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Everyday Legal Problems and the Cost of Justice in Canada: Infographic

Canadian Forum on Civil Justice

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EVERYDAY LEGAL PROBLEMS & THE COST OF JUSTICE IN CANADA

Having a legal problem can be expensive.

These costs not only impact the people who experience legal problems. They also result in increased costs to the State.

There are different costs associated with legal problems:

Financial

Temporal

Physical Health

Mental Health

Individuals

The State



In a study of everyday legal problems in Canada, we found that:

Over a given three-year period

11.4 MILLION

adult Canadians will experience at least one serious everyday legal problem.

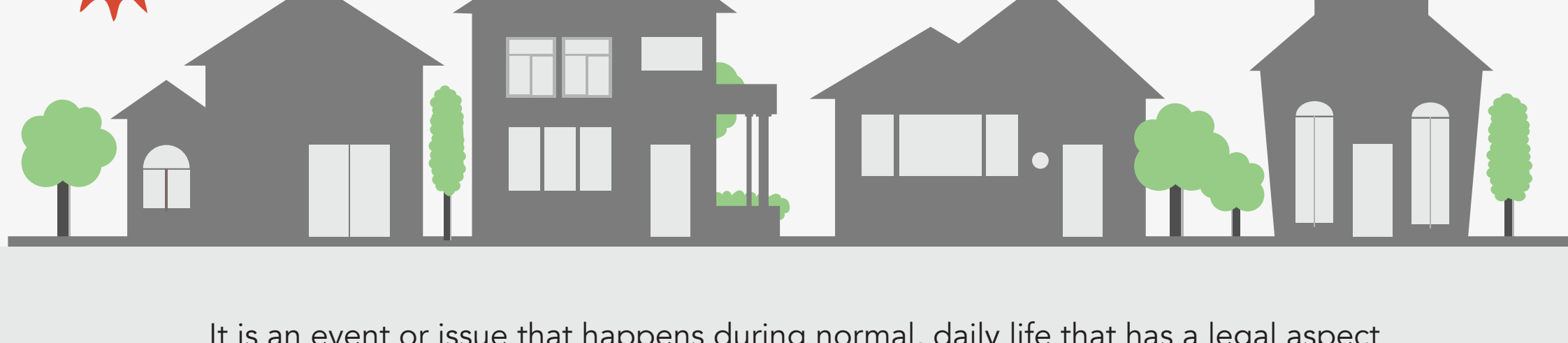
THAT'S EQUIVALENT TO ALMOST

50%

OF ADULT CANADIANS

That amounts to roughly **35,745,000** separate everyday legal problems.

What is an everyday legal problem?



It is an event or issue that happens during normal, daily life that has a legal aspect and a potential legal solution within the civil justice system.*

Everyday legal problems fall into a range of categories:

Consumer

Employment

Debt

Wills and Incapacity

Family

Social Assistance

Treatment by Police

Neighbourhood and Property Damage

Housing

Immigration

Disability Assistance

Discrimination

Personal Injury

Medical Treatment

Threat of Legal Action

What do Canadians do about everyday legal problems?

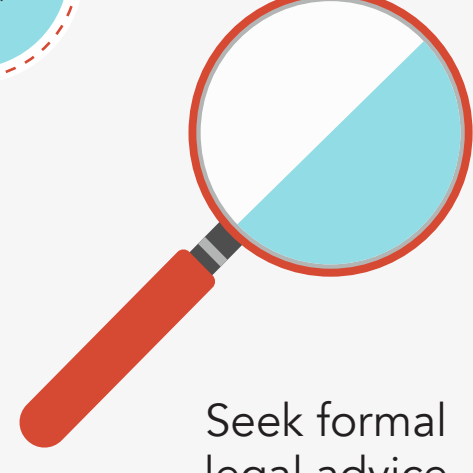


95%

try to do something about their everyday legal problem.

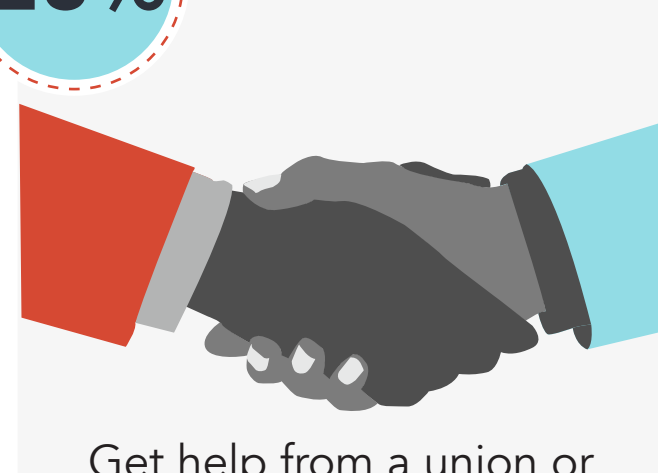
Canadians try to resolve their everyday legal problems in a combination of ways:

19%



Seek formal legal advice

28%



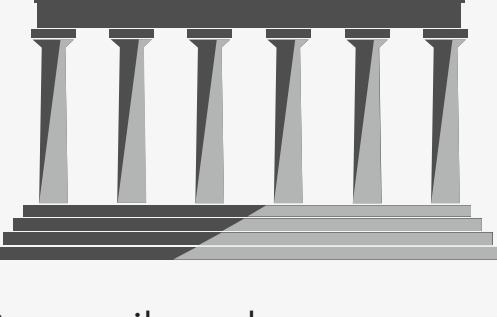
Get help from a union or advocacy group

75%



Contact the disputing party directly to try to solve the problem

7%



Go to tribunals or courts to solve the problem

33%



Look for information online

61%



Get advice from friends or relatives



Getting help for everyday legal problems can be costly.

21%

In fact, 21% of people who don't take action when faced with an everyday legal problem say it's because of the cost.

What do everyday legal problems cost?*



Almost as much as a Canadian household spends on **food for a year**



3 times as much as a Canadian household spends on out of pocket **health expenses**



Almost **1/2** as much as a Canadian household spends on **housing**



An average of **10%** of a Canadian household's **annual income**



Over **10%** of the average amount a Canadian household spends on **goods and services** for a year

Legal problems can result in

Emotional Problems

Physical Health Problems

Loss of Housing

Relationship Breakdown

Family Problems

Poor Performance at Work

Other problems

HOVER MOUSE

Everyday legal problems also cost the State

The Canadian Government spends approximately:

248 MILLION

each year in social assistance payments

450 MILLION

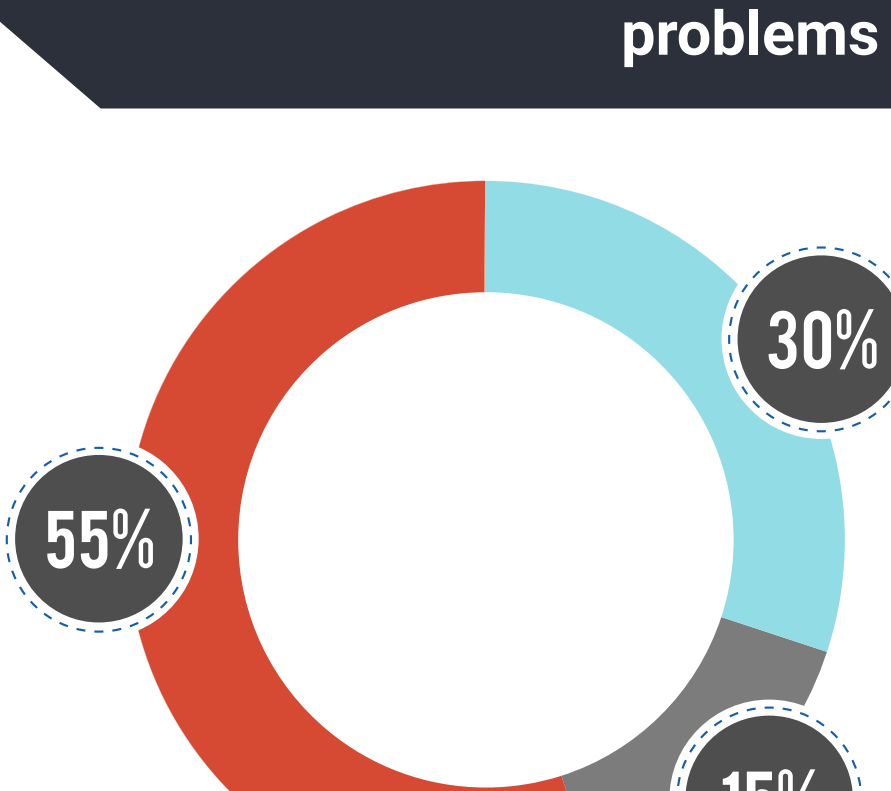
in employment insurance payments

101 MILLION

in health care costs

HOVER MOUSE

Does all this spending mean that everyday legal problems are being resolved?



55% of people say their legal problem was resolved within 3 years

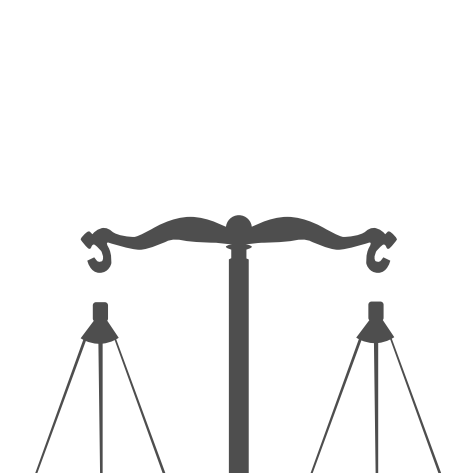
30% of people say their legal problems are ongoing

15% of people say one problem was resolved but another problem was ongoing

Even when everyday legal problems are resolved, many Canadians are not happy with the outcome.

70%

say they expected a better outcome



46%

say the outcome was unfair



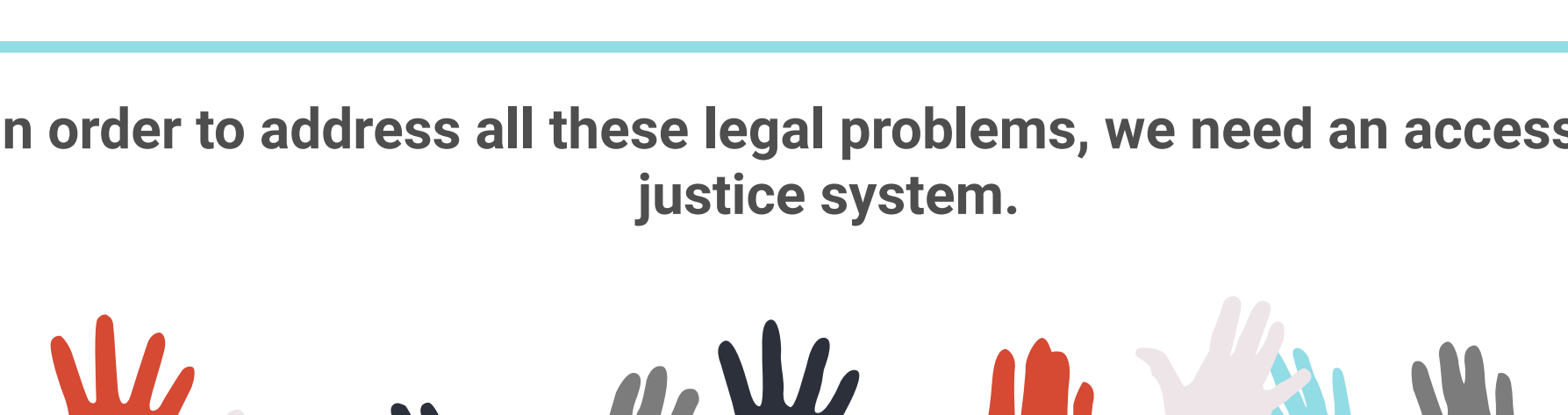
42%

of people who resolved their legal problem on their own say that, with help, the outcome would have been better

The implications of dealing with and not effectively dealing with everyday legal problems are significant.

Essentially all of us will experience at least one everyday legal problem over the course of our lifetime.

In order to address all these legal problems, we need an accessible justice system.



* Hazel Genn, Paths to Justice: What People Do and Think about Going to Law (Oxford: Hart, 1999)

** Figures based on 2012 household spending statistics

For more information on the "Everyday Legal Problems and the Cost of Justice in Canada" study, visit: www.cfcj-fcjc.org/cost-of-justice

This infographic was prepared by the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice