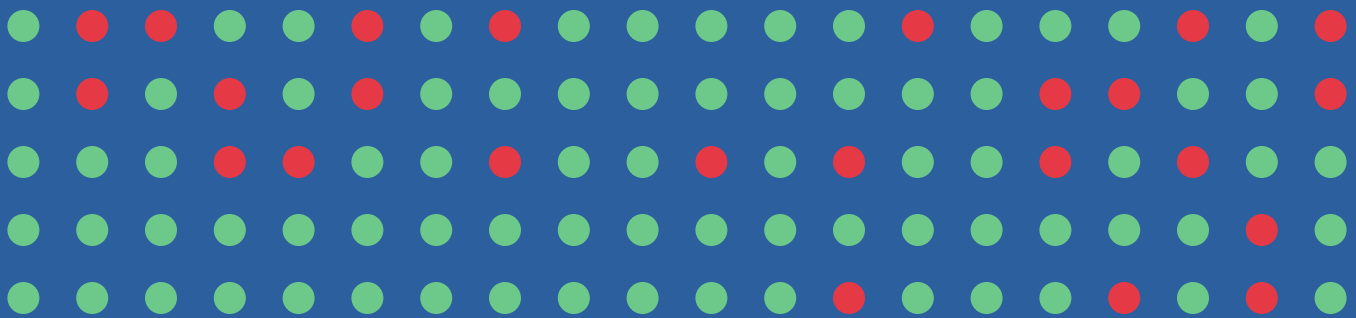


Towards A Healthier Profession

Report on the Mental Health, Substance Use,
Gambling, and Wellness of Illinois Lawyers,
and Paths Forward



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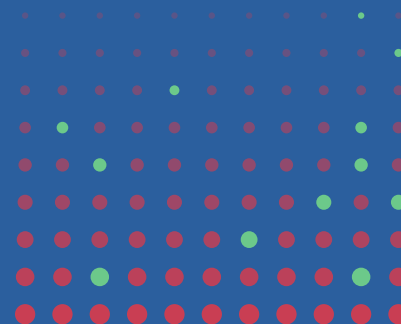
Contents

Foreword	iv
Executive Summary	1
The Study	1
Snapshot of Key Findings	1
Mental Health	1
Alcohol Use	2
Drug Use	3
The Overlap of Mental Health, Alcohol Use and Drug Use	4
Gambling Issues	4
Cognitive Decline Among Lawyers	5
Lawyers' Plans to Retire	5
The Prevalence of Stress in the Legal Profession and Its Impact	5
Key Recommendations to Promote Mental Health and Wellness	6
Introduction to the Goals and Methods for the Research	9
Need for the Survey	9
Goals of the Study	10
Survey Methodology	10
Lawyers' Opinions of Overall Wellness in the Legal Profession	12
Mental Health: Lawyers Speak About Themselves	14
Self-Ratings of Mental Health	14
<i>Impact of Age, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity on Self-Rated Mental Health</i>	15
Experiences of Lawyers Reporting Fair or Poor Mental Health	17
<i>History of Diagnosis and Treatment</i>	17
<i>Suicidal Ideation</i>	17
Career Consequences of Fair or Poor Mental Health	19
Personal Impacts of Fair or Poor Mental Health	20
<i>Negative Feelings About One's Self</i>	20
<i>Negative Impact on Family and Social Relationships</i>	21
Most Lawyers in Need of Help Seek It, but Over One-Third Do Not	22
Vicarious Trauma from Law Practice or Serving as a Judge	24
Alcohol Use and the Impact on Lawyers	27
Frequency and Amount of Drinking Alcohol	27
When Do Lawyers Drink Alcohol?	28

Amount of Alcohol Consumed Per Occasion	28
Not Able to Stop Drinking	30
Binge Drinking	30
Why Do Lawyers Drink Alcohol?	31
Identifying Lawyers with a High Risk of Alcohol Use Disorder	33
Consequences of High Risk Alcohol Use	33
<i>Impacts on Work</i>	34
<i>Impacts on Personal Life</i>	34
<i>Concern by Others</i>	36
Men Drink More Often Than Women and Are at Higher Risk for Alcohol-Related Problems	36
Younger Lawyers Are More Likely to Drink Alcohol Than Older Lawyers	39
Seeking Help, or Not	40
Drug Use and the Impact on Lawyers	43
Frequency of Using Recreational Drugs or Misusing Prescription Drugs	43
Lawyers Who Frequently Use Recreational Drugs	45
Misuse of Prescription Drugs	46
Gender Differences in Use of Drugs	47
Age Differences in Use of Recreational Drugs	47
Reasons Why Lawyers Frequently Use Recreational Drugs or Frequently Misuse Prescription Drugs	48
The Impacts of Frequent Drug Use on Work	49
The Impacts of Frequent Drug Use on Personal Life	49
Expressions of Concern by Others About Frequent Drug Use	50
Do Lawyers Who Frequently Use Drugs Seek Help?	51
The Overlap of Mental Health, Alcohol Use and Drug Use	53
Problem Gambling and Its Impact on Lawyers	57
The Extent of Gambling Among Lawyers	58
Why Do Lawyers Engage in Problematic Gambling?	60
Adverse Consequences of Problematic Gambling	60
Not Many Problem Gamblers Seek Help	62
The Emerging Problem of Cognitive Decline in the Legal Profession	64
Cognitive Decline Among Lawyers and Judges as Observed by Lawyers	65
Resources to Help Lawyers and Judges with Cognitive Decline	65
Will Lawyers Ever Retire?	66
The Prevalence of Stress in Today's Practice of Law	69
Many Lawyers View Work as Synonymous with Stress	70
Impact of Workplace Policies and Culture on Level of Stress at Work	74
Workplace Policies That Proactively Support Wellness	76
Stress Is a Major Reason Why Lawyers Leave Their Jobs	76
LAP Support and Services	77
Best Practices for Promoting Mental Health and Wellness	79
Guidance to Legal Employers About Policies to Promote Mental Health and Wellness	80
<i>Meaningful Leadership Must Come from the Top</i>	80
<i>Speak to Lawyers at All Levels About What They Need</i>	81
<i>Enforce Complete Confidentiality as a Core Policy</i>	82

Create Leave, “Mental Health Days,” and Vacation Policies	82
Rethink Billable Hour Quotas and Monitor Workloads	83
Implement Flexible Work Policies	84
Increase Lawyer Engagement with a Collegial and Supportive Workplace Culture	85
Training, Education, and Resources	86
Support Non-Profit Organizations That Provide Mental Health and Wellness Assistance	86
Host Social Events That Do Not Center on Alcohol	86
Steps Lawyers Can Take to Improve Their Own Mental Health and Wellness	87
Take Care of Yourself – It Matters	88
Reach Out to a Person You Trust and Respect	88
Ask for Professional Guidance and Counseling	89
The Role of Bar Associations	89
Create and Sponsor a Wide Variety of Programs	89
Promote Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs	90
Convene Summits and Conferences on Emerging Mental Health and Wellness Issues	90
De-Emphasize Alcohol at Bar Association Social Events	91
How Judges Can Help to Improve Mental Health and Wellness	91
Conclusion	93
Appendices	94
Appendix A: Demographics, Employment, and Location of Survey Respondents	94
Age and Year of Law School Graduation	94
Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation	94
Race and Ethnicity	95
Disability Status	96
Veterans	96
Marital Status	96
Where Lawyers Practice: Appellate Districts	97
Employment	97
Type of Employer	98
Practice Area	99
Level of Seniority	99
Hours Worked Per Week, In-Office and Remote	100
In Office and Remote Working	100
Appendix B: Survey Methodology	101
The Survey Questionnaire	101
The Survey Population, Sample, and Analyses	101
Red Bee Alcohol Use Risk Index for Lawyers (AURIL)	102
Red Bee Work Stress Index (WSI)	103
Endnotes	105
Citation, Copyright, and Disclaimers	108

Foreword



We are pleased to introduce this innovative and important research, the first-ever systematic study about mental health, alcohol and drug use, and gambling in the Illinois legal profession.

Practicing law today entails onerous billable hour requirements, long working hours, intense pressures arising from handling high stakes matters, unreasonable deadlines and demands imposed by clients, judges, and supervising attorneys, and the expectation of 24/7 availability and responsiveness, all of which contribute to an inhospitable and unhealthy (sometimes toxic) workplace culture. This leads not only to unhappiness, family problems, and attrition, but also chronic stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression. Far too many lawyers resort to maladaptive coping mechanisms, including problematic drinking, drug use, and gambling. In addition, a number of lawyers and judges suffer vicarious trauma because of the emotionally difficult nature of the matters they handle.

Unfortunately, while the profession has been paying more attention to these important issues, very little progress has been made in addressing and ameliorating the root causes. Meaningful structural and cultural changes are needed to create healthier and more accommodating workplaces and to provide greater support for those in need of it. Based on robust quantitative and qualitative data from a comprehensive survey completed by over 6,700 Illinois lawyers, this Report presents a full range of information about the current status of Illinois lawyers with regard to mental health, alcohol and drug use, gambling, as well as a panoply of work-related and personal consequences that can ensue from these problems. The Report also contains 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. The research addresses such core questions as: What are the mental health, substance use, and gambling problems faced by Illinois lawyers? What impact do those problems have on their work and everyday life? How does the practice of law impact lawyers' wellness?

We conclude the Report with suggested best practices and policies for legal employers, individual lawyers, bar associations, and the judiciary. These recommendations stem from the many thousands of responses gathered in this research and can be used across an array of organizations to support and implement meaningful initiatives and programs to respond to the myriad wellness challenges confronting Illinois lawyers.

We are extremely grateful to Illinois LAP for sponsoring this Survey, and especially its Executive Director, Dr. Diana Uchiyama. This study would not have been done without her guidance and deep commitment to the goals of the research, her support of the highest level of standards for the research, and her help in facilitating input from the Survey Advisory Committee and other supporters of Illinois LAP. We are also grateful to Tony Pacione and Joe Scally, the Deputy Director and Clinical Director of LAP, for their ideas and interest in the research.

We thank the highly supportive members of the LAP Board of Directors for their support of this research, their input, and help in pretesting of the Survey questionnaire. The 2025-2026 LAP Board included President Judge Susan Clancy Boles, Vice President Kevin M. Kelly, Treasurer Judge Sophia Atcherson, Secretary Conrad Nowak, Kristine M. Tuttle, J. Nelson Wood, Edward McCarthy, Judge Daniel J. Kubasiak, Judge Stanley L. Hill, Patrick Murphy, Valee L. Salone, Judge Alfredo Maldonado, Arthur Winstein, and Terrance M. Garmon, with Illinois Supreme Court Liaison Justice Mary K. O'Brien. We are also grateful to our Survey Advisory Committee, which included Joan A. Akalaonu, Judge Stephen E. Balogh, Perry J. Browder, Timothy Cavanagh, Judge Bridget C. Duignan, Justice Timothy C. Evans, Dennis D. Fitzpatrick, Eileen Heisler, Shawn Kasserman, Eileen M. Letts, Sari W. Montgomery, Justice Jesse G. Reyes, and Angel Wawrzynek.

We have been fortunate to receive support from a great research team. Megan Bonham, Ph.D., our project associate, was instrumental in all aspects of the study, helped with the questionnaire, distribution of the Survey, review of qualitative data for use in the Report, and readily responded to the many ins and outs of the research process. Aiste Guobytė, Ph.D., provided high-level technical and statistical support as well as patience with all aspects of the analytic process and the many requests we made. We thank Deborah Ashton, Ph.D., Ed.D., whose in-depth knowledge with respect to mental health and substance use issues was invaluable in the design of the Survey questionnaire. In addition, we thank Administrative Assistant Elaine Bianculli for her tireless help and patience with our process. We also thank our Red Bee Group colleagues who have been enthusiastic and supportive of our research through all of its phases.

We appreciate the opportunity to conduct this vitally important research. We hope that this study will serve as a clarion call for meaningful reforms in the legal profession in Illinois and elsewhere. Maintaining mental health and wellness is necessary to attain personal and professional fulfillment, as well as a lawyer's ability to satisfy the ethical obligation to provide effective representation to clients. Reducing the number of lawyers with mental health, substance use, or gambling issues will also minimize mistakes, potential malpractice claims, and disciplinary problems. Improving lawyers' mental health and wellness will greatly benefit not only individual lawyers, but also their employers and the profession at large.



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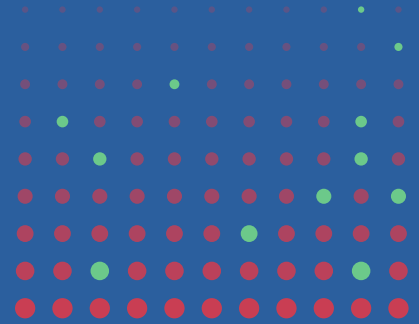


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Executive Summary



THE STUDY

The Illinois Lawyers' Assistance Program (LAP) sponsored a first-ever comprehensive study about mental health, alcohol and drug use, gambling, cognitive decline, and the overall wellness of lawyers and judges in Illinois. The Survey's extensive data allow detailed reporting about the prevalence and real life consequences of a wide range of mental health and wellness issues. The data also provide evidence-based "Best Practices" that individual lawyers, legal employers, bar associations, and other organizations can use for more targeted support, policies, and initiatives that address and ameliorate the mental health and wellness challenges that are profoundly impacting the professional and personal lives of many thousands of Illinois lawyers.

- The Survey was sent to 56,268 Illinois lawyers who were registered in 2025 with the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission and had their principal office in Illinois. The study design allows reliable estimates about the entire population of Illinois lawyers.
- 6,778 lawyers completed the Survey, and respondents included lawyers of all ages, gender identities and sexual orientations, races and ethnicities, and disability status.
- Survey respondents represented all areas of legal practice and places of employment, including solo practice, small to large firms, government, corporate legal departments, non-profits, and the judiciary.
- The Survey focused on experiences during the past one-year period.

SNAPSHOT OF KEY FINDINGS

Mental Health

We asked Illinois lawyers to rate their mental health:

- Over 80% of lawyers reported that their mental health was excellent, very good, or good.
- However, 20% of lawyers rated their mental health as only fair or poor, which equates to over 11,000 lawyers in active practice in Illinois who could use help with mental health issues.
- Lawyers in the 25-35 age group were more likely than lawyers in other age groups to rate their mental health as fair or poor.
- Of the 20% of lawyers who rated their mental health as fair or poor:
 - 32% experienced suicidal ideation in the past year, which equates to approximately 3,500 Illinois lawyers. Of those who experienced suicidal ideation in the past year, 24% reported thinking about ending their life in the two weeks before they took the Survey.
 - As a result of their fair or poor mental health, lawyers reported feeling burned out; unable to sustain attention at work; taking time off work; and unable to perform at their regular standards.
 - 37% of lawyers who rated their mental health as fair or poor did not seek help over the past year because of 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.
- 30% of lawyers had experienced vicarious trauma in the past year, defined as a lasting emotional or psychological impact from ongoing exposure at work to other people's trauma. While those lawyers practiced in many areas of law, the three most common areas leading to vicarious trauma were litigation, criminal law, and family/domestic relations. Judges also experience vicarious trauma.

Alcohol Use

ALL LAWYERS

- 85% of lawyers reported drinking alcohol in the past year.
- A majority of lawyers drink alcohol anywhere from less than a few times a month to several times a week.
- 12% of lawyers (amounting to over 6,700 Illinois lawyers) drink alcohol four or more times a week, with 9% of all lawyers drinking alcohol almost every day (which equates to over 5,000 Illinois lawyers).
- 15% of lawyers reported no use of alcohol in the past year.

LAWYERS WHO DRANK ALCOHOL IN THE PAST YEAR

- 35% of lawyers report drinking alcohol both on weekends and during the week.
- On any given occasion when a lawyer drinks, 86% typically consume 1-3 drinks, with 11% typically consuming 4-5 drinks and 4% consuming at least six drinks per occasion and sometimes 9 or more.

- Lawyers who drink more often typically drink in greater amounts. 26% of lawyers who drink alcohol between four times a week and almost every day consume at least 4–5 drinks per occasion, and about 6% consume 6 drinks or more per occasion.
- Close to 28% of lawyers who drink alcohol (an estimated 13,100 Illinois lawyers) reported that there were times in the past year when they could not stop drinking or could not control their drinking.
- 18% of lawyers (equating to over 8,600 Illinois lawyers) reported binge drinking at least once in the past year.
- 27% of lawyers (close to 13,000 Illinois lawyers) reported that their alcohol use increases under stress, and 40% of that group engages in stress drinking either monthly, weekly, or even daily (amounting to roughly 5,200 Illinois lawyers).
- 11% of lawyers who reported drinking in the past year were identified as high risk for alcohol use disorder (over 5,400 Illinois lawyers), and 23% of lawyers (over 11,000 Illinois lawyers) are at moderate risk for alcohol use disorder.
- High risk drinkers experience more negative consequences at work, including burnout (45%), difficulty sustaining attention (29%), and/or inability to perform at their regular standards (28%).
- High risk drinkers experience more negative impacts on their personal lives, including blacking out (53%), worse physical health (45%) and/or worse mental health (35%).
- 82% of high risk drinkers (which equates to over 4,400 Illinois lawyers) did not seek help for their drinking. The majority of high risk drinkers believe they can handle their drinking (70%) and/or they enjoy drinking and do not want to stop (52%).
- Men drink alcohol more often than women and are at higher risk for alcohol-related issues.
 - Men are 2.5 times as likely as women (15% of men compared to 6% of women) to have a high risk of alcohol use disorder.
 - 18% of men compared to 10% of women drink alcohol 4 or more times a week.
 - 11% of men compared to 7% of women drink alcohol on a daily or almost daily basis, which means that men are more than 1.5 times as likely as women to engage in a high frequency of drinking alcohol.

Drug Use

- 78% of lawyers do not use recreational drugs and do not misuse prescription drugs.
- 9% of lawyers (which amounts to over 5,000 Illinois lawyers) infrequently use recreational drugs and/or misuse prescription drugs.
- 13% of lawyers (which equates to over 7,300 Illinois lawyers) frequently use recreational drugs or misuse prescription drugs, with the large majority only using recreational drugs.
- Of the 12% of lawyers who frequently use recreational drugs, 97% use cannabis, with 88% using cannabis at least once a week, including 35% who use cannabis daily or almost daily.

- 17% of lawyers who frequently use recreational drugs take hallucinogens and 11% report using cocaine, typically used far less frequently than cannabis.
- Men are more likely than women lawyers to frequently use recreational drugs (13.3% vs. 9.7%), which equates to approximately 4,500 men compared to approximately 2,100 women.
- Younger lawyers are more likely than older lawyers to use recreational drugs. 22% of lawyers age 25-35 frequently use recreational drugs, and each older age cohort uses recreational drugs less frequently.
- A large number of lawyers who frequently use recreational drugs or misuse prescription drugs do so to:
 - reduce stress or relax (74%)
 - feel good or get high (67%)
 - help with sleep, pain and other health issues (61%)
- 93% of lawyers who frequently use drugs or misuse prescription drugs do not seek help for drug use.

The Overlap of Mental Health, Alcohol Use and Drug Use

- Close to 68% of lawyers (estimated at more than 38,000 Illinois lawyers) report no serious wellness issues for either mental health, high risk alcohol use or frequent recreational drug use/prescription drug misuse.
- Almost 24% of lawyers have responses showing a wellness challenge in one area, either: fair or poor mental health (13% of Illinois lawyers), or high risk alcohol use (over 4% of Illinois lawyers), or frequent recreational drug use/prescription drug misuse (close to 7% of Illinois lawyers).
- About 8% of lawyers have a combination of two or three wellness issues, including 1.3% who report challenges in all three areas: fair or poor mental health, high risk alcohol use, and frequent recreational drug use/prescription drug misuse.

Gambling Issues

- 50% of all lawyers did not gamble over the past year.
- About 3% of all lawyers engage in problematic gambling. 53% of that group engage in gambling at least once a week, with 12% gambling on a daily or almost daily basis.
- Lawyers aged 25-35 were more likely than older lawyers to engage in problematic gambling (13%).
- Problematic gamblers most often gamble for the thrill of winning or competition, for entertainment, to escape from worries or problems, or to try to recover money from previous losses.

- 30% of problematic gamblers reported that gambling impacted their personal lives, including getting into financial trouble, anger, and worse mental health.
- Only 3% of problematic gamblers sought help for their gambling.

Cognitive Decline Among Lawyers

- 39% of lawyers have observed other lawyers who appear to show signs of cognitive decline.
- 21% of lawyers have observed signs of cognitive decline among judges.
- 94% of lawyers believe more resources should be made available to help lawyers or judges experiencing cognitive decline.

Lawyers' Plans to Retire

- Close to 40% of lawyers age 60 or older have no planned age for retirement.
- 25% of lawyers age 60 or older plan to retire before age 70.
- 24% of lawyers age 60 or older plan to retire when they are 70 or older.

The Prevalence of Stress in the Legal Profession and Its Impact

- Illinois lawyers report that they routinely:
 - Experience stress while at work (57%)
 - Are overwhelmed with the many things they have to do (36%)
 - Feel the day never ends (31%)
 - Have trouble taking time off from work (30%)
 - Find it hard to wind down from work (29%)
 - Are anxious or panicked about work (27%)
 - Are worried about looking foolish or incompetent at work (21%)
- High percentages of lawyers report that specific elements of workplace policies and culture have a particularly negative impact on their mental health and wellness, including:
 - Excessive workload requirements (63%)
 - Not being appreciated for work that is done (52%)
 - Feel stuck in their position and going nowhere (39%)
 - Unfair compensation (37%)
 - Feel isolated and alone, even when in the office (37%)
 - Feel pressure to be in the office (36%)
 - Were treated in a rude, intimidating, or disrespectful way (34%)
 - Lack of mentorship or sponsorship (33%)

- Our Work Stress Index (“WSI”) shows that:
 - 27% of lawyers (estimated at more than 15,000 Illinois lawyers) have daily or weekly feelings of stress about work.
 - 30% of Illinois lawyers have monthly feelings of stress about work.
 - Lawyers with the highest WSI scores have the most negative opinions about their workplace and its impact on their overall wellness.
- The more hours that lawyers work, the greater stress they experience. The 23% of lawyers who work over 50 hours a week have the highest WSI scores.
- 66% of lawyers who believe their workplaces negatively impact their mental health, physical health, or overall wellness would consider leaving their job.
- 70% of all lawyers who currently work as a lawyer reported they had previously left a job because it adversely impacted their mental health, physical health, or overall wellness.
- Lawyers in work settings with certain specific policies set out below have significantly lower WSI scores than lawyers without these policies:
 - Culture encourages lawyers to seek assistance with mental health or substance use issues.
 - Policy allows time off for mental health or substance use issues.
 - Education or training on mental health or substance use.
 - Policy sets forth how lawyers can seek assistance for mental health or substance use issues.
 - Access to professional counseling services.
 - Mindfulness and meditation training.
- Judges experience less stress than lawyers.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

1

RECOMMENDATION 1

Legal employers should establish mental health and wellness resources, policies, and programs.

- Leaders should commit to and support workplace policies that will implement the cultural and structural changes that are necessary to support mental health and wellness.
- Leaders should set the tone by modeling their support through their own actions and communications to lawyers in their organization.

2

RECOMMENDATION 2

Workplace policies supporting mental health and wellness should include these key elements:

- Confidentiality protections.
- Clear and transparent leave policies, mental health days, and vacation guidelines.
- Realistic billable hour and caseload requirements.
- Flexible work arrangements, including hybrid and remote alternatives.
- Training and education for lawyers and judges on subjects related to mental health and wellness that are provided on a regular basis.
- Policies that reassure lawyers that they will not be penalized or stigmatized for reporting mental health and wellness issues, and seeking help.

3

RECOMMENDATION 3

Lawyers should take steps to address and to improve their own mental health and wellness:

- Prioritize personal wellness by taking permissible holiday and vacation time and mental health days as needed.
- Establish boundaries to set time aside where you are disconnected from the office so that you can really relax and de-stress. Take time away from the laptop and phone.
- Seek out support from spouses and partners, other family members, close friends, mentors or sponsors, LAP, and mental health professionals if you are experiencing mental health and wellness challenges. Act as soon as the warning signs appear — don't wait until you are in crisis mode.

4

RECOMMENDATION 4

Bar associations should use their resources and outreach to provide programs that educate and raise awareness about the prevalence and impact of mental health and wellness issues, including excess alcohol and drug use, gambling, and cognitive impairment. Programs could:

- Provide mental health and substance use CLE programs to comply with Illinois Supreme Court Rule 794(d).
- Advocate for model workplace policies that prioritize mental health and wellness issues.
- Promote mentorship and sponsorship programs which can help reduce feelings of isolation and imposter syndrome, and support lawyers' engagement and collegiality.
- Convene summits and conferences on emerging mental health and wellness issues to promote dialogue, reduce stigma, and shine a spotlight on these important issues.

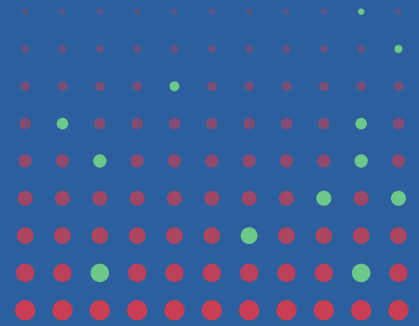
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RECOMMENDATION 5

Courts can play an important role in promoting mental health and wellness.

- Judges should model civility in their proceedings and implement countywide standing orders regarding civility, bullying and acceptable behavior in their courtroom and in the conduct of litigation.
- Judges should receive training as to how the case deadlines and schedules they impose can impact the mental health and wellness of the lawyers who appear before them.
- Continuing education and training should be provided to judges who themselves often experience vicarious trauma, threats to their physical safety, and chronic stress.
- Judges should be trained to recognize when they or other judges, or lawyers who appear before them, are experiencing cognitive decline.

Introduction to the Goals and Methods for the Research



Need for the Survey

Mental health, substance use, and overall wellness have become increasingly important to the legal profession, with numerous lawyers struggling under greater pressures and onerous demands in the workplace while also attempting to balance their many professional and family obligations. Several factors have led to increased focus on these issues by lawyers, legal employers, bar associations, and organizations such as the Illinois LAP, including:

- The nature of legal work has intensified compared to a generation ago. Many roles now involve constant connectivity, faster decision cycles, higher performance expectations, and fewer clear boundaries between work and personal life. Technology has made people accessible at all hours and wherever they may be located. The stakes of decisions—and the scrutiny that follows—are often very high.
- Legal employers have increasingly recognized that paying insufficient attention to wellness has negative consequences for them and their employees. They now realize that it is important to create hospitable work environments, identify impairments, and provide support when needed. Mental health problems, such as depression, chronic stress and burnout, and drug and alcohol use by lawyers can adversely affect judgment, productivity, and retention, and may lead to mistakes, potential malpractice claims, and disciplinary problems. In a profession that relies so heavily on careful thinking and sound decision-making, these ramifications are especially significant. As a result, wellness is no longer viewed as simply a personal matter, but instead as an issue that also affects organizational performance and client outcomes.¹
- There has been a cultural shift in the legal profession, due in large part to younger lawyers. Today, it is common to have discussions, programs, meetings, and publications focusing on how practicing law often leads to chronic stress, burnout, depression and other mental health challenges, as well as drug and alcohol use that earlier generations either minimized or ignored. Conversations about mental health and substance use are more open than even a decade ago, and younger professionals, in particular, expect workplaces to take wellness issues seriously. The

COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift by highlighting how quickly stress and a feeling of isolation can impact performance and mental health. Today, wellness is increasingly framed as part of professional responsibility—it not only supports individual health, it also enhances a lawyer’s ability to satisfy the ethical obligation to provide effective representation to clients.

Goals of the Study

Although there have been prior reports about mental health problems, substance use, and other wellness challenges faced by lawyers, they have typically focused on mental health diagnostics with few details about the impact on a lawyer’s everyday life.² Organizations have also published detailed recommendations to stakeholders about how to support lawyers’ mental health and wellness. While experts have an obvious role to play, lawyers who are experiencing, observing, and living with wellness challenges can also provide valuable insights and suggestions. For instance, a recent survey of Massachusetts lawyers measured lawyer wellness and alcohol use, access to treatment for mental health issues and alcohol use, while also emphasizing the importance of workplace policies, practices, and overall support for lawyers as a means to reduce the substantial number of lawyers who have wellness challenges.³

Through this Survey and Report, we aimed to reach broadly by assessing problems with mental health, substance use, and gambling, and also looked at cognitive decline; how those challenges impact a lawyer’s work, relationships with family and friends, and their overall sense of wellness; whether lawyers reach out for help and the reasons why or why not; and recommendations about the types of assistance that make a difference. While a survey does not clinically diagnose its respondents, it is useful to generate estimates of the population who, on a self-reported basis, are experiencing various mental health issues, alcohol and drug use, and gambling problems. A survey 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.

Survey Methodology

Consistent with these goals, the Survey opened on November 3, 2025, closed on December 6, 2025, and was sent to all 56,268 Illinois lawyers who were registered in 2025 with the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (“ARDC”) and reported to the ARDC that their principal office was in Illinois. A total of 6,778 lawyers completed the Survey. All individual respondents were anonymized with no identification by name or place of employment. Importantly, the demographic profile of lawyers who responded to the Survey approximates the gender and age distributions of the lawyers who practice in Illinois.

Core research questions focused on the following areas:

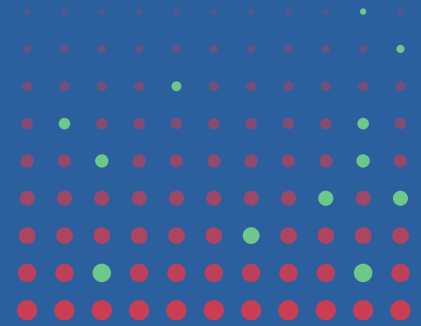
- How many Illinois lawyers have problems with respect to their mental health, alcohol, drugs, gambling, and stress-related issues such as burnout and depression, especially to the point that their wellness and job performance are compromised?
- Which groups of lawyers are most susceptible to these wellness 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?

The Survey yielded 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. In addition, the Survey included a number of open-ended questions, which led to narrative responses that are included in the Report and provide a wealth of qualitative anecdotal data.

Importantly, the Survey responses 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.

With the extensive data from this Survey, LAP can more effectively fulfill its important mission of supporting Illinois lawyers, judges, their employers and families in dealing with mental health problems, drug and alcohol use, and problematic gambling. LAP's services are needed now more than ever.

Lawyers' Opinions of Overall Wellness in the Legal Profession



We began the Survey by asking lawyers whether they view problems with mental health, drug use, alcohol use, and gambling as common in the legal profession. The results were that:

- A substantial number of lawyers rated mental health problems as very common or widespread (41%) or somewhat common (37%).
- 70% of lawyers believe alcohol use is very common or widespread, and another 23% of lawyers believe it is somewhat common.
- 14% of lawyers believe that drug use is very common, and 41% believe it is somewhat common.
- Gambling was the behavior least likely to be viewed as common in the profession (only 7% of lawyers hold that view), although 35% of lawyers thought it was somewhat common.

Wellness issue	Not common/rare	Somewhat common	Very common/widespread
Mental health problem	21%	37%	41%
Drug use	46%	41%	14%
Alcohol use	7%	23%	70%
Gambling problem	58%	35%	7%

Note: Because of rounding, rows may not add to exactly 100%.

Numerous lawyers described the challenges to wellness that take place in the legal profession, with comments such as:

“Drug and alcohol use was so prevalent at my defense side firm. The pressure is too high, and it’s getting worse.”

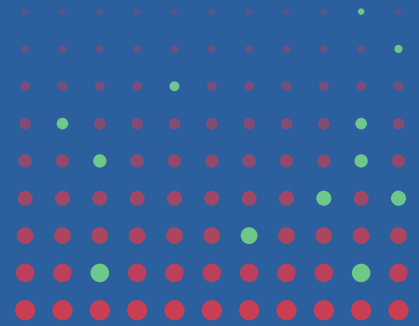
— White female lawyer in a law firm

“We all know working in the legal profession is a risk factor for alcoholism, substance abuse, and addiction (whether substances or gambling). It’s hard not to drink when outings center around alcohol. Being mindful of that risk is important.”

— Multiracial female lawyer in government

Practicing law is inherently stressful, which can lead to mental health problems and substance use. There are many contributing factors, such as unreasonable demands by clients and by other lawyers with whom the lawyer works; crushing billable hour quotas; never-ending pressure to bring in business; a need to be responsive 24/7 and to work at night and on weekends; an inability to balance professional and family obligations; incivility from judges, opposing counsel, and one’s own clients and colleagues; and some emotionally difficult practice areas, such as criminal law, family law, and abuse cases.

Mental Health: Lawyers Speak About Themselves



Self-Ratings of Mental Health

When we asked lawyers to rate their own mental health, the majority of lawyers reported that it is excellent or very good (52%) or good (29%). But a substantial minority – 20% of all lawyers – viewed their mental health as just fair (16%) or poor (4%). Extrapolating to the more than 56,000 lawyers based in Illinois who are in active practice, over 11,000 lawyers could use help with mental health issues.⁴

Mental health self-rating	% of lawyers
Excellent	21%
Very good	31%
Good	29%
Fair	16%
Poor	4%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

A number of respondents described how stressful the practice of law is for them:

“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

“The stress is affecting my physical and mental health.”

— White female lawyer in a corporate law department

“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

“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 lawyer in a law firm

Judges had somewhat higher self-ratings of their mental health, with 9% rating their mental health as fair or poor.

Mental health self-rating	% of judges
Excellent	34%
Very good	42%
Good	16%
Fair	8%
Poor	1%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

Impact of Age, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity on Self-Rated Mental Health

The youngest lawyers – those in the 25-35 year old age range – gave themselves lower mental health ratings: 33% of lawyers age 25-35 rated their mental health as fair (24%) or poor (9%), and 67% of lawyers in that age cohort rated their mental health as good, very good, or excellent. Each successive age cohort has higher self-ratings of mental health, with the best self-ratings in the cohort of lawyers over age 65: 95% rate their mental health as good, very good, or excellent, with that percentage increasing to 97% among lawyers over age 75.

Self-rating of mental health in each age cohort					
Age range	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
25–35	9%	24%	37%	23%	7%
36–45	5%	19%	34%	32%	10%
46–55	3%	17%	33%	32%	15%
56–65	2%	12%	23%	35%	29%
66–75	0%	5%	14%	34%	47%
Over 75	0%	3%	7%	33%	57%

Note: Because of rounding, rows may not add to exactly 100%.

A first-year associate vividly described the stress and mental health challenges he was facing at the outset of his career:

“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

Gender did not have a strong effect on self-ratings of mental health, although men were somewhat more likely to give themselves a better self-rating than women.

Mental health self-rating by gender	Female	Male
Excellent	12%	26%
Very good	31%	31%
Good	35%	25%
Fair	18%	14%
Poor	4%	4%

Note: Respondents who identified as “Other” gender and those who did not indicate their gender are excluded because the sample size was too small to estimate reliable weighted percentages.

As shown below, there were observed differences among various groups defined by race and ethnicity. However, a statistical analysis of these comparisons showed no significant differences.⁵

Mental health self-rating	White/Caucasian	African American/Black	Hispanic/Latino/a	Asian/Asian American	Multi-racial
Excellent	22%	17%	14%	14%	12%
Very good	31%	34%	29%	29%	28%
Good	28%	31%	36%	30%	36%
Fair	15%	12%	18%	24%	18%
Poor	4%	6%	3%	4%	6%

Note: The sample sizes for the following race/ethnicity groups were too small to estimate prevalence and for this reason were excluded from the table. These include Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders (n = 5), American Indian/Alaska Natives (n = 5), Middle Eastern or North Africans (n = 58). Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

In the next sections, we describe detailed information about the 20% of lawyers who rated their mental health as fair or poor, with a focus on their everyday emotional experiences, the impact of their mental health on their work and personal life, and any history of treatment.

Experiences of Lawyers Reporting Fair or Poor Mental Health

History of Diagnosis and Treatment

The majority of lawyers who characterized their mental health as fair or poor – 63% – had received a professional diagnosis of a mental health condition. Depression and anxiety are the most commonly reported diagnoses. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are two other common diagnoses. Many lawyers reported being diagnosed with more than one condition.⁶

Suicidal Ideation

Close to one-third of the lawyers (32%) who self-rated their mental health as fair or poor experienced suicidal ideation in the past year, either many times (6%), several times (9%), or once or twice (17%). As stated above, since 20% of respondents self-rate their mental health as fair or poor, which extrapolates to over 11,000 active Illinois lawyers, the 32% figure extrapolates to approximately 3,500 active Illinois lawyers who have experienced suicidal ideation in the past year.

Fair or poor mental health: Experienced suicidal ideation in past year

Yes, many times in the past year	6%
Yes, several times in the past year	9%
Yes, once or twice in the past year	17%
No, never in the past year	59%
Prefer not to answer	10%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

And within the group of lawyers who experienced suicidal ideation in the past year, a substantial minority (24%) reported thinking about ending their life as recently as the past two weeks, with another 16% preferring not to answer.

Experienced suicidal ideation in past two weeks (in group who experienced suicidal ideation in past year)

Yes	24%
No	60%
Prefer not to answer	16%

The following comments by respondents about suicidal thoughts are troubling:

“Most of my suicidal thoughts are related to my job.”

— White female lawyer in a law firm

“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

“I have seen a rising number of posts about depression and even suicide on our immigration law groups on social media.”

— Hispanic/Latina female lawyer in solo practice

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

— White female lawyer in solo practice

Career Consequences of Fair or Poor Mental Health

A substantial percentage of lawyers who rate their mental health as fair or poor – 43% – report taking time off or missing work because of their mental health. These lawyers represent almost 9% of all Illinois lawyers, which equates to over 4,800 active Illinois lawyers.

A large percentage of lawyers with fair or poor mental health self-ratings also report feeling burned out (91%), unable to sustain attention at work (71%), and unable to perform at their regular standards (57%). A substantial minority engaged in poor judgment or poor decision-making (22%), had problems getting along with others (22%), and had poor performance in front of others (21%).

Lawyers with fair or poor mental health: Negative experiences at work

Felt burned out	91%
Unable to sustain attention when I should have	71%
Unable to perform at my regular standards	57%
Had to take time off or miss work	43%
Poor judgment or poor decision-making	22%
Problems in getting along with others	22%
Poor performance in front of others	21%
Disciplinary action	2%
Other	3%
None of the above	2%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all impacts that applied to them.

Several respondents explained how stress and burnout impacted their practices and careers:

“6-week leave due to burnout, which included symptoms of brain fog, exhaustion, inability to speak coherently. At the worst, I stopped being able to speak in complete sentences.”

— White female lawyer in a law firm

“I’m underemployed in doc review because I’m too stressed to deal with clients and backstabbing colleagues in a law firm.”

— White female lawyer

“Had to close down my practice.”

— White female lawyer in solo practice

“Lack of interest in my work.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

“Continuous, never-ending burnout because vacation time is a joke.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in government

“Had to take a leave of absence to attend an outpatient trauma and anxiety program.”

— White female lawyer in a corporate law department

“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

Personal Impacts of Fair or Poor Mental Health

Experiencing fair or poor mental health has many implications for how lawyers experience everyday life. Sadly, the majority of people who rate their mental health as fair or poor frequently experience a broad range of negative feelings about themselves, their work life, and their personal relationships.

Negative Feelings About One’s Self

Lawyers who rate their mental health as fair or poor “often or very often” experience one or more negative feelings about themselves. Thus, 75% feel anxious or nervous “often or very often”; 63% find it difficult to stop or control worrying; 52% report feeling down, depressed, or hopeless; and 50% are unable to control the important things in their lives. A smaller but substantial number also experience little interest or pleasure in doing things that matter (44%), feel low self-worth (31%), and have nightmares or flashbacks (18%).

Lawyers with fair or poor mental health: Negative feelings about self in the past year	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 my life	50%
Feel little interest or pleasure in doing things that matter	44%
Feel I was not worth much as a person	31%
Experience flashbacks or nightmares	18%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

In the same vein, a large percentage of lawyers who self-report fair or poor mental health experienced “worse mental health” in the past year (67%), no longer have an interest in activities they used to enjoy (59%), have worse physical health (59%), and have poor self-care (57%).

Negative Impact on Family and Social Relationships

Lawyers with fair or poor mental health also experience more difficult family and social relationships:

Lawyers with fair or poor mental health: Impact on family and social relationships	
Anger or irritability in relationships	62%
Have fewer friends than before	43%
Missed family or social events that I used to attend	41%
Neglected, caused problems, or ended my marriage or personal partnership	37%
Neglected, caused problems, or have difficulties in relationship with my child/children	19%
Have gotten into financial trouble	15%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Comments from lawyers reinforced these problems:

“Lost family and friend relationships.”

— White male lawyer

“Stress most of the time bleeds into family life.”

— White female lawyer in law school/academia

Fair or poor mental health usually does not go unnoticed by relatives, friends or co-workers. Relatives and friends – especially spouses or partners – are most likely to express concern about a lawyer’s mental health. To a lesser degree, co-workers or managers also express concern. However, 30% of lawyers with fair or poor mental health report that neither a relative, friend nor co-worker has expressed concern in the past year about their mental health. One implication is that lawyers with fair or poor mental health who have close family or friends have better chances of being alerted to the problem and encouraged to seek help.

Expressed concern in the past year about lawyer's mental health (among lawyers with fair or poor mental health)

Spouse or partner	52%
Other relative or friend	29%
Parent	24%
Co-worker	14%
Child	7%
Workplace management personnel	4%
None of the above	30%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Most Lawyers in Need of Help Seek It, but Over One-Third Do Not

Many lawyers with fair or poor mental health report that they reached out for help over the past year.

Reached out for help about their mental health in past year

Yes	63%
No	37%

Of those seeking help, the large majority (92%) sought help from a therapist, physician, or treatment program. In addition, many lawyers sought help from friends (33%), family (33%), and a colleague at work (11%), the Illinois LAP (9%), and to a lesser extent self-help groups or other sources.

From whom respondents sought help in past year

Therapist, physician, or treatment program	92%
Friend	33%
Family	33%
Work colleague	11%
Lawyers' Assistance Program (LAP)	9%
Self-help group	5%
Other	2%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

The 37% of lawyers who recognize that they have fair or poor mental health but did not seek help over the past year gave various reasons why not: they had no time (68%), believed that they could handle it themselves (58%), cited a financial burden (36%), had concerns about privacy or confidentiality (28%), embarrassment (24%), were worried about their reputation (21%), were concerned about hurting their career (19%), and/or other reasons.

Why lawyers with fair or poor mental health did not seek help in past year

Do not have time	68%
I believe that I can handle it	58%
Financial burden	36%
Concerns about privacy or confidentiality	28%
I would be embarrassed	24%
Concern it will hurt my reputation or carry a stigma	21%
Concern it will hurt my career	19%
Other	9%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Respondents explained in some detail why help was not sought:

“It is not a concern or priority for employers, so there is no time to attend to mental health.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in government

“Each day I am traumatized by the things that are said, the way the system operates, and by our limited ability to seek help for fear of losing our license.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in a law firm

“[I want] guidance by the IARDC about addressing mental health concerns without concern that your license is in danger.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

“Difficulty finding satisfactory care.”

— White male lawyer in government

“Although efforts to promote the need for mental health care within the legal community have made many aware, amongst all age groups, and especially those 30 or above, there remains a stigma – to openly admit you need help means that some will forever view you differently and may in fact, give you fewer career opportunities based on the fact that you needed help with your mental health. This is a dangerous and lonely reality for the person who needs help.”

— White male lawyer in government

Vicarious Trauma from Law Practice or Serving as a Judge

Vicarious trauma refers to the emotional and psychological impact from exposure at work to other people's trauma. Vicarious trauma is prevalent in the legal profession but has not been the subject of much discussion or study. It arises when lawyers, judges, and legal staff are exposed, especially repeatedly, to the traumatic experiences of others through their work.⁷ Attorneys handling matters involving violence, abuse, catastrophic injury, immigration, or criminal conduct routinely review graphic evidence, listen to painful testimony, and absorb detailed accounts of human suffering, often over extended periods and under adversarial pressure. Also, lawyers and judges can be vicariously traumatized by how their actions and decisions profoundly impact the lives of others. Over time, vicarious trauma can lead to symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, sleep disruption, irritability, emotional numbing, or heightened anxiety.

Vicarious trauma arises from the work itself and can affect even highly skilled, resilient practitioners who care deeply about their clients. The culture of the legal field—emphasizing stoicism, high performance, and constant availability—combined with a commitment to clients and to the legal process, can make it harder to recognize or address these effects. Left unaddressed, sustained vicarious trauma can mimic post-traumatic stress disorder and negatively affect how lawyers function, their wellness, and their work performance.⁸

We asked all lawyers, regardless of how they rated their current mental health, if they had experienced vicarious trauma in the past year, defined as the “lasting emotional and psychological impact from ongoing exposure at work to other people's trauma.” 30% of lawyers answered “Yes.” While those affected included lawyers in a wide range of practice areas, the three most common areas were litigation, criminal law, and family/domestic relations law.⁹

Many lawyers spoke of how the very nature of their practice creates emotional challenges:

“All I deal with is litigation over other people's trauma—from work, prison, housing, poverty, etc.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in legal aid litigation

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

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“I represent people in sexual abuse cases. In that capacity, I am often the first person the client has spoken with about their experiences, so that I am in the position of counselor as well as avenger. It's a higher level of responsibility.”

— Male lawyer in solo practice litigation

“I deal with child abuse and neglect cases, and that can take a toll.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in government

“I work with people in prison who are experiencing daily trauma.”

— White female lawyer in non-profit litigation

“I deal with catastrophic injury and death cases regularly. Every case involves terrible trauma.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm litigation

“I routinely watch police body camera footage of violent incidents, including shootings, and incidents where people die.”

— White male lawyer in government litigation

While most lawyers who described vicarious trauma said that it related to work with their clients, some experienced it within their own workplace:

“Our company has cyclical layoffs, and it’s traumatic to watch other co-workers getting laid off, often unexpectedly.”

— White female lawyer in a corporate law department

“I am a managing partner of a firm and deal with everyone’s personal losses and difficulties, which I am happy to do; I see it as a very important part of my job. But it is a very, very hard time for a lot of people at all levels of our industry. I have employees scared to come to work because they are afraid of the federal government. We had multiple employees lose family members this year, or who are dealing with aging parents. And everything has gotten and continues to get more expensive, which just adds a lot of pressure for everyone at all levels.”

— Male lawyer in a law firm

Lawyers also described the repercussions of their exposure to others’ trauma, including mental health diagnoses, effects on their personal/family relationships, and choosing to practice a different area of law:

“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

“Being in family law, it is difficult to trust others in personal relationships.”

— White female lawyer in solo practice

“Seeing so much death has made me anxious and paranoid as a mother.”

— White female lawyer in government

“I left my previous position in criminal law within the last year due to this.”

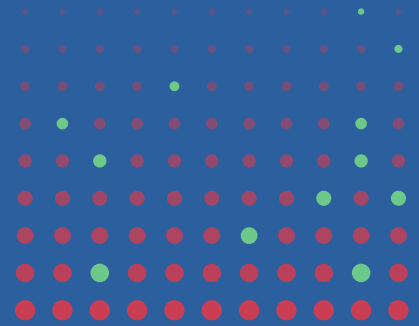
— White female lawyer in government

These comments underscore the reality of how vicarious trauma can have negative consequences for a lawyer's mental health, relationships at work, and relationships with friends and family. We believe the data and comments call for a more detailed understanding of what practical steps can and should be taken to address this problem.



Looking at the Survey results as a whole, it is very concerning that over 11,000 Illinois lawyers view their mental health as only “fair” or “poor.” The youngest lawyers are more likely than any other age group to give themselves low self-ratings. It is also alarming that approximately 3,500 Illinois lawyers with fair or poor mental health experienced suicidal ideation in the past year, with a quarter of them experiencing suicidal ideation in the two weeks before taking the Survey. Lawyers further described how fair or poor mental health profoundly and negatively affects their personal and professional lives. Still other Illinois lawyers and judges described struggles with the vicarious trauma that can result from empathetic engagements with their clients and litigants. Clearly, there is a need for action to address mental health in the legal profession from many perspectives, as we discuss further in the Best Practices section of the Report.

Alcohol Use and the Impact on Lawyers



Multiple studies have shown that alcohol use is prevalent among lawyers and is frequently associated with stress and mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety.¹⁰ To date, there has been no comprehensive collection of data showing the extent and impact of alcohol use among Illinois lawyers.

To understand the scope of alcohol use among Illinois lawyers, we undertook a multifaceted approach to measuring alcohol use and its impact. With input and guidance from LAP clinicians, we devised a series of screening questions to identify the percentage of lawyers with moderate or high risk of alcohol use disorder. The questions included measures of the frequency of drinking, quantity of drinking per occasion, ability to stop, and self-reported binge drinking in the past year. We also measured the consequences of excessive drinking on many different aspects of work, family dynamics, and social life.

Together, the range of data we obtained provides a solid base of information about the circumstances that are likely to signal “problematic” use of alcohol and the consequences for lawyers. Our time frame focused on alcohol use in the past year.

Frequency and Amount of Drinking Alcohol

We first asked lawyers how often they drank alcohol over the past year. As shown in the table below, 15% of lawyers reported never drinking alcohol. Another 50% of lawyers reported drinking alcohol 2 to 4 times a month or less, and 22% of lawyers drink 2-3 times a week. Approximately 12% of all lawyers drink alcohol 4 or more times per week, with the majority of them (9% of all lawyers) drinking alcohol almost every day.

Extrapolating the 12% high use group to the population of Illinois lawyers results in an estimated 6,752 practicing Illinois lawyers who drink alcohol 4 or more times a week, with 5,064 of them drinking alcohol almost every day.

Frequency of alcohol use in past year	% of all lawyers
Never	15%
Monthly or less	23%
2-4 times a month	27%
2-3 times a week	22%
4 or more times a week (Almost every day)	12% (9%)

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

Judges reported similar (although not identical) rates of alcohol use.

In the remaining sections, we analyze various factors and consequences regarding the 85% of lawyers who reported drinking alcohol in the past year.

When Do Lawyers Drink Alcohol?

There are certain days when drinking is more common, as reflected by the fact that 97% of those who drink do so on weekends (Friday–Sunday). That said, 35% of lawyers report drinking alcohol both on weekends and during the week, while 3% report drinking only during the week.

When do you usually drink alcohol?	% of lawyers who drink alcohol
Only on weekends (Friday–Sunday)	62%
Both during the week and on weekends	35%
Only during the week	3%

Amount of Alcohol Consumed Per Occasion

Turning to the amount of alcohol consumed on any given occasion by all lawyers who drink alcohol, 86% typically consume 1–3 drinks per occasion, with 11% typically consuming 4–5 drinks per occasion, and 4% consuming at least six drinks per occasion and sometimes 9 or more.

Number of drinks per occasion	% of lawyers who drink alcohol
1	36%
2-3	50%
4-5	11%
6-8	3%
9 or more	1%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

There is a substantial connection between how often and how much a lawyer drinks. Lawyers who drink more often also tend to drink in greater amounts.

- Close to two-thirds of lawyers (64%) who drink alcohol monthly or less often typically have only one drink per occasion. Over a year's time, these lawyers drink far less alcohol than other lawyers who drink alcohol.
- The large majority of lawyers who drink alcohol at least 2-4 times monthly consume at least 2-3 drinks per occasion.
- Lawyers who drink alcohol at least 2-3 times weekly are more likely to drink a larger number of drinks per occasion:
 - 20% of lawyers who drink alcohol 2-3 times a week have 4-5 drinks or more per occasion.
 - 26% of lawyers who drink alcohol 4 times a week or more consume 4-5 drinks or more per occasion. Among the lawyers who drink at this high level, about 6% consume 6 drinks per occasion or more.

Relationship of drinking frequency and number of drinks per occasion					
Number of drinks per occasion	Drinking frequency				
	Monthly or less	2-4 times a month	2-3 times a week	4 or more times a week	Almost every day
1	64%	32%	22%	22%	16%
2 to 3	31%	56%	58%	52%	57%
4 to 5	3%	10%	14%	20%	21%
6 to 8	1%	2%	5%	5%	4%
9 or more	0.2%	0.4%	1%	1%	1%

Note: The percentage answering "4 or more times a week" does not include those who answered "Almost every day." Because of rounding, each column may not add to exactly 100%.

Extrapolating these results to the population of Illinois lawyers suggests that an estimated 5,261 lawyers consume 4-5 drinks each time they drink alcohol, and an estimated 1,913 lawyers consume 6 drinks or more each time they drink alcohol.

While there is no ironclad rule about what frequency and amount of drinking per occasion constitutes problem drinking, many specialists agree that consuming 4-5 drinks or more per occasion on multiple days a week rises to a problematic level of consumption.¹¹ Similarly, a large amount of drinking on a single occasion, even if done monthly or less, can raise concerns.¹²

Not Able to Stop Drinking

A third aspect of problem drinking is when lawyers are not able to stop drinking or drink more than they intended. Close to 28% of lawyers who drink alcohol reported that they drank more than they intended or had trouble stopping over the past year. About 2.5% of lawyers who drink alcohol have that problem on a daily or weekly basis. This problematic level of drinking is not limited to a relatively small number of lawyers.

The data show that:

- Over 9,500 lawyers throughout Illinois said that on occasions during the year, they could not stop drinking.
- Close to 2,400 lawyers said that they have difficulty controlling their drinking on a monthly basis.
- Close to 1,200 lawyers said they have difficulty controlling their drinking on a weekly or daily basis.

Difficulty stopping or drank more than intended during past year	% of lawyers who drink alcohol
Daily or almost daily	0.5%
Weekly	2%
Monthly	5%
Less than monthly	20%
Never	71%

Note: Because of rounding, the column does not add to exactly 100%.

Binge Drinking

We use binge drinking as a fourth factor for assessing problem drinking. We asked about instances of binge drinking using a specific and well-regarded definition: for women, 4 or more drinks in two hours; and for men, 5 or more drinks in two hours.¹³

The result was that among all lawyers who drank any alcohol in the past year, 18% reported binge drinking at least once in the past year. This equates to more than 8,600 Illinois lawyers.

Binge drinking during past year	% of lawyers who drink alcohol	Estimated number of lawyers
Yes	18%	More than 8,600

Heavy drinking is not uncommon in the legal profession as reflected in the comments below:

“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

“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

Why Do Lawyers Drink Alcohol?

We asked all lawyers who drank any alcohol in the past year about why they drink. The single most common reason – by far – is to enjoy time with friends or family (79%). Other reasons often given were to reduce stress, take their mind off problems, or relax (44%); to feel good or have fun (41%); and to be social or fit in (32%). A much smaller percentage of lawyers drink alcohol to help with sleep, pain, or other issues (5%) or because they are unable to control their drinking (2%).

Reasons why lawyers drink alcohol	% of lawyers who drink alcohol
To enjoy time with friends or family	79%
To reduce stress, take my mind off problems, or relax	44%
To feel good or have fun	41%
To be social, fit in	32%
To help with sleep, pain, or other issues	5%
Unable to control my drinking	2%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

We also asked lawyers about stress drinking. The result was that of all lawyers who drank any alcohol in the past year, 27% said that their alcohol use increases under stress. That percentage amounts to close to 13,000 lawyers.

Among those lawyers who increase their alcohol use when stressed, 60% engage in stress drinking less than monthly or once or twice a year. But 40% of lawyers stress drink more frequently: either monthly (28%), weekly (10%), or even daily (2%). That 40% of frequent stress drinkers amounts to roughly 5,200 Illinois lawyers.

Frequency of increased alcohol use under stress	% of lawyers who drink alcohol
Daily or almost daily	2%
Weekly	10%
Monthly	28%
Less than monthly	33%
Once or twice a year	27%

Many lawyers elaborated on their reasons for drinking alcohol:

“Litigation is high stress. Alcohol is acceptable and easy to access.”

— Hispanic/Latina female lawyer in government

“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

“Work culture that appears to find alcohol use acceptable as a means to handle stress.”

— White female lawyer in government

“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

“There’s a real stigma to not drinking.”

— White female lawyer in government

“Financial concerns often lead to increased alcohol and drug usage.”

— Hispanic/Latino male lawyer in solo practice

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

— White female lawyer in the judiciary

“I enjoy the taste and how it tastes with food when I eat dinner.”

— White female lawyer in a corporate law department

Identifying Lawyers with a High Risk of Alcohol Use Disorder

While the previous sections provided data-based insights into the dimensions of when lawyers drink alcohol and their levels of drinking, we also analyzed who is at high risk for problematic alcohol use. Drinking can have serious consequences across multiple levels, including a lawyer’s health, workplace performance, family relationships, social life, and sense of self and self-worth.

To identify a lawyer’s level of risk for alcohol use disorder, we created the Alcohol Use Risk Index for Lawyers (“AURIL”). The AURIL includes questions from indices of general population alcohol use over the past year,¹⁴ which were supplemented with specific questions about the consequences of a lawyer’s drinking on their work and personal life. Details about the AURIL are contained in Appendix B – Survey Methodology.

The results are that among all of the lawyers who report drinking any alcohol in the past year, 11% were identified as high risk for alcohol use disorder, 23% were identified as moderate risk, and 65% were identified as low risk. When we extrapolate these percentages to the population of Illinois lawyers, more than five thousand Illinois lawyers are at high risk for alcohol use disorder (n = 5,437), and more than double that number are at moderate risk (n = 11,173).

Alcohol Use Risk Index for Lawyers (AURIL)	% of lawyers who drink alcohol	Approximate number of Illinois lawyers
High risk	11%	5,437
Moderate risk	23%	11,173
Low risk	65%	31,218

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

Consequences of High Risk Alcohol Use

The consequences of high risk alcohol use are not always predictable. But there are certain common issues that emerge with that level of drinking, which can affect a lawyer’s health, work, family, social relationships, and feelings about one’s self. Not everyone with a problematic level of drinking will experience all of these problems, but those on the higher end of alcohol use are likely to experience at least one of them.

Impacts on Work

High risk drinkers experience a much greater level of negative consequences at work. This includes a greater likelihood of burnout, difficulty sustaining attention, and being unable to perform at regular standards or poor performance in front of others, along with a lower but nonetheless noticeable percentage of self-reports describing poor judgment, having to miss work, and problems in getting along with others at work. In open-ended responses, lawyers also reported other negative impacts, such as tiredness at work or delayed start to a workday.

Impact on work from drinking	% of lawyers at low risk, moderate risk, high risk for alcohol use disorder		
	Low risk	Moderate risk	High risk
Felt burned out	0%	10%	45%
Unable to sustain attention when I should have	0%	6%	29%
Unable to perform at my regular standards	0%	2%	28%
Poor judgment or poor decision-making	0%	1%	12%
Had to take time off or missed work due to drinking	0%	2%	14%
Problems in getting along with others	0%	<1%	7%
Poor performance in front of others	0%	<1%	5%
Disciplinary action	0%	0%	2%
Other	0%	1%	1%
None of the above	100%	84%	34%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could check all impacts that applied to them.

Impacts on Personal Life

At the same time, a lawyer's excess drinking can also greatly impact their personal life. Lawyers with a high risk of drinking to excess have a high risk of blacking out (53%), worse physical health (45%), worse mental health (35%), poor self-care (32%), lack of interest in activities they used to enjoy (18%), financial trouble (8%) and even legal trouble (2%). Excess drinking also has a greater negative impact on family and social relationships, with a higher chance of anger or irritability in relationships (36%); neglect, problems or end of marriage or personal partnership (27%); neglect, problems or difficulties in relationships with children (12%); missing family or social events (6%); and fewer friends (6%).

We note that, compared to the low or moderate risk groups, the group of high risk drinkers had experienced every one of these negative impacts. The moderate risk group experienced almost

every impact, although at much lower frequency than those at high risk. The low risk drinkers had either a low single digit frequency of this impact or, as with more than half the factors, no such experiences.

Impact on personal life from drinking	% of lawyers at low risk, moderate risk, and high risk for alcohol use disorder		
	Low risk	Moderate risk	High risk
Blacked out in the past year	0%	11%	53%
Have worse physical health	4%	14%	45%
Anger or irritability in relationships	1%	8%	36%
Have worse mental health	0.6%	8%	35%
Poor self-care	2%	10%	32%
Neglected, caused problems, or ended my marriage or personal partnership	0%	1%	27%
No longer have an interest in the activities I used to enjoy	0%	1%	18%
Neglected, caused problems, or have difficulties in relationship with my child/children	0%	0.1%	12%
Have gotten into financial trouble	0%	0.1%	8%
Missed family or social events that I used to attend	0%	1%	6%
Have fewer friends than before	0%	0.2%	6%
Have gotten into legal trouble	0%	0%	2%
Other	0.5%	1.5%	2%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could check all responses that applied to them.

The impact of drinking can be very serious, as this comment shows:

“I actually attempted suicide in large part due to stress and my alcoholism.”

— White female lawyer in legal aid

Concern by Others

Behaviors by lawyers at a high risk for alcohol use disorder do not go unnoticed. 50% of the lawyers in the high risk group report that a spouse or partner expressed concern about their drinking in the past year. A smaller but meaningful number of relatives or friends (10%), parents (9%), children (6%) or co-workers and management (5%) also expressed concern. By comparison, the moderate risk group has extremely small percentages of expressed concerns. No concerns by others were reported for the low risk group.

Someone expressed concern in the past year about drinking	% of lawyers at high risk for alcohol use disorder
Spouse or partner	50%
Other relative or friend	10%
Parent	9%
Child	6%
Co-worker	3%
Workplace management personnel	2%

Note: Respondents checked all responses that applied to them.

Men Drink More Often Than Women and Are at Higher Risk for Alcohol-Related Problems

One of the interesting open questions about alcohol use among lawyers is whether there are any significant gender differences. An advantage of this sample is that there are clear boundaries about the population – the number of practicing lawyers based in Illinois – and the gender and ages of that population, thus facilitating the ability to generate more meaningful population statistics by using weighted statistical analyses.

Looking first at the frequency of drinking alcohol, the majority of both men and women drink alcohol 2 to 4 times a month or less often.

Notably, a greater percentage of men engage in more frequent drinking, which is associated with high risk drinking. Specifically:

- 29% of men compared to 22% of women drink alcohol 2-3 times a week.
- 18% of men compared to 10% of women drink alcohol 4 or more times a week, which means that men are almost twice as likely as women to drink with that frequency.
- 11% of men compared to 7% of women drink alcohol on a daily or almost daily basis, which means that men are more than 1.5 times as likely as women to engage in a high frequency of drinking alcohol.¹⁵

Frequency of alcohol use in past year	Female	Male
Monthly or less	34%	23%
2-4 times a month	34%	30%
2-3 times a week	22%	29%
4 or more times a week (Daily or almost every day)	10% (7%)	18% (11%)

Given these gender differences at the higher end of alcohol use, it is not surprising that men are 2.5 times as likely as women (15% of men compared to 6% of women) to have a high risk of alcohol use disorder, and less likely to have a low risk of alcohol use disorder (61% of men compared to 71% of women).

Level of risk of alcohol use disorder	Female	Male
High risk	6%	15%
Moderate risk	22%	24%
Low risk	71%	61%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

Among lawyers who have a high risk of alcohol use disorder, men have more consequences at work as compared to women: Men are more likely than women to feel burned out, unable to perform at their regular standards, have poor judgment or poor decision-making, have problems getting along with others, and have poor performance in front of others. Women, in contrast, are more likely to have to take time off from work.

Impacts on work due to high risk drinking	Female	Male
Felt burned out	41%	46%
Unable to perform at my regular standards	24%	30%
Unable to sustain attention when I should have	28%	29%
Poor judgment or poor decision-making	5%	15%
Had to take time off from work	13%	9%
Problems in getting along with others	1%	8%
Poor performance in front of others	2%	6%
Disciplinary action	0%	2%
None of the above	39%	33%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Regarding the impact of high risk drinking on one's personal life, men are more likely to no longer have an interest in activities they used to enjoy, and women are more likely to have poor self-care. There are no meaningful differences between men and women on all of the other measures of impact on personal life.

Impacts on personal life due to high risk drinking	Female	Male
Have worse physical health	43%	46%
Anger or irritability in relationships	34%	37%
Have worse mental health	37%	34%
Poor self-care	41%	29%
Neglected, caused problems, or ended my marriage or personal partnership	23%	28%
No longer have an interest in the activities I used to enjoy	13%	20%
Neglected, caused problems, or have difficulties in relationship with my child/children	11%	12%
Have gotten into financial trouble	5%	9%
Have fewer friends than before	5%	6%
Missed family or social events that I used to attend	9%	6%
Have gotten into legal trouble	0%	3%
Other	1%	2%
None of the above	22%	20%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Men who engage in higher risk levels of drinking are more likely to receive expressions of concern about their drinking from their spouse or partner. Specifically, 55% of high risk male drinkers report that their spouse or partner expressed concern about their drinking, as compared to 36% of high risk women drinkers who reported expressions of concern from their spouse or partner. For both men and women, it is uncommon for others – i.e., relatives or friends, parents, children, or co-workers – to express concern about their drinking.

Someone expressed concern about high risk drinking	Female	Male
Spouse or partner	36%	55%
Other relative or friend	12%	10%
Parent	11%	8%
Child	8%	5%
Co-worker	2%	3%
Workplace management personnel	0%	2%
None of the above	50%	38%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Considering these statistics from various perspectives, the Survey findings show that male lawyers are more likely to drink at a high risk level and that they experience greater consequences from that level of drinking than women.

Younger Lawyers Are More Likely to Drink Alcohol Than Older Lawyers

Looking at drinking across age categories, the group most likely to have used alcohol in the past year is the youngest lawyers. Conversely, the oldest lawyers are the least likely to drink alcohol. An exception to these age trends is at the level of drinking four or more times a week, although this degree of drinking covers a relatively small percentage of lawyers.

Alcohol use	Age					
	25-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	Over 75
Never	11%	15%	16%	15%	19%	24%
Monthly or less	24%	23%	24%	24%	23%	20%
2-4 times a month	34%	29%	24%	25%	22%	20%
2-3 times a week	23%	22%	23%	23%	18%	16%
4 or more times a week	7%	11%	13%	13%	18%	20%

Note: Because of rounding, each column may not add to exactly 100%.

Several lawyers commented how drinking was socialized beginning in law school:

“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

“Getting the students in law school and changing the culture regarding alcohol is key.”

— Multiracial female lawyer in government

Seeking Help, or Not

The overwhelming majority of high risk users of alcohol – 82% – did not seek help for their drinking. That amounts to approximately 4,458 Illinois lawyers in the high risk group who are not seeking help. While there were a number of reasons given, the two most frequent were the belief that the lawyer can handle their drinking (70%) and that they enjoy drinking and do not want to stop (52%). Lack of time, embarrassment, concerns about privacy or confidentiality, hurting their reputation or career, or the financial burden were other reasons for not seeking help.

Why high risk users of alcohol did not seek help	% of high risk alcohol users
I believe that I can handle it	70%
I enjoy drinking and don't want to stop	52%
Do not have time	21%
I would be embarrassed	18%
Concerns about privacy or confidentiality	16%
Concern it will hurt my reputation or carry a stigma	12%
Concern it will hurt my career	9%
Financial burden	6%
Other	10%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Why are lawyers not seeking help? Some expressed the view that there is “no need” for help and “drinking is not a problem”:

“I don't believe I have a problem that requires help.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“I am not concerned about it at this time. In the past when I have been, I have made the required changes.”

— White male lawyer in non-profit

“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

“It’s not something that is causing personal or professional problems. Don’t see the need to seek help.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“Not an issue.”

— White male lawyer in a solo practice

“I do dry months, and sometimes I drink a lot. I’m an adult, chill.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“I don’t have an issue that would require me seeking help.”

— White male lawyer in a corporate law department

Other lawyers responded that they enjoy drinking and do not consider it a problem:

“My drinking is not a problem. Work is great, husband and kids are great, finances are great. We have a great life, and drinking is part of our enjoyment.”

— White female lawyer in government

“It is not negatively affecting me but is a bit heavier than it should be. But also is a main part of my social gatherings, and those are very positive things for me.”

— White female lawyer in legal aid

“I drink socially, and it’s not a problem.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

There was, of course, a range of other reasons for not seeking help:

“Fear of change.”

— White male lawyer in government

“I don’t care.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

“I know alcohol is a response and not a cause of strife in my life.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

“Just another bad habit.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“Resignation to it.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“I’m looking for alternatives for pain relief.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

When high risk drinkers reached out for help about their alcohol use, the majority sought help from therapists, physicians, or a treatment program (69%), or reached out to a friend (24%), family member (22%), the Illinois LAP (22%), a self-help group (20%) and, less frequently, a work colleague (6%), or someone else (3%).

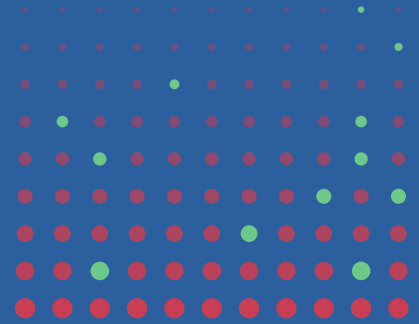
Resources contacted for help by high risk drinkers	% of high risk alcohol users
Therapist, physician, or treatment program	69%
Friend	24%
Family	22%
Lawyers’ Assistance Program (LAP)	22%
Self-help group	20%
Work colleague	6%
Other	3%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.



Several clear patterns emerge from the Survey data. Alcohol use remains a significant concern, with many lawyers neither seeking nor receiving help. Many, but not all, of those who drink more than casually report negative consequences affecting their work, personal lives, and overall sense of self-worth and optimism about the future. Despite these impacts, most lawyers with heavy drinking patterns are not seeking help. We will address these findings again in the context of identifying best practices that encourage lawyers to seek and receive the help they need and to address the consequences, both professionally and personally, associated with alcohol use. We also anticipate that the results will be used by a range of organizations and employers to provide services that address and reduce alcohol-related problems.

Drug Use and the Impact on Lawyers



While alcohol is legal to use and drinking alcohol is generally accepted as a social behavior, the same cannot be said for drug use. Tens of millions of Americans continue to use illicit drugs on a regular basis: approximately 73.6 million people reported illicit drug use in 2024, and the prevalence of drug use disorders has been increasing.¹⁶ At the same time, there is widespread misuse of prescription drugs, with often disastrous consequences for drug users and their families.¹⁷

Drug use is not confined to any one demographic group and is documented among highly educated and high-functioning professionals. Past research on the legal profession found elevated rates of substance-related problems, including prescription drug misuse.¹⁸ Below, we provide detailed results about the extent and consequences of drug use among Illinois lawyers. For comparison, data on substance use in Illinois' general population are available from SAMHSA.¹⁹

Frequency of Using Recreational Drugs or Misusing Prescription Drugs

Problematic drug use is of two types: use of recreational drugs or misuse of prescription drugs. We recognize that infrequent use of certain specific recreational drugs or prescription drugs does not typically suggest problematic use.²⁰

Based on other research, and in collaboration with LAP staff and clinicians, we developed a Drug Use Index that describes the level and nature of drug use or misuse. On the basis of their Survey responses, each respondent was placed into one of six mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive drug use categories, defined as follows:

Drug Use Index: Categories and Definitions

Category of drug use	Criteria for this level of drug use/misuse
1. No drug use	No use of a recreational drug and no misuse of prescription drugs in the past year
2. Infrequent use of recreational drugs	Defined as either cannabis (e.g., pot, vape or edibles containing THC) once a month or less OR a hallucinogen (e.g., LSD, mushrooms) not more than once in the past year
3. Infrequent misuse of prescription drugs	Defined as either misusing benzodiazepine OR ADHD medication, not more than twice in the past year
4. Frequent use of recreational drugs	Defined as cannabis once a week or more OR any hallucinogen more than once, OR any use of any other recreational drug such as cocaine or heroin in the past year
5. Frequent misuse of prescription drugs	Defined as any misuse of a prescription drug, except misusing benzodiazepine OR ADHD medication no more than twice in the past year
6. Frequent use of recreational drugs combined with frequent misuse of prescription drugs	Both frequent use of recreational drugs and misuse of prescription drugs as defined in Categories 4 and 5

The results were that over three-fourths of all Illinois lawyers – 78% – fall into Category 1 of the Drug Use Index. They report no use of a recreational drug and no misuse of a prescription drug over the past year. This group of non-users over the past year accounts for approximately 43,889 Illinois lawyers.

Index of drug use: All lawyers	% of survey respondents	Estimated number of Illinois lawyers ²¹
Category 1: No recreational drug use and no misuse of prescription drugs	78%	43,889
Category 2: Infrequent recreational drug use	9%	5,064
Category 3: Infrequent prescription drug misuse	0.1%	56
Category 4: Frequent use of cannabis and/or any other recreational drug	12%	6,752
Category 5: Frequent misuse of prescription drugs	0.4%	225
Category 6: Both frequent use of recreational drugs and prescription drug misuse	0.7%	394

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

The other 22% (an estimated 12,491 Illinois lawyers) fall into one of the five Index categories that describe a pattern of using recreational drugs and/or misusing prescription drugs.

- 9% of all lawyers, or approximately 5,120 lawyers, fall into Category 2 or 3, “infrequent” use.
- 13% of all lawyers, or approximately 7,371 lawyers, fall into Category 4, 5, or 6, “frequent” use of recreational drugs or misuse of prescription drugs.
- However, the large majority of “frequent” drug use lawyers – amounting to about 12% of all lawyers, or approximately 6,752 – use only recreational drugs.
- The other roughly 1% of lawyers engaged in a combination of frequently misusing prescription drugs (0.4%) or frequently using recreational drugs in combination with frequent misuse of prescription drugs (0.7%).²²

The vast majority of judges – 99% – did not report using either recreational drugs or misusing prescription drugs.

In the following sections, we go into detail about the 13% of all Illinois lawyers who report frequent use of recreational drugs and/or frequent misuse of prescription drugs. We also analyze the consequences and problems from such behavior.

Lawyers Who Frequently Use Recreational Drugs

A very large percentage of the lawyers who are frequent users of recreational drugs – 97% – take cannabis. 17% of frequent drug users take hallucinogens, and 11% of frequent drug users take cocaine. There was no reported use of heroin. Lawyers reported low use of nitrous oxide, crystal meth, or other drugs such as ketamine or MDMA.

Primary types of recreational drugs used	% of frequent drug users
Cannabis	97%
Hallucinogens	17%
Cocaine	11%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could check use of more than one drug.

It is not unusual for lawyers to use a combination of recreational drugs. Regarding cannabis, 79% of frequent drug users consume only cannabis, and another 19% take cannabis along with other drugs. With respect to cocaine, 2% of frequent drug users take only cocaine, and another 8% use cocaine along with other drugs. There is a similar pattern for hallucinogens, where 1% of frequent users take only hallucinogens, and another 14% of frequent users take hallucinogens and other recreational drugs.

Combinations of recreational drug use in the past year	% of frequent recreational drug users
Cannabis only (e.g., pot, vape, or edibles containing THC)	79%
Hallucinogens only (e.g., LSD, mushrooms, mescaline)	1%
Cocaine only	2%
Cannabis and hallucinogens	11%
Cannabis and cocaine	5%
Cannabis, hallucinogens, and cocaine	3%

Note: There were very few lawyers who mentioned other drugs (e.g., crystal meth, ketamine) so they are excluded from this table. No lawyer reported using heroin. Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

Of the lawyers who frequently use recreational drugs, the vast majority – 88% – do so at least once a week, with 35% using recreational drugs daily or almost daily.

How often recreational drugs are used	% of frequent recreational drug users
Daily or almost daily	35%
More than once a week	32%
About once a week	21%
About once a month	3%
A few times in the past year	8%
Once in the past year	1%

Note: As shown in our Index of Drug Use, taking a hallucinogen more than once a year or any use of cocaine or heroin or similar drug in the past year is considered “frequent use.” The rows showing use once a month or less reflect use of those drugs, and not cannabis.

Misuse of Prescription Drugs

Lawyers who misuse prescription drugs account for about 1% of the total sample, and it is therefore hard to draw reliable statistical conclusions about their behavior. We note that most misuse of prescription drugs involved ADHD medication, benzodiazepines, opioids, stimulants (e.g., amphetamine), sleep aids, or antidepressants.

Gender Differences in Use of Drugs

There were small differences between men and women as to whether they had any recreational drug use in the past year, although women were more likely to have no recreational drug use in the past year (80% of women compared to 77% of men).

Recreational drug use in past year by gender: All lawyers	Female	Male
No recreational drug use	80%	77%
Infrequent recreational drug use	9%	8.5%
Frequent use of cannabis and/or any other recreational drugs	9.7%	13.3%

Note: the gender breakdown of lawyers misusing prescription drugs was too small for reliable gender comparisons. Because of rounding, the columns do not add to exactly 100%.

13.3% of men frequently use cannabis and/or other recreational drugs compared to 9.7% of women. In other words, men are 37% more likely to be frequent users of these drugs than women. Although the gender percentages seem to be close, they translate to about 4,535 Illinois male lawyers as compared to 2,123 Illinois female lawyers who frequently used recreational drugs in the past year because of the much larger number of men compared to women in the legal profession in Illinois.

Age Differences in Use of Recreational Drugs

The youngest lawyers are most likely to use at least some recreational drugs, even if not regularly. Each successively older cohort of lawyers reports less drug use. That is especially the trend for frequent users of recreational drugs: among lawyers age 25–35, about 22% fall into the frequent use category, with a lower percentage in each successive age group.

	Age					
Recreational drug use in past year: All lawyers	25–35	36–45	46–55	56–65	66–75	Over 75
No use of recreational drugs	64%	74%	80%	85%	88%	93%
Infrequent use of recreational drugs	13%	10%	8%	7%	6%	3%
Frequent use of recreational drugs	22%	15%	10%	7%	6%	4%
Approximate number of lawyers at frequent use level ²³	2,081	2,093	1,252	694	432	100

Note: We could not make meaningful age comparisons concerning prescription drug misuse because there were too few people in each age group who misused prescription drugs.

Reasons Why Lawyers Frequently Use Recreational Drugs or Frequently Misuse Prescription Drugs

The 13% of lawyers who frequently use recreational drugs and/or frequently misuse prescription drugs gave an array of reasons for doing so. A substantial majority of lawyers use or misuse drugs to reduce stress or relax (74%), to feel good or get high (67%), and/or to help with sleep, pain, and other health issues (61%). A smaller percentage use drugs to stay awake, concentrate or increase energy (14%), fit in socially (12%), to experiment (9%) or because they could not control their drug use (5%). Other reasons were also given, such as to enhance creativity or sexual experience.

Reasons why lawyers frequently use recreational drugs or frequently misuse prescription drugs	% of frequent drug users
To reduce stress, take my mind off problems, or relax	74%
To feel good or get high	67%
To help with sleep, pain, or other health issues	61%
To stay awake, concentrate, or increase energy	14%
To be social, fit in	12%
Out of curiosity, to experiment	9%
Unable to control my drug use	5%
Other	3%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could check all that applied to them.

Many lawyers offered details about their reasons for taking drugs, such as:

“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

“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/Black female lawyer in a corporate law department

“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

“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

The Impacts of Frequent Drug Use on Work

An ongoing question is whether frequent use of recreational drugs impacts lawyers at work. 80% of lawyers who frequently use recreational drugs report no major impact. However, some lawyers cite burnout (11%), negative effects on attention (9%), and inability to perform at regular standards (7%). A smaller percentage reports negative impacts such as poor judgment, needing time off from work, poor performance in front of others, problems in getting along with others, and for a small minority, disciplinary action.

Impacts on work	% of frequent drug users
Felt burned out	11%
Unable to sustain attention when I should have	9%
Unable to perform at my regular standards	7%
Poor judgment or poor decision-making	5%
Had to take time off from work	3%
Poor performance in front of others	2%
Problems in getting along with others	2%
Disciplinary action	1%
None of the above	80%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could check more than one response.

The Impacts of Frequent Drug Use on Personal Life

As shown below, about three-quarters of lawyers who frequently use recreational drugs/misuse prescription drugs said it did not negatively affect their personal life.

Of the one-quarter of frequent drug users who reported one or more impacts on their personal lives, the most commonly reported effects were worse physical health (12%), worse mental health (11%), and poor self-care (10%). Other effects, including temperament issues, family problems, lost interests, and legal or financial problems, were less frequently reported.

Impacts on personal life	% of frequent drug users
Have worse physical health	12%
Have worse mental health	11%
Poor self-care	10%
No longer have an interest in the activities I used to enjoy	8%
Neglected, caused problems, or ended my marriage or personal partnership	7%
Anger or irritability in relationships	5%
Missed family or social events that I used to attend	5%
Have fewer friends than before	4%
Have gotten into financial trouble	2%
Neglected, caused problems, or have difficulties in relationship with my child/children	2%
Have gotten into legal trouble	0.7%
None of the above	74%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all impacts that applied to them.

Expressions of Concern by Others About Frequent Drug Use

Only 14% of lawyers who frequently used drugs reported that a spouse or partner, or another relative or acquaintance, expressed concern about their frequent drug use. A spouse or partner was most likely to express concern, as reported by 10% of lawyers who frequently use drugs.

Someone expressed concern about frequent drug use	% of frequent drug users
Spouse or partner	10%
Other relative or friend	4%
Parent	2%
Child	1%
Co-worker	1%
Workplace management personnel	0.2%
None of the above	86%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Do Lawyers Who Frequently Use Drugs Seek Help?

It is uncommon among lawyers who are frequent users of recreational drugs or misuse prescription drugs to seek help, and in the past year, only 7% of them sought help. Of the small number of lawyers who reached out for help, the vast majority (85%) contacted a physician, therapist, or treatment program. Smaller percentages reached out to one or more other sources for help.

Resources contacted for help by frequent drug users	% of lawyers who did seek help
Therapist, physician, or treatment program	85%
Family	23%
Friend	23%
Lawyers' Assistance Program (LAP)	18%
Self-help group	15%
Work colleague	7%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

Lawyers gave a number of reasons why they do not seek help for their frequent drug use. Nearly half said they enjoy drugs and don't want to stop (45%) and/or they believe that they can handle using drugs (44%). Much smaller percentages mentioned concerns about privacy, hurting their career or reputation, or being embarrassed; and some lawyers also said they did not have the time or help would be a financial burden.

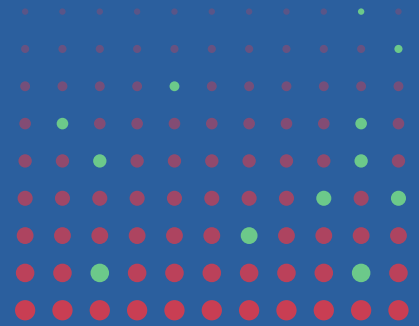
Why frequent drug users did not seek help	% of those who did not seek help
I enjoy drugs and don't want to stop	45%
I believe that I can handle it	44%
Concerns about privacy or confidentiality	7%
Concern it will hurt my career	6%
Concern it will hurt my reputation or carry a stigma	5%
I would be embarrassed	4%
Do not have time	3%
Financial burden	2%
Other	31%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.



In sum, 13% of all respondents reported frequent use of recreational drugs or frequent misuse of prescription drugs. Major reasons for that level of use include to reduce stress and relax, to feel good or get high, or to help with sleep, pain or other health issues. The overwhelming majority of lawyers who frequently take recreational drugs/misuse prescription drugs do not seek help. Taken together, the data underscore the need for targeted, stigma-sensitive outreach, and strategies to identify and assist at-risk lawyers before more serious consequences emerge.

The Overlap of Mental Health, Alcohol Use and Drug Use



Earlier chapters of this Report detailed three common wellness challenges: fair or poor mental health, high risk use of alcohol, and frequent use of recreational or misuse of prescription drugs. Each wellness issue was treated as independent of the others, which allowed detailed analyses of each wellness issue. That analytic approach, however, did not differentiate that lawyers can experience more than one wellness difficulty at the same time. As examples, some lawyers who have fair or poor mental health also have high risk for alcohol use problems; some lawyers at high risk for alcohol use problems may also frequently use recreational drugs; or some lawyers experience only challenges in the area of mental health or alcohol use but not in both areas.

Co-occurrence data, showing whether lawyers simultaneously experience different wellness issues, can allow employers, bar associations, and treatment providers to more fully understand the nature and extent of wellness challenges within the population of lawyers they serve. Such data also give confidence that an organization's initiatives and programs will support the lawyers that the programs target.

With these concepts in mind, we analyzed the data around two main questions:

1. What percent of Illinois lawyers gave Survey responses that show no serious wellness challenges, i.e., no challenges regarding fair or poor mental health, high risk alcohol use, or frequent drug use?²⁴
2. What are the chances that lawyers with one wellness issue – either fair or poor mental health, high risk alcohol use, or frequent drug use – will also experience other wellness issues?

The results were as follows and are also summarized in the table and diagram below.

First, two-thirds of Illinois lawyers or 67.8% (population estimate is approximately 38,150), show no serious wellness challenges for either mental health, high risk alcohol use, or frequent recreational drug use/prescription drug misuse. This is a group that could be the focus of CLE programs but not necessarily programs providing treatment, intervention, counseling, group support, or other wellness services.

Second, responses from the other third or 32.2% of all lawyers (population estimate is approximately 18,119) showed the following distributions of wellness issues.

Category 1: Lawyers with a wellness challenge in only one of three areas. Close to 24% of all lawyers have a wellness challenge in *one* area:

- 13% of all lawyers (n = estimated 7,315) have fair or poor mental health
- 4.2% of all lawyers (n = estimated 2,363) have high risk alcohol use
- 6.6% of all lawyers (n = estimated 3,714) have frequent drug use

This category accounts for 74% of all lawyers whose Survey responses showed a wellness issue.

Category 2: Lawyers with wellness challenges in two areas. Just over 7% of all Illinois lawyers experienced a combination of *two* wellness issues:

- 2.4% of lawyers (n = estimated 1,350 lawyers) have both fair or poor mental health *and* high risk alcohol use.
- 3.2% of lawyers (n = estimated 1,801) have both fair or poor mental health *and* frequent drug use.
- 1.5% of lawyers (n = estimated 844) have both frequent drug use *and* high risk alcohol use.

This category accounts for 22% of all lawyers whose Survey responses suggest a wellness issue.

Category 3: Lawyers with wellness challenges in all three areas. The remaining 1.3% of lawyers (n = estimated 732) report all *three* wellness issues simultaneously: fair or poor mental health, high risk alcohol use, and frequent drug use.

This category accounts for 4% of all lawyers whose Survey responses suggest a wellness issue.

**Types and combinations of three wellness issues:
fair or poor mental health, high risk alcohol use, and frequent drug use/prescription drug misuse**

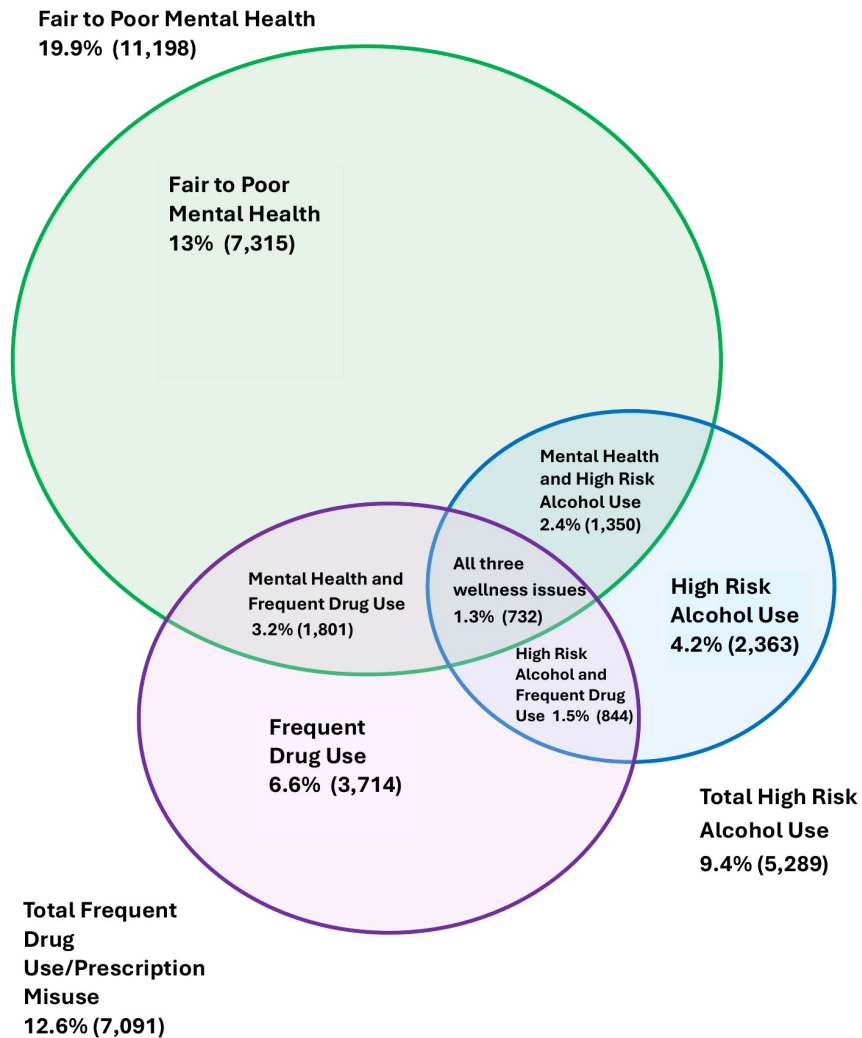
Type and combination of wellness issues	% of Illinois lawyers in Survey	Estimated number of Illinois lawyers
No reported issue about fair or poor mental health, high risk alcohol use, or frequent drug use/prescription misuse	67.8%	38,150
Fair or poor mental health, only	13.0%	7,315
High risk alcohol use, only	4.2%	2,363
Frequent drug use/prescription misuse, only	6.6%	3,714
Both fair or poor mental health and high risk alcohol use	2.4%	1,350
Both fair or poor mental health and frequent drug use/prescription misuse	3.2%	1,801

Types and combinations of three wellness issues: fair or poor mental health, high risk alcohol use, and frequent drug use/prescription drug misuse		
Type and combination of wellness issues	% of Illinois lawyers in Survey	Estimated number of Illinois lawyers
Both high risk alcohol use and frequent drug use/prescription misuse	1.5%	844
All three wellness issues: Fair or poor mental health and high risk alcohol use, and frequent drug use/prescription misuse	1.3%	732

Using this same data, below we visually show the distribution of prominent wellness issues in the population of lawyers, including the extent to which wellness issues overlap. The three circles show the 32.2% of all Illinois lawyers with at least one wellness issue. Within that group, the large majority (74%) show only *one* wellness issue: either fair or poor mental health, or high risk alcohol use, or frequent drug use. They have no overlap with other wellness problems. The other 26% show a combination of two or all three wellness issues, with no dominant combination of issues.

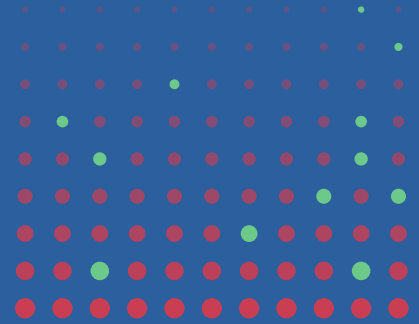
Illinois Lawyers: Types And Combinations Of Mental Health, Alcohol & Drug Issues

Illinois lawyers with no reported issue: 67.8% (38,150)



It is reasonable for organizations to target their programs, outreach, and other resources to the needs of their constituents. While some programs, especially educational programs, can readily address the three wellness issues simultaneously, the data suggest that training and intervention strategies may be more effective and efficient when they are tailored to one particular area of wellness.

Problem Gambling and Its Impact on Lawyers



Gambling problems are not uncommon among lawyers and can result from the attraction that many lawyers have to risks and challenges, such as an enjoyment from beating opponents, and a win-lose mentality.²⁵ “It’s not about the money. It’s about the action . . . the money is symbolic.”²⁶

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. Gamblers—especially well-educated or higher-income individuals—are susceptible to the “illusion of control,” a cognitive bias in which individuals overestimate their ability to influence outcomes.²⁷ The increasing availability of online and mobile betting platforms can heighten risk by making gambling much more accessible, private, and continuous.²⁸ As several respondents noted:

“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.”

— White female lawyer in government

“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

Gambling escalates quietly. What begins as occasional entertainment can shift into habitual or compulsive behavior, particularly during periods of stress, burnout, or professional pressure.²⁹ Losses are often framed as temporary setbacks that can be reversed, thereby fueling “chasing” behavior, one of the hallmark predictors of problem gambling.³⁰ Over time, habitual gambling can produce financial strain, impaired judgment, distraction, and diminished work performance. This progression is consistent with how clinicians understand Gambling Disorder, which is defined by patterns of loss of control, persistence despite negative consequences, and increasing

preoccupation.³¹ Because professionals often have greater access to financial resources and strong incentives to preserve a respectable public image, gambling problems may remain hidden longer.

The Extent of Gambling Among Lawyers

Most lawyers either did not gamble over the past year (50%) or purchased only lottery tickets (20%). However, 29% of respondents gambled beyond lottery tickets.

Gambling by lawyers in the past year	% of lawyers
No gambling	50%
Lottery tickets only	20%
Gambling beyond lottery tickets	29%

Note: Due to rounding, these percentages do not add up to exactly 100%.

Judges report gambling at about the same level and types as lawyers.

Most lawyers who gambled beyond lottery tickets played casino games or slot machines (55%) or did sports betting (44%). Lawyers also gambled privately with friends, family, or co-workers, such as in poker games (29%), or engaged in betting on horse or dog racing (10%) or online gambling (9%). Lawyers who selected “Other” described a variety of gambling experiences such as participation in raffles or fundraisers, playing poker, fantasy sports, and gambling on stocks.

Gambling activity (beyond lottery)	% of those who gambled (beyond lottery)
Casino games or slot machines	55%
Sports betting	44%
Private gambling with friends/family/co-workers	29%
Horse or dog racing	10%
Online gambling	9%
Other	4%

Note: The column percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents checked as many items as occurred in the past year.

To determine the extent to which Illinois lawyers engage in *problematic* gambling, we asked the 50% 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.

- I have often bet more money than I planned to
- I have lied to my family, friends, or co-workers about how much I gambled

- My gambling has caused financial difficulties

As shown in the table below, of lawyers who gambled in the past year, 6% answered “yes” to one or more of the screening questions. This represents a total of 3% of the population or about 1,688 Illinois lawyers.

Problematic gambling	% of those who have gambled in the past year
I have often bet more money than I planned to	6%
I have lied to my family, friends, or co-workers about how much I gambled	3%
My gambling has caused financial difficulties	1%

We note that the screening questions for problematic gambling do not depend simply on the frequency of gambling. That is because gambling even a few times a year can lead to problematic behavior: betting more than a lawyer planned to, financial difficulties, and hiding the amount of gambling from family, friends, and co-workers.

Rates of problematic gambling had no significant difference due to gender. We note that lawyers with problematic gambling tended to be the youngest lawyers, with 13% of lawyers in the 25-35 year age range gambling at a problematic level.

Age of lawyer	25-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	Over 75
% of lawyers who engage in problematic gambling	13%	6%	6%	4%	3%	2%

Among those lawyers whose Survey responses indicate problematic gambling, 53% gamble at least once a week, and often more frequently than that. However, 47% gamble once a month or less.

Frequency of gambling	% of lawyers with problematic gambling
Daily or almost daily	12%
More than once a week	18%
About once a week	23%
About once a month	21%
A few times in the past year	22%
Once in the past year	4%

Why Do Lawyers Engage in Problematic Gambling?

Excitement, avoiding daily life, and the hope of winning large amounts of money are common reasons why lawyers gamble at a problematic level. More specifically, lawyers with problematic gambling most often did so for the excitement or thrill (74%) or to socialize or for entertainment (50%). As one lawyer put it, “My gambling is my form of entertainment as well as socialization.” Lawyers also gambled to escape or distract themselves from worries and problems (34%), and/or in an attempt to recover money from previous losses (23%). Numbing one’s feelings, inability to control their gambling, or the goal of winning enough money to stop working were other reasons given.

Reasons for gambling	% of problematic gamblers
For the excitement, thrill, feeling of winning or competition	74%
To socialize or for entertainment	50%
To escape or distract from worries, problems, or concerns, to relax	34%
To recover money from previous losses	23%
To numb my feelings	6%
Unable to control my gambling	5%
Other (e.g., goal of winning enough money to stop working)	8%

Note: Respondents checked all that applied to them.

Adverse Consequences of Problematic Gambling

Only 16% of lawyers with problematic gambling reported one or more adverse impacts of gambling on work.

Impacts on work	% of problematic gamblers
Poor judgment or poor decision-making	7%
Unable to sustain attention when I should have	7%
Felt burned out	6%
Unable to perform at my regular standards	4%
Took time off or missed work because of gambling	4%
Problems in getting along with others	2%
Poor performance in front of others	2%
None of the above	84%

Note: Respondents who did not check “none of the above” checked all that occurred in the past year.

A somewhat larger percentage of problematic gamblers – 30% – reported that gambling impacted their personal lives. Reported problems include getting into financial trouble (15%), anger or irritability in relationships (15%), worse mental health (14%), and, to a lesser extent, problems with family or friends and/or various aspects of wellness.

Impacts on personal life	% of problematic gamblers
Have gotten into financial trouble	15%
Anger or irritability in relationships	15%
Have worse mental health	14%
Poor self-care	6%
No longer have an interest in the activities I used to enjoy	6%
Neglected, caused problems, or ended my marriage or personal partnership	6%
Missed family or social events that I used to attend	5%
Have fewer friends than before	5%
Have worse physical health	4%
Neglected, caused problems, or have difficulties in relationship with my child/children	3%
Have gotten into legal trouble	1%
Other	1%
None of the above	70%

Note: Respondents who did not check "none of the above" checked all that applied to them.

Lawyer comments about their problematic gambling included being “disappointed in myself with the wasted time;” and another lawyer reported that “I didn’t get into financial trouble but had to be more aware of my spending because of it.”

When someone expressed concern about a lawyer’s gambling, it was typically a spouse or partner (13%) or another relative or friend (8%).

Someone expressed concern in the past year about gambling	% of problematic gamblers
Spouse or partner	13%
Other relative (not spouse, parent, or child) or friend	8%
Parent	4%
Child	2%
Co-worker	1%

Note: Respondents checked all that applied to them.

Not Many Problem Gamblers Seek Help

A very low percentage of problem gamblers – only 3% – seek help for a gambling problem. For those lawyers seeking help, they primarily reach out to a therapist, physician, or treatment program. A small number of lawyers also seek help from family, friends, or self-help groups.

The high percentage of lawyers *not* seeking help stems largely from the belief that they do not need help (50%) and/or they enjoy and don't want to stop gambling (38%). A much smaller number of lawyers refrain from seeking help due to concerns about embarrassment, confidentiality, stigma, harm to their career, lack of time or money and other negative consequences.

Why problematic gamblers did not seek help	% of those who did not seek help
I believe that I can handle it	50%
I enjoy gambling and don't want to stop	38%
I would be embarrassed	13%
Concern it will hurt my reputation or carry a stigma	9%
Concerns about privacy or confidentiality	7%
Concern it will hurt my career	5%
Do not have time	3%
Financial burden	2%
Other	24%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

"I don't consider it a problem. While on a couple of occasions I gambled more than I intended, I have not come anywhere close to gambling an amount that would cause me financial hardship."

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“I’m well aware of my financials, and I truly believe I would never get that far and can control myself.”

— White male lawyer in government

“It is recreational.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in non-profit

“My gambling is not an issue for me as I have and can stop whenever I want.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

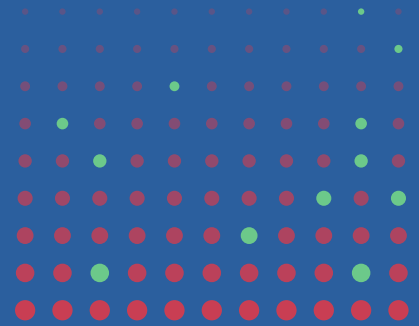
“I reached out for help for my gambling in previous years. The gambling this year was in the first quarter and has since stopped.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm



What is striking about the gambling data is the relatively low percentage of lawyers who report behaviors characteristic of problematic gambling compared to a greater percentage of lawyers with alcohol or drug use problems. Among lawyers who report behavior that is problematic, only a minority of them report that gambling impacts their work or personal lives, and a very low percentage of problematic gamblers seek help. The most common reasons are that they find gambling enjoyable or feel they can handle it themselves. Another reason is the gambler’s mindset: gamblers may have a “chasing losses” mentality that they “can win it back and then will stop.” Gambling is easier to hide than alcohol or drugs and has no physical warning signs, which correlates with far less social pressure from family and friends to do something about the gambling – as well as the fear that if they seek help, they will be embarrassed or hurt their career. While gambling is not a predominant problem among lawyers, it is more common among younger lawyers and a problem that may grow as AI and related technologies have an even greater impact on gambling and gamblers.

The Emerging Problem of Cognitive Decline in the Legal Profession



It is an accepted truism that with aging, some individuals experience a decline in certain cognitive abilities, such as memory, attention, thinking skills, and processing speed.³² While age alone does not signify significant cognitive decline, which is also influenced by genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors, age is an easily identifiable factor in diminished cognitive functions.³³

For professionals, cognitive decline is often subtle rather than obvious. Legal practice depends heavily on executive function (issue-spotting, judgment, strategy), working memory (holding multiple facts and arguments simultaneously), processing speed (reviewing large records, responding in real time), multitasking, complex decision-making, and handling interruptions — functions shown to change with cognitive decline. While cognitive decline research has not specifically studied lawyers in large numbers, the functions that are affected by cognitive decline impact the judgment and actions taken by lawyers and judges on an everyday basis.³⁴

The impact of a lawyer's cognitive decline on client representation is a core concern. The American Bar Association has issued the Opinion that “[i]mpaired lawyers have the same obligations under the [Rules of Professional Conduct] as other lawyers. Simply stated, mental impairment does not lessen a lawyer's obligation to provide clients with competent representation.”³⁵ At the same time, legal employers also have the “paramount obligation” to protect the interests of their clients.³⁶ Also relevant here is American Bar Association Model Rule of Professional Conduct 1.16(a)(2), which provides that a lawyer shall not represent a client or shall withdraw from an ongoing representation of a client if “the lawyer's physical or mental condition materially impairs the lawyer's ability to represent the client.”³⁷

With the recognition that cognitive decline is likely to be a growing concern as larger numbers of lawyers age and continue to practice, the Survey obtained some baseline information about observations of cognitive decline and how lawyers are approaching retirement.

Cognitive Decline Among Lawyers and Judges as Observed by Lawyers

In the past year, 39% of Illinois lawyers have observed other lawyers who appear to show signs of cognitive decline, and 21% of lawyers have observed signs of cognitive decline among judges.

Observed cognitive decline	% of lawyers
Yes, practicing lawyer(s)	39%
Yes, judge(s)	21%

While a substantial number of lawyers have observed cognitive decline, few lawyers (3%) have reported another lawyer or judge for concern about their reduced cognitive capacity. When lawyers did make reports, several said that “nothing happened” or “the issue was ignored” or they were told to “mind your business.” As one lawyer commented:

“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

Resources to Help Lawyers and Judges with Cognitive Decline

Nearly all lawyers – 94% – believe that there should be resources to help lawyers or judges who are experiencing cognitive decline. Lawyers also believe that help should come from multiple sources. Most prominently, 81% of lawyers would look to the Illinois Lawyers’ Assistance Program (LAP) for help. Other frequently suggested sources of help are private resources like family or physicians (68%), employers (64%), bar associations (62%), the ARDC (57%), with a scattering of other resources mentioned.

Who should provide help	% of lawyers
Lawyers’ Assistance Program (LAP)	81%
Private resources (like family or physician)	68%
Employers	64%
Bar associations	62%
Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (“ARDC”)	57%

Note: Responses add up to more than 100% because respondents could choose more than one answer.

Lawyers also provided a wide range of suggestions for the types of programs, resources and help:

“Confidential counseling and/or advice from a trained professional.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“Therapy, group sessions, and any other program that will strongly encourage/force them to address their declining cognitive health in a meaningful way.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in government

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

— Multiracial female lawyer in solo practice

“An investigative body where lawyers could anonymously report, and it would be competently investigated.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“Some kind of self-assessment survey to help a lawyer/judge recognize his or her cognitive decline.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

“Training or resources to help attorneys recognize signs of cognitive decline in themselves or others, with information about what to do if they believe they or another lawyer are experiencing cognitive decline. For instance, it has not occurred to me that I could report a lawyer or judge I had concerns about.”

— White female lawyer in legal aid

“I think the most helpful would be guides and lectures on how to identify when it 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

“A mandatory CLE that addresses signs to look for, resources, and duty to report. It could be a mandatory webinar like the ones on sexual harassment.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in the judiciary

Will Lawyers Ever Retire?

While the number of Illinois lawyers over the past 10 years has remained about the same, there has been a slow “graying” of registered lawyers. About 17% of registered Illinois lawyers are ages 60–69, another 9% are ages 70–79, and 2% of Illinois lawyers are age 80 or older.³⁸

We can expect that policies and programs around cognitive decline will become more prominent sooner rather than later. Illinois has no mandatory retirement age for a practicing lawyer or judge.

The Survey shows that close to 40% of lawyers age 60 or older have no target age for their retirement and expect to keep working as a lawyer as long as they feel able to do the work. Another 25% plan to retire before age 70, 24% of lawyers plan to retire when they are 70 or older, and 8% do not have a plan for retirement or know at what age they will retire.

Expected age of full-time retirement from the law	% of 60+ year olds
My plan is to keep working in the law as long as I feel I am able to do the work	39%
70 or older	24%
65-69	20%
By age 65	5%
I don't have a plan for retirement	4%
Don't know	4%
I am already retired	3%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

Lawyers who plan to keep practicing law as long as they feel able to do the work give multiple reasons why. They overwhelmingly say they like the work and find it engaging (85%). They also enjoy the social connections and interactions at work (59%), want to continue earning income (51%), don't know what else they would do (28%), are not financially able to retire (23%), and like the social recognition of being a lawyer (17%).

Reason for continuing to practice as long as able	% of lawyers
I like the work and find it engaging	85%
I enjoy the social connections and interactions during work	59%
I want to continue earning income	51%
I don't know what else I would do if I stopped working full-time	28%
I am not financially able to retire	23%
I like the social recognition that comes with being a practicing lawyer/judge	17%

Note: The sum of the column percentages is greater than 100% because respondents checked as many items as applied.

A number of lawyers commented about their reasons to continue practice:

"My retired friends seem less happy and more in decline."

— White male lawyer in a corporate law department

"I want to remain socially relevant."

— White male lawyer in government

"I know that I am helping the underrepresented."

— African American/Black female lawyer in non-profit

"I have tier two retirement; it is insufficient to live off of."

— African American/Black female lawyer in the judiciary

"WILL WORK TO THE DAY GOD COMES TO TAKE ME--LAW IS MY ENTIRE LIFE!!!"

— White male lawyer in solo practice

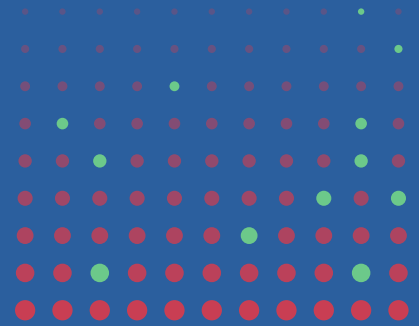
"For me, law is a calling."

— White female lawyer in solo practice



These data reinforce that a greater focus on cognitive functioning and the practice of law is timely. The legal profession generally is experiencing a demographic shift toward a more senior bar, and practice complexity continues to increase. Maintaining consistent standards of competence and client protection requires a proactive, structured approach that supports lawyers at different career stages rather than relying solely on uniform expectations applied identically to all practitioners regardless of age.

The Prevalence of Stress in Today's Practice of Law



Practicing law has always been stressful, but it seems to become increasingly stressful every year. The legal profession is characterized by a highly competitive, “win at all costs” mindset, and a relentless focus on perfectionism. In addition, legal employers and clients frequently impose unreasonable work demands and deadlines. Lawyers face onerous billable hour requirements as well as constant pressure with respect to business development and revenue generation. They have precious little downtime, and many lawyers feel hesitant or unable to take time off to truly decompress.

While advances in technology have greatly facilitated communications, they have also created a need for immediate responses and 24/7 availability. Similarly, although the growing use of artificial intelligence tools has made it faster and cheaper to perform certain types of work, these tools likewise create additional stress. Clients often have unrealistic expectations about the efficiencies that can be achieved; lawyers have concerns about potential mistakes; and some lawyers, particularly younger lawyers, fear that AI will ultimately imperil their job security.

All of these stress factors are exacerbated by the fact that many firms and corporate legal departments have moved away from allowing hybrid and remote work alternatives and are instead requiring lawyers to work in the office five days a week. These mandatory in-office policies disproportionately affect women, particularly women with children, who have found that flexible work policies help them achieve a better balance of their professional and family obligations.

For many lawyers, practicing law results in constant pressure and chronic stress that affects personal relationships and work performance, and can lead to mental and physical health issues, as well as excessive alcohol and drug use. For employers, wellness challenges confronted by lawyers can affect morale, recruitment, and increase the risk of costly attrition.

As part of the Survey, we asked questions to assess the extent of workplace pressures that can contribute to stress, burnout, and other mental and physical health issues. It is our hope that the findings will demonstrate the importance of designing and implementing meaningful and effective strategies that benefit lawyers and the organizations where they work.

Many Lawyers View Work as Synonymous with Stress

As shown in the table below, when asked 12 questions about various aspects of stress around their work, a relatively large proportion of respondents experience stress and related feelings on a weekly or daily basis:

- Experience stress at work (57%)
- Feel overwhelmed with all of the things I have to do (36%)
- Have trouble taking time off from work (30%)
- Feel like my day never ends (31%)
- Find it hard to wind down from work (29%)
- Anxious or panicked about work (27%)
- Worried about looking foolish or incompetent at work (21%)

Other feelings experienced on a weekly or daily basis include:

- Thinking it would be better to stop working at current job (17%)
- Feeling disengaged from their workplace (17%)
- Could not experience any positive feelings about what they do at work (16%)
- Think it would be better to stop working as a lawyer (14%)
- Found it difficult to take on new challenges (12%)

Notably, 14% of respondents, or about 1 in 7, had weekly or daily thoughts that it would be better to stop working as a lawyer. As one lawyer candidly noted:

"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

How lawyers feel/past year	Never, rarely/a few times a year	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Combined weekly or daily
Experienced stress at work	26%	17%	27%	30%	57%
Felt overwhelmed with all the things I have to do	43%	20%	20%	16%	36%
Have trouble taking time off work	53%	16%	14%	16%	30%
Feel like my day never ends	55%	14%	17%	14%	31%

How lawyers feel/past year	Never, rarely/a few times a year	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Combined weekly or daily
Find it hard to wind down from work	55%	16%	18%	11%	29%
Anxious or panicked about work	56%	17%	18%	9%	27%
Thought it would be better to stop working at my current job	72%	10%	9%	8%	17%
Worried about looking foolish or incompetent at work	66%	13%	13%	8%	21%
Thought it would be better to stop working as a lawyer	77%	9%	7%	7%	14%
Felt disengaged from my workplace	70%	13%	11%	6%	17%
Couldn't seem to experience any positive feelings about what I do at work	72%	12%	12%	4%	16%
Found it difficult to take on new challenges	76%	12%	9%	3%	12%

Note: Because of rounding, rows may not add to exactly 100%.

In order to analyze the relationship between various aspects of work and a lawyer's stress level, we used the 12 questions referred to above to create a robust, multi-dimensional Work Stress Index ("WSI"). Each lawyer's WSI score is the numerical average of their responses across the 12 questions. Scores were then grouped into five frequency categories: (1) rarely or never, (2) a few times a year, (3) monthly, (4) weekly, and (5) daily. Higher scores indicate more frequent stress.³⁹

Score on Work Stress Index (WSI)	Frequency of feeling stress about work	% of lawyers	Estimated number of Illinois lawyers
1.00	Rarely or never	4%	2,251
1.01-2.0	A few times a year	39%	21,945
2.01-3.0	Monthly	30%	16,880
3.01-4.0	Weekly	19%	10,691
4.01-5.0	Daily	8%	4,501

The results are that the mean WSI score for all Survey respondents is 2.41, which is in the "monthly" range for feeling stress about work. But the data also show that 27% of lawyers have WSI levels that

indicate weekly or even daily feelings of stress. Extrapolating to the population of Illinois lawyers, an estimated 10,691 Illinois lawyers have weekly feelings and an estimated 4,501 Illinois lawyers have daily feelings of stress.

Not surprisingly, 65% of lawyers who view the impact of their workplace as positive for their overall well-being have the lowest scores on the WSI. In contrast, the 22% of lawyers – an estimated 12,379 lawyers – who have negative opinions about how their workplace affects their well-being also have the highest WSI scores. Thus, there is a clear relationship between how positively lawyers view the impact of their workplace on their overall well-being and the level of workplace stress that lawyers experience.

Impact of workplace on overall well-being	Average WSI score	% of lawyers	Estimated number of Illinois lawyers
Very positive	1.77	26%	14,630
Somewhat positive	2.34	39%	21,945
No impact either way	2.40	13%	7,315
Somewhat negative	3.16	17%	9,566
Very negative	4.00	5%	2,813

Similarly, lawyers who were more satisfied working as a lawyer are much less likely to experience stress about work, as shown by the fact that each higher category of satisfaction with being a lawyer shows a lower level of stress on the WSI.

Satisfaction with being a lawyer	Average score on the WSI
Very satisfied	1.92
Satisfied	2.51
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3.04
Dissatisfied	3.42
Very dissatisfied	3.91

We also used scores on the WSI to better understand certain group differences, particularly with respect to gender and age, around the level of stress at work. Gender was not a significant factor, as both men and women report having these work stress experiences at about the same frequency.

However, age is a factor that predicts degree of stress about work. Younger lawyers (age 25-35) had the highest average WSI score (2.9), and each older age group had successively lower average group scores. Consistent with that result, and as shown in the table below, 31% of lawyers age 25-35, almost one third of that age group, reported that their workplace had a negative impact on their

well-being compared to just 18% of lawyers age 56-65 and less than 10% of lawyers older than 65. Nevertheless, a number of older lawyers are also experiencing relatively high levels of stress about work.

Impact of workplace on well-being	Age					
	25-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	Over 75
Very or somewhat positive impact	57%	64%	62%	68%	77%	79%
No impact one way or the other	12%	12%	13%	15%	15%	16%
Somewhat or very negative impact	31%	24%	25%	18%	9%	5%

Note: Because of rounding, each column may not add to exactly 100%.

Lawyers are well aware when a workplace has negative effects on their wellness. Indeed, two-thirds of lawyers (66%) who are in workplaces that negatively affect their mental health, physical health, or overall wellness would consider leaving that current job.

Would consider leaving current job because workplace negatively affects overall wellness	% of lawyers who are negatively affected by their workplace
Strongly agree	28%
Agree	38%
Neither agree nor disagree	17%
Disagree	12%
Strongly disagree	6%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

In contrast to lawyers, judges averaged a WSI score of 1.72 ("A few times a year"). There were no meaningful differences by Illinois appellate district on the Work Stress Index, nor were there meaningful differences by practice area.

Impact of Workplace Policies and Culture on Level of Stress at Work

Lawyers do not work in a vacuum, and it is valuable to know how the culture of a workplace enhances or decreases the level of stress that lawyers experience. The concept of workplace culture raises various questions, such as: Is there respect for the lawyers who contribute to the organization? Is compensation fair? Are there undue pressures to work long hours? Are lawyers given work that they can perform without undue stress? Do lawyers feel unappreciated and unmentored? Are there policies that expressly support lawyer wellness? As shown below, there is a strong relationship between lawyers who have negative views of their workplace and the policies and practices in place at those workplaces.

The number of hours worked per week is usually directly or indirectly driven by policies set by the employer. The data are clear that the more hours that lawyers work, the more likely they will experience greater stress about work. In fact, the average score on the WSI increases significantly with each increased level of working hours. As shown below, an estimated 12,942 Illinois lawyers work more than 50 hours a week, with 3,376 of them working over 60 hours per week. These lawyers also have the highest stress scores on the WSI.

Hours worked per week	% of lawyers	Average WSI score	Estimated number of Illinois lawyers
Over 60 hours	6%	3.0	3,376
51 to 60 hours	17%	2.8	9,566
41 to 50 hours	42%	2.5	23,633
31 to 40 hours	23%	2.2	12,942
21 to 30 hours	4%	2.0	2,251
10 to 20 hours	4%	1.7	2,251
Fewer than 10 hours	4%	1.6	2,251

How lawyers are treated under employment policies and the unwritten office rules also matters. Excessive workload and lack of appreciation are the top two reasons why lawyers say their workplace has a negative impact on their wellness. Still other reasons include feeling “stuck,” “isolated and alone,” or “not appreciated” for work that is done; unfair compensation; pressure to be in the office or unable to work on a suitable schedule; and lack of mentorship or sponsorship.

Lawyers whose current workplace has a negative impact on their wellness: Impact of workplace culture

Aspect of workplace culture	% of lawyers who give this reason
Excessive workload requirements	63%
I am not appreciated for the work that I do	52%
Feel stuck in a position like I am going nowhere	39%
Unfair or inadequate compensation	37%
Most of the time, even when I am in the office, I feel isolated and alone	37%
Pressure to be in the office	36%
I am treated in a rude, intimidating, or disrespectful way	34%
Lack of mentorship or sponsorship	33%
Inability to work on a schedule that suits me	26%
Lack of training for the job I have	17%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

These responses were supplemented by the respondents' comments about lack of advancement opportunities, difficulty with leadership and management, pressure at work, lack of competent staff and understaffing, difficult clients, and vicarious trauma, for example:

"I had a toxic boss who was a bully, didn't understand the implications of legal advice, and took credit for my work."

— White female lawyer in a corporate law department

"Murder videos. Videos of children being raped. Speaking with children who have been raped. Having to cross-examine children who have been raped. Representing abused and neglected children who are suicidal. Having clients commit suicide or get murdered."

— White male lawyer in a law firm

"Our clients are emotional vampires."

— White female lawyer in a law firm

"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

Workplace Policies That Proactively Support Wellness

Employers can and should implement policies and practices that enhance wellness for their lawyers. As shown below, a workplace with any one of six wellness policies is significantly more likely ($p < .001$) for its lawyers to report lower stress about work (as measured by the WSI) compared to workplaces without these policies.

Nature of policy	Average WSI score for lawyers in workplace without/with policy	
	Without	With
A culture that encourages employees to seek assistance with mental health or substance use issues	2.81	2.35
A leave policy that allows time off for treatment of mental health or substance use issues	2.78	2.32
Education or training on mental health or substance use topics	2.60	2.37
A written policy that sets forth how lawyers can seek assistance for mental health or substance use issues	2.62	2.36
Access to professional counseling services	2.58	2.42
Mindfulness and meditation training	2.58	2.41

Interestingly, resources such as gym membership and health insurance coverage for mental health or treatment of substance use did not have a significant impact on respondents' overall stress levels.

Stress Is a Major Reason Why Lawyers Leave Their Jobs

Lawyers were vocal in reporting that in the past they had left a job because their workplace adversely impacted their mental health, physical health, or overall wellness.

In fact, 70% of all Illinois lawyers who currently work as a lawyer said they had left jobs for that reason.

Many lawyers described the wellness challenges they faced at their prior jobs that prompted them to leave, including these comments:

"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

"I experienced racism and sexism."

— African American/Black female lawyer in government

"I left my position as a litigator because the stress became overwhelming and was causing panic attacks."

— White male lawyer in a law firm

"Left a firm where I worked 6 days a week, 12 hours a day. There was no time for anything else. After 10+ years, I had had enough and left."

— African American/Black female lawyer in solo practice

Of the 103 lawyers who responded to the Survey and were not currently working as a lawyer, a large majority reported that a major reason for leaving their last job was its negative impact on their wellness. More specifically, their last job had caused too much stress, lack of work/life balance, worse mental health, and/or had a negative impact on their family life. Some older lawyers, especially, cited declining physical health.

Specific reasons left last job	% of responding lawyers
Too much stress	82%
Lack of work/life balance	59%
Decreased mental health	56%
Negative impact on family	36%
Declining physical health	28%
Alcohol use	15%
Drug use	5%
Gambling	1%
Other reasons	35%

Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents checked all that applied to them.

LAP Support and Services

The Illinois LAP is well known by Illinois lawyers and judges, and only 7% of respondents had never heard of it. There were no significant gender or age differences in whether Illinois lawyers were familiar with LAP.

Lawyers viewed many different types of services as important for LAP to offer, especially individual therapy, mental health referrals, cognitive decline assistance, and CLE programs. Also important to

large numbers of Illinois lawyers are materials for managing stress, mental health, substance use, self-care, and gambling; group therapy; bar journal articles; and wellness videos.

Wellness resource	% of respondents
Individual therapy	85%
Mental health referrals	75%
Cognitive decline assistance	73%
CLE programs	71%
Stress management materials	56%
Mental health materials	54%
Substance use materials	50%
Self-care materials	49%
Gambling materials	45%
Group therapy	44%
Bar journal articles	44%
Wellness videos	42%

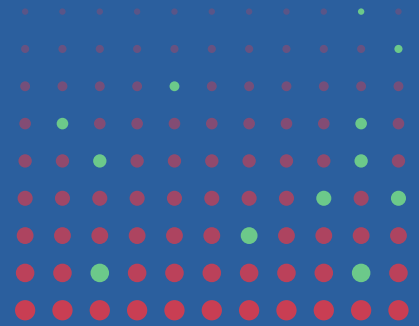
Note: The sum of the column percentages is greater than 100% because respondents checked as many items as applied.

The data give valuable guidance to LAP, as well as other organizations and legal employers, as to the types of educational materials and other programs that may be of most benefit to lawyers.



In sum, maintaining overall wellness is key to enabling lawyers to do their best work, avoid mistakes, achieve successful and long careers, and contribute at a high level over time. The many pressures, stresses, and demands of the legal profession take a toll on lawyers and adversely affect both them and their employers. As set forth in the Best Practices section of this Report, it is imperative that legal employers take lawyer wellness seriously and create healthier and more accommodating work environments, reduce unnecessary pressures, and make support easier to access. At the same time, lawyers need to recognize their own wellness needs, use available resources, and seek help before issues become overwhelming.

Best Practices for Promoting Mental Health and Wellness



It is clear from our findings that the legal profession is facing a crisis with respect to mental health and wellness.⁴⁰ Today's lawyers are confronted with unpredictable workloads, often difficult demands of clients, unreasonable deadlines, onerous billable hour requirements, a preoccupation with perfectionism, and the need to be available and responsive on a 24/7 basis. There are persistently high levels of stress, bias, pressure, incivility, bullying, and vicarious trauma – all factors that can affect a lawyer's mental health and wellness.

The result is that thousands of Illinois lawyers are experiencing declining mental health, engaging in high risk alcohol use, frequent drug use, excessive gambling and/or a combination of these wellness issues. While the Illinois LAP is providing important and impactful services and resources, one organization cannot alone handle the ever-increasing mental health and wellness challenges that so many lawyers are facing.

It is critically important for lawyers to seek help, and when they do, they should not be stigmatized or penalized. This concern was recognized by the National Conference of Bar Examiners when, in April 2026, it released its updated Sample Character Report Application, emphasizing that applicants disclosing mental health diagnoses/treatment, substance misuse, or other sensitive matters are “assured that the steps you have taken to address such matters, such as through counseling, treatment or other actions, is to your credit. The National Conference of Bar Examiners and admission authorities of the jurisdictions strongly encourage applicants who may benefit from assistance to seek it.”⁴¹ To encourage lawyers to seek support without fear that their reputation or career could be harmed, reporting procedures must ensure effective confidentiality protection.

The Survey data and the numerous comments received from Illinois lawyers who responded to the Survey's open-ended questions were invaluable in developing a set of best practices for mental health and wellness policies that will benefit: (a) individual lawyers; (b) law firms, corporate law departments, and other organizations employing lawyers; (c) bar associations; and (d) the judiciary. Below we detail our recommended best practices.

Guidance to Legal Employers About Policies to Promote Mental Health and Wellness

Meaningful Leadership Must Come from the Top

Leadership from the top is essential for the development, implementation, and success of mental health and wellness policies and programs. Lawyers who we surveyed emphasized that for meaningful structural change to occur, leaders need to set the tone about the importance of wellness, create and oversee specific targeted policies, provide necessary support and resources, and maintain their commitment to the mental health and wellness of all lawyers. Employers can create resources to provide support for lawyers who are experiencing warning signs of mental health and wellness issues, not just those who may already be in severe distress or crisis. Resources should include a confidential process where lawyers and staff can share concerns they may have about mental health and wellness, regarding themselves or others with whom they work. To be both effective and properly protective, it is essential that these procedures are developed with the guidance of a psychologist or other professional familiar with wellness issues and effective, confidential procedures for implementing an organization's policies and programs.

Senior leaders can and should speak about mental health and wellness as normal workplace issues, not as a personal weakness or failure. Leaders and other influential lawyers in the organization may wish to share their own mental health and wellness struggles and the tools and methods they use to address them. Such first-hand and personal stories foster open and candid discussions and demonstrate that having such issues does not constitute a personal weakness or failure, and they will go a long way to encourage other lawyers to seek help with their mental health and wellness needs. Leaders can also remind lawyers about wellness programs, flexible work policies, and confidential reporting channels.

Leaders should themselves receive guidance and training so that they can have a better understanding of the complex issues involved and make more well-informed decisions about how to tackle mental health and wellness issues. With thoughtful and committed planning, specific policies and initiatives tailored to a particular organization can be successfully established.

Leaders and others at senior levels can also provide visible support by modeling through their own behavior their commitment to maintaining and promoting lawyer mental health and wellness as an integral part of the culture of the organization. Leaders need to emphasize that there is an expectation that all lawyers take vacation time, avoid sending non-urgent late-night emails, respect boundaries, and take time off or leave, if necessary, to recover from the stress inherent in the practice of law.

Many Survey respondents emphasized the importance of systemic change, with such comments as:

“Promote healthy workplaces at the law firm level. Law firms have to change, not the individual lawyer. This is a systematic, structural issue that most people treat as a personal failing. I don’t need mindfulness; I need a vacation.”

— White male lawyer in solo practice

“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

“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

Leaders may not always realize that the workplace culture and environment they oversee may exacerbate mental health and wellness issues. They might typically view their workplace through the lens of their own personal experience and not truly understand how lawyers are being treated, what behavior is rewarded or tolerated, and the stresses imposed on lawyers in their day-to-day work. A leader may believe that the organization’s culture is respectful, collaborative, and accommodating because that is the stated goal, while lawyers may feel the culture is too competitive, uncaring, unduly stressful, or even dismissive. Creating a healthy workplace culture that promotes mental health and wellness will help everyone in an organization, and will ensure that lawyers are healthier, more engaged, more productive, more likely to stay, and less likely to resort to drug or alcohol use, make mistakes, or feel emotionally exhausted.

Below we suggest the types of policies an organization should consider and the process for implementing them. We recognize that not all policies can be implemented by all organizations. We also recognize that changing the workplace culture is not easy. However, the costs of not addressing and ameliorating these issues are simply too great to continue with the status quo.

Speak to Lawyers at All Levels About What They Need

A necessary first step for employers to promote mental health and wellness in their organization is to learn what is needed and by whom. It is surprising how often leaders and others in the top echelon of an organization do not have a realistic understanding of the organization’s culture as it is experienced and lived by mid-level and junior lawyers.

One best practice is to survey lawyers to assess the types of mental health and wellness issues they are facing and determine what types of resources would be most helpful to them. A less formal approach to gathering information is to have “drop boxes” where lawyers can anonymously make suggestions about how the organization can support mental health and wellness.

Another technique is for senior and influential lawyers to “walk the hallways,” or have one-on-one “pulse checks” to ask lawyers what they would like to see the organization do to enhance mental health and wellness. Information can also come from listening sessions and exit interviews, both of which can often yield surprising and useful information. Discussing suggestions in various leadership meetings is another way to gather information and discuss the benefits and costs of resources that can be provided.

These steps can help leadership frame and support meaningful policies. Without first obtaining input and suggestions from a range of affected lawyers, there is less likelihood that policies and strategies, though well-intentioned, can succeed.

We recognize that there are a variety of workplace settings and many factors that can affect when, how, and which mental health and wellness policies and practices can be established. To give basic guidance, we describe below eight policies or practices that are building blocks for a workplace culture that values mental health and wellness.

Enforce Complete Confidentiality as a Core Policy

First and foremost, employers must recognize that strict confidentiality is a cornerstone of any policy for addressing lawyers’ mental health and wellness. Confidentiality requirements and prohibitions against retaliation for lawyers’ reporting of a mental health or wellness issue should be included in any policy. A policy should expressly state that a lawyer’s report or inquiry about a mental health or wellness issue is confidential and will not be disclosed to others except in certain very limited circumstances, which should be specified in the policy. Any health-related information should be stored separately from personnel files and protected with appropriate safeguards and consistent with HIPAA and EEOC guidance.

There should be designated personnel with whom an attorney can discuss a mental health or wellness issue, and these personnel must receive effective training about the policy and how to communicate with lawyers seeking assistance. If an employer elects to use a reporting system where an individual’s mental health and wellness information is provided to a third party, only that third party or specifically authorized personnel of the employer should have access to that information.

We emphasize that any effective mental health and wellness policy should be developed and reviewed by both an attorney and a psychologist or other mental health professional familiar with these issues so that its provisions are in legal compliance and meet applicable psychological standards.

Create Leave, “Mental Health Days,” and Vacation Policies

Employers should adopt written and carefully defined leave and back-to-work policies that address taking time off on account of mental health or wellness issues. The policy should make clear that employees returning from wellness time off will be treated with dignity and respect and confidentiality will be maintained.

Lawyers should be encouraged to avail themselves of a “mental health day” or leave policies when time off is required to deal with mental health or wellness issues or simply to “de-stress.”

Respondents overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of paid time off, as well as days off for mental health and wellness-related appointments, and even sabbaticals if needed. Lawyers on leave, or who need to take time off or a break from work, should not be required to respond to emails, and caseloads should be covered by others. Similarly, lawyers should be encouraged to take true vacations without having to always be available to the office and clients, and they should not have to work extra hours throughout the year to make up for time off to meet billable hour expectations. This will enable them to fully disconnect and recharge.

There were many comments in the Survey from lawyers about the need to take time off for wellness, such as:

“Mandatory time off/vacation. It would force lawyers to take some time off for themselves away from the office to recharge.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“Ample paid time off that doesn’t affect billables.”

— White female lawyer in a law firm

Leave policies, mental health days, and vacation are not simply lawyer fringe benefits; they are practical tools for sustaining energy, judgment, and performance over time. When lawyers are encouraged to step away for a break before they suffer from stress, burnout, depression, or a mental health and wellness crisis, both the lawyer and the employer are better positioned to succeed.

Rethink Billable Hour Quotas and Monitor Workloads

Employers should understand the impact of our findings showing a direct correlation between onerous billable hour requirements and stress, burnout, and other mental health and wellness issues.

Respondents overwhelmingly emphasized the incompatibility of their heavy workloads with wellness and a healthy work-life balance. They also identified unreasonable workloads as a key factor preventing them from taking advantage of mental health and wellness services. The problems created by too much work were addressed in many lawyers’ comments:

“If you want to address these issues, the root cause is the billable hour demand. These resources are a band-aid, but they don’t address the underlying issue, which is the 24/7 demand on a lawyer’s time and attention.”

— White female lawyer in a law firm

“Address billable requirements with law firms. This is the root of most stress.”

— Multiracial male lawyer in a law firm

“Set guidelines and/or standards for employers for what an ‘ethical’ case load is for an attorney, depending on workplace (private practice, legal aid, government, etc.) and practice areas.”

— Hispanic/Latina female lawyer in a law firm

“Lobby for more realistic expectations in the workplace. In some practice areas, the billable hour is becoming more and more unrealistic and is putting undue pressure on practitioners due to fixed fee schedules. We need to seriously look at doing away with the billable hour and move to a ‘working hour’ and flat fee structure for non-litigation practice groups.”

— White female lawyer in a law firm

“Firms should remove the billable hour requirement and work on a project basis.”

— Asian/Asian American male lawyer in a law firm

“Get rid of billable time entirely.”

— White male lawyer in the judiciary

“Mandated caseload caps.”

— White male lawyer in non-profit

“If we had half the caseload, we could actually participate in mental health and wellness programs.”

— White female lawyer in government

Employers who require a certain number of billable hours should monitor the number of hours billed weekly, monthly, and yearly by their attorneys. An excessive number of billable hours can be a warning sign of potential trouble. Lawyers reported that they were often fearful of turning down work assignments because they were worried about the consequences, especially if the assignment was from a more senior lawyer. Conversely, taking on additional work when a lawyer is already over-extended could lead to increased stress, pressure, and potential burnout. Along these lines, some organizations have adopted policies that discourage emails and calls on evenings and weekends unless absolutely and truly necessary. When lawyers have protected time away from work, they are more likely to recover from stress, maintain personal and family relationships, and return to work with greater focus, energy, and resilience.

Implement Flexible Work Policies

Starting during the pandemic, workplace flexibility has been sought by more and more lawyers, both men and women, and prior research shows this is particularly desired by parents with dependent children.⁴² Almost 50% of Survey respondents reported working on a hybrid schedule or working remotely. Our view is that flextime and part-time policies should be de-stigmatized and those who use these policies should not suffer any adverse consequences as a result of their use. The increased insistence by many employers that their lawyers work in the office four or five days a week can be counterproductive to lawyers’ mental health and wellness.

Many respondents highlighted their desire for more flexible work policies, as these examples show:

“Flexibility to work from home is the single biggest factor in helping me manage my mental health and stress both at home and at work.”

— White male lawyer in government

“Promote alternative work settings to allow lawyers to do hybrid/part-time/remote work and not be seen as less than.”

— White female lawyer in a law firm

“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

Increase Lawyer Engagement with a Collegial and Supportive Workplace Culture

In any given organization, there can be many lawyers with different backgrounds, practices, personalities, work styles, career stages, and ideas about what success looks like. That diversity can be a great strength, but it also means that connection does not always happen automatically. A real commitment to engagement helps build bridges across those differences. It gives lawyers and staff more opportunities to understand one another, share ideas, feel included, and see how their individual work fits into the larger purpose of the organization.

One Survey respondent suggested that employers perform a “culture and needs” audit, to develop policies that support collegiality and a hospitable and accommodating workplace culture. It is important, of course, to create a workplace that lawyers can enjoy, rather than dread. This makes a great difference in promoting mental health and wellness.

In this context, engagement is both a wellness strategy and a business strategy. When lawyers feel connected and respected rather than overlooked and excluded, they are more likely to collaborate, support one another, stay committed to the organization’s success and overall goals, and remain at their job. Over time, policies that encourage engagement can help create a healthier, more cohesive and effective organization, whether that is a law firm, corporation, government agency, or not-for-profit.

Training, Education, and Resources

Another key best practice is for organizations to provide ample mental health and wellness training, education, and resources. As examples, employers can arrange workshops and programs featuring mental health and wellness specialists and encourage candid dialogue about how to make the workplace more hospitable, collegial, and enjoyable. The Illinois Supreme Court requires CLE credit for mental health and substance use education (Rule 794(d)), and many programs can be made available to legal organizations. By doing so, it makes attending those programs more convenient and sends a message that the organization is taking mental health and wellness seriously. A legal employer can also invite experts to speak with lawyers about mental health, alcohol use, substance use, gambling, cognitive impairment, and other issues that affect mental health and wellness.

Training from mental health and wellness specialists gives lawyers coping mechanisms and practical tools for managing stress and helps them recognize early signs of burnout. Training also reduces stigma. When issues like high risk alcohol use or frequent drug use are discussed in the context of a training session, there is a double benefit: lawyers are more likely to seek help and training, and leaders and other managers are better prepared to respond when they see lawyers struggling.

Support Non-Profit Organizations That Provide Mental Health and Wellness Assistance

There are several practical ways that employers can support LAP and other non-profits that provide guidance and help to the legal community with respect to mental health and wellness issues. An organization can make financial contributions, sponsor programs, hold receptions where someone from a non-profit organization is a speaker and ask for matching donations, and provide space or administrative support for community wellness events. By providing such support, an employer helps strengthen the network of care in the legal profession. At the same time, it sends a strong message to lawyers that the employer does not merely pay lip service to mental health and wellness but instead is truly concerned and committed.

Host Social Events That Do Not Center on Alcohol

Employers should host social functions where alcohol is not served or non-alcoholic options are available. This will make workplace gatherings more inclusive, healthier, and safer.

Alcohol-free events also support wellness by sending the message that social events at work do not have to revolve around drinking. Lawyers can relax and build relationships without the risks that can come with providing unlimited alcohol at the end of a day and into the evening.

A number of Survey respondents noted that alcohol is too prevalent at events sponsored by legal employers:

“Alcohol is everywhere in the legal profession, firm parties, client receptions, business meals, conversations with colleagues. Firms could adopt a policy that limits alcohol at any firm-related function because not everyone can participate.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

“I enjoy working for a company that does not allow alcohol at work events. I think more companies should consider this.”

— White female lawyer in a corporate law department

“Encourage more non-drinking events. Have more mocktails and non-alcoholic wine at events. Make it clear that we don’t have to drink as a release. There are other healthy ways to de-stress.”

— African American/Black female lawyer in a corporate law department



In sum, a strong mental health and wellness strategy does not depend on one program or one policy. We have listed a number of policies that can be included in an employer’s framework for enhanced wellness through top-down leadership and an inclusive and flexible approach to policies and training. Change does not happen overnight. It requires an ongoing commitment to create a workplace culture where lawyers feel respected, supported, and able to seek help on a confidential basis when needed. In the end, supporting mental health and wellness is not separate from organizational success; it is one of the foundations for building a healthy, engaged, and productive workplace.

Steps Lawyers Can Take to Improve Their Own Mental Health and Wellness

As we learned through our research, many lawyers are struggling with their mental health and wellness. Unfortunately, far too many feel their mental health is suffering, resort to heavy use of alcohol, frequent use of recreational drugs, or excessive gambling. Some lawyers are fortunate enough to work in a supportive organization where they feel they can thrive and succeed and enjoy a full life outside of work. However, other lawyers work in settings that are not supportive, and where work is simply “a job” that they endure or dislike rather than enjoy.

Even when a lawyer feels depressed, overwhelmed, isolated, stressed, burnt out, or stuck in a rut, change is still possible. Taking one small step to reach out can begin the process of finding support and moving toward a healthier and more manageable path forward.

Below, we suggest various steps that lawyers can take to promote their own mental health and wellness.

Take Care of Yourself – It Matters

Given the increased stress, pressure, and anxiety that individual lawyers are experiencing, self-care is critical, regardless of a lawyer's age, gender, type of practice, and practice setting.

Good physical health supports energy, sleep, concentration, and the ability to handle daily responsibilities. Good mental health supports sound judgment, problem solving, relationships, resilience, and the ability to manage stress. Physical and mental health also reinforce each other, and caring for both creates a stronger foundation for overall wellness.

Lawyers can maintain their mental health and wellness in many different ways. Take the permissible holiday and vacation time as well as “mental health days” when needed. It is essential to recharge so that you come back to work relaxed and refreshed, more focused, and productive. Also, avoid scheduling too many meetings. Try to avoid excessive travel, which is often stressful. See if meetings out of town can be handled by Zoom instead. Think about what is important for you to do personally and what you can delegate.

Don't stretch yourself too thin – avoid taking on too much work. There is a danger of increasing your workload until you feel overloaded, stressed out, and potentially falling down a rabbit hole from which it is hard to climb back up.

It is a tremendous and gratifying benefit to set aside some time every day for yourself, your family, and friends. Disconnect from your cellphone and laptop. Don't check your emails in the middle of the night – they can wait until the morning.

Practice mindfulness or other techniques to detach from work stressors. Mindfulness can help increase focus, concentration, and memory, which are all skills that enhance lawyer effectiveness.⁴³

Devote time to enjoyable activities other than work. It may be playing sports or going to the gym, playing an instrument (yes, you are not too old to learn!), reading a novel, redoing furniture, tending to your garden, cooking, or participating in a community or religious organization, as just a few examples of activities that allow you not to be excessively preoccupied with work all the time.

Reach Out to a Person You Trust and Respect

Support may come from your spouse or partner, trusted friends, family members, mentors and sponsors, counselors, employee programs, or other professionals who can help identify practical next steps. The simple action of reaching out can help you deal with feelings of isolation or the struggles that often come with mental health issues and excessive substance use. Trusted confidantes can listen without judgment, offer perspective and guidance, and help you feel less alone. They can also make a phone call, find the right support professional or organization, and help with the process of moving toward professional care and healthier choices.

Ask for Professional Guidance and Counseling

Lawyers who are struggling with mental health and wellness issues can benefit enormously from professional guidance and counseling. A lawyer should not hesitate to seek professional assistance as soon as there are warning signs about potential mental health, substance use, and gambling issues or a decline in cognitive ability. There are many places where you can get help. And we emphasize the readiness of Illinois LAP to respond to requests for help or calls for guidance at any time about next steps on an entirely confidential basis and centered around what will work best for the lawyer in need of help.

The Role of Bar Associations

Given their considerable resources and reach, bar associations have an important role to play in raising awareness and educating their members about the prevalence and impact of mental health and wellness issues, encouraging lawyers to seek help when needed, and advocating for model workplace policies that will implement the types of cultural and structural changes that are necessary to support mental health and wellness. One Survey respondent aptly described the important role bar associations can play:

“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 lawyer in government

Create and Sponsor a Wide Variety of Programs

Bar associations are also well positioned to create and sponsor programming to help Illinois lawyers comply with Illinois Supreme Court Rule 794(d), which requires one hour of mental health and substance use CLE credit in each two-year reporting period. By this Rule, the Supreme Court has ensured that Illinois lawyers will become better informed about mental health and wellness issues. As examples of proactive bar associations, the Illinois State Bar Association has had extensive programming concerning work/life balance, mental health issues and wellness. The Women’s Bar Association of Illinois has a Mental Health and Wellness Committee, which provides CLE programming, training, and articles on mental health and wellness. The Chicago Bar Association has a substantial CLE platform with a category for mental health/substance use and a Well-Being/Mindfulness Committee. Program topics include working with depression and anxiety, mental and emotional fitness, and rethinking alcohol-centered social norms in law. Illinois LAP also offers virtual CLEs that are available 24/7 for mental health and substance use CLE credit.

Survey respondents suggested CLE programs that bar associations should consider presenting, including these suggestions:

“Provide less generic mental health CLE and instead offer sessions that feature experts who can really share hallmarks of these issues in a relatable way.”

— White female lawyer in a corporate law department

“Continue to offer testimonial-based CLE programs from practicing or retired lawyers describing their own mental health and substance abuse challenges and strategies that have and have not worked for them in coping with those challenges.”

— White male lawyer in a law firm

For certain mental health and related wellness topics, CLE programming should include a psychologist or other qualified mental health professional. Bar associations should continue to partner with LAP and educate their members about LAP’s strictly confidential services, resources and referrals for counseling, monitoring and recovery support.

Promote Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs

Bar associations can promote mentorship and sponsorship programs that assist lawyers in their careers and make the legal profession more inclusive and less isolating. Such programs can enhance mental health and wellness in the legal profession and reduce the sense that lawyers have to navigate difficult careers entirely on their own. A good mentor can provide perspective, practical advice, and a sounding board to talk through challenges and setbacks before they become overwhelming.

These programs also help lawyers feel more connected to the profession. When experienced lawyers take an interest in a junior lawyer’s growth, it can strengthen confidence and help that lawyer make better decisions about work and the direction of their career. Sponsorship adds another important benefit: it helps open doors to lawyers outside of their own workplace, which in and of itself provides new learning, perspective, and opportunities.

Bar association programs may be particularly important to solo practitioners and lawyers in small firms, especially in more remote or rural areas of Illinois that may have fewer resources for lawyers.

Convene Summits and Conferences on Emerging Mental Health and Wellness Issues

A bar association is ideally suited to bring together lawyers, judges, and mental health and wellness experts, sending a clear message that mental health and wellness issues must be integrated into conversations about competence, professionalism, and the future of the legal profession.

Summits or conferences can provide practical solutions and highlight available resources. They can encourage participation from all segments of the profession and allow attendees to talk openly about stress, burnout, depression, substance use, and the need for assistance and support to those facing such challenges.

De-Emphasize Alcohol at Bar Association Social Events

Bar associations, like other organizations, should de-emphasize alcohol at social events and plan a variety of activities that promote socializing and networking but are not centered around drinking. As one Survey respondent stated:

“Hold events that model responsible alcohol use. Too many bar association events turn into bacchanals.”

— White male lawyer in government

How Judges Can Help to Improve Mental Health and Wellness

Our Survey data reflect that judges rated themselves higher with respect to their mental health as compared to lawyers. However, 9% of judges rated their mental health as only fair or poor. Like lawyers, judges can experience vicarious trauma as a result of the emotionally difficult cases they preside over and the toll taken on them by the profoundly life-altering consequences of certain of their decisions. Indeed, data have shown that 63% of judges have experienced at least one symptom of vicarious trauma.⁴⁴ Moreover, in recent times, as the political climate has become increasingly polarized, judges have reported a dramatic rise in personal threats, public hostility, and security concerns, which can negatively affect their mental health and wellness.⁴⁵

Lawyers recognize that judges can play a role in promoting mental health and wellness by requiring civility from litigants and counsel. As one Survey respondent stated:

“Stronger and more enforcement of ethical rules of lawyers’ civility.”

— White female lawyer in a law firm

Judges should model civility in their courtrooms and implement countywide standing orders that provide written guidance about acceptable and unacceptable behavior in court and during the course of litigation.⁴⁶

Judges need to be cognizant of the impact their actions have on the mental health and wellness of the lawyers who appear before them, including how the case schedules they set can impact the lawyers appearing before them. Two examples among many comments speak to how judges sometimes unnecessarily increase stress for lawyers and their clients:

“Workload and stress related to and caused by unrealistic expectations of judges.”

— Multiracial male lawyer in a law firm

“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

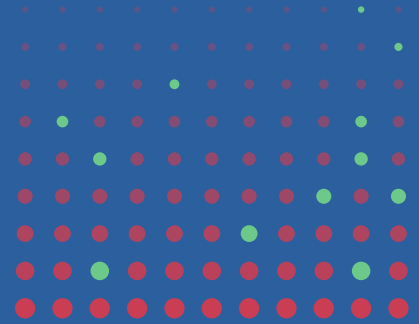
Training and education on subjects related to mental health and wellness, such as the programming provided by LAP, are essential information for judges to have. There is, of course, a range of topics that could be included, such as management of stress, vicarious trauma, and self-care measures. The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism has organized training sessions for judges on vicarious trauma.⁴⁷

Finally, training for judges should include how to recognize when they or other judges or lawyers are experiencing cognitive decline. This is particularly important in Illinois, which, unlike many other states, does not have a mandatory retirement age for judges. Once again, written policies as to how to address these sensitive issues would be very beneficial to the judiciary.

Conclusion

For too long, the profession has turned a blind eye to widespread mental health and wellness issues experienced by lawyers. The results of our Survey should be a wake-up call that concrete and meaningful change is needed now, and should spur all stakeholders to implement the necessary systemic changes. The Best Practices recommended in this Report represent a multifaceted, holistic approach that can serve as a springboard for more effective strategies and policies to improve Illinois lawyers' mental health and wellness. The creation of more hospitable, accommodating legal workplaces will ultimately lead to greater personal and professional fulfillment in the practice of law.

Appendices



Appendix A: 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.

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

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

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.

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.⁴⁸ 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.

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

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.

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

Race and Ethnicity

The large majority of respondents were White/Caucasian (82%). There was about an equal percentage of African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino/a respondents: 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 Islander or American Indian/Alaska Native.

Race/Ethnicity	%
White/Caucasian	82%
African American/Black	4%
Hispanic/Latino/a	4%
Asian/Asian American	3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	<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?	% of lawyers with an impairment
Yes	22%
No	78%

Veterans

A small number of respondents are veterans (5%), and the vast majority (87%) of veterans completed their service 11 or more years ago.

Veteran status	%
Yes	5%
No	95%

Completed service	% of veterans
More than 20 years ago	74%
11–20 years ago	13%
6–10 years ago	7%
I am still serving	4%
Within the past 5 years	3%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

Marital Status

Most respondents 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%).

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

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

Where Lawyers Practice: Appellate Districts

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 (November 3 to December 6, 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%

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.

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%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

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 11 to 100 lawyers. A small percentage (2%) work in larger firms of up to 249 lawyers. A sizeable percentage – 13% – work in firms of 250 lawyers or more.

Lawyers in private practice: Firm size	%
I am a 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%

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 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%

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 in mid-level or lower-level roles (68%), as shown below.

Level of seniority: Corporate and non-profit settings	%
General Counsel or 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%

Note: Column percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

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: Law firms	%
Equity Partner	38%
Non-equity Partner	18%
Counsel	9%
Associate	32%
Staff Attorney	2%
Contract Attorney	1%

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 and 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 remotely most of the time (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%

Appendix B: Survey Methodology

The Survey Questionnaire

As described in the Introduction, the Survey measured a range of topics covering these core issues:

- (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 Survey Population, Sample, and Analyses

The Survey questionnaire was successfully pretested on October 23, 2025, with a range of Illinois lawyers. After successful pretesting, the Survey opened to all Illinois lawyers on November 3, 2025, and closed on December 6, 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 LAP via The Red Bee Group survey platform (Qualtrics) inviting them to take the Survey. The final sample included 6,778 lawyers whose responses were useable for data analyses.

The Illinois ARDC collects population data on attorney gender and age, and we used that population data 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, it was appropriate to use statistical weighting techniques based on age. We also weighted the data by gender because weighting by age skewed the representation of women and men in the sample.⁴⁹ 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,⁵⁰ 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 Report'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. Because population estimates use weighted data, population totals may differ slightly from one analysis to another.

A major feature of our 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.⁵¹ 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.

To report numerical results, we used the 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 halfway.

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:

- Drank 2-3 times per week or more frequently, OR
- Drank 4-5 or more drinks per occasion, OR
- Had difficulty stopping drinking at least monthly, OR
- 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.⁵² 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 α = .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 that, as expected, it is correlated with related concepts such as lawyers' perceptions of their workplace.

Endnotes

- 1 In this report, we use “wellness” as an umbrella term that includes our research on multiple domains with respect to mental health, substance use disorders, and other challenges that lawyers are dealing with in their work lives and personal lives. We do not use the terms “mental health” and “wellness” synonymously. Mental health refers to a person’s psychological and emotional state. It includes the presence or absence of conditions like depression, anxiety, high stress, low resilience, and poor regulation of feelings, as examples.
- 2 See, e.g., P. R. Krill, R. Johnson, and L. Albert. 2016. “The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys.” *Journal of Addiction Medicine* 10(1):46–52; National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being. 2017. *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association.
(https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/professional_responsibility/lawyer_well_being_report_final.pdf); J. Anker and P. R. Krill. 2021. “Stress, Drink, Leave: An Examination of Gender-specific Risk Factors for Mental Health Problems and Attrition among Licensed Attorneys.” *PLOS ONE* 16(5):e0250563.
- 3 J. Sirkin, J. Sawyer, S. Augenbraun, R. Rasky, and M. Freij. 2023. *Lawyer Well-Being in Massachusetts: Final Report*. Chicago, IL: NORC at the University of Chicago.
(https://www.norc.org/content/dam/norc-org/pdfs/NORC_MA%20Lawyer%20Well-Being%20Report_Final_2023_2_1.pdf).
- 4 We note that while 41% of lawyers viewed mental health problems in the profession as very common or widespread, it is not entirely surprising that in a self-assessment of mental health, over 80% of lawyers said their own mental health was good, very good, or excellent. See, e.g., E. Zell, J. E. Strickhouser, C. Sedikides, and M. D. Alicke. 2020. “The Better-than-Average Effect in Comparative Self-evaluation: A Comprehensive Review and Meta-analysis.” *Psychological Bulletin* 146(2):118–149. (Includes reference to tendency for people to perceive themselves as superior when compared with their peers, including on personality traits.) See also S. E. Taylor and J. D. Brown. 1988. “Illusion and Well-being: A Social Psychological Perspective on Mental Health.” *Psychological Bulletin* 103(2):193–210.
- 5 Pairwise comparisons by racial/ethnic group were conducted (meaning each group was compared to every other group). Because multiple comparisons were made, a Bonferroni correction was applied to the p-values describing statistically significant differences among groups to reduce the risk of false positives. After this adjustment, no group comparisons reached statistical significance.
- 6 This is why the percentages of lawyers with a given diagnosis add up to more than 100%.
- 7 S. Iversen and N. Robertson. 2021. “Prevalence and Predictors of Secondary Trauma in the Legal Profession: A Systematic Review.” *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 28(6):802–822.
- 8 See K. Baird and A. C. Kracen. 2006. “Vicarious Traumatization and Secondary Traumatic Stress: A Research Synthesis.” *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 19(2):181–188.
- 9 A recent Massachusetts study found that vicarious trauma was most frequently experienced by female lawyers, non-white lawyers, lawyers working in the public sector, solo practitioners, and litigation lawyers. See note 3, *supra*, pp. 14–15.
- 10 See, e.g., Bloomberg Law. 2024. *2024 Attorney Well-Being Report: The Divide Between Health and the Legal Industry*. Arlington, VA: Bloomberg Law.
(<https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/insights/litigation/2024-well-being-report/>).
See p. 8.

- 11 National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. 2025. “The Basics: Defining How Much Alcohol is Too Much?” *The Healthcare Professional’s Core Resource on Alcohol*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health.
(<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/health-professionals-communities/core-resource-on-alcohol/basics-defining-how-much-alcohol-too-much>).
- 12 See the discussion on drinking in National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. 2025. “Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) in the United States: Age Groups and Demographic Characteristics.” *Alcohol Facts and Statistics*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health.
(<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-effects-health/alcohol-topics/alcohol-facts-and-statistics/alcohol-use-disorder-aud-united-states-age-groups-and-demographic-characteristics>).
- 13 See, e.g., National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. 2025. *Understanding Binge Drinking*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health.
(<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/binge-drinking>).
- 14 Well-known indices for assessing alcohol use disorder in the general population include AUDIT developed by the World Health Organization
(<https://app.mhpss.net/?get=393/audit-mov.pdf>)
and the American Psychiatric Association’s DSM-5 checklist
(<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/understanding-alcohol-use-disorder>).
- 15 These statistics have strong validity given the sampling and weighting techniques we used to generate population statistics.
- 16 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2025. *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. (HHS Publication No. PEP25-07-007, NSDUH Series H-60). Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
(<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt56287/2024-nsduh-annual-national-report.pdf>).
- 17 National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2020. “Drug Misuse and Addiction.” *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health.
(<https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drug-misuse-addiction>).
- 18 E.g., Krill, Johnson, and Albert, note 2, *supra*; The Grove Estate Addiction Treatment. 2025. “10 Professions with the Most Prevalent Addiction Rates.”
(<https://grovetreatment.com/addiction/statistics/professions-highest-addiction-rates/>).
- 19 See Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2025. *Behavioral Health Barometer, Illinois, Volume 8: Indicators as Measured in the 2021-2023 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health*. (SAMHSA Publication No. PEP25-07-009). Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
(<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt56792/2023-nsduh-barometer-illinois.pdf>). Shows Illinois general population statistics about substance use.
- 20 As an example, occasional cannabis use, such as once per month, is generally not classified as problematic. Clinical definitions of misuse focus on patterns of impairment, loss of control, and adverse consequences rather than frequency alone. See, e.g., American Psychiatric Association. 2022. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed., text rev. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- 21 Because population estimates use weighted data, population totals may differ slightly from one analysis to another.
- 22 We note that the estimates of how often lawyers misuse prescription drugs may be less reliable because of the small number of people reporting that type of behavior.
- 23 The estimated number of frequent drug users in any given age group is the product of multiplying the percentage of frequent drug users in that age group by the total size of the Illinois population of lawyers in that age group. An age group with a larger number of lawyers but a smaller percentage of frequent drug users may show a greater number of frequent drug users than a smaller age group with a larger percentage of frequent drug users. That is the situation here: the larger population of lawyers age 36-45 includes 15% who are frequent drug users compared to the smaller population of lawyers age 25-35 which includes 22% who are frequent drug users; and because of its much larger population, the 36-45 age group shows a slightly larger number of frequent drug users.
- 24 There was not a large enough number of lawyers with problematic gambling to conduct a reliable stand-alone co-occurrence analysis.

- 25 See D. Weisenfeld. 2025. “All About the Action: Are Lawyers More at Risk for Gambling Addiction?” *ABA Journal* 111(4):35-41, citing interview with Robert M. Jarvis, Nova Southeastern University gambling law professor. (<https://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/all-about-the-action-are-lawyers-more-at-risk-for-gambling-addiction>).
- 26 *Id.*, quoting Eric Webber, Legal Professionals Program Coordinator, Caron Treatment Centers.
- 27 E. J. Langer. 1975. “The Illusion of Control.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 32(2):311-328; T. Toneatto, T. Blitz-Miller, K. Calderwood, R. Dragonetti, and A. Tsanos. 1997. “Cognitive Distortions in Heavy Gambling.” *Journal of Gambling Studies* 13(3):253-266.
- 28 See, e.g., S. M. Gainsbury. 2015. “Online Gambling Addiction: The Relationship Between Internet Gambling and Disordered Gambling.” *Current Addiction Reports* 2(2):185-193.
- 29 I. Elman, E. Tschibelu, and D. Borsook. 2010. “Psychosocial Stress and Its Relationship to Gambling Urges in Individuals with Pathological Gambling.” *The American Journal on Addictions* 19(4):332-339.
- 30 H. R. Lesieur. 1979. “The Compulsive Gambler’s Spiral of Options and Involvement.” *Psychiatry* 42(1):79-87.
- 31 See, e.g., note 20, *supra*.
- 32 For a general overview of cognitive decline see E. M. Tucker-Drob. 2019. “Cognitive Aging and Dementia: A Life-Span Perspective.” *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology* 1(1):177-196. We note that cognitive decline affects a person’s performance in complex, real-world settings, including multitasking, decision-making, and handling interruptions—functions central to legal work.
- 33 J. M. Hale, D. C. Schneider, N. K. Mehta, and M. Myrskylä. 2020. “Cognitive Impairment in the U.S.: Lifetime Risk, Age at Onset, and Years Impaired.” *SSM: Population Health* 11:100577.
- 34 See K. R. Peck and D. Roulo. 2021. “The Coming Wave: Cognitive Impairment in Baby Boomer Lawyers.” *Bifocal: Journal of the ABA Commission on Law and Aging* 43(1):1-4. (https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/law_aging/bif-vol-43-issue1.pdf).
- 35 American Bar Association Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility. 2003. *Formal Opinion 03-429: Obligations with Respect to Mentally Impaired Lawyer in the Firm*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association. (https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/professional_responsibility/ethics-opinions/03-429.pdf). This Opinion focuses on law firm obligations although its content can apply more broadly to lawyers in multiple practice settings.
- 36 *Id.*
- 37 American Bar Association. 2023. “Rule 1.16: Declining or Terminating Representation.” *Model Rules of Professional Conduct*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association. (https://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/model_rules_of_professional_conduct/rule_1_16_declining_or_terminating_representation/). See also M. J. Fucile. 2020. “Model Rule 1.16(a)(2): Where Wellness Meets Withdrawal.” *The Professional Lawyer* 27(1):13-18.
- 38 Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission. 2025. *Annual Report: 2024 Highlights*. Chicago, IL: Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission. (<https://iadc.org/Files/Annualreports/ARDCAnnualReportHighlights2024.pdf>).
- 39 Appendix B details the design and use of the Work Stress Index.
- 40 We use the term “mental health and wellness” as an umbrella description of the mental health, alcohol, drug use, gambling and cognitive decline issues addressed in this Report.
- 41 Sample of the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) Character Report Application. (https://www.ncbex.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/NCBE-Sample-Character-Report-Application_0.pdf).
- 42 S. A. Scharf, R. D. Liebenberg, and P. Brown. 2023. *Legal Careers of Parents and Child Caregivers: Results and Best Practices from a National Study of the Legal Profession*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession. (<https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/women/2023/parenthood-report-2023.pdf>). See pp. 56-73.
- 43 A. M. Brafford. 2018. *Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers and Legal Employers*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association. (<https://vjlap.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Well-Being-Toolkit.pdf>).

- 44** S. Villinski. 2025. “Illinois Judges and Vicarious Trauma: ‘Healthier Judges Make Better Decisions.’” Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism.
(<https://www.2civility.org/illinois-judges-and-vicarious-trauma-healthier-judges-make-better-decisions/>).
- 45** National Judicial College. 2024. “Over Half of Judges Report Threats, Environment Affecting Mental Health.” (<https://judges.org/news-and-info/over-half-of-judges-report-threats-environment-affecting-mental-health/>); C. P. Edwards, J. Reichert, B. Bornstein, and M. Miller. 2018. “Judges and Stress: An Examination of Outcomes Predicted by the Model of Judicial Stress.” *Judicature* 102(3):51-61.
(<https://judicature.duke.edu/articles/an-examination-of-outcomes-predicted-by-the-model-of-judicial-stress/>).
- 46** See S. A. Scharf and R. D. Liebenberg. 2024. *Bullying in the Legal Profession: A Study of Illinois Lawyers’ Experiences and Recommendations for Change*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism.
(https://civility.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2Civility_BullyingReport_Full_FN.pdf).
See pp. 66-67.
- 47** See note 44, *supra*.
- 48** For the 2025 bar year, 60.6% of Illinois lawyers identified as male and 38.9% identified as female. The small remaining percentage (0.5%) either did not declare a gender or identified as non-binary.
- 49** R. Valliant, J. A. Dever, and F. Kreuter. 2013. *Practical Tools for Designing and Weighting Survey Samples*. New York: Springer.
- 50** T. P. Johnson. 2014. “Sources of Error in Substance Use Prevalence Surveys.” *International Scholarly Research Notices* 2014:Article ID 923290.
- 51** See, e.g., P. J. Edwards, I. Roberts, M. J. Clarke, C. DiGuseppi, B. Woolf, and C. Perkins. 2023. “Methods to Increase Response to Postal and Electronic Questionnaires.” *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2023(11):Article ID MR000008. See also note 50, *supra*.
- 52** 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.

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