



Public Affairs Council

THE PANDEMIC AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS: ONE YEAR LATER



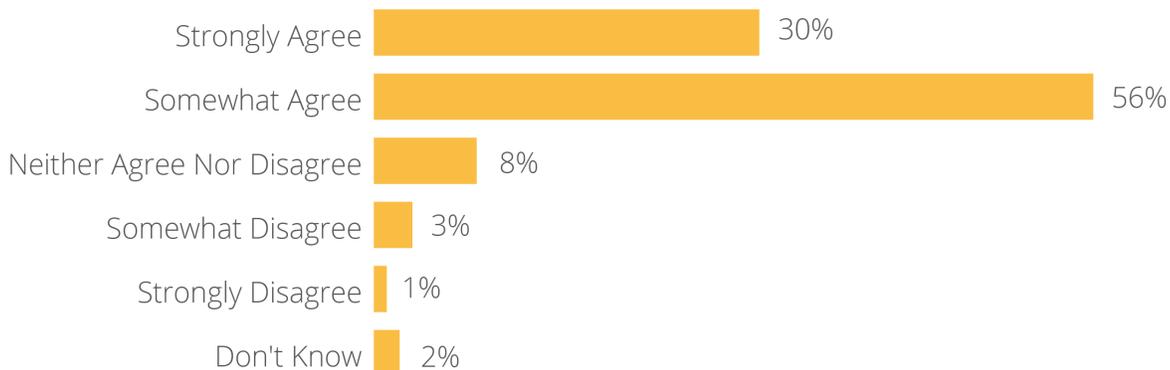
MAY 2021

ADVOCATES ADAPT TO REMOTE WORK AND LIMITED FACE TIME WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Savvy lobbyists know how to work a room, but can they work with Zoom? According to the vast majority of government affairs executives who answered a new Public Affairs Council survey, the answer is an unqualified "Yes!"

The poll finds that 87% of government affairs executives say it will become increasingly common to use video conferencing for lobbying, and 83% believe their staffs are already proficient with Zoom, Teams and other platforms. In fact, two-thirds (66%) of government affairs executives say their staffs can do their entire jobs well while working remotely.

Video Conferences with Policymakers and Staffs Will Increasingly Replace In-Person Meetings



What's more, 65% say it has been easier to reach elected officials by phone or video conferencing during the pandemic than they expected. And a plurality (46%) claim that video calls can sometimes be more effective than face-to-face meetings.

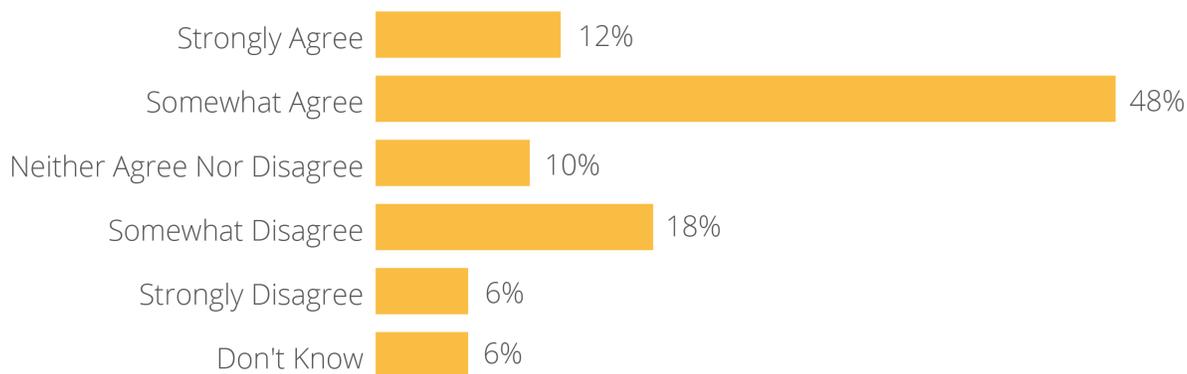


The survey of 157 government affairs executives, conducted in April 2021, provides an update on a similar survey the Council conducted in May 2020 shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began sweeping across the globe.

IN-PERSON MEETINGS WITH FEDERAL POLICYMAKERS WILL BECOME MORE RARE

For advocates of all stripes, it's fortunate that video conferencing has gone mainstream since 60% believe that, even after the pandemic is over, it will remain difficult to meet with federal policymakers in person. In last year's survey, 71% were pessimistic of their chances of getting face time soon with policymakers.

It Will Remain Difficult to Meet with Federal Policymakers In-Person After Pandemic is Over

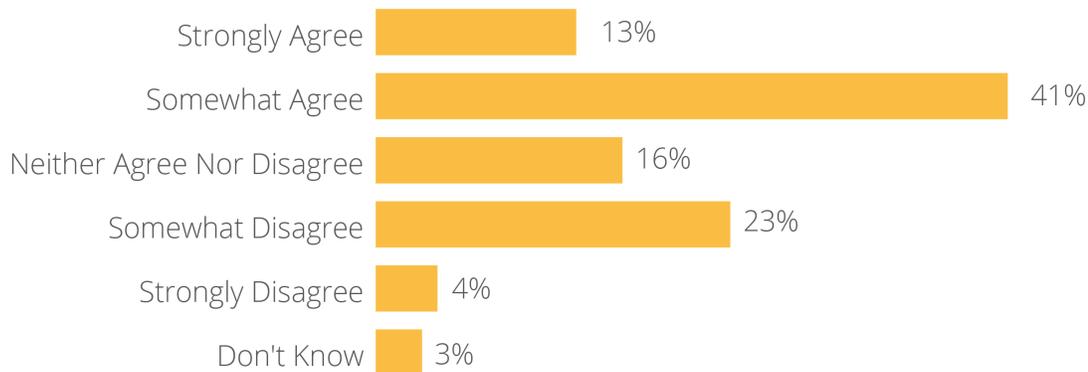


While advocacy at the national level will rely heavily on video conferencing, in-person meetings are already returning in some states. Only 35% of government affairs executives now think it will remain difficult to meet with state elected officials face-to-face, which is down substantially from last May when 54% expected to be communicating on a video platform for the foreseeable future.

DIGITAL ADVOCACY IS RISING, BUT IS TRADITIONAL LOBBYING WANING?

One of the most interesting results of the 2020 poll was that 61% believed the pandemic would bring about a decline in traditional lobbying and an increase in digital advocacy strategies such as online grassroots campaigns and issue advertising on social media. Over the past 11 months, the percentage of executives more bullish about digital advocacy has shrunk to 54%. But only 27% say there won't be a rise in the use of digital advocacy tools and a decline in traditional lobbying methods.

Pandemic Will Spur Decline in Traditional Lobbying and Growth in Digital Advocacy



MOST SAY BIDEN WAS WELL-PREPARED TO HANDLE COVID-19

Government affairs executives give President Biden high marks for his efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that all Americans have access to vaccinations. While 60% agree he was well-prepared to effectively manage the nation's response to the pandemic, only 15% disagree. Ninety-four percent (94%) say governors vary widely in their ability to manage their state's response.

PANDEMIC'S IMPACT WILL CONTINUE TO DOMINATE POLICYMAKING

The pandemic has also had a profound impact on legislative agendas. In last year's survey, 67% predicted that, for the rest of 2020, federal and state governments would be reluctant to consider policy issues unrelated to COVID-19. Now, a whopping 96% of government affairs executives believe that through the rest of 2021, the pandemic and its impact will continue to dominate policymaking at both the federal and state levels.

The most common responses to likely policy changes resulting from the pandemic are the continuation of short-term financial support to certain industries and small businesses (79%), closer collaboration with other countries and the WHO to prevent or minimize future pandemics (62%), extending healthcare coverage to more people who are uninsured (53%), and budget crunches at the state level that will result in major program cuts and/or tax increases (51%).

PRIVATE SECTOR HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN SUPPORTING PUBLIC HEALTH

Survey respondents give their own organizations high scores for handling the pandemic. Ninety-six percent (96%) say their organization has managed the crisis well given its severity, a score that increased slightly from 94% last year. Most organizations represented in the survey have taken a direct role in supporting public health initiatives. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents have engaged in one or more public health programs. The most widely conducted initiatives have been educating the public (46%), distributing PPE (40%), providing COVID-19 testing services/facilities (26%), supporting vaccinations through employee incentives (22%) and providing services and/or facilities for vaccinations (21%).

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENTS DEAL WITH BUDGET CUTS, TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Given the economic impact of the pandemic, it's not surprising that 28% of executives report major budget cuts; this percentage was down from 39% last year. Restrictions on non-essential travel were likely to continue post-pandemic for 81% of respondents last year and for 60% this year. However, the percentage who strongly believe that non-essential travel will be restricted even after the pandemic is over has dropped from 39% in 2020 to only 15% this year.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Both nonpartisan and nonpolitical, the Public Affairs Council is the leading association for public affairs professionals worldwide. The Council's mission is to advance the field of public affairs and to provide its 700 member companies and associations with the executive education and expertise they need to succeed while maintaining the highest ethical standards.

This survey analysis is based on responses from 157 government affairs executives who completed an online poll in April 2021. The most common responding organizations were corporations (47%), associations (26%), consulting firms/agencies (14%) and non-profit groups (8%).

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