



LAW FORWARD

**2024 Legal Industry
Satisfaction Survey**

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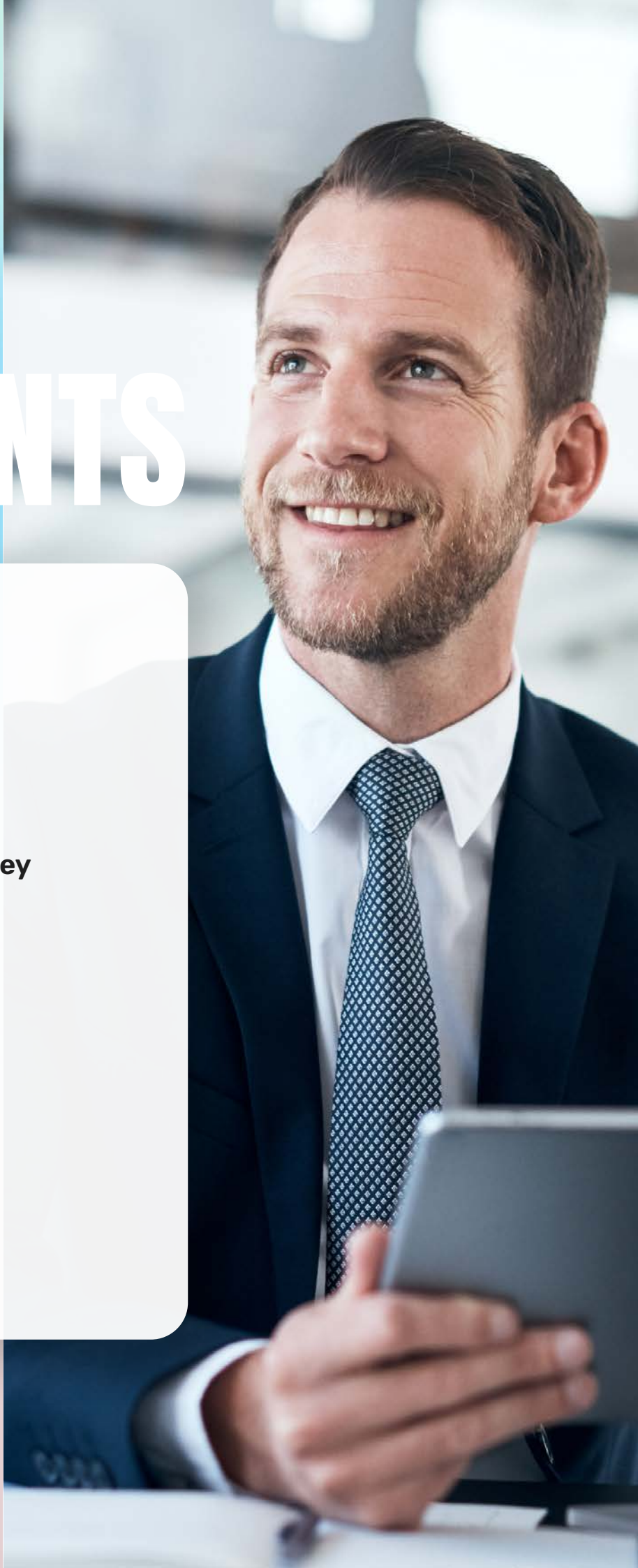
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01 FROM THE CEO



Welcome to the College of Law's 2024 Legal Industry Satisfaction Survey executive summary.

This year, the College of Law in partnership with Perceptive, set out to ask an important question: Are legal professionals genuinely satisfied in their workplaces?

To find out, we surveyed lawyers Australia-wide.

This investigation follows the release of our [Australian Legal Salary Survey](#) in May 2024. That study uncovered pressing issues like persistent gender pay gaps and a compelling link between further education and increased earning potential.

For this research, however, we went beyond compensation – and explored how happy lawyers are at work. Our goal? To uncover insights into workplace conditions that lawyers and their organisations can use to foster healthier, more productive and supportive environments.

Our survey revealed recurring themes including the integral role supportive workplace cultures play in employee satisfaction, a strong desire for flexible working arrangements, and unsurprisingly, the importance of fair remuneration.

Some findings are challenging to confront. Nevertheless, we believe they can guide improvements in individual career outcomes, organisational resilience, and the broader legal profession.

We hope this executive summary offers the same illuminating insights for you and your organisation as it has for us. For those who'd like a deeper dive, the full report is available at collaw.edu.au.

Neville Carter
CEO, College of Law

The results of the survey delivered five key insights:

- 1** Only 2 in 5 lawyers would recommend their workplace to others.
- 2** Lawyers with flexible arrangements are the most satisfied.
- 3** Most lawyers are working standard hours.
- 4** Almost 70% of lawyers experienced burnout in the past year.
- 5** In the past year, 31% of lawyers experienced or witnessed unlawful bullying.

Other noteworthy findings include:

- A third of legal professionals are highly satisfied with their careers, finding the work both rewarding and challenging
- 80% intend to remain in the legal field for at least another five years
- Lawyers hold mixed feelings about AI, viewing it with a blend of curiosity and scepticism.

“ Our survey revealed recurring themes including the integral role supportive workplace cultures play in employee satisfaction, a strong desire for flexible working arrangements, and unsurprisingly, the importance of fair remuneration. ”

02 ABOUT THE SURVEY

We surveyed lawyers across Australia about their workplace and well-being.

Let's take a closer look at who they are – and how we measured their responses.

To achieve an accurate representation of practicing lawyers in the Australian profession, responses are weighted by gender breakdowns as per the NSW Law Society's "2022 National Profile of Solicitors" report (55% female; 44% male; 1% gender diverse).

1,022

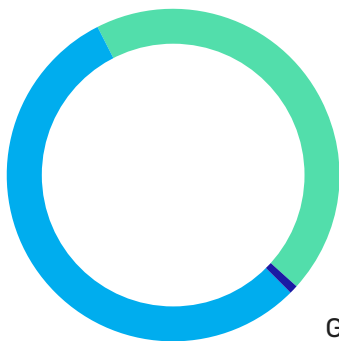
Number of responses collected through our online survey

2

Number of months the survey was open

GENDER

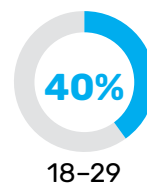
55%
Male



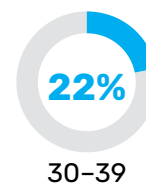
44%
Female

1%
Gender Diverse

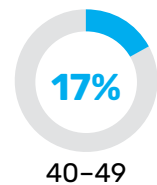
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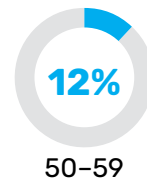
18-29



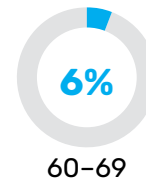
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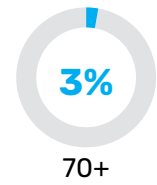
40-49



50-59

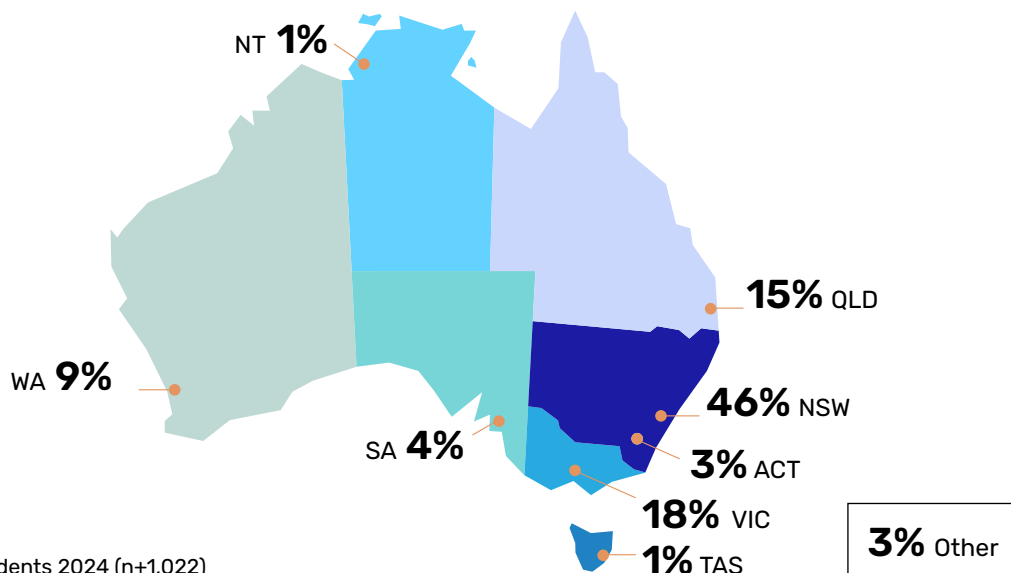


60-69



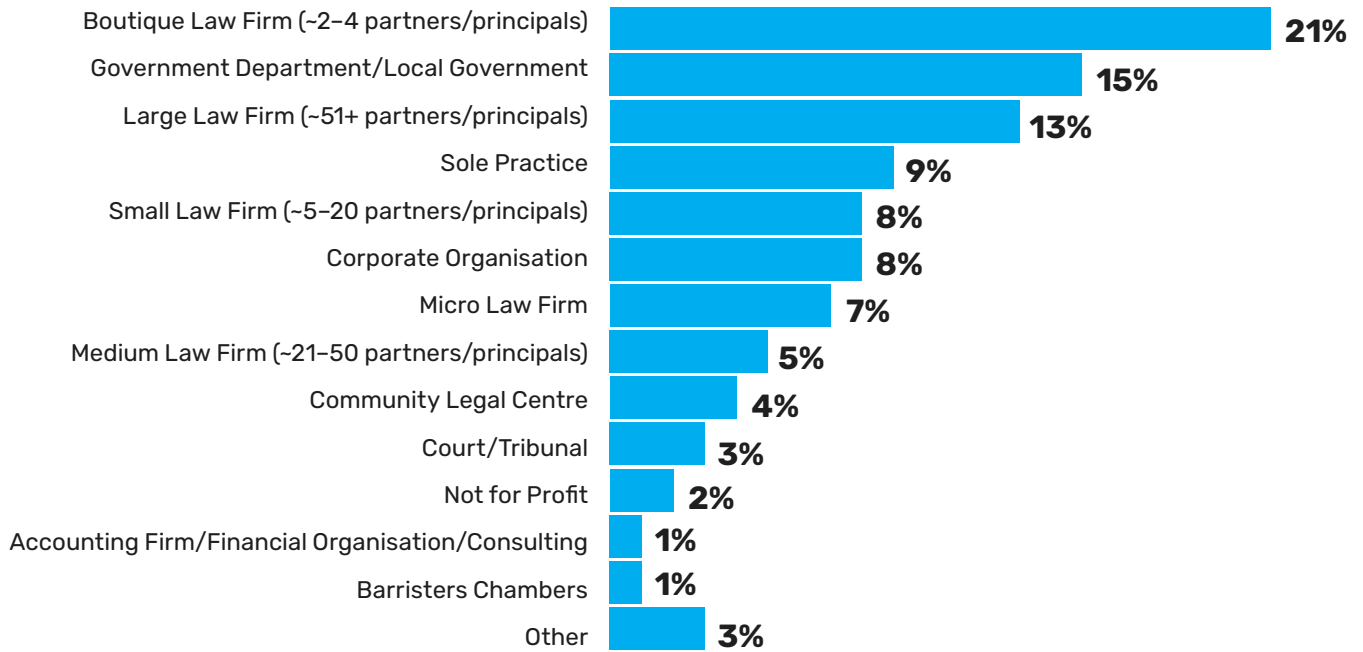
70+

REGION



Base: Total Respondents 2024 (n+1,022)

WORKPLACE



Base: Total Respondents currently working in the Profession (n=861)





03 KEY FINDINGS

1. ONLY 2 IN 5 LAWYERS WOULD RECOMMEND THEIR WORKPLACE TO OTHERS

Supportive culture, flexible work options and opportunities for career growth, advancement and development are boosting employee satisfaction, with 2 in 5 lawyers recommending their workplace.

However, not all experiences are positive.

Their reasons for dissatisfaction include:

- Toxic workplace culture
- Poor management and leadership
- Unsatisfactory pay

Top priorities for job seekers – and job leavers

When choosing a new employer, respondents cited salary as the top priority, followed by career progression opportunities.

For those leaving the legal profession altogether, the main reasons were:

- Toxic workplace culture
- A lack of support from leadership
- Excessive workloads



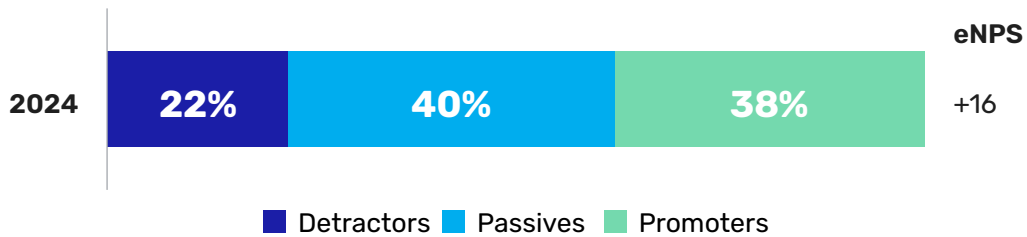
Retention insights

Nearly a quarter of lawyers (25%) plan to leave their workplace in the next two years.

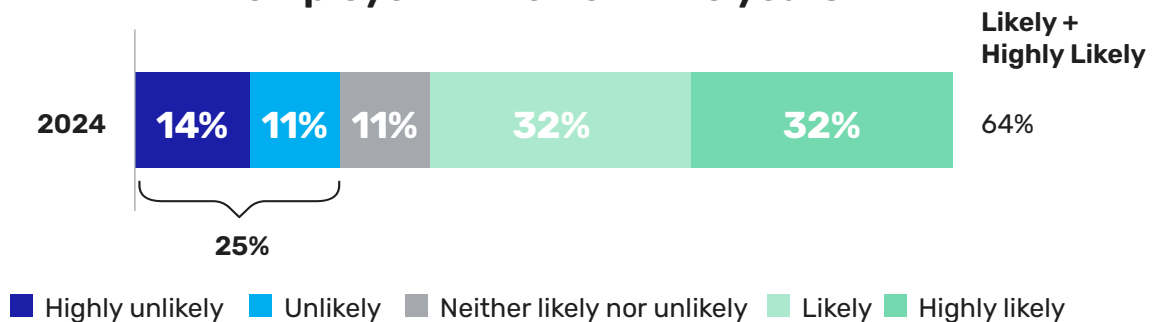
The good news? Better pay, increased flexibility and stronger mentoring programs could turn the tide in retaining staff – creating workplaces that lawyers are proud to endorse and commit to.

Workplace ratings: promoters, passives and detractors

Likelihood of recommending place of employment



Likelihood of staying with your current employer in the next two years



Base: Total Respondents Currently Working in the Profession, excluding Business Owners (n=728)

What lawyers value – and what drives them away

'High quality work and clients; strong culture and commitment to team well-being.'



Supportive and friendly culture

Quality of work

Flexible environment

Opportunity for advancement and development

Negative and toxic culture

Poor leadership

Unsatisfactory pay

Limited opportunities to progress

'There is no flexibility in the role to allow working from home. There are no benefits. There are no pay rises.'

2. LAWYERS WITH FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS ARE THE MOST SATISFIED

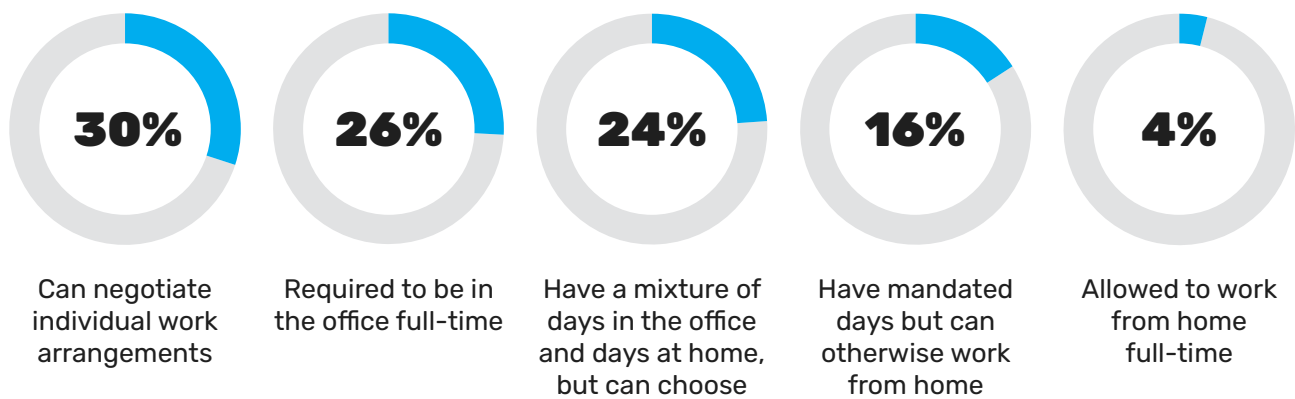
Hybrid work options are a top preference for lawyers, with those enjoying schedule flexibility reporting the highest workplace satisfaction levels.

And it seems that flexibility is not hard to find.

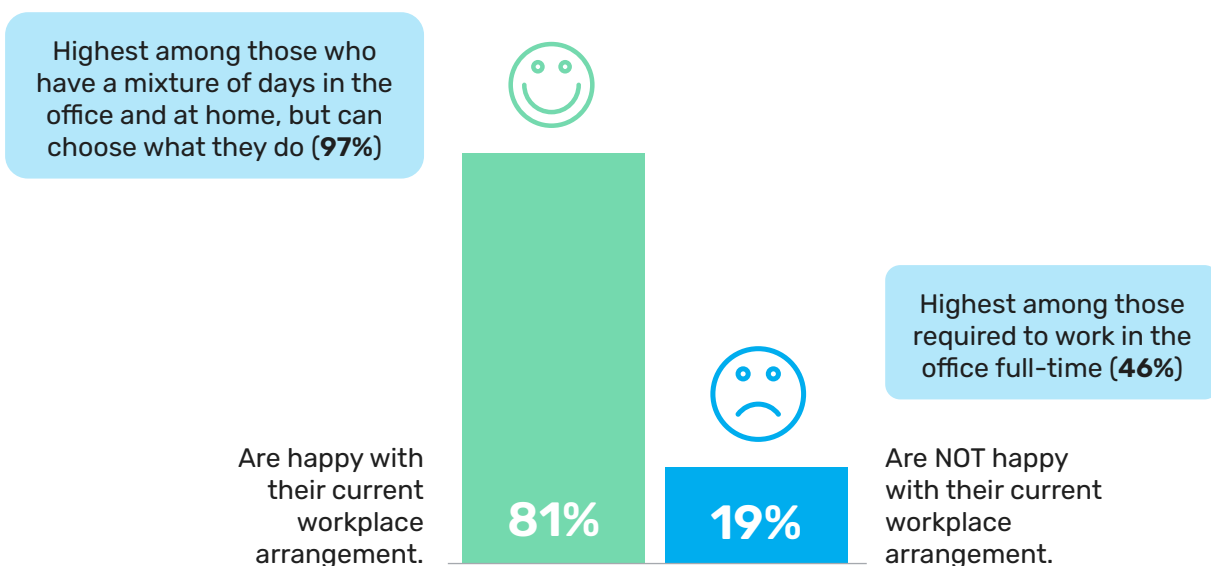
The survey revealed that 74% of respondents are benefitting from flexible arrangements – whether through remote work, office-home splits or another custom setup.

Interestingly, some respondents expressed concerns about isolation when working from home. This underscores the popularity of hybrid models as the ideal balance for lawyers.

Where lawyers are working: Office, hybrid and remote



Satisfaction with current workplace arrangements



Base: Total Respondents currently working in the Profession, excluding Business Owners (n=728)



3. MOST LAWYERS ARE WORKING STANDARD HOURS

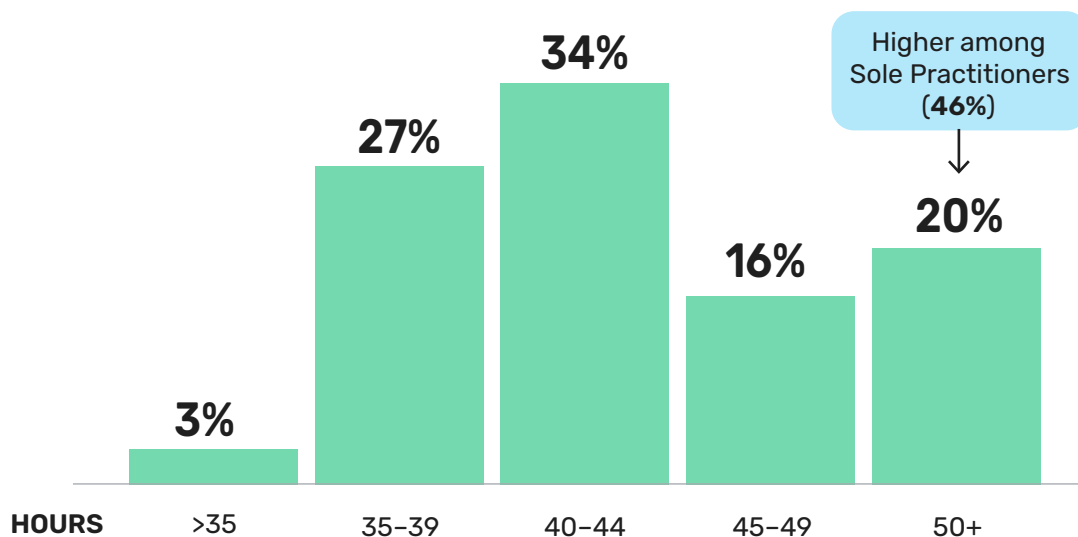
When it comes to work hours and billable targets:

- Most lawyers (61%) work 35–44 hours a week
- A further 20% work 50+ hours a week
- 16% work 45–49 hours per week
- 3% under 35 hours or less

Only 19% of those surveyed felt pressured to work overtime, with this burden weighing more heavily on:

- Women across the board
- Professionals working in larger firms

How many hours lawyers are working each week



4. ALMOST 70% OF LAWYERS EXPERIENCED BURNOUT IN THE PAST YEAR

Around two-thirds of lawyers reported experiencing burnout over the past year. The key drivers of burnout? Intense workloads and pressures on personal time.

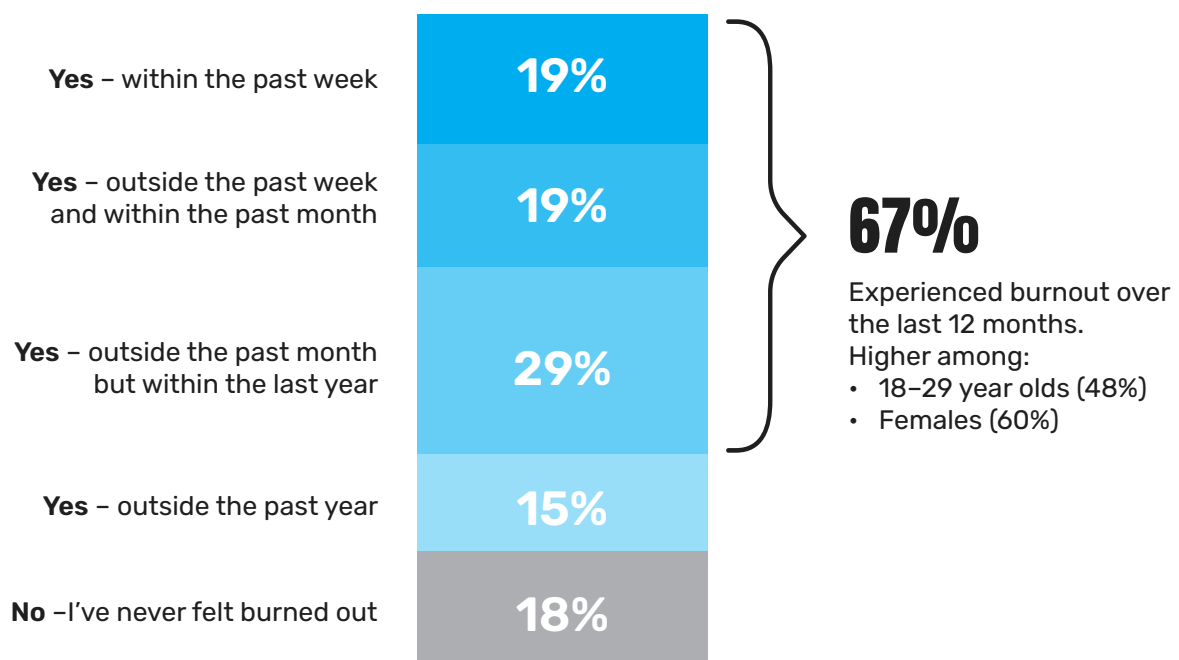
Out of those who experienced burnout over the last year a higher proportion were women (60%) when compared to men (40%). Additionally, 48% of those who experienced burnout over the last year were aged between 18 and 29 years.

Respondents highlighted five top ways workplaces could help prevent burnout:

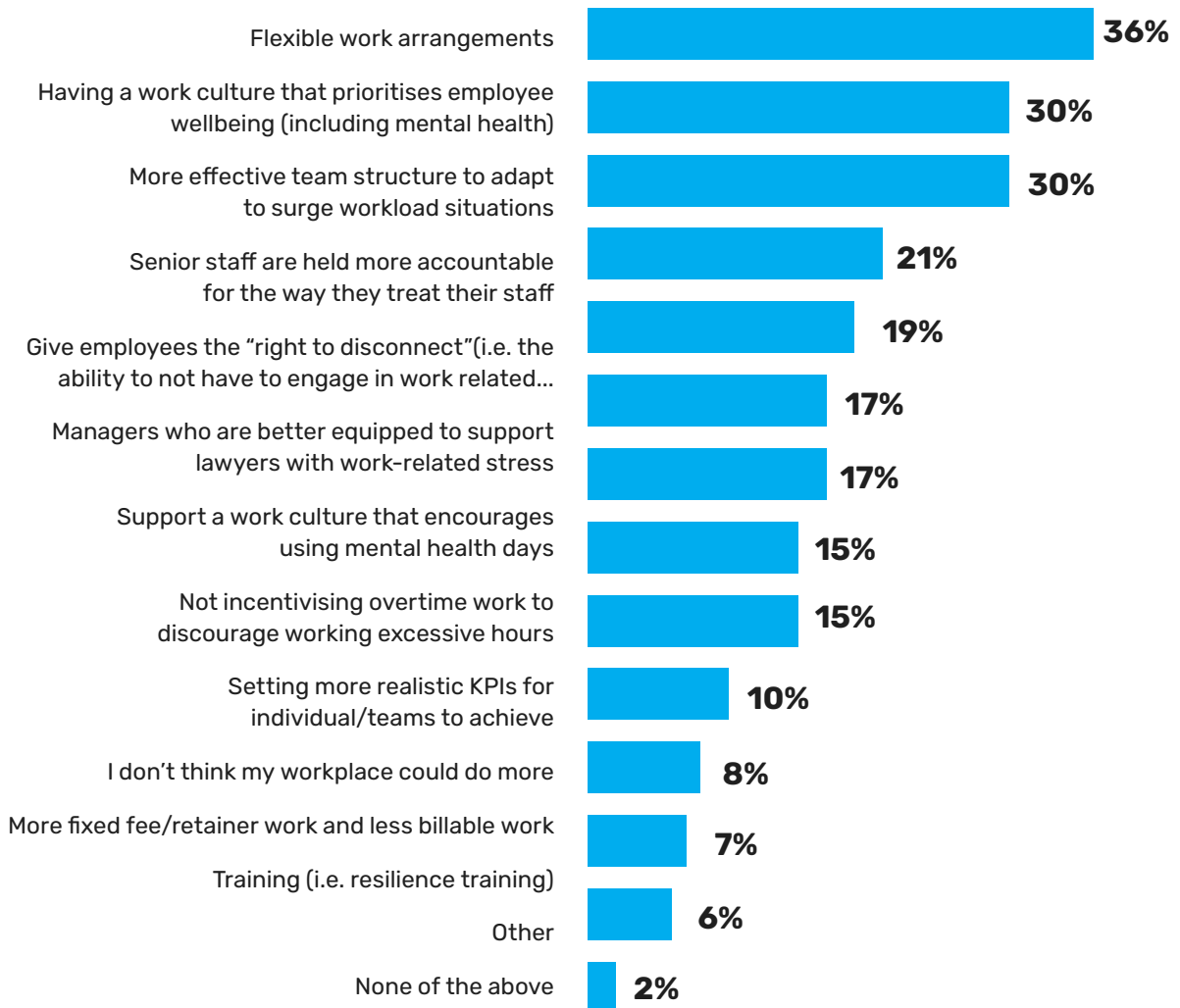
- Flexible work options
- A culture that prioritises well-being
- Improved team structures to manage workload surges
- Senior staff being more accountable for treatment of employees
- Give employees the 'right to disconnect' which will become a legal requirement for all employers from 26 August 2025.

Despite these challenges, only one third of lawyers have taken leave specifically for mental health, reflecting a continued stigma around the issue.

Burnout at work: a look at lawyer experiences



Preventing burnout: the strategies that matter most



5. IN THE PAST YEAR, 31% OF LAWYERS EXPERIENCED OR WITNESSED UNLAWFUL WORKPLACE BULLYING

Most lawyers reported that they have not faced or observed workplace bullying, harassment or discrimination.

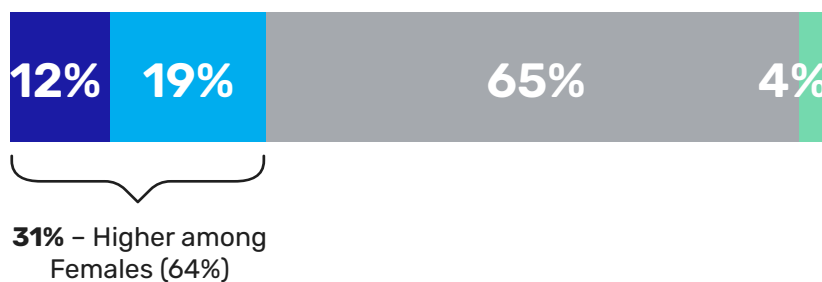
Still, these issues persist – with nearly 31% experiencing or witnessing bullying in the past year. Women feel this impact more acutely, with 64% of female respondents saying they had experienced or witnessed bullying in the past year.

Gender and age biases are also prominent, with over a quarter (28%) of lawyers experiencing these forms of discrimination firsthand in the workplace.

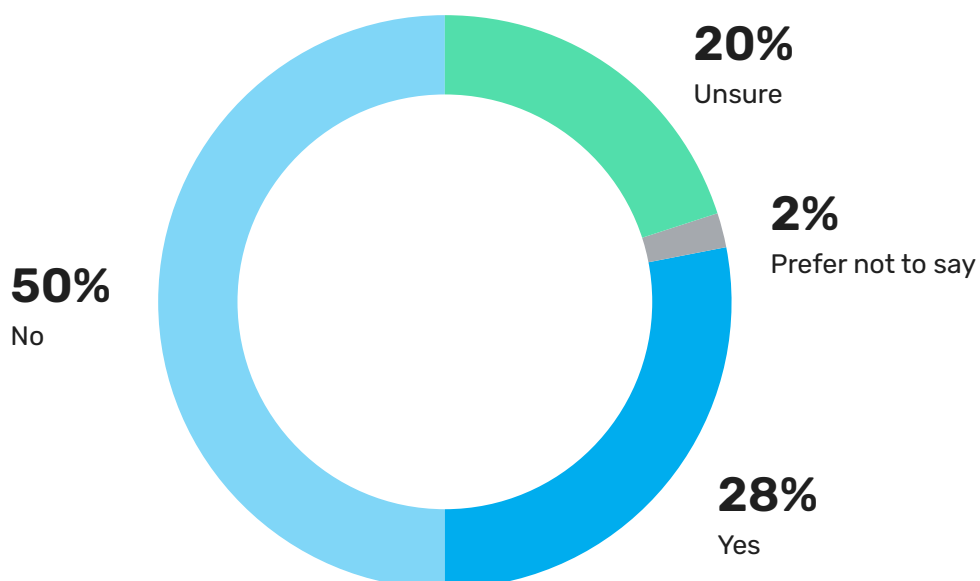
On a positive note, respondents praised large law firms, government bodies and corporate organisations for effective, accessible systems to address allegations and support employee well-being.

Incidents of bullying in the workplace

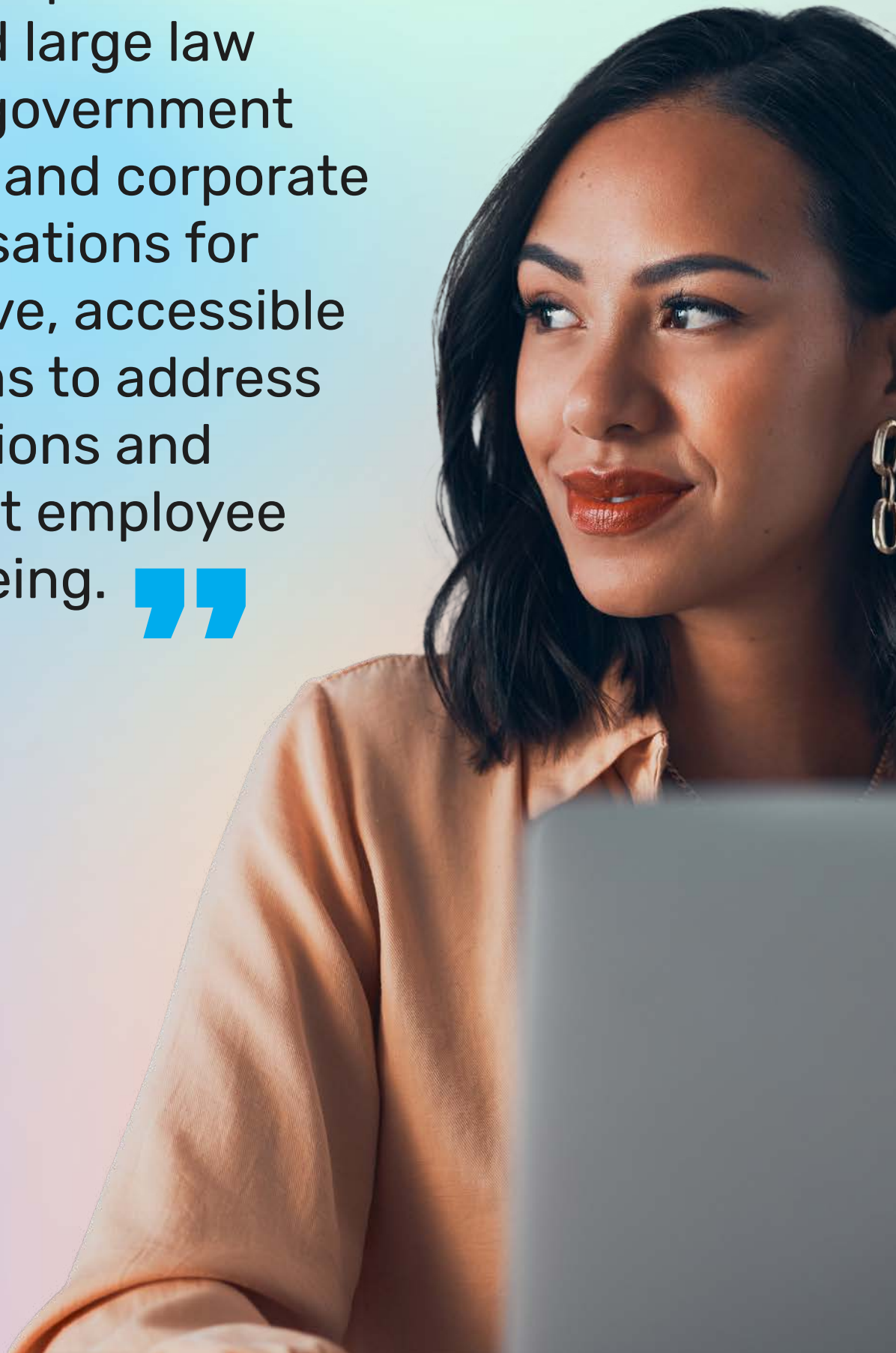
■ Yes, myself
 ■ Yes, someone else
 ■ Haven't experienced or witnessed
 ■ Prefer not to say



Incidents of bias in the workplace



“ On a positive note, respondents praised large law firms, government bodies and corporate organisations for effective, accessible systems to address allegations and support employee well-being. ”





04 NEXT STEPS

For leaders

With lawyers facing tough workplace challenges, now is the time to assess where your organisation stands in supporting staff satisfaction and well-being.

Are your current practices meeting the needs of today's legal professionals? And how does your workplace culture measure up when it comes to retention and fostering satisfaction?

Here's what you can do next.

- 01 Boost flexible work options:** Go for hybrid models that let your team balance remote and in-office work to match what they value most.
- 02 Make staff well-being a priority:** Set clear policies for mental health leave, champion work-life balance – and actively reduce the stigma around wellbeing.
- 03 Educate on the right to disconnect:** Browse the College of Law website for the latest news and articles to help your staff understand their rights and how to focus on their well-being.
- 04 Build a supportive culture:** Eliminate toxicity by strengthening the leadership at your firm. And reinforce anti-bullying policies to create a healthier environment.
- 05 Champion inclusivity:** Equip your firm, especially if it's a smaller one, with solid frameworks to improve diversity and keep bias out of the workplace.

For individuals

Empower yourself with these insights to craft a work-life that fits your needs. Make choices that prioritise your satisfaction, growth and balance in the legal profession.

Here are some tips to get you started:

- 01 Protect your well-being:** Set work boundaries that help you stay balanced and avoid burnout.
- 02 Go for flexibility:** If hybrid or remote work matters to you, have the conversation with your employer to find a setup that works.
- 03 Invest in your growth:** Dive into professional development that gets you excited – whether it's CPD courses or new certifications.
- 04 Build your network:** Connect with mentors, colleagues and peers who share your values and can support you.
- 05 Be a culture champion:** Lead by example with respect and inclusivity in every interaction, making the workplace better for everyone.

Want to know more?

- Download the full Law Forward 2024 Legal Industry Satisfaction Survey
- Browse the College of Law's postgraduate courses



WHERE'S NEXT?

The College of Law is the school of professional practice for lawyers in Australia and New Zealand.

Our mission is to deliver innovative, practice-focused and flexible education and training to enhance the careers of professionals in the legal services industry.

With over 400 staff across Australia and New Zealand – most of whom are practising lawyers – we work from the profession, for the profession. And we've been doing it for 50 years.

To find out more about our courses:



Practical Legal Training call +61 2 9965 7078 or 1300 856 111

Postgraduate, CPD and Short courses call +61 2 9965 7111



Email enrolments@collaw.edu.au