



# National Prosecutors' Consortium

## Survey Highlights

### *Iowa*



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# IOWA REPORT

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# BACKGROUND

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The National Prosecutors' Consortium (NPC), a collaboration between Justice & Security Strategies (JSS) and the Prosecutors' Center for Excellence (PCE), is designed to collect information on innovative programs employed by prosecutors' offices, to assist prosecutors in developing and deploying new programs, and to expand the research capacities of prosecutors' offices. The team developed a survey that is being administered at the county level across the United States on a state-by-state basis. This survey seeks to accomplish two objectives to support prosecution needs: 1) collection of a thorough baseline of information on the operation of county prosecutors' offices across the country, and 2) identification of those offices that have adopted innovative programs.



# METHODOLOGY

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NPC conducted focus groups with prosecutors and prosecutor coordinating offices. As part of this effort, NPC identified the desired topic areas and reviewed survey questions. The survey is designed as an agency-based questionnaire intended to collect data on the characteristics and operations within each prosecutor's office. The survey is delivered through an online, secure, cloud-based service using the Qualtrics survey platform. States are being offered this survey on a rolling basis.

As part of the data quality assurance process, we have identified a battery of 84 questions that provide the core information requested by the survey. To minimize the proportion of missing data, the weighted number of completed responses is compared to a threshold. Offices in counties where the responses did not pass this threshold will be contacted and additional responses will be requested. This report discusses responses from all partially complete surveys, but there may be changes in the number of valid cases for some questions as follow-ups with agencies continue.

# THE CURRENT STATE - IOWA

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The statewide Iowa survey provides many insights into the day-to-day functioning of Iowa's prosecutors' offices. This report discusses preliminary results from the survey. Out of the 99 prosecutors' offices that were contacted, 53 counties (54%) submitted responses as of June 28, 2019.



## TYPES OF CASES

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**Figure 1** depicts the percentage of prosecutors' offices handling specific types of cases. All offices reported handling all or at least some felonies, misdemeanors, infractions, and juvenile cases. Furthermore, all of the responding offices (N = 53) reported handling civil matters. **Figure 2** highlights the percentage of prosecutors' offices involved in various types of civil matters. All 53 offices reported handling mental health commitments. Fifty-two offices reported handling child protection matters, and 49 offices reported handling adult protection matters. FOIA or other public information requests were reported by 50 offices. Forty-six offices reported handling civil forfeitures, and nuisance abatement was reported by 42 offices. One office reported handling child support cases.

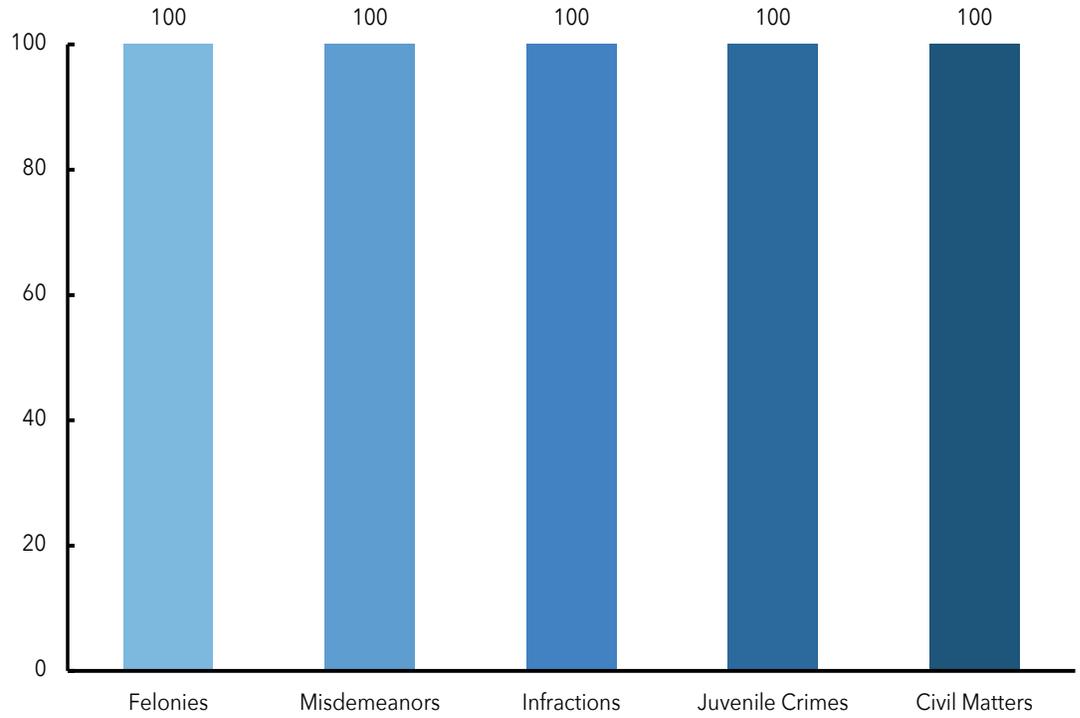


Figure 1. Percentage of Prosecutors' Offices with Jurisdiction over Cases by Type (N =53).

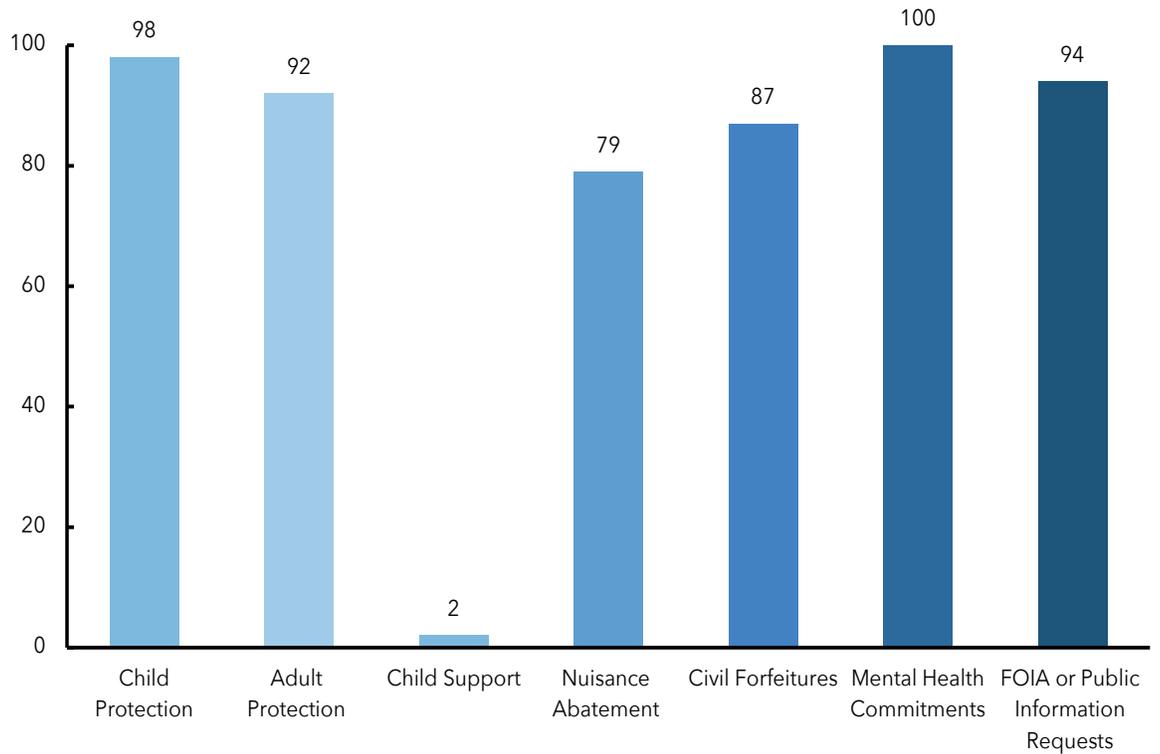


Figure 2. Percentage of Prosecutors' Offices with Jurisdiction over Civil Matters by Type (N = 53).

# CHIEF PROSECUTOR

Of the 53 counties that responded to the survey, all indicated that their Chief Prosecutor was elected. On average, the Chief Prosecutor had been in office for about nine years. The tenure of the Chief Prosecutor ranged from less than 1 year to 37 years. As seen in **Figure 3**, 53% of prosecutors had been in office for about 1-5 years, 17% 6-10 years, 11% between 11 and 15 years, 8% between 16 and 20 years, and 11% for more than 20 years.

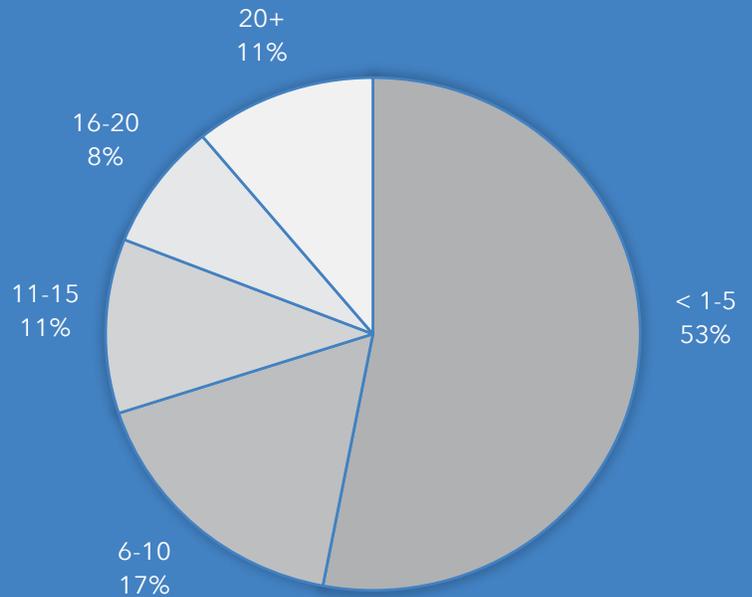


Figure 3. Chief Prosecutor Years in Office (N =53).

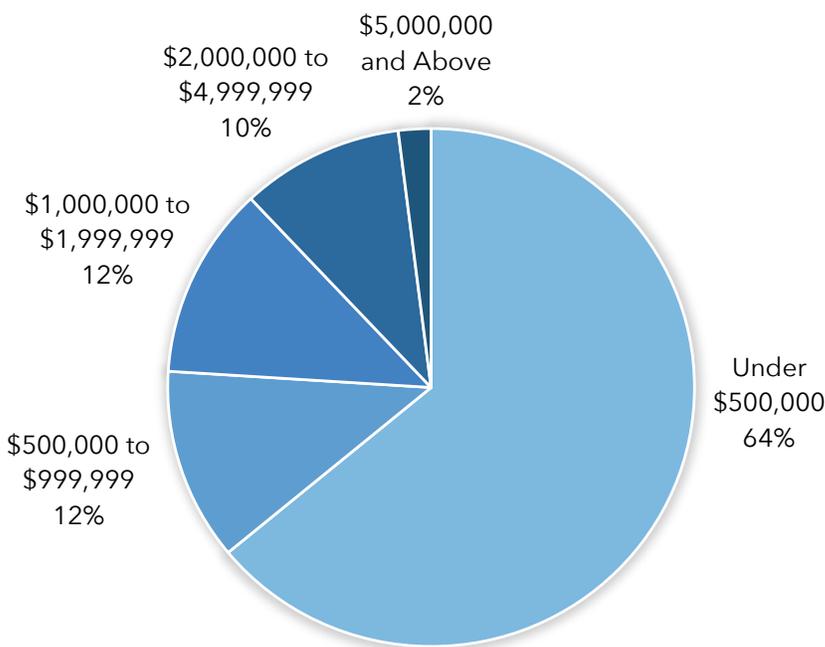


Figure 4. Ranges of 2018 Total Budgets (N = 50).

# OFFICE BUDGET

The 2018 average budget for prosecutors' offices was approximately \$1,060,806, with a low value of \$147,580 and a high value of \$13,822,787. **Figure 4** depicts that 64% of the offices had a budget under \$500,000, 12% had budgets between \$500,000 and about \$999,999, 12% had budgets between \$1,000,000 and about \$1,999,999, 10% had budgets between \$2,000,000 and \$4,999,999, and 2% had budgets over \$5,000,000.

The average 2018 personnel budget for Iowa prosecutors' offices was \$924,338. Responses ranged from \$73,126 to \$13,312,201. **Figure 5** presents the ranges of personnel budgets. Approximately 71% of the offices had a personnel budget under \$500,000, 11% had a personnel budget over \$500,000 but less than about \$999,999, 7% had a personnel budget over \$1,000,000 but less than about \$1,999,999, 9% had a personnel budget over \$2,000,000 but less than about \$4,999,999, and 2% had personnel budgets over \$5,000,000.

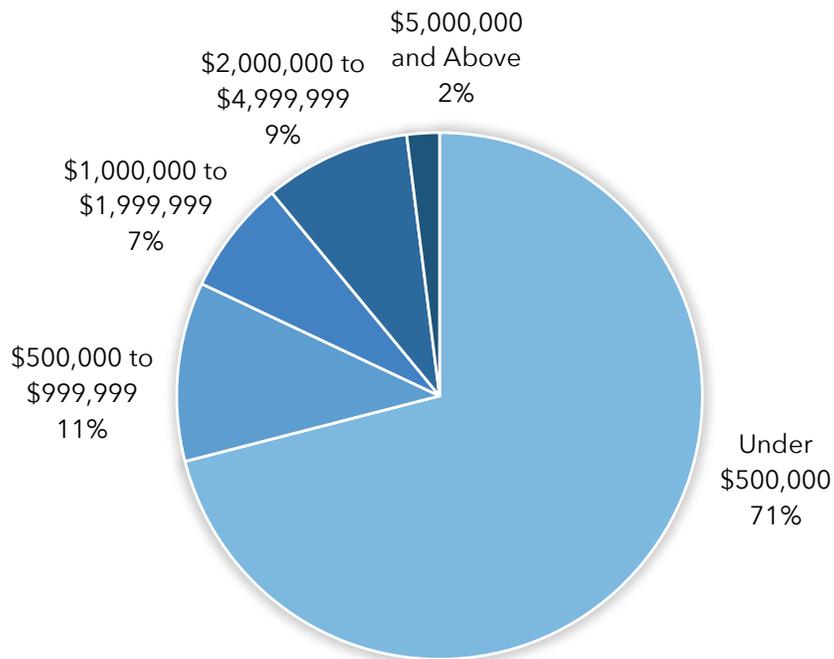


Figure 5. Ranges of 2018 Personnel Budgets (N = 45).

The average percentage of personnel to total budget by budget category is displayed in **Figure 6**.<sup>1</sup> This graph provides a method to determine whether agencies with large budgets spend a disproportionate amount of their budget on personnel costs. From this graph, it appears that jurisdictions with the largest budgets spend the highest portion of their budget (94%) on personnel. Jurisdictions with budgets from \$1,000,000 to \$1,999,999 and jurisdictions with budgets under \$500,000 allocated about 80% of their budget to personnel. Jurisdictions in the \$500,000 to \$999,999 range allocated approximately 72% of their budget to personnel.

<sup>1</sup> Three offices reported personnel to total budget ratios below 50 percent. These three cases have been excluded from the chart below. Updated information will be incorporated into revisions of this report.

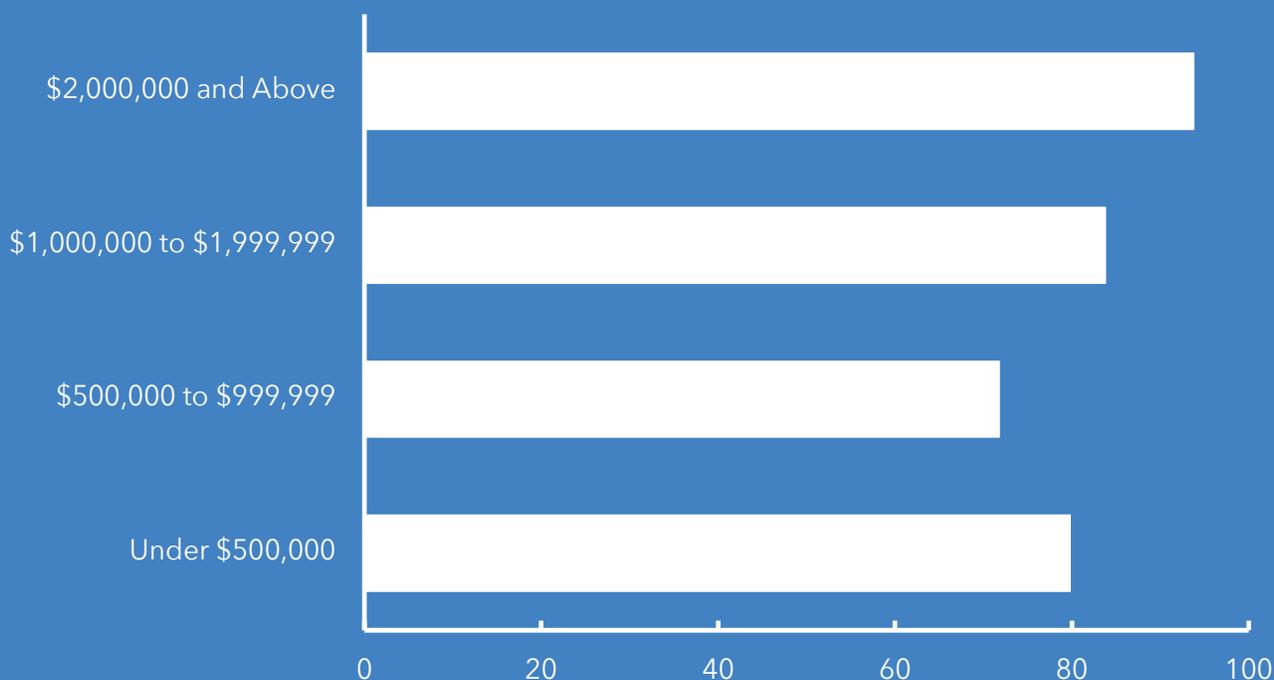


Figure 6. Average Percentage Personnel to Total Budget by Budget Category (N = 42).

# STARTING SALARIES

The 2018 starting salaries of recently graduated law students hired as prosecutors in Iowa ranged from a minimum of \$27,765 to a maximum of \$100,000. The average of the 28 responding offices was \$58,646.

# CASE PROCESSING

In 2018, the offices surveyed reviewed on average 321 felony cases, resulting in 287 cases charged, 217 cases with at least one conviction, and 9 cases diverted. Further, on average, the offices reported reviewing 1,149 misdemeanor cases, resulting in 1,117 cases charged, 986 cases with at least one conviction, and 47 cases diverted. Finally, on average, the offices also reviewed 105 juvenile cases, resulting in 98 cases charged, 86 cases with at least one conviction, and 13 cases diverted.

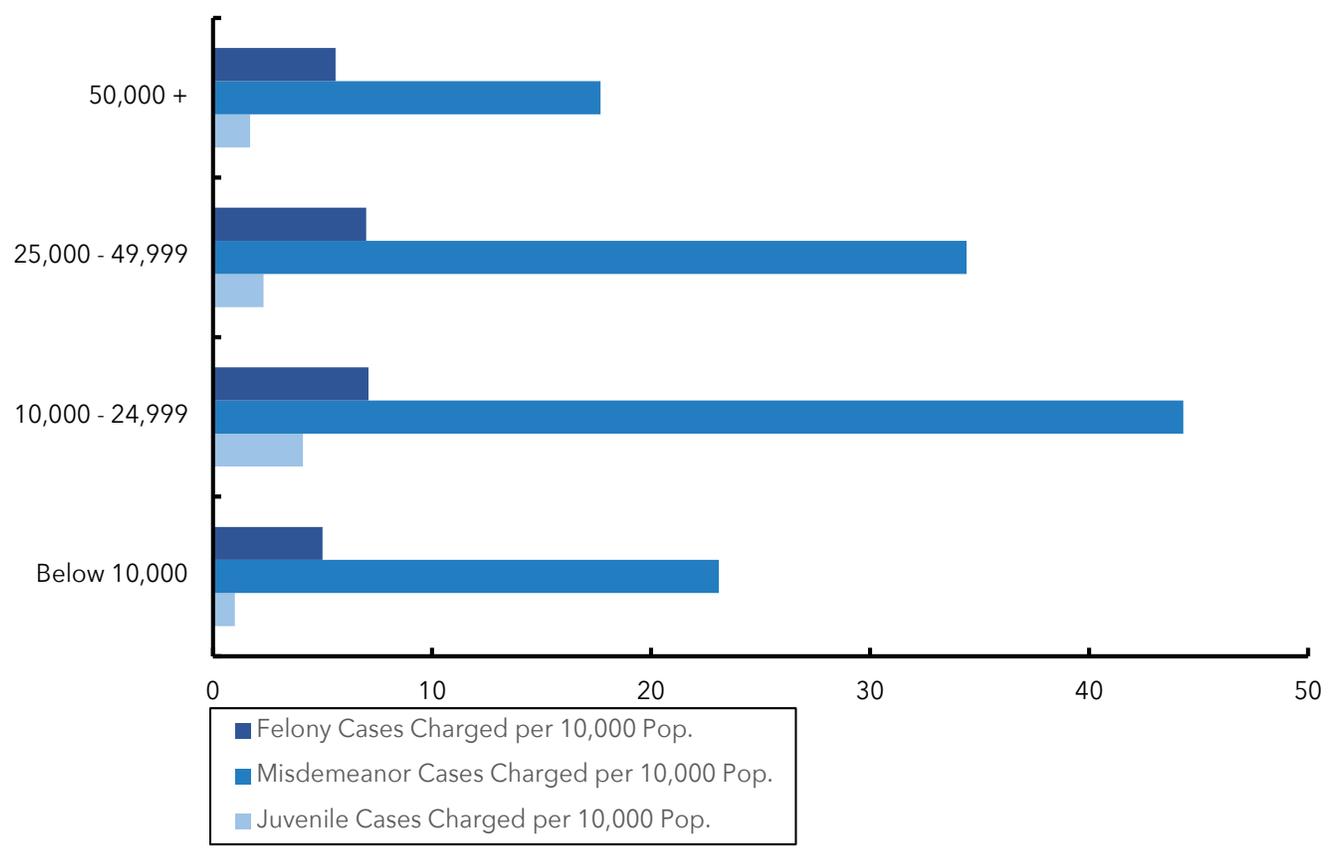


Figure 7. Cases Charged per 10,000 Population by Population Category (N = 35).

**Figure 7** depicts the number of felonies, misdemeanors, and juvenile cases charged by county population category. There is little variance in the number of felony and juvenile cases charged per capita. There are slight differences in rates of misdemeanor cases charged, as the jurisdictions in the mid-population range (10,000 - 49,999) charge more misdemeanors per 10,000 residents compared to smallest and largest counties.

**Figure 8** presents the average number of charged cases per full-time attorney for felonies, misdemeanors, and both felonies and misdemeanors combined. While these data are limited, the estimated workloads can provide a useful benchmark for agencies. Across reporting offices, there are an average of 74 charged felony cases per full-time attorney and 421 charged misdemeanor cases per full-time attorney. Overall, this resulted in an average of 495 charged misdemeanor and felony cases per full-time attorney.

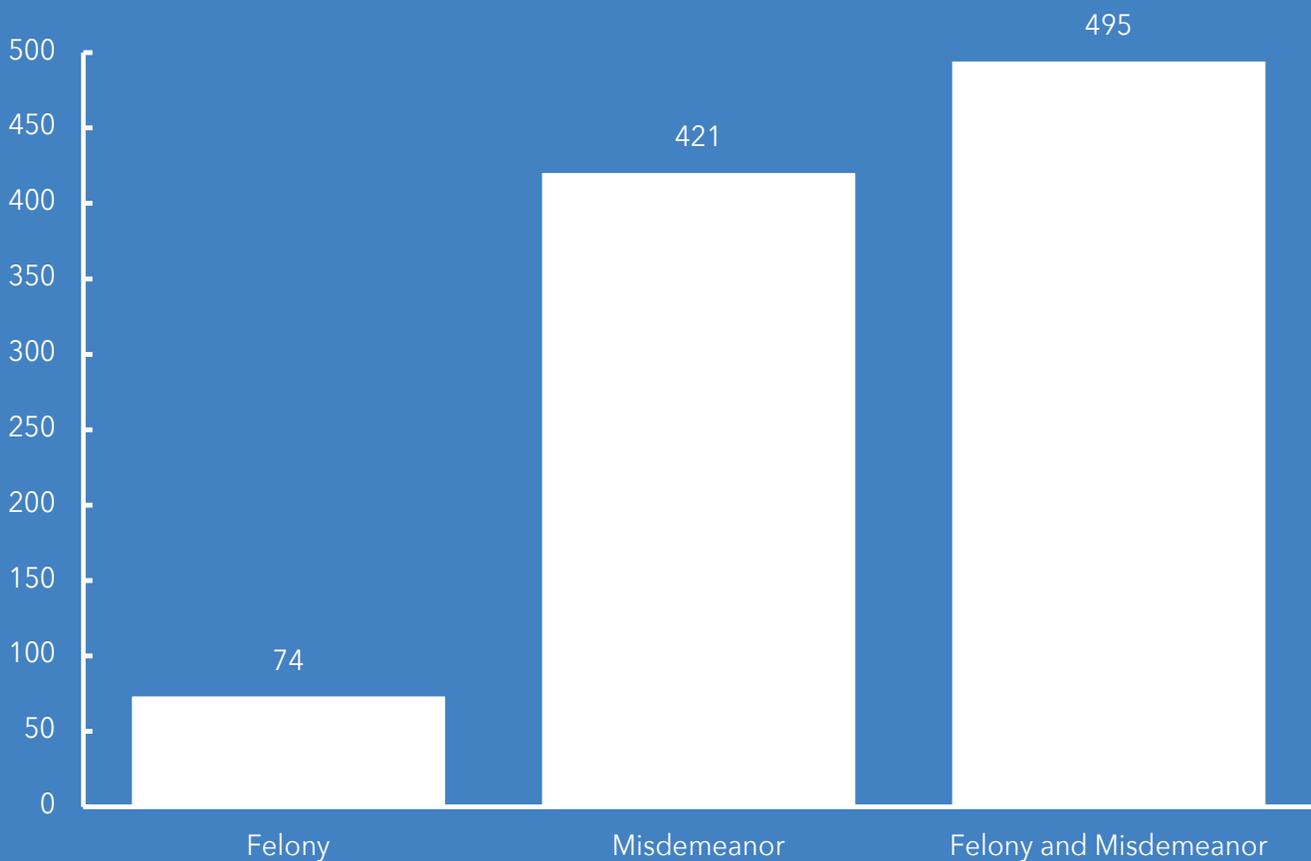


Figure 8. Average Number of Cases per Full-Time Attorney by Type of Case (N =26).



# NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

On average, prosecutors' offices in Iowa reported employing five full-time and 0.5 part-time attorneys. These offices also reported employing five full-time and 0.5 part-time non-attorneys.

**Figure 9** presents the number of full-time employees per 10,000 population by population category. Offices covering between 10,000 and 24,999 residents have the lowest number of full-time attorneys, non-attorneys, and total employees per 10,000 residents. Offices covering between 25,000 and 49,999 residents have the highest number of full-time attorneys, non-attorneys, and total employees per 10,000 residents.

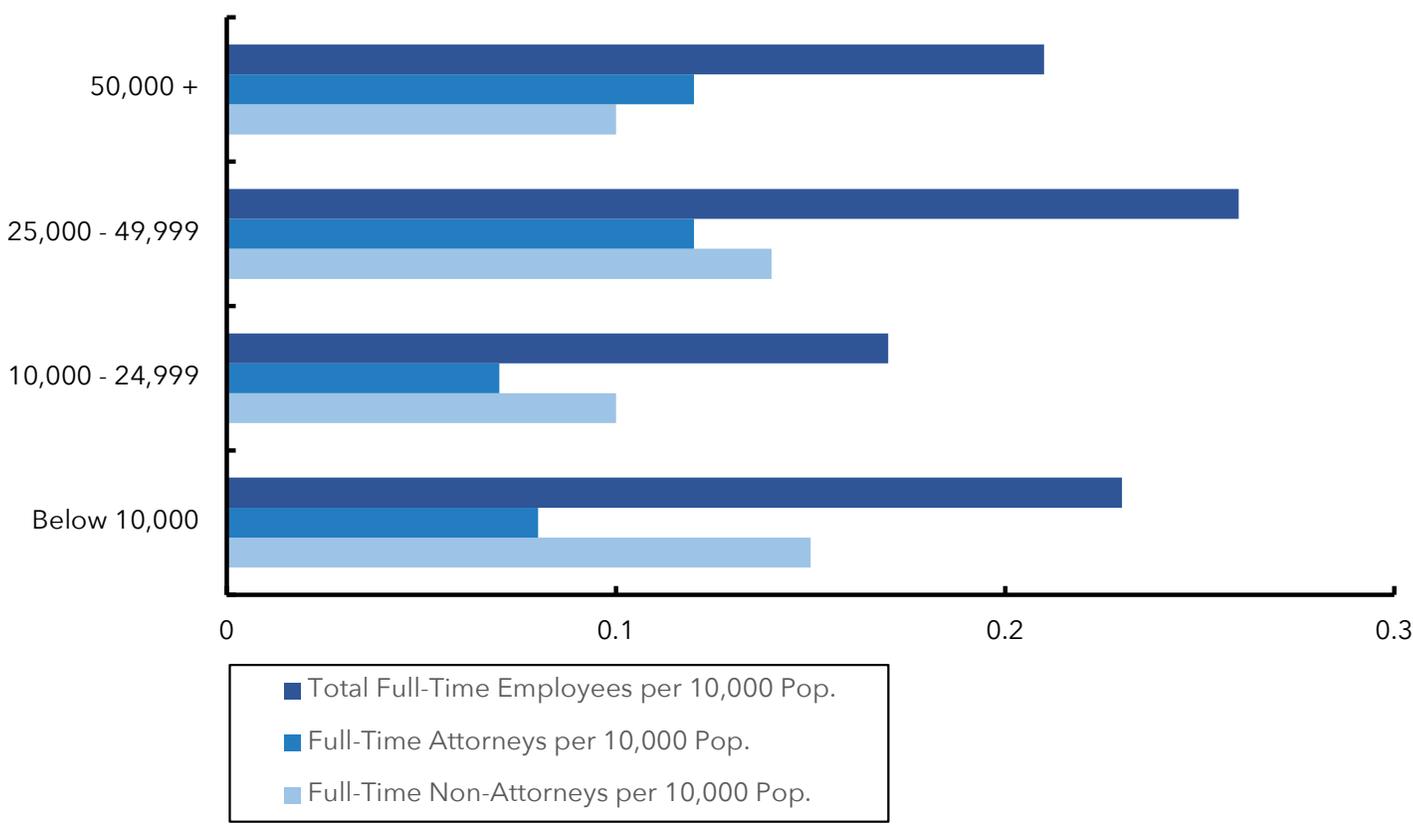


Figure 9. Number of Full-Time Employees per 10,000 Population by Population Category (N = 53).

A different strategy for examining staffing information is to consider the ratio of staff to a measure of workload. **Figure 10** presents the average number of full-time employees per 1,000 felony and misdemeanor cases charged. Counties covering fewer than 10,000 residents have the highest number of non-attorneys and total employees per 1,000 cases charged. Counties covering more than 50,000 residents have the most attorneys per 1,000 cases charged.



Figure 10. Average Number of Employees per 1,000 Felony and Misdemeanor Cases by Population (N = 35).



# PROSECUTOR INITIATIVES

A total of 43% of offices reported engaging in problem solving courts or other programs that offer alternatives to incarceration in 2018. The majority of offices reported that individuals with offenses involving low-level felonies (68%) and non-violent felonies (68%) are eligible for participation in these programs. A smaller number of offices reported that misdemeanor offenders (63%) and offenders with violent felonies (21%) are eligible for these programs.

# SPECIALTY COURTS

We asked respondents about nine different types of specialty courts: Drug courts, Veterans' courts, Mental Health courts, Human Trafficking courts, Homeless courts, Alcohol/Driving Sobriety courts, Domestic Violence courts, Community courts, and Re-entry courts. **Figure 11** provides the frequency of counties with each type of specialized court in 2018. The most common specialized courts were Drug courts (46%) and Mental Health courts (29%). Considerably fewer offices reported specialized Domestic Violence courts (10%), Alcohol/Driving Sobriety courts (5%), and Veterans' courts (5%). No offices reported Human Trafficking, Homeless, Re-entry, or Community courts.

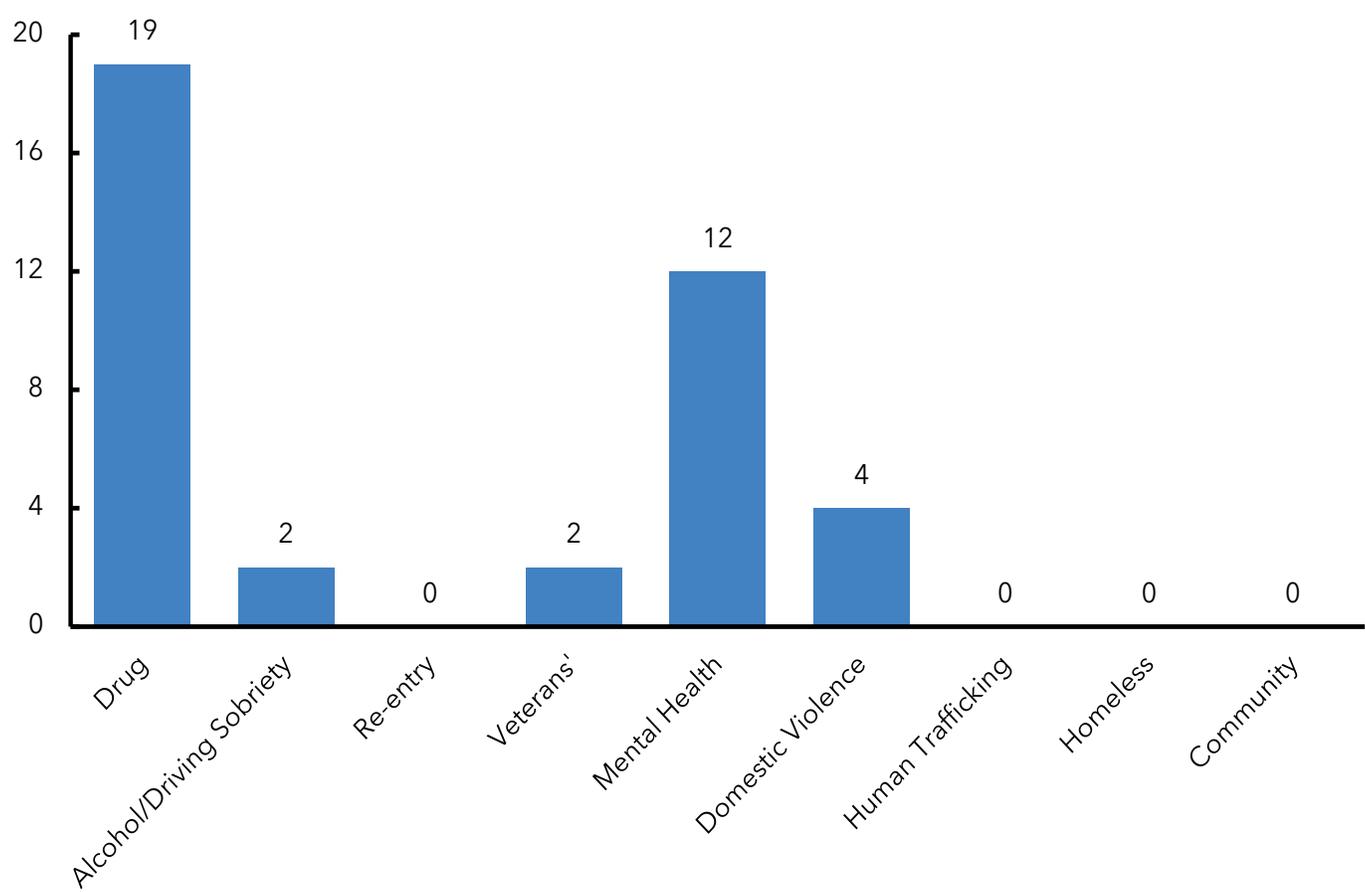


Figure 11. Number of Counties Reporting Specialized Courts by Type (N = 41).

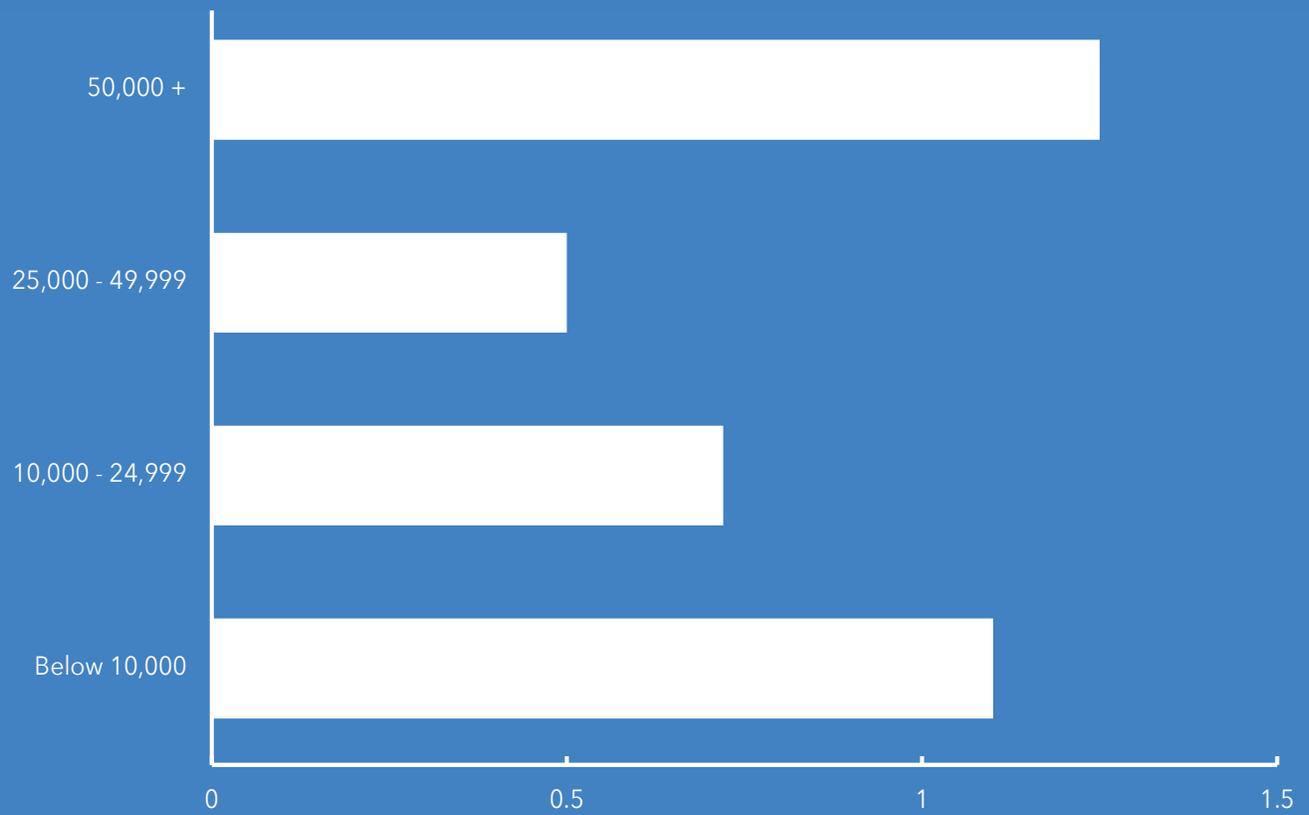


Figure 12. Average Number of Special Court Types by Population Category (N = 53).

**Figure 12** shows the number of special court types compared to the population category of the county. Counties with more than 50,000 residents have on average nearly 1.3 special court types compared to one for the other categories.





# ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

We also asked whether the offices in each county offered alternatives to incarceration in 2018, as shown in **Figure 13**. Drug treatment (60%) and mental health services (58%) were the most common offerings. Community service was offered in 50% of counties, anger management in 45% of counties, and training/education programs in 38% of counties. Less often were deflection (13%) and restorative justice (5%) programs offered as alternatives to incarceration.

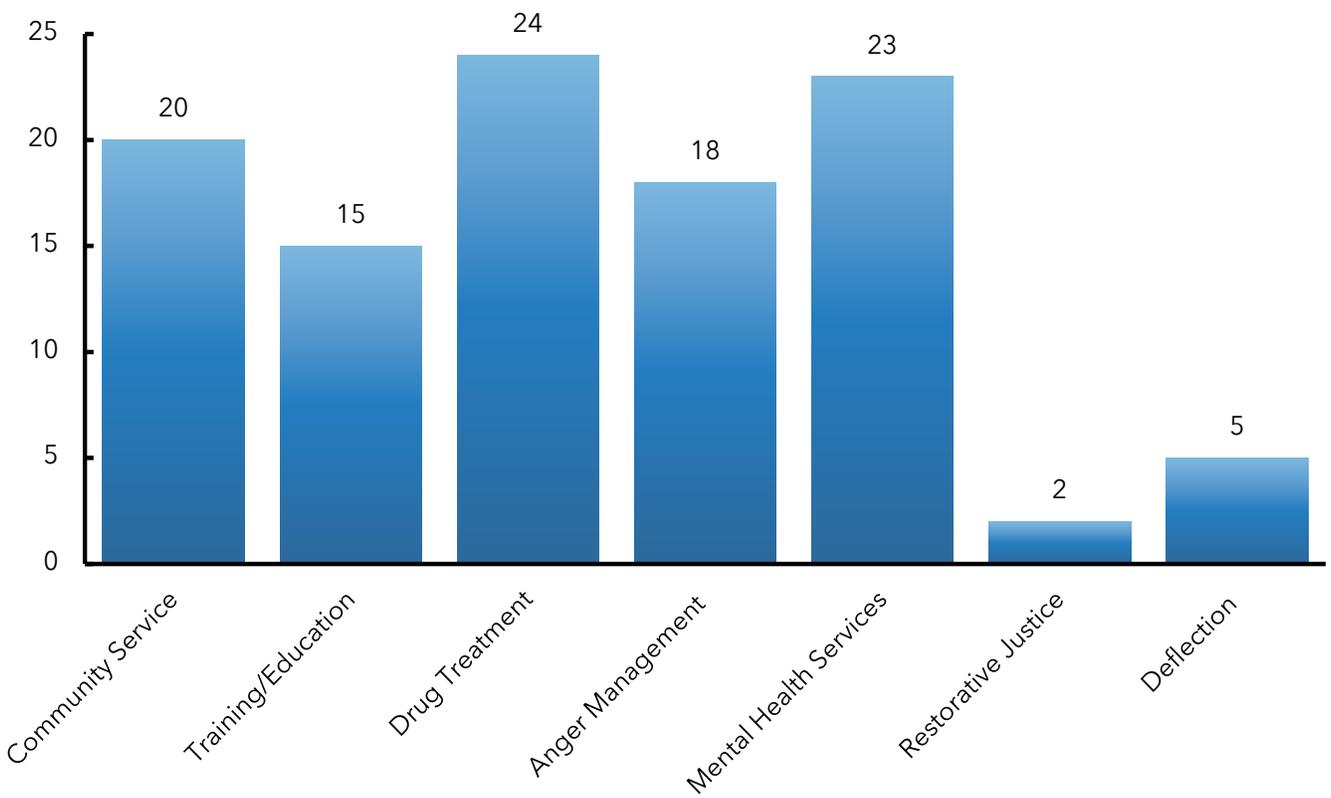


Figure 13. Number of Counties Reporting Alternatives to Incarceration by Type (N = 40).

# SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

**Figure 14** presents the number of prosecutors' offices that reported operating specialized programs. The most common type of program was Victim Assistance, which was reported by 73% of offices. The majority of offices reported offering Restitution programs (68%) and Witness Assistance programs (63%). Just under half of offices reported Victim Services without Arrest programs (49%). Rarely did prosecutors' offices report running Victim/Witness Relocation (17%), Community Affairs Units (15%), Conviction Review (12%), and Community Prosecutors programs (2%). No offices reported having Crime Strategies Units.

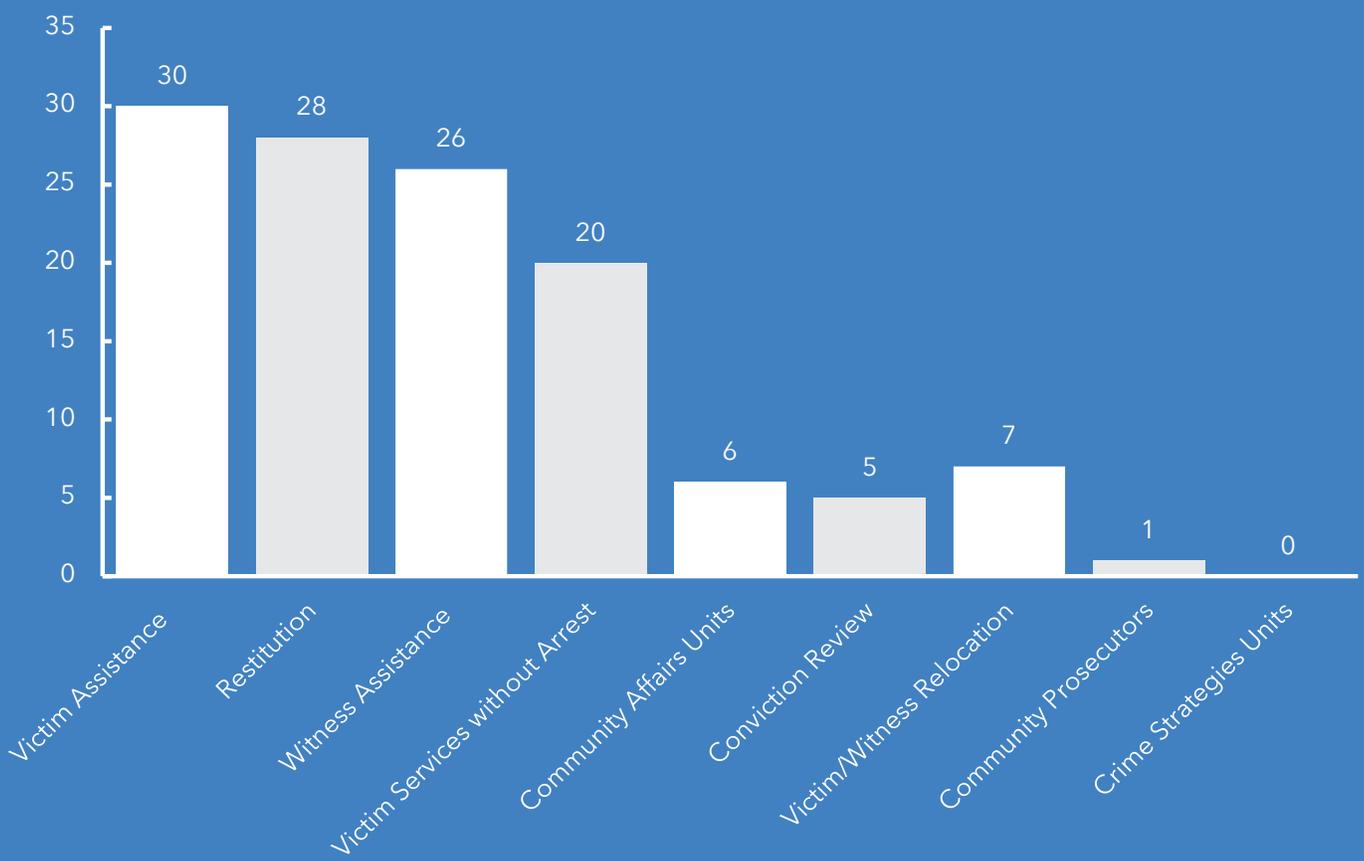
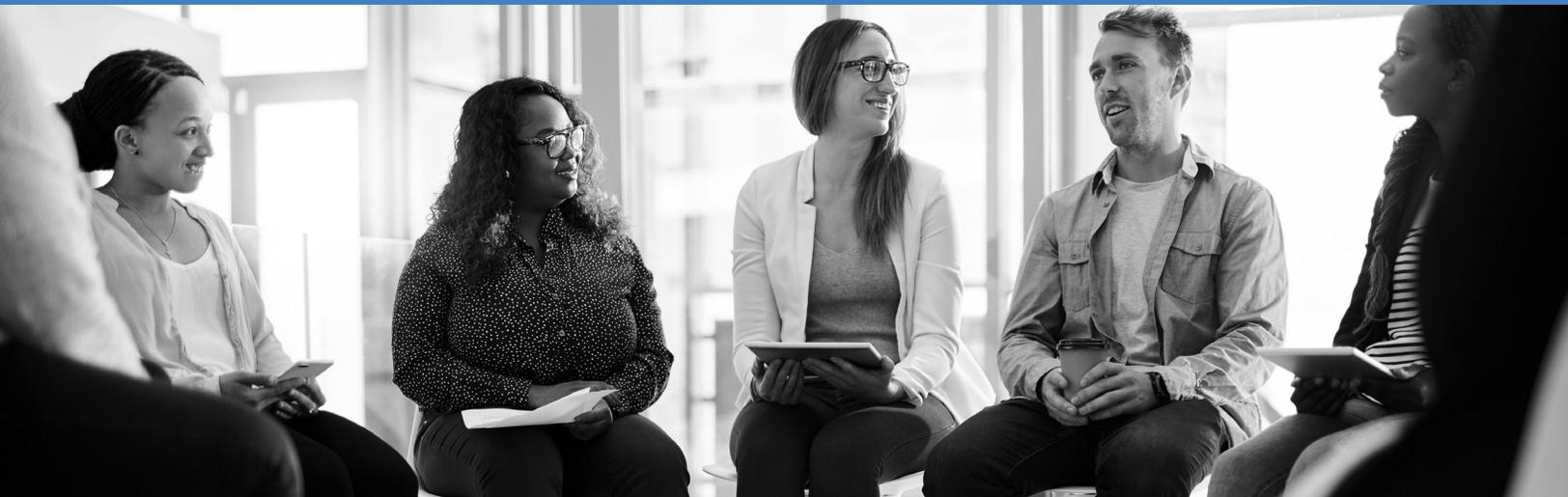


Figure 14. Counties Reporting Specialized Programs by Type (N = 41).



## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Finally, we asked whether the prosecutors' offices ran or participated in several different community programs. These results are presented in **Figure 15**. Just over half of offices reported participating in Truancy programs (60%). Slightly fewer offices reported participating in Community Engagement programs (43%) and Co-located Child Abuse programs (36%). Considerably fewer offices reported participating in Youth Education (26%), Violence Reduction (26%), Co-located Domestic Violence (26%), and Adult Education programs (21%). Approximately 5% of offices reported participating in Neighborhood Clean-up and Children of Inmates programs. No offices reported participating in Neighborhood Courts, Re-entry, or Sports programs.

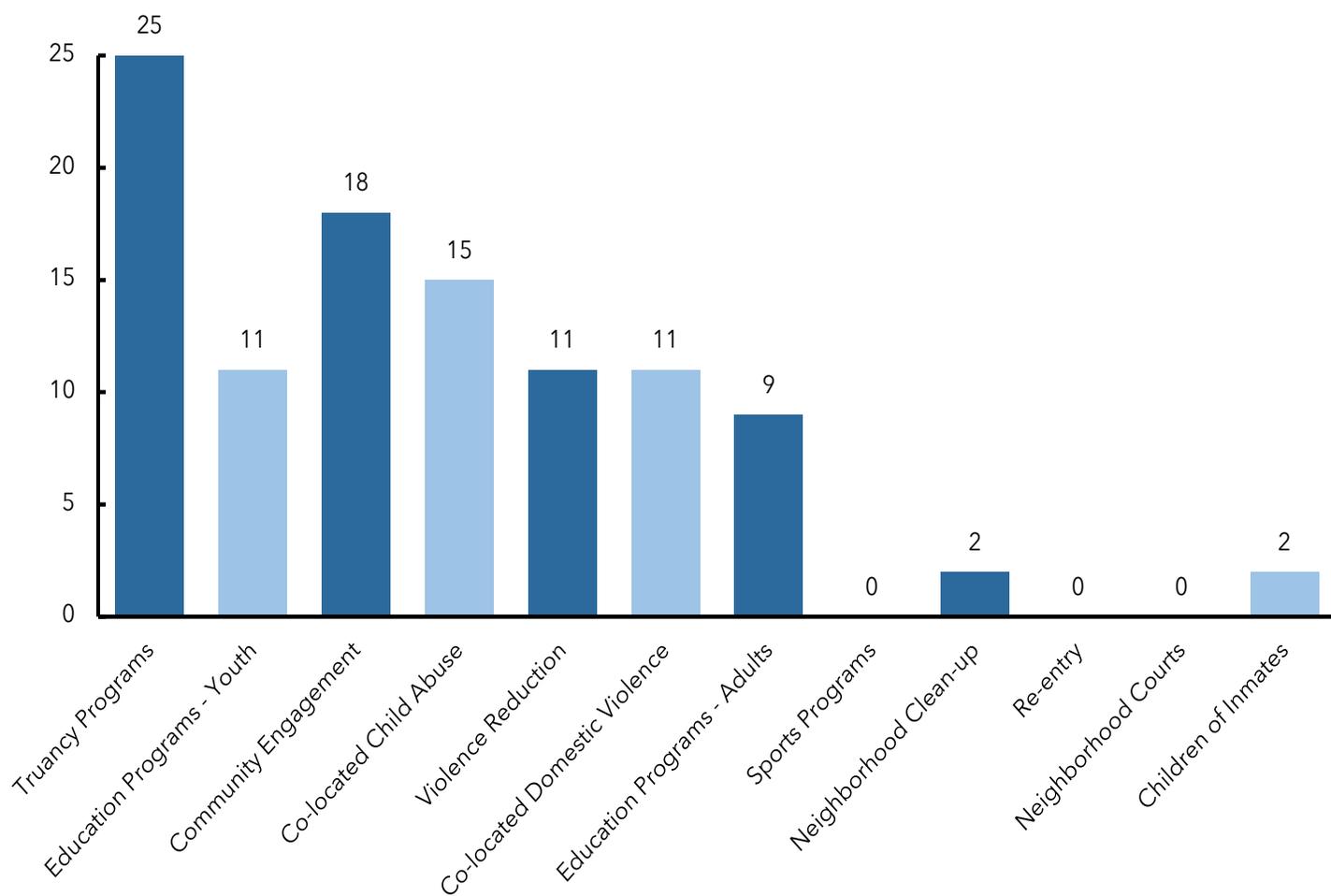


Figure 15. Participation in Community Programs by Type (N = 42).

## TECHNOLOGY

In the next section, we asked respondents about the use of technology within their offices. **Figure 16** illustrates the use of technology in prosecutors' offices. Nineteen percent (19%) of the offices responded that they have a technology unit responsible for the computers, data, software, and hardware functioning within their own offices. Sixty-five percent (65%) of offices responded that they are using an electronic case management system, and 81% of the offices reported using electronic discovery. Ninety-three percent (93%) reported using technology in their courtrooms, and 38% reported having staff to support them with the use of this technology.

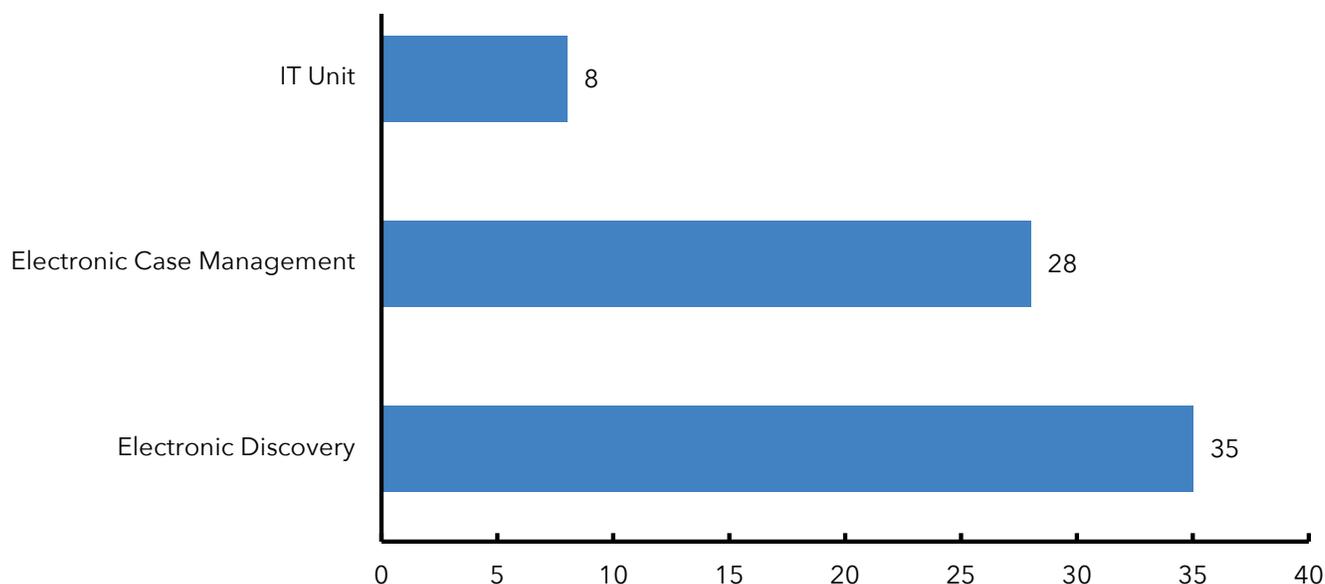


Figure 16. Technology Use within Prosecutors' Offices by Type (N = 43).



## BODY-WORN CAMERAS

In addition, 93% of the respondents reported having at least one police agency within their jurisdiction that has implemented a body-worn camera (BWC) program. **Figure 17** presents the method of delivery for BWC video. Of those receiving BWC video, 46% are using DVDs, 23% are using both cloud and DVD interfaces, and 5% are using cloud-based interfaces. Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents reported needing additional staff to view and manage the evidence collected by BWCs.

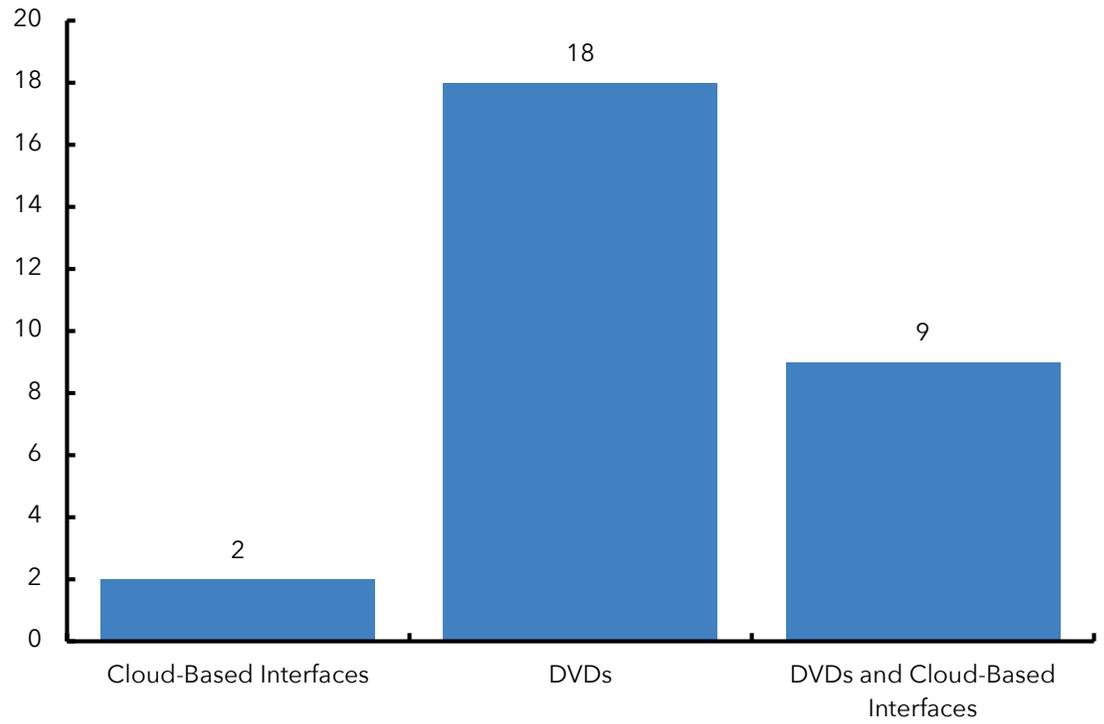


Figure 17. BWC Recordings Received by Prosecutors' Offices by Type (N = 39).

**Figure 18** below shows the percentage of offices by jurisdiction size that reported needing additional staff to review BWC footage. None of the jurisdictions with residents between 25,000 and 49,999 stated that they needed additional staff. Half of the offices covering between 10,000 and 24,999 residents reported they needed additional staff (n=20) while all offices covering more than 50,000 residents reported the need for additional staff (n=7).

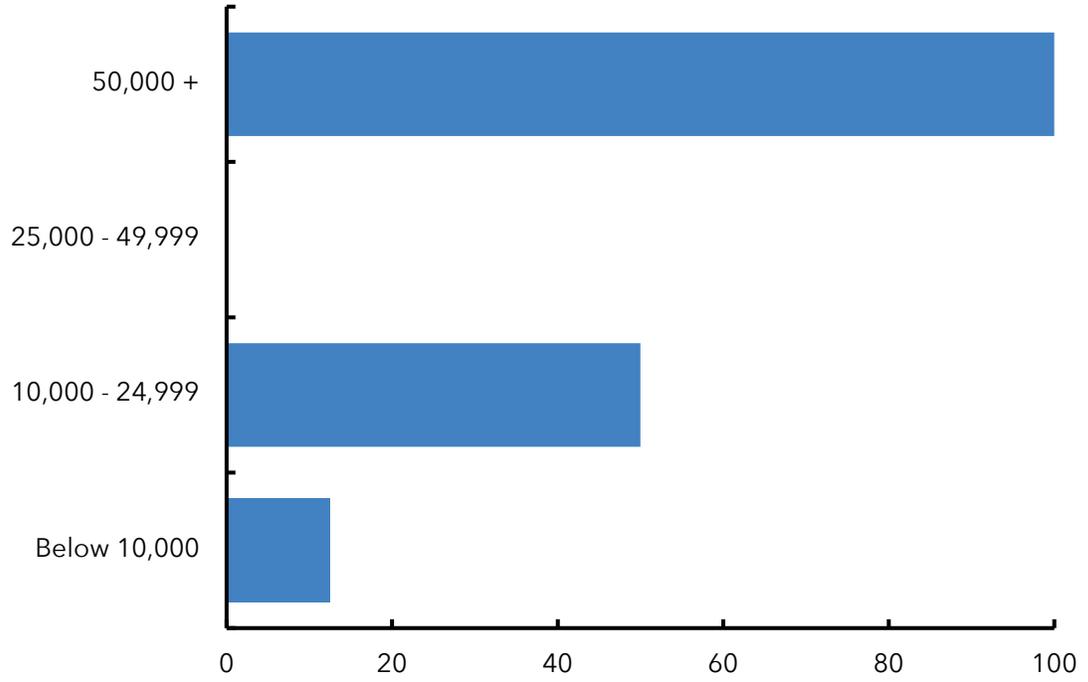


Figure 18. Percentage of Offices Needing Additional Personnel for Reviewing BWC Video by Population Category (N = 40).

## WEBSITES

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Asked what they share with the public online, 72% of survey respondents reported having office websites and 39% reported updating their websites routinely (monthly, quarterly, or annually).

## RESEARCH

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A minority of the responding offices reported engaging in research and analysis. Twenty-one percent (21%) of offices reported involvement in a research project in the last two years with a university, college, consultant, or independent research firm.

Thirty-three percent (33%) of offices reported analyzing crime data, caseloads, or other types of information routinely on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. Nine percent (9%) of responding offices provide an annual report to the public on the work of the office.

Thirty percent (30%) of the responding counties have participated in major U.S. Department of Justice grant-based programs. Nine percent (9%) of offices have participated in Project Safe Neighborhoods programs, 82% have participated in Violence Against Women Act programs, 27% have participated in Federal Victims of Crimes Act programs, and 9% have participated in a Violence Reduction Network or Public Safety Partnership. No offices have participated in a Smart Prosecution Initiative.



# STATE-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

The state of Iowa also requested some specific information from each county. Specifically, prosecutors in Iowa were interested in the number of full-time and part-time victim witness coordinators and the number of offices with a delinquent fine collection program. Forty-nine percent (49%) of offices reported having a full-time victim/witness coordinator (N=43), and 30% of offices reported having a part-time victim/witness coordinator. In addition, 58% of offices reported having a delinquent fine collection program. **Figure 19** presents the percentage of offices with full-time and part-time delinquent fine collectors. The majority of offices (64%) reported having full-time delinquent fine collectors, while 36% reported having part-time delinquent fine collectors.

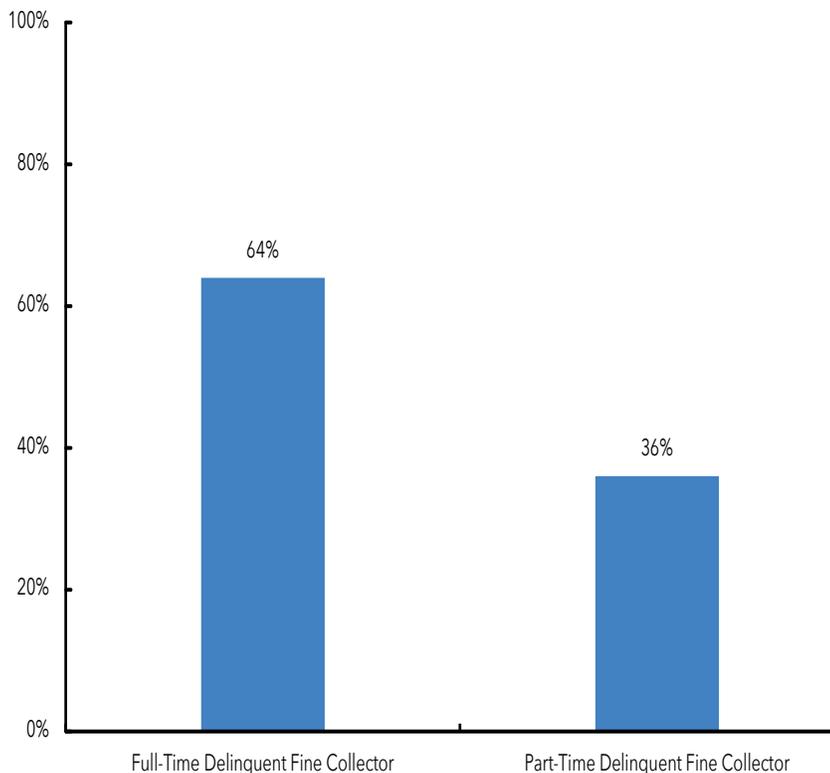
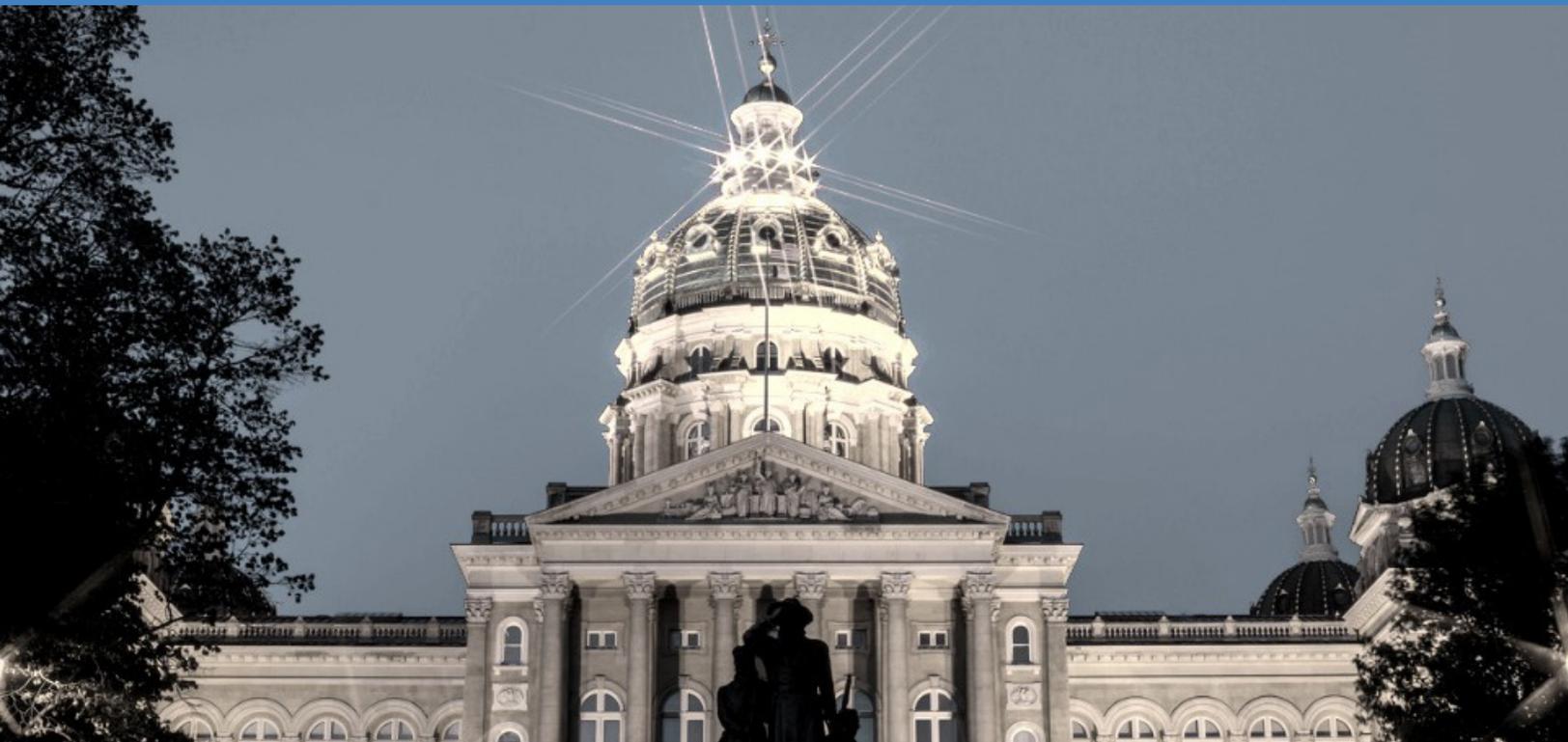


Figure 19. Percentage of Full-Time versus Part-Time Delinquent Fine Collectors (N=43).

The final questions requested for inclusion in the Iowa survey were whether each county was self-insured and whether the county defends their liability issues through the statewide insurance provider and their attorney. Half of Iowa Prosecutors' Offices reported that their county was self-insured (N=42). Of the counties that are not self-insured, 95% reported defending liability issues through the statewide insurance provider and attorney.



# CONCLUSIONS

The statewide survey administered by JSS and PCE provides many insights into the day-to-day functioning of Iowa prosecutors' offices. From the wide range of submissions from Iowa counties thus far, there are a number of trends emerging.

From the survey, we can determine that all responding Iowa prosecutors' offices handle felonies, misdemeanors, juvenile cases, infractions, and civil matters.

All of the responding prosecutors' offices have elected Chief Prosecutors who have served an average of 9 years. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the offices have budgets under \$5 million, and 98% have personnel budgets under \$5 million. The number of full-time employees per 10,000 population is highest for offices covering between 25,000 and 49,999 residents.

The per capita rates of felony and juvenile cases charged are very similar across population categories, but mid-population counties charge more misdemeanors per 10,000 residents compared to the smallest and largest counties. The smallest population category (below 10,000 residents) had the highest number of non-attorneys and total employees per 1,000 cases charged. Counties covering more than 50,000 residents have the most attorneys per 1,000 cases charged.

It is apparent that nearly all offices offer specialized or problem-solving courts and some courts are significantly more common than others. While

Drug courts and Mental Health courts were the most commonly offered, fewer offices reported offering Alcohol/Driving Sobriety, Veterans', and Domestic Violence courts. No offices reported offering Human Trafficking, Homeless, Re-entry, or Community courts.

Most offices reported running specialized programs. The most common specialized programs offered fell under the headings of Victim Assistance, Restitution, and Witness Assistance. On the other hand, only a few offices reported Community Affairs Units, Conviction Review, and Community Prosecutors programs. No offices reported Crime Strategies Units.

The majority of respondents reported providing specific community programs to the areas they serve. The most common offerings were Truancy, Community Engagement, and Co-located Child Abuse programs.

This research has provided great insight into the basic needs of prosecutors' offices. Further research based on these findings should focus on prosecutors' caseloads. Specifically, researchers should continue to investigate ideal caseloads for prosecutors and evaluate proper resource management.

All in all, the Iowa offices that completed the statewide prosecutor survey have provided vital data that have increased the knowledge base on the functioning of Iowa prosecutors' offices as well as on the role of Iowa prosecutors.