

The State
of
**State
Courts**

★
2014
★

★
POLL
★

NCSC
National Center for State Courts

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Kentucky



David Rottman
NCSC

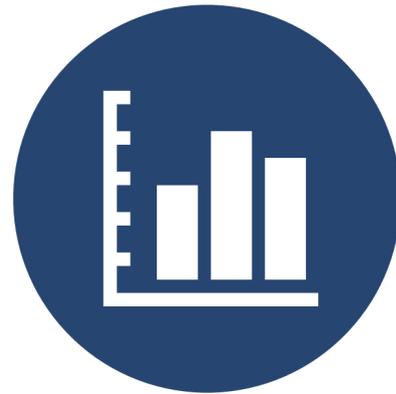


Chief Justice Mary Russell
Missouri



Jesse Rutledge
NCSC

METHODOLOGY



WHAT: NCSC nationwide telephone survey

WHO: Conducted by GBA Strategies

WHEN: November 12–16, 2014

POLLED: 1000 Registered Voters

STATS: MOE +/- 2.8% 19 times out of 20

KEY FINDINGS



Courts remain the **most trusted branch** of government



Court users express confidence in fairness of proceedings, but have doubts about **customer service and job performance**



There is a strong demand for **greater availability of online services**



The public worries that politics undermines the **impartiality of the court system**

FIGURE 1

The public is more optimistic about the work of the state courts than in 2012.

Q: “Please state how well each of the following words or phrases describes the state courts.”

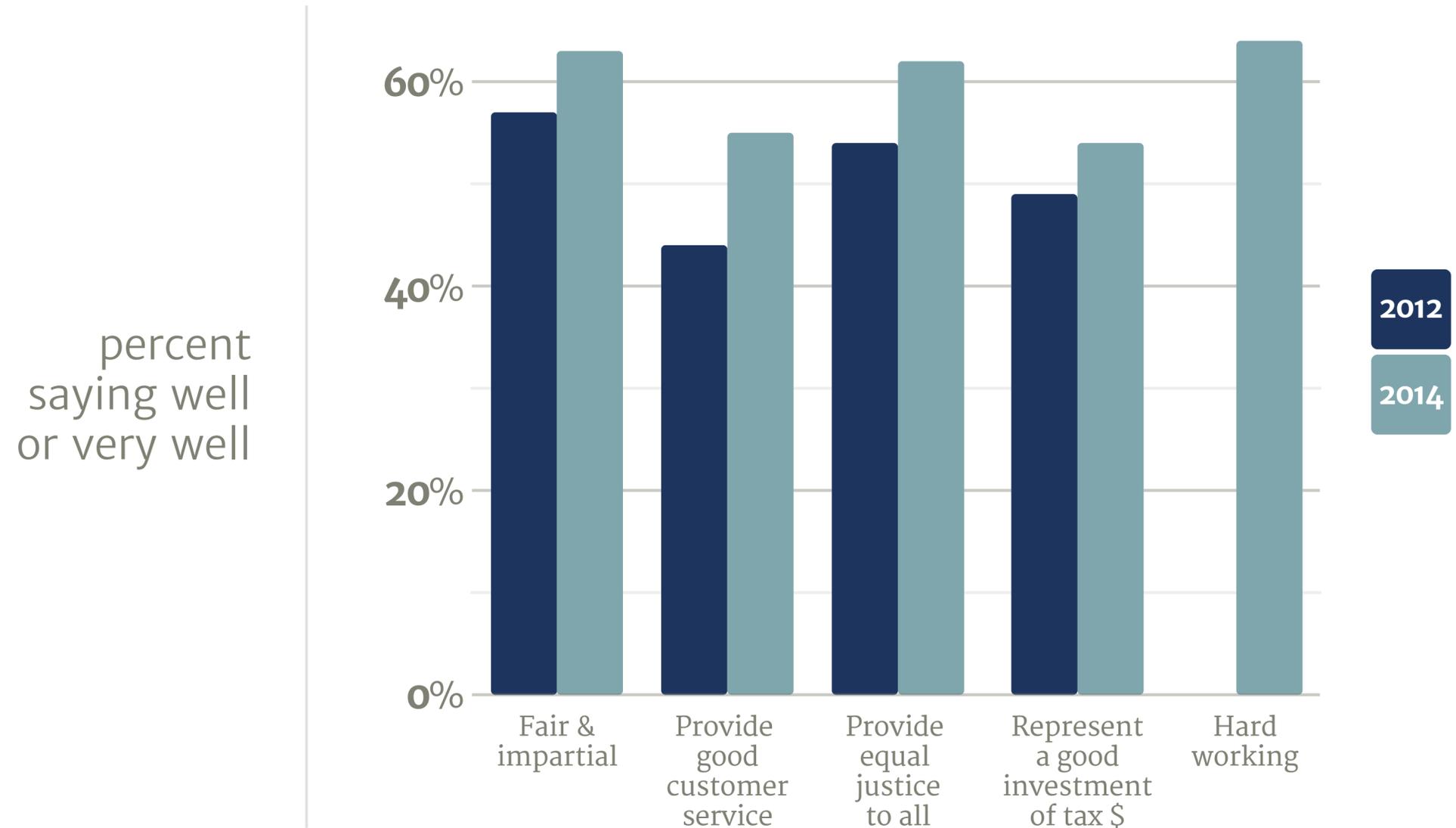
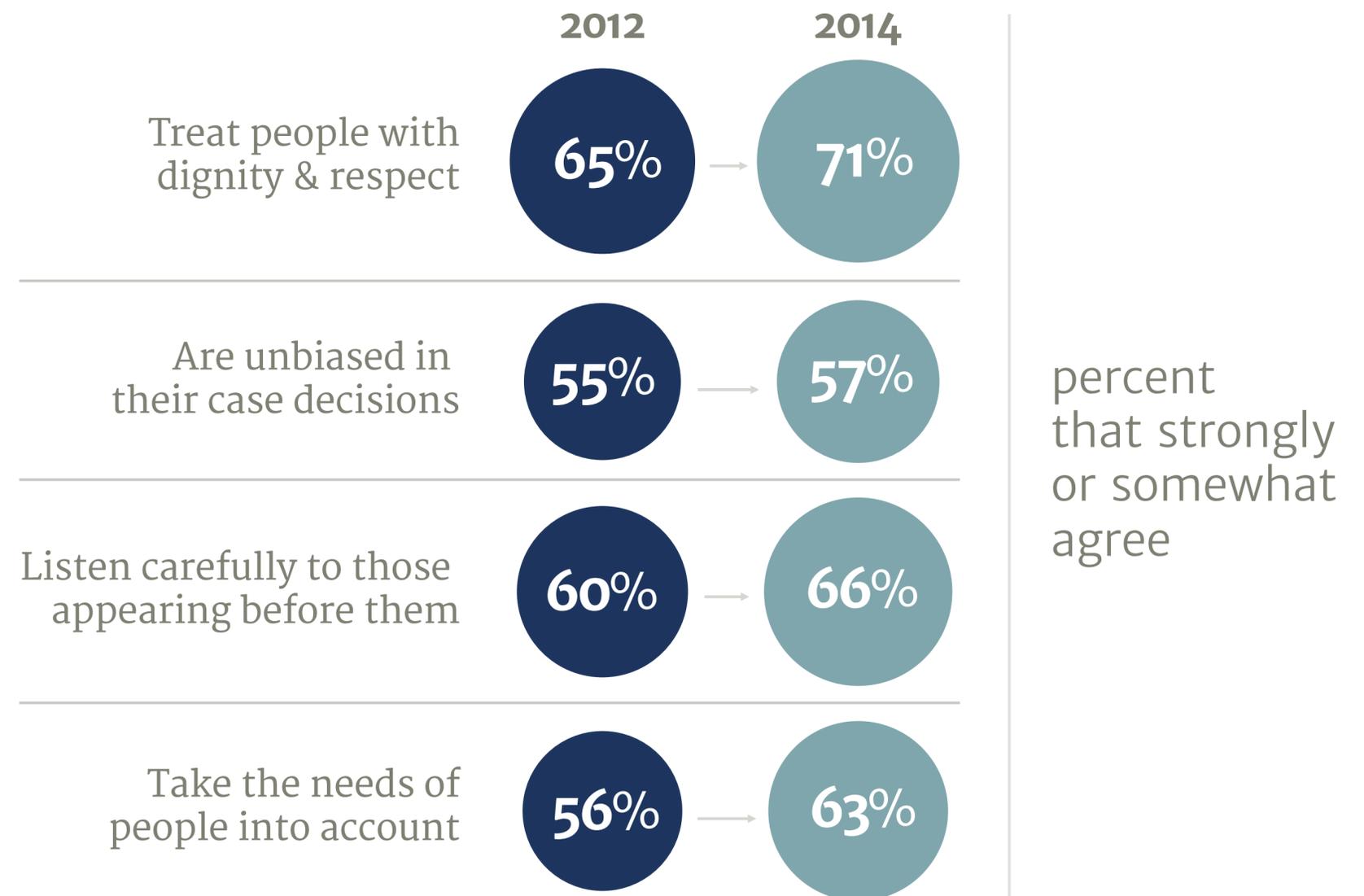


FIGURE 2

Voters also see improvements in procedural fairness attributes since 2012 survey.

Q: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”



Q: “Regardless of the outcome, were you satisfied with the fairness of the process in your dealings with the court system?”

Q: “How would you rate the job being done by courts in (state)?”

FIGURE 3

Those who report direct interaction with the courts are satisfied....

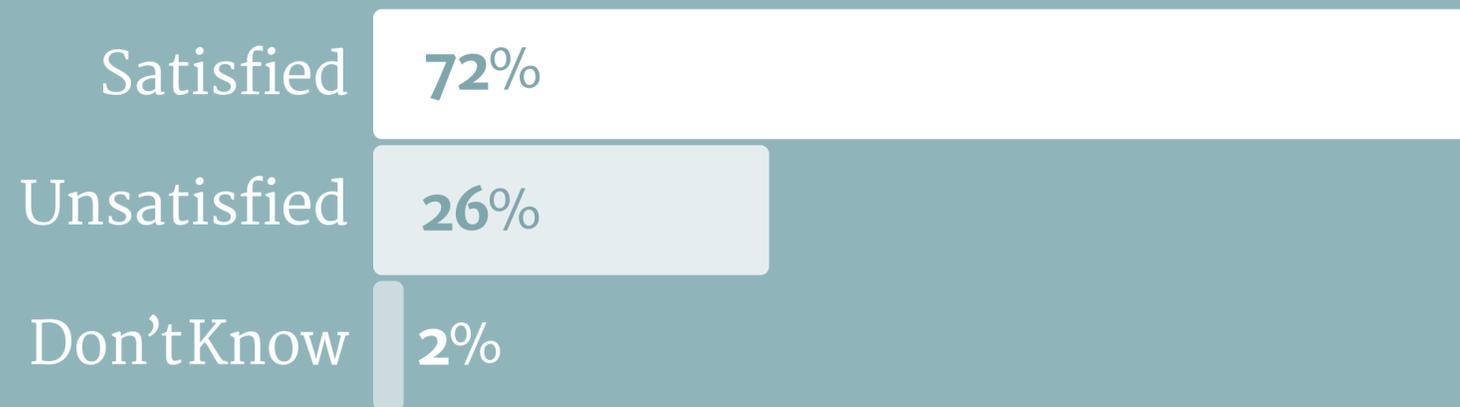


FIGURE 4

...But are more likely to give lower ratings on job performance and customer service.



FIGURE 4, CONT'D

...But are more likely to give lower ratings on job performance and customer service.

Q: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”

Percent saying they strongly or somewhat agree

● No Direct Contact ● Direct Contact

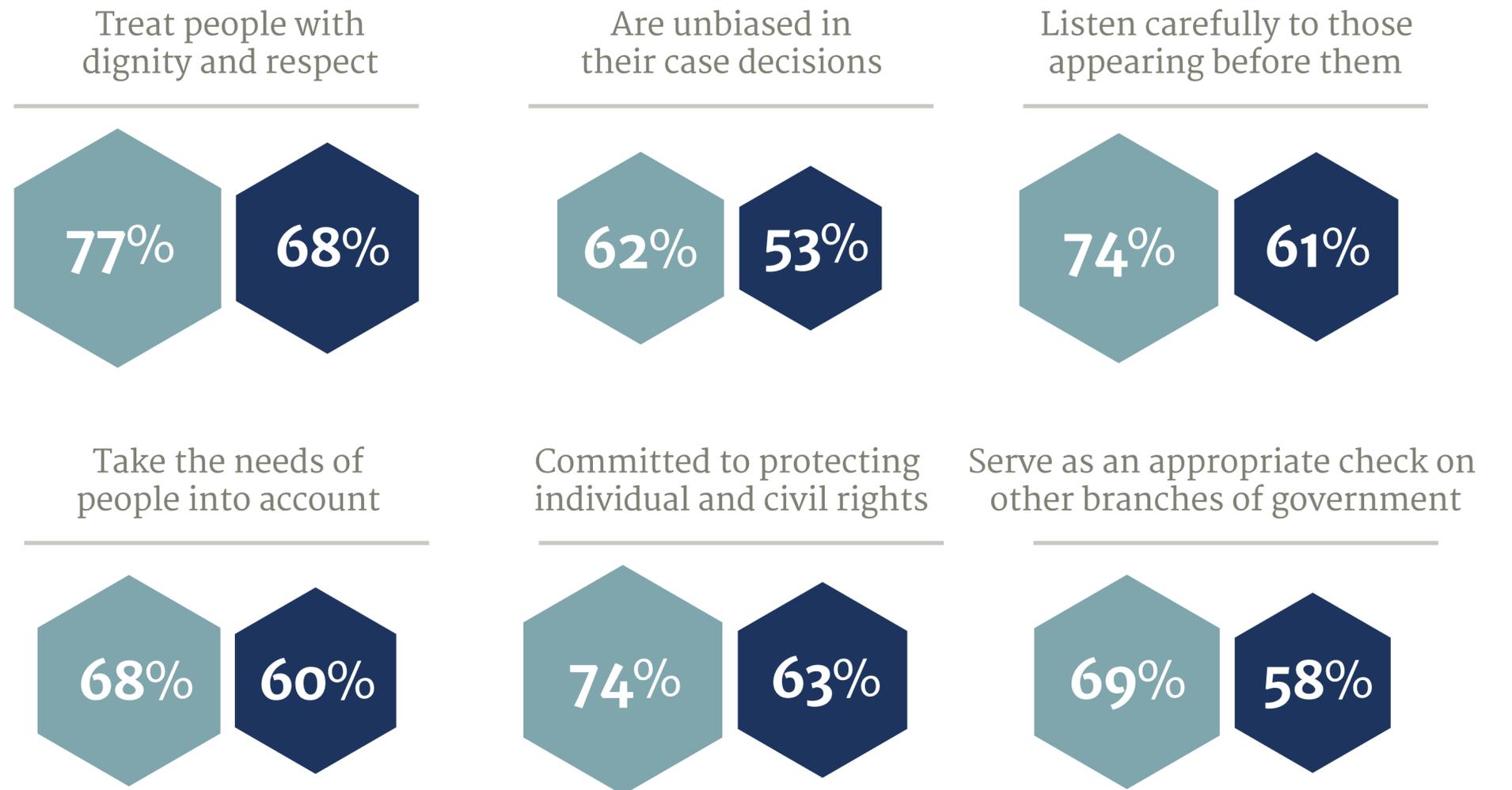


FIGURE 5

Voters are split on whether the courts are doing enough with technology.

Statement 1

“(State) courts are effectively using technology to lower costs and improve customer service.”

Statement 2

“(State) courts are not effectively using technology to improve their own operations or how they interact with the people they serve.”

Don't Know

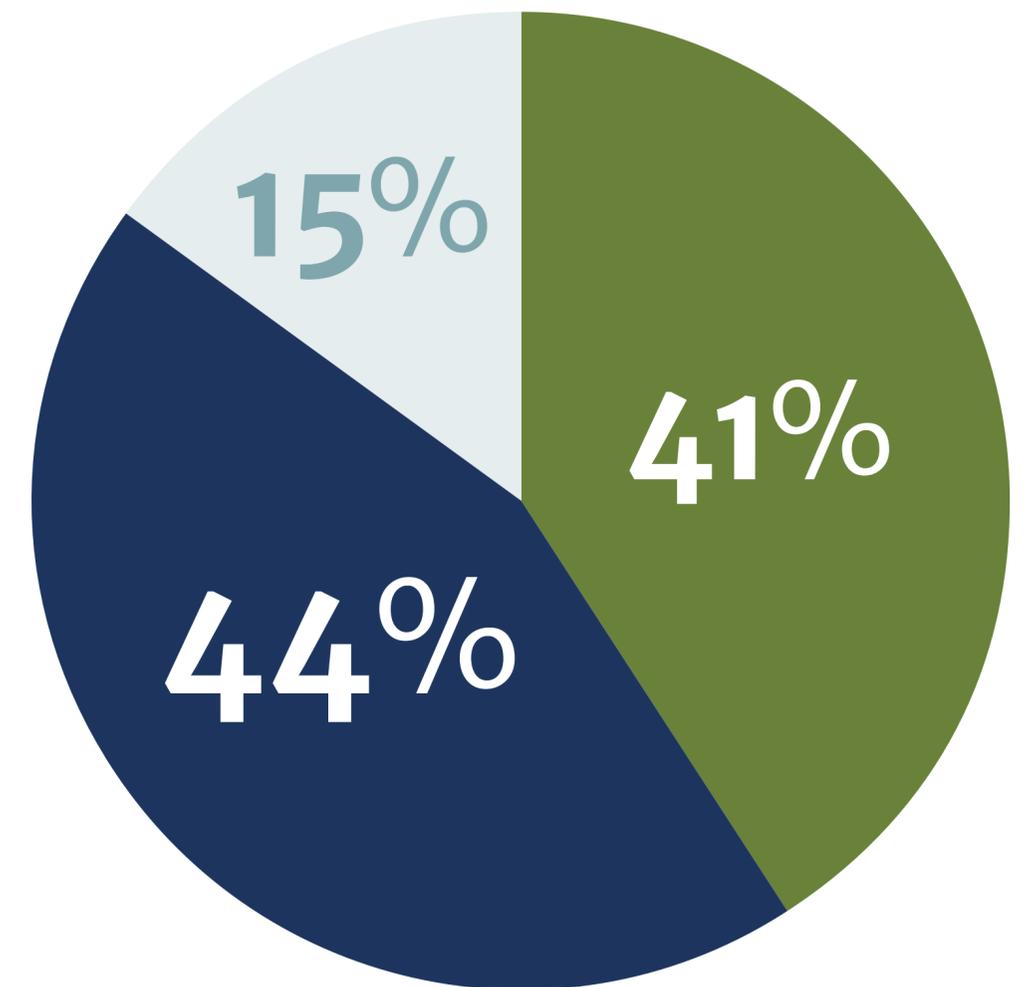
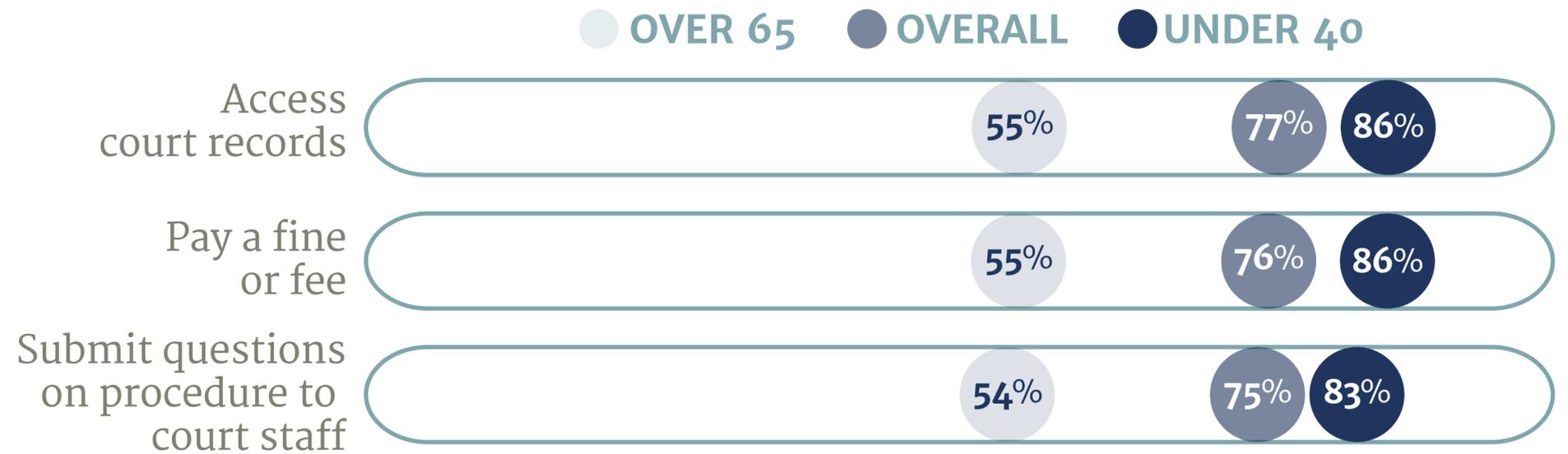


FIGURE 6

The public is willing to conduct court business online.

Q: “If you had business with the courts and this service was available online, how likely would you be to use it?”



percent saying they would definitely or probably use the service if available online.

FIGURE 7

Voters are wary that politics is undermining the impartiality of the system.

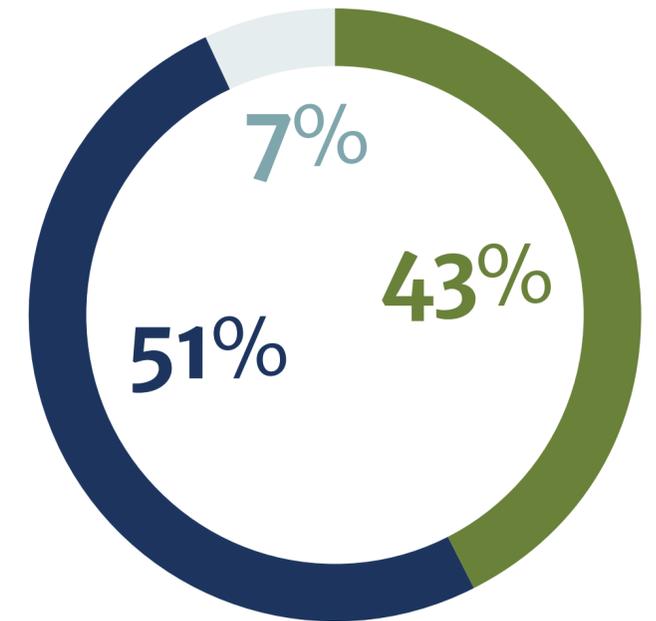
Statement 1

“Judges in (state) courts are selected based on their qualifications and experience.”

Statement 2

“Judges in (state) courts are there because of personal connections or political influence.”

Don't Know



Statement 1

“Judges in (state) courts make decisions based on an objective review of facts and the law.”

Statement 2

“Judges in (state) courts make decisions based more on their own beliefs and political pressure.”

Don't Know

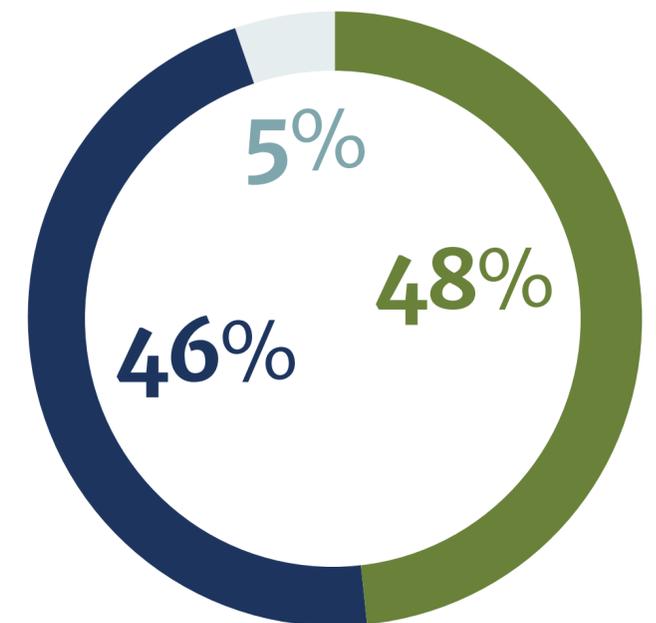


FIGURE 7, CONT'D

Voters are wary that politics is undermining the impartiality of the system.

In the nine states with contested partisan elections for state high courts, the 46 percent who agree with the “political pressure” statement rises to 51 percent.

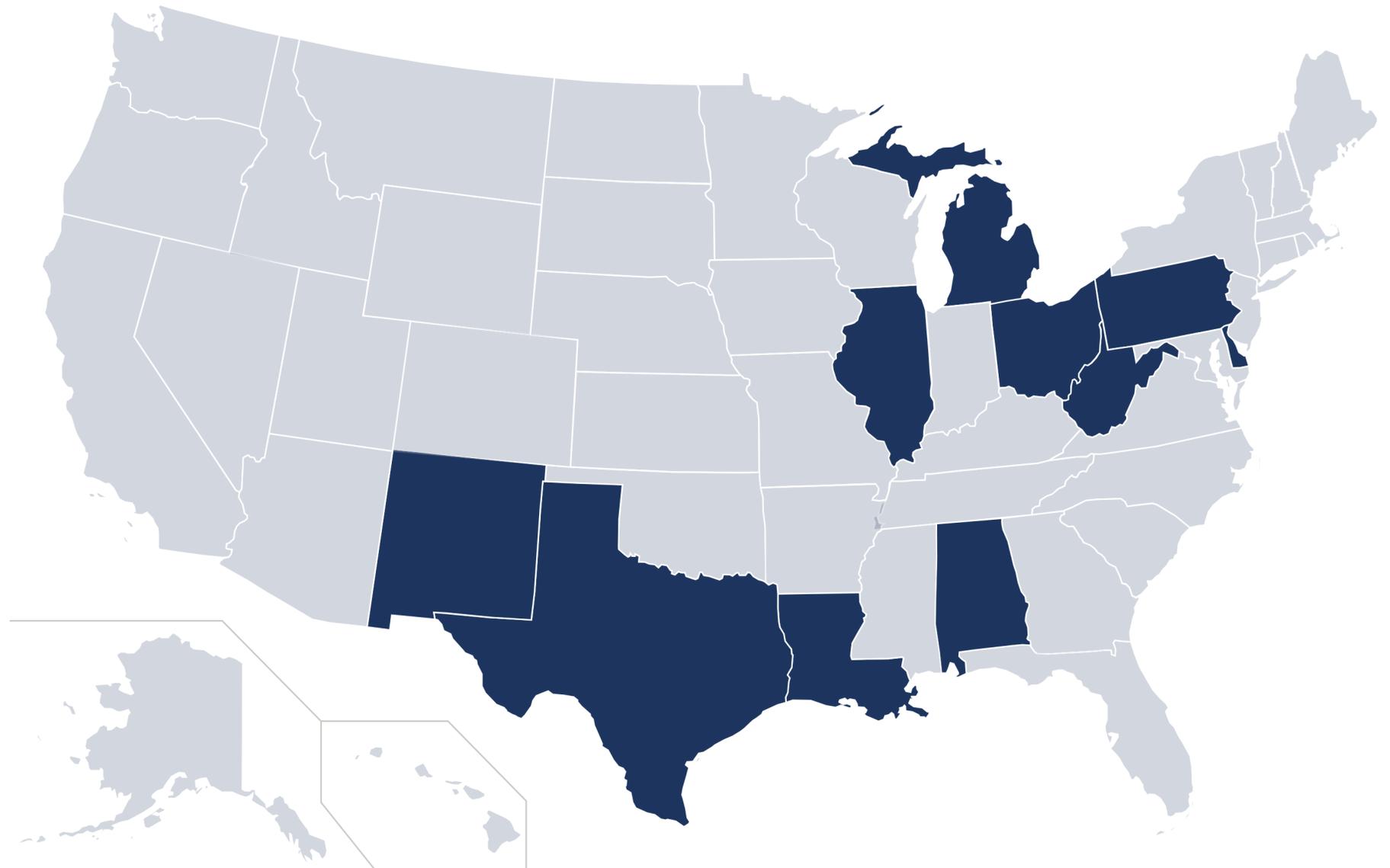
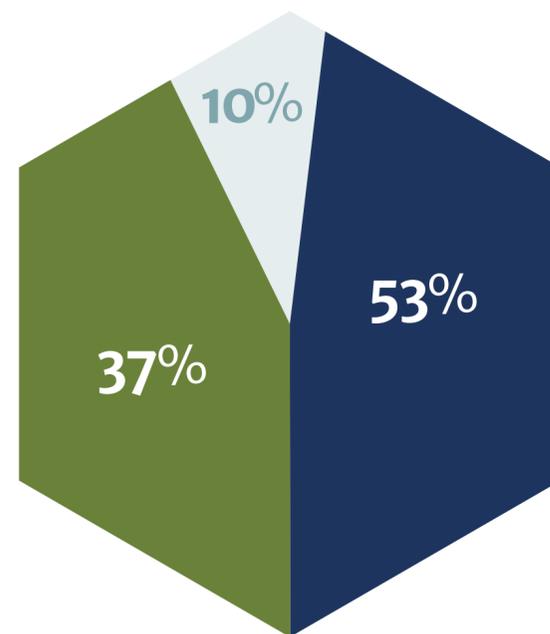


FIGURE 8

The public does not subscribe to the myth that judges are underworked...

Q: “How many hours each week do you think judges in (state) courts spend on duties directly related to their judicial responsibilities?”



- 40 or more hours/week
- < 40 hours/week
- Don't know

FIGURE 9

...But there is virtually no public support for a campaign on judicial salaries.

Q: “Do you believe judges in (state) courts are paid too much, *not enough*, or about the right amount?”

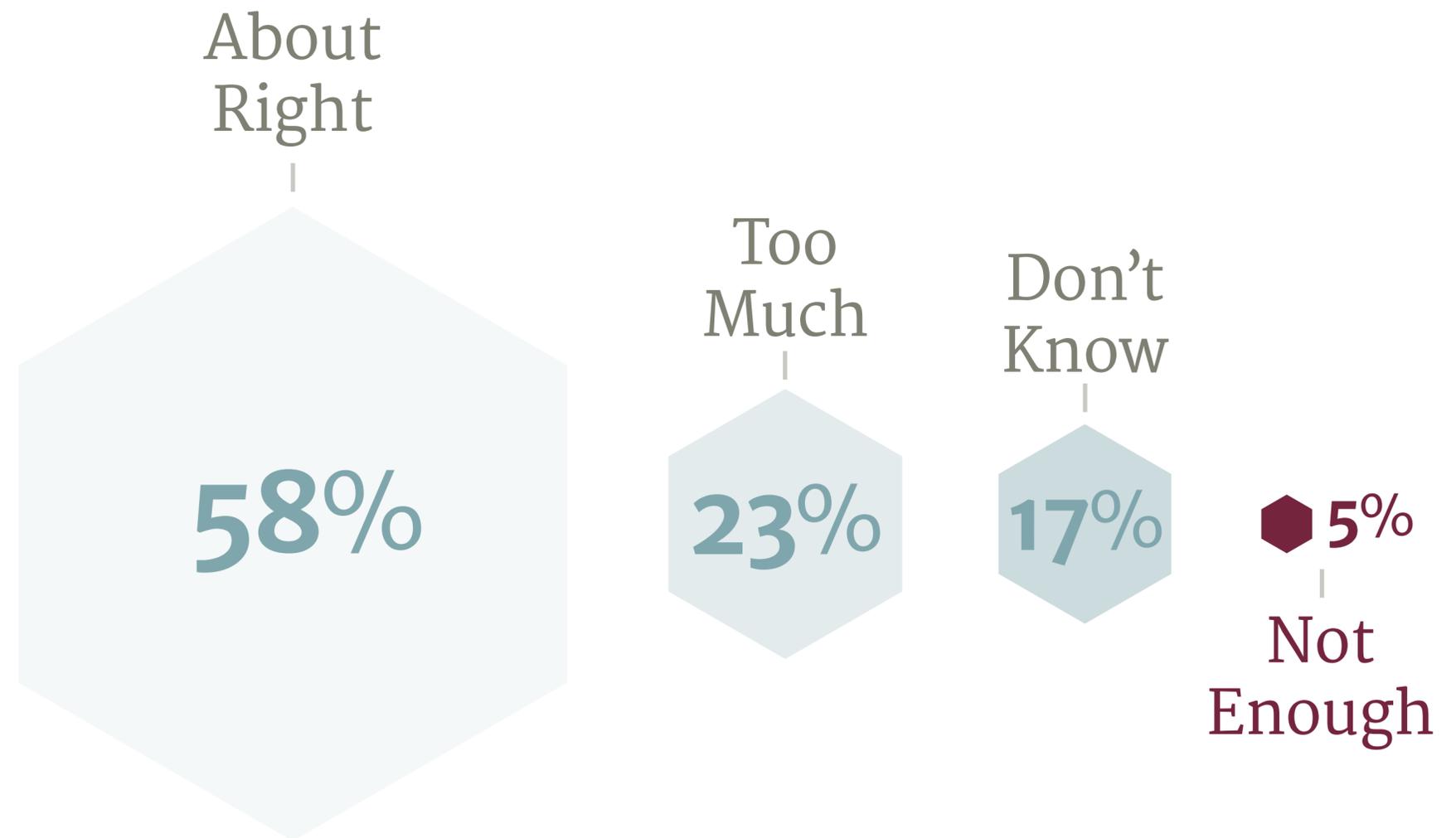
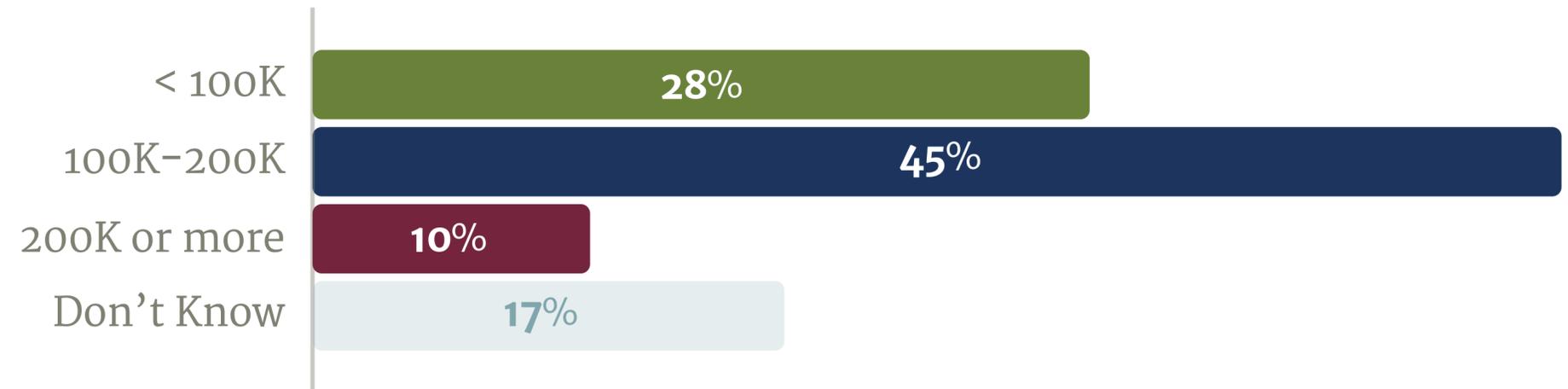


FIGURE 10

Voters have a reasonable understanding of how much state judges earn.

Q: “How much do you estimate judges in (state) courts are paid annually?”



11% of state supreme court judges earn more than \$200K per year
- NCSC Survey of Judicial Salaries

FIGURE 11

The cost of hiring an attorney is perceived as the greatest barrier to access to justice...

Q: “If you were considering taking a case to court, would this make you less likely to go to court?”

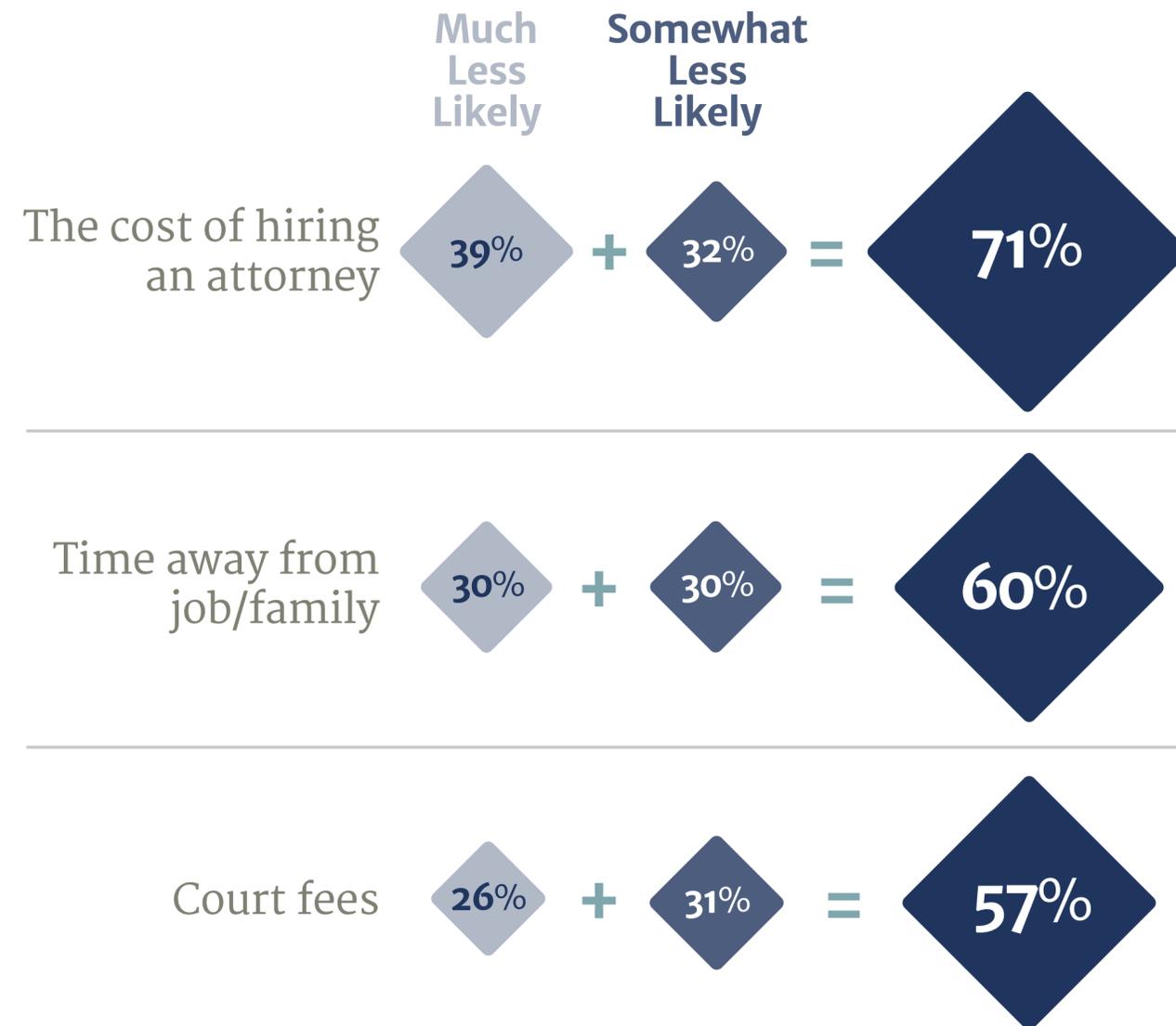


FIGURE 11, CONT'D

...and the courts are not seen as doing enough to help people navigate the system without a lawyer.

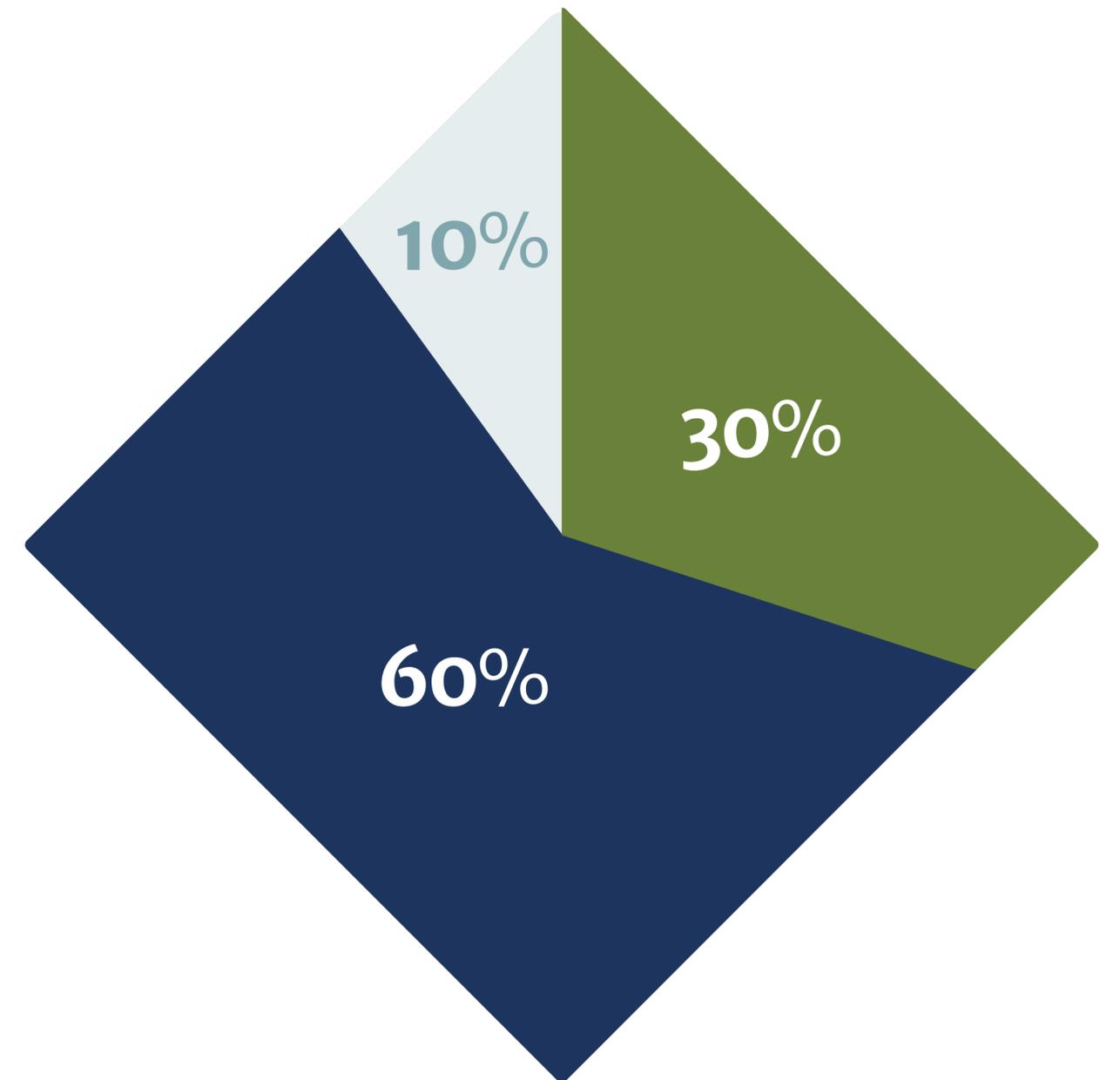
Statement 1

“(State) courts *are effectively* providing information for individuals without attorneys.”

Statement 2

“(State) courts are *not doing enough* for individuals without attorneys.”

Don't Know



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