

Town of Highland Park Court

Annual Review

2019



The current analysis is a component of a comprehensive review of the Town of Highland Park Court and its administration of justice, which has been in place during the past three years. The current review is focused on the data obtained during the calendar year 2019. The objective in collecting and analyzing the data is to determine the patterns and practices of the municipal court in Highland Park, in its administration of justice. Although the data is limited to 2019, it is substantive enough in order to reach conclusions on trends related to the patterns and practices of the court.

The analysis of the 2019 data produced interesting and relevant results. Overall, the significant majority of cases filed related to Caucasian defendants. This was followed by Hispanics and African Americans, in that order. Of the cases filed, most (in all racial and ethnic categories) were “disposed”. Of the cases disposed, Caucasians and Asians had the most significant percentages. This was followed by Hispanics and African Americans. Based on the data reviewed, it is clear that among the cases disposed, the most significant percentages, other than Caucasians, are of individuals belonging to protected classes (i.e., Asians, Hispanics and African Americans). **In sum, the 2019 data clearly shows that the court does not favor a particular racial or ethnic group in its disposition of cases.** This is a significant finding as it shows the court operates in a manner consistent with best practices and within the framework of the United States Constitution.

When analyzing the dispositions, the data shows that of the 8,617 cases with court appearances, 5,934 of them involved Caucasian defendants. The second (but distant) most significant number (1,333) related to Hispanic defendants. This was followed by African Americans (651) and Asians (253). It is also evident that Native Americans constituted the group with the least number of court appearances (84). Of the cases involving Caucasian

defendants, a significant number (4,864) were closed with no court appearance. The second most significant number of cases closed without any court appearance pertained to Hispanics. One would expect this given the fact that Hispanics constituted the second largest number of defendants, after Caucasians. The third most significant number of dispositions without a court appearance (497) pertained to African Americans.

Of the cases with fines paid to the clerk, the majority of them involved Caucasian defendants (1,909); this was followed by Hispanics (692) and African Americans (243). It should also be noted that the majority of cases dismissed through the completion of deferment was led by Caucasians (1,489); then followed by Hispanics (173) and African Americans (104). This seemed to be the same trend across the board with Caucasian defendants. That is, the majority of the cases deferred by the judge and the prosecutor, involved Caucasians. This was followed, in both instances, by African Americans and Hispanics alike.

When considering the number of cases deferred by the clerk, the same trend applied. That is, the majority of cases dismissed by the clerk involved Caucasians; this was followed by cases involving Hispanics and African Americans, in that order. Relative to gender, most of these cases deferred by either the judge, the prosecutor or the clerk, seemed to be predominant among males. The data also showed that the most significant percentage of cases involving Caucasians, African Americans, Hispanics and Asians were disposed at the window.

Summary of Findings

Although the data represented only 2019, it does present a profile regarding the disposition of cases. The importance related to the manner in which the cases are processed through the Highland Park Municipal Court, goes without saying. A careful review of the data shows the following:

- a) The cases filed are mostly related to Caucasian defendants; this was followed by Hispanics and African Americans, respectively.
- b) The cases that were closed by the court, dismissed by the prosecutor and dismissed by the judge, seem to be proportionally distributed among Caucasians, African Americans and Hispanics. This is an indicator that justice seems to be distributed across race and ethnicity.
- c) The cases dismissed at the window and those dismissed via U.S. Mail also seemed to be proportionally distributed among all races and ethnic groups.
- d) A significant percentage of cases by all races/ethnicities were disposed through the payment of fines to the clerk. This may be an indicator that defendants took advantage of the convenience of resolving their cases before their court date. The race and ethnicity of the defendant did not seem to make a difference in their disposition to dispose of the citation through the mail or window.
- e) The data also shows that there were various methods of disposing cases by all racial and ethnic groups. Even though there no specific pattern was identified, it is clear that disposition of cases ranged from driving courses being completed, to paying fines and providing proof of insurance. This particular case distribution warrants further analysis as additional data is acquired.

In my view, the Highland Park Municipal Court engages in a fair and Constitutional process as measured through the availability of options on disposition of cases. There is no little doubt that the analysis of additional data over the next year will reveal if the pattern on the distribution of cases and disposition of these, continues. The Highland Park Municipal Court continues to excel in its efforts to revise its standing orders, provide easy access and information to all defendants through its web site, and ensures that the administration of justice in its court is implemented while adhering to the United States Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Texas.

Table 1. Profile of Cases

Race/Ethnicity	Cases Filed	Cases Disposed	Outstanding Cases
Caucasian	7,863	5,934	1,929
African American	1,462	651	811
Hispanic	2,123	1,333	790
Asian	352	253	99
Middle Eastern	-	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-
Native American	121	84	37
Not Entered	441	362	79
Total	12,362	8,617	3,745

Table 2. Disposition of Cases with Court Appearances

Race/Ethnicity	Total Cases with Court Appearances	Cases Closed by the Court	Cases Dismissed Completion of Defensive Driving Course
Caucasian	1,070	272	200
African American	154	32	30
Hispanic	247	106	27
Asian	38	9	15
Middle Eastern	-	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-
Native American	23	2	9
Not Entered	78	48	-
Total	1,610	469	281

Table 3. Disposition of Cases with Court Appearances (cont.)

Race/Ethnicity	Cases Dismissed by Prosecutor	Cases Dismissed by Judge	Cases Dismissed (Juveniles/Minors) Theme in
Caucasian	89	28	66
African American	21	10	5
Hispanic	27	10	2
Asian	3	2	2
Middle Eastern	-	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-
Native American	3	-	1
Not Entered	27	1	1
Total	170	51	77

Table 4. Disposition of Cases with Court Appearances (cont.)

Race/Ethnicity	Cases Complied Dismissal (3J)	Cases Complied Dismissal (3P)	DA Dismissed/Def erred Completed	Cases DI/Dismiss (Proof Insurance)
Caucasian	52	91	265	5
African American	15	15	22	4
Hispanic	8	26	36	4
Asian	2	1	4	-
Middle Eastern	-	-	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-	-
Native American	-	-	8	-
Not Entered	-	-	1	-
Total	77	133	336	13

Table 5. Percentages of All Cases Dismissed by Judge and Prosecutor

Race/Ethnicity	Cases Dismissed by Judge	Cases Dismissed by Prosecutor
	(in percentages)	(in percentages)
Caucasian	1.74%	5.53%
African American	0.62%	1.30%
Hispanic	0.62%	1.68%
Asian	0.12%	0.19%
Middle Eastern	0.00%	0.00%
Unknown	0.00%	0.00%
Native American	0.00%	0.19%
Not Entered	0.06%	1.68%

Table 6. Percentages of Cases Disposed at Window and U.S. Mail

Race/Ethnicity	Cases Disposed at Window	Cases Disposed at Window
	(totals)	(in percentages)
Caucasian	4,864	69.42%
African American	497	7.09%
Hispanic	1,086	15.50%
Asian	215	3.07%
Middle Eastern	-	0.00%
Unknown	-	0.00%
Native American	61	0.87%
Not Entered	284	4.05%
Total	7,007	100.00%

Table 7. Disposition of Cases at Court Window (in frequencies)

Race/Ethnicity	Fine Paid to Clerk	Driving Course Completed	Compliance Dismissal by Clerk	Deferred by Clerk	Dismissed after Appeal
Caucasian	1,909	859	447	1,489	145
African American	243	87	33	104	22
Hispanic	692	96	75	173	35
Asian	82	60	13	52	8
Middle Eastern	-	-	-	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-	-	-
Native American	24	13	7	17	-
Not Entered	277	-	-	4	-
Total	3,227	1,115	575	1,839	210

Table 8. Defendant's Reasoning for Disposing of Cases at Court Window or by Mail (in percentages)

Race/Ethnicity	Options to Address Citation Chosen at the Window		At Window or by Mail - Defendant did not want to Appear Before Judge	
	Defendant chose best option to address their needs	Defendant was not eligible for any other option	Felt no need to appear in court	Didn't want to wait for court date
Caucasian	95%	1%	44%	48%
African American	94%	1%	46%	41%
Hispanic	88%	6%	60%	30%
Asian	95%	2%	60%	30%
Middle Eastern	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unknown	0%	0%	64%	36%
Native American	96%	4%	52%	42%
Not Entered	100%	0%	33%	67%

Qualitative data is obtained through a form provided to and completed by the defendant. Not all defendants complete these forms.