



MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

You Be
The **JUDGE**

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey

Prepared by Court Research Office,

State Court Administrator's Office

Presented to Judicial Council, March 2024

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Background and Purpose of Access & Fairness Survey	5
Branch core goals and performance measures	5
About the survey instrument	5
Analytical approach.....	6
Changes to deployment methodology of 2023 survey.....	7
Local Court Customer Survey Results	8
Number of responses by survey deployment method	8
Respondent demographics	9
Access and fairness results over time	24
Detailed in-person and remote access and fairness statement results from 2023.....	27
Access and fairness results by district.....	30
Customer experience results	31
Analysis: Litigant experience by venue	34
Analysis: Selected demographic differences in access and fairness ratings.....	39
Analysis: Self-represented litigant experience in civil matters.....	42
Public Website Customer Survey Results	47
Court Payment Center Survey Results.....	50
Court Payment Center web payment customers	50
Court Payment Center phone customers	52
External Application Support Team Survey Results.....	55
Statewide Self-Help Center Survey Results	56
Project Implementation and Leadership	57

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Survey Deployment Methodology.....	59
Deployment of local court customer surveys.....	59
Deployment of public website survey.....	61
Deployment of Court Payment Center surveys.....	61
Deployment of External Application Support Team and Statewide Self-Help Center surveys	62
Appendix.....	64
A. Data cleaning notes.....	64
B. Number of local court customer responses by district and court location.....	65
C. In-person local court customer questionnaire.....	68
D. Remote local court customer questionnaire.....	70

Executive Summary

The Minnesota Judicial Branch’s fourth District Court Access and Fairness Survey, conducted August to November 2023, provides important insight into the experiences of court customers post-pandemic, compared to a robust baseline of data going back to 2008. The survey gathered nearly 15,000 responses from local court customers in every county across the state, website users, and call center customers.

Results indicate increased levels of access in the courts. Average access ratings have ticked upward among both in-person and remote local court customers, statewide and in nearly every judicial district.¹ Access ratings increased the most for attorneys and justice partners appearing remotely.²

Overall perceptions of fairness increased compared to prior years, but only among remote hearing participants. Fairness ratings among in-person court customers declined slightly. A deeper look reveals fairness levels that could use improvement, especially among criminal defendants.³

Increased choice around hearings is a top issue for survey respondents. One in three local court customer respondents want the ability to choose their hearing date and time. One in three courthouse customers want the option to appear remotely, and one in five remote hearing participants want the option to appear in person.⁴

Self-represented litigants in civil matters report less access to justice and less perceived fairness compared to litigants with attorney representation. Results suggest courts could improve services for court customers lacking attorney representation, especially around the clarity of forms.⁵

Access to the courts and perceptions of fairness continue to differ by race, especially among remote hearing respondents. Ratings among American Indian and Alaska Native respondents in particular suggest room for improvement.⁶

A key finding from prior surveys, that customers are dissatisfied with wait times, is no longer a top issue for survey respondents. Agreement levels to the statement “I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time” increased more than any other statement, both for in-person and remote court customers.⁷ “Less of a wait at the courthouse” was a top priority for courthouse visitors in 2019 and dropped to #3 in 2023.⁸

Survey respondents visiting the Minnesota Judicial Branch website report a lower level of access compared to respondents receiving assistance over the phone or in courthouses. Results indicate there may be opportunities to improve navigation on the website, especially for those paying a fine.⁹

¹ See the sections [Access and fairness results over time](#) and [Access and fairness results by district](#)

² See the section [Analysis: Selected demographic differences in access and fairness ratings](#)

³ See the section [Analysis: Litigant experience by venue](#)

⁴ See the section [Customer experience results](#)

⁵ See the section [Analysis: Self-represented litigant experience in civil matters](#)

⁶ See the section [Analysis: Selected demographic differences in access and fairness ratings](#)

⁷ See [Table 7. Individual access statement ratings by year](#)

⁸ See the section [Customer experience results](#)

⁹ See the sections [Public Website Customer Survey Results](#) and [Court Payment Center web payment customers](#)

Background and Purpose of Access & Fairness Survey

Branch core goals and performance measures

The Access & Fairness Survey results serve as measures for the Access to Justice, Excellence, and Fairness & Equity goals of the Minnesota Judicial Branch. These goals are outlined in Judicial Council Policy 505, *Core Judicial Branch Goals*:¹⁰

- Access to Justice, states “[t]he Minnesota Judicial Branch will be open, affordable and understandable to ensure access to justice.”
- Excellence, states “[t]he Minnesota Judicial Branch will achieve excellence in the resolution of cases by making decisions that are fair, reasoned, understandable, and that resolve the controversy at issue.”
- Fairness & Equity, states “[t]he Minnesota Judicial Branch will provide due process and equal protection of the law, and will ensure that individuals called for jury duty are representative of the population from which the jury is drawn.”

Judicial Branch Policy 505.2, *Key Results and Measures: Priority Measures for Implementation*, states the Access & Fairness Survey should be implemented every four years.¹¹

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has conducted prior District Court Access and Fairness Surveys in 2008, 2013, and 2019.

About the survey instrument

The Access & Fairness Survey instrument used in Minnesota is adapted from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) CourTools Access & Fairness Survey. In late 2022, NCSC substantially updated this CourTool to accommodate the nationwide shift to remote hearings during the COVID-19 pandemic, by updating questions and recommended deployment methods. The survey contains ten (10) statements related to access to justice and six (6) statements related to fair treatment during court hearings. There are also demographic questions that respondents are asked to complete, so satisfaction levels can be compared across demographic groups. Race and gender response options have evolved over time to

¹⁰ See [Minnesota Judicial Council Policy 505, Core Judicial Branch Goals \(mncourts.gov\)](https://mncourts.gov/policy/505)

¹¹ See [Minnesota Judicial Council Policy 505.2, Key Results and Measures: Priority Measures for Implementation \(mncourts.gov\)](https://mncourts.gov/policy/505.2)

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

match common usage, and the options on the 2023 survey are pulled from the updated NCSC CourTool. The local court customer questionnaires are included in the Appendix.¹²

Beginning with the 2013 Access & Fairness Survey, Minnesota broadened the survey beyond local court customers by administering adapted questionnaires to centralized court customer service functions. Customers of the Court Payment Center were surveyed starting in 2013, customers of the public website were surveyed starting in 2019, and customers of the Statewide Self-Help Center and the External Application Support Team were surveyed starting in 2023.

Beginning with the 2019 Access & Fairness Survey, Minnesota added questions to the local court customer survey aimed at improving the court experience. Respondents are asked to select from a list of possible court improvements and about what business they would wish to complete online. The list of possible court improvements was partially modified in 2023 to reflect options relevant to current court operations.

Analytical approach

Survey respondents answer the access and fairness statements on a standard five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This report summarizes responses by calculating the average, with strongly disagree equal to one through strongly agree equal to five. This results in individual statement ratings as well as an average access rating and an average fairness rating, when taking the average across all ten access statements and all six fairness statements, respectively. All ratings are therefore on a scale of one to five.

In line with past reports, this report uses the following “stoplight” indicators for assessing those ratings:

1. Ratings 4.1 or higher indicate the court is doing a good job (“green”)
2. Ratings 3.5 to 4.0 indicate the court is doing okay (“yellow”)
3. Ratings 3.4 or lower indicate the court needs improvement (“red”)

Prior reports have also calculated an index score using NCSC methodology, which translates the average access and fairness rating from a scale of one to five to a scale of 20 to 100. With the revised CourTool, NCSC no longer advocates this analytical approach. This report does not calculate index scores.

¹² See Appendix C. [In-person local court customer questionnaire](#) and D. [Remote local court customer questionnaire](#)

Changes to deployment methodology of 2023 survey

The ongoing use of remote hearings after the COVID-19 pandemic meant the 2023 Access and Fairness Survey required two significant methodology changes compared to prior surveys to capture the same broad level of customer participation.

First, the 2023 survey needed to capture feedback from a new customer base: remote hearing participants. This was accomplished using an online version of the survey, tailored by NCSC for remote hearings. This online survey was made available primarily via an automatic redirect from Zoom and follow-up emails to parties and attorneys appearing at remote hearings.

Second, the 2023 survey needed to make courthouse data collection more flexible to accommodate lower visitor traffic in physical court locations. During the 2023 survey window, 51 percent of all hearings were held remotely. Court locations were given an option of either administering the survey using a staffed survey table or of setting up the survey materials at a front counter that could be administered without dedicated survey staff.

Local Court Customer Survey Results

Number of responses by survey deployment method

The 2023 survey implemented multiple new survey deployment methods for in-person and remote hearing data collection, which are described in more detail in [Deployment of local court customer surveys](#). This section provides information on the number of in-person and remote hearing responses received using each method.

The majority (73 percent) of responses in 2023 are from remote hearing participants (see Table 1). During the 2023 survey window, about half of all district court hearings were held remotely, meaning survey results are over-representative of remote hearing participants. The resources needed for in-person courthouse data collection place limits on how long that data collection can last; meanwhile, the automated methods were used during the full survey window to maximize the opportunity of court customers to provide feedback.

Table 1. Number of local court customer responses by venue¹³

Venue of data collection	Number of responses	Percent of total responses
Remote hearing data collection	8,161	73.1%
In-person data collection	3,002	26.9%
Total, all methods	11,163	100%

Table 2. Number of remote hearing participant responses by data collection method

Remote Hearing Data Collection Method	Number of responses	Percent of total responses
Zoom redirect	4,767	58.4%
Email invitation	3,249	39.8%
Zoom chat	28	0.3%
Hearing notice insert	0	0%
Method not known	117	1.4%
Total, all remote hearing data collection methods	8,161	100%

A majority (58 percent) of remote hearing participant survey responses were collected via the statewide Zoom redirect (see Table 2). Most of the remainder of remote hearing responses were collected via

¹³ Throughout this report, “venue” refers to whether the respondent is in person or remote.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

email invitation. In one percent of responses, the data collection method tag was missing due to a data quality issue with the survey software.

The vast majority of in-person surveys were collected in locations using staffed survey tables alone or in combination with a longer-term front counter set-up (50.7 + 31.7 = 82.4 percent, see Table 3). In a small number of responses received through in-court QR codes, the location tag was missing, so the method is unknown.

Table 3. Number of in-person responses by data collection method

In-Person Data Collection Method	Number of responses	Percent of total responses
Staffed survey table	1,522	50.7%
Hybrid of staffed survey table and front counter set-up	951	31.7%
Front counter set-up	523	17.4%
Method not known	6	0.2%
Total, all in-person data collection methods	3,002	100%

Respondent demographics

This section provides highlights in the 2023 local court customer survey respondent demographics, compared to prior surveys and, where applicable, to MNCIS data on hearing participants.

Each district received more total responses in the 2023 survey than the 2019 survey.

The overall increase in the number of responses is driven by the number of remote hearing participants who responded to the survey (see Table 4).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 4. Number of survey responses by judicial district, year, and venue

District	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote	2023 Total
1st District	865	450	514	471	824	1,295
2nd District	298	255	604	91	787	878
3rd District	716	382	661	323	494	817
4th District	947	636	733	286	2,168	2,454
5th District	1,479	852	571	230	432	662
6th District	540	245	517	166	438	604
7th District	1,126	508	506	256	591	847
8th District	454	235	451	319	231	550
9th District	805	651	932	555	734	1,289
10th District	539	400	546	301	1,178	1,479
Unknown District ¹⁴			17	4	284	288
Total, Statewide	7,769	4,614	6,052	3,002	8,161	11,163

In past surveys, all data collection occurred locally on targeted survey days within the survey window. In 2023, this local survey collection was supplemented with centralized, largely automated data collection for remote hearing participants deployed during the full survey window of August to November.

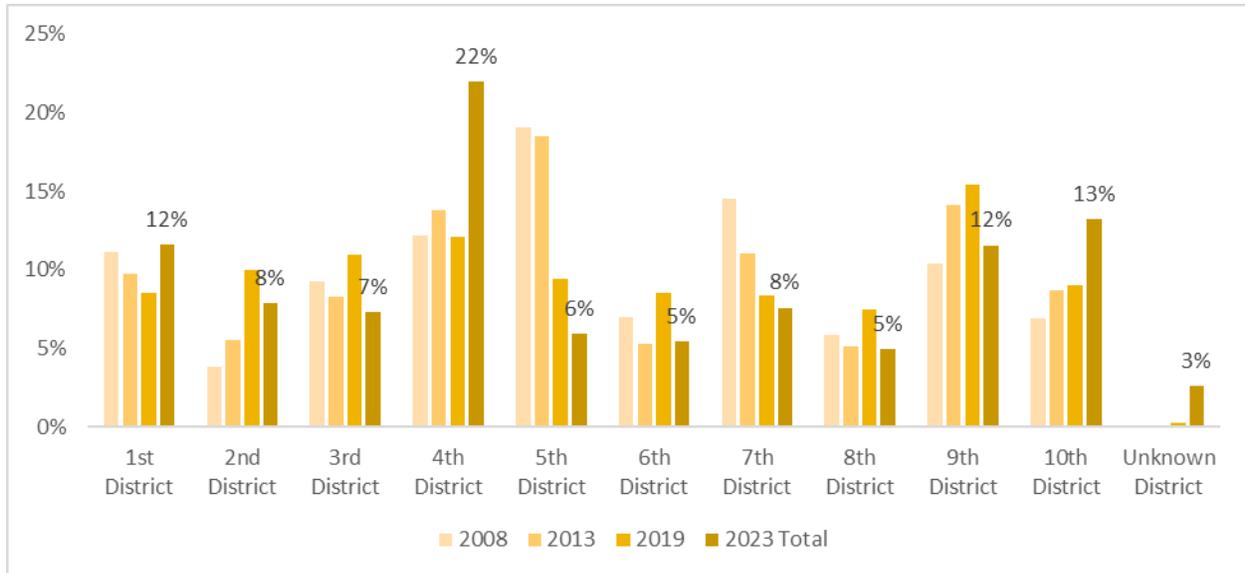
The 1st, 4th, and 10th Districts increased their share of responses compared to prior surveys.

All other districts decreased their share (see Figure 1). ‘Unknown District’ increased in share due to the increase in electronic data collection that relies on respondent self-report of where their hearing was heard.

¹⁴ Electronic data collection results in an ‘Unknown District’ when the participant is not able to report what district court their hearing was heard in.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 1. Share of survey responses by judicial district and year



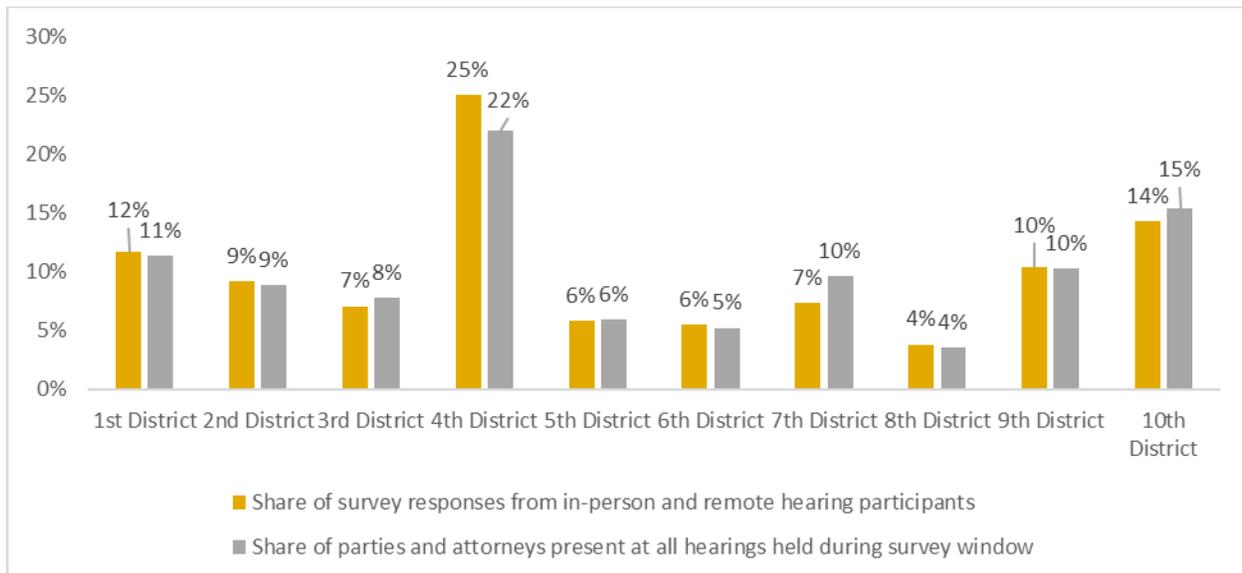
The share of hearing participant responses by district closely mirrors the share of hearings.

The courts do not collect data on all courthouse visitors, so the representativeness of the survey sample by district cannot be analyzed. However, the number of surveys received from hearing participants¹⁵ can be compared to MNCIS data on parties and attorneys present at hearings held during the survey window (August to November). That comparison shows that the survey sample of hearing participants is fairly representative down to the district level (see Figure 2).

¹⁵ Throughout this report, “surveys received from hearing participants” refers to the combination of a) all remote hearing participant surveys and b) in-person courthouse surveys where the respondent reported that their court activity was ‘having a hearing or trial on me case’ or ‘watching a hearing or trial’.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 2. Share of 2023 hearing participant survey responses compared to share of parties and attorneys present at hearings held by judicial district



Hearing participants make up a smaller share of in-person responses compared to prior surveys.

Courthouse visitors have been asked in each survey what court activity or activities they engaged in during their visit. Respondents can select more than one activity, so the percentages do not sum to 100. These activities have been consistent through surveys, except for ‘appear as a witness’, which was selected by two percent of respondents in the 2008 and 2013 surveys and discontinued in 2019; Figures 4 and 5 do not include ‘appear as a witness’.

The share of visitors in court to ‘have a hearing or trial in my case’ dropped from 51 percent in 2019 to 38 percent in 2023 (see Figure 3). The share of visitors in court to ‘watch a hearing or trial’ is also down by almost a quarter (14 percent in 2019 compared to 11 percent in 2023).

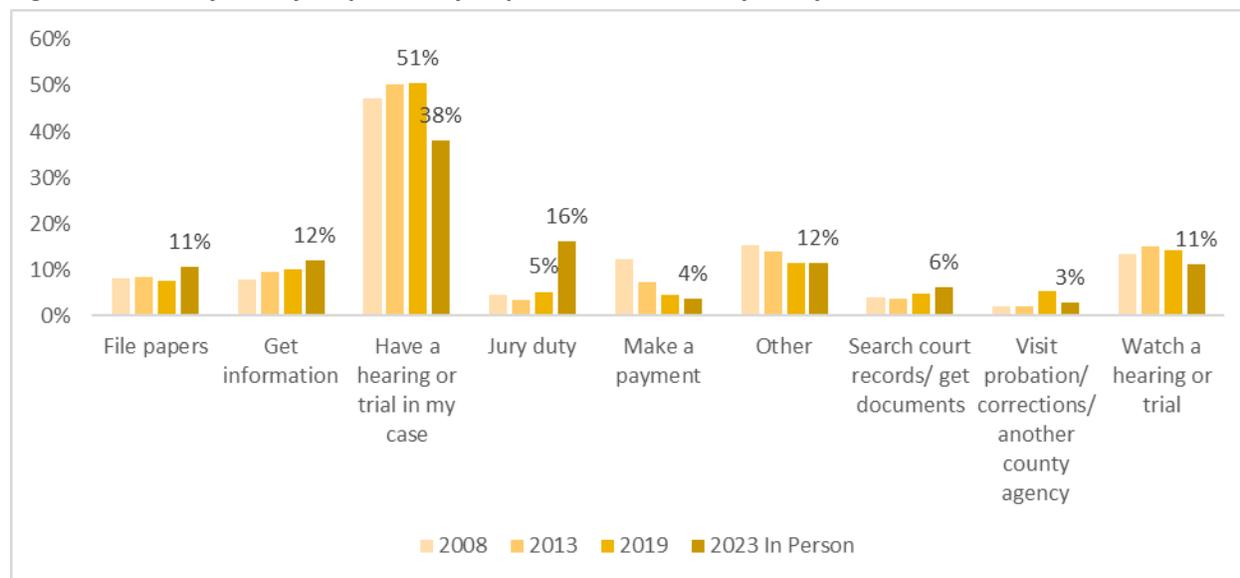
The courts do not collect data on all court visitors, so we are not able to determine whether the mix of court activities among survey takers is representative of all courthouse visitors. However, the smaller share of respondents coming to court to participate in a hearing is consistent with the shift toward holding remote hearings.

The increased share of in-person respondents reporting for jury duty is also notable and reflective of the jury selection process and jury trials continuing to be held in person. The share of courthouse

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

respondents making a payment continue to decline, likely reflective of the increased options for remote (telephone or online) payment through the Court Payment Center.¹⁶

Figure 3. Share of survey responses by in-person court activity and year



Hearing participants make up a larger share of total survey responses compared to prior years.

Although hearing participants make up a smaller share of in-person survey responses, they make up a larger share of total (in-person and remote) survey responses compared to prior years. (All remote hearing survey respondents are considered hearing participants.) Respondents who participated in an in-person or remote hearing make up 88 percent of the total survey sample in 2023, compared to 65 percent in 2019 (see Figure 4).

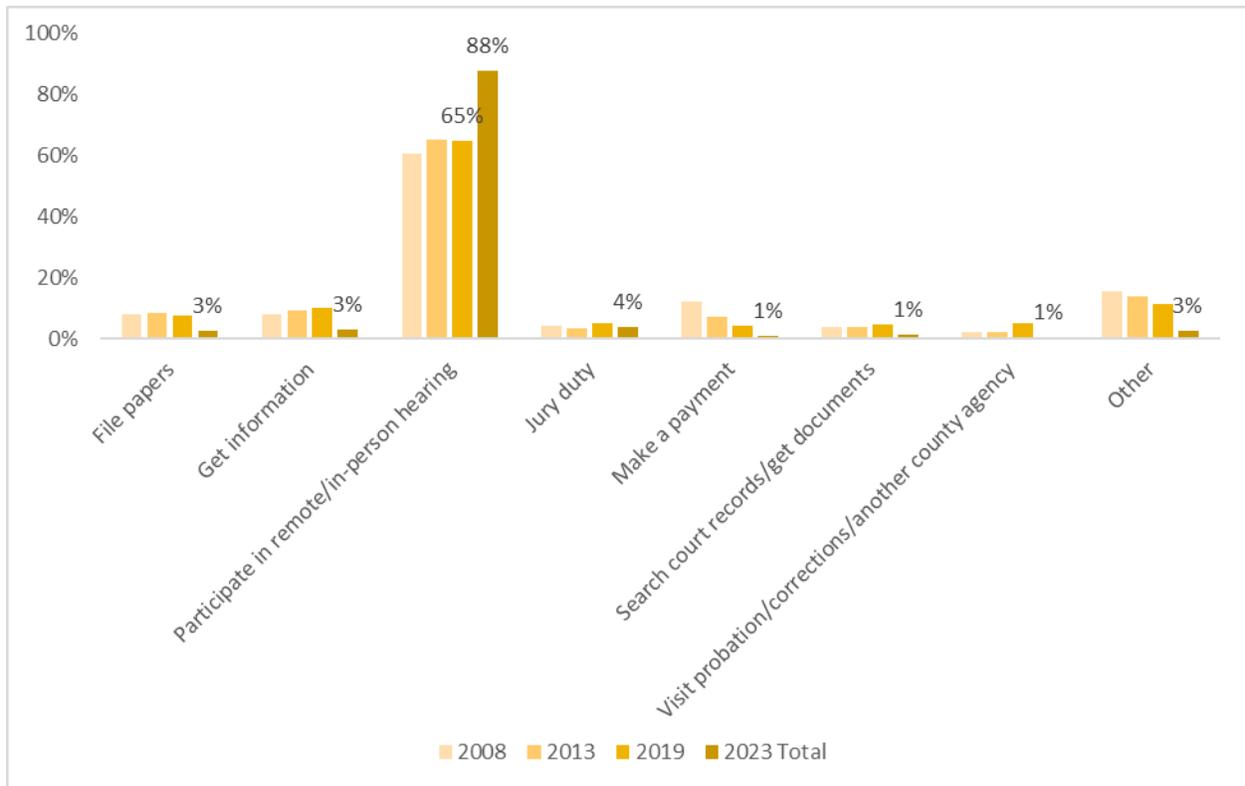
Remote hearing participants were invited to take the survey during the entire survey window through automated methods; courthouse visitors received a survey invitation only if they visited on that courthouse’s designated survey day(s). As previously noted, the resources needed for in-person courthouse data collection place limits on how long that data collection can last; meanwhile, the automated methods were used during the full survey window to maximize the opportunity of court customers to provide feedback.

¹⁶ Court Payment Center customers receive a modified Access and Fairness Survey, the results of which can be found in the section [Court Payment Center Survey Results](#).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

The courts do not collect data on customer activities that would allow an analysis of how representative these responses are of all customers. However, this shift in the respondent pool will require extra care when analyzing survey results over time.

Figure 4. Share of survey responses by court activity and year



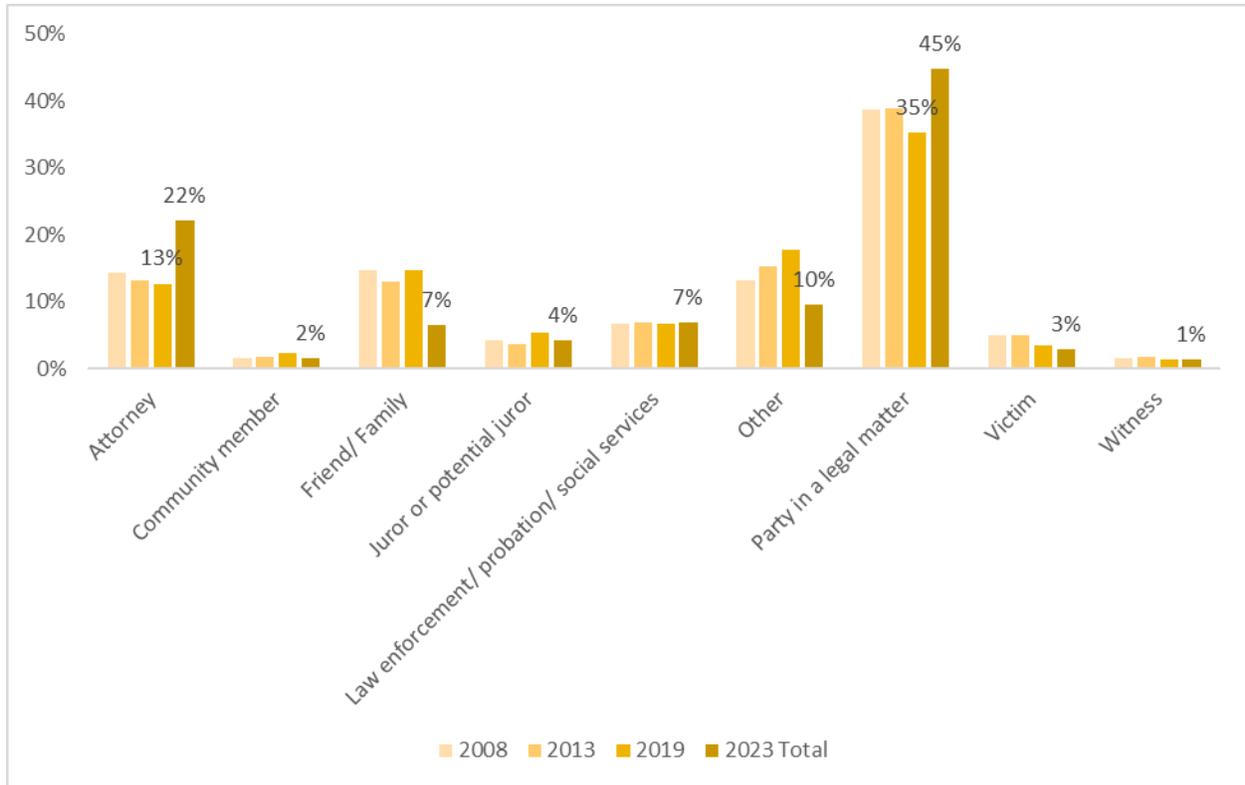
Attorneys and parties make up a larger share of responses compared to prior surveys.

The increased share of responses from attorneys and parties is consistent with the shift towards responses from hearing participants and away from those visiting courthouses on other business (e.g., getting information or searching court records). The share of attorney respondents nearly doubled (from 13 percent in 2019 to 22 percent in 2023, see Figure 5). Parties have made up a plurality of responses in each survey and increased ten percentage points compared to 2019, to 45 percent in 2023.

The decline in responses from friends and family seen in Figure 6 is reflected among both in-person and remote hearing survey takers: friends and family represented 15 percent of 2019 survey takers, 12 percent of 2023 in-person survey takers, and five percent of 2023 remote hearing survey takers (not shown).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 5. Share of survey responses by role and year

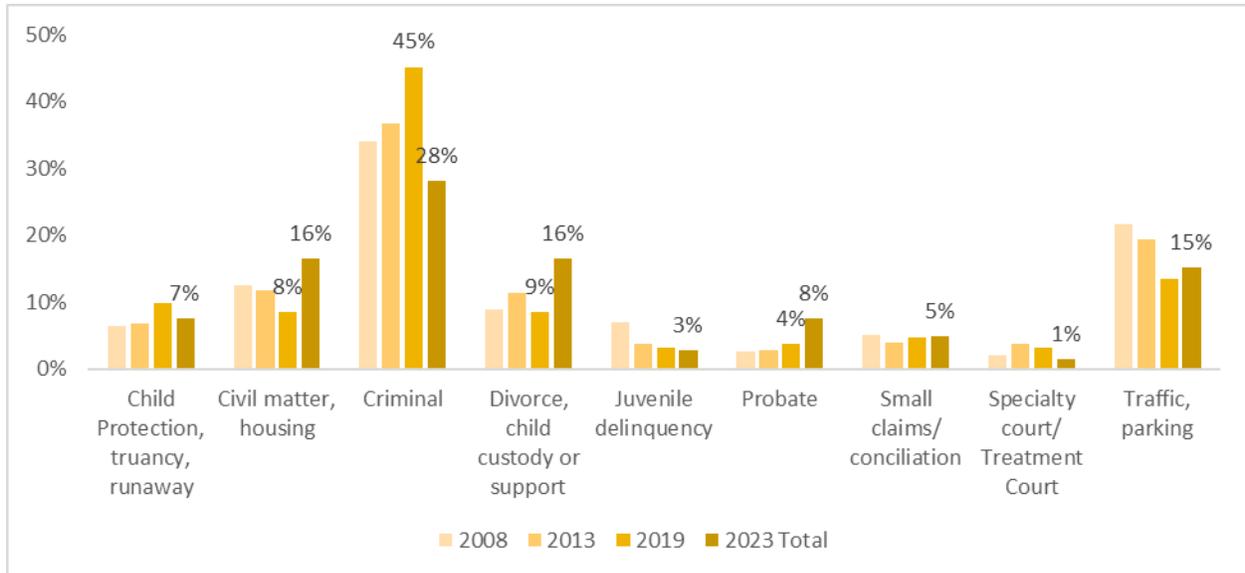


The case type Criminal represents a lower share of responses compared to prior surveys.

Criminal represents 28 percent of total survey responses in 2023, down from 45 percent in 2019 (see Figure 6). Civil, family, and probate case types all represent a larger share of responses compared to prior years.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 6. Share of survey responses by case type and year



The case type Criminal represents a lower share of responses compared to hearings held.

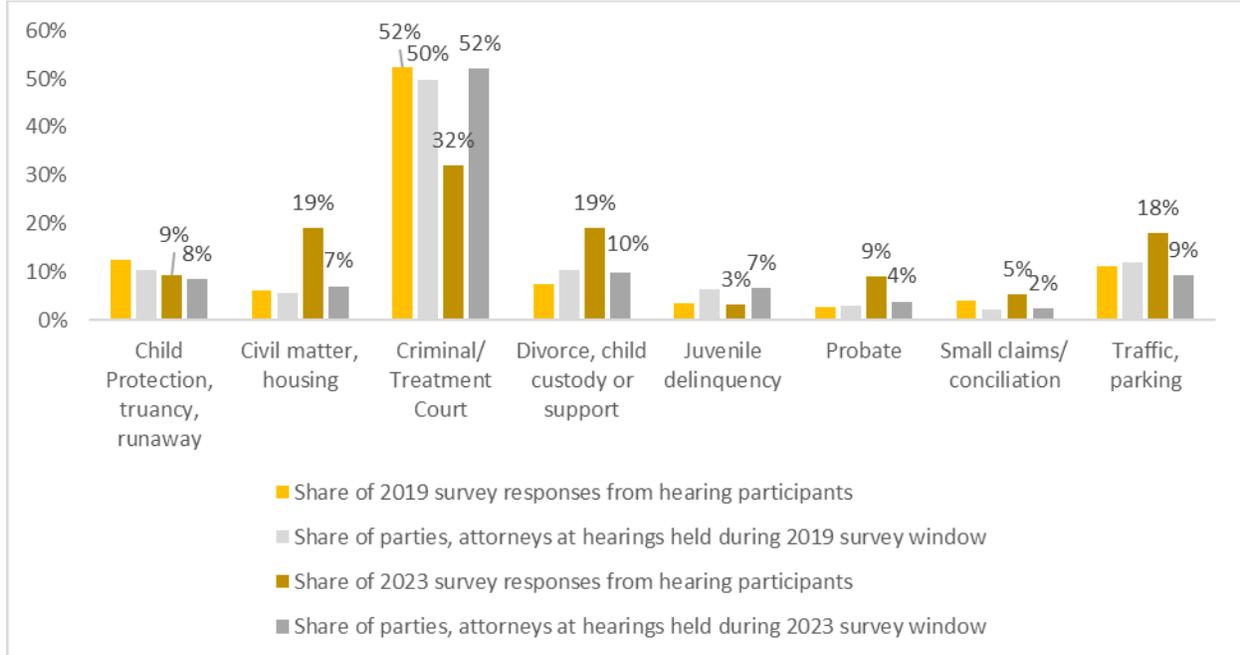
Although there is no data to gauge case type representativeness of all survey respondents, we can compare MNCIS data on parties and attorneys attending hearings to the hearing participant surveys by case type. This comparison shows that the overall representativeness of hearing participant survey responses by case type declined in 2023 compared to 2019, largely due to remote hearing survey respondents.

In 2019, 50 percent of all parties and attorneys recorded as present at hearings during the survey window attended criminal hearings, and 52 percent of hearing participant surveys were related to criminal cases (see Figure 7). In 2023, a slightly higher share of parties and attorneys at hearings attended a criminal hearing (52 percent) and a lower share of hearing participant surveys were related to criminal cases (32 percent). In contrast, civil, family, probate, and traffic case types are over-represented in the hearing participant survey results.

The underrepresentation of criminal case participants in the 2023 survey results was also seen in the OHI Hearing Participant Survey of early 2023, in which 26 percent of responses were from criminal case participants (compared to 32 percent of Access and Fairness responses).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 7. Share of 2019 and 2023 hearing participant survey responses compared to share of parties and attorneys at hearings held by case type and year

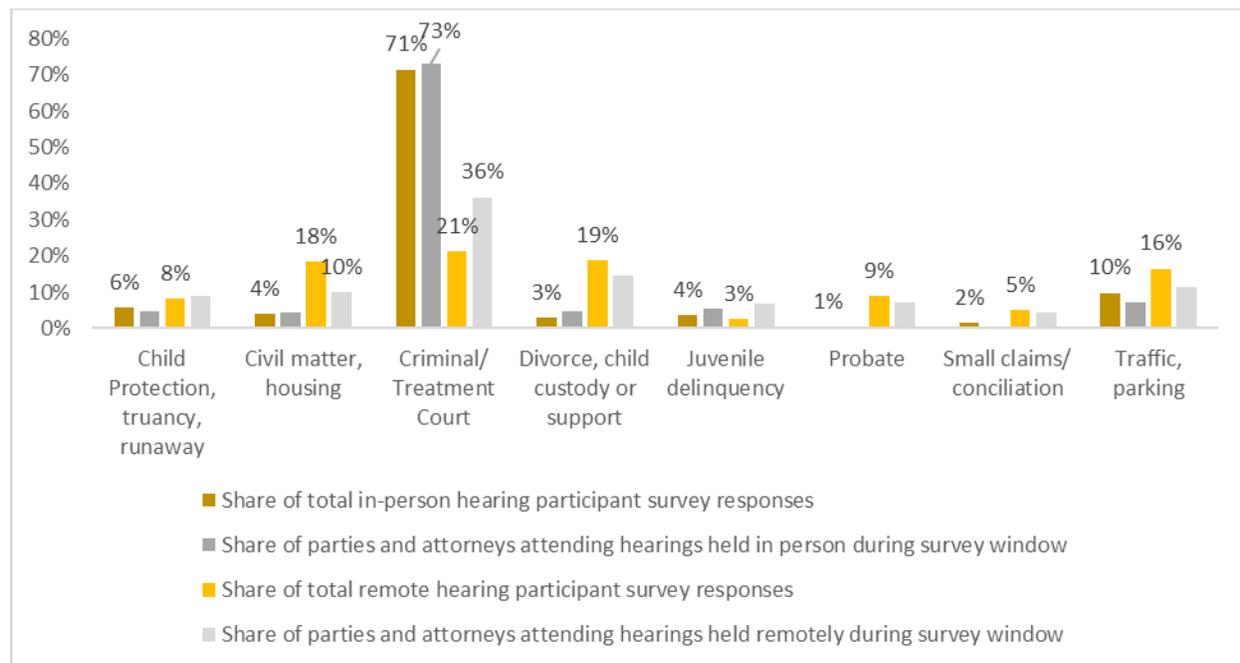


This result is largely driven by remote hearing responses; in-person hearing responses are broadly representative of party and attorney presence at hearings as recorded in MNCIS. Seventy-three percent of all parties and attorneys recorded as present at a hearing in MNCIS during the survey window attended a criminal hearing, compared to 71 percent of in-person hearing participant survey responses (see Figure 8). Thirty-six percent of parties and attorneys attending a remote hearing attended a criminal hearing, compared to 21 percent of remote hearing participant survey responses. Civil, family, probate, and traffic case types are all over-represented among the remote hearing participant survey responses.

Figure 8 also illustrates that the case type composition of responses varies significantly by venue. This complicates a comparison of the remote and in-person hearing experience, which is explored in the section [Analysis: Litigant experience by venue](#).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 8. Share of 2023 hearing participant survey responses compared to share of parties and attorneys at hearings held by case type and venue



Non-response to race, gender, and age questions has increased compared to prior surveys.

Beginning with the 2019 survey, the race and gender questions included an affirmative ‘Prefer not to say’ response option; this response option was also added to the age question in 2023. Also in 2023, the questionnaire added the following statement regarding the collection of race, gender, and age data from respondents:

The questions in this box are optional. Your response will help the Minnesota Judicial Branch determine whether customers are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, and age.

The response options to the race question have seen multiple terminology updates across survey years. All surveys since 2008 have included an ‘Other’ or write-in option; the term for that category was updated in 2023 to ‘Prefer to self-describe’. Two response options were added in 2019: ‘Middle Eastern or North African’ and ‘Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander’. The category ‘Asian or Asian American’ was updated in 2023 from ‘Asian’ in past surveys. The category ‘Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic’ was updated in 2023 from ‘Hispanic or Latino’ in past surveys. The 2023 response options follow the updated NCSC CourTool.

The share of survey responses not disclosing race has increased to 16 percent (see Figure 9), gender to 13 percent (see Figure 10), and age to 12 percent (see Figure 11). (Age was not included on the 2008

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

questionnaire.) Non-disclosure refers to either affirmatively responding ‘Prefer not to say’ or simply leaving the question blank.

Figure 9. Share of survey responses not disclosing race by year

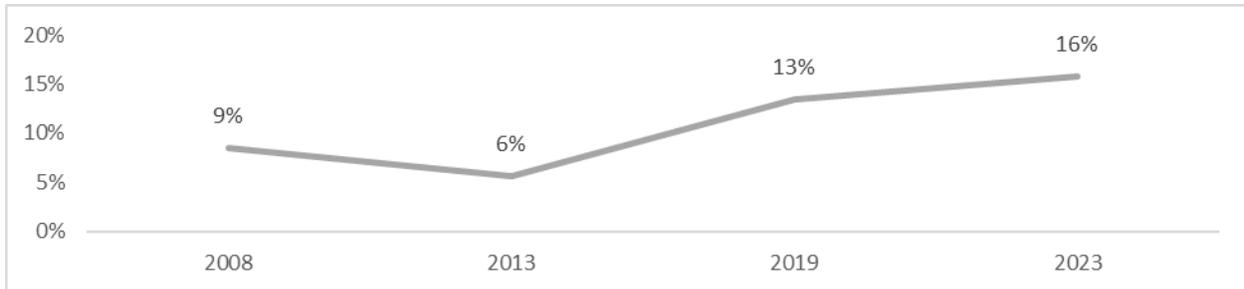


Figure 10. Share of survey responses not disclosing gender by year

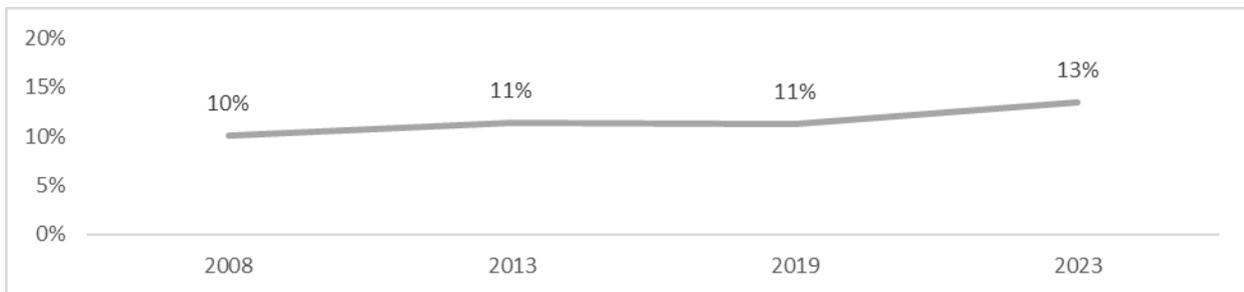
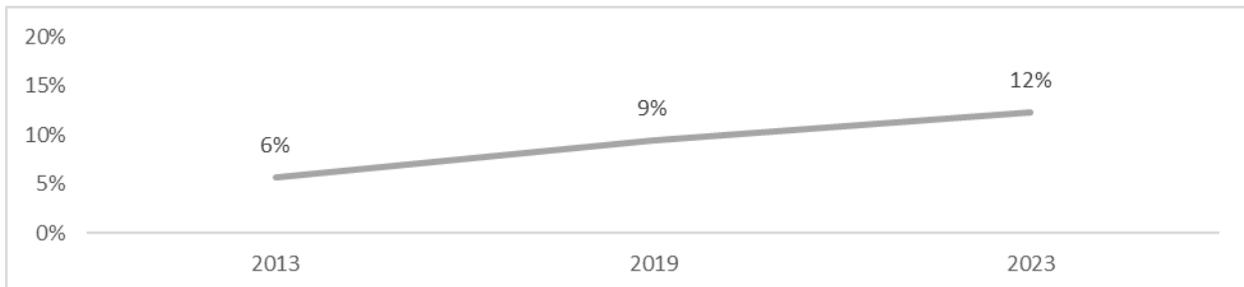


Figure 11. Share of survey responses not disclosing age by year

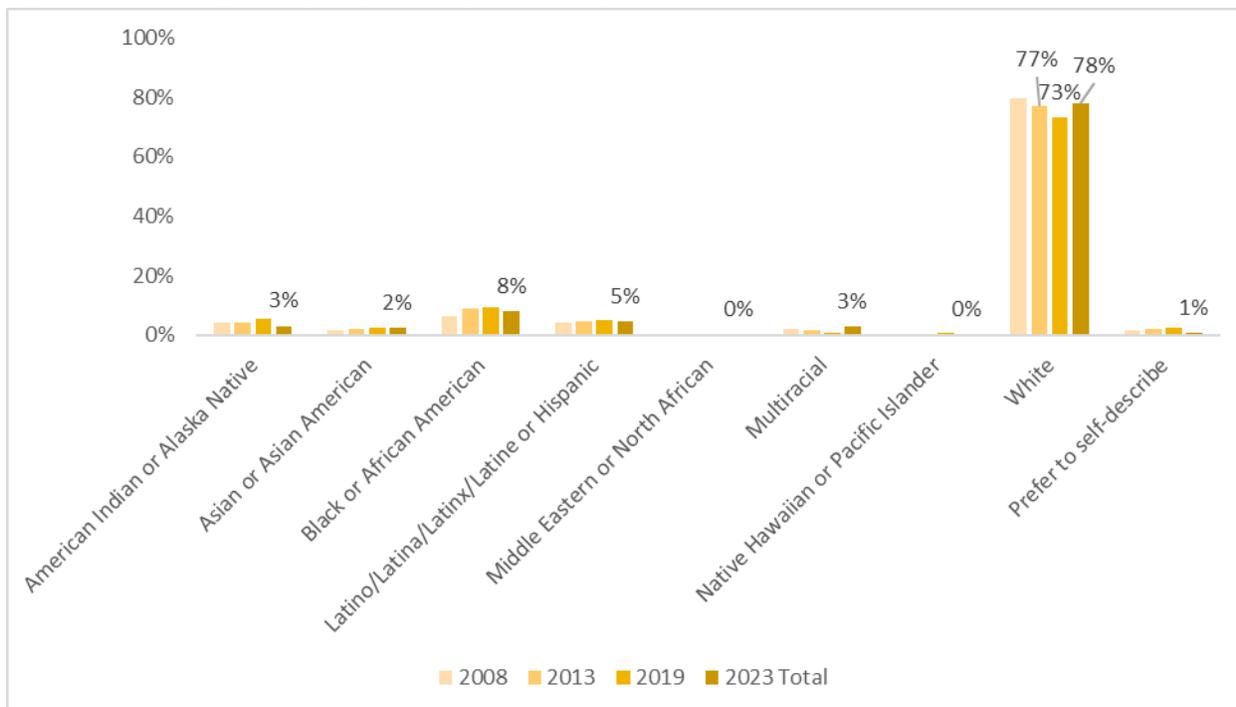


Responses from white, non-Hispanic survey takers make up a slightly larger share compared to the 2019 and 2013 surveys.

White, non-Hispanic survey takers represent 78 percent of responses in 2023, compared to 73 percent in 2019 and 77 percent in 2013 (see Figure 12).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 12. Share of survey responses by race and year



Previous sections have described changes in survey respondent demographics by role and case type, but those shifts do not explain the shift toward a larger share of white respondents. This trend in race responses occurs within each role and case type: for example, the share of attorney respondents who are white increased from 88 percent in 2019 to 91 percent in 2023, and the share of party respondents who are white increased from 67 percent in 2019 to 72 percent in 2023 (not shown).

The shift towards a larger share of white respondents is primarily driven by remote hearing participants. Seventy-nine percent of remote hearing participant respondents are white, compared to 73 percent of in-person courthouse visitor respondents (see Table 5).¹⁷ The decline in the share of American Indian or Alaska Native respondents is also entirely driven by remote hearing responses (5.6 percent in-person compared to just 2.1 percent remote).

¹⁷ The results from 2008 to 2019 and the in-person results from 2023 include all responses, not just those from hearing participants. Hearing participants tend to be more racially diverse; for example, 68 percent of in-person hearing participant respondents in 2023 are white (not shown), compared to 73 percent of all in-person respondents seen in Table 4.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 5. Share of survey responses by race, year, and venue

Race	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.2%	4.0%	5.6%	5.6%	2.1%
Asian or Asian American	1.8%	2.0%	2.5%	1.5%	2.8%
Black or African American	6.5%	9.0%	9.2%	8.6%	7.8%
Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic	4.1%	4.5%	5.0%	6.0%	4.1%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%
Multiracial	1.9%	1.7%	0.9%	3.5%	2.8%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.1%	0.1%
White	79.7%	76.9%	73.3%	73.2%	79.5%
Prefer to self-describe	1.8%	1.9%	2.5%	1.3%	0.6%

Among remote hearing participant respondents, 81 percent of those completing the survey from the Zoom redirect are white, compared to 77 percent of those completing the survey from the emailed invitation (not shown). That the racial makeup of respondents varies by survey method is an important consideration for future surveys.

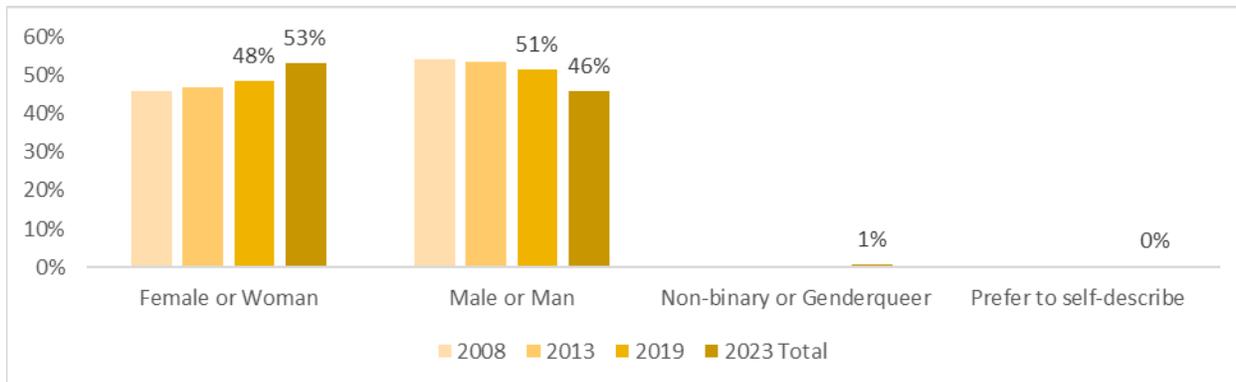
Although the share of responses from people of color is lower, the raw number of responses from most racial groups is higher in 2023 compared to 2019 (not shown).

Responses from female survey takers make up a larger share compared to prior surveys.

Survey respondents identifying as female increased to 53 percent in 2023 from 48 percent in 2019 (see Figure 13). The response option ‘Non-binary or Genderqueer’ was added in 2023, following the updated NCSC CourTool, and was selected by one percent of all respondents.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 13. Share of survey responses by gender and year

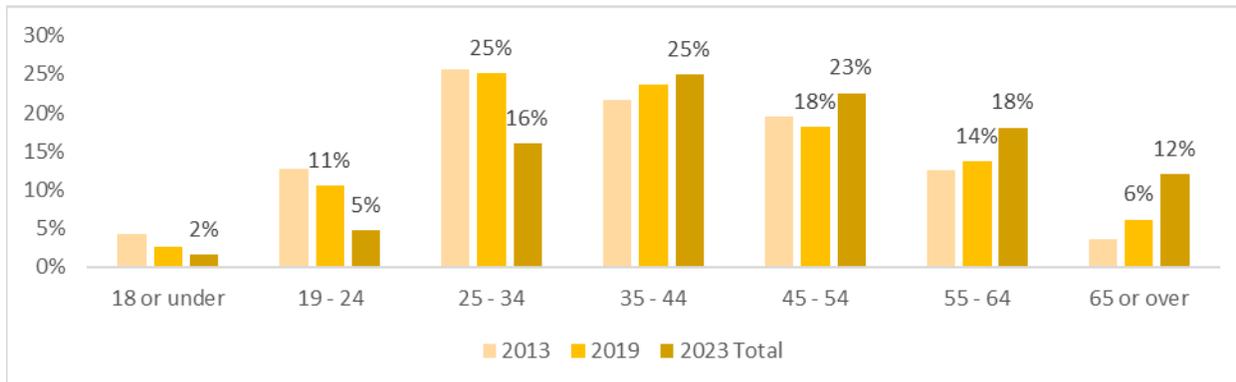


Just as with the shift toward more white respondents, the shift toward more female respondents is driven by remote hearing participants. Just 47 percent of courthouse visitor responses are from women, compared to 55 percent of remote hearing participant responses (not shown). Among remote hearing participants, the Zoom redirect garnered a higher share of responses from women than the emailed invitation: 57 percent versus 53 percent (not shown).

Responses from older respondents make up a larger share compared to prior surveys.

All age categories 35 and older have increased in share in the 2023 survey compared to prior surveys, and all categories 34 and younger have decreased (see Figure 14).

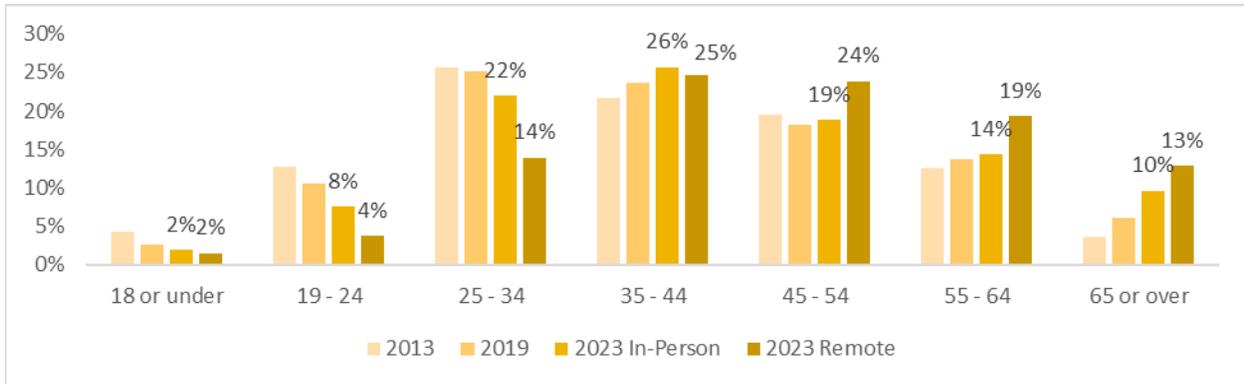
Figure 14. Share of survey responses by age and year



Similar to trends in the race and gender of respondents, the trend toward more older respondents is also driven by remote hearing participants. All age categories 45 and older make up a larger share of remote hearing responses compared to in-person responses in 2023 (see Figure 15). However, even in-person courthouse visitor responses have trended more moderately toward older respondents.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 15. Share of survey responses by age, year, and venue



2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Access and fairness results over time

Access ratings have ticked upward in 2023 among both in-person and remote respondents to 4.3 (see Table 6). In contrast, while fairness ratings among remote respondents increased markedly to 4.3, ratings among in-person respondents decreased to 4.0. This is the first statewide access or fairness rating in the “yellow” (doing okay) category.

Table 6. Average access and fairness ratings by year¹⁸

Rating	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote	2023 Total
Average Access Rating	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3
Average Fairness Rating	4.1	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.3	4.2

As previously noted, the vast majority of in-person hearings are in criminal matters, and a corresponding majority of in-person survey responses are related to criminal.¹⁹ The decline in the average fairness rating among in-person respondents reflects a decline in ratings in the criminal case type, which is detailed in [Table 25. Average fairness ratings by case type and year](#).

The 2023 results by venue are consistent with a key finding from the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative (OHI) Hearing Participant Survey of 2023: “[I]itigants and most other hearing participants who attended their hearing remotely reported similar or higher levels of satisfaction compared to those who attended in person.” This was also found in the jurisdictions piloting the new NCSC Access and Fairness CourTool, where a key lesson was that “[o]n average, court users believe remote proceedings are at least as accessible and fair as in-person proceedings.”²⁰

Average agreement to the access statement “I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time” increased the most in 2023 compared to 2019, moving from the “yellow” (doing okay) category to the “green” (doing well) category for both in-person and remote respondents (see Table 7).

¹⁸ Throughout this report, tables with access and fairness ratings use cell shading of green, yellow, or red to indicate the corresponding stoplight category; ratings in the yellow category are also underlined.

¹⁹ See [Figure 8. Share of 2023 hearing participant survey responses compared to share of parties and attorneys at hearings held by case type and venue](#)

²⁰ “Measuring Access and Fairness in Remote Court Proceedings.” *Trends in State Courts 2023*. National Center for State Courts. URL accessed 1/22/24, https://www.ncsc.org/data/assets/pdf_file/0026/92159/Measuring-Access-and-Fairness-in-Remote-Court-Proceedings.pdf.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Results also show a marked increase in agreement with the statement “The court's website was helpful” among remote hearing respondents; in-person respondents rated the website in the “yellow” category in line with previous results.

The increase in agreement to “I was able to get my court business done without [physical] [technology], communication, or language barriers” may be due in part to a wording difference from prior surveys, when the statement read “The court tries to get rid of barriers to service, such as physical and language barriers.” The updated wording on this statement comes from the updated NCSC CourTool.

Table 7. Individual access statement ratings by year²¹

Q#	Access Statement	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
1	[Finding the courthouse] [Joining the proceeding] was easy.	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4
2	[It was easy to find the courtroom or office I needed] [I was able to focus on the proceeding without distraction].	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.4
3	The forms I needed were clear and understandable.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.1
4	I felt safe [in the courthouse] [participating in the remote hearing or court activity].	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.5
5	I was able to get my court business done without [physical] [technology], communication, or language barriers.	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.3
6	I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>	4.1	4.3
7	Court staff paid adequate attention to my needs.	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3
8	I was treated with respect.	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.4
9	The court's hours made it easy for me to do my business.	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.3
10	The court's website was helpful.	<u>3.7</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.8</u>	4.1

²¹ Throughout this report, wording differences between the in-person and remote hearing questionnaires in access and fairness statements are indicated in square brackets, with in-person wording appearing first.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

All fairness statements among remote respondents in 2023 are in the “green” category, while three of six among in-person respondents are in the “yellow” category (see Table 8). Remote hearing respondents rated each statement higher than in-person respondents. Compared to 2019, ratings among in-person respondents declined on all statements except for “I was treated the same as everyone else.” Ratings among remote respondents increased on all statements except for “I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.”

One fairness statement is new in 2023 (“I could follow what was happening in the proceeding”) and one had a change in wording from “The judge listened to my side of the story before making a decision” to “I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.” Both of these changes are from the revised NCSC CourTool and may be impacting results.

Table 8. Individual fairness statement ratings by year

Q#	Fairness Statement	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
11	The way my case was handled was fair.	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.9</u>	4.2
12	I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.	4.1	4.1	4.1	<u>3.9</u>	4.1
13	I was treated the same as everyone else.	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.3
14	I could follow what was happening in the proceeding.	NA	NA	NA	4.1	4.4
15	The judge had the information needed to make good decisions about my case.	4.1	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.2
16	I know what to do next about my case.	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.3

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Detailed in-person and remote access and fairness statement results from 2023

Tables 9 and 10 provide detailed access results from in-person and remote respondents, respectively, with statements listed in order of agreement level. Tables 11 and 12 provide detailed fairness results from in-person and remote respondents, respectively, in the same format.

Table 9. In-person access statement results in order of percent Agree or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
1	Finding the courthouse was easy.	3%	1%	5%	31%	59%	90%	4.4	2,922
8	I was treated with respect.	4%	1%	5%	28%	61%	89%	4.4	2,909
5	I was able to get my court business done without physical, communication, or language barriers.	4%	2%	6%	30%	59%	89%	4.4	2,818
2	It was easy to find the courtroom or office I needed.	3%	2%	6%	35%	54%	89%	4.3	2,874
4	I felt safe in the courthouse.	4%	2%	7%	29%	58%	88%	4.4	2,905
7	Court staff paid adequate attention to my needs.	4%	2%	8%	29%	56%	85%	4.3	2,833
9	The court's hours made it easy for me to do my business.	4%	3%	11%	30%	51%	81%	4.2	2,805
3	The forms I needed were clear and understandable.	4%	3%	12%	35%	45%	81%	4.2	2,589
6	I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	6%	5%	12%	30%	48%	78%	4.1	2,756
10	The court's website was helpful.	5%	4%	23%	41%	27%	67%	3.8	1,255

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 10. Remote access statement results in order of percent Agree or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
4	I felt safe participating in the remote hearing or court activity.	4%	1%	6%	22%	67%	89%	4.5	7,719
2	I was able to focus on the proceeding without distraction.	4%	2%	6%	26%	62%	87%	4.4	7,940
1	Joining the proceeding was easy.	4%	3%	6%	25%	63%	87%	4.4	8,065
8	I was treated with respect.	5%	2%	6%	20%	67%	87%	4.4	7,770
9	The court's hours made it easy for me to do my business.	4%	2%	9%	24%	60%	85%	4.3	7,607
5	I was able to get my court business done without technology, communication, or language barriers.	5%	4%	7%	23%	60%	84%	4.3	7,665
7	Court staff paid adequate attention to my needs.	6%	3%	8%	21%	62%	83%	4.3	7,422
6	I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	6%	4%	8%	23%	60%	83%	4.3	7,778
10	The court's website was helpful.	3%	4%	14%	40%	39%	79%	4.1	3,090
3	The forms I needed were clear and understandable.	5%	4%	12%	27%	52%	78%	4.1	5,843

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 11. In-person fairness statement results in order of percent Agree or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
14	I could follow what was happening in the proceeding.	4%	4%	12%	36%	44%	80%	4.1	1,042
16	I know what to do next about my case.	5%	3%	12%	34%	46%	79%	4.1	1,005
13	I was treated the same as everyone else.	5%	4%	13%	34%	43%	77%	4.1	1,026
15	The judge had the information needed to make good decisions about my case.	6%	4%	14%	32%	43%	75%	4.0	1,004
11	The way my case was handled was fair.	7%	5%	14%	33%	40%	74%	3.9	1,033
12	I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.	7%	6%	17%	31%	38%	69%	3.9	925

Table 12. Remote fairness statement results in order of percent Agree or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
14	I could follow what was happening in the proceeding.	4%	2%	7%	26%	62%	87%	4.4	7,554
16	I know what to do next about my case.	5%	3%	9%	25%	58%	83%	4.3	6,983
13	I was treated the same as everyone else.	5%	3%	10%	24%	59%	83%	4.3	7,056
15	The judge had the information needed to make good decisions about my case.	6%	4%	10%	22%	59%	80%	4.2	6,811
11	The way my case was handled was fair.	6%	4%	11%	23%	56%	79%	4.2	7,052
12	I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.	7%	4%	11%	22%	55%	77%	4.1	6,053

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Access and fairness results by district

Although average access ratings vary by district, all ratings are 4.1 or higher among both in-person and remote respondents, placing them in the “green” (doing well) category (see Tables 12 and 13). As with statewide results, seven districts have fairness ratings among in-person respondents in the “yellow” (doing okay) category.

Table 13. Average access ratings by judicial district

District	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote	2023 Total
1st District	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3
2nd District	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4
3rd District	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.3
4th District	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.4	4.4
5th District	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3
6th District	4.2	4.2	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	4.3	4.3
7th District	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4
8th District	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3
9th District	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3
10th District	4.1	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.2

Table 14. Average fairness ratings by judicial district

District	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote	2023 Total
1st District	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.2
2nd District	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.3
3rd District	4.2	<u>4.0</u>	4.3	<u>4.0</u>	4.3	4.2
4th District	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	4.3	4.3
5th District	4.2	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	4.1
6th District	4.1	<u>3.8</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	4.2
7th District	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	4.3	4.3
8th District	4.1	4.3	4.2	<u>3.8</u>	4.3	4.1
9th District	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.9</u>	4.2	4.2
10th District	4.1	4.2	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	4.1

Customer experience results

Beginning in 2019, the local court customer questionnaire included the question “What three (3) changes would most improve your experience with the courts?” A list of nine possible changes were listed, plus a space to write in another suggestion.

The list of possible court improvements was added to and partially modified in 2023 to reflect options relevant to current court operations and to the respondent’s venue (for example, in-person respondents saw “The option to appear at hearings remotely via Zoom” and remote hearing respondents saw “The option to appear at hearings in person”). Also beginning in 2023, to minimize potential order bias (respondents tending to select the first option listed), the response options were randomized in the online survey software and printed survey forms used for in-person data collection displayed one of three different sort orders.

The most popular change among in-person respondents was “The option to appear at hearings remotely via Zoom”, with 34 percent of respondents selecting (see Table 15). (Twenty-two percent of remote hearing respondents selected “The option to appear at hearings in person”, making it the fifth-most-popular option among remote hearing respondents and indicating the choice of how to appear is popular across venue.) The most popular change selected by remote hearing respondents was “The option to choose my hearing date and time”, chosen by 34 percent. Because respondents can select up to three, the percentages do not sum to 100.²² Respondents also had an “Other”, write-in option, which is not displayed in Table 15.

Notably, among in-person respondents, “Less of a wait at the courthouse” went from the top selection in 2019 to third place in 2023; 47 percent of respondents selected it in 2019 compared to just 28 percent in 2023. (This drop cannot be explained by potential order bias in the 2019 results, because that option appeared in the middle of the list. On the 2019 survey, “Longer hours of courthouse operation (evenings and/or weekends)” was listed first and therefore may have benefitted from order bias.)

²² The survey software prevented respondents from selecting more than three, but that validation was not possible for in-person paper forms. Some in-person respondents selected more than three changes on their paper form, and results reflect all of their selections.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 15. Percent of respondents selecting each potential change, in order of 2023 popularity, with top three selections underlined and shaded in grey

Change	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
The option to appear at hearings remotely via Zoom	NA	<u>34%</u>	NA
The option to choose my hearing date and time	NA	<u>29%</u>	<u>34%</u>
Less of a wait at the courthouse	<u>47%</u>	<u>28%</u>	NA
An online portal to access my court information	NA	27%	<u>30%</u>
Less of a wait for my hearing to start	NA	NA	<u>27%</u>
More options to find my Zoom link online	NA	NA	23%
The option to appear at hearings in person	NA	NA	22%
Better access to community services from within the courthouse (such as housing assistance, domestic violence shelter, or legal advice)	<u>26%</u>	21%	NA
More options to conduct business online	19%	19%	20%
More options to fill out forms online	22%	18%	16%
Longer hours of courthouse operation (evenings and/or weekends)	<u>28%</u>	16%	14%
Better signs (or directions) in the courthouse	18%	16%	NA
Longer hours of phone support (evenings and/or weekends)	17%	13%	9%
More user friendly forms in plain language	14%	NA	NA
More knowledgeable staff available to answer questions	14%	NA	NA

The share of in-person respondents reporting they had first tried to conduct their business online but couldn't doubled in 2023, from nine percent to 16 percent (see Table 16). A smaller share of remote hearing participants reported attempting any court business online that they couldn't complete (nine percent).

Table 16. Percent of respondents unsuccessfully attempting court business online

Question	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
[For any of the business that brought you to the courthouse today] [Prior to your hearing today], did you attempt to complete [that] [any court] business online but couldn't?	9%	16%	9%

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Selected comments of what business in-person survey respondents attempted online include:

- “certified copies”
- “check on court date”
- “efile – confusing”
- “pay my fine, but came to pay in person to avoid extra fees from paying online with my debit card”
- “the divorce process”
- “zoom hearing”

Selected comments of what business remote survey respondents attempted online include:

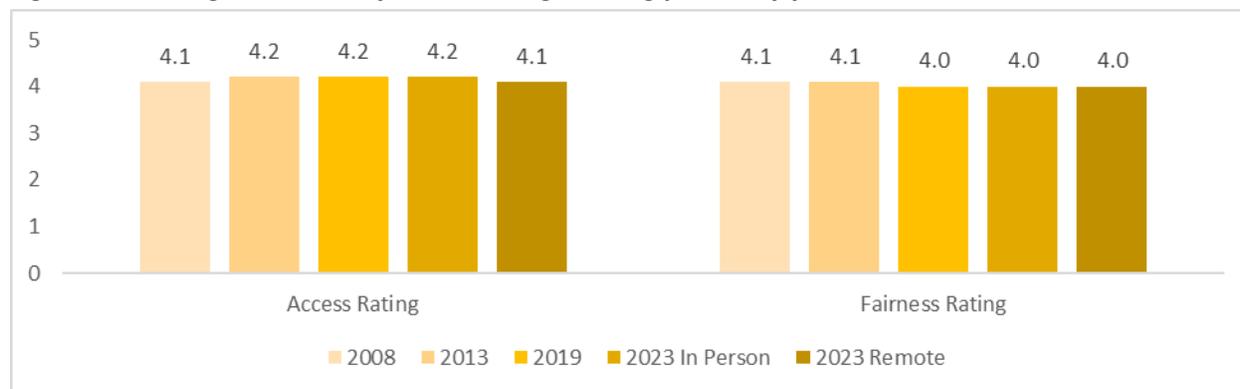
- “Complete forms court forms online to avoid printing and mailing expenses”
- “Could not look up the fine for my ticket as website sent me in a circle.”
- “fillable forms did not work even after downloading Adobe”
- “Had to call to get a hearing scheduled. No online sign up.”
- “I couldn’t submit my expungement paperwork and had to go through other Avenues”
- “I tried to find out when and what my court hearing was about.”
- “Zoom information was not sent to me prior to the hearing. I had to call court admin and was 15 mins late signing on.”

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Analysis: Litigant experience by venue

Litigants (defined as survey respondents selecting ‘Party in a legal matter’ as their role in court) report generally consistent levels of access and fairness regardless of in-person or remote venue. In-person litigants report slightly higher levels of access (4.2 versus 4.1 among remote litigants, see Figure 16); both groups have fairness levels in the “yellow” category (4.0).

Figure 16. Average access and fairness ratings among parties by year and venue



The case type of respondents varies significantly by venue. In-person litigants are most likely to be in court for a criminal matter: 55 percent of in-person litigants report a case type of criminal, versus 17 percent of remote litigants (see Table 17).

Table 17. Number of 2023 party respondents by case type and venue

Case Type	2023 In-Person #	2023 In-Person %	2023 Remote #	2023 Remote %
Child Protection, truancy, runaway	42	5%	165	4%
Civil matter, housing	77	8%	558	15%
Criminal	513	55%	642	17%
Divorce, child custody or support	83	9%	825	22%
Juvenile delinquency	28	3%	36	1%
Probate	16	2%	202	5%
Small claims/ conciliation	51	5%	319	8%
Specialty court/ Treatment Court	14	2%	19	0%
Traffic, parking	106	11%	1,066	28%
<i>Total, all case types</i>	<i>930</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>3,832</i>	<i>100%</i>

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Tables 18 and 19 show access and fairness ratings among parties by case type, year, and venue. Parties in criminal cases tend to provide lower access and fairness ratings when responding to the remote survey compared to the in-person survey. (Arraignments and uncontested criminal matters are more likely to be heard remotely, which likely impacts these results.) In contrast to criminal, parties in child protection cases tend to provide higher ratings when responding to the remote survey compared to the in-person survey.

Table 18. Average access ratings among party respondents by case type, year, and venue

Case Type	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
Child Protection, truancy, runaway	4.2	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	4.3
Civil matter, housing	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.2
Criminal	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.2	<u>4.0</u>
Divorce, child custody or support	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.1
Juvenile delinquency	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>	4.2	*	<u>4.0</u>
Probate	4.3	4.2	4.4	*	4.4
Small claims/ conciliation	4.4	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.1
Traffic, parking	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3

*Result from fewer than 30 respondents not shown

Table 19. Average fairness ratings among party respondents by case type, year, and venue

Case Type	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
Child Protection, truancy, runaway	4.2	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.9</u>	4.1
Civil matter, housing	4.1	4.1	4.3	*	4.2
Criminal	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.7</u>
Divorce, child custody or support	4.1	4.2	4.1	*	<u>3.9</u>
Juvenile delinquency	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>4.0</u>	*	<u>3.8</u>
Probate	4.1	*	4.3	*	4.3
Small claims/ conciliation	4.4	4.4	<u>4.0</u>	*	<u>4.0</u>
Traffic, parking	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.2

*Result from fewer than 30 respondents not shown

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

The higher average access rating among in-person litigants compared to remote litigants is driven by these statements (see Table 20):

- I was able to get my court business done without [physical] [technology], communication, or language barriers.
- [Finding the courthouse] [Joining the proceeding] was easy.
- I was treated with respect.

Also of note, even in-person litigants in 2023 reported higher levels of agreement to the statement “I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time” compared to prior survey years, although their rating (4.0) is still in the “yellow” (doing okay) category.

Table 20. Individual access statement ratings among parties by year and venue

Q#	Access Statement	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
1	[Finding the courthouse] [Joining the proceeding] was easy.	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.2
2	[It was easy to find the courtroom or office I needed] [I was able to focus on the proceeding without distraction].	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.2
3	The forms I needed were clear and understandable.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>
4	I felt safe [in the courthouse] [participating in the remote hearing or court activity].	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3
5	I was able to get my court business done without [physical] [technology], communication, or language barriers.	4.2	4.2	<u>4.0</u>	4.4	4.1
6	I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>	4.1
7	Court staff paid adequate attention to my needs.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.1
8	I was treated with respect.	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.2
9	The court's hours made it easy for me to do my business.	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1
10	The court's website was helpful.	<u>3.5</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>3.9</u>

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

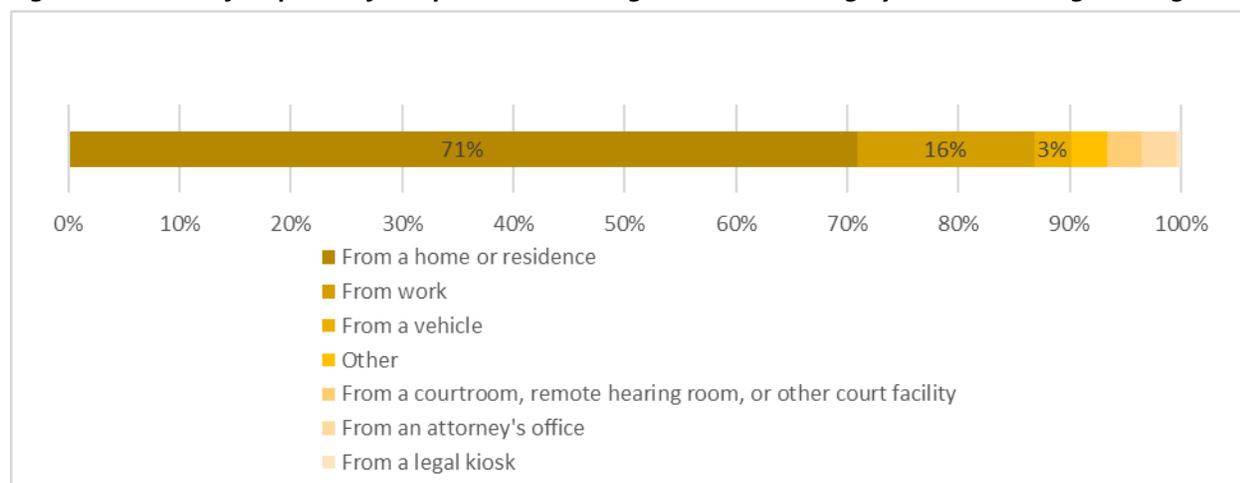
Remote litigants provide equal or higher ratings on all fairness statements compared to in-person litigants (see Table 21). In-person litigants in 2023 provide lower ratings on all questions compared to 2019.

Table 21. Individual fairness statement ratings among parties by year and venue

Q#	Fairness Statement	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
11	The way my case was handled was fair.	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>
12	I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.9</u>
13	I was treated the same as everyone else.	4.2	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.1
14	I could follow what was happening in the proceeding.	NA	NA	NA	4.1	4.2
15	The judge had the information needed to make good decisions about my case.	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>
16	I know what to do next about my case.	4.2	4.2	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>

The vast majority (71 percent) of responses from parties attending a hearing remotely are from those who logged on to the proceeding from a home or residence; an additional 16 percent are from those who logged on from work (see Figure 17).

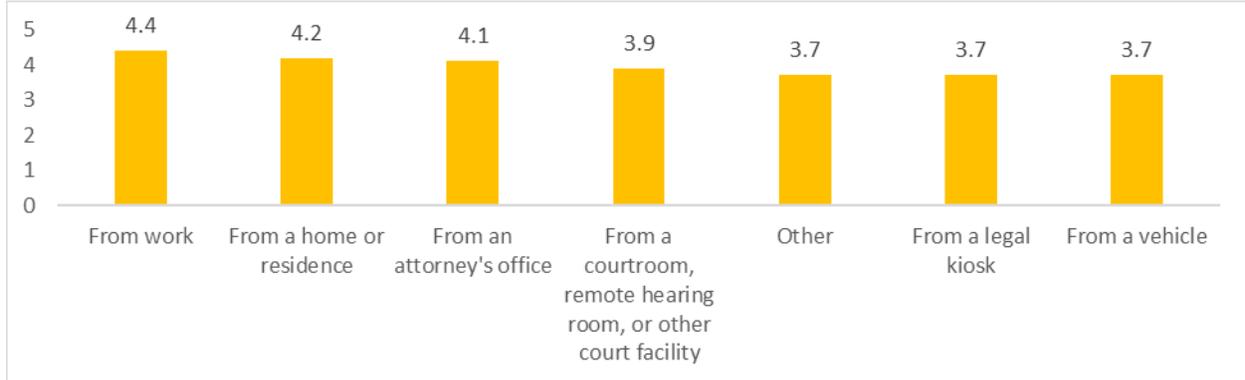
Figure 17. Share of responses from parties attending a remote hearing by location during hearing



Parties attending their remote hearing from work had the highest overall access rating, followed by those attending from a home or residence (see Figure 18).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 18. Average access ratings among parties attending a remote hearing by location during hearing



Selected comments from parties regarding venue include:

- “As an elderly person, I was not comfortable with the ZOOM HEARING.”
- “I appreciate the zoom option however, the wait time can be too long”
- “I feel that meeting in person and not via Zoom would help to show body language more and could help the judge see more of the dynamics between me and my ex-husband.”
- “I have participated on many ZOOM hearings over the last year. I would say there I am overall satisfied I will say that breakout rooms, chambers ect need to be offered while parties are waiting. Often the business that used to get done in the court waiting room gets missed. Also the delays from connectivity issues can be distracting”
- “I like remote. Hope it continues to be an option.”
- “It was really nice to not have to drive or find a ride to the courthouse. It's an hour away from my home.”
- “Love the remote option. Very convenient. Did not have to take time off of work”
- “Much better than standing in line in City Hall for two hours! Thank you for structuring the service this way.”
- “would of preferred a zoom option. Had to drive an hour for 5 minutes and a new court date”

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Analysis: Selected demographic differences in access and fairness ratings

Access and fairness ratings among remote attorneys and justice partners increased notably.

In contrast, attorneys and justice partners appearing in person provided access ratings in line with prior years, as shown in Table 22. All roles except victim have access ratings of 4.1 or higher (the “green” or doing well category), but ratings vary widely across role (respondents selecting a role of “other” are not shown). Parties appearing remotely provided slightly lower access ratings than in-person parties. Parties and victims have fairness ratings in the “yellow” or doing okay category (see Table 23; respondents selecting a role most applicable to the fairness statements are shown). The in-person and remote experience among parties was explored previously in the section [Analysis: Litigant experience by venue](#).

Table 22. Average access ratings by selected role in court and year

Role in Court	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
Attorney	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.7
Community member	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.2
Friend/ Family	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.2
Juror or potential juror	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.3	NA
Law enforcement/ probation/ social services	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.5
Party in a legal matter	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.1
Victim	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>
Witness	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	4.1	*	4.4

*Result from fewer than 30 respondents not shown

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 23. Average fairness ratings by selected role in court and year

Role in Court	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
Attorney	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.7
Law enforcement/ probation/ social services	4.3	4.3	4.2	*	4.5
Party in a legal matter	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>
Victim	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.7</u>

*Result from fewer than 30 respondents not shown

Access and fairness ratings increased notably in the child protection and treatment court case types.

The increase in both access and fairness ratings in child protection is isolated to remote respondents, while the increase in treatment court appears among both remote and in-person respondents (see Tables 24 and 25).

Access ratings in all case types for both in-person and remote respondents are in the “green” (doing well) category. Fairness ratings among in-person respondents are in the “yellow” (doing okay) category in child protection, criminal, and conciliation. Access ratings among remote respondents are equal to or higher than in-person respondents in all case types other than criminal and conciliation. Fairness ratings among remote respondents are equal to or higher than in-person respondents in all case types.

Table 24. Average access ratings by case type and year

Case Type	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
Child Protection, truancy, runaway	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.4
Civil matter, housing	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.4
Criminal	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.2
Divorce, child custody or support	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3
Juvenile delinquency	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.3
Probate	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.6
Small claims/ conciliation	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.1
Specialty court/ Treatment Court	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.4
Traffic, parking	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.3

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 25. Average fairness ratings by case type and year

Case Type	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
Child Protection, truancy, runaway	4.3	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	4.4
Civil matter, housing	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.4
Criminal	4.1	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.1
Divorce, child custody or support	4.1	4.2	4.2	*	4.2
Juvenile delinquency	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.2
Probate	4.3	4.3	4.4	*	4.6
Small claims/ conciliation	4.3	4.4	<u>4.0</u>	*	4.1
Specialty court/ Treatment Court	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	*	4.3
Traffic, parking	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.2

*Result from fewer than 30 respondents not shown

Access and fairness ratings from white respondents continue to be among the highest of any racial group

White respondents provide access and fairness ratings equal to or higher than any other racial group (see Tables 26 and 27). Notably, ratings among American Indian or Alaska Native and Black or African American respondents are higher among those completing the in-person survey compared to those completing the remote survey. Remote access and fairness ratings are more disparate by race than in-person ratings, and more disparate than in prior surveys.

Table 26. Average access ratings by race and year

Race	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.1	4.1	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	<u>4.0</u>
Asian or Asian American	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3
Black or African American	<u>3.9</u>	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.1
Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.2
Multiracial	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	4.1	4.3	4.3
White	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.4

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 27. Average fairness ratings by race and year

Race	2008	2013	2019	2023 In-Person	2023 Remote
American Indian or Alaska Native	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.7</u>
Asian or Asian American	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>	4.2	*	4.2
Black or African American	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	<u>4.0</u>
Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic	4.1	4.1	4.3	<u>4.0</u>	4.1
Multiracial	<u>4.0</u>	4.1	*	<u>3.9</u>	4.1
White	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.4

**Result from fewer than 30 respondents not shown*

Analysis: Self-represented litigant experience in civil matters

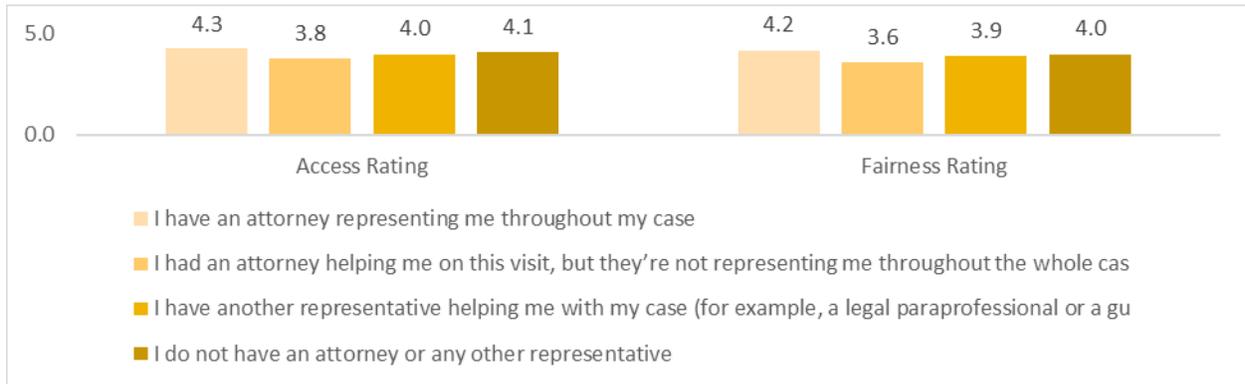
For the first time in 2023, the local court customer questionnaire included a question for parties regarding whether they have attorney representation. This section presents results specifically for parties in civil matters, including the survey’s case types of: Divorce, child custody or support; Civil matter, housing; Probate; Small claims/conciliation.

The majority of responses from parties in civil matters are associated with self-represented litigants (63 percent, not shown). Thirty-one percent of responses are from parties with attorney representation, and less than ten percent are from parties with temporary assistance from an attorney or assistance from another type of representative. (Data from MNCIS suggest about 40 percent of parties in civil matters are self-represented.)

Attorney-represented parties (who responded “I have an attorney representing me throughout my case”) provide higher ratings on both access and fairness compared to self-represented litigants (who responded “I do not have an attorney or any other representative”) (see Figure 20).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 20: Average access and fairness ratings among parties in civil matters by attorney representation status



Self-represented litigants in civil matters provide lower ratings than attorney-represented parties across all access statements, with four statements in the “yellow” (doing okay) category (see Table 28). The access statement with the greatest discrepancy by attorney representation status is “The forms I needed were clear and understandable.”

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 28. Access ratings from parties in civil matters by attorney representation status

Q#	Access Statement	Rating among respondents who answered "I do not have an attorney or any other representative"	Rating among respondents who answered "I have an attorney representing me throughout my case"
1	[Finding the courthouse] [Joining the proceeding] was easy.	4.3	4.4
2	[It was easy to find the courtroom or office I needed] [I was able to focus on the proceeding without distraction].	4.2	4.4
3	The forms I needed were clear and understandable.	<u>3.8</u>	4.2
4	I felt safe [in the courthouse] [participating in the remote hearing or court activity].	4.3	4.4
5	I was able to get my court business done without [physical] [technology], communication, or language barriers.	4.1	4.3
6	I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	<u>4.0</u>	4.3
7	Court staff paid adequate attention to my needs.	4.1	4.3
8	I was treated with respect.	4.2	4.4
9	The court's hours made it easy for me to do my business.	4.1	4.3
10	The court's website was helpful.	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>

Self-represented litigants in civil matters provide lower ratings than attorney-represented parties across all fairness statements, with all but one statement in the “yellow” (doing okay) category (see Table 29). The fairness statement with the greatest discrepancy by attorney representation status is “I know what to do next about my case.”

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 29. Fairness ratings from parties in civil matters by attorney representation status

Q#	Fairness Statement	Rating among respondents who answered "I do not have an attorney or any other representative"	Rating among respondents who answered "I have an attorney representing me throughout my case"
11	The way my case was handled was fair.	<u>3.9</u>	4.1
12	I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>
13	I was treated the same as everyone else.	<u>4.0</u>	4.2
14	I could follow what was happening in the proceeding.	4.2	4.4
15	The judge had the information needed to make good decisions about my case.	<u>4.0</u>	4.1
16	I know what to do next about my case.	<u>3.9</u>	4.2

Selected comments from self-represented litigants in civil matters include:

- "Didn't know a lot of the Law terms or verbiage, but the Judge was very helpful."
- "Everyone was exceedingly gender affirming and it was a genuinely beautiful experience for me. Thank you so much for giving me this moment to remember"
- "Going through the online court process was fairly simple. It is nice to not have to take off a half day or full day of work to go Downtown for a 5 minute hearing. It allows so much flexibility."
- "I appreciate the fact that I was able to do all of my hearings online through zoom as i have a physical disability that makes driving difficult and being at home made a very stressful time a bit less stressful, thank you"
- "I think it would be very helpful if the paperwork that you need to submit as a response was listed in the paperwork that you received when notified would be listed. As well as being able to complete the form online rather than needing to be able to print it."
- "Do not appreciate that cases with lawyers are put to the front of the line. They are getting paid to be their from their client, and I am rushing to get back to work just like they are rushing to help their other clients. Make it fair across the board. (And I was one of the cases that was pushed to the front because the other party has representation- it's still not fair)."

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

- “As black man in America, seeking any sort of justice in a white court through any alternative means is the biggest joke. My first zoom hearing was failure. The female judge did not make eye contact when I spoke. when the petitioner (white person) spoken the judge was looking at her and paying attention. I also noted that when I spoke the judge was dismissive, rude, and arrogant. The judge was cutting me off to speak which was an indication that she made up her mind before hearing all facts. in my experience, zoom hearing are the worst and i would rather go to court in person.”
- “I am just really concerned how judges keep changing. How is that fair? Family cases should have the same judge. I wasn’t even given the information timely for new judges each time over the last 2.5 years”
- “[...] There should be advocates available to support parents representing themselves. This is an extremely stressful and traumatizing process. It is demeaning, demoralizing, and elitist. I am a college-educated, native English speaker and I had trouble understanding court processes, procedures, and paperwork. How are other people supposed to navigate this system? [...]”
- “I either missed or it was not clear that I had to give the defendant copies of my uploaded evidence after serving the summons packet.”
- “I felt taken less seriously because I am a young woman without financial access to any legal help.”
- “i was treated very unfairly and havent been allowed to speak in my own petition”
- “Just very confusing.”

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Public Website Customer Survey Results

Results for most access statements on the survey of public website customers are in the “yellow” (doing okay) category, except for the statement “I easily found the information I needed”, which is in the “red” (needs improvement) category (see Table 16).

Table 16. Access statement results in order of percent Mostly or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
4	I was able to get my court business done without technology or language barriers.	8%	5%	23%	36%	27%	64%	<u>3.7</u>	607
2	The information I found was clear and easy to understand.	8%	7%	25%	37%	23%	59%	<u>3.6</u>	688
5	I know what I need to do next to complete my court business.	9%	6%	27%	34%	23%	58%	<u>3.6</u>	594
3	I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	10%	7%	26%	35%	21%	56%	<u>3.5</u>	612
1	I easily found the information I needed.	13%	10%	22%	33%	23%	56%	3.4	707

Average access ratings vary widely based on the activity respondents are engaged in on the website, from a high of 3.9 among those completing a jury questionnaire to a low of 3.2 among those paying a fine (see Figure 33). Ratings are also generally higher among older respondents (see Figure 34) and among female respondents (see Figure 35).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Figure 33. Average access ratings from public website respondents by activity



Figure 34. Average access ratings from public website respondents by age

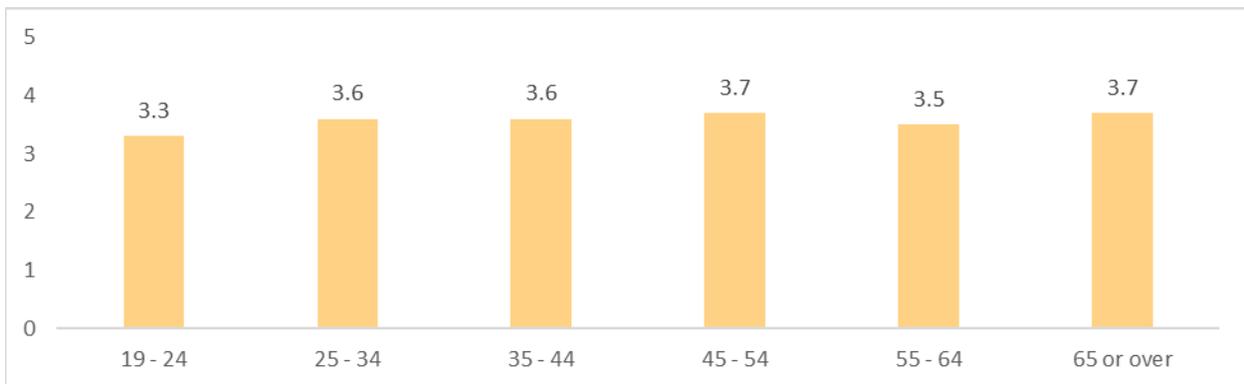
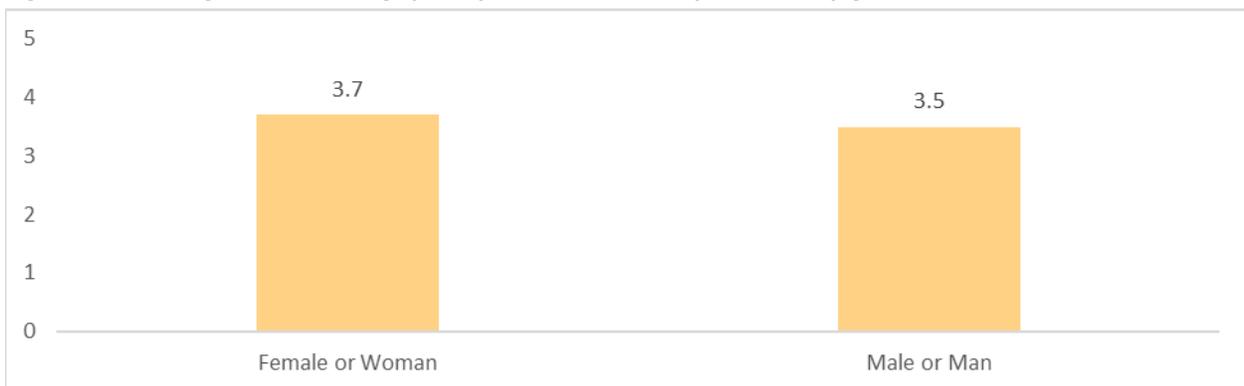


Figure 35. Average access ratings from public website respondents by gender



Results are not directly comparable to 2019 results the response options in 2019 were on a Yes/No scale rather than a five-point agreement scale. However, these results are now comparable with other surveys using a consistent analytical approach.

Selected comments from those paying a fine include:

- “I couldn't figure out how to find the amount of my fine. I ended up calling instead.”
- “Kept bringing me back to the same page over and over”

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Other selected comments from website respondents include:

- “The website was intuitive and straightforward to navigate.”
- “Thank you for your ongoing assistance, including with updates and improvements to the judicial website. I use the site primarily to read appellate decisions, but I have also occasionally searched court records and found the website straightforward to navigate.”
- “It would be helpful to have the ability to look at daily court docket information on MCRO like MNCIS used to have.”
- “The courts are doing a good job at creating access online and avoiding a trip to the court administrator but still has quite a ways to go in the 'appearance of fairness' and in making all data open that should be open to the public.”
- “I need my zoom meeting information”
- “wanted to know my court date and time, could not locate the area to get this information. very annoying!!”
- “Not sure how to find past court calendars”

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Court Payment Center Survey Results

Court Payment Center web payment customers

Results for each access statement on the Court Payment Center survey of web payment customers are in the “yellow” (doing okay) category (see Table 17). These results are notably consistent over time, but ratings to the statement “I was able to get my court business done without technology or language barriers” has been trending upward since 2013 (see Table 18).

Table 17. Access statement results in order of percent Mostly or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
3	I was able to get my court business done without technology or language barriers.	7%	2%	12%	38%	41%	79%	<u>4.0</u>	2230
4	I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	8%	3%	11%	38%	40%	78%	<u>4.0</u>	2237
2	The information provided by the Minnesota Court web payment site was clear and easy to understand.	7%	4%	14%	40%	36%	76%	<u>3.9</u>	2300
1	I easily found the information I needed.	7%	4%	14%	38%	37%	75%	<u>3.9</u>	2358

Table 18. Individual access statement ratings by year

Q#	Statement	2013	2019	2023
1	I easily found the information I needed.	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>
2	The information provided by the Minnesota Court web payment site was clear and easy to understand.	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.9</u>
3	I was able to get my court business done without technology or language barriers.	<u>3.7</u>	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.0</u>
4	I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	<u>3.7</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.0</u>

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Average access ratings vary by race, gender, and age (see Figures 36, 37, and 38, respectively). American Indian or Alaska Native and white respondents, female respondents, and respondents age 65 and older are among those with the highest average access ratings.

Figure 36. Average access ratings from web payment customers by race

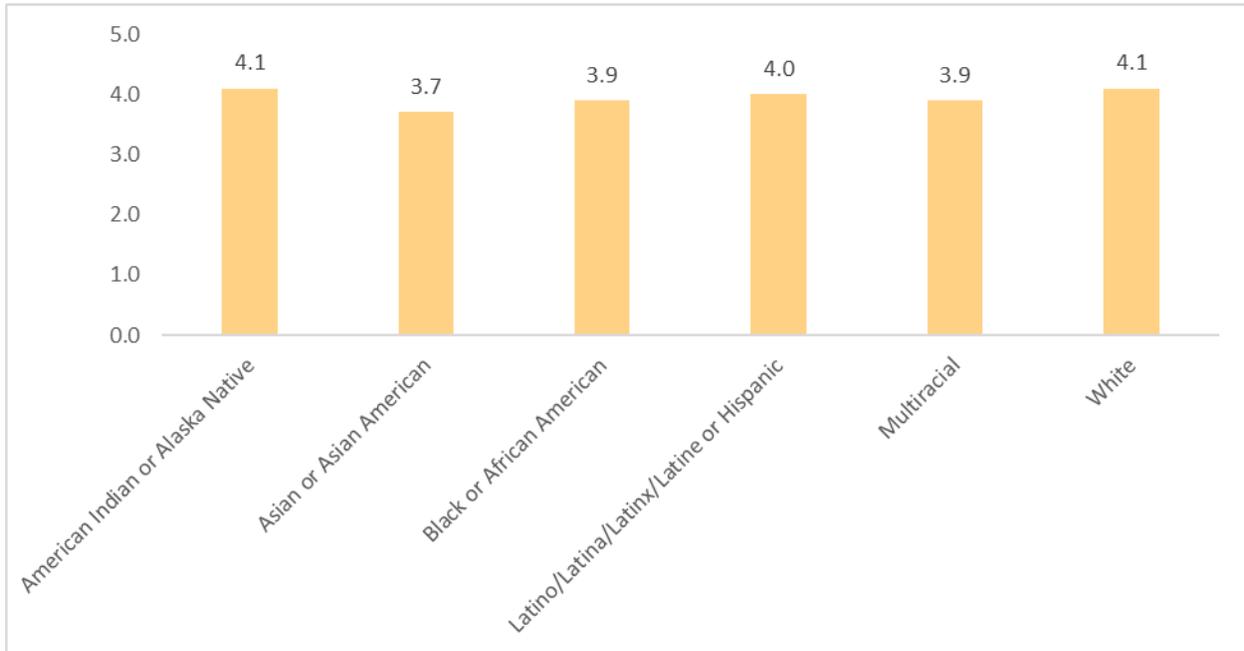


Figure 37. Average access ratings from web payment customers by gender

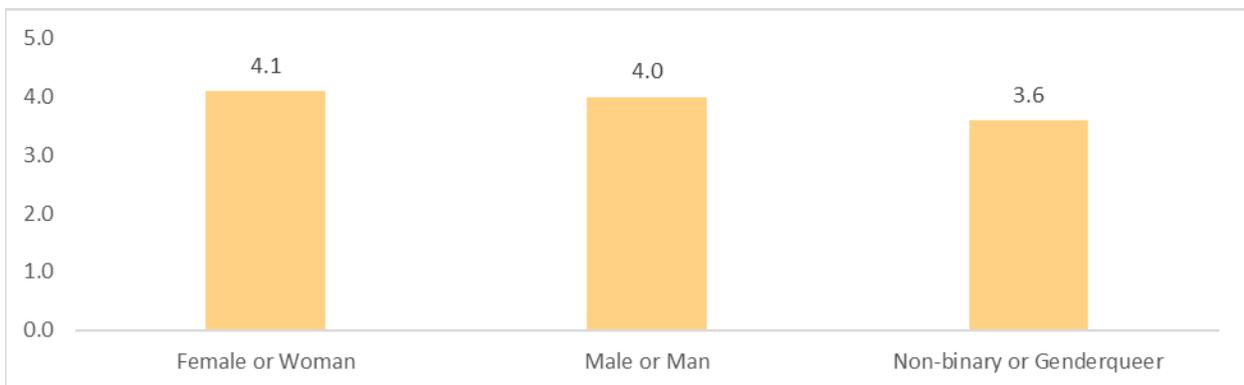
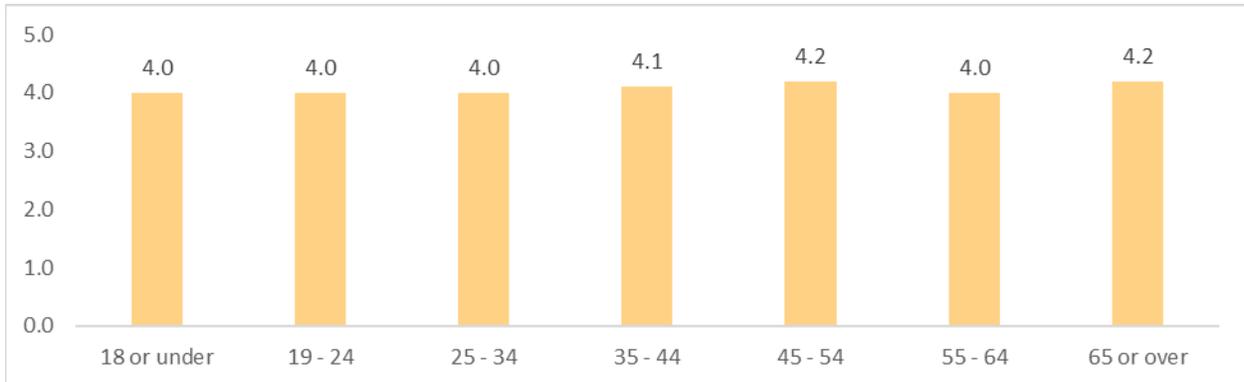


Figure 38. Average access ratings from web payment customers by age



Selected comments from web payment customers include:

- “Very easy site. Also appreciated the opportunity to discuss the ticket with someone at the court via zoom call.”
- “I wish that your site accepted check or PayPal in addition to credit card”
- “Paying a fine needs to be available in more languages than English. This is unfair and puts those who are unable to read English in a very tough spot [...]”
- “not sure what the convenience fee means, as there is no other , less convenient way to pay?????”
- “Need a mobile friendly view- website is not easy to use via phone.”
- “[...] It really sucks that you all make people pay parking tickets next to homeless encampments and that money goes to god knows where, when people are struggling. [...]”

Court Payment Center phone customers

Results for each access statement on the Court Payment Center survey of phone customers are in the “green” (doing well) category (see Table 19). The majority of respondents provided a top rating of one (on a scale of four) regarding their overall experience and experience with the automated phone system (see Table 20).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Table 19. Access statement results in order of percent Mostly or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Mostly Disagree	% Neutral	% Mostly Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Mostly or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
1	I was treated respectfully when I spoke with staff.	6%	2%	11%	5%	76%	81%	4.4	258
2	The information I received was clear and easy to understand.	7%	3%	12%	7%	71%	78%	4.3	275
5	I completed my call in a reasonable amount of time.	10%	6%	10%	12%	62%	74%	4.1	236
6	The hours of the Minnesota Court Payment Center made it easy for me to do business.	6%	5%	16%	12%	61%	73%	4.2	224
3	I was able to get my court business done without communication barriers.	8%	4%	16%	8%	63%	71%	4.1	255
4	I was able to get my court business done without technology barriers.	8%	6%	15%	10%	61%	71%	4.1	242

Table 20. Experience rating results in order of percent rating one or two

Q#	Statement	% 4	% 3	% 2	% 1	% 1 or 2	N
8	On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the best, please rate your experience with the automated features of the phone system.	11%	12%	24%	53%	77%	212
7	On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the best, please rate your overall experience.	10%	14%	21%	55%	76%	219

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

The 2023 survey included three unchanged statements from the 2019 survey, allowing a year-to-year comparison.²³ This comparison shows a notable improvement in results, moving from the “yellow” (doing okay) to “green” (doing well) category in the access statement ratings (see Table 21) and increasing the share of respondents who provide a rating of one or two from 64 percent in 2019 to 76 percent in 2023 (see Table 22).

Table 21. Individual access statement ratings by year

Statement	2019	2023
I completed my call in a reasonable amount of time.	3.5	4.1
The hours of the Minnesota Court Payment Center made it easy for me to do business.	3.6	4.2

Table 22. Percent providing overall experience rating of one or two by year

Statement	2019	2023
On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the best, please rate your overall experience.	64%	76%

²³ The 2013 survey received fewer than 20 responses, so results are not shown here.

External Application Support Team Survey Results

Results for each statement on the External Application Support Team survey are in the “green” (doing well) category (see Table 21). Levels of agreement are lowest on the statement “I was able to get my court business done without technology barriers”, which likely reflects the nature of the troubleshooting calls handled by this team.

Table 21. Access statement results in order of percent Mostly or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Mostly Disagree	% Neutral	% Mostly Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Mostly or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
1	I was treated respectfully when I spoke with staff.				3%	97%	100%	5.0	34
5	I completed my call in a reasonable amount of time.				9%	91%	100%	4.9	33
2	The information I received was clear and easy to understand.		3%		9%	89%	97%	4.8	35
3	I was able to get my court business done without communication barriers.		6%		9%	85%	94%	4.7	34
4	I was able to get my court business done without technology barriers.	9%	6%	9%	15%	62%	76%	4.1	34

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Statewide Self-Help Center Survey Results

Results for each statement on the Statewide Self-Help Center survey are in the “green” (doing well) category (see Table 22). Levels of agreement are at or above 94 percent on each statement.

Table 22. Access statement results in order of percent Mostly or Strongly Agree

Q#	Statement	% Strongly Disagree	% Mostly Disagree	% Neutral	% Mostly Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Mostly or Strongly Agree	Rating	N
1	I was treated respectfully when I spoke with staff.	1%		1%	4%	95%	99%	4.9	141
5	I completed my call in a reasonable amount of time.			2%	4%	94%	98%	4.9	126
2	The information I received was clear and easy to understand.	1%	1%	4%	4%	91%	95%	4.8	138
4	I was able to get my court business done without technology barriers.	1%	1%	4%	13%	82%	95%	4.7	128
3	I was able to get my court business done without communication barriers.	1%	1%	5%	5%	89%	94%	4.8	133

Project Implementation and Leadership

The FY23 Operational Plan included preparation for the Access & Fairness Survey under Priority 3A (Seek and respond to feedback from court customers to improve the day-to-day work of the Branch) Task 2 (Begin planning for district court Access & Fairness Surveys, to be conducted in FY24, with a focus on reviewing survey questions and methods to accommodate customers attending court remotely). As a part of this task, State Court Administration Court Research Office (CRO) staff sought input from National Center for State Court analysts and research teams in other states conducting similar statewide Access & Fairness surveys (Michigan and Colorado), particularly related to remote hearing survey methodologies.

CRO staff presented high level planning considerations and the redesigned NCSC CourTool to JAD in February 2023. At that meeting, a small group of volunteers was formed to shape the final survey implementation plan recommended to and approved by JAD in March 2023. The small group included:

Heather Kendall, 2nd Judicial District Administrator
Shelley Ellefson, 3rd Judicial District Administrator
Sara Gonsalves, 4th Judicial District Administrator
Dawn Torgerson, Deputy State Court Administrator
Katie Schurrer, Manager, Strategic Planning & Projects Office

This plan was presented to Judicial Council in April 2023 for discussion, with no further amendments.

The FY24 Operational Plan included a task to conduct the surveys, analyze results, and begin planning for follow up under Priority 3C (Engage with our court partners, litigants, and communities to ensure our actions are inclusive of the Minnesota Judicial Branch's diverse customers and their needs) Task 4 (Conduct the Access & Fairness Survey and begin strategic follow-up to increase access to justice and/or enhance fairness).

The district liaisons for the 2023 Access & Fairness Survey were:

1st Judicial District – Brenda Jerde, Court Operations Manager
2nd Judicial District – Breanne Baty, Court Administration Manager
3rd Judicial District – Teresa VanBuskirk, Court Administration Manager
4th Judicial District – Isabelle Clough, Research Analyst
5th Judicial District – Sonja Kruger, Deputy District Administrator
6th Judicial District – Hilary Huntley, Deputy District Administrator

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

7th Judicial District – Marcia Setrum, Deputy District Administrator

8th Judicial District – Joanne Reinert, Deputy District Administrator

9th Judicial District – Pam Norenberg, Court Administration Manager

10th Judicial District – Tracy Gullerud, Deputy District Administrator &

Molly Buckrey, Litigant Services Supervisor

The CRO project lead, Ellen Bendewald, was responsible for ensuring a methodologically sound survey process and providing district liaisons the tools, information, and assistance to effectively administer the surveys. The project lead was also responsible for coordinating with State Court Administration Court Services Division and Court Information Office staff on centrally administered surveys of Court Payment Center, External Application Support Team, and Statewide Self-Help Center customers and Minnesota Judicial Branch public website visitors.

Survey Deployment Methodology

The 2023 Access and Fairness Survey was conducted in multiple phases to obtain feedback from customers along these touchpoints:

- Local court customers, visiting a courthouse in person or attending a hearing remotely
- Visitors to the public website
- Court Payment Center customers, paying a fine online or over the phone
- External Application Support Team customers, seeking assistance over the phone
- Statewide Self-Help Center customers, seeking assistance over the phone

The Access and Fairness statements were largely aligned with the NCSC revised CourTool, except for plain language edits made for past surveys. Many of these statements were used across multiple touchpoints. The race and gender questions and response options were updated to align with the revised CourTool and were used across all touchpoints with demographic questions.

All surveys were conducted between July 31 and December 1, 2023.

Deployment of local court customer surveys

Access and Fairness surveys in the courthouse were originally designed as in-person intercept surveys, with staffed survey tables set up for one or more days near the exits to the building. Beginning with the 2023 survey, local courts with low foot traffic due to the shift to remote hearings also had the option to set up survey supplies at the front counter, without a dedicated person to staff the collection of surveys. Some courts chose a hybrid approach, with staffed survey collection on one or two days and unstaffed collection for one or more weeks during the survey window.

In-person survey supplies were the same regardless of method. Paper survey forms were available, along with ballot boxes to preserve the anonymity of responses. Large posters and flyers were provided to post around the building to encourage interest and participation. Judges and court staff were provided sample scripts to encourage visitors to complete the surveys upon completion of their court business. Additionally, pens with the Minnesota Judicial Branch logo were provided for respondents to take the survey, but also as an incentive or reward for completing the survey. Finally, courts were provided slips of paper with a link and QR code to an electronic version of the survey that visitors could take any time within the survey period. (Similar to prior surveys, only a small number (134) of the total 3,002 courthouse responses were submitted online using this method.)

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Multiple remote hearing survey methods were adopted for the 2023 survey, drawing from experience from prior remote hearing participant surveys conducted by the Branch and guidance from NCSC. Two methods were administered by the State Court Administrator's Office statewide for the entire survey period:

- An automatic redirect from Zoom, visible to remote hearing participants who joined the proceeding from a computer (rather than a mobile device).
- An emailed invitation, sent to hearing participants with a valid email address in MNCIS who were recorded as present at a remote hearing in the prior week.

Liaisons were provided with a real-time dashboard of the number of responses generated by these two methods for their local courts. (Because these methods relied on the hearing participant to report the court location, the results provide less granularity of court location than the in-person survey in Hennepin, Ramsey, and Dakota, where participants were not expected to be able to report their specific location or building name.) Local courts had the option to supplement these two statewide methods with additional remote hearing participant data collection:

- Providing a direct link to hearing participants, such as through the Zoom chat.
- Including an insert with remote hearing notices with instructions on how to complete the survey after the hearing.

Liaisons were provided a "Survey Orientation for Local Court Locations" guide to assist them in preparing local courts to conduct the survey. The guide included a list of the supplies they would need, tips on how best to approach potential respondents, the web survey address and when to provide it, response rate information including how to collect it and where to record it for their liaison, some tips of approaches that worked well from prior surveys, and finally instructions for how to send in completed responses. A brief training video was also launched prior to the survey window, highlighting the survey goals and purpose to local court staff.

Liaisons worked with local courts to identify which dates to schedule the survey, including the number of days needed. The goal for each court location was 30 completed in-person responses and 30 completed remote hearing responses.

A total of 48,286 email invitations were sent during the survey window, with 3,249 surveys completed from this method, for a response rate of 6.7 percent. Where practical, survey staff collected response rate information when using the staffed survey table deployment method. Local response rates to this

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

method range from 19 – 100 percent and average 60 percent. (The average response rate using this method in 2019 was 45 percent.) Response rates for other methods (unstaffed survey tables, Zoom redirect, and Zoom chat) are not available due to a lack of data.

Deployment of public website survey

A general website survey was first conducted in 2019. Compared to the 2019 survey, the 2023 survey included an additional Access statement (“I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time”) and reframed the response options from Yes/No to the five-point agreement scale used in the NCSC CourTool.

For two weeks beginning Monday, August 7, the Branch’s public website displayed a banner on each page with the following language, with an embedded link to the online survey:

Thank you for participating in the Minnesota Judicial Branch Access & Fairness Survey about your use of the Minnesota Judicial Branch website. Your feedback is important to us. Your responses to this survey will help us make improvements to the website.

Please take the survey (English, Español, Soomaali, Hmoob) after you have completed your business on the Judicial Branch website. The survey is short and should take you no longer than 5 minutes.

The general website survey generated a total of 731 responses, up from 483 responses to the 2019 survey conducted for two weeks in March 2019. During the survey period (August 7 to August 20), the website had 221,000 unique visitors, meaning fewer than one percent of website visitors completed the survey.

Deployment of Court Payment Center surveys

SCAO first conducted surveys of Court Payment Center phone and online customers in 2013.

Web payment customers

The survey of web payment customers was targeted to customers who had just made a payment. The 2023 questionnaire for web payment customers removed some questions which appeared on the 2019 survey, namely, the county of the citation, frequency of visits to the web payment site, and satisfaction with the hours of operation of the web payment site.

The survey launched on Wednesday, August 23 and ran through Monday, September 11. A banner appeared on the Web Payment application website during that period inviting visitors to take the survey after completing their court business. From Tuesday, August 29 to Monday, September 11, customers completing a payment were redirected to the survey once their payment was submitted. Ninety-nine

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

percent of all responses were received in the period when the redirect was active. The survey received a total of 2,374 responses, up from 813 responses to the 2019 survey conducted for two weeks in February 2019. During the survey period, 17,004 web payments were made in the system, for a response rate of 14.0 percent.

Court Payment Center phone customers

Customers contact the Court Payment Center (CPC) to pay a fine or look up a fine amount, typically on a traffic or parking citation. The 2019 survey was significantly modified from 2013 to allow the survey to be deployed through the automated voice system, rather than routing callers to staff at SCAO to complete the survey. This survey consisted of two Access statements in addition to pre-programmed customer satisfaction questions. The 2023 survey was further modified to align with the other call center surveys being administered (of Statewide Self-Help Center customers and External Application Support Team customers).

From Tuesday, October 10 through Monday, October 23, callers to the CPC were given the option to take the survey in the automated phone tree. Customers who opted into the survey were administered the survey through the automated Sonant telephone system.

The CPC received a total of 25,363 calls during this survey period and 275 responses, for a response rate of 1.1 percent.

Deployment of External Application Support Team and Statewide Self-Help Center surveys

SCAO implemented Access & Fairness Surveys across two new phone customer touchpoints in 2023: External Application Support Team and Statewide Self-Help Center. Both surveys leveraged the same questionnaire programmed into the Branch's Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) software.

External Application Support Team phone customers

Customers contact the External Application Support Team (EAST) to receive technical assistance with the Minnesota Digital Exhibit System (MNDES), Minnesota Government Access (MGA), and other external-facing applications. Customers include justice partners, private law firms, and unrepresented litigants.

From Monday, October 9 through Friday, October 27, EAST staff asked callers to participate in the Access & Fairness Survey. Callers who agreed were transferred to the automated survey.

EAST received a total of 134 calls during this survey period and 35 responses, for a response rate of 26.1 percent.

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Statewide Self-Help Center phone customers

Customers contact the Statewide Self-Help Center (SHC) to receive legal information and resources about their legal problem if they are not represented by an attorney. This is the first Access & Fairness Survey SCAO has conducted among SHC customers.

From Monday, September 18 through Friday, September 29, SHC staff asked callers to participate in the Access & Fairness Survey. Callers who agreed were transferred to the automated survey.

The SHC received a total of 1,056 calls during this survey period and 141 responses, for a response rate of 13.4 percent.

During the same survey window, an online survey of SHC email customers was also deployed by providing a survey link in email responses to customer inquiries. This survey received only two responses, so results are not included in this report.

Appendix

A. Data cleaning notes

Comments from respondents that may “identify the respondent” or “identifies specific court personnel, directly or indirectly” are confidential and not included in reporting, pursuant to Order Regarding Accessibility to Access and Fairness Survey Responses, No. ADM 10-8050 (Dated October 12, 2012). Confidential comments received from surveys in each district are provided to the Chief Judge of that district.

Across all survey arms, surveys submitted with no answer to any access or fairness statement, no answer to a customer experience question, and no written comment were removed due to non-response (199 remote hearing participant surveys, 16 in-person courthouse surveys, 45 general website surveys, 110 web payment surveys).

Responses to the in-person courthouse survey where the respondent indicated their only activity at the courthouse was “visit probation/corrections/another county agency” were removed (50 surveys).

Responses to the remote hearing participant survey and the in-person courthouse survey where the respondent indicated they are court staff or judicial officers were removed (6 remote surveys and 8 in-person courthouse surveys). Also, responses where the respondent indicated they were on a Zoom meeting that was not a court hearing were removed, e.g., committee meetings or attorney swearing in ceremonies (5 surveys).

Responses to “The court’s website was helpful” on the in-person courthouse survey are not included where the respondent answered “no” to the introductory question “Did you visit the court’s website before today’s visit at www.mncourts.gov?” (112 surveys). If the introductory question is left blank, responses to the website statement are included. This criteria is not needed for the remote hearing participant survey because that survey used skip logic so respondents who did not visit the website did not see the question about the website.

Responses to the Fairness statements on the in-person courthouse survey are not included where the respondent answered “no” to the introductory question “Did you appear in front of a judge today?” (171 surveys). If the introductory question is left blank, but responses are provided for one or more of the statements, responses are removed where they fail to meet one of the following conditions: a) the respondent selected “have a hearing or trial in my case” as something they did in court that day, or b) if their activity was unknown (no answer to the question) (149 surveys).

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

B. Number of local court customer responses by district and court location

District and Court Location	In Person	Remote	Total Surveys
1st Judicial District	471	824	1,295
Carver	58	95	153
Dakota	14	435	449
Dakota - Apple Valley	46	0	46
Dakota - Hastings	42	0	42
Dakota - West St. Paul	62	0	62
Goodhue	73	47	120
Le Sueur	29	26	55
McLeod	47	68	115
Scott	66	124	190
Sibley	34	29	63
2nd Judicial District	91	787	878
Ramsey	NA	787	787
Ramsey - Juvenile Family Justice Center	4	NA	4
Ramsey - Law Enforcement Center	11	NA	11
Ramsey - Main Courthouse	48	NA	48
Ramsey - Maplewood	28	NA	28
3rd Judicial District	323	494	817
Dodge	21	15	36
Fillmore	29	25	54
Freeborn	27	24	51
Houston	9	23	32
Mower	32	51	83
Olmsted	35	148	183
Rice	53	49	102
Steele	39	32	71
Wabasha	6	32	38
Waseca	30	25	55
Winona	42	70	112
4th Judicial District	286	2,168	2,454
Hennepin	NA	2,168	2,168
Hennepin - Brookdale	24	NA	24
Hennepin - Conciliation Court	2	NA	2
Hennepin - Family	21	NA	21
Hennepin - Government Center	165	NA	165
Hennepin - Juvenile	4	NA	4
Hennepin - Public Safety Facility	16	NA	16
Hennepin - Ridgedale	30	NA	30
Hennepin - Self-Help & Records	24	NA	24
5th Judicial District	230	432	662

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

District and Court Location	In Person	Remote	Total Surveys
Blue Earth	1	94	95
Brown	6	66	72
Cottonwood	24	15	39
Faribault	12	27	39
Jackson	0*	15	15
Lincoln	14	1	15
Lyon	20	27	47
Martin	32	44	76
Murray	24	8	32
Nicollet	5	38	43
Nobles	29	31	60
Pipestone	1	15	16
Redwood	53	24	77
Rock	1	11	12
Watonwan	8	16	24
6th Judicial District	166	438	604
Carlton	28	72	100
Cook	7	18	25
Lake	35	17	52
St. Louis - Duluth	50	229	279
St. Louis - Hibbing	16	40	56
St. Louis - Virginia	30	62	92
7th Judicial District	256	591	847
Becker	30	59	89
Benton	1	28	29
Clay	26	77	103
Douglas	29	38	67
Mille Lacs	17	34	51
Morrison	25	25	50
Otter Tail	28	78	106
Stearns	36	207	243
Todd	40	27	67
Wadena	24	18	42
8th Judicial District	319	231	550
Big Stone	20	9	29
Chippewa	15	18	33
Grant	31	8	39
Kandiyohi	16	56	72
Lac qui Parle	4	11	15
Meeker	10	33	43
Pope	37	11	48
Renville	29	27	56

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

District and Court Location	In Person	Remote	Total Surveys
Stevens	32	15	47
Swift	4	11	15
Traverse	35	4	39
Wilkin	53	15	68
Yellow Medicine	33	13	46
9th Judicial District	555	734	1,289
Aitkin	36	46	82
Beltrami	29	76	105
Cass	18	83	101
Clearwater	39	29	68
Crow Wing	33	144	177
Hubbard	32	48	80
Itasca	51	95	146
Kittson	27	5	32
Koochiching	51	44	95
Lake of the Woods	31	4	35
Mahnomen	34	11	45
Marshall	30	13	43
Norman	43	12	55
Pennington	18	29	47
Polk	32	66	98
Red Lake	20	16	36
Roseau	31	13	44
10th Judicial District	301	1,178	1,479
Anoka	49	338	387
Chisago	29	93	122
Isanti	26	62	88
Kanabec	28	35	63
Pine	30	54	84
Sherburne	63	96	159
Washington	34	356	390
Wright	42	144	186
Unknown District	4	284	288
Statewide Total	3,002	8,161	11,163

**Jackson County's in-person data collection forms were missing in transit to the State Court Administrator's Office at the time of writing this report.*

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

C. In-person local court customer questionnaire



Access and Fairness Survey

Thank you for taking this survey today.
Please complete both sides of the survey.



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Finding the courthouse was easy.	<input type="radio"/>					
It was easy to find the courtroom or office I needed.	<input type="radio"/>					
The forms I needed were clear and understandable.	<input type="radio"/>					
I felt safe in the courthouse.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was able to get my court business done without physical, communication, or language barriers.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	<input type="radio"/>					
Court staff paid adequate attention to my needs.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was treated with respect.	<input type="radio"/>					
The court's hours made it easy for me to do my business.	<input type="radio"/>					

Did you appear in front of a judge today? Yes No (If No, please skip the six (6) questions in the box below)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
The way my case was handled was fair.	<input type="radio"/>					
I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was treated the same as everyone else.	<input type="radio"/>					
I could follow what was happening in the proceeding.	<input type="radio"/>					
The judge had the information needed to make good decisions about my case.	<input type="radio"/>					
I know what to do next about my case.	<input type="radio"/>					

What three (3) changes would most improve your experience with the courts?

- Better signs (or directions) in the courthouse
- Better access to community services from within the courthouse (such as housing assistance, domestic violence shelter, or legal advice)
- Less of a wait at the courthouse
- More options to fill out forms online
- More options to conduct business online
- An online portal to access my court information
- The option to choose my hearing date and time
- The option to appear at hearings remotely via Zoom
- Longer hours of courthouse operation (evenings and/or weekends)
- Longer hours of phone support (evenings and/or weekends)
- Other _____



Access and Fairness Survey

Thank you for taking this survey today.
Please complete both sides of the survey.



Did you use the court's website before today's visit at www.mncourts.gov?

- Yes No (If No, please skip the three (3) questions in the box below)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
The court's website was helpful.	<input type="radio"/>					
For any of the business that brought you to the courthouse today, did you attempt to complete that business online but couldn't? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No If so, what business did you hope to complete online? _____						

What was your role at court today? (Please choose the one that fits best)

- Party in a legal matter (e.g., plaintiff or defendant) Law enforcement/probation/social services
 Attorney representing a client Community member Victim
 Friend/Family Witness Juror or potential juror
 Other _____

What did you do at court today? (Mark all that apply)

- Have a hearing or trial in my case Get information File papers Make a payment
 Watch a hearing or trial Search court records/get documents Jury duty
 Visit probation/corrections/another county agency Other _____

What type of case brought you to the courthouse today? (Please choose the one that fits best)

- Criminal Child protection, truancy, runaway Divorce, child custody or support
 Juvenile delinquency Civil matter, housing Probate
 Small claims/conciliation Treatment court (e.g., drug court) Traffic, parking

Did you have an attorney helping you with your court business? (Please choose the one that fits best)

- I have an attorney representing me throughout my case
 I had an attorney helping me on this visit, but they're not representing me throughout the whole case
 I have another representative helping me with my case (for example, a legal paraprofessional or a guardian ad litem)
 I do not have an attorney or any other representative

(The questions in this box are optional. Your response will help the Minnesota Judicial Branch determine whether customers are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, and age.)

How do you identify your race? (Mark all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native Asian or Asian American Black or African American
 Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic Middle Eastern or North African
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander White Prefer to self-describe _____
 Prefer not to say

How do you identify your gender? Female or Woman Male or Man Non-binary or Genderqueer

- Prefer to self-describe _____ Prefer not to say

What is your age? 18 or under 19-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65 or over

- Prefer not to say

Please add any comments you have: _____

D. Remote local court customer questionnaire



Remote Hearing Participant Access and Fairness Survey



Thank you for participating in the Minnesota Judicial Branch’s Access & Fairness Survey of remote hearing participants. Your feedback is important to us. Your responses to this survey will help us make improvements to our services. This survey is short and should take no longer than 5 minutes to complete.

***What was your role at today’s hearing? (Please choose the one that fits best)**

- Party in a legal matter (e.g., plaintiff or defendant)
- Law enforcement/probation/social services
- Attorney representing a client
- Community member
- Victim
- Friend/Family
- Witness
- Judicial officer or court staff *[if selected, survey will skip to thank-you page]*
- Other _____

What type of case did you have a hearing on today? (Please choose the one that fits best)

- Criminal
- Child protection, truancy, runaway
- Traffic, parking
- Juvenile delinquency
- Civil matter, housing
- Probate
- Small claims/conciliation
- Treatment court (e.g., drug court)
- Divorce, child custody or support

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Joining the proceeding was easy.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was able to focus on the proceeding without distraction.	<input type="radio"/>					
The forms I needed were clear and understandable.	<input type="radio"/>					
I felt safe participating in the remote hearing or court activity.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was able to get my court business done without technology, communication, or language barriers.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	<input type="radio"/>					
Court staff paid adequate attention to my needs.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was treated with respect.	<input type="radio"/>					
The court’s hours made it easy for me to do my business.	<input type="radio"/>					

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
The way my case was handled was fair.	<input type="radio"/>					
I had a chance to tell my side of the story before my case was decided.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was treated the same as everyone else.	<input type="radio"/>					
I could follow what was happening in the proceeding.	<input type="radio"/>					
The judge had the information needed to make good decisions about my case.	<input type="radio"/>					
I know what to do next about my case.	<input type="radio"/>					

***Did you use the court's website before today's hearing at www.mncourts.gov?**

Yes No *[If no, survey will skip the next three questions.]*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
The court's website was helpful.	<input type="radio"/>					

Prior to your hearing today, did you attempt to complete any court business online but couldn't?

- Yes
 No

If so, what business did you hope to complete online? *[Question only appears if 'Yes' is selected above.]*

***What three (3) changes would most improve your experience with the courts?**

[Survey will randomize sort order of options and validate that at least one and no more than three selections are made.]

- Longer hours of courthouse operation (evenings and/or weekends)
- Longer hours of phone support (evenings and/or weekends)
- More options to find my Zoom link online
- Less of a wait for my hearing to start
- An online portal to access my court information
- The option to appear at hearings in person
- The option to choose my hearing date and time
- More options to fill out forms online
- More options to conduct business online
- Don't know or no opinion
- Other _____

Did you have an attorney helping you at today's hearing? *[Question only appears if 'Party in a legal matter' is selected in question #1.]*

- I have an attorney representing me throughout my case
- I had an attorney helping me on this visit, but they're not representing me throughout the whole case
- I have another representative helping me with my case (for example, a legal paraprofessional or a guardian ad litem)
- I do not have an attorney or any other representative

2023 District Court Access and Fairness Survey Results

Where did you participate in the remote hearing?

- From a home or residence
- From a vehicle
- From work
- From an attorney's office
- From a courtroom, remote hearing room, or other court facility
- From a legal kiosk
- Other _____

The following questions are optional. Your response will help the Minnesota Judicial Branch determine whether customers are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, and age.

How do you identify your race? (Mark all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Prefer to self-describe _____
- Prefer not to say

How do you identify your gender?

- Female or Woman
- Male or Man
- Non-binary or Genderqueer
- Prefer to self-describe _____
- Prefer not to say

What is your age?

- 18 or under
- 19-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or over
- Prefer not to say

Please add any comments you have.

**An asterisk (*) indicates the question is required for survey branching and validation purposes.*