



# Community Engagement, Trust and Confidence: Engaging, Listening and Improving Justice for All

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Episode 2 – July 14, 2020

*Presented by the Community Engagement in the State Courts Initiative*

# Webinar Overview

- I. Welcome and Introduction: **Chief Justice Nathan Hecht**, Supreme Court of Texas; President, Conference of Chief Justices
- II. Housekeeping and Logistics – **Tina Vagenas**, Director and Chief Counsel, Access to Justice Initiatives, National Center for State Courts
- III. Pilot Portraits
  - **Chief Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby**, Moderator, District of Columbia Court of Appeals
  - **Chief Justice Michael G. Heavican**, Supreme Court of Nebraska
  - **Joseph A. Hamm**, PhD, Professor, School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University
  - **Benita Jones**, Public Information Office, Kansas City, Missouri Municipal Division
  - **John Laing**, Chief Experience and Diversity Officer, Executive Office of the Massachusetts Trial Court
  - **Jeffrey Tsunekawa**, Director of Research and Court Services, Texas Office of Court Administration
  - **Lisa M. Pytlik Zillig**, PhD, Research Associate Professor, Public Policy Center, University of Nebraska
  - **Corey Steel**, State Court Administrator, Supreme Court of Nebraska

# Housekeeping and Logistics

- Participants are all muted except panelists.
- Questions will be fielded through the Zoom Q&A box. We encourage you to submit questions through the Zoom Q&A box. This can be done throughout the webinar. During the Q&A portion, panelists will respond to questions and comments.
- The webinar is being recorded and will be made available to participants following the webinar, and it will be posted to the NCSC Vimeo page at <https://vimeo.com/statecourts>
- Materials from presenters will be available at [ncsc.org/webinar-materials](https://ncsc.org/webinar-materials)

# Poll

How beneficial and worthwhile do you think community engagement is for the courts?

- Very
- Somewhat
- I don't think it's beneficial, and resources would be better directed toward other endeavors
- I have no opinion either way

A grayscale image of a statue of Lady Justice, blindfolded and holding scales of justice, is positioned on the left side of the slide. The statue is partially obscured by a teal-colored vertical bar and a teal-colored square. The background of the slide is a dark gray gradient.

# Community Engagement Pilot Project 2019-2020



CITY OF  
KANSAS CITY,  
MISSOURI

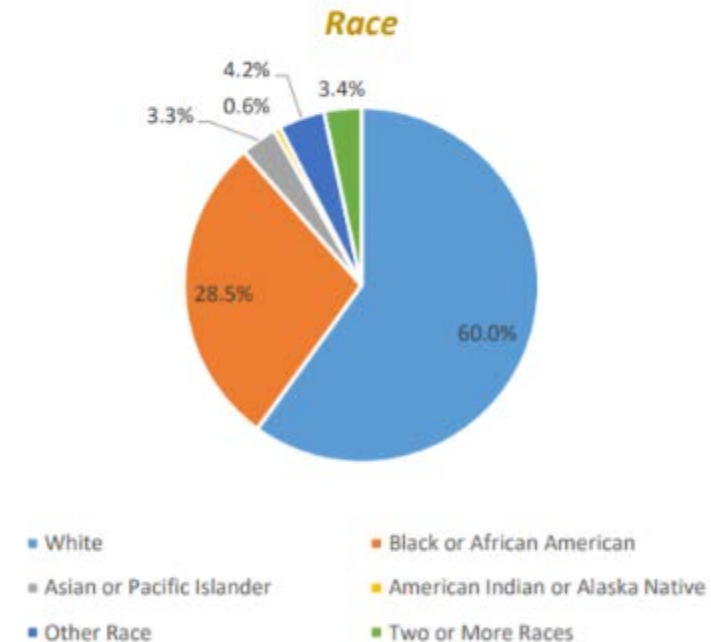
MUNICIPAL COURT

Benita Jones, Public Information Officer  
Community Engagement Project Manager



- Missouri: Population 6.1 million. Unified court system. Local project
- Largest City in Missouri both in area and population.
- KCMO: 505,604
- 319 square miles
- Lies within parts of 4 counties: Jackson, Clay, Platte and Cass.
- Center of a metropolitan area with more than 2.1 million residents.

*Ethnicity*



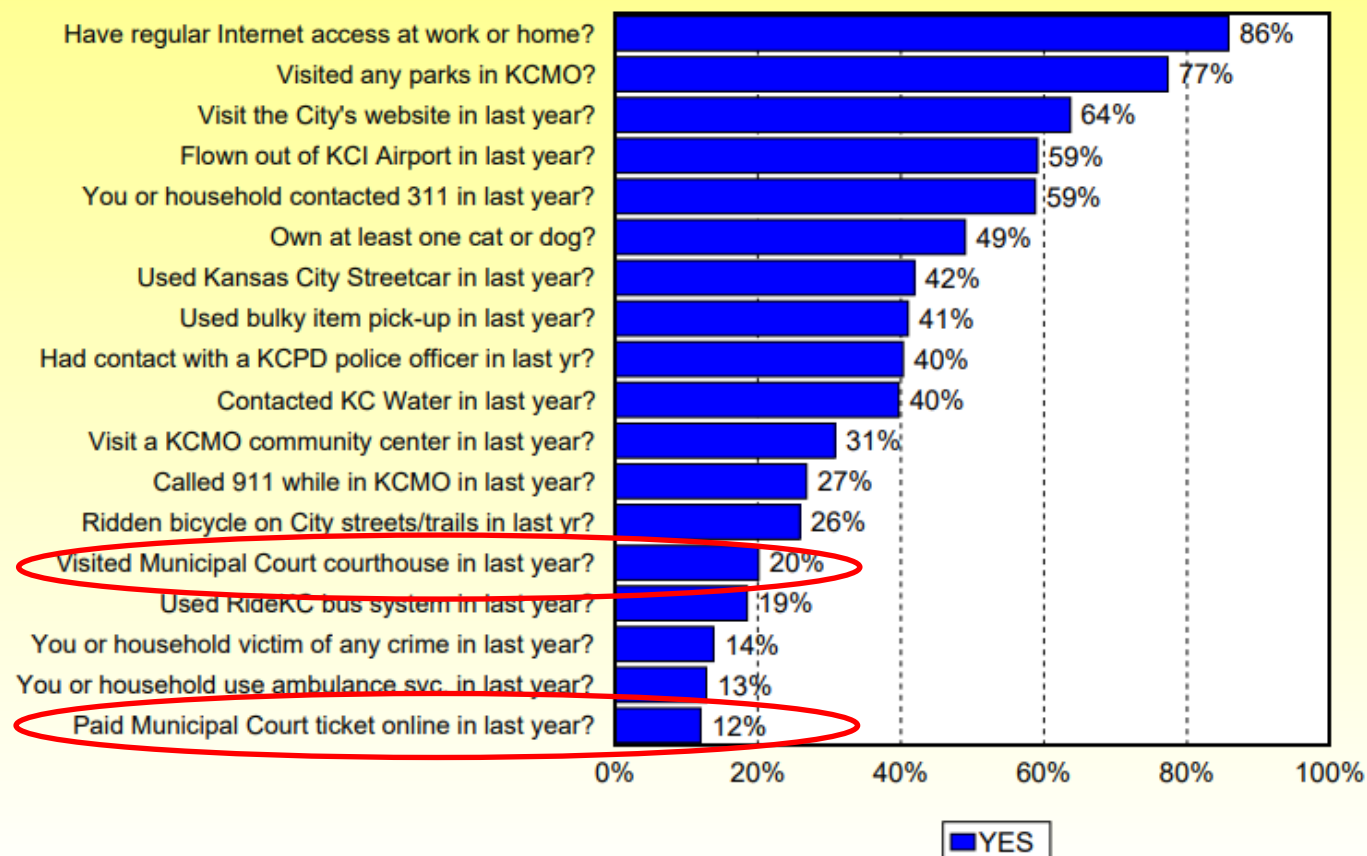
- Persons of Hispanic Origin (of any race): 9.4% of the population.

# 2019-20 KANSAS CITY MISSOURI CITIZEN SURVEY

First weeks of Aug, Nov, Feb and May. Of the 9000 households contacted, 3,754 responded (42% response rate)






## Please answer the following questions:

by percentage of respondents who responded "Yes" (excluding not provided)



Source: ETC Institute (2019-20)

- Largest municipal court in Missouri
- 8 full-time judges and 1 part-time judge

KCMO Municipal Court by the numbers		
191,698 Cases filed in FY2018-19		
Traffic		104,386
Parking		52,126
General Ordinance Violations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trespass</li> <li>• Assault</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Disorderly Conduct</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>		17,843
Housing		13,484
Animal		3,850

For more than 20 years the City has had a contract with [Legal Aid of Western Missouri](#) to represent low-income people charged with jailable offenses in Municipal Court.

- 8,500 defendants /year
- \$1.17 million budgeted in FY2019-2020
- A staff of 13 is allocated to Legal Aid's Municipal Court representation

# SPECIALITY COURTS

## Problem-Solving Courts/Treatment Courts

- Mental Health Court-Developed in 2002
- Drug Court-Developed in 2002
- Veterans Treatment Court-Developed in 2009

## Other Specialized Dockets

- Housing - 1987 Charter Amendment
- Animal - 2012
- Truancy - 2012
- Domestic Violence Compliance Docket – 2015
  - Designated a Mentor Court by the US Department of Justice
- Reinstatement Court - 2019

# Yet 41% of People Fail to Appear for Court. WHY?

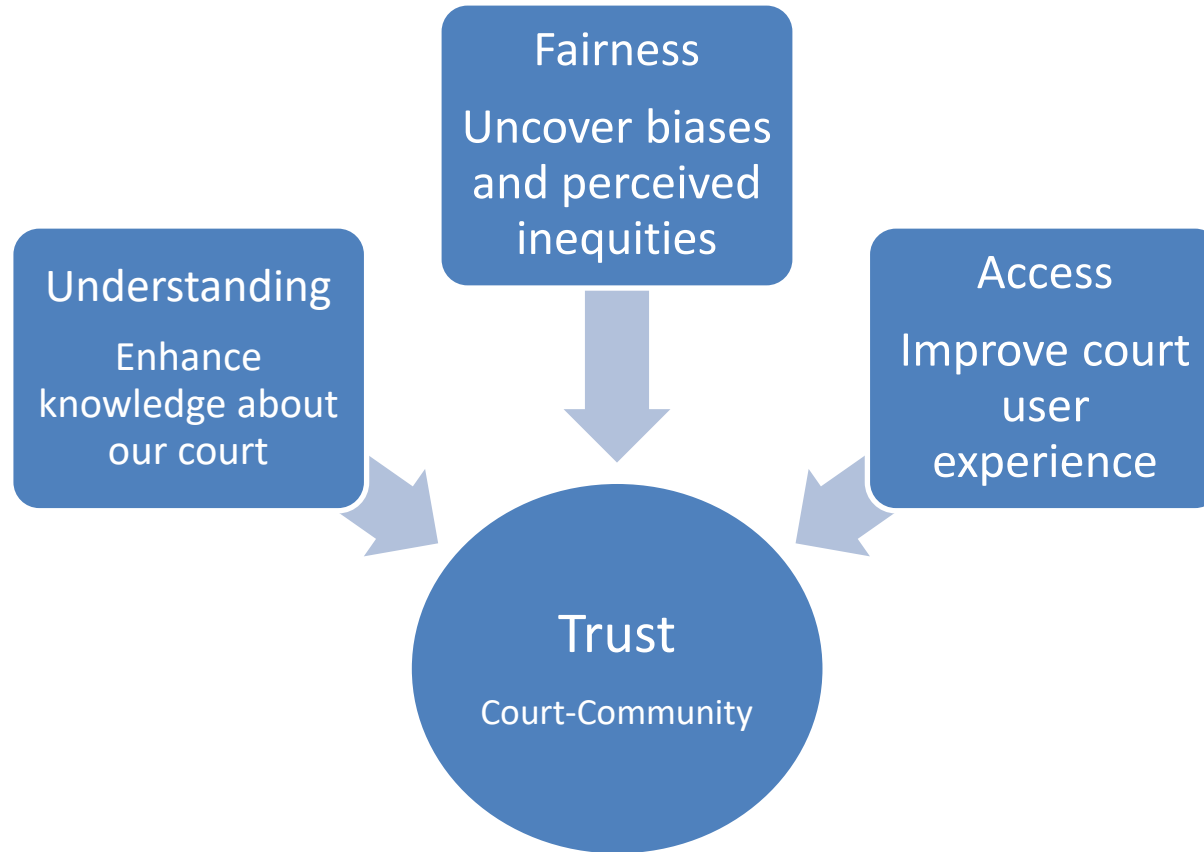
**This was not the intended focus of engagement but was looking at this at about the same time.**

## **Why Significant?**

- Our court DOES NOT issue failure to pay warrants.
- Our court DOES issue failure to appear warrants.
- On some moving violations a failure to appear also can result in a driver license suspension until the person complies-clearing the warrant, coming to court, disposing of the ticket and reinstatement fee.
- Car is vital in wide-spread metropolitan area. Racial minority communities may not live close to the jobs.
- Just missing court can be costly to low-income persons, increases likelihood police contact and of going to jail even if briefly.

# Municipal Court Community Engagement Project

Use a mix of surveys and community engagement forums to explore:



## GOALS

Seek real-world data and community input to make and to support better, more inclusive practices, policies and budget decisions.

Form an ongoing Community Justice Coordinating Committee (long term)

AND

Decided to take this opportunity to explore our failure to appear rate

# Municipal Court Community Engagement Partners

## Steering Committee

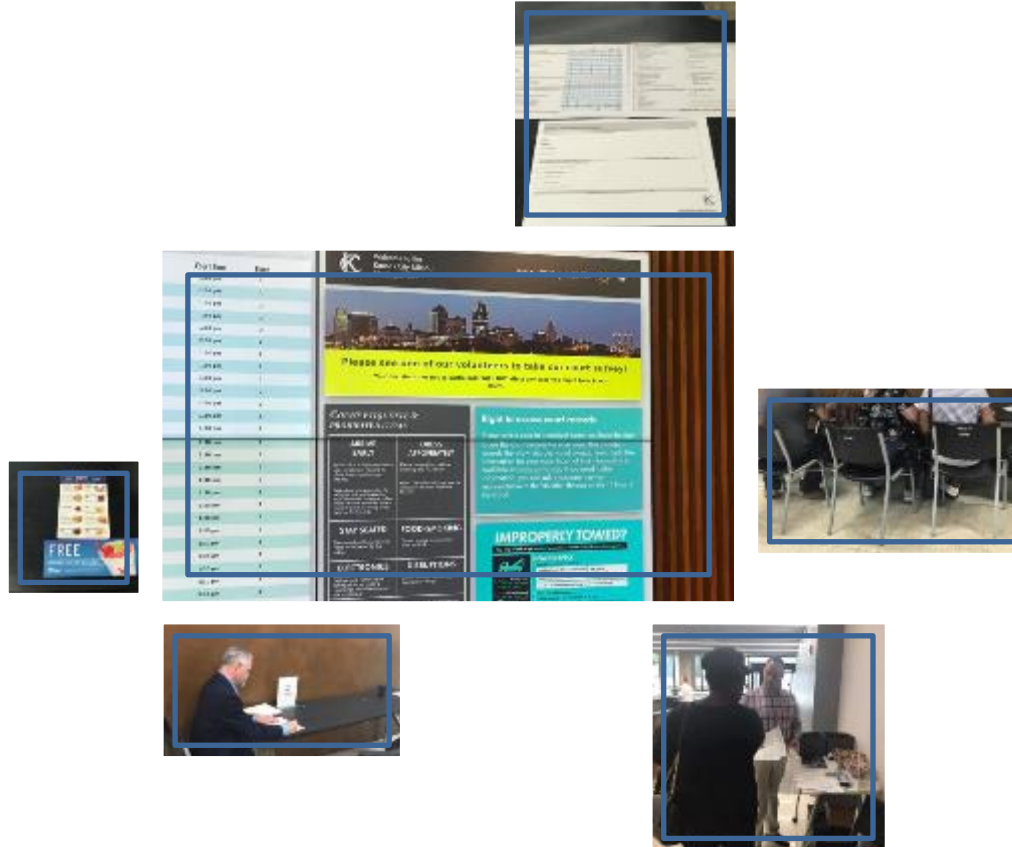
- Municipal Court
- City Manager's Office
- City Prosecutor's Office
- Health Department/Aim for Peace
- Legal Aid of Western Missouri
- Private Defense Bar
  - KCMBA Municipal Court Committee
- Veronica's Voice
- Kansas City, Missouri Public School District
- Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)
  - Professional Facilitation and Training
- Ad Hoc Group Against Crime
- Guadalupe Centers
- P.O.S.S.E (Peers Organized to Support Student Excellence)
- Faith Community (Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church)

## Additional Assistance

- KCPD
- DataKC
- City Communications
- City Human Resources: Education and Development
- The Summers Advisory Group
  - Unconscious Bias Training



# Conducted Week-Long Court User Survey May 6 – 10, 2019



- Modeled after NCSC Access and Fairness Survey
- Input from the national pilot project team and our partners
- Designed to measure
  - Access: Individual satisfaction with ability to make use of the court's services
  - Fairness: How the legal process dealt with their issue, interest or case
  - Perceptions and trust
- English and Spanish
- A first for Municipal Court

## Outcome:

- Volunteers: Municipal Court, City Prosecutor's Office, Steering Committee, KCPS translators
- 952 Responses: including individuals on the in-custody docket
- More than 200 respondents also agreed to be contacted for future engagements

# Multi-Directional Community Engagement Sessions

**KCMO RESIDENT SPEAK EASY SESSIONS**

**TUESDAY, NOV. 12, NOON - 3 PM**  
(DOORS OPEN AT 11:30 A.M.) LIGHT LUNCH  
Gregg/Klica Community Center  
1600 John Buck O'Neill Way  
Kansas City, MO, 64108

**THURSDAY, NOV. 14, 6 - 9 PM**  
(DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 P.M.) LIGHT DINNER  
Kansas City North Community Center  
3930 Northeast Antioch Road  
Kansas City, MO, 64117

**SATURDAY, NOV. 16, 9 AM - NOON**  
(DOORS OPEN AT 8:30 A.M.) CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST  
Southeast Community Center  
4201 East 63rd Street  
Kansas City, MO, 64130

**HELP IMPROVE YOUR LOCAL COURT COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS WITH MUNICIPAL COURT**

RECEIVE GIFT CARD INCENTIVES FOR COMPLETING YOUR PARTICIPATION

BILINGUAL (SPANISH-ENGLISH) INTERPRETERS AT ALL SESSIONS

RSVP: KCMOGOV.EVENTBRITE.COM

Speak Easy Sessions are opportunities for residents to speak directly to City officials and staff. Expect an interactive session and lots of discussion. We want your ideas to help us run the city better. For more information and other sessions, visit [kcmo.gov/speakeasy](http://kcmo.gov/speakeasy).

- Different parts of the city
- Utilized iClicker technology and low tech Post It notes
- Shared concerns and ideas related to court access, fairness and trust
- Specific Question: Why people don't come to court?
- They knew they were helping build a national tool kit for other courts
- Meals and \$25 gift card incentives
- Resource Table
- Judges and City Officials and Police attended but placed differently at different sessions
- Radio appearances



**With 41% Of Kansas City Residents Failing To Show Up, Municipal Court Leaders Seek To Build Trust**

# 4 Engagement Sessions

## Three Community Conversations with Municipal Court

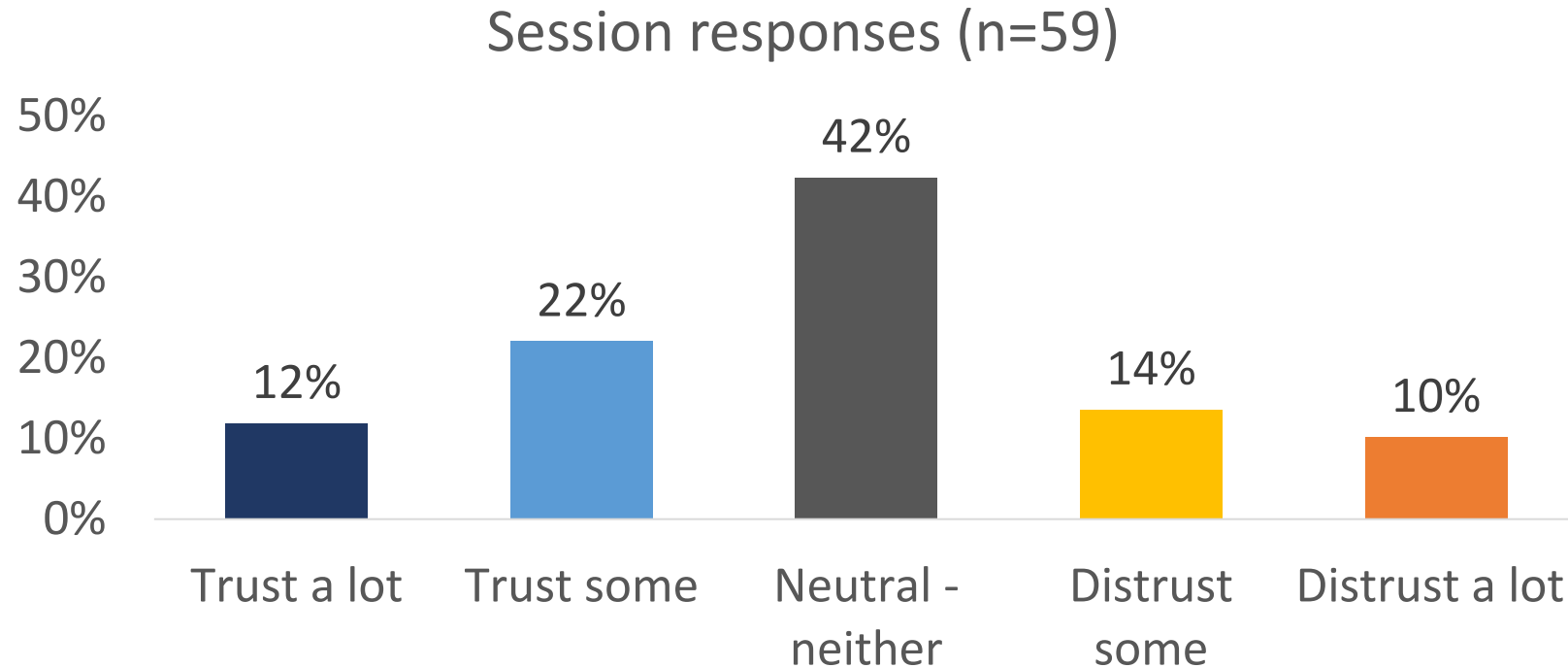
- November 12, 14, and 16, 2019
- At community centers
- Open to anyone
- Some pre-registration
- About 75 total
- Mostly adults

## One Youth Community Conversation with Municipal Court

- February 6, 2019
- Southeast High School Restorative Justice Program and Civics Classes
- About 100 at single session
- Student ambassadors visited court
- More court information provided



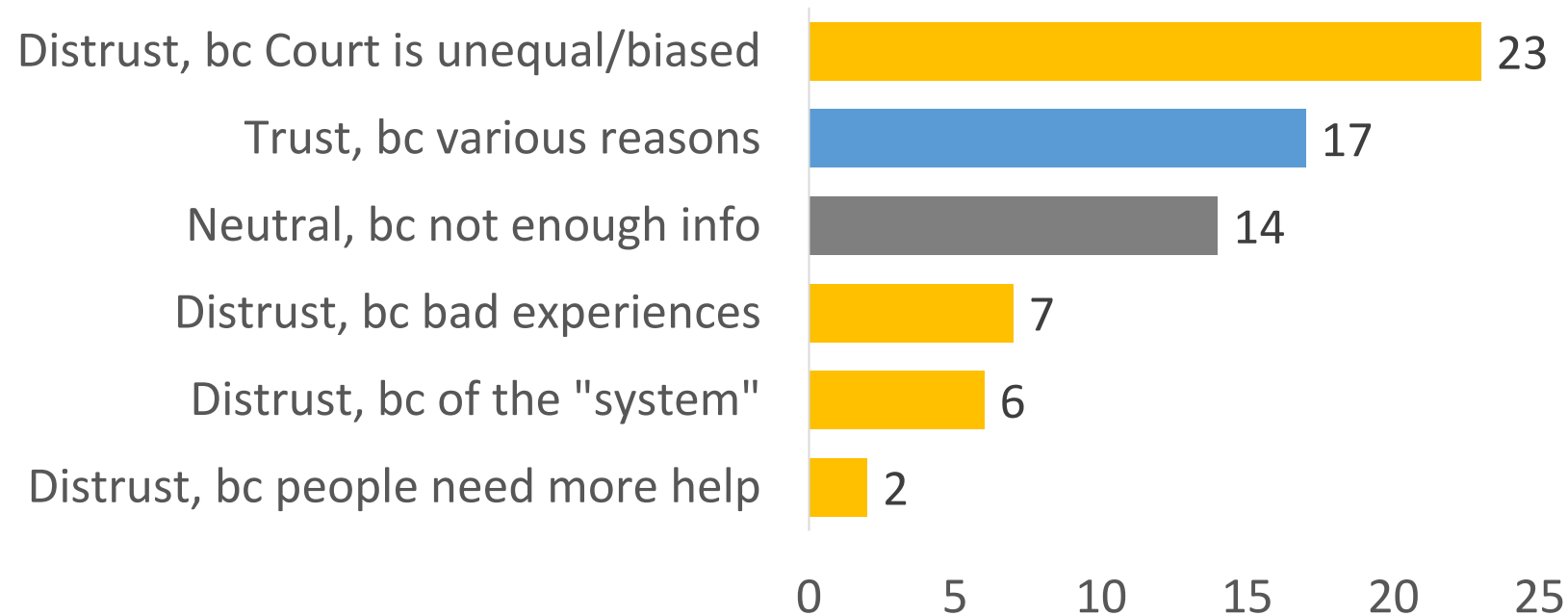
# How much do you trust or distrust Municipal Court?



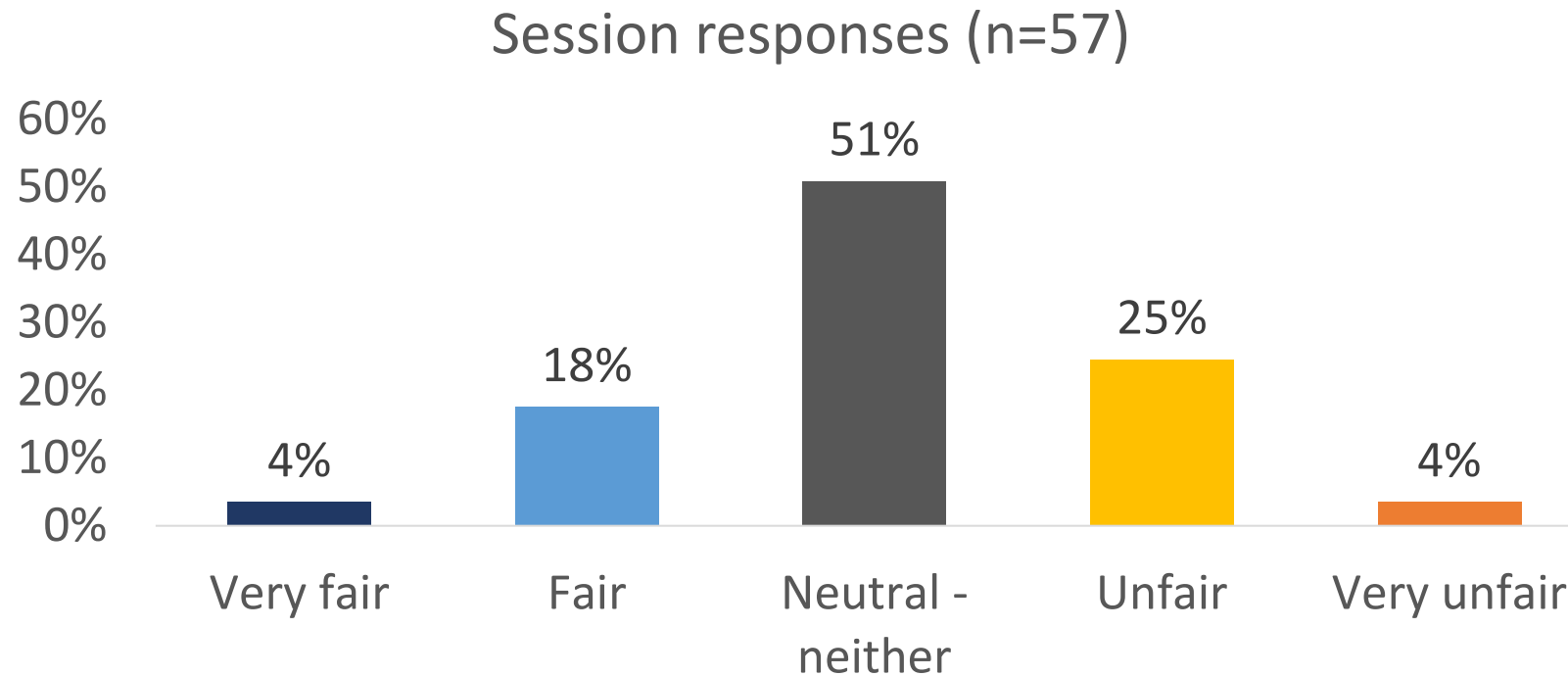
From customer survey in May 2019: 68% agree or strongly agree that they trust Municipal Court (19% neutral, 13% disagree/strongly disagree). 37% say that people in their community trust MC “extremely” or “very much” (37% “somewhat”, 26% “slightly” or “not at all”)

## Themes: Why do you trust or distrust MC?

### Number of responses by theme

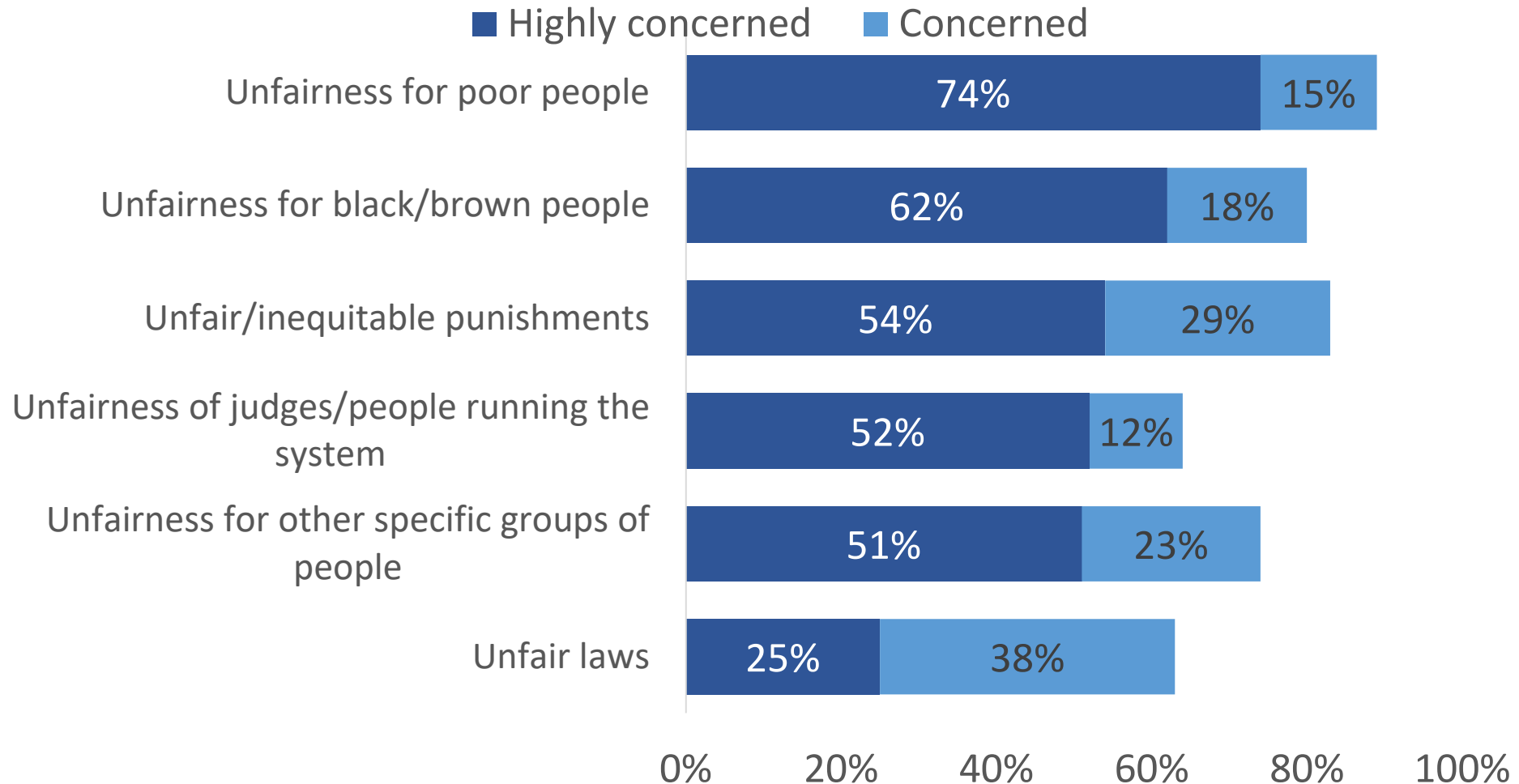


How fair or unfair does Municipal Court treat people?



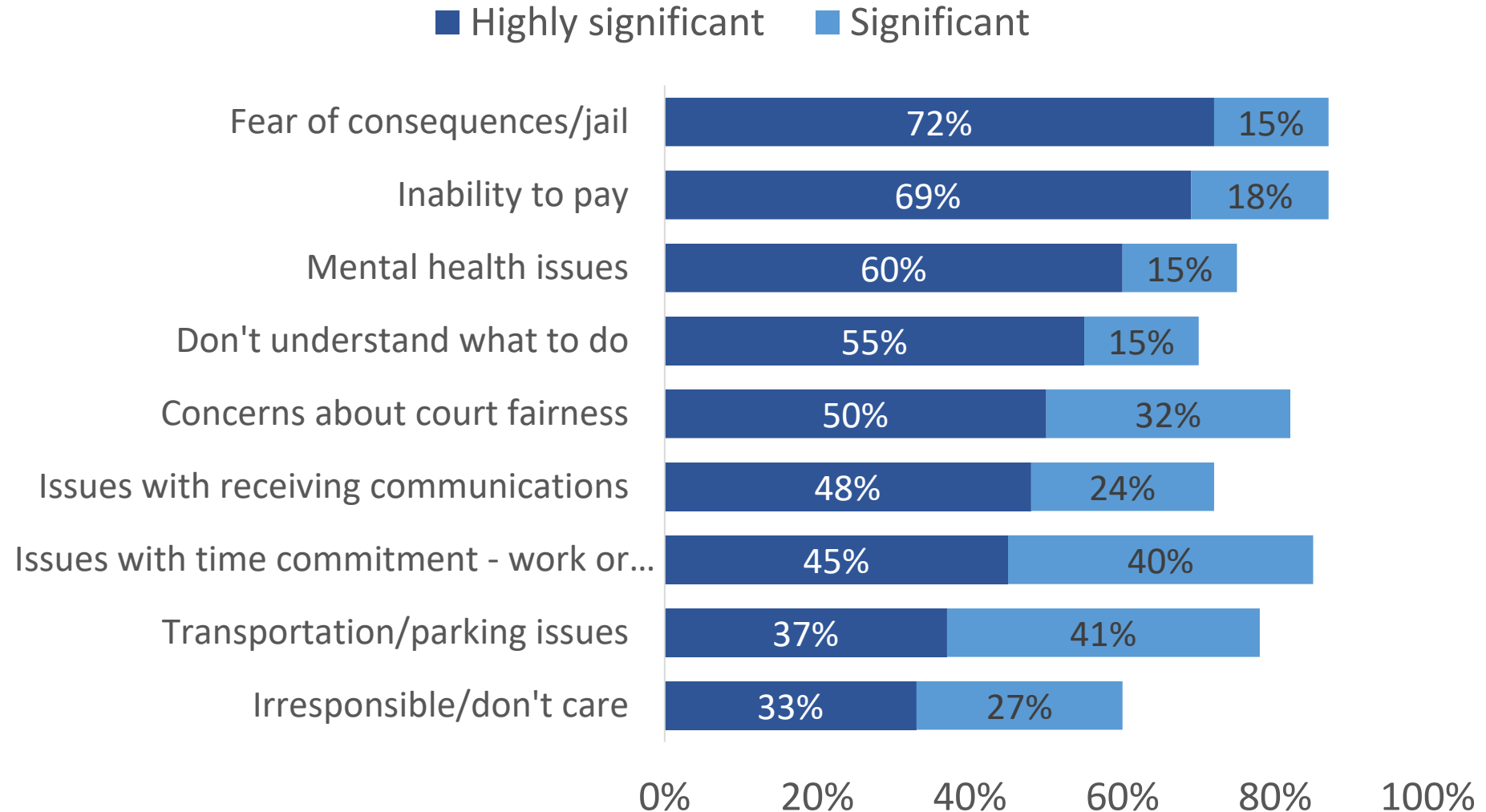
From customer survey in May 2019: 76% agree or strongly agree that Municipal Court treats people fairly regardless of race, gender, age, wealth, or other characteristics. (13% neutral, 11% disagree/strongly disagree).

Percent of attendees who said that they are “highly concerned” or “concerned” about this issue related to fairness/equity



## Themes: Why don't people show up for court?

### Percent of attendees who said that an issue is “significant” or “highly significant”



## Most frequent response themes from other questions

Question	Most common responses, by theme
What brought you here today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To learn</li><li>• To share input</li></ul>
What resources could the court provide to help the public better handle their court business?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better communication options</li><li>• People resources (advocates, legal services, etc.)</li></ul>
What does the court do well or you find helpful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Services for public</li><li>• Don't know</li></ul>
What are the most important things you learned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chance to hear/learn from others</li><li>• Court cares about the community</li><li>• Learned about court operations</li></ul>
What follow up would you like to see?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Changes to the system</li><li>• Report out results and changes</li><li>• More opportunities for input</li></ul>

# What's next

## Concrete Action

- Pull all of this together with information from Resident Survey to find priorities
  - Resident Survey priority for Municipal Court: Effectiveness of the Specialty Courts.
- Address the immediate needs and “low hanging fruit” (expedited by COVID-19)
  - Virtual Hearings
  - Increased ability to set up payment plans online and make installments without coming to courthouse
  - Put court notices, brochures, documents in plain language

## More Challenging

- New ways to engage in COVID-19 world
- Work with community to explore the specific fears and real or perceived biases related to our court
- Recognize what our community values and make those points of connection to find new ways to provide information and services they need when and how needed
  - Can't give legal advice but maybe there are forms, videos, seminars, self-help kiosks
  - Expand on partnerships

# MORE INFORMATION



Visit [kcmo.gov/court](http://kcmo.gov/court)

Download the Municipal Court Know Your Rights brochure

Email [court@kcmo.org](mailto:court@kcmo.org)

Call (816) 513-2700

Like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/KCMOMuniCourt](https://facebook.com/KCMOMuniCourt)

On YouTube search for KCMO Municipal Court

**Municipal Court Address is 511 E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, KC, MO 64106**

# Nebraska PEPP Tour



# Texas Public Engagement Pilot Project

Community Engagement, Trust and Confidence: Engaging,  
Listening and Improving Justice for All

July 14, 2020

Jeffrey Tsunekawa  
Director of Research and Court Services  
Office of Court Administration



*December 1998*

*Public Trust and Confidence in the Courts and the Legal Profession in Texas*

SUMMARY REPORT

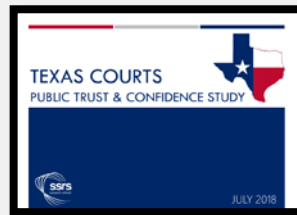
December 1998



*December 2016*

*June 2017*

**PUBLIC TRUST &  
CONFIDENCE**



*July 2018*

*January 2019*



TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE REPORT

and

RECOMMENDATIONS

June 2018



# PUBLIC TRUST & CONFIDENCE

## *Community Engagement*

***Recommendation 1:** The Judicial Council and other judicial entities should continue to seek opportunities to improve the judiciary's engagement with the community, which should include hosting summits, developing materials for judges about model judicial outreach in communities, and producing materials about civic education.*

*"The Committee recommends that programs like Access to Justice: Class in the Courtroom and the Beyond the Bench Summit be replicated and expanded. The Committee further recommends that the Texas Judicial Council and other judicial entities look for more opportunities to engage with the public to increase public trust and confidence in our judicial system."*



## Texas OCA Problem Focus Areas

Evangelism and education on the role of courts and the judiciary.

Public perception of equal justice.

Responsiveness to users' needs and keeping up with society's expectations.

1

Court/Clerk Services and Legal Resources Awareness

2

Community-building between Judges/Clerks and Public

3

Public Knowledge of Judicial Reform

4

Fairness and Equal Treatment



# Methodology

## Recruitment Survey

**Recruitment Survey**

The Texas Office of Court Administration ([www.tcoacourt.org](http://www.tcoacourt.org)) is conducting a survey in order to get initial views on topics that affect citizens of the state of Texas regarding perceptions of the judicial system. We will then select 20 individuals from the collected responses to take part in a 2-hour focus group regarding specific concerns or issues about the Texas judicial system. This is an initiative that is made possible by a grant through the National Center for State Courts (<http://www.ncsc.org>).

**As a token of gratitude for participation, individuals will be compensated with a Visa Gift Card valued at \$25.00 and will receive a complimentary lunch the day of the focus group.**

**Participation and Availability**

Are you interested in participating in an in-person focus group on [INSERT DATE AND TIME]? YES or NO

Are you available to attend a 2-hour in-person focus group on [INSERT DATE AND TIME]? YES or NO

**Contact Information:**

- Phone Number
- Email Address
- City

**Which of the following best describes your age?**

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55 or older

**Which of the following best describes the highest level of education completed?**

- Less than or only some high school
- High School Diploma / GED
- Some College or post-high school
- Some College or post-high school
- Four Year College or post-high school
- Four Year College Degree
- Some Graduate School

## Pre-Survey

**Public Engagement Pilot Projects**

**PRE-EVENT (FIRST TIME) SURVEY (2pg+)**

The purpose of this survey is to find out people's views prior to or early on in public engagement activities. It is for all who participate in public engagement activities held by pilot courts (see pilot court list) including members of the general public, court users, and court personnel. Please give your honest opinion. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. To match this survey with later surveys, we would like to use your email address as your ID. The facilitators will not use your email for any purposes other than data matching with your previous survey. Also, the facilitators will remove all survey data after the trial has been matched. Thank you for your help. Your help is essential to improving the Courts across the nation!

**1. Please provide your email or ID:**

**2. Do you currently work with or for the courts in any official role or position?**

**3. What is your role or position with or for the courts?**

**4. Do you play any leadership roles in your community?**

**5. What leadership role(s) do you play?**

**6. Please indicate if you have had each of the following experiences with the courts before today.**

**7. About how many experiences have you personally had with the courts in the last 5 years?**

**8. How familiar are you with the Texas state courts?**

**9. How positive do you feel about the Texas state courts?**

**10. How negative do you feel about the Texas state courts?**

**11. How much do you trust or distrust the Texas state courts?**

## Post-Survey

**Public Engagement Pilot Projects**

**POST-EVENT SURVEY (2pg+)**

As you may recall, so that we can match this survey with other surveys you complete, we need you to include your email. Your email will only be used to match your experience across surveys, and will be removed from our state after matching is complete. It will not be used for any other purposes without your explicit permission.

**1. Please provide the same email or ID as you used on the pre-survey.**

**2. How important to you were the topics addressed during the engagement activities?**

**3. How helpful were the engagement activities in making progress toward solving one or more problems?**

**4. How satisfied or unsatisfied were you with the engagement activities?**

**5. Were any groups of people or viewpoints missing from today's engagement?**

**6. In your opinion, how well did the following people really listen to and understand others' views during the engagement activities? (If any of the types of people listed above were not present, please "not relevant")**

**7. During the engagement activities, to what degree, if any, did your knowledge of the Texas state courts increase?**

**8. Were there any changes to your views on the courts during the engagement activities?**

**9. How much did the discussion help you see new viewpoints?**

**10. How many different viewpoints were expressed in front of the whole group?**

**11. What specific persons or groups should be invited to future engagements, who are not here today?**





Alpine, Texas  
Rural – Pop. 5,905

*October 15, 2019*

#### Discussion High Points

- Feelings of distrust due to lack of understanding judge role
- Wanted judicial education to begin at mid/high school levels
- Saw need for a Community Resource Center

#### Survey Results

- Trusted courts “some”
- Strong interest in more engagement events
- Overwhelming increase in knowledge because of event



Brownsville, Texas  
Mid-Sized – Pop. 175,023

*November 6, 2019*

#### Discussion High Points

- Socioeconomic status influences judicial outcomes
- Language access a community concern
- Need for judicial interaction with the public

#### Survey Results

- Trust factor averaged neutral
- Knowledge of court system increased
- “Someone cares about my opinion of the courts.”



Houston, Texas  
Urban – Pop. 2,314,000

*February 19, 2020*

#### Discussion High Points

- Opinions of the judicial system were influenced by interaction with law enforcement.
- Physical locations of court facilities limits accessibility and civic participation.
- A desire for judicial and civics education, including pro se resources and legal aid.

#### Survey Results

- Very low trust factor of courts and the judicial system.
- Lack of opportunities to increase knowledge of civics.
- Politics had an impact on comfort factor between individuals and the system.



# Thank You!



# Thank you!

- For any questions about this webinar, please contact Tina Vagenas at [kvagenas@ncsc.org](mailto:kvagenas@ncsc.org).
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