
WHITES VS NON-WHITES VIEWS OF THE CIVIL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Results from the 2014 Civil Legal Needs Study Update

Technical Report #15-069¹

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¹ This summary was prepared as part of WSU contract Number 21448, SESRC #SC273, CLNS14, sponsored by Washington State, Office of Civil Legal Aid, Supreme Court, civil Legal Needs Update Committee.

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Dichotomous Variable White vs Non-White

Of all respondents, 56.7% were White or Caucasian, 9.2% were Black/African American and 20.4% were Hispanic. Asians accounted 7.6% and Native Americans accounted for 6.3% of respondents. The remaining 1.4% were Pacific Islanders. There was a small group of respondents (3.6%) who reported belonging to a mixed race and the remaining 3.1% of respondents selected “other” category.

Some race/ethnicity categories are small, and, therefore cannot be used for a meaningful comparison analysis. Mathematically, using a dichotomous variable “White vs Non-white” gives more statistical power to our tests than using race as a categorical variable with 6 or 7 categories. For this reason, we turned a multicategory nominal variable “race” into a dichotomous variable with two categories “White” and “Non-White”.

Views of the Civil Justice System

Respondents were asked a number of questions relating to their perception of the civil justice system and its ability to effectively help people like them solve important legal problems.

Our analyses did not reveal differences in the views of White and Non-White respondents regarding courts (Figure 1).

However, the confidence in fairness of the civil justice system and its ability to solve problems differed by race (Figure 2 and Figure 3). In particular, a substantially higher numbers of White respondents than non-White believed that civil justice system treat them fairly “all of the time” or “most of the time” (35% vs 25%). The same 10-point percent gap was documented for the other side of the view scale with 34% of Non-White respondents selecting “Not at all” and “Rarely” answer categories in response to a question about fairness compared to 24% of White respondents selecting the same answer categories (Figure 2).

The differences in confidence that the civil justice system offers potential in helping people like them solve important problems by race were less profound, but still statistically significant. The real differences were manifested at the lower level confidence side of the scale but not at the higher-level confidence side of the scale. In particular, significantly more White respondents than Non-White felt that people like them could effectively resolve important problems through the civil justice system (30% vs 24%) (see Figure 3).

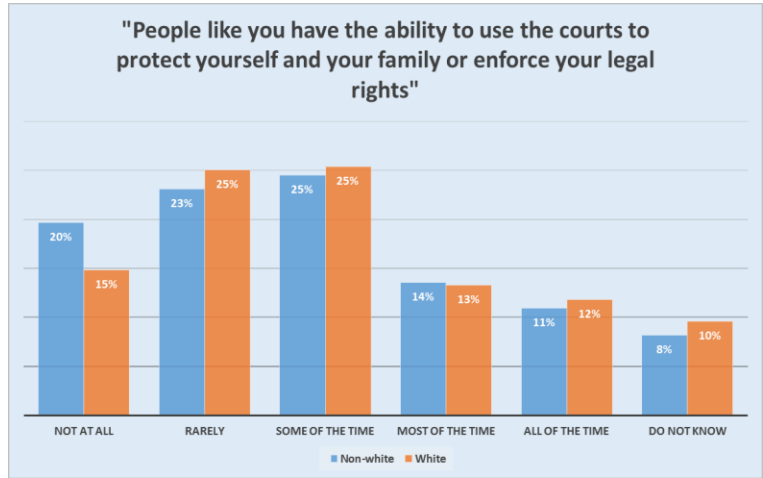


Figure 1: Whites vs Non-Whites' views of courts

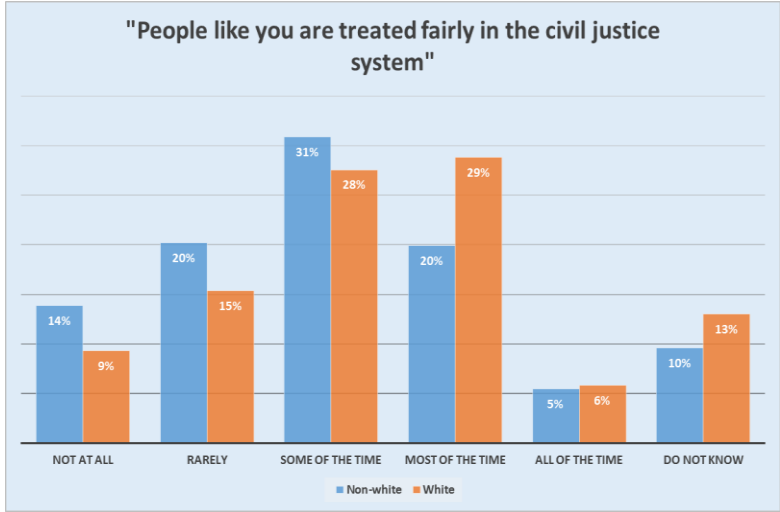


Figure 2: Whites vs Non-Whites's views on fair treatment

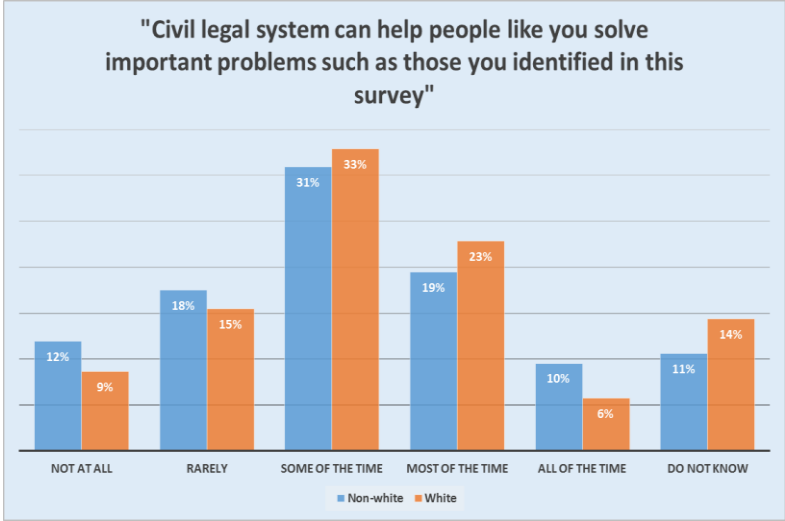


Figure 3: Whites vs Non-Whites' views on solution of problems