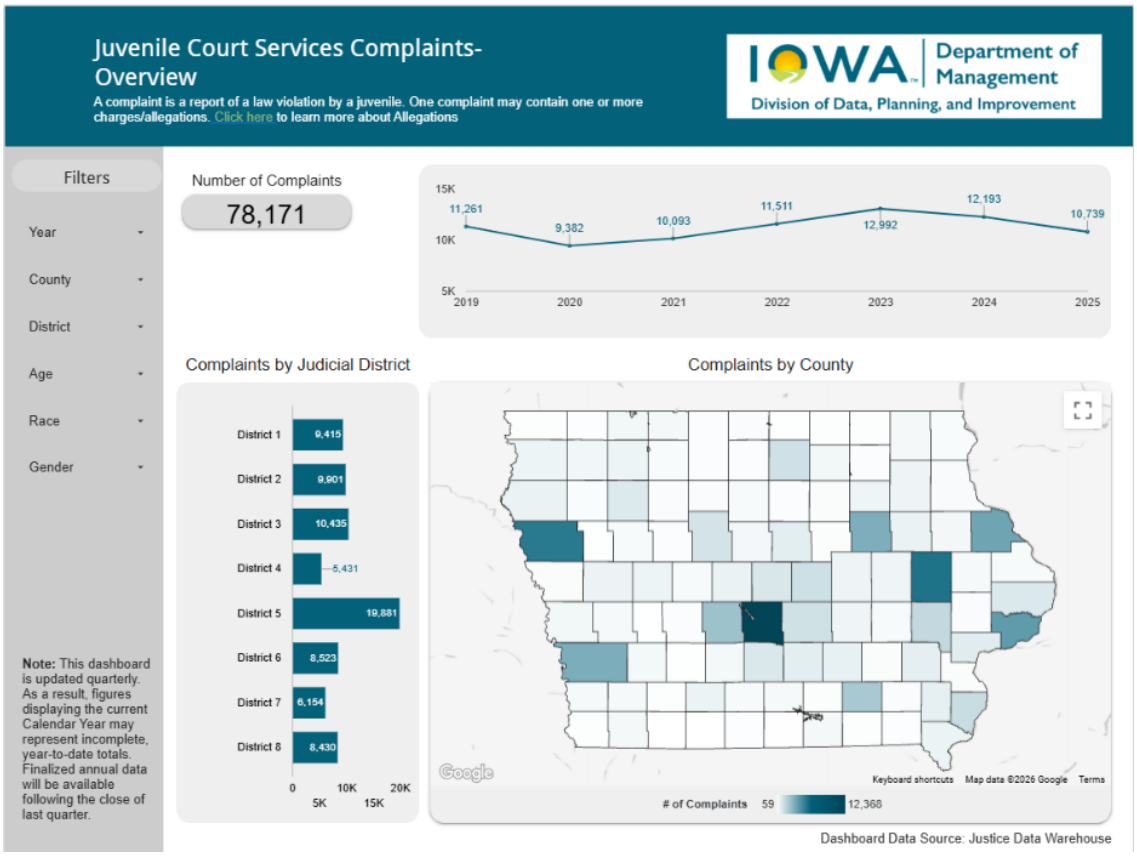
By the conclusion of 2025, the following dashboards had been created:

- Juvenile Justice Dashboards:
    - Complaints (see Figure 3)
    - Allegations
    - Petitions Filed
    - Informal Adjustment Agreements
    - Waivers
- Adult Criminal Justice Dashboards:
    - Disposed Charges
    - Convictions (see Figure 4)

The refreshed EZA dashboards were created with a primary objective to focus on building and enhancing systems that allow for more efficient data analysis and interpretation. These deliverables are intended to push past the limits of static, traditional reports and promote data exploration centered around a more dynamic and interactive method of data dissemination. This is accomplished by employing a

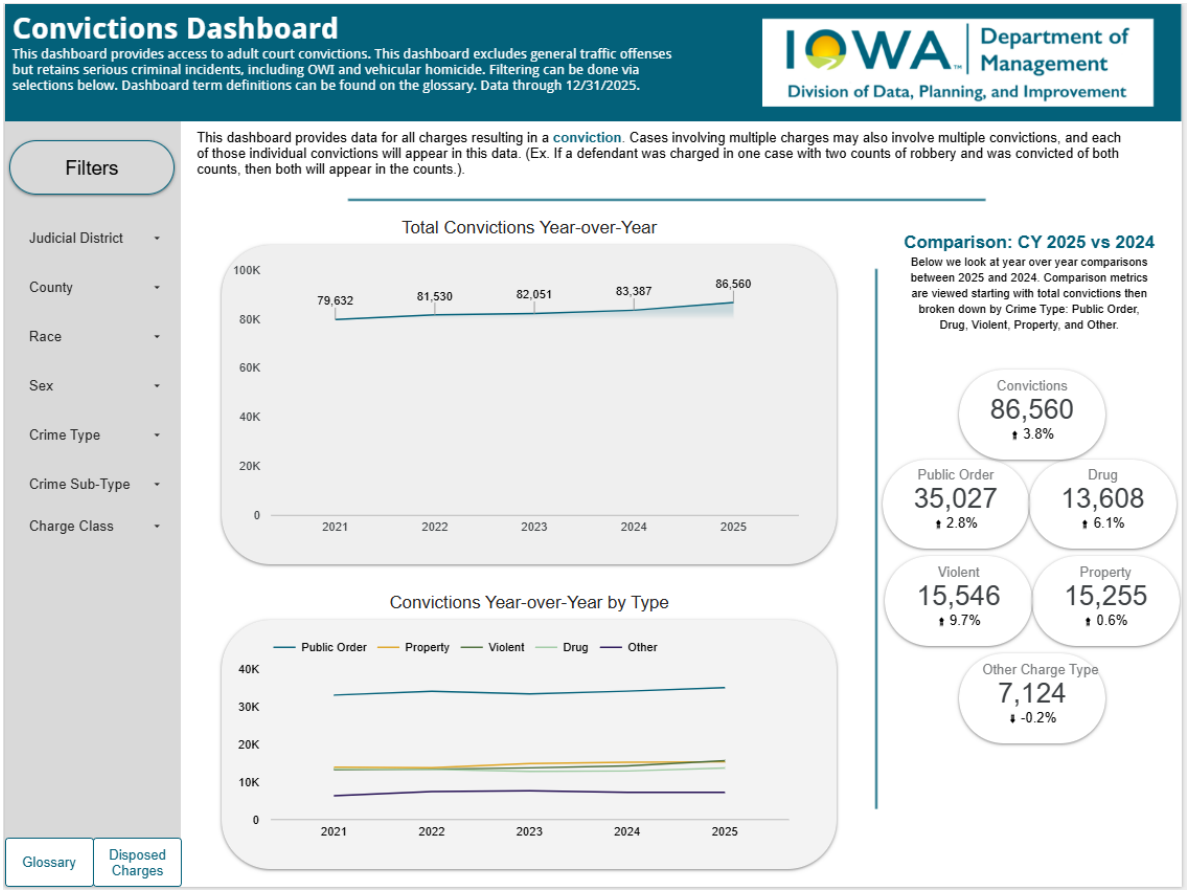
variety of modern technical features afforded by dashboarding technology such as drill-down analysis, advanced filtering, dynamic visuals, and seamless data refresh.

Figure 3: JCS Complaints Dashboard



At the beginning of the development cycle, a consistent layout and theme was determined to provide a familiar look and feel for users to grow accustomed to as they engage with the refreshed dashboards. Once the template was decided upon, each dashboard was built with an emphasis on data storytelling and a user-friendly design. Common filters were identified and incorporated into each dashboard to support the ability to focus on specific data elements. Weekly meetings were held to ensure work aligned with the project objectives and feedback was obtained from various stakeholders at regular intervals.

Figure 4: Adult Convictions Dashboard



The EZA Dashboard Migration Project represents a significant shift from static reporting toward a robust, self-service analytics environment. By leveraging Looker Studio's intuitive analytic features, the Department of Management was able to shift from a more static reporting tool with limited analytic capacity into a suite of intuitive, interactive tools that empower stakeholders to uncover actionable insights independently. Because of the thorough development process, these dashboards ensure that critical justice data is not only accessible but also optimized for long-term data literacy and informed decision-making across state departments.

Summary

The newly refreshed EZA dashboards boast interactive features such as advanced filtering, drill down analysis, and seamless data refresh capabilities. These features, paired with visual illustrations, bolster users' engagement and facilitate a more data-driven approach to information processing. By leveraging Google Looker Studio as the business intelligence platform, these dashboards pair intuitive and user-friendly features with Google's leading cloud storage environment thereby offering highly engaging data assets and transforming the way users interact with Iowa's justice data.

Future opportunities exist to expand upon these dashboards. As user-demand and data literacy increase, so do the opportunities for additional and expanded dashboards. Data democratization promotes a more informed, data-driven approach to decision making and the EZA Data Migration project serves as an example towards the Department of Management's commitment to these efforts.

Appendix: Visuals

Figure 5: JCS Allegations Dashboard

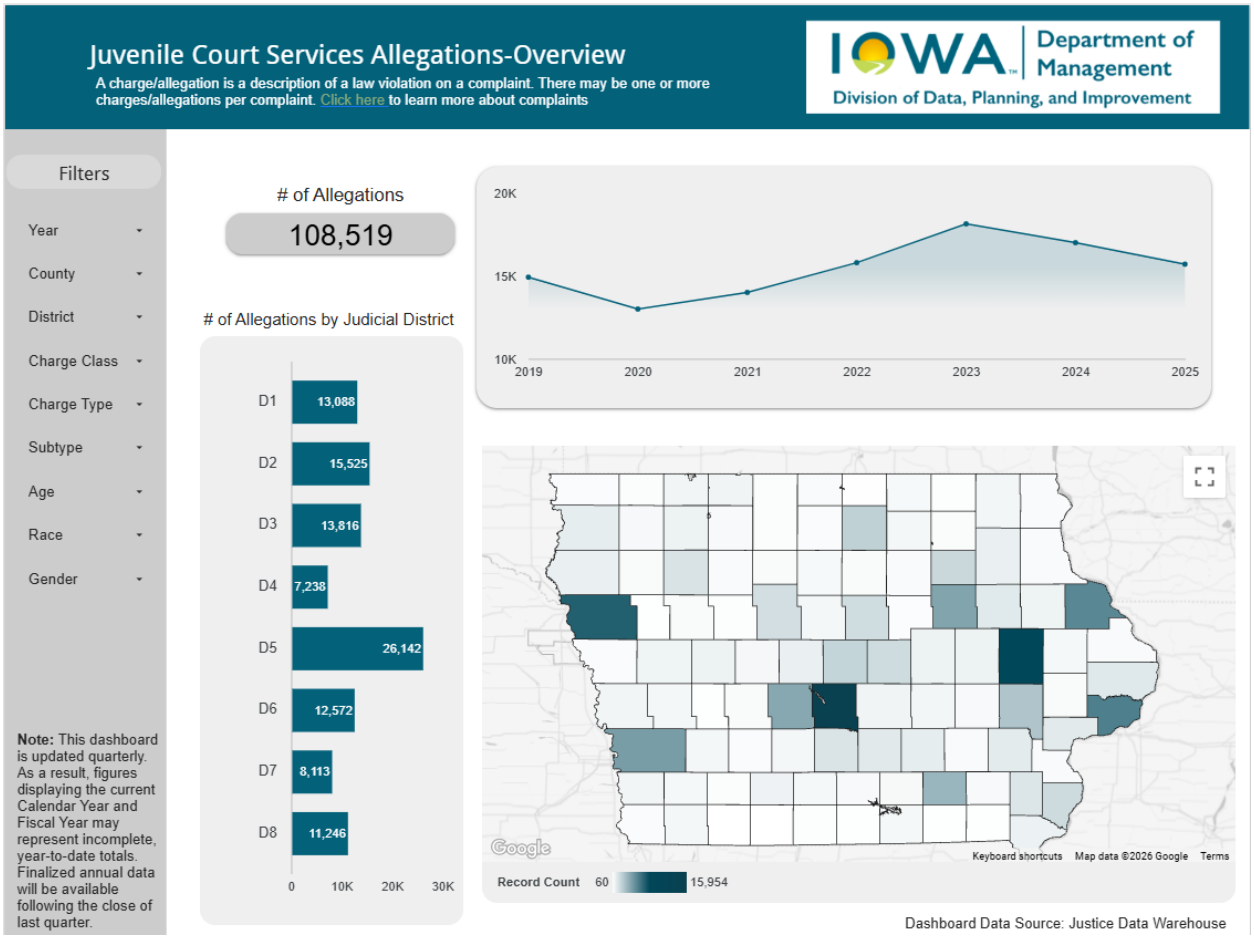


Figure 6: JCS Petitions Dashboard

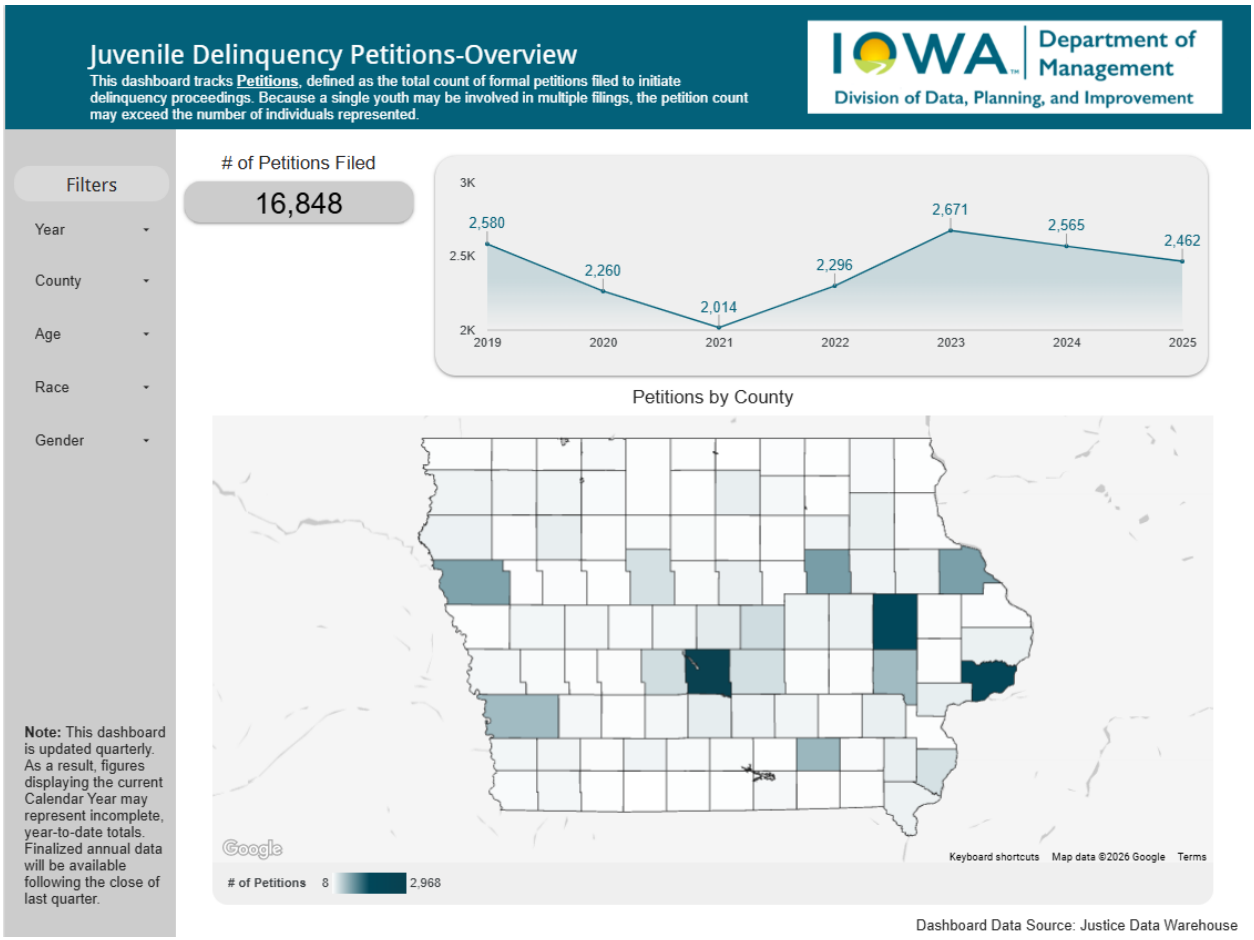


Figure 7: JCS Informal Adjustment Agreements Dashboard

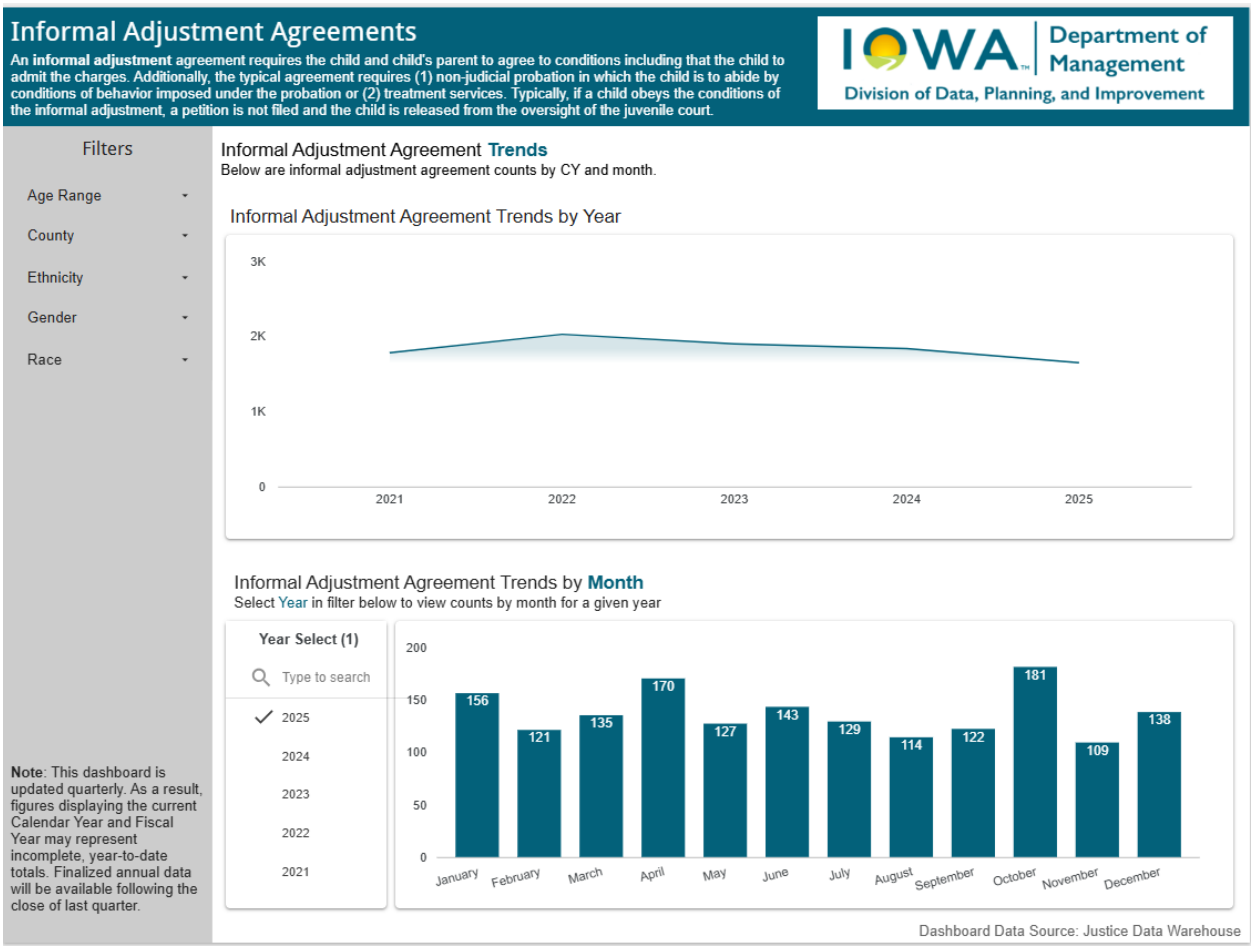


Figure 8: JCS Waivers Dashboard

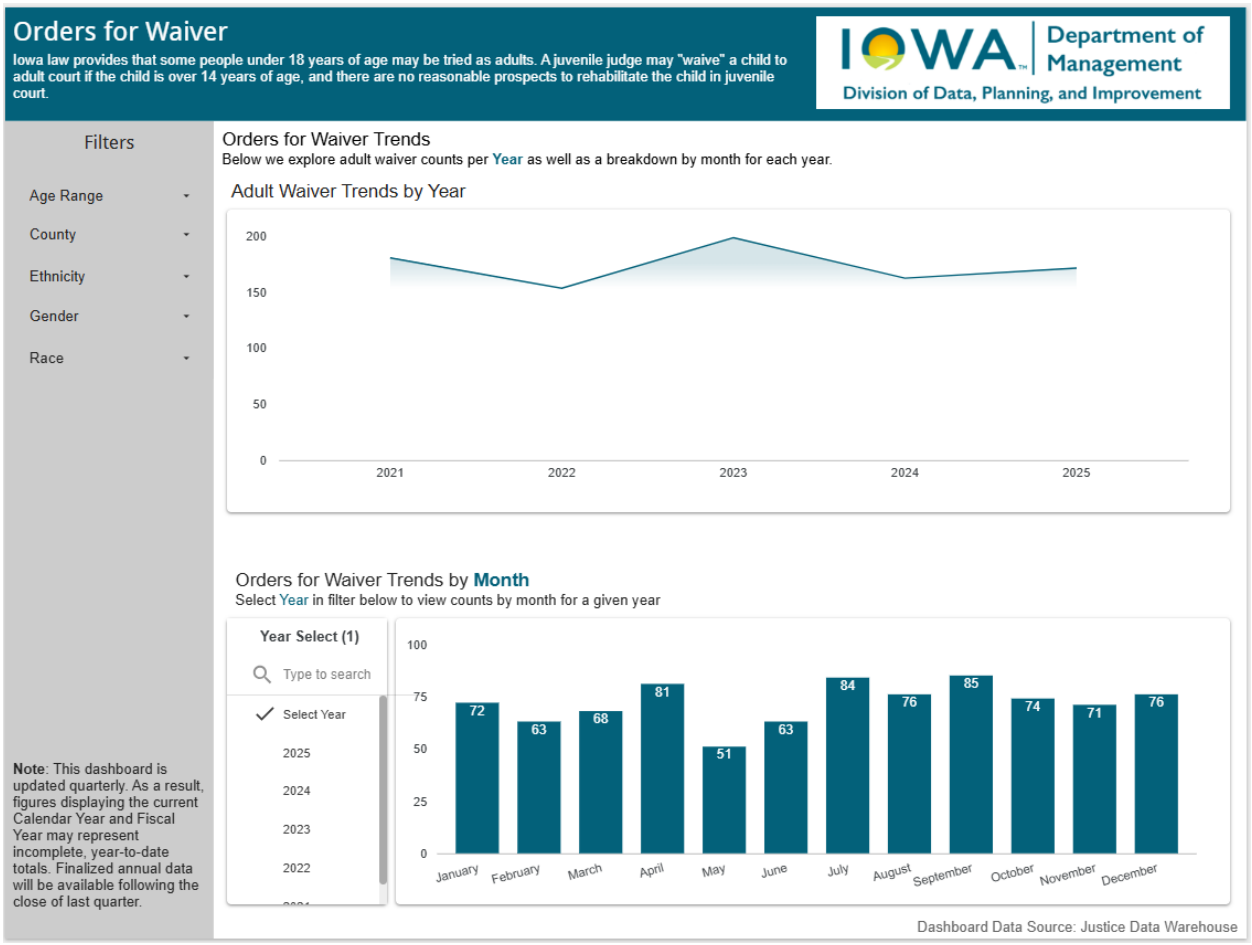


Figure 9: Adult Court Disposed Charges Dashboard

