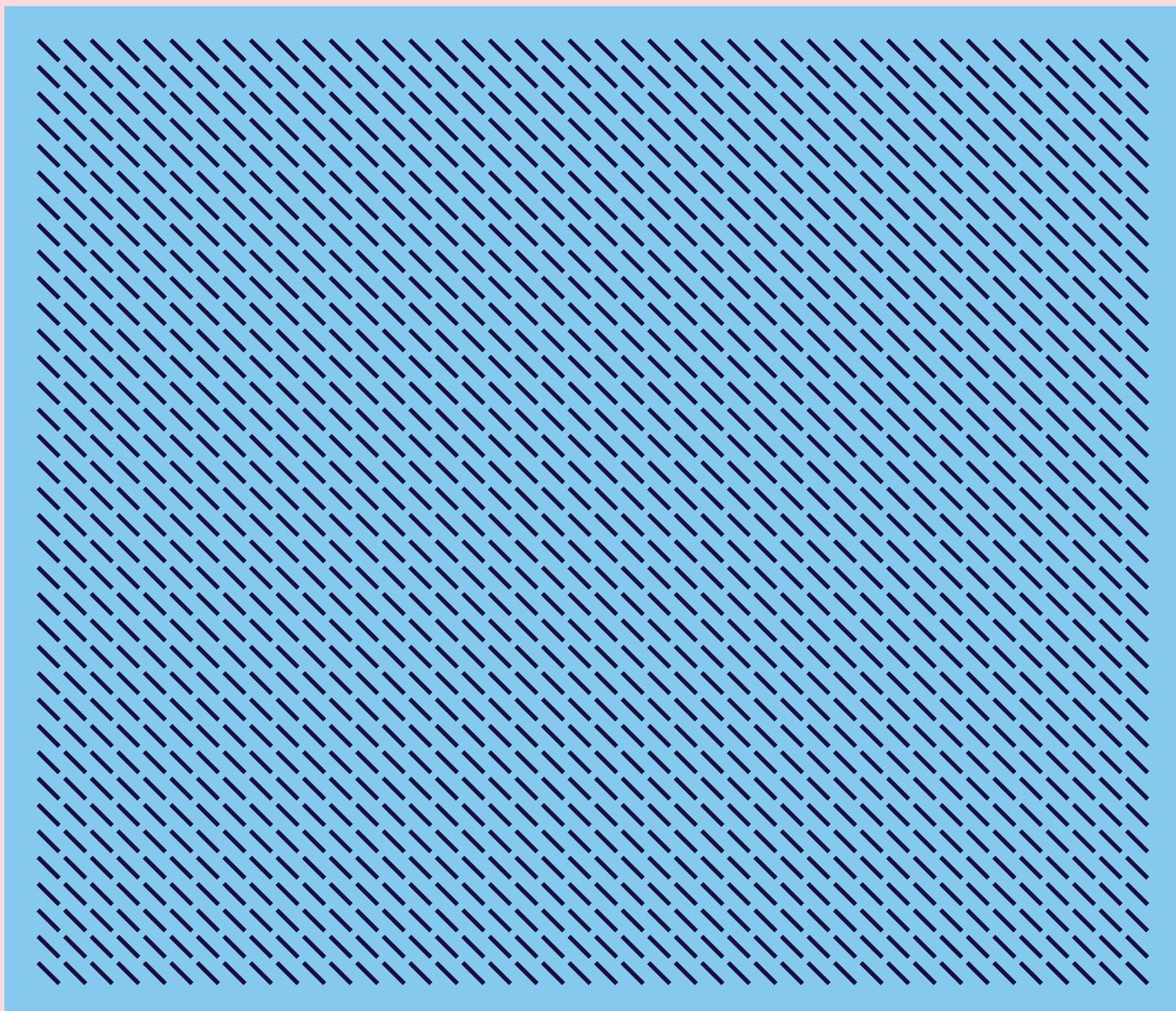

Uncivil Behaviours in the Legal Profession: Findings from the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census

Dr Georgina Rychner, Dr Alice Catherine King
and Prof Nigel J Balmer

Legal Services
Research Centre

Victorian Legal Services
BOARD + COMMISSIONER



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This report is published by the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner (VLSB+C). The Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner are independent statutory authorities responsible for the regulation of the legal profession in Victoria.

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- improve access to justice.

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Key findings

The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census sought to understand key issues impacting the legal profession, including the experience of uncivil behaviours – low-intensity negative behaviour that ‘involves acting with disregard for others in the workplace, in violation of workplace norms for respect’.¹

Three types of uncivil behaviour were measured: verbal disrespect, professional undermining and unacceptable behaviours or comments relating to personal characteristics.

The census was a voluntary online survey distributed to all Victorian lawyers holding practising certificates, with 1,887 lawyers responding and 1,545 completing the uncivil behaviours module.

Routine incivility

The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census found uncivil behaviours were routinely experienced and witnessed across the Victorian legal profession. Overall, 83% of respondents experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours in the 12 months before the survey. There was substantial overlap between experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviours, with 71% both experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviours, and only 8% solely witnessing and 5% solely experiencing uncivil behaviours.

Twenty-two per cent of respondents experienced one or more broad type of uncivil behaviour often or very frequently, and 24% witnessed one or more type often or very frequently.

Verbal disrespect was the most common form of uncivil behaviour, which was experienced by 63% and witnessed by 69% of respondents. This was followed by professional undermining and unacceptable behaviours relating to personal characteristics. Though unacceptable behaviours were the least prevalent category (experienced by 34% and witnessed by 45%), they were by no means rare and remain a significant concern.²

1. Lynne M. Andersson and Christine M. Pearson, “Tit for Tat? The Spiralling Effect of Incivility in the Workplace,” *The Academy of Management Review* 24, no. 3 (1999): 455.
2. Especially since such behaviours can cross the threshold from ‘low-intensity’ incivility to unlawful workplace discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) and *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

Who experiences uncivil behaviours

While uncivil behaviour was common regardless of personal characteristics, distinct patterns emerged. Female and non-binary respondents (or those using another term) were more likely to both experience and witness incivility compared to male respondents. Younger lawyers also faced higher rates of uncivil behaviour. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents who completed the module (n=12) all reported experiencing or witnessing uncivil behaviours. LGBTQIA+ respondents reported elevated rates of both experiencing and witnessing incivility (with 80% experiencing and 83% witnessing incivility) and notably higher exposure to uncivil behaviours relating to personal characteristics.

Professional context also mattered. Respondents with fewer years of experience and those working for community, government or non-legal employers encountered uncivil behaviours at higher rates. Certain practising certificate types, including principals, employees with trust authorisation and barristers, also reported higher rates of uncivil behaviour with 82% of principals, 83% of principals with trust authorisation, 88% of employees with trust authorisation, and 85% of barristers experiencing such behaviours.

The source and setting of incivility

Fellow employees were the most common perpetrators of uncivil behaviours (48% of those experiencing/witnessing uncivil behaviours), though this varied considerably by work type and context. Lawyers in larger firms and in-house roles more frequently experienced incivility from colleagues (75% for in-house lawyers), while barristers were more likely to encounter incivility from other barristers and from judges or magistrates (over half of those experiencing these behaviours did so from judges or magistrates). More generally, many respondents reported uncivil behaviours occurring in the courtroom – especially those with regular court exposure.

After employees, clients represented the next most frequent source of uncivil behaviour (reported by 38% of those experiencing/witnessing uncivil behaviours). Practitioners working in law firms, government and community organisations faced higher rates of client-perpetrated incivility, with those in outer metropolitan and regional areas experiencing this particularly often (52% and 54% respectively, compared to 36% in inner metropolitan areas).

While the office remained the predominant location for uncivil behaviours (reported by 64% of those experiencing or witnessing uncivil behaviours), behaviours were also commonly experienced in courtrooms (32%) and other locations outside the office (38%).

The cost of uncivil behaviour

Uncivil behaviours did not occur in isolation – they clustered with other aspects of negative workplace culture, including inadequate compensation, excessive workload, conflicts with values or professional obligations, and sexual harassment. That finding did not indicate that uncivil behaviours are the root cause of these other issues, rather that incivility and harmful workplace conditions appear to be mutually reinforcing elements of toxic workplace culture.

Uncivil behaviours were strongly related to poorer wellbeing, greater risk of burnout, and lower life satisfaction across domains. Of those who did not experience or witness uncivil behaviours, 20% showed likelihood of anxiety and 10% showed likelihood of depression. In stark contrast, of the lawyers who did experience or witness such behaviours 40% showed likelihood of anxiety and 26% showed likelihood of depression.

Frequent uncivil behaviour related to significantly worse wellbeing, significantly higher rates of burnout, and significantly poorer life satisfaction. Importantly, however, even infrequent exposure to incivility was associated with poorer wellbeing, higher burnout risk, and diminished life satisfaction. This was not limited to those experiencing the behaviours directly, as those who witnessed behaviours were also affected. Even low levels of uncivil behaviour were consequential.

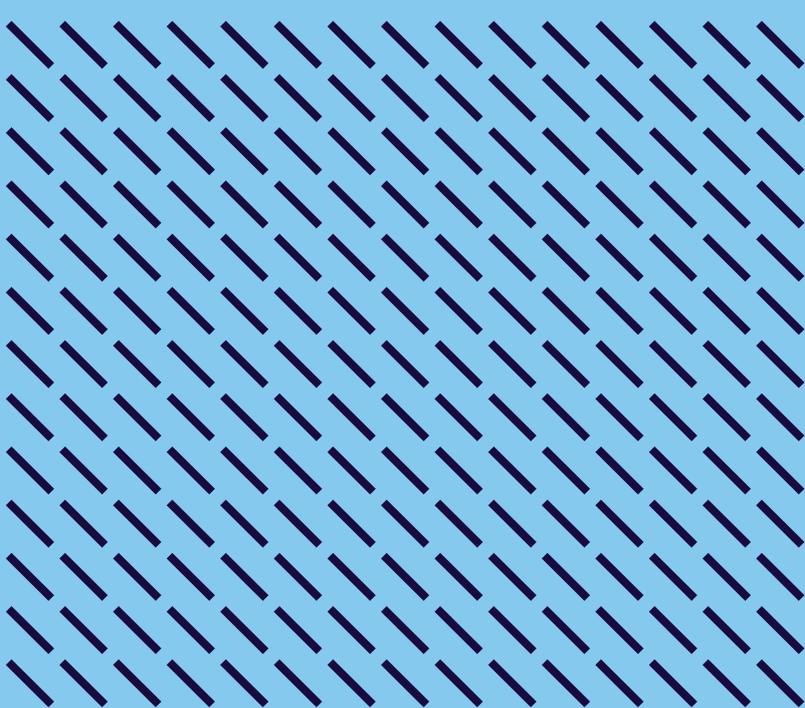
While rates of respondents intending to leave the profession did not differ based on whether uncivil behaviours were experienced (14% for both groups), among those who experienced uncivil behaviours and planned to leave the profession, incivility and workplace culture did factor into their departure rationales. Respondents cited uncivil behaviour, bullying, harassment, toxic workplaces and inadequate organisational responses to problematic behaviour among their reasons for exiting the legal profession.

This study demonstrates that uncivil behaviours among Victorian lawyers are ubiquitous and persist at high rates despite existing professional conduct rules and continuing professional development. The cost is tangible – diminished wellbeing, burnout, lost talent and ultimately, eroded trust in the legal system. In many cases, uncivil behaviours may appear low impact. However, they scaffold more harmful conduct and degrade workplace culture. Understanding and responding to these behaviours matters to those within the profession, as well as to the communities that depend on a healthy, sustainable legal system. Given the prevalence of everyday legal issues, that is all of us.

01

Introduction and methodology

This section provides background on workplace incivility, its prevalence in the legal sector and beyond, and strategies that have been adopted to reduce uncivil behaviours within the legal profession. It goes on to describe the 2025 Victorian Legal Census, the modules within it that we are drawing on in this report, its methodology, the rationale for our approach, and some of its limitations.



Uncivil behaviours

What is workplace incivility?

Andersson and Pearson introduced the concept of 'workplace incivility' in 1999, theorising that 'acting with disregard for others in the workplace, in violation of workplace norms for respect' can escalate into more intense forms of workplace aggression.³ Compared to workplace bullying, sexual harassment and violence, incivility might be regarded as 'low-intensity negative behaviour' that is rude, impolite and discourteous. In contrast to high-intensity behaviours, such as physical violence, there is often ambiguity of intent to cause harm.⁴ Conversely, civility has been identified as a practice that 'promotes cooperation and professionalism among legal practitioners'.⁵

Examples of workplace incivility include demeaning verbal and non-verbal behaviours, such as ignoring inputs from colleagues, not listening to or ignoring a colleague, speaking over a colleague, disparagement, snide remarks, professional discrediting, sarcasm and ostracism.⁶ Research has also highlighted 'person-focused' incivility, which includes gender or age disparagement, unprofessional address or inappropriate comments on appearance.⁷

3. Andersson and Pearson, "Tit for Tat," 455.
4. Andersson and Pearson, "Tit for Tat," 456.
5. Leah Teague, "Civility Matters: Why Law Schools Must Teach Students to Disagree Without Being Disagreeable," *Baylor Law Review* 76, no. 1 (2024): 11; Minh Nguyen, "The Importance of Civility in the Practice of Law," *Advocate Magazine*, (July 2023).
6. Christine M. Pearson and Christine L. Porath, "On the Nature, Consequences and Remedies of Workplace Incivility: No Time for 'Nice'? Think Again," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (2005): 7–8; Christine L. Porath and Christine M. Pearson, "Emotional and Behavioral Responses to Workplace Incivility and the Impact of Hierarchical Status," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2012): 326–357; Scott A. Hutton, "Workplace Incivility: State of the Science," *The Journal of Nursing Administration* 36, no. 1 (2008): 168–175; D.M. Felblinger, "Incivility and Bullying in the Workplace and Nurses' Shame Responses," *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic and Neonatal Nursing* 37, no. 2 (2008): 234–242; Donald G. Zauderer, "Workplace Incivility and the Management of Human Capital," *Public Manager*, 31 (2002): 36–43.
7. Lilia Cortina et al., "What's Gender Got To Do With It? Incivility in the Federal Courts," *Law & Social Inquiry* 27 (2002) 235–270; Amanda R. Hovman et al., "Negative Acts in the Courtroom: Characteristics, Distribution and Frequency Among a National Cohort of Danish Prosecutors," *Behavioural Sciences* 14 (2024): 332.

Workplace incivility has implications for workplace culture, employee wellbeing, retention of staff and productivity.⁸ Exposure to frequent uncivil behaviours has been shown to have a negative effect on employee job satisfaction and result in psychological distress.⁹

As research has expanded to focus on the perpetration of uncivil behaviours, self-report surveys suggest that respondents have been more likely to perpetrate such behaviour in the face of organisational change, perceived job insecurity, low support from co-workers or supervisors, high job demands and perceived lack of control over their work.¹⁰ It is common for workplace incivility to be instigated by senior staff towards lower-ranking employees. Studies also show a relationship between employees' experiencing or witnessing incivility in the workplace and the likelihood of then instigating uncivil behaviour.¹¹

Civility and incivility in the legal profession

When exhibited, civility contributes to the efficient and fair administration of justice, and when witnessed by clients or the public, civil behaviour by lawyers can improve public trust in the legal profession.¹² In this context, commentators argue that civility, often used interchangeably with courtesy, is 'a skill rooted in ethics and professionalism'.¹³

Much has been written on uncivil behaviours and the legal profession, in particular the inherent tension between behaving in a courteous and upstanding manner, and the professional prerogative to act zealously on behalf of clients or to act competitively within a workplace where such behaviour is rewarded.¹⁴ In other words, lawyers behave uncivilly because their workplaces, and the nature of their work, may expect and reward it. Other studies, while agreeing that incivility is rewarded to some extent within the profession, argue that certain lawyers consciously make the choice to act this way. This perspective suggests that uncivil behaviour contributes to a type of professional identity that has become more common among lawyers in the 21st century.¹⁵

8. Workplace culture we define as 'the shared values, beliefs, assumptions and norms that affect the way people and groups in an organisation – no matter what level of seniority – interact with each other', borrowing largely from Ju Li Ng et al., "Workplace Culture Improvements: A Review of the Literature," in *Workplace Culture Improvements: A Review of the Literature* (NSW Ministry of Health, 2014), 5.
9. Lilia Cortina et al., "Incivility in the Workplace: Incidence and Impact," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 6, no. 1 (2001): 64–80; Daniela Adiyaman and Laurenz Meier, "Short-term Effects of Experienced and Observed Mood and Self-esteem," *Work & Stress* 36, no. 2 (2022): 133–146; Nathalie Cadieux et al., "Towards a Healthy and Sustainable Practice of Law in Canada," in *National Study on the Psychological Health Determinants of Legal Professionals in Canada, Phase I (2020–2022)*, (University of Sherbrooke, 2022).
10. Eva Torkelson et al., "Factors Contributing to the Perpetration of Workplace Incivility: The Importance of Organizational Aspects and Experiencing Incivility from Others," *Work & Stress* 30, no. 2 (2016): 115–131.
11. Brad Estes and Jia Wang, "Workplace Incivility: Impacts on Individual and Organizational Performance," *Human Resource Development Review* 7, no. 2 (2008): 218–240; Christine M. Pearson and Christine L. Porath, "The Cost of Bad Behavior: How incivility is damaging your business and what to do about it," *Human Resources Management International Digest* 18, no. 6 (2010); Kristoffer Holm et al., "Models of Workplace Incivility: The Relationships to Instigated Incivility and Negative Outcomes," *Biomed Research International* (2015): 1–10.
12. Teague, "Civility Matters," 12–13.
13. Laurel Rigertas, "Demonstrating Civility: A Law School Learning Outcome," *Kentucky Law Journal* 112, no. 3 (2024): 417.
14. Alice Woolley, "Does Civility Matter?" *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 46 (2008): 175–188; Susan Daicoff, "Asking Leopards to Change their Spots: Should Lawyers Change?" *Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics* 11 (1998): 547–595.
15. Melissa Mortazavi, "Incivility as Identity," *Michigan State Law Review* 939 (2020): 956.

In Australia, research has established incivility as an area of concern for the legal profession.¹⁶ Numerous studies link uncivil and unethical behaviours with the rise of commercialism and the pressures this creates within law firms. This is exacerbated by metrics such as the billable hour and conditional fee arrangements.¹⁷ Few studies have captured rates of incivility in legal workplaces, though many have included behaviours that constitute uncivil behaviours in studies of declining professionalism, discrimination, sexual harassment and workplace bullying.¹⁸ A 2025 survey by Holmes et al. of lawyers in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia found that 87% of survey participants had experienced uncivil behaviours in the previous 12 months, and 28% of survey participants experienced some form of incivility weekly.¹⁹ Exposure to uncivil behaviours was associated with lower levels of wellbeing and had a negative impact on psychological distress.²⁰

A prominent focus of incivility in the legal profession is poor behaviour that takes place in the courtroom.²¹ In 2014, Justice Philip McMurdo of the Supreme Court of Queensland expressed his belief that incivility among Australian lawyers had increased.²² However, it is not solely barristers who are exhibiting such behaviour in court as numerous surveys of legal advocates have established that judicial officers can also perpetrate this behaviour towards counsel.²³ As Schindeler and Eastman point out, ‘there is no universally enforceable authoritative definition of standards for what constitutes actionable misbehaviour or misconduct of a judicial officer’, and ‘there is no statutory definition of “judicial bullying”’.²⁴

16. Paula Baron, “The Elephant in the Room? Lawyer Wellbeing and the Impact of Unethical Behaviours,” *Feminist Law Journal* 41, no. 4 (2015): 87–119.
17. Maryam Omari and Megan Paull, “‘Shut Up and Bill’: Workplace Bullying Challenges for the Legal Profession,” *International Journal of the Legal Profession* 20, no. 2 (2013): 141–160; Gaye T. Lansdell, “Reflections on ‘Professionalism’ and Legal Practice – an Outmoded Ideology or an Analytically Useful Category?” *Legal Ethics* 19, no. 2 (2016): 294–319; Baron, “The Elephant in the Room?”; Margaret Thornton, “Squeezing the Life Out of Lawyers: Legal Practice in the Market Embrace,” *Griffith Law Review* 24, no. 4 (2016): 471–491.
18. See for example Baron, “The Elephant in the Room?”; Alison Wallace et al., *National Attrition and Re-engagement Study (NARS) Report* (Urbis, 2014); Kate Eastman, “Judicial Bullying: Let’s Have a Conversation,” *Judicial Quarterly Review* 1, no. 3 (2024): 93–117.
19. The authors noted that they could not comment on whether this is a more significant problem in law than other industries, given lack of benchmark data. Survey number was 1,890. Vivien Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing, Workplace Experiences and Ethics: A Research Report* (Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner, the Law Society of New South Wales and the Legal Practice Board of Western Australia, 2025), <https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/resources/lawyer-wellbeing-workplace-experiences-and-ethics-research-report>.
20. Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing, Workplace Experiences and Ethics*.
21. David A. Grenardo, “A Lesson in Civility,” *Geo. J. Legal Ethics* 32 (2019): 135; Cortina et al., “What’s Gender Got To Do With It?”; Hovman et al., “Negative Acts in the Courtroom”; Kristan Russell et al., “Is Civility Dead? Judges’ Perceptions of Incivility in the Courtroom,” *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* 4 (2021): 57–73.
22. Philip McMurdo. “Civility and Professional Courtesy,” Queensland Law Society Symposium 2014, 21 March 2014, accessed 17 April 2025, <https://hearsay.org.au/author/philip-mcmurdo/>.
23. Wallace, *National Attrition and Re-engagement Study*; Kylie Nomchong, “Judicial Bullying: The View from the Bar,” *Judicial Officers’ Bulletin* 30, no. 10 (2018): 95–100; Victorian Bar, *Quality of Working Life Survey* (Victorian Bar, 2018).
24. Emily Schindeler, “The Problematic of Judicial Accountability,” *Legalities* 1, no. 2 (2021): 212; Eastman, “Judicial Bullying,” 100.

Addressing incivility in the legal profession

Teaching professional conduct through education and CPD

The issue of incivility in the legal profession can be classified as an issue of ethics and professional responsibility. Ethics and professional responsibility is currently an area of study that is mandated throughout every stage of Australian legal education: during the Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor degree, during pre-admission professional training, and post-admission through continuing professional development (CPD). In 1992 legal ethics or ‘professional conduct’ became mandatory as a subject in Australian law schools as one of the Priestley 11 doctrines.²⁵ However, the subject’s place in the curriculum has been continuously debated, particularly as law degrees become increasingly generalist, and the subject itself is often met with derision by students and weariness by faculty.²⁶ Subsequent pre-admission professional training (PLT) is practical legal training that bridges the gap between legal education and entering the world of legal practice, and again ethics and professional responsibility is a prescribed competency.²⁷ Once admitted to the profession, practising lawyers must meet CPD requirements, including at least one CPD point in ethics and professional responsibility annually.²⁸

Professional conduct rules

Jurisdictions have taken different approaches to whether civility be strongly encouraged or mandated in professional conduct rules.²⁹ In England and Wales, a ‘principles’ or ‘outcomes’ approach exists, in which principles and outcomes are outlined in the Code of Conduct that guides – but does not govern – solicitors.³⁰ In contrast, the United States has adopted a rules-based approach, with 24 states having incorporated civility language into their oaths of admission for lawyers.³¹ Four states – Arizona, Florida, Michigan and South Carolina – mandate civility, meaning that a lawyer could face sanctions for uncivil behaviour.³² In Canada, though the Model Code of Professional Conduct is principles-based and non-binding, lawyers in Ontario have been subject to disciplinary action on the basis of uncivil communication.³³

25. Justine Rogers, “Legal Ethics Education: Seeking – and Creating – a Stronger Community of Practice,” *The Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics* 36, no. 61 (2023): 61–109.
26. Maria Nicolae, “Legal Education, Legal Practice and Ethics,” *Legal Education Review* 25 (2015): 237–250; Michele Leering, “Integrative Reflective Practice in Canada and Australia: Enhancing Legal Education Pedagogy and Professionalism” (PhD thesis, Queens University 2023), 117–118; Rogers, “Legal Ethics Education,” 77.
27. Rob Lilley and Christina Do, “What Should an ‘Entry-level Lawyer’ Look Like in a Post-Covid World?” *Western Australian Law Teachers’ Review* 1 (2022): 20–21.
28. Lilley and Do, “What Should an ‘Entry-level Lawyer’ Look Like in a Post-Covid World?” 22.
29. Paula Baron and Lillian Corbin, “The Unprofessional Professional: Do Lawyers Need Rules?” *Legal Ethics* 20, no. 2 (2017): 155–173.
30. Baron and Corbin, “The Unprofessional Professional,” 164.
31. Rigertas, “Demonstrating Civility,” 413–466; David A. Grenardo, “Civility Rules: Debunking the Major Myths Surrounding Mandatory Civility for Lawyers and Five Mandatory Civility Rules That Will Work,” *Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics* 37, no. 2 (2024): 174–175.
32. Grenardo, “Civility Rules,” 177–181.
33. The Canadian Model Code of Professional Conduct states: ‘a lawyer must be courteous and civil and act in good faith to all persons with whom the lawyer has dealings in the courts of his or her practice’ (7.2-1). Alice Woolley, “‘Uncivil by Too Much Civility?’: Critiquing Five More Years of Civility Regulation in Canada,” *Dalhousie Law Journal* 36, no. 1 (2013): 240–267; Woolley, “Does Civility Matter?”

In Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia are subject to the same regulatory framework of Legal Profession Uniform Rules.³⁴ Under this framework there exists Legal Profession Uniform General Rules, which apply to all qualified entities and legal practitioners, as well as Uniform Conduct (Barristers) Rules and Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules.³⁵ Each set of rules mandates proper conduct, for example the Solicitor's Conduct Rules require that a solicitor must 'be honest and courteous in all dealings in the course of legal practice' (4.1.2).³⁶

Complaints about professional misconduct

In Victoria, complaints about lawyers' professional conduct can be made to the legal regulator, the Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner (VLSB+C), by members of the public and other lawyers. Complaints about professional conduct include a raft of misconduct issues, such as duress or breach of confidentiality, and behaviour that is abusive, rude or intimidating, or that constitutes bullying, harassment, discrimination or sexual impropriety.³⁷ The VLSB+C advises that 'low level or isolated discourtesy that does not adversely affect the progress of a matter' is not likely to be considered, whereas 'serious abuse, such as threats of physical harm or ongoing use of profane language', or 'abusive, discourteous conduct that is repeated and adversely affecting the progress of a matter' are likely to be considered.³⁸

While not all jurisdictions include courtesy or civility in their conduct rules or principles, Baron and Corbin demonstrate the commonalities across the UK, Canada, the United States and Australia in the application of disciplinary action in alleged cases of incivility or misconduct.³⁹ The threshold for disciplinary action across all jurisdictions remains high, and, where lawyers are sanctioned, it is often because their conduct is considered to bring the reputation of the legal profession into disrepute, or detrimentally affects the administration of justice.⁴⁰

Methodology

The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census

This report draws on data from the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census, which examines Victorian lawyers' perspectives on systemic issues affecting the profession. The lawyer census is conducted by the Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC), the independent research function of the VLSB+C.

The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census was a voluntary online survey distributed to all Victorian lawyers holding practising certificates, with a total of 1,887 lawyers responding. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Full details of the lawyer census methodology, including the questionnaire and development process, are available in the accompanying technical report.⁴¹

34. See *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014* (Vic).

35. "Rules and Compliance," Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, accessed 17 April 2025, <https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/lawyers/practising-law/professional-obligations/rules-and-compliance>.

36. "Legal Profession Uniform Law Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015," NSW Government, accessed 17 April 2025, <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/sl-2015-0244#sec.4-oc.2>.

37. Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner internal data.

38. "Complaints About Lawyers by Lawyers," Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, accessed 17 April 2025, <https://lsbc.vic.gov.au/lawyers/complaints/complaints-about-lawyers-lawyers>.

39. Baron and Corbin, "Robust Communications or Incivility," 1–23.

40. Baron and Corbin, "Robust Communications or Incivility," 1–23.

41. See Legal Services Research Centre, *The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census Technical Report* (Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, 2026).

The survey covered 7 key areas: artificial intelligence, lawyer identity, ethics, competency, wellbeing, experiences of uncivil behaviour, and sexual harassment. It also collected professional and personal demographic information to enable analysis of response patterns across different lawyer groups.

To ensure the survey results accurately represent the broader Victorian lawyer population, we applied post-stratification weighting based on age, gender and practising certificate type. This statistical adjustment corrects for potential biases from under or over-representation of certain groups in the sample, using benchmark data from the VLSB+C's certificate renewal records. All analyses in this report use these weighted data to provide more reliable population estimates.

The uncivil behaviours module

The uncivil behaviours module sought to quantify the nature of uncivil behaviours within the legal profession in Victoria, the rate at which such behaviours occur, who perpetrates them and in what settings, and the impact such behaviours have on wellbeing, work satisfaction and staff retention.

The Workplace Incivility Scale is a self-reported 7-point scale that measures employee's perceptions of disrespectful, rude or condescending behaviours from superiors or coworkers.⁴² The scale asks whether/how frequently employees, over a determined time period, have been in a situation where a superior or coworker has used uncivil behaviour, as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Workplace Incivility Scale items

1	Put you down or was condescending to you
2	Paid little attention to your statement or showed little interest in your opinion
3	Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you
4	Addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately
5	Ignored or excluded you from professional camaraderie
6	Doubted your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility
7	Made unwanted attempts to draw you into a discussion of personal matters. ⁴³

Due to time constraints for the lawyer census, the 7-item scale was condensed to 2 items that were designed to best encapsulate the items from the original (see Table 1). Since the development of the Workplace Incivility Scale in 2001, uncivil behaviours literature has included 'microaggressions' pertaining to age, gender and race.⁴⁴ This concept has now been captured by a third item, as shown in Table 2.

42. Cortina et al., "Incivility in the Workplace," 68–70; Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing, Workplace Experiences and Ethics*, 18.

43. Cortina et al., "Incivility in the Workplace," 70.

44. Cortina et al., "What's Gender Got To Do With It?" 235–270; Hovman et al., "Negative Acts in the Courtroom," 332.

Table 2 – Uncivil behaviours as set out in the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census

1	Verbal disrespect (e.g. harsh or inappropriate language, swearing, yelling, public criticism, addressing you in unprofessional terms, being interrupted).
2	Professional undermining (e.g. being ignored, excluded or silenced, or others taking credit for your work).
3	Unacceptable behaviours or comments relating to your personal characteristics (e.g. your gender, sexuality, age or ethnicity).

We acknowledge that behaviours in the third item could amount to unlawful behaviour under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic). Classifying this behaviour as ‘uncivil’ is not meant to diminish its potential to harm, but rather to capture experience that may not amount to unlawful behaviour but remains problematic.

Respondents were asked in separate questions how often they experienced and witnessed each of the 3 items in the last 12 months: never, rarely (1 to 2 times), sometimes (3 to 5 times), often (6 to 10 times), very frequently (more than 10 times), or prefer not to say.

Respondents were asked where they experienced and/or witnessed uncivil behaviours, and the position that best described the person perpetrating the behaviours.

The report also draws on both the wellbeing/burnout module within the lawyer census and questions respondents’ intention to leave the profession. The wellbeing module consisted of 2 psychometrically validated scales that measured levels of anxiety, depression and burnout across the profession. The Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) is an ultra-brief screening tool for symptoms of anxiety and depression.⁴⁵ It is a 4-item patient health questionnaire, that consists of a 2-item anxiety scale (GAD-2) and a 2-item depression scale (PHQ-2), where patients are asked to report how often they have been bothered by 4 problems.⁴⁶ The total score is determined by adding together the scores of each of the 4 items: not at all (0), several days (1), more than half the days (2), and nearly every day (3).⁴⁷ Scores are then rated as normal (0 to 2), mild (3 to 5), moderate (6 to 8) and severe (9 to 12).

45. Kurt Kroenke et al., “An Ultra-brief Screening Scale for Anxiety and Depression: The PHQ-4,” *Psychosomatics* 50, no. 6 (2009): 613–21.

46. Bernd Löwe et al., “A 4-item Measure of Depression and Anxiety: Validation and Standardization of the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) in the General Population,” *Journal of Affective Disorders* 122, no. 1–2 (2009): 86–95.

47. Kroenke et al., “An Ultra-Brief Screening Scale for Anxiety and Depression”.

To measure burnout, we used the ultra-short Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT4). The BAT4 is based on the proposition that the following symptoms constitute burnout: exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment and emotional impairment.⁴⁸ Participants were asked to score how often they experienced the items that correlate to these symptoms. Each of the 4 burnout items were coded as: never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), always (5), prefer not to say (0). Any missing values were coded as missing. Scores for each item were summed and divided by 4 to create an overall score out of 5. This final score could be categorised based on existing statistical norms or clinical cut-off values – the latter was chosen for their higher threshold. The cut-off values were then recoded into 3 traffic light categories: no risk of burnout, at risk of burnout, and very high risk of burnout.⁴⁹

The module also contained a 6-item domain satisfaction scale that measures satisfaction with aspects of life related to wellbeing (health, personal relationships, job, financial situation and life as a whole).⁵⁰

Modelling experiences of uncivil behaviours

Binary logistic models

We fitted 4 binary logistic models using imputed data to identify any predictors of experiencing uncivil behaviours. Multivariate models such as this simultaneously control for all predictor variables, ensuring that observed associations represent the independent effect of each factor rather than spurious relationships due to confounding caused by other measured characteristics. It achieves this by isolating the effect of each predictor variable, while holding everything else constant.

Each of the 4 models had as their dependant variable:

- Model 1 – experienced uncivil behaviours
- Model 2 – experienced uncivil behaviours often or frequently
- Model 3 – witnessed uncivil behaviours
- Model 4 – witnessed uncivil behaviours often or frequently.

Each model also included a broad range of predictor variables relating to personal and professional characteristics. These included age group, gender, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, sexual orientation, relationship status, children, caring responsibilities, disability status, years of practice certification, type of practising certificate, partnership status, in-house status, organisation size, organisation type and annual taxable income. Complete model results are set out in Appendix A.

48. Emina Hadžibajramović, Wilmar Schaufeli, and Hans De Witte, “The Ultra-short Version of the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT4)—development, Validation, and Measurement Invariance Across Countries, Age and Gender,” *PLOS One* 19, no. 2 (2024). We interpreted the scores using the clinical cut-off values, indicating the extent to which a respondent’s score is comparable with those who have been diagnosed as ‘burned out’ by trained professionals, see Schaufeli et al., *User Manual – Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) – Version 2.0* (KU Leuven, 2020). There are various ways to measure burnout, and further information on why we utilised this scale can be found in Legal Services Research Centre, *The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census Technical Report*.

49. See Schaufeli et al., *User Manual – Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)*, 16.

50. See Nicolas Loewe et al., “Life Domain Satisfaction as Predictors of Overall Life Satisfaction Among Workers: Evidence From Chile,” *Social Indicators Research* 118, no. 1 (2013): 71–86. For the items related to health, personal relationships, job, financial situation and Nigel J. Balmer et al., *The Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS) Volume 1: Everyday Problems and Legal Need* (Victoria Law Foundation, 2023) for the item about life as a whole.

Limitations

Due to the breadth of the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census, the uncivil behaviours module was limited to 3 questions, so it only captures a high-level view of uncivil behaviours within the legal profession. Professional demographics (such as organisation type) also reflect characteristics at the time of survey completion, and respondents may have moved roles within the 12-month uncivil behaviour reference period.

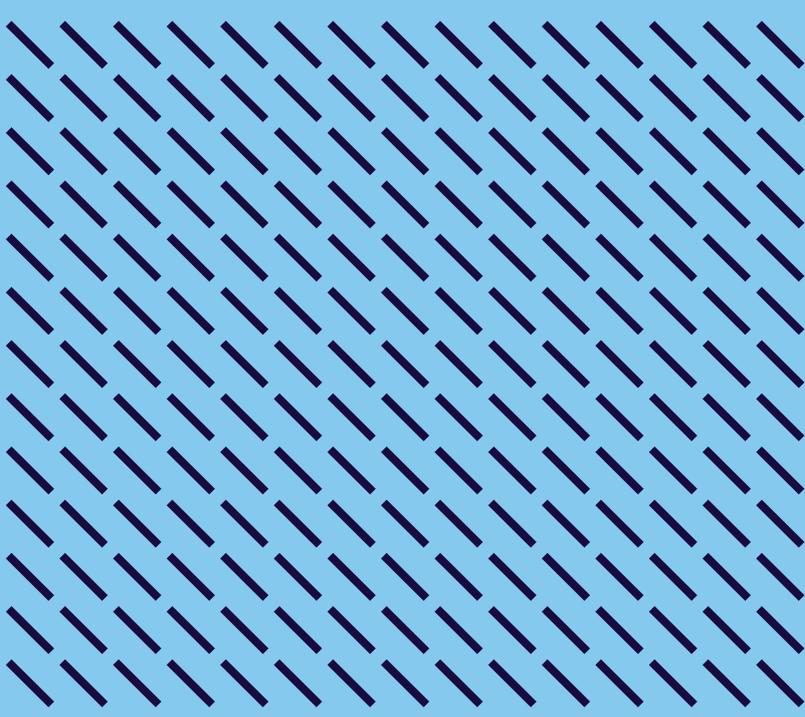
Due to the question structures, respondents were unable to delineate which individual behaviours/incidents were experienced where and perpetrated by whom. Instead, they were asked where they experienced or witnessed the behaviours on the whole (though they were able to select all that applied). For this reason, some prioritisation may have occurred among respondents who experienced or witnessed 2 or more categories of behaviours, in multiple places, or that was perpetrated by various people in the course of their work.

It is worth noting that this survey captured uncivil behaviours as interpreted and perceived by the respondents. Their perceptions may be shaped by personal characteristics, previous experiences, cultural background or other factors.

02

Overall prevalence of uncivil behaviour

This section explores the overall prevalence of uncivil behaviours, both experienced and witnessed. It analyses factors associated with experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviours, including more frequent experiencing or witnessing. It also explores both location and perpetrators of behaviour.



Overall prevalence

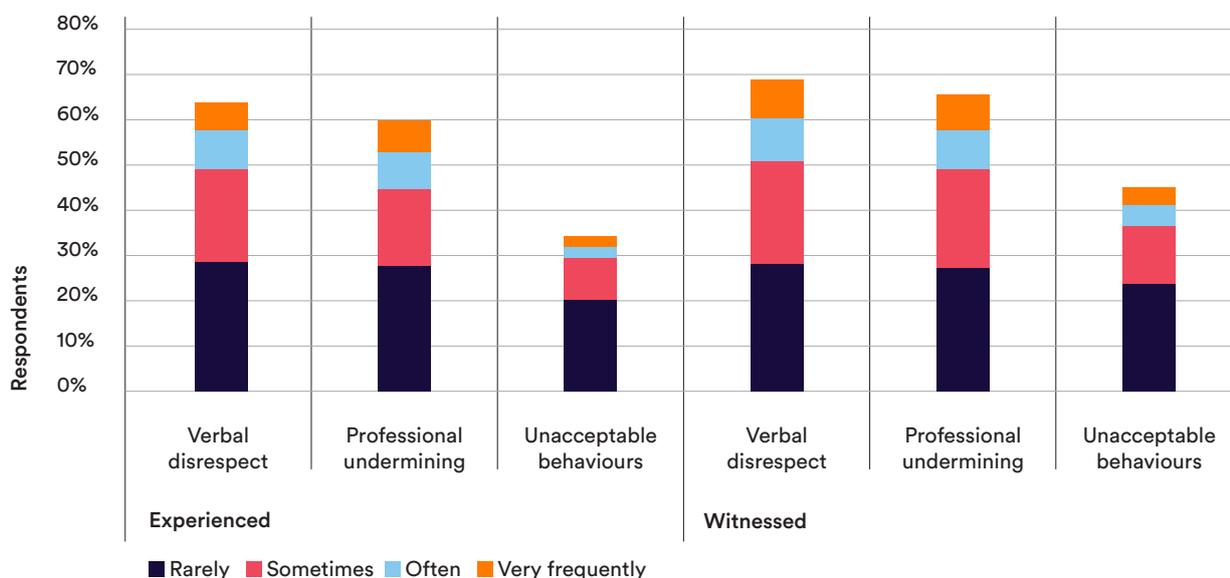
Overall, 83% of respondents (n=1,285) experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours in the 12 months before the survey. Seventy-six per cent of respondents (n= 1,167) experienced uncivil behaviours and 78% witnessed (n=1,210) uncivil behaviours. There was substantial overlap between experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviours, with 71% (n=1,092) *both* experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviours. In contrast, only 8% (n=118) solely witnessed and 5% solely experienced uncivil behaviours.

Turning to frequency of behaviours, 22% (n=348) experienced one or more broad type of uncivil behaviour often or very frequently, and 24% (n=379) witnessed one or more type often or very frequently. Twenty-nine per cent (n=456) either experienced *or* witnessed one or more type of behaviour often or very frequently, while 18% (n=273) experienced *and* witnessed one or more type of behaviour often or very frequently.⁵¹

As shown in Figure 1, verbal disrespect was the most common uncivil behaviour that respondents experienced or witnessed (63%, n=984 and 69%, n=1,067 respectively), closely followed by professional undermining and unacceptable behaviours.

Figure 1 also sets out the frequencies of each of the behaviours, and while ‘rarely’ was most common for each behaviour (witnessed or experienced), more frequent behaviours were not uncommon.

Figure 1 – Uncivil behaviours experienced and witnessed, by broad behaviour type



51. Looking solely at ‘very frequently’, 10% (n=148) experienced one or more type very frequently and 11% (n=175) witnessed one or more type very frequently. Fourteen per cent (n=210) either experienced or witnessed one or more type of uncivil behaviour very frequently and 7% (n= 113) both experienced and witnessed one or more type of uncivil behaviour very frequently.

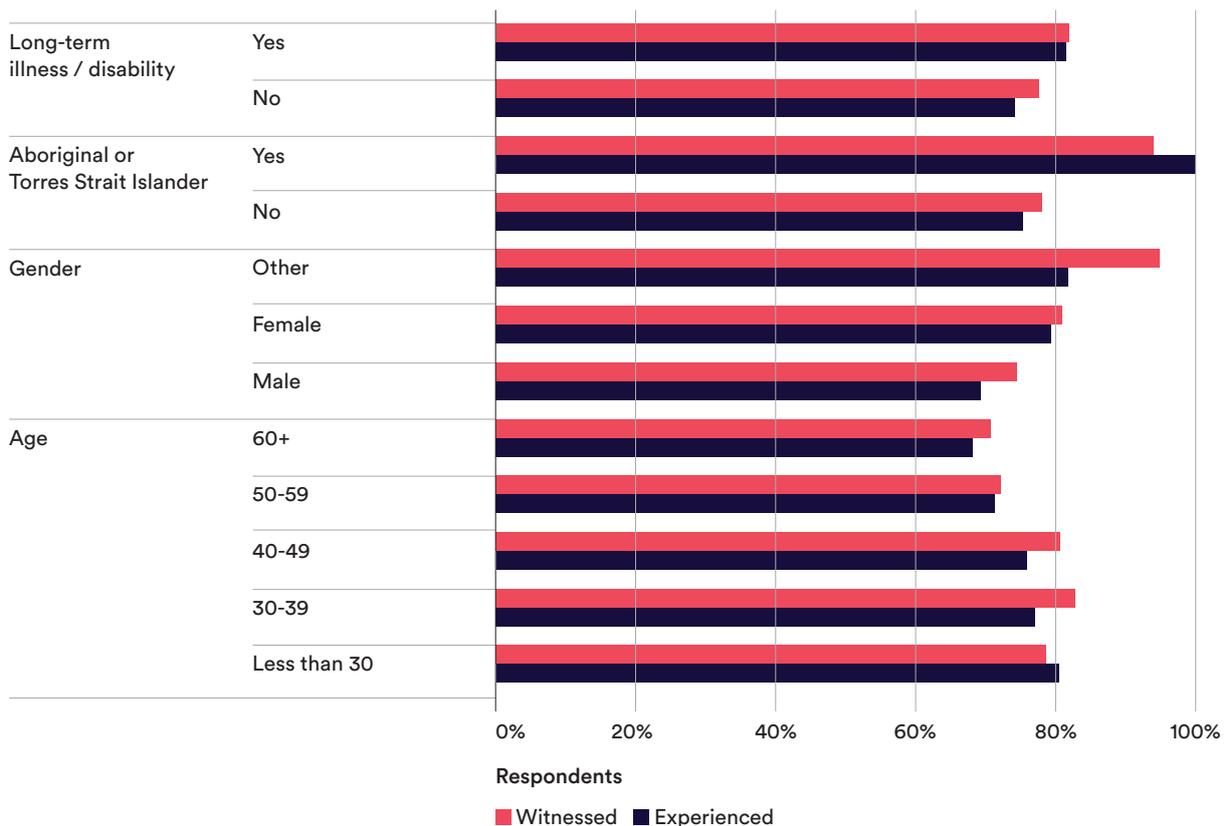
Factors associated with experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviours

Four statistical models were fitted to explore personal and professional characteristics associated with experiencing uncivil behaviour in the past 12 months, experiencing uncivil behaviour often, witnessing uncivil behaviour, and witnessing uncivil behaviour often. The full statistical output can be found in Appendix A.

There were few personal or professional characteristics where experiencing or witnessing was uncommon. Having controlled for other variables, for every single personal or professional characteristic it was more likely than not that uncivil behaviours had been experienced and witnessed in the past 12 months.

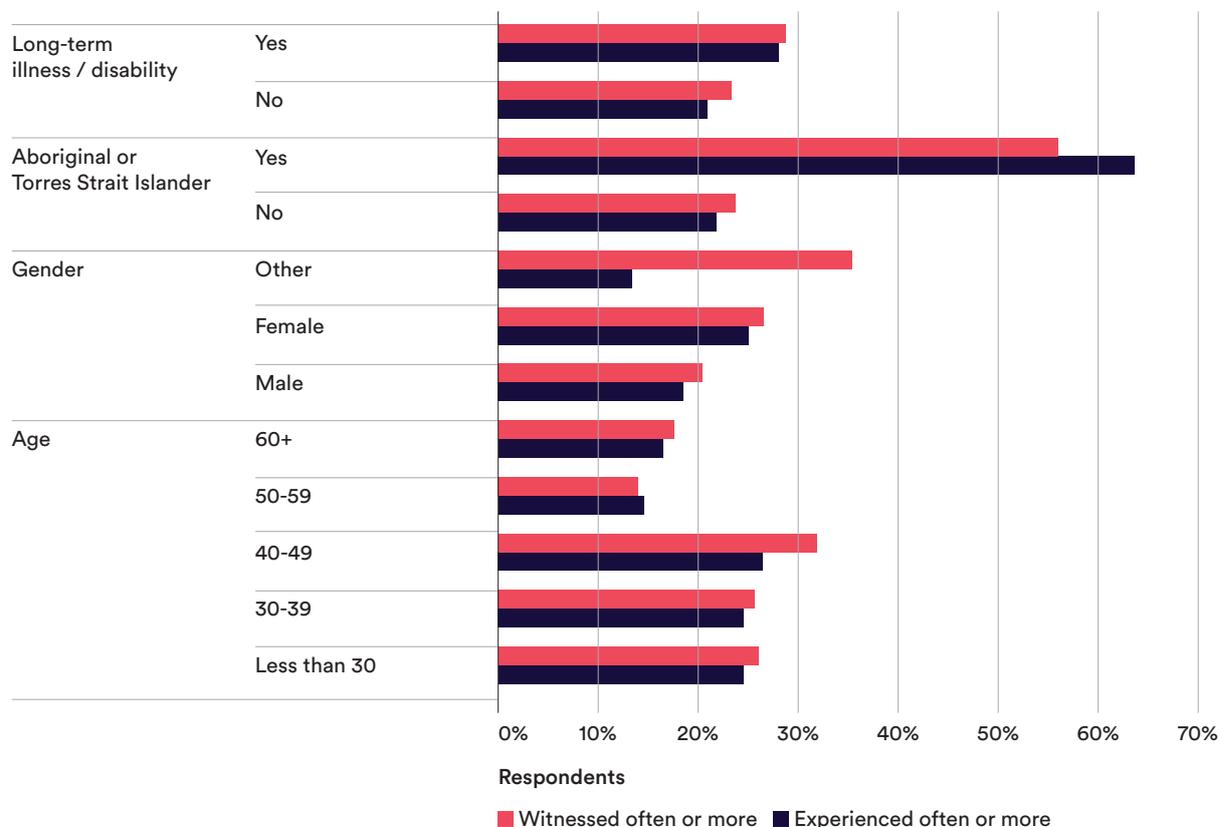
Nonetheless, some personal and professional characteristics did have a statistically significant relationship with experiencing and/or witnessing uncivil behaviours. This included gender, age, whether respondents were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and whether or not respondents reported a long-term illness or disability. The relationship between each of these variables and witnessing or experiencing uncivil behaviour is shown in Figure 2 (simultaneously controlling for other variables),⁵² while the relationship with witnessing or experiencing them often is shown in Figure 3 (again, controlling for other variables).

Figure 2 – The relationship between selected personal characteristics and experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviour in the past 12 months



52. This ensures that observed relationships are not simply a function of other characteristics, for example women being more likely than men to work in particular settings. In practice, percentages in the figures are derived using the margins command within Stata, which keeps other variables constant, isolating the relationship of interest from confounding variables.

Figure 3 – The relationship between selected personal characteristics and experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviour often in the past 12 months



Gender had a significant association with uncivil behaviours in all models.⁵³ This was principally a result of women being significantly more likely than men to experience uncivil behaviours, experience them often, witness them, and witness them often (see Figures 2 and 3).⁵⁴

There was also a significant relationship between age group and witnessing uncivil behaviours, experiencing them often and witnessing them often.⁵⁵ This was a result of witnessing and experiencing, and particularly witnessing or experiencing often, being more likely for those under 50 years old, and less likely for those aged 50 or older (see Figures 2 and 3). The difference was particularly pronounced for more frequent uncivil behaviours (see Figure 3).

53. Testing the gender terms together in Model 1, $X^2_2 = 14.28$, $p < 0.001$; experiencing often model, $X^2_2 = 7.51$, $p = 0.023$; Model 3, $X^2_2 = 9.03$, $p = 0.011$; Model 4, $X^2_2 = 6.50$, $p = 0.039$.

54. There was also some suggestion that non-binary respondents or those using another term were somewhat more likely to experience or witness behaviours, though differences fell well short of significance (see Appendix A), which is in part a likely consequence of small numbers of non-binary respondents or those using another term.

55. Testing the age terms together in Model 3, $X^2_4 = 11.04$, $p = 0.026$; Model 2, $X^2_4 = 9.77$, $p = 0.044$; Model 4, $X^2_4 = 21.18$, $p < 0.001$.

While the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers included in the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census was comparatively small (18 lawyers), they were more likely to have experienced and/or witnessed uncivil behaviour. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers experienced uncivil behaviours in the past 12 months (see Figure 2) and were also significantly more likely than other respondents to have experienced or witnessed such behaviour often (see Figure 3).⁵⁶

Lawyers reporting a long-term illness or disability were also more likely than other respondents to have experienced uncivil behaviours and experienced them often (see Figures 2 and 3) having controlled for other variables/ characteristics.⁵⁷

Looking at other characteristics, those with volunteer/CLS certificates who had experienced uncivil behaviours had a somewhat lower percentage (65% controlling for other variables), especially when contrasted with principals (82%), principals with trust authorisation (83%), employees with trust authorisation (88%) and barristers (85%). Barristers and corporate legal practitioners who had experienced behaviours often had somewhat higher percentages (31% and 31.4% respectively). There was also a high percentage of barristers who witnessed behaviours (90%) and witnessed behaviours often (35%). Government legal practitioners also witnessed behaviours often (39%).

There were also some differences by organisation type, with lawyers working with non-legal employers or in the community sector being more likely to experience behaviours in general (83% and 82% respectively). Interestingly, non-legal employees were less likely to experience behaviours often (only 12.8% controlling for other variables).

Those earning less than \$50,000 (65% experiencing) or more than \$350,000 (55% for \$350,00 to \$450,000, 69% for more than \$450,000) were somewhat less likely to experience uncivil behaviours compared to those between the 2 ranges, for example \$160,000 to \$200,000 (82%).

Some factors associated with different types of uncivil behaviour

As illustrated in Figure 1, verbal disrespect was the most common uncivil behaviour encountered, with 63% (n=984) of respondents experiencing and 69% (n=1,067) witnessing this behaviour. Based on simple bivariate analyses,⁵⁸ verbal disrespect was more likely to be experienced by respondents who were younger, female, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTQIA+ or experiencing long-term illness or disability.⁵⁹ Respondents working in the community sector also experienced relatively high levels of disrespect, with 71% (n=72) experiencing some form of this behaviour.

56. Testing the term in Model 2, $X^2_1 = 12.47$, $p < 0.001$; and Model 4, $X^2_1 = 4.90$, $p = 0.027$.

57. Testing the term in Model 1, $X^2_1 = 5.54$, $p = 0.019$; and Model 2, $X^2_1 = 5.35$, $p = 0.021$.

58. Rather than the multivariate statistical models used above.

59. Age: $X^2_{12} = 113.37$, $p < 0.001$; gender: $X^2_{12} = 113.37$, $p < 0.001$; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander: $X^2_4 = 22.20$, $p < 0.001$; sexuality: $X^2_4 = 45.32$, $p < 0.001$; carer status: $X^2_4 = 78.46$, $p < 0.001$; long-term illness or disability: $X^2_4 = 56.71$, $p < 0.001$.

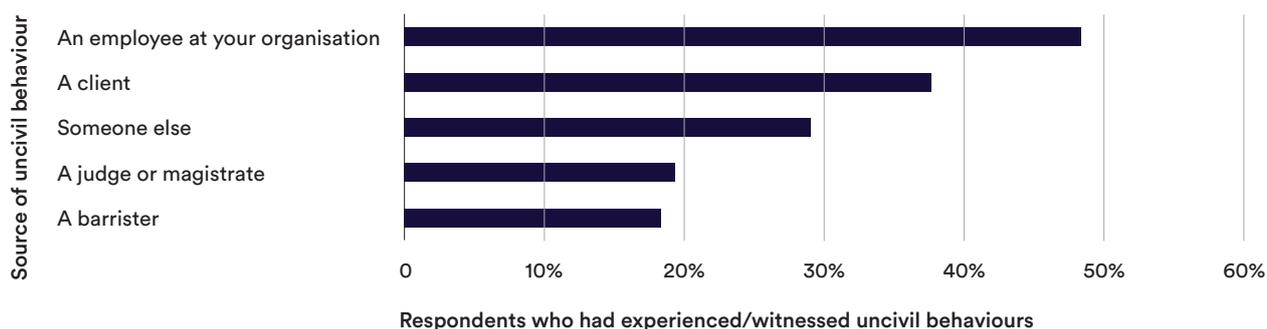
In terms of professional undermining, there was a significant relationship between gender, age and experience of professional undermining. The rate of professional undermining increased with income band but peaked at the \$160,000 to \$200,000 band.⁶⁰ Unacceptable behaviours were experienced by comparatively fewer respondents (see Figure 1), however it is worth noting these included some more serious behaviours (such as bullying and discrimination).

There was again a significant relationship between gender, age and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, and the experience of unacceptable behaviours.⁶¹ Female respondents (39%, n=357) were more likely to experience unacceptable behaviours than male respondents (26%, n=156), as were a smaller number of non-binary respondents (or those using other terms; 60%, n=17), while 63% (n=7) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents experienced these behaviours. There was also a significant relationship between experience of a long-term health illness or disability and experience of unacceptable behaviours, with 42% (n=118) experiencing such behaviours.⁶²

Source of uncivil behaviour

Figure 4 sets out the source of uncivil behaviours among those who had either experienced or witnessed such behaviour in the past 12 months. As illustrated, behaviours experienced or witnessed by respondents were most likely to come from fellow employees (48%, n=622), followed by clients (38%, n=484).⁶³

Figure 4 – Perpetrators of uncivil behaviours, experienced or witnessed



60. For gender, $X^2_6 = 84.67$, $p < 0.001$; for age, $X^2_{12} = 106.07$, $p < 0.001$. However, when controlling for other variables, only gender was significant: $X^2_3 = 18.49$, $p = 0.003$. Controlling for other variables, annual taxable income was significant when it came to professional undermining: $X^2_9 = 23.63$, $p = 0.004$.

61. For gender, $X^2_6 = 71.04$, $p < 0.001$; for age, $X^2_{12} = 115.60$, $p < 0.001$; for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, $X^2_4 = 17.46$, $p < 0.002$. When controlling for other factors, gender remained significant ($X^2_3 = 13.78$, $p = 0.003$).

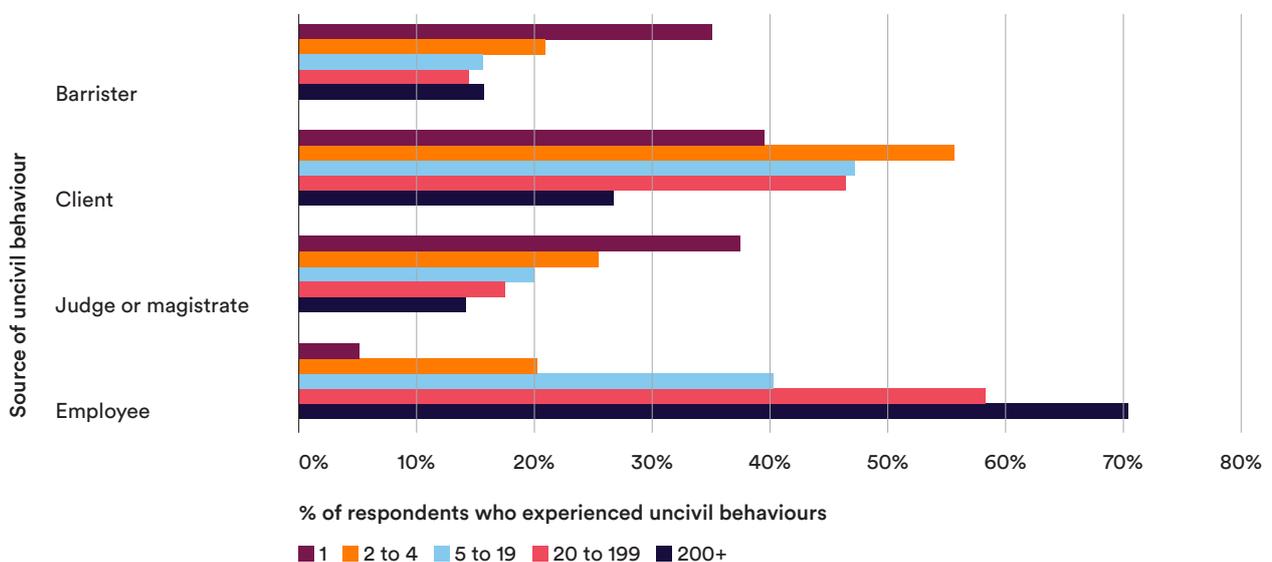
62. $X^2_4 = 23.30$, $p < 0.001$

63. Respondents could 'select all that apply', meaning percentages do not add to 100.

There was some evidence of relationships between respondents' personal characteristics and the perpetrators of uncivil behaviours. For example, of those who had experienced uncivil behaviour, fellow employees made up a larger proportion of the perpetrators for younger respondents (under 30 and 30 to 39) and women.⁶⁴ LGBTQIA+ respondents also experienced uncivil behaviours from colleagues at comparatively higher rates.⁶⁵

Typical perpetrators were also a function of workplace composition and work patterns. For example, there was a significant relationship between experiencing uncivil behaviours from an employee and entity size. As shown in Figure 5, respondents who had experienced uncivil behaviour and who worked for organisations with over 200 staff were far more likely to identify an employee as the perpetrator.⁶⁶

Figure 5 – Perpetrators of uncivil behaviours, by entity size⁶⁷



In-house lawyers experiencing uncivil behaviour were far more likely to identify an employee as the perpetrator (75% of those who experienced uncivil behaviours, n=205) than lawyers not working in in-house roles.⁶⁸

64. The findings were 60% and 55% of 20 to 29-year-olds and 30 to 39-year-olds respectively. Fifty-four per cent of women who experienced uncivil behaviours experienced them from an employee. For age, $X^2_6 = 57.58$, $p < 0.001$; for gender, $X^2_3 = 30.33$, $p < 0.001$.

65. The findings were 64% (n=134) compared to 46% (n=455) of heterosexual respondents. $X^2_2 = 18.68$, $p < 0.001$.

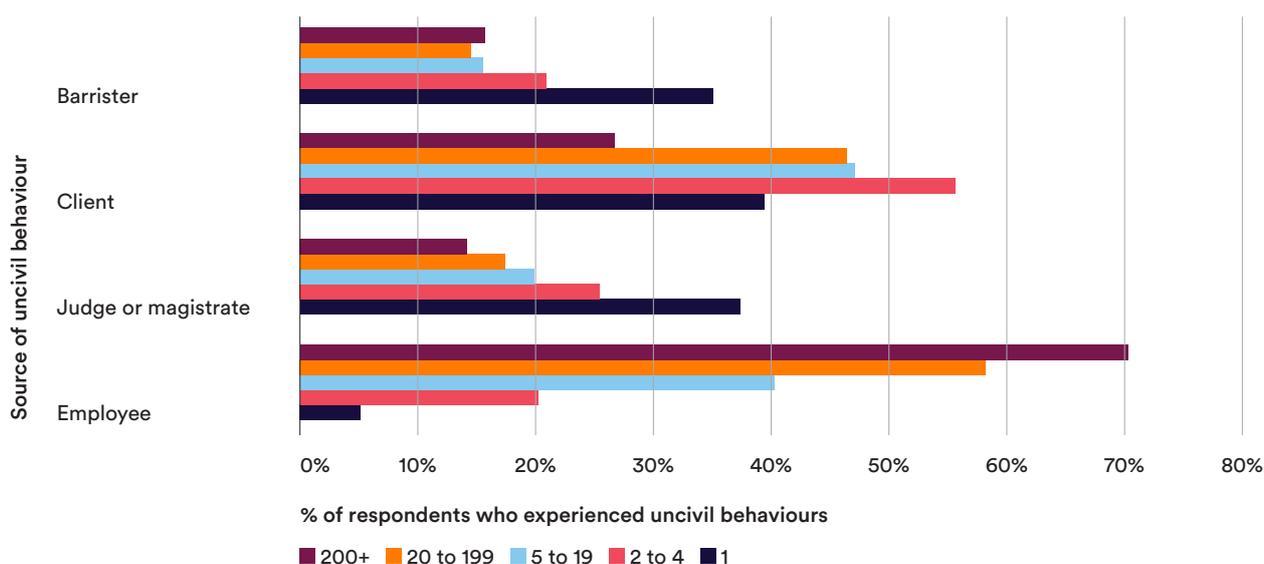
66. The findings were 68% (n=324). $X^2_5 = 237.24$, $p < 0.001$. The inverse relationship can be observed for respondents who experienced uncivil behaviours from judges and magistrates, and barristers, with entity sizes between one to 4 employees experiencing from these groups at higher rates; for experienced from a judge or magistrate, $X^2_5 = 40.01$, $p < 0.001$; for experienced from a barrister, $X^2_5 = 33.12$, $p < 0.001$.

67. Respondents could 'select all that apply', meaning percentages do not add to 100.

68. $X^2_2 = 98.10$, $p < 0.001$

There was a significant relationship between organisation type and identified perpetrators of uncivil behaviours.⁶⁹ Those working in law firms, government and non-legal employers who experienced uncivil behaviour were more likely to have experienced it from employees and clients, whereas sole practitioners were more likely to have experienced these behaviours from judges, magistrates or barristers (see Figure 6). Experience of uncivil behaviours from clients was considerably higher in outer metropolitan and regional areas: 52% (n=67) and 54% (n=14) respectively, compared to 36% (n=388) of those in inner metropolitan areas.⁷⁰ Perpetrator type remained largely consistent when it came to the type of uncivil behaviour experienced.

Figure 6 – Perpetrators of uncivil behaviours, by organisation type (selected)⁷¹



Location of uncivil behaviour

Sixty-four per cent of those experiencing or witnessing uncivil behaviour in the past 12 months indicated that the behaviours had occurred in the office (n=821), with 38% who identified behaviours that occurred outside the office (n=482) and 32% in court (32%, n=407).⁷²

There were some associations between location of behaviours and respondents' personal characteristics. For example, there was a significant relationship between the location of the uncivil behaviour and gender.⁷³ Women and non-binary respondents (or those using other terms) were more likely to experience uncivil behaviours at the office than men (68%, n=530 for women, 81%, n=26 for non-binary respondents/those using other terms, and 56%, n=262 for men). Conversely, where men experienced uncivil behaviours, this was more commonly outside the office compared to women (44%, n=204 men compared to 34%, n=262 women).

69. For example, $X^2_7 = 223.40$, $p < 0.001$ for organisation type and experienced from an employee.

70. Geographic areas were coded in line with ABS categories. See Legal Services Research Centre, *The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census Technical Report*.

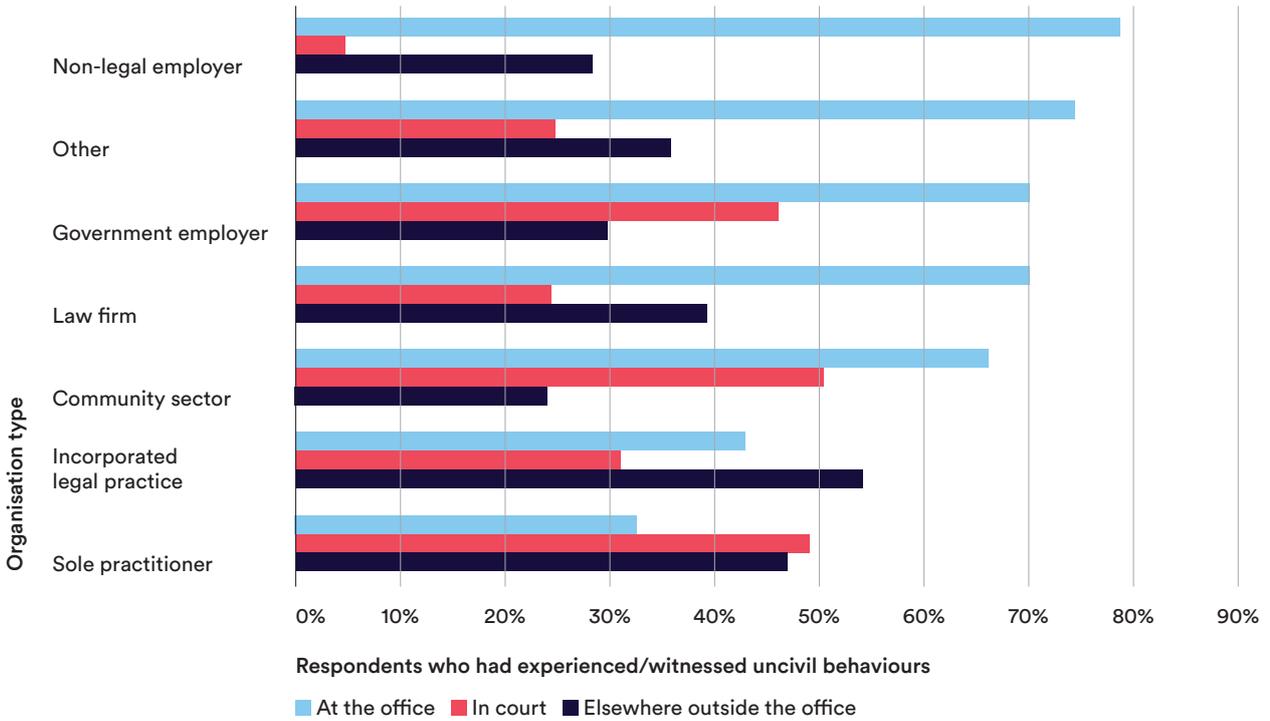
71. Respondents could 'select all that apply', meaning percentages do not add to 100.

72. Respondents could 'select all that apply', meaning percentages do not add to 100. Results were almost identical when 'experiencing' and 'witnessing' were viewed in isolation.

73. For example, gender and experienced at the office: $X^2_3 = 18.59$, $p < 0.001$.

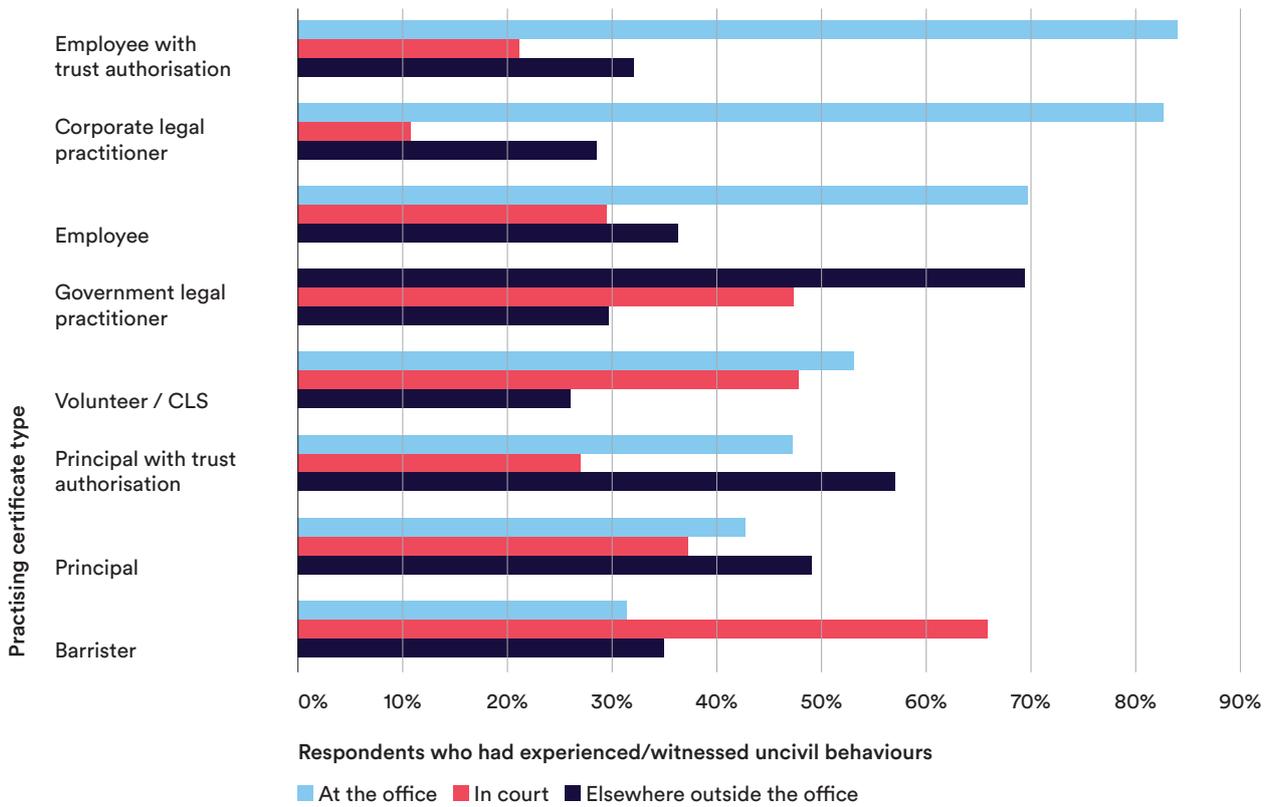
The location of uncivil behaviour also reflected the typical location of work and the composition of the workplace. As illustrated in Figure 7, those working at law firms and for non-legal employers were more likely to experience uncivil behaviours at the office, compared to those who were sole practitioners. Lawyers in the community sector experienced uncivil behaviours both in the office and in court at relatively comparable rates.

Figure 7 – Location of uncivil behaviours by respondents’ organisation type



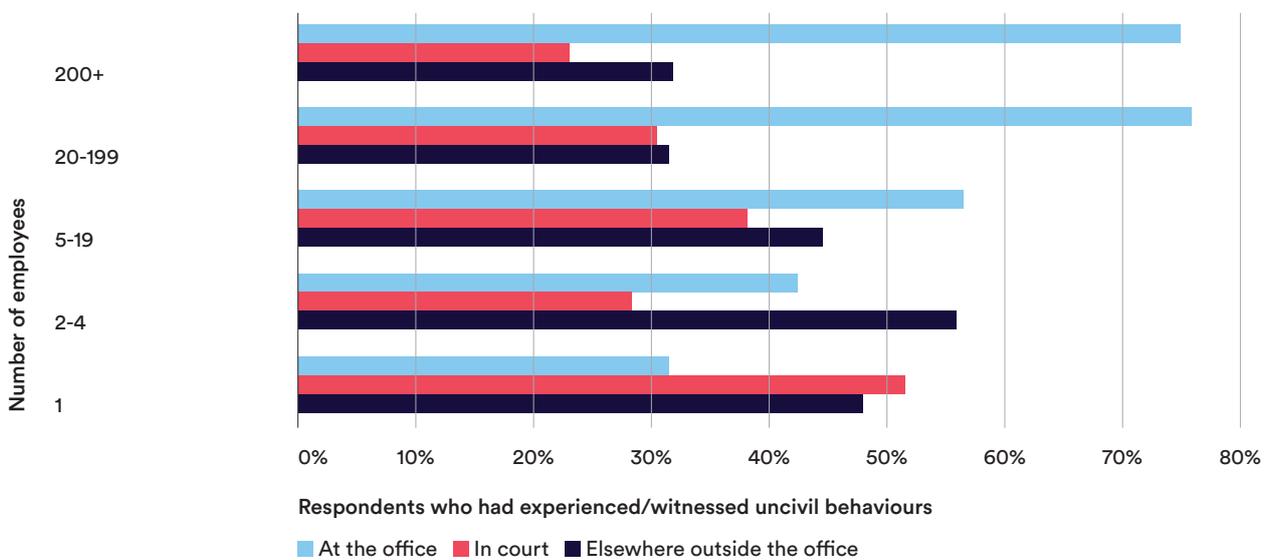
Location of uncivil behaviour by practising certificate type is set out in Figure 8. As shown, there was substantial variation in location of behaviours. Barristers were, not surprisingly, much more likely than other certificate types to experience or witness uncivil behaviours in court, with ‘in office’ behaviours most commonly experienced/witnessed among employees with trust authorisation and corporate legal practitioners.

Figure 8 – Location of uncivil behaviours by respondents’ practising certificate type



The number of employees also related to the location of uncivil behaviour. As illustrated in Figure 9, uncivil behaviours in the office increased with the number of employees, while ‘in court’ or ‘elsewhere outside the office’ behaviours fell.

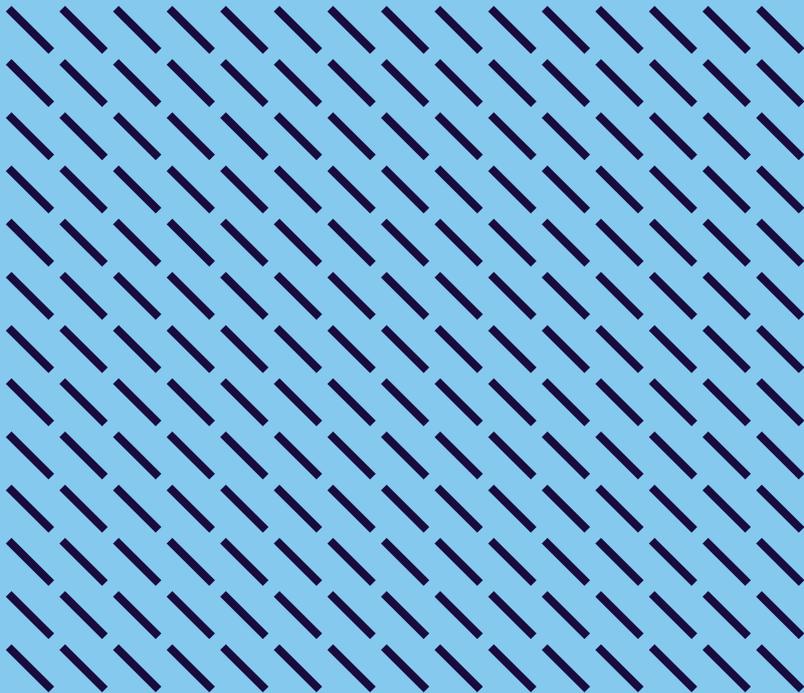
Figure 9 – Location of uncivil behaviours by number of employees at respondents’ workplace



03

Uncivil behaviours in context

This section puts uncivil behaviours in context by considering the relationship between experiencing and/or witnessing uncivil behaviours, other forms of workplace misconduct (such as sexual harassment), and adverse working conditions (such as inadequate compensation, excessive workloads, conflicts between client and workplace demands, conflicts between own values and professional obligations, and pressure to compromise professional values). It explores the relationship between experiencing and/or witnessing uncivil behaviours and wellbeing indicators (such as anxiety and depression, burnout and life satisfaction). It also presents qualitative analysis on the effect experiencing uncivil behaviours had on respondents' intent to leave the profession.

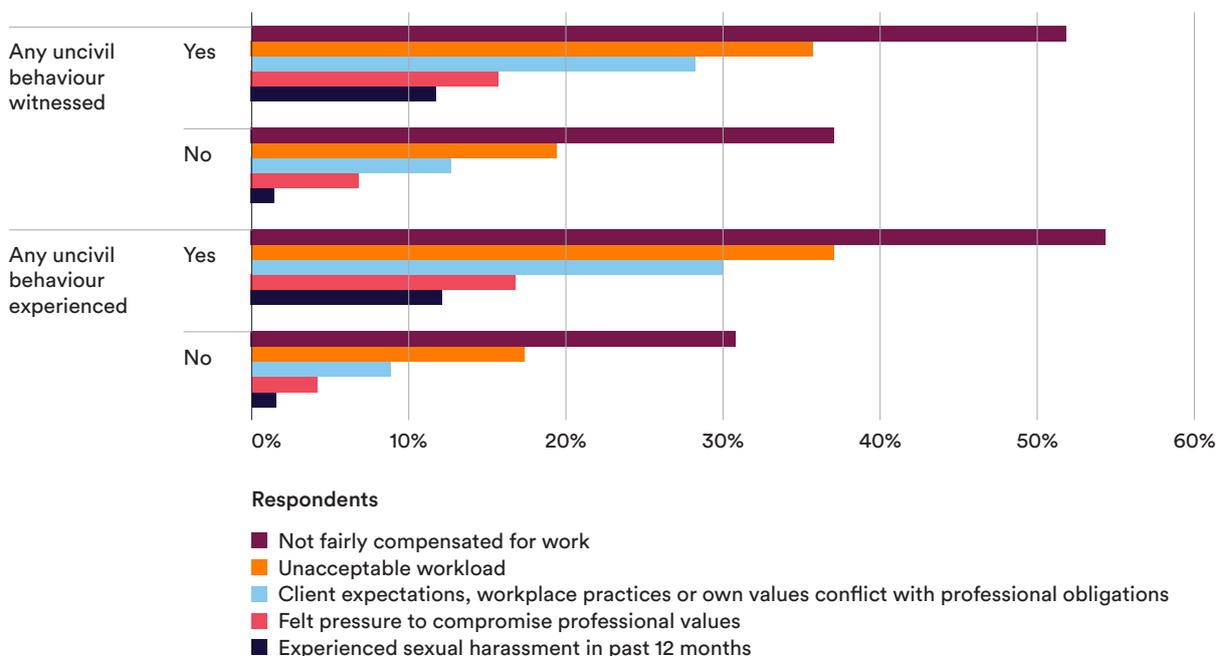


Uncivil behaviours, workplace misconduct and adverse conditions

Figure 10 shows the relationship between uncivil behaviours, both experienced and witnessed, and a range of factors relating to workplace misconduct and adverse working conditions. Those who experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours were more likely to feel unfairly compensated for their work, report an unacceptable workload, report pressure to compromise professional values, find client expectations/instructions workplace practices or personal values conflicted with professional obligations, and experience sexual harassment at work in the past 12 months.

This does not indicate that uncivil behaviours cause these other workplace issues. Rather, the findings show that other forms of workplace harm are far more likely to exist where incivility is present. More broadly, the findings also highlight that workplace misconduct and adverse working conditions tend to cluster together.

Figure 10 – Rates of workplace misconduct and adverse working conditions among those who experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours and those who did not

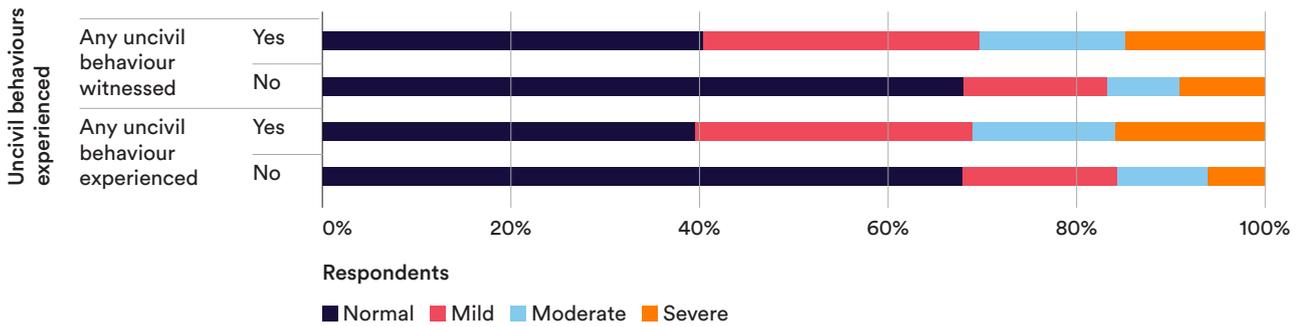


Uncivil behaviour, wellbeing and retention

Uncivil behaviours and psychological distress

Figure 11 shows psychological distress, captured by the PHQ-4 scale, in terms of whether or not respondents had witnessed, and whether or not they had experienced uncivil behaviours in the past 12 months. As shown, both witnessing and experiencing uncivil behaviours at work was associated with significantly higher rates of psychological distress.⁷⁴

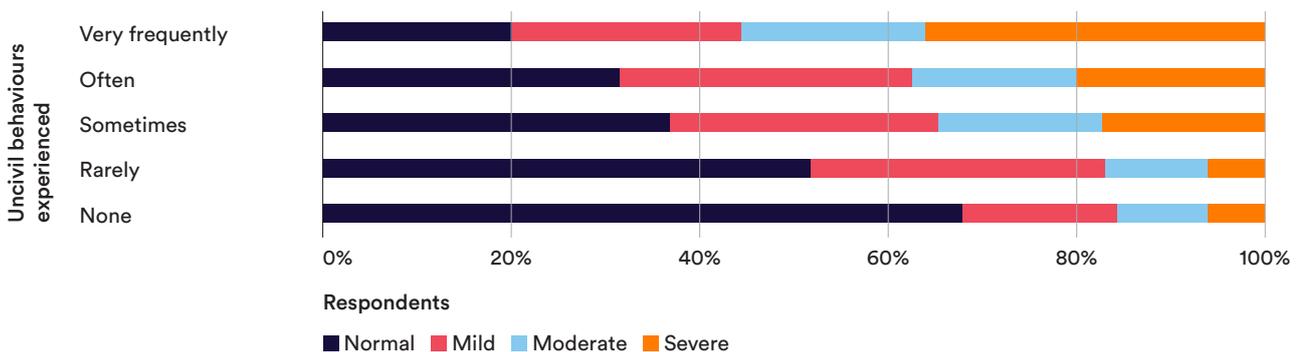
Figure 11 – Wellbeing PHQ-4 scores by whether respondents had experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours



Similarly, for sub-types of uncivil behaviour, 39% (n=197) of respondents who experienced unacceptable behaviours indicated moderate to severe psychological distress. Similarly, 35% (n=308) of respondents who experienced professional undermining, and 32% (n=307) of respondents who experienced verbal disrespect indicated moderate to severe psychological distress.

Figure 12 shows psychological distress (PHQ-4) by frequency of uncivil behaviours experienced. As illustrated, psychological distress increased with frequency of uncivil behaviour, though even infrequent uncivil behaviour was associated with increased psychological distress (compared to those not experiencing uncivil behaviour).

Figure 12 – Wellbeing PHQ-4 scores by frequency of uncivil behaviours experienced



74. This relationship was highly significant for witnessing and experiencing ($X^2_3 = 78.63$, $p < 0.001$ and $X^2_3 = 91.95$, $p < 0.001$ respectively). PHQ-4 can also be split into anxiety and depression subdomains. Twenty per cent (n=51) of respondents who did not experience or witness any uncivil behaviours indicated likelihood of anxiety, and 10% (n=24) indicated likelihood of depression. In comparison, 40% (n=495) of respondents who did experience or witness uncivil behaviours indicated anxiety, and 26% (n=322) indicated depression.

Uncivil behaviours and burnout

As shown in Figure 13, there was a highly significant relationship between uncivil behaviours and burnout (BAT4 scale),⁷⁵ with a far higher risk of burnout among those who had experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours in the past 12 months.

Figure 13 – Risk of burnout (BAT4) by whether respondents had experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours

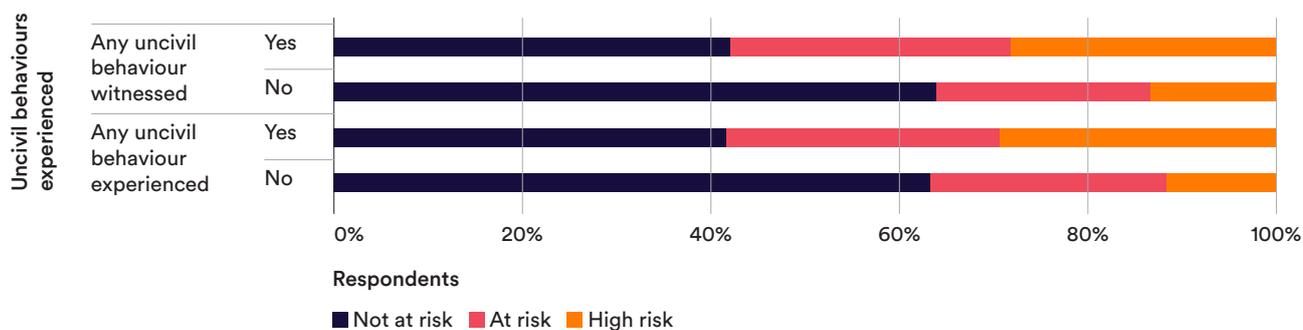
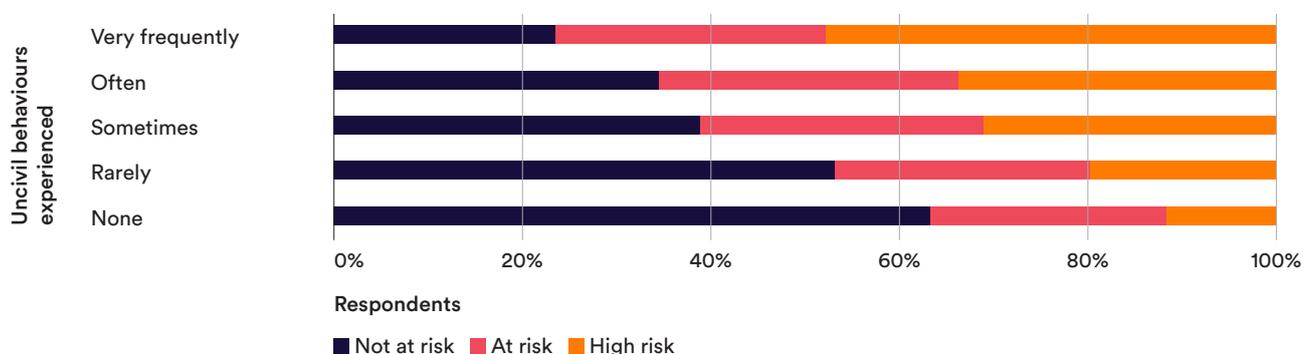


Figure 14 shows burnout (BAT4 scale) by the frequency of uncivil behaviours experienced. As for psychological distress, burnout risk increased with frequency of uncivil behaviour, though again, even infrequent uncivil behaviour was associated with greater risk of burnout (compared to those not experiencing uncivil behaviour).

Figure 14 – Risk of burnout (BAT4) by frequency of uncivil behaviours experienced

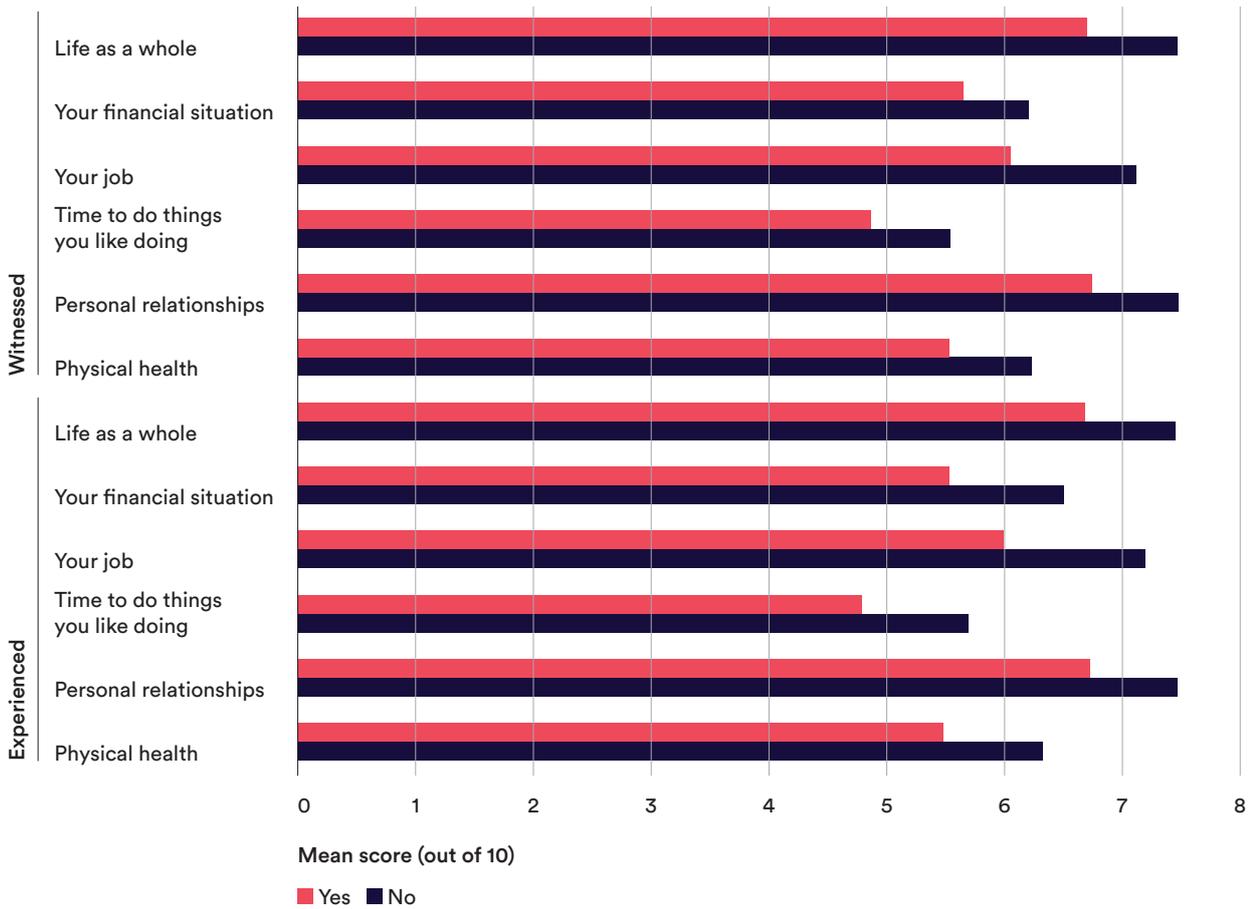


75. For witnessing; $X^2_2 = 54.13$ $p < 0.001$ and for experiencing; $X^2_2 = 65.35$, $p < 0.001$.

Uncivil behaviours and life satisfaction

Figure 15 shows mean life satisfaction (from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied)) across 6 domains. As illustrated, experiencing or witnessing uncivil behaviours in the past 12 months was associated with lower satisfaction across all domains.⁷⁶

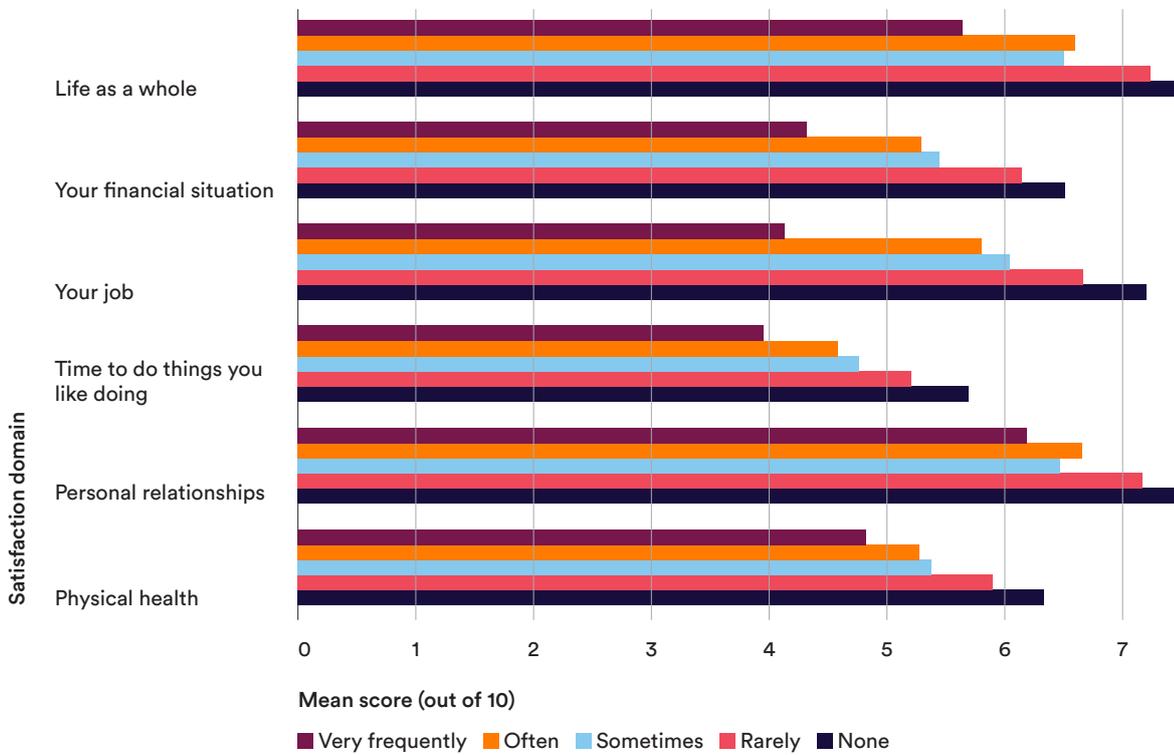
Figure 15 – Life satisfaction by whether respondents had experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours



76. Using simple Mann-Whitney U tests to compare scores showed that the difference in scores by whether or not respondents witnessed uncivil behaviours, and by whether or not they experienced uncivil behaviours was highly statistically significant in all cases.

Figure 16 shows mean score for each domain of life satisfaction by frequency of uncivil behaviours experienced. As illustrated, for every domain, satisfaction decreased as the frequency of uncivil behaviours experienced increased.

Figure 16 – Life satisfaction by frequency of uncivil behaviours experienced



Uncivil behaviours and intention to leave the profession

Overall, there was little difference between those who had experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours and those who had not when indicating their intention to leave the profession (14% for each group).⁷⁷

Where respondents indicated that they intended to return to study, take a career break, or make a career change, they were asked to explain why they planned to make the change in their own words. Where respondents specified an ‘other’ reason for intending to leave (excluding parental/care duties or retirement), they were also asked to provide additional details.

The following section analyses 28 verbatim responses given by lawyers who experienced uncivil behaviours often or very frequently in their work over the past year. The analysis indicates that, despite comparable rates of intending to leave the profession overall, uncivil behaviours (or other work culture issues) frequently formed part of the departure rationales for this group.

Embedded incivility, dysfunction and harm

Several respondents described departure rationales centred on unsustainable work conditions and organisational failures that, while not explicitly naming incivility, pointed to broader toxic workplace cultures. Multiple practitioners cited experiencing burnout, stress, anxiety, health impacts, as well as futility of their efforts. For example, one respondent replied:

[I am] very worn down by the system and rarely going home at the end of the day truly feeling my work has made a positive difference. [I have] constant stress and anxiety, to the point of affecting my ability to sleep... Working within this system often feels equivalent to swimming into shore and getting pulled back out by a rip every time I get close.

Respondents’ accounts frequently referenced inadequate leadership and unsupportive organisational structures. One respondent, for example, connected multiple dimensions of dysfunction, describing:

High levels of stress, toxic leadership and poor emotional intelligence within the industry, poor work/life balance, and lack of support within the culture ([for example] poor wellbeing support and no policies in place).

Another respondent observed that ‘a good lawyer does not make a good manager’, resulting in organisations being ‘poorly managed, potentially negligently managed’. There were also characterisations that suggested there are environments where uncivil behaviours may go unchecked.

Others pointed to aspects of overwork and burnout, paired with unsupportive cultures. One practitioner described corporate firms working ‘junior lawyers to death for not enough base pay. Overtime is not given, nor is time in lieu.’ A community legal centre worker who had been ‘overworked and underpaid for nearly a decade’ concluded simply: ‘I can’t continue to be treated so poorly’. Responses also cited suicidal ideation, lasting trauma and relationship breakdown as part of the rationales for leaving.

77. n= 175 and n=35, respectively. The relationship between intention to leave and experience of uncivil behaviours was not significant: $X^2_3 = 2.74$, $p = 0.433$.

Naming incivility

A second group of respondents explicitly named uncivil behaviours as their reason for leaving. Multiple respondents gave responses such as ‘bullying and harassment’ or ‘disillusioned with legal career, too much bullying and inappropriate conduct’ as their rationale. Several used the word ‘toxic’ as a sufficient explanation, or ‘toxic industry’ and ‘toxic industry and poor culture’. One respondent characterised the profession as being populated by ‘unsavoury characters who frankly are immature and have no interest in humanity’. Another experienced lawyer detailed the intergenerational cycle of mistreatment and its consequences:

Having been in the profession for over 2 decades, I’ve also watched junior lawyers be bullied, just as I was as a junior lawyer. I love mentoring junior lawyers (it’s been the best part of my job) but I’ve watched them leave the profession and give up due to bullying.

Another went further and explicitly referenced problematic behaviour alongside a system that is ill-equipped to effectively respond to incivility. That respondent also referred to: ‘stress, disillusionment with behaviour of other legal practitioners and the bench, and the lack of correction/punishment by the governing body of poor behaviour by supposedly legal professionals’.

Judicial incivility featured in several accounts, including that of one lawyer who expressed complete professional disillusionment stemming from observed conduct:

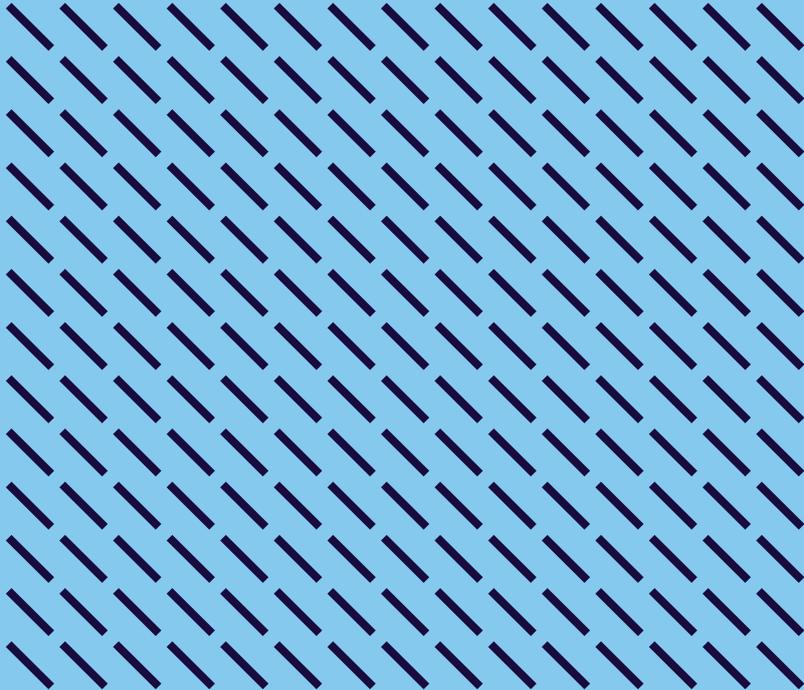
I have lost faith and respect for the judiciary. This is due to demeaning and sarcastic comments made to survivors of domestic violence, which I have experienced and witnessed. I’ve also repeatedly seen blatant unprofessional behaviour by judges and tribunal members towards vulnerable members of the community. I’m done and no longer believe the legal system is an instrument of social good. I now see it as a system that is working as intended.

Several practitioners who cited bullying and toxic cultures expressed profound uncertainty about continuing in law, for example: ‘I feel burnt out and need to take some sort of break doing other things before deciding if this is what I want to do for the rest of my life’ and ‘after 30 years I still love being a lawyer but [I’m] so tired of unhealthy workplaces’. These comments distinguished between the practitioners’ work and their rejection of the culture.

04

Discussion

This section presents our current understanding of incivility in the Victorian legal profession. We examine how our findings connect with existing research, discuss their contribution to the field, and consider next steps for research and for addressing workplace incivility.



A persistent problem

This study confirms that uncivil behaviours remain routine within the Victorian legal profession. There is a lack of benchmark data to quantify whether uncivil behaviours are a more significant problem in law compared to other industries, but it is evident that the vast majority of Victorian lawyers will have experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviours in the past 12 months (83%) with almost a third (29%) having experienced or witnessed behaviours often or frequently.

In terms of behaviour type, verbal disrespect and professional undermining were experienced and witnessed at high rates, with fewer respondents experiencing and witnessing unacceptable behaviours. However, while unacceptable behaviours may have been less common than verbal disrespect or professional undermining, they were by no means rare (34% experiencing and 45% witnessing respectively) and remain a cause of concern.⁷⁸

The finding that 76% of respondents experienced uncivil behaviours in the 12 months before the survey may appear somewhat lower than the finding in Holmes et al., whose 2024 study of legal practitioners across Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia found 87% of respondents experienced uncivil behaviours.⁷⁹ This does not indicate that the rate of experience has decreased in the 12 months between the 2 studies. The way in which uncivil behaviours were captured differed, given Holmes et al. used the full Workplace Incivility Scale⁸⁰ and the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census took a more concise approach as it also covered several other substantive topics. However, regardless of method, both studies agree that uncivil behaviour is routine.

Uncivil behaviours experienced and/or witnessed were also common regardless of personal or professional characteristics. Nonetheless, some personal demographics did have a bearing on exactly how likely a respondent was to encounter uncivil behaviours. For example, respondents who were younger, female, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, or who reported a long-term illness or disability reported behaviours at higher rates. Race and ethnicity (as far as this information was captured in the models – see Appendix A) were less strong predictors of uncivil behaviour. However, several previous studies have acknowledged that there are cultural differences in how uncivil behaviours may be perceived, which may act as a confounding factor that obscures the true relationship between these variables and incivility.⁸¹

Some professional characteristics were also associated with higher rates of experiencing uncivil behaviours. This included certain practising certificate types (such as principals, principals with trust authorisation, employees with trust authorisation and barristers). The percentages of barristers and corporate legal practitioners who had experienced behaviours often were also somewhat higher.

78. Not least since employees are more clearly protected from this category of behaviour by unlawful workplace discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) and *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). See “Workplace Discrimination,” Fair Work Ombudsman, accessed 15 May 2025, <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/fact-sheets/rights-and-obligations/workplace-discrimination>.

79. Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing, Workplace Experiences and Ethics*, 18.

80. Noting the difference in survey instrument – Holmes et al. used the Cortina et al. Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) whereas this study compressed several WIS categories. See Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing, Workplace Experiences and Ethics*, 18; Cortina et al., “Incivility in the Workplace,” 64–80.

81. Cortina et al., “Incivility in the Workplace”; Hovman et al., “Negative Acts in the Courtroom”.

Colleagues as perpetrators

The findings of this report confirm that employees are still the most likely perpetrators of uncivil behaviours, noting this survey did not ask respondents about the relative seniority of colleagues.⁸² Results also showed that clients and judges or magistrates were commonly identified as perpetrators.

Although the office remains the predominant location where uncivil behaviours are likely to occur, uncivil behaviours also occurred outside of the office, including within courtrooms at considerable rates. This was particularly the case for those with more frequent exposure to the courtroom, such as barristers. Over half of the barristers who experienced uncivil behaviours (across all 3 categories of behaviour) experienced these behaviours from a magistrate or judge, and even higher rates of barristers experienced uncivil behaviours from fellow barristers. As many legal professionals experience uncivil behaviours in the courtroom, this finding warrants further attention.

Client behaviours

This study also demonstrates that – after employees – clients are the most common perpetrators of uncivil behaviours, particularly professional undermining. Experience of uncivil behaviours from clients was considerably higher in outer metropolitan and regional areas, and professional undermining by clients was more often experienced by female employees with fewer years of practising experience.

These results indicate that further research into client-perpetrated uncivil behaviour may be warranted. While there is substantial literature on sexual harassment within the profession,⁸³ uncivil behaviours by clients within the client-lawyer relationship is relatively understudied in Australia.⁸⁴

The cost of uncivil behaviours

Uncivil behaviours were strongly related to other aspects of negative workplace culture, including not being fairly compensated for work, unacceptable workload, conflicts with personal values or professional obligations, and experience of sexual harassment. As previously noted, this is not to say that incivility was the cause of other aspects of negative workplace culture, rather that incivility is an aspect of a negative culture cluster. This study also contributes to the literature on the relationship between uncivil behaviours and wellbeing. Respondents who experienced uncivil behaviours were far more likely to have higher levels of psychological distress and be at higher risk of burnout. Importantly, while more frequent behaviours related to greater psychological distress and risk of burnout, both were significantly elevated, even among those reporting relatively infrequent incivility. Even low levels of ‘low level’ behaviours came with a cost.

82. The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census report on sexual harassment, which did capture seniority of perpetrators, found that of those who indicated that the most recent incident of sexual harassment involved someone else in their organisation, 73% said that the individual was more senior to them. See Alice Catherine King et al., *Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession: Findings from the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census* (Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, 2025).

83. Most recently, King et al., *Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession*.

84. See Stephanie Prevost, “Proactive Efforts to Eliminate Sexual Harassment by Clients,” *Business Horizons* 68, no. 3 (2025): 331–340; Gillian R. Chadwick, “Time’s Up for Attorney-Client Sexual Violence,” *University of Maryland Law Journal of Race, Religion, Gender and Class* 22, no. 1 (2022): 76–119; Casey W. Baker, “Attorney-Client Sexual Relationships in the #MeToo Era: Understanding Current State Approaches and Working Towards a Better Rule,” *Southwestern Law Review* 49 (2020): 243–270.

Previous studies have linked experience of uncivil behaviours to poor staff retention. This study found that, while experiencing or witnessing uncivil behaviours did not necessarily have bearing on respondents' intention to leave the profession, poor culture and inappropriate behaviours were cited by lawyers as reasons for wanting to leave. Further research in this area would be valuable.⁸⁵

Lawyers are not obligated to stay at workplaces where incivility and higher impact behaviours, such as harassment and bullying, occur. Those who have options may decide to leave the profession altogether.

More to be understood

The evidence suggests that, despite ongoing CPD on professional responsibility and the existing professional conduct rules, uncivil behaviours persist at high rates within the legal profession. It occurs within the workplace, in the courtroom, and outside both. The perpetrators span colleagues, barristers, the judiciary and clients.

This study has established the high rates at which uncivil behaviours occur, and the myriad negative impacts they have on lawyer wellbeing. Though they may be seen as low impact, uncivil behaviours scaffold harmful and unlawful conduct, as seen by the frequent overlap with sexual harassment and bullying. The combination of harmful conduct and the poor workplace culture it creates has real-world consequences for legal workplaces, including poor wellbeing, diminished collegiality, lost talent and eroded public trust in our legal system.

More broadly, the literature in Australia needs to go beyond establishing the problem and turn to what can be done to address it. One aim of the lawyer census is to repeat modules over time to produce an evolving picture of trends in uncivil behaviours, sexual harassment, wellbeing, and more. This longitudinal data provides the opportunity to monitor the impact of regulatory or other interventions. It also provides an opportunity to learn directly from practitioners about what works for them and their workplaces to enhance wellbeing, and, in turn, reduce problematic behaviours and build positive culture. A legal profession that is healthy, respectful, and sustainable is not merely desirable but essential – both for those within it and the communities that depend on it.

85. The LSRC is embarking on research exploring the sustainability of the legal profession, including collecting further empirical data on leaving the profession.

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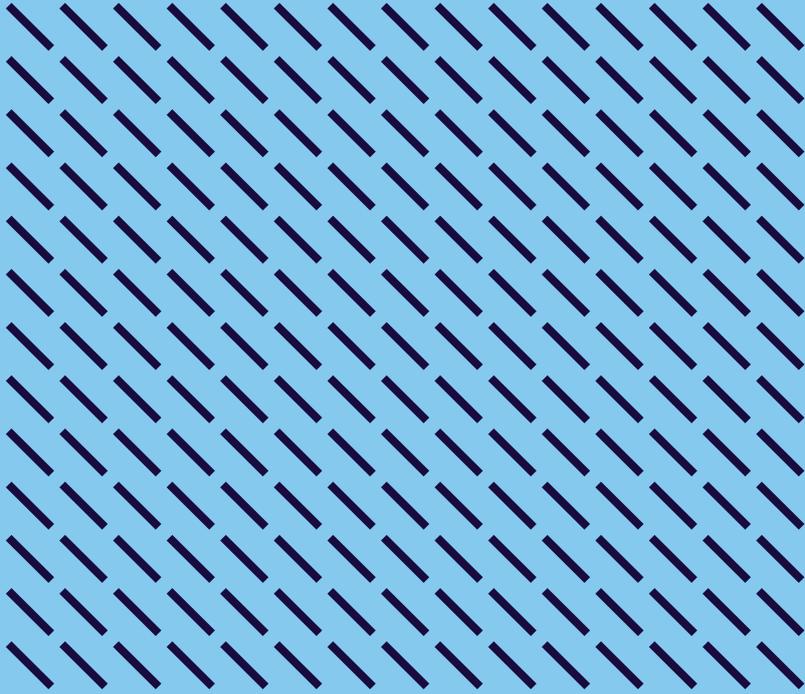
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Appendix



Appendix A

Binary logistic regression models

Interpreting coefficients

In summarising the findings, we refer to model coefficients. Coefficients represent the expected change in the log-odds of being in a higher psychological distress category (that is, worse mental health) when comparing each category to its reference group, holding all other variables constant. Positive coefficients indicate increased risk of psychological distress and vice versa, and larger absolute values with stronger associations. So, a coefficient of 0.6 would indicate a term associated with greater psychological distress (compared to the reference category for that variable), while accompanying statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) would indicate that the observed association is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Table 3 – Model 1: Experience of uncivil behaviours

Observations: 1,539

Any uncivil behaviour experienced	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Age						
20–29 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
30–39	-0.217	0.272	-0.800	0.425	-0.749	0.315
40–49	-0.285	0.305	-0.940	0.350	-0.883	0.312
50–59	-0.536	0.307	-1.750	0.081	-1.137	0.066
60+	-0.696	0.317	-2.200	0.028	-1.316	-0.075
Gender						
Male (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Female	0.569	0.153	3.730	0.000	0.270	0.868
Non-binary/other term	0.726	0.693	1.050	0.295	-0.632	2.084
Relationship status						
Married (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Single	0.382	0.195	1.960	0.050	0.000	0.765
De facto	0.309	0.189	1.630	0.103	-0.062	0.680
Years of experience						
Less than 5 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
5–9	0.007	0.251	0.030	0.979	-0.485	0.498
10–19	0.026	0.251	0.100	0.919	-0.466	0.518
20+	0.036	0.269	0.130	0.893	-0.491	0.563

Table 3 – Model 1: Experience of uncivil behaviours continued

Any uncivil behaviour experienced	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Certificate type						
Principal (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Principal with trust	0.063	0.254	0.250	0.805	-0.435	0.560
Employee	-0.582	0.335	-1.740	0.082	-1.238	0.075
Employee with trust	0.454	0.707	0.640	0.521	-0.931	1.839
Barrister	0.228	0.323	0.710	0.480	-0.404	0.860
Corporate legal practitioner	-0.994	0.504	-1.970	0.049	-1.983	-0.005
Government legal practitioner	-0.835	0.545	-1.530	0.126	-1.904	0.234
Volunteer/CLS	-1.421	0.750	-1.890	0.058	-2.891	0.049
Partner						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.023	0.288	-0.080	0.938	-0.587	0.542
Not applicable	-0.074	0.189	-0.390	0.696	-0.445	0.297
In-house						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.009	0.262	0.040	0.972	-0.504	0.523
Law firm (base)	0.430	0.337	1.280	0.202	-0.231	1.091
Sole practitioner	-0.027	0.294	-0.090	0.928	-0.604	0.551
Incorporated legal practice	0.507	0.458	1.110	0.269	-0.391	1.405
Government employer	0.843	0.450	1.880	0.061	-0.038	1.724
Non-legal employer	0.778	0.372	2.090	0.036	0.049	1.507
Community sector	0.533	0.449	1.190	0.235	-0.347	1.413
Other	0.430	0.337	1.280	0.202	-0.231	1.091
Government employer	0.843	0.450	1.880	0.061	-0.038	1.724
Non-legal employer	0.778	0.372	2.090	0.036	0.049	1.507
Community sector	0.533	0.449	1.190	0.235	-0.347	1.413
Other	0.430	0.337	1.280	0.202	-0.231	1.091
Number of employees						
1 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
2–4	0.373	0.305	1.220	0.221	-0.224	0.971
5–19	0.449	0.344	1.310	0.192	-0.225	1.123
20–199	0.311	0.343	0.910	0.364	-0.361	0.984
200+	0.198	0.344	0.580	0.564	-0.476	0.872

Table 3 – Model 1: Experience of uncivil behaviours continued

Any uncivil behaviour experienced	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Salary						
Less than \$50,000 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
\$50,000–\$80,000	0.588	0.379	1.550	0.121	-0.155	1.332
\$80,001–\$120,000	0.420	0.320	1.310	0.189	-0.207	1.047
\$120,001–\$160,000	0.589	0.336	1.750	0.080	-0.071	1.248
\$160,001–\$200,000	0.939	0.361	2.600	0.009	0.232	1.647
\$200,001–\$250,000	0.718	0.368	1.950	0.051	-0.004	1.439
\$250,001–\$350,000	0.665	0.396	1.680	0.093	-0.110	1.440
\$350,001–\$450,000	-0.444	0.462	-0.960	0.337	-1.350	0.462
More than \$450,000	0.187	0.413	0.450	0.651	-0.623	0.997
Sexual orientation						
Heterosexual (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
LGBTQIA+	0.182	0.232	0.790	0.431	-0.272	0.636
Children						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.162	0.168	0.970	0.334	-0.167	0.492
Carer						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.146	0.253	0.580	0.564	-0.350	0.643
Country of birth						
Australia (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	-0.464	0.191	-2.420	0.015	-0.839	-0.089
Language at home						
English (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	0.249	0.367	0.680	0.496	-0.469	0.968
Long-term illness or disability						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.463	0.197	2.350	0.019	0.077	0.849
Constant	0.222	0.553	0.400	0.688	-0.862	1.307

Table 4 – Model 2: Experience of uncivil behaviours often or frequently
Observations: 1,563

Experienced uncivil behaviours often or frequently	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Age						
20–29 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
30–39	0.003	0.265	0.010	0.992	-0.518	0.523
40–49	0.109	0.316	0.350	0.730	-0.510	0.729
50–59	-0.685	0.333	-2.060	0.039	-1.338	-0.033
60+	-0.534	0.386	-1.380	0.167	-1.291	0.223
Gender						
Male (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Female	0.415	0.168	2.470	0.014	0.086	0.744
Non-binary/other term	-0.406	0.632	-0.640	0.521	-1.645	0.834
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	2.011	0.569	3.530	0.000	0.895	3.127
Relationship status						
Married (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Single	0.146	0.199	0.730	0.463	-0.244	0.535
De facto	0.169	0.195	0.870	0.386	-0.213	0.552
Years of experience						
Less than 5 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
5–9	-0.159	0.270	-0.590	0.556	-0.688	0.370
10–19	-0.155	0.273	-0.570	0.570	-0.690	0.380
20+	-0.246	0.319	-0.770	0.442	-0.872	0.380
Certificate type						
Principal (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Principal with trust	-0.113	0.310	-0.360	0.716	-0.719	0.494
Employee	-0.276	0.362	-0.760	0.446	-0.984	0.433
Employee with trust	-0.536	0.748	-0.720	0.474	-2.002	0.931
Barrister	0.482	0.353	1.370	0.172	-0.209	1.174
Corporate legal practitioner	0.468	0.447	1.050	0.295	-0.408	1.344
Government legal practitioner	0.057	0.542	0.100	0.917	-1.006	1.120
Volunteer/CLS	-0.017	0.811	-0.020	0.983	-1.606	1.571

Table 4 – Model 2: Experience of uncivil behaviours often or frequently
continued

Experienced uncivil behaviours often or frequently	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Partner						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.124	0.339	-0.370	0.715	-0.788	0.541
Not applicable	-0.262	0.200	-1.310	0.190	-0.653	0.130
In-house						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.191	0.244	0.790	0.432	-0.286	0.669
Organisation type						
Law firm (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Sole practitioner	-0.549	0.404	-1.360	0.174	-1.341	0.243
Incorporated legal practice	-0.472	0.347	-1.360	0.173	-1.152	0.207
Government employer	-0.291	0.478	-0.610	0.543	-1.229	0.647
Non-legal employer	-1.008	0.446	-2.260	0.024	-1.883	-0.134
Community sector	-0.202	0.365	-0.550	0.581	-0.916	0.513
Other	-0.482	0.467	-1.030	0.302	-1.398	0.434
Number of employees						
1 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
2–4	0.597	0.361	1.660	0.098	-0.110	1.305
5–19	0.472	0.380	1.240	0.215	-0.274	1.217
20–199	0.123	0.383	0.320	0.748	-0.628	0.874
200+	0.067	0.385	0.170	0.863	-0.688	0.821
Salary						
Less than \$50,000 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
\$50,000–\$80,000	-0.696	0.430	-1.620	0.105	-1.539	0.147
\$80,001–\$120,000	-0.828	0.387	-2.140	0.033	-1.587	-0.069
\$120,001–\$160,000	-0.348	0.393	-0.890	0.375	-1.118	0.422
\$160,001–\$200,000	-0.354	0.404	-0.880	0.381	-1.145	0.438
\$200,001–\$250,000	-0.223	0.426	-0.520	0.601	-1.058	0.612
\$250,001–\$350,000	-0.164	0.464	-0.350	0.724	-1.072	0.745
\$350,001–\$450,000	-0.519	0.560	-0.930	0.354	-1.617	0.579
More than \$450,000	-0.243	0.494	-0.490	0.623	-1.212	0.726

Table 4 – Model 2: Experience of uncivil behaviours often or frequently
continued

Experienced uncivil behaviours often or frequently	Coefficient	Standard Error	Z-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Sexuality						
Heterosexual (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
LGBTQIA+	0.047	0.217	0.220	0.827	-0.378	0.472
Children						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.199	0.189	-1.050	0.293	-0.571	0.172
Carer						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.381	0.237	1.610	0.108	-0.084	0.845
Language at home						
English (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	0.631	0.354	1.780	0.075	-0.063	1.325
Country of birth						
Australia (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	-0.439	0.216	-2.030	0.042	-0.862	-0.016
Long-term illness or disability						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.420	0.181	2.310	0.021	0.064	0.776
Constant	-0.751	0.606	-1.240	0.216	-1.939	0.437

Table 5 – Model 3: Witnessing uncivil behaviours
Observations: 1,553

Any Uncivil Behaviour Witnessed	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Age						
20–29	0	.	.	.	.	.
30–39	0.289	0.282	1.030	0.305	-0.263	0.841
40–49	0.132	0.304	0.440	0.663	-0.464	0.729
50–59	-0.370	0.313	-1.180	0.236	-0.983	0.243
60+	-0.447	0.324	-1.380	0.167	-1.082	0.187
Gender						
Male (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Female	0.403	0.159	2.530	0.011	0.091	0.714
Non-binary/other term	1.936	1.069	1.810	0.070	-0.160	4.032
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	1.571	1.159	1.360	0.175	-0.701	3.843
Relationship status						
Married (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Single	0.386	0.203	1.900	0.057	-0.011	0.783
De facto	0.205	0.201	1.020	0.309	-0.190	0.599
Years of experience						
Less than 5 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
5–9	-0.086	0.272	-0.310	0.753	-0.618	0.447
10–19	-0.104	0.262	-0.400	0.691	-0.619	0.410
20+	0.040	0.282	0.140	0.886	-0.513	0.594
Certificate type						
Principal (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Principal with trust	-0.075	0.261	-0.290	0.774	-0.586	0.436
Employee	-0.542	0.353	-1.530	0.125	-1.234	0.150
Employee with trust	0.717	0.863	0.830	0.406	-0.974	2.408
Barrister	0.778	0.322	2.420	0.016	0.147	1.408
Corporate legal practitioner	-0.641	0.509	-1.260	0.208	-1.639	0.358
Government legal practitioner	-0.130	0.559	-0.230	0.816	-1.226	0.966
Volunteer/CLS	-1.597	0.825	-1.930	0.053	-3.215	0.021

Table 5 – Model 3: Witnessing uncivil behaviours
continued

Any Uncivil Behaviour Witnessed	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Partner						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.280	0.291	-0.960	0.337	-0.850	0.291
Not applicable	-0.240	0.199	-1.200	0.228	-0.630	0.150
In-house						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.198	0.261	0.760	0.449	-0.314	0.710
Organisation type						
Law firm (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Sole practitioner	-0.047	0.346	-0.140	0.892	-0.726	0.632
Incorporated legal practice	0.205	0.308	0.670	0.506	-0.399	0.809
Government employer	-0.075	0.471	-0.160	0.874	-0.997	0.848
Non-legal employer	-0.027	0.454	-0.060	0.952	-0.917	0.862
Community sector	1.187	0.403	2.940	0.003	0.397	1.978
Other	0.532	0.471	1.130	0.259	-0.391	1.454
Number of employees						
1 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
2–4	0.628	0.308	2.040	0.041	0.025	1.231
5–19	0.643	0.351	1.830	0.067	-0.045	1.331
20–199	0.842	0.356	2.360	0.018	0.143	1.540
200+	0.716	0.350	2.040	0.041	0.029	1.403

Table 5 – Model 3: Witnessing uncivil behaviours
continued

Any Uncivil Behaviour Witnessed	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Salary						
Less than \$50,000 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
\$50,000–\$80,000	0.103	0.369	0.280	0.779	-0.619	0.826
\$80,001–\$120,000	0.010	0.320	0.030	0.975	-0.616	0.636
\$120,001–\$160,000	-0.068	0.335	-0.200	0.840	-0.724	0.588
\$160,001–\$200,000	0.455	0.362	1.260	0.208	-0.254	1.164
\$200,001–\$250,000	0.699	0.372	1.880	0.060	-0.030	1.427
\$250,001–\$350,000	0.357	0.397	0.900	0.368	-0.421	1.135
\$350,001–\$450,000	-0.358	0.473	-0.760	0.450	-1.286	0.570
More than \$450,000	0.233	0.415	0.560	0.575	-0.581	1.047
Sexual orientation						
Heterosexual (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
LGBTQIA+	0.286	0.241	1.190	0.235	-0.186	0.759
Children						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.083	0.178	-0.470	0.640	-0.433	0.266
Carer						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.224	0.262	0.850	0.394	-0.290	0.737
Language at home						
English (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	-0.063	0.350	-0.180	0.857	-0.750	0.623
Country of birth						
Australia (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	-0.179	0.198	-0.910	0.365	-0.567	0.209
Long-term illness or disability						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.287	0.194	1.480	0.140	-0.094	0.667
Constant	0.459	0.575	0.800	0.425	-0.668	1.585

Table 6 – Model 4: Witnessing uncivil behaviours often or frequently
Observations: 1,563

Witnessed uncivil behaviours often or frequently	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Age						
20–29 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
30–39	-0.021	0.251	-0.080	0.934	-0.512	0.470
40–49	0.307	0.301	1.020	0.309	-0.284	0.897
50–59	-0.820	0.337	-2.430	0.015	-1.480	-0.159
60+	-0.534	0.380	-1.400	0.160	-1.279	0.212
Gender						
Male (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Female	0.373	0.163	2.290	0.022	0.053	0.692
Non-binary/other term	0.826	0.511	1.620	0.106	-0.176	1.827
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	1.565	0.707	2.210	0.027	0.180	2.950
Relationship status						
Married (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Single	-0.047	0.202	-0.230	0.816	-0.442	0.349
De facto	0.057	0.192	0.290	0.768	-0.320	0.433
Years of experience						
Less than 5 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
5–9	-0.457	0.257	-1.780	0.075	-0.960	0.046
10–19	-0.106	0.258	-0.410	0.682	-0.610	0.399
20+	-0.379	0.314	-1.210	0.228	-0.994	0.237
Certificate type						
Principal (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Principal with trust	0.034	0.321	0.110	0.915	-0.595	0.664
Employee	-0.107	0.358	-0.300	0.765	-0.809	0.595
Employee with trust	0.254	0.644	0.400	0.693	-1.007	1.516
Barrister	0.830	0.367	2.260	0.024	0.111	1.549
Corporate legal Practitioner	0.587	0.440	1.330	0.183	-0.276	1.450
Government legal Practitioner	1.054	0.548	1.920	0.055	-0.021	2.128
Volunteer/CLS	-0.840	0.950	-0.880	0.376	-2.702	1.021

Table 6 – Model 4: Witnessing uncivil behaviours often or frequently
continued

Witnessed uncivil behaviours often or frequently	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Partner						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.122	0.343	-0.360	0.722	-0.794	0.550
Not applicable	-0.073	0.197	-0.370	0.711	-0.458	0.312
In-house						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.176	0.257	0.690	0.493	-0.328	0.680
Organisation type						
Law firm (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Sole practitioner	-0.281	0.388	-0.720	0.470	-1.042	0.480
Incorporated legal practice	-0.415	0.341	-1.220	0.223	-1.082	0.253
Government employer	-0.987	0.482	-2.050	0.041	-1.933	-0.042
Non-legal employer	-0.884	0.435	-2.030	0.042	-1.736	-0.032
Community sector	0.487	0.318	1.530	0.125	-0.136	1.109
Other	-0.249	0.446	-0.560	0.577	-1.123	0.625
Number of employees						
1 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
2–4	0.635	0.365	1.740	0.082	-0.081	1.351
5–19	0.556	0.383	1.450	0.146	-0.194	1.306
20–199	0.555	0.377	1.470	0.141	-0.184	1.294
200+	0.429	0.385	1.110	0.265	-0.326	1.185
Salary						
Less than \$50,000 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
\$50,000–\$80,000	-0.610	0.455	-1.340	0.180	-1.501	0.281
\$80,001–\$120,000	-0.412	0.402	-1.020	0.306	-1.199	0.376
\$120,001–\$160,000	-0.151	0.408	-0.370	0.712	-0.949	0.648
\$160,001–\$200,000	-0.161	0.421	-0.380	0.703	-0.986	0.665
\$200,001–\$250,000	0.048	0.441	0.110	0.913	-0.816	0.913
\$250,001–\$350,000	0.002	0.481	0.000	0.997	-0.942	0.945
\$350,001–\$450,000	-0.314	0.562	-0.560	0.576	-1.416	0.787
More than \$450,000	-0.178	0.536	-0.330	0.739	-1.228	0.871

Table 6 – Model 4: Witnessing uncivil behaviours often or frequently
continued

Witnessed uncivil behaviours often or frequently	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-value	2-tailed p-value	95% confidence interval	
Sexual orientation						
Heterosexual (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
LGBTQIA+	0.026	0.208	0.120	0.901	-0.382	0.433
Children						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.324	0.182	-1.780	0.074	-0.680	0.032
Carer						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.403	0.240	1.680	0.093	-0.068	0.873
Language at home						
English (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	0.203	0.360	0.560	0.573	-0.503	0.908
Country of birth						
Australia (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	-0.445	0.218	-2.040	0.041	-0.872	-0.017
Long-term illness or disability						
No (base)	0
Yes	0.305	0.180	1.700	0.089	-0.047	0.657
Constant	-1.251	0.601	-2.080	0.037	-2.430	-0.073

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