

# State *of the* State Courts

// 2021 POLL



# // SURVEY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS



**Chief Judge Anna  
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*District of Columbia*



**Martin Hoshino**  
*California*



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*South Carolina*



**Gayle P. Lafferty**  
*Delaware*



**Chief Justice Maite  
Oronoz Rodriguez**  
*Puerto Rico*



**Molly Justice**  
*NCSC*



**Jesse Rutledge**  
*NCSC*

# // METHODOLOGY



**What:** NCSC Nationwide Multimodal Survey (Phone + Online)

**When:** October 12-16, 2021

**Who:** Conducted by GBAO Strategies

**Polled:** 1,000 Registered Voters

**Stats:** MOE +/- 3.1% 19 times out 20

## // KEY FINDINGS



**Public trust measures are the lowest since NCSC began tracking confidence indicators**, which is consistent with virtually all other surveys taken recently. This is true across all institutions of government.



Large numbers of respondents indicate that **barriers to getting to a courthouse exist**, which connects clearly with expressed enthusiasm for accessing services remotely.



Two-thirds of respondents say they are **comfortable using video technology** in their lives. A majority indicate a preference for remote participation in certain types of cases, while in others most would still rather appear in person.



A clear majority would like to see **remote hearings continue**—but there are significant differences of opinion driven by age.

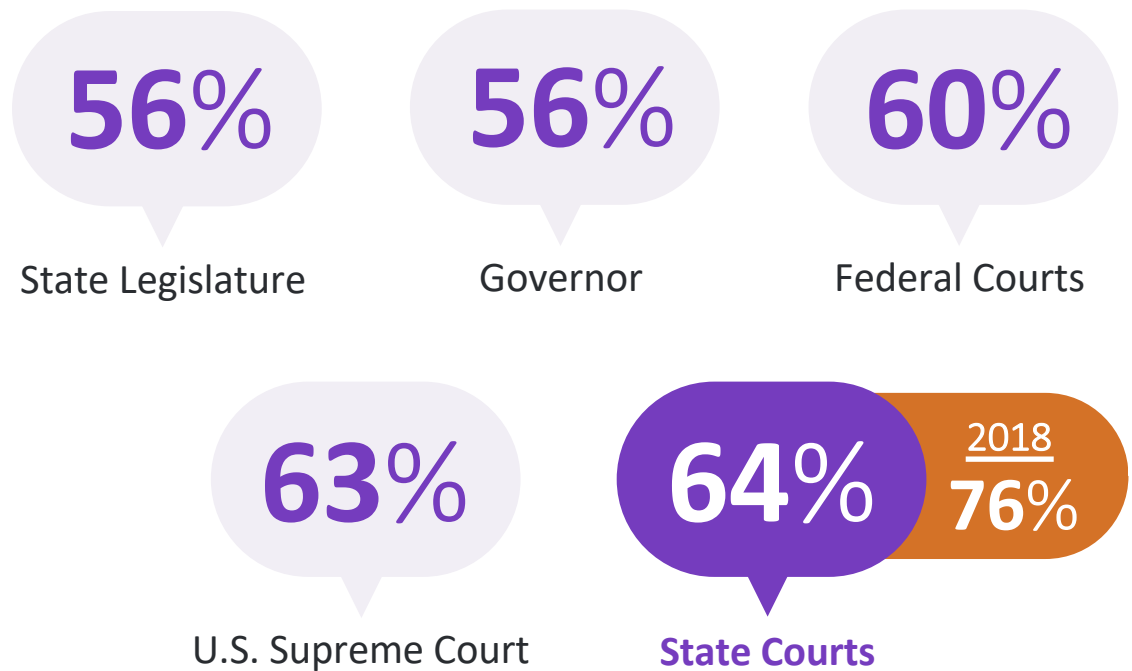


// FIGURE 1

Confidence in institutions is the lowest since we began tracking in 2012, though courts continue to fare better than other branches.

Q: “How much confidence do you have in each institution?”

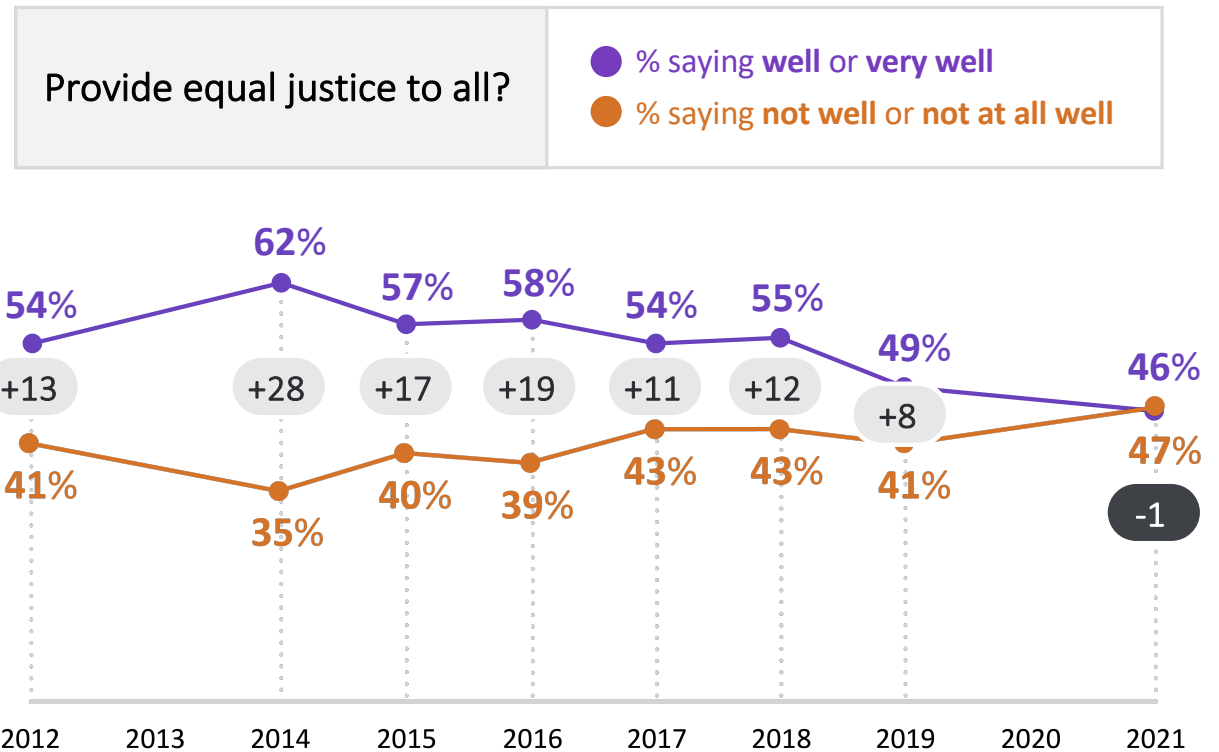
Percent saying they have either a great deal of confidence or some confidence.



// FIGURE 2

Americans are concerned about the ability of the courts to deliver on a core promise: equal justice for all.

Q: “Does the following word or phrase describe [state] courts very well, well, not very well, or not well at all?”



// **FIGURE 3**

Nearly 2 out of 3 say they have had at least one direct contact or experience with the courts.

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**Q:** “(Tell us) about your experience, contact or involvement with the court system.”



PARKING / TRAFFIC TICKET



PARTY TO A FAMILY CASE



SERVED ON A JURY



PARTY TO A LAWSUIT



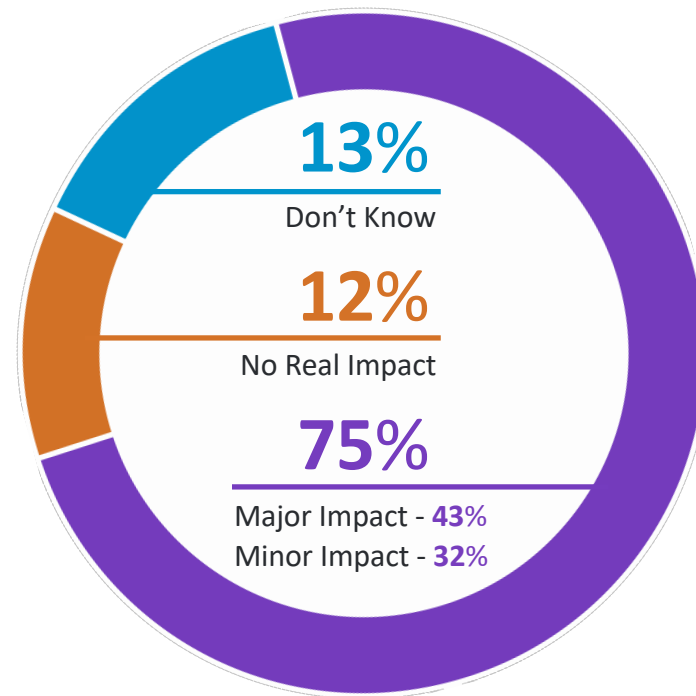
INVOLVED IN A CRIMINAL CASE

Overall, **63%** of Americans report some form of direct contact with the court system.

// FIGURE 4

There is widespread recognition that the pandemic has impacted the ability of courts to perform key functions.

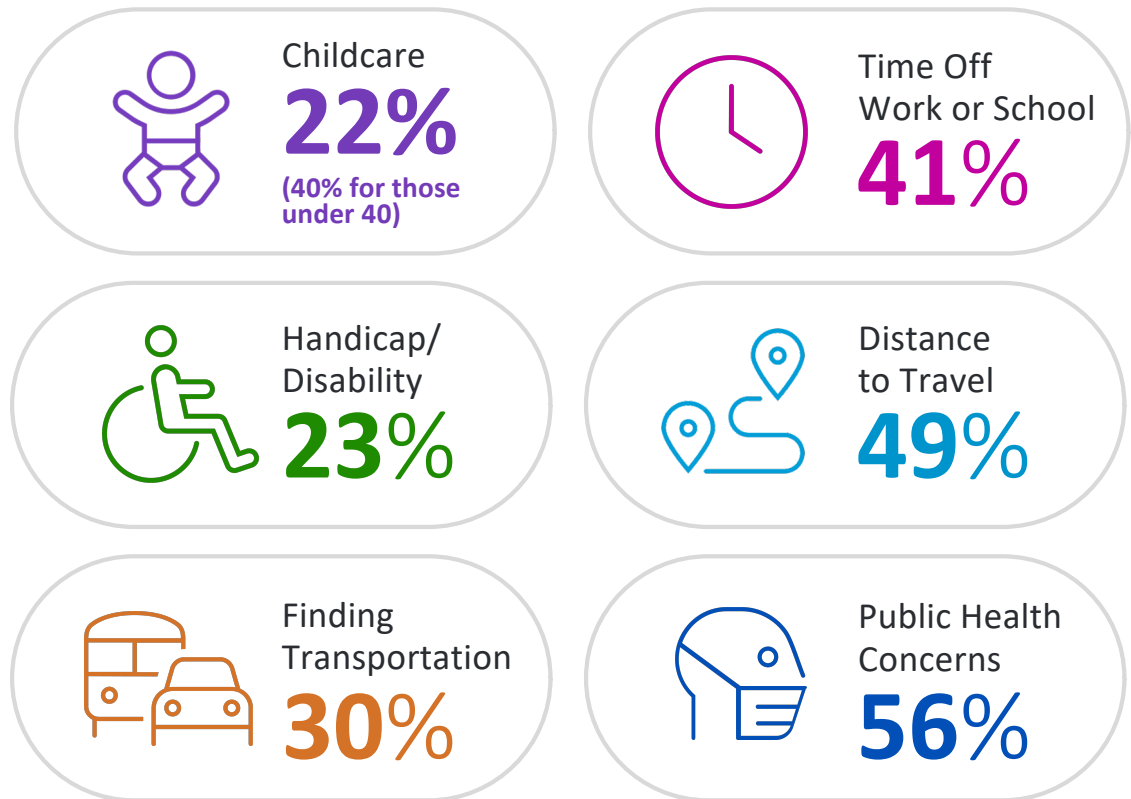
**Q:** “To the best of your knowledge, has the coronavirus pandemic [impacted] the ability of [STATE] courts to deliver justice and meet the needs of [STATE] residents in a fair and timely manner?”



// FIGURE 5

For many, going to the courthouse itself isn't always easy.

Q: "Please tell me if this would be a problem for you personally."

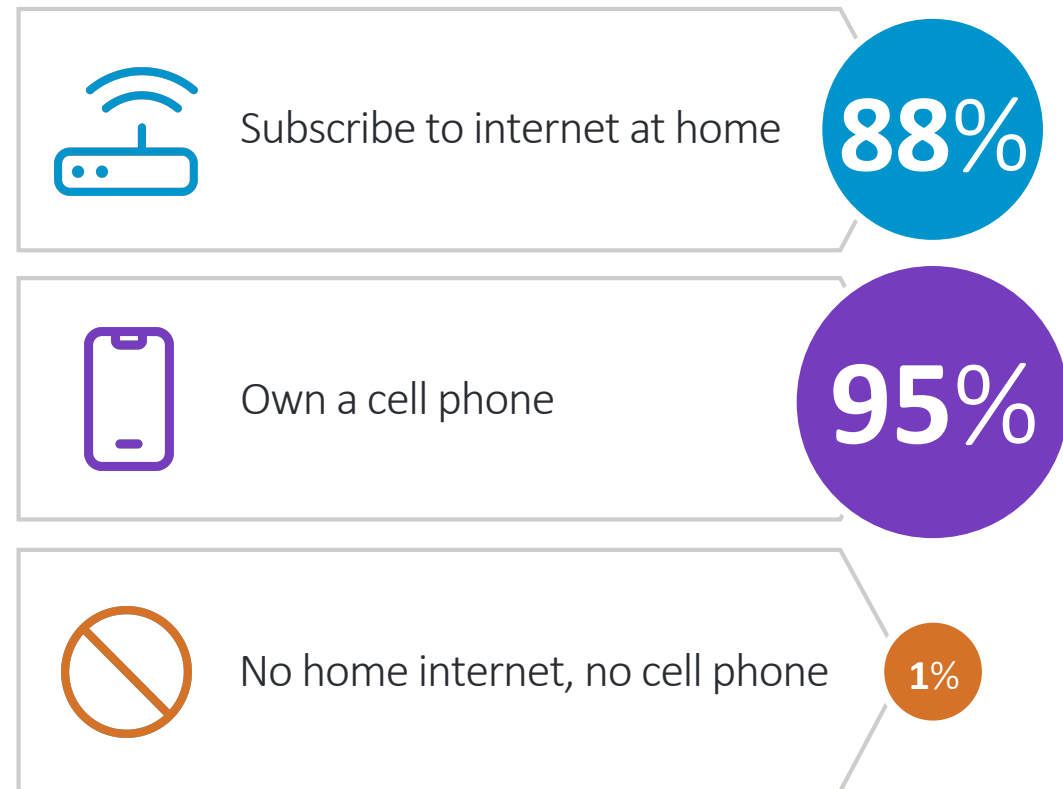




// FIGURE 6

Most Americans have the technology tools for remote participation.

**Q:** “What internet service do you subscribe to at home? Do you have a cell phone?”

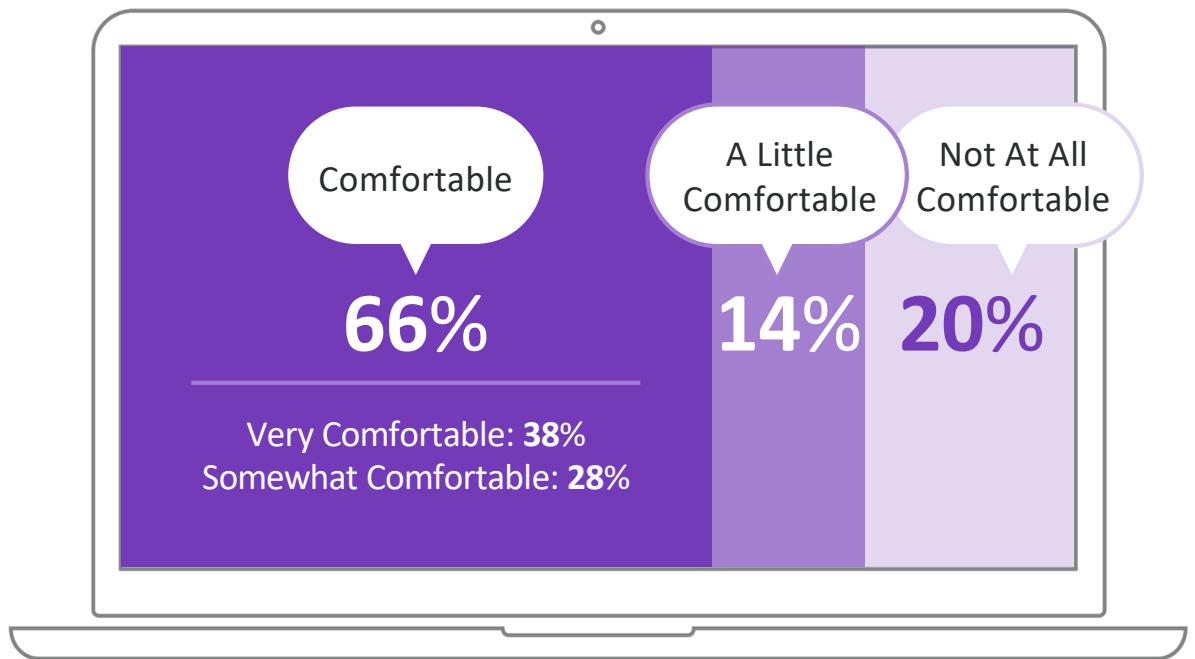




// FIGURE 7

Two-thirds of respondents say they are comfortable using video technology.

**Q:** “How comfortable do you feel using video conferencing services for meetings or appointments typically held in person?”

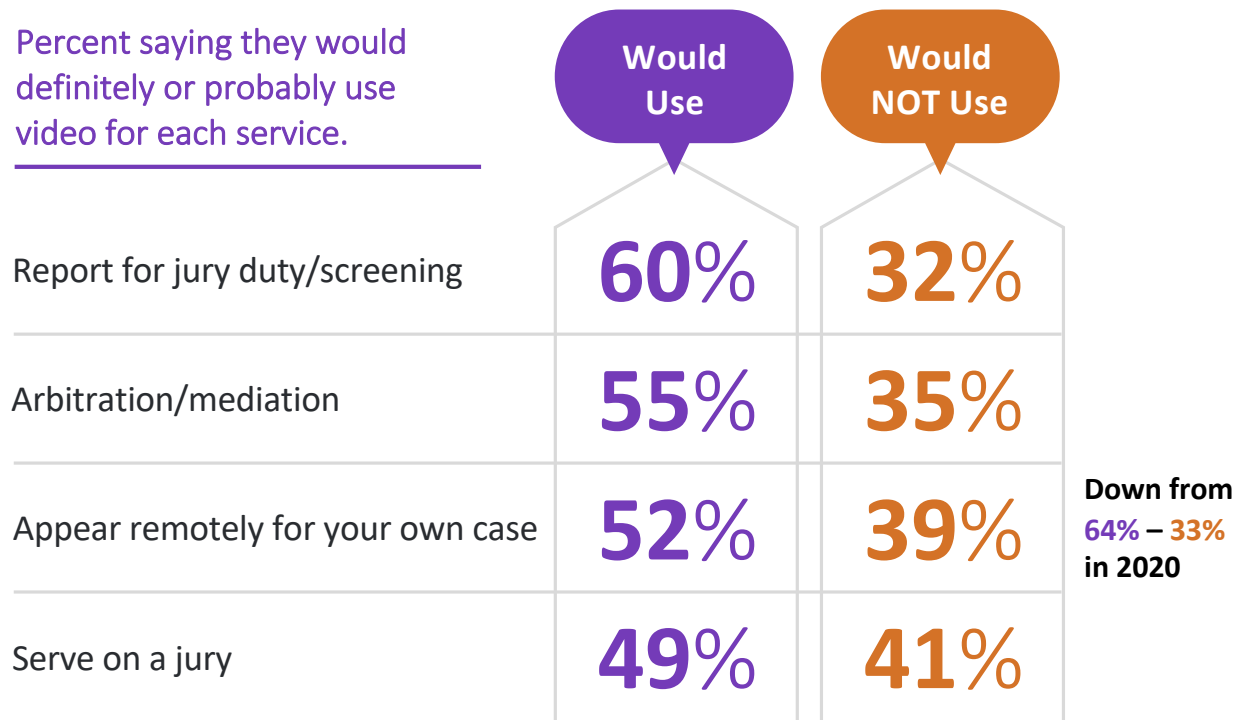


// FIGURE 8

Remote *voir dire* tops the list of video options.

**Q:** “If you had business with the courts and this service was available online via videoconference...would you use it?”

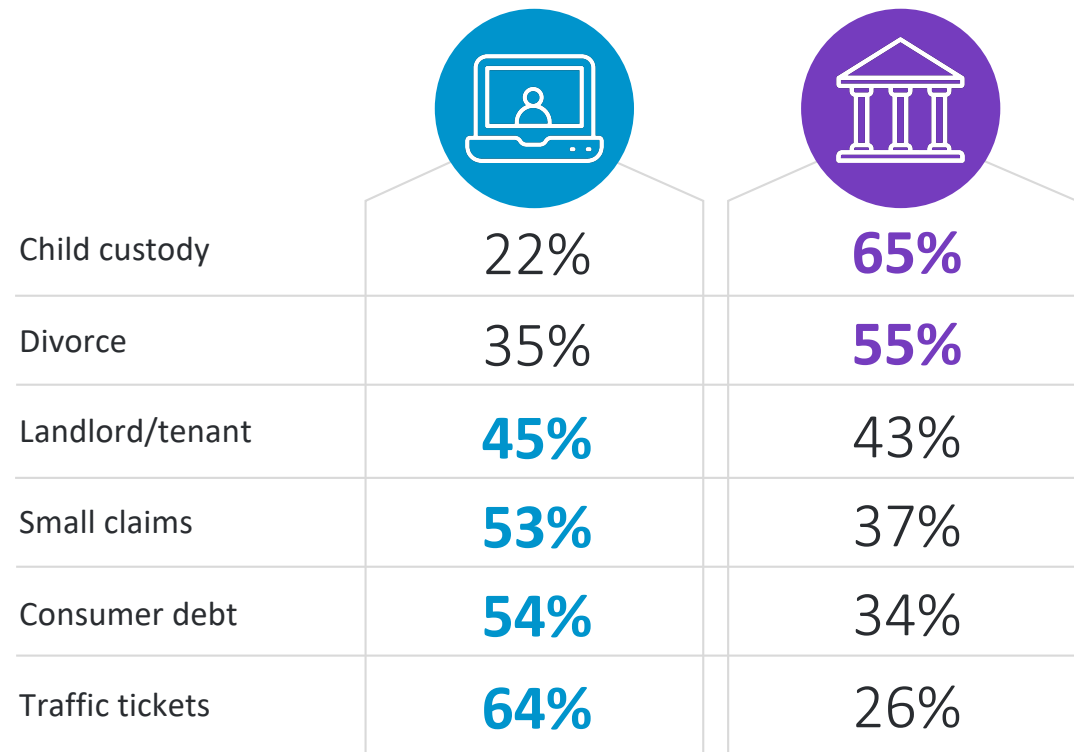
Percent saying they would definitely or probably use video for each service.



// FIGURE 9

Voters are more open to remote participation in certain case types than others.

**Q:** “If you were part of a court proceeding of this type...would you prefer to handle this type of case remotely by video or phone appearance or by appearing in-person at the courthouse?”



// FIGURE 10

A majority would like to see remote hearings continue.

Q: “Which statement comes closest to your own view?”

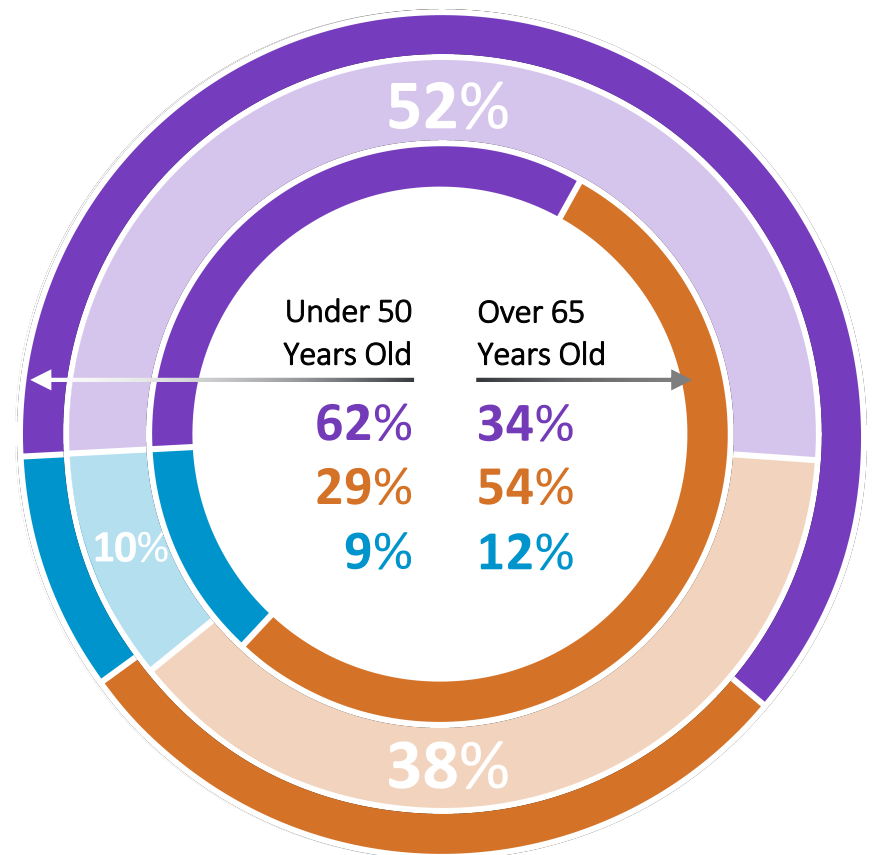
**Statement 1**

Once the pandemic is over, courts should **continue to hold hearings by video** because it allows them to hear more cases and resolve cases more quickly, and it makes it easier for people to participate without having to travel to a courthouse, take time off work, or find childcare.

**Statement 2**

Courts should **stop holding hearings by video as soon as possible** because technology problems can disrupt the whole system, not everyone can use this technology, and people are less likely to take video hearings as seriously as if they had to appear in a courtroom in person.

**Don't Know**







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CELEBRATING  
**50** Years  
1971-2021

*For more information, visit:*  
**[ncsc.org/survey](https://ncsc.org/survey)**