

Public Records in 2026

Five Trends Reshaping Government Agencies



+ The State of Public Records

Public records officers, clerks, and record managers across the country are facing a new reality. Over 130 government agencies responded to our 2026 Public Records Trend Survey, and the data is clear: **the work is growing faster than the workforce, and complexity is outpacing capacity.**



83%

of agencies report request volume increases in the past 2 years

40%

say at least one quarter of their requests are complex or "high-effort"

29%

cite staff turnover as their top compliance risk

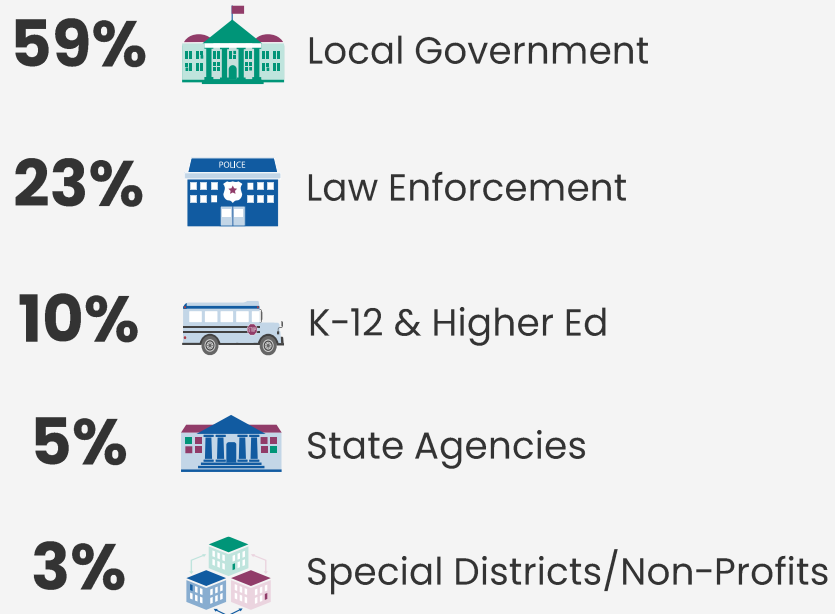
92%

are moving toward automated processes

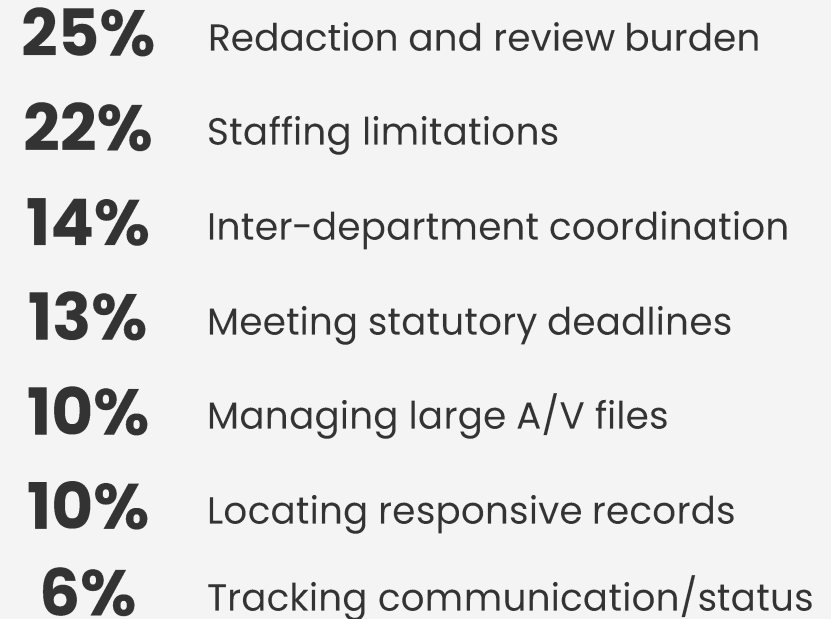
+ Who We Heard From

130 government agencies shared frontline experiences with public records management. Here is who completed the survey and the top challenges they are dealing with every day.

Government Agencies



Top Challenges Reported



Rising Request Volume and Complexity

Public records workloads are expanding at a pace most agencies were not built to absorb. The JustFOIA 2026 survey found that more than 83% of respondents reported increases in request volume over the past two years, **with more than a third seeing jumps of more than 50%.**

NASCIO and the Center for Digital Government consistently flag workload growth as a top operational pressure for government teams. But it's not just volume; it's complexity. Requests now span multiple departments and include electronic records like videos, email chains, and Teams messages, each requiring specialized tools to extract and review.



83%

report request volume increases in the past 2 years

40%

say at least one quarter of their requests are complex or "high-effort"

21%

are seeing more requirements for review and redaction

Daily Detours

Staff spend hours manually routing requests to the right departments, chasing down records across siloed systems, and tracking status through spreadsheets or email threads instead of doing real work.

Skip the Busywork

Automated routing, centralized tracking dashboards, and cross-department workflows eliminate manual coordination on every single request.

The Surge in Video and Audio Records Requests

Nowhere is the complexity challenge more evident than in video and audio records. Body-worn camera footage, dash cam video, and 911 call recordings now rank among the most frequently requested record types. Law enforcement records topped the JustFOIA survey at **21% of all request volume, with body-worn camera or audio/video a close second at 18%.**

A single body camera request can involve gigabytes of footage that require specialized redaction software, CJIS compliance review, and coordination among records, legal, and public safety staff.



33%

report increases
in video
and audio file
requests

25%

say redaction and
review is one of
their biggest
challenges

14%

of law enforcement
respondents name
content creators as
frequent requesters

Daily Detours

A single body-cam request can consume an entire day: download large files, review video for necessary redaction, coordinate with legal and public safety, and manage file delivery to the requester.

Skip the Busywork

Automated redaction tools and large file workflows mean your team handles high-complexity video requests without losing their entire day.

The Spotlight Fuels the Fire

Government agencies are no longer just managing records — they're managing the spotlight. Nearly half of the agencies surveyed experienced request spikes tied to media coverage, high-profile incidents, or viral events in the past year. This is a structural shift, not a temporary trend.

Viral TikTok or social media trends have created measurable spikes in FOIA volume across multiple agencies. **Even indirect agencies feel the ripple effect of incidents they were not involved in.** Just search TikTok for “FOIA request” or “public records requests,” and you’ll see the effect social media has had on the industry.



48%

experienced spikes tied to high-profile or viral incidents

27%

of frequent requesters are private citizens, often tied to media events

20%

of frequent requesters are social media influencers or media

Daily Detours

A news cycle or viral story sends a wave of requests from people who have never filed before, and your team must respond to each one with the same legal care and deadline discipline as any other request.

Cut the Risks

Public-facing request portals with transparent status updates reduce inbound follow-up calls and handle spike volume without adding staff.

Training Gaps and the Compliance Cliff

Behind every missed deadline is often a training gap. The JustFOIA survey found staff turnover and training deficiencies were the top-cited compliance risk—ahead of missed deadlines and incomplete searches. Government records positions see ~20% annual turnover, driven by retirement and private-sector competition.

New public records legislation is introduced each year in nearly every state, expanding requirements, modifying exemptions, and changing response timeframes. International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) recommends formal training at least annually, with quarterly updates during active legislative sessions.



29%

cite staff turnover or training gaps as their top compliance risk

26%

identify incomplete records searches as a major compliance exposure

15%

say inconsistent redactions are a major compliance risk

Daily Detours

A new hire uses outdated exemptions. A records clerk retires, taking institutional knowledge with them. The result: inconsistent responses, compliance gaps, and exposure to fines or litigation.

Cut the Risks

Built-in audit trails, deadline tracking, and automated redaction create a compliance safety net that survives staff changes—so institutional knowledge lives in the system, not just in people.

Automation is No Longer Optional

Automation has crossed the threshold from innovation to operational necessity. JustFOIA's survey found that 53% of agencies are already largely standardized, with just 8% remaining fully manual. Government technology investment is increasingly concentrated in workflow automation over custom development.

The compliance case is equally compelling. Agencies using automated deadline tracking and workflows report significantly fewer missed responses and reduced processing times. Automated redaction reduces manual review burden, and centralized audit trails provide the documentation needed to defend against litigation.



92%

of agencies are using or moving towards automation software

45%

of the greatest compliance risks cited would be reduced with automation software

68%

of the greatest challenges named would be solved with automated software

Daily Detours

Manual tracking means deadlines get missed when someone is out sick. Email threads get lost. Requests fall through the cracks between departments. Every manual handoff is a compliance risk waiting to happen.

Cut the Risks

Automated workflows, smart reminders, AI-assisted redaction, and Laserfiche integration don't just save time. They build the compliance infrastructure that protects your agency as the workload keeps growing.

+ The Trends Are Here.

The agencies that act now will be the ones with more good days.

Public records request management is not getting simpler. Volume is rising, complexity is growing, and staffing levels are unlikely to keep up with increasing workloads. But agencies that invest in the right technology, training, and partners are not just surviving these trends. They are using them as an opportunity to modernize, build public trust, and free their teams to focus on the work that matters.



CUT THE RISKS

with a proven tech partner that knows exactly what it takes to keep organizations like yours compliant and secure.



SKIP THE BUSYWORK

with best-in-class software, automation, and integrations designed to free up time in everyone's day.



GET THE HELP YOU NEED

from responsive GovTech experts who are always there to support you and help achieve your goals.

JustFOIA Records Requests



"Any and All" Document Management



Redaction



Payment Portal



Public Portal



Security



Single Sign-On



Workflow Automation



Correspondence



Custom Forms



Laserfiche Integration



Advanced Reporting



User Training

**Get more good days done
with JustFOIA**

