



## News Release

For Immediate Release

For more information, contact:

**Tim Kolly** 312-698-6220 | [tkolly@dri.org](mailto:tkolly@dri.org)

### **DRI Poll Finds Dramatic Ethnic and Racial Differences Regarding Civil Trial Preferences**

**Chicago, April 2, 2014**—In civil cases, Hispanics and blacks are significantly less likely than whites to trust their fate to a jury rather than a judge or an arbitrator. While 51% of white prefer to be tried by a jury, only 39% of blacks would. And the reluctance is even greater among Hispanics with only 26% preferring a trial by jury. The annual DRI National Poll on the Civil Justice System is conducted by DRI's Center for Law and Public Policy and is the only annual national poll dedicated to the civil justice system.

In the poll, respondents were given three choices of whom they would prefer to hear their cases in a civil trial: a jury, a judge, or an arbitrator. Among three of the demographic categories surveyed (whites, African-Americans, and Hispanics) the disparity in preferences is stark. While 51% of Hispanics would prefer to be tried by judges, only 20% of whites and 21% of blacks would, a difference far in excess of two to one.

The numbers are virtually reversed between whites and Hispanics on preference for a jury trial. A majority of whites, 51%, would prefer their cases to be heard by a jury while only 26% of Hispanics would. Among the three choices, 39% of black respondents prefer juries while 36% prefer an arbitrator, the highest percentage of any of the three groups. And unlike Hispanic respondents, among blacks, having a judge hear their case was their least favored option.

#### **Preference for hearing a civil case:**

	Jury	Judge	Arbitrator
All	46%	24	22
Whites	51	20	21
Hispanics	26	51	15
Blacks	39	21	36

"The right to trial by jury is one of the foundations of our country," said DRI president Mike Weston. "It is alarming that such a high percentage of all Americans may distrust the jury system. The trial bar needs to educate all Americans and conduct ourselves in a manner to regain the public trust."

Sky Woodward, chair of the DRI Center for Law and Public Policy, agreed. "Litigants need to feel that they approach the courts as equals before the law. If Hispanic reluctance to have a jury decide their case or black reluctance have a judge decide theirs is the result of mistrust, perhaps we ought to be looking more thoughtfully at ways of addressing that. We need more information."

Overall, the scientific sampling of 1,005 Americans showed respondents, by a large margin, want a civil trial to be heard by a jury (46%) rather than a judge (24%), or an arbitrator (22%). Examined another way, however, the figures are equal between those favoring a jury (46%) and those favoring other options (24% + 22%).

The above findings come from an independent, nonpartisan telephone survey conducted via landline and cell-phone interviews with a random national sample of 1,005 adults. The results have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for the full sample. All characterizations of differences in results have been tested for statistical significance. The survey was produced by Langer Research Associates of New York, N.Y.

###

### **About DRI – The Voice of the Defense Bar**

*For more than fifty years, DRI has been the voice of the defense bar, advocating for 22,000 defense attorneys, commercial trial attorneys, and corporate counsel and defending the integrity of the civil judiciary. A thought leader, DRI provides world-class legal education, deep expertise for policy-makers, legal resources, and networking opportunities to facilitate career and law firm growth. For more information, log on to [www.dri.org](http://www.dri.org)*