

# DISTRICT COURTS

## ANALYSIS OF ACTIVITY FOR YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 1994

### NEW CASES FILED

The 386 district courts in the State experienced a slight decrease in new cases filed during the reporting year, to 543,743 from 554,888 in 1993. The number of new criminal cases filed decreased 3.8 percent below 1993 filings, civil cases decreased 2.0 percent, and juvenile cases increased 16.1 percent.

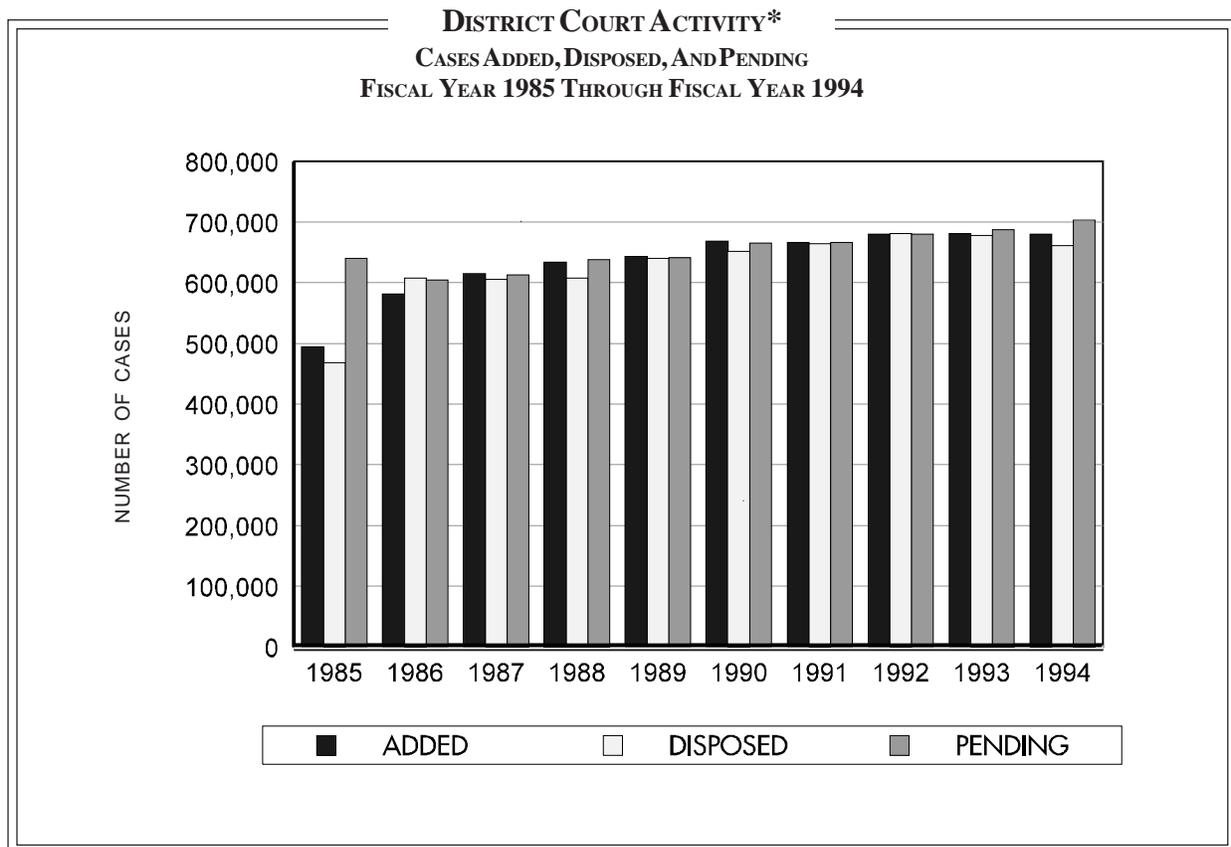
Civil cases accounted for 370,424 or 68.1 percent of all new cases added during the fiscal year. The largest segment of civil cases added (32.7 percent of new civil filings) were divorce actions. Of the civil cases added, family law matters other than divorce actions comprised 20.7 percent, damages and personal injury cases (including workers' compensation) comprised 13.0 percent, tax cases comprised 14.9 percent, and disputes over debts comprised 5.0 percent.

Juvenile cases (Title 3 of the Texas Family Code) accounted for 18,654, or 3.4 percent of the total cases filed in the district courts.

Criminal cases constituted 154,665, or 28.4 percent of the total new cases added during the year. Of the criminal cases, 14.0 percent involved a charge of theft (including auto theft), 12.8 percent burglary, 4.5 percent robbery, 1.4 percent homicide (including capital murder), 12.7 percent assault (including sexual assault of a child and of an adult), 6.5 percent felony DWI, 27.9 percent drug offenses, and 2.5 percent were misdemeanor cases. Of the criminal cases added in the district court, 12.6 percent were by information, and 87.4 percent were by indictment.

### URBAN FILINGS

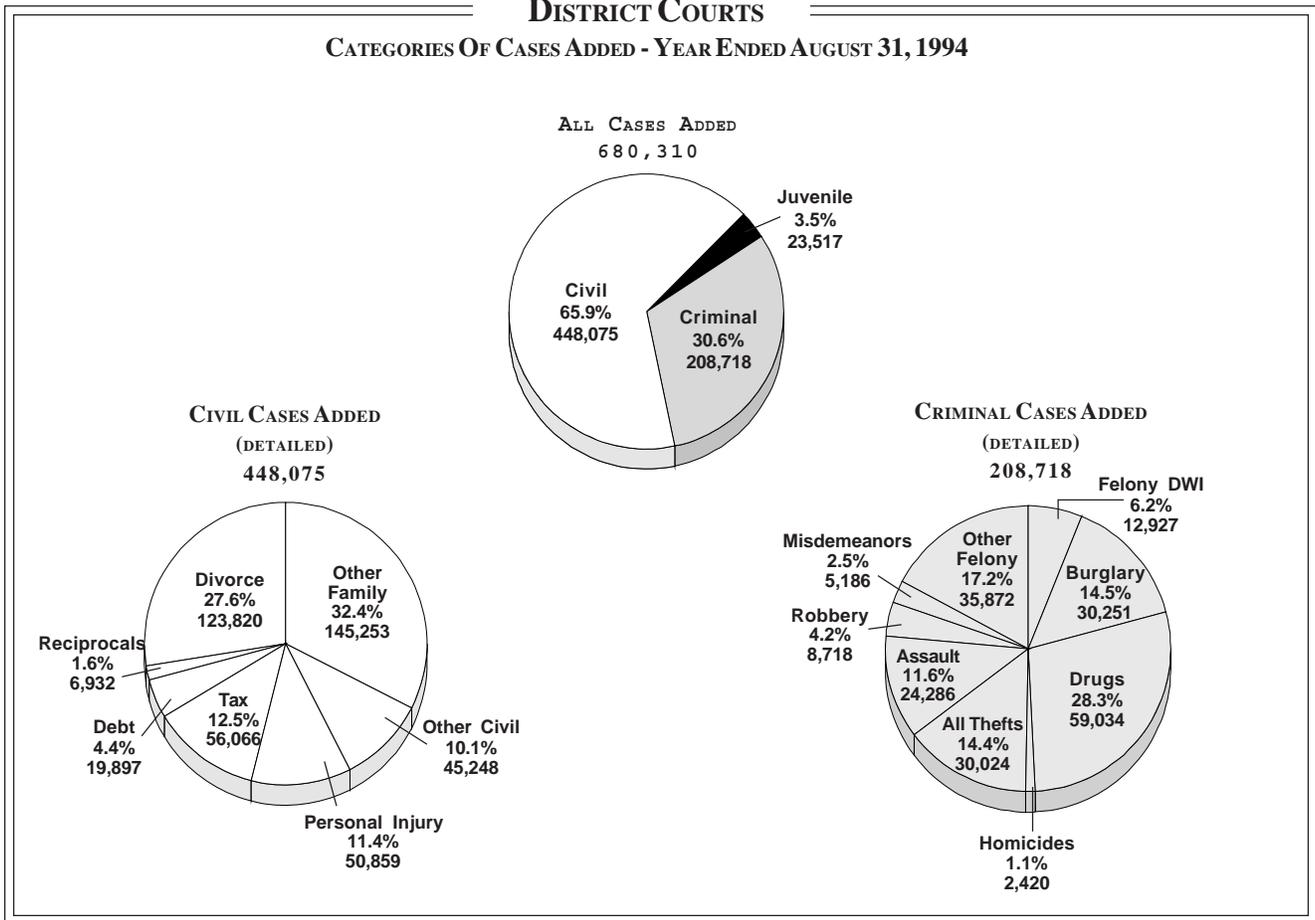
The number of all categories of cases added to the docket in the ten most populous Texas counties decreased 2,829 cases (0.7 percent) in state fiscal year 1994 below the number of filings during 1993. In all other counties, the number of cases added decreased 0.1 percent. These ten most populous counties (Harris, Dallas, Bexar, Tarrant, El Paso, Travis, Hidalgo, Nueces, Denton, and Collin) had approxi-



\* Fiscal year 1986 includes for the first time show cause motions in civil activity, deferred adjudications, and shock probations in criminal activity, and motions to revoke probation in criminal and juvenile activity.

## DISTRICT COURTS

### CATEGORIES OF CASES ADDED - YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 1994



mately 55 percent of the state's population and 56 percent of the total cases added during the fiscal year.

Total cases added decreased in Dallas County (5.4 percent), Bexar County (4.8 percent), Tarrant County (4.6 percent), Nueces County (6.3 percent), Denton County (11.4 percent), and Collin County (4.9%), but remained approximately the same in El Paso County. Increases in total filings occurred in the counties of Harris (3.6 percent), Travis (10.5 percent), and Hidalgo (7.7 percent).

Criminal cases added to the docket decreased 3.0 percent in the ten urban counties during fiscal year 1994 as compared to 1993. This compares to a decrease of 0.9 percent in criminal filings for all other counties of the State. Criminal filings increased in five of the ten urban counties: Tarrant (6.1 percent), Travis (13.0 percent), Hidalgo (15.3 percent), Nueces (15.2 percent), and Collin (9.1 percent). Counties reporting a decrease in criminal cases added to the docket were Harris (3.4 percent), Dallas (8.0 percent), Bexar (2.6 percent), El Paso (8.9 percent), and Denton (5.1 percent).

Civil cases added decreased 0.2 percent in the most populous counties, but decreased 0.5 percent in the remaining counties of the State. Four counties reported increases in civil filings: Harris (6.9 percent), El Paso (1.6 percent), Travis (8.7 percent), and Hidalgo (5.6 percent).

Counties reporting decreases in civil cases added were Dallas (2.5 percent), Bexar (7.6 percent), Tarrant (5.6 percent), Nueces (14.6 percent), Denton (14.8 percent), and Collin (5.1 percent).

### DISPOSITIONS

During the fiscal year, the district courts disposed of 97.3 percent of the total criminal and civil cases added to their dockets, compared to 99.6 percent in 1993. The district courts in the ten most populous counties disposed of 98.1 percent. In all other counties of the State, 96.3 percent were disposed. Statewide, 96.0 percent of the criminal cases and 97.9 percent of the civil cases added to the dockets were disposed of during the year.

In the ten urban counties the disposition rate of criminal cases averaged 97.8 percent of new cases, ranging from 71.4 percent in Hidalgo County to 113.3 percent in Tarrant County. The disposition rate of criminal cases for the rest of the State averaged 93.8 percent of those added to the docket.

Comparable figures for civil cases show an average disposition rate of 98.3 percent in the ten urban counties and a 97.4 percent disposition rate in the rest of the State. The range in the ten urban counties was from 83.3 percent in El Paso County to 106 percent in Nueces County.

# DISTRICT COURTS

## ANALYSIS OF ACTIVITY FOR YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 1994

(CONT.)

An average of 1,712 cases per judge statewide were disposed of during the year, compared with 1,757 per judge during 1993.

Of all civil cases disposed, 24.0 percent were by nonjury trials, and approximately 52.3 percent of these nonjury trials were in divorce cases. Of the civil cases disposed, 30.9 percent were family law cases including show cause motions but not divorces. Of all civil cases, 10.0 percent were dismissed for want of prosecution, and 17.5 percent were dismissed at the request of the plaintiff.

The defendant entered a plea of guilty in 38.2 percent of the criminal cases disposed. Including these pleas, the defendant was convicted in 40.6 percent of the cases and acquitted in less than one percent. In 17.1 percent of the criminal dispositions, the defendant was placed on deferred adjudication. Dismissals accounted for 16.7 percent of disposed cases. Of these dismissals, 10.9 percent were because of insufficient evidence, 12.4 percent were because the case was refiled, and 22.7 percent because the defendant was convicted in another case.

In the cases in which the defendant pleaded not guilty and which were disposed of by jury verdicts, the defendant was found guilty in 82.6 percent of the cases and was acquitted in 17.4 percent. In trials before the judge alone on not-guilty pleas, convictions resulted in 66.5 percent of the cases and acquittals in 33.5 percent.

Among the criminal cases, the highest rate for disposition by conviction was the category of felony DWI with 40.5 percent by convictions. The highest rate of disposition by dismissal was for sexual assault of an adult with 15.4 percent. The lowest rate of dismissal was for felony DWI with 4.8 percent.

### DISPOSITION RATES

Of the 200,457 criminal cases disposed by the district courts, 33.4 percent were disposed of in a period of less than two months from the date of indictment or information, 10.2 percent took two to three months, 8.8 percent took three to four months, and 47.6 percent took over four months.

Of juvenile cases handled by the district courts, a finding of delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision (CINS) was entered in 61.3

percent of the cases disposed. In 1.9 percent of the cases, the juvenile was found not to have engaged in the proscribed conduct. Probation was continued in 5.4 percent of the cases and revoked in 2.4 percent of the cases. Dismissals and other dispositions occurred in 29.3% of the cases disposed.

District courts handled 1.5 percent fewer divorce actions during 1994 than during 1993. During the fiscal year, 118,983 divorce cases were disposed of — 27.1 percent of all civil (non-juvenile) cases handled by district courts. Some 15.1 percent of divorce cases were dismissed.

Tax cases tend to stay on the docket for long periods of time compared to other categories of cases. This fiscal year, only 31.1 percent of the tax cases filed during the year or carried over from the previous year were disposed of by the district courts as compared to 29.6 percent in fiscal year 1993. Approximately 55.5 percent of tax case dispositions were either dismissed for want of prosecution or by the plaintiff.

District courts disposed of 1.1 percent more personal injury-type cases during 1994 than during 1993. Almost 25 percent of the personal injury-type cases ended in agreed judgments, and 31.1 percent were dismissed by the plaintiff.

Of the 438,727 civil dispositions during the year, the courts disposed of 27.3 percent of the cases in under three months, 19.7 percent in three to six months, 18.8 percent in six to twelve months, 11.1 percent in twelve to eighteen months, and 23.1 percent over eighteen months.

### CASES PENDING

The 523,835 civil cases pending in the district courts on August 31, 1994 were slightly more than the 517,136 pending on September 1, 1993. Criminal cases pending increased 5.1 percent, from 160,286 to 168,467.

### DEATH SENTENCES IMPOSED

Forty-three death sentences (compared to 30 in 1993) and 505 life sentences were assessed in the district courts during the year.

**DISTRICT COURT**  
**TOTAL OF REPORTED ACTIVITY**  
**FOR YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 1994**

**CRIMINAL, CIVIL, AND JUVENILE CASES**  
*(100% OF COUNTIES REPORTING)*

	<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>AVERAGES PER JUDGE*</u>
<b>CASES PENDING SEPTEMBER 1, 1993</b> .....	686,690	1,779
Docket Adjustments .....	-3,490	-9
<b>CASES FILED AND ADDED DURING YEAR:</b>		
New Cases Filed .....	543,743	1,409
Show Cause Motions Filed .....	66,878	173
Motions to Revoke Probation Filed .....	50,598	131
Other Cases Added .....	<u>19,091</u>	<u>49</u>
TOTAL CASES ADDED DURING YEAR .....	<u>680,310</u>	<u>1,762</u>
TOTAL CASES ON DOCKET .....	<u>1,363,510</u>	<u>3,532</u>
<b>CASES DISPOSED OF DURING YEAR:</b>		
Jury Trials (including Directed Verdicts) .....	7,371	19
Nonjury Trials (excluding Guilty Pleas or Nolo Contendere) .....	120,220	311
Guilty Pleas or Nolo Contendere (Criminal, Nonjury) .....	76,670	199
Motions to Revoke Probation Disposed (Criminal and Juvenile Only) .....	42,472	110
Placed on Deferred Adjudication (Criminal Only) .....	34,229	89
Placed on Shock Probation (Criminal Only) .....	2,103	5
Transfers on Change of Venue .....	3,092	8
Transfers to County Court (Criminal Only) .....	868	2
Show Cause Motions Disposed (Civil Only) .....	56,881	147
Default Judgments (Civil Only) .....	32,029	83
Agreed Judgments (Civil Only) .....	79,850	207
Complete Summary Judgments (Civil Only) .....	3,827	10
Dismissals .....	153,914	399
Other Dispositions .....	<u>47,285</u>	<u>123</u>
TOTAL DISPOSITIONS DURING YEAR .....	<u>660,811</u>	<u>1,712</u>
<b>CASES PENDING AUGUST 31, 1994</b> .....	702,699	1,820

\*Averages per judge are based on 386 judges