

Analysis of Impediments to Housing and Community Resources in Idaho

**An Assessment of Perceptions Across
Multiple Stakeholder Groups**

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and***

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By

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The Idaho Housing and Finance Association (IHFA) and the Idaho Department of Commerce and Labor (IDCL) set out to perform an Analysis of Impediments with key goals in mind:

First, we decided to expand this document's focus from the minimum requirements specified by HUD and the Fair Housing Act to include impediments to community resources. We did this in hope of drawing attention to the various impediments that may limit participation in public life, processes and commerce.

Second, we aimed to involve several stakeholders in discussion the project goals and formulating the survey's questions and procedures. To that end, we invited input and involvement from a variety of sources. We would like to thank the partners listed below that contributed their time and energy throughout a process that began in the fall of 2003.

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City of Nampa
City of Boise
City of Pocatello
State Independent Living Center (SILC)

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Executive Summary

The Center for Health Policy (CHP) conducted a statewide analysis of impediments to housing and community resource access for Idahoans that live with disabilities and/or belong to other protected classes under the Fair Housing Act. The survey was commissioned by the Idaho Housing and Finance Association and Idaho Department of Commerce and Labor, and designed by a coalition of housing stakeholders, fair housing advocates and accessibility professionals. CHP employed a multi-modal survey methodology that included four stakeholder groups defined by the stakeholders.

Although a number of impediments to access to both housing and community resources were identified, reports of discrimination and other barriers to access were relatively few. Members of all stakeholder groups recognized that access barriers existed, but reported that these barriers have been substantially reduced in the five years since the last analysis of impediments was conducted. The respondents in each of the stakeholder groups expressed optimism that access barriers could be further reduced in the coming years through increased cooperation and collaboration among members of all interested parties, and through a combination of education and enforcement.

1. Introduction and Background

The Idaho Housing and Finance Association and the Idaho Department of Commerce contracted with the Center for Health Policy at Boise State University to conduct a study that would identify potential impediments to accessing housing and community resources in Idaho. The goal of this study was to assess the extent to which persons with disabilities and members of other protected classes may face barriers to (or be discriminated against in) housing and community resource access. The objective was to gather information to document how members of key stakeholder groups perceive housing and community resource accessibility across Idaho.

Four stakeholder groups were selected for this study, including consumers, partners, providers, and officials. Questionnaires were sent randomly to persons within each of the stakeholder groups and their responses were evaluated. The consumers received paper questionnaires, both in English and in Spanish, while members of the other three stakeholder groups were encouraged to respond to web-based questionnaires.

The “consumer” population in this study consisted of a relatively diverse sample drawn from persons who received Section 8 housing assistance funds from one of the four major housing assistance providers in the state of Idaho. The “partner” sample included members of advocacy organizations that deal directly with policy and access issues for members of the protected classes. The “provider” sample consisted of persons who were employed in a profession that involved the design or provision of housing and public resources. The “official” sample consisted of persons with primary affiliations with one of four types of organizations, including city, county, state, or federal governmental agencies.

A concerted effort was made to sample potential respondents in each county of the state to ensure appropriate statewide representation. Consumers in each county of the state were mailed paper-based surveys, while partners, providers, and officials in most counties of the state received an E-mail message inviting them to participate in a web-based survey.

A total of 750 paper-based surveys were mailed to consumers, while 174 partners, 184 providers, and 365 officials received E-mail invitations to participate in the web-based survey.

2. Survey Format and Distribution

Consumers

The consumer population in this study consisted of a relatively diverse sample drawn from across the state of Idaho. A total of 750 paper-based surveys (printed in both English and Spanish) were mailed to persons who received Section 8 housing assistance funds from one of the four major housing assistance providers in the state (e.g., the Idaho Housing and Finance Association, the Pocatello Housing Authority). Surveys were sent to potential respondents in a proportional fashion (i.e., more surveys were sent to consumers in heavily populated counties such as Ada and Canyon, and fewer surveys were sent to consumers in sparsely populated counties, such as Idaho and Custer). A total of 227 surveys were returned, for a response rate of slightly over 30% (see Table 1). The strategy of mailing surveys to Section 8 recipients was based on the assumption that persons who received housing assistance were likely to be members of one of the seven protected classes.

Partners

The partner sample in this study included members of advocacy organizations that deal directly with policy and access issues regarding members of protected classes. Eligible partners were identified by members of the agencies sponsoring this project, and by members of several of the partner agencies themselves. A total of 174 individuals who were believed to be knowledgeable about fair housing and community resource access issues were sent, via E-mail, a link to a web site located on the Center for Health Policy server. Each potential respondent was sent a unique access code along with the link to ensure that only eligible respondents could complete a survey. A total of 61 partners completed the survey, for a response rate of slightly over 35% (see Table 1).

Providers

The provider sample consisted of a wide variety of persons in a broad range of occupations; the commonality among all potential respondents labeled a provider was that they were employed in a profession (e.g., property management, real estate, architecture or engineering) that in some way involved the design or provision of housing and public resources. Eligible providers were identified by members of the agencies sponsoring this project, and by members of several of the provider agencies themselves. A total of 184 individuals who were believed to be knowledgeable about fair housing and community resource access issues were sent an E-mail invitation, link to the survey web site, and unique access number in the same manner as with the partner respondents. A total of 71 providers completed the survey, for a response rate of nearly 40% (see Table 1).

Officials

The officials sample consisted of persons employed in a wide range of public service positions, ranging from city clerks and mayors to building officials, county commissioners, and state government officials. Eligible officials were identified by lists provided by members of agencies sponsoring this project, as well as by members of other organizations (e.g., the Association of Idaho Cities and the Association of Idaho Counties) that work directly with public officials. Invitations to complete a web-based survey were sent via E-mail to 365 officials who had identifiable E-mail addresses (access to and completion of the web-based survey was identical for officials as for members of the partner and provider samples). A total of 158 officials responded to the surveys, for a response rate of over 40% (see Table 1).

Respondent Group	Number of Respondents	Response Percentage
Consumers	227	30.3
Partners	61	35.1
Providers	71	38.6
Officials	158	43.3

Because a major purpose of this research was to identify impediments to housing and community resource access throughout the state of Idaho, a concerted effort was made to sample potential respondents in each county of the state. Although this sometimes proved difficult (for example, it was impossible to locate partner and provider organizations in each of Idaho's 44 counties), the goal of ensuring statewide representation was largely reached. As seen in below in Table 2, the respondents did not reside strictly in the eight Idaho counties classified as urban (the criterion

for being urban, which was provided by the Idaho Department of Commerce, was having a population center of at least 20,000 people; using this criterion, Idaho’s urban counties include Ada, Bannock, Bonneville, Canyon, Kootenai, Latah, Nez Perce, and Twin Falls). Substantial percentages of the responses received across the four stakeholder groups were from respondents in Idaho’s 36 rural and frontier counties (see Table 2).

Respondent Group	Percentage of Responses from Rural or Frontier Counties
Consumers	16.6
Partners	27.3
Providers	21.0
Officials	50.8

4. Respondent Demography

Consumers

Gender - Of the consumer respondents who returned a survey within the response time frame, 172 (77.1% of those who indicated their gender) reported being women and 51 (22.9%) reported being men. Four respondents (1.8% of the total sample) did not indicate their gender.

Ethnicity - The racial/ethnic composition of the consumer sample was very close to that reported for the state of Idaho as a whole. As seen below in Table 3, the majority of the respondents who completed this item reported being Caucasian/White. The largest single minority group was comprised of individuals who identified themselves as being Hispanic/Latino. Relatively few consumer respondents identified themselves as being members of other ethnic minority groups (see Table 3).

Ethnic Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Caucasian	183	85.5
Hispanic/Latino	20	9.4
Native American	6	2.8
African-American	3	1.4
Asian-American	2	0.9

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (13 respondents, or 5.7% of the sample, did not complete this item). Because percentages are rounded to the first decimal place, the total percentage may not equal 100.

Skin color - The majority of the respondents (209, or 92.1% of the total sample) indicated their skin color in their own words. Of these respondents, 23 (11.0%) reported having a skin color that was other than “White” (the majority of these were “tan”, “beige”, “olive”, or “brown”).

National origin - Slightly over 70% of the respondents completed an item asking them to list the country in which they were born. Only five (3.0%) of these respondents reported being born in a country other than the United States.

Religion - The vast majority of respondents who completed an item asking them about their religion (181 respondents, or 79.7% of the total sample) indicated either being Christian or having no religious beliefs. Only two respondents (1.1% of those who completed this item) clearly reported having religious beliefs (Buddhist or Wiccan) that were other than Christian. Of those who indicated a particular denomination of Christianity, 32 (17.7% of those who completed this item) reported being Catholic, and 31 (17.1%) indicated being Mormon.

Familial status - Nearly all respondents (225, or 99.1% of the total sample) indicated their familial status (i.e., their marital and parental statuses). As seen below in Table 4, the largest group of respondents identified themselves as being single with no children in the household, followed by persons who identified themselves as being single with children in the household, married with children in the household, and married without children in the household. A relatively small number of respondents selected an “Other” option (indicating that their familial status did not fit one of the four standard response options); the most common “Other” responses were widowed and divorced.

Familial Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Single, no children in household	95	42.2
Single, children in household	81	36.0
Married, children in household	25	11.1
Married, no children in household	13	5.8
Other (e.g., widowed, divorced)	11	4.9

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (2 respondents, or less than 1% of the sample, did not complete this item). Because percentages are rounded to the first decimal place, the total percentage may not equal 100.

Disability status - The respondents were asked to identify whether or not they met at least one criterion of the federal definition of having a disability (described in the survey as “any mental or physical impairment that limits one or more major life activities, including vision, hearing, speech, walking, breathing, ect.”). All respondents completed this item. Of these respondents, 142 (62.6%) indicated that they met at least one criterion of the federal definition of having a disability, and 85 (37.4%) indicated that they did not meet a criterion.

In other words, well over 60% of the respondents in the consumer subset of the sample self-identified as having a disability. Those who indicated that they met a criterion for having a disability were prompted to write, in their own words, what their disability was. As seen below in Table 5, the largest group of those who reported having a disability reported that they suffered from mental health problems or had multiple disabling conditions. Mobility problems were also reported by a sizable percentage of those who completed this item (see Table 5).

Disabling Condition	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Mental health difficulties	41	30.4
Multiple disabling conditions	38	28.1
Mobility/walking difficulties	28	17.0
Arthritis	7	5.2
Vision problems	6	4.4

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (7 respondents who had reported having a disability did not specify the nature of their disability). Because percentages are rounded to the first decimal place, the total percentage may not equal 100.

Partners

Sector representation - The responding partners indicated representing several different sectors. As seen below in Table 6, the largest single block of respondents indicated that they represented the government sector. A substantial percentage of the respondents also reported representing the not-for-profit and education sectors. Respondents reporting that they represented the private and faith-based sectors, or another sector not represented by a response option on the survey, were relatively few (see Table 6).

Sector Representation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Government	20	36.4
Not-for-profit	17	30.9
Education	12	21.8
Private	2	3.6
Faith-based	1	1.8
Other	4	7.3

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (5 respondents, or 8.2% of the sample, did not complete this item). Because percentages are rounded to the first decimal place, the total percentage may not equal 100.

Constituency representation - The partner agencies and organizations that were sampled were diverse in terms of the constituencies they represented, and this was clear in the respondents’ reports. When asked to indicate what key constituencies they and their organizations represented, the responding partners indicated a wide range of constituencies. As seen below in Table 7, over half of the respondents who completed this item indicated that they represented people with both physical and developmental disabilities, and a substantial number of the partner respondents also indicated that their agencies and organizations served people with mental disabilities and who are members of ethnic minority groups.

Smaller numbers of partner respondents indicated that they represented people on the basis of income (e.g., poor persons) and age (e.g., the elderly). Thirteen respondents selected an available “Other” category, indicating that they and their organizations represented people on bases

other than those available in the response options. Of these, the most common constituencies (reported by three respondents each) were people with all types of disabilities and all people, regardless of disability or other characteristics (see Table 7).

Constituency Representation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
People with physical disabilities	31	50.8
People with developmental disabilities	31	50.8
People with mental disabilities	30	49.2
Minority populations	28	45.9
People on basis of income	18	29.5
People on basis of age	17	27.9
Other (e.g., all people)	13	21.3

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (all respondents completed this item). Because multiple responses to this item were allowed, the total percentage of responses may exceed 100.

Providers

Sector representation - The provider respondents indicated representing a wide variety of different sectors. As seen in Table 8, the largest concentration of respondents indicated that they represented the not-for-profit sector, followed by the private for-profit and government sectors. Smaller numbers of respondents reported representing the faith-based sector and trade associations (see Table 8).

Sector Representation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Not-for-profit	21	39.6
Private for-profit	15	28.3
Government	9	17.0
Faith-based	5	9.4
Trade associations	3	7.6

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (16 respondents, or 22.4% of the sample, did not complete this item). Because percentages are rounded to the first decimal place, the total percentage may not equal 100.

Organizational representation - The provider agencies and organizations were, like the partners, quite diverse in terms of the constituencies that they represented. As seen below in Table 9, the largest percentage of respondents reported representing lending, finance, or title companies. Fairly large numbers of respondents also reported representing property owners/developers, property management companies, shelter providers, and real estate agencies, and other organizations (see Table 9).

Organizational Representation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Lender/Finance/Title	18	25.4
Property owner/developer	15	21.2
Property management	11	15.5
Shelter providers	11	15.5
Real estate brokers	8	11.3
Social service agency	3	4.2
Builder/Architect/Engineer	2	2.8
Other	9	12.6

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (all respondents completed this item). Because multiple responses to this item were allowed, the total percentage of responses may exceed 100.

Employees - The respondents in the provider group reported belonging to agencies and organizations that varied widely in size. When asked to indicate the number of employees at their agency or organization statewide, the respondents reported numbers ranging from one person to 7,500 people, with a median number of 55. When asked to indicate the number of employees at their agency or organization at their own local or regional office, the respondents reported numbers ranging from one person to 1,200 people, with a median number of 12.

Officials

Employment - The final sub-population sampled in this study was the officials group. The officials sample consisted of persons employed in a wide range of public service positions, ranging from city clerks and mayors to building officials, county commissioners, and state government officials. Eligible officials were identified by lists provided by members of agencies sponsoring this project, as well as by members of other organizations (e.g., the Association of Idaho Cities and the Association of Idaho Counties) that work directly with public officials.

Affiliations - The officials in the sample indicated their primary affiliation to be to one of four types of government bodies: State, county, city, or federal. As seen below in Table 10, the vast majority of persons who indicated their primary affiliation reported being primarily affiliated with city government. Relatively small numbers of respondents indicated being primarily affiliated with county government, state government, or the federal government (see Table 10).

Affiliation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
City government	89	77.4
County government	10	8.7
State government	7	6.1
Federal government	7	6.1
Other	2	1.7

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (43 respondents, or 27.2% of the sample, did not complete this item).

Positions - When asked about the specific position they held with their respective government position, the respondents reported a variety of different positions. As seen in Table 11, the largest number of respondents reported being city clerks, and a large number also reported being elected officials. Smaller numbers of respondents identified themselves as being program staffers, building officials and policy makers (see Table 11).

Position Held	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
City clerk	28	25.0
Elected official	27	24.1
Program staff	20	17.9
Building officials	11	9.8
Policy maker	5	4.5

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item (46 respondents, or 29.1% of the sample, did not complete this item). Because multiple responses to this item were allowed, the total percentage of responses may exceed 100.

Employees - When asked to indicate how many employees were employed in their most immediate departments, the respondents listed a wide range of numbers. The number of employees ranged from one to 580, with a median of four employees

Functions - The officials in the sample were asked some additional questions about building codes and housing options in their respective regions. For example, the officials were asked what their local government’s currently adopted building code was. Of the 100 respondents to this item, 29 (29.0%) reported their building code to be the most recent Idaho Building Code (ICBO), and 28 (28.0%) reported the Uniform Building Code (UBC). When asked whether their adopted building code includes energy conservation requirements, the vast majority of the respondents (65, or 87.8% of those who completed this item) indicated that it did.

Many local government bodies are also housing providers. To assess the extent to which this was true for the government bodies that employed the officials in the sample, the officials were asked whether their employer was a housing provider. The majority of the respondents (64, or 86.5% of those who completed this item) indicated that they were housing providers.

The officials were asked to indicate what their city or county does to support low-to-moderate income housing. Four options were provided, as was an area on the survey where the respondents could provide additional information about what their local government does to provide such housing. A sizable minority of the respondents (29, or 18.4%) indicated that their city or county supported and encouraged builders to seek out and use federal and state subsidies for low-to-moderate income housing.

Slightly smaller numbers of respondents indicated that their city or county used land-use controls to permit the building of less expensive housing (24; 15.2%) or provided infrastructure to support building less expensive housing (20; 12.7%). A relatively small number of respondents (7; 4.4%) indicated that their city or county provided density bonuses to developers who included a certain number of units reserved for low- and moderate-income buyers and renters.

Officials were also asked to indicate what land-use controls their local city or county utilized. Over half of the respondents indicated that their local government used zoning laws (90, or 57.0% of the respondents) and minimum lot sizes or square footage requirements for residential construction (81; 51.3%). Substantial numbers of respondents also indicated that their city or county employed code enforcement officers (65; 41.1%), used development agreements (58; 36.7%), and used Planned Unit Development (58; 36.7%). Less common land-use controls included water efficiency policies or ordinances (31; 19.6%) and historical/architectural reviews (29; 18.4%).

A final item asked the officials whether they felt that their local utilities (e.g., water, sewer, electrical, and natural gas) were conducive to local business investment or expansion. The majority of the respondents (80, or 82.5% of those who completed this item) indicated that they felt their local utilities were indeed conducive to business investment or expansion.

5. Results

Consumers Responses

Discrimination - All consumers were asked whether they had been discriminated against in terms of both housing and community resource access. Regarding housing discrimination, the consumers were first asked to read examples of discrimination (e.g., “steering” tenants to specific buildings, floors, or neighborhoods, charging higher rents or fees, or denying access to housing due to their membership in one of the protected classes), and then were asked to indicate whether or not they or anyone they knew had experienced such discrimination.

The vast majority of consumers (203 respondents, or 89.4% of those who completed this item) reported that they had not personally experienced such discrimination in housing decisions, and most (199; 87.7%) also reported knowing no one else who had experienced such discrimination. Of those who reported having been discriminated against in a housing decision, the most commonly reported bases for the decisions were disability status and family status (each reported by five consumers), multiple reasons (four), and being on welfare or housing assistance (three).

Filing complaints - The consumers were also asked whether they had ever filed a fair housing complaint as a result of being discriminated against. Only four consumers (1.8% of those who completed this item) indicated that they had filed such a complaint. This result is interesting because in response to the earlier item about having been discriminated against, 24 respondents, or 10.6% of those who completed the item, reported having been discriminated against in a housing decision. This suggests that housing discrimination is seriously under reported (with only one in six persons who believe that they have been discriminated against filing a fair housing complaint).

A later item asked the consumers who felt that they had been discriminated against and who had chosen not to file a complaint, why they had not filed a complaint. The most common response, which was given by eight consumers, was that they did not feel that making a complaint would do any good.

Access to housing - Individuals who indicated that they had a disability were asked to answer several questions related to their personal experiences of access to housing that accommodated their disability. When asked whether they had personally had a difficult time trying to access such housing, the majority of the consumers with disabilities (122, or 89.5% of those who completed this item) reported that they had not. Of those who reported having a difficult time, the most commonly reported accessibility problems were related to access to housing units (such

as lack of wheelchair ramps; this theme was reported by four consumers), access within housing units (such as difficulty accessing bathrooms or appliances; this theme was reported by three consumers), and the costs associated with renting or buying housing units with appropriate accommodations (reported by three consumers).

Access to community resources - Individuals who indicated that they had a disability were also asked to answer several questions related to their personal experiences of access to community resources such as public facilities, events or programs, and local businesses. When asked whether they had personally had a difficult time trying to access such community resources, the vast majority of the consumers with disabilities (140, or 94.4% of those who completed this item) reported that they had not.

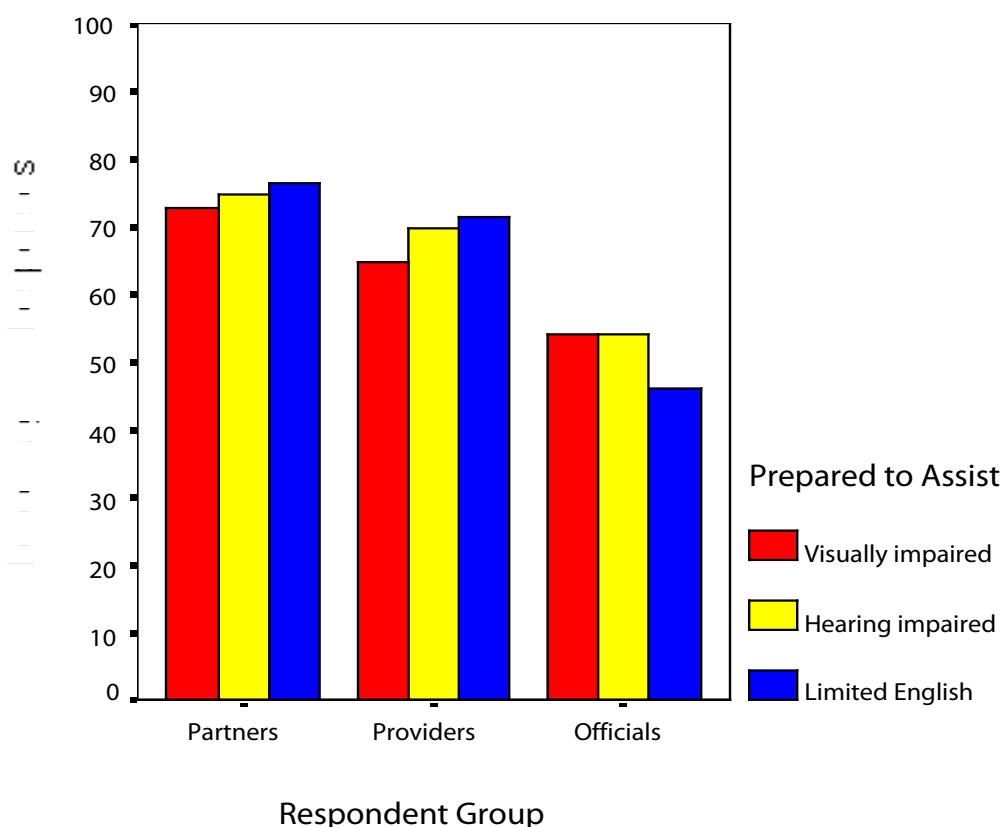
Only two of the consumers (1.4% of those who completed this item) who identified themselves as having a disability reported having filed a complaint related to community resource access. However, it is noteworthy that when asked whether they had ever chosen not to file a complaint related to community resources access, even when they believed the complaint would have been legitimate, 11 respondents (or 7.7% of those who completed this item) indicated that they had made such a choice. These two patterns of responses, when taken together, seem to suggest that considerably more accessibility difficulties are experienced by disabled persons than one might think based simply on numbers of access-related complaints.

6. Analysis

Office Accessibility

Respondents from the partner, provider, and official samples were each asked a number of questions related to the accessibility of their offices to persons with disabilities and members of other protected classes. As seen below in Figure 1, there were some clear differences in preparations to assist persons with various types of disabilities and language impediments. Partners were most likely to report their offices being prepared to assist people with visual impairments (72.7% of those who completed this item reported being prepared to do so), hearing impairments (74.6%), and limited English proficiency (76.4%) than were both providers (64.7%, 69.8%, and 71.2%, respectively) and officials (54.1%, 54.1%, and 46.0%, respectively) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Ability to Serve People with Disabilities and Language Impediments



Respondents from each of the three organizational samples were also asked whether their business offices were accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504. As an example, the respondents were asked whether a person using a wheelchair could enter the respondents' offices to conduct business or to use rest room or common areas without assistance. As seen in Table 12, the clear majority of respondents in all three samples indicated that their offices were indeed accessible under ADA or Section 504 guidelines. Accessibility rates were near 90% for the respondents who completed this item in all three samples (see Table 12).

Respondent Group	Percentage of Respondents
Partners	87.3
Providers	90.4
Officials	88.1

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item. This item was not completed by 6 partners (11.5% of that sample), 24 providers (33.8%), and 69 officials (43.7%).

A separate item asked the respondents in each of the three organizational samples whether their offices had been the target of an ADA complaint in the past. Reported ADA complaints were relatively low among the respondents who completed this item. However, history of complaints did differ among the respondent groups; whereas none of the partner respondents who completed this item reported a complaint filed against their office, 25.5% of the providers and 14.0% of the officials reported that a complaint had been filed against their offices. The response rates to this item also differed; whereas 86.9% of the partners were willing or able to answer this item, only 71.8% of the providers and 67.7% of the officials responded to it.

Ability to Address Fair Housing and Accessibility Issues:

Several survey items queried the organizational respondents on their agency’s ability to address issues related to Fair Housing and accessibility. One such question asked the organizational respondents to identify their main sources of information on Fair Housing and Accessibility. The organizational respondents were also asked whether they believed that most of the employees at their organizations knew how to locate resources to address a Fair Housing or accessibility issue.

As seen below in Table 13, the majority of the respondents in each organizational sample who completed this item indicated that most of the employees at their organizations knew how to locate the necessary resources. It is somewhat interesting that the percentage of respondents in the partner sample who felt that most of their organization’s employees could locate Fair Housing and accessibility informational resources was somewhat lower than the percentages in the provider and official samples (see Table 13). This finding should be interpreted in tandem, however, with the finding that much higher percentages of providers and officials failed to answer this item (see Table 13).

Respondent Group	Percentage of Respondents
Partners	69.8
Providers	84.6
Officials	83.7

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item. This item was not completed by 8 partners (13.1% of that sample), 20 providers (28.2%), and 52 officials (32.9%).

Organizational respondents in two of the three organizational samples were also asked whether or not their organization had a local Title II information contact person (providers were not asked this question, as many of them were employed by organizations that do not receive public funding, and therefore are not required to have a designated Title II contact person). Less than half of the partners (49.1%) reported that their organization had a designated Title II contact person, and slightly less than one-third of the officials (31.6%) reported having a designated Title II contact person.

Training and Collaboration Among Stakeholder Groups:

Several items on the partner and provider surveys asked questions about Fair Housing and accessibility training for housing professions and about perceived levels of cooperation between partners, providers, and government officials throughout the state of Idaho. These items were considered to be instructive as they were expected to shed light on some key issues related to service improvements and increases in collaboration among the various parties with a stake in Fair Housing and accessibility issues.

According to some persons with interests in Fair Housing and accessibility issues (including consumer advocates and some members of protected classes), there may be a perception that some people employed in the housing industry are not particularly sensitive to Fair Housing and accessibility issues. To assess this possibility, as well as the extent to which housing providers express concern about these issues, respondents in the partner and provider groups were asked whether they believed that members of the housing industry were generally supportive of Fair Housing principles. The vast majority of providers who completed this item (91.5%) reported believing that housing industry professionals like themselves indeed were supportive of Fair Housing principles; a smaller percentage—though still a clear majority—of partners (67.4%) agreed. These results seem to suggest that many housing providers at least believe themselves and their colleagues to be supportive of Fair Housing principles, and that most partners also believe this to be true.

The respondents in the provider sample were also asked to indicate whether they believed there was adequate and reliable training available to housing industry professionals seeking compliance with federal Fair Housing and accessibility laws. Among the respondents who completed this item, over two-thirds (69.8%) reported believing that there was adequate and reliable training available, and slightly under one-third (30.2%) reported that there was not.

The respondents in both the partner and provider sample were asked whether they believed that productive collaboration and cooperation existed among consumer advocates, the housing industry, and local governments in Idaho. This question seemed of particular importance, because productive collaboration and cooperation may be necessary for true progress to be made on Fair Housing and accessibility issues. Interestingly, neither group of respondents that completed this item seemed to feel that a great deal of productive collaboration and cooperation exists among the various stakeholder groups. Although the majority of partners (60.1%) reported that productive collaboration and cooperation exist, only a minority of providers (40.5%) agreed. Thus, it seems clear that there is some disparity as to the extent to which members of the different stakeholder groups feel as though they are working together productively to address Fair Housing and accessibility concerns in Idaho.

Protected Class Status and Housing Accessibility:

Perhaps the most explicit measure of the presence of discrimination in housing decisions was an item asking members of the three organizational samples whether they felt that Idahoans belonging to one or more protected classes had a difficult time securing housing of their choice, assuming that they met standard credit and income requirements. As seen below in Table 14, slightly less than half of the partners and providers indicated that they felt protected class members had a difficult time accessing housing that they were qualified for, and less than one in five officials felt that this was the case. Although on the surface these numbers appear positive, it seems somewhat alarming that over 40% of both partners and providers believe that members of protected classes have such difficulty. It is also disturbing that well over one-third of both the providers and officials did not answer this question (see Table 14); one might interpret this result as suggesting that many providers and officials did not know (or wish to comment on) the extent to which housing discrimination occurs.

Respondent Group	Percentage of Respondents
Partners	44.2
Providers	46.8
Officials	17.5

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item. This item was not completed by 9 partners (14.8% of that sample), 24 providers (33.8%), and 61 officials (38.6%).

All Stakeholder Groups:

Because a key goal of this study was to attempt to gather information to understand how members of all four stakeholder groups perceive housing and community resource accessibility across the state of Idaho, many questions were asked to members of each of the four respondent groups. This methodology allowed direct comparisons to be made on important perceptual and attitudinal dimensions. The results from the items presented to all four respondent groups are discussed below. Members of all four respondent groups were asked whether they believed that people with disabilities generally have a difficult time accessing housing that accommodates their disability (it is noteworthy, however, that this question was posed only to consumers with disabilities).

As seen below in Table 15, the responses to this item varied widely by respondent group. Well over half of the partners and providers who completed this item indicated that they felt housing is difficult to access for people with disabilities, while less than half of the officials and slightly over one-third of the consumers with disabilities agreed with this statement. The disparity in rates of agreement with this statement (as well as the ability to complete this item; see the disparity in response rates in Table 15) across the four respondent groups is rather stark, and indicates that there are widely differing perspectives on how accessible housing with appropriate accommodations is for people with disabilities. Perhaps the most interesting result from this question is that consumers with disabilities reported feeling that housing that accommodates disabilities is not difficult to access; in fact, they felt it was easier to access than did other respondents to the survey.

This result was puzzling to the research team. It could well be that such housing is in fact easily accessible. However, we must recognize that because the consumer sample was drawn from Section 8 housing recipients, the consumers who were sampled may have been had more assistance

finding housing with accommodations than other persons with disabilities. In any case, the lack of agreement about how accessible housing with accommodations for people with disabilities really is seems a problem. Efforts to objectively quantify the presence of and need for appropriate housing for people with disabilities seem warranted.

Respondent Group	Percentage of Respondents
Consumers with disabilities	34.5
Partners	81.1
Providers	69.6
Officials	43.5

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item. This item was not completed by 8 partners (13.1% of that sample), 25 providers (35.2%), and 66 officials (41.8%). All consumers with disabilities completed this item.

One of the questions that was considered to be critical to this analysis of impediments was whether access to housing and community resources had improved since the last analysis of impediments was conducted in 1999. To assess whether access in these areas had improved, two questions were asked of all stakeholders. The first was whether they believed that access to housing for members of protected classes had improved since 1999, and the second was whether they believed that access to community resources had improved since that same year. As seen below in Table 16, the majority of respondents in each respondents group who completed this item agreed that access to housing had improved.

Respondent Group	Percentage of Respondents
Consumers	66.7
Partners	75.0
Providers	81.5
Officials	79.5

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item. This item was not completed by 51 consumers (22.5% of that sample), 21 partners (34.4%), 28 providers (39.4%), and 85 officials (53.8%).

There was some variability in agreement among respondent groups; over 80% of the providers who completed this item reported believing that access to housing had improved since 1999, while slightly lower percentages of officials, partners, and consumers agreed (see Table 16). However, it is noteworthy and very important that clear majorities of all respondents in each group felt that improvements in access have been made since 1999. The results were similar with regard to responses to the item asking whether access to community resources had improved since 1999; a clear majority (over 70%) of members of all respondent groups who completed this item reported that access to community resources has indeed improved since the last analysis of impediments was conducted (see Table 17).

It is interesting, however, that clearly more officials (over 90%) and providers (over 85%) felt that community resource access had improved compared to partners and consumers (both around

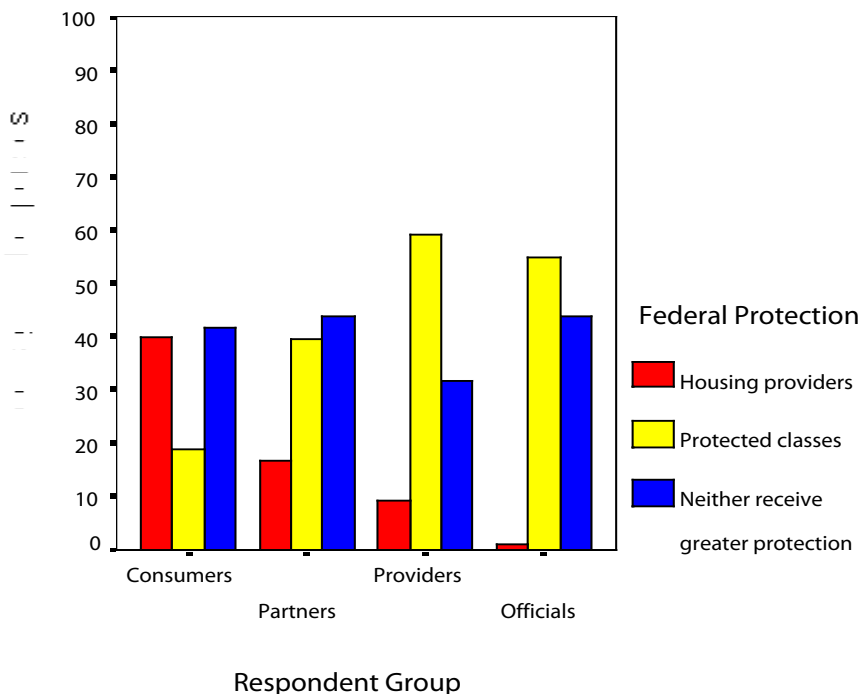
70%) (see Table 17). It is also interesting that at least 50% of the officials failed to respond to either question; this suggests that many of the officials do not know or wish to comment on the extent to which access to housing and community resources has changed in the past five years.

Respondent Group	Percentage of Respondents
Consumers	71.3
Partners	71.4
Providers	85.4
Officials	92.5

Note. The percentages listed are “valid percentages”, meaning that they are calculated out of the total number of respondents who completed the item. This item was not completed by 62 consumers (27.3% of that sample), 19 partners (31.2%), 30 providers (42.3%), and 79 officials (50.0%).

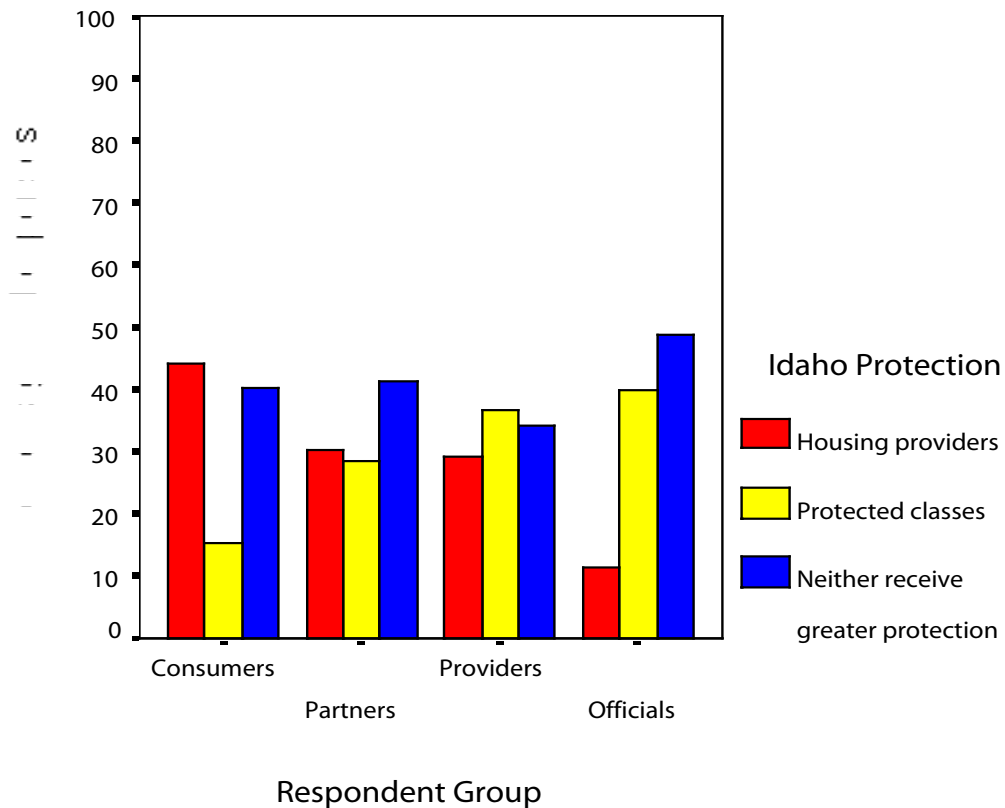
Members of all four stakeholder groups were also asked two questions related to protection under current law. Specifically, they were asked who (housing providers/building owners or members of protected classes) they believed received greater protection under current federal and Idaho state laws. Responses to these items clearly differed among respondent groups, and also differed as of function of whether the laws were federal or state. As seen in Figure 2, the largest group of responding consumers and partners (41.5% and 43.8%, respectively) felt that neither housing providers/building owners nor members of protected classes received preferential treatment under federal law, while the largest number of responding providers and officials (59.1% and 54.9%, respectively) felt that members of protected classes receive the strongest protection under federal law.

Figure 2: Perceptions of Protection Under Federal Law



Although a large number of responding consumers (39.9%) felt that housing providers/building owners received the greatest protection under federal law, this perception was not shared by partners (16.7% reported this to be true), providers (9.1%) or officials (1.2%) (see Figure 3). Regarding protection under current Idaho state law, the response patterns differed. As seen below in Figure 3, the most common response pattern among responding partners (41.3%) and officials (48.7%) was that neither housing providers/building owners nor members of protected classes received greater protection under Idaho state law, while the largest number of consumers (44.0%) felt that housing providers/building owners received greater protection, and the largest number of providers (36.6%) felt that members of protected classes received the greatest protection (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Perceptions of Protection Under Idaho State Law



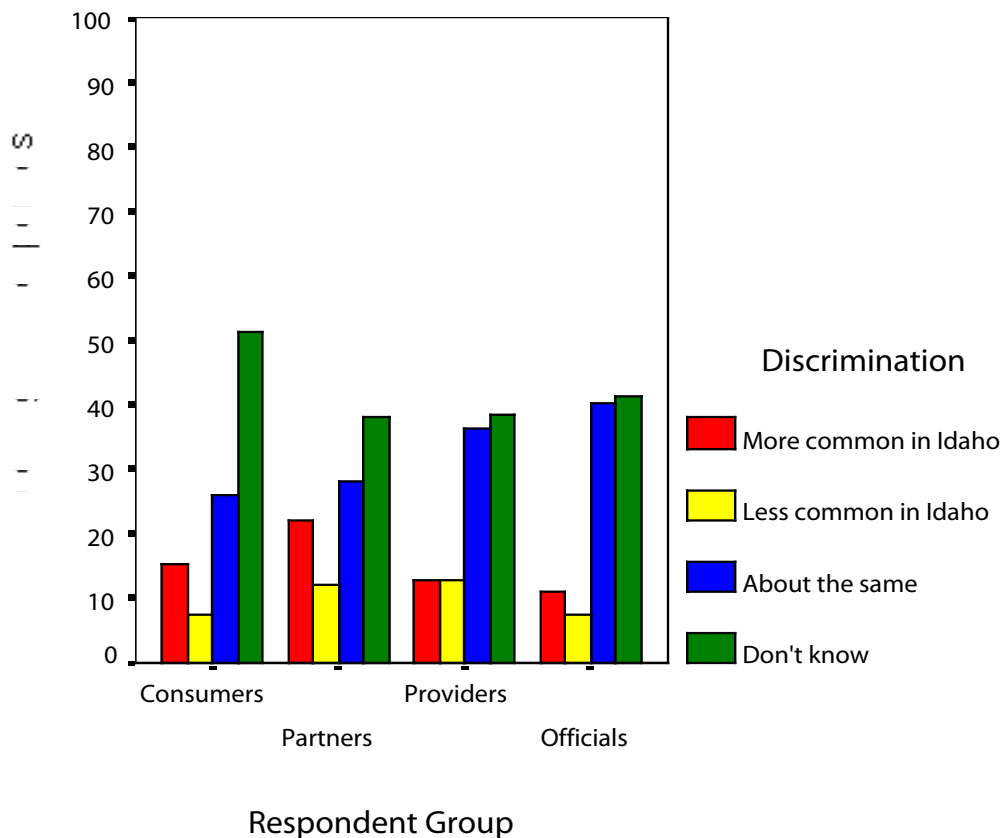
It is noteworthy that the perception that federal law is more protective of members of protected classes than is Idaho state law was found among all respondent groups. To assess the extent of this perception, a simple formula was utilized, subtracting the percentage of respondents who reported that members of protected classes received more protection under Idaho state law from the percentage of respondents who reported that members of protected classes received more protection under federal law. The results are rather telling. The degree to which the respondents felt that federal law was more protective of members of protected classes than Idaho state law was most pronounced among providers (+22.5) and officials (+15.2), and was somewhat lower—but still evident—among advocates (+11.3) and consumers (+3.5%). Thus, it is clear that there is a perception among members of all respondent groups that members of protected classes are more protected under current federal laws than current Idaho state laws.

Several survey items also queried members of all four stakeholder groups about their perceptions of housing discrimination in Idaho and whether any discrimination that occurs is intentional or not. The first item simply asked all of the respondents whether they felt that housing discrimination in Idaho (if it occurs) is more common, less common, or about the same in frequency compared to neighboring states. As seen below in Figure 4, the most common response to this item, among all four respondent groups, was a “don’t know” option (51.2% of the consumers who completed this item reported not knowing, as did 41.4% of the officials, 38.3% of the providers, and 38.0% of the partners).

The next most common response to this item, again among all four respondent groups, was that housing discrimination is about as common in Idaho as it is in neighboring states (40.2% of the officials who completed this item gave this response, as did 36.2% of the providers, 28.0% of the partners, and 26.1% of the consumers). Partners were somewhat more likely than members of the other respondent groups to report that housing discrimination in Idaho is more common in neighboring states (22.0% of partners reported this to be true, as did 15.4% of consumers, 12.8% of providers, and 10.9% of officials).

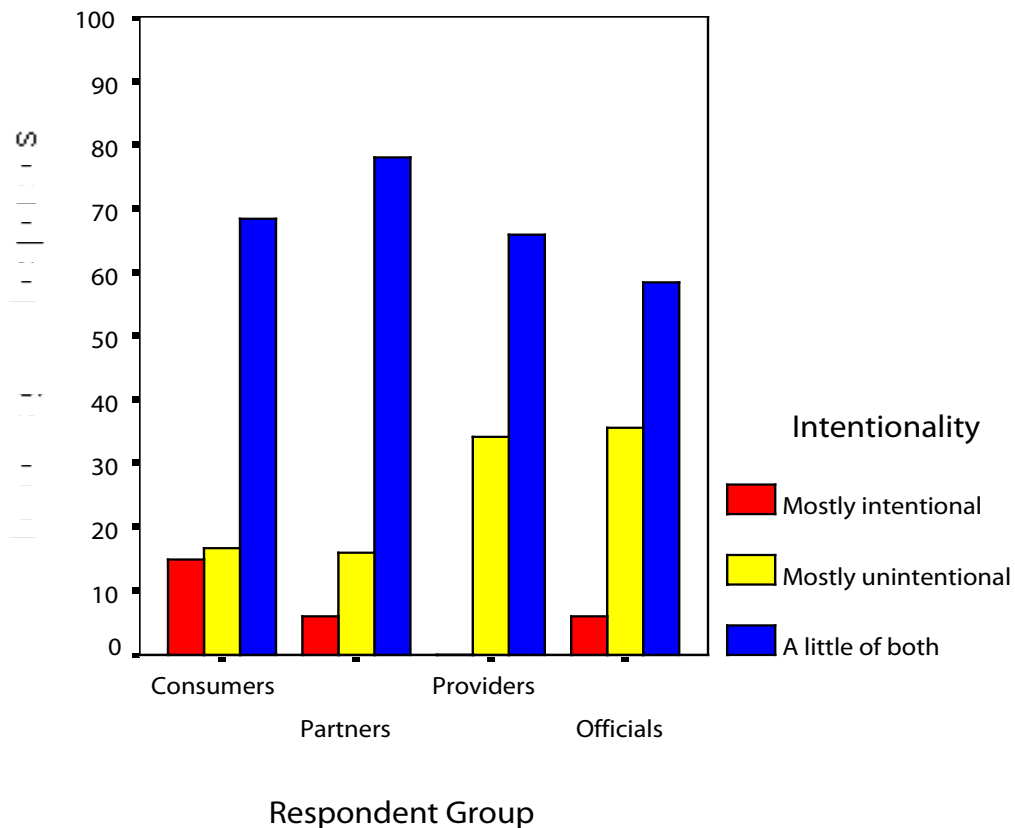
Providers (12.8%) and partners (12.0%) were somewhat more likely than officials (7.6%) and consumers (7.4%) to report that housing discrimination occurs more often in neighboring states than it does in Idaho (see Figure 4). Taken in sum, it is clear that many of the respondents in each stakeholder group don’t believe that they know how Idaho compares to neighboring states in terms of the frequency of housing discrimination. Those respondents who did feel qualified to answer this item generally reported that it is no more or less common than in neighboring states.

Figure 4: Prevalence of Discrimination in Idaho Compared to Neighboring States



A second question regarding housing discrimination asked the respondents whether discrimination, if it occurs, is mostly intentional, mostly unintentional (for example, through ignorance of laws), or is a combination of the two. As seen below in Figure 5, a clear majority of respondents in all four stakeholder groups reported believing that housing discrimination is a combination of both intentional and unintentional factors (78.0% of the partners who completed this item selected this response option, as did 68.3% of the consumers, 65.9% of the providers, and 58.3% of the officials). When observing the responses of only those respondents who reported that housing discrimination is mostly intentional or unintentional, it is clear that more members of all four stakeholder groups felt that discrimination is more often unintentional than it is intentional, although this pattern is more pronounced in providers (34.1% reported discrimination to be mostly unintentional and 0.0% reported it to be mostly intentional), officials (35.7% vs. 6.0%), and partners (15.4% vs. 5.8%), than consumers (16.8% vs. 14.9%) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Perceived Intentionality of Discrimination

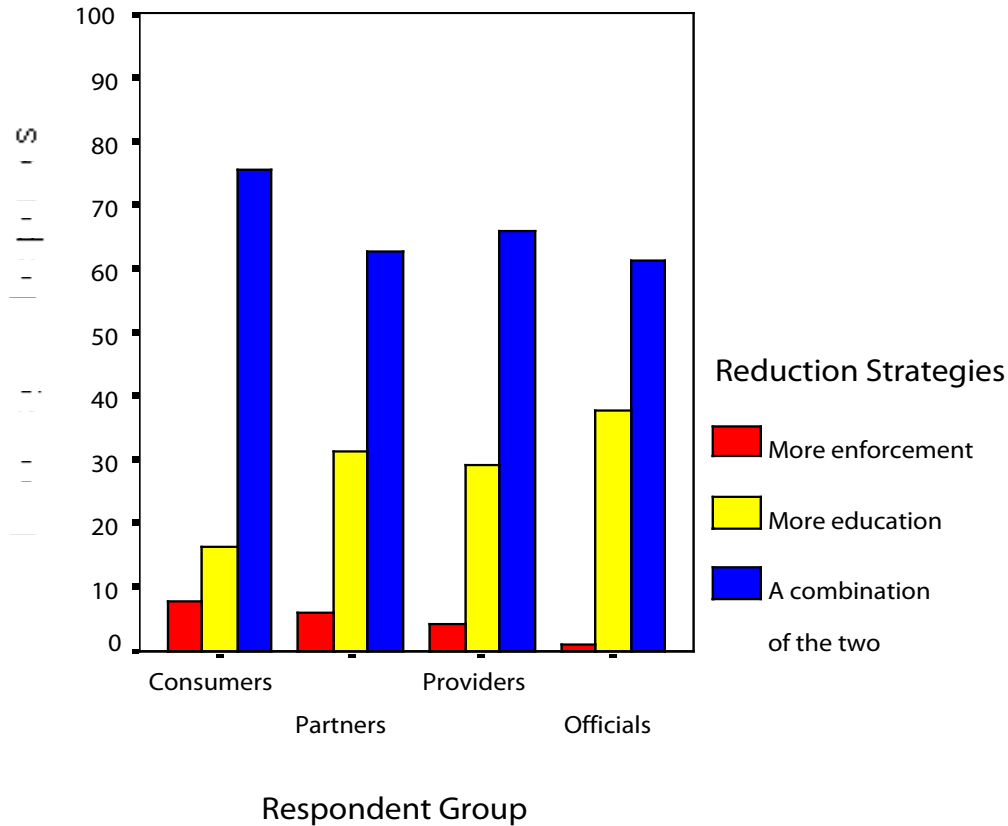


Two other questions regarding housing discrimination in Idaho asked the respondents in all four stakeholder groups about how discrimination could be reduced, and who should bear the primary responsibility for addressing this discrimination. First, the respondents were asked whether housing discrimination could most effectively be addressed by more enforcement of fair housing laws, more education on what constitutes housing discrimination, or a combination of these two strategies.

Not surprisingly, a clear majority of respondents in all four respondent groups reported that a combination of the two strategies would be most effective in reducing housing discrimination (75.6% of the consumers who completed this item selected this response option, as did 66.0% of the providers, 62.8% of the partners, and 61.3% of the officials) (see Figure 6). Among those

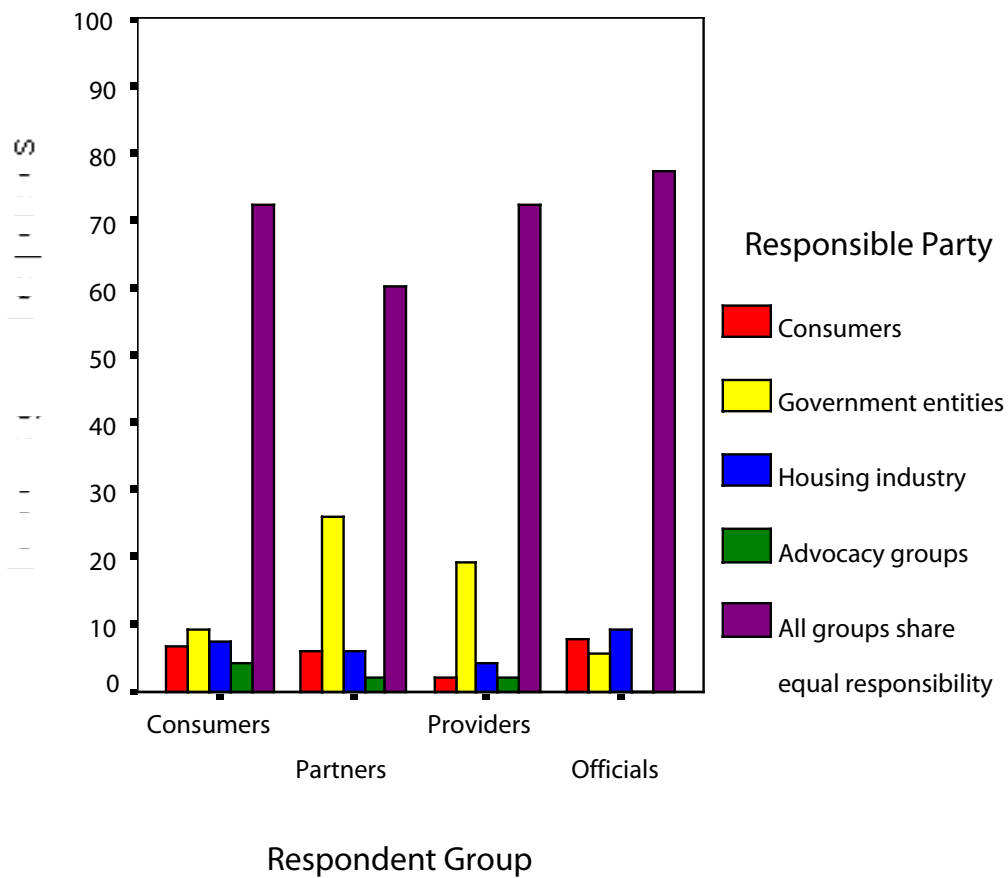
respondents who selected either more enforcement or more education as a more effective strategy, a greater number of respondents in all four groups clearly favored more education over more enforcement (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Most Effective Strategies to Reduce Discrimination



With regard to the item on who should bear the primary responsibility for addressing housing discrimination, respondents were allowed to select five response options: consumers, government entities, the housing industry, nonprofit advocacy groups, or all groups share equal responsibility. As seen below in Figure 7, the majority of respondents in all four groups reported that all groups share equal responsibility for addressing housing discrimination (77.3% of the officials to completed this item selected this option, as did 72.3% of the consumers, 72.3% of the providers, and 60.0% of the partners). Among those respondents who identified a single group that should bear the primary responsibility for addressing housing discrimination, the largest numbers of partners (26.0%), providers (19.2%) and consumers (9.4%) reported that government entities should bear this responsibility. The largest group of officials (9.1%) who identified a single group that should bear primary responsibility reported that the housing industry should address housing discrimination (see Figure 7). Taken in sum, the responses to these two items suggest that members of all four stakeholder groups believe a multifaceted approach involving more education and enforcement would be most effective in reducing housing discrimination in Idaho, and also that members of all groups share equal responsibility for addressing this discrimination.

Figure 7: Responsible Parties for Addressing Discrimination



7. Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this project was to assess, for the first time since 1999, perceptions of what impediments to housing and community resource access exist for persons with disabilities and members of other protected classes. This project is considered unique in that it solicited the perceptions of members of multiple stakeholder groups, who, by nature of their inclusion in a stakeholder group, may have distinct views on access issues. Further, this project seems unique in that it attempted to solicit perceptions from members of the four stakeholder groups throughout the state of Idaho, which enables the findings to be generalized fairly well across the entire state. The response rates from each of the stakeholder groups were also acceptable (at least for the types of methodology used), allowing an even greater degree of confidence when generalizing the findings from the sample to a larger population. In short, the methodology employed in this study seems both inclusive and sound, so confidence in the generality of the results seems warranted.

The surveys issued to the various stakeholder groups included many items, and the responses to these items are described in some detail throughout this report. The researchers acknowledge that some readers may initially find it difficult to discern the “key issues” in the volume of material, and therefore will attempt to synthesize the key findings in our conclusions.

As noted above, this project is the first since 1999 to assess perceptions of impediments to statewide housing and community resource access for Idahoans with disabilities and members

of other protected classes. Key goals in this project were to: 1) assess perceptions of the existence of access barriers; 2) assess the magnitude of existing barriers; 3) isolate the most frequent types of barriers; 4) gain an understanding of how to reduce existing barriers; and 5) to understand whether significant progress has been made in reducing access barriers since 1999.

As discussed below, we conclude that there is a general sense among members of all stakeholder groups that some barriers exist to housing and community resource access for people with disabilities and members of other protected groups, and that there are some marked discrepancies in how serious these barriers are among members of the four stakeholder groups. However, it appears clear that members of all four stakeholder groups feel that substantial progress in reducing access barriers has been made in the five years since the last analysis of impediments was conducted, and that there is a nearly universal sense that, through increased collaboration and outreach efforts, this progress can be accelerated in the future.

It is encouraging that the reported incidence of housing discrimination by consumers was very low; the vast majority of consumers reported not having been discriminated against or even knowing anyone who had been discriminated against. Very few consumers had ever filed fair housing complaints. Clear majorities of responding consumers with disabilities reported having little difficulty accessing housing with appropriate accommodations and little difficulty accessing community resources (although, as noted earlier, these findings should be interpreted while bearing in mind that the consumers were all Section 8 recipients, and that they may experience less difficulty finding accessible housing than other members of protected classes).

Members of the other three stakeholder groups (partners, providers, and officials) acknowledged that barriers to access exist, both in terms of housing and community resource access, although there was some variability in the extent to which these barriers were perceived to exist; partners and providers seemed to feel that access was more restricted than officials. In any case, it seems encouraging that members of all three organizational stakeholder groups acknowledged that access barriers exist, and as is discussed in greater detail below, seem committed to reducing them.

Regarding the magnitude of housing and community resource access barriers, there seemed to be a discrepancy among perceptions of members of the four stakeholder groups. Generally, consumers and officials perceived access barriers to be fewer than partners and providers. Although many members of all four groups reported not knowing whether access barriers such as discrimination are more prevalent in Idaho compared to neighboring states, the general sense among those who commented on this issue was that they are not.

Comments on what types of barriers to housing and community resource access were primarily solicited from consumers with disabilities, as these persons were considered the most likely to have personal experiences with existing barriers. Regarding housing, consumers were most likely to report having difficulty finding housing that they could easily enter (for example, with wheelchair ramps), and where they could move easily between rooms and access appliances. Only a few consumers reported having any difficulty accessing community resources, and those who did usually specified that the difficulties surrounded wheelchair access or lack of accommodations for hearing disabilities.

Members of the organizational respondent groups overwhelmingly reported that their organizations offered accommodations to people with disabilities; the vast majority of respondents in all three groups reported that their offices are accessible to people with disabilities, and most

reported that they were able to accommodate people with visual and hearing impairments, as well as people with limited English proficiency. Furthermore, responding members from each of the three organizational groups reported that most of the employees in their organizations know how to access resources on housing and accessibility issues. In sum, it seems that there are some types of access problems that are relatively common for people with disabilities, but that members of relevant organizations report that their organizations are trying to reduce these barriers, at least at the local level.

Understanding whether barriers exist and the nature of existing barriers are important goals, but it is also important to gain an understanding of how to reduce these barriers. Members of all four groups offered perspectives on this latter issue, and the results are instructive. Most of the respondents in each group perceived housing discrimination, for example, to be partly or mostly unintentional, and as perhaps as a result, reported believing that education on what constitutes discrimination and how to avoid it should be at least a major part of efforts to reduce discrimination (more education was a preferred strategy over more enforcement among members of all four groups).

Importantly, the majority of the respondents in all four groups felt that all groups are equally responsible for working together to reduce housing discrimination in particular; this suggests that there may be a commitment to collaborative efforts to address barriers to housing access. This finding invokes a sense of optimism for future progress; however, it may only be viable if commitments to working together actually result in collaborative efforts.

The final major goal in this project was to determine whether substantial progress had been made in reducing access barriers between 1999, when the last statewide analysis of impediments was conducted, and 2004. It is noteworthy that clear majorities of all four stakeholder groups reported that access to both housing and community resources has improved for members of protected classes between 1999 and 2004. Although providers and officials felt greater progress has been made, both partners and consumers clearly agreed that members of protected classes in the current year can more easily access housing and community resources—suggesting that those who have been working diligently in the past five years to improve both types of access are making significant progress toward their goals.

8. Recommendations

Given the nature and content of the results, the researchers believe that several recommendations can be made to allow for continued improvements in housing and community resource access for Idahoans with disabilities and for members of other protected classes. These recommendations include:

- Attempt to find ways to objectively document housing and community resource barriers
- Foster an environment of mutual interest among all stakeholder groups, so that collaborative efforts to reduce access barriers are more likely to be successful
- Encourage consumers to consider documenting complaints when they consider them to be legitimate
- Encourage members of all stakeholder groups to become more aware of and involved in community resource access issues.

We recommend continuing the development of ways to *objectively* document barriers to housing and community resource access because discrepancies were found in perceptions of barriers among members of the four stakeholder groups. Perceptions are inherently *subjective*, and therefore they are likely to be influenced by a number of factors (for example, occupational class and job-specific experiences); thus, perceptions may not always reflect reality (though they certainly reflect *some* reality). Therefore, anything that can be done to help create a comprehensive database of what observable access barriers exist would be desirable. Particularly desirable would be a database that could be contributed to and accessed by members of all four stakeholder groups, as such a database would not only provide evidence of barriers but also offer opportunities for them to be removed.

For example, if members of a partner organization contributed information about specific types of housing access problems in a region of the state, providers in that area could view the information and make efforts to reduce those barriers (either by building new units that eliminate the problems or retrofitting existing units to provide better access). Objective documentation that would be available to all stakeholders seems that it would provide valuable information on what can be done to reduce access barriers and the extent to which progress is being made regarding barrier reduction.

Complex and multifaceted problems that have multiple interested parties, such as access to housing and community resources, usually require complex and multifaceted solutions. These types of solutions can often only be developed and successfully implemented by members of each of the interested parties (in this case, consumers, partners, providers, and officials). As was noted earlier in the summary and conclusions section of this report, members of all four stakeholder groups sampled in this study indicated that they feel that members of all groups are responsible for reducing housing discrimination, and presumably also other barriers to housing and community resource access.

Clearly, the belief seems to be that collaboration is warranted. However, collaboration may not currently be the operating standard. As was discussed earlier in the report, only about 40% of responding providers reported that a state of productive collaboration existed between themselves and partners, and only a slight majority of the partners felt that such a state existed. Although we

can only speculate about the extent to which officials and consumers perceive a collaborative environment exists, it is likely that they too feel collaboration is lacking.

Responses to some items (e.g., the items on protection under Idaho state and federal law) suggested that members of some stakeholder groups perceive that members of other stakeholder groups have a position or interest that is contrary to their own. Although it is virtually impossible to completely eliminate adversarial sentiments in any group, it seems desirable to do whatever can be done to reduce these sentiments among the various stakeholder groups and replace them with, at the very least, a sense of limited cooperation.

Collegial forums that include members of all stakeholder groups to examine issues and engage in discourse related to housing and community resource access would be extremely desirable. Efforts to reduce the “all-or-nothing” thinking characteristic of perceived antagonists would also be helpful. Ultimately, it seems that members of all four groups recognize that, in order to continue to make substantial progress toward access barrier reduction, all groups need to be involved, and all perspectives need to be considered. Encouraging that involvement and perspective consideration seems a viable way to build consensus on how to continue to improve housing and community resource access.

Issues related to fair housing and community resource access complaints are certainly sensitive to all of the stakeholders sampled in this study. This is likely due to a sense that two of the stakeholder groups—consumers and partners—are likely to file complaints, and two other stakeholder groups—providers and officials—are likely to be targets of complaints. Therefore, we recognize that any recommendation regarding complaints may be perceived as inflammatory by some readers of this report (although we hope that this is not the case). In actuality, the level of reported discrimination in housing and resource access in Idaho appears to be fairly low, at least according to our results; very few consumers reported feeling discriminated against in either housing or community resource access, and relatively small numbers of organizational group respondents reported that a complaint had ever been filed against their agency. However, we found some evidence that fair housing and community resource complaints may be somewhat under reported.

For example, only one in six consumers who felt that they had been legitimately discriminated against in a housing decision reported filing a complaint. Obviously, this is not acceptable; legitimate complaints should be recorded and addressed by appropriate authorities, and we recommend continuing efforts to encourage consumers to report legitimate complaints. At the same time, we recognize that illegitimate complaints also occur, and that complaints of this type serve to undermine relations among the stakeholder groups, especially between consumers and partners on one side and providers and officials on the other. Therefore, efforts to reduce the likelihood of illegitimate complaints are desirable.

The final recommendation made in this report is to encourage members of all stakeholder groups to become more involved in and knowledgeable about housing and community resource access issues. In analyzing the survey responses, we found that many members of the various stakeholder groups did not answer items related to these issues. Lack of an answer to these items may reflect that the questions as they were presented in the surveys themselves were difficult to understand, and if this was true, then the researchers are largely at fault.

On the other hand, it is possible that members of the stakeholder groups simply did not know information relevant to housing and community resource access issues. For example, they may not have known whether their offices were ADA compliant, or whether housing is difficult to access for people who are members of protected classes. If this is true, then it seems warranted to encourage interested parties to become more familiar with these issues. Policy-related decisions that have an impact on housing and community resource access issues must be made by the informed, and to the extent that many members of stakeholder groups are not informed, they may become excluded from the process.

We find many reasons to be optimistic about housing and community resource access for Idahoans with disabilities and members of other protected classes. Some challenges exist, although barriers to housing and community resource access were not found to be numerous. Some clearly were perceived and documented. However, challenges represent opportunities for growth and progress, and we believe that with increased cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholder groups, barriers to housing and community resource access can be removed over the next five years.