



The State
of
**State
Courts**

★
2
0
1
7
★

★
P
O
L
L
★

NCSC
National Center for State Courts

SURVEY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS



**Chief Judge Anna
Blackburne-Rigsby**
District of Columbia



Kathryn Dolan
Indiana



Sally Holewa
North Dakota



David Slayton
Texas



Jesse Rutledge
NCSC

METHODOLOGY



WHAT: NCSC nationwide telephone survey

WHO: Conducted by GBA Strategies

WHEN: October 28-November 1, 2017

POLLED: 1,000 Registered Voters

STATS: MOE +/- 3.1% 19 times out of 20

KEY FINDINGS



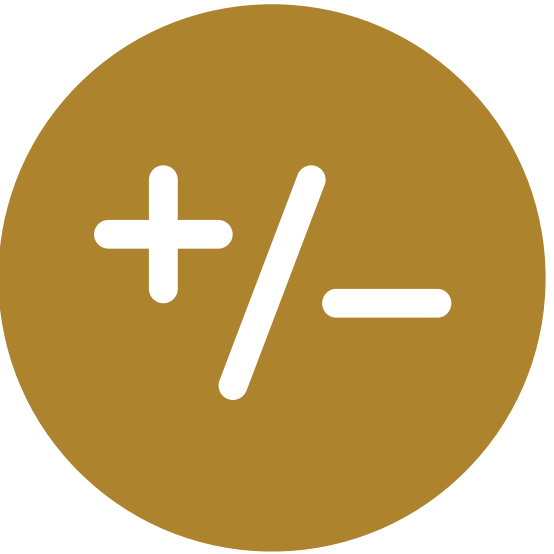
After several years of survey work, we see **consistency emerging** on core questions of public trust and confidence.



Judges are perceived as out of touch with community concerns, and the **public seeks greater engagement from the courts.**



Access to justice in rural areas is a concern for many—especially those in the South and Southwest.



The justice system is still seen as too complicated to allow for **self-representation**—but the public can identify specific **customer service challenges** and **simple solutions** to remedy this.

FIGURE #1

Courts remain the most trusted branch of government.

Q: “How much confidence do you, yourself, have in each institution—a great deal of confidence, some confidence, not very much confidence, or no confidence at all.”

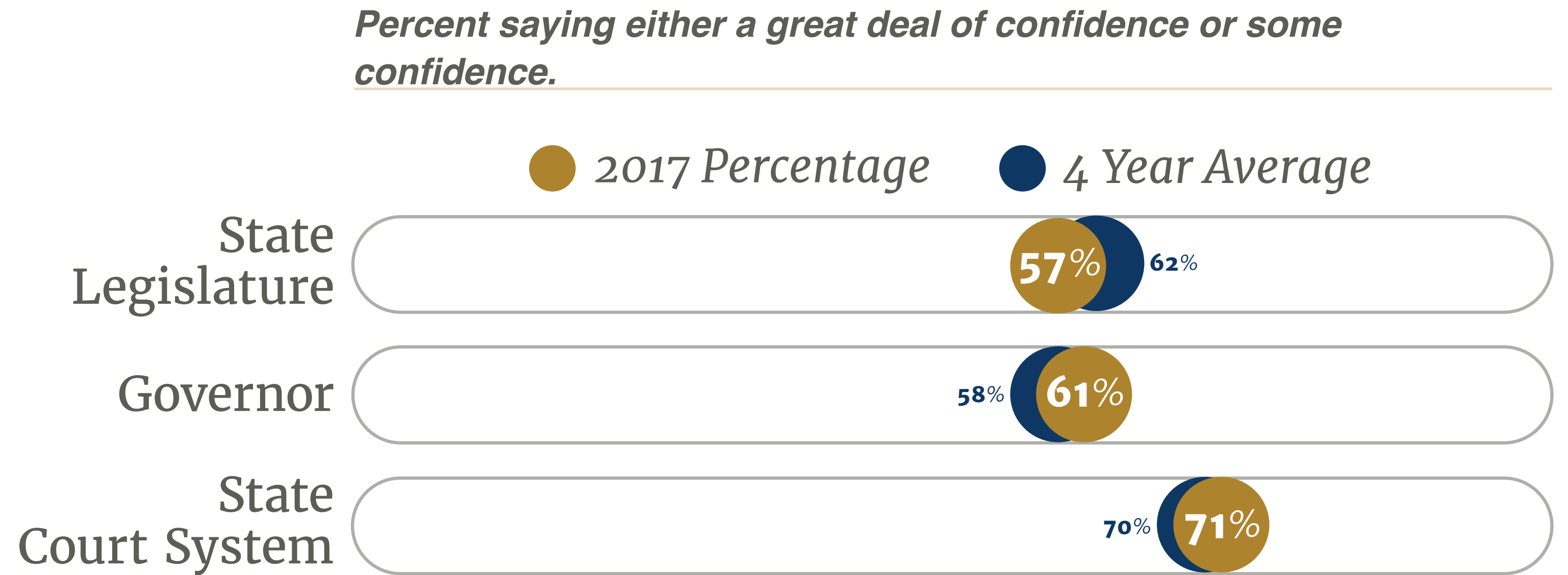


FIGURE #2

Public trust barometers closely track to the State of the State Courts polling averages since 2012.

Q: “Do the following words or phrases describe the state courts very well, well, not very well or not well at all?”

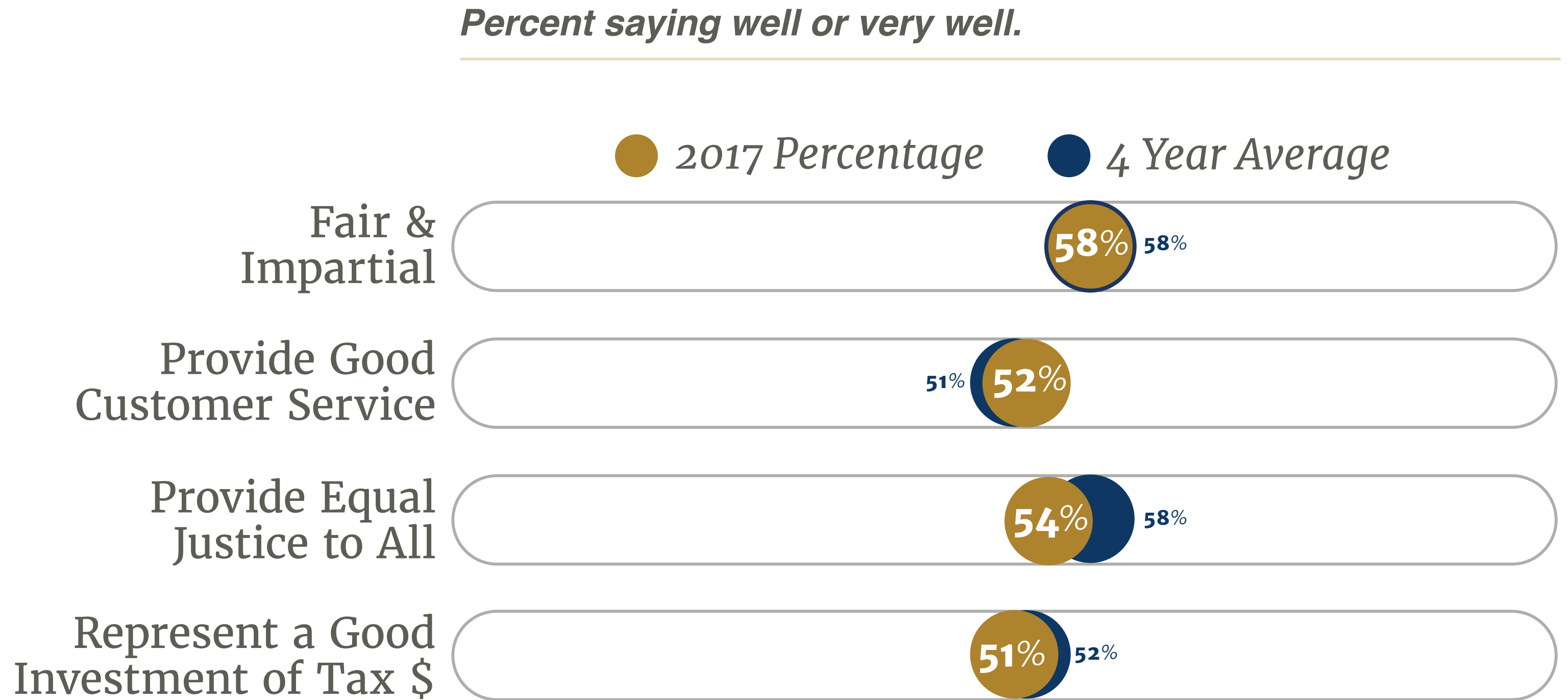
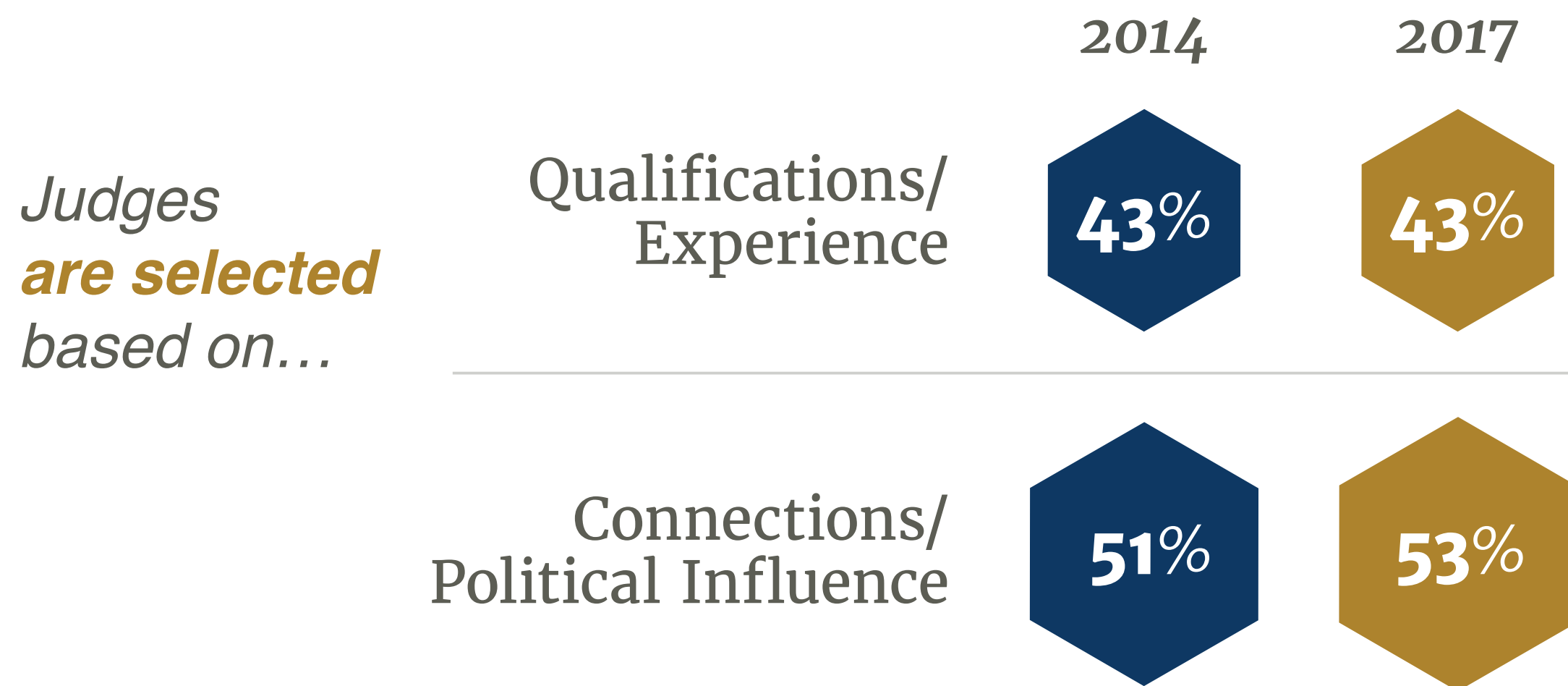


FIGURE #3

Voters continue to remain wary that politics undermines the impartiality of the court system.

Q: “Which statement comes closer to your own view: Judges in (STATE) courts are selected based on their qualifications and experience OR Many judges are there because of personal connections or political influences rather than qualifications.”



Q: “Which statement comes closer to your own view: Judges in (STATE) courts make decisions based on an objective review of the facts and the law OR Judges in (STATE) courts make decisions based more on their own beliefs and political pressure.”

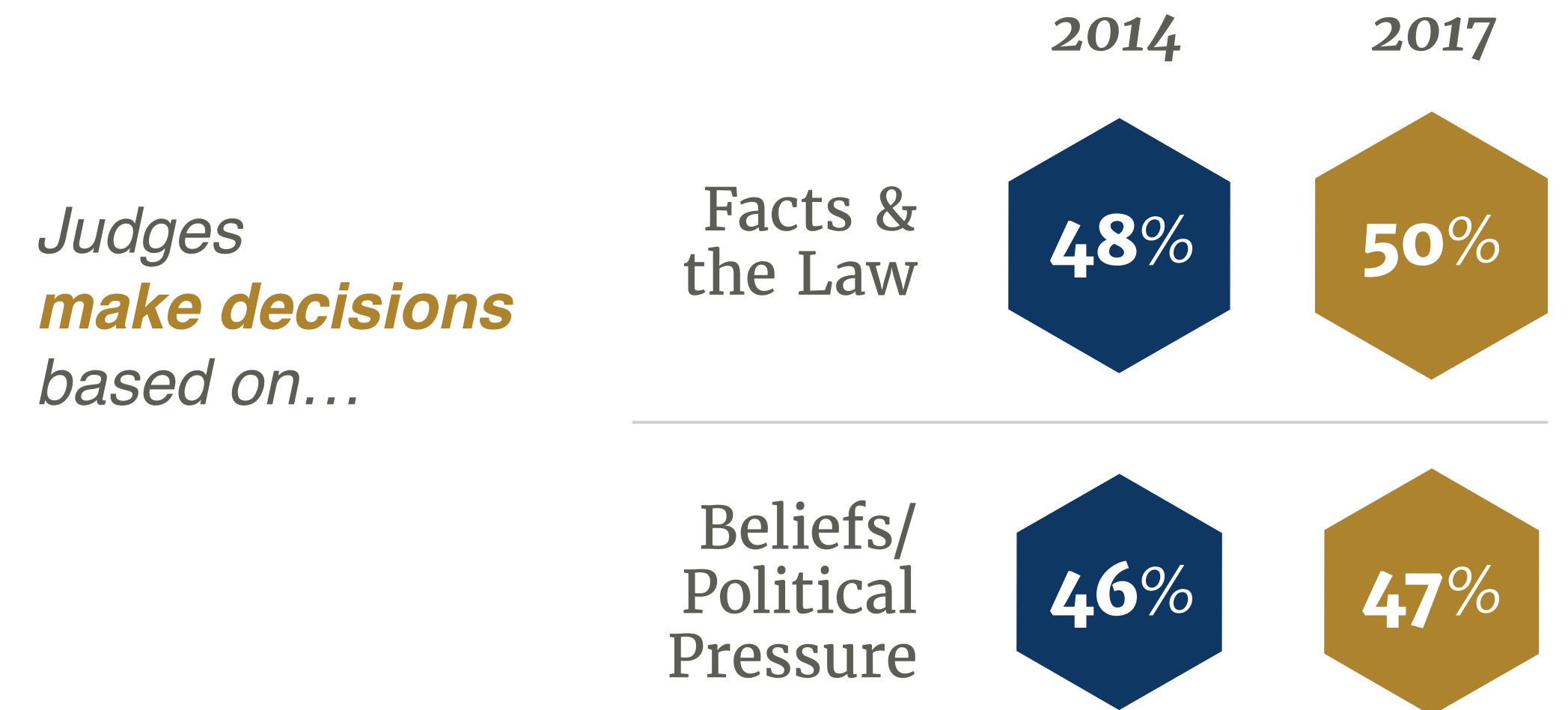


FIGURE #4

Judges are perceived as out of touch with community concerns.

Q: “Which statement comes closer to your own view?”

Statement 1

“In general, judges in (STATE) courts reflect the values of our communities and **understand the challenges facing the people who appear in their courtrooms.**”

Statement 2

“Many judges in (STATE) courts don't understand the challenges facing people who appear in their courtrooms and **need to do a better job of getting out into the community and listening to people.**”

Don't Know



FIGURE #6

Delivering access to justice in rural America presents challenges to which most voters are sympathetic...

Q: *“A challenge facing many state court systems is how to provide court services to rural, remote, and underpopulated areas that are sometimes 100+ miles away from the nearest courthouse. Do you view this as a major problem, a minor problem, or not a real problem in (STATE)?”*



FIGURE #7

...And most would like to see these challenges addressed.

Q: “Which of the following proposed solutions do you think is the best way for states to address the question of how to provide court services to people living in rural, remote, and underpopulated areas?”

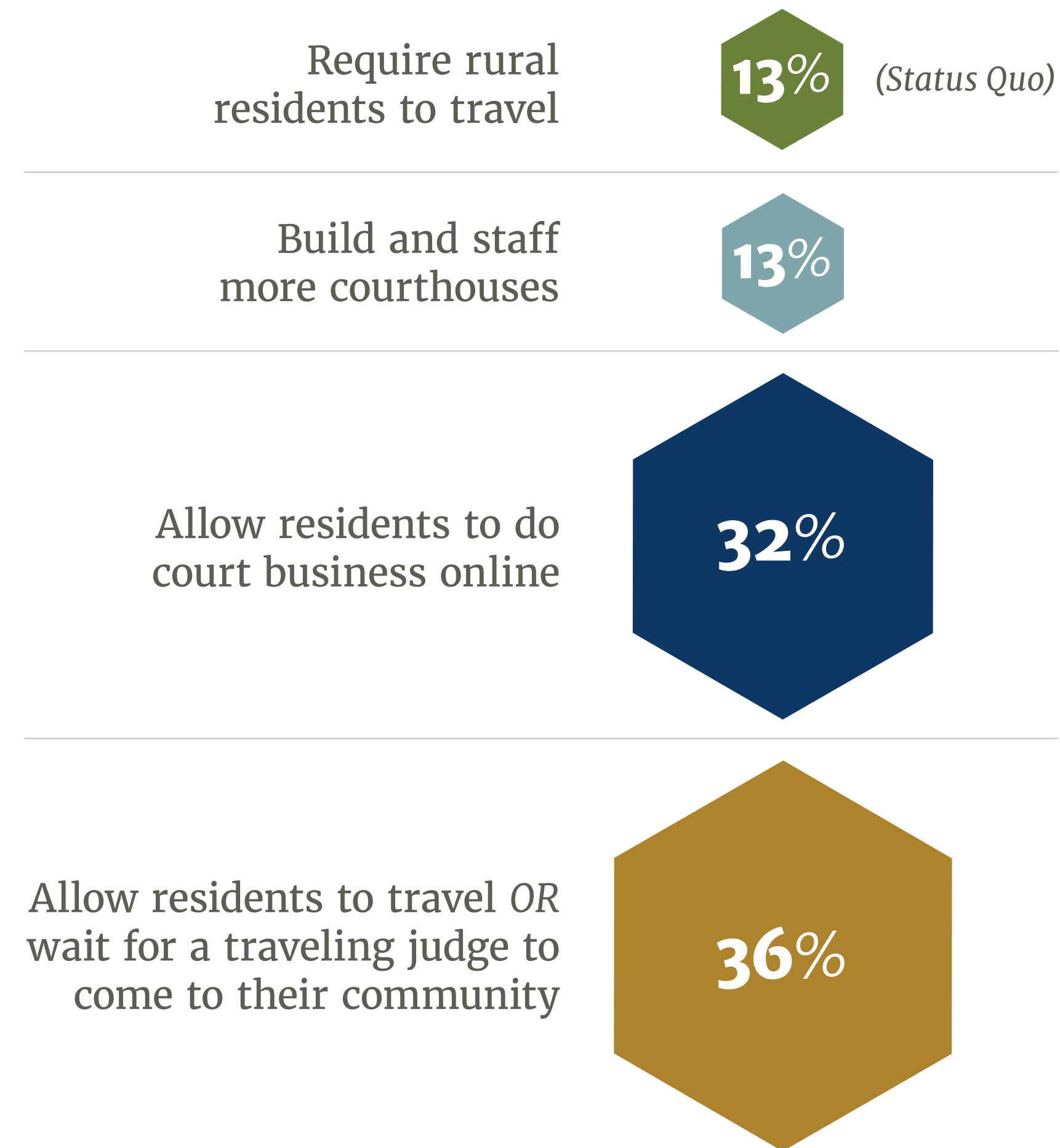


FIGURE #8

The court system is still seen as too complicated to allow for self-representation.

Q: “Despite the cost, I would want to be represented by a lawyer anytime I was dealing with the court system.”

Percentage saying somewhat or strongly agree.

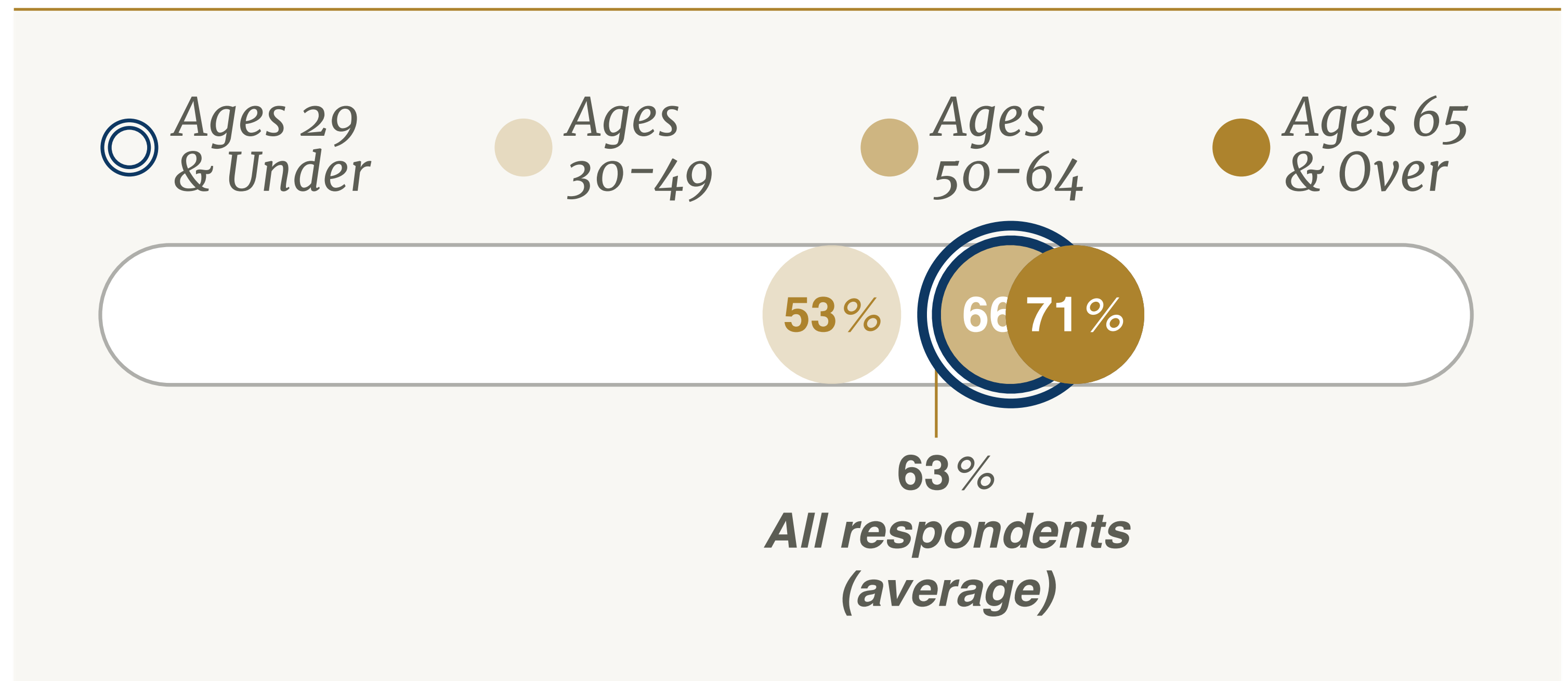


FIGURE #9

Customer service concerns tell courts where to focus resources...

Q: “If you had an issue that needed to be resolved in the (STATE) courts, which TWO of the following customer service concerns would you be most worried about?”

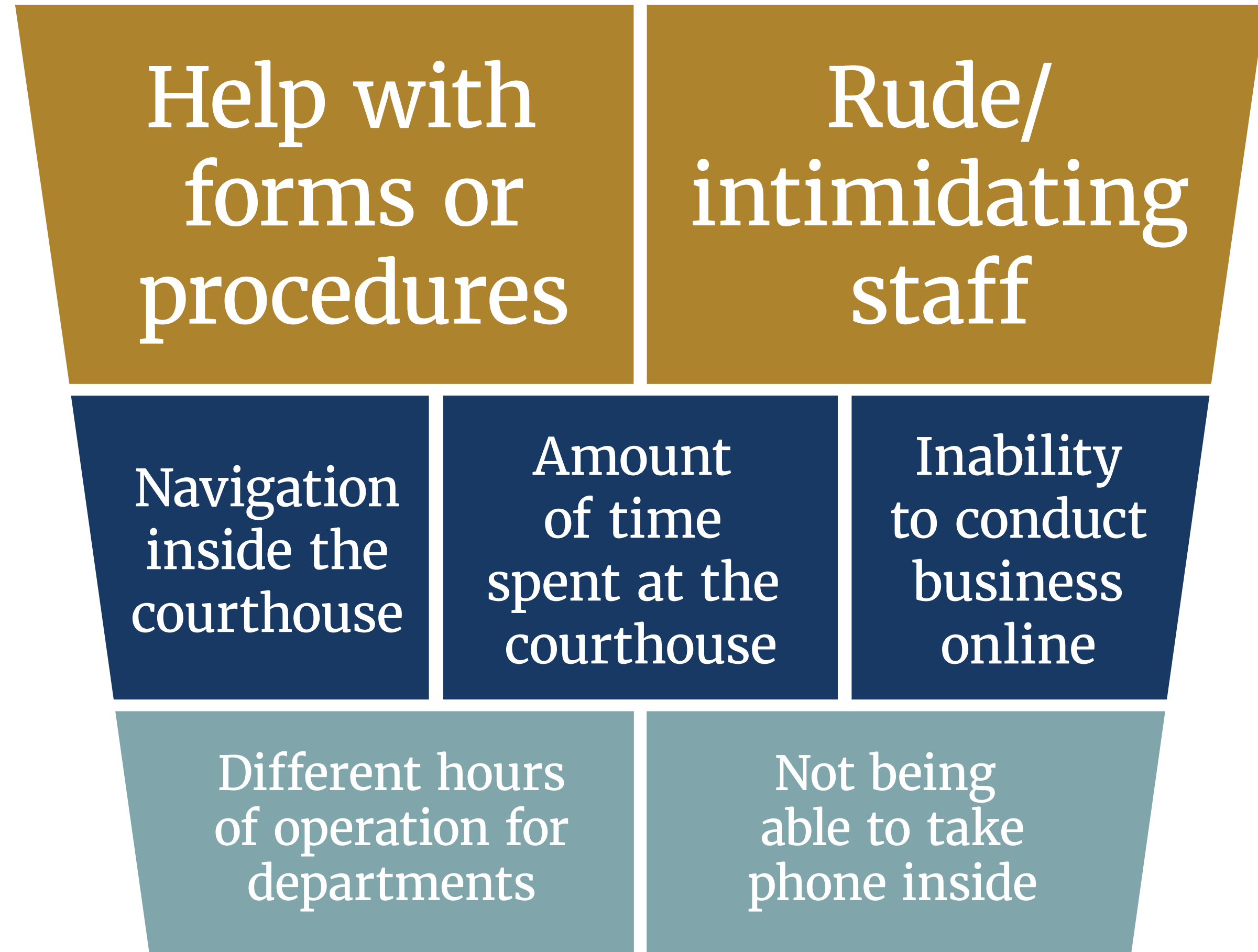


FIGURE #10

...and should be relatively easy for courts to remedy.

Q: “Tell me whether you think each idea would significantly improve the customer service experience in [STATE] courts, somewhat improve it, or make no difference.”

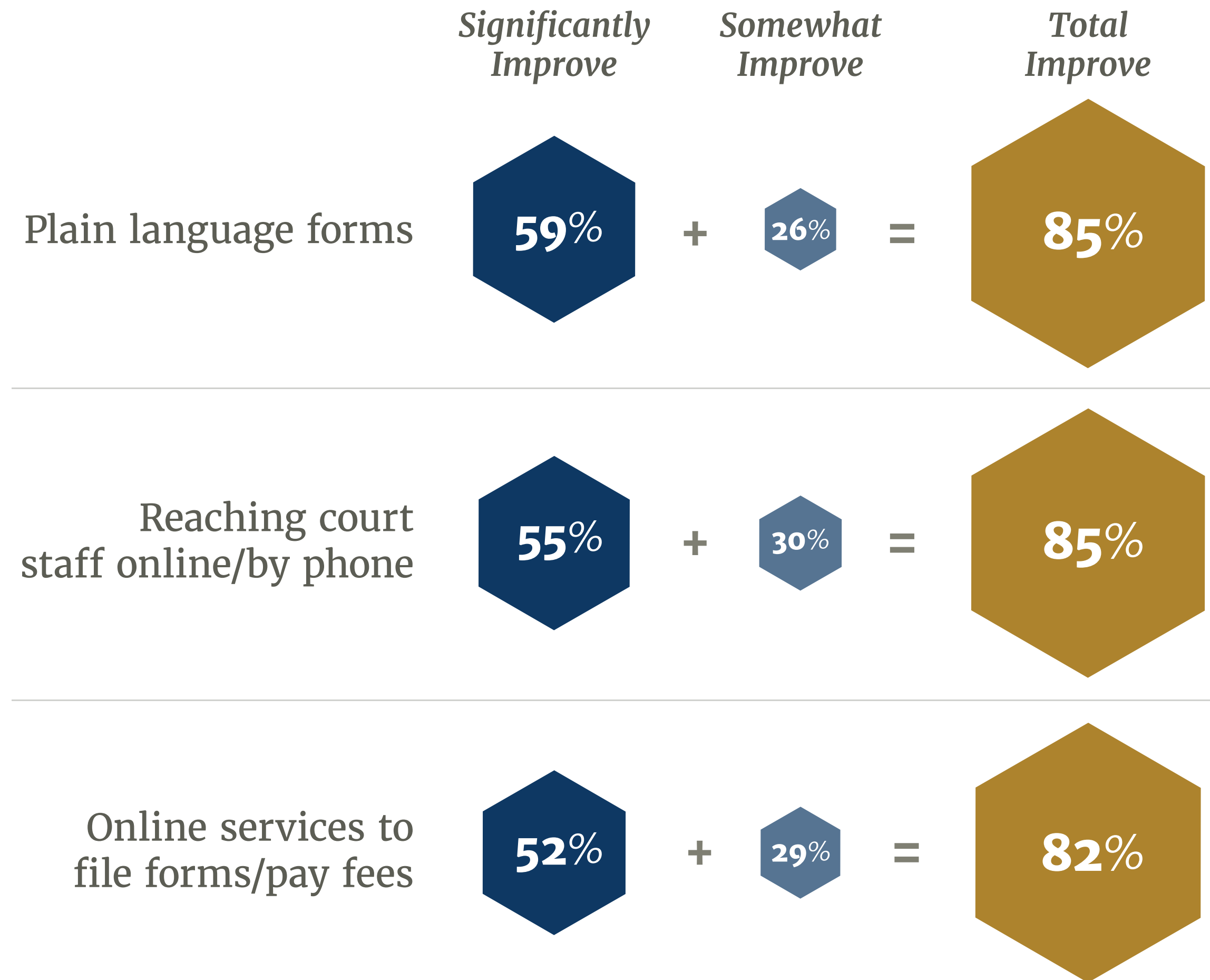
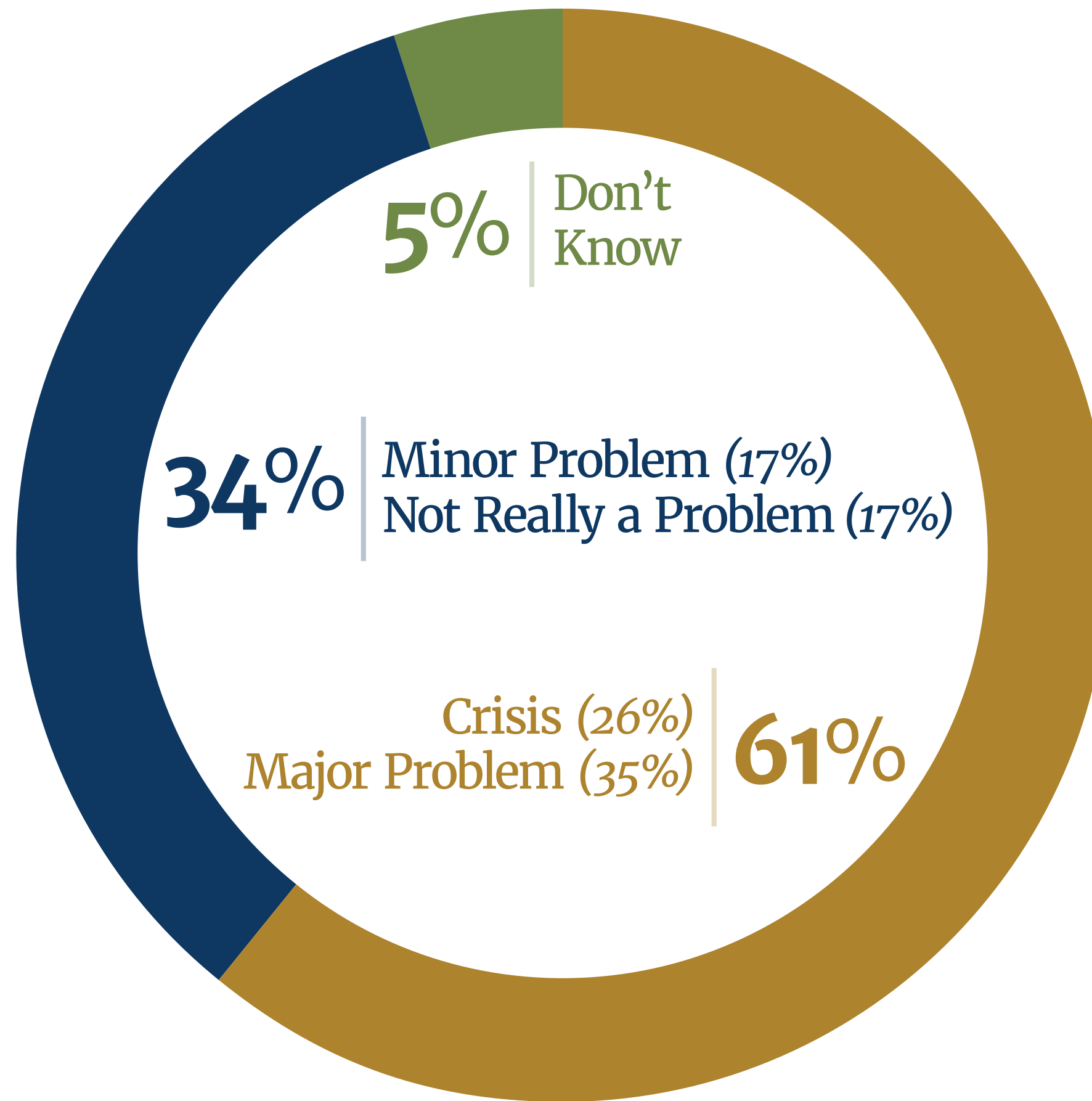


FIGURE #11

Voters are familiar with the opioid epidemic with a majority seeing it is a major problem or a crisis.

Q: “Now let me ask you about an issue that has increasingly been in the media lately. How would you characterize the issue of opioid abuse in your local community?”



By Race
White: 65%
Non-White: 51%



The State
of
**State
Courts**

★
2
0
1
7
★

★
P
O
L
L
★

NCSC
National Center for State Courts

For more information, visit:
ncsc.org