

2020-2021

Legal Needs Assessment

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Introduction

The United States justice system rests on the principle of its citizens receiving fair and equal treatment under the law. This ideal has not been met to its full capacity by any means. However, instead of hopelessness or default apathy toward this ideal, here at Legal Aid we are continually striving to identify these gaps in administering justice and find meaningful ways to enact change.

The means of collecting data about civil legal needs in the United States is a crucial part of attaining this goal. If we do not know where injustice is being overlooked, our efforts to grow are significantly hindered. However, this data is not as easily attained as one might expect. When COVID-19 began to wreak havoc on everyday life in March 2020, changes were expected. The rising unemployment, evictions, deteriorating health, social unrest, and overall chaos of the year began to expose the many already existing disparities in the American civil justice system. Not only does this illustrate the importance of the work which Legal Aid does but it also leads to a unique opportunity for data collection.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Journal of American Arts and Sciences published a report in 2019 titled "Access to Justice". This report found in 2017 that some



*71 percent of low-income households had experienced at least one civil legal problem in the previous year, including conflicts around health care, housing conditions, disability access, veterans' benefits, and domestic violence.*¹

In addition, a shocking "86 percent of the civil legal problems reported by low-income Americans in 2017 received inadequate or no legal help."²This was the state of the civil justice system before a global pandemic swept over the country. Consequently, we can expect that some of these problems may have worsened over the last 4 years. The recovery from this tumultuous year will take time, but this is where the Legal Needs Assessment becomes a useful tool for such a recovery. Through the collection of data about the needs of local Arkansas communities, we are discovering detailed information on the specific struggles of our fellow community members. Not only will this influence the strategic planning and case priority decisions, but it will also aid in the overall goal of recovering from the national catastrophe which was witnessed over the past year.

¹ "Access to Justice," Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences 148, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 8.

² "Access to Justice," 8.

Purpose

From October 2020-May 2021, Legal Aid of Arkansas conducted a Legal Needs Assessment in the 31 counties in our service area. The last time a study of this kind was conducted in Arkansas was in 2017.³ Since then, smaller-scale needs assessments were conducted for targeted populations,⁴ but the 2020 comprehensive needs assessment was initially postponed due to the events of COVID-19. Per the performance criteria set forth by the LSC,⁵ Legal Aid organizations are responsible for "identifying the most pressing civil legal needs of low-income people in the service area and targeting resources to address those needs." The purpose of this study was to understand the needs of Arkansas communities which may not be easily expressed as "legal problems." By discussing these questions with Legal Aid internal staff, community organizations, local private attorneys, educational staff, library staff, and a group of past and potential clients, we are confident that our results will guide us in creating a strategic plan to provide equal justice to the citizens of Arkansas.

Objectives

- Obtain information needed to strategically prioritize cases based on what communities and their citizens express as needs
- Give a voice to individuals organizations, leaders, and attorneys to speak on the needs of their community
- Find current gaps in our service area and the contributing problems which accompany these gaps
- Understand perspectives and sentiments toward Legal Aid and our services

³ Sarah Ann Purtill, "The Legal Needs of Low-Income Arkansans" (2017), <http://www.arlegalservices.org/sites/default/files/2017%20LAA%20Needs%20Assessment.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.arlegalservices.org/sites/default/files/Opioid%20Needs%20Assessment%202019.pdf>

⁵ "LSC Performance Criteria," Legal Services Corporation, last updated 2018, <https://www.lsc.gov/media-center/publications/lsc-performance-criteria>

Research Questions

- What are areas in which Legal Aid lawyers witness a gap in service?
- What perspective do outside organizations and attorneys have of Legal Aid and its services?
- Can we expand our reach and capacity building with cooperative partnerships via organizations and courts?
- Where do organizations refer others for legal help?
- What patterns in problems areas are we hearing from clients?

Survey Groups + Responses



**Community Citizens (Past
and Potential Clients)**

316



**Legal Aid Staff (Direct Client
Services)**

46



Community Organizations

29



**Educational Counselors and
Family Engagement
Coordinators**

29



County Library Staff

8



Private Attorneys

57

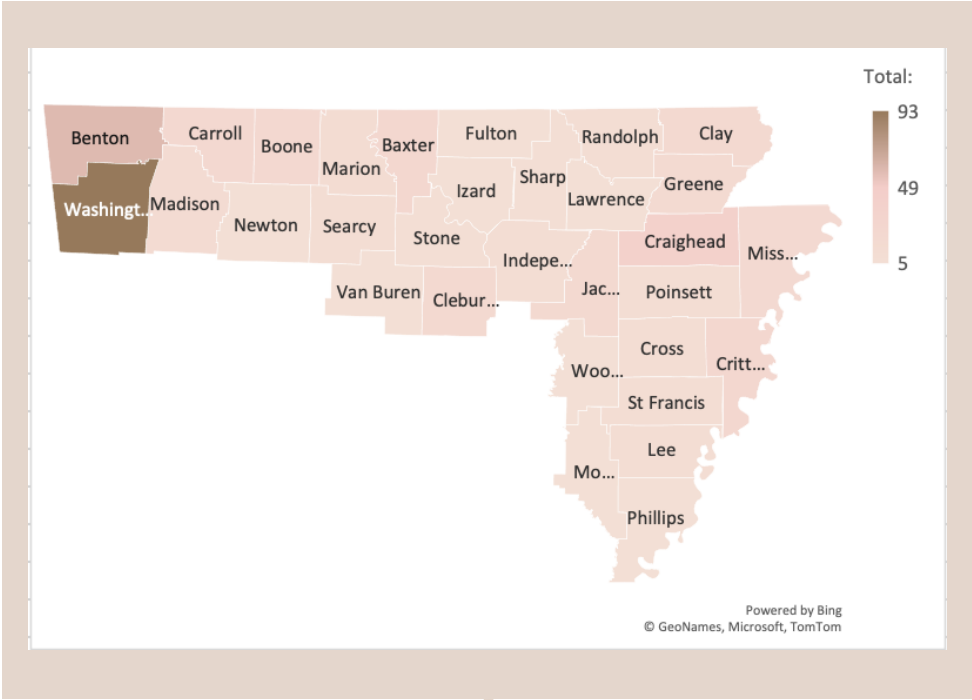


**District and Circuit Court
Judges**

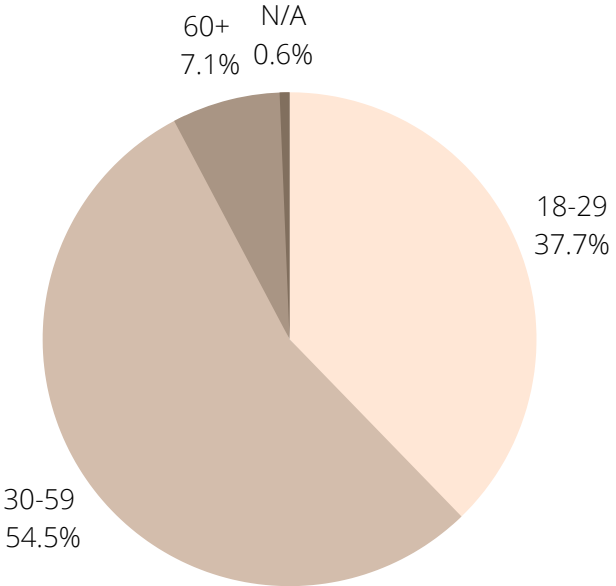
20

Group Demographics

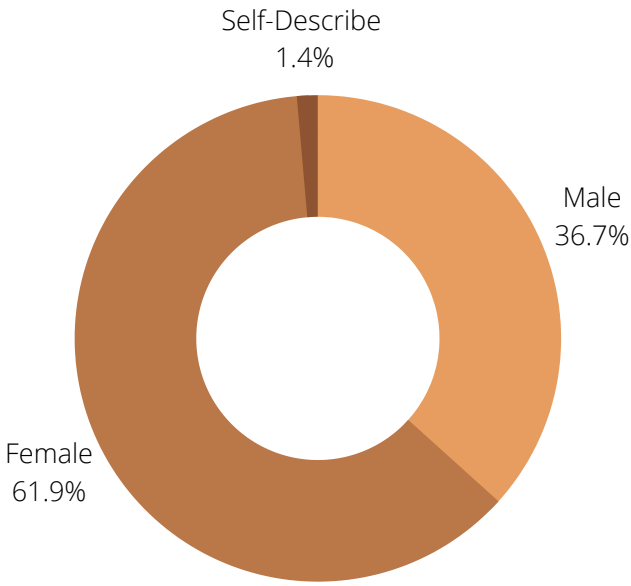
Respondents by County



Respondents by Age

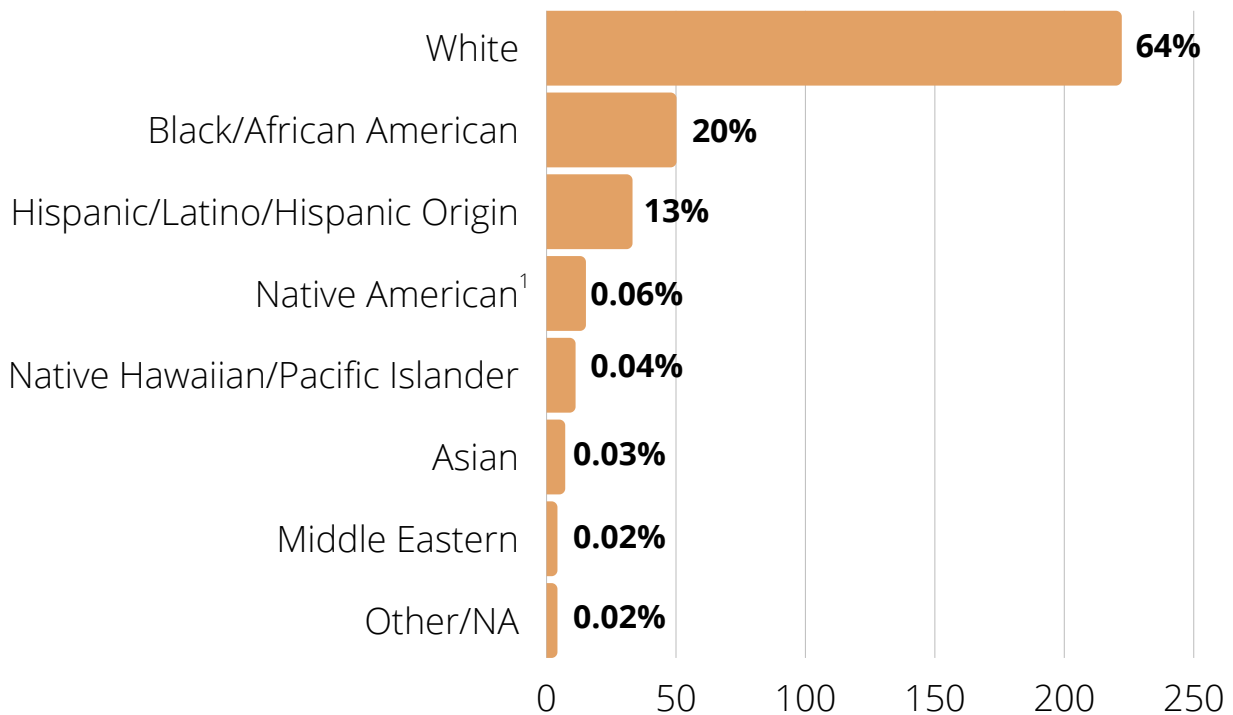


Respondents by Gender

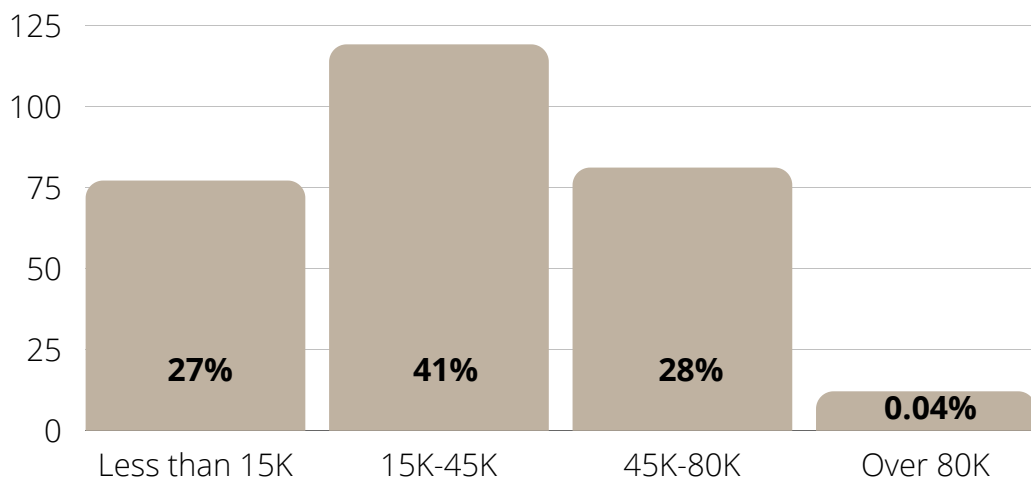


Group Demographics

Client Respondents by Ethnicity



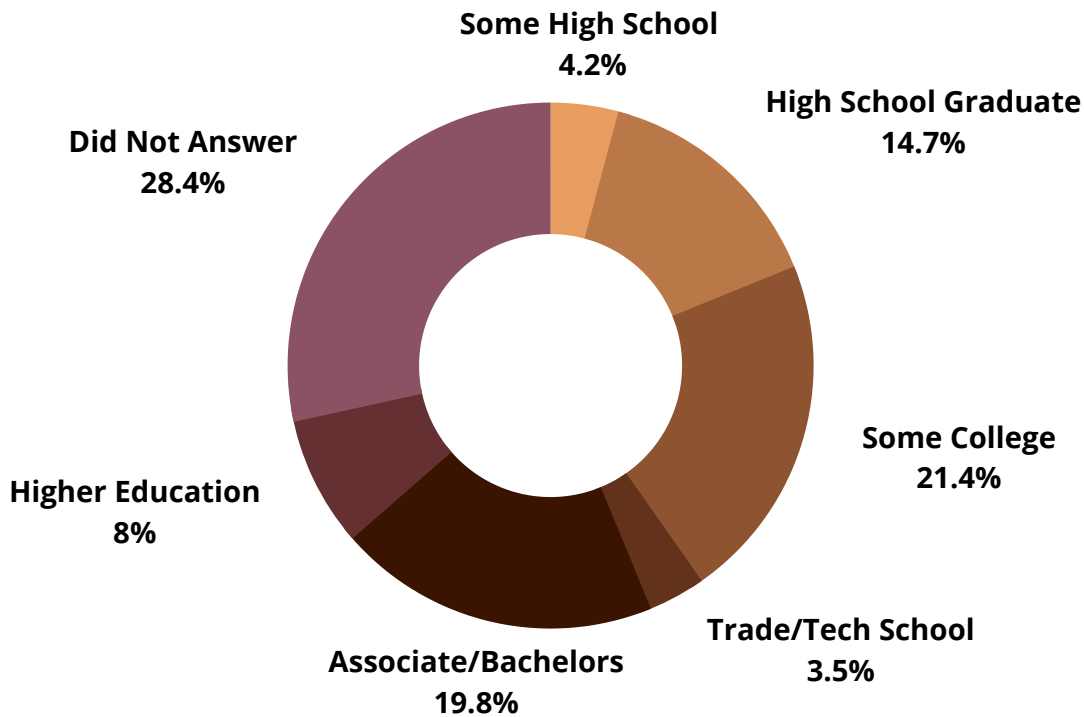
Client Respondents by Household Income Level



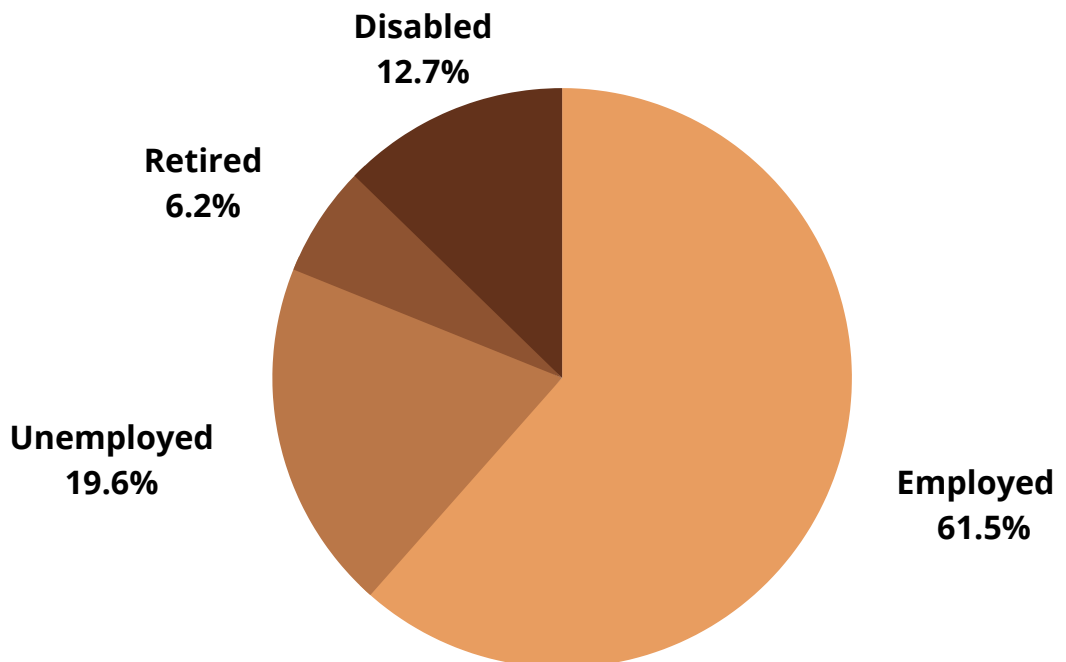
¹ It was discovered that American Indian was selected erroneously due to its location and language (totaling an original 20%) and was deemed statistically invalid. The rest of the data set was deemed intact.

Group Demographics

Respondents by Education Level



Respondents by Employment Status



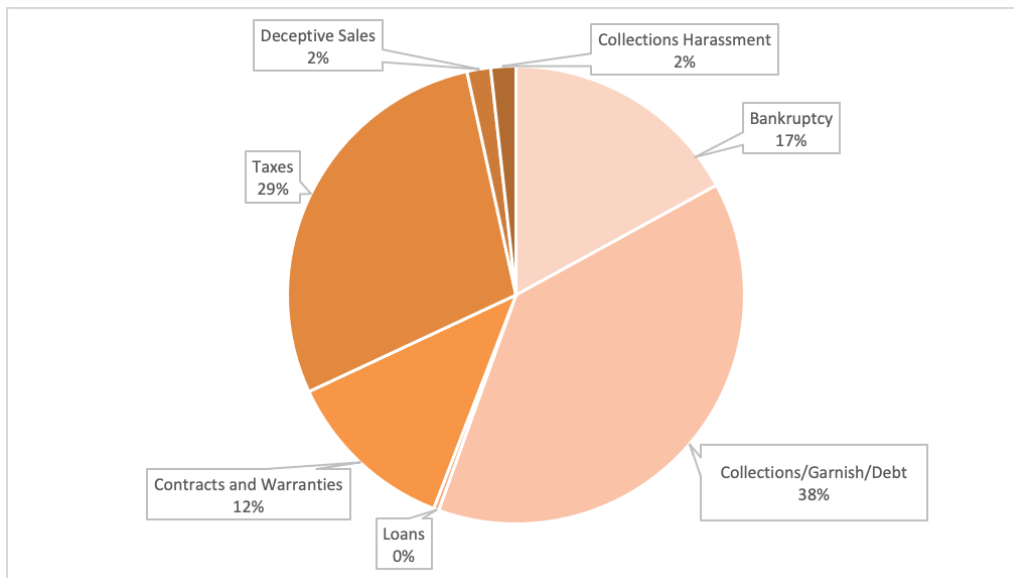
LEGAL NEEDS

CLIENT

FINANCE/CONSUMER

2020 Case Distribution

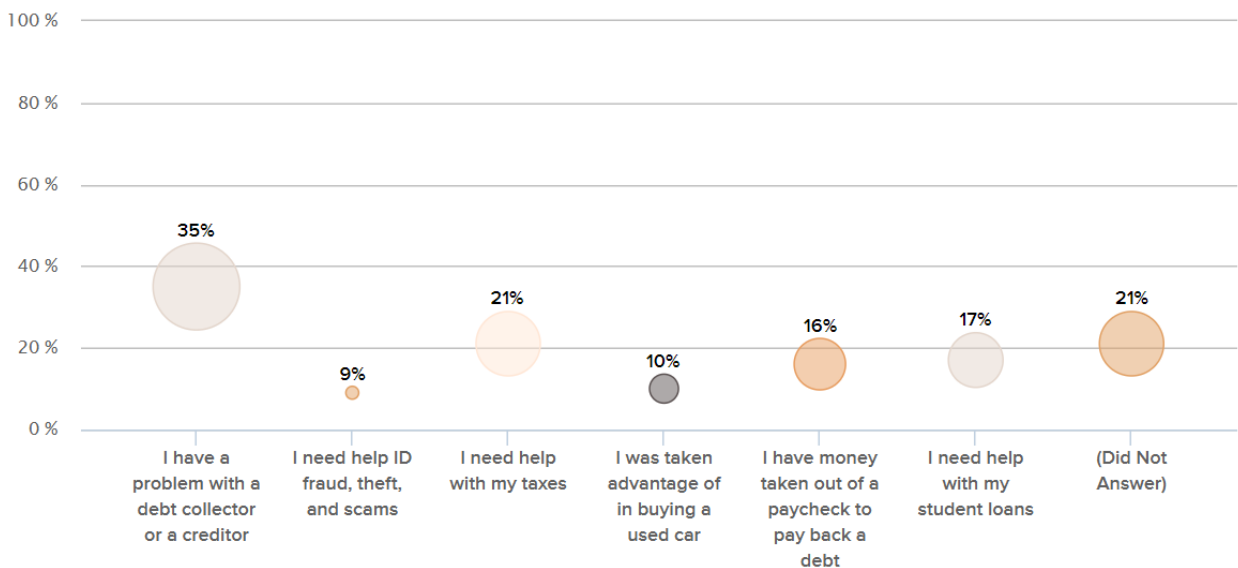
*provided by Legal Server case data
from January 2020-December 2020*



20'-21' Client Needs

per the 2021 Legal Needs Assessment

(N=316)



* Respondents could mark more than one answer to this question

FINANCE/CONSUMER

Upon comparison of 2020's case data and the 2021 Legal Needs Assessment, the majority of legal needs appear to match up with Legal Aid's 2020 case data. The top two categories of *Debt/Debt Collector Issues* and *Taxes* maintain a higher percentage in both data sets. Legal Aid has made concentrated efforts toward these two areas through clinics and community education, specifically used car deals, debt buying, and free tax clinics.

In 2020, Legal Aid had a total of 4 cases regarding student loans. The Legal Needs Assessment revealed a much higher percentage of possible need in this area. In fact, 18 clients which selected student loans also had an annual income of less than 15,000. Another 23 respondents which cited student loan issues fell into the 15,000-45,000 income bracket. In total, 75% of the clients who selected "I need help with my student loans" were below an annual income of \$45,000. Though this percentage may not translate directly into an identifiable legal problem with student loans, it is obvious that people are seeking help and may not be aware of the legal possibilities regarding this issue.

Fraud, theft, and scams appear to be increasing as well. This increase seems to fit the national context⁶ and trends due to COVID-19. An increase in online shopping has led to scam delivery notifications and requests for payment. Other situations have included scam virus tracing calls, vaccine payments, and other fraudulent schemes related to EIP payments.⁷As society switches to contact-less methods, opportunities to exploit consumers will likely increase with it.

When clients were given a space to list additional problems, around 14 clients gave answers. Their answers included problems with debt, student loans, scams, taxes, auto repair damage, and bankruptcy. There were no additional identifiable trends from these answers.

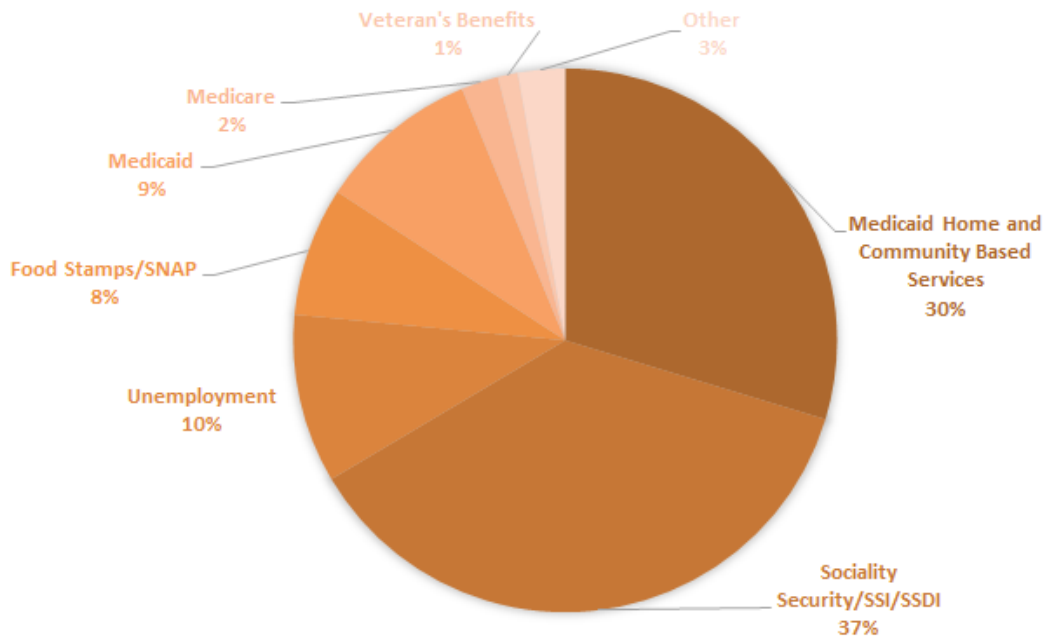
⁶ "Coronavirus Scams" *Federal Communications Commission*, February 5, 2021, <https://www.fcc.gov/covid-scams>

⁷ "Coronavirus Scams"

HEALTH AND PUBLIC BENEFITS

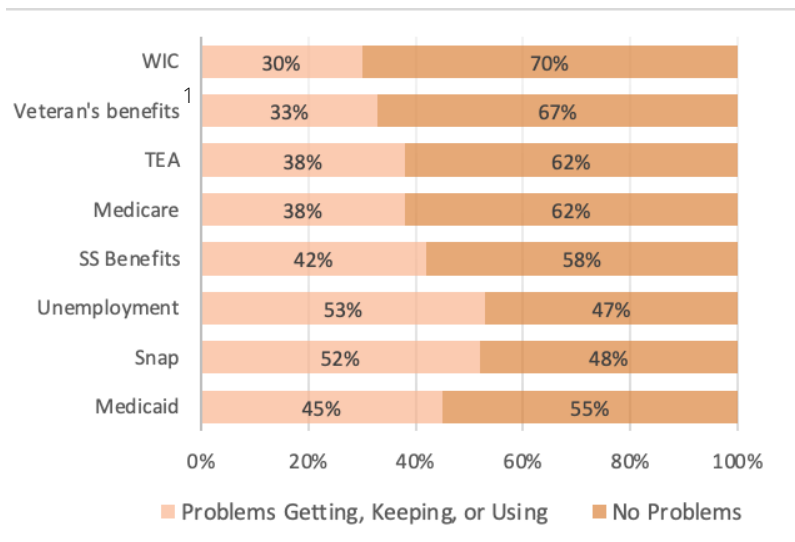
2020 Case Distribution

provided by Legal Server case data from January 2020-December 2020



20'-21' Client Needs

per the 2021 Legal Needs Assessment



¹ Proportion of people who claim to have veteran's benefits is much higher than expected and does not correlate statically with current percentages of Veterans in Arkansas.

HEALTH AND PUBLIC BENEFITS

The health of all persons living in America has been one of the most relevant topics of 2020 and 2021. When a global pandemic became the reality for every person living in America, people were hit hard with fears of unemployment, unsafe working conditions, health risks, and social isolation. Though the government has public benefit systems like SNAP, TEA, unemployment, SS, and others, these programs were put to the test in 2020. After all, the numbers of unemployed persons in every state were higher than they were during the Great Depression⁸ and people were looking to their state and federal government for financial relief to meet basic needs. Consequently, an increase in people applying for government benefits is to be expected.

However, the Legal Needs Assessment also attempted to portray *how well* clients can access these benefits. Clients were asked whether their benefits were denied, cut, overpaid, fraudulent, or experienced another type of problem. Though many respondents reported no current problems with public benefits, Unemployment and SNAP/Food Stamps appear on the higher end of difficulty for clients (52%-53%). In addition, Medicaid and Social Security are approaching a 50% difficulty level, even with Medicaid terminations paused due to the federal pandemic relief legislation. In previous legal needs assessments, Social Security was a larger problem area, but this was often due to a client respondent pool of older clients. The age demographic of this survey (see page 8) was primarily middle-aged adults. Also, the survey had a reliable demographic in regards to employment and disability (see page 8).

Though the clients may be experiencing increased stress due to problems with their benefits, this doesn't mean that they necessarily recognize the possibility of a legal solution. Many people easily become weary of the excessive waiting and confusion which comes with challenging a possible mistake by a federal program. The most commonly cited problem with public benefits was having benefits cut or reduced. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased public education efforts which can assist in helping clients realize potential issues with their current benefits.

8 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R46554.pdf>

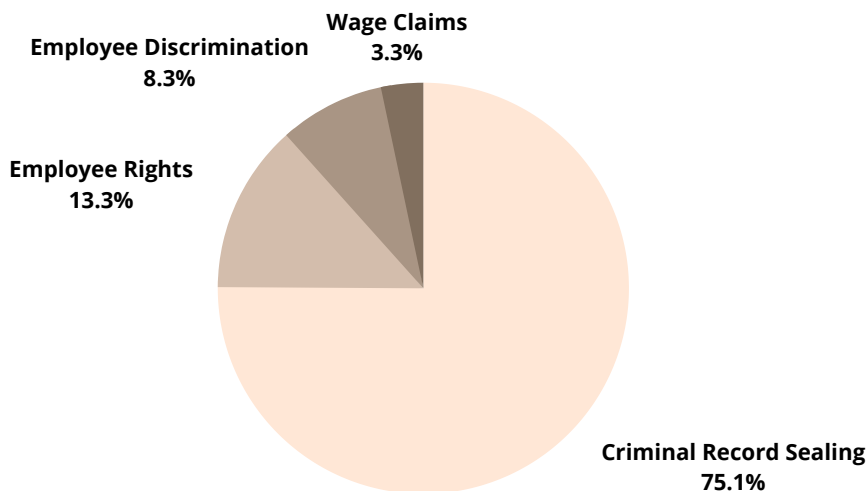
EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

2020 Case Distribution

*provided by Legal Server case data
from January 2020-December 2020*

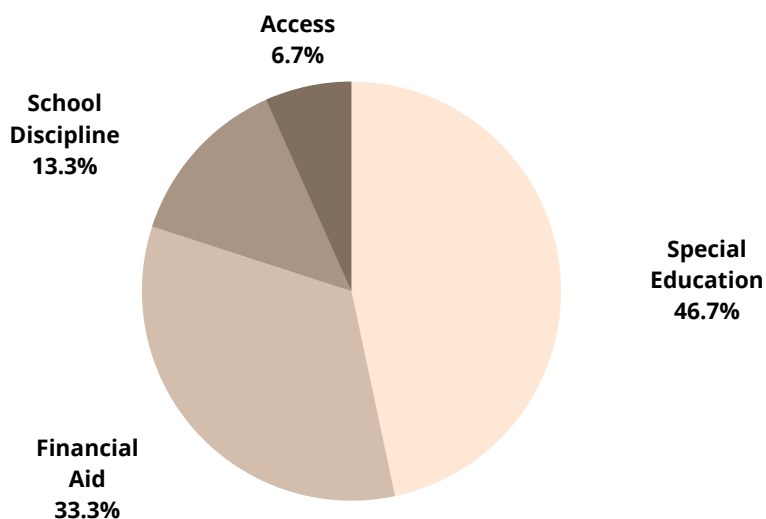
Employment

It is clear from the case data of 2020 that sealing criminal records is an important factor in restoring someone's ability to be employed. However, the Legal Needs Assessment attempted to gain further insight into what other factors might impede employment. See the detailed breakdown on the following pages.



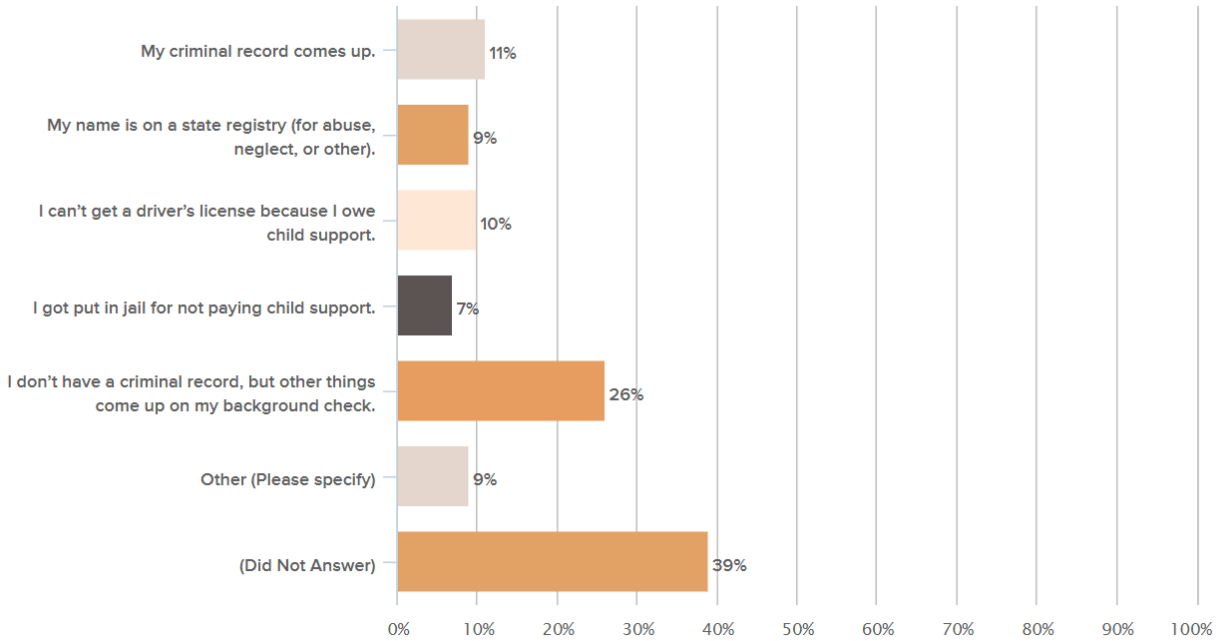
Education

The 2020 caseload did not include many education related cases. Of the ones taken, the majority were related to special education. To determine if clients experience other issues, which they may not know involve legal solutions, the assessment asked clients about their children's education.



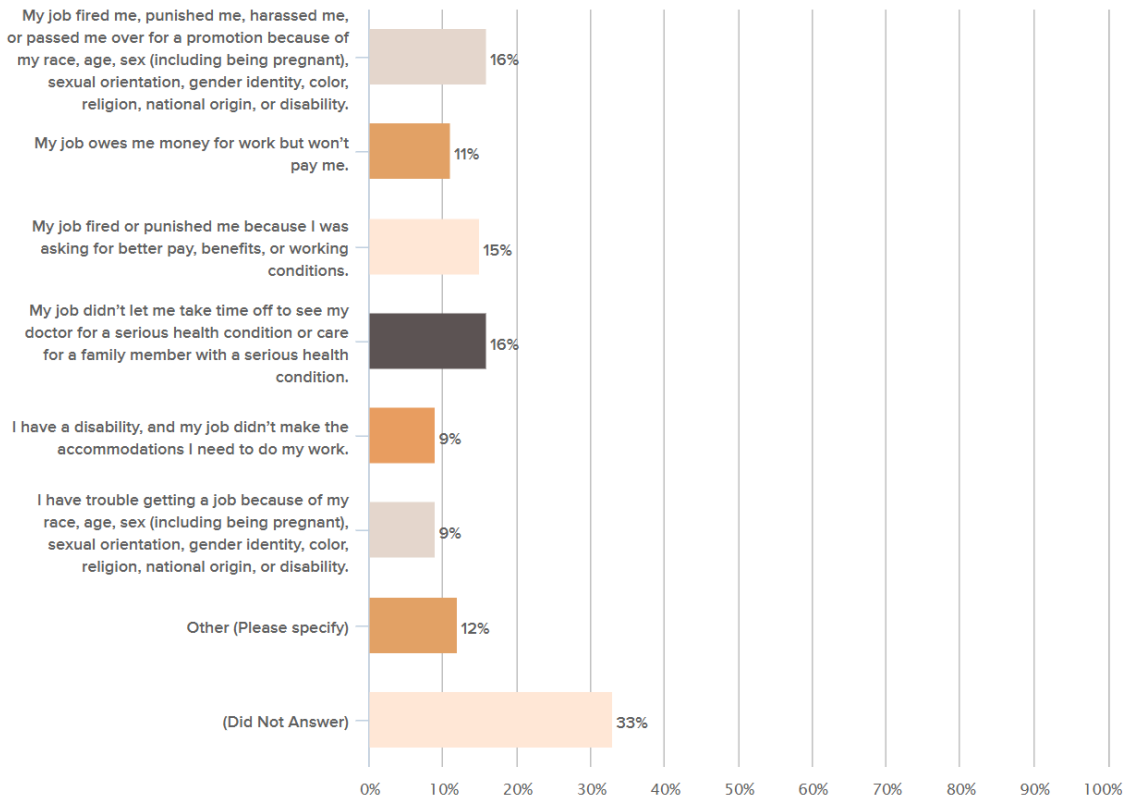
Q "I have had the following problems getting a job"

(N=316)








Q Concerns related to employment

(N=316)



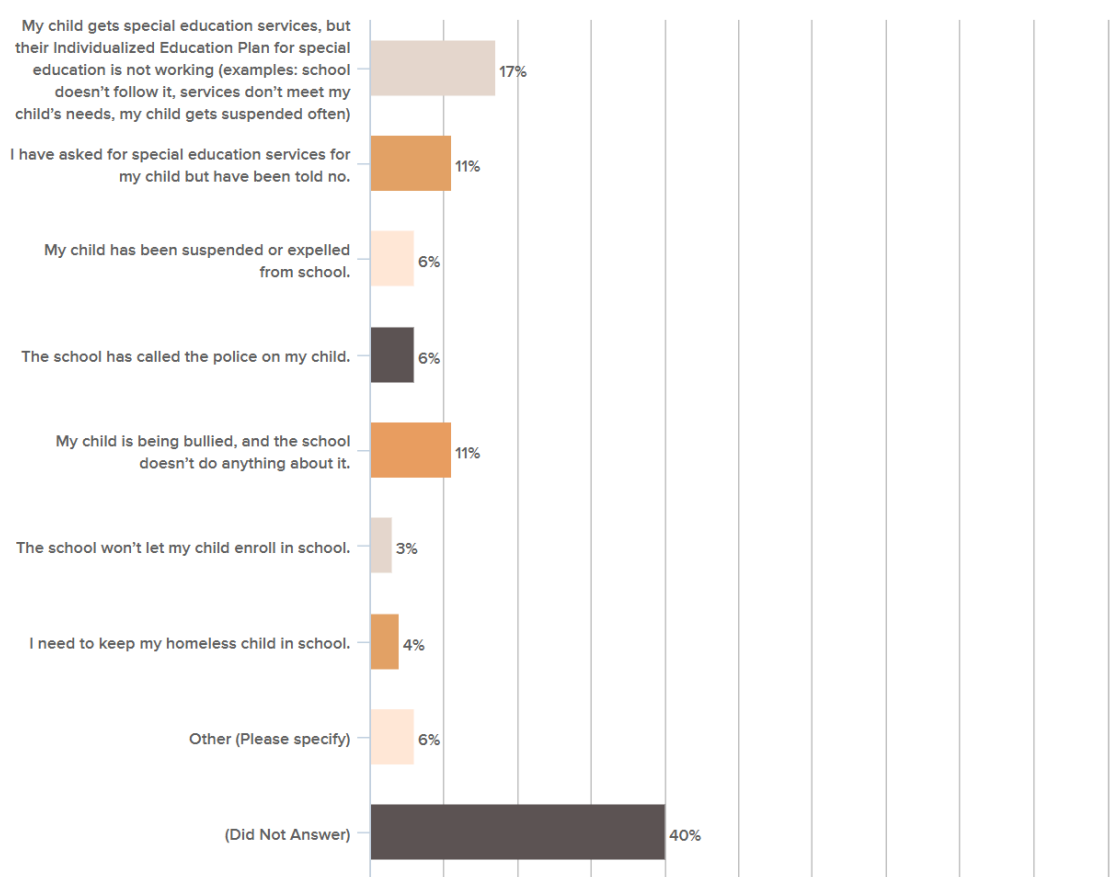
2021 Legal Needs Assessment

Q Top Industries of Clients Surveyed

-  **Retail:** Grocery Store, Gas Station, Convenience Store, Department Store
-  **Restaurant:** Server, Cook, Host
-  **Medical:** Medical Assistant, Nurse, Therapists, Cleaning/Kitchen Staff, CNA, or Care Aide (at Hospital, Clinic, School, Nursing Facility, or In-Home Care)
-  **Education:** Teacher, Classroom Aide, Custodian, Lunchroom Worker, Bus Driver
-  **Office Work:** Various Administrative Staff Positions, Call Center Operator, Bank Teller, etc

Q "I have had the following problems with my children's education"

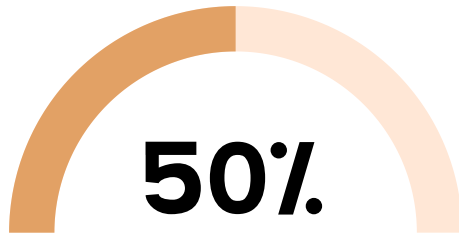
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LEGAL NEEDS

CLIENT

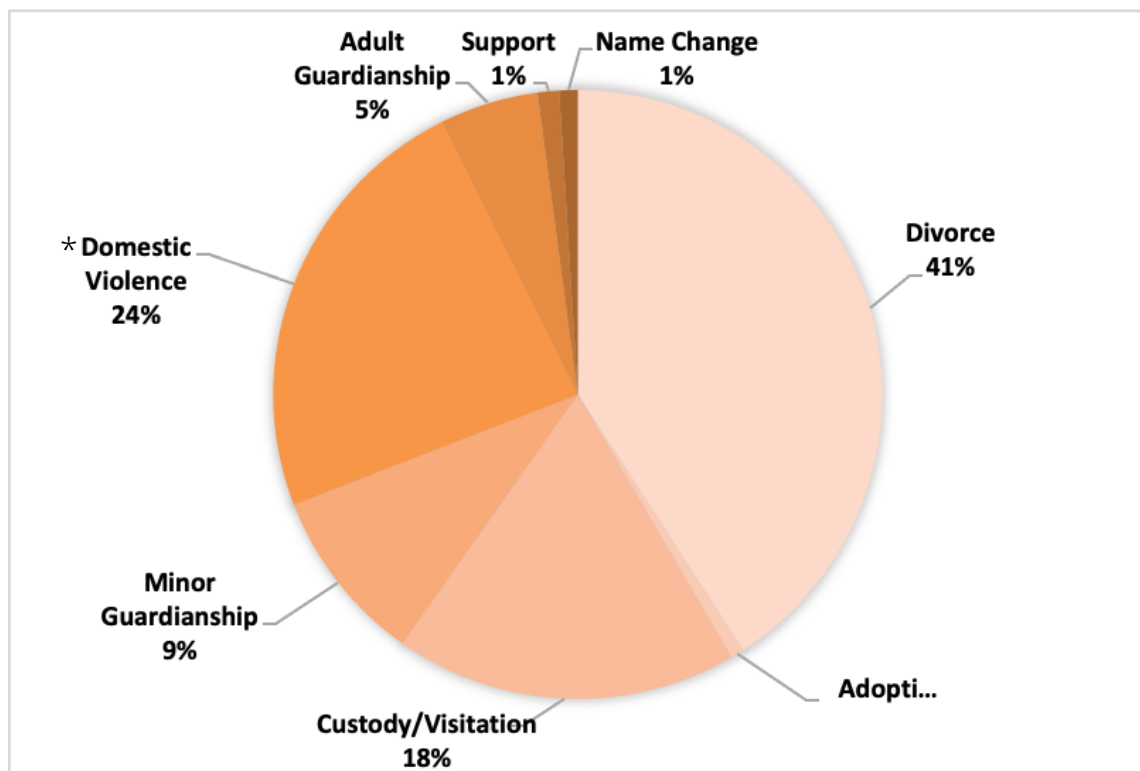
FAMILY



In the year 2020, 50% of Legal Aid's total cases were family law cases. The nation saw a rise in domestic abuse cases as more individuals spent time in their home during the national shut down.¹ The case distribution below shows Divorce/Separation and Domestic Abuse as the largest contributors to the 2020 case numbers. Custody and Visitation is also on the higher side with 18%. To get a more detailed view into what family related issues clients might be experiencing, the Legal Needs Assessment provided nine answer options to choose from regarding family.

2020 Case Distribution

*provided by Legal Server case data
from January 2020-December 2020*



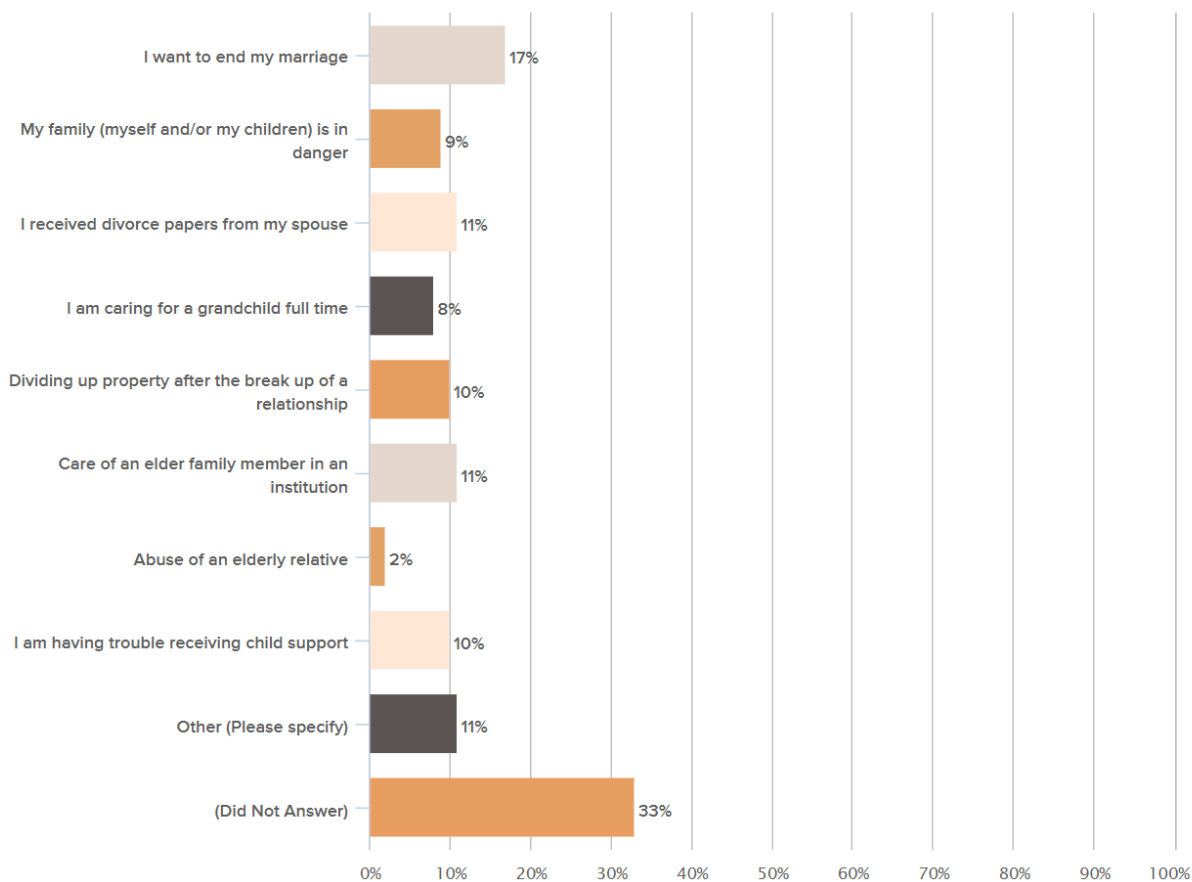
¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7195322/>

* The percentage of Domestic Violence cases is primarily Orders of Protection and does not include the Divorce or other Domestic cases which may be related or caused by Domestic Abuse.

FAMILY

Q "Concerns related to family and relationships"

(N=316)

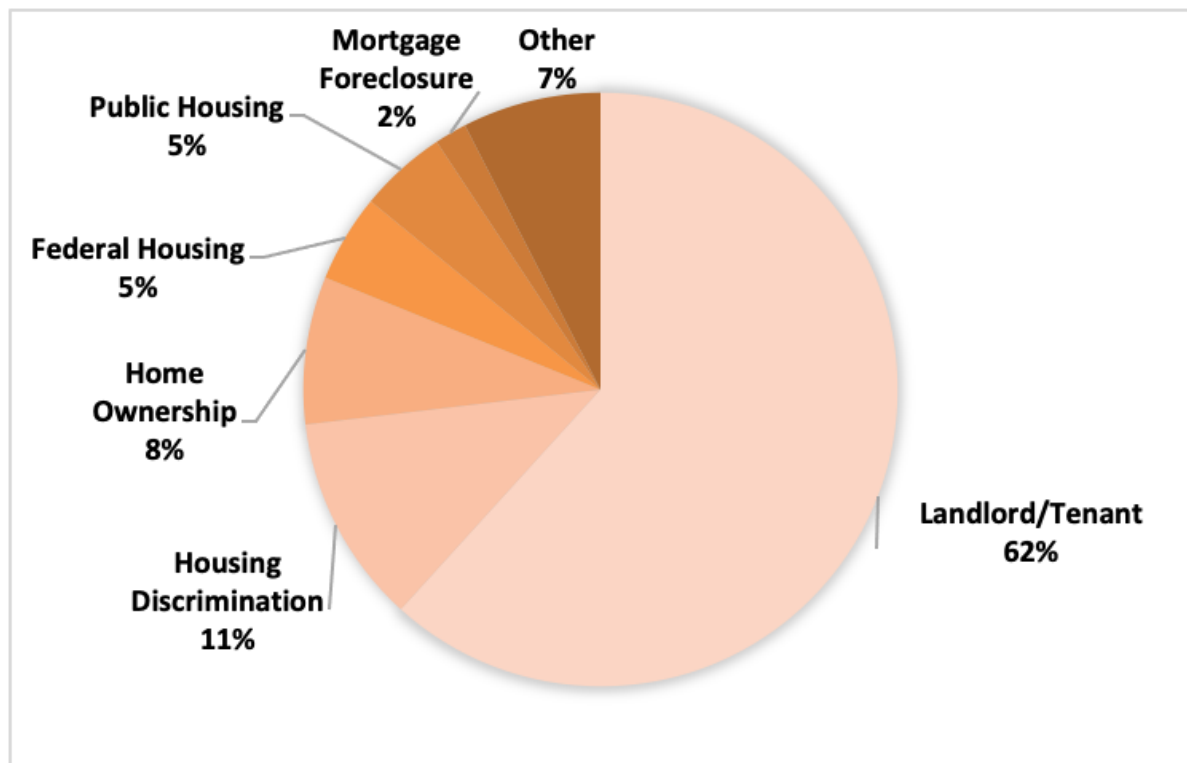


Divorce remains the top issue for client respondents. The two answer options regarding divorce combined make up around 30% of the answers. The case data from 2020 reveals that divorce, custody, and domestic violence are a large majority of cases which come to Legal Aid. While this assessment affirms this case breakdown, it also reveals other issues which clients are reporting including: caring for an older family member and having trouble receiving child support.

HOUSING

2020 Case Distribution

*provided by Legal Server case data
from January 2020-December 2020*



At the outbreak of COVID-19, housing insecurity became a top priority to Legal Aid of Arkansas. Initiatives were put in place to help clients better understand the CDC Eviction Moratorium, fight their impending evictions, and expose landlord intimidation and violations. Prior to COVID-19, Arkansas citizens have been at risk of exploitation in the area of housing because the many residents are residing in unlivable and unsafe conditions. This continues to be an issue as we can see from the results below in the Legal Needs Assessment. Though the majority of answers are related to a client's ability to pay toward their housing and utilities, we also see higher numbers regarding unsafe living conditions, evictions, and other landlord/tenant relations.

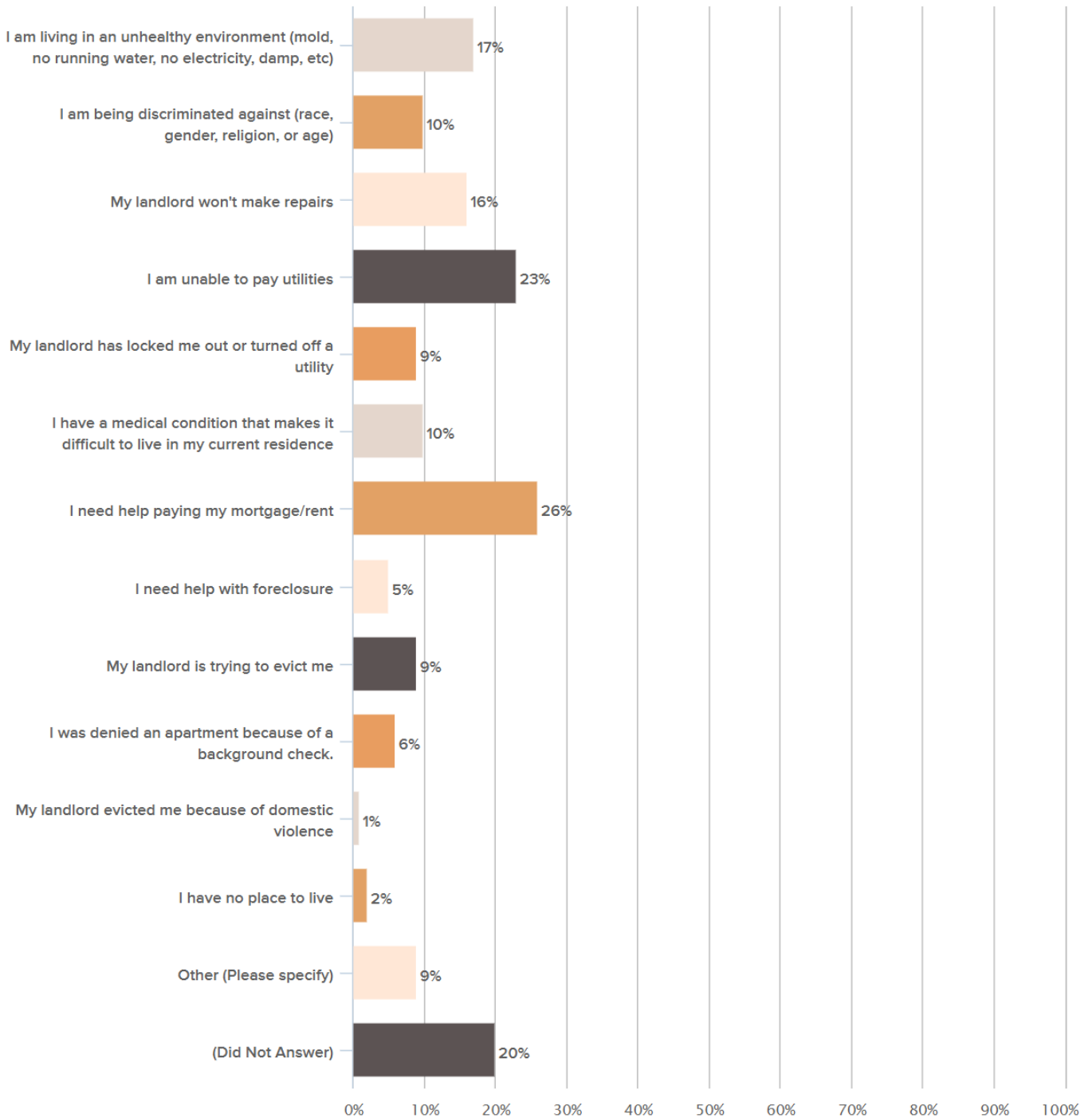
LEGAL NEEDS

CLIENT

HOUSING

Q "Concerns related to Housing"

(N=316)



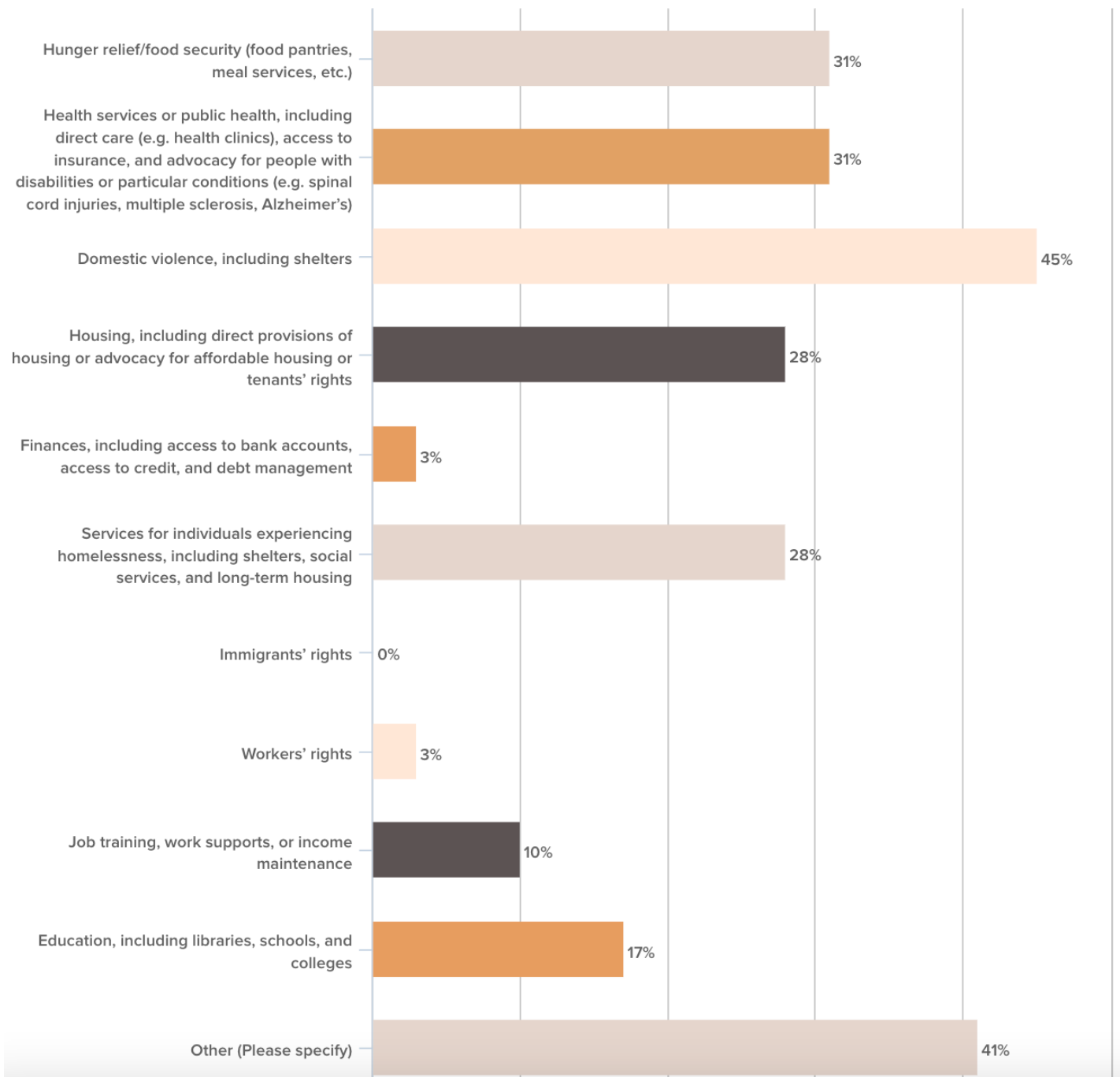
LEGAL NEEDS

COMMUNITY

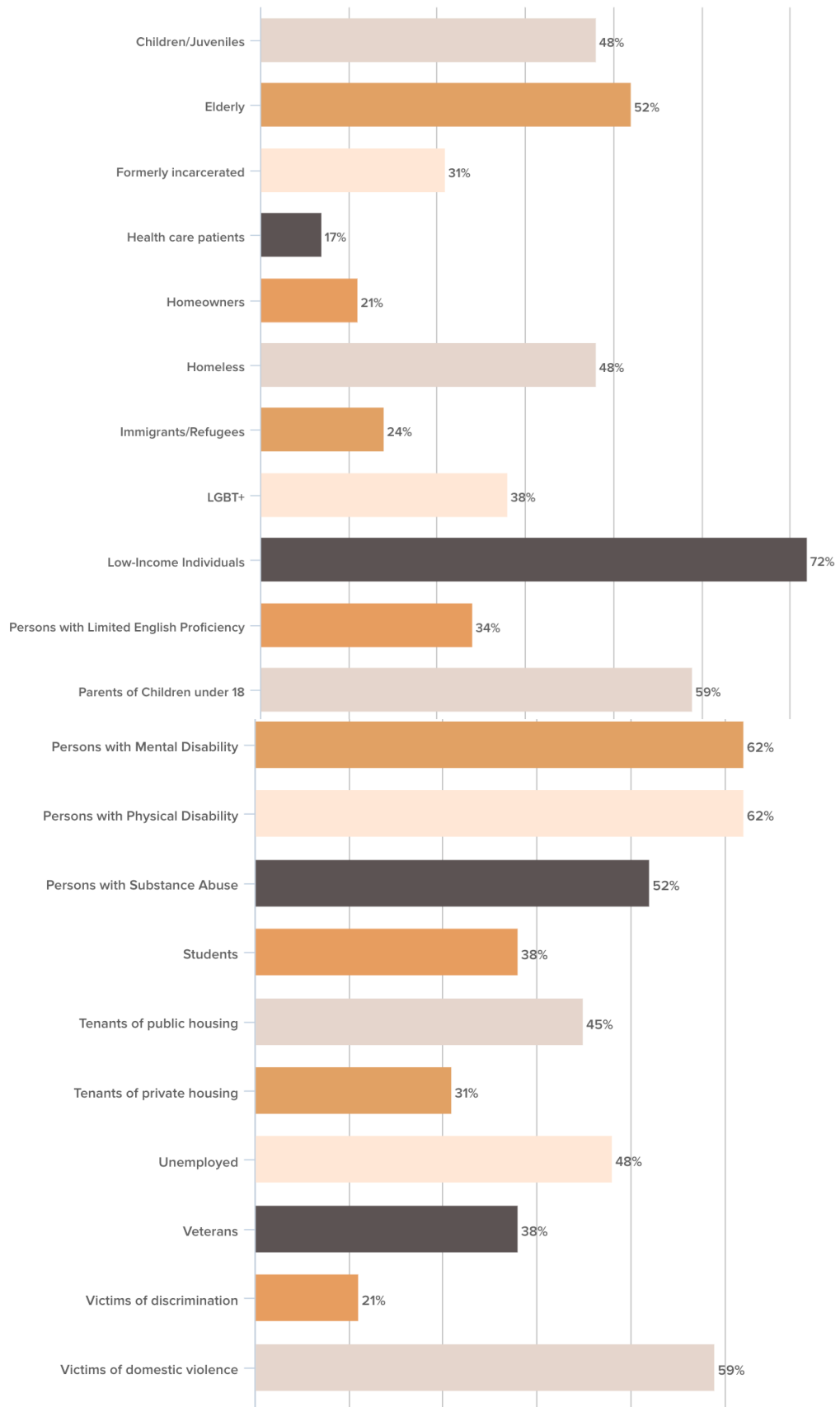
LEGAL NEEDS

Legal Aid surveyed a total of **29 community organizations** (not including Libraries and the Educational Employees surveyed later on). Below is the breakdown of the type of organizations surveyed categorized by what type of service they provide and the groups of individuals they serve.

Types of Organizations

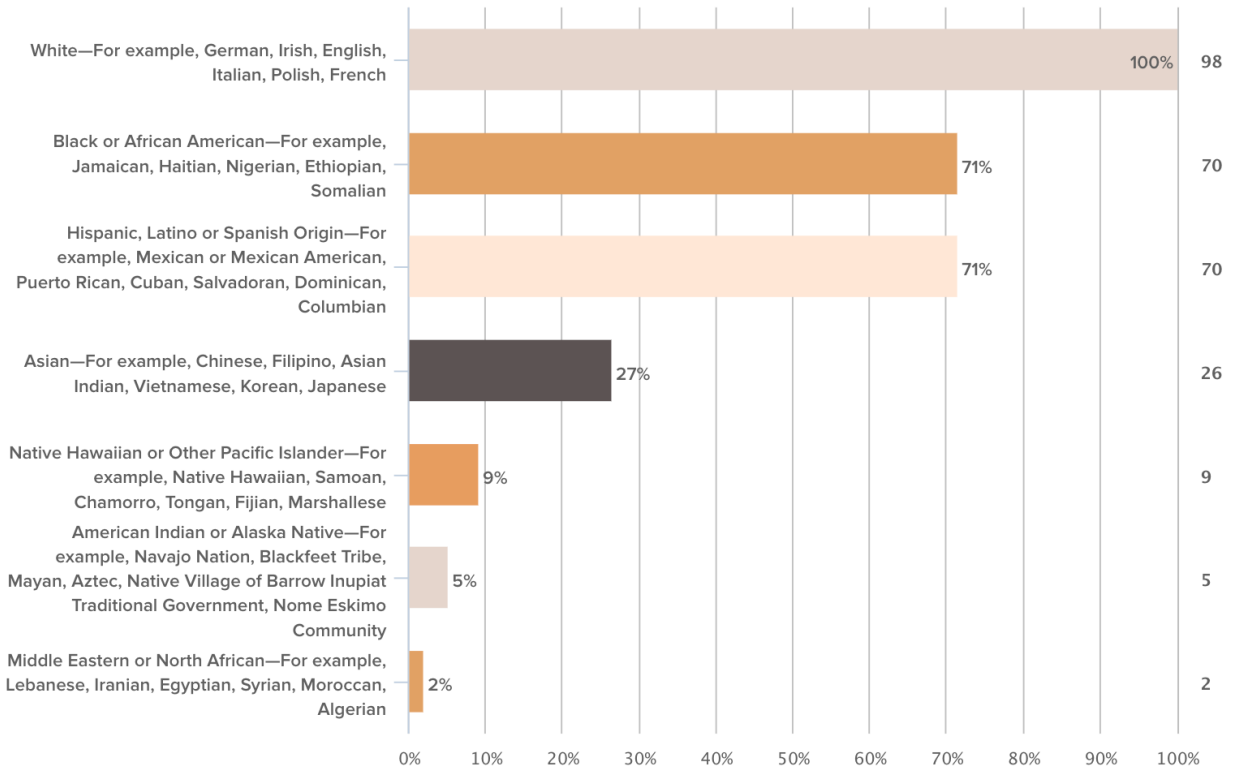


Groups

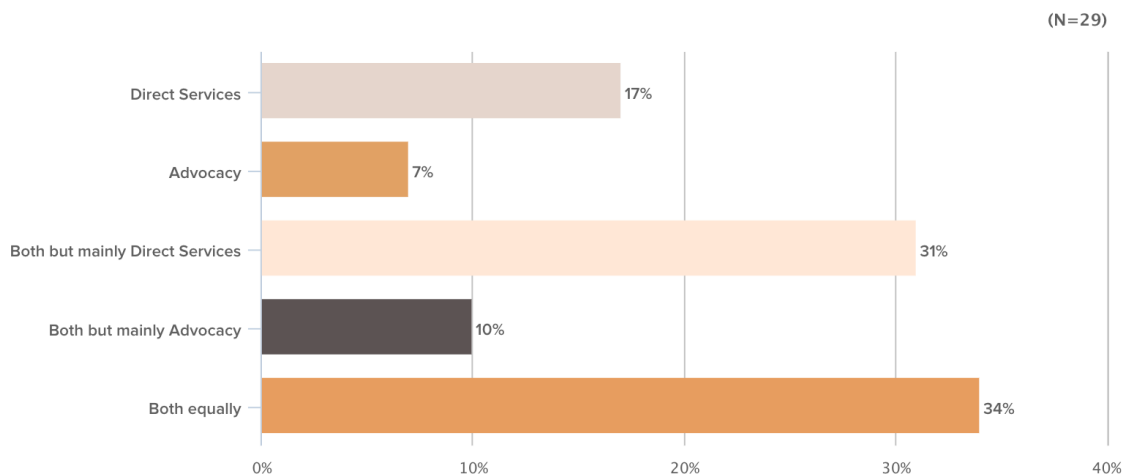


LEGAL NEEDS

Q Various Ethnicities Served by the Community Organizations

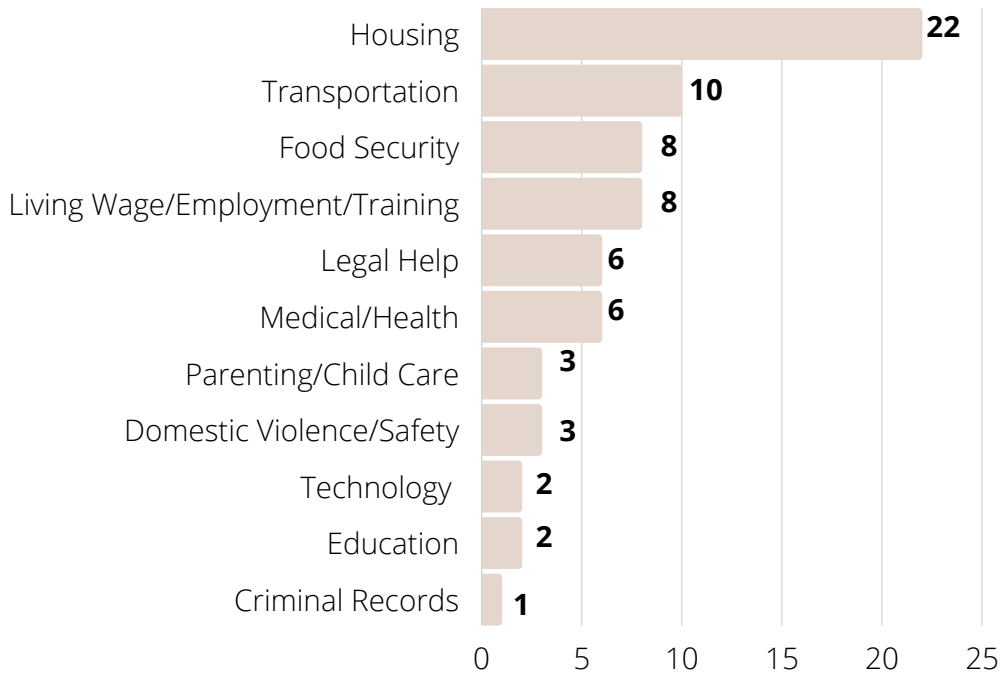


Q Does your organization provide direct services to clients or does it operate more on the advocacy side?



LEGAL NEEDS

Q What do you think are the top three most pressing problems or issues facing low income people in your community or service area?



The intent of this question is not to identify specific legal needs. We must understand the larger needs of their communities first. These community organizations serve various needs throughout their community, but also witness the plights of their clients daily. This gives them a broader view of the needs in their community. In this case, affordable housing is a significant need in the client communities. In addition, food security and transportation are consistent problems for their lower-income clients.

Q When it comes to the well-being of your community, what do you consider to be the number one problem being faced by your clients?



HOUSING



FOOD SECURITY



PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Q Does your organization witness a problem facing your community that you consider to be largely unmet?

Mental Health
Treatment

Available
Transportation

Substance Use
Disorder

Undocumented
Immigrant Victims of DV

Low-Income
Housing

Legal Help Desks for Non
Pro Se litigants

Homelessness

Evictions

Technology
Assistance

Stigma around
Disabilities

Spanish Interpretation
and Translation

Public Benefit Education
for Seniors

Q What are emerging issues or needs of low-income people in your community that you think are going to become large issues or needs?

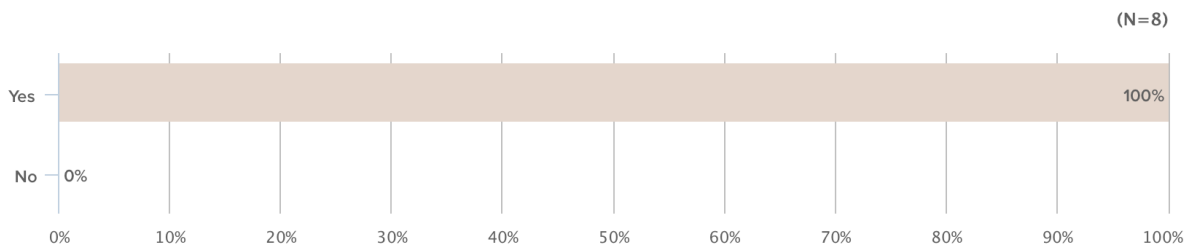
- Homelessness
- Utility/Rent Payments
- Immediate Evictions/Not able to pay Back-Rent
- "Real ID" Requirements
- Childcare
- Public Benefits Cut
- Lack of Available Jobs
- Employment Training
- Lack of Living Wage
- Impact of low transportation on Employment

LEGAL NEEDS

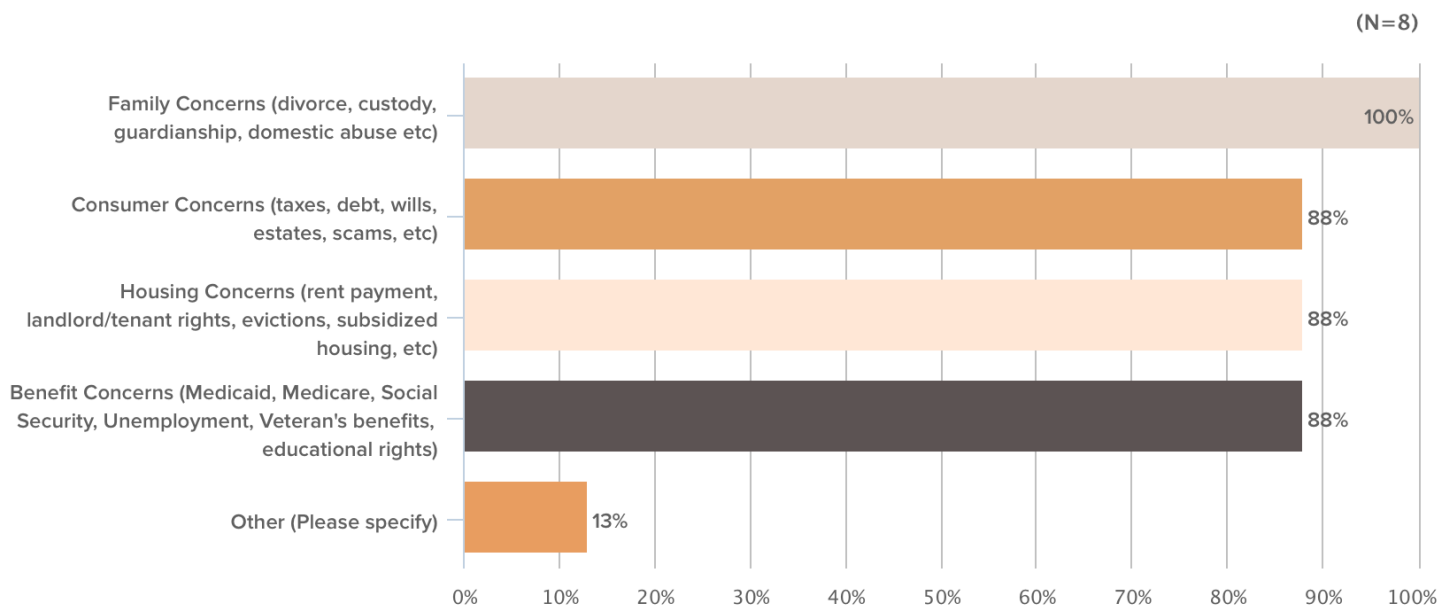
LIBRARIES

In addition to surveying community organizations like non-profits, advocacy organizations, and other service organizations, a different survey was sent out to local libraries in counties across Legal Aid's service area. Libraries are sources of community education and therefore have the potential to encounter community members looking for information and help on various legal issues. A total of 8 libraries responded from 8 different counties.

Q Has a community member ever approached you for help or information about a legal matter (custody, Social Security, veteran benefits, domestic abuse, debt, taxes etc)?



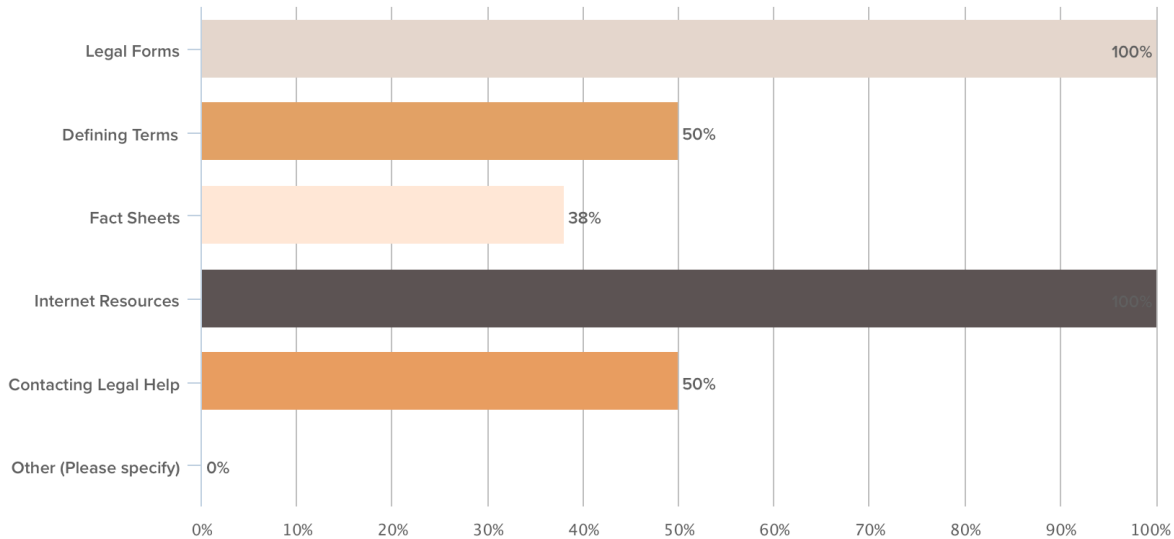
Q Please select any/all of the categories which people asked for more information about:



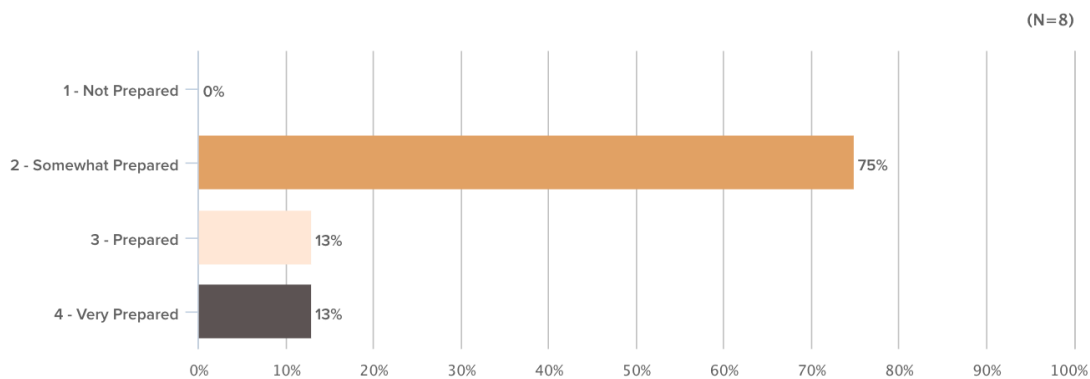
LEGAL NEEDS

LIBRARIES

Q What kind of information was the library member seeking?



Q When asked about any of the above concerns, how equipped/prepared did you feel in assisting the community member?



2 OUT OF 8 LIBRARY STAFF HAD RECEIVED TRAINING FOR LEGAL QUESTIONS



6 OUT OF 8 LIBRARY STAFF HAD NEVER RECEIVED OR HEARD OF TRAINING FOR LEGAL QUESTIONS

29 family outreach coordinators in local schools were surveyed about the needs in their community. They were surveyed to gain a better understanding of what kind of issues their community is currently suffering from and what they see as potential problems arising in their communities. Though not all of this information is directly related to legal problem areas, it contributes to the larger picture of the community's needs. The majority of the respondents listed normal concerns regarding their students' access to food, clothing, and family support systems. Many expressed concerns that student's families often struggled to find affordable housing and pay their utility bills, and unstable employment situations made them susceptible to losing their living situation. Beyond these expected concerns, two problem areas that appeared to not only be discussed frequently but also stood apart from the expected problem areas.

1 MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

2 TECHNOLOGY/INTERNET

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

- Substance Use Disorder from parents directly affecting the success of the students
- Substance Use Disorder becoming a more pertinent issue for children who are attending virtually
- Parents who experience Substance Use Disorders don't have means of treatment available to them
- Children undergoing deteriorating mental health due to COVID and their family situations do not have access to treatment.

TECHNOLOGY/INTERNET

- Increase use of technology due to COVID-19 in 2020
- Children do not have access to adequate technology or are not equipped to utilize it
- Children who do have access to technology, do not often have internet in their homes.
- Families struggle to pay their utilities and other bills which can directly affect the child's ability to learn virtually

LEGAL NEEDS

**LEGAL
COMMUNITY**

LEGAL NEEDS

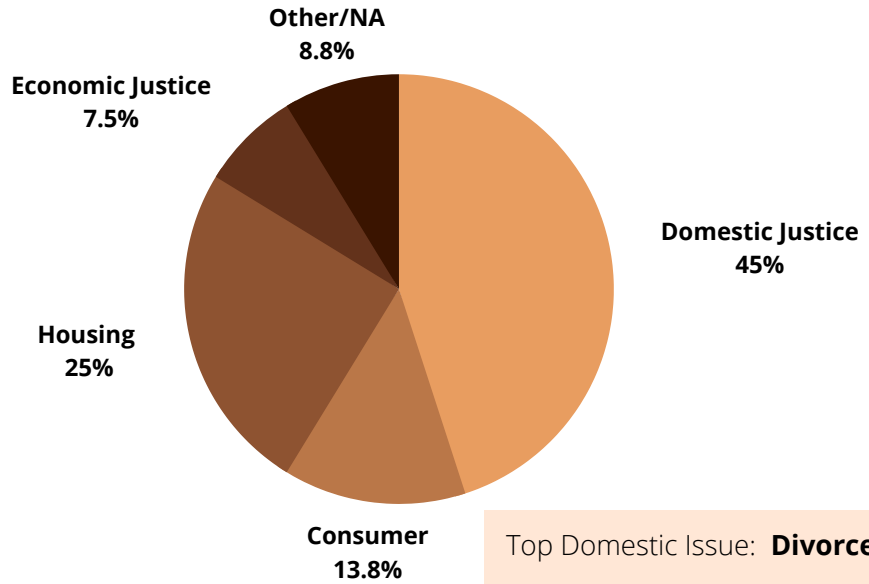
The main goal of surveying local Arkansas private attorneys was to understand the types of needs they may witness in their encounters with lower-income clients, how they perceive Legal Aid and its work, and what resources the attorneys offer their clients. In this section, the needs of their lower-income clients will be examined.

PRIVATE ATTORNEYS

Legal Needs



In your legal experience with low-income clients in your community, (regardless of whether you take the case), what are three major problems they come seeking help for?



Top Domestic Issue: **Divorce**

Top Consumer Issue: **Debt/Debt Collection**

Top Housing Issue: **Landlord/Tenant Relations**

Top Economic Justice Issue: **Public Benefits**

Domestic

- I Divorce
- II Custody/Visitation
- III Guardianship

Consumer

- I Debt/Collections
- II Petition to Seal
- III Bankruptcy

Housing

- I Landlord/Tenant
- II General Housing
- III Eviction

Economic Justice

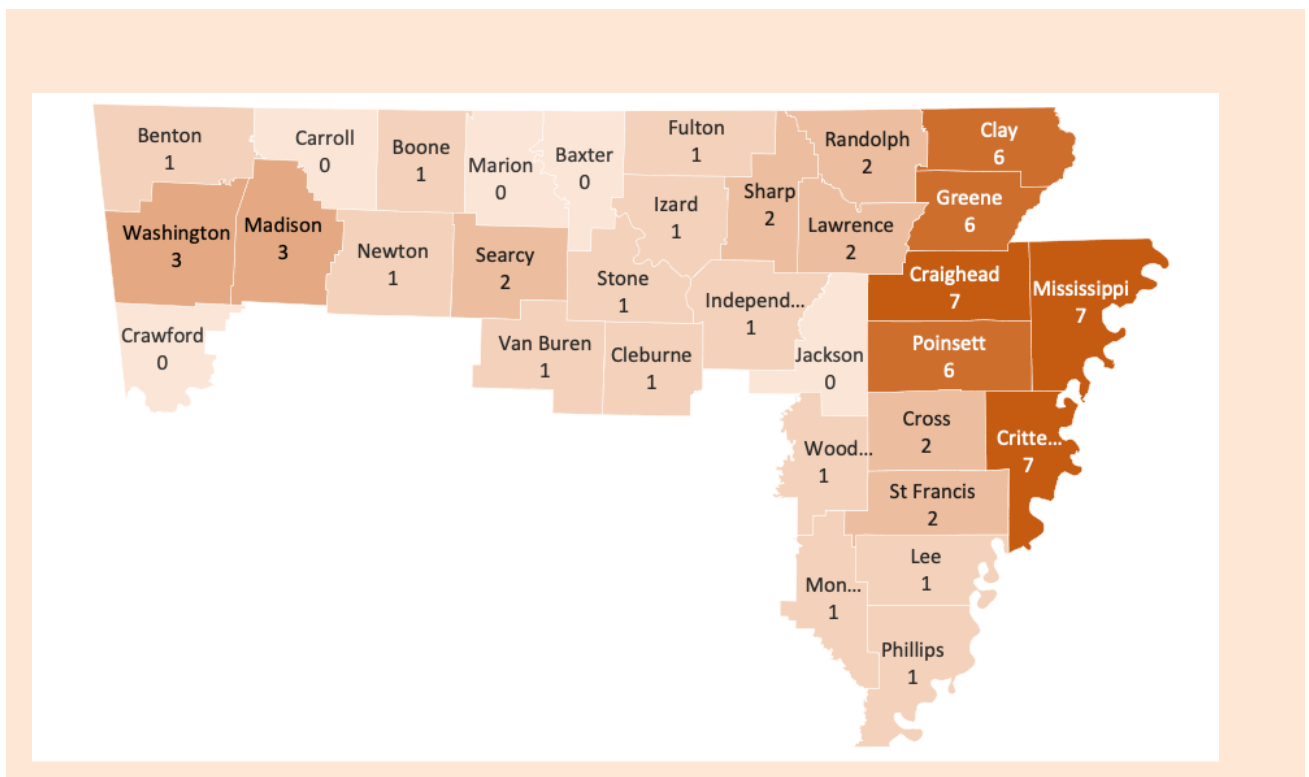
- I Benefits
- II Adult Maltreatment
- III Employment

LEGAL NEEDS

JUDGES AND JUSTICES

In addition to surveying local private attorneys, a separate survey was also sent out to the judges and justices in Legal Aid's service area. This section will explore what they determine are pressing and prevalent civil legal needs based on the cases which enter their courts. Later on in the report, we will also see how these Arkansas judges perceive Legal Aid's work and their ideas of what can be improved. Below is a breakdown of the counties from which the Judges belong before we go into the specifics of the questions. There were a total of 20 responses to this survey.

RESPONDENTS BY COUNTY



LEGAL NEEDS

JUDGES AND JUSTICES



Do you witness any new civil legal issues arising from the pandemic?

- CDC Eviction Moratorium**
- Increased Guardianship Cases**
- Delay in Civil Jury Trials**
- Issues Impacting Poverty**
- Assistance for Self-Represented Litigants in Domestic Cases**

Half of the respondents did not report any new civil legal issues arising from the pandemic. 4 quoted issues related to the CDC Eviction Moratorium and Landlord/Tenant relations. Other arising civil legal issues are listed to the left.



What civil legal needs are you witnessing in the low-income community? List at least three in order of frequency:

Frequently Mentioned:

1. Divorce

- a. Incorrect Forms
- b. Unprepared and Disadvantaged Pro Se Litigants
- c. Prison Divorces

2. Evictions

- a. Breach of Contract
- b. Landlord/Tenant Relations
- c. CDC Order Violations
- d. Unlawful Detainer

3. Guardianships

4. Custody/Child Support/Paternity

5. Automobile

- a. Car Repossessions
- b. Reinstating Driver's License

6. Expungements

7. Domestic Battery and Violations of Orders of Protection

Other Issues:

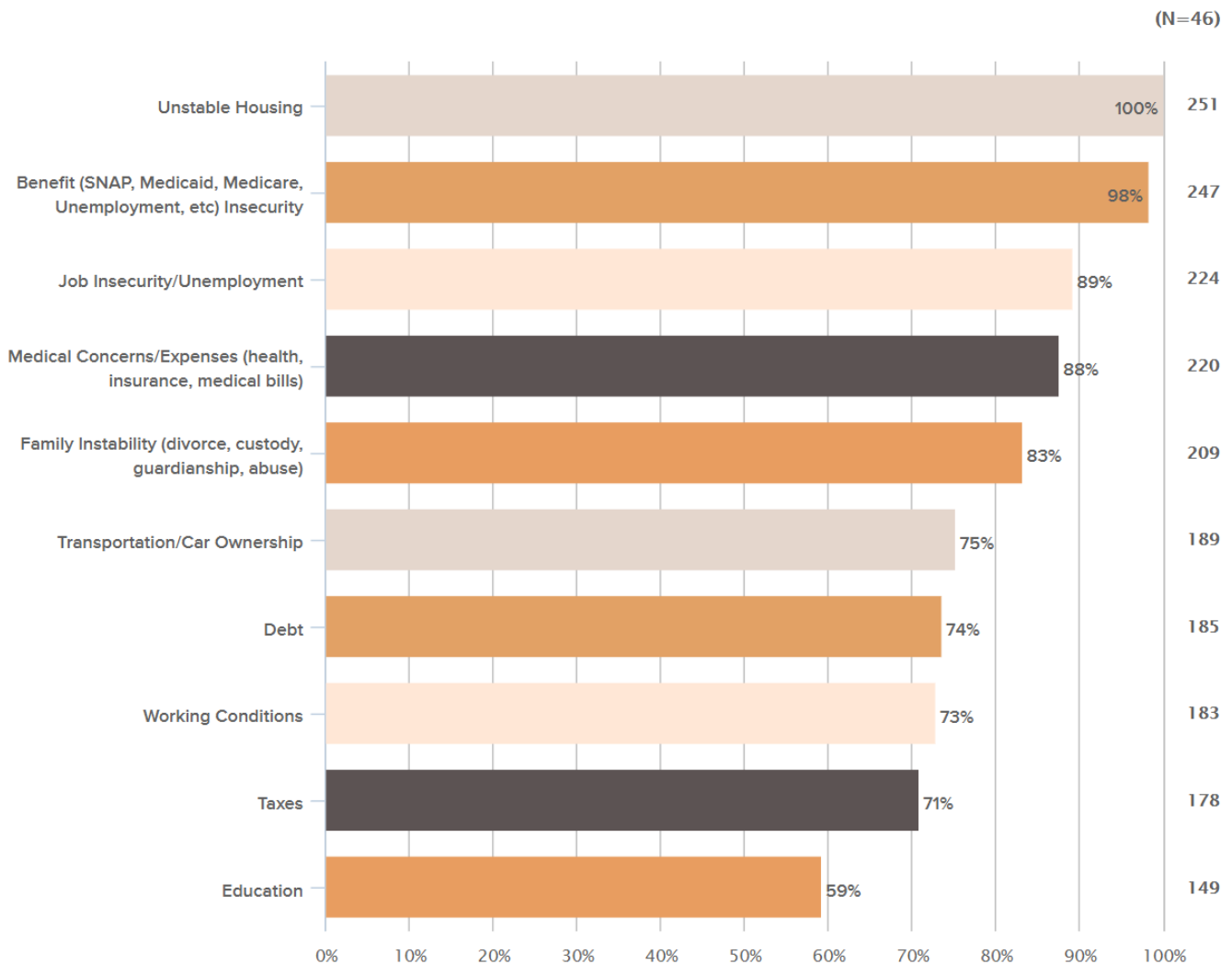
Assistance with compliance with AO4
Bankruptcy Issues
Pro Se Litigant Preparedness
Access to Information
Transportation to offices
Contract Disputes
Employment Issues
Health Insurance Coverage
Applying and Accessing Medicaid

LEGAL NEEDS

LEGAL AID STAFF

Legal Aid Staff were surveyed to determine the multiple issues which clients are experiencing in addition to the specific legal problem they are seeking assistance for. They were also asked to consider possible solutions to identify these various legal problems.

Q In your experience, what are the most frequent legal issues callers have that they don't identify or don't know to seek help for? Please rank according to frequency



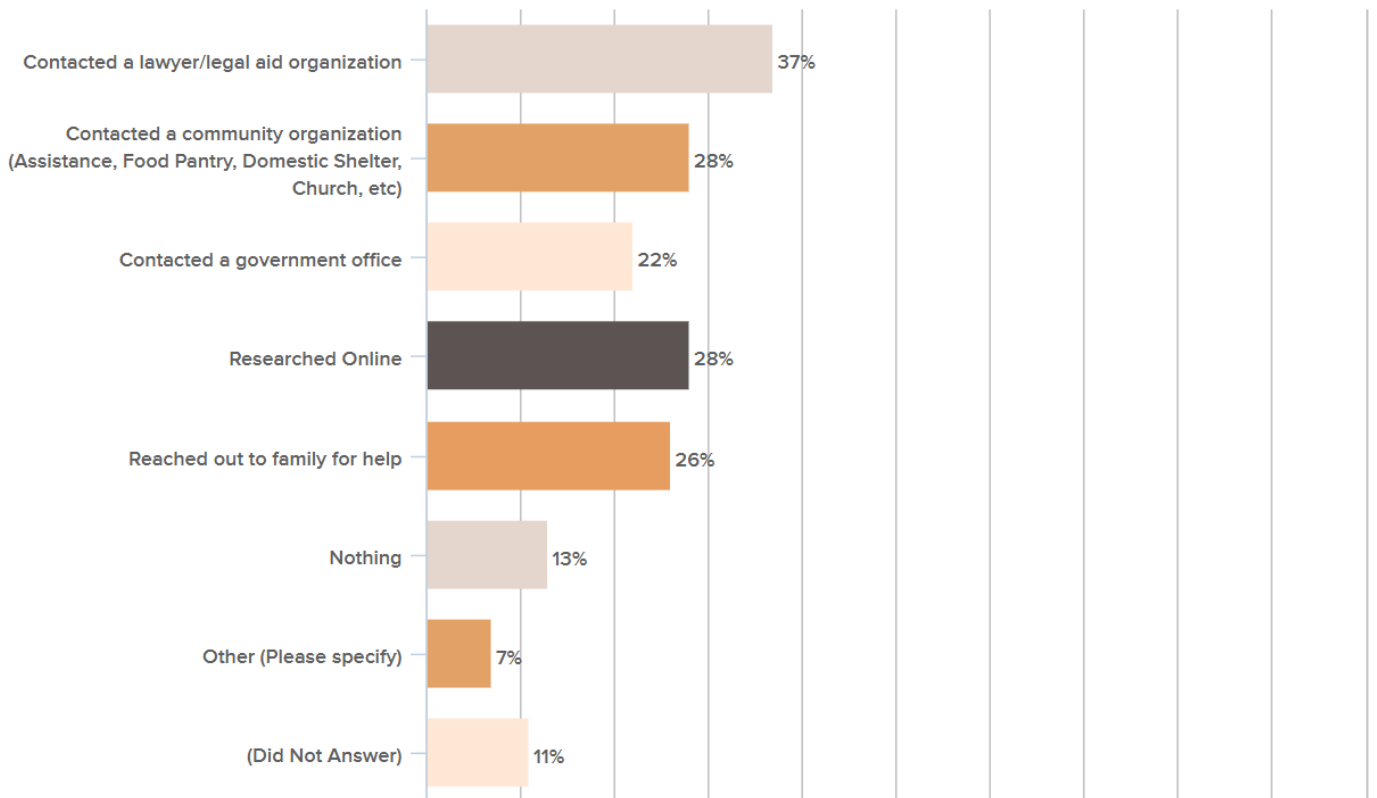
RESPONSES TO LEGAL NEEDS

CLIENTS

This section will explore the various responses by clients, community organizations, and the other survey groups as to how they address the perceived legal needs (pages 9-35). In order to obtain this information, clients were asked the below questions.



What did you do to resolve/address the above problem(s) selected in the previous questions (family, housing, benefits, education, employment, etc)?



If no action was taken, why?

“ I don't know what to do next or what else can be done ”

“ Didn't have money for a lawyer or any legal assistance ”

“ Issue resolved itself and I got the help I needed ”

“ There are not resources for advocacy or assistance that I know how to find ”

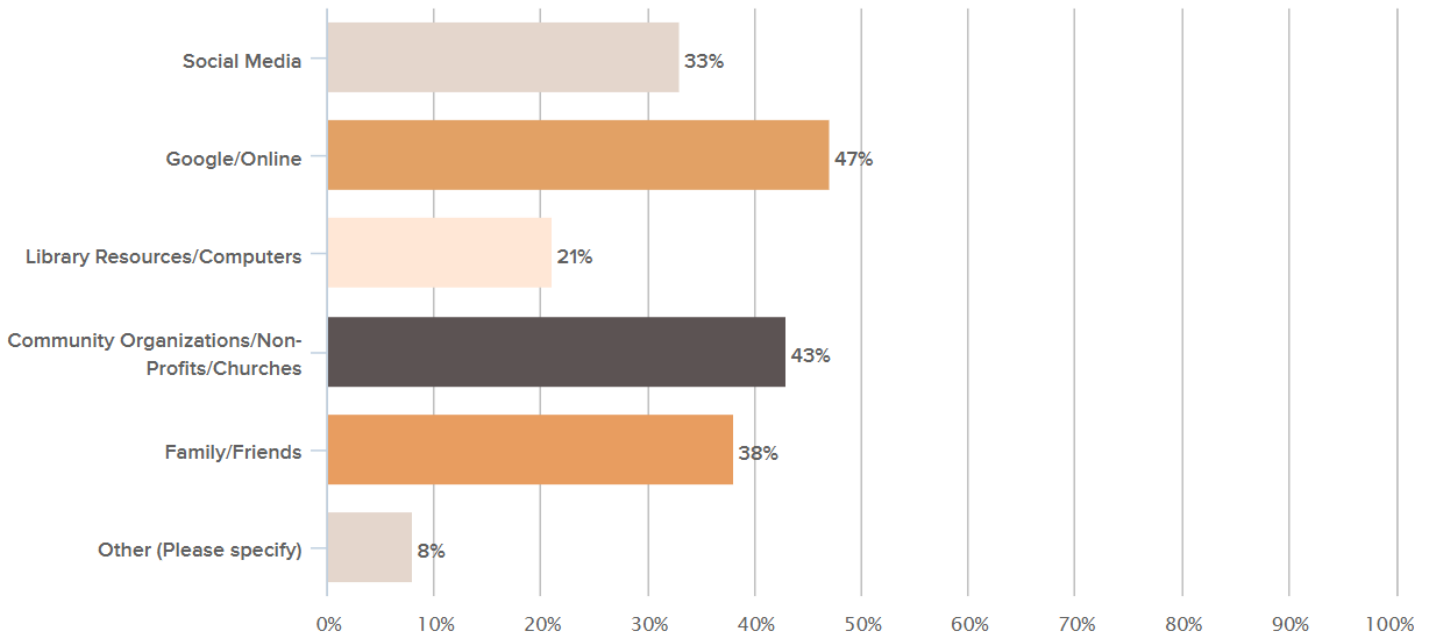
RESPONSES

CLIENT



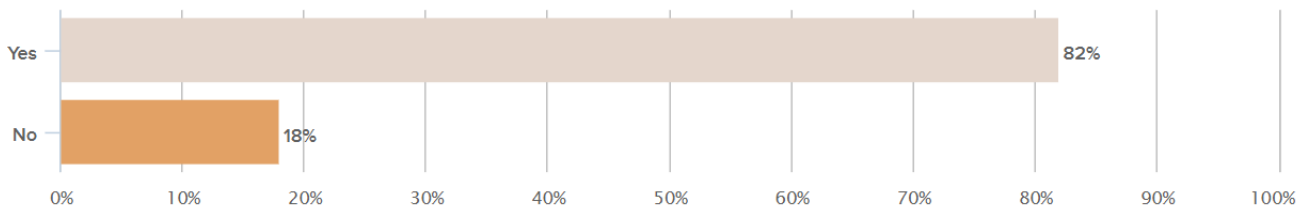
If you were to seek help facing any of the above listed problems, where would you look for help?

(N=281)



Have you ever heard of free legal services being available for low-income individuals?

(N=301)



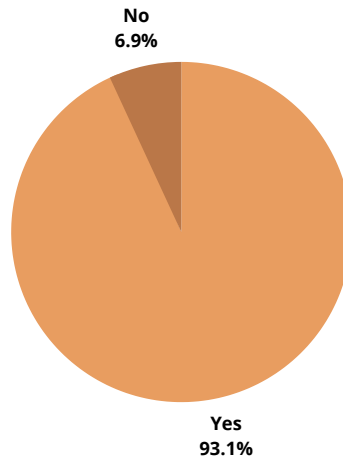
RESPONSES TO LEGAL NEEDS

COMMUNITY

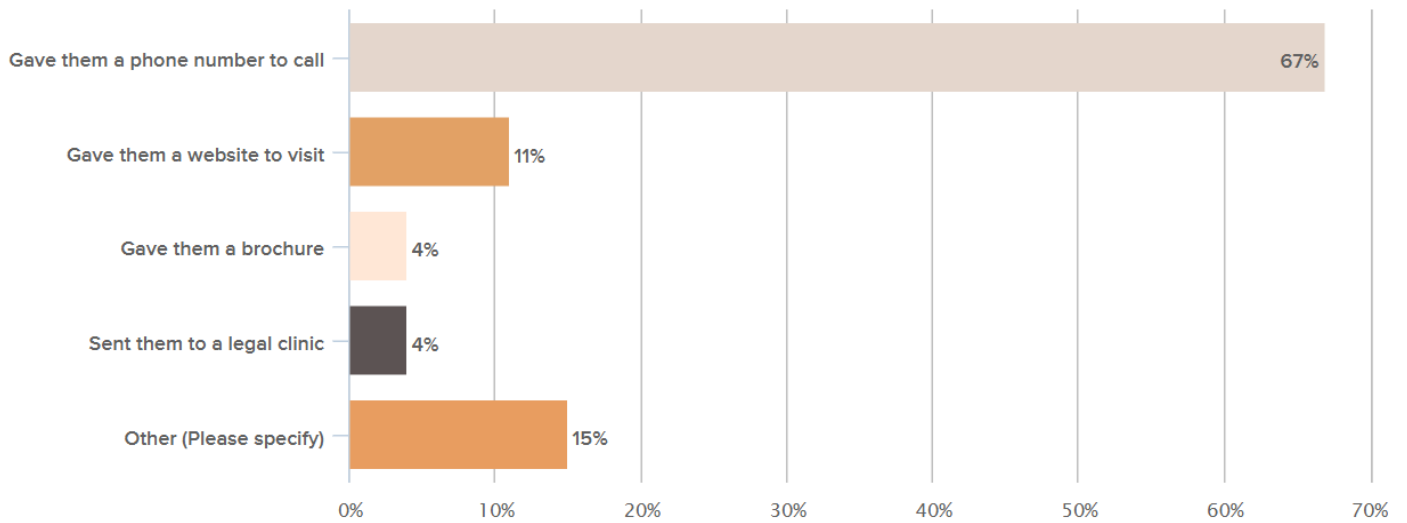
RESPONSES



Have you ever referred a client or member to a free legal service provider in Arkansas?



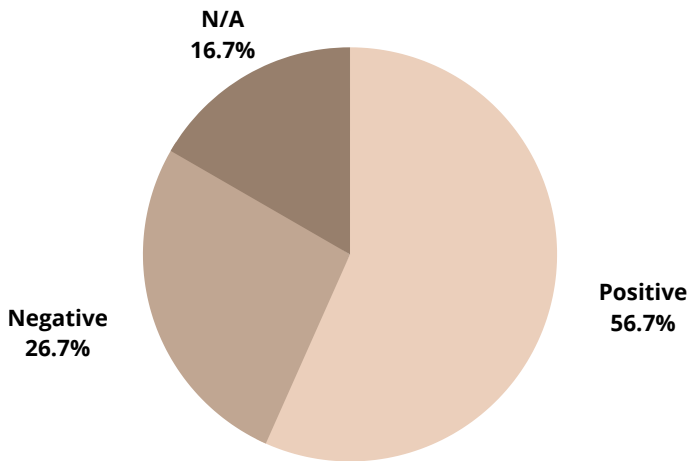
If yes, how did you refer them?



RESPONSES



If you've had any experiences with Legal Aid of Arkansas, please explain below what we can do better to improve our advocacy efforts in your community

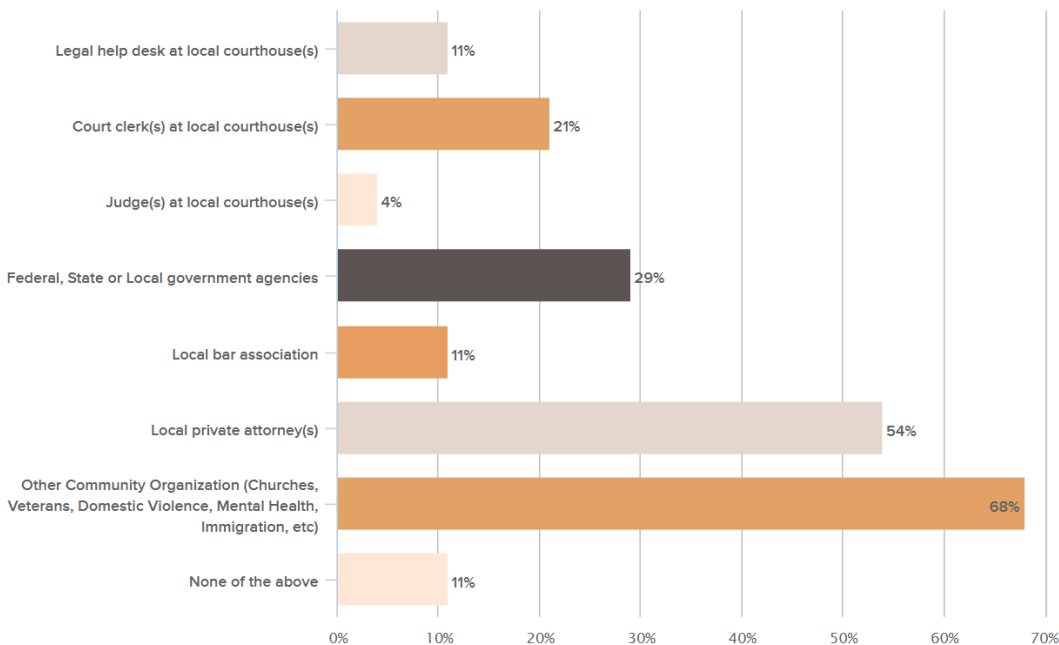


*Exact text responses can be found in Appendix



If/When one of your clients has had a potential legal issue, to which of the below resources have you referred them to or given them information about besides Legal Aid? (Select all that apply)

(N=28)



RESPONSES TO LEGAL NEEDS

**LEGAL
COMMUNITY**

RESPONSES

PRIVATE ATTORNEYS

Referral Rate



91% of private attorneys have referred clients to Legal Aid



Have you ever referred a low-income client to Legal Aid of Arkansas or Center for Arkansas Legal services?

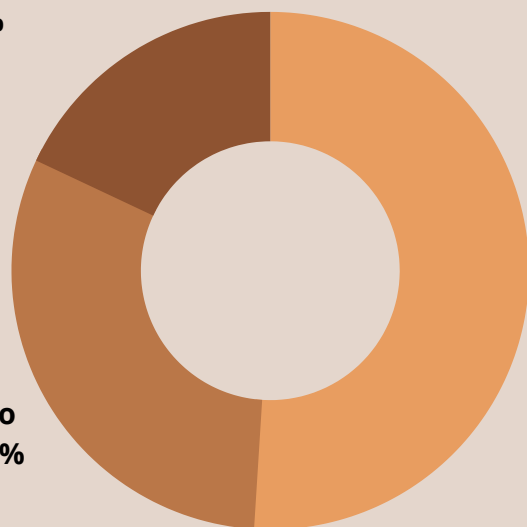
Website Resources



Have you ever referred a low-income client to arlegalservices.org for important documents, pro se information, or other resources?

Never Heard of It
18%

No
31%



Yes
51%

PRIVATE ATTORNEYS

"The service provided is greatly needed and utilized"

"I have witnessed excellent work on systemic issues such as Medicaid, housing, and domestic violence"

Perception of Legal Aid

Q

Based on your experience/observation, do you think the legal aid organizations in Arkansas adequately represent and serve their clients?

69%

Private Attorneys believe Legal Aid lawyers adequately represent their clients

Successes

Effective representation and advocacy for:

- Preventing Evictions
- Securing and educating about Public Benefits
- Protecting Domestic Violence victims
- Veteran's Clinics

Effective Resources and Outreach

- Self-help forms and info
- Pro Bono Training
- CLE Trainings
- Statewide Website Resources

Obstacles

Lack of resources

- Lack of assistance in certain rural areas
- Advice given instead of direct legal help
- Consistent communication with clients

Lack of Advertising with Private Attorneys

- Hear about Legal Aid's effort through word of mouth versus communicative efforts

RESPONSES

JUDGES AND JUSTICES

Q What is your experience with Legal Aid attorneys

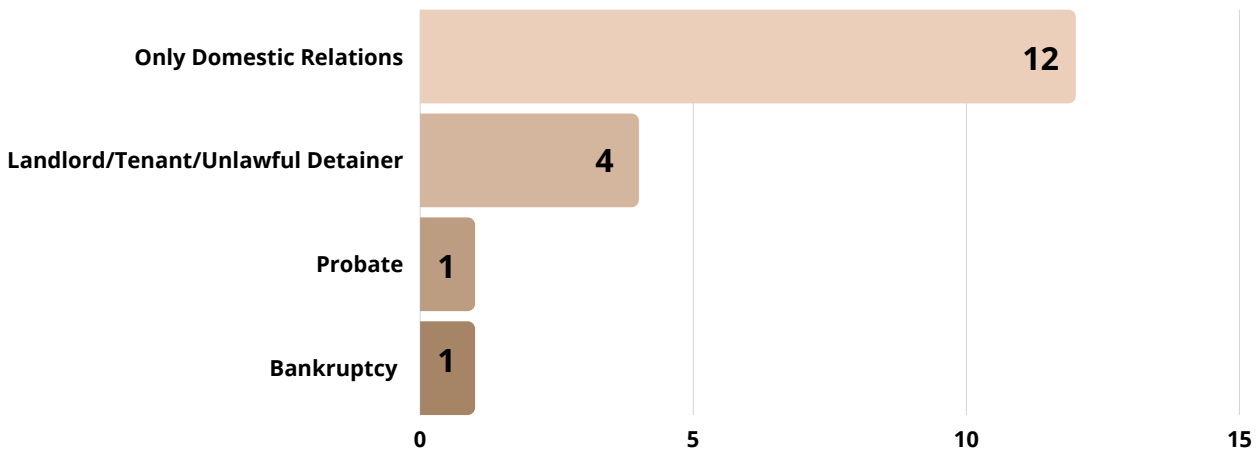
“
Excellent. I have always been tremendously impressed with Legal Aid attorneys in the courtroom.
”

“
They are prepared, take instruction well, and are extremely competent.
”

“
My experience with Legal Aid has always been positive.
”

*Detailed list of answers in the Appendix

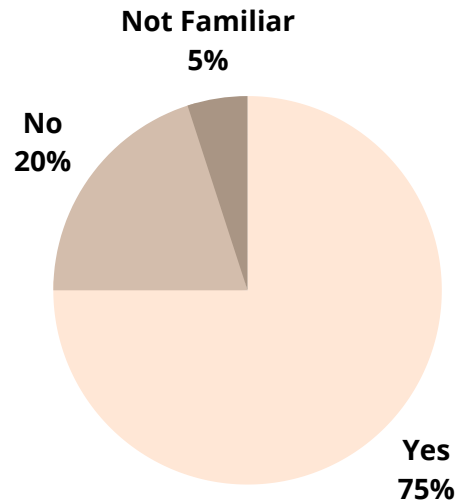
Q What kinds of cases other than domestic relations do you have with Legal Aid attorneys?



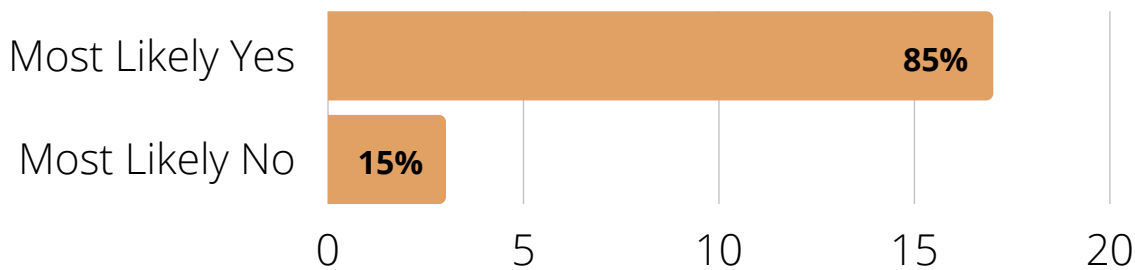
RESPONSES


JUDGES AND JUSTICES

Q Have you ever referred a low-income client to arlegalservices.org for important documents, pro se information, or other resources?









Q *Many areas in Arkansas have a limited number of attorneys who can volunteer to handle cases for low income clients, while other areas have many volunteer attorneys. Would you be willing to allow pro bono attorneys representing clients in your courtroom to participate in hearings via remote access, such as zoom, even when the courthouses fully reopen?*






 Keeping in mind Legal Aid's resource limitations, what are some things we could improve or gaps we are not addressing?

SPECIFIC LEGAL ISSUES

-  Assisting with AO4 Requirements
-  Debt Litigation or Collection
-  Prison Divorces
-  Car Repossessions
-  Assisting Self-Represented Litigants in Domestic Cases
-  Paternity Issues in Juvenile Court

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

-  Social Media and Communication of Services Offered
-  Assistance in Rural Areas and Possible Office Locations
-  Consistency in Online Domestic Forms for Pro Se Litigants

The judges specific text answers to these questions can be found in the Appendix. Though there was a significant amount of variety in their responses, these thoughts are a helpful insight into what judges see as needs of lower-income clients and several ways Legal Aid might be able to address those gaps.

RESOURCES

**LIBRARY &
COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS**

RESOURCES

LIBRARY

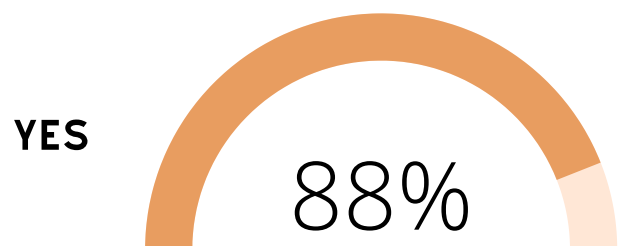
Throughout this report, the needs of Arkansas citizens have been assessed through various groups and respondents, including Arkansas citizens themselves. In addition, the report examined how clients and community organizations often respond to these perceived legal needs. An easy solution would be for Legal Aid to have more funding and thereby have an increased capacity to hire more lawyers, establish more offices, and consequently be able to extend their reach into Arkansas communities experiencing disparities. However, this is not always a realistic option for Legal Aid organizations. Besides, income eligibility requirements mean that many lower-income Arkansas citizens do not qualify for free legal services, but still face many legal dilemmas without assistance. This is why Legal Aid makes significant efforts toward community education, community partnerships, legal clinics, and offering free legal resources online. Consequently, we wanted to not only assess how these resources are working, but also examine the potential to expand these efforts. This included understanding the needs of communities in terms of public transportation, public and free Wi-Fi, and the organization's willingness to host free legal events.

.....

Q Does your library have public access to technology?



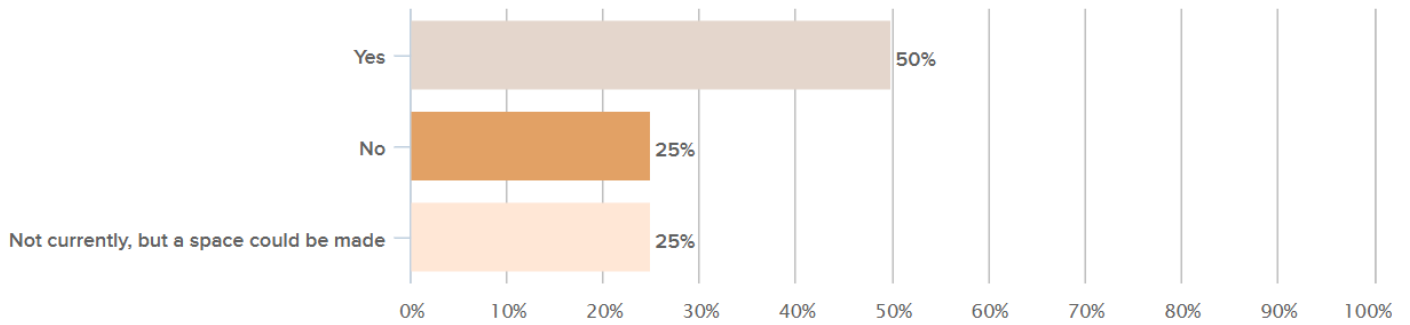
Q Does your library have public free wifi?





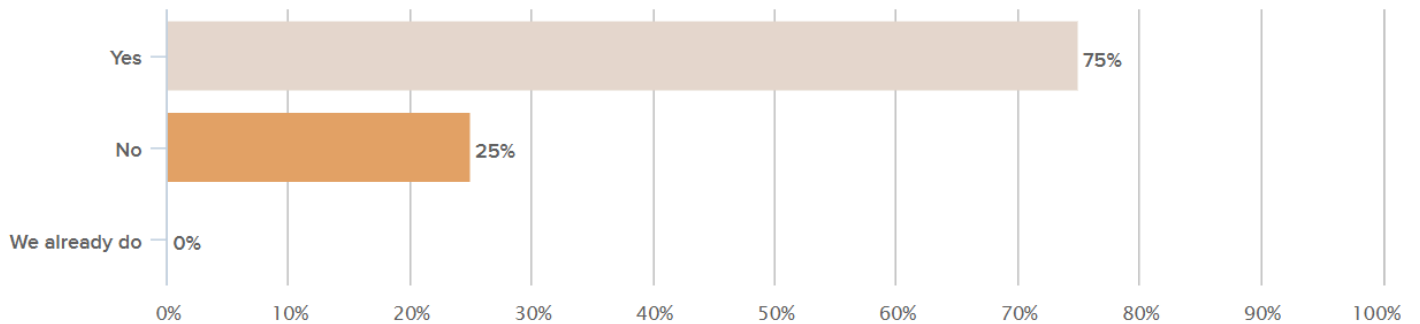
Does your library location have a private space or private meeting space?

(N=8)



Would your library be interested in hosting a community event for free legal help?

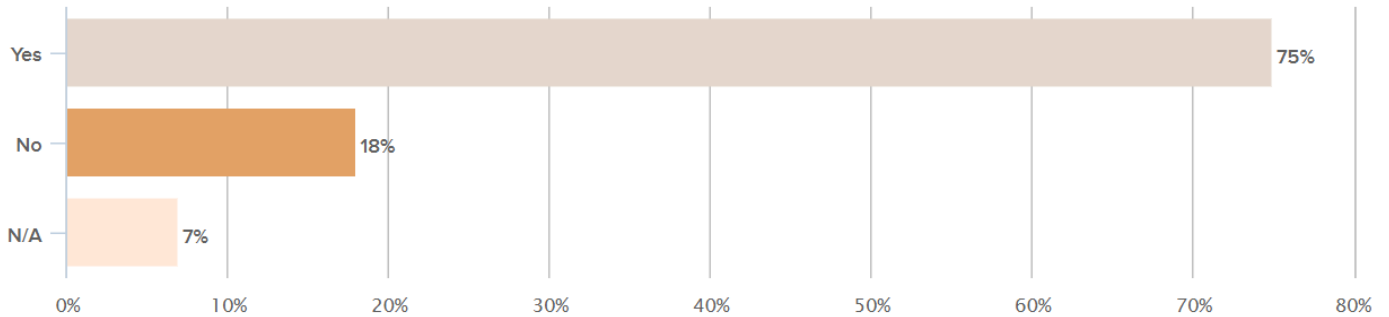
(N=8)





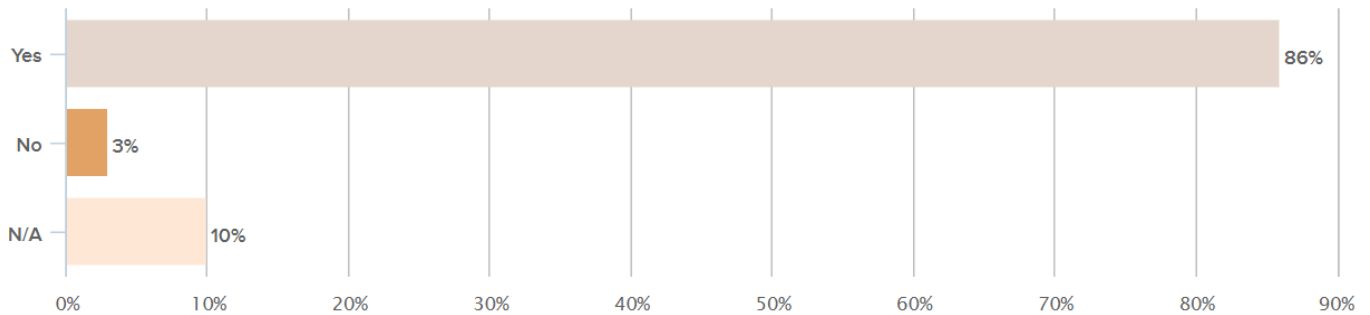
Does your organization have access to technology which would be available to your clients or members so that they could access legal resources if your client or member does not have access to the internet in their homes, on personal devices or through other means?

(N=28)



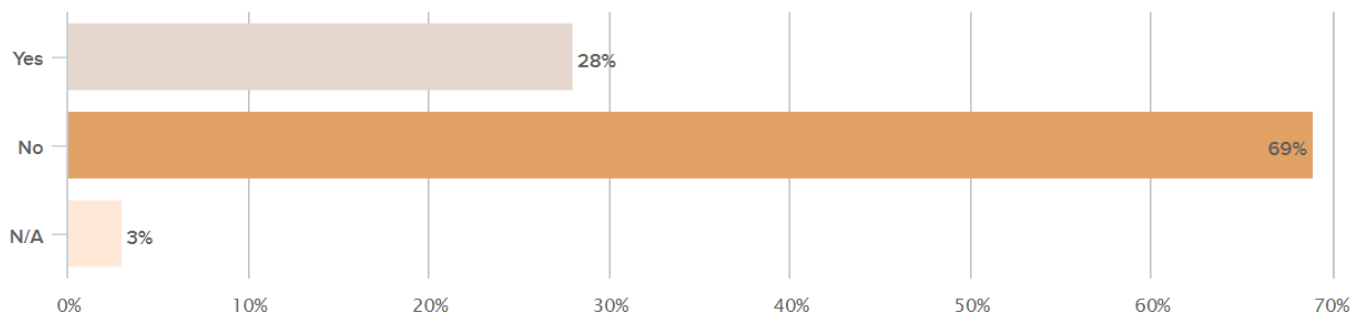
Does your *community* offer access to technology and the internet to people who do not otherwise have other access to technology and the internet?

(N=29)



Does your community offer public transportation?

(N=29)



METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Methodology

Research Paradigm

2020 contained many methodological constraints on data collection which had not previously been experienced. An ideal method of collecting data is to be in-person in Arkansas communities to hear the perspectives of its citizens, whether or not they have access to technology. This would include door-to-door interviews, community canvassing, sit-ins at various offices, and events at community organizations. Considering the surmounting health concerns due to COVID-19, Legal Aid had to make many decisions regarding how to protect the very people they vow to serve. Consequently, the methodological approach was to obtain accurate and extensive data without putting clients and community members at any risk. This resulted in a mixed-method research paradigm, including both quantitative data obtained through surveys, while also giving a space for qualitative data in the collection methods.

Research Limitations

Though this may have disadvantages to the data analysis, it was also a timely opportunity to engage clients and other community partners on several new frontiers. Not only was Legal Aid able to utilize their following on social media, but they were also able to make connections with community organizations, libraries, and attorneys across their service area. In particular, LAAR strove to reach populations without technological access through the community organizations which serve them consistently. Though this method is not as thorough as directly reaching these individuals through canvassing, it is their understanding that these community organizations strove to represent the needs of their clients honestly and comprehensively.

Methodology

Research Methods

The methods of data collection included using software known as SOGO Survey. This platform sent out specifically designed and strategic questionnaires to 7 different groups (see Group List on page below). The first group of client surveys was sent to previous clients Legal Aid had interacted with in some form. The second group was made available to the wider public via our social media pages. For the more specified list of contacts, the information was gathered based on location (counties in our service area) and the type of service provided. Efforts were made to ensure that various services and counties were adequately represented in the survey process. In addition to sending out surveys, Legal Aid conducted an internal data collection process through the Legal Server system. This allowed them to understand what the current case priorities are, where possible gaps in service might be, and other trends or patterns they need to be aware of.

Ethical Considerations

All efforts were made by the Legal Aid staff to communicate and promote the private information shared by data participants. Our privacy statements can be found in Appendix __. These statements required agreement by the participants before the survey could be completed. Though the data is informing the strategic decision of LAAR, specific information is not shared externally and therefore will maintain the privacy of the participants. The participants were made aware that their answers would inform the strategic decisions of the organization. Clients were offered to be entered into a gift card drawing for taking the survey but were not required to list their names. We contacted the participants via email and sent Walmart gift cards ranging from amounts of \$25 to \$100.

Data Analysis

From this data, a statistical analysis was conducted to determine recurring patterns and themes present in the data. While recording these patterns, the qualitative aspect of the study was discussed in a group format to influence discussion and address more theoretical conclusions and plans of action for the future. To prevent the dominance of one perspective in analyzing this data, a committee was created to sift through the larger areas of data. This was an effort to mitigate personal biases which could occur with a singular researcher. These meetings were primarily to discern visible patterns in the statistical data as well as to compare cross tables of information.

APPENDIX

- A **ORG. SURVEYED**
- B SURVEY QUESTIONS
- C TEXT ANSWERS
- D PRIVACY STATEMENT
- E SOCIAL MEDIA

Community Organizations Surveyed

- Area Agency on Aging
- Area Agency on Aging of NWA
- Disability Rights Arkansas
- Family Network
- Family Violence Prevention
- Forrest City Public Library
- Lonoke County Safe Haven
- Margie's Haven House
- M-DCS, Inc.
- Mississippi County Union Mission
- Northwest Arkansas Continuum of Care
- Our House
- Out of the Dark
- Ozark Opportunities, Inc- SUCCESS Program
- Ozark Rape crisis Center
- Ozark Rape Crisis, Inc.
- Peace at Home Family Shelter
- Saint Paul's Episcopal Church
- Saline County Safe Haven
- Samaritan Outreach
- Sanctuary Inc
- Second Street Pantry Missions, Inc.
- Serenity inc
- Servant's Heart Outreach
- Sources for Community Independent Living
- Southwest Arkansas Crisis & Resource Center
- Stone County Abuse Prevention Inc.
- The Salvation Army of Northwest Arkansas
- Washington County Public Law Library

APPENDIX

ORG. SURVEYED

SURVEY QUESTIONS

TEXT ANSWERS

PRIVACY STATEMENT

SOCIAL MEDIA

Survey Questions

Client Survey

1. Clicking on the agree button below indicates that you have read the above information, you voluntarily agree to participate, and you are at least 18 years old. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please decline participation by clicking on the disagree button.
2. What is your age
3. What gender do you identify as?
4. Which categories describe you? Select all that apply (Ethnicity)
5. Do you identify yourself as someone with a disability?
6. What is the highest degree or level of School you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.
7. How many children under the age of 18?
8. What is your estimated annual household income?
9. What county in Arkansas do you live?
10. What is your current employment status?
11. How many months has it been since you last worked for pay?
12. Please select the industries in which you are currently employed
13. Have you ever needed an interpreter/translator in any legal situation?
14. Was an interpreter/translator provided to you in a way that met your needs?
15. Please indicate if the following describes a concern you have related to finances currently or in the past
16. In the last 12 months, have you had any problems getting, keeping, or using the following benefits?
17. Please indicate which of the following describe a problem with your housing situation. You may select more than one answer.
18. Please indicate which of the following (if any) describe a problem with your children's education.
19. Please indicate if the following describes a concern you have related to employment
20. Please indicate if any of the following describe a concern you have related to family and relationships
21. I have had the following problems getting a job
22. Besides the ones listed above, is there any other issue or problems you've experienced in the past year?
23. What did you do to resolve/address the above problems selected in the previous questions (family, housing, benefits, education, employment, etc)
24. If no action was taken, why?
25. If you were to seek help facing any of the above listed problems, where would you look for help?
26. Have you ever heard of free legal services being available for low-income individuals?
27. Please enter your email address below if you wished to be entered in our giveaway for \$100, \$75, \$50, and \$25.

Community Organization Survey



1. Clicking on the agree button below indicates that you have read the above information, you voluntarily agree to participate, and you are at least 18 years old. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please decline participation by clicking on the disagree button.

2. Please enter the name of your organization below
3. What is your name and position at your organization
4. What county of Arkansas do you serve? If your organization serves multiple counties, please select other and enter which counties you serve.
5. What area(s) does your organization provide services in? Please select all that apply
6. Does your organization provide direct services to clients or does it operate more on the advocacy side?
7. What are the primary groups or populations your organization serves or come in contact with in your work?
8. On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 representing the majority of your clients), please select which groups below your predominantly provide services to?
9. What do you think are the top three most pressing problems or issues facing low income people in your community or service area?
10. When it comes to the well being of your community, what do you consider the number one problem being faced by your clients?
11. What are the emerging issues or needs of the low-income people in your community or service area that you think are going to become larger issues or needs?
12. Does your organization witness a problem facing your community that you consider to be largely unmet?
13. Have you ever referred a client or member to a free legal service provider in Arkansas?
14. If yes, how did you refer them?
15. If you've had any experience with Legal Aid of Arkansas, please explain below what we can do better to improve our advocacy efforts in your community?
16. If/When one of your clients has had a potential legal issue, which of the below resources have you referred to them or given information about besides Legal Aid?
17. If you identified any of the items above, please provide any specific information you can such as the location of the courthouse, name of the Legal aid organizations, government agency, bar association church etc.
18. If you did not refer your client to any sort of legal advice/help, what was your reasoning?
19. Does your organization have access to technology which would be available to your clients or members so that they could access legal resources if your client member does not have access to the internet in their homes, on personal devices, or through other means?
20. Does your community offer access to technology and the internet to people who do not otherwise have other access to technology and internet?
21. Does your community offer public transportation?

Judge and Justice Survey

1. What county(s) do you primarily work in, select all that apply
2. What is your experience with Legal Aid Attorneys in and outside your courtroom?
3. Do you witness any new civil legal issues arising from the pandemic?
4. What kinds of cases other than domestic relations do you have with Legal Aid Attorneys?
5. What civil legal needs are you witnessing in the low-income community? List at least three in order of frequency
6. Keeping in mind Legal Aid's resource limitations, what are some things we could improve or gaps we are not addressing?
7. Have you ever referred a low-income client to arlegalservices.org for important documents, pro se information, or other resources?
8. Many areas in Arkansas have a limited number of attorneys who can volunteer to handle cases for low-income clients, while other areas have many volunteer attorneys. Would you be willing to allow pro bono attorneys representing clients in your courtroom to participate in hearings via remote access, such as zoom, even when the courthouses fully reopen?

Private Attorney Survey

1. How many years have you been a practicing lawyer?
2. What county do you primarily work in?
3. In your legal experience with low income clients in your community (regardless of whether you take the case) what are three major problems they come seeking help for?
4. Have you ever encountered a low-income client with an issue you didn't feel like you had adequate expertise to address?
5. If so, what was it?
6. Have you ever referred a low-income client to Legal Aid of Arkansas or Center for Arkansas Legal Services?
7. Have you ever referred a low-income client to arlegalservices.org for important documents, pro se information, or other resources?
8. Is there another website which you have referred clients to for legal information/forms/fact sheets etc? Please enter below
9. How do you most often interact with Legal Aid? Select all that apply
10. Apart from contact with legal Aid attorneys, how do you usually hear about Legal Aid's work?
11. Based on your experience/observation, do you think the legal aid organizations in Arkansas adequately represent and serve their clients?
12. If no, please give an example
13. If yes, please give an example
14. Based on your experience with Legal Aid of Arkansas, what are some things we could improve or possible gaps we are not addressing?

Library Survey



1. Agreeing to Terms and Conditions (see above)
2. Please enter the name of your library below
3. What is your name and position at your library?
4. What county of Arkansas do you serve? If your organization serves multiple counties, please select "other" and enter which counties you serve.
5. Has a community member ever approached you for help or information about a legal matter (custody, Social Security, veteran's benefits, domestic abuse, debt, taxes etc)
6. Please select any/all of the categories which people asked for more information about (family, consumer, housing, benefits, other)
7. What kind of information was the library member seeking? Check all that apply
8. When asked about any of the above concerns, how equipped/prepared did you feel in assisting the community member?
 - a) You answered not prepared. Have you ever received training for assisting someone with a legal question?
 - b) You answered somewhat prepared. Have you ever received training for assisting someone with a legal question?
 - c) You answered prepared. Have you ever received training for assisting someone with a legal question?
 - d) You answered very prepared. Have you ever received training for assisting someone with a legal question?
9. Does your library have public access to technology?
10. Does your library have public/free wifi?
11. Does your library location have a private space or meeting space?
12. What type of community outreach events does your library host?
13. Would your library be interested in hosting a community event for free legal help?
14. Does your library have a space capable of hosting a community event?
15. Does your organization witness a problem facing your community that you consider to be largely unmet?
16. Have you ever referred a client or member to a free legal service provider in Arkansas?
 - a) If yes, how did you refer them?
17. Have you ever displayed or promoted Legal Aid of Arkansas in your library (brochure, posters, displaying help-line number)?
18. Would your library consider advertising Legal Aid's helpline number, brochures, or other educational materials?
19. If/When one of your library members has had a potential legal issue, to which of the below resources have you referred them or given them information about?
20. If you did not refer the library member to any sort of legal help/advice, what was your reasoning?
21. Would you be interested in receiving more information about free legal training for library staff?
22. If you would like to receive more information, please enter a good email for the information to be sent to:

Education Survey

1. Agreeing to Terms and Conditions (see above)
2. Please enter the name of your school below:
3. What is your name and position at the school?
4. What county of Arkansas is your school located in?
5. What age group of children attends your school? Select all that apply
6. On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 representing the majority of your students, please select which groups below predominantly make up your student body
7. What do you think are the top three most pressing problems or issues facing low income students and their families in your school?
8. When it comes to the well-being of your community ,what do you consider the number one problem being faced by your students and their families?
9. What are the emerging issues or needs of low income children and families in your community that you think are going to become large issues or needs?
10. Do you witness a problem facing your community/students that you consider to be largely unmet?
11. Have you ever referred a student or parent to a free legal service provider in Arkansas?
 - a) If Yes, how did you refer them?
12. If you've had any experiences with Legal Aid of Arkansas, please explain below what we can do better to improve our advocacy efforts in your community
13. If/When one your students/families has had a potential legal issue, to which of the below resources have you referred them to or given them information about besides Legal Aid of Arkansas?
14. If you did not refer your student's parent/family to any sort of legal help/advice, what was your reasoning?
15. Does your school provide access to technology for your student/families so that they could access legal resources if they do not have access to the internet in their homes, on personal devices or through other means?
16. Does your community offer access to technology and the internet to people who do not otherwise have other access to technology and the internet?
17. Does your community offer public transportation?

APPENDIX

ORG. SURVEYED

SURVEY QUESTIONS

TEXT ANSWERS

PRIVACY STATEMENT

SOCIAL MEDIA

Client Survey

Besides the ones listed above, is there any other issue or problem which you've experienced in the past year?

- "I can't pay for Chapter 7 to keep from losing my home. My husband became disabled and I was fired.
- Custody of my kids
- Tax Audit
- Bad Experience Auto Repair
- Being scammed through phone calls
- Tenant/Non Tenant Laws
- Ex-Spousal Abuse
- I was wrongfully evicted from my last apartment due to being sexually assaulted and also the landlord falsely called the police on me and my 12 year old for 'criminal trespassing' after she invited us in for me to ask about my eviction.
- Lousy, neglectful assistance for my nephew by legal services of Arkansas
- I am a type 2 diabetic waiting for a hearing for a disability
- Physical and mental issues. I am trying to get disability money
- I have a couple of credit cards after me
- Yeah all has to do with trying to get my kids out of the system and to a stable home
- I really need help with this mortgage company
- My knee is getting worse and my hip is causing pain
- Little to no income, rent is \$850 per month plus utilities and I am taking class to better myself. I still need help to get by
- Management tried to move me into an inaccessible apartment
- Yes, Legal Aid has taken 2 1/2 years and still has not settled my case and the plaintiff has died
- I have excessive debts due to health conditions and I am unable to pay
- Yes, Jacksonville District Court is refusing to hear the Petition and Order to Seal filings. I submitted 3 sets of files documents to the court on 1/07/2020. It has been over a year, and I still have no results. These charges are traffic in nature and financial. The charges are over 8 and 9 years old. No DUI's or DWI's at all. No felonies at all. Beebe District Court, did grant my Petitions within 2 months of submitting, however, ACIC has informed me that mistakes were made by the court clerks there. I need legal help will this issue. I have been denied jobs that I really wanted and needed because of these very old tickets..
- I let someone stay with me to help them out and they stole money, a very expensive phone and apple watch from me.
- When granted guardianship there should have been included adult support for the caretaker from the State. This is insane hat I am expected to do this for free!

Client Survey

Besides the ones listed above, is there any other issue or problem which you've experienced in the past year?

- Cognitive disorder after surgery for brain aneurysm. Dealing with medicare/medicaid in confusing for me. I have no family nor anyone to assist with this and worry about the future.
- im currethe last place wherre me and my chjildren were staying gave me an alturnitive to take naakedpics or he would put me and my kids out on the st, I chose to leave due to the fact i wasnt about to keep my babies around someone that was that sick but in the event i had no adddress to give my PO and no one to take ny kids in the event that they decided to put me in jail for not having a permanantapproved address and thenn DHS would have taken my kids because we have no one else to helpntlyexperencing some legal issues due to
- There are things that have shown up in my credit reports that make me concerned about identity theft.
- Obtaining legal aid/assistance with divorce.
- My daughter died and my grandchildren were taken by the other grandmother and I read not allowed r.i.p set them. Legal aid would not help. My nephews girlfriend took off with his daughter, legal aids said they don't handle those things. So what does legal aids do besides occupy a building?
- Yes, National Collegiate Student Loan Trust sued me because I was not able to pay for my student loans that went into default. They sent legal papers regarding garnishing my wages, but I do not make enough money to get my paycheck garnished. I believe the legal documents are concerning putting a lien on my property as well. I already went to court and lost my case. I told them in court that I do not make the money to pay back the amount of money they are requesting me to pay per month.
- I been trying to get a divorce from my husband who was deported on battery charges on me and my daughter
- Had my record sealed with Legal AIDS help. I would like to try and return to work but my background check will eliminate me from getting hired. Any suggestions?
- I need help getting a divorce from my abusive husband who is currently in federal prison
- Trouble paying debt
- Getting permanent guardianship/custody of my grandson.
- Bankruptcy
- Only problem I have is I tried getting help from Legal Aide (you guys) but all you would do is send me a link which I didn't understand why I didn't qualify to get help since my only income is my disability & snap. I have wanted my divorce for a while but I can not afford it I even went online to try to do it & I couldn't afford them either ..That has really been my only issue..
- Medical discrimination
- No job because of job gap, no home because of credit, license is suspended due to court non ayment, cant see son because custodial parent left state

Client Survey

Besides the ones listed above, is there any other issue or problem which you've experienced in the past year?

- Losing my job due to Covid and only finding part time work that does not pay enough to support my son and I
- Homelessness
- Working mood is my problem
- I can't work for the time being
- Marriage Problems
- I lost my apartment after being laid off due to COVID
- Rent Increase
- Salary, virus, and marriage are the problems I face
- Wrongfully cited for seatbelt violation. Had to take off work, drive 1.5 hours to plead not guilty, then drive out again another day for court.
- Need to file Bankruptcy
- Sister, who helps with household bills, can't get a job to pay for herself and 3 kids because she doesn't have a ged or high school diploma, leaving me to provide for 5 ppl on student salary
- How to take friend off of deed to property. I am the only one financing.
- Unable to afford food, but don't qualify for help
- Medical expenses, medical access
- Many health issues
- Need help filing for unemployment
- I was put in a dangerous situation helping a friend who had a bad landlord, Trying to prove to financial aid that I am an independent (father is dead, mother is abusive)
- My boss is in arrears with my pay
- Being sole caregiver of my daughter, without having any help or support. No breaks
- I can't get into housing because of my criminal record and need to get my name expunged.
- Lost job due to Covid-19 and childcare/school issues but still waiting on DWS to make a decision on my claim. It's been 4 months
-

Community Survey

What do you think are the top three most pressing problems or issues facing low income people in your community or service area?

- 1) Lack of adequate and affordable housing options. We do have some low-income housing options but what we do have is limited and poor quality. When those housing options are full, what is left is too expensive for our remaining low-income clients to find housing. Those who receive assistance from programs such as HUD Section 8 have limitations on how much rent they can afford and most decent housing options are over their eligible price range given by the program.
- 2) Access to quality medical care that is not urgent care. Many low income households seek medical care only when sick or through urgent care clinics and do not receive routine wellness checks. This leads to health problems going unseen for months until it causes greater problems.
- 3) A broad and community based mental health system that seeks to treat those with both acute and severe mental health problems. We see clients who are in and out of mental health institutions and seem to never get any real help.
- Homelessness, meeting their basic needs such as food and clothing.
- Employment Training, Access to Healthy Foods, Crime
- Hunger, Homelessness, Utility/rent assistance
- Legal representation, affordable housing, medical services-insurance
- Lack of affordable transportation options, difficulty of obtaining authorization for In Home Services such as ARChoices, lack of affordable housing (long wait lists for Seniors, very few options for disabled adults).
- Need for Senior Housing, Food Insecurity, Paying for Utilities, Prescriptions and Housing Repairs
- Lack of Transportation, Safety-dependence on financial and emotional support from abusive individuals, and Lack of education or job training
- Digital divide, income inequality, and unemployment.
- Having access to housing, especially if they have any previous criminal history.
- Being able to apply for benefits discreetly when trying to flee a domestic violence situation without the (abuser) parent of shared children being notified of location via child support.
- Fighting for custody of children, especially when it is drawn out.
- not enough access to justice for people who can't afford it.
- We need more Pro Bono attorneys willing to GENUINELY help those who need legal guidance and/or representation but can't afford it.
- A resource center(s) to help direct any and all potential litigants to resources that will help them with their specific cause or need. This is something that as Law Librarian for the County I am working to implement for the citizens of this county and surrounding areas.

What do you think are the top three most pressing problems or issues facing low income people in your community or service area?

- Getting into affordable housing. Help with utilities either from starting new or help with keeping their utilities on. Affordable transportation, we have people that needs to find jobs and if they do sometimes then they have the problem with transportation to get to and from.
- Housing
- Affordable childcare
- Transportation
- Transportation, Access to qualified parenting/anger management classes, lack of legal paperwork in their native language
- First one is the lack of employment in this area.
- Second is the lack of housing (affordable/livable) housing
- Third is lack of education
- Affordable decent housing
- Living wage
- Health care
- The top three most pressing problems to low income in my community are access to housing, access to childcare, and transportation.
- lack of services available, community denial and hope
- Affordable and habitable Housing, Health and Wellbeing (Mental Health, proper insurance, equitable Primary care, disability, etc.), and affordable Legal representation (with our family, mainly custody cases)
- Access and education on using technology
- Access to transportation
- Affordable housing, medical treatment, food.
- No access to quality, affordable legal help.
- No access to housing.
- Being failed by the justice system
- Access to legal aide, transportation and housing
- 1. Finding jobs that pay a living wage.
- 2. Finding affordable housing.
- 3. Finding affordable transportation.
- Housing costs higher than income levels for households. Lack of HUD approved landlords in our areas. Length of time people on waiting list or are having trouble finding housing and losing voucher for timeframe.
- Lack of affordable housing
- Food Insecurity
- Inability to pay utility expenses
- Lack of QUALITY low income housing.
- The need of advocates or mentors .
- transportaton
- assistance with housing (rent and utilities)
- interpersonal violence
- Accessible affordable housing.
- Lack of Supports and services in the community to remain independent.
- Lack of employment opportunities - livable wage.

When it comes to the well-being of your community, what do you consider the number one problem being faced by your clients?

- Mental health is by far the number one problem in our community right now. I don't know if it is because a lot of people don't understand it or because it is so difficult to address the problem, but there are so many people going without help in our community. They go from one place to the next and are offered little to no help. They want to take medication to help themselves, but are refused because the doctors are afraid of repercussions. It is also too difficult for agencies like shelters to seek help for clients themselves due to confidentiality and liability.
- find service to help them get back on their feet,
- Crime
- "Either hunger or utility assistance. During COVID-19, we have dramatically increased the number of individuals we distribute meals to. We have also seen a dramatic increase in the amount of people we help with utility and rent assistance, as people have lost their jobs."
- Finding affordable housing
- language
- Affordable transportation is one of the most common concerns for Seniors and Disabled/low income adults that can no longer safely drive. Concerns are that: Medicaid transportation is reliable for appointments, the bus system being limited/not available to most, no affordable options for rural areas.
- Need for caregivers, Medicaid cuts, postponing nursing home placement for as long as possible.
- They have been hurt by so many people they don't know who to trust. They trust unsafe people and it continues to be a cycle of abuse in their lives. Poverty has kept them financially dependent and stuck in toxic situations. When they finally do reach out for help, it's overwhelming where to start and they are just a number to most government agencies. They are not treated with care and concern because most agencies have too large of a case load and won't return phone calls etc. Our agency works very hard to ensure that they are heard and cared for and have guidance through the process, but we have seen how difficult it is to get the help they need.
- Unemployment
- Not being able to feel that they can have law enforcement or the justice system fully support and enforce protection when fleeing domestic violence.
- Access not only to justice but information and resources in general. NWA has a really good start on resources (HARK, Legal Aid, etc) but somehow we need to tie it all together in a more effective manner. We do network but perhaps have a NETWORK Board (or Committee) that can meet on a regular and more frequent basis to hammer out the needs of the community and the challenges we face as providers in effectively delivery help to those needs.
- Affordable housing
- Being able to access and afford basic needs.
- Lack of shelter
- All of the above which then turns violent and that's when we come in to play
- Housing and utility costs and hunger
- When looking at the well-being of my community, the number one problem being faced by our clients is safety.
- Not sure this can be a one issue answer. They are all linked, see above.
- Affordable and habitable housing
- Exposure to COVID.
- Victims do not have access to quality legal representation.
- Inadequate Housing, especially for those with felony convictions and low income/poor credit
- Finding something bigger than themselves to believe in, and believing in themselves.
- Lack of affordable housing and good landlords (non-slumlords)
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of QUALITY and affordable housing.
- "substance abuse
- Lack of services in the community.

What are the emerging issues or needs of low income people in your community or service area that you think are going to become large issues or needs?

- "Homelessness is on the rise. Housing costs are rising and income is not meeting that increase. The assistance that families receive to help pay for housing is also not being raised to meet the increase. This is leading to more and more families living in substandard housing or being homeless.
- I have also come into contact with several families who are not low-income so to speak, but are in the income bracket that is just above being able to qualify for assistance for medicaid/SNAP/etc. These families are paying so much out-of-pocket for these things that they end up being financially lower than those who do receive this assistance. This places a burden on these families that goes unnoticed"
- Job for clients who have a past.
- Employment and employment preparation training.
- Not being able to pay monthly bills has been a problem since the pandemic began, I only see this getting worse as it continues.
- Affordable housing and food insecurity due to Covid 19.
- Housing- as the community grows and expands, the lack of affordable housing keeps decreasing for the population and the homeless population will likely grow in the upcoming years.
- Loss of AR Choices Medicaid Waiver Program, decrease in care hours, move to nursing home care
- The legal system often has let our clients down. They don't feel safe because the order of protection process is not always efficient. Often they file an order of protection and then it takes forever to get served. They may even have an order of protection and call the police, when it is violated, and the police don't arrest their abuser. Often abusers are arrested and then let out the very next day. There are too lax of penalties for violent criminals who continue in a cycle of abusive behavior. This often is because of lack of staff and funding for the police and lack of space in the jail etc. I see this problem growing over time.
- Access to decent paying jobs.
- Homelessness is a major problem facing most people and if there is any previous criminal history, there aren't any options for housing leaving many to be faced with staying on the streets due to shelters being full to capacity. This also applies for illegal immigrants that have been victims of abuse. Many are forced to return to their abusers for fear of being left on the street.
- With the pandemic, I worry for all those who can't work and the long term effects this will bring on their lives. Such as evictions, and if not evicted falling in to major debt to pay back the "back-rent" accumulated during this pandemic. This and among so many other issues that will manifest from this mess that we have probably not thought of.
- It all seems to come back to housing and help with their utilities.
- "Lack of services to the undocumented families or individuals--lack of opportunity to make a living.
- Lack of affordable housing, waitlist is too long, or too expensive for a 1 income household.

What are the emerging issues or needs of low income people in your community or service area that you think are going to become large issues or needs?

- Transportation issues (unaffordable, lack of other options besides owning car) that lead to the inability to work.
- Low wage that makes it impossible to afford basic needs like housing, food, transportation, health needs."
- I think lack of informational and legal paper work in different languages is going to become a bigger issue as our demographics change.
- The issues above are the continuing issues they face everyday. It has been that way for seven years i have been working here. I think it becomes larger do the constant lack of employment, housing. These issues are what cause most of the arguments that start things off.
- Food insecurity
- I think an emerging issues or need would be access to identification. With the real ID requirement deadline coming up in October that is going to hinder a lot of things victims can do if they cannot get that. Another large need is childcare, if a victim has children and comes into shelter, they have to take their kids with them or put them in some kind of daycare, If they cannot get affordable childcare then they cannot get a job, then they cannot get their own transportation or find a job.
- Lack of services and education
- Free or low-cost legal representation for legal services such as custody cases, inhabitable housing, and mental health (services exist as do stigma)
- "No resources for clients with developmental disabilities being cut from ARChoices.
- ARChoices client's budgets being cut, forcing people into nursing homes.
- Access to food, jobs, transportation and affordable housing.
- Our medical and social systems increasingly requiring access and knowledge of how to purchase/pay for and use technology."
- "No affordable housing
- No access to legal representation"
- Inadequate housing and support for housing such as furniture, utilities, etc
- "Low paying jobs need to provide enough to feed families: basic wage increase.
- More effort to provide good education and vocational training to children and youth of low income families."
- Moratorium ends and families unable to pay their back rent and issued immediate vacate orders regardless of legality.
- COVID-19 impacts of business closures or reductions in the workforce will significantly reduce the ability of already income constrained individuals/families to be self-sustaining. Our organization has significant concerns around the increase in evictions, especially when the eviction moratorium ends. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the lack of access to health care for our homeless population.
- "Mental health issues of low income people.
- Lack of Supervised housing for the mental health clients."
- same as above
- "Transportation
- housing"

Does your organization witness a problem facing your community that you consider to be largely unmet?

- I believe something more could be done about mental health in our community. At least to better assess the needs of the more severe cases and refer them to somewhere that better suits their needs. We have people in our community who go to the emergency department on a routine basis looking for help and are sent home every single time just because they are there for their mental illness. This is completely wrong and should be handled differently.
- Homeless programs for families
- Yes, Service providers working together for the benefit of clients. This would be essential to directing clients to needed services available in communities.
- We have a homeless issue in our areas, but there are no homeless shelters. Luckily, we can provide housing for our DA and SA victims, but we are not funded to be a homeless shelter.
- See above.
- Senior Citizens are being faced with declining health with no support system available. Everything seems to be done by internet and computer and our Clients do not have computers, do not know how to use them and cannot afford to have computers or internet. Client needs our staff to assist them with navigating through Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid systems. In most cases, they don't understand the correspondence they receive about their services.
- Transportation in Suburban and Rural areas
- In our immediate area, Spanish speaking individuals do not have access to forms and translators at the court houses. These should be available for all individuals that are becoming a larger part of our population.
- As a law library we primarily serve the legal profession, so there is no immediate concern there since we are providing safe remote access to legal research for them. We also partner with Legal Aid of Arkansas in providing a weekly Pro Se Help Desk. In providing this service there are so many people that really can't receive this help from the Pro Se Help Desk because they don't necessarily qualify as a Pro Se Litigant. However, their need is still there their inability to pay for legal help is still there. We need to find a way to add to this Help Desk that can offer more of a "legal advice and guidance" and/or resources to attorneys that will take their case on Pro Bono and/or provide a low fee structure.
- Homeless community
- Women will not often report domestic or sexual assault by their spouses because they are afraid of deportation.
- "We witness all the above which are the cause of issues. I think our community needs to have more housing for anyone not just elderly and disabled to supply good housing for those that are low income.
- We have lost most of our industry here so that is a big problem not having those factories for men and women to work."
- Affordable housing
- A problem that our community is facing that is going largely unmet is access to mental health services.

Does your organization witness a problem facing your community that you consider to be largely unmet?

- Affordable housing and technology (equipment, internet, cellular service, knowledge of how to use).
- Again, no access to affordable legal representation. Also, in counties where there is no domestic violence program, such as hot spring county (Malvern) law enforcement and the courts do not protect victims, they do not follow through with prosecutions of abusers, even when there's proof of child abuse, dhs doesn't investigate and returns children home to their abusers, law enforcement does not charge violations of order of protections or enforce the order, and when the victims address it in court, nothing is done. We are the closest service provider in that particular area and have seen victim after victim be revictimized in all the areas above.
- Access to mental health counseling and medication management, especially for those who are struggling with or who have struggled with addiction.
- The ongoing drug problem. A Church can help provide hope and encouragement to low income folk, to guide them into better jobs they deserve, so they are not tempted into illegal ways of making a living.
- Lack of knowledge on legality of eviction process especially during Co-vid
- Affordable housing has and will continue to be a largely unmet need of our community.
- Lack of quality and affordable housing."
- substance abuse, holding violent offenders accountable
- Stigma towards individuals with disabilities -

If you've had any experiences with Legal Aid of Arkansas, please explain below what we can do better to improve our advocacy efforts in your community

- I have referred victims of domestic violence/abuse to Legal Aid of Arkansas before and have always had great experiences.
- In domestic violence we often need service for client with a history of substance abuse, These client feel judged by others and like they aren't getting the help they need .
- No experience with legal aid
- I personally have not, I can't speak for our social services department though.
- Our experience is mainly with Orders of Protection, which are met very well. Each attorney we have worked with has been wonderful and worked hard for our clients. The other needs clients have asked for help with, but that seem to be unmet are legal representation in divorces and family court. We have had some clients who needed help with citizenship issues that said they called Legal Aid and were told you don't deal with those issues. We found an organization in Northwest Arkansas to refer them to.
- I think they could improve the customer service many times they are very rude and they should have someone permanently who will speak spanish to help the clients so the prose would more quick.
- Legal Aid of AR has been very helpful and we greatly appreciate the assistance provided to our Clients during their AR Choices appeals and issues. Staff seemed to really care and fight for each one as much as possible.
- We have had mixed experiences. Some attorneys will be positive and attentive and we have had some that never return phone calls or emails, who don't really advocate for our client and seem on the side of the defendant instead of their own client. We have had some clients that their attorney has been changed in the middle of their case with no forewarning or explanation. We would love to see Legal Aid offer more consistency, communication and care and concern for our clients.
- Our experiences with Legal Aid of Arkansas has been great. They have served our community by providing free legal services for many years.
- We refer clients to Legal Aid on a regular basis because many of our clients are low income and need assistance with custody, protective orders, etc.
- Aside from what I mentioned above and not that it should rest entirely on Legal Aid of Arkansas to remedy my concerns, I think Legal Aid of Arkansas does and excellent job.
- Currently nothing is coming to mind.
- The experience has been great. Perhaps just more continued education and awareness and marketing around what Legal Aid can help with. Most of our clients are completely unaware and unsure.
- "We give your phone number out quite often, we have never had any problems with legal aid.
- We appreciate what you do to help these clients."
- I believe for the most part people have said good things about the services. The only complaint I can think of hearing is that people may not be answering their phone or their attorney did not show up to the hearing.

If you've had any experiences with Legal Aid of Arkansas, please explain below what we can do better to improve our advocacy efforts in your community

- During 2020, I referred a few clients over for Housing situations that stood to benefit from legal guidance. For a few clients, the window of time they were limited to call was a barrier. Others were able to talk to someone and then never heard back (lack of communication or closing the loop). Others had successful experiences. I personally have had some trouble over the last few years with the customer service on the application process while on the phone with clients. These client we refer have had a multitude of traumas and discrimination, the last thing they need is someone judging them or questioning them when they are calling for help in a serious legal matter. Trauma-Informed care is highly recommended!
- "I think Legal Aid of Arkansas is doing a great job!
- It might be helpful to put together a seminar on explaining the legal paperwork (POAs, wills, DNR, etc.) that people should consider or have in place and post it on your website and Facebook where everyone can see it."
- We refer victims of domestic violence to legal aid, I would say weekly, I know one victim that was accepted for legal advice but not representation. What is reported back to us by the people we refer is that they were told there has to be physical abuse in order to get legal aid services, there has to be physical child abuse to get custody services, they don't do custody, they would help the dad/abuser before they could help the mother/victim in a custody case and that the rules change everytime they call. Most of our clients say the first phone contact they have with legal aid is unfriendly and uninviting.
- Take on clients with a broader spectrum of needs, such as sealing records to provide people with housing and employment opportunities and advocating for sex offenders that need housing and employment
- You do a great job, but I'm sure you could use more support and funding.
- Stronger presence in the community- many we have referred are struggling with getting return phone calls with time sensitive issues causing panic in families and homelessness for many.
- We at the Northwest Arkansas Continuum of Care are proud to have Legal Aid of Arkansas as member organization and are grateful for this partnership. Legal Aid Attorneys actively participate in our weekly COVID-19 calls, sharing updates on a regular basis. Other Legal Aid of Arkansas Attorneys provide other member programs and community partners with timely and relevant information on laws, programs, procedures and quickly respond to all requests for services referred by the community.
- Have definitely had some negative experiences. 1. Attorney being rude and dismissive, 2. Not communicating with client, 3. Asking advocate to pay for court filings because he didn't have any money on him. 4. Attorney communicating with perpetrator rather than victim.

If you identified any of the items above, please provide any specific information you can, such as the location of the courthouse, name of the legal aid organization, government agency, the bar association, or the church, etc.

- Blaine Swain, who formerly worked with Legal Aid of Arkansas is a typical referral of mine. He is a great resource and is always a ton of help if he can be. I also like to refer to immigration if the situation needs it and other domestic violence resources if we cannot be of help.
- "There are several places that we refer our Outreach clients and our shelter clients to around the Batesville, Arkansas area for help that we can't provide. There are several attorney names that we know and refer them to if Legal Aid can't help - Fuller Bumpers, Randall Henley, Oscar Jones and Scott Stalker.
- We have sent some Outreach clients to some churches that have food pantries or serve meals, or can help with rent and utilities: St. Paul's Episcopal, First Methodist, First Baptist, and Fellowship Bible Church.
- We also refer them to Batesville Help & Hope for food and clothing, and to NADC for their Head Start and Early Head Start programs, utility and food commodities needs and their various other programs. We refer them to White River Medical or ArCare for health and counseling needs."
- Immigration Law
- VA, Faith in Action
- Social Security and DHS staff, VA and Vet Assist Program, Mental Health Providers, PACE, PASSE, all community resources for food pantries, health and dental.
- Lonoke County Courthouse, Prosecuting Attorney
- Dardanelle Courthouse, Danville Courthouse, Waldron Courthouse an Paris Courthouse.
- Legal Aid of Arkansas, HARK, UA Law School Legal Clinic
- Court clerk at the Boone Co Court House. Private Attorney in Harrison, AR
- We send multiple clients to Legal Aid of Arkansas. We've also referred then to Arkansas Immigration Defense, Catholic Charities for immigration issues, etc.
- Not sure
- I always refer them to our attorneys here at the office and if they are not able to help then the attorneys give them other resources.
- Mainly here in Craighead County. Have also referred to the Prosecuting Attny's office
- We contacted some private attorneys we either had a personal relationship with or attorneys we have worked with in the past. If there are other resources to refer clients to for free or low-cost services, could this information be compiled and sent out to local agencies?
- "Ozark Legal Services Pro Bono Project 4083 N. Shiloh Drive Suite 3 Fayetteville, AR 72703 Phone: (501) 442-0600, <https://www.legalhandle.com/pro-bono-attorneys-Arkansas.html>"

If you identified any of the items above, please provide any specific information you can, such as the location of the courthouse, name of the legal aid organization, government agency, the bar association, or the church, etc.

- Court clerk's office are not allowed to give information, they say you have to know how to file something on it own or have an attorney. Judges will not discuss an open case. We have refered to catholic charities for immigration before but they don't have services in our area for victims anymore. They used to help with Vawa's but nkw that service is only offered in northwest arkansas. Nwapp has been helpful by answering legal questions
- Legal Aid at the center for nonprofits in rogers
- Newport Legal Aid, White River Women's Shelter, County Library, City Hall, local private attorneys, two of these are members of St. Paul's Church.
- We recommend all local churches, SHare and Care, House of Hope, Mercy Mall, Housing Authority, DHS, VA, Rape crisis, mental health facilities, DV shelters, Facebook groups associated with providing assistance
- Adult Protective Services, Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Shelter, Prosecutors

Private Attorney Survey

Have you ever encountered a low-income client with an issue you didn't feel you like had adequate expertise to address? If so, what was it?

- SS disability
- Bankruptcy
- Med mal
- Tax problems and unemployment law
- Social Security
- probate and estate planning; contested child custody, divorce
- The probate case from hell.
- Immigration issues
- Bankruptcy, or other more complicated issues that are not in my practice area. Some housing issues like who can qualify for COVID evictions stay, I think it's better they speak with an attorney with more knowledge on such things
- Medical malpractice
- Trust issues
- Social Security, unemployment payments
- Family law issues; how do I get my kids back; workers comp issue
- Bankruptcy
- "Immigration
- Income Tax
- Alleged Medicaid Fraud"
- From time to time, people will come to me for assistance in areas outside of my practice (family law). This is not common, but when it does happen, it tends to be criminal, landlord-tenant, and breach of contract.
- Housing
- Cases involving housing because our firm represents several landlords and rental property owners.
- Landlord Tenant. Landlord did not follow proper process to evict and stole the person's possessions while they were in jail for a weekend.
- Out of state issues, discrimination matters, etc...
- Bankruptcy
- Orders of protection
- I don't personally handle criminal matters
- Divorce & Child Custody
- 70 yo cancer patient who could not get help for in home services bc she was not poor enough for medicaid
- Student loan fraud
- Veterans benefits issues/processes

Based on your experience/observation, do you think the legal aid organizations in Arkansas adequately represent and serve their clients?

If no, please give an example

- I rarely see Legal Aid attorneys in court (pre-COVID).
- "1. Clients report to me frustration with not having phone calls returned for weeks or months to even do an intake with legal aid.
- 2. Clients who were being sued by an insurance company bring the pleadings filed by legal aid which were honestly legally VERY INADEQUATE and harmed the client.
- 3. Lack of efficiency -- again, unable to control the 'front door' for intakes and dispensing advice to clients."
- The answer is obvious. Far more people require help the Legal Aid can help. Also too much time is wasted on protection orders. I know those grants help but the system is designed for people to handle them alone
- there just aren't enough resources to go around
- I feel too many folks do not qualify. I am sure it is a lack of funding.
- Office closed in Mtn View 2012. Not enough staff or resources. Many folks saying they applied Anderson only received a letter
- "Do not take divorce cases
- Take very few referrals"
- When Legal Aid offers counsel-of-record services in cases in which I am opposing counsel, the quality of representation tends to be good. However, because Legal Aid considers people to whom it sends advice letters to be "clients," I cannot say that those people are getting anything close to good assistance.
- I understand that much of our work is to help make systemic change, but when poor people in Arkansas need a divorce and can not get one through Legal Aid it hurts them. There is no one else for them to turn to but if they can get a divorce their life and their children's life would improve. I know historically we started out doing a majority of family law cases. Those people still need out help
- Too many low income persons, not enough attorneys or resources
- Cases that appear to have poor results
- They write advice letters in cases where the individual needs more help than advice
- Legal aid attorneys have no actual life experience dealing with poor individuals and families. How could one gain such experience in a liberally sheltered life/career with generally no experience in privately compensated employment (which requires one to actually serve their community - *if you don't do a good job, you do not get paid*)? One must often exhibit tough love to help certain individual's problems. In my experience, legal aid attorneys always represent people whom they know nothing about and therefore such legal aid attorneys will believe any sad story they hear.
- I do not have enough information to form this conclusion.
- There is not enough help in my area for anything. People don't think LA is in Phillips County anymore, or that we give them excuses not to help so they give up.

Based on your experience/observation, do you think the legal aid organizations in Arkansas adequately represent and serve their clients?

If yes, please give an example:

- Veterans Workshops are vital
- The work that they do with domestic violence victims.
- I have witnessed excellent work on systemic issues such as Medicaid, housing, and domestic violence.
- quality of practice resources provided to participating pro bono attorneys
- LAA Attorneys have extensive expertise in certain areas, such as landlord-tenant issues. If LAA cannot staff the client, the client is referred to a pro bono attorney. The legal forms available for pro se matters are very helpful. Plus, LAA offers low/no cost CLE for private attorneys so we can better assist clients/
- The self-help forms are particularly useful and I wish there were even more of them. The fact sheets are also very useful for people. I have a disability client facing eviction who called me and sending him the fact sheet I feel will help him understand the advice I gave over the phone.
- I think some clients use Legal Aid in evictions as a way to extend their stay without paying rent. It puts Legal Aid in a precarious position ethically, but I believe the attorneys I have dealt with have professionally handled the situation.
- The service provided is greatly needed and utilized
- best they can given \$ constraints. need more funding.
- As far as I know, just not sure there are adequate attorneys for the number of clients?
- From my view, you are helping a LOT of clients and do a good job of it.
- I have never had anyone complain about their representation by Legal Aid.
- LAA has made great strides in insuring the citizens of Arkansas receive the state benefits and resources to which they are entitled thru important work in Federal court
- They represent victims of domestic violence very well
- I wish they could help more! But many families are served in some pretty dire situations, such as divorce.
- Legal Aid attorneys do a good job representing clients in divorce matters, obtaining orders of protections and landlord/tenant issues.
- The website helps a huge number of people.
- When engaged, I have always found legal aid attorneys to provide excellent advice and counsel to clients. The major problem is that Legal Aid lacks resources to meet the needs of the many low-income people who cannot afford private counsel

Based on your experience with Legal Aid of Arkansas, what are some things we could improve or possible gaps we are currently not addressing?

- "There should be more Legal Aid attorneys handling orders of protection.
- There should be more divorces sent pro bono through Legal Aid. There are two attorneys in our office in the panel, yet neither of us have a case.
- Legal Aid should put on more clinics."
- Explaining how all legal aid organizations and the commission and the websites work together
- "I do not even know where to start.
- Maybe have an attorney assigned to do Intakes only. Have that attorney ready to speak to people immediately. Times are changed. This waiting around endlessly is terrible.
- Have a policy that all calls are returned within 24 hours."
- You just need more people.
- Nothing in the areas in which I practice.
- In my experience I have seen people who were sued for money who had a valid defense but couldn't get legal aid to help or couldn't afford an attorney. Once a judgement is finalized in ruins credit (if they had any) garnishments can be devastating to a low income family. Collection agencies leave a lot to be desired. Statute of limitations has run in cases; a collection agent says pay half and we will forgive the rest and sue, bad service or no service. I think if each office set aside 2 hours a month then every person who applies for legal aid can come in a group and have a 5-10 minute discussion about the situation to see if a defense exists. Having these 30 days apart would hopefully ensure no one has a default judgement entered against them.
- I don't have any suggestions.
- IT SEEMS THAT THE ONLY CASES THEY ARE INVOLVED IN ARE EVICTIONS AND CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENTS THEY SHOULD TAKE ON MORE DOMESTIC CASES
- Could improve on screening where some clients have enough income or assets to pay private lawyers.
- some people are poor but not physically abused, and it seems the only cases legal aid takes involve domestic battery allegations
- regular email communication on available cases as was done in the past
- More CLE classes on poverty law issues
- The main issue is insufficient staff to meet the legal needs of its target demographic.
- I'm not sure what is not being addressed. I believe the Legal Aid attorneys in our area do a fine job given the lack of contact by many of the clients.
- See above
- more funding/ more/better compensated attorneys/
- "I think you're
- Doing the best you can with the resources you have. I worked for legal aid for
- Over 26 years"
- I don't know enough about your policies and procedures to be able to answer that.
- I would like to see LAA obtain grants to assist our criminal specialty court participants with civil legal issues

Based on your experience with Legal Aid of Arkansas, what are some things we could improve or possible gaps we are currently not addressing?

- Legal Aid from my experience won't take custody cases unless there is domestic abuse. Paternity cases often involve low income single parents who need help desperately to obtain orders so there won't be domestic issues
- "Take traffic cases & argue unconstitutionality of jailing defendants for debt
- Constitution makes the poor a protected class
- Employment laws are routinely violated in NWA because the poor have no advocates. Written medical excuses for illness or appointments or funerals do not stop a write up for absence.
- Workers who sustain WCC injuries are often advised to use health insurance rather than WCC benefits.
- Injured workers are routinely fired."
- Legal Aid was quite unwise to disband the Modest Means Panel and lift the fee caps that it had been providing to low-income people. This resulted in many low-income people facing brutal market rates, and I regularly talk to low-income people who are struggling as a result. Until Legal Aid puts fee caps back in place, low-income people will not get the relief that they need.
- See my last comment
- Get the law school clinics more involved in representation
- I find that clients are not screened well and the initial action they are referred for is often not adequate for their needs. Occasionally jurisdictional issues pop up, such as UCCJEA and child custody.
- More staff in remote areas. More emphasis on practical help in individual cases. Realization that disadvantaged people are not computer literate, except maybe on social media.
- Legal Aid is a liberal organization and therefore will continue to act in a liberal manner (complete lack of understanding of the root causes of certain social problems and, therefore, and inability to deal with the "effect"). Therefore, I expect nothing to change regardless of whether certain truths are discussed. Legal Aid is a serious enabler of bad behavior in society.
- Marketing. Prior to this survey email, I was not aware of the resources provided by Legal Aid of Arkansas.
- Almost all of my requests for pro bono cases from Legal Aid are for women. My impression is that Legal Aid does not help as many men in divorce and custody issues.
- I think everyone needs a family lawyer. We would be best served by a type of socialization of legal services paid for by tax dollars.
- More legal help, not just advice.
- There are abundant constitutional concerns with various laws primarily affecting people with low incomes. The problems need legislative attention, but short of that rule changes and coordination with the courts can diminish constitutional concerns. For eviction cases, if the courts would require their review of procedural posture prior to ordering the issuance of a writ of possession (this is not uniform from county to county but required by some judges) it would ensure the matter is, at least, ripe for provisional remedy. Short of that, the courts might recognize the due process rights of tenants and with the cooperation of a willing organization (hint hint) appoint an attorney to ensure due process, in the absence of an appearance by another attorney.
- Paternity cases in association with juvenile court

Judge/Justice Survey

What is your experience with Legal Aid attorneys in and outside the courtroom?

- As a Judge, mainly domestic relations and landlord/tenant actions.
- Expungements and occasionally civil actions on behalf defendants
- Very helpful
- I preside over a criminal, domestic, and probate docket and regularly have Legal Aid attorneys in my court. They are prepared, take instruction well, and are extremely competent.
- Cases in court.
- no experience outside. inside, i find legal aid attorneys prepared able.
- Mostly in order of protection cases on domestic relations chambers day.
- my experience with Legal Aid has always been postive.
- Positive
- "As an attorney,My experience has been good. I served on the legal services board out of Newport in the 1990s I believe.
- As a district judge for the past 16 years I have very little contact with clients of legal Aid.
- Victims in domestic batterries and violations of orders of protection need the assistance of Legal aid service."
- It has always been good. For the past year I have been on Zoom, so I have not had contact in a while.
- Excellent. I have always been tremendously impressed with Legal Aid attorneys in the courtroom.
- None
- My experience is mostly with OPs and divorce actions. The legal aid attorneys are prepared, professional and do a great job.
- Positive. Attorneys frequently have little prior contact or poor communications with clients. Usually a Client issue.
- None.
- Positive.
- Legal Aid attorneys are knowledgeable and punctual.
- Occasionally saw them in circuit representing someone on an order of protection.
- I've just taken the bench and so far have had no experience with Legal Aid attorneys in my courtroom. Prior to taking the bench, I offered services through Legal Aid and occasionally Legal Aid attornes served as opposing counsel.

Do you witness any new civil legal issues arising from the pandemic?

- On the domestic relations side, with the modifications of AO 4 and the need for a verbatim record, self represented litigants need assistance in preparing divorces via deposition or affidavit.
- No
- Not at this time.
- I do not hear civil cases.
- Not other than CDC moratorium on evictions.
- no
- No.
- not at this time
- No
- Yes.
- I am now in District Court, so I have not seen anything new yet.
- The CDC Moratorium on evictions has been very impactful.
- Not that have been expressed
- Nothing unusual
- Eviction Moratorium
- LL/Tenant
- Delay in civil jury trials results in fewer dispositions whether by trial, settlement or motion. Also the moratorium preventing evictions and unlawful detainers cause delays.
- Issues impacting poverty
- No.
- Some issues are more frequent -- guardianships. I've come across several families where someone has died because of COVID. Care and custody of the children becomes an issue. I work in juvenile court and there have been several families where the educational progress of children has been impaired because of the death of family members. People have NO money so issues of trying to meet basic needs of the family have become more serious.

What kinds of cases other than domestic relations do you have with Legal Aid attorneys?

- Landlord/tenant
- See above
- Guardianships.
- Probate, mostly guardianship.
- Probate and civil.
- none
- I have not.
- I helped with some bankruptcy issues in the past
- Unlawful Detainer
- It would be helpful if legal services had more involvement in domestic batteries in violation of the orders of protection.
- Domestic violence
- Mainly domestic. I think I have had one civil case with a Legal Aid attorney.
- None. I do all the OOP's, though.
- Pretty much exclusively domestic relations.
- Unlawful Detainers, Orders Protection
- None.
- Unlawful detainers and evictions.
- I have only had DR w/ Legal Aid attorneys thus far.
- None.
- na

What civil legal needs are you witnessing in the low-income community? List at least three in order of frequency:

- "The need for assistance in compliance with AO4
- Breach of contract/eviction
- CDC mandate compliance"
- Landlord tenant public defender does great job on criminal issue (2) expungements (3) repossessions vehicles
- I am not seeing any new issues in the Domestic Relations and Probate aspects of the law and those are the only cases I hear at this time.
- n/a
- "Divorce
- Guardianships
- Tenant"
- unlawful detainer, eviction,
- bankruptcy issues, custody and child support
- Problems with pro se litigants understanding (1) AO 10, (2) properly filling out divorce complaints and other paperwork.
- "Domestic battery and violations of orders of protection.
- Evictions."

What civil legal needs are you witnessing in the low-income community? List at least three in order of frequency: continued

- "Access to information
- Adequate availability
- Transportation to offices"
- "Expungement
- Divorce
- Guardianship"
- Counsel in divorce cases; the others are handled by private counsel or public defender
- "Prison divorces
- Contract disputes
- Employment issues"
- Divorce, order protection, guardianship
- LL/T
- Car repossessions, orders of protection. Evictions.
- Divorce, Child Support, Domestic violence
- "Expungements
- Getting Driver's licenses reinstated
- Landlord/Tenant"
- "1. Paternity - especially in juvenile cases, getting paternity established and then child support.
- 2. Health insurance coverage -- application for and accessing medicaid
- 3. Divorce"

Keeping in mind Legal Aid's resource limitations, what are some things we could improve or gaps we are not addressing?

- Assisting with AO 4 requirements
- See above
- More lawyers, more time devoted to low income litigants. Same story, new verse....
- see #5
- "more help with debt litigation or collection
- I believe the creditor has a big advantage and more than pushes the line"
- You could prepare all of the divorce paperwork and limit the scope of your representation to that so that at least the pleadings would be correct. In conjunction with this, you could remove the "form" complain from all internet outlets because they are wrong more often than they are right
- A greater present by legal services On social media or assist the impoverished in contacting legal services.
- Rural areas need more attention.
- No gaps, just more funding to provide the much needed counsel for domestic relations litigants. The online forms are a WONDERFUL resource.

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- Rural areas need more attention.
- No gaps, just more funding to provide the much needed counsel for domestic relations litigants. The online forms are a WONDERFUL resource.
- Prison divorces
- Clint's are confused about limited scope representation
- Car repossessions. People got to get to work.
- I would like to see more domestic relations clients accepted to reduce the number of self-represented litigants. Self-represented litigants have a distinct disadvantage.
- An office in Osceola District because they cannot afford travel.
- I would really like Legal Aids assistance in dealing with paternity issues in juvenile court cases. In almost every case we have some issue with paternity and sorting that out can often delay permanency for the children and limit the options available for family placement

Education Survey

What do you think are the top three most pressing problems or issues facing low income students and their families in your school?

- Poverty and Economic Barriers
- housing and food
- Internet connection, Transportation, Food
- "Positive parenting models
- positive parent support
- access to mental health care for the entire family"
- Consistent internet access at home. Working families who have little ability to assist with student academic success at home.
- "job security
- food insecurities
- custody"
- Food security, housing, and transportation.
- Access to food and transportation
- Jobs , childcare (especially when students go virtual), uninvolved parent(s) - grandparents raising children
- Exposure to what is available to them, lack o motivation
- "Internet access
- Access to other items that are necessity for daily life
- Support from a stable home"
- "1. Basic necessities at home. water, electricity, heat
- 2. drug/alcohol abuse
- 3. neglect"
- Hunger or lack of school supplies, lower access to preventative healthcare, and higher likelihood of being exposed to violence.
- Adequate food supply, social media influence, career goals beyond high school
- "Access to affordable housing
- Access to public transportation
- Access to good paying wages"
- "Consistent, affordable housing
- Food security
- Access to wifi to access educational services"
- housing, jobs, family stability
- Financial stability, mental health, and homelessness or being doubled up with other families.
- "1. Understanding how to access virtual learning.
- 2. Food/housing insecurity
- 3. Mental health/drug use"

What do you think are the top three most pressing problems or issues facing low income students and their families in your school?

- good housing, enough to eat, keeping the lights and heat on
- "Substance abuse by family members.
- Poor Housing.
- Parents not employed."
- transient housing, dependable transportation, access to jobs
- "1. Lack of access to employment for our families. and lack of exposure to world activities.
- 2. Lack of motivation and knowing the importance of an education
- 3. Lack of parent support both at home and at school."
- Resources - legal, health (mental, physical - resources for addiction treatment, aid for utilities
- Transportation, no jobs in the area, Clothing
- "1. Lack of higher education of student(relatives)
- 2. Understanding the benefits and importance of education
- 3. Wavering desire of students to attend school consistently
- 4. Misplaced value systems of material wealth versus educational and moral wealth"
- Inadequate housing, drug use and Many times, family members take these young children on to raise and do not have documentation or legal papers needed to fill in as guardians.
- "Paying bills/steady income
- Drugs/alcohol
- Transportation"
- Custody issues, behavioral/mental health, attendance, parental drug abuse

When it comes to the well-being of your community, what do you consider the number one problem being faced by your students and their families?

- Poverty and Economic Barriers
- unemployment
- Transportation/Food
- Generational poverty and the family cycle of dysfunction it creates
- Consistent internet access at home. Lack of parental involvement with students academic success.
- Covid
- Lack of nutritious food
- The pandemic has displaced people, created job shortages, caused loss of friends and family members, and restricted access to services like food assistance and counseling.
- Lack spiritual guidance
- Lack of exposure to all of the things available to them. There is very little interest to go further in life. Many are content with where they are.
- The connection between success and academics and possessing all of the things necessary to achieve those goals.
- Neglect of children due to alcohol/drug abuse by not providing basic necessities.
- Lower access to preventative healthcare
- stable finances
- Affordable housing
- Housing and financial stability.
- Accessing virtual learning consistently and successfully along with increasing mental health issues.
- lack of trust in others
- Substance abuse.
- poverty
- At the moment we have many grandparetns who are raising their grand schildren due to lifestyles of the parents. Drugs are very prevalent in our community.
- Addiction
- No jobs in the area
- Cycles of single parent households where children born to a teenage parent who is uneducated.
- drugs and violence and also apathy
- Steady/sufficient Income
- Poverty

Do you witness a problem facing your community/students that you consider to be largely unmet?

- If we get the people from the Mississippi chicken plants that are shutting down, then our schools will be overcrowded and short of teachers.
- "Access to public services; extremely rural area
- Nearest town is 30 miles away."
- Students see the unhealthy dysfunction of their parents and continue the cycle. I feel that positive mentors would be beneficial, individuals who spend time with them and show them other ways to live.
- Students do not understand internet safety or what it means to use their technology responsibly.
- value on education
- Services for those who are homeless, while it has improved lately, still continues to be difficult to find.
- Transportation concerns, no access to public transportation, limited bus availability
- Church attendance
- Student homelessness
- Yes, mostly social/emotional support beyond the school building.
- Drugs/ alcohol
- Yes
- single parent homes and very young fathers and mothers
- Resources are there to meet the needs. I feel the community/students are not accessing them for whatever reasons that I am unaware.
- see all of the above
- Substance abuse.
- jobs
- Yes, I feel like many of our students have serious attendance issues and no one seems to care or do anything about this issue. Also our students who are virtual learners are not completing assignments and seem to not even be attempting.
- n/a
- Latch key children and/or children being reared by technology(i.e. misuse of cell phones, social media, explicit websites, etc.)
- Parents of these young students not motivated to work, smoking alot of weed and living off the government
- Yes, we have many teens who do not have a permanent stable home
- LGBTQ rights

If you've had any experiences with Legal Aid of Arkansas, please explain below what we can do better to improve our advocacy efforts in your community

- I am thankful you reached out with this information.
- I haven't had any and don't feel that I have the know how of the system to refer a parent. I would reach out to my school social worker first.
- no experiences
- I would love more education on services and client qualifications. Many times families will tell us that Legal Aid has turned them down. It would be helpful to know what qualifies one for legal aid services so we can determine if that referral is the correct one to make.
- N/A
- Had a problem getting someone to answer the phone.
- no experience
- Letting schools know what is available so that schools can better get help to those families who may need legal assistance
- Currently, students who are unaccompanied youth (receive McKinny-Vinto services) can have access to medical treatment and food without the requirement of parental permission; however, they cannot get any legal help unless they have parental consent or have turned 18. This leaves unaccompanied youths vulnerable to being denied proper disability benefits as well as other benefits that they are unable to receive,
- More advertisement of legal services available to juveniles.
- n/a
- I found it difficult to get through on the number I had for the local Lega Aid. It seems that there needs to be trained staff equipped to answer calls, take questions and direct clients in the proper direction.
- Our local office at that time was backed up and I don't believe were able to help the family. It has been awile
- N/A
- Legal aide was utilized by my counseling clients and their families when disability rights were an issue

APPENDIX

ORG. SURVEYED

SURVEY QUESTIONS

TEXT ANSWERS

PRIVACY STATEMENT

SOCIAL MEDIA

Privacy Statement

Client Survey

Your participation in the study represents a meaningful contribution to our future strategic decisions. This survey does not involve any sales or fundraising. Your input is extremely valuable as we plan for future community outreach initiatives! Your open, honest feedback is extremely valuable and much appreciated! The survey will take an estimated 5-10 minutes to complete. The collection, use, disclosure, and processing of your personal data will be confidential. Legal Aid of Arkansas will only contact you if you choose to provide your email address and you have won the giveaway drawing.

Community Survey

Here at Legal Aid, we are so grateful for the work you do in your community. As we develop our plans for how to better engage the community and provide equal access to justice, we want to involve our fellow community partners to discover more about your community. Your participation in the study represents a meaningful contribution to our future strategic decisions. This survey does not involve any sales or fundraising. It should take approximately 5-7 minutes and your answers are anonymous and confidential.

Private Attorney Survey:

Here at Legal Aid, we are so grateful for the work you do in your community. As we develop our plans for how to better engage the community and provide equal access to justice, we want to involve our fellow legal partners to discover more about your community. Your participation in the study represents a meaningful contribution to our future strategic decisions. This survey does not involve any sales or fundraising. It should take approximately 5-7 minutes and your answers are anonymous and confidential.

Judges/Justices Survey

Here at Legal Aid, we are so grateful for the work you do in your district to help achieve justice across the state of Arkansas. As we develop our plans for how to better engage the community and provide equal access to justice, we want to involve our judges and justices to acquire insights into what you are witnessing daily. Your participation in the study represents a meaningful contribution to our future strategic decisions. This survey does not involve any sales or fundraising. It should take approximately 5-7 minutes and your answers are anonymous and confidential.

Social Media Promotion



Legal Aid Needs Assessment Survey!



TAKE SURVEY

Scan the QR code or click the [link](#) to take the survey!



Take the survey for your chance to win \$100, \$75, \$50, and \$25 gift cards!



By taking this survey, you will **HELP** Legal Aid of Arkansas better understand the needs of our community members to expand access to equal justice efforts!

The mission of Legal Aid of Arkansas is to champion equal justice for low-income individuals and communities and to remedy the conditions that burden and marginalize them.

**LEGAL AID** of ARKANSAS
Equal Access to Justice
Fighting Poverty, Maintaining Dignity, Assuring Justice