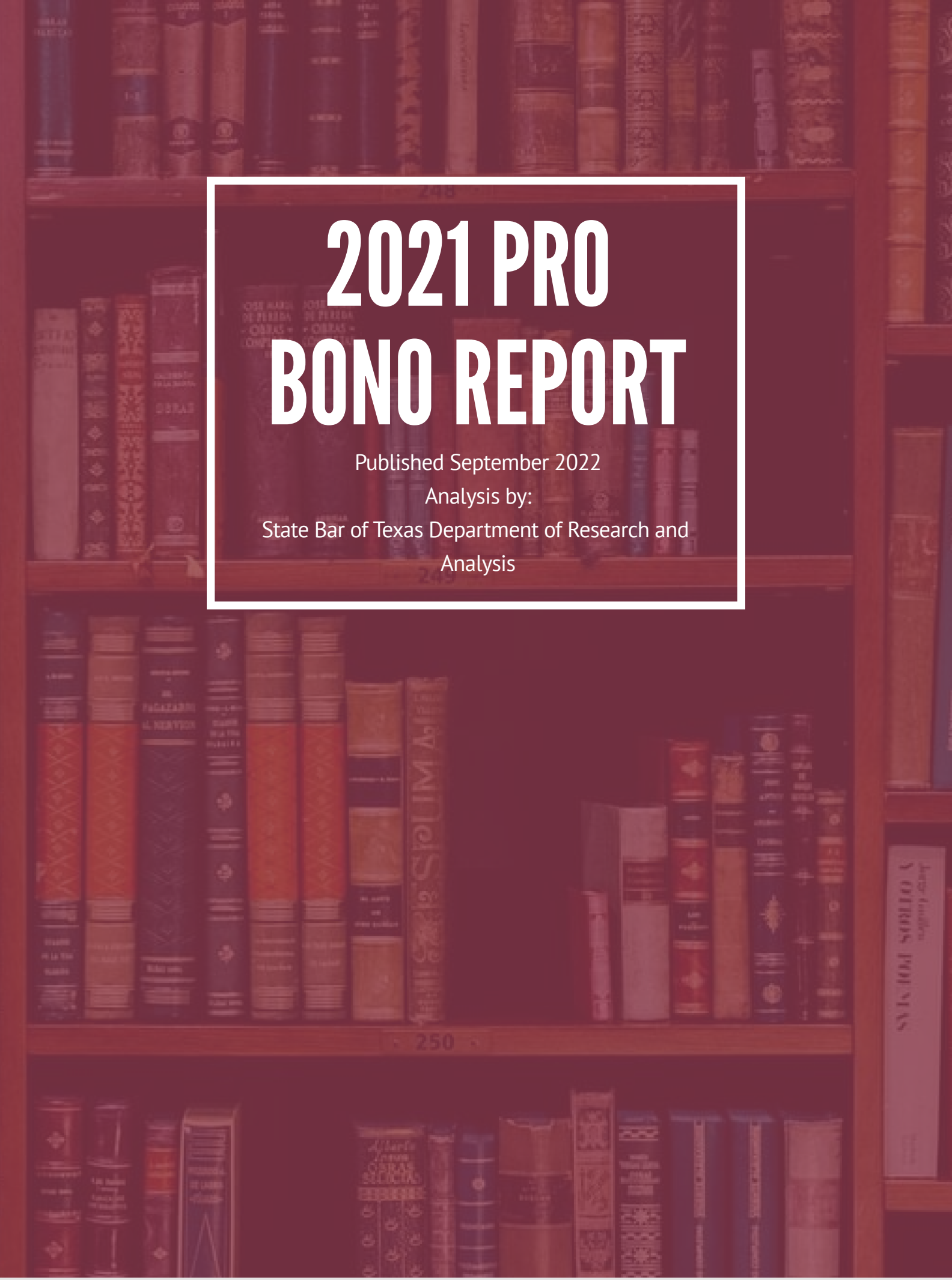


2021 PRO BONO REPORT

Published September 2022

Analysis by:

State Bar of Texas Department of Research and Analysis

2021 PRO BONO SURVEY

SUMMARY

The 2021 Pro Bono Survey was administered as part of the Texas Attorney Survey that was emailed on October 13, 2020, to all active State Bar of Texas attorneys who had not opted out of taking surveys (N = 83,374). A total of 5,566 attorneys completed the Attorney Survey, with 2,202 attorneys providing information about their pro bono activities in 2021. The main findings from the 2021 Pro Bono Survey are:

HOURS

Overall 42% of respondents provided some form of pro bono services in 2021, either legal services without expectation of payment or at a substantially reduced fee. Additionally, 32% of respondents provided free pro bono legal services; these attorneys provided an average of 89 hours of free legal services that benefited the poor in 2021. Extrapolating these results to the 95,196 active in-state membership results in an estimate that 2.72 million hours of free legal services to the poor were performed in 2021. Additionally, 16% of attorney respondents provided reduced fee legal services to the poor, and the average was 59 hours. Extrapolating to the active in-state membership suggests that members provided 911,286 hours of substantially reduced fee legal services to the poor in 2021.

FINANCE

The Pro Bono Survey indicates that State Bar members made significant financial contributions to support pro bono services—13% of survey respondents paid an average of $1,316 out of pocket expenses related to pro bono or legal services to the poor in 2019.

Across the 95,196 active in-state attorneys, this equates to approximately $17 million in out-of-pocket expenditures in 2021. Additionally, 9% of survey respondents made direct contributions related to legal services to the poor, with the average amount at $1,011. Therefore, it is estimated that State Bar members contributed $8 million to support pro bono or legal services to the poor in 2021.

METHOD

DATA COLLECTION

Pro bono information for the 2021 Pro Bono Survey was collected in conjunction with the 2021 Texas Attorney Survey. The Texas Attorney Survey is conducted biyearly to provide up-to-date and accurate economic information on the practice of law in Texas.

The survey was conducted electronically and emailed on May 24, 2022, to all active Texas attorneys with a valid email address on record with the State Bar of Texas and who had not opted out of receiving survey mailings (N = 83,374). Attorneys had from May 24, 2022, to June 14, 2022, to complete the survey.

For the purposes of this report, responses were analyzed from 2,202 active in-state Texas attorneys who responded to the Pro Bono Survey and met certain criteria. A total of 5,566 in-state attorneys responded, but the analysis criteria had to exclude respondents who left the pro bono question blank. Consequently, a total of 2,202 responses became the basis for the analyses. Additionally, if a respondent failed to provide an answer to a particular question (e.g., the county of his or her practice), the respondent was excluded from the analysis relevant to that question but not from other analyses.

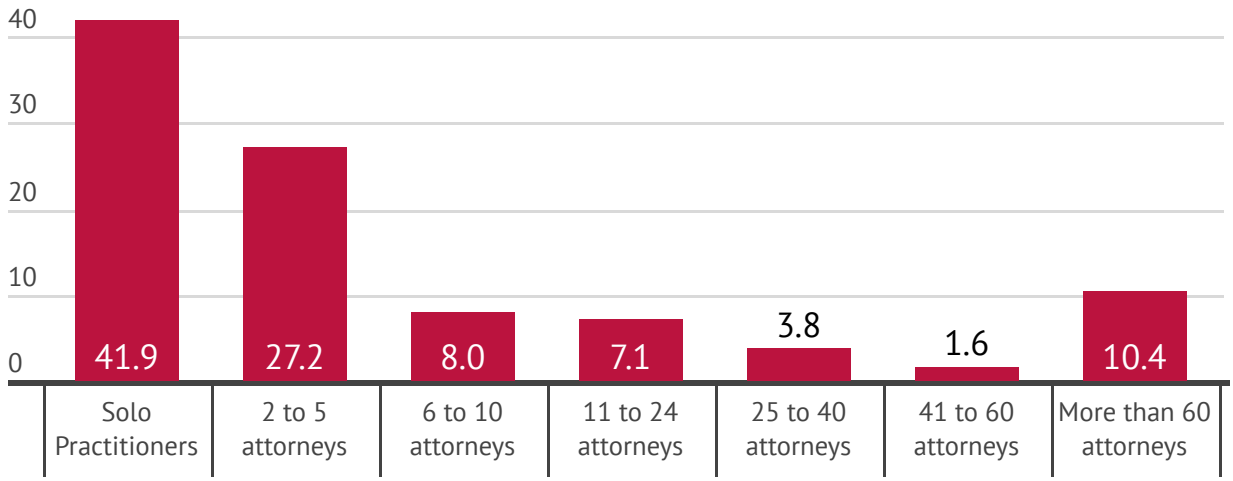
PRO BONO SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The Pro Bono Survey instrument used in this study was based on the pro bono questions used by the State Bar of Texas in previous years' surveys. The instrument asks several yes/no questions to see if respondents provided pro bono hours or reduced-cost hours. For respondents who did provide pro bono or reduced fee hours, several follow-up questions were asked regarding specific types of work such as hours on criminal or civil cases.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

FIRM SIZE

Of the attorneys reporting pro bono in 2021, 77% were in firms with 10 or fewer attorneys.



AGE AND YEARS LICENSED

The median age of attorneys who reported pro bono in 2021 was 54 and the median years licensed was 22. For all active Texas attorneys, the median age was 49 and the median years licensed was 19.

Median Years Licensed

23

Median Age

54

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

GEOGRAPHY

Like the overall Texas attorney population, respondents to the pro bono survey questions are concentrated in just a handful of Texas Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA). More than eighty percent of Texas attorneys can be found in the four largest MSAs, Houston (32%), Dallas (31%), Austin (14%), and San Antonio (8%).

Similarly, 77% of pro bono survey respondents were located in the four largest MSAs.

	Texas Attorneys	Pro Bono
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land MSA	32.0%	25.5%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA	30.9%	26.7%
Austin-Round Rock MSA	13.9%	14.3%
San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA	7.8%	10.2%
El Paso MSA	1.4%	2.1%
Corpus Christi MSA	1.1%	1.6%
Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA	0.7%	0.8%
Central Texas MSAs	1.2%	1.7%
East & NE Texas MSAs	2.4%	3.3%
South Texas MSAs	2.1%	3.3%
West Texas MSAs	2.7%	3.7%
Non-Metropolitan Counties	3.7%	6.8%

PRO BONO TRENDS

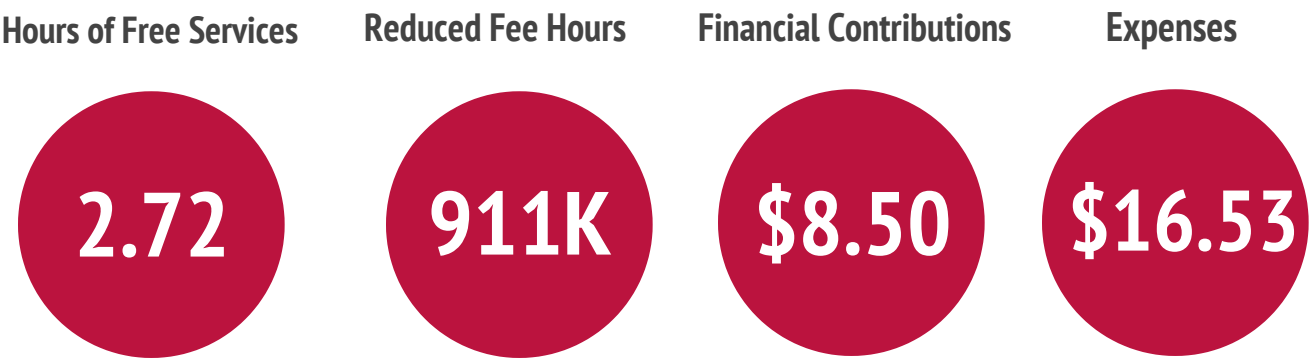
HOURS AND FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Note: All values in millions

The table below represents the pro bono trends from 2011 to 2021.

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
Total Free Services	2.42	2.37	1.87	2.82	2.48	2.72
Reduced Fee Hours	2.11	1.87	1.34	2.13	1.74	911,286
Financial Contributions	$11.46	$8.01	$5.14	$13.20	$9.74	$8.50
Expenses	--	$14.83	$11.72	$12.60	$14.21	16.53

2011 TO 2021 AVERAGES

Note: All values in millions

The following figures are the average hours of pro bono and the related financial contributions and expenses from 2011 to 2021.