

# #TalkJustice : 1- Overview

Fall 2017

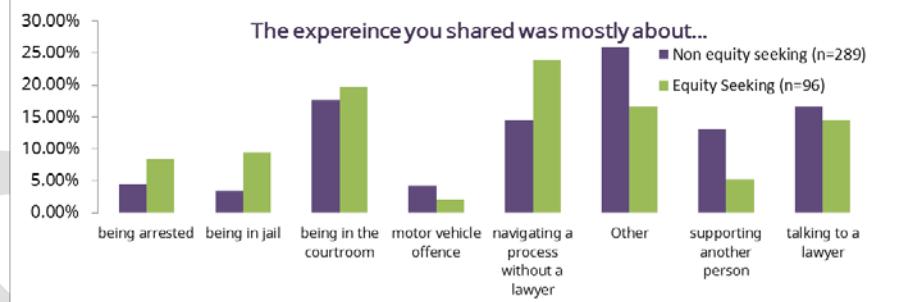
## INTRODUCTION

Since the spring of 2016, the #TalkJustice project has been collecting experiences and observations from Nova Scotians concerning our justice system. To date, Nova Scotians have shared 220 experiences with us. They were collected as 'top of mind' thoughts about the justice system. We asked them also to provide answers to a few additional questions that would help interpret the story. This update provides information concerning those experiences.

## WHAT WAS MY STORY ABOUT?

The experiences that were shared are as diverse as you might expect. Respondents' observations were often about being in a courtroom, navigating the legal system without a lawyer and supporting another person through the justice system. The table to the right shows the main topics that were discussed.

Members of equity seeking groups were more likely than others to share experiences about being arrested, being in jail and navigating a process without a lawyer. The 'other' category being quite large, suggests that the range of topics respondents wanted to speak to was larger than researchers had originally thought.



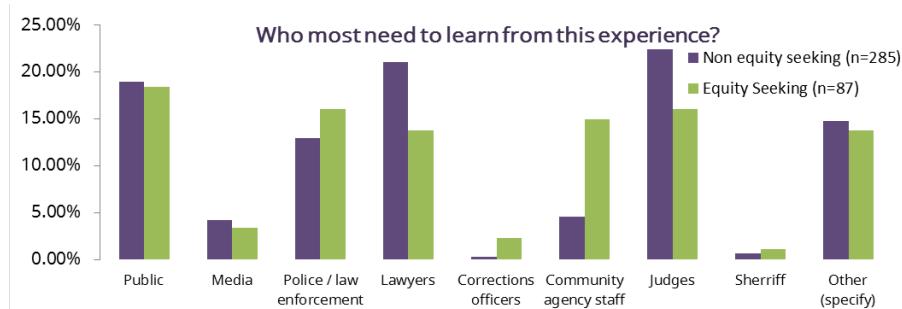
*[Being in a courtroom]* “When I was 16 years old I was charged with drinking under age. Since this was the first time anyone in my family had been charged I really only had other teenagers experience to go by. I remember being absolutely terrified going into the court...”

*[Navigating a process without a lawyer]* “A person was convicted of theft and ordered to pay restitution but only a small portion was paid in. [T]o get anymore after the three year time period more legal fees must be paid by the injured party in order to collect This is not fair and should be followed by the court system to ensure it is paid in full.”

*[Other]* “Periodically I have the chance to encourage people to do better in life. I saw a young girl in public that stopped me and said that because of my encouragement she was drug free and has stayed out of trouble for over a year. That was a positive experience.”

## WHO NEEDS TO LEARN FROM MY STORY?

Respondents were asked to identify who most needs to hear the story they shared. They were allowed to select more than one response from the list in the table below. Largely people felt that judges, lawyers and the public were the ones most in need of hearing about their experience. However, members of equity-seeking groups are more likely to suggest that police and other law enforcement officials as well as community agency staff need to hear their story most. Once again there is a larger than anticipated 'other' category. Most in that category were focused on government officials and policy makers.



*[Public] "I was stopped for speeding along the Bedford Highway late one night. I was treated very respectfully by the officer, despite the fact that I technically could have been given a reckless driving ticket due to my excessive speed. ... The calmness and professionalism of the officer allowed me to fully realize how careless and dangerous I had been."*

*[Lawyer] "I am an advocate for incarcerated people and frequently work with crown and defence on release plans. I recently had a really positive experience with a very thoughtful and understanding crown in the Bridgewater area. This crown did not take a punitive approach but rather took a rehabilitative approach and allowed my client to get on her own recognizance. My client is now doing really well in a supportive housing environment."*

*[Judges] A prostitute savagely beaten by her pimp escaped to ED where we assisted her in lodging complaint with police. Pimp's lawyer subpoenaed her PAST medical records, found past history which patient did not want disclosed publicly and got complaint withdrawn by threatening to bring it up in court.*

## HOW LONG WILL YOU REMEMBER THIS EXPERIENCE?

Respondents were asked to identify how long they would remember the experience that they shared. For many the experience was highly memorable. The vast majority of stories (68%) would be remembered "as long as I live".

Experiences from those who identify as equity-seeking are more likely (55/67 : 82%) to be recorded as "I will remember as long as I live" when compared to non equity-seeking group experiences (63/98 : 64%).



*[I will remember as long as I live] A family member with schizophrenia killed 3 family members the justice system says he isn't or can't be held responsible for his actions because of his sickness. Yet when he gets out of the forensic hospital he will be left responsible to take his drugs on his own, this needs to change.*