

The background of the entire graphic is a sunburst pattern composed of numerous light gray triangular rays radiating from the center. In the center of the image is a dark blue square containing the main title. Overlaid on the bottom of this square is a yellow banner with a dark blue border, and below that is another dark blue rectangular box.

The State *of* State Courts

★ 2014–2018 ★

5-Year Retrospective

NCSC
National Center for State Courts

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

**The
Good**



FINDING 1

**Courts Are the Most Trusted
of the Three Branches of
Government**

FINDING 3

**Courts Key Attribute: Hard-
Working**

FINDING 2

**Courts Critical Role: Guardians
of
Individual Rights**

FINDING 4




**Procedural Fairness is a
Hallmark of the Court
System**

FINDING #1

Courts are the Most Trusted of the Three Branches of Government

THE STATE OF STATE COURTS

Percent saying they have “some” or a “great deal” of confidence in each institution.

	 Governor	 Legislature	 Courts
2018	60%	65%	76%
2017	61%	57%	71%
2016	58%	65%	74%
2015	57%	61%	71%
2014	59%	63%	68%
1999 (Hearst)	77%	76%	75%
1977 (Yankelovich)	66%	64%	61%

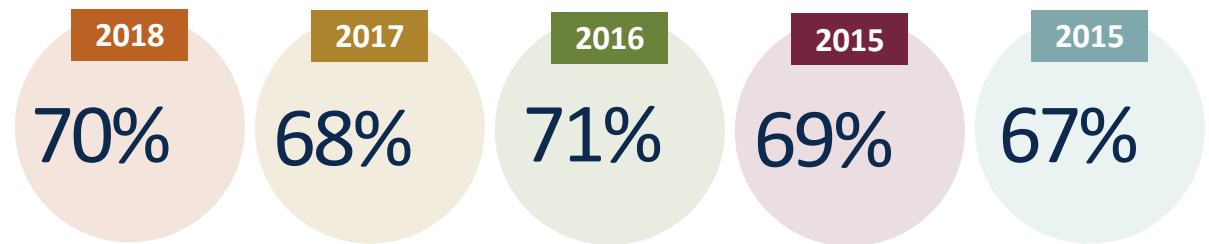
2014-2018: 5-Year Retrospective

FINDING #2

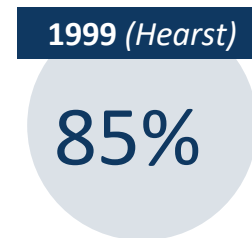
Courts Critical Role: Guardians of Individual Rights

THE STATE OF STATE COURTS

Percent saying they “strongly” or “somewhat” agree that state courts are committed to protecting individual rights.



Percent saying they “strongly” or “somewhat” agree that the courts protect defendants’ constitutional rights.



2014-2018: 5-Year Retrospective

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The Challenges



Access

FINDING 5

Expensive & Complicated

FINDING 6

Not Customer-Service Oriented

FINDING 7

Technology Lagging

Fairness

FINDING 8

Judges Seen as Political

FINDING 9

Two Systems of Justice

FINDING 10

**Concern About
Racial Bias Abounds**

FINDING #5

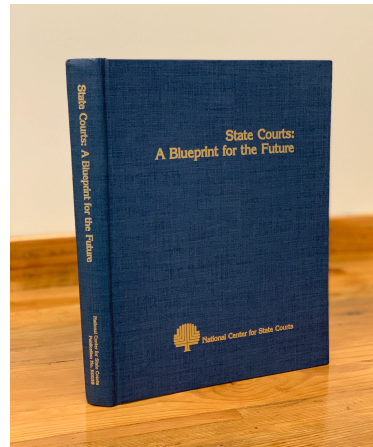
**Courts are
Seen as Slow,
Expensive, and
Complicated**

“Respondents consistently expressed a belief that the entire legal system is designed to benefit itself, rather than the people it serves...”

– 2015 focus group report to NCSC and the ABA

FINDING #7

Lagging in Technology and Innovation



62% say that “efficiency in the courts” is a serious or very serious problem.

— 1977 Yankelovich

TABLE II.1
EFFICIENCY OF COURTS AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM BY COURT EXPERIENCE*

Efficiency In The Courts Is A:	Any State Court Experience	No State Court Experience
	%	%
Very serious problem	35	24
Serious problem	27	28
Moderately serious problem	26	31
Small problem	6	10
No problem at all	3	3
Uncertain	3	4

**Question:* Here is a list of social problems that people are talking about today. Using the scale at the bottom of this card, please tell me how serious *you* think each of these problems is to American society today.

FINDING #7

Lagging in Technology and Innovation

TABLE II.1
EFFICIENCY OF COURTS AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM BY COURT EXPERIENCE*

<u>Efficiency In The Courts Is A:</u>	<u>Any State Court Experience</u> %	<u>No State Court Experience</u> %
Very serious problem	35	24
Serious problem	27	28
Moderately serious problem	26	31
Small problem	6	10
No problem at all	3	3
Uncertain	3	4

*Question: Here is a list of social problems that people are talking about today. Using the scale at the bottom of this card, please tell me how serious *you* think each of these problems is to American society today.

FINDING #8

Judges Seen as Political

THE STATE OF STATE COURTS



When presented with a list of potential concerns about the courts, this statement was picked as a top concern: “Court decisions are influenced by political considerations.”
— 1977 Yankelovich

TABLE IV.8
PERCEIVED SERIOUSNESS AND FREQUENCY OF
PROBLEMS RELATED TO EQUALITY/FAIRNESS*

<u>Serious Problem/Occurs Often:</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> %
Court decisions that are influenced by political considerations	26
Courts that do not treat the poor as well as they treat the affluent	25
Courts that do not treat blacks as well as they treat whites	19
Courts that disregard defendant's rights	9
Judges who are biased and unfair	12
Lawyers who do not treat their poor clients as well as their affluent clients	28

*Question: See Table IV.2.

2014-2018: 5-Year Retrospective

FINDING #8

Judges Seen as Political

TABLE IV.8
PERCEIVED SERIOUSNESS AND FREQUENCY OF
PROBLEMS RELATED TO EQUALITY/FAIRNESS*

<u>Serious Problem/Occurs Often:</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> %
Court decisions that are influenced by political considerations	26
Courts that do not treat the poor as well as they treat the affluent	25
Courts that do not treat blacks as well as they treat whites	19
Courts that disregard defendant's rights	9
Judges who are biased and unfair	12
Lawyers who do not treat their poor clients as well as their affluent clients	28

*Question: See Table IV.2 .

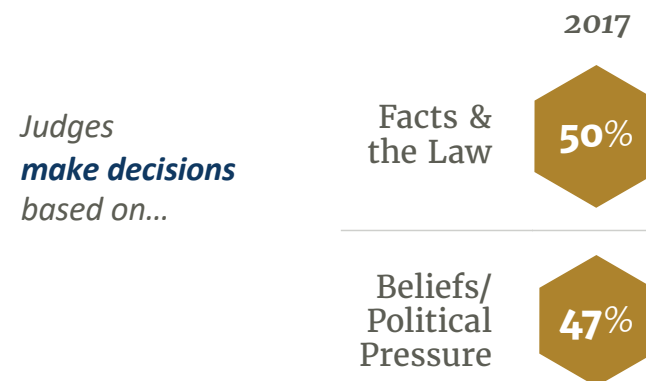
FINDING #8

Judges Seen as Political

2017 Q: “Which statement comes closer to your own view: Judges in (STATE) courts are selected based on their qualifications and experience OR Many judges are there because of personal connections or political influences rather than qualifications.”



2017 Q: “Which statement comes closer to your own view: Judges in (STATE) courts make decisions based on an objective review of the facts and the law OR Judges in (STATE) courts make decisions based more on their own beliefs and political pressure.”

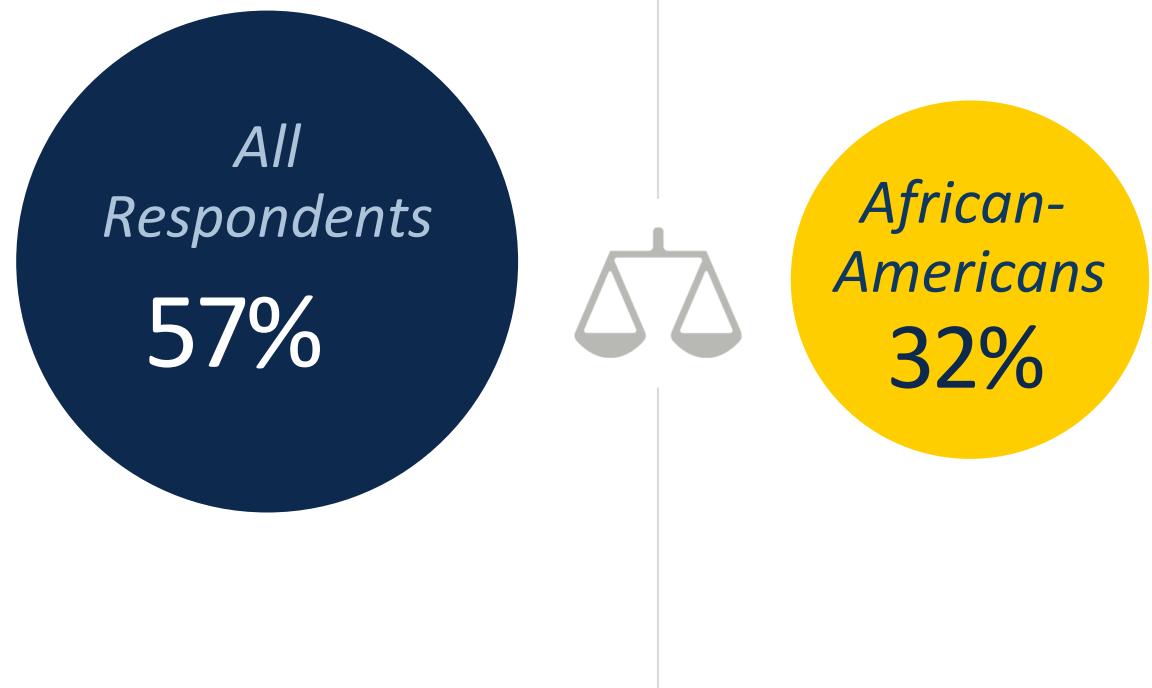


FINDING #10

Concern About Racial Bias Abounds

THE STATE OF STATE COURTS

Equal justice to all?



2014-2018: 5-Year Retrospective

A sunburst background with numerous light gray rays radiating from the center. In the center is a dark blue square containing the title text. Overlaid on the bottom of this square is a yellow ribbon banner with the years '2014-2018' and stars on either side. Below the ribbon is a dark blue rectangular box containing the text '5-Year Retrospective'.

The State *of* State Courts

★ 2014–2018 ★

5-Year Retrospective

NCSC
National Center for State Courts

For more information, visit:

ncsc.org