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Abstract

The Justice-of-the-Peace Courts have been in operation for 10 years in Russia. The paper assesses the extent to which they have fulfilled the original policy goals of diverting mundane cases away from the *raionnye* (district) courts and making the legal system more accessible to ordinary citizens. Policy makers have repeatedly tinkered with their jurisdictional parameters in order to find a proper dividing point between the JP courts and the district courts. The caseload data document that the JP courts now handle almost all first-instance administrative cases, as well as about three-quarters of all civil cases. Their role in criminal justice is more constrained. Their success in processing huge numbers of cases is facilitated by the use of “judicial orders” (*sudebnye prikazy*) in many civil cases, and by the use of a type of plea bargaining (*osoboe proizvodstvo*) in criminal cases. Each of these procedural mechanisms obviates the need for a full hearing on the merits.