



Lawyer Satisfaction Survey

New Pressures, New Realities

April 2025

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Background

Law360 Pulse's fifth annual Lawyer Satisfaction Survey explores how content lawyers are at their private practice jobs. Lawyers at private firms of all sizes answered questions about their satisfaction with their compensation, work-life balance, opportunities for advancement, and more. The Lawyer Satisfaction Survey is part of a series of surveys that aim to expand the data-driven insights available as part of Law360 Pulse, a news service focused on the business of law.

Methodology

Law360 Pulse conducted the Lawyer Satisfaction Survey from Jan. 15 to Mar. 16, 2025. The survey received 1,184 responses from U.S.-based attorneys, of whom 38% were associates, 15% were nonequity partners, 22% were equity partners, 11% were solo practitioners, and 14% were of counsel or staff attorneys, or held some other role. Among participants, 40% of respondents were women and 56% were men, with 1% identifying as nonbinary or a third gender and 3% preferring not to disclose their gender. The respondent pool was 77% white, 3% Black, 6% Hispanic or Latino, 3% Asian, 3% two or more races, fewer than 1% American Indian or Pacific Islander, and 9% preferring not to disclose their race or ethnicity. Some percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding, while other percentages may exceed 100 because respondents were allowed to select multiple answers. The survey was anonymous and will not connect any individual response with any person.

Introduction

By Xavier Chauvris and Jack Collens

Law360 Pulse

Lawyer satisfaction is at the lowest level since Law360 Pulse started tracking job satisfaction four years ago, though most respondents in the 2025 edition of our annual Lawyer Satisfaction Survey still say they are content with their jobs overall.

Lawyers in 2025 report being less satisfied with their firms' billable hours requirements, opportunities for advancement, and collegiality than at any point in the five-year history of the survey. They also report stagnant satisfaction rates with respect to compensation.

And for the first time since our survey began in 2021, fewer than half of respondents rated their financial stability as excellent.

While two-thirds of respondents say they would choose the law as a career again if given a second chance, this also represents the lowest such result since the survey first ran in 2021. Relatedly, lawyers' intentions to seek a job at another firm were also at the highest level since 2021, with nearly a quarter of respondents saying they were

For the first time, a majority of respondents reported being stressed most or all of the time.

likely or very likely to do so.

Another rising concern is the level of stress lawyers report. For the first time, a majority of respondents reported being stressed most or all of the time. Previously, no more than four in 10 reported such levels of stress.

Fewer respondents than ever reported their work-life balance had improved, with equity partners and lawyers at smaller firms the most likely to report improved or stable levels of work-life balance. This is true despite those same groups reporting higher work hours.

Across all metrics, equity partners report being most content, with lower levels of stress, more vacation time, and higher satisfaction scores. Nonequity partners are least satisfied and among the most stressed.

1. Where Lawyers Want to Work

When asked where they would most like to work, lawyers predictably listed many of the BigLaw firms that have appeared in prior rankings.

In fact, the top four were largely unchanged since last year's report, though Kirkland & Ellis LLP moved up one spot to tie Latham & Watkins LLP for first. Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP and Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP rounded out the top four.

Others in the top ten included Cooley LLP, Jones Day, Covington & Burling LLP, Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP, McDermott Will & Emery LLP, O'Melveny & Myers LLP, and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP.

Most firms that top the list have more than a thousand attorneys in the U.S. Out of the most desirable firms, only Susman Godfrey LLP and Williams & Connolly LLP have significantly fewer attorneys, showing that the size of the firm, and the potential benefits those large firms can provide, appears to make a significant difference to where ambitious lawyers would most like to land.

RANK	FIRM	MENTIONS
1	Kirkland	22
1	Latham	22
3	Gibson Dunn	17
4	Paul Weiss	15
5	Cooley LLP	14
6	Jones Day	13
7	Covington	12
7	Davis Polk	12
7	McDermott	12
7	O'Melveny	12

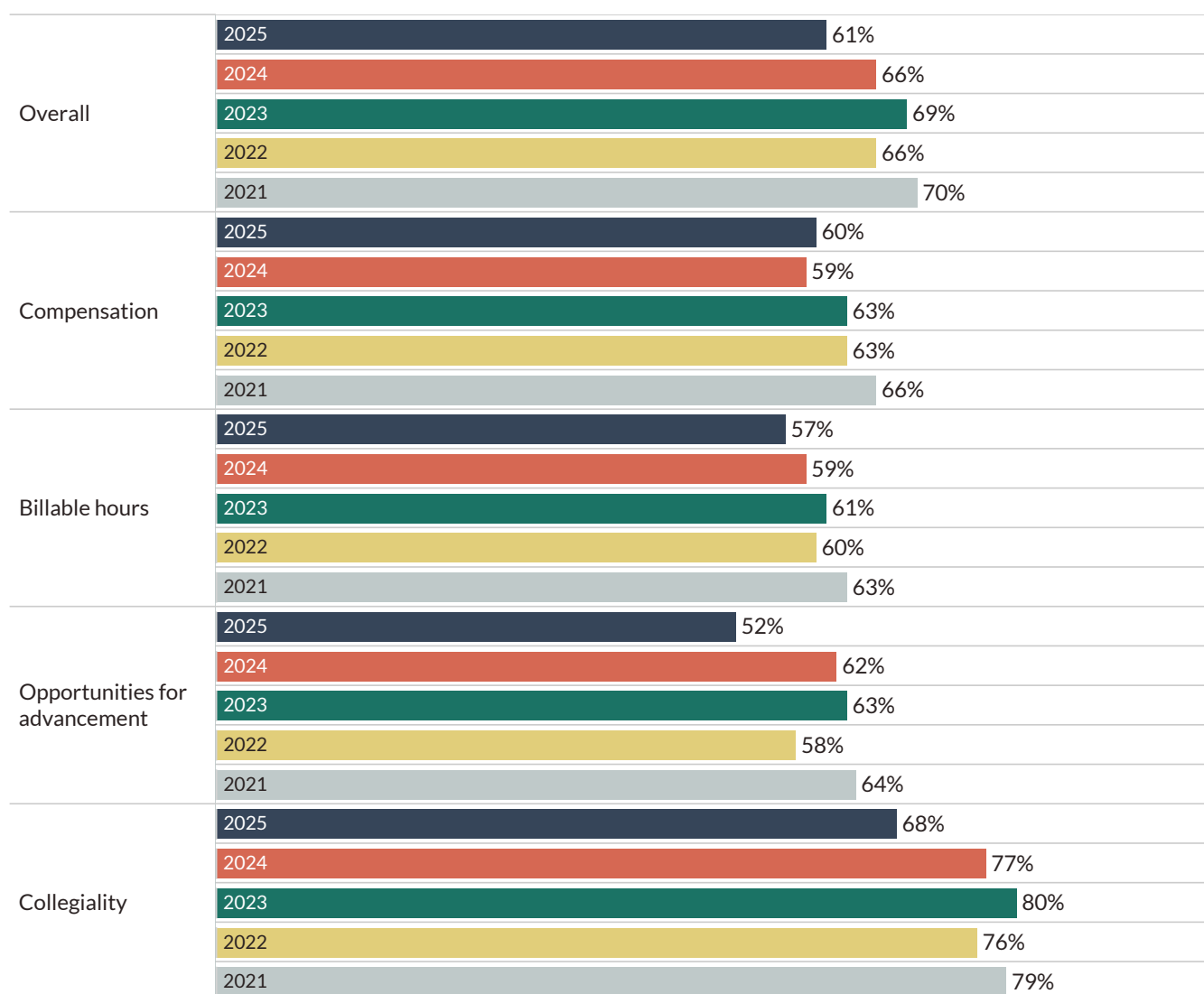
RANK	FIRM	MENTIONS
7	Skadden	12
12	Hogan Lovells	11
13	Morgan Lewis	10
13	Sidley	10
13	Susman Godfrey	10
13	WilmerHale	10
17	Alston & Bird	9
17	Quinn Emanuel	9
17	Ropes & Gray	9
17	Williams & Connolly	9

2. Job Satisfaction

Lawyer satisfaction is at the lowest level since Law360 Pulse started tracking it in 2021, with 61% saying they are satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs overall. The same pattern persists in three other categories. Satisfaction is at its lowest recorded levels with respect to the billable hours requirement — 57% satisfied or very satisfied — opportunities for advancement — 52% — and collegiality and collaboration — 68%. Satisfaction with compensation is marginally up from last year, at 60%.

How satisfied are you with each of the following at your job?

Percentage of respondents who say they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied”



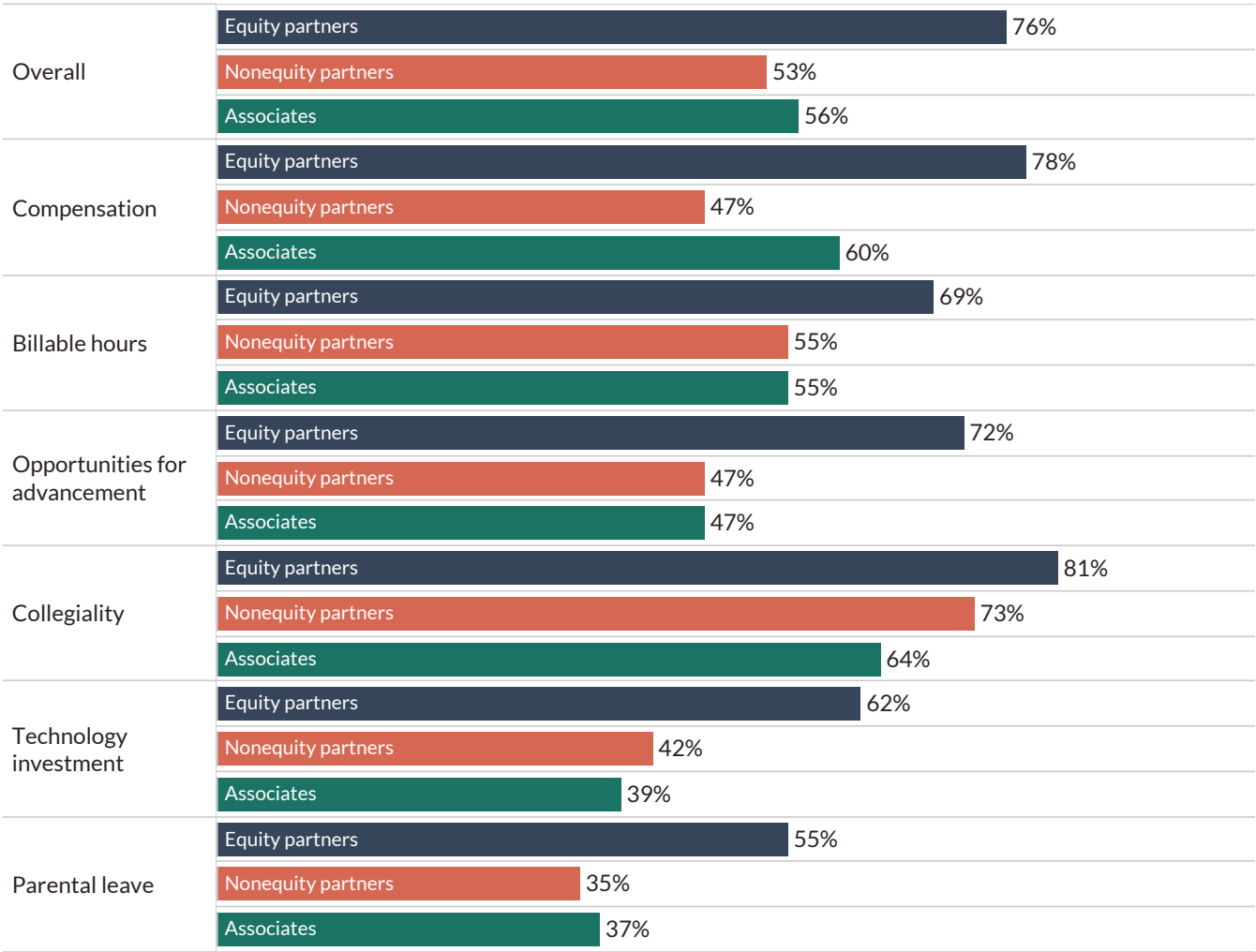
As in every other year of the survey, lawyers expressed the highest levels of satisfaction with their firms’ levels of collegiality and collaboration, though this year’s number — 68% — is the lowest in the five years of the survey, down 9 percentage points from last year and down generally from the mid- to high-70s earlier in the decade.

Contentment with opportunities for advancement was also down substantially year-over-year, to 52% from last year’s 62%, while overall satisfaction dropped 5 percentage points.

Of the three primary job titles in the survey — associates, nonequity partners, and equity partners — nonequity partners reported the lowest overall job satisfaction, with 53% saying they were satisfied or very satisfied, while associates were only slightly more content, at 56%. Equity partners were the most satisfied, with more than three quarters — 76% — expressing the same level of satisfaction.

How satisfied are you with each of the following at your job?

Percentage of respondents who say they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied”



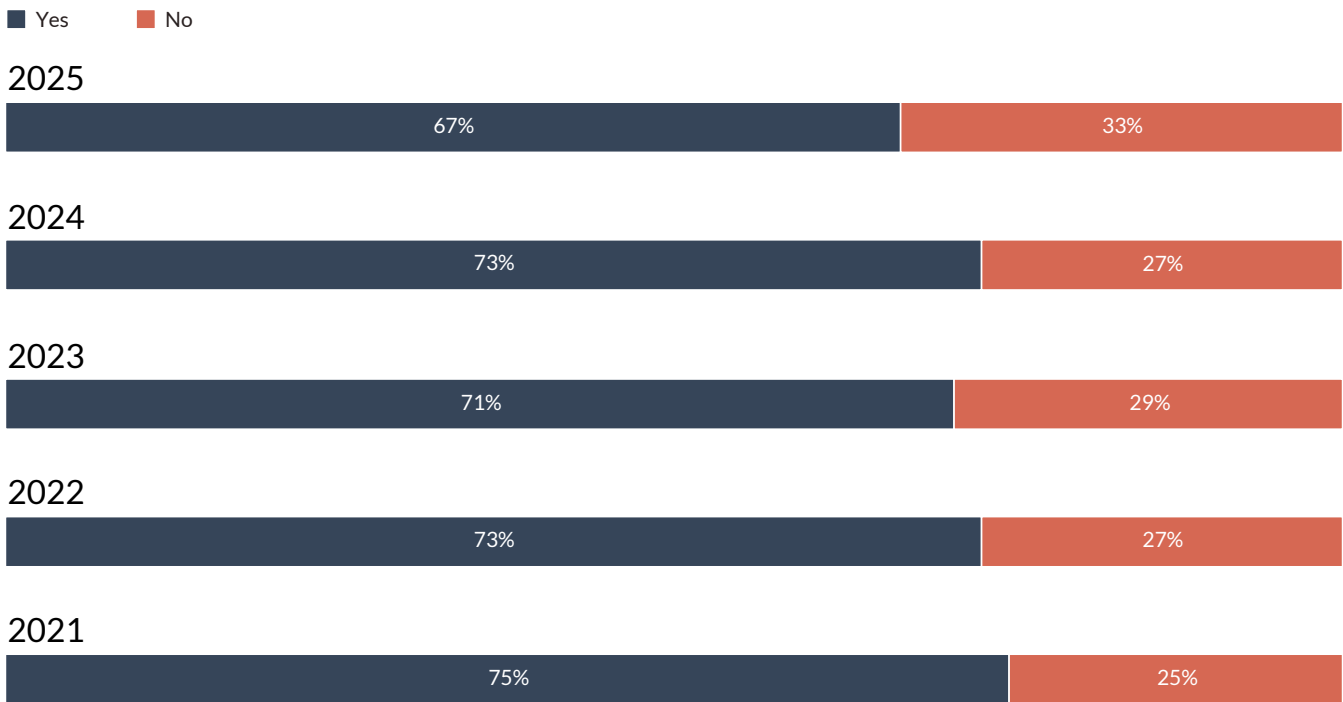
Associates and nonequity partners expressed similar levels of contentment in a number of categories, with 47% of both groups saying they were satisfied or very satisfied with their opportunities for advancement, 55% of both expressing satisfaction with their firms’ billable hours requirements, and about 40% in both groups saying they were satisfied with their firms’ investment in technology, including artificial intelligence.

Both groups expressed the lowest levels of satisfaction with their firms’ parental leave policies. As these were the youngest groups — along with counsel and staff attorneys — they are the most likely to be actively engaged with firm family leave policies.

Equity partners, meanwhile, were much more likely to say they were satisfied or very satisfied in every area surveyed, with their highest satisfaction scores reserved for collegiality and collaboration — 81% — compensation — 78% — and overall — 76%. In fact, while fewer than half of associates and nonequity partners expressed satisfaction with technological investments, parental leave policies, and opportunities for advancement — with a minority of nonequity partners also expressing satisfaction with their compensation — majorities of equity partners were content with each category.

While most categories of job satisfaction varied little by firm size, lawyers at larger firms were considerably more likely than those at smaller firms to be satisfied or very satisfied with their compensation. While 57% and 59% of respondents from lawyers with up to 100 and 101 to 500 lawyers were satisfied or very satisfied with their compensation, 75% and 64% of those at firms with 501 to 1,000 and more than 1,000 lawyers, respectively, said the same.

If you could do it all over, would you still become a lawyer?





The decline in job satisfaction appears to extend to general career satisfaction, as well, with two-thirds of respondents saying they would choose to be a lawyer again if given the opportunity. While this still represents a strong majority who would continue in their chosen career, it is the lowest reported figure since the survey's inception and a 6 percentage point decrease since last year's version.

Looking by job title, nonequity partners were least likely to say they would choose to be a lawyer, but at 61% are still fairly content with their choice of career.

If you could do it all over, would you still become a lawyer?

■ Yes ■ No

Equity partners



Nonequity partners



Associates



Further evidence of declining contentment appears in the responses to the question of how likely the respondent is to look for a job at another firm within the next year. Nearly a quarter – 24% – say they are likely or very likely to do so, up from 18% in 2024. In fact, the figure has risen each year, from 14% in 2021.

How likely are you to look for a job at another firm within the next year?

Very unlikely Unlikely Neither likely nor unlikely Likely Very likely

2025



2024



2023



2022



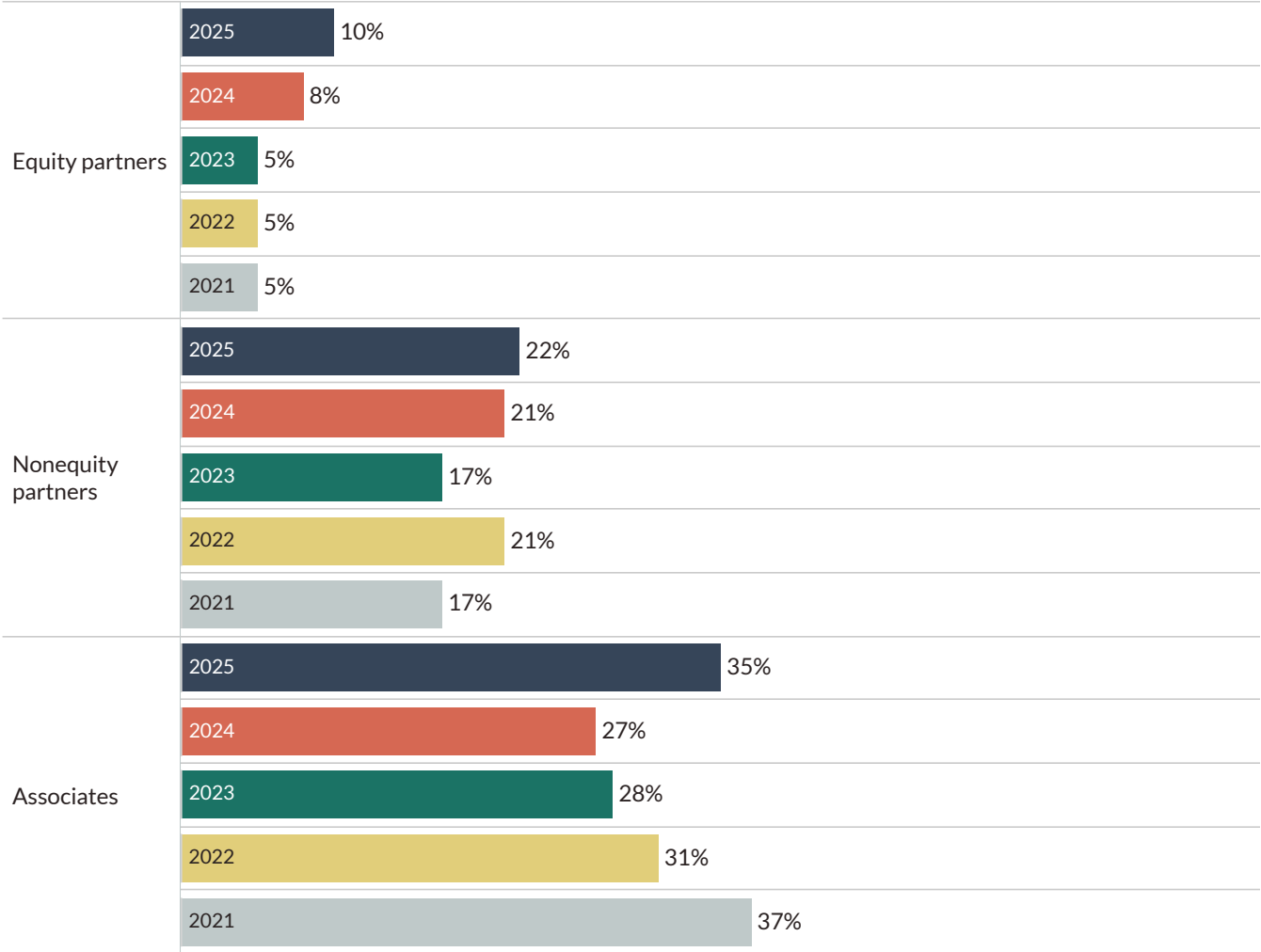
2021



Breaking down by job title reveals a similar growth pattern. For both nonequity and equity partners, the 2025 results — with 22% and 10% saying they are likely or very likely to seek a job at a new firm, respectively — represent the highest such figures in the survey’s history. Among associates, 2025’s 35% is slightly lower than 2021’s 37%, but is an 8 percentage-point increase over 2024’s 27%.

How likely are you to look for a job at another firm within the next year?

Percentage of respondents who say they are “likely” or “very likely”



The overall pattern is that lawyers are less satisfied with their work than at any point in the survey’s history, but they remain generally content with their current positions and do not regret their career choice.



3. Financial Well-Being

One potential culprit for declining satisfaction is worsening financial stability. For the first time, fewer than half of all respondents rated their financial stability as “excellent.” The share of respondents who rated their financial stability as “poor” or “average” is the highest it has been since the start of the survey in 2021, at 10% and 46%, respectively.

Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?

■ Excellent ■ Average ■ Poor

2025



2024



2023



2022



2021



Moreover, financial stability has worsened for those in more precarious roles: Fewer associates and nonequity partners rate their financial stability as excellent than in 2024. Equity partners were actually more likely to rate their financial stability as excellent, at 67% to last year’s 63%.

Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?

■ Excellent ■ Average ■ Poor

Equity partners



Nonequity partners



Associates



There were variations by firm size, with those at larger firms more likely to rate their financial stability as excellent: 66% of those at firms with more than 500 lawyers and 54% of those at firms with more than 1,000 lawyers said their financial stability was excellent. In contrast, only 38% of lawyers at the smallest firms — those with 100 or fewer lawyers — and 49% of those at midsize firms — those with 101 to 500 lawyers — said the same.

Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?

■ Excellent ■ Average ■ Poor

Firms with more than 1,000 lawyers



501-1,000 lawyers



101-500 lawyers



100 or fewer lawyers



Responses to open-ended questions provided further evidence of financial concerns. When asked about the most common misconception about being a lawyer, many respondents said that the conventional wisdom about lawyers being wealthy was a myth. One equity partner at a small firm said a common misconception is that “you make a lot of money. Some lawyers do, but most do not and those that do often sacrifice family, friends and health in the process.”

Even lawyers at BigLaw firms took issue with the perception of high incomes and cushy jobs, with one equity partner saying it is a myth that “being a partner means that you can work less and make more money. Those days are gone.”



4. Stress Levels

Another potential reason for declining job satisfaction is the increase in stress levels. For the first time in the survey’s history, more than half of respondents — 51% — said they felt stressed “most” or “all of the time.” That marks a 13 percentage point increase over 2024’s result and an increase of 18 percentage points since 2021. The increase has been slow and steady since 2021, as the figure was about a third of respondents in both 2021 and 2022, 35% in 2023, and 38% in 2024. That is, 2025’s result represents an abrupt and startling increase in reported stress levels.

How stressed are you?

■ I do not feel stressed ■ I rarely feel stressed ■ I sometimes feel stressed ■ I feel stressed most of the time ■ I feel stressed all of the time

2025



2024



2023



2022

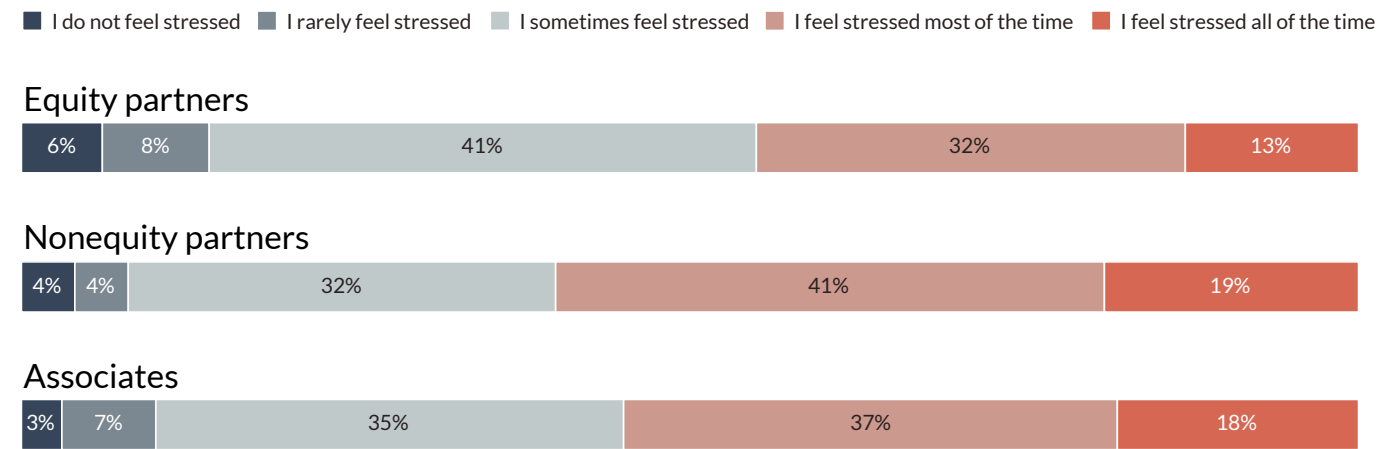


2021



Nonequity partners reported the highest levels of stress, with 60% of respondents in that role saying they felt stress most or all of the time. A similar share of associates – 55% – said the same, while only 45% of equity partners said they felt stress most or all of the time.

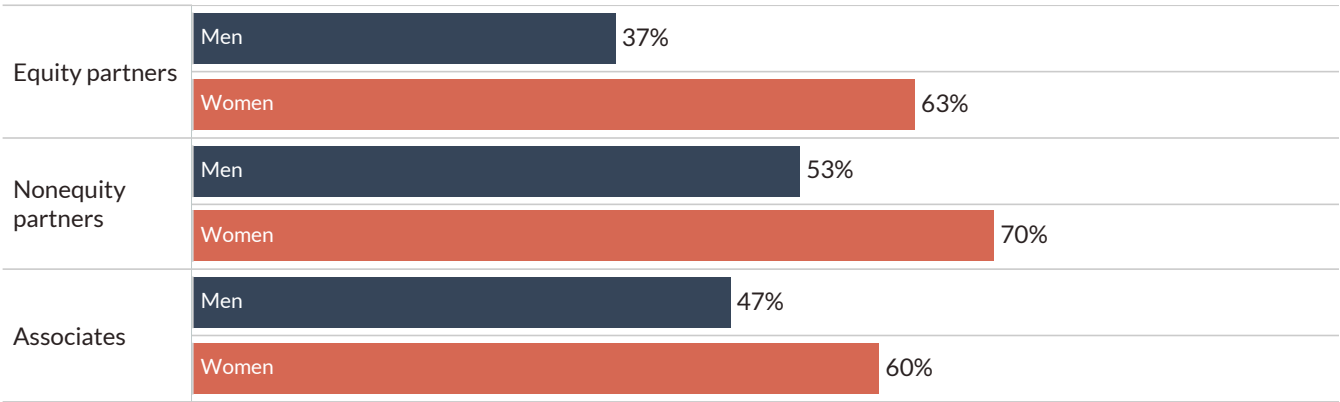
How stressed are you?



There was also a difference by gender: At 59%, women were much more likely to say they were stressed most or all of the time than men, at only 43%. This difference persisted for every job role, too, with the gap highest among equity partners. There was a 13 percentage point stress-related gender gap for associates, a 17-point gap for nonequity partners, and a 26-point gap for equity partners. Whereas only 37% of male equity partners reported feeling stress most or all of the time, 63% of women in that role said the same.

How stressed are you?

Percentage of respondents who say they are stressed most or all of the time





5. Work-Life Balance

The fewest respondents since the survey's inception reported their work-life balance had improved over the past year, at 19%. As in prior years, more lawyers said their work-life balance had remained steady, at 46%, than had improved or worsened, though the share of those saying it had worsened is at an all-time high of 35%.

Over the past year, has your work-life balance gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse?

■ Better ■ Stayed the same ■ Worse

2025



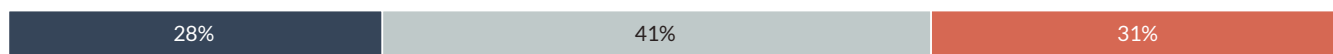
2024



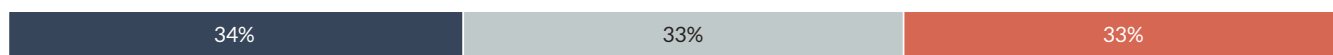
2023



2022



2021

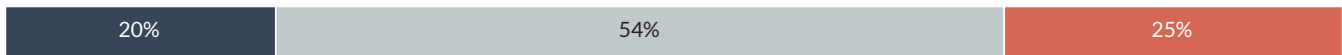


Nonequity partners were the least likely to say their work-life balance had improved, at 12%, while both associates and equity partners were equally likely to say the same, at 20%. However, associates and nonequity partners were similarly likely to say their work-life balance had worsened, at 40% and 42%, respectively.

Over the past year, has your work-life balance gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse?

■ Better ■ Stayed the same ■ Worse

Equity partners



Nonequity partners



Associates



There were also differences by firm size, with lawyers at smaller firms more likely to report improved work-life balance — at 22% — and lawyers at the largest firms more likely to say their work-life balance had worsened, at 45%

Over the past year, has your work-life balance gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse?

■ Better ■ Stayed the same ■ Worse

Firms with more than 1,000 lawyers



501-1,000 lawyers



101-500 lawyers



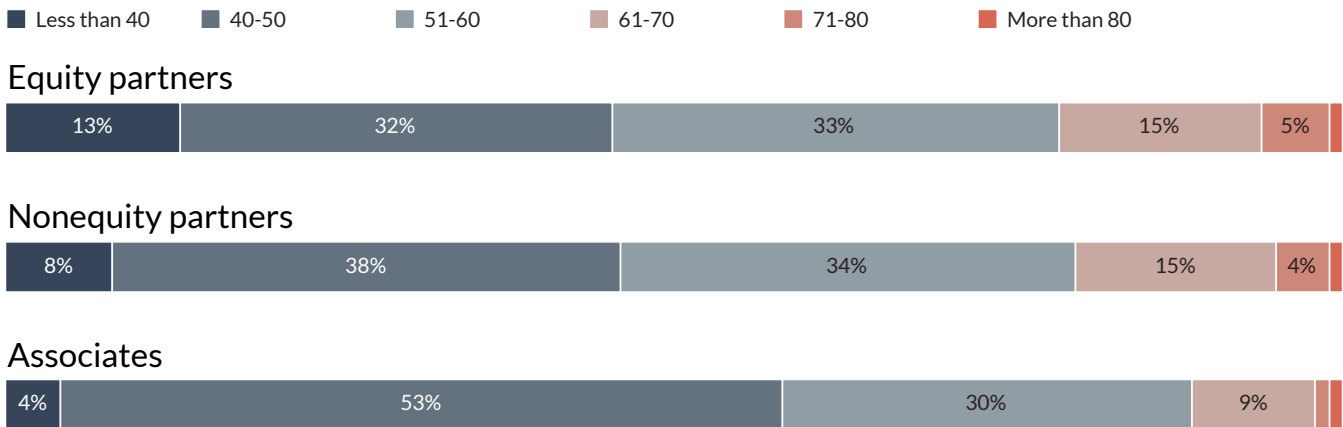
100 or fewer lawyers



Changes in stress levels are not necessarily linked to work hours, however. While 45% of respondents say they worked more than 50 hours a week on average, that figure is similar to results from 2022 through 2024.

Furthermore, associates work fewer hours than partners: Only 42% of associates work more than 50 hours per week, compared to 53% of nonequity partners and 55% of equity partners. Given that associates and nonequity partners share similar stress levels, this does not appear to be the driving force behind their shared difficulties.

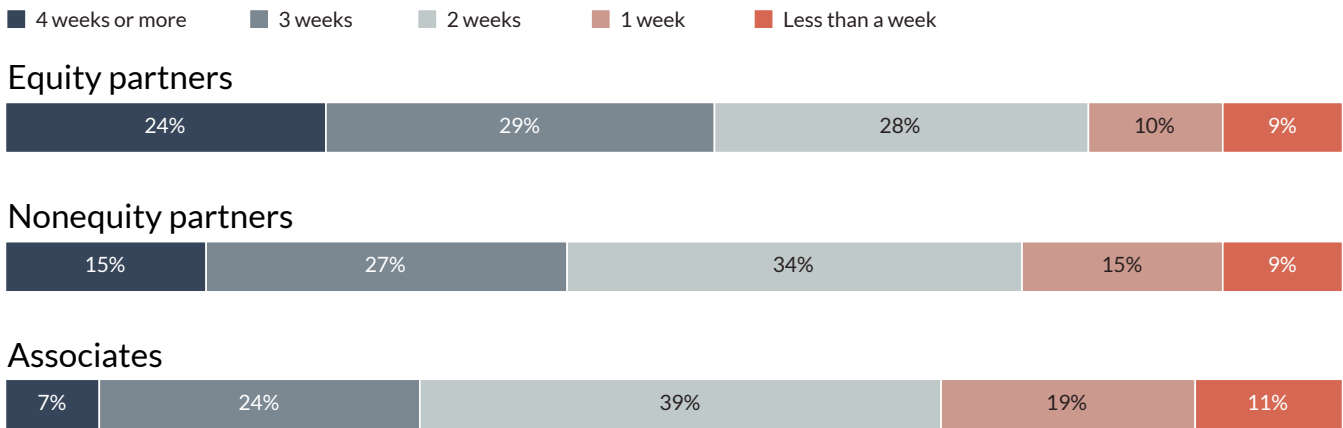
How many hours a week do you work, on average?



However, there is a clear relationship between hours and firm size: Moving from the smallest firms to the largest increases the share of lawyers reporting working more than 50 hours per week, from 39% at the smallest firms to 50% at those with 101-500 lawyers, 57% at those with 501-1,000 lawyers, and 64% at the largest firms.

Partners may work longer hours, but they take more vacation time: 31% of associates plan to take at least three weeks of vacation in 2025, compared to 42% of nonequity partners and 53% of equity partners.

How much vacation time do you expect to take overall in 2025?



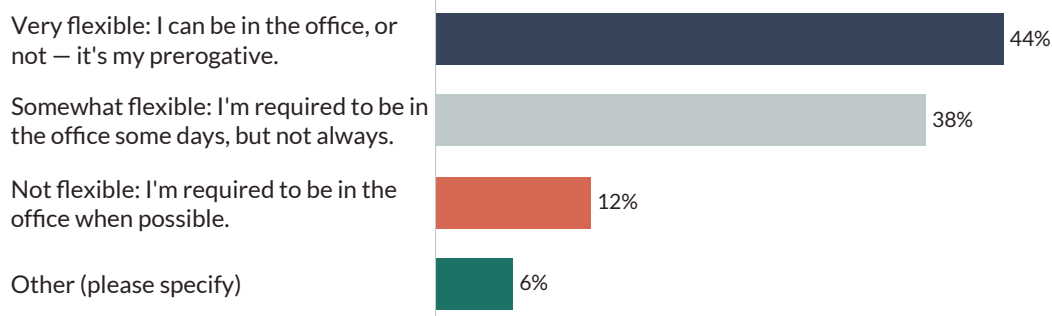


6. Workplace Environment

Building a strong workplace environment is a priority for many businesses, and survey respondents had some positive things to say about their law firm's office policies and priorities.

Legal professionals typically value their ability to have some control over their schedule, and while more firms have been taking a close look at their in-office policies, survey respondents reported that they are still enjoying at least some flexibility with working remotely. Nearly 40% of respondents reported that their firm is somewhat flexible with remote work, and 44% reported that their firms are still very flexible and that lawyers can choose when to be in the office and when to work from home.

How flexible is your firm with working remotely?



A majority of respondents — 51% — also reported that management is very considerate of family obligations, with nearly 30% reporting that management is somewhat considerate.

Still, there were significant differences between the smallest firms and the largest when it comes to balancing family obligations with work. At firms with 100 attorneys or fewer, 82% of survey respondents reported that firm management was very considerate or somewhat considerate of family obligations. At the largest firms with more than 1,000 lawyers, 69% of respondents could report that management was at least somewhat considerate of family obligations.

Is management at your firm considerate of family obligations?

■ Very considerate ■ Somewhat considerate ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat inconsiderate ■ Very inconsiderate

Firms with more than 1,000 lawyers



501-1,000 lawyers



101-500 lawyers



100 or fewer lawyers



A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their workplace is committed to diversity and inclusion – more than 60% – although there were some significant differences between how readily associates agreed with that statement as compared to equity partners. Just over half of associates agreed or strongly agreed with that statement while more than 70% of equity partners did.

How much do you agree with the following statement? My workplace is committed to diversity and inclusion.

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Equity partners



Nonequity partners



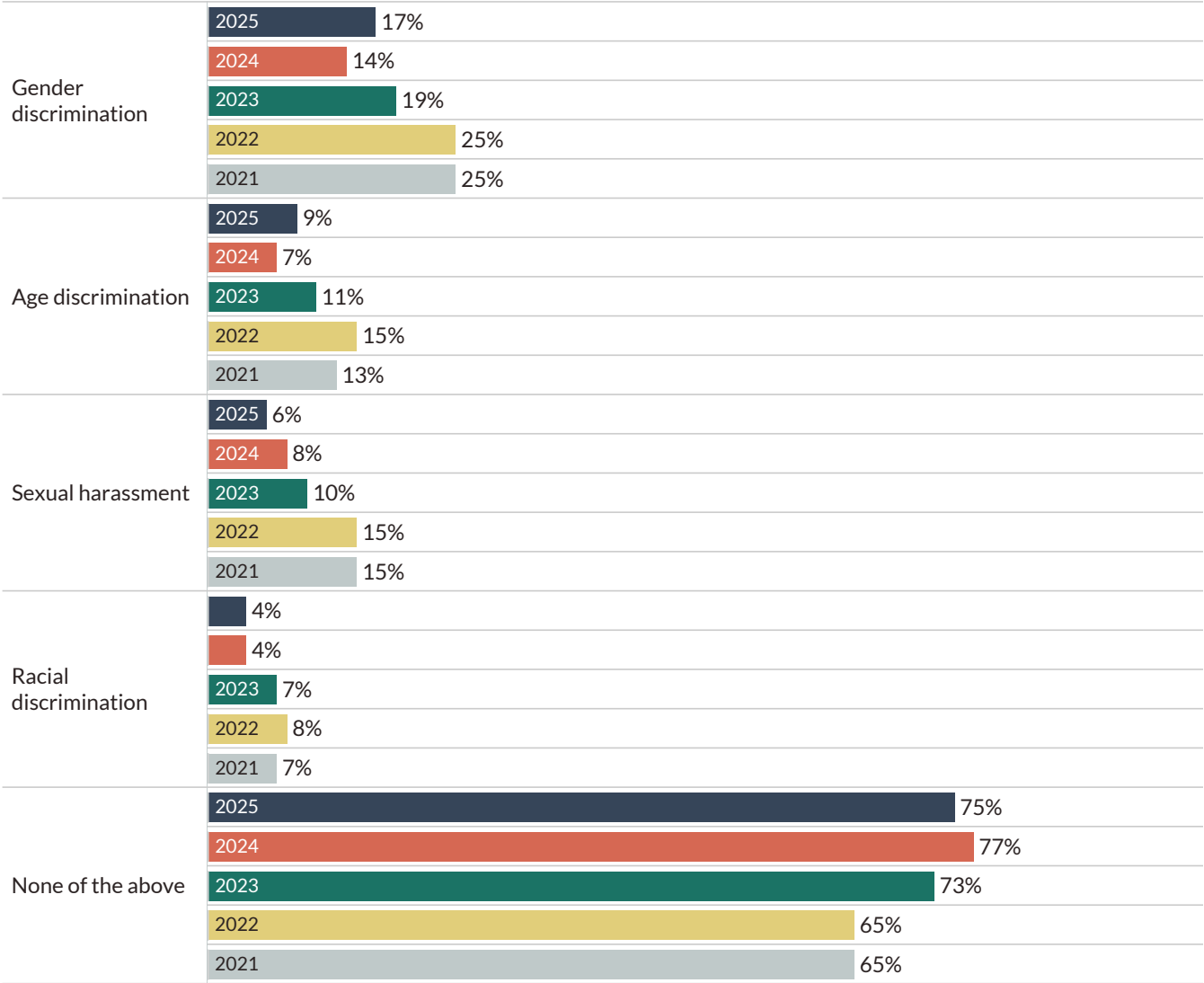
Associates



Finally, reports of discrimination in the workplace have trended downwards since the inception of the survey in 2021, though reports of gender and age discrimination are slightly higher in 2025 than in 2024, at 17% and 9%, respectively.

There were also clear patterns in gender and race or ethnicity in reporting discrimination. Women were six times as likely as men to report experiencing both gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Lawyers of color were more than five times as likely as white lawyers to report experiencing racial discrimination.

Have you ever personally encountered any of the following on the job?



Meet the Team

Jack Collens

Senior Data Analyst

Xavier Chauvris

Data Analyst

John Campbell

Senior Data Editor

Chris Yates

Art Director

Jacqueline Bell

Director of Series, Surveys & Data



Questionnaire

Are you based in the U.S.?

- Yes
- No

Which of the following best describes you:

- Associate at a private firm
- Nonequity partner at a private firm
- Equity partner at a private firm
- Of counsel at a private firm
- In-house counsel
- Government attorney
- Staff attorney
- Nonattorney law firm staff
- Solo practitioner
- Other (please specify)

What firm do you work for?

Overall, how would you rate your current financial stability?

- Poor
- Average
- Excellent

How much student loan debt do you have?

- None
- \$1-\$50,000
- \$50,001-\$100,000
- \$100,001-\$250,000
- More than \$250,000

Over the past year, has your work-life balance gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse?

- Better
- The same
- Worse

How satisfied are you with each of the following at your job?

(Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, or Very dissatisfied)

- Compensation
- Firm's billable hours requirement
- Firm's investment in technology, including AI
- Opportunities for advancement
- Collegiality and collaboration
- Firm's parental leave policy
- Overall job

How likely are you to look for a job at another firm within the next year?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

How stressed are you?

- I do not feel stressed.
- I rarely feel stressed.
- I sometimes feel stressed.
- I feel stressed most of the time.
- I feel stressed all of the time.

Based on their reputation in the industry, if you could work at any law firm(s) other than the one where you currently work, which one(s) would you choose? (Identify up to three.)

How many hours a week do you work, on average?

- Less than 40
- 40-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71-80
- More than 80

How much vacation time do you expect to take overall in 2024?

Less than a week

- 1 week
- 2 weeks
- 3 weeks
- 4 weeks or more

How flexible is your firm with working remotely?

- Not flexible: I'm required to be in the office when possible.
- Somewhat flexible: I'm required to be in the office some days, but not always.
- Very flexible: I can be in the office, or not — it's my prerogative.
- Other (please specify)

Have you ever personally encountered any of the following on the job? (Check all that apply)

- Sexual harassment
- Gender discrimination
- Racial discrimination
- Age discrimination
- None of the above

How well did the firm deal with the incident(s)?

- Very poorly
- Poorly
- Acceptably
- Well
- Very well
- Not applicable

How much do you agree with the following statement? My workplace is committed to diversity and inclusion.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Is management at your firm considerate of family obligations?

- Very considerate
- Somewhat considerate
- Neutral
- Somewhat inconsiderate
- Very inconsiderate

Has your firm undergone a merger or acquisition over the past year?

- Yes
- No

How satisfied are you with how the firm handled the integration?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

How many pro bono hours did you work in 2024?

- 0 to 20 hours
- 21 to 40 hours
- 41 to 60 hours
- 61 to 80 hours
- More than 80 hours

If you could do it all over, would you still become a lawyer?

- Yes
- No

What is a common misconception about being a lawyer or the business of law?

What is the best part of being a lawyer?

Please provide any advice and tips for the newer lawyer.

How many attorneys are at your firm globally?

- 100 or fewer
- 101-200
- 201-300
- 301-400
- 401-500
- 501-600
- 601-700
- 701-1,000
- More than 1,000

How old are you?

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89
- 90+

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Nonbinary/third gender
- Prefer not to say

Which best describes your race or ethnicity?

- White (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Black or African American (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Two or More Races (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- Prefer not to identify

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