

Many U.S. Families Faced Civil Legal Issues in 2018

Survey highlights need for alternative approaches to help people navigate the courts

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About 1 in 3 U.S. households faced housing, family, or debt issues that could result in an interaction with the civil legal system in 2018, according to a survey commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The pervasive nature of such civil legal issues suggests that Americans would benefit from having more options for handling these cases and a broader range of assistance programs that extend beyond what private or legal aid attorneys can effectively provide.

In the survey, 47 percent of households reported that they had dealt with at least one civil legal problem over the previous 12 months, not including traffic tickets. Including traffic citations—which may be civil or criminal, depending on the state—the number increased to 56 percent. A significant number of respondents—25 percent—said they had experienced at least two civil legal problems during the year.

Aside from traffic tickets, the top civil issues faced by families involved responsibility for a family member, for example child custody (16 percent); disputes related to goods or services (15 percent); and issues with credit, loans, or debt (13 percent). (See Figure 1.) [READ MORE](#)

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