

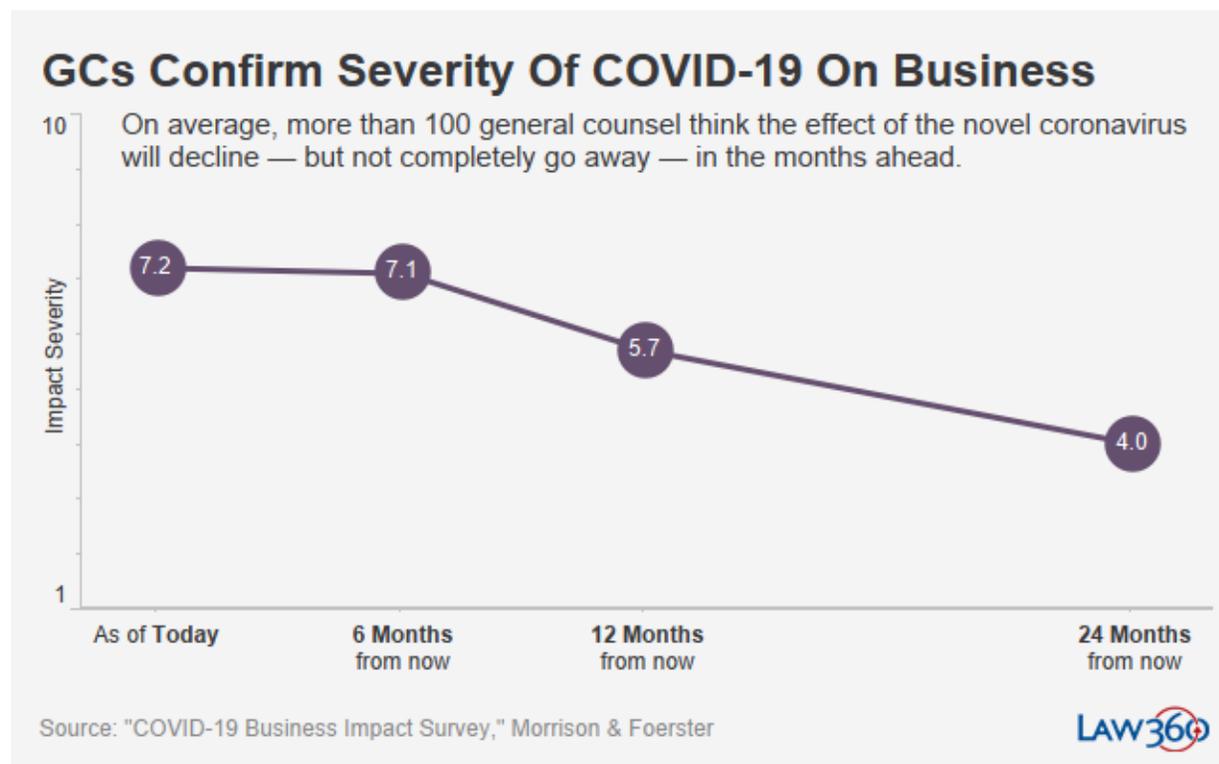
## GCs Forced To Shift Priorities Amid COVID-19 Crisis

By Michele Gorman

*Law360 (April 2, 2020, 7:37 PM EDT)* -- Increased workloads and shifting priorities to address urgent needs are just some of the effects that general counsel across industries are facing because of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new survey released Thursday.

More than half of the 110 in-house general counsel at global corporations who participated in the COVID-19 Business Impact Survey by Morrison & Foerster LLP ranked the novel coronavirus as "severe" — at a level of 8 or higher on a 10-point scale, with 10 marking the "most severe" effect.

On average, in-house counsel said COVID-19 currently lands at a 7.2 on the scale, and over the next six months, they only expect that number to decrease by a tenth of a point, the survey found.



Looking ahead, GCs think the impact will decline but not completely go away. For example, they predicted the level to decrease to a 5.7 over the next year, and to a 4 over the next two years.

"Companies seem to be weathering the storm now, but may have to resort to more drastic measures as the crisis continues over the next six to 24 months," the survey says.

Between March 20 and March 24, legal counsel also weighed in on how the novel virus has affected their tasks. Almost 63% of respondents said that their current workload "has increased as an immediate result of COVID-19," according to the survey.

Meanwhile, 20% of participants said workload "has remained the same but changed," which MoFo said shows that businesses have been forced to shift their "regular business priorities to deal with these new and more immediate priorities."

The in-house counsel also said the traditional priorities they typically view as challenges have fallen further down on their lists. Topping those lists now are "providing legal counsel on unprecedented issues," "making decisions in uncertain times" and "protecting the company from risk," according to the survey.

Since the escalation of the crisis in the U.S. over the past few weeks, experts have warned lawyers about cybercriminals increasingly exploiting vulnerabilities stemming from the global coronavirus pandemic.

But the general counsel who participated in MoFo's survey ranked the legal risks related to data security and privacy lower than other virus-related concerns — at fourth and sixth, respectively. The main three legal risks associated with COVID-19 — regardless of company size — are employment/human resources, contracts, and supply chain disruption, the survey found.

"Security appears to be lower on the scale likely because the other risks are paramount at the moment," said Miriam Wugmeister, co-chair of MoFo's global privacy and data security group. "Unfortunately, the number of data security incidents is likely to rise in the near future, which may impact many organizations."

MoFo conducted its survey with general counsel at companies with revenues ranging from less than \$250 million to more than \$20 billion.

--Editing by Alanna Weissman.