



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

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Title

Report to the Judicial Council: Release of Demographic Data on California Justices and Judges

Submitted by

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Agenda Item Type

Information Only

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Executive Summary

This informational report to the Judicial Council is notice of the annual release of aggregate demographic information concerning the gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, and disability status of California's justices and judges by specific jurisdiction, which council staff is required by statute to collect and release annually.

Relevant Previous Council Action

In 2006, Senate Bill 56 (Dunn) authorized 50 new judgeships in California and amended Government Code section 12011.5(n) (see [Link A](#)) to require the Judicial Council to collect and report on the demographics of the bench in the aggregate. Similar reporting requirements apply to the Governor and the Commission on Judicial Nominees Evaluation of the State Bar of California. The council has collected and released this demographic data since 2007, with the most current year information release planned for March 1, 2024. Currently, section 12011.5(n) requires that the council report on the composition of the bench by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, and disability status.

Data pertaining to veteran and disability status have been collected since 2014, as a result of an expansion of the legislative mandate for the collection of demographic data from new justices and judges. Beginning in 2023, the demographic category for gender identity will include a new response alternative: nonbinary.

Analysis/Rationale

The information in the judicial demographic charts reflects justices and judges on the bench as of December 31, 2023, who have voluntarily reported demographic background information.

The charts show:

- The overall gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity of responding justices and judges in the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, and trial courts;
- The gender of these justices and judges by jurisdiction (Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal by district, and trial courts by county);
- The race/ethnicity of responding justices and judges by jurisdiction;
- The specific race/ethnicity reported by those justices and judges who indicated that they consider themselves to be of more than one race/ethnicity;
- The sexual orientation and gender identity of responding justices and judges by jurisdiction;
- The veteran status and disability status of responding judicial officers new to the bench, beginning in calendar year 2014; and
- Comparisons of the current overall data on gender, race, and ethnicity with data from prior years' reports.

The most recent demographic data reflect changes resulting from judicial retirements and other departures from the bench, new judicial appointments, and an increase in the number of trial court judges who have provided race/ethnicity information.

As of December 31, 2023, responding female judicial officers constitute 41.2 percent of judicial officers across all court levels, a 1 percentage point increase over the prior year and an increase of more than 14 percentage points since 2006—the first year that data were collected for this purpose.

The bench also has continued to become more racially and ethnically diverse. The proportion of responding white judicial officers has declined by more than 9 percentage points since 2006. The percentage of responding Asian, Black, and Hispanic judicial officers has doubled over the same time period.

Fiscal Impact and Policy Implications

There are no costs to the courts for the annual collection and release of demographic data on justices and judges (see Link B). The release of this descriptive information is in response to a legislative mandate for descriptive demographic data, and on that basis is not intended to directly impact state or council policy.

Attachments and Links

1. Link A: Gov. Code, § 12011.5(n),
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV§ionNum=12011.5
2. Link B: California Courts website, Judicial Officer (JO) Demographic Data,
www.courts.ca.gov/13418.htm