



The State of Texting as Evidence 2026

Text messages are the new evidence. This survey shows how Americans save, lose, and rely on the conversations that decide their disputes.

81%

**of American adults have screenshotted a text or DM
because they might need it as proof.**

Rises to 90% among adults under 60.

A national survey of 1,081 U.S. adults 18 and older, fielded June 12–16, 2026 via the SurveyMonkey Audience national panel. Modeled margin of error ± 3 percentage points.

Published July 2026
textport.com/research

KEY FINDINGS

The headline numbers

From 1,081 U.S. adults surveyed in June 2026.

81%



have screenshotted a text or DM because they might need it as proof

Rises to 90% among adults under 60.

38%



have had texts or DMs used in a legal, workplace, or other formal proceeding they were part of

58% among 45–60-year-olds; 74% among custody savers.

78%



have deleted or lost messages they later wished they had kept

Among custody savers: 93%.

75%



worry at least a little that someone could delete messages they might need later

39% are somewhat or very worried; 47% of custody savers are very worried.

66%



have saved message evidence for a serious matter: work, money, housing, fraud, harassment, or family

716 of 1,081 respondents.

32%



of people who tried to save a full conversation found it hard or couldn't do it at all

Respondents on iPhones: 41%. On Android: 20%.

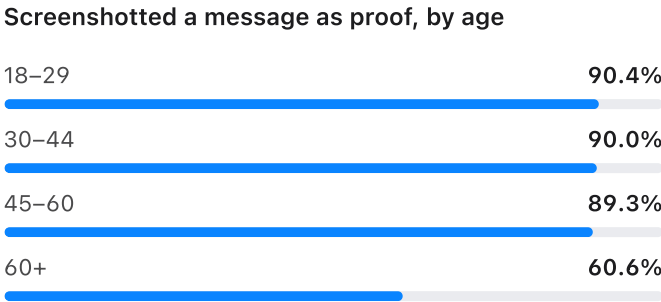
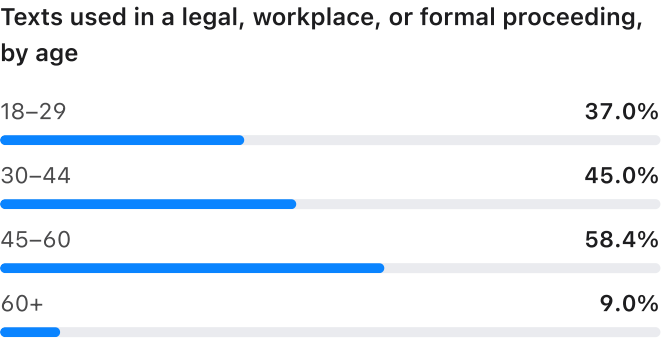
Full question wording, bases, and counts for every result appear in the appendix. Figures are free to cite with attribution to TextPort and a link to textport.com/research/texting-as-evidence-2026.

Texts are the new evidence

Saving a text as proof is a mainstream habit. **81.5% of adults have screenshotted a message** they thought they might need later, and **54.5% have needed to save an entire conversation** for a serious or official purpose.

For many, that record has already mattered. **37.6% have had texts or DMs used in a legal, workplace, or other proceeding** they were personally involved in.

The habit is near-universal under 60, then falls off a cliff: roughly **90% of adults under 60 screenshot for proof**, against 60.6% of those over 60. Ages 45 to 60 are the peak evidence years: **58.4% have had texts used in a proceeding**, the highest of any age band.

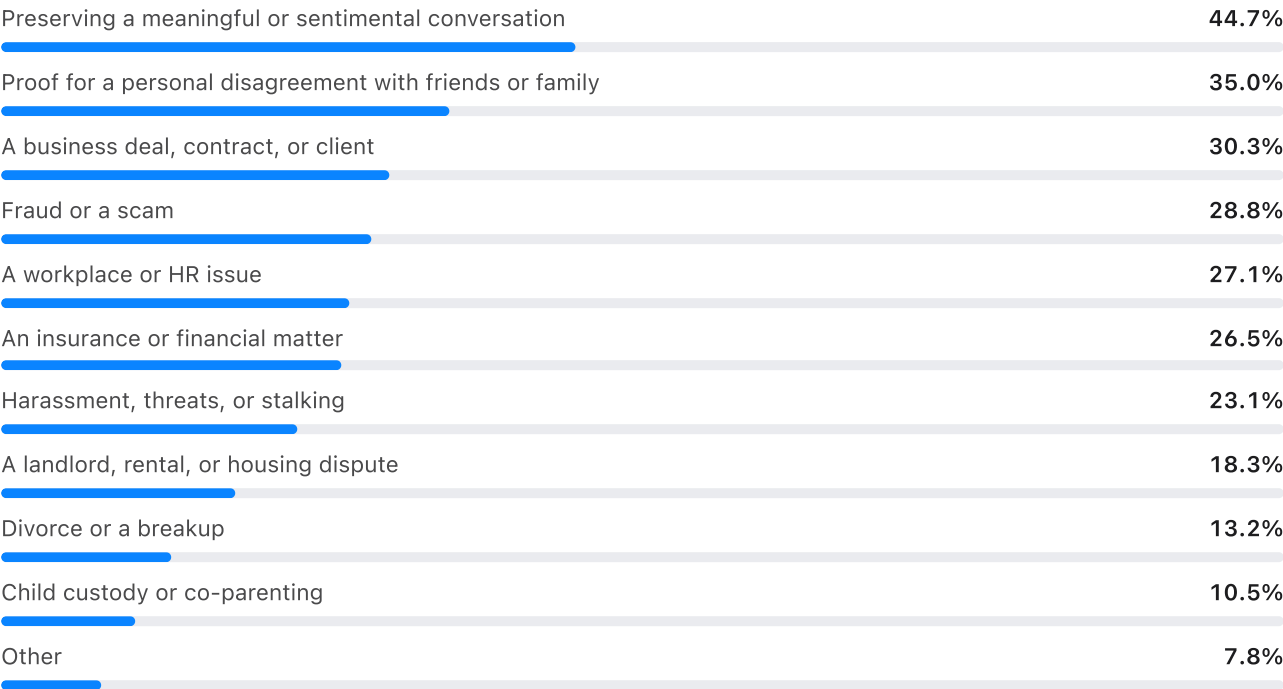


What Americans are saving

People save messages to hold onto something meaningful, and to protect themselves. Sentimental saving is the most common single reason, but the defensive reasons add up: **66.2% have saved message evidence for a serious matter**, whether work, money, housing, fraud, harassment, or family. That is 716 of 1,081 respondents.

These are not quick exchanges, either. **18.5% of saved conversations reached back more than a year**. The record people need is often the oldest part of the thread, and the hardest to recover once it is gone.

Reasons people saved or screenshotted messages (select all that apply)



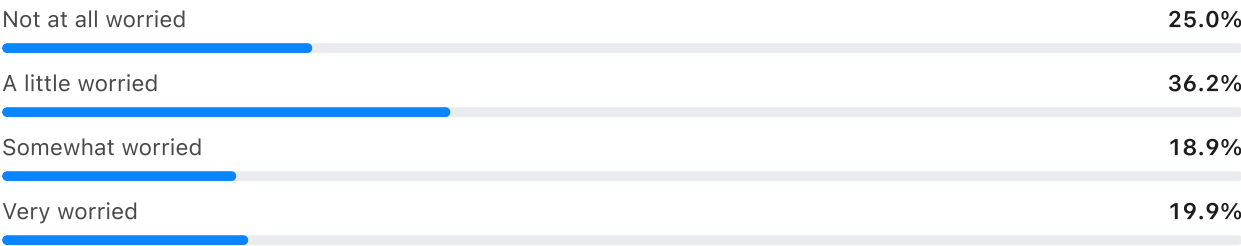
Base: 884 respondents who saved or screenshotted messages. Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents could select multiple reasons.

The disappearing-message problem

Almost everyone has been burned by a message that is gone. **77.9% have deleted or lost messages they later wished they had kept.** Loss is the norm, not the exception.

It worries them, too. **75.0% are at least a little worried that someone could delete messages they might need later,** and 38.9% are somewhat or very worried. There is a contradiction here: apps made disappearing messages a default feature in the same years people started treating their phones as the record of last resort.

How much it worries people that someone could delete messages they might need



77.9% have lost messages they regret, yet **64.2% think of their phone as a record of important conversations** they might need later. The archive people count on is one accidental deletion away from being gone.

The custody files

Split the results by why people saved messages and one cluster stands apart. Family-law disputes, custody and divorce, are where texts most often become evidence and where the fear of losing them runs highest.

Among people who saved messages in a custody or co-parenting dispute, **74.2% had texts used in a proceeding, 92.5% have lost messages they regret, and 47.3% are very worried about deletion.** No other group depends this heavily on a record it can lose.

Reason messages were saved	Texts used in a proceeding	Lost messages they regret	Very worried about deletion
Child custody or co-parenting n = 93	74.2%	92.5%	47.3%
Divorce or a breakup n = 117	56.4%	89.7%	33.3%
Harassment, threats, or stalking n = 204	56.9%	89.2%	28.9%
A workplace or HR issue n = 240	61.2%	84.2%	30.4%
A landlord, rental, or housing dispute n = 162	67.9%	92.6%	35.2%

Custody or divorce combined (n = 181)

64.1% had texts used in a proceeding, **91.7%** have lost messages they regret, and **65.2%** are somewhat or very worried about deletion.

Saving is harder than it should be

Wanting the record is one thing; getting it out of the phone is another. **32.0% of people who tried to save a full conversation found it hard or could not do it at all**, and 8.6% never figured out how.

The difficulty is lopsided by platform: **40.7% of iPhone users found it hard or impossible, about twice the 20.3% on Android**. And 12.5% of iPhone users gave up entirely, versus 4.7% on Android.

How easy or hard it was to save or export a full conversation



Device comparisons use the device the respondent took the survey on (388 on iOS, 469 on Android) as a proxy for their primary device.

The expectation gap

65.5% believe a screenshot would be accepted as evidence in court. Courts often ask for more: authentication of who sent it, the surrounding context, and a complete thread rather than a cropped image. This is a finding about what people believe, not legal advice, so confirm what your court requires.

Full results

Every question, with the base and the percentage and count for each answer.

Q1. Have you ever taken a screenshot of a text or direct message because you thought you might need it later as proof or a record?

Base: 1,081

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Yes	81.5%	881
No	15.5%	168
Not sure	3.0%	32

Q2. Have you ever needed to save, export, or print an entire text conversation for a serious or official purpose — not just a single screenshot?

Base: 1,081

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Yes	54.5%	589
No	39.5%	427
Not sure	6.0%	65

Q3. You mentioned saving or screenshotting messages for a reason. What was that reason? Select all that apply.

Base: 884, asked of respondents who have saved or screenshotted messages

Answer	Percent	Respondents
A business deal, contract, or client	30.3%	268
Fraud or a scam	28.8%	255
A workplace or HR issue	27.1%	240
An insurance or financial matter	26.5%	234
Harassment, threats, or stalking	23.1%	204
A landlord, rental, or housing dispute	18.3%	162
Divorce or a breakup	13.2%	117
Child custody or co-parenting	10.5%	93
Preserving a meaningful or sentimental conversation	44.7%	395
Proof for a personal disagreement with friends or family	35.0%	309
Other	7.8%	69

Full results (continued)

Q4. Roughly how far back did that conversation go?

Base: 884, asked of respondents who have saved or screenshotted messages

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Days	33.7%	298
Weeks	24.5%	217
A few months	23.3%	206
Over a year	11.0%	97
Multiple years	7.5%	66

Q5. When you tried to save or export the full conversation, how easy or hard was it?

Base: 884, asked of respondents who have saved or screenshotted messages

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Very easy	35.6%	315
Somewhat easy	32.4%	286
Somewhat hard	18.3%	162
Very hard	5.1%	45
I couldn't figure out how to do it	8.6%	76

Q6. Have you ever deleted or lost messages that you later wished you had kept?

Base: 1,045

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Yes	77.9%	814
No	22.1%	231

Q7. Some apps make messages disappear automatically or let people delete messages on both sides. How much does it worry you that someone could delete messages you might need later?

Base: 1,045

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Not at all worried	25.0%	261
A little worried	36.2%	378
Somewhat worried	18.9%	198
Very worried	19.9%	208

Full results (continued)

Q8. If you needed to, do you believe a screenshot of a text message would be accepted as evidence in a court or formal proceeding?

Base: 1,045

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Yes, definitely	29.3%	306
Probably	36.2%	378
Probably not	16.8%	176
Definitely not	1.8%	19
I don't know	15.9%	166

Q9. Have text messages or DMs ever actually been used in a legal, workplace, or other formal proceeding that you were personally involved in?

Base: 1,045

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Yes	37.6%	393
No	62.4%	652

Q10. How much do you agree with this statement: "I think of my phone as a record of important conversations I might need later."

Base: 1,045

Answer	Percent	Respondents
Strongly agree	27.6%	288
Agree	36.7%	383
Neither agree nor disagree	25.3%	264
Disagree	7.6%	79
Strongly disagree	3.0%	31

How this survey was run

TextPort surveyed **1,081 U.S. adults 18 and older** through the SurveyMonkey Audience national panel. The survey was fielded from June 12, 2026 to June 16, 2026. The modeled margin of error is ± 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level (modeled error estimate).

1,045 respondents completed the full questionnaire; demographic and attitudinal questions are based on completes. 51.7% of respondents were women and 48.3% men; 12.9% were 18–29, 32.5% were 30–44, 26.9% were 45–60, and 27.7% were over 60. Device-type comparisons use the device the respondent took the survey on (388 on iOS, 469 on Android) as a proxy for their primary device.

Results are unweighted. Follow-up questions about a specific saved conversation were asked only of the 884 respondents who reported saving or screenshotting messages for a reason.

RESPONDENTS	FIELDED	MARGIN OF ERROR	POPULATION
1,081	Jun 12–16	± 3 pts	U.S. adults 18 and older

CITE THIS REPORT

TextPort, “The State of Texting as Evidence 2026,” July 2026 survey of 1,081 U.S. adults. Available at textport.com/research/texting-as-evidence-2026. Published under **CC BY 4.0**; cite TextPort and link to the report when reusing the work.



About TextPort

TextPort is a privacy-first app for iPhone and desktop that turns conversations from iMessage, SMS, WhatsApp, and other chat apps into clean, timestamped PDFs and spreadsheets people use as records and evidence. This research is part of an annual series on how Americans save, export, and rely on their message history.

Research inquiries: research@textport.com · Media kit: textport.com/press