

The 26th Judicial District
SelfServe Center

2006: A Year at a Glance



Elisa Chinn-Gary, Family Court Administrator
Darwin F. Rice, SelfServe Center Coordinator
Shirley Nelson, Interim SelfServe Center Coordinator

ATTORNEYS PROVIDING LIMITED SCOPE OR UNBUNDLED SERVICES

The SelfServe Center has as one of its' primary mission to link litigants with attorneys who are willing to provide "limited scope services." This term is used to describe the wide range of discreet tasks that an attorney might provide short of full representation. Limited Scope Services makes the total cost of legal assistance more affordable as litigants elect whether to use counsel at each phase of the case. The SelfServe Center Coordinator maintains profiles of attorneys willing to provide unbundled services. This information is routinely provided to customers visiting the Center. This year, eight (8) new attorneys were added to the list of providers.

EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

The SelfServe Center routinely offers family law videos as a tool to equip and educate pro se litigants. During operational hours, a rotation of videos are played to provide litigants the opportunity to gain a basic knowledge of the SelfServe Center and how it can serve them. Additionally the following titles are available in the Center for private viewing:

- Custody or Visitation and/or Support
- Absolute Divorce
- Modification of Custody/Visitation
- Contempt
- Domestic Violence

With the exception of the domestic violence video, titles are available in English and Spanish. No appointment is necessary. Customers visiting the Center are encouraged to view the video corresponding to the form packet requested. If unable to view the video upon their initial visit to the Center, customers are invited to return at a more convenient time.

FREE LEGAL CLINICS

The SelfServe Center offers monthly legal clinics on the topics of Absolute Divorce and Custody, Visitation and Support. The clinics are held on the first and third Mondays of every month in Conference Room 3561 beginning at 12:30 pm. The clinics are used as a means to educate the public on the most commonly used packets in the center. The attorney and/or certified paralegal conducting the clinic informs litigants of step-by-step procedures, explains how to complete the forms and reviews forms for completeness. In 2006, twenty-four (24) clinics were held. In 2006, attendance was steady and the feedback gathered from the evaluation forms reflect a high level of customer satisfaction. Of the 177 customers who pre-registered for clinics, 109 attended.

MODEST MEANS COMMITTEE

In 2003, the North Carolina Bar Association (NCBA) formed a Pro Se Task Force to address the status of pro se litigation in North Carolina. The group was charged to study and report on pro se programs around the nation; develop collaborative efforts with other NCBA committees and other legal groups in North Carolina and across the nation; and study ways and means to assist pro se litigants. In 2004, the Pro Se Task Force evolved into a standing NCBA committee; namely, the Modest Means Committee. Todd Nuccio, Trial Court Administrator and Elisa Chinn-Gary, Family Court Administrator and have represented the interest of the Mecklenburg County judiciary and citizens in working to meet the challenges of pro se litigation.

In 2006, the Mecklenburg County SelfServe Center was featured in the creation of a DVD modeling and promoting self-help initiatives through the courts. The DVD will be presented to judges, bar groups, legislators and community stakeholders across North Carolina to explain the self-help models available and promote the adoption of some level of service within each judicial venue.

WEBSITE

With the public's ever increasing access to the internet, the SelfServe Center website helps reach a greater volume of citizenry. Forms and instructions are conveniently available for download online. On average, 384 disclosure forms were completed online each month. This figure does not include those who visit the website without filling out the disclosure to access forms. Plans are currently under development to upgrade the site to include streaming video and virtual court tours.

STAFFING

Still faced with critical staffing challenges, the Center continues to operate without any dedicated funding. Currently, resources from the Family Court Administrator's Office are utilized to operate the Center during limited hours. In 2006, Darwin Rice, SelfServe Center Coordinator, reported to active military duty. Shirley Nelson, began serving as Interim Coordinator in February. The SelfServe Center has continued to rely heavily on interns and volunteers to help cover the duties in the center and provide coverage during Family Court staff shortages and mandatory trainings. The Family Court Administrator's Office lacks the resources to restore the full operational hours of the Center. Each day customers who arrive after closing are advised to return during operational hours or visit the website. And though volunteerism within the Center has remained constant, the staff-to-customer ratio challenges efforts to provide comprehensive services.

DISTRIBUTION OF FORM PACKETS

To date the following form packets are available in the SelfServe Center and on the website.

- Absolute Divorce
- Custody/Visitation (*Instructions also available in Spanish*)
- Child Support
- Answer and Counterclaim for Custody/Visitation and/or Support
- Modification of Custody/Visitation
- Modification of Child Support
- Contempt
- Domestic Violence
- Civil No-Contact
- Motion in the Cause for Visitation
- Child Custody Agreement for School Enrollment
- Name Change –Adult
- Name Change –Child (Uncontested)
- Small Claims –Money or Property Owed
- Small Claims –Summary Ejectment
- Limited Driving Privileges (*Instructions also available in Spanish*)
- Expungement
- Motion to Appoint a Guardian Ad Litem

The following figures reflect the number of form packets distributed in the SelfServe Center in 2006:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
797	867	625	489	588	642	508	487	501	466	364	334	6668

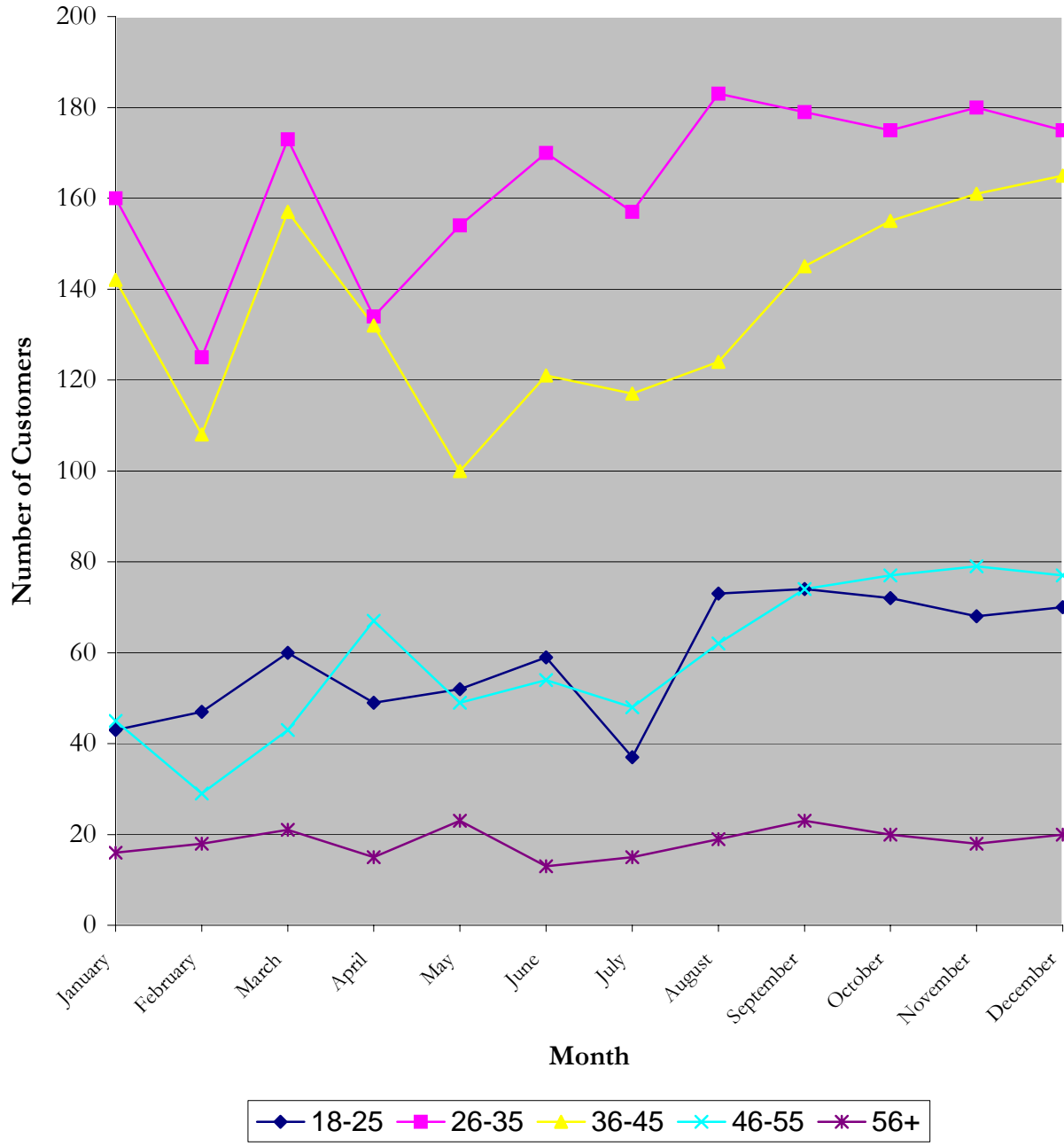
The following figures reflect the number of form packets accessed from the SelfServe Center Website in 2006:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
319	423	224	471	416	458	458	316	386	362	352	418	4608

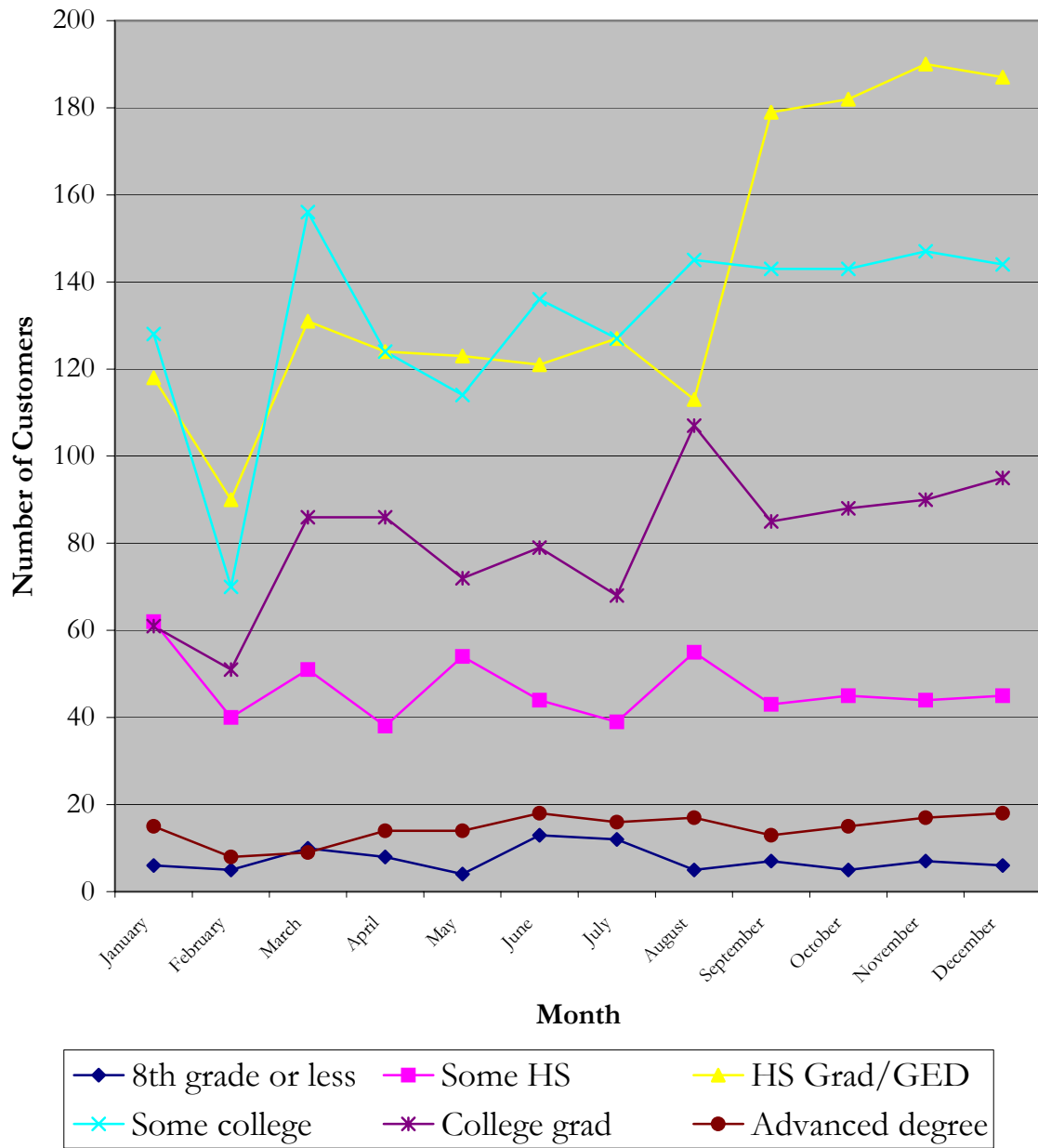
CUSTOMER VOLUME

In addition to customers who request a form packet, others simply visit the Center or contact the general information telephone line. In 2006, the Center assisted an average of eighty-seven (87) walk-in customers per month seeking general information. Technological limitations prevents an accurate tally of calls to the information line. However, the relocation of the SelfServe Center and installation of a new phone system in the courthouse, promises to automate computation of calls to both the English and Spanish information line in 2007.

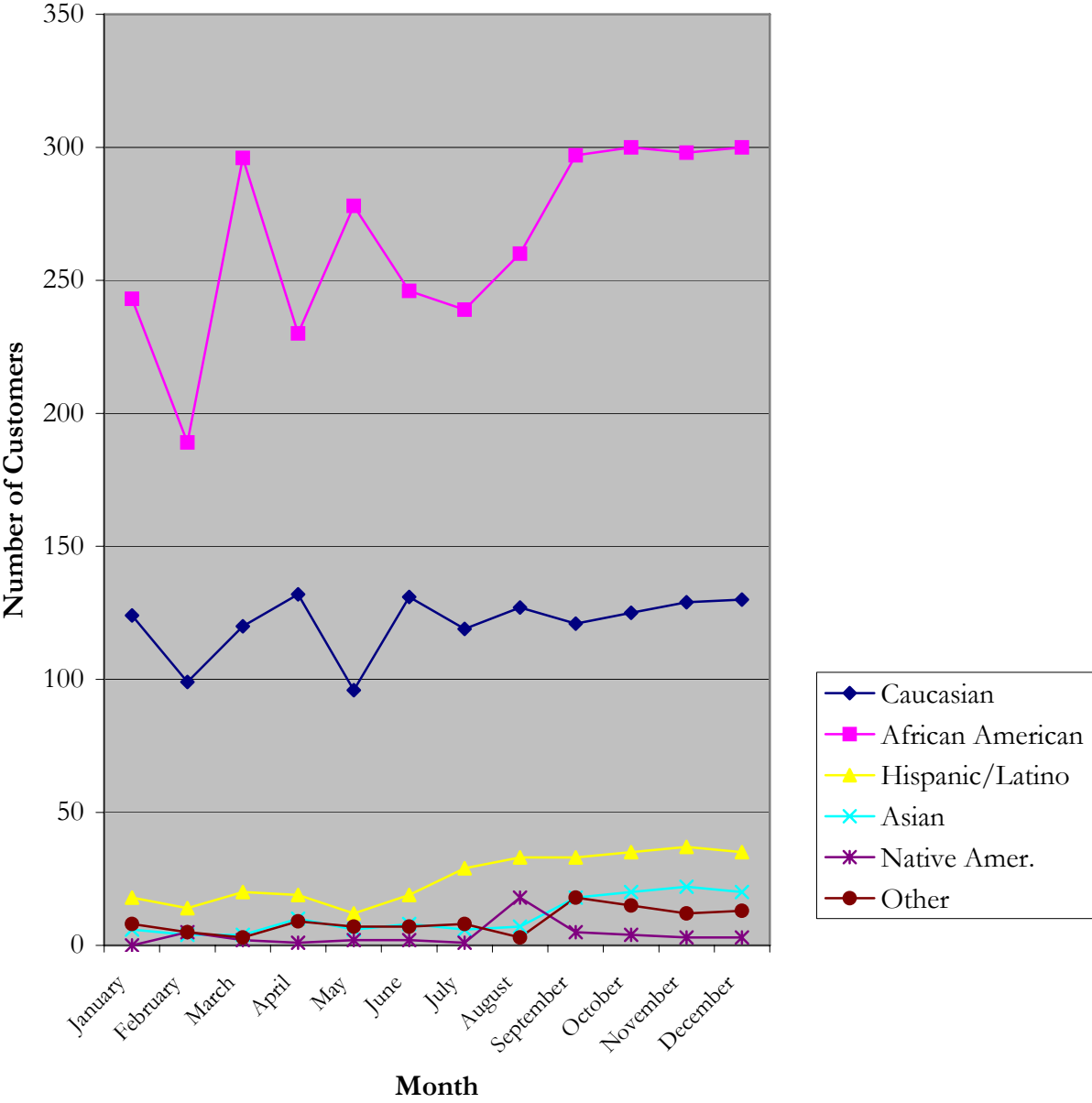
Age 2006



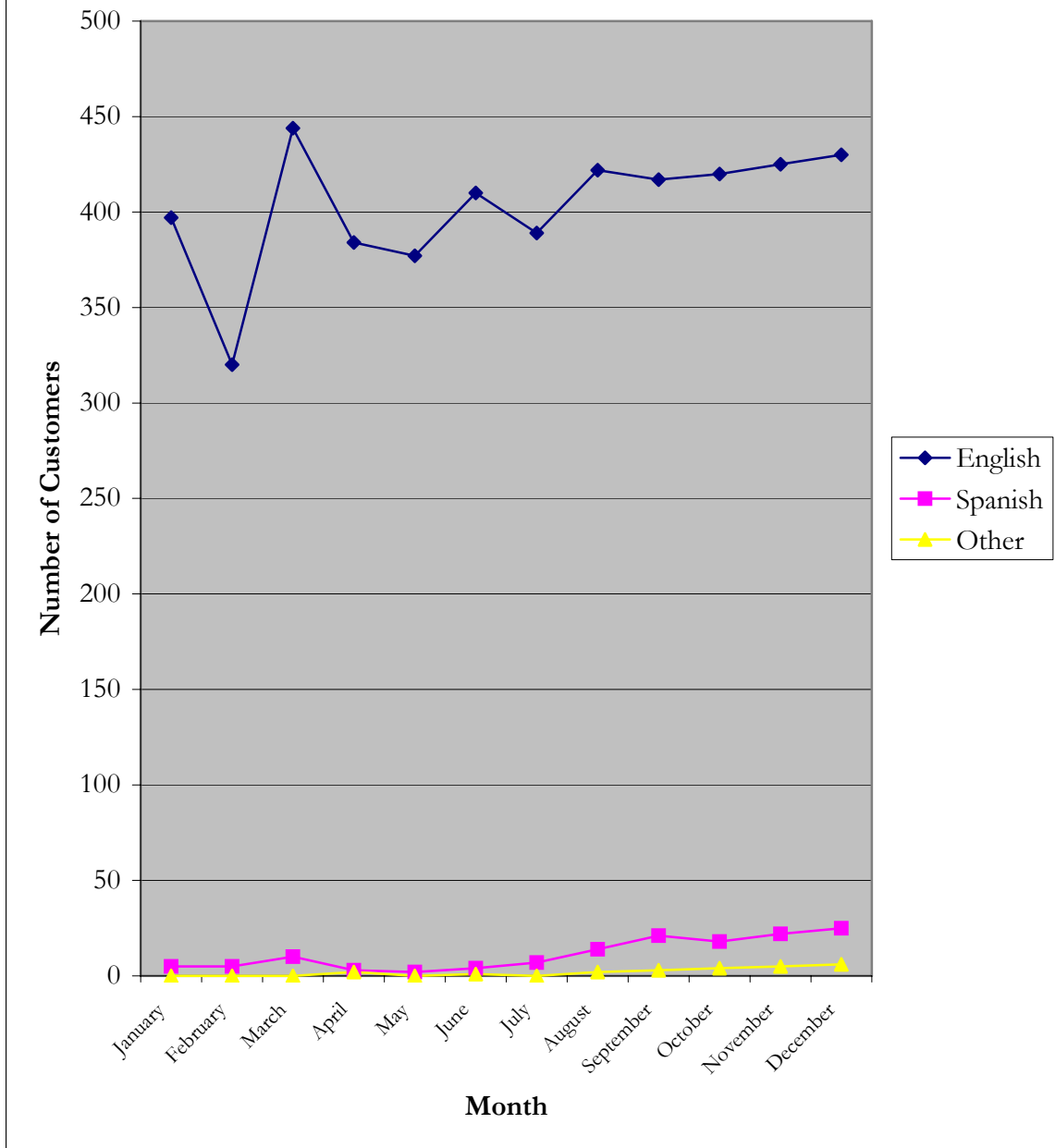
Education 2006



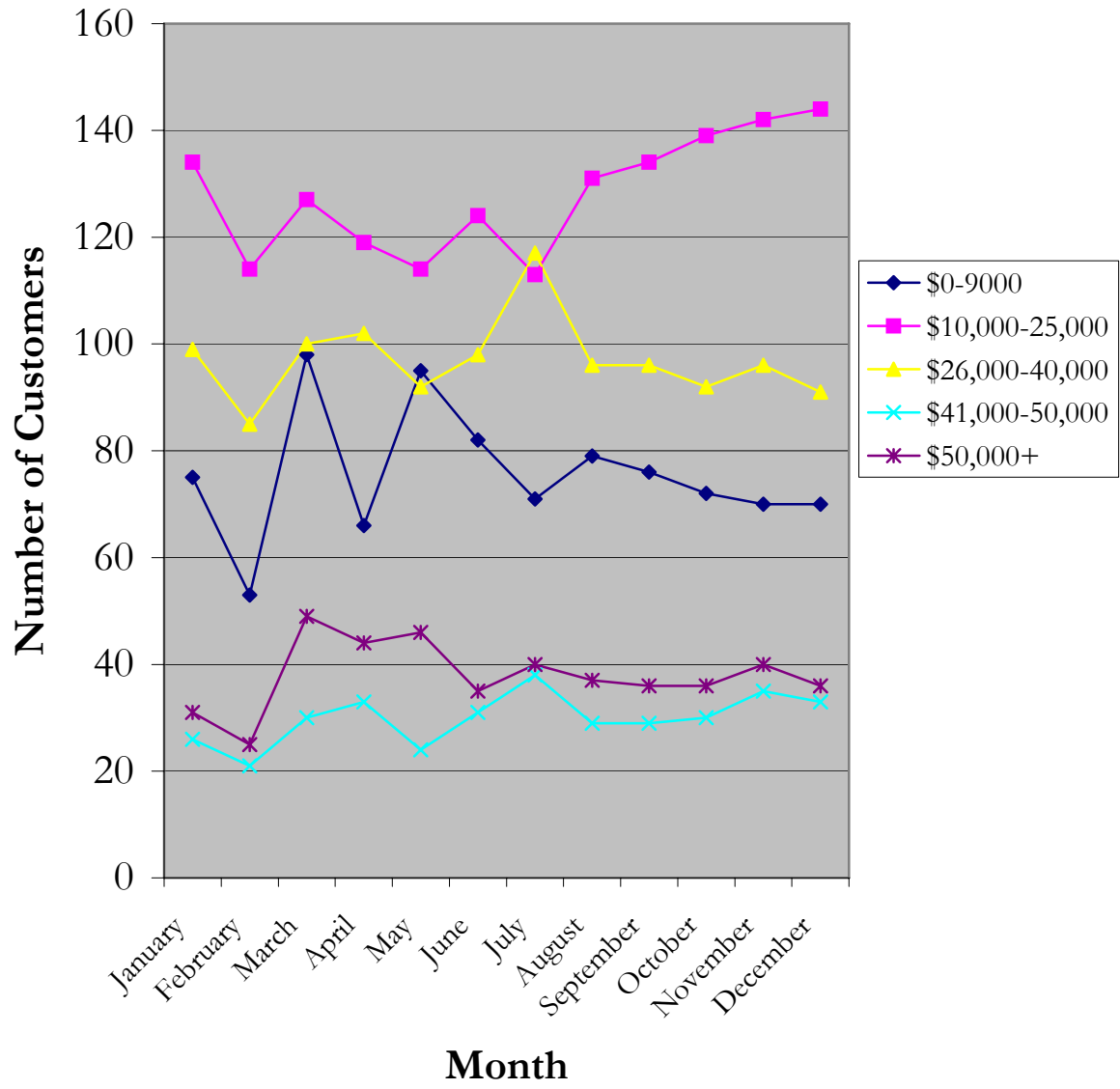
Ethnic Background 2006



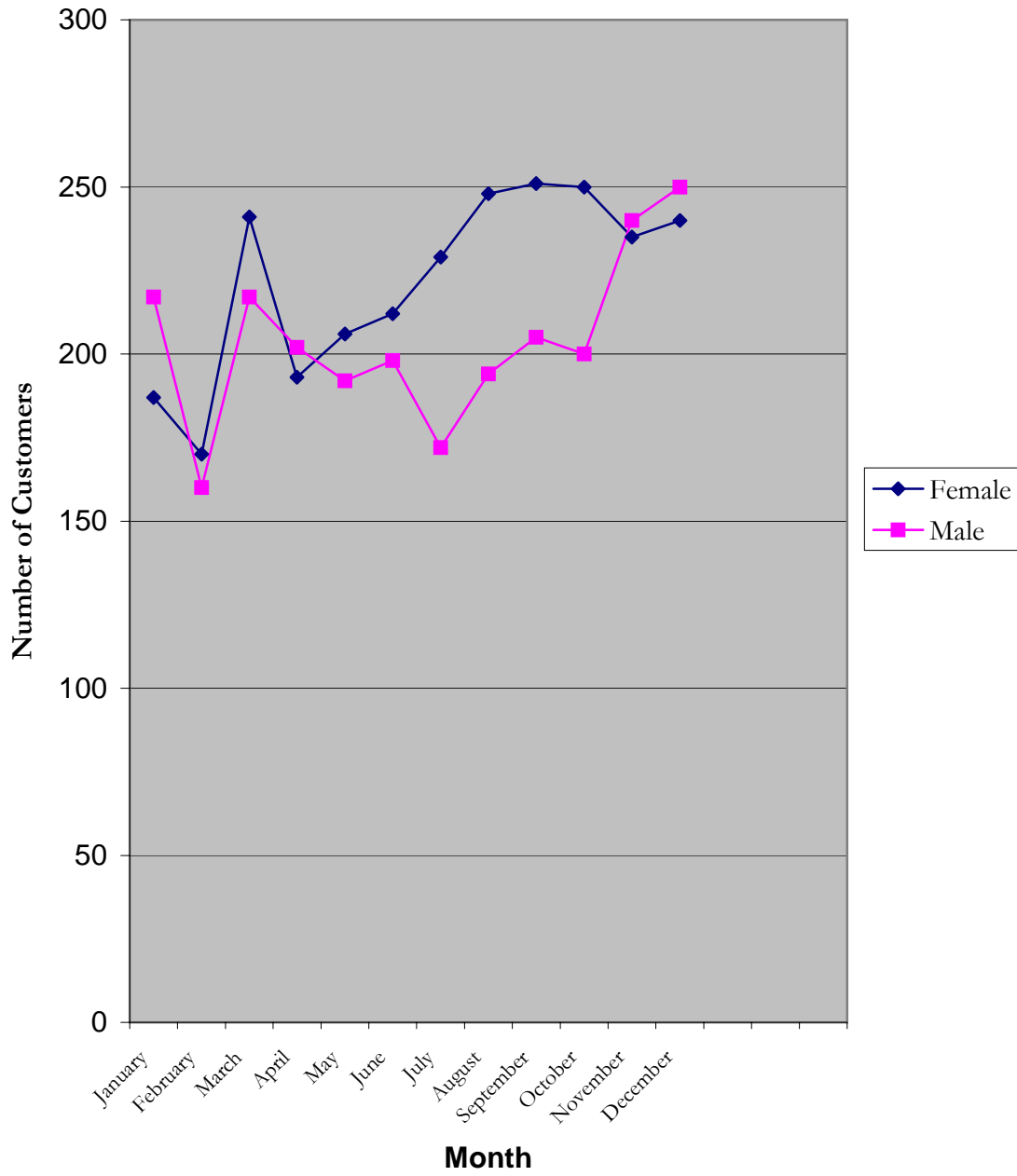
Language 2006



Income 2006



Gender 2006



ANECDOTAL COMMENTS SELSERVE CENTER 2006

“Very helpful.”--- April 2006 Clinic Evaluation Form

“I am glad for this clinic because there are some people afford legal services.” – March 2006 Clinic Evaluation Form

“This is very helpful!” ---June 2006 Clinic Evaluation Form

“Instructor was thorough in answering my questions.” --- 2006 Clinic Evaluation Form

“Very friendly and helpful”---October 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Great program for citizens of Mecklenburg County.” -- October 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“SelfServe Center provides guidance on how to handle many cases.” October 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Good customer service.” ---November 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Great option.” – November 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Good people that help others.” --- November 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Glad to have this resource.” November 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Great Center!” --- November 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Thank for being here.” --- December 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“This is a great place.” --- December 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“I think the SelfServe Center does a great job. It should promote/communicate out to the general public more.” --- December 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Always have good experience in the SelfServe Center.” --- December 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Upfront great help!” --- December 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form

“Clean and efficient.” --- August 2006 Disclosure/Intake Forms

“They have excellent service.” --- August 2006 Disclosure/Intake Form