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Judge Theodora N. Kouris FY 2019 - 2024, New York Immigration Court

Published Nov 7, 2024

Attorney General William Barr appointed Theodora N. Kouris to begin hearing cases in October 2019. Judge Kouris earned a Bachelor of Arts in 2005 from Cornell University and a Juris Doctor in 2009 from Boston College Law School. In 2019, she worked as an associate attorney for the Law Office of Usman B. Ahmad P.C., in Long Island, New York. From 2010 to 2019, she worked as an associate attorney at the Law Offices of Ted Sofer Esq. P.C., in New York. Judge Kouris is a member of the Massachusetts State Bar and New York State Bar.

Deciding Asylum Cases

Detailed data on decisions by Judge Kouris were examined for the period covering fiscal years 2019 through 2024. During this period, court records show that Judge Kouris decided 722 asylum claims on their merits. Of these, she granted asylum for 630, granted 8 other types of relief, and denied relief to 84. Converted to percentage terms, Kouris denied 11.6 percent and granted 88.4 percent of asylum cases (including forms of relief other than asylum).

Figure 1 provides a comparison of Judge Kouris's denial rate each fiscal year over this recent period. (Rates for years with less than 25 decisions are not shown.)

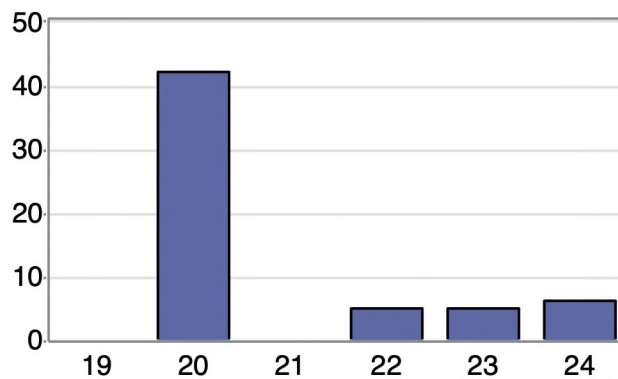


Figure 1: Percent of Asylum Matters Denied

Nationwide Comparisons

Compared to Judge Kouris's denial rate of 11.6 percent, Immigration Court judges across the country denied 57.7 percent of asylum claims during this same period. Judges at the New York Immigration Court where Judge Kouris decided these cases denied asylum 34.8 percent of the time. See Figure 2.

Judge Kouris's asylum grant and denial rates are compared with other judges serving on the same court in [this table](#). Note that when an Immigration Judge serves on more than one court during the same period, separate Immigration Judge reports are created for any Court in which the judge rendered at least 100 asylum decisions.

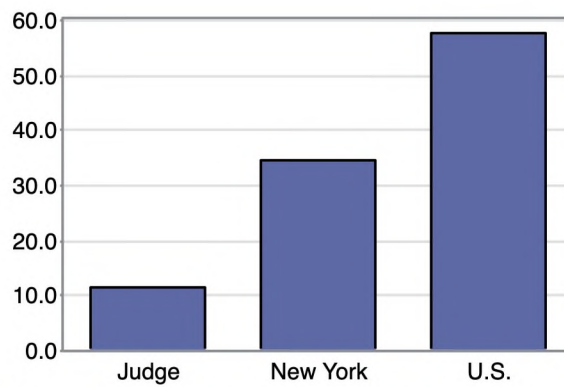


Figure 2: Comparing Denial Rates (percents)

Why Do Denial Rates Vary Among Judges?

Although denial rates are shaped by each Judge's judicial philosophy, denial rates are also shaped by other factors, such as the types of cases on the Judge's docket, the detained status of immigrant respondents, current immigration policies, and other factors beyond an individual Judge's control. For example, TRAC has previously found that legal representation and the nationality of the asylum seeker are just two factors that appear to impact asylum decision outcomes.

The composition of cases may differ significantly between Immigration Courts in the country. Within a single Court when cases are randomly assigned to judges sitting on that Court, each Judge should have roughly a similar composition of cases given a sufficient number of asylum cases. Then variations in asylum decisions among Judges on the same Immigration Court would appear to reflect, at least in part, the judicial philosophy that the Judge brings to the bench. However, if judges within a Court are assigned to specialized dockets or hearing locations, then case compositions are likely to continue to differ and can contribute to differences in asylum denial rates.

Representation

When asylum seekers are not represented by an attorney, almost all of them (77%) are denied asylum. In contrast, a significantly higher proportion of represented asylum seekers are successful. In the case of Judge Kouris, 2.5% were not represented by an attorney. See Figure 3. For the nation as a whole, about 16.4% of asylum seekers are not represented.

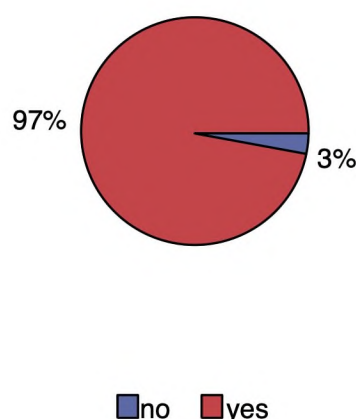


Figure 3: Asylum Seeker Had Representation

Nationality

Asylum seekers are a diverse group. Over one hundred different nationalities had at least one hundred individuals claiming asylum decided during this period. As might be expected, immigration courts located in different parts of the country tend to have proportionately larger shares from some countries than from others. And, given the required legal grounds for a successful asylum claim, asylum seekers from some nations tend to be more successful than others.

The largest group of asylum seekers appearing before Judge Kouris came from China. Individuals from this country made up 33.9% of her caseload. Other nationalities in descending order of frequency appearing before Judge Kouris were: India (19.3%), Bangladesh (9.3%), Nepal (6.0%), El Salvador (5.3%). See Figure 4.

In the nation as a whole during this same period, major nationalities of asylum seekers, in descending order of frequency, were El Salvador (14.0%), Guatemala (13.2%), Honduras (12.4%), Mexico (8.2%), China (6.1%), India (5.4%), Venezuela (4.0%), Ecuador (3.7%), Nicaragua (3.5%), Colombia (2.9%), Cuba (2.6%), Brazil (2.6%), Russia (2.4%).

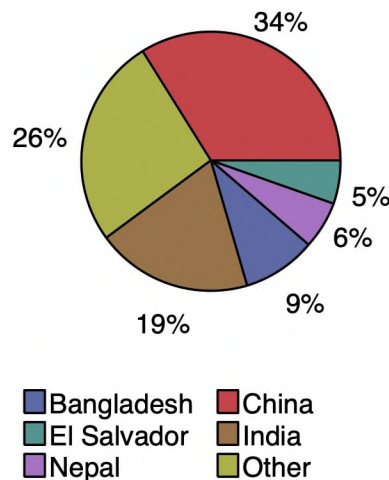


Figure 4: Asylum Decisions by Nationality

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