



The Attorney Count Project Summer 2019

The Count. This summer, the National Center for Access to Justice (NCAJ) at Fordham Law School is carrying out a research initiative to update the “Attorney Count” in the Justice Index, justiceindex.org. Last updated in 2016, the Count is a national resource for data on the number of civil legal aid organizations and attorneys providing free legal assistance in each state.

Its Importance. Access to a lawyer is often essential to people who risk the loss in our justice system of their homes, children, savings, physical and emotional safety, and more. By reporting the numbers of civil legal aid organizations and attorneys in each state, and by comparing the states to one another, the Justice Index equips officials, activists, researchers and members of the public to better understand and champion the importance of civil legal aid in each state and in our society. In its most recent edition, the Justice Index found that the number of civil legal aid attorneys was on average fewer than 1 per 10,000 low income people. Only 7 states had as many as 1 civil legal aid attorney per 10,000 low income people. The Justice Index sets 10 civil legal aid attorneys per 10,000 low income people as a goal. In the general population there are, on average, more than 40 attorneys per 10,000 people.

The Plan. As with previous editions, NCAJ will conduct the Count by seeking the support of individuals at the American Bar Association, the Legal Services Corporation, the National Association of IOLTA Programs, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association, and other organizations. The success of the Count will also turn, in part, on the engagement of NCAJ (and its partners) with hundreds of individuals in local civil legal aid organizations, IOLTA programs, Access to Justice Commissions, courts, bar associations, bar foundations, private law firms, and other institutions. NCAJ invites leaders in all these settings to join in the work to carry out the Count. NCAJ is conducting the Count with the direct assistance of a large team of pro bono attorneys, law students and undergraduates at Pfizer Inc.

Further. In 2019 and 2020, NCAJ will be working to update the criteria and findings in all of the Justice Index categories, and will also be adding to the Justice Index best policies for curbing excessive reliance on “fines and fees” as a means of financing government. An overview of the Justice Index is [here](#).ⁱ Since its initial publication online in 2014, the Justice Index has been an important tool for justice system reformers, and for all who are working to make our society more just. In addition to the number of civil legal aid attorneys per poor person, the Justice Index elevates best policies for assuring access to justice for self-represented litigants, people with limited English proficiency, and people with disabilities. NCAJ created the Justice Index with help from six law firms, four corporations, and three law schools – a pro bono team [honored](#)ⁱⁱ by the American Bar Association with the [Pro Bono Publico Award](#)ⁱⁱⁱ in 2017.

More on NCAJ. Based at Fordham Law School in New York City, NCAJ is a nonprofit organization that relies on data and advocacy to increase access to justice, improve the justice system, and build a more just and equitable society. To obtain more information about NCAJ, sign up for [NCAJ’s blog](#)^{iv} or visit [NCAJ’s website](#).^v All are invited to use [NCAJ’s Justice Index](#)^{vi} to support justice system reform. Please contact David Udell, NCAJ’s Executive Director, with any questions, dudell@fordham.edu.

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End Notes (links)

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- i <https://ncforaj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Introduction-to-the-Justice-Index-5-29-19.pdf>
 - ii <https://ncforaj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ABA-Pro-Bono-The-Justice-Index-Team.mp4>
 - iii https://www.americanbar.org/groups/probono_public_service/projects_awards/pro_bono_publico_award/past_recipients
 - iv ncforaj.org
 - v ncforaj.org
 - vi justiceindex.org