



Hearing Participant Survey Findings August 2023

This document is written and published by the
Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Executive Summary	4
oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative	5
Hearing Participant Survey	5
Responses.....	7
Hearing Participant Survey Findings.....	10
Access to Hearings	11
<i>Hearing participants were much more likely to experience barriers to attending their hearing if they attended in person than if they attended remotely.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Hearing participants who identified as White only were less likely to experience barriers to attending hearings than hearing participants identifying as any other race.</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Women and men experienced difficulty attending their hearing at similar rates.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Effectiveness of Hearings	13
<i>Hearing participants who attended remotely reported similar or higher levels of satisfaction with client-attorney communication compared to those who attended in person.</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Most hearing participants who attended remotely were more likely to report they could understand the proceedings easily.</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Most hearing participants who attended remotely were more likely to report they could focus on the hearing without distractions.</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Hearing participants who attended remotely were more likely to be satisfied with the amount of time and seriousness their case was given during the hearing</i>	<i>17</i>
Timely Hearings	18
<i>Hearing participants who attended remotely were more satisfied with the amount of time they waited for their hearing to begin.</i>	<i>18</i>
Hearing Participant Preferences for Appearing Remotely or In Person	19
<i>Three in four hearing participants would prefer to attend a future hearing remotely.</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>The best predictor of preference for how to attend a future hearing was how someone attended their most recent hearing.</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Hearing participants were most likely to prefer attending remotely because of the ease and convenience.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Hearing participants were most likely to prefer attending in person because they preferred face-to-face communication or they found it easier for everyone to understand the proceedings in person.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Attorneys representing clients and litigants were most likely to prefer attending a future hearing remotely.</i>	<i>21</i>

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

<i>Demographic characteristics had some small effects on the preference to appear remotely or in-person for a future hearing.</i>	22
<i>Twin Cities metro county hearing participants were more likely to prefer attending a hearing remotely.</i>	23
Conclusion	23
Appendix A. Hearing Participant Survey - Litigant.....	24
Appendix B. Hearing Participant Survey – Attorney Representing Clients.....	26
Appendix C. Hearing Participant Survey - Other Hearing Participants.....	28
Appendix D. Hearing Participant Survey responses by case type, role, and how appeared.....	30
<i>Criminal Hearing Responses.....</i>	30
<i>Parking or Traffic Hearing Responses.....</i>	30
<i>Another Type of Hearing (Non-Criminal) Responses.....</i>	31
Appendix E. Hearing Participant Survey respondent criminal defendant self-reported race compared to Minnesota defendant self-reported race for defendants attending adult criminal hearings April 25-June 30, 2023	31
Appendix F. County of Hearing Participant Survey Respondents by how attended most recent hearing, in order of total number of survey respondents.....	32
Appendix G. Data Tables for Figures in Text.....	35
<i>Data Table for Figure 2. Percent of Litigants reporting “What made it difficult to attend your hearing?” (survey respondents could select more than one difficulty)</i>	35
<i>Data Table for Figure 5. Percent of hearing participants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “It was easy to understand what was happening during the hearing.”</i>	35
<i>Data Table for Figure 8. Percent of hearing participants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “I was able to focus on the hearing without distractions.”.....</i>	36
<i>Data Table for Figure 14. Preference for attending a future hearing remotely by role in hearing</i>	36

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Executive Summary

Between April 25 and June 30, 2023, the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative (OHI) collected 3,451 responses to an online Hearing Participant Survey.¹ Survey responses were recruited through a browser pop-up on hearing participants' computers following hearings using the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Zoom account, targeted emails to litigants who participated in a hearing the previous week, two emails to justice partners of the Minnesota Judicial Branch, the Minnesota Bar Association's email newsletter, and large posters and small bookmark size flyers with links and QR codes to access the survey available in Minnesota courthouses. The brief survey asked questions about the respondent's most recent hearing experience and relevant demographic information. These survey findings are considered reliable due to the very large number of responses and their demographic characteristics closely reflecting those of the state of Minnesota.

Key Findings

- Three out of four (76%) hearing participants² reported they would prefer to attend a future hearing remotely rather than in person.
- Hearing participants who attended their most recent hearing remotely were much more likely to prefer to attend a future hearing remotely than those who had attended in person.
- Litigants and attorneys representing clients were most likely of any type of hearing participant to prefer attending a future hearing remotely.
- Race, age, and gender of the hearing participant did not largely affect preference for appearing remotely or in person for a future hearing.
- Hearing participants who attended remotely were over one and a half times more likely to report it was not difficult to attend their hearing than those who attended in person and much less likely to report barriers to attending their hearing.
- Hearing participants who attended both remotely and in person reported high levels of satisfaction with attorney-client communication, the seriousness and time their case was given, their ability to focus and understand the proceedings, and the time they waited for their hearing to begin.
- Litigants and most other hearing participants who attended their hearing remotely reported similar or higher levels of satisfaction compared to those who attended in person.

¹ An additional 3,425 responses were collected between December 2022 and April 25, 2023. These responses are not included in the current report's analysis due to a suspected data quality issue as well as a desire to use the most recent data for decision making. However, the older responses showed similarly high levels of preference for remote hearings and high satisfaction with hearings.

² "Hearing participants" includes anyone external to the Minnesota Judicial Branch who attended a hearing in Minnesota District Courts and completed the Hearing Participant Survey about their experience. Internal Minnesota Judicial Branch staff or judicial officers were excluded from the Hearing Participant Survey and redirected out of the survey if they attempted to complete it.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

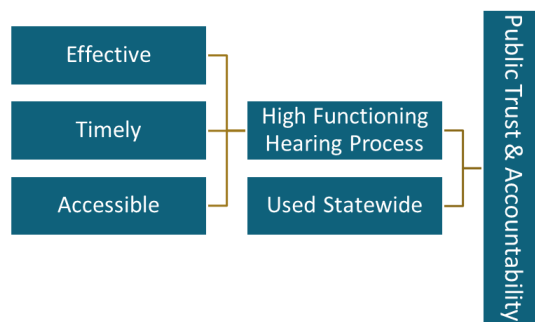
In 2022, the Minnesota Judicial Branch made a historic decision to make remote hearings a permanent part of court operations. It formed the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative (OHI) to oversee implementation of the changes to remote and in-person hearings, help district courts resolve issues, and refine, evaluate, and improve the hearing process. OHI has been granted the authority to implement, evaluate, and recommend changes to hearings in alignment with the Branch’s oneCourtMN vision.

In June 2022, the oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative Policy (Policy 525) went into effect as an initial attempt at integrating remote and in-person hearings into a consistent statewide hearings framework. In 2024, OHI will use a range of data (including results from the Hearing Participant Survey) to make more permanent recommendations to the Judicial Council regarding the use of remote, hybrid, and in-person hearings in Minnesota.

Evaluation & Data Collection Framework

The OHI Steering Committee approved its Evaluation & Data Collection Framework (Figure 1 below) in July 2022. The framework specifies OHI’s intended outcomes and evaluation questions. The primary outcomes for the initiative are stated within its vision: “to build public trust and accountability in the Minnesota Judicial Branch, Minnesota district courts will have court hearings that are effective, timely, and accessible.” OHI data collection and analysis uses many methods to answer six priority evaluation questions.

Figure 1. Evaluation & Data Collection Framework



The oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative **vision:** To build public trust and accountability in the Minnesota Judicial Branch, Minnesota district courts will have court hearings that are effective, timely, and accessible.

Hearing Participant Survey

The Hearing Participant Survey was conducted by the OHI Evaluation & Organizational Learning Team to gather information on hearing participants’ experiences with attending hearings remotely and in person in Minnesota. The survey was structured to answer key questions of interest to the OHI Steering Committee at a statewide level. The answers to these questions will guide OHI’s recommendations to Judicial Council:

- What particular hearing practices (e.g., remote, in-person, and hybrid hearings) have most contributed to intended positive outcomes for the public?

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

- To what extent have hearing practices contributed to intended positive outcomes for the public?
- What additional unintended outcomes have resulted from our hearing practices?
- Which stakeholders' needs, benefits, and interests are best served by our hearing process(es)?

It was piloted at the Ramsey County Courthouse by two members of the Evaluation & Organizational Learning Team. Based on feedback from pilot survey participants, the survey was adjusted and shortened. Please refer to Appendices A, B, and C for copies of the final survey instrument.

Data Collection

Between April 25 and June 30, 2023, OHI collected 3,451 responses to the Hearing Participant Survey.³ Of these responses, 80% (2,768 responses) were completed following the participant's most recent remote hearing appearance via Zoom and 20% (683) were completed following the participant's most recent in-person hearing appearance at the courthouse. The survey was administered using QuestionPro (an online survey administration tool). Survey responses were recruited using a combination of methods (below) that primarily targeted litigants and secondarily targeted other hearing participants:

- Multilingual⁴ browser pop-up on hearing participants' computers following hearings using the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Zoom account
- Weekly multilingual survey invitation emails to litigants who participated in a hearing the week before
- Emails to Minnesota Judicial Branch's justice partners
- Minnesota Bar Association email newsletter
- Multilingual posters and bookmark-sized flyers with links and QR codes to access the survey available in Minnesota courthouses
- Rotating news item on the mncourts.gov Minnesota Judicial Branch homepage
- Banner on the lawhelpmn.org website
- Paper surveys optional for local courthouses

The large number of responses and the distribution of responses (refer to following page) indicate OHI can be confident the findings accurately reflect the opinions of hearing participants across the state even though specific case types, roles, hearing types, and/or counties may not be significantly represented within the sample.

³ An additional 3,425 responses were collected between December 2022 and April 25, 2023. These responses are not included in the current report's analysis due to a suspected data quality issue with the older data as well as a desire to use most recent data for decision making. However, the older responses showed similarly high levels of preference for remote hearings and high satisfaction with hearings.

⁴ The Hearing Participant Survey was available in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Responses

Litigants (parties to the case, defendants, plaintiffs, and respondents) account for the largest proportion of responses to the Hearing Participant Survey (70%). In addition, most survey responses were submitted by hearing participants who attended remotely (80%) and by participants in non-criminal hearings (53%). The survey received a high number of responses from almost all roles (except media), all hearing appearance types, and all case areas. Refer to Tables 1-2 and Appendix D for a breakdown of hearing participant survey responses by role and by case area and appearance type.

Table 1. Hearing Participant Survey responses by role and case area

Which best describes your role in the hearing?	Criminal	Parking or Traffic	Another type of hearing	Not reported	Total
Litigant (party to the case, defendant, plaintiff, respondent)	589	544	1,181	115	2,429
Attorney representing clients (public or private attorney)	75	10	268	17	370
Court partner (e.g., law enforcement, probation, social services, advocacy organization or association)	60	1	148	25	234
Prosecutor or Minnesota Attorney General's Office	33	9	17	5	64
Media	4	1	5	3	13
Other	74	27	217	23	341
Total	835	592	1,836	188	3,451

Table 2. Hearing Participant Survey responses by role and how participant appeared at their hearing

Which best describes your role in the hearing?	Attended In Person (face to face, in the courtroom)	Attended Remotely (videoconference, Zoom)	Total
Litigant (party to the case, defendant, plaintiff, respondent)	541	1,888	2,429
Attorney representing clients (public or private attorney)	42	328	370
Court partner (e.g., law enforcement, probation, social services, advocacy organization or association)	45	189	234
Prosecutor or Minnesota Attorney General's Office	11	53	64
Media	4	9	13
Other	40	301	341
Total	683	2,768	3,451

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Of the total 3,451 Hearing Participant Survey responses, those who reported race and gender⁵ mirrored the population of Minnesota fairly closely. Compared to the population, Black or African Americans and women are slightly overrepresented. Asian or Asian American, Latino/Latina/Latinx or Hispanic, and White Minnesotans are slightly underrepresented. Refer to Tables 3-5 on the following page for a break down of survey responses by self-reported race, gender, and age.

However, the demographics of Minnesota District Court customers do not always align with the state of Minnesota overall. For example, based on court data from the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS), defendants (litigants) in criminal hearings who identify as Black or African American are underrepresented in the Hearing Participant Survey data. While those who identify as Black or African American make up approximately 10% of the identified survey responses about criminal hearings (and approximately 6% of the Minnesota population), they account for approximately 28% of Minnesota's Adult Criminal defendants participating in hearings during the survey window. Refer to Appendix E for a comparison of the self-reported race of criminal defendants (for mandatory appearance cases) in Minnesota and the self-reported race of defendants from the Hearing Participant Survey.

Refer to Appendix F for a table of the counties where survey respondents participated in their most recent hearing.

⁵ Of the total 3,451 survey respondents 417 (12%) did not report their race, 331 (10%) did not report their gender, and 327 (9%) did not report their age

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Table 3. Demographics of Hearing Participant Survey respondents by Race

Categorized self-reported race	Percent of responses	Number of responses	Percent of Minnesota 2021 adult population
American Indian or Alaska Native ONLY	1.9%	58	0.9%
Asian or Asian American ONLY	2.4%	74	5.0%
Black or African American ONLY	10.3%	313	6.1%
Latino/a/x or Hispanic ONLY	3.0%	92	4.7%
White ONLY	75.0%	2,275	81.9%
Two or more races	4.6%	141	1.5%
Another race not listed	2.7%	81	
Total Reported Race	100%	3,034	

Table 4. Demographics of Hearing Participant Survey respondents by Gender

Self-reported Gender	Percent of responses	Number of responses
Woman	54.5%	1,699
Man	44.1%	1,375
I prefer to use another term not listed	1.5%	46
Total Reported Gender	100%	3,120

Table 5. Demographics of Hearing Participant Survey respondents by Age

Self-reported age	Percent of responses	Number of responses
Less than 21 years	2.8%	88
21-39 years	30.8%	963
40-59 years	43.2%	1,350
60-79 years	22.1%	691
80+ years	1.0%	32
Total Reported Age	100%	3,124

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

The Hearing Participant Survey provides strong evidence that **remote hearings provide greater access to hearings by presenting fewer barriers to attendance.** The strongest evidence of greater access comes from the survey question, “What made it difficult to attend your hearing?” In response, around one quarter of litigants attending remotely reported at least one difficulty attending their hearing, while



more than half of litigants attending in person reported difficulty attending. This trend was most pronounced among litigants but persisted for all other hearing roles as well. Taking time off work, transportation, and the participant’s physical and mental health were the most frequently reported difficulties in attending a hearing. These difficulties were reported two to five times more frequently by litigants attending in-person than those attending remotely.

The Hearing Participant Survey also provides strong evidence that **most hearing participants are having positive experiences attending hearings both remotely and in person in Minnesota District Courts.**

Most remote and in-person hearing participants responded positively about client-attorney communication, their ability to focus on and understand the proceedings, the time devoted to their case, the seriousness with which their case was treated, and the time they waited for their hearing to begin. For almost all roles and case areas, hearing participants were more likely to respond positively if they attended remotely.



The Hearing Participant Survey results also indicate a clear **preference among hearing participants for attending a future hearing remotely.** Three quarters (76%) of hearing participants surveyed said they would rather attend a future hearing remotely, compared to 24% of hearing participants who would prefer to attend in person.



Across all roles, case areas, racial groups, and genders most participants would prefer to attend remotely in the future. Attorneys representing clients and litigants were most likely to prefer attending remotely in the future. Court partners, prosecutors, and participants from the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office were least likely to prefer attending remotely.

How the hearing participant had attended their most recent hearing (remotely or in person) made the biggest difference for how they would like to appear in the future. While 81% of those who attended their most recent hearing remotely would prefer to attend remotely in the future, 53% of those who attended their hearing in person would prefer to attend remotely in the future. This could indicate participants were more interested in a future remote hearing after their positive recent experience. It could also indicate many participants were able to attend their most recent hearing according to their preference. In addition, it is possible most participants attended a hearing in a remote/in-person setting aligned with their expectation of how it should be heard.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Access to Hearings

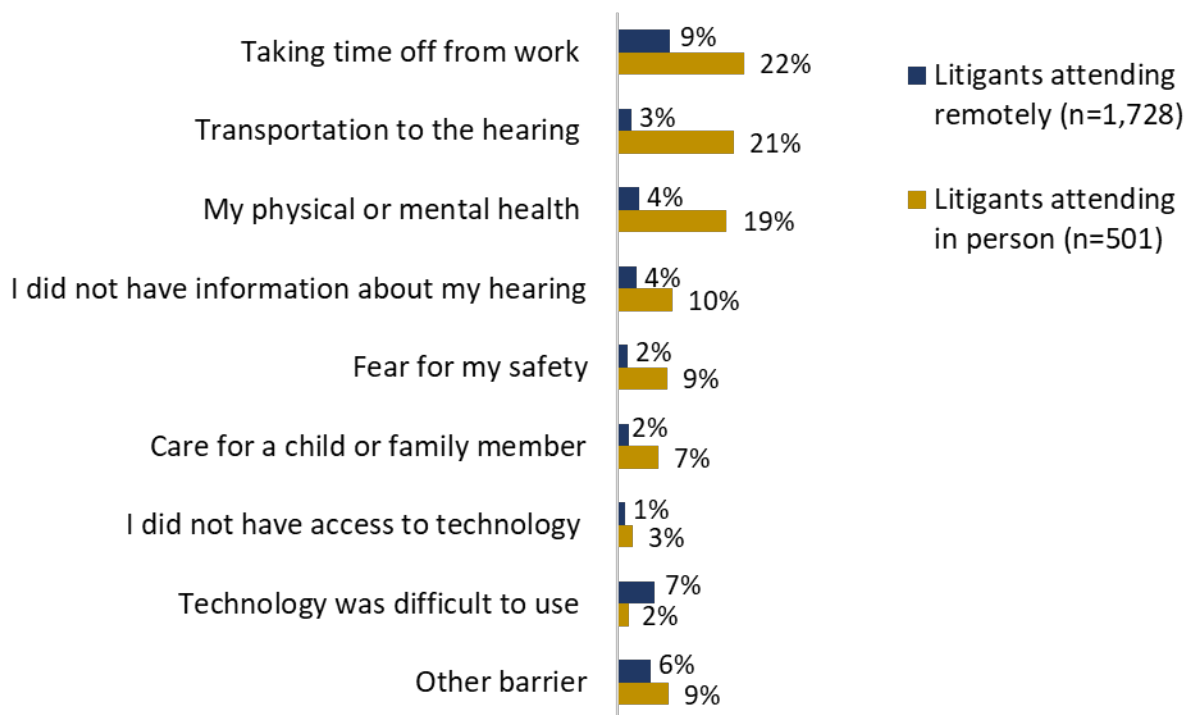
Hearing participants were much more likely to experience barriers to attending their hearing if they attended in person than if they attended remotely.

While a large majority (80%) of remote hearing participants reported “it was not difficult to attend my hearing,” only half (50%) of in-person hearing participants said they experienced no difficulties attending. For litigants, 77% who attended remotely said it was not difficult to attend their hearing compared to 48% of those who attended in person.

In addition, all barriers to attending a hearing except difficulty using technology were experienced more frequently by in-person hearing participants. Taking time off from work, transportation to a hearing, and physical or mental health were the most frequently experienced barriers to attending a hearing in person. Refer to Figure 2 for a breakdown of what percentage of litigants experienced each barrier.

Figure 2. Percent of Litigants reporting “What made it difficult to attend your hearing?” (survey respondents could select more than one difficulty)

Data table reference for Figure 2 can be found in [Appendix G](#)



“Other” barriers described by hearing participants included issues with attorneys, justice issues, lack of or wrong information about their hearing, technical issues with Zoom or with hearing people speaking during a remote proceeding, and difficulty traveling to attend the hearing.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Hearing participants who identified as White only were less likely to experience barriers to attending hearings than hearing participants identifying as any other race.

While 76% of White hearing participants reported it was not difficult to attend their hearing, 68% of hearing participants reporting another race reported it was not difficult to attend. Across all racial groups, hearing participants were much less likely to experience a difficulty attending their hearing if they attended remotely. Litigants who identified as White only or another race were equally likely to experience difficulties attending a hearing in person. Litigants were more likely to experience barriers to attending hearings than attorneys or court partners, especially if attending in person.

Table 6. Percent of hearing participants reporting “It was not difficult to attend my hearing” by self-reported race, role in hearing, and how they appeared for hearing

Self-reported role	Self-reported race	% of appeared remotely	% of appeared in person
Litigant	White only	78%	49%
Litigant	Another Race	73%	49%
Attorney or Court Partner	White only	92%	73%
Attorney or Court Partner	Another Race	84%	56%
Other Participant	White only	83%	42%
Other Participant	Another Race	66%	50% (n=10)

Women and men experienced difficulty attending their hearing at similar rates.

The same proportion of all men and women hearing participants (74%) and the same proportion of men and women litigants (71%) reported it was not difficult to attend their hearing. Both men and women were much more likely to report it was not difficult to attend their hearing if they appeared remotely. Men were slightly more likely than women to report a barrier to attending in person and slightly less likely to report a barrier to attending remotely.

Those who preferred to identify with a term other than man or woman (n=46) were more likely to experience a difficulty attending their hearing remotely or in person than those who identified as men or women. The number of in-person survey respondents in this category is very small (n=8), so a comparison between in-person and remote participants is not reported here.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

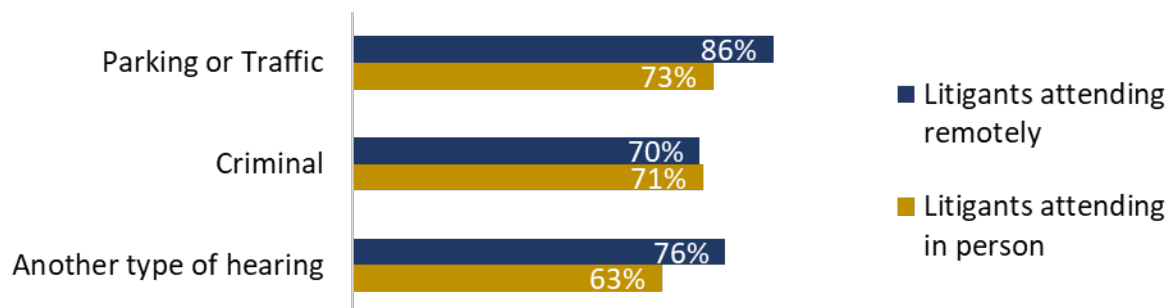
Effectiveness of Hearings

Hearing participants reported high levels of satisfaction with all measures of hearing effectiveness. These items included client-attorney communication, the time allotted for the hearing, the ability of participants to understand and focus on the proceeding, and the seriousness with which their case was treated. For most roles and case areas, hearing participants were more likely to be satisfied in these areas if they attended remotely.

Hearing participants who attended remotely reported similar or higher levels of satisfaction with client-attorney communication compared to those who attended in person.

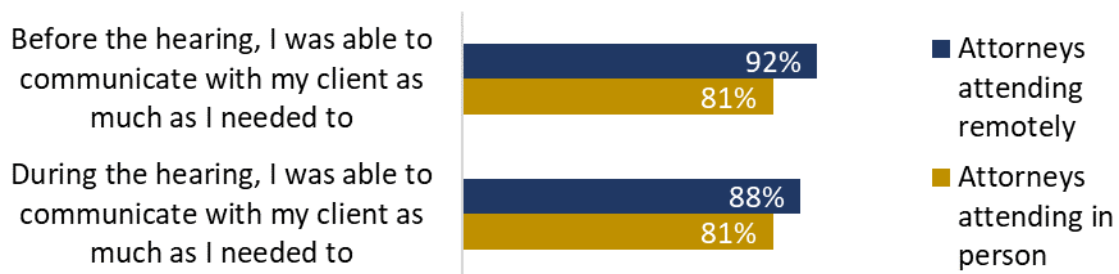
Overall, litigants who attended their hearing remotely reported more positive experiences of communication with their attorney, compared to those who attended hearings in person. During criminal hearings, litigants who attended remotely and in person were almost equally satisfied with the level of communication.

Figure 3. Percent of litigants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “During the hearing, I was able to communicate with an attorney as much as I needed to.”



Attorneys who attended a hearing remotely were also more satisfied with the level of communication with their clients before and during the hearing than those who attended in person.⁶

Figure 4. Percent of attorneys representing clients that ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’ with each statement



⁶ The number of attorney responses to these questions for in-person hearings were somewhat low (n=36) meaning it is difficult to draw definite conclusions from this comparison.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

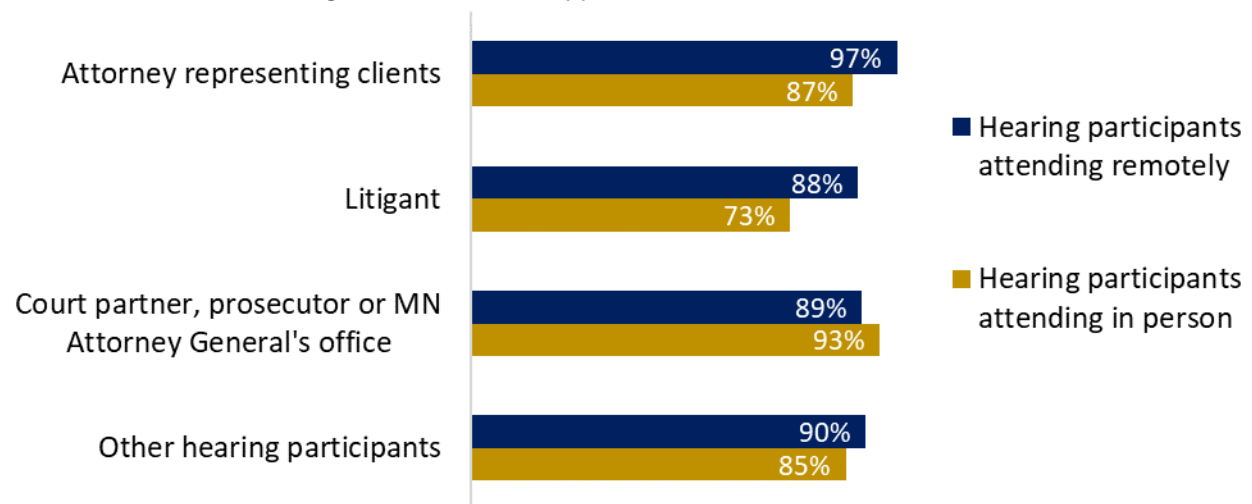
oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Most hearing participants who attended remotely were more likely to report they could understand the proceedings easily.

Hearing participants who attended a hearing remotely were more likely than those who attended in person to agree or strongly agree that “It was easy to understand what was happening during the hearing.” This trend persists for all three cases areas (criminal, parking or traffic, and other types of cases) and for both litigants and most other hearing participants. Court partners, prosecutors, and Minnesota Attorney General’s Office respondents were the exception.

Figure 5. Percent of hearing participants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “It was easy to understand what was happening during the hearing.”

Data table reference for Figure 5 available in [Appendix G](#)

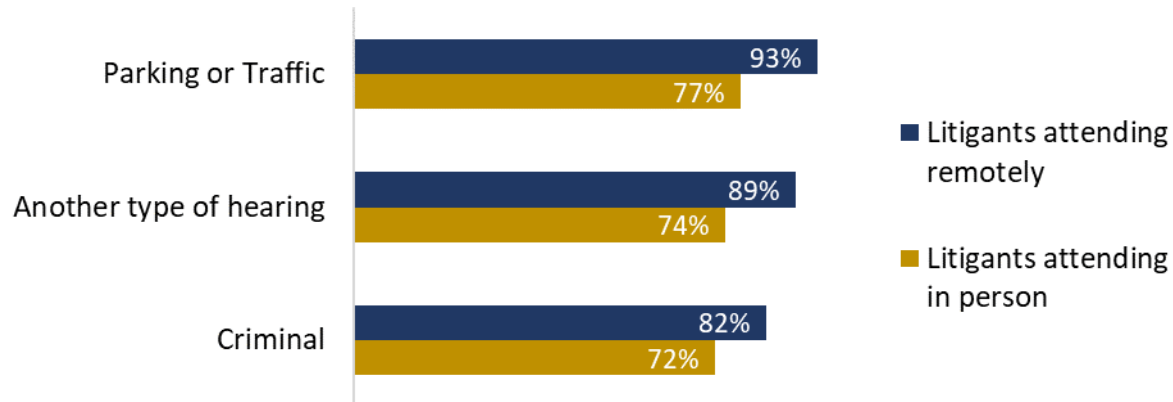


Litigants in all case areas attending remotely reported less difficulty understanding the proceedings than those who attended in person. Litigants also reported greater difficulty than other hearing participants understanding the proceedings and reported the lowest ability to understand the proceedings for criminal cases (compared to non-criminal, or parking/traffic hearings).

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

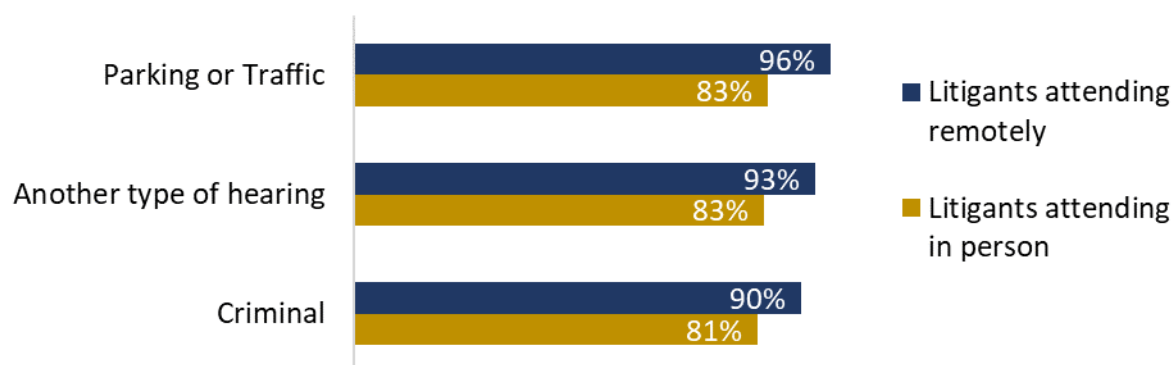
Figure 6. Percent of litigants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “It was easy to understand what was happening during the hearing.”



Most hearing participants who attended remotely were more likely to report they could focus on the hearing without distractions.

A large majority of litigants and other hearing participants attending remotely and in person in all case areas said they could focus on their hearing without distractions. Hearing participants who attended a hearing remotely were somewhat more likely than those who attended in person to agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I was able to focus on the hearing without distractions.”

Figure 7. Percent of litigants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “I was able to focus on the hearing without distractions.”



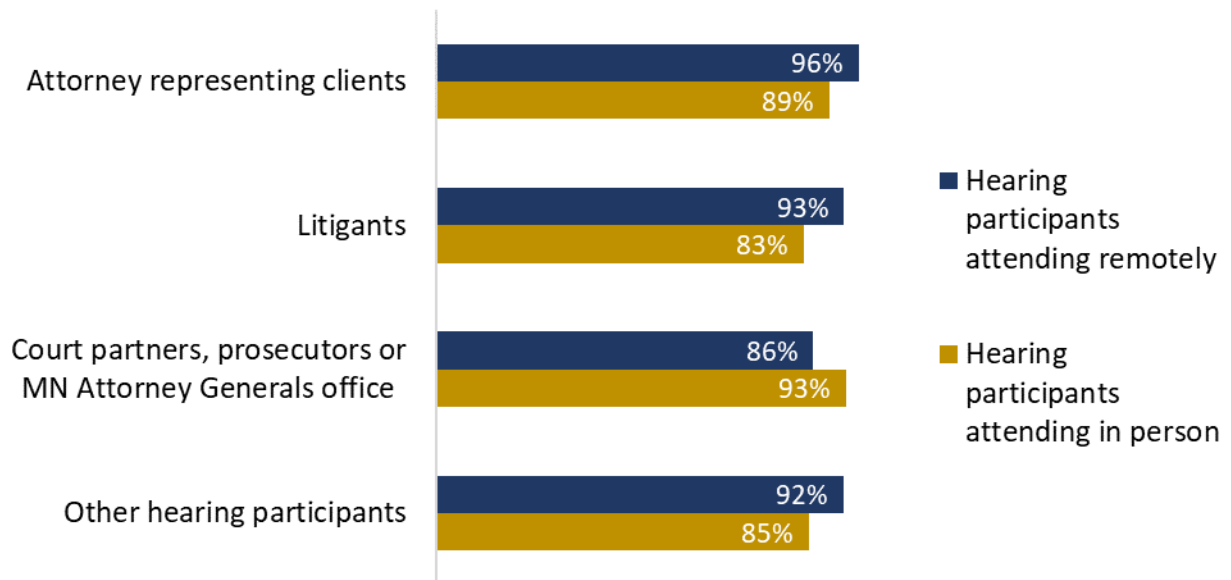
Conversely, court partners and prosecutors or Minnesota Attorney General’s Office participants were somewhat more likely to be able to focus without distractions if they attended in person.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Figure 8. Percent of hearing participants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “I was able to focus on the hearing without distractions.”

Data table reference for Figure 8 available in [Appendix G](#)



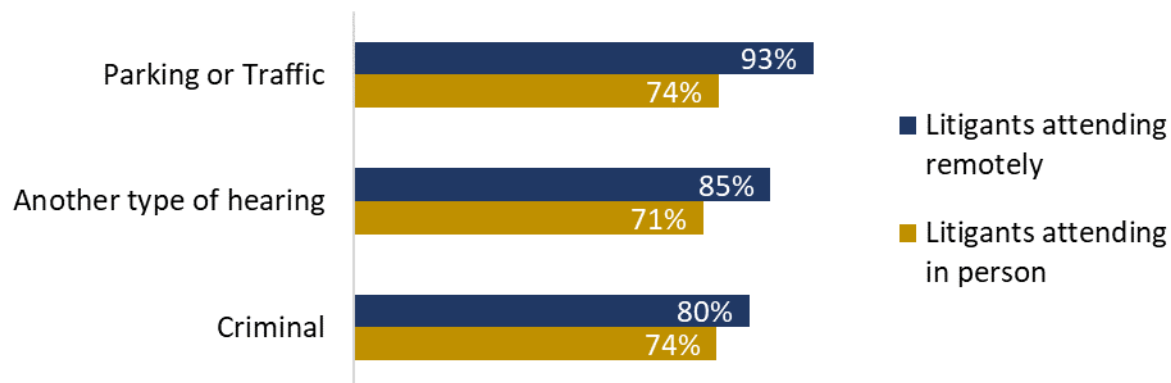
Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Hearing participants who attended remotely were more likely to be satisfied with the amount of time and seriousness their case was given during the hearing⁷

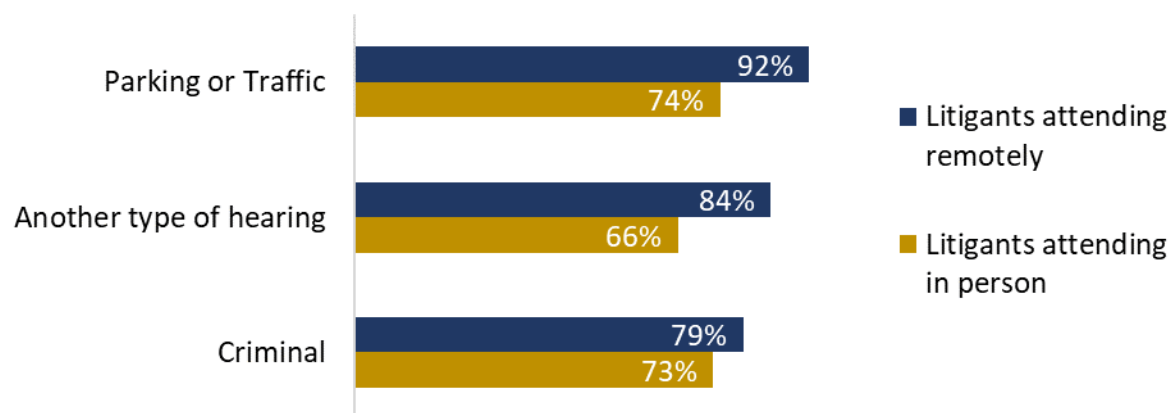
For criminal and non-criminal hearings, litigants and other hearing participants were more likely to agree with the statement, “During the hearing, my case was given the amount of time it deserved” when they had attended a hearing remotely.

Figure 9. Percent of litigants that “Agree” or “Strongly agree” with, “During the hearing, my case was given the amount of time it deserved.”



Litigants and other hearings participants were also more likely to agree their case was treated with the seriousness it deserved if they attended remotely for both criminal and non-criminal hearings. Court partners were the only exception with 95% of those attending in-person (n=45) and 91% of those attending remotely (n=189) reporting their case was treated with the seriousness it deserved.

Figure 10. Percent of litigants that “Agree” or “Strongly agree” with, “During the hearing, my case was treated with the seriousness it deserved.”



⁷ These results could be partially explained by in-person hearings usually being held for more complex and serious proceedings. Therefore, hearing participants could have greater expectations for the time and seriousness allotted to hearings held in person.

Timely Hearings

Hearing participants who attended remotely were more satisfied with the amount of time they waited for their hearing to begin.

Overall, hearing participants were much more satisfied with the time they waited for their hearing to begin when they attended remotely. This was true for all case areas and for litigants and other participants. Criminal defendants (litigants) and other hearing participants who attended in person were least likely to report the amount of time they spent waiting for a hearing was reasonable.

Figure 11. Percent of litigants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “The amount of time I spent waiting for the hearing to begin was reasonable.”

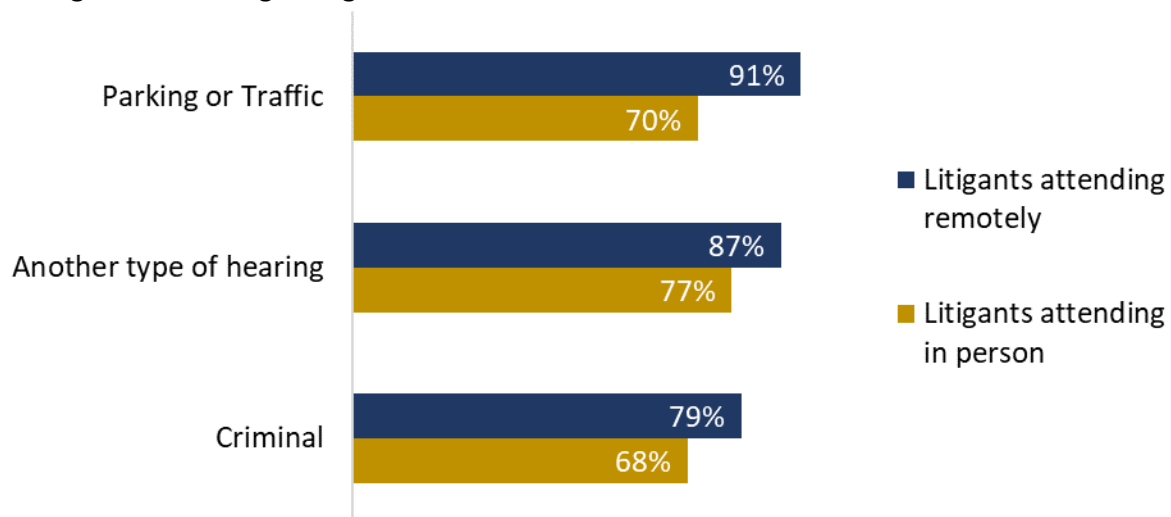
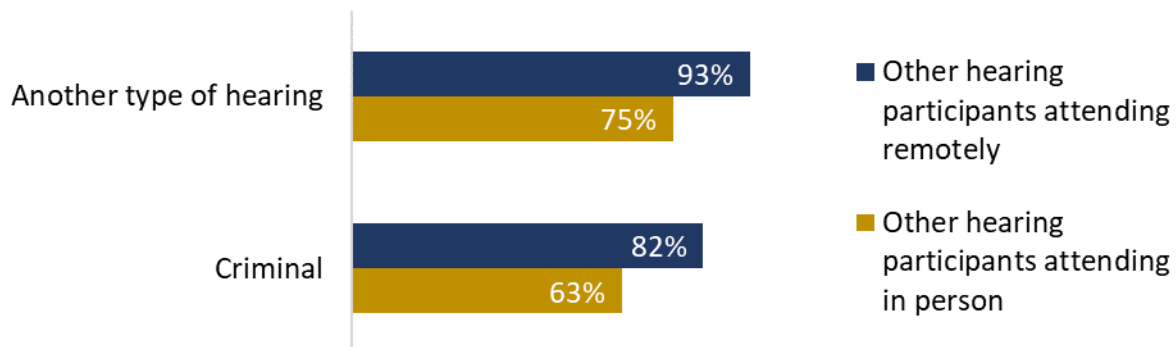


Figure 12. Percent of other hearing participants (non-litigants) that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “The amount of time I spent waiting for the hearing to begin was reasonable.”⁸



⁸ Only 14 non-litigant hearing participants who attended a parking/traffic hearing in person completed this question. Therefore, parking or traffic hearing results are not reported as part of this analysis.

Hearing Participant Preferences for Appearing Remotely or In Person

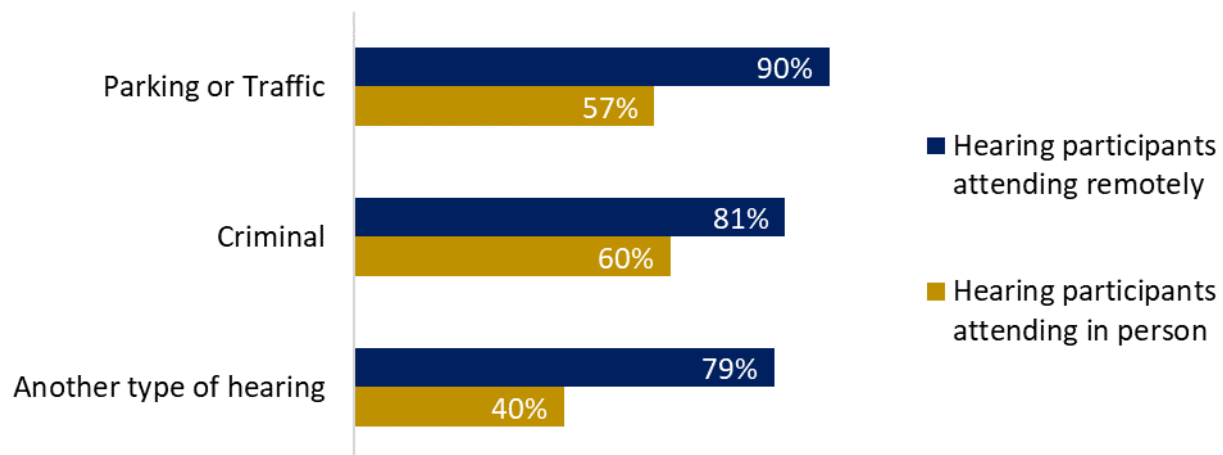
Three in four hearing participants would prefer to attend a future hearing remotely.

Of 3,224 hearing participants who responded to the question, “If you ever attend a hearing again, would you prefer to attend remotely or in person?” 76% answered they would prefer to attend remotely. Around one quarter (24%) of hearing participants reported they would rather attend in person.

The best predictor of preference for how to attend a future hearing was how someone attended their most recent hearing.

Most hearing participants who attended remotely or in person preferred to attend a future hearing remotely. However, only around half (53%) of hearing participants who had most recently attended a hearing in person preferred to attend a future hearing remotely. A considerably larger majority (81%) of hearing participants who had most recently attended a hearing remotely would prefer to attend a hearing remotely in the future. This pattern was consistent for litigants and all other types of hearing participants as well as for criminal, parking or traffic, and other types of hearings, but was most pronounced for non-criminal hearings. Litigants and other hearing participants who had just attended a non-criminal hearing in person were least likely to prefer attending remotely (and most likely to prefer attending in person) in the future.

Figure 13. Percent of hearing participants preferring to attend a future hearing remotely and in person, by case area and how they attended their most recent hearing



This pattern could be explained by hearing participants having positive experiences at their most recent hearing and preferring to attend in the same way next time. Another reason may be the way the hearing participant attended their most recent hearing aligned with their preference (either because the state or local policy aligns with their preference or they were granted an exception to the policy).

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Hearing participants were most likely to prefer attending remotely because of the ease and convenience.

When asked why they would prefer attending remotely, the majority of hearing participants explained they would prefer to attend remotely because it was easier or more convenient. A large number of hearing participants explained they would prefer to attend remotely because they do not need to travel to the courthouse, and/or because it saves them time. Many hearing participants noted they would prefer to attend remotely because it saves money.

In addition, many hearing participants explained they would prefer to attend remotely because of stress or mental health concerns. For example, not wanting to face people in person and/or fearing going to the courthouse, child or family care concerns, accessibility concerns, or health concerns (particularly COVID or other sickness exposure).

“Attending remotely made it easier to squeeze it into our day and then get back to it. My son was at school for the court hearings and was able to get to them without taking too much time out of school. Roughly a half hour of time out of school vs a potential whole day.”

Hearing participants were most likely to prefer attending in person because they preferred face-to-face communication or they found it easier for everyone to understand the proceedings in person.

When asked why they would prefer attending in person in the future, most explained they would rather communicate face-to-face and/or they found the hearing easier to understand in person.

Many hearing participants noted they felt in-person hearings were more appropriate (and encourage more appropriate behavior) for the serious nature of a court case.

In addition, many hearing participants noted they just felt more comfortable in person, felt communication was better in person (between attorneys and clients or other participants), or had experienced technical issues attending remotely. Smaller numbers of hearing participants reported their reasons had to do with in-person hearings being more effective or efficient, or less anxiety-producing for them.

“While attending remotely is very convenient, I did feel as though there is something to being able to look at the judge and having the judge look at you person to person. Via Zoom, it felt very much like I wasn’t seen as a person, but just seen as another case to get through as quickly as possible.”

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

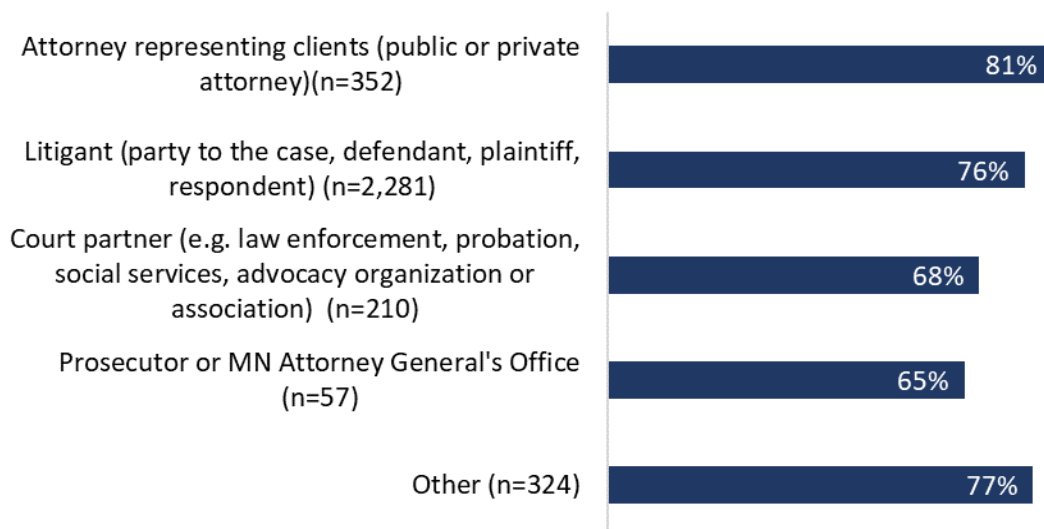
oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Attorneys representing clients and litigants were most likely to prefer attending a future hearing remotely.

Within all groups of hearing participant roles, most hearing participants reported they would rather attend a future hearing remotely than in person. However, attorneys representing clients were most likely to report they would prefer to attend remotely (81%), followed by litigants (76%). Prosecutors and attorneys from the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office (65%) and court partners (68%) were least likely to prefer attending remotely.

Figure 14. Preference for attending a future hearing remotely by role in hearing

Data table reference for Figure 14 is available in [Appendix G](#)

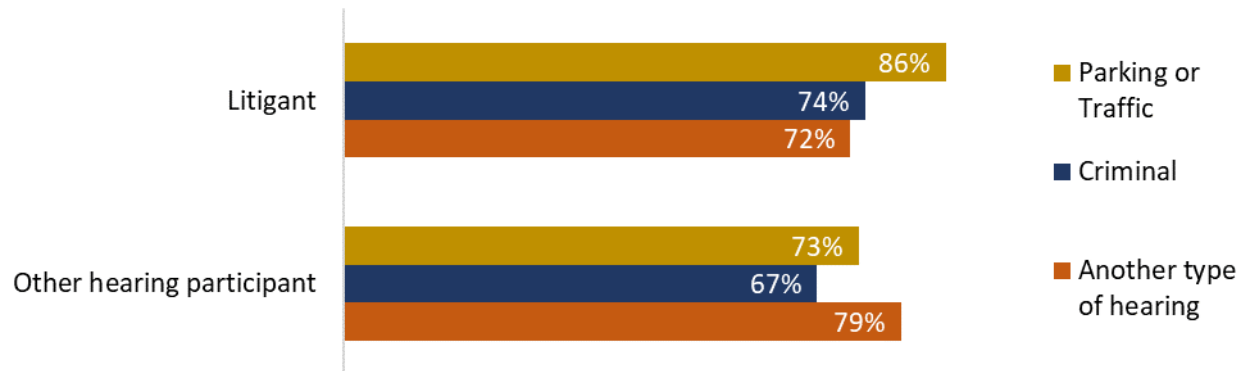


Litigants were more likely to prefer appearing remotely after participating in a parking or traffic or other criminal case hearing, while other hearing participants were more likely to prefer appearing remotely after participating in a non-criminal case hearing.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Figure 15. Preference for appearing at a future hearing remotely by role and case area



Demographic characteristics had some small effects on the preference to appear remotely or in-person for a future hearing.

Women (78%) were more likely than men (73%) to prefer attending a future hearing remotely. The small number of hearing participants who identified their gender with a term besides man or woman were less likely than both men and women to prefer appearing remotely (69% of 45 total survey responses)

All racial groups reported similar rates of preferring to attend a future hearing remotely (between 75% and 77% preferred to attend remotely).⁹ The exception was Asian or Asian American hearing participants (n=92) who preferred to appear remotely 86% of the time (compared to 76% of non-Asian or Asian-American hearing participants).

All age groups also preferred to attend a future hearing remotely at similar rates, with the exception of survey respondents under 21 years of age. 85% (of a total 81) hearing participants under 21 preferred to attend a hearing remotely in the future, compared to 74%-76% preferring to attend remotely in every other age group. However, for those under 21, case area of their most recent hearing appears to have a large impact on the preference to attend remotely. While 93% of those under 21 attending a criminal (96%), or parking or traffic (91%) hearing would prefer attending remotely in the future; only 63% of the respondents under 21 (n=27) attending a non-criminal hearing would.¹⁰

⁹ All racial groups with at least 20 hearing participant survey responses

¹⁰ The small number of responses in this category makes it difficult to make conclusions based on this data. However, the difference is so extreme that it likely has some validity.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Twin Cities metro county hearing participants were more likely to prefer attending a hearing remotely.

While 80% of the 1,219 hearing participants attending a hearing in Ramsey (80%) or Hennepin (81%) county reported they would prefer to attend a future hearing remotely, hearing participants in other counties were less likely to report they would prefer to attend remotely (72% of a total 1,725 hearing participants).

In seven counties, less than two thirds of hearing participants reported they would prefer to attend remotely in the future (Becker, Carlton, Crow Wing, Isanti, Itasca, Olmsted, and Otter Tail Counties).¹¹ Isanti County was the only county where the majority of hearing participants said they would prefer to attend a hearing in-person, despite most having attended their recent hearing remotely.

Conclusion

The Hearing Participant Survey is the largest Minnesota District Court survey of litigants and other hearing participants since remote hearings became an integral part of court business during the pandemic. The survey provides strong evidence remote hearings have increased access to hearings, that most hearing participants prefer to attend hearings remotely, and that hearing participants are having mostly positive experiences at their Minnesota District Court hearings, especially when attending remotely.

¹¹ Counties with at least 20 hearing participant survey responses

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Appendix A. Hearing Participant Survey - Litigant

Thank you for sharing your feedback on your most recent hearing. This survey should take less than five minutes to complete. Your feedback is anonymous and will be used by the Minnesota Judicial Branch to improve hearings in Minnesota.

Survey questions:

1. How did you attend your most recent hearing? (mark one)

- Remotely (video conference, Zoom)
- In Person (face to face, in the courtroom)

2. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements about your most recent hearing?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Does not apply
The amount of time I spent waiting for the hearing to begin was reasonable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It was easy to understand what was happening during the hearing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was able to focus on the hearing without distractions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the hearing, my case was given the amount of time it deserved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the hearing, my case was treated with the seriousness it deserved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the hearing, I was able to communicate with an attorney as much as I needed to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What made it difficult to attend your hearing? (mark all that apply)

- It was not difficult to attend my hearing
- Transportation to the hearing
- Care for a child or family member
- Taking time off from work
- My physical or mental health
- Fear for my safety
- Technology was difficult to use
- I did not have access to technology
- I did not have information about my hearing
- Other _____

Continue the survey on the other side of the page

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

4. If you attend a hearing again, would you prefer to attend remotely or in person? (mark one)

- I would prefer to attend in person at the courthouse
- I would prefer to attend remotely

5. Why would you prefer to attend that way?

6. What type of hearing did you attend? (mark one)

- Criminal
- Parking or Traffic
- Another type of hearing

The following questions about you on the next page will help us understand how the district court hearing experience differs among participants. These questions are optional, but your answers are very helpful for making Minnesota District Court hearings as fair as possible.

7. How do you identify your race? (mark all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- I prefer to self-describe:

8. What is your age? (mark one)

- Less than 21 years
- 21-39 years
- 40-59 years
- 60-79 years
- 80+ years

9. Which of the following best describes your gender identity? (mark one)

- Man
- Woman
- I prefer to use another term not listed here: _____

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Appendix B. Hearing Participant Survey – Attorney Representing Clients

Thank you for sharing your feedback on your most recent hearing. This survey should take less than five minutes to complete. Your feedback is anonymous and will be used by the Minnesota Judicial Branch to improve hearings in Minnesota.

Survey questions:

1. How did you attend your most recent hearing? (mark one)

- Remotely (video conference, Zoom)
- In Person (face to face, in the courtroom)

2. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements about your most recent hearing?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Does not apply
The amount of time I spent waiting for the hearing to begin was reasonable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Before the hearing, I was able to communicate with my client as much as I needed to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It was easy to understand what was happening during the hearing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was able to focus on the hearing without distractions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the hearing, my case was given the amount of time it deserved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the hearing, my case was treated with the seriousness it deserved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the hearing, I was able to communicate with my client as much as I needed to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What made it difficult to attend your hearing? (mark all that apply)

- It was not difficult to attend my hearing
- Transportation to the hearing
- Care for a child or family member
- Taking time off from work
- My physical or mental health
- Fear for my safety
- Technology was difficult to use
- I did not have access to technology
- I did not have information about my hearing
- Other _____

Continue the survey on the other side of the page

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

4. If you attend a hearing again, would you prefer to attend remotely or in person? (mark one)

- I would prefer to attend in person at the courthouse
- I would prefer to attend remotely

5. Why would you prefer to attend that way?

6. What type of hearing did you attend? (mark one)

- Criminal
- Parking or Traffic
- Another type of hearing

The following questions about you on the next page will help us understand how the district court hearing experience differs among participants. These questions are optional, but your answers are very helpful for making Minnesota District Court hearings as fair as possible.

7. How do you identify your race? (mark all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- I prefer to self-describe:

8. What is your age? (mark one)

- Less than 21 years
- 21-39 years
- 40-59 years
- 60-79 years
- 80+ years

9. Which of the following best describes your gender identity? (mark one)

- Man
- Woman
- I prefer to use another term not listed here: _____

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Appendix C. Hearing Participant Survey - Other Hearing Participants

Thank you for sharing your feedback on your most recent hearing. This survey should take less than five minutes to complete. Your feedback is anonymous and will be used by the Minnesota Judicial Branch to improve hearings in Minnesota.

Survey questions:

1. How did you attend your most recent hearing? (mark one)
 - Remotely (video conference, Zoom)
 - In Person (face to face, in the courtroom)
2. Which best describes your role in this hearing? (mark one)
 - Prosecutor or MN Attorney General's Office
 - Court partner (e.g. law enforcement, probation, social services, advocacy organization)
 - Media
 - Other participant: _____

3. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements about your most recent hearing?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Does not apply
The amount of time I spent waiting for the hearing to begin was reasonable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It was easy to understand what was happening during the hearing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was able to focus on the hearing without distractions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the hearing, my case was given the amount of time it deserved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the hearing, my case was treated with the seriousness it deserved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. What made it difficult to attend your hearing? (mark all that apply)
 - It was not difficult to attend my hearing
 - Transportation to the hearing
 - Care for a child or family member
 - Taking time off from work
 - My physical or mental health
 - Fear for my safety
 - Technology was difficult to use
 - I did not have access to technology
 - I did not have information about my hearing
 - Other _____

Continue the survey on the other side of the page

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

5. If you attend a hearing again, would you prefer to attend remotely or in person? (mark one)

- I would prefer to attend in person at the courthouse
- I would prefer to attend remotely

6. Why would you prefer to attend that way?

7. What type of hearing did you attend? (mark one)

- Criminal
- Parking or Traffic
- Another type of hearing

The following questions about you on the next page will help us understand how the district court hearing experience differs among participants. These questions are optional, but your answers are very helpful for making Minnesota District Court hearings as fair as possible.

8. How do you identify your race? (mark all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine or Hispanic
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- I prefer to self-describe:

9. What is your age? (mark one)

- Less than 21 years
- 21-39 years
- 40-59 years
- 60-79 years
- 80+ years

10. Which of the following best describes your gender identity? (mark one)

- Man
- Woman
- I prefer to use another term not listed here: _____

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Appendix D. Hearing Participant Survey responses by case type, role, and how appeared.

Criminal Hearing Responses

Self-reported role	Number of respondents attended in person	Number of respondents attended remotely	Total number of respondents
Attorney representing clients (public or private attorney)	18	57	75
Court partner (e.g. law enforcement, probation, social services, advocacy organization or association)	24	36	60
Litigant (party to the case, defendant, plaintiff, respondent)	286	303	589
Media	1	3	4
Other	15	59	74
Prosecutor or MN Attorney General's Office	6	27	33
Total	350	485	835

Parking or Traffic Hearing Responses

Self-reported role	Number of respondents attended in person	Number of respondents attended remotely	Total number of respondents
Attorney representing clients (public or private attorney)	5	5	10
Court partner (e.g., law enforcement, probation, social services, advocacy organization or association)		1	1
Litigant (party to the case, defendant, plaintiff, respondent)	74	470	544
Media	1		1
Other	5	22	27
Prosecutor or MN Attorney General's Office	3	6	9
Total	88	504	592

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Another Type of Hearing (Non-Criminal) Responses

Self-reported role	Number of respondents attended in person	Number of respondents attended remotely	Total number of respondents
Attorney representing clients (public or private attorney)	17	251	268
Court partner (e.g., law enforcement, probation, social services, advocacy organization or association)	16	132	148
Litigant (party to the case, defendant, plaintiff, respondent)	152	1,029	1,181
Media		5	5
Other	18	199	217
Prosecutor or MN Attorney General's Office	1	16	17
Total	204	1,632	1,836

Appendix E. Hearing Participant Survey respondent criminal defendant self-reported race compared to Minnesota defendant self-reported race for defendants attending adult criminal hearings April 25-June 30, 2023

Self-reported race	Number of defendants in MN criminal hearings	Percentage of defendants in MN criminal hearings	Number of litigant survey respondents about criminal hearing ¹²	Percent of litigant survey respondents about criminal hearings
American Indian or Alaska Native	11,363	8%	20	4%
Asian or Pacific Islander or Asian American	3,358	2%	10	3%
Black or African American	37,183	28%	56	10%
Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine	10,973	8%	17	3%
Another race	2,132	2%	18	3%
Multi-racial / two or more categories	4,856	4%	29	5%
White	64,702	48%	422	72%
Total	134,567	100%	548	100%

¹² The categories on the survey do not directly align with how Minnesota asks about and reports their race data.

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Appendix F. County of Hearing Participant Survey Respondents by how attended most recent hearing, in order of total number of survey respondents

Which county did you attend your hearing in?	Number Attended In Person	Number Attended Remotely	Total
I don't know	7	50	57
Hennepin County	169	759	928
Ramsey County	33	290	323
Dakota County	71	113	184
Anoka County	70	101	171
Washington County	5	116	121
Olmsted County	28	60	88
St. Louis County - Duluth	14	60	74
Wright County	18	56	74
Scott County	28	36	64
Stearns County	8	47	55
St. Louis County - Virginia	5	41	46
Carver County	11	28	39
Clay County	7	32	39
Blue Earth County	5	32	37
Sherburne County	12	21	33
Crow Wing County	8	24	32
Rice County	9	22	31
Winona County	4	26	30
Carlton County	1	26	27
Goodhue County	4	21	25
Chisago County	1	23	24
Isanti County	3	21	24
Itasca County	1	22	23
Becker County	5	17	22
McLeod County	3	19	22
Pine County	1	21	22
Otter Tail County	4	17	21
Nicollet County	0	18	18
Steele County	4	14	18
Beltrami County	6	10	16
Polk County	0	16	16
Aitkin County	2	13	15
Douglas County	3	11	14
Koochiching County	2	12	14

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Which county did you attend your hearing in?	Number Attended In Person	Number Attended Remotely	Total
Mille Lacs County	5	9	14
Houston County	1	12	13
Kanabec County	0	13	13
St. Louis County - Hibbing	1	12	13
Kandiyohi County	1	10	11
Lake County	1	10	11
LeSueur County	3	8	11
Cass County	0	10	10
Lyon County	3	7	10
Martin County	0	10	10
Wabasha County	3	7	10
Waseca County	0	10	10
Benton County	1	8	9
Brown County	0	9	9
Hubbard County	1	8	9
Morrison County	4	5	9
Mower County	5	4	9
Redwood County	0	9	9
Dodge County	2	6	8
Wadena County	1	7	8
Sibley County	0	7	7
Chippewa County	0	6	6
Cottonwood County	1	5	6
Faribault County	1	5	6
Freeborn County	1	5	6
Mahnomen County	0	6	6
Marshall County	0	6	6
Stevens County	1	5	6
Wilkin County	0	6	6
Fillmore County	1	3	4
Jackson County	0	4	4
Meeker County	0	4	4
Pennington County	0	4	4
Pope County	1	3	4
Todd County	1	3	4
Cook County	0	3	3
Nobles County	0	3	3

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Which county did you attend your hearing in?	Number Attended In Person	Number Attended Remotely	Total
Pipestone County	1	2	3
Red Lake County	0	3	3
Renville County	1	2	3
Roseau County	0	3	3
Big Stone County	0	2	2
Lac Qui Parle County	0	2	2
Lincoln County	0	2	2
Murray County	0	2	2
Swift County	0	2	2
Clearwater County	0	1	1
Grant County	0	1	1
Kittson County	0	1	1
Norman County	0	1	1
Rock County	0	1	1
Watonwan County	0	1	1
Yellow Medicine County	0	1	1

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Appendix G. Data Tables for Figures in Text

Data Table for Figure 2. Percent of Litigants reporting “What made it difficult to attend your hearing?” (survey respondents could select more than one difficulty)

Barrier	Percent of litigants attending in person (n=501)	Percent of litigants attending remotely (n=1,728)
Taking time off from work	22%	9%
Transportation to the hearing	21%	3%
My physical or mental health	19%	4%
I did not have information about my hearing	10%	4%
Fear for my safety	9%	2%
Care for a child or family member	7%	2%
I did not have access to technology	3%	1%
Technology was difficult to use	2%	7%
Other barrier	9%	6%

Data Table for Figure 5. Percent of hearing participants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “It was easy to understand what was happening during the hearing.”

Type of Hearing Participant	Percent of hearing participants attending in person	Percent of hearing participants attending remotely
Attorneys representing clients	87%	97%
Litigants	73%	88%
Court Partner, Prosecutor, or MN Attorney General’s Office	93%	89%
Other Hearing Participants	85%	90%

Hearing Participant Survey Findings

oneCourtMN Hearings Initiative

Data Table for Figure 8. Percent of hearing participants that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with, “I was able to focus on the hearing without distractions.”

Type of Hearing Participant	Percent of hearing participants attending in person	Percent of hearing participants attending remotely
Attorneys representing clients	89%	96%
Litigants	83%	93%
Court Partner, Prosecutor, or MN Attorney General’s Office	93%	86%
Other Hearing Participants	85%	92%

Data Table for Figure 14. Preference for attending a future hearing remotely by role in hearing

Type of Hearing Participant	Percent of hearing participants	Number of hearing participants
Attorneys representing clients	81%	352
Litigants	76%	2,281
Court Partner	68%	210
Prosecutor, or MN Attorney General’s Office	65%	57
Other Hearing Participants	77%	324