

Unfinished Business: Why Cities Matter to Welfare Reform Texas

An analysis of welfare caseloadsⁱ in the 89 urban counties that contain the 100 largest US citiesⁱⁱ between 1994 and 1999 found that:

- In 1999, ten states, including Texas, accounted for nearly 70 percent of the nation's welfare caseloads, up significantly from 42.5 percent in 1994. The bulk of the national welfare population can be found in: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington. These ten states contained 53 percent of the overall national population in 1999.
- While urban welfare caseloads are declining rapidly, they are shrinking more slowly than national caseloads. Texas is an exception. While the nation's welfare caseloads dropped by 51.5 percent between 1994 and 1999, the state reduced its caseload by 51.6 percent, to 137,782 cases in 1999. Four of nine urban counties had slower caseload declines than the national average, and five counties' declines were faster. Urban county declines ranged from a low of

36.2 percent in El Paso County to a high of 70.1 percent in Harris County (Houston).

- The share of state welfare caseloads stayed stable in the majority of urban counties in Texas. El Paso County experienced a slight increase in its share of the state caseload, growing from 5.2 percent in 1994 to 6.8 percent in 1999. Two counties— Dallas and Harris (Houston) counties—experienced decreases in their shares of Texas' welfare rolls (1.8 and 7.4 percentage points, respectively). The remaining six counties' shares did not fluctuate by more than 1.0 percent in that five year period.
- One-third of Texas' large urban counties is shouldering a disproportionate share of their state's welfare cases when compared to their share of the state's total population. Three out of the nine counties surveyed contained a larger percentage of the state caseload than their share of the total state population: Bexar (San Antonio), El Paso, and Nueces (Corpus Christi) counties. The

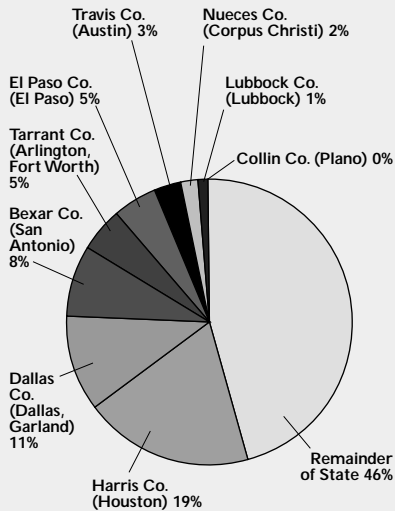
remaining six counties—Collin (Plano), Dallas, Harris, Lubbock, Tarrant (Fort Worth), and Travis (Austin)—contained caseloads proportionate to or less than their "fair share," relative to their shares of the total state population.ⁱⁱⁱ

- Racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented on the Texas welfare rolls compared to their numbers in the total population. In all five counties where data was available, whites comprise nearly three-quarters or more of the total population, but in no county do they represent more than 15 percent of the welfare rolls. Blacks are seriously over-represented in all counties except El Paso County, and Hispanics are over-represented in three counties: Travis, Bexar and El Paso counties.^{iv}

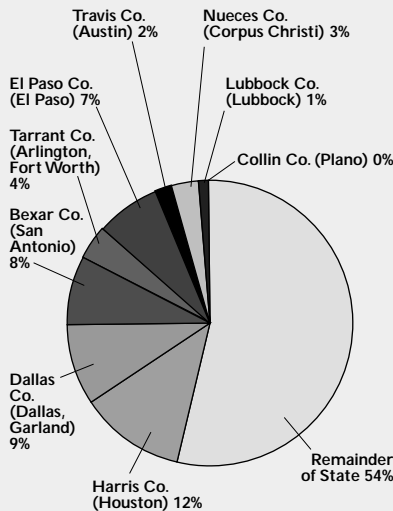




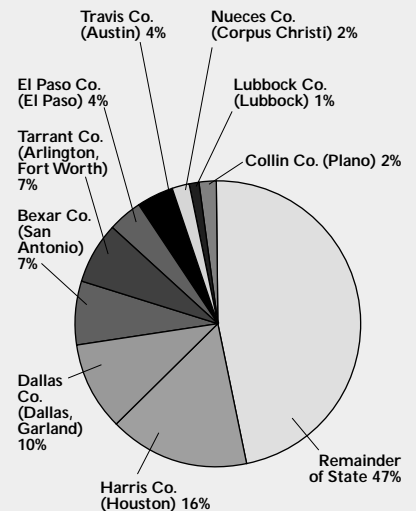
A. Share of Texas' Welfare Caseload, 1994



B. Share of Texas' Welfare Caseload, 1999



C. Share of Texas' Total Population, 1999



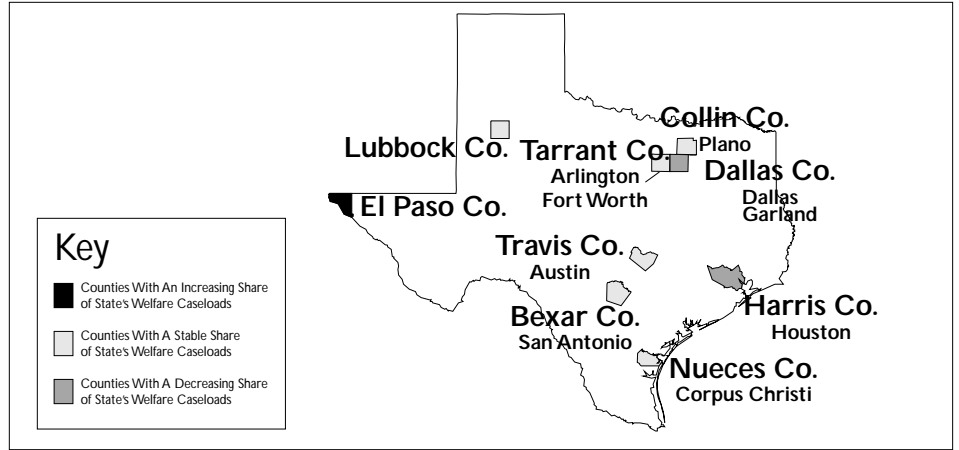
Texas Data Table

	Welfare Cases 1999	% Decline in Welfare Cases 1994-1999	% of State Caseload 1994	% of State Caseload 1999	% of Total State Population 1999	Fair Share Index 1999	City Concentrated Poverty Rate' 1990	% of County Population in Central City ^{vi} 1998
Texas	137,782	51.6%						
Bexar Co. (San Antonio)	11,358	50.2%	8.0%	8.2%	6.8%	1.2	15.6%	82.2%
Collin Co. (Plano)	396	66.2%	0.4%	0.3%	2.3%	0.1	n/a	51.2%
Dallas Co. (Dallas, Garland)	12,353	59.8%	10.8%	9.0%	10.3%	0.9	8.0%	62.1%
El Paso Co. (El Paso)	9,388	36.2%	5.2%	6.8%	3.5%	1.9	15.9%	88.5%
Harris Co. (Houston)	16,431	70.1%	19.3%	11.9%	16.2%	0.7	9.4%	55.8%
Lubbock Co. (Lubbock)	1,552	58.0%	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0	10.4%	83.7%
Nueces Co. (Corpus Christi)	3,478	44.6%	2.2%	2.5%	1.6%	1.6	10.2%	89.1%
Tarrant Co. (Arlington, Fort Worth)	5,762	58.8%	4.9%	4.2%	6.9%	0.6	7.0%	59.0%
Travis Co. (Austin)	3,264	54.7%	2.5%	2.4%	3.6%	0.7	5.7%	77.9%

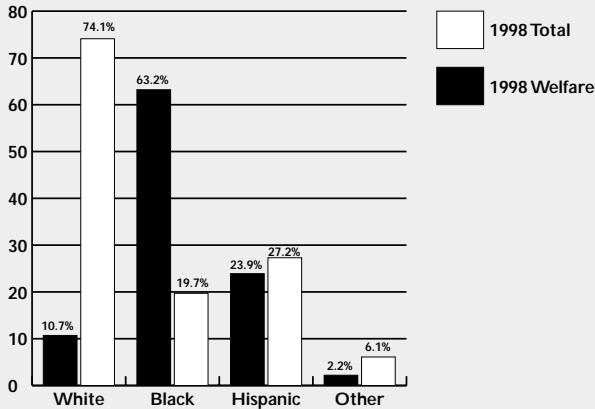




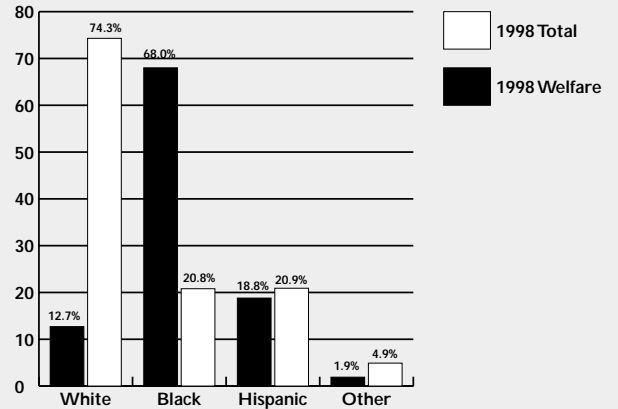
Right: The map indicates the change in concentration of state welfare caseloads in the nine Texas counties between 1994 and 1999. El Paso County experienced an increased concentration of Texas' welfare cases; Dallas and Harris counties experienced decreases in concentration; the other six counties' share of the Texas caseload remained stable.



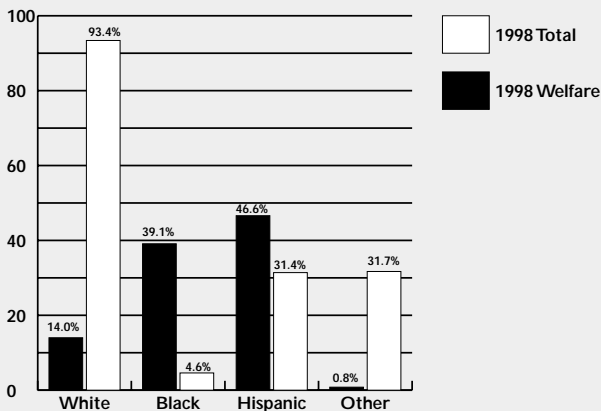
Harris County Racial and Ethnic Composition: Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998



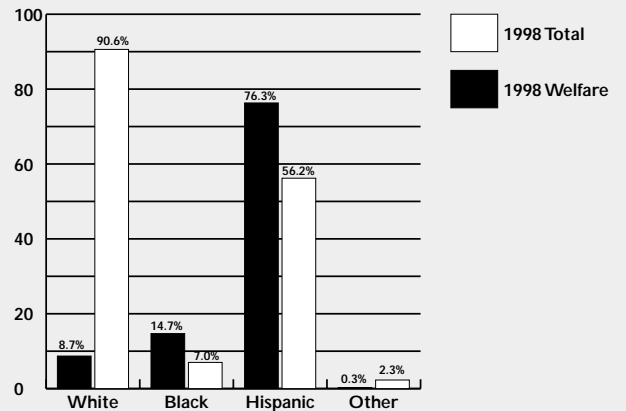
Dallas County Racial and Ethnic Composition: Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998



Travis County Racial and Ethnic Composition: Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998

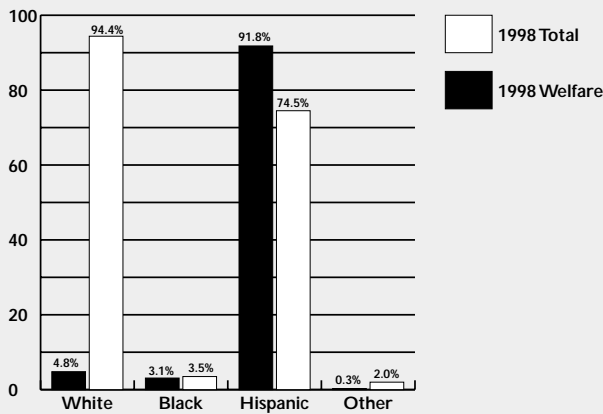


Bexar County Racial and Ethnic Composition: Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998





El Paso County Racial and Ethnic Composition: Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998



Endnotes

- i The caseload data reflect the number of welfare cases, not individual recipients. Welfare cases may include a two-parent household with children, a single-parent household with children, or cases where there is no adult in the assistance unit (child-only cases). The data also reflect the number of cases that received cash assistance under Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and its successor, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).
- ii Because welfare programs, both AFDC and TANF, are typically administered at the county-level, the caseload data reflect the county caseloads, not the number of cases within the central cities. For the most part, the use of county-level caseload data may understate the central city welfare trends because of the inclusion of welfare cases from suburbs.
- iii The Fair Share Index conveys the share of the state welfare population contained in a county, compared with the county's share of the overall state population. The Fair Share Index is a ratio of two figures: the county's percentage of the state welfare caseload in 1999 divided by the county's percentage of the state total population in 1999.
- iv Percentages may not add up to 100 percent, since the ethnic category "Hispanic" may overlap with other racial categories.
- v The concentrated poverty rate reflects the percentage of the city population that lived in census tracts where 40 percent of the residents were poor in 1990 (the most recent year for which concentrated poverty data is available). Concentrated poverty is associated with the social characteristics and behaviors that define the so-called "hard-to-serve" welfare population: illiteracy, chronic unemployment, poor work history, no high school diploma, low skills, teenage pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births.
- vi The percentage of the county population that lives in the central city indicates how "urban" the county and, by extension, the welfare caseload actually is. Counties in the Southwest and West are relatively larger than the Northeastern and Midwestern counties and contain larger suburban populations. We would expect that the welfare population is more urban even in relatively more suburban counties. The indicator serves as a rough estimate of how well the county welfare data captures city-specific welfare trends.

Full Report Available at:
www.brookings.edu/urban

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