

Research Snapshot

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

What is this about?

The Social Sciences Research Lab (SSRL) surveyed 400 Saskatchewan residents about their opinions, perceptions, and experiences with the legal system. The study examined opinions on access to justice, availability of legal services, and theoretical preferred supports when faced with a legal issue.

What did the researchers do?

The SSRL collected data through four quarterly telephone surveys, administered to 400 Saskatchewan residents. Researchers asked these residents questions about Saskatchewan's legal system. Each survey addressed a different, but related, topic. The four topics were: (1) perception on the claim that "all people living in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the Saskatchewan justice system regardless of their demographic information"; (2) what was most surprising to respondents who interacted with the legal system; (3) how respondents would rate the availability of legal assistance in Saskatchewan; and (4) where respondents would go for help if they were facing a legal issue. Researchers randomly selected respondents and ensured those surveyed were representative of Saskatchewan demographics. Following the surveys, researchers conducted comparative analysis on responses given by various demographic groups (gender, age, level of education, employment status, geographic location, and income).

What do you need to know?

This study determined that the majority of respondents believe all people in Saskatchewan have equal and fair access to the justice system. Regardless of demographic, 63.3% of respondents agreed with this proposition.

Researchers gained a clearer picture of how Saskatchewan residents felt about the provincial justice system and how demographic factors affected this perspective. For example, experiences with the justice system affects one's perception of it. Of respondents with actual experience in the justice system, 32.1% said that the availability of legal assistance was poor or very poor. Only 18.8% of respondents without experience with the justice system indicated the same.

The research also examined where respondents would go for help if they faced a legal issue. The most likely responses were: (1) their own lawyer or paralegal; (2) family or friends; and (3) search for a lawyer/paralegal.

What did the researchers find?

Important findings include:

- Survey #1: One-third of residents (33.3%) believe people living in Saskatchewan do not have equal and fair access to the justice system. Women are more likely to believe this is so than men.
- Survey #2: Residents of Saskatchewan with legal dispute experience expressed surprise at the cost of associated fees and legal bills.
- Survey #3: 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%) than those without experience.
- Survey #4: Female respondents were significantly more likely to indicate they would go to government offices or agencies, legal clinics, professionals other than lawyers, or elected officials to solve their legal problems than male respondents.

About the researchers:

The SSRL was founded in 2011 and includes 8 different research laboratories. The organization's objectives are to:

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

Citation:

A full copy of the report can be found on the Centre for Research, Evaluation, and Action Towards Equal Justice (CREATE Justice) website. [Link to the report.](#)

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How can you use this?

The four surveys provide information relevant to numerous justice stakeholders. For example, organizations involved in public legal education now know that women are much more likely to seek legal information from a government office or agency than men. This type of information provides a foundation for data-driven access to justice initiatives.