



Ipsos Reid



LEGAL SERVICES SOCIETY

Legal Aid in BC

Prepared by: Ipsos Reid

- ◆ A series of questions added to the *BC Reid Express* provincial omnibus survey for December 2005.
- ◆ Fieldwork conducted December 7 to 12, 2005 by telephone.
- ◆ Survey results weighted to 2001 Census data by age and gender within region.
- ◆ RDD dialling, random selection of respondents at the household level.
- ◆ Margin of error $\pm 3.5\%$, 19 times out of 20 on a base of 763 people.

Summary of Findings

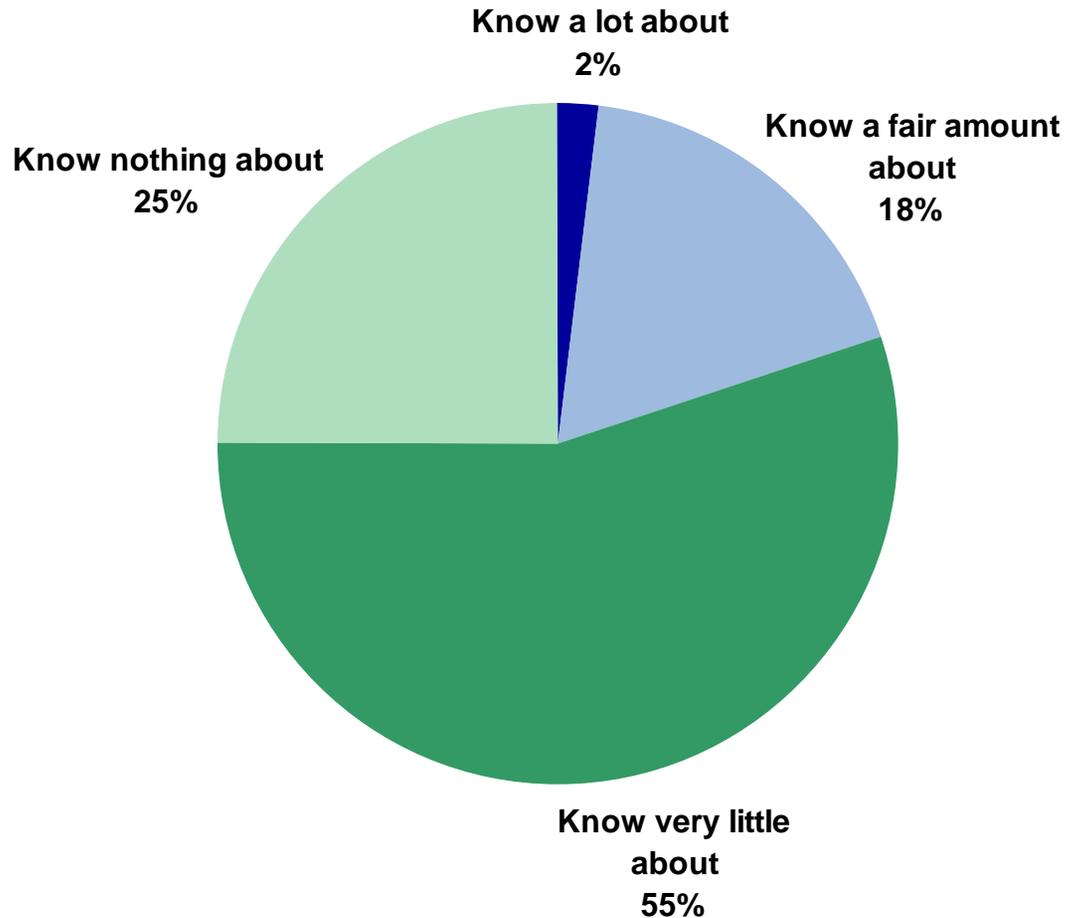
- ◆ The majority of British Columbians know very little (55%) or nothing (25%) about legal aid. There is little regional variation on awareness.
- ◆ Although there is a distinct lack of knowledge amongst British Columbians regarding legal aid, few believe that legal aid is readily available when it comes to criminal law, family law, immigration/refugee law or other civil matters. People who know more about legal aid tend to be more likely than others to say that funding is not adequately available.
- ◆ Almost nine-in-ten British Columbians say they support legal aid services. Support for legal aid services is a little lower amongst people in the BC north and interior, but still high at 83%. Support is higher amongst those who are more aware of legal aid.
- ◆ British Columbians generally say that legal aid for low income people is important in all types of cases, but particularly in family court (94% say it is very or somewhat important). Those who are less aware of legal aid services tend to place less importance on legal aid for low income people.
- ◆ 51% of British Columbians say that legal aid services are not adequately funded, while 37% say that they are either adequately funded or over-funded. Those who are more aware of legal aid services are more likely to say that legal aid is not adequately funded.

Summary of Findings (cont'd)

- ◆ There is almost universal agreement with the idea that everyone should have the right to access the justice system. Only 2% disagree with this.
- ◆ There is a little less agreement with the idea of the government giving legal aid the same priority as health care, education, welfare and child protection. Nevertheless, 73% of British Columbians feel that legal aid should get the same funding priority as these other social services. Just 25% disagree.
- ◆ When asked for ways in which legal aid services could be improved, the most common suggestion by far is for funding to be increased. This is followed by providing improved accessibility for all people and educating people about legal aid.

Legal Aid Knowledge

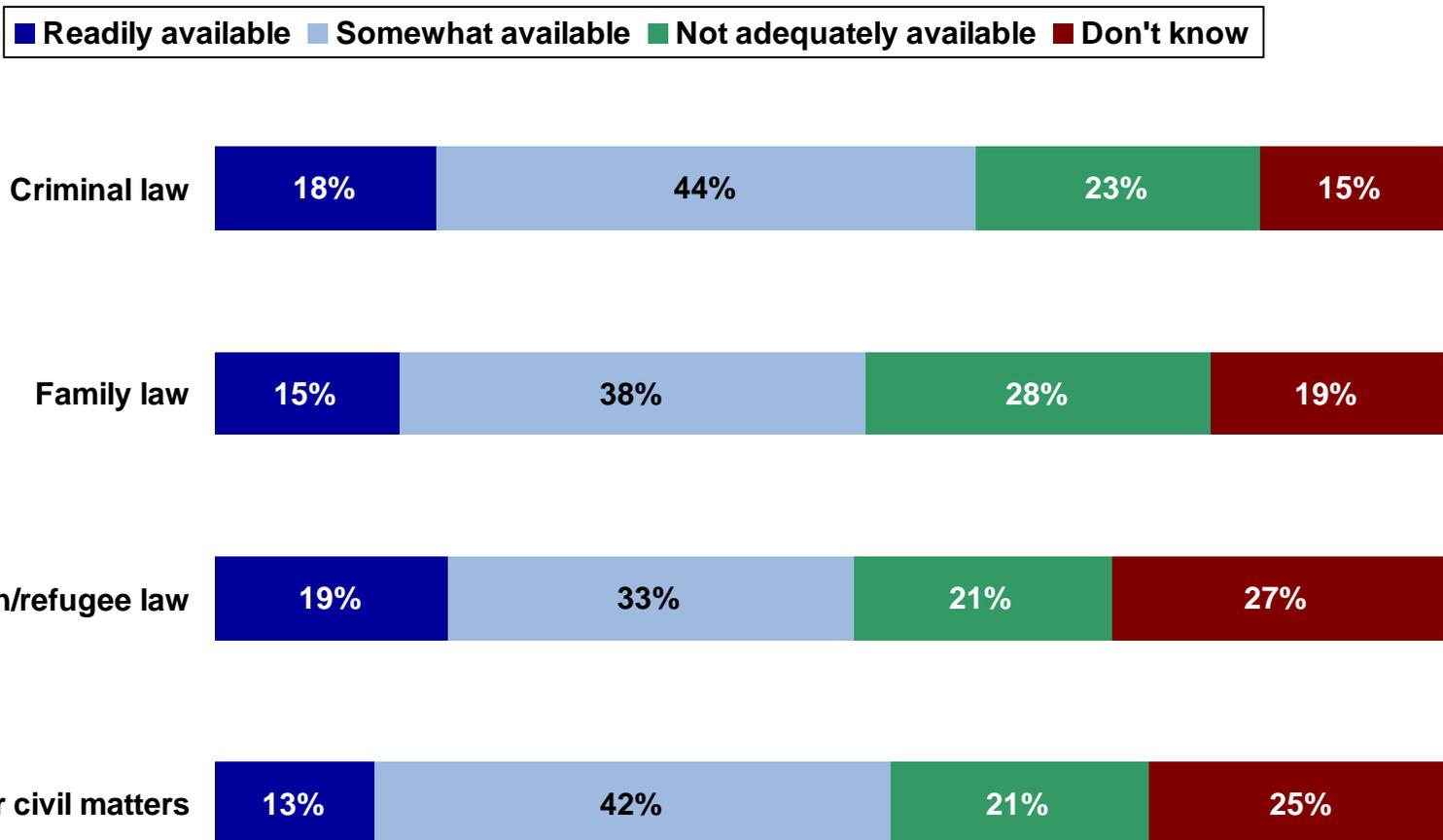
"I would like to ask you a few questions about legal aid. First of all, is this a subject that you ...?"



Base: All respondents (n=763)

Availability of Legal Aid

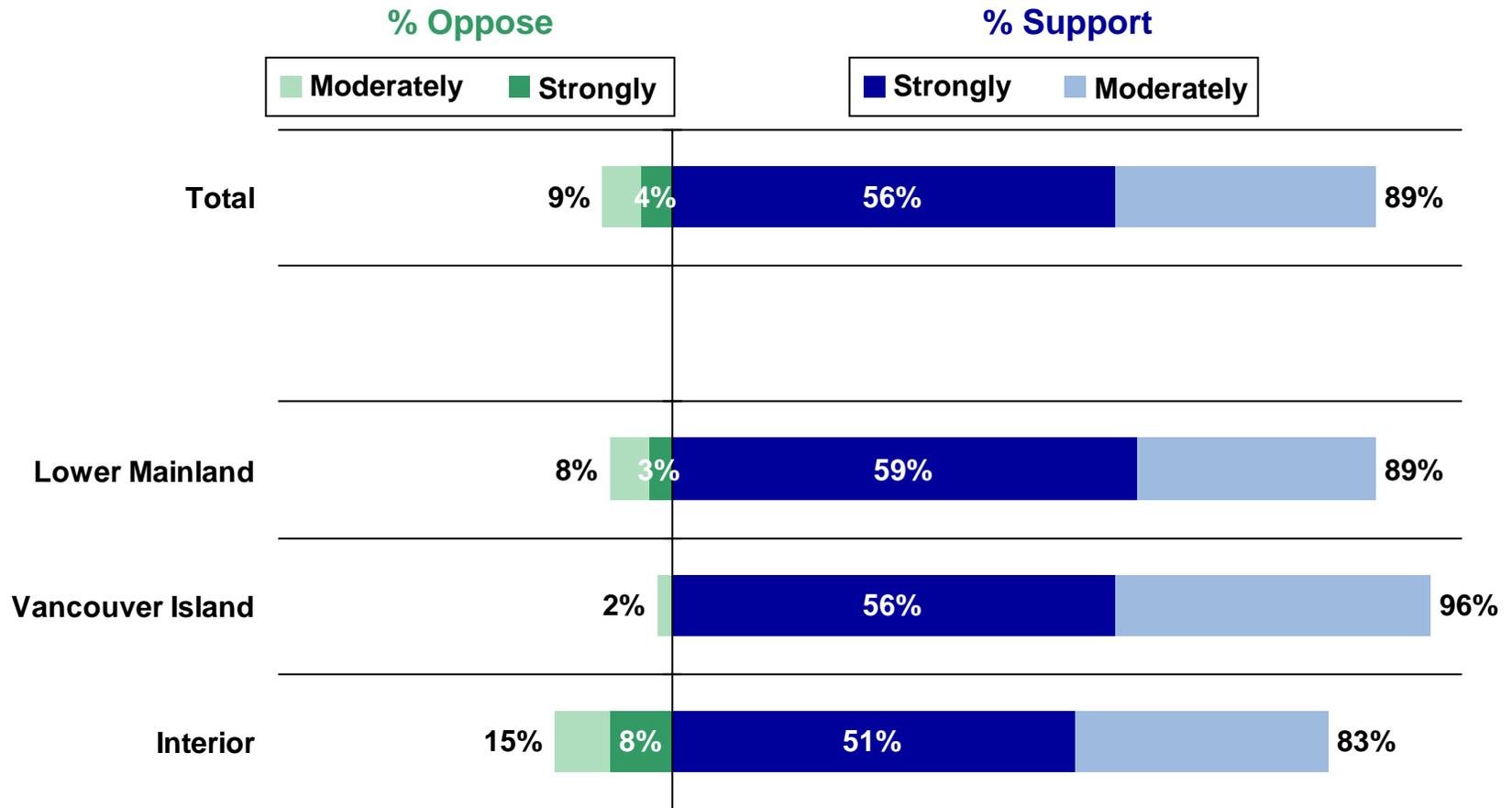
“Overall, for those who need it, would you say that legal aid in BC is readily available, somewhat available, or not adequately available when it comes to ...?”



Base: All respondents (n=763)

Support/Oppose Legal Aid Services

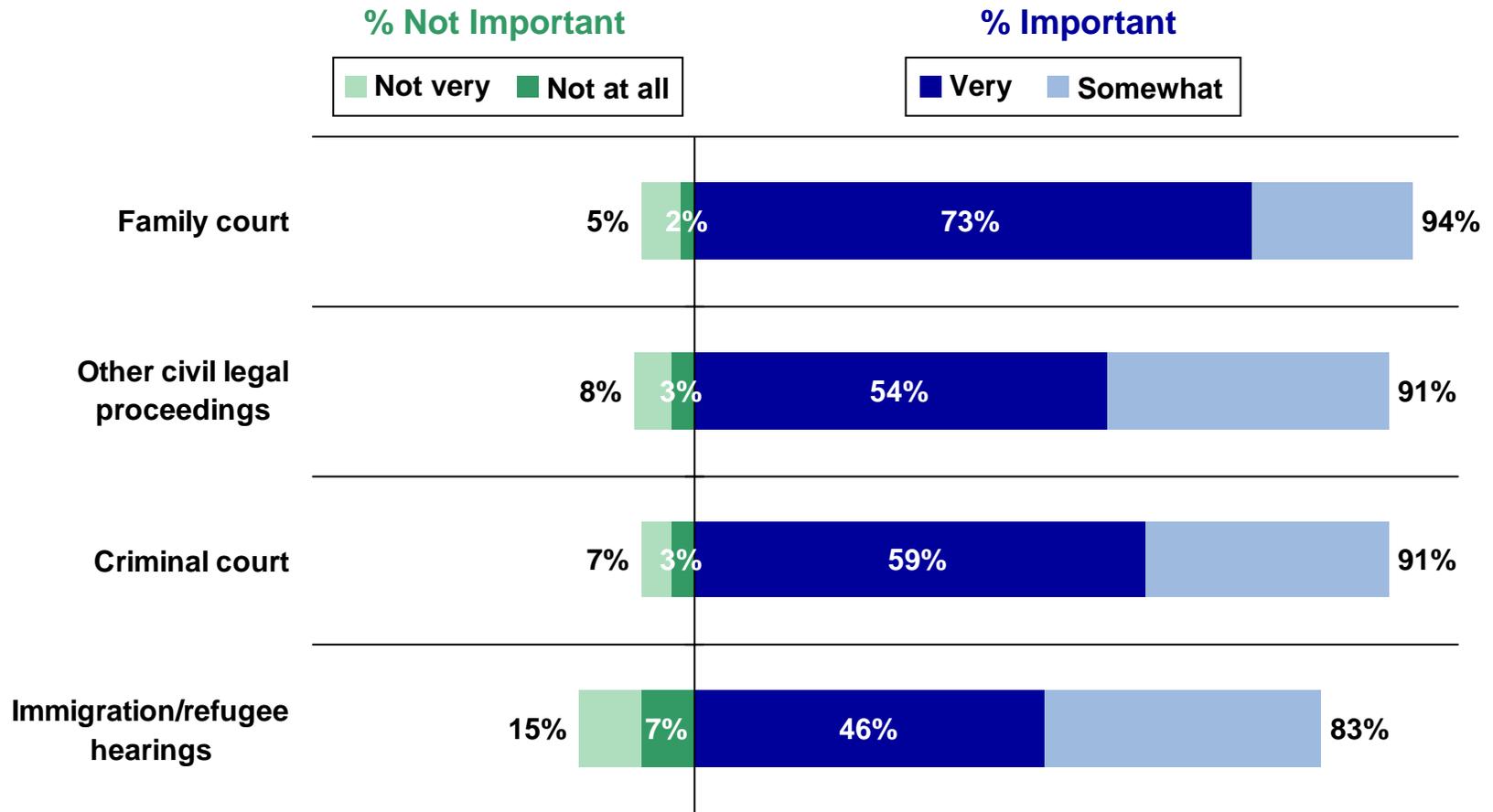
“As you may already know, legal aid services provide low income people with legal information, advice, and/or representation in court. This can include providing them with a self-help kit, giving them a few hours of legal advice, or paying a lawyer to represent them in court for serious family, criminal, or immigration/refugee problems. Knowing this, to what extent do you support or oppose legal aid services?”



Base: All respondents (n=763)

Importance of Fairness in the Justice System

“In your opinion, how important is it to fairness in the justice system for BC to provide low income people with legal aid in ...?”

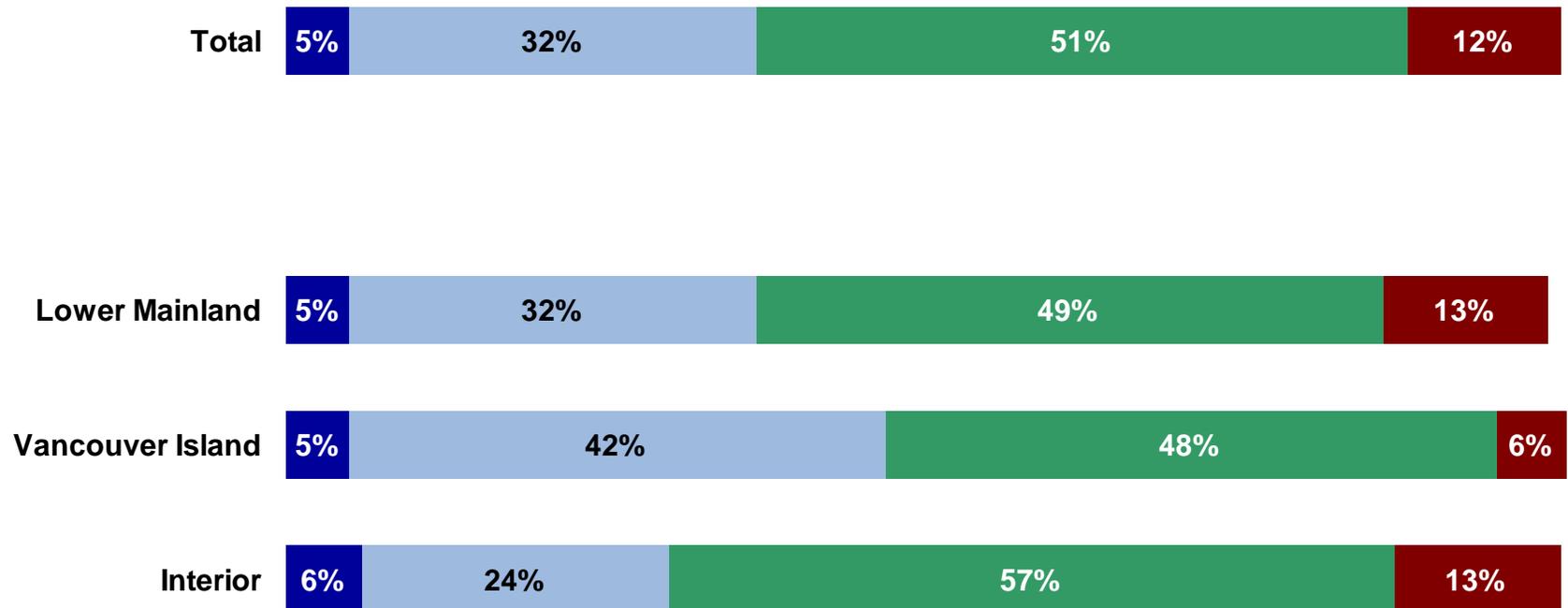


Base: All respondents (n=763)

State of Legal Aid Services in BC

“Based on anything you may have read, heard, or seen, would you say that legal aid services in British Columbia are ...?”

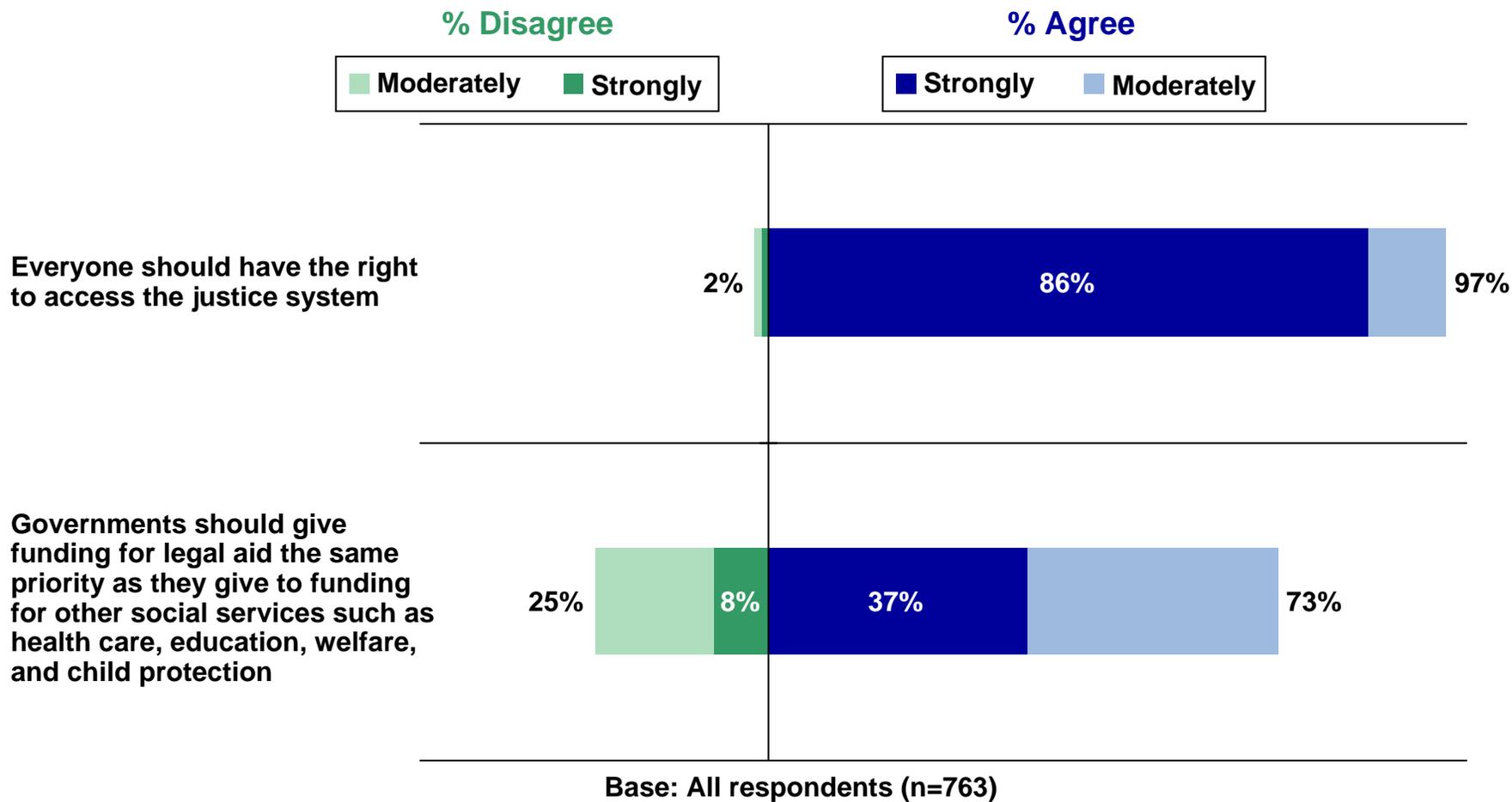
■ More than adequately funded
 ■ Adequately funded
 ■ Not adequately funded
 ■ Don't know



Base: All respondents (n=763)

Agreement with Statements

“Would you agree or disagree with the following statement ...? Would that be strongly or moderately?”



Suggested Improvements for Legal Aid Services

“How do you think legal aid services in British Columbia could be improved?”

	Total Respondents (n=763) %
More/better/adequate funding	25
Improved accessibility for all people	11
Educating the public about legal aid	10
Have services go to those who need it (including low income people)	6
More involvement in system by lawyers (including more lawyers)	4
More advertising	3
Have better quality staff	3
Have increased staff	2
Have background checks conducted before handing out legal aid	2
Legal aid should not be available to criminals	2
Pay legal aid employees better (including lawyers)	2
Faster access to legal aid (including reducing waiting times)	2
Availability of services to all areas of BC	2
Other	11
Nothing/no need for improvement	3
Don't know	36