



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 2006.
- ◆ Fieldwork conducted December 4th to 10th, 2006 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.
- ◆ Methodology used in the 2006 research is identical to that conducted in 2005. Comparisons to the 2005 results are provided.
- ◆ Respondents screened to exclude people who are, or who live with, someone who is closely related to a Legal Services Society employee or a lawyer who provides legal aid services.
- ◆ Margin of error $\pm 3.6\%$, 19 times out of 20 on a base of 763 people.

Summary of Findings

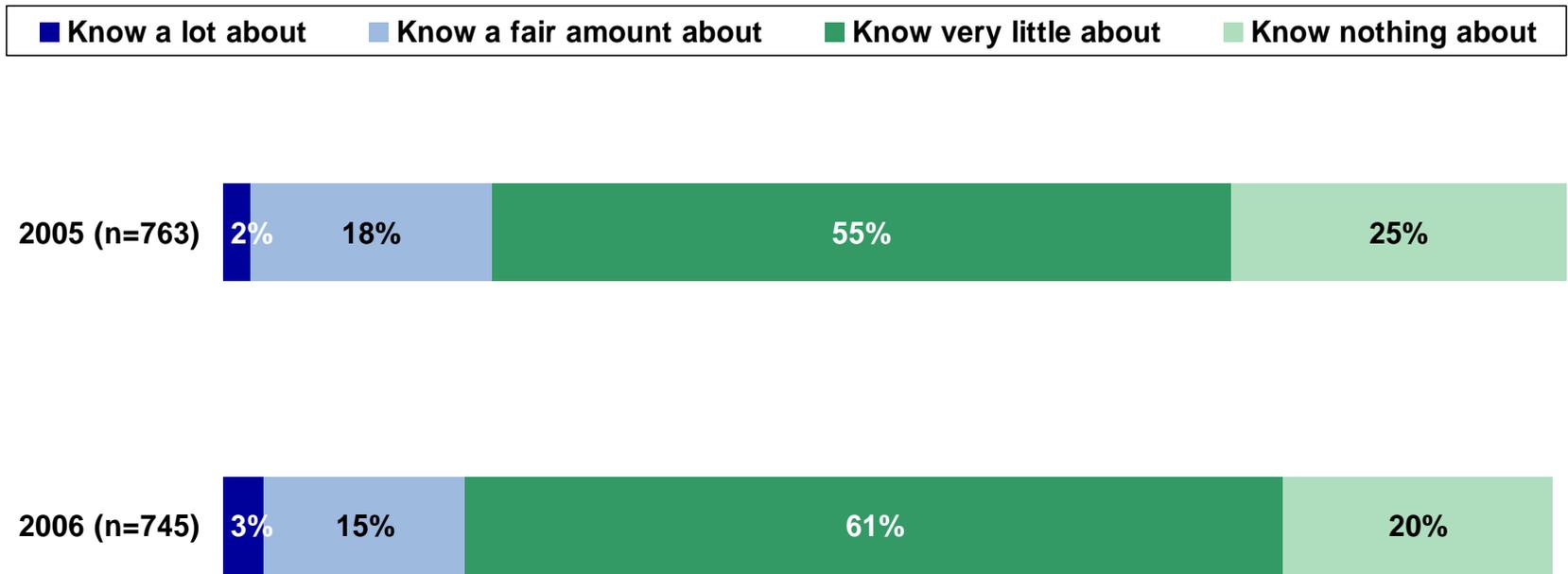
- ◆ The majority of British Columbians continue to know very little (61%) or nothing (20%) about legal aid. This is relatively unchanged from 2005, although the proportion of people saying they know nothing has dropped from 25% in 2005 to 20% in 2006. People in BC's North and Interior are a little less knowledgeable about legal aid with 87% saying they know little or nothing about it.
- ◆ Although there is a lack of knowledge amongst British Columbians when it comes to legal aid, they do believe it is available to people. The majority of British Columbians believe that legal aid is either readily or somewhat available when it comes to criminal law, family law, immigration and refugee law and other civil matters.
- ◆ Support for legal aid services in BC is almost universal with 93% of people saying they support legal aid, up slightly from 89% in 2005. In fact, 54% say they strongly support it. Just 6% say they oppose legal aid services. Support for legal aid services is fairly uniform across all regions.
- ◆ British Columbians generally say that legal aid for low income people is important in all types of cases, but particularly in family court (95% say it is very or somewhat important).
- ◆ Exactly one-half of British Columbians (50%) believe that legal aid services are not adequately funded. At the same time, 37% say that they are either adequately funded or over-funded, while the remaining 13% say they don't know.

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, while 97% of people agree. This is unchanged over the past year.
- ◆ 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, 78% of British Columbians feel that legal aid should get the same funding priority as these other social services. This is up from 73% in 2005. Just 21% 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. These responses are generally unchanged from 2005.

Legal Aid Knowledge

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



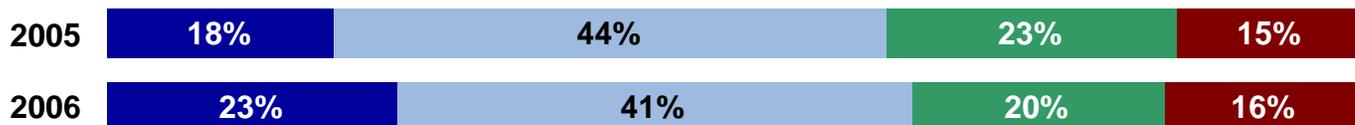
Base: All respondents (n=763)

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 ...?”

■ Readily available ■ Somewhat available ■ Not adequately available ■ Don't know

Criminal law



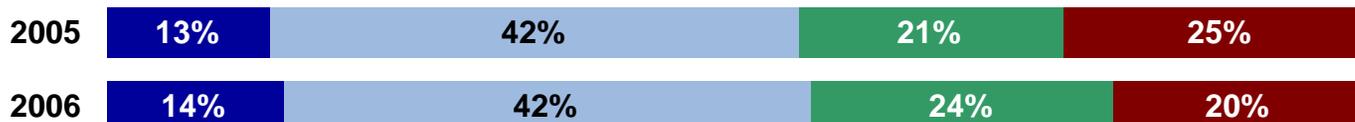
Family law



Immigration/refugee law



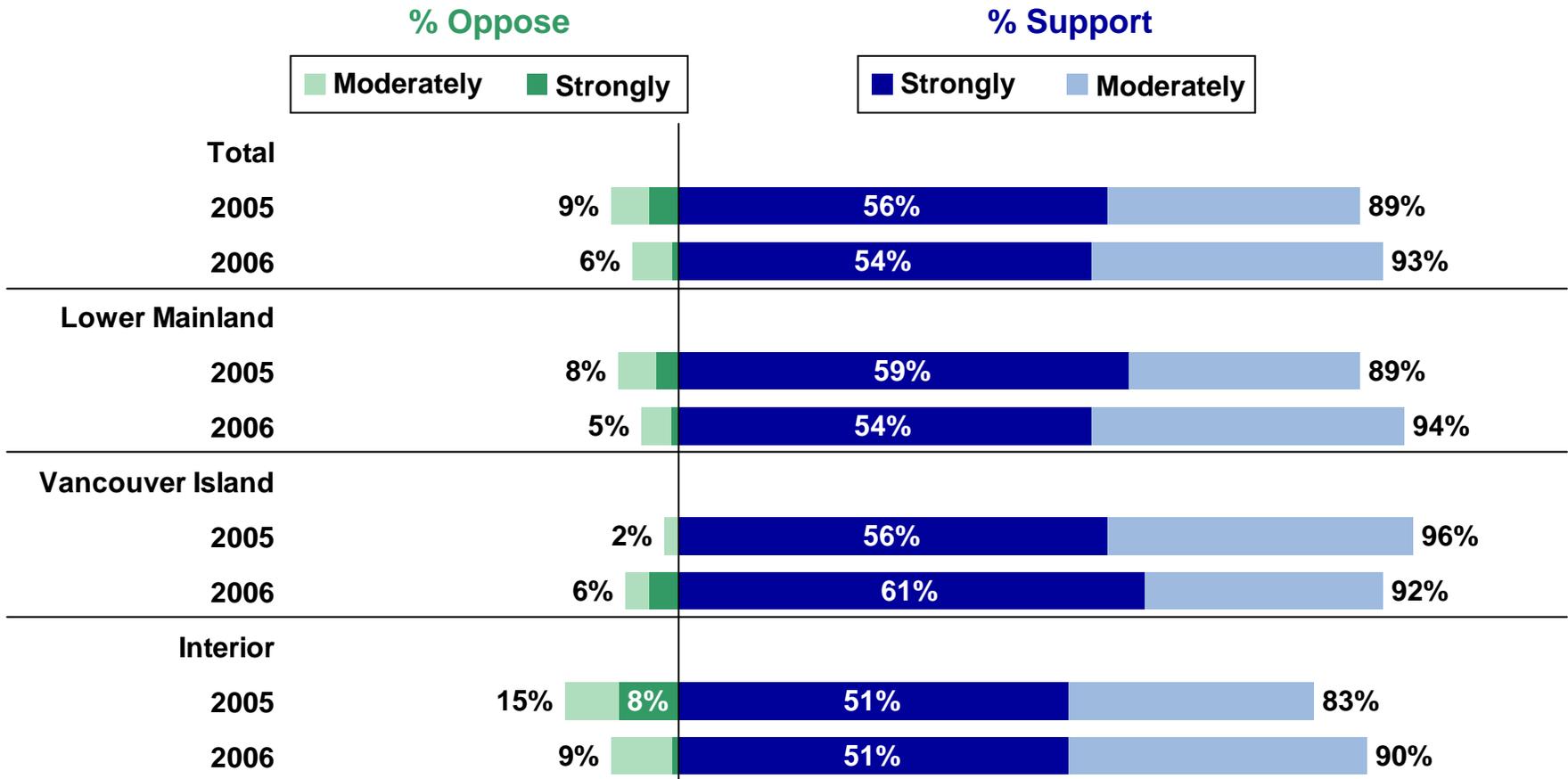
Other civil matters



Base: All respondents (n=763 in 2005 / n=745 in 2006)

Support/Oppose Legal Aid Services

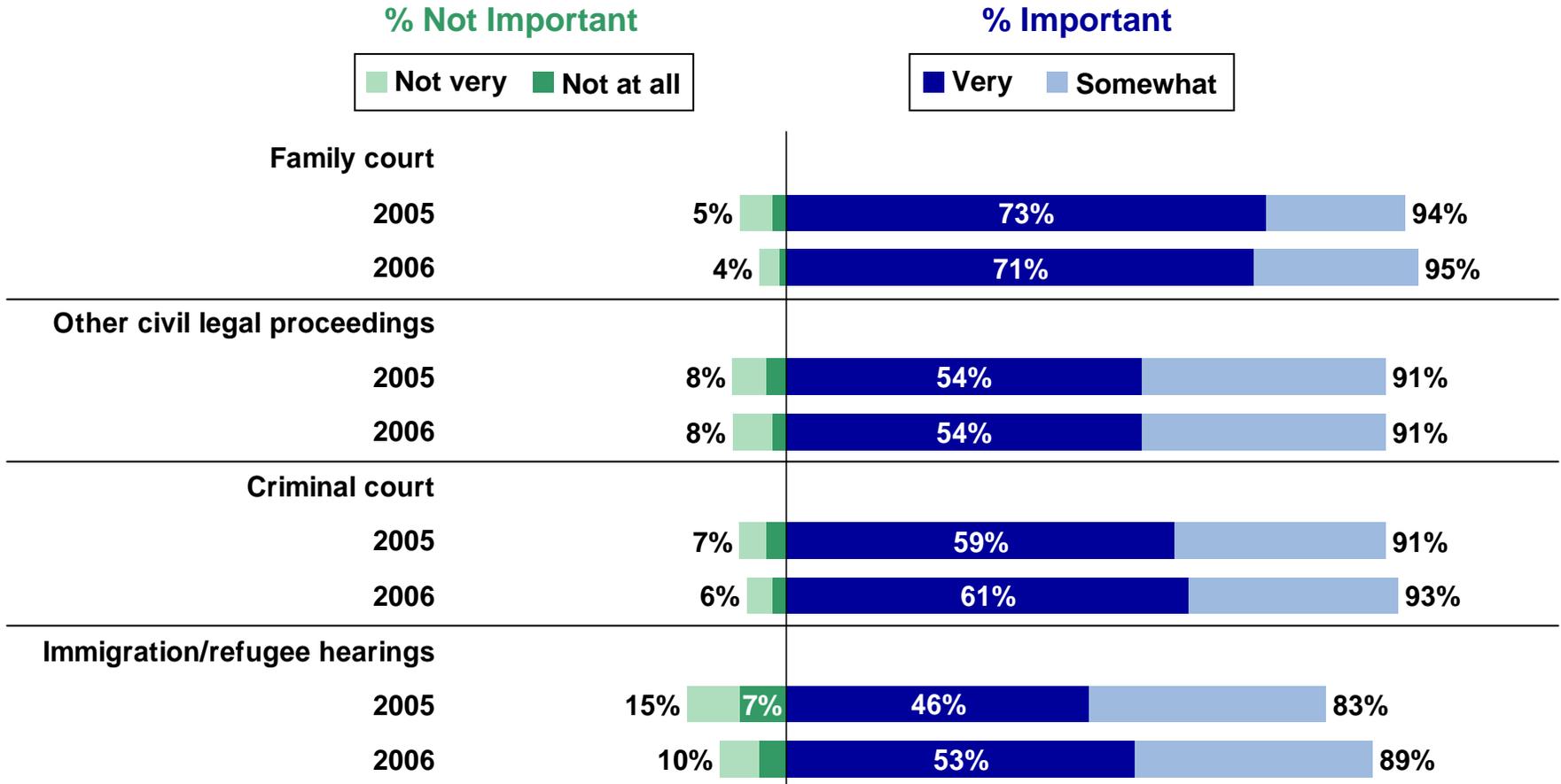
“As you may already know, legal aid services provide low income people with legal information, advice, and/or representation in court. This can include providing them with a self-help kit, giving them a few hours of legal advice, or paying a lawyer to represent them in court for serious family, criminal,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



Base: All respondents (n=763 in 2005 / n=745 in 2006)

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 ...?”

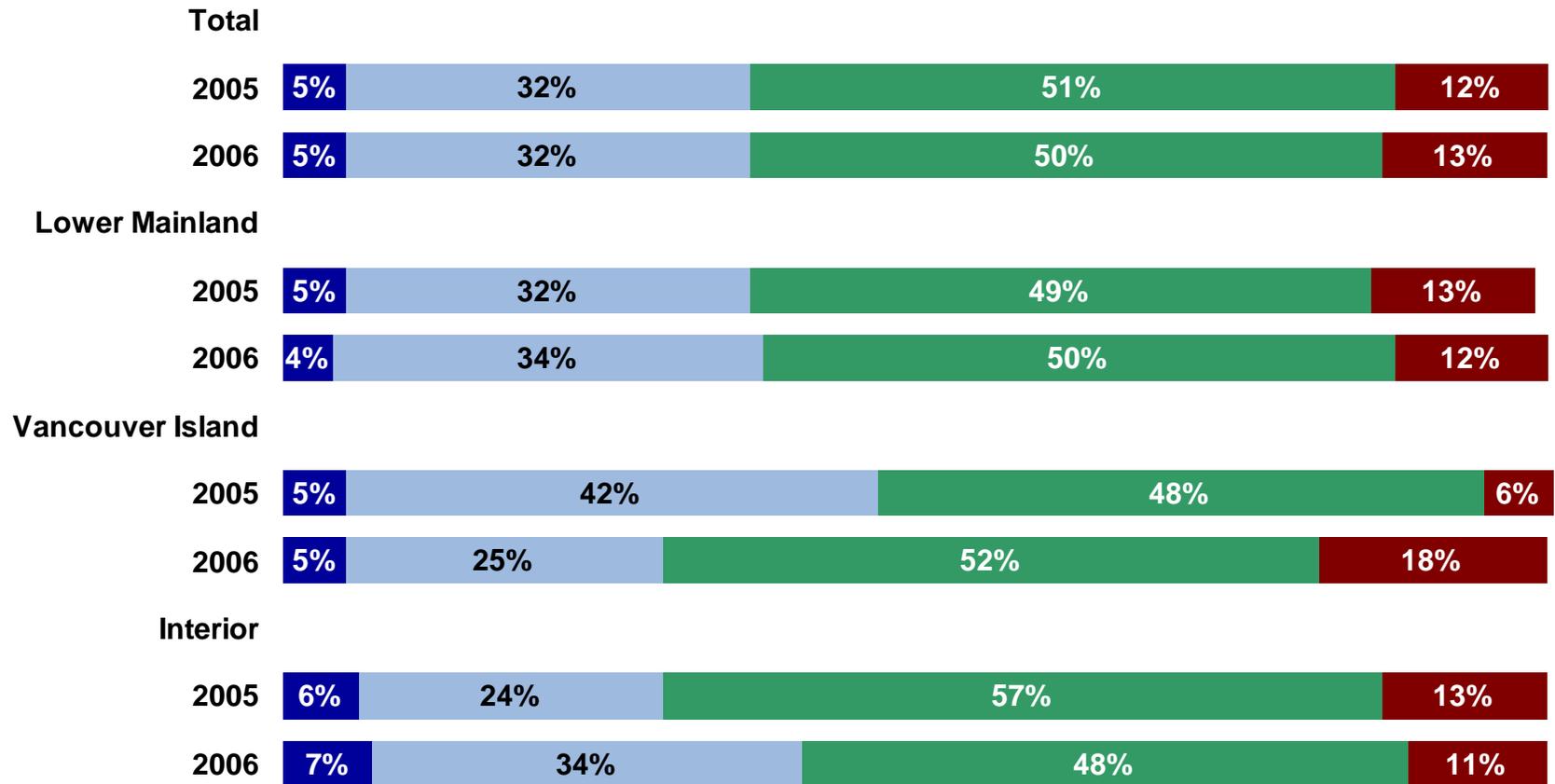


Base: All respondents (n=763 in 2005 / n=745 in 2006)

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 ...?”

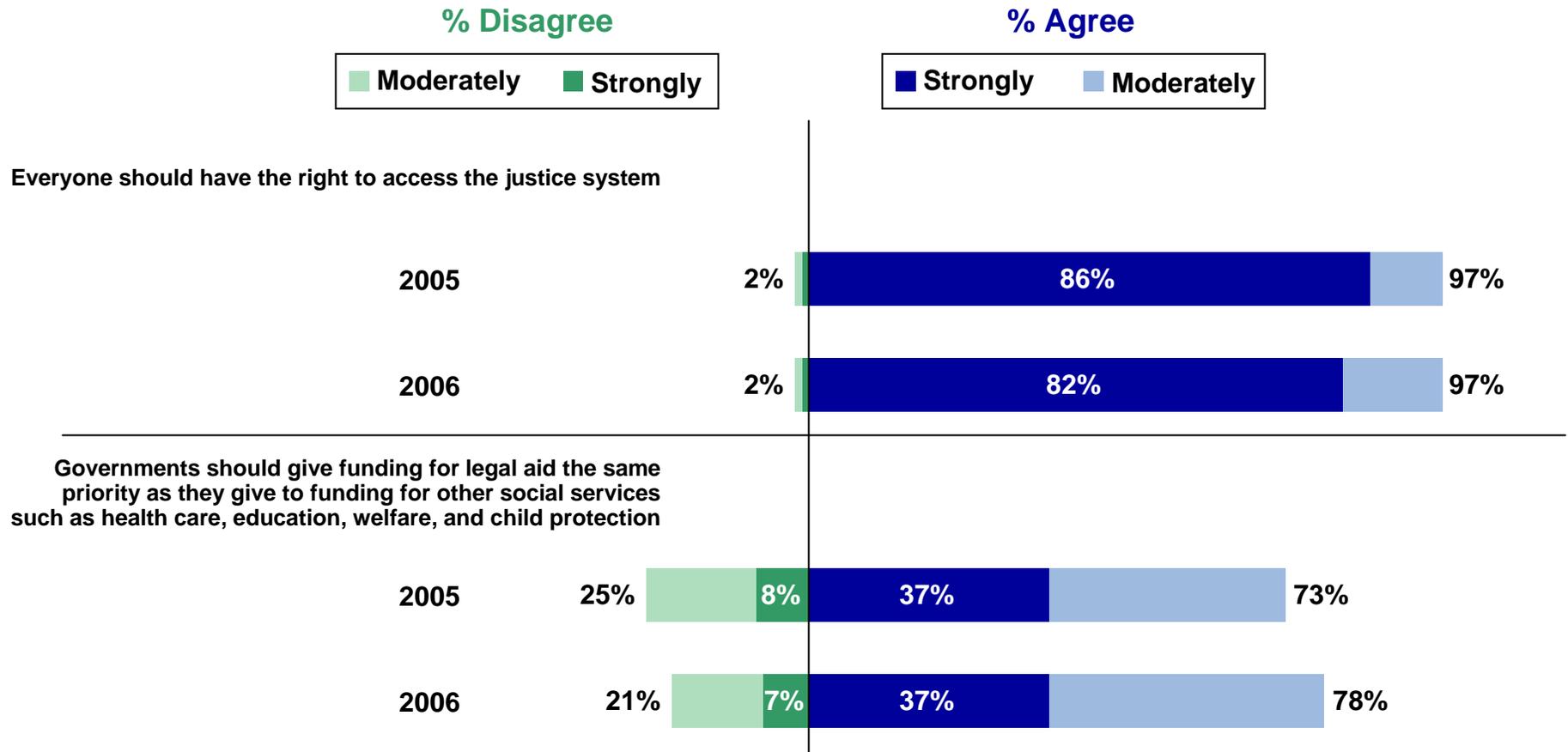
■ More than adequately funded
 ■ Adequately funded
 ■ Not adequately funded
 ■ Don't know



Base: All respondents (n=763 in 2005 / n=745 in 2006)

Agreement with Statements

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



Base: All respondents (n=763 in 2005 / n=745 in 2006)

Suggested Improvements for Legal Aid Services

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

	2005 (n=763) %	2006 (n=745) %
More/better/adequate funding	25	21
Improved accessibility for all people	11	12
Educating the public about legal aid	10	10
Have services go to those who need it (including low income people)	6	6
More involvement in system by lawyers (including more lawyers)	4	4
More advertising	3	3
Have increased staff	2	2
Have background checks conducted before handing out legal aid	2	1
Legal aid should not be available to criminals	2	1
Pay legal aid employees better (including lawyers)	2	1
Faster access to legal aid (including reducing waiting times)	2	1
Availability of services to all areas of BC	2	1
Have better quality staff	3	–
Other	11	17
Nothing/no need for improvement	3	3
Don't know	36	34