

UNDERSTANDING THE UNMET CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS IN LOUISIANA 2018

Louisiana State
Bar Association



Access to Justice

The Gap Assessment Subcommittee



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Published by the
Louisiana State Bar Association
Access to Justice Committee
Gap Assessment Subcommittee

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Understanding the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Individuals in Louisiana 2018

A report on the first formal study
to measure the civil legal needs
of low-income Louisiana residents.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
I. Methodology	4
II. Introduction	6
III. Louisiana’s Low-Income Community	7
IV. Louisiana’s Efforts to Address Unmet Need	12
V. The Unmet Civil Legal Needs in Louisiana: Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study.....	15
VI. Louisiana Legal Service Corporation’s Data Supports Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study’s Finding of Unmet Civil Legal Need	40
VII. Challenges	42
VIII. Recommendations	42
IX. Acknowledgments.....	44
X. Addendum.....	45
Individual/Family Member Survey	45
XI. End Notes	53

Executive Summary

This report is the Louisiana State Bar Association's first formal effort to measure the civil legal needs of low-income Louisiana residents. In that regard, the Louisiana State Bar Association commissioned faculty researchers David Yarbrough and Steve Gruesbeck¹ to collect relevant, original data. Their collection method consisted of contacting in-person networks of social service providers for people in poverty in both rural and metro parishes. Yarbrough and Gruesbeck focused on a target population of persons at or below 200% of the poverty level, a population that would likely qualify for Legal Services Corporation (LSC) services. Through these networks, Yarbrough and Gruesbeck delivered two web-based surveys (one for individuals and families, and another for social service providers) to identify the scope of the legal services needed by those who access these services. The number of responses received met or exceeded the 95 percent confidence level with a five percent margin of error.

The Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study was supplemented by relevant data collected by the Louisiana legal aid programs for a 2017 study funded by LSC. The data from the LSC study demonstrated the extent of services provided when individuals access services through the programs' intake desks, thereby giving a bit more context than provided by a respondent's self-assessment in the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck report.

The Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study, commissioned by the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), shows an objective measure of the unmet civil legal need, as demonstrated by the chart "Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana," found on page 17. By expanding the report to include Louisiana LSC data, the authors were able to postulate significant subjective reasons as to why legal needs go unmet, be it a lack of understanding how the justice system works, the continuum nature of where needs may be unmet at a series of stages, citizens not knowing whether services are available or simply lacking the recognition that a problem has a legal component.

In general, Louisiana has fewer civil legal service providers than states with similar poverty populations. Louisiana has two LSC-funded programs, with a total of 119 staff attorneys for all Louisiana parishes who provide a significant majority of the civil legal aid to Louisiana's low-income individuals. In the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study as well as information gleaned from a 2017 study of the two LSC-funded Louisiana civil legal aid programs, data shows these programs turned away approximately 50% of individuals seeking services due to eligibility restrictions, conflicts of interests, lack of resources and other limitations. In an additional 20% of cases, the agency provided limited services, but these services did not meet the full legal need of the client.

The LSBA has worked hard to promote pro bono organizations, specialty bars, self-help desks, Public Library "Ask-a-Lawyer" events, numerous online resources and a Modest Means Directory, as a way to supplement the LSC-funded programs. In addition, Louisiana law schools, both private and public, maintain legal clinics which provide student representation to the indigent in civil and criminal legal proceedings.

Despite these efforts, the unmet civil legal need for the poor remains of great concern as wealth inequality has risen tremendously in Louisiana over the last 50 years. LSC funding decreases have limited the ability of local programs to respond to the increasing demand of low-income citizens. In Louisiana in 2017, 20.2% of the state's residents live below the federal poverty line.² People who live in poverty or with a low income are more likely to experience a variety of legal problems that result from their economic circumstances. In addition to economic circumstances, people in poverty face compounding factors that make it difficult to access legal resources or recognize, without external assistance, that their problem has a legal component. The more salient of these include domestic instability, unemployment, proliferation of low wage jobs, lack of community resources, and other issues such as disabilities, immigration status, education, language proficiency, low literacy and high incarceration rates.

The numbers suggested by the original data from Yarbrough and Gruesbeck resulted in the following findings, which should be considered in light of the objective and subjective difficulties of measuring the unmet civil legal needs.

Respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study were first asked to identify whether they or a family member ever a civil legal need. Out of all the respondents in the study, 54% of respondents or a member of their family had a legal need and 46% of respondents did not.

In analyzing the group of respondents who reported having a legal need (54% of all respondents), the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study identified four legal issues in which more than 50% of respondents had a need in that area, namely: consumer and finance, employment, family, and disaster relief.³

- **Consumer and Finance:** Overall, 56% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study who had a legal need indicated that they had a consumer and financial legal need in their households. Of that percentage, approximately 41% of the need was reported as unmet.
- **Employment:** Out of respondents who identified a legal need, 62% of respondents had an employment legal need and 53% of that need was reported as unmet.
- **Family Law:** Out of respondents who identified a legal need, 67% of respondents had a legal need in family law and 43% of that need was reported as unmet.
- **Disaster Relief:** Out of respondents who identified a legal need, 66% of respondents had a legal need related to disaster relief and 55% of that need was reported as unmet.

The Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study also identified five issues that had the highest percentages of unmet legal need, each over 60%:

- **Healthcare:** Overall, 36% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study who had a legal need indicated that they had a healthcare legal need in their households. Of that percentage, about 65% of that legal need was reported as unmet.
- **Juvenile:** Out of respondents who identified a legal need, 25% of respondents had a juvenile legal need and 63% of that need was reported as unmet.
- **Housing:** Out of respondents who identified a legal need, 39% of respondents had a housing legal need and 62% of that need was reported as unmet.
- **Immigration:** Out of respondents who identified a legal need, 20% of respondents had an immigration legal need and 62% of that need was reported as unmet.
- **Education:** Out of respondents who identified a legal need, 32% of respondents had an education legal need and 62% of that need was reported as unmet.

Yarbrough and Gruesbeck asked participants to select from a list of possible actions taken to resolve their legal need. Most notably, over 44% of respondents did not know they could go to legal aid, receive pro bono legal help, hire a low-cost attorney, use online help or pro se support.

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I. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify the unmet civil legal needs of Louisiana residents who are potentially eligible for services offered by Louisiana legal services programs and other low-cost or free legal provider programs. Through online surveys by way of existing social and community networks, the study gathered a representative sampling of Louisiana residents.

Methodology of Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study

Yarbrough and Gruesbeck collected data by first contacting in-person networks of social service providers for impoverished people in both rural and metro parishes. Through these networks, Yarbrough and Gruesbeck delivered web-based surveys to identify the scope of the legal need by those who access these services. The surveys were designed to provide a best estimate of the legal need by persons and families in Louisiana who may not have access to or knowledge of legal services programs and may be considered eligible for free or low-cost legal assistance based on poverty status.

Sample Size of Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study

Louisiana is home to approximately 4.6 million residents of which approximately 883,000 lived at or below the household poverty limit at the time of the survey. There are approximately 18,000 non-profit agencies in Louisiana that include about 7,000 churches, 1,000 private foundations and 10,000 non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations. Through email lists, foundation contact lists, church directories, and non-profit contact lists, persons throughout the non-profit network were asked to participate by completing one survey and making another available to their client population. All together there were two types of surveys that went out: one for social service providers and one for individuals and family members (see Addendum).

Through this sampling approach, Yarbrough and Gruesbeck estimated that approximately 380 responses per survey were necessary to maintain a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Yarbrough and Gruesbeck received 421 completed surveys from individuals and family members as administered by the agencies. The number of completed surveys from social service providers did not meet the amount necessary to maintain a confidence level sufficient for reporting purposes.

Surveys and Distribution

The individual and family member survey asked for direct responses from those that fell within prescribed eligibility household and income guidelines, and this was the primary data collection tool of the study. The service provider study intended to have representatives from legal and community social service providers comment on the presenting needs of their eligible clients. To address missing agency responses, data from a 2017 LSC Louisiana legal services report which also evaluated legal need was reviewed. The LSC data is addressed later in the report.

The individual and family member survey was the primary survey used for data collection and is the primary source for reported percentages of legal need. This survey was adapted with permission from the Civil Legal Needs Questionnaire developed by the Arkansas Legal Services Partnership and the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service Research Team. That report was made available in 2013 through Legal Aid of Arkansas and the Center for Arkansas Legal Services.

The service provider survey was used to validate responses and was adapted with permission from the Legal Needs Assessment Survey 2010 for Service Providers and the Legal Community developed by the Legal Services of Eastern Missouri.

Louisiana individuals and families with incomes below 200% of the poverty threshold⁴ were asked to identify if they or a family member in their household had a civil legal need in the past two years. Those who reported a need for legal assistance were then asked about the nature of their need(s). Respondents selected from various “case types” drawn from a list used in the LSC Annual Summary Reports.⁵ These broad legal areas of need included: consumer and financial, employment, family, needs arising from natural disasters, education, needs associated with receiving government benefits, health benefits, housing, immigration, personal rights, and juvenile justice.

Data Collection and Compliance

Surveys were available for service providers and individuals throughout the month of February 2017. Respondents were selected via a “snowball sample” procedure, starting with the identified service provider agencies and a self-selecting sample of the current Louisiana residents. The service-provider informants are the data resource point for representative, stratified sampling targeting those individuals with household incomes near the identified poverty level.

The target group of respondents were persons at or below 200% of the poverty level. These people would likely qualify for LSC assistance. However, some respondents reported income that was higher than this threshold. Their responses were included in this report. Yarbrough and Gruesbeck found that despite being above the threshold for LSC assistance, there was no statistical difference between the met and unmet need those below or those above the 200% of the poverty level. This last finding speaks to the civil legal needs of moderate-income individuals who cannot benefit from LSC assistance but are otherwise unable to have their legal needs met.

Prior to distribution of the surveys, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the Northwestern State University Institutional Review Boards for research regarding human subjects reviewed the protocols of the study through the standard compliance application process based on the guidelines of the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46. Data collection began following compliance approval of the methodology.

Methodology of Legal Services Corporation Data

LSC commissioned a study of its grantees to survey their intake data for a six-week period in March and April of 2017. The purpose of the study was to assess how the grantee organizations respond to those cases: whether it fully served the client, served but not to the extent necessary to fully address a client’s full legal need, or was unable to serve the client. The LSC grantee organizations in Louisiana are Southeast Louisiana Legal Services and Acadiana Legal Service Corporation which service the entire state. These organizations provided their individual intake data for the purpose of this report.

The authors reviewed the data to assess the general trend of how many cases were fully served by the provider and how many were not served. The data provided an overview of how LSC-funded programs in Louisiana are able to meet the legal needs of those who seek their assistance.

II. INTRODUCTION

This report incorporates the findings of faculty researchers David Yarbrough and Steve Gruesbeck, and the findings of Louisiana grantees of the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). Yarbrough and Gruesbeck conducted a study in February 2017 commissioned by the LSBA with the purpose of exposing the unmet civil legal need of low-income Louisiana residents. Because these respondents are low-income, Yarbrough and Gruesbeck looked to see whether respondents would meet the qualifications for services provided by LSC-funded organizations, the largest providers of legal services to low-income or indigent residents.

Data, original and supplemental, was collated and used to frame the issues of unmet legal need in Louisiana as well as noting challenges and exploring possible solutions.

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While the Louisiana State Bar Association has been active in access to justice efforts, this is the first formal attempt to more accurately gauge unmet legal needs in the state.

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A Word About Measuring Unmet Civil Legal Need

Measuring unmet civil legal needs is not a new concept, but it is a difficult one. The American Bar Association’s first effort to explore access to justice and the legal need of low-income and middle-income households came about in the early 1970’s, culminating in the 1974 Comprehensive Legal Needs Study. Many other states since have produced their own reports addressing access to justice and unmet legal needs.⁶ While the Louisiana State Bar Association has been active in access to justice efforts, this is the first formal attempt to more accurately gauge unmet legal needs in the state.

In this regard, it should be noted that there are several challenges to arriving at an accurate number, in large part because unmet legal need is not objective; instead, it is a function of peoples’ access to legal resources and the level of understanding a person has about how the legal system works, both of which are linked.⁷ Often, if there are no available services, researchers will not know how much need there is nor the level of need.⁸

Further, even if there is a known legal need, “it is unmet if they don’t get steered toward information about the problem and then if they don’t get assistance to resolve or deal with it ... [L]egal need is a continuum. There may be a series of stages along the continuum where legal help is needed and is unmet.”⁹ Likewise, individuals “may not recognize a problem as legal, and when they do, they may not know of a legal service program or be able to access it.”¹⁰ Last, but not least, factors including poverty, culture, disability, age, lack of knowledge or confidence, lack of power and resources, and the plain inaccessibility of services in pursuing a remedy or assistance hinders citizens’ ability to find legal help when needed.¹¹ Given this, the determination of need for legal services will always be subjective. Despite these challenges, however, the following data and supplemental information offer a glimpse at the unmet legal needs in Louisiana.

III. LOUISIANA'S LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY

To understand the importance of addressing unmet legal needs, it is critical to understand their context. As in the nation as a whole, wealth inequality in Louisiana has risen tremendously over the last 50 years.¹² At 20.2%, Louisiana has one of the highest percentages of people living below the federal poverty line; it is second only to Mississippi, which stands at 20.8%. Louisiana sits near the bottom in childhood poverty; it is ranked as 49th of the 50 states, with 28.4% of children under 18 living below the poverty line. More than 20% of working-age women and 15% of working-age men in the state live in poverty,¹³ all with insufficient incomes to afford basic necessities.¹⁴ Nearly one in three families in Louisiana claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) each year.¹⁵ EITC is a federal program designed to financially assist the working poor.

For people of color, the likelihood of living below the federal poverty level increases. In 2017, 34.2% of the state's African American residents live below the poverty level, as do 22.2% of the Latino population.¹⁶ Just fewer than 13% of the state's white residents live below poverty.¹⁷

While the high number of households living below the federal poverty level is significant, it is only part of the story of those struggling financially in Louisiana. Data collected by United Way has been used to establish a broader picture of those for whom day-to-day existence is precarious and provides a landscape of unmet legal needs. A United Way report, which details a full picture of income inequality and the financial struggle of many of the state's residents, defines a threshold determined by the total income needed for a household (or "family") to meet basic monthly expenses. The report calls these households "ALICE," that is, Asset-Limited Income-Constrained Employed.¹⁸ They might otherwise be called the "working poor" because despite being employed, these households cannot afford basic monthly expenses.

ALICE created a novel way of measuring poverty in response to the way the federal poverty guidelines fail to consider the current cost of basic household necessities and the actual cost of living.¹⁹ Even when households receive supplemental assistance from government programs and non-profits, the United Way study found that there is still an unfilled gap to meet basic household necessities.²⁰ Consequences of this gap affect housing, child care and education, access to sufficient healthy food, effective and efficient transportation, health and health care, and savings.²¹

Problems Associated with Poverty or Low-Income Status

An inadequately realized fact is that poverty is expensive. The high cost of being poor is well documented.²² People living in poverty face expenses that do not affect more affluent people, such as costs associated with pay day lending, pawn shops, check cashing services and usurious rates for rent-to-own furniture and appliances.

People who live in poverty or with a low-income are more likely to experience a variety of legal problems that result from their economic circumstances. It has long been a maxim of household economics, as well as a guideline for anti-poverty programs, that no more than 30% of household income should be spent on housing (rent or mortgage).²³ In 2016, 49% of renters in Louisiana paid between 30% and 50% of their monthly income in rent and utilities.²⁴ In the same year, 28.1% of Louisiana renters paid over 50% of their monthly income in rent, and are considered "severely cost burdened."²⁵

Having rent as a high percentage of income increases the likelihood that the renter will have financial issues and be late or unable to pay the rent, leading to eviction. Poor and low-income families are more likely to live in substandard rental housing from corporate landlords who lease with few protections for the renters and little incentive to forgive late payments. This is borne out by the number of searches at LouisianaLawHelp.com, a legal services self-help database maintained by Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, related to renters' rights, eviction, security deposits, and other housing issues.²⁶

Those living in poverty and low-income people may be dependent on public benefits and therefore have issues concerning eligibility for those benefits. Each month, one in five Louisiana residents - nearly 900,000 people - rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to afford food. Searches for legal assistance with public benefits, particularly SNAP and child care assistance, are frequent inquiries to LouisianaLawHelp.org.²⁷ Additional searches for public benefit assistance include time limits for receipt of benefits and access to private assistance such as Meals on Wheels.

An inadequately realized fact is that poverty is expensive. The high cost of being poor is well documented.²²

Family, Custody, Divorce, and Dealing with Domestic Violence

Family law issues are near the top of those most often searched on LouisianaLawHelp.com. Issues that fall under the broad category of "family law" constitute a litany of the issues that confront the state's residents across the board and are exacerbated by lack of resources and institutional support. These include inquiries about custody and visitation, the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, resources for grandparents raising grandchildren, intra-family adoption, child support collection, modification, and delinquency. The largest age groups living below the poverty line in Louisiana are children under eighteen and adults between the ages of 18 and 34.²⁸ One can only reasonably surmise that the lack of access to legal assistance, inability to pay for attorneys and the general economic pressure of providing for a family are reflected in these searches.

Unemployment

From 2007 to 2011, Louisiana approved approximately 80% of unemployment insurance (UI) claims. In 2007, only two states had paid benefits to less than 20% of unemployed workers. In June 2011 the U.S. Department of Labor issued a "call to action" for states to implement strategies to "reduce improper UI payments."

Louisiana now denies 52% of its applicants for UI compared to only denying 19% between the years 2007 to 2011; a 179% increase.²⁹ A report by the National Employment Law Project (NELP) points out multiple reasons for this steep decline in the number of unemployed workers who do not receive unemployment insurance benefits. These include disqualification of workers for reasons outside of employment, state policies that discourage workers from applying for UI benefits and dramatic increases in the number of claims denied for procedural reasons, primarily occurring due to the adoption of online claim filing.

During these same periods, the denial rate in the U.S. overall, increased 57%, to an average rate of 19% of claims.³⁰ As the NELP report concludes, publicity around deep state cuts in benefits (especially attacks on entire categories of workers) likely creates a chilling effect on unemployed workers who are effectively discouraged from applying for UI.³¹ These effects are exacerbated by the "modernization" of the claims process. Since March 2013, claims for unemployment benefits in Louisiana can only be made

online.³² Appeals of determinations (denials) must be made within 15 days of the mailing date of the determination, which creates a difficult obstacle for low-income people who may be more likely to move frequently. If an appeal is filed timely, it is likely that the claimant will not have a lawyer and may be forced to respond to a denial, pitted against a company who is represented by counsel. Unfamiliarity with the legal system and the requirement that all appeals be handled by telephone create another obstacle to being afforded all rights to secure UI benefits.³³

Work in Low-Wage Jobs

Although the state's unemployment rate is at its lowest rate in a decade, many of the state's workers are not earning enough to be considered financially stable.³⁴ As the ALICE Report makes clear in remarkable detail, the number of households that cannot count on the financial security of meeting basic household needs affects residents across the state and of every race, gender, age, family type and size.³⁵

A fact exposed by ALICE is the proliferation of low-wage jobs, which trap families in economic insecurity. Seventy-one percent of jobs in the state pay less than \$20 per hour; more than half of the state's jobs pay less than \$15 per hour. A full-time job paying \$15 per hour means a gross income of \$30,000 per year, which is well-below the \$42,444 household survival budget for a family of four in the state. Those who can secure a job paying \$15 or \$20 per hour are doing relatively well. Lower wage jobs paying significantly less than \$15 are increasing, while jobs that pay at rates that can adequately support a family become harder to find. Between 2007 and 2013, the number of jobs paying less than \$10 per hour increased by 115%, while those paying \$30-40 per hour fell by 64%.³⁶

Despite recent attempts nationwide to enact higher wage statutes, Louisiana remains one of five states with no state minimum wage law, relying instead on the federal minimum wage rate. The federal minimum wage was set in 2009 at \$7.25/hour and has not changed. Louisiana also does not have an overtime law, so many of the state's workers who are employed in smaller businesses that are not covered by the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, do not receive additional wages when they work overtime.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 5.3% of Louisiana workers earn \$7.25 per hour or less, compared to 2.7% nationwide.³⁷ Without its own minimum wage provision, Louisiana also follows the federal law that permits employers to take a "tip credit" of up to \$5.12 per hour for workers who earn at least \$30.00 per month in tips. This means that many of the state's restaurant servers and bartenders are paid only \$2.13 per hour. While the employer is responsible for ensuring that workers actually receive at least \$7.25 per hour and for keeping records of employee earnings, in reality many of these workers often receive no actual payment from their employers, and the tip credit gives rise to wage claims for which workers may seek legal help.

Unfortunately, over the next decade, low wage jobs are expected to grow faster than higher wage jobs.³⁸ The lowest hourly wages in Louisiana come from occupations in these industries: (1) food preparation and serving related, (2) personal care and service; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; and (4) healthcare support.³⁹ While the national economy grows in tech-based industries that provide higher wages, Louisiana is falling behind and ranks 46th out of states with the economic structure to support these growing industries.⁴⁰

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Poverty Strips the State's Residents of Knowledge and Resources

The United Way's ALICE Report includes a "Community Resources Index," which measures "the education, health, and social resources that are available in a community."⁴¹ Community resources are considered "fundamental prerequisites to being able to work and raise a family" because they can make both short- and long- term differences in financial stability.⁴²

Only 26 of Louisiana's 64 parishes, received a "good" rating for availability of community resources, and twenty parishes received a "poor" rating.⁴³ These "poor" parishes are characterized by lack of community engagement and social capital needed to mobilize resources, improve the quality of life for residents, and resolve conflict.⁴⁴ Snapshots of a variety of indices that measure quality of life, opportunity, needs, and changes, including the potential for intergenerational mobility, find Louisiana scores below average or near the bottom for most indices that are indicative of development and positive change.⁴⁵ In its ranking of the "best states," *U.S. News & World Report* placed Louisiana near the bottom in positive measurements such as health care, education, fiscal stability, infrastructure, and quality of life, yet it leads the nation in crime and corrections.⁴⁶ The combination of these factors placed Louisiana 50th in economic opportunity.⁴⁷

Additional Barriers to Meeting Civil Legal Needs

For many people who are low-income and unable to meet their basic needs, there are additional hurdles created by disabilities, immigration status and language proficiency, age, low literacy and lack of education, current or prior incarceration or criminal records, and lack of assets to enable survival in the wake of a disaster. Addressing the unmet needs of these populations may be complex, and finding solutions ought to consider outcomes such as increasing available legal services, legal education and other appropriate support.

People Who are Disabled

Many people with disabilities also experience legal needs associated with poverty. They face additional barriers often due to their need for legal assistance to secure and maintain government benefits, access public transportation, find accessible housing, and access public buildings. About 33.6% of Louisiana residents with a disability live below 125% of the federal poverty level.⁴⁸

Immigrants

Immigrants – particularly those who are recently arrived, have little or no proficiency in English, or lack work authorization – have always been vulnerable. Exploitation of immigrants in Louisiana has been well documented.⁴⁹ According to a recent report by WalletHub, Louisiana ranks 47th (of 50 states and Washington, D.C.) in the educational attainment of recent immigrants.⁵⁰

Additionally because immigration status precludes eligibility of many public benefit programs, immigrants may often believe that they have no legal recourse against discrimination in situations such as non-payment of wages, education or domestic violence.

Elderly

Seniors are one of the state's most vulnerable population, a fact recognized by the existence of a state agency to address their needs. According to the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs (GOEA), Louisiana's population of those aged 60 or older will increase to over 1 million people by 2020. In 2016, 12.5% of

Louisiana residents over age 65 lived below the poverty line. The growing aging population of the state implies a significant need for services and, under the auspices of the Older Americans Act, the GOEA uses its limited state funding to work with several civil legal aid providers to offer support for seniors seeking medical and legal assistance. The agency itself also assists thousands of seniors in areas including personal care, transportation and recreation.⁵¹

People with Low Literacy

Louisiana's high school graduation rate remains among the lowest in the nation. In 2017, the state's high school graduation rate was 78%. Although this is an all-time high for the state, it still lags below the national average of 84% graduation rate.⁵² The rate of graduation is a barometer for the state's educational achievement, which in turn affects economic outcomes.⁵³

Incarcerated and Formerly-Incarcerated

For adults with serious misdemeanor or felony arrests or convictions or who were formerly incarcerated, their records can be a life sentence of poverty and low wages.⁵⁴ Louisiana's high incarceration rate is well documented.⁵⁵ Following incarceration, Louisiana places barriers to employment, housing, and other essential elements that interfere with rebuilding productive lives. Whereas Louisiana has 389 total restrictions on employment for those with felony convictions, other states average 123 mandatory employment restrictions.⁵⁶ People with controlled substance convictions, many of which are non-violent offenses, are subject to 102 mandatory restrictions in Louisiana.⁵⁷ The largest number of restrictions are in health care jobs,⁵⁸ which prevents many from employment in one of the fastest growing job sectors in the state.

Approximately 17,000 people are released annually from Louisiana's prisons.⁵⁹ Beyond the barriers to employment, conviction records and incarceration can result in the revocation of driver's licenses, which further restricts employment opportunities and mobility. Access to public housing and other public benefits are difficult to obtain, and individuals with arrest records or criminal convictions can be barred from public housing programs, including Section 8 voucher and rental assistance programs.⁶⁰ Under federal law, some criminal records result in prohibition from all federally funded housing programs, which can result in family separations. Entire families can be evicted or denied housing as a result of any member's drug conviction.⁶¹ For a drug conviction, Louisiana imposes a lifetime ban for receipt of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Those convicted of drug offenses may be disqualified from receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.⁶² Formerly incarcerated persons also face barriers in obtaining medical insurance and with voting eligibility. All of these obstacles have a profound effect on families and standards of living.

People who Lack Assets in Disaster-Prone Louisiana

When persons lack assets in the wake of a disaster, such as a hurricane or flooding or other severe weather events, or an environmental calamity, such as an oil spill that causes significant economic effects, they are severely impacted in their ability to recover. Federal Reserve data shows that 49% of Louisiana residents surveyed have not set aside emergency or "rainy day" funds to cover expenses for three months in case of sickness, job loss, economic downturn or other emergencies.⁶³ More than 10% of the households in Louisiana used high-cost, high risk debt, such as payday loans, for meeting basic needs and lack funds to establish an emergency savings account.⁶⁴ If the frequency of natural disasters in the last decade is any indication of the likelihood of future disasters in Louisiana, Louisiana will face more and more individuals financially unprepared to relocate or rebuild.

IV. LOUISIANA'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS UNMET CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS

Louisiana legal services providers have struggled with a change in legislative interest in funding services for the poor and decreased available federal LSC funding. In response, other non-profit civil legal aid providers and the LSC-funded legal service programs have expanded limited services and coordinated efforts to increase citizens' access to legal assistance, advice and information through partial representation, legal clinics, medical-legal partnerships, self-represented litigants help desks, court approved legal forms (primarily family law), brief services, reduced fee services and more, as detailed below.

LSBA Access to Justice Commission

The Louisiana Supreme Court has been vigilant in its concern for the ability of those living in poverty to access the courts. Because of their concerns, and in collaboration with the LSBA, in 2015 the Access to Justice (ATJ) Commission was created to address the most problematic and pressing needs of the poor at a systemic level.

The purpose of the Commission is to “assure continuity of policy and purpose in the collaboration between the private bar, the courts, and the civil justice community so as to further the goal of assuring that Louisianans, regardless of their economic circumstance, have access to equal justice under the law.”⁶⁵ The ATJ Commission has six committees: Building Bridges, Funding, In Forma Pauperis, Language Access, Modest Means, and Self-Represented Litigation. Now in its third year, the Commission continues making progress on many of these relevant issues.

Pro Bono Organizations

Several of the regional bar foundations have pro bono components which match volunteer attorneys with cases referred by local Legal Service Programs or cases directly accepted through their own intake. These pro bono components often provide additional services by conducting Self Help Desks at their local courts, offering clinics to provide legal information and holding Ask-A-Lawyer events. Louisiana's network of pro bono programs includes the New Orleans Pro Bono Project, Baton Rouge Bar Foundation Pro Bono Project, Lafayette Bar Foundation Pro Bono Program (formerly Lafayette Volunteer Lawyers), Shreveport Bar Foundation Pro Bono Project, Central Louisiana Pro Bono Project, and Southwest Bar Foundation Pro Bono Program. In addition, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services has a volunteer component to address legal needs not covered by any independent pro bono organization in the parishes they serve.

Louisiana's Efforts to Address Unmet Civil Legal Needs:

LSBA Access to Justice Commission

Pro Bono Organizations

Specialty Bars

Louisiana Law Schools

Support and Resources for Legal Aid Organizations

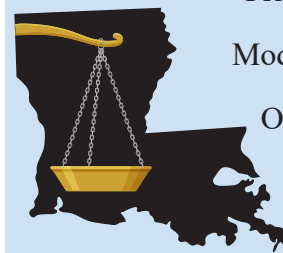
Self-Help Desks

Legal Education and Assistance Program (LEAP)

Private Attorneys

Modest Means Panel

Online Resources for Legal Information



Specialty Bars

Specialty bars may address legal needs of the poor through their membership. The specialty bars include the Louis A. Martinet Legal Society (which have six chapters located across the State of Louisiana), Association for Women Attorneys, Baton Rouge Association for Women Attorneys, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Louisiana, Jesse N. Stone Legal Society, Louisiana Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Louisiana Association of Black Women Attorneys, Louisiana Judicial Council of the National Bar Association, and the Vietnamese American Bar Association.

Louisiana Law Schools

Louisiana has four law schools, Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, Tulane University Law School, Louisiana State University Law School, and Southern University School of Law. Each has law clinics dedicated to the training of law students in the practice of law by providing supervised legal representation to targeted populations including but not limited to the elderly, children, immigrants, low wage workers, tenants, and criminal defendants.

Support and Resources for Legal Aid Organizations

The Louisiana Bar Association, through its Access to Justice Committee and Access to Justice Department supports legal aid organizations by offering an annual conference to provide opportunities to network and discuss poverty-related legal issues. This free annual Civil Justice Community Conference is designed specifically for non-profit legal attorneys. The conference focuses on issues affecting low-income populations, provides educational opportunities on substantive law and practice management issues as well as the opportunity to earn a full year's Continuing Legal Education credits. The conference also hosts Task Forces in the areas of consumer, family, public benefits, employment, and housing law. These task force groups, which include attorneys from non-profit legal providers across the state, discuss and share approaches to legal issues, and successful interventions and strategies. Further, the ATJ Committee holds an annual Pro Bono Awards ceremony hosted by the Louisiana Supreme Court which promotes and increases awareness of the contributions of pro bono attorneys and highlights the importance of pro bono work by Bar members.

Self Help Desks

At the local level, the lower courts became increasingly aware of a marked increase in the number of self-represented litigants and the amount of time needed to effectively address their situations during court proceedings. With the assistance of the LSBA Access to Justice Department, courts developed self-help desks inside their courts. Eight help desks are now established in or near the following courts: 9th JDC (Rapides); 14th JCD (Calcasieu); 17th Judicial Court (Lafourche), 19th Judicial Court's Family Court (East Baton Rouge); 22nd JDC (St. Tammany/Washington); 24th Judicial Court (Jefferson); 29th JDC (St. Charles) and Orleans Civil District Court. Local organizations, often pro bono organizations, recruit volunteer attorneys to operate the desks, with some local firms stepping up to volunteer as well. These volunteers assist litigants by giving legal information and answering general questions about the court. As a corollary to the help desks, courts are now more willing to publish their district's court-approved forms for litigants to use when representing themselves. Additionally, some courts have accepted the assistance of ATJ staff and developed virtual help desks that can be found on individual websites where similar information and forms can be found.

Legal Education and Assistance Program (LEAP)

Over the past several years, the LSBA has collaborated with the Louisiana State University Law Library, Louisiana Library Association, Law Library of Louisiana, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, and other partners to provide the public with legal forms, information and referral resources across the state.⁶⁶ The Legal Education and Assistance Program (LEAP) helps public libraries address patrons' legal needs by providing training for staff on how to respond to legal questions without providing "legal advice." Through the development of substantive law *libguides* and other specialized resources which address frequently asked topics, librarians become more adept in providing informational services to patrons with legal issues. These efforts are supplemented by "Lawyers in Libraries" events, which bring attorneys across the state into their local public library to provide free, limited legal services. Most Louisiana parish libraries participate in "Lawyers in Libraries" events scheduled in October during the national Celebrate Pro Bono Week.

Private Attorneys and Modest Means Panel

The Modest Means Directory is a recent effort by the LSBA to provide an alternative opportunity for obtaining legal representation when an individual's income is higher than the federal poverty level. These "working poor" are ineligible for free legal aid but are unable to pay market rate price for private attorneys. It is hoped that more attorneys will see this as an opportunity to build their practice through flat fee or sliding scale pricing while providing much needed legal services to this population with income between 200% and 400% of the federal poverty level.⁶⁷

Online and Other Resources for Legal Information

For those individuals who have access to the internet, several resources provide legal information and/or assistance. Some offer information on a range of legal topics, while others are more targeted, such as those offering assistance with child abuse and domestic violence.⁶⁸ The American Bar Association created a free online question-and-answer resource model that connects qualifying persons with a lawyer in their state. States were encouraged to use the service and individualize their own free legal answers site and engage in volunteer recruitment. The LSBA ATJ program was one of six original programs which joined this project that has now gone nationwide.⁶⁹

IV. THE UNMET CIVIL LEGAL NEED IN LOUISIANA: YARBROUGH AND GRUESBECK STUDY

General Overview

Respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study were first asked to identify whether they had ever had a legal problem. Out of all the respondents in the study, 54% of respondents or a member of their family had a legal need and 46% of respondents did not. The 54% of respondents who had a legal need were the focus of the remainder of the study.

FOUR MOST PREVALENT AREAS OF NEED		
1	FAMILY LAW	67%
2	DISASTER RELIEF	66%
3	EMPLOYMENT	62%
4	CONSUMER & FINANCIAL	56%

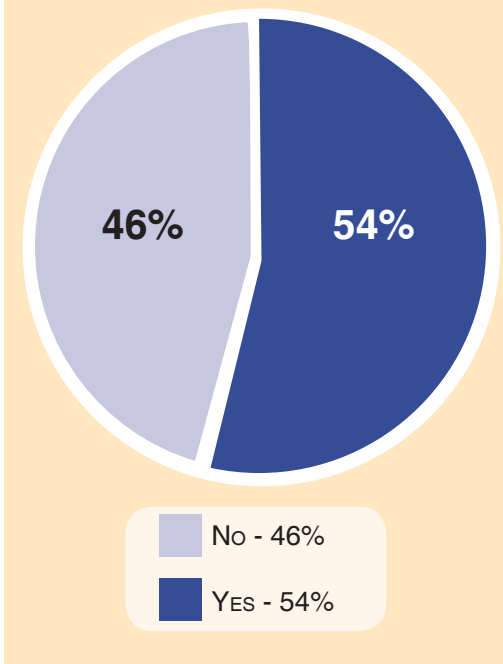
Respondents to the study who identified that they had a legal need, that is 54%, were then asked to identify whether they had legal need in the past two years and which area of civil law their need involved. More than 50% of these respondents identified a legal problem in the past two years. The four areas in which problems most often occurred were: consumer and financial, employment, family law, and disaster relief.

While fewer Louisianans experienced a legal need in other common civil law areas, many of these areas have the highest percentage of unmet needs. The highest percentage of unmet legal need were found in five areas: healthcare, juvenile, housing, education, and immigration. These five issues have more than 60% of its needs unmet.

FIVE MOST PREVALENT AREAS OF UNMET NEED		
1	HEALTHCARE	65%
2	JUVENILE	63%
3	EDUCATION	62%
4	IMMIGRATION	62%
5	HOUSING	62%

Yarbrough and Gruesbeck also asked respondents whether they knew how to access specific resources. Out of all the respondents in the study, 24% knew how to access legal aid, 15% knew how to access pro bono attorneys, and 17% knew how to access online legal help or pro se support. However, 44% respondents did not know how to access any of the given resources.

Did Respondents (or a member of their family) Ever Have a Legal Need?



About the Data

The surveys distributed by Yarbrough and Gruesbeck asked respondents to identify whether they had a legal need and then whether the legal need was met. Respondents first identified their legal need in general categories as indicated by the Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana chart. The study then broke down these larger legal issues into subcategories to better identify what specific legal need participants had in each category. These subcategories are the focus of the next section, “Findings by Legal Issue.”

Yarbrough and Gruesbeck also asked participants what actions they took to address their legal problem. The ability of an individual to understand how to resolve their legal problem is critical to establishing the unmet need. A need will continue to go unmet in spite of available services if the persons experiencing the need do not have the understanding that (1) their need has a legal remedy and (2) legal resources are available. The answers to these questions will be paired with the responses to each subcategory.

What is an Unmet Legal Need?

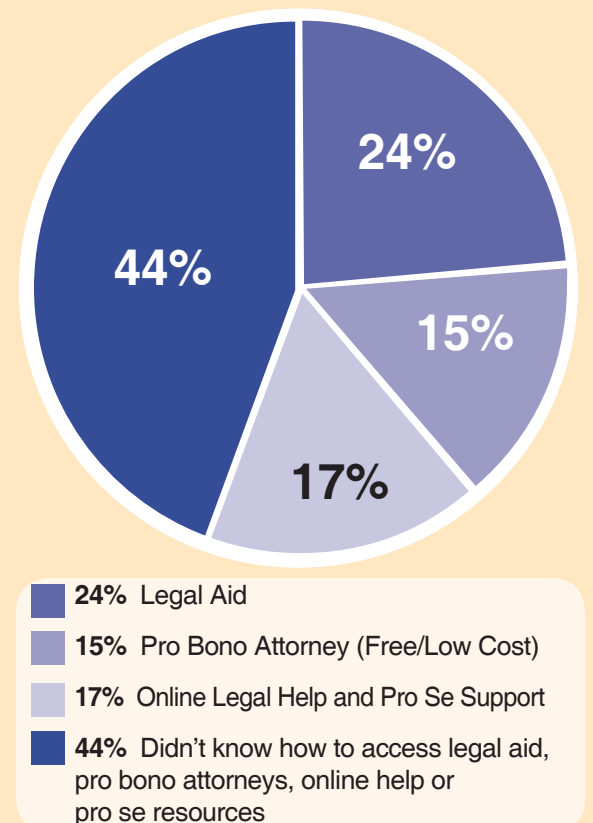
Respondents could choose whether their legal need was “met”, “unmet”, or the respondent chose not to answer the question. When the study shows the total legal need, it is not just “met” or “unmet” because of the unknown percentage resulting from the failure to answer this question at all.

Additionally, some of the issue subcategories in the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study do not contain an “unmet” percentage of the legal need. This is because at very low percentages, the responses are not statistically reliable enough to project across the entire population of Louisiana. The issues where this applies are marked by an asterisk (“*”) to indicate that the unmet percentage is unreported to preserve the reliability of the study. Because of these data issues, the unmet need in these subcategories is not reportable.

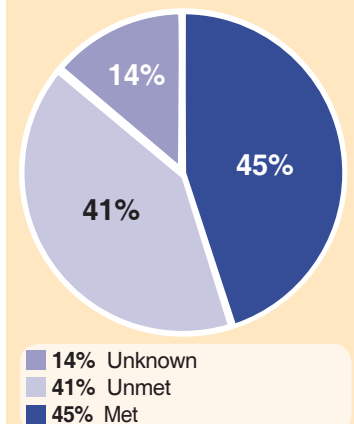
Reporting the Data Collection

It should be noted that respondents could answer a question by choosing “other” instead of a given specific response. With the “other” category, there is no other data to interpret it or speculate as to its meaning. This is relevant because for some questions, the percentage of respondents who chose “other” is relatively high.

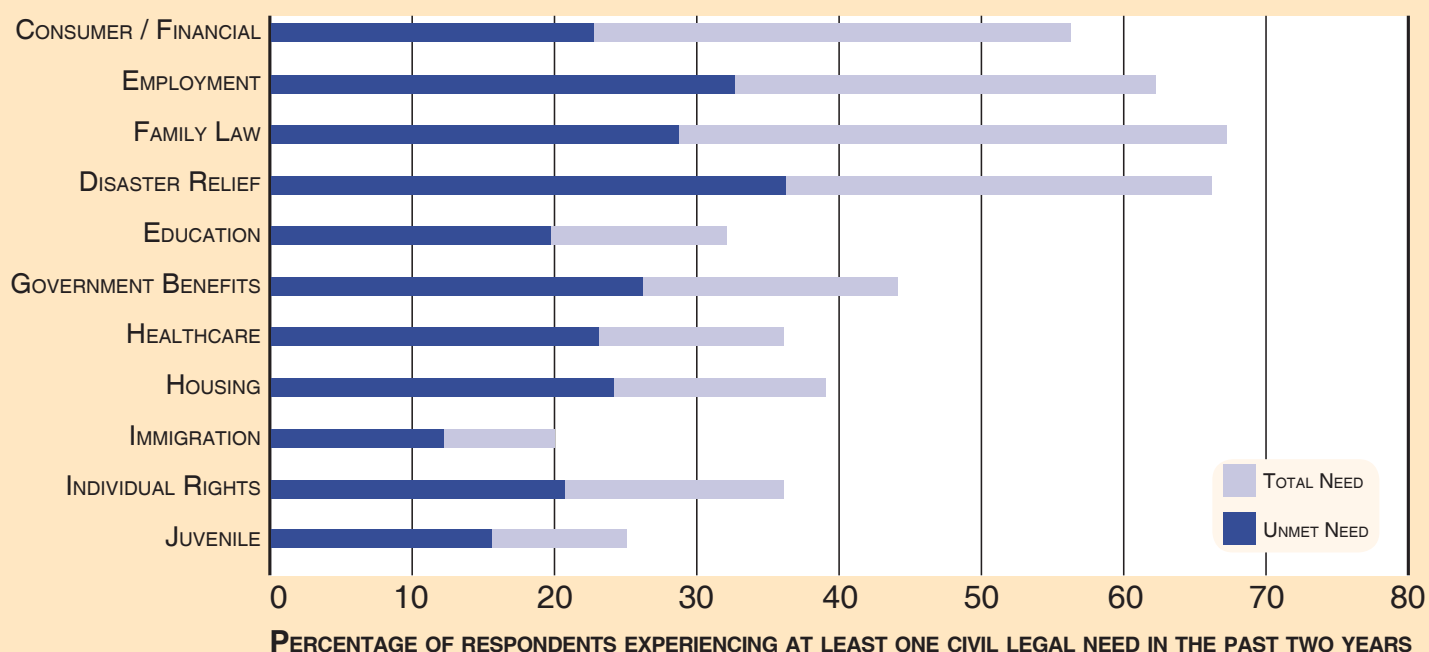
Resources Respondents Knew How to Access



Sample Percentage Met/Unmet/Unknown



Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana



DATA BREAKDOWN

CONSUMER / FINANCIAL ISSUES	.41% OF	56% NEED IS UNMET
EMPLOYMENT	.53% OF	62% NEED IS UNMET
FAMILY LAW ISSUES	.43% OF	67% NEED IS UNMET
DISASTER RELIEF	.55% OF	66% NEED IS UNMET
EDUCATION	.62% OF	32% NEED IS UNMET
GOVERNMENT BENEFITS	.60% OF	44% NEED IS UNMET
HEALTHCARE	.65% OF	36% NEED IS UNMET
HOUSING	.62% OF	39% NEED IS UNMET
IMMIGRATION	.62% OF	20% NEED IS UNMET
INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS	.58% OF	36% NEED IS UNMET
JUVENILE	.63% OF	25% NEED IS UNMET

Findings By Legal Issue

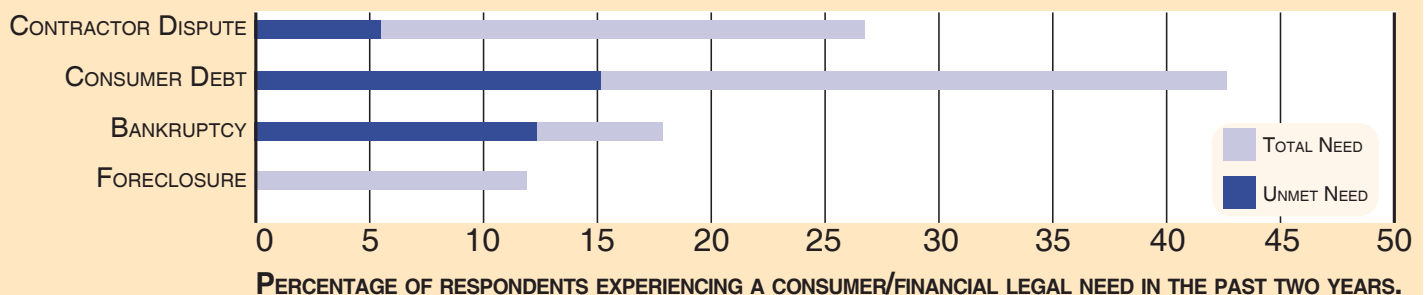
The Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study highlighted the areas of consumer/financial matters, employment, family law, disaster relief, government benefits, healthcare, housing, immigration, individual rights, and juvenile issues. This section provides a targeted inquiry into the met and unmet legal needs of subcategories of those legal areas and what course of action the respondents sought.

1. Consumer and Finance

Referencing the “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 56% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a consumer and financial legal need in their households during the two years prior to the survey. This makes consumer and finance one of the most prevalent legal issues among respondents. Of that percentage, approximately 41% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

The following subcategories are the most common issues related to consumer and finance identified by the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study. The subcategories are contractor dispute, consumer debt, bankruptcy, and foreclosure. Contractor disputes commonly involve breach of contract and property liens.

Consumer / Financial Legal Needs in Louisiana



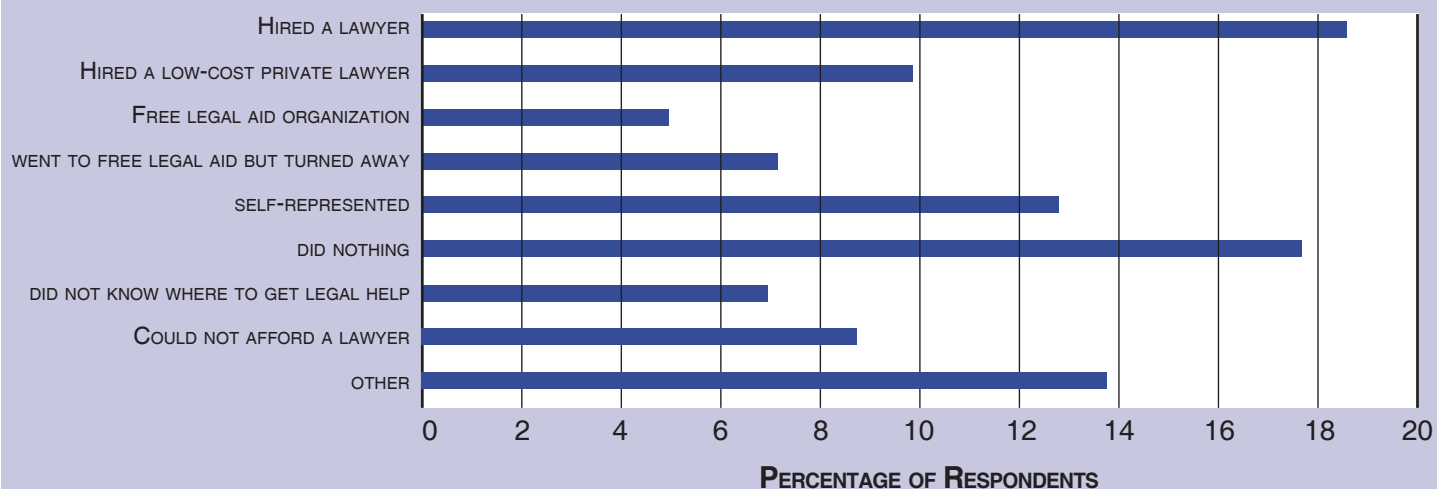
DATA BREAKDOWN

CONTRACTOR DISPUTE	21% OF 27% NEED IS UNMET
CONSUMER DEBT	36% OF 43% NEED IS UNMET
BANKRUPTCY	70% OF 18% NEED IS UNMET
FORECLOSURE	12% NEED

The largest need within the broad category of consumer and finance issues is consumer debt, representing 43% of the respondents who had a legal need in consumer finance issues. About a third of the consumer debt legal need is unmet.

Contractor disputes represent 27% of the respondents with a consumer and finance legal need with 21% of that need unmet. Bankruptcy represents a small portion of the consumer and finance legal needs, around 18%, but has the largest proportion of its needs being unmet: 70%. Foreclosure is another small portion of this category with a 12% need. The sample size is too small to make a reliable approximation of the unmet need for foreclosures.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



In response to this legal need, most respondents hired a lawyer, but many did nothing. Looking at the first three options, a combined 33% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” about 11.76% of respondents approached legal aid services, but more than half of those respondents were turned away.

A high number of respondents were self-represented, around 12.75%, more than those who went to legal aid or hired a low cost attorney. In addition, more respondents did nothing (17.65%) than those who self-represented. For the option of “Could not afford a lawyer,” just under 9% of respondents realized that their problem had a legal solution but could not afford a lawyer. Another 6.86% of respondents did not know where to get help.

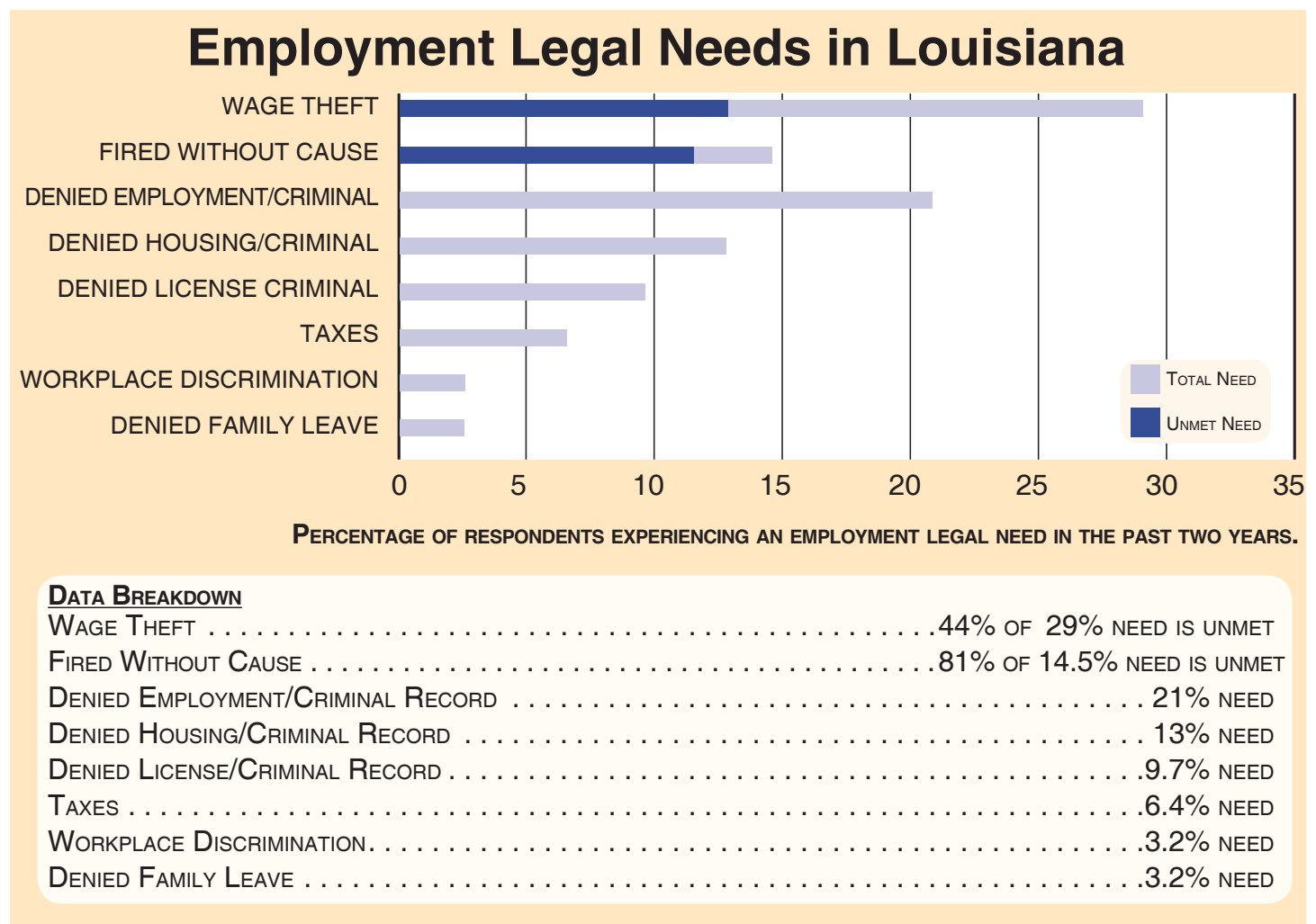
**41% OF CONSUMER FINANCE
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

2. Employment

Referring back to the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 62% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had employment legal needs in their households during the two years prior to the survey. As noted, this issue is one of the most prevalent legal issues among respondents. Of that percentage, about 53% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

The area of employment law contains a wide variety of specific legal needs. These include wage theft, being fired without cause, taxes, workplace discrimination, and being denied family leave. The greatest legal need in these subcategories of employment are wage theft and denial of employment due to a criminal record, each representing 29% and 21% of the need respectively. Around 44% of the wage theft need is unmet.

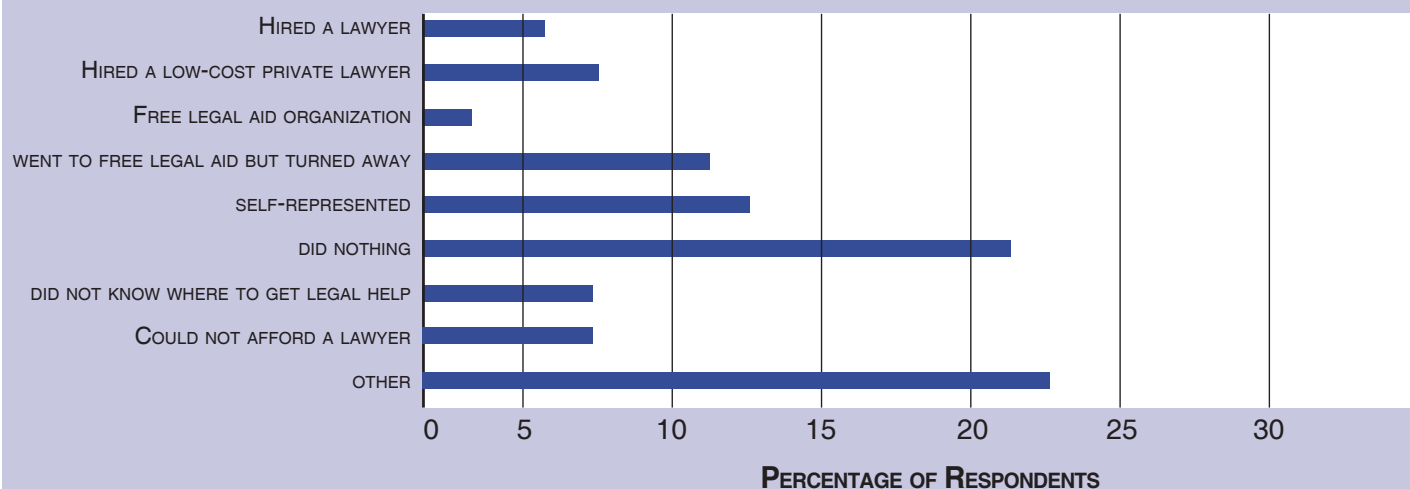
For denial of employment due to a criminal record, there was not enough data to ascertain the unmet legal need. These denials are important because many individuals suffer employment-related consequences from having a criminal record, either being denied employment, denied housing, or denied licenses. These denials can have an impact on a person’s employment opportunities. For example, the denial of a driver’s license, commercial driver’s license, and professional licenses, can affect the ability of a person to seek and maintain employment.



While firing without cause is less than 15% of the need in this area, 81% of the need is reported as unmet. Because Louisiana is an “at-will” state, “firing without cause” is not an individual cause of action. This subcategory might require further legal review to ascertain instances of unlawful discrimination or for purposes with seeking unemployment benefits.

There were not a sufficient number of respondents to assess the unmet need in the other subcategories of employment law.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



In response to this legal need, 21% of respondents did nothing.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 15.5% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” about 14% of respondents approached legal aid services, but almost 80% of those who went to legal aid were turned away.

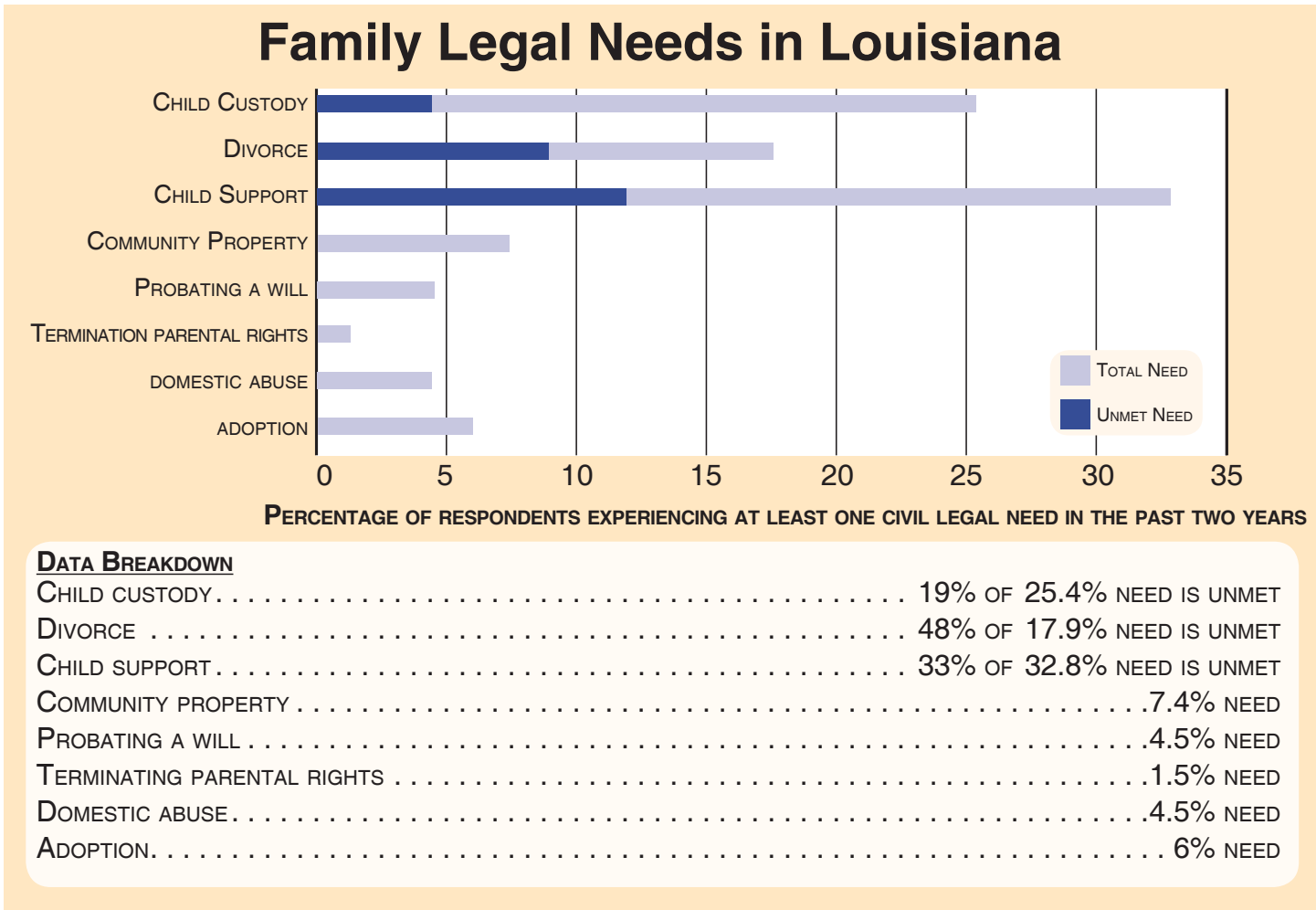
A high number of respondents were self-represented (12.68%), a percentage similar to those who had legal representation. For the option of “Could not afford a lawyer,” just under 9% of respondents realized that their problem had a legal solution but could not afford a lawyer. The same percentage of respondents did not know where to get help. One respondent wrote in a response and stated, “I talked to people online (like Facebook), but they didn’t seem to know what to do except get a lawyer and that was too expensive.”

**53% OF EMPLOYMENT
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

3. Family Law

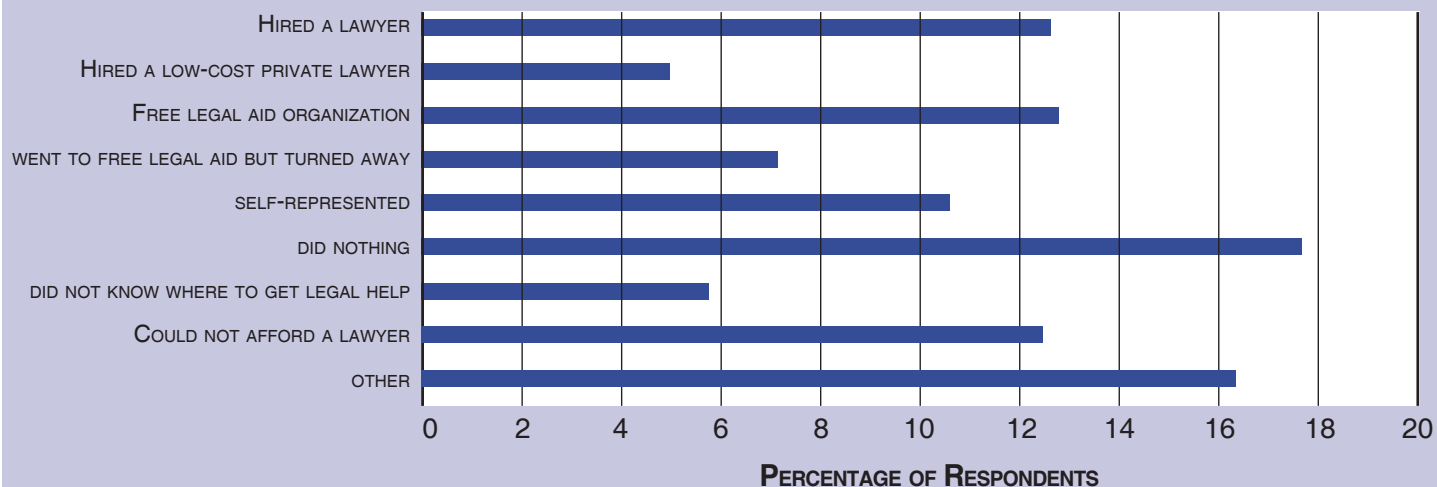
Referencing the “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 67% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a family law need in their households during two years prior to the survey. As noted previously, family law is one of the most prevalent legal issues with consumer finance, employment, and disaster relief. Of that percentage, about 43% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

The following are common issues related to family law that the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study asked respondents to focus on: child custody, divorce, child support, community property, probating a will, terminating parental rights, domestic abuse, and adoption. These subcategories are common for those who practice family law for low-income populations. While the proper venue for many of these legal issues is the district courts, juvenile courts handle many family law cases too, including child support and child in need of care cases.



The greatest legal needs in these subcategories of family law are child support and child custody with 32.8% and 25.4% of the family law legal need respectively. For child support, 33% of the need is unmet. For child custody, only 19% of the legal need is unmet. The greatest unmet legal need in family law is for divorce, where almost half of the need is unmet. All the other subcategories represent less than 10% of the family law legal need, but there was not sufficient data to statistically assess the unmet need for these subcategories.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



In response to this legal need, 17.5% of respondents did nothing.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 30% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” just less than 20% of respondents approached legal aid services. Almost one-third of those who went to legal aid were turned away which is a relatively low amount that is turned away compared to other legal issues.

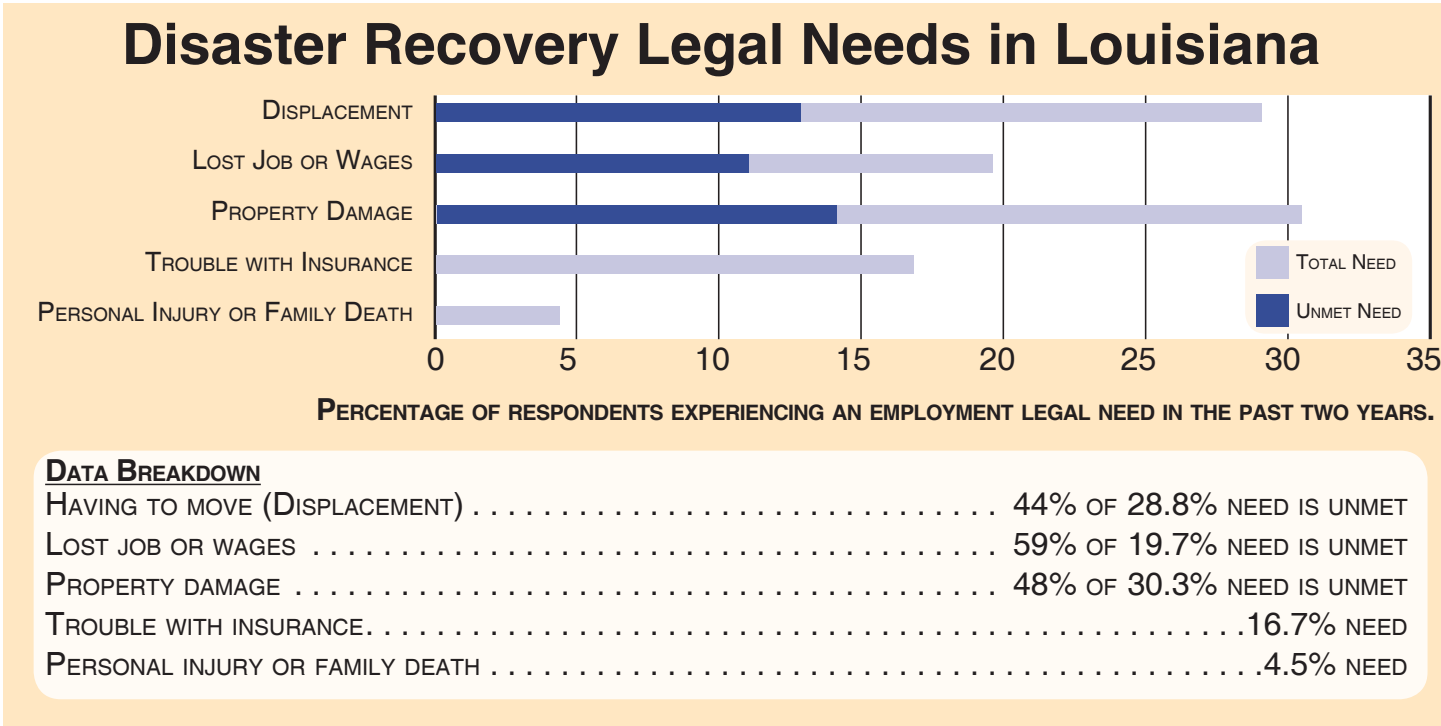
Approximately 10.68% of respondents who had a family law legal need were self-represented which is far less than those who found legal representation. For the option of “Could not afford a lawyer,” 12.62% of respondents realized that their problem had a legal solution but could not afford a lawyer. Less than that, around 5.83% of respondents did not know where to get help. One respondent wrote in a response and stated that DCFS assisted with child support.

**43% OF FAMILY LAW
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

4. Disaster Recovery

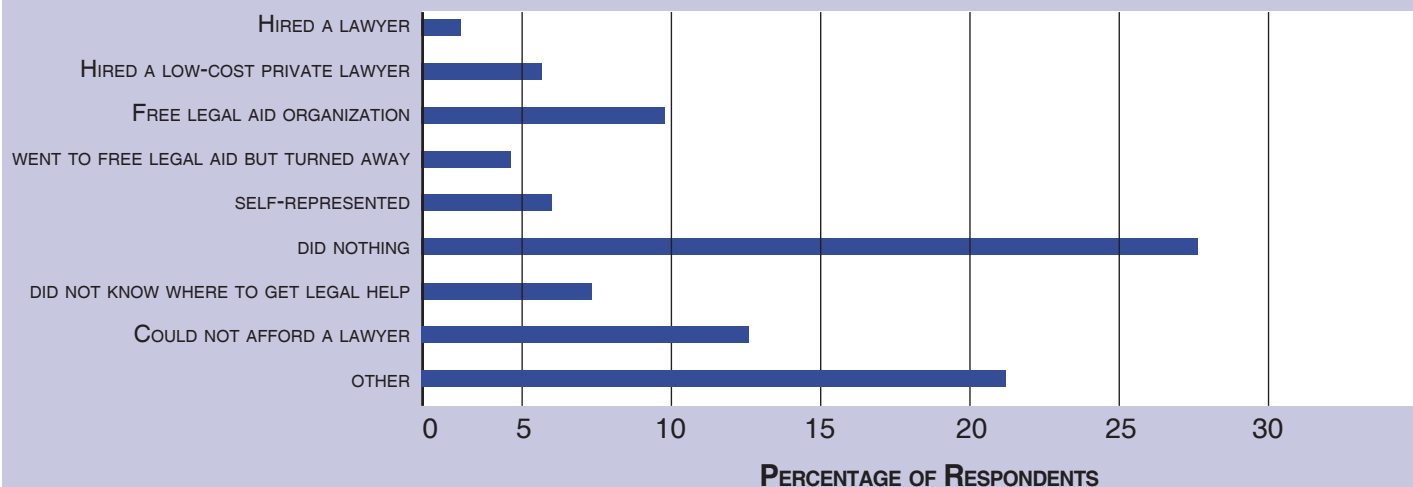
Referring back to the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 66% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a legal need in the area of disaster recovery in their households during the two years prior to the study. This is one of the most prevalent legal issues along with consumer/finance, employment, and family law. Of respondents with a legal need in disaster recovery, about 55% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

The following are common issues related to disaster recovery that the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study asked respondents to focus on: displacement, lost job or wages, property damage, insurance problems and personal injury or family death. Around the time of the survey, Baton Rouge suffered catastrophic flooding. Unfortunately for Louisianans, natural disasters are not a rare occurrence. The greatest legal need in these subcategories of disaster relief are displacement and property damage. For displacement, about 28.8% of respondents have that legal need with 44% of the need unmet. For property damage similarly, approximately 30.3% of respondents have that legal need with 48% of the need unmet. The third most prevalent legal need is the lost jobs or wages with one-fifth of respondents with this need and almost 60% of it unmet. This overlaps with the employment category and parallels its high unmet need. Displacement also overlaps with housing. It should be noted that disaster relief on its own is not a specialized area of law, but an elevated need for legal services with an even more strained access to those resources.



Insurance is also still high at 16.7% of the legal need and followed by a 4.5% need of personal injury and family death assistance. There was not sufficient data to statically assess the unmet need for these subcategories.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



In response to this legal need, 28.57% of respondents reported doing nothing.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 17.85% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” just less than 15% of respondents approached legal aid services. One-third of those who went to legal aid were turned away which is a relatively low amount that is turned away compared to previous legal issues.

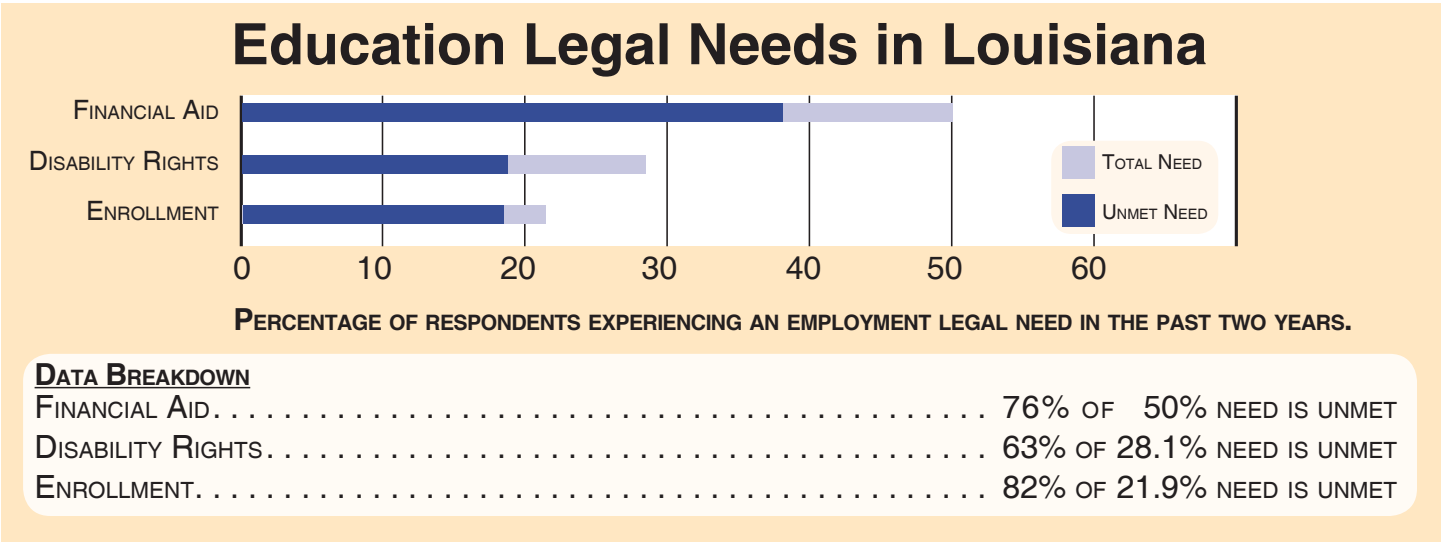
Around 5.95% of respondents were self-represented which is far less than those who found legal representation. For the option of “Could not afford a lawyer,” 13.1% of respondents realized that their problem had a legal solution but could not afford a lawyer. Less than that, around 8.33% of respondents did not know where to get help.

**56% OF DISASTER RECOVERY
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

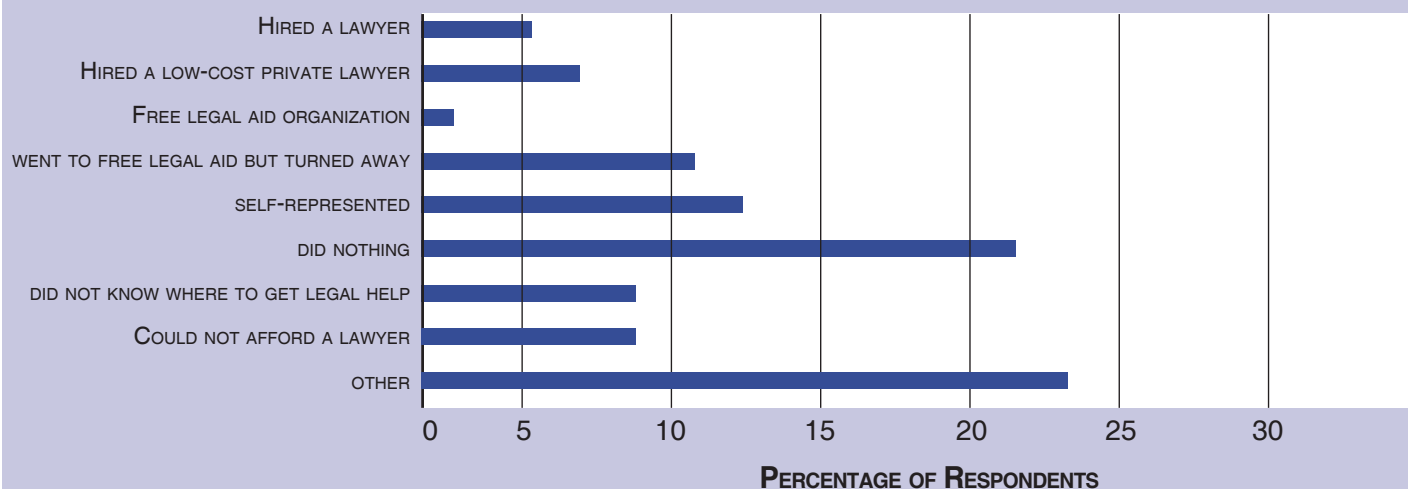
5. Education

Referring back to the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 32% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a legal need in the area of education in their households during the two years prior to this survey. Of that percentage, about 62% of that legal need was unmet. This is a higher unmet legal need than many of the more prevalent legal issues.

The following are common issues related to education that the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study asked respondents to focus on: financial aid, disability rights, and enrollment. Education in Louisiana presents complex issues, particularly with navigating the charter school system. The greatest legal need for education is financial aid. Half of respondents with a legal need in education have issues with financial aid and 76% of that need is unmet. Disability rights represent a need for almost 30% of respondents who have a legal need with 63% of that need unmet. Enrollment is about one-fifth of the education legal need with a large majority, 82% of the need was unmet.



What did Respondents do for legal help?



In response to this legal need, 21.13% of respondents did nothing.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 15.49% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” just less than 14.09% of respondents approached legal aid services. Almost 80% of those who went to legal aid were turned away, which shows that many people are aware that this is a legal issue but cannot find affordable representation.

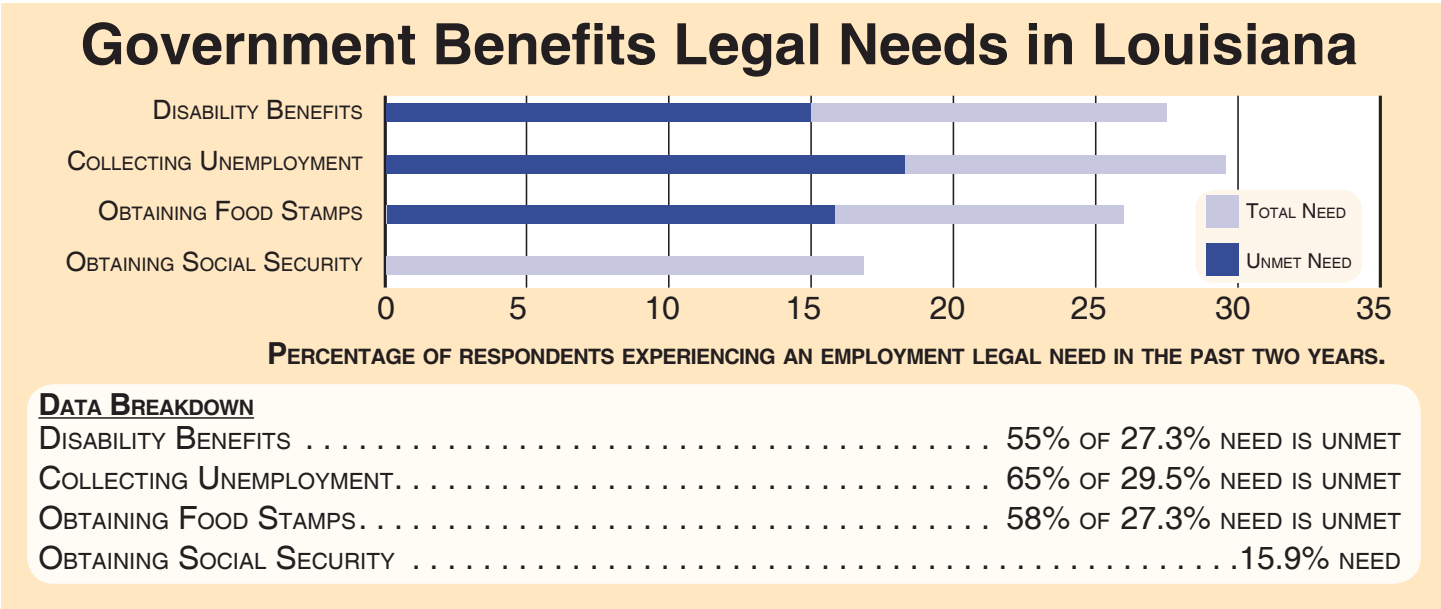
Around 12.68% of respondents were self-represented which is a little less than those who found legal representation. For the option of “Could not afford a lawyer,” 8.45% of respondents realized that their problem had a legal solution but could not afford a lawyer. The same percentage of respondents did not know where to get help.

**62% OF EDUCATION
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

6. Government Benefits

Referencing the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 44% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a legal need in the area of government benefits in their households during the two years prior to the study. Of that percentage, about 60% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

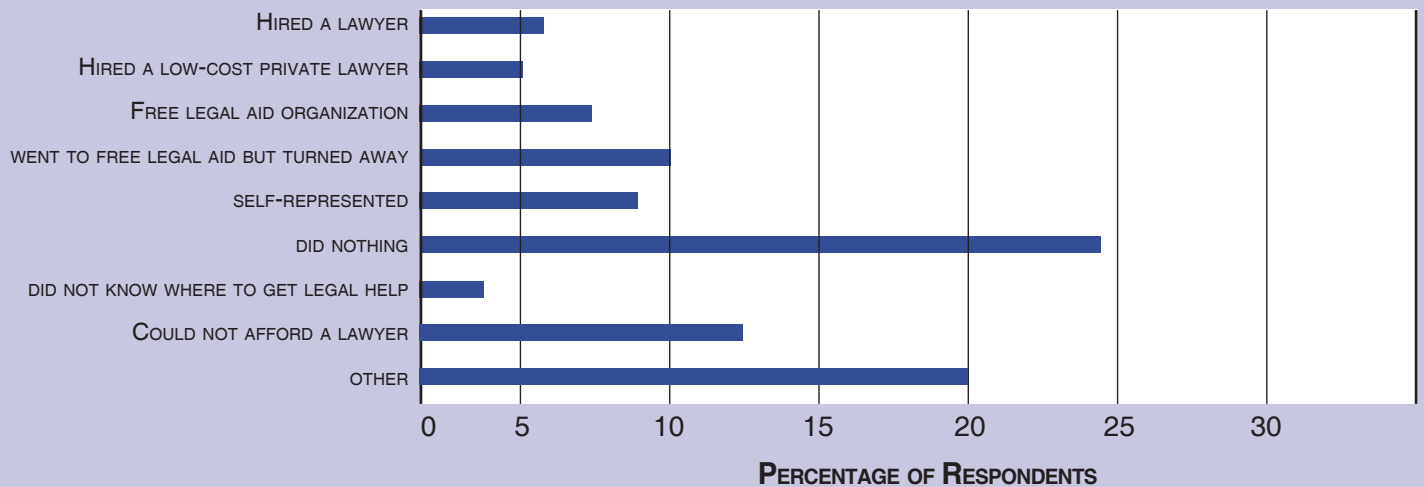
The following are common issues related to government benefits identified by the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study: disability benefits, collecting unemployment, obtaining food stamps, and obtaining social security. These types of cases generally start at the agency level and appeals occur with the Administrative Law Judges.



The greatest legal need for government benefit assistance, for almost 30% of respondents, is collecting unemployment. This subcategory also has the highest unmet legal need of the legal area with 65% of the need unmet. Collecting unemployment intersects with the employment category of legal issues explored previously, but these are frequently a distinct claim at the agency level that can benefit a client while other claims are pending or being investigated.

The next two prominent categories at 27.3% of respondents each are disability benefits and food stamps with an unmet need of 55% and 58% respectively. The last subcategory is social security representing only 15.9% of the respondents with a legal need for government benefits. There was not sufficient data to statistically assess the unmet need for this subcategory.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



In response to this legal need, 24.36% of respondents did nothing.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 15.49% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” just less than 18% of respondents approached legal aid services. More than half of those who went to legal aid were turned away.

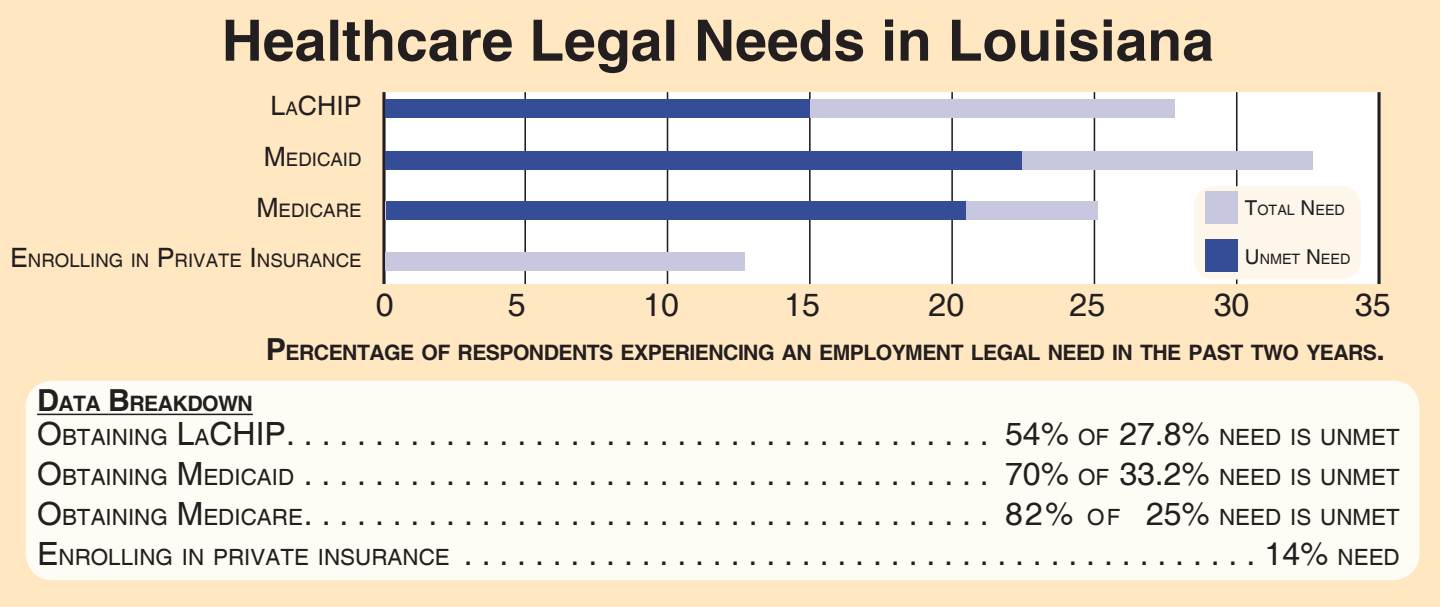
Around 8.79% of respondents were self-represented which is less than those with representation and quite a low number compared to the other legal issues. For the option of “Could not afford a lawyer,” 12.82% of respondents realized that their problem had a legal solution but could not afford a lawyer. Here, only 3.83% of respondents who had a legal need in this area did not know where to get help, which is notably one of the lowest percentage for this option across all the legal issues.

**60% OF GOVERNMENT BENEFITS
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

7. Healthcare

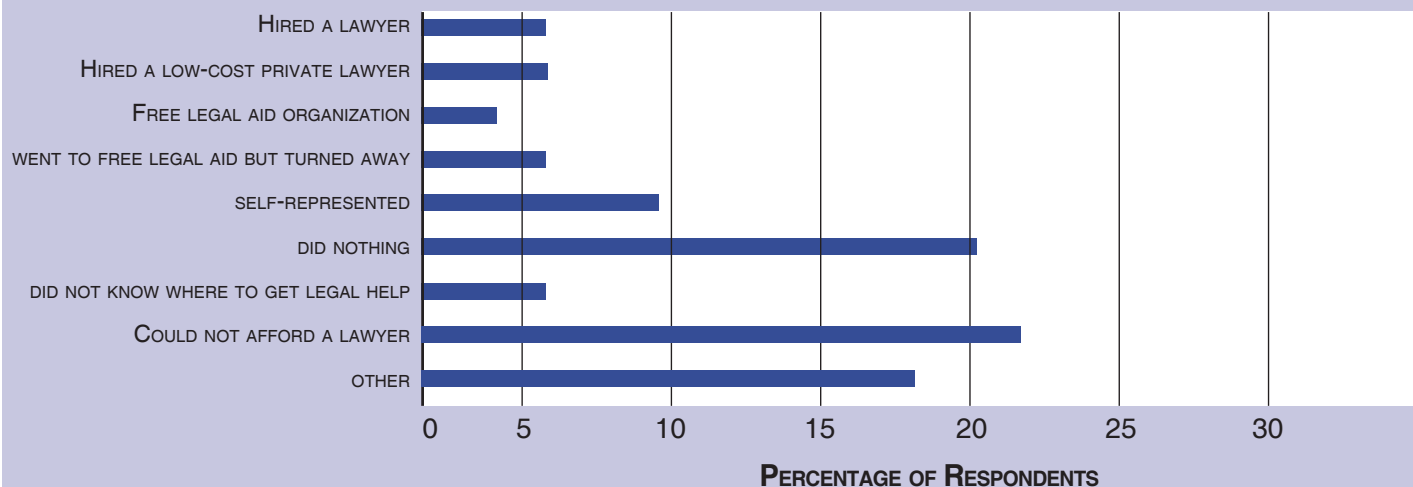
Referring to the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 36% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a legal need in the area of healthcare in their households during the two years prior to the study. Of that percentage, about 65% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

The following are common issues related to healthcare: LaCHIP, Medicaid, Medicare, and enrolling in private insurance. LaCHIP is the Louisiana Children’s Health Insurance Program. The greatest legal need for healthcare assistance is obtaining Medicaid. Almost 33.2% of respondents need assistance obtaining, and likely keeping, Medicaid with 70% of this need unmet. Obtaining LaCHIP represents around 27.8% of respondents with more than half of the need as unmet. A quarter of respondents with a healthcare legal need have trouble obtaining Medicare. Obtaining Medicare has the highest percentage of unmet need at 82% of respondents not having their need met.



The last subcategory, enrolling in private insurance, represents only 14% of the respondents with a legal need for healthcare. There was not sufficient data to statistically assess the unmet need for this subcategory.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



In contrast to the aforementioned legal issues, most respondents when faced with a legal need in healthcare knew that the problem could be solved with a lawyer but 21.62% of respondents could not afford a lawyer. The second most common response, at 20.27% of respondents with a need in this area, was to do nothing.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 17.57% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” 10.81% of respondents approached legal aid services. Around 62% of those who went to legal aid for this issue reported being turned away.

Approximately 9.46% of respondents with a legal need in healthcare were self-represented which is less than those with representation. Only 6.67% of respondents who had a legal need in this area did not know where to get help.

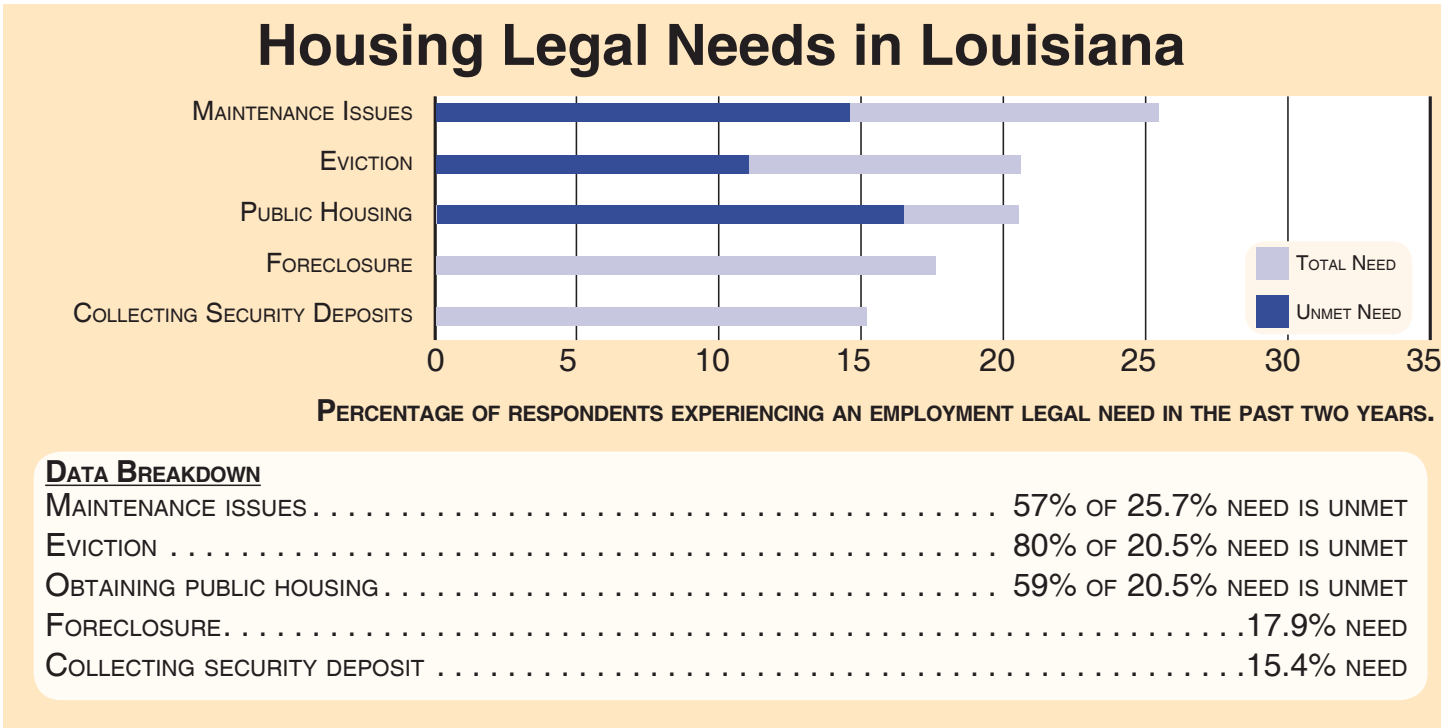
**65% OF HEALTHCARE
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

8. Housing

Referring to the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 39% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a housing legal need in their households during the two years prior to the study. Of that percentage, about 62% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

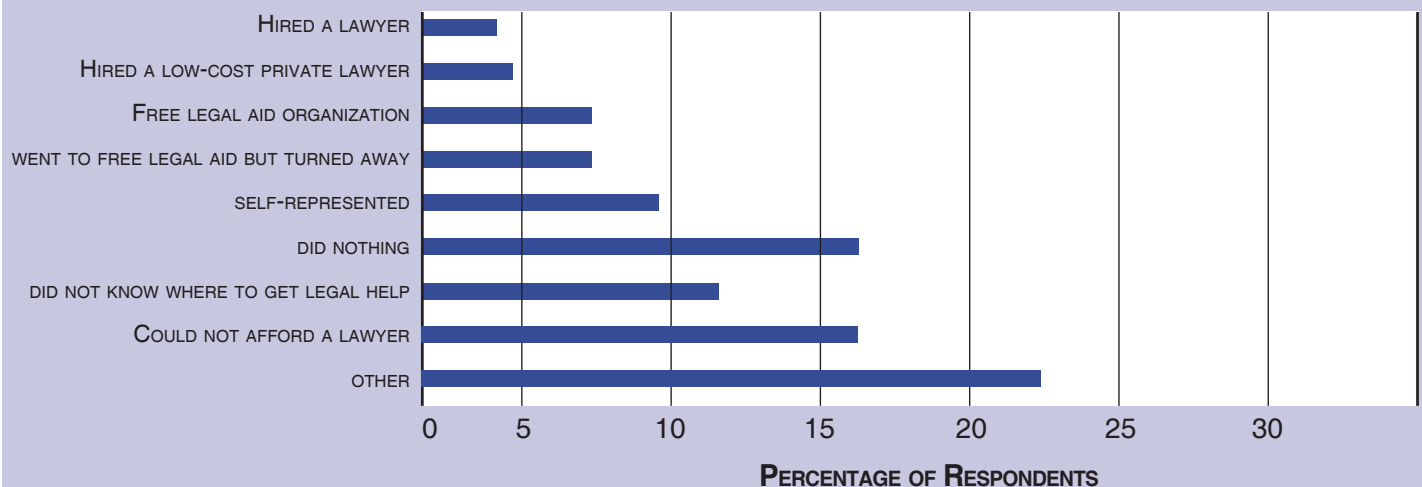
The following are common issues related to housing: maintenance issues, evictions, public housing, foreclosure, and collecting security deposits. Many housing issues appear before local city and parish courts and local justice of the peace courts.

The greatest legal need in the area of housing is maintenance issues. A little over 25% of respondents who need assistance with housing have maintenance issues and 57% of that need is unmet. Eviction and public housing both represent 20.5% of respondents. Eviction has a much higher legal need with 80% of respondents facing an eviction having their need unmet. The unmet legal need for public housing is also high with 59% of respondents not having their need met.



The last two subcategories foreclosure and security deposit collection are the lowest subcategories in the housing area representing 17.9% and 15.4% of respondents respectively. There was not sufficient data to statistically assess the unmet need for these subcategories.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



For housing, if respondents who answered as “Other” are eliminated, most respondents either did nothing or knew that a lawyer was needed and could not afford one; both choices represented 16.67% of respondents who faced a housing legal need.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 15.16% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” 15.16% of respondents approached legal aid services. Exactly half of those who went to legal aid for this issue reported being turned away.

Around 9.09% of respondents were self-represented which is less than those with representation. About 12.12% of respondents who had a legal need in this area did not know where to get help.

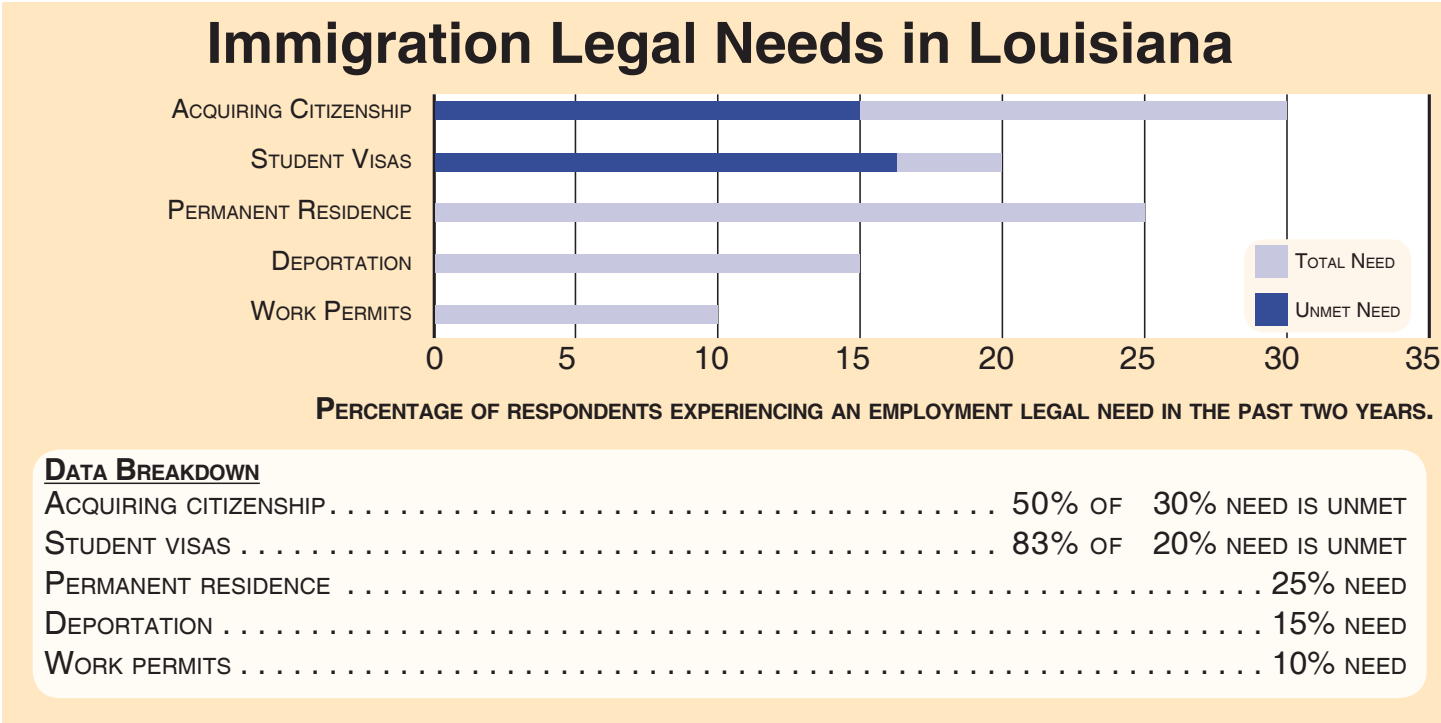
**62% OF HOUSING
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

**80% OF EVICTION
NEEDS ARE UNMET**

9. Immigration

Referencing the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 20% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a immigration legal need in their households during the two years prior to the study. Of that percentage, about 62% of that legal need is reported as unmet. Yarbrough and Gruesbeck note that the percentage may be artificially low due to the fact that the study occurred in 2016 when anti-immigrant sentiments increased across the country.

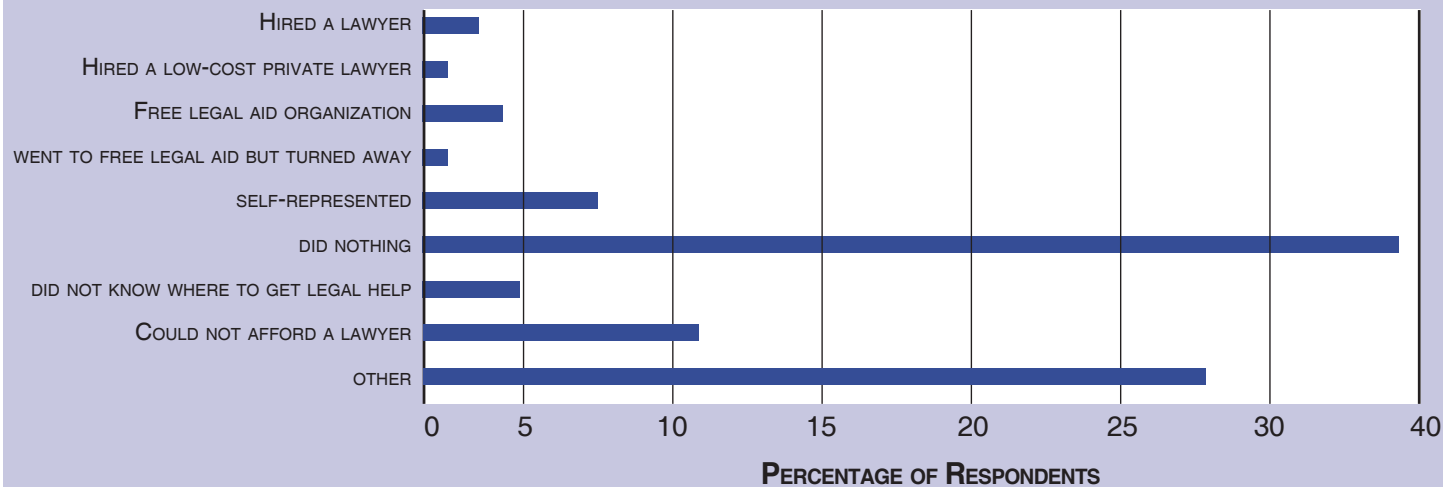
The following are common issues related to immigration: acquiring citizenship, student visas, permanent residence, deportation, and work permits. In immigration law, an immigrant who enters the country with a visa or a permit may, under certain circumstances, then acquire permanent residence and then full citizenship.



The greatest legal need in the area of immigration is the need to acquire citizenship with 30% of respondents who have an immigration legal need. Half of these respondents’ need is unmet. One-fifth of respondents with a legal need in immigration require assistance with their student visas which could involve obtaining, transferring, or renewing the visa. Eighty percent of student visa needs are unmet.

One-fourth of respondents with immigration legal needs faced problems with permanent residence. The last two subcategories, deportation and work permits, represent 15% and 10% of respondents with a legal need in immigration. There was not sufficient data to assess the unmet need for these three subcategories.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



In the area of immigration, almost 38% of respondents did nothing in the face of their legal need. This is the highest percentage of respondents who did nothing across all legal issues.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 8.8% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” 5.6% of respondents approached legal aid services. Less than 30% of those who approach legal aid reported being turned away.

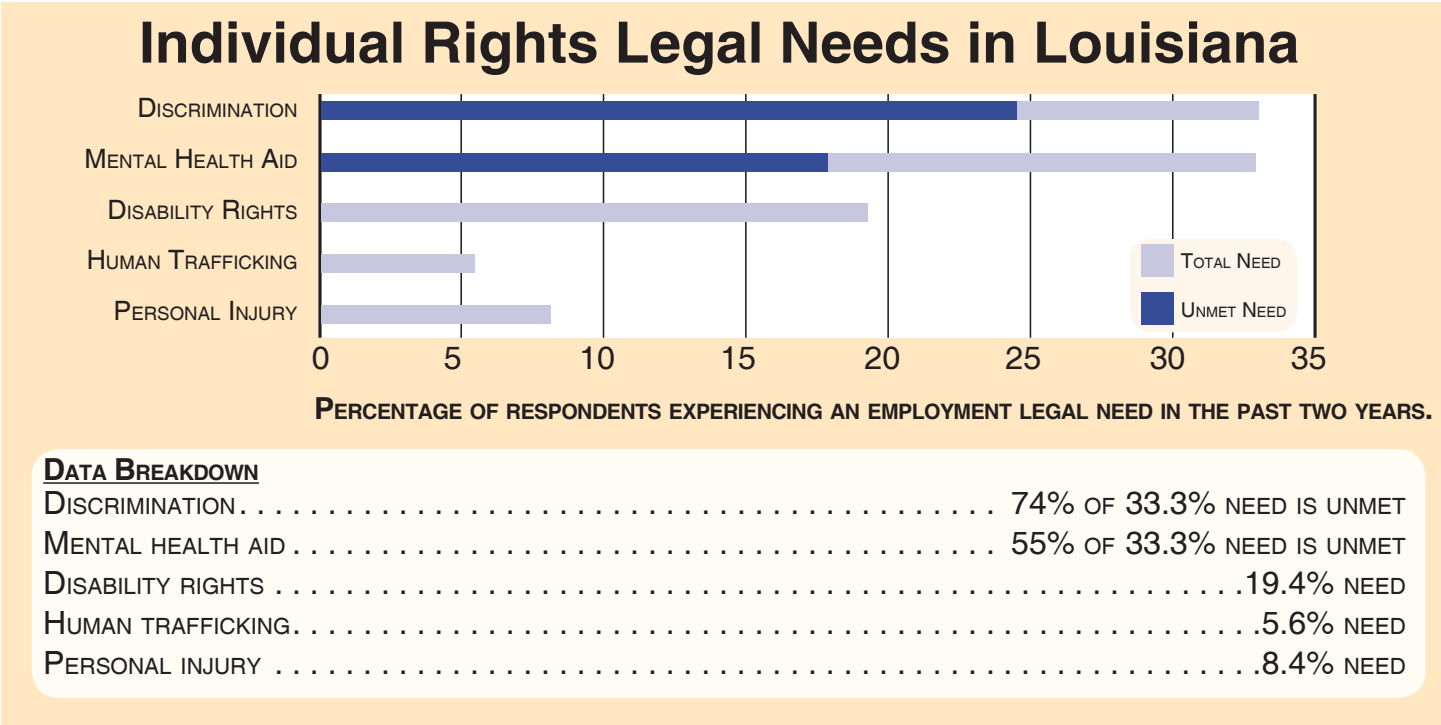
Approximately 7.2% of respondents were self-represented which is just slightly less than those with representation. About 11.2% of respondents knew that they needed legal help but could not afford a lawyer. About 4.8% of respondents who had a legal need in this area did not know where to get help.

**62% OF IMMIGRATION
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

10. Individual Rights

Referring to the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 36% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a legal need in the area of individual rights in their households during the two years prior to the study. Of that percentage, about 58% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

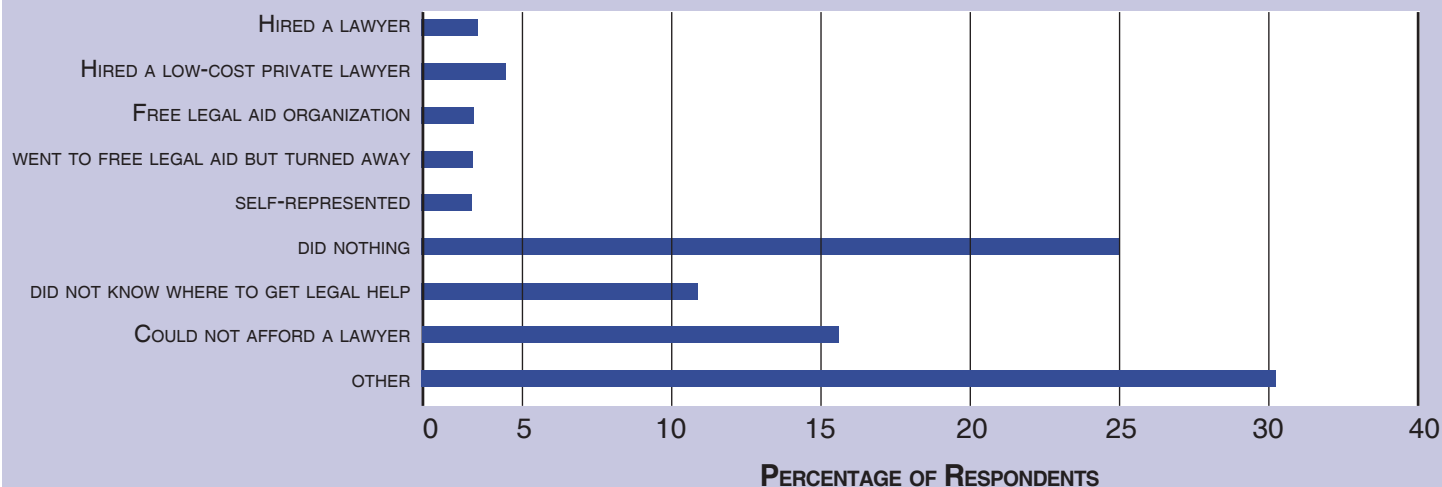
The following are common issues related to individual rights: discrimination, mental health aid, disability rights, human trafficking, and personal injury. In this section, discrimination is viewed as an individual right but it can also cross reference with many other legal issues such as employment and housing.



Discrimination and mental health aid both represent the greatest legal need in the area of individual rights with one-third of respondents who have a need in each category. Discrimination has a higher percentage of an unmet need with 74% of the need as unmet. Mental health aid is lower with 55% of the need unmet.

Less than one-fifth of respondents with a need in individual rights needed help with disability rights. The last two subcategories, human trafficking and personal injury are the lowest ranked subcategories in the area of individual rights representing 5.6% and 8.4% of respondents respectively. There was insufficient data to statistically assess the unmet need for these subcategories.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



For individual rights, almost 25% of respondents did nothing in the face of their legal need. This is the highest percentage of respondents who did nothing across all legal issues.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 10.93% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” 6.24% of respondents approached legal aid services. Exactly half of those who went to legal aid for this issue reported being turned away.

Around 3.12% of respondents were self-represented which is far less than those with representation. About 15.62% of respondents knew that they needed legal help but could not afford a lawyer. About 10.94% of respondents who had a legal need in this area did not know where to get help. One respondent supplied a write-in response and stated, “I didn’t know you could use a lawyer to get help with this type of thing.”

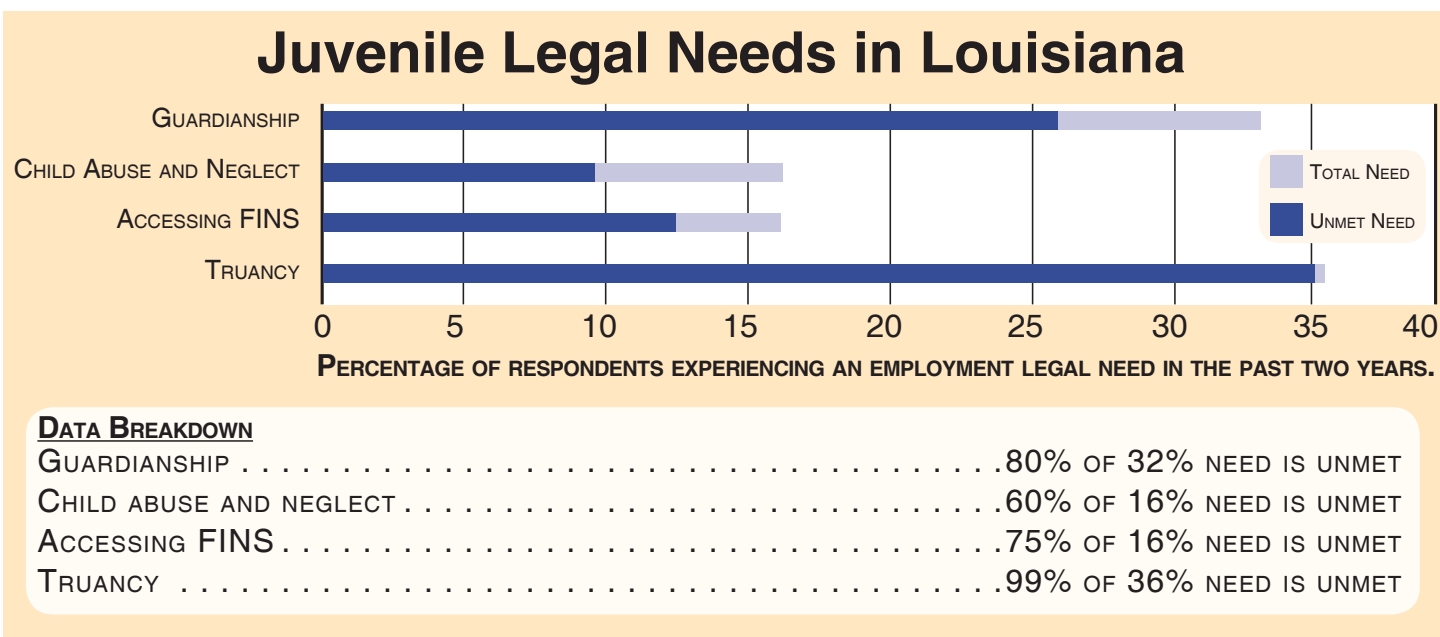
**58% OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

11. Juvenile

Referring to the overall “Common Civil Legal Needs Areas in Louisiana” chart, 25% of respondents to the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study indicated that they had a juvenile legal need in their households during the two years prior to the study. Of that percentage, about 63% of that legal need is reported as unmet.

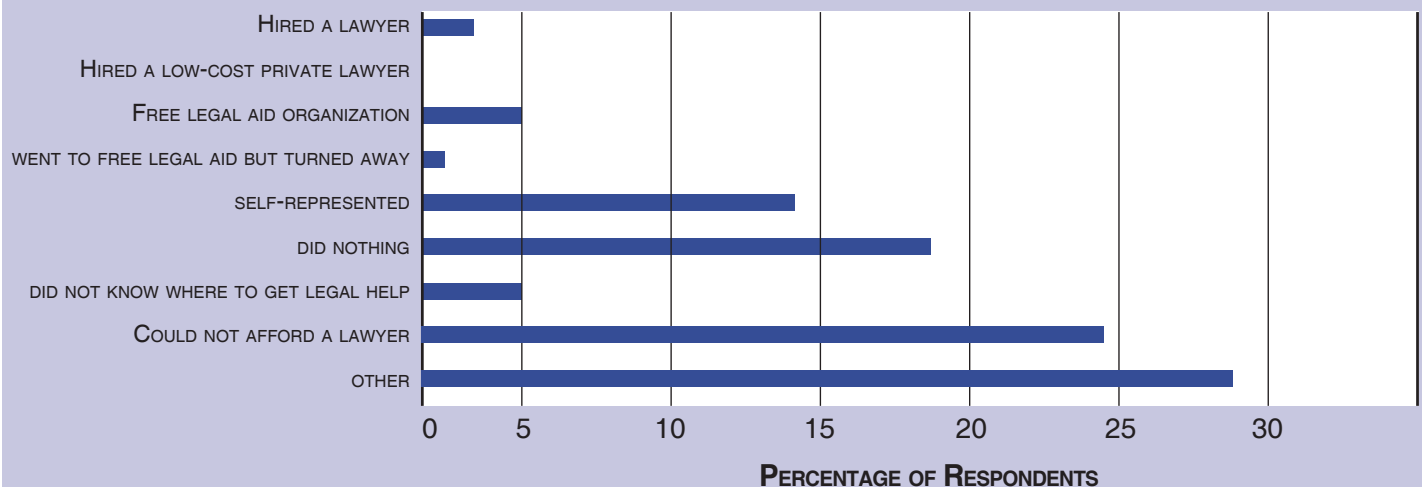
The following are common issues related to the legal area of juvenile issues: guardianship, child abuse and neglect, accessing Families in Need of Services (FINS), and truancy. There are only four juvenile courts in the state: Jefferson Parish, New Orleans, Shreveport, and Baton Rouge. District courts in other parishes assume juvenile jurisdiction.

The greatest legal need in the area of juvenile legal needs is truancy. Truancy matters usually are handled in municipal courts and is a charge against parents. About 36% of respondents who have a juvenile legal need have a need for assistance with truancy. Of this need, 99% of respondents reported that their need was unmet, by far the highest percentage of the study. The second largest need in juvenile issues is guardianship with 32% of respondents with that need. Another high percentage, 80%, of this need is unmet.



Child abuse and neglect and accessing FINS both represent 16% of the need of respondents with juvenile legal issues. Approximately 60% of the need for assistance with child abuse and neglect is unmet. Three-fourths of the need to access FINS is unmet. FINS is an informal process and frequently the children are given representation, but not the parents.

What did Respondents do for legal help?



For juvenile legal needs, 24.56% of respondents could not afford a lawyer. This indicated that the respondent realized they needed legal assistance but the resources were not accessible.

Looking at the first three options, a combined 8.77% of respondents had legal representation. Combining the options of “Free legal aid organization” and “Went to free legal aid but turned away,” 7% of respondents approached legal aid services. Almost one-fourth of those who went to legal aid for this issue reported being turned away.

Approximately 14.04% of respondents were self-represented which is more than those with representation. Approximately 5.26% of respondents who had a legal need in this area did not know where to get help. Of these respondents who had a juvenile legal need, 17.54% of respondents did nothing in the face of that need.

**63% OF JUVENILE
LEGAL NEEDS ARE UNMET**

VI. LOUISIANA LEGAL SERVICE CORPORATION'S DATA SUPPORTS YARBROUGH AND GRUESBECK STUDY'S FINDINGS OF UNMET CIVIL LEGAL NEED

The Yarbrough and Gruesbeck study focused on respondents at or below 200% of the poverty level. Respondents in this target group would likely qualify for assistance from Legal Services Corporation (LSC)-funded organizations.⁷⁰ The question is what happens when a low-income Louisiana resident goes to an LSC-funded organization for legal assistance? Reviewing Louisiana LSC-funded organization's capacity to serve this population adds context to the unmet need as measured by Yarbrough and Gruesbeck.

At one time, Louisiana had nine legal services organizations with offices scattered throughout the state. With increased pressure from the LSC to merge programs and consolidate administrative personnel, the number of programs decreased. Along the way, many of the smaller offices closed, losing local connection with poor citizens in those areas of the state. By 2001, the number of legal services programs had decreased to four. Currently, two large legal services programs remain and each program serves approximately one-half of the state. These two programs, Acadiana Legal Service Corporation (ALSC) and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS), have approximately 119 staff attorneys and 14 contract attorneys. Both programs seek specialty grants to provide for additional legal needs in their regions.

The national Legal Services Corporation directed its grantees, including SLLS and ALSC, to study its intake for a six week period in March and April of 2017. For this report, the authors considered only data from the two Louisiana programs who provided their individual results. The purpose of the study was to assess the types of cases received by intake staff and determine how the grantee organization responded to those cases. The Louisiana LSC study looked to whether the organization fully served the client, partially served the client, or was unable to serve the client.

This chart depicts the percentage of cases that came for an intake interview and whether SLLS and ALSC were able to fully serve, partially serve due to insufficient resources, or unable to serve for administrative reasons.

Unable to Serve: Turned Away

Almost 50% of the cases are turned away for administrative reasons. These reasons include when the individual was ineligible for LSC services, a conflict of interest existed, the individual's legal need was outside the LSC acceptance guidelines, or the program lacked the resources needed to take on the case.

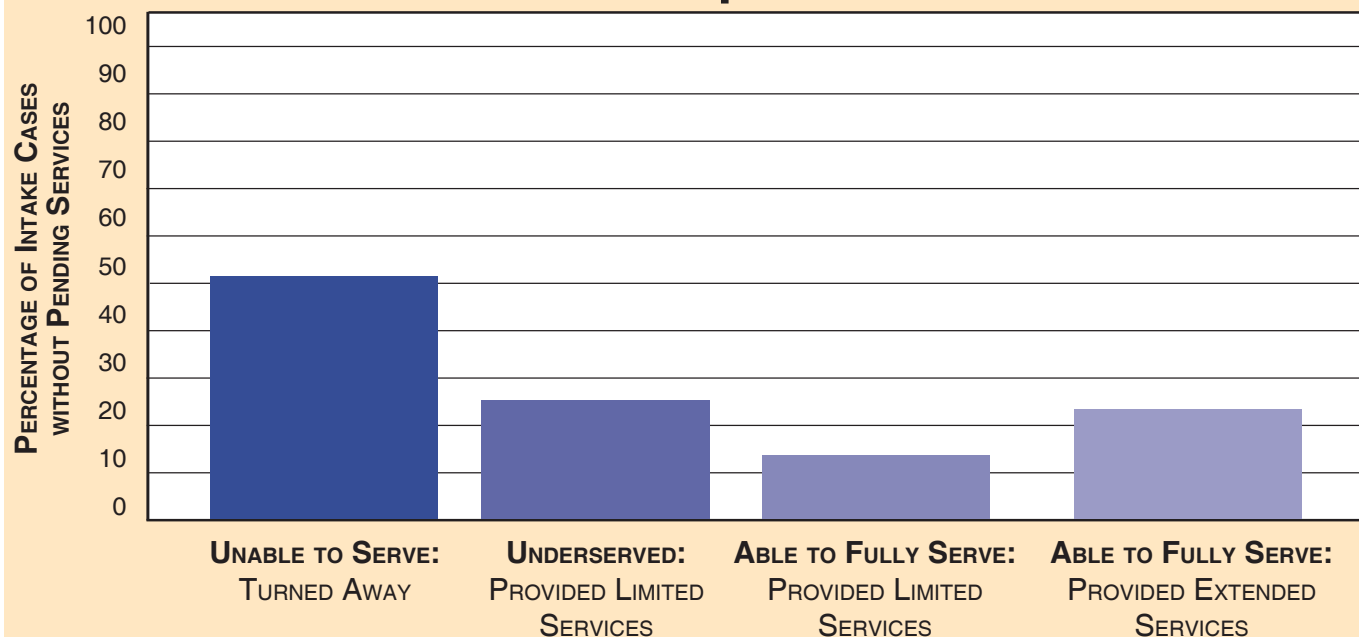
Underserved: Provided Limited Services

There are also 20% of cases that, although limited resources were provided, the help offered was not sufficient to resolve the client's legal problem. When SLLS and ALSC provided limited services due to limited resources for those clients, services included limited actions, *pro se* resources, or legal advice.

Able to Fully Serve: Provided Limited Services

For 10% of cases, the attorneys at SLLS and ALSC provided the same types of limited services as the above category, but there was not a lack of resources. These services were expected to fully serve the legal needs of the clients.

Met and Unmet Cases by SLLS and ASLC in March/April of 2017



Able to Fully Serve: Provided Extended Services

SLLS and ASLC had the resources to provide full representation, extended services and case support that fully served the needs of around 20% of clients.

SLLS and ASLC Data in relation to Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study

In the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck study, the legal need was self-reported as met or unmet by the individual who needed help. The LSC study, in contrast, had attorneys assess whether services were provided and whether those services were expected to meet the legal need of the client. Thus, the “Unable to Serve” and “Underserved” categories do not necessarily mean that the legal need went unmet, because the potential client could possibly find another avenue to meet their need. However, the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck study highlighted that the most common action to resolve a legal need was to “do nothing.” Given the limited legal resources generally available outside of LSC, it could be fair to infer that it was unlikely that the potential client would be able to find alternate legal assistance.

However, another way to look at the LSC data, which proves useful, would be to assess whether LSC was able to meet the legal need presented to them. With this framing, the “Unable to Serve” and “Underserved” categories reveal that 70% of cases that came for an intake interview went unmet by LSC for either administrative reasons or insufficient resources. The “Able to Serve” categories show that LSC was able to meet the legal need of 30% of intake cases with either limited services or extended service.

CONCLUSION

The cross-reference of these two reports, although not sharing the same methodology, nevertheless, each support the other’s ultimate finding that there is a large population of individuals whose legal needs are unmet.

VII. CHALLENGES

The Study *itself* posed some informational challenges. More particularly, although the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study achieved statistically relevant sample size, the confidence level in the broader applicability of the data was compromised when analyzing legal issues with few responses. Likewise, some ambiguities in the survey questions limited the information that could be gathered. For example, the question “[w]hat did respondents do?” in regard to their legal problem, elicited responses under the category of “[o]ther,” thereby making a specific reason as to the respondent’s actions unavailable and unknowable. Last, a lack of sufficient responses from legal services providers, impeded validation of individual responses.

Nevertheless, the Study *results* were significant overall, and represent a first step in crafting meaningful approaches to low-income Louisiana individuals who are unable to obtain legal representation by virtue of one, or many, of the reasons herein exposed. Two *observations* borne out by the Study are crucial to meeting the challenges that lay ahead in any access to justice effort:

- A significant percentage of low-income individuals surveyed were not aware of how or where to find legal assistance; and
- A substantial number of low-income individuals were turned away because of limited resources serving their legal needs.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Our state is challenged by numerous and diverse factors that threaten its ability to ensure access to justice for all citizens. While Louisiana civil legal service organizations make a significant effort to maximize ways to provide access to those with the primary legal needs documented in the Yarbrough and Gruesbeck Study, such efforts are often not enough. We must galvanize the Louisiana’s Justice Community to fulfill our obligation to provide full representation to those least able to access it, or otherwise afford it.

We must not lose sight of the critical role civil legal services plays in the lives of each citizen, and the difficulty in seeking redress without legal representation: the right to care and safeguard their own children; to protect their rights when evicted; to damages when owed wages; to benefits when disabled; and so many other reasons which make legal access vital to their overall well-being. Approximately 20% of Louisiana’s individuals live in poverty, many at the margins of justice; these individuals are our concern. We hope that this initial report will reinforce our resolve to say with certainty and conviction that such lack of legal access is not acceptable, and that we must move forward to find effective solutions for closing the gap between services and unmet civil legal needs of our residents.

For these principled reasons, and many others which draw from our own moral and civic compass, we propose the following initial recommendations. These are based on extensive analysis of the information in the Yarborough and Gruesbeck Study, the background reading and understanding of the Legal Services Corporation's 2017 Justice Gap Report, and the ALICE Report; without excluding any other possible solutions, we consider the following recommendations appropriate at this time, and understand that all allow for further study:

- **FOLLOW UP STUDY.** While this Study is an important first step, a longer and fuller study should be considered; even perhaps longitudinal or cross-sectional, as necessary to understand, respectively, either the effect of educational initiatives, as recommended below, or future efforts on strengthening the efficacy of the legal services available. In addition to data gathered, as in this study, the suggested study might include conversations with community of providers across diverse services and populations, e.g. medical assistance; more focused and complete court statistics across the state; focus groups that include legal services attorneys, law school clinic professors; executive directors of legal services and community groups representative of beneficiaries of legal services organizations. It is evident also that we need more resources assessing people who fall outside of the reach of state resources. It might also be helpful to include conversations with those interested in the plight of middle-income individuals, many who still struggle to afford legal services.
- **EDUCATION.** Louisiana must address the education of the 44% of people who do not know anything about legal services or how to obtain legal help. An extensive education campaign would be helpful on two levels: legal rights education, and identification of available legal services organizations for those who are unaware of their existence.
- **LIMITED RESOURCE RE-ASSESSMENT.** A coordinated effort should be considered to identify and efficiently allocate available resources to the most significant of the unmet needs. It is well known that organizations have limited resources to give clients, but as demonstrated by the LSC data, there are limited resources that can be expected to meet the full need of the client. We should explore ways to maximize the efficacy of those restricted resources and thus increase the amount of cases that can be resolved with such resources.
- **LIMITED FUNDING DEVELOPMENT.** Likewise, focusing on the unmet need as detailed in this report, providers should identify which unmet needs are likely to remain unmet for purposes of considering the development of coordinated funding requests to address those specific unmet needs.
- **COLLABORATION.** It may be helpful to study and explore a triage system with the idea of developing a process to quickly identify the most appropriate organizational resource(s) available to respond to particular critical unmet legal needs, such as those which affect the most basic human necessities of Louisiana's low-income residents.

IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was funded by the Louisiana State Bar Association and prepared by the Gap Assessment Subcommittee of the Access to Justice Committee.

This report presents the findings of Professor David Yarborough of University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Instructor Steve Gruesbeck of Northwestern State University of Louisiana who surveyed low-income Louisiana residents across all parishes with the help of Dylan Harrell. This was a brave undertaking, the first of its kind in Louisiana, and it could not have been done without their infinite patience and perseverance.

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 John P. Nelson Distinguished Professor of Law
 Loyola College of Law, Loyola University-New Orleans

 Amanda L. Hass, Esq.

The Gap Assessment Subcommittee wants to acknowledge the outstanding national work on the justice gap done by the Legal Services Corporation. The cooperation of Laura Tuggle from Southeast Louisiana Legal Services and Greg Landry from Acadiana Legal Service Corporation allowed this report to look specifically at how efficiently Louisiana civil legal aid organizations bridge the justice gap.

This work could not have been completed without the help of Monte Mollere, LSBA Access to Justice Director, Linda Johnson, LSBA, and Erika Zucker, Workplace Justice Project of the Stuart H. Smith Law Clinic and Center for Social Justice of the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, who provided critical research on the issue of low-income community of Louisiana. Ms. Zucker's work is supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Last, a note of appreciation to Hayley Landry, a student-practitioner at the Workplace Justice Project of the Stuart H. Smith Law Clinic and Center for Social Justice of the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, who provided support in ensuring the accuracy of all the endnotes.

X. ADDENDUM

Individual/Family Member Survey

We are asking for your help in a research project studying the legal needs of citizens in Louisiana. The research is being done by David Yarbrough in Lafayette and Steve Gruesbeck in Natchitoches on behalf of the Louisiana State Bar Association Access to Justice Committee. The goal of the study is to better understand the unmet civil legal needs in Louisiana. The answers to the questions in this survey will remain anonymous and your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to complete the survey, there are questions about your age, gender, ethnicity and other demographic information to help us better understand the general characteristics of who answered the questions. We will not ask your name, address, phone number or any other identifying information. We will ask you about experiences that you have had that could have involved legal help. It will take you about 10 minutes to complete the survey. You do not have to take this survey. If you start the survey and decide that you do not want to finish, all you have to do is close your internet browser. If you have any questions about taking the survey, you may contact Dr. David Yarbrough at 337-482-1015 or email: service@louisiana.edu. By completing the survey, your answers may help the Louisiana State Bar Association identify the ways to help provide free legal help to others in Louisiana. If you need legal help and don't know who to ask, you can click on this link or call the Louisiana Civil Justice Center toll free at 1-800-310-7029. You will see this information on the bottom of every page of the survey. The Institutional Review Board of UL Lafayette will make sure that this survey is done in an ethical manner. If you have concerns about the ethics of this survey, you may contact the University of Louisiana at Lafayette IRB through email at irb@louisiana.edu. If you are willing to help us with this research and agree to take the survey. Please check the agree box below and continue to the next page.

Do you know how to access the following (Select all that apply)?

1. Legal Aid (organization with lawyers who do not charge a fee)
2. Pro Bono attorneys (free or low cost lawyers)
3. Online legal help and support for self-representation
4. I don't know how to access any of these services

What is your yearly household income?

1. Less than \$23,500
2. \$23,501-\$31,500
3. \$31,501-\$40,000
4. \$40,001-\$48,500
5. \$48,501-\$57,000
6. over \$57,000

Have you or an immediate family member ever needed legal help in Louisiana?

1. Yes
2. No

In the last 2 years, which of these legal issues have you or any of your family members experienced?

Please select any areas where you or a family have had legal issues in the past 2 years.

1. trouble with a contractor like payment, fraud or workmanship
2. consumer debt collection / loan and credit cards
3. bankruptcy
4. foreclosure
5. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Please select all that apply to you or a family member's legal issues in the past 2 years.

1. disability rights related to school attendance
2. discipline in school
3. school enrollment
4. school financial aid
5. vocational education
6. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Please select all that apply to you or a family member in the past 2 years.

1. trouble with wages
2. fired from your work without cause
3. not getting a job because of a criminal record
4. not getting a house or apartment because of a criminal record
5. can't get a license because of a criminal record
6. trouble with your taxes due to work
7. discrimination in your work
8. family leave from work
9. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Please select all that apply to you or a family member in the past 2 years.

1. any family community property issues
2. child custody or guardianship
3. divorce, separation or annulment
4. paying or receiving child support
5. trouble with probating a will or writing a will
6. termination of parental rights
7. domestic abuse or neglect
8. adoption or paternity issues
9. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Have any of these been legal issues for you or a family member in the past 2 years?

1. getting Social Security benefits
2. getting disability benefits
3. collecting unemployment
4. getting food stamps
5. getting veterans benefits
6. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Have you or a family member had any legal issues in these areas in the past 2 years?

1. getting or registering for LaCHIP
2. getting Medicaid
3. getting Medicare
4. enrolling in private insurance
5. trouble with a nursing home
6. getting home and community-based care
7. getting long-term care
8. hospice care
9. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Select any of the legal issues that apply to you or a family member in the past 2 years.

1. getting a security deposit refund
2. maintenance issues with your housing
3. have you been evicted?
4. getting or keeping public housing
5. trouble with mobile homes
6. housing discrimination
7. foreclosure
8. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Have you or a family member had any of these legal issues in the past 2 years?

1. trouble with getting citizenship
2. you or family members facing deportation
3. getting work permits
4. applying for or establishing asylum/refugee status
5. trouble getting permanent residence
6. getting or keeping student visas
7. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Have you or a family member had any of these issues in the past 2 years?

1. experiencing discrimination
2. disability rights
3. accessing mental health aid
4. experiencing human trafficking
5. experiencing personal injury
6. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Have you or a family member had any of these issues in the past 2 years?

1. trouble with guardianship
2. experiencing child neglect/abuse
3. accessing FINS
4. getting emancipation
5. trouble with truancy
6. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Have you or a family member experienced any of these legal issues in the past 2 years?

1. Having to move because of a natural disaster
2. lost your job or wages because of a disaster
3. property damage because of a disaster
4. trouble with insurance after a disaster
5. personal injury or death of a family member due to a disaster
6. I've experienced none of these

What did you do for legal help (Select all that apply)?

1. I paid a lawyer to represent me.
2. I did nothing.
3. I represented myself.
4. I went to a free legal aid organization but they could not help me.
5. I went to a low-cost private lawyer.
6. I used a free legal-aid organization.
7. I needed legal help, but did not know where to get it.
8. I needed a lawyer, but could not afford one.
9. Other _____

Are there any other legal issues that you would like to let us know about?

What is your gender?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Other (please specify) _____

What is your marital status?

1. Single
2. Married
3. Divorced
4. Separated
5. Widowed

How many people live in your home?

What is your ethnicity (Select all that apply)?

1. American Indian
2. Native Alaskan
3. Hispanic
4. White
5. African American
6. Asian
7. Pacific Islander
8. Other _____

If reading or writing English is difficult for you, how would you prefer to communicate about your legal issue?

1. Spanish
2. French
3. Vietnamese
4. Chinese/Mandarin
5. Spoken English (not written)
6. I do not have difficulty with reading or writing English
7. Other _____

Are you a U.S. Citizen or legal permanent resident?

1. Yes
2. No

In what Parish do you live?

Are you raising any children who are not your legal dependents?

1. Yes
2. No

Does anyone in your household receive Medicaid, Medicare, Fitap, LaCHIP, SNAP or TANF?

1. Yes
2. No

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1. Less than High School
2. High School
3. Some College
4. 2 year College Degree
5. 4 year College Degree
6. Graduate or Professional Degree

Are there any individuals with military connections in your immediate family?

1. Yes
2. No

What is your current employment status?

1. Employed 40+ hours a week
2. Employed less than 40 hours a week
3. Unemployed
4. Retired
5. Student
6. Other _____

What is your age?

XI. END NOTES

Endnotes

- 1 Professor David Yarborough, Ph.D. teaches at University of Louisiana at Lafayette and is Dean of Community Service. Instructor Steve Gruesbeck teaches at Northwestern State University of Louisiana and is the Director of Service Learning.
- 2 Center for American Progress, Talk Poverty: Louisiana 2017 Poverty Data (2017), found at <https://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/louisiana-2017-report/> (last visited Oct. 16, 2018) (The 2017 report uses primarily 2016 data).
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**Published by the
Louisiana State Bar Association
Access to Justice Committee
Gap Assessment Subcommittee**

