

Research Methods: Rural Appointed Representation in Texas

The data in this interactive map comes from the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This document contains methodological notes on how the data were constructed and links to further resources.

Appointed Representation Rates

Appointed representation rates are published by TIDC through the Commission's Data Portal at <https://smartdefense.pprinet.tamu.edu> where they are referred to as 'appointment rates.' They are computed annually by dividing the number of cases in which a county reported paying for representation by that county's estimated total caseload. These two data elements are drawn from different sources, and TIDC adjusts the resulting rates to account for anomalies in the data. Because of the limitations inherent in this method, we regard these data as a valid, but an approximate measure of the percentage of defendants represented by appointed counsel. Appointed representation rates can be broken down into those for misdemeanor cases and felony cases.

TIDC describes the calculation of these metrics as follows.

In Misdemeanor Cases:

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of misdemeanor court-appointed cases paid (reported by auditors in the Indigent Defense Expenditure Report)}}{\text{Average of new misdemeanor cases added and cases disposed (reported by courts to the Office of Court Administration)}}$$

In Felony Cases:

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of felony court-appointed cases paid (reported by auditors in the Indigent Defense Expenditure Report)}}{\text{Average of new felony cases added and cases disposed (reported by courts to the Office of Court Administration)}}$$

Adjustments to Data:

Because appointment rates combine information from the Office of the Court Administration's Court Reports and the Indigent Defense Commission's Indigent Defense Expenditure Report, differences in collection periods, small numbers of cases, or reporting error by counties may

produce out-of-range responses. To correct for these anomalies, appointment rates over 100% are reported as 100%.

Note: Appointed representation rate data are not available in all counties in all years. Where data are missing the number “-999” appears.

Rural-Urban Continuum Codes

The Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (RUCC) are distributed by the USDA and form a classification scheme that distinguishes metropolitan counties by the population size of their metro area and nonmetropolitan counties by the degree of urbanization and adjacency to a metro area. Each county in the United States is assigned one of the 9 codes. ‘Metro’ counties are ranked 1-3 in the codes and ‘Non-metro’ counties are ranked 4-9. 2013 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes were used for the classification of all counties as metro or non-metro areas in this map. For more information, see <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes/>.

A complete description of the 9 codes is below.

Code Description

Metro counties:

- 1 Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more
- 2 Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population
- 3 Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population

Nonmetro counties:

- 4 Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area
- 5 Urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjacent to a metro area
- 6 Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, adjacent to a metro area
- 7 Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent to a metro area
- 8 Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area
- 9 Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, not adjacent to a metro area