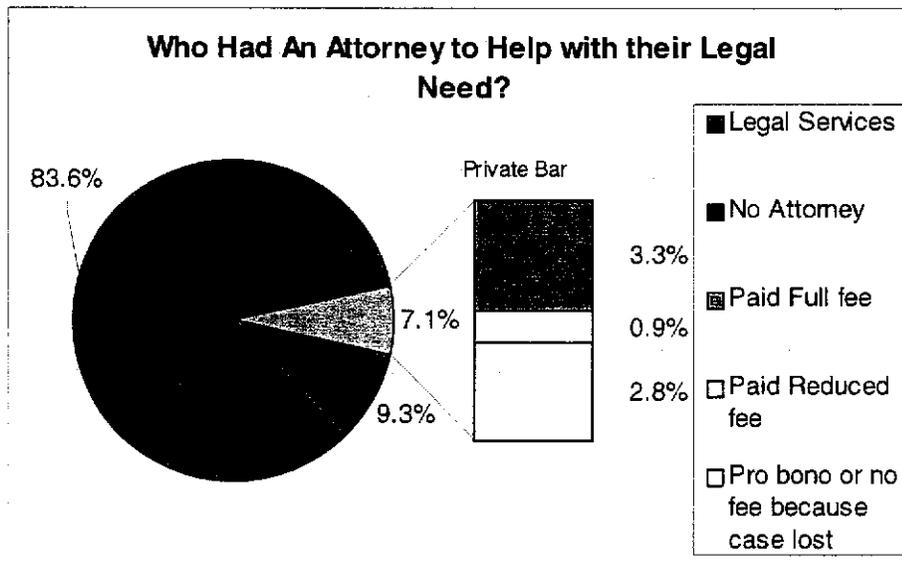
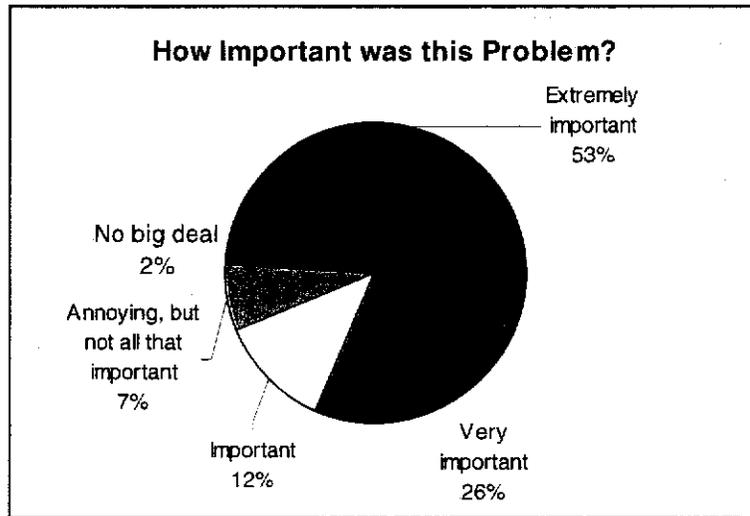


And Justice for All?

A keystone of an ordered, democratic society is the sense among its citizens that the law applies equally to everyone, and that if there are serious miscarriages of justice the courts will fairly and impartially decide disputes under a rule of law. The role of attorneys in making justice happen, though sometimes ridiculed, is central to this faith. The most common response when someone is in trouble or is treated unfairly is to call an attorney.

A recent study of legal needs, surveying more than 800 lower income households in all regions of Montana, demonstrates clearly that the justice system in this state is in crisis, at least for the poorest among us. The study, conducted under the auspices of the Equal Justice Task Force, showed:

- The average lower income family had 3.47 legal problems in the previous year;
- The households surveyed rated more than half of these problems as extremely important to their families, and rated more than 3/4 of the problems as extremely important or very important;

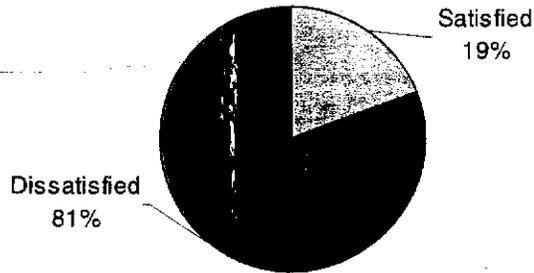


- Only about 16% of the households surveyed had the help of an attorney in dealing with the legal problem;
- It is likely that lower income families in Montana have roughly

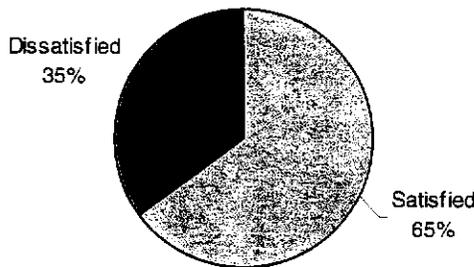
120,000 legal problems a year for which they have no help from a lawyer;

- When the families surveyed had a lawyer's help, they were far more satisfied with the outcome and had much more

Satisfaction
Sought a Lawyer, but Rejected



Satisfaction with Outcome
Represented by a Lawyer

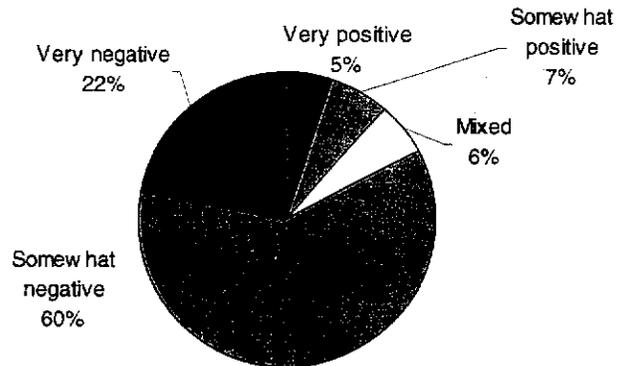


positive attitudes about the legal system;

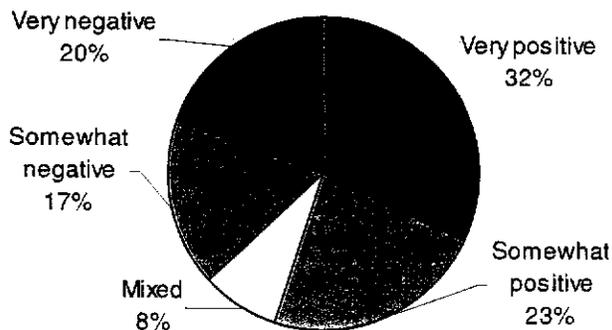
- On the other hand when survey respondents had sought legal help, but been unable to find it, they were far more dissatisfied, and had much more negative attitudes.

The implications are clear. If all of the people of Montana are to have continuing faith in the fairness and equality of our legal system, then we must find ways to achieve more equal access to the justice system. The task of opening the legal system on a more equal basis must be a priority for anyone who cares about the rule of law.

Resulting Feelings about Legal System
Sought a Lawyer but Rejected



Resulting Feelings about Legal System
Represented by a Lawyer



For more information, contact:

Ann Gilkey
Equal Justice Coordinator
State Bar of Montana
PO Box 577
Helena, MT 59624
406-447-2201