

Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Remote Hearings
Court User Survey: Summary Results
Conducted September 2022 – May 2023

1. Please select the county in which your most recent case was heard.

Choices	Count	% of Total
Chittenden	90	16.5%
Washington	70	12.9%
Rutland	60	11.0%
Windham	55	10.1%
Lamoille	52	9.6%
Windsor	49	9.0%
Bennington	29	5.3%
Franklin	29	5.3%
Addison	26	4.8%
Orleans	26	4.8%
Caledonia	19	3.5%
Orange	19	3.5%
Essex	10	1.8%
Grand Isle	10	1.8%
TOTAL	544	

2. Please select the category below that best describes you.

Choices	Count	% of Total
Involved in a court case / legal matter as a party	193	35.4%
Attorney or attorney's staff	128	23.5%
Other	50	9.2%
Victim or witness	29	5.3%
Community Advocate (e.g. guardian, clergy, public health nurse, public librarian)	28	5.1%
State agency staff	27	5.0%
Probation officer / staff	21	3.9%
Friend or family member	20	3.7%
Law enforcement officer / staff	14	2.6%
Social services staff	11	2.0%
Member of the media	10	1.8%
Another legal professional representing a litigant	4	0.7%
Member of the public	4	0.7%
Interpreter	3	0.6%
Juror	2	0.4%
Business user (e.g., messenger, process server)	1	0.2%
TOTAL	545	

3. Did you have an attorney helping you with your court business?

Choices	Count	% of Total
I do not have an attorney or any other representative	97	50.3%
I have had an attorney representing me throughout my case	83	43.0%
I had an attorney representing me on my visit, but they're not representing me throughout the whole case	10	5.2%
I have another representative helping me with my case (e.g., a guardian or Communications Specialist)	3	1.6%
TOTAL	193	

4. For each item below, please choose the answer that best reflects your opinion, based on your experience with the Court.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A	Total	Weighted Average (scale of 5)
Joining the proceeding was easy	8.1%	8.6%	11.0%	35.2%	37.1%	3.3%	491	3.97
I was able to focus without distraction	9.9%	13.8%	8.1%	30.8%	37.3%	2.8%	493	3.83
I felt safe participating remotely	6.4%	4.3%	10.1%	29.1%	50.1%	4.5%	485	4.32
The court made reasonable efforts to remove barriers to participating	11.1%	6.7%	15.7%	33.1%	33.3%	6.3%	477	3.96
I was able to get my court business done in a reasonable amount of time	16.9%	11.0%	11.8%	28.1%	32.2%	4.8%	484	3.65
Court staff paid adequate attention to my needs	18.5%	7.1%	14.2%	27.3%	33.0%	9.2%	466	3.85
I was treated with respect	14.4%	4.9%	10.3%	29.2%	41.3%	4.3%	487	3.95

5. For each item below, please choose the answer that best reflects your opinion, based on your experience with the Court.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A	Total	Weighted Average (scale of 5)
The way my case was handled was fair	21.2%	8.2%	13.2%	27.6%	29.8%	12.4%	453	3.84
The judge listened to my side of the story before making a decision	18.3%	5.2%	13.8%	30.2%	32.5%	20.7%	421	4.46
The judge had the information necessary to make good decisions about my case	19.1%	10.4%	9.9%	28.8%	31.8%	14.6%	444	4.03
I was treated the same as everyone else	16.7%	5.6%	13.4%	31.0%	33.3%	13.6%	448	4.15
I could follow what was happening	8.8%	8.8%	8.6%	37.6%	36.1%	6.9%	476	4.12
I was comfortable enough to say what I really thought about things	13.3%	10.2%	12.2%	29.9%	34.5%	12.6%	452	4.14
As I leave the phone or videoconference, I know what to do next about my case	12.2%	10.1%	11.5%	33.7%	32.6%	16.7%	436	4.38

6. Was this your first time participating in a remote hearing?

Choices	Count	% of Total
No	375	70.0%
Yes	161	30.0%
TOTAL	536	

7. Was your hearing a hybrid hearing, meaning some people were in the courtroom and some were participating remotely?

Choices	Count	% of Total
No	240	44.8%
Yes	296	55.2%
TOTAL	536	

8. What type of device did you use to access the proceeding (select all that applied to your most recent proceeding)?

Choices	Count	% of Total
Laptop computer	274	44.2%
Desktop computer	151	24.4%
Smartphone	126	20.3%
Tablet	28	4.5%
Landline	26	4.2%
Other	15	2.4%
TOTAL	620	

9. How was your connection for your court proceeding? Select the response that best describes your experience.

Choices	Count	% of Total
My connection was good: I had a reliable connection the entire time	384	71.6%
My connection was generally OK but sometimes slow or unstable	94	17.5%
My connection was poor: It cut out or stopped working at least once	33	6.2%
Other	25	4.7%
TOTAL	536	

10. Where did you participate from?

Choices	Count	% of Total
My home	249	46.5%
My place of work	187	34.9%
My attorney's or legal representative's office	42	7.8%
Other	24	4.5%
My car	17	3.2%
A friend's or family member's home	10	1.9%
Another public location (e.g., library, public hotspot, coffee shop, business)	7	1.3%
TOTAL	536	

11. Why did you participate from that location (select all that apply)?

Choices	Count	% of Total
I was at work for my regular business hours or scheduled shift	169	55.6%
My attorney or legal representative suggested it	42	13.8%
Other	38	12.5%
My internet service or data plan at home is unreliable or too limited	17	5.6%
I have too many distractions or not enough privacy at home	15	4.9%
I was instructed to participate from this location by the court	12	3.9%
I don't have access to an internet connection at home	6	2.0%
I don't have the appropriate technological device(s) at home	5	1.6%
TOTAL	304	

12. How did you find out about your most recent court proceeding (select all that apply)?

Choices	Count	% of Total
I received an electronic or voice notification from the court (e.g., email, text message, phone call, voicemail)	223	36.6%
I received a paper notification from the court or law enforcement (e.g., form, letter, postcard, summons)	161	26.4%
I was told by my attorney or other legal representative	87	14.3%
I searched the court website for information	54	8.9%
Other	52	8.5%
I was told by the court at my last hearing	24	3.9%
I saw a public notice or announcement (e.g., in the news, on social media)	7	1.1%
I was told by my probation officer	2	0.3%
TOTAL	610	

13. What type of matter was being handled for your most recent remote court proceeding?

Choices	Count	% of Total
Criminal (e.g. felonies, misdemeanors including DWI/DUI)	153	29.3%
Divorce, child custody, child support	108	20.7%
Civil (e.g. contract disputes, debt collection, evictions, mortgage foreclosures, damages)	58	11.1%
Child welfare (e.g. abuse, neglect, abandonment)	52	9.9%
Probate (e.g. wills and estates, adult and juvenile guardianships, conservatorships)	42	8.0%
Other	32	6.1%
Order of protection	28	5.4%
Traffic or local ordinance violations	19	3.6%
Juvenile delinquency or status offenses (e.g. truancy)	17	3.3%
Small claims (e.g. lower level debt collection)	14	2.7%
TOTAL	523	

14. What is your age?

Choices	Count	% of Total
40-49 years	121	23.1%
30-39 years	118	22.5%
50-59 years	114	21.8%
60-69 years	70	13.4%
70-79 years	37	7.1%
20-29 years	32	6.1%
I prefer not to answer	24	4.6%
80+ years	5	1.0%
<20 years of age	3	0.6%
TOTAL	524	

15. How do you identify your race?

Choices	Count	% of Total
White	410	77.5%
I prefer not to answer	83	15.7%
Black or African American	13	2.5%
Other	10	1.9%
Asian or Asian American	5	0.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	0.8%
Middle Eastern or North African	3	0.6%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	0.2%
TOTAL	529	

16. Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine?

Choices	Count	% of Total
No	436	83.5%
I prefer not to answer	76	14.6%
Yes	10	1.9%
TOTAL	522	

17. What is your gender?

Choices	Count	% of Total
Female	292	55.8%
Male	181	34.6%
I prefer not to answer	36	6.9%
Non-binary	7	1.3%
I prefer to self-describe	6	1.1%
Transgender	1	0.2%
TOTAL	523	

18. Did you request any disability accommodations for the remote proceeding?

Choices	Count	% of Total
No, I didn't need any accommodations	451	86.2%
No, but that would have helped me	31	5.9%
I prefer not to answer	29	5.5%
Yes	12	2.3%
TOTAL	523	

19. Did you request any language interpreter services for the remote proceeding?

Choices	Count	% of Total
No, I didn't need language interpretation	490	93.7%
I prefer not to answer	23	4.4%
No, but that would have helped me	5	1.0%
Yes	5	1.0%
TOTAL	523	

20. Responses to Open-Ended Questions

- “How could you have been better served in your most recent proceeding?”
- “Please share any additional comments.”

Responses by Response Category	%
Hearing Outcome Complaint	35%
Webex Complaint	19%
Event Specific Complaint	16%
Communication Complaint	15%
Positive/General Comment	14%
Total Comments = 99	

Webex v. Other Complaints	%
Webex Complaints	22%
Other Complaints	78%
Total Complaints	

- *What type of matter was being handled for your most recent remote court proceeding?*

Case Type (n= 70)	%
Divorce, child custody, child support	33%
Probate	16%
Civil	14%
Traffic/local ordinance violation	10%
Other	10%
Order of protection	9%
Small claims	4%
Criminal	3%
Child welfare	1%

Hearing Outcome Complaints: Sample of Comments

- Whether in physical court or online there should be a way to speak to the judge privately. I have medical information I don't want disclosed.
- If it had been in person, waiting several months for a hearing and then only to spend 10 minutes on the phone is very frustrating. Especially since it seemed incredibly rushed. Almost like it was a great inconvenience for them.
- I had problems signing on for the court. This made me late and my case was ruled against me. I tried to explain to the judge but was told basically....too bad. I'd have to appeal. This made me unhappy due to the fact that there was definite problems with logging on.
- The courts mishandled many things throughout Covid. The case that I had open was dismissed because we didn't show, but we didn't know we had to show. This gave him the ability to open a court case. This entire thing took 4 years.
- Judge failed to see that the case involved a domestic abuse case. They need better training recognizing the dynamic of post trauma after a domestic abuse victim.
- This was a status conference hearing for eviction case, and request for a prompt default judgement. Unclear on why given all notice and documents are filed that a default judgement was not granted at this hearing and further delay must happen. From what seemed to go on at the conference no review of filed documents happened. I couldn't hear the judge clearly and he could barely hear me. Certainly won't use video or phone conference again.
- Webex is not easy as there's a couple different apps. You cannot present yourself remotely as you could in a court room. It is hard to focus as there's too many distractions to do remotely at home then a court room. It also isn't safe as other tenants can hear you conducting your case.
- My small claims case was filed 20 months ago and not [no] hearing has been completed.
- I had logged on and was in cue them I was dropped for no reason on my part. First, I got in then dropped so I wasn't sure if it was me or them. I was before the time my letter said I had to be in court. I had to see if my laptop was ok or the internet I was on was working properly, which took

a few minutes, then I tried again to get in. This time I got in. I guess in the meantime my name was called and I wasn't there due to the issue of initially being dropped. I tried to explain, but the Judge said sorry you were late and told me to appeal. While I was on waiting, there were several other people waiting and also dropped. They did not get back in and they also had judgments against them. If you get dropped, not by something you do, but because of some issue in the website it counts against you which I find unfair...but glad that we have the right to appeal.

- In my experience the Vermont judicial system is biased toward fathers. My ex-wife was not required to disclose she was assisted by an attorney during the hearing, and because of the video format, was able to hide it.
- Due to THE COURTS Tech problem handling the system, the judge then stated on the record that there will be no longer any remote calls and parties must attend the little Vermont country courthouse IN PERSON and so despite my living 800 miles and Three States Away and cannot travel due to my and aged and infirmed mothers health conditions, and am the main participatory Self Representing "Interested Person" protecting my deceased fathers Trust for my extended family from legal attack by one party! Told judge such was prejudicial to said party--constituting a mistrial, and he said "yes-maybe so" but that is just too bad!

Webex Complaints: Sample of Comments

- Have an easier way to get into the Webex meetings.
- I wear hearing aids. I rely on lip reading when I [can't] hear what is being said. I was offered video but the other party didn't know how to do that so we had to do phone. If i wanted in person, everyone would wear a mask. Does not help a HOH person. Phone was noisy and loud background. Hard to tell who was talking. Lots of papers and person yelling into phone because she thought that would help. Just made it worse.
- Remote hearings create an environment for discrimination and unequal treatment of participants.
- Better video/ audio. I should have been more prepared for legal situation.
- Video connection was not the greatest. Communication was difficult and may have affected outcome.
- It would be better if a more widely used video platform (eg, Zoom) was used instead of WebEx. I [didn't] realize how hard it would be to download and install and almost [didn't] have enough time before meeting the judge.
- By being able to know who I was talking to and who else was talking for starters
- I felt my case involved minor children and should be in person as for its about parental rights.
- It was very easy for the other party to cut me off and not let me explain myself the WHOLE time It would have been good if the other party was muted.
- My 'ADA' protected disabilities needed to be acknowledged and respected. After being disconnected several times during oral arguments, no allowance was given for the time disconnected. Especially so during a SCOV oral argument.
- The technology was a bit "clunky" and there were technology delays, but we got the work done.
- With my first hearing, the court lost my email three times and because of the lack of lead time and technical difficulties from their end, I couldn't get a video conference. The second time was almost equally confusing when the video conferencing technology was glitching, one of the Court Representatives called my cell phone so that I could join via phone conference. But the phone number is displayed look like a Spam call. Perhaps it would be easier for people if the courts phone numbers and email addresses were clearly marked as such and that communication from

the court to people was clear in terms of when video links would be sent out and by whom to reduce any confusion and streamline this whole process.

- Please remember that low income people often do not have the same experience with technology and might not be as adept with videoconferencing.
- The only issue I experienced during my virtual court hearing was that near the end, when the judge was speaking on the outcome of the case, the audio became garbled and I missed bits and pieces the most important part of the hearing. I did wish that I was able to somehow play back the video afterward to hear some of the things the judge had said that had cut out.
- The plaintiff covered her screen many times, I felt like she might have had someone else there to talk to, maybe her lawyer? How can you have a fair hearing if you cannot have open dialogue in person? I was at a loss as how to defend myself when I'm looking at two screens and not able to concentrate on my notes and get my side of account clarified. I would not recommend this type of court hearing to anyone.
- The phone hearing was very disorganized and ineffective. I felt like I was deaf, dumb and blind.
- Something as important as someone trying to take your children rights from you should only be done in person and sure that everything is explained and everyone understands fully.

Event Specific Complaints: Sample of Comments

- If the court started on time!
- Given an opportunity to address the court with questions.
- Tech person should not have Muted parties! PARTIES NOT ABLE NOR ALLOWED TO OBJECT! Judge frustrated and denied Rights of parties to then participate remotely! Their fault, not ours!
- There should have been a way for the judge to actually leave the hearing rather than just turning their sound off when the parties were provided time to speak.
- Felt very uncomfortable and intimidated by the parties.
- I was unable to attend my remote hearing because it was scheduled at a very inconvenient time for me. It is not possible for me to take this time off of work. I gave myself plenty of time to go from work to my car where I have previously not had issues connecting to calls. However, I was unable to connect to the call and was forced to drive around town looking for a connection but ultimately was late for my hearing and the judge defaulted. I would have avoided this situation if I had been allowed to provide input as to when my hearing would be.
- Be allowed back in the courtroom. If not, all parties should be required to use video.
- This allows lawyers to field more cases for profits and discrimination against proves [?] litigants.
- I am unable to attend hearings in person, even before covid. In 2019 I had to fight and be belittled by a judge for not being present in a hearing and attending over the phone. I hope you keep this as an option moving forward. Not everyone can attend in person.
- The person who I was trying to get a stalking order against me was harassing me on Facebook during the remote court session when the judge when he was explaining his decision not to grant my relief from abuse order. No I did not feel safe.
- During my case manager's conference, my spouse was texting me while we were on the call. He hung up twice from the conference when he was angry with me, then called back. He said he got disconnected. It was confusing and upsetting.

Communication Complaints: Sample of Comments

- If I was given the correct information to login to the video conference.
- The routines and protocols to ensure that people can get on the video conference was disorganized. There was a lack of communication between myself and the court in terms of the how and when. There was not enough lead time and email addresses and phone numbers from the court we're not clearly marked so it was easy to have those important notifications buried in my email and spam calls.
- There were a number of times where I had to call and email multiple people for a status on simply scheduling the court hearing which took months every time. Quicker scheduling would be appreciated so not to feel unheard/unimportant.
- The document I received was not very clear. I was unsure if it was just virtual or if it could be done in person so I called to find out. The person I spoke with said it was virtual, not in person, but come to find out, I could have been there and would have preferred to be.
- Be clear that it is not required to join via video too if joining by telephone is enough.
- The technical set up to participate in the hearing remotely was very poor concerning communication on the process. I was in the virtual waiting room and the court failed to enter me into the virtual hearing. I had to call the court to report they dropped me. The hearing is being rescheduled, which seems to take months. Very frustrating and ill run.
- I think there should be a summary after each hearing.
- I was in the courtroom with no one else there, I was not able to do remote video. I had a hard time following what was said, I could not hear the Judge and still don't know what my outcome was. [Plaintiff?] lied many times even under oath but I was not able to ask her any questions when she did so. I found the whole experience demeaning and would like to have had all of us present so that matters I found concerning could be voiced in person.
- I had never been to court for anything so had know idea what would happen. I got to talk with the police officer first. He told the judge what I wanted to plead She just agreed to it and it was done. No one told me what to do next.

Positive/General Comments: Sample of Comments

- Judge was very cordial, and respectful.
- WebEx is an unusual platform and I had a little trouble joining the hearing, but court staff was helpful and the judge waited a few minutes while I worked things out on my end.
- I appreciate the judge's knowledge of connections and understanding when I had to turn my screen off for a better connection.
- I have had the misfortune of participating in both in-person and remote hearings. I find the remote hearings to be a much easier and less challenging way to interact with the court. It allowed me to participate in hearings that otherwise would have involved substantial missed work.
- It was the same as being in the courtroom myself, yet much more convenient and much less time consuming! I hope they will continue and/or be available indefinitely.
- Thank you for providing this option. I no longer reside in the county the hearing took place in and this option was helpful.
- Remote worked well. I had no problems with the remote system. Just with the actual judicial officers that Vermont has employed.
- Everything was fine.
- My experience went as well as it could have.

- The remote hearing process has many advantages, and I sincerely appreciated the ability to take 30 min out of my day rather than 4 hrs to drive to and from the hearing. The instructions for the time and joining the meeting were very easy to follow. Once I joined the meeting, the police officer was very clear and respectful with his explanation and the judge was efficient and professional. The only thing that was confusing was when to leave the online meeting and how I would get follow-up information. There were other parties on the call, so when they moved to the next case, I logged off the meeting. Since I used an email address when I logged on, it would have been useful to see an automatic email that indicated that the results of the hearing would be mailed to me. The online judicial proceeding is a great COVID silver lining.
- It was quick, efficient and professional.
- I am unable to attend hearings in person, even before covid. In 2019 I had to fight and be belittled by a judge for not being present in a hearing and attending over the phone. I hope you keep this as an option moving forward. Not everyone can attend in person.