

# 2026 Law Firm Intake Benchmark

After-Hours Intake: What the Published Data Shows — and What the Industry Still Does Not Measure

A public-facing evidence brief examining after-hours phone response, advertised 24/7 availability, online scheduling, and web inquiry response benchmarks across U.S. law firms.

## Research status

This brief synthesizes confirmed third-party findings. The figures below are not presented as CallShift-owned results. Where reliable national evidence does not yet exist, the gap is stated explicitly and reserved for the CallShift 2026 Law Firm Intake Benchmark Study.

**Prepared August 2026**

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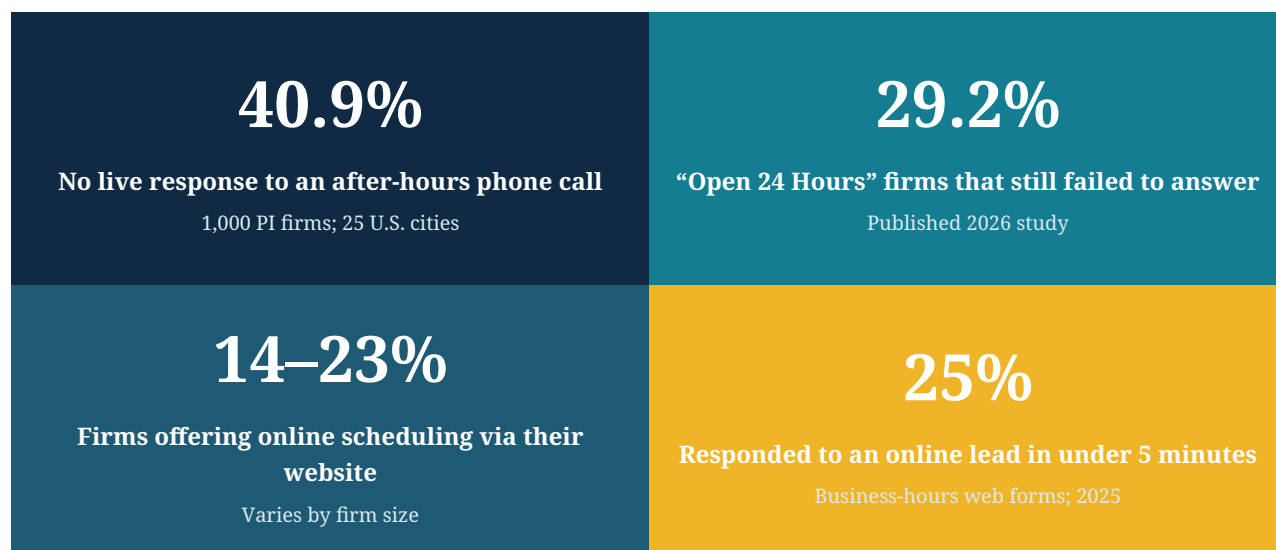
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Intake Gap Is Real — but the Evidence Has Boundaries

Published U.S. research shows that prospective clients can encounter meaningful delays or dead ends when they contact a law firm. The clearest recent after-hours evidence comes from a 2026 study of 1,000 personal-injury firms in 25 major U.S. cities. That study found that 40.9% did not provide a live response to an after-hours phone call. Among firms whose Google Business Profiles listed them as “Open 24 Hours,” 29.2% failed to answer the test call.

Separate ABA technology data shows that online scheduling remains uncommon: only 14% to 23% of firms reported offering scheduling through their websites, depending on firm size. And Hennessey Digital’s 2025 study of 1,333 U.S. law firms found a 13-minute median response time to online lead forms submitted during business hours, with 25% responding within five minutes.

What the published literature still does not establish is just as important: there is no strong large-scale national benchmark for how often law firms acknowledge an after-hours web inquiry within five minutes, how often a prospective client can actually book a consultation after hours, or how frequently firms provide a functioning multi-channel after-hours intake experience.



**Key point:** These figures answer different questions. They should not be combined into a single national “after-hours intake rate.”

## Four in Ten Tested Firms Did Not Provide a Live After-Hours Response

In 2026, Tiago Strammiello and Cal Stein examined after-hours intake responsiveness across 1,000 personal-injury law firms in 25 major U.S. cities. Each firm was called outside regular business hours. A response from a human, an answering service, or an automated system counted as an answer.

### **Published finding: 40.9% non-answer rate**

The study reported that 40.9% of the 1,000 personal-injury firms tested did not provide a live response to the after-hours call.

### **Advertised 24/7 availability did not guarantee an answer**

The same study compared actual call handling with information displayed on firms' Google Business Profiles. Among firms listing "Open 24 Hours," the published paper reports that 29.2% still failed to answer the after-hours test call.

**Approximately 3 in 10 firms advertising 24-hour availability failed the after-hours phone test.**

### **What this finding does — and does not — establish**

- It provides a large recent benchmark for after-hours phone responsiveness among personal-injury firms.
- It does not represent every U.S. practice area or every law firm in all 50 states.
- It tests the telephone channel only; it does not establish whether a non-answering firm offered text, web chat, a functioning online scheduler, or rapid web-form acknowledgment.
- The paper is posted on SSRN and discloses an affiliation with ClaireAI, a legal intake provider. That commercial interest should be visible when the result is cited.

### **Responsible wording for publication**

"In a 2026 test of 1,000 U.S. personal-injury law firms across 25 major cities, 40.9% failed to provide a live response to an after-hours phone call. Among firms advertising 24-hour availability, 29.2% failed to answer."

## Online Scheduling Is Still Uncommon

After-hours accessibility is not limited to whether someone answers the phone. A prospective client may also want to schedule a consultation without waiting for office staff to return.

The American Bar Association’s 2024 Legal Technology Survey found that online scheduling through law-firm websites remains relatively uncommon, with adoption varying by firm size.

| Firm size       | Online scheduling |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Solo firms      | 23%               |
| 2–9 attorneys   | 18%               |
| 10–49 attorneys | 14%               |
| 100+ attorneys  | 15%               |

This is useful evidence about technology adoption, but it is not the same as measuring successful after-hours booking. A website may display a scheduling tool yet offer no evening appointments, require staff approval before confirmation, or use the feature only for existing clients.

**What can be said now**

“Only 14%–23% of law firms offered online scheduling through their websites, depending on firm size.”

**What should not be inferred**

The ABA data does not establish that the remaining firms cannot schedule consultations after hours, nor does it measure whether an online booking actually results in a confirmed consultation.

## Business-Hours Web Response Is Measured. After-Hours Acknowledgment Is Not.

Hennessey Digital's 2025 Lead Form Response Time Study provides one of the largest current benchmarks for law-firm web inquiries. The study contacted 1,333 U.S. law firms in Q1 2025 using online lead forms. Importantly, the forms were submitted between 10 a.m. and noon in each firm's local time zone, and the clock stopped at the first personal outreach from the firm.

| Response benchmark                            | 2025 result |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| First personal response in under 5 minutes    | 25%         |
| First personal response in 10 minutes or less | 33%         |
| First personal response within 1 hour         | 56%         |
| No personal response within 7 days            | 26%         |

### Median response time: 13 minutes

These figures are valuable for understanding business-hours response speed. They do not answer the specific after-hours question CallShift wants to publish.

#### The unresolved benchmark

Current large-scale national research does not establish what percentage of U.S. law firms acknowledge an after-hours web inquiry within five minutes.

### Why “acknowledgment” should be measured separately

A prospective client can receive an immediate automated confirmation and still wait hours for a meaningful human response. The CallShift benchmark should therefore measure two clocks:

01

#### Time to acknowledgment

How quickly the firm confirms that the inquiry was received, whether automatically or manually.

02

#### Time to meaningful human response

How quickly a person provides a substantive reply, next step, consultation offer, or other useful intake contact.

## The Research Gap CallShift Can Own

The strongest opportunity is not to repeat the after-hours phone statistic already published by others. It is to measure the parts of the intake journey that have not yet been established at national scale.

|                                         |                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Functioning after-hours intake</b>   | What percentage of firms provide a working after-hours path across phone, text, chat, web forms, and scheduling? |
| <b>After-hours consultation booking</b> | What percentage allow a prospective client to actually secure a consultation outside normal business hours?      |
| <b>Immediate web acknowledgment</b>     | What percentage acknowledge an after-hours web inquiry within 1 minute or 5 minutes?                             |
| <b>Meaningful response speed</b>        | What percentage provide substantive human contact within 5, 15, 30, and 60 minutes after hours?                  |
| <b>Automation and performance</b>       | Are firms with observable automated intake or follow-up associated with faster response and deeper follow-up?    |
| <b>Follow-up depth</b>                  | How many firms continue contacting the prospect after the first unanswered call or message?                      |

## 3 | PROPOSED ORIGINAL RESEARCH

## What the CallShift 2026 Benchmark Should Measure Directly

To produce genuinely citable CallShift statistics, the study should distinguish observable website capabilities from live intake performance. The public report should describe the methodology in enough detail that another researcher could understand exactly how each metric was defined.

### Website intake audit

- Advertised 24-hour availability.
- Visible phone, text, chat, web-form, and scheduling options.
- Office hours and after-hours instructions.
- Presence of an apparent AI or automated intake tool.
- Ability to submit an inquiry or begin scheduling outside normal business hours.
- Number of steps or required fields before a prospect can complete intake.

### Live inquiry testing

- Time to automated acknowledgment.
- Time to first meaningful human response.
- Whether a consultation can be booked after hours.
- Whether the response is personalized and provides a clear next step.
- Number of follow-up attempts over a defined observation period.
- Channels used for follow-up: phone, voicemail, email, SMS, chat, or scheduling link.

### Recommended timing bands

|        |        |         |         |         |         |             |
|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|
| <1 min | ≤5 min | ≤15 min | ≤30 min | ≤60 min | ≤24 hrs | No response |
|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|

### Definitions that should be published with the results

**Live response:** A human, live answering service, or interactive automated system that engages the caller beyond passive voicemail.

**Acknowledgment:** A message confirming receipt of an inquiry; may be automated and should not be treated as a human response.

**Meaningful human response:** A substantive contact from a person that addresses the inquiry, explains a next step, or offers a consultation.

**After hours:** A standardized local-time period outside the firm's posted business hours, defined before data collection begins.

**Online booking:** A process that allows the prospective client to select or request a consultation time through the website; confirmed booking should be tracked separately from a request-only form.

#### Publication standard

Until CallShift has collected its own timestamped observations, the report should not publish a national percentage for after-hours web acknowledgment, after-hours consultation booking, or automation-driven response improvement.

## What a Reader Can Reliably Take Away Today

|            |                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 40.9%      | In a 2026 after-hours phone test of 1,000 personal-injury firms, 40.9% did not provide a live response.                                                   |
| 29.2%      | Among tested firms advertising “Open 24 Hours,” 29.2% failed to answer the after-hours call.                                                              |
| 14–23%     | ABA survey data shows online scheduling through firm websites ranged from 14% to 23%, depending on firm size.                                             |
| UNMEASURED | No strong large-scale national benchmark currently establishes five-minute after-hours web acknowledgment or successful after-hours consultation booking. |

**That unresolved space is the opportunity for the CallShift 2026 Law Firm Intake Benchmark: not another collection of borrowed statistics, but a transparent, repeatable national measurement of what happens after a prospective client reaches out.**

## SOURCES &amp; RESEARCH NOTES

## Primary Sources Used in This Brief

### 1. Strammiello, Tiago & Cal Stein. “After-Hours Intake Response Rates Across 1,000 U.S. Personal Injury Law Firms.”

SSRN, posted April 20, 2026. The study tested 1,000 personal-injury law firms in 25 major U.S. cities outside regular business hours and reported a 40.9% overall non-answer rate and a 29.2% non-answer rate among firms listed as “Open 24 Hours.”

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=6310399](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=6310399)

### 2. American Bar Association. “2024 Solo and Small Firm TechReport.”

The ABA’s 2024 Legal Technology Survey reported online scheduling through websites at 23% for solo firms, 18% for firms with 2–9 attorneys, 14% for firms with 10–49 attorneys, and 15% for firms with 100+ attorneys.

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/law\\_practice/resources/tech-report/2024/2024-solo-and-small-firm-techreport/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/law_practice/resources/tech-report/2024/2024-solo-and-small-firm-techreport/)

### 3. Hennessey Digital. “2025 Lead Form Response Time Study.”

The study contacted 1,333 U.S. law firms in Q1 2025 through online lead forms submitted between 10 a.m. and noon local time. It reported a 13-minute median response time, 25% responding in under five minutes, 33% in 10 minutes or less, 56% within one hour, and 26% with no personal response within seven days.

<https://hennessey.com/2025-lead-form-response-time-study/>

## Research integrity note

This document is a synthesis of third-party research prepared by CallShift. CallShift did not conduct the tests described in the confirmed findings above and does not claim ownership of those statistics. The planned CallShift benchmark is intended to measure currently unresolved intake questions directly. Any future CallShift findings should be published with definitions, sample selection, field dates, local-time testing windows, denominators, exclusions, and known commercial interests.

### Suggested public description

“The CallShift 2026 Law Firm Intake Benchmark builds on existing U.S. research by measuring the intake questions that current large-scale studies do not answer — including after-hours web acknowledgment, consultation booking, multi-channel availability, and follow-up depth.”

## CALLSHIFT

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