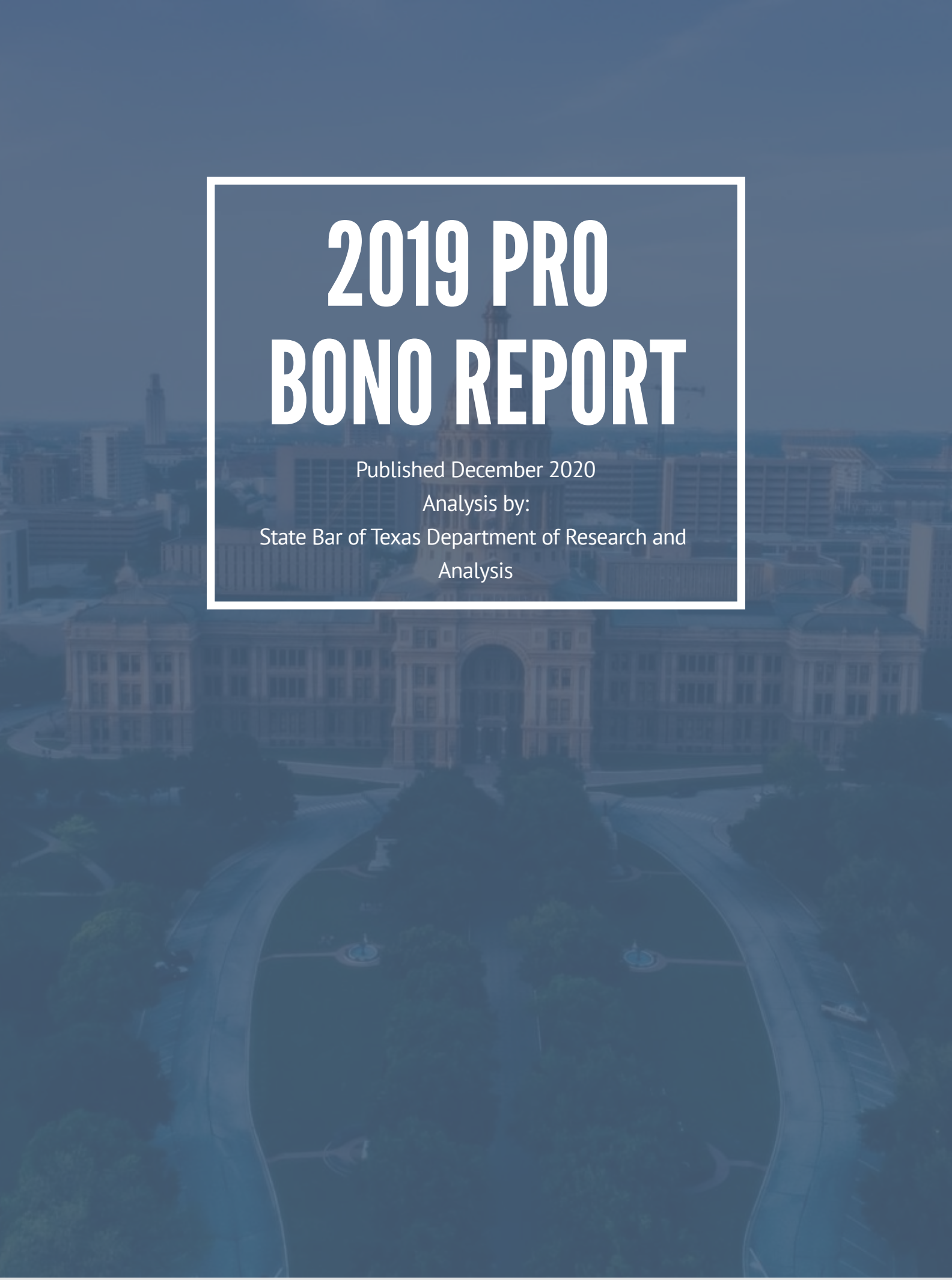


2019 PRO BONO REPORT

Published December 2020

Analysis by:

State Bar of Texas Department of Research and Analysis

2019 PRO BONO SURVEY

SUMMARY

The 2019 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 = 83,257). A total of 6,990 attorneys completed the Attorney Survey, with 2,900 attorneys providing information about their pro bono activities in 2019. The main findings from the 2019 Pro Bono Survey are:

HOURS

Overall 43.7% of respondents provided some form of pro bono services in 2019, either legal services without expectation of payment or at a substantially reduced fee. Additionally, 38.4% of respondents provided free pro bono legal services; these attorneys provided an average of 69.7 hours of free legal services that benefited the poor in 2019. Extrapolating these results to the 92,833 active in-state membership results in an estimate that 2.48 million hours of free legal services to the poor were performed in 2019. Additionally, 19.6% of attorney respondents provided reduced fee legal services to the poor, and the average was 95.5 hours. Extrapolating to the active in-state membership suggests that members provided 1.74 million hours of substantially reduced fee legal services to the poor in 2019.

FINANCE

The Pro Bono Survey indicates that State Bar members made significant financial contributions to support pro bono services—15.6% of survey respondents paid an average of $982.39 out of pocket related to pro bono or legal services to the poor in 2019.

Across the 92,833 active in-state attorneys, this equates to approximately $14.2 million in out-of-pocket expenditures in 2019. Additionally, 10% of survey respondents made direct contributions related to legal services to the poor, with the average amount at $1,036.22. Therefore, it is estimated that State Bar members contributed $9.7 million to support pro bono or legal services to the poor in 2019.

METHOD

DATA COLLECTION

Pro bono information for the 2019 Pro Bono Survey was collected in conjunction with the 2019 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 October 13, 2020, 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 = 83,257). Attorneys had from October 13, 2020, to November 3, 2020, to complete the survey.

For the purposes of this report, responses were analyzed from 2,900 active in-state Texas attorneys who responded to the Pro Bono Survey and met certain criteria. A total of 6,990 in-state attorneys responded, but the analysis criteria had to exclude respondents who left the pro bono question blank. Consequently, a total of 2,900 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.

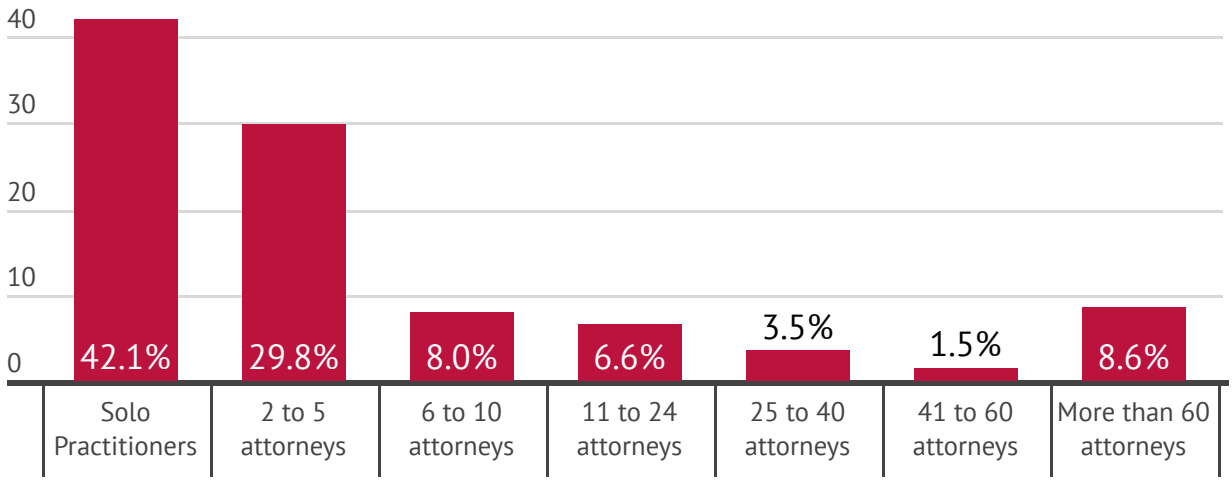
PRO BONO SURVEY INSTRUMENT

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 2019, 80% were in firms with 10 or fewer attorneys.



AGE AND YEARS LICENSED

The median age of attorneys who reported pro bono in 2019 was 52 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

22

Median Age

52

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). 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%	26.1%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA	30.9%	28.3%
Austin-Round Rock MSA	13.8%	12.9%
San Antonio-New Braunfels MSA	7.8%	9.4%
El Paso MSA	1.4%	1.8%
Corpus Christi MSA	1.1%	1.6%
Beaumont-Port Arthur MSA	0.8%	0.6%
Central Texas MSAs	1.2%	2.1%
East and Northeast Texas MSAs	2.4%	3.8%
South Texas MSAs	2.2%	2.8%
West Texas MSAs	2.8%	4.3%
Non-Metropolitan Counties	3.7%	6.3%

PRO BONO TRENDS

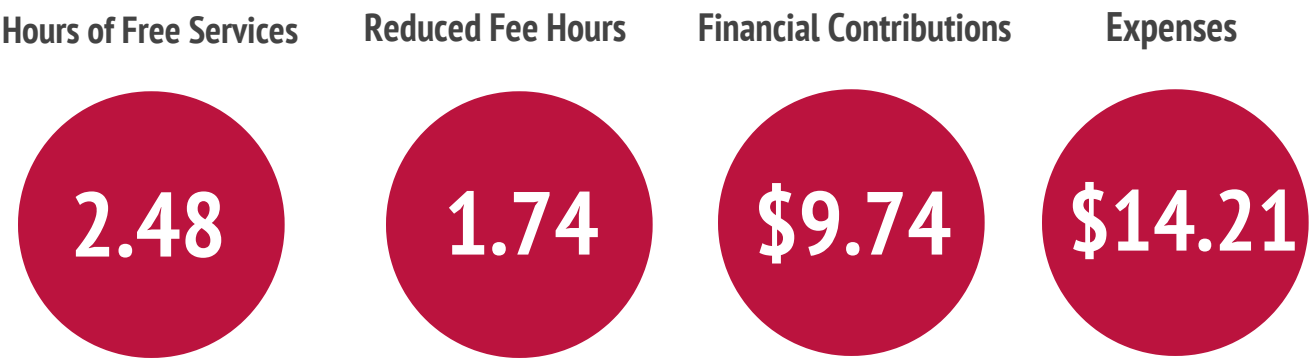
HOURS AND FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Note: All values in millions

The table below represents the pro bono trends from 2009 to 2019.

	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019
Total Free Services	2.24	2.42	2.37	1.87	2.82	2.48
Reduced Fee Hours	2.35	2.11	1.87	1.34	2.13	1.74
Financial Contributions	$13.70	$11.46	$8.01	$5.14	$13.20	$9.74
Expenses	--	--	$14.83	$11.72	$12.60	$14.21

2009 TO 2019 AVERAGES

Note: All values in millions

The following figures are the average hours of pro bono and the related financial contributions and expenses from 2009 to 2019.