

Trends in Cases Added, Disposed, and Pending per District Court Fiscal Years 2002 through 2006

Population Served per Court

In fiscal year 2006, the average population served per district court in Texas was 52,916 citizens. With more than 92,000 citizens per court, Fort Bend and Denton counties topped the list in terms of highest average population served per court, approximately 75 percent more than the statewide average.

From 2002 to 2006, the statewide average population served per court grew 7.2 percent, despite the creation of seven new district courts during this period. The Dallas area experienced the greatest growth in population served per court. Rockwall County's population per court rose by one-third, Fort Bend and Collin counties' by more than 20 percent, and Denton and Kaufman counties' by nearly 20 percent. Other areas of significant growth centered around Houston and the San Antonio-Austin area.

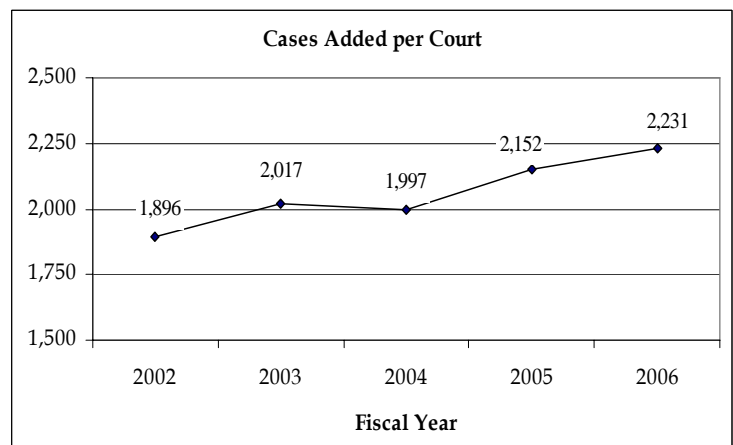
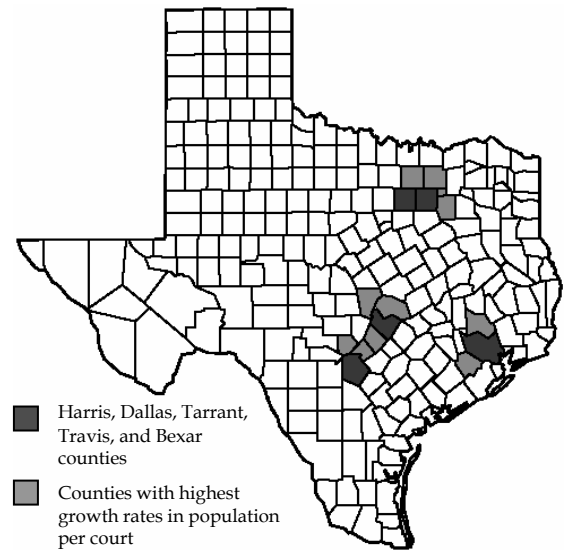
Highest Average, FY 2006		Greatest Change, FYs 2002 to 2006	
Fort Bend County	92,730	Rockwall County	33.3%
Denton County	92,440	Fort Bend County	23.1%
Williamson County	83,364	Collin County	22.6%
Collin County	82,432	Montgomery County	20.9%
Coryell County	75,802	Williamson County	20.5%
Montgomery County	75,607	Denton County	19.7%
Hidalgo County	75,364	Hays County	19.2%
Ellis County	66,737	Kaufman County	18.1%
Bell County	64,014	Comal County	17.5%
Harrison County	63,459	Kendall County	16.3%
Bexar County	63,265	Burnet County	15.7%
Statewide	52,916	Statewide	7.2%

Cases Added per Court

Overall

While the state's population increased by an average of 1.8 percent per year from fiscal years 2002 through 2006, the number of civil, criminal and juvenile cases added per district court in Texas increased at a greater rate—an average of 4.2 percent per year—despite the creation of seven new district courts during the same period.

On average, 2,059 cases were added per court per year over the five-year period. In fiscal year 2006, an average of 2,231 cases were added per court.



Harris County had the highest average number of cases added per court per year over the past five years (3,065 cases, 48.9 percent higher than the statewide average),¹ while King County had the lowest (5 cases). Four of the 10 counties with the highest average population per court also ranked in the top 10 for the highest average number of cases added per court per year (Bexar, Bell, Denton, and Harrison counties).

<i>Counties with Highest Average Number of Cases Added per Court per Year, FYs 2002 to 2006</i>	
Harris County	3,065
Bexar County	2,858
Bell County	2,642
Brazos County	2,618
Harrison County	2,546
Jefferson County	2,530
Dallas County	2,377
Travis County	2,370
Denton County	2,322
Cameron County	2,162
Statewide Average	2,059
Statewide Median	460

Civil Cases

Statewide, the number of civil cases added per court increased by an average of 4.7 percent per year from fiscal year 2002 (1,253 cases) to 2006 (1,363 cases). Harris and Bexar counties had the highest average number of civil cases added per court (2,112 cases) per year during this period.

Criminal Cases

The number of criminal cases added per court increased an average of 2.9 percent per year over the past five years (from 554 cases in 2002 to cases 634 in 2006). Brazos County had the highest average number of criminal cases added per court (1,270 cases) per year over the five-year period.

Juvenile Cases

The number of juvenile cases added per court increased an average of 2.4 percent per year during the five-year period (from 89 cases in 2002 to 94 cases in 2006). Harris County had the

<i>Counties with Highest Average Number of Civil Cases Added per Court per Year, FYs 2002 to 2006</i>		<i>Counties with Highest Average Number of Criminal Cases Added per Court per Year, FYs 2002 to 2006</i>		<i>Counties with Highest Average Number of Juvenile Cases Added per Court per Year, FYs 2002 to 2006</i>	
Harris County	2,112	Brazos County	1,270	Harris County	221
Bexar County	2,112	Kleberg County	947	Bexar County	192
Harrison County	2,063	Wood County	869	Collin County	154
Jefferson County	2,030	Travis County	860	Travis County	147
Bell County	1,896	Cass County	822	McLennan County	141
Denton County	1,816	Dallas County	799	Galveston County	119
Fort Bend County	1,588	Rockwall County	797	Dallas County	114
Cameron County	1,529	Harris County	732	Tarrant County	112
Jim Wells County	1,510	Navarro County	728	El Paso County	103
Gregg County	1,502	Jones County	718	Williamson County	99
Statewide Average	1,363	Statewide Average	602	Statewide Average	94
Statewide Median	255	Statewide Median	162	Statewide Median	1

¹ According to data submitted to OCA, Hill County ranked highest in terms of cases added per court. This data, however, included the court activity statistics for the county-level courts and was therefore excluded from the analysis.

largest average number of juvenile cases added per court (221 cases) per year.

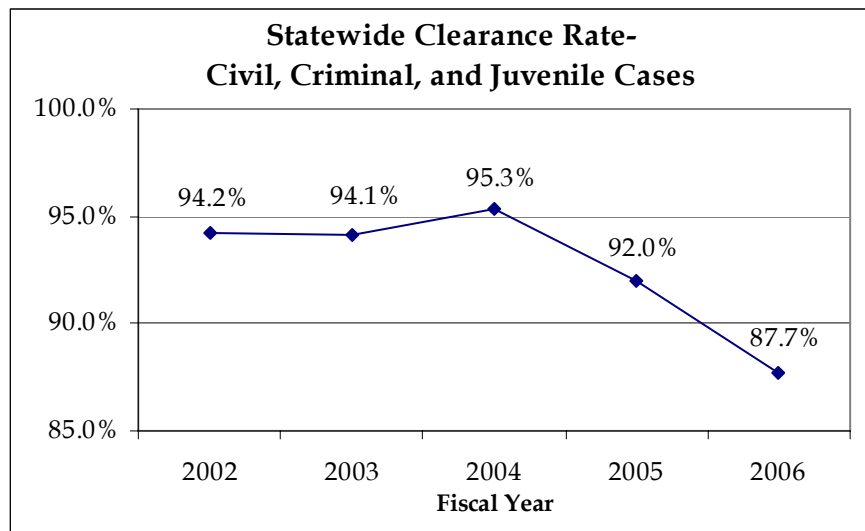
Cases Disposed per Court and Clearance Rates

Overall

The number of cases disposed per court increased by 3.2 percent per year over the past five years. On average, each court disposed of 1,905 cases per year. Bexar County had the highest number of cases disposed per court per year (2,731 cases, 43.4 percent higher than the statewide average), and Loving County had the lowest number (4 cases).

Bexar County	2,731
Harrison County	2,491
Harris County	2,427
Bell County	2,381
Jefferson County	2,343
Dallas County	2,311
Brazos County	2,302
Travis County	2,270
Denton County	2,227
Ellis County	2,145
Statewide Average	1,905
Statewide Median	432

From 2002 to 2006, the overall clearance rate for civil, criminal and juvenile cases averaged 93.6 percent. However, the clearance rate dropped substantially from 95.3 percent in 2004 to 87.7 percent in 2006—the lowest rate seen since 1980 (87.3 percent)—as the number of cases added to the courts’ dockets outpaced dispositions and despite the creation of new district courts during the period.



Only 35 percent of counties reported a clearance rate of 100 percent or higher in 2006. Thus, pending caseloads were growing in nearly two-thirds of counties in the state.

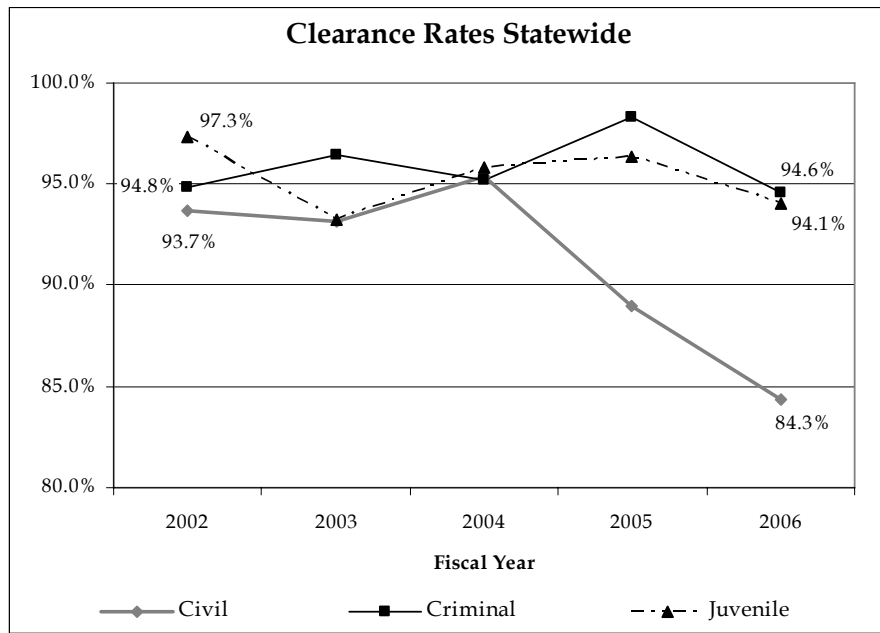
An equal percentage of counties averaged a clearance rate of 100 percent or higher from

Camp County	66.5%
Hardeman County	71.7%
Bandera County	72.9%
Kent County	73.3%
Oldham County	75.2%
Fannin County	76.4%
Polk County	77.1%
La Salle County	78.2%
Newton County	80.6%
Harris County	81.0%
Statewide Average	92.7%
Statewide Median	97.2%

Harris County	81.0%
Dallas County	97.2%
Tarrant County	97.9%
Bexar County	95.7%
Travis County	95.4%
El Paso County	90.5%
Hidalgo County	88.8%
Collin County	96.5%
Denton County	94.6%
Fort Bend County	93.3%

2002 to 2006. Statewide, the average clearance rate was 92.7 percent during the five-year period. Camp County had the lowest average clearance rate, with only 66.5 percent cases disposed of per year.

In all of the 10 most populous counties, clearance rates averaged less than 100 percent per year. Tarrant County had the highest average clearance rate at 97.9 percent, while Harris County had the lowest (81.0 percent).



Civil Cases

Statewide, the number of civil cases disposed of per court increased by an average of 2.8 percent per year from 2002 (1,174 cases) to 2006 (1,268 cases). On average, each court disposed of 1,238 civil cases per year. Harrison and Bexar counties had the highest average number of civil cases disposed of per court (2,037 and 2,035 cases, respectively) per year during this period.

Despite the increase in dispositions, the civil case clearance rate dropped substantially from 2002 (93.7 percent) to 2006 (84.3 percent). Kent County had the largest reduction in civil clearance rates, with an average decrease of 32.4 percent per year.

Half of the 10 largest counties had a positive change in civil clearance rates. Travis County had the greatest average increase (5.8 percent per year), while Harris County had the greatest average decrease (10.5 percent per year).

Criminal Cases

The number of criminal cases disposed of per court increased by an average of 4.3 percent per year from 2002 (526 cases) to 2006 (600 cases). On average,

Counties with Greatest Average Decrease per Year in Civil Case Clearance Rates, FYs 2002 to 2006

Kent County	-32.4%
Crane County	-22.3%
Real County	-14.6%
Cochran County	-13.8%
Hall County	-13.8%
Bee County	-13.5%
Austin County	-12.9%
Foard County	-12.4%
Ochiltree County	-11.0%
Harris County	-10.5%
Statewide Average	7.6%
Statewide Median	2.7%

Average Civil Clearance Rates and Change per Year in the 10 Most Populous Counties, FYs 2002 to 2006

	Avg. Clearance Rate	Avg. Change per Year
Harris County	74.1%	-10.5%
Dallas County	99.3%	0.7%
Tarrant County	97.0%	1.0%
Bexar County	96.5%	0.0%
Travis County	94.6%	5.8%
El Paso County	89.2%	-7.7%
Hidalgo County	80.4%	-9.8%
Collin County	97.5%	0.1%
Denton County	94.2%	0.7%
Fort Bend County	94.0%	-0.6%

each court disposed of 577 cases per year during the period. Brazos County had the highest average number of criminal cases disposed of per court (1,255 cases) per year.

The criminal case clearance rate remained relatively stable over the five-year period, changing an average of 0.0 percent per year.

Hardeman County experienced the largest decrease in criminal clearance rates – an average of 21.3 percent per year.

Among the 10 largest counties, Travis County had the largest average increase in criminal clearance rates (6.8 percent per year), while Hidalgo County had the greatest average decrease (2.6 percent per year).

Juvenile Cases

The number of juvenile cases disposed of per court increased an average of 1.3 percent per year over the past five years (from 87 in 2002 to 88 in 2006). On average, each court disposed of 89 cases per year. Harris County had the highest average number of juvenile cases disposed of per court (213 cases) per year.

Despite the increase in juvenile dispositions per year, the juvenile case clearance rate decreased 0.8 percent per year since 2002.

Falls County experienced the largest decrease in juvenile clearance rates, with an average decrease of 17.7 percent per year.

Counties with Greatest Average Decrease per Year in Criminal Case Clearance Rates, FYs 2002 to 2006

Hardeman County	-21.3%
Falls County	-18.6%
La Salle County	-14.0%
Polk County	-13.2%
Irion County	-12.1%
Palo Pinto County	-10.2%
Upton County	-9.7%
Hartley County	-8.9%
Bee County	-8.9%
Panola County	-8.1%
Statewide Average	8.6%
Statewide Median	2.6%

Average Criminal Clearance Rates and Change per Year in the 10 Most Populous Counties, FYs 2002 to 2006

	<i>Avg. Clearance Rate</i>	<i>Avg. Change per Year</i>
Harris County	97.6%	-0.3%
Dallas County	94.3%	0.4%
Tarrant County	99.4%	2.2%
Bexar County	92.9%	1.6%
Travis County	97.1%	6.8%
El Paso County	111.8%	13.5%
Hidalgo County	104.9%	-2.6%
Collin County	93.8%	0.1%
Denton County	95.8%	0.7%
Fort Bend County	90.9%	-0.6%

Counties with Greatest Average Decrease per Year in Juvenile Case Clearance Rates, FYs 2002 to 2006

Falls County	-17.7%
San Jacinto County	-15.9%
Matagorda County	-15.1%
Montague County	-13.2%
Bee County	-11.0%
Maverick County	-9.7%
Freestone County	-8.0%
Upshur County	-6.6%
Travis County	-5.8%
Hidalgo County	-4.9%
Statewide Average	18.3%
Statewide Median	9.2%

Average Juvenile Clearance Rates and Change per Year in the 10 Most Populous Counties, FYs 2002 to 2006

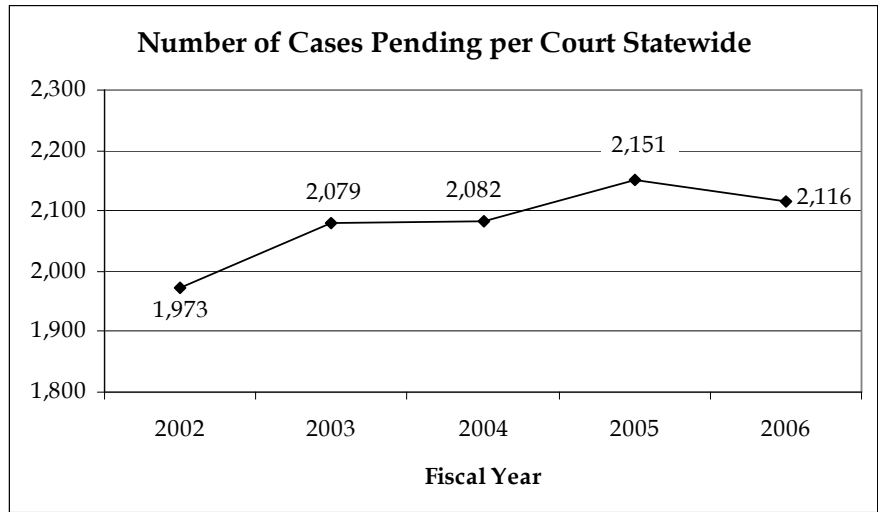
	<i>Avg. Clearance Rate</i>	<i>Avg. Change per Year</i>
Harris County	96.2%	-0.3%
Dallas County	90.0%	-0.8%
Tarrant County	99.8%	-0.1%
Bexar County	94.2%	-0.7%
Travis County	97.0%	-5.8%
El Paso County	158.3%	33.0%
Hidalgo County	91.6%	-4.9%
Collin County	96.3%	-1.9%

Only one of the 10 largest counties had a positive change in juvenile clearance rates.² El Paso County had the largest average increase in juvenile clearance rates (33.0 percent per year), while Travis County had the largest average decrease (5.8 percent per year).

Cases Pending per Court

Overall

From 2002 to 2006, the number of cases pending per court statewide grew an average of 4.8 percent per year. However, in 2006, the number of cases pending per court dropped to 2,116 cases, down from 2,151 pending the previous year.



Van Zandt County had the highest average number of cases pending per court over the five-year period, with an average of 4,075 cases pending per year—nearly double the statewide average. Loving County, on the other hand, had the lowest number of cases pending (5 cases).

Van Zandt County	4,075
Angelina County	3,665
Ellis County	3,606
Liberty County	3,493
McLennan County	2,915
McLennan County	2,915
Harris County	2,865
Grayson County	2,783
Brooks County	2,705
Eastland County	2,323
Statewide Average	2,116
Statewide Median	615

County	Avg. No. Cases Pending	Avg. Change per Year
Harris County	2,865	27.2%
Dallas County	2,113	72.0%
Tarrant County	1,417	36.4%
Bexar County	2,025	84.9%
El Paso County	1,972	-11.0%
Hidalgo County	3,489	-23.9%
Collin County	1,162	11.4%
Denton County	1,599	78.8%
Fort Bend County	1,693	-1.6%

Three of the 10 most populous counties had pending caseloads larger than the statewide average.³ Hidalgo County reported the highest number of cases pending per court during the period (3,489 cases—64.9 percent higher than the statewide average), while Denton County reported the lowest (1,027 cases—51.5 percent lower than the statewide average). Harris County, however, experienced the fastest growth in its pending caseload, with an average increase of 15.2 percent per year over the past five years.

² No juvenile activity was reported for district courts in Denton and Fort Bend counties for FYs 2002 to 2006.

³ Travis County was not included due to inaccurate data reported for FY 2005.

Civil Cases

Statewide, the number of civil cases pending per court increased an average of 5.0 percent per year from 2002 (1,438 cases) to 2006 (1,691 cases). Van Zandt County had the highest average number of civil cases pending per court per year – 119.0 percent above the statewide average.

King County experienced the largest increase in civil cases pending per court, with an average increase of 13.0 percent per year. The number of cases pending in King County, however, was very small (approximately 5 cases).

Among the 10 most populous counties, El Paso County had the largest increase in its pending caseload (an average of 19.2 percent per year), while Dallas County had the largest decrease (an average of 5.4 percent per year).

<i>Counties with Highest Average Number of Civil Cases Pending per Court per Year, FYs 2002 to 2006</i>	
Van Zandt County	3,388
Angelina County	3,343
Liberty County	3,158
Hidalgo County	2,981
Ellis County	2,783
McLennan County	2,645
Grayson County	2,319
Harris County	2,313
Eastland County	1,915
Grimes County	1,730
Statewide Average	1,547
Statewide Median	405

<i>Average Number of Civil Cases Pending per Court per Year in the 10 Most Populous Counties, FYs 2002 to 2006</i>		
	<i>Avg. No. Cases Pending</i>	<i>Avg. Change per Year</i>
Harris County	2,313	18.8%
Dallas County	1,429	-5.4%
Tarrant County	1,075	3.3%
Bexar County	1,591	4.3%
El Paso County	1,241	19.2%
Hidalgo County	2,981	12.2%
Collin County	726	3.6%
Denton County	1,267	7.8%
Fort Bend County	1,193	11.5%

Criminal Cases

The number of criminal cases pending per court increased an average of 4.3 percent per year over the five-year period (from 487 cases in 2002 to 557 cases in 2006). Stephens County had the largest average number of criminal cases pending per court per year – 239.1 percent above the statewide average.

Atascosa County experienced the largest increase in criminal cases pending per court, with an average increase of 53.0 percent per year.

<i>Counties with Highest Average Number of Criminal Cases Pending per Court per Year, FYs 2002 to 2006</i>	
Stephens County	1,770
Brooks County	1,659
Kleberg County	914
Ellis County	823
Cass County	797
Montgomery County	737
Starr County	723
Jones County	716
El Paso County	692
Van Zandt County	686
Statewide Average	522
Statewide Median	161

Among the 10 most populous counties, Fort Bend County had the largest increase in its pending caseload (an average of 10.7 percent per year), while Hidalgo County had the largest decrease (an average of 3.7 percent per year).

Juvenile Cases

Statewide, the number of juvenile cases pending per court increased an average of 1.4 percent per year over the past five years. Dallas County had the highest average number of juvenile cases pending per court per year—176 cases, 274.5 percent above the statewide average.

Comal County experienced the greatest increase in juvenile cases pending per court, with an average increase of 564.4 percent per year (due to a large increase from fiscal year 2003 (15 cases) to 2004 (133 cases) in cases pending at the end of the fiscal year).

Of the 10 most populous counties, only two counties reported a decrease in their pending caseloads. Hidalgo County had the largest increase in its pending caseload (an average of 16.9 percent per year), while Harris County had the largest decrease (an average of 12.7 percent per year).

Average Number of Criminal Cases Pending per Court per Year in the 10 Most Populous Counties, FYs 2002 to 2006

	<i>Avg. No. Cases Pending</i>	<i>Avg. Change per Year</i>
Harris County	505	4.6%
Dallas County	508	9.5%
Tarrant County	324	-1.9%
Bexar County	398	9.8%
El Paso County	692	8.4%
Hidalgo County	472	-3.7%
Collin County	354	8.9%
Denton County	332	7.7%
Fort Bend County	500	10.7%

Counties with Highest Average Number of Juvenile Cases Pending per Court per Year, FYs 2002 to 2006

Dallas County	176
Galveston County	145
Lee County	115
Cameron County	114
Upshur County	95
Zapata County	90
Lubbock County	87
Brazos County	85
Collin County	82
Nacogdoches County	80
Statewide Average	47
Statewide Median	1

Average Number of Juvenile Cases Pending per Court per Year in the 10 Most Populous Counties, FYs 2002 to 2006

	<i>Avg. No. Cases Pending</i>	<i>Avg. Change per Year</i>
Harris County	47	-12.7%
Dallas County	176	7.2%
Tarrant County	19	-2.0%
Bexar County	36	12.5%
El Paso County	40	14.2%
Hidalgo County	36	16.9%
Collin County	82	14.8%