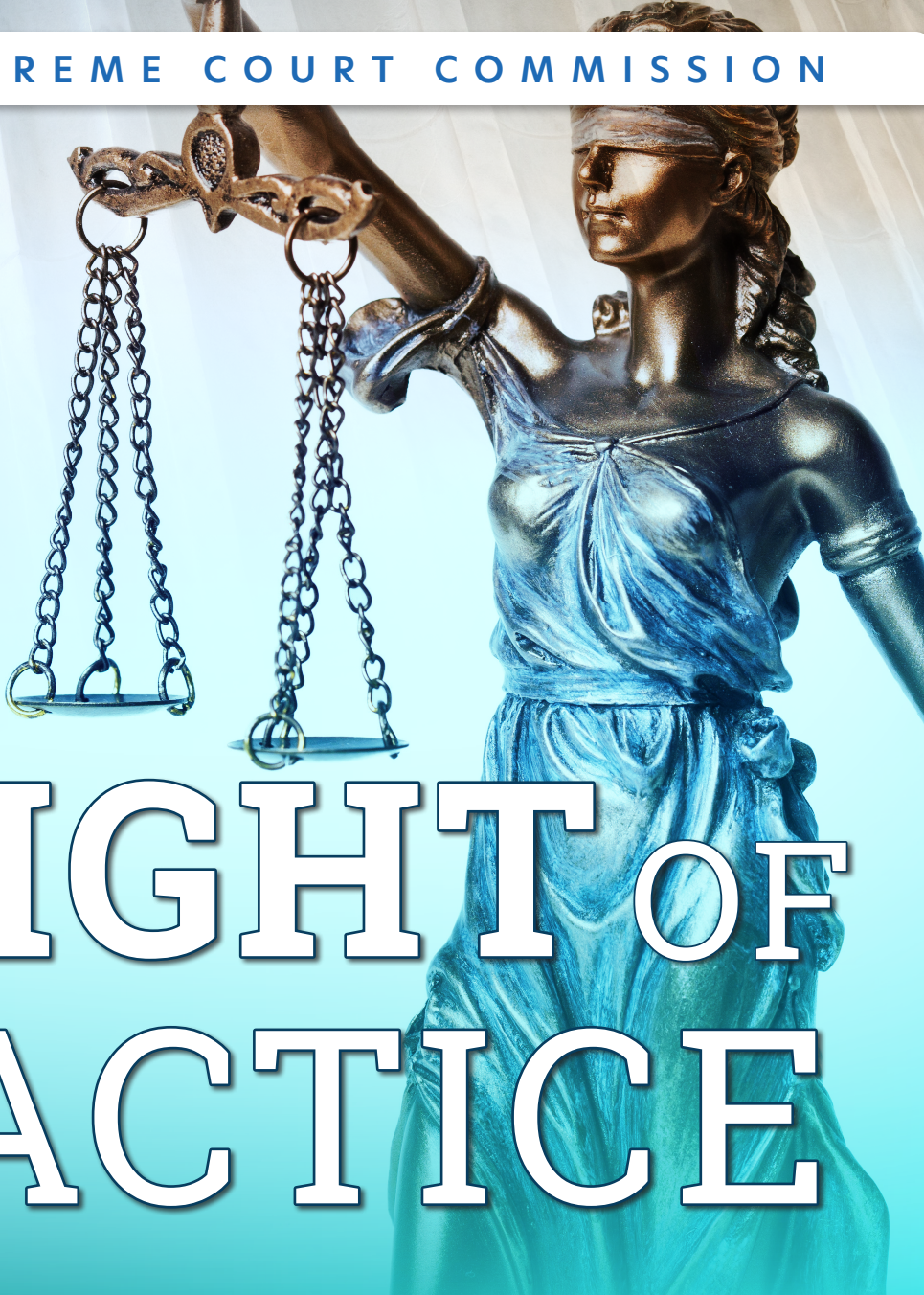




# THE WEIGHT OF PRACTICE

**A LANDMARK STUDY ON ILLINOIS  
LAWYERS' MENTAL HEALTH &  
WELL-BEING CHALLENGES**







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# FOREWORD

## ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT JUSTICE MARY K. O'BRIEN

ILLINOIS LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
SUPREME COURT LIAISON



// **[The survey data on] stigma is among the most dangerous findings in the [Weight of Practice] survey.** People don't come forward when they feel it will be used against them or that it's such a taboo subject that they feel they can't talk about it. Our mission is to ensure they can talk about it. We want to be able to know what's really going on and to be able to offer real solutions and things that can truly help them. //

Justice O'Brien was elected to the Illinois Supreme Court in November 2022. Previously, she was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1996 and served until December 2003. She was appointed to the Illinois Appellate Court in December 2003 and subsequently elected to the Appellate Court in 2004 and retained in 2014. During her tenure, she served on multiple commissions and committees and received awards from numerous community and legal organizations.



# FOREWORD

## HONORABLE SUSAN CLANCY BOLES

ILLINOIS LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BOARD PRESIDENT



“**[The survey results confirm what I saw on the bench] during my last seven years in a jury trial courtroom I would see lawyers three weeks at a time during a very intense trial.** [Due to the stress and demands of their job, there is a huge difference between attorney’s appearance, composure and sharpness] on day one versus day 15. [It’s obvious that] they are not sleeping or are not able to recall something said just 2 days ago. The way they [try to] cope with different stressors has been very eye opening.”

Susan Clancy Boles served as the former Chief Judge of the Sixteenth Judicial Circuit (Kane County). She is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and the Valparaiso University School of Law (with high distinction). She was appointed as an Associate Judge in 2007. In October of 2008, she was appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court to the position of Circuit Judge. She was elected Circuit Judge in November of 2010 and Chief Judge in 2015.

Judge Boles served as an original member of the re-constituted Illinois Judicial Conference (2018 – 2019). In 2017, the Illinois Supreme Court appointed Chief Judge Boles to serve as a member of the Illinois Judicial College standing committee on Judicial Education.

Judge Boles served on the Board of Directors of the Illinois Judges Association from 2010 – 2016. She served as IJA Chair of the Worries of the World Wide Web In-School Programs Committee, a program she co-created which addresses the increasing problem of cyber bullying, electronic harassment and sexting/pornography amongst middle school aged students. Chief Judge Boles continues to frequently speak to both middle and high school age students on a variety of topics youth are faced with today.

Judge Boles served as Vice Chair of the Circuit Court of Chief Judges Conference (2017-19).



# DR. DIANA UCHIYAMA, JD, PSYD, CAADC

## // TO THE ILLINOIS LEGAL COMMUNITY,

**We are proud to present the Illinois Lawyers' Assistance Programs' (LAP) landmark study, *The Weight of Practice*, the first of its kind, comprehensive survey on Mental Health, Alcohol Use, Substance Use, Gambling, Vicarious Trauma, Stress, and Cognitive Decline in the Illinois Legal community.** The results are reliable and valid and show significant cross correlation with the Attorney Registration & Disciplinary Commission statistics on lawyers in the State, and LAP's own internal case management system. While viewing the information may feel like a huge undertaking and give you a sense of great concern for the practice of law, LAP views the results of the survey as a roadmap for how to implement short- and long-term change to create positive changes in the health and wellness of all attorneys throughout our State. We can no longer turn a blind eye to the negative impact of current standards and norms, and we cannot say that this information does not apply to your agency or firm. We have convincing evidence that signing a Wellness Pledge or just talking about being committed to the Mental Health of your attorneys, is not enough and simply falls short and has limited benefits to the people who work in the law. We must take this information seriously and implement necessary changes so that we can turn the lives around for the many who are suffering and not doing well. We must encourage people to work hard, but also take time off for rest and restoration, and not encourage the workforce to always be available to the agency or the client. We must limit the use of alcohol in all our workplace settings and not normalize alcohol as part of the culture of law and law events. We must all take stock in our places of employment and determine if we are contributing to the normalization of heavy drinking, work without rest philosophies, and not having options for the employees to take time off to get help. We must monitor time off as a necessary part of working, rather than celebrating the people who appear to not need rest and not have healthy balanced lives. We must look beyond what we know now and encourage a culture where getting help is not held against someone, and more people have healthy personal lives and healthy productive careers. //



**Dr. Diana Uchiyama,  
JD, PsyD, CAADC**

**Executive Director of the  
Illinois Lawyers' Assistance  
Program (LAP)**

Before joining LAP, Dr. Diana was the Administrator of Psychological Services for DuPage County and worked as a Staff Psychologist and Juvenile Drug Court Coordinator for Kane County. She is a Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor, holds an Advanced Mindfulness training Certificate and is a Trauma Informed Care Provider. She has a masters and doctorate in Clinical Psychology, is a licensed Clinical and Forensic Psychologist, and previously practiced law as a Cook County Assistant Public Defender, litigating misdemeanor and felony cases representing indigent clients for over a decade.





# 01.

# ***THE WEIGHT OF PRACTICE LANDMARK SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS***

**One in five Illinois lawyers  
rated their mental health  
fair or poor.**



# THE WEIGHT OF PRACTICE

*"For 2-3 years, I've quietly quit as I've tried to recover from the anxiety and depression of law."*

— AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK FEMALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE

**Significant numbers of lawyers are struggling with their mental health, suicidal ideation, alcohol use, substance use, gambling, vicarious trauma, and workplace stress across the Illinois legal profession.**

The Illinois Lawyers' Assistance Program (LAP) sponsored a landmark study documenting the well-being challenges of real-life lawyers and judges across Illinois such as:

Mental health

Alcohol use

Drug use

Overlap of mental health, alcohol use and drug use

Gambling

Vicarious trauma

Stress

Cognitive decline

Overall wellness

6,778 lawyers provided feedback from all practice areas, including the judiciary.

Focused on past one year experience working in law.

Valid and reliable estimates about the entire population of Illinois lawyers.

## THE SURVEY MEASURED:

- (1) Individual and workplace circumstances that lead to reduced mental health, high-risk alcohol and drug use, gambling, and cognitive decline;
- (2) the impact of these conditions on lawyers' work and personal lives;
- (3) how and when lawyers seek help when facing serious wellness issues; and
- (4) what types of support can enhance wellness for Illinois lawyers.



# THE INDEPENDENT SURVEY

*"I think the most helpful would be guides and lectures on how to identify when it [a well-being problem] is happening. I think it can be difficult to realize and come to terms with. At the very least, because of the stigma, I think it needs to be discussed more often and openly as not being a negative thing. It's a phase of life that we all experience, but we have a duty to protect the public interest."*

— MULTIRACIAL MALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

## The Illinois Lawyers' Assistance Program's (LAP) landmark study is

based on robust quantitative and qualitative data from a comprehensive survey completed by over 6,700 Illinois lawyers and judges.

**The Weight of Practice** presents the current status of Illinois lawyers with regard to mental health, alcohol and drug use, gambling, and well-being challenges. Including, first-of-its-kind data about the growing problem of cognitive decline among lawyers and judges as many in the legal profession are now working into their 70s and beyond.

## 2026 independent survey aimed to:

**assess problems** with mental health, alcohol, substance use, and gambling.

**discover** root causes that impact a lawyer's work, relationships with family and friends, and their overall sense of wellness.

**understand motivations** for when or why lawyers reach out for help.

**be anonymous** with no respondent identification by name or place of employment.

**represent the approximate gender and age distribution** of the lawyers who practice in Illinois.

**yield systematic and highly informative quantitative data** on the various workplace, social, personal, and structural factors that impact the overall mental health and wellness of Illinois lawyers.

**reflect the experiences of lawyers in many different practice settings** — private practice, corporate law departments, government, the judiciary, public interest organizations, academia, and not-for-profit organizations.

**document current status of Illinois legal profession** for LAP to more effectively fulfill its important mission of supporting Illinois lawyers, judges, and their employers in dealing with mental health problems, drug and alcohol use disorders, and problematic gambling. LAP's services are needed now more than ever.



Independent survey sent to 56,268 attorneys registered in 2025 with the Attorney

Registration & Disciplinary Commission of The Supreme Court of Illinois (IARDC).

LAP wants to thank **Stephanie A. Scharf, J.D., Ph.D.**, and **Roberta D. Liebenberg, J.D.**, with **The Red Bee Group** for spending significant time before and during the creation of the survey, listening to LAP staff feedback and the goals we were seeking to achieve by conducting this impactful survey on behalf of ILAP. TRBG is a consulting firm that advises corporations, law firms, and not-for-profits about growth and innovation.



# SURVEY METHODOLOGY

## The Survey Population and Analyses

**Between October 23, 2025 and December 12, 2025, all 56,268 lawyers who were registered with the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (“ARDC”), and who also reported to the ARDC that their principal office was in Illinois, were sent an email from the Illinois Lawyers’ Assistance Program via The Red Bee Group (TRBG) survey platform (Qualtrics) inviting them to take the Survey. 7,623 people were recorded opening the Survey in Qualtrics. 246 of these were excluded from the analyses due to indications of possible duplicates (e.g., cookies on browsers or response similarity). Another 474 participants were excluded from the analyses because they did not respond to any questions except for initial demographic information. The final sample used for data analyses included 6,778 Illinois lawyers.**

TRBG used the Illinois ARDC population data on attorney gender and age, to assess the extent to which the Survey respondents mirrored the population of Illinois lawyers. With respect to age, survey respondents slightly under-represented the population of younger lawyers and over-represented the population of older lawyers. Therefore, for population data analyses, TRBG felt it was appropriate to use statistical weighting techniques based on age. They also weighted the data by gender because weighting by age skewed the representation of women and men in the sample.<sup>1</sup> Such weighting is designed to reduce bias from non-responders and generalize findings to the population of Illinois lawyers. While weighting could have some limitations,<sup>2</sup> all things considered, it was important for the validity of conclusions about the population of Illinois lawyers to have analyses with gender and age distributions that were close to the population distributions, which is what the weighting achieved. This Study’s reported percentages are weighted percentages unless otherwise noted. Weighted percentages are also used to estimate the total number of respondents (n or N) in a group or analysis.

A major feature of this Survey design is “skip” patterns in the questionnaire, which are used in self-administered surveys to decrease the burden and amount of time necessary to complete a questionnaire when the content does not apply, e.g., posing many questions about alcohol use when a lawyer drinks alcohol only a few times a year and in small amounts. Dropping out of a survey is a problem when the survey takes longer to complete and when questions are posed which do not apply to given respondents.<sup>3</sup> Anecdotally, there have been problems in surveys about alcohol and substance use when lawyers are asked questions that do not apply to them and consequently stop taking the survey. By using skip patterns, we were able to receive usable substantive responses representing 12% of the population of Illinois lawyers, which allowed a great deal of reliability, validity and depth to the data analyses.

Numerical results were based upon Banker’s Rounding Technique for rounding to whole numbers, or in some instances to one tenth of a percent. With this method, numbers are rounded down when the last digit is less than 5, rounded up when the last digit is greater than 5, and rounded to the nearest even number when exactly half-way.

<sup>1</sup> R. Valliant, J. A. Dever, and F. Kreuter. 2013. *Practical Tools for Designing and Weighting Survey Samples*. New York: Springer.

<sup>2</sup> T. P. Johnson. 2014. “Sources of Error in Substance Use Prevalence Surveys.” *International Scholarly Research Notices* 2014:Article ID 923290.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., American Psychiatric Association. 2022. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed., text rev. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.



# SURVEY METHODOLOGY

## Red Bee Alcohol Use Risk Index for Lawyers (AURIL)

To analyze data about alcohol use and specifically to determine whether an individual's alcohol use was problematic and therefore subject to additional survey questions, we used a combination of initial information about each respondent's frequency of drinking, typical volume of drinking, difficulty stopping drinking, and self-reported binge drinking in the past year. **We then converted all information about use of alcohol and its impact over the past year to create an Alcohol Use Risk Index for Lawyers (AURIL).**

Based on a review of other indices, guidance from Illinois LAP, and our knowledge of the legal profession, we asked about drinking behavior along four screening dimensions: frequency of drinking, volume of drinking, ability to stop drinking, and experience with binge drinking. The survey process identified lawyers whose answers showed they:

1. Drank 2-3 times per week or more frequently, or
2. Drank 4-5 drinks or more drinks per occasion, or
3. Had difficulty stopping drinking at least monthly, or
4. Engaged in binge drinking over the past year.

Lawyers who did not meet any of those four criteria were "skipped out" to the next section of the questionnaire.

The lawyers who met any one of the four criteria were then asked additional questions about:

- Blackout/memory loss;
- Impact of drinking on work;
- Impact of drinking on personal life (relationships, children, financial loss, legal trouble, loss of interest);
- Relative or friend who expressed concern about the respondent's drinking.

Responses to all of these questions were then used to create the AURIL. A given lawyer's score on this Index was anywhere from 0 to 24 points:

- High Risk for Alcohol Use Disorder (Score of 10-24)
- Moderate Risk for Alcohol Use Disorder (Score of 5-9)
- Low Risk for Alcohol Use Disorder (Score of 0-4)

**The AURIL parallels the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), developed by the World Health Organization, aligning with low risk, moderate risk, and high risk categories.** Combining both alcohol use and the consequences of alcohol into a score on the Index is a common approach when diagnostic criteria include both drinking practices as well as impacts on daily life.<sup>1</sup> We also separately detail the statistics about lawyers' drinking patterns as well as reporting alcohol-related consequences across all three risk groups.

## Red Bee Work Stress Index (WSI)

Based on our previous work about burnout and stress, and aware of various stress indices publicly available for use in social research, **we created a Work Stress Index ("WSI") to assess within the population of lawyers the extent to which, regardless of any evident mental health or substance use issues, lawyers felt levels of stress directly connected to the culture, expectations, policies and practices of their workplace,** be that a law firm, a corporation, a government agency, a not-for profit, or other settings.

**There are 12 questions about feelings in the Work Stress Index:**

- Experienced stress at work
- Felt overwhelmed with all of the things I have to do
- Have trouble taking time off work
- Feel like my day never ends
- Find it hard to wind down from work
- Anxious or panicked about work
- Worried about looking foolish or incompetent at work
- Thought it would be better to stop working at current job
- Felt disengaged from my workplace
- Could not seem to experience any positive feelings about what I do at work
- Thought it would be better to stop working as a lawyer
- Found it difficult to take on new challenges

Respondents answered each of the 12 WSI questions by checking the frequency they experienced each feeling over the past year: daily = 5, weekly = 4, monthly = 3, a few times a year = 2, and rarely or never = 1. Using those numerical responses, we then calculated for each respondent their average score across all 12 questions, which ranged anywhere from 1.00 to 5.00. **The result for all respondents was a mean WSI score of 2.41.**

The questions in the Work Stress Index create a statistically acceptable one factor scale. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed a single-factor structure. All items demonstrated strong factor loadings (range: .62 - .86), and the scale showed excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  = .93). In plain language, this means that all items can be said to be measuring one concept; when someone says that they feel one of these experiences daily (e.g., "I felt overwhelmed with all the things I have to do"), they will likely report frequently having other experiences listed in the scale. In addition, the scale has convergent validity, meaning it should be and it is correlated with related concepts such as lawyers' perceptions of their workplace.

<sup>1</sup> K. Høiland, E. K. A. Arnevik, L. M. Diep, T. Mathisen, A. S. Nielsen, and J. Egeland. 2025. "Predictors of High- and Low-risk Drinking after Group Treatment for Alcohol Use Disorder." *BJPsych Open* 11(4):e150.

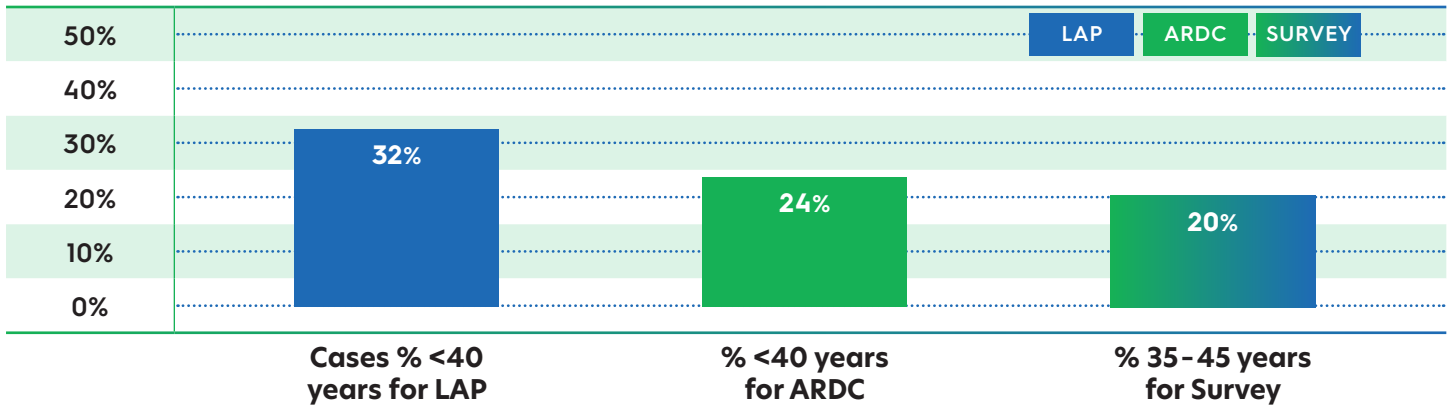


# COMPARISON DATA GRAPHS OF LAP CLIENTS (FY '25-26), ARDC AND SURVEY

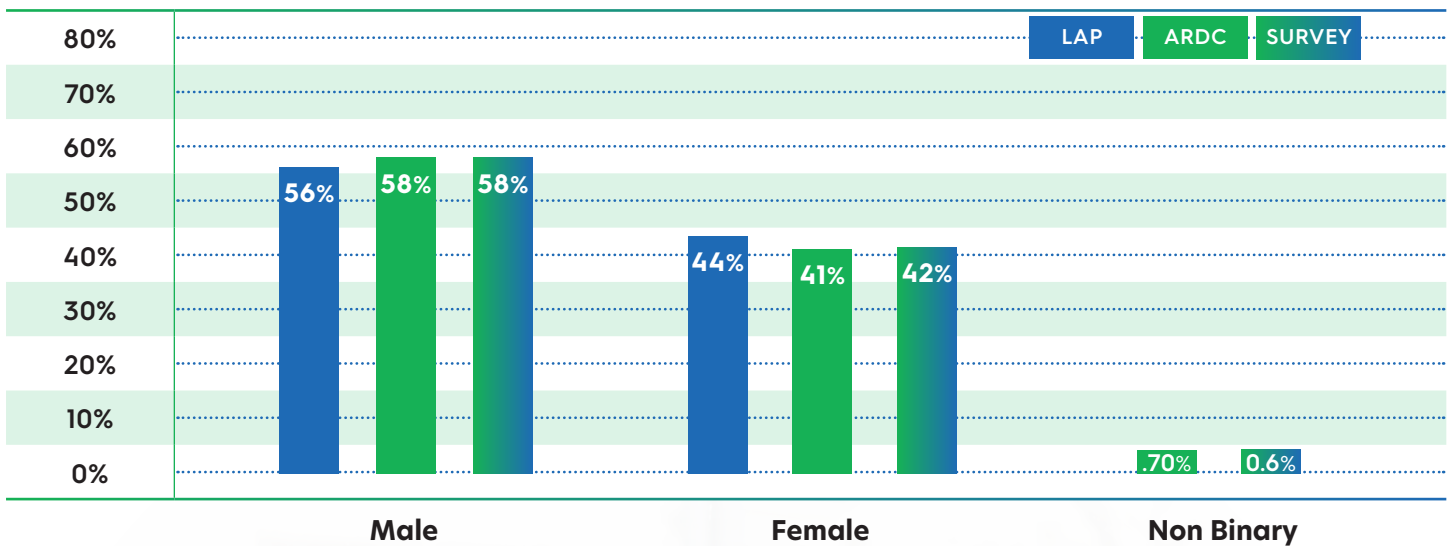
"Lawyers are a nexus of other people's trauma and conflict. It's a brutal profession."

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

## Age Comparison



## Gender Comparison



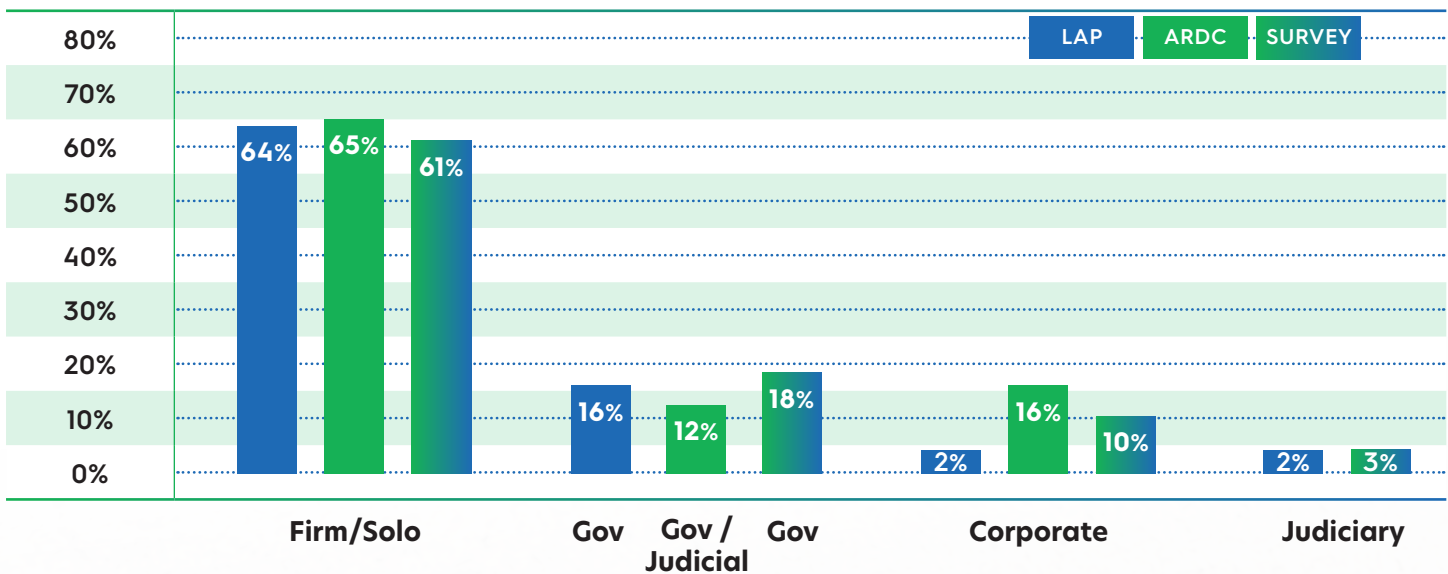


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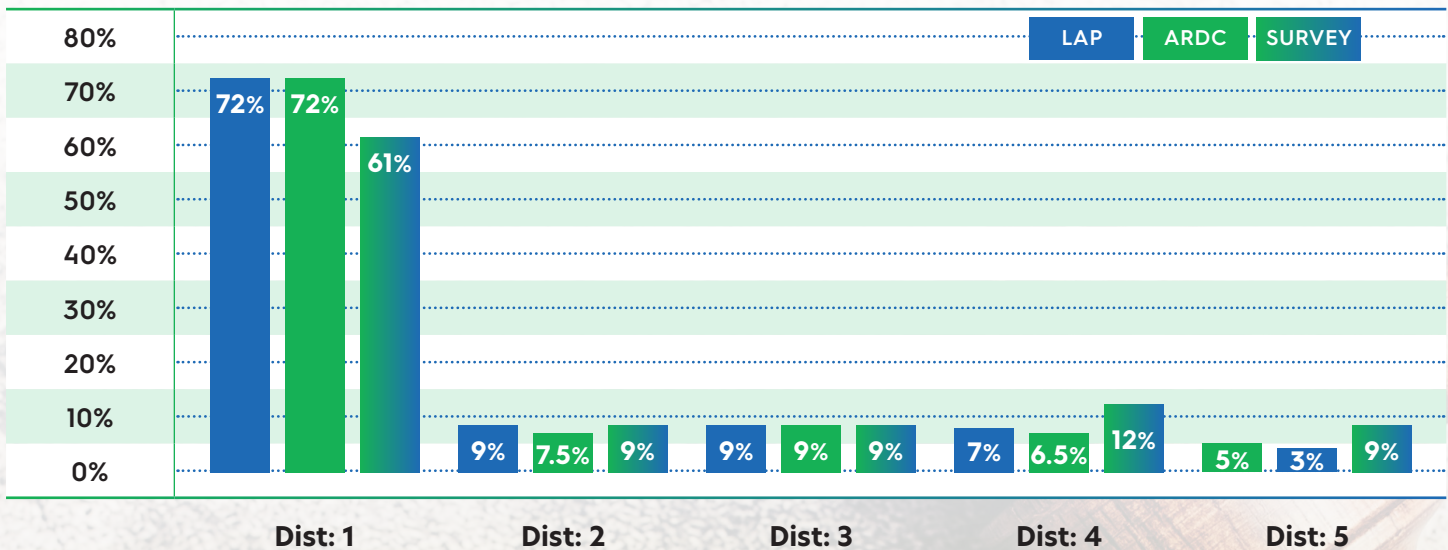
*"I have been diagnosed as having mild PTSD as a result of handling years of child sexual abuse cases."*

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE

## Work Setting Comparison



## Supreme Court District Comparison



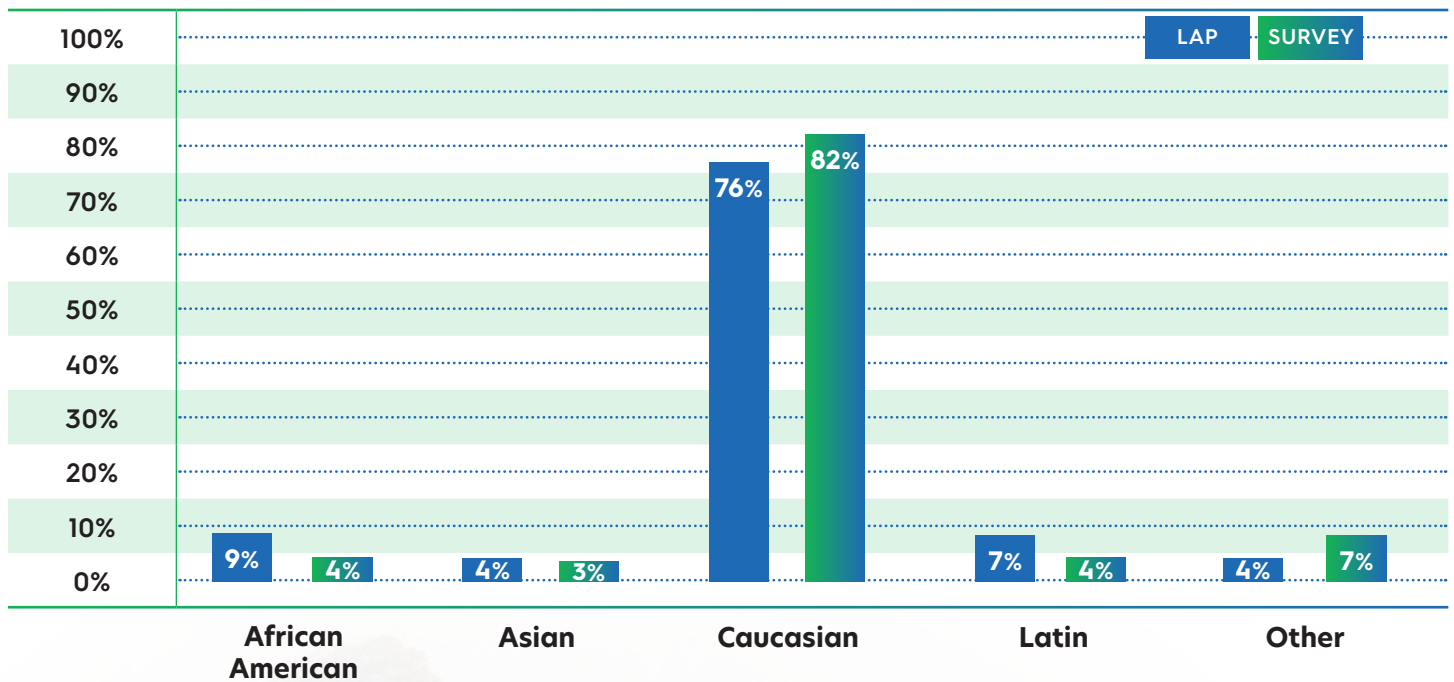


# COMPARISON DATA GRAPHS OF LAP CLIENTS (FY '25-26) AND SURVEY

*"Our clients are emotional vampires."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

## Ethnicity Comparison



*"Stronger and more enforcement of ethical rules of lawyers' civility."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM



# MENTAL HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

"The stress level is unbelievable. Client demands, collecting receivables, doing the legal work, managing staff. There aren't many professions where one person is responsible for so many things at one time."

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYERS IN A LAW FIRM

20%

Fair or Poor

  
20% of lawyers rated their mental health fair or poor, equaling about 11,000 lawyers.

- They also felt **burnt out, unable to sustain attention at work, needed to take time off work, and were unable to perform at their regular standards.**
- **37% of them did not seek help** in the past year due to lack of time, belief they could handle it on their own, financial considerations, concerns about privacy or confidentiality, embarrassment, reputational worry, and/or concern about hurting their career.

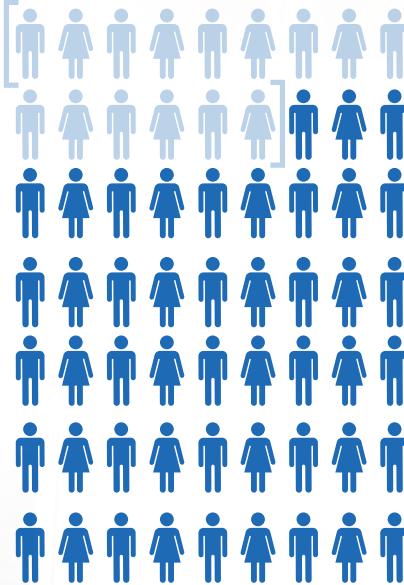


Of the 20% who rated their mental health fair or poor:

**32% (3,500) experienced suicidal ideation in the past year.**

3,500 lawyers

Of this group, 24% had thought about ending their life in the 2 weeks before the survey.



840 lawyers

Experienced suicidal ideation in past two weeks prior to survey.

25-35 age group

33% of lawyers in the 25-35 age group rate their mental health as fair or poor.

*"I felt psychologically tortured, physically and emotionally intimidated, and like my employer (and sometimes clients) reveled in attempting to make me suicidal."*

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM



# MENTAL HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

*"I deal with catastrophic injury and death cases regularly. Every case involves terrible trauma."*

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM LITIGATION

## VICARIOUS TRAUMA

30%

**30% of lawyers had experienced vicarious trauma in the past year**, which is lasting emotional or psychological impact from ongoing exposure at work to other people's trauma.

**Areas of practice that led to higher levels of vicarious trauma issues most often are as follows:**

**Litigation**

**Criminal Law**

**Family/  
Domestic Relations**



**Judges also experience vicarious trauma.**

*"Unchecked anger by judges is unnecessary and extremely hard to cope with. I don't understand why they do not feel more responsible not to add to the acrimony in families in the courts."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM



# ALCOHOL USE HIGHLIGHTS

*"There's a real stigma to not drinking."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

## FREQUENCY OF DRINKING ALCOHOL

**85%**  
of lawyers

reported drinking  
in the past year:

**Few times  
a month**

**50%**

**Several  
times  
a week**

**22%**

**4+ times  
a week  
(6,700 lawyers)**

**12%**

**Almost  
daily  
(5,000 lawyers)**

**9%**

**15%**  
of lawyers  
reported  
no drinking  
in the past year

*"Criminal law requires practitioners to face horrific traumas on a daily basis ... it is not shocking that some would turn to alcohol or substance abuse as a way to escape from the negative emotional/psychological weight that working in this field brings."*

- HISPANIC/LATINO MALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

*"The rampant alcohol abuse is problematic. People well into their fifties drink like they're in frat houses still and encourage others to do the same. It's unhealthy."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

*"Socialization in the legal practice is largely focused on gatherings involving alcohol, at least in Southern Illinois."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN THE JUDICIARY

*"Work culture that appears to find alcohol use acceptable as a means to handle stress."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT



# ALCOHOL USE HIGHLIGHTS

*"I actually attempted suicide in large part due to stress and my alcoholism."*

— WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN LEGAL AID

## ALCOHOL USE IN THOSE WHO DRANK THIS PAST YEAR

**35% of lawyers** report drinking alcohol both on weekends and during the week.

Weekends

*"Litigation is high stress. Alcohol is acceptable and easy to access."*

— HISPANIC/LATINA FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT



During the week

When a lawyer drinks, they consume as follows:

86%

**1-3**  
drinks

11%

**4-5**  
drinks

4%

**6+**  
drinks  
per occasion  
and sometimes  
nine or more

Lawyers  
who drink  
more often,  
typically drink  
in greater  
amounts.

26%

**26% of lawyers (5,200)** who drink alcohol 4 times a week to almost every day consume at least 4-5 drinks per occasion, and over 6% (1,900) consume 6 drinks or more per occasion.

*"I have multiple times been in court and smelled alcohol on another criminal defense attorney's breath. Alcohol abuse is a serious problem in the criminal defense community in Illinois."*

— WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN NON-PROFIT



# ALCOHOL USE HIGHLIGHTS

*"Litigation is high stress. Alcohol is acceptable and easy to access."*

- HISPANIC/LATINA FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

**28%**  
of lawyers  
(13,100)

"It feels like an immediate 'fix' for whatever the bigger problem may be. I think they want a reprieve from whatever that problem is, at least for a moment."

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER  
IN GOVERNMENT

## NOT ABLE TO STOP DRINKING

**Over 28% of lawyers (13,100)** reported times in the past year they could not stop drinking or could not control their drinking as follows:

**20%**

**Less than monthly**

**5%**

**Monthly**

5% (2,400) said they have difficulty controlling their drinking **on a monthly basis.**

**2.5%**

**Weekly**

2.5% (1,200) said they have difficulty controlling their drinking **on a weekly or daily basis.**

**0.5%**

**Daily or almost daily**

**27%**

### **Stress drinking**

27% (13,000) reported **alcohol use increases under stress**, with 40% of this subgroup engaging in stress drinking either monthly, weekly or even daily (about 5,200).

**23%**

### **Moderate-risk drinker**

23% (11,000) who drank in the past year were **identified as moderate risk for alcohol use disorder.**

**18%**

### **Binge drinking**

18% (8,600) reported binge drinking **at least once in the past year.**

**11%**

### **High-risk drinker**

11% (5,400) who drank in the past year were **identified as high risk for alcohol use disorder.**

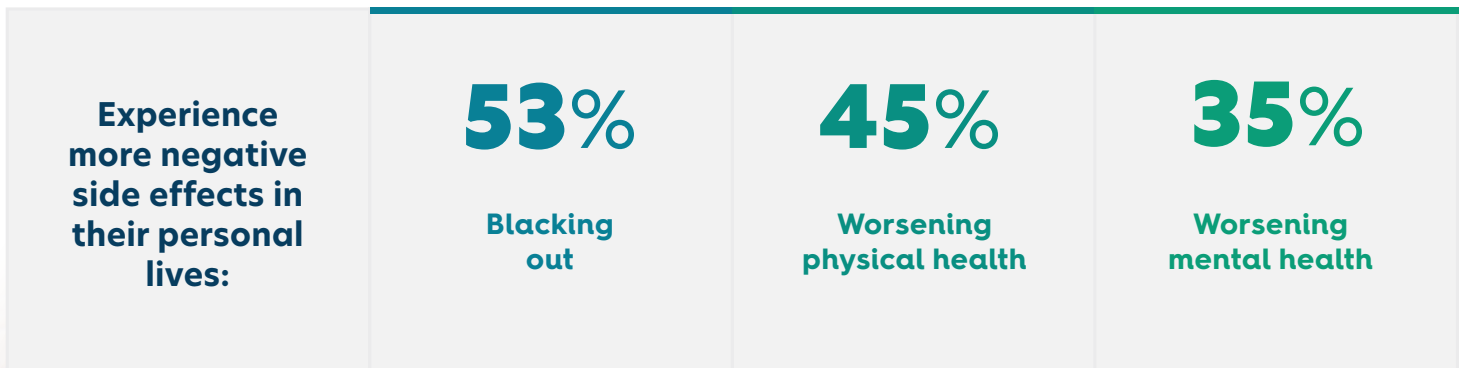
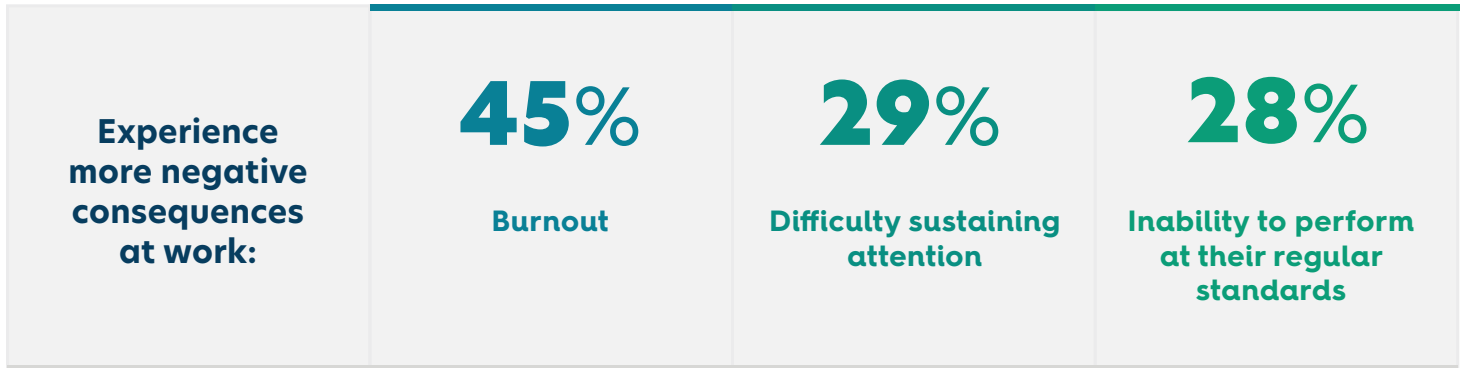


# ALCOHOL USE HIGHLIGHTS

"Anonymous line to raise concerns so the person can be observed and get help, if needed."

- MULTIRACIAL FEMALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE

## HIGH RISK DRINKERS



### Reasons for not seeking help:

82%  
(4,400)  
of high-risk  
drinkers, **did not**  
seek help for  
their drinking.

Could  
handle it on  
their own.

**70%**

Enjoy drinking  
and don't  
want to stop.

**52%**



# ALCOHOL USE HIGHLIGHTS

*"Drug and alcohol use was so prevalent at my defense side firm.  
The pressure is too high, and it's getting worse."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

**11% of men drink alcohol almost daily  
compared to 7% of women.**

**Men drink  
more often  
than women  
and are at  
higher risk  
for alcohol-  
related  
issues.**

**Men are  
2.5 times  
as likely as  
women to  
have risk of  
alcohol use  
disorder  
(15% vs. 6%).**

## GENDER AND ALCOHOL- RELATED PROBLEMS



**Men are 1.7  
times more  
likely than  
women to  
engage  
in high  
frequency  
alcohol use.**

**18% of men drink alcohol 4 or more  
times a week compared to  
10% of women.**



# RECREATIONAL AND DRUG USE HIGHLIGHTS

"Most of the young lawyers I know who do drugs do it to achieve their billable hours; a true paradigm shift needs to happen with work-life balance."

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN THE JUDICIARY

## FREQUENT USE OF RECREATIONAL DRUGS

**13%**  
of lawyers

**13% of all Illinois lawyers report frequent use of recreational drugs and/or frequent misuse of prescription drugs with the large majority only using recreational drugs.**

**12%**  
(6,752)

**Frequent use of cannabis and/or any other recreational drug.**

**0.4%**  
(225)

**Frequent misuse of prescription drugs.**

**0.7%**  
(394)

**Both frequent use of recreational drugs and prescription drug misuse.**

### Primary types of recreational drugs:

#### Cannabis

**97%**

**97% use cannabis,** with 88% using cannabis at least once a week, and 35% who use cannabis daily or almost daily.

#### Hallucinogens

**17%**

**17% use hallucinogens.**

#### Cocaine

**11%**

**11% use cocaine.**



# RECREATIONAL AND DRUG USE HIGHLIGHTS

“The biggest problem driving addiction issues and abuse of alcohol and drugs in the legal profession is the fact that attorneys cannot easily get away from work mentally. This is not healthy. ... Lawyers often are expected to work under extreme mental stress for years with no respite.”

— AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE LAWYER IN A CORPORATE LAW DEPARTMENT

## REASONS FOR DRUG USE

**Men are more likely than women to frequently use recreational drugs (13.3% vs. 9.7%) equating to about 4,500 men and 2,100 women.**

**+/-**

**Younger lawyers** are more likely than older lawyers to use recreational drugs.

## Why lawyers frequently use recreational drugs or misuse prescription drugs:

**74%**

Reduce stress or relax

**67%**

Feel good or get high

**61%**

Help with sleep, pain and other health issues

**22%**

**22% of lawyers** aged 25-35 frequently use recreational drugs.

**93%**

**93% of frequent** recreational drug users or prescription drug misuser's **do not seek help.**



# THE OVERLAP OF MENTAL HEALTH, ALCOHOL USE AND DRUG USE HIGHLIGHTS

*"The stress of litigation, particularly criminal litigation and trials, can contribute to seeking to ease stress through drugs and alcohol."*

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

**Almost 24%  
of lawyers  
(7,000+)  
reported at least  
one wellness  
challenge  
including:**

## 3 common wellness challenges:

- ✓ Fair or poor mental health
- ✓ High risk use of alcohol
- ✓ Frequent recreational drug use/prescription drug misuse

13%

**Fair or  
poor  
mental  
health**

Over  
4%

**High-risk  
alcohol  
use  
disorder**

Almost  
7%

**Frequent  
recreational  
drug use/  
prescription  
drug misuse**

8%



**A combination of two  
or three wellness issues.**

1.3%



**Challenges in all three  
wellness areas.**

# GAMBLING HIGHLIGHTS

*"I think gambling issues are getting worse as it has become more accessible. I don't think we fully acknowledge how much of an issue this has become, especially sports betting among younger attorneys."*

- WHITE MALE LAWYER



**Problematic gambling**

**3% of all lawyers engage in problematic gambling.**

30% of problematic gamblers report **negative impact on personal life.**



**53% engage in gambling at least once a week.**

**12% gamble on a daily or almost daily basis.**

**Gambling is easier to hide than alcohol or drugs, and has no physical warning signs.**

*"I feel like problem gambling is not well-known; people don't know how to recognize the signs (even in themselves), and now sports betting is so pervasive. I think that's an area where additional education would be helpful."*

- FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT



**More frequent gambling**

Lawyers aged **25-35 reported more frequent gambling** than older lawyers.

**Majority of lawyers who gamble do it for the following reasons:**



*"Just another bad habit."*

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

**Escape from worries or problems**

*"My gambling is my form of entertainment as well as socialization."*

- ONE LAWYER RESPONDED

**Entertainment and fun**

**Recover money from previous losses**



# STRESS HIGHLIGHTS

"I'm a first year associate, and I feel overwhelmed/anxious most days, and I go home thinking about work. I have difficulties resting/sleeping through the night due to work worries/responsibilities. I have constant fear that I am unintelligent/incompetent and not doing enough but also feel exhausted throughout the workday. I have had regrets about becoming an attorney and moments of suicidal thoughts. I'm not sure if I need to seek help or if I need to overcome my issues myself to try to be a more efficient, hardworking attorney."

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

## STRESS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LEGAL PROFESSION

A relatively large proportion of respondents experience stress and related feelings on a weekly or daily basis:



# STRESS HIGHLIGHTS

"Being a lawyer in any capacity impacts your mental health. The stress is different in a corporate setting as compared to litigation. I have done both, and the challenges are different, but both impact your mental health."

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN A CORPORATE LAW DEPARTMENT

## PREVALENCE OF STRESS

**High percentage of lawyers report** workplace culture and policies negatively impact their mental health and wellness as follows:

"I have been overworked and underpaid at two law firms, and I have felt immense pressure to bill more hours despite lacking training or guidance to help me do so. I have also experienced micromanaging that became hostile, unrealistic expectations, backstabbing, office politics, downplaying my achievements and belittling my ideas. I had to call the suicide hotline 4 times while working for a firm that pushed me too far and never truly supported me. It was awful."

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM





# STRESS HIGHLIGHTS

*"The stress is affecting my physical and mental health."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A CORPORATE LAW DEPARTMENT

## WORK STRESS INDEX (WSI)



**27%**  
(more than 15,000)  
**have daily or  
weekly feelings  
of stress about  
work.**

**30%**

Experience  
**monthly  
feelings  
of stress.**

**23%**

23% of lawyers  
who **work over  
50 hours a week**  
have the **highest  
WSI scores.**

*"I have heard several lawyers talk about suicide  
due to stress in the last year."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE



**Judges experience  
less stress** than  
lawyers.



**More hours a  
lawyer works,**  
the greater  
the stress they  
experience.



**Lawyers who have the  
highest WSI scores have  
the most negative opinions  
about their workplace**  
and the impact on their  
overall mental health.



**66% of lawyers** believe their  
workplaces negatively impact their  
mental health, physical health, or  
overall wellness and **would  
consider leaving their job.**



**70% of lawyers** had previously  
**left a job** because it adversely  
impacted their mental  
and physical health and  
overall wellness.





# STRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Lawyers in work settings with certain specific policies set out below have significantly lower Work Stress Index (WSI) scores than lawyers without these policies:

## Encouragement

**Culture encourages** lawyers to seek assistance with mental health or substance use issues.



## Understanding

**Policy allows time off** for mental health or substance use issues.



## Knowledge

**Education or training** on mental health or substance use.



## Guidance

Policy sets forth **how lawyers can seek assistance** for mental health or substance use issues.



## Access

**Access** to professional counseling services.



## Positive Activities

Mindfulness and meditation **training**.



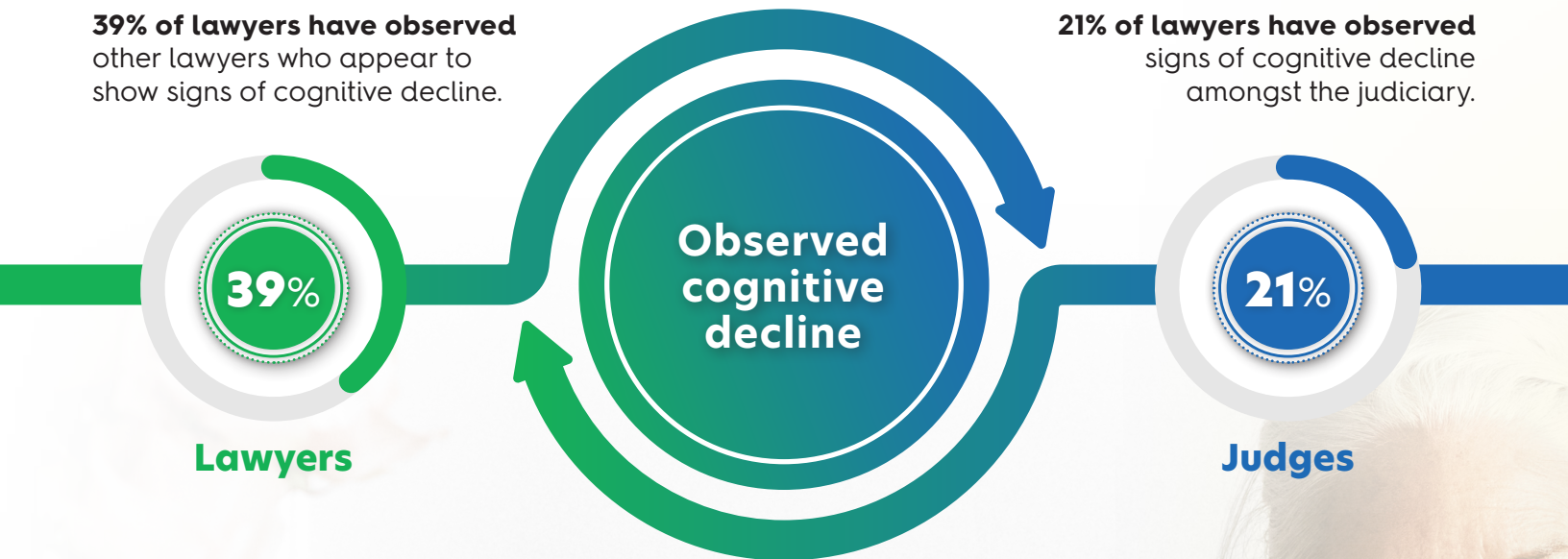
# COGNITIVE DECLINE AND RETIREMENT HIGHLIGHTS

*"Cognitive decline is only going to become a more serious issue in the profession over the next decade or so. It is essential that we create more pipelines for anonymous information-sharing with lawyers' support groups and state bars to allow lawyers to raise alarms about cognitive decline without having to fear retribution."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

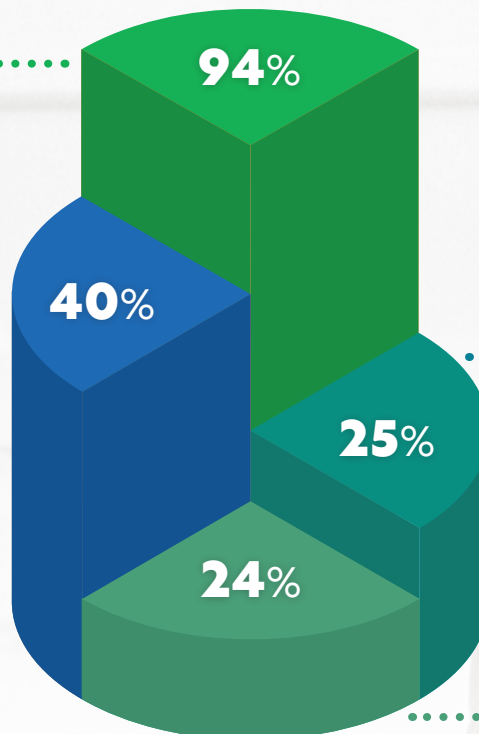
**39% of lawyers have observed** other lawyers who appear to show signs of cognitive decline.

**21% of lawyers have observed** signs of cognitive decline amongst the judiciary.



94% of lawyers believe **more resources should be made available to help** lawyers or judges experiencing cognitive decline.

**40% of lawyers 60 or older have no planned age** for retirement.



25% of lawyers plan to retire **before age 70.**

24% of lawyers plan to retire **when they are 70 or older.**

# 02.

## ***THE WEIGHT OF PRACTICE COMPREHENSIVE RESULTS***

**Mental health, alcohol, substance use, and overall wellness have become increasingly important topics to the legal profession, with numerous lawyers struggling under greater pressures and onerous demands in the workplace.**



# COMPREHENSIVE RESULTS

*"The leadership at the firm sets the tone for mental health. I think leaders/supervisors not only need better training at recognizing symptoms, but training on not exacerbating the symptoms. I think treating employees better has a significant positive impact on their mental health and quality of work."*

— WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

## **An estimated 11,000 Illinois lawyers rated their health as fair or poor, underscoring the scale of the mental health challenges identified by *The Weight of Practice*.**

This report aimed to assess the legal professions' challenges with mental health, alcohol, substance use, gambling and how they impact a lawyers work life, personal life and overall sense of well-being.

While a report does not clinically diagnose its respondents, it is useful to generate estimates of the population who, on a self-reported basis, are experiencing various well-being challenges. A report can also provide specifics about a lawyer's work, family and social experiences, and other factors that are essential to understanding what types of services and approaches can be effective in addressing and ameliorating wellness problems.

## Lawyer Well-being Challenges

Mental Health

Alcohol Use

Drug Use

Gambling

Vicarious Trauma

Stress

Cognitive Decline

## Core research questions focused on the following areas:

- How many Illinois lawyers have problems with respect to their mental health, alcohol use, drug use, gambling, and stress-related issues such as burnout and depression, especially to the point that their wellness and job performance are compromised?
- Which groups of lawyers are most susceptible to these wellness problems? For example, are younger lawyers or older lawyers more likely to be affected?
- What are the workplace and personal circumstances that lead to mental health problems, substance use, gambling problems, stress and burnout, and other wellness issues?
- How do these problems impact lawyers' practices and careers, and their personal lives?
- How often and when do lawyers seek help when facing mental health challenges, substance use, gambling problems, burnout, and other wellness-related issues?
- From whom do lawyers seek help?
- What do lawyers perceive as adverse consequences from seeking help or treatment?
- What types of support and treatment do lawyers find to be most effective?

# MENTAL HEALTH RESULTS

*"Had to take a leave of absence to attend an outpatient trauma and anxiety program."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A CORPORATE LAW DEPARTMENT

78%

78% of all lawyers surveyed said **mental health problems are very (41%) to somewhat (37%) common in their profession.**

20%

20% of all lawyers **view their mental health as only fair (16%) or poor (4%).** This is the equivalent of 11,000 lawyers in Illinois.

9%

9% of all **judges rated their mental health as fair (8%) or poor (1%).**

**25-35 year old lawyers rated their mental health lower than any other age group: 24% fair and 9% poor.**

There was **no significant difference between ethnic groups** in the reported level of mental health problems.

**Women rated their mental health slightly lower** (22% fair, 4%\* poor) **than men** (18% fair, 4% poor).

\* The number of respondents identifying their gender as other was too low to draw any statistically significant conclusions.

## ASKING FOR HELP

37%

**of lawyers who rated their mental health as fair or poor did not seek any form of help in the past year.** A variety of reasons were given including a belief they could handle it on their own, financial considerations, embarrassment, concerns about confidentiality, or concern about hurting their career.

63% of

**those who rated their mental health as fair or poor had received a professional diagnosis.** Depression and anxiety are the most commonly reported diagnoses. ADHD and PTSD are other common diagnoses.



**Of the 63% who sought help, 92% saw a therapist, physician, or treatment program.** Other sources of help included friends, family, or colleagues.

## SUICIDAL IDEATION

32%

**32% of lawyers reporting fair or poor mental health also reported having suicidal ideation** at least once during the past year. This is the equivalent of 3,500 lawyers.

**24% of the 32% experienced suicidal ideation** over the past two weeks.

*"Most of my suicidal thoughts are related to my job."*

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM



# MENTAL HEALTH RESULTS

*"Lack of interest in my work."*

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE

## IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH ON LIFE

**43% of lawyers** reporting fair or poor mental health **took time off or missed work** during the previous year due to mental health issues.

**91% reported feeling burnt out, 71% had poor attention, 57% did substandard work.** And, additional findings showed significant increase in poor judgment, relationship problems at work and poor performance in front of others.

2%, or the **equivalent of 220 lawyers,** reported **undergoing disciplinary action.**

**Over half of lawyers** reporting fair or poor mental health also **reported that a spouse, family member or coworker expressed concern** about their mental health in the previous year.

**Lawyers** reporting fair or poor mental health also report **experiencing anger or irritability,** having **fewer friends, missing family or social events,** having **financial trouble** and **neglecting family relationships.**

**75% of lawyers reporting fair or poor mental health often or very often feel:**

| Negative feelings about self in the past year among lawyers with fair or poor mental health | Often or very often |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Feel nervous, anxious, panicky, or on edge                                                  | 75%                 |
| Find it difficult to stop or control worrying                                               | 63%                 |
| Feel down, depressed, or hopeless                                                           | 52%                 |
| Feel unable to control the important things in their life                                   | 50%                 |
| Feel little interest or pleasure in doing things that matter                                | 44%                 |
| Feel they were not worth much as a person                                                   | 31%                 |
| Experience flashbacks or nightmares                                                         | 18%                 |

**A large percentage of lawyers who self-report fair or poor mental health experienced**

**67%**

experienced **worse mental health** in the past year.

**59%**

**no longer have interest in activities** they used to enjoy.

**59%**

59% have **worse physical health.**

**57%**

57% have **poor self-care.**

# ALCOHOL USE RESULTS

*"I know alcohol is a response and not a cause of strife in my life."*

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE

## ALCOHOL USE, MISUSE AND THE IMPACT ON LAWYERS

85% of lawyers reported drinking in the past year:

Few times  
a month

50%

Several  
times  
a week

22%

4+ times  
a week  
(6,700 lawyers)

12%

Almost  
daily  
(5,000 lawyers)

9%

Yes  
Binge  
drinking

18%

More than  
8,600

18% reported binge drinking at least once in the past year – binge drinking is defined as more than 4 drinks in 2 hours for women and for men, more than 5 drinks in 2 hours.

## FREQUENCY AND AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL USE IN THOSE WHO DRANK IN THE PAST YEAR

35% of lawyers report drinking alcohol both on weekends and during the week. And, consumes the following when drinking:



26% (5,200) of lawyers who drink alcohol 4 times a week to almost every day consume at least 4-5 drinks per occasion, among the lawyers who drink at this high level, about 6% (1,900) consume 6 drinks or more per occasion.



15% of lawyers reported no drinking in the past year.

28%

Over 28% (13,100) of lawyers reported they drank more alcohol than intended or had trouble stopping over the past year.

5% (2,400) said they drank more than intended or had trouble stopping on a **monthly** basis.

2.5% (1,200) said they drank more than intended or had trouble stopping on a **weekly** or daily basis.



27% (13,000) reported alcohol use increases under stress, with 40% (about 5,200) of this subgroup engaging in stress drinking either monthly, weekly or even daily.



# ALCOHOL USE RESULTS

"I do not believe that my drinking is a problem. I usually have at most two, except certain occasions. My friend expressed a concern over my gravitation towards high proof spirits."

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

## LAWYERS WITH MODERATE TO HIGH RISK FOR ALCOHOL USE DISORDER

**23% (11,000) who drank** in the past year identified as **moderate risk** for alcohol use disorder.



**11% (5,400) who drank** in the past year identified as **high risk** of alcohol use disorder.

**82% (4,400) of high-risk drinkers did not seek help for their drinking due to:**



**70% feel** they **can handle it** on their own.



**52% enjoy drinking** and don't want to stop.



**Lack of time and embarrassment** were among the other reasons.



**Behaviors of lawyers with high-risk for alcohol use disorder do not go unnoticed,** 50% of lawyers in this category report that a spouse or partner has expressed concern.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES

**Men drink more often than women and are at a higher risk for alcohol related issues.**

Men are **2.5 times as likely** as women to **have high risk of alcohol use disorder** (15% vs. 6%).

**18% of men drink alcohol 4 or more times a week compared to 10% of women.**

**11% of men drink alcohol daily or almost daily compared to 7% of women.**

Men are **1.7 times more likely** as women to engage in **high frequency of drinking alcohol.**

"I experienced racism and sexism."

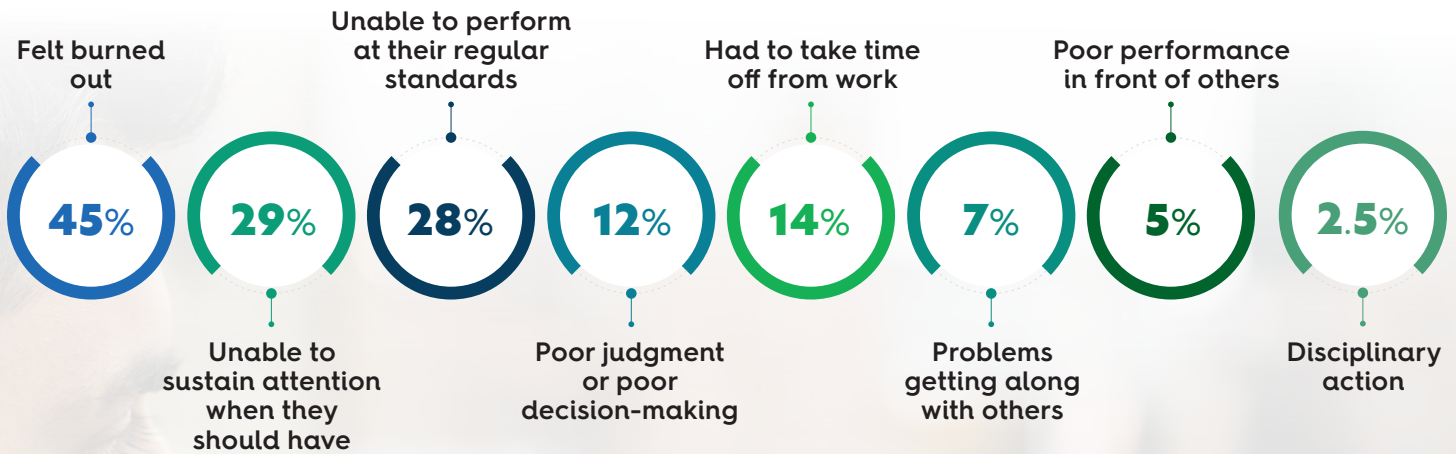
- AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

# ALCOHOL USE RESULTS

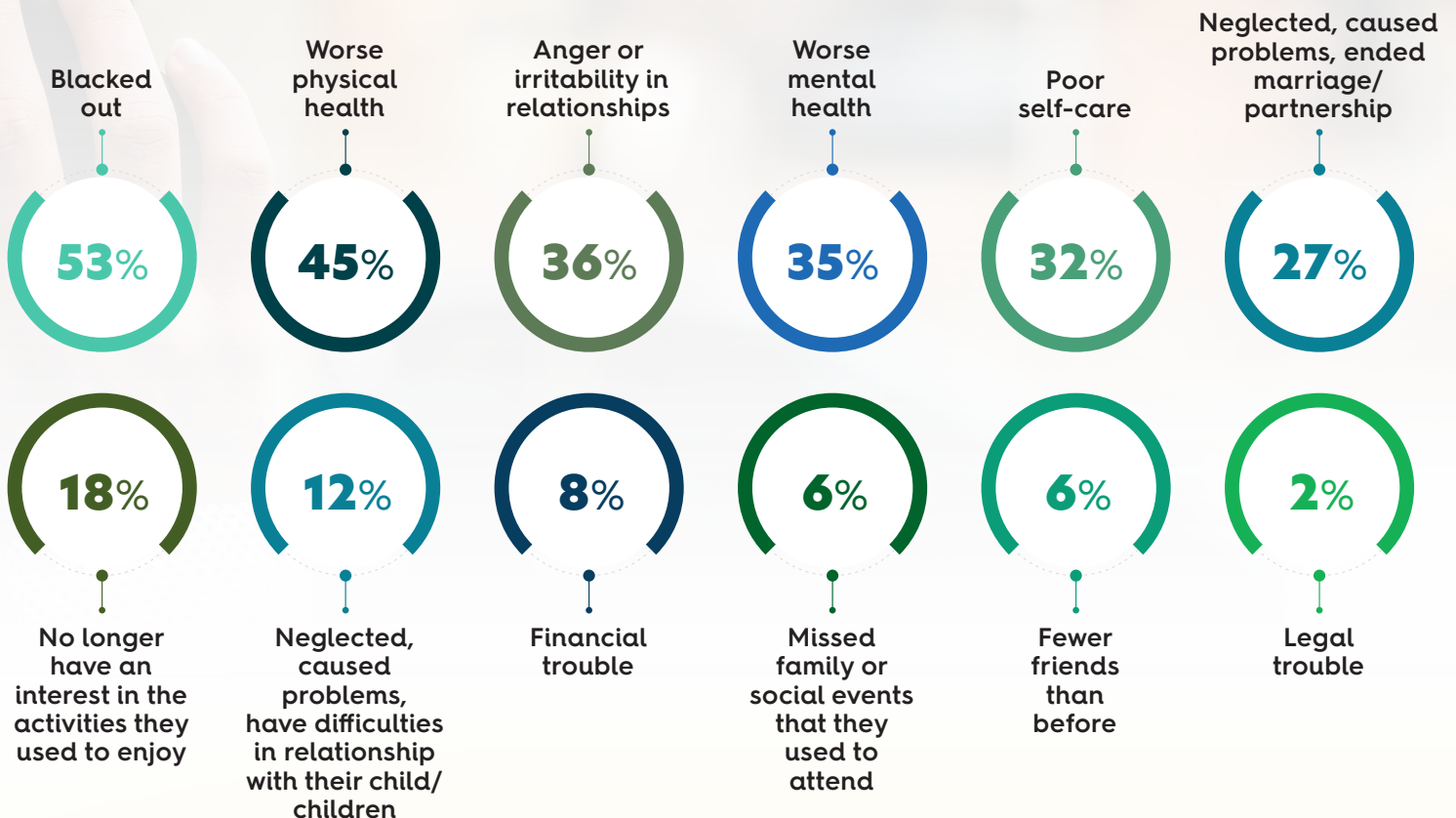
*"Financial concerns often lead to increased alcohol and drug usage."*

- HISPANIC/LATINO MALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE

## IMPACT OF HIGH-RISK ALCOHOL USE ON WORK



## IMPACT OF HIGH-RISK ALCOHOL USE ON PERSONAL LIFE





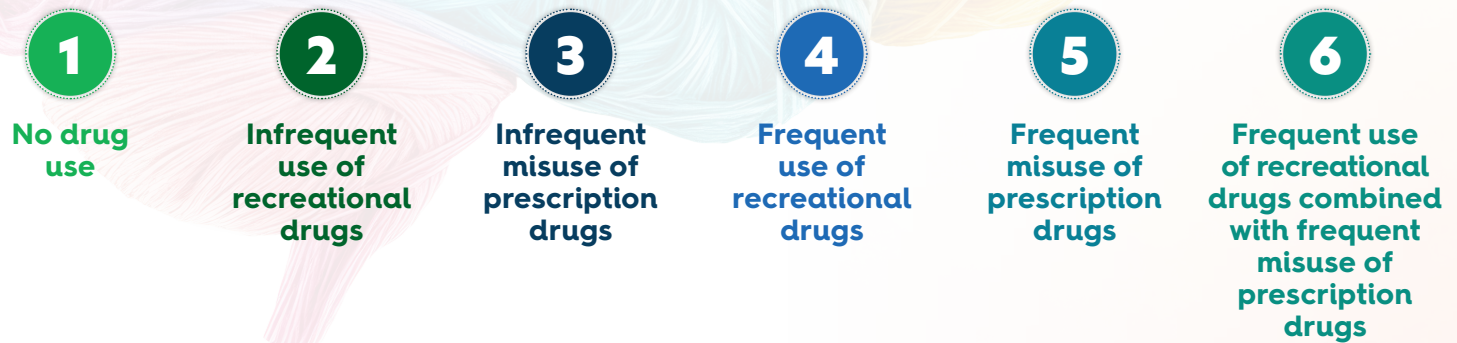
# RECREATIONAL AND DRUG USE RESULTS

*"Family and criminal law are emotionally burdensome and have needy clients that stress me out, and sometimes the quickest release is a glass of wine or smoke pot to make my brain turn off."*

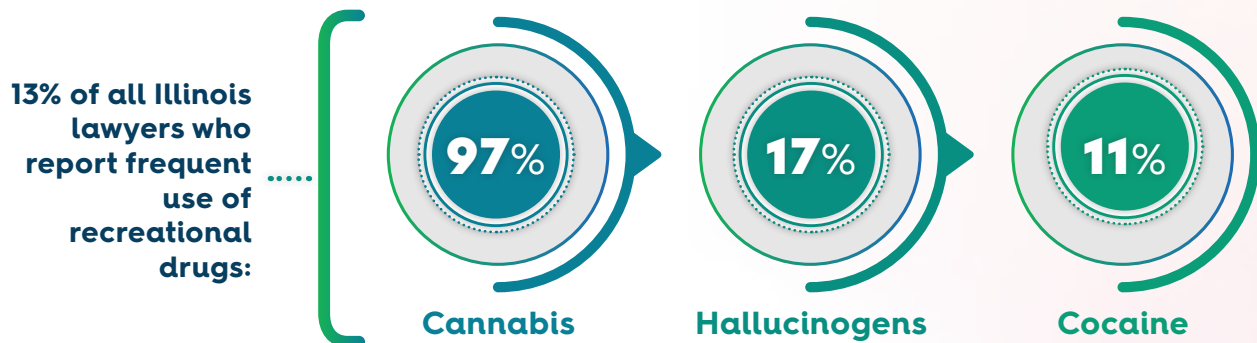
- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

## RECREATIONAL AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The Study examines drug use among Illinois lawyers, distinguishing recreational drug use from prescription drug misuse through a six-category drug use index:



### Primary types of recreational drugs

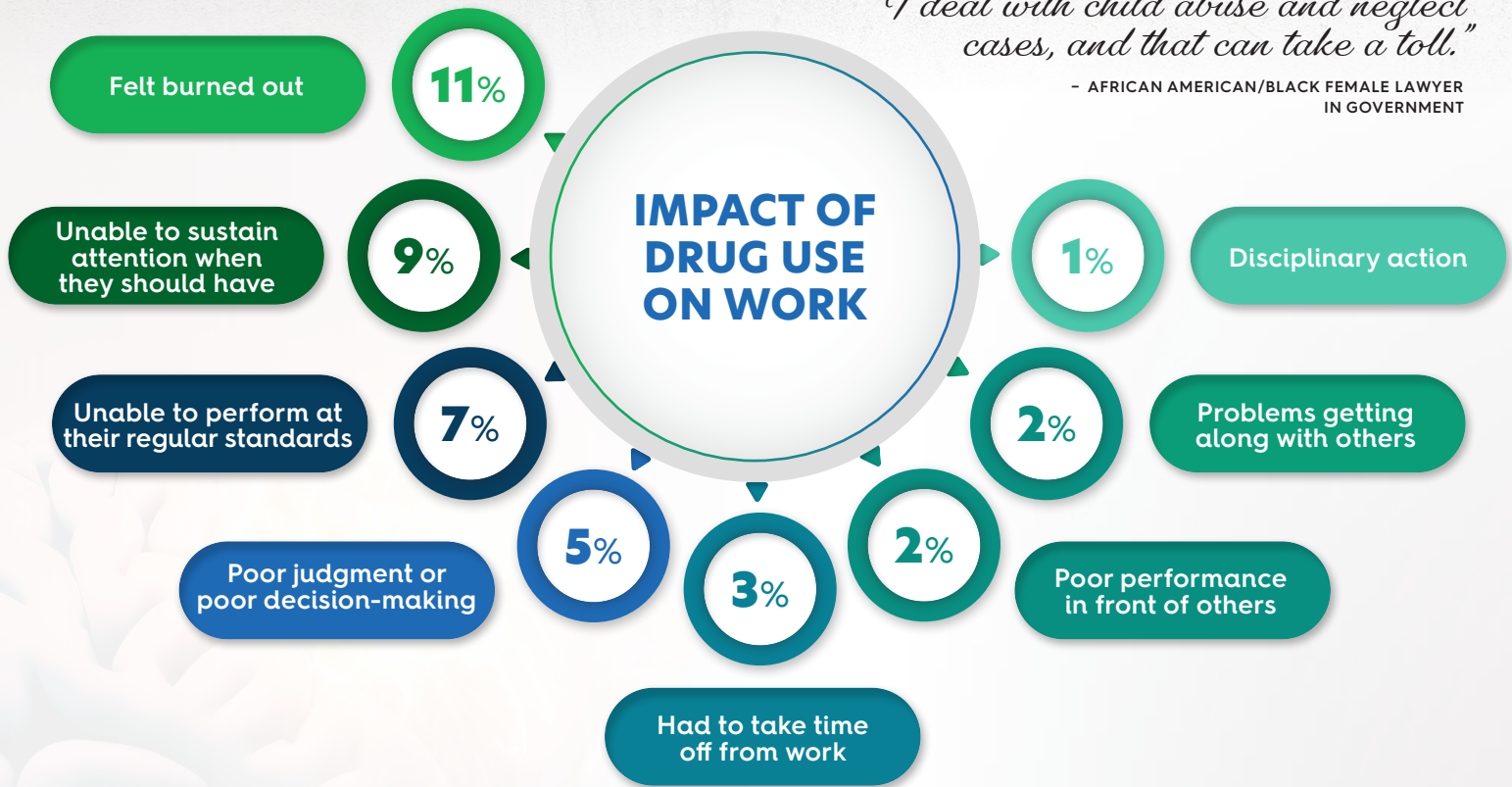


| Combinations of recreational drug use in the past year     | %           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Cannabis only (e.g., pot, vape, or edibles containing THC) | 79% (5,276) |
| Hallucinogens only (e.g., LSD, mushrooms, mescaline)       | 1% (50)     |
| Cocaine only                                               | 2% (113)    |
| Cannabis and hallucinogens                                 | 11% (743)   |
| Cannabis and cocaine                                       | 5% (306)    |
| Cannabis, hallucinogens, and cocaine                       | 3% (209)    |

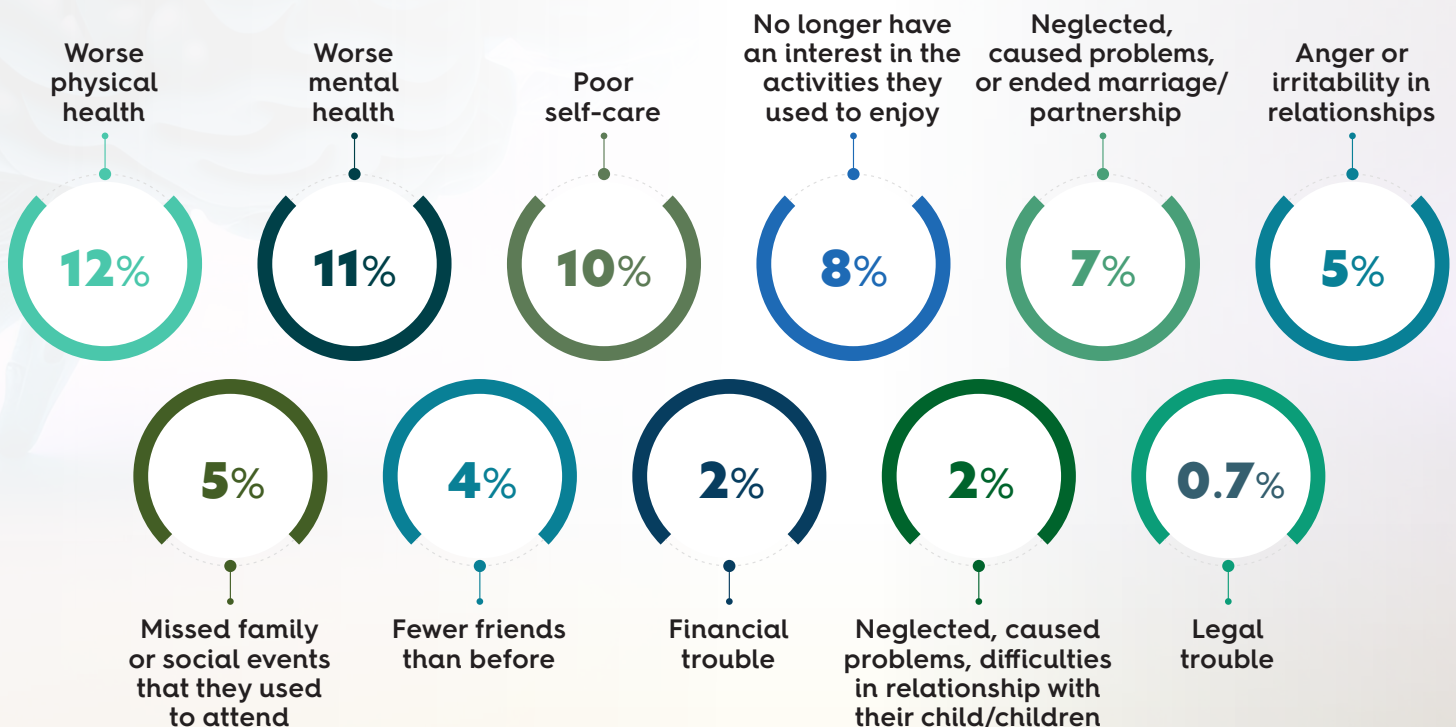
# RECREATIONAL AND DRUG USE RESULTS

*"I deal with child abuse and neglect cases, and that can take a toll."*

– AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK FEMALE LAWYER  
IN GOVERNMENT



## IMPACT OF DRUG USE ON PERSONAL LIFE





# RECREATIONAL AND DRUG USE RESULTS

*"Focus more on structural solutions to promoting well-being and less on burden on individuals to practice self-care on their own."*

— WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN LEGAL AID

## SUMMARY FINDINGS EMPLOYING THE DRUG USE INDEX

- 1** Most Illinois lawyers reported no drug use or prescription misuse in the past year: 78%, or approximately 43,889 lawyers, based upon the total number of licensed attorneys in the state.
- 2** About 22% (about 12,491) reported some level of drug use or misuse, of which 13% (about 7,371) lawyers reported frequent drug usage. See page 38 for drug use category 4, 5, and 6.
- 3** The 'frequent recreational drug use' is almost entirely cannabis-related (97% of "frequent recreational" use).
- 4** Other types of primary substances in the frequent recreational drug use group were hallucinogens at 17% and cocaine at 11%.
- 5** Prescription drug (including anxiolytic and opioids) misuse was reported by less than 1% of lawyers.
- 6** Frequent drug use is more common among younger attorneys, which has been identified in other published studies investigating attorney substance use.
- 7** The identified reasons for frequent use were:
  - a. stress relief (74%)
  - b. feel good/get high (67%)
  - c. help with sleep, pain or health issues (61%)
  - d. stay awake, concentrate or increase energy (14%)
  - e. be social/fit in (12%)
  - f. curiosity/experiment (9%)
- 8** 1/4 of frequent drug users reported one or more negative impact on their personal lives including worse physical health (12%), worse mental health (11%), and poor self-care (10%).
- 9** 7% of frequent users reported they sought help for their drug use.
- 10** The primary **barriers** for getting help identified:
  - a. enjoying drug use
  - b. believing they could handle it
  - c. concerns about privacy, and possible negative effects on their career.
  - d. hurt my reputation or carry a stigma
- 11** Approximately 80% of frequent drug users reported no significant impact on their work from substance use.



# THE OVERLAP OF MENTAL HEALTH, ALCOHOL USE AND DRUG USE RESULTS

*"I'm looking for alternatives for pain relief."*  
- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE

## Three common wellness challenges:

- ✓ Fair or poor mental health
- ✓ High risk use of alcohol
- ✓ Frequent recreational drug use/ prescription drug misuse



**1.3% of lawyers have challenges in all 3 areas.**

## 32.3% of all lawyers (18,119) have the following wellness challenges:

24% of all lawyers have a **wellness challenge in only ONE area.**



(7,315) have fair or poor mental health



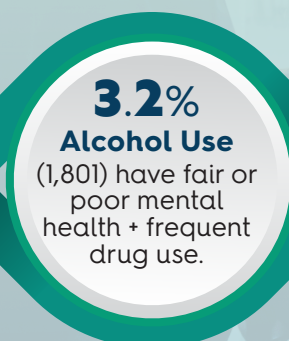
(2,363) have high-risk alcohol use



(3,714) have frequent drug use



7% of all lawyers have **challenges in TWO areas.**



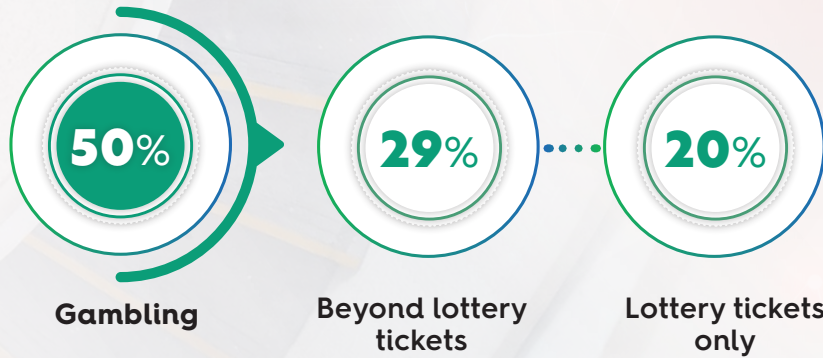
*"Had to close down my practice."*  
- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN SOLO PRACTICE



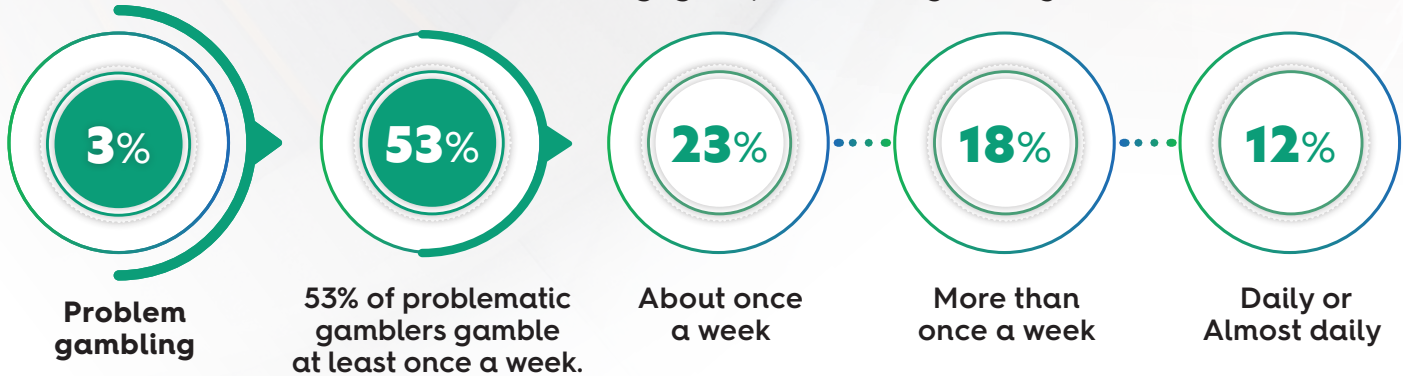
# GAMBLING RESULTS

## PROBLEMATIC GAMBLING AND ITS IMPACT ON LAWYERS

50% of all lawyers engaged in some form of gambling.



Of the 3% that engage in problematic gambling:



To determine the extent to which Illinois lawyers engage in problematic gambling, we asked the 49% of lawyers who had done any gambling in the past year to answer **three screening questions**, derived from research showing that these questions consistently differentiate between problem and non-problem gambling.

**1**  
I have often bet more money than I planned to.  
(6%)

**2**  
I have lied to my family, friends, or co-workers about how much I gambled.  
(3%)

**3**  
My gambling has caused financial difficulties.  
(1%)

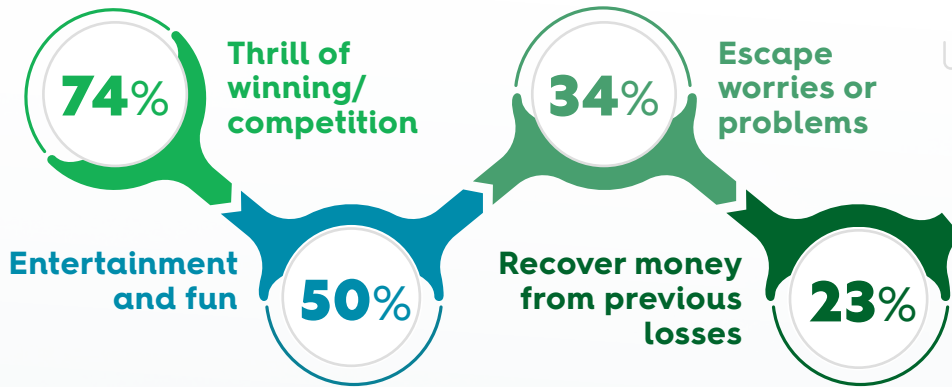
Of the lawyers who gambled in the past year, **6% answered "yes" to one or more of the screening questions**. This equals 3% of all lawyers or about 1,688 Illinois lawyers.

# GAMBLING RESULTS

*"I reached out for help for my gambling in previous years. The gambling this year was in the first quarter and has since stopped."*

— WHITE MALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

The majority of lawyers with problematic gambling do it for the following reasons:



**Lawyers aged 25-35** are more likely to engage in problematic gambling (13%), compared to older lawyers (6% or less).

**16% of problematic gamblers** reported an adverse impact

of gambling on work, including poor judgment/decision making, substandard performance, burn out, unable to sustain attention, and missing work.



*"It is recreational."*

— AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK FEMALE LAWYER IN NON-PROFIT



**Only 3% sought help for their problematic gambling.** Reasons for not seeking help included a belief that they can handle it, they enjoy/don't want to stop, fear of stigma and being embarrassed.



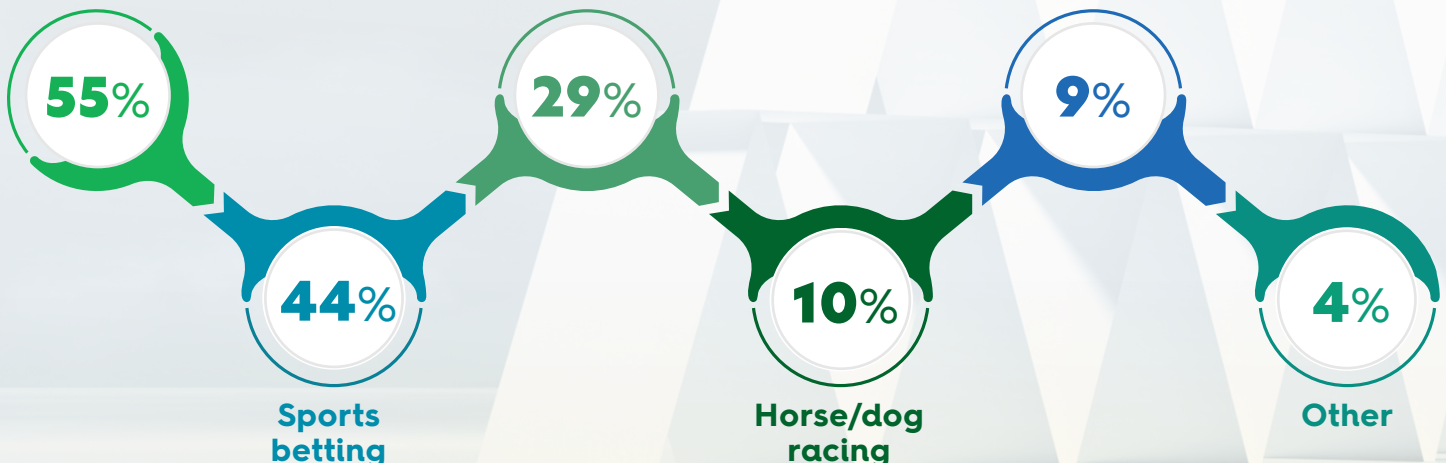
**30% of problematic gamblers reported that their gambling negatively impacted** their personal lives, including financial problems, anger and irritability, and declining mental health.

**Activities like poker, sports betting, or options-style wagering** can resemble decision-making that many lawyers experience in their practice: incomplete information, high stakes, and the possibility of "outperforming" others through skill and judgment.

Casino games/  
slot machines

Private gambling  
(friends/family/co-workers)

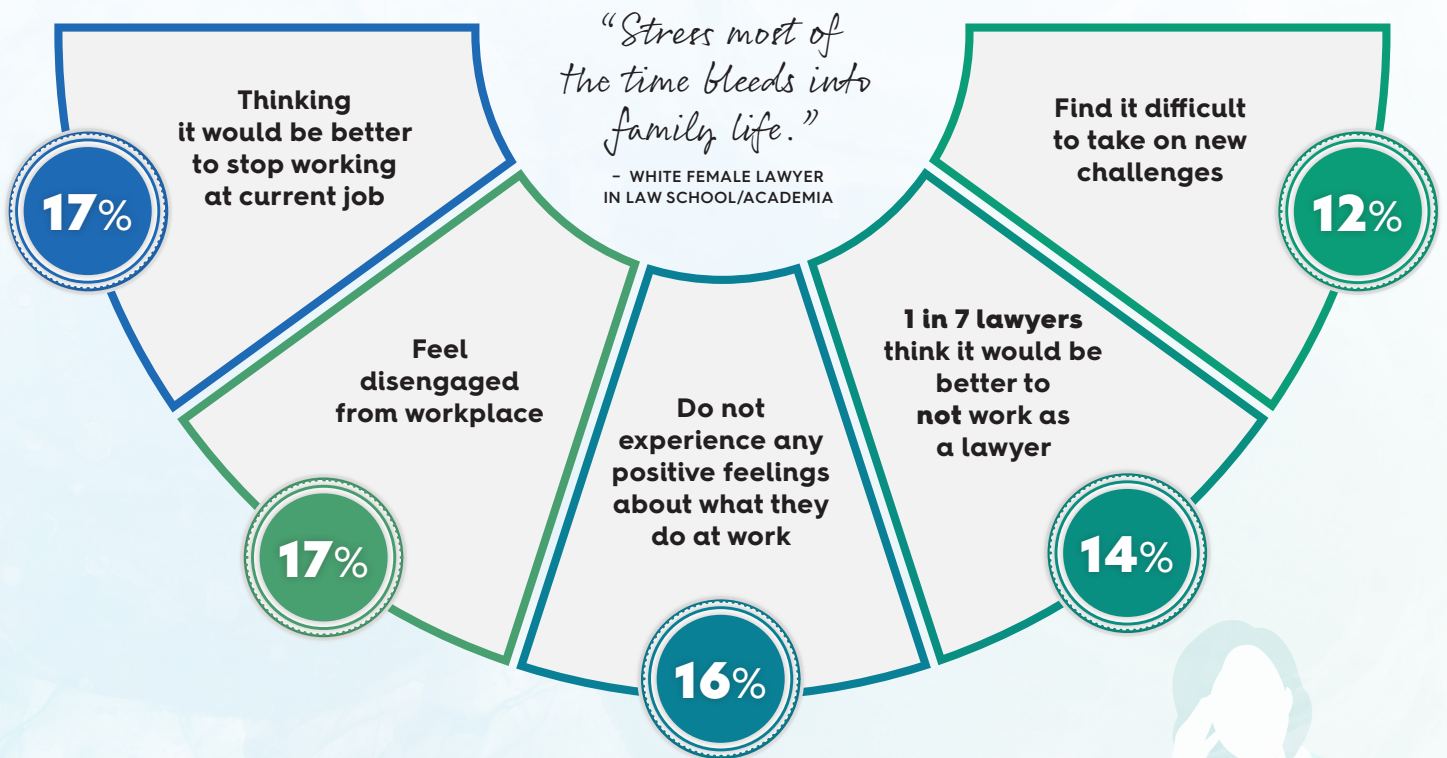
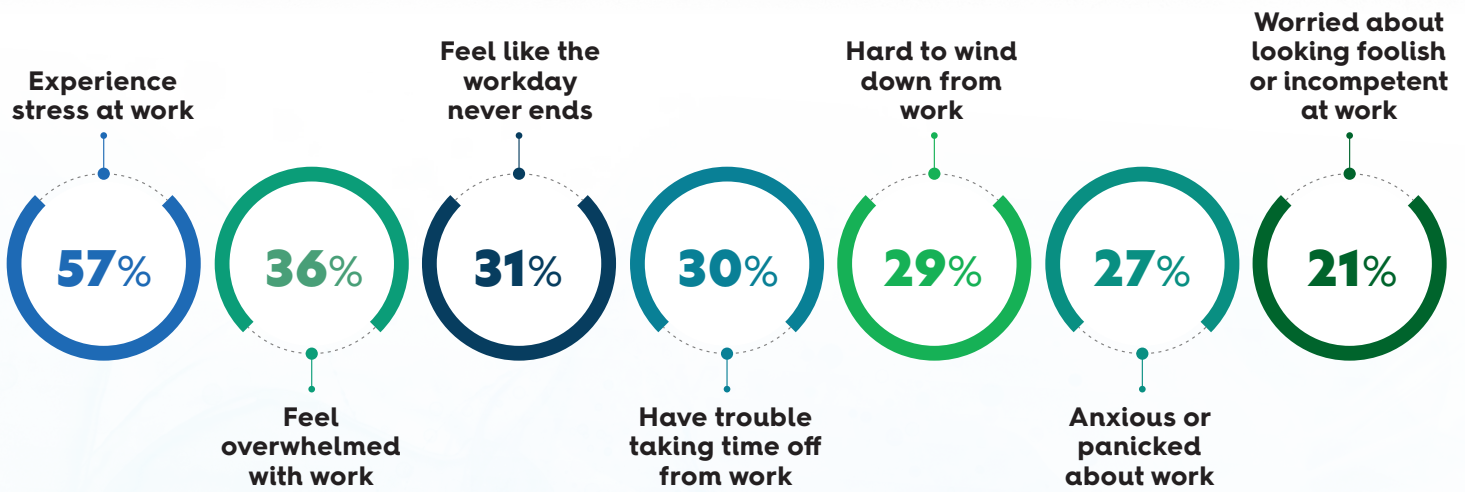
Online  
gambling





# STRESS RESULTS

When polled about 12 questions related to stress and their work, a large percentage of respondents' experience stress and related feelings on a weekly or daily basis:



Using the Work Stress Index created by the Survey related to stress and work, we can conclude the following:

- 4% (2,251) rarely or never feel stress
- 39% (21,944) experience stress a few times a year
- 30% (16,880) experience stress monthly
- 19% (10,691) experience stress weekly
- 8% (4,501) experience stress daily

# STRESS RESULTS

"I think being a homeless bum would be better than being a lawyer. If I didn't have a family, I would prefer to live on the streets."

- WHITE MALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT

There is a linear relationship between viewing their workplace as positive or negative and feelings of stress and overall wellness as follows:



(21,945)  
of lawyers  
view workplace  
as **somewhat  
positive.**



(14,630)  
of lawyers view  
workplace as  
very **positive.**



(9,566)  
of lawyers view  
workplace as  
**somewhat  
negative.**



(7,315)  
of lawyers say  
workplace has  
**no impact at all**  
on wellness.



(2,813)  
of lawyers view  
workplace as  
**very negative.**



Lawyers who are more satisfied working as a lawyer are much **less likely to experience stress** about work.



Judges have lower work stress index levels compared to lawyers.

Gender was not a significant factor related to work stress experiences, but age was a major factor. Younger lawyers (25-35) have highest level of WSI scores.



of lawyers  
**aged 25-35**  
reported their  
workplace had  
a negative  
impact on their  
well-being.



of lawyers  
**aged 36-45**  
reported their  
workplace had  
a negative  
impact on their  
well-being.



of lawyers  
**aged 46-55**  
reported their  
workplace had  
a negative  
impact on their  
well-being.



of lawyers  
**aged 56-65**  
reported their  
workplace  
had a negative  
impact on  
their well-being.



of lawyers  
**aged 66-75**  
reported their  
workplace had  
a negative  
impact on their  
well-being.



of lawyers **over  
75** reported  
their workplace  
had a negative  
impact on their  
well-being.

**66% of lawyers who acknowledge a workplace having a negative effect on their mental health, physical health, or overall wellness would consider leaving their current job.**



**Agree**



**Strongly agree**



**No opinion**

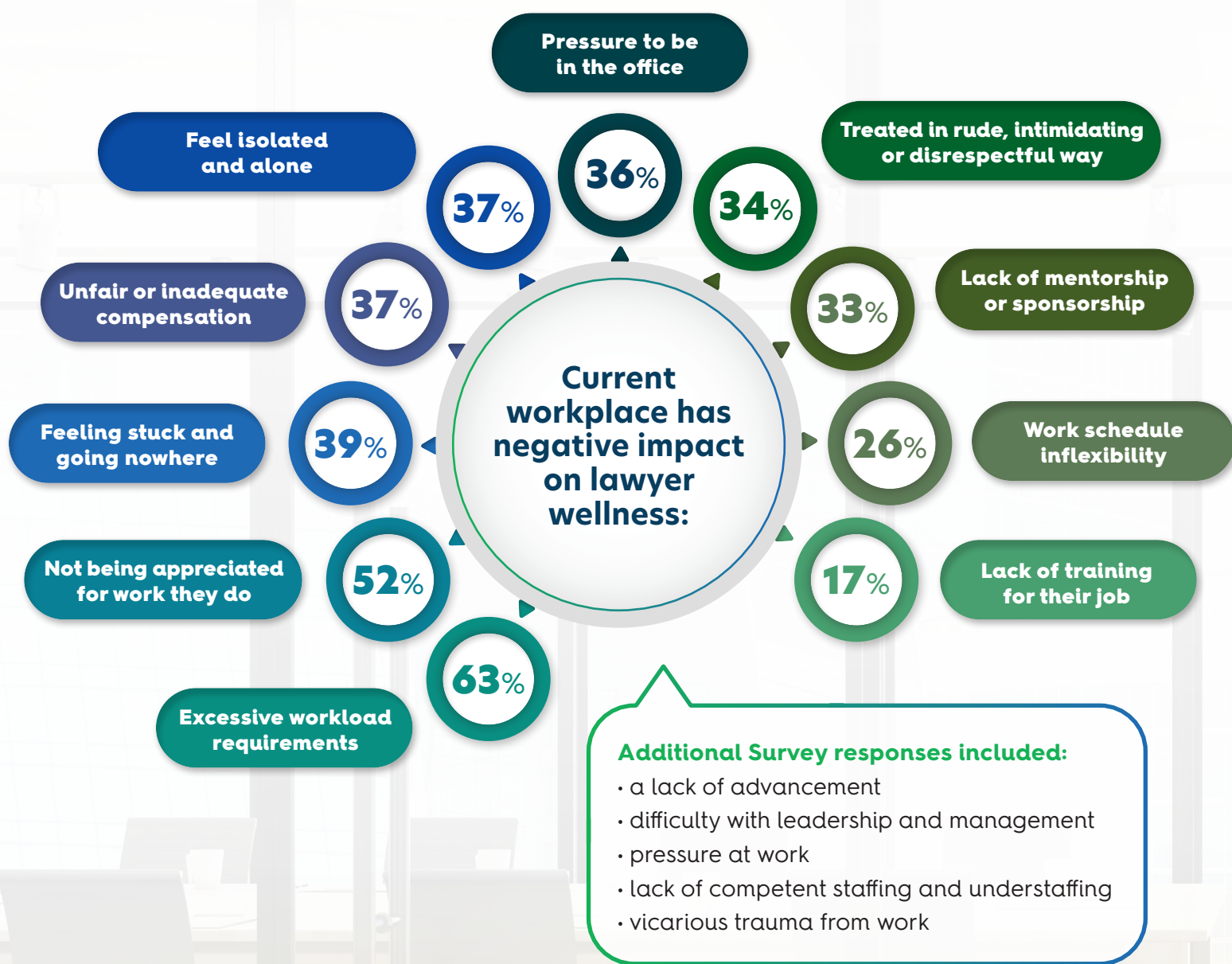


# STRESS RESULTS

The more hours a lawyer works, the more likely they are to experience stress at work:

## Hours worked per week

|                                  |                                                        |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Highest work stress index        | 6% (3,376) of lawyers work <b>over 60 hours</b> a week |
| Second highest work stress index | 17% (9,566) of lawyers work <b>51-60 hours</b> a week  |
| Third highest work stress index  | 42% (23,633) of lawyers work <b>41-50 hours</b> a week |
| Fourth highest work stress index | 23% (12,942) of lawyers work <b>31-40 hours</b> a week |



# STRESS RESULTS

"The work is crushing. The deadlines daunting. And there is no culture for feedback or being heard. Money is the bottom line."

- HISPANIC/LATINO MALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

## Employers with workplace policies and wellness practices have lawyers who report lower work stress.

They have workplace cultures that support getting help for mental health and substance use issues, a leave policy that allows time off to get help, education about mental health issues, a written policy about how to seek help for problems, access to counseling services, and mindfulness and meditation training.

70%



70% of lawyers said they **left jobs because their workplace negatively impacted their mental health, physical health, or overall wellness.** Stress is a major reason why lawyers leave their jobs.



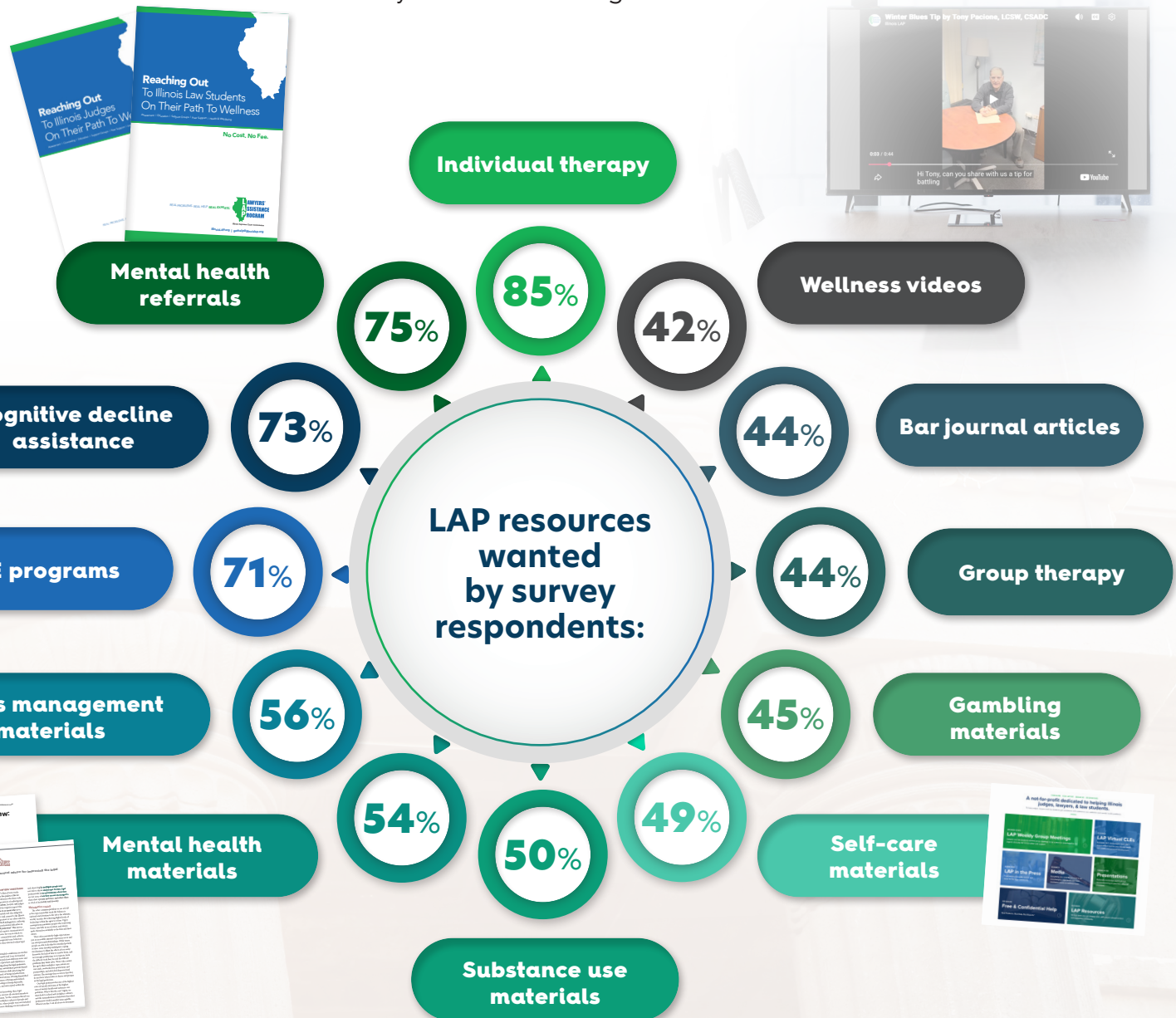
"I left the traditional law firm practice after three years because of the intense mental abuse inflicted on me by the managing partner there. I genuinely believe had I not left that job, I would have just walked in front of a bus one day after work."

- WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN THE JUDICIARY



# LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LAP) SUPPORT AND SERVICES

The Illinois LAP is well-known by Illinois lawyers and judges, only 7% of respondents had never heard of it. They want the following services:



*"I think offering resources, guidance, CLEs, mentorship, and encouragement for lawyers to recognize their addictions and seek help without becoming ostracized for it would be beneficial. People are concerned about negative perceptions, and so although it's extremely common for lawyers to suffer from addictions or mental health conditions, we do so in silence. Bar associations have a unique ability to foster community and support for lawyers who are struggling alone."*

— MULTIRACIAL FEMALE IN GOVERNMENT

# APPENDIX

## DEMOGRAPHICS, EMPLOYMENT, AND LOCATION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

### AGE AND YEAR OF LAW SCHOOL GRADUATION

The age of Survey respondents parallels the age categories of the population of Illinois lawyers, after the appropriate statistical weighting. **The median age is 49.** Consistent with a wide age range, there is a broad span of years practicing law, with graduation from law school as early as 1952 and up to and including 2025. **The median year of graduation is 2004.**

| Age     | Weighted |
|---------|----------|
| 25-35   | 17%      |
| 36-45   | 25%      |
| 46-55   | 22%      |
| 56-65   | 19%      |
| 66-75   | 13%      |
| Over 75 | 5%       |

### GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Gender was well represented in this survey, with slight over-sampling of female participants (42%) and under-sampling of male respondents (56%) compared to the population of Illinois lawyers.<sup>1</sup> **The average age of female respondents was 46, and the average age of male respondents was 54,** a result that is not unexpected given that older classes of law school graduates had noticeably fewer women than men, and women lawyers are more likely to leave the practice of law than men. A small percentage (2%) either did not declare a gender or identified as non-binary. Regarding sexual orientation, **the large majority of respondents reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual (90%),** with 4% as gay/lesbian, 3% bisexual, and 3% other or preferred not to answer.

| Gender identity | Weighted |
|-----------------|----------|
| Female          | 42%      |
| Male            | 56%      |
| Other           | 0.6%     |
| No response     | 1.4%     |

| Sexual orientation         | %   |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Heterosexual/Straight      | 90% |
| Gay/Lesbian                | 4%  |
| Bisexual                   | 3%  |
| Other/Prefer not to answer | 3%  |

*“I feel like alcohol use in particular is embedded in our being when we are in law school. I remember at orientation, they gave us a talk about alcohol and drug use being prevalent amongst attorneys, and then we walked out into the hall to find someone had hung up notices of our first happy hour. We literally had happy hour posters up weekly for different events. Drinking totally used to be how I would unwind on a Friday evening for years after graduating law school (some weeknights too).”*

– WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN GOVERNMENT



## APPENDIX

### VETERANS

A small number of respondents are veterans (5%), and the vast majority (88%) of veterans completed their service 11 or more years ago.

| Veteran status | %   |
|----------------|-----|
| Yes            | 5%  |
| No             | 95% |

| Completed service   | %   |
|---------------------|-----|
| 20 years ago +      | 74% |
| 11–20 years ago     | 13% |
| 6–10 years ago      | 7%  |
| I am still serving  | 4%  |
| Within past 5 years | 3%  |

### RACE AND ETHNICITY

The large majority of respondents were Caucasian (82%). There was about an equal percentage of African American and Hispanic/Latin lawyers: 4% in each category; with 3% of the sample identifying as Asian/Asian American, 2% identifying as multiracial, and less than 1% identifying as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island or American Indian/Alaska Native.

| Race/Ethnicity                   | %     |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Caucasian                        | 82%   |
| African American                 | 4%    |
| Hispanic                         | 4%    |
| Asian/Asian American             | 3%    |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | LT 1% |
| American Indian/Alaska Native    | LT 1% |
| Middle Eastern or North African  | LT 1% |
| Multiracial                      | 2%    |
| Other/Prefer not to answer       | 3%    |

### DISABILITY STATUS

6% of respondents report having an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Extrapolating to the population of Illinois lawyers, that is over 3,300 lawyers. Among those lawyers, 22% require an accommodation to work.

| Do you have an impairment that substantially limits major life activity? | %   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Yes                                                                      | 6%  |
| No                                                                       | 91% |
| Prefer not to answer                                                     | 3%  |

| Do you require an accommodation to work? | %   |
|------------------------------------------|-----|
| Yes                                      | 22% |
| No                                       | 78% |

### MARITAL STATUS

Most lawyers in the Survey sample were married (70%) or in a domestic relationship (6%). A smaller proportion reported being single or never married (14%), divorced (8%), separated (1%), or widowed (2%).

Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers and occasionally rounding results in group percentages that do not total exactly 100%.

| Marital status                           | %   |
|------------------------------------------|-----|
| Married                                  | 70% |
| Single, never married                    | 14% |
| Divorced                                 | 8%  |
| Living with partner/domestic partnership | 6%  |
| Widowed                                  | 2%  |
| Separated                                | 1%  |

### LOCATION OF LAWYERS' PRACTICE

The majority of respondents base their practice in the First Appellate District (61%), which encompasses all of Cook County, including the City of Chicago and multiple surrounding suburbs. From 9 to 12% of respondents practice in each of the other districts: the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Appellate Districts.

| Location of practice      | %   |
|---------------------------|-----|
| First Appellate District  | 61% |
| Second Appellate District | 9%  |
| Third Appellate District  | 9%  |
| Fourth Appellate District | 12% |
| Fifth Appellate District  | 9%  |

### EMPLOYMENT

The vast majority of respondents are actively practicing law (95%), with most practicing throughout the entire year (90%). That said, at the time of the Survey in November–December 2025, 5% of respondents who had registered with the ARDC in 2025 did not work in a job that requires a law degree.

| In the past year, worked in a job that requires a law degree                 | %   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Throughout the past year                                                     | 90% |
| Part of the past year and currently work in a job that requires a law degree | 5%  |
| Part of the past year but no longer work in a job that requires a law degree | 1%  |
| No                                                                           | 4%  |

"Fewer in-office days would be enormously beneficial to my mental health, mainly because it would save 2+ hours that I could spend with my family or sleeping."

– WHITE FEMALE LAWYER IN A LAW FIRM

## APPENDIX

### TYPE OF EMPLOYER

#### Most respondents work in law firms (61%).

Many respondents also work in government (18%) or corporate law departments (10%). Another 5% of respondents work in various non-profit settings, such as legal aid, other non-profits, or law schools/academia. **2% of respondents are judges**, and another 1% work in a court system.

Of respondents in private practice, two thirds (67%) work either as **solo practitioners (32%)** or in **smaller firms of 2-5 lawyers (26%)** or 6-10 lawyers (9%). Another 18% of respondents work in mid-size firms of from 11 to 100 respondents. A small percentage (2%) work in larger firms of up to 250 lawyers. A sizable percentage — 13% — work in firms of 250 lawyers or more.

### PRACTICE AREA

Just over a quarter of respondents (26%) work in litigation; the remaining 74% are spread across an array of practice areas, as shown in the table below.

| Practice area                                   | %   |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Civil Litigation                                | 26% |
| Business / Corporate / Commercial               | 13% |
| Government                                      | 11% |
| Criminal Law                                    | 10% |
| Family / Domestic Relations                     | 8%  |
| Property (Real Estate, Land Use, Environmental) | 6%  |
| Estate Planning / Probate                       | 5%  |
| General Practice                                | 5%  |
| Employment / Labor                              | 4%  |
| Immigration                                     | 2%  |
| Other                                           | 10% |

| Type of employer                       | %   |
|----------------------------------------|-----|
| Law firm, including solo practitioners | 61% |
| Government                             | 18% |
| Corporate law department               | 10% |
| Judiciary                              | 3%  |
| Legal aid                              | 2%  |
| Non-profit                             | 2%  |
| Law school/Academia                    | 1%  |
| Other                                  | 2%  |

| Lawyers in private practice: Firm size | %   |
|----------------------------------------|-----|
| Solo practitioner                      | 32% |
| 2-5 lawyers                            | 26% |
| 6-10 lawyers                           | 9%  |
| 11-50 lawyers                          | 15% |
| 51-100 lawyers                         | 3%  |
| 101-249 lawyers                        | 2%  |
| 250 or more lawyers                    | 13% |

### LEVEL OF SENIORITY

#### For those respondents who work in corporate or non-profit settings,

20% are in a senior role, with 11% in the position of General Counsel or an equivalent role and 9% in the position of Deputy General Counsel or an equivalent role. 11% work as supervising or managing attorneys. Other respondents are largely in more junior or mid-level roles (62%) with contract or other attorneys.

#### In law firms — where the majority of respondents work — the distribution of seniority is somewhat different.

**38% of respondents are equity partners, 27% are non-equity partners or counsel, 32% are associates**, with 3% in staff attorney or contract attorney roles. The relatively large percentage of equity partners likely reflects that the majority of firms are small in size where the criteria for promotion as an equity partner are more flexible than in very large firms.

| Level of seniority: Corporate and Non-profit settings  | %   |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| General Counsel, Executive Director or equivalent role | 11% |
| Deputy General Counsel or equivalent role              | 9%  |
| Supervising or Managing Attorney                       | 11% |
| Senior Counsel/Senior Attorney or equivalent role      | 23% |
| Counsel/Attorney or equivalent role                    | 39% |
| Contract Attorney                                      | 1%  |
| Other                                                  | 5%  |

### HOURS WORKED PER WEEK, IN-OFFICE AND REMOTE

**The majority of respondents work more than 40 hours a week**, with the median number of hours between 41 to 50 hours weekly.

| Hours worked per week | %   |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Over 60 hours         | 6%  |
| 51 to 60 hours        | 17% |
| 41 to 50 hours        | 42% |
| 31 to 40 hours        | 23% |
| 21 to 30 hours        | 4%  |
| 10 to 20 hours        | 4%  |
| Fewer than 10 hours   | 4%  |

### IN OFFICE AND REMOTE WORKING

#### Remote working, a largely post-Covid phenomenon, continues to be common.

While 42% of respondents spend 4-5 days a week in the office and another 9% spend more than 5 days a week in the office, the other 49% of respondents work remotely, with 2-3 days a week in the office (24%), 1 day a week in the office (5%), or fully remote (20%).

| Days in office                        | %   |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| More than 5 days a week in the office | 9%  |
| 4-5 days a week in the office         | 42% |
| 2-3 days a week in the office         | 24% |
| 1 day a week in the office            | 5%  |
| Remotely most of the time             | 20% |



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