



85% of Lawyers Use AI, Yet Manual Work Still Dominates Legal Workflows, New Progress Software Report Reveals

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State of Legal 2026 report shows how AI, automation and streamlined processes can reduce delays and strengthen client confidence

BURLINGTON, Mass., July 08, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [Progress Software](#) (Nasdaq: PRGS), the trusted provider of AI-powered digital experience and infrastructure software, today announced the release of its *State of Legal 2026* benchmarking report. Based on a nationwide survey of U.S.-based lawyers conducted by Regina Corso Consulting, the report reveals that while AI adoption is now widespread across the legal industry, many firms are still working to translate that momentum into fully efficient, modernized workflows. [The full report is available here.](#)

Despite rapid uptake of AI tools, many legal teams continue to rely on manual, fragmented processes. The report finds that 85% of lawyers are already using AI for tasks such as legal research, document summarization and intake support. However, 77% say much of their work remains manual and 73% report workflows that include too many steps, highlighting a significant opportunity to better integrate AI, automation and process design to meet the demands of a digital-first, client-driven environment.

"Legal teams aren't slow to adopt AI: 85% are already using it. The issue is that most firms are layering AI on top of broken, manual processes instead of rethinking how work gets done," said Loren Jarrett, EVP and GM of Digital Experience, Progress Software. "Our research makes it clear that meaningful gains don't come from adding more tools—they come from eliminating friction. Firms that standardize workflows, automate intake and build governance into their technology stack will enable themselves to unlock the benefits of AI tools to move faster, scale smarter and deliver the kind of client experience modern legal work demands."

Key Findings from the *State of Legal 2026* Report

- **AI adoption is widespread, but governance is still evolving:** Eighty-five percent of lawyers report using AI for tasks such as legal research, document summarization, case management and intake support. However, 36% cite a lack of governance or training as an ongoing challenge as adoption scales.
- **Automation improves work life, but adoption remains limited:** While 82% say automation has improved their work lives, only 24% report that a significant portion of their daily work is automated. Integration challenges, budget constraints and security concerns remain the top barriers to broader adoption.
- **Client intake remains a critical opportunity for improvement:** Nearly half (47%) say intake takes four days or longer, even though most believe it should take two to three days or less. Additionally, 94% say faster intake would improve outcomes, and 92% say automation would enable them to take on more business.
- **Legal productivity is constrained by inefficient processes:** While lawyers are satisfied with their work, 52% say they feel effective but not efficient due to manual tasks, unnecessary handoffs and fragmented systems.
- **Tool sprawl and inconsistency slow teams down:** Eighty-four percent say inconsistent processes across teams or systems reduce efficiency, and 95% want legal technology that is simple, intuitive and free of unnecessary features.

"It really comes down to understanding AI and understanding how to leverage it and how to screen it," said Whitney Harper, Co-Founder, ADVOS legal & ADVOS Pro. "But what I firmly believe is that AI is not here to take our jobs as lawyers. If we can figure out how to harness it, we can free ourselves up to deliver incredible value, do our best work and really enjoy the practice."

As firms look to close these operational gaps, technologies like [Progress® ShareFile®](#) are helping modernize how legal work gets done. By combining secure document management, AI-powered automation and streamlined client intake, these platforms enable legal teams to reduce friction, accelerate turnaround times and deliver more consistent, streamlined client experiences.

About the Survey

The *State of Legal 2026* report is based on a nationwide survey of 304 U.S.-based lawyers working in both law firms and in-house legal departments. The research explores job satisfaction, operational efficiency, client intake, technology adoption, automation, AI usage and security challenges shaping the future of legal work.

About Progress Software

[Progress Software](#) (Nasdaq: PRGS) empowers organizations to achieve transformational success in the face of disruptive change. Our software enables our customers to develop, deploy and manage responsible AI-powered applications and personalized digital experiences with agility and ease. Businesses of all sizes get a trusted provider in Progress, with the products, expertise and vision they need to turn AI disruption into a competitive advantage. Millions of developers and technologists at hundreds of thousands of organizations depend on Progress every day. Learn

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