

# TEXAS COURT SECURITY INCIDENTS REPORT



FISCAL YEAR 2014

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION

DAVID SLAYTON

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

Published By  
OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION  
DAVID SLAYTON, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

205 WEST 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET, SUITE 600  
POST OFFICE BOX 12066  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2066  
(512) 463-1625  
FAX: (512) 463-1648  
*WWW.TXCOURTS.GOV*

NOVEMBER 2014

## ***Background***

Article 102.017(f), Code of Criminal Procedure, requires a local administrative judge to submit a written report to the Office of Court Administration (OCA) regarding any incident involving court security that occurs in or around a building housing a court. A security incident is defined as any adverse event that threatens the security of a person or property, or causes or may cause significant disruption to functions of the court due to a breach in security.

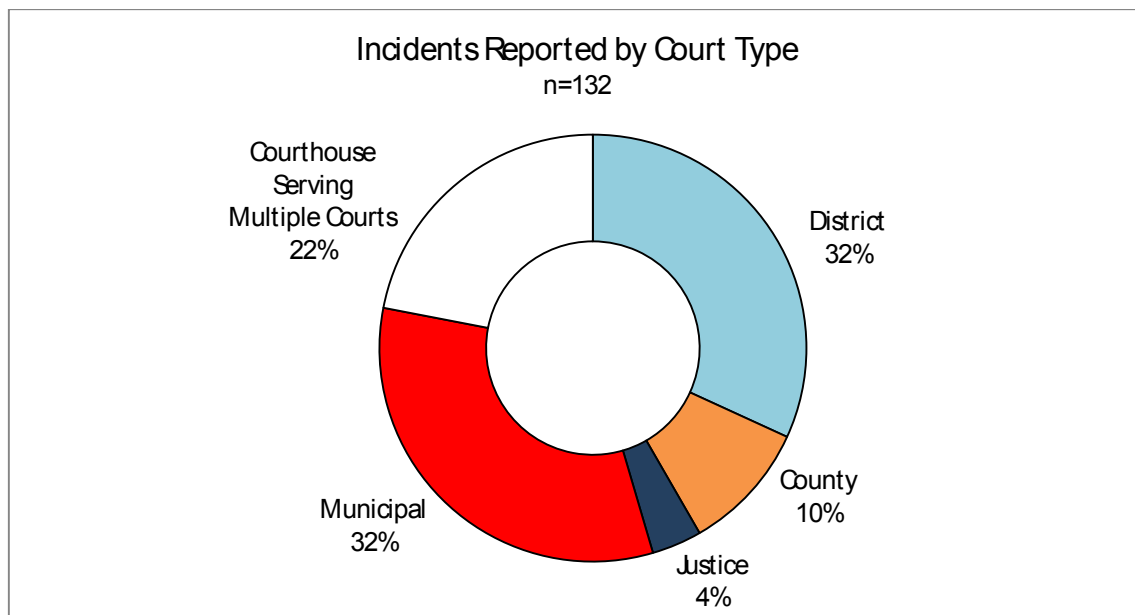
The purpose of the Security Incident Report is to collect concrete, quantitative information about the frequency and nature of the security threats facing the judiciary.

## ***Total Incident Reports for FY 2014***

Between September 1, 2013 and August 31, 2014, **132 incident reports** were submitted to OCA. This corresponds to an **average of 11 incidents per month**. In comparison, 159 incidents were reported during the previous fiscal year.

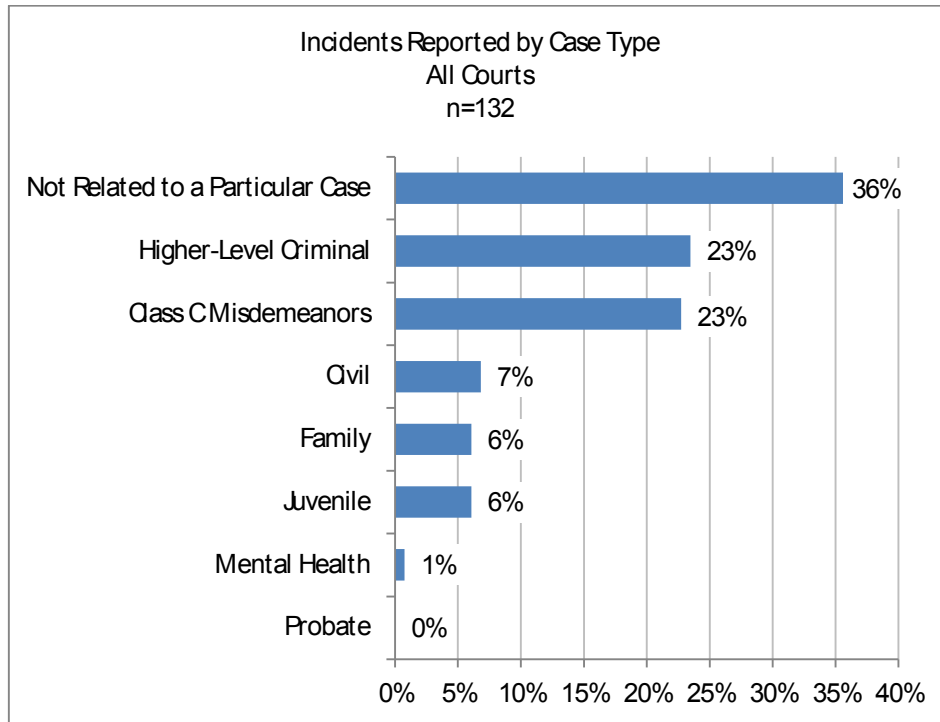
## ***Incidents Reported by Court Type***

Of the 132 incident reports submitted, 32 percent were submitted by **district courts** (42 incidents), 10 percent by **county-level courts** (13 incidents), 4 percent by **justice courts** (5 incidents), 33 percent by **municipal courts** (43 incidents), and 22 percent by a **courthouse serving multiple court types** (29 incidents).

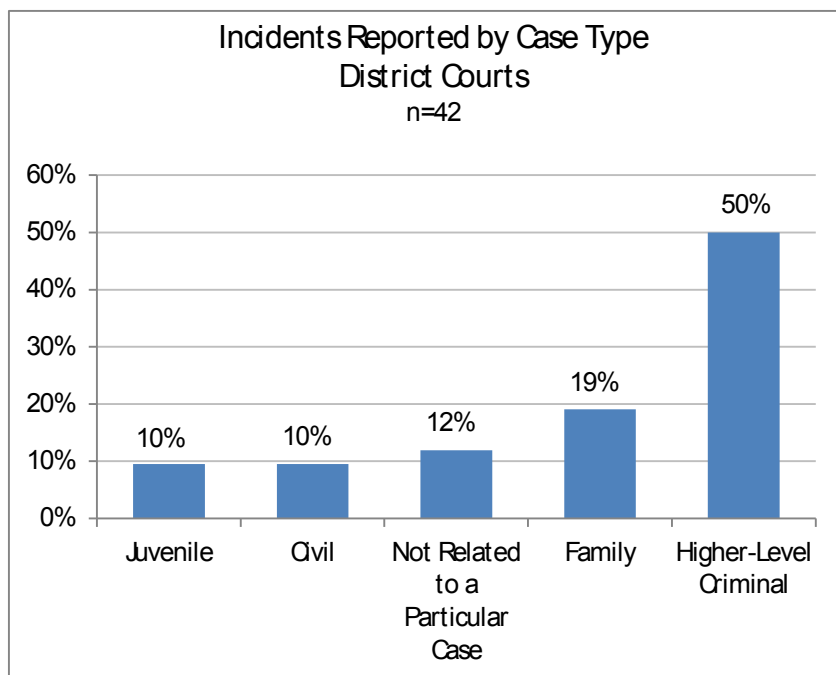


**Incidents Reported by Case Type**

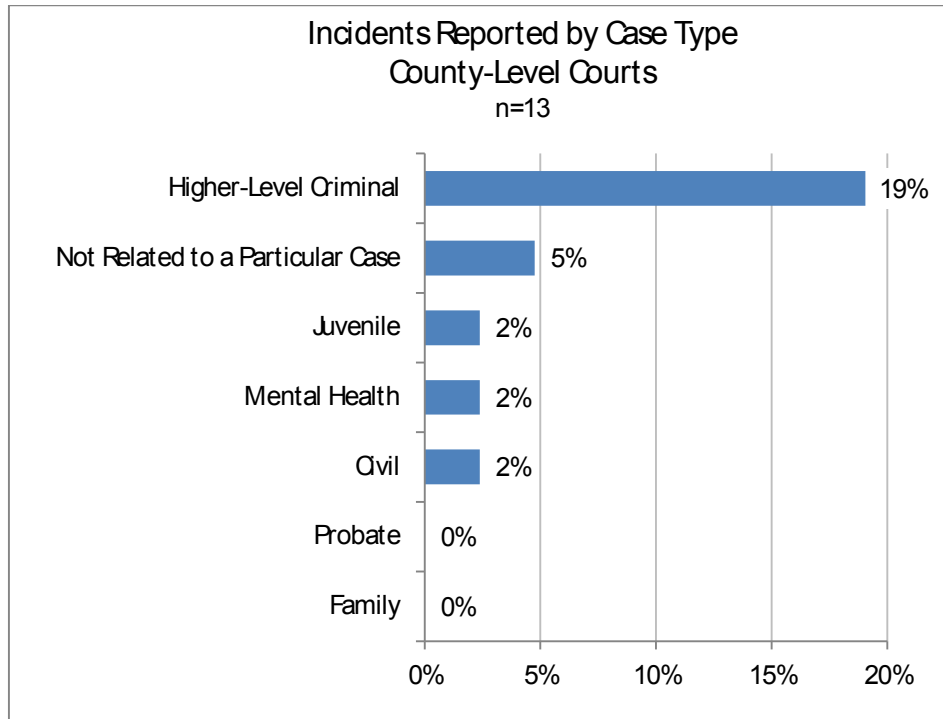
Thirty-six percent of all reported incidents were **not related to a particular case** (47 incidents). Twenty-three percent of all reported incidents involved **felony and higher-level misdemeanor criminal cases** (31 incidents) while **Class C misdemeanor offenses** constituted 23 percent (30 incidents) of reported incidents.



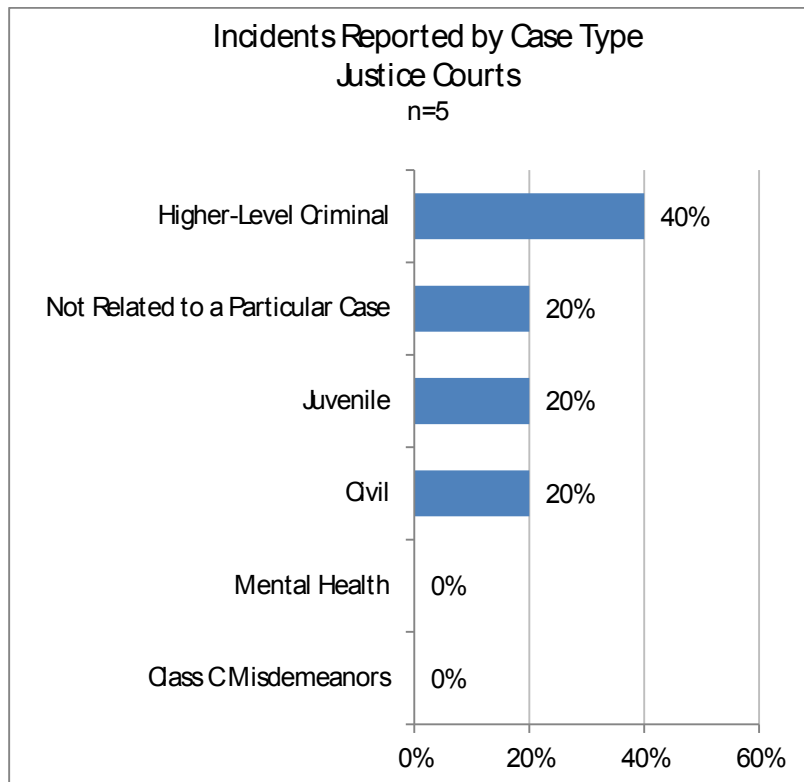
Of the incidents reported by district courts, 50 percent were related to **criminal cases** (21 incidents), and 19 percent involved **family cases** (8 incidents).



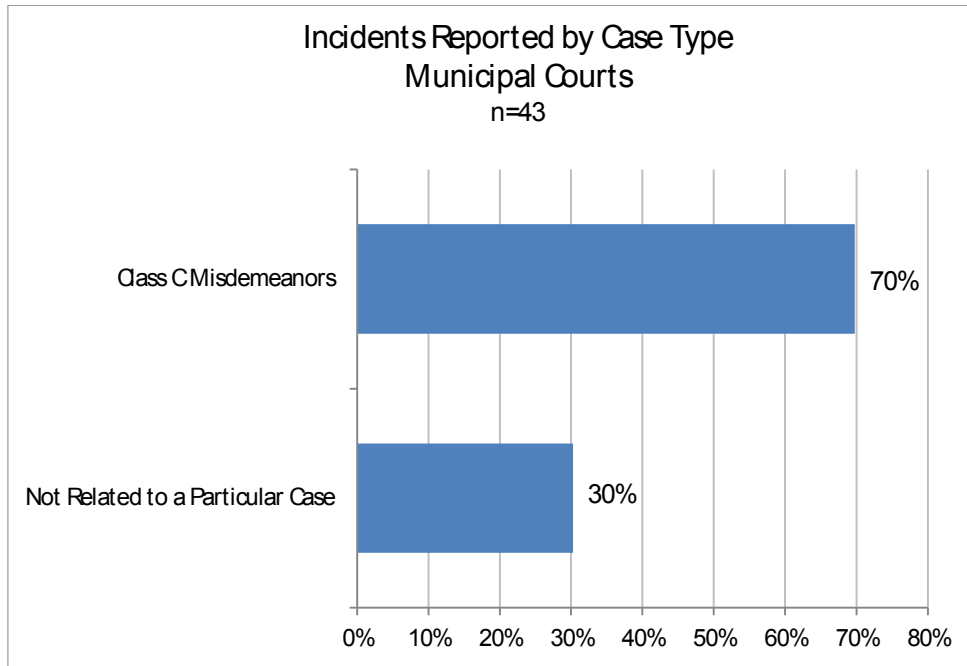
Incidents reported by county-level courts were most often related to **higher-level misdemeanor cases** (19 percent, or 8 incidents).



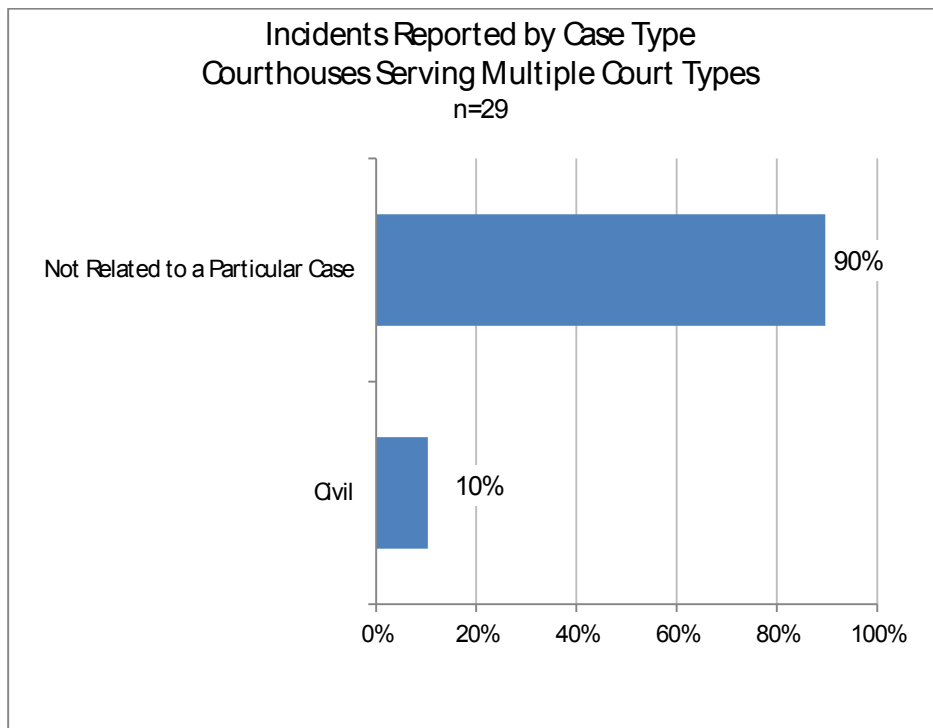
Five incidents were reported by **justice courts**. Two incidents were related to criminal cases while other incidents were evenly split amongst three case categories.



Incidents reported by municipal courts were related to **Class C misdemeanors** (70 percent, or 30 incidents), or **not related to a particular case** (30 percent, or 13 incidents).



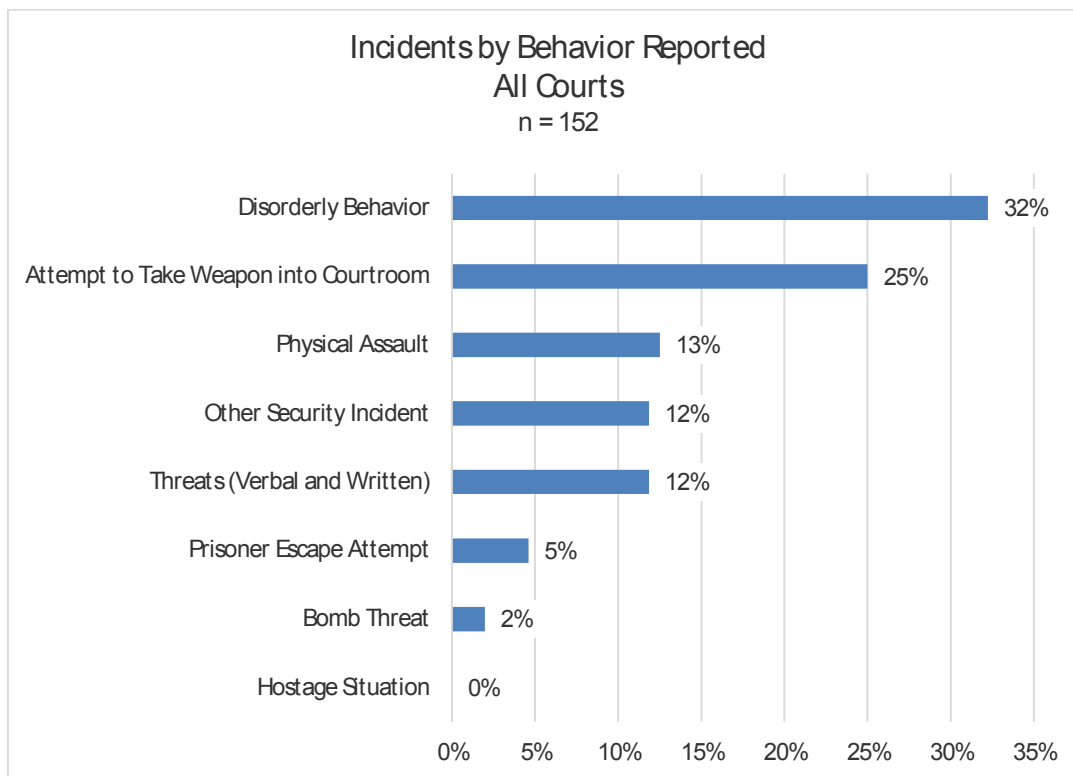
For courthouses that serve more than one court type, most incidents were **not related to a particular case** (26 incidents).



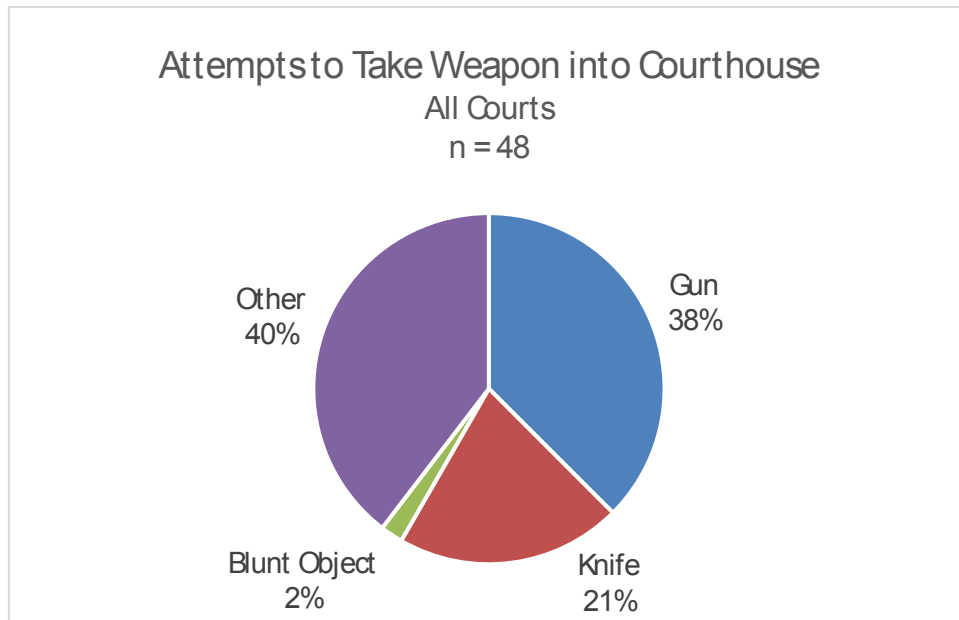
### *Incidents by Behavior Reported*

The following charts summarize the security incidents by type of behavior reported. Incidents may involve multiple behaviors; for example, a security incident may involve both a verbal threat and a physical assault. Therefore, the number of behaviors reported is more than the number of reported incidents (132 incidents).

**Disorderly behavior** (49 reports) accounted for 32 percent of all reported behaviors. The next most common behavior reported were **attempts to take a weapon into a courthouse** (25 percent, or 38 reports), followed by **physical assault** (13 percent, or 19 reports).

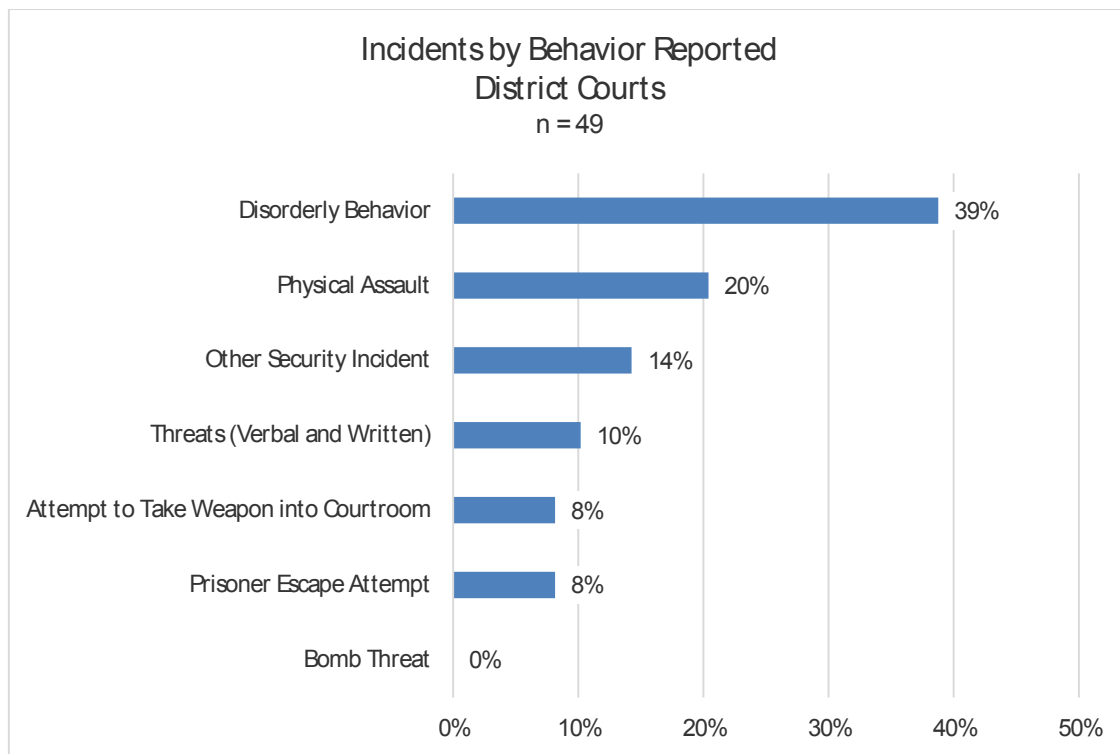


Forty percent of attempts to take a weapon into a courtroom or courthouse involved weapons other than guns or knives. Most of these incidents involved knuckles. Guns were involved in 38 percent of attempts.





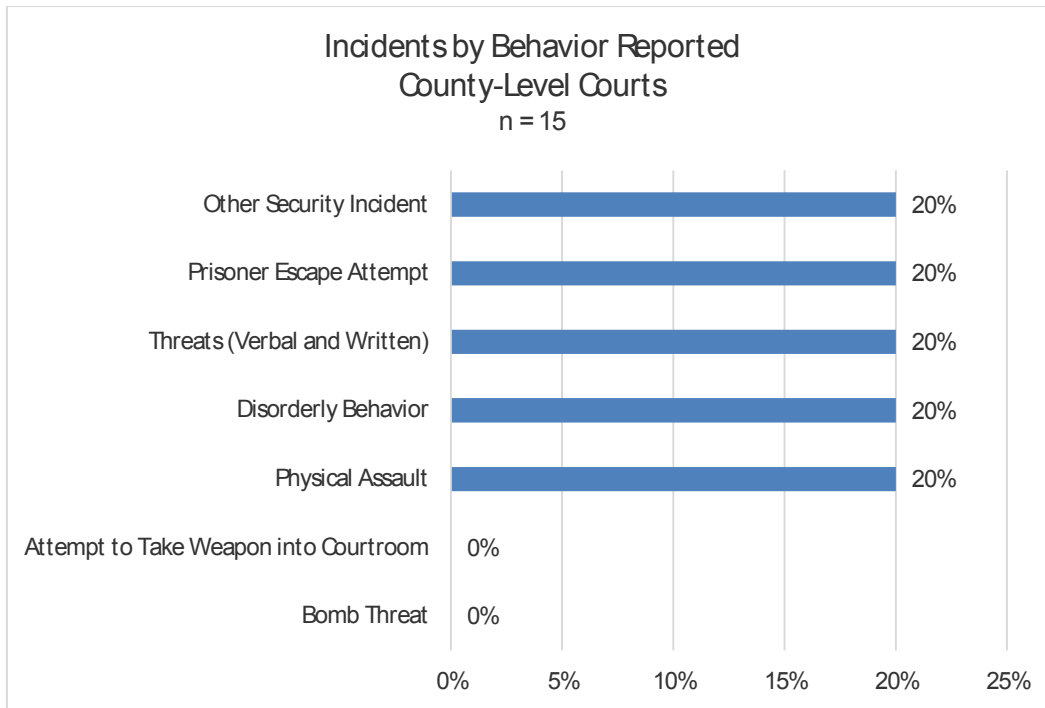
In district courts, **disorderly behavior** (19 reports) accounted for 39 percent of reported behaviors. The next most common behavior reported by district courts was **physical assault** (20 percent, or 10 reports).



The following are examples of incidents that occurred in district courts during the year:

- A member of the public approached the courthouse screening area. As he arrived at the x-ray machine, the individual stopped and said that he had forgotten to take his gun out of his boot. He was arrested and taken to the court security office where a revolver and live ammunition were removed from his boot.
- An individual was yelling outside in front of the courthouse and disrupting proceedings. A deputy directed the man to cease his yelling and to remove the poster boards he had placed all over the courthouse steps. The individual complied and then entered the building with a warning of the consequences if his disruptive behavior continued. He was instructed to leave his poster boards at the security station while he conducted his business.
- At a detention hearing a judge ordered a juvenile to be detained at another county's juvenile detention center. The juvenile became agitated and vocal and demanded to be held at the local county jail, stating that he would hurt the other juveniles at the detention center if he wasn't sent to jail. The judge told a deputy to advise the detention center staff of the juvenile's threats and dismissed the juvenile from court. As bailiffs escorted the juvenile to a holding cell he threatened and became combative with the bailiffs and made threats against the judge. Once alone in the holding cell, the juvenile began hitting his head on the walls and kicking the cage gate until transport arrived. After a struggle to restrain and remove the juvenile, he was escorted back to the detention center.

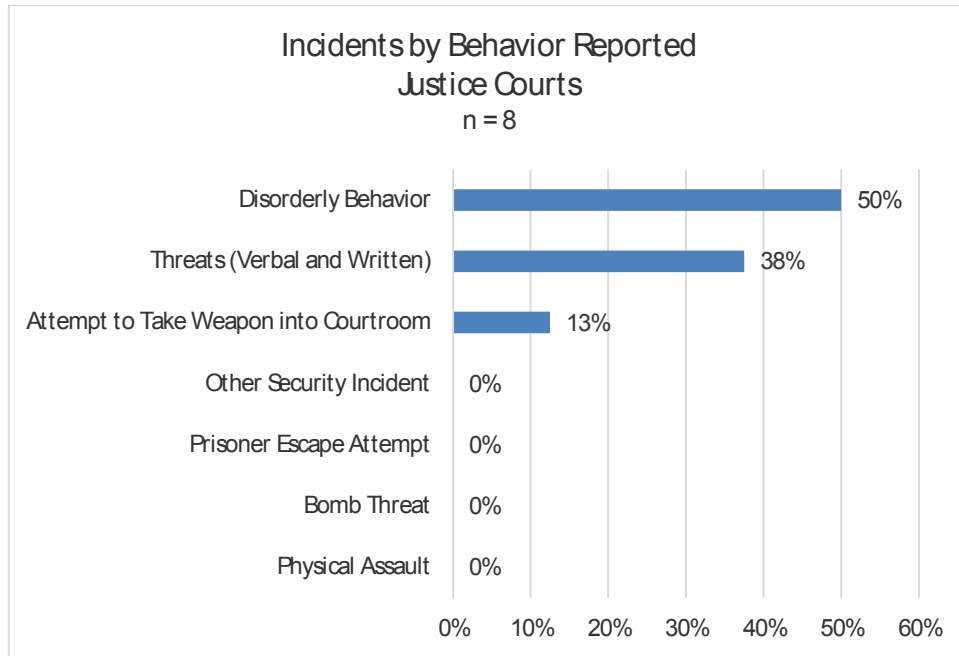
In county-level courts, reported behaviors were equally distributed amongst five behaviors (20 percent or 3 reports, each).



The following are examples of incidents that occurred in county-level courts during the year:

- During a mental health hearing conducted via tele-monitor, a defendant became agitated and walked away from the monitor while muttering that he was going to kill the judge. An attorney present immediately requested that the defendant's remarks be added to the hearing transcript.
- A criminal defendant assaulted a mental health counselor in open court as he was being evaluated by the counselor. The mental health counselor sustained a bloody nose and swelling which required an EMS response.
- A courthouse security supervisor was notified by the city police department that a threat had been made on the county courthouse. An individual had posted on her Facebook page that if her brother was sent to the state's juvenile justice program, she would blow up the county courthouse and the probation center. The individual, a juvenile, was taken into custody at her local school for issuing a terroristic threat.

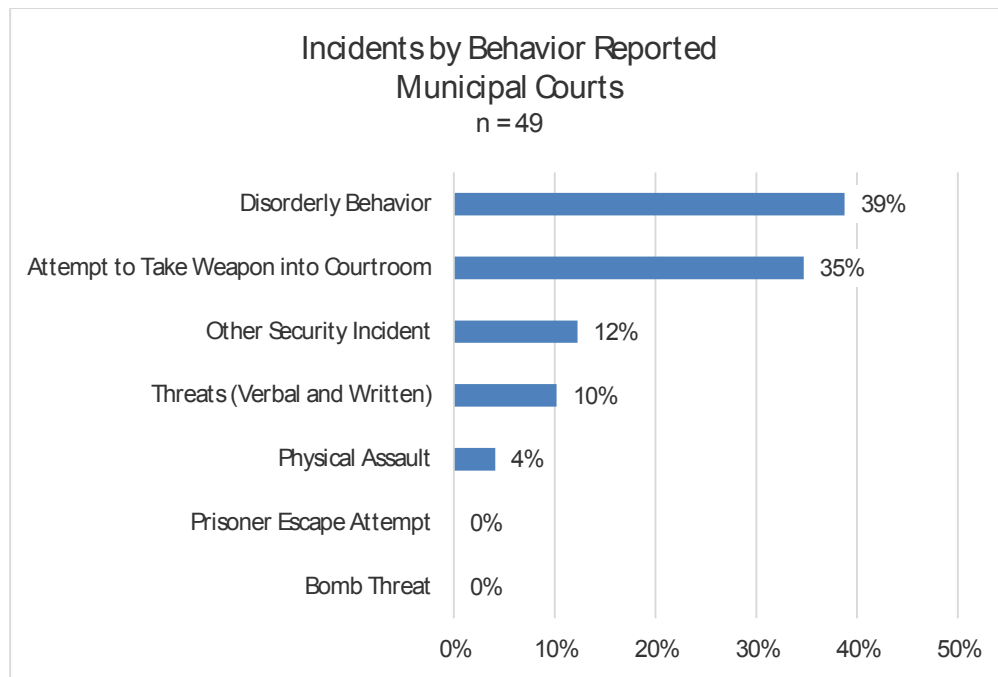
Only eight reported behaviors were reported from justice courts. Four incidents (50 percent) involved **disorderly behavior**, and three or 38 percent concerned **written or verbal threats**.



The following are some examples of incidents that occurred in justice courts during the year:

- A defendant disrupted court and would not comply with judge's instruction to sit still and not leave court. He was handcuffed and asked to sit down. He lunged at the deputy resulting in being taken down to the floor and restrained. The police department was called and the defendant was arrested for hindering official court proceedings.
  
- As his case was being heard, a defendant became hostile in his speech and demeanor. After being warned that he would be held in contempt for his actions, the defendant launched into a violent, threatening barrage of foul language and grew increasingly out of control. The panic alert security alarm was activated to summon help to secure order in the court room. Police responded, and the defendant became more out of control. It was necessary to take defendant down to gain control of him using handcuffs.

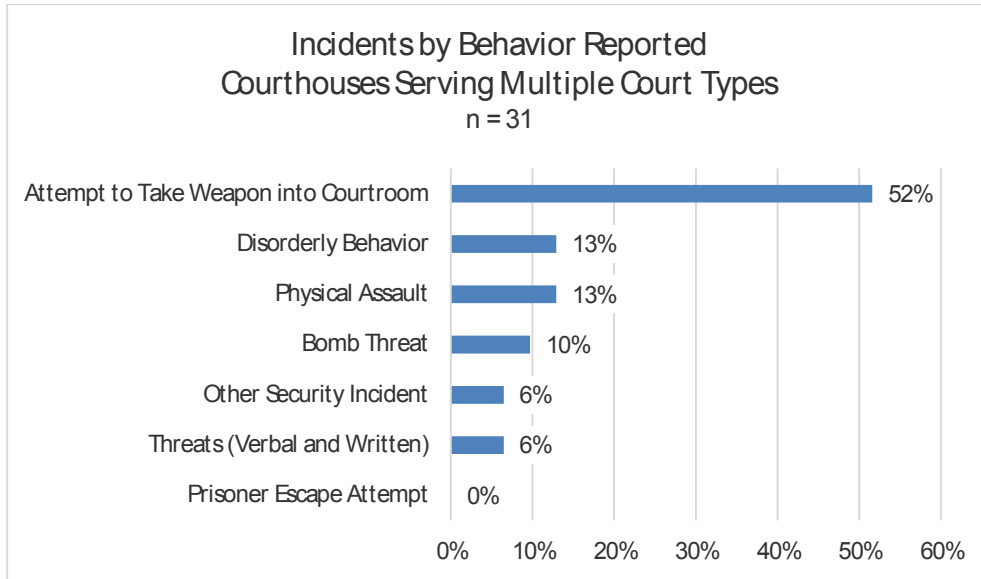
In municipal courts, **disorderly behavior** (39 percent, or 19 reports) and an **attempt to take a weapon into the courthouse** (35 percent, or 17 reports) accounted for the majority of reported behaviors.



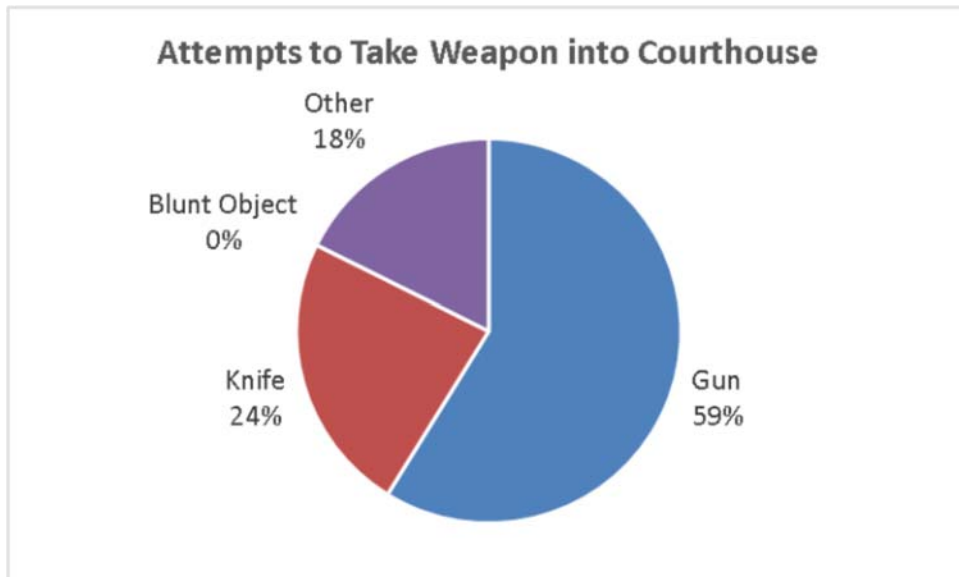
The following are some examples of incidents that occurred in municipal courts during the year:

- A hearing officer reported that a defendant whom she had previously found liable for a parking citation showed up at the hearing officer's residence while she was parking in her driveway. The defendant was apologetic but the hearing officer asked that an investigation take place due to her concern about the defendant knowing her home address.
- A defendant refused multiple times to state his name before a judge. He then stated that he was a sovereign citizen with special rights and that the court had no jurisdiction or laws over him. He turned on his cell phone and began to video record the judge. The judge instructed the bailiff to tell the defendant to turn off his cell phone and leave the courtroom but the defendant refused. The judge found the defendant in contempt of court and he was escorted out of the courtroom.
- A defendant threw a milkshake at a judge when she entered the reception area from her office. The judge was startled but not injured. The defendant left the courthouse but was arrested and transported to a local hospital for an emergency detention order.

In incidents involving courthouses serving multiple court types, an **attempt to take a weapon into the courthouse** accounted for the majority of reported behaviors (52 percent, or 16 reports).

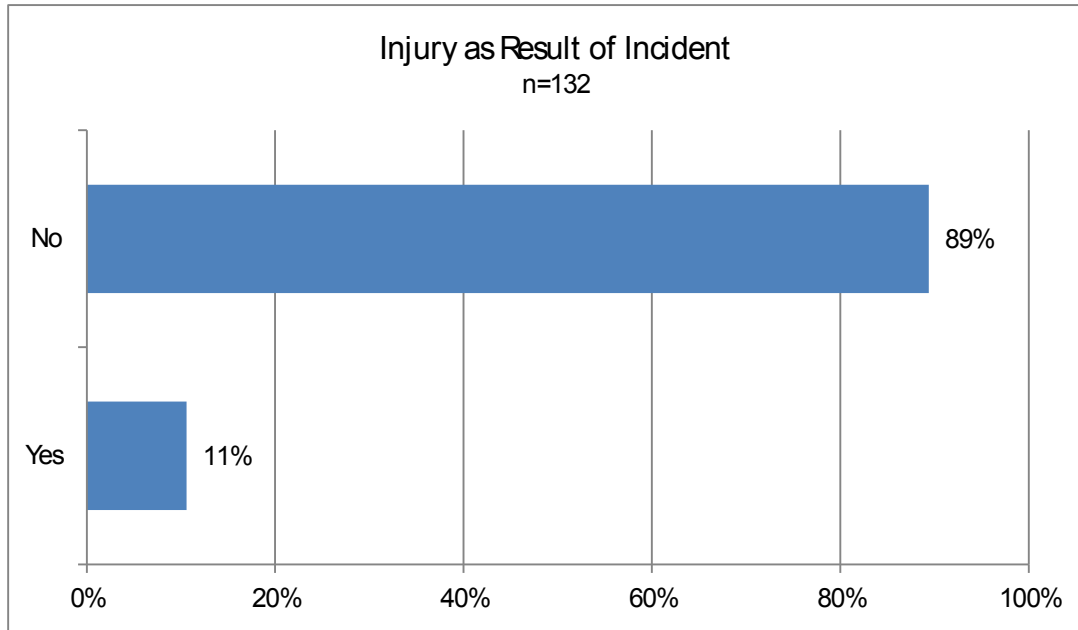


The majority of attempts to take a weapon into the courthouse involved guns. Other weapons included knives and daggers, brass or plastic knuckles, and an expandable baton.

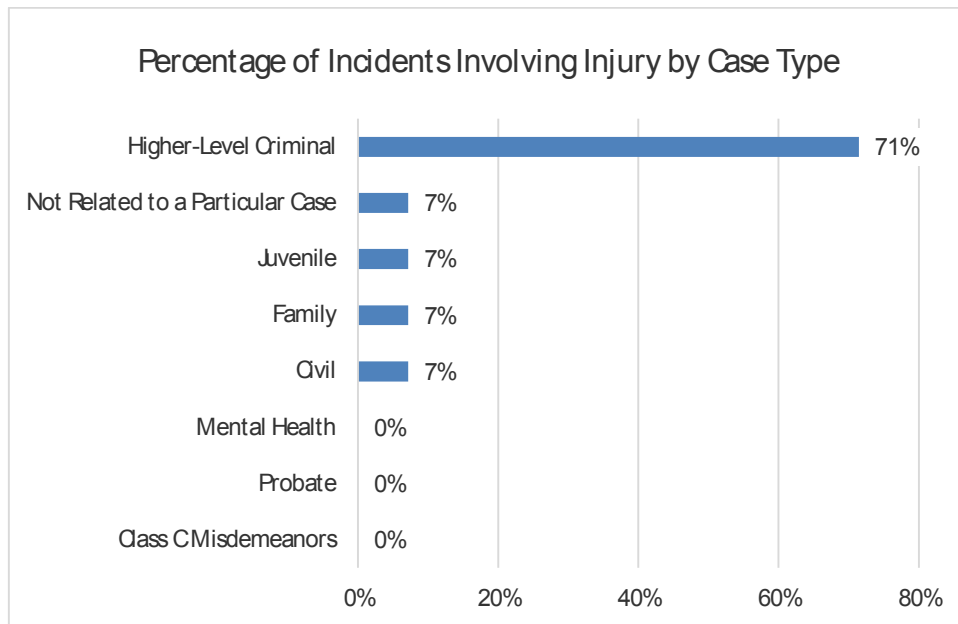


### *Incidents Resulting in Injury*

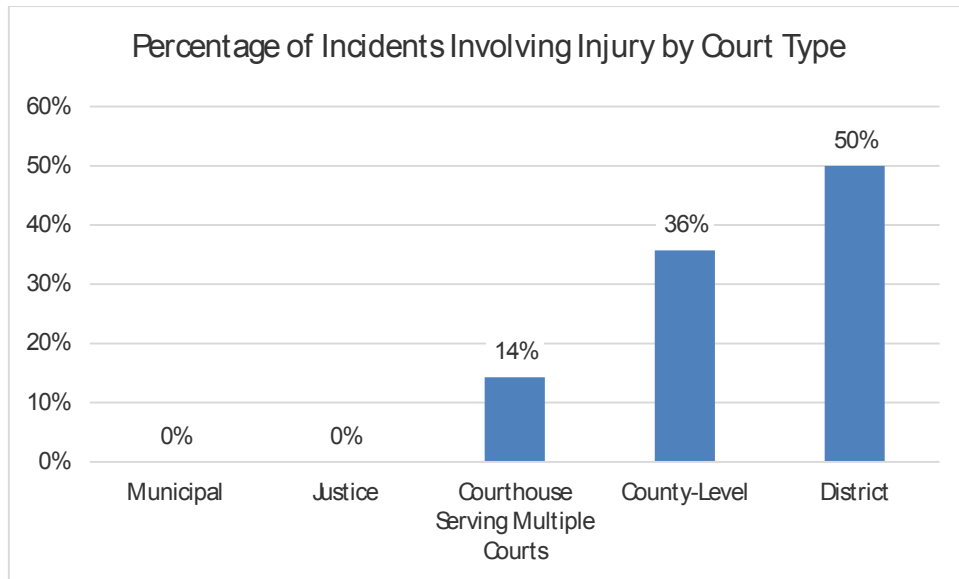
Eleven percent of the reported incidents resulted in **injury** (14 incidents). In 89 percent of incidents, **no injuries** were reported (118 incidents).



More than 70 percent of incidents related to a **felony or class A or B misdemeanor** case resulted in an injury. Incidents related to **civil** cases, **family** cases, **juvenile** cases and incidents **not related to a particular case** resulted in an injury at one case per case type, or at 7 percent per case type.

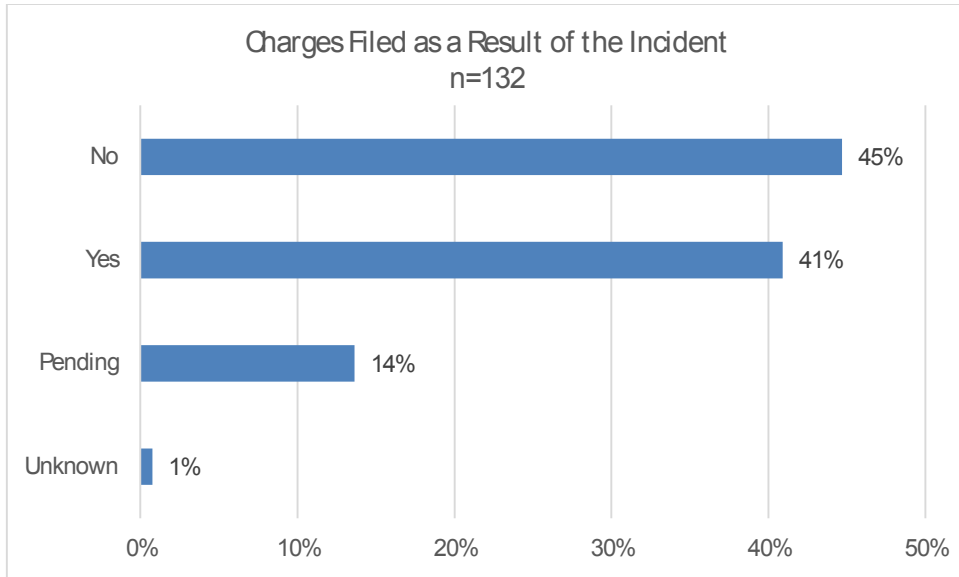


Fifty percent of incidents reported from **district** courts involved injury, as did 36 percent of incidents reported from **county** courts. An injury occurred in 14 percent of incidents reported from **courthouses serving multiple court types**.

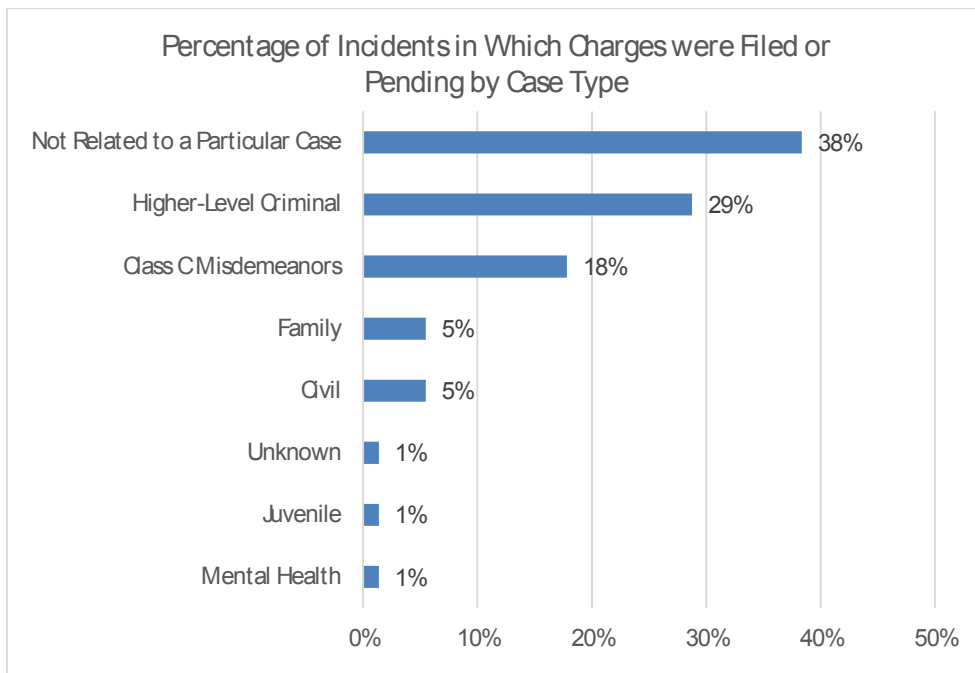


### *Incidents Resulting in Charges Filed*

**Charges were filed** in 41 percent of reported incidents (54 incidents). In 14 percent of the incidents, **charges were pending** (18 incidents). **Charges were not filed** in 45 percent of the incidents (59 incidents).

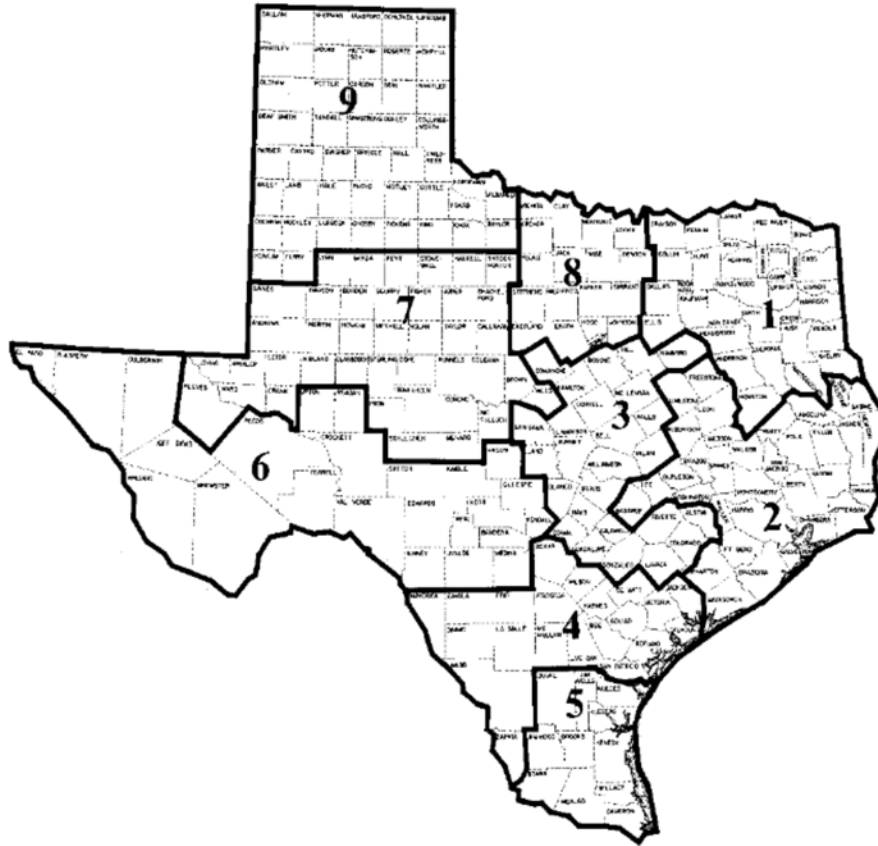


Charges were most frequently filed for incidents **not related to a particular case** (38 percent, or 28 incidents) followed by **felony and higher-level misdemeanor** (29 percent) and **class C misdemeanor criminal cases** (18 percent).





## Incidents Reported by Administrative Judicial Region (AJR)



<b>Incidents Reported by Administrative Judicial Region</b>		
<b>Region</b>	<b>Number of Incidents</b>	<b>Percentage of All Incidents</b>
1	19	14%
2	26	20%
3	47	36%
4	26	20%
5	1	1%
6	4	3%
7	3	2%
8	3	2%
9	3	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Incident Reports Submitted by District Courts</b>				
<b>County</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bell	1	3	3	7
Bexar	16	12	3	31
Collin	0	1	1	2
Coryell	0	1	0	1
Dallas	13	12	5	30
Eastland	0	0	2	2
Fannin	0	2	1	3
Fort Bend	1	1	1	3
Galveston	0	1	1	2
Gonzales	1	0	0	1
Guadalupe	0	1	0	1
Harris	0	9	6	15
Harrison	1	1	0	2
Hill	0	0	1	1
Hood	2	0	0	2
Jefferson	3	0	0	3
Johnson	0	1	1	2
Kleberg	0	1	0	1
Lubbock	0	1	2	3
Matagorda	3	1	0	4
McLennan	0	0	2	2
Montgomery	2	1	0	3
Nueces	1	0	0	1
Rusk	1	1	0	2
Tarrant	5	5	0	10
Titus	0	0	2	2
Tom Green	2	3	0	5
Travis	1	3	11	15

<b>Incident Reports Submitted by District Courts (continued)</b>				
<b>County</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Van Zandt	0	1	0	1
Victoria	1	0	0	1
Webb	2	1	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>161</b>

<b>Incident Reports Submitted by County-Level Courts</b>				
<b>County</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bexar	5	4	3	12
Caldwell	0	1	0	1
Cass	1	0	0	1
Collin	1	0	0	1
Dallas	4	6	2	12
El Paso	3	3	0	6
Fort Bend	2	0	0	2
Galveston	0	0	1	1
Gray	1	0	0	1
Harris	0	5	5	10
Hunt	0	0	1	1
Jefferson	1	0	0	1
Lee	0	0	1	1
Matagorda	1	0	0	1
Midland	0	2	0	2
Tarrant	1	0	0	1
Travis	0	3	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>57</b>

<b>Incident Reports Submitted by Justice Courts</b>				
<b>County</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Aransas	0	1	0	1
Collin	0	0	1	1
Colorado	0	0	1	1
Harris	0	1	2	3
Hood	1	0	0	1
Kaufman	1	0	1	2
Lubbock	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>

<b>Incident Reports Submitted by Municipal Courts</b>				
<b>City</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Angleton	1	0	0	1
Arlington	1	0	0	1
Austin	10	24	20	54
Balch Springs	0	1	0	1
Baytown	1	0	0	1
Beaumont	0	1	0	1
Brazoria	1	0	0	1
Bryan	1	3	0	4
Comanche	0	0	1	1
Conroe	0	1	0	1
Corsicana	1	0	1	2
El Paso	0	1	1	2
Eules	1	0	0	1
Forney	1	0	3	4
Fort Worth	6	1	0	7
Frisco	0	1	1	2
Houston	0	4	6	10
Hurst	0	1	1	2

<b>Incident Reports Submitted by Municipal Courts (continued)</b>				
<b>City</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Kerrville	0	0	2	2
Killeen	0	0	1	1
La Marque	1	0	0	1
Longview	1	0	0	1
McKinney	0	0	1	1
Mercedes	0	1	0	1
Missouri City	2	0	0	2
Monahans	0	0	1	1
New Braunfels	0	0	1	1
North Richland Hills	1	0	0	1
Pearland	0	1	1	2
Rockwall	2	0	0	2
Round Rock	1	0	0	1
San Angelo	1	1	2	4
Tom Bean	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>118</b>

<b>Incident Reports Submitted—Not Related to a Particular Court</b>				
<b>County</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bexar	18	19	20	57
Coryell	0	0	1	1
El Paso	0	2	1	3
Fannin	0	1	0	1
Fort Bend	0	0	1	1
Harris	0	0	1	1
Lubbock	0	2	1	3
Montgomery	0	1	0	1
Tarrant	1	1	0	2
Travis	0	1	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>75</b>