



Civic Education in the Nation's Schools

Survey of Civic Education Activities Results



Background

On August 1, 2009, retired Supreme Court Associate Justice David Souter delivered the keynote speech at the Opening Assembly of the American Bar Association annual meeting in Chicago. His focus was civic education in the United States. He declared, “I believe civic educational reform is, literally, essential to the continued vitality of American constitutional government as we know it.” Justice Souter’s message came with a call to action: “I will ask the American Bar Association as an organization and each one of you as individuals to take on the job. ...Civic education has to be raised to a new power and [that is] why every one of us in this room has to see to it that civic understanding becomes a birthright of every American.”¹

Survey

In the fall of 2010, the American Bar Association Division for Public Education constructed a survey on civic education, one for bar associations and another for organizations and institutions. Because a true picture of civic education in the United States has yet to be methodologically documented, this endeavor was a preliminary exercise to gather an informal depiction of what civic education looks like among ABA partners so that a discussion could begin. Being merely at the discovery phase, there were no defined goals for data collection. In general, the ABA Division for Public Education sought to learn what civic education looks like, how programs are structured, and how they are administered.

Initially, the notion was that the structure and activities between bar association and organizations and institutions were so different that separate surveys needed to be constructed. Overall, the questions in the survey for the bar associations and for organizations and institutions were very similar, with a few questions specifically tailored to bar associations and a few specifically tailored to organizations and institutions. Based on our findings, however, we have learned that the differences are slight, as the following summary indicates.

The availability of the survey was marketed through several venues: ABA Division for Public Education’s journal, Law Matters; ABA Division for Public Education’s newsletters; ABA Bar Services journal, The Bridge; and ABA Bar Services’ mailing list. The survey was accessible online, through the Division’s website beginning in November of 2010.

The findings from this report were analyzed from survey responses from November 2010 through January 2011.

As a whole we were pleased with our results and impressed with the responding organizations’ commitment and assiduousness to civic education. Findings indicate that there is a uniformity and structure to programs, and much work is being conducted on limited funds.

¹ Keynote Speech by David Souter, Associate Justice, U.S. Supreme Court, at Opening Assembly, American Bar Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, August 1, 2009, <http://www.abanet.org/publiced/JusticeSouterChallengesABA.pdf>.

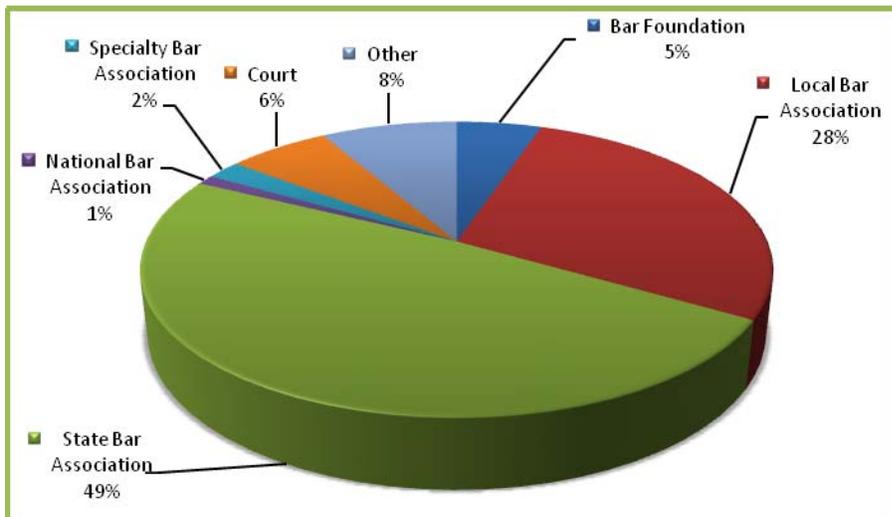
Discussion

In total, there were 328 respondents from organizations and institutions and 96 from bar associations. This numerical disparity is evident considering there are limited numbers of bar associations and organizations and institutions covered all the other categories in civic education. For a better contextualization, the results are presented in percentages. The discussion will be presented in two sections: 1) bar associations; and 2) organizations and institutions.

Discussion of the findings will include: Description of Respondents, Involvement in Civic Education, Staffing, Training, Funding, Audience, Activities, Materials and Resources, Program Focus, Legislation, and Law Day².

Bar Associations

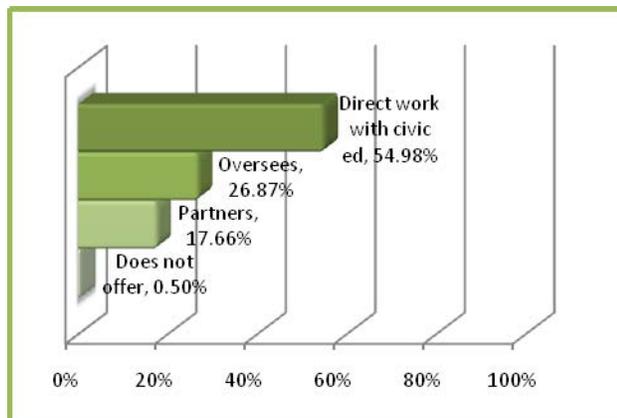
Description of Respondents



There was a wide representation of respondents among bar associations. The vast majority of respondents were from state and local bar associations (77%), while Other, Court, Bar Foundation, Specialty Bar Association, and National Bar Association comprised the rest (23%).

*Involvement in Civic Education*³

At 54.98 percent, more than half of bar associations' work involved direct work with civic education. For the purposes of this survey, direct work includes: promoting, administering, and conducting civic education activities and programs. Concomitantly, less than half of the bar associations' role was to oversee or partner in civic education.

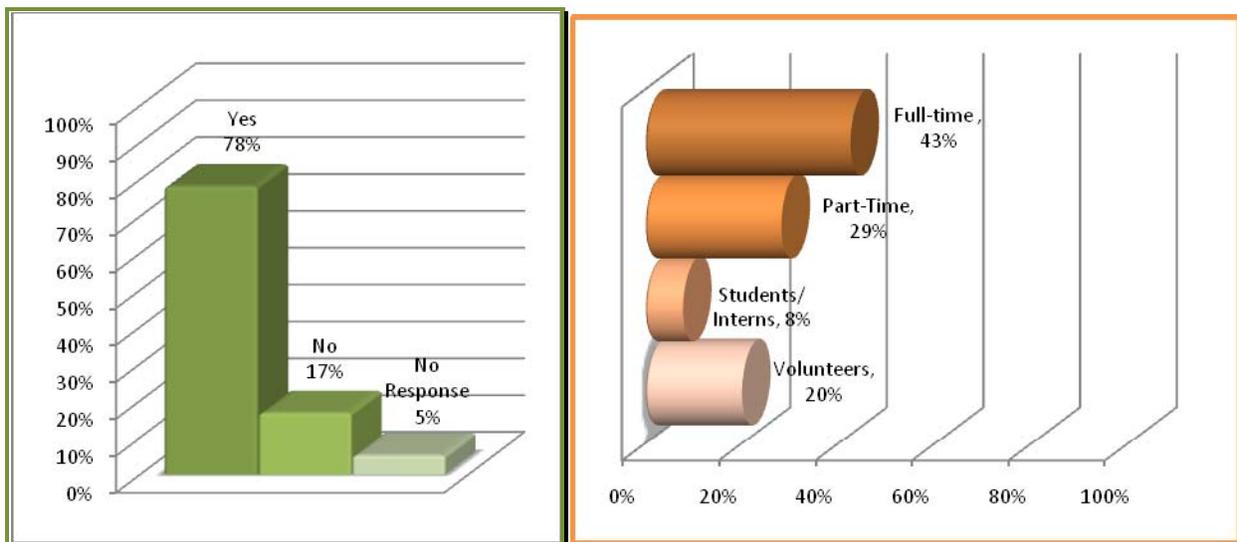


² Law Day questions were only included in the survey to bar associations.

³ Of note, respondents were encouraged to check all that applied to this question. Most bar associations often played more than one role in their involvement in civic education.

Staffing

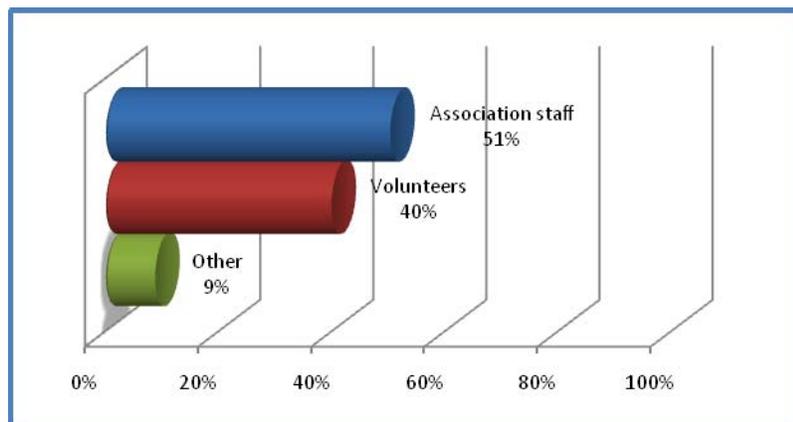
The definition of staffing included full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff. For bar associations, 78 percent of their civic education programs were staffed. Of the bar associations that were staffed for civic education, 43 percent were full-time and 29 percent were part-time. Only 28 percent were students/interns or volunteers.



Training

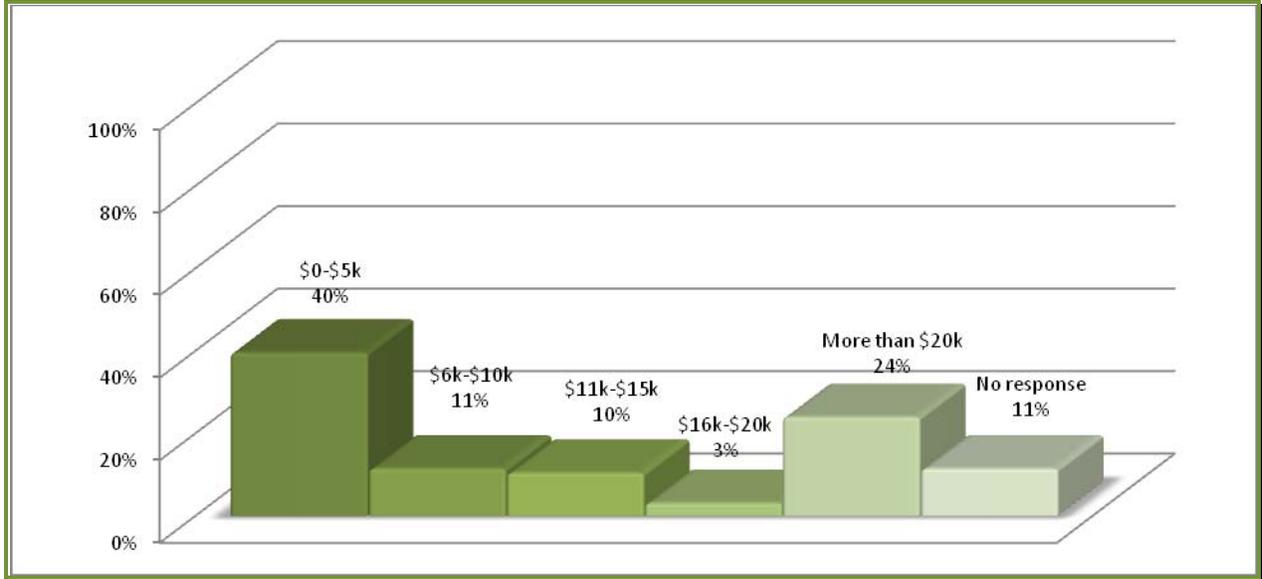
In terms of training, slightly more than half of bar associations trained the volunteers who lead the civic education programs at 52 percent. One confounding factor to these numbers is that 25 percent of bar organizations did not respond to this question, thereby making it difficult to definitively conclude how many volunteers are truly trained.

For bar associations, of the people who conducted the trainings, 51 percent were staff, 40 percent were volunteers, and 9 percent were Other. While a little over half of the trainings were conducted by staff, there was a conspicuous reliance on volunteers whose commitment can sometimes be unpredictable.

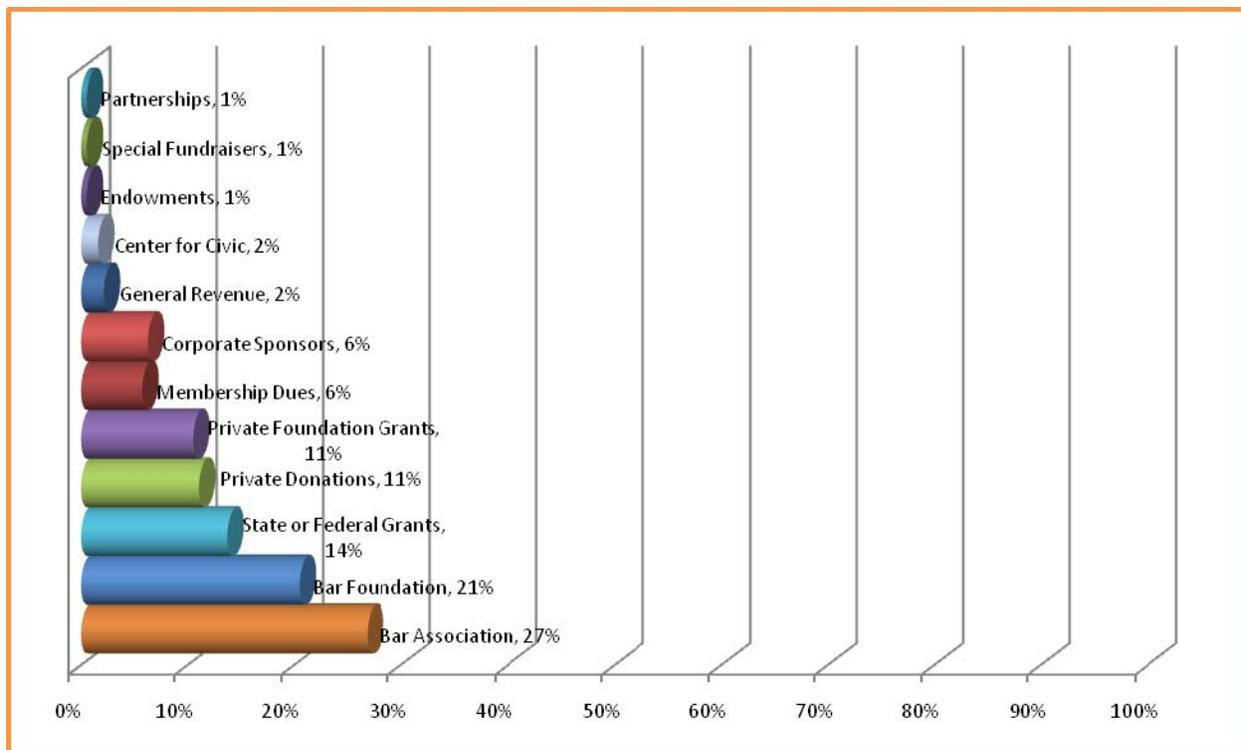


Funding

Funding is an important component to implementing programs, and many bar associations divested a significant amount of money to civic education. Impressively, 24 percent spend more than \$20,000 per annum on civic education programs. On the other hand, at the smaller scale, 40 percent of the bar association programs spend less than \$5,000 per annum on civic education programs.



Importantly, related to funding was the question of *how* the bar associations fund civic education programs and activities. The greatest percentage of programs and activities were funded by the bar associations, themselves, at 27 percent, and through bar foundations at 21 percent. The least method of funding was through partnerships (1%), special fundraisers (1%), endowments (1%), Center for Civic Education (2%), and general revenue (2%).



Audience

Bar Associations' target audience is more focused on educators and students from kindergarten through 8th grade at 37 percent and 44 percent, respectively, as well as from 9th through 12th grade at 42 percent and 41 percent, respectively. When focusing on the general public, however, bar associations focus more on adults (50%) than at the kindergarten through 12th grades (38%).

| Question | Level | % | Level | % | Level | % |
|-----------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|--------|-----|
| Educators | K-8 | 37% | 9-12 | 42% | Adults | 13% |
| Students | K-8 | 44% | 9-12 | 41% | Adults | 10% |
| General Public | K-8 | 20% | 9-12 | 18% | Adults | 50% |

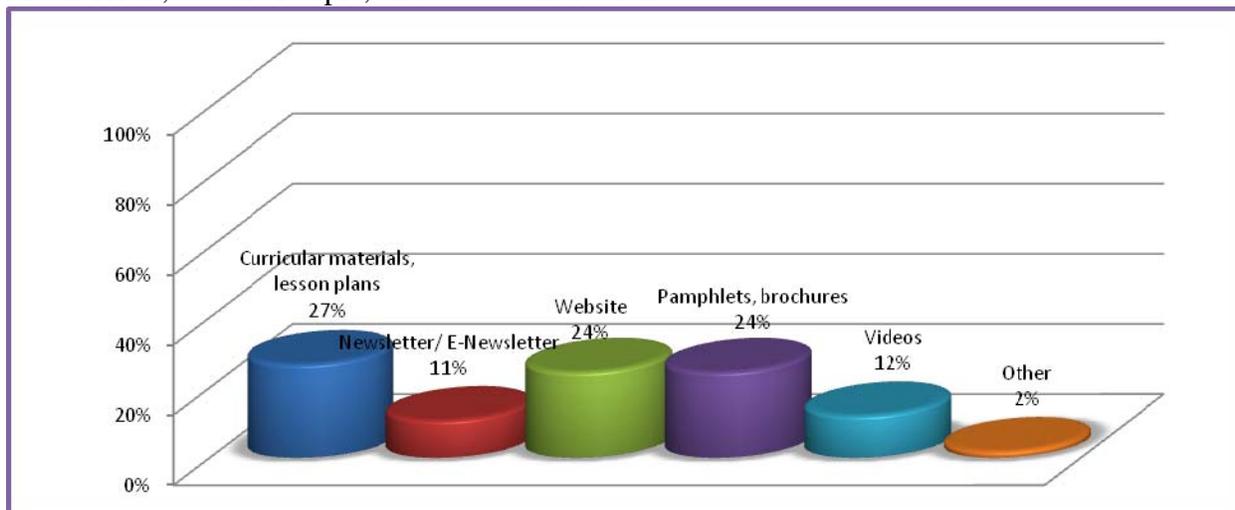
Activities

The types of activities that bar associations conducted varied somewhat proportionally. Law Day activities were greatest at 14 percent, but Moot Court/Mock Trials and Professional Development for K-12 teachers were a close second at 12 percent each, and Awards, Competitions, and Contests and Lawyer in the Classroom Programs were a very close third at 11 percent.

| Activities | Bar |
|--|------------|
| Awards, Competitions, and Contests | 11% |
| Conferences, Workshops, and Summer Institutes | 9% |
| Conflict Resolution, Peer Mediation Programs | 2% |
| Court Tours | 5% |
| Law Day Activities | 14% |
| Lawyer in the Classroom Programs | 11% |
| Moot Court, Mock Trial | 12% |
| Professional Development for K-12 teachers | 12% |
| Speakers Bureau | 7% |
| Youth Court | 5% |
| Youth Mentoring Programs | 5% |
| Curriculum Resources | 3% |
| General Public Education | 2% |
| Other | 2% |

Materials and Resources

The majority of the materials and resources that bar associations provided through their civic education programs and activities were curricular materials, lesson plans (27%); website (24%); and pamphlets, brochures (24%). Other materials and resources included YouTube videos, Mock Trials, We the People, and U.S. Constitutions.



Program Focus

| | Bar |
|---|-----|
| American Government | 13% |
| Careers in Law | 9% |
| Character Education | 4% |
| Civics | 14% |
| Constitutional Law | 12% |
| Criminal Law | 7% |
| International Law | 1% |
| Judicial System, Delinquency Prevention | 8% |
| Legal History | 6% |
| Rule of Law | 12% |
| Voting and Elections | 5% |
| State or Local Government | 4% |
| Bullying | 3% |
| Other | 2% |

Program focus for civic education did not vary exceedingly with bar associations. The greatest program focus for bar associations was Character Education at 14 percent with American Government coming a close second at 13 percent, and Constitutional Law and Rule of Law tied at third with 12 percent each.

Legislation

Interestingly, far less bar associations indicated that they formally supported civic education legislation (21%) than those who did not (61%). Among the bar associations who indicated that they did formally support civic education legislation, the types of civic education legislation that they supported are: Civics funding, Assessments, Education Standards, Civics Commission, and Civics Council.

| | Bar |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes | 21% |
| No | 61% |
| No Response | 18% |

Law Day

For bar associations, variances among Law Day activities were not wide. The greatest percentage of Law Day activities were classroom visits at 30 percent, and there was a tie for second between essay, poster contests and public programs at 16 percent.

| Activities | Bar |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Dial-a-Lawyer, Pro Bono legal advice | 5% |
| Classroom visits | 30% |
| Essay, Poster Contest | 16% |
| Mock Trial | 11% |
| Awards program (e.g. Liberty Bell) | 8% |
| Public program | 16% |
| Other (please specify): | 14% |
| CLE | |
| Law Day competition | |
| Luncheon for Mock Trial competition | |
| Court tours, visits | |
| Classroom resources online | |

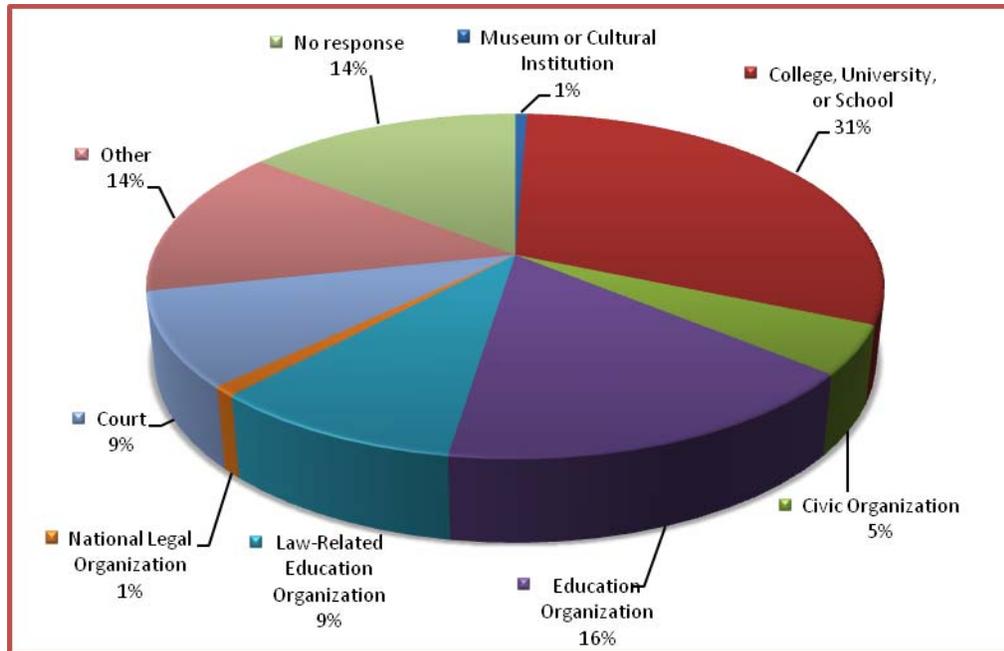
Participation in Law Day activities was quite impressive according to bar association respondents. Twenty-six percent indicated that a range of 11-50 members participate in Law Day activities and 13 percent indicate that a range of 101-500 students and 11 percent indicate that a range of 1,001-5,000 students participate in Law Day activities.

| # of Members Participating | % |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 0-10 | 4% |
| 11-50 | 26% |
| 51-100 | 4% |
| 101-500 | 9% |
| More than 500 | 6% |
| No Response | 52% |

| # of Students Participating | % |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| 0-100 | 9% |
| 101-500 | 13% |
| 501-1000 | 7% |
| 1001-5000 | 11% |
| More than 5000 | 2% |
| No Response | 57% |

Organizations and Institutions

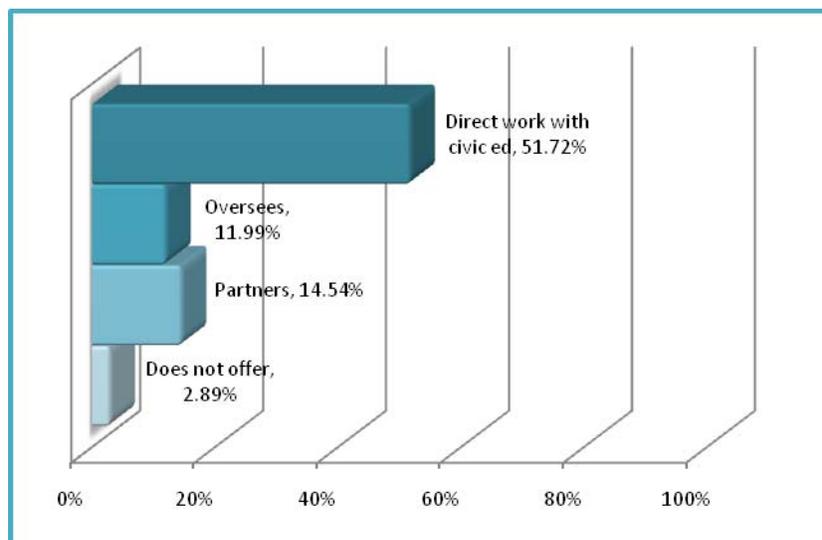
Description of Respondents



Representation was quite wide in organizations and institutions. College, university, or school organizations and education organizations categories dominated the types of respondents for the organizations and institutions.

Involvement in Civic Education

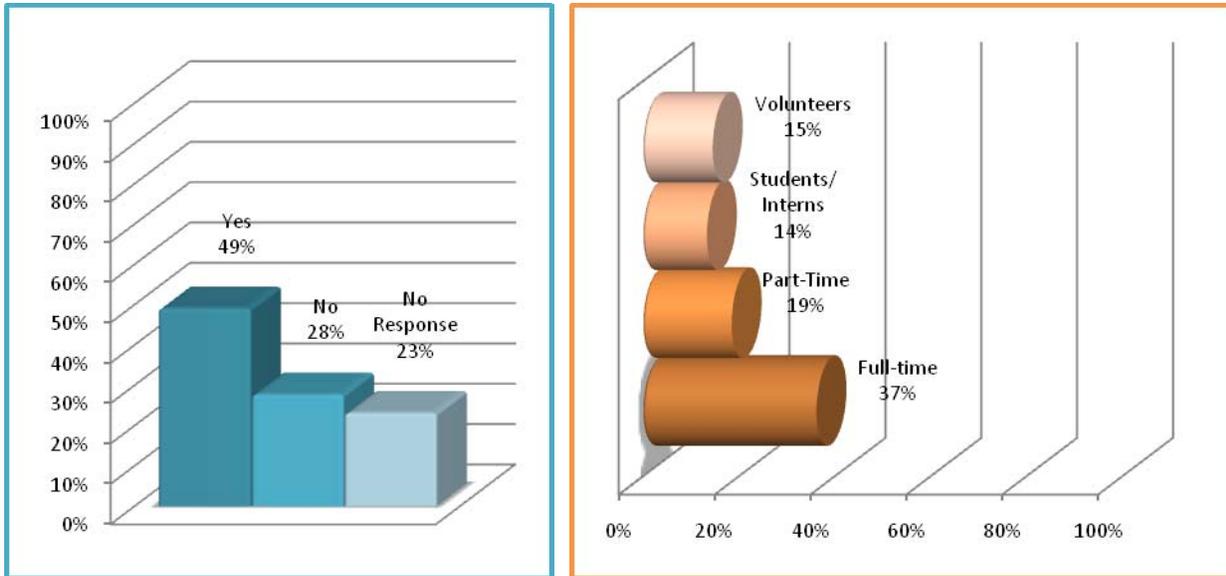
Interestingly, the organizations' type of involvement with civic education was proportionally similar between bar associations and organizations and institutions. At 51.72 percent, the majority of organizations and institutions' work involved direct work with civic education which includes promoting, administering, and conducting civic education activities and programs.



Staffing

For organizations and institutions, slightly less than half (49%) were staffed. However, because there was such a high percentage of organizations' and institutions' respondents who did not respond to this question (23%), an accurate picture is difficult to ascertain.

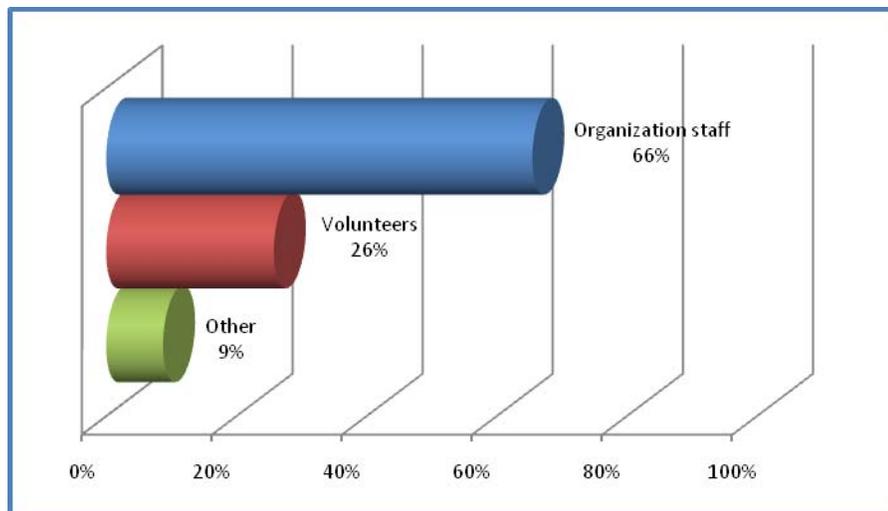
Of the organizations and institutions that indicated that they have staff devoted to civic education, over half were employed by the organizations: 37 percent were full-time and 19 percent were part-time. In total, 29 percent were students/interns or volunteers.



Training

In terms of training, 24 percent of organizations and institutions train their volunteers. As with the bar associations, a confounding factor to these numbers is that 56 percent of organizations and institutions did not respond to this question, thereby making it difficult to definitively conclude how many volunteers are truly trained.

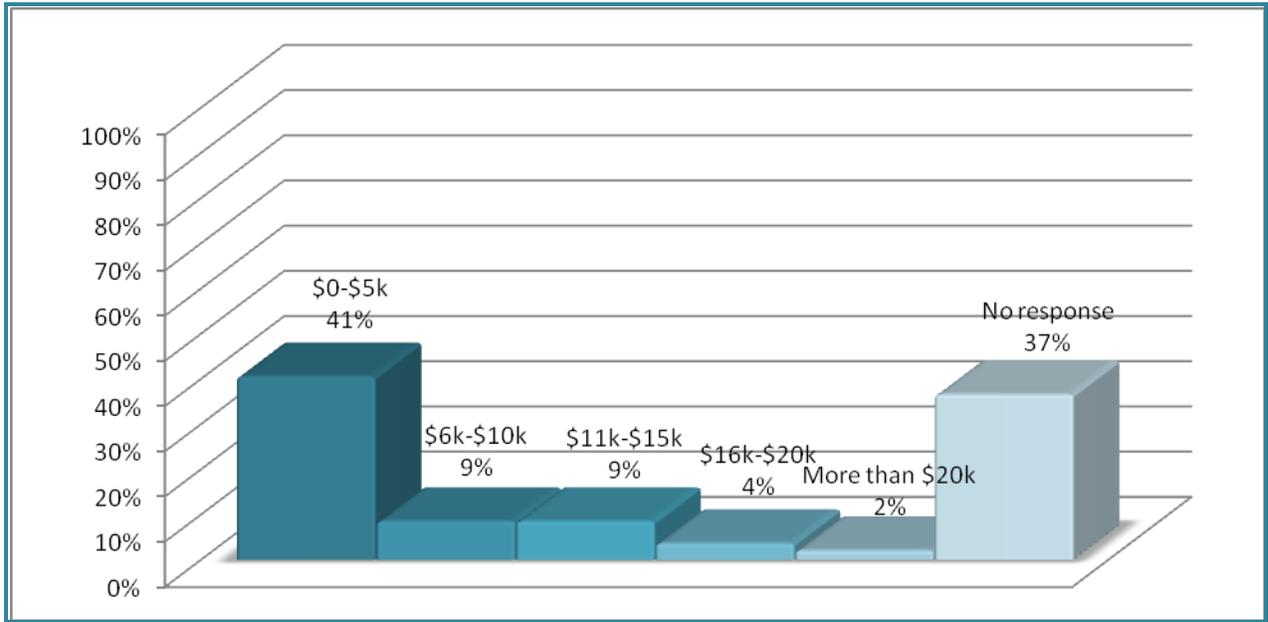
For organizations and institutions, 66 percent were staff, 26 percent were volunteers, and 9 percent were Other. As with bar associations, there was a conspicuous reliance on volunteers whose commitment can sometimes be unpredictable.



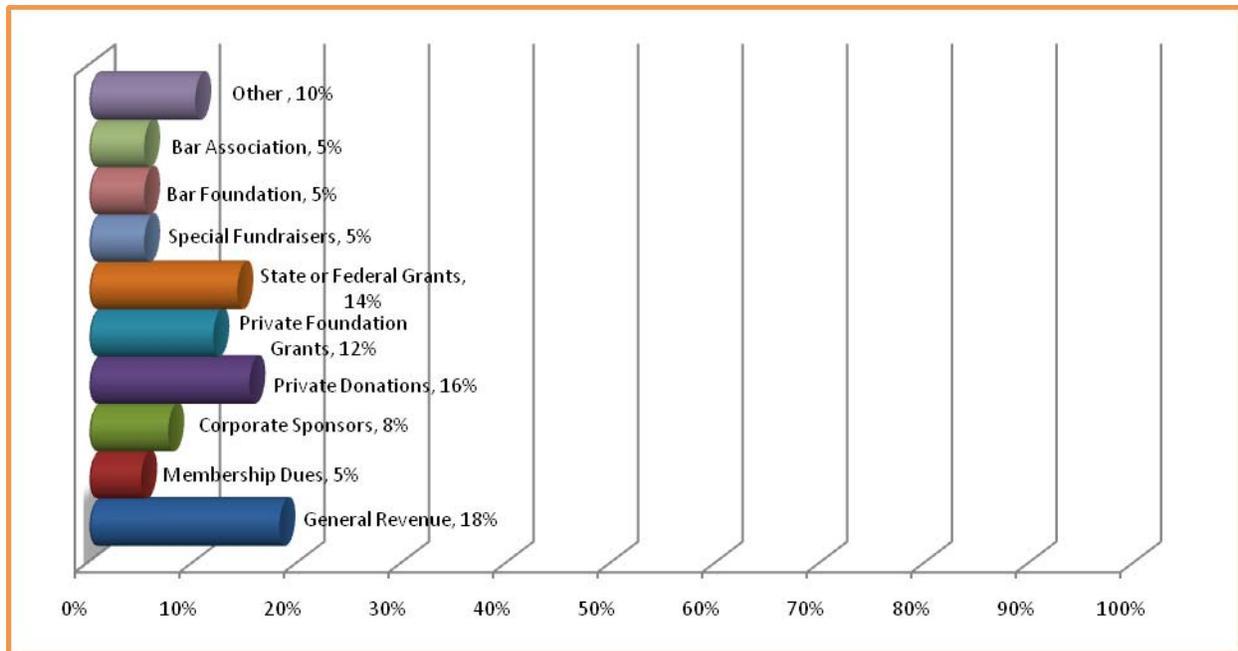
Funding

For organization/institution programs, only 2 percent spent more than \$20,000 per annum on civic education programs. On the other hand, 41 percent of organizations and institutions spend

less than \$5,000 per annum on civic education program. Skewing the organizations/institutions data was the 37 percent of the respondents who did not answer this question.



Related to funding was the question of *how* organizations and institutions fund civic education programs and activities. The greatest percentage of programs and activities were funded through their general revenue at 18 percent and through private donations at 16 percent. The least method of funding was through bar associations, bar foundations, special fundraisers, and membership dues, each at 5 percent.



Audience

Organizations and institutions focus more on educators and students from kindergarten through 12th grade. The survey for the organizations and institutions broke down the education levels from K-4th, 5th-8th, 9th-12th grades, undergraduates, and graduate/law school students. For both educators and students, there was a concentrated focus at the 9th-12th grade levels at 31 percent and 35 percent, respectively.

Additionally, organizations and institutions targeted undergraduate and graduate/law school students but not at a remarkable level, ranging from 8 percent to 13 percent. Moreover, at 31 percent, adults were targeted most when focusing on the general public.

| Audience | Level | % | Level | % | Level | % | Level | % | Level | % | Level | % |
|-----------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|------------|-----|----------|-----|--------|-----|
| Educators | K-4 | 17% | 5-8 | 22% | 9-12 | 31% | Under-grad | 11% | Grad/Law | 8% | Adults | 10% |
| Students | K-4 | 16% | 5-8 | 22% | 9-12 | 35% | Under-grad | 13% | Grad/Law | 8% | Adults | 6% |
| General Public | K-4 | 12% | 5-8 | 13% | 9-12 | 20% | Under-grad | 13% | Grad/Law | 11% | Adults | 31% |

Activities

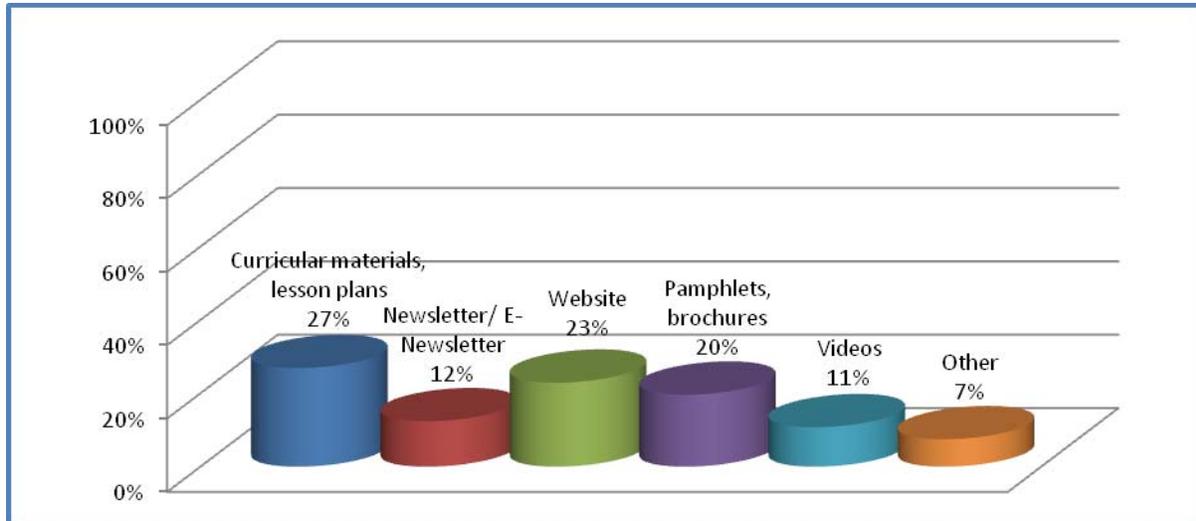
The types of activities that organizations and institutions conducted did not vary widely. The greatest activities were Student Programs at 12 percent and tied at second were Constitution Day Activities, Law Day Activities, and Moot Court, Mock Trial at 10 percent. The least conducted activities were Conflict Resolution, Peer Mediation Programs, Youth Court, and Youth Mentoring Programs at 3 percent each.

| Activities | Orgs |
|--|------------|
| Awards, Competitions, and Contests | 7% |
| Conferences, Workshops, and Summer Institutes | 9% |
| Conflict Resolution, Peer Mediation Programs | 3% |
| Constitution Day Activities | 10% |
| Court Tours | 6% |
| Law Day Activities | 10% |
| Lawyer in the Classroom Programs | 6% |
| Moot Court, Mock Trial | 10% |
| Professional Development for K-12 teachers | 9% |
| Speakers Bureau | 5% |
| Student Programs | 12% |
| Youth Court | 3% |
| Youth Mentoring Programs | 3% |
| Other | 6% |

Materials and Resources

The materials and resources that organizations and institutions provided varied slightly more than the activities. At 27 percent, curricular materials/lesson plans were the greatest materials and resources disseminated with the website and pamphlets/brochures coming a close second and third at 23 percent and 20 percent, respectively. Other types of materials and resources were extensive, including: pocket U.S. Constitutions, assemblies for all students and public, outreach posters, books/textbooks, informational materials, research articles, policy guidance and best practice models, international teacher exchange, customized staff development materials, Journal of Educational Controversy, recorded materials, Spanish materials, We the People program,

graphic novels "justice case files", PowerPoint presentations, state standards, YouTube videos, handouts, voter registration forms, Attorneys in the Area, ABA Auxiliary, lending library, newspapers for classroom learning, social networking, internal training and teaching materials, mock trials, publications, and CLE outlines.



Program Focus

| | Orgs |
|---|------|
| American Government | 13% |
| Careers in Law | 6% |
| Character Education | 5% |
| Civics | 13% |
| Constitutional Law | 10% |
| Criminal Law | 7% |
| International Law | 1% |
| Judicial System, Delinquency Prevention | 7% |
| Legal History | 4% |
| Rule of Law | 8% |
| Voting and Elections | 8% |
| Current Events or Issues | 10% |
| Famous Trials | 4% |
| Other | 3% |

Similar to the activities, the focus of the programs did not vary widely with organizations and institutions. They focused the most on American Government and Civics at 13 percent and second on Constitutional Law and Current Events or Issues at 10 percent. On the other hand International Law was the least emphasized program focus at 1 percent.

Legislation

Twenty-one percent of organizations and institutions indicated that they formally supported civic education legislation, and 43 percent indicated that they did not. However, because a significant proportion (37%) did not respond to this question, the outcomes are difficult to determine.

| | Org |
|-------------|-----|
| Yes | 21% |
| No | 43% |
| No Response | 37% |

For organizations and institutions, the types of civic education legislation that they supported are: state and national education standards, assessments, civic education funding, and civic engagement.

Conclusion

Over a three-month period, many bar associations and organizations and institutions responded to this survey, and much was learned through their responses. Findings from this preliminary data collection provide hope for the future of civic education. Many organizations, bar associations as well as organizations and institutions, are actively involved with civic education, conducting a wide variety of activities, producing numerous materials and resources, and involving a broad spectrum of audiences.

In contrast, bar associations and organizations and institutions work in civic education on restricted funds, and there is only limited involvement in legislation.

The hope is that civic education can be advanced even further, and that this document could be a resource to initiate discussions.