

## 2011 Access & Fairness Survey Results and Analysis

**Purpose:** The following document provides results and analysis from the recently completed Access & Fairness Survey. The information included can be used to identify areas where the court is excelling and areas where user satisfaction can be improved.

**Background:** The Access & Fairness Survey is one of several National Center for State Courts (NCSC) performance measures which the court has adopted. This is the first time the survey has been implemented. The NCSC survey has been slightly modified to better serve the needs of this particular court. Despite this, a significant portion of the survey can be benchmarked to other courts. The survey itself can be found on page 14.

**Methodology:** The survey was conducted over the course of five half-days in early December. Times were chosen that would capture the most court activities possible. As individuals were preparing to exit through security, they were approached by volunteer interviewers and offered a candy bar in exchange for their participation. In addition, on one of the half-days, interviews were conducted with in-custody defendants. Surveys were available in Spanish and Vietnamese. All surveys were collected anonymously. Results were entered into a database and analyzed.

**Results:** Results are shown as the percent of respondents who chose each answer. The results are presented in a variety of contexts:

General Statistics	pg. 2
All Respondents	pg. 3
General Court	pg. 4
Traffic & Parking	pg. 5
Unfavorable Outcome	pg. 6
Made a Payment Only	pg. 7
Day Reporting	pg. 8
Open Ended Question	pg. 13

More specific breakdowns concerning various populations and court groups can be made. However, sample sizes may limit the usefulness of certain results.

**Analysis:** The survey was overwhelmingly positive. In terms of access and fairness, most court users were content with their court experience. All results sections have an adjacent analysis. Further comparison analysis is presented for:

Timeliness	pg. 9
Language Barriers	pg. 10
Benchmarking	pg. 11
Survey Quality	pg. 12

RPEG recommends court leadership review the survey result and determine what action is necessary. RPEG can facilitate this process, if the court finds it a priority.

Some key areas that would benefit from attention are:

- **Duration of visit for day reporting.** Over 30% of day reporters had a negative response to the question “I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.” 82% reported spending over an hour in the courthouse the day they took the survey. The day reporting section contains a more complete analysis of this result.
- **Perception of timeliness for criminal court.** Criminal court had the next highest percent negative for “I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time,” with 25%. 61% of individuals who appeared in criminal court were in the courthouse for over an hour. This may be a problem of individuals having unrealistic expectations of how long court will take.
- **Navigation problems reported by individuals for whom English is a second language.** Almost twice as many individuals in this group went to the wrong courthouse initially than did the sample as a whole. Similarly, they had twice the negative responses to the questions, “The court makes reasonable efforts to remove language barriers,” and “I easily found the courtroom or office I needed,” than the sample as a whole. This suggests complications with finding and navigating the courthouse.

Ethnicity	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	4%
Asian	7%
Black or African American	17%
Hispanic or Latino	7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3%
White	51%
Mixed	7%
Other	4%

Type of Court	Percent	Count
Domestic Violence Court	2%	3
Community Court	2%	3
Mental Health Court	3%	4
301	4%	5
Don't Know	11%	15
General Court	29%	40
201	50%	69

Type of Case	Percent	Count
Non-Traffic, Non-Criminal	2%	3
Civil	2%	3
Don't Know	2%	3
Parking	27%	39
Traffic	32%	46
Criminal	34%	49

Gender	Percent
Male	62%
Female	37%
Other	1%

What did you do in court today?	Number
Juror	5
CRC	7
Witness	8
Other Party	12
Search Records	17
File Papers	21
Attorney	21
Day Reporting	28
Get Information	34
Defendant	39
Probation Obligation	42
Make a Payment	75
Hearing/Trial	108

Participants could choose multiple activities. As a result, total count exceeds surveys collected.

Type of Attorney	Percent	Count
Public Defender	84%	52
Private Attorney	16%	10

# All Respondents

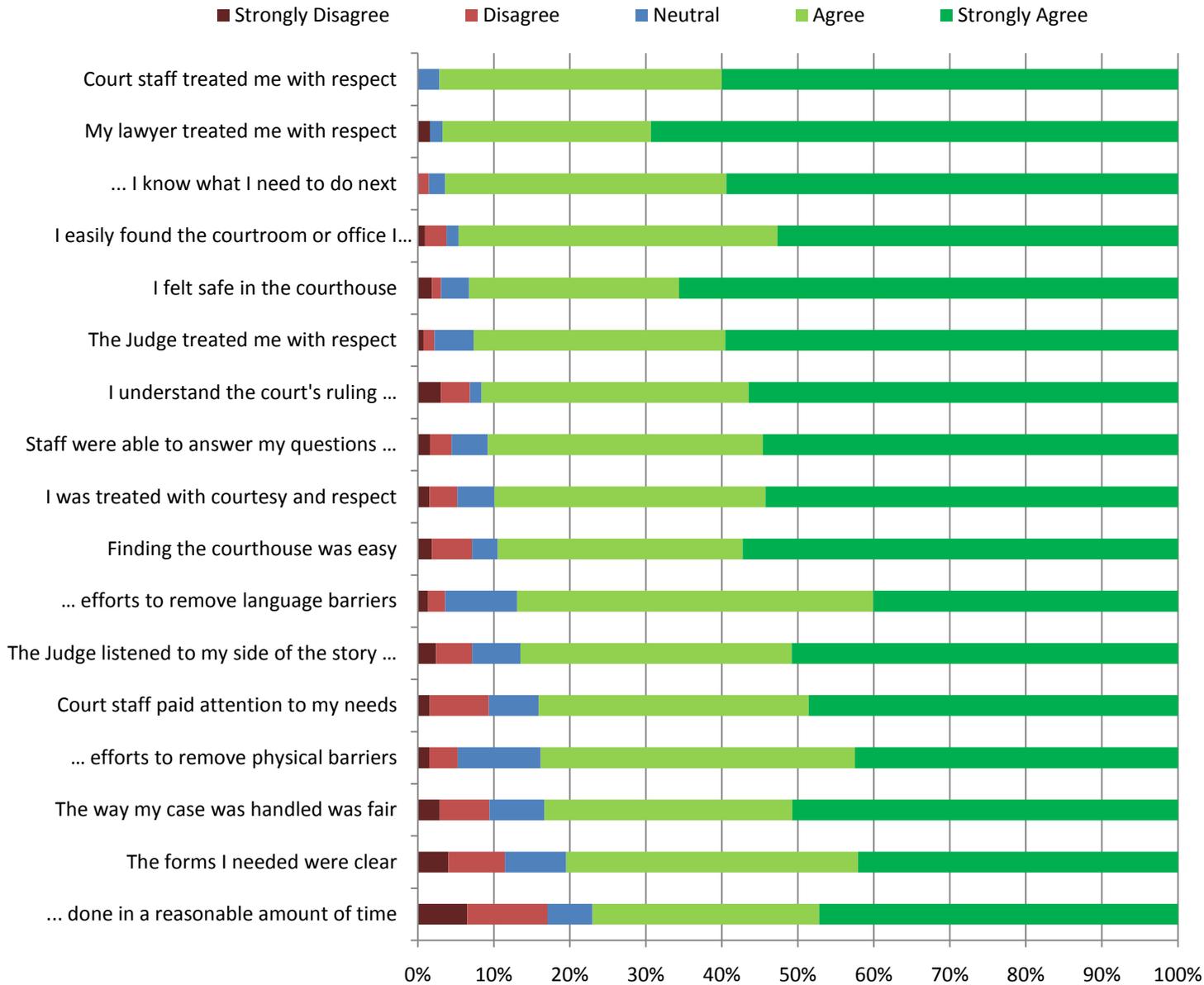


Figure 1 shows the percent of responses in each category for all survey participants. n = 328

- **Client perceptions of access and fairness were overwhelmingly positive.**
- Only “The forms I needed were clear” and “I was able to get...done in a reasonable amount of time” had a negative response over 10%.
- **“Court staff treated me with respect” had no negative response.**

Figure 1

# Criminal Court

Includes Specialty Courts

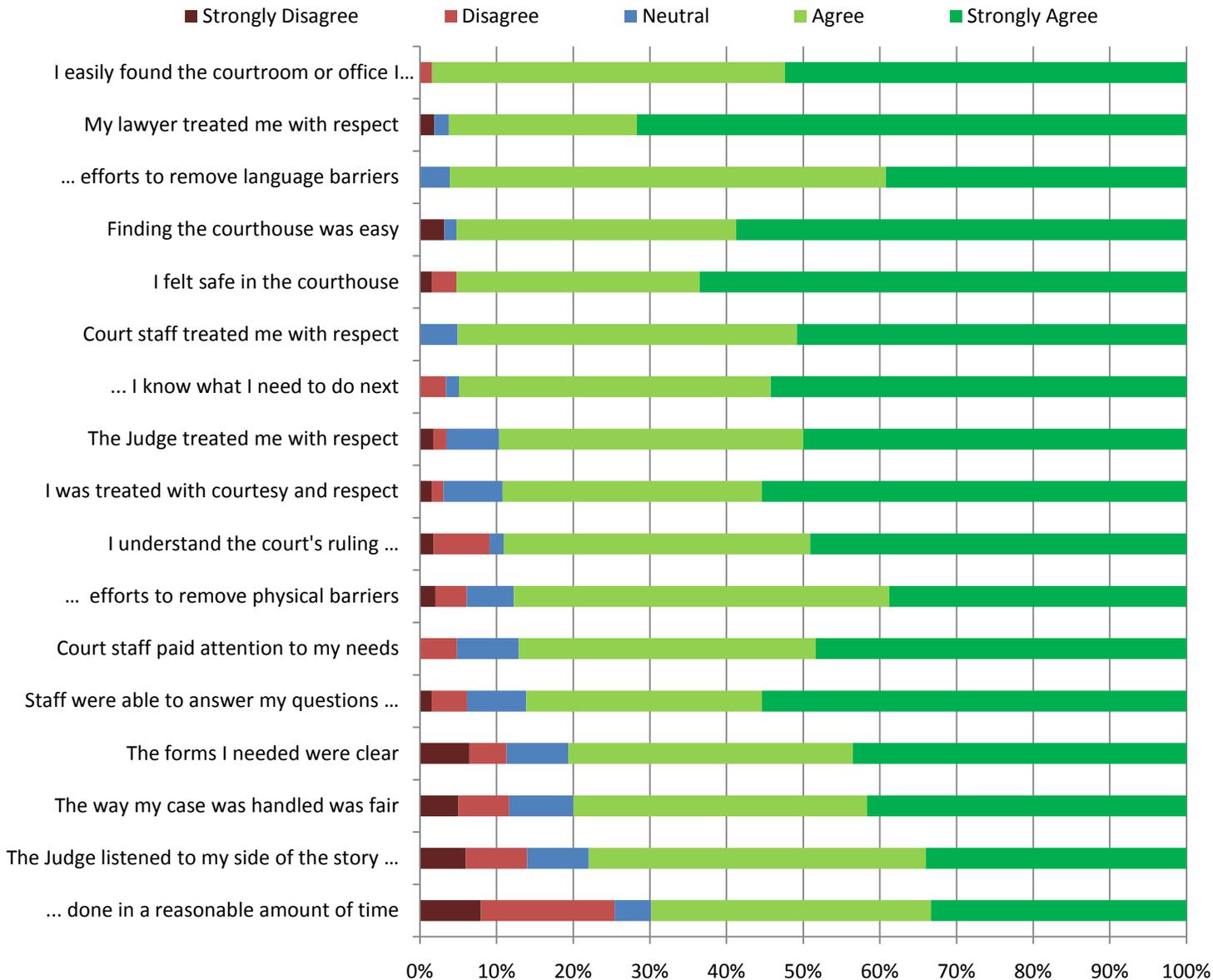


Figure 2 excludes individuals who appeared in either 201 or 301. Because response rates for the specialty courts were not large enough to be statistically significant they have been combined with general court results. n = 65.

- **Within this group, results were still very positive.**
- Higher negative responses on timeliness were likely due the way in which defendants are asked to appear.
- Other negative responses over 10% could be partially attributed to the more serious implications of a negative outcome in criminal court compared to courtroom 201 or 301.

Figure 2

# Traffic and Parking (201 & 301)

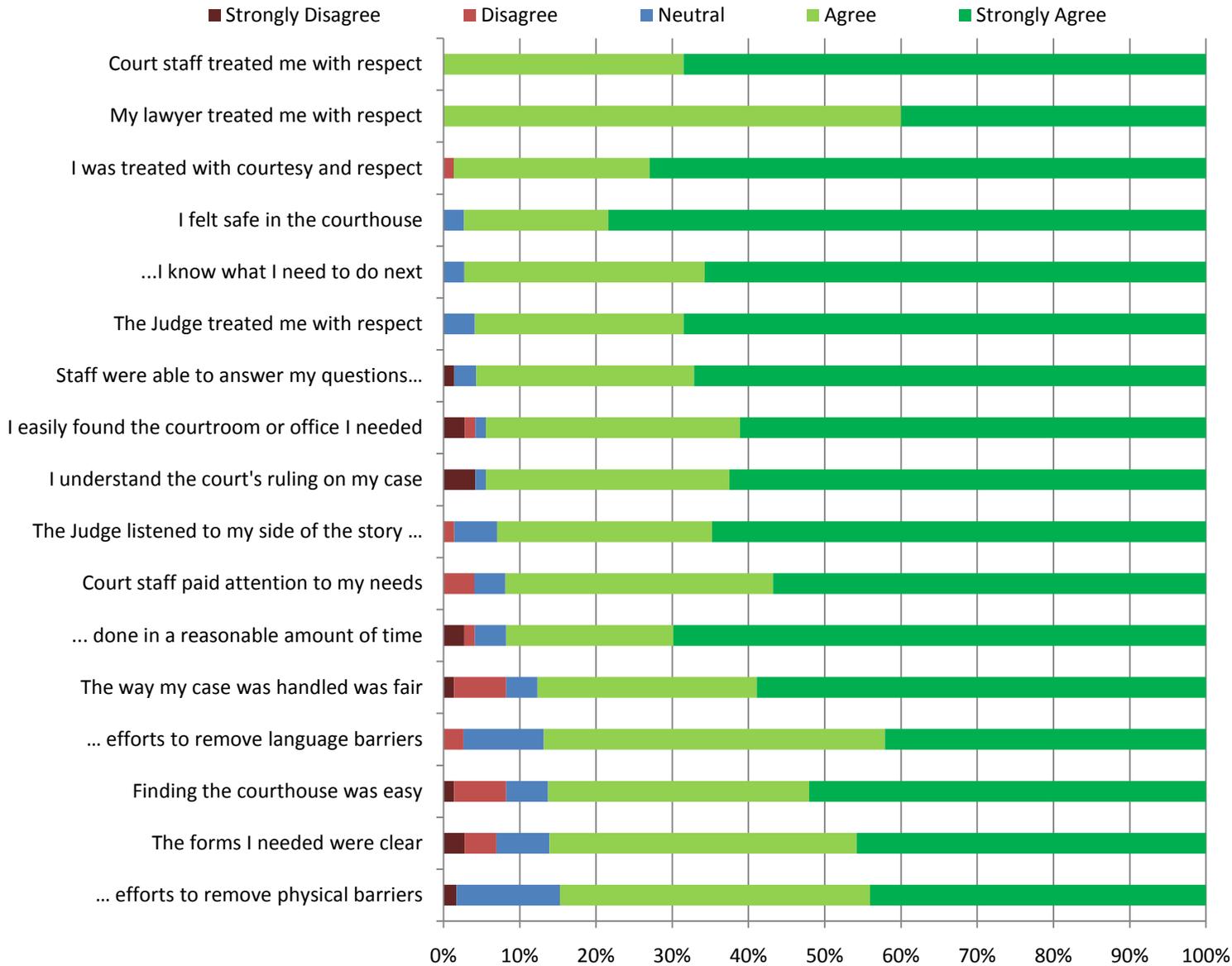


Figure 3 includes only those that appeared in 201 or 301. n = 74 (201 = 69; 301 = 5).

- Overall, users had a positive perception of access and fairness in 201 and 301.
- Negative response percentages were much smaller in 201 and 301 compared to criminal court.
- Areas for attention could be in clarity of forms and directions to the courthouse and hearing location.

Figure 3

# Unfavorable Outcome

## Any Hearing Type

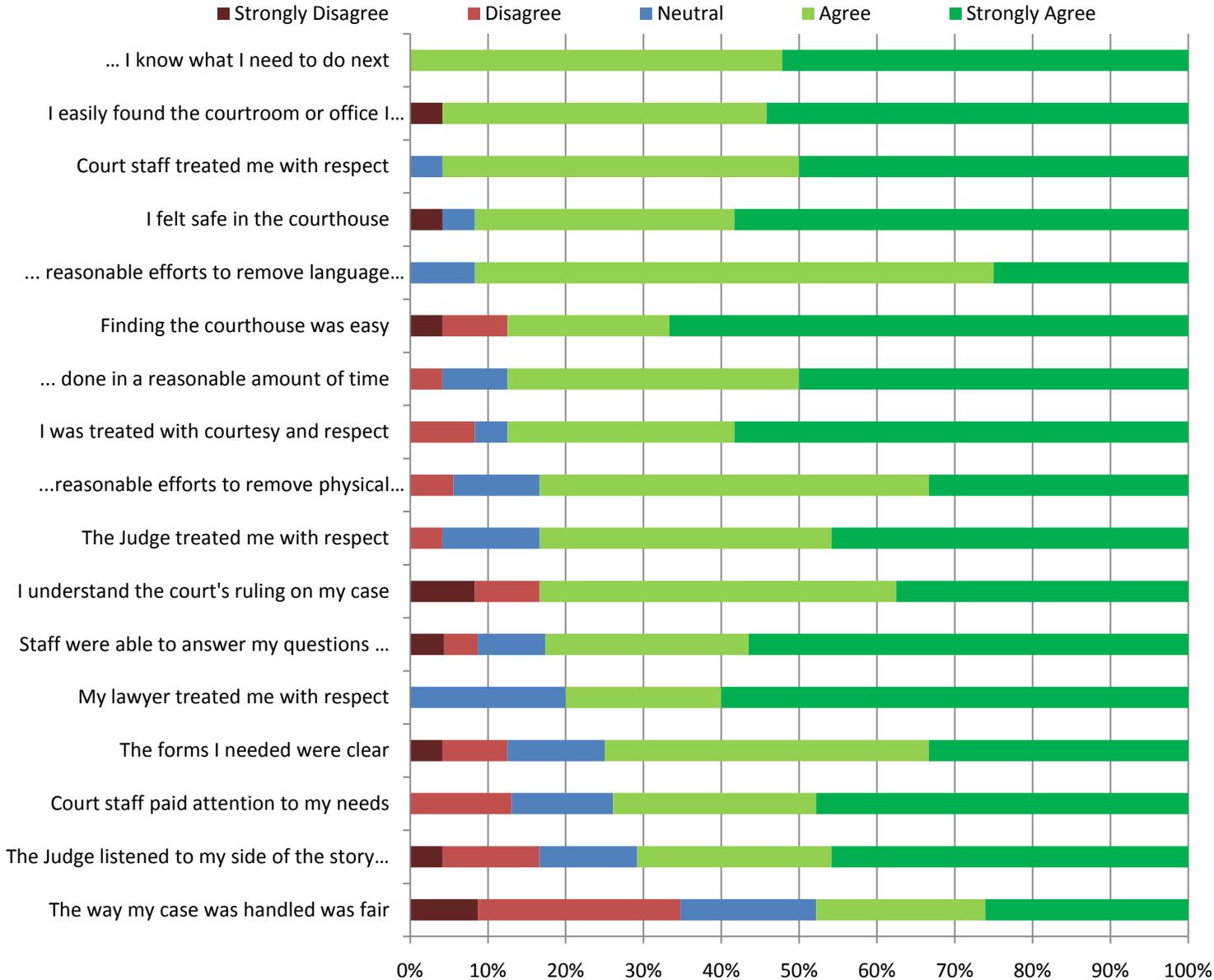
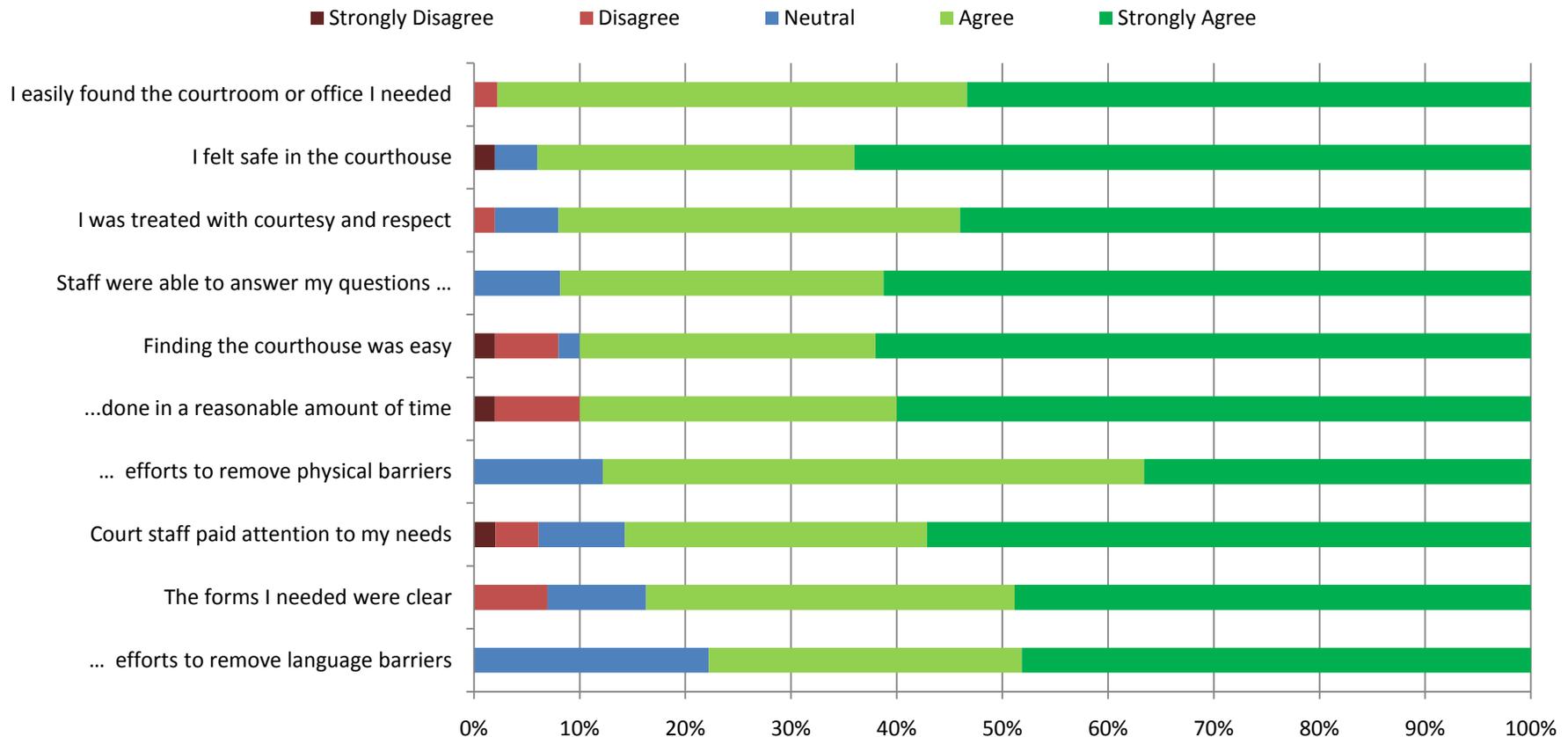


Figure 4 shows the responses for individuals who appeared before a judicial officer in any courtroom and identified their court experience as “unfavorable.” n = 24.

- This is a small sample, so all conclusions taken from it must be considered in that light.
- Negative responses had a higher percentage among this segment compared to overall responses.
- **Even though these individuals had a negative outcome, most of the responses were still at least 80 % positive.**
- Only “the way my case was handled was fair” was under 70% positive.
- These results show a negative bias among individuals who have an unfavorable outcome, but the bias was remarkably small.

Figure 4

## Made a Payment Only

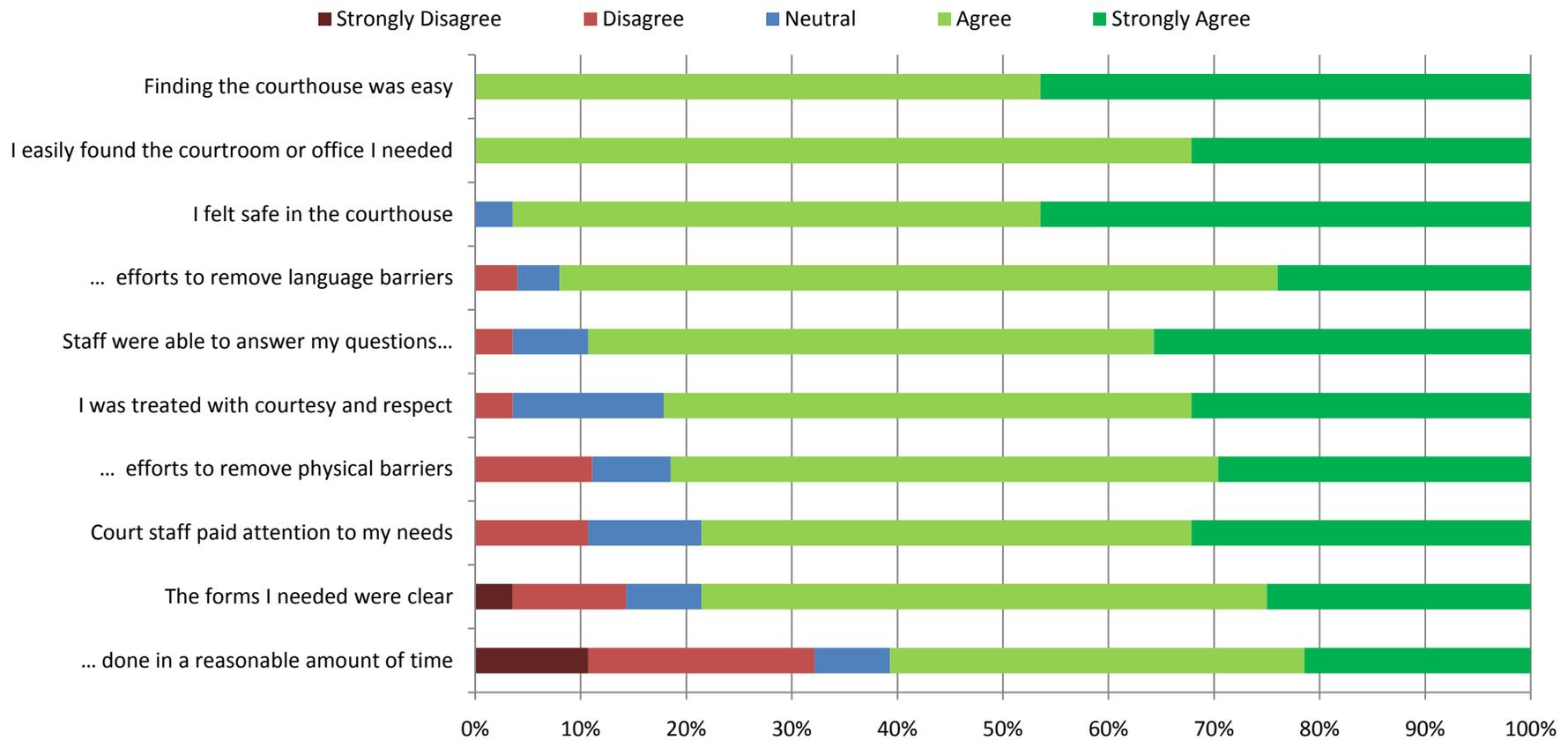


**Figure 5**

Figure 4 shows the results for respondents who made a payment only. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple options for “What did you do in the court today?” The figure excludes individuals who did other things in addition to making a payment. These individuals did not answer the questions specific to appearing in court so the question list is smaller. Users of the quick pay window were not captured by the survey. n = 50.

- **Responses were all overwhelmingly positive.**
- Only “done in a reasonable amount of time” reaches 10% negative responses. However, 83% were done in less than 30 minutes, and 92% within an hour. 8% took over an hour. There is a high correlation between the final 8% and the negative “reasonable amount of time” responses.
- All responses were less negative than the sample in its entirety.

## Day Reporting



**Figure 6**

Figure 5 shows respondents who marked day reporting for “What did you do in the court today?” Unlike the previous graph, individuals that only did day reporting and did not do other business could not be analyzed. Such a breakdown would have resulted in far too small a sample. No distinction was made between pre- and post-trial day reporting. n = 28.

- Day reporters spend a lot of time at the court so the 100% positive responses for navigation are to be expected.
- The negative response for “done in a reasonable amount of time” was surprising. One would expect day reporting to not take very long. However, almost half of day reporters were engaged in other business in the court, including hearings and other probation obligations. Additionally, there is some question as to how day reporters tended to interpret the question. It is possible they interpreted the “I was able to complete my court business in a reasonable amount of time” as the entirety of their court business, complete only when their case is finished. Such a perception could lead to the responses received.
- **Time spent in court for day reporters was quite high, with 80% spending more than an hour in court. It is possible that the day reporting process simply takes a long time, as such, additional research into this issue may be warranted.**

# TIMELINESS

## Done in a Reasonable Amount of Time

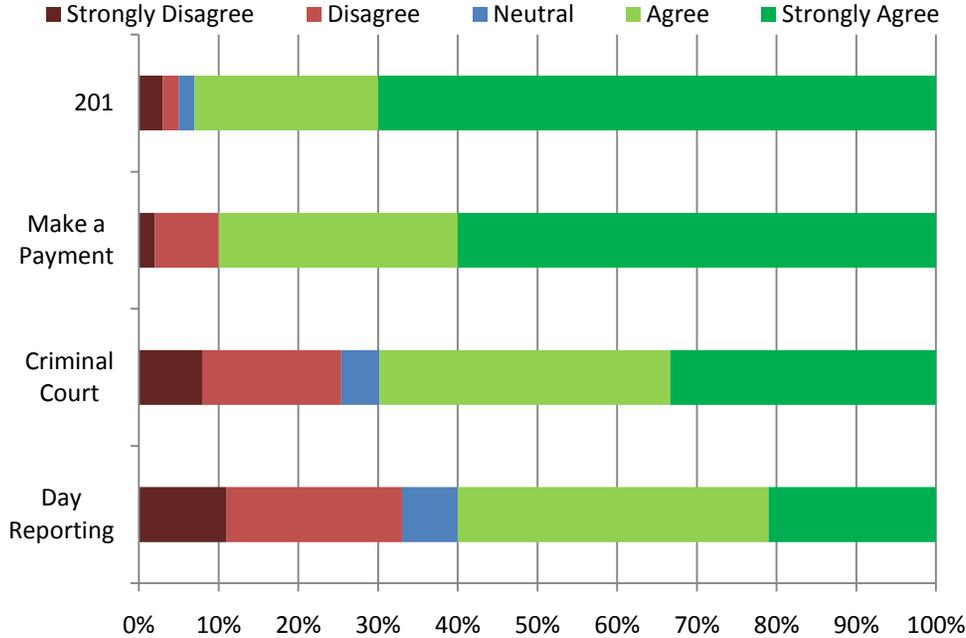
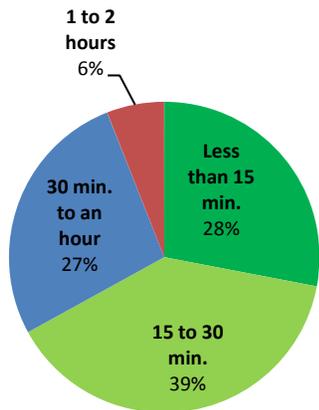


Figure 7

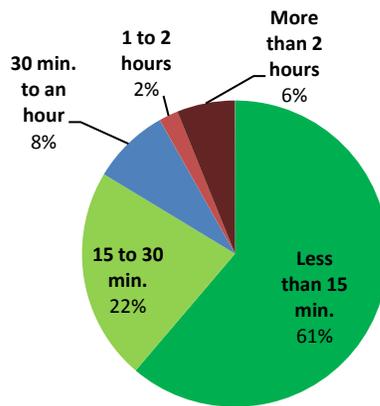
Certain segments have higher negative responses to “done in a reasonable amount of time” than others. This is due to the interaction between how long one thought something should take and how long it really did.

- Among the selected, 201 had the lowest negative response. **People expect a magistrate appearance to take a long time; in reality about two-thirds were done in less than 30 minutes and were pleased with the result.**
- Make a payment only had a 10% negative response. 83% of people were done within 30 minutes. However, for 8% of people it took over an hour. **Individuals for whom making a payment took over an hour make up the majority of the negative responses. If avoidable, this may be an area for improvement**
- Criminal court had over 20% negative response. 61% of people were in the court for over an hour. Much of this may be related to how court is scheduled. **Criminal Court scheduling, or the information given about wait times, may be another area for improvement.**
- Day reporting results were high for the reasons mentioned previously. **Figure 11 lends credence to the possibility that day reporting takes an inordinate amount of time.** 82% spent over an hour in the courthouse the day they were surveyed.



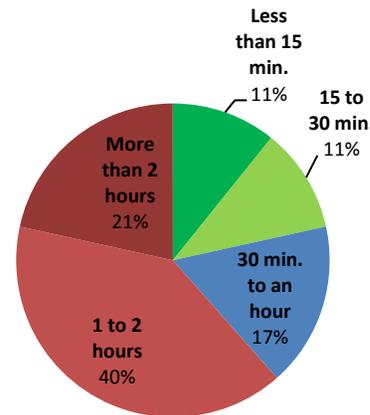
Duration of Visit:  
201

Figure 8



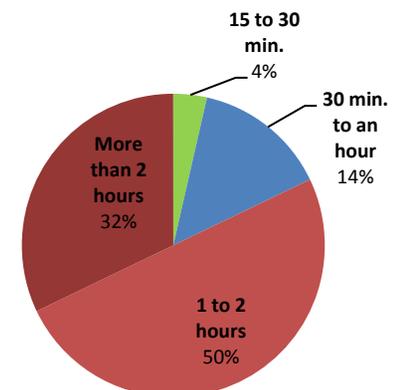
Duration of Visit:  
Make a Payment Only

Figure 9



Duration of Visit:  
Criminal Court

Figure 10



Duration of Visit:  
Day Reporting

Figure 11

# LANGUAGE

## Reasonable Efforts to Remove Language Barriers

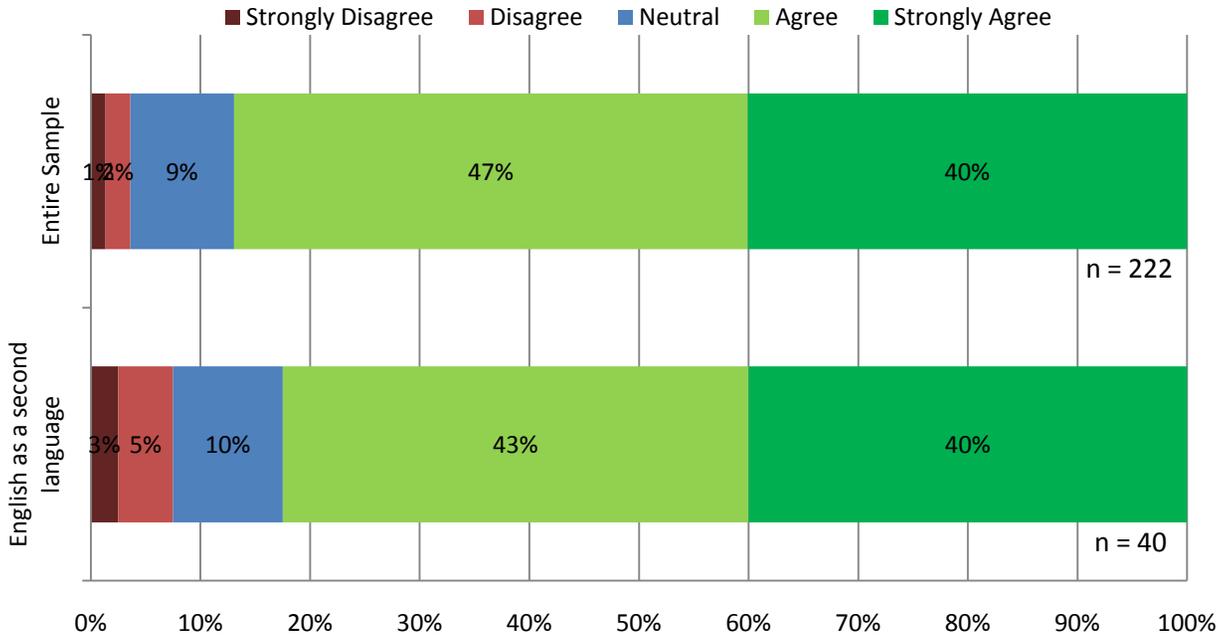


Figure 12

The following figures compare individuals for whom English is a second language with the entire sample.

- Compared to respondents as a whole, survey participants who identified as English not being their first language, were more than twice as likely to have a negative response (3% versus 8%) when asked if the court made reasonable efforts to remove language barriers.
- The trend continues in the questions asking if they came to the wrong courthouse and whether they easily found their courtroom or office. In both cases the negative was near double the sample as a whole.
- The survey results suggest that **people for whom English is a second language had more difficulty finding and navigating the courthouse than the sample as a whole**, although overall satisfaction remains high.

### Easily Found Courtroom or Office

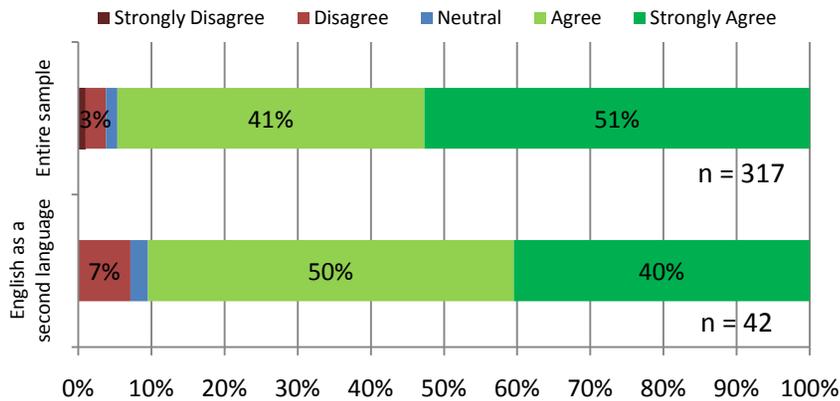


Figure 13

### Came to the Wrong Courthouse

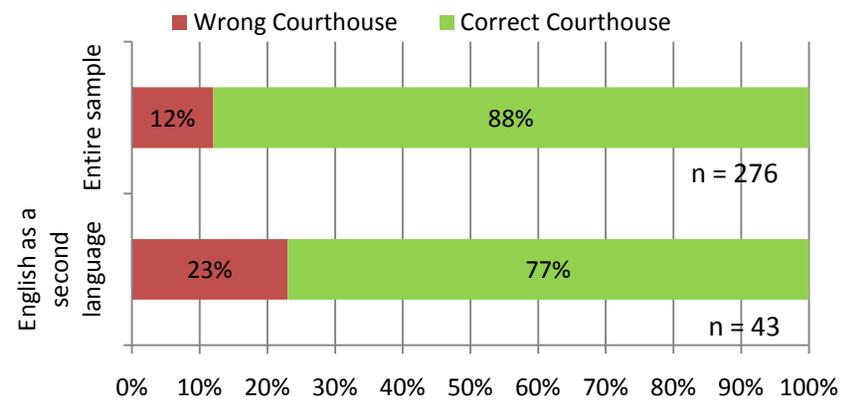


Figure 14

# BENCHMARKING

## SMC Outperformed KCC

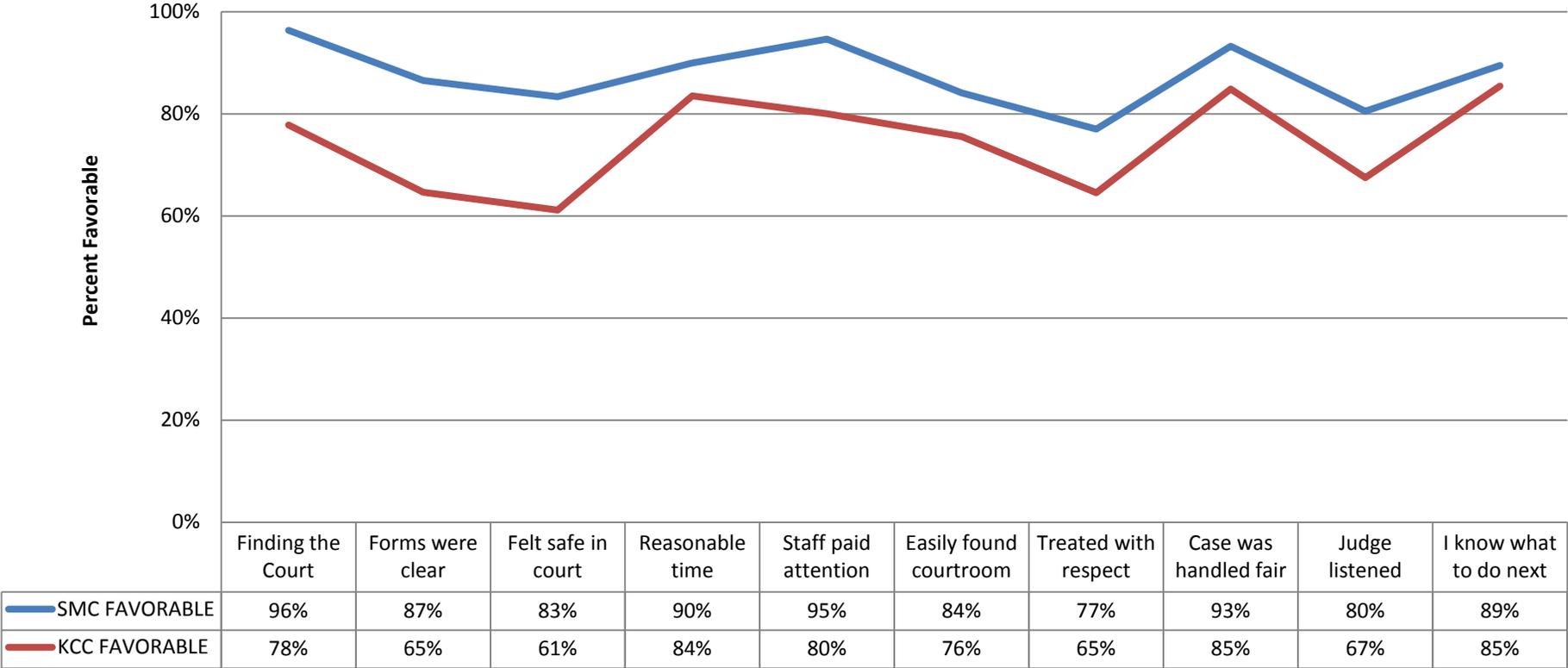


Figure 15

We were able to benchmark ten questions against King County Courthouse’s 2010 Access & Fairness Survey. The King County survey included both District and Superior Court.

- Comparable questions were limited to ten because some questions were removed and others were added to improve the survey’s usefulness to SMC.
- **SMC had a higher percent favorable for all questions that were compared.**

# SURVEY QUALITY

## Results Compared to Filings

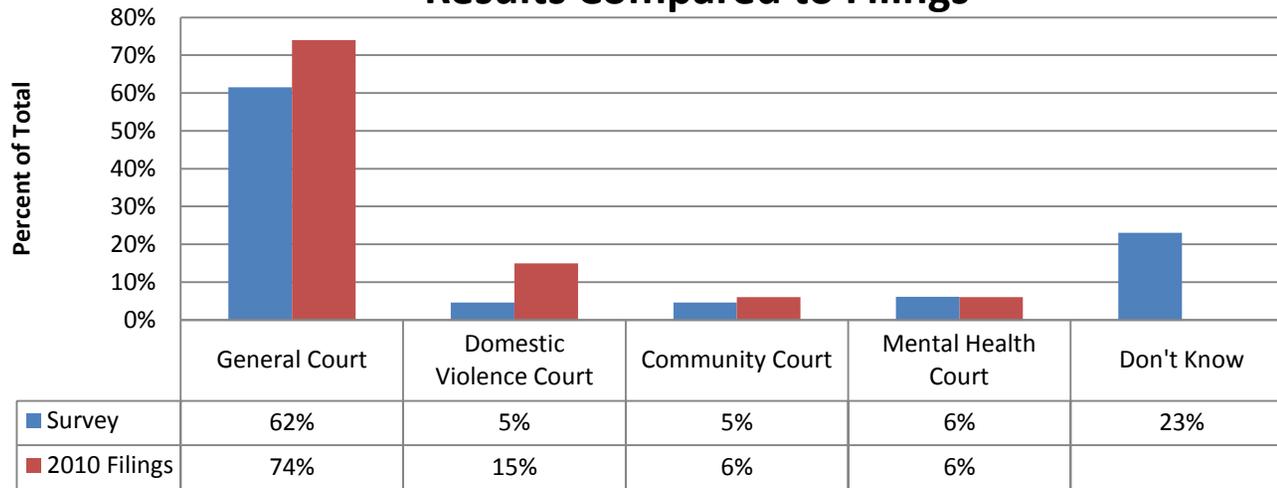


Figure 16

## Declined to Take Survey

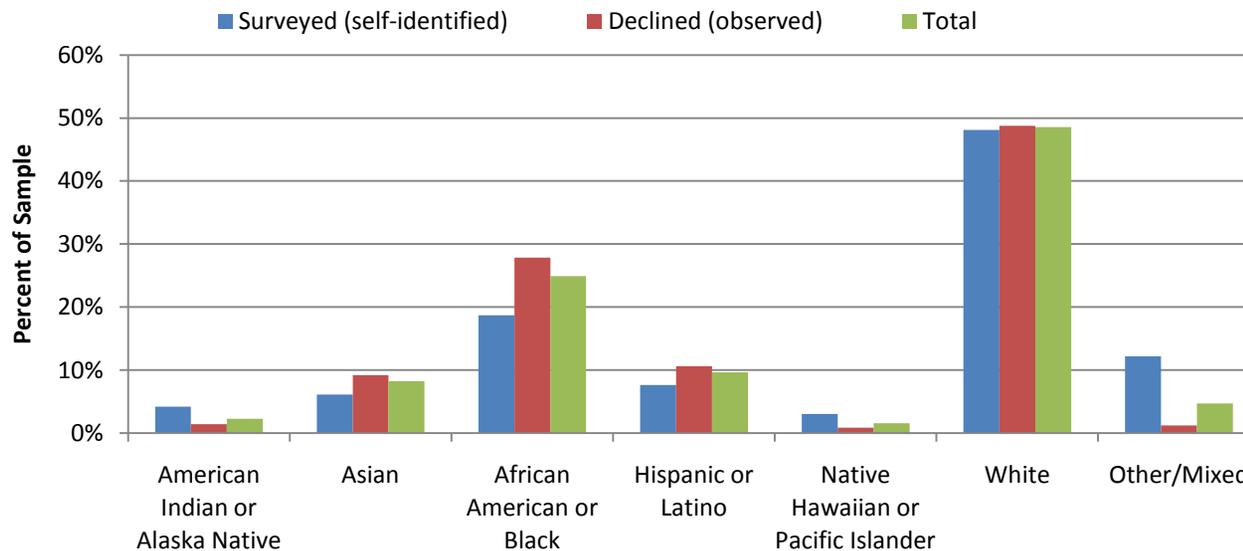


Figure 17

- 328 surveys were completed.
- 143 of those respondents appeared before a judicial officer.

Appeared in Court	
201	69
General Court	40
Don't Know	15
301	5
Mental Health Court	4
DV Court	3
Community Court	3

- Appearances captured in the survey were very similar to actual filings for 2010. The only underreported court is Domestic Violence. This could be due defendants not responding truthfully to the interviewer because of the stigma attached to domestic violence.
- Most ethnicities were as likely to participate as to decline. The “Black or African American” group appears to be more likely to decline. This can possibly be attributed to the conflict between self identification and observation. Note that the “Other/Mixed” category is much larger for surveyed than observed to decline.

# OPEN ENDED QUESTION

170 participants answered the open ended question “How could we have served you better at the court today.”

- **30% had positive comments for the court such as, “Great Job” or “Excellent Service.”**
- 15% had “no complaints” or similar response.

Coded Responses	
29%	Positive Comment
28%	Other
15%	No complaints
8%	Parking is difficult
6%	Took to long
4%	Would like coffee stand
4%	Unhappy with court outcome
4%	Social justice complaint
2%	Judge or Magistrate was disrespectful
1%	Attorney didn't spend enough time with me

Notable responses in the other category:

- “Better information for witnesses”
- “Provide better information in initial letter”
- “Because of online fees I came to the court to pay my ticket”
- “Option to set up payment plans online or by phone”
- “Off the record continuances should be available in all the courtrooms”
- “Better explanation about what to expect in court”

# SURVEY

## THE MUNICIPAL COURT OF SEATTLE



TIME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### Access & Fairness Survey

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_



"For the first set of questions I will read a statement and I would like you to tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree or find it not applicable."



QUESTION	Read out options for as many questions as is useful.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1. Finding the courthouse was easy.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. I felt safe in the courthouse.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical barriers.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove language barriers.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. Court staff paid attention to my needs.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9. Staff were able to answer my questions or direct me to the person who could.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. I was treated with courtesy and respect.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
"For the next questions choose the best answer"						
11. Did you come to the wrong courthouse initially?	Yes	No				
12. Did you try to conduct your business online or by phone before coming to the courthouse today?	Yes	No				N/A
13. How long were you in the building?	Less than 15 minutes	15 to 30 minutes	30 minutes to an hour	1 to 2 hours	More than 2 hours	

“Were you party to a legal matter before a judicial officer today?”

This means the interviewee was a defendant, plaintiff or appeared before a magistrate. If so, complete questions 14 - 25. If not, skip to question 26.

“For the following questions, choose the option that best describes your experience today”

14. What type of case brought you to court today?

1. Traffic
2. Parking
3. Criminal
4. Non-Traffic, Non-Criminal Infraction (littering, drinking in public, etc.)
5. Civil
6. Don't know

15. What court did you appear in today?

1. 201 (Magistrate to Mitigate/Contest)
2. 301 (Contested Infraction)
3. General Court
4. Domestic Violence Court
5. Community Court
6. Veterans Court
7. Mental Health Court
8. Don't know

“For the next set of questions answer whether you strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, or not applicable”

QUESTION	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
16. The way my case was handled was fair.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
17. The (Judge/Magistrate) listened to my side of the story before he or she made a decision.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
18. As I leave the court, I know what I need to do next.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19. The (Judge/Magistrate) treated me with respect.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
20. Court staff treated me with respect.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
21. I understand the court's ruling on my case.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
22. Was the outcome in court favorable to you today?	Yes	No				N/A
23. Were you represented by a lawyer?	Yes	No				N/A
If the answer to question 23 was no, skip ahead to question 26.						
24. If you were represented by a lawyer, was your lawyer a public defender or a private lawyer?	Public Defender		Private Lawyer			N/A
25. My lawyer treated me with respect.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A



Restart here if questions 14 – 25 were skipped.  
All interviewees should be asked the following questions.



“Please choose the options that best fit what you did in the court today. You may choose more than one answer”

26. What did you do in the court today?

1. Search court records/obtain documents
2. File Papers
3. Make a payment
4. Get information
5. Appear as a witness
6. Attorney representing client
7. Jury duty
8. Attend a hearing or trial
9. Court resource center
10. Day reporting
11. Defendant
12. Other party to a legal matter
13. Probation obligation (not day reporting)

“The following questions are optional; they are demographic in nature”

27. How do you identify yourself?

1. American Indian or Alaska Native
2. Asian
3. Black or African American
4. Hispanic or Latino
5. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
6. White
7. Mixed
8. Other \_\_\_\_\_

28. Is English your first language?

9. Yes
10. No

29. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_

30. How could we have served you better at the court today?