



2025 Workload Study Report

Introduction and Background



2025 Workload Study: Introduction

Tennessee's criminal justice system continues to operate under growing demands, from increasingly complex cases to heightened expectations for efficiency, transparency and victim support. At the core of this system are the professionals who carry out the day-to-day responsibilities of prosecution: Assistant District Attorneys (ADAs), Criminal Secretaries (CSs), Victim-Witness Coordinators (VWCs), and Criminal Investigators (CIs). For their workload, dedication and efficiency are central to the fair and timely pursuit of justice across the state.

The 2025 Workload Study represents a renewed effort to accurately measure and evaluate the demands placed on these key personnel. Building on prior research and methodology, most notably the 1999 Tennessee weighted caseload study conducted by the American Prosecutors Research Institute and the 2008 North Carolina weighted caseload study conducted by the National Center for State Courts, this study uses updated, data-driven approaches to assess how time and effort are distributed across various criminal case types and job functions. This workload model allows for a more precise analysis than traditional caseload statistics, providing a realistic view of how much time each role both *spends* and actually *requires* in order to handle the volume and complexity of today's criminal cases.

Since the last study, the criminal justice landscape in Tennessee has experienced significant shifts including legislative changes, technological advancements, staffing fluctuations, and evolving victim advocacy practices. The 2025 study reflects these changes and is designed to ensure that resource planning keeps pace with modern prosecutorial responsibilities. The unique aspect of the 2025 update took a different approach in assessing workload capacity by taking samples of staff that are representative of every district in order to get an in-depth look into how workload and efficiency vary by district.

The primary goals of this study are to:

- Quantitatively assess the workload of Assistant District Attorneys, Criminal Secretaries, Victim-Witness Coordinators, and Criminal Investigators across Tennessee's judicial districts.
- Identify areas of staffing imbalance and resource strain.
- Provide a credible foundation for future personnel allocation, budgeting, and organizational planning.
- Support long-term efforts to improve prosecutorial efficiency, case outcomes, and victim services.

Grounded in empirical observation and strengthened by the participation of professionals throughout the state, this study underscores Tennessee's continued commitment to ensuring that its prosecutorial offices are appropriately staffed and equipped to meet the demands of public service in the criminal justice system.



2025 Workload Study: Participants

The Workload Study was conducted over an 8-week period, beginning on **April 7th, 2025** and concluding on **May 30th, 2025**. Participants were encouraged to track their time for the entirety of the study.

Participants were responsible for tracking **ALL** time spent throughout the day, including travel time and non-case related activities.

- Travel time includes any travel that is related to work-related activities (excluding a daily commute). This includes driving to and from different courts or traveling to meetings and other events.
- An example of non-case related activities is community outreach and public engagement.
- Participants tracked their time using **Clockify**, a web-based, user-friendly platform.

Time was tracked using a two-tiered system. A full overview of the time categories for each position can be found on the next page.

- **Tier One** (labeled as “Project” in Clockify) details the type of case the participant worked on. **Tier one is the same across all four positions.**
- **Tier Two** (labeled as “Tasks” in Clockify) outlines the nature of the work associated with the case or project worked on. **Tier two options vary by position.**



2025 Workload Study: Methodology

I. Study Design

The 2025 workload study was designed to measure how prosecutorial resources are allocated across Tennessee's judicial districts. To capture this, roughly 25% of Assistant District Attorneys (ADAs) and 40% of support staff (Victim Witness Coordinators, Criminal Investigators, and Criminal Secretaries) were sampled statewide. Participants logged all work time across 12 standardized categories, including all case-related time (felonies by class, misdemeanors, VOPs, juvenile cases, multi-case work), non-case related work, travel time, and vacation and sick leave.

These time records were scaled to be representative of the full prosecutorial workforce, providing statewide estimates of how staff hours are distributed by function. Combined with available statewide case counts, this method highlights how workload compares with staffing capacity, offering a clear picture of resource pressures.

The 2025 analysis is unique in the fact that while we received the time split by categories, we have to extrapolate from the corresponding samples of our staff positions to be representative of the whole state. This requires us to assume representativeness among the sample size of participants selected. With this assumption, we are able to create case weights for each of the four staff positions (ADA, VWC, CI, CS) by charge type. This brings a sound depiction of system workload and resource deficiencies and allowed for quantifying per-case productivity (the duration of a "typical" case) or district-to-district differences in efficiency. This requires the assumption that all of the time recorded by each of the four positions surveyed is representative of time that each group, as a whole, would spend on the corresponding case type (when adjusted post time-study collection). The assumption relies on representativeness in terms of case complexity handled by the sample, case mix, consistent and rigorous time-recording practices, and case distribution across staff of varying levels of age, expertise, and years of service.

It is also important to note that while the majority of ADA, VWC, CS, and CI positions within the State of Tennessee are state-funded employees, a handful of select districts have additional staff who are funded through grant or local level sources. All of these staff, regardless of funding source(s), participate in handling the prosecutorial nature of the workload as a whole, so the weights and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Need calculated in this study are indicative of **total system need**. The resulting FTE gap represents the number of **additional state-funded positions needed** to ensure that the workload of the system as a whole is adequately covered.



2025 Workload Study: Methodology

A. Case Weights for ADAs, VWCs, CIs, and CSs

After the study concluded, the data from the time study and the caseload filings data were used to calculate case weights. These weights represent the time that it *currently* takes a staff to complete a specific case, depending on charge type. In order to ensure equality in possible staff and resource allocation decisions being made in this report, the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference used a set of case weights across all 32 districts that was representative of the state as a whole.

The case weights for each case type were calculated by aggregating all the time that an ADA recorded for that charge type, and then dividing by the annual case filings. Because a sample of each staff position was taken from each district, the weights calculated depend on representativeness. The weights calculated are intended to give an idea, based on the current conditions of workload, how much time on average it takes to complete one case of a specific charge type.

$$\text{Case Weight}_{\text{type}} = \frac{\text{Total Case-Related Time (hours) for Type}}{\text{Total Filings for Type}}$$

B. Day and Year Values

To calculate resource need, the application of case weights, case filings, and year value are all used in the assessment. A year value is defined as the amount of time a staff member has available for case-related work within an annual time frame. The relationship between all three is expressed as follows:

$$\text{Workload (hours)} = \text{Case Weight}_{\text{type}} \times \text{Filings}_{\text{type}}$$

$$\text{Resource Need (FTE)} = \frac{\text{Workload (hours)}}{\text{Year Value (hours)}}$$

Year values for each of the four position categories were calculated in a standard two-step framework. First, the amount of time for case-related work available each day was calculated, assuming what is to be the 'day value'. Next, the day values were multiplied by the number of working days per year. The output yielded the year values for each of the four position categories – ADA, VWC, CI, and CS.



2025 Workload Study: Methodology

The year values for each of the positions were obtained and verified on two levels. The first level of calculating the year value required using participant time logs and assessing which time categories were considered ‘case-related’, and which categories were considered ‘work-related’, but not ‘case-related’. Total participant case-related time was thus divided by total participant work-time, yielding the year value.

The year value calculated via the logs was then directly compared against the year value calculated using human resources data collected by the Conference Staff and Station Annual Report. After subtracting weekends, holidays, vacation and sick leave, and required conference training attendances, the output calculated was the average amount of working days a staff position has a year for case-related work. Multiplying this value by the day value yields the average hours available per year for case-related work for a particular staff position. The expressions utilized are as follows:

$$\text{Day Value (hours)} = \text{Total Workday (hours)} - (\text{Lunch/Breaks} + \text{Non-Case-Related Time})$$

$$\text{Year Value (hours)} = \text{Day Value (hours)} \times \text{Working Days per Year}$$

C. Utilization Rate

The 2025 Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference took a different approach in calculating the gap for resource staffing needs. Instead of refining the case weights directly vis-à-vis Delphi panel adjustments, we compared the case-related time reported by each staffing category against an accepted “target utilization” level representative of sustainable practice. This target utilization percentage is emblematic of a staff’s workday that can be reasonably and efficiently devoted to case-related duties. The remaining percentage is reserved for all other work that a staff’s role consists of, including administrative non-case related duties, trainings, and other office specific obligations.

For this report, we adopted a target utilization rate of 80%. This utilization rate was compared against current workload for each staffing position in order to produce the shortage estimates for ADA, VWC, CI, and CS. The rate difference was then multiplied by the FTE positions that currently exist, with the output being the demand based on the workload. The difference in the demanded FTE from the current FTE reflect the need.



2025 Workload Study: Limitations

The findings of this workload study should be interpreted with an understanding of several methodological and data-related limitations:

Sampling Scope and Representativeness

Sample Design

The study employed a **purposive, stratified selection design** rather than complete random sampling. Participants for the study were purposively, non-randomly selected to incorporate diversity in the survey. Participants were chosen with diversity across multiple parameters including (i) years of service/tenure, (ii) age, (iii) expertise and functional role in the office, (iv) office size and geography (rural, transitional, urban), and (v) typical workload intensity.

Implications

While a purposive criteria improves coverage of inherently diverse workloads, the lack of completely random assignment means that the sample *could* still differ systematically when compared to the full workforce. To account for this, reported case weights and FTEs Needed for demand estimates have been **scaled to the statewide caseload** and should be interpreted **more as estimations** rather than rigid, precise population parameters. Where feasible, **post-stratification** was also applied by aligning time shares to known filing counts by charge type to reduce selection bias as much as possible.

Incomplete Case Count Data

Not all counties are represented in the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) General Sessions and Criminal Court aggregate case count data due to differences in local reporting practices. This has been a systemic issue in Tennessee for some time now, as detailed by a 2022 memo from the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury. This limitation reduces the completeness and comparability of the statewide dataset. While the majority of counties had case count filings accessible via the General Sessions Data Repository, larger counties had only self report via clerks, which may have inconsistent reporting measures as compared to the AOC. Additionally, General Sessions and Criminal Court case count data used in the 1999 study were not comprehensive nor standardized across counties at the time of this analysis.

Case Tracking and Measurement Challenges

Workload logs were monitored by case category (e.g., Felony B, Misdemeanor with Victim), but it is possible that case-level productivity lacks rigid accuracy because logged time and case counts could not be perfectly matched. Another problem faced was that time logged within the “Multi-Case” category could not be tied to a specific charge type. To adjust for this, post-stratification was used to redistribute the time proportionally among the other categories. Because caseload data was reported on an annual basis, the time study’s data was weighted to be representative of the entire staff population, in addition to being annualized. Similarly, statewide case filing counts by charge type may not have been reported consistently among all of the districts, which could lead to small, unintended fluctuations in case weights.



2025 Workload Study: Limitations

Exclusions and Undercounting

Non-General Sessions juvenile courts were excluded from the dataset, leading to an underestimation of juvenile-related workload in some judicial districts. Because of the inconsistency in how juvenile cases are counted by district, we had to withdraw the 'Juvenile - Status Offenses' category from the analysis portion. The 1999 Tennessee Weighted Caseload study had the same problem and also chose not to give Juvenile Court any calculated corresponding weight.

Absence of Outcome Data

This study does not include any case outcome measures (e.g. dismissals, convictions, pleas). Workload estimates therefore strictly reflect the time required to process cases but cannot be directly tied to a prosecutor's performance or other system outcomes.

Influence of Current Operational Conditions

All workload estimates reflect the current conditions of operation, which may include inefficiencies stemming from understaffing, training gaps, or district-specific procedures. These factors may inflate the time recorded for certain tasks and do not necessarily represent an ideal or optimized workload.

Absence of Clear Bind-over Rate by District

A number of districts that have both a General Sessions Court and a Criminal Court typically have a bind-over rate that details how many cases on average are bound over from General Sessions to Criminal Court. The Conference has been unable to locate bind-over rates from the AOC or the districts because the reporting practices of each district are not standardized. This leaves the possibility of cases being double counted, which could artificially shrink the case weights from representing what exists de facto. The Conference is still in communication with the AOC in an effort to locate these rates so that it can be applied to the case filings counts.

Absence of Complete General Sessions Case Count Data

The Conference is still pursuing the case count filings data for a few counties. Several counties do not report their case data directly to the AOC's General Sessions Data Repository, in which case the Conference must reach out directly. These case counts will be added to the analysis once they are received. As a note, because these case counts are still to be determined, the case weights on the following pages are **only CURRENT ESTIMATIONS** based on available data. They are **subject to change and correction as new data comes in**. E.g. Anderson, Marion County data never received in proper format.



2025 Workload Study Report

Report Findings



2025 Workload Study: Overview

Overview

- Over the course of 8 weeks, the 2025 Workload Study captured **106,715.35 hours*** of work from **361 participants** across the state.
- 106,715.35 hours /361 participants/8 weeks
= avg **36.95 hours a week per participant***

By Position

Position	Number of Participants	Total Logged Hours*	Avg. Hours/Week*
ADA	160	48,665.70	38.02
VWC	75	21,282.45	35.47
CI	45	13,482.50	37.45
CS	81	23,628.03	36.46

By Task

- ADAs spent **10,918.28 hours*** in court (total time spent on pretrial litigation, trial litigation, specialty court, juvenile court, and prep/attend grand jury tasks)
- VWCs spent **4,826.65 hours*** in court (total time spent on court hearings/trials, prep/attend grand jury, and parole hearings/prep tasks)



2025 Workload Study: Overview

Time Logged by Project



ADA Comparison: 2025 Study and 1999 Study

	Number of Participants	Total Logged Hours	Avg. Hours/Week
2025	160	48,665.70	38.02
1999	173	45,564.49	37.63



2025 Workload Study: Analysis

Workload Analysis: Assistant District Attorney (ADA)

➤ The table below shows a breakdown of time/case for each of the categories

ADA Year Value: 1,494 hours/year

	Sample Size Est. Workload (April - May 2025; unit: hrs)	State Population Est. Workload (April - May 2025; unit: hrs)	Case Weight (hrs/case count; unit: hrs)	FTEs covering Existing Workload (~estimate)	Additional FTEs Needed to handle workload
ADA - Criminal 1	18,306.54	70,251.35	58.84	282.13	~36 ADAs
ADA - Criminal 2	10,688.36	41,016.58	5.06	164.73	~21 ADAs
ADA - Criminal 3	4,810.80	18,461.45	2.14	74.14	~9 ADAs
ADA - Felony VOP	1,259.49	4,833.29	18.81	19.41	~2 ADAs
ADA - Misdemean or 1 (W/ Victim)	1,845.93	7,083.76	2.98	28.45	~3 ADAs
ADA - Misdemean or 2 (All Other)	1,767.72	6,783.63	1.13	27.24	~3 ADAs
ADA - Misdemean or VOP	158.14	606.86	0.09	2.44	~1 ADA



2025 Workload Study: Analysis

Workload Analysis: Victim Witness Coordinators (VWC)

➤ The table below shows a breakdown of time/case for each of the categories

VWC Year Value: 1,322 hours/year

	Sample Size Est. Workload (April - May 2025; unit: hrs)	State Population Est. Workload (April - May 2025; unit: hrs)	Case Weight (hrs/case count; unit: hrs)	FTEs covering Existing Workload (~estimate)	Additional FTEs Needed to handle workload
VWC - Criminal 1	9,069.51	22,220.30	18.47	100.85	~8 VWCs
VWC - Criminal 2	3,172.32	7,772.18	0.93	35.27	~3 VWCs
VWC - Criminal 3	1,271.19	3,114.42	0.35	14.14	~1 VWC
VWC - Felony VOP	186.64	457.27	1.78	2.08	~1 VWC
VWC - Misdemean or 1 (W/ Victim)	2,185.49	5,354.45	2.25	24.3	~2 VWCs
VWC - Misdemean or 2 (All Other)	544.21	1,333.31	0.22	6.05	~1 VWC
VWC - Misdemean or VOP	12.76	31.26	0.01	0.14	--



2025 Workload Study: Analysis

Workload Analysis: Criminal Secretary (CS)

➤ The table below shows a breakdown of time/case for each of the categories

CS Year Value: 1,360 hours/year

	Sample Size Est. Workload (April - May 2025; unit: hrs)	State Population Est. Workload (April - May 2025; unit: hrs)	Case Weight (hrs/case count; unit: hrs)	FTEs covering Existing Workload (~estimate)	Additional FTEs Needed to handle workload
CS - Criminal 1	7,898.78	19,273.00	16.02	85.03	~10 CSs
CS - Criminal 2	4,253.59	10,378.76	1.25	45.79	~5 CSs
CS - Criminal 3	2,805.03	6,844.27	0.78	30.2	~3 CSs
CS - Felony VOP	866.77	2,114.92	8.23	9.33	~1 CS
CS - Misdemeanor 1 (W/ Victim)	792.39	1,933.43	0.81	8.53	~1 CS
CS - Misdemeanor 2 (All Other)	1,483.83	3,620.55	0.6	15.97	~2 CSs
CS - Misdemeanor or VOP	48.39	118.07	0.02	0.52	~1 CS



2025 Workload Study: Analysis

Workload Analysis: Criminal Investigator (CI)

➤ The table below shows a breakdown of time/case for each of the categories

CI Year Value: 1,305 hours/year

	Sample Size Est. Workload (April - May 2025; unit: hrs)	State Population Est. Workload (April - May 2025; unit: hrs)	Case Weight (hrs/case count; unit: hrs)	FTEs covering Existing Workload (~estimate)	Additional FTEs Needed to handle workload
CI - Criminal 1	6,913.10	15,208.82	12.64	65.87	~2 CIs
CI - Criminal 2	1,358.91	2,989.60	0.36	12.95	--
CI - Criminal 3	848.16	1,865.95	0.21	8.08	--
CI - Felony VOP	77.99	171.58	0.67	0.74	--
CI - Misdemean or 1 (W/ Victim)	393.36	865.39	0.36	3.75	--
CI - Misdemean or 2 (All Other)	159.28	350.42	0.06	1.52	--
CI - Misdemean or VOP	10.62	23.36	0.01	0.1	--



2025 Workload Study Report

Conclusion: Looking Forward



2025 Workload Study: Looking Forward and Future Studies

While the 2025 Workload Study represents a significant step in assessing prosecutorial workload across Tennessee, its findings should be viewed as an informed estimate rather than a definitive measure. The limitations outlined in this report highlight both the progress made since the 1999 study and the areas where further refinement is necessary. Moving forward, several pathways exist to strengthen future studies and improve the accuracy, reliability, and usefulness of workload assessments.

Improving Data Collection and Reporting

A consistent challenge across multiple studies has been the lack of standardized, statewide case count reporting. The absence of uniform reporting practices—particularly in larger counties—creates gaps in coverage and comparability. Establishing a centralized, mandatory reporting system through the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) would address this issue directly. Partnerships between the District Attorneys General Conference, the AOC, and county clerks will be crucial to ensuring more consistent and complete data capture. In addition, developing mechanisms to track case outcomes (e.g., dismissals, pleas, convictions) would add depth to future analyses, linking time demands more closely with prosecutorial effectiveness.

Expanding and Standardizing Sampling

Future workload studies should strive for larger and more randomized samples of Assistant District Attorneys and support staff. While purposive sampling provided valuable diversity in this study, greater reliance on randomization would reduce potential selection bias and strengthen representativeness. Expanding participation across all staff categories, including juvenile-focused positions, would also improve coverage. Training and clearer guidance on time log entry could reduce inconsistencies in how tasks and multi-case work are categorized.

Addressing Juvenile and Specialty Caseloads

The exclusion of juvenile court data continues to underrepresent juvenile-related workload. Establishing a standardized approach for tracking juvenile matters across districts would fill a longstanding gap in Tennessee workload studies. Future analyses could also explore specialty areas such as diversion programs, problem-solving courts, and emerging categories of cyber or technology-driven crimes, which increasingly impact prosecutorial resources.



2025 Workload Study: Looking Forward and Future Studies

Refining Case Tracking and Measurement

Case-level productivity would benefit from more precise tracking systems that integrate time logs with case management data. This integration would reduce the reliance on post-stratification adjustments and provide a more accurate link between workload and charge type. Similarly, collecting and applying bind-over rate data across districts would help resolve concerns about potential double counting between General Sessions and Criminal Court. Ongoing collaboration with the AOC to obtain these measures should remain a priority.

Accounting for Operational Conditions

Because current workload measures reflect the realities of present staffing, training, and procedural environments, they may include inefficiencies. Future studies might incorporate scenario modeling to estimate how workloads would look under optimal staffing or with technology-assisted efficiencies. This dual lens would provide policymakers both a picture of current needs and a vision of what improvements could yield.

Building a Continuous Data Infrastructure

Perhaps the most important next step is to shift from periodic workload studies toward the development of a continuous data infrastructure. By leveraging case management systems, time-tracking software, and ongoing reporting, Tennessee could create a living dataset that allows real-time monitoring of prosecutorial workload. Such a system would reduce reliance on infrequent large-scale studies and instead support ongoing assessment, planning, and resource allocation.

In sum, the 2025 Workload Study provides a meaningful snapshot of prosecutorial workload in Tennessee, but it should also be viewed as part of an evolving process. By improving data collection, expanding representativeness, addressing longstanding gaps, and building continuous infrastructure, future studies can provide even stronger evidence to guide resource allocation, staffing, and policy decisions across the state.