

2022

CARLTON FIELDS

CLASS ACTION SURVEY

BEST PRACTICES IN REDUCING COST AND MANAGING RISK IN CLASS ACTION LITIGATION

CARLTON FIELDS

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Introduction

Carlton Fields is pleased to share its 11th annual Class Action Survey, which provides an overview of important issues and practices related to class action matters and management. This annual publication reports on historical trends captured since the inception of the survey and includes information related to emerging issues in class action litigation.

Class action spending has increased for seven consecutive years, and it is expected to continue to rise in 2022. Companies with class actions are seeing increases in the number of class actions they face at a given time. The current portfolio reveals the highest number of both ongoing matters and total matters since the inception of this survey 11 years ago.

The 2022 Carlton Fields Class Action Survey is based on interviews with general counsel or senior legal officers at more than 400 *Fortune* 1000 and other large companies across a variety of industries. They shared their thoughts about class action exposure and best practices for class action management. We thank you for taking the time to review our report. As always, we aspire to provide valuable information that will assist your company and its legal department in managing class litigation both effectively and efficiently.

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Executive Summary

Defense Spending on Class Actions Heads Up for the Seventh Straight Year — Hits New Record

Companies are spending more upfront, face record caseloads, and are keeping in-house attorneys at the same levels as last year. This translates into increased spending to assess and defend class action matters.

Labor and Employment Tops All Class Actions Companies Face

COVID-19 is seen as causing increased labor and employment claims — especially wage and hour, discrimination, and workplace safety claims.

Labor and Employment, Consumer Fraud, and Data Privacy Expected to Lead Next Wave of Class Actions

Companies expect more labor-related claims along with data privacy claims to lead the next wave of class actions. The two are related as work-from-home and hybrid work environments increase the chances of the unauthorized release of data.

Consumer Fraud Claims Expected to Soar

Companies' increasing use of social media to make statements is becoming a magnet for plaintiffs' counsel to allege false claims. The audiences for such claims are wide and the plaintiffs' bar is aggressive, with statements regarding environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues drawing particular attention. Pharmaceutical and supplement manufacturers increasingly are attracting new claims.

Class Action Caseload at Each Company to Hit a Record High in 2022

The typical large company can anticipate a 27% increase in class action caseload in 2022.

Number of In-House Attorneys Managing Class Actions Is Down One Attorney Since 2018

Most companies are keeping in-house staffing levels unchanged from 2020, which is one attorney lower than our 2018 survey.

Companies Plan to Increase Reliance on Outside Counsel

The increased caseload, variability of issues between cases, and unpredictable staffing needs find in-house counsel increasingly relying on outside counsel to defend class actions.



Fewer AFAs Being Used

More companies are opting for hourly rates to move through their caseload after years of experimentation with alternative fee arrangements (AFAs).

Trusted Outside Counsel, Early Case Assessment Equal Powerful Cost Reduction Tools

Companies point to trust in outside counsel to do the right thing for companies as the most effective cost management tool. This is followed closely by early case assessment, which is especially valuable when performed by trusted outside counsel.

Bet-the-Company Matters on the Decline

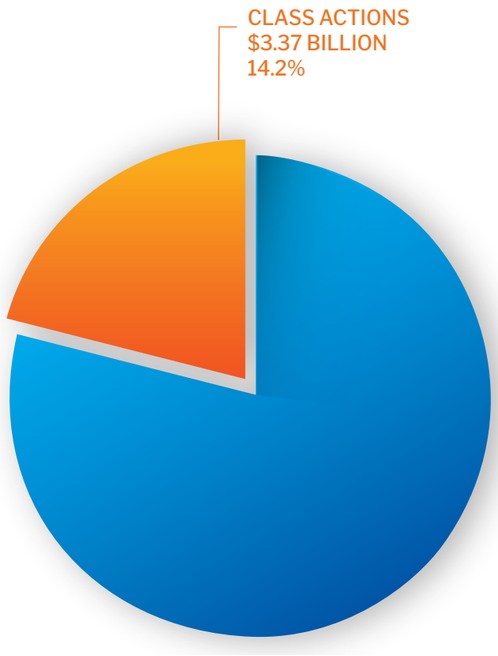
The number of companies facing bet-the-company matters dropped substantially to less than 5%. While the class actions these companies face may be complex, they are now less likely to be perceived as critical to the balance sheet or the stock price.

Class Action Spending and Budgets

Class Action Budgets Take Up a Bit More of the Corporate Legal Budget

Companies increased the percentage of the budget they allocate to class actions to 14.2% from almost 13% last year. Spending on class actions increased to cross the $3 billion threshold for the first time. Class action spending is expected to be one of the fastest-growing areas of legal spending. See page 7 for spending history.

$23.7 Billion Market for Legal Services in Litigation

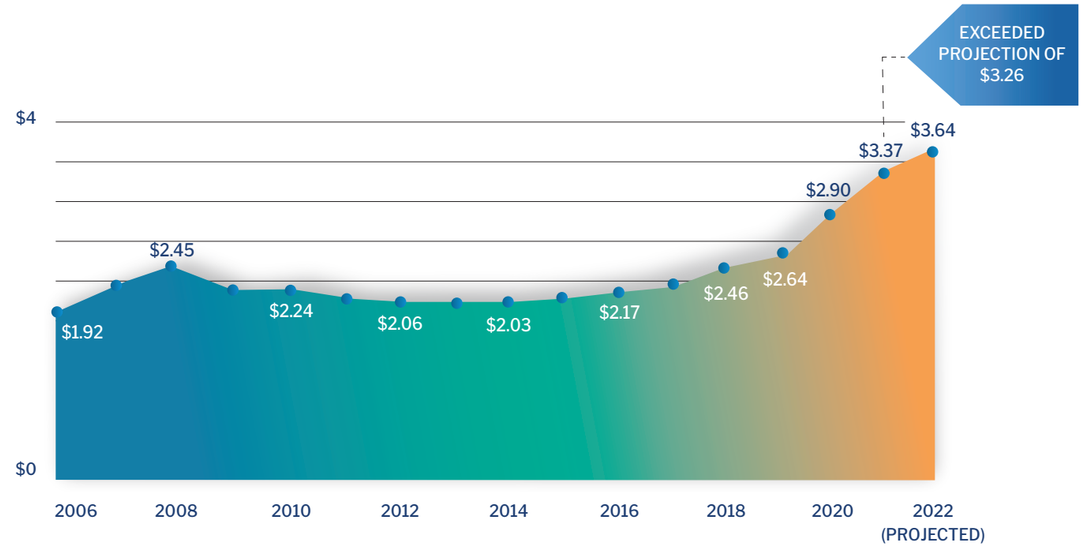


Spending on Class Actions Heads Up for the Seventh Straight Year

Corporate legal spending on defending class actions grew a record-breaking 16% in 2021. Spending on class actions is expected to rise another 8% in 2022, an increase second only to 2021. There are two main drivers to this anticipated increase in class action legal spending. First, front-end spending is up as companies become more aggressive about their defense strategies. Second, companies with class actions are spending more per case than in prior years.

US Corporate Legal Spending on Class Actions

$ BILLIONS



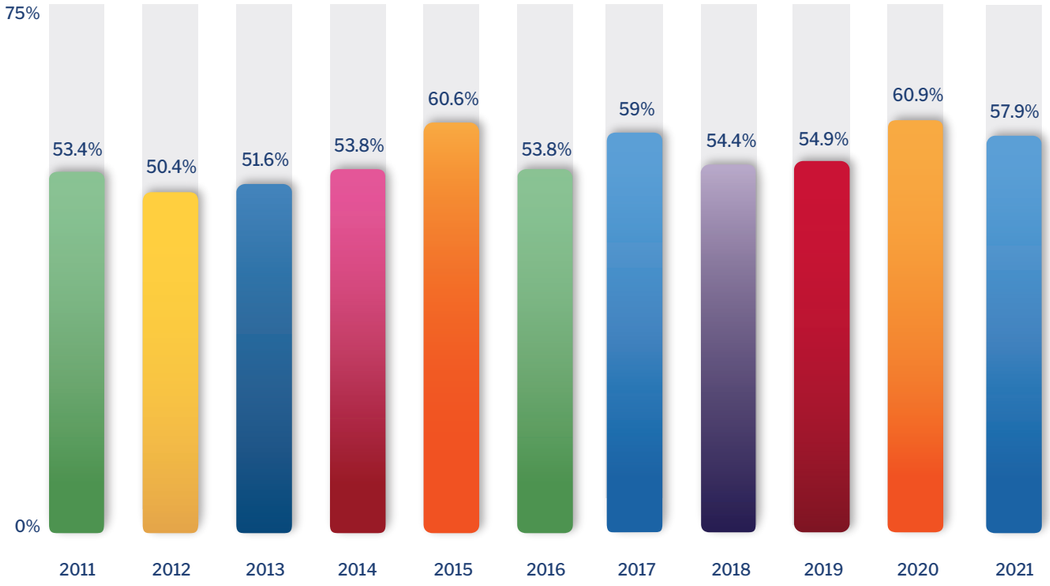


Number of Companies Facing Class Actions Dips in 2021 After a Big Increase Last Year

The number of companies facing class actions declined in 2021 after a big jump in 2020. As discussed on page 7, spending on class actions increased, meaning companies with class actions are spending more than in prior years. That is, legal spending on class actions is up and is spread across fewer companies.

Companies with Class Actions

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



Labor and Employment Takes Largest Share of Budget and Matters, Consumer Fraud Second

Labor and employment accounts for the greatest class action spending and number of matters. Consumer fraud accounts for the second-largest portion of class action spending.

Class Actions and Annual Spending Breakdown by Type

PERCENT OF MATTERS AND SPENDING

PRACTICE	MATTERS	SPENDING
LABOR & EMPLOYMENT	25.6%	23.5%
CONSUMER FRAUD	19.6%	19.4%
INSURANCE	13.5%	13.6%
SECURITIES	9%	11.7%
PRODUCT LIABILITY	6.6%	5.6 %
COVID-19	6.1%	6.2%
TECHNICAL STATUTORY VIOLATIONS	6%	4.4%
ANTITRUST	5.2%	6.8%

Note: Chart does not add up to 100%. Excludes other types of class actions each accounting for less than 5% of matters and spending, including intellectual property, commercial contracts, negligence and nuisance, agent commissions, data privacy/cybersecurity, environmental, and property damage.

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Labor and Employment Class Actions Grow

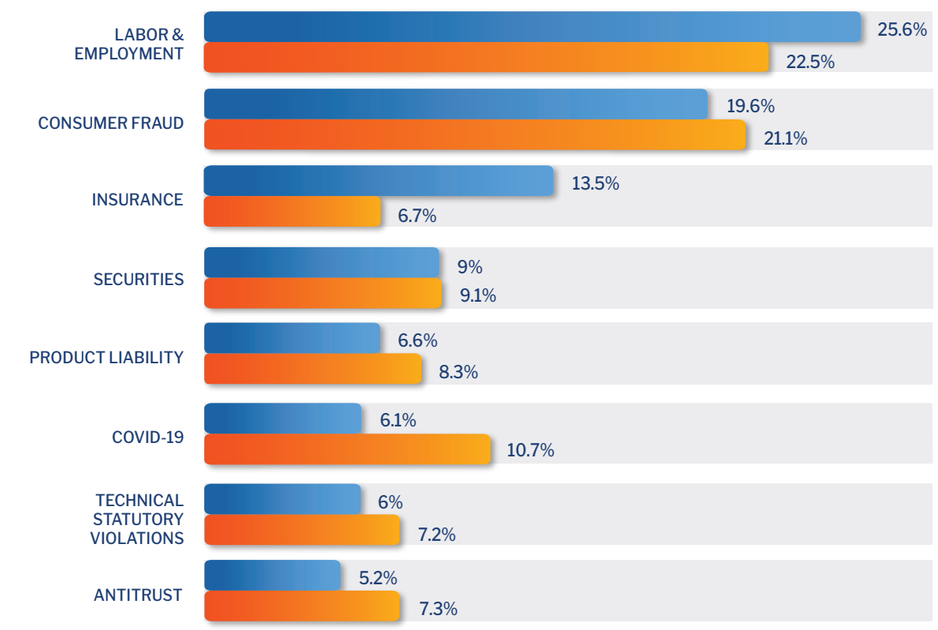
Labor and employment class actions are up as regulatory agencies become more aggressive and workforce safety claims grow, which both result in follow-on class actions. While the number of consumer fraud class actions declined, companies continued to face claims resulting from the use of social media, denial of medical claims, and debt collection practices.

Companies reported numerous labor and employment claims that are related to COVID-19 and encompass such issues as wage and hour, workplace safety, and vaccine accommodation being claimed as discrimination.

Insurance claims do not include COVID-19 claims and are mostly tied to financial products and offerings or claims relating to disasters.

Class Actions Breakdown by Type

PERCENT OF MATTERS



Note: Chart does not add up to 100%. Excludes other types of class actions each accounting for less than 5% of matters and spending, including intellectual property, commercial contracts, negligence and nuisance, agent commissions, data privacy/cybersecurity, environmental, and property damage.

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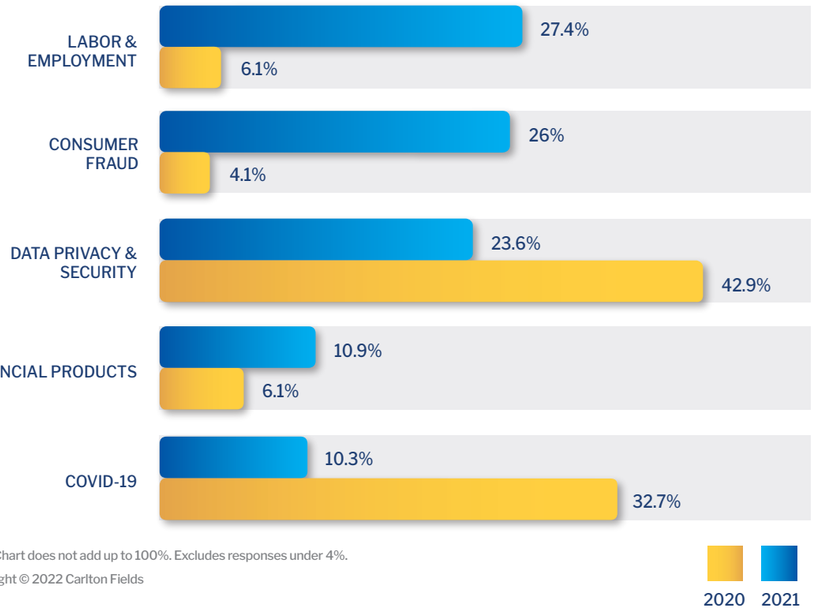
What's Next for Class Actions

Labor and Employment, Consumer Fraud, and Data Privacy Expected as Next Wave of Class Actions

Labor and employment is expected to top the next wave of claims. Companies expect claims for wage and hour, workplace safety, and discrimination. Anticipation of data privacy claims is down significantly from last year as a result of companies believing they have improved business practices. Consumer fraud claims include mortgage disputes and social media-related claims, and involve forced terms and conditions, false claims, and alleged violations of state regulations. COVID-19 claims are expected to drop long term, but companies expect claims for vaccine policies and unknown claims to arise in the short term.

Next Wave of Class Actions

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



Note: Chart does not add up to 100%. Excludes responses under 4%.

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In Their Own Words: Corporate Counsel on the Next Wave of Class Actions

> For us, it will be related to COVID-19 from the outcome of the vaccine mandate requirements."
>
> *— Vice President, Chief Litigation Counsel*
> *Large Electric Services Company*

> We are in the midst of the COVID interruption wave. When it will cease is unclear."
>
> *— Associate Corporate Counsel, Corporate Litigation Unit*
> *Fortune 500 Financial Services Company*

> It will be specific to cybersecurity and privacy. We are at the tip of the iceberg."
>
> *— Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary*
> *Leading Insurance Company*

> Privacy related to customer data remains hot and heavy. Fair credit as well."
>
> *— Senior Corporate Litigation Counsel*
> *Large Electric Services Company*

> Additional labor and employment claims from COVID. Also, additional product liability claims and securities claims from the economic losses post-COVID."
>
> *— Senior Director, Legal Counsel, Litigation*
> *Leading Pharmaceuticals Company*

> Product fraud involving Wi-Fi and mobile devices, and their terms and conditions. Cyber or privacy issues around personal information."
>
> *— Vice President, Litigation Counsel*
> *Global Insurance Organization*

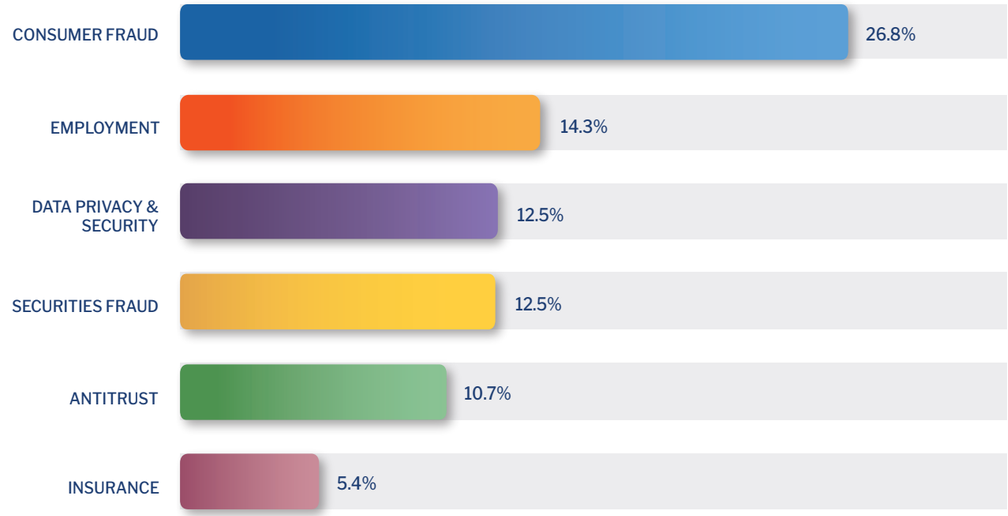
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Consumer Fraud Class Actions Top Greatest Exposure to Businesses

Companies see consumer fraud class actions as posing the largest threat by a wide margin, pointing to claims based on both the use of social media and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) disclosures and practices. Employment poses less risk as it is better understood, but large issues like wage and hour are still seen as major threats. Data privacy is third as the risk of unintended leaks, growing hacks, and increasing state level regulations grows, even as companies have a better handle on their security protections than in prior years. Securities fraud risk stems from damaging the stock price and cost of capital, and is again present in our survey results. Antitrust brings risk of business interruption or an impaired acquisition.

Class Actions Posing the Biggest Risk

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



Note: Chart does not add up to 100%. Excludes responses under 5%.

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In Their Own Words: Corporate Counsel on the Type of Class Actions Posing the Biggest Risk

> Employment class actions pose the biggest risk, particularly because of the effect on our reputation."

— Chief Executive Officer of Global Legal and Strategy
Global Insurance Company

> If we go all-in on a challenged company practice, this would potentially have a big impact and high exposure."

— Chief Legal Officer, North America
Global Auto Manufacturer

> Wage and hour cases, especially those that involve whether certain groups of employees are exempt, e.g., hourly versus salaried."

— Managing Counsel - Global - Commercial Litigation
Leading International Insurance Company

> Wage and hour. Plaintiffs' lawyers find the place where we are not tracking time, e.g., reaching the front door and clocking in."

— Vice President, Employment Litigation
Fortune 500 Telecommunications Company

> Consumer regulatory. Suits based on overdraft fees, unfair or deceptive trade practices, or any violation of a regulation. That's particularly problematic because any perceived violation will lead to a regulatory action coming down on us."

— Vice President, Corporate Counsel - Litigation Management
Large Regional Bank

> All of our claims are complex in my area of consumer fraud, so we try to settle as early as possible and reach a mutually viable solution. We only fight when we know 100%, we will win. We need to protect the company's reputation, which is always first and foremost."

— Vice President, Chief Counsel, Complex Litigation
Leading Insurance Company

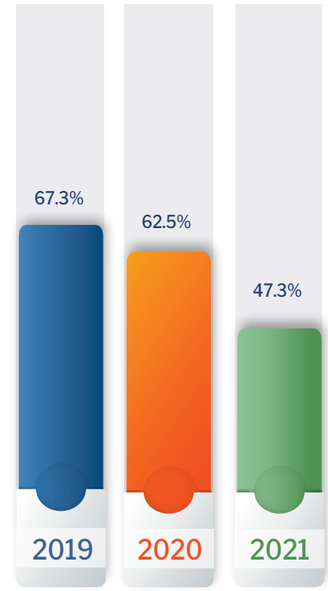
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Companies Becoming Skilled in Avoiding Labor and Employment Class Actions

Less than one-half of companies reported having faced a labor and employment class action in the last five years. Many companies are successfully avoiding labor and employment class actions. Some companies reported that they have settled their labor and employment class actions and implemented corrective actions to avoid future claims. The decline in the number of companies facing these claims suggests this strategy is effective.

Faced Labor & Employment Class Actions in the Last Five Years

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



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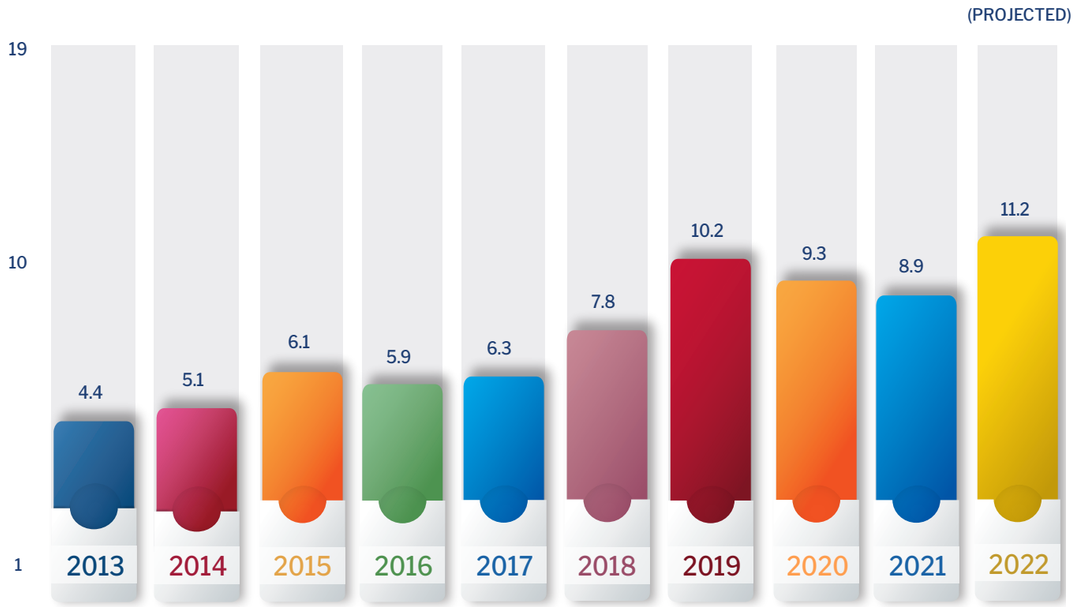
Caseload, Law Firms, and In-House Resources

Number of Projected Class Actions Reaches New High

Companies are projecting between two and three new class actions in 2022 — the highest level reported in more than 10 years. The increased caseload is anticipated to come despite the settlements (see page 26). High settlement rates combined with an increased caseload suggests more companies have more cases in the initial stages.

Current Class Actions

AVERAGE NUMBER OF MATTERS PER COMPANY



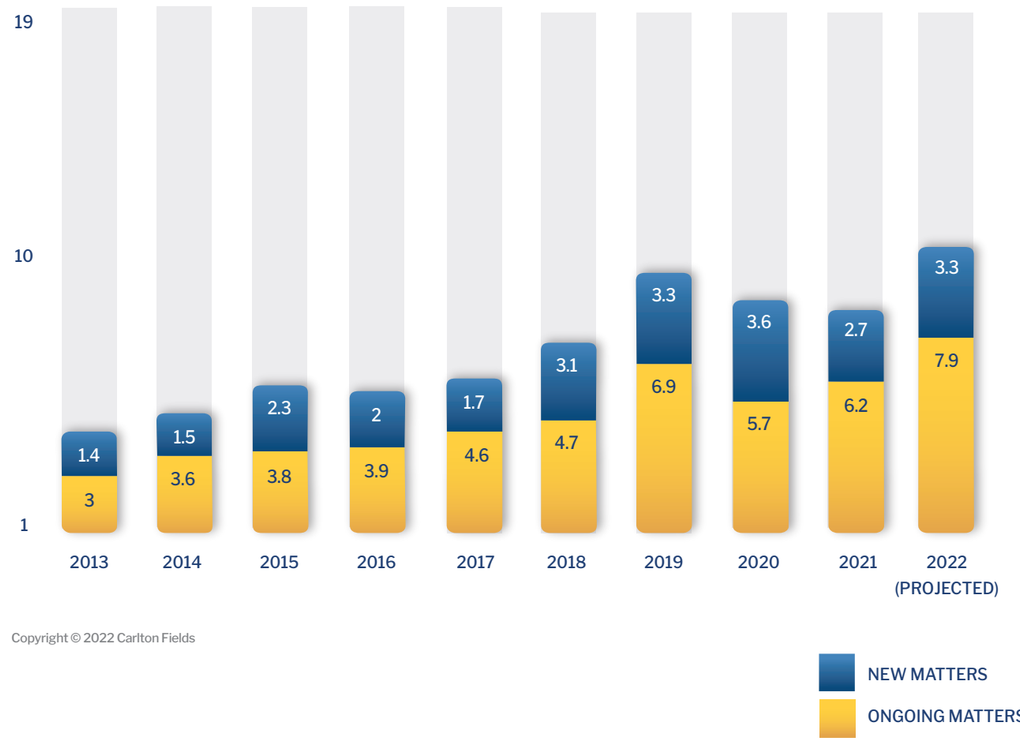
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Companies Expect Increased Caseload Going Into 2022

The current portfolio reveals the highest number of ongoing (carryover) matters and the highest number of total matters (ongoing plus new) in the last 11 years. The increased caseload will require more outside counsel management as the number of in-house attorneys is largely unchanged (see page 23).

Current Class Actions

AVERAGE NUMBER OF MATTERS PER COMPANY



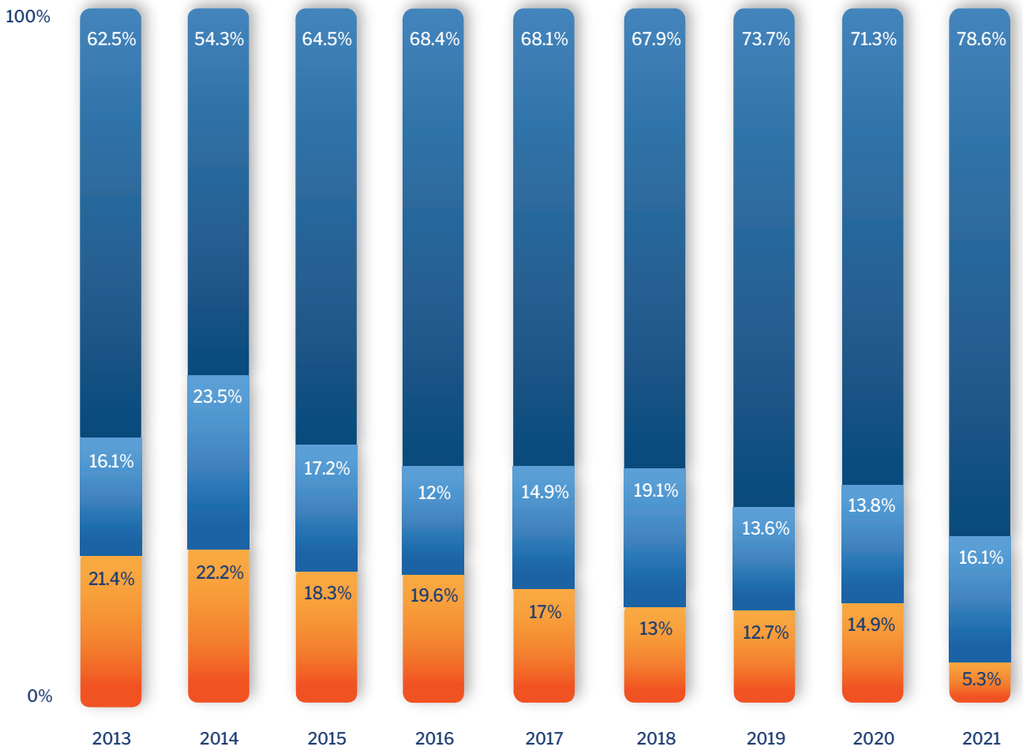
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Most Companies Facing Class Actions Have Faced Them Before

Most companies facing class actions have faced them before and see these claims on a regular basis. Among companies with class actions, they are seeing more class actions over time and seeing increases in the number of class actions they face.

Class Action Experience

PERCENT OF COMPANIES FACING CLASS ACTIONS



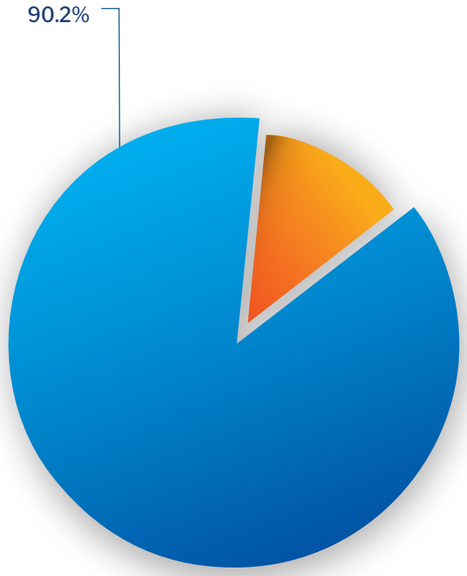
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Most Companies Face Class Actions Filed in the US Only

Ninety percent of companies are facing class actions filed only in the United States — up from 82% last year. Top legal decision-makers expect fewer claims outside the United States for the foreseeable future.

Defending Class Actions Filed in the US Only

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



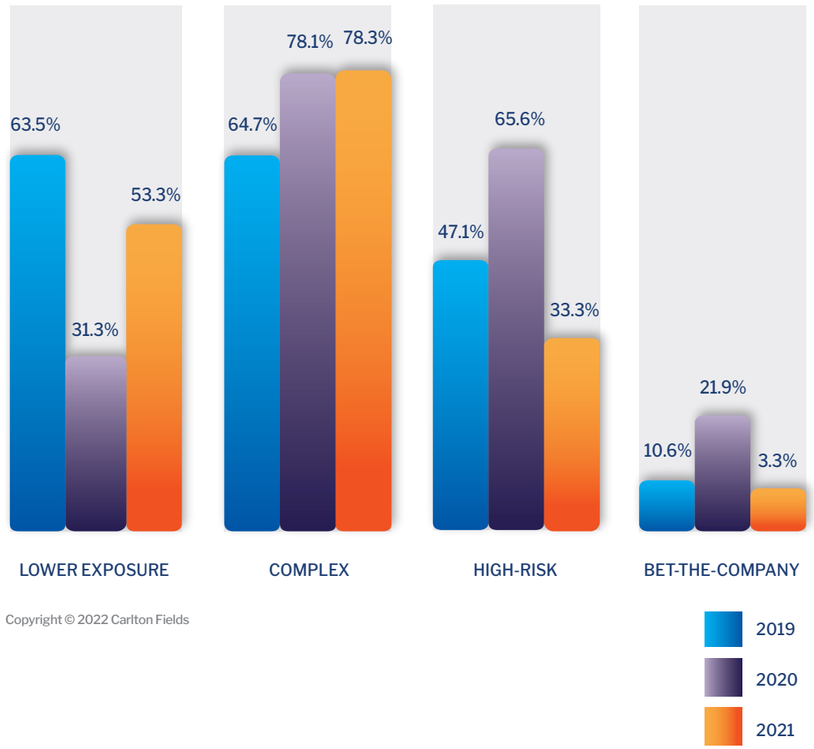
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Most Companies Face Complex Matters, More Facing Lower Exposure

Companies again reported facing a high number of complex matters. Like last year, these focus on workforce issues where companies want to keep their employees happy but still defend against the claims — adding complexity. The complex group also includes data privacy matters. Low exposure matters show the most growth; these claims are perceived as contained and manageable. Bet-the-company matters include business interruption insurance coverage, social media claims against mega tech companies, and coverage for natural disasters. The share of companies with bet-the-company matters is seven times lower than in 2020, with companies facing lower exposure matters growing more than 20 percentage points in that same period.

Class Actions Breakdown by Risk Level

PERCENT OF COMPANIES MANAGING CLASS ACTIONS



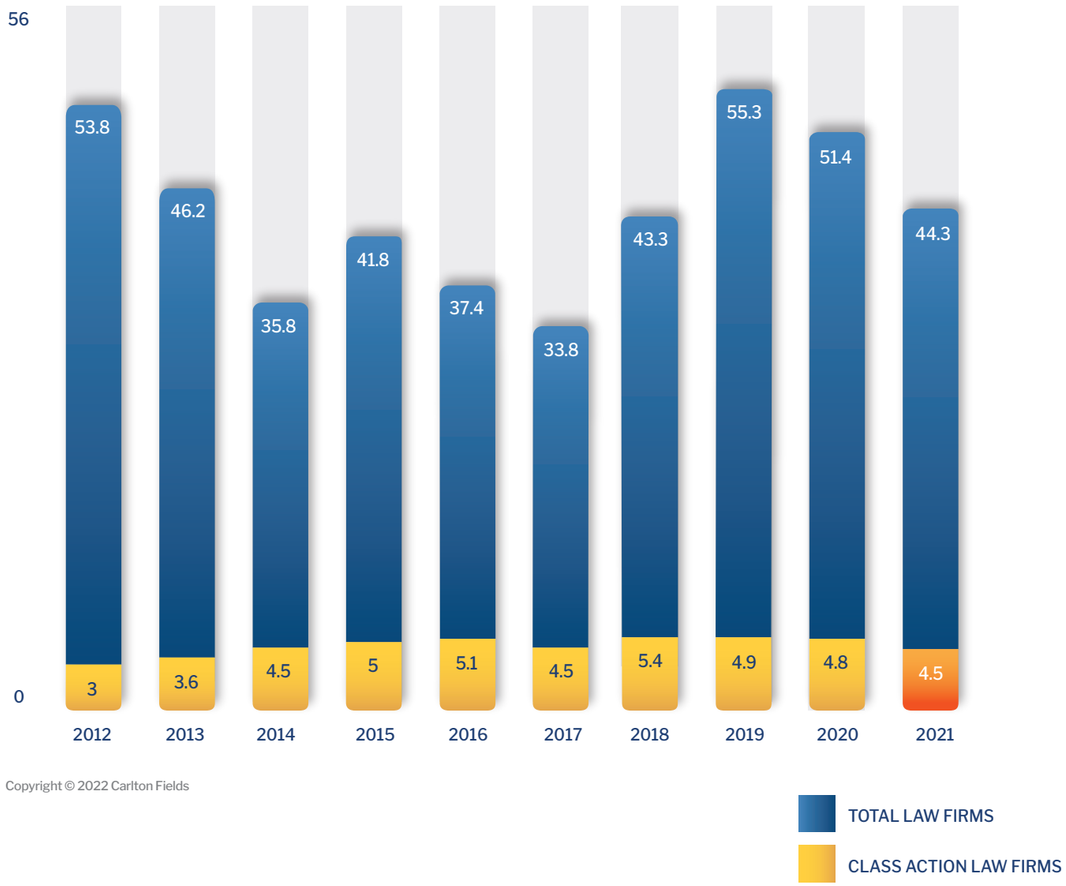
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Class Action Law Firm Panels Remain Virtually Unchanged — Hope to Build Knowledge

Companies are using 15% fewer law firms overall than in 2020 — and down 20% from 2019. By contrast, companies expect to keep the size of their class action law firm panels virtually unchanged — hoping to keep things streamlined and build institutional knowledge within their firms.

Law Firms Used Overall and for Class Actions

NUMBER OF FIRMS



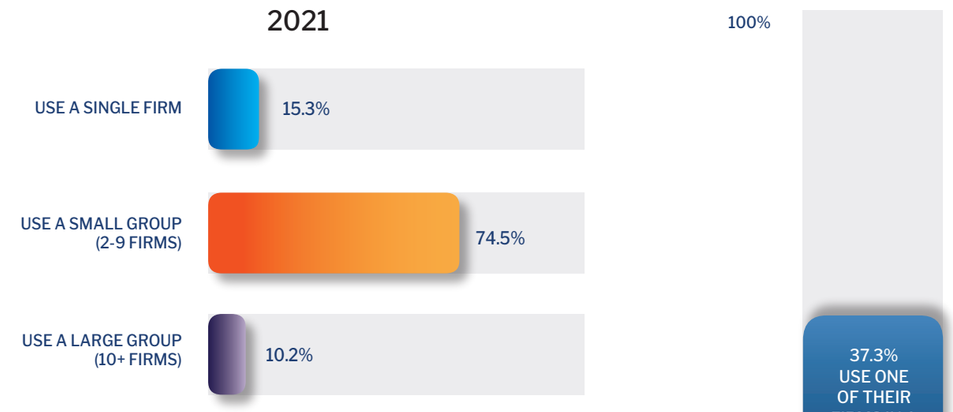
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Most Companies Use Small Groups of Law Firms to Manage Class Actions

Companies rely on a small group of law firms to manage class actions. The benefits include more uniformity in the approach to class actions, more diversity of thought than a single firm, reduced management time, and more understanding of client goals. Only a small segment of companies use a large group of law firms for class actions, even as the caseload grows. Thirty-seven percent of companies use a single law firm in a supervisory role — up from 26.7% last year — suggesting more companies see benefit from the practice.

Role of Firms in Class Action Work

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



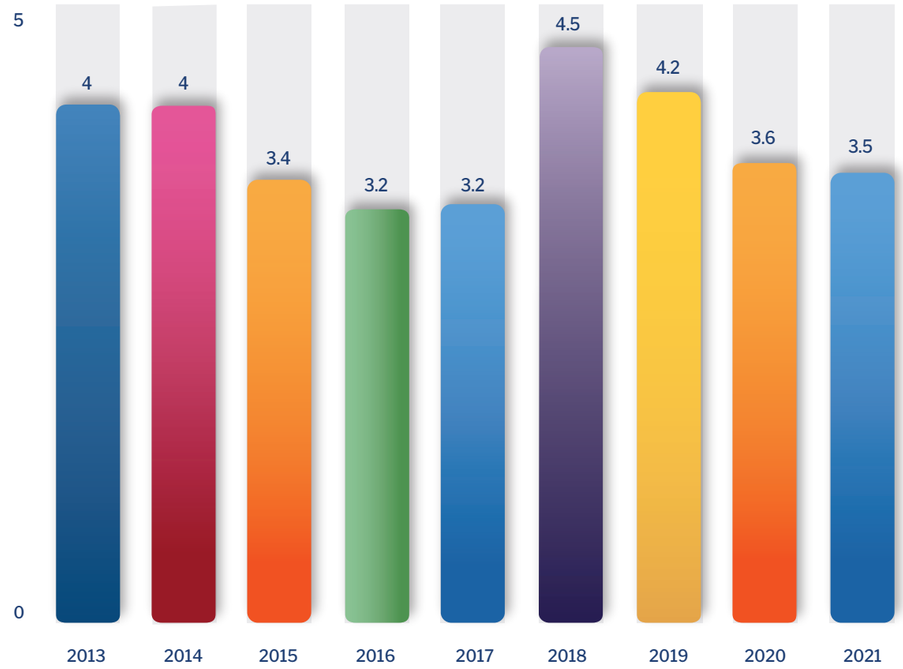
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In-House Attorneys Dedicated to Class Actions Essentially Unchanged

Companies continue to hold the number of in-house attorneys for class actions steady. The increased caseload (see page 17) suggests more work will go to outside counsel as these in-house attorneys spend more time on strategy and management. Companies have one less attorney dedicated to class actions than in 2018.

In-House Attorneys Dedicated to Class Actions

AVERAGE NUMBER OF LAWYERS



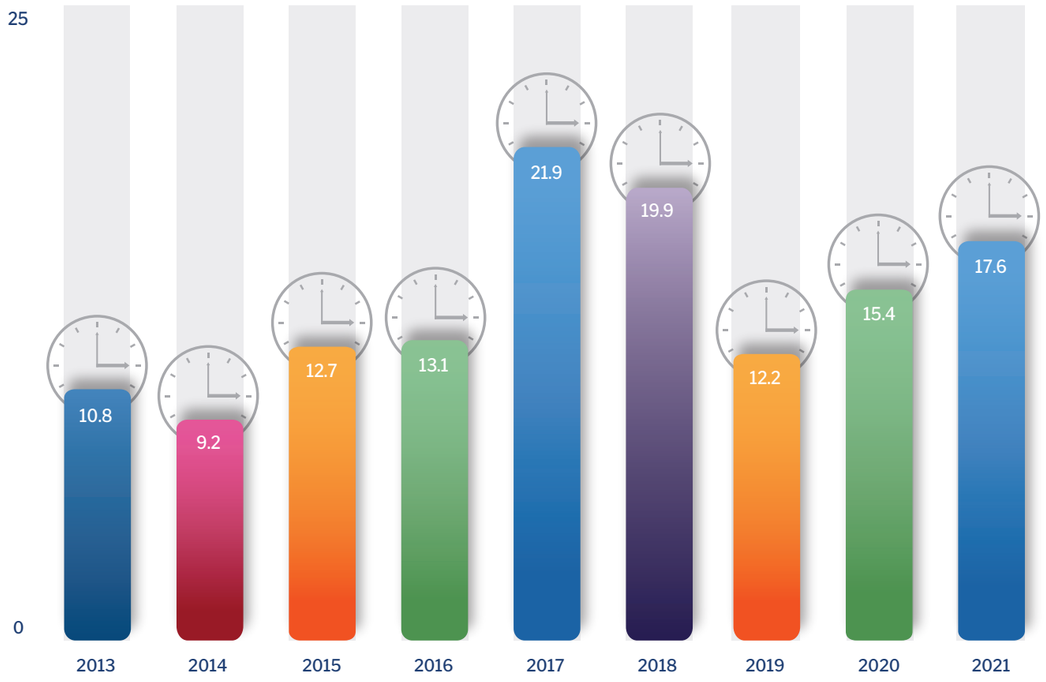
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In-House Attorneys See Marginal Increase in Time Spent on Class Actions

In-house attorneys are spending just over two hours more per week on class actions than they did last year — this translates to approximately 100 hours per year. The relatively small increase in hours dedicated to class actions, despite the increase in caseload, reflects the increased reliance on outside counsel for the defense of class actions.

Aggregate In-House Attorney Time Spent on Class Actions

HOURS PER WEEK



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Fewer Companies Benefit From Insurance Coverage

The number of companies with a portion of their class action defense costs covered by insurance dropped significantly from last year to 32.1%. Fewer companies are buying coverage. The cost of coverage increased for those with coverage. Of those class actions for which insurance is assisting with defense costs, the percentage of costs paid by insurance increased for the second straight year, reflecting both savvy buyers and better-tailored insurance products.

Companies with Defense Costs Covered by Insurance

PERCENT OF COMPANIES

Defense Costs Covered by Insurance

PERCENT OF CLASS ACTION DEFENSE COSTS

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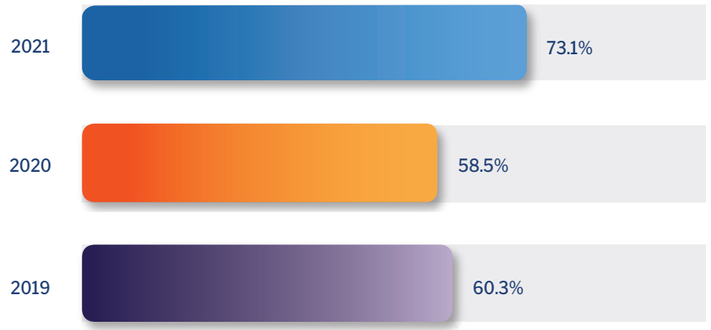
Resolution of Class Actions

Resolving Older Cases Leads to a Jump in Reported Settlements

The number of settlements of open putative class actions jumped as top legal decision-makers reported they were able to settle their older matters. Turnover of in-house counsel fueled settlements as newly hired corporate counsel decided to dispose of legacy matters.

Class Actions Settled

AVERAGE PERCENT OF CLASS ACTIONS



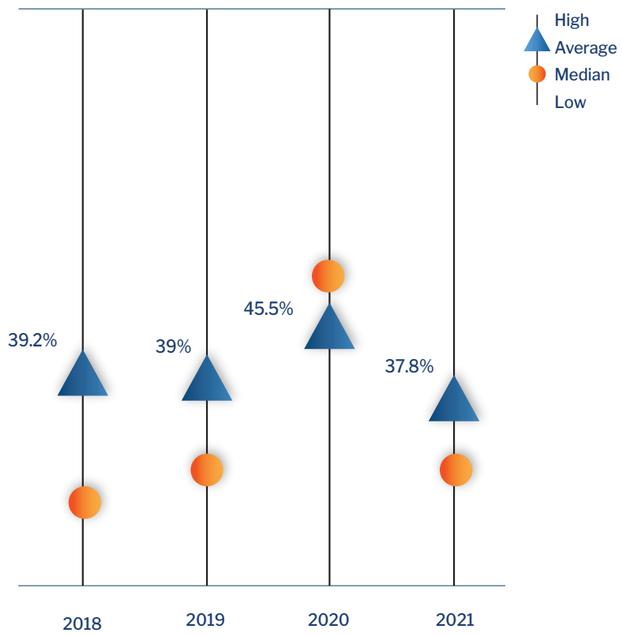
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Percentage of Individual Settlements Decreased From 2020

On average, 37.8% of class actions settled on an individual basis in 2021, down from 45% last year and in line with prior years. Top legal decision-makers reported that the age of the pending matters helped facilitate classwide settlements because plaintiffs saw the pandemic as placing their time frames at risk — making settlement more attractive. Companies also reported that the increased filing rate of new class actions was a factor in resolving pending cases on a classwide basis.

Individual Settlements

PERCENT OF SETTLEMENTS



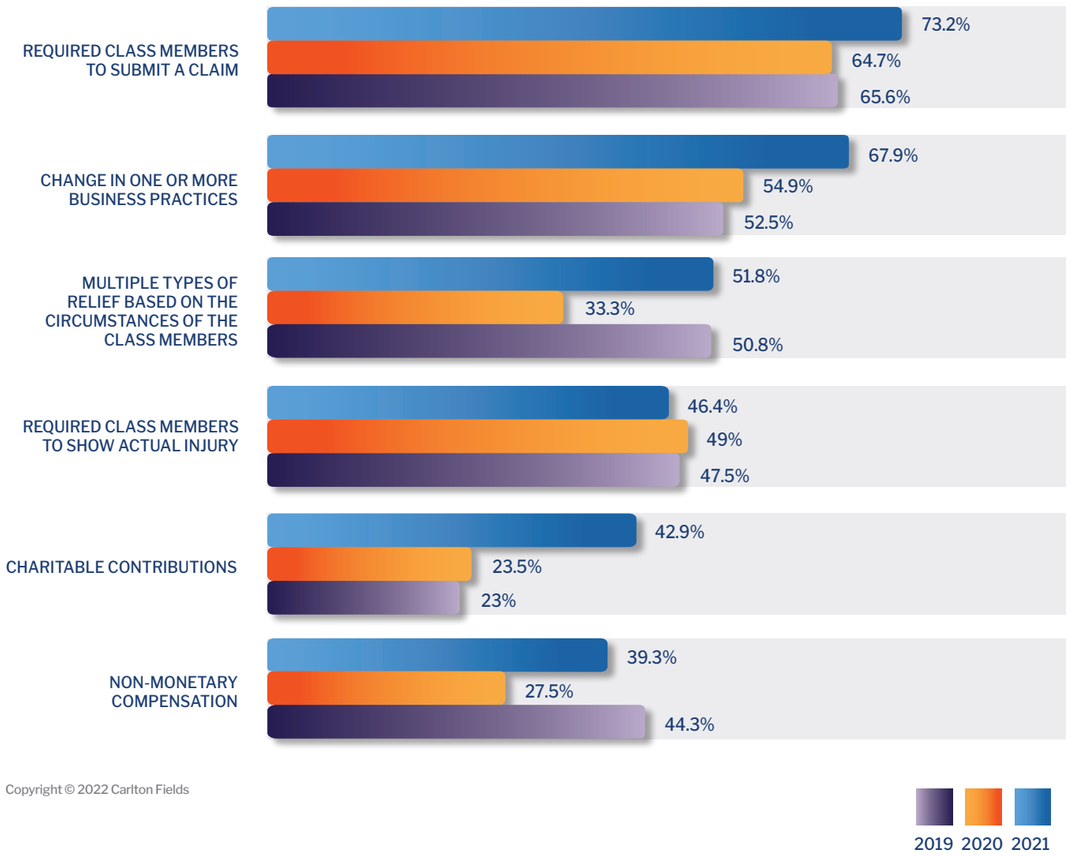
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Claims-Made Settlements Jump

Five types of settlement conditions increased during 2021: requirement to submit a claim, change in business practices, multiple types of relief based on the circumstances of the class members, provision for charitable contributions, and non-monetary compensation. Claims-made settlements jumped more than eight percentage points from 2020.

Involved in a Settlement with the Following Conditions

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



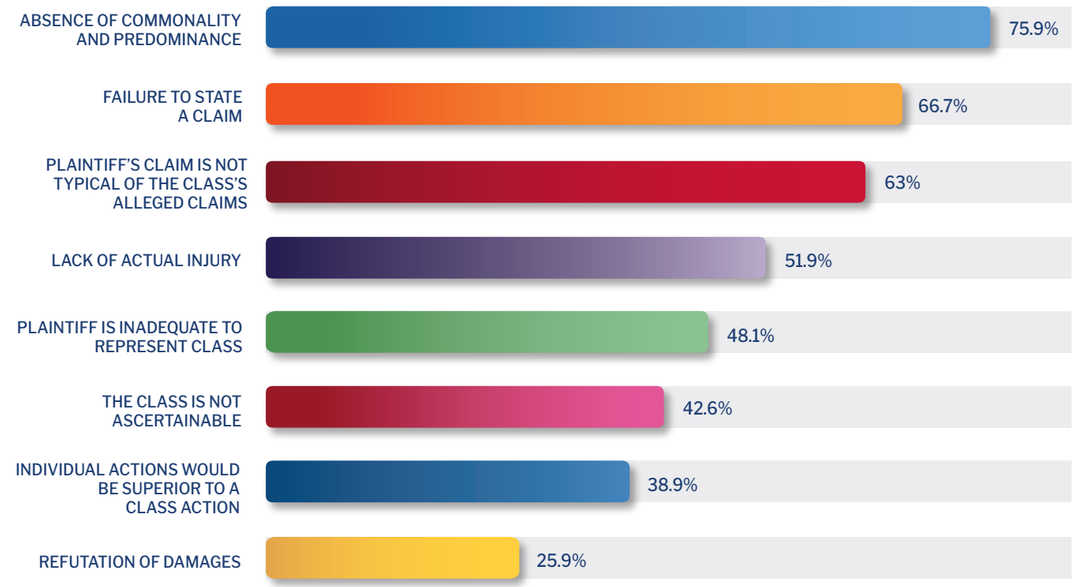
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Three Defense Strategies Used More Than Others

Three defense strategies stand out as being most effective for the second year in a row: absence of commonality and predominance defense, failure to state a claim, and atypical claims from the class.

Successful Class Action Defenses

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



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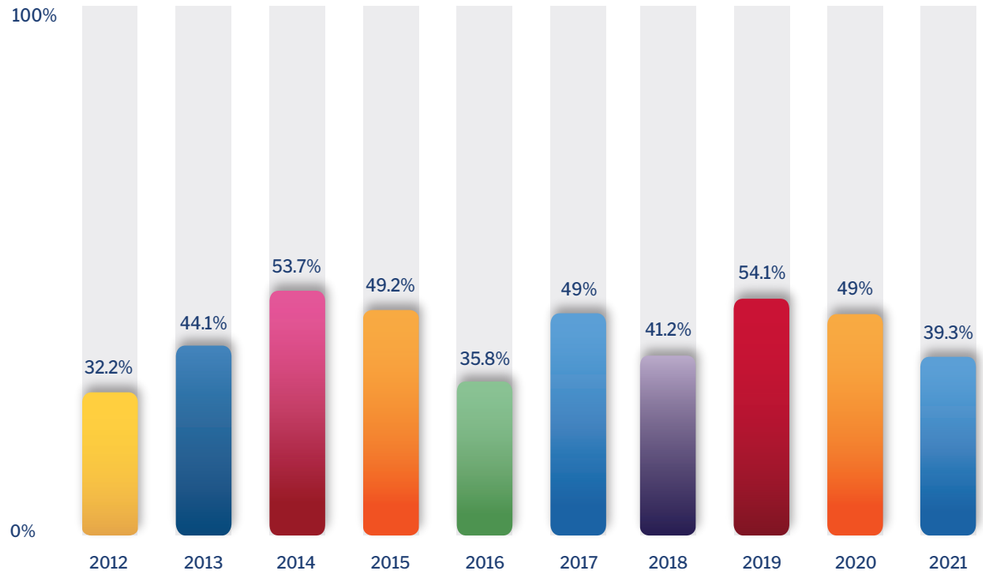
Cost Control and Use of AFAs

AFA Usage Drops as Corporate Counsel and Law Firms Face Turnover

Companies relying on AFAs dropped again, to 39.3%, after a more moderate decline last year. Companies reported the decline has at least two causes. First, negotiation of an effective AFA with a law firm is complex, and the increased workload on corporate counsel makes it that much more challenging. Second, increased turnover in both the corporate counsel department and at law firms has resulted in newer relationships where the parties lack the deep understanding and trust necessary to develop a productive AFA.

Alternative Fee Arrangement Use in Class Actions

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



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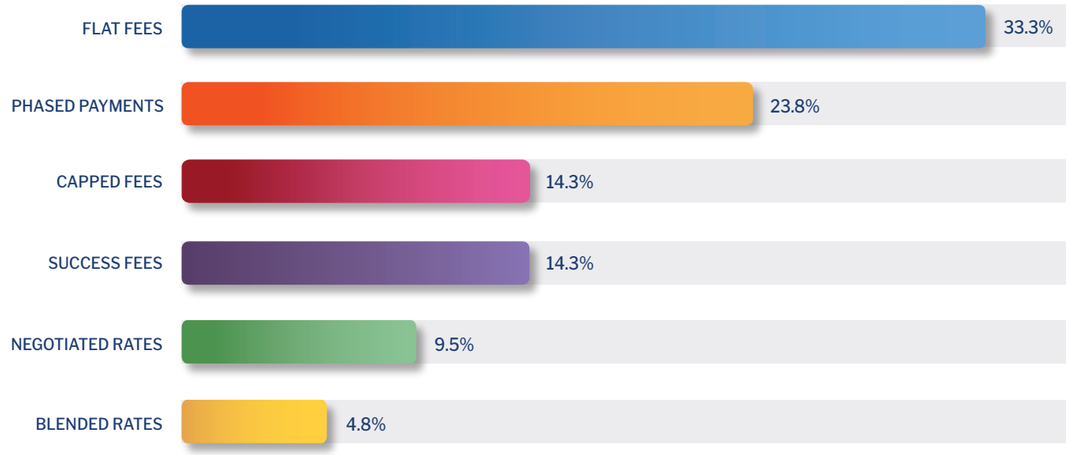
Flat/Fixed Fees and Phased Payments Are Most Favored AFAs

Fixed fees remain the most popular AFAs for class action defense among corporate counsel — and provide the best results. Phased fee arrangements are fixed fees for portions of the matters where law firms propose a new fixed fee at the start of each new phase, such as the initial case assessment, the motion to dismiss phase, the class certification phase, and other, defined case events. This offers predictability and more focused management of discrete components of class action work. This approach also helps everyone learn from experience and set more realistic and reliable fees for ensuing stages. About a quarter of companies this year reported that phased fees were the most successful AFA for them.

BTI's independent research indicates top decision-makers are happiest with fixed fees and phased payments as they save money and offer budget certainty.

Success of Alternative Fee Arrangement Types in Class Actions

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



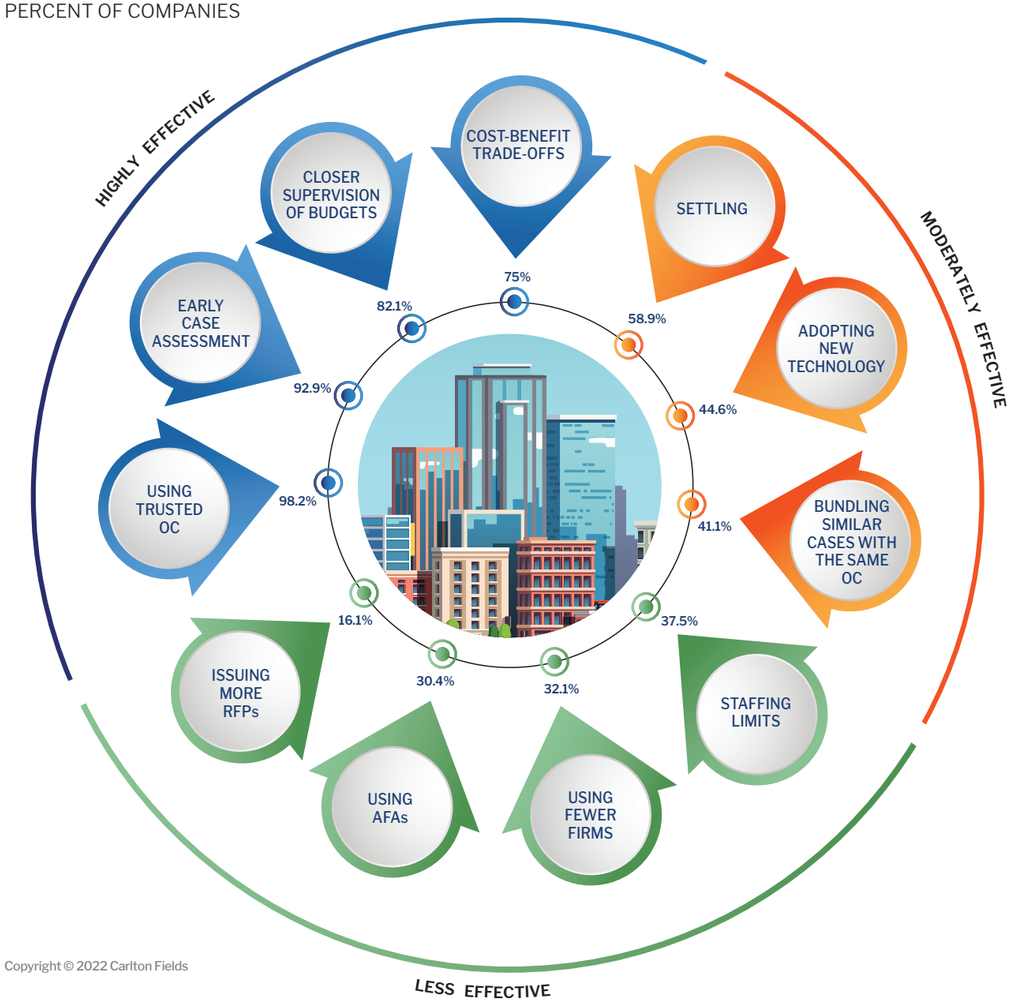
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Relying on Trusted Counsel Tops Cost Reduction Tools

Trusted counsel ranks as the most effective tool to reduce and control cost. Companies believe trusted counsel will make the right decision and respect the need to keep costs down without sacrificing the defense. Early case assessment rivals using trusted counsel as the most effective cost reduction tool. Laying out an early strategy and cost-benefit analysis saves fees. Assessing the benefits of each major aspect of the strategy against the cost provides cost reduction as does reducing the number of law firms used. Budgets provide certainty and accountability and drive improved performance. Bundling similar cases drives certain economies of scale and knowledge. Staffing limits and RFPs can provide cost reductions.

Cost Reduction Policies and Practices

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



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Early Case Assessment and Proactive Risk Management Dominate Corporate Counsel's Management of Class Actions

Corporate counsel are relying on early case assessment and proactive risk management as their primary management strategies — accounting for two-thirds of the strategies in use. Only 15.4% want to be aggressive.

Approach to Managing Upcoming Class Actions

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In Their Own Words: Corporate Counsel on Their Approach to Managing Upcoming Class Actions

"It's been evolving over the past year. We now lean on early assessment and creative solutions to drive disposition. We are moving away from the 'work it and turn-over-every-stone' approach."

— Vice President, Litigation
Fortune 500 Telecommunications Company

"There is a focus on compliance from a proactive basis specific to our business processes. We also use benchmarking with other similar companies that may have experienced similar class actions."

— Vice President & Deputy General Counsel
Large Telecommunications Company

"We look at the facts and assess whether we have liability and then do right by the people who are coming after us. These are customers with whom we have a special relationship, and we take it seriously as these are stakeholders in our enterprise."

— Vice President and Assistant General Counsel
Global Financial Services Company

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"We try to anticipate what might go wrong and work to mitigate any potential risk. It's about prevention. So far, we have done a good job."

— Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Prominent Insurance Company

"It's all about risk avoidance. We benchmark with our peers through trade organizations and other things that include our attorneys. We keep current with our industry journals and the rest of the world on anything that could apply to our business."

— Vice President, Chief Litigation Counsel
Leading Electric Services Company

"We look at each case separately and try to make the best business decision. Sometimes this costs us more money than we like, but in the long term it may be the best thing for the company."

— General Counsel & Chief Compliance Officer
Large Insurance Company

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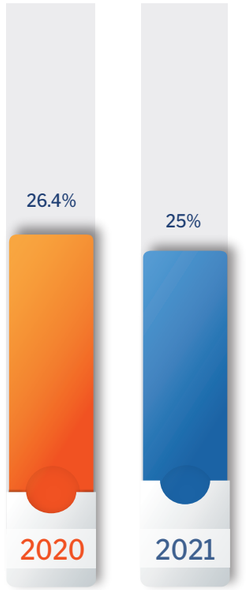
Current Impact of the Pandemic on Class Action Filings

One-Quarter of Companies Have Faced Class Actions Arising Out of the Coronavirus Pandemic

One in four companies reported facing class actions as a result of the pandemic. They face a range of claims. We discuss these claims on page 37. Corporate counsel indicated most pandemic-related claims are in workforce and regulatory issues — with insurance companies experiencing coverage claims.

Defending Coronavirus-Related Class Actions

PERCENT OF COMPANIES



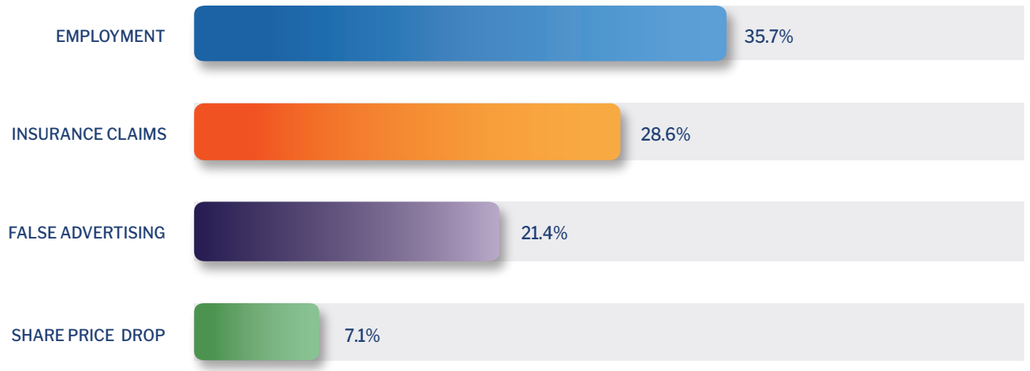
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Employment Claims Are More Than a Third of the Reported Pandemic Class Actions

Companies reported that the pandemic is driving three major types of class actions: (1) employment claims related to wage and hour, worker safety, discrimination, gender pay equity, and vaccine mandates; (2) insurance-related actions dealing with claims for more coverage than insurance companies interpret in their policies (with almost 40% of these claims for business interruption); and (3) false adverting claims for products or services related to treating COVID-19.

Types of Coronavirus-Related Class Actions Arising From the Pandemic

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Note: Only insurance companies identify insurance claims. Chart does not add up to 100% as it excludes other responses under 5%.

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In Their Own Words: Corporate Counsel on Class Actions Arising Out of the Coronavirus Pandemic

> Our case is an employment-related claim. Independent contractors are demanding the same benefits as employees."
>
> *— Associate General Counsel*
> *Fortune 500 Insurance Company*

> We had a false advertising action. Like about 250 other universities, we had to pivot to online."
>
> *— Vice President and General Counsel*
> *Leading Private University*

> Ours was a Paycheck Protection Program claim for nonpayment of agent fees."
>
> *— Vice President, Corporate Counsel - Litigation Management*
> *Large Regional Bank*

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Methodology and Approach

The 2022 Carlton Fields Class Action Survey results were compiled from 411 interviews with general counsel, chief legal officers, and direct reports to general counsel. Consistent with the approach used in past years, to control for bias and assure objectivity, Carlton Fields retained an independent consulting firm to select the companies and conduct the interviews. The consulting firm provides only aggregate data to Carlton Fields. Individual responses and company names are kept confidential and excluded from the survey results.

Surveyed companies had an average annual revenue of $23.7 billion and a median annual revenue of $14.1 billion. They operate in more than 25 industries, including banking and financial services, consumer goods, energy, high tech, insurance, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, professional services, and retail trade.

About Carlton Fields

Carlton Fields has litigated and counseled clients in hundreds of class actions for more than 35 years in federal and state courts across the nation. These cases present unique challenges due to their different rules, enhanced scope, and higher stakes. The firm understands the potential impacts, costs, and risks associated with class actions and is a leader in developing legal approaches and strategies for managing class action litigation.

If you would like to learn about the survey and how these results may impact you, please contact **John E. Clabby** at 813.229.4229, jclabby@carltonfields.com, or **D. Matthew Allen** at 813.229.4304, mallen@carltonfields.com.

To obtain additional copies of this report, visit **https://ClassActionSurvey.com.**

Scan this QR code to view ***Classified: The Class Action Blog.***

Scan this QR code for more class action resources.

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