



THE CIVIL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE PUBLIC RESEARCH PROJECT

PREVIEW OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: THE PUBLIC

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This is a simplified version of the interview guide our researchers will be using if you have agreed, or subsequently agree, to take part in our research about the civil justice system. As we are interested in hearing in detail about your experiences and thoughts, we would like you to be able to have the time to think about the issues we raise. At the time of the interview the researcher will guide you through these questions and offer any additional explanations you might need.

SECTION A:

To begin, I would like to go over some definitions:

By “civil justice”, we don't mean the criminal courts. We mean the courts that deal with cases like:

- family law*
- child welfare*
- injuries from accidents*
- property disputes, and*
- wills and estates*

By “system” we include everyone who has a role in civil court proceedings, such as:

- judges*
- lawyers*
- other people who work at the courthouse*
- native and other support workers*
- services such as Legal Aid*
- government, and*
- public legal education groups.*

1. a) At this time are you involved in a civil court case?

1. YES 2. NO

2) Are you represented by legal counsel?

1. YES 2. NO

2. a) Have you previously been involved in a civil court case?

1. YES 2. NO

b) HOW OFTEN:

WHEN:

IN WHAT WAY(S) INVOLVED :

WHERE YOU REPRESENTED BY LEGAL COUNSEL?

3. Plaintiff

4. Defendant

5. Witness

6. Expert Witness

7. Juror

8. Member of Aboriginal Justice Committee

9. Participant in Aboriginal dispute resolution

10. Other

c) Attended court as a COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE:

1. YES 2. NO

3. How well informed do you think you are about the civil court system in Canada?

SECTION B:

For this interview, we would like you to consider as communication every way in which you have discussed, given, or received information about your court case. This may include any of the following:

- direct meetings and conversations**
- telephone, e-mail, memos and letters**
- finding or receiving brochures and other written or visual information material**
- getting information placed on a web site**
- receiving or understanding orders, directions and decisions of the court**
- referrals to or from other services**
- seeking or following directions posted around the court house.**

4. a) Have you ever given any thought to these things before now?

Was it easy to reach the court?

What, if anything, would have made it easier?

What ways of communicating worked the best?

Did you use any particular tactics to communicate successfully [get what you needed]?

5. During your involvement with the civil court system, were you ever offered information without having to ask for it? If so, when did this occur?

6. You have had more than one involvement with the civil court system. Were your communication experiences different?

SECTION C

7. Do you think there would be anything to be gained by improving communication between the public and the civil court system?
8. Ideally, what changes would you like to see in communication with the civil court system?

How do you think these changes can be brought about?
What might be a barrier to these changes?

9. Past reports have often suggested that such things as multi-service information centres, telephone information lines, special web pages, and better public education would help improve communication between the civil justice system and the public. We would like to know what you think about these ideas.

- 18) Do you think a multi-service information centre would be helpful? Why or why not?

Where should it be?
What should it be like?
What should it have in it?
Should it be staffed or self-help?
Who should the staff be?

- b) What about a telephone information line? Would that be helpful?

What kind of information should it provide?
Automated or in-person information?
Hours of operation?

- c) What about specially designed web sites?

What kind of information should it provide?
What kind of design features?

- d) What about other kinds of public education efforts? There are brochures, videos, public forums, workshops, and educational classes. What kinds of public education do you think are most helpful?
- e) How should the public be informed about these services?

10. What are the three most important recommendations you would make to improve communication between the public and the civil justice system?

SECTION D

Recently it has been suggested that the civil justice system in Canada needs overall reform (that is, changes to improve the way it works).

11. Do you think members of the public can, and should have a role in shaping civil justice reform?
12. If there were more, or better, communication between the civil justice system and the public, do you think this would make reforming the system easier?

How could the public be involved in improving the way the civil justice system communicates with them?

13. Would you personally like to be part of shaping civil justice reform?