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An Examination of Prosecutorial Staff, Budgets, Caseloads and the Need for Change In Search of a Standard

The Seven Largest Jurisdictions

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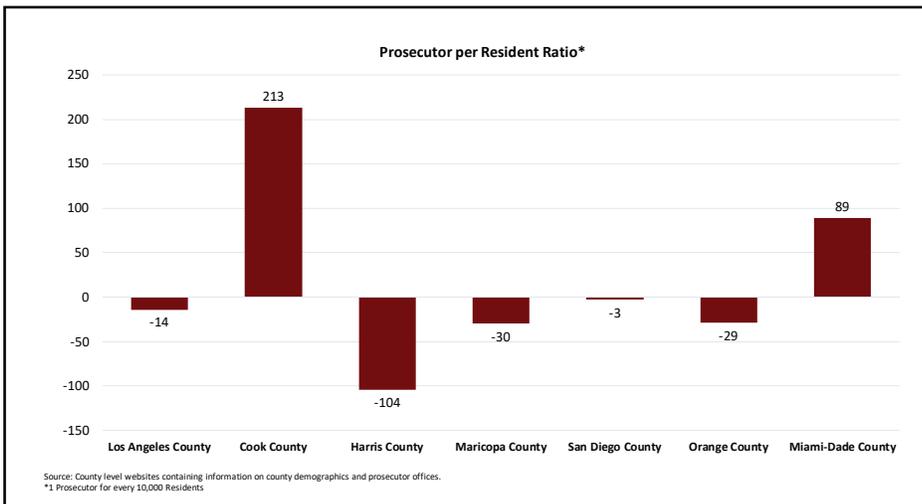
Key Findings

Harris County Prosecutors are Overworked, Understaffed and Underfunded

New CJR research finds Harris County prosecutor caseloads and funding ratios are inconsistent with largest U.S. counties.

Houston, Texas – August 13, 2019 - A new study conducted by the Center for Justice Research at Texas Southern University finds that the Harris County prosecutor’s office is understaffed, underfunded and subject to higher caseloads than similarly situated U.S. counties. This report examines the seven largest U.S. counties’ prosecutor offices accounting for population size, operating budget, personnel, and caseload specifics.

“Any prosecutor additions **MUST** be aligned with agreements not to further exacerbate racial/ethnic disparities or class inequities.”



Note: Prosecutor per Resident Ratio = (County Population / 10,000) – Number of Prosecutors

Notable Observations

- Following a 10,000 to 1 population-to-prosecutor ratio¹, Harris County has the greatest prosecutor deficit: 104.
- Harris County, Texas has only 45% of the total number of prosecutors of Cook County, Illinois, and 89% of Maricopa County, Arizona.
- Harris County prosecutors have one of the highest felony caseloads, yet they have fewer misdemeanor cases than similarly situated prosecutor offices.
- Despite being the third largest U.S. county, Harris County's 703 full-time employees make it the smallest staffed office of the largest seven counties.
- Harris County's prosecutor office received \$19.12 per capita funding. This rate is significantly lower than other comparable counties.

¹Due to the variability of local case processing, funding considerations and taxpayer preferentials, the American Bar Association has refrained from establishing a prosecutor to population ratio. This sentiment was echoed by the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) in 2002. As a point of initial comparison, we utilize the only such proposed standard suggested for similar reasons in Wisconsin. **Again, this comparison is not meant to suggest an adopted standard, but one that would allow for a comparison of caseloads across multiple jurisdictions before the consideration of important factors, of which we identify within this research brief.** The comparison of prosecutor ratios should not overshadow our recommendation that the onus rest with each prosecutor's ability to justify the need for additional funding allocations.