2017
COURT ACCESS & FAIRNESS SURVEY REPORT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings from the 2017 Maine Court Access and Fairness Survey, which asked survey participants to respond to a series of court "access" and "fairness" questions. The survey was conducted in March 2017 by the Maine Statistical Analysis Center and was completed by 1,039 participants, all of whom were visitors to various courthouses across the State of Maine. The survey results summarized in this report are part of ongoing efforts by the Maine Judicial Branch (MJB) to be responsive to the government and the public.

Findings from this research were positive, reflecting court users' belief that courts are both accessible and fair. The majority of court users agreed or strongly agreed with survey statements affirming that courts are accessible (83%) and likewise agreed or strongly agreed with statements affirming that they are fair (78%).

Access

While the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that courts are accessible, there were some differences in accessibility ratings depending on characteristics of participants, types of cases, and courts, as shown below.

THE MAJORITY (83%) OF PARTICIPANTS *AGREED* OR *STRONGLY AGREED* THAT COURTS ARE ACCESSIBLE

- Participants who were in court for traffic and criminal cases found court less accessible than those who were in court for other types of cases.
- Participants who were in court for "other" types of cases found court more accessible than those who were in court for specific categorized case types (e.g., civil, divorce, etc.).
- Participants who visited court in Region 3 found court less accessible than those who visited court in other locations.
- Participants who visited court in Region 8 found court more accessible than those who visited court in other locations.

*Note: While some groups found court less accessible than others, the majority of **all** groups* agreed *or* strongly agreed *that courts were accessible.*

Analysis also focused on individual statements from which the overall accessibility score was derived in order to understand which facets of accessibility were rated more highly than others. The majority of statements related to access (80%) had average scores that fell between *agree (4)* and *strongly agree (5).* Furthermore, three of the accessibility statements had average scores that were closer to *strongly agree,* indicating that the majority of participants found the court very accessible in these regards.

Specifically, participants were able to find the courthouse, felt safe while they were there, and believed they were treated with courtesy and respect.

Only two of the statements related to access (regarding the amount of time it took to conduct court business and the usefulness of the court's website) had scores that fell between *neither agree nor disagree* and *agree*. Thus, while the majority agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, there was nevertheless more ambivalence or disagreement with these statements than with other statements. The MJB might target its efforts to increase perceptions of accessibility on these two areas.

Fairness

While the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that courts are fair, there were differences in fairness ratings depending on participant characteristic, type of cases, and courts, as shown below.

THE MAJORITY (78%) OF PARTICIPANTS *AGREED* OR *STRONGLY AGREED* THAT COURTS ARE FAIR

- Participants who were in court for criminal cases found court less fair than those who were in court for other case types.
- Participants who were in court for divorce, child support, or custody cases found court fairer than those who were in court for other types of cases.
- Females found court fairer than males.
- Participants who visited court in Region 1 found court fairer than those who visited court in other locations.
- Facets of fairness with the highest ratings were *knowing what to do next* and *being treated the same as everyone else.*
- Facets of fairness with the lowest ratings were *1) the judge had the information necessary to make good decisions, 2) the judge listened to my side of the story before making a decision,* and *3) the way my case was handled was fair.*

Note: *While some groups found court less fair than others, the majority of **all** groups* agreed *or* strongly agreed *that courts were fair.*

Those in court for criminal cases and males were most likely to give lower scores for fairness, and while these two characteristics are correlated (those in court for criminal cases were more likely to be male), they impacted fairness perception separately—those involved in criminal cases gave lower scores regardless of gender, and males gave lower scores even when they were not in court for criminal cases. In fact, the difference between males and females can be attributed to the rankings of those who were in court for *divorce, child custody, or support* cases. Thus, overall fairness scores were lower for those in court for criminal cases (regardless of gender) and for males in court for divorce, child custody, or support cases. The MJB might target its efforts to increase perceptions of fairness on these two populations.

Introduction

This report summarizes the findings from the 2017 Maine Court Access and Fairness Survey. This survey and subsequent analysis were performed by the Maine Statistical Analysis Center (SAC), located at the Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, at the request of the Maine Judicial Branch (MJB). The objective of this research was to measure the attitudes of Maine state court users regarding the accessibility and fairness of the courts they visited.

The MJB consists primarily of the Supreme Judicial Court, the Superior Court, and the District Court.[1] Each of these courts has a different function within the judicial system. The District Court has jurisdiction over family law matters, civil cases, and non-felony criminal cases, all of which are decided by a judge rather than a jury. The Superior Court has jurisdiction over all felony cases as well as misdemeanor and civil cases in which the defendant has requested a jury trial. District and Superior Court judges and justices share responsibility for and resolve all criminal matters within the Unified Criminal Docket. The Supreme Judicial Court addresses questions of law arising from civil action and criminal trials as well as hearing appeals from trial courts. Maine's court system is composed of eight judicial regions, each containing between one and four counties.[2] There are a number of court locations within each region, some of which house both Superior and District Courts or consolidated trial courts.

State of Maine Judicial Branch Mission:

> "To administer justice by providing a safe, accessible, efficient and impartial system of dispute resolution that serves the public interest, protects individual rights, and instills respect for the law"

The MJB has embraced performance measurement as a means of demonstrating to the state's legislative and executive branches that it is responsive to the needs of the courts' users. Additionally, performance measures provide the MJB with valuable feedback regarding what the state's courts are doing well and what areas need improvement. In recent years, the Judicial Branch has engaged in several process improvement efforts to enhance the performance of the court system. Among these efforts has been the development of a business and consumer docket and a unified criminal docket. Recently, the MJB selected a vendor to develop a new electronic case management and e-filing system that will greatly improve case and information management. In addition, the MJB is exploring new civil filing protocols designed to increase efficiency in the processing and disposition of civil cases.

[1] In addition, the Maine Judicial Branch has a number of drug treatment courts, a co-occuring disorder court, business and consumer court, small claims court, Unified Criminal Docket, and other judicial services.

[2] Region 1: York; Region 2: Cumberland; Region 3: Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford; Region 4: Kennebec and Somerset; Region 5: Penobscot and Piscataquis; Region 6: Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, and Waldo; Region 7: Hancock and Washington; Region 8: Aroostook

The survey results summarized in this report are part of the MJB's ongoing effort to solicit feedback from those who have had contact with the state court system to find additional ways in which the MJB can provide better public service. While winning a court case may be important to those involved in judicial disputes, research demonstrates that positive perceptions of court experiences are more influenced by the treatment participants experience in court and their perceptions of fairness.[3] Feedback related to access and fairness is particularly valuable to the court system, given its mission statement "to administer justice by providing a safe, accessible, efficient and impartial system of dispute resolution that serves the public interest, protects individual rights, and instills respect for the law."

[3] National Center for State Courts, CourTools, Access and Fairness. Retrieved from http://www.courtools.org/~/media/Microsites/Files/CourTools/courtools_Trial_measure1_access_and_fairness.ashx

Methodology & Limitations

In 2015, MJB Court Management convened an internal stakeholder group (consisting of employees from operations, the marshal service, facilities, and data and information units) to consider ways to obtain feedback from the public. This group determined that the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) CourTools Access and Fairness Survey would work well in Maine. The NCSC works with court systems throughout the United States and understands the elements of an effective court system.

The CourTools instrument is brief and can be administered in less than five minutes. The NSCS survey consists of ten access and five fairness Likert-scale statements and five demographic questions; the MJB added a question addressing whether the plaintiff or defendant was represented by a lawyer. One of the advantages of using this survey is that it was designed for court users engaged in a variety of different activities, including:

- Searching court records/obtaining documents
- Filing papers
- Making payments
- Getting information
- Appearing as witnesses
- Representing clients
- Serving on juries
- Attending hearings or trials

Another advantage of using the survey is that it has been tested and used throughout the U.S., and the widespread use of it will allow Maine to compare its results to other states and municipalities.

The use of this survey instrument will enable the MJB to establish baseline data on access and fairness measures. Findings from the survey will be used to drive access and fairness quality improvement efforts such as improving court signage, improving information available on court web pages, and improving customer service. In addition, the MJB may choose to use this tool regularly, every few years, to monitor these indicators over time.

In the summer of 2015 the MJB approached the Maine SAC about its interest and availability in conducting the CourTools survey. It was important to the MJB that the survey administration be fair and objective and that court users have the opportunity to express their thoughts through an independent neutral entity. The Maine SAC has a strong record of working on a variety of justice-oriented projects at the local, county, and state level and is interested in researching justice system improvement efforts. It likewise has extensive experience administering and analyzing surveys in conjunction with the Muskie School's Survey Research Center.

Given the many different court locations geographically dispersed throughout Maine, it was not feasible to administer the survey at each location during the same time period. Furthermore, some court locations have an insufficient volume of court traffic to justify the expense of sending a survey interviewer to that location. Therefore, in conjunction with the MJB, the Maine SAC developed a statistically sound sampling strategy that included a representative sample of courts in all eight of Maine's judicial regions and a mix of major case-types. In order to ensure that an adequate number of responses were obtained from rural areas, two court locations were selected from regions seven and eight, while the remaining regions were represented by one location each. Thus, a total of ten courthouses were selected, representing 27.8% of the state's 36 courthouses. The ten locations selected house 40 of the 86 (46.5%) courtrooms in the state and include district courts, superior courts, business and consumer dockets, and unified criminal dockets. This selection has a number of advantages: the selection includes large and small courts, a mix of trial courts, and covers both urban and rural areas.

Region: Location		Court Type*	Courtrooms
Region 1:	Springvale	DC	3
Region 2:	Cumberland Superior/Portland District	DC, SC, BCD, UCD	12
Region 3:	Lewiston	DC	5
Region 4:	Skowhegan	DC, SC, UCD	2
Region 5:	Penobscot Judicial Center	DC, SC, UCD	7
Region 6:	Knox Superior/Rockland District	DC, SC	3
Region 7:	Calais District Washington Superior/Machias District	DC DC, SC	1 3
Region 8:	Aroostook Superior/ Caribou District Presque Isle	DC, SC DC	2 2

*DC = District Court, SC = Superior Court, BCD = Business and Consumer Docket, UCD = Unified Criminal Docket

In early January 2017, MJB provided the Maine SAC with a March court schedule for each of the courts selected including docket types. In consultation with the MJB, the Maine SAC selected a survey schedule that maximized the possibility that a variety of court users would be surveyed.

Interviewers from the Survey Research Center were deployed to conduct surveys during the two-week period of March 13th through March 24th, 2017, following a thorough training on how to administer the instrument. While a late spring snowstorm postponed the administration of the survey in a few regions, interviews were completed within 21 "survey days" across all ten court location, with interviewers spending between one to three days at each court.

In order to ensure that all court users were able to understand and take part in the survey, interviewers were prepared to use LanguageLine for participants requiring translation services. While English was not the primary language for some survey participants, they were nevertheless able to complete the survey with minimal assistance from friends and family members.

Survey participants were given the survey upon completion of their court business. Participants completed a total of 1,039 surveys from ten locations in eight regions. The number of completed surveys ranged from a high of 301 in Bangor (Region 5) to a low of 11 in Calais (Region 7).

Region: Location		# of Completed Surveys	# of Survey Days
Region 1:	Springvale	60	2
Region 2:	Portland	211	4
Region 3:	Lewiston	154	3
Region 4:	Skowhegan	89	2
Region 5:	Bangor	301	3
Region 6:	Rockland	74	2
Region 7:	Machias Calais	20 11	1 1
Region 8:	Caribou Presque Isle	72 47	2 1
	Total	1039	21

In addition to administering surveys, interviewers were asked to log how many people chose not to complete the survey. A total of 449 non-responders were logged. While this number should be viewed with some caution since this was not a core responsibility and some survey interviewers were not as methodical as others in keeping track of their non-responders, it can be used to compute a rough estimate of the percentage of people approached who completed the survey (69.8%).

One of the limitations of this study lies with the challenge of selecting a representative sample. While efforts were made to ensure that the survey selection would be representative of the state's overall court activity, these efforts were balanced against practical constraints. These constraints limited the number of locations visited as well as the time spent at each location. As a result, survey results could be biased by issues specific to a particular time and location. While this challenge is inherent to all survey research and the survey interviewers did not identify any specific issues, it nevertheless is a possibility that bears mentioning.

Findings

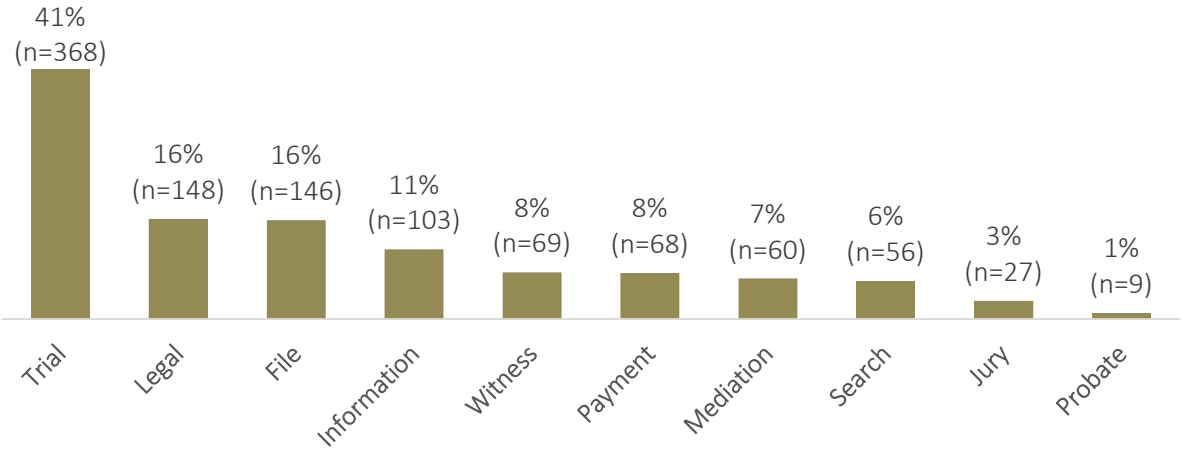
Participant Description

Court Activities

Survey participants were asked to identify the activities they engaged in while in court. They were given ten choices from which they could choose one or more responses. The choices were as follows:

- *Search* court records/obtain documents
- *File* papers
- Make a *payment*
- Get *information*
- Appear as a *witness*
- *Jury* duty
- Attend a hearing or *trial*
- Registry of Deeds or *probate*[4]
- Party to a *legal* matter
- *Mediation* or arbitration

A total of 904 out of 1039 participants (87%) identified at least one activity. Of those who responded, 88% identified one activity and the remaining 12% identified two or more. The largest proportion of responding participants (41%) indicated that they were in court to attend a hearing or trial.



Note: These numbers do not equal 904 because participants could select more than one activity.

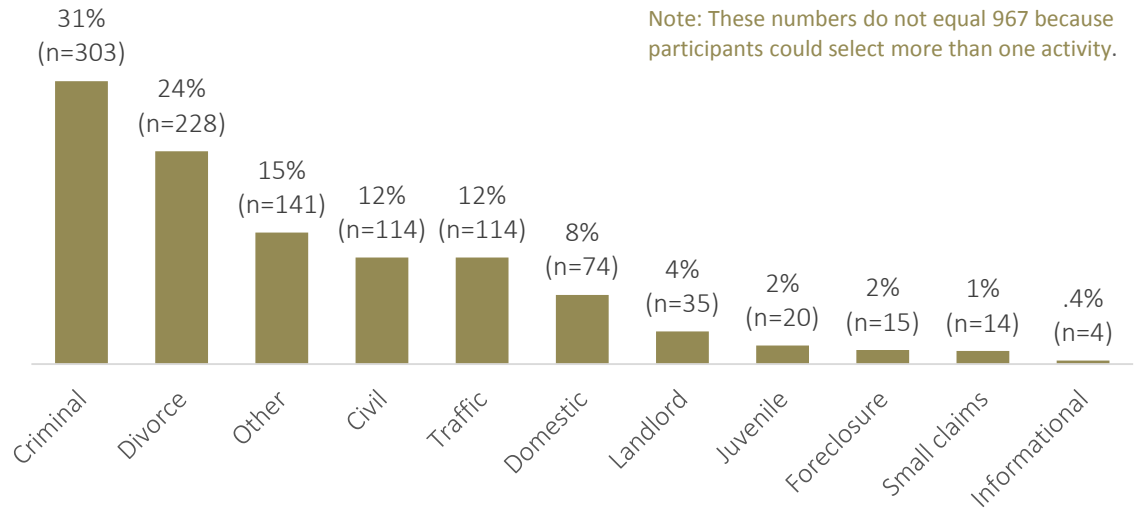
[4] This survey was intended to measure perceptions of *state* court experiences. A small number of participants indicated that they were in court for registry of deeds or probate tasks, which are *local* court functions. This number was too small (n=9) to skew the findings of state court experiences.

Type of Court Case

Survey participants were asked what type of case brought them to court. They were given 11 case types from which they could choose one or more response. The choices were as follows:

- Traffic
- Criminal
- Civil matter
- Divorce, child custody or support
- Juvenile matter
- Small claims
- Landlord/tenant
- Domestic violence/protection order
- Foreclosure
- Informational session
- Other

A total of 967 out of 1039 participants (93%) identified at least one case type. Of those who responded, 92% identified one answer and the remaining 8% chose two or more answers. The largest proportion of responding participants (31%) indicated that they were in court for a criminal case. The smallest proportion (0.4%) indicated that they were in court for an informational session.[5]



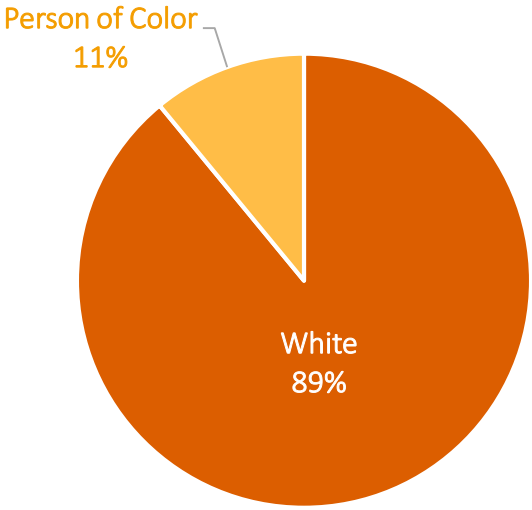
[5] While informational sessions are a part of the foreclosure process, no one who selected foreclosure selected informational and, likewise, no one who selected informational selected foreclosure. Thus, these categories are reported separately throughout this report.

Race/Ethnicity

Survey participants were asked to identify their race/ethnicity. They were given nine choices from which to choose one response. The choices were as follows:

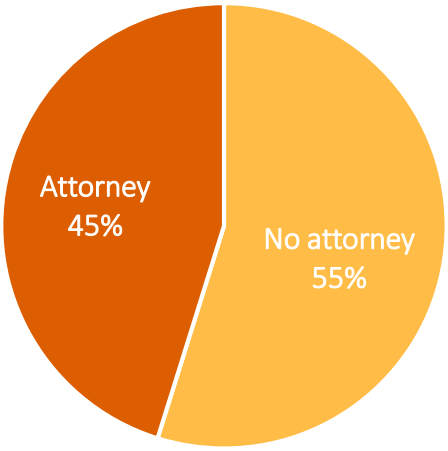
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Mixed Race
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

A total of 948 out of 1039 participants (91%) identified a race/ethnicity. The majority of responding participants (89%) indicated that they were *White*, while the remaining 11% reported other races and/or ethnicity. The proportion of the general population that are *persons of color* is approximately 5%, so persons of color were disproportionately represented among survey participants. Of the subcategories that compose persons of color, *American Indian or Alaska Native* was identified most frequently; 3% of participants who identified a race/ethnicity identified this choice.

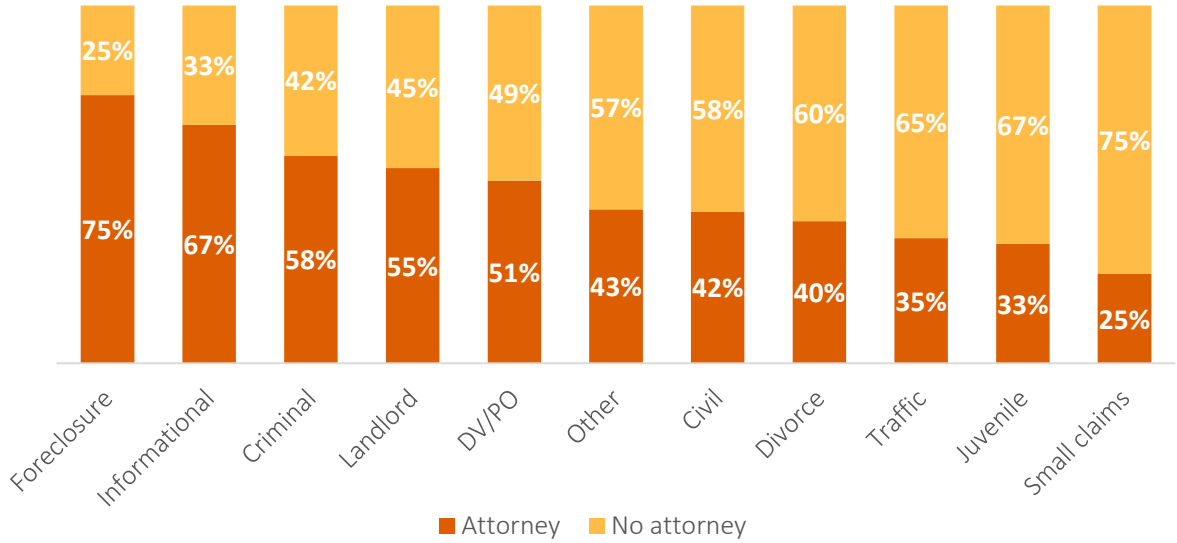


Attorney Representation

Participants were asked whether they were represented by an attorney if they were a party in a court case or legal matter. A total of 560 participants responded to this question, and a little more than half (55%) indicated that they did not have an attorney.



The proportion of participants who indicated they had an attorney varied by case type.[6] Participants who reported that they were in court because of a foreclosure case were most likely to have an attorney; about three-quarters (75%) of these participants indicated that they had an attorney.



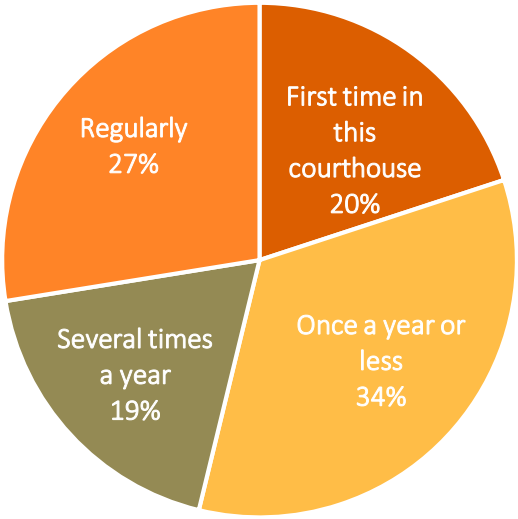
[6] Case types are listed on page 4.

Frequency of Court Visits

Survey participants were asked to report how frequently they were in the courthouse. They were given four choices from which to choose one response. The choices were as follows:

- First time in this courthouse
- Once a year or less
- Several times a year
- Regularly

A total of 1002 out of 1039 participants (96%) reported the frequency of their visits. Of those who responded, the largest proportion (34%) reported that they were in the courthouse *once a year or less*.



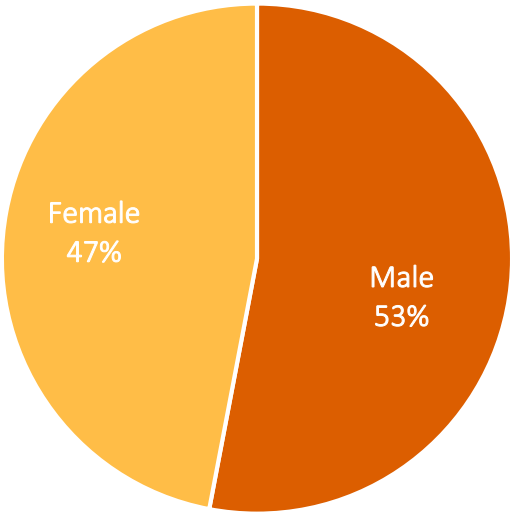
In the remainder of this report these four categories are collapsed into two categories. *First time in this courthouse* and *once a year or less* were recoded as *infrequently*, and *several times a year* and *regularly* were recoded as *frequently*. A little more than half of all participants (54%) reported that they were in the courthouse *frequently.*

Gender

Survey participants were asked to report their gender. They were given four choices from which to choose one response. The choices were as follows:

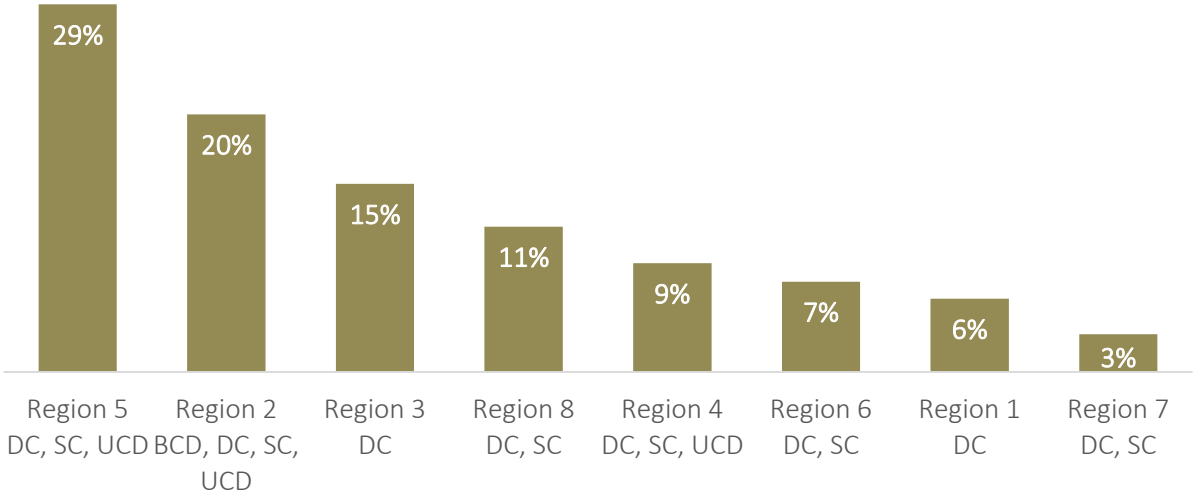
- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

Only one participant indicated *other,* and 38 participants either selected *prefer not to answer* or simply did not select an answer. A total of 1000 participants responded with either *male* or *female*. Of these, a slight majority (53%) were male, while the remainder (47%) were female.



Court Region

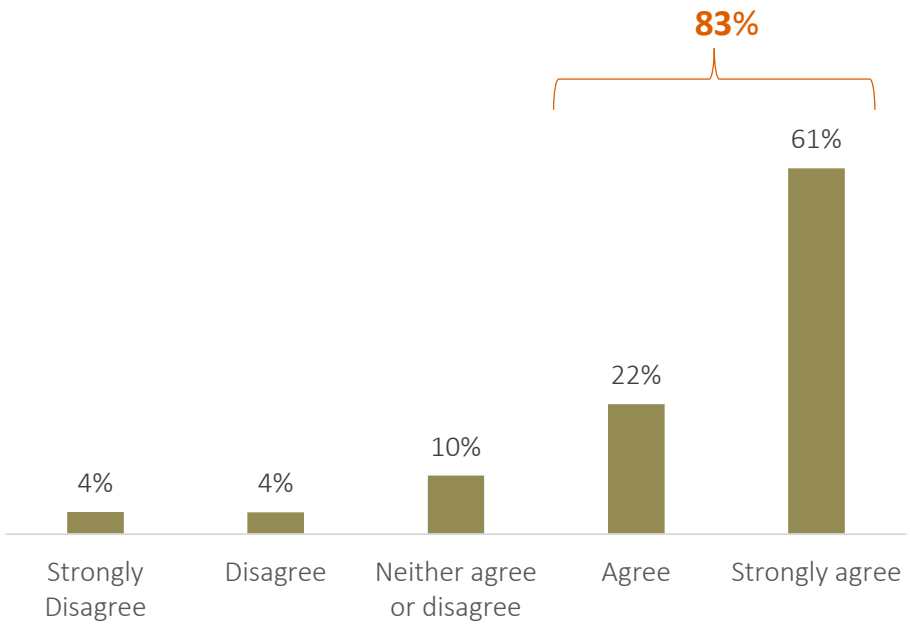
Surveys were conducted in each of the eight judicial regions across the state. The sites selected included district courts, superior courts, consolidated district and superior courts, business and consumer dockets, and unified criminal dockets. Almost half (49%) of all participants were located in two of the eight regions. These two regions, Region 5 and Region 2, were responsible for 29% and 20% of survey responses, respectively.



DC = District Court, SC = Superior Court, BCD = Business and Consumer Docket, UCD = Unified Criminal Docket

Access

Participants were presented with ten separate statements related to court access and asked to respond to them with *strongly disagree*, *disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree,* or *not applicable*. Ease of access to court was indicated by the answers *agree* and *strongly agree*. Aggregating the responses to these ten statements gives a general measure of accessibility. Overall, 83% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with statements related to ease of access to courts.

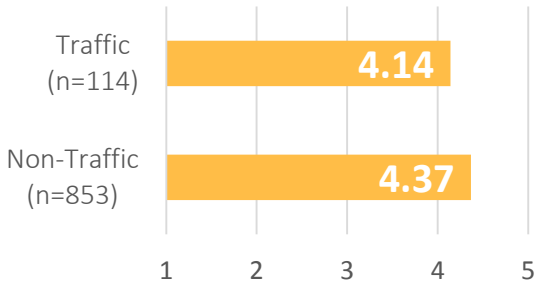


Access by Participant and Court Characteristics

In order to compare court access between groups, researchers used the numeric scale (1 to 5) associated with each response category to calculate an average rating. The average court access rating across all participants was 4.33. **This rating indicates that most participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with court access statements, affirming ease of access.** However, this rating varied depending on characteristics of participants, types of cases, and courts. The following differences were statistically significant.

Traffic Cases

Participants who were in court for **traffic cases** found court **less accessible** than those who were in court for other types of cases.[7]



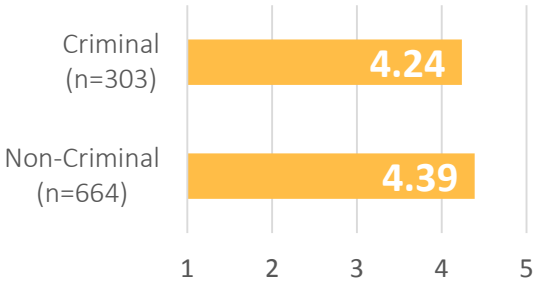
The lower rating for overall court access by participants with traffic cases was due to lower ratings for the following statements (lower rates indicated by orange circles):

S1. Finding the courthouse was easy.
S2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.
S3. I felt safe in the courthouse.
S4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.
S5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.
S6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.
S7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.
S8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.
S9. The court's website was useful.
S10. The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.

[7] Independent t-test: $t(135.6)=2.597$, $p=0.010$, $d=0.27$

Criminal Cases

Participants who were in court for **criminal cases** found court **less accessible** than those who were in court for other types of cases.[8]



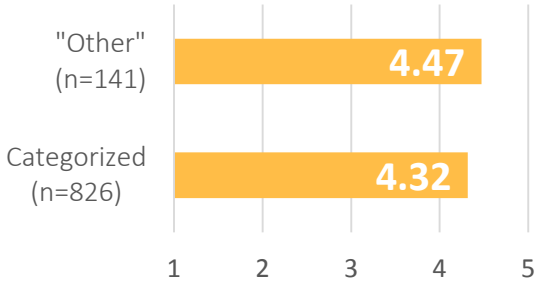
The lower rating for overall court access by participants with criminal cases was due to lower ratings for the following statements (lower rates indicated by orange circles):

S1. Finding the courthouse was easy.
S2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.
S3. I felt safe in the courthouse.
S4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.
S5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.
S6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.
S7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.
S8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.
S9. The court's website was useful.
S10. The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.

[8] Independent t-test: $t(965)=2.785$, $p=0.005$, $d=0.19$

Other Cases

Participants who were in court for **"other" types of cases** found court **more accessible** than those who were in court for categorized types of cases (e.g., civil, divorce, etc.).[9]



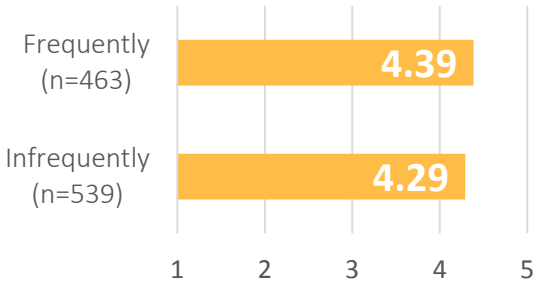
The higher rating in overall court access by participants with "other" cases was due to higher ratings for the following statements (higher rates indicated by yellow circles):

S1. Finding the courthouse was easy.
S2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.
S3. I felt safe in the courthouse.
S4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.
S5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.
S6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.
S7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.
S8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.
S9. The court's website was useful.
S10. The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.

[9] Independent t-test: $t(965)=2.177$, $p=0.030$, $d=0.20$

Frequency of Court Use

Participants who were in court **frequently** found court **more accessible** than those who were in court infrequently.[10]



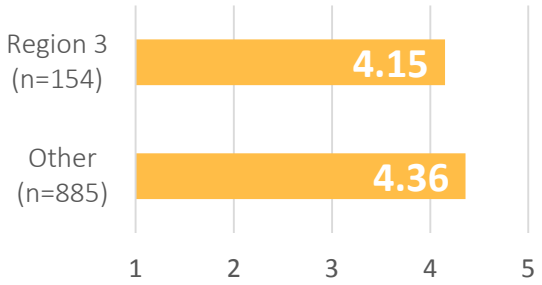
The lower rating in overall court access by participants who were in court infrequently was due to lower ratings for the following statements (lower rates indicated by orange circles):

S1. Finding the courthouse was easy.
S2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.
S3. I felt safe in the courthouse.
S4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.
S5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.
S6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.
S7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.
S8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.
S9. The court's website was useful.
S10. The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.

[10] Independent t-test: $t(999.1)=1.965$, $p=.0.050$, $d=0\ 12$

Region 3

Participants who visited court in **Region 3** found court **less accessible** than those who visited court in other locations.[11]



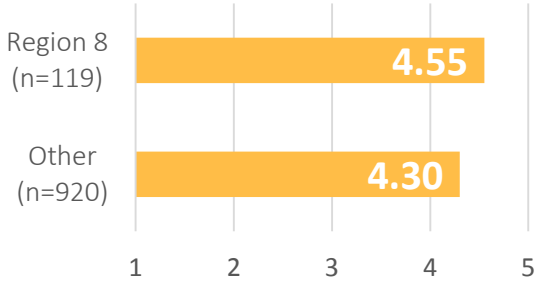
The lower rating in overall court access by participants who visited a courthouse in Region 3 was due to lower ratings for the following statements (lower rates indicated by orange circles):

S1. Finding the courthouse was easy.
S2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.
S3. I felt safe in the courthouse.
S4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.
S5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.
S6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.
S7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.
S8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.
S9. The court's website was useful.
S10. The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.

[11] Independent t-test: $t(196.7)=2.780$, $p=0.006$, $d=0.25$

Region 8

Participants who visited court in **Region 8** found court **more accessible** than those who visited court in other locations.[12]



The higher rating in overall court access by participants who visited a courthouse in Region 8 was due to higher ratings for the following statements (higher rates indicated by yellow circles):

S1. Finding the courthouse was easy.
S2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.
S3. I felt safe in the courthouse.
S4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.
S5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.
S6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.
S7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.
S8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.
S9. The court's website was useful.
S10. The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.

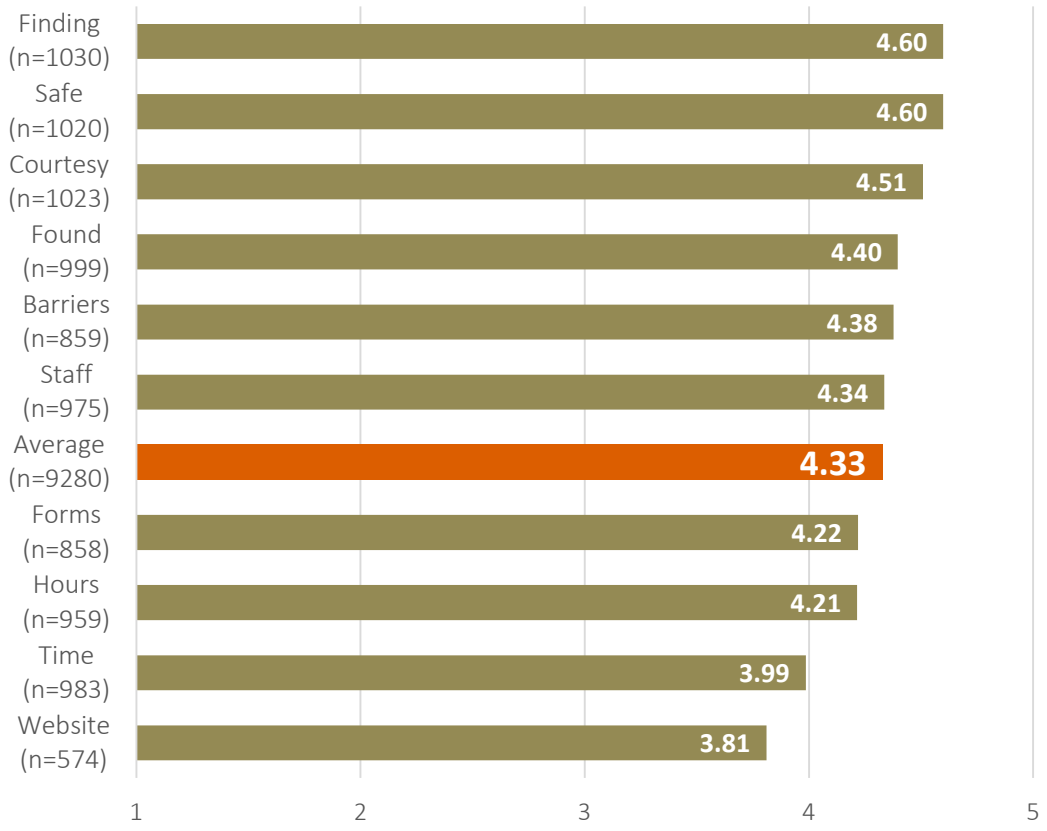
[12] Independent t-test: $t(181.0)=4.187$, $p<.0.001$, $d=0.36$

Individual Facets of Court Access

While the average court access rate was 4.33, survey participants found some facets of court more accessible than others. Facets with the highest ratings were *finding the courthouse* (4.60), *feeling safe in the courthouse* (4.60), and *being treated with courtesy and respect* (4.51). Facets with the lowest ratings were *hours of operation* (4.21), *ability to finish court business in a reasonable amount of time* (3.99), and *the usefulness of the court website* (3.81).

Access Statements:

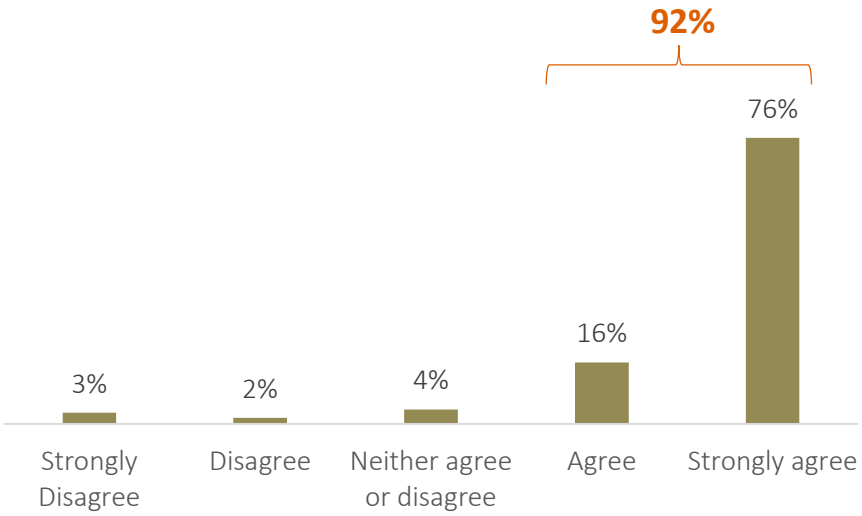
Finding the courthouse was easy.
I felt *safe* in the courthouse.
I was treated with *courtesy* and respect.
I easily *found* the courtroom or office I needed.
The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language *barriers* to service.
Court *staff* paid attention to my needs.
The *forms* I needed were clear and easy to understand.
The court's *hours* of operation made it easy for me to do my business.
I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of *time*.
The court's *website* was useful.



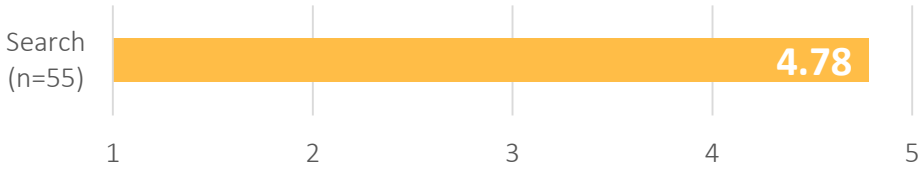
The remainder of this section looks at the individual facets of court access, summarized by the statements about access that appeared on the survey.

1. Finding the courthouse was easy.

Approximately 92% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

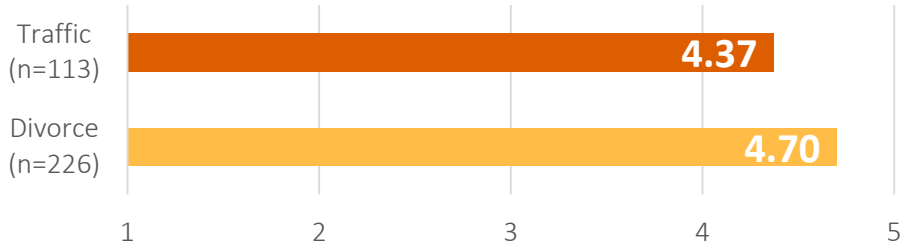


While the average rating for this question was 4.60, ratings varied depending on the activity participants engaged in while in court. Those who were in court to *search court records/obtain documents* had a rating (4.78) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this activity (4.60).[13]

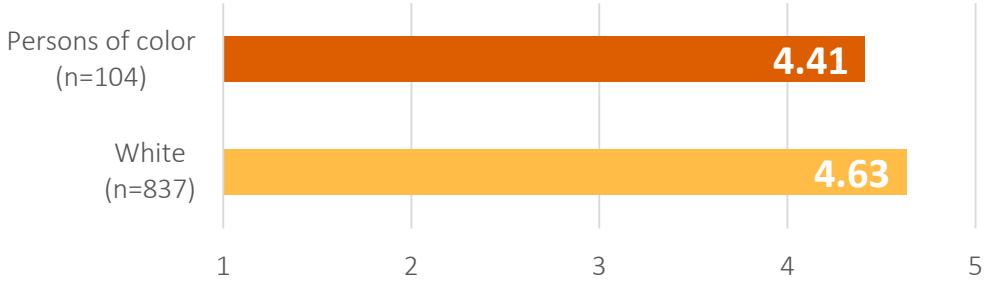


[13] Independent t-test: $t(68.1)=2.021$, $p=0.047$, $d=0.24$

Ratings also varied according to the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *traffic* cases had a rating (4.37) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.63).[14] Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* type cases had a rating (4.70) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.57).[15]

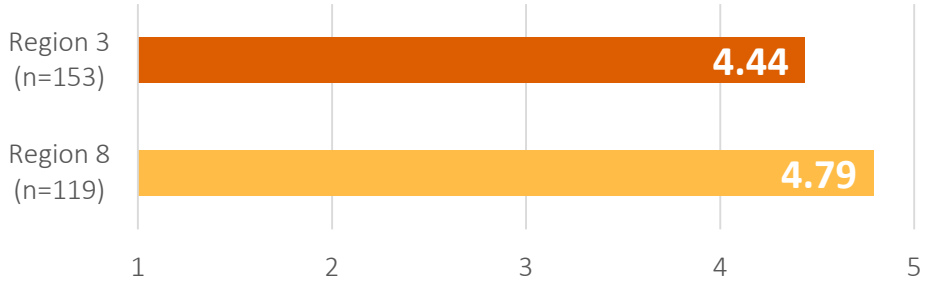


Ratings varied according to participant race/ethnicity. Persons of color had a rating (4.41) that was statistically significantly *lower* than that of white participants (4.63).[16]



[14] Independent t-test: $t(131.8)=2.480$, $p=0.014$, $d=0.27$
[15] Independent t-test: $t(434.4)=2.181$, $p=0.030$, $d=0.16$
[16] Independent t-test: $t(122.9)=2.194$, $p=0.030$, $d=0.24$

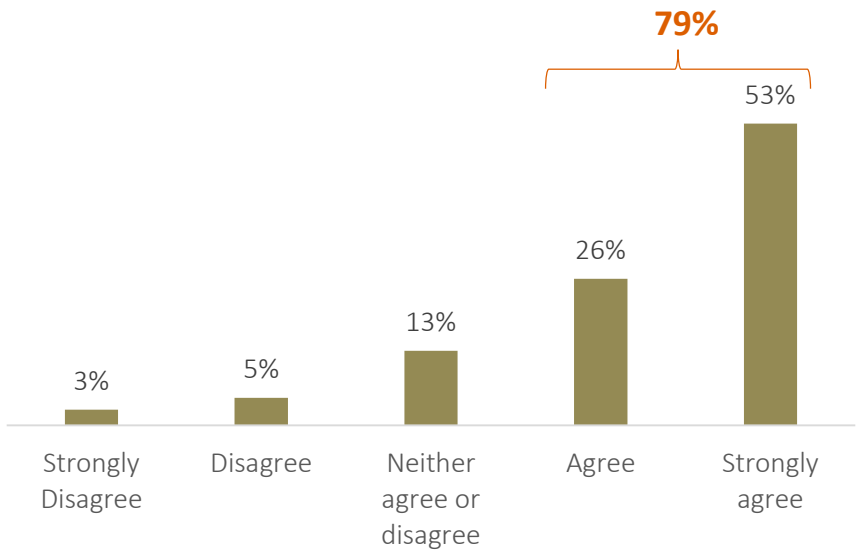
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 3 had a rating (4.44) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.63).[17] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 8 had a rating (4.79) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.57).[18]



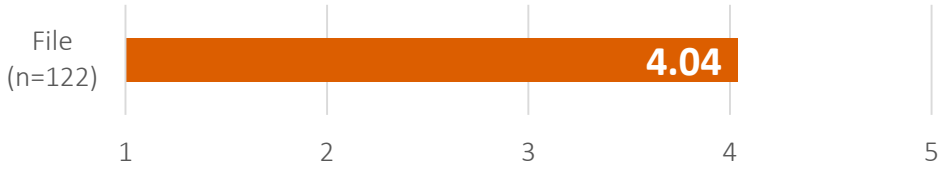
[17] Independent t-test: $t(183.3)=2.042$, $p=0.043$, $d=0.20$
[18] Independent t-test: $t(218.4)=3.757$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.29$

2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.

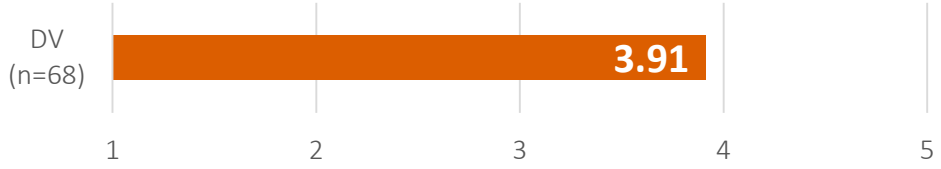
Approximately 79% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the statement.



While the average rating for this question was 4.22, ratings varied depending on the activity participants engaged in while in court. Those who were in court to *file papers* had a rating (4.04) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this activity (4.27).[19]

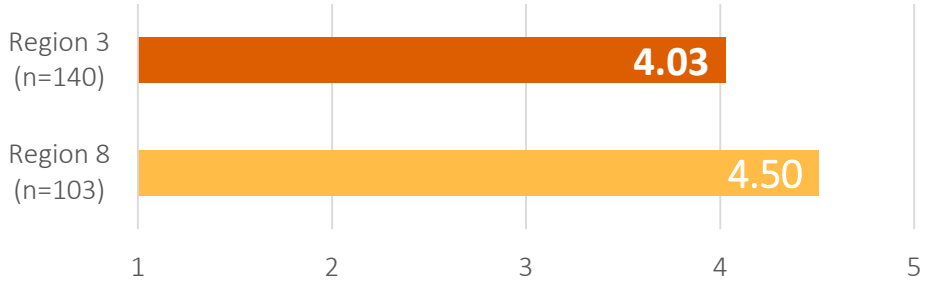


Ratings also varied according to the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *domestic violence/protection order* cases had a rating (3.91) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.25).[20]



[19] Independent t-test: $t(155.9)=2.018$, $p=0.045$, $d=0.21$
[20] Independent t-test: $t(800)=2.645$, $p=0.008$, $d=0.33$

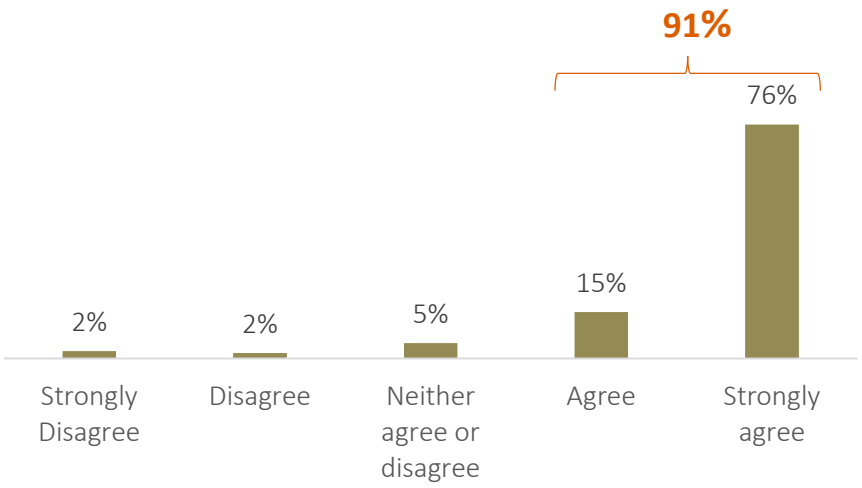
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 3 had a rating (4.03) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.26).[21] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 8 had a rating (4.50) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.18).[22]



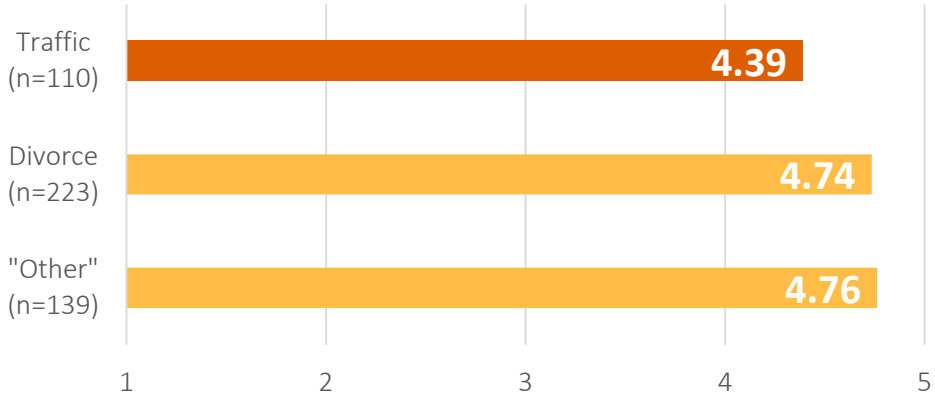
[21] Independent t-test: $t(856)=2.395$, $p=0.017$, $d=0.21$
[22] Independent t-test: $t(163.0)=3.886$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.35$

3. I felt safe in the courthouse.

Approximately 91% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

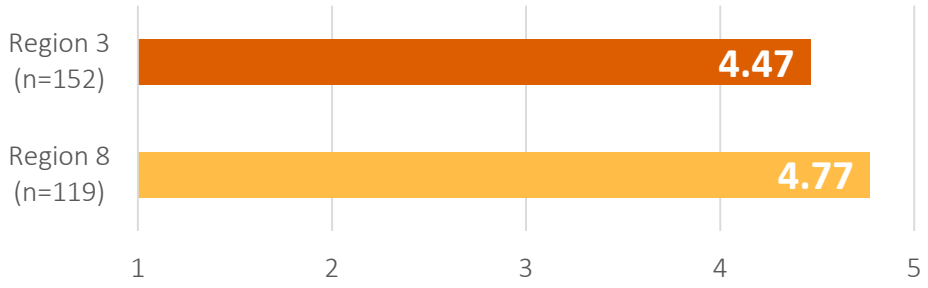


While the average rating for this question was 4.60, ratings varied depending on the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *traffic* cases had a rating (4.39) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.64).[23] Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* cases had a rating (4.74) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.58).[24] Likewise, those who were in court for *other* types of cases had a rating (4.76) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for *other* types of cases (4.59).[25]



[23] Independent t-test: $t(128.0)=2.513$, $p=0.013$, $d=0.28$
[24] Independent t-test: $t(476.1)=2.822$, $p=0.005$, $d=0.20$
[25] Independent t-test: $t(233.9)=2.769$, $p=0.006$, $d=0.23$

Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 3 had a rating (4.47) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.62).[26] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 8 had a rating (4.77) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.58).[27]

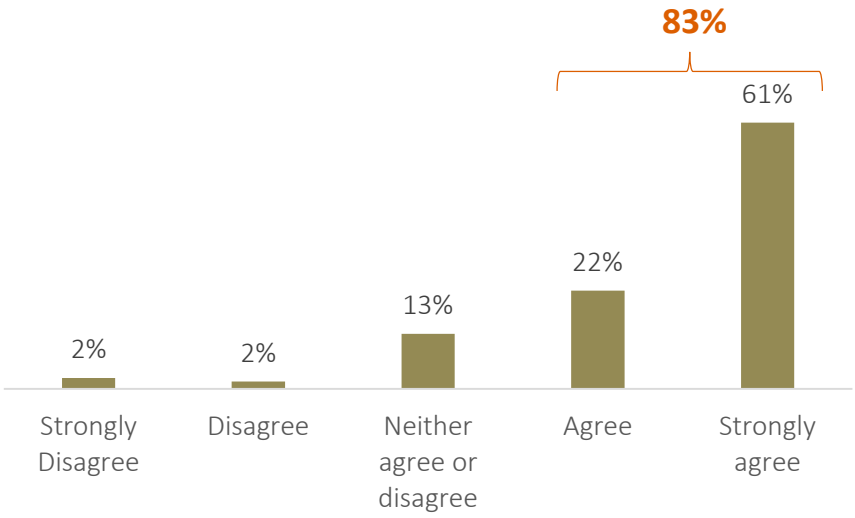


[26] Independent t-test: $t(190.5)=1.821$, $p=0.070$, $d=0.17$

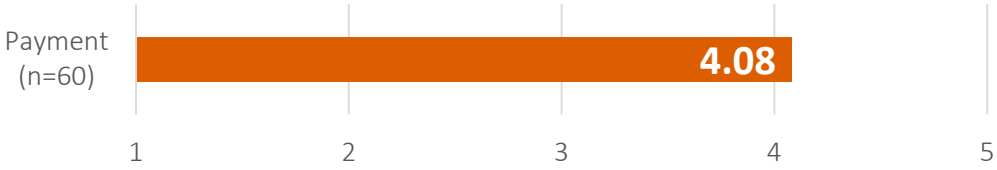
[27] Independent t-test: $t(207.4)=3.328$, $p=0.001$, $d=0.27$

4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.

Approximately 83% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

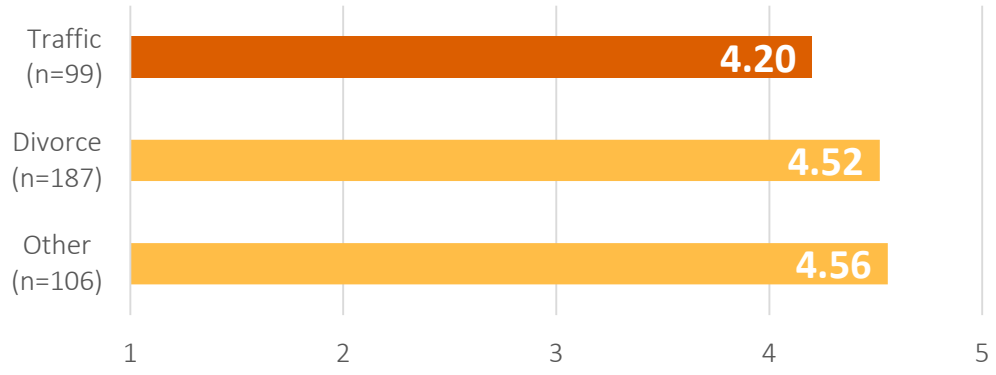


While the average rating for this question was 4.38, ratings varied depending on the activity participants engaged in while in court. Those who were in court to *make a payment* had a rating (4.08) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this activity (4.40).[28]

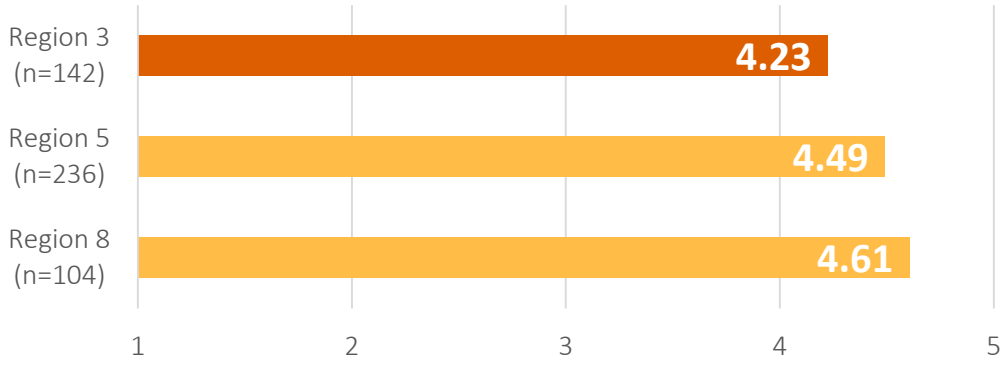


[28] Independent t-test: $t(65.3)=2.078$, $p=0.042$, $d=0.31$

Ratings also varied according to the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *traffic* cases had a rating (4.20) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.43).[29] Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* cases had a rating (4.52) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.36).[30] Likewise, those who were in court for *other* types of cases had a rating (4.56) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for *other* type of cases (4.37).[31]



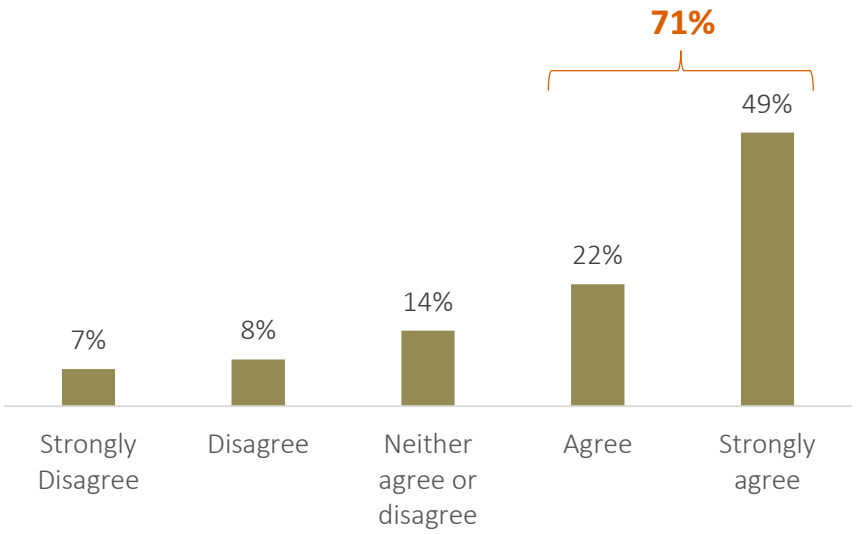
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 3 had a rating (4.23) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.41).[32] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 5 had a rating (4.49) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.33).[33] Likewise, those who visited a courthouse in Region 8 had a rating (4.61) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.35).[34]



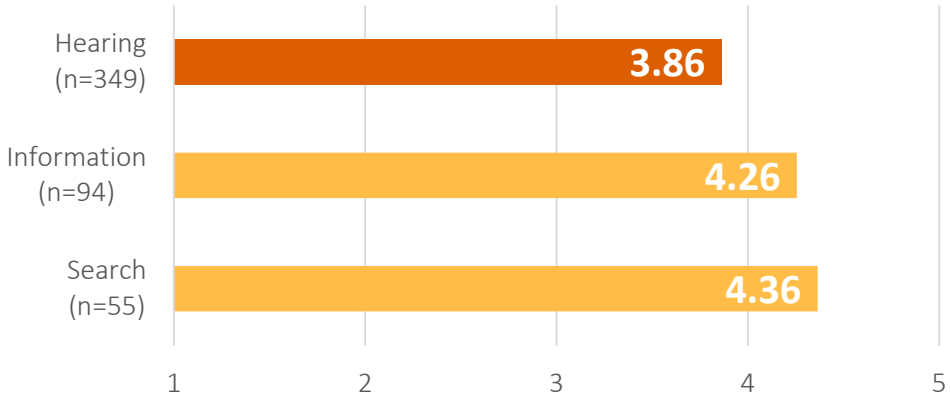
[29] Independent t-test: $t(117.8)=1.990$, $p=0.049$, $d=0.23$
[30] Independent t-test: $t(369.4)=2.291$, $p=0.023$, $d=0.18$
[31] Independent t-test: $t(150.8)=2.127$, $p=0.035$, $d=0.21$
[32] Independent t-test: $t(857)=2.117$, $p=0.035$, $d=0.19$
[33] Independent t-test: $t(857)=2.206$, $p=0.028$, $d=0.17$
[34] Independent t-test: $t(164.3)=3.419$, $p=0.001$, $d=0.31$

5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.

Approximately 71% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

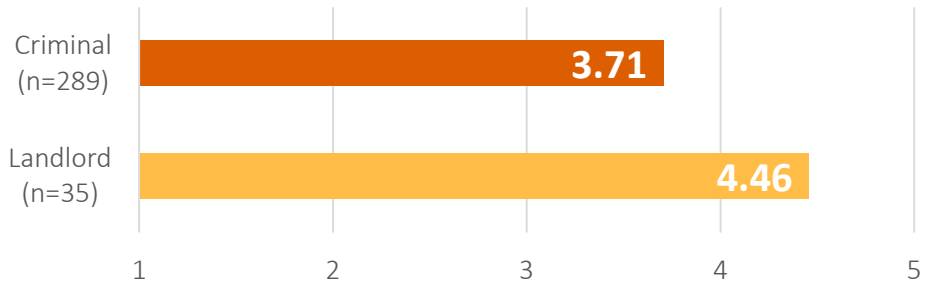


While the average rating was 3.99, ratings varied depending on the activity participants engaged in while in court. Those who were in court to *attend a hearing or trial* had a rating (3.86) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.10).[35] Those who were in court to *get information* had a rating (4.26) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (3.97).[36] Likewise, those who were in court to *search court records/obtain documents* had a rating (4.36) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (3.98).[37]

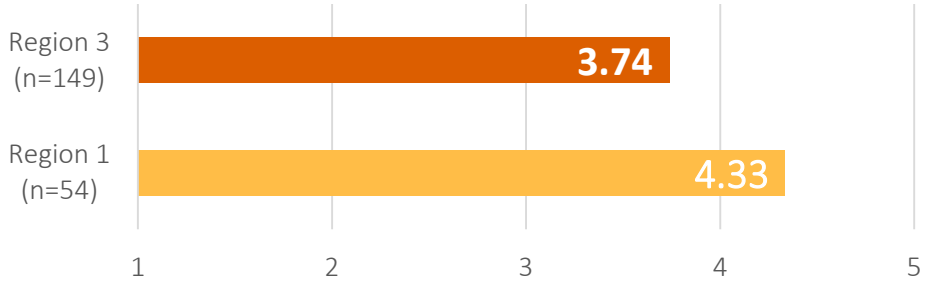


[35] Independent t-test: $t(855)=2.757$, $p=0.006$, $d=0.19$
[36] Independent t-test: $t(125.3)=2.319$, $p=0.022$, $d=0.24$
[37] Independent t-test: $t(855)=2.221$, $p=0.027$, $d=0.33$

Ratings also varied according to the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *criminal* cases had a rating (3.71) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.11).[38] Those who were in court for *landlord/tenant* type cases had a rating (4.46) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (3.97).[39]



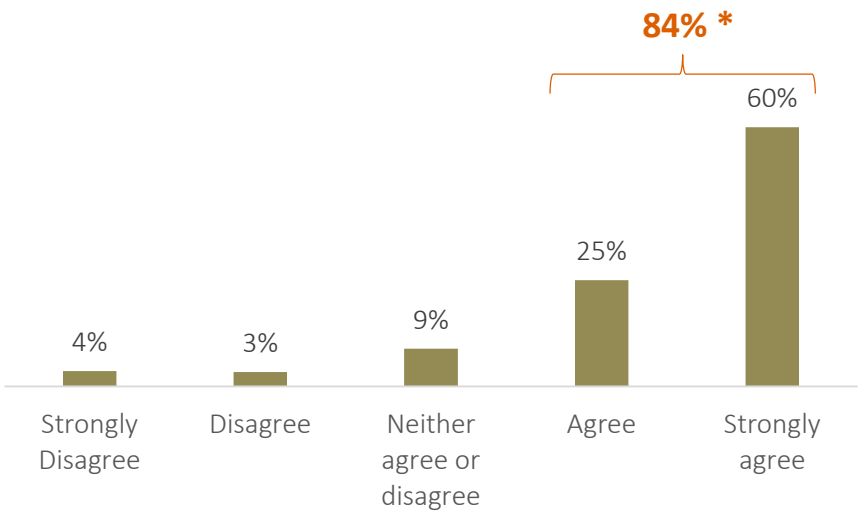
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 3 had a rating (3.74) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.03).[40] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 1 had a rating (4.33) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (3.97).[41]



[38] Independent t-test: $t(508.8)$-4.464, $p<0.001$, $d=0.32$
[39] Independent t-test: $t(39.6)=3.147$, $p=0.003$, $d=0.45$
[40] Independent t-test: $t(981)=2.624$, $p=0.009$, $d=0.23$
[41] Independent t-test: $t(981)=2.099$, $p=0.036$, $d=0.32$

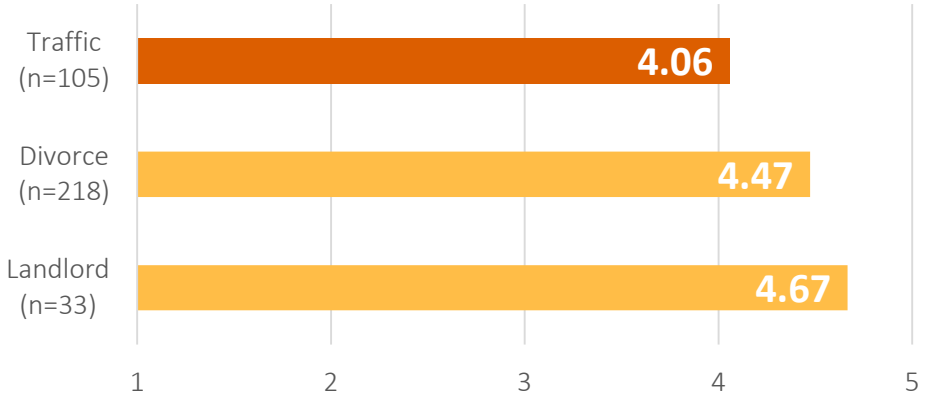
6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.

Approximately 84% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.



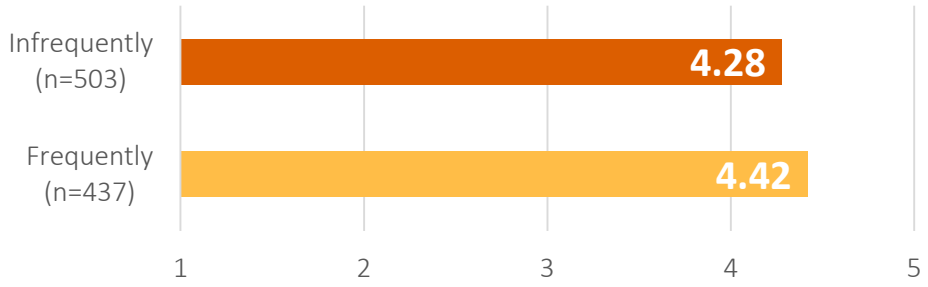
* Due to rounding, total does not correspond with the sum of individual columns.

While the average rating for this question was 4.34, ratings varied depending on the activity participants engaged in while in court. Those who were in court for *traffic* cases had a rating (4.06) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.39).[42] Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* type cases had a rating (4.47) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.31).[43] Those who were in court for *landlord/tenant* type cases had a rating (4.67) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.34).[44]

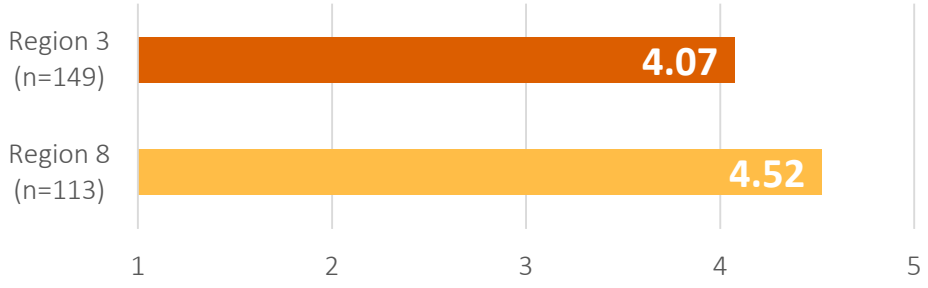


[42] Independent t-test: $t(123.8)=2.793$, $p=0.006$, $d=0.31$
[43] Independent t-test: $t(423.2)=2.282$, $p=0.023$, $d=0.17$
[44] Independent t-test: $t(35.1)=2.079$, $p=0.045$, $d=0.35$

Ratings varied according to the frequency with which participants visited the courthouse. Those who visited a courthouse *infrequently* had a rating (4.28) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited the courthouse *frequently* (4.42).[45]



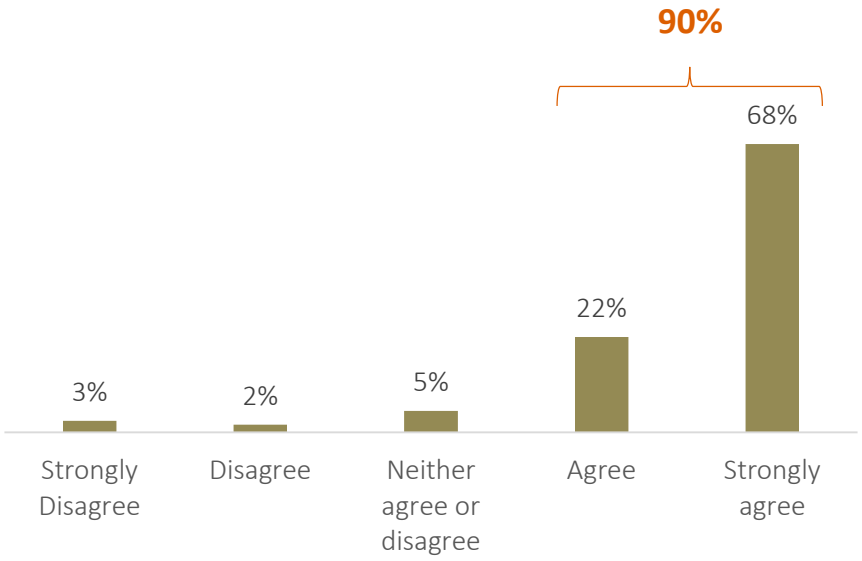
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 3 had a rating (4.07) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.38).[46] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 8 had a rating (4.52) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.31).[47]



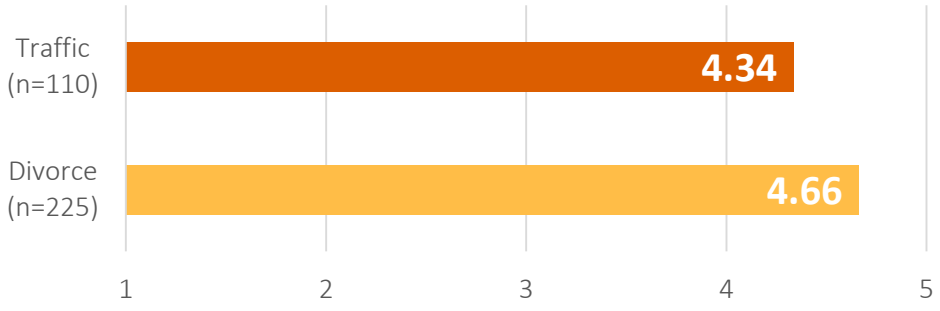
[45] Independent t-test: $t(937.7)=2.178$, $p=0.030$, $d=0.14$
[46] Independent t-test: $t(188.4)=3.064$, $p=0.003$, $d=0.29$
[47] Independent t-test: $t(163.8)=2.505$, $p=0.013$, $d=0.23$

7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.

Approximately 90% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

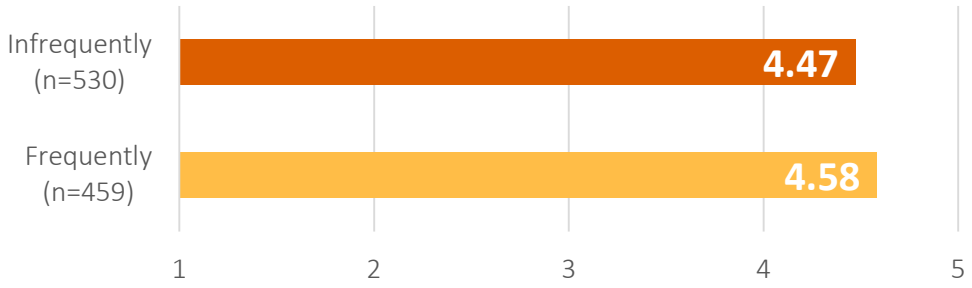


While the average rating for this question was 4.51, rating varied according to the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *traffic* cases had a rating (4.34) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.55).[48] Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* type cases had a rating (4.66) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.49).[49]

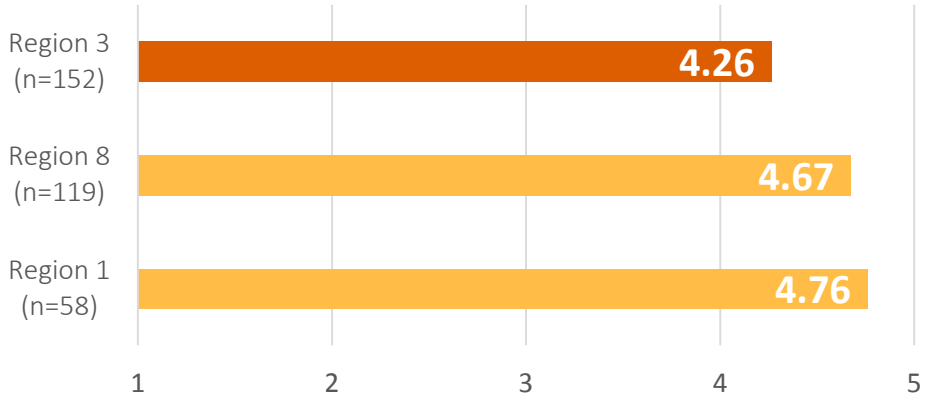


[48] Independent t-test: $t(130.0)=2.169$, $p=0.032$, $d=0.23$
[49] Independent t-test: $t(458.2)=3.022$, $p=0.003$, $d=0.22$

Ratings varied according to the frequency with which participants visited the courthouse. Those who visited a courthouse *infrequently* had a rating (4.47) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses *frequently* (4.58).[50]



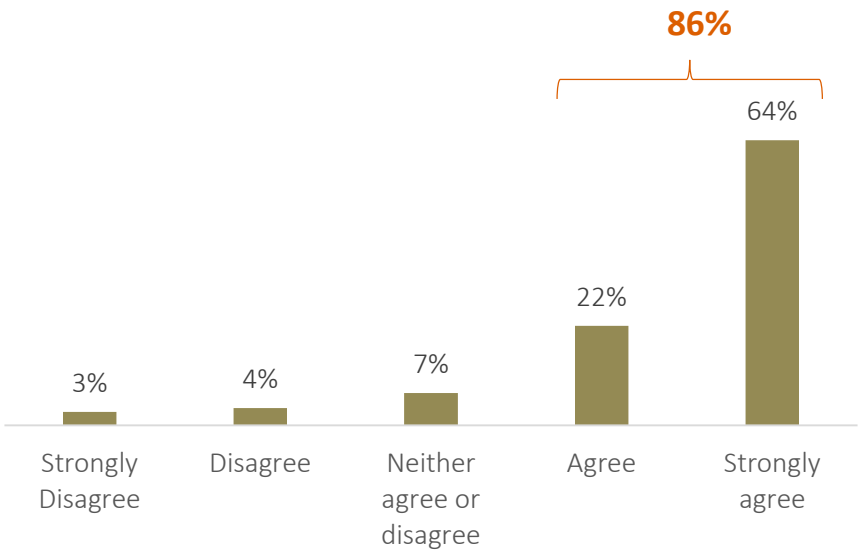
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 3 had a rating (4.26) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.55).[51] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 8 had a rating (4.67) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.49).[52] Likewise, those who visited a courthouse in Region 1 had a rating (4.76) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.49).[53]



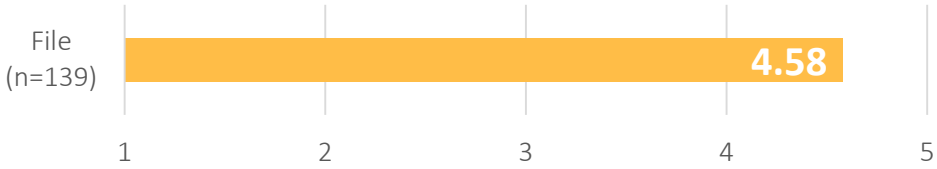
[50] Independent t-test: $t(986.6)=2.013$, $p=0.044$, $d=0.13$
[51] Independent t-test: $t(184.9)=3.129$, $p=0.002$, $d=0.30$
[52] Independent t-test: $t(182.4)=2.723$, $p=0.007$, $d=0.23$
[53] Independent t-test: $t(85.1)=3.883$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.37$

8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.

Approximately 86% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

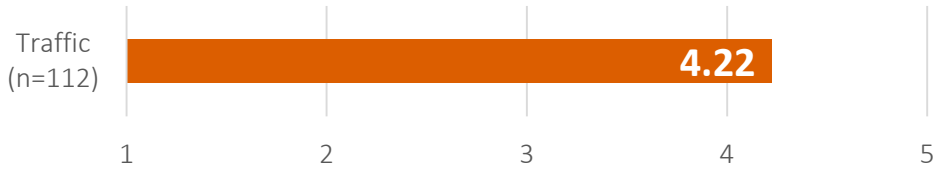


While the average rating for this question was 4.40, ratings varied depending on the activity participants engaged in while in court. Those who were in court to *file papers* had a rating (4.58) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this activity (4.38).[54]

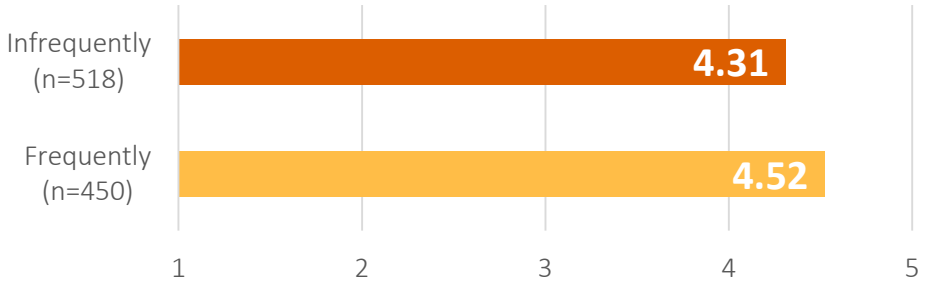


[54] Independent t-test: $t(233.8)=2.700$, $p=0.007$, $d=0.23$

Ratings also varied according to the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *traffic* cases had a rating (4.22) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.44).[55]

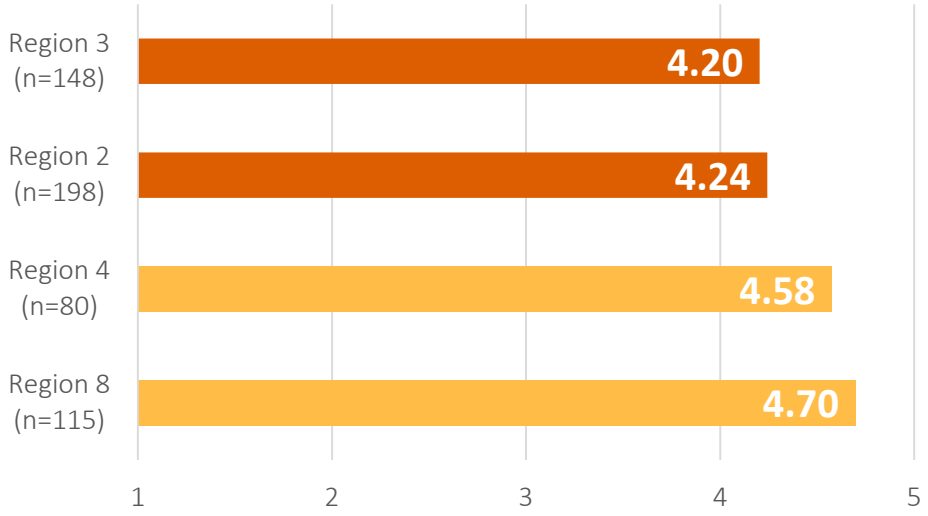


Ratings varied according to the frequency with which participants visited the courthouse. Those who visited a courthouse *infrequently* had a rating (4.31) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited a courthouse *frequently* (4.52).[56]



[55] Independent t-test: $t(138.2)=2.098$, $p=0.038$, $d=0.22$
[56] Independent t-test: $t(965.3)=3.442$, $p=0.001$, $d=0.22$

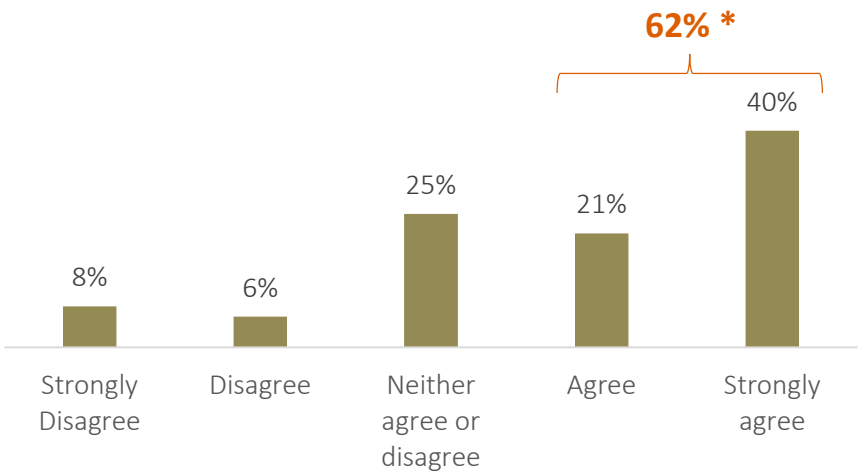
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 3 had a rating (4.20) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.43).[57] Likewise, those who visited a courthouse in Region 2 had a rating (4.24) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.43).[58] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 4 had a rating (4.58) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.38).[59] Likewise, those who visited a courthouse in Region 8 had a rating (4.70) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.36).[60]



[57] Independent t-test: $t(190.0)=2.384$, $p=0.018$, $d=0.22$
[58] Independent t-test: $t(296.1)=2.412$, $p=0.016$, $d=0.19$
[59] Independent t-test: $t(102.5)=2.054$, $p=0.043$, $d=0.21$
[60] Independent t-test: $t(185.3)=4.640$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.39$

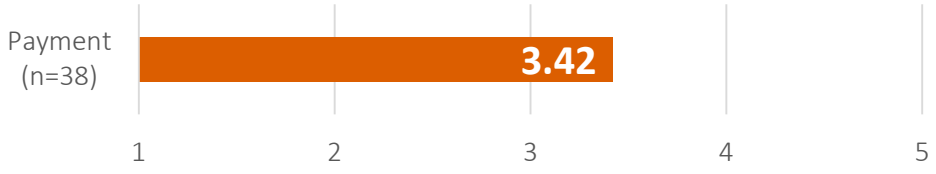
9. The court's website was useful.

Approximately 62% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.



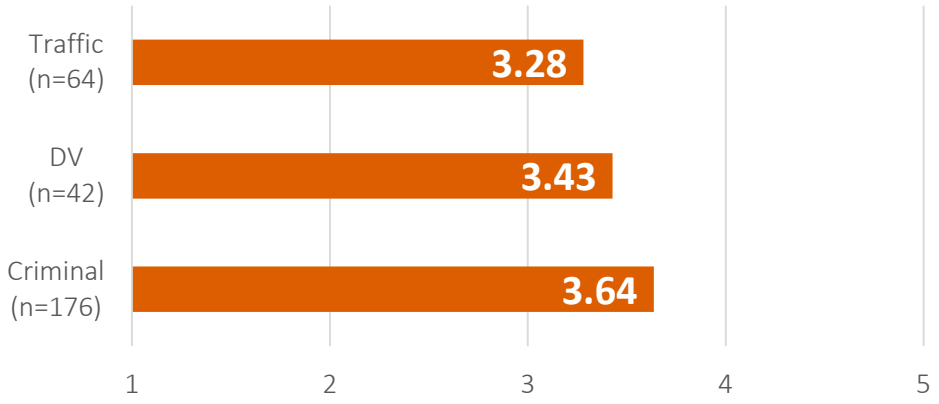
* Due to rounding, total does not correspond with the sum of individual columns.

While the average rating for this question was 3.81, ratings varied depending on the activity participants engaged in while in court. Those who were in court to *make a payment* had a rating (3.42) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this activity (3.83).[61]

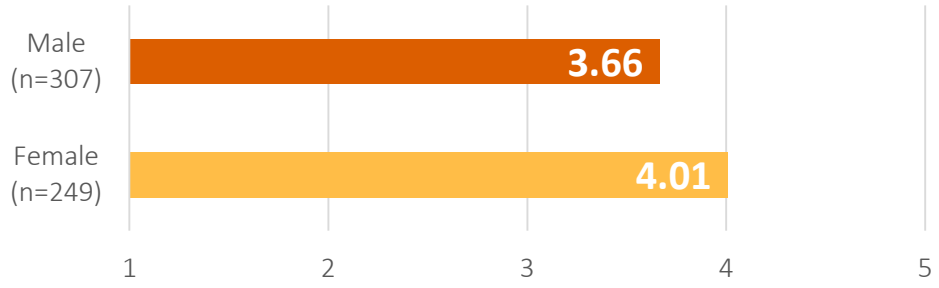


[61] Independent t-test: $t(496)=1.981$, $p=0.048$, $d=0.34$

Ratings also varied according to the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *traffic* cases had a rating (3.28) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (3.89).[62] Those who were in court for *domestic violence/protection order* cases had a rating (3.43) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (3.85).[63] Those who were in court for *criminal* cases had a rating (3.64) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (3.91).[64]

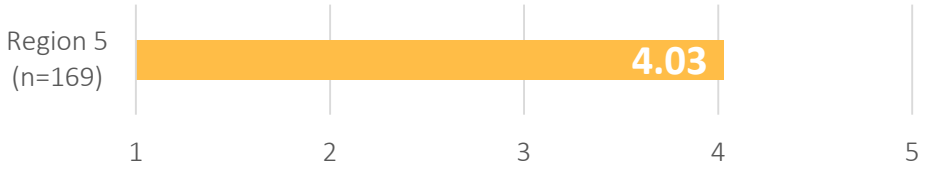


Ratings varied according to gender. Male participants had a rating (3.66) that was statistically significantly *lower* than that of female participants (4.01).[65]



[62] Independent t-test: $t(541)=3.735$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.49$
[63] Independent t-test: $t(541)=2.130$, $p=0.034$, $d=0.32$
[64] Independent t-test: $t(541)=2.390$, $p=0.017$, $d=0.22$
[65] Independent t-test: $t(551.9)=3.348$, $p=0.001$, $d=0.28$

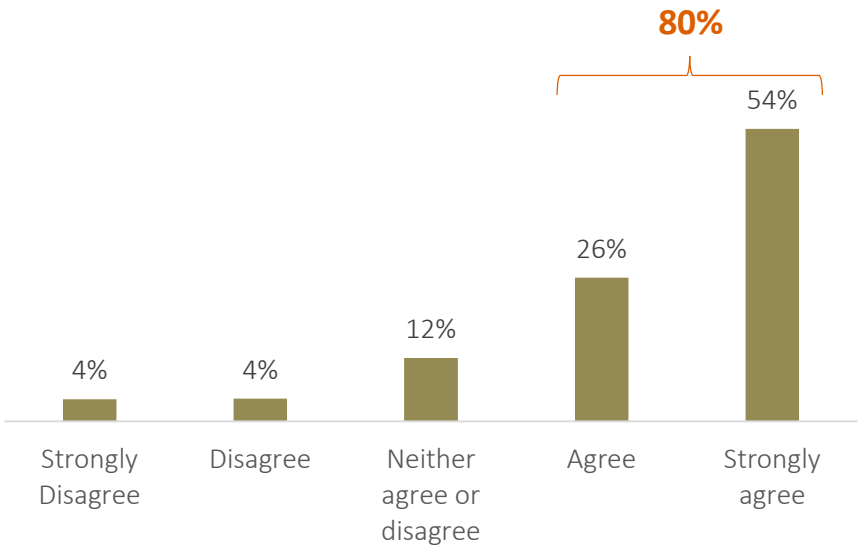
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 5 had a rating (4.03) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (3.72).[66]



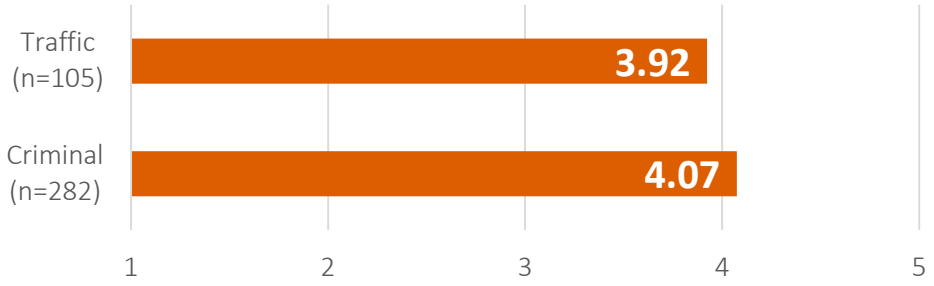
[66] Independent t-test: $t(572)=2.753$, $p=0.006$, $d=0.26$

10. The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.

Approximately 80% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

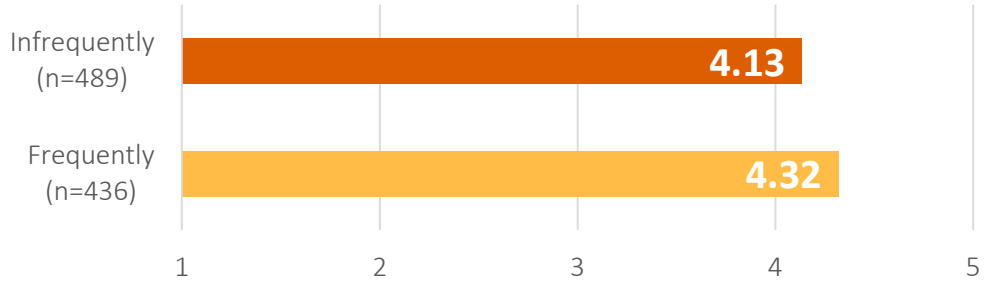


While the average rating for this question was 4.21, ratings varied depending on the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *traffic* cases had a rating (3.92) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.26).[67] Likewise, those who were in court for *criminal* cases had a rating (4.07) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.29).[68]

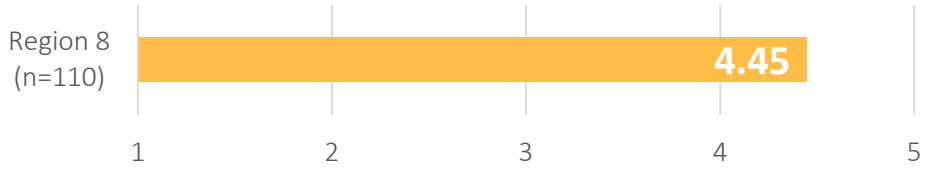


[67] Independent t-test: $t(122.1)=2.599$, $p=0.010$, $d=0.29$
[68] Independent t-test: $t(898)=2.849$, $p=0.004$, $d=0.20$

Ratings varied according to the frequency with which participants visited the courthouse. Those who visited a courthouse *infrequently* had a rating (4.13) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited a courthouse *frequently* (4.32).[69]



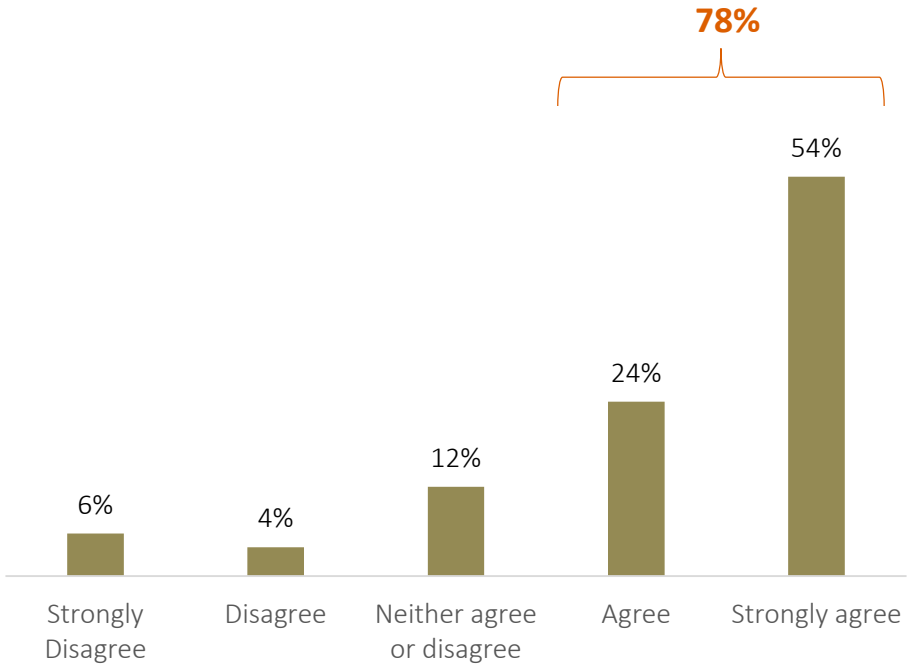
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 8 had a rating (4.45) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other regions (4.18).[70]



[69] Independent t-test: $t(922.5)=2.656$, $p=0.008$, $d=0.17$
[70] Independent t-test: $t(174.2)=3.185$, $p=0.002$, $d=0.28$

Fairness

Participants were presented with five separate statements related to fairness and asked to respond to them with *strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree,* or *not applicable.* Court fairness was indicated by the answers *agree* and *strongly agree.* Aggregating the responses to these five statements across all participants give a general measure of fairness. Overall, 78% of participants reported fairness (24% *agree*, 54% *strongly agree*).

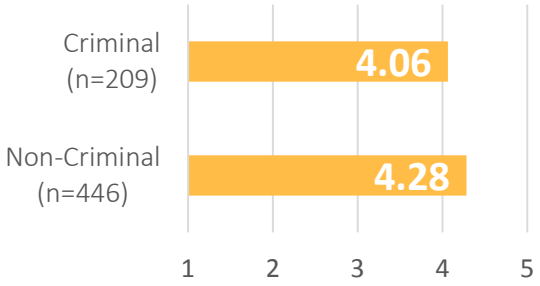


Fairness by Participant/Court Characteristics

In order to compare court fairness between groups, researchers used the numeric scale associated with each response category to calculate an average rating. The average court fairness rating across all participants was 4.19. This rating indicates that most participants *agreed (4)* or *strongly agreed (5)* with court fairness statements. However, this rating varied depending on characteristics of both participants and courts. The following differences were statistically significant.

Criminal Cases

Participants who were in court for **criminal cases** found court **less fair** than those who were in court for other types of cases.[71]



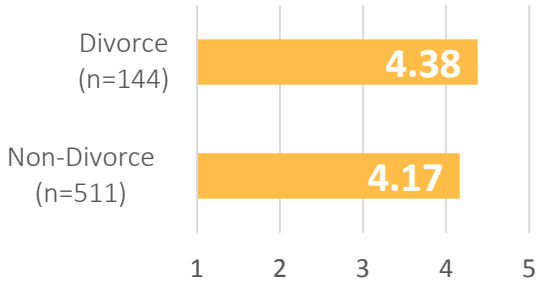
The lower rating for overall court fairness by participants with criminal cases was due to lower ratings for the following statements (lower rates indicated by orange circles):

S11. The way my case was handled was fair.
S12. The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.
S13. The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case.
S14. I was treated the same as everyone else.
S15. As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case.

[71] Independent t-test: $t(653)=2.609$, $p=0.009$, $d=0.22$

Divorce Cases

Participants who were in court for **divorce cases** found court **fairer** than those who were in court for other types of cases.[72]



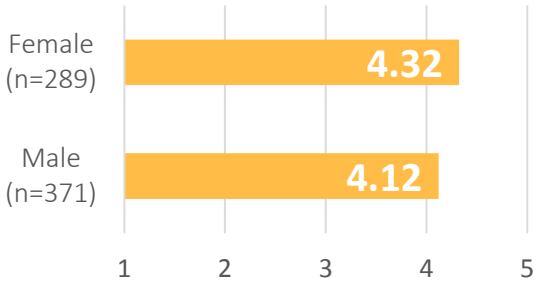
The higher rating for overall court fairness by participants with divorce cases was due to higher ratings for the following statements (higher rates indicated by yellow circles):

S11. The way my case was handled was fair.
S12. The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.
S13. The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case.
S14. I was treated the same as everyone else.
S15. As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case.

[72] Independent t-test: $t(263.5)=2.500$, $p=0.013$, $d=0.23$

Gender

Females found court **fairer** than males.[73]



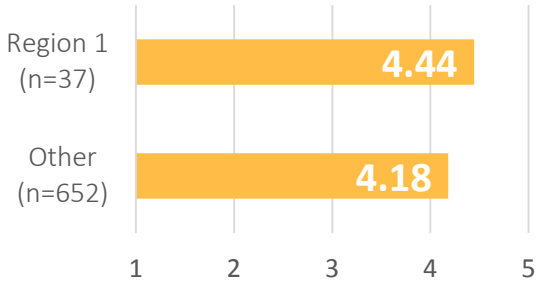
The higher rating in overall court fairness by females was due to higher ratings for the following statements (higher rates indicated by yellow circles):

S11. The way my case was handled was fair.
S12. The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.
S13. The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case.
S14. I was treated the same as everyone else.
S15. As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case.

[73] Independent t-test: $t(639.0)=2.618$, $p=0.009$, $d=0.20$

Region 1

Participants who visited court in **Region 1** found court **fairer** than those who visited court in other locations.[74]



The higher rating in overall court access by participants who visited a courthouse in Region 1 was due to higher ratings for the following statements (higher rates indicated by yellow circles):

S11. The way my case was handled was fair.
S12. The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.
S13. The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case.
S14. I was treated the same as everyone else.
S15. As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case.

[74] Independent t-test: $t(45.2)=2.157$, $p=0.036$, $d=0.30$

Individual Facets of Fairness

While the average court fairness rating was 4.19, survey participants found some facets of court operations fairer than others. Facets with the highest ratings were *knowing what to do next* (4.30) and *being treated the same as everyone else* (4.27). Facets with the lowest ratings were *the judge had the information necessary to make good decisions* (4.10), *the judge listened to my side of the story before making a decision* (4.09), and *the way my case was handled was fair* (4.06).

Fairness Statements:

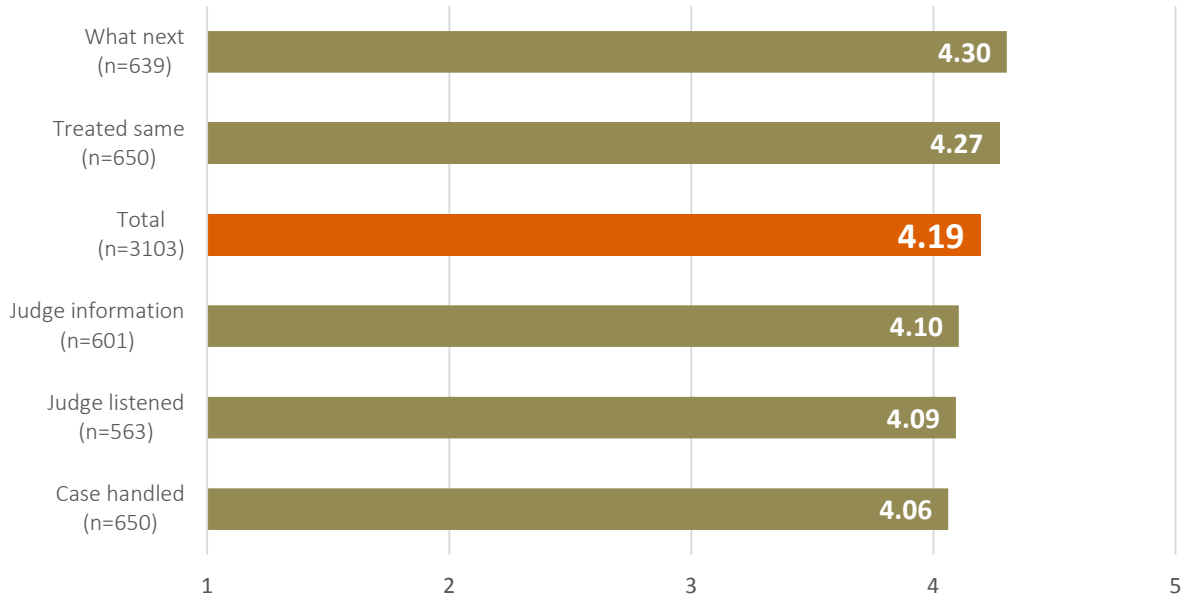
As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case.

I was treated the same as everyone else.

The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case.

The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.

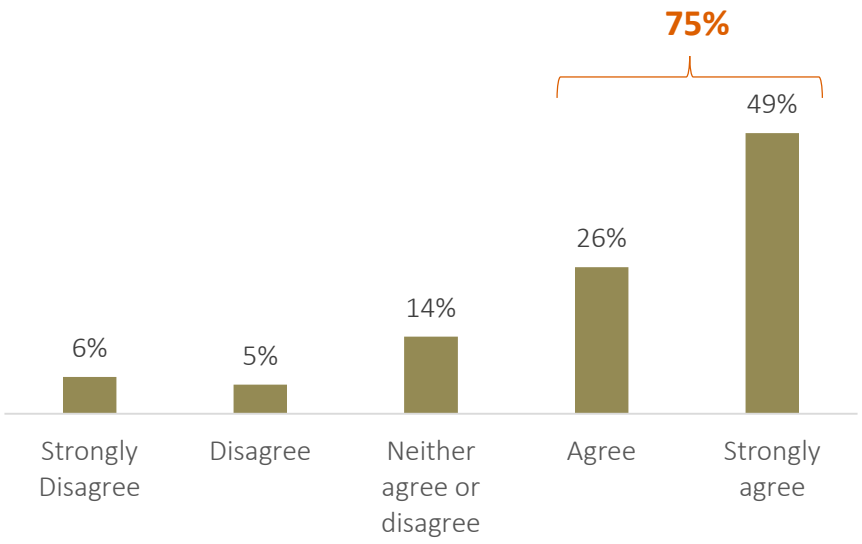
The way my case was handled was fair.



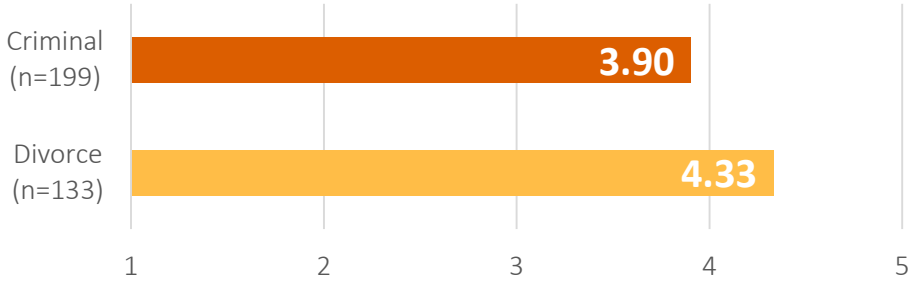
The remainder of this section looks at the individual facets of court fairness, summarized by the statements about fairness that appeared on the survey.

11. The way my case was handled was fair.

Approximately 75% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

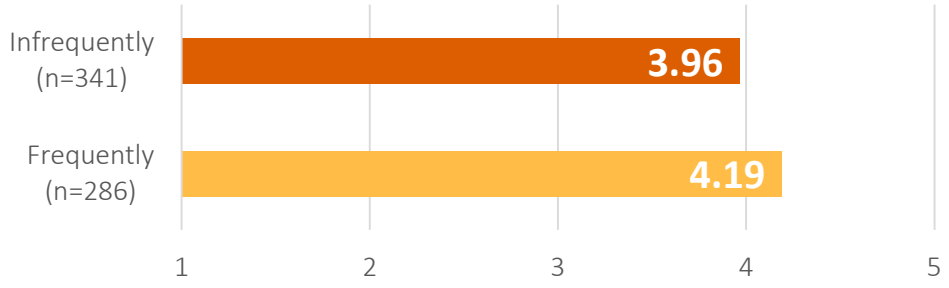


While the average rating for this question was 4.06, ratings varied depending on the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *criminal* cases had a rating (3.90) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.16).[75] Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* type cases had a rating (4.33) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.01).[76]

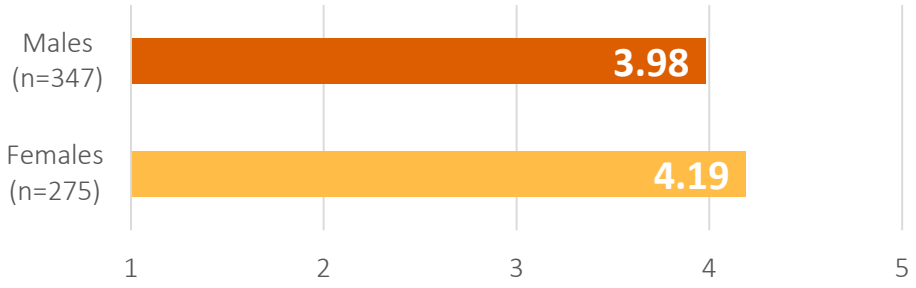


[75] Independent t-test: $t(353.8)=2.458$, $p=0.014$, $d=0.22$
[76] Independent t-test: $t(257.6)=3.168$, $p=0.002$, $d=0.29$

Rating varied according to the frequency with which participants visited the courthouse. Those who visited a courthouse *infrequently* had a rating (3.96) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited the courthouse *frequently* (4.19).[77]



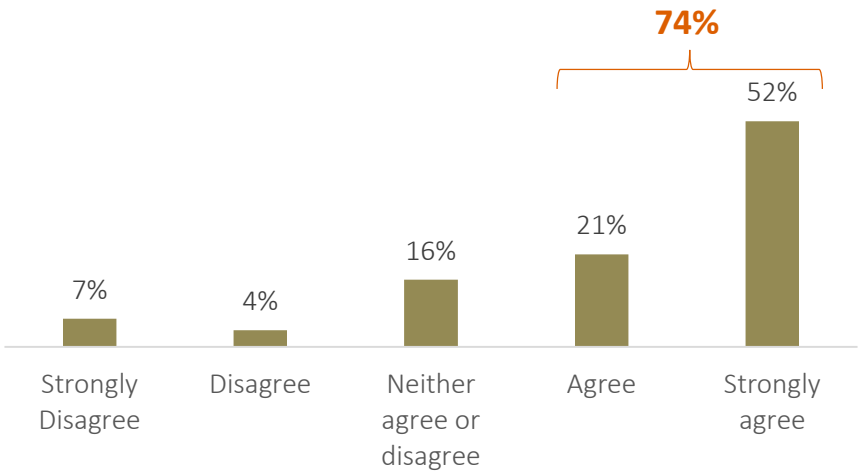
Ratings varied according to gender. Male participants had a rating (3.98) that was statistically significantly *lower* than that of female participants (4.19).[78]



[77] Independent t-test: $t(625)=2.369$, $p=0.018$, $d=0.19$
[78] Independent t-test: $t(620)=2.194$, $p=0.029$, $d=0.18$

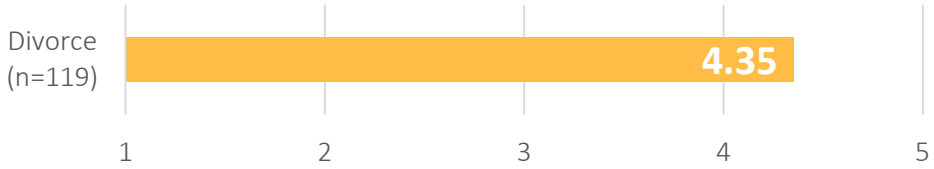
12. The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.

Approximately 74% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.



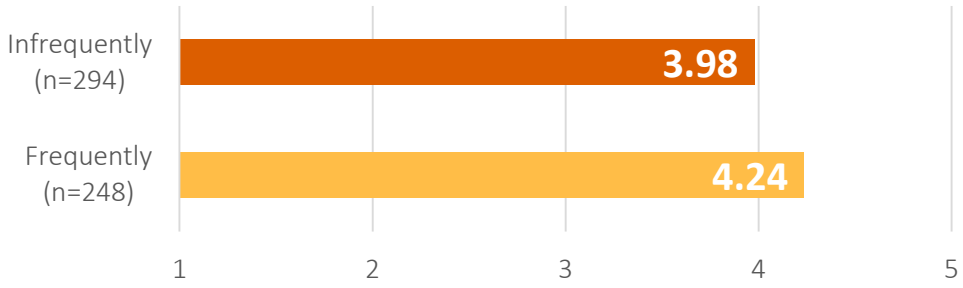
* Due to rounding, total does not correspond with the sum of individual columns.

While the average rating for this question was 4.09, ratings varied depending on the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* cases had a rating (4.35) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.05).[79]

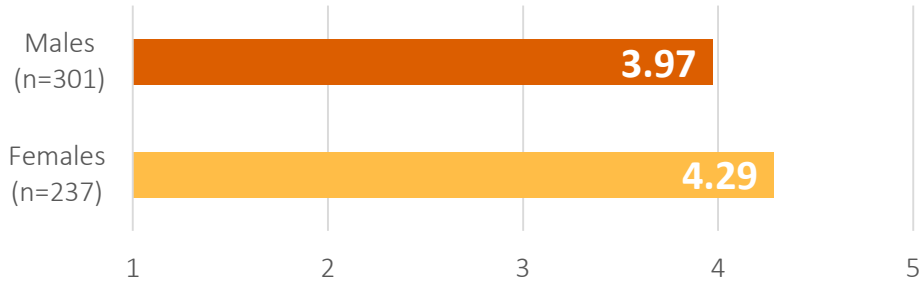


[79] Independent t-test: $t(234.6)=2.867$, $p=0.005$, $d=0.28$

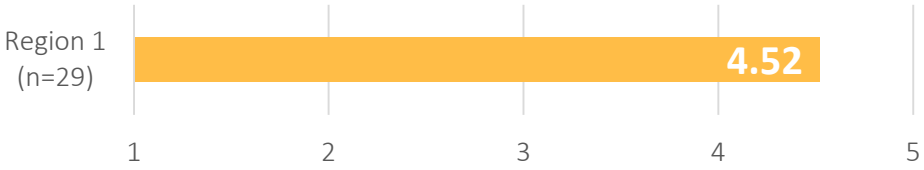
Ratings varied according to the frequency with which participants visited the courthouse. Those who visited a courthouse *infrequently* had a rating (4.24) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited the courthouse *frequently* (3.98).[80]



Ratings varied according to gender. Male participants had a rating (3.97) that was statistically significantly *lower* than that of female participants (4.29).[81]



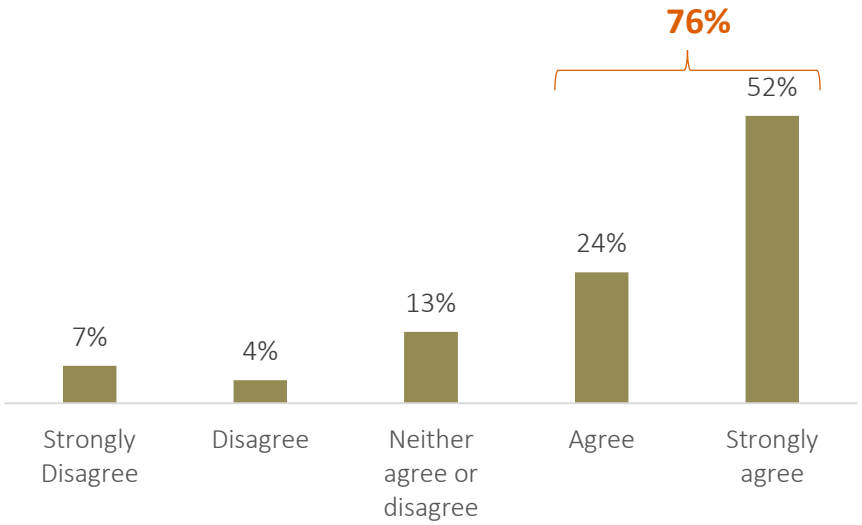
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 1 had a rating (4.52) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.07).[82]



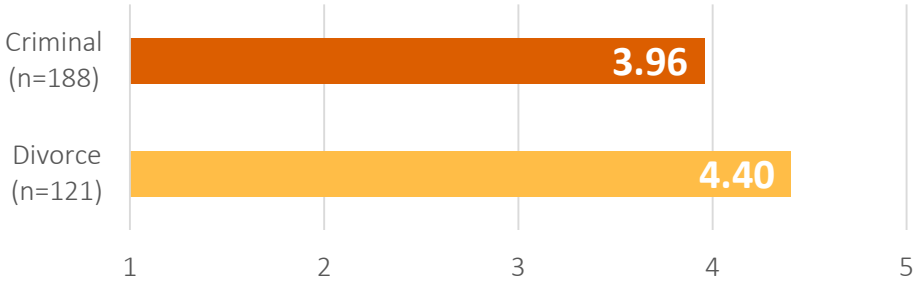
[80] Independent t-test: $t(540)=2.551$, $p=0.011$, $d=0.22$
[81] Independent t-test: $t(532.7)=3.169$, $p=0.002$, $d=0.27$
[82] Independent t-test: $t(38.2)=3.246$, $p=0.002$, $d=0.46$

13. The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case.

Approximately 76% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

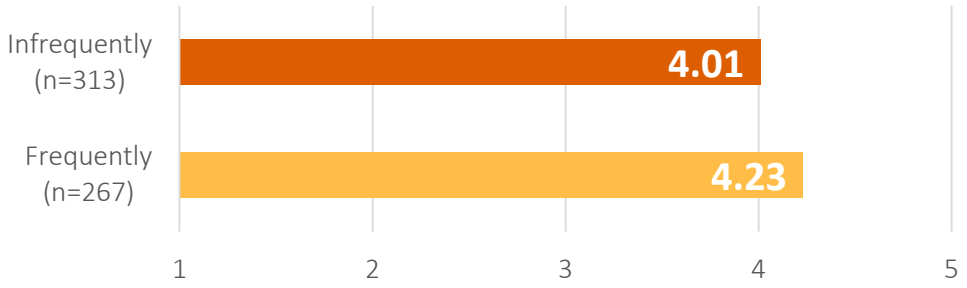


While the average rating for this question was 4.10, ratings varied depending on the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *criminal* cases had a rating (3.96) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.21).[83] Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* cases had a rating (4.40) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.05).[84]

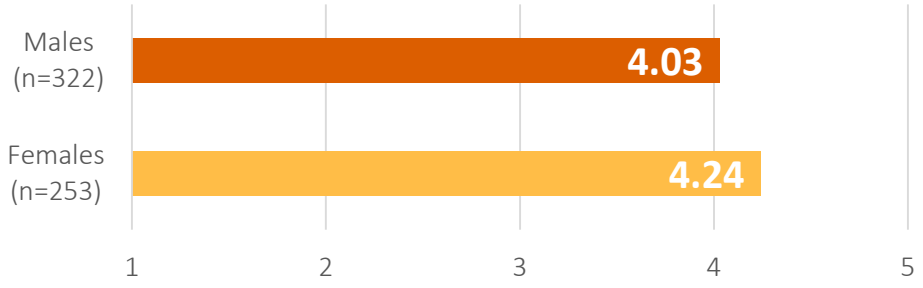


[83] Independent t-test: $t(569)=2.447$, $p=0.015$, $d=0.22$
[84] Independent t-test: $t(235.2)=3.385$, $p=0.001$, $d=0.32$

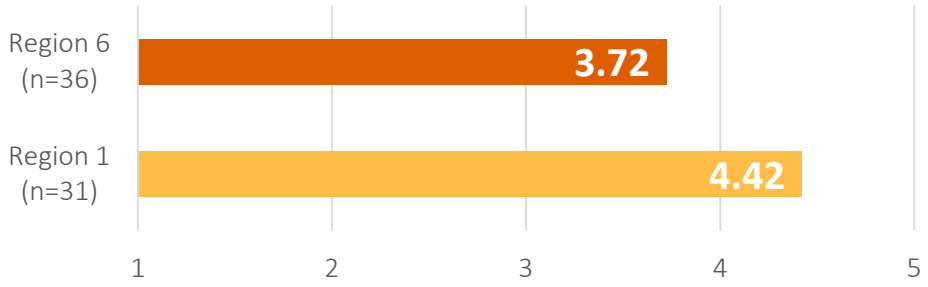
Ratings varied according to the frequency with which participants visited the courthouse. Those who visited a courthouse *infrequently* had a rating (4.01) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited the courthouse *frequently* (4.23).[85]



Ratings varied according to gender. Male participants had a rating (4.03) that was statistically significantly *lower* than that of female participants (4.24).[86]



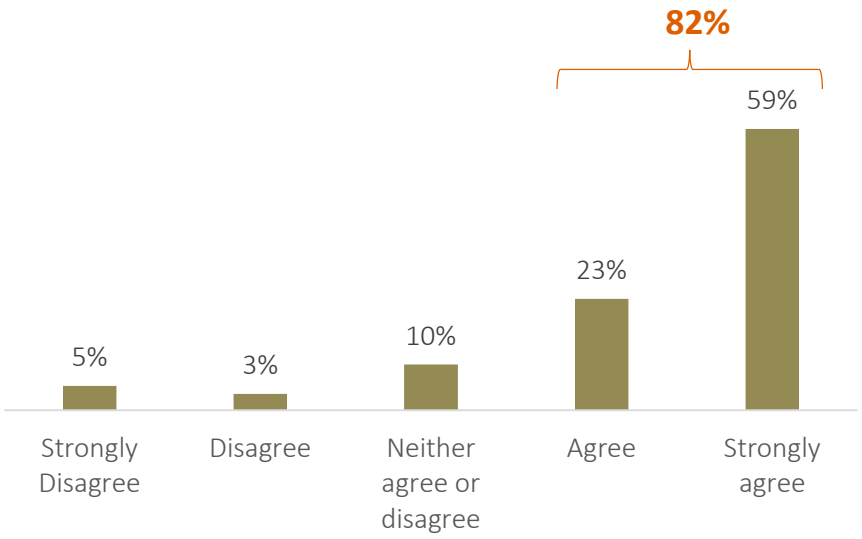
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 6 had a rating (3.72) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.13). [87] Those who visited a courthouse in Region 1 had a rating (4.42) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.09).[88]



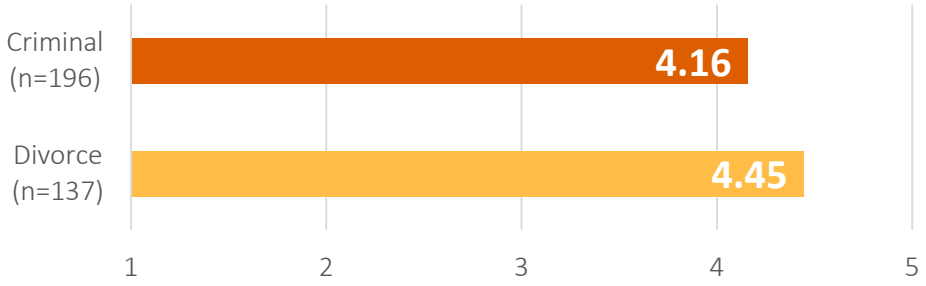
[85] Independent t-test: $t(578)=2.262$, $p=0.024$, $d=0.19$
[86] Independent t-test: $t(573)=2.157$, $p=0.031$, $d=0.18$
[87] Independent t-test: $t(599)=1.989$, $p=0.047$, $d=0.31$
[88] Independent t-test: $t(38.7)=2.265$, $p=0.029$, $d=0.33$

14. I was treated the same as everyone else.

Approximately 82% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.

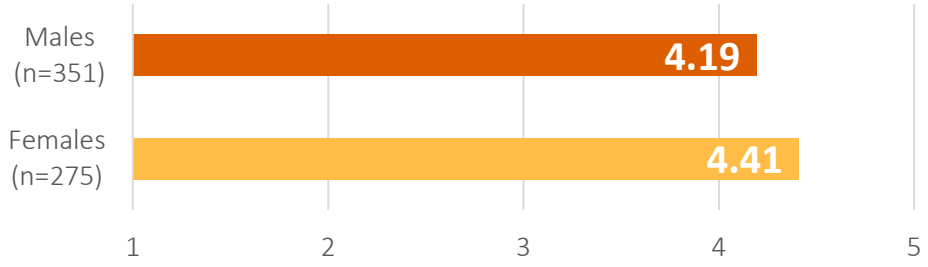


While the average rating for this question was 4.27, ratings varied depending on the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *criminal* cases had a rating (4.16) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.35).[89] Those who were in court for *divorce, child custody or support* cases had a rating (4.45) that was statistically significantly *higher* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.24).[90]

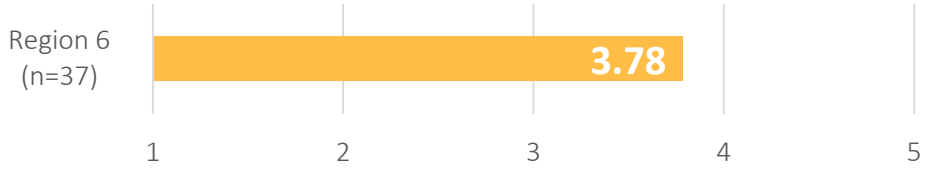


[89] Independent t-test: $t(617)=2.007$, $p=0.045$, $d=0.17$
[90] Independent t-test: $t(250.5)=2.132$, $p=0.034$, $d=0.20$

Ratings varied according to gender. Male participants had a rating (4.19) that was statistically significantly *lower* than that of female participants (4.41).[91]



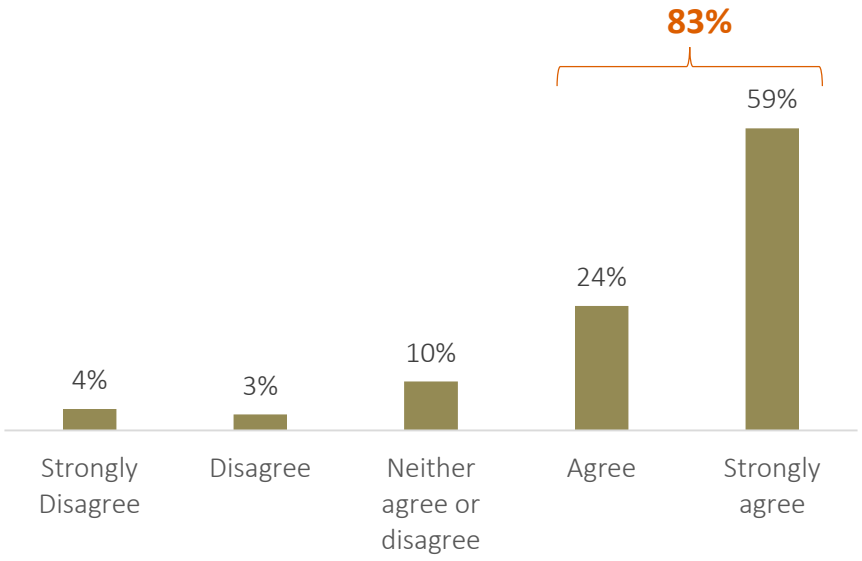
Ratings varied according to the location of the courthouse visited by participants. Those who visited a courthouse in Region 6 had a rating (3.78) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited courthouses in other locations (4.30).[92]



[91] Independent t-test: $t(613.8)=2.533$, $p=0.012$, $d=0.20$
[92] Independent t-test: $t(38.4)=2.131$, $p=0.040$, $d=0.41$

15. As I leave court, I know what to do next about my case.

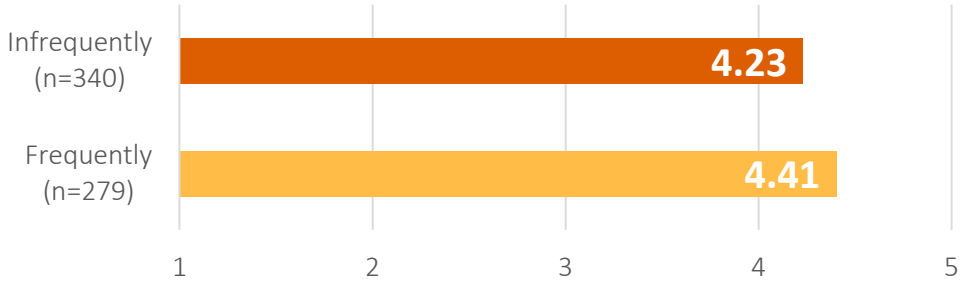
Approximately 83% of participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with this statement.



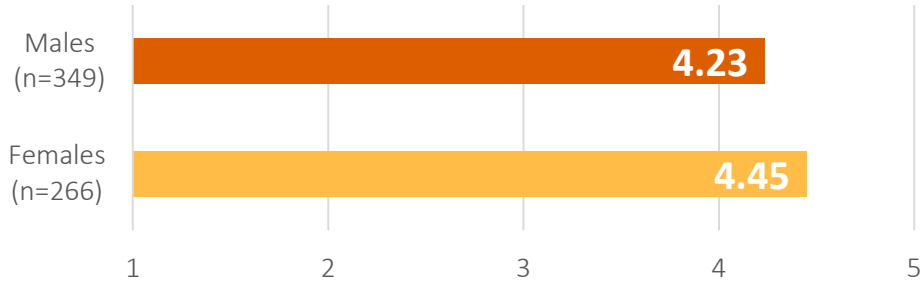
While the average rating for this question was 4.30, ratings varied depending on the type of case that brought participants to court. Those who were in court for *domestic violence/protection order* cases had a rating (4.00) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who were not in court for this type of case (4.35).[93]

[93] Independent t-test: $t(606)=2.313$, $p=0.021$, $d=0.32$

Ratings varied according to the frequency with which participants visited the courthouse. Those who visited a courthouse *infrequently* had a rating (4.23) that was statistically significantly *lower* than those who visited the courthouse *frequently* (4.41).[94]



Ratings varied according to gender. Male participants had a rating (4.23) that was statistically significantly *lower* than that of female participants (4.45).[95]



[94] Independent t-test: $t(617)=2.067$, $p=0.039$, $d=0.17$
[95] Independent t-test: $t(599.9)=2.600$, $p=0.010$, $d=0.21$

Comparison With Other States

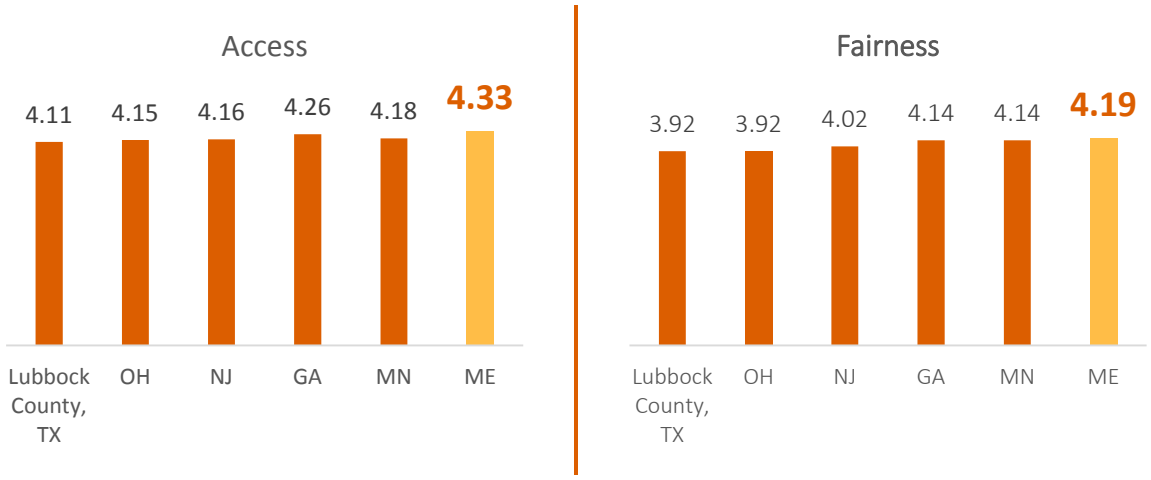
A number of other states have used the CourTools instrument to assess access and fairness in their jurisdictions and have made their results available online, making comparisons possible. Toward that end, SAC researchers searched for reports using the CourTools portal,[96] focusing on surveys done between 2008 and 2017 and reports with enough detail to allow for comparison with Maine's survey. This search resulted in a total of five comparison states/counties: Georgia; Minnesota; New Jersey; Ohio; and Lubbock County, Texas. The surveys conducted by these states varied greatly in sample size, from 69 (Lubbock County, TX) to 4500 (MN). This difference, along with other differences in how the surveys were worded and conducted, means that comparisons must be made with caution.[97]

With an overall access score of 4.33 and an overall fairness score of 4.19, Maine scored higher than any of the comparison states.

This being said, Maine fared favorably when compared to other states. With an overall access score of 4.33 and an overall fairness score of 4.19, Maine scored higher than any of the comparison states. A comparison of the individual statements associated with access and fairness showed that Maine was lower than one or more comparison states when it came to the following statements:

- The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.
- I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.
- The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.
- The way my case was handled was fair.
- The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.

These are areas on which the MJB might focus its improvement efforts.



[96] http://www.courtools.org/Trial-Court-Performance-Measures/Reports-from-Courts.aspx

[97] For details of comparison state reports, please see original source. Links to each report are provided on the CourTools website (see preceding footnote).

Conclusion

Access

The majority of statements related to access (80%) had average scores that fell between *agree (4)* and *strongly agree (5)* (see chart on page 22 for graphical depiction of scores). Furthermore, three of these statements had average scores that were closer to *strongly agree*, indicating that the majority of participants found the court very accessible in these regards. Specifically, participants were able to find the courthouse, felt safe while they were there, and believed they were treated with courtesy and respect. These are positive findings for the MJB.

Only two of the statements related to access had scores that fell between *neither agree nor disagree* and *agree*, indicating that while the majority agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, there was nevertheless more ambivalence and disagreement with these statements compared to other survey statements. These statements were related to the amount of time it took to conduct court business and the usefulness of the court's website.

A closer look at these two issues shows that those who were in court to attend a hearing, those in court for criminal type cases, and those attending a court in Region 3 were less likely to feel able to get their court business done in a reasonable amount of time. Likewise, there were specific groups of participants who were less likely to find the court's website useful: those in court to make a payment; those in court for traffic, domestic violence, and criminal cases; and males. These, then are the areas and populations on which the MJB might focus its improvement efforts.

Fairness

All of the statements related to fairness had average scores that fell between *agree (4)* and *strongly agree (5)* (see chart on page 51 for graphical depiction of scores). This is a highly positive finding for the MJB.

As outlined in the preceding *Fairness by Participant/Court Characteristics* section of this report, there were differences in the perception of overall fairness by case type and participant characteristic. Specifically, those in court for criminal cases and males were most likely to give lower scores for fairness. It is reasonable to assume that there is a positive correlation between these two characteristics—that males were more likely to be in court for criminal cases—and, in fact, this was the case among survey participants. While 31% of all survey participants were in court for criminal type cases, the percentage for males was 37% and the percentage for females was 24%.

When these characteristics are teased apart, however, the picture becomes more complex. Males and females in court for criminal cases had similar scores (4.1 and 4.0, respectively), while males in court for non-criminal cases had statistically significantly lower scores than females in court for non-criminal cases.[98] Thus, the difference in fairness score between males and females cannot be explained by criminal case type; the difference persists among males and females with other case types.

		Case Type	
		Criminal	Non-Criminal
Gender	Female	4.0 (n=65)	4.4 (n=214)
	Male	4.1 (n=141)	4.2 (n=222)

This persisting gender difference can be attributed to the rankings of males and females in *divorce, child custody, or support* cases. A little under a quarter of all participants (24%) indicated *divorce, child custody, or support* as the type of case that brought them to court, second only to criminal cases. Overall, those who were in court for this type of case had a high fairness score (4.38), but scores differed by gender; males had an average fairness score of 4.2 while females had an average score of 4.5, a statistically significantly difference.[99]

In summary, overall fairness scores were lower for those in court for criminal cases (regardless of gender) and males in court for divorce, child custody, or support cases. The MJB might target its efforts to increase perceptions of fairness on these two populations.

[98] Independent t-test: $t(430.5)=2.682$, $p=0.008$, $d=0.26$
[99] Independent t-test: $t(141)=2.219$, $p=0.028$, $d=0.37$

Appendix

Judicial Branch Survey

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	n/a
Section I: Access to the Court *Circle the number.*	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Finding the courthouse was easy.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
3. I felt safe in the courthouse.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
5. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
6. Court staff paid attention to my needs.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
7. I was treated with courtesy and respect.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
9. The Court's Web site was useful.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
10. The Court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a

If you are party to a legal matter and appeared before a judicial officer today, complete questions 11-15:

Section II: Fairness *Circle the number.*						
11. The way my case was handled was fair.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
12. The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
13. The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
14. I was treated the same as everyone else.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
15. As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case.	1	2	3	4	5	n/a

Section III: Background Information *(check all that apply for each category)*

What did you do at the court today?	What type of case brought you to the courthouse today?	How do you identify yourself?
____Search court records/obtain documents	____Traffic	____American Indian or Alaska Native
____File papers	____Criminal	____Asian
____Make a payment	____Civil matter	____Black or African American
____Get information	____Divorce, child custody or support	____Hispanic or Latino
____Appear as a witness	____Juvenile matter	____Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
____Jury duty	____Small claims	____White
____Attend a hearing or trial	____Landlord/Tenant	____Mixed Race
____Registry of Deeds or Probate	____Domestic Violence/Protection Order	____Other:_____
____Party to a legal matter	____Foreclosure	____ Prefer Not to Answer
____Mediation or Arbitration	____Informational Session	
	____Other:_____	

If you are a party in a court case/legal matter, are you represented by an attorney in the case? ___Yes ___No

How often are you typically in this courthouse?	What is your gender?
____First time in this courthouse	____Male
____Once a year or less	____Female
____Several times a year	____Other
____Regularly	____ Prefer Not to Answer

Name/Location of Court:_____

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The Muskie School of Public Service is Maine's distinguished public policy school, combining an extensive applied research and technical assistance portfolio with rigorous undergraduate and graduate degree programs in geography-anthropology; policy, planning, and management (MPPM); and public health (MPH). The school is nationally recognized for applying innovative knowledge to critical issues in the fields of sustainable development and health and human service policy and management, and is home to the Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy.

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About the Maine Statistical Analysis Center

The Maine Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) informs policy development and improvement of practice in Maine's criminal and juvenile justice systems. A partnership between the University of Southern Maine Muskie School of Public Service and the Maine Department of Corrections, SAC collaborates with numerous community-based and governmental agencies. SAC conducts applied research, evaluates programs and new initiatives, and provides technical assistance, consultation and organizational development services. The Maine Statistical Analysis Center is funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and supported by the Justice Research Statistics Association.

US Department of Justice

The Law Enforcement Data Use Survey and Report were conducted under the auspices of the State Justice Statistics Program, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), Department of Justice (DOJ). Funding for this initiative was provided by the BJS grant 2016–BJ–CX–K006.

Maine SAC website: http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/justiceresearch

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This report is available on the Maine Statistical Analysis Center Website at:
http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/justiceresearch/Publications/Adult/2017_Court_Access_&_Fairness_Survey_Report.pdf