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the legal profession®

International Bar Association

Raising the Bar: Women in Law Project



Phase 2 Report

International Bar Association Legal Policy & Research Unit with the support of the IBA Women Lawyers Committee and Diversity & Inclusion Council

The International Bar Association (IBA), established in 1947, is the world's leading international organisation of legal practitioners, bar associations, law societies, law firms and in-house legal teams. The IBA influences the development of international law reform and shapes the future of the legal profession throughout the world.

It has a membership of more than 80,000 lawyers, 190 bar associations and law societies, and 200 group member law firms, spanning over 170 countries. The IBA is headquartered in London, with offices in São Paulo, Seoul, The Hague and Washington, DC.

The IBA Legal Policy & Research Unit (LPRU) undertakes research and develops initiatives that are relevant to the rule of law, the legal profession and the broader global community. The LPRU engages with legal professionals, law firms, law societies and bar associations, governments, non-governmental organisations and international institutions to ensure innovative, collaborative and effective outcomes.

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Foreword

It is our honour to present the *Raising the Bar: Women in Law* report, representing the second major milestone in the International Bar Association's global project examining women's representation in the legal profession. The focus of the report is the results of a landmark survey conducted by the IBA in 2025, which gathered information from over 5,000 women about their personal experiences in the legal profession, spanning 100 jurisdictions. This report builds on the foundations laid by the IBA Diversity and Inclusion Council and then on the leadership of Immediate Past President Almudena Arpón de Mendivil. This was a Presidential initiative during her tenure and central to her commitment to advance informed, evidence-based discussion on the future of the profession.

We have the privilege of serving the IBA under a historic joint presidency spanning 2025 and 2026, established to ensure continuity, collaboration and sustained strategic direction. Our joint leadership is guided by a defined set of shared objectives, including promoting gender parity and diversity within the legal profession particularly at this crucial juncture where these values seem to be under scrutiny in some jurisdictions. These priorities provide the framework within which projects such as *Raising the Bar: Women in Law* continue to develop and evolve.

This initiative aligns closely with our shared objectives. By examining how professional structures and workplace practices affect progression, retention and leadership across jurisdictions and legal sectors, the report contributes to a deeper understanding of the conditions required for a strong, independent and representative profession. In doing so, it complements the IBA's wider efforts to support professional standards, strengthen institutional resilience and reinforce public confidence in the rule of law.

This report is the product of extensive work by the IBA Legal Policy & Research Unit, undertaken with the support of the IBA's Diversity and Inclusion Council and its Women Lawyers' Committee, and guided by an Advisory Board comprised of members from a range of IBA committees and the IBA Bar Issues Commission. These experienced legal professionals work in a range of legal sectors and jurisdictions. Their collective expertise and perspectives have been instrumental in shaping both the analysis and the recommendations contained in this report.

We extend our sincere thanks to all those who contributed their enthusiasm and time to this project. Their work reflects the IBA's commitment to rigorous research and thoughtful engagement with the challenges facing the legal profession worldwide.

We invite readers to engage closely with the findings and recommendations of this report. Raising the bar to achieve an inclusive and equitable legal profession is an ongoing endeavour, requiring leadership, collaboration and sustained attention. Through initiatives such as this, the IBA reaffirms its commitment to supporting a profession that is independent, inclusive and equipped to meet the demands of a changing world.

Jaime Carey

President, International Bar Association (2025)

Claudio Visco

President, International Bar Association (2026)

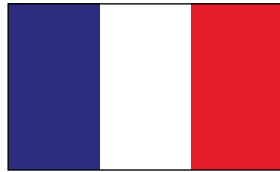
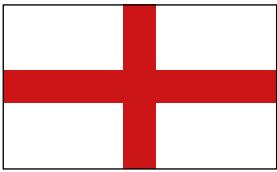
Key findings



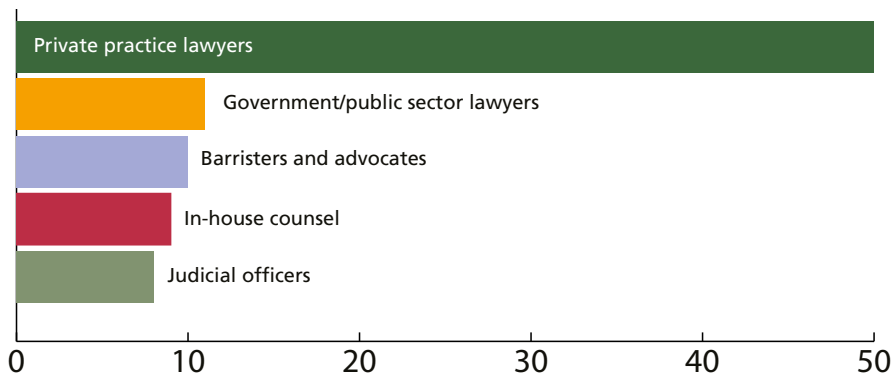
4,933 responses



Conducted in four languages: English, French, Spanish and Portuguese



Respondent roles



'Calls for' workplace initiatives

Respondents called for access to workplace initiatives not already available to them, including:

- support for parents and carers
- mental health support, stress management and recognition of vicarious trauma
- unconscious bias training
- pay equity and transparency
- support for life stages (menopause, perimenopause, fertility issues)
- professional development and training (eg, business development and communication)



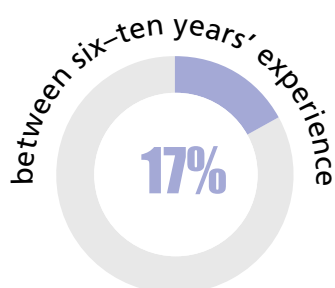
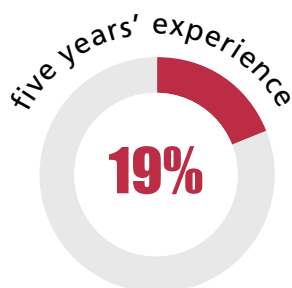
Personal responsibilities outside of work among respondents

52 per cent of survey respondents working in the profession have dependent children, and this cohort is evenly split between having responsibility as primary or equal carer. **38 per cent** of respondents indicated they had caring responsibilities as well as, or other than, children.



Key findings

Length of time in profession

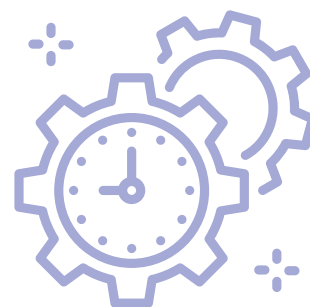


Availability of workplace initiatives

60 per cent of respondents indicated that their workplace has greater availability of flexible working arrangements post Covid-19.

40 per cent have access to coaching and mentoring programmes.

20 per cent have access to leadership training for women.



Initiatives with greatest impact on career

Flexible working

33 per cent

Coaching and mentoring

20 per cent

Top future career plans among respondents

Staying in my current workplace without plans to leave

62 per cent

Leaving my current workplace to join another legal workplace

25 per cent

Staying in the legal profession but in a different role (eg, academia, consulting)

19 per cent



Reasons for leaving the profession

Top reasons for having left:

- being unhappy with their workplace culture
- seeking better support for mental or physical health elsewhere
- having experienced bias or discrimination in their current role



Summary of recommendations



1. Striving for structural and cultural change around workplace initiatives

ensuring the visibility and accessibility of workplace initiatives and changing culture and stigma around access.



2. Embedding flexible work practices

normalising flexible work to reduce stigma, promote equitable application of flexible work policies and support retention.



3. Building sustainable career pathways for women

addressing barriers to women's advancement through formalised coaching and mentoring programmes, targeted training and transparency.



4. Supporting women's wellbeing

promoting and supporting women's wellbeing in the profession.



5. Recognising and supporting life stages and caring responsibilities

recognising and supporting those experiencing different life stages such as menopause, and parents and carers.



6. Support for solo practitioners, smaller workplaces and women in chambers

recommendations to ensure women working as solo practitioners, in smaller workplaces and in barristers' chambers are better supported.

See page [45] for the full set of recommendations arising from the survey findings.

Signposts to relevant recommendations are included throughout the body of this report.

Introduction

The Project

In March 2021, the International Bar Association (**IBA**) launched an ambitious multi-year global project, the **Raising the Bar: Women in Law** initiative (**the Project**),¹ examining women's representation in the legal profession. The Project has been carried out in two phases, intended to span multiple legal sectors and jurisdictions over several years, gathering data on women's representation at all levels of the profession, with a particular focus on senior roles. It has been designed to assess the prevalence and impact of workplace initiatives designed to support women's progression and advance gender equity, and seek to identify what is, and is not, working for women in the legal profession.

The focus of **Phase 1** of the Project (2021 to date) has been on country-specific research across key legal sectors (law firms, in-house legal teams, public sector institutions, the judiciary and, where relevant, the Bar), examining the number of women lawyers across each sector and country, with a particular emphasis on women's representation at the most senior levels of the profession. Phase 1 has also gathered data on the prevalence and effectiveness of relevant workplace initiatives. As of March 2026, 13 jurisdictions have been completed (in order of report publication: England and Wales, Uganda, Spain, Nigeria, the Netherlands, Chile, the Republic of Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Ukraine, Turkey, Taiwan and Australia, in addition to a case study in collaboration with DLA Piper in Nepal).² Research was undertaken by way of organisation-focused surveys which gathered **quantitative** data about the number of women working at respondent organisations (including those working in senior roles) and details of workplace initiatives provided by those organisations. In addition, a **qualitative** assessment was made as to the perceived efficacy of those initiatives.

Country studies are currently ongoing in Canada, Singapore and India with publication expected throughout 2026.

The IBA-led **Phase 2** of the Project is the focus of this report. Phase 2 was designed to highlight women's subjective experiences of working in the profession, and to enhance our understanding of what is and what is not working for women pursuing legal careers. The survey was open to women working across all legal sectors, including academia and non-governmental organisations. It was also open to those who had left the legal profession within the last five years. The survey was designed to gather both **quantitative and qualitative** data and to complement and expand upon the research gathered as part of Phase 1 of the Project.



1 IBA Raising the Bar: Women in Law Project: see www.ibanet.org/gender-equality-in-the-legal-profession.

2 These reports are available via www.ibanet.org/gender-equality-in-the-legal-profession.

The Project builds on previous related work undertaken by the IBA, including the *Us Too? Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession* (2019) (**Us Too? report**),³ *Mental Wellbeing In the Legal Profession* (2021) (**Mental Wellbeing Report**),⁴ *Beyond Us Too? Regulatory Responses to Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession* (2022) (**Beyond Us Too? report**),⁵ *Women in Law Progress Report* (2024),⁶ *Young Lawyers Report* (2022)⁷ and IBA *Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit*.⁸ In 2024, the Project won ‘Gender Equality Initiative of the Year’ at the UK Women & Diversity in Law Awards.⁹

In particular, Phase 2 of the Project was informed by the findings of the IBA’s *Women in Commercial Legal Practice Report* (2017) (**Women in Commercial Legal Practice report**).¹⁰ While the Phase 2 survey broadened its focus to include legal sectors other than commercial private practice law firms, comparisons between the 2017 report and those from Phase 2 have been made where relevant.

Context

Across most jurisdictions, there is a well-documented disparity between the proportion of women in the legal profession and their representation in senior roles.¹¹ While it is important to recognise that the gap is reducing, there is still some way to go – particularly in the private sector and in selected jurisdictions.

Findings from Phase 1 of the Project support this assertion: on average, across the 13 countries covered at the time of writing, women made up **45 per cent** of all lawyers, but only **34 per cent** of those in senior positions.¹²

Statistics differ according to sector and jurisdiction. The corporate in-house sector is the closest to achieving gender parity overall (with women representing **57 per cent** of the sector on average across jurisdictions studied), followed by the public sector (**49 per cent**), law firms (**48 per cent**) and the judiciary (**43 per cent**). These variations reflect sectoral differences not only in recruitment and retention patterns, but also in organisational structure, expectations around billable work, cultures of flexibility and access to leadership pipelines.

3 Available at www.ibanet.org/bullying-and-sexual-harassment.

4 Available at www.ibanet.org/mental-wellbeing-in-the-legal-profession.

5 *Ibid.*

6 Available at www.ibanet.org/gender-equality-in-the-legal-profession.

7 Available at www.ibanet.org/LPRU/Young-lawyers-survey.

8 Available at www.ibanet.org/DI-Toolkit-for-Lawyers.

9 www.ibanet.org/IBA-wins-at-UKs-Women-and-Diversity-in-Law-Awards.

10 Available at www.ibanet.org/LPRU/Women-business-Lawyers-Initiative-Front-page.

11 For example, the IBA’s 2017 *Women in Commercial Legal Practice* report found that women represented only 30 per cent of law firm partners, and 14 per cent of law firm equity partners (p 19); 2025 research conducted by the Solicitors Regulation Authority in the United Kingdom found that women represented 47 per cent of salaried partners at firms, but only 32 per cent of full-equity partners (see www.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/diversity-profession/diverse-legal-profession/); 2023 research conducted by the American Bar Association found that only 28 per cent of all law firm partners were women, and in 2020, only 22 per cent of equity partners (see www.americanbar.org/news/profile-legal-profession/women/); in Ireland, while women make up the majority of employees across the board at large law firms, the proportion of women who are partners is consistently below 50 per cent (see Emmet Malone, ‘Ireland’s biggest law firms: Staffed by women, but run by men, with one exception’, *The Irish Times*, 12 December 2025, www.irishtimes.com/business/work/2025/12/12/legal-firms-still-predominantly-staffed-by-women-but-run-by-men-gender-pay-gap-reports-suggest/).

12 Based on *Women in Law Progress Report* (2024) and *Australia Results Report* (2026), available at www.ibanet.org/gender-equality-in-the-legal-profession. Taiwan is not included in the senior positions figure due to not being able to obtain the numerical value for the senior lawyers.

In undertaking Phase 2 of the Project, several fundamental questions guided the design of the global survey:

- ➔ **What is working for women in the legal profession?**
- ➔ **How can women be better supported to reach, and remain in, positions of senior responsibility within the legal profession?**
- ➔ **Why are women considering leaving the profession – or why have they left?**
- ➔ **What needs to change to ensure women can stay, thrive and be fairly promoted in legal roles?**
- ➔ **How do these issues play out differently across sectors and jurisdictions?**

Phase 1 of the Project provided a strong data set to evidence representation and organisational initiatives overall, but did not reveal *why* women were failing to progress at a comparable rate and *how* existing initiatives (where available) were experienced in practice. The IBA's *Women in Commercial Legal Practice* report highlighted the need to revisit the reasons women leave the profession due to insufficient qualitative data at that time. Phase 2 was designed to address these evidence gaps.

The findings of Phase 2 must also be contextualised against the current backdrop of significant global developments affecting women, and others, in the legal profession.

DEI pushback and shifting public discourse

Since January 2025 there has been a well-documented rise globally in political and organisational pushback against diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.¹³ The wave of pushback can be linked to federal government action in the United States, with a series of executive orders directing the dismantling of DEI programmes and revising gender terminology and policies across federal agencies and contractors.¹⁴ A number of law firms in the US entered into agreements with the US federal government, including, among other measures, committing to revising or ceasing certain DEI practices.¹⁵ However, it is notable

13 Joanna Partridge, 'DEI rollback across US accelerates as major companies scale back initiatives' (The Guardian, 14 February 2025), see [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/14/diversity-equity-inclusion-dei-us-trump-google-amazon-walmart#:~:text=The%20diversity%2C%20equity%2C%20and%20inclusion%20\(DEI\)%20rollback,one%20board%20member%20from%20a%20diverse%20background%3E](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/14/diversity-equity-inclusion-dei-us-trump-google-amazon-walmart#:~:text=The%20diversity%2C%20equity%2C%20and%20inclusion%20(DEI)%20rollback,one%20board%20member%20from%20a%20diverse%20background%3E); Harron Siddique, 'More than half of UK businesses changing DEI approach due to Trump's criticism' (The Guardian, 30 October 2025), see www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/30/more-than-half-of-uk-businesses-changing-strategy-on-ethical-policies-research-finds; Sam McKeith, 'Are law firms shifting away from DEI programs?' (The Law Society Journal, 16 September 2025), see <https://lsj.com.au/articles/are-law-firms-shifting-away-from-dei-programs/>; Iva Mihaylova, Konrad Rietmann, 'Diversity, equity and inclusion at a crossroads: a scoping review of the characteristics of its workplace backlash' (16 October 2025), *Journal of Sustainable Business*, 10(18)), see <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-025-00122-5>.

14 *Defending Women From Gender Ideology of Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government* (signed 20 January 2025), see www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/; *Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing* (signed 20 January 2025), see www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/; *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity* (signed 21 January 2025), see www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity/; see also Tracy Richelle High, Julia M Jordan and Ann-Elizabeth Ostrager, 'President Trump Acts to Roll Back DEI Initiatives' (Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance, 10 February 2025), see <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2025/02/10/president-trump-acts-to-roll-back-dei-initiatives/>.

15 Chris Opfer, Justin Hendry, 'Five Major Law Firms Cut \$600 Million Deals With Trump' (Bloomberg Law, 11 April 2025), see <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/five-major-law-firms-cut-600-million-deals-with-trump-1>.

that not all firms agreed to government demands.¹⁶ This trend has affected the resourcing, visibility and implementation of gender equality and other DEI programmes in law firms and other organisations. Recent research in the legal and broader professional services sectors indicates that DEI roles have been reduced or reframed in organisations beyond the US jurisdiction.¹⁷

Return-to-office mandates

The post-Covid-19 pandemic environment has seen an increase in return-to-office mandates, including across large commercial law firms and government agencies. Evidence from Phase 2 suggests that mandatory office attendance disproportionately affects women, who are more likely to rely on hybrid arrangements to balance work with caring and other personal responsibilities. This is notwithstanding the popularity of flexible working arrangements among women in the profession, as evidenced by findings from Phase 1 of the Project, which indicate that flexible working is the most popular workplace initiative for women among the jurisdictions studied.

This finding aligns with external global studies showing that strict office-attendance policies reduce retention of mid-career women and limit progression pathways for those requiring flexible working arrangements.¹⁸

Increasing focus on wellbeing in law

Wellbeing continues to be a high-priority issue for the profession. The IBA's 2019 *Us Too?* report and associated work have highlighted the connection between workplace culture, misconduct and mental health in the legal profession.

Recent research, both undertaken by the IBA and others, underscores the gendered mental wellbeing impacts of work in the legal profession. The IBA's 2021 *Mental Wellbeing Report* demonstrated a marked difference between the overall mental wellbeing of women and men in the legal profession, with women receiving a lower average wellbeing score than men (**46 per cent** versus **57 per cent**), noting that the overall score for those working in the profession was relatively low (**51 per cent**, falling just below the average score found within general populations in a range of countries).

16 Eduardo Reyes, 'In depth: Law firm and US bar strike blows against Trump – is the tide turning?' (The Law Society Gazette, 16 May 2025), see www.lawgazette.co.uk/news-focus/in-depth-law-firm-and-us-bar-strike-blows-against-trump-is-the-tide-turning/5123314.article.

17 See, eg, Taylor Nicole Rogers, 'Backlash leaves diversity executives facing career uncertainty' (Financial Times, 6 November 2025), see www.ft.com/content/21c21cd2-4bb3-4e02-9dc8-d2849ca61457; Effie Webb, 'Salesforce cuts diversity hiring goals, joining Meta and Google in scaling back DEI initiatives' (Business Insider, 6 March 2025), see www.businessinsider.com/salesforce-cuts-diversity-hiring-goals-amid-dei-backlash-2025-3; Haroon Siddique, 'More than half of UK businesses changing DEI approach due to Trump's criticism' (The Guardian, 30 October 2025), see www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/30/more-than-half-of-uk-businesses-changing-strategy-on-ethical-policies-research-finds; Naomi Neilson, 'Australian Bar reverses move to scrap diversity and inclusion committee' (Lawyers Weekly, 27 November 2025), see www.lawyersweekly.com.au/biglaw/43411-australian-bar-reverses-move-to-scrap-diversity-and-inclusion-committee.

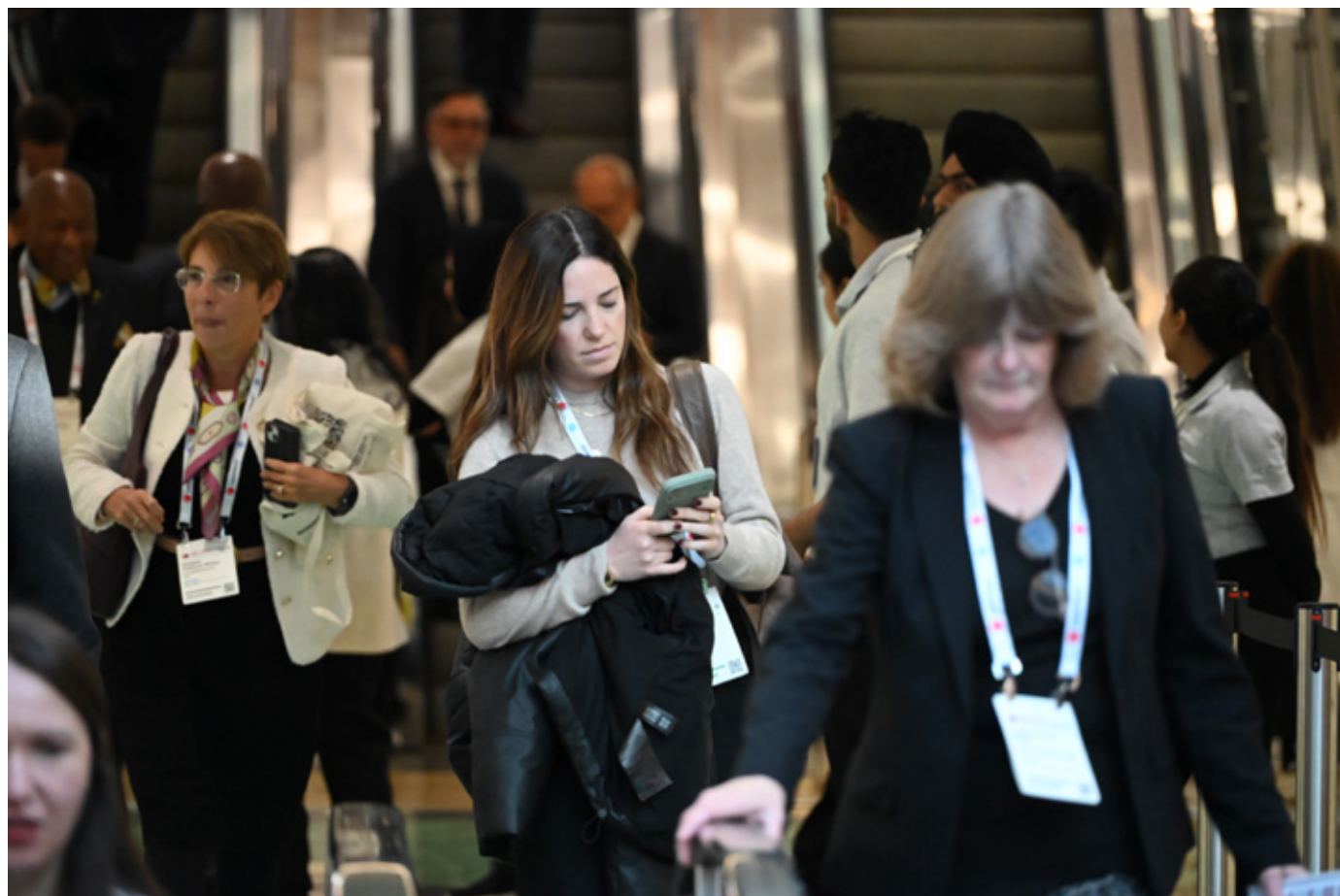
18 Heejung Chung, Shiyu Yuan, 'Return to Office Mandates – What is at stake for workers, companies, and gender equality?' (King's College, May 2025), see www.kcl.ac.uk/news/uk-workers-increasingly-rejecting-return-to-office-mandates-study-finds.

The 2025 *Life in the Law* report published by the charity LawCare UK further shows that women disproportionately experience burnout, stress and the psychological impact of hostile workplace cultures.¹⁹ The IBA Phase 2 survey responses reinforce this finding, with many women reporting long hours, billable-hours pressure for those in the private sector, exposure to vicarious trauma, and a reluctance to seek mental health support due to stigma.

Phase 2 confirms that although progress has been made in some areas, **structural and cultural barriers to women's progression remain entrenched** across global legal sectors. There is clear evidence of:

- strong demand for meaningful, accessible initiatives;
- uneven implementation of existing policies;
- ongoing challenges for women balancing professional and personal responsibilities; and
- cultural norms that continue to reinforce inequity.

These findings form the basis for the recommendations that follow in the report.



¹⁹ Accessible at <https://lawcare.org.uk/life-in-the-law/>.

Methodology

The IBA Legal Policy and Research Unit (**LPRU**), supporting the IBA Women Lawyers' Committee and Diversity & Inclusion Council, conducted a global survey between March and June 2025. The survey was open to all women working in the legal profession, as well as those who had left the profession in the five-year period preceding the survey date. The survey format was tailored specifically to each group. The survey was available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. A copy of the survey questions is annexed to this report.

The questions covered a range of topics, including:

- the legal background of the survey respondent: home jurisdiction and age, area of work, years practised/worked, nature of working arrangements (full or part-time);
- whether the respondent has any children or other caring responsibilities;
- workplace initiatives available to and accessed by the respondent;
- success or challenges in accessing workplace initiatives and the impact of workplace initiatives on the respondent's career;
- additional initiatives, policies or resources the respondent would like to be made available in their workplace;
- the respondent's level of satisfaction with their current role;
- whether the respondent was considering a career move within, or outside of the law, and why;
- what would encourage a respondent considering a change in role or employment to stay in their current role, if anything; and
- the ability for the respondent to tell us more about their experience working as a woman in the law.

In relation to those who had left the legal profession in the five years preceding the survey, additional questions included:

- reasons for the respondent leaving their last legal role;
- what would have changed the respondent's decision to leave the legal profession, if anything;
- whether or not the respondent would consider working in the legal profession in future, and if so, what type of role, and why; and
- the ability for the respondent to tell us more about their experience working as a woman in the law.

The survey received nearly 5,000 responses, the majority of which were from women working in the profession.

An external firm, Venturis Consulting Group, assisted in hosting the survey platform and in analysing the responses. Detailed analysis of the data was undertaken using Microsoft PowerBI.

In addition, desktop research was undertaken to review relevant articles, reports and external studies relating to the issues raised by the survey.

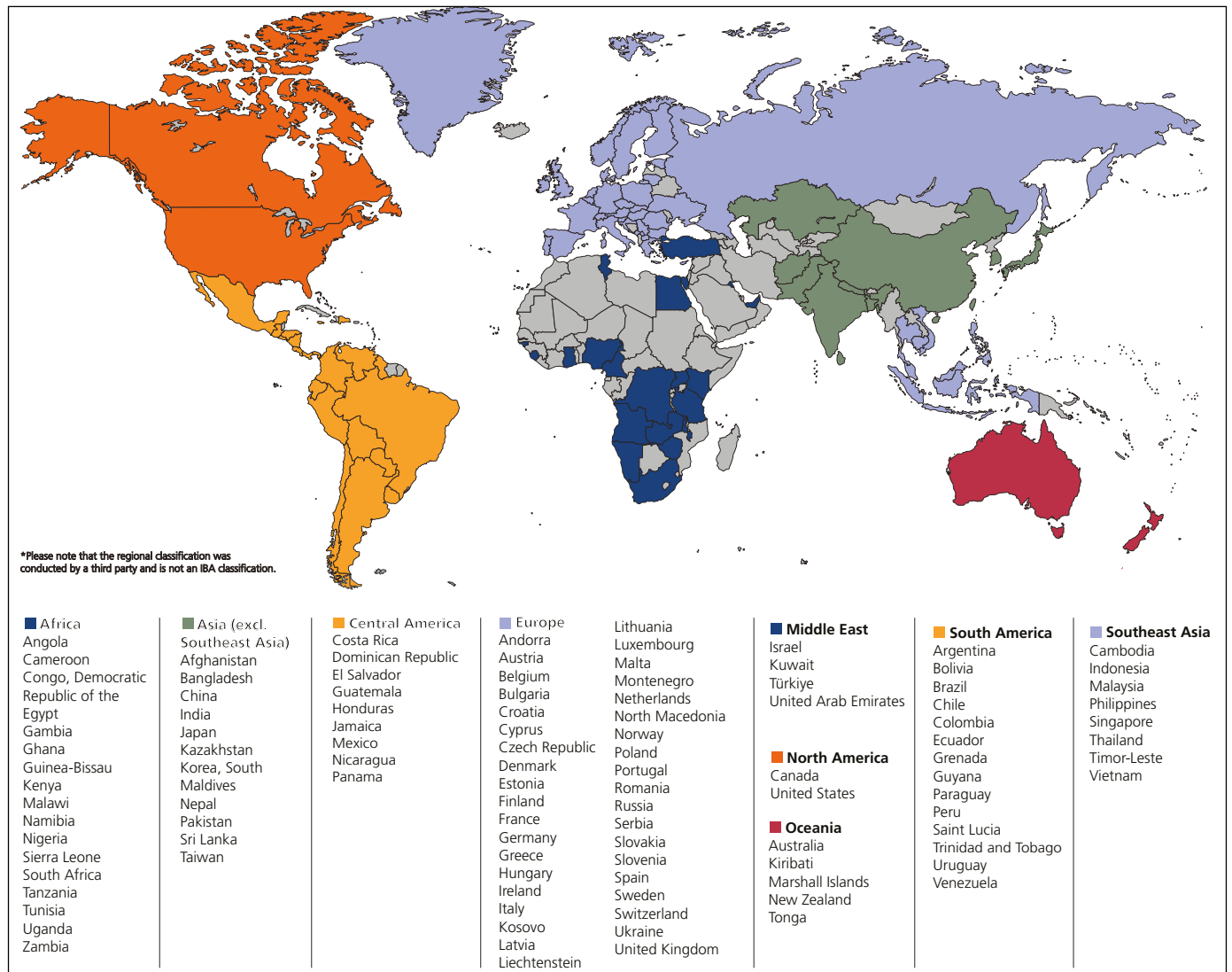
To strengthen the credibility and depth of the report's recommendations, the IBA established an Advisory Panel comprising representatives from ten IBA Committees. The Panel offered expert guidance and thoughtful feedback on the proposed recommendations, and their collective insights have been invaluable. The IBA extends its sincere gratitude to this distinguished group for their contributions on behalf of the following entities:

- IBA Women Lawyers' Committee
- IBA Diversity & Inclusion Council
- IBA Bar Issues Commission
- IBA Law Firm Management Committee
- IBA Judges' Forum
- IBA Corporate Counsel Forum
- IBA Forum for Government and Public Lawyers
- IBA Academic and Professional Development Committee
- IBA Diversity and Equality Law Committee
- IBA Future of Legal Services Commission



Survey results

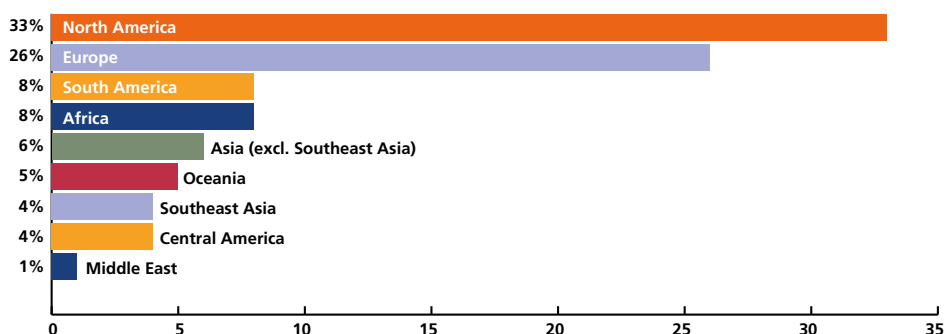
Demographics



A total of 4,933 responses to the survey were received from over 100 jurisdictions – the majority (4,625) were from women still working in the profession at the time of the survey, which is the primary focus of this report. Results in relation to those who have recently left the profession (a cohort of 308 total responses) are considered later in the report, in addition to an analysis of any overlap or contrast in the data between the two groups.

Regional distribution

Respondent regions



Respondents spanned all major global regions, accounting for the following response rates:

- **North, South and Central America** (particularly **Canada**, accounting for **34 per cent** of all responses) – approximately **50 per cent** of all responses;
- **Europe** – representing **26 per cent**; and
- **Asia-Pacific, Africa, Oceania** and the **Middle East** – together comprising **24 per cent** of responses.

While the dataset is global, the comparatively high number of responses from Canada and Europe should be borne in mind when interpreting aggregate trends.

Roles and seniority

Survey respondents working in the profession represented the full spectrum of legal roles, including:

- judges and judicial officers;
- barristers and advocates;
- private practice lawyers;
- in-house legal counsel;
- government lawyers and prosecutors;
- academics;
- non-governmental organisation (NGO) and public-interest lawyers; and
- sole practitioners.

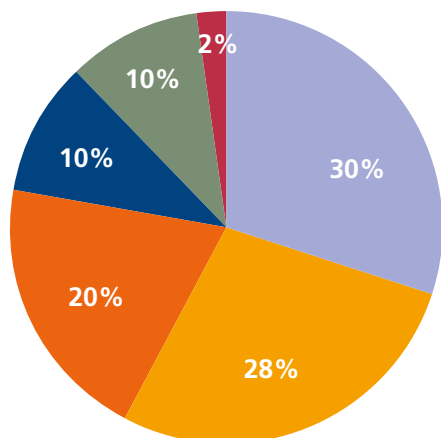
Among respondents, the rates across role cohorts were:

- private practice lawyers (55 per cent);
- government/public sector lawyers (11 per cent);
- barristers and advocates (ten per cent);
- in-house counsel (nine per cent); and
- judicial officers (eight per cent).²⁰

In terms of length of time spent in the profession, approximately **19 per cent** of respondents had fewer than five years' experience, **17 per cent** had between six and ten years' experience, and **63 per cent** had been practising for more than a decade.

²⁰ With four per cent of respondents identifying their role as 'other'.

Age of survey respondents



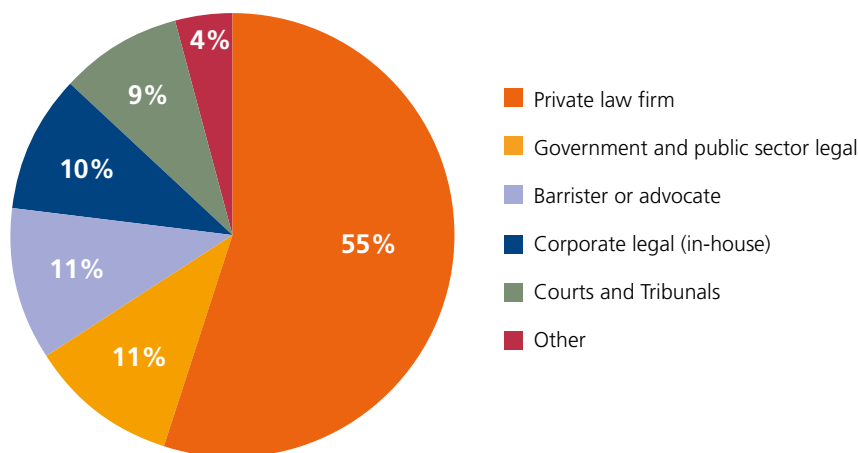
How old are you?

■ 18-29 ■ 40-49 ■ 50-59 ■ 30-39 ■ 60-69 ■ 70 or older

Age distribution

Respondents ranged from early-career to post-retirement age. The largest group, approximately **30 per cent**, was aged **30–39**, followed by those aged **40–49 (28 per cent)**. A significant proportion of respondents (**42 per cent**) were aged **50+**, ensuring that experiences across the full career spectrum, including mid-career pressures and late-career considerations, were captured.

Respondent role



Working arrangements

Fourteen per cent of respondents indicated they worked part time (**six per cent** indicated they had requested part-time working arrangements, but these had not been approved).²¹

²¹ This is a similar rate to the IBA's *Women in Commercial Legal Practice* study: 17 per cent of women who responded to the 2017 survey were working part time.

Practice areas

Respondents came from a wide array of practice areas, with the most common areas including (where applicable to a respondent's role):

- litigation (general and civil);
- commercial and corporate law;
- criminal law;
- family law;
- government/public law; and
- employment law.

Caring responsibilities outside of work



64 per cent of respondents were balancing caring responsibilities alongside paid work:

- **52 per cent** of respondents had dependent children – of this cohort, **48 per cent** were the primary carer and **45 per cent** were joint carers.
- **38 per cent** had caring responsibilities as well as, or other than, children.



Workplace initiatives

Availability and use of workplace initiatives

The survey asked respondents to indicate what type of workplace initiatives were available to them, as well as indicating which workplace initiatives they had accessed in their workplace. This included the following list of initiatives, as well as the opportunity for respondents to specify any additional initiatives which were not listed:

- **quota setting for senior role positions;**
- **availability of greater flexible working arrangements (post-Covid-19 restrictions);**
- **leadership training for women;**
- **target setting for senior role positions;**
- **unconscious bias training;**
- **coaching/mentoring programmes;**
- menopause/perimenopause support programmes; and
- carer support.

The initiatives in **bold** were those included in the surveys used in Phase 1 of the Project (which surveyed legal workplaces about the availability and perceived effectiveness of workplace initiatives). This enabled the IBA to directly compare the results of the availability and efficacy of these initiatives from Phase 1 (from an organisational perspective, ie, the *providers* of these workplace initiatives) with Phase 2 (from an individual employee perspective, ie, the *targets* of these initiatives).

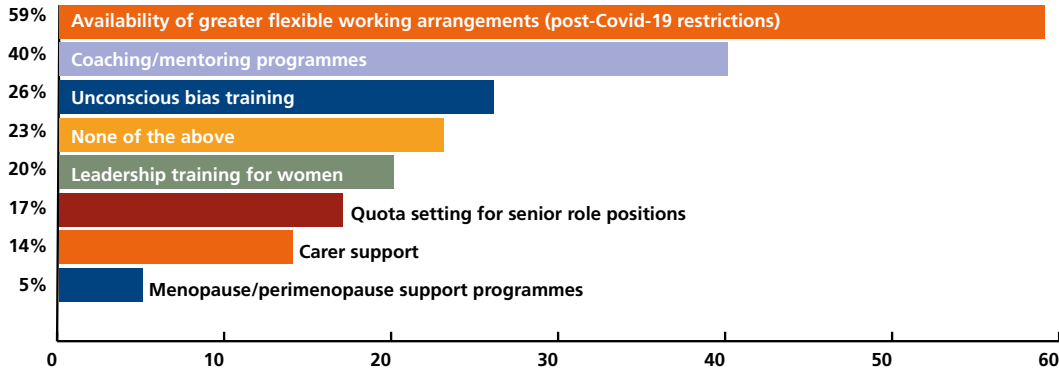
Availability in workplaces

Almost **60 per cent** of respondents indicated that their workplace has greater availability of flexible working arrangements post Covid-19.

Forty per cent have access to coaching and mentoring programmes and **20 per cent** have access to leadership training for women.

The IBA's research across both phases of the Project demonstrates that both workplaces and individuals cite **flexible working arrangements** and **coaching/mentoring programmes** as the most commonly available workplace initiatives.

Availability of initiatives in respondent workplaces



Most common workplace initiatives – Phase 2 (individuals)

- Flexible working arrangements
- Coaching/mentoring programmes
- Unconscious bias training

Most common workplace initiatives – Phase 1 (workplaces)

- Flexible working arrangements
- Coaching/mentoring programmes
- Leadership training for women

In addition to the initiatives included in the research for Phase 1 of the project, respondents were also asked whether they had access to carer support or menopause/perimenopause support programmes. Neither were particularly common: only **seven per cent** of respondents had access to carer support; and only **two per cent** of respondents had access to menopause/perimenopause support programmes.

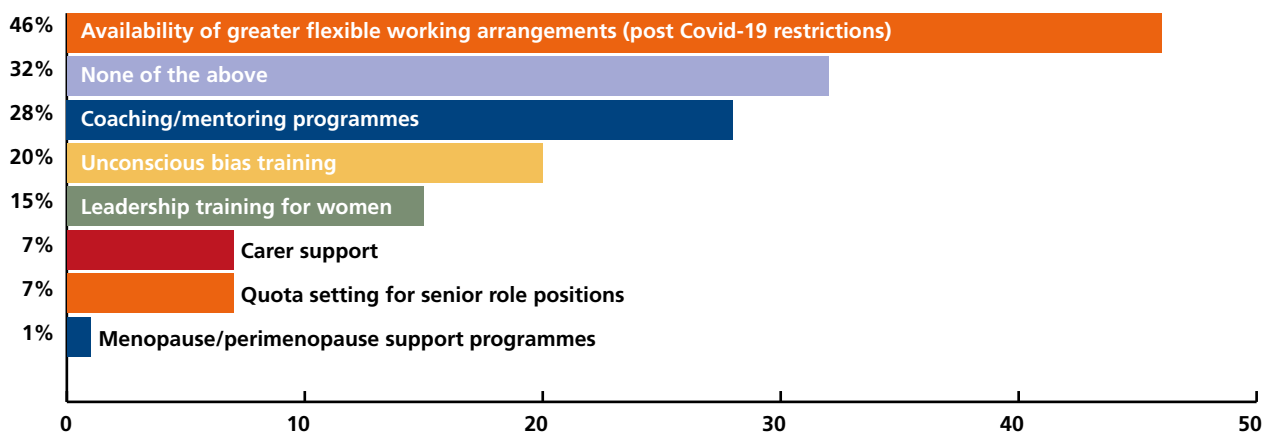


Workplace initiatives were widely available in private law firms (**90 per cent** of respondents working in a law firm had workplace initiatives available to them). Barristers and advocates were offered the lowest number of workplace initiatives (**20 per cent** of respondents in this sector had no initiatives available to them).

Use of workplace initiatives

Two-thirds of survey respondents stated that they had accessed initiatives available to them in their workplace.

Use of workplace initiatives by respondents





Impact of workplace initiatives

Flexible working and coaching and mentoring were cited by Phase 2 survey respondents with access to workplace initiatives as having had the greatest positive impact on their careers (**33 per cent and 20 per cent respectively**).

A notable minority of respondents (**14 per cent**) reported that workplace initiatives had not positively impacted their careers. They attributed this to several factors: stigma around accessing such programmes; limited support for those in senior positions; unclear processes for access; and uneven availability across sectors or workplaces. These explanations were consistently cited in the survey.

Calls for additional workplace initiatives

Respondents were asked to respond to an open-text box question to provide further details about what additional initiatives, policies or resources they would like to see made available in their workplaces.

Common suggestions included:

- support for life stages (menopause, perimenopause, fertility issues);
- support for parents and carers; and
- mental health awareness and support, and recognition of and support for vicarious trauma.

Parents and carers support

Calls for access to and/or enhanced carers support was a recurring theme among survey respondents, reflecting ongoing structural challenges for women and others balancing legal careers with caregiving responsibilities. This aligns with other research, such as the 2024 *Mind the Caring Gap* report (authored by Reynolds Porter Chamberlain, Next 100 Years and LawCare),²² which found that 57 per cent of legal professionals felt their career progression had been negatively affected by caring responsibilities and that 73 per cent relied on annual leave to fulfil these duties, with 66 per cent receiving either unpaid or no formal support.

Differences in parental leave entitlements across jurisdictions remain a significant source of inequity within the legal profession despite some headway, with many respondents reporting a lack of recognition for fathers or other partners as primary caregivers as well as limited structural support for gender-equal sharing of leave and care. These disparities shape career trajectories across jurisdictions, affecting the ability of lawyers, particularly women, to remain in practice or progress into leadership roles. For example, in 2023, the American Bar Association reported that mothers are significantly more likely than fathers

²² See www.rpclegal.com/-/media/rpc/files/reports/301619_a4pb_mind_the_caring_gap_caring_responsibilities_report_d9.pdf.

to experience career disadvantage, stress and burnout due to caregiving obligations, reinforcing the gendered nature of this burden within the profession.²³

Notwithstanding broader legislative and workplace-level advances,²⁴ uptake of parental leave by fathers remains uneven. In many jurisdictions, cultural norms, financial disincentives or fear of professional disadvantage deter fathers from taking full advantage of leave entitlements.²⁵

Respondents' feedback reflected a growing expectation that legal workplaces adopt clearer, more structured carers' policies. This included requests for expanded parental leave for all parents, childcare assistance and structured support for those returning from parental leave or managing other caring responsibilities.



23 Stephanie A Scharf, Roberta D Liebenberg and Paulette Brown, *Legal Careers of Parents and Child Caregivers* (American Bar Association, 2023), see www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/women/2023/parenthood-report-2023.pdf.

24 For example, the OECD reports that most OECD countries provide for paid leave for fathers: see *Paid leave for fathers: Recent OECD policy trends* (OECD Publishing, 2025), available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/07442bed-en>. Workplaces are also introducing their own progressive parental leave policies beyond legal requirements, such as Lewis Silkin in the UK, which became one of the first UK law firms to announce its equal parental leave policy in early 2024 (allowing for 12 months leave with six months full pay for all new parents, with no requirement to share entitlements between partners). The policy is open-source and led to significant interest from many law firms, businesses and barristers' chambers. The firm reported increase in revenue and profits, as well as partner headcount, following introduction of the policy: see www.wiwsummit.com/articles/blazing-a-trail-for-parental-leave-lewis-silkins-pioneering-policy-one-year-on.

25 *Paid leave for fathers: Recent OECD policy trends* (OECD Publishing, 2025), see <https://doi.org/10.1787/07442bed-en>.

In her own words:



Childcare facilities, personal coaching for working parents – in particular career developments – transparent opportunities for women with caring responsibilities who may not be ‘present’ in the office five days a week.

Private lawyer, United Kingdom

We are required to go in person to preside from our computers in an office for some court assignments and there is no rational reason for this. Allowing greater flexibility in this instance would reduce the stress of commuting, and provide parents and carers with more work-life balance.

Court/Tribunal officer, Canada

My experience has been that in order to still have career opportunities if you wish to work part-time or have flexibility around carer responsibilities for children you need to move to an in-house or government role. Private practice unfortunately doesn’t genuinely offer these options and still allow career advancement, especially in areas outside capital cities.

In-house lawyer, Australia

Long working hours when pregnant (until midnight). During maternity leave, you still need to follow your files even from far away or you would have no place when coming back. Then, I felt I didn’t have the opportunity to take the parental leave, as I would not have ... a place ... and came back to the office after the end of the mandatory maternity leave: no breastfeeding room, closing until late night/early morning, inhumane pace for someone caring for a baby.

Private lawyer, Luxembourg

Lack of respect or support for parenting or carer responsibilities from courts, bar associations. High cost of chambers when income is erratic and parenting reduces work availability. Difficulty rebuilding practice on return from parental leave.

Barrister/advocate, Australia

In my case, I have opted for reduced working hours to care for a disabled person, with a consequent reduction in salary and retirement pension.

Barrister/advocate, Spain

Greater support and acceptance of male parental leave or carer leave for men.

Private lawyer, United Kingdom

The introduction of paid paternity leave would really help in making the playing field more level for men and woman in the legal profession, particularly in relation to career progression.

Private lawyer, Ireland



Support for life stages

Both menopause and perimenopause support, as well as support for other life stages (for example, fertility support and the impact of the menstrual cycle) were common suggestions from respondents.

The survey responses reflect a growing recognition that biological and ‘life stage’ factors materially affect women’s participation and progression in the legal profession.

Respondents’ comments also reflected increasing awareness of the impact of the menstrual cycle and reproductive health on professional engagement. While menstrual health remains under-addressed

in legal workplaces, emerging domestic laws and individual workplace policies illustrate a slow shift in recognition, with countries such as Portugal and Spain recently introducing statutory menstrual leave, alongside Indonesia, Japan, South Korea and Zambia, although entitlements vary considerably.²⁶ State governments in Australia have also introduced reproductive leave entitlements for public workers.²⁷ Other countries, including France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Malta, Portugal and Ukraine, have legislated fertility treatment leave.²⁸ However, evidence suggests that even where such rights exist, stigma and a lack of awareness around entitlements continue to prevent uptake,²⁹ reinforcing the need for cultural as well as policy change.

Deloitte's *Women @ Work 2025* global survey found that around a quarter of women in the workplace experience health challenges due to menstruation, menopause or fertility challenges. However, 40 per cent of women reported working through severe menstrual pain, while only a minority accessed formal support or adjustments.³⁰ Similarly, one-third of women experiencing menopause in the workplace indicated that they had worked through high levels of pain and symptoms associated with menopause/perimenopause without taking time off work:³¹ *'[F]or many women... their experience at work is one of working through high levels of pain and symptoms without taking time off.'*³²

Other research indicates that menopausal symptoms have a demonstrable impact on workplace performance and retention. In the UK, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reports that 67 per cent of women aged 40–60 experiencing menopausal symptoms state that these symptoms have a mostly negative impact on their working life, with many expressing concerns about stigma, career damage and lack of managerial support.³³ The CIPD report found that over a quarter of women surveyed consider menopause has negatively affected their career progression, with some considering leaving employment altogether due to inadequate workplace support.³⁴

26 Annabel Rackham, 'UK charities call for menstrual leave for severe pain' (BBC News, 22 May 2022), see www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-61477168.

27 Stephanie Convery, 'Reproductive leave could be a 'gamechanger' for Australian workers – how would it work?' (The Guardian, 12 January 2025), see www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/jan/13/reproductive-leave-study-australian-workers-period-pain-endometriosis-ivf-menopause-vasectomy.

28 *Fertility crisis: impact on employment* (IUS Laboris, 3 April 2023) <https://iuslaboris.com/insights/fertility-crisis-impact-on-employment/>.

29 Ashifa Kassam, 'A year on, Spain's "historic" menstrual leave law has hardly been used. Why?' (The Guardian, 4 June 2024), see www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/04/spain-historic-menstrual-leave-law-hardly-used-period-pain-endometriosis.

30 Accessible at www.deloitte.com/global/en/issues/work/content/women-at-work-global-outlook.html, 10.

31 *Ibid*, 11.

32 *Ibid*, 2.

33 *Menopause in the workplace* (CIPD, 4 October 2023), see www.cipd.org/en/knowledge/reports/menopause-workplace-experiences/.

34 *Ibid*, 16.

In her own words:



A far greater emphasis on the menopause, as this hits women just at the time they are in their career stride and are wanting to secure the top jobs in the profession.

Private lawyer, United Kingdom

More empathy – permissions for menstrual cramps, family planning medical appointments, more flexibility for pregnant and postpartum women...

Private lawyer, Colombia

Policies around leave related to menstrual cycle issues/pain – although this can be taken as sick leave, a policy on the topic may enable further conversations about it.

Private lawyer, United Kingdom

Support for egg freezing procedures.

Private lawyer, United States

That the particular needs that women may have (eg, menstrual leave, place to breastfeed, etc) are not so easily recognised under the idea that women and men are in a fully equal situation, when in reality, there are... factors that require specific needs for women to be addressed.

Private lawyer, Mexico

I think support during perimenopause and menopause would be great. The more I learn about the symptoms and impacts, the more I wish that I had had supports throughout that period of time.

Government lawyer, Canada

Better support for women going through fertility issues, and women's health issues.

Barrister/advocate, Australia

...period leave for women when experiencing severe cramps or excessive bleeding.

Private lawyer, Nigeria

An extra day off for painful periods.

Barrister/advocate, Luxembourg



Mental wellbeing, stress and vicarious trauma support

The impact of legal work on mental wellbeing was a recurring concern among survey respondents. Many called for stronger workplace support and increased awareness of mental health issues, stress management assistance, and clearer recognition of, and support for, vicarious trauma. These concerns reflect broader patterns identified in existing research on wellbeing within the legal profession.

The IBA's *Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession* report (2021) found significant concerns about wellbeing across global legal sectors, with women reporting lower average wellbeing than men. The study highlighted that a large proportion of legal professionals experience work-related stress, and that systemic factors such as long hours, high workloads and workplace culture are key contributors to poor mental health outcomes. Legal mental health charity LawCare provides guidance for legal workplaces to improve mental health

and wellbeing, urging the legal sector to move from a reactive approach to mental health and wellbeing to prevention. Recommendations from LawCare’s 2025 *Life in the Law* report include:

- actively managing workloads;
- prioritising and valuing managing people;
- embedding hybrid and flexible working options;
- evaluating programmes and activities that support mental health and wellbeing at work; and
- legal education and training to equip people joining the sector with the skills and knowledge they need for a sustainable legal career.³⁵

Survey responses also point to a growing awareness of the need for appropriate vicarious trauma support among legal professionals working with traumatic material. There is increasing recognition that exposure to clients’ trauma and traumatic material can result in cumulative and harmful psychological effects, particularly for those working in areas such as criminal law, coronial work, immigration, child protection and pro bono practice, as well as judicial officers.³⁶

In her own words:

“

More mental health support such as the ability to take mental health days in lieu of a sick day or better benefits.

Private lawyer, Canada

Women’s health programmes and especially mental health (anxiety, depression, hormones).

Private lawyer, Ecuador

Training regarding... resilience, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue.

Government lawyer, United States

Mindfulness and emotional support to practitioners that face high stress levels.

Private lawyer, Colombia

...it would be beneficial to all of us to have our senior advocates coached on wellbeing so that any trigger warnings for stress can be identified before reaching the stage of burn out.

Barrister/advocate, Malta

”






³⁵ Accessible at <https://lawcare.org.uk/life-in-the-law/>, 34–36.

³⁶ Russ Scott and Ian Freckelton, ‘Vicarious trauma among legal practitioners and judicial officers’ (May 2024), *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* (6(31)), 500-522, see <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11185848>.

Challenges with access to initiatives



Respondents were asked to reply to an open-text box question to provide further details about challenges faced in accessing initiatives (if any). Challenges commonly cited by respondents included:

-  workplace initiatives not being offered or available (this was particularly the case for respondents working in courts and tribunals, as barristers/advocates and as sole practitioners);
-  the impact of workload and time constraints on being able to access or use initiatives, even if available;
-  lack of awareness and transparency about what initiatives are available in each workplace and how to access/use them;
-  cultural and structural issues, including the stigma surrounding access and initiatives being harder to access or less applicable to those at a more senior level; and
-  financial and resourcing constraints.

Responses revealed a recurring theme among respondents: while many legal workplaces have introduced workplace initiatives, visibility, access and cultural acceptance of these initiatives remain inconsistent. A significant number of participants reported that they were unsure what initiatives existed within their organisations or how to access them. Others indicated that initiatives were available only to a select few, or that participation depended on the discretion of individual managers.

In her own words:

“

Knowing that the initiatives are available and understanding how to use them in a manner that fits my life.

Government lawyer, Canada

Due to prolonged working hours and hectic work schedules I can't enjoy or productively use any initiatives.

Private lawyer, Japan

Whether these initiatives can actually be implemented often depends on one's direct supervisor. My supervisor allows me to use them, but from what I understand, many department heads do not permit their employees to do so.

In-house lawyer, Taiwan

Some initiatives have already been implemented or announced at my law firm; however, when associates or senior lawyers attempt to access them, availability often depends on the discretion of the partner leading the department.

Private lawyer, Ecuador

”

Respondents also described perceptions that initiatives were 'tick-box' exercises lacking genuine organisational support. Several participants noted stigma associated with accessing initiatives, including flexible working arrangements – particularly concerns about being perceived as less committed or ambitious.

In her own words:

“

There is a concern that working on a flexible schedule will impact on career progression and you will not be taken as seriously as your male peers who do not work flexibly.

Private lawyer, United Kingdom

It is considered laziness to ask for flexible work hours, and you are required to work hard even at the expense of your family to prove your commitment.

Barrister/advocate, Nigeria

... although the firm claims to allow flexible working arrangements ... their policies on this are not transparent, change on a whim, and do not apply equally to all associates.

Private lawyer, Canada

Authentic flexible working is key. In some of the firms where I have worked there is flexible working in principle but the reality is different, with expectations to work beyond your fixed hours, check and respond to work email and messages out of hours, [and] attend events on non-working days. If you don't then you are deemed as 'not invested' in your career.

Private lawyer, United Kingdom

Flexible working arrangements are often looked down upon, with strong encouragement of attending in-office more, as well as financial repercussions for not meeting in-office quotas.

Barrister/advocate, Canada

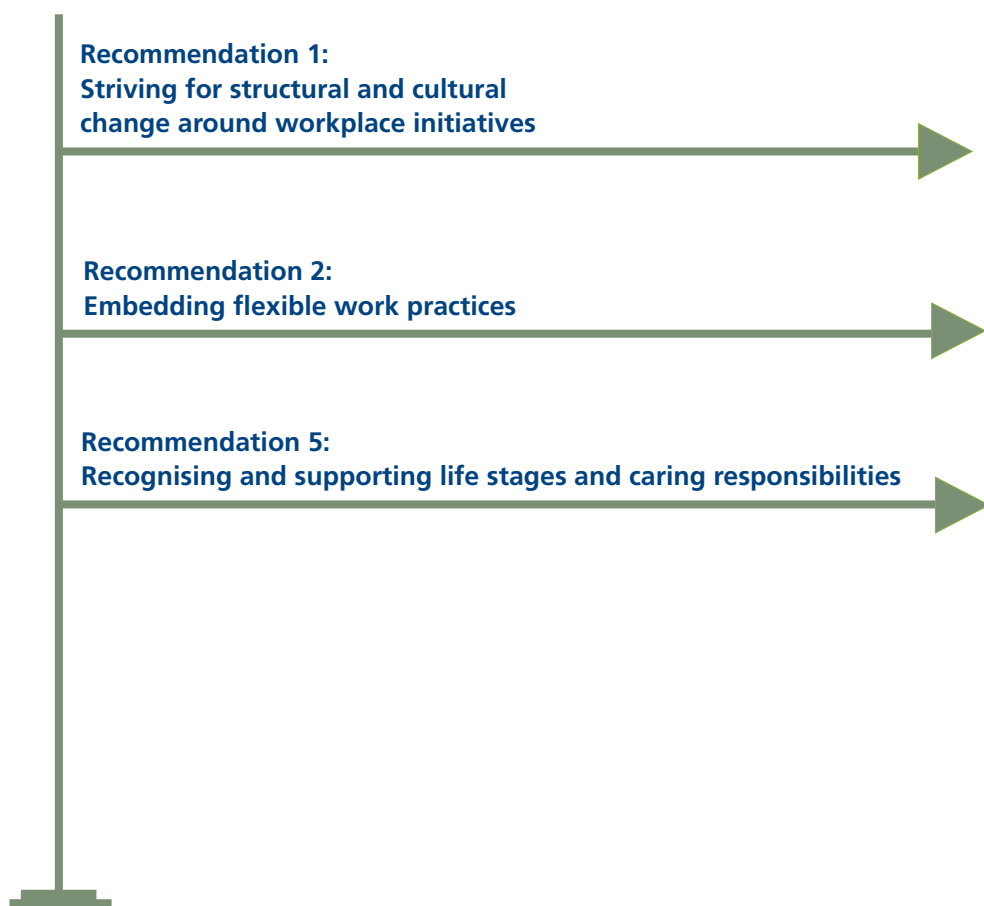
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This aligns with research finding that women are more likely than men to express concern that flexible working might negatively affect promotion or leadership opportunities, including findings from the IBA’s 2017 *Women in Commercial Legal Practice* report, which focused on women in law firms and corporate in-house roles – it is clear that such concerns remain prevalent among women in the profession.³⁷ The Phase 2 findings reflect a continuation of the disparities observed in the *Women in Commercial Legal Practice* report which indicated that, while women requested flexible working more frequently than men, they received proportionally fewer full approvals of flexible working arrangements.³⁸

Research confirms that flexible work arrangements can improve retention, wellbeing and productivity when performance is measured by outcomes rather than hours worked.³⁹ Flexible working policies and expectations need to be transparent, fairly applied and framed as gender-neutral.

This is particularly important in light of post-pandemic return-to-office expectations that are likely to disproportionately affect women with caring responsibilities, especially in private-practice settings.⁴⁰

These findings about workplace initiatives inform:



37 See p 27; see also *Women @ Work 2025: A Global Outlook* (Deloitte, 2025), 26–27; *Career progression and flexible working: making it work for women*, (King’s College Institute for Women’s Leadership, December 2022), 3–4.

38 See pp 47–48.

39 *Women @ Work 2025: A Global Outlook*, (Deloitte, 2025), 20–22.

40 Heejung Chung, Shiyu Yuan, *Return-to-office mandates: What is at stake for workers, companies, and gender equality?* (King’s Global Institute for Women’s Leadership, May 2025).

Satisfaction with work and career moves

The survey results demonstrate that women working in the law appear to be satisfied with the nature of their work in the industry and the opportunities available to make full use of their professional skillsets. This indicates that legal work itself is a rewarding undertaking for women. Most issues for women in the profession arise in relation to the working environment itself.

A respondent from Canada described this experience as follows:

“

I find the work I do for clients rewarding and intellectually stimulating, but the lack of resources and high demand means that it's hard to achieve a good work-life balance. I know a lot of women, including myself, who have (or are) burning out.

”

Satisfaction with current role

Respondents working in the profession at the time of the survey were asked to rate their satisfaction with a range of aspects of their current roles, including promotion opportunities, work-life balance, workload, access to mentoring, and the quality of work they perform. The data indicates a mixed picture: women are satisfied with their work and use of their skills but are on average less satisfied with other aspects of their working lives, such as opportunities for promotion and advancement, and support for work-life balance.

Similar themes emerged in the IBA's 2017 *Women in Commercial Legal Practice* report: support for work-life balance, work-life balance generally, mentors, required billable hours, non-chargeable commitments and promotion opportunities were the factors in respect of which women were most dissatisfied.⁴¹

Across the sample of respondents currently working in the profession:

- **69 per cent** reported being very satisfied or satisfied with their work overall (**16 per cent** were neutral, **12 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied).
- **65 per cent** were very satisfied or satisfied with the extent to which they can make use of their skills and abilities in their current role (**17 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, **15 per cent** were neutral).
- **65 per cent** were very satisfied or satisfied with the level of job security in their current role (**17 per cent** were neutral, **14 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied).
- **55 per cent** were very satisfied or satisfied with their career trajectory (compared to expectations) (**24 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, **20 per cent** were neutral).
- **55 per cent** were very satisfied or satisfied with access to learning and development opportunities (**19 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, **22 per cent** were neutral).
- **49 per cent** were very satisfied or satisfied with the hours they were required to work (**26 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, **21 per cent** were neutral).
- **45 per cent** were very satisfied or satisfied with opportunities for promotion or advancement (**27 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, **20 per cent** were neutral).
- **41 per cent** felt very satisfied or satisfied with the support available for work-life balance in their current workplace (**30 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, **23 per cent** were neutral).
- **41 per cent** felt very satisfied or satisfied with support provided to access contacts and networks in their current role (**26 per cent** were neutral, **25 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied).
- **38 per cent** were very satisfied or satisfied with their access to mentors or sponsors (**30 per cent** were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, **23 per cent** were neutral).

41 See pp 25–26.

Qualitative comments underscored the significance of these results. Many respondents highlighted chronic overwork, high billable-hour expectations, and a perception that long hours remain an entrenched norm across many legal workplaces. Several reported that while flexible working exists in policy, high workloads make these arrangements difficult to utilise in practice.

In her own words:

“

To use them, time. Although there is the possibility of flex time and consideration for the fact that I am head of the family, the workload is still very high and no matter how much is delegated, because of the role the requirements are high.

Private lawyer, Colombia

[Training is] additional to the workload without more flexibility.

Corporate in-house lawyer, Colombia

”

Respondents also described feeling overlooked for development opportunities, with some attributing this to opaque selection processes, unconscious bias, or assumptions about caregiving responsibilities.

In her own words:

“

Many initiatives are either unavailable or poorly implemented. As a woman, I've faced challenges like limited access to funding, lack of childcare support, and no structured mental health services, making it harder to balance career growth with personal responsibilities.

Barrister/advocate, Cameroon

The strain of the requirements of the profession is immensely aggravated by the never-evolving workplace culture of gender bias and the lack of measures taken to allow mothers to stay in the profession or advance in their careers. The lack of transparency regarding promotions and salaries allow and enhance the pay gap in finance and in general in the legal profession.

Private lawyer, Luxembourg

Legal firms in Mexico often insist that there is space and opportunity for women in leadership roles, while overlooking the biological and sociological differences between men and women. Rather than denying these realities, I would prefer they acknowledge that there is currently no system in place to support women who wish to pursue both a career and family life – and begin to build one.

Private lawyer, Mexico

Flexible working is essential for me in order to balance my professional and family commitments (not children but elderly and other members of my family). My firm does not have a consistent attitude to it – it allows it but somehow seems to consider it as a career obstacle.

Private lawyer, Italy

”

Anticipated career moves

Top future plans

- 1) Staying in my current workplace without plans to leave
- 2) Leaving my current workplace to join another legal workplace
- 3) Staying in the legal profession but in a different role (eg, academia, consulting)

Top reasons for wanting to move

- 1) Better salary/remuneration
- 2) Mental or physical health reasons
- 3) Better work-life balance

Plans to make imminent career changes are also somewhat common among those working in the profession. Respondents were asked whether they intended to make a career move in the next two years – for over half of respondents, planning to stay in their current role was the most popular answer (cited by **62 per cent**), followed by leaving their current workplace for another legal workplace (cited by **25 per cent**) and transitioning into a different role within the profession (cited by **19 per cent**) – noting that respondents could select multiple answers to this question, and as such, some respondents indicated they were considering multiple possibilities. Reasons for respondents considering a move include seeking better salary or remuneration (cited by **39 per cent**), better support for mental or physical health (cited by **32 per cent**) and better work-life balance (cited by **31 per cent**) – again, respondents could select multiple reasons.

In her own words:



Still fairly new in the legal profession and manageable since I am yet without a child. But I believe that once I have a family of my own, I do not want to continue working in legal as the hours and workload would be too much to have a balanced life with my family. Everything wrong seems to be normalised in this career. 'That's just the nature of the legal profession'... 'You have to work extra hours'... 'No rest during weekends'... 'Client comes first'...

Private lawyer, Malaysia

In the French judiciary, working conditions (heavy workload, inadequate resources, pressure from hierarchy, politics, the media, etc) and the lack of recognition or career development prospects can encourage people to change professions. To want to stay, we need to find meaning in the work we do, have the means to do quality work, and be better paid for the amount of work and responsibilities.

Court/Tribunal officer, France



Women who had worked in private firms also commonly referred to the pressure of billable hours as a reason for considering a move.

In her own words:



Better work environment, work-life balance and appreciation of my skills beside the amount of billable hours.

Private lawyer, Italy

... too much pressure on billable hours and too little time for professional growth.

Corporate in-house lawyer, Estonia

While I love the practice of law; at times, the 'business of law' (billable hours, inability to say no to work, work leaking into all aspects and hours of the day) began to outweigh the joy I got from practising. Had there been more balance, including without having to sacrifice great files/great work, I would have stayed longer.

Barrister/advocate, Canada

If ... firm[s] prioritise[d] quality of work instead of quantity of billable hours – or at the very least, if the reward structure at least acknowledged that there is more to performing well as a lawyer than [the] number of hours recorded...

Private lawyer, United Kingdom



These findings about satisfaction with work and career moves inform:



Personal responsibilities outside of work

Women continue to juggle work responsibilities with additional caring responsibilities outside of work. **Approximately half** of survey respondents working in the profession have dependent children, and this cohort is evenly split between having responsibility as primary or equal carer. Almost **40 per cent** of respondents indicated they had caring responsibilities as well as, or other than, children. The majority of the group with additional caring responsibilities indicated they were caring for their own or their partner's parents.

In her own words:



Juggling workload and commitments that suit the majority but fall outside your working arrangements is difficult. I feel guilt when I take time for caring responsibilities. The end result is emotional burden/guilt of feeling like I am not performing at my best in either my caring responsibilities or my paid job.

Government lawyer, Australia

Women who want a family and a life outside of work may prefer a different career.

In-house lawyer, Canada

Pure hell when I was employed by courts, had child dependents, then aged parents. I could not have done it and cared for my husband during a long (terminal) illness. Fortunately I'd left judicial employment by the time he became ill.

Court/Tribunal officer, Australia

Motherhood is currently my top priority, and I haven't yet decided exactly how I'll balance it with work. If I choose to devote more time to it and can't get the required support in the arrangement I propose – which may involve relocating to another country – then I might have to resign. However, for now, the company is open to various work formats, so I hope we'll be able to reach a mutually beneficial agreement when the need arises.

Private lawyer, Ukraine

I have heard many stories of colleagues, mainly mothers, who suffered some kind of retaliation after using benefits such as extended maternity leave and reduced workdays...

Private lawyer, Brazil



These findings about personal responsibilities outside of work inform:



Reasons for leaving the profession

The most cited reasons for respondents having left the legal profession in the five years preceding the survey related to workplace environment and culture (other than retirement, which **32 per cent** of respondents cited), with the top factors for having left being as follows: being unhappy with their workplace culture (**50 per cent**), seeking better support for mental or physical health elsewhere (**49 per cent**), having experienced bias or discrimination in their current role (**24 per cent**) and work-life balance (**24 per cent**).⁴²

⁴² Note that respondents could select multiple answers to this question and as such, some respondents indicated they were considering multiple possibilities.

Other significant factors included:

- better support for caring responsibilities elsewhere (**21 per cent**);
- better position or significant job opportunity elsewhere (**17 per cent**);
- lack of opportunities for promotion and career advancement (**15 per cent**);
- change in practice area/type of work (**15 per cent**);
- to take a career break (**14 per cent**); and
- more flexible working opportunities elsewhere (**14 per cent**).

The IBA's 2017 *Women in Commercial Legal Practice* report also sought to understand why women had left the profession.⁴³ The most commonly cited reason for leaving was work-life balance (**68 per cent**), followed by being unhappy with workplace culture (**53 per cent**) and the leadership and direction of the organisation (**48 per cent**).

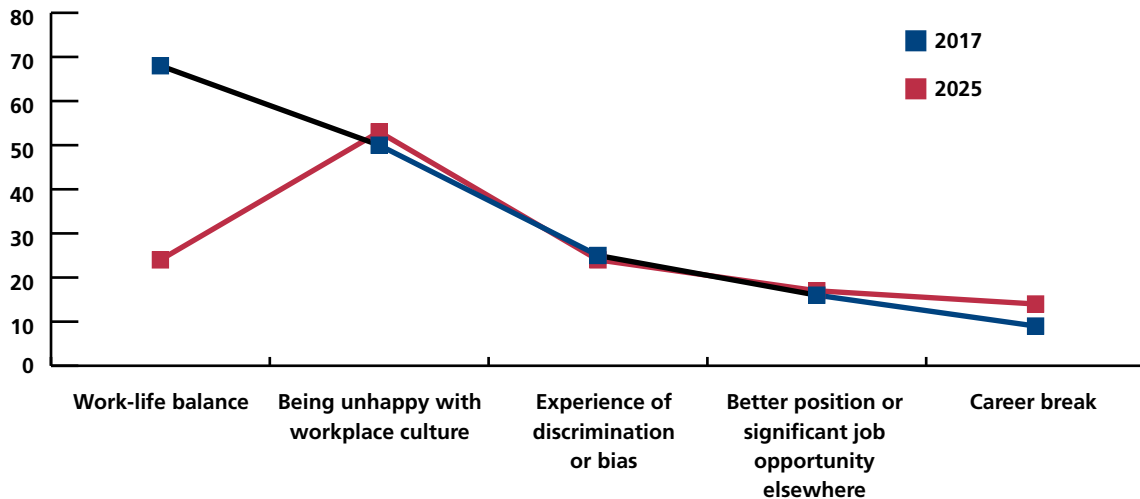
Other significant factors in the 2017 report included:

- experience of discrimination or bias (**25 per cent**);
- experience of harassment and bullying (**21 per cent**);
- pressure to bring in clients/business (**18 per cent**);
- better position or significant job opportunity elsewhere (**16 per cent**);
- seeking better mentorship (**11 per cent**);
- the move was part of a longer-term career plan (**ten per cent**); and
- to take a career break (**nine per cent**).

It is striking that most of the factors overlapping between both studies (being unhappy with workplace culture, experiences of bias and discrimination, seeking a better position or significant job opportunity elsewhere and taking a career break) were cited at near-identical or similar rates between the two studies. Only work-life balance was cited at a significantly different rate in both studies: this factor was less of a priority among the 2025 survey cohort (a drop from **68** to **24 per cent**).

⁴³ Although the report noted this was a small cohort of respondents and that this issue would require further research.

Reasons for leaving the profession – 2017 and 2025 results



Women who formed part of this cohort, when asked to provide further details about why they had left, overwhelmingly referenced stress, burnout, their treatment in the profession and a lack of work-life balance:

In her own words:



Way too stressful. I'm at a time of life where I most want peace.

I realised within three months of leaving how stressful my work had been, how much better I felt.

Being a lawyer is too stressful and provided me with no enjoyment or satisfaction. It became only a pay cheque at the expense of my mental wellbeing and personal life.

I left private legal practice because I was denied a promotion almost immediately after disclosing that I had been diagnosed with a chronic health condition, and taking personal and unpaid leave to manage it. In addition, the partners refused a request for flexible working arrangements to accommodate my health and instead recommended that I work on weekends to make up for the billable hours lost when I accessed sick leave.

I resigned from a law firm because I felt stagnant in my professional development. Despite being given supposed flexibility when I became a mother, they started taking staff and responsibilities away from me, and putting pressure on me with billing hours, as well as making comments implying that my intellectual abilities had changed. In the end I could no longer sustain it and resigned without any future plans. It shouldn't have happened like that: they should have supported me.



Some respondents indicated that they had left due to changing values and priorities, as well as a sense of having completed or fulfilled their personal objectives.

In her own words:



My values have changed. I don't see adequate supports for members of the profession.

I will use my energy to do other things. I was a lawyer for 55 years. I don't regret my career in law but I don't want to do it anymore.

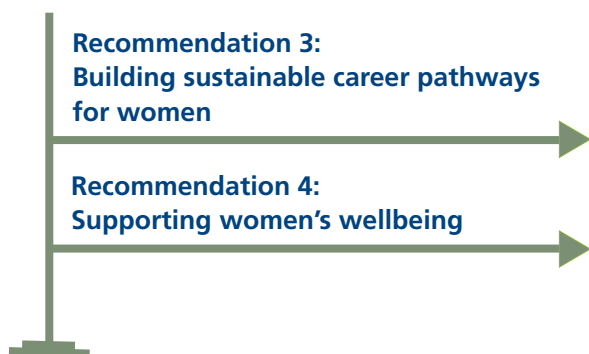
I have done this long enough. and have moved on in shifting my career into more meaningful contributions.



Interestingly, most respondents in this cohort were either considering returning to the profession in future (**38 per cent**) or maybe returning in future (**28 per cent**). Most were considering returning in the short term (<12 months: **36 per cent**; one to two years: **23 per cent**).

For those considering a return, the most common answer regarding the type of workplace they would consider returning to was 'not sure' (**24 per cent**). This was followed by government legal roles, in-house and NGOs (**15 per cent**, **14 per cent** and **12 per cent** respectively).

These findings about reasons why women are leaving the profession inform:



Solo practitioners, smaller workplaces and women in chambers

Respondents to the survey included women working as solo/self-employed practitioners, in smaller firms or organisations and as barristers/advocates (typically working in chambers). These respondents indicated the need for better consideration of the unique challenges of those who are self-employed or lack the resourcing of larger organisations, and highlighted that this cohort is often overlooked in policy discussions about workplace initiatives or women's progression in law. We have included a selection of illustrative quotes below.

Women working as solo practitioners and in small legal workplaces represent a significant proportion of the legal profession globally, yet they frequently lack the same kind of human resources support or formal policies available to larger organisations. Similarly, barristers in chambers are unlikely to have the same suite of workplace initiatives available compared to other workplaces due to the self-employed nature of

the profession. The Bar was the sector **least likely** to have workplace initiatives available, with **20 per cent** of barristers/advocates indicating they had no initiatives available. This is not an insignificant figure – it is twice that seen in the public sector, private firm and in-house respondents. The Phase 2 survey revealed that these types of practitioners experience particular challenges in accessing wellbeing and career-development support. These respondents noted feelings of isolation, difficulties maintaining work-life balance, and financial or reputational barriers to taking leave.

Responses highlighted that smaller organisations were less likely to have structured diversity policies or mentoring programmes in place. Additionally, many solo practitioners rely on informal networks that vary in accessibility and quality, often replicating existing hierarchies or gender imbalances. The result is a widening gap in opportunity and wellbeing outcomes between large and small legal workplaces.

In her own words:

“

I would love if more of these initiatives were made available to small firms and sole practitioners at low costs/from our legal regulators... so that the burden of decreasing access for women in the legal profession wouldn't fall so heavily on women within the legal system.

Barrister/advocate, Canada

As a solo practitioner, I don't have access to these resources. And it's difficult for me to even find time to navigate these resources or make use of them.

Barrister/advocate, Canada

I think that our professional organization should offer much more support and coaching and guidance to solo women practitioners.

Barrister, Canada

Solo practice – difficulties during pregnancy and maternity leave because I'm on my own, no support, minimal social protection, no support from the Bar – I'm a single mother, I spend my life juggling my job and my family. Only solo practice, although financially insecure, allows me to do this.

Sole practitioner, France

General resistance to the provision of information on gender pay and retention data. The raising of women's issues perceived as a threat to chambers.

Barrister/advocate, United Kingdom

Lack of respect or support for parenting or carer responsibilities from courts, bar associations. High cost of chambers when income is erratic and parenting reduces work availability. Difficulty rebuilding practice on return from parental leave.

Barrister/advocate, Australia

[Workplace initiatives] are not available in my chambers and they are not taken seriously or seen as important in any event.

Barrister/advocate, United Kingdom

Self-employed female lawyers, always balancing between our law firm and family, still lack training in business development and certainly support or services in the area of care (for children and ascendants).

Private lawyer, Spain

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“

Smaller firms or boutiques do not have these kinds of [workplace] initiatives so I have to reach out outside of my firm for support.

Private lawyer, Canada

I want the professional body to take on more responsibility for connecting solo professionals.

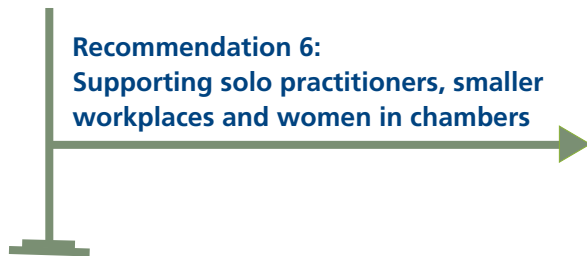
Private lawyer, Canada

It is difficult as a solo practitioner to manage both legal work, administrative work and business development, and to find time to think about how to advance my career or obtain supports in a structured way.

Private lawyer, Canada

”

These findings about solo and self-employed practitioners and barristers inform:



Women’s personal experiences

Self empowerment
Little support
Lack of support
Structural barriers
Inadequate support at home
Difference between salaries
Sexism
Lack of flexibility
Parental leave
Equality countries
Unconscious bias
Burnout
Current climate
Supportive workplaces
Sexual harassment

Survey respondents working in the law were also asked if there was anything else they would like to tell us about their experiences working in the profession. Key themes that emerged among respondents were:

- **experiences of gender discrimination, bullying and harassment;**
- **the impact of work-life balance and family responsibilities;**
- **mentorship as a key factor in career development and retention;**
- **the gender pay gap;**
- **underrepresentation of women in leadership;**
- **career burnout;** and
- **a call for greater diversity and inclusion in practice.**

Survey respondents who had left the profession in the five years preceding the survey referred to similar themes to the cohort still working in the profession. The following themes were particularly dominant among this group:

- **toxic workplace culture, harassment and bullying;**
- **hampered career progression and ageism;** and
- **regulatory and structural barriers.**

The responses received indicate that gender-based bullying and harassment remain pervasive issues among the profession. While not a direct focus of this survey (and noting that no quantitative data was collected about the rates of bullying and harassment experienced by women as part of the survey), these topics were frequently raised by women when asked to expand on their experiences in the profession.

In her own words:

“

Women are still treated poorly in the profession – they are passive-aggressively bullied, gaslit and made to feel ‘hysterical’ when they dare to stand up for themselves in male-dominated environments. This is even in the face of workplace harassment and bullying educational seminars, and even when a woman has managed to claw her way to the top of the food chain.

It is emotionally depleting to have to advocate for our own basic respect and yet, we successfully advocate for others constantly.

Government lawyer, Canada

I have found some ageism over the last two years towards females in the legal profession. Comments have been made, such as we shouldn’t be concerned about trying to retain older female staff members as they are ‘unlikely to leave as no one wants to hire women over 50’. I have found this to be highly insulting, as well as disturbing.

Private lawyer, United Kingdom

I would need more than 500 characters. It has been a hard slog with many rewards and advantages being a woman, but equally glaring and disturbing aspects that have perhaps improved for those coming after me but are still not called out or addressed. Even I still feel poorly equipped to combat and respond to them.

Court/Tribunal officer, Australia

”

“

Practising law as a female is awful. I experienced incredible workplace bullying in my articling year and throughout my practice until very recently... I experienced extremely abusive emails from partners no matter how hard I worked. I have been asked by male lawyers if I am on my period as a reason for refusing an adjournment request, being told 'I hope you're in a better mood'...

Barrister/advocate, Canada

The foundation of law was based on the principles of equity and equality. However, it sadly falls flat on accommodating ambitious yet empathetic women. We are made to feel to compete every day like headless chickens... We really need to address these issues!

Private lawyer, Japan

It's awful! I can't wait to retire. Women are treated poorly. And there is very little motivation on anyone to change. I am trying, but it is hard to get others on board.

Barrister/advocate, New Zealand

”

In 2019, the IBA launched a landmark study into bullying and sexual harassment in the legal profession (the *Us Too?* Report), which was based on the largest-ever global survey of legal professionals on bullying and sexual harassment and was a pivotal moment of reckoning for the profession. The report indicated that bullying had affected one in two female respondents; and that sexual harassment had affected one in three. The findings revealed a pattern of harm experienced by women in the profession across jurisdictions, legal sectors and levels of seniority. The report not only highlighted the extent of the issue, but also systemic barriers that prevented reporting and disciplinary action. The IBA subsequently undertook a global campaign to engage with key international stakeholders on the issue, developed an anti-harassment e-learning series and published a report exploring regulatory responses to bullying and sexual harassment in the profession (*Beyond Us Too?* report), as well as a report exploring the positive impact on technology to address workplace harassment (*Innovation-led cultural change: can technology effectively address workplace harassment?*).⁴⁴

However, it is clear that further work is required to address this persistent issue that affects not only women but all members of the profession. This ongoing problem cannot, and should not, be ignored, particularly when policymakers and organisations are considering how to improve women's wellbeing and longevity in the profession.

Despite concerns, many respondents express pride and satisfaction in their work, describing the profession as intellectually stimulating, rewarding, and an opportunity to make a positive impact. Some note that their experiences have improved over time or in certain roles (eg, government, in-house or self-employment).

44 Available at www.ibanet.org/bullying-and-sexual-harassment.

In her own words:



It has been a rich, challenging but fulfilling experience.
Corporate in-house lawyer, Nigeria

It has been a rewarding career now for over 45 years. The ability to constantly learn and develop skills and knowledge are very important to me and law gives that.
Private lawyer, Canada

Many of my colleagues are highly experienced women lawyers who eventually left the private sector probably because the practice of law was unsustainable with other responsibilities. We now sit as part-time senior adjudicators. We have significant job flexibility [and] autonomy but are not paid commensurate with our responsibilities or skills. That is the trade-off I have made for the final ten years of my career.
Court/Tribunal officer, Canada

The legal profession has enabled me to have a very fulfilling and rewarding career. It has enabled me to be financially independent and provide for my family. Once I decide to 'slow down', I am hopeful that it... will open doors for me to continue to give back (ie, non-profit organizations, NGOs, boards, etc) and leverage my strengths and skills for other meaningful purposes.
Corporate in-house lawyer, Canada

The profession is fulfilling and frustrating at the same time. It takes a lot of hard work, takes a toll on you, but it also gives a sense of accomplishment.
Court/Tribunal officer, Philippines



These findings about women's personal experiences inform:



Other themes for consideration

The need for continued cultural change in the profession

Persistent gendered cultures, bias and discrimination continue to impede women's progress in the legal profession. While bullying and harassment was not a focus of this survey, the results nonetheless indicate that women continue to experience gender-based discrimination in their workplaces, and witness or experience bullying or harassment.⁴⁵

The IBA's *Us Too? Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession* (2019) report brought global attention to these issues, finding that one in two women had experienced bullying in the legal workplace, and one in three had experienced sexual harassment. This report was based on the largest-ever global survey of legal professionals on bullying and sexual harassment, and was a pivotal moment of reckoning for the profession. Notwithstanding this important work, the findings of our Phase 2 survey point to bullying and harassment remaining significant issues impacting those working in the legal profession.

Recent regional studies confirm that this pattern is not confined to a single jurisdiction and remains a prevalent concern. For example, in the United Kingdom, the *Independent Review of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment at the Bar* (2025), chaired by Baroness Harriet Harman KC, describes pervasive bullying and sexual misconduct at the Bar.⁴⁶ The *Law Council of Australia National Attrition and Re-engagement Study* (2023) found that one in three women lawyers surveyed had experienced gender-based harassment during their careers. Such results indicate that cultural transformation, not just compliance, is needed to create a **safe, inclusive professional environment**.⁴⁷

The IBA intends to revisit its work in this space with the intention of tracking progress made and identifying the cultural changes still required.

The importance of an intersectional approach

The survey responses demonstrate that women's experiences within the profession are not homogeneous. They are frequently shaped by the intersection of gender with other characteristics, including ethnicity, disability, socio-economic background, sexual orientation and age. These intersecting factors can compound and intensify barriers to entry, progression and retention within the profession. The findings of

45 On the basis of open text box responses received from respondents working in the profession at the time of the survey, and those who had left the profession in the five years preceding the survey, to the question 'Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience working in the legal profession?'

46 Baroness Harriet Harman KC, *Independent Review of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment at the Bar*, (Bar Council of England and Wales, September 2025), see www.barcouncil.org.uk/support-for-barristers/bullying-and-harassment/review.html.

47 See also, eg: Joan C Williams, Marina Multhaup, Su Li, and Rachel Korn, *You Can't Change What You Can't See: Interrupting Racial & Gender Bias in the Legal Profession*, (American Bar Association's Commission on Women in the Profession and the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, 2018); Isabelle Auclair, Sophie Brière, Antoine Pellerin, Julie Dextras-Gauthier & Amélie Keyser-Verreault, *Survey on Sexual Harassment and Violence in the Practice of Law*, (Canada, 2021); *2023 Workplace Environment Survey* (the New Zealand Law Society, October 2023); *2024 Review of Harassment in the South Australian Legal Profession* (Equal Opportunity SA to the Attorney General, December 2024); *Bullying in the Legal Profession: A Study of Illinois Lawyers' Experiences and Recommendations for Change* (Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism, October 2024).

Phase 2 reinforces the need for continued cultural and structural change that acknowledges the diversity of women's experiences across the legal profession. Addressing gender inequality in the profession effectively means ensuring meaningful and sustainable change for all those working in the profession, through policies and practices that are inclusive by design.



Recommendations

About the recommendations

This section of the report sets out recommendations to advance women's progression, inclusion and wellbeing within the legal profession. The recommendations, and the work undertaken as part of this report, continue the IBA's commitment to advancing fairness and integrity in the profession.

The recommendations presented here are addressed to legal workplaces, professional bodies (bar associations, law societies and regulators) and individual members of the profession. They outline practical, evidence-based steps that can be taken at every level to build an equitable, sustainable and ethical legal profession for all. They aim to support both organisations and individuals in identifying strategies that advance inclusion within the legal sector, not only for women, but all members of the profession.

Every member of the profession has agency to drive change. These recommendations encourage lawyers, individually and collectively, to champion inclusive practice within their workplaces and professional networks.

These recommendations have been developed for a global audience; however, local adaptation should be considered by those adopting the recommendations, to appropriately reflect differences in regulation, culture and professional structure. The purpose of the recommendations is to provide a framework that can be applied flexibly while retaining universal principles of equality, professionalism and respect to support women's careers in law.

The recommendations are based on the quantitative and qualitative data gathered as part of Phase 2. They build on the organisation-based findings from Phase 1 of the Project, as well as previous IBA work, and incorporate additional desk-based research across jurisdictions and sectors. The recommendations have been scrutinised and considered by an Advisory Panel made up of members from ten different IBA Committees across the Legal Practice Division (LPD), Bar Issues Commission (BIC) and Section on Public and Professional Interest (SPPI):

- Women Lawyers' Committee;
- Diversity & Inclusion Council;
- Bar Issues Commission;
- Law Firm Management Committee;
- Judges' Forum;
- Corporate Counsel Forum;
- Forum for Government and Public Lawyers;
- Academic and Professional Development Committee;
- Diversity and Equality Law Committee; and
- Future of Legal Services Commission.

It is evident from the survey responses that structural change to support women's progression across all sectors is still needed, as is cultural change within the profession.

The recommendations cover the following areas, based on six key themes identified among the survey results:



1. Striving for structural and cultural change around workplace initiatives

ensuring the visibility and accessibility of workplace initiatives and changing culture and stigma around access.



2. Embedding flexible work practices

normalising flexible work to reduce stigma, promote equitable application of flexible work policies and support retention.



3. Building sustainable career pathways for women

addressing barriers to women's advancement through formalised coaching and mentoring programmes, targeted training and transparency.



4. Supporting women's wellbeing

promoting and supporting women's wellbeing in the profession.



5. Recognising and supporting life stages and caring responsibilities

recognising and supporting those experiencing different life stages such as menopause, and parents and carers.



6. Support for solo practitioners, smaller workplaces and women in chambers

recommendations to ensure women working as solo practitioners, in smaller workplaces and in barristers' chambers are better supported.

Workplaces and professional bodies implementing the recommendations in this report are **strongly encouraged** to regularly review their effectiveness by reference to clear, time-bound goals and evaluation metrics. Accountability is required to ensure impactful change.

Legal ranking organisations are also encouraged to incorporate recognition **and benchmarking** of the implementation of these recommendations in legal workplaces to encourage uptake and spread best practices globally.

This section of the report also identifies the need for **ongoing cultural change in the profession**, and the further work required to continue to address the issues raised by survey respondents regarding discrimination, bullying and harassment. Legal workplaces, professional bodies and members of the profession are **strongly encouraged** to unite to continue to push for cultural change.

Recommendation 1: Striving for structural and cultural change around workplace initiatives

To achieve meaningful change, legal workplaces must move beyond policy creation to **active implementation, transparent access and cultural normalisation** around workplace initiatives. Visibility, clear communication and equitable access at every level of seniority are essential to ensure these programmes fulfil their intended purpose.

Professional bodies and members of the profession are encouraged to share and highlight best practice to promote the **positive impact of workplace initiatives**.

Recommendations for legal workplaces

- 1.1 Publish clear, accessible information about available workplace initiatives (for example, on internal portals or in staff handbooks), including eligibility criteria and application processes.
- 1.2 Review and where possible, formalise the administration of initiatives (such as leadership training, mentoring or coaching) to ensure consistent and equitable access across teams and seniority levels. Mentoring guidance for legal workplaces is contained in the IBA's Women Lawyers' Committee *Mentorship Toolkit*.⁴⁸
- 1.3 Incorporate workplace initiative participation into performance and promotion discussions to avoid implicit bias against those who access initiatives.
- 1.4 Provide training across all levels (from initial induction to senior leadership training) about communication and role-modelling to normalise the use of workplace initiatives and reduce stigma.

Recommendations for professional bodies

- 1.5 Develop best-practice guidance on equitable access to workplace initiatives, tailored to different legal sectors as appropriate.
- 1.6 Provide training and awareness campaigns that highlight the positive impact of workplace initiatives on retention and performance, supported by current research.
- 1.7 Consider public and positive recognition of legal workplaces that support and promote women's careers in law. Examples include the creation of a voluntary pledge that workplaces can commit to and publicise their commitment to supporting gender equality,⁴⁹ media recognition and industry awards.

48 Available at www.ibanet.org/IBA-Women-Lawyers-Committee-Mentorship-Toolkit-launched-to-close-gender-gap-in-the-legal-profession.

49 Eg, *Women in Law Pledge* (the Law Society of England and Wales, Bar Council of England and Wales and Chartered Institute of Legal Executives, 4 April 2022), see www.lawsociety.org.uk/campaigns/women-in-leadership-in-law/tools/the-women-in-law-pledge.

Recommendations for members of the profession

- 1.8 Promote cultural change by sharing evidence of the benefits of workplace initiatives across professional networks. Encourage profession-wide education on the value of workplace initiatives (for example, through continuing professional development programmes), particularly for mid- and late-career women.
- 1.9 Highlight and celebrate senior practitioners who visibly model participation in such initiatives, demonstrating that engagement is consistent with professional excellence and leadership.

Recommendation 2: Embedding flexible work practices

The survey results show that flexible and hybrid work have become the norm across much of the legal profession, yet inequalities persist in access and perception. **Flexible work carries with it a number of benefits** for the individual and workplace, yet **stigma around flexible working persists**, as well as uneven application of flexible working policies across levels of seniority.

Embedding flexibility as a permanent, gender-neutral practice requires visible leadership commitment, transparent communication and robust policy design. This is particularly important in light of a recent trend towards ‘return-to-office’ expectations in the private sector.

Recommendations for legal workplaces

- 2.1 Treat flexible work as standard practice wherever practicable, rather than an exception or privilege.
- 2.2 Track use of flexible working arrangements by role and seniority to identify potential bias or disparities in access.
- 2.3 Provide targeted manager training on supervising hybrid teams and evaluating performance based on outcomes rather than presence.

Recommendations for professional bodies

- 2.4 Develop training and best practice on hybrid and flexible work, to be adapted to different practice settings where practicable.
- 2.5 Encourage workplaces to share case studies of successful flexible working arrangements to promote best practice.

Recommendations for members of the profession

- 2.6 Champion flexibility as integral to professional excellence, not a deviation from it.
- 2.7 Encourage open dialogue on the professional benefits of hybrid work, including productivity and wellbeing outcomes.

- 2.8 Senior lawyers and leaders can act as role models by using and publicly supporting flexible work arrangements to actively reduce stigma around use.⁵⁰

Recommendation 3: Building sustainable career pathways for women

Phase 1 has thus far revealed a persistent leadership gap across the 12 jurisdictions studied: women comprised 47 per cent of lawyers but only 38 per cent of those in senior positions.⁵¹ The Phase 2 survey results confirm that **barriers to women's advancement remain entrenched**. In particular, respondents identified a lack of formalised mentorship and sponsorship support, unclear promotion criteria and workplace culture as key obstacles to progression.⁵²

Embedding structured, transparent career development systems is therefore essential to ensure fair access to progression opportunities and to sustain women's representation at senior levels. **Ensuring women's progression and sustained careers in law benefits not only the individuals concerned but workplaces themselves** – increasing retention, preserving institutional knowledge, improving staff satisfaction and workplace culture and strengthening business performance.⁵³

Recommendations for legal workplaces

- 3.1 Establish structured mentorship and sponsorship programmes with clear objectives, eligibility criteria and regular evaluation.
- 3.2 Integrate leadership development and succession planning programmes for mid-career women to assist with the transition to senior roles.
- 3.3 Recognise and reward partners, supervisors and managers who actively mentor or sponsor women through promotion and remuneration frameworks.
- 3.4 Provide accessible leadership skills and return-to-work training for women and caregivers returning from career breaks.

50 Role-modelling has positive benefits with respect to flexible work and can ease barriers between work and external responsibilities – see Laura Jones, *Women's Progression in the Workplace* (Global Institute for Women's Leadership, King's College London, October 2019), 41, available at www.kcl.ac.uk/giwl/assets/womens-progression-in-the-workplace.pdf.

51 *50:50 by 2030: A longitudinal study into gender disparity in law – Progress Report*, (IBA, December 2024), 14.

52 On the basis of open text box responses received from respondents working in the profession at the time of the survey, and those who had left the profession in the five years preceding the survey, to the question 'Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience working in the legal profession?'

53 See Beth Michoma, 'Retention strategies for female talent in law firms' (IBA, 21 September 2023) www.ibanet.org/retention-strategies-female-talent-law-firms; Ivan Alvarado, *Global Report 2020: How to improve gender diversity at senior levels within law firms*, (Thomson Reuters Legal Executive Institute, 7 October 2020) <https://legalsolutions.thomsonreuters.co.uk/blog/2020/10/07/a-new-report-transforming-womens-leadership-in-the-law-global-report-2020-how-to-improve-gender-diversity-at-senior-levels-within-law-firms/>.

Recommendations for professional bodies

- 3.5 Develop national and regional mentorship networks to connect women across firm sizes, practice areas and jurisdictions.
- 3.6 Offer continuing professional development courses on inclusive leadership, sponsorship and effective mentoring.

Recommendations for members of the profession

- 3.7 Share examples of effective mentorship models and success stories to encourage replication across jurisdictions.
- 3.8 Actively participate in cross-organisational mentoring and sponsorship programmes.
- 3.9 Champion gender diversity as integral to ethical leadership, public trust and professional credibility.
- 3.10 Those who engage external counsel can require evidence of implementation of these recommendations as part of procurement criteria, panel selection, renewal processes and ongoing performance evaluation.

Recommendation 4: Supporting women's wellbeing

The Phase 2 results highlight that **burnout, stress and poor mental wellbeing remain widespread** among women in the profession. Respondents described heavy workloads, unrealistic billing expectations for those in private practice, and cultures that discourage help-seeking or time off. Research conducted by the IBA's Wellbeing Commission has also highlighted this issue, finding that women experience worse mental wellbeing than others in the profession.⁵⁴ In particular, and in line with other research, women with caring responsibilities are especially likely to report poor wellbeing outcomes and difficulty balancing competing pressures. The evidence demonstrates that ensuring women's wellbeing in the profession requires both structural and cultural reform. Legal workplaces must recognise mental wellbeing as a core component of professional competence and provide appropriate resources to support and retain individuals from all backgrounds.

Recommendations for legal workplaces

- 4.1 Implement comprehensive wellbeing policies such as access to confidential counselling, employee assistance programmes and trained mental health first aiders.
- 4.2 Provide leadership training to identify and respond appropriately to stress, burnout and vicarious trauma.

⁵⁴ See *Wellbeing in the Legal Profession: A Global Study* (IBA Wellbeing Commission, 2021), 30–31, available at www.ibanet.org/document?id=IBA-report-Mental-Wellbeing-in-the-Legal-Profession-A-Global-Study.

- 4.3 Regularly review workload allocation and, where applicable, billing structures to reduce overwork and ensure equitable distribution of tasks.
- 4.4 Incorporate wellbeing objectives into performance and promotion frameworks, recognising leaders who foster psychologically safe environments.

Recommendations for professional bodies

- 4.5 Consider integrating wellbeing into professional conduct rules and continuing professional development requirements.
- 4.6 Develop centralised peer support networks and wellbeing resources.
- 4.7 Recognise and promote organisations that demonstrate excellence in wellbeing practice through accreditation or award schemes.

Recommendations for members of the profession

- 4.8 Challenge stigma around mental health conversations through visible leadership example and open discussion.
- 4.9 Model balanced working habits and encourage peers to take rest and recovery seriously as elements of professional competence.

Recommendation 5: Recognising and supporting life stages and caring responsibilities

The survey found that over half of respondents were balancing caring responsibilities alongside paid work, yet **only seven per cent had access to carers' support**, beyond parental leave, in their workplace. Respondents emphasised that caring obligations – whether for children, ageing relatives or others – directly affected their promotion prospects and longevity in the profession.

Additionally, **only two per cent of respondents indicated that their workplaces offered menopause or perimenopause support**, while qualitative comments called for greater recognition of other 'life stage' needs, including fertility-related health issues and the impact of the menstrual cycle.⁵⁵ These findings show that while some legal organisations have introduced policies addressing parental leave or flexible working, few have adopted holistic frameworks that reflect the full range of life-stage experiences affecting women's participation and wellbeing.

⁵⁵ Research shows that many women work through pain associated with menstrual cycles and fertility treatments, as well as through menopausal symptoms – with some feeling uncomfortable to discuss these issues with their employers. Nearly 24 per cent of respondents surveyed as part of Deloitte's 2025 report *Women @ Work* indicated they suffered painful symptoms from menstruation, menopause or fertility challenges. 40 per cent reported working through pain, and 13 per cent indicated they did not feel comfortable discussing these symptoms with their employer. One in ten women were worried that disclosure or discussion would lead to negative impacts on their career progression (pp 10–11).

To retain talent and promote equality, **legal workplaces must recognise that caring and ‘life stage’ transitions are normal aspects of professional life.**

Recommendations for legal workplaces

- 5.1 Normalise uptake of parental leave by all parents in the workplace, through visible leadership endorsement and communication from senior management.
- 5.2 Provide flexible return-to-work options and reintegration programmes following extended absences, including phased returns and workload adjustments.
- 5.3 Establish menopause and perimenopause, menstrual cycle, fertility treatment and family-planning policies with appropriate confidentiality protections and training for managers. Workplaces are encouraged to co-design policies and programmes with those they affect, to ensure maximum positive impact.

Recommendations for professional bodies

- 5.4 Issue model policies and practical guidance on supporting caring responsibilities and life stage transitions across different legal sectors.
- 5.5 Provide continuing professional development training for leaders and human resources professionals on inclusive management of parental, carers and medical leave.
- 5.6 Recognise and promote organisations demonstrating best practice in supporting life stages.

Recommendations for members of the profession

- 5.7 Advocate for equal sharing of caring responsibilities within the profession through mentoring, education and leadership visibility.
- 5.8 Engage publicly in dialogue around menopause, menstrual cycle impacts and other life stages to help remove stigma and promote the positive benefits of support.
- 5.9 Support policy reform within organisations and through professional associations that embeds ‘life stage’ inclusivity as a standard part of workplace culture.

Recommendation 6: Supporting solo practitioners, smaller workplaces and women in chambers

Women practising as sole practitioners, in small firms or as self-employed barristers constitute a substantial share of the legal profession, yet they often lack the workplace support available in larger organisations, whether due to size (in the case of solo practitioners and those in smaller firms) or nature of the workplace (in the case of women working as barristers in chambers). The Phase 2 survey revealed that these types of

practitioners experience particular challenges in accessing wellbeing support and career development initiatives, like coaching and mentoring. The result is a widening gap in opportunity and wellbeing outcomes between large and small workplaces, and those in other sectors.

Addressing these disparities requires coordinated support from bar associations, regulators and peer networks to ensure that equity and wellbeing initiatives reach all members of the profession, regardless of workplace size or type.

Recommendations for professional bodies

- 6.1** Develop tailored toolkits and policy templates for small firms, solo practitioners and barristers addressing wellbeing, flexibility and other workplace initiatives.
- 6.2** Offer reduced-cost or subsidised access to continuing professional development and legal education programmes and training on leadership development for those who are working in organisations with fewer resources for training.
- 6.3** Create regional mentoring exchanges or partnership initiatives that pair small-practice lawyers with leaders from larger organisations.

Recommendations for members of the profession

- 6.4** Participate actively in peer support and mentoring networks to foster support, community and shared learning across practice sizes. Those from solo practice, smaller firms and chambers are encouraged to identify established networks or larger workplaces that may be able to assist with mentorship, practical guidance and shared learning opportunities.
- 6.5** Advocate for inclusion of solo and small-practice perspectives in professional-body policymaking and research, to ensure that these types of practitioners are included in data collection and not excluded from research and reporting.

What next?

Workplace culture, mental and physical health, work-life balance and remuneration are important factors influencing women's decisions to move within, or out of, the legal profession.

The survey responses reveal a strong, consistent demand for:

- more flexible, inclusive and supportive working arrangements, particularly in certain legal sectors;
- structured mentoring and leadership development for women;
- concrete action on pay equity, unconscious bias and career progression; and
- holistic support for mental health, family responsibilities and all life stages.

There is also a clear call for these changes to be genuinely implemented and culturally embedded, not just offered on paper or as a formality. It is evident from the survey responses that structural change to support women's progression across all sectors is still needed, as is cultural change within the profession to support and enhance women's wellbeing and sense of personal and financial security.

What is clear, in terms of private practice, is that a 24/7 culture that rewards constant availability and makes it difficult for anyone with caring responsibilities to keep up, let alone thrive, is a significant barrier. Where that is the norm, stepping back – even temporarily – can have a detrimental impact upon someone's path to partnership. It is often asserted that the system is designed for people without caregiving responsibilities and reinforced by outdated assumptions about what 'committed' looks like.

In her own words:

“

When I started work in my field... I was often the only woman in the meeting, on the panel, on the team. My early experience was of others assuming I was there to take notes (cringe). This has shifted dramatically the past 20 years. I now work mostly with women. Recent political shifts demonstrate that advances in gender equality can quickly be reversed so we must never give up!

Legal professional, North America

... A key factor for my job satisfaction has always been maintaining contact with other women lawyers. Working together to promote equality of opportunity has provided a sense of purpose and collegiality.

Court/Tribunal officer, Australia

I hope to see change, to see lawyers taking their lunch breaks, their vacation time, and have a work-life balance like the rest of the population.

Private lawyer, Canada

Let's hope to see a shift in our field in the next 20 years. Fingers crossed!

Private lawyer, Czech Republic

”

“

It has been a fulfilling 30 years with its challenges and triumphs. I would encourage women to consider this not as just a job but truly a profession and vocation. We are not superwomen but we can be excellent and effective members of the legal profession with support from others. We only need to ask.

Private lawyer, Singapore

One has to be the change that one wants to see! It has not been easy and success has not been as frequent as I would have liked but still, I press on! CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

Court/Tribunal officer, Trinidad and Tobago

Trying is better than wondering 'what if'.

Private lawyer, China

”



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- Diversity & Inclusion Council (Funmi Oluyede, Co-Chair);
- Bar Issues Commission (Fiona McLeod, Officer);
- Law Firm Management Committee (Anne Macdonald, Co-Chair);
- Judges' Forum (Hon Justice Nallini Pathmanathan, Officer);
- Corporate Counsel Forum (Harpreet K Sidhu, Officer);
- Forum for Government and Public Lawyers (Jane Anderson, Co-Chair);

Appendix: survey questions

Section 1: screening questions

SQ1 This survey is aimed at women working in the legal profession (or who have worked within the legal profession in the last five (5) years). Please confirm that this description applies to you.

I confirm this description applies to me.

SQ2 Are you currently practising as a lawyer or otherwise working in the legal profession (eg, as a judge or judicial officer, or legal academic)?

1	Yes → Link to SECTION 2
2	No → Thank and close

SQ3 Have you practised as a lawyer or otherwise worked in the legal profession (eg, as a judge or judicial officer, or legal academic) in the last five years?

1	Yes → Link to SECTION 3
2	No → Thank and close

Section 2: currently working in profession

Part A primary demographics

A1 How old are you?

1	18–29 years
2	30–39 years
3	40–49 years
4	50–59 years
5	60–69 years
6	70 years or older

A2 In which jurisdiction do you practice? If you practice in more than one jurisdiction, please select the primary jurisdiction you practice in.

[Drop down box to select jurisdiction]

Part B Current employment characteristics

B1 Which ONE category best describes your main role (the role that you spend most time on each week)?

Courts and Tribunals	
1	Judge of a senior court (eg, High Court, Court of Appeal, Supreme Court or Crown Court)
2	Judge of a district court (eg, District Court, Country Court, Local Court)
3	Magistrate
4	Tribunal member
5	Other (please specify)
Barrister/advocate	
6	Senior Counsel, King's Counsel or equivalent title (eg, Senior Advocate)
7	Junior Counsel
8	Advocate
Private law firm	
9	Equity partner
10	Salaried partner
11	Sole practitioner
12	Special Counsel
13	Senior Solicitor/Senior Associate
14	Associate
15	Solicitor

16	Paralegal
17	Other (please specify)
Corporate legal (in-house)	
18	General Counsel/Head Legal Counsel
19	Senior Legal Counsel/Senior Lawyer
20	Legal Counsel/Lawyer
21	Other (please specify)
Government or public sector legal	
22	Managing Lawyer or Prosecutor
23	Senior Lawyer or Prosecutor
24	Lawyer or Prosecutor
25	Other (please specify)
Other	
26	Academia
27	Non-government organisation
28	Other legal role (please specify)

B2 For how many years have you been practising?

1	Under 1 year
2	1–5 years
3	6–10 years
4	11 years or more

B3 Do you currently work full time or part time in your current main role?

1	Full time
2	Part time

B4 What are the areas of law that you mainly practice in? (please select all that apply)

1	Administrative Law
2	Advocacy
3	Banking/Finance
4	Civil Litigation
5	Commercial Law
6	Conveyancing/Real Property
7	Corporate Law
8	Criminal Law
9	Debts/Insolvency
10	Employment/Industrial Law
11	Environmental Law
12	Family Law
13	Immigration Law

14	Information technology/Telecommunications
15	Intellectual Property
16	International Law
17	Litigation – general
18	Personal Injury
19	Planning/Local Government
20	Small Business
21	Taxation
22	Trade Practices Law
23	Wills and Estates
24	Other (please specify)
25	Not applicable to my situation

Part C Workplace initiatives

C1 Does your workplace have any of the following initiatives in place? (select all that apply):

Quota setting for senior role positions

Availability of greater flexible working arrangements (post Covid-19 restrictions)

Leadership training for women

Target setting for senior role positions

Unconscious bias training

Coaching/mentoring programmes

Menopause/perimenopause support programmes

Carer support

Other: _____

None of the above

C2 Have you made use of, or been supported by, any of the following initiatives in your workplace? (select all that apply):

Quota setting for senior role positions

Availability of greater flexible working arrangements (post Covid-19 restrictions)

Leadership training for women

Target setting for senior role positions

Unconscious bias training

Coaching/mentoring programmes

Menopause/perimenopause support programmes

Carer support

Other: _____

None of the above

C3 Which of these initiatives do you consider has had the most significant positive impact on your career?

Quota setting for senior role positions

Availability of greater flexible working arrangements (post Covid-19 restrictions)

Leadership training for women

Target setting for senior role positions

Unconscious bias training

Coaching/mentoring programmes

Menopause/perimenopause support programmes

Carer support

Other: _____

None of the above

C4 What challenges, if any, have you faced in accessing or using these initiatives?

C5 Are there any additional initiatives, policies or resources you would like to see made available to lawyers/judges within your workplace?

C6 Where you have requested access in your current workplace to any of the following flexible working arrangements, can you indicate which requests were approved or denied (select all that apply):

1	Part time work	Approved	Denied
2	Remote working (eg, working from home)	Approved	Denied
3	Flexi-time/time off in lieu	Approved	Denied
4	Compressed work week	Approved	Denied
5	Flexible hours (start and finish times)	Approved	Denied
6	Job sharing	Approved	Denied
7	Paid parental leave	Approved	Denied
8	Unpaid parental leave	Approved	Denied
9	Carer's leave or other carer-specific working arrangements	Approved	Denied
10	Other (please specify)	Approved	Denied
11	None of the above – I have not requested access to flexible working arrangements in my current role		

[For respondents who had requests approved]:

C7 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how the arrangements that were approved have worked in practice?

	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Not relevant	Not sure
a) Overall, the arrangements have worked as intended						
b) Initially the arrangements worked well but they were not sustainable for me						
c) Management was/is supportive of these arrangements						
d) My colleagues were/are supportive of these arrangements						
e) My clients were/are supportive of these arrangements						
f) The arrangements have negatively impacted my career path and opportunities for promotion						
g) The arrangements have negatively impacted the profile and type of work I am given						

Part D Career satisfaction

D1 To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following aspects of your current main employment position?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not relevant	Not sure
a) Opportunities for promotion and advancement							
b) Access to flexible working arrangements							
c) The hours I am required to work							
d) The level of support in my organisation for work-life balance							
e) The level of work-life balance that I have							
f) The level of independence and control I have over my work							
g) The quality/profile of work I am given the opportunity to do							

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not relevant	Not sure
h) Opportunities to make full use of my skills and abilities							
i) The level of personal satisfaction in the work that I do							
j) The level of job security							
k) Accessibility of mentors to support my career development							
l) Support provided to access contacts and networks							
m) Accessibility of learning and development opportunities							

D2 Now thinking about your career as a whole, to what extent are you satisfied with each of the following:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not sure
a) The opportunities you have had for professional development and promotion						
b) The level of support you have received for work-life balance						
c) Your career trajectory (compared to your expectations)						

Part E Future career moves

E1 Are you considering any of the following over the next two years? (select all that apply):

1	Staying in my current workplace without plans to leave
2	Leaving my current workplace to join another legal workplace
3	Staying in the legal profession but in a different role (eg, academia, consulting)
4	Leaving my current workplace to start my own legal practice
5	Leaving the legal profession entirely
6	Retiring from the workforce
7	Other (please specify):

8	Not applicable: I am not considering a career move over the next two years. [Selecting this box will take the participant to Part F – if this box is selected, no other boxes in the list can be selected.]
---	---

E2 Please specify which of the following factors you think will play/is playing a role in your decision to move (select all that apply):

1	Better salary/remuneration elsewhere
2	Lack of promotional opportunities/career advancement in my current role
3	Greater scope for flexible working arrangements elsewhere
4	Mental or physical health reasons
5	Better support for my mental or physical health elsewhere
6	The impact of menopause/perimenopause
7	Better support for me during menopause/perimenopause elsewhere
8	The impact of caring responsibilities
9	Better support for my caring responsibilities elsewhere
10	Better work-life balance elsewhere
11	Unhappy with the workplace culture in my current role
12	Experienced bias or discrimination in my current role
13	Experienced harassment or bullying in my current role
14	More independence/control in work elsewhere
15	Better quality of work elsewhere
16	Change in practice area/different type of work from my current role
17	Better position/significant job opportunity elsewhere
18	Better job security/reliability of work and/or income
19	Wanted to start a new firm/sole practice/work for myself
20	Too much pressure on billable hours in my current role
21	Too much pressure on bringing in clients/new business in my current role
22	Didn't want to work as a lawyer anymore
23	Taking time out from the profession (career or personal break)
24	Relocation
25	Redundancy/termination of employment
26	Retirement
27	Other (please specify)

E3 What, if anything, would change your decision to move job/employment circumstances? (ie, encourage you to stay in your current job)

Part F Demographics

F1 Which best describes your marital status?

1	Single
2	Married or de facto
3	Divorced, separated, widowed

F2 a) How many dependent children do you have (including step-children)?

1	0 [Go to 0]
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5 or more

b) Are any of these children... (select all that apply):

1	Aged under 6 and living with you all/some of the time
2	Aged 6–12 and living with you all/some of the time
3	Aged 12–17 and living with you all/some of the time
4	Aged 18 or older and living with you all/some of the time
5	None of the above

c) Are you the primary carer in your family?

1	Yes [Go to 0]
2	No [Go to 0]
3	There is no primary carer – the role is shared [Go to 0]

F3 Do you have any other family or carer responsibilities?

1	Yes [Go to F4]
2	No [Go to Part G]

F4 Please indicate for whom you have carer responsibilities (select all that apply):

1	Grandparent/s (mine or my partner's)
2	Parent/s (mine or my partner's)
3	Sibling/s (mine or my partner's)
4	Other (please specify)

Part G Quote

Optional: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience working in the legal profession?

The IBA may quote from your response as part of our reporting on this survey. If so, any quote may be associated with your jurisdiction and/or the sector you have provided, but will otherwise be **anonymised**.

If you **do not want** the IBA to quote from your response, please let us know using the check box below.

No, I do not want the IBA to quote from my response.

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Section 2: Non-practising lawyers

Part A Primary demographics

A1 How old are you?

1	18–29 years
2	30–39 years
3	40–49 years
4	50–59 years
5	60–69 years
6	70 years or older

A2 In which jurisdiction do you work? If you work in more than one jurisdiction, please select the primary jurisdiction you work in.

[Drop down box to select jurisdiction]

A3 How many years is it since you were first admitted as a legal practitioner? (please round to the nearest number of full years)

A4 Prior to leaving the legal profession, how many years practising experience did you have post admission (excluding any time taken as breaks from the profession)?

1	1 year
2	2–5 years
3	6–10 years
4	Over 10 years

Part B Career moves

B1 Which one category best describes the last role in which you practised as a lawyer?

1	Court or Tribunal judge, magistrate or member
2	Barrister/advocate
3	Private law firm – sole practitioner
4	Private law firm – law firm with 2–5 partners/principals
5	Private law firm – law firm with 5–10 partners/principals
6	Private law firm – law firm with 10+ partners/principals
7	Corporate legal (in-house)
8	Government or public sector legal
9	Non-government organisation

10	Academia
11	Other (please specify)

B2 When you left your role as a practising lawyer, please specify which of the following factors played a role in your decision? (select all that apply):

1	Better salary/remuneration elsewhere
2	Lack of promotional opportunities/career advancement in my current role
3	Greater scope for flexible working arrangements elsewhere
4	Mental or physical health reasons
5	Better support for my mental or physical health elsewhere
6	The impact of menopause/perimenopause
7	Better support for me during menopause/perimenopause elsewhere
8	The impact of caring responsibilities
9	Better support for my caring responsibilities elsewhere
10	Better work-life balance elsewhere
11	Unhappy with the workplace culture in my current role
12	Experienced bias or discrimination in my current role
13	Experienced harassment or bullying in my current role
14	More independence/control in work elsewhere
15	Better quality of work elsewhere
16	Change in practice area/different type of work from my current role
17	Better position/significant job opportunity elsewhere
18	Better job security/reliability of work and/or income
19	Wanted to start a new firm/sole practice/work for myself
20	Too much pressure on billable hours in my current role
21	Too much pressure on bringing in clients/ new business in my current role
22	Didn't want to work as a lawyer anymore
23	Taking time out from the profession (career or personal break)
24	Relocation
25	Redundancy/termination of employment
26	Retirement
27	Other (please specify)

What, if anything, would have changed your decision to leave the legal profession?

Part C Career intentions

C1 Would you consider working as a lawyer again in the future?

1	Yes
2	No
3	Maybe

[For 'Yes' and 'Maybe' at C1 (For 'No' at C1, skip to C4)]

C2 Within approximately what time frame would you consider returning to the legal profession?

1	Within the next 12 months
2	1–2 years
3	3–5 years
4	6–10 years
5	More than 10 years
6	Not sure

C3 What type of workplace would you consider working in as a lawyer? (please select the workplace that you would be most likely to consider working in): *[only select one]*

1	Court or Tribunal role
2	Barrister/Advocate
3	Prosecutor/Public Defender
4	Private law firm – sole practitioner
5	Private law firm – law firm with 2–5 partners/principals
6	Private law firm – law firm with 5–10 partners/principals
7	Private law firm – law firm with 10+ partners/principals
8	Corporate legal (in-house)
9	Government legal
10	Non-government organisation
11	Academia
12	Other (please specify)
13	Not sure

[For 'No' at C1]:

C4 Please indicate briefly why you would not consider working as a lawyer in the future:

Part D Demographics

D1 Which best describes your marital status?

1	Single
2	Married or de facto
3	Divorced, separated, widowed

D2 a) How many dependent children do you have (including step-children)?

1	0 [Go to D3]
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5 or more

b) Are any of these children... (select all that apply)

1	Aged under 6 and living with you all/some of the time
2	Aged 6–12 and living with you all/some of the time
3	Aged 12–17 and living with you all/some of the time
4	Aged 18 or older and living with you all/some of the time
5	None of the above

c) Are you the primary carer in your family?

1	Yes [Go to D3]
2	No [Go to D3]
3	There is no primary carer – the role is shared [Go to D3]

D3 Do you have any other family or carer responsibilities?

1	Yes [Go to D4]
2	No [Go to Part E]

D4 Please indicate for whom you have carer responsibilities (select all that apply):

1	Grandparent/s (mine or my partner's)
2	Parent/s (mine or my partner's)
3	Sibling/s (mine or my partner's)

Part E

Optional: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience working in the legal profession?

The IBA may quote from your response as part of our reporting on this survey. If so, any quote may be associated with your jurisdiction and/or the sector you have provided, but will otherwise be **anonymised**.

If you do not want the IBA to quote from your response, please let us know using the check box below.

No, I do not want the IBA to quote from my response.

Thank you for your participation in this survey.



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