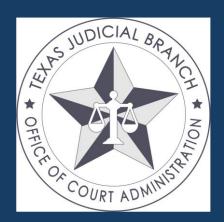# BIENNIAL DISTRICT COURTS JUDICIAL WORKLOAD ANALYSIS FOR THE 30 MOST POPULOUS COUNTIES

TEXAS OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION

October 2024

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Biennial District Court Judicial Workload Analysis for the 30 Most Populous Counties

In 2023 (88th Legislative Session), the Legislature created Government Code Section 72.039 requiring the Office of Court Administration to conduct a caseload analysis, also known as a judicial officer needs/workload analysis for the district courts in the 30 most populous counties at least every two years. This report includes the judicial needs analyses for 49 counties given the geographical patterns that some counties fall under given jurisdictional boundary overlap.

Though this type of analysis provides valuable perspective into judicial needs, it should be viewed as one tool among many for assessing the need for additional judicial officers. The weighted caseload formulas help identify the need within a threshold, but it should not be the sole determinant. Other factors that can be considered when evaluating judicial needs include case complexities, geographical considerations, specialized court functions, and more.

Government Code Sec.72.039. DISTRICT COURT CASELOAD ANALYSIS.

(a) In this section:

(1)"Clearance rate" has the meaning assigned by Section 72.083.

(2)"Judicial officer" means a district judge or an associate judge, master, magistrate, or referee who conducts proceedings for district courts.

(b)The office at least once every two years shall conduct a district court caseload analysis. The analysis must concentrate on the weighted caseload of the district courts in the 30 most populous counties in this state, considering the nature and complexity of cases heard by each court, and include the following information, disaggregated by county:

(1) the number of cases filed in each district court with jurisdiction in the county in each of the preceding five state fiscal years;

(2) the clearance rate for each district court with jurisdiction in the county in each of the preceding five state fiscal years;

(3) the number of estimated full-time equivalent judicial officers serving district courts in the county in the preceding state fiscal year;

(4) the number of full-time equivalent judicial officers needed to serve the district courts in the county based on the most recent weighted caseload analysis;

(5) the calendar year for creation of the most recently created district court in the county; and

(6) any other relevant information identified by the director.

(c) Not later than October 1 of each even-numbered year, the office shall report the results of the analysis conducted under Subsection (b) to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and each member of the legislature.

Data Sources

There are two data sources for these analyses: the number of filings reported by the county and judicial officer census surveys. Filings are used to indicate a county's incoming caseload. Judicial Officer census surveys detail the additional judicial resources other than elected judges each county has available to handle their caseload.

County Filings

Section 71.035(b) of the Texas Government Code and Chapter 171 of the Texas Administrative Code require clerks to submit a monthly activity report concerning the criminal, civil, family, and juvenile cases in the county's district courts. Clerks submit one report combining the activity for all district courts in the county. No data are available for individual courts. Monthly reports are due no later than 20 days following the end of the month for which data are reported and are entered into the Court Activity Reporting and Directory System (CARD) (http://card.txcourts.gov/).

The key data elements collected in the monthly reports include the number of active and inactive cases pending at the first of the month, the number of cases added during the month and how they were filed, the number of cases disposed during the month and how they were closed, the number of active and inactive cases pending at the end of the month, and the length of time a case remained active before being disposed.

For these analyses, **the number of filings includes new cases filed and reopened cases** (motions to revoke and all other cases added).

For complete descriptions of what is included in the monthly court activity reports, visit: TJB | Judicial Data | Reporting | Trial Court Activity (txcourts.gov).

Judicial Officer Census Survey

In August 2024, the Office of Court Administration sent surveys to the Local Administrative District Judge in the 30 most populous counties. An additional 16 surveys were sent to the Local Administrative District Judge of smaller counties that have overlapping geographical jurisdiction with a county included in the 30 most populous.

The survey asked for the names of all county-funded judicial officers (associate judges, magistrates, referees, and masters) that work on filed cases in district courts, their FTE status (full-time employee or part-time employee), and the percentage of time spent on each case category.

The judicial resources from this survey were counted in the existing judicial resources for the county.

Judicial Officer Needs Analysis

Estimated Need

The need for judicial officers in a county is estimated using a weighted caseload methodology, considering the types of cases filed and their complexity. Since some case types require greater amounts of judicial time (e.g, capital murder), those cases are given a higher case weight when determining overall caseload. The **Case Weights** represent the average amount of time in minutes that judicial officers spend on the handling of cases in the courts as determined by the 2023 Texas Judicial Workload Study.

To calculate judicial workload, filings for each of the case types are multiplied by the corresponding case weights to obtain the total number of minutes of judicial officer time needed to handle the caseload (**Estimated Need**).

	Case Type					
	Divorce with Children	Divorce without Children	Child Support (IV-D)	Child Protection	Other Family	Total
Case Weight (Minutes)	91	40	20	120	33	
Lone Star County Cases Filed FY 24	1,300	1,550	1,500	325	375	5,050
Estimated Need (Minutes)	118,300	62,000	30,000	39,000	12,375	261,675

To translate the Estimated Need in minutes to the number of judicial officers needed, the Estimated Need in minutes is divided by the **Judicial Officer Year Value**—the amount of time per year that a judicial officer has available to perform case-related work (after subtracting time spent on non-case-related activities such as travel and administrative duties).

The Judicial Officer Year Value is calculated by multiplying the number of workdays in the judicial officer year by the number of hours in a day available for case-related work as determined by the 2023 Judicial Workload Study. Due to travel required for judges with a multi-county district, the time available for case-related work is less than that available for judges serving a single county.

Judicial District Type	Judicial Officer Year Value
Single County	77,400 minutes
Multi-County	70,950 minutes

Lone Star County

Estimated Need (minutes)	261,675 minutes
Judicial Officer Year Value	77,400 minutes
Estimated Number of Judicial Officers Needed	3.38 FTEs[1]

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[1] An FTE is a full-time equivalent employee (40 hours a week).

Existing Judicial Officer Resources

For the purposes of assessing existing resources, the Office of Court Administration assigns different values based on the type of judicial officer. An elected/appointed Judge of the court is considered 1 FTE, and any other county-employed judicial officer is considered 0.75 FTE.

Judicial Officer Type	Number of FTEs
Elected/appointed Judge	1 FTE
County-employed associate judge, magistrate, master, referee	0.75 FTE
OCA child support or child protection associate judge[2]	Based on filings

In the Lone Star County example, assume there are 2 Judges and an Associate Judge assisting 20 hours per week. The resulting value for judicial officers is 2.38 FTEs.

Lone Star County	Number of FTEs
2 Elected/appointed Judges	2 FTEs
1 half-time County-employed associate judge *(Half-time = 0.5 FTE; multiply 0.5 by 0.75 FTE value for county-employed judicial officers; resulting figure is 0.38 FTE)*	0.38 FTE
Total Existing Judicial Officers	2.38 FTEs

Workload per Judicial Officer

The Judicial Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC), which served as an advisory body for the 2023 Judicial Workload Study, adopted a rounding convention for counties showing a need for additional judicial officers that is based upon the Workload per Judicial Officer and puts judicial officers in counties of all sizes on equal footing. **Workload per Judicial Officer** is calculated by dividing the total judicial officer need in each county by the existing number of funded judicial positions.

Lone Star County	
Estimated Number of Judicial Officers Needed	3.38 FTEs
Existing Judicial Officer Resources	2.38 FTEs
Workload per Judicial Officer	1.42 FTEs

According to standard adopted by JNAC, when Workload per Judicial Officer is greater than **1.15 FTE**, there is a need for one or more additional judicial positions. The estimated number of judicial

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[2] OCA child support and child protection courts can serve multiple counties. Therefore, the FTE count is based on the filings for the county served.

officer positions needed is based on the number of judicial officers that brings each county as close to the 1.15 threshold as possible, rounding to the nearest .5 FTE position.

The rounding convention using Workload per Judicial Officer was designed to provide empirical guidance as to which courts are under-resourced. It also provides a means to rank jurisdictions regarding their relative need. The higher the workload per judge, the greater the need for additional resources.

Counties that are near the threshold (e.g., courts with a workload per judge between 1.10 and 1.20) may benefit from a secondary analysis that examines additional contextual factors affecting the need for judicial officers. For example, some counties slightly above the workload per judicial officer threshold of 1.15 may feel they have sufficient resources to handle their workload efficiently and effectively, even though the rounding rule suggests the need for one or more additional judgeships. On the other hand, some counties that are slightly below the threshold may exhibit unique factors that impact their workload and may not be accounted for in the model. For example, counties bordering Mexico or other states may have additional work associated with their shared boundaries that create more complex elements to many of their cases. These extra factors should be considered when determining whether additional resources are needed.

The current Workload per Judicial Officer in Lone Star County is 1.42, indicating a need for additional judicial resources. Changing the Associate Judge to full time would add another 0.38 FTE and result in a Workload per Judicial Officer of 1.23—still indicating a need for additional resources. Adding another court instead with its elected/appointed Judge adds a full FTE, resulting in a value of 1.00, indicating a full but not excessive workload. Depending on the county's circumstances such as rapid and sustained filings growth and population growth, and considering State and local budget cycles, the County may opt to do both, to provide room for that growth and mitigate potentially excessive workload in the near future.

Lone Star County	Current	+ 0.38 FTE	+ 1.0 FTE	+ 1.38 FTE
Estimated Need	3.38			
Existing Resources	2.38	2.75	3.38	3.75
Workload per Judicial Officer	**1.42**	**1.23**	**1.00**	**0.90**

Fiscal Year 2023 Judicial Workload Analyses Highlights

The judicial workload analysis assessed the FTE needs across two categories: single-county jurisdictions and multi-county jurisdictions. A court is generally considered to have an adequate number of judicial officers if the workload per officer is below 1.14 FTE.

It should be noted that missing data will affect the accuracy of the net need analysis and should not be taken as a complete reflection of judicial staffing needs for those counties.

Single County Jurisdictions

For the 20 counties with single-county jurisdictions—where all courts in the county serve only that county—9 counties were identified as needing additional FTE positions to handle the workload. These counties exhibited workload demands that exceeded current staffing capacities, indicating a clear need for increased judicial resources.

Ellis County was right at the threshold, meaning its workload is nearly at the point of requiring additional judicial staffing to maintain an appropriate balance.

As noted in the chart, the values for Bexar and Dallas were lower than expected due to missing data.

County	Net Need	Current Workload per Judicial Officer
Bexar [1]	9.31	**1.29**
Brazoria	0.36	1.05
Brazos	-1.48	0.73
Collin	6.69	**1.43**
Dallas [2]	-16.30	0.70
Denton	2.50	**1.20**
Ellis	0.56	**1.14**
Fort Bend	-2.57	0.83
Galveston	0.36	1.05
Harris	60.32	**1.70**
Hidalgo	2.50	**1.18**
Jefferson	-2.04	0.77
Kaufman	-0.13	0.96
McLennan	-2.21	0.70
Midland	-2.19	0.64
Montgomery	3.83	**1.35**
Smith	-0.41	0.92
Tarrant	11.71	**1.29**
Travis	4.39	**1.16**
Williamson	1.51	**1.24**

1. Bexar was missing 3 months of data for criminal and juvenile cases.

2. Dallas was missing 12 months of data for criminal cases.

Single County Jurisdictions

County	County Population 2023	FILINGS							CLEARANCE RATE						JUDICIAL OFFICERS							
		FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	Change FY 23-24	Change FY 20-24	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	Avg	Estimated Need	District Judges	% State Funded Judicial Officers	County Employed Judicial Officers	OCA Employed Judicial Officers	Net Need	Current Workload per Judicial Officer	Last Court Created
Bexar [1]	2,087,679	60,453	57,003	55,195	55,938	53,724	-4%	-11%	79%	80%	91%	94%	84%	86%	41.88	27	86%	4.50	1.07	9.31	1.29	2010
Brazoria	398,938	9,465	9,382	9,715	9,903	10,256	4%	8%	90%	92%	91%	106%	98%	96%	7.59	5	74%	1.88	0.35	0.36	1.05	2019
Brazos	244,703	5,047	5,103	5,236	6,450	5,934	-8%	18%	96%	87%	99%	90%	109%	96%	4.06	4	77%	1.29	0.25	-1.48	0.73	2023
Collin	1,195,359	23,241	25,203	24,613	26,288	29,286	11%	26%	95%	98%	105%	92%	95%	97%	22.37	15	99%	0.19	0.48	6.69	1.43	2024
Dallas [2]	2,606,358	89,170	86,917	93,269	85,654	54,624	-36%	-39%	91%	99%	93%	98%	98%	96%	37.38	39	79%	11.25	3.44	-16.30	0.70	2005
Denton	1,007,703	16,214	17,111	17,133	18,540	20,216	9%	25%	94%	91%	102%	102%	95%	97%	15.10	12	98%	0.22	0.38	2.50	1.20	2025
Ellis	222,829	4,652	4,683	5,285	6,031	5,961	-1%	28%	82%	90%	78%	82%	113%	90%	4.49	3	81%	0.75	0.17	0.56	1.14	2014
Fort Bend	916,778	15,954	16,793	15,521	17,141	18,039	5%	13%	82%	88%	107%	100%	99%	95%	12.33	8	60%	6.00	0.90	-2.57	0.83	2017
Galveston	361,744	8,370	9,354	10,065	9,747	10,306	6%	23%	93%	81%	101%	106%	99%	96%	8.23	6	81%	1.50	0.37	0.36	1.05	2001
Harris	4,835,125	147,883	160,746	161,476	164,723	168,457	2%	14%	80%	84%	100%	98%	97%	92%	146.36	67	83%	14.78	4.25	60.32	1.70	2024
Hidalgo	898,471	17,610	16,936	18,889	19,888	22,405	13%	27%	95%	85%	87%	96%	88%	90%	16.42	13	100%	0.00	0.92	2.50	1.18	2022
Jefferson	251,496	7,981	8,970	7,938	8,147	8,798	8%	10%	89%	86%	112%	96%	94%	95%	6.76	8	95%	0.45	0.35	-2.04	0.77	1981
Kaufman	185,690	2,845	2,788	2,659	3,711	4,096	10%	44%	86%	87%	99%	87%	93%	90%	2.97	3	100%	0.00	0.10	-0.13	0.96	2023
McLennan	268,583	8,510	7,518	7,847	7,509	7,082	-6%	-17%	86%	92%	99%	128%	109%	102%	5.14	6	90%	0.75	0.60	-2.21	0.70	2022
Midland	177,108	5,659	5,929	5,445	6,362	5,875	-8%	4%	93%	105%	105%	100%	98%	100%	3.87	5	88%	0.75	0.32	-2.19	0.64	2009
Montgomery	711,354	15,211	17,496	17,525	18,489	19,293	4%	27%	87%	97%	107%	99%	95%	97%	14.68	8	78%	2.40	0.45	3.83	1.35	2019
Smith	245,209	5,416	5,146	5,272	5,113	5,194	2%	-4%	83%	79%	94%	102%	103%	92%	4.59	5	100%	0.00	0.00	-0.41	0.92	2023
Tarrant	2,182,947	68,087	61,638	65,521	64,565	66,047	2%	-3%	84%	92%	107%	108%	100%	98%	51.66	28	75%	10.18	1.77	11.71	1.29	2022
Travis	1,334,961	30,547	27,386	28,978	30,370	34,121	12%	12%	90%	90%	91%	95%	94%	92%	31.94	21	78%	6.00	0.54	4.39	1.16	2021
Williamson	697,191	7,821	7,853	7,848	8,302	9,105	10%	16%	88%	77%	97%	100%	96%	92%	7.73	6	98%	0.09	0.13	1.51	1.24	2002

1. Bexar missing criminal and juvenile for June to August 2024.
2. Dallas missing criminal June 2023 to August 2024.

Multi-County Jurisdictions

The analysis for multi-county jurisdictions identifies the overall need for additional judicial officers at the cluster level. However, it does not account for the unequal distribution of workload across the individual counties. Some counties may have higher demands than others, but this disparity is not reflected in the overall net need of the cluster.

In the multi-county jurisdictions, 26 counties made up 8 clusters, where courts serve multiple counties.

Of these, the Bell County cluster one cluster indicates a need for additional resources, and the Nueces County cluster is near the threshold for requiring an additional FTE.

Cluster	Net Need	Current Workload per Judicial Officer
Bell & Lampasas	1.12	**1.15**
Webb & Zapata	-0.57	0.89
Nueces, Kenedy & Kleberg	1.04	**1.12**
Cameron & Willacy	-0.66	0.94
Lubbock & Crosby	0.11	1.02
Johnson & Somervell	0.29	1.09
El Paso, Brewster[1], Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis & Presidio	1.64	1.07
Hays, Caldwell, Colorado, Comal[2], Gonzales, Guadalupe[3] & Lavaca	-3.65	0.72

1. Brewster missing 11 months of reports.
2. Comal missing all reports for FY 2024.
3. The county courts at law in Guadalupe handle most of the juvenile cases and an unknown number of civil for the county but the cases are reported under the district courts.
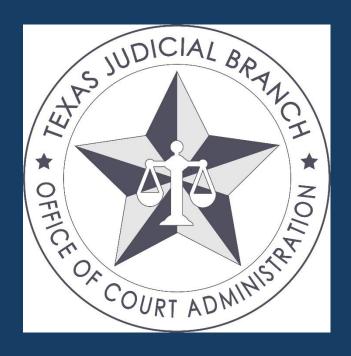
Multi-County Jurisdictions

County	County Population 2023	FILINGS FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	Change FY 23-24	Change FY 20-24	CLEARANCE RATE FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	Avg	Estimated Need	District Judges	% State Funded Judicial Officers	County Employed Judicial Officers	OCA Employed Judicial Officers	Net Need	Current Workload per Judicial Officer	Last Court Created
Bell	393,193	11,653	11,443	9,996	10,333	10,867	5%	-7%	90%	83%	91%	94%	104%	92%	8.24		89%	0.80	0.80	6.63		2022
Lampasas	23,262	810	656	751	649	689	6%	-15%	108%	104%	95%	103%	105%	103%	0.52		100%	0.00	0.04	0.48		Unknown
Total		12,463	12,099	10,747	10,982	11,556	5%	-7%	91%	84%	91%	94%	104%	93%	8.76	6	90%	0.80	0.84	1.12	1.15	
Webb	269,148	6,645	6,759	5,103	5,124	5,954	16%	-10%	76%	90%	113%	104%	93%	94%	4.53		88%	0.56	0.16	3.80		2001
Zapata	13,736	370	394	364	369	343	-7%	-7%	84%	78%	83%	66%	100%	82%	0.20		64%	0.56	0.01	-0.37		1981
Total		7,015	7,153	5,467	5,493	6,297	15%	-10%	76%	90%	111%	102%	93%	93%	4.73	4	79%	1.12	0.18	-0.57	0.89	
Kenedy	343	91	193	218	470	465	-1%	411%	77%	36%	42%	38%	55%	46%	0.32		100%	0.00	0.00	0.32		Unknown
Kleberg	30,069	696	815	1,053	945	1,158	23%	66%	85%	67%	97%	123%	112%	99%	0.75		100%	0.00	0.01	0.74		Unknown
Nueces	352,289	13,636	12,320	12,449	11,489	12,565	9%	-8%	78%	85%	97%	112%	114%	97%	8.53		100%	0.00	0.55	7.98		1983
Total		14,332	13,135	13,502	12,434	13,723	10%	-4%	79%	84%	97%	113%	114%	97%	9.60	8	100%	0.00	0.56	1.04	1.12	
Cameron	426,710	12,907	13,756	12,215	11,104	13,027	17%	1%	74%	83%	96%	107%	85%	88%	9.10		100%	0.00	1.26	7.83		2021
Willacy	20,037	856	937	775	849	832	-2%	-3%	90%	89%	112%	106%	91%	97%	0.57		100%	0.00	0.06	0.50		1970
Total		13,763	14,693	12,990	11,953	13,859	16%	1%	75%	83%	97%	107%	85%	89%	9.66	9	100%	0.00	1.33	-0.66	0.94	
Crosby	4,917	121	119	117	100	100	0%	-17%	93%	61%	87%	74%	130%	88%	0.06		100%	0.00	0.01	0.05		Unknown
Lubbock	320,940	8,222	8,569	8,145	8,815	8,628	-2%	5%	90%	90%	96%	102%	100%	96%	7.04		93%	0.50	0.48	6.06		1989
Total		8,343	8,688	8,262	8,915	8,728	-2%	5%	90%	89%	96%	102%	100%	95%	7.11	6	93%	0.50	0.49	0.11	1.02	
Johnson	202,906	4,067	3,865	3,726	3,877	4,185	8%	3%	82%	88%	106%	109%	98%	96%	3.35		100%	0.00	0.20	3.15		2003
Somervell	9,888	237	228	271	287	245	-15%	3%	79%	81%	91%	126%	119%	100%	0.16		100%	0.00	0.02	0.14		1977
Total		4,304	4,093	3,997	4,164	4,430	6%	3%	82%	87%	105%	110%	100%	97%	3.51	3	100%	0.00	0.22	0.29	1.09	
Brewster [3]	9,513	141	178	233	227	16	-93%	-89%	49%	81%	49%	81%	44%	65%	0.01		100%	0.00	0.00	0.01		1995
Culberson	2,196	113	124	194	143	97	-32%	-14%	50%	82%	37%	84%	33%	57%	0.05		100%	0.00	0.00	0.05		Unknown
El Paso	869,880	25,844	20,041	18,794	23,353	23,725	2%	-8%	95%	111%	127%	91%	87%	101%	23.35		82%	3.75	0.24	19.36		2008
Hudspeth	3,451	243	131	69	59	270	358%	11%	130%	357%	538%	266%	47%	186%	0.15		100%	0.00	0.00	0.15		1995
Jeff Davis	1,856	25	36	53	40	48	20%	92%	204%	61%	111%	73%	148%	115%	0.03		100%	0.00	0.00	0.03		1995
Presidio	5,795	96	126	98	81	51	-37%	-47%	93%	57%	78%	53%	59%	69%	0.05		100%	0.00	0.00	0.05		1995
Total		26,462	20,636	19,441	23,903	24,207	1%	-9%	95%	111%	126%	91%	87%	101%	23.64	18	83%	3.75	0.25	1.64	1.07	
Caldwell	49,859	1,154	1,107	1,005	1,033	1,006	-3%	-13%	69%	78%	92%	91%	67%	79%	0.94		100%	0.00	0.07	0.87		2004
Colorado	21,117	605	529	541	573	715	25%	18%	90%	98%	73%	81%	72%	82%	0.54		100%	0.00	0.03	0.51		Unknown
Comal [4]	193,928	3,669	3,235	2,934	3,539		-100%	-100%	62%	68%	93%	74%	#DIV/0!	74%	0.00		100%	0.00	0.00	0.00		2021
Gonzales	19,930	593	656	594	741	580	-22%	-2%	84%	76%	91%	96%	94%	88%	0.46		100%	0.00	0.03	0.43		Unknown
Guadalupe [5]	188,454	3,457	3,333	3,291	3,510	3,833	9%	11%	83%	79%	82%	91%	88%	85%	2.99		100%	0.00	0.10	2.90		2021
Hays	280,486	5,059	5,420	5,368	5,514	5,355	-3%	6%	104%	70%	82%	91%	101%	90%	4.32		89%	0.75	0.25	3.32		2022
Lavaca	20,571	409	374	389	396	409	3%	0%	72%	90%	85%	94%	103%	89%	0.36		100%	0.00	0.04	0.32		Unknown
Total		14,946	14,654	14,122	15,306	11,898	-29%	-27%	84%	74%	85%	87%	92%	84%	9.62	12	94%	0.75	0.52	-3.65	0.72	

3. Brewster missing all reports for October 2023 to August 2024.
4. Comal missing all reports for FY 2024.
5. The county courts at law in Guadalupe handle most of the juvenile cases and an unknown number of civil for the county but the cases are reported under the district courts.

Texas Office of Court Administration

Data & Research Division