

The Self-Help Center Census:
A National Survey

American Bar Association
Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services

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Sara Smith

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I. Executive Summary

The notion of a court-based legal self-help center to provide information and resources to those without full legal representation was launched in the early 1990s in Maricopa County (Phoenix) Arizona. Twenty years later, the American Bar Association has identified approximately 500 self-help centers around the country of whom 222 responded to an online survey, the reports of which are reported in this Self-Help Center Census. This Census provides a window into the structure and operation of self-help centers around the US, with details on staffing, funding, types of services that are provided and the nature of the centers' customers. The information gathered here illustrates the extent to which self-help centers are a vibrant and effective resource addressing the needs of court-users throughout the country.

- Nearly 3.7 million people are served by self-help centers annually.
- The vast majority of self-help centers are staffed by five or fewer full-time equivalents and about half of the centers reported relying on a range of volunteers including attorneys, paralegals, students, and community members.
- Self-help centers tend to rely most heavily on court, state and county funding, but also supplement such funding with a number of other sources including bar associations; grants; city, county and federal funding; private donations and self-generated income, for example, from workshops.
- Most self-help centers provide some type of in-person services, document assistance and web-based information. Less commonly provided services include in-person workshops, interactive web-based forms, web or videoconferencing workshops, video or online tutorials, email or online responses, and referrals to pro bono attorneys and attorneys providing unbundled services.
- Self-help centers tend to focus on services for persons of limited resources.
- Most respondents reported being able to assist most of their customers, but a subset of their customers' legal needs was too complicated and/or their case types were not served by the center.
- Most respondents indicated that they believed their customers would benefit from limited scope representation, though only 38% of the centers provide information about such services and only 15% indicate that their community has a limited scope lawyer referral service panel.

II. Introduction

The notion of a court-based legal self-help center to provide information and resources to those without full legal representation was launched in the early 1990s in Maricopa County (Phoenix) Arizona. The center was designed to formally address the procedural needs of self-represented litigants, most of whom were of low and moderate incomes, and to re-direct self-represented litigants from less efficient sources of information. The court transformed a portion of the public law library into a workplace that included pre-Internet document preparation kits, dedicated court personnel to answer questions, referrals to on-site legal aid lawyers and a directory of local lawyers willing to provide limited scope, or unbundled, representation at market rates.

Twenty years later, the American Bar Association has identified approximately 500 self-help centers around the country. The centers, obviously, vary widely from the original template. This Self-Help Center Census provides a window into the structure and operation of self-help centers around the US, with details on staffing, funding, types of services that are provided and the nature of the centers' customers. The information gathered here illustrates the extent to which self-help centers are a vibrant and effective resource addressing the needs of court-users throughout the country.

III. Research Methodology

Sample Identification

Given that there did not exist a comprehensive national list of legal self-help centers, it was necessary to use various methods to obtain contact information. The initial sample for the survey was identified by combining the use of some pre-existing lists of legal self-help centers¹ and conducting an Internet search. This yielded over 450 self-help centers in 36 jurisdictions.² Subsequently, snowball sampling³ was applied to refine and expand the sample. Notably, there was a great deal of variation in how many self-help centers were identified in each jurisdiction. California and Illinois, for example, both have an extensive network of easily identifiable self-help centers, with California having over 80 and Illinois having over 120.

Survey Design

The survey instrument used was initially developed for the pilot survey of self-help centers in California and subsequently modified slightly for the national survey. Survey questions were reviewed by workgroups of the National Self-Represented Litigation Network and other subject matter experts. Questions asked how the centers are staffed and funded, methods of assisting litigants, substantive areas in which services are

¹ Some jurisdictions had their own state-wide lists (California and Illinois, for example).

² In terms of the number of self-help centers identified per jurisdiction, the median was 2 and the mean was 9.38.

³ Snowball sampling (also known as referral sampling or chain sampling) is a non-probability sampling technique that involves using existing study subjects to recruit additional subjects from among their acquaintances. In this study, we used the Internet and pre-existing lists of known self-help centers and then asked each contact to forward the survey to any additional self-help centers about which they knew.

provided and descriptive data about the number and types of clients served. The survey was distributed electronically, giving respondents from the self-help centers the opportunity to take the survey at the time and place of their choosing and to thoughtfully consider their answers.

Data Collection and Response Rate

The survey was made available between November, 2012 and April 2013. In an effort to collect as many responses as possible, three reminders were sent out to all centers the ABA had identified. The response rate for this survey was approximately 47%⁴, a rate consistent with the 30-50% identified in the literature as typical for online surveys.⁵ This yielded 222 self-help centers in 28 jurisdictions. In terms of the number of surveys received per jurisdiction, the median was 1 and the mean was 4.35. After an initial presentation on the data at a meeting of the National Self-Represented Litigation Network, an additional three states provided information about their program. Their information is included in the National Map and they are included in the directory of resources, but given the concerns regarding the difference in time in which the surveys were collected, their responses regarding staffing and methods of operation are not included in the data analysis.

Data Analysis

The design features of the survey ensured that the data would be ready for analysis with minimal format manipulation. Using Qualtrics survey software, the answers were exported directly into Excel. Incomplete surveys were exported along with completed surveys so that data could be used for those questions that had been answered.

Once exported, redundancies, where there were multiple responses for a given self-help center, were removed. These redundancies were likely the result of the snowball sampling for which contacts were encouraged to forward the survey to colleagues. In the event that more than one survey was received for a self-help center, the more complete survey was retained and any questions for which two responses contradicted each other, the response was marked as a non-response for that question.

Since California and Illinois had such high response rates for the survey, their data, which reflects different service methodologies may be overrepresented in this sample. California requires that its court based self-help centers be staffed by attorneys and support staff under their direction where Illinois has many self-help centers located in public libraries with volunteer staffing. There are a wide variety of other models.

⁴ This is an approximation. Because snowball sampling was implemented (contacts were encouraged to forward the survey to other known self-help centers), it is impossible to determine the exact number of self-help centers to which the survey was sent.

⁵ See, Lozar Manfreda, K., M. Bosnjak, J. Berzelak, I. Haas, and V. Vehovar. 2008. Web surveys versus other survey modes: A meta-analysis comparing response rates. *International Journal of Market Research* 50(1): 79-104. Also see, Shih, T.H., and X. Fan. 2008. Comparing response rates from Web and mail surveys: A meta-analysis. *Field Methods* 20(3) 249-271.

State	Number of Completed Surveys
Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wyoming	0
Alaska	2
Arizona	3
California	80
Colorado	7
Connecticut	13
DC	1
Delaware	1
Florida	11
Georgia	1
Hawaii	1
Idaho	6
Illinois	44
Louisiana	3
Maryland	17
Massachusetts	1
Michigan	5
Minnesota	1
Montana	4
Nevada	1
New Jersey	1
New Mexico	2
New York	3
North Carolina	1
Oregon	9
Pennsylvania	1
South Carolina	1
Tennessee	1
Texas	1
Utah	1
Washington	1
Wisconsin	1

Program Staff

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their self-help center's staff, including inquiries regarding the number of staff, whether volunteers are used, and what percent of the director's time is spent on the center. Taken together, the results of these questions suggest that many self-help centers are operating by combining staff time, volunteer time, and varying levels of time commitments from their directors.

Full-Time Equivalent Personnel

The majority of self-help centers are staffed by fewer than 6 full-time equivalents, with 17% of respondents indicating they did not have any FTEs, suggesting that their centers are staffed by fewer than one FTE, by volunteers or are principally technology-based programs⁶ (see Fig. 2). Thirty-three percent of respondents reported having 1 FTE, followed by 27% reporting having between 2 and 5 FTEs. Only 8% of the respondents indicated that their centers have 6 or more FTEs. Fifteen percent of respondents indicated that they did not know the answer to this question.

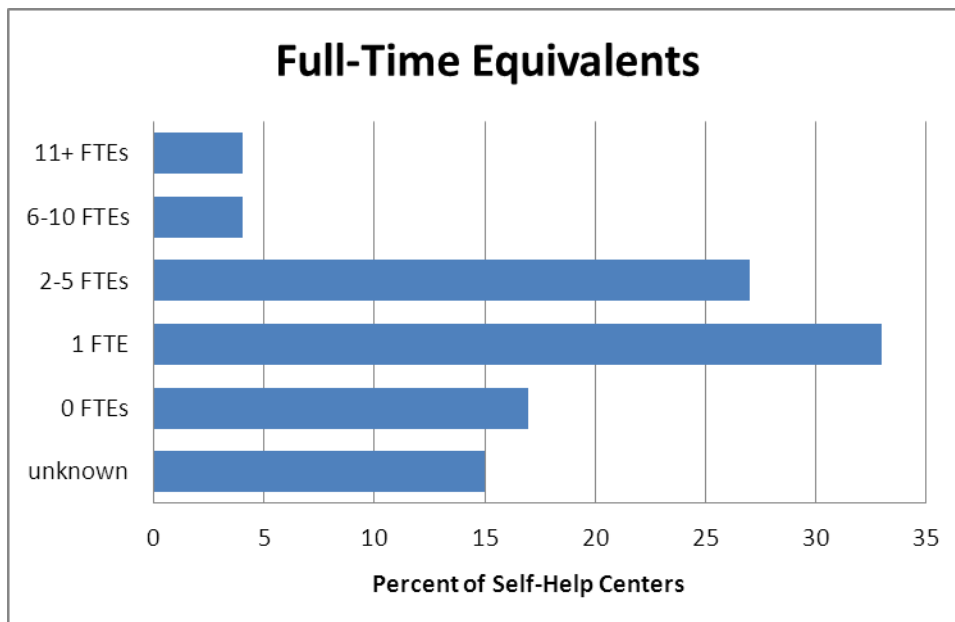


Figure 2. Number of Full-Time Equivalents Staffing Centers. This figure is based on the results of Q15: How many full-time equivalents personnel staff the self-help center? 135 respondents provided an answer to this question. The California survey did not include this question.

Volunteers

Just over half (51%) of the respondents indicated that their self-help centers rely on volunteers (see Fig. 3). The 109 respondents who had indicated that their centers relied on volunteers were then asked to provide information about their volunteers' backgrounds. Of these, 55% indicated that their center used attorneys as volunteers (see Fig. 4). Forty-six percent indicated that college students acted as volunteers, followed by 28% relying on paralegal volunteers and another 28% relying on community members. A small percentage relied on AmeriCorps/JusticeCorps and Interpreters, with 11% and 10% respectively. Other types of volunteers mentioned in the comment section include paralegal students (n=2), high school students (n=2), alliance Worknet (n=1), and retired judge (n=1)

⁶ Note, however, that programs operating *exclusively* online were not included in this survey.

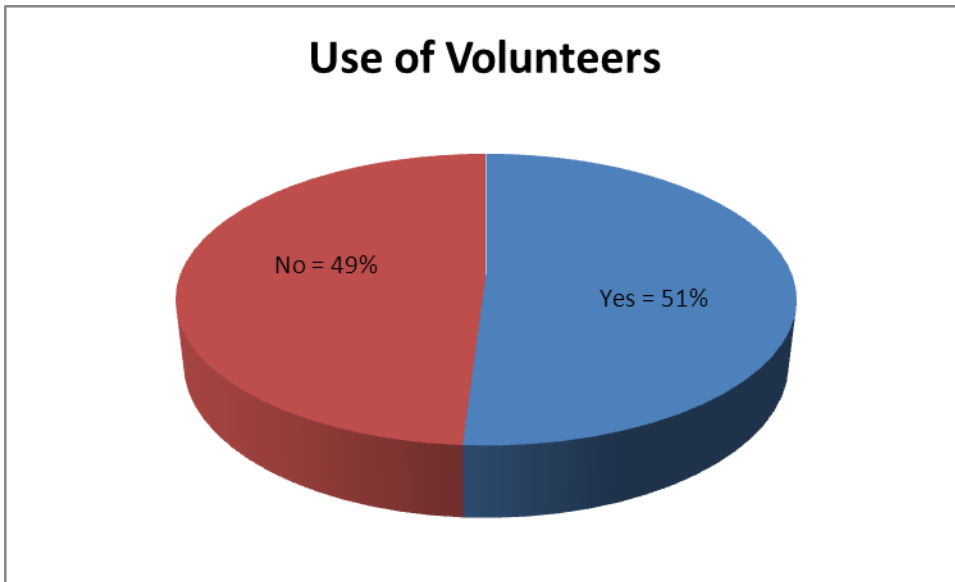


Figure 3. Use of Volunteers This figure is based on the results of Q12: Does your self-help center use volunteers? Two hundred and fourteen respondents provided an answer to this question.

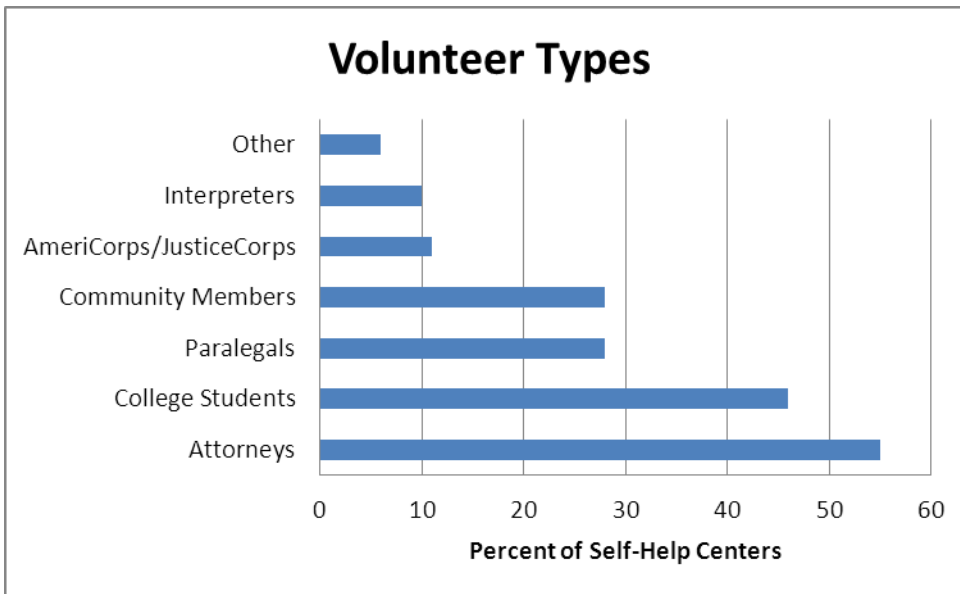


Figure 4. Volunteer Types. This figure is based on the results of Q13: What types of volunteers do you use? (Response choices were as shown above). All 109 of the respondents who indicated that their centers relied on volunteers provided an answer to this question.

Percent of Director's Time Dedicated to the Self-Help Program

Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicated that most (between 76 and 100%) of their director's time is dedicated to the self-help program. The second most common response was that between 0 and 25% of the director's time is dedicated to the self-help program, with 28% of respondents providing this answer. Seven percent of the respondents indicated that their center does not have a director.

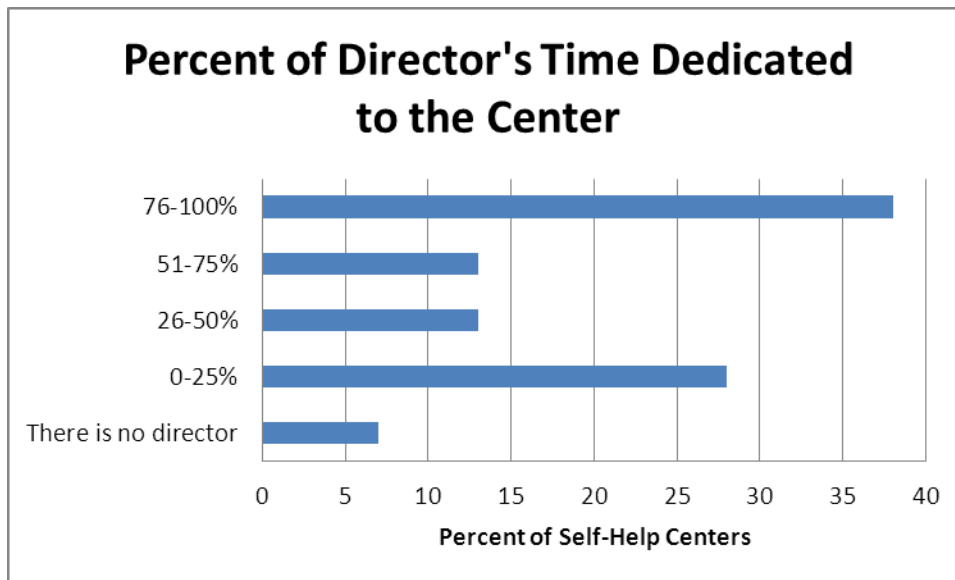


Figure 5. Percent of Director's Time Dedicated to the Center. This figure is based on the results of Q16: What percent of your self-help center's director's time is dedicated to the self-help program? (Response choices were as shown above). One hundred and ninety-seven respondents provided an answer to this question.

Program Features

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their self-help center's program features, including inquiries about languages offered, the use of e-filing, and funding. Taken together, the results of these questions suggest that about half of the self-help centers are providing services in Spanish. Additionally, respondents reported a wide range of other second languages in which services are provided. With regard to funding, self-help centers tend to rely most heavily on court, state and county funding, but also supplement such funding with a number of other sources.

Languages Offered

Approximately half (48%) of the centers reported that their staff were bilingual and/or multilingual (see Fig. 6), with Spanish being the most commonly reported second language in which services were offered (see Table 2). More than half (54%) of the respondents indicated that their self-help center offered services in Spanish. Respondents

were also asked to indicate any other languages in which services are offered. After Spanish, Mandarin was the most commonly reported language, with 10 centers indicating that they provided assistance in Mandarin. Other languages mentioned include Polish (n=2), Farsi (n=2), Somali (n=1), Creole (n=1), Italian (n=1), Chinese (n=1), Hmong (n=1), Armenian (n=1), Hindi (n=1), Tagalong (n=1), and Japanese (n=1). Fourteen survey responses mentioned using language online services to provide assistance in any language.

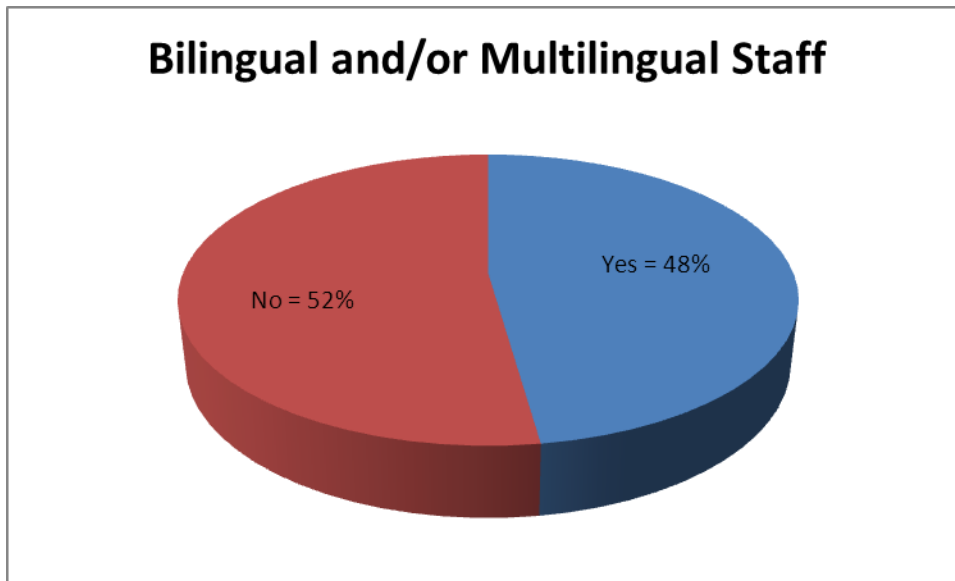


Figure 6. Bilingual and/or Multilingual Staff. This figure is based on the results of Q10: Does your self-help center have bilingual and/or multilingual staff? All 222 respondents provided an answer to this question.

Language Offered	Number of Centers Offering Language	Percent of Centers Offering Language
Spanish	119	54
Mandarin	10	4.5
Vietnamese	9	4
Cantonese	8	3.6
Korean	8	3.6
French	8	3.6
German	8	3.6
Russian	5	2.3
Arabic	4	2
ASL	3	1.4

Table 2. Number of Self-Help Centers Offering Other Languages. This figure is based on the results of Q11: In which languages does your self-help center provide services? All 222 respondents provided an answer to this question.

Electronic Filing

Electronic filing allows for the migration of court records from a paper to an electronic format, enabling document submission to multiple court systems. Such e-filing practices are becoming more common and may help reduce court costs by making the process more efficient. Thus, the survey included a question on whether self-help centers are taking advantage of this practice. The majority (88%) of self-help centers report that they do not play a role in e-filing (see Fig. 7). In most instances, that appears to be because their court has not yet undertaken e-filing.

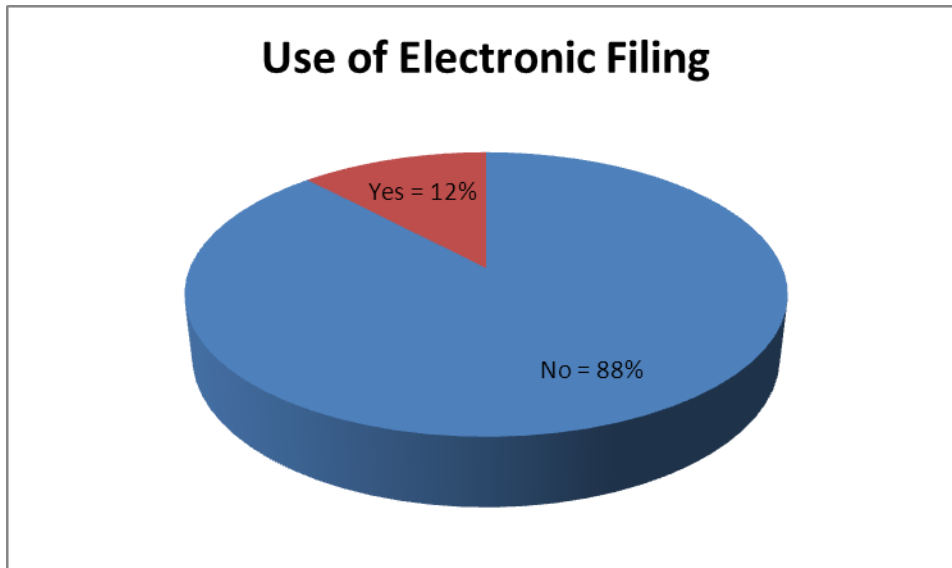


Figure 7. Use of Electronic Filing. This figure is based on the results of Q14: Does your self-help center play a role in e-filing? Two hundred and sixteen respondents provided an answer to this question.

Funding

Respondents were provided a list of possible funding sources and asked to indicate all that applied. Court budgets were the most commonly indicated source (see Fig. 8), with 49% of respondents providing this answer. State funding was the second most common response (29%) followed by county funding (14%).

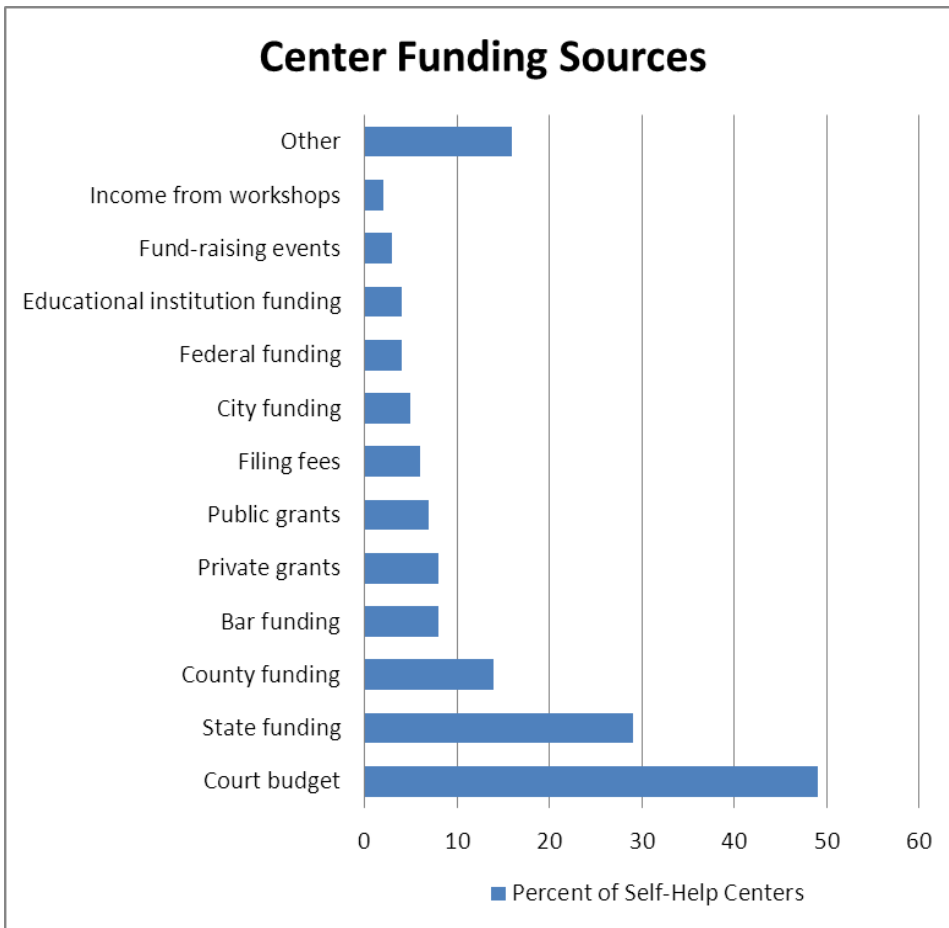


Figure 8. Funding Sources. This figure is based on the results of Q17: How is your self-help center funded? (Respondents were asked to check all that apply; response choices were as shown above). One hundred and thirty-one respondents provided answers to this question. California self-help centers are not included in this figure.

Respondents were given a text box to explain their answers, giving some insight into the 16% that indicated “other.” Text responses included: legal aid associations (n=3), law library funds (n=2), trust endowments (n=1), Access to Justice Commission funds (n=1), and private donations (n=1). Additionally four respondents mentioned sustaining their center on volunteer time. And, two respondents indicated that they had funding for initial set-up costs, but have been operating since then with no funds.

When asked to identify which source was their center’s *primary* source of funding, 47% of the respondents provided “court budget” as their answer (see Fig. 9). The second most common primary source of funding was county funding, with 11% of the self-help centers providing this answer.

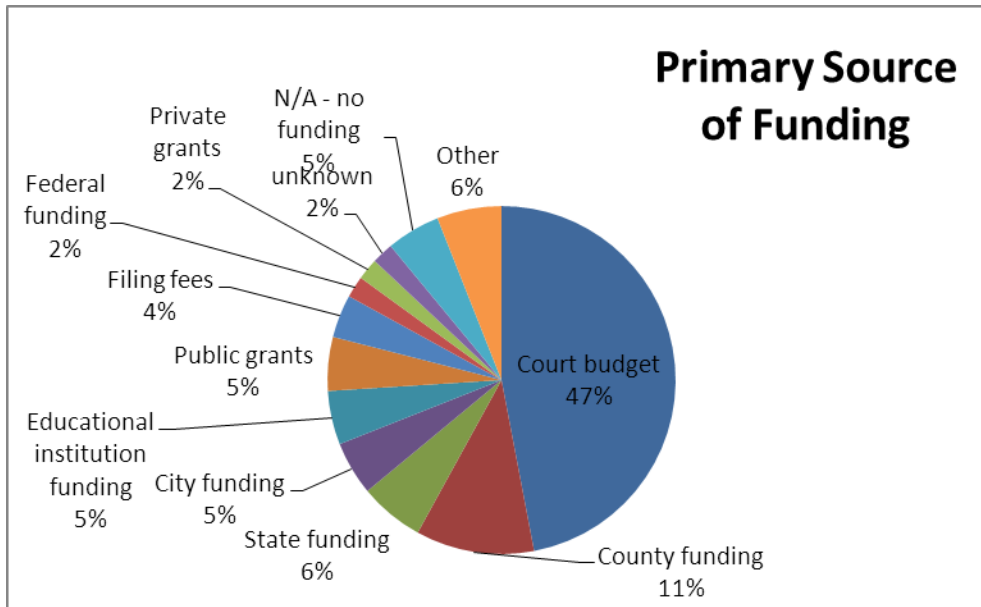


Figure 9. Primary Source of Funding. This figure is based on the results of Q18: Of the above-indicated funding sources, which is the primary source of funding? (Response choices were as shown above). One hundred and thirty-four respondents provided answers to this question. California self-help centers are not included in this figure.

California was not included in this analysis as it has a distinct structure of funding. Specifically, \$11.2 million of state court funds are provided to support court-based, attorney-supervised, self-help centers in the state. This supplements the family law facilitator program which provides over \$16 million for these services in cases involving child support and parentage.. Filing fee revenue helps to support small claims advisors who are increasingly included in self-help center operations. These funds have been supplemented with local court funding. Some county governments, including Los Angeles and San Francisco, also provide funding for self-help services at courts to help address the needs of their constituents. There are additional specialized grant funds including partnership grant funds which provide \$1.6 million for legal services agencies to provide self help services at local courts. Many courts also provide additional funding from their general court budget for their self help centers.

Service Methods and Substantive Areas

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the types of services their self-help centers provide. Most self-help centers (82%) provide some type of in-person services (82%), hard copy support (82%) and web-based information (71%). More than half of the self-help centers provide referrals to lawyer referral services (62%) and telephone assistance (55%).

In-Person Services

The majority (82%) of self-help centers reported that they provide in-person services. Assistance (but not representation) in court hearings is offered by 41% of the self-help centers (see Fig. 10). Approximately 1/3 of the centers provide mediation or settlement assistance and 1/3 provide in-person workshops.

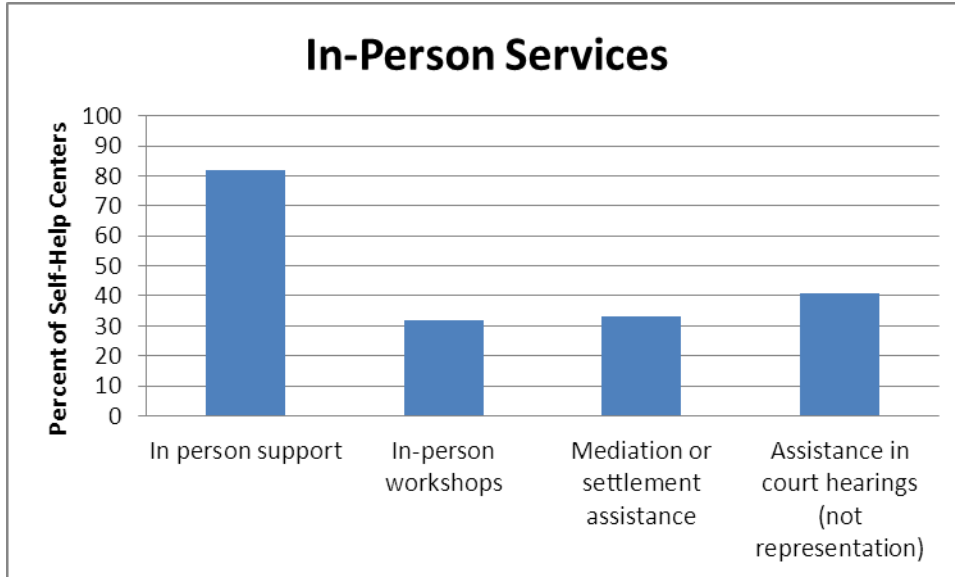


Figure 10. In-Person Services. This figure is based on the results of Q19: Please check the appropriate boxes below to indicate the types of support services your program provides in each of the identified substantive law areas. Two hundred and twenty-two respondents provided answers to this question.

Document Assistance

Document assistance is a specific service that many (over 80%) of the surveyed self-help centers reported providing (see Fig. 11). Forty-one percent of the surveyed centers indicated they provide bilingual or multilingual forms and 37% provide interactive web-based forms.

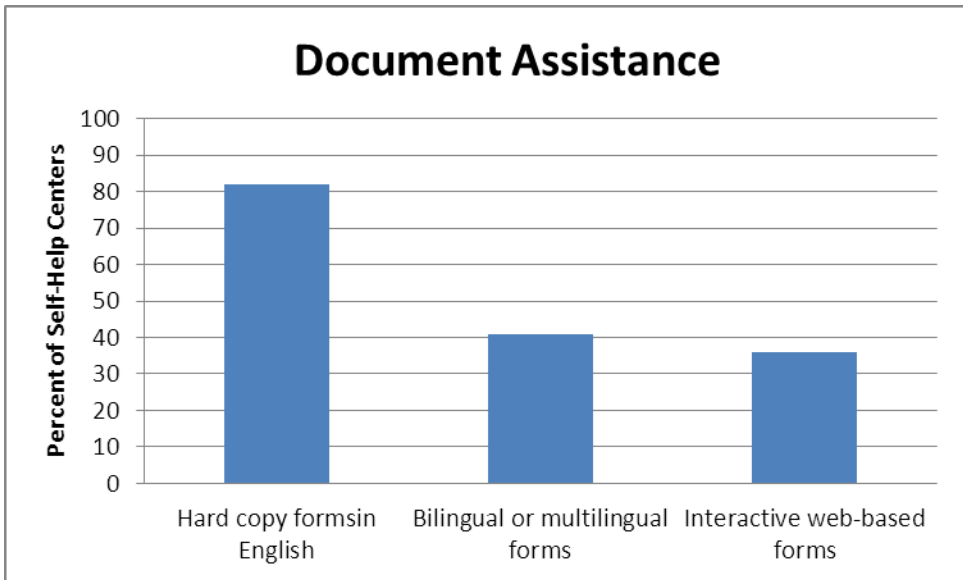


Figure 11. Document Assistance. This figure is based on the results of Q19: Please check the appropriate boxes below to indicate the types of support services your program provides in each of the identified substantive law areas. Two hundred and twenty-two respondents provided answers to this question.

Telephone Assistance

Approximately half of the surveyed self-help centers (55%) provide telephone assistance in English, with 34% providing such assistance in other languages (see Fig. 12).

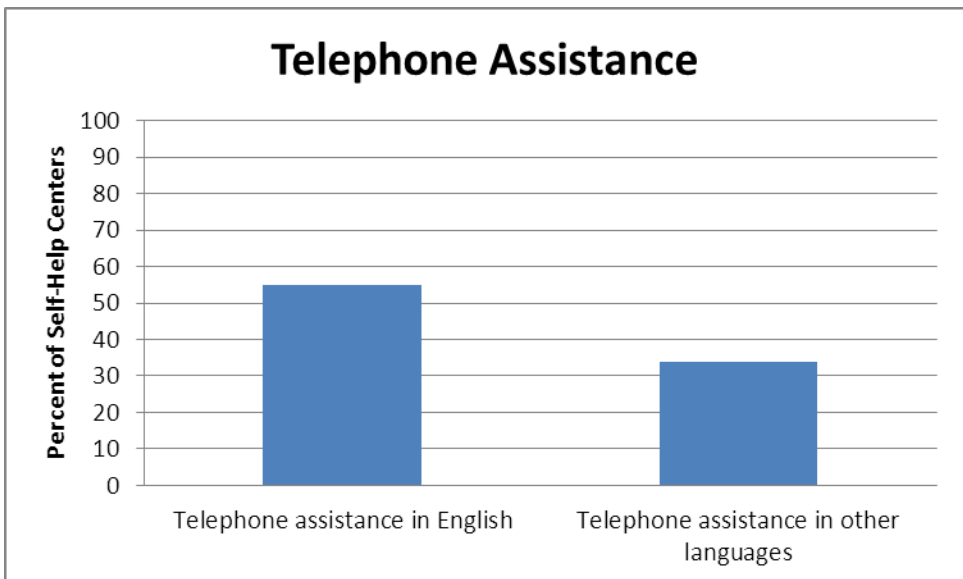


Figure 12. Telephone Assistance. This figure is based on the results of Q19: Please check the appropriate boxes below to indicate the types of support services your program provides in each of the identified substantive law areas. Two hundred and twenty-two respondents provided answers to this question.

Web-Based Assistance

Respondents were asked about a number of web-based service methods, including providing web-based information in English or other languages, providing web or videoconferencing workshops, conducting video or online tutorials, and answering emails or online questions. Seventy-one percent of those surveyed indicated that their self-help center provided web-based information in English, with 27% providing web-based information in other languages (see Fig. 13). Forty-seven percent of the centers also reported that they answer email or online questions. About a quarter of the self-help centers also provide video or online tutorials (23%) or web/videoconferencing workshops (4%).

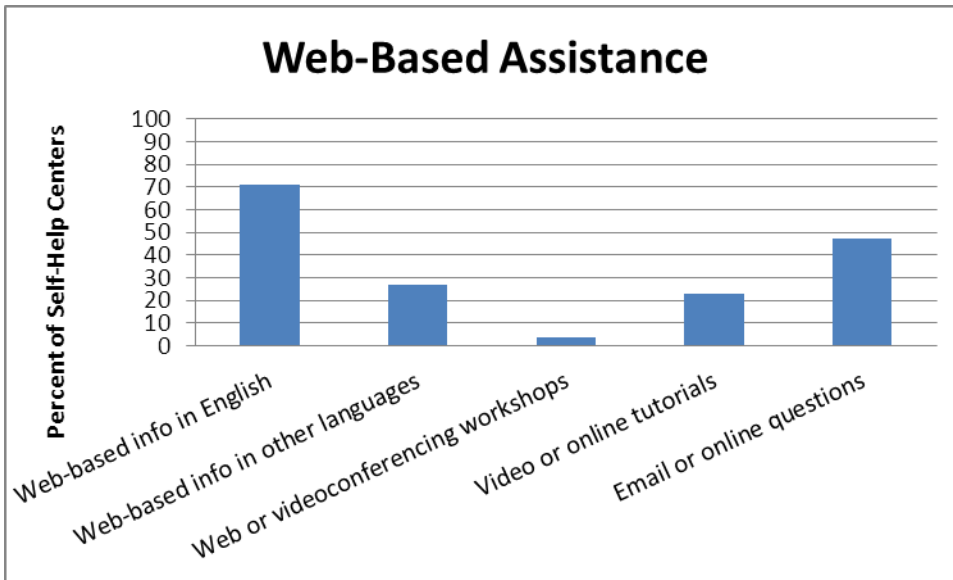


Figure 13. Web-Based Assistance. This figure is based on the results of Q19: Please check the appropriate boxes below to indicate the types of support services your program provides in each of the identified substantive law areas. Two hundred and twenty-two respondents provided answers to this question.

Referrals

Sixty-two percent of the respondents indicated that their self-help centers provide referrals to lawyer referral services (see Fig. 14). Less commonly provided were referrals to pro bono attorneys (36%), referrals to attorneys providing unbundled services (28%), and other referrals to attorneys (26%).

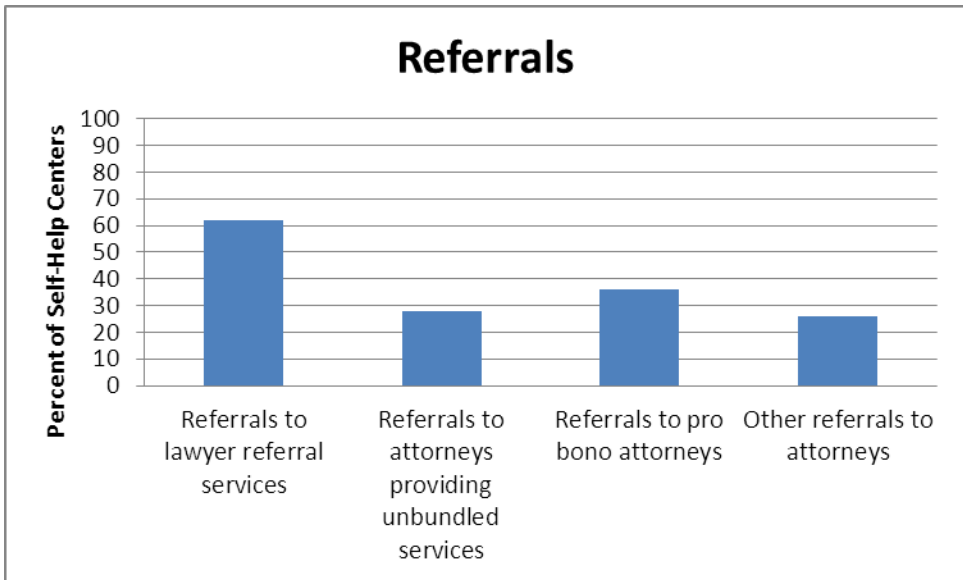


Figure 14. Referrals. This figure is based on the results of Q19: Please check the appropriate boxes below to indicate the types of support services your program provides in each of the identified substantive law areas. Two hundred and twenty-two respondents provided answers to this question.

Substantive Areas

For each of the service methods listed in the survey, respondents were asked to indicate in which substantive areas of the law these services were provided. For all service method types, the most common substantive area for which the services are provided is family law, followed by child support (see Fig. 15). Eighty-nine percent of the respondents indicated that their self-help center provided services in family law. Domestic violence is also a common area of the law for support to be offered, followed by guardianships, landlord/tenant matters, small claims, and general civil matters.

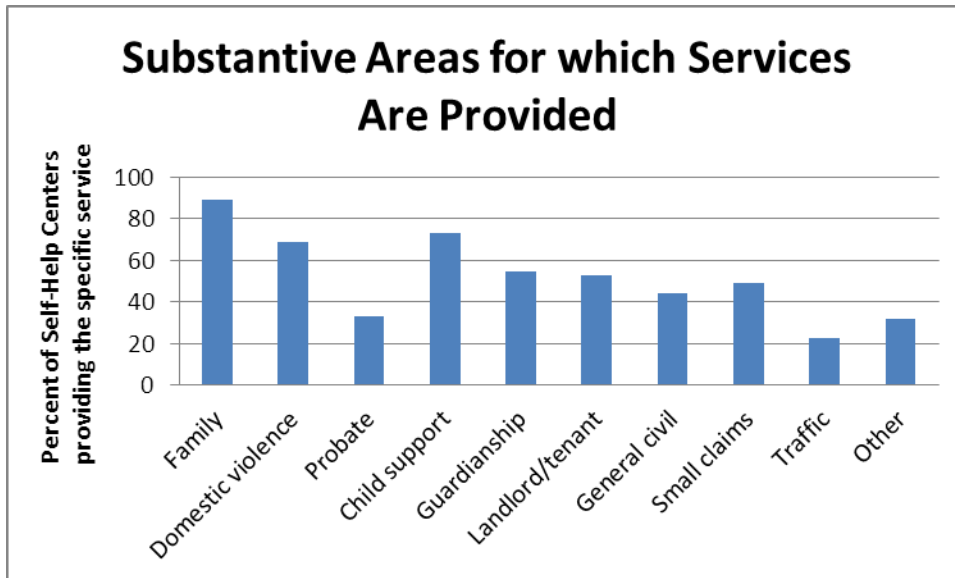


Figure 15. Substantive Areas for which Services are Provided. This figure is based on the results of Q19: Please check the appropriate boxes below to indicate the types of support services your program provides in each of the identified substantive law areas. For “referrals to lawyer referral services” and “other referrals,” 142 respondents provided answers (these services areas were not included in the California survey). For all other service areas, 222 respondents provided answers.

Volume Data

Number of Persons Served

Respondents were asked to estimate the number of people that their self-help center served within the 6 months prior to the survey. Centers varied quite a bit in terms of the volume of clients served, with responses ranging from 0 to over 10,000 (see Fig. 16). The average number of clients served over the six month period was 3,237. This data leads to the conclusion that nearly 3.7 million people are served by self-help centers annually.⁷

⁷ Because California represents a large percentage of the centers who responded, and because its self-help centers serve more than the average number of people, this figure was calculated in two steps to make the expansion to self-help centers nationwide more representative and to more accurately determine the total number of people served per year. First, the survey identified an average of 3,237 people being served by each center, not including California, over a six month period. That figure was multiplied by 2 and expanded to the 386 centers (466 total were identified, but the figure 386 was used to account for the absence of the 80 California centers in this calculation) which results in 2,498,964 people served per year in all states except California. Second, the California figure for number of people served per year was added, 1,200,000, (California requires that self-help centers report this information, which is where this figure comes from), which results in 3,698,964 people being served per year, nationwide.

It is possible, if not likely, that the centers responding to this survey serve more people than the average of the centers overall and the total figure extrapolated here is somewhat larger than the actual number of people served. On the other hand, it is likely there are more than 466 centers throughout the US and the actual number of people could be higher as a result of the services provided by an unknown number of unidentified centers.

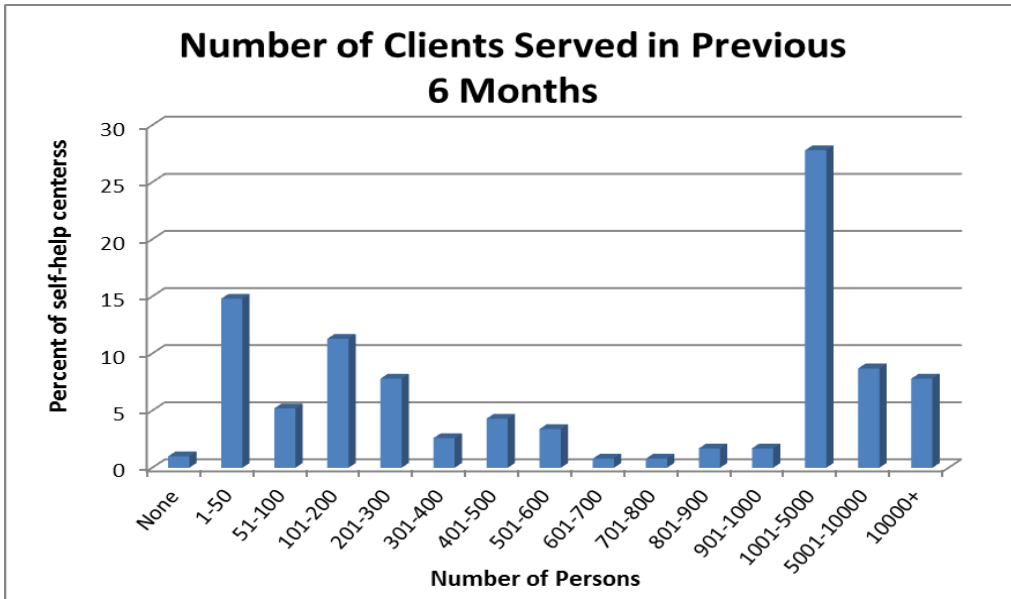


Figure 16. Number of Persons Centers Served in Previous 6 Months. This figure is based on the results of Q21: Approximately how many persons were served by your self-help center in the last 6 months? While this survey collected six month totals by individual center, California data was provided separately through California’s reporting requirements and could only be broken down by county. Therefore, this figure excludes California centers because its data was not comparable. One-hundred and fifteen (non-California) respondents provided answers to this question. An additional 10 respondents indicated that they did not know the answer to this question and 17 simply did not respond.

In an effort to determine whether and why self-help centers were unable to provide services to everyone, the survey asked respondents to estimate the number of persons who had requested service but were unable to obtain help at the center and to provide a reason for having turned away customers. Of those who provided an estimate (n=82), 43% indicated that they were able to serve all persons who came to their center for assistance (see Fig. 17). The remaining 57%, however, indicated that they had turned away some number of persons over the 6 month period prior to the survey. Of those who had to turn away customers, about 1/3 indicated they turned away 1-10 people, about 1/3 indicated they turned away 11-50 people, and the remaining 1/3 turned away over 50 people in the previous 6 months.

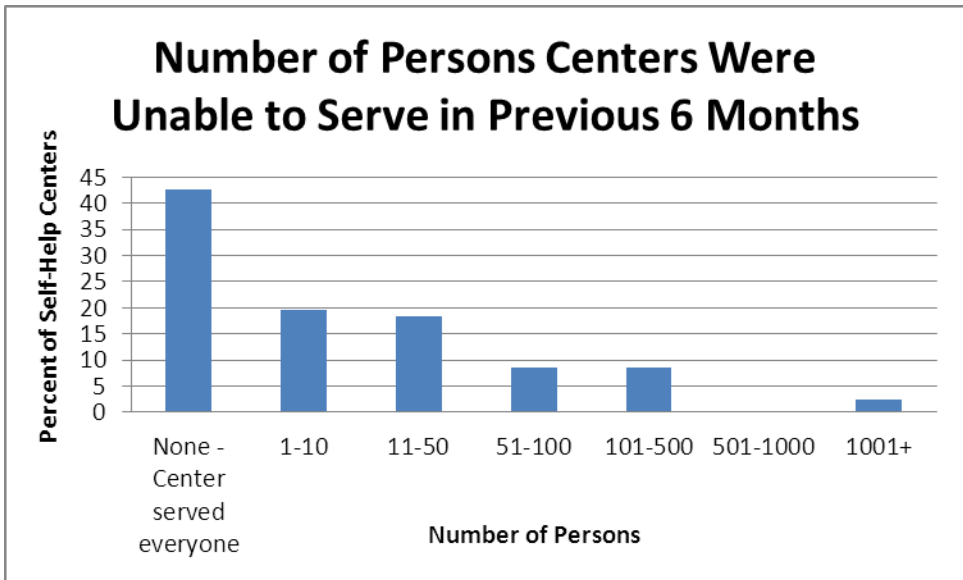


Figure 17. Number of Persons Centers Were Unable to Serve in Previous 6 Months. This figure is based on the results of Q22: Approximately how many persons requesting service was your self-help center unable to serve in the last 6 months? Eighty-two respondents provided an answer to this question. An additional 36 respondents indicated that they did not know the answer to this question. Twenty-four simply did not respond. This question was not included in the California survey.

Out of the 222 surveyed, 162 provided an explanation for why their center was occasionally unable to assist people. Eighty-one percent indicated that they turned people away because litigants' matters were too complicated or their case types were not served by the center (see Fig. 18). Forty-seven percent of those who provided an explanation indicated that the volume of customers exceeded the center's capacity to help. Twenty-seven percent cited county/jurisdiction limitations. And, 8% cited income limitations. Respondents were provided with a text box to add other explanations, and four respondents indicated they turned people away because of conflicts of interest (presumably because they establish an attorney-client relationship with the litigants that they serve) and six indicated that customers either did not show up or arrived too late in the day for the center to be of assistance.

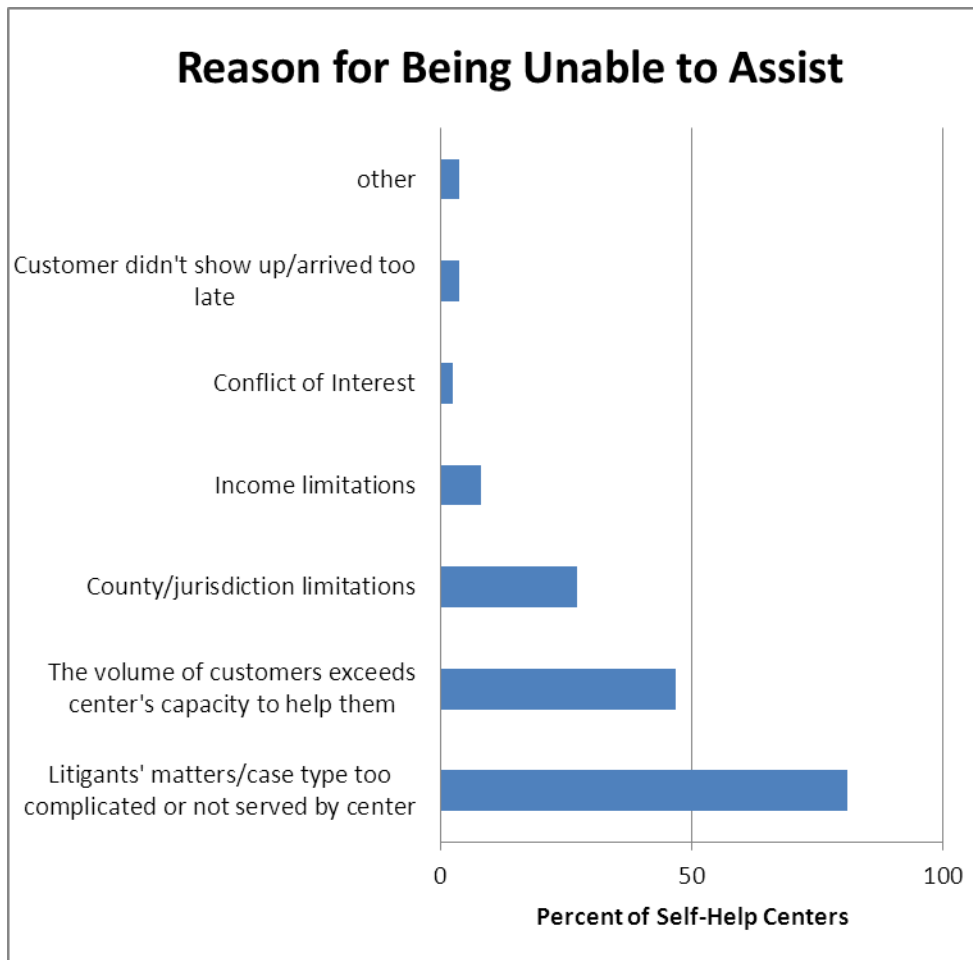


Figure 18. Reason for Being Unable to Assist. This figure is based on the results of Q23: If you had to turn people away, for what reason(s) did you do so? Percentages in this figure represent percent of respondents providing the indicated response choice out of the 162 respondents who provided an answer to this question. Note that “Customer didn’t show up/arrived too late” and “Conflict of interest” were not provided in the response choices for the survey, but several respondents indicated these responses in the text box provided for this question.

Limited Scope Representation

In order to determine what kinds of services might meet the legal needs of self-help center customers, a number of questions were asked about limited scope representation. First, respondents were asked to estimate the number of their center’s customers who would benefit from unbundled services. Of the 186 respondents who provided an estimate, 86% indicated that at least some of their customers would benefit from such services; 21% indicated that a very high proportion of their customers (81-100%) would benefit (see Fig. 19).

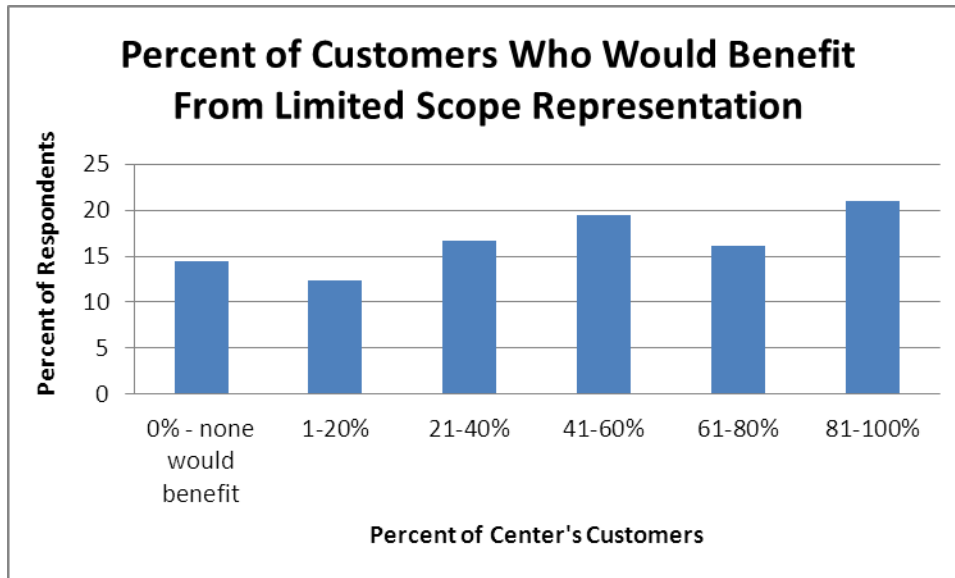


Figure 19. Customers Who Would Benefit From Limited Scope Representation. This figure is based on the results of Q24: What is your best estimate of the number and percent of customers who could benefit from limited scope representation to assist them with legal strategy, preparing paperwork, appearing in court for limited issues, negotiations, discovery or other issues? One-hundred and eighty-six respondents provided an estimate for this question.

However, while many of the respondents believed that their customers would benefit from limited scope representation, most respondents felt that only a small proportion of their customers could afford such services at the going rate in their community. The majority of respondents (81%) believed that under a quarter of their customers could afford to pay the going rate. (see Fig. 20). Nineteen percent of the respondents, however, believed that more than quarter of the center’s customers could afford such services, with 15% indicating that they believed 26-50% of their customers could afford such services and 4% indicating that 51-75% of their customers could afford such services.

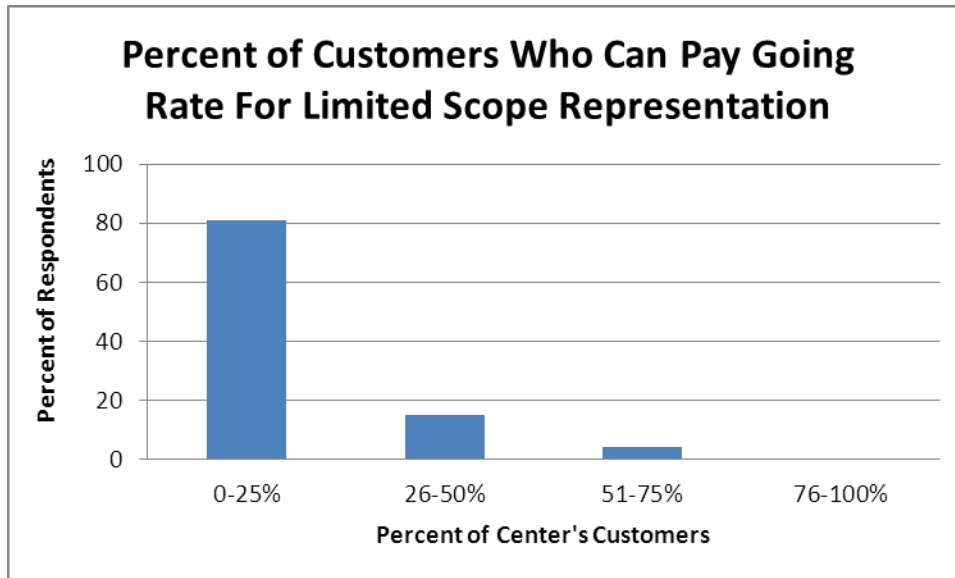


Figure 20. Percent of Customers Who Could Pay the Going Rate. This figure is based on the results of Q25: What is your best estimate of the percent of customers who could pay the going rate of an attorney in your community for limited scope assistance? One hundred and seventy-nine respondents provided an estimate for this question; 20 did not answer and 23 indicated “I’m not sure.”

When asked to identify which specific limited scope services are most greatly needed, 196 respondents replied. Of these, the most commonly cited service was limited court appearances for single hearings (62% of respondents gave this answer), followed by document assistance (61%) and limited court appearances for single issues (58%).

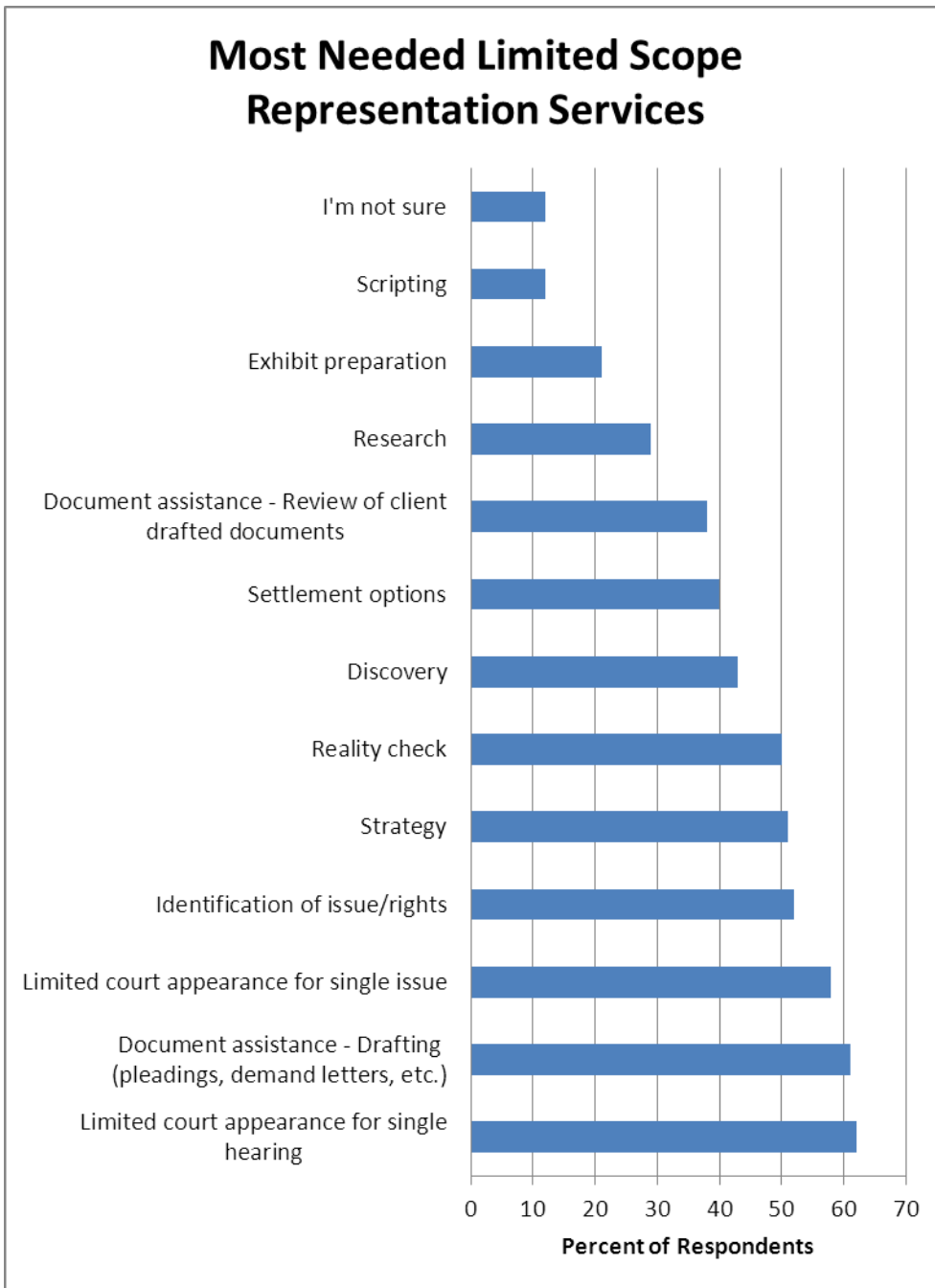


Figure 21. Most Needed Limited Scope Services. This figure is based on the results of Q26: Which specific limited scope services are most greatly needed (response choices were as shown above; respondents were asked to check all that apply). One-hundred and ninety-six respondents provided an answer to this question.

Yet, despite responses suggesting that many of their customers would benefit from limited scope representation, that some of them could actually afford it, and that there are a range of types of limited scope services that are needed, just more than a third (38% of those who responded to the question) indicated that their self-help center provides information about limited scope representation (see Fig. 22).

Centers Providing Information About Limited Scope Representation

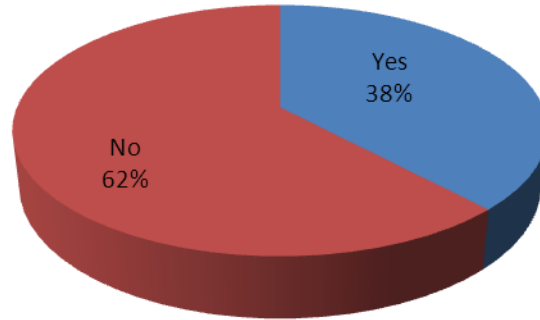


Figure 22. Centers Providing Information About Limited Scope Representation. This figure is based on the results of Q31: Do you provide information about limited scope representation options to center users? Two hundred respondents provided an answer to this question.

Finally, respondents were asked about limited scope lawyer referral service panels in their communities. While, 44% indicated that their communities did not have such panels, and 15% indicated that their communities did, a full 41% reported that they were not sure about the answer to this question (see Fig. 23). Meanwhile, 69% of respondents indicated that they believed that a limited scope lawyer referral service panel would be helpful (see Fig. 24).

Whether Community Has Limited Scope Lawyer Referral Service Panel

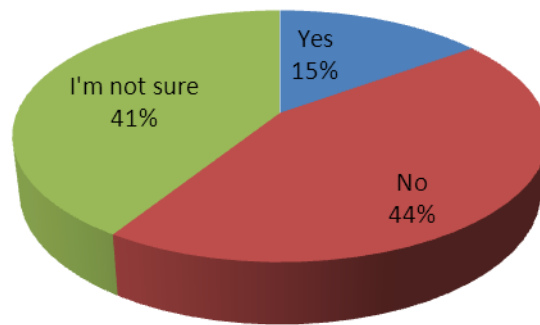


Figure 23. Whether Community Has Limited Scope Lawyer Referral Service Panel. This figure is based on the results of Q29: Does your community have a limited scope lawyer referral service panel? One hundred and ten respondents provided an answer to this question (this question was not included in the California survey)

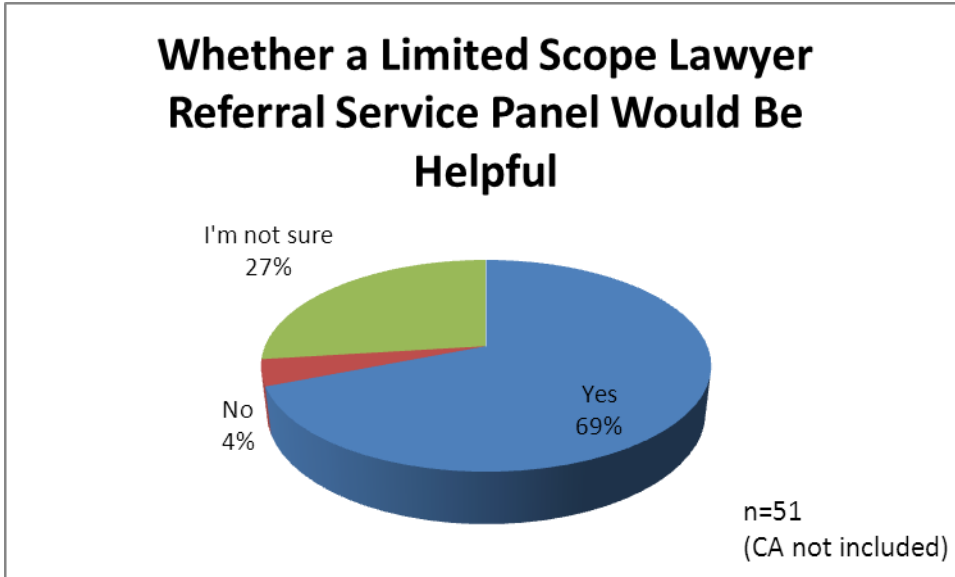


Figure 24. Whether a Limited Scope Lawyer Referral Service Panel Would Be Helpful. This figure is based on the results of Q30: If no, would such a panel be helpful to you? Fifty respondents provided an answer to this question (this question was not included in the California survey)

Full Representation

Respondents were asked to estimate how many of their customers need full representation and would *not* benefit from limited scope representation. While 40% of the respondents felt that none of their customers needed full representation, the remaining 60% did feel that at least some of their customers did need full representation (see Fig. 25). Approximately 20% of the respondents estimated that 1-10% of their customers need full representation. And another 20% estimated that 11-25% of their customers need full representation. Only around 3.5% of the respondents felt that most or all of their customers (76-100%) needed full representation.

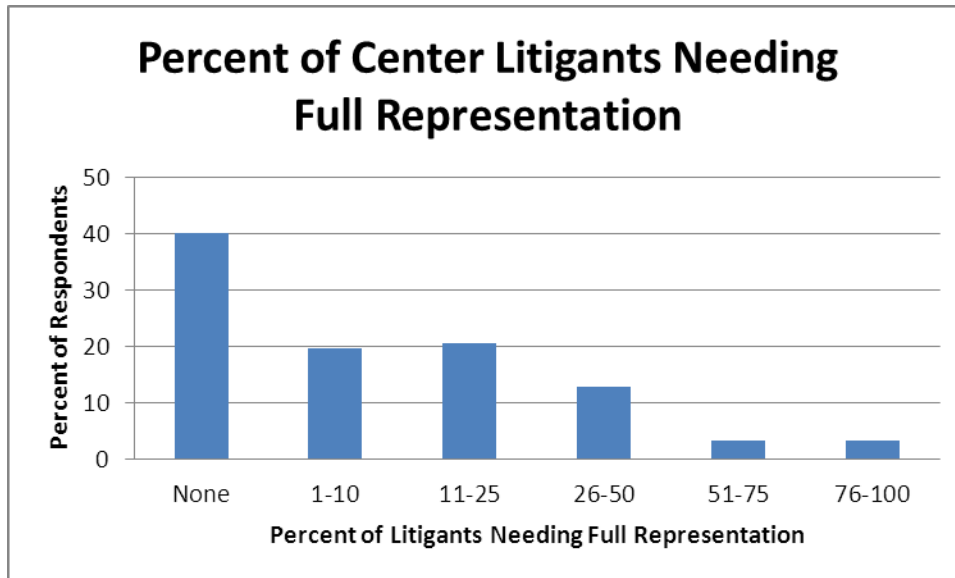


Figure 25. Number of Center’s Litigants Per Month Needing Full Representation. This figure is based on the results of Q27: Approximately how many (or what percent of) litigants each month need full representation for their case and would not benefit from limited scope representation? One hundred and ten respondents provided an answer to this question (this question was not included in the California survey)

When asked to estimate the percent of litigants who could pay the going rate for an attorney, 68% of respondents indicated that they believed less than a quarter of their center’s customers could afford an attorney (see Fig. 26). Twenty-one percent of the respondents, however, indicated that they were not sure.

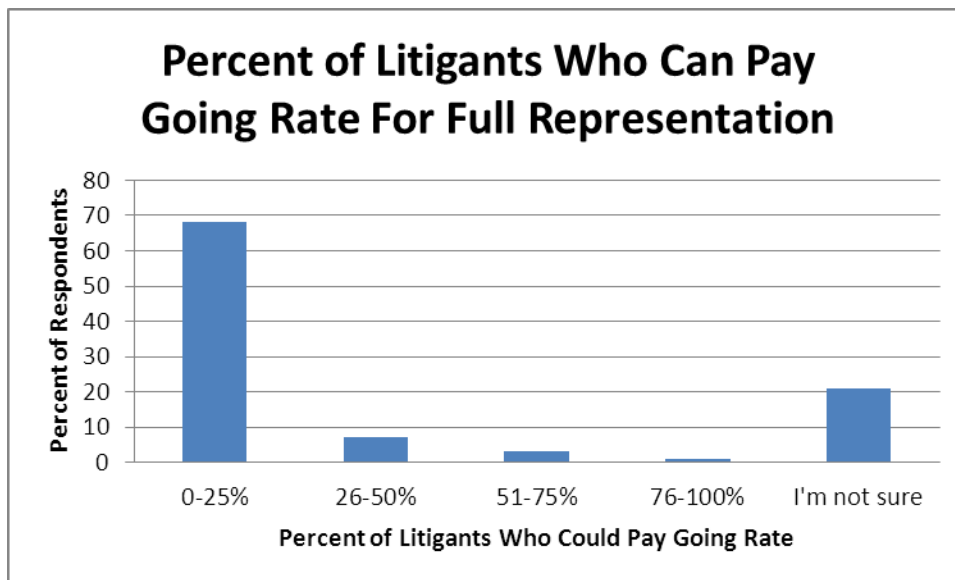


Figure 26. Percent of Litigants Who Could Pay Going Rate for Attorney. This figure is based on the results of Q28: Of them, approximately what percentage could pay the going rate of an attorney in your community for full representation? One hundred and fourteen respondents provided an answer to this question (this question was not included in the California survey)

V. Conclusion

The findings of the present survey provide a nationwide picture of legal self-help centers and, it is hoped, will contribute to discussions on how to expand and better utilize such resources to improve access to justice for the growing population of self-represented litigants. While the volume of clients served by self-help centers varies substantially, there are some noteworthy findings with regard to staffing, program features, service methods and substantive areas, and the clients served. In thinking about lines of inquiry moving forward, the results of this survey suggest a number of topics for further analysis and discussion.

First, in a tight economy, it is certainly important to think creatively about pulling together resources. The results of this survey reveal that self-help centers are doing just that, both in terms of staffing personnel and funding sources. With regard to staffing, self-help centers tend to be operating by combining staff time, volunteer time, and varying levels of time commitments from their directors. The majority of self-help centers are staffed by five or fewer full-time equivalents and about half of the centers reported relying on volunteers as well. Notably, centers rely on a range of types of volunteers, including attorneys, paralegals, students, and community members. With regard to funding, self-help centers tend to rely most heavily on court, state and county funding, but also supplement such funding with a number of other sources. These sources include:

- Bar funding
- Private and public grants
- Income generated from filing fees
- City and Federal funding
- Educational institution funding
- Funds from legal aid associations
- Law library funds
- Trust endowments
- Access to Justice Commission funds
- Private donations
- Fund-raising
- Income from workshops

Second, given the variation in populations served and availability of resources, it is unlikely that in terms of service methods a single approach would be appropriate. It may be of great benefit for self-help centers to explore alternative methods of delivering assistance to best reach their clients. A snapshot of the typical service methods suggests that most self-help centers provide some type of in-person services, document assistance and web-based information. Less commonly provided services include in-person workshops, interactive web-based forms, web or videoconferencing workshops, video or online tutorials, responding to email or online questions, and referrals to pro bono attorneys and attorneys providing unbundled services. More work needs to be done to tease out which service methods are most useful, given the needs of specific populations

served. Technology-based service methods, such as interactive web-based forms and phone assistance, may go a long way in helping rural populations, for example.

The information collected here clearly demonstrates that self-help centers are reaching their target customer base, being those of limited resources. We see that most respondents reported being able to assist most of their customers, but a subset of their customers' legal needs was too complicated and/or their case types were not served by the center. Therefore, more work needs to be done to efficiently identify those who would most benefit from self-help assistance and those who are in need of other services. For example, most respondents indicated that they believed their customers would benefit from limited scope representation, though only 38% of the centers provide information about such services and only 15% indicated that their community has a limited scope lawyer referral service panel. Self-help centers may be able to play a role in channeling such populations to limited scope representation or full representation attorneys, if appropriate, while freeing up center resources for the customers who most need that type of assistance.