

2020

COVID-19 Impact Study



ILLINOIS STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION



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Purpose

The findings cited in this report are based on a survey sponsored by the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA).

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ISBA members and their law practices. Specifically, the survey documented members' responses to the current situation, as well as collected information on the impact to revenue generation, operating expenses, and process changes brought on by necessity due to COVID.





Method

- ◆ The survey sample of 20,519 included all emailable ISBA members, excluding law students, at the time of sample selection.
- ◆ The survey was designed jointly by the ISBA and Readex.
- ◆ The online survey fielded from October 8 to 22, 2020. Three email invitations were sent in that timeframe.
- ◆ Respondents were offered entry into a drawing for a chance to receive one of two \$100 Visa gift cards as an incentive to participate.
- ◆ The survey was closed with 2,925 responses (14% response rate).
- ◆ The margin of error based on 2,925 responses is ± 1.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for percentages based on smaller sample sizes will be larger.





About Readex Research

- ◆ Nationally recognized independent research company located in Stillwater, Minnesota.
- ◆ Roots are in survey research for the magazine publishing industry, but specialization in conducting high-quality survey research (by mail and/or the Internet) has served clients from many other markets.
- ◆ Since its founding in 1947, Readex has completed thousands of surveys for hundreds of different clients.
- ◆ The response was tabulated and this report was prepared by Readex in accordance with accepted research standards and practices.



Impact of COVID-19



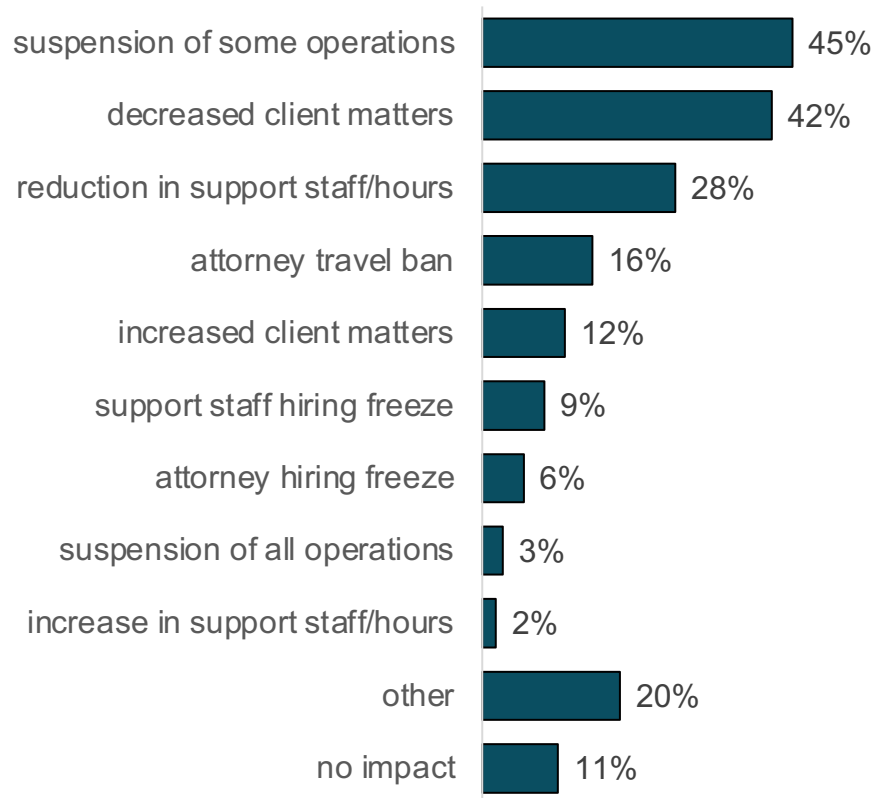
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Suspension of some operations and decreased client matters are among the top impacts respondents noted that COVID-19 had on their law firm/practice.

Impact of COVID-19 on Law Firm/Practice



In what ways, if any, has the COVID-19 outbreak impacted your law firm/practice?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



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While there are similarities between impacts seen by lawyers in private practice and other lawyers or judges, a handful of notable differences do appear.

Impact of COVID-19 on Law Firm/Practice

By Job Function	Lawyer: Private Practice	Other Lawyer or Judge
suspension of some operations	47%	50%
decreased client matters	51%	16%
reduction in support staff/hours	31%	28%
attorney travel ban	15%	29%
increased client matters	12%	15%
support staff hiring freeze	9%	13%
attorney hiring freeze	6%	10%
suspension of all operations	2%	3%
increase in support staff/hours	2%	5%
other	17%	20%
no impact	8%	12%

Boldface denotes a statistically higher percentage than the other segment

In what ways, if any, has the COVID-19 outbreak impacted your law firm/practice?

base: respondents in each segment (multiple answers)



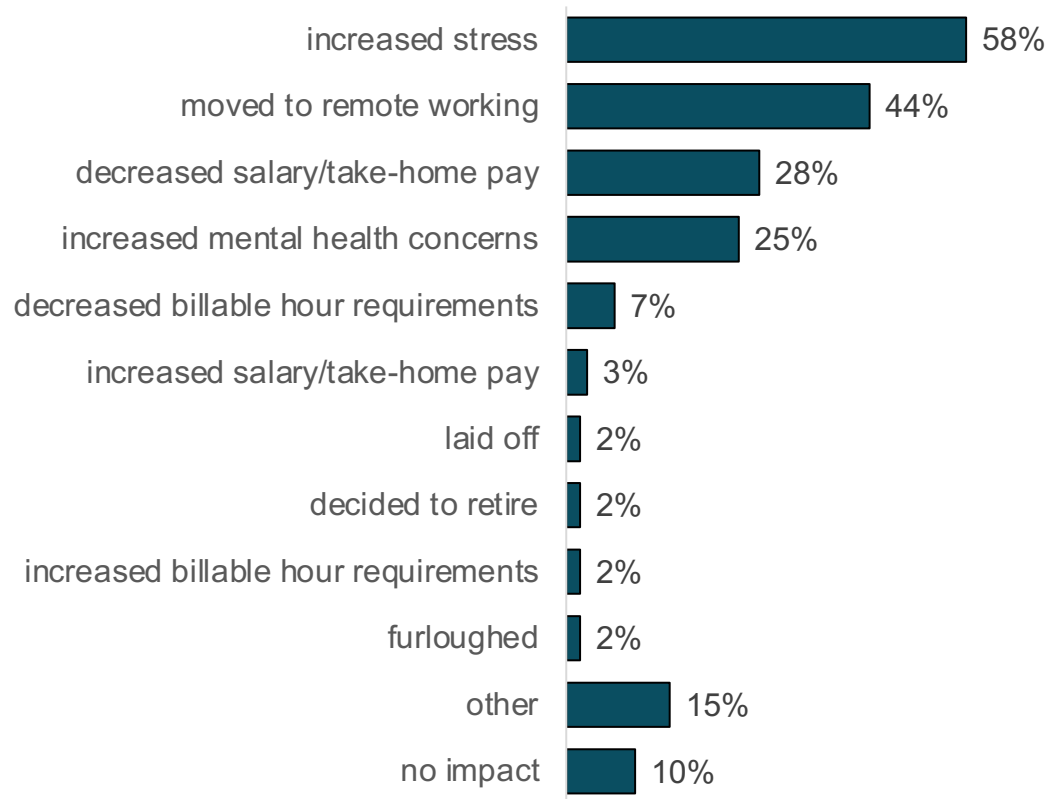
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Increased stress, a move to remote working, decreased salary/take-home pay, and increased mental health concerns were noted by at least one in four respondents as ways the COVID-19 outbreak has impacted them personally.

Impact of COVID-19 Personally



In what ways, if any, has the COVID-19 outbreak impacted you?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



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Developing new clients, financial stability, having employees unable to work, and emotional and/or mental well-being are among the top concerns of the impacts of COVID-19 in the next 12 months.

Concern about Impact of COVID-19 Personally or on Firm/Practice

CONCERNED* SUMMARY



***CONCERNED** = rating 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 5=very concerned and 1=not concerned at all

Regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on you or your firm/practice, what is your level of concern for each of the following in the next 12 months?





The level of concern for COVID-19’s impacts on their firm/practice or themselves in the next 12 months is higher, overall, for respondents in the first appellate district, versus those in other districts.

**Concern about Impact of COVID-19 Personally or on Firm/Practice
CONCERNED* SUMMARY**

By Location of Primary Office	Appellate District				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
developing new clients	50%	43%	38%	31%	36%
my financial stability	42%	35%	35%	24%	31%
employees unable to work (personally infected, family member infected, childcare issues, etc.)	32%	35%	40%	40%	35%
my emotional and/or mental well-being	38%	34%	31%	27%	29%
keeping your clients satisfied	30%	27%	31%	25%	29%
your firm or practice staying open	22%	19%	14%	12%	12%

***CONCERNED** = rating 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 5=very concerned and 1=not concerned at all

Regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on you or your firm/practice, what is your level of concern for each of the following in the next 12 months?

base: respondents in each segment

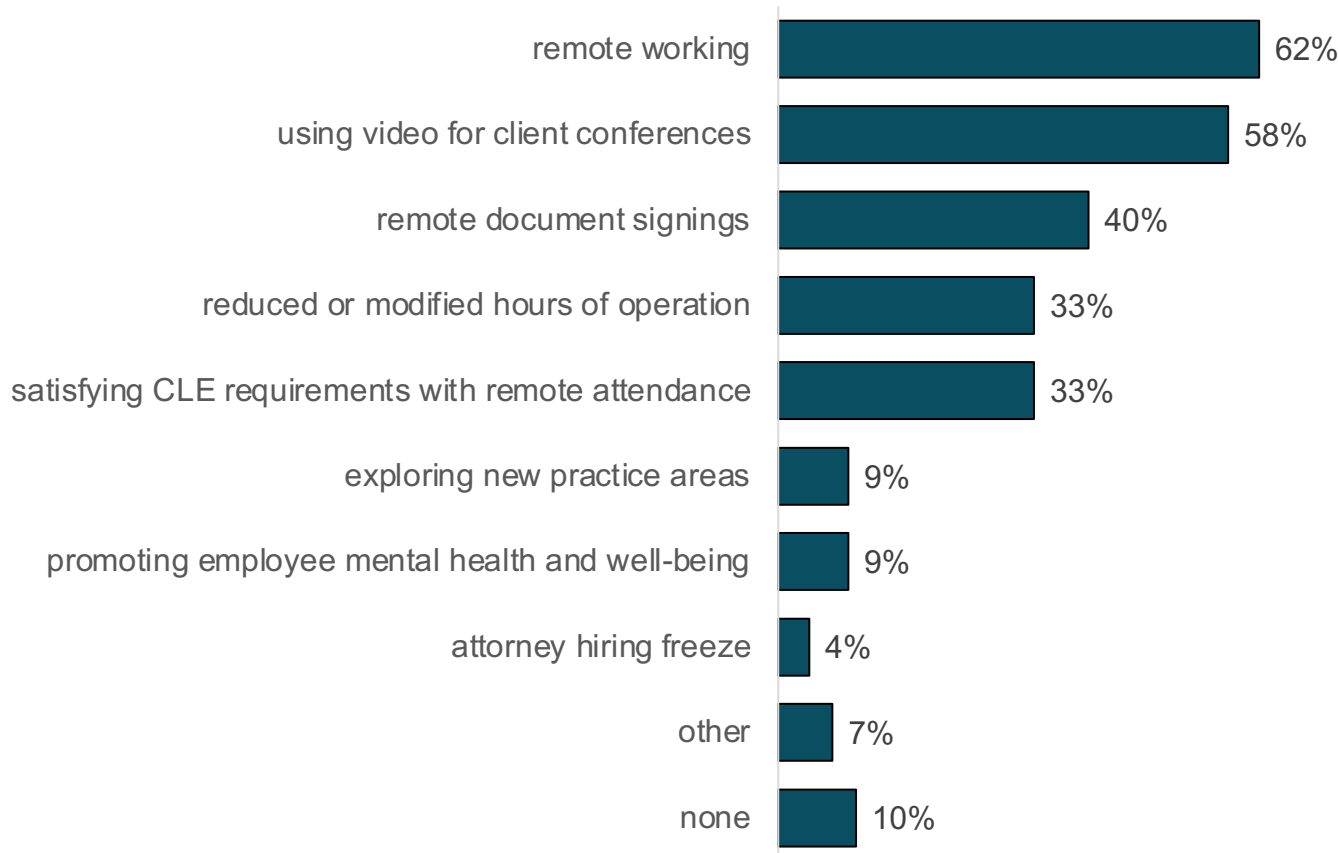


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When asked what their firm/practice implemented for the first time as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, more than half reported either remote working (62%) and/or using video chat for client conferences (58%).

Changes Implemented for First Time



Which of these has your firm/practice implemented for the first time as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



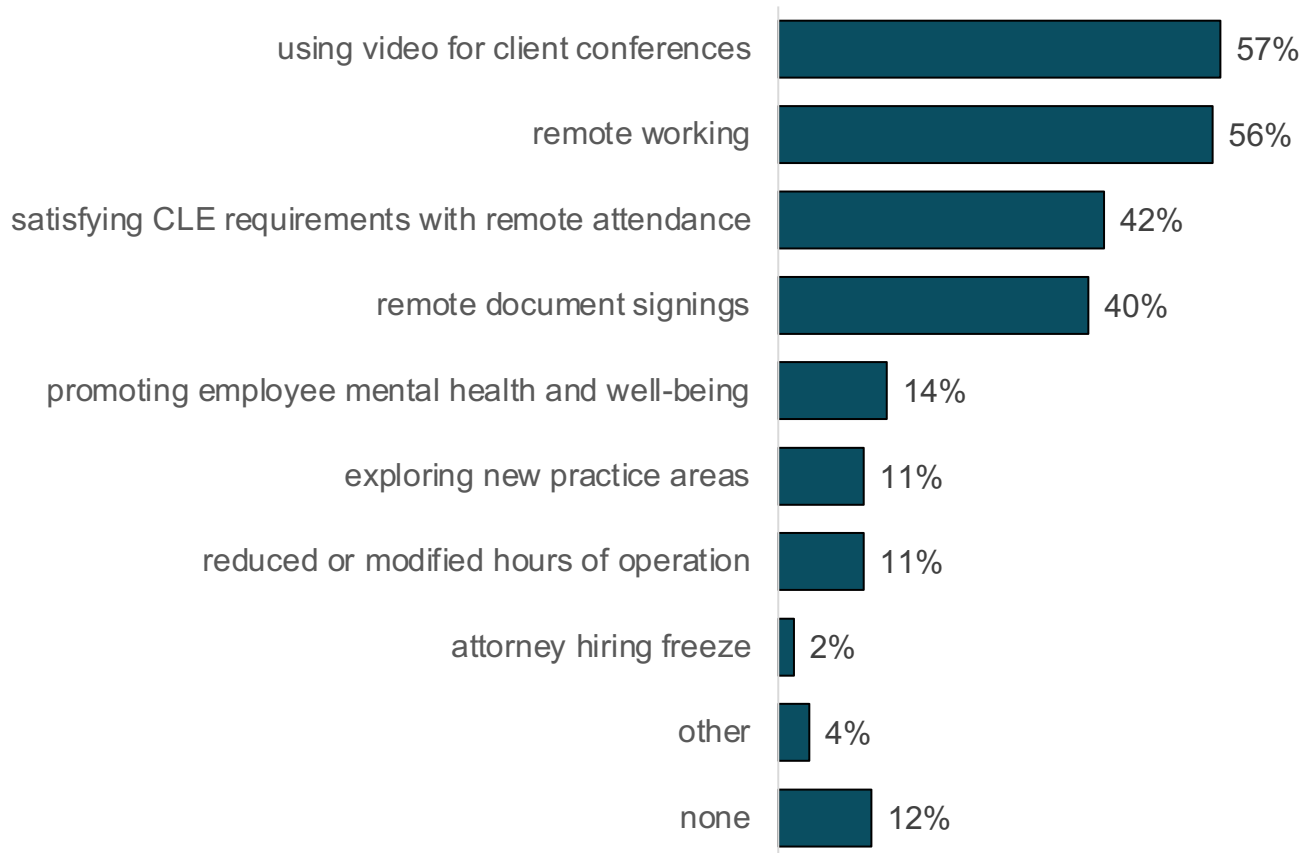
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Once things are “back to normal” more than half of respondents anticipate their firm/practice will continue to use video for client conferences (57%) and/or remote working (56%).

Changes Anticipated to Continue When “Back to Normal”



Once things are "back to normal," which of the following, if any, do you anticipate continuing for your firm/practice?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



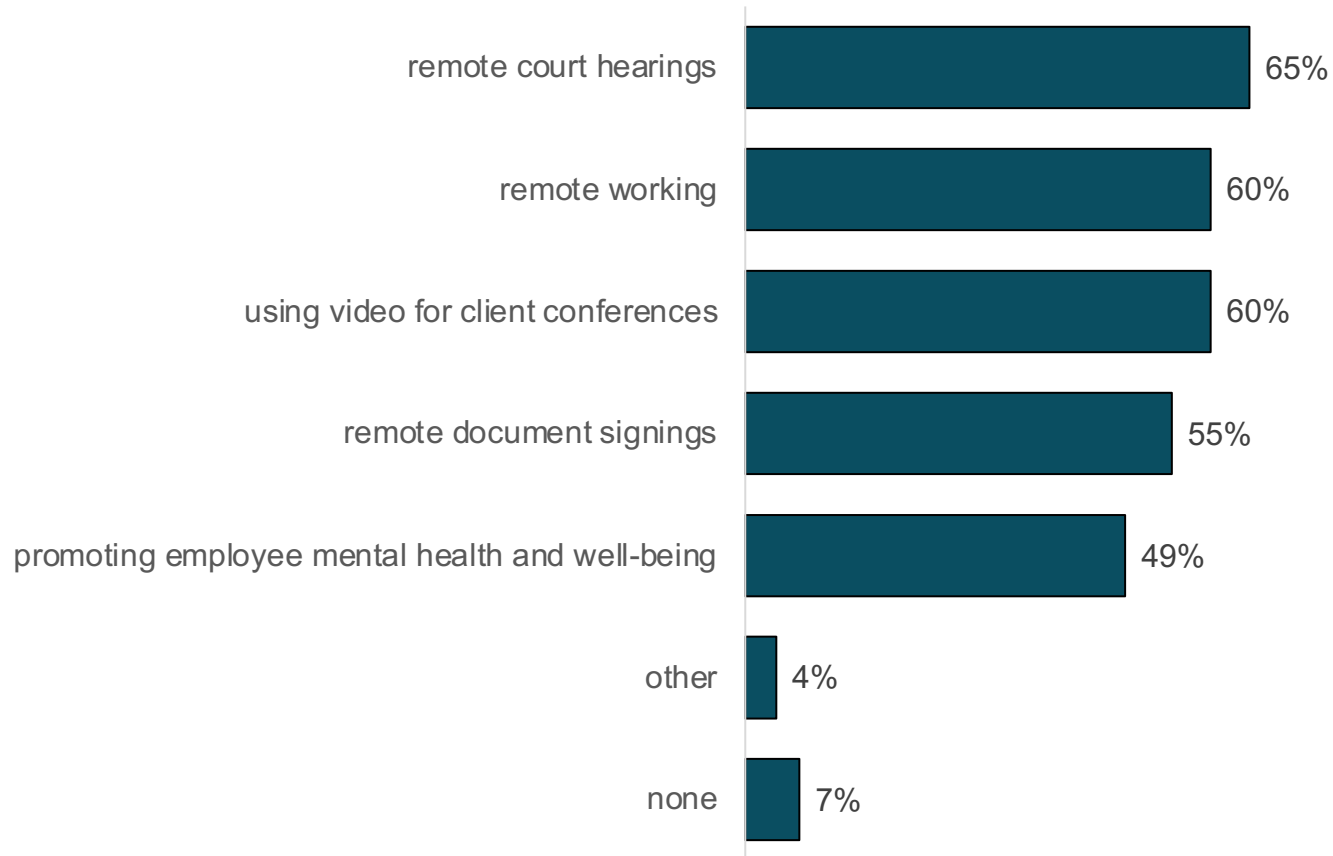
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Respondents hope to see a number of industry changes for the legal profession as a whole when things are “back to normal,” led by remote court hearings.

Industry Changes Hope to Continue When “Back to Normal”



Once things are "back to normal," which of the following, if any, would you hope to see continue for the legal profession as a whole?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



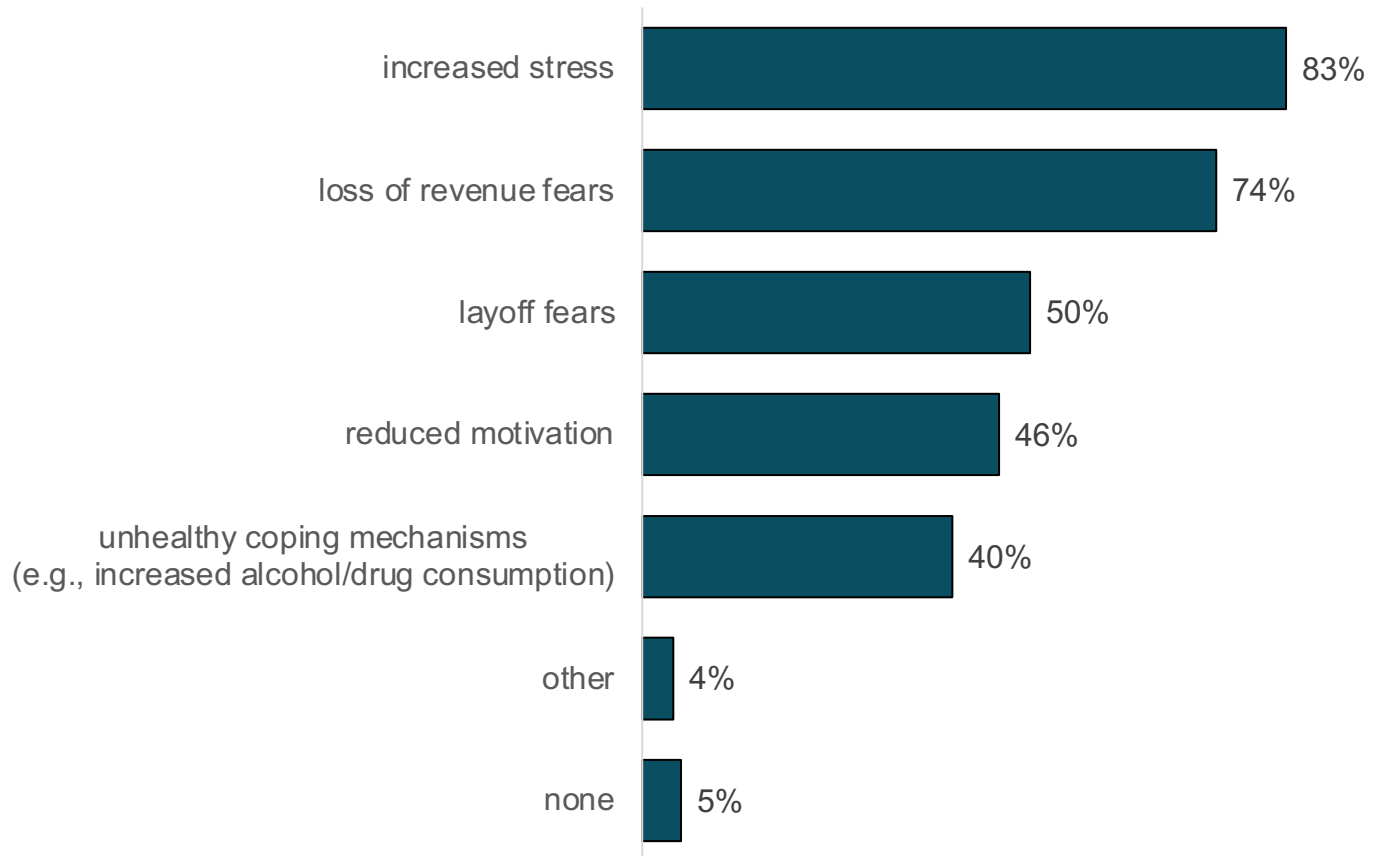
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When asked their thoughts on what their employees or fellow attorneys are experiencing as a result of COVID-19, most imagine increased stress (83%) and/or loss of revenue fears (74%).

Experiences of Fellow Employees/Attorneys



Which of the following, if any, do you think your employees or fellow attorneys are experiencing as a result of COVID-19?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



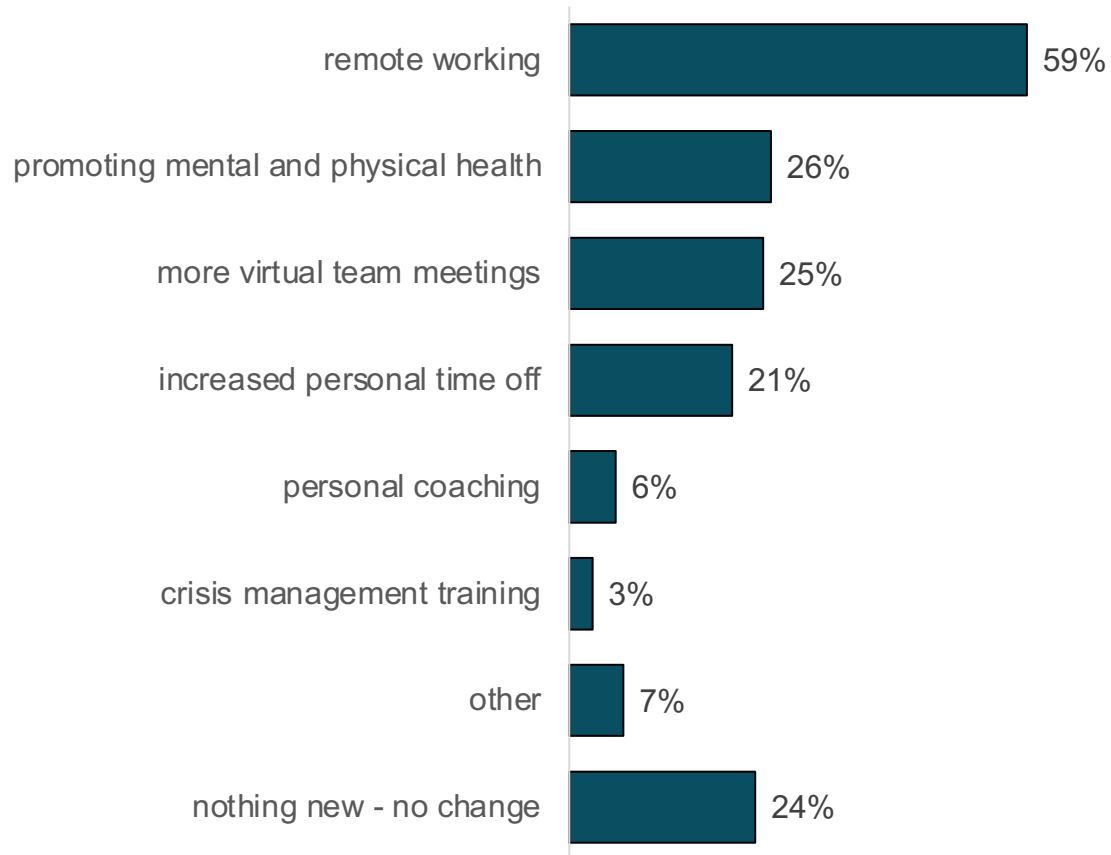
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Remote working (59%) is the leading change implemented by leadership to support staff during the COVID-19 pandemic

Changes Implemented by Leadership to Support Staff



What are you or your firm's leaders implementing to support staff during the COVID-19 pandemic?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



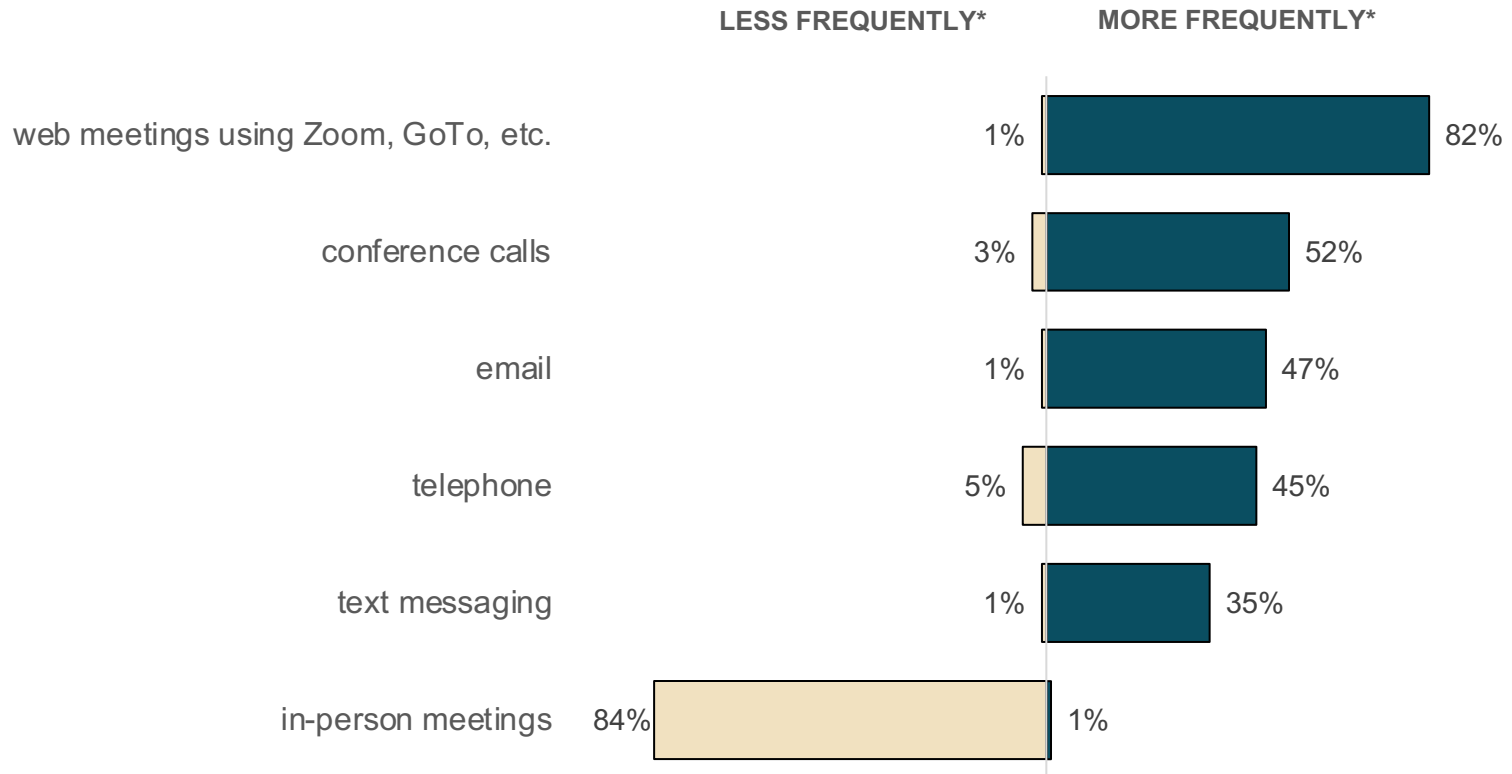
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Respondents or their firm's attorneys are using various forms of remote communication more frequently, led by web meetings like Zoom, GoTo, etc.

Change in Frequency of Communication Methods Used With Clients



How has COVID-19 affected the frequency with which you or your firm's attorneys use each of the following methods to interact with clients and prospective clients?

base: all 2,925 respondents



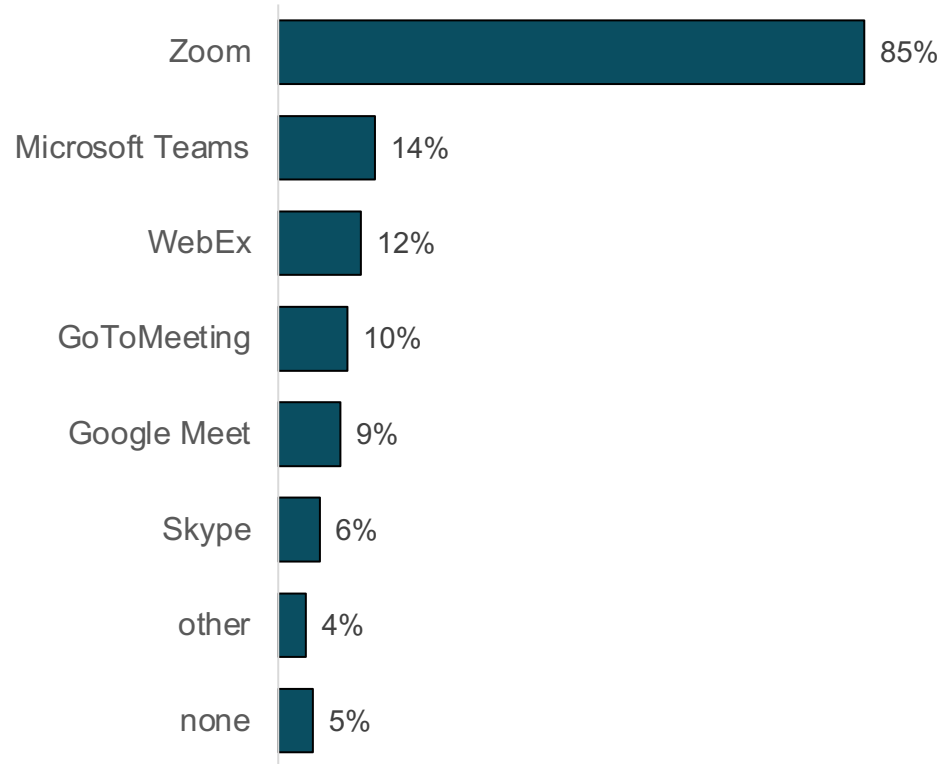
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Among the online platforms listed, Zoom is preferred by most respondents (85%).

Online Platforms Preferred



What online platform(s) do you prefer for meetings, if any?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



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Job Function and Firm Type

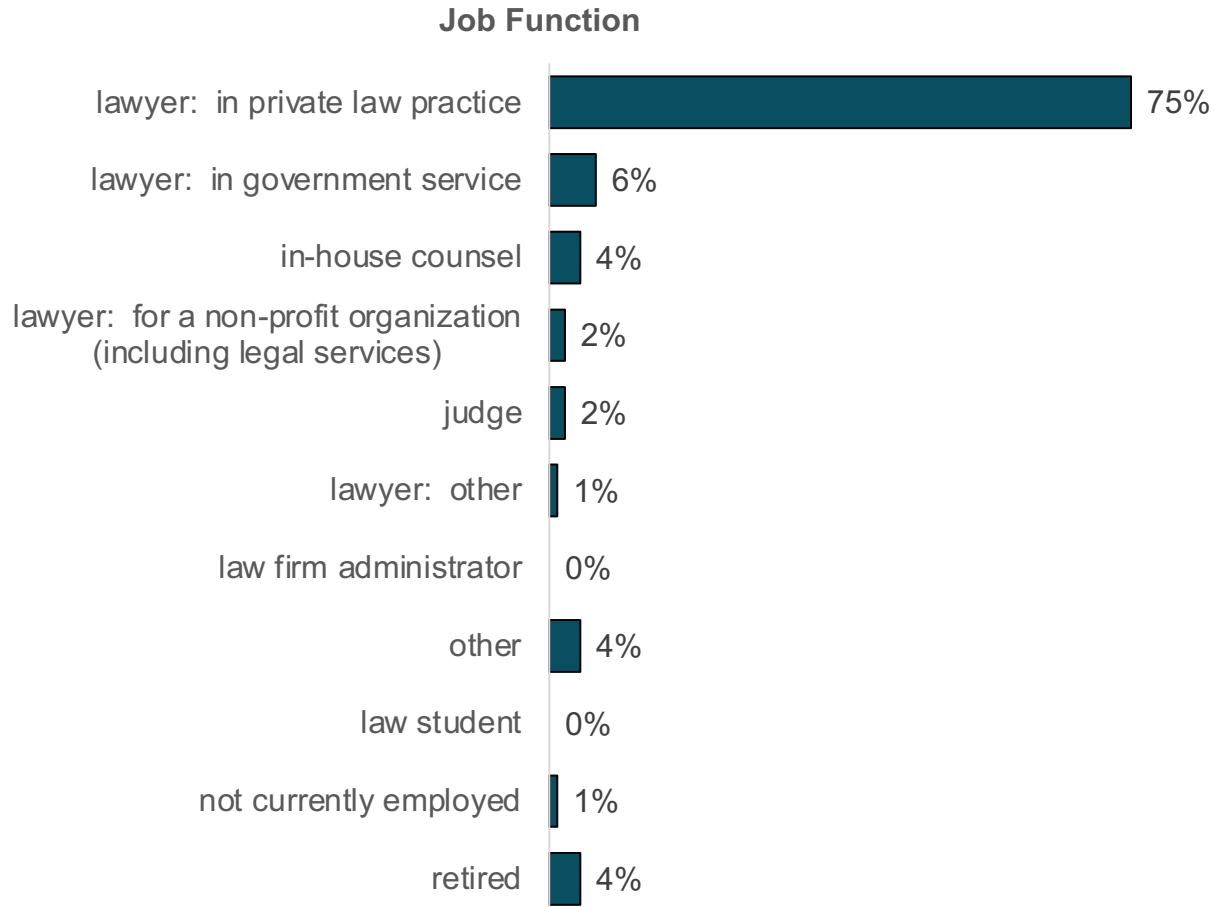


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Three in four respondents (75%) self-describe as a lawyer in private law practice.



What best describes the nature of your current job function?





Respondents report currently practicing in various areas of law, led by real estate (34%), trust, estate planning, probate (30%), and general practice (24%).

Areas of Law Practicing

Area of Law	% practicing	Area of Law	% practicing
real estate	34%	taxation	5%
trust, estate planning, probate	30%	labor	5%
general practice	24%	intellectual property	4%
family	21%	healthcare	3%
personal injury	19%	immigration	2%
corporate	18%	government contracts	2%
criminal	14%	environmental	2%
commercial (including banking)	11%	government relations/lobbying	1%
employment/benefits	9%	securities	1%
workers' compensation	8%	entertainment	1%
municipal	7%	international	1%
insurance	7%	antitrust	0%
bankruptcy	7%	other	15%
administrative	6%	none – not practicing law	1%

In what areas of law are you currently practicing?

base: 2,714 respondents who describe their current job function as in-house counsel, lawyer, law firm administrator, or other (multiple answers)

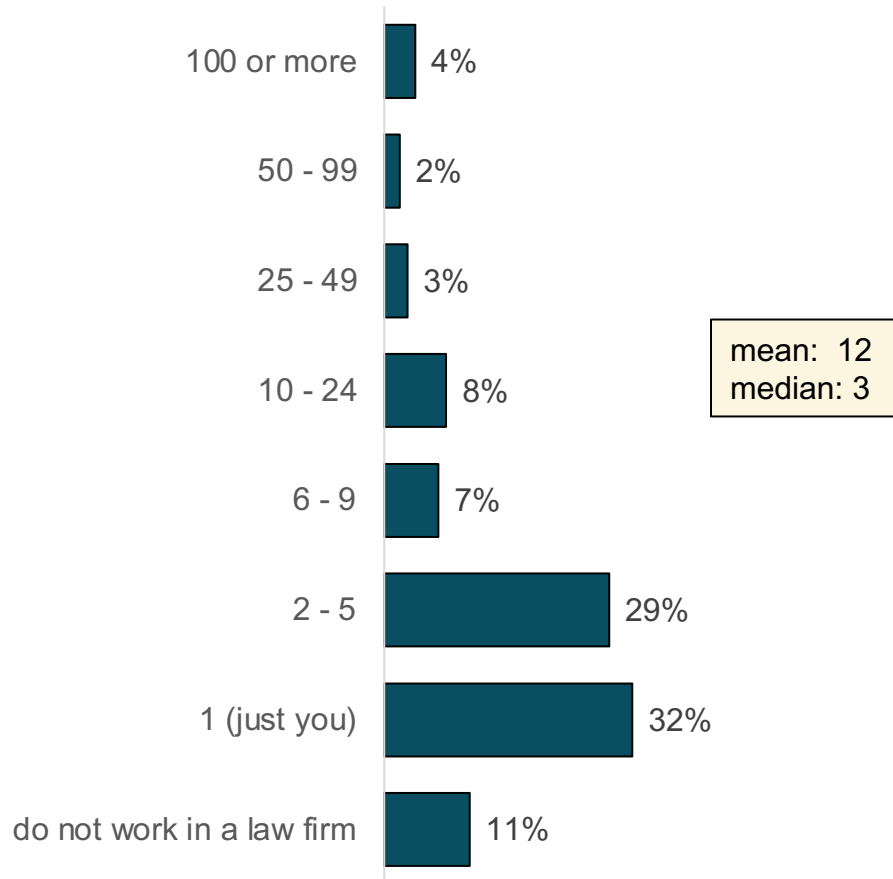


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Respondents who work in law firms do so at firms that typically employ 3 lawyers (including themselves).

Number of Lawyers at Law Firm



If you work in a law firm, how many lawyers (including yourself) are currently employed by your law firm?

base: 2,714 respondents who describe their current job function as in-house counsel, lawyer, law firm administrator, or other



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Two in five respondents (42%) report their primary office is located in the Cook Judicial Circuit.

Illinois Judicial Circuit of Primary Office Location

Judicial Circuit	%	Judicial Circuit	%
Cook	42%	13th	1%
1 st	4%	14th	2%
2 nd	2%	15th	1%
3 rd	3%	16th	3%
4 th	2%	17th	2%
5 th	2%	18th	6%
6 th	3%	19th	4%
7 th	4%	20th	3%
8 th	1%	21st	1%
9 th	1%	22nd	1%
10 th	2%	23rd	1%
11 th	2%	primary office not in Illinois	6%
12 th	2%		

In what Illinois judicial circuit is your primary office located?

base: all 2,925 respondents



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Personal Profile

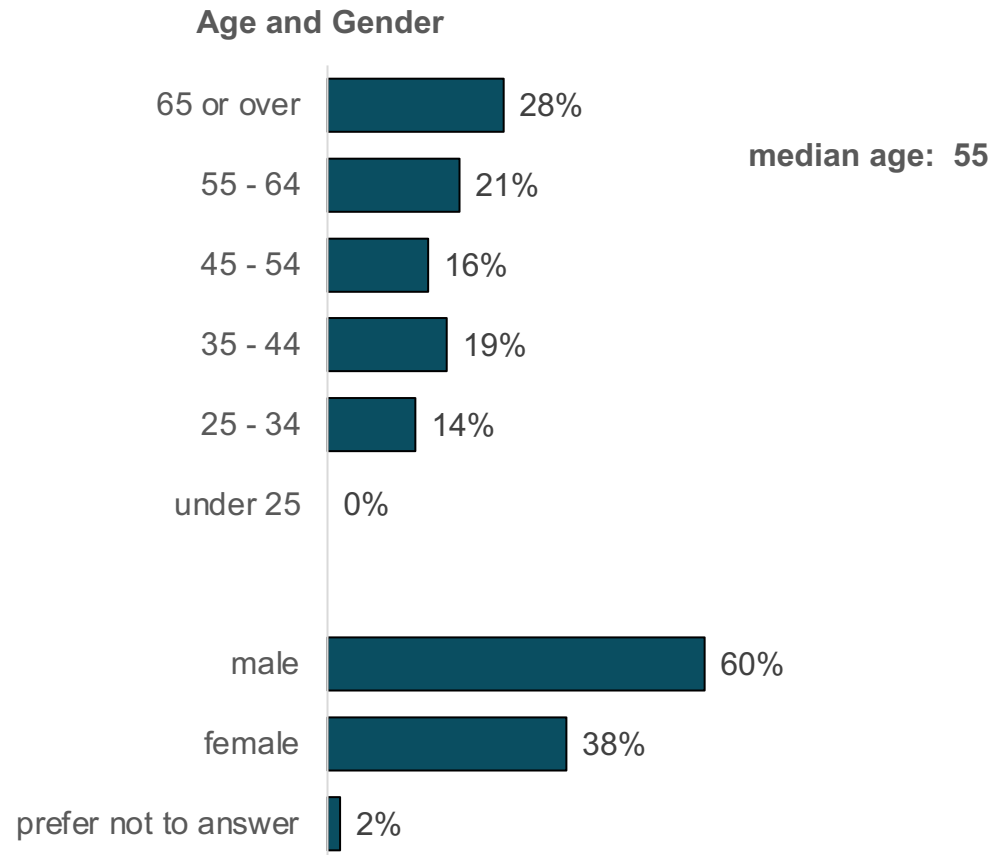


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The typical respondent is a 55-year-old male.



What is your age?
What is your gender?

base: all 2,925 respondents

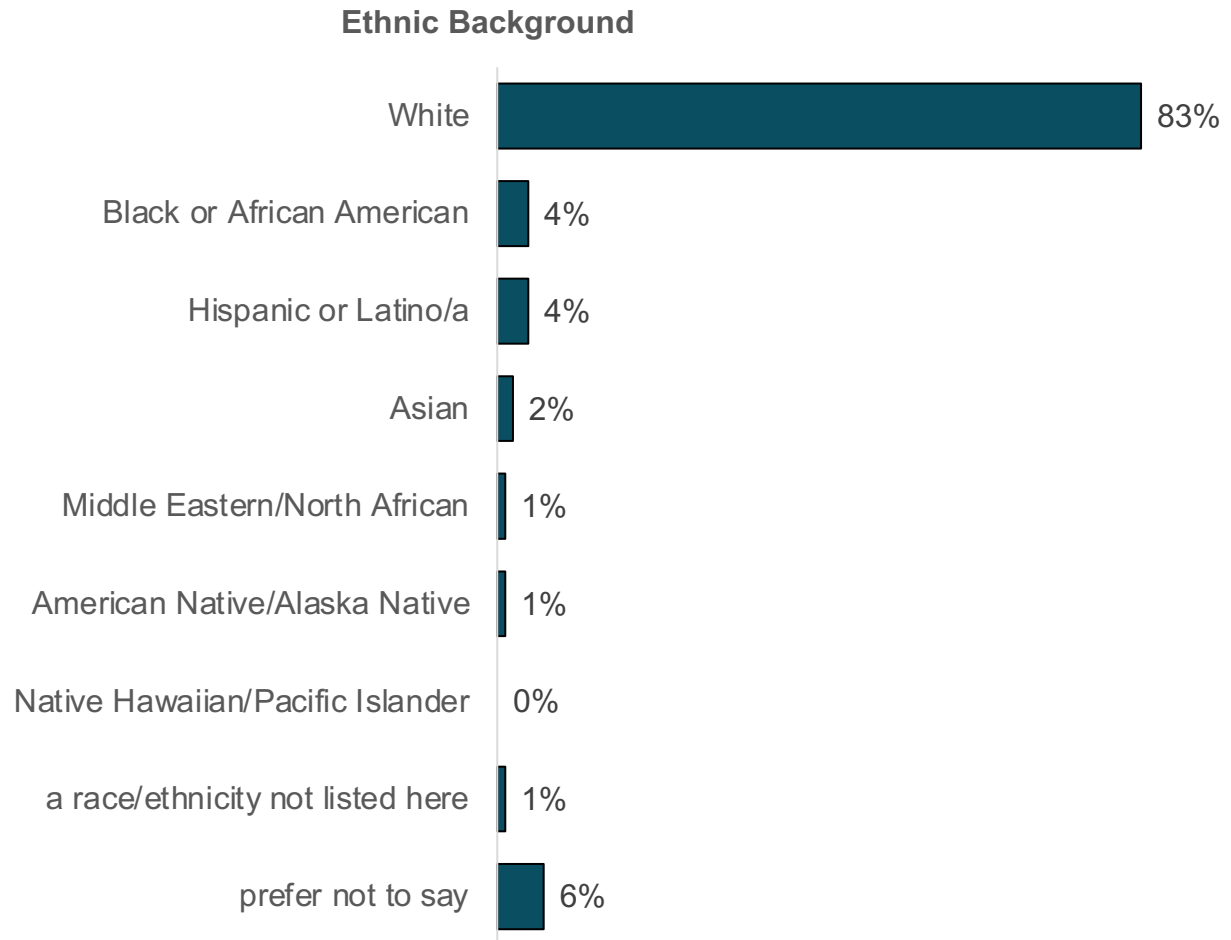


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Most respondents (83%) are White.



How would you describe your race/ethnicity?

base: all 2,925 respondents (multiple answers)



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