

Arizona Foundation for
**LEGAL SERVICES
& EDUCATION**
THE ARIZONA BAR FOUNDATION

2025

Arizona Legal Needs Assessment



Completed by:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Arizona Bar Foundation, with support and guidance from the Steering Committee, undertook a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the unmet legal needs of Arizonans, including any gaps in accessing legal aid. The Steering Committee, administered through the Arizona Bar Foundation, and chaired by Hon. Joseph Kreamer, consists of Community Legal Services, DNA People's Legal Services, and Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc., the three Arizona Legal Services entities designated by the national Legal Service Corporation (LSC), as well as their Volunteer Lawyer Programs, and William E. Morris Institute for Justice. The Steering Committee works collaboratively toward a seamless system of legal services across the state to increase equal access to justice for all Arizonans. As part of its commitment to providing high-quality legal services in Arizona, the Steering Committee retained Kōmēngé to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to assist in identifying gaps in services and underserved populations as well as to gather information that will assist legal aid organizations in prioritizing resources to better address basic unmet legal needs in Arizona.

The overall conclusion is that, for people who receive legal assistance, services are rated highly and are respected by the community. However, there simply are not enough resources dedicated to the access to justice ecosystem to meet the overwhelming need. For English speaking respondents, the top four issues in importance and impact on life are: protecting income & avoiding debt; housing; family; and health (including mental health). For Spanish speaking respondents, the top four issues in importance and impact on life are: protecting income & avoiding debt; family; employment; and housing. For Native American respondents, the top four issues in importance and impact on life are: protecting income & avoiding debt; family; housing; and health (including mental health). Cases that increase resources for clients or prevent financial harm are rated as most important to clients' well-being.

ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTS

The Steering Committee is a leader in the fight for justice in Arizona. Community partners highly value the Steering Committee and its member legal aid programs and offered constructive feedback from the perspective of caring collaborators. Community input was significant. More than six thousand (6,000) clients and stakeholders completed the legal needs surveys. More than two hundred twenty (220) community partners committed one to two hours each to take part in group interviews and listening sessions.

Together this information provided a mountain of qualitative data about both existing services and unmet legal needs. This qualitative data was supplemented with the quantitative analysis of relevant data to draw a comprehensive picture of Arizona communities' legal needs.



Kōmǝngé LLC is an organizational consulting partnership between Alex Gulotta, Anna Dorn-Gulotta, and Íde Gulotta with more than thirty-seven years of direct legal services experience in five different states (Arizona, California, Kentucky, Virginia, and Wisconsin). We also have more than twenty years of experience providing consulting services to access to justice organizations. We know the access to justice community.

At Kōmǝngé, we believe an organization's ability to make an impact in the world — and in the lives of its community members — is inextricably linked to the health of the organization. Improving the way your organization thinks, acts, and dreams about the future increases the likelihood that your efforts will have long-term, positive societal impacts. Our approach focuses on the change you hope to make in the world and gives you the tools necessary to ensure that your strategies and activities are designed to realize that change.¹

¹ Cover photo by [Mark Nemenzo](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Overview

The assessment utilizes a modern approach to evaluation that emphasizes the development of practical processes for ongoing evaluation and decision-making – with an eye toward using data to improve existing systems and to drive substantive work. During our process, we consider opportunities to increase the use of data to identify unmet legal needs, address gaps in services or legal deserts to better measure the ultimate impact of the work.

Rationale

The role of traditional strategic planning and assessment has been under question for more than a quarter of a century.² As Mintzberg stated in 1994, “Three decades of experience with strategic planning have taught us about the need to loosen up the process of strategy making rather than trying to seal it off by arbitrary formalization.”³ More recently, the Stanford Social Innovation Review boldly professed “The Strategic Plan is Dead. Long Live Strategy.”⁴ This same message is embodied in many scholarly articles and books dedicated to organizational planning. This assessment follows that trend.

Critical Factors in the Needs Assessment Process

The assessment procedures used in this report are strongly informed by the work of Jeanne M. Liedtka, Professor of Business Administration at the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia, who identified five elements to be incorporated into strategic thinking processes: systems-perspective, intent-focused, intelligent opportunism, thinking in time, hypothesis-driven.⁵ The work of David La Piana, author of The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution, suggests methods and factors to consider in a well-reasoned and rigorous strategic processes.⁶ Professor Liedtka’s factors and La Piana’s recommendations are highly aligned and critical to ensuring well-balanced and rigorous planning and assessment. We have incorporated these concepts into our methods of planning and assessment tailored specifically for legal aid programs.

² Mintzberg, H. (1994, February). The Fall and Rise of Strategic Planning. Retrieved April 03, 2018, from <https://hbr.org/1994/01/the-fall-and-rise-of-strategic-planning>.

³ Id.

⁴ O'Donovan, D., & Rimland Flower, N. (2013, January 10). The Strategic Plan is Dead. Long Live Strategy. (SSIR). Retrieved April 03, 2018, from https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_strategic_plan_is_dead_long_live_strategy.

⁵ Liedtka, J. M. (1998) Strategic Thinking: Can it be Taught? *Long Range Planning*, 31(1), 120-129.

⁶ La Piana, D. (2008) *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid Response World*. Saint Paul Minnesota: Fieldstone Alliance. See also the new edition La Piana, D. & Campos, M. M. (2018) *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid Response World*. (2nd Ed.). Saint Paul Minnesota: Fieldstone Alliance.

Scope of Work

Kōmǎngé provided assessment planning support by helping the Steering Committee scope, develop, and implement quantitative and qualitative measurement instruments, such as surveys and interview protocols; administering stakeholder and client surveys; conducting key informant interviews; hosting virtual listening sessions; evaluating qualitative data from listening sessions, key informant interviews, and surveys; analyzing court data; and developing recommendations for future program development.

Specific qualitative and quantitative datasets included:

- Surveys.
- Group Interviews.
- Community Listening Sessions.
- Demographic Analysis of the service areas' eligible client population mapped in relation to demographic factors and other relevant data.

Assessment Phases

Phase One: Project Planning

The legal needs assessment and priority setting process began with a preliminary call with the Executive Director, key Steering Committee leaders, and Steering Committee partner stakeholders to review the overall process and make changes necessary based on the Steering Committee's specific needs. Key leadership individuals and motivated stakeholders participated in the planning committee for the needs assessment. The planning committee collaborated with Kōmǎngé to prepare for the needs assessment process with regular check-in video conferences to monitor progress. The planning committee also helped identify and compile background data from Steering Committee member program's internal case management systems, client satisfaction surveys, and from local resources such as courts and bar associations (as was relevant).

Phase Two: Survey Development, Implementation, & Analysis

Based on our preliminary fact-gathering, Kōmǎngé developed client surveys in English and Spanish – and a stakeholder survey for staff, board, and key community partners – to gain information about community needs consistent with the deliverables outlined in the RFI. Surveys were posted on the statewide civil legal services website and distributed to stakeholders via direct email and posting on the website. All surveys were promoted by the Steering Committee and member programs' social media. Response was strong with five thousand seven hundred and thirty-five (5,735) community responses and three hundred forty-one (341) stakeholder responses. Kōmǎngé used the survey data to prepare for the key informant interviews and to begin identifying issues for further study and reflection.

Phase Three: Group Interviews and Listening Sessions

Kōmǎngé conducted eight (8) virtual group interviews and one (1) large in-person staff meeting to gather input from approximately one-hundred and sixty-five (165) key Steering Committee and Steering Committee member program staff, board members, and lead community partners. In addition, four (4) virtual listening sessions and four (4) in-person listening sessions captured the reflections of an additional fifty-seven (57) key community stakeholders.

Phase Four: GIS Mapping Analysis

In addition to the survey data, Kōmǎngé worked with the planning committee to review Closed Case Data by service type and by geographic location. This data was used to understand current service delivery patterns and to determine the impact and viability of future strategic initiatives. Kōmǎngé also worked with the committee to review relevant available data in the service area to identify significant demographic changes and potential opportunities for both impact advocacy and focused direct service work

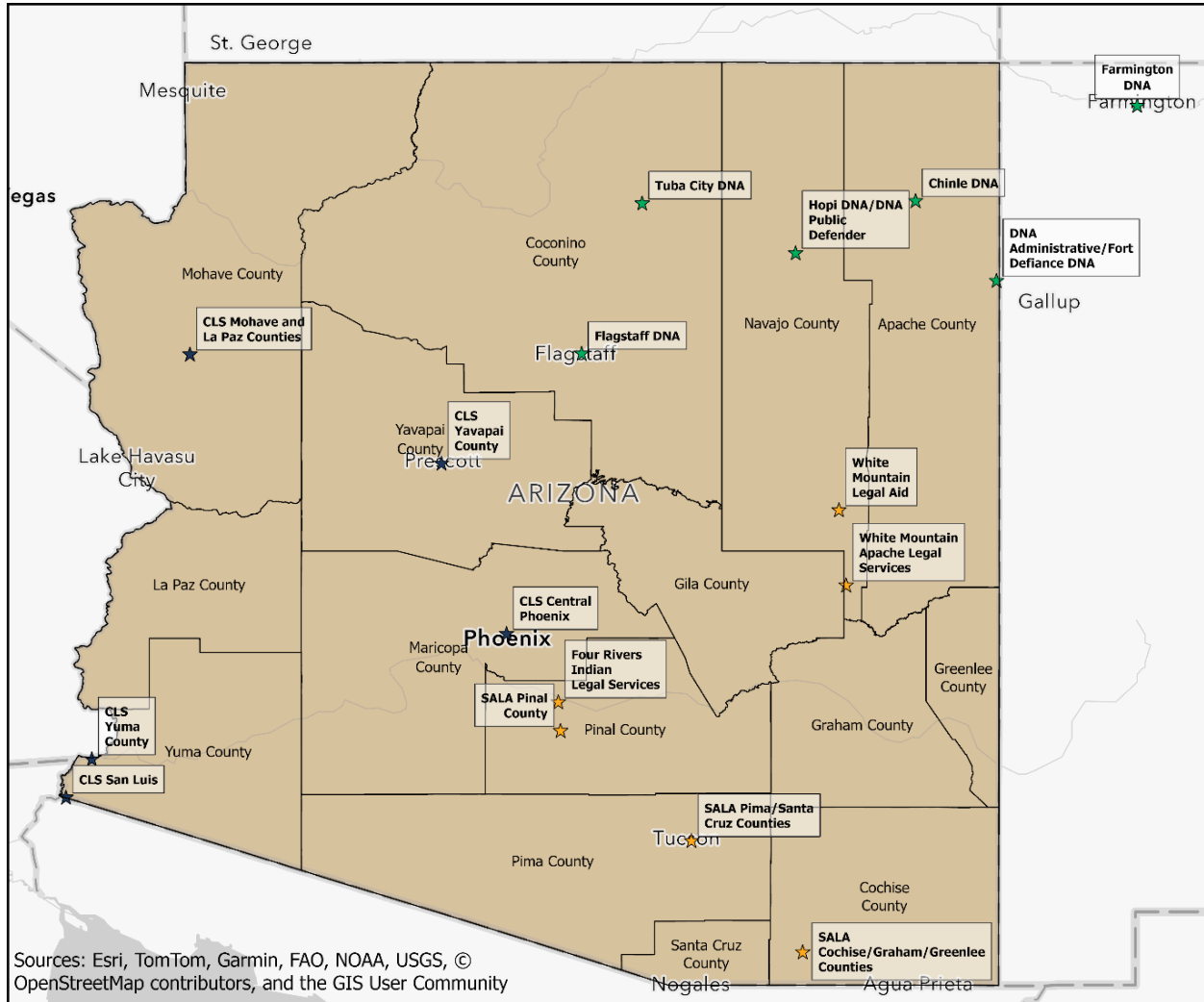
Phase Five: Completion of Final Report and Recommendations

The report integrates staff and stakeholder feedback and contains findings and recommendations for program board's case priority setting and service delivery systems, as well as to use in building community awareness and support for addressing identified unmet legal needs.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

SERVICE AREA OVERVIEW

This analysis includes all counties in the State of Arizona, Native nations that share geography with Arizona, and the entire Navajo Nation, including the portions that share geography with Utah and New Mexico. The data analysis in this report for DNA is limited to Arizona cases.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community survey was created to solicit feedback from client-eligible individuals in the community and was offered in both English and Spanish. The survey was posted on the statewide legal services website and available to individuals applying for services. Community members were asked about their most pressing needs in the last two years and the needs they see impacting other members of their community. The survey document is attached as Appendix C (Spanish Survey: Appendix E) and the survey response data (without text fields) is attached as Appendix D (Spanish Survey: Appendix F).

A total of 5,735 individuals responded to the two surveys (5,530 English survey, 205 Spanish survey). In the survey, community members were asked about any problems or issues they experienced in the last two years impacting their life, such as problems keeping families together, keeping housing, getting or keeping work, paying bills, or anything affecting their health or wellbeing. The survey asked about their experiences with problems or issues in the same categories as the Advocate and Stakeholder Survey.⁷

Respondent Feedback

Respondents reported experiencing problems or issues spanning almost all categories, but the most reported area by a large margin was protecting income and avoiding debt.

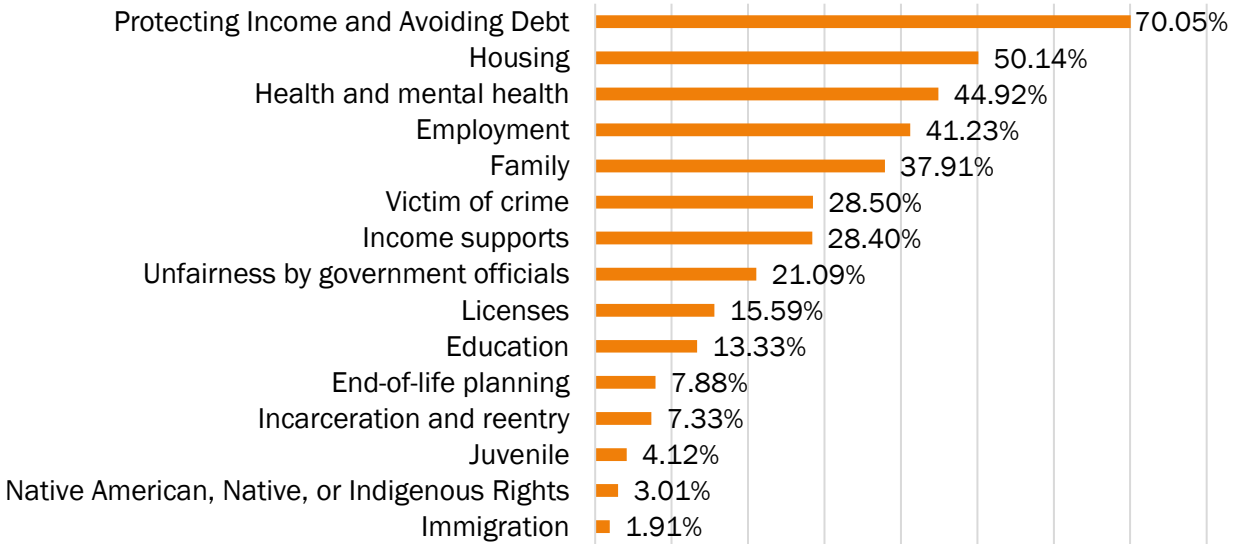
The top problem areas by percentage of respondents who reported experiencing problems or issues in the last two years were:

- Protecting Income and Avoiding Debt (70.05%)
- Housing (50.14%)
- Health and Mental Health (44.92%)
- Employment (41.23%)
- Family (37.91%)

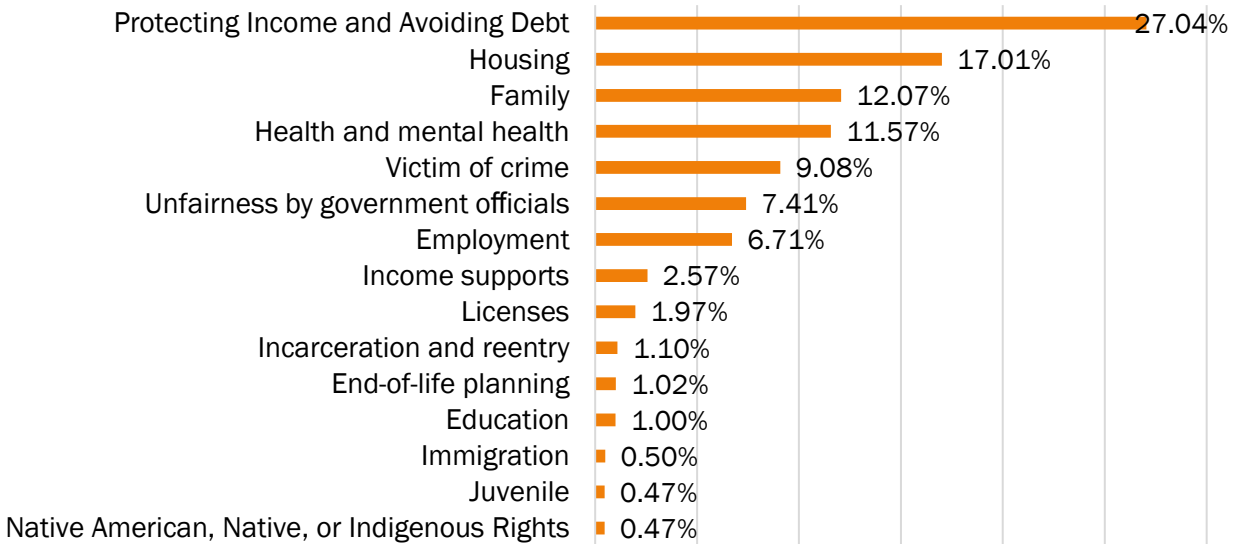
Of these problems, respondents rated protecting income and avoiding debt, housing, and family as the most severe or long-lasting problems that occurred in the last two years. Many respondents discussed comingled issues around the top-rated categories.

⁷ Protecting Income and Avoiding Debt, Education, Employment, Family, Juvenile, Health and mental health, Housing, Income supports, Native American, Native, or Indigenous Rights, Licenses, Immigration, End-of-life planning, Incarceration and reentry, Victim of crime, and Unfairness by government officials.

Problems Experienced in the Last Two Years



Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem

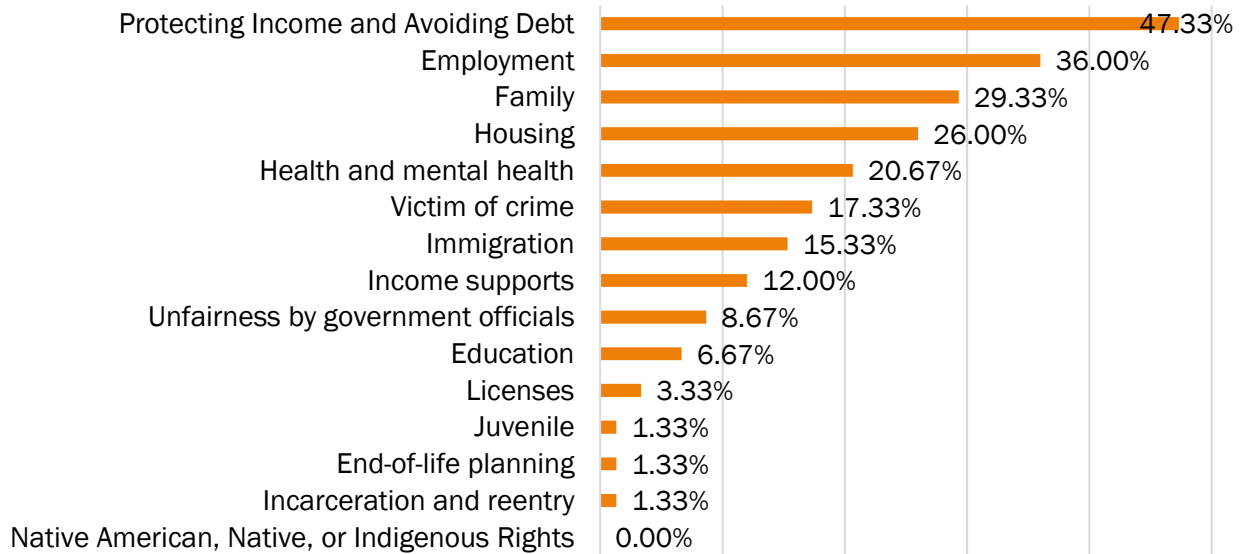


On the Spanish survey, the top problem areas by percentage of respondents who reported experiencing problems or issues in the last two years were:

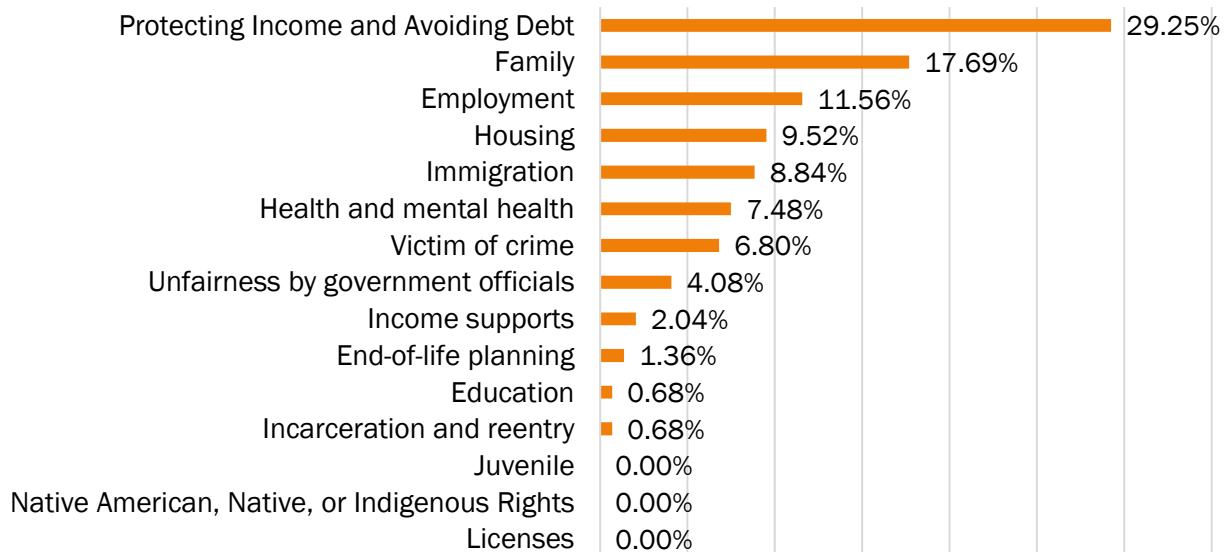
- Protecting Income and Avoiding Debt (47.33%)
- Employment (36.00%)
- Family (29.33%)
- Housing (26.00%)
- Health and Mental Health (20.67%)

Of these problems, respondents rated protecting income and avoiding debt issues, family, and employment as the most severe or long-lasting problems that occurred in the last two years. Issues included wage claims, workplace injuries, consumer fraud, identity theft, credit issues, substandard housing, mobile home communities, and discrimination and unfair treatment in housing and employment.

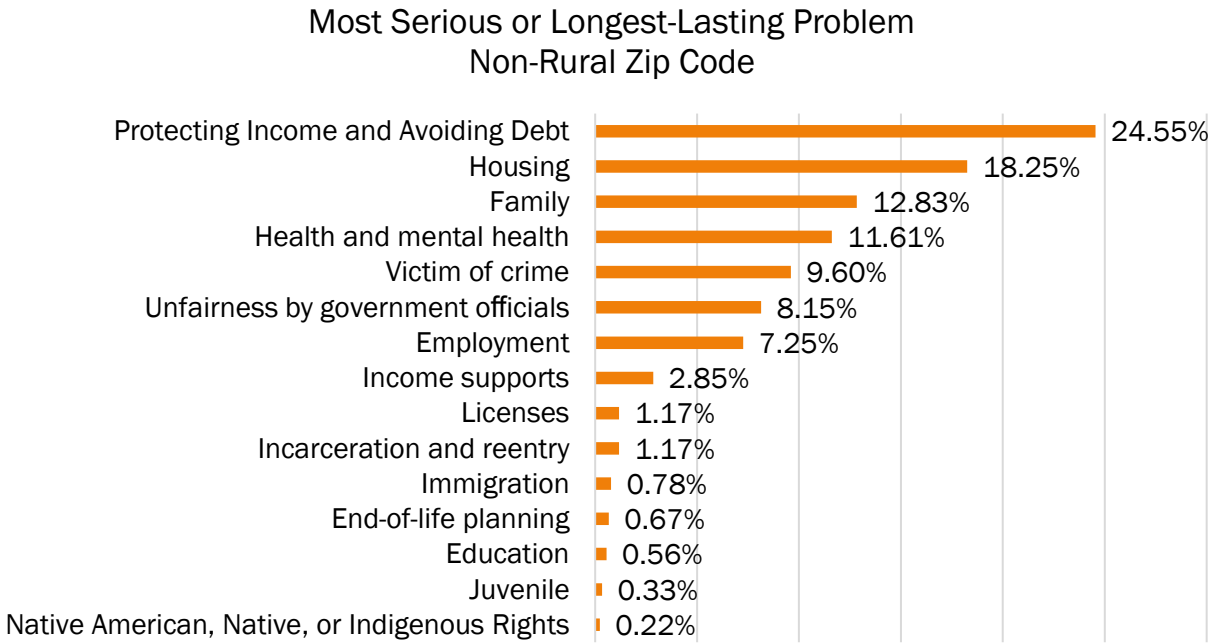
Problems Experienced in the Last Two Years Spanish Survey



Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem Spanish Survey

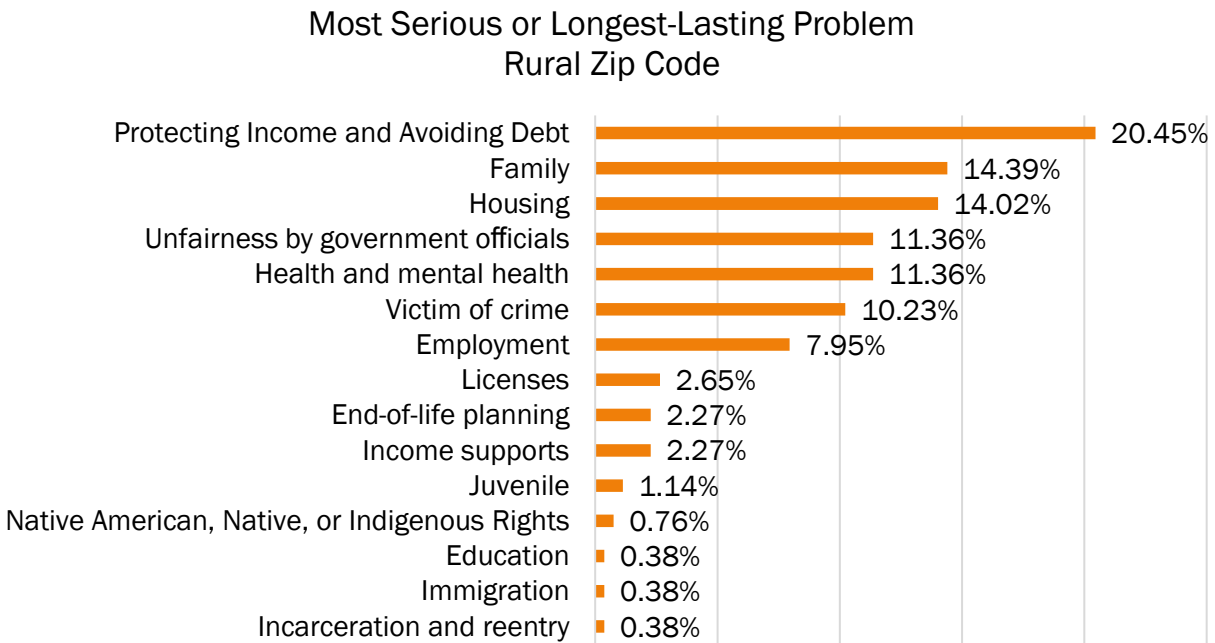


Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem – Non-Rural Zip Code



1,792 respondents out of 5,734 who provided the most serious problem & zip code data.

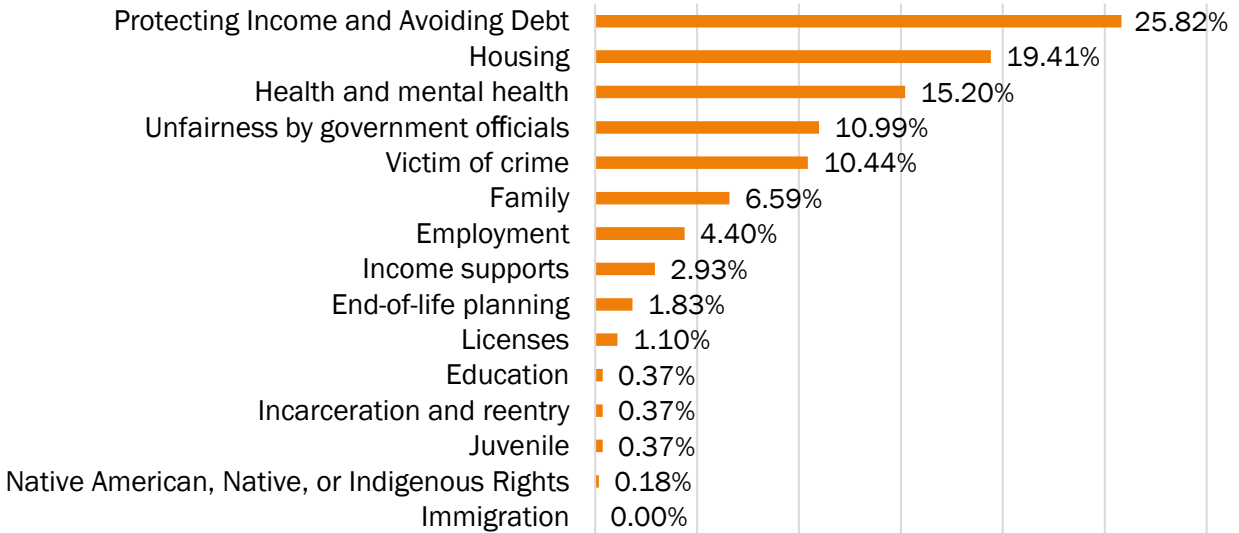
Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem – Rural Zip Code



264 respondents out of 5,734 who provided the most serious problem & zip code data.

Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem – People Over 60

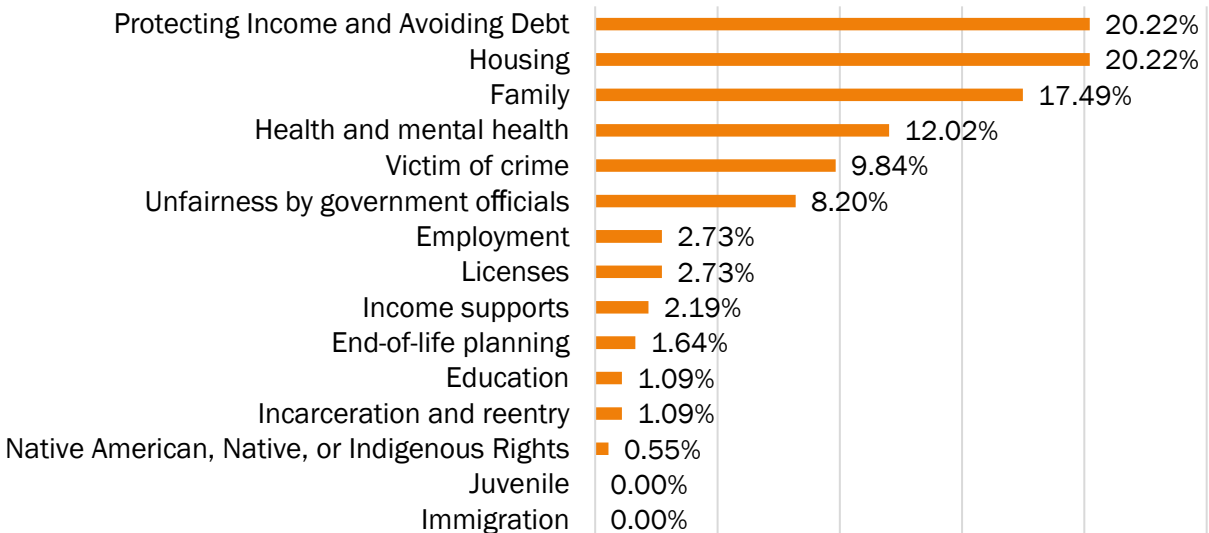
Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem
People Over 60



598 respondents out of 5,734 who provided the most serious problem & age data.

Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem – Veterans

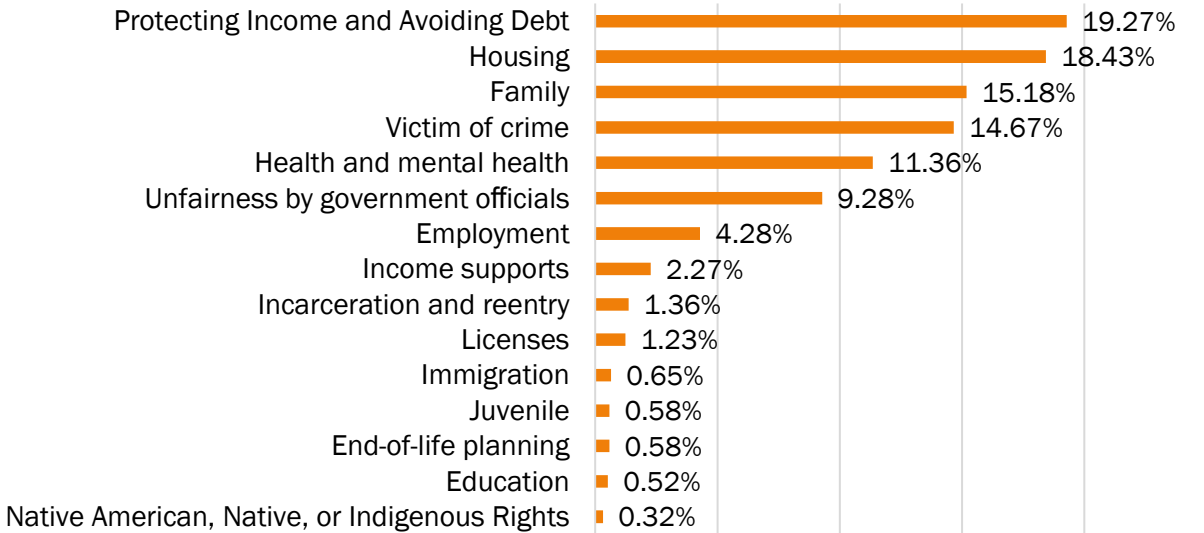
Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem
Veterans



202 respondents out of 5,734 who provided the most serious problem & veteran status.

Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem – Survivors of Domestic Violence

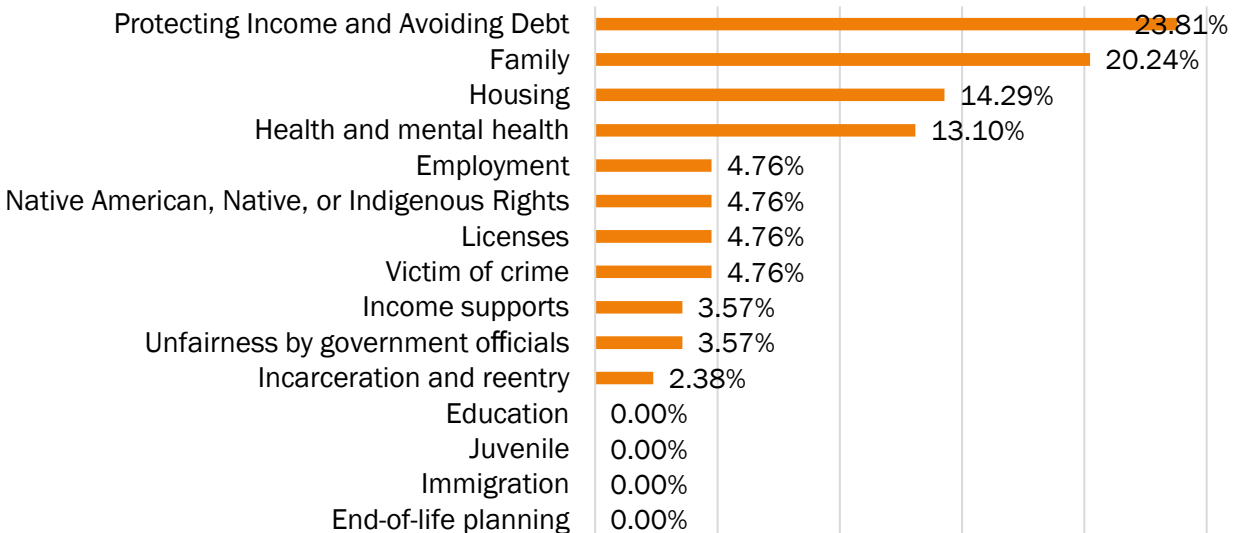
Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem
Survivors of Domestic Violence



1,678 respondents out of 5,734 who provided the most serious problem & DV data.

Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem – Native American or Alaska Natives

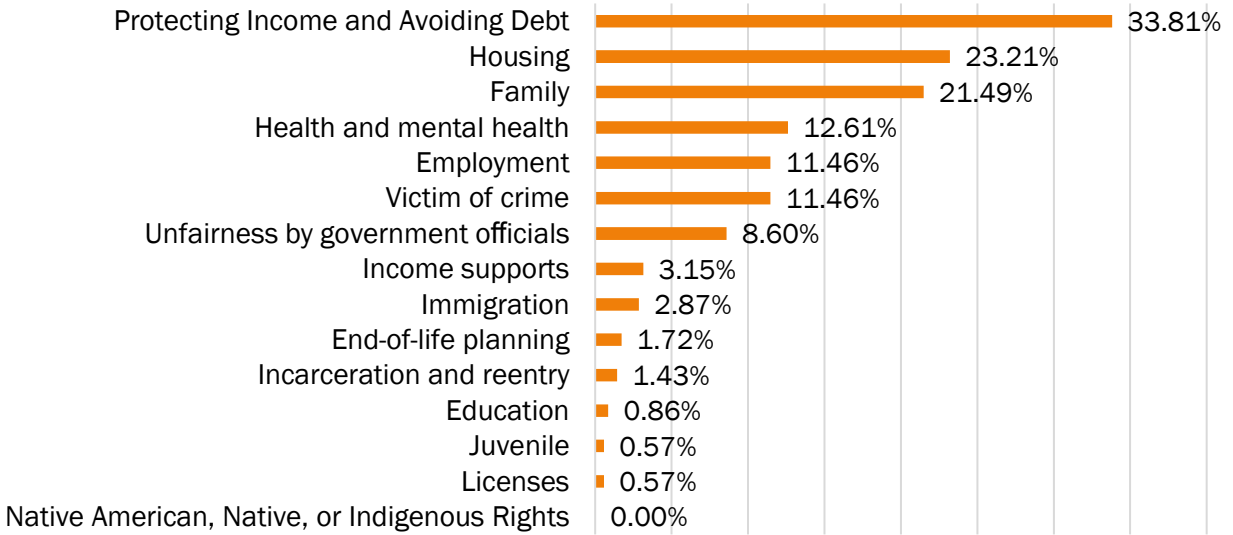
Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem
Native American or Alaska Natives



86 respondents out of 5,734 who provided the most serious problem & race data.

Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem – Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx

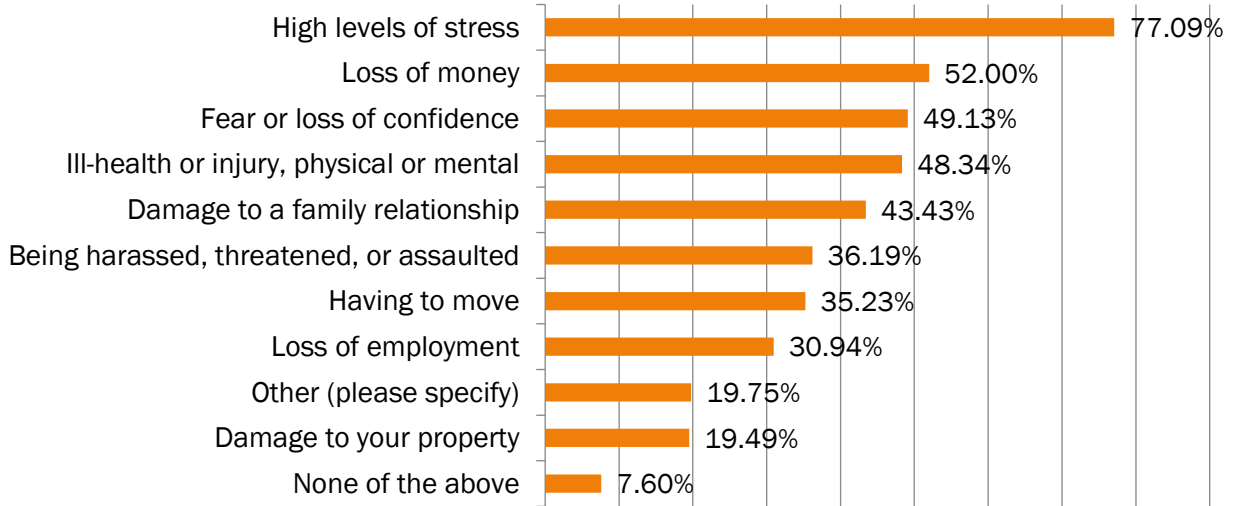
Most Serious or Longest-Lasting Problem
Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx



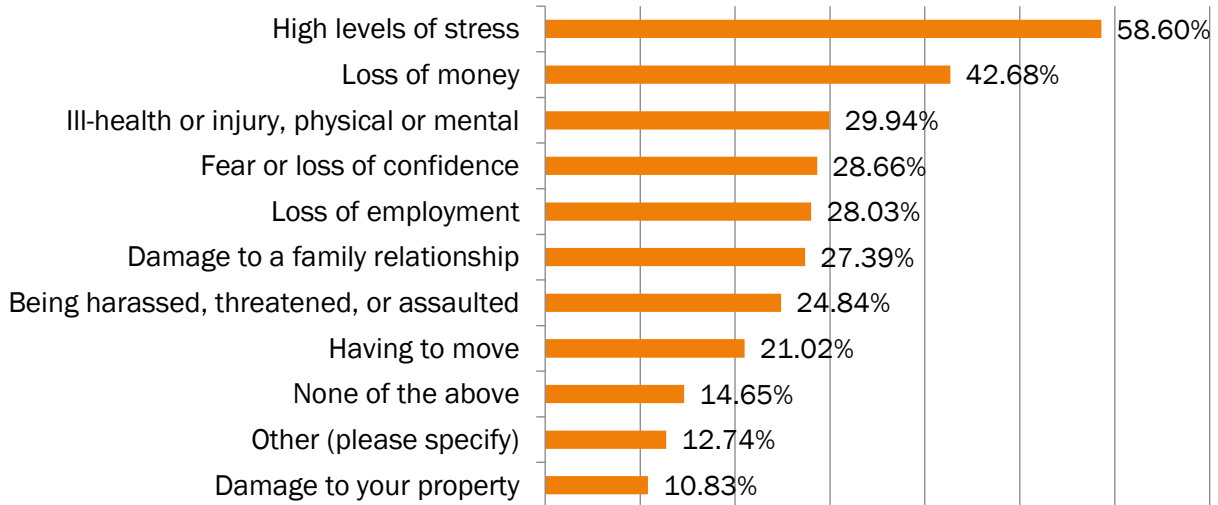
512 respondents out of 5,734 who provided the most serious problem & race data.

As a result of these problems, people experienced high levels of stress, loss of money, and ill-health, physical or mental.

Impacts of the Problem



Impacts of the Problem - Spanish Survey



About 50% of all respondents did not get any help or information about their problem. For over 70% of respondents, the problem is still happening.

Overall, respondents do not know where to seek assistance. On both the English and Spanish survey, about 50% of people received no information to address their problem (English Survey: 47.02%, Spanish Survey: 51.33%). The greatest source of help for all respondents was family or friends. Over 30% (Spanish Survey: 27%) used the internet to

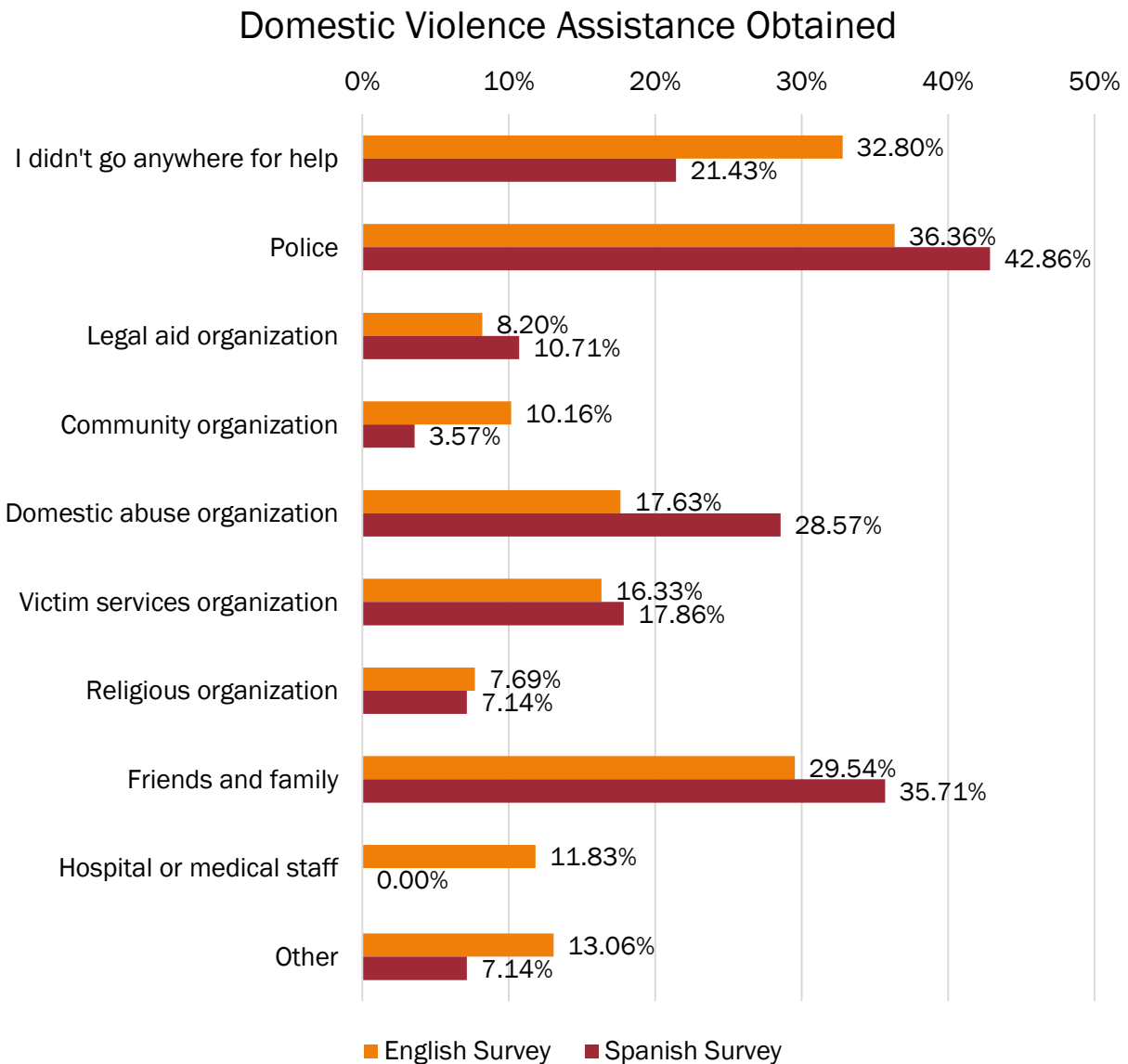
search for answers and 20% (Spanish Survey: 13%) received information from first responders, medical providers, health and mental healthcare providers, social service organizations, shelters, ombudsmen, courts, and government agencies directing them to seek legal assistance. Less than 10% used leaflets or self-help guides (Spanish Survey: 10%). Just over 25% filed or responded to a claim with a court, agency, or government body (English Survey: 25.88%, Spanish Survey: 27.89%). For over 70% of respondents, the problem is still happening (English Survey: 73.02%, Spanish Survey: 77.86%).

The majority of people did not: get the help they needed, have their problem resolved quickly, have loss or harm fixed, get the result they wanted, or receive an outcome fair to everybody involved. Respondents on the Spanish survey were less likely to indicate they received satisfactory outcomes to their problem. Many individuals had to pay for attorney or advisor fees, court fees, forms or document preparation, calls or correspondence, collecting information or evidence, travel to obtain help, and experienced lost wages (English Survey: 15-20% across all categories, Spanish Survey: under 10% across all categories except attorney fees, document preparation, and lost wages, 10-18%). Less than 10% received any assistance from a community or social service organization to help pay any costs (English Survey: 9.87%, Spanish Survey: 6.2%). Spanish Survey respondents were more likely to pay for forms or document preparation.

Experiences with Domestic Violence

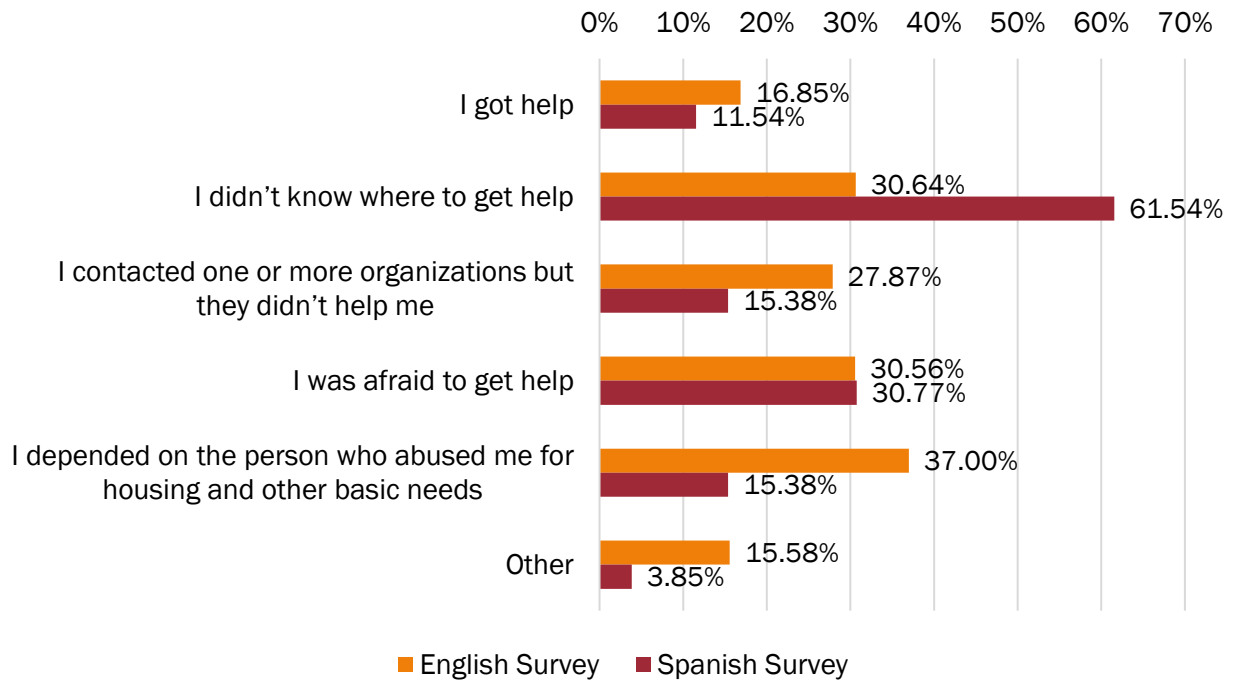
The survey contained a specific section on experiences with domestic violence. Of the 4,784 respondents who answered the question on the English Survey, 34.34% (1,643 individuals) have experienced domestic violence and answered additional questions about their experiences. On the Spanish Survey, of 162 people who answered the question, 21.60% (35 individuals) have experienced domestic violence.

For more than 60%, the domestic violence occurred in the last two years. Only 34% went to a domestic abuse or victim services organization for help.



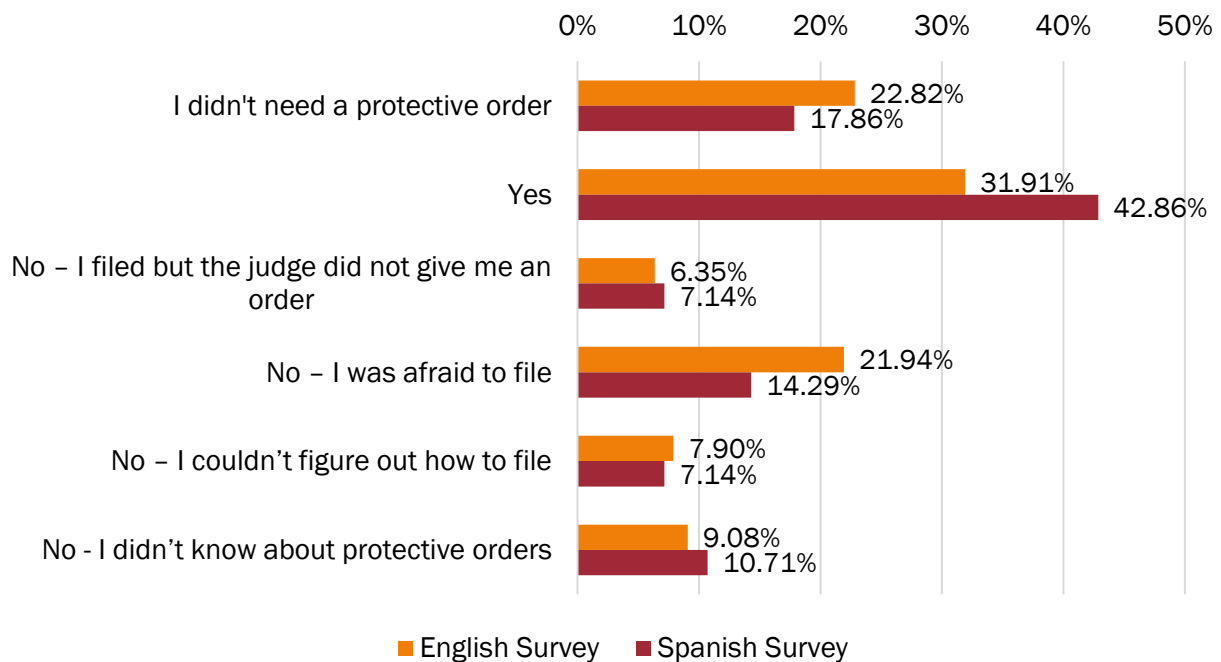
Less than 20% of respondents obtained legal help with domestic violence.

Reasons People Did Not Obtain Help



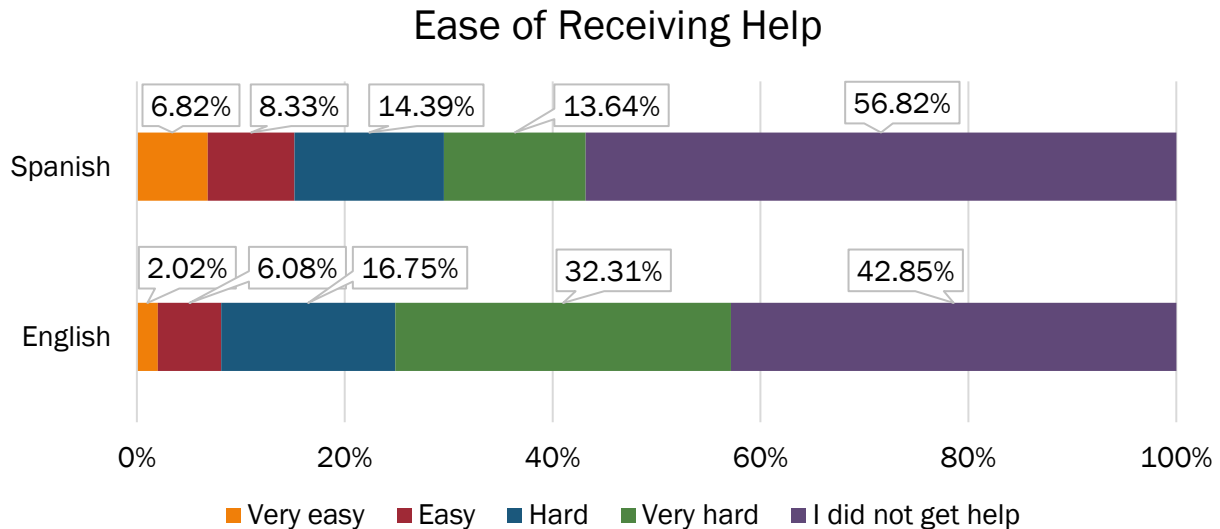
Over 30% of respondents (40% Spanish Survey) obtained a protective order.

Protective Orders Received



Many people did not receive any legal help, even after seeking assistance.

Many did not receive any help at all, with respondents on the Spanish Survey more likely to indicate they did not receive help (English Survey: 42.85%, Spanish Survey: 56.82%). Those that received help indicated it was very difficult or difficult to get help. Many requested help from a variety of sources but were not accepted or provided services. (English Survey: 55.61%, Spanish Survey: 47.24%).



The top reasons people did not obtain legal help were not knowing where to get assistance, stress, and worries about cost of obtaining help.

The top reasons respondents on the English Survey did not obtain legal help were: not knowing where or how to get advice (36.24%); they were worried about the cost (28.51%); it was too stressful (24.43%); they tried getting advice before and it wasn't useful (22.20%), they were scared to take action or get advice (16.64%), and/or, they did not think it would make any difference to get help (13.32%). The top reasons respondents on the Spanish Survey did not obtain help were: not knowing where or how to get advice (32.82%); they were worried about the cost (29.01%); it was too stressful (17.56%); they were scared to take action or get advice (12.98%), and/or they tried getting advice before and it wasn't useful (9.16%).

Respondents reported receiving unsolicited emails, calls, or letters offering some form of help (English Survey: 6.17%, Spanish Survey: 5.88%). In addition, 1.98% (Spanish Survey: 4.20%) contacted or received contact from a form creator, and 1.50% (Spanish Survey: 2.52%) contacted or received contact from a notario or notario publico. Though some of these contacts may have been genuine help, many were at a high risk of being predatory or offering substandard assistance.

Community Remarks Summary

The primary feedback from respondents on the surveys is the need for more – more information, more services, more access. People seek more information in more accessible formats shared more broadly within their communities. They want access to quick, quality, reliable legal information. Ideally, that information could be tailored to their situation in some way. A broader variety and type of resources is sought in addition to direct representation, so people have more resources to help solve their own problems. People spend a lot of time finding information and resources to address their problems. They contact many sources of information or help, often being turned away repeatedly, or being unable to get through phone lines or navigate complicated websites. Court and agency processes are difficult and often impossible for lay people to navigate without help.

People need resources in their communities at the places they already frequent. They want to see more outreach and in-community resources or collaborations. They want help at their local library, community center, senior center, or medical provider. Having resources that people need to hunt down increases stress and delays the ability for people to prevent problems from escalating. People described their hopelessness and devastation at being unable to find answers or help. By the time an individual has determined a lawyer may be the solution to their problem, they have already expended time and energy on locating information and resources. Many understand that not everyone can receive direct assistance, but the sheer difficulty of finding reliable, trusted information and meaningful self-help resources places an extraordinary burden on our communities. People lack confidence in the legal and social service systems and their ability to receive fair and meaningful assistance.

About Respondents

Not all respondents answered the demographic or life questions, having the option to skip or select “Prefer not to say.” Percentages may vary from Arizona statewide averages in some cases due to the distribution of the survey among vulnerable and high need populations by community partners. This survey utilized poverty proxies to identify individuals experiencing poverty. Of those that replied to the demographic questions:

Over 80% of respondents answered that they experienced legal problems arising from poverty or received government benefits or support only available to people experiencing poverty.

49.78% consider themselves to have a chronic condition, difference, or disability (of 2,537 respondents).

31.26% consider themselves to be disabled and unable to work (of 2,543 respondents).

7.95% served in the U.S. Military (of 2,540 respondents).

Gender (total answered: 2,529)

66.03% women; 28.67% men; 0.55% nonbinary; 0.16% trans men; 0.12% trans women; 0.08% genderqueer/gender nonconforming; 0.08% transgender; and 3.76% prefer not to say.

Sexual Orientation (total answered: 2,500)

67.20% heterosexual/straight; 8.48% asexual; 4.36% bisexual; 1.32% gay; 0.88% lesbian; 0.52% pansexual; 0.24% queer; and 12.52% prefer not to say.

Race or Ethnicity (total answered: 2,527)

50.65% White; 20.26% Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx; 9.34% Black or African American; 3.40% Native American or Alaska Native; 3.05% Multiracial or Multiethnic; 1.74% Asian; 0.67% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; 0.36% Middle Eastern or North African; 3.80% another race or ethnicity; and 6.85% prefer not to say.

Relationship Status (total answered: 2,535)

26.82% single never married; 20.24% divorced; 18.90% married; 9.59% living with a significant other or in a domestic partnership; 8.09% separated; 5.33% widowed; 5.44% other; and 5.60% prefer not to say.

Current living situation (total answered: 2,531)

35.56% Rent (19.56% rent apartment, 10.51% rent house, 3.36% rent room, 2.13% rent mobile home)

35.44% unhoused (includes homeless; living with friends, relatives, or others; living in hotels or dorm; living in a RV/camper; living in a car or truck; couch surfing (both free and paid); and paying to rent a non-living space or less than a room)

21.29% Own (17.58% own home, 3.71% own mobile home)

4.98% prefer not to say

Under 1% each: 0.79% living in a shelter, 0.67% mental health facility, 0.43% assisted living facility, 0.08% nursing home, 0.36% jail (not prison), 0.28% prison, or 0.08% juvenile detention.

Highest Level of Education (total answered: 2,547)

31.05% some years of college; 24.85% graduated high school; 14.02% graduated from college; 11.19% some high school; 7.18% completed graduate school; 4.08% some graduate school; 1.8% middle school or some middle school; 0.43% did not attend school; 0.28% elementary school or less; and 5.10% prefer not to say.

Age (total answered: 2,542)

27.97% ages 45 – 59; 23.52% ages 35 – 44; 19.63% ages 60 – 74; 17.07% ages 25 – 34; 4.92% ages 18 – 24; 3.32% ages 75 – 84; 0.67% ages 84+; 0.35% under 18; and 2.64% prefer not to say.

Primary Language (total answered: 2,537):

87.50% English; 5.12% Spanish; 0.83% American Sign Language; other languages less than 1% by total then alphabetical: Arabic, Armenian, Tagalog, Amharic, Chinese/Mandarin, French, Hebrew, Italian, Diné bizaad (Navajo), Persian, Portuguese, Romanian, Vietnamese, Bengali, Bosnian, Cajun, Dutch, Finnish, Hungarian, Japanese, Pennsylvania Dutch, Somali, Swahili, Urdu, Zapotec, and Cambodian. Other languages indicated in the comments include Albanian, Bosnian, Burmese, Moroccan Arabic, and Samoan.

Location of Residence

A total of 2,304 respondents shared their zip code. Of those, 2,203 are Arizona zip codes. For the non-Arizona zip codes, some come from neighboring states that overlap the service area of an Steering Committee member program: 18 New Mexico and 3 Utah. Some come from California (31) and under 10 each come from Texas, Nevada, Idaho, and Colorado. The remaining out of state zip codes span a variety of states across the U.S. Individuals living out of state may be eligible for Steering Committee member program services if their legal problem is in a jurisdiction in Arizona.

ADVOCATE AND STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

A key stakeholder survey targeting advocates, including legal aid staff, community stakeholders, social service providers, other members of the bar, judges, and court administrators was created. This survey obtained feedback from 341 individuals about Steering Committee member programs' historical program activities, emerging community legal needs, and recommendations for future services. Written surveys were conducted via SurveyMonkey with participants able to share candid anonymous feedback. The survey document is attached as Appendix A and the survey response data (without text fields) is attached as Appendix B. In the survey, advocates and stakeholders were asked about the types of legal issues experienced by people in the lower-income community.

In the survey, advocates and stakeholders were asked about the types of legal issues experienced by people in the lower-income community, including the following areas:

Protecting income and avoiding debt (being unable to pay money you owe or unfair charges, including bill collectors, bankruptcy, credit, repossession, warranties, loans, medical debt)

Education (discipline, expulsion, suspension, special education, language access, job training, student financial aid)

Employment (firing, unpaid wages, poor working conditions, discrimination, harassment, taxes, employee rights, unfair disciplinary procedures, changes to contract terms)

Family (adoption, custody or visitation, child or spouse support, adult guardianship, name change, parental rights termination, paternity, domestic abuse, support)

Juvenile (neglect or abuse, minor guardianship, emancipation)

Health and mental health (disability, injury or illness, healthcare services and coverage, mental health services, home healthcare and support, long-term care facility, other health or support services)

Housing (eviction or becoming homeless, poor maintenance, discrimination, housing vouchers or subsidized housing, mobile home, foreclosure, unfair mortgage practices, land ownership or title issues)

Income supports (problems with applying for, receiving, or the amount of Social Security retirement, SSI, SSDI, food stamps, Veterans benefits, state or local childcare or kinship care supports)

Native American, Native, or Indigenous Rights (any issue in Native nation court or related to Native nation membership)

Licenses (driver's license issues or reinstatement, occupational licenses)

Immigration (citizenship, legal status, asylum)

End-of-life planning (advance directives, powers of attorney, wills, trust, probate, inheritance)

Incarceration and reentry (criminal record expungement or sealing)

Victim of crime (abuse, civil rights, disability rights, elder abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking, fraud or money scams)

Unfairness by government officials (discriminatory or corrupt treatment by the police or other government official)

About Respondents

A total of 341 individuals responded to the Advocate and Stakeholder Survey, including:

- Current and former staff of legal aid organizations
- Other attorney advocates and members of the Bar Association, including prosecutors, public defenders, attorney generals, other government attorneys, and in-house counsel
- Non-attorney advocates
- Active and Retired Judges and Administrative Law Judges
- Staff members of courts and the judiciary, both local, state, and Native nations.
- State, municipal, and city government and agency employees covering an extensive spectrum of services that interact with lower-income and vulnerable Arizonans
- Federal government and agency employees
- Staff and leadership at multiple school districts across the state
- Social service providers, including social workers, migrant advocates, healthcare organization staff, and senior center staff
- Librarian, law-librarian, and library staff members

Almost 30% work at law firms or in private practice, 13.86% work for a State, Native nation, or Local Government, 8.43% work for a legal aid organization. Over 30% work in a variety of other governments, agencies, schools, and service providers, serving children, seniors, survivors of domestic violence, and other vulnerable individuals.

Survey Data

Advocates reported seeing lower-income people with legal issues spanning all the surveyed categories.

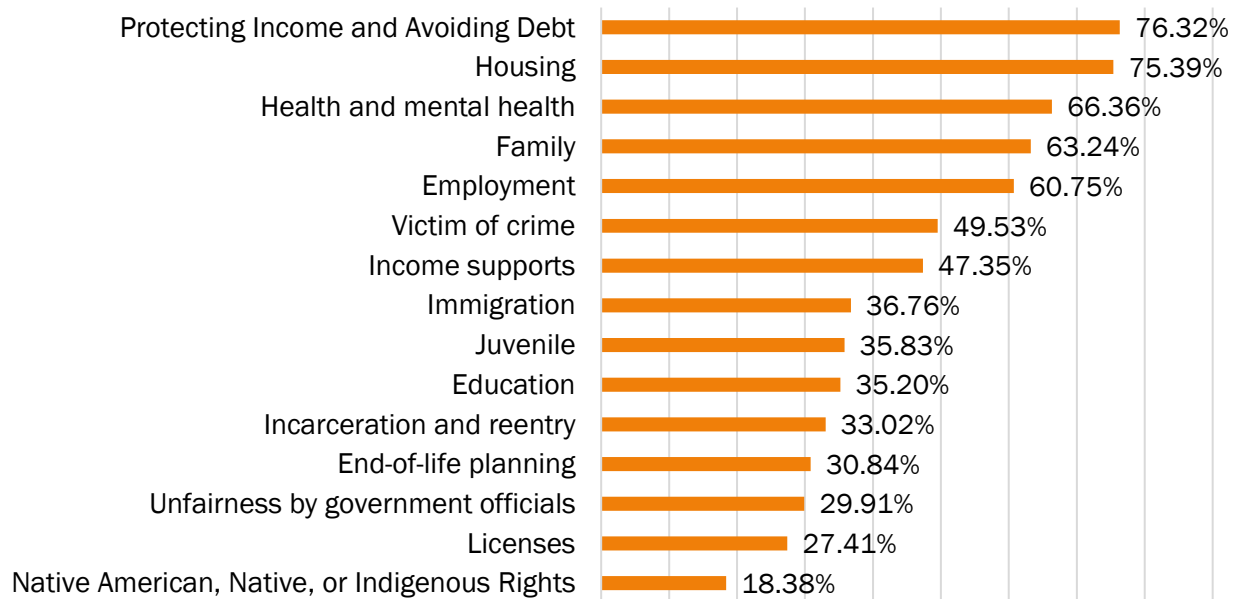
The top problem areas by percentage of respondents who reported the area being an issue for lower-income individuals were:

- Protecting Income and Avoiding Debt (76.32%)
- Housing (75.39%)
- Health and Mental Health (66.36%)
- Family (63.24%)
- Employment (60.75%)

Advocates rated that the two most urgent needs for civil legal help are with Debt and Housing issues. These are closely followed by Health and Mental Health, Family, and

Employment. Almost 35% of advocates saw people every day experiencing the need they rated the most urgent, with others seeing it a few times a week (23.03%), once a week (10.30%), or less.

Problem Areas Reported by Advocates



Only 33% believe there is a reliable source of information or assistance in their community to help lower-income people resolve civil legal problems. Almost 74% of advocates do not believe there are adequate services available to meet community civil legal needs.

Many identify legal services organizations and self-help resources as sources of information or assistance but indicate there are not sufficient resources to handle all the community’s needs. In many cases, people are turned away or must wait for services. One advocate noted that “The availability and effectiveness of information largely depends on the type of problem.” Some legal problem areas have more resources available than others and in other cases the available resources are not accessible. Gaining access to materials is especially difficult in rural areas and in Native nations where people depend on accessing the internet or forms at public locations and there is a lack of in-community resources.

For others, self-help materials are too difficult to be effective and self-help centers do not offer enough assistance or guidance for people to gain meaningful assistance. This is especially true for immigrants, people who do not speak English as a first language, people with health or mental health difficulties, and other vulnerable populations. Many advocates indicate that court and agency processes are often so difficult that they necessitate

intervention by an attorney or advocate, and that simplifying these processes is necessary for access to justice and access to public benefits and community resources.

The system itself often necessitates involvement of legal help for areas that should not need that level of engagement.

Advocates found self-help materials not very effective at meeting community needs.

Across all categories, advocates largely found self-help materials to be not very effective, not necessarily due to the quality of the materials, but due to barriers for individuals in accessing and comprehending the resources.

The problem is often that the resources are all over the place instead of in one consolidated area and laypeople often have trouble distinguishing the quality of the information they find.

Getting information into the hands of those who need it is a challenge. Not everyone has a smartphone or computer.

I think self-help materials are often too generalized to be meaningful in most of these arenas.

Folks are not lawyers, there are self-help materials offered by the Courts. They are well drafted, but lay people struggle without assistance. The Court's center to assist with some of these matters is great, when it is available. Many people cannot access it because they work.

Families do not know how to navigate "self-help" materials. I, as a member of a social service organization, do not understand what "self-help" is available out there. The assumption that everyone has access to the internet and technology to access it is not what is truly happening. If they do, do they even understand. Many individuals struggle to read and write, much less understand legal jargon.

Self-help material is available for the areas that I assist with (family law) but even then, many do not understand or comprehend the material. Many are not tech savvy to go online and access the material. They need guidance.

Survey respondents found legal help (both advice and representation) to be much more effective than self-help materials across all categories. The most highly rated areas for legal help (ranked as either *Extremely effective* or *Very effective*) were: Family (28.29%), End-of-life planning (26.07%), Juvenile (24.51%), and Protecting Income and Avoiding Debt (24.04%).

Legal advice and representation is crucial and so needed in our community for lower-income folks and under-represented groups of people. We also need assistance in languages other than English.

When individuals and families have the opportunity to receive legal services and representation, the fear of a potential outcome outside of their control subsides a bit. I know that families continue to fear the legal system and how it will support them, if at all. Having the support is extremely important.

The services available are great for those who have access. But not many people have access because the providers and resources are few.

Again, if the other side is represented, the person seeking help is at a disadvantage. Re: Immigration, courts are backed up and effective bilingual legal aid availability is limited.

For people who do receive services, those services are rated highly and respected by other advocates and stakeholders in the community. However, there are simply not enough civil legal services available to meet the overwhelming need.

Core Pressures Identified by Advocates and Stakeholders

The most pressing civil legal needs identified by advocates and stakeholders as impacting lower-income members of the community were:

- Housing, including unfair housing practices, eviction prevention, affordable housing, public housing and section 8, substandard housing, mobile home communities, title issues, and support for the unhoused (comprising almost 60% of short answer key words)
- Family law issues, including domestic violence, juvenile, guardianships, child support, custody, and order enforcement (comprising almost 35% of short answer key words)
- Health and Mental Health and trauma, including access to health and mental health services, long-term care, victims' services, mental health stigma and discrimination (including criminalization of homelessness), disability services and benefits, substance use, and comorbidities (comprising over 15% of short answer key words)
- Immigration, including DACA and asylum, unjust treatment of immigrants and people of color, and services for immigrants, including public benefits and housings
- Employment, especially related to wage claims, abusive employers, workplace injuries, visa workers, and employment for survivors of domestic violence
- Children's rights and education supports, including school and disability services, school to prison pipeline, and foster children.
- Consumer, including fraud, abusive contracts and loans, income and financial support services, and increasing income

- Tribal sovereignty and Native nation issues, including public defense and representation on issues surrounding Native nation membership.
- Incarceration and re-entry, including restoration of rights, set asides, and drivers' license reinstatement.
- Wills and probate, including property transfer, generational wealth, and vital records
- Civil rights issues and discrimination, as they apply to issues above, including housing, immigration, race, employment, children, and tribal sovereignty.

There are groups of people who advocates believe need extra assistance accessing services.

- Non-English Speakers, Spanish-speaking parties, Navajo and Hopi speakers, Chinese speakers, speakers of rare languages (including many African languages), and anyone requiring an interpreter, including ASL and braille services (especially in the context of court and agency services and forms)
- Individuals with low or no literacy in English, whether or not they are an English speaker
- Seniors, especially those in any of the other raised categories, in particular non-English speakers, immigrants, Native Americans, and individuals with disabilities.
- People of color, including Native Americans, Hispanic or Latinx, and immigrants.
- Immigrants, including refugees, unaccompanied minors, and people who are undocumented.
- Adults and children with disabilities, especially people with brain-based disabilities.
- People with extreme mental health concerns, people with substance use disorders, and the unhoused face barriers and discrimination.
- LGBTQ+ members of the community, especially people who are trans and/or nonbinary.
- Children, Youth and Juveniles, especially those without parental support and those under- or unhoused.
- Individuals with lived experience in the criminal justice system, especially when trying to navigate the pardon or expungement system, including those who are unhoused.

GROUP INTERVIEWS

Eight group interviews and a large, in-person planning meeting reached 165 members of legal aid program leadership, staff, and boards, including client community board members. Staff at all levels of the programs were encouraged to participate. Interviewees included Steering Committee member program leadership, management and administrative staff, outreach staff, program staff, special project managers, and intake staff – across every member program office and substantive practice area.

Substantive Needs

Substantive legal needs are grouped into two subsections: 1. Existing Services Meeting Critical Needs; and 2. Gaps in Service Needs. These lists are not comprehensive but reflect stakeholder feedback from the interview sessions.

Core priority areas identified in these sessions include Housing, Consumer, Employment, Family, Income Maintenance, and Health. In addition, this qualitative feedback from the group interviews must be combined with the survey data, the listening session feedback, and other data analysis to draw a complete picture.

Existing Services Meeting Critical Needs

- Consumer (bankruptcy, debt collection, repossessions, car warranty cases, payday loans, foreclosure scam cases [limited resources, solar panel contracts and related issues, and public utilities)
- Employment (wage claims, EITC and other IRS tax issues are significant in tribal communities in particular)
- Family (protective orders, enforcement of protective orders, kinship care and family guardianships)
- Health (access to medical care)
- Housing (eviction prevention is critical)
- Income Maintenance (SSI/SSDI termination, veterans benefits and discharge upgrades)
- Individual Rights (immigration [limited])
- Miscellaneous (Tribal court criminal cases)

Gaps and Expanded Service Needs

- Consumer (foreclosure scams, student loan assistance, senior consumer scams, senior financial abuse and APS enforcement)
- Education (FAPE, special education/IDEA, school discipline)
- Employment (unpaid wage claims/wage theft claims especially against repeat offenders)
- Family (sequential limited engagement clinics, increase services for DV survivors [criminal victims rights attorney to assist with DV cases, sue domestic abusers in tort

for damages], family adoptions for increased stability, assistance with parenting time and visitation issues)

- Housing (mobile home and mobile home park protections, habitability, assistance for the unhoused [IDs, vital documents, expungements, credit reports], security deposits, affordable housing advocacy, post eviction support services, fair housing enforcement)
- Income Maintenance (expand SSI/SSDI termination assistance, expand SSI/SSDI overpayment representation, community justice worker filing assistance for public benefits, DES application issues advocacy, Miller trusts).
- Individual Rights (re-entry legal program, LGBTQ+ issues, access to mental health services, crisis intervention programs, immigration).
- Miscellaneous (planning documents and probate, especially to preserve housing or access benefits)

LISTENING SESSIONS

Four (4) virtual listening sessions and four (4) in-person listening sessions captured the reflections of an additional fifty-seven (57) stakeholders including key community partners from a broad cross section of different organizations.

Substantive Legal Needs

Substantive legal needs are grouped into two subsections: 1. Existing Services Meeting Critical Needs; and 2. Gaps and Expanded Service Needs. These lists are not comprehensive but reflect community stakeholder feedback in the listening sessions.

Core priority areas include Housing, Income Maintenance, Consumer, Family, Employment, and Health. The level and extent of services may vary by location. In addition, this qualitative feedback from the listening session must be combined with the survey data, the group interview feedback, and the case and court data analysis to draw a complete picture. Nonetheless, it offers valuable insights.

Existing Services Meeting Critical Needs

- Employment (farmworker assistance)
- Family (protective orders and protection of victims of violence)
- Housing (eviction prevention, habitability [air conditioning issues, pests], assisting unhoused people, mobile/manufactured home protection)
- Income Maintenance (Social Security, SSI, SSDI, Veterans Benefits)
- Individual Rights (criminal record expungements)
- Miscellaneous (planning documents)

Gaps in Service Needs

- Consumer (senior consumer or healthcare scams [ALTCS eligibility], contractor fraud, credit report corrections, utility shutoffs to mobile home communities or apartments, foreclosure assistance, contract or lease review)
- Family (post-divorce issues involving custody and visitation, grandparents raising grandchildren [POAs and guardianships], assistance for parents in reestablishing relationships with children following the removal of the children or the parent returns from jail, return of property between cohabiting individuals)
- Juvenile (ICWA/foster care)
- Health (ALTCS appeals, involuntary discharges from housing/healthcare hybrid facilities [assisted living facilities, long-term care facilities, and other facilities], quality of care issues [treatment, staff issues, other facility issues, administrative complaints])
- Housing (loss of housing due to unpaid taxes or consumer scams, predatory vehicle towing)
- Income Maintenance (preparation of initial applications [Social Security, SSI, and SSDI], Veterans benefits, immigration status and public benefits education)
- Individual Rights (criminal record issues and access to services [housing], fines and fees causing increased criminalization, LGBTQ+ issues [name and gender marker changes, updating vital documents, with both state and tribal governments], racial profiling by the police and sheriffs)
- Miscellaneous (driver's licenses, planning documents [prevent heirship property and ensure clear title between generations], assistance with Five Wishes, probate [especially on reservation lands])

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

To offer an intersectional picture of social vulnerability, the service areas divided among Community Legal Services, DNA-People's Services, and Southern Arizona Legal Aid (covering the entire state of Arizona) was mapped against the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Social Vulnerability Index (CDC/ATSDR SVI or SVI)**, which CDC/ATSDR defines as “a place-based index, database, and mapping application designed to identify and quantify communities experiencing social vulnerability.”⁸

CDC/ATSDR defines social vulnerability in these terms: “Every community must prepare for and respond to hazardous events, whether a natural disaster like a tornado or a disease outbreak, or an anthropogenic event such as a harmful chemical spill. The degree to which a community exhibits certain social conditions, including high poverty, low percentage of vehicle access, or crowded households, among others, may affect that community's

⁸ See CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index 2022 is available at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/index.html>. Additional documentation and explanations of the four themes is available at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/media/pdfs/2024/10/SVI2022Documentation.pdf>.

ability to prevent human suffering and financial loss in the event of a disaster. These factors describe a community’s social vulnerability.”

SVI consists of four themes: **Socioeconomic Status, Household Characteristics, Racial & Ethnic Minority Status, Housing Type & Transportation**. Each theme encompasses several variables pulled from American Community Survey (ACS), 2018-2022 (5-year) data⁹. Individual variables are converted to a percentile ranking for each, summed, and then ranked again to produce the individual theme percentile ranks. The overall score is produced by summing all sixteen ranked variables and then converting those sums to percentile rankings.

Because SVI is a ranked variable, the values are relative to the set of data in question. CDC/ATSDR offers SVI calculations for the entire US, individual states, Puerto Rico, and tribal census tracts. The calculations are also offered in two geography types/levels where applicable: county and census tract. SVI figures in this report reflect Arizona census tract SVI values and therefore represent an estimation of the relative social vulnerability of a census tract as compared to all other census tracts in the state of Arizona. Full documentation on the 2022 CDC/ATSDR SVI can be found on [the CDC/ATSDR website](#).¹⁰

All Steering Committee member programs’ offices are located near clusters of social vulnerability, but there are areas of social vulnerability that are geographically isolated (see Poverty in Arizona map below).

Arizonans In Need SNAP Summary

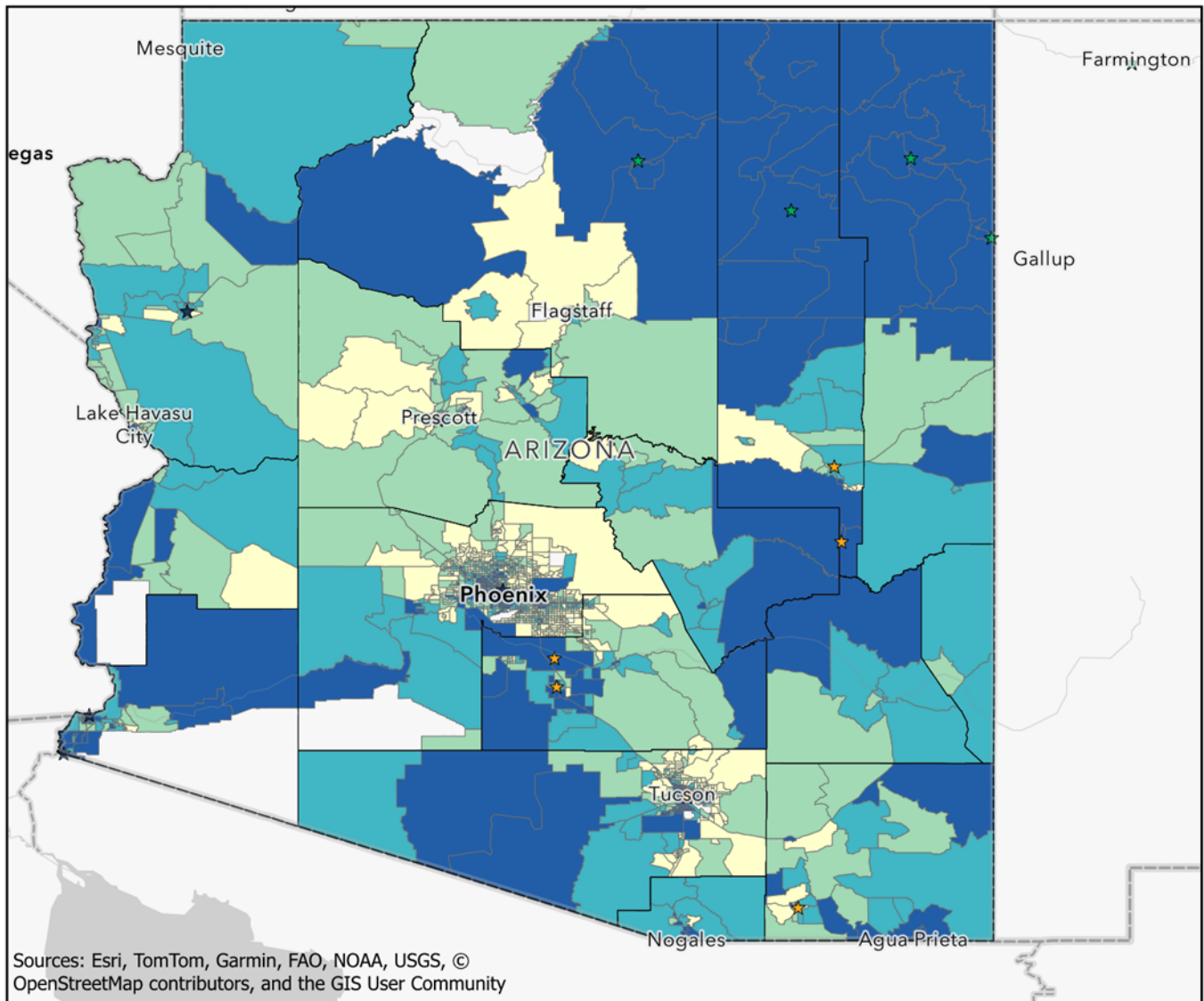
Additional insights can be gained from participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The SNAP Community Characteristics Dashboard Congressional District Explorer is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, to share information about Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation, income, and household demographics.¹¹ According to the Dashboard, in Arizona, 10.3% of all households participate in SNAP, or 294,864 households. There are 349,619 households in poverty in Arizona, with a household poverty rate of 12.2%.

⁹ Census data can be accessed at <https://data.census.gov/>. The ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables can be accessed at <https://data.census.gov/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Detailed%20Tables>.

¹⁰ See CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index 2022 is available at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/index.html>. Additional documentation and explanations of the four themes is available at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/media/pdfs/2024/10/SVI2022Documentation.pdf>.

¹¹ This data includes statistics for 2013 to 2022, with most recent data being based on 2022 SNAP participation statistics and the American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (2013-2022, excluding 2020). The rest of this report uses the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, so individual numbers may vary. The Dashboard is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data-research/data-visualization/snap-community-characteristics-congressional-district-dashboard>.

Social Vulnerability Index - Overall



Overall

Overall Social Vulnerability

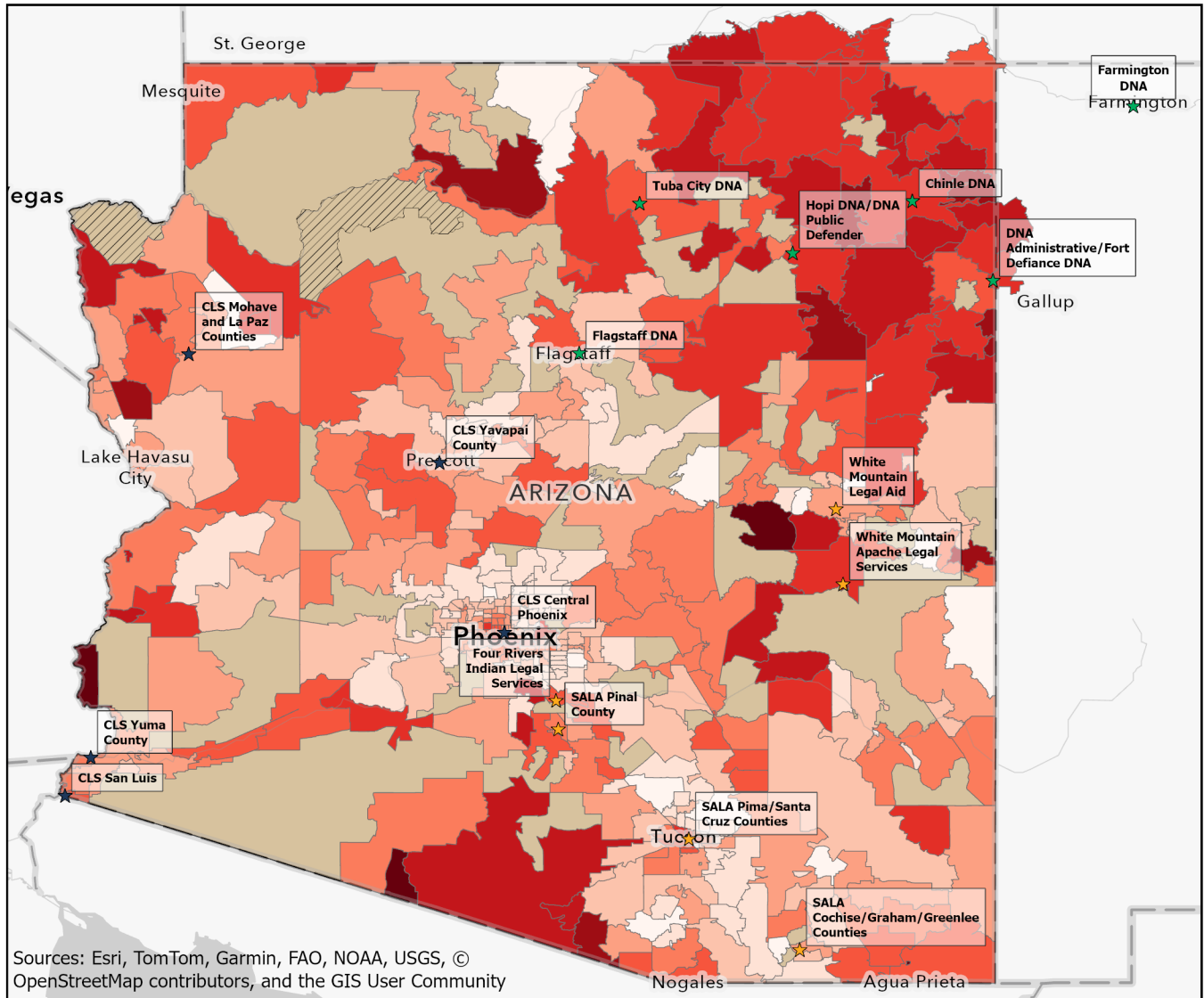
- Lowest - Bottom 4th (434)
- Second 4th (433)
- Third 4th (433)
- Highest - Top 4th (433)

Program Offices

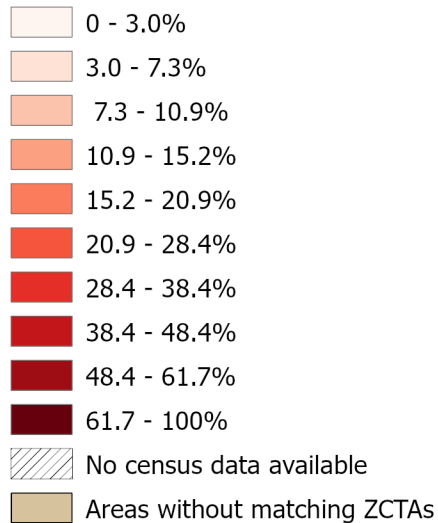
- Community Legal Services
- DNA-People's Legal Services
- Southern Arizona Legal Aid

CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index, Arizona
 Social Vulnerability Index - Overall
 Geography/Subdivision: Census Tracts
 Map shows what quartile of SVI or SVI sub-index scores a given census tract falls into, relative to all census tracts in the state of Arizona.

Poverty in Arizona



% of Population Below Poverty Level



Program Offices

- ★ Community Legal Services
- ★ DNA-People's Legal Services
- ★ Southern Arizona Legal Aid

American Community Survey
 2018-2022 5-year estimates
 S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months
 Geography: ZIP Code Tabulation Area
 Map shading shows the estimated percentage of the population below the poverty level within a given ZCTA.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRIORITIES

The Steering Committee and its member legal aid programs are leaders in the fight for justice in Arizona. Overall, feedback reinforced the fact that the quality of legal services provided was high if a person was successful in accessing those services. But access was universally identified as an issue making the prioritization of resources even more critical.

EXISTING SERVICES MEETING CRITICAL NEEDS

The following services meet critical needs in Arizona and constitute a significant portion of existing program services. There are not significant gaps in program services across programs but there are variations. As resources permit, some levels of the following critical services are needed across the state.

- Consumer
 - Bankruptcy
 - Debt collection
- Employment
 - Wage Claims
 - EITC & Tax
- Family
 - Protective Orders
 - Divorce
- Health
 - Access to care
 - Mental health treatment
- Housing
 - Private rental housing
 - Subsidized housing
 - Mobile homes
 - Assistance for the unhoused
- Income Maintenance
 - TANF
 - SNAP
 - SSI/SSDI
 - Unemployment compensation
 - Veterans benefits
- Individual Rights
 - Immigration
 - Expungements
- Miscellaneous
 - Wills, advance directives, and powers of attorney
 - Vital documents assistance
 - Tribal Criminal Court (as appropriate)

EXPANDED SERVICE NEEDS

To the degree that there is capacity to consider new areas, there are important unmet needs in the following areas:

- Consumer
 - Foreclosure scam cases
 - Student loan assistance
 - Senior consumer scams
 - Senior financial abuse and APS enforcement
- Education
 - Protecting the right to a FAPE
 - Special education/IDEA
 - School discipline
- Employment
 - Unpaid wage claims/wage theft claims
- Family
 - Increase services for DV survivors
 - Family adoptions for increased stability
 - Assistance with parenting time and visitation issues
 - Sequential limited engagement clinics
- Health
 - Home and community-based care access
- Housing
 - Mobile home and mobile home park protections
 - Habitability
 - Assistance for the unhoused
 - Security deposits
 - Advocacy for more affordable housing
 - Post eviction support services
 - Fair housing enforcement
- Income Maintenance
 - Expand SSI/SSDI termination assistance
 - Expand SSI/SSDI overpayment representation
 - Community justice workers for benefit applications
- Individual Rights
 - Comprehensive re-entry legal program
 - LGBTQ+ issues
 - Challenges accessing mental health services
 - Immigration services
- Miscellaneous
 - Planning Documents (Miller trusts and similar tools)
 - Probate, especially when needed to preserve housing

CONCLUSION

The member programs of the Steering Committee of the Arizona Bar Foundation have a combined history of more than 200 years of service to low-income Arizonans. They are leaders in the access to justice movement. This assessment provides a framework for improving and expanding services to those most in need in Arizona.
