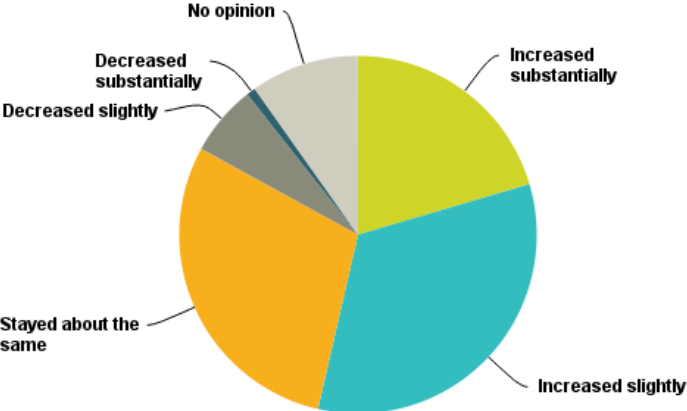


# Q4 2015 NFOIC/MLRC/IRE Open Government Survey

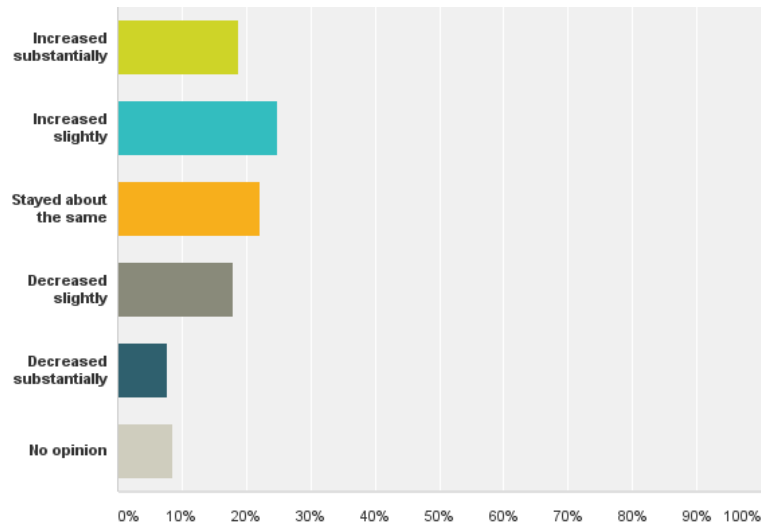
March 16, 2016

# Q1: Over the past two years, do you believe the incidence of open records or proceedings violations in your state and local jurisdiction has...



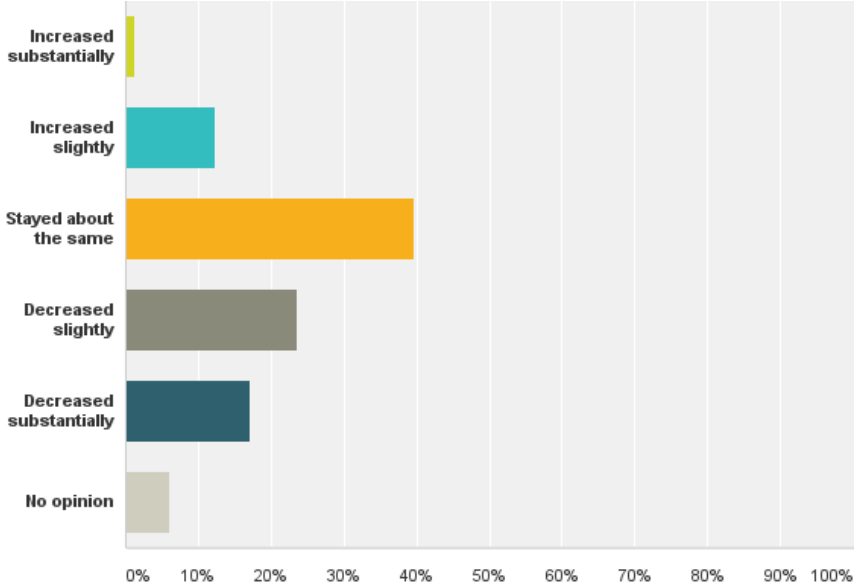
Answer Choices	Responses
Increased substantially	20.43% 48
Increased slightly	33.19% 78
Stayed about the same	29.36% 69
Decreased slightly	6.38% 15
Decreased substantially	0.85% 2
No opinion	9.79% 23
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>

## Q2: Over the past two years, do you believe that the number of professional reporters and journalists making open government requests in your state and local jurisdiction has...



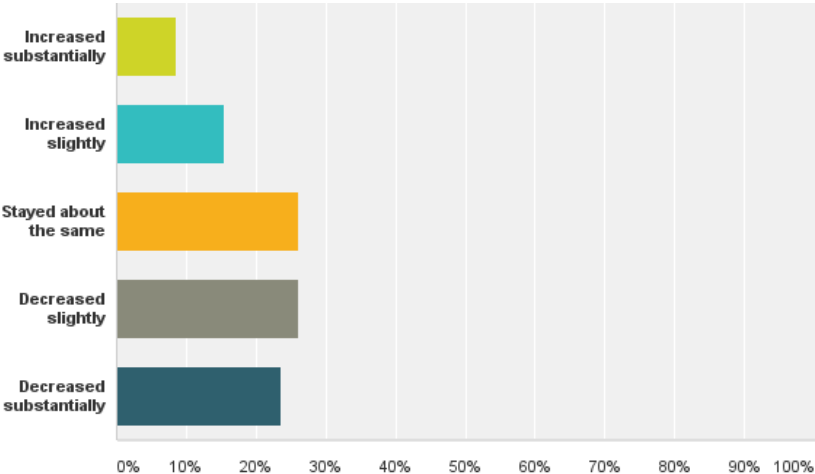
Answer Choices	Responses
Increased substantially	18.80% 44
Increased slightly	24.79% 58
Stayed about the same	22.22% 52
Decreased slightly	17.95% 42
Decreased substantially	7.69% 18
No opinion	8.55% 20
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>

### Q3: Over the past two years, do you believe that government officials' understanding of and voluntary compliance with open government requirements in your state and local jurisdiction has...



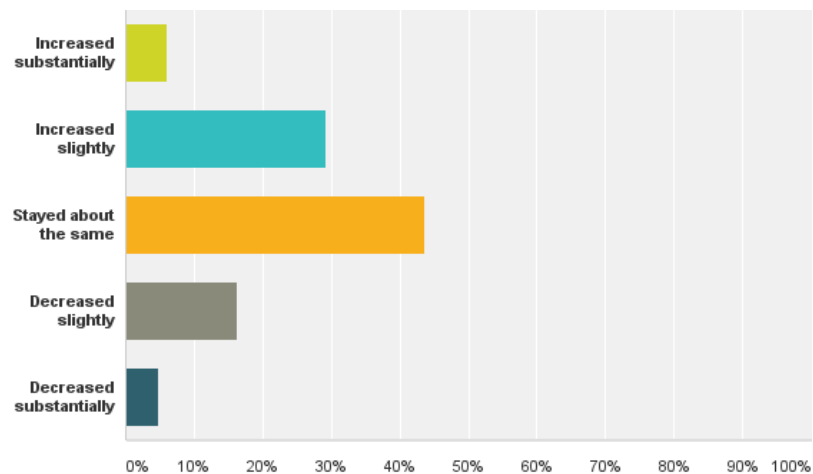
Answer Choices	Responses
Increased substantially	1.28% 3
Increased slightly	12.39% 29
Stayed about the same	39.74% 93
Decreased slightly	23.50% 55
Decreased substantially	17.09% 40
No opinion	5.98% 14
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>

**Q4: Over the past two years, do you believe that the amount of human and financial resources from media organizations devoted to litigation and legal compliance with open government requirements in your state and local jurisdiction has...**



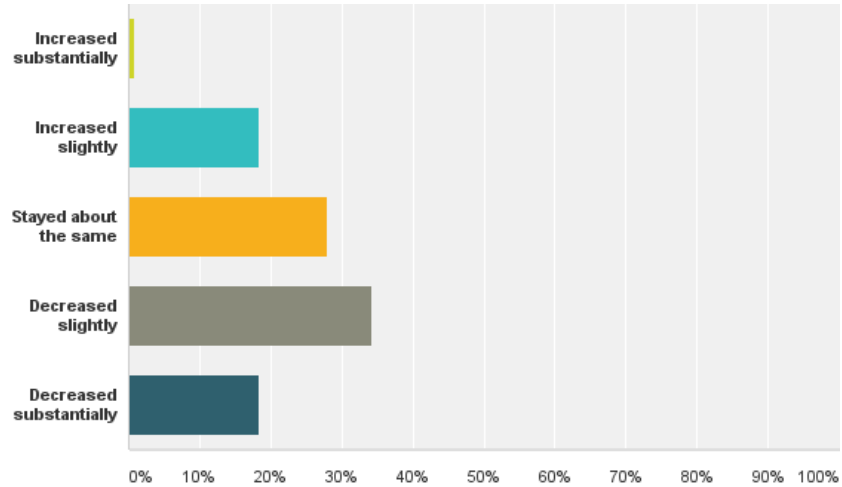
Answer Choices	Responses
Increased substantially	8.58% 20
Increased slightly	15.45% 36
Stayed about the same	26.18% 61
Decreased slightly	26.18% 61
Decreased substantially	23.61% 55
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>

## Q5: Over the past two years, do you believe that the amount of human and financial resources from good government organizations and non-profit groups devoted to litigation and legal compliance with open government requirements has...



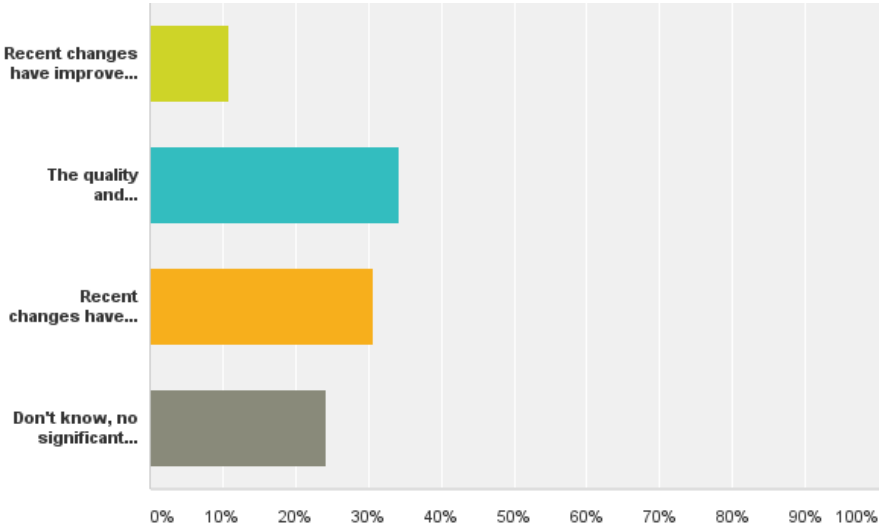
Answer Choices	Responses
Increased substantially	6.03% 14
Increased slightly	29.31% 68
Stayed about the same	43.53% 101
Decreased slightly	16.38% 38
Decreased substantially	4.74% 11
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>

# Q6: Over the past two to five years, do you believe that efforts by government to provide citizen access and comply with open government laws has...



Answer Choices	Responses
Increased substantially	0.86% 2
Increased slightly	18.45% 43
Stayed about the same	27.90% 65
Decreased slightly	34.33% 80
Decreased substantially	18.45% 43
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>

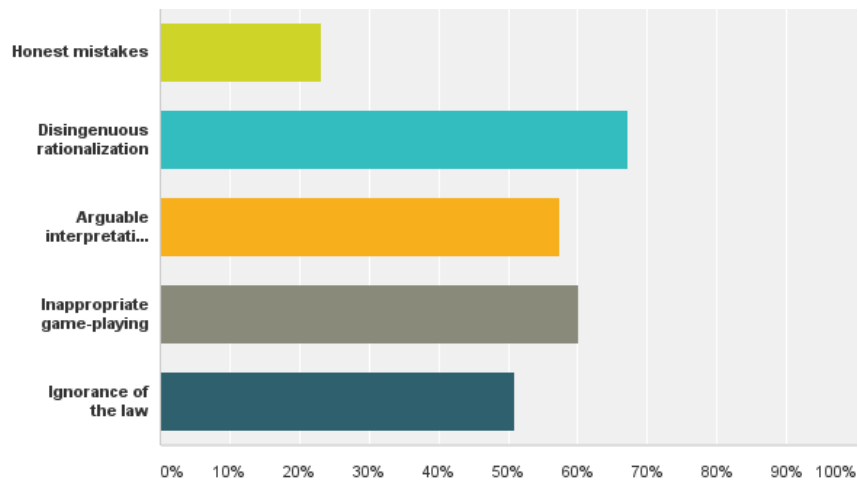
# Q7: Over the past two years, how would you rate the impact of reforms, amendments and legislative changes to public disclosure and open meeting laws affecting your state?



Answer Choices	Responses
Recent changes have improved our state's open government laws	10.96% 24
The quality and effectiveness of open government laws have stayed about the same	34.25% 75
Recent changes have made our state's open government laws worse	30.59% 67
Don't know, no significant changes, or uncertain about impact	24.20% 53
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>

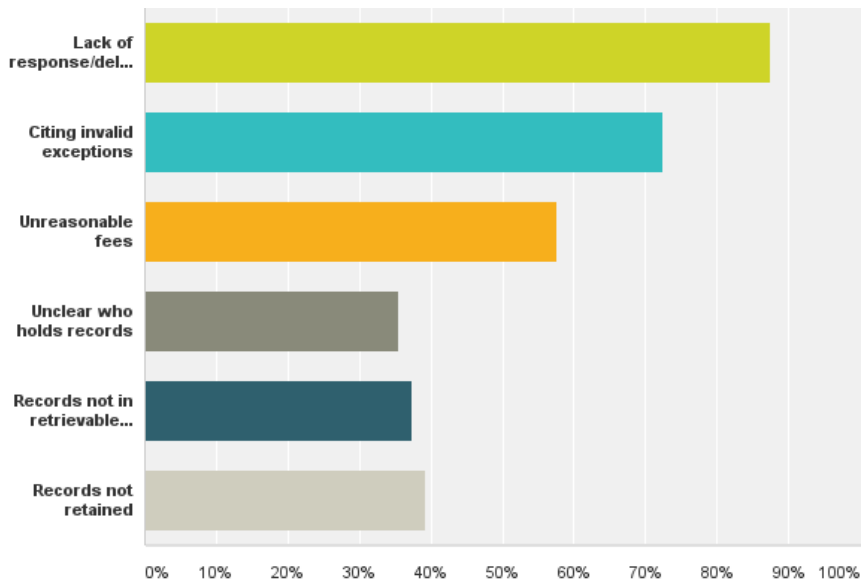


## Q8: In cases in which government officials have denied access for reasons with which you disagree, do you believe the denial was based on...(Check all that apply)



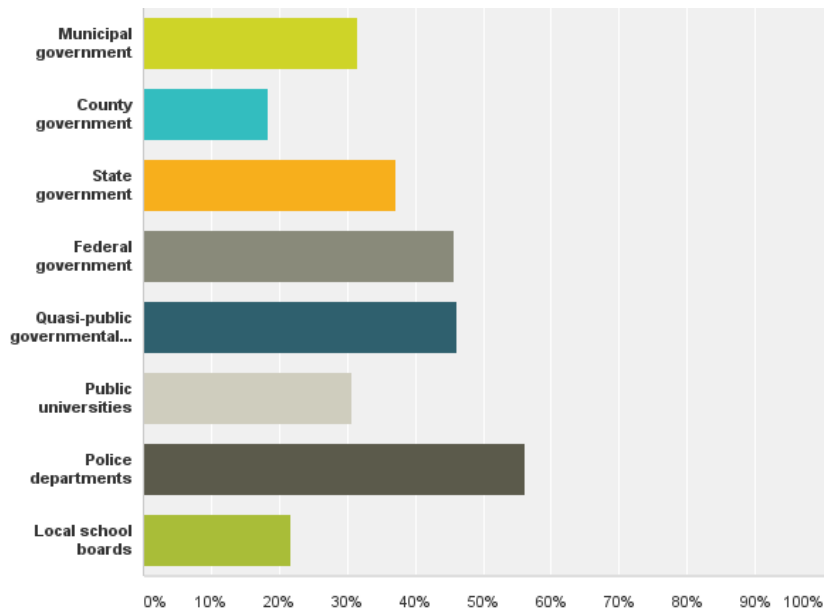
Answer Choices	Responses
Honest mistakes	23.15% 50
Disingenuous rationalization	67.13% 145
Arguable interpretation of statutory language	57.41% 124
Inappropriate game-playing	60.19% 130
Ignorance of the law	50.93% 110
<b>Total Respondents: 216</b>	

## Q9: What obstacles have you faced from government officials who deny access to information? (Check all that apply)



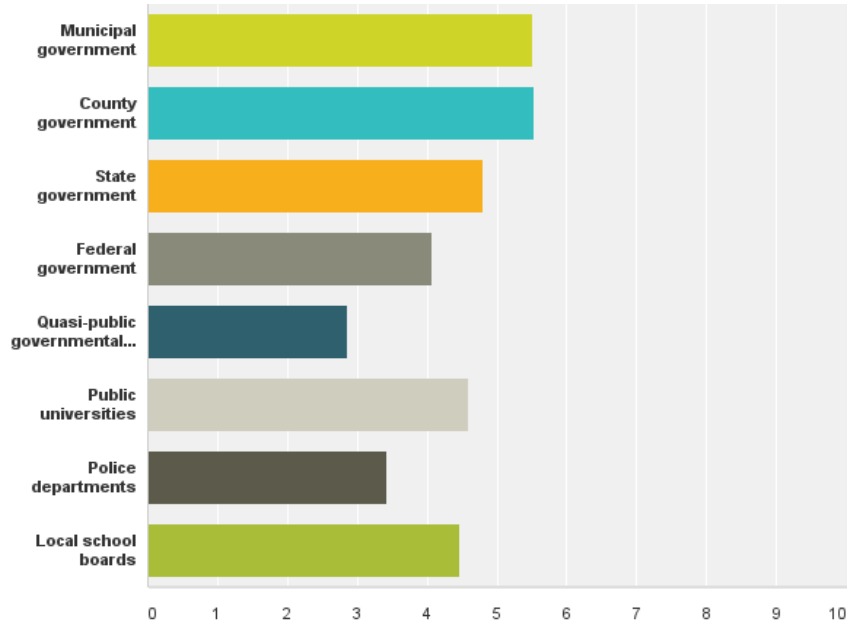
Answer Choices	Responses
Lack of response/delayed response	87.56% 190
Citing invalid exceptions	72.35% 157
Unreasonable fees	57.60% 125
Unclear who holds records	35.48% 77
Records not in retrievable form	37.33% 81
Records not retained	39.17% 85
<b>Total Respondents: 217</b>	

## Q10: What types of agencies are most difficult for private citizens, journalists, and other petitioners to obtain information? (Check up to three answers)



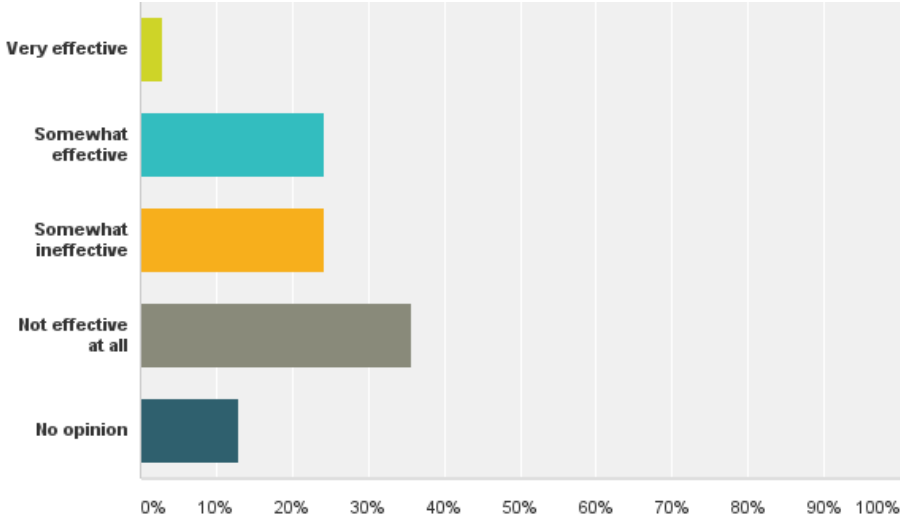
Answer Choices	Responses
Municipal government	<b>31.60%</b> 67
County government	<b>18.40%</b> 39
State government	<b>37.26%</b> 79
Federal government	<b>45.75%</b> 97
Quasi-public governmental bodies (entities that enter into contracts with governmental bodies)	<b>46.23%</b> 98
Public universities	<b>30.66%</b> 65
Police departments	<b>56.13%</b> 119
Local school boards	<b>21.70%</b> 46
<b>Total Respondents: 212</b>	

## Q11: Please rank the following agencies as being the most transparent and/or cooperative? (One being the most transparent, and eight as the least transparent and/or cooperative)



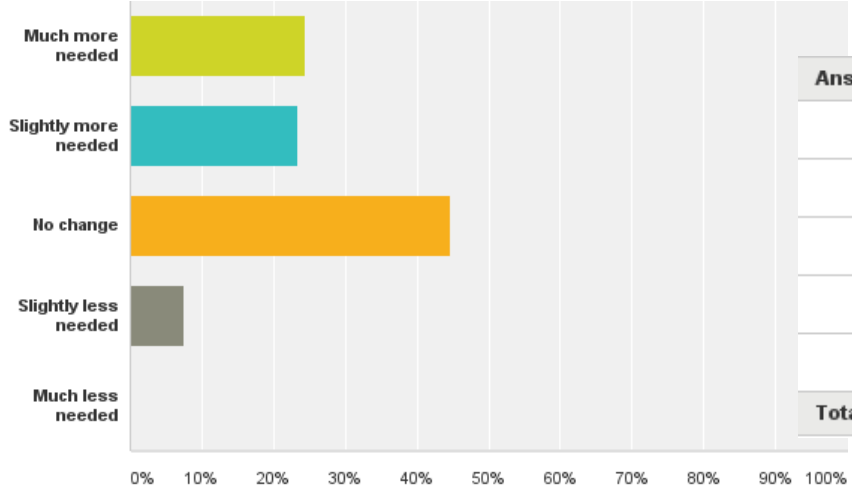
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	Score
Municipal government	27.33% 44	11.80% 19	13.66% 22	16.15% 26	10.56% 17	9.32% 15	5.59% 9	5.59% 9	161	5.51
County government	11.32% 18	31.45% 50	16.35% 26	8.81% 14	15.09% 24	8.81% 14	5.66% 9	2.52% 4	159	5.53
State government	15.43% 25	11.73% 19	17.28% 28	12.96% 21	10.49% 17	9.88% 16	12.35% 20	9.88% 16	162	4.80
Federal government	8.33% 14	10.71% 18	11.31% 19	14.88% 25	10.12% 17	11.31% 19	16.67% 28	16.67% 28	168	4.08
Quasi-public governmental bodies (entities that enter into contracts with government bodies)	2.47% 4	3.09% 5	6.79% 11	6.79% 11	12.96% 21	14.81% 24	21.60% 35	31.48% 51	162	2.87
Public universities	9.76% 16	10.37% 17	14.63% 24	15.85% 26	17.68% 29	13.41% 22	12.20% 20	6.10% 10	164	4.59
Police departments	5.14% 9	7.43% 13	5.14% 9	11.43% 20	10.29% 18	21.71% 38	15.43% 27	23.43% 41	175	3.42
Local school boards	5.65% 10	11.30% 20	16.38% 29	16.95% 30	16.38% 29	14.12% 25	11.30% 20	7.91% 14	177	4.46

# Q12: In your area, how would you rate the effectiveness of enforcement measures in non-compliance cases?



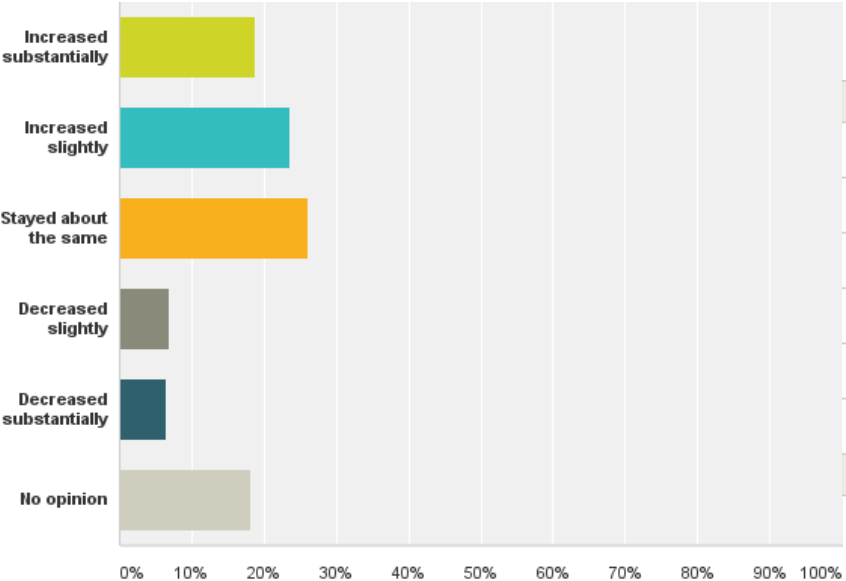
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very effective	2.90%	6
Somewhat effective	24.15%	50
Somewhat ineffective	24.15%	50
Not effective at all	35.75%	74
No opinion	13.04%	27
<b>Total</b>		<b>207</b>

# Q13: Have emerging forms of public data and proactive disclosures made your advocacy services and resources more or less needed/valuable than they were two years ago?



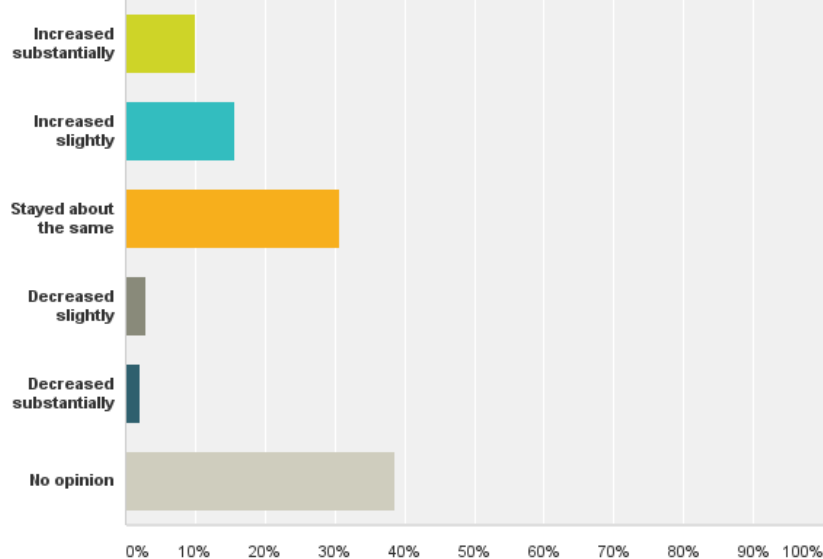
Answer Choices	Responses
Much more needed	24.38% 49
Slightly more needed	23.38% 47
No change	44.78% 90
Slightly less needed	7.46% 15
Much less needed	0.00% 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>

# Q14: Over the past two years, do you believe the number of instances in which your organization has intervened in an open government matter for clients or the public has...



Answer Choices	Responses
Increased substantially	18.72% 38
Increased slightly	23.65% 48
Stayed about the same	26.11% 53
Decreased slightly	6.90% 14
Decreased substantially	6.40% 13
No opinion	18.23% 37
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>

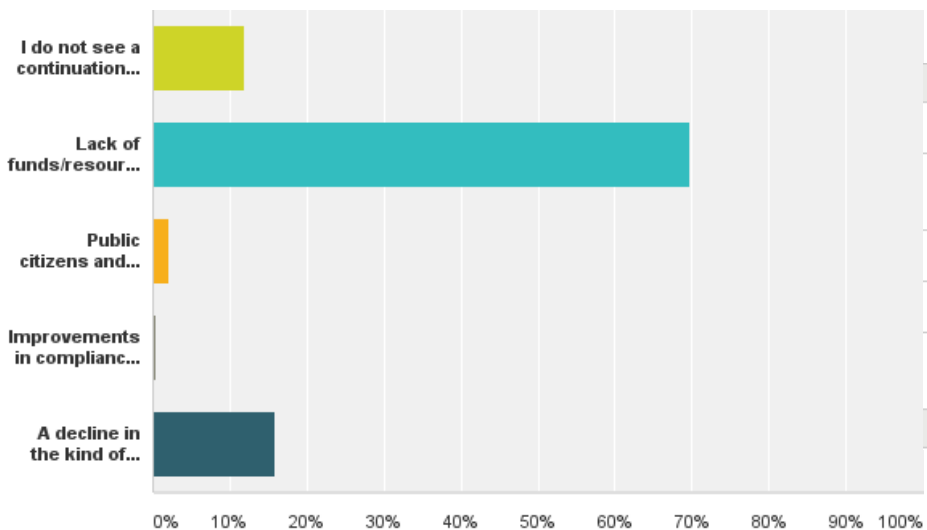
# Q15: Over the past two years, do you believe the number of instances in which your organization has intervened in an open government matter for non-media clients or the public has...



Answer Choices	Responses
Increased substantially	10.05% 20
Increased slightly	15.58% 31
Stayed about the same	30.65% 61
Decreased slightly	3.02% 6
Decreased substantially	2.01% 4
No opinion	38.69% 77
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>

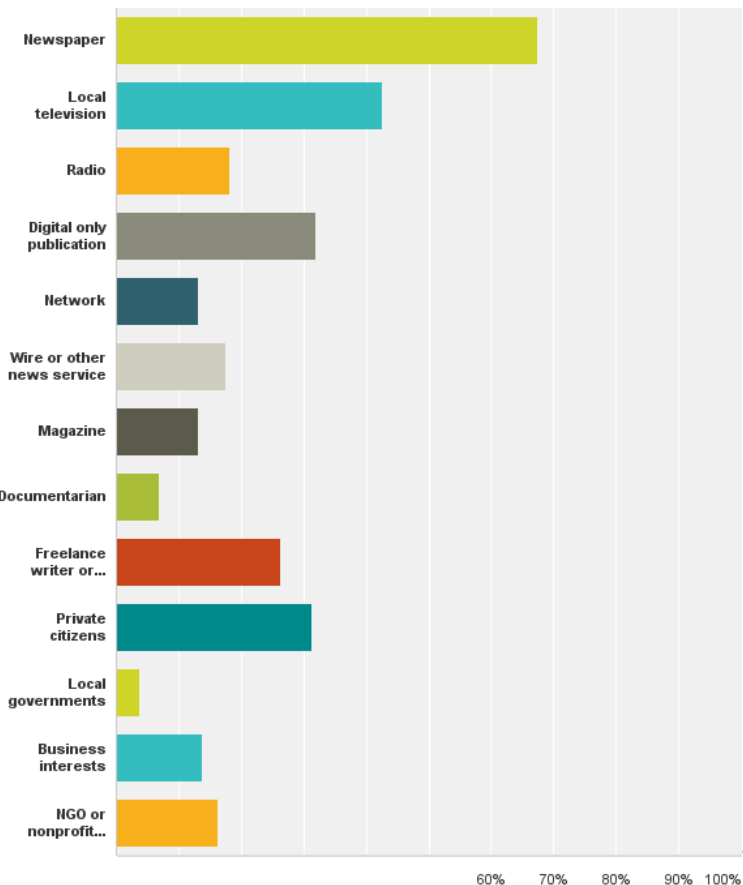


**Q16: Our past surveys on these topics have shown declining media interest and involvement in litigation and legal actions regarding open government matters. Do you see that trend continuing, and if so to what do you primarily attribute it?**



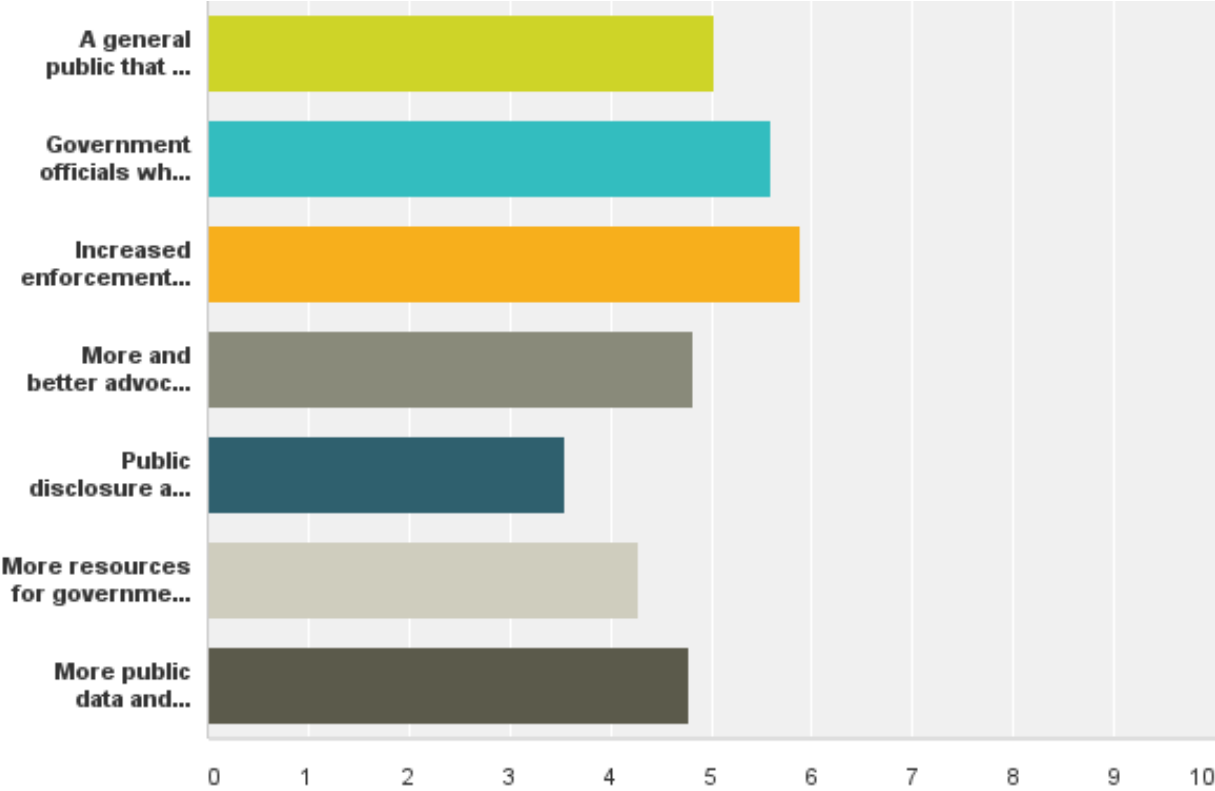
Answer Choices	Responses
I do not see a continuation of that trend (Please continue to Question No. 18)	<b>11.94%</b> 24
Lack of funds/resources for litigation	<b>69.65%</b> 140
Public citizens and groups taking the lead in such actions	<b>1.99%</b> 4
Improvements in compliance and/or proactive disclosures negating the need for legal actions	<b>0.50%</b> 1
A decline in the kind of reporting that requires assertive legal actions to gain access to information	<b>15.92%</b> 32
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>

## Q17: What kind(s) of clients has your organization represented in open government matters? (Check all that apply)



Answer Choices	Responses
Newspaper	67.50% 108
Local television	42.50% 68
Radio	18.13% 29
Digital only publication	31.87% 51
Network	13.13% 21
Wire or other news service	17.50% 28
Magazine	13.13% 21
Documentarian	6.88% 11
Freelance writer or journalist in any medium	26.25% 42
Private citizens	31.25% 50
Local governments	3.75% 6
Business interests	13.75% 22
NGO or nonprofit organization	16.25% 26
<b>Total Respondents: 160</b>	

**Q18: In your opinion, which of the following is most needed to make public information from agencies more accessible? (Please rank your top three choices)**



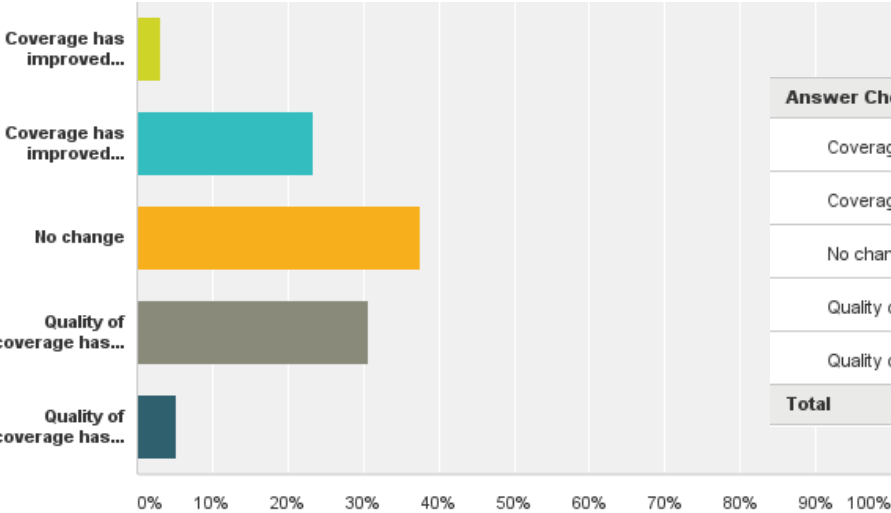
**Q18: In your opinion, which of the following is most needed to make public information from agencies more accessible? (Please rank your top three choices)**

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	Score
1.	A general public that is better informed and more educated regarding open government laws	22.64% 24	19.81% 21	30.19% 32	8.49% 9	8.49% 9	5.66% 6	4.72% 5	106	5.04
2.	Government officials who are better informed and more educated regarding open government responsibilities	27.34% 38	33.09% 46	25.18% 35	5.76% 8	4.32% 6	2.88% 4	1.44% 2	139	5.59
3.	Increased enforcement measures	46.95% 77	22.56% 37	17.68% 29	5.49% 9	1.22% 2	3.66% 6	2.44% 4	164	5.88

**Q18: In your opinion, which of the following is most needed to make public information from agencies more accessible? (Please rank your top three choices) **cont.****

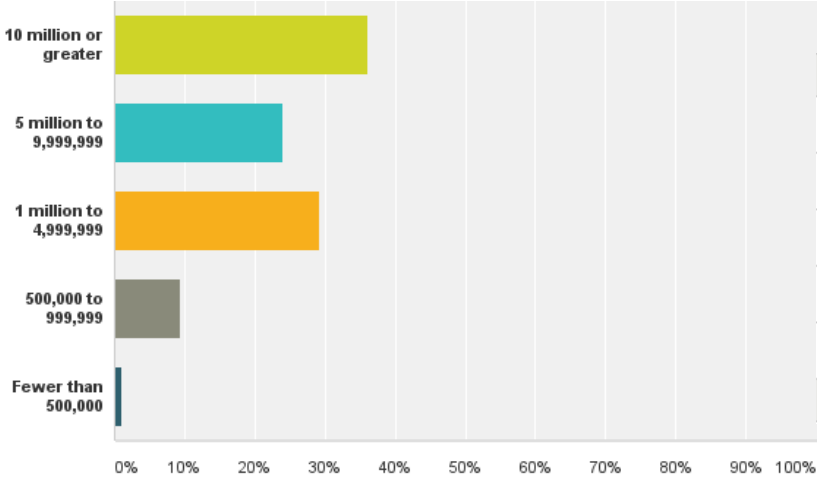
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	Score
4.	Increased enforcement measures	<b>46.95%</b> 77	<b>22.56%</b> 37	<b>17.68%</b> 29	<b>5.49%</b> 9	<b>1.22%</b> 2	<b>3.66%</b> 6	<b>2.44%</b> 4	164	5.88
5.	More and better advocacy by press associations, law firms, open government organizations and others	<b>15.38%</b> 16	<b>18.27%</b> 19	<b>35.58%</b> 37	<b>8.65%</b> 9	<b>10.58%</b> 11	<b>8.65%</b> 9	<b>2.88%</b> 3	104	4.82
6.	Public disclosure and public meetings laws that are easier to understand	<b>2.94%</b> 2	<b>19.12%</b> 13	<b>17.65%</b> 12	<b>7.35%</b> 5	<b>16.18%</b> 11	<b>16.18%</b> 11	<b>20.59%</b> 14	68	3.54
7.	More resources for government FOI offices	<b>14.10%</b> 11	<b>24.36%</b> 19	<b>17.95%</b> 14	<b>7.69%</b> 6	<b>6.41%</b> 5	<b>15.38%</b> 12	<b>14.10%</b> 11	78	4.29
8.	More public data and proactive disclosure	<b>17.76%</b> 19	<b>27.10%</b> 29	<b>24.30%</b> 26	<b>6.54%</b> 7	<b>7.48%</b> 8	<b>3.74%</b> 4	<b>13.08%</b> 14	107	4.78

# Q19: In your opinion, how has the changing landscape of government access over the past two years affected the quality of news coverage in your area?



Answer Choices	Responses
Coverage has improved significantly	3.17% 6
Coverage has improved somewhat	23.28% 44
No change	37.57% 71
Quality of coverage has decreased somewhat	30.69% 58
Quality of coverage has decreased significantly	5.29% 10
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>

## Q20: What is the current population of the state or territory in which you reside or work?



Answer Choices	Responses	
10 million or greater	36.13%	69
5 million to 9,999,999	24.08%	46
1 million to 4,999,999	29.32%	56
500,000 to 999,999	9.42%	18
Fewer than 500,000	1.05%	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>191</b>

# END

## Q4 2015 NFOIC/MLRC/IRE Open Government Survey

March 16, 2016