

**The Town of Highland Park**

**Municipal Court**

**2024 Data Analysis**

The Town of Highland Park Municipal Court requested an analysis of their 2024 court data. In 2015, the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a report on the court practices of Ferguson, Missouri, which indicated inequitable treatment of minorities within their local judicial system. The findings of the Ferguson report have prompted local municipal courts to analyze and reflect on their own practices with a view toward discover of inequities and proactive actions to correct any areas in need of attention to ensure that people of all races receive equitable treatment under the law.

Thus, the purpose for the analysis Highland Park Municipal Court data is to gather some context on the practices of the court and, where necessary, offer amendments to policies or practices to improve equitable operations.

## **Municipal Court Data**

The data analyzed in this report was provided by Highland Park Municipal Court for the period January-December 2024. The court downloaded their data from the municipal court software system and placed into Excel spreadsheets. The data received was then restructured into a reader-friendly format where a number of formulae and calculations could be written to gather context on the operations of the court.

Since the Ferguson report was about the inequitable racial treatment within the Ferguson court, the analysis of this report is strictly focused on the treatment of races within their court practices. Thus, there is no analysis in this report that disaggregates the data by gender, nor does it disaggregate by resident/non-resident status. Further, since there were very few cases involving Middle Eastern, Native American, and Unknown, there is no analysis conducted specifically with these racial categories. Further, the racial identifier of Not Entered may refer to cases where a parking citation was issued, thus no race was known at the time of the citation. There will be no analysis of the Not Entered cases.

This report is structured in three sections as follows:

1. Cases filed analysis
2. Case disposition analysis
3. Cases outstanding analysis

A summary of findings will be provided at the conclusion of the report.

**Note on Racial Nomenclature**—In the data provided by Highland Park Municipal Court, there were a number of different ways to refer to the races. For example, in some data Whites were referred to as Caucasian, and in other data as Whites. Likewise, some data referred to Blacks, and some data referred to as African American. In order to simplify the analysis contained in this report, the following racial identifications will be used:

1. White
2. Black
3. Hispanic
4. Asian
5. Middle Eastern
6. Native American
7. Unknown

18 - (N American) 10 cases did not make any attempt to call, mail or email the Court regarding their citation, 2 cases set to plea and/or pay, and 5 case pending probation dismissal and/or compliance dismissal, 1 case set on appeal.

136 - (Unknown) 122 cases did not make any attempt to call, mail or email the Court, regarding their citations, 7 cases set to plea and and/or pay, 3 cases pending probation dismissal and/or compliance dismissal, 2 cases set for trial, 2 cases past due.

Unknown are citations that are issued for parking offenses.

The Court office continues to send courtesy letters out to all defendants that do not appear within the 20 days of the citation being issued or pay on the date given by the Court. Court staff sends court notifications by phone or text message as a reminder 20 days have passed and defendants need to come in for options, schedule a preliminary hearing and/or make payment.

Defendants may handle cases by email or by submitting a request for a Virtual hearing with the Prosecutor, if they are not able to appear in person.

In response to the recommendations requested, Court staff used the Texas Department of Public Safety's TLETS program to update addresses and phone numbers of defendants that have mailed returned due to bad addresses. Additional letters are then sent with information on the options to handle outstanding citation.

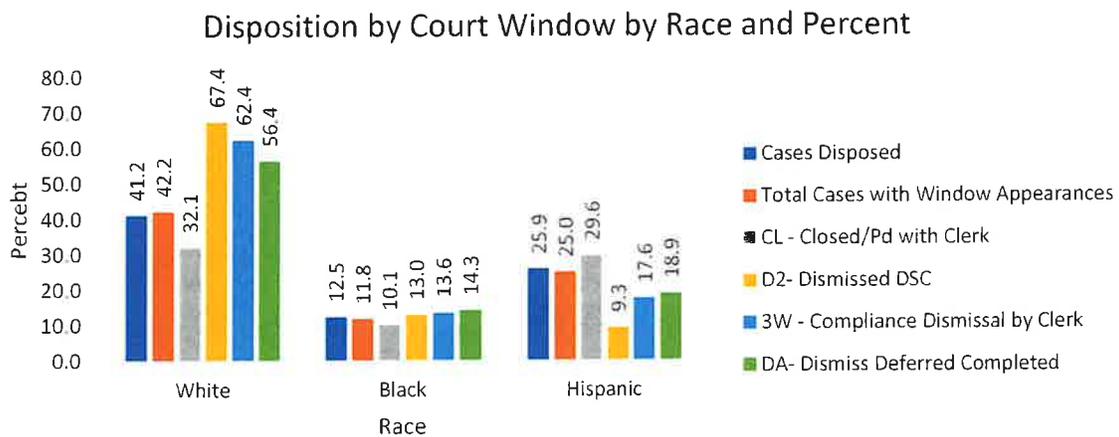
Court staff applied the updated information and sent notices and/or communication to the defendants with outstanding offenses filed from Jan 2016 to Dec 2024. In accordance with Judge Hammack's standing order, a second courtesy letter, a pre warrant letter and a warrant were sent as needed.

**Results of additional letters sent by Race**

	Letters Mailed	No Response	Cases Disposed	Appeared in Court	Total Disposal and Appearances	Percentage disposed
White	480	43	222	215	437	91%
Black	322	63	111	148	259	80%
Hispanic	303	61	102	140	242	80%
Asian	34	2	19	13	32	94%
M Eastern	-	-	-	-	-	#DIV/0!
N American	18	2	6	10	16	89%
Unknown	100	16	49	35	84	84%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,257</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>1,070</b>	<b>85%</b>

Hispanics accounted for 9.3% of DSC dispositions. These figures indicate Whites are slightly overrepresented and Hispanics slightly underrepresented in this variable. But, as stated above, such a disparity does not necessarily translate into any systemic concern, rather it is merely pointing out how mild disparities in the data are noticeable when normalizing the data for analysis. The following chart displays both the proportions of overall dispositions and court window dispositions, as well as the most common court window dispositions.

Figure 3-Variou Dispositions at Court Window Disaggregated by Race and Percent



### Cases Outstanding Analysis

In this section, the outstanding cases, disaggregated by race, are analyzed. This year, the municipal court reports a total of 4,838 cases that remain outstanding. Here, the classifications by which cases remain outstanding are examined across racial distributions. The following three tables present the raw data on outstanding cases.

Table 6-Outstanding Cases (A)

Outstanding Cases											
Race	Total Pending through Court *	1J - Deferred by Judge	1P - Deferred by Prosecutor	2J - DSC by Judge	2P -DSC by Prosecutor	CA -Continued Appearance	1W - Deferred by Clerk	2W -DSC by Clerk	1C - Deferred requested by Mail	2C - DSC requested by Mail	X
White	1,083	14	21	5	3	2	26	22	12	10	3
Black	1,605	4	6	0	1	0	7	1	4	1	0
Hispanic	1,581	4	6	0	0	0	7	3	16	1	0
Asian	61	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	1	0
Middle Eastern	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	38	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0

Unknown	457	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,838</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 7-Outstanding Cases (B)

Outstanding Cases												
Race	4J - Ext to pay by Judge	AJ - Deferred Disposition	AP - Appeal	C1 - Continuance for Compliance	C2 - Continuance to Request DSC	C3 - Continuance for Plea	C4 - Continuance to Request Deferred	CD - DSC	CS - Community Service Ordered	EA - Extension to Appeal	EX - Ext to pay	IA- Initial Appearance
White	0	0	19	38	6	23	53	0	5	9	0	457
Black	0	0	12	31	8	45	102	0	8	3	1	834
Hispanic	0	0	7	48	0	45	66	0	3	0	3	770
Asian	0	0	2	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	25
Middle Eastern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	23
Unknown	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	431
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2,540</b>

Table 8-Outstanding Cases (C)

Outstanding Cases										
Race	MB - MVBA Collection	OM - Outstanding Omni	PC - Pending Collections	PH - Preliminary Hearing	PP - Payment Plan	PT - Pre-Trial Hearing	SC - Show Cause Hearing	SH - Show Cause	TR - Trial	TM - Theme
White	144	128	30	31	12	4	1	0	5	1
Black	254	193	45	25	8	6	1	0	5	1
Hispanic	207	232	45	47	71	0	0	0	0	0
Asian	5	10	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middle Eastern	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Native American	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	2	3	0	10	0	0	0	0	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

Although there were nearly 5,000 outstanding cases, nearly 80% of all outstanding cases were due to one of three classifications—Initial Appearance, MVBA Collection, and Outside Omni. Since most of the other classifications for outstanding cases contain small samples, they are not analyzed.

Among the Initial Appearance classification, Whites accounted for 18%, Blacks 33%, Hispanics 30%, and Asians 1%. Among the classification of MVBA Collection, Whites accounted for 23%, Blacks 41%, Hispanics 33%, and Asians 1%. Among the Outstanding Omni classification, Whites accounted for 22%, Blacks, 34%, Hispanics 41%, and Asians 2%.

Each of these classifications appear relatively proportional when compared to one another.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

The Town of Highland Park Municipal Court submitted a full year of raw data for analysis. Three areas were reviewed—cases filed, case dispositions, and outstanding cases. When analyzing the data, disaggregated by race, there does not appear to be any evidence that the court is operating with any noticeable inequity among any race. The data appears proportional to each race in cases filed, disposed, and outstanding. Where any mild disparities were noted, none appeared to rise to the level of concern of inequitable treatment based on race.

In summary, the analysis of the 2024 data indicates that the court appears to be operating with fairness and equity among all races.

Regarding recommendations, the Highland Park Municipal Court has adhered to all of our previous recommendations. Specifically, they are using simple racial identifiers in the software that produces the tables for analysis in an effort that these remain uniform across all tables. They are to be commended for this effort.

When reviewing the data for outstanding cases the following are status and descriptions:

STATUS	Description
PP	Payment Plan
1P	Deferred by Prosecutor.
1J	Deferred by Judge.
1C	Deferred by Defendant.
1W	Deferred by Clerk.
2W	DSC by Clerk
2C	DSC by Defendant
2P	DSC by Prosecutor
2J	DSC by Judge
CS	Community Service
EA	Pass for Appeal Bond
EX	Extension to Pay
CA	Continued Appearance
CN	Virtual Hearing
C1	Pass for Proof of Compliance
C2	Pass for Defensive Driving
C3	Pass for Disposition & Plea
C4	Pass for Deferred
PH	Preliminary Hearing
PT	Pre-Trial Hearing
TR	Bench Trial
TM	Essay due
IA	Initial Appearance
MB	Collections
SC	Show Cause

OM

Outstanding sent to DPS (deny renewal of license)