



OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY

2026 TENNESSEE JUDICIAL WEIGHTED CASELOAD STUDY UPDATE



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Introduction

Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) 16-2-513 requires the Comptroller of the Treasury to publish an annual judicial weighted caseload study comparing existing judicial resources with estimated need. The Comptroller's Office has not published an updated study since 2020 due in part to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As court operations were restricted to comply with public health guidelines, case filings declined significantly, and the resulting data no longer reflected typical court activity for a time.

Another reason for not publishing an updated study in recent years was out-of-date case weights. Not all cases require the same amount of time to process; some take longer and others take less. Given this, weighted caseload studies add weight to cases that take more time and resources. The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) recommends case weights be updated every five to seven years to account for various factors that affect case processing times, including changes in legislation, case law, legal practice, court technology, and administrative policies. Case weights were last updated in 2013. According to the timeline of every five to seven years, the case weights would have been updated around 2020, the year the COVID-19 pandemic began. Rather than update the weights during an atypical period when court operations were disrupted and case filings had declined significantly, the judicial weighted caseload study was postponed. In lieu of updating the case weights and publishing annual judicial weighted caseload studies during this time, the Comptroller's Office conducted related research projects, such as analyzing case filing trends, while the pandemic receded and courts resumed their standard operations.

In recent years, courts have returned to standard operation and case filings have risen from 2020, suggesting the time was right to proceed with updating the case weights. In spring 2025, the Comptroller's Office and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) contracted with the NCSC to update the weights; the new weights were finalized in the fall of 2025.

This report presents the first judicial weighted caseload study since 2019. This includes an overview of the methods used by the NCSC to update the weights and reviews recent legislative actions. The legislative actions include the creation of a three-judge panel to hear certain civil cases, changes in state law regarding Administrative Uniform Procedures Act (UAPA) cases, changes in the number of state trial court judge positions in certain judicial districts, and the establishment of a Judicial Redistricting Task Force. By January 1, 2027, the task force must complete and publish a proposed statewide judicial redistricting plan that both improves access to the state's circuit, chancery, and criminal courts and promotes efficient use of publicly funded judicial resources. The General Assembly is required by state law to enact legislation implementing the task force's plan by December 31, 2027. If such legislation is not enacted, the funding for any judicial district with a "disproportionately high number of judges," as determined by the Comptroller's Office, must be reduced by 10 percent in the subsequent fiscal year.

Judicial weighted caseload terms

Case-related time: the time judges and judicial officers spend that is directly related to the processing of state trial court cases.

Non-case related time: the time spent by state trial court judges on continuing education requirements, training, general administrative work, and other duties unrelated to cases.

Travel time: the time spent by state trial court judges traveling between court houses, court rooms, or any other form of travel necessary to complete their duties.

Judicial officer: a person authorized to make decisions in a court of law. Examples include judges, magistrates, and child support magistrates.

Child support magistrate: magistrates employed by the state to oversee matters involving child support and some other domestic relations cases.

What is a weighted caseload study?

Weighted caseload studies account for the time and resources needed to process different types of cases. Since not all cases require the same amount of time to process, a weighted caseload study adds a higher weight to

cases that take more time and resources. Cases that demand more time, such as a first-degree murder case, have a higher weight, while those that demand less time, like a probation violation, have a lower weight. The weights for each type of case are then multiplied by the number of cases to produce an estimate of resources, or judges, needed for criminal, civil, and domestic relations cases.

The judicial weighted caseload study multiplies the number of case filings in each judicial district by the weights established for each case type to produce an estimate of the judicial resources needed in each district.

The National Center for State Courts’ methods for updating case weights

Prior to 2025, the last time Tennessee updated judicial case weights was in October 2013. Both the 2013 and the 2025 case weight updates were conducted by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The NCSC recommends case weights be updated every five to seven years to account for various factors that affect case processing times, including changes in legislation, case law, legal practice, court technology, and administrative policies.

There are four core phases to updating the case weights. These include preparation, during which the timeline for updating weights is decided on and judicial officers are trained on how to report their time, the time study to collect data, a feedback period, and meetings between the NCSC and Weighted Caseload Committee (WCC)^A to finalize case weights.

Phase one: Planning and training

For the 2025 case weight update, the process began with planning sessions between NCSC staff and members of the WCC. The first meeting with NCSC and WCC was held in January 2025. During this meeting, the group established case types and decided how to group time for case-related and non-case related activities.

Case-related time refers to the time judges and judicial officers spend that is directly related to the processing of cases. This includes time spent conducting hearings and associated administrative duties like preparing orders and conducting legal research. Non-case-related time, by contrast, refers to the time spent by judges and judicial officers on continuing education requirements, training, general administrative work, and other duties unrelated to cases. NCSC subtracts non-case-related time, travel time (i.e., the time spent by time study participants traveling between courthouses, court rooms, or any other form of travel necessary to complete their duties),^B and time for a daily lunch break of 30 minutes from the annualized total amount of time available in a judicial officer’s work year.

Exhibit 1: Case-related and non-case-related time

Case-related time	Non-case related
Pre-trial activities	General administration
Bench trial activities	Problem-solving courts (oversight and supervision)
Jury trial activities	Problem-solving courts (administrative)
Post-disposition activities	Committees, meetings, and related work
Judicial settlement conferences	Community activities, speaking engagements, etc.
Three-judge panel presiding judge activities	Education and training
	Work-related travel
	Vacation, illness, or other leave
	Time study data reporting and entry
	Three-judge panel non-presiding judge activities
	Other

Source: State of Tennessee Trial Court Judicial Weighted Caseload Study, National Center for State Courts, Oct. 2025.

^A The weighted caseload committee includes four judges and five chancellors. Chancellors oversee state chancery courts.

^B Participants’ daily commutes are not considered in travel time as they are outside the scope of a workday.

A significant change in NCSC's methodology between 2013 and 2025 is the decision to include time spent by judicial officers in problem-solving courts in non-case-related time. Problem-solving courts in Tennessee include adult recovery courts, safe baby courts, veterans courts, and other similar courts. These court dockets are not required of state court judges, who volunteer their time to oversee and supervise court participants. In 2013, problem-solving courts were given an individual case weight in the judicial weighted caseload's criminal case types category. OREA then surveyed judges on how many cases they oversaw in such courts. For the 2025 weights, this weight has been removed and the time judicial officers spend in problem-solving courts is now categorized as non-case-related time.

Once case types and activities were decided on by the NCSC and the WCC, the NCSC hosted a webinar for all time study participants to learn how to categorize and record their time. The NCSC also held an in-person training at the spring 2025 Judicial Conference that included an extended question and answer section. Participants were also provided with a recording of the webinar and reference materials. During the time study, NCSC supplied a help desk for participants to ask questions when necessary.

Phase two: Time study

The time study was conducted from March 31 to April 26, 2025. The study included judges as well as child support magistrates, senior judges, special masters, and law clerks. Child support magistrates were included because they have the legal authority to make decisions in domestic relations cases. As of November 2025, 12 of the state's 32 judicial districts have child support magistrates. These child support magistrates are included along with state trial court judges in the weighted caseload calculations for those 12 judicial districts. Senior judges, however, are only included in the statewide weighted caseload calculations because they are assigned on a temporary basis to any state court as needed. The weights were calculated by the NCSC as follows:

1. adding all time spent by judicial officers on each case type during the four-week time study period,
2. dividing the total time spent on each case type by the number of working days in the time study period to determine the average daily amount of work time,
3. multiplying the average daily amount of work time by the number of days judges work in a year to determine the annual work time spent on each case type, and
4. dividing the annual work times by the three-year average of case filings for each case type.^c

The implementation of a three-year average to determine the annual work time spent on each case type is a change from how weights were calculated in NCSC's 2013 weights. In 2013, NCSC used one year of case filings data to calculate the weight for each case type. In NCSC's 2025 study, annualized minutes are divided by a three-year average of the filings for that case type from the three previous years of available data. Using a three-year average reduces the effects of volatility and temporary fluctuations in caseloads in a given year on case weights.

^c NCSC used case filings data from fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024. OREA's analysis uses case filings data from fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Exhibit 2: NCSC's weight creation example using DUI filings

DUI Cases- Total Minutes Recorded During Data Collection Period	18,470
<i>Divide by</i>	÷
Work Days of Data Collection Period	19
Average Minutes per Day Working on DUI Cases	972
<i>Multiply by</i>	X
Total Judge Working Days per Year	210
<i>Equals</i>	=
Annualized Minutes for DUI Cases	204,142

Developing Preliminary Case Weight	
Annualized Minutes for DUI Cases	204,142
<i>Divide by</i>	÷
3-Year Average Filings	2,373
<i>Equals</i>	=
Preliminary Case Weight (minutes)	86.03

Source: State of Tennessee Trial Court Judicial Weighted Caseload Study, National Center for State Courts, Oct. 2025.

Phase three: Feedback

Most (97 percent) judges and judicial officers tracked and reported their time during the four-week period of the time study. Following the time study's completion, the NCSC administered an adequacy of time survey. Survey respondents included 108 state trial court judges. Respondents were asked whether they felt they had sufficient time to process cases and if the cases captured in the month-long time study were representative of a typical caseload.

The NCSC then conducted four focus groups with judges. Focus group participants were asked about the available time they have to complete their work, the degree to which cases have become complex over time, if the participants felt the time they reported during the time study reflected a typical workload, etc. Focus group feedback and survey data were used by NCSC to consider any potential revisions to the preliminary case weights and were also presented to the WCC to provide information to base potential case weight adjustments on.

Feedback gained from the adequacy of time survey and the focus groups highlighted a few common themes about the data reported by judges and their workloads. Most participants felt most of their work was captured during the time study period. Approximately three quarters of survey respondents stated that all their work was reported, and the remaining one quarter of respondents said there were some tasks that did not get reported. These tasks included work after hours or on leave, time spent on legal research, and some miscellaneous or administrative tasks. Participants also expressed that they did not have adequate time in the workday to complete work in a satisfactory manner and often work through lunch, in the evenings, or over the weekend to complete work. Participants identified how case complexity has increased over time which included an increase in electronic evidence and advanced technology, an increase in self-represented litigants, and legislative changes.

Phase four: Adjustments and finalization

In September 2025, the NCSC presented the preliminary case weights along with survey results and focus group feedback to the WCC for review, where a number of decisions and revisions were made. One decision was to finalize which version of the weights should be used for the weighted caseload formula. NCSC created three options for each case type. One option was limited to the time reported by judges. The second option included the time reported by judicial officers, which for judicial weighted caseload purposes are child support

magistrates with the authority to make decisions in a court of law. As of November 2025, 12 of the state's 32 judicial districts have a state-funded child support magistrate. A third option included the time reported by law clerks and staff attorneys, which do not have the authority to make decisions in cases. After discussing which option most accurately reflected judicial workload, the NCSC and WCC chose the second option, which bases judicial workload on judicial officers, which includes child support magistrates.

The second revision was to consolidate routine administrative hearings and complex administrative hearings into one case type: administrative hearings. Under the 2013 weights, the two hearing types were separated. Consolidation was done because of confusion among clerks about whether hearings should be classified as routine or complex and potential double-counting.

For the final revision to the case weights, the WCC elected to combine all civil cases into one case type (civil cases) and combine all domestic relations cases into one case type (domestic relations cases). Examples of civil cases include real estate matters or medical malpractice cases, while examples of domestic relations cases are orders of protection or residential parenting cases. This was a change from the 2013 weights, which used separate weights for the different types of civil and domestic relations cases. All civil cases were consolidated, and all domestic relations cases were consolidated due to concerns of inconsistent reporting by clerks across the state. This consolidation of cases does, however, reflect the earliest version of weights used for judicial weighted caseload calculations. In NCSC's initial 1997 study, all civil cases were combined into one case type and all domestic relations cases were combined into one case type.

Legislative changes that impact the judicial weighted caseload

In addition to the changes described above, there have been several legislative changes that impact the judicial weighted caseload calculations. These include changes to cases that fall under the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act (UAPA), the addition of a new judicial district, the creation of a three-judge panel to review certain types of administrative cases, and the addition and removal of judicial positions in specific districts.

As of 2018, UAPA cases can be heard in any judicial district

Uniform Administrative Procedures Act (UAPA) cases are civil cases that challenge a government agency's decision regarding a plaintiff's rights, duties, and privileges. For example, a state-licensed barber appealing a decision of the Tennessee Board of Cosmetology and Barber Examiners to revoke the barber's license would be a UAPA case.

Prior to 2018, UAPA appeals cases were largely restricted to hearings in Davidson County, so all time spent on all UAPA appeals cases in the state was reflected in the weighted caseload calculations for the 20th Judicial District (Davidson County). Public Chapter 1021 (2018) allows UAPA cases to be heard in other judicial districts. In addition to Davidson County, UAPA cases can also be heard in the chancery court closest to the residence of the party bringing the case or alternatively, at the person's discretion, in the chancery court nearest to the place where the cause of action arose.

The General Assembly created a three-judge panel to review certain administrative cases

In 2021, the General Assembly passed legislation establishing a three-judge panel to hear civil cases that:

- challenge the constitutionality of a state statute, executive order, or administrative rule;
- seek declaratory judgment or injunctive relief; and
- are filed against the state of Tennessee, a state agency, or a state official acting in an official capacity.

The panel must include one trial-level judge from each of Tennessee's three grand divisions. One of the three judges is appointed by the Tennessee Supreme Court as the presiding judge on each case.

For the 2025 time study, the NCSC instructed judges who serve on a three-judge panel as a presiding judge to report the time spent on the panel as case-related activities, meaning this time is factored into the judicial weighted caseload results. Time entered by non-presiding judges for three-judge panels was included in non-case related time.

The General Assembly created the 32nd Judicial District

In 2022, the General Assembly created the 32nd Judicial District, which comprises Hickman, Perry, and Lewis counties. These three counties were previously part of the 21st Judicial District, along with Williamson County. The 21st Judicial District is now a single-county (Williamson County) district.

For the 2013 time study, the annual travel time for the 21st Judicial District (the 21st consisted of Williamson, Hickman, Perry, and Lewis counties in 2013) was 5,817 minutes. For the 2025 time study, the 21st Judicial District is now a single county district and so the annual travel time is less, at 1,086 minutes. The 32nd Judicial District (Hickman, Perry, and Lewis counties) has an annual travel time of 6,598 minutes.

In weighted caseload calculations, travel time is subtracted from the total judge year when estimating the total amount of time judges have available to devote to case-related work. Judicial districts with more than one county typically have more annual travel time because judges and judicial officers have to travel to more than one county courthouse. A reduction in travel time means judges have more time in the workday for case-related activities.

Judicial positions added or removed in specific districts

Public Chapter 396 (2023) created an additional criminal court in the 13th Judicial District (Clay, Cumberland, Dekalb, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, and White counties) and an additional circuit court in Judicial Districts 19 (Montgomery and Robertson counties) and 22 (Giles, Hardin, Lawrence, Maury, and Wayne counties). The newly established courts began operation on September 1, 2023. Judicial District 23 (Cheatham, Dickson, Humphreys, Houston, and Stewart counties) also gained an additional circuit court, effective September 1, 2024, due to Public Chapter 880 (2023).

Public Chapter 977 (2024) eliminated one division of the circuit court and one division of the criminal court in the 30th Judicial District (Shelby County), effective September 1, 2024. The same legislation also created an additional division of the circuit court in the 4th Judicial District (Cocke, Grainger, Jefferson, and Sevier counties), and an additional division of trial court in the 19th Judicial District (Montgomery and Robertson counties). Both courts began operation on September 1, 2024.

Public Chapter 600 (2024) created an additional division of trial court in the 18th Judicial District (Sumner County), effective September 1, 2024.

Judicial redistricting task force

Public Chapter 1098 (2022) directed the Speakers of the House and Senate to establish an advisory judicial redistricting task force to review the composition of Tennessee's judicial districts. The task force, which was to be established by July 1, 2025, consists of 14 members: three sitting trial court judges, three district attorneys general, three public defenders, three citizen members, the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the chair of the Civil Justice Committee.^D The sitting trial court judges, district attorneys general, and public

^D The public chapter states the chairman of the Civil Justice Committee should serve on the task force. There is not a Civil Justice Committee according to the General Assembly's website, but there is a Civil Justice Subcommittee.

defenders include a representative from each of Tennessee’s three grand divisions. The statute requires the task force to hold at least one public hearing per grand division.

By January 1, 2027, the task force must publish a proposed statewide judicial redistricting plan that improves access to the state’s circuit, chancery, and criminal courts and promotes the efficient use of publicly funded judicial resources. If the General Assembly does not enact legislation implementing the task force’s plan by December 31, 2027, the funding for any judicial district with a “disproportionately high number of judges,” as determined by the Comptroller’s Office, must be reduced by 10 percent in the subsequent fiscal year.

Workload calculations

Statewide judicial need

There are three kinds of judicial officials in Tennessee’s judicial weighted caseload analysis. The first category is state trial court judges who hear civil, criminal, and domestic relations cases.

Child support magistrates, who are not judges but have the legal authority to make decisions in some domestic relations cases, are the second category. As of November 2025, 12 of the state’s 32 judicial districts have a child support magistrate. These child support magistrates are included along with state trial court judges in the weighted caseload calculations for those 12 judicial districts.

The third category is senior judges, who are former trial and appellate court judges that may be temporarily assigned as needed to any court, including state trial courts, appellate courts, and the Tennessee Supreme Court’s workers’ compensation panel. Senior judges are appointed to four-year terms by the Tennessee Supreme Court. There is not a fixed number of senior judges; the number fluctuates based on the need.

Judicial officers and senior judges help meet judicial demand across the state. Based on an average of case filings from 2023, 2024, and 2025, the deficit of judicial resources statewide was just over -34 FTE when only state trial court judges were considered. The addition of judicial officers reduced the deficit to -22.29 FTE, while adding senior judges lessened the deficit to -16.29 FTE. Judicial resource calculations for individual judicial districts in this report include judicial officers, if there is a state-funded judicial officer in that district, but do not include senior judges. Senior judges are only incorporated during consideration of the statewide deficit as they serve the state as a whole and not a specific judicial district. Senior judges do not spend all their work time in state trial courts; they may also work on cases at the appellate court level and on the Tennessee Supreme Court’s workers’ compensation panel.

Exhibit 3: Three-year average judicial demand, including child support magistrates and senior judges

	Trial judges only	Trial judges and child support magistrates	Trial judges, child support magistrates, and senior judges
Deficit	-34.29	-22.29	-16.29

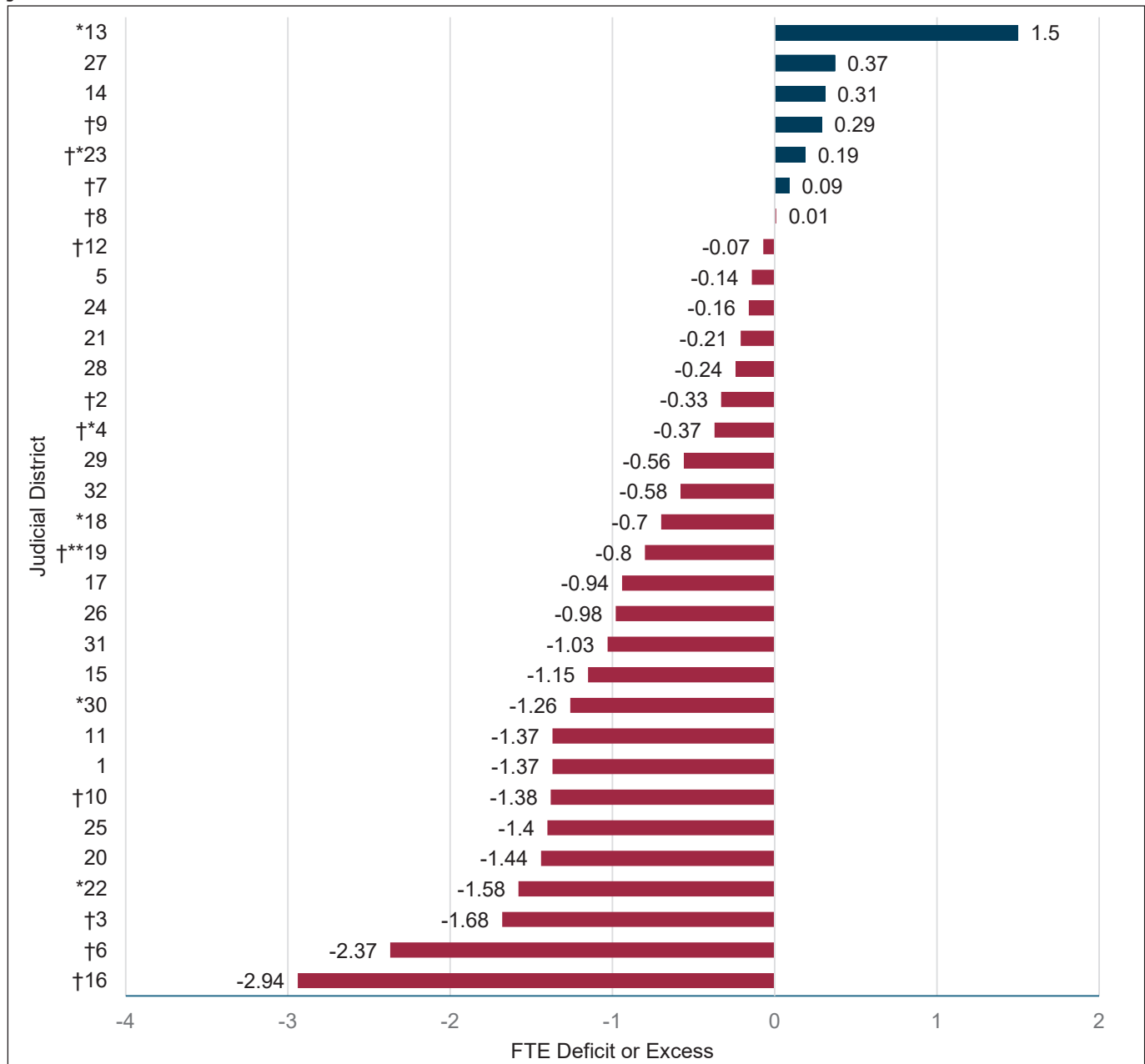
Source: OREA analysis of data provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Overall three-year average

OREA calculated a three-year average of judicial resources using case filing data from fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025. Using a three-year average reduces the effects of volatility and temporary fluctuations in caseloads in a given year on case weights.

The analysis reflects a deficit in judicial resources in 25 of Tennessee's 32 judicial districts.^E Judicial Districts 13 (Clay, Cumberland, Dekalb, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, and White counties), 27 (Obion and Weakley counties), 14 (Coffee County), 9 (Loudon, Meigs, Morgan, and Roane counties), 23 (Cheatam, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, and Stewart counties), 7 (Anderson County), and 8 (Campbell, Claiborne, Fentress, Scott, and Union counties) have an excess in judicial resources. Only Judicial District 13 (Clay, Cumberland, Dekalb, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, and White counties) has an excess of judicial resources greater than one FTE. Of the judicial districts with a deficit in judicial resources, seven counties have a deficit of less than -.5 FTE, six have an FTE deficit between -.5 and -1, and 10 judicial districts' deficits fall between -1 and -2 FTE. Judicial Districts 6 (Knox County) and 16 (Rutherford and Cannon counties) have FTE deficits of greater than -2 FTE. Judicial District 16 (Cannon and Rutherford counties) has the largest three-year average deficit at -2.94 FTE.

Exhibit 4: All but seven Tennessee judicial districts have a three-year average deficit in judicial resources

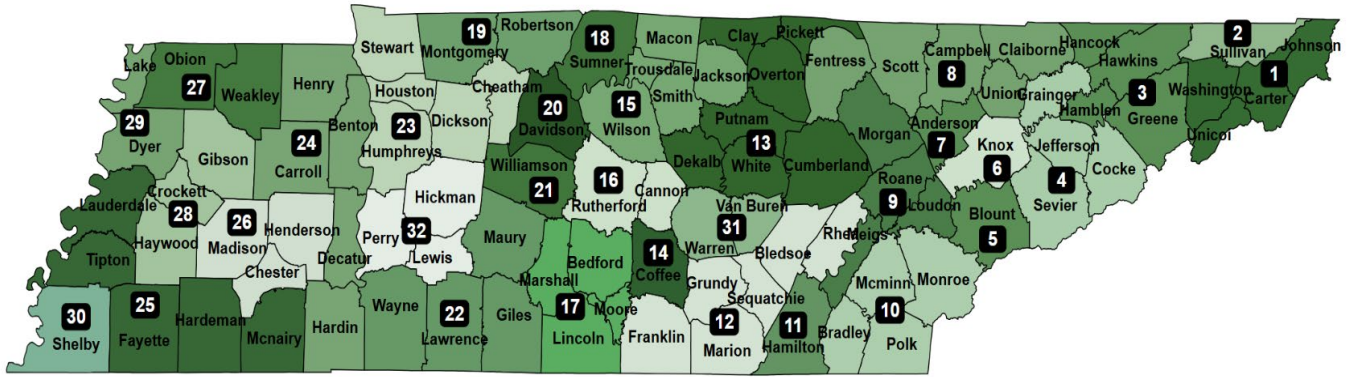


Source: OREA analysis of data provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Notes: (1) See Appendix A for a list of the counties associated with each judicial district. (2) Districts marked with an asterisk (*) gained or lost judicial positions between the beginning of fiscal year 2023 and the end of fiscal year 2025. Two asterisks indicate the district gained or lost two positions. (3) Calculations for judicial districts marked with a † include state trial court judges and a state-funded child support magistrate.

^E See Appendix A for a list of all Tennessee judicial districts and the counties in each judicial district.

Appendix A: Tennessee Judicial Districts



Judicial District Counties

1	Carter, Johnson, Unicoi, Washington
2	Sullivan
3	Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins
4	Cocke, Grainger, Jefferson, Sevier
5	Blount
6	Knox
7	Anderson
8	Campbell, Claiborne, Fentress, Scott, Union
9	Loudon, Meigs, Morgan, Roane
10	Bradley, McMinn, Monroe, Polk
11	Hamilton
12	Bledsoe, Franklin, Grundy, Marion, Rhea, Sequatchie
13	Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, White
14	Coffee
15	Jackson, Macon, Smith, Trousdale, Wilson
16	Cannon, Rutherford
17	Bedford, Lincoln, Marshall, Moore
18	Sumner
19	Montgomery, Robertson
20	Davidson
21	Hickman, Lewis, Perry, Williamson
22	Giles, Lawrence, Maury, Wayne
23	Cheatham, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, Stewart
24	Benton, Carroll, Decatur, Hardin, Henry
25	Fayette, Hardeman, Lauderdale, McNairy, Tipton
26	Chester, Henderson, Madison
27	Obion, Weakley
28	Crockett, Gibson, Haywood
29	Dyer, Lake
30	Shelby
31	Van Buren, Warren
32	Hickman, Lewis, Perry

Appendix B: Three-year average workload calculations

Case Type	Case Filings per Judicial District										
	Case Weight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
First Degree Murder	863	18	13	8	11	2	36	3	4	8	19
Post Conviction Relief	1103	3	7	6	10	2	7	1	8	6	9
Felony A & B	153	249	219	252	365	74	521	109	162	231	331
Felony C, D, & E	58	646	630	521	784	311	1265	276	497	475	901
DUI	86	25	39	83	240	24	80	40	38	32	61
Criminal Appeals (incl. juvenile delinquency)	12	6	6	3	2	3	0	2	3	1	0
Misdemeanor	29	424	391	368	514	54	201	94	117	203	171
Other Petitions, Motions, Writs	67	37	154	106	62	2	469	9	22	25	40
Probation Violation	19	1216	1655	1105	1508	441	1299	457	539	964	927
Combined Domestic Relations	83	1723	1096	2673	2519	863	4810	1257	806	693	2486
Combined Civil	91	1876	1474	1749	1302	503	3936	710	1011	967	1574
Total Filings		6,222	5,684	6,874	7,317	2,279	12,623	2,958	3,207	3,605	6,519
Workload (Weights x Filings)		448,473	371,022	509,341	518,048	162,897	1,018,024	221,195	242,865	250,283	508,947
Judge Year (210 days per year, 8 hrs. per day)		100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800
Subtract daily lunch		6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300
Average District Travel per year		5,761	6,538	9,759	5,867	0	0	0	15,315	8,585	7,169
Non-case Related Time (78 minutes/day)		18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386
Availability for Case-Specific Work		70,353	69,576	66,355	70,247	76,114	76,114	76,114	60,799	67,530	68,945
# Judicial Officers		5	5	6	7	2	11	3	4	4	6
Total Judicial Officer Demand		6.37	5.33	7.68	7.37	2.14	13.37	2.91	3.99	3.71	7.38
FTE Deficit or Excess		-1.37	-0.33	-1.68	-0.37	-0.14	-2.37	0.09	0.01	0.29	-1.38
Child Support Magistrate		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Case Filings per Judicial District										
Case Type	Case Weight	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
First Degree Murder	863	69	8	5	4	18	28	7	10	26	165
Post Conviction Relief	1103	9	3	3	4	2	10	10	4	17	37
Felony A & B	153	503	250	297	95	348	533	173	213	389	789
Felony C, D, & E	58	877	533	629	212	577	1163	212	446	913	1978
DUI	86	172	29	112	19	50	140	7	56	238	129
Criminal Appeals (incl. juvenile delinquency)	12	14	5	2	1	10	2	1	8	27	14
Misdemeanor	29	325	99	337	92	332	570	33	119	562	514
Other Petitions, Motions, Writs	67	8	3	41	34	75	727	181	245	692	183
Probation Violation	19	749	794	827	310	688	1115	237	440	692	1829
Combined Domestic Relations	83	2953	1628	757	418	904	3356	1240	1366	2925	3353
Combined Civil	91	3385	1213	1230	504	1670	2108	977	1540	2353	7764
Total Filings		9,063	4,566	4,240	1,693	4,674	9,753	3,077	4,446	8,833	16,754
Workload (Weights x Filings)		788,953	345,089	302,146	127,414	363,683	753,244	266,120	357,843	706,780	1,476,966
Judge Year (210 days per year, 8 hrs. per day)		100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800
Subtract daily lunch		6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300
Average District Travel per year		0	8,085	8,938	763	5482	302	8511.3	0	3,998	137
Non-case Related Time (78 minutes/day)		18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386
Availability for Case-Specific Work		76,114	68,029	67,176	75,351	70,632	75,812	67,603	76,114	72,116	75,978
# Judicial Officers		9	5	6	2	4	7	3	4	9	18
Total Judicial Officer Demand		10.37	5.07	4.50	1.69	5.15	9.94	3.94	4.70	9.80	19.44
FTE Deficit or Excess		-1.37	-0.07	1.50	0.31	-1.15	-2.94	-0.94	-0.70	-0.80	-1.44
Child Support Magistrate		No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

	Case Filings per Judicial District										
Case Type	Case Weight	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
First Degree Murder	863	3	28	6	5	32	33	6	16	18	271
Post Conviction Relief	1103	4	6	6	10	6	25	3	2	3	71
Felony A & B	153	134	330	252	234	251	326	93	102	106	1541
Felony C, D, & E	58	373	620	355	389	652	716	132	180	251	3514
DUI	86	79	178	69	7	44	75	4	11	11	167
Criminal Appeals (incl. juvenile delinquency)	12	6	2	2	4	3	3	2	4	2	0
Misdemeanor	29	146	447	197	28	100	290	43	79	117	877
Other Petitions, Motions, Writs	67	61	161	251	16	13	64	0	37	15	1032
Probation Violation	19	341	1024	452	441	734	623	184	215	128	1805
Combined Domestic Relations	83	1089	1567	1324	556	1158	1301	476	630	538	2612
Combined Civil	91	1707	1502	1092	907	1198	773	465	607	748	5498
Total Filings		3,942	5,867	4,008	2,599	4,190	4,229	1,408	1,884	1,939	17,388
Workload (Weights x Filings)		316,153	442,658	317,795	213,684	336,709	357,503	117,603	159,545	170,547	1,612,324
Judge Year (210 days per year, 8 hrs. per day)		100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800	100,800
Subtract daily lunch		6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300	6,300
Average District Travel per year		1,086	8,844	10,108	8,422	13744	4,302	3996.3	4,935	9,456	258
Non-case Related Time (78 minutes/day)		18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386	18,386
Availability for Case-Specific Work		75,028	67,270	66,006	67,692	62,370	71,812	72,118	71,179	66,658	75,856
# Judicial Officers		4	5	5	3	4	4	2	2	2	20
Total Judicial Officer Demand		4.21	6.58	4.81	3.16	5.40	4.98	1.63	2.24	2.56	21.26
FTE Deficit or Excess		-0.21	-1.58	0.19	-0.16	-1.40	-0.98	0.37	-0.24	-0.56	-1.26
Child Support Magistrate		No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

	Case Filings per Judicial District			
Case Type	Case Weight	31	32	Total
First Degree Murder	863	4	8	891
Post Conviction Relief	1103	1	0	297
Felony A & B	153	180	114	9767
Felony C, D, & E	58	233	179	21440
DUI	86	17	32	2309
Criminal Appeals (incl. juvenile delinquency)	12	8	2	149
Misdemeanor	29	149	73	8066
Other Petitions, Motions, Writs	67	0	45	4810
Probation Violation	19	237	138	24114
Combined Domestic Relations	83	599	400	50076
Combined Civil	91	462	338	53143
Total Filings		1,890	1,328	175,061
Workload (Weights x Filings)		147,992	109,763	14,041,608
Judge Year (210 days per year, 8 hrs. per day)		100,800	100,800	
Subtract daily lunch		6,300	6,300	
Average District Travel per year		3,316	6,598	
Non-case Related Time (78 minutes/day)		18,386	18,386	
Availability for Case-Specific Work		72,798	69,516	
# Judicial Officers		1	1	
Total Judicial Officer Demand		2.03	1.58	
<u>FTE Deficit or Excess</u>		-1.03	-0.58	-22.29
Child Support Magistrate		No	No	

**Appendix C: National Center for State Courts
State of Tennessee Trial Court Judicial Weighted
Caseload Study**



DATE	PROJECT STAFF	PREPARED FOR	PREPARED BY
October 2025	Shannon Nguyen Suzanne Tallarico DeShield Greene Amy Kehner Anthony Kim Emma Maier	State of Tennessee, Comptroller of the Treasury and the Administrative Office of the Courts	National Center for State Courts Court Consulting Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In July 2024, the State of Tennessee, Comptroller of the Treasury requested that an independent, objective assessment of judicial staffing needs be conducted for judicial officers in the Tennessee Trial Courts.

Weighted caseload studies provide courts with objective information about judicial staffing needs based on the amount of time required to process various types of cases. This information is useful in helping to determine the number of judicial officers needed to cover the courts' work, based on the number and types of cases filed.

For many years, the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts has relied on weighted caseload models to determine resource needs for judges. Over time, the integrity of workload standards is affected by multiple influences, including changes in legislation, court rules, legal practice, technology, and administrative factors. In order to measure the impact of these influences, supplemental data must be gathered and incorporated into the model. Recognizing the utility and need to update the weighted caseload model for the Trial Courts, the Comptroller of the Treasury on behalf of its Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) contracted with the National Center for State

Courts (NCSC) in July 2024 to conduct an evidence-based assessment of the workload for judicial officers in the Tennessee Courts.

The NCSC worked with members on the Weighted Caseload Committee (WCC) for this project. The WCC included chancellors and both civil and criminal court judges, as well as AOC staff. The NCSC consultants, with guidance from the WCC, designed and conducted the study to produce a weighted caseload model for judicial officers in the Tennessee Trial Courts.

The weighted caseload study included the collection of three types of data: (1) work time data recorded by judicial officers during a four-week period, (2) a survey of participating judicial officers requesting their assessment of the extent to which they have adequate time to perform their duties to their satisfaction; and (3) qualitative feedback from focus group discussions with judicial officers.

The case weights reflect the average number of case-related minutes that judicial officers spend per year processing each of the different case types; they are based upon work time recorded by time study participants in the Tennessee Trial Courts during a four-week study period. The case weights and other components of the weighted caseload model were reviewed and approved by the WCC.

This study is comprehensive and reliable because:

- It was designed and conducted by NCSC consultants who are national experts in the development of weighted caseload models for courts and other justice system agencies.
- A high percentage (97%) of Trial Court judicial officers participated in the study, which substantially enhances the credibility and validity of the data collected.
- It included a survey of Trial Court judicial officers to assess whether they have adequate time to achieve reasonable levels of quality in performing their duties. The adequacy of time survey data assisted in determining the reasonableness of the case weights which were based solely on the work time data.
- The NCSC consultants conducted a total of four focus group meetings involving knowledgeable Trial Court judicial officers to review and discuss the findings from the adequacy of time survey. The focus group participants also provided feedback on other factors that might not have been captured during the time study. This qualitative input informed the discussion and decisions made by the WCC regarding the case weights and the weighted caseload model. No WCC Committee member was permitted to participate in focus groups.

NCSC consultants organized the project around the following primary tasks:

1. Development of the research design.

The WCC met with the NCSC consultants in January 2025 to provide guidance for the weighted caseload study. The WCC provided advice and feedback on the overall study design, which case types and activities to include in the weighted caseload model, the methodology, content, the scheduling of the training sessions prior to the time study, the duration of the time study, and the approach and composition of the focus groups. The WCC also provided feedback and recommendations on key issues covered in the final report.

2. Tennessee Trial Court judicial time study.

During the study time study period, the court had 160 judicial officer primary participants. Ninety-seven percent of those Trial Court chancellors and judges participated in the four-week time study conducted between March 31 and April 26, 2025. Other ancillary participants with judicial decision-making authority included child support and divorce referees, magistrates, senior judges, masters, law clerks, and staff attorneys. Before the time study began, an NCSC consultant conducted three one-hour training webinars and one two and a half hour in-person training session on March 25 at the 2025 Spring Tennessee Judicial Conference to provide detailed instructions on how all participants

should track and record their work time. The NCSC also provided both written instructions and an online help desk link to participants who had questions about recording time and categorizing information. During the time study, Trial Court judicial officers kept records of all time spent on case-related and non-case-specific activities and entered their work time data in the NCSC's secure online data entry website.

3. Adequacy of Time Survey.

After the time study data collection period, 108 Trial Court judicial officers completed an online adequacy of time survey regarding the sufficiency of time available during regular working hours to do their work. The survey results revealed that most judicial officers in the Trial Court believe they "usually" have enough time to effectively handle their daily tasks.¹

4. Data Analysis and development of preliminary case weights.

NCSC staff analyzed the data collected from the time study and adequacy of time survey, and then drafted reports, including tables and preliminary case weights for review by the WCC.

5. Four focus groups.

In July 2025, NCSC staff conducted four focus group discussions via Zoom with experienced Trial Court judges to review the project methodology and discuss the preliminary findings from the time study and adequacy of time survey and to obtain feedback about their day-to-day work experiences.

6. WCC review, discussion, and decision-making.

The NCSC, AOC and Comptroller staff, and WCC held a final meeting on September 11, 2025 to review the data and make final decisions based on the adequacy of time survey and focus group findings. After reviewing all the data, survey results, and focus group findings, the WCC opted to use the case weights based on all judicial officer time with no adjustments, and excluded time entered by law clerks and staff attorneys. There was consensus among the WCC, the AOC, and the Comptroller that these case weights most accurately reflection of how cases are processed in the trial level judiciary and of the work of judicial officers in the Tennessee Courts. Additionally, due to concerns of inconsistent case reporting practices across the state for many civil and domestic cases, all civil case weights and

¹ The collection of data did reveal that many trial judges work at night and on some weekends to effectively complete all job tasks.

all domestic case weights were combined to create a single civil case weight and a single domestic relations case weight. Collapsing the case weights for these case types provides consistency without compromising accuracy.² All criminal case types were given their own case weight because per statute, court clerks must report all counts in a criminal indictment and concerns of inconsistent reporting practices of criminal cases have not been prevalent.

full-time equivalent (FTE) judicial officers to effectively handle the current workload, including available child support referees and senior judges.³

7. Preparation of the Final Report.

After the September 11 meeting, NCSC staff developed a report of findings for review by the WCC and AOC.

Findings

The final report explains in detail each step in the research and data analysis process for this weighted caseload study and the development of the weighted caseload model. The weighted caseload model is sufficiently flexible and provides the AOC with the framework to determine the approximate need for Trial Court judges. Applying the new weighted caseload model reveals that the Tennessee Trial Courts should have **198.22**

² The collapsing of civil case types resulted in a de minimis difference in present need numbers but will provide greater consistency in future studies.

³ It should be noted that while Senior Judges are included in the total count of judicial officers, not all time of Senior Judges is dedicated to the trial level Courts. Senior Judges are also designated at times to sit with the Court of Appeals, Court of Criminal Appeals or Supreme Court Workers' Compensation Panels.

Recommendations

The NCSC encourages the AOC to consider the following recommendations regarding the ongoing use of the weighted caseload model.

Recommendation 1

The NCSC recommends updating the Trial Court judicial officer needs model annually by inserting new case filings from the average of the most recent three years of reliable filings.

Recommendation 2

The weighted caseload model presented in this report should be the starting point for determining the need for judicial officers in the Tennessee Trial Courts. There are qualitative issues that an objective weighted caseload model cannot account for such as possible variations in the proportion of cases involving self-represented parties; differences among counties in the percentage of persons who require court interpreting services (whose hearings require more time); and the number of various judicial support staff (e.g., bailiffs, law clerks, court reporters). Issues such as these that result in longer or shorter case processing times should be considered by the AOC when determining judicial need.

Recommendation 3

The NCSC recommends that the AOC conduct a secondary analysis as a follow up to the weighted caseload study for courts where the judicial need shown in the model deviates by at least one judge (plus or minus). During the secondary analysis, the AOC should consider court-specific and qualitative factors that may affect the need for judges, such as trends in filings, atypical requirements for travel among courts, the ability to specialize in certain case types, the availability of support staff (e.g. law clerks, etc.) and local prosecutorial practices.

Recommendation 4

Over time, the integrity of any weighted caseload model may be affected by external factors such as changes in legislation, case law, legal practice, court technology, and administrative policies. The NCSC recommends that the AOC conduct a comprehensive review of the weighted caseload model every five to seven years. This review should include a time study in which all or most Trial Court judicial officers participate. Between updates, if a major change in the law appears to have a significant impact on workload, a quality adjustment panel of experts (e.g. the WCC) can be convened to make interim adjustments to the affected case weight(s).

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the many challenges for courts is determining the appropriate number of judicial officers and court staff required to provide high-quality services in the courts. For many years, the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) has relied on weighted caseload models to determine resource needs for judges.

Recognizing the utility and need to update the 2013 weighted caseload model for the Tennessee Trial Courts, the AOC sought the assistance of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to conduct a weighted caseload study to generate case weights through the process of a time study in which Trial Court judicial officers tracked their time for a four-week period.

A clear measure of court workload is central to determining how many judicial officers are needed to process all cases filed. Adequate resources are essential for the Trial Court to effectively process court business without delay while also delivering quality service to the public. Meeting these challenges involves objectively assessing the number of Trial Court judges required to handle the caseload and whether those resources are being allocated and used appropriately.

Different types of cases create different amounts of judicial workload: for example, a felony case typically requires more case processing time than a traffic case. Unlike resource allocation methods that are based on population or raw, unweighted caseloads, the weighted caseload methodology explicitly incorporates the

differences in judicial workload associated with different types of cases, producing a more accurate and nuanced profile of the need for judicial officers in the Tennessee Trial Courts.

Specifically, the current study accomplished the following:

- Utilized a methodology that bases the development of case weights on all work recorded by Trial Court judicial officers,
- Included participation from 97% of Trial Court chancellors and judges, as well as participation from other ancillary participants,
- Included a four-week data collection period to ensure sufficient data to develop valid case weights,
- Accounted for Trial Court judicial work for all phases of case processing,
- Accounted for non-case-related activities and travel that are a normal part of daily work,
- Established a transparent and flexible model to determine the need for Trial Court judges across the state.

Based on a survey (adequacy of time) of Trial Court judicial officers, the participants ranged in the number of years in which they have been employed by the court from less than one year to over 30 years. Approximately 40% of the participants have been employed with the Tennessee Judiciary for three years or less; approximately 27% have been employed between four and ten years, and 33% have served the Tennessee for more than eleven years. This variation in time on the job likely translates into differing case processing times,

which is one key reason for using a statewide average of those case processing times.

This report explains the weighted caseload methodology and results in detail and offers recommendations for the ongoing use of the model.

The Weighted Caseload Model

The weighted caseload method of workload analysis is grounded in the understanding that different types of court cases vary in complexity and, consequently, in the amount of judicial officer work they generate. The weighted caseload methodology calculates judicial officer need based on the court's complement of case filings multiplied by the case weights, which results in the total expected workload for the courts.

The weighted caseload formula consists of three critical elements:

1. *Case filings*, the number of new cases of each type filed each year (or the average of the most recent three years).
2. *Case weights*, which represent the average amount of time required to handle cases of each type.
3. The *year value*, the amount of time each judicial officer has available to work in a year.

The total annual workload is calculated by multiplying the average of the most recent three years of annual filings for each case type by the corresponding case weight, then summing the workload across all case types. The court's workload is then divided by the year value to

determine the total number of full-time equivalent judicial officers needed to handle the workload.

The 2025 Weighted Caseload Study

The weighted caseload study's findings are based on a time study in which participants tracked their work time for four weeks. The data were entered into the NCSC's proprietary data entry system.

The NCSC worked with members on the Weighted Caseload Committee (WCC) throughout this project. The WCC included chancellors and both civil and criminal Court judges, as well as AOC staff. The WCC's role was to advise the NCSC on the selection of case types and activities, the time study design, and to make policy decisions regarding the development of the case weights and needs model. The WCC met in January 2025 to define the parameters of the study and again in June 2025 to review the preliminary data. A final meeting was held with the WCC in September 2025 to make final decisions regarding the case weights and judicial needs model. The WCC specifically requested that the impact by district not be discussed or shared with any committee member until all decisions associated with the study had been completed.

The weighted caseload study was conducted in two phases:

1. A *time study* in which all Trial Court judicial officers were asked to record all case-related and non-case-related work over a four-week period. The time study provided an

empirical description of the amount of time currently devoted to processing each case type, as well as the division of the workday between case-related and non-case-related activities.

2. A *quality adjustment* process to ensure that the final weighted caseload model incorporates sufficient time for efficient and effective case processing. The quality adjustment process included:
 - An *adequacy of time survey* asking Trial Court judicial officers about the amount of time currently available to perform their work, including their perceived levels of work-related stress and whether the current pace of work is sustainable,
 - Four *focus groups* conducted by NCSC including Trial Court judicial officers from across the state, and no WCC Committee Members were permitted to participate in a focus group, and
 - A review and acceptance of the case weights by the WCC and AOC.

Case Type Categories

The WCC was charged with establishing case type categories that satisfied the following requirements:

- The case type categories are both mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive, meaning that any given case falls into one, case type category.
- Categories are logically distinct.
- There are meaningful differences among categories in the amount of judicial officer work required to process the average case.
- There are enough case filings within each category to develop a valid case weight.
- Filings for each case type category or its component case types are tracked consistently and reliably by the Tennessee AOC.

The WCC defined thirty-five case type categories, listed in Figure 1. A more detailed description of the case types can be found in Appendix A.

II. CASE TYPES AND ACTIVITIES

At the WCC's first meeting in January 2025, one of the committee's primary tasks was to establish the case type categories and activities upon which to base the time study. The case types, case-related activities, and non-case-related activities describe all the work required and expected of judicial officers in Tennessee Trial Courts.

Figure 1: Trial Court Judicial Officer Case Types

1	1st Degree Murder
2	Major Felony (A & B Felonies)
3	Other Felony (C, D & E Felonies)
4	DUI
5	Misdemeanor
6	Probation Violation
7	Criminal/Juvenile Delinquency Appeals
8	Other Petition, Motions & Writs
9	Post-Conviction Relief
10	Protection of Children
11	Divorce with Minor Children
12	Divorce without Minor Children
13	Child Support, Wage Assignment, Interstate Support
14	REOPENED: Child Support/Wage Asgmt/Interstate Sup
15	Orders of Protection
16	REOPENED: Orders of Protection
17	Other Domestic Relations
18	Residential Parenting with or without Child Support
19	REOPENED: Residential Parenting w or w/o Child Sup
20	Contempt
21	ROUTINE and COMPLEX Administrative Hearings
22	COMPLEX Administrative Hearings
23	Contract/Debt/Specific Performance
24	Real Estate Matters
25	Damages/Tort
26	Healthcare Liability
27	Probate/Trust
28	REOPENED: Probate/Trust
29	Juvenile Court Appeal (Civil)
30	Guardianship/Conservatorship
31	REOPENED: Guardianship/Conservatorship
32	Other General Civil
33	REOPENED: Other General Civil
34	Judicial Hospitalization
35	REOPENED: Judicial Hospitalization

Tasks and Activities

Trial Court judicial officers perform a variety of functions in and out of court that can be directly related to the processing of cases (case-related activities), as well as non-case-specific work. NCSC staff worked closely with the WCC to develop a comprehensive list and description of these essential activities. The list of activities

served as an organizing tool to guide data collection during the time study. A list of case-related activities for Trial Court judicial officers is provided in Figure 2. The non-case-related activities are provided in Figure 3. A more detailed description of the case-related and non-case-related activities can be found in Appendices B and C, respectively.

The weighted caseload model is based on the uniform amount of time Trial Court judicial officers have available to perform all their work annually, including both case-related and non-case-related tasks. To determine judicial staffing needs, the average amount of time spent on non-case-related activities is held constant, and the remainder of time available is calculated to determine the average amount of time available for judicial officers to perform case-related work. This is a critical component of the weighted caseload model, so knowing how much time is spent on both case-related and non-case-related work is essential.

Figure 2: Trial Court Judicial Officer Case-Related Activities

1	Pre-Trial Activities
2	Bench Trial Activities
3	Jury Trial Activities
4	Post-Disposition Activities
5	Judicial Settlement Conferences
6	3-Judge Panel PRESIDING Judges
7	3-Judge Panel NON-Presiding Judges

Non-Case-Related Activities

Work that is not related to a particular case before the court, such as court management, committee meetings, travel, and professional education, is also an essential part of the judicial

workday. To compile a detailed profile of Trial Court judicial officers' non-case-related activities and provide an empirical basis for constructing the day and year values, the WCC defined non-case-related activities for Trial Court judicial officers (Figure 3). To simplify the task of completing the time study forms and aid in the validation of the time study data, vacation and other leave and time spent filling out time study forms were included as non-case-related activities.

Figure 3: Trial Court Judicial Officer Non-Case-Related Activities

-
- 1 General Administration
 - 2 Problem-Solving Courts (oversight and supervision)
 - 3 Problem-Solving Courts (administrative)
 - 4 Committees, Meetings and Related Work
 - 5 Community Activities, Speaking Engagements, etc.
 - 6 Education and Training
 - 7 Work-Related Travel
 - 8 Vacation, Illness or Other Leave
 - 9 Other
 - 10 Time Study Data Reporting & Entry
-

III. TIME STUDY

The time study phase of the weighted caseload study measured current practice—the amount of time judicial officers currently take to process cases of each type, as well as time spent on non-case-related work. For a period of four weeks, all Trial Court judicial officers and other ancillary participants (e.g. law clerks) were asked to track their working time by case type and activity. Separately, the AOC provided counts of filings by case type category. The NCSC used the time study and filing data to calculate the average number of minutes currently spent processing

cases within each case type category (preliminary case weights).

Data Collection

During the four weeks from March 31 through April 26, 2025, judicial officers were asked to track their time by case type category and case-specific activity or by a non-case-related activity. Participants were instructed to record all working time, including time spent processing cases outside of regular working hours, if applicable, and all non-case-related work. Participants tracked their time in as little as five-minute increments using a web-based form.

To maximize data quality, all time study participants were asked to attend a webinar training module explaining how to categorize and record their time. An in-person training was also held at the 2025 Spring Tennessee Judicial Conference which featured an extended Questions and Answers session. In addition to the live training modules, participants were provided with a recording of the training webinar and reference materials. Additionally, there was a help desk link on the online data entry website that time study participants could use to ask questions, when necessary. The web-based data collection method allowed time study participants to verify that their data was accurately entered and permitted real-time monitoring of participation rates, helping to maximize the quality and completeness of the time study data.

As shown in Figure 4, 155 of 160 expected Trial Court judges and chancellors fully participated in the time study, with an overall participation rate of 97%. Additionally, many ancillary participants

recorded time, including child support and divorce referees, magistrates, senior judges, special masters, and law clerks. This level of participation ensured sufficient data to develop an accurate and reliable profile of current practice in the Tennessee Courts.

Figure 4: Time Study Participation Rates of Trial Court Judges and Chancellors

	Expected Count	Actual	Participation Rate
1ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5	5	100%
2ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4	4	100%
3RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5	5	100%
4TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	6	5	83%
5TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2	1	50%
6TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	10	10	100%
7TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2	2	100%
8TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3	3	100%
9TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3	3	100%
10TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5	4	80%
11TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	8	8	100%
12TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4	4	100%
13TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	6	6	100%
14TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2	2	100%
15TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4	4	100%
16TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	6	6	100%
17TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3	3	100%
18TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4	4	100%
19TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	8	8	100%
20TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	17	17	100%
21ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4	4	100%
22ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5	5	100%
23RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4	3	75%
24TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3	3	100%
25TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4	4	100%
26TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4	4	100%
27TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2	2	100%
28TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2	2	100%
29TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2	2	100%
30TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	20	19	95%
31ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	1	1	100%
32ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	1	1	100%
4TH and 5th JUDICIAL DISTRICT	1	1	100%
Statewide Total	160	155	97%

Caseload Data

To translate the time study data into the average amount of time spent on each type of case (preliminary case weights), it was first necessary to determine the average number of cases of each type filed over the most recent three-year period. The AOC provided filing data for fiscal years 2022 through 2024 for each of the case type categories. The caseload data for calendar years 2022, 2023, and 2024 were then averaged to provide an average annual count of filings within each case type category. Using an annual average rather than the caseload data for a single year minimizes the potential for any temporary fluctuations in caseloads to influence the case weights.

Preliminary Case Weights

Following the data collection period, the time study and caseload data were used to calculate preliminary case weights. A preliminary case weight represents the average amount of time judicial officers currently spend processing a case of a particular type. The use of separate case weights for each case type category accounts for the fact that cases of varying levels of complexity require different amounts of judicial case processing time.

Three sets of preliminary case weights were developed for the WCC's consideration. The first set included all time entered by all participants, including chancellors, judges, child support and divorce referees, magistrates, senior judges, special masters, and law clerks. The second set included time entered by only judicial officers (chancellors, judges, child support referees, magistrates, senior judges, and special masters).

The third set included time entered only by chancellors and judges. After careful consideration, the WCC elected to use case weights that only included judicial officer time, excluding law clerks and staff attorneys, as these case weights most accurately reflect the work of judicial officers across the state without overstating the workload. It was acknowledged that law clerks and staff attorneys are essential resources to judicial officers, and it was important to capture their work to understand the contribution they make. However, since they had no authority to make decisions in cases and were not the focus of the current study, their time was not included in the final case weight calculation.

The preliminary case weights were calculated by: (1) adding all time spent by judicial officers on each case type during the 19-day data collection period, (the time study period included one state holiday, Good Friday on April 18, resulting in 19-working days.), (2) dividing the total amount of time for each case type by 19 (the number of working days in the time study) – to determine the average daily amount of work time, (3) multiplying the daily average time by the number of days Trial Court judges and chancellors are expected to work in a year (the year value), which yields the annual amount of work time on each case type, and (4) dividing the annual work time by the number of cases filed for each case type during the most recent and representative 3-year average of filings (CY 2022, 2023, and 2024). This result provides a picture of the average amount of case-related time currently spent by all Trial Court judicial officers in the Tennessee Courts on each of the identified case types.

Figure 5 illustrates the calculations for determining the preliminary case weight for DUI cases.

Figure 5: Example -- Calculating Annualized Minutes and Preliminary Case Weight for DUI Cases

DUI Cases- Total Minutes Recorded During Data Collection Period	18,470
<i>Divide by</i>	÷
Work Days of Data Collection Period	19
Average Minutes per Day Working on DUI Cases	972
<i>Multiply by</i>	X
Total Judge Working Days per Year	210
<i>Equals</i>	=
Annualized Minutes for DUI Cases	204,142

Developing Preliminary Case Weight	
Annualized Minutes for DUI Cases	204,142
<i>Divide by</i>	÷
3-Year Average Filings	2,373
<i>Equals</i>	=
Preliminary Case Weight (minutes)	86.03

Based on the time study, Trial Court judicial officers spend a combined total of 204,142 minutes of case-related time on DUI cases annually. Dividing that time by the 3-year average number of DUI cases filed (2,373) yields a preliminary case weight of 86.03 minutes, or 86 minutes rounded to a whole number. Figure 6 shows the three sets of preliminary case weights for Trial Court judicial officers, all participants, and chancellors and judges.

Due to confusion during the time study on which types of administrative hearings were complex versus routine, the WCC decided to combine the Routine Administrative Hearings and Complex Administrative Hearings case type categories into one case type category.

Figure 6: Tennessee Trial Court Preliminary Case Weights

Case Type	Preliminary Case Weights (in minutes) Judicial Officers	Preliminary Case Weights (in minutes) All Participants	Preliminary Case Weights (in minutes) Judges Only
1st Degree Murder	863	1,112	860
Major Felony (A & B Felonies)	153	174	153
Other Felony (C, D & E Felonies)	58	65	58
DUI	86	91	82
Misdemeanor	29	29	29
Probation Violation	19	19	19
Criminal/Juvenile Delinquency Appeals	12	12	12
Other Petition, Motions & Writs	67	96	66
Post-Conviction Relief	1,103	1,272	1,019
Protection of Children	128	137	121
Divorce with Minor Children	124	140	108
Divorce without Minor Children	50	54	40
Child Support, Wage Assignment, Interstate Support	116	122	42
REOPENED: Child Support, Wage Assignment, Interstate Support	29	35	9
Orders of Protection	47	48	37
REOPENED: Orders of Protection	21	22	15
Other Domestic Relations	185	200	153
Residential Parenting with or without Child Support	1,285	1,450	1,273
REOPENED: Residential Parenting with or without Child Support	173	189	169
Contempt	91	102	37
Combined Domestic Relations	83	91	65
ROUTINE and COMPLEX Administrative Hearings	390	513	379
Contract/Debt/Specific Performance	170	240	167
Real Estate Matters	235	266	232
Damages/Tort	105	132	94
Healthcare Liability	1,085	1,198	1,031
Probate/Trust	30	36	22
REOPENED: Probate/Trust	17	19	13
Juvenile Court Appeal (Civil)	533	533	466
Guardianship/Conservatorship	131	152	84
REOPENED: Guardianship/Conservatorship	83	88	81
Other General Civil	66	94	64
REOPENED: Other General Civil	6	6	6
Judicial Hospitalization	15	16	15
REOPENED: Judicial Hospitalization	53	115	53
Combined Civil	91	115	83

IV. QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

The preliminary case weights generated during the time study represent the amount of time Trial Court judicial officers *currently* spend handling various types of cases, but do not necessarily indicate whether this is the amount of time they *should* spend on each case. To provide a qualitative assessment of whether the current practice allows adequate time for quality performance, time study participants were provided the opportunity to complete an adequacy of time (AOT) survey. The NCSC also conducted focus groups with judicial officers over four sessions to obtain feedback about the data collection period, current workloads, levels of stress related to workload, and the ability to maintain the current pace of work.

Adequacy of Time (AOT) Survey

All Trial Court judicial officers were asked to complete a web-based adequacy of time survey in May of 2025. The participants were asked to respond to several questions related to the data collection period and their current workload. The survey was completed by a total of 108 judicial officers. Appendix D presents the survey results in detail.

The survey data provided information to help the WCC determine whether the case weights derived from the time study data are sufficient to allow judicial officers to complete work in a timely and high-quality manner. Findings from

the adequacy of time survey are presented in tandem with the focus group findings.

Focus Groups

To gain an in-depth understanding of the issues judges face in processing cases, the NCSC held four separate focus group sessions remotely between July 14 – 24, 2025. Judges from the WCC did not actively participate in the focus groups to ensure that other judges from across the state had the opportunity to participate and candidly share their unique experiences and insight.

The focus groups allowed NCSC staff to understand the different issues facing judicial officers in the Tennessee Trial Courts and to gain perspective on whether the time study adequately captured a clear picture of their work. The focus group findings and adequacy of time survey data were also presented to the WCC to provide information to base potential case weight adjustments on.

Focus Group Themes and Adequacy of Time Survey Findings

Unreported or Underreported Work

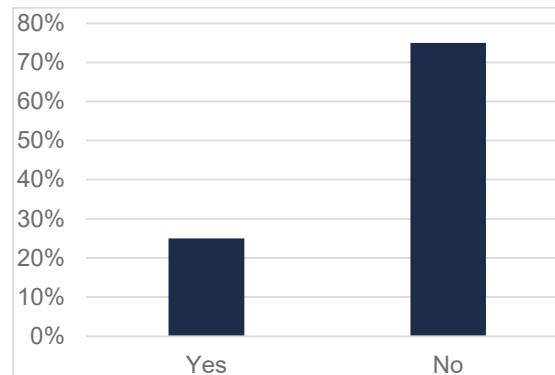
Focus group participants were asked if there was work performed during the time study period of March 31 – April 26, 2025 that was not captured or recorded.

Overall, participants felt that most of their work was captured during the time study period. Unreported work included occasional time spent working while on leave, task transitions or interruptions, and some case-related research

and contemplation outside of the workday. For example, one district experienced judicial staffing challenges that required extraordinary time spent on administrative issues, so other case-related time may have gone unreported. Furthermore, some judicial officers felt that time spent on complex civil cases, such as conservatorship and chancery court, could be underreported in the study due to the large volume of work for each case. Furthermore, participants noted that time spent on pre-indictment work, such as grand juries or search warrants, was sometimes underreported because it was considered a “non-case-related” activity.

AOT survey responses. Survey respondents were asked, “During the time study, was there court work that you engaged in that did not get reported?” Approximately three quarters of the survey respondents stated that all their work was reported, and approximately one quarter said there were some tasks that did not get reported. Like the focus group participants, the AOT survey respondents indicated that work after hours or during leave, time spent on legal research, and some miscellaneous or administrative tasks occasionally went unreported. In addition, survey respondents cited time spent on search warrant duties, training, attendance, and multitasking or overlapping tasks as work that was not reported in the time study.

AOT Results, Unreported Work



Sufficient Time

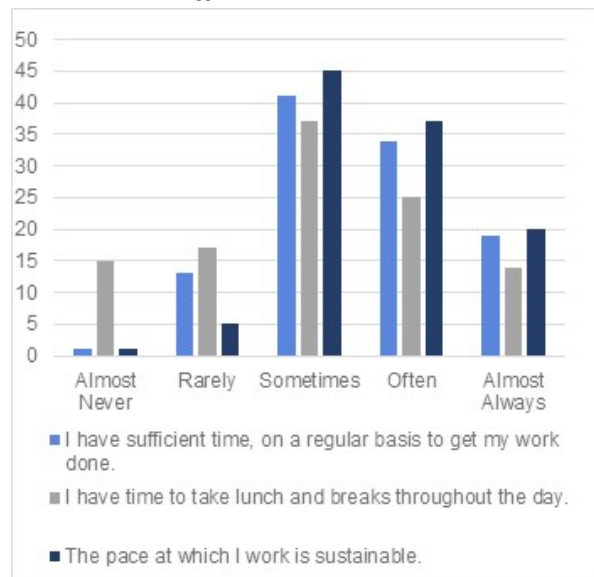
Focus group participants were asked if they have adequate time in the current workday to complete their work to their satisfaction.

Overall, participants expressed that they do not have adequate time in the workday to complete their work in a satisfactory manner and often work through lunch, in the evenings, or over the weekend to complete their work. Judicial officers are frequently triaging their cases and managing time-sensitive issues. For example, Chancery courts hear a large volume of cases involving emergency or extraordinary relief. In addition, the requirements of Rule 52.01 of the Tennessee Rules of Civil Procedure have added time to case processing. Judicial officers frequently work after business hours on legal reading, writing opinions, drafting orders, and decisions for complex cases.

AOT survey responses. The AOT survey asked respondents to indicate their agreement with the following statement: “I have sufficient time, on a regular basis, to get my work done.” About half of the AOT responses indicated that they “often” or “almost always” have sufficient time,

while a majority (86%), indicated either “sometimes”, “often”, or “almost always.”

AOT Results, Sufficient Time



Work-Life Balance

Focus group participants were asked about their sense of work-life balance in their current workday.

Judicial officers provided a mix of responses regarding their sense of work-life balance. Some noted that managing litigants and clerk/court staff can add to the workload. Others mentioned the lack of resources, such as law clerks, as a factor impacting work-life balance. One court stated that there was a 25% increase in filings in 2025 as a recent issue for judicial officers’ work-life balance. Finally, some participants mentioned the difficulty with taking leave or vacation time due to their trial schedules and calendaring as a barrier to work-life balance.

Case Complexity

Focus group participants were asked to identify how case complexity has increased over time, and if certain case types have increased in complexity more than others.

Participants cited the increase in electronic evidence and advances in technology as sources of complexity in cases. For example, the use of electronic filing, Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, and social media have resulted in more complex and, therefore, time-consuming cases, especially when self-represented litigants are involved. Furthermore, legislative changes, such as the three-judge panel statute for constitutional challenges (Rule 54) or statutory changes in Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) cases, have led to an increase in complexity. Overall, participants said that civil cases, including healthcare, commercial, and class-action cases have increased in complexity. Criminal cases involving motions, especially post-conviction motions, were also considered more complex than in the past.

Obstacles

Focus group participants were asked to discuss internal and external obstacles that impact their work and efficient case processing.

Key themes included the increase in self-represented litigants, managing partner agencies such as the District Attorney’s office or Department of Corrections, and issues with resources. The lack of internal and external resources was highlighted as a challenge across the state, particularly in rural districts. For example, rural districts may have fewer internal resources such as law clerks, which impacts the

capacity of judicial officers to process cases efficiently. Furthermore, the lack of paid attorneys and court-appointed counsel in rural districts can also cause delays in case processing.

of self-represented litigants coupled with the complexity and nuance of civil cases, such as probate, adds to the time judicial officers must spend on the bench.

AOT survey responses. Survey respondents were asked, “What obstacles (if any) are currently in your way from achieving success in your job?” Not unlike the focus groups, survey respondents mentioned the impact of self-represented litigants (34%) as well as the lack of resources such as judges, court staff, and attorneys (38%). However, the AOT also mentioned the lack of other internal resources like the case management system (CMS) as an obstacle (21%). Related to the lack of resources, over half of the survey respondents (47%) said that the heavy volume of cases and workload is an obstacle, while some also cited the constant interruptions (41%) and lack of time to complete their work (24%).

Self-Represented Litigants

Focus group participants were asked about the impact of self-represented litigants on case processing times for judicial officers.

While judicial officers had varied responses regarding the amount of time added to each case, all participants agreed that case processing takes more time when the case involves self-represented litigants. Participants emphasized two key issues: the volume of filings and the additional time required in court. The rise in self-represented litigants and ease of electronic filing have led to a higher volume of civil filings, such as civil motions, by self-represented litigants. In addition, the lack of knowledge and preparation

V. WCC REVIEW OF CASE WEIGHTS AND QUALITATIVE REVIEW⁴

After completing the time study, the adequacy of time survey, and the focus group discussions, the NCSC staff conducted the final meeting with AOC and Comptroller staff and the WCC on September 11, 2025. The WCC members reviewed the materials prepared by NCSC staff which included findings from the time study and the qualitative input from the adequacy of time survey and focus group feedback.

After thoroughly reviewing all the materials, the WCC opted to use the case weights based on all judicial officer time with no adjustments, and excluded time entered by law clerks and staff attorneys. There was consensus among the WCC, AOC, and Comptroller that these case weights most accurately reflected the work of judicial officers in the Tennessee Courts and how cases are processed in the trial level judiciary. Additionally, due to concerns of inconsistent case reporting practices across the state for many civil and domestic cases, all civil case weights and all domestic case weights were combined to create a single civil case weight and

a single domestic relations case weight. In the prior study, the case types were expanded very similarly to the original case types for the current study. However, in the 1999 study, the breakout of case types for civil and domestic was consistent with the final categories being used in the 2025 study. Collapsing the case weights for these case types provides consistency without compromising accuracy and reduces the error rate for counting these cases. All criminal case types were given their own case weight because per statute, court clerks must report all counts in a criminal indictment and concerns of inconsistent reporting practices of criminal cases have not been prevalent.

The final case weights are shown in figure 7.

Figure 7: Tennessee Trial Court Judicial Officers Final Case Weights

Case Type	Final Case Weight (in minutes)
1st Degree Murder	863
Major Felony (A & B Felonies)	153
Other Felony (C, D & E Felonies)	58
DUI	86
Misdemeanor	29
Probation Violation	19
Criminal/Juvenile Delinquency Appeals	12
Other Petition, Motions & Writs	67
Post-Conviction Relief	1,103
Combined Civil	91
Combined Domestic Relations	83

⁴ All decisions made by the WCC were made prior to seeing the end result of judicial need by district and

therefore their decisions were not influenced by the final results.

VI. CALCULATING THE NEED FOR TRIAL COURT JUDICIAL OFFICERS

In the weighted caseload model, three factors contribute to the calculation of a judicial officer needs model. These include caseload data (filings), case weights, and the year value. The year value is equal to the amount of time each full-time judicial officer has available for case-related work on an annual basis. The relationship among the filings, case weights, and year value is expressed in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Trial Court Judicial Officer Needs Model Computation

$$\frac{\text{Filings x Case Weights (minutes)}}{\text{Year Value (minutes)}} = \text{Resource Need (FTE)}$$

Multiplying the filings by the corresponding case weights calculates the total annual workload in minutes. Dividing the workload by the year value yields the total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) judicial officers needed to handle the workload.

⁵ Time entered by non-presiding judges for 3-judge panel cases was moved from the case-related time to the non-case-related time to allow a consistent

Trial Court Judge Day Value

The judge day value represents the amount of time each Trial Court judicial officer has available for case-related work each day. This value is calculated by subtracting time for lunch, breaks, and non-case-related work (e.g., administration, travel, training) from the total working day.

The judicial workday for Trial Court judicial officers starts with 8 hours a day, including a half hour for lunch. The WCC adopted this day value in consultation with the AOC and Comptroller. Time study data indicated that Trial Court judicial officers spend an average of an hour and a half on non-case-related work (88 minutes per judicial officer per day).⁵ After subtracting the non-case-related time and a half hour for lunch, this results in a case-related day that equates to approximately 6 hours for judicial officers statewide. While the calculation for the weighted caseload model assumes a 7.5 hour working day, the time study data indicated that judicial officers are consistently working 8 or more hours each day, with some working more than 9 hours per day on average.

Trial Court Judge Year Value

The judge year value was determined by WCC with input from the NCSC project team. The preliminary year value was calculated by

and equitable adjustment across the state for this time.

subtracting weekend days, holidays, time related to illness, vacation time, and time spent attending judicial conferences and seminars from the calendar year. The calculations are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Trial Court Judge Year

	Days
Total Days per Year	365
Weekends	-104
Holidays	-12
Vacation/Sick/Other Leave	-27
Training and Conferences	-12
Work Days per Year	210
Work Minutes per Year	100,800

To calculate the final year values for case-related work, the number of days in the working year were multiplied by the day value for case-related work, subtracting 30 minutes for lunch, non-case-related work, and travel time. This figure is then expressed in terms of minutes per year. Figure 10 shows the calculation of the case-related year value for Trial Court judges. Travel has not been deducted in this calculation as travels varies by district and should be deducted on a district-by-district basis. The average annual travel by district is shown in Appendix E.

Figure 10: Trial Court Judge Case-Specific Year Value

Judge Year (days)		Judge Day (hours)		Minutes per hour		Year Value (minutes)
210	x	6.04	x	60	=	76,114

Applying the computation shown in Figure 10, the judicial needs models indicate a net need for 198.22 full-time equivalent (FTE) Trial Court judicial officers statewide to effectively handle the current workload. The judicial need figure is based only on the weighted caseload model and does not account for other factors that can affect case processing.

Figure 11 shows the overall statewide need. The judicial need by district can be found in Appendix F.

**Figure 11: Tennessee Trial Court
Judicial Officer Need**

	Final Case Weights	3-Year Average Cases Filed
1st Degree Murder	863	861
Major Felony (A & B Felonies)	153	9,834
Other Felony (C, D & E Felonies)	58	22,138
DUI	86	2,373
Misdemeanor	29	9,209
Probation Violation	19	24,668
Criminal/Juvenile Delinquency Appeals	12	148
Other Petition, Motions & Writs	67	4,462
Post-Conviction Relief	1,103	306
Combined Civil	91	52,982
Combined Domestic Relations	83	51,907
Total Cases		178,888
Case-specific Work Minutes (sum of WT x cases)		14,239,371
Judicial Officer Annual Availability		100,800
Subtract 30 minutes for lunch per day (30 * 210)		6,300
Subtract Annual Non-Case-Related Time		18,386
Subtract Annual Travel Time		4,277
Judicial Officer Annual Case-Related Availability		71,837
Judicial Officer FTE Demand		198.22

*Separate values for travel were used for each county. However, for the sake of simplicity only one value is displayed here.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

The NCSC encourages the AOC to consider the following recommendations regarding the ongoing use of the weighted caseload model.

Recommendation 1

The NCSC recommends updating the Trial Court judicial officer needs model annually by inserting new case filings using the average of the most recent three years of reliable filings.

Recommendation 2

The weighted caseload model presented in this report should be the starting point for determining the need for judicial officers in the Tennessee Trial Courts. There are qualitative issues that an objective weighted caseload model cannot account for such as possible variations in the proportion of cases involving self-represented parties; differences among counties in the percentage of persons who require court interpreting services (whose hearings require more time); and the number of various judicial support staff (e.g., bailiffs, law clerks, court reporters). Issues such as these that result in longer or shorter case processing times should be considered by the AOC when determining judicial need.

Recommendation 3

The NCSC recommends that the AOC conduct a secondary analysis as a follow up to the weighted caseload study for courts where the judicial need shown in the model deviates by at least one judge (plus or minus). During the secondary analysis, the AOC should consider court-specific and qualitative factors that may affect the need for judges, such as trends in filings, atypical requirements for travel among courts, the ability to specialize in certain case types, the availability of support staff (e.g. law clerks, etc.) and local prosecutorial practices.

Recommendation 4

Over time, the integrity of any weighted caseload model may be affected by external factors such as changes in legislation, case law, legal practice, court technology, and administrative policies. The NCSC recommends that the AOC conduct a comprehensive review of the weighted caseload model every five to seven years. This review should include a time study in which all or most Trial Court judicial officers participate. Between updates, if a major change in the law appears to have a significant impact on workload, a quality adjustment panel of experts can be convened to make interim adjustments to the affected case weight(s).

APPENDIX A: TRIAL COURT JUDGE CASE TYPE CATEGORIES

Criminal Case Types	
1 1st Degree Murder	Includes all cases involving a 1st degree murder.
2 Major Felony (A & B Felonies)	Includes all class A or B felonies.
3 Other Felony (C, D & E Felonies)	Includes all class C through E felonies.
4 DUI	Includes all DUI's (regardless of type or class).
5 Misdemeanor	Includes all <i>non-DUI</i> misdemeanor cases.
6 Probation Violation	Includes any case involving a probationer who has violated the terms of his/her probation sentence (regardless of the original offense type).
7 Criminal/Juvenile Delinquency Appeals (511)	Includes both adult criminal appeals and juvenile delinquency appeals.
8 Other Petition, Motions & Writs	Includes any case where the defendant has filed a post-judgment petition, motion or writ, including, but not limited to, habeas corpus relief, suspended sentences, reinstatement of probation, furlough, expunctions, requests for waiver of costs and fines, and habitual motor vehicle offenders.
9 Post-Conviction Relief	Includes any case involving the filing of a petition challenging the lawfulness of his/her conviction and/or sentence.

Domestic Relations Case Types	
10	Protection of Children- Paternity, Adoption, Legitimation, Surrender, TPR (361, 362, 363, 364) Cases involving court actions to prove that a person is the father of an illegitimate child and to enforce support obligations; legalizing the status of an illegitimate child; adoption of a minor child; and parental or guardian termination of parental rights.
11	Divorce with Minor Children (371) Includes all cases involving the termination of a marriage, permanent separation between husband and wife, where there are minor children involved.
12	Divorce without Minor Children (372) Includes all cases involving the termination of a marriage, permanent separation between husband and wife, and annulment where there are no minor children involved.
13a	Child Support, Wage Assignment, Interstate Support (385, 387, 391, 392) Includes all case type activity to set the terms of child support or wage assignments only; and cases received from another state or sent to another state.
13b	REOPENED: Child Support, Wage Assignment, Interstate Support (385, 387, 391, 392) Includes all reopened case type activity to set the terms of child support or wage assignments only; and cases received from another state or sent to another state.
14a	Orders of Protection (381) Includes petitions for orders of protections.
14b	REOPENED: Orders of Protection (381) Includes reopened petitions for orders of protections.
15	Other Domestic Relations (401) Includes domestic cases that do not logically fit into any of the above categories.
16a	Residential Parenting with or without Child Support (383, 384) Includes cases to set the terms of a parenting plan for unmarried parent.
16b	REOPENED: Residential Parenting with or without Child Support (383, 384) Reopened cases for purposes of modifying visitation or custody arrangements whether or not it includes a modification of child support issues.
17	Contempt (382) A civil or criminal action alleging the order of the court has been violated or an action where the order was handed down from an outside jurisdiction.

General Civil Case Types	
Note: All General Sessions Appeals should be recorded under the case type of the original appeal, e.g. Damages/Torts, Contract/Debt or Real Estate Matters.	
18	ROUTINE Administrative Hearings (Appeals) (513) Includes judicial review of a state or local administrative agency proceedings.
19	COMPLEX Administrative Hearings Cases filed under the Administrative Procedures Act.
20	Contract/Debt/Specific Performance (461, 462) Includes any action involving agreements or contracts (expressed or implied). This includes recovery of money for services performed, sales of goods, money loaned, damages for performance of simple contracts (expressed or implied), and liens by a builder or furnisher. Where damages would be an inadequate compensation for the breach of an agreement, the contractor or vendor will be compelled to perform specifically what he has agreed to do. Examples include: Agreements in writing to buy or sell land; Contracts to execute or renew leases; Contracts to execute a mortgage; Contracts to insure; Contracts for chattels of special value.
21	Real Estate Matters (481) Includes suits dealing with ownership, foreclosure proceedings, easements, water rights, rights of way, boundary disputes, condemnation proceedings, and partitions.
22	Damages/Tort (471) Includes all cases involving action to recover money as compensation or indemnity for personal injury or death. For this study, a tort is an injury or wrong committed against a person by a party who either did something he or she was obligated not to do, or failed to do something that he or she was obligated to do.
23	Healthcare Liability (451) Includes cases filed pursuant to the Healthcare Liability Act.
24a	Probate/Trust (501, 573) Includes all cases involving the administration of decedents' estates and all cases involving the legal possession of real or personal property held by one person for the benefit of another.
24b	REOPENED: Probate/Trust (501, 573) Includes reopened cases involving the administration of decedents' estates and all cases involving the legal possession of real or personal property held by one person for the benefit of another.
25	Juvenile Court Appeal (Civil) Includes all CIVIL juvenile court appeals.
26a	Guardianship/Conservatorship (571, 572)

Cases in which a person (conservator/guardian) is lawfully invested with the power and charged with the duty of taking care of the property or rights of another person who is considered by the court as incapable of managing his or her own affairs or caring for him/herself, EXCLUDING Judicial Hospitalization.

26b REOPENED: Guardianship/Conservatorship (571, 572)

Reopened cases in which a person (conservator/guardian) is lawfully invested with the power and charged with the duty of taking care of the property or rights of another person who is considered by the court as incapable of managing his or her own affairs or caring for him/herself, EXCLUDING Reopened Judicial Hospitalization..

27a Other General Civil (581) (491)

Includes actions that are not included in any of the other categories. Common examples are: workers compensation, property damage suits, employment discrimination suits, un-liquidated damages, salary suit initiated by a county official; non-domestic relations contempt; tax matters; special remedy injunctions; writs of mandamus; quo warrant; name change; foreign judgments; minor settlements.

27b REOPENED: Other General Civil (581)

Includes reopened actions that are not included in any of the other categories. Common examples are: workers compensation, property damage suits, employment discrimination suits, un-liquidated damages, salary suit initiated by a county official; non-domestic relations contempt; tax matters; special remedy injunctions; writs of mandamus; quo warrant; name change; foreign judgments; minor settlements.

28a Judicial Hospitalization (541)

Cases in which a person (conservator/guardian) is lawfully invested with the power and charged with the duty of taking care of the property or rights of another person who is considered by the court as incapable of managing his or her own affairs or caring for him/herself.

28b REOPENED: Judicial Hospitalization (541)

Reopened cases in which a person (conservator/guardian) is lawfully invested with the power and charged with the duty of taking care of the property or rights of another person who is considered by the court as incapable of managing his or her own affairs or caring for him/herself.

APPENDIX B: TRIAL COURT JUDGE CASE-RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. Pre-Trial Activities

Includes routine matters that occur in cases before a trial or other disposition is reached and/or before a case goes to trial. Examples of activities include the following:

- Initial appearance/arraignment.
- Pre-trial hearings and motions.
- Pre-trial conferences.
- Calendar or docket call.
- Pre-trial management conferences.
- Non-trial disposition activities (plea uncontested dissolution; nolle prosequi, dismissal).
- Administrative activities occurring pre-trial.

2. Bench Trial Activities

Includes all activities associated with bench trials, whether the work is done in or out of the courtroom, incident to the conduct of a trial or adjudicatory hearing before the trier of fact and includes hearings to memorialize an agreement. Also includes administrative activities that occur during the bench trial phase of a case.

3. Jury Trial Activities

Includes all activities associated with conducting a jury trial, including jury selection and activities through entry of verdict – or – through a guilty plea, settlement or dismissal prior to verdict. Also includes administrative activities that occur during the jury trial phase of a case.

4. Post-Disposition Activities

Includes all activities related to a case after a disposition has been reached, but before the time to appeal has run.

5. Judicial Settlement Conferences

Includes all time spent conducting settlement conferences (for cases filed in another district).

6. 3-Judge Panel PRESIDING Judges – Civil cases only

To include all time associated with the presiding judges of a 3-judge panel only. Non-Presiding judges of a 3-judge panel do not report time here.

7. 3-Judge Panel NON-Presiding Judges – Civil cases only

To include all time associated with the non-presiding judges of a 3-judge panel only. Presiding judge of a 3-judge panel does not report time here.

APPENDIX C: TRIAL COURT JUDGE NON-CASE-RELATED ACTIVITIES

a. General Administration

Includes all time associated with general court administration, such as personnel issues, case assignment, non-specific legal research, professional reading of law journals and other related literature, and time on approving non-specific expenses of auxiliary court staff including but not limited to court reporters, interpreters, and the like.

b. Problem-Solving Courts (oversight and supervision)

Includes all time spent on the oversight and supervision of participants of any problem-solving court.

c. Problem-Solving Courts (administrative)

Includes all time spent with the work of problem-solving courts that does not involve the oversight or supervision of participants.

d. Committees, Meetings and Related Work

Includes all time spent in committee meetings, including en banc meetings, state or local committee meetings and local staff meetings. Also includes work associated with such meetings, such as reviewing materials or developing meeting materials.

e. Community Activities, Speaking Engagements, etc.

Includes all time associated with community outreach and community activities in which you engage in your official capacity as a judge, such as speaking at local bar luncheons, school/college or rotary club.

f. Education and Training

Includes all time spent in judicial training, judicial continuing education and attending judicial conferences, whether in-person or online.

g. Work-Related Travel

Includes all non-commuting travel time for activities required in your capacity as a judge/elected official.

h. Vacation, Illness or Other Leave

Includes all time away from the court due to vacation, illness, or other personal leave time.

i. Other

Include any non-case-related activities that are not included in the list but are required of you in your capacity as a judicial officer.

j. Time Study Data Reporting & Entry

All time associated with tracking and entering data for the current time study.

APPENDIX D: ADEQUACY OF TIME SURVEY RESULTS

Adequacy of Time Survey Respondents

Please tell us your position

Circuit Court Judge	54	50%
Criminal Court Judge	29	27%
Chancellor	25	23%
Total	108	100%

How many years have you worked for the Tennessee Judicial Department?

Less than one year	6	6%
1-3 years	37	34%
4-5 years	6	6%
6-10 years	23	21%
11-15 years	18	17%
16-20 years	9	8%
21-30 years	5	5%
31+ years	4	4%
Total	108	100%

Time Study Period Questions

During the time study, was your work and workload representative of a typical 4-week period?

Yes	72	67%
No	36	33%
Total	108	100%

Please explain how your work was different during the survey period?

I was scheduled in court for less than usual due to continuances, motions, etc.	24	22%
Several trials were scheduled but vacated	19	18%
I had a lighter workload than usual	17	16%
I was on vacation	9	8%
Other	8	7%
I took sick/medical leave	6	6%
My colleague(s) was on leave, so I handled their duties	3	3%
I just started a new position	2	2%
I had a heavier workload than usual	1	1%
I was at a conference, committee meeting, community meeting, etc.	1	1%

Was your travel time typical during the study period?

Yes	65	60%
No	19	18%
N/A	24	22%
Total	108	100%

Please explain how your travel was different.

I traveled less than usual	17	89%
I traveled more than usual	1	5%
I had already planned a week for vacation	1	5%

During the time survey period, was there work that you engaged in that did not get reported?

Yes	27	25%
No	81	75%
Total	108	100%

Please tell us what work did not get reported.

I did not report multitasking or overlapping tasks	20	19%
I did not report miscellaneous or administrative duties/tasks	18	17%
Some of my overtime and/or weekend work did not get reported	13	12%
Some of the time I spent on research did not get reported	13	12%
I worked while I was on vacation/medical/personal leave, but it was not reported	8	7%
Other	7	6%
I attended some training sessions, but I did not report the time	1	1%

Adequacy of Time

	1 Almost Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Almost Always	Average Score
I have sufficient time, on a regular basis to get my work done.	1	13	41	34	19	3.53
I am able to accomplish what needs to be done during the workday.	2	16	30	38	22	3.57
When I start a task, I typically have the time to complete the task.	2	9	56	30	11	3.36
I have the tools and resources to do my job efficiently and effectively.	3	7	27	37	34	3.85
I have enough time to adequately assist court users and ensure they understand.	0	2	28	37	33	4.01
There is sufficient time for learning opportunities aligned with my job duties.	2	11	42	27	24	3.57
I am able to meet deadlines without rushing at the last minute.	1	10	40	41	16	3.56
I have time to take lunch and breaks throughout the day.	15	17	37	25	14	3.06
The pace at which I work is sustainable.	1	5	45	37	20	3.65

Obstacles to Case Processing

Please tell us of any obstacles that exist (if any) that hinder your ability to process cases efficiently. Choose all that apply. If there are no obstacles, please select "None".

	Number of Judges	% of Judges
Heavy volume of cases and workload	51	47.2%
Constant interruptions and having to multi-task	44	40.7%
Not enough judges/court staff/attorneys	41	38.0%
Assisting self-represented litigants	37	34.3%
Lack of time	26	24.1%
Inadequate case management system	23	21.3%
Outdated or poor facilities	20	18.5%
Poor technology or internet connection	17	15.7%
Other	17	15.7%
Lack of security	11	10.2%
None	11	10.2%
Inadequate equipment (e.g. copiers, computers, etc.)	8	7.4%
Lack of resources	8	7.4%
Lack of funding	7	6.5%
Uneven allocation of work and duties	7	6.5%
Continuous changes in laws, processes, public information, etc.	5	4.6%
Miscommunication/lack of communication	3	2.8%
Insufficient pay/benefits	2	1.9%
Inadequate training	1	.9%
Poor leadership/poor management/micro-management	1	.9%

APPENDIX E: AVERAGE ANNUAL TRAVEL PER JUDICIAL OFFICER BY DISTRICT

District	Average Annual Travel Minutes per Judicial Officer
1ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5,761
2ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	6,538
3RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	9,759
4TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5,867
5TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	0
6TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	0
7TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	0
8TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	15,315
9TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	8,584
10TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	7,169
11TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	0
12TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	8,085
13TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	8,938
14TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	763
15TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5,482
16TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	302
17TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	8,511
18TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	0
19TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3,998
20TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	137
21ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	1,086
22ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	8,844
23RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	10,108
24TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	8,422
25TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	13,744
26TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4,302
27TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3,996
28TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4,935
29TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	9,456
30TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	258
31ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3,316
32ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	6,598

APPENDIX F: TENNESSEE TRIAL COURT JUDICIAL OFFICER NEED BY DISTRICT

	Judicial Officer FTE Demand	Current Judicial Officer FTE	Current Child Support Referees	Current Senior Judges	Total Judicial Officer Resource	Difference
1ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	6.6	5			5	- 1.6
2ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5.4	4	1		5	- .4
3RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	7.8	5	1		6	- 1.8
4TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	7.7	6	1		7	- .7
5TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2.2	2			2	- .2
6TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	13.2	10	1		11	- 2.2
7TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2.9	2	1		3	.1
8TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4.2	3	1		4	- .2
9TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3.7	3	1		4	.3
10TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	7.6	5	1		6	- 1.6
11TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	10.4	9			9	- 1.4
12TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5.3	4	1		5	- .3
13TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5.5	6			6	.5
14TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	1.8	2			2	.2
15TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5.2	4			4	- 1.2
16TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	9.8	6	1		7	- 2.8
17TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4.0	3			3	- 1.0
18TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4.8	4			4	- .8
19TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	10.2	8	1		9	- 1.2
20TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	18.4	18			18	- .4
21ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4.6	4			4	- .6
22ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	6.6	5			5	- 1.6
23RD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5.1	4	1		5	- .1
24TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	3.3	3			3	- .3
25TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	5.4	4			4	- 1.4
26TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	4.9	4			4	- .9
27TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	1.7	2			2	.3
28TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2.2	2			2	- .2
29TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2.4	2			2	- .4
30TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	21.9	20			20	- 1.9
31ST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	2.1	1			1	- 1.1
32ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT	1.5	1			1	- .5
Statewide Senior Judges				6	6	6.0
Statewide Total	198.2	161	12	6	179	- 19.2

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