

# INTRODUCTION

This report provides results from the General Division of the Common Pleas Court's Access and Fairness Public Survey that was conducted from July 20, 2015 to August 17, 2015.

Many assume that "winning" and "losing" is what matters most to citizens when dealing with the courts. Yet research consistently shows public trust and confidence is shaped more by a person's perceptions of how they are treated in court, and whether the court makes decisions fairly. This measure provides a tool for surveying court users including attorneys and parties to litigation.

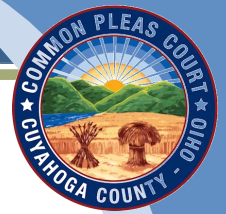
Using the survey instrument designed by the NCSC (National Center for State Courts), the project team, over the course of several weeks, surveyed people exiting the courthouse on the condition they had completed their business with the court that day.

A total of 651 individuals responded to the survey. However, on any given question, a number of people did not respond. This information is presented at the top of each section of the survey. Each person surveyed had experience with the court and its services. Court users were asked to respond to a series of questions relating to access to justice and the fairness of the judicial process. Responses were made using a five-level Likert scale. The responses went from (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree or Disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree, (N/A) Not Applicable. The survey also included questions relating to the background and demographics of the respondents. No information was requested that allowed the court to identify the respondent (e.g. name, case number, etc.); thus, responses could not influence the outcome of a respondent's legal matter and confidentiality is preserved.

Please note that the data below does include some respondents' experiences with other Divisions of the Common Pleas Court (i.e. Domestic Relations, Juvenile and Probate Courts) and with the Cleveland Municipal Court. In total, from the 525 individuals who responded to question 5 in Section III, 199 responses were from individuals who came to court for reasons other than a case in the General Division of the Common Pleas Court. An effort was made to minimize the collection of data from individuals appearing in other courts other than Adult Probation or Common Pleas Court, but in some instances that was not possible. It is valid to say that if survey respondents had a bad experience in another court, it could have negatively impacted the numbers for the other questions in the survey.

The report highlights the data collected which will be used to examine the Court's continued efforts to ensure equal access and quality services to the public. If resources are available, this report will be updated on an annual basis.





# OVERVIEW OF ACCESS AND FAIRNESS SURVEY

## CUYAHOGA COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT

### DEFINITION

Ratings of court users on the court’s accessibility and its treatment of customers in terms of fairness, equality, and respect

### PURPOSE

Many assume that “winning” or “losing” is what matters most to citizens when dealing with the courts.

However, research consistently shows that positive perceptions of court experience are shaped more by court users’ perceptions of how they are treated in court, and whether the court’s process of making decisions seems fair.

This measure provides a tool for surveying all court users about their experience in the courthouse. Comparison of results by location, division, type of customer, and across courts can inform court management practices.

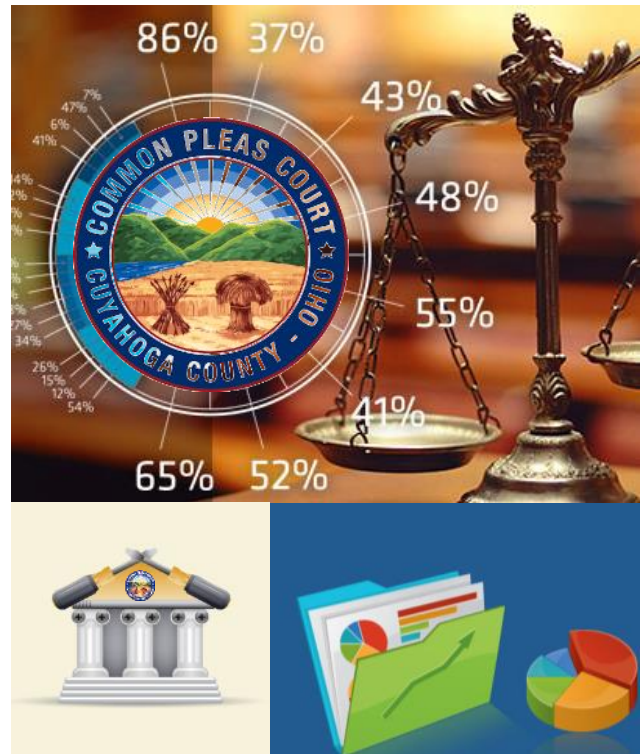
Designed to demonstrate the quality of service delivery, these survey results foster consensus on what the court should strive to achieve and the success in meeting objectives in a world of limited resources.

### SURVEY DATA [7/20/2015 — 8/17/2015]

The following data was gathered by a survey of visitors of the court. Included in this survey are visitors of the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court and Adult Probation.

Ten questions were asked to visitors about court access. The responses went from (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Agree or (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree, (N/A) Not Applicable.

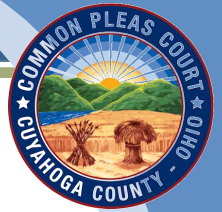
(\*The Cleveland Municipal Court data is not included in this report.)



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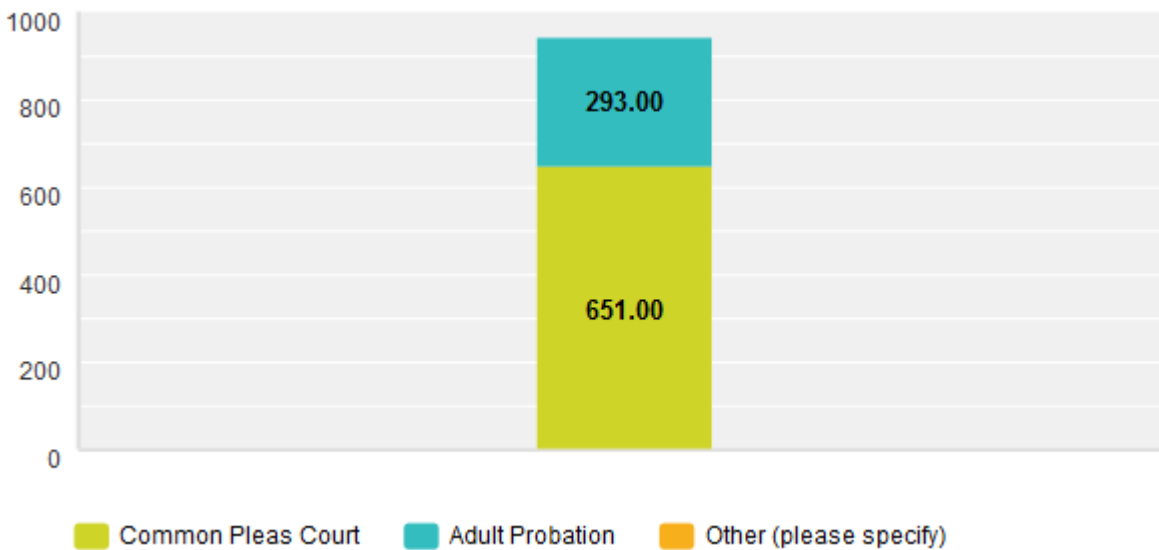
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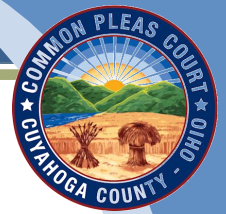
## SECTION I: ACCESS TO THE COURT

### Q1 | Which Courts or Agencies did you visit today?

Answered: 939 | Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Common Pleas Court	69.3% 651
Adult Probation	31.2% 293
Other (please specify)	0.0% 0
Total Respondents: 939	



## SECTION I: ACCESS TO THE COURT

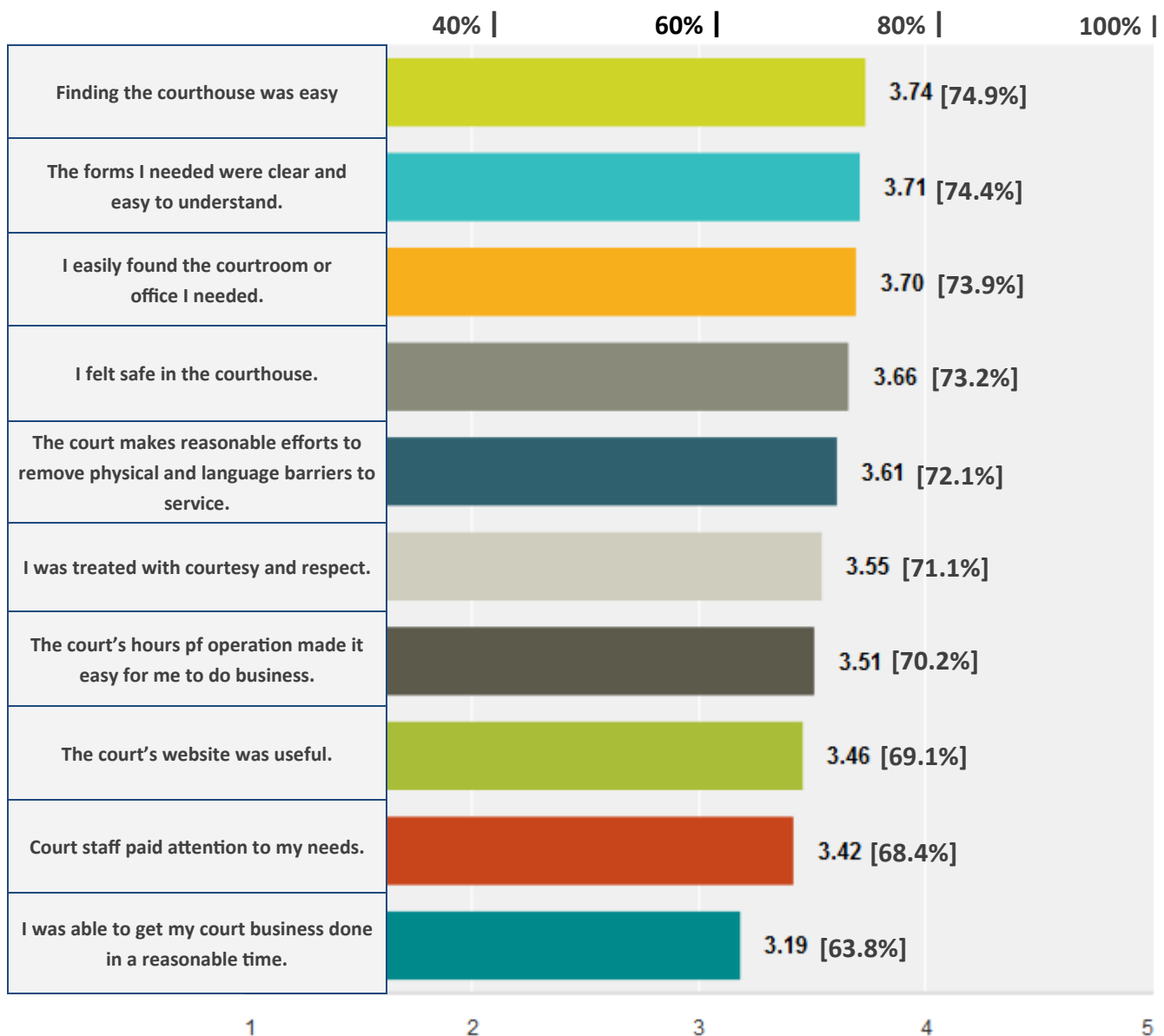
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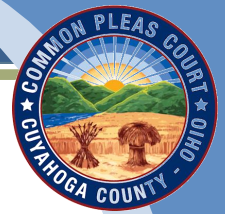
(\*Note: The Cleveland Municipal Court data is not included in this report.)

### Q2 | About Court Access

Answered: 939 | Skipped: 0



The specific data of this bar chart can be found on the next page of this report.



## SECTION I: ACCESS TO THE COURT

Statement Concerning Access to the Court	Avg. Score %	Number of Responses	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Finding the courthouse was easy	74.9	939	12.57% 118	6.28% 59	4.69% 44	44.20% 415	29.93% 281	2.34% 22
The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.	74.4	935	7.17% 67	11.34% 106	7.49% 70	44.92% 420	23.85% 223	5.24% 49
I easily found the courtroom or office I needed	73.9	935	8.34% 78	11.87% 111	7.38% 69	44.81% 419	26.20% 245	1.39% 13
I felt safe in the courthouse	73.2	925	12.00% 111	7.14% 66	8.76% 81	45.62% 422	25.51% 236	0.97% 9
The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service	72.1	934	7.39% 69	11.24% 105	12.42% 116	44.97% 420	19.49% 182	4.50% 42
I was treated with courtesy and respect.	71.1	934	11.99% 112	10.06% 94	8.78% 82	47.11% 440	20.77% 194	1.28% 12
The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do business.	70.2	935	9.41% 88	14.65% 137	10.05% 94	44.81% 419	19.47% 182	1.60% 15
The Court's website was useful	69.1	684	8.98% 84	8.88% 83	8.45% 79	33.48% 313	13.37% 125	26.84% 251
Court staff paid attention to my needs.	68.4	915	11.37% 106	15.13% 141	9.66% 90	44.85% 418	17.17% 160	1.82% 17
I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable time	63.8	936	18.59% 174	13.89% 130	9.62% 90	42.09% 394	13.78% 129	2.03% 19
<b>Overall Access to Justice Score</b>	<b>71.6</b>							

### 100-Point Scale Method for Presenting Survey Results:

Employing a 100-point scale to present survey results is useful particularly for displaying the results within the familiar and intuitive 100-point scale.

In order to convert the survey results for each survey statement to a 100-point scale, the following calculations are made: the number of persons who responded to the statement is multiplied by the 100-point scores corresponding to the Likert scale responses made by those persons (e.g., the number of persons responding with an “Agree” response is multiplied by 80, the number of persons responding with a “Disagree” response is multiplied by 40, and so on); then the sum of the converted 100-point scores for each statement is divided by the total number of persons responding to the statement.

Result scores greater than 80 on this scale indicate the court is “doing a good job.” Result scores over 70, but under 80 indicate the court is “doing okay.” Result scores under 70 indicate the court “needs improvement.”

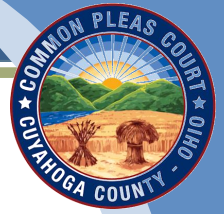
**100-Point Scale Conversion**

*Overall Scale*

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
20	40	60	80	100

100 point scale makes it easier to interpret results

- > 80     Doing a good job
- > 70 < 80     Doing OK
- < 70     Needs improvement



## SECTION I: ACCESS TO THE COURT

### Analyzing Survey Results

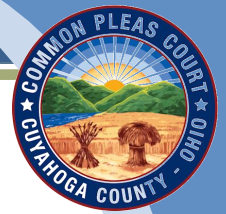
Table 2 below lists access to justice survey response scores from highest to lowest. These scores will act as a benchmark for additional surveys and help the court to focus on the areas most in need.

**Table 2. Measure 1 Ranking of Access to Justice**

Access to Justice Statements, Ranking of Court User Responses

Highest Scores to Lowest Scores

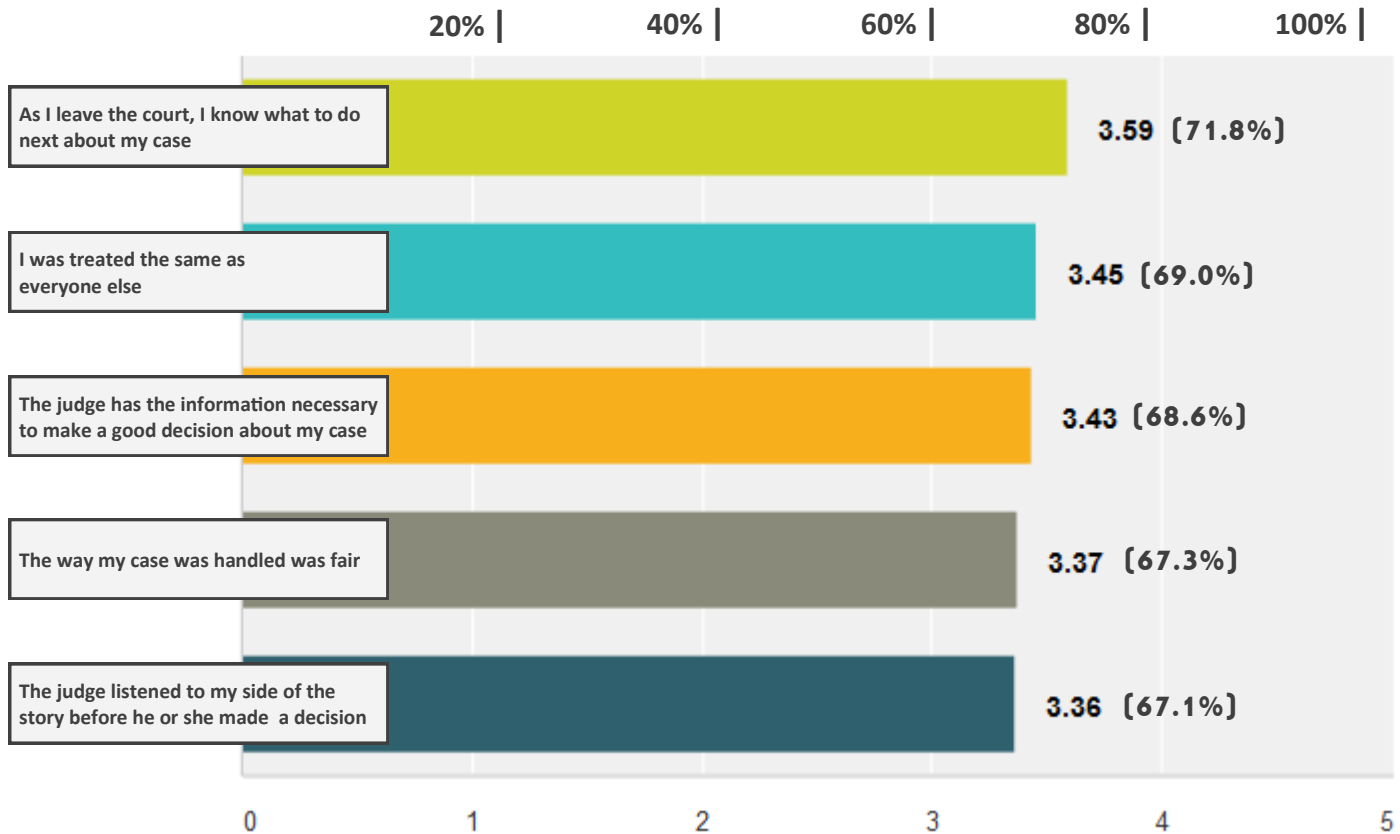
Survey Statement	Score
Finding the courthouse was easy.	74.9%
The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.	74.4%
I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.	73.9%
I felt safe in the courthouse.	73.2%
The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.	72.1%
I was treated with courtesy and respect.	71.1%
The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do business.	70.2%
The Court's website was useful.	69.1%
Court staff paid attention to my needs.	68.4%
I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable time.	63.8%
<b>Average Overall Access to Justice Score</b>	<b>71.6%</b>



## SECTION II: FAIRNESS

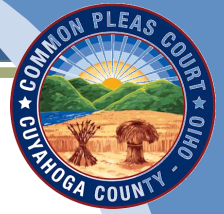
### Q3 | Court Fairness

Answered: 924 | Skipped: 15



Court Fairness	Avg. %	Resp. #	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case	71.8	667	5.90% 54	8.73% 80	10.04% 92	32.64% 299	15.50% 142	27.18% 249
I was treated the same as everyone else	69.0	694	8.24% 76	9.87% 91	11.82% 109	30.59% 282	14.75% 136	24.73% 228
The judge has the information necessary to make good decisions about my case	68.5	665	8.03% 74	9.98% 92	10.95% 101	29.50% 272	13.67% 126	27.87% 257
The way my case was handled was fair	67.3	663	8.79% 81	11.93% 110	9.11% 84	28.31% 261	13.77% 127	28.09% 259
The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision	67.1	666	8.88% 82	11.81% 109	9.10% 84	29.47% 272	12.89% 119	27.84% 257
<b>Average Percent of Court Fairness</b>	<b>68.7</b>							





## SECTION II: FAIRNESS

### Analyzing Survey Results

Table 3 below lists fairness survey responses and scores from highest to lowest. These scores will act as a benchmark for future surveys and help the court to focus on the areas most in need.

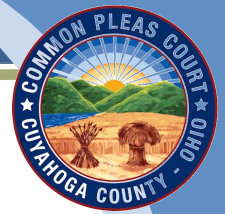
**Table 3. Measure 1 Ranking of Fairness Scores**

Fairness Statements Ranking of Court User Responses

Highest Scores to Lowest Scores

Survey Statement	Score
As I leave the court, I know what to do next about my case	71.8%
I was treated the same as everyone else	69.0%
The judge has the information necessary to make good decisions about my case	68.6%
The way my case was handled was fair	67.3%
The judge listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision	67.1%
Average Overall Access to Justice Score	68.7%

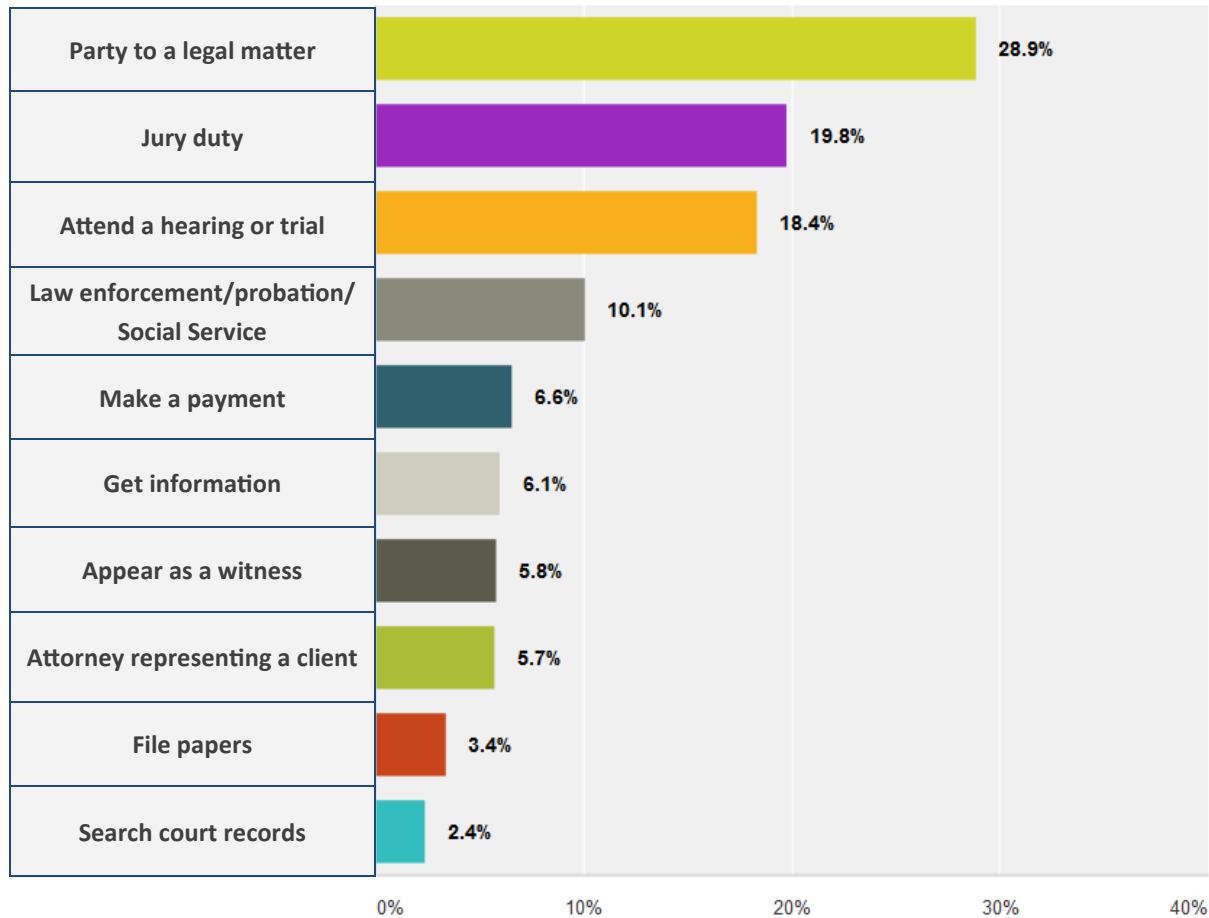




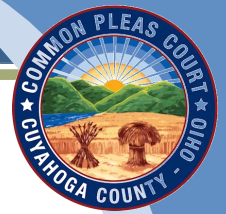
## SECTION III: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Q4 | What did you do at the court today?

Answered: 909 | Skipped: 30



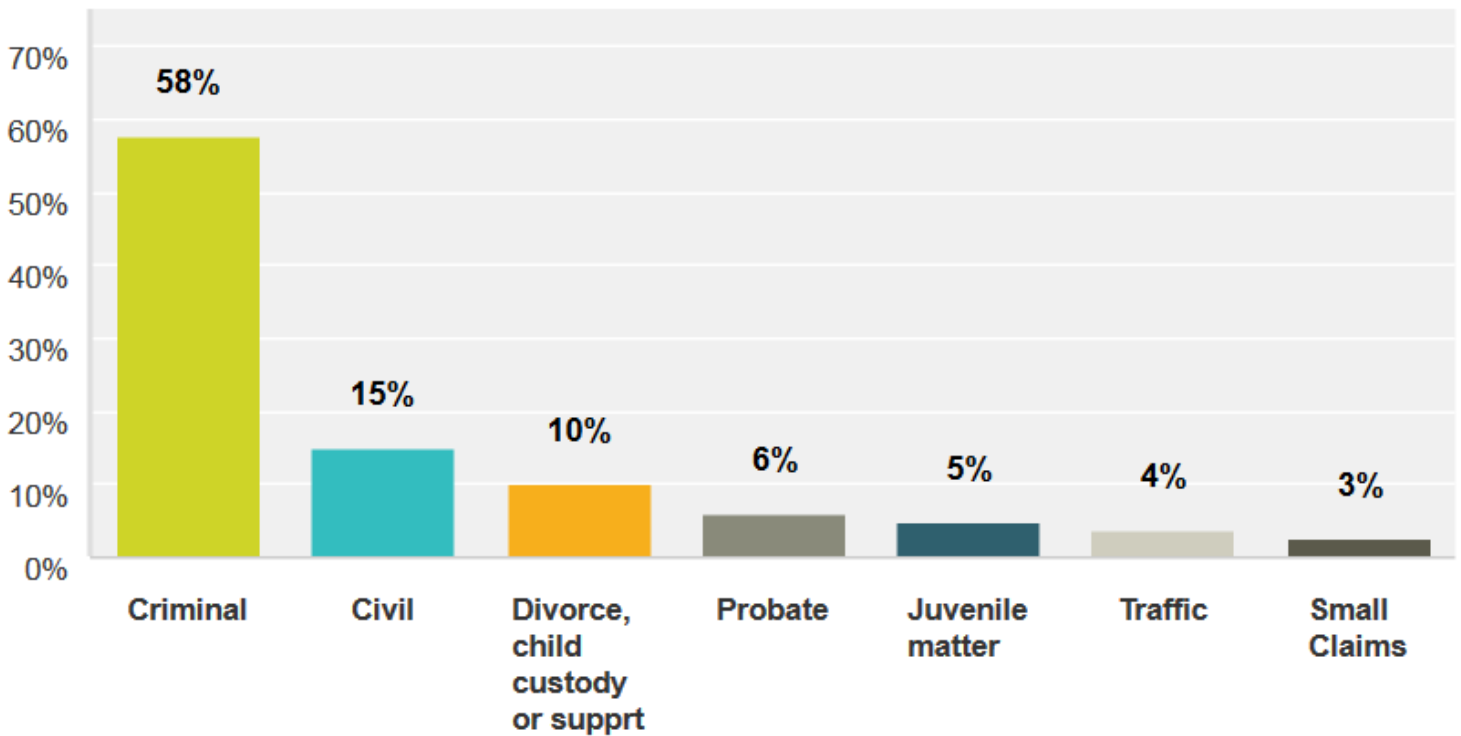
Answer Choices	Responses
Party to a legal matter	28.9% 263
Jury duty	19.8% 180
Attend a hearing or trial	18.4% 167
Law enforcement/probation/social services staff	10.1% 92
Make a payment	6.6% 60
Get information	6.1% 55
Appear as a witness	5.8% 53
Attorney representing a client	5.7% 52
File papers	3.4% 31
Search court records/obtain documents	2.4% 22
Total Respondents: 909	



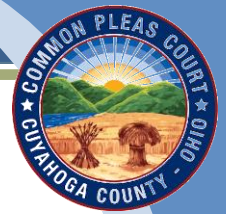
## SECTION III: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Q5 | What type of case brought you to the court today?

Answered: 797 | Skipped: 142



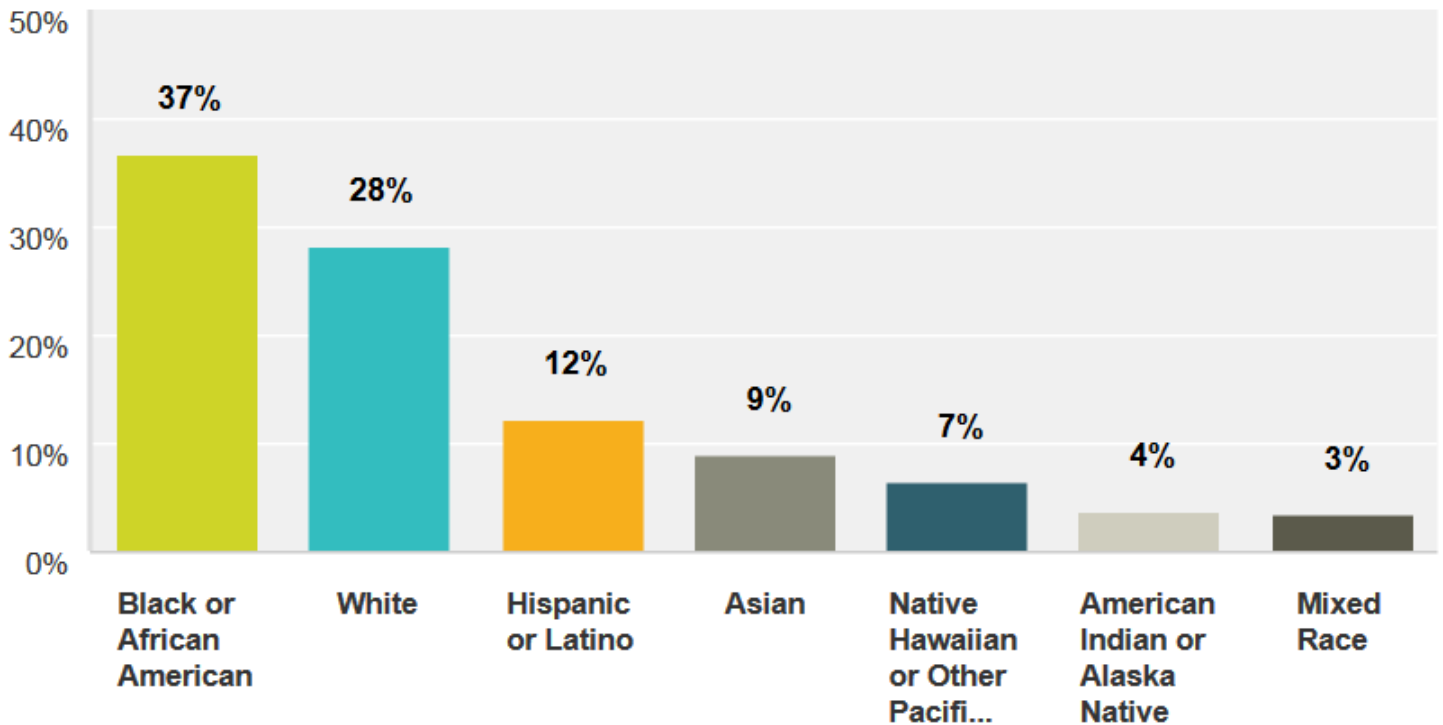
Answer Choices	Responses
Criminal	58% 461
Civil	15% 119
Divorce, child custody or support	10% 80
Probate	6% 48
Juvenile matter	5% 38
Traffic	4% 30
Small Claims	3% 21
Total	797



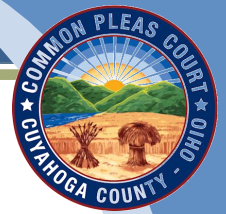
## SECTION III: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Q6 | How do you identify yourself?

Answered: 906 | Skipped: 33



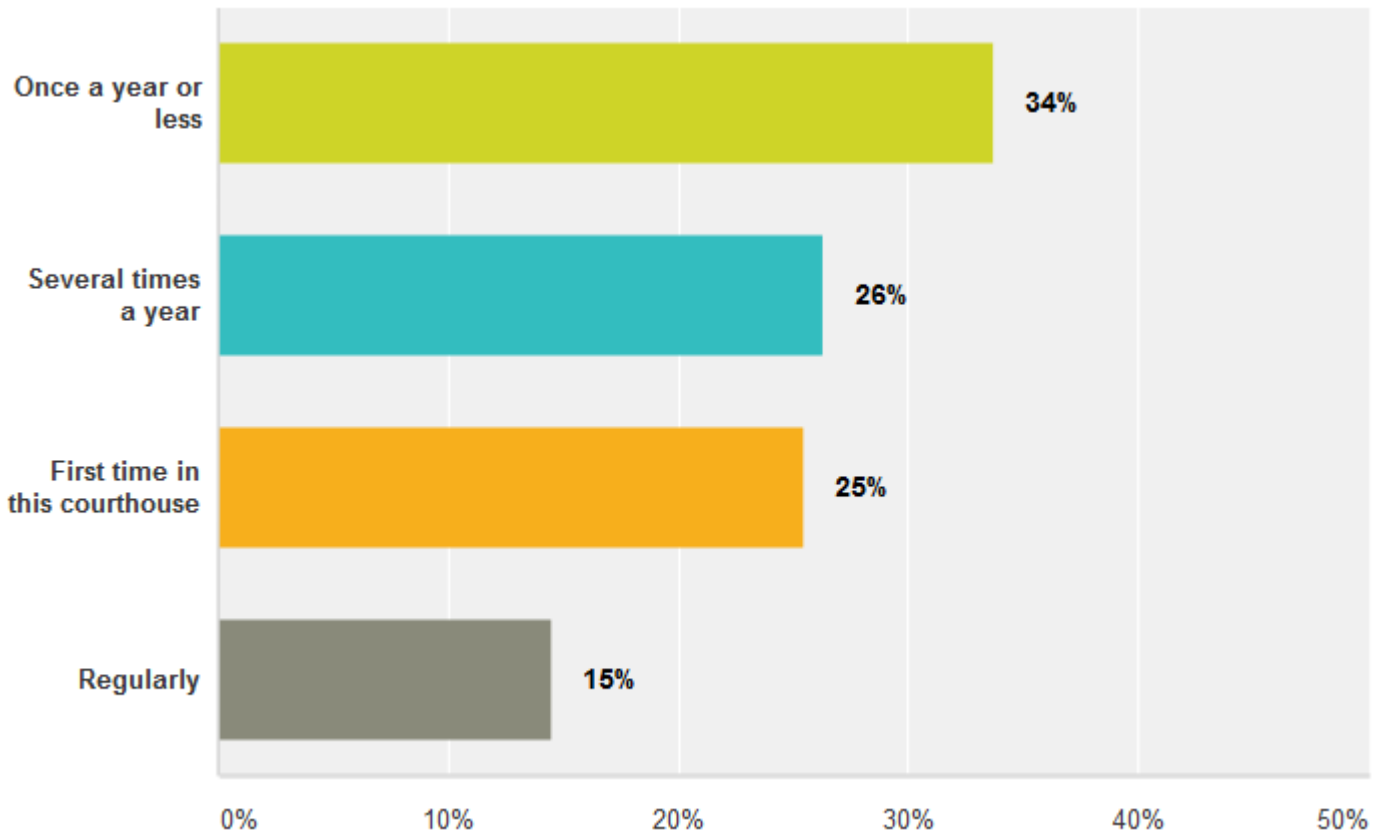
Answer Choices	Responses
Black or African American	37% 332
White	28% 257
Hispanic or Latino	12% 110
Asian	9% 82
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	7% 59
American Indian or Alaska Native	4% 35
Mixed Race	3% 31
<b>Total</b>	<b>906</b>



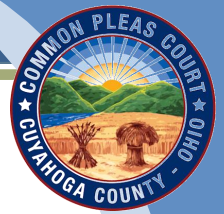
## SECTION III: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Q7 | How often are you typically in this courthouse?

(Choose closest estimate) Answered: 908 | Skipped: 31



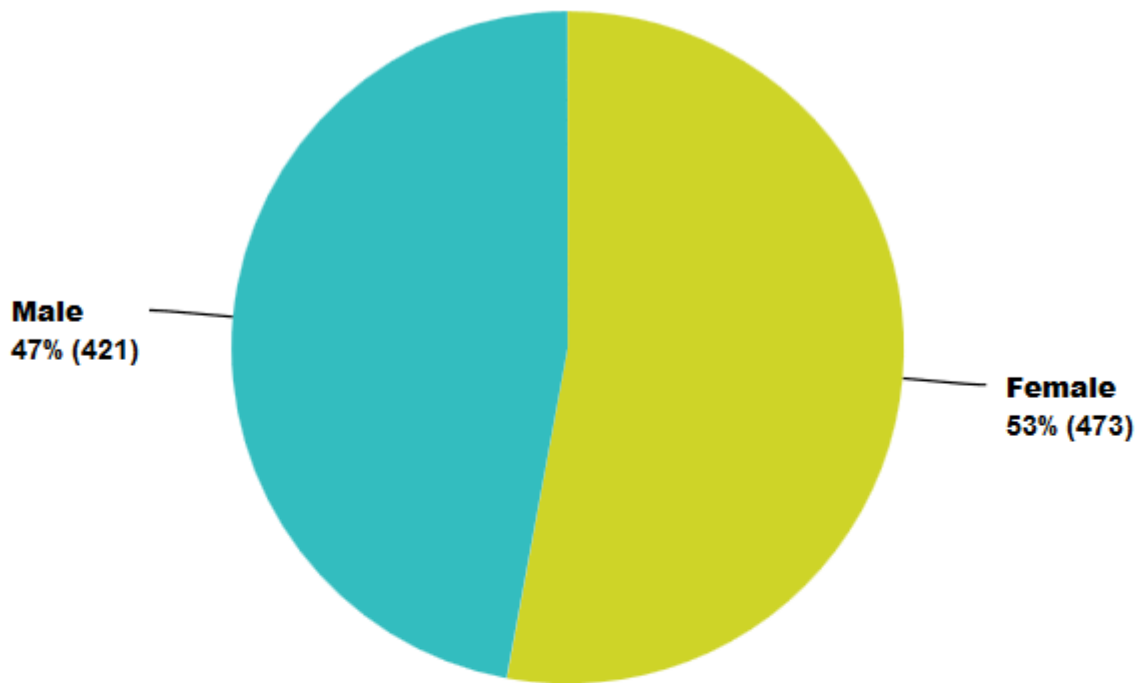
Answer Choices	Responses
Once a year or less	34% 306
Several times a year	26% 239
First time in this courthouse	25% 231
Regularly	15% 132
Total	908



## SECTION III: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Q8 | What is your gender?

Answered: 894 | Skipped: 45



Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	53%	473
Male	47%	421
Total		894



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