



SNAPSHOT

FY 2018-19 Tennessee Judicial Weighted Caseload Study Update

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Juan Napoles | Legislative Research Analyst
Juan.Napoles@cot.tn.gov

State law requires the Comptroller of the Treasury to annually update the judicial weighted caseload study for state trial court judges. Weighted caseload studies compare the state’s existing judicial resources with an estimate of the judicial resources needed. This update provides estimates based on cases filed in FY 2019.

The state has an estimated net *deficit* of 8.53 judges based on FY 2019 data. Overall, FY 2019 filings increased from FY 2018 by 520 cases (0.26 percent).

Yearly Trend in Judicial Resources (Full-Time Equivalent Judges)

Fiscal Years	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17 ^(a)	FY18	FY19
Total Judicial Resources	152	152	152	153	153	156	156
Estimated Judicial Resources Needed	157.13	154.73	151.22	157.22	159.31	162.51	164.53
Net Excess or Deficit in Judicial Resources	-5.13	-2.73	0.78	-4.22	-6.31	-6.51	-8.53

Notes: (a) The weighted caseload update for FY 2017 was revised with data received after the report was published.

Source: Estimates derived from model developed by the National Center for State Courts and updated with filings data provided by the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts.

Judicial Districts 13, 19, 22, and 30 showed the highest demand for judicial resources in FY 2019, with respective estimated net deficits of 1.30, 2.00, 1.16, and 1.43 full-time equivalent judges. The districts that demonstrated the highest judicial need based on the average judicial demand for the past three fiscal years were Judicial Districts 13, 19, 22, and 23. On average, Judicial District 30 showed a surplus in judicial resources over the past three fiscal years.

Criminal cases increased about 1.37 percent (46 percent of cases), civil cases increased by 2.74 percent (25 percent of cases), and domestic relations cases decreased by over 3.5 percent (29 percent of cases). With an increase of 1,129 case filings compared to last year, Felony A and B cases saw the largest net change in filings. The growth in Felony A and B cases in Shelby County alone made up 70 percent of the growth in Felony A and B cases across the state. The other case types with the greatest change compared to FY 2018 were Orders of Protection (-854), Probate/Trust (+585); Felony C, D, and E (+582), Contract/Debt/Specific Performance (+531), and Misdemeanors (+518).

Effective September 1, 2022, Public Chapter 530 (2020) creates a new judicial district by splitting Judicial District 21 (Hickman, Lewis, Perry, and Williamson Counties) into two districts. The creation of a new judicial district and the associated redistricting should be factored into any possible new study of the amount of time selected court staff – judges, district attorneys, public defenders – typically spend on each type of case. Periodically updating the case weights assigned to different types of cases to take into account redistricting, new laws, technological changes, population shifts, and other factors improves the reliability of estimates. The National Center for State Courts suggests updating case weights every five to seven years. The case weights used in the judicial weighted caseload study were last updated in 2013.

The FY 2019 Judicial Weighted Caseload update and a map showing estimated demand for judicial resources by judicial district are available at tncot.cc/orea.