

Access and Fairness Survey Report

Fourth Judicial District

El Paso County Judicial Building

June 25, 2014

*Prepared by:
Office of the State Court Administrator
Court Services Division*



Introduction

I am pleased to issue this report on the Fourth Judicial District's Access and Fairness Survey.

This report summarizes the results of the survey conducted on June 25, 2014 in El Paso County at the El Paso County Judicial Building. The Access and Fairness Survey represents the judicial department's commitment to demonstrate accountability, and improve the delivery of justice throughout the state of Colorado trial courts.

The survey was conducted on what is considered a typical day at the court. The Access and Fairness Survey was implemented in the manner suggested by the National Center for State Courts—an exit survey.

Staff from the Court Services Division of the State Court Administrator's Office, in conjunction with staff from the El Paso County Judicial Building surveyed people conducting business with the court. Survey respondents were asked about ease of court access and fair treatment as a means of offering court leadership a balanced perspective on court operations within this district.

Everyone exiting the court buildings was asked to fill out the brief self-administered survey. The volunteers were stationed at the exit points of the court building and approached each person as he or she was leaving. The Access and Fairness Survey was available in both English and Spanish.

Generally, the feedback gathered through the Access and Fairness Survey for El Paso County was very positive.

Snapshot

Access:

81% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the court is accessible.

Fairness:

69% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are treated fairly.

Court Users:

A total of 528 court users completed the survey.

Response Rates:

On average, 98% of respondents answered the access and fairness questions.

On average, 83% of respondents answered the demographic questions.



SURVEY RESULTS>>>>

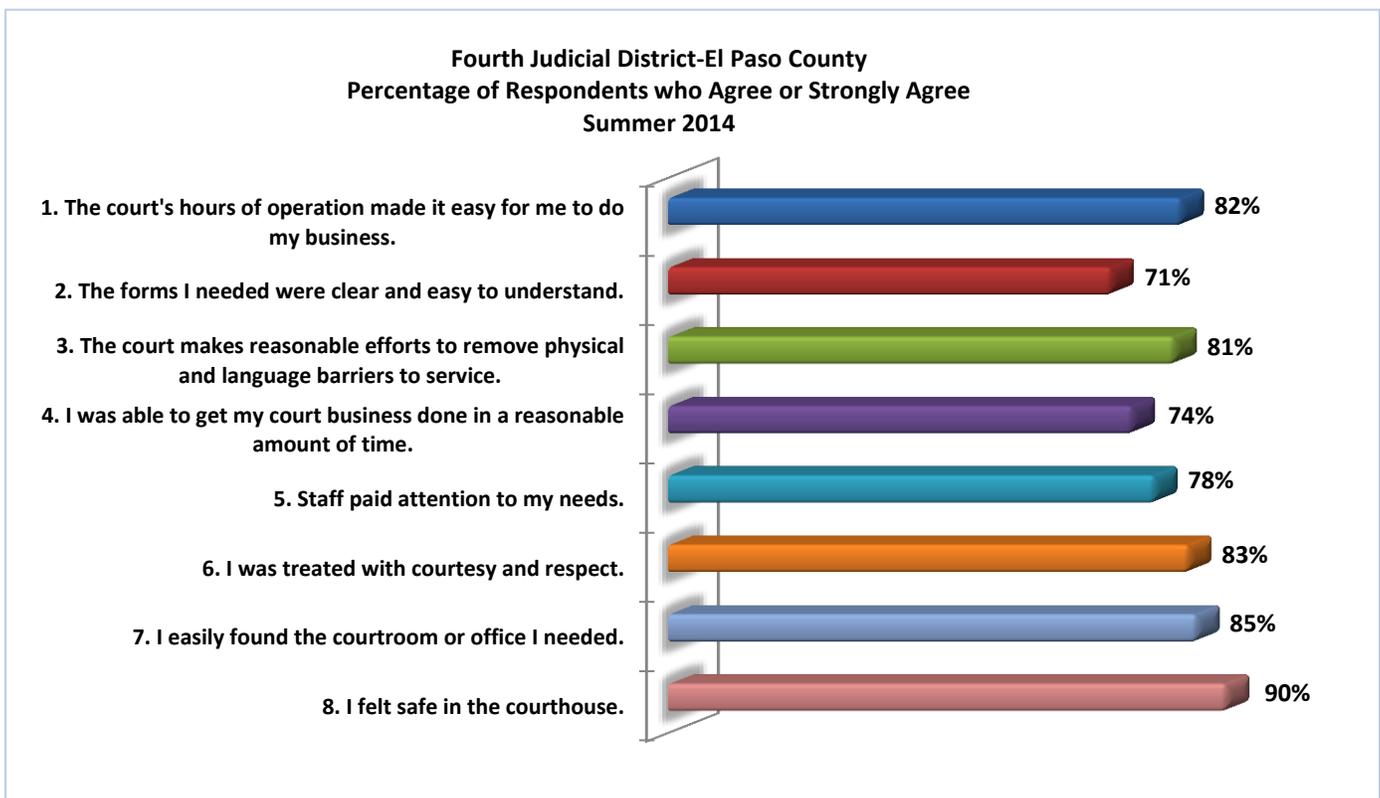
The Access and Fairness survey measures multiple aspects of a court user's experience. These are all important and will be discussed individually later in this report. However, the immediate question for many in the courts is, "How are we doing?" The quickest way to answer that question is to look at the percentage of respondents who 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the access and fairness portions of the survey.

In El Paso County, **81%** of respondents agree or strongly agree that the court is accessible and **69%** of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are treated fairly.

ACCESS TO THE COURT>>>>

Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each of the statements below. Responses were ranked on a five-point scale of agreement, with "1" being Strongly Disagree and "5" being Strongly Agree. A "Not Applicable" response was allowed.

The chart below shows the **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS THAT EITHER AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE** with each of the statements.



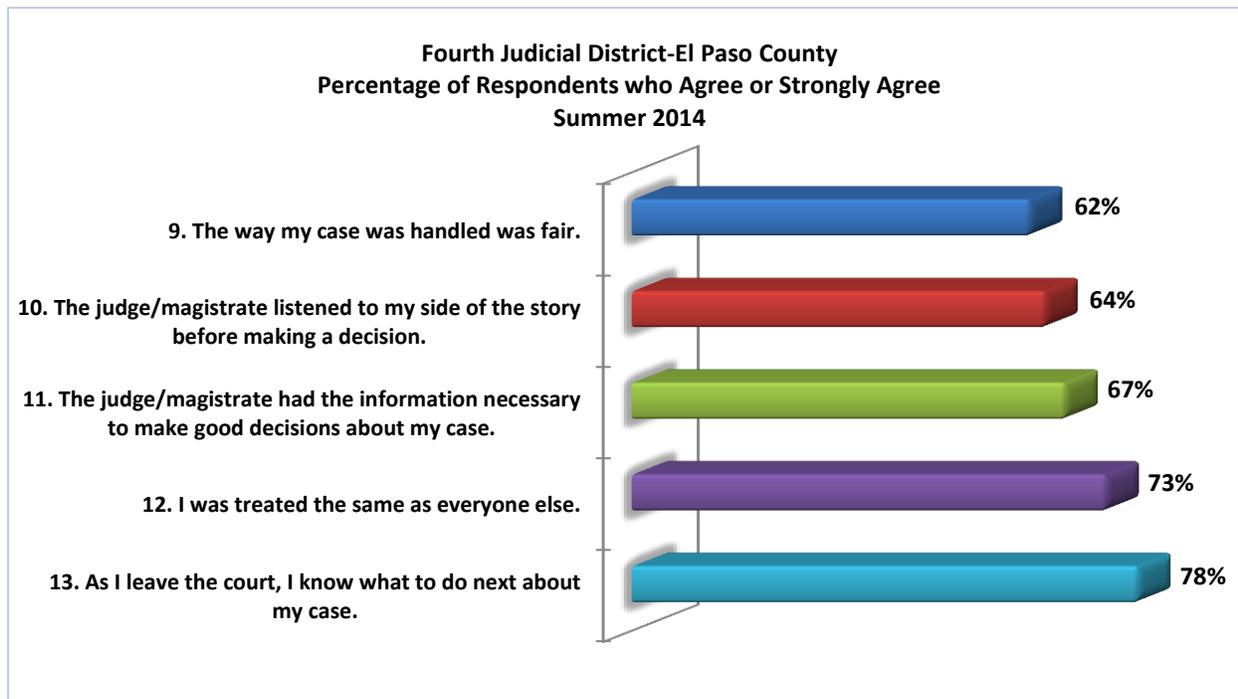
The access agreement scores were quite strong, with five out of eight questions scoring above 80%. The lowest access agreement score, 71%, pertained to the necessary forms being clear and easy to understand (question 2). Being able to conduct court business in a reasonable amount of time (question 4) and the staff paying attention to needs (question 5) also received scores just below the average of 81%.

The highest access agreement score, 90%, regarded the respondents' perception of feeling safe in the courthouse (question 8). Overall, based upon the access agreement scores, respondents have a positive perception of the services provided by the courthouse in El Paso County.

FAIRNESS IN THE COURT>>>>

Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each of the statements below. Responses were ranked on a five-point scale of agreement, with "1" being Strongly Disagree and "5" being Strongly Agree. A "Not Applicable" response was allowed.

The chart below shows the **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS THAT EITHER AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE** with each of the statements.



The lowest fairness agreement score, 62%, regarded the respondents' perception that the way their case was handled was fair. Question 10, "The judge/magistrate listened to my side of the story before making a decision" and question 11, "The judge/magistrate had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case" received a fairness agreement score of 64% and 67%; both questions are near the average fairness score of 69%.

The highest fairness agreement scores, 73% and 78%, pertained to the respondents' perceptions of being treated the same as everyone else and knowing what to do next about their case.

RESPONSE RATES>>>>

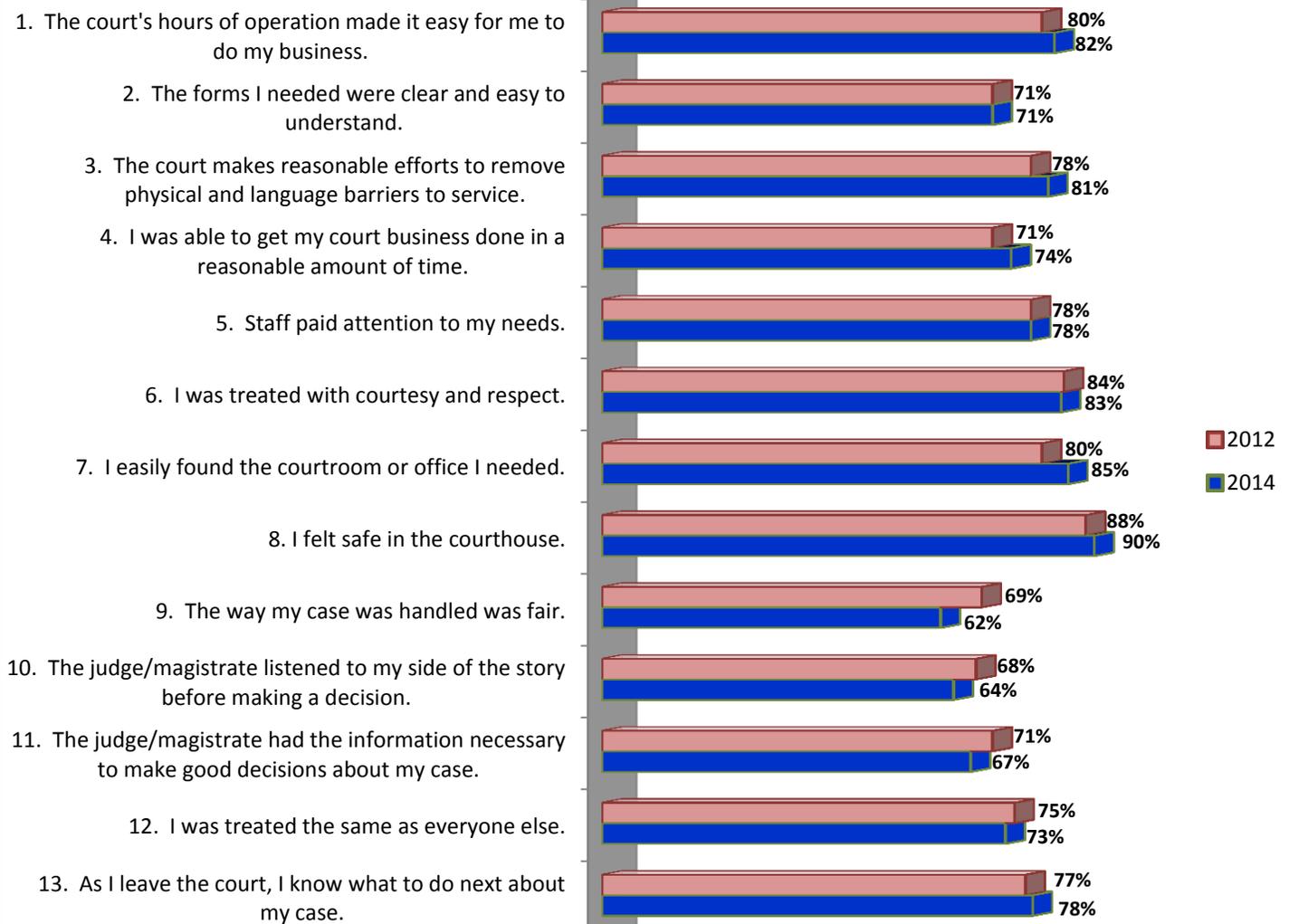
Overall, the response rate for the survey in El Paso County was 21%. A total of 2,542 people exited the court facilities during the course of the day and 528 surveys were completed. Due to many individuals entering and exiting multiple times per day, the end result is that attorneys and law enforcement officers in particular would have been counted multiple times as surveyors were not able to discern if individuals had previously completed the survey or been counted in another location or at another time of day.

While there may be several explanations for a respondent not completing a particular portion of a survey, the likely causes for not answering the demographic questions include question location (some questions were on the back of the survey), applicability (some people may not have been at the court in a role or capacity indicated), and general aversion to filling out demographic, personally identifying information (such as race, income or education level). The survey (Attachment A) consists of three sections: The information gathered in the first two sections provides feedback on court-user experiences; the information obtained in the demographic section allows for further analysis of potential commonalities among responses and respondents.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS>>>>

- 70% of respondents said that they did not use the internet to obtain information prior to coming to the courthouse
- 19% of respondents were attending a hearing or trial regarding their own case
- 32% of respondents were at the courthouse as a result of a criminal case
- 22% of respondents are being represented by a lawyer, with 41% being represented by a lawyer appointed by the court

RESULTS COMPARED>>>>2012 VERSUS 2014



THANK YOU!>>>>

THE EL PASO COUNTY LEADERSHIP TEAM AND COLORADO COURTS AND PROBATION WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ALL OF OUR EMPLOYEES WHO HELPED MAKE THIS SURVEY A SUCCESS. YOUR HARD WORK AND DEDICATION ARE DISPLAYED IN THE POSITIVE RESULTS RECEIVED BY THIS SURVEY. IT IS CLEAR THAT EACH OF YOU IS WORKING HARD TO CREATE AN ACCESSIBLE AND FAIR ENVIRONMENT FOR COLORADO COURT USERS AND WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

COURTOOLS>>>>



The Access and Fairness Survey was developed and tested by the National Center for State Courts as part of its CourTools project. CourTools is a set of ten trial court performance measures created to help courts measure their effectiveness and, as a result, improve their performance.

The Access and Fairness Survey is a tool used to obtain citizens' perspectives on the court's accessibility and how they were treated in court in terms of fairness, equality and respect. Research indicates that matters of procedure and fairness are equally important, and in some cases more important, than outcomes for most public consumers. This especially applies to the justice system. How court users perceive their experience in the courthouse may feel as important to them as the outcome of their case. The Access and Fairness Survey is a brief, self-administered survey that can provide valuable information about a court user's experience. This information can then be used to help courts identify potential problem areas and improve their management practices to address public concerns.

COPY OF THE ACTUAL SURVEY FOLLOWS>>>>

COLORADO JUDICIAL BRANCH Access and Fairness Survey



Section I: Access to the Court

(Please circle the number that reflects how strongly you disagree or agree with the statement.)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
1. The court's hours of operation made it easy for me to do my business.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2. The forms I needed were clear and easy to understand.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. The court makes reasonable efforts to remove physical and language barriers to service.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4. I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5. Staff paid attention to my needs.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6. I was treated with courtesy and respect.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. I easily found the courtroom or office I needed.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. I felt safe in the courthouse.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Section II: Fairness

(Please circle the number that reflects how strongly you disagree or agree with the statement.)

9. The way my case was handled was fair.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. The judge/magistrate listened to my side of the story before making a decision.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11. The judge/magistrate had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12. I was treated the same as everyone else.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13. As I leave the court, I understand what is expected of me and what I need to do next in my case.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14. Did you use the internet to obtain any information about the court or your case prior to coming to the courthouse?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO				

Section III: Background information (Check all that apply)

Why did you visit the courthouse today?

- Visit probation officer
- Jury Duty
- Visit the clerk's office (file papers, get information, make payments)
- Attend a hearing for my own case
- Attend a hearing or trial for another person's case
- Visit a Family Court Facilitator
- Visit a Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator
- Other county business (legal services, assessor, treasurer)

What was your role in the courthouse today?

- Professional (attorney, law enforcement, probation officer, social services, probation officer, social services)
- Public involved in a case (own case, came with friend/family, witness)
- Jury Duty
- Visit your probation officer
- Other _____

What type of case brought you to the courthouse?

- Traffic
- Criminal (felony, misdemeanor)
- Family (child support/custody, divorce, juvenile, will/estate, etc.)
- Civil (debt/collections, small claims)
- Other _____

Does an attorney currently represent you in your case? Yes No N/A

- If **YES**, is your attorney
- Appointed by the court or
 - Hired by you

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