



Public Perceptions of the Saskatchewan Justice System and its Accessibility to Saskatchewan Residents

CREATE Justice Omnibus Survey Questions Report

May 2019

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Introduction

The CREATE Justice Omnibus Survey report presents the findings on the perceptions, opinions, and experiences from Saskatchewan residents on questions related to the Saskatchewan legal system, including access to justice, the availability of legal assistance, and one's own preferred supports when facing legal issues.

Methodology

Data were collected through the Social Sciences Research Laboratories Omnibus Survey, which is a telephone survey administered quarterly to a random and representative sample of 400 Saskatchewan residents. The SSRL omnibus survey provides representative data that can be generalized to the Saskatchewan population at a margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$ at the 95% confidence interval. Four iterations of the Omnibus Survey, including June, 2018; September, 2018; December, 2018; and March, 2019, featured questions for this report. Accordingly, the findings of each question are presented in separate sub-sections in the Findings section. As the findings of this report span four iterations of the Omnibus Survey, it should be noted that each sub-section comprises different respondents from the other sub-sections.

For each Omnibus Survey, telephone numbers from Saskatchewan were purchased from a third party vendor, ASDE Survey Sampler. Both landlines and mobile telephone numbers were purchased. In accordance with the 2016 Communications Monitoring Report (<https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/policymonitoring/2016/cmr2.htm>), 25.8% of the sample were mobile telephone numbers to match the estimate of mobile-only households in Saskatchewan. The survey was programmed in Sensus 6.0 and uploaded into WinCATI 6.0 for interviewing.

Further Information about the Social Sciences Research Laboratories, University of Saskatchewan, is located in Appendix A.

Findings

1) Saskatchewan Residents' Perceptions on Equal and Fair Access to Justice

In the June 2018 Omnibus Survey, residents of Saskatchewan were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "*all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the Saskatchewan justice system no matter their race, citizenship status, language, gender, class, geographic location, sexual orientation, religion, etc.*" The findings are presented in Figure 1.

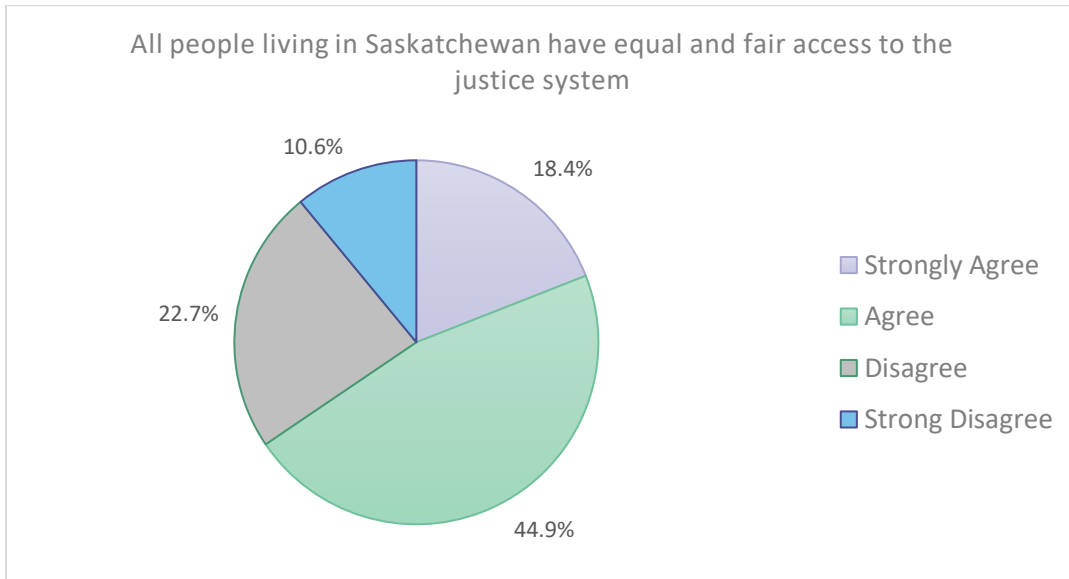


Figure 1 – All people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair justice system (general findings)

Overall, this study found that the majority of respondents agreed that all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the Saskatchewan justice system no matter their specific demographic information (44.9%; $n = 180$). In addition, 18.4% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement. On the other hand, 33.3% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that all people living in Saskatchewan have fair and equal access to justice. Of the respondents, 11 indicated that they didn't know, and 2 respondents refused to answer this question.

Comparative analyses were further conducted to compare differences between gender, age, level of education, and income.

Perceptions on Fair and Equal Access to Justice by Gender

When the question on equal and fair access to justice was compared by gender, we found that male respondents were significantly more likely to agree that all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the Saskatchewan justice system regardless of their demographic profile, as 76% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, while 57.8% of female respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 42.2% of female respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This difference was found to be statistically significant.

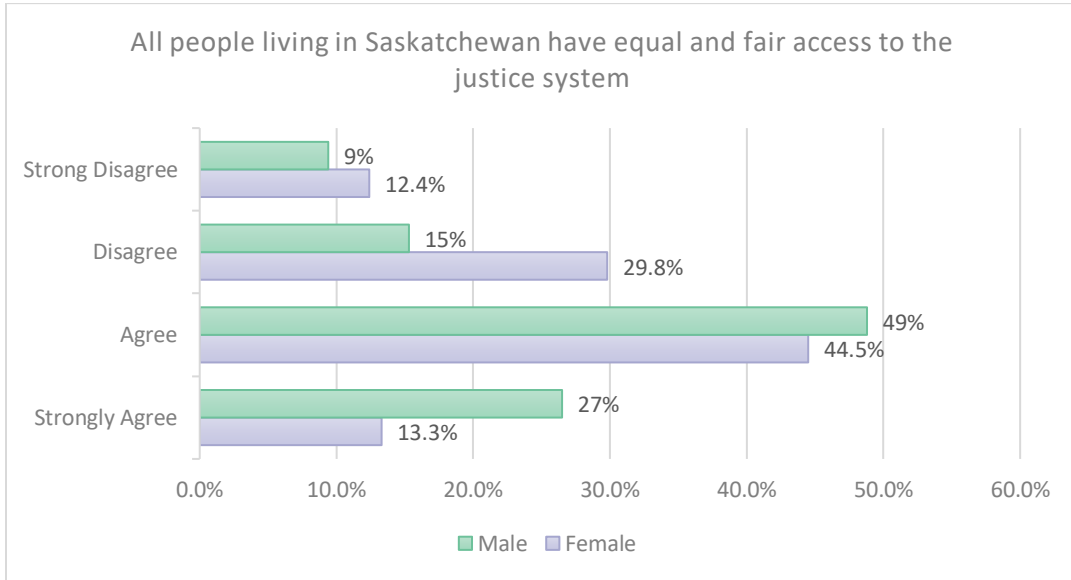


Figure 2 - All people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair justice system (by gender)

Perceptions on Fair and Equal Access to Justice by Age Categories

When the perceptions of equal and fair access to justice was compared by age, we found that respondents aged 18 - 34 were most likely to agree that all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the Saskatchewan justice system regardless of their demographic profile, as 72% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 62.8% of respondents aged 35 - 54 and 64.5% of respondents aged 55 and over echoed that sentiment. These differences were not statistically significant.

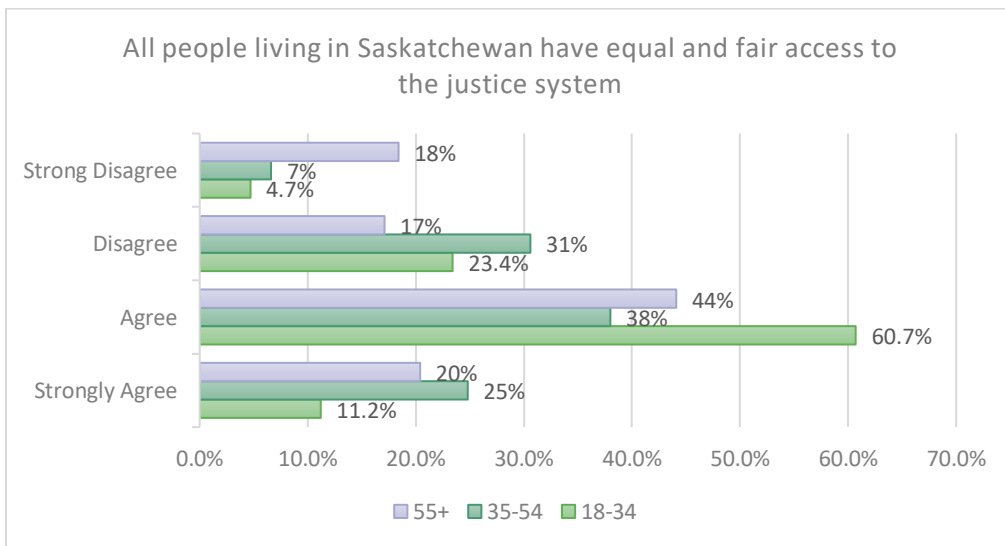


Figure 3 - All people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair justice system (by age categories)

Perceptions on Fair and Equal Access to Justice by Level of Education

When the perceptions of equal and fair access to justice was compared by level of education, we found that respondents who had completed college or technical school were most likely to agree that all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the Saskatchewan justice system regardless of their demographic profile, as 76% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. Following, 72% of respondents with high school or less education either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. In contrast, approximately a half of respondents with university education either agreed or strongly agreed. The differences between the three groups were significant. The responses of those with a university education were significantly different from those with a college/technical school education, and the responses of those with a university education were also significantly different from those who had a high school education or less.

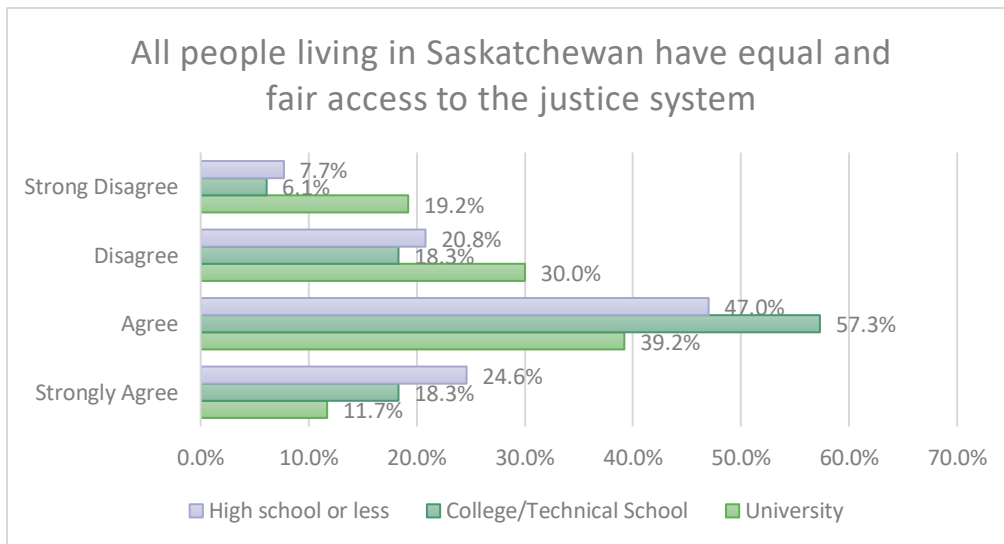


Figure 4 - All people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair justice system (by level of education)

Perceptions on Fair and Equal Access to Justice by Employment Status

When the perceptions of equal and fair access to justice was compared by employment status, we found that respondents that are working for pay were more likely to agree that all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the Saskatchewan justice system regardless of their demographic information. In particular, 73% of respondents working for pay either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, in comparison to 55% of respondents not working for pay. This difference was found to be significant.

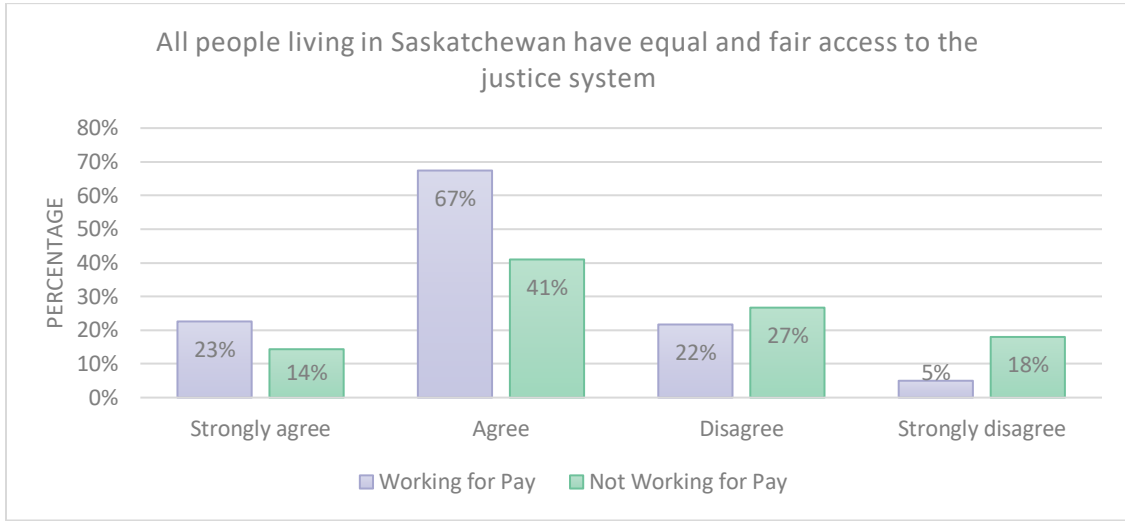


Figure 5 - All people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair justice system (by employment status)

Perceptions on Fair and Equal Access to Justice by Income Categories

When the perceptions of equal and fair access to justice was compared by income categories, we found that respondents with incomes more than 100K were most likely to agree that all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the Saskatchewan justice system regardless of their demographic profile with 67% of respondents having either agreed or strongly agreed. This was followed by 65% respondents making 50K to less than 100K having either agreed or strongly agreed with the item. Meanwhile, 49% of respondents making less than 50K agreed or strongly agreed. The differences between the three groups was significant. However, only the difference between respondents making less than 50K and respondents making more than 100K was statistically significant.

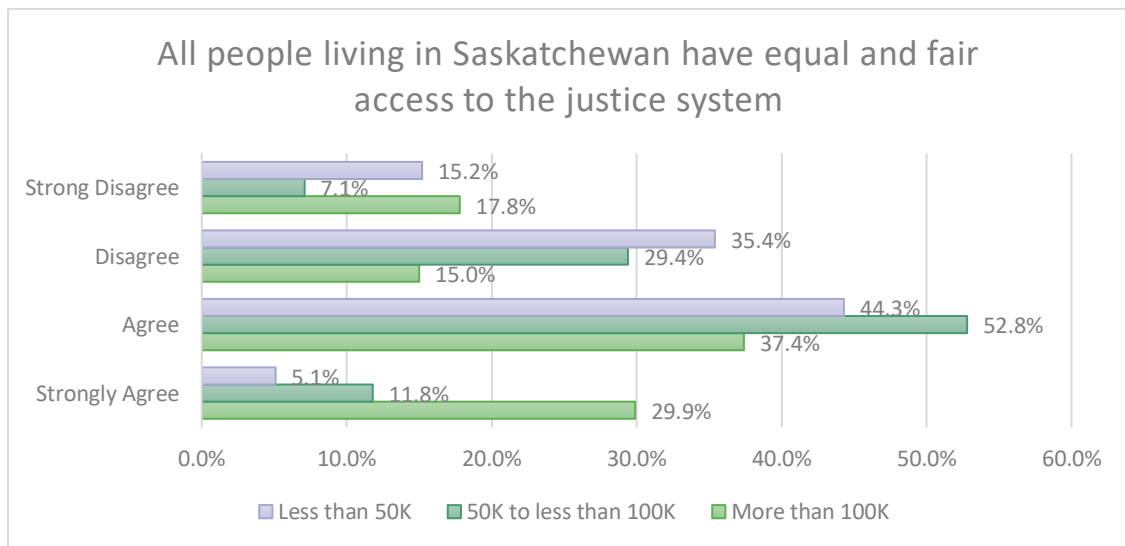


Figure 6 - All people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair justice system (by income categories)

Perceptions on Fair and Equal Access to Justice by Geographic Regions

When the perceptions of equal and fair access to justice was compared by geographic regions, we found that respondents in Regina CMA (69%) were most likely to either agree or strongly agree with the statement. However, no differences emerged between groups.

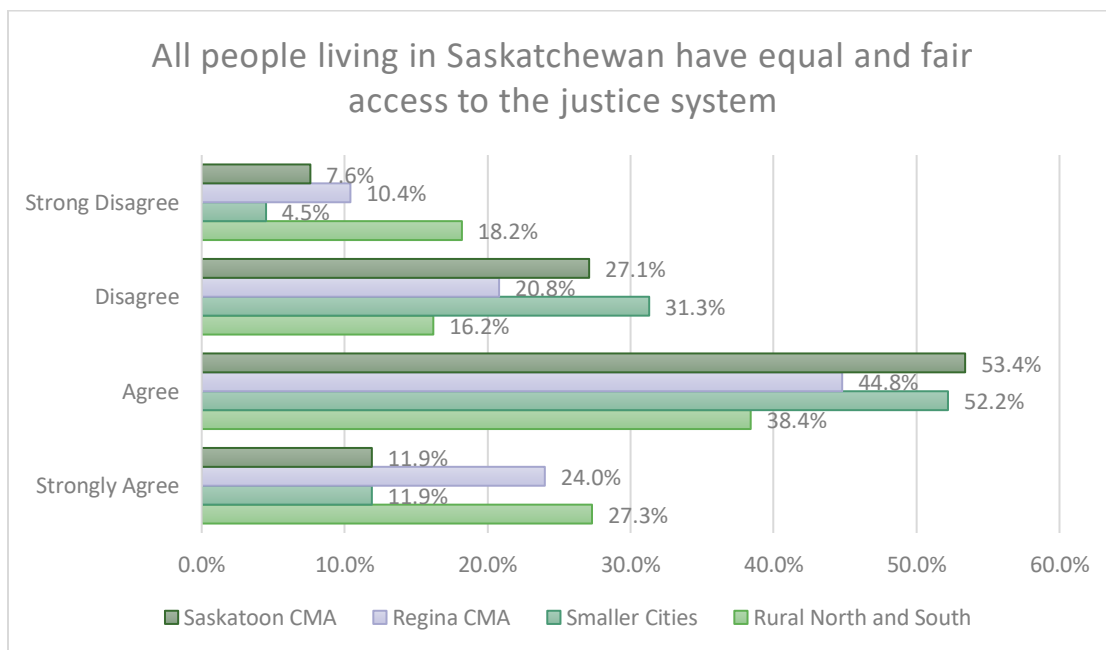


Figure 7 - All people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the justice system (by geographic regions)

2) Most Surprising Aspect about the Legal Dispute

In the September 2018 Omnibus Survey, residents of Saskatchewan were asked if they have been involved in a legal dispute in Saskatchewan; and, if they were, what surprised them the most about the legal dispute. Among the 401 respondents, 49 respondents indicated that they have been involved in a legal dispute. The 49 respondents were asked what surprised them the most when looking back on their legal dispute.

Table 1 - Looking back on the legal process used to deal with that dispute, which of the following surprised you the most?

	Frequency	Valid Percent
What it would cost me in fees or legal bills	11	22.1%
How long it would take	9	17.5%
How much the process would affect my life (such as emotionally, my life plans, or the people around me)	8	16.2%
None of the above	6	12.0%
Something else	16	32.2%

As seen in Table 2, respondents were most likely to indicate that something other than the options provided. Those respondents were prompted to share their thoughts further and their responses are provided below.

Table 2 – What surprised you most about the legal process: open-ended responses	
Number of respondents	Open-ended response
9	<i>All of the above</i>
1	<i>How uncaring the legal system is, go by the law and not by compassion. how it should be but was surprising</i>
1	<i>Kind of affects your whole fricken future, it kinda destroys your whole future like if you want to leave the country and travel. but that was when I was young and dumb.</i>
1	<i>Takes too long and costs too much. all the above.</i>
1	<i>The cost and the time it would take</i>
1	<i>The thing that surprised me the most was actually how fair the system was to me.</i>
1	<i>Wasn't surprised about anything</i>
1	<i>None of the above</i>

Of the options provided, respondents were most likely to indicate that what surprised them the most was the cost (22.1%), followed by how long the dispute took (17.5%), and how much the process would affect their life (16.2%).

3) Residents Rating of the Availability of Legal Assistance in Saskatchewan

In the December 2018 Omnibus Survey, residents of Saskatchewan were asked how they would rate the availability of legal assistance in Saskatchewan. In response, the survey found that Saskatchewan residents were most likely indicate that it was good (37.4%), followed by it was fair (31.7%). Meanwhile, 25% of residents felt that it was poor to very poor, and 5.7% of residents felt that it was very good. Figure 8 presents the findings.

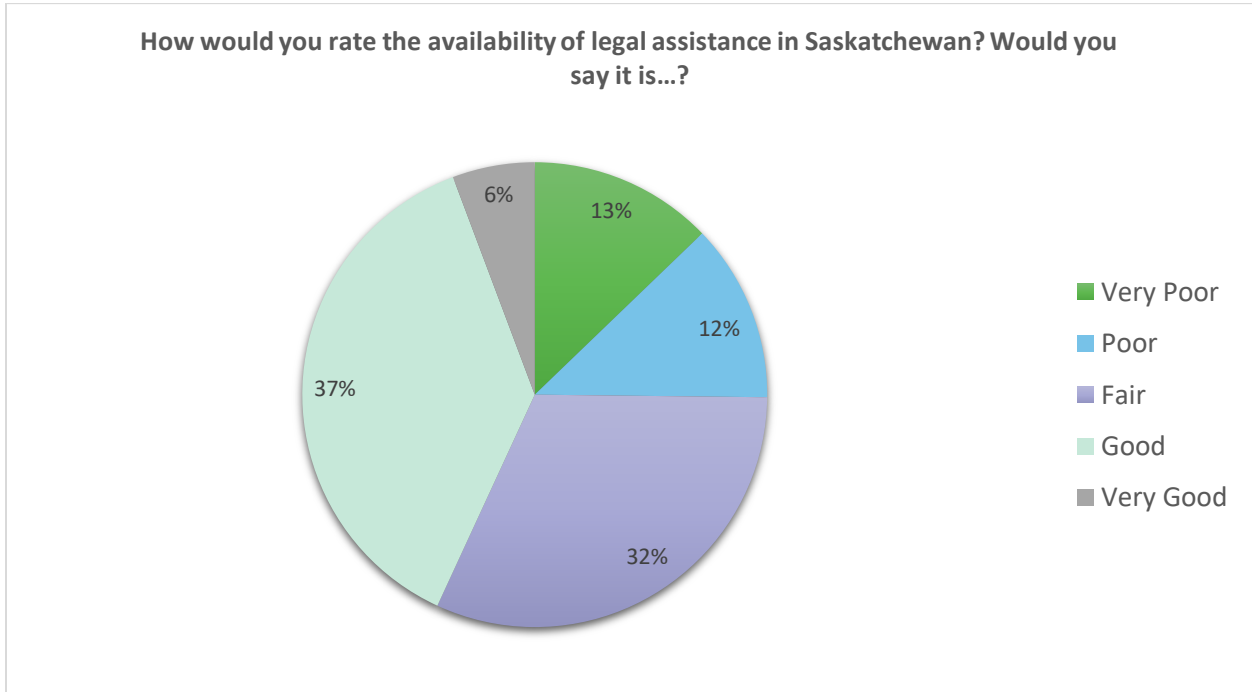


Figure 8 - Availability of legal assistance in Saskatchewan ratings (general finding)

Next, respondents were asked if they have had experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan. Figure 9 presents the findings, and we found that, of the 400 respondents, 245 respondents have not had experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan, while 153 respondents had experience and 2 respondents did not respond to the question.

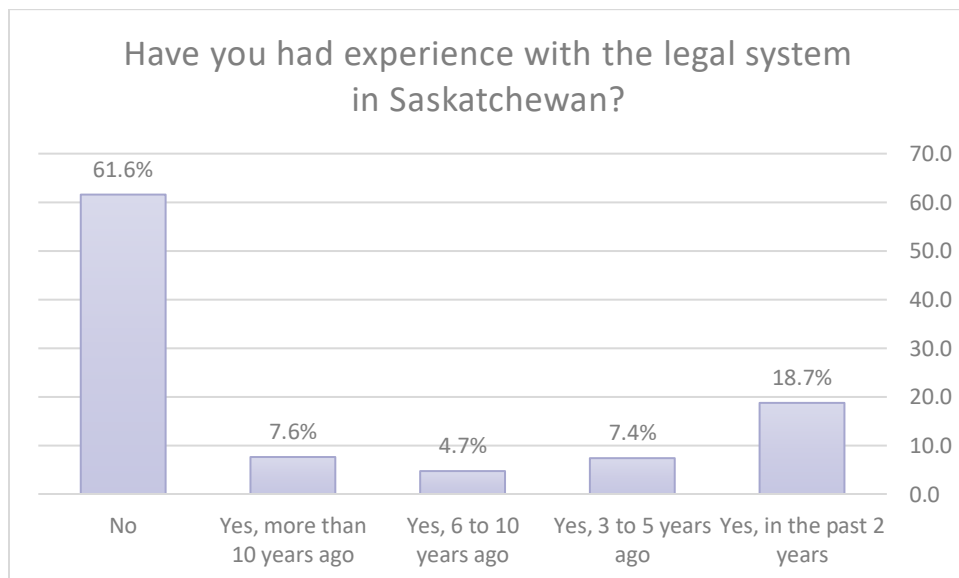


Figure 9 – Previous experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan

Of the 153 respondents that had experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan, respondents were most likely to indicate that the experience occurred in the past 2 years (49%; $n = 75$). This was followed by the experience having occurred more than 10 years ago (19.8%, $n = 30$), 3 to 5 years ago (19.2%, $n = 29$), and 6 to 10 years ago (12.2%, $n = 19$).

Ratings of the availability of legal assistance in Saskatchewan were compared between respondents with no experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan and respondents with previous experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan. Table 3 presents the findings.

As a result, we found that respondents with no experience with the legal system were more likely to rate the availability of legal assistance to be either good or very good (47.3%), while respondents with previous experience in the legal system were more likely to rate the availability of legal assistance to be either poor or very poor (32.1%). While differences were noticed between the two groups, these differences were not statistically significant.

Table 3 - How would you rate the availability of legal assistance in Saskatchewan? Would you say it is...? (By experience with the SK legal system)

	Have you had experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan?	
	No	Yes
Very Poor	16 9.7%	23 16.4%
Poor	15 9.1%	22 15.7%
Fair	56 33.9%	41 29.3%
Good	70 42.4%	44 31.4%
Very Good	8 4.8%	10 7.1%

4) If you were Facing a Legal Issue, Where Would you go for Help?

In the March 2019 Omnibus Survey, residents of Saskatchewan were asked “If you were facing a legal issue, where would you go for help?” with the following options provided and respondents were able to select all that applied to them:

- Family or friends
- My own lawyer or paralegal
- Government office or agency
- Legal clinic
- My employer or union representative
- Search for a lawyer or paralegal (ex. Internet, yellow pages, referral)
- Health care, social worker, or other professional
- Website
- Public Library

- 1-800 or other phone service
- Community worker or faith leader
- MLA or city councillor
- 211 Saskatchewan
- Other
- I have not faced a legal issue

The findings are presented in Figure 11.

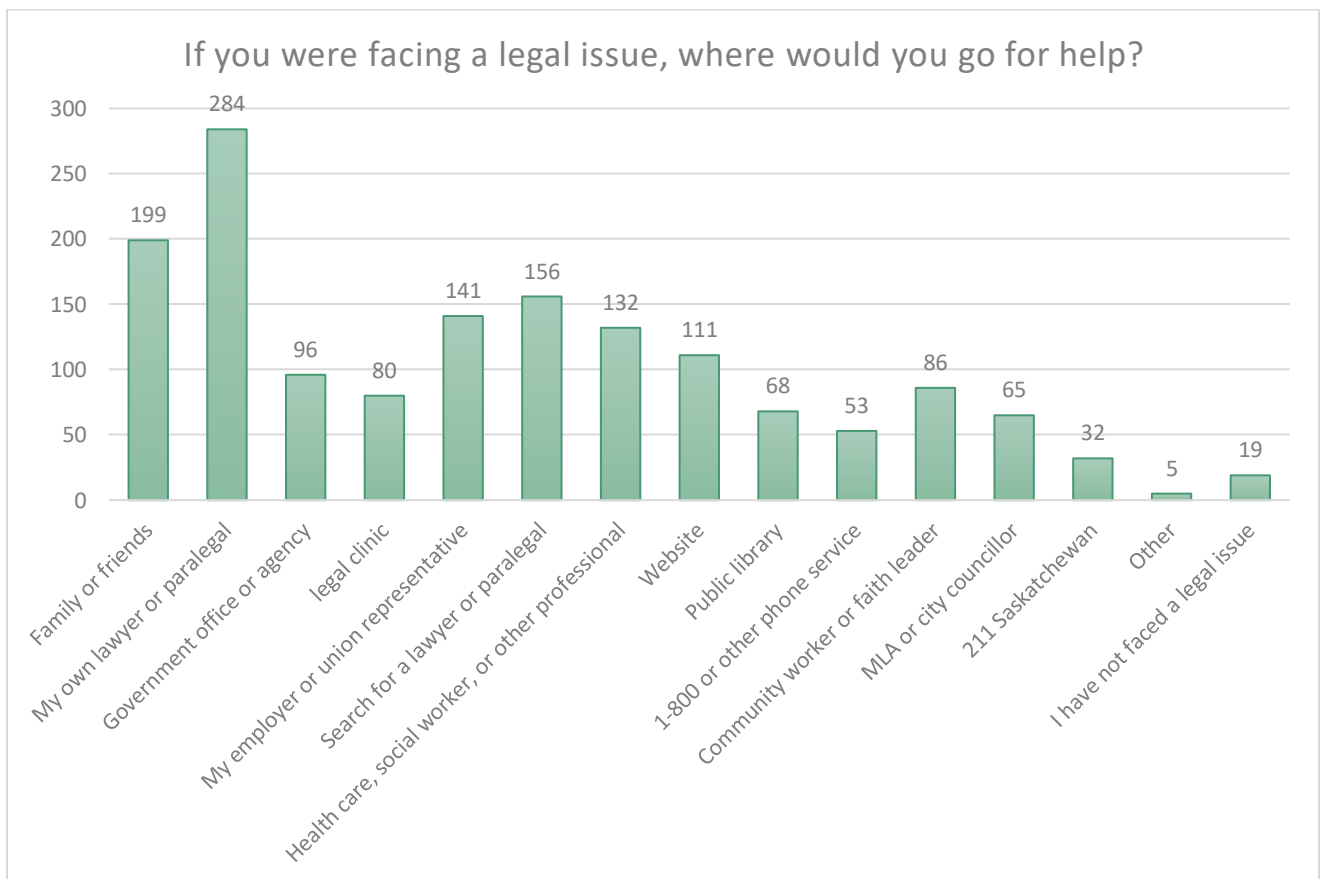


Figure 10 – If you were facing a legal issue, where would you go for help (general findings)

According to Figure 10, Saskatchewan residents were most likely to seek legal help from their own lawyer or paralegal; family or friends; search for a lawyer or paralegal; their employer or union representative; and health care, social worker, or other professional.

Additional comparisons by demographic variables were conducted. The findings are presented below.

Where to seek legal help by Gender

Figure 11 presents the comparison between genders on where they would go for help if they were facing a legal issue. When compared, female respondents were significantly more likely than male respondents to go to the following for legal help:

- Government office or agency
- Legal clinic
- Health care, social worker, or other professional
- MLA or city councillor

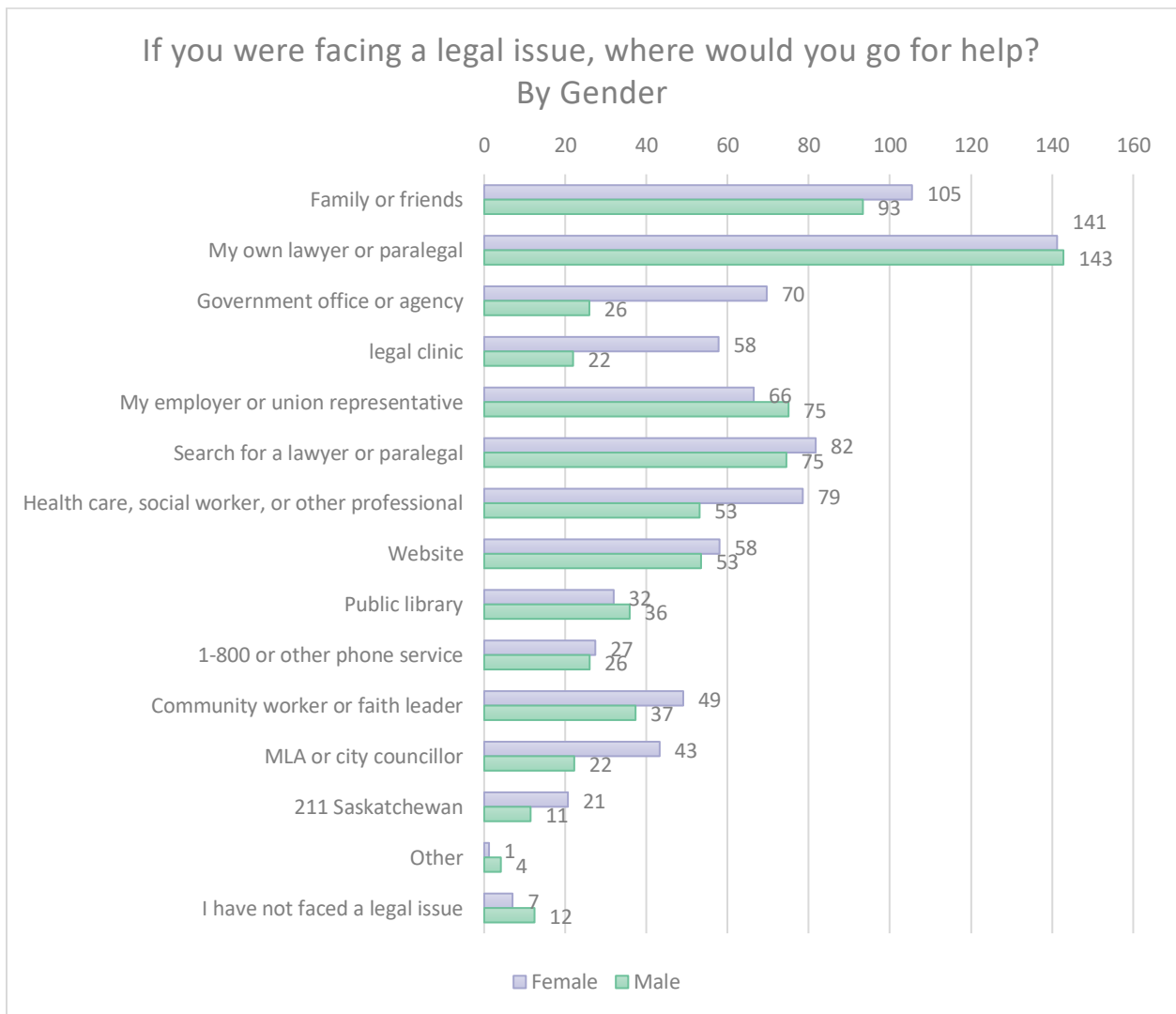


Figure 11 - If you were facing a legal issue, where would you go for help (by gender)

Where to seek legal help by Age Categories

Figure 12 presents the comparison between age categories on where they would go for help if they were facing a legal issue. When compared, younger respondents (18-34) were significantly more likely than their older counterparts to go to the following for legal help:

- Family or friends
- Government office or agency
- Employer or union representative
- Search for a lawyer or paralegal
- A health care, social worker, or other professional
- Website
- Public library
- 1-800 or other phone service
- A community worker or faith leader
- 211 Saskatchewan

Meanwhile, older respondents (aged 55+) were significantly more likely to go to the following for legal help:

- Their own lawyer or paralegal
- MLA or city councillor

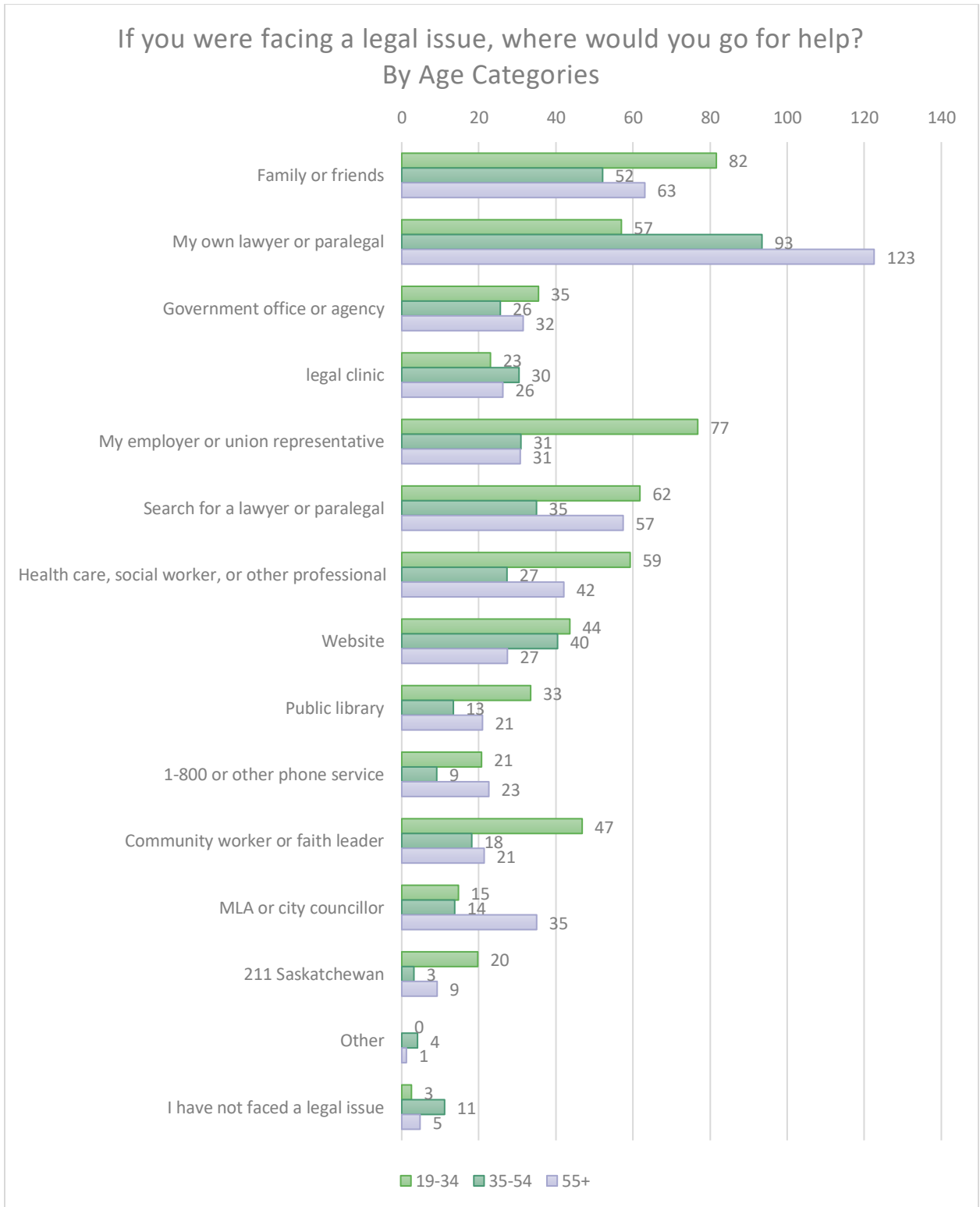


Figure 12 - If you were facing a legal issue, where would you go for help (by age categories)

Where to seek legal help by Level of Education

Figure 13 presents the comparison between level of education on where they would go for help if they were facing a legal issue. When compared, respondents with high school or less were most likely than their counterparts to go to the following for legal help:

- Family or friends
- Government office or agency for legal help
- Employer or union representative
- Search for a lawyer or paralegal for legal help
- Health care, social worker, or other professional
- Public library
- Community worker or faith leader

Meanwhile, respondents with university education were most likely to go to the following for legal help:

- Website
- 211 Saskatchewan

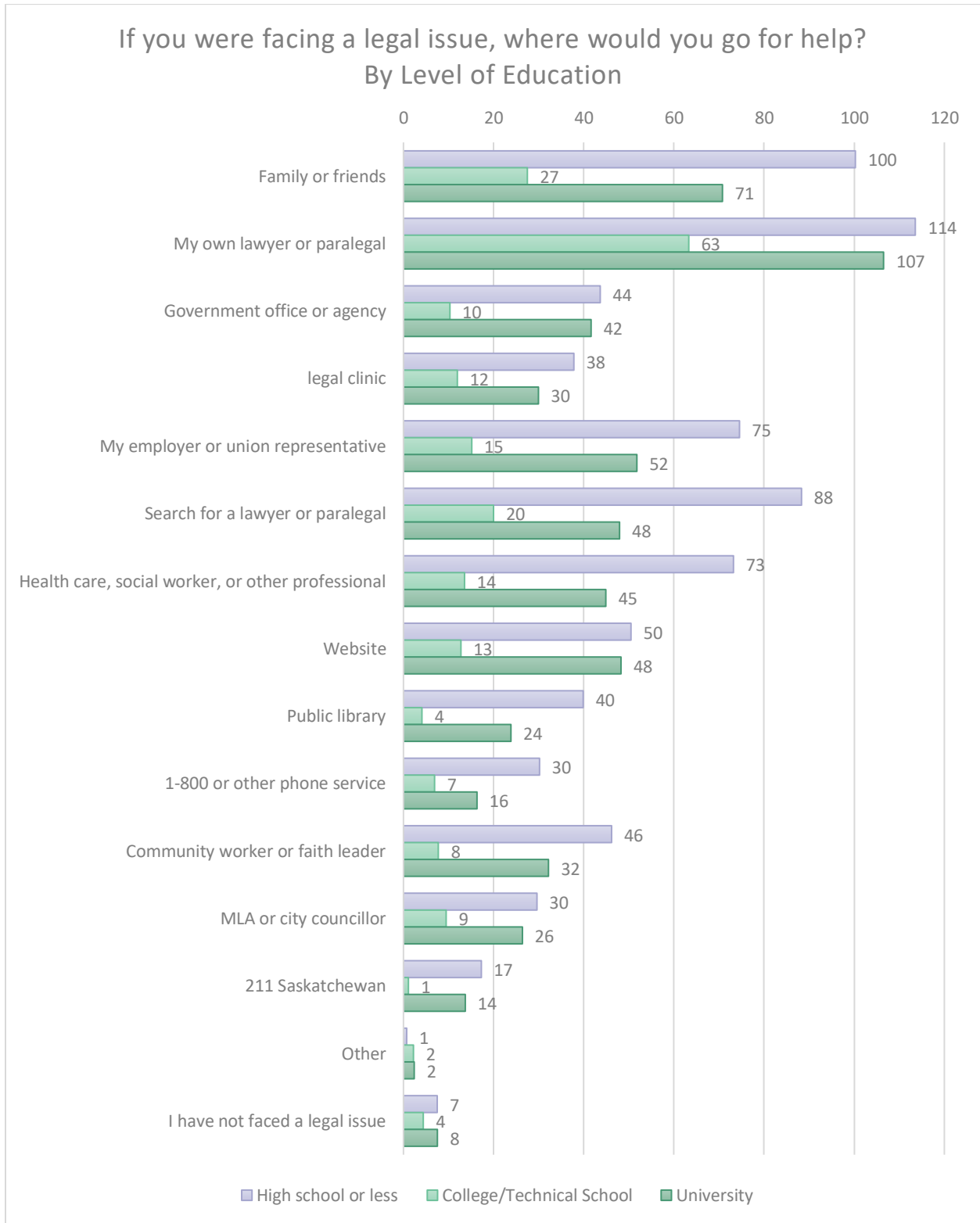


Figure 13 - If you were facing a legal issue, where would you go for help (by level of education)

Where to seek legal help by Employment Status

Figure 14 presents the comparison between age categories on where they would go for help if they were facing a legal issue. When compared, respondents that were not working for pay were significantly more likely to go to the following for legal help:

- Health care, social worker, or other professional
- Website
- Public library
- MLA or city councillor
- 211 Saskatchewan

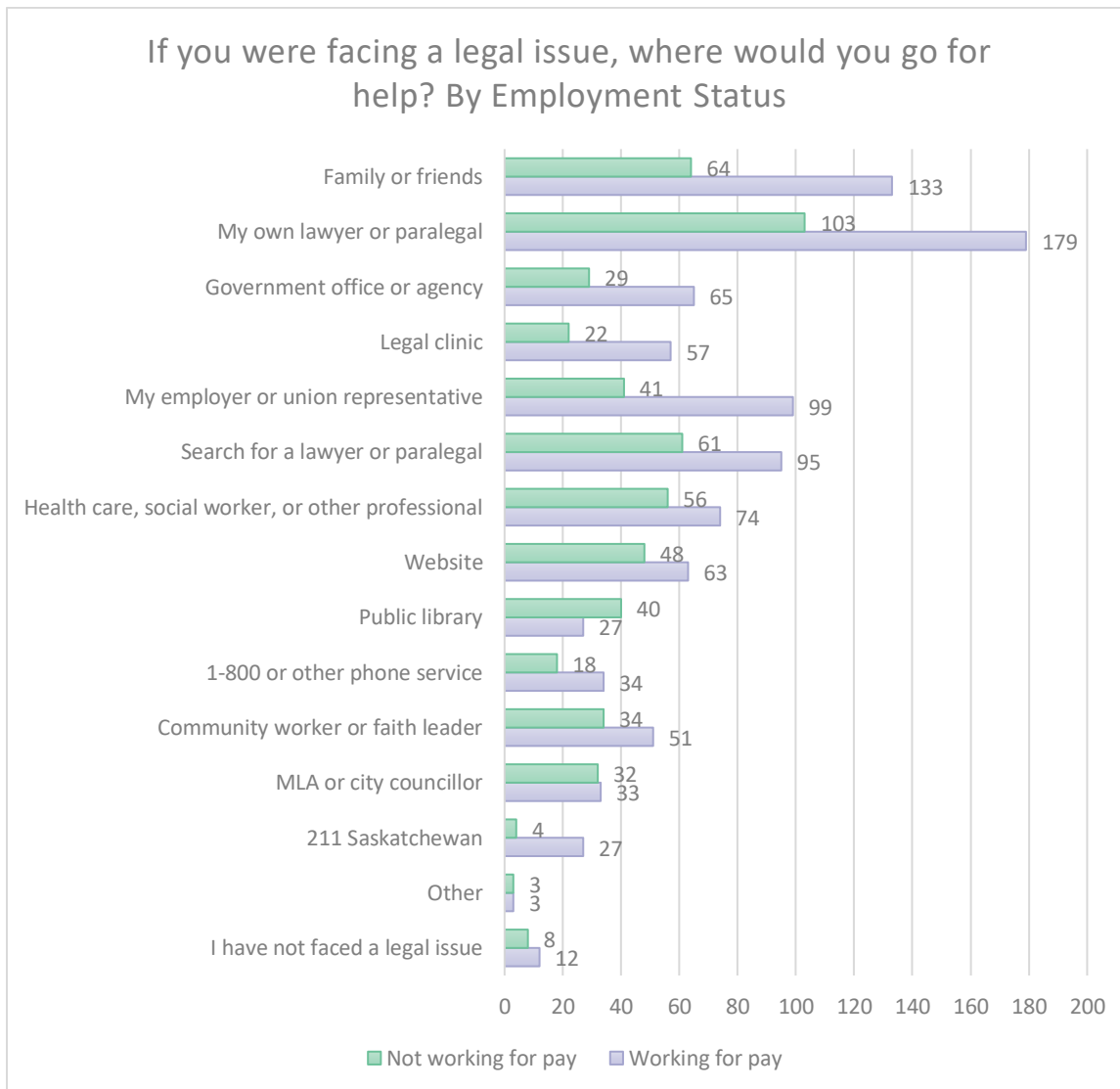


Figure 14 - If you were facing a legal issue, where would you go for help (by employment status)

Where to seek legal help by Income Categories

Figure 15 presents the comparison between income categories on where they would go for help if they were facing a legal issue. When compared, respondents with a household income of less than 50K were significantly most likely to go to the following for legal help:

- Family or friends
- Legal clinic
- Their employer or union representative
- Search for a lawyer or paralegal
- Health care, social worker, or other professional
- Website
- Public library
- 1-800 or other phone service
- Community worker or faith leader
- MLA or city councillor

Meanwhile, respondents with a household income of more than 50K to less than 100K were most likely to go to the following for legal help:

- 211 Saskatchewan
- To not have faced a legal issue

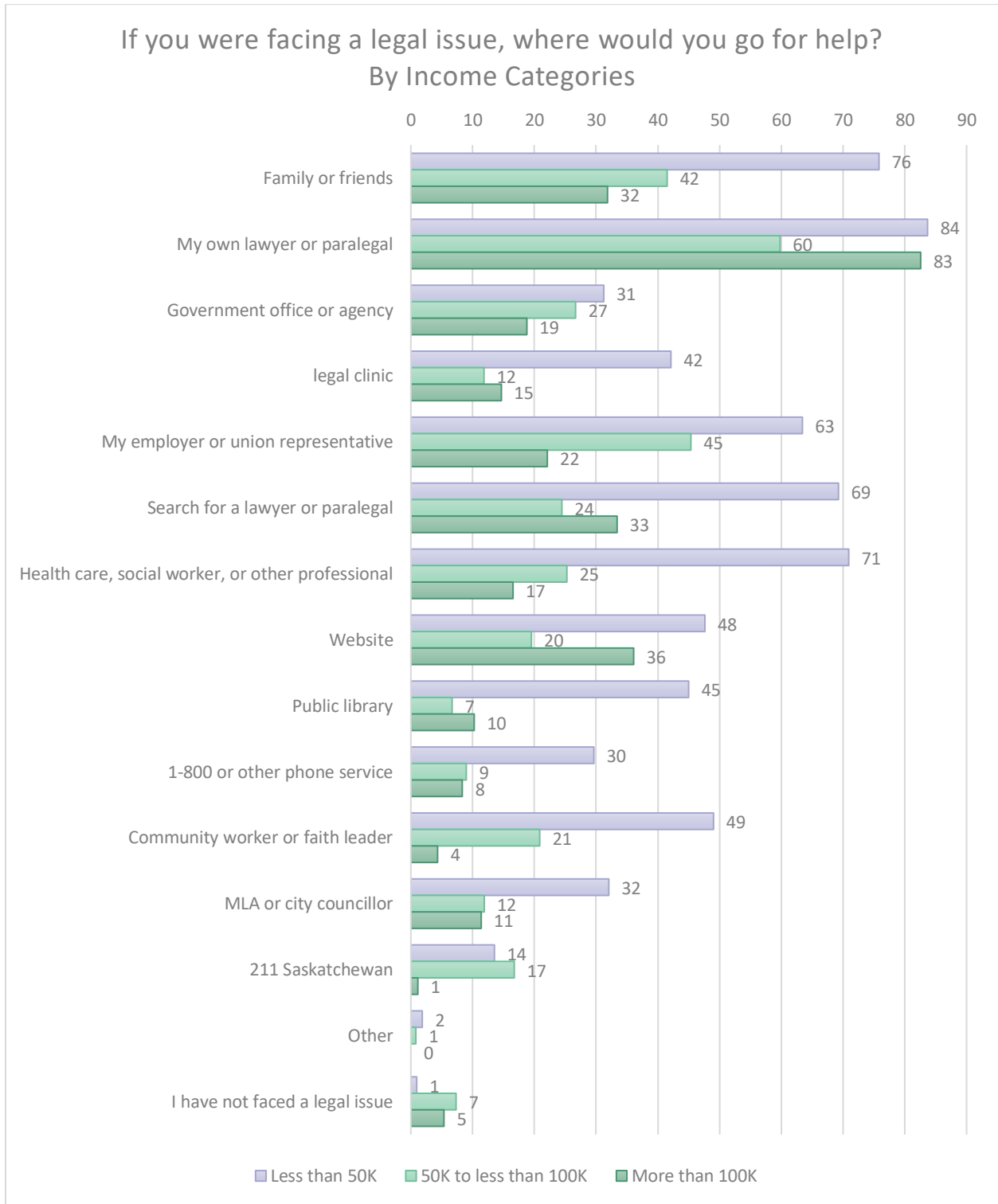


Figure 15 - If you were facing a legal issue, where would you go for help (by income categories)

Where to seek legal help by Geographic Regions

Figure 16 presents the comparison between geographic regions on where they would go for help if they were facing a legal issue. When compared, respondents located in Regina CMA and in smaller cities were more likely than the other respondents to go to the following for legal help:

- Government office or agency
- Their employer or union representative
- Search for a lawyer or paralegal
- 211 Saskatchewan
- Other

Respondents living in the Regina CMA, and in the rural north and south were more likely to go to a public library for legal help.

Meanwhile, respondents from the Saskatoon CMA were least likely to report that they go to a health care, social worker, or other professional for legal help.

Finally, of the four geographic regions, respondents from Regina CMA were most likely to report that they have not faced a legal issue.

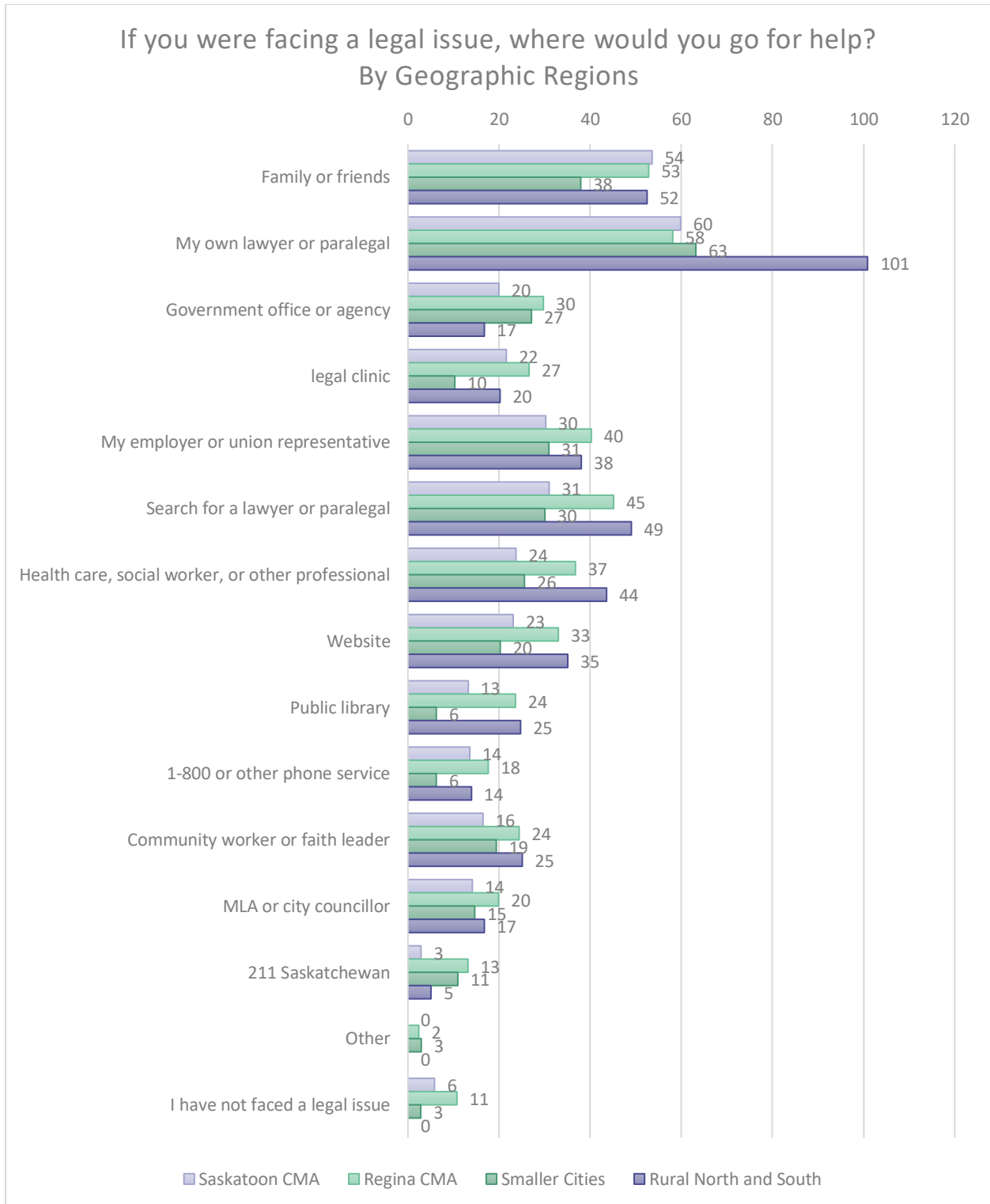


Figure 16 - If you were facing a legal issue, where would you go for help (by geographic regions)

Conclusion

The purpose of the questions asked in the SSRL Omnibus Survey was to gain an understanding of Saskatchewan residents on their perceptions, opinions, and experiences on access to justice.

The first survey (June 2018) collected Saskatchewan residents' opinions on whether all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the justice system no matter their race, citizenship status, language, gender, class, geographic location, sexual orientation, religion, etc., and found that while 63% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, differences in opinion emerged between demographic groups. Specifically, respondents that are female, have a university education, are not working for pay, or have a household income of less than \$50,000 were significantly more likely to disagree that all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the justice system.

The second survey (September 2018) asked Saskatchewan residents if they have ever been involved in a legal dispute and, if so, what surprised them the most about the legal dispute. Approximately 12% of residents ($n = 49$) indicated that they have been involved in a legal dispute. Those residents were further asked what surprised them the most about the legal dispute and 22% selected what it would cost them in fees or legal bills; 17.5% selected how long it would take; 16% selected how much the process would affect their lives; 32% indicated something else; of which, most respondents mentioned all of the above categories. Meanwhile, 12% selected none of the above.

The third survey (December 2018) asked Saskatchewan residents how they would rate the availability of legal assistance in Saskatchewan and the survey found that 43% rated it as good to very good, 32% rated it as fair, and 25% rated it as poor to very poor. This survey further gauged whether respondents have had experience in the legal system in Saskatchewan. Of the 400 respondents, 245 respondents indicated that they have not had experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan, while 153 respondents reported that they did have experience with the legal system. Comparing these two groups, residents with no experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan were more likely to rate the availability of legal assistance to be good or very good (47.3%), while residents with previous experience with the legal system in Saskatchewan were more likely to rate the availability of legal assistance to be poor or very poor (32%). However, this difference was not statistically significant, and caution should be used when drawing conclusions about the perceptions of the availability of legal assistance based on an individual's past experience with the legal system.

Finally, the fourth survey (March 2019) asked Saskatchewan residents if they were facing a legal issue, where would they go for help? As a result, respondents were most likely to report that they would seek legal help from their own lawyer or paralegal, their family or friends, or search for a lawyer or paralegal. However, when demographic groups were compared, differences between groups were further uncovered. In particular, respondents that were female, younger, with a level of education of high school or less, not working for pay, or have a household income of less than \$50,000, were significantly more likely to indicate the willingness to seek more avenues to find legal help, in comparison to other groups.

Appendix A – About the Social Sciences Research Laboratories

The Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL) is a unique and leading network of nine research laboratories made possible by the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Government of Saskatchewan, and the University of Saskatchewan, including many of its colleges, schools and administrative units. As a research support unit, the SSRL assists faculty, staff and students undertaking research in the social sciences by providing access to specialized research infrastructure (computers, software and equipment) and research space (specific and multi-purpose), and providing access to research supports in the form of specialists with backgrounds and training in specific social science research methodologies (quantitative research; qualitative research; experimental research; surveys; GIS and cartography; social network analysis; among many others).

Our mission:

To provide shared research infrastructure and technical administrative support to faculty, staff and students at the University of Saskatchewan and beyond, to facilitate the design, delivery and dissemination of cutting-edge social science research.

The SSRL currently consists of the following laboratories:

- *Community-Based Observation Laboratory (COL)*
- *Experimental Decision Laboratory (EDL)*
- *EEG Hyperscanning Laboratory (EHL)*
- *Mixed Methods Research Laboratory (MMRL)*
- *Qualitative Research Laboratory (QRL)*
- *Survey and Group Analysis Laboratory (SGAL)*
- *Social Network Laboratory (SNL)*
- *The Spatial Laboratory (TSL)*
- *Video Therapy Analysis Laboratory (ViTAL)*

The SSRL has three objectives:

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

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