

# The State of Fax:

## A survey on current fax usage, satisfaction and issues



## Background and Methodology: The State of Fax Survey

*“The (fax) machine at the Harris County Public Health department in Houston recently became overwhelmed when one laboratory sent a large batch of test results, spraying hundreds of pages all over the floor.*

*“ ‘Picture the image of hundreds of faxes coming through, and the machine just shooting out paper,’ said Dr. Umair Shah, executive director of the department.”<sup>1</sup>*

Healthcare is just one industry where faxing persists, for many good reasons:

1. Faxing technology and protocols are secure against malicious attack
2. It is a secure and HIPAA-compliant means to share Protected Health Information (information that can be linked to an individual about health status, healthcare provision)
3. Paper records and forms persist in many physician’s offices, clinics and healthcare facilities
4. Despite the growing and encouraged use of Electronic Health Records, EHRs suffer from incompatibility and interoperability. Faxing records is an easy common denominator.

Faxing is a fixture of many industries—legal, financial, government, manufacturing. It is a technology that will not simply go away.

Rather than ignoring fax, TechGenix initiated this study to shed more light on fax technology, to gain understanding from the organizations, companies and individuals using it.

TechGenix offers a content hub with new articles daily that attract over 650,000 visitors per month. It presented this survey to its readership targeting IT and Business readers who used fax technology.

The State of Fax survey had 253 respondents. With this sample size, extrapolating results to the larger faxing population has an approximately six percent margin of error, with a confidence level of 18 times out of 20.

<sup>1</sup> Bottleneck for U.S. Coronavirus Response: The Fax Machine  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/13/upshot/coronavirus-response-fax-machines.html>



## The Fax Survey questions

- ① *What type of fax solution is used in your organization?*
- ② *How many employees regularly use fax in your organization?*
- ③ *How many pages does your organization send and receive in a typical week?*
- ④ *How do you expect your fax usage to change over the coming year?*
- ⑤ *What systems is your fax solution integrated with?*
- ⑥ *What do you consider to be the main challenge with fax? (Select up to three)*
- ⑦ *What would you consider to be the most important benefits of an ideal fax solution?*
- ⑧ *How satisfied are you with your current fax solution?*
- ⑨ *How has COVID-19 impacted your faxing capability?*

We also asked a number of demographic questions to understand the differences in fax usage based on industry, size of company, and job roles.



## Results

### What is your industry vertical?

It is useful to understand the audience to put the responses and percentages in context. About half of the respondents were in the industries we considered heavier users of faxing: Healthcare, Legal, Financial, Government and Manufacturing.

It was interesting to note that manufacturing/transportation/logistics was as high as healthcare in our study.

There was also a high percentage—over 25 percent—for Services as a vertical. Services is a broad category; it may include services for the key industries noted previously.

## What type of faxing service are you using?

There was an even set of one-third/one-third/one-third among respondents for the three main faxing options.

Just over one-third of respondents indicated they were using traditional paper fax machines.

One-third were using digital faxing technologies, either fax server software or cloud-based fax services.

The remaining one-third of respondents were using a mix of these two faxing approaches. This indicates that traditional paper fax machines are likely in operation for about half of the companies or organizations.

We looked at the results by industry, recognizing that the smaller sample sizes increase the margin of error. The data showed an anomaly with Government respondents as much higher users of traditional paper-based faxes, at almost 66 percent or two-thirds of their group compared with about 30 percent for the full sample. They were also the smallest adopters of a fax server approach.

The Financial sector was the highest user of fax server, at one-third of the respondents for that digital fax approach alone.

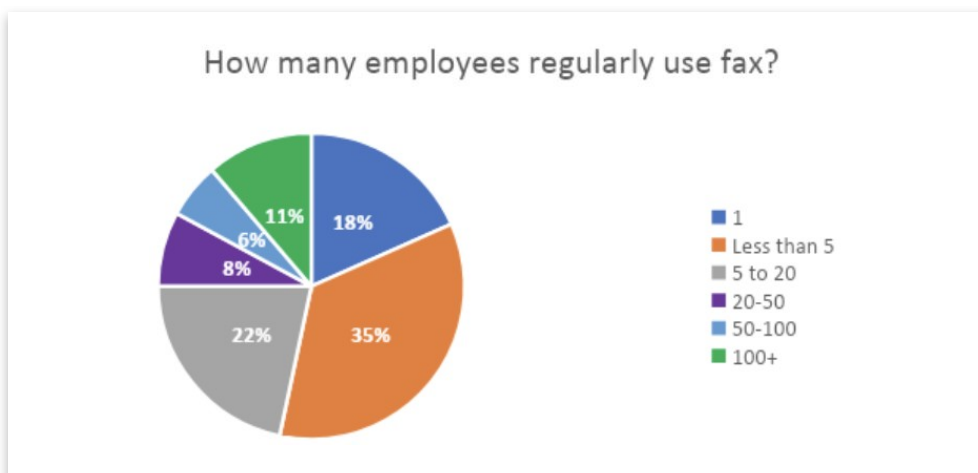
Fax servers typically require an initial capital outlay but are cheaper in the long run rather than paying per page for cloud faxing services. This is especially true if you are sending or receiving more than a few multi-page faxes per week. The high proportion of Financial services companies (banks, insurance companies) choosing this option is in keeping with their tendency to be early and savvy technology adopters, ready to make an investment that offers a positive ROI within a defined timeframe.



## How many employees regularly use fax in your organization?

The majority of fax operations have five or fewer people regularly engaged with the technology. However, surprisingly, about 25 percent have more than 20 and even over 100 people faxing on a regular basis.

This finding of many light users and a few but significant number of heavy users is amplified in the next question about the amount of pages faxed. Most organizations that do fax, fax relatively sparingly. But there is a minority of organizations that do a large volume of faxing. They are responsible for the majority of faxes sent and delivered each day.



## How many pages does your organization fax (send and receive) in a week?

About half of respondents use fax sparingly – with less than 20 pages being sent or received per week. About 20 percent are heavy users, with over 100 pages in transmission on a weekly basis. In a broad way, you could say there are two camps: “lite” faxers on one end; heavy faxers on the other. With these numbers, we could assume that **80 percent of the faxes being sent or received are from 20 percent of the organizations using fax.**

Generally, larger numbers of employees at a company was a good indicator of a larger number of pages being transmitted. But a stronger indicator was the number of employees who regularly send faxes. More fax users = much higher fax volumes and an organization that depends on fax communications as a regular business practice.

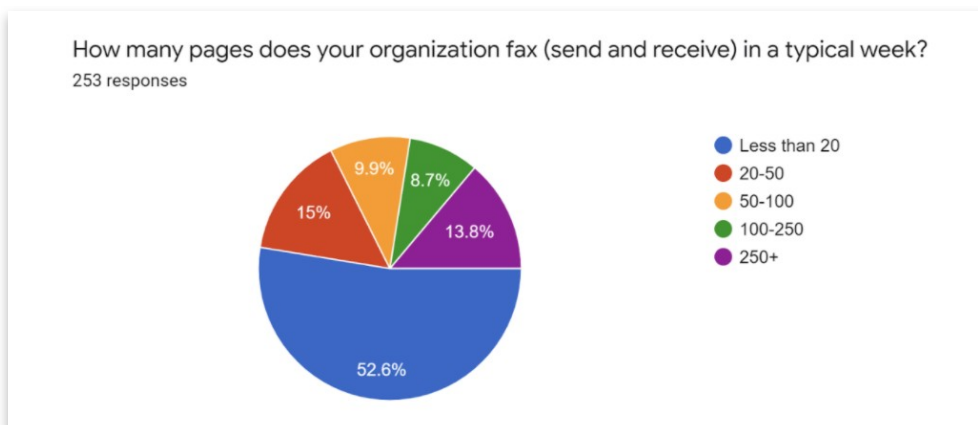
Having many people actively engaged with sending or receiving faxes can create a challenging situation. Traditional paper machines become choke points. The fact many people use them sets up privacy and security problems. Your undelivered fax sits on a machine in view; I put it on a

nearby table to send mine. Others can see it, remove it, mis-file it. Having many people engaged with faxing requires more dedicated fax management and policies.

Healthcare was the largest vertical in the heavy-user group sending or receiving more than 100 pages in a week. This is indicative of the ongoing reliance on fax communication in healthcare. This group of heavy users in healthcare also had a wide range of company sizes: from under 50 to over 1000 employees. However, the healthcare heavy-user group also had many fax users.

Surprisingly, a significant portion (20 percent) of the heavy users across industries relied on traditional paper fax machines to handle their load. This points to ongoing opportunities for cost and time savings for big fax technology users. Almost 50 percent of heavy users had a mix of digital and traditional fax approaches.

Cloud, or SaaS usage was the lowest among heavy users, about half of the number using Fax Servers. This is likely due to the metering cost per page of cloud faxing. This would make large volumes expensive.



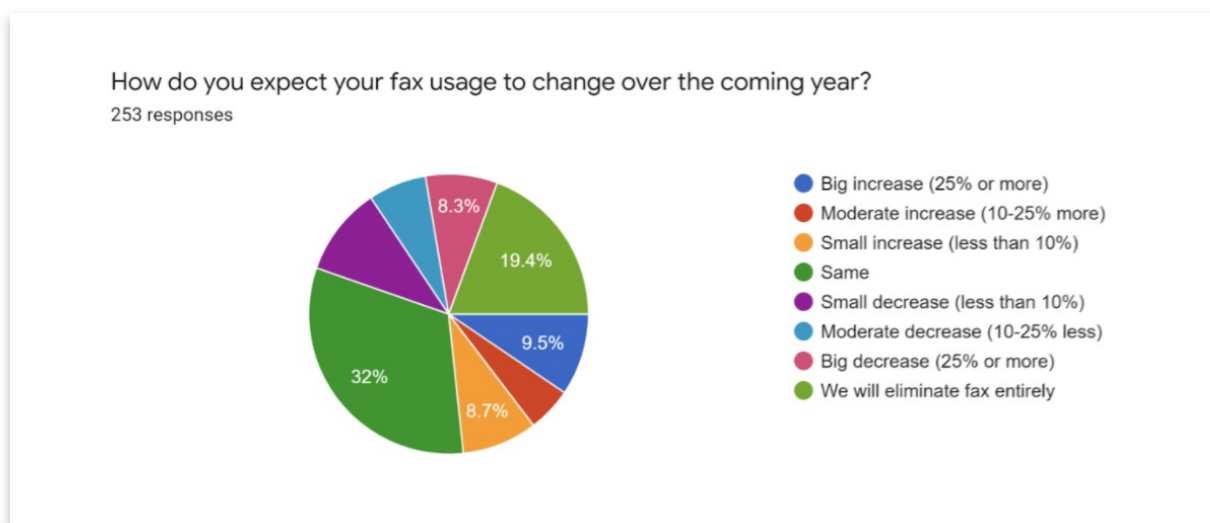
## How do you expect your fax usage to change over the coming year?

Faxing may be waning in people’s perception, but it will not disappear any time soon. This is consistent with most other studies and anecdotal evidence. Indeed, about **25 percent of the participants in this study project some level of increase in their faxing 2020-2021**. About one-third of the total respondents thought fax levels would remain the same.

On the opposite end, 20 percent of respondents indicated they plan to eliminate faxing in the coming year. Light users—organizations sending or receiving less than 20 pages per week—make up 90 percent of the “eliminate” responders, with a significant portion from manufacturing and finance. Low levels of faxing make it easier to find alternates; manufacturing faces less regulatory issues; the financial vertical typically has budgets that allow for more choice in technology decision-making.

The response from the **heavy fax user cohort** is quite interesting. **Roughly 50 percent expect some level of increase in their amount of faxing** for the coming year. Given that these heavy users account for perhaps 80 percent of the actual fax pages sent or received in a year, we may anticipate more pages being sent electronically, year over year.

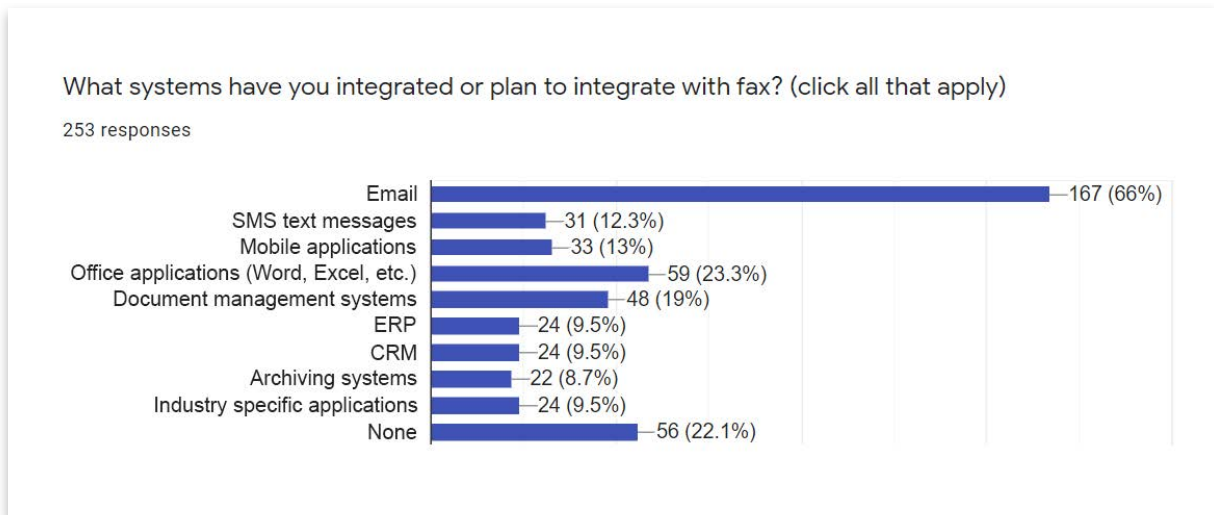
Only one respondent from the heavy user cohort declared their intention to eliminate faxing in 2021.



## What do you integrate with your fax systems?

Fax remains a largely standalone application except for email. This is consistent with the general respondents’ use of different faxing approaches—digital methods are typically done through email applications.

The lack of other integrations points to an opportunity for improved ease of use for fax communications. Healthcare is a prime example. Having fax integrated with electronic health record (EHR) systems would make sending, receiving, retrieving and archiving fax data far more seamless. For healthcare, faxing is often the “lowest common denominator” for information exchange. Having the ability to consume incoming faxes digitally into your EHR would save staff time and increase the utility of fax data (and eliminate the machines shooting pages image noted at the beginning of this report).



## What do you consider to be the main challenge with faxing?

Biggest challenge: Time.

Respondents could select up to three challenges; a majority had some element of “time-consuming” in their choices.

For those that selected “time-consuming” as their only challenge, all but one relied on traditional paper fax machines or a combination of digital and tradition paper faxing.

Among the heavy fax user cohort, “time-consuming” was also the most prevalent selection of challenges, at roughly the same rate as the overall survey.

“Time-consuming” was also the main challenge for healthcare users. No healthcare users selected “security” as a primary concern. It did show up in second place or third after “time-consuming” for some respondents



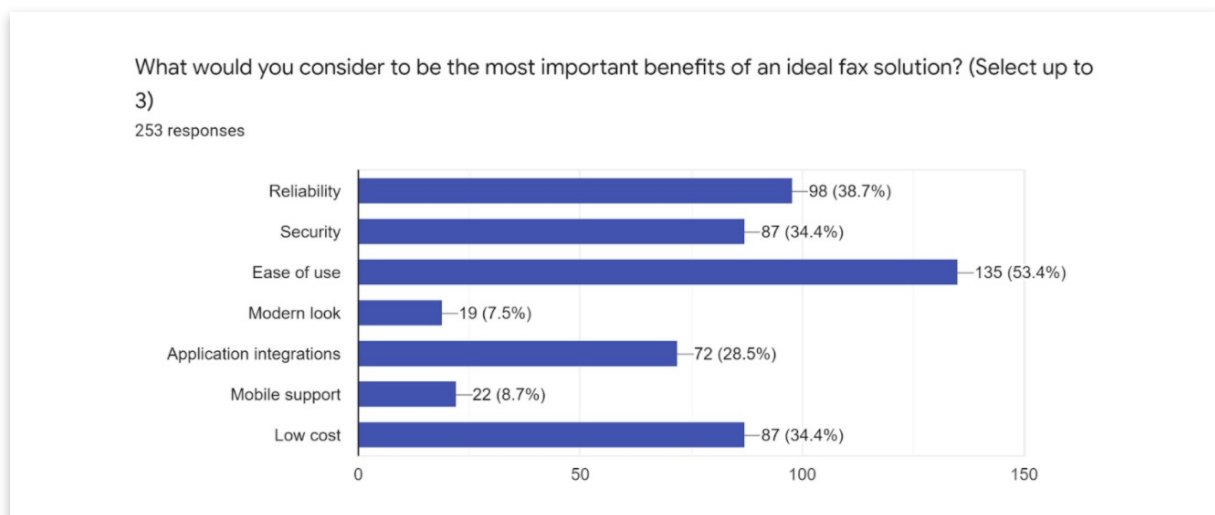


## What do you consider the most important benefits of an ideal fax solution?

A majority of respondents (53 percent) selected Ease of Use as key to their ideal fax solution. This is consistent with many other user surveys we have conducted. Ease of use (rather than, say, “more features”) is the user desire for almost every technology.

However, when we examine the heavy-user cohort (more than 100 pages faxing per week), “Reliability” takes top spot, selected solely or as first by more than half of these significant users. Their volume of faxing indicates this technology plays a central role in their communications and/or business, meaning reliability would be a key feature.

Respondents choosing the third most selected benefit, “Low cost”, were overwhelmingly from the low-user cohort of under-20 pages. Their use of fax is limited, and this group want to spend the least amount possible on the technology.



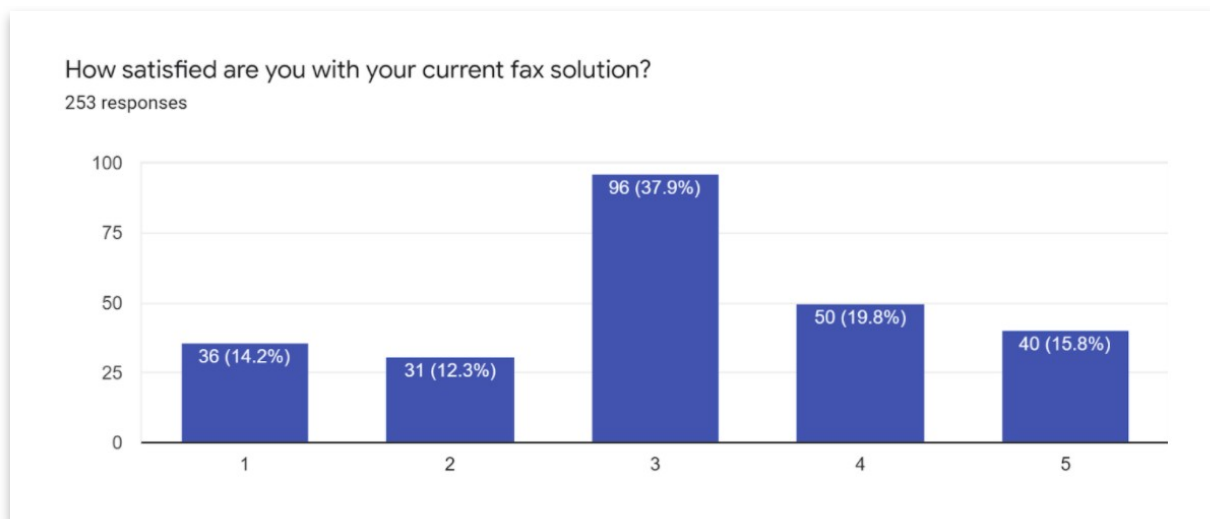
## How satisfied are you with your current fax solution?

The average fax user is averagely satisfied with their fax solution. Satisfaction comes in at about 3.1 across all respondents. More people are very satisfied or extremely satisfied with their fax application than those with below-average satisfaction.

The most satisfied vertical among those we can identify is manufacturing. The least satisfied is government or public sector.

More than half of the heavy-user cohort were very or extremely satisfied with their fax solution, putting them at a higher level of satisfaction than the average respondent. The few heavy-users who rated satisfaction as a “1” relied on traditional paper fax machines.

The most represented user group rating their fax experience as a “1” were low-usage faxers: 75 percent of the “1” ratings came from the group sending or receiving less than 20 faxes in a week. This correlates with the characteristics of the organizations wanting to eliminate fax in the coming year.



## How has COVID-19 impacted your faxing capability?

Just under 16 percent of respondents saw COVID-19 and the resulting business shutdowns as affecting their ability to fax. Those affected were spread across industries, though with less healthcare organizations than the volume of healthcare respondents would have indicated. An additional 12 percent are investigating options for remote faxing.

On the positive side, just over 30 percent saw no impact, due to the fact they were already using digital fax applications. The remainder of respondents found workarounds—either with some staff still in offices and able to access fax capabilities, or physically relocating fax machines to employees’ homes to manage the communications.

The one lesson or takeaway seems to be that digital faxing approaches gave organizations more agility dealing with the unforeseen COVID-19 crisis.

How has COVID-19 impacted your faxing capability?

253 responses



## Conclusions and observations

### A minority of faxing organizations send the majority of faxes

Faxes sent and received seem to obey the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of the pages faxed are sent or received by 20 percent of the organizations. Most companies use fax sparingly, if they use it at all. A minority of companies are heavy users and send/receive hundreds of pages per week.

### Faxing will continue to persist for years to come

Many more companies anticipate their use of fax to increase or remain at the same levels than those reducing their use of fax. The average user's satisfaction with faxing is not highly negative, and generally on par with many technologies. Options exist for companies dissatisfied with faxing to choose alternate means to send and receive faxes, especially for those on traditional fax platforms who have not experienced the benefits of digital faxing.

### Despite the digital options available, traditional paper fax machines continue to be used

One-third of respondents use traditional paper faxing, and a further one-third have a mix of digital and traditional paper machines. Perhaps, seeking fax alternatives may not be a priority for IT or procurement departments. They may be unaware of how their organizations use fax and the opportunities for cost and time savings.

## Better fax integration could save companies time and money

While fax has integrations with email, there are numerous opportunities for other system and process integrations. Fax to finance systems; fax to legal applications; and of course, fax to electronic health records systems are key examples.

## Fax users want ease of use and to cut the time it takes to fax

The main challenges and benefits mentioned by fax users relate to easier to use and saving time. Security or compliance are typically reasons people choose fax, but they were not as significant in what people said they wanted. Perhaps people who use fax already understand and see those values. After ease of use, the next most important benefit is reliability, especially among heavy fax users.

## Digital faxing organization fared better from the impact of COVID-19

The flexibility digital faxing affords, rather than relying on physical devices, meant less disruption when employees were asked to stay home. Faxing capability could be extended to work-from-home teams relatively easily. The need to fax continued through the COVID-19 situation; digital faxing gave more agility to those companies using it.

### About TechGenix

TechGenix Ltd is an online media company providing high quality technical content to IT professionals. It empowers them with the answers and tools that are needed to set up, configure, maintain, and enhance their networks.

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