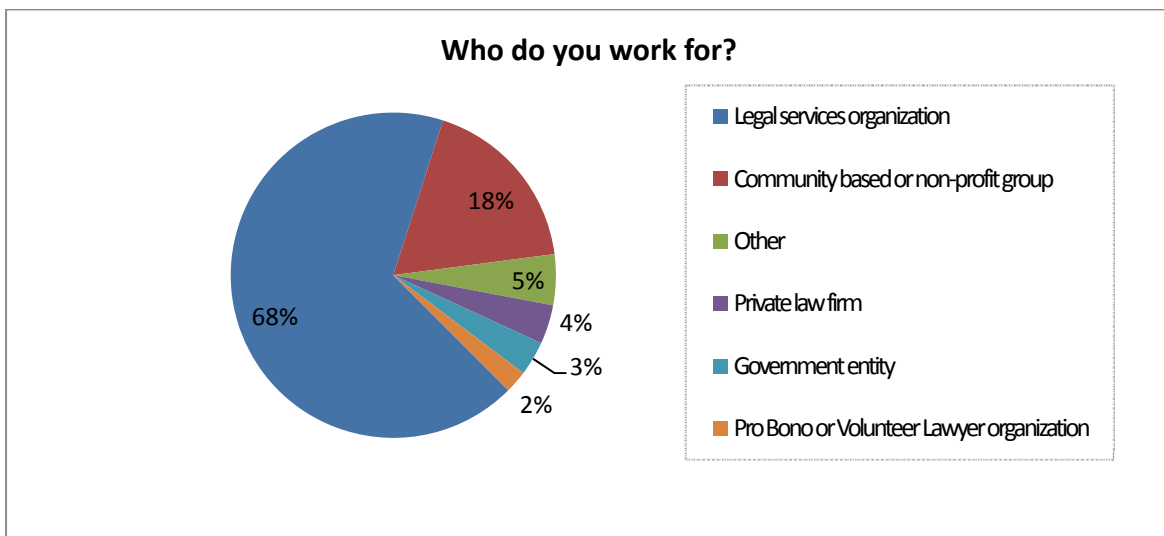


# Empire Justice 2010 Survey

This summer Empire Justice surveyed advocates familiar with its work to provide feedback on the services it provides and to help shape priorities. This report details the survey findings.<sup>1</sup>

## Who answered the survey?

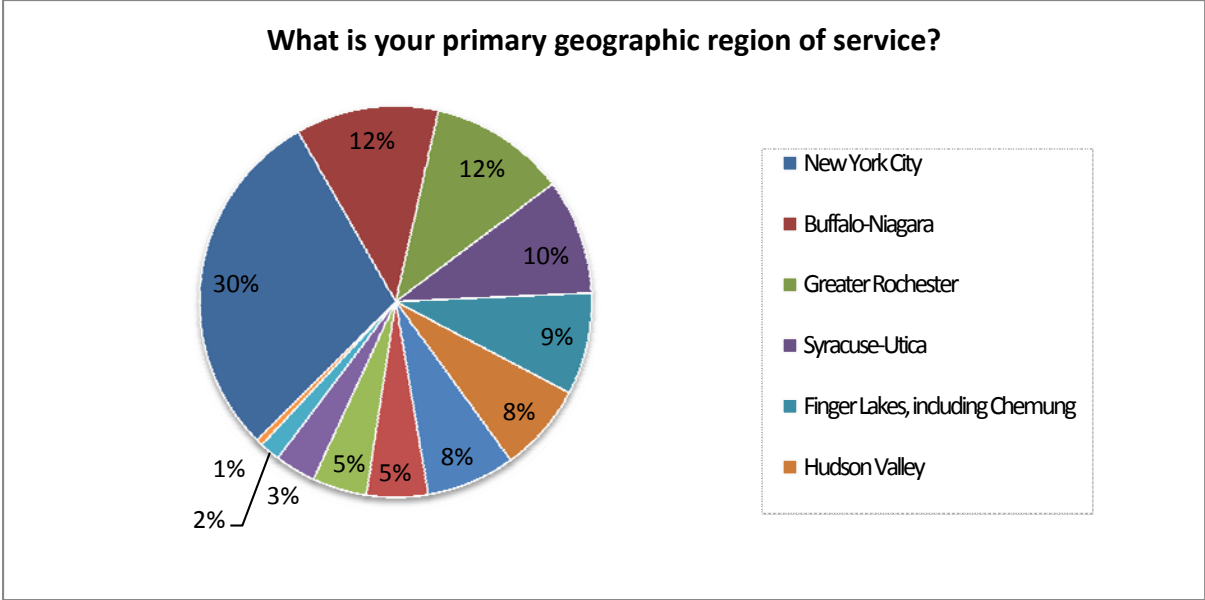
One hundred and seventy-three individuals completed the survey, over seventy percent of those work in legal services or volunteer lawyer organizations.



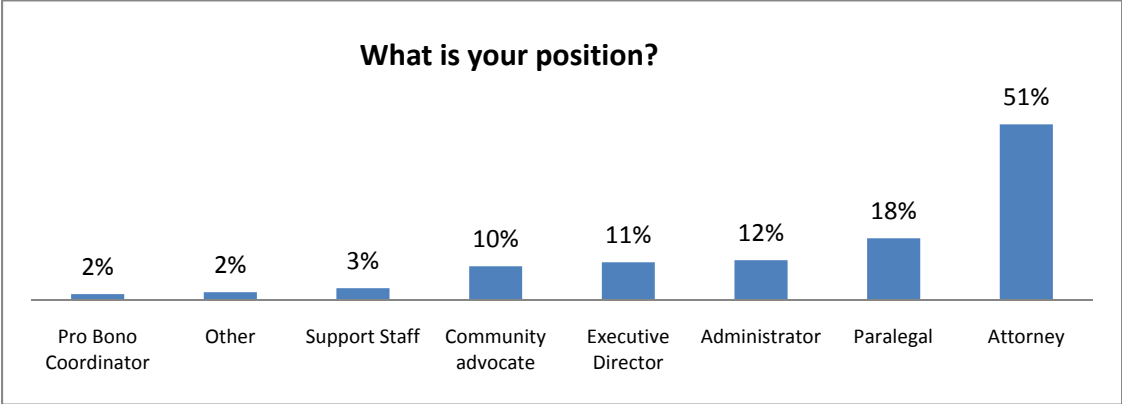
Every region and corner of the state responded. Readers who think of Empire Justice as working primarily with “upstate” offices may be surprised to learn that thirty percent of the respondents are from New York City.

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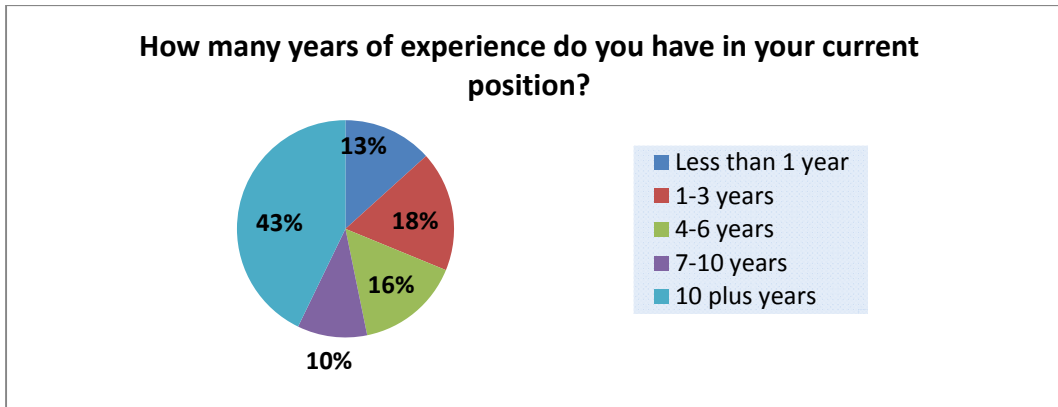
<sup>1</sup> The survey was distributed through legal services and other advocacy group listservs and was also available on the Empire Justice website. For additional information on the survey, please contact Jerry Wein ([jwein@empirejustice.org](mailto:jwein@empirejustice.org)).



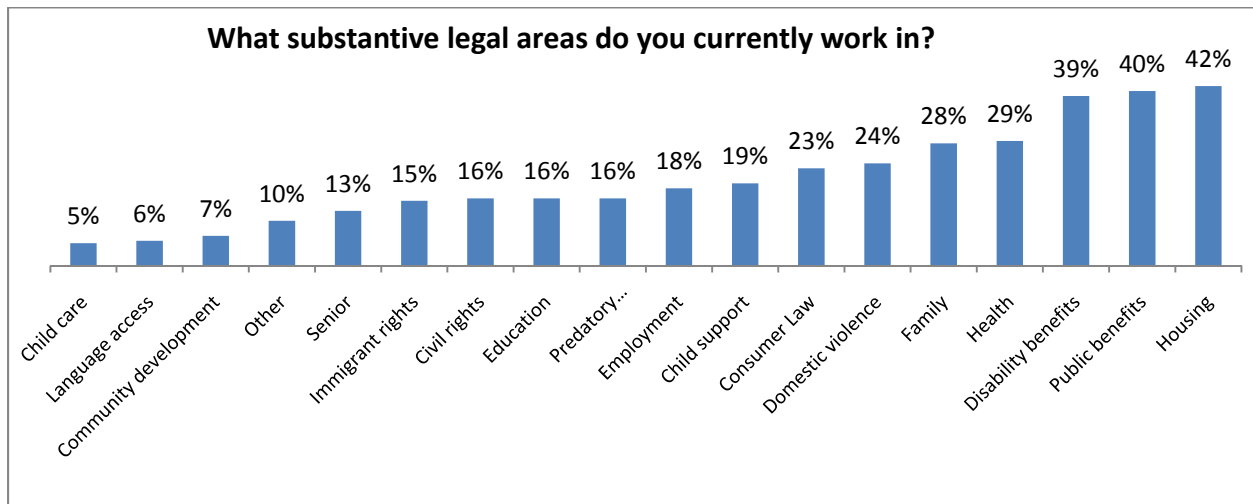
Just under seventy percent of the respondents are attorneys and paralegals; executive directors and administrators comprise approximately twenty-five percent of those responding.



Overall, the respondents are an extremely knowledgeable group. Forty-three percent have more than ten years experience working in their current position; only thirteen percent have less than one year.

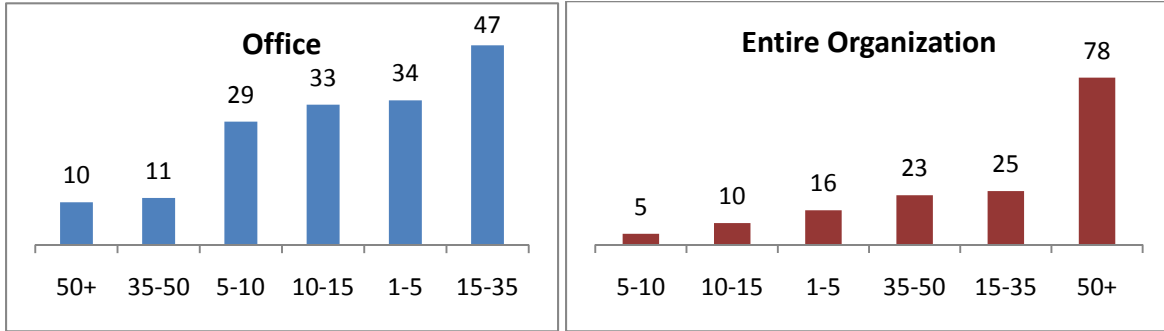


Substantively, advocates work in a broad range of areas lead by housing (42%), public benefits (40%), Disability benefits (39%), family (29%) and consumer (23%).



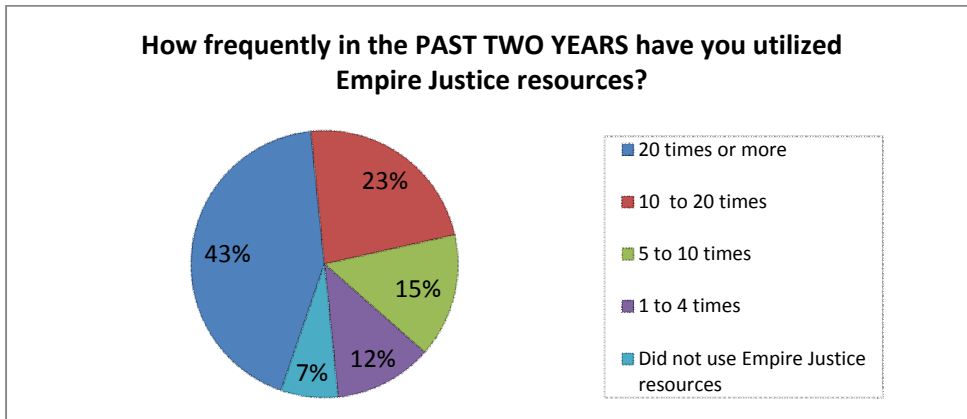
Thirty-four respondents work in small offices (1-5 staff); sixty-two work in offices with between 5 and 15 staff; forty-seven in offices with between 15 and 35 and twenty-one in offices with 35 or more staff. By contrast, seventy-eight respondents worked in organizations of 50 or more--perhaps reflecting the move toward larger regional organizations spearheaded by the Legal Services Corporation. Thirty-one respondents worked for organizations that have 15 or fewer staff; forty-eight worked for organizations with a staff of between 15 and 50.

## Office and Organizational Size (Total Personnel)

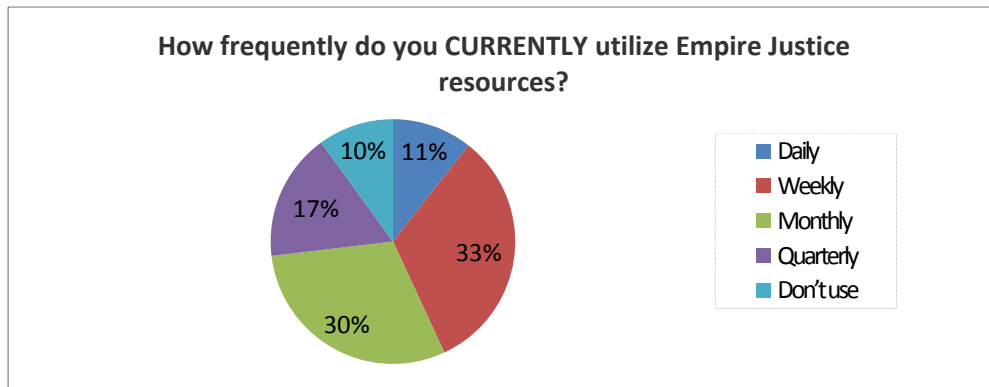


## Interactions with Empire Justice

The graph below depicts how frequently respondents utilized Empire Justice resources during the past two years. Forty-three percent used Empire Justice resources over twenty times during that period.



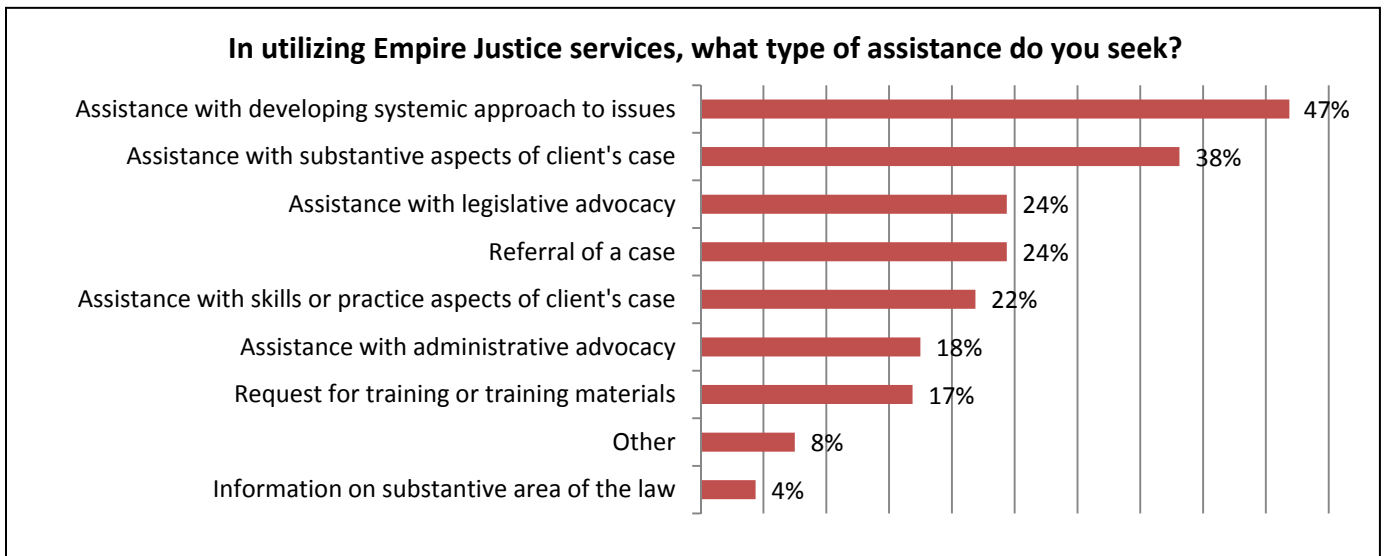
In answering a separate question, eleven percent of respondents indicated they utilize resources (for example contacting staff, reading publications, attending training programs or task force meetings, etc.) on a daily basis. One-third of respondents use Empire Justices on a weekly basis.



For the ten percent of respondents who do not use Empire Justice resources, the primary reasons given were either that they did not know about the services offered by Empire Justice or who to contact.

### Assistance Advocates Seek

When advocates contact Empire Justice they are most often looking for help with developing systemic approaches to issues and/or assistance with the substantive aspects of a client’s case.



### What Services do Respondents Use?

The Empire Justice services that respondents take advantage of most often include:

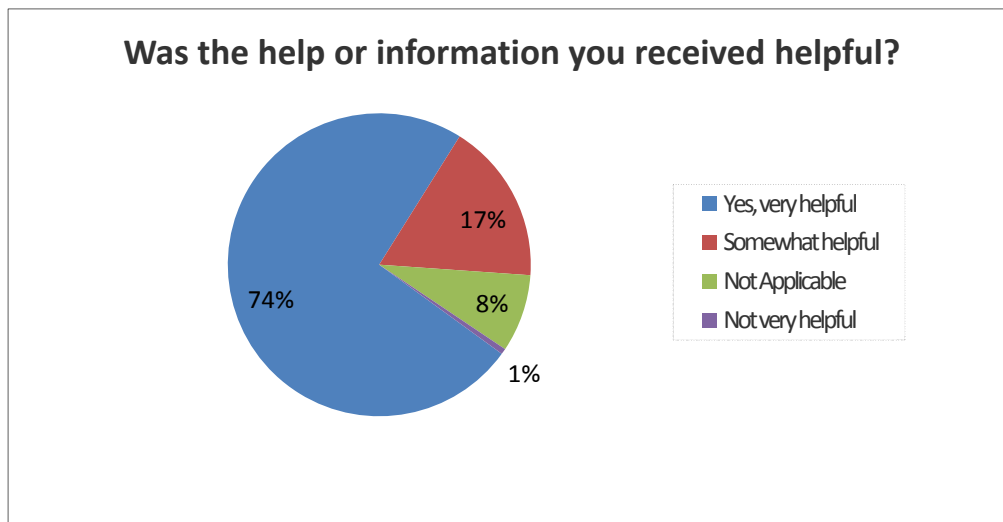
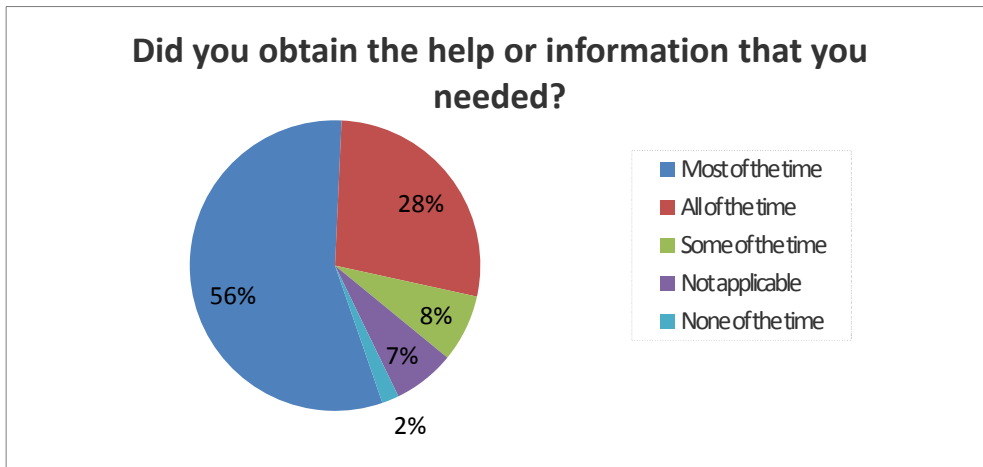
Service or Resource Offered	Per Cent of Respondents who Use Service or Resource
• Empire Justice Website Materials or On-Line Resource Center	54%
• Participated In a Listserv	50%
• Technical Assistance via Listserv	37%
• Legal Services Journal	35%
• Task Force Meetings(s)	35%
• In-Person Training Program	35%
• Disability Law News	34 %
• Technical Assistance via Email	33%
• Fair Hearing Bank	31%
• Technical Assistance via Phone	30%

**Service or Resource Offered**

**Per Cent of Respondents who Use Service or Resource**

• Disability Advocacy Resources	25%
• Public Benefits Case Law Database	22%
• Training Through On-Line Resource Center	21%
• New York Health Access Web Site	19%
• Domestic Violence Case Law Update and Resources	13%
• Policy Meetings	10%

Eighty-four per cent of respondents report that they receive the help or information they seek from Empire Justice all of the time or most of the time and that the information or assistance was very helpful or somewhat helpful ninety-one per cent of the time. Only two per cent indicated that they did not receive the help or information that they needed.



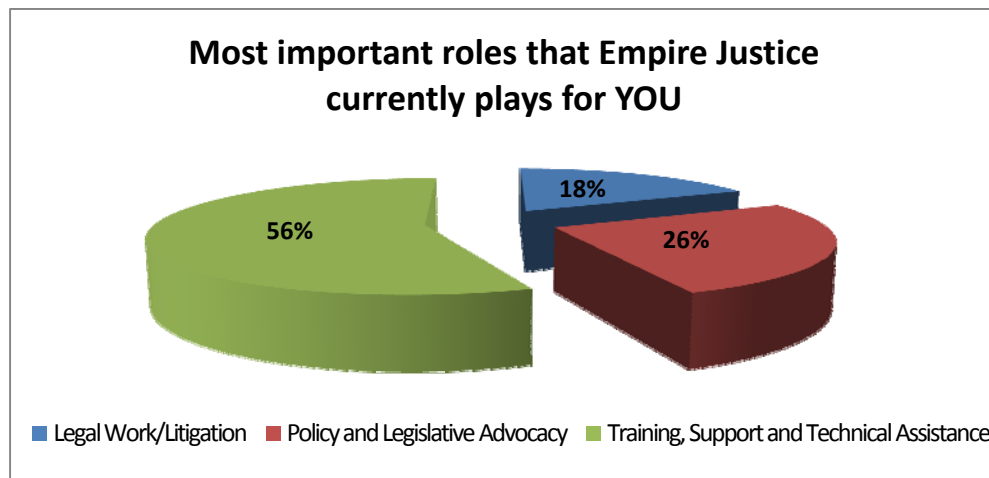
## What are the most important roles that Empire Justice plays?

When asked to consider the multiple roles played by Empire Justice and to identify five that were most important to them in doing their work, respondents identified the most important Empire Justice roles as:

**Training, Support and Technical Assistance—56%** (including substantive technical assistance, substantive law updates, training on legal skills and substantive areas, coordinating services and providing leadership to substantive task forces, providing useful information for advocates via the Empire Justice website, Language Access Resource Center, Domestic Violence Advocacy Resources, etc.) Respondents chose these roles most important fifty-six per cent of the time; almost twice as important for advocates than those that follow.

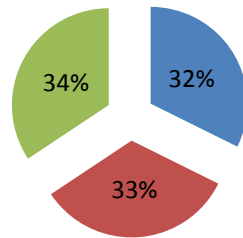
**Policy and Legislative Advocacy – 26%** (including providing leadership and collaboration in legislative and administrative policy advocacy, providing leadership and collaboration in advocacy on state funding for legal services, providing leadership and collaboration on issues that impact clients statewide and authoring and publishing reports on important policy issues that impact New Yorkers).

**Legal Work/Litigation—18%** (including providing litigation backup and support, co-counseling cases with other legal services providers, identifying important substantive legal issues that impact the poor and litigating important issues of statewide consequence).



When considering the value to their client communities of Empire Justice’s services and roles, respondents differentiated only slightly among “policy and legislative advocacy—34%”, “legal work/litigation—33%” and “training, support and technical assistance—32%”.

### Most important roles that Empire Justice plays for your CLIENT COMMUNITY



■ Training, Support and Technical Assistance   ■ Legal Work/Litigation   ■ Policy and Legislative Advocacy

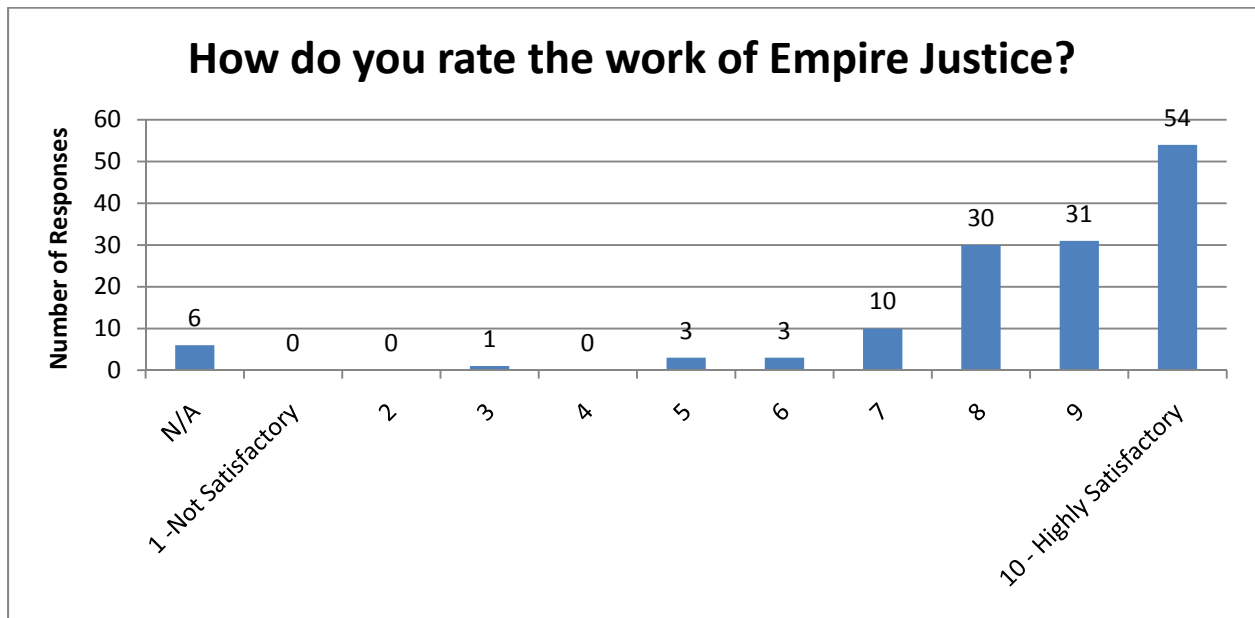
To explore how respondents utilize/value Empire Justice Center roles and services, respondents were asked whether they agreed with the following statements:

Statement	Percent of Respondents who Agree
• I highly value Empire Justice’s role in coordinating and leading policy advocacy efforts	85%
• I count on Empire Justice as a critical resource to keep me abreast of changes in law and regulations	82%
• I regularly use a listserv led or co-lead by Empire Justice Staff	81%
• I highly value Empire Justice’s role in coordinating and leading administrative advocacy efforts	80%
• Empire Justice keeps me well informed about the issues it is working on	78%
• I count on Empire Justice as a critical resource to identify important substantive legal issues that impact the poor	74%
• The Online Resource Center is a valuable research tool for me	68%
• I count on Empire Justice as a critical resource to support me in my work	67%
• I count on Empire Justice as a critical resource to litigate important issues of statewide importance	65%
• I have participated in Empire Justice sponsored training in the past two years	65%
• I receive legislative alerts through the Empire Justice website	62%
• I regularly visit the Empire Justice Web Site	59%

Statement	Percent of Respondents who Agree
• I have attended in person or electronically at least one task force meeting coordinated by Empire Justice in the past two years	49%
• I have received CLE credit for Empire Justice sponsored training in the past two years	46%
• I regularly read the Legal Services Journal	44%
• I regularly read the DAP News	40%
• I have co-counseled on cases with Empire Justice	11%
• I regularly visit the <a href="http://www.housingchoice.org">www.housingchoice.org</a> website	9%

### Overall, How Do Respondents Rate the Work of Empire Justice?

Respondents gave an overall rating for the work of Empire Justice between “1” – Not Satisfactory and “10” – Highly Satisfactory. Of the one hundred and thirty-two people who responded to this question, fifty-four gave the organization a “10” and only seven gave ratings of “6” or below. Comments provided by respondents that accompanied their overall rating are in Attachment I of this report.



## **Three Adjectives Describing Empire Justice**

The final survey question asked, “What three adjectives do you think best describe Empire Justice as an organization?” All the responses received are in Attachment II of this report. The top ten words respondents used (in order) are:

Helpful, knowledgeable, informative, dedicated, professional, effective, committed, comprehensive, hardworking, and supportive.

## **Final Thoughts**

Attachment III contains respondents’ responses to an invitation to comment on any aspect of Empire Justice’s work and role.

## Attachment I

### Comments received with Request to Rate the Work of Empire Justice

- I get the sense that EJC has an enormous amount of resources that \*would\* be useful to me, but I don't know what they are, and I don't know how to access them. I'm not sure what the best way would be to educate the legal services community about this, but I think it's great that the organization is clearly asking itself those types of questions.
- The work of Empire Justice Center staff has been invaluable in advancing the cause of equal and social justice for all New Yorkers.
- I find EJC invaluable in the information it makes publicly available, as well as in the technical assistance the staff provides me and my colleagues regularly. I particularly appreciate the attention EJC pays to intersecting oppressions and the effort to include a LGBTQH analysis.
- Mike Hanley is invaluable -- knowledgeable, generous, and -- I guess this is what makes EJC so important to us -- provides advice from the poverty law litigator's point of view -- useful, immediately applicable, and of most practical benefit to the client. Amy Schwartz is invaluable, knowledgeable, generous, a singular resource as (1) THE statewide LGBT poverty law resource, and (2) unifying force for statewide DV - including LGBT DV - poverty law community.
- Mike Hanley is a housing god.
- There is always room for improvement.
- The advocates are some of the best in their fields and always willing to help and train other advocates. They provide an invaluable resource to the legal services community (I used to be a legal services atty)
- I often feel they are overwhelmed with the amount of work they do
- I think EJC does an excellent job in the areas important to me.
- EJC provides professional and compassionate advocacy services at the highest level
- 10+++++++etc
- Staff are very good with Technical Assistance. Extremely patient and knowledgeable in terms of explaining substantive law and practice tips for newly-admitted attorneys.
- I would like to see more collaboration with legal services programs throughout the State to develop a more coordinated litigation effort. I appreciate that this is a very difficult task to accomplish given the diversity of issues, demands and needs from one to another community. I think that the collaborative effort within the legal services community has been more successful in the legislative advocacy area, even when we haven't been successful on that front (a successful collaboration doesn't have to mean that the end result wanted is obtained).
- EJC has the best staff, with the most knowledge, and the utmost commitment to helping field staff and low income people generally. Bravo!
- I think Empire Justice Center needs to inform people more about what services you offer and how to access resources. I think you do great work - just tell us more about it!
- I use your website all the time to get up-to-date information on benefits. I don't know what I would do without you!

## Attachment II

### What Three Adjectives Best Describe Empire Justice as an Organization?

- Supportive, Educational, Expert
- FOCUSED, RESPONSIVE, ACCESSIBLE
- Competent, professional, cutting edge
- Social justice-focused, effective, leader
- Helpful, supportive, one very bad experience where I felt ej staff was arrogant and condescending
- I don't know if these are adjectives per se but: hard-working, attentive, and extremely thorough.
- Professional, necessary, competent
- Innovative, involved, dedicated
- On top of relevant issues
- Competent, effective, invaluable
- Knowledgeable, effective, responsive
- Thorough, knowledgeable, useful
- Professional, Supportive, Caring
- Focused, strategic, helpful
- Invaluable, helpful, committed
- Smart, Generous, Comprehensive -- provides both legislative advocacy and practical help for my client!
- Dedicated, knowledgeable, Experts
- Motivated, highly skilled, professional
- EFFECTUAL, IMPERATIVE, USEFUL
- Committed, Passionate, Knowledgeable
- Accessible informative articulate
- Friendly, Knowledgeable, accessible
- Dynamic, expert, diligent
- Knowledgeable, committed, professional
- Supportive, current, effective
- Important, invaluable, critical
- Accessible, patient, knowledgeable
- Informative, reliable and helpful
- Comprehensive, cutting-edge, high quality
- Informed, responsive, reliable
- Strong, united, indispensable
- Dedicated, hardworking, informative
- Timely, Valuable, Comprehensive
- Hardworking, strategic, passionate
- Instrumental, focused, effective
- OUTSTANDING, DEDICATED, COMPETENT
- Information, coordination & advocacy
- ESSENTIAL, HELPFUL, GREAT
- Devoted, capable, hard-working

- Efficient, knowledgeable, interested
- Large, siloed, mission drift
- Knowledgeable, helpful, committed to justice
- Empathy, service, and compassion
- Reliable, available, helpful
- Knowledgeable, community-oriented, supportive
- Informative, professional, educational
- Professional, highly-trained advocates
- STRATEGIC, ESSENTIAL, IMPORTANT
- Skillful, committed, qualified are perhaps, the best characterization I might give.
- Advocate, informing, leader,
- Dedicated, helpful and valuable
- Thorough, invaluable, dedicated
- Intelligent, Responsive, Progressive
- Consistently Intelligent, thoughtful, beneficial
- Helpful, Resource, Quality
- Advocacy, policy, legislation
- Fabulous, Thorough, Informative
- Committed, high quality
- Informational, knowledgeable, hardworking
- Necessary, useful, important to the legal community
- Informed, engaged, professional
- HELPFUL COOPERATIVE INFORMATIVE
- SUPERB advocates, DEDICATED to the work they are doing, always HELPFUL to people with questions or anyone in need
- Wonderful, informed, organized
- Helpful, necessary, state-wide
- Knowledgeable, helpful, capable
- Progressive, essential, informative
- Advocacy and Policy driven, statewide, collaborative
- Approachable, user-friendly, current
- Dedicated, efficient, communicative
- Critical, quality, upstate
- Collaborative, skilled, connected
- Organized, effective, and cutting edge
- Incisive, Effective/Comprehensive, Collaborative
- Accurate, Comprehensive, Beneficial
- Well-staffed, efficient, topical
- Critically important, underfunded, exceptionally talented and competent
- Important, necessary, and effective
- I like the organization, but due to my specialization in a few housing issues, I only utilize a small portion of the resources available.

## Attachment III

### Final Comments on any Aspect of Empire Justice's Work and Roles

- Very valuable resource for the NY legal community. I rely on EJC to provide updates on the law for the staff and in order for me to draft accurate curricula for training purposes. I don't look to EJC as much for direct client services.
- Thank you for the years and years of assistance you have provided to me and to my colleagues in the legal services community. It is not always clear what EJC does or how to access its benefits.
- Your organization is peripheral to my work, which is primarily criminal, but I use it to get quick info on non-criminal areas of law that my clients ask about, and I appreciate its usefulness for that purpose. And I'm glad that there are organizations out there working on the overarching policy issues that I don't have time to concentrate on at work.
- Cathy Roberts is amazing! Any time I have an issue, and whether I e-mail her directly or ask a question via the listserv, she is at the ready to assist me, and takes the time to follow up. She has assisted me directly, and indirectly through her answers to other advocates' listserv questions, on many a client situation.
- None at this time but appreciate organization's existence.
- Keeping legal services' attorneys abreast of substantive law issues and changes and litigating issues we are prohibited from litigating are extremely important roles. Please keep it up.
- I really appreciate technical assistance from Amy Schwartz. I have attended great trainings and task force meetings she has organized, and I have consulted with her on individual cases for substantive law and strategic planning guidance.
- Invaluable.
- I have been with my firm 37 years, empire justice is the most important resource and support we have.
- I wish as a private practice representative I felt more welcomed to ask questions of this service.
- The online trainings are invaluable for a new attorney starting in poverty law, particularly because they are accessible at any time and they are so well-organized and informative.
- We need EJC to bring law reform litigation in welfare matters.
- Critical
- Great job.
- Some EJ attorneys seem very focused on client needs and serve very useful backup functions for my clients while others ... not so much. But that may be because I haven't reached out to them in the same way.
- With so many lawyers in so many silos, EJ seems to be structured to do impact litigation but impact litigation doesn't seem to be happening. In my opinion, lawyers can be most useful to our clients in one of two ways: Either bringing impact litigation or providing holistic representation in a broad range of poverty law issues but it's not clear to me that EJ does either one of those. Maybe that reflects inadequate PR - it's being done and I'm not hearing about it - or it's not being done. Legislative advocacy also needs to be done (funding, law reform) but I'm not sure that a lawyer needs to do that.
- EJC's advocacy is critical in providing some measure of justice in nearly all cases they take on.

- I depend on EJC--its services enable me to get my work done more easily; it provides a network of those similarly concerned; it provides resources not otherwise available; it is full service.
- For someone who is looking to contact a staff for technical support, I think it'd be nice if there are simple tools like online chat to ask a staff a question, or some kind of online directory that makes it easy to identify the contact person for a particular issue. It would also be nice to have an issue directory with links to relevant publications on Empire Justice website so an attorney who is new to an area of law can look at the publications to get a good overview of the issues in that area. It would also be nice if there is a posting of important discussions in a forum (have it summarized or link to it).
- The work done by Empire Justice Center has been essential in identifying the issues and strategies to solve numerous housing and lending issues, in addition to their commitment to serving the poor in this community and across the state. Highly effective advocates!
- As an advocate who works for a service provider with no attorney on staff, it would be extremely helpful if Empire Justice could occasionally represent our clients in particularly difficult cases.
- I have appreciated and enjoyed all the people I have communicated and interacted with at Empire Justice Center. While Empire Justice has benefited my practice in concrete, practical ways, the intangible, less easily defined benefits have been even more important to me. In my career, the one disappointment with Empire Justice is that I have not had the opportunity to co-counsel on important litigation.
- I often discuss my cases with some of the attorneys there and I found their input extremely valuable.
- I hope you get more funding and quickly - this incredible staff deserves financial security. Management should be applauded for its success in growing and maintaining a first class law office, and it would be a crime if lack of financial support now meant a loss of any of the knowledgeable and dedicated advocates at EJC.
- They are a great asset to the community and advocates.
- Empire Justice helps both me and my office to be more effective and efficient in our legal work. Thanks to the efforts of Empire Justice, I feel that I am not "alone in the wilderness" doing this work, but rather part of a larger state-wide effort to pursue justice on behalf of the poor.
- EJC plays a limited role downstate.
- I think Empire Justice Center does a great job at being a leader in providing up to date legal information, producing valuable materials, and providing direct service to clients. Not many legal offices can do all three as effectively as Empire Justice Center can.
- Please keep up all the great work that you do. Thanks!
- It seems that services in many regions of the state have become very fragmented - I recognize that EJC has worked to address the need for integration of services and the need for providing representation in traditional core services (public benefits, housing, etc.) - but it seems that much more needs to be done in this area, and EJC would seem to be the logical choice to lead this effort.
- I like the organization, but due to my specialization in a few housing issues, I only utilize a small portion of the resources available through Empire Justice. I appreciate much of the work Ruhi Maher has done locally for the community. Having read through this survey, I hope to look more at the Empire Justice website.
- I have a friend was jailed with a high bail or a probation issue in another state 17 years ago - it was terrible that he was locked up over a minor issue a long time ago, causing him to lose his job and be away from a family that needs him.