

Caseload Trends in the District Courts

Analysis of Activity for Year Ended August 31, 2002

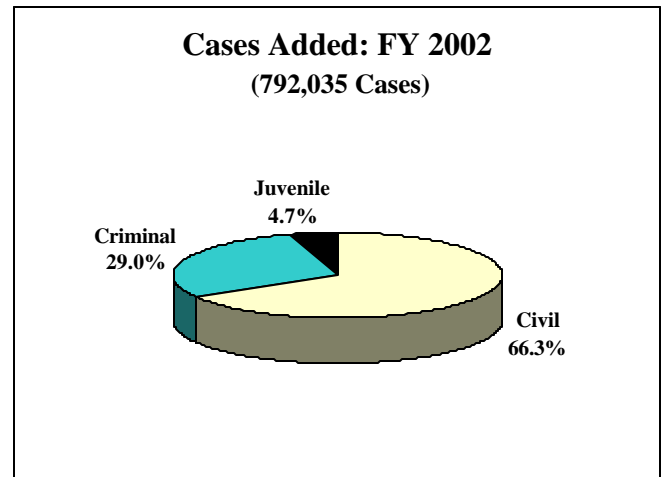
BACKGROUND

As of September 1, 2002, 418 district courts were operating in Texas. District courts, the primary trial courts in Texas, are courts of general jurisdiction, and most of these courts exercise both criminal and civil jurisdiction. In metropolitan areas, however, district courts tend to specialize in civil, criminal, or family law matters. Additionally, in a few localities, courts that primarily exercise criminal jurisdiction are designated "criminal district courts." A limited number of district courts in the state also possess subject matter jurisdiction normally exercised by county courts.

CASE FILINGS

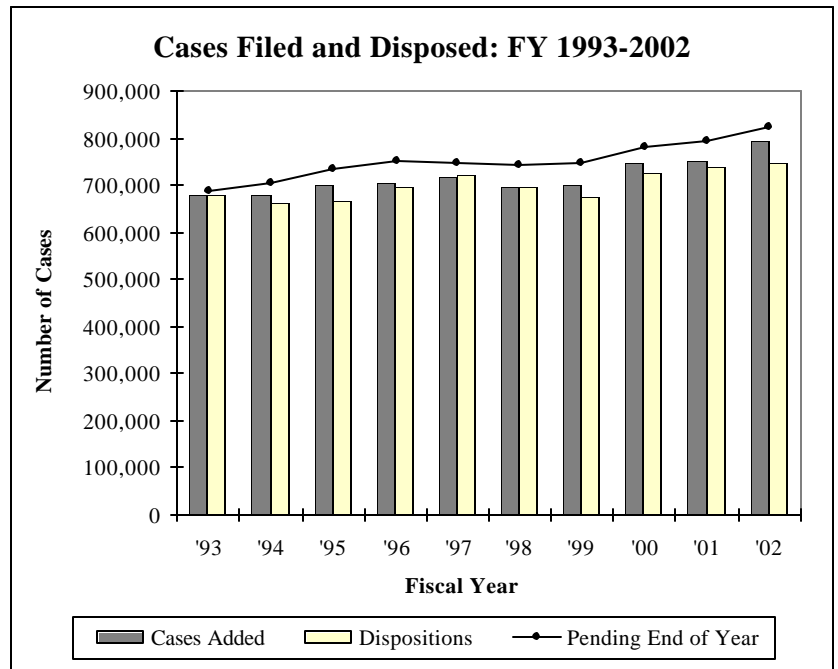
- The number of cases added to district court dockets increased by 5.1 percent from the previous fiscal year.** In FY 2002, 792,035 cases were filed in district courts, compared to 753,254 in FY 2001. Civil cases accounted for 66.3 percent, criminal cases for 29.0 percent, and juvenile cases for 4.7 percent of all cases added in FY 2002. Over the past decade, the total number of cases added to district court dockets has increased an average of 1.7 percent per fiscal year, resulting in an overall 16.3 percent increase (from 681,222 cases added in FY 1993).

- The number of civil cases added to the dockets grew by 4.9 percent.** In FY 2002, 525,178 civil cases were added, compared to 500,460 in FY 2001. Nearly two-thirds (345,745 cases) of these cases involved family law and divorce matters. Over the last 10 fiscal years, the number of civil cases added has grown an average of 1.8 percent per fiscal year, resulting in an overall increase of 16.7 percent (from 450,163 civil cases added in FY 1993).



- Approximately 7 percent more criminal cases were added to the dockets in FY 2002 than during the previous fiscal year.** In FY 2002, 229,405 criminal cases were added to district court dockets, compared to 214,132 in FY 2001, representing a 7.1 percent increase. Drug possession cases accounted for 21.3 percent (48,869) of all criminal cases added, while the next largest category consisted of drug sale or manufacture cases (22,446 cases, or 9.8 percent). The number of criminal cases added to the dockets has grown an average of 1.0 percent per fiscal year over the last decade, resulting in an overall increase of 8.9 percent (from 210,700 criminal cases added in FY 1993).

- More than 3 percent fewer juvenile cases were added to the dockets in FY 2002 than in the previous fiscal year.** 37,452 juvenile cases were filed in district courts in FY 2002, 3.1 percent fewer than the 38,662 cases filed in FY 2001. Only 1.8 percent (666 cases) of the juvenile cases filed in FY 2002 involved conduct

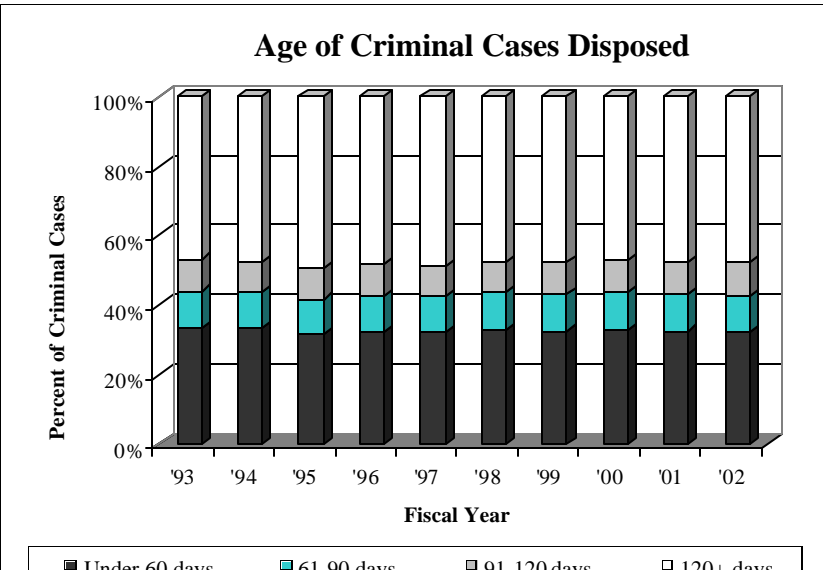


indicating a need for supervision (CINS), while the remaining 98.2 percent (36,786 cases) involved delinquent conduct. Despite the recent decrease in juvenile filings, the number of juvenile cases added to the dockets has grown an average of 7.6 percent per fiscal year over the last 10 fiscal years, resulting in an overall increase of 84.0 percent (from 20,359 juvenile cases added in FY 1993).

DISPOSITIONS

- District courts disposed of slightly more cases than during the previous fiscal year.** In FY 2002, district courts disposed of 746,640 cases, compared to 738,243 in the previous fiscal year—a 1.1 percent increase. Dispositions have increased an average of 1.1 percent per fiscal year over the last decade, resulting in an overall increase of 10.1 percent (from 678,222 dispositions in FY 1993).
- The statewide average number of cases disposed per judge continued to grow.** In FY 2002, 1,786 cases per judge were disposed, compared to 1,766 in FY 2001, 1,751 in FY 2000 and 1,704 in FY 1999.
- Criminal cases accounted for 29.2 percent (218,097 cases) of all cases disposed in FY 2002, civil dispositions comprised 65.9 percent (492,061 cases), and juvenile cases comprised 4.9 percent (36,482 cases).**
- Of all civil cases disposed, 22.3 percent were disposed by a bench trial, while 0.39 percent were disposed by a jury trial.** In FY 2002, 109,615 cases (or 22.3 percent of all civil cases disposed) were disposed by bench trial, compared to 111,046 cases (or 22.6 percent of all civil case dispositions) during the previous fiscal year. In FY 2002, 1,918 civil cases (0.39 percent) were disposed by a jury trial, compared to 2,377 civil cases (0.48 percent) in FY 2001.
- The number of criminal cases disposed in FY 2002 was similar to the number disposed during the previous fiscal year.** The defendant entered a plea of guilty in 40.9 percent (89,281 cases) of criminal cases disposed during FY 2002. In addition, defendants pled guilty and were placed on deferred adjudication in 16.4 percent (35,863 cases) of all criminal cases disposed in FY 2002. A small percentage (2.2 percent, or 4,838 cases) of criminal cases were disposed at trial. Dismissals accounted for another 13.9 percent (30,268 cases) of disposed cases, and transfers and other dispositions made up the remaining 26.5 percent (57,847 cases) of the total criminal cases disposed.
- Of all criminal cases that were disposed at trial, 76.2 percent were disposed by jury trial.** In FY 2002, 4,838 cases (or 2.2 percent of all criminal cases disposed) went to trial. Of these cases, 1,150 (23.8 percent) were tried by a judge alone, and 3,688 cases (76.2 percent) were tried by a jury. Defendants were acquitted in 51.3 percent (590) of cases that were disposed by bench trial in FY 2002, compared to only 18.7 percent (691) of cases decided by a jury.
- In FY 2002, a finding of delinquent conduct was entered in 54.0 percent (19,375 cases) of the 35,900 juvenile delinquent conduct cases disposed, while an affirmative finding of conduct indicating a need for supervision was entered in 49.0 percent (285 cases) of the 582 CINS cases disposed.**
- The overall case clearance rate fell to 94.3 percent.** Despite an increase in dispositions, clearance rates fell in FY 2002 as the number of new cases added outpaced the disposition of cases. The overall clearance rate fell to 94.3 percent in FY 2002 from 98.0 percent in the previous fiscal year. Moreover, the civil clearance rate fell from 98.2 percent in FY 2001 to 93.7 percent in FY 2002, and the criminal clearance rate fell from 98.2 percent in FY 2001 to 95.1 percent in FY 2002. However, the juvenile clearance rate rose to 97.4 percent, compared to 94.9 percent in FY 2001.
- Time to disposition of civil cases improved, and time to disposition of criminal cases remained stable, in FY 2002.** In FY 2002, 48.1 percent of civil cases were disposed within six months,

	Bench	Jury	ALL TRIALS
Convictions	560 (48.7%)	2,997 (81.3%)	3,557 (73.5%)
Acquittals	590 (51.3%)	691 (18.7%)	1,281 (26.5%)
TOTAL	1,150 (100%)	3,688 (100%)	4,838 (100%)



compared to 46.9 percent during the previous fiscal year. As in FY 2001, 32.1 percent of criminal cases were disposed within 60 days from filing in FY 2002.

- **Approximately four percent more cases were pending in district courts at the end of FY 2002 than at the end of the previous fiscal year.** At the close of FY 2002, 823,431 cases remained pending, compared to 791,978 in FY 2001.

OTHER ACTIVITY

- **In FY 2002, 26 death sentences and 281 life sentences were assessed in the district courts.** These figures are lower than the ten-year average of 34 death sentences and 410 life sentences. In FY 2002, one fewer death sentence and one fewer life sentence were assessed than during FY 2001.
- **The number of post-conviction writs of habeas corpus and other writs of habeas corpus filed increased significantly.** In FY 2002, 5,117 post-conviction writs of habeas corpus were filed, 16.8 percent more than the 4,382 that were filed in FY 2001. The number of other writs of habeas corpus filed also grew 19.0 percent, from 5,035 in FY 2001 to 5,994 in the subsequent fiscal year.
- **The number of bond forfeiture proceedings also increased, while the number of contempt, extradition, and other separately docketed proceedings fell.** Bond forfeiture proceedings increased 6.7 percent, from 9,483 in FY 2001 to 10,118 in FY 2002. Contempt, extradition, and other separately docketed proceedings, however, fell by 5.8 percent from the previous fiscal year (from 2,349 in FY 2001 to 2,214 proceedings in FY 2002).