



Communicating with Lawyers about Civil Legal Aid: Highlights of 2014 Research Among Lawyers

By Lake Research Partners and The Tarrance Group

AN UPDATE TO 2013 RESEARCH AMONG LIKELY VOTERS

Commissioned By:



For soliciting participation in the interview phase of the research, we are very grateful to Meredith McBurney and the following civil legal aid programs:

Bay Area Legal Aid (California)

Campaign for Equal Justice (Washington)

Chicago Bar Foundation and Prairie State Legal Services (Illinois)

Florida Legal Services

Legal Aid Foundation of Colorado

Legal Aid of Nebraska

New Mexico Legal Aid

North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission

Texas Access to Justice Foundation

Introduction

- **Goals**

- Assess current state of opinion about civil legal aid among lawyers as a follow-up to 2013 research among likely voters.
- Test strategic messaging among lawyers to assess if a different communications strategy is needed for lawyers than for likely voters, and specifically comparing the recommended 2-minute sound bite with a new direct appeal to lawyers to determine which is more effective with lawyers.
- Devise messaging strategy toward lawyers to increase funding for civil legal aid.

- **Process**

- One-on-one interviews with lawyers
- Nationwide online survey among lawyers

Research Methodology

- One-on-one interviews with lawyers
 - Conducted interviews with lawyers from the following groups (45 minutes in length).
 - ✓ Lawyers from solo or small size firms (1-10 attorneys) who personally donate to civil legal aid;
 - ✓ Lawyers from medium size firms (11-49 attorneys) who personally donate to civil legal aid;
 - ✓ Lawyers from medium size firms (11-49 attorneys) who do not personally donate to civil legal aid; and
 - ✓ Lawyers from large size firms (50 or more attorneys) who do not personally donate to civil legal aid.
- Online nationwide survey of lawyers
 - Conducted 20-minute online survey with 368 lawyers

Summary of Findings – Research with Likely Voters (2013)

- **What we know from the 2013 research with likely voters:**
 - There is little awareness of civil legal aid among likely voters. This is similar to the finding of the Belden Russonello & Stewart research in 2000.
 - Words that work:
 - ✓ Civil legal aid
 - ✓ Fairness
 - Important to connect with voters' values rather than describing exactly what civil legal aid is as a program.
 - Helpful to give examples of services provided such as easy to understand forms, self-help centers, and legal assistance or representation.
 - There are two potential attacks to worry about with voters: 1) the middle-class being left out while footing the bill and 2) the perception that the program is open to abuse by those who would needlessly take advantage of and over-burden it.

Summary of Findings – Research with Lawyers (2014)

- **What we learned from the 2014 research with lawyers:**
 - Lawyers are more likely than voters to support increasing government funding for civil legal aid.
 - Current and previous donors and volunteers are very passionate about civil legal aid. The broadening of the definition and new messaging strategy will not deter them from being involved.
 - Words that work:
 - ✓ Access and Fairness
 - ✓ Professional responsibility or duty as an attorney
 - A direct appeal, worded specifically for lawyers, is slightly more successful than the overall messaging strategy to voters. However, both the “2-minute sound bite” and “direct appeal” produce sizeable margins of support over opposition to increasing government funding for civil legal aid. The “2-minute sound bite” may prove more successful in retaining those who currently or previously were volunteers or donors while the “direct appeal” may entice new donors or participation in programs.

9 Second Sound Bite

What to Highlight

**Our
Program Is
Civil Legal
Aid**

**We Assure
Fairness for all
in the Justice
System**

**Civil Legal Aid assures
fairness for all in the
justice system,
regardless of how
much money you have.**

The 2-Minute Sound Bite:

builds on the 9-second sound bite with additional information on services provided

What to Highlight

**Our Program Is
Civil Legal Aid**

**We Assure Fairness
for All in the Justice
System, Not the Few
Who Can Afford It**

**Our Services
Increase Ease of
Access to Information
and Assistance to
Know Your Rights**

Civil legal aid assures fairness for all in the justice system, regardless of how much money you have. It provides access to legal help for people to protect their livelihoods, their health, and their families. Civil legal aid makes it easier to access information—whether through easy-to-understand forms, including online forms; legal assistance or representation; and legal self-help centers—so people can know their rights. Civil legal aid also helps streamline the court system and cuts down on court costs. When we say the Pledge of Allegiance we close with “justice for all.” We need programs like civil legal aid to ensure that the very principle our founding fathers envisioned remains alive: justice for all, not the few who can afford it.

The Direct Appeal: *new message directed specifically to lawyers*

What to Highlight

Speak directly
to lawyers

Talk about
professional
responsibility to
increase access to
justice

Funding is at
critically low levels
to meet demand

As lawyers, we know first-hand the value and necessity of quality legal representation. We see victims of domestic violence, abused children, and families losing their homes all too frequently because they cannot afford a lawyer. We have a professional responsibility to help others in our community gain access to the justice system to protect their rights, their freedom, their homes, their livelihoods, and their families. Legal needs studies have consistently found that less than 20 percent of low-income people get the legal assistance they need, and funding per eligible person has dropped drastically in recent years. This is too much of a crisis for lawyers like us to not get involved. Supporting civil legal aid is a way to work for justice and access for all.

A LOOK INTO THE RESEARCH

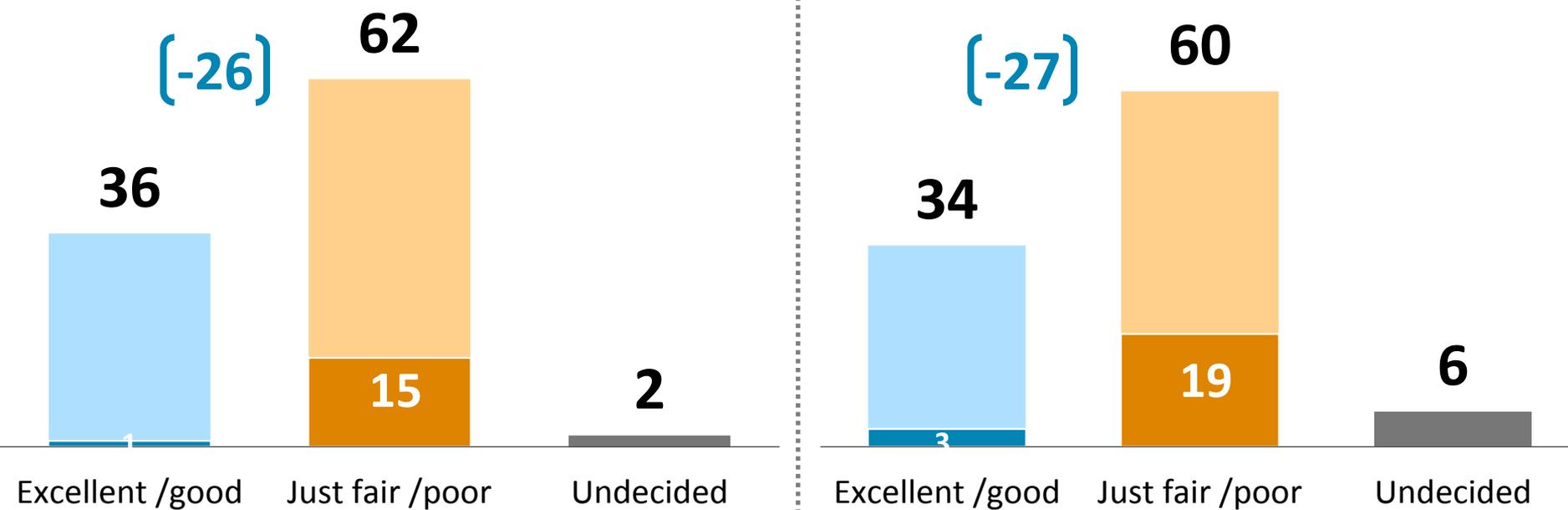


Among both lawyers and likely voters, there is equal discontent with the job the civil justice system is doing.

Rate the Job the Civil Justice System is Doing

Among LAWYERS

Among VOTERS



**Darker colors indicate intensity*

How would you rate the job the civil justice system is doing? Is it doing an excellent, good, just fair, or poor job?

Lawyers believe civil legal representation is important but often difficult to access. Lawyers show even more awareness of access problems than voters. Lawyers share the view of voters that the middle class as well as the poor have problems.

81%
Of
Lawyers

Believe it is important to ensure everyone has access to legal help or legal representation for civil legal matters

82%
Of
Voters

71% of Lawyers
Believe the
POOR
have a difficult time
obtaining legal help or
representation

60% Among VOTERS

55% of Lawyers
Believe the
MIDDLE CLASS
have a difficult time
obtaining legal help or
representation

43% Among VOTERS

While civil legal aid is unknown to more than one-third of voters, lawyers are nearly universally familiar with the term and have solidly positive impressions.

75%
Of
Lawyers

have a favorable opinion of
civil legal aid

57%
Of
Voters

“...in terms of the quality of the services...*I have always been impressed* and continue to be impressed by that.” – woman; large firm, non-donor

“Impressions are that it’s *worthwhile and necessary.*”
– man; medium firm, donor

“I think it does a *crucial job.*”
– woman; small firm, donor

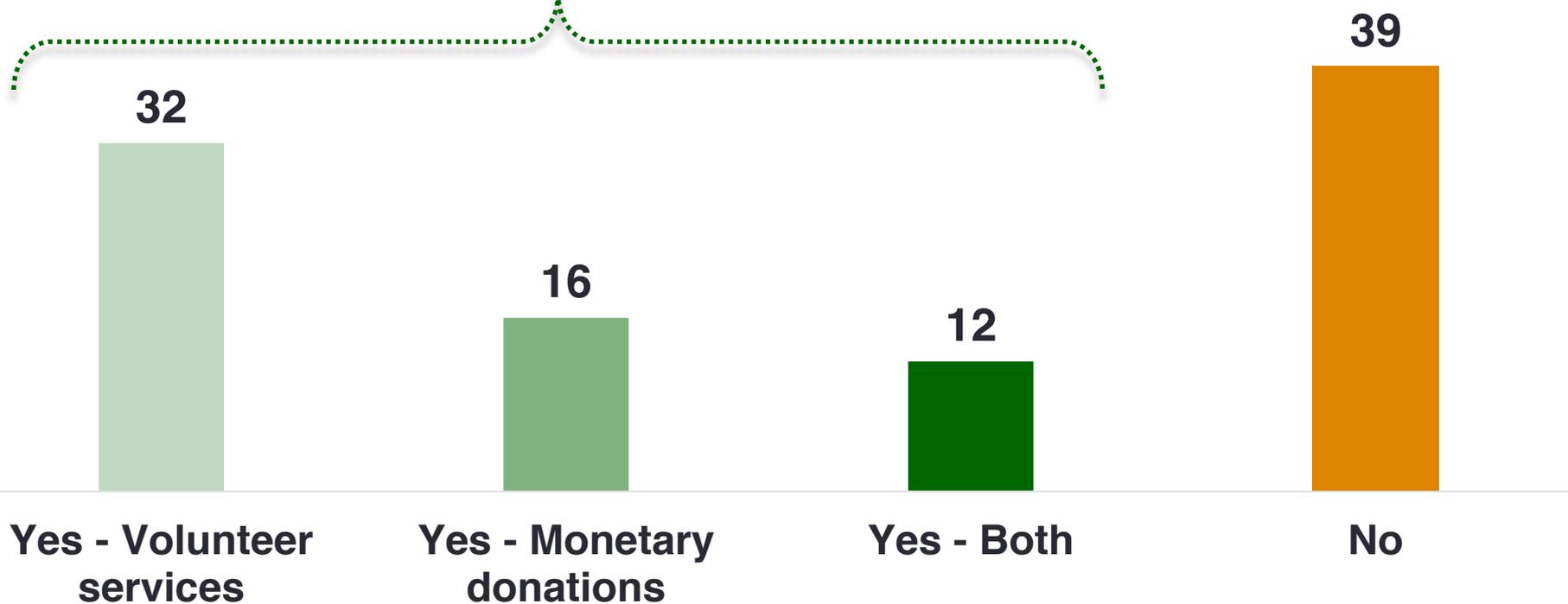
36%

of VOTERS have *never heard of or cannot give an opinion* of civil legal aid (2013 research)

A majority of lawyers indicate a previous or current involvement with civil legal aid. By a margin of two to one, they are more likely to volunteer their services than to give monetary donations to civil legal aid organizations.

Current or Previous Involvement with Civil Legal Aid

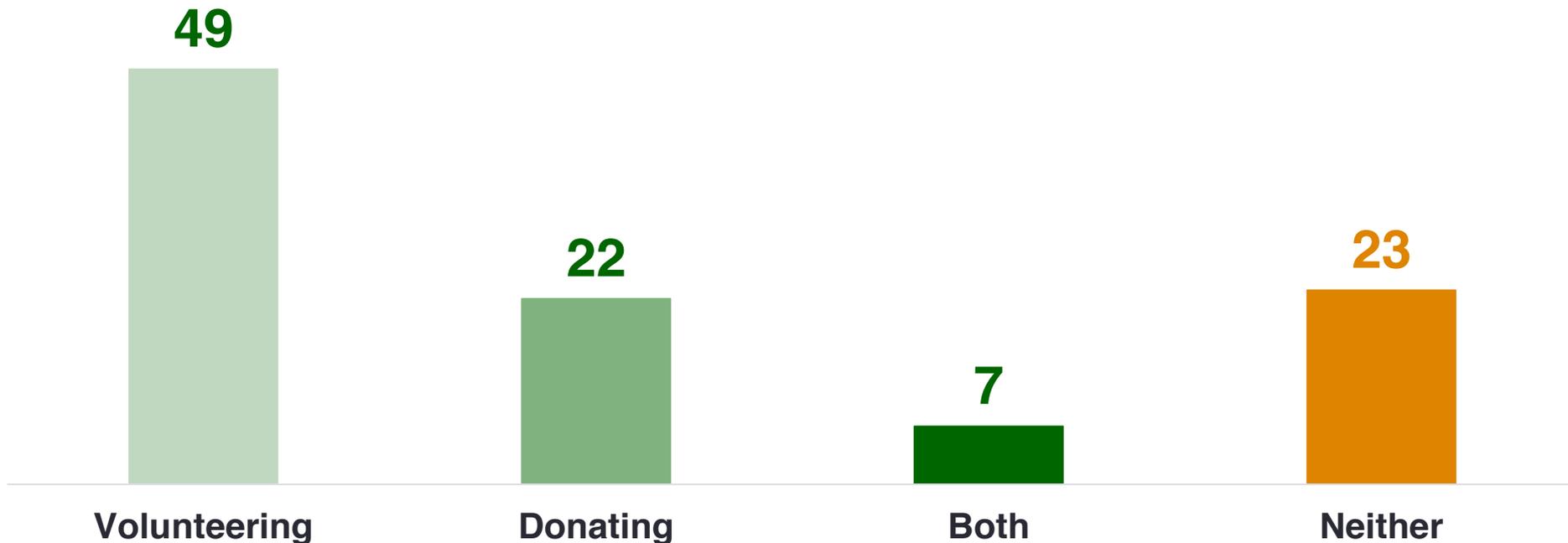
59% of lawyers indicate involvement with civil legal aid



Do you currently or have you previously volunteered your services or donated money to a civil legal aid organization?

When asked specifically if they have interest in donating or volunteering, lawyers express a strong preference to volunteer their services rather than donate. However, one-quarter of lawyers do not want to participate.

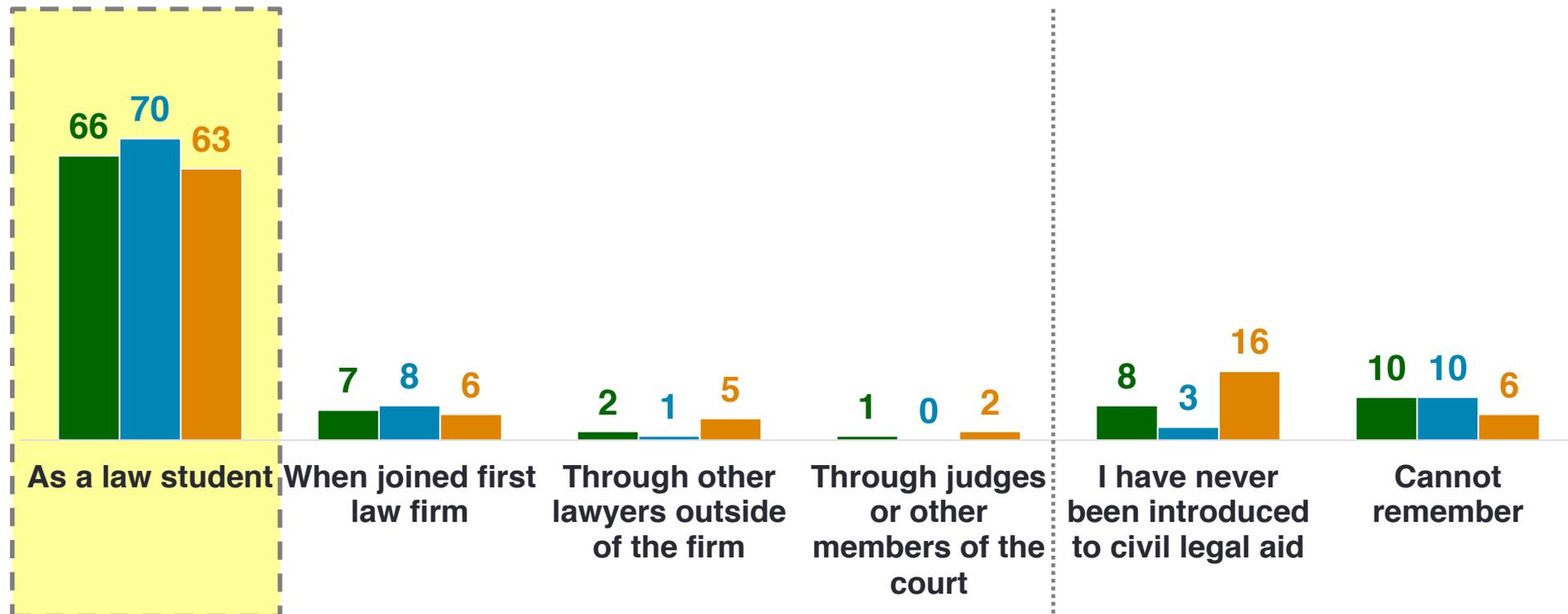
Do you have more interest in donating to civil legal aid programs or volunteering your services?



Lawyers are most likely to be introduced to civil legal aid during law school. However, reaching them early does not necessarily correlate with consistent volunteering or donating.

Introduction to Civil Legal Aid

■ All Lawyers ■ Volunteer/Donor ■ Non-Volunteer/Donor



When did you first get introduced to the idea of civil legal aid?

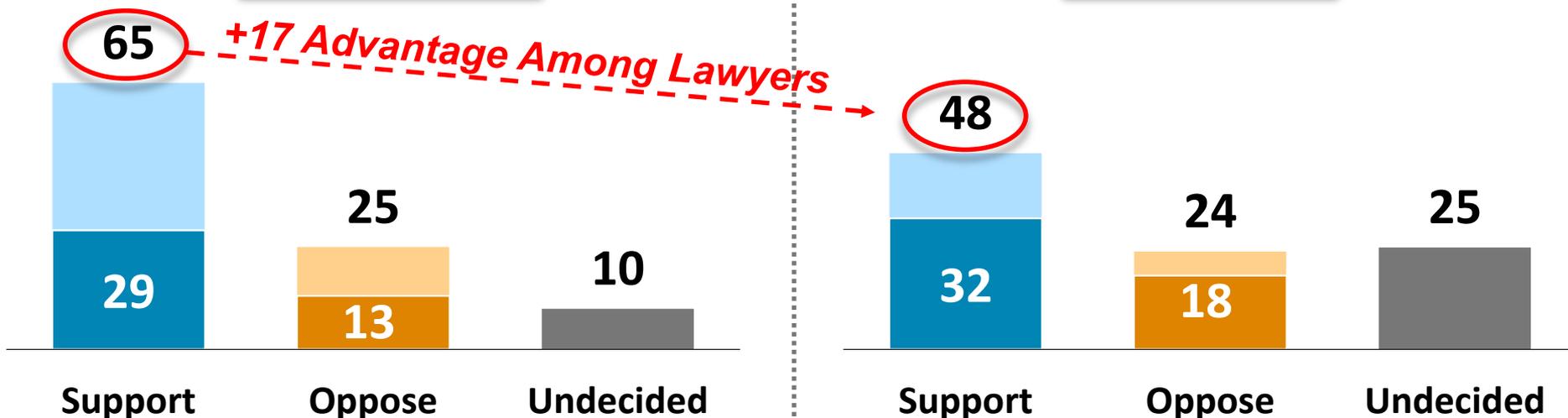
Lawyers tend to be supportive of increasing government funding for civil legal aid. They show more initial support than voters. Additionally, intensity in support outweighs all opposition among lawyers.

Initial Support for Increasing Government Funding for Civil Legal Aid

As it currently stands, the organizations that provide civil legal help and representation to those who cannot afford it are funded by both public and private sources. Public funding comes from federal, state and local governments. Private support comes from charitable donations and foundation grants as well as from the volunteer services of private lawyers, law students and others. However, funding for civil legal aid meets only 20% of the demand.

Among LAWYERS

Among VOTERS



**Darker colors indicate intensity*

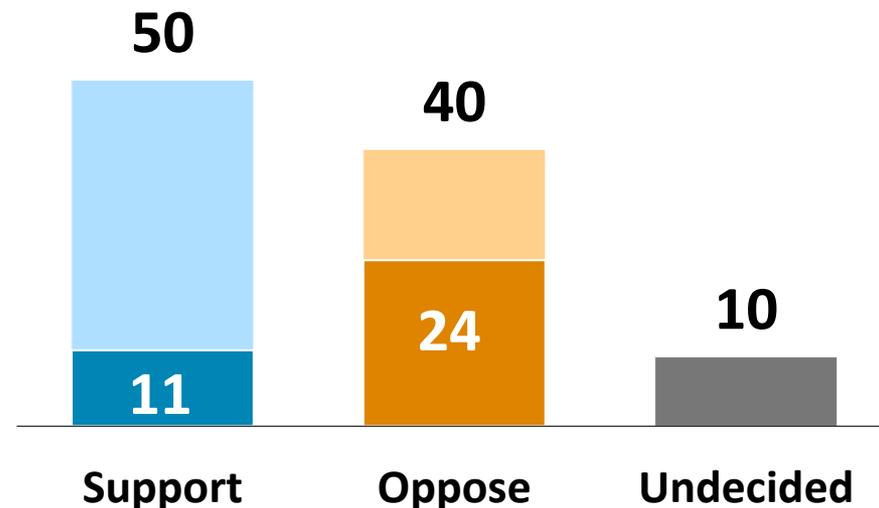
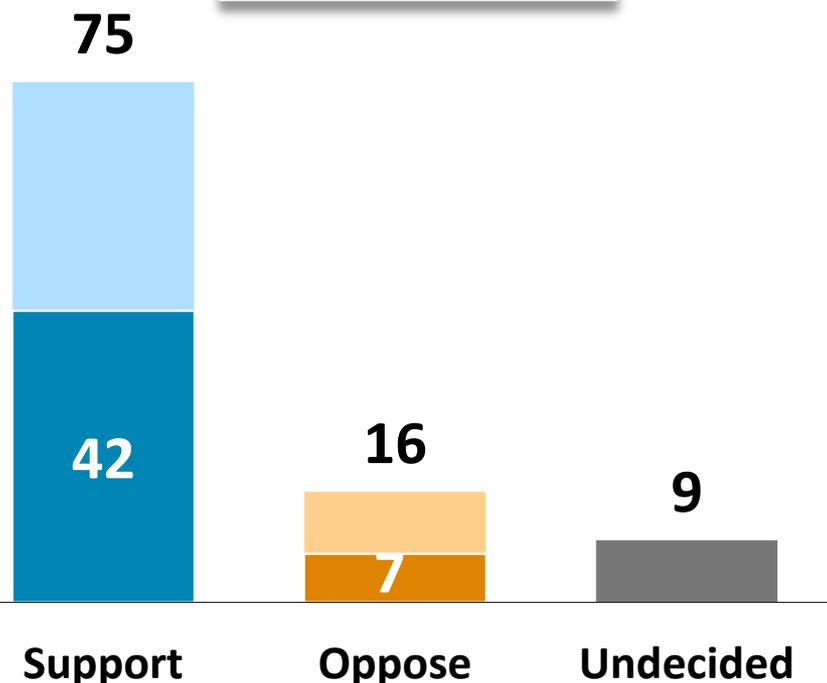
Would you support or oppose increasing government funding for this program, or are you undecided? [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE] And do you feel that way strongly, or not-so strongly?

When it comes to increasing government funding for civil legal aid, the views of lawyers who are not involved with civil legal aid track those of voters. Lawyers who have participated as donors or volunteers overwhelmingly support an increase in funding.

Initial Support for Increasing Government Funding for Civil Legal Aid

Among LAWYERS –
Volunteers/Donors

Among LAWYERS –
Non-Volunteers/Donors

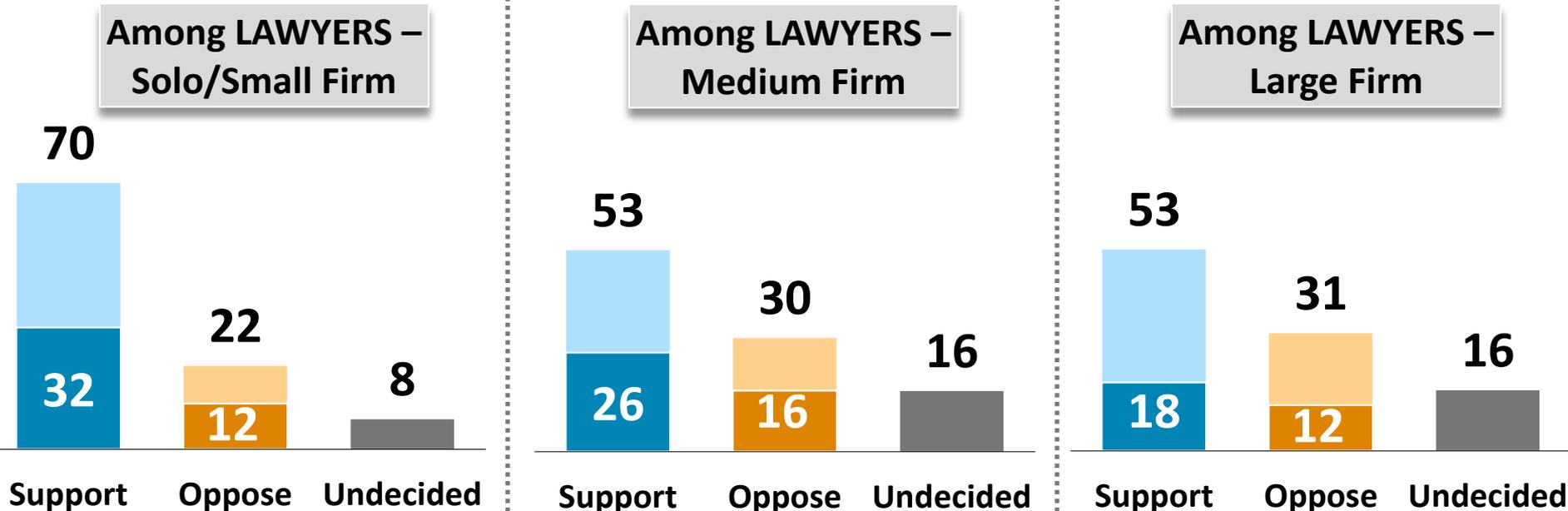


**Darker colors indicate intensity*

Would you support or oppose increasing government funding for this program, or are you undecided? [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE] And do you feel that way strongly, or not-so strongly?

Lawyers in solo or small firms tend to support increasing funding for civil legal aid more than lawyers in medium or large size firms. This is not surprising as most donors come from smaller firms. Support is strongest in the Northeast while further efforts are needed to boost opinions in the Midwest.

Initial Support for Increasing Government Funding for Civil Legal Aid



Support is strongest in the Northeast (73% Support, 14% Oppose), followed by the South (67% Support, 27% Oppose), and West (65% Support, 22% Oppose). Opposition is strongest in the Midwest (48% Support, 42% Oppose)

**Darker colors indicate intensity*

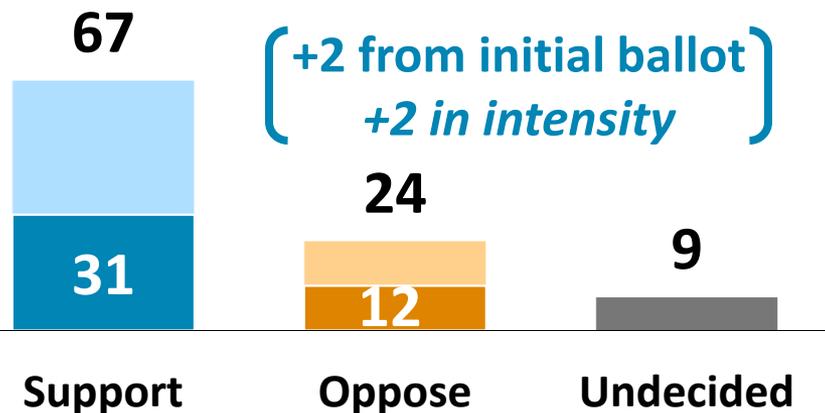
Would you support or oppose increasing government funding for this program, or are you undecided? [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE] And do you feel that way strongly, or not-so strongly?

Far from deterring lawyers, the new definition of civil legal aid is well-received, especially by those who previously or currently volunteer or donate. In fact, it increases support and intensity from already robust initial levels.

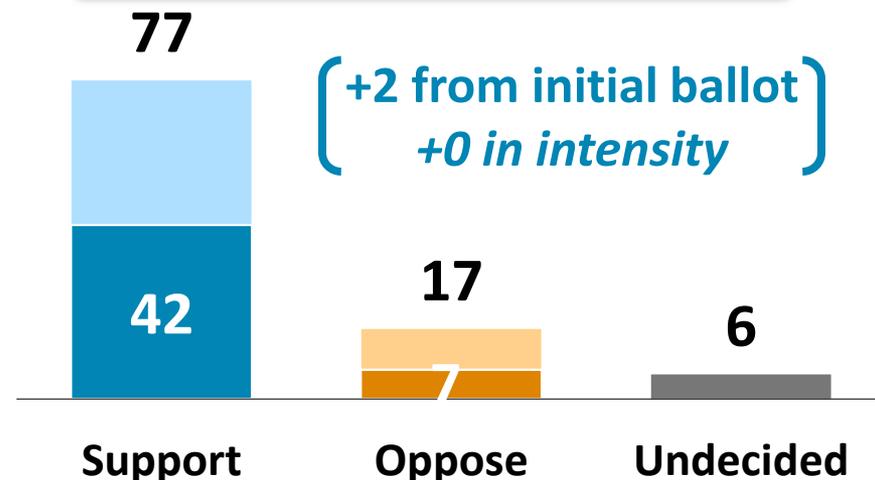
Support for Increasing Government Funding for Civil Legal Aid WITH NEW DEFINITION

Civil legal aid is a combination of services and resources that help Americans of all backgrounds – but primarily the poor and disadvantaged – to effectively navigate the justice system. Civil legal aid provides people with a range of services – including legal assistance and representation; self-help centers and other court-based services; free legal clinics and pro bono assistance; and access to web-based information and forms – that help guide them through complicated legal proceedings to protect their livelihoods, their health, and their families.

Among LAWYERS



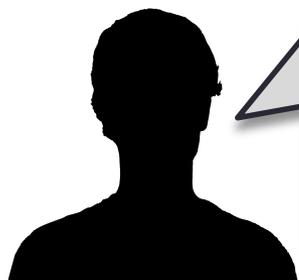
Among VOLUNTEERS and DONORS



*Darker colors indicate intensity

Would you support or oppose increasing government funding for this program, or are you undecided? [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE] And do you feel that way strongly, or not-so strongly?

During the one-on-one interviews, lawyers were very receptive to the new definition. They liked the broader nature, including highlighting the wide range of services instead of just providing legal representation. Positive responses crossed both donors and non-donors with the latter expressing new interest in the program.



*"I think that's **very thorough** and a very good explanation...I think lawyers even here locally in the community where people are pretty aware of Legal Aid, I **don't think that they understand the full range of services** that the staff attorneys of Legal Aid and the volunteer lawyers are working on."* – man; solo/small firm, donor

*"I think it was a pretty good statement. **I think that covers about 90 to 99% - 95 to 99% - of what civil legal is or should be.**"* – woman; large firm, non-donor

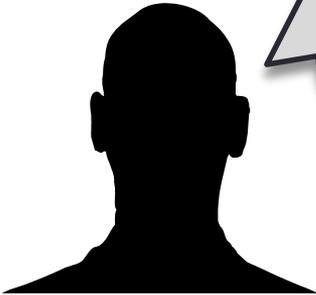


*"You know **I don't think most people think about that stuff as part of what legal aid is and that's what we do** and that's what I like about that definition or that statement. It was broad."* – man; medium firm, donor

There is a mixed response from lawyers toward self-help centers and other innovations—a key difference between the legal community and voters. Self-help centers and innovations were well-received among voters.



*“My only concern would be...self-help and forms and that kind of stuff that **sounds to me like somebody is practicing law** and giving people ideas of what to do and then when the person goes and does it they are going to come back and say well that’s malpractice because you didn’t tell me X, Y, and Z.”*
– woman; solo/small firm, donor



*“...**On the Internet, I have seen so many messes created by the use of these forms** because there are certain **very simple things that trained attorneys understand** but that people who simply read the forms don’t understand.”* – man; medium firm, non-donor

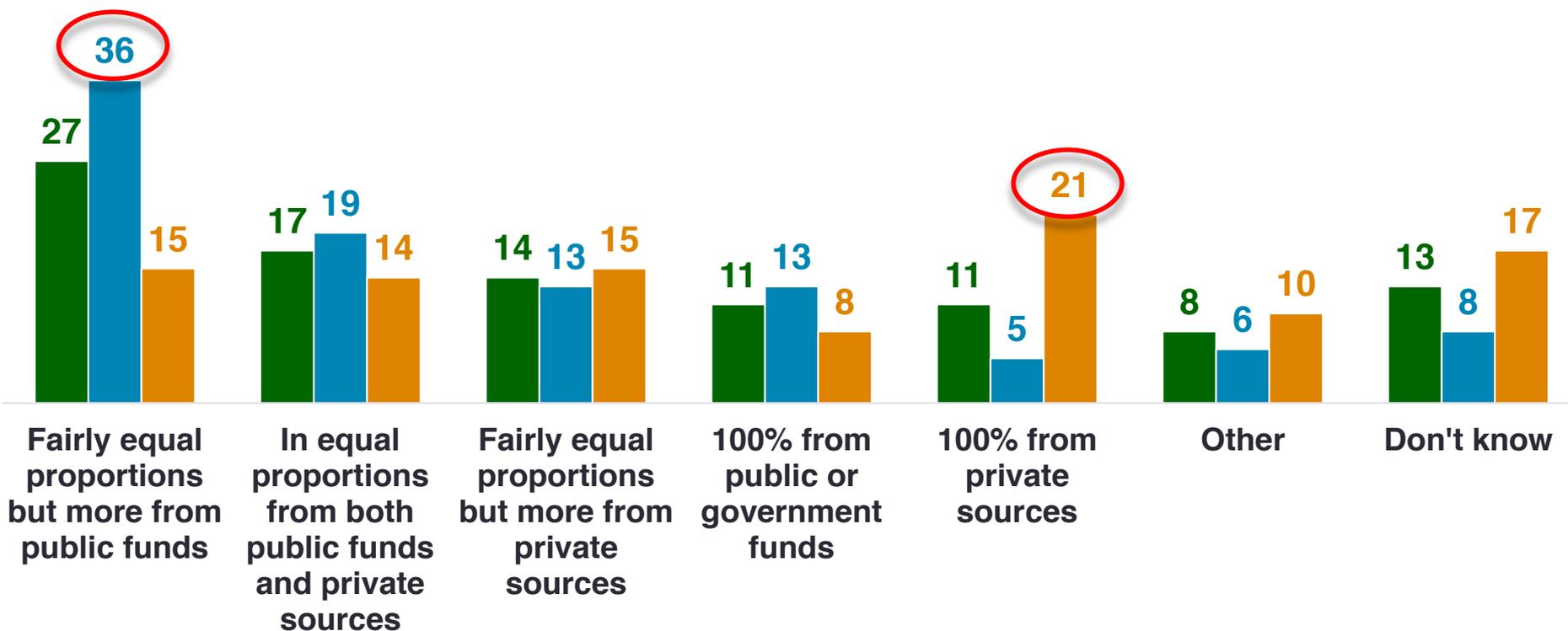


*“Web-based services are great, but there is a whole generation out there still that doesn’t get it in terms of web. **You know they don’t use computers.**”* – man; medium firm, donor

There is no consensus among lawyers about how civil legal aid should be funded. As between public and private sources, previous and current volunteers and donors prefer fairly equal proportions but more from public funds, while those who are not involved prefer funding solely from private sources. The latter group tends to be more conscious of government spending and potential increases in their taxes as reasons to move away from public funding.

How Should Civil Legal Aid Be Funded?

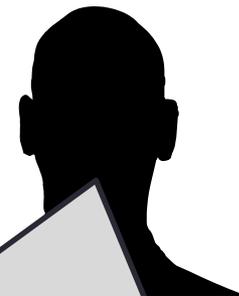
■ All Lawyers ■ Volunteer/Donor ■ Non-Volunteer/Donor



Donors and non-donors alike have divided opinions about where funding should come from.



*"I am not a big government funding guy. I think it should **go through private donations.**"* – man; large firm, non-donor



*"So I think that civil legal aid groups, **while I would prefer to see them funded a bit more by government,** they need to look to a variety of sources because that **diversification is probably the only thing that will save them** in the bad times."* – man; solo/small firm, donor

*"Our **state legislature** needs to put money there...period." – woman; solo/small firm, donor*

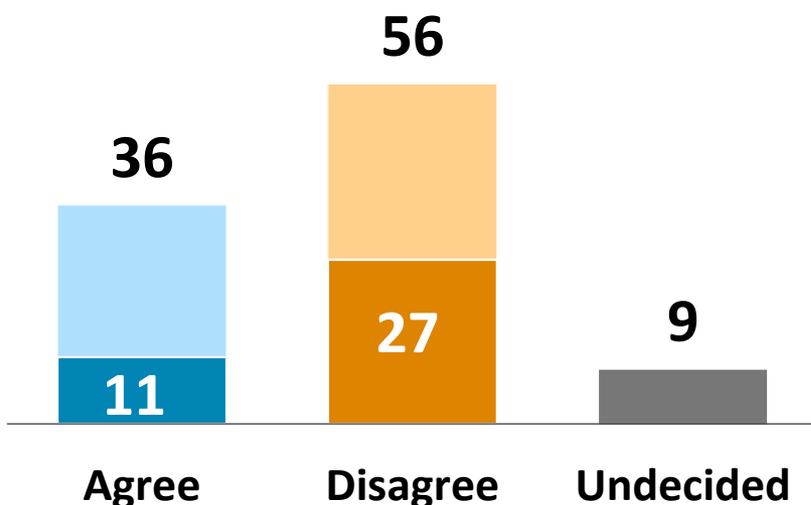


*"...when the federal government said they were cutting back...that's not necessarily a bad thing...I **like communities taking care of communities**...They may give them some funds, but if every community at least had some guidance on how to do it and how to do the fundraising, then I think that's more effective. **It seems like when you get federal money that there's a lot of waste.**"* – man; medium firm, donor



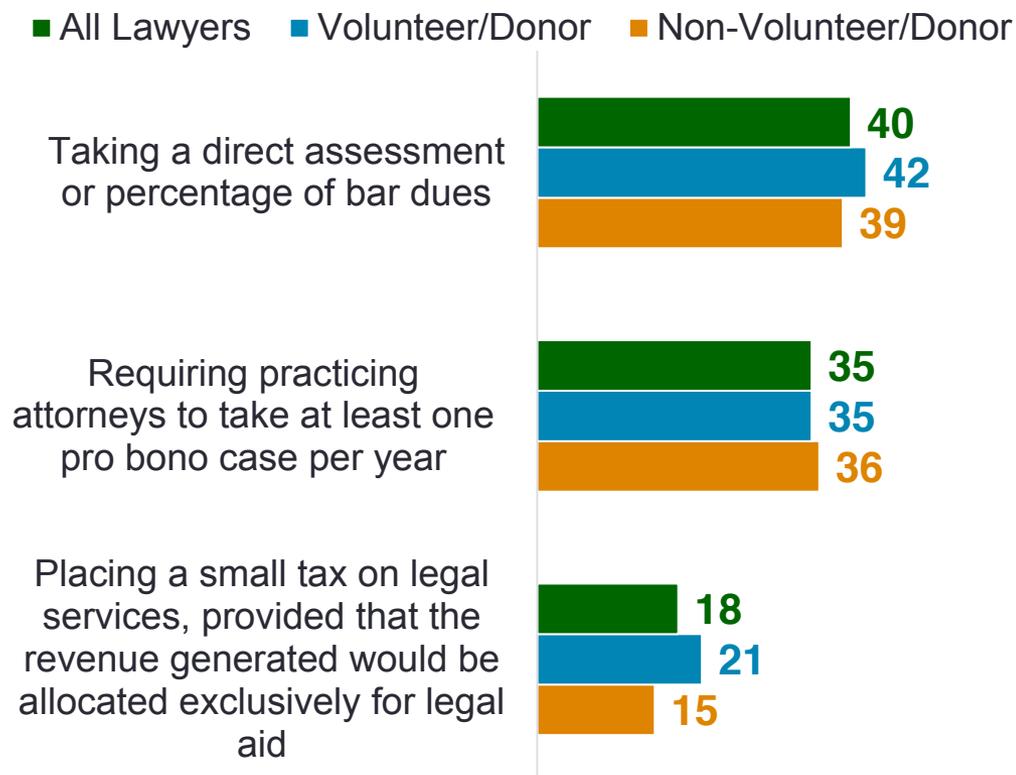
Lawyers show minimal interest in bearing more of the cost of civil legal aid. Taking a direct assessment or percentage of bar dues is the most popular option tested, although support is lukewarm.

Legal Community Bear More of the Cost of Civil Legal Aid



Vols + Donors – 39% Agree
Non-Vols + Donors – 32% Agree

Potential Ways to Increase Funding



**Darker colors indicate intensity*

Do you agree or disagree that the legal community should bear more of the cost of civil legal aid than it currently does? [IF AGREE/DISAGREE] And do you feel that way strongly, or not-so strongly?

Some have suggested that the legal community should bear more of the cost of civil legal aid. Please rate the following, on a scale from 0-10, where 10 means STRONGLY SUPPORT, 0 means STRONGLY OPPOSE, and you can be anywhere in between with 5 meaning you are unsure, as a means to increasing funding for civil legal aid.

Lawyers are more likely to listen to other lawyers who volunteer for legal aid or have experience doing pro bono work, or people who have benefited from legal aid. These groups are strong validators for civil legal aid programs and can help grow the donor base. Those who are not involved are less persuaded by people who have used civil legal aid.

Potential Validators for Civil Legal Aid Programs

Among ALL LAWYERS

1

Lawyers who volunteer for legal aid (46%)

2

Lawyers who provide pro bono services outside of legal aid (38%)

3

People who have used civil legal aid (38%)

Among VOLUNTEERS and DONORS

1

Lawyers who volunteer for legal aid (53%)

2

People who have used civil legal aid (48%)

3

Lawyers employed by legal aid (44%)

Among NON-VOLUNTEERS and NON-DONORS

1

Lawyers who provide pro bono services outside of legal aid (35%)

2

Lawyers who volunteer for legal aid (34%)

3

Friends who are lawyers (28%)

(People who have used civil legal aid 23%)

Tapping into lawyers' sense of their professional responsibility and their ability to increase access to the civil justice system will be key to expanding the donor base. These are the most compelling reasons to get involved. Additionally, a direct appeal can be especially powerful in reaching out to new donors.

What is the most compelling reason for YOU to either donate or volunteer your services to civil legal aid programs?

*“Because **I believe access is denied to too many people** because they either can't afford it or don't know how to get it; **and as an attorney, I have a responsibility to do something.**”* – open end response from lawyer, donor

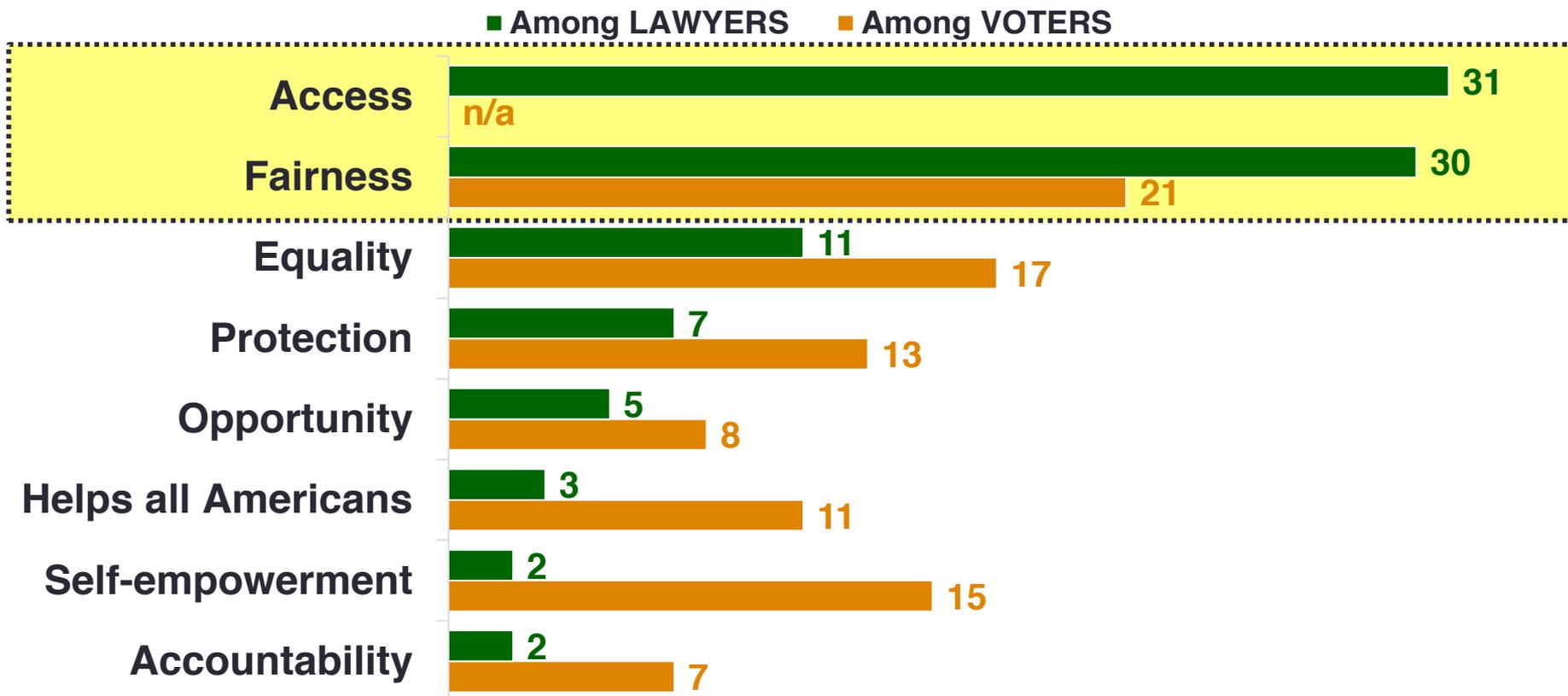
*“To give back to the community. Believe that you have an **ethical obligation** as an attorney.”* – open end response from lawyer, volunteer

*“I feel an **obligation as an attorney** to increase access to justice in the legal system. I cannot afford to donate money, but I can afford to donate some time.”* – open end response from lawyer, volunteer

*“**Equal opportunity to justice for all.** I've seen too many ridiculously confused people in court trying to navigate the legal system on their own because they can't afford a lawyer. The court can only help so much while still staying neutral. **Lawyers need to step up and volunteer.**”* – open end response from lawyer, does not donate or volunteer

Access and fairness are the two key values associated with civil legal aid among lawyers and voters alike. Values-based messaging works best with promoting ideas to lawyers as well as voters.

Value Most Associated with Civil Legal Aid



After reading all of this information about civil legal aid, what do you most associate with the program? Please pick one option.

The previous research among voters led to the development of the “2-minute sound bite” message. It incorporates the most effective language in gathering support for increasing funding for civil legal aid. In the most recent phase of this study, we wanted to assess whether a direct appeal to lawyers would be more effective—in strengthening levels of engagement among existing donors and in generating interest among prospective donors and volunteers.

CURRENT MESSAGING STRATEGY TOWARD VOTERS – 2-MINUTE SOUND BITE

Civil legal aid assures fairness for all in the justice system, regardless of how much money you have. It provides access to legal help for people to protect their livelihoods, their health, and their families. Civil legal aid provides access to information—whether through easy-to-understand forms, including online forms; legal assistance or representation; and legal self-help centers—so people can know their rights. Civil legal aid also helps streamline the court system and cuts down on court costs. When we say the Pledge of Allegiance we close with “justice for all.” We need programs like civil legal aid to ensure that the very principle our founding fathers envisioned remains alive: justice for all, not the few who can afford it.

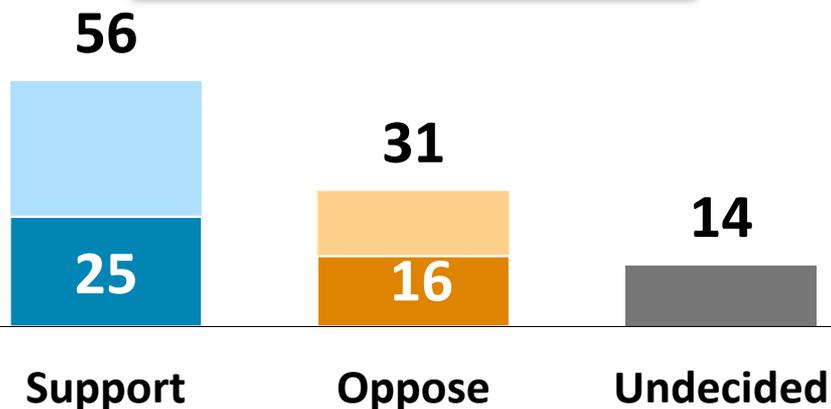
POTENTIAL NEW MESSAGING STRATEGY TOWARD LAWYERS – DIRECT APPEAL

As lawyers, we know first-hand the value and necessity of quality legal representation. We see victims of domestic violence, abused children, and families losing their homes all too frequently because they cannot afford a lawyer. We have a professional responsibility to help others in our community gain access to the justice system to protect their rights, their freedom, their homes, their livelihoods, and their families. Legal needs studies have consistently found that only 20% of the people who qualify for services are able to obtain it due to lack of resources, and funding per eligible person has dropped by almost 60% in recent years. This is too much of a crisis for lawyers like us to not get involved. Supporting civil legal aid is a way to work for justice and access for all.

Both messages work well when it comes to maintaining majority support for increased funding and limiting the reach of the opponents' argument. The direct appeal is slightly more effective overall, largely due to the superiority of that approach among non-volunteers and non-donors—suggesting the utility of a direct appeal message strategy in donor prospecting. However, the 2-minute sound bite is the more effective approach in communicating with previous or current volunteers and donors—and voters.

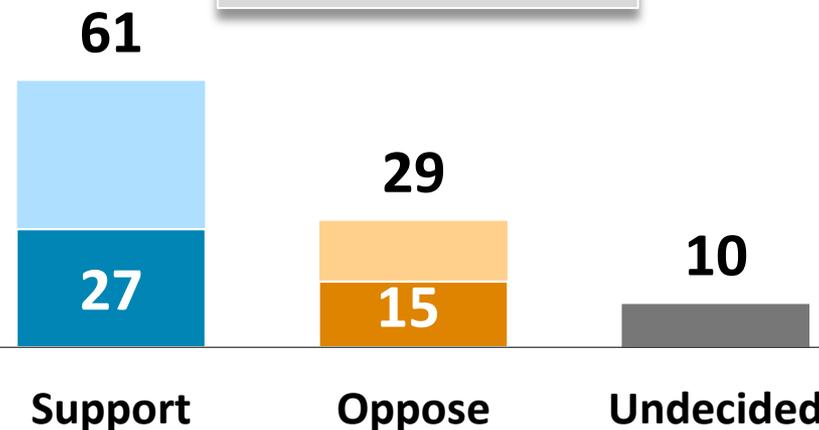
Support for Increasing Government Funding for Civil Legal Aid – AFTER HEARING ARGUMENTS FROM BOTH SIDES

Among LAWYERS –
Heard 2-Minute Sound Bite



Vols/Donors – 74% Support, 18% Oppose
Non-Vols/Donors – 35% Support, 49% Oppose

Among LAWYERS –
Heard Direct Appeal



Vols/Donors – 67% Support, 21% Oppose
Non-Vols/Donors – 47% Support, 44% Oppose

**Darker colors indicate intensity*

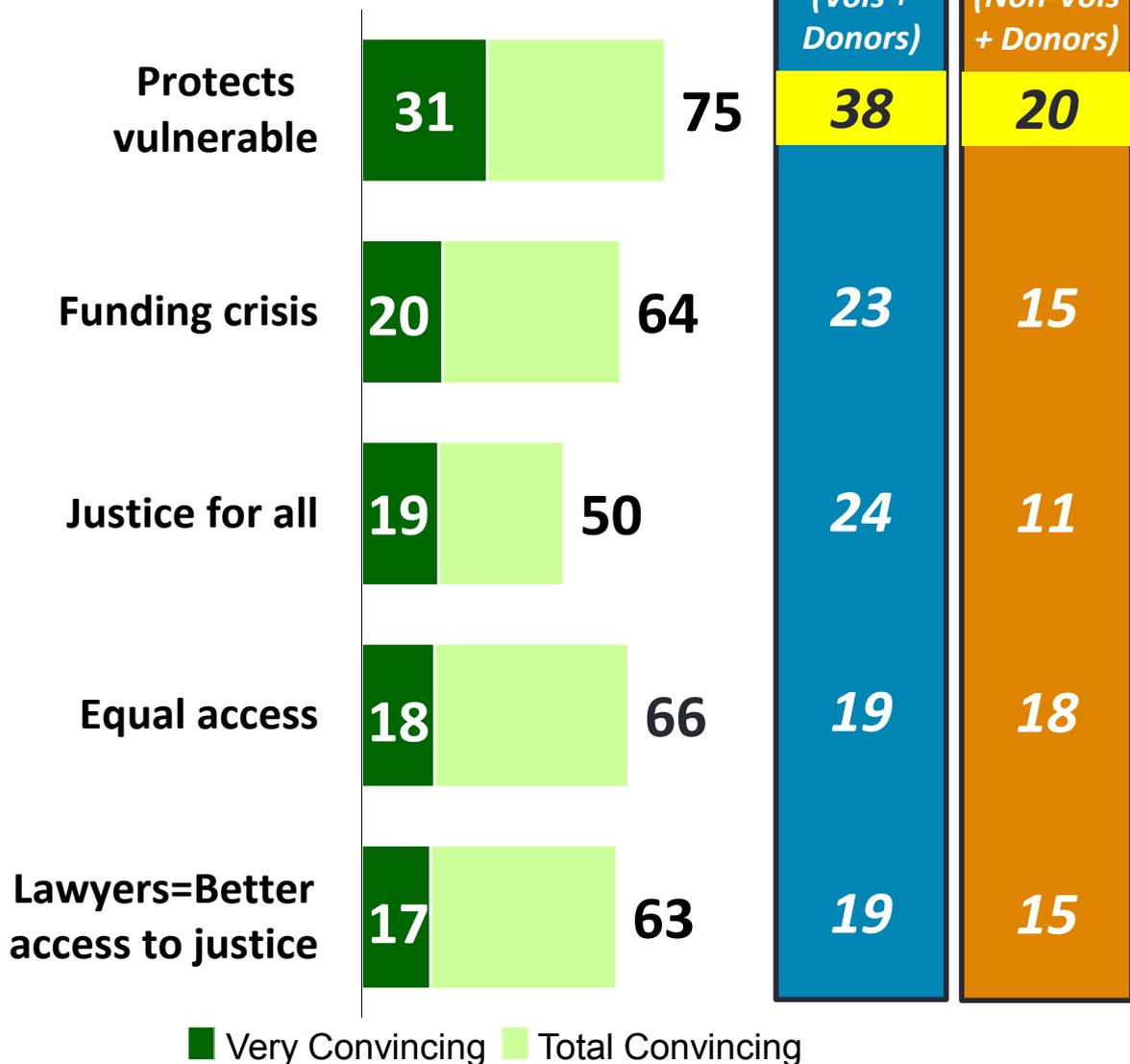
Sometimes over the course of a survey like this, people change their minds. Would you support or oppose increasing government funding for this program, or are you undecided? [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE] And do you feel that way strongly, or not-so strongly?

Many of the successful messages with voters—such as assuring equality and access to justice for all—also work well with lawyers.

However, the strongest message with lawyers is that civil legal aid protects those with nowhere else to turn—a key difference with the 2013 findings among likely voters and proof that previous messaging efforts to the legal community have been successful. While a detailed account of the vulnerable populations most helped by civil legal aid is a less effective approach in communicating with likely voters (who see themselves as plenty vulnerable), it is the strongest message—in reach and intensity—in communicating with lawyers.

In addition, it is useful with lawyers to highlight the current funding crisis and focus on lawyers being the intermediary to creating better access to justice. Talking about civil legal aid as a leader in innovations in the industry fell flat with lawyers (41% total convincing).

Top Supporter Messages



**Darker colors indicate intensity*

Now you will read messages in support of increasing funding for civil legal aid. Please indicate whether the statement you read is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing, or not at all convincing reason for you to donate to or volunteer for civil legal aid programs.

Text of Top Supporter Messages

Protects vulnerable: Civil legal aid protects people with nowhere else to turn. Civil legal aid groups provide legal representation for victims of domestic violence, families dealing with threats or neglect from absentee landlords, as well as children, seniors, and veterans who are denied access to health care or benefits. Ensuring that civil legal aid is adequately funded means that we are not turning our back on the most vulnerable and helping them gain access to the civil justice system.

Funding crisis: The facts are plain – more people need legal aid now than ever, but the resources are not there. In the past decade, as poverty rates have risen the funding per eligible client has dropped by almost 60%. Legal aid programs turn away two of every three people who qualify for services due to lack of resources. It is estimated that a staggering 80% of serious legal needs of low-income people go unmet due to grossly insufficient funding. This prevents access to the justice system that all Americans deserve.

Justice for all: When we say the Pledge of Allegiance we end it with “justice for all”. However, today, too many people are left without access to justice. Civil legal aid exists to make sure every American has access to justice, regardless of how much money they have. We need programs like civil legal aid to ensure the very principle our founding fathers envisioned remains alive: justice for all not the few who can afford it.

Equal access: Civil legal aid ensures equal access to justice under the law. It provides access to legal help for people who cannot afford it otherwise, especially when it’s necessary to protect their livelihood, their health or their family. The quality of justice should not depend on how much money you have. Civil legal aid provides the fairness and equal access to justice that all Americans deserve.

Lawyers=Better access to justice: Lawyers who donate to or volunteer for legal aid programs help increase access to justice. Everyone benefits when lawyers can provide advice and legal services to those who qualify for legal aid because courtrooms run smoother, cases are handled properly, and their knowledge and expertise can help clients navigate the complicated legal process. All of this translates to better access to justice, including those who do not qualify for civil legal aid because systems get set up to best serve those in need.

Key Takeaways

- Nearly two-thirds of lawyers indicate current or previous involvement with civil legal aid. However, lawyers express greater interest in volunteering than providing monetary donations—a major hurdle to overcome as government funding continues to decrease.
- Overall, lawyers support increasing government funding for civil legal aid. However, volunteers and donors express greater interest than those who have never been involved.
- For lawyers, civil legal aid is about fairness and access.
- The overall messaging strategy with likely voters will work with lawyers. However, a direct appeal strategy will be particularly effective in enticing new donors and volunteers.
- The key validators for lawyers include lawyers who volunteer for civil legal aid, lawyers who provide pro bono services outside of civil legal aid, and people who have used civil legal aid.

ANY QUESTIONS?



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