



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN



**CREATE Justice**

Centre for Research, Evaluation,  
and Action Towards Equal Justice

Access to Legal Services - Dispute Resolution - Systemic Justice

# Saskatchewan Access to Legal Information Data Collection Pilot Project 1.0 Report

**March 2018**

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## Introduction

This is a report of CREATE Justice, a centre for research, evaluation, and action on the topic of access to justice, specifically, in the areas of access to legal services, dispute resolution, and systemic justice. CREATE Justice was established at the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan during 2016 in response to both national calls to action and a local recommendation by participants at the 2015 meeting of the Dean's Forum on Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice (the Dean's Forum).

The objective of the Saskatchewan Access to Legal Information Project (the SALI Project) is to increase access to legal information for Saskatchewan residents. This project has emerged in the context of the Dean's Forum on Access to Justice and Dispute Resolution. In its deliberations, the forum identified access to legal information as one of the critical components of access to justice.

This survey was designed as a pilot project to collect information about requests for legal information from Saskatchewan public libraries, as well as library demographic information for the purpose of improving access to legal information for the public.

## Methodology

Two surveys were programmed on the Voxco online survey platform. One survey collected information about requests for legal information and the other survey collected library demographic information. Entries to the legal requests survey reported on requests from April 25, 2017 to September 5, 2017. Twenty-five libraries submitted entries. It should be noted that data collection was reported to be impacted by personnel changes in the middle of the collection period. It should also be noted that Saskatoon-area library branches were collapsed into one category, as only a portion provided their branch name.

In total, 27 libraries or branches completed the 7-item demographic survey. Questions related to hours of operation, hours worked by library staff, population of area served, number of in-person visits, and print collection size. It should be noted that libraries that completed the demographic survey did *not* correspond to those who completed the requests for legal information forms. Demographic surveys were completed from April 25, 2017 to August 31, 2017.

The Library Demographics Survey and the Access to Legal Information Survey are presented in Appendix A and B, respectively. Information about the Social Science Research Laboratories, University of Saskatchewan, is located in Appendix C.

## Findings – Library Demographics

The participating libraries were spread across Saskatchewan. The population of the area served by the libraries ranged between 100 and 11,000, with an average population size of approximately 1,400. In-person visits per day for the libraries ranged from 1 person to 75 people, with an average of approximately 19 in-person visits per day. The print collection size of the libraries ranged from 0 to 17,500, with an average collection size of between 5,000 and 6,000. The libraries' weekly hours of operation ranged from approximately 8 to 56 hours. The average hours of operation of the participating libraries was approximately 18 hours per week. The approximate hours worked by staff participating in the surveys ranged from zero to approximately 56 hours per week, with an average of approximately 15 hours per week. The hours worked by staff tended to be the same or slightly less than the hours of operation of the libraries.

## Findings – Requests for Legal Information

In total, 46 requests for legal information were reported from 25 libraries. All requests were addressed in 30 minutes or less, with almost half (45.7%;  $n = 21$ ) the requests being addressed in 5 minutes or less. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of requests for 1-5 minute, 6-15 minute, and 16-30 minute intervals.

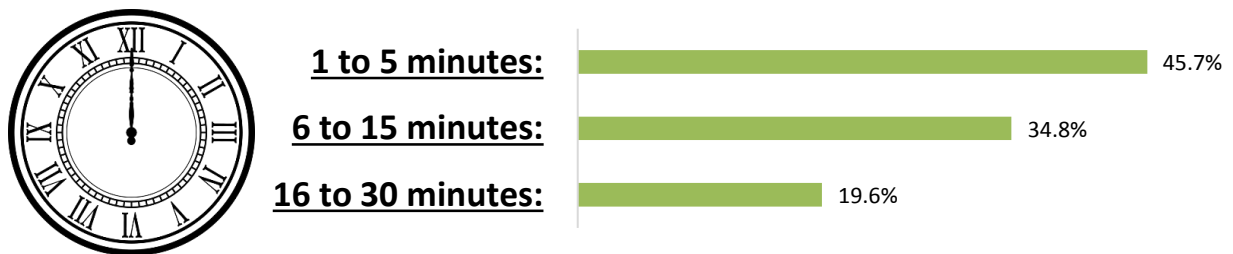


Figure 1 – Time spent on requests for legal information (by percentage).

Librarians were also asked about what legal information topics they spoke about with the library patron. The most common area was family law-related topics (19.6%;  $n = 9$ ), followed by criminal and tax law topics (15.2%;  $n = 7$ ). The full breakdown of requests by topic area can be found in Figure 2. The results suggest that there is a wide range of legal information topics for which librarians receive requests. Although not represented in the figure, 8 (17.4%) requests were categorized as “other”. These included directions to legal support services, passport issues, and transfer ownership.

### Legal Information Topics

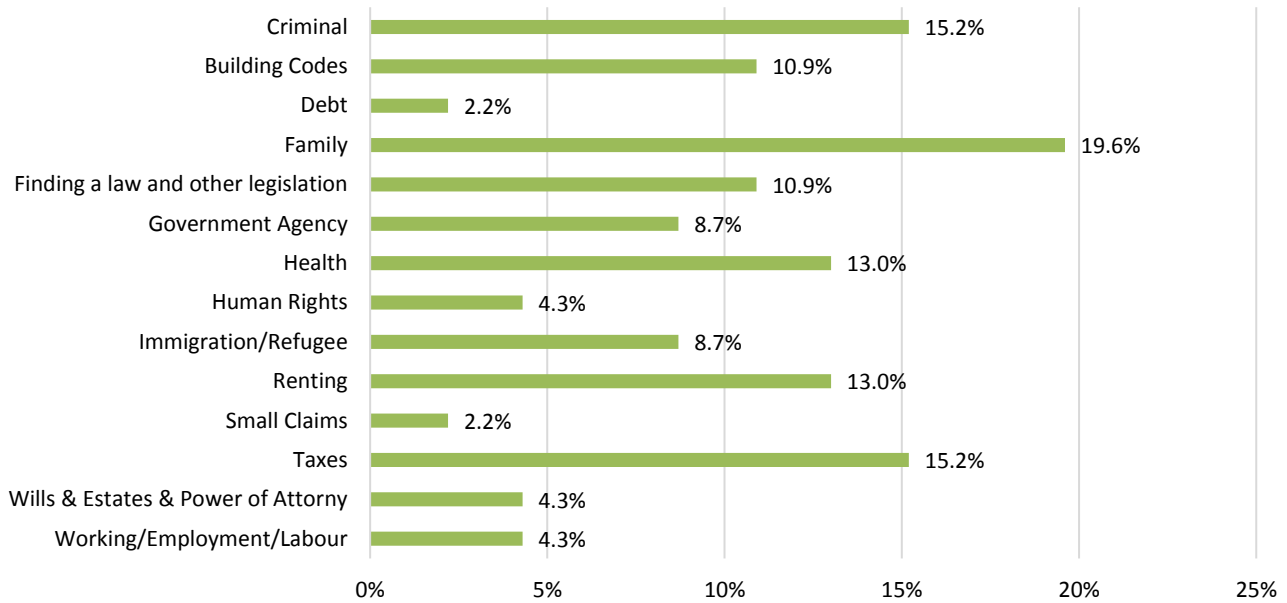


Figure 2 – Topics of legal information requests (by percentage).

Respondents ( $n = 9$ ) who indicated that they received requests for family legal information were asked a follow-up question to clarify the type of family information the library patrons were pursuing. Figure 3 provides a graphical depiction of these results. Most of the patrons (77.8%;  $n = 7$ ) were interested in child custody and support information. One request each (11.1%) was related to divorce information, resources (i.e., therapy, training), and age requirements for children to be left unsupervised at the library (categorized as “other”).

### Family Legal Information

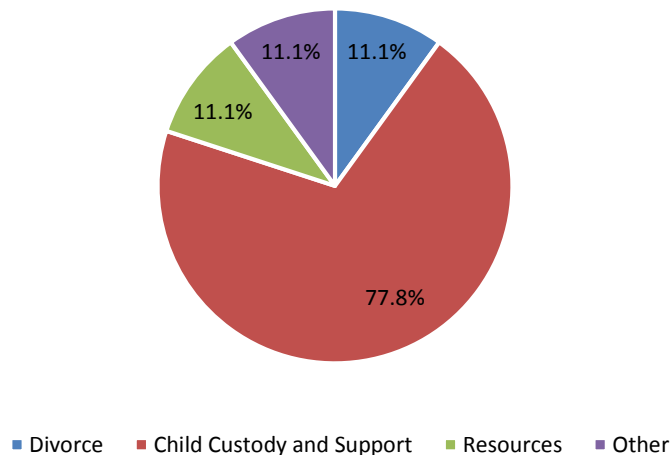


Figure 3 – Topics of family legal information requests (by percentage).

The librarians were asked whether they provided the library patron with a referral(s) and, if they did, what type of referral(s) it was. More than two-thirds of the requests (67.4%;  $n = 31$ ) resulted in at least one referral. Figure 4 provides a detailed breakdown of what referrals were made. The most common referral was to government agencies (19.6%;  $n = 9$ ) and the Public Legal Education Association (PLEA - 15.2%;  $n = 7$ ). Seven requests (15.2%) were categorized as “other”, and these tended to include referrals to online resources such as the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) website, a website to do taxes, and websites mentioned in the PLEA pamphlet. Two librarians also mentioned they referred them to a book in the library.

Librarians who indicated that they provided the library patron with a referral to “another library” or the “Public Legal Education Association” were asked follow-up questions. If they made a referral to “another library”, they were asked to what type of library they made a referral. Options included “college/university library”, “another public library”, or “courthouse library/law society library”. Of the four referrals that were made to another library, two were made to a college/university library, and one each to another public library and to a courthouse library/law society library. See Figure 5 for a visual depiction of these referrals.

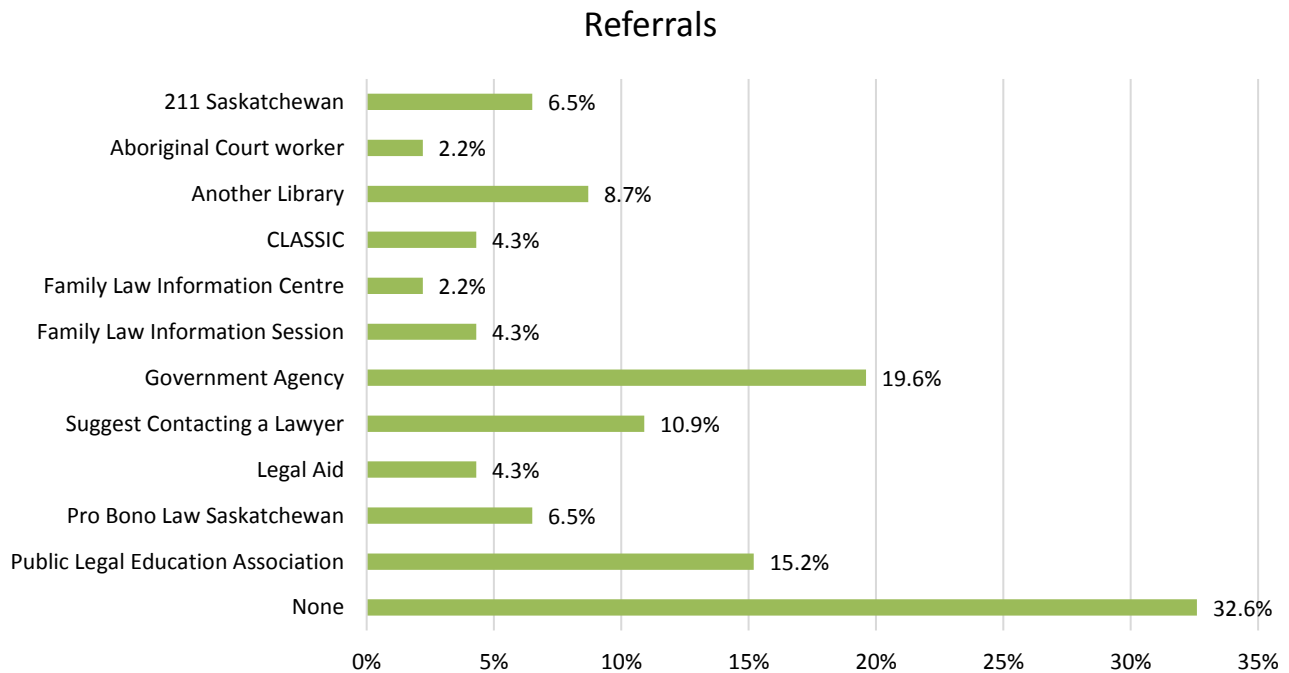
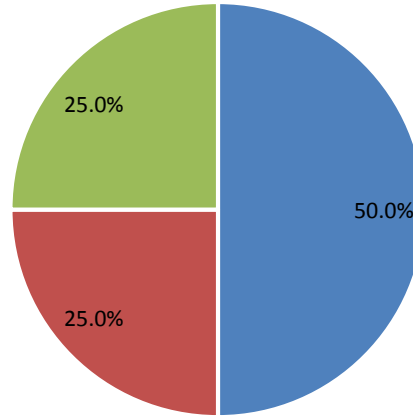


Figure 4 – Referrals for legal information (by percentage).

### Library Referrals

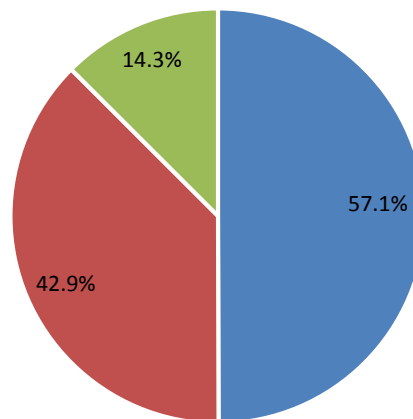


■ College/University Library ■ Another Public Library ■ Courthouse Library/Law Society Library

Figure 5 – Referrals to other libraries (by percentage).

Librarians who referred patrons to the Public Legal Education Association were asked what type of PLEA resource they provided. Of the seven referrals that were made to PLEA, four patrons were provided with a print resource, 3 were directed to the PLEA website, and one was given PLEA’s telephone number.

### PLEA Referrals



■ Print Resource ■ Website ■ Phone Number

Figure 6 – Types of PLEA resources provided to library patrons (by percentage).

## Conclusions

In total, 27 libraries across Saskatchewan completed a library demographic survey and 25 libraries completed forms outlining their requests for legal information. Most of the libraries were from small areas, serving an average population of 1,400. The average collection size was between 5,000 and 6,000 and they were open for an average of 18 hours per week.

In regards to requests for legal information, 46 requests were documented from 25 different libraries. Most requests were quick to complete, with almost half the requests being completed in 5 minutes or less. Almost one-fifth of the requests related to family issues, with two-thirds of these requests relating specifically to child custody and support. Aside from family law-related requests, criminal, taxes, health and renting-related requests were also common.

Approximately two-thirds of the requests resulted in a referral. The most common referrals were to government agencies (almost 20%) and to the Public Legal Education Association (15%). More than half of the librarians who made referrals to PLEA provided a print resource, suggesting the importance of the provision of immediate, tangible information; however, the PLEA website address was also commonly provided.



## Appendix A – Library Demographics Survey

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1. Library name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Library location: \_\_\_\_\_
3. The total approximate number of hours of operation of Library over 3-month time-span:  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The total approximate number of hours worked by library staff participating in pilot survey over 3-month time-span:  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. The approximate population of centre/surrounding area served by the Library:  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. The approximate number of in-person visits per day:  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Print collection size: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B – Access to Legal Information Survey

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1. Library: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Library Staff Name: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Date of Request: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Time spent on request:
  - 1 to 5 minutes
  - 6 to 15 minutes
  - 16 to 30 minutes
  - 31 to 45 minutes
  - 46 to 60 minutes
  - 61 minutes or longer
5. What was the legal information topic you spoke about with the library patron? (select all that apply)
  - Criminal
  - Consumer
  - Building Codes
  - Debt
  - Family
  - Finding a law and other legislation
  - Going to court
  - Government agency
  - Health
  - Human rights
  - Immigration/refugee
  - Real estate
  - Renting (landlord/tenant)
  - Small claims
  - Taxes
  - Wills & Estates & Power of Attorney
  - Working/Employment/Labour
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
6. What type of family information did you speak about with the library patron (select all that apply)
  - Pre-nuptial agreements
  - Divorce
  - Child Custody and Support



- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

7. What type of library did you provide a referral for? (select all that apply)

- College/University Library
- Another Public Library
- Courthouse Library/Law Society Library

8. What type of Public Legal Education Association resource did you provide a referral for? (select all that apply)

- Print resource
- Website
- Phone number

9. Notes:

## Appendix C – About the Social Sciences Research Laboratories

Founded in 2011, the Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL) represents a major investment in social science research infrastructure and research supports at the University of Saskatchewan, and across Canada. Comprised of eight complementary and interrelated research laboratories (*Community-Based Observation Laboratory; Experimental Decision Laboratory; EEG Hyperscanning Laboratory; Qualitative Research Laboratory; Spatial Analysis For Innovation in Health Research Laboratory; Survey and Group Analysis Laboratory; Social Network Laboratory; and Video Therapy Analysis Laboratory*), the SSRL has three objectives:

1. To provide researchers access to shared research infrastructure and technical and administrative support.
2. To enable hands-on research training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students in the social sciences.
3. To enable and support investigator-driven and community-engaged research.

Uniquely developed as a ‘public utility,’ the SSRL provides access to specialized research infrastructure (computers, equipment and software) and research space (specific and multi-purpose research space that facilitates mixed-methods research). Additionally, the SSRL provides access to research supports in the form of methodologists/specialists (SSRL operations staff) with backgrounds and training in specific social science research methodologies (e.g., quantitative/survey research; qualitative research; experimental research; mapping, GIS and spatial analyses). The SSRL and its component laboratories are available on a fee-for-service model to faculty, staff and students at the University of Saskatchewan, other academic institutions, and community partners outside of the university setting.

As a unit, the SSRL benefits from what is described as a ‘collective capacity,’ i.e., shared infrastructure, shared space and shared operational and administrative support provided across seven diverse, yet related research laboratories. The benefits of this collective capacity are substantial, allowing for shared theoretical and methodological explorations through mixed-methods research; facilitating community-engaged scholarship with individuals and organizations outside of the University of Saskatchewan; and providing student opportunities for experiential learning through practical, hands-on research and employment opportunities.

For more information, visit our webpage: [ssrl.usask.ca](http://ssrl.usask.ca)

Email: [ssrl@usask.ca](mailto:ssrl@usask.ca)

Phone: 306-966-8409

**Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL)**

Room 260 Arts Building 9 Campus Drive

College of Arts & Science University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon SK Canada S7N 5A5

P: 306.966.8409 F: 306.966.8819

Email: [ssrl@usask.ca](mailto:ssrl@usask.ca)Web: <http://ssrl.usask.ca>