

2024 Attorney Well-Being Report:

The Divide Between Health & the Legal Industry



Introduction

by Patrick Krill

Awareness of, and frustration with, the mental health and well-being risks in the legal profession have never been higher, yet the systemic and organizational changes needed to mitigate those risks are often elusive and slow to manifest. That obvious disconnect, which is easily observable at the profession-wide level, is also mirrored in the lives of individual lawyers. Despite reporting that they place a high value on personal well-being in their own lives and the profession as whole, many lawyers are nonetheless experiencing numerous health and well-being struggles coupled with an inability or reluctance to avail themselves of resources that may be helpful while also adopting unhealthy coping mechanisms.

These dynamics pose a seemingly difficult "chicken or egg" question: Does the profession need to somehow change to allow people to experience greater health and well-being, or do enough individuals within the profession need to change their own behaviors such that the norms, expectations, and demands of the profession are ultimately modified as a result? Paradoxically, it is somehow both, but until we as individuals are more determined and willing to bridge the gap between what we say we want for ourselves and our profession, and the actions we take in service of those stated priorities, many aspects of the status quo are likely to persist.

At the same time, as evidenced by the significant percentage of lawyers who say they sometimes or often encounter legal professionals whose substance use or mental health issues may interfere with their work responsibilities, the institutional stakeholders of the profession clearly have more work to do. And given how critical the mental and physical well-being of attorneys and legal professionals is to the delivery of effective client service and to the productivity and profitability of legal employers, there is altogether no shortage of compelling reasons for us all to do better. And based on how important we say well-being is to us, we should.

Thank you for reading.

Table of Contents

Section 1

The State of Well-Being in Law	2
--------------------------------------	---

Section 2

Mental Health Treatment, Alcohol Usage & Coping Mechanisms	6
---	---

Section 3

Impact of Well-Being on the Legal Industry & Available Resources	10
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Bloomberg Law Resources	14
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Appendix

Demographics of Survey Respondents	15
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About the Authors	18
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Section 1

The State of Well-Being in Law

Attorneys say that well-being is important to them and to the legal industry, but the survey responses also indicate that attorneys are struggling with their well-being and mental health.

How Important is Well-Being?

Bloomberg Law asked attorneys how important well-being is to their own practice of law and to the legal profession. On a ten-point scale, attorneys rated the importance of well-being to their own careers at 8.7, and the importance of well-being to the legal profession as a whole at 7.7. This variation is magnified when we break down the percentages of attorneys who rated the importance of well-being an eight or higher: 85% of attorneys ranked well-being an eight or higher as it relates to their own legal practice, while 67% said the same as it relates to the entire legal profession.

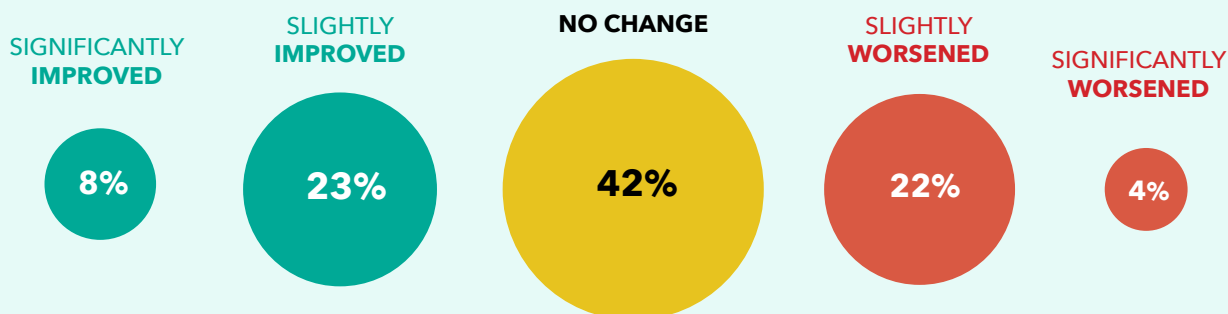
How Are Attorneys Feeling?

When asked about their overall well-being, attorneys seem to be doing just ok. On average, attorneys gave their well-being a 6.5 on a 10-point scale. The average for younger attorneys (ages 25-34) hovers around 5.6, and positive well-being seems to increase with age: attorneys ages 35-44 averaged a response of 6.1, attorneys ages 45- 54 averaged a response of 6.4, attorneys ages 55-64 averaged a response of 6.8, and attorneys older than 65 averaged a response of 7.8.

Well-Being Since the Start of 2024

In the Well-Being Survey, we asked attorneys how their overall well-being has changed since the beginning of 2024. 4 in 10 respondents indicated that their well-being stayed about the same, while more respondents indicated that their well-being at least slightly improved (31%) than those who said it had at least slightly worsened (26%). Although it is positive that more attorneys indicated improvement, the fact that 1 out of every 4 attorneys said their well-being has declined this year is troubling.

Attorney Well-Being Since the Start of 2024



Source: 2024 Attorney Well-Being Survey

Note: 1% selected "Don't Know/Not Sure"

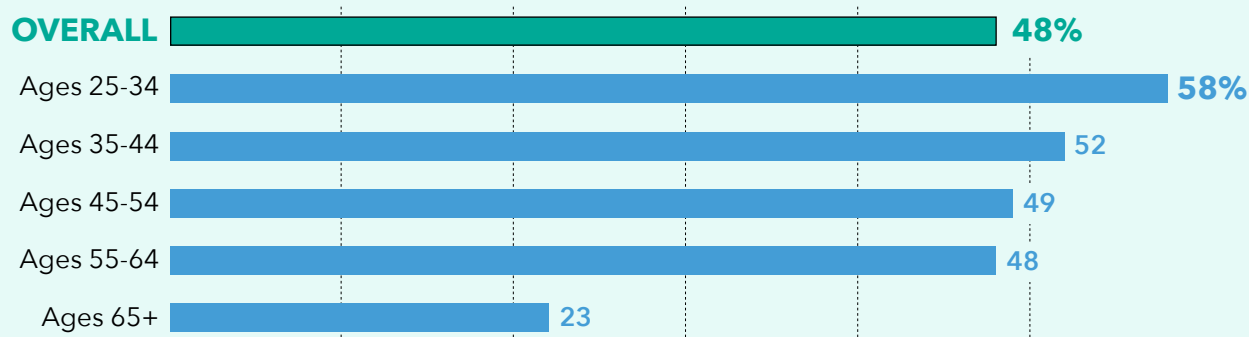
When broken down by gender, the data indicate that larger percentages of female attorneys are struggling. 30% of female respondents reported that their well-being worsened, compared to 21% of male respondents. This is consistent with the [results](#) from prior Bloomberg Law Workload & Hours surveys—female attorneys give lower well-being ratings and report higher rates of burnout than male attorneys do.

A Problem With Burnout

Attorneys felt burned out almost half of the time at work in the second half of 2023. And with the average number of hours worked every week hovering just around 50 during this period, it comes as no surprise.

Attorneys Feel Burned Out Almost Half the Time

In Q3 and Q4 of 2023, what percentage of the time did you feel burned out?



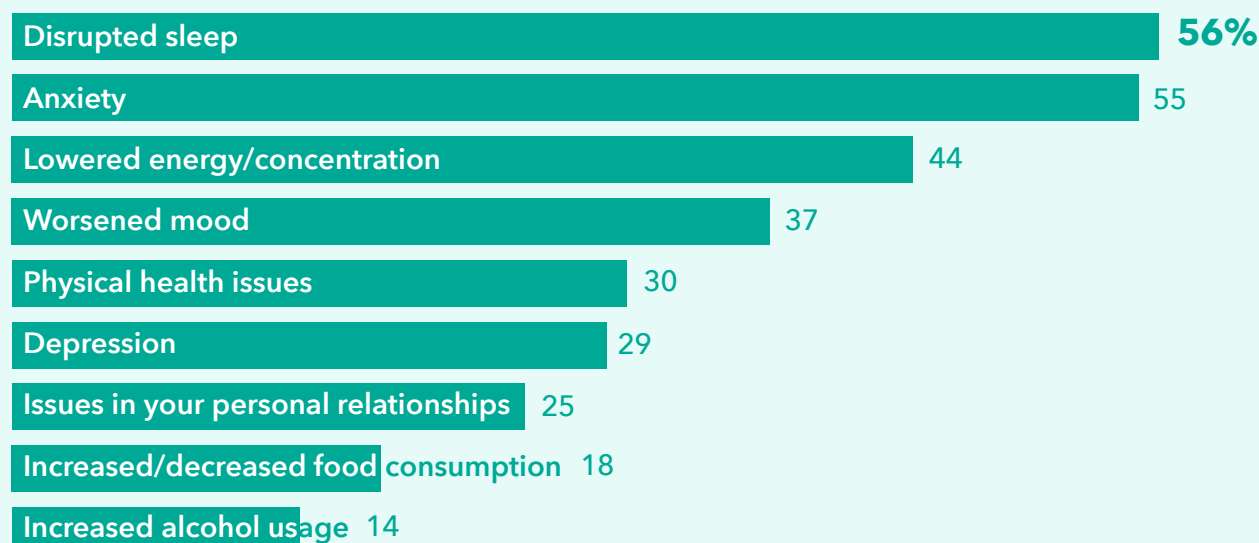
Source: Bloomberg Law Workload & Hours Survey (Q3-Q4)

It's also no surprise, given the results of past surveys, that female attorneys said they experienced more burnout in their jobs (53% of the time) than male attorneys reported (41%). The survey results also showed that those respondents who have children under the age of 18 in the home experienced more burnout (50%) than those who do not (46%).

Burnout rates had a direct connection to attorneys' well-being worsening: attorneys who said their well-being "significantly worsened" in the second half of 2023 reported being burned out an average of 77% of the time.

Perhaps one of the reasons attorneys are feeling burned out is, despite saying that they took an average of nine days off during the second half of 2023, over [three-quarters](#) of the respondents said that they worked on about half (or more) of their days off. Though, on a positive note, respondents also report spending, on average, 6.9 hours per week on self-care, a number which has [continued to increase](#) in the past two years—though self-care hours for female attorneys (6.4) still lag behind the hours for male attorneys (7.7).

Which of These Have You Experienced This Year?



Source: 2024 Attorney Well-Being Survey

Common Mental & Physical Health Experiences

In order to get a clearer picture of the well-being concerns attorneys are grappling with today, we asked them in the Well-Being Survey simply what they have experienced since the beginning of 2024 and presented a series of possible mental and physical health issues.

We found that attorneys are experiencing disrupted sleep and anxiety at majority levels, which can lead to a slew of mental and physical health issues and prevent them from performing at the levels desired by their firms and clients.

Among all respondents who feel they have experienced anxiety and/or depression, 4 in 10 have been medically diagnosed with one or both of those conditions. Notably, that average drops to 3 in 10 among partners, but increases to 6 in 10 among mid-level associates.

What Well-Being Challenges Are Attorneys Dealing With?

After asking attorneys what issues they have experienced, we then asked attorneys what other well-being challenges they faced since the beginning of 2024. Respondents could select all that applied to them.

From trouble focusing, to imposter syndrome, to feelings of loneliness and isolation, most attorneys expressed dealing with at least one such issue this year. In fact, only 17% of respondents said that they had not faced any of the challenges listed below.

The challenges most frequently selected by attorneys were “trouble focusing on work tasks” and an “inability to disconnect from work”—almost half of the respondents said these were issues.

These responses make sense given the percentage of attorneys who said they grapple with poor sleep and anxiety.

Whether attorneys have a diagnosable mental health condition or not, the data indicate that a significant portion of the legal profession is impaired in some way. Next, we examine how individual attorneys are addressing (or not addressing) these challenges.

Challenges in 2024

Trouble focusing on work tasks	48%
Inability to "disconnect" from work	45
Sadness/anxiety/fear about world events	38
Feelings of inadequacy/Imposter syndrome	35
Unmanageable workload	32
Feeling a lack of meaning or purpose in life	31
Loneliness or isolation	26

Source: 2024 Attorney Well-Being Survey

Section 2

Mental Health Treatment, Alcohol Usage, & Coping Mechanisms

How are attorneys addressing their well-being and mental health challenges? Another disconnect we see in the well-being data is that, despite attorneys finding well-being important, they are not always seeking help even when they recognize that they need it. What's more, though many attorneys report healthy coping mechanisms (such as exercise and meditation), others are turning to alcohol.

What Do You Do to Support Your Well-Being?



Source: 2024 Attorney Well-Being Survey

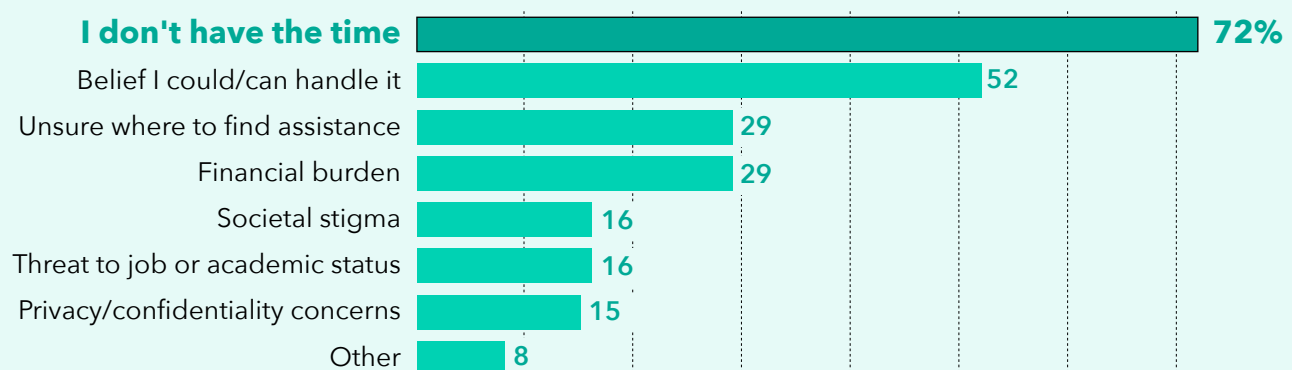
Attorneys responding to the Well-Being Survey provided insight into what attorneys use and do to support their mental health and well-being. We provided attorneys with a range of options from exercise and hobbies to support groups and medication. The largest percentage of attorneys (71%) said they engage in hobbies like hiking, attending sporting events, reading, gaming, and watching tv. A majority of respondents also said they manage their wellness though regular exercise and spending time with family.

More prescriptive activities, such as therapy/counseling and prescription medication, were selected by less than a third of participants. Interestingly, associate attorneys were more likely to pick these options—49% said they go to therapy/counseling and 42% utilize prescription medication. If we look only at the data on attorneys who are 25-34, the percentages are even higher—51% said they use therapy/counseling and 49% use prescription medication.

43% of respondents have delayed seeking treatment for their mental health.

The stigma hasn't disappeared, but with the advent of virtual therapy and more lawyers engaging in self-care, there's been a marked shift in the way the legal profession discusses and prioritizes mental health, and younger attorneys are more willing to seek help.

Why Have You Delayed / Why Are You Delaying Seeking Treatment for Mental Health?



Source: 2024 Attorney Well-Being Survey

Maintaining Mental Health

We also asked the additional question on the Well-Being Survey of whether, since the beginning of 2024, respondents had ever waited or not sought treatment from a mental health professional.

While about 15% of respondents said they sought treatment for mental health ASAP, about another 17% said they believed they would benefit from treatment but still have not sought it out. Additionally, over a quarter of respondents said they have delayed seeking treatment, either this year or at some point prior, but eventually sought treatment. In total, over 40% of respondents did not seek or delayed seeking treatment at some point, despite an acknowledgement that they'd benefit from doing so.

Why did these attorneys not seek or delay seeking treatment for mental health conditions? The number one reason attorneys gave was time. More than 70% said that they don't have the time to seek treatment from a mental health professional. After "Time," the most selected reason was attorneys' belief that they can handle their own mental health.

It is encouraging that less than 20% of attorneys who delayed or didn't seek treatment said it was due to stigma or fear of what it will do them professionally/academically. But, these responses highlight the well-being disconnect in law: attorneys value well-being, but then those who acknowledge needing mental health treatment don't get it or delay it because they don't have the time or they believe they can work through things on their own.

Alcohol Consumption

As documented extensively in the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being's [2017 report](#) and multiple other studies, mental health issues for attorneys are often exacerbated by alcohol consumption. Unfortunately, as documented in the [2021 Stress, Drink, Leave study](#) sponsored by the DC Bar and the California Lawyers Association, work-related stress often coincides with lawyers drinking more alcohol.

87% of attorneys from our Well-Being Survey are current drinkers, or at least have consumed alcohol since the beginning of 2024. This is significantly higher than reports of consumption among the general United States population—a [2019 study](#) from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found that 70% of adults had consumed alcohol in the last year.

On days that you drink alcohol, how many drinks do you typically have?

1 or 2	76%
3 or 4	20
5 or 6	3
7, 8, or 9	1
10 or more	<1

Source: 2024 Attorney Well-Being Survey

How Much Are Attorneys Drinking?

Of those attorneys who have consumed alcohol since the beginning of 2024, 18% said they drink four or more times a week and 25% drink two to three times a week. In terms of how much attorneys consume when they do drink alcohol, most (76%) reported having one or two drinks, but 25% reported drinking above the limits for moderate alcohol use which are defined as 2 drinks or less in a day for men and 1 drink or less in a day for women. This included 20% of respondents who reported consuming three or four drinks and 5% who reported consuming more than five drinks.

Of those respondents who said they drink at least two times a week, 34% consumed at least three drinks on these occasions.

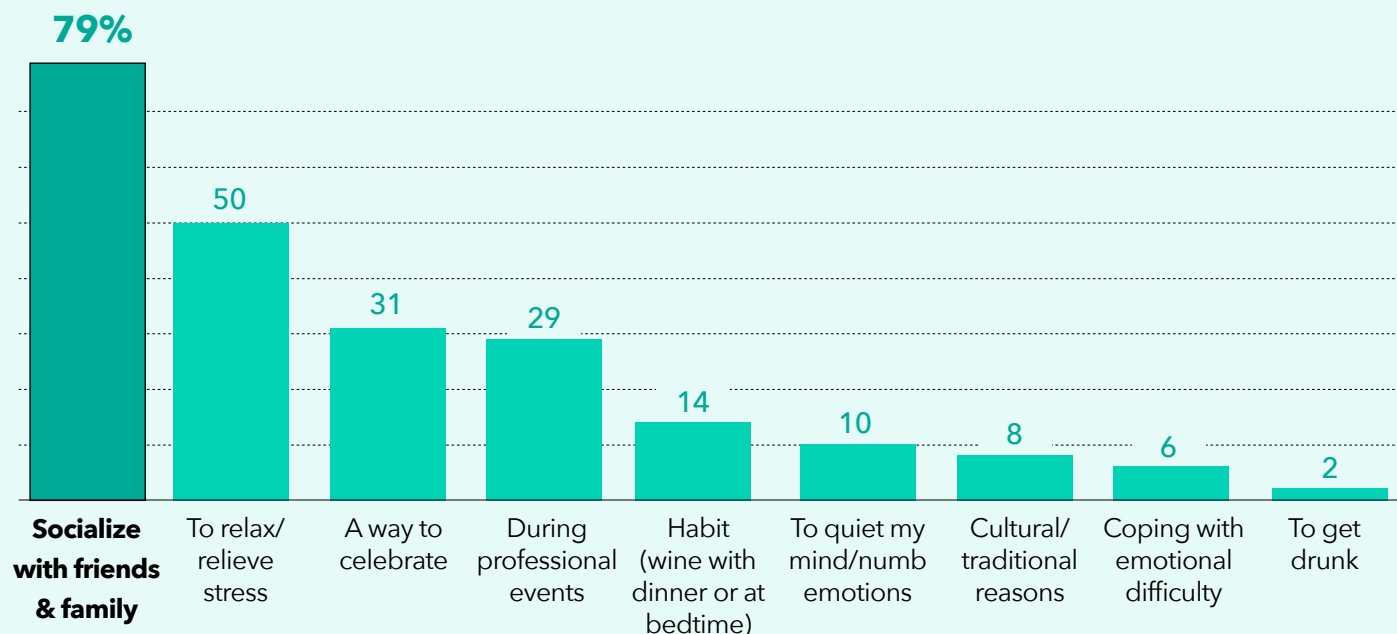
The Well-Being Survey did not officially screen respondents for high-risk drinking patterns or alcohol use disorder and more information would be needed to do so. However, as the Stress, Drink, Leave study and numerous other surveys have found, high-risk drinking is prevalent among lawyers and is frequently associated with high stress and mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

Why Do Attorneys Drink?

Among the respondents who consume alcohol, nearly 80% drink to socialize with friends and family. The majority of respondents also report drinking for coping motives—including 50% who drink to relax and relieve stress, 10% who drink to numb their emotions/quiet their minds, and 6% who drink to cope with emotional difficulties.

The Top Reasons Attorneys Are Drinking

We asked attorneys to select the top three reasons for their alcohol consumption.*



Source: 2024 Attorney Well-Being Survey

Perhaps saying no to booze can prove difficult in the legal industry, as most attorneys (77%) indicate that either all or most professional events they attended since the beginning of 2024 (including conferences, work dinners, and happy hours) served alcohol. Notably, of the attorneys who drank this year, 29% said that drinking at professional events was one of their top three reasons for consuming alcohol.

Reducing the prevalence of alcohol at professional events is one way that organizations could improve employee well-being. The Stress, Drink, Leave study found that workplace permissiveness towards alcohol was a primary predictor of risky drinking among men and women. Deemphasizing alcohol not only would be beneficial for any attorney dealing with risky drinking behaviors, it also would aid inclusivity and belonging for the 11% of our respondents who do not drink. The American Bar Association (ABA) also encourages reducing the expectation of alcohol at events in its [Well-Being Pledge](#) and 7-Point Framework for Well-Being.

In the next section, we explore the effect of well-being challenges on the legal profession and what the industry is doing to address these challenges.

**Note: Six percent chose "Other," which included answers like enjoying the taste, being a wine or beer aficionado, pain management, and "I'm over 21 and [I] ... felt like it."*

Section 3

Impact of Well-Being on the Legal Industry & Available Resources

Respondents to the Workload & Hours Survey and the Well-Being Survey weighed in on how well-being, mental health, and addiction issues impact their organizations and the profession. Attorneys also shared information on resources currently provided by their organizations to address well-being issues, and their utilization of lawyer assistance programs.

Impaired Attorneys

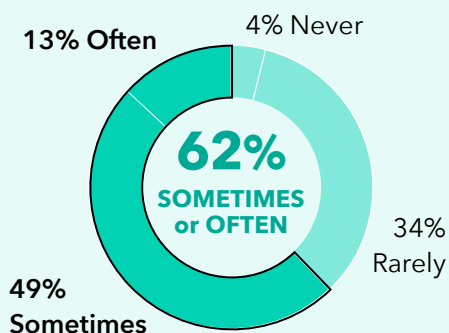
Perhaps the most troubling data from the Well-Being Survey was how often attorneys encountered legal professionals with well-being, substance abuse, and/or mental health issues that potentially interfered with their professional responsibilities. More than 6 in 10 attorneys said at least sometimes, in their judgment, they have encountered such impaired professionals.

This data raises significant ethics issues and creates risks for both the impaired attorney and their employer. In turn, any resulting disciplinary measures or malpractice claims may further compound an attorney's well-being challenges. Furthermore, supervisory or managerial attorneys, and sometimes even colleagues, may be responsible for such professional conduct violations.

Well-Being and Retention

Also troubling, though not surprising, is that attorneys who are experiencing high degrees of burnout and well-being issues might be leaving their jobs—or even the legal industry altogether.

How often do you encounter legal professionals whose well-being, substance abuse, and/or mental health issues may interfere with their work responsibilities?



Source: 2024 Attorney Well-Being Survey

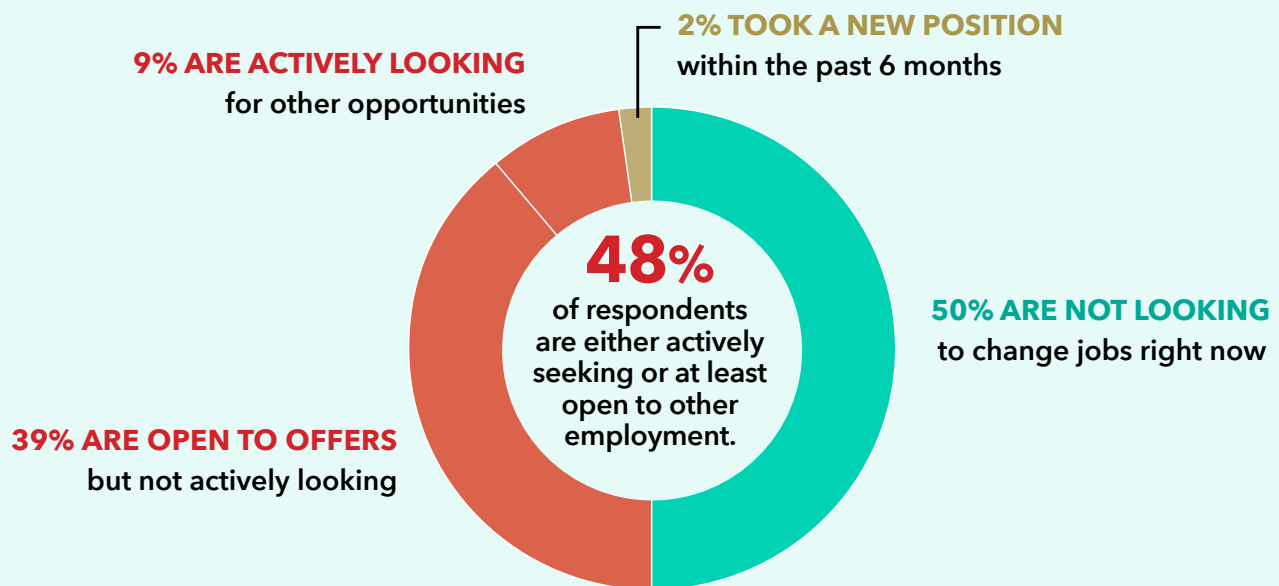
Top Reasons Lawyers Might Leave Their Jobs

Reduced work stress	57%
Better salary/compensation	56
Better work/life balance	54
Better work environment	42
Finding purpose in my work	38
More opportunities for advancement	38
More flexibility/options to work remotely	28
Change in professional direction	26

Source: Bloomberg Law Workload & Hours Survey (Q3-Q4)

At the end of 2023, almost half (48%) of attorneys said they were actively seeking other opportunities or are at least open to other offers. The number one reason for leaving their jobs? Reduced work stress.

Current Job Status: Are You Looking for New Employment?



Source: Bloomberg Law
2023 Workload & Hours Survey (Q3-Q4)

Using Industry Resources

We asked attorneys what well-being benefits their organizations offered. Respondents reported receiving everything from company-sponsored mindfulness apps to childcare, but two areas stood out: mental health coverage and education or training on mental health and well-being. 71% of respondents said their organizations offer mental health coverage, which represented a continuation of the increase Bloomberg Law [reported on](#) last year.

Self-Care Options Available Through Your Job

Which of these services does your organization offer? And which ones do you take advantage of?	Offered & Used	Offered, Not Used	Not Offered (Or Unsure)
Office pantry service	25	11	64%
Education or training on mental health, well-being, etc.	17	45%	38
Mental health coverage	13	58%	29
Wellness days off (beyond sick leave)	11	17	72%
Gym memberships	11	28	61%
Mindfulness and meditation apps	8	31	61%
Staff dedicated to employee well-being (e.g., team or coordinator)	4	24	72%
Childcare benefits	4	35	61%
Mental health first-aid or psychological safety training	3	32	65%
Onsite spa service	1	4	95%

Source: Bloomberg Law 2023 Workload & Hours Survey (Q3-Q4)

62% of attorneys reported that their organization offers well-being education, while the remaining 38% said that such training either isn't available or that they aren't sure whether it's offered or not. It is troubling that, of the attorneys who said their company offered education on well-being, three-fourths of these respondents said they didn't attend.

Separately, we asked attorneys on the Well-Being Survey whether they had attended any well-being training (offered by any source), and though the majority had, 33% said they have not. As well-being is arguably [germane](#) to everyone's legal practice, and as the respondents themselves find well-being important, this is more evidence of the divide between what attorneys value and how they actually approach well-being.

Lawyer Assistance Programs

Last, the Well-Being Survey asked attorneys whether they were familiar with their jurisdiction's lawyer assistance program. Lawyer assistance programs – also known as LAPs – are organizations that promote well-being for law students, lawyers, judges and other legal professionals. All states and many local jurisdictions have their own LAPs.

Even though most attorneys (73%) knew about their local LAP, over a quarter of respondents (27%) did not. Of those who knew about their LAP, only 1 in 10 had utilized their resources (including trainings) at some time. LAPs offer a host of resources to impaired professionals and their families, including counseling and peer contacts, and more education on LAPs from organizations and [law schools](#) should be encouraged.

For more well-being resources and guidance on building well-being programs, see Bloomberg Law's [In Focus: Legal Professional Well-Being](#) page and [Practical Guidance: Well-Being Programs & Organizational Health](#) page.

Bloomberg Law Resources

Bloomberg Law provides well-being resources on its recently refreshed [In Focus: Legal Professional Well-Being](#) page and its new [Well-Being Programs & Organizational Health Practical Guidance](#) page.

On the refreshed In Focus: Legal Professional Well-Being page, legal professionals will find analysis pieces and news articles on well-being, information on well-being CLE requirements and state lawyer assistance programs, as well as links to outside resources offered by the [American Bar Association](#) and the [Institute for Well-Being in Law](#).

On the new Well-Being Programs & Organizational Health Practical Guidance page, legal professionals, well-being professionals, and organizations seeking to build or improve well-being programs will find overviews, sample policies, checklists, and professional perspectives on topics such as:

- Organizational health
- Outside counsel well-being guidelines
- Building well-being programs at law firms
- Surveys for assessing employees' well-being needs and interests
- Fostering inclusive work environments
- Handling substance abuse & treatment
- Alternative work events without alcohol
- Leave, accommodation, and discrimination
- Well-being and ethics



Appendix

Demographics of Survey Respondents

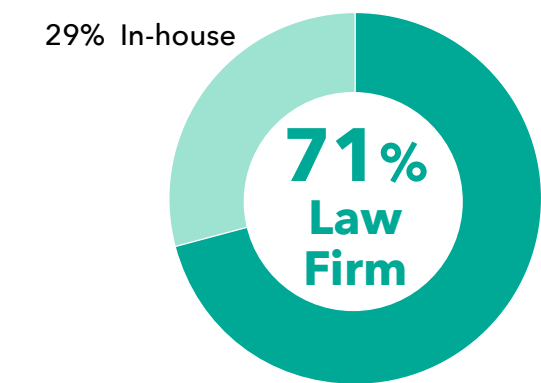


Demographics for Workload & Hours Survey (2023 Q3-Q4)

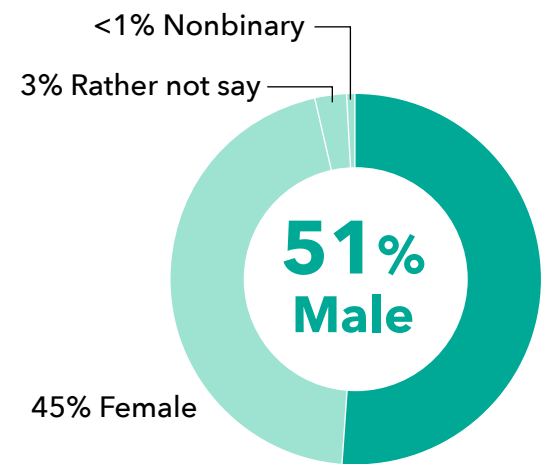
Nearly 1,400 respondents were asked about their experiences in the second half of 2023. 98% of respondents are practicing attorneys, but to be more inclusive of the entire legal industry, 2% represent professors and non-practicing attorneys in alternative legal roles (such as paralegals and legal operations professionals who hold a JD). Data were collected from Feb. 12th to March 4th of 2024.

Approximately 7 in 10 represent attorneys at firms, while about 3 in 10 represent attorneys in in-house roles (where about 80% work in corporations, while the other 20% work in other in-house roles, such as labor unions, non-profits, professional services organizations, and academic institutions). Respondents spent an average of just over 22 years in the legal industry.

WORK ORGANIZATION



GENDER



AGE

<35 years old	14
35-44 years	22
45-54 years	23%
55-64 years	23%
65+ years	16
Rather not say	2

PROFESSIONAL TITLE

Partner	40%
Counsel	33
Associate	22
Staff Attorney	3
Other	2

RACE/ETHNICITY

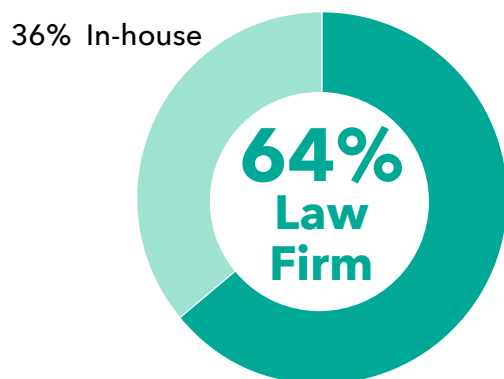
White	78.1%
Other/Rather not say	7.5
Asian	4.0
Multi-racial	5.1
Black or African American	2.6
Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish	2.5
Middle Eastern or North African	0.2
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1

Demographics for Attorney Well-Being Survey

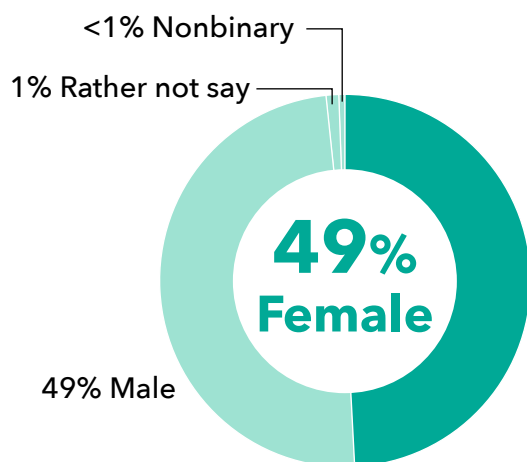
Over 600 respondents were asked about their work/life experiences. 97% of respondents are practicing attorneys, but to be more inclusive of the entire legal industry, 3% represent professors and non-practicing attorneys in alternative legal roles (such as paralegals and legal operations professionals who hold a JD). Data were collected from May 13th to May 27th of 2024.

Approximately two-thirds represent attorneys at firms, while about a third represent attorneys in in-house roles (where about 70% work in corporations, while the other 30% work in other in-house roles, such as labor unions, non-profits, professional services organizations, and academic institutions).

WORK ORGANIZATION



GENDER



AGE

<35 years old	14
35-44 years	22
45-54 years	25%
55-64 years	21
65+ years	17
Rather not say	1

PROFESSIONAL TITLE

Partner	36%
Counsel	34
Associate	19
Staff Attorney	7
Other	4

RACE/ETHNICITY

White	77.6%
Multi-racial	6.4
Other/Rather not say	5.2
Asian	4.0
Black or African American	3.8
Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish	2.5
Middle Eastern or North African	0.5
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0

About the Authors

Patrick Krill

Patrick Krill is a lawyer, licensed and board-certified alcohol and drug counselor, researcher and advocate who has spearheaded numerous groundbreaking efforts to improve mental health in the legal profession.

In 2016, Patrick founded [Krill Strategies](#), a behavioral health consulting firm exclusively for the legal profession. He is a trusted advisor and educator to large legal employers throughout North America and Europe, including more than half of AmLaw 100 firms. His highly specialized background and unique breadth of knowledge regarding behavioral health and well-being in the legal profession make him a widely sought-after expert and trusted resource for solving one of the legal profession's most challenging problems. He can be reached at Patrick@prkrill.com

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Jessica R. Blaemire is a Senior Legal Analyst with Bloomberg Law focusing on litigation, attorney well-being, and legal ethics. In this role, Jessica has helped develop surveys, written multiple analysis pieces, and developed practical guidance related to well-being.

Prior to joining Bloomberg Law, Jessica was a commercial litigation attorney for over fifteen years. Jessica earned her JD from the University of Virginia School of Law, and her BA in Sociology and American Studies from the College of William and Mary. Jessica is licensed to practice law in D.C. and Virginia.

Andie Hozik

Andie Hozik is a Content Specialist on Bloomberg Law's Litigation team with a focus on labor and employment, state and federal litigation, and lawyer well-being. Prior to Bloomberg Law, she worked for the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, the Missouri Attorney General's Office, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas. She also served as an author and staff member for the UMKC Law Journals.

Andie earned her JD from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law with an emphasis in family law and a BS in Psychology from George Mason University. She is licensed to practice law in the District of Columbia and Missouri.

John Irons

John Irons is the Data Visualization Manager for the Data, Legal Analytics and Business ("DataLAB") team at Bloomberg Law. Since February of 2019 he has been responsible for creating the layouts and graphic elements for survey summary reports like this one, as well as co-writing and editing the text.

Before joining Bloomberg Law, John worked as a graphic artist and data visualization specialist for Congressional Quarterly, CQ-Roll Call, and National Journal. He has a Bachelors Degree in Fine Art from Birmingham-Southern College.

Brittany L. Long

Brittany Long leads the Data & Surveys team at Bloomberg Law. With a focus on initiating conversation in the field of law, her team designs and produces surveys, compares results to existing data, and assesses trends to help Bloomberg Law maintain its status as a thought leader within the legal industry.

Before joining Bloomberg Law Brittany held various roles in data analytics and market research in such fields as government contracting and public health and has over 12 years of experience conducting primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative analysis. Brittany has a BA from the University of Missouri and an MA from Brandeis University.

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