Wellbeing in the Legal Profession: Findings from the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census

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Legal Services
Research Centre

Victorian Legal Services
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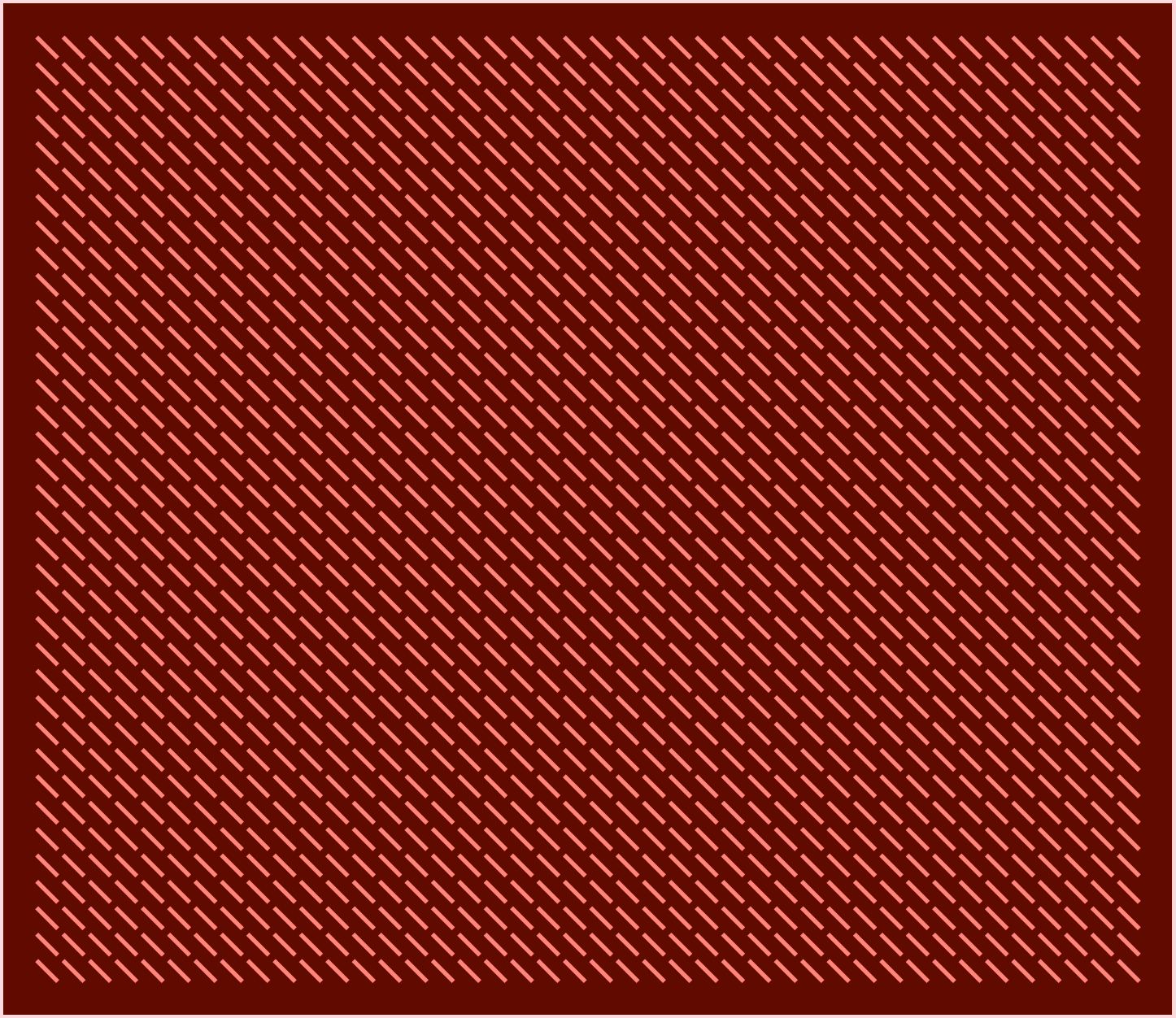

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VLSB+C – Legal Services Research Centre

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– improve access to justice.

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In the context of this report, we particularly thank those lawyers who shared their experiences of wellbeing with us.

Content warning

This report contains content that highlights the experiences and impacts of poor mental health and wellbeing. Engaging with this topic may be confronting or upsetting. This content may be especially challenging if you have experienced poor mental health in the past.

If you require immediate mental health support, call Lifeline crises support on **13 11 14**.

You can also access other health and wellbeing support services:

Your GP can provide you with a mental health care plan and refer you to a psychologist for subsidised treatment.

Victorian Bar's online health and wellbeing portal provides information and independent counselling services to members.

Law Institute of Victoria member counselling service (AccessEAP) provides confidential 24/7 support and counselling to Victorian solicitors – call **1800 818 728**.

Beyond Blue provides information about depression, anxiety and related disorders – call **1300 22 4636**.

The Black Dog Institute provides information on depression and bipolar disorder. It also has a dedicated toolkit to help lawyers stay well.

Suicide Call Back Service provides 24/7 telephone and online counselling to people who are affected by suicide.

Headspace provides mental health support for 12 to 25-year-olds.

Contents

Key findings

The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census included a wellbeing module completed by more than 1,500 lawyers. Using validated screening instruments of psychological distress and burnout risk, alongside measures of subjective wellbeing / life satisfaction and intention to leave the profession, this report examines the state of lawyer wellbeing in Victoria, the factors associated with it, and its broader consequences.

The report first examines the prevalence and distribution of psychological distress and burnout across the profession. It then explores their determinants in 2 stages. Bivariate analyses describe how rates of distress and burnout vary across personal characteristics, professional characteristics, and adverse workplace experiences (including excessive workload, ethical conflicts, incivility and sexual harassment). Multivariate analyses then isolate which of these factors are independently associated with distress and burnout, once all other measured characteristics are controlled for simultaneously.

Finally, the report examines how psychological distress and burnout relate to broader outcomes, including subjective wellbeing / life satisfaction (across multiple domains) and intention to leave the profession. In doing so, the report constructs an analytical framework in which workplace conditions act on psychological distress and burnout, which in turn shape subjective wellbeing and intention to leave the profession.

Levels of psychological distress and burnout

Over half (53%) of respondents experienced some form of psychological distress, with 13% experiencing it at severe levels. Over a third (36%) were experiencing symptoms of anxiety and almost a quarter (23%) symptoms of depression. Over half (53%) were at risk of burnout, with a quarter (25%) at very high risk.

Psychological distress and burnout, while conceptually distinct, were powerfully related in practice. Among those with severe psychological distress, 79% were at very high risk of burnout.

Demographic determinants

Younger lawyers, women, LGBTIQA+ lawyers, and those with long-term health conditions or disabilities all experienced significantly higher rates of psychological distress and burnout. Approximately one in 5 lawyers aged 20 to 29 experienced severe psychological distress, compared to fewer than one in 10 of those aged 60 and over. There was also a clear relationship between the severity of health conditions and the severity of psychological distress.

Differences between psychological distress and burnout

While both psychological distress and burnout were associated with younger age, health conditions and relationship status, they diverged on professional characteristics. Psychological distress decreased steadily with age. Burnout followed a different pattern, peaking in mid-career (5 to 19 years holding a practising certificate) before improving.

Years of practice were significantly associated with burnout even after controlling for age (and other factors). This suggests that the mid-career period represents a point of particular vulnerability to burnout. During this career stage, demands have accumulated but the moderating effects of greater career maturity and experience have not yet fully offset them.

Income was also significantly associated with burnout, peaking in the $120,001 to $160,000 bracket, but not with psychological distress. Differences are consistent with burnout as a specifically work-related construct, shaped more directly by the structural conditions of legal practice.

Adverse workplace conditions and experiences

Multivariate analysis found that workplace conditions were the most powerful independent predictors of both psychological distress and burnout, rather than individual factors.

Perceiving workload as unacceptable was the single strongest predictor in both models. Frequently facing conflicts with professional obligations, experiencing sexual harassment, and experiencing or witnessing uncivil workplace behaviours were all independently associated with higher distress and burnout, even after accounting for all other factors. Conversely, feeling fairly compensated was independently associated with lower distress and burnout.

In contrast, many personal and professional characteristics that were significant in bivariate analyses – including gender, sexual orientation, income and firm size – lost significance once workplace conditions (and other factors) were accounted for.

This suggests that it is the conditions lawyers experience at work, rather than who they are or where they sit in the profession, that most directly influence distress and burnout. This is consistent with the central proposition of Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory, which is that burnout develops where job demands are high and job resources are limited. Further, the findings provide empirical grounding for regulatory attention to psychosocial hazards under the recent Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations in Victoria.[1]

Poor psychological health has broader consequences

Psychological distress and burnout were both associated with substantially lower subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction across all 6 domains measured, including satisfaction with physical health, personal relationships, time, job, financial situation, and life as a whole. Both outcomes were also associated with intention to leave the profession. Qualitative analysis of the reasons provided by lawyers intending to leave revealed that adverse workplace conditions, including workload, toxic cultures, incivility and harassment, featured prominently in their rationales for departure (when excluding retirement).

Workplace conditions are the key lever for change

A central message from this analysis is that workplace conditions matter. While the bivariate analyses identify which groups of lawyers experience higher rates of psychological distress and burnout, the multivariate analyses consistently show that it is the conditions lawyers experience at work (their workload, whether they feel fairly compensated, and whether they face sexual harassment, incivility or conflicts with their professional obligations) that are most strongly and independently associated with both negative outcomes. This points clearly to where intervention is most likely to make a difference.

1. Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025 (S.R. No. 103/2025). Available at https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-09/25-103sra-authorised.pdf.

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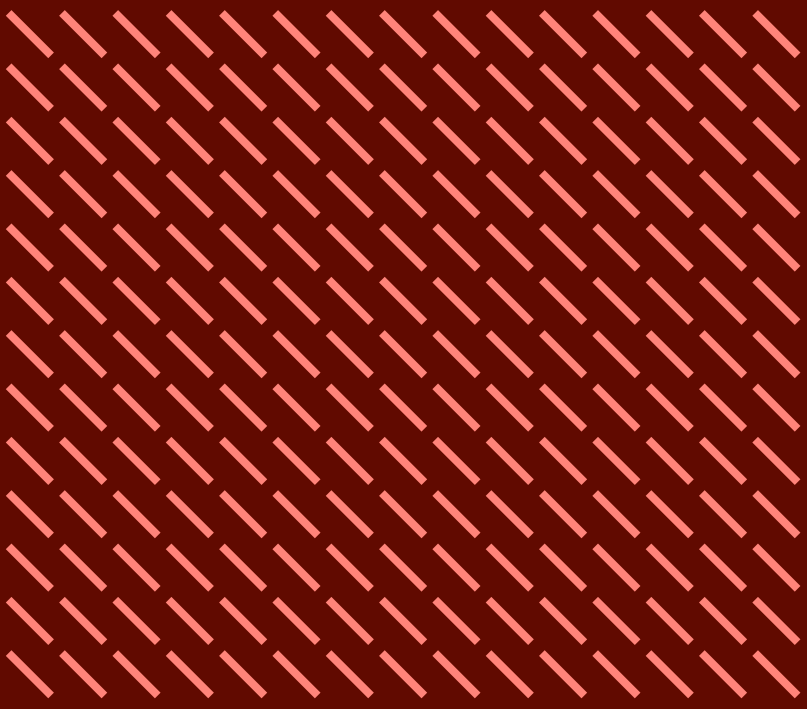
Introduction and methodology

This section provides background on lawyer wellbeing, including the extent of the issue, the factors driving it, and the impact poor wellbeing has on a personal, sectoral and community wide level. It goes on to describe the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census, the modules within it we are drawing upon, our methodology, the rationale for our approach, and some limitations.



Lawyer wellbeing

Lawyer wellbeing, and more specifically, the *poor* wellbeing of lawyers, has been an issue that has gained momentum in Australia and internationally in recent years.[2] The personal, commercial and societal impacts of poor wellbeing in the legal profession are known. Despite efforts made to address the issue, rates of poor wellbeing amongst lawyers remain alarmingly high. Lawyer wellbeing is a key priority for the VLSB+C, and the wellbeing module in the lawyer census was intended to add to baseline level data that allows for monitoring over time.

What is wellbeing?

Although wellbeing has been the subject of increasing attention, a universal definition and conceptualisation of the term remains elusive.[3] From a broad perspective, the World Health Organization defines wellbeing as 'a positive state experienced by individuals and societies … a resource for daily life … determined by social, economic and environmental conditions'.[4] The Australian Government has released a national wellbeing framework adopting a multidimensional conceptualisation of wellbeing spanning health, security, sustainability, cohesion and prosperity.[5]

Despite this multidimensionality, much of the literature around lawyer wellbeing tends to narrow the concept to focus largely on mental health, and the impact of poor mental health on individuals.[6] In keeping with this, the lawyer census adopted a more focused approach for examining wellbeing within the legal profession, concentrating on dimensions that are both readily measurable and closely tied to workplace factors.[7] Specifically, the census examined levels of psychological distress, burnout, subjective wellbeing / life satisfaction[8] (as well as adverse workplace conditions and experiences and intention to leave the profession). This captures both negative psychological states (distress and burnout) and broader subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction), providing a more rounded picture than measures of poor mental health alone.

2. For a synthesis of current understanding, see Lucinda Soon et al., "Towards a Context-specific Approach to Understanding Lawyers' Well-being: A Synthesis Review and Future Research Agenda," Psychiatry, *Psychology and Law 31*, no.3 (2024): 550–573.
3. Aaron Jarden and Annalise Roache, "What Is Wellbeing?" *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 20* (2023): 5,006; Soon et al., "Towards a Context-specific Approach," 550–573.
4. World Health Organization, *Health Promotion Glossary of Terms 2021* (World Health Organization, 2021): 10.
5. Australian Government, *Measuring What Matters: Australia's First Wellbeing Framework* (Australian Government, 2023): 4.
6. Soon et al., "Towards a Context-specific Approach," 550–573.
7. This difference in scope also reflects different research objectives: population-level monitoring versus identification of occupation-specific drivers amenable to targeted intervention.
8. A measure of subjective wellbeing across domains.

Lawyer wellbeing – what we know so far

Research into the wellbeing of lawyers and law students in Australia is well-established. Early studies spanning back to the late 1990s found that legal professionals experienced poor wellbeing due to issues around quality of life and lack of flexibility in the profession, and experienced higher rates of depression than the general population and other professionals in similar industries.[9] The notable 2009 *Courting the Blues* report, which examined depression literacy and psychological distress in Australian law students and practising lawyers also found high levels of psychological distress and risk of depression in participants when compared to the Australian community.[10] Subsequent studies over time have continued to reinforce the high prevalence of poor mental health and wellbeing experienced by law students and lawyers in Australia.[11] More recently, research conducted in 2024 with lawyers in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia found that approximately 30% of participants reported moderate to severe psychological distress.[12]

From an international perspective, the situation is just as concerning. The International Bar Association (IBA) Presidential Taskforce on Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession, formed in 2019, conducted 2 global surveys on lawyer wellbeing: one for individuals, and one for law firms and legal organisations. These surveys found that one in 3 respondents say their work had a negative or extremely negative impact on their wellbeing.[13] Studies conducted on lawyers in the United States on wellbeing and substance use have consistently found higher rates of depression, anxiety, stress and problematic substance use.[14] A study conducted on almost 13,000 licensed attorneys found that 46% of respondents reported concerns with depression at some point in their career. The findings also point to the fact that mental health concerns often

9. The Law Society of Western Australia and Women Lawyers of Western Australia, R*eport on the Retention of Legal Practitioners Final Report March 1999* (The Law Society of Western Australia and Women Lawyers of Western Australia, 1999); Norm Kelke et al., *Courting the Blues: Attitudes Towards Depression in Australian Law Students and Lawyers* (Brain & Mind Research Institute, 2009): 1.
10. Kelke et al. *Courting the Blues*.
11. For example, see Michelle Brady, *VLSB+C Lawyer Wellbeing Project: Report on Legal Professionals' Reflections on Wellbeing in the Legal Profession and Suggestions for Future Reform* (Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, 2019); First Person Consulting, *Systems Theory of Change for Lawyer Wellbeing Project: Results from the System Effects Survey* (Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, 2024); Janet Chan et al., "Lawyering Stress and Work Culture: An Australian Study," *UNSW Law Journal* 37, no. 3 (2014):1,062-1,102; Natalie Skead and Shane Rogers, "Stress, Anxiety and Depression in Law Students: How Student Behaviours Affect Student Wellbeing," *Monash University Law Review* 40, no. 2 (2014): 564–587.
12. Vivien Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing, Workplace Experiences and Ethics: A Research Report* (Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, the Law Society of New South Wales and the Legal Practice Board of Western Australia, 2025).
13. International Bar Association Presidential Taskforce on *Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession, Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession: A Global Study* (International Bar Association, 2021).
14. For example, see Justin Anker and Patrick R. Krill, "Stress, Drink, Leave: An Examination of Gender-specific Risk Factors for Mental Health Problems and Attrition Among Licensed Attorneys," *PLoS ONE* 16, no. 5 (2021): 1–18; G. Andrew H. Benjamin et al., "The Prevalence of Depression, Alcohol Abuse and Cocaine Abuse Among United States Lawyers," *The International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 13, no. 3, (1990): 223–246; William W. Eaton et al., "Occupations and the Prevalence of Major Depressive Disorder," Journal of Occupational Medicine 32, no. 11 (1990): 1,079–1,087; Connie J. A. Beck et al., "Lawyer Distress: Alcohol-related Problems and Other Psychological Concerns Among a Sample of Practising Lawyers," *Journal of Law and Health* 10, no. 1 (1995): 1–60.

coincide with alcohol use disorders, with the findings showing higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress among those considered to have problematic alcohol use.[15] Research has also shown elevated rates of suicide and suicidal ideation among lawyers, underscoring the urgency of addressing wellbeing in the profession.[16] Other similar jurisdictions like Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom echo these findings, and point to a global 'wellbeing crises' among lawyers and legal professionals.[17] Studies across these jurisdictions have also noted that specific cohorts are more likely to experience poor wellbeing, including female lawyers, lawyers from minority ethnic groups, those in the early stages of their career, and lawyers with disabilities.[18]

Importantly, when considering lawyer wellbeing, the state of an individual's mental health is a result of various factors, including non-work determinants.[19] However, there is evidence to indicate that certain work-based factors are associated with a greater risk of developing common mental health issues.[20] Moreover, mental health and mental illness (that is, having a diagnosed mental health condition, such as anxiety or depression), are related but distinct phenomena.[21] An individual may have a diagnosed condition and still be of optimal mental health and wellbeing. Likewise, an individual may not have any diagnosed mental health condition and still be suffering from poor mental health and wellbeing.

15. Patrick R. Krill et al., "The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys," *Journal of Addiction Medicine* 10, no. 1 (2016): 46–52.
16. Patrick R. Krill et al., "Stressed, Lonely, and Overcommitted: Predictors of Lawyer Suicide Risk," *Healthcare* 11 (2023): 536; Matthew S. Thiese et al., "Depressive Symptoms and Suicidal Ideation Among Lawyers and Other Law Professionals," *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 63, no. 5 (2021): 381–386; Steven Stack and Barbara A. Bowman, "Suicide Among Lawyers: Role of Job Problems," *Suicide and Life-threatening Behaviour* 53, no. 2 (2023): 312–319.
17. Nathalie Cadieux et al., *Research Report (Final Version): Towards a Healthy and Sustainable Practice of Law in Canada. National Study on the Health and Wellness Determinants of Legal Professionals in Canada, Phase I (2020–2022)* (Université de Sherbrooke, 2022); Aaron Jarden et al., *The Mental Health and Wellbeing of the New Zealand Legal Profession* (The University of Melbourne, 2024); LawCare, *Life in the Law 2020/21* (Law Care, 2021); LawCare, Life in the Law 2025 (LawCare, 2025).
18. See for example, Richard Collier, "Whose 'Wellbeing' are we Talking About? Culture Change and the Politics of the Legal Profession's Wellness Turn," *International Journal of the Legal Profession* (2025): 1–20; Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing*; International Bar Association Presidential Taskforce on Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession, *Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession*; Cadieux et al., *Research Report (Final Version)*.
19. World Health Organization, *WHO Guidelines on Mental Health at Work* (World Health Organization, 2022); Nancy Beauregard et al., "What Do We Know About the Non-work Determinants of Workers' Mental Health? A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies," *BMC Public Health* 11, no. 439 (2011): 1–15.
20. Samuel B. Harvey et al., "Can Work Make You Mentally Ill? A Systemic Meta-review of Work-related Risk Factors for Common Mental Health Problems," *Occup Environ Med* 74 (2017): 301–310.
21. Gerben J. Westerhof and Corey L. M. Keyes, "Mental Illness and Mental Health: The Two Continua Model Across the Lifespan," *Journal of Adult Development* 17 (2010):110–119.

What are the factors driving poor wellbeing?

Despite the importance of non-work factors, studies have indicated a relationship between work conditions and various aspects of wellbeing. For example, studies point to factors such as high levels of stress and pressure (coupled with low levels of control over work), poor work–life balance, long hours, burnout, uncivil behaviour, sexual harassment, bullying, vicarious trauma, billing pressures, negative ethical climate, and discrimination as all contributing to psychological distress and ill health in both lawyers and law students.[22]

Research looking specifically into workplace demands and resources of Australian lawyers, with particular focus on high billing targets, found that lawyers with high billing targets experienced higher demands, lower resources and therefore more anxiety, stress, job dissatisfaction and less work–life balance than those with low-to-moderate or no billing targets.[23] Other studies have also explored the issue of lawyer wellbeing explicitly through the lens of the JD–R model, further confirming the link between high workplace demands and wellbeing, stress and burnout.[24]

Importantly, the Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations, which commenced in Victoria on 1 December 2025, strengthen the existing OHS framework by providing guidance to employers on their obligations to protect employees from psychological injury.[25] Under these regulations, the factors identified across the literature as driving poor lawyer wellbeing – including excessive workload, uncivil behaviour, sexual harassment, and negative ethical climate – are all examples of psychosocial hazards.

22. See for example, First Person Consulting, *Systems Theory of Change for Lawyer Wellbeing Project*; Martin E. P. Seligman et al., "Why Lawyers Are Unhappy," *Deakin Law Review* 10, no. 1, (2005): 49–66; Ros Lethbridge et al., *Vicarious Trauma in the Legal Profession: Discussion Paper* (Pheonix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2024); Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing*; Tina Popa et al., "'A Big Nebulous, Multifaceted Concept': Reflections from Victorian Personal Injury Lawyers on Wellbeing, Burnout and Vicarious Trauma," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 31, no. 3 (2024): 417–439; Russ Scott and Ian Freckelton, "Vicarious Trauma Among Legal Practitioners and Judicial Officers," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 31, no. 3 (2024): 500–522; Ray Nickson and Alice Neikirk, "Getting Slapped and Kicked: The Experience of Judicial Bullying for Lawyers Providing Publicly Funded Criminal Defence," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 31, no. 3 (2024): 401–416.
23. Adele J. Bergin and Nerina L. Jimmieson, "Australian Lawyer Well-being: Workplace Demands, Resources and the Impact of Time-billing Targets," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 21, no. 3 (2014): 427–441.
24. See for example, Nora Chlap and Kristen Murray, "Work Demands, Self-care, and Mental Health in Lawyers," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 0 (2025): 1–21; Veronica Margaret Hopkins and Dianne Gardner, "The Mediating Role of Work Engagement and Burnout in the Relationship Between Job Characteristics and Psychological Distress Among Lawyers," *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* 47, no.1 (2012): 59–68.
25. WorkSafe, *Psychological Health Regulations: Information Sheet* (WorkSafe, 2025).

Why does this matter?

The detrimental impact of poor wellbeing and poor mental health on an individual level is well-documented. Studies have shown that poor mental health can be a barrier to gaining and maintaining employment, and that the impact of poor mental health on labour-force participation is not limited to severe mental illness.[26] Burnout, for example, can lead to absenteeism, presenteeism, suboptimal performance, and potentially job loss and exclusion from the labour market.[27]

Chronic stress and burnout can also have a significant impact on the overall health and wellbeing of an individual. Poor wellbeing, in the form of chronic stress and burnout, can lead to physical and mental illnesses. [28] Conditions such as high job demands and long hours – conditions lawyers often experience – have been found to raise the odds of having a diagnosed illness by 35% and increase mortality by almost 20% respectively.[29]

Poor wellbeing and mental ill health also negatively affect businesses, with both having long been linked to productivity loss, particularly as a result of presenteeism and lowered job satisfaction.[30] From a broader perspective, some studies estimate the cost of unhealthy workplaces to businesses in Australia ranges from $11 billion to almost $13 billion each year.[31]

The risk of poor wellbeing to the sustainability of the profession is significant, with much research pointing to the link between intention to leave a position, or the profession entirely, and poor wellbeing and work–life balance.[32] The sustainability of the profession is vital to society as a whole. Lawyers uphold the rule of law, and if they are unable to, or perceived to be unable to fulfill this role, it can undermine public confidence and trust in the profession and the justice system.[33]

26. Sarah C. Olesen et al., "Mental Health Affects Future Employment as Job Loss Affects Mental Health: Findings From a Longitudinal Population Study," *BMC Psychiatry* 13, no. 144 (2013): 1–9.
27. Denise Albieri Jodas Salvagioni et al., "Physical, Psychological and Occupational Consequences of Job Burnout: A Systematic Review of Prospective Studies," *PLoS ONE* 12, no. 10 (2017): 1–29.
28. Agnese Mariotti, "The Effects of Chronic Stress on Health: New Insights into the Molecular Mechanisms of Brain–Body Communication," *Future Science OA* 1, no. 3 (2015): 1–6.
29. Joel Goh et al., "Workplace Stressors & Health Outcomes: Health Policy for the Workplace," *Behavioral Science & Policy* 1, no. 1 (2015): 43–52.
30. Charlotte Clegg, *The Business Case for Wellbeing and the Mindful Business Charter: A White Paper for Law Firms, In-house Counsel, Their Clients, and Beyond* (Mindful Business Charter, 2025); Marco Hafner et al., *Health, Wellbeing and Productivity in the Workplace: A Britain's Healthiest Company Summary Report* (RAND Corporation, 2015); Salvagioni et al., "Physical, Psychological and Occupational Consequences of Job Burnout," 1–29; Tina Bui et al., "Workplace Stress and Productivity: A Cross-Sectional Study," *Kansas Journal of Medicine* 14, no. 1 (2021): 42–45; Amy Isham et al., *Wellbeing and Productivity: A Review of the Literature*, CUSP Working Paper No. 22 (University of Surrey, 2020); Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing*.
31. Productivity Commission, *Mental Health Productivity Commission Inquiry Report*, Volume 2, No. 95 (Australian Government, 2020): 297.
32. See for example, Urbis Pty Ltd, *National Attrition and Re-engagement Study (NARS) Report*, (Law Council of Australia, 2014); Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing*; Chan et al., "Lawyering Stress and Work Culture," 1,062–1,102; International Bar Association Presidential Taskforce on Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession, *Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession*; Natalie Mei-Chuen Drew et al., "The Holy Grail: Work–Life Balance in the Legal Profession," *UNSW Law Journal* 38, no. 1 (2015): 288–322.
33. International Bar Association Presidential Taskforce on Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession, *Mental Wellbeing in the Legal Profession*.

This study

This report examines lawyer wellbeing through an analytical framework that seeks to trace pathways from workplace characteristics and experiences, through psychological distress and work-related burnout, to broader life and career outcomes.

This approach draws broadly on complementary research traditions, such as JD–R theory where (in simple terms) work characteristics relate to employee outcomes through psychological states / processes.[34] Within this framework, psychological distress (assessed using PHQ-4 categories) and burnout (assessed using BAT4) are examined as potential mediating[35] pathways (mechanisms through which workplace conditions may influence broader life and career outcomes). These were used as core wellbeing outcomes, which were examined in the context of personal characteristics, professional characteristics, work conditions, and workplace experiences. The analysis shows how psychological distress and burnout relate to broader outcomes, including life satisfaction (a measure of subjective wellbeing) across multiple domains and intention to leave (and rationale for leaving) the profession.

Methodology

The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census

This study uses data from the 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census. The census was conducted by the Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC), the independent research function of the VLSB+C. The 2025 census was a voluntary online survey distributed to all Victorian lawyers holding practising certificates, with a total of 1,887 lawyers responding.[36] The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Full details of the census methodology, including the questionnaire and development process, are available in the accompanying technical report.[37]

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, post-stratification weighting was applied 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.

34. Evangelia Demerouti et al., "The Job Demands–Resources Model of Burnout," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86, no. 3 (2001): 499–512; Arnold B. Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti, "Job Demands–Resources Theory: Taking Stock and Looking Forward," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 22, no. 3 (2017): 273–285; Jari J. Hakanen et al., "The Job Demands–Resources Model: A Three-year Cross-lagged Study of Burnout, Depression, Commitment, and Work Engagement," *Work & Stress* 22, no.3 (2008): 224– 241.
35. Reuben M. Baron and David A. Kenny, "The Moderator–Mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51, no.6 (1986): 1,173–1,182.
36. Of a total of 29,537 current practising certificate holders, a response rate of 6.4%.
37. Legal Services Research Centre, *The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census: Technical Report* (Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, 2026).

The wellbeing module

The wellbeing module consisted of 5 core sets of items. Two of these, were psychometrically validated scales that measured levels of psychological distress (which could also be split into anxiety and depression) and burnout. The Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) is an ultra-brief screening tool for symptoms of anxiety and depression (Table 1).[38] 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.[39] 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).[40] Levels of psychological distress are then calculated and rated as normal (0 to 2), mild (3 to 5), moderate (6 to 8) and severe (9 to 12).[41]

Table 1 – PHQ-4 screening tool[42]

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	0	1	2	3
Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3
Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	0	1	2	3
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3

38. Kurt Kroenke et al., "An Ultra-brief Screening Scale for Anxiety and Depression: The PHQ-4," *Psychosomatics* 50, no. 6, (2009): 613–621. To note, this is not a diagnostic tool.
39. 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, (2010): 86–95.
40. Kroenke et al., "An Ultra-brief Screening Scale for Anxiety and Depression," 613-621.
41. Using the operational categorisation used in Kroenke et al., "An Ultra-brief Screening Scale for Anxiety and Depression".
42. This table is reproduced from Kroenke et al., "An Ultra-brief Screening Scale for Anxiety and Depression".

The ultra-short Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT4) was used to capture risk of burnout (Table 2). The BAT4 is based on the proposition that the following symptoms constitute burnout: exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, and emotional impairment.[43] Participants are asked to score how often they experienced the items that correlate to these symptoms. Each of these 4 burnout items were coded as follows: never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), always (5). 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.[44]

Table 2 – BAT4 screening tool

The following statements are related to your work situation and how you experience this situation. Please state how often each statement applies to you	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
At work, I feel mentally exhausted	1	2	3	4	5
I struggle to find any enthusiasm for my work	1	2	3	4	5
When I am working, I have trouble concentrating	1	2	3	4	5
At work, I may overreact unintentionally	1	2	3	4	5

The module also explored life satisfaction (or subjective wellbeing) levels among respondents through a 6-item domain satisfaction scale that measures satisfaction with aspects of life (health, personal relationships, time availability, job, financial situation, life as a whole).[45] The 'life as a whole' item corresponded to the single item 'global life satisfaction' measure set out alongside the Personal Wellbeing Index.[46]

In the analysis of the wellbeing module, we also drew on other questions relating to acceptability of workload, satisfaction with remuneration, uncivil behaviours experienced and / or witnessed at work, sexual harassment experienced at work, the extent to which work conflicted with professional obligations, and intention to leave the profession.

The percentages reported in the findings relate to those who completed each specific item within the wellbeing module of the survey.

43. Emina Hadžibajramović et al., "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): 1–18. 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 Wilmar Schaufeli et al., *User Manual – Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)* – Version 2.0 (KU Leuven, 2020). Further information on why we utilised this scale to measure burnout can be found in Legal Services Research Centre, *The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census Technical Report*.
44. See Schaufeli et al, *User Manual*, 16. The categories and their scores were as follows: green (no risk) = 1.00–2.58; orange (at risk) = 2.59–3.01; red (very high risk) = 3.02–5.00.
45. For the items that relate to health, personal relationships, job and financial situation see Nicolas Loewe et al., "Life Domain Satisfaction Among Workers: Evidence from Chile," *Social Indicators Research* 188, (2014): 71–86.
46. See in International Wellbeing Group, *Personal Wellbeing Index Manual: 6th Edition*, Version 2, 190624, (Australian Centre on Quality of Life, School of Psychology, Deakin University – Melbourne Campus, 2024), 1–55. Beyond the global measure, domains included did have some overlap with Personal Wellbeing Index items, although items were selected to ensure key domains of interest were included.

Analytical approach

This report describes overall levels of psychological distress and burnout among Victorian lawyers and examines the relationship between these 2 measures. It then examines the determinants of psychological distress and burnout in turn, considering personal characteristics, professional characteristics, and adverse workplace experiences. It also looks at how psychological distress and burnout relate to broader outcomes, including subjective wellbeing / life satisfaction across multiple domains and intention to leave the legal profession.

For the analysis of determinants, findings are presented using 2 complementary analytical approaches. Bivariate analyses examine the relationship between each individual factor and psychological distress (PHQ-4) and burnout (BAT4) using cross-tabulations and chi-squared tests of association. These analyses describe the overall pattern of association between each factor and the outcome, identifying which characteristics are linked to poorer or better wellbeing.

However, since many of these characteristics are interrelated (for example, age, years practising certificates have been held, and income may be correlated), bivariate analyses cannot distinguish whether an observed association reflects a direct relationship or is primarily a function of overlap with other factors.

To address this issue, multivariate analyses using ordinal logistic regression were also conducted. These models simultaneously control for all measured characteristics (personal, professional and workplace experiences) by isolating the independent contribution of each factor while holding all others constant.

If a bivariate association weakens or disappears in the multivariate model, it suggests the relationship was partly or wholly explained by other measured variables. For example, a bivariate association between age and psychological distress might weaken or disappear in the multivariate model once workplace conditions are accounted for, if older lawyers tend to work in more favourable conditions than their younger counterparts.

Both approaches are informative as bivariate analyses describe the patterns as experienced by different groups of lawyers, while multivariate analyses help explain why those patterns exist. The multivariate modelling approach, including how missing data were handled, is described in the following section.

Modelling psychological distress and burnout

Dealing with missing data

The lawyer census contained substantial missing data across key demographic, professional and experience variables. A complete-case analysis would have reduced the analytical sample from 1,887 respondents to approximately 855 (45% sample loss). Missing data rates changed across variables, ranging from minimal missing data for some demographic variables (for example, gender) to more substantial issues for items later in the survey (for example, uncivil behaviours in the workplace). Consequently, we employed multiple imputation using chained equations to impute missing values where possible.[47] This approach seeks to predict missing values from observed data, generating multiple plausible datasets that reflect uncertainty about the missing values.[48]

Multiple imputation integration

Results were obtained using Rubin's rules for combining estimates across the 20 imputed datasets using Stata's 'mi impute chained' procedure.[49] This approach pools parameter estimates across imputations, adjusts standard errors to account for both within-imputation and between-imputation variability, and ultimately seeks to provide valid inference that reflects uncertainty due to missing data. The final models used 1,356 and 1,368 observations respectively, with the complete results included in Appendix A.

Ordinal logistic regression models

We fitted 2 ordinal logistic regression models using imputed data to identify independent predictors of psychological distress and burnout. Both PHQ-4 and BAT4 outcome categories were analysed using ordinal logistic regression, which is a common method for multivariate analysis of an ordered categorical outcome.[50] More broadly, multivariate models, such as ordinal logistic regression, simultaneously control for all predictor variables. This ensures that observed associations represent the independent effect of each factor rather than spurious relationships created by confounding other measured characteristics. It achieves this by isolating the effect of each predictor variable, while holding everything else constant.

47. Ian R. White et al., "Multiple Imputation Using Chained Equations: Issues and Guidance for Practice," *Statistics in Medicine* 30, no. 4 (2011): 377–399.
48. Donald B. Rubin, *Multiple Imputation for Nonresponse in Surveys* (John Wiley & Sons, 1987). Random seed set to 12,345 to allow reproducible results. The multiple imputation procedure successfully completed, generating 20 imputed datasets. Following imputation, a sample of 1,356 was available for analysis.
49. Rubin, *Multiple Imputation for Nonresponse in Surveys*; White et al., "Multiple Imputation Using Chained Equations."
50. See J. Scott Long and Jeremy Freese, *Regression Models for Categorical Dependent Variables Using Stata*, 3rd ed. (Stata Press, 2014).

The outcome variable for the psychological distress model (PHQ-4) ranged from 1 (normal wellbeing) to 4 (severe psychological distress), where higher values indicate poorer wellbeing.[51] The outcome variable for the burnout model (BAT4) ranged from 1 (not at risk of burnout) to 3 (very high risk of burnout), where higher values indicate greater burnout risk.

Both models included a broad range of predictor variables relating to personal and professional characteristics, workplace experiences, and work attitudes. These included age group, gender, whether respondents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, sexual orientation, relationship status, children, caring responsibilities, country of birth, language spoken at home, disability status, years of practice certification, type of practising certificate, partnership status, organisation size, income, sexual harassment experience, experience of uncivil workplace behaviours, acceptable workload, and fair compensation.

Limitations

As with any survey concerned with a sensitive topic like wellbeing, limitations include potential non-response bias (where those experiencing the most severe problems may be less likely to participate) and social desirability bias (which may lead to underreporting of symptoms).

In addition, the PHQ-4 is a screening tool rather than a diagnostic tool. While it is a useful tool to identify individuals who may be suffering from anxiety or depression disorders (or both), further diagnostic criteria are required to determine a clinical diagnosis. This report does not comment on the presence or absence of mental health conditions of the respondents.

The focus on psychological distress and burnout as intermediate outcomes reflects the practical constraints of census data collection, which prioritised brief, validated screening instruments to minimise respondent burden while capturing clinically significant concerns. Soon et al. identify a gap in lawyer wellbeing research, particularly around positive measurement (including around work engagement, meaning and flourishing).[52] While our framework does include positive measurement, including around subjective wellbeing / life satisfaction, there is scope to expand this in future exercises.

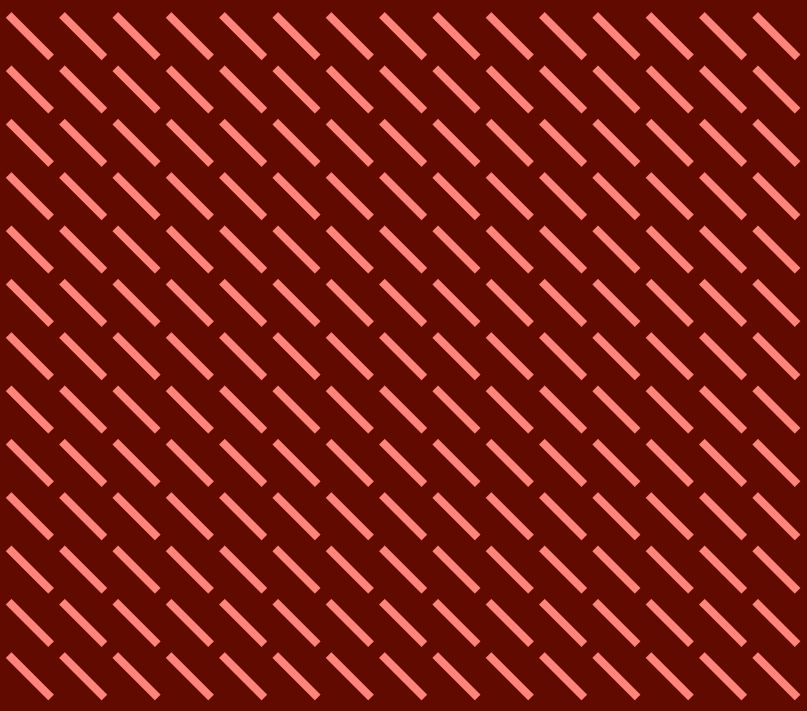
While our analysis allows examination of potential pathways through which workplace adversities may relate to lawyers' broader wellbeing and career trajectories, its potential for causal inference is limited as a cross-sectional study. Cross-sectional designs are well-suited to monitoring prevalence and identifying associations requiring attention, but are typically not well suited to measuring the impact of interventions designed to address issues. This requires tailored approaches, ideally including randomised controlled trials. As Soon et al. point out, understanding the impact of interventions remains an important focus for future research.[53]

51. The ordinal logistic regression model assumes proportional odds, meaning that the relationship between predictors and psychological distress remains constant across all thresholds of the outcome (normal versus mild / moderate / severe distress; normal / mild versus moderate / severe distress; normal / mild / moderate versus severe distress). This allows estimation of a single coefficient for each predictor that applies across all outcome categories, with separate intercepts for each threshold. This approach is more parsimonious than multinomial alternatives that would estimate separate coefficients for each outcome category.
52. Soon et al., "Towards a Context-specific Approach," 550–573.
53. Soon et al., "Towards a Context-specific Approach," 550–573.

02

Psychological distress, burnout and their relationship

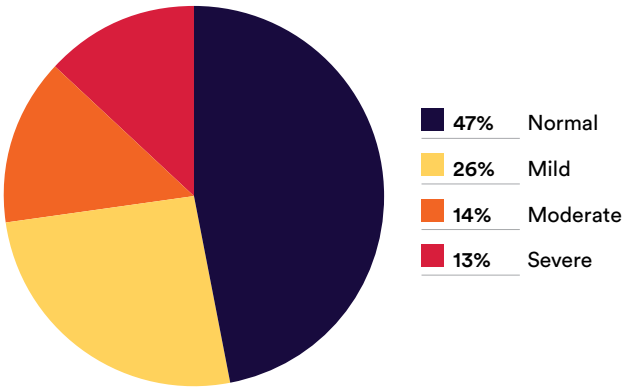
This short section presents overall levels of psychological distress (PHQ-4) and burnout (BAT4) among Victorian lawyers and examines the relationship between these 2 measures.



Overall levels of psychological distress

Based on categorisation of the PHQ-4 scale, 47% (n = 702) of respondents who completed the wellbeing module experienced normal levels of psychological distress, 26% (n = 396) experienced mild levels of psychological distress, 14% (n = 208) experienced moderate levels of psychological distress, and 13% (n = 203) experienced severe levels of psychological distress (Figure 1).[54]

Figure 1 – Overall psychological distress categories based on the PHQ-4 scale

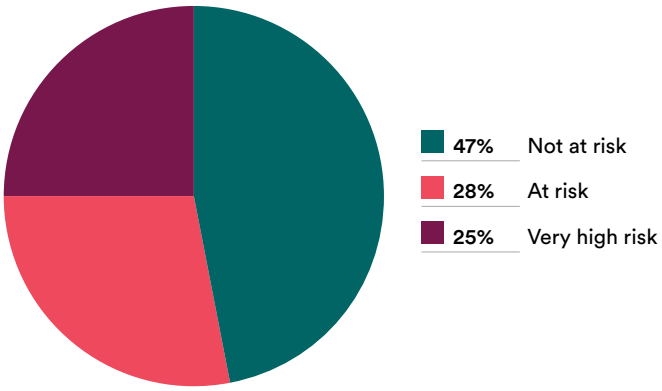


Splitting the PHQ-4 into anxiety (GAD-2) and depression (PHQ-2) subscales indicated that 36% (n = 553) of respondents experienced symptoms of anxiety and 23% (n = 352) experienced symptoms of depression.

Overall levels of burnout

Based on categorisation of the BAT4, 47% (n = 725) of respondents were not at risk of burnout, 28% (n = 440) were at risk, and 25% (n = 385) were at very high risk (Figure 2).[55]

Figure 2 – Percentage of respondents by burnout scores



54. Using PHQ-4 score rather than categories (which could vary from 0 to 12), mean score was 3.83 (SD = 3.56) and median score was 3.00 (IQ range = 5.00).
55. Using BAT4 scores rather than categories (which could vary from 1 to 5), mean score was 2.70 (SD = 0.73) and median score was 2.75 (IQ range = 0.75).

Unsurprisingly, there was a strong relationship between wellbeing and burnout. While they are conceptually distinct measures, with psychological distress reflecting general mental health symptoms and burnout capturing work-specific exhaustion, they are powerfully related in practice.[56]

Table 3 illustrates the number and percentage in each category of burnout risk (BAT4) for each category of psychological distress (PHQ-4). As shown among those categorised as 'normal' on the PHQ-4 scale, 72% of respondents were 'not at all' at risk of burnout.

In contrast, 79% of respondents among those with 'severe' psychological distress were at very high risk of burnout.[57] Table 4 shows the same data with column percentages, again illustrating the strength of the relationship between psychological distress and burnout. For example, of those not at risk of burnout, 71% were in the normal psychological distress category and 2% in the severe distress category. In comparison, among those in the very high risk of burnout category, only 4% were in the normal psychological distress category, with 43% in the severe distress category.

56. A simple chi-squared test illustrates the extent of the relationship; $X^2_6 = 617.237$, $p < 0.001$.
57. Pearson residual was 15.4

Table 3 – Burnout (BAT4) categories for each psychological distress (PHQ-4) category (row percentages)

		BAT4 burnout risk					
		Not at risk		At risk		Very high risk	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
PHQ-4 psychological distress	Normal	501	72%	170	24%	29	4%
	Mild	153	39%	146	37%	97	24%
	Moderate	42	20%	79	38%	87	42%
	Severe	11	5%	32	16%	159	79%

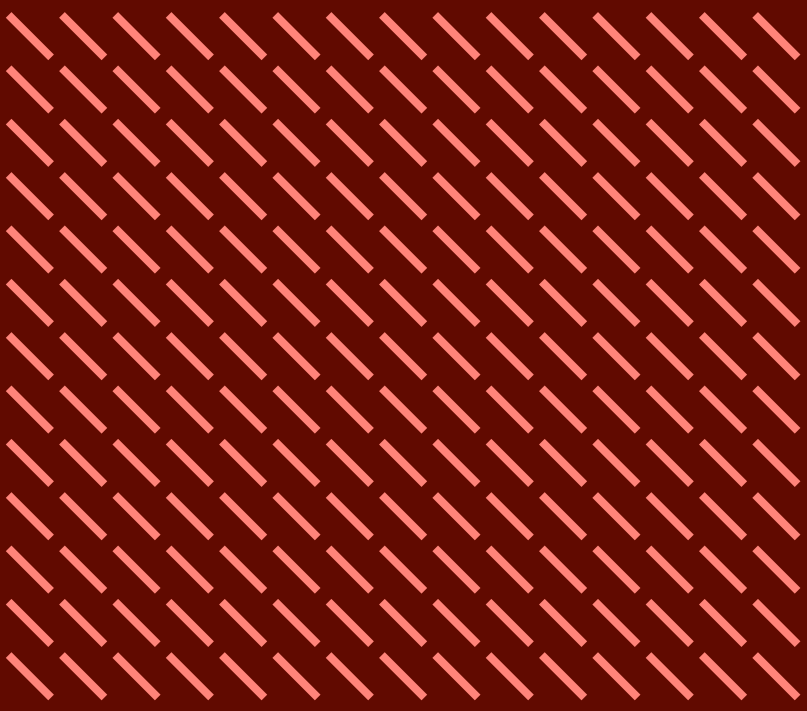
Table 4 – Psychological distress (PHQ-4) category for each burnout (BAT4) category (column percentages)

		BAT4 burnout risk					
		Not at risk		At risk		Very high risk	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
PHQ-4 psychological distress	Normal	501	71%	170	40%	29	8%
	Mild	153	22%	146	34%	97	26%
	Moderate	42	6%	79	19%	87	23%
	Severe	11	2%	32	7%	159	43%

03

Determinants of psychological distress

This section examines factors associated with psychological distress (PHQ-4) among Victorian lawyers, including personal and professional characteristics.



Factors associated with PHQ-4 scores

Table 5 sets out the relationship between psychological distress (PHQ-4 groups) and a range of personal and professional characteristics.

Table 5 – Overall PHQ-4 scores by different variables[58]

		PHQ-4							
		Normal		Mild		Moderate		Severe	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age group	20–29	87	33%	78	30%	45	17%	52	20%
	30–39	195	39%	145	29%	80	16%	79	16%
	40–49	164	49%	77	23%	53	16%	40	12%
	50–59	122	56%	59	27%	17	8%	19	9%
	60–69	81	64%	26	21%	9	7%	10	8%
	70+	43	72%	11	18%	4	6%	2	3%
Gender	Male	312	54%	146	25%	58	10%	65	11%
	Female	375	42%	239	27%	141	16%	129	15%
	Another term	9	27%	10	29%	7	21%	7	22%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	No	683	46%	387	26%	206	14%	196	13%
	Yes	4	31%	4	38%	0	0%	4	31%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	578	49%	312	26%	151	13%	143	12%
	LGBTIQA+	77	34%	59	26%	42	19%	45	20%
Relationship status	Married	387	55%	163	23%	72	10%	78	11%
	Single	128	39%	101	31%	48	15%	49	15%
	De facto	144	39%	101	28%	67	18%	54	15%
Children under 18	Yes	269	54%	121	24%	60	12%	53	11%
	No	411	44%	255	27%	137	15%	137	15%
Caring responsibility for elderly or disabled adults	Yes	53	44%	35	29%	21	18%	12	10%
	No	623	47%	343	26%	176	13%	172	13%
Country of birth	Australia	559	46%	312	26%	170	14%	162	13%
	Other	103	49%	64	30%	26	12%	20	9%
Language at home	English	658	47%	364	26%	187	13%	183	13%
	Other	23	37%	17	28%	11	17%	11	18%
Long-term health condition, impairment or disability	No	577	51%	304	27%	140	12%	121	11%
	Yes	91	34%	64	24%	53	20%	61	23%
Level of restriction due to long-term health condition, impairment or disability	None or non-limiting	591	51%	307	26%	145	12%	125	11%
	Mild	38	31%	34	28%	27	22%	24	20%
	Moderate	30	34%	21	23%	16	18%	22	25%
	Severe or extreme	9	30%	5	18%	5	18%	9	33%

58. Comparable tables for the GAD-2 and PHQ-2 are in Appendix B.

Table 5 – Overall PHQ-4 scores by different variables[58] continued

		PHQ-4							
		Normal		Mild		Moderate		Severe	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Practising certificate years	Less than 5 years	153	40%	99	26%	58	15%	70	19%
	5 to 9 years	103	42%	71	29%	37	15%	35	14%
	10 to 19 years	149	45%	81	25%	56	17%	42	13%
	20 plus years	203	62%	71	21%	34	10%	23	7%
Practising certificate type	Principal	73	54%	30	22%	24	17%	9	6%
	Principal with trust authorisation	97	54%	49	27%	19	11%	16	9%
	Employee	250	42%	171	29%	83	14%	94	16%
	Employee with trust authorisation	6	28%	6	24%	9	41%	2	7%
	Barrister	60	54%	24	21%	14	13%	14	12%
	Corporate legal practitioner	117	49%	64	27%	28	11%	32	13%
	Government legal practitioner	94	45%	50	24%	30	14%	34	16%
	Volunteer / CLS	3	29%	3	29%	1	13%	3	29%
Partner	No	446	43%	283	28%	152	15%	147	14%
	Yes	87	54%	42	26%	23	14%	11	7%
	Not applicable	165	53%	71	23%	31	10%	43	14%
Organisation type	Law firm	252	41%	164	27%	93	15%	100	16%
	Sole practitioner	118	55%	52	24%	23	11%	22	10%
	Incorporated legal practice	52	48%	29	27%	20	18%	8	7%
	Government employer	109	46%	55	23%	33	14%	39	17%
	Non-legal employer	82	48%	49	28%	19	11%	21	12%
	Community sector	43	46%	33	35%	11	11%	8	8%
	Other	39	65%	11	18%	7	12%	3	5%
Number of employees	1	103	56%	39	22%	20	11%	20	11%
	2–4	63	48%	33	25%	19	15%	15	12%
	5–19	99	43%	68	30%	38	17%	23	10%
	20–199	162	47%	100	29%	47	13%	40	11%
	200+	256	45%	143	25%	78	14%	91	16%
Annual taxable pay (excl. super/other benefits)	Less than $50,000	35	58%	11	18%	7	11%	8	14%
	$50,000–$80,000	59	41%	42	29%	23	16%	20	14%
	$80,001–$120,000	175	41%	114	27%	70	16%	64	15%
	$120,001–$160,000	121	43%	75	27%	45	16%	41	15%
	$160,001–$200,000	74	46%	44	28%	16	10%	28	17%
	$200,001–$250,000	73	49%	42	29%	21	14%	12	8%
	$250,001–$350,000	56	60%	24	25%	11	12%	3	3%
	$350,001–$450,000	23	60%	9	24%	4	9%	2	7%
	More than $450,000	46	65%	14	19%	7	9%	4	6%

Personal characteristics

There was a highly significant relationship between age and psychological distress, with less distress as age increased.[59] As can be seen in Table 5, the figures are particularly concerning for those aged 20 to 29. One in 5 young lawyers (20%) experienced severe psychological distress and only 33% experienced normal levels of psychological distress.[60] Comparatively, those aged above 50 fared better, as normal levels of psychological distress were experienced by 56% of those aged 50 to 59, 64% of those aged 60 to 69, and 72% of those aged over 70.[61]

The relationship between gender and PHQ-4 scores was also significant.[62] While numbers of respondents were comparatively small, those who identified as non-binary or used another term experienced much higher levels of psychological distress than female or male respondents, as almost half of this cohort experienced moderate and severe levels of psychological distress. Fewer female respondents experienced normal levels of psychological distress than male respondents (42% compared to 54%), and women experienced severe psychological distress more frequently compared to men (15% compared to 11%).[63]

Although a small number of respondents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, concerningly, almost one third of them (4 of 12, 31%) reported severe levels of psychological distress.[64]

59. Using a simple chi-squared test; $X^2_{15} = 89.988$, $p < 0.001$.
60. Pearson residuals were 2.8 and -3.1 respectively.
61. Pearson residuals were 2.1, 2.9 and 2.9 respectively. This trend was largely mirrored when looking at the results from the GAD-2 and PHQ-2, with both screening tools also showing a significant relationship between age and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Respondents in the youngest age group experienced anxiety symptoms (41%) and depression symptoms (33%) at higher rates than older age groups.
62. Using a simple chi-squared test: $X^2_9 = 36.004$, $p < 0.001$.
63. Gender was also significantly associated with symptoms of anxiety, although not with symptoms of depression ($X^2_3 = 43.018$, $p < 0.001$). Male respondents experienced less symptoms of anxiety than females, with 26.9% of males and 41.3% of females reporting symptoms of anxiety (Pearson residuals were -3.8 and 2.5 respectively. Respondents who identified as male or female also experienced fairly similar rates of symptoms of depression at 21% and 24% respectively). Respondents who identified as non-binary or used another term were experiencing much higher rates of symptoms of anxiety (71%) and depression (39%) (Pearson residual was 2.6).
64. The chi-squared test for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents was not statistically significant ($X^2_6 = 7.872$, $p = 0.248$), although this is likely attributable to very small cell sizes rendering formal testing unreliable. The descriptive pattern remains concerning and warrants attention.

Sexual orientation was significantly associated with psychological distress,[65] with significantly poorer wellbeing for LGBTIQA+ respondents. Twenty per cent of LGBTIQA+ respondents reported severe levels of psychological distress, compared to 12% of heterosexual respondents.[66]

Relationship status was also significantly associated with psychological distress.[67] Married respondents fared best, as 55% experienced normal levels of psychological distress, compared to 39% of both single and de facto respondents. Having children under 18 was also significantly associated with lower psychological distress, as 54% of those with children were in the normal category compared to 44% of those without children.[68] Caring responsibilities for elderly or disabled adults were also significantly associated with psychological distress. Those with caring responsibilities were somewhat less likely to have experienced severe distress (10%) than those without (13%).[69] Country of birth and language spoken at home were not significantly associated with psychological distress.[70]

There was a highly significant relationship between long-term health conditions or disabilities and psychological distress.[71] As seen in Table 5, respondents who indicated they have a long-term health condition or disability experienced higher rates of moderate and severe levels of psychological distress, at 20% and 23% compared to 12% and 11% for those with no long-term health condition or disability.[72] The relationship also showed a clear gradient, with the percentage of respondents in the severe distress category increasing with the level of restriction due to health condition or disability. It rose from 11% for those with no or non-limiting conditions, to 20% for mild conditions, 25% for moderate conditions, and 33% for severe or extreme conditions.

65. $X^2_6 = 22.816$, $p < 0.001$
66. The Pearson residuals for LGBTIQA+ respondents experiencing severe and normal levels of psychological distress were 2.7 and -2.6 respectively. This significance was mirrored in the GAD and PHQ-2, with LGBTIQA+ respondents more likely to experience both symptoms of anxiety and depression, at 47% and 34% respectively, compared to 34% and 21% of heterosexual respondents.
67. $X^2_9 = 47.115$, $p < 0.001$
68. $X^2_6 = 18.746$, $p = 0.005$. It should be noted that having children is likely confounded with age and relationship status, with these interrelationships explored further in the multivariate analysis.
69. $X^2_6 = 15.414$, $p = 0.017$. Again, this seemingly counter-intuitive finding is explored further in the multivariate analysis.
70. Country of birth: $X^2_6 = 11.331$, $p = 0.079$; language spoken at home: $X^2_6 = 5.621$, $p = 0.467$.
71. $X^2_6 = 55.584$, $p < 0.001$
72. Pearson residuals were 2.7 and 4.1 respectively. Perhaps unsurprisingly, respondents with a long-term health condition or disability were also more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression ($X^2_2 = 39.518$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_2 = 45.196$, $p < 0.001$ respectively). Looking at respondents with a severe or extreme long-term health condition or disability, over half (57%) experienced symptoms of anxiety and 46% experienced symptoms of depression.

Professional characteristics

There was a highly significant relationship between years of practising experience and psychological distress, with the proportion of those who experienced severe distress decreasing as the years of practice increased.[73] Those who had held practising certificates for less than 5 years had the highest percentage in the severe distress category (19%), while those who had held practising certificates for over 20 years had the highest percentage in the normal distress category (62%).[74]

Type of practising certificate was also significantly associated with psychological distress.[75] Although small in number, almost one third of respondents with volunteer practising certificates experienced severe psychological distress. Employees with trust authorisation also experienced notably elevated levels of psychological distress. Partnership status was significantly associated with psychological distress,[76] as non-partners experienced higher rates of severe psychological distress (14%) than partners (7%).[77]

Type of organisation was also significantly associated with psychological distress.[78] Those working for government employers and law firms reported the highest percentage of severe levels of psychological distress (17 and 16% respectively). Respondents in the 'other' category were most likely to experience normal levels of psychological distress (65%), followed by sole practitioners (55%).[79]

There was some evidence of a relationship between firm size and psychological distress.[80] For example, sole practitioners were more likely to experience normal levels of psychological distress (56%). In contrast, those working at organisations with more than 200 people had the highest percentage of those who experienced severe psychological distress (16%).

Income was also significantly associated with psychological distress.[81] Although there were exceptions, the proportion of respondents experiencing severe distress generally decreased as income increased. These findings are consistent with the age and experience patterns described previously, suggesting that lawyers experience higher levels of psychological distress in the earlier stages of their career.[82]

Beyond the variables shown in Table 5, we also looked at the areas of practice with the highest percentages of respondents who experienced severe psychological distress. These included insurance law (50%) and maritime law (48%), with a further breakdown of PHQ-4 by areas of law shown in Appendix C. It is worth noting that the sample sizes for individual areas of law were often small and these figures should be interpreted with caution.[83]

73. $X^2_{12} = 54.714$, $p < 0.001$
74. Pearson residual was 2.6.
75. $X^2_{24} = 44.757$, $p = 0.006$
76. $X^2_{9} = 22.961$, $p = 0.006$
77. Respondents for whom partnership was not applicable experienced a rate of 14%.
78. $X^2_{21} = 38.250$, $p = 0.012$. When examining the GAD-2 and PHQ-2 separately, type of organisation was statistically significant for symptoms of depression but not symptoms of anxiety. Those working in law firms (28%) and for government employers (24%) had the highest rates of depressive symptoms (Pearson residual for law firms was 2.7).
79. The 'other' category included respondents working in fields such as the charity / not-for-profit sector, unions and education.
80. $X^2_{15} = 27.808$, $p = 0.023$
81. $X^2_{27} = 55.787$, $p < 0.001$
82. Although it should be noted that income, age and years of experience are likely to be substantially correlated. The multivariate analysis explores these interrelationships.
83. International trade law (100%, n = 1) is excluded from the text given the sample of one respondent. Sample sizes for other areas of law listed were also small (see Appendix C).

Multivariate analysis

The bivariate analyses describe the patterns of psychological distress across different groups of lawyers. The multivariate analysis (ordinal logistic regression set out in Appendix A) takes this further by examining which of these associations hold independently, once all other personal characteristics, professional characteristics and workplace adversities are controlled for simultaneously. This is helpful since many of the characteristics are interrelated. For example, age correlates with years practising certificates have been held and income. The multivariate model seeks to disentangle shared variance to identify the extent to which factors have an independent association with psychological distress.

Several bivariate associations were confirmed in the multivariate model. The relationship between age and psychological distress persisted even after controlling for all other factors. For example, lawyers aged 60 and over showed significantly lower distress than the youngest (reference) cohort.[84] Long-term health conditions or disabilities also remained a highly significant predictor of psychological distress.[85] Being in a de facto relationship was associated with significantly higher distress compared to being married.[86] Respondents who were single also showed somewhat elevated distress compared to married respondents, although this fell short of significance.[87]

In contrast, several notable bivariate associations weakened considerably or lost significance once other factors were accounted for. The significant bivariate relationships between gender, sexual orientation, or whether respondents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander all became non-significant with psychological distress in the multivariate model once other variables were introduced. This does not mean these characteristics are irrelevant to psychological distress, but rather that their bivariate associations may be partly explained by other factors in the model. These factors may include differences in (adverse) workplace experiences, income, or practice settings that vary across groups.

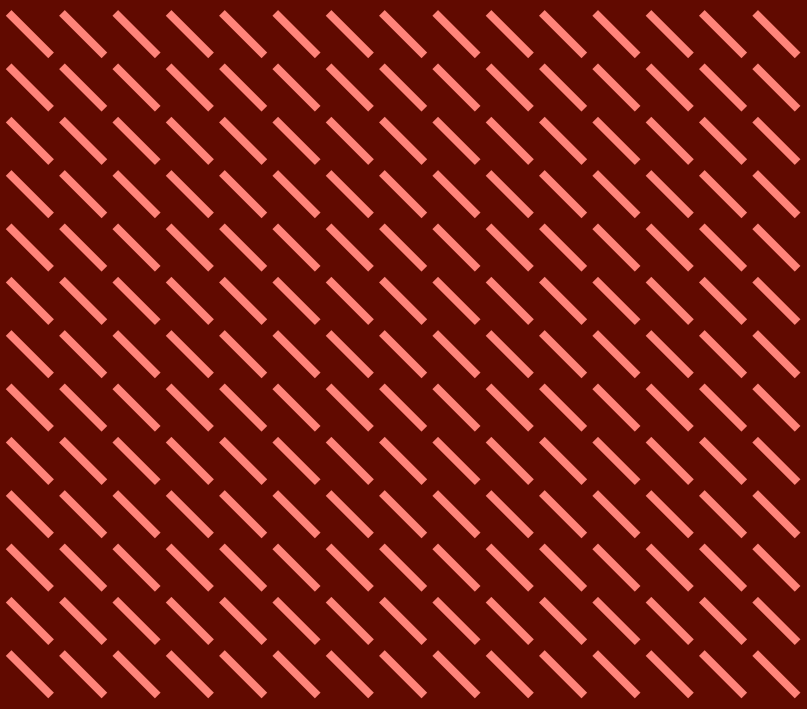
The most striking finding from the multivariate model for professional characteristics is the relative absence of significant effects. Years of practice, type of practising certificate, partnership status, firm size, and income all showed little independent association with psychological distress once other factors were controlled for. This suggests that the bivariate differences observed across these professional characteristics are substantially explained by the personal characteristics and particularly the adverse workplace factors included in the model. In other words, the professional characteristics appear less important than workplace environment and culture.

84. Coefficient = -0.82, $p = 0.013$
85. Coefficient = 0.75, $p < 0.001$
86. Coefficient = 0.32, $p = 0.044$
87. Coefficient = 0.25, $p = 0.130$

04

Determinants of burnout

This section examines factors associated with risk of burnout (BAT4) among Victorian lawyers, including personal and professional characteristics.



Factors associated with BAT4 scores

Table 6 sets out the relationship between risk of burnout (BAT4 groups) and a range of personal and professional characteristics.

Table 6 – BAT4 scores by different variables

		BAT4					
		Not at risk		At risk		Very high risk	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Age group	20–29	117	44%	69	26%	80	30%
	30–39	191	37%	168	33%	156	30%
	40–49	151	45%	102	30%	85	25%
	50–59	125	56%	59	27%	38	17%
	60–69	86	64%	28	21%	20	15%
	70+	50	79%	9	14%	4	6%
Gender	Male	337	56%	149	25%	110	19%
	Female	373	41%	277	30%	260	29%
	Another term	9	27%	12	36%	12	37%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	No	709	47%	426	28%	375	25%
	Yes	4	33%	3	24%	5	44%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	594	49%	340	28%	280	23%
	LGBTIQA+	85	37%	70	30%	77	33%
Relationship status	Married	383	54%	185	26%	146	20%
	Single	130	38%	108	32%	101	30%
	De facto	160	42%	112	30%	105	28%
Children under 18	Yes	239	47%	161	31%	113	22%
	No	459	47%	259	27%	251	26%
Caring responsibility for elderly or disabled adults	Yes	65	52%	38	30%	23	18%
	No	634	47%	376	28%	335	25%
Country of birth	Australia	567	46%	352	29%	312	25%
	Other	118	54%	53	24%	50	22%
Language at home	English	664	46%	405	28%	359	25%
	Other	35	55%	17	26%	12	19%
Long-term health condition, impairment or disability	No	583	50%	338	29%	245	21%
	Yes	109	39%	72	26%	99	35%
Level of restriction due to long-term health condition, impairment or disability	None or non-limiting	596	50%	345	29%	252	21%
	Mild	52	40%	31	24%	46	36%
	Moderate	30	32%	26	28%	36	39%
	Severe or extreme	13	43%	7	24%	10	33%

Table 6 – BAT4 scores by different variables continued

		BAT4					
		Not at risk		At risk		Very high risk	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Practising certificate years	Less than 5 years	186	48%	99	25%	105	27%
	5 to 9 years	108	43%	70	28%	73	29%
	10 to 19 years	131	39%	108	32%	98	29%
	20 plus years	196	57%	90	26%	56	16%
Practising certificate type	Principal	85	61%	30	21%	25	18%
	Principal with trust authorisation	106	57%	49	26%	32	17%
	Employee	249	41%	182	30%	183	30%
	Employee with trust authorisation	9	36%	8	31%	8	32%
	Barrister	63	56%	28	25%	22	19%
	Corporate legal practitioner	110	45%	74	30%	60	25%
	Government legal practitioner	96	45%	65	30%	53	25%
	Volunteer / CLS	5	60%	2	25%	1	15%
Partner	No	470	44%	301	28%	290	27%
	Yes	91	55%	48	29%	26	16%
	Not applicable	160	51%	88	28%	68	21%
Organisation type	Law firm	279	45%	163	26%	180	29%
	Sole practitioner	134	60%	52	23%	37	17%
	Incorporated legal practice	56	51%	31	28%	23	21%
	Government employer	108	45%	72	30%	61	25%
	Non-legal employer	77	45%	52	30%	44	25%
	Community sector	40	40%	34	33%	27	27%
	Other	31	50%	24	39%	7	12%
Number of employees	1	109	59%	46	25%	30	16%
	2–4	68	50%	34	25%	35	25%
	5–19	110	46%	62	26%	66	28%
	20–199	163	46%	111	31%	84	23%
	200+	244	42%	174	30%	159	28%
Annual taxable pay (excl. super/other benefits)	Less than $50,000	43	70%	10	16%	9	14%
	$50,000–$80,000	78	52%	40	27%	32	21%
	$80,001–$120,000	186	42%	125	29%	128	29%
	$120,001–$160,000	114	40%	83	29%	92	32%
	$160,001–$200,000	71	43%	53	32%	41	25%
	$200,001–$250,000	66	44%	50	33%	35	23%
	$250,001–$350,000	56	59%	27	29%	12	13%
	$350,001–$450,000	23	59%	9	23%	7	18%
	More than $450,000	44	62%	19	26%	9	12%

Personal characteristics

There was a significant relationship between age and risk of burnout.[88] Younger respondents were more likely to be in the very high risk of burnout group (30% for those aged both 20 to 29, and 30 to 39),[89] with risk far lower for older respondents (17% for those aged 50 to 59, 15% for those aged 60 to 69, and 6% for those aged over 70).

Gender was also significantly related to risk of burnout.[90] Compared to male respondents (19% in the very high risk category), female respondents (29% very high risk) and a smaller number of those identifying as non-binary or using another term (37% very high risk) had greater risk of burnout.

Although a small number of respondents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 44% of these respondents were at very high risk of burnout, compared to 25% of respondents who were not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.[91]

Consistent with psychological distress findings, LGBTIQA+ respondents exhibited higher burnout risk, with 33% in the very high risk category, compared to heterosexual respondents (23%).[92]

Relationship status was highly significantly associated with burnout risk.[93] Married respondents were least likely to be at very high risk (20%), compared to single respondents (30%), and those in de facto relationships (28%). Factors that were not significantly associated with burnout risk were having children under 18, caring responsibilities for elderly or disabled adults, country of birth, and language spoken at home.[94]

There was a highly significant relationship between burnout risk and reporting a long-term health condition or disability.[95] Those with long-term health conditions or disabilities were more likely to be at very high risk of burnout (35% compared to 21% of other respondents) and less likely to be at no risk of burnout (39% compared to 50% of other respondents).[96]

88. $X^2_{10} = 74.700$, $p < 0.001$
89. The Pearson residual for those aged 30–39 not at risk was -3.2 and 2.5 for very high risk.
90. $X^2_6 = 42.876$, $p < 0.001$
91. The chi-squared test for respondents who were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander was not statistically significant ($X^2_4 = 3.082$, $p = 0.544$), a likely consequence of very small numbers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents. The descriptive pattern remains concerning.
92. $X^2_4 = 15.010$, $p = 0.005$
93. $X^2_6 = 28.013$, $p < 0.001$
94. Children under 18: $X^2_4 = 6.465$, $p = 0.167$; caring responsibilities: $X^2_4 = 8.800$, $p = 0.066$; country of birth: $X^2_4 = 6.968$, $p = 0.138$; language spoken at home: $X^2_4 = 2.164$, $p = 0.706$. Caring responsibilities approached significance, with those with caring responsibilities somewhat less likely to be at very high risk of burnout (18.3%) compared to those without (24.9%).
95. $X^2_4 = 39.446$, $p < 0.001$
96. Breaking down long-term health condition further, the percentage in the very high burnout risk category was 21% for 'none or non-limiting', 36% for 'mild', 39% for 'moderate', and 33% for 'severe or extreme'. Unlike the clearer gradient seen for psychological distress, the pattern here plateaus after 'none or non-limiting'.

Professional characteristics

There was a significant relationship between years of practising experience and burnout risk.[97] Unlike the pattern for psychological distress, burnout risk did not simply decrease with experience. Those who had held practising certificates for less than 5 years had a greater percentage of those who were not at risk of burnout (48%) than those with 5 to 9 years (43%), or 10 to 19 years of experience (39%). The majority of those holding practising certificates for 20 years or more were not at risk of burnout, with this group also being substantially less likely to be at very high risk.[98] The following multivariate analysis further explores how years of practice and age together relate to burnout risk.

Type of practising certificate was significantly associated with burnout risk.[99] Respondents holding principal practising certificates had a comparatively high percentage of those not at risk of burnout (61%) as did those holding volunteer practising certificates (60%), and principal with trust practising certificates (57%).[100] In contrast, respondents holding employee with trust practising certificates (32%) and those holding employee practising certificates (30%) had comparatively high percentages in the very high risk of burnout group. Partnership status was also significantly associated with burnout risk,[101] as partners were less likely to be at very high risk (16%) than non-partners (27%).

Type of organisation was significantly associated with burnout risk.[102] Overall, sole practitioners had least risk of burnout, as 60% were not at risk and 17% were at very high risk.[103] Respondents from law firms had the highest rate of being at very high risk of burnout (29%), followed by those in the community sector (27%), those with non-legal employers (25%), and those with government employers (25%).

There was also a significant relationship between firm size and burnout risk.[104] In keeping with the sole practitioner findings, those working in organisations with just one employee were the least likely to be at very high risk of burnout overall.[105]

There was a significant relationship between income and burnout risk,[106] although it was not a linear relationship. The percentage of respondents not at risk of burnout decreased as income increased up to the $120,001 to $160,000 bracket, at which point it began to increase again, reaching 62% for those earning more than $450,000. The pattern for very high risk of burnout was largely the inverse, peaking in the $120,001 to $160,000 bracket before generally decreasing.

There was some variation in burnout risk relating to areas of practice, as set out in Appendix C, although sample sizes for individual areas of law were often small and these figures should be interpreted with caution.

97. $X^2_8 = 32.787$, $p < 0.001$
98. The Pearson residual for those holding a practising certificate for 20 years or more was 2.9 for not at risk and -3.2 for very high risk.
99. $X^2_{16} = 38.335$, $p = 0.001$
100. The Pearson residual for those holding a principal practising certificate and not at risk of burnout was 2.4. To note, the number of volunteer practising certificate holders was small and findings should be interpreted with caution.
101. $X^2_6 = 15.320$, $p = 0.018$
102. $X^2_{14} = 52.259$, $p < 0.001$
103. The Pearson residual for sole practitioners not at risk was 2.9 and -2.5 for very high risk.
104. $X^2_{10} = 22.464$, $p = 0.013$
105. The Pearson residual for respondents working in organisations with one employee not at risk of burnout was 2.4; the residual for very high risk was -2.4.
106. $X^2_{18} = 50.823$, $p < 0.001$

Multivariate analysis

The bivariate analyses in the previous section describe the patterns of burnout risk across different groups of lawyers. As with psychological distress, the multivariate analysis (ordinal logistic regression, set out in Appendix A) for burnout examines which associations hold independently, once other personal characteristics, professional characteristics and workplace adversities are controlled for simultaneously.

Several bivariate associations also held having controlled for other variables. Age remained significantly associated with burnout, with lawyers aged 50 to 59[107] and those aged 60 and over[108] showing significantly lower burnout risk than the youngest reference age group. Long-term health conditions or disabilities also remained significant independent predictors.[109] Single relationship status was significantly associated with higher burnout risk compared to being married.[110] People in de facto relationships also showed increased risk compared to married respondents, although that finding fell short of statistical significance.[111] Interestingly, caring responsibilities were also related to decreased burnout risk, even having controlled for other variables.[112]

As with psychological distress, gender, sexual orientation, and whether respondents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander lost significance in the multivariate model for burnout. Again, this suggests that the bivariate associations for these characteristics may be partly explained by other factors relating to workplace experiences or practice settings.

A key difference between the psychological distress model and the burnout model emerged for professional characteristics. While years of practice showed no independent association with psychological distress, it was significantly associated with burnout risk even after controlling for age and other factors. Compared to those with less than 5 years of experience, lawyers with 10 to 19 years[113] and 20 or more years[114] of experience showed significantly elevated burnout risk. This was consistent with burnout as a more directly work-related construct, with risk elevated among those in mid-career (5 to 19 years of practice), suggesting a period of professional vulnerability that is not solely a function of age.

Income also showed a markedly different pattern for burnout compared to psychological distress. While income was non-significant for distress in the multivariate model, it was significantly associated with burnout, with risk peaking in the middle-to-upper income bands. Compared to the lowest income bracket, several categories showed significantly elevated risk: $80,001 to $120,000,[115] $120,001 to $160,000,[116] $160,001 to $200,000,[117], and $200,001 to $250,000.[118] Type of practising certificate also showed some associations with burnout, which approached (but did not reach) statistical significance.[119]

Consistent with burnout being a specifically work-related construct, some professional characteristics (for example, years of practice and income) retained significance for burnout, where they had shown little association with psychological distress.

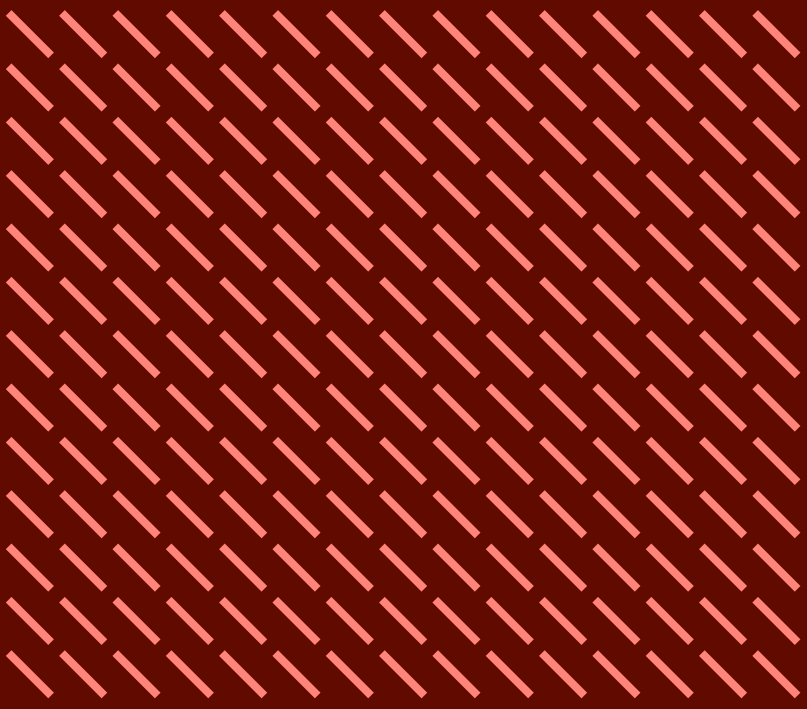
107. Coefficient = -0.61, p = 0.045
108. Coefficient = -0.89, p = 0.005
109. Coefficient = 0.39, p = 0.017
110. Coefficient = 0.53, p = 0.002
111. Coefficient = 0.29, p = 0.082
112. Coefficient = -0.43, p = 0.040
113. Coefficient = 0.60, p = 0.013
114. Coefficient = 0.66, p = 0.019
115. Coefficient = 0.93, p = 0.028
116. Coefficient = 1.24, p = 0.005
117. Coefficient = 1.19, p = 0.008
118. Coefficient = 1.16, p = 0.011
119. For example, employees (coefficient = 0.51, p = 0.086) and employees with trust authorisation (coefficient = 1.13, p = 0.074) tended towards higher burnout risk compared to the principals reference category.

05

Workplace adversity, psychological distress and risk of burnout

This section examines how a range of forms of workplace adversity relate to both psychological distress and risk of burnout. Analysis focused on 6 key factors: experiencing uncivil behaviour often, witnessing uncivil behaviour often, experiencing sexual harassment, perceiving an unacceptable workload, perceiving an unfair remuneration, and experiencing frequent ethical conflicts.

The section begins by examining these factors individually, before examining how they interrelate, and then how they relate to psychological distress and burnout when combined.



Adverse work conditions

This section begins by exploring how workplace adversity relates to both psychological distress (PHQ-4) and burnout (BAT4). It focuses predominantly on these 6 workplace adversity indicators:

– experiencing uncivil behaviour often or frequently in the past 12 months
– witnessing uncivil behaviour often or frequently in the past 12 months
– experiencing sexual harassment in the last 12 months
– perceiving an unacceptable workload
– perceiving an unfair remuneration
– often finding that work conflicted with professional obligations.[120]

Workplace adversity and psychological distress

Table 7 presents the distribution of psychological distress severity across the 6 workplace adversity indicators. The pattern of association is consistent across all 6 measures, as lawyers who experienced adverse conditions demonstrated substantially higher rates of psychological distress compared to those not experiencing such conditions. All relationships were highly statistically significant.[121]

Table 7 – Psychological distress severity by workplace adversity indicators

Workplace adversity		Psychological distress (PHQ-4 group)							
		Normal		Mild		Moderate		Severe	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Experienced uncivil behaviour often (past 12 months)	No	606	52%	298	26%	145	13%	112	10%
	Yes	90	27%	95	28%	61	18%	90	27%
Witnessed uncivil behaviour often (past 12 months)	No	596	53%	290	26%	134	12%	111	10%
	Yes	100	27%	102	28%	72	20%	91	25%
Experienced sexual harassment (past 12 months)	No	646	49%	344	26%	165	13%	153	12%
	Yes	32	23%	37	27%	33	24%	37	27%
Perceived unacceptable workload	No	559	58%	239	25%	103	11%	67	7%
	Yes	119	26%	130	28%	91	20%	119	26%
Perceived unfair remuneration	No	415	59%	166	24%	73	10%	49	7%
	Yes	219	34%	188	29%	108	17%	137	21%
Often faced conflict with professional obligations	No	593	52%	306	27%	138	12%	107	9%
	Yes	109	30%	90	25%	70	19%	96	26%

120. Due to workplace directives / practices, client instructions, or personal values.
121. Retaining the order in Table 7, $X^2_3 = 99.67$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_3 = 97.66$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_3 = 51.32$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_3 = 173.55$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_3 = 108.60$, $p < 0.001$; and $X^2_3 = 98.43$, $p < 0.001$ respectively.

Among lawyers frequently experiencing uncivil behaviour, 45% reported moderate to severe psychological distress, compared to only 23% of those who did not experience uncivil behaviour in the past year. The pattern was similarly pronounced for those witnessing incivility. Of those who had witnessed incivility often, 45% had moderate to severe distress compared to those who did not witness uncivil behaviour (22% had moderate to severe distress). Respondents who experienced sexual harassment in the past year showed a particularly strong association with psychological distress, with 51% of those who experienced harassment reporting moderate to severe distress, compared to 25% of those who did not experience harassment.

Workload and remuneration issues were also associated with psychological distress. Among lawyers reporting an unacceptable workload, 46% experienced moderate to severe distress compared to 18% of those without workload concerns. Of those lawyers reporting unfair remuneration, 38% reported moderate to severe distress compared to 17% of others.[122] Conflicts with professional obligations showed a similar pattern, with 45% of lawyers frequently facing such conflicts reporting moderate to severe distress, compared to 21% of those not experiencing such conflicts (or experiencing them only infrequently).[123]

In contrast, the proportion of lawyers reporting normal psychological distress was consistently higher among those not experiencing workplace adversity. This ranged from 49% (no sexual harassment) to 59% (fair remuneration), compared to 23% to 34% among those experiencing adverse conditions.

Multivariate analysis

The bivariate analyses demonstrate clear associations between various forms of workplace adversity and psychological distress. The multivariate model (Appendix A) confirms that these relationships are not simply a function of differences (personal or professional) between those who do and do not experience adverse workplace conditions. They persist and remain important determinants of psychological distress, even having controlled for a range of personal and professional characteristics.

Having controlled for other variables, workload acceptability was the single strongest predictor of psychological distress. Lawyers who rated their workload as unacceptable showed substantially higher psychological distress.[124] Conflicts with professional obligations were also among the strongest predictors, as lawyers who felt their professional obligations were often compromised reported showing significantly higher distress.[125] In contrast, feeling fairly compensated for work was associated with significantly lower distress.[126]

122. Hours worked per week showed a broadly similar pattern to workload perceptions. Among those working 61 to 70, 71 to 80 and 81 to 90 hours per week, 29%, 28% and 30% respectively reported severe psychological distress, compared to substantially lower rates among those working fewer hours.
123. Looking at broader indicators, the relationship between professional autonomy and psychological distress remained evident. Lawyers who disagreed they were able to maintain professional independence showed 64% moderate to severe distress compared to 24% of those who strongly agreed. Those who disagreed they were free to exercise professional judgment showed 53% moderate to severe distress versus 20% among those who strongly agreed. Lawyers who felt strong pressure to compromise professional values showed 51% moderate to severe distress compared to 19% of those who felt no such pressure. Among those frequently experiencing conflicts between professional obligations and workplace practices / directives, 72% reported moderate to severe distress compared to 20% of those who never experienced such conflicts, while for conflicts with personal values, 76% of those frequently experiencing such conflicts showed moderate to severe distress versus 20% of those who never experienced them.
124. Coefficient = 1.04, $p < 0.001$
125. Coefficient = 0.72, $p < 0.001$
126. Coefficient = -0.53, $p < 0.001$

Experience of sexual harassment in the 12 months before the survey remained significantly associated with higher psychological distress in the multivariate model, confirming that the bivariate association is not explained by other characteristics associated with harassment.[127] Uncivil workplace behaviours also remained significant, as those who both witnessed and experienced such behaviours,[128] and those who solely experienced such behaviours, reported higher distress.[129]

The persistence and strength of factors associated with workplace adversity, even having controlled for personal characteristics, professional characteristics, *and each other*, is notable. While many personal and professional characteristics lost significance once other factors were controlled for, the workplace adversity variables remained significant determinants. They are independently and substantively linked to wellbeing, even after accounting for the full range of personal and professional differences between lawyers.

Workplace adversity and burnout risk

Table 8 presents the distribution of burnout risk across the core 6 workplace adversity indicators. Again, a consistent pattern emerged across all measures, as lawyers experiencing adverse workplace conditions demonstrated substantially elevated burnout risk compared to those not experiencing these conditions. Again, all relationships were highly statistically significant.[130]

Table 8 – Burnout risk by workplace adversity indicators

Workplace adversity		Risk of burnout (BAT4 group)					
		Not at risk		At risk		High risk	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Experienced uncivil behaviour often (past 12 months)	No	617	52%	328	28%	246	21%
	Yes	103	30%	105	31%	137	40%
Witnessed uncivil behaviour often (past 12 months)	No	610	53%	321	28%	230	20%
	Yes	111	30%	112	30%	153	41%
Experienced sexual harassment (past 12 months)	No	670	50%	371	28%	300	22%
	Yes	30	21%	46	32%	67	47%
Perceived unacceptable workload	No	574	58%	262	26%	156	16%
	Yes	117	25%	148	32%	203	43%
Perceived unfair remuneration	No	417	58%	188	26%	111	16%
	Yes	210	31%	218	32%	245	36%
Often faced conflict with professional obligations	No	620	53%	331	28%	223	19%
	Yes	105	28%	109	29%	162	43%

127. Coefficient = 0.52, p = 0.012
128. Coefficient = 0.45, p = 0.009
129. Coefficient = 0.48, p = 0.064
130. Retaining the order in Table 8, $X^2_2 = 67.25$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_2 = 82.24$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_2 = 55.26$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_2 = 174.51$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2_2 = 119.78$, $p < 0.001$; and $X^2_2 = 104.31$, $p < 0.001$ respectively.

Among lawyers frequently experiencing uncivil behaviour, 71% were at risk or very high risk of burnout, compared to 49% of those not experiencing uncivil behaviour in the past year. Similarly, those witnessing incivility 71% were at risk or very high risk of burnout, compared to 48% of others. As for psychological distress, sexual harassment also showed a strong association with burnout, with 79% of those who experienced harassment in the past year being at risk or very high risk of burnout, compared to 50% of those who did not experience harassment.

Workload and remuneration issues were also powerfully associated with burnout. Among lawyers reporting unacceptable workload, 75% were at risk or very high risk of burnout compared to 42% of those without workload concerns. For unfair remuneration, 68% of affected lawyers were at risk or very high risk of burnout compared to 42% of others.[131] Where respondents reported frequent conflicts with professional obligations, 72% were at risk or very high risk of burnout compared to 47% of those not experiencing such conflicts (or experiencing them only infrequently).[132]

In contrast, the proportion of lawyers not at risk of burnout was far higher among those not experiencing workplace adversity, ranging from 50% (no sexual harassment) to 58% (acceptable workload and fair remuneration), compared to 21% to 31% among those experiencing adverse conditions.

Multivariate analysis

As with psychological distress, the multivariate model confirms that workplace adversity variables were powerful independent predictors of burnout risk. Workload acceptability was again the strongest single predictor, as lawyers who rated their workload as being unacceptable reported substantially higher burnout risk.[133] Conflicts with professional obligations were again associated with higher risk of burnout[134] and fair compensation was associated with lower risk,[135] even having controlled for other variables.

Sexual harassment also remained a powerful predictor of burnout,[136] as did uncivil workplace behaviours. People who witnessed such behaviours showed significantly elevated risk.[137] Experiencing, and both witnessing and experiencing, such behaviours also have positive coefficients[138] indicating greater burnout risk, although neither was significant (when compared to the 'neither experienced or witnessed' reference category and controlling for other variables).

131. There was also a relationship between hours worked and burnout. For example, of those working 81 to 90 hours per week, 69% were at risk or very high risk of burnout, as were 62% of those working 71 to 80 hours per week and 69% of those working 61 to 70 hours per week.
132. Again, looking at broader indicators showed a strong association between aspects of professional autonomy and burnout across items. Lawyers who disagreed they could maintain professional independence showed 87% at risk or very high risk of burnout versus 45% of those who strongly agreed. Those who disagreed they were free to exercise professional judgment showed 74% at risk or very high risk compared to 45% of those who strongly agreed. Lawyers who felt strong pressure to compromise professional values showed 84% at risk or very high risk of burnout compared to 38% of those who felt no such pressure. Among those frequently experiencing conflicts between professional obligations and workplace practices / directives, 81% were at risk or very high risk of burnout compared to 43% of those who never experienced such conflicts, while for conflicts with personal values, 85% of those frequently experiencing such conflicts were at risk or very high risk versus 45% of those who never experienced them.
133. Coefficient = 1.00, $p < 0.001$
134. Coefficient = 0.85, $p < 0.001$
135. Coefficient = -0.65, $p < 0.001$
136. Coefficient = 0.75, $p = 0.001$
137. Coefficient = 0.51, $p = 0.042$
138. 0.39, $p = 0.092$ and 0.18, 0.318 respectively

The persistence and strength of burnout factors associated with workplace adversity is important, even having controlled for personal characteristics, professional characteristics, *and each other*. As for psychological distress, workplace adversity retained significance and appears independently and substantively linked to burnout.

Putting conditions together: a workplace adversity score

This section examines the same 6 key workplace adversity factors in combination. It adds them together to produce a simple workplace adversity score, ranging from 0 (experiencing none of these factors) to 6 (experiencing all 6).

Overall, there were 1,277 respondents with responses for all 6 indicators, with 394 (31%) scoring zero, 331 (26%) scoring one, 216 (17%) scoring 2, 193 (14%) scoring 3, 83 (7%) scoring 4, 60 (5%) scoring 5, and 21 (2%) scoring 6. The mean score (number of indicators) was 1.6.[139]

Indicators were also related to each other as shown in Table 9, which sets out the relationship between the 6 workplace adversity indicators using phi coefficients.[140]

Table 9 – Relationship (phi coefficients) between workplace adversity indicators*

Indicator	Experienced uncivil behaviour often (past 12 months)	Witnessed uncivil behaviour often (past 12 months)	Experienced sexual harassment (past 12 months)	Perceived unacceptable workload	Perceived unfair remuneration	Conflict with obligations
Experienced uncivil behaviour often (past 12 months)	1					
Witnessed uncivil behaviour often (past 12 months)	0.67	1				
Experienced sexual harassment (past 12 months)	0.29	0.34	1			
Perceived unacceptable workload	0.20	0.23	0.09	1		
Perceived unfair remuneration	0.19	0.21	0.09	0.34	1	
Often faced conflict with professional obligations	0.24	0.26	0.15	0.18	0.18	1

*Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

139. Where any indicator was unknown or missing, that respondent was removed from the analysis.
140. The phi coefficient measures the strength of association between 2 binary variables. Values range from 0 (no association) to 1 (perfect association). This is accompanied by a significance test that shows whether the observed association is statistically significant (unlikely to have occurred by chance).

As shown, there was a positive relationship between all indicators, with adverse experiences tending to cluster together.[141] Unsurprisingly, the strongest relationship was between experiencing and witnessing uncivil behaviour,[142] although there were also fairly strong relationships between witnessing incivility and experiencing sexual harassment,[143] and between unacceptable workload and unacceptable remuneration.[144] While sexual harassment showed a weaker relationship with workload and remuneration indicators, this partly reflects the lower prevalence of sexual harassment compared to other adversity indicators, which constrains the maximum possible correlation.[145] Importantly, all relationships were highly statistically significant, confirming that experiencing any one form of workplace adversity increased the likelihood of experiencing others.[146]

Workplace adversity score, psychological distress and burnout

Table 10 shows the relationship between workplace adversity score and psychological distress (PHQ-4). Table 11 shows the relationship between workplace adversity score and burnout (BAT4). As illustrated, workplace adversity score was strongly positively correlated with both psychological distress and burnout,[147] with higher adversity scores associated with far worse outcomes on both measures.

The relationship between the workplace adversity score and psychological distress is shown in Table 10. Among those reporting no workplace adversity indicators, 70% reported 'normal' psychological distress and only 4% reported being in the 'severe' category. In contrast, of the small number of respondents who had a workplace adversity score of 6, only one (5%) was in the 'normal' psychological distress category, while 80% were in the 'severe' category.

141. Of those who reported one, over 60% reported multiple.
142. Phi = 0.67
143. Phi = 0.34
144. Phi = 0.34
145. Both phi = 0.09
146. $p < 0.001$
147. Spearman's rank correlation (rho): rho = 0.43, $p < 0.001$ and rho = 0.46, $p < 0.001$ respectively.

Table 10 – The relationship between workplace adversity score and psychological distress (PHQ-4)

Workplace adversity score	Psychological distress (PHQ-4)							
	Normal		Mild		Moderate		Severe	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	273	70%	69	18%	29	8%	17	4%
1	170	53%	91	29%	35	11%	22	7%
2	81	39%	69	33%	30	14%	30	14%
3	50	29%	56	33%	32	19%	34	20%
4	15	20%	26	33%	17	21%	21	26%
5	9	15%	7	11%	20	34%	23	40%
6	1	5%	3	15%	0	0%	16	80%

The relationship between the workplace adversity score and burnout is shown in Table 11. Among those reporting no workplace adversity indicators, 70% were not at risk of burnout and 9% were in the very high risk category. In contrast, of those reporting a workplace adversity score of 6, only one (7%) was not at risk while 77% were in the very high risk category.

Table 11 – The relationship between workplace adversity score and burnout (BAT4)

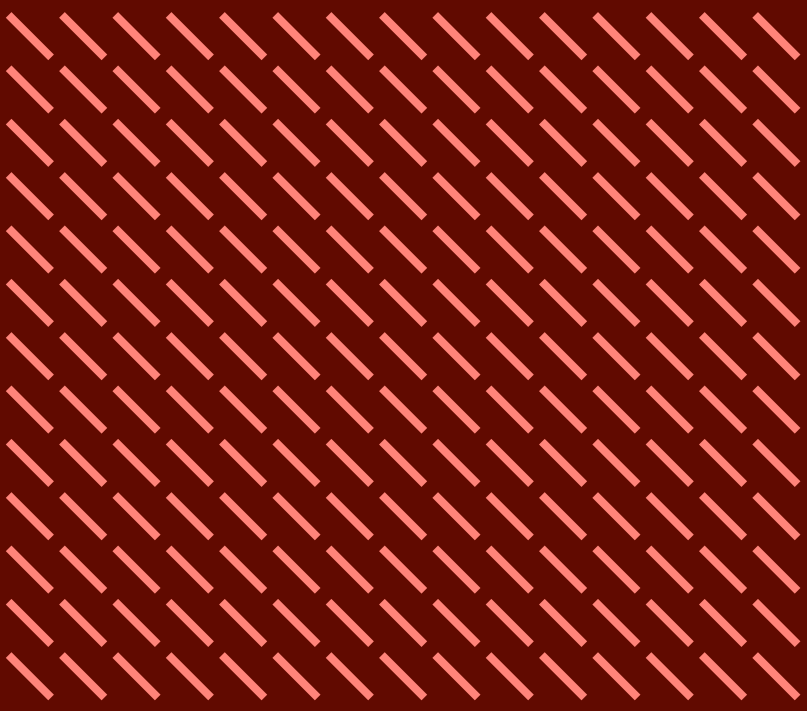
Workplace adversity score	Burnout (BAT4)					
	Not at risk		At risk		Very high risk	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	273	70%	85	22%	34	9%
1	171	52%	98	30%	60	18%
2	69	32%	84	39%	61	28%
3	41	24%	55	32%	77	44%
4	21	25%	22	26%	40	49%
5	6	9%	19	32%	35	58%
6	1	7%	3	16%	16	77%

06

Psychological distress, burnout, subjective wellbeing and careers

This section examines how psychological distress and burnout relate to broader aspects of lawyers' lives and careers. The analysis explores the extent to which psychological distress (PHQ-4) and burnout risk (BAT4) are associated with subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction across multiple life domains – physical health, personal relationships, time availability, job satisfaction, financial situation, and life as a whole.

The section also examines intention to leave the profession, exploring the reasons lawyers plan to leave and how these intentions relate to psychological distress and burnout.

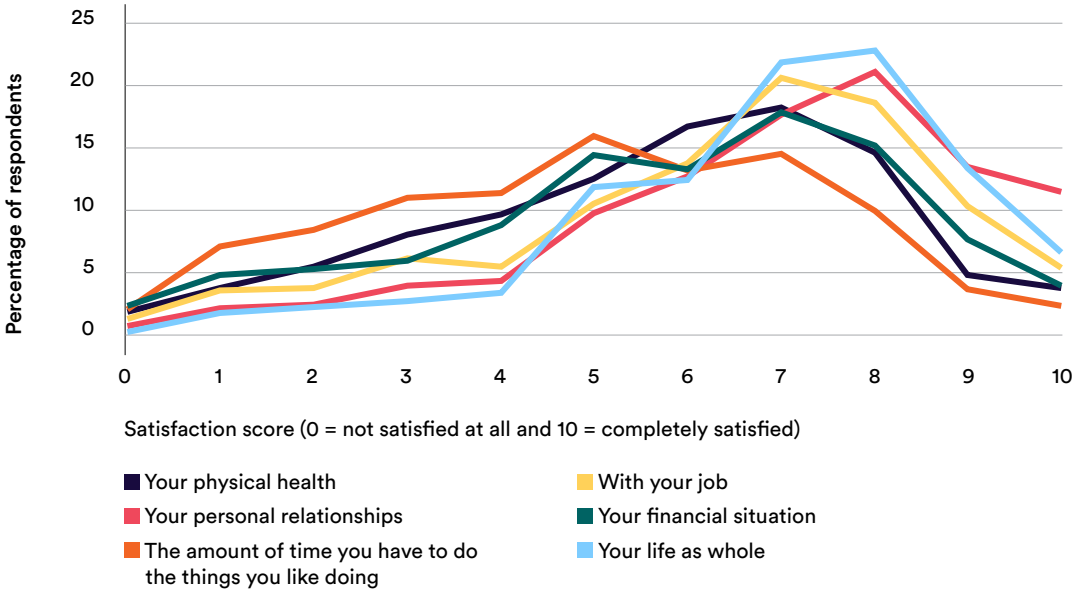


Subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction

As set out in the methods, the lawyer census asked respondents to rate 6 aspects of subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction (collectively referred to as 'life satisfaction' in this section) from zero to 10. These are physical health, personal relationships, the amount of time they have to do things they like to do, their job, financial situation, and life as a whole.

Figure 3 sets out respondents' scores for each of the 6 domains, with mean scores of 5.7 for satisfaction with physical health, 6.9 for personal relationships, 5.0 for the amount of time available to do things they like, 6.3 for jobs, 5.8 for financial situation, and 6.9 for life as a whole.

Figure 3 – Life satisfaction scores for each of the 6 domains



Psychological distress, burnout and subjective wellbeing / life satisfaction

There were highly significant negative relationships between both psychological distress and burnout and all 6 domains of life satisfaction.[148] In Table 12, this is shown in mean satisfaction scores for each domain for both psychological distress and burnout groups. There is a consistent pattern of declining satisfaction as psychological distress and burnout levels increase.

Table 12 also presents Spearman's rank correlation coefficients (rho) for each relationship (between psychological distress or burnout and each satisfaction domain).

These coefficients measure the strength of association between the ordinal wellbeing measures (PHQ-4 and BAT4) and satisfaction scores, ranging from -1 to +1. Negative values indicate that higher distress and/or burnout is associated with lower satisfaction, and positive values indicate the opposite relationship (0 indicates no relationship).

148. P-values associated with rho in Table 12 were all less than 0.001 indicating statistical significance.

For psychological distress, the strongest relationships were with overall life satisfaction (rho = -0.54) and job satisfaction (rho = -0.50), indicating a substantial decline in satisfaction as psychological distress increased. There were also moderate (and highly statistically significant) correlations observed for satisfaction with time for preferred activities (rho = -0.40), financial situation (rho = -0.36), personal relationships (rho = -0.35), with a weaker but still significant relationship for physical health (rho = -0.28). This suggests psychological distress relates to perceived physical health, as well as work and life satisfaction.

For burnout, the strongest correlations were again with job satisfaction (rho = -0.54) and overall life satisfaction (rho = -0.45). There were moderate correlations for time for activities (rho = -0.38), financial situation (rho = -0.33), personal relationships (rho = -0.30), and a weaker (but again still significant) relationship with physical health (rho = -0.26).

Table 12 – Mean satisfaction scores by psychological distress and burnout categories (with correlation coefficients (rho))

	Satisfaction domain					
	Physical health	Personal relationships	Amount of time	Job	Financial situation	Life as a whole
Psychological distress (PHQ-4)	**rho = -0.28**	**rho = -0.35**	**rho = -0.40**	**rho = -0.50**	**rho = -0.54**	**rho = -0.54**
Normal (n = 702)	6.3	7.7	5.9	7.4	6.6	7.9
Mild (n = 396)	5.5	6.7	4.9	6	5.7	6.7
Moderate (n = 208)	5.1	6.2	4.2	5.8	4.9	6.1
Severe (n = 203)	4.4	5.5	3.2	3.5	4	4.7
Burnout (BAT4)	**rho = -0.26**	**rho = -0.30**	**rho = -0.38**	**rho = -0.54**	**rho = -0.33**	**rho = -0.45**
Not at risk (n = 725)	6.3	7.6	5.9	7.5	6.6	7.7
At risk (n = 440)	5.6	6.7	4.8	6.1	5.7	6.7
Very high risk (n = 385)	4.8	6	3.6	4.3	4.5	5.6

Figures 4 to 15 show these relationships. These 12 charts show how increasing psychological distress (PHQ-4) and risk of burnout (BAT4) relate to lower life satisfaction scores across all domains.

Figures 4 to 9 present life satisfaction by psychological distress categories (PHQ-4). The green bars (representing ‘normal’ distress) dominate the higher end of satisfaction scales and the red bars (representing ‘severe’ distress) cluster towards the lower satisfaction end. This pattern is evident across all 6 life satisfaction domains and is particularly pronounced for job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction.

Figures 10 to 15 present life satisfaction by burnout categories (BAT4), and show a similar pattern.

Figure 4 – Satisfaction with physical health by PHQ-4

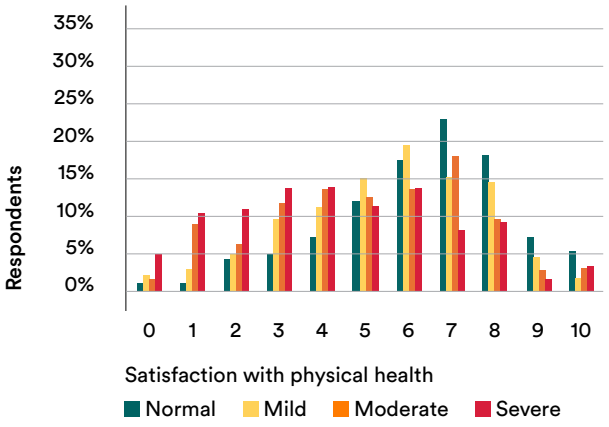


Figure 5 – Satisfaction with personal relationships by PHQ-4

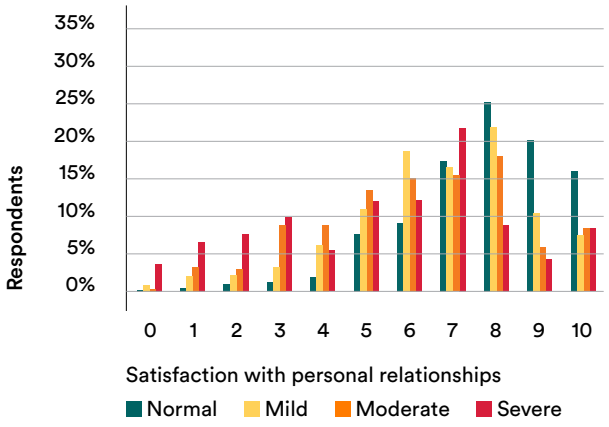


Figure 6 – Satisfaction with amount of time to do things they like by PHQ-4

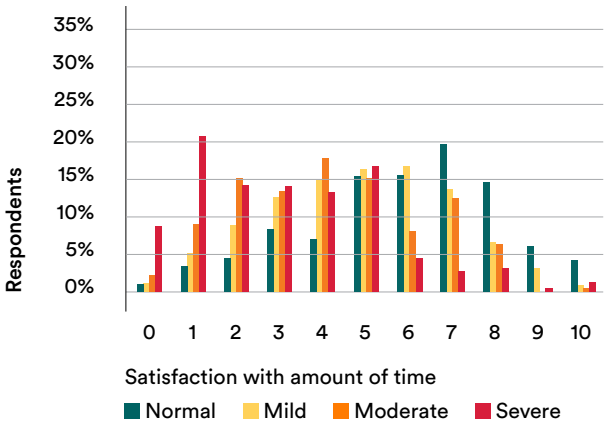


Figure 7 – Satisfaction with job by PHQ-4

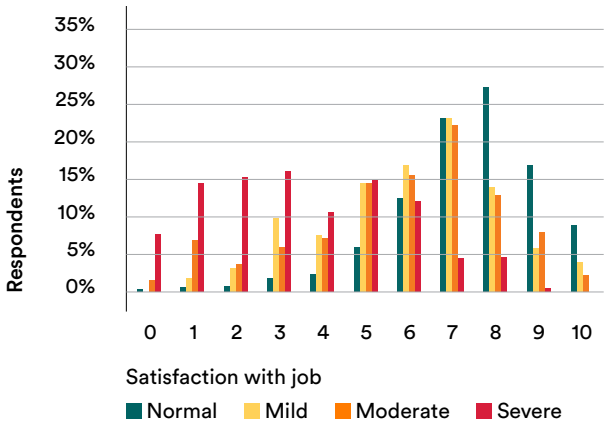


Figure 8 – Satisfaction with financial situation by PHQ-4

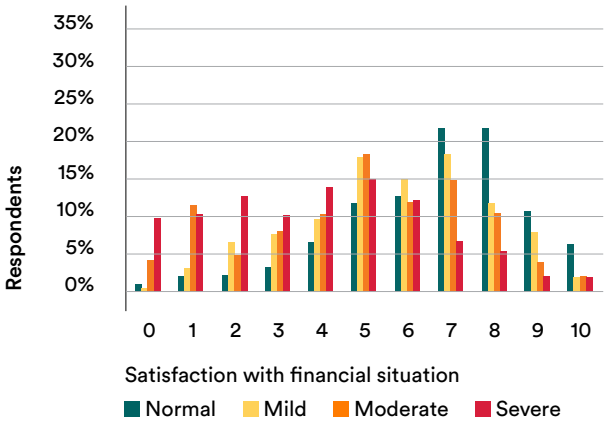


Figure 9 – Satisfaction with life as a whole by PHQ-4

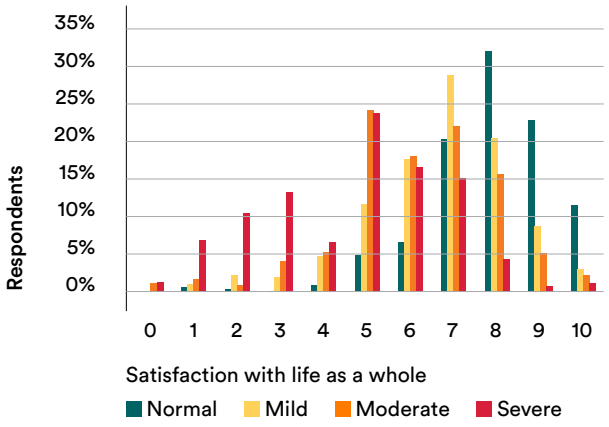


Figure 10 – Satisfaction with physical health by BAT4

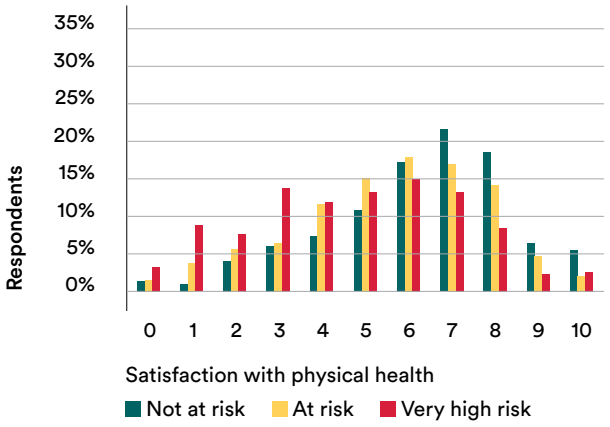


Figure 11 – Satisfaction with personal relationships by BAT4

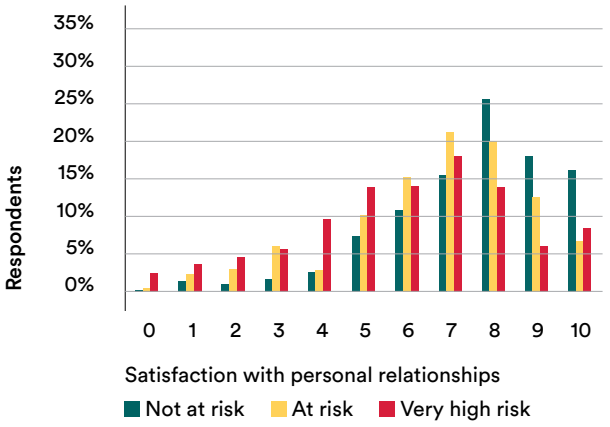


Figure 12 – Satisfaction with amount of time to do things they like by BAT4

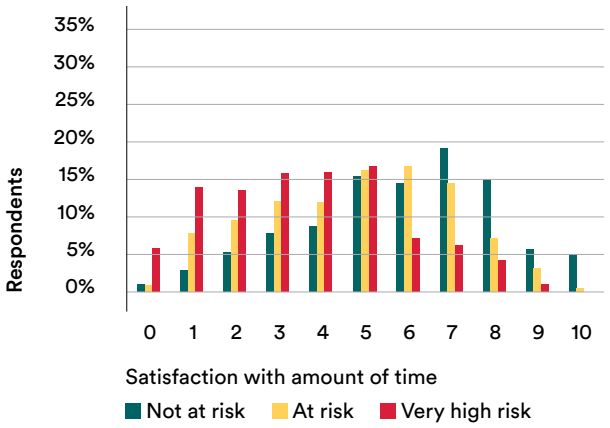


Figure 13 – Satisfaction with job by BAT4

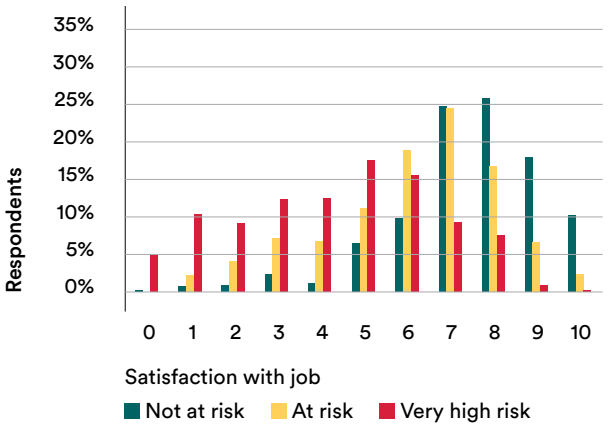


Figure 14 – Satisfaction with financial situation by BAT4

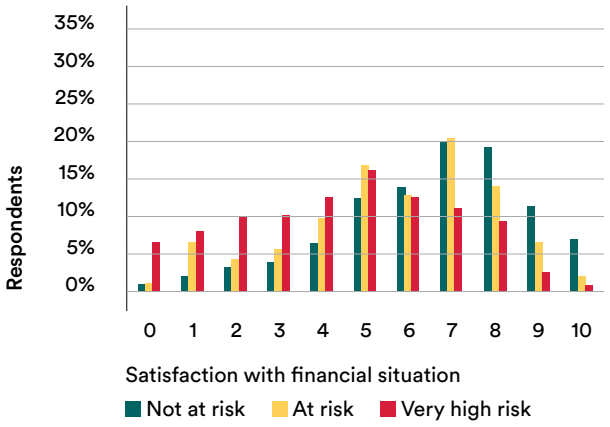
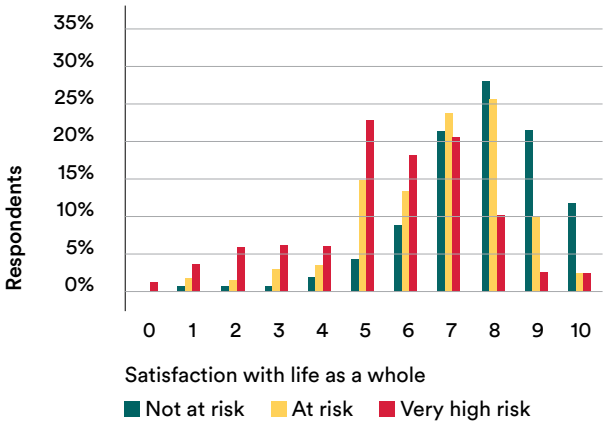


Figure 15 – Satisfaction with life as a whole by BAT4



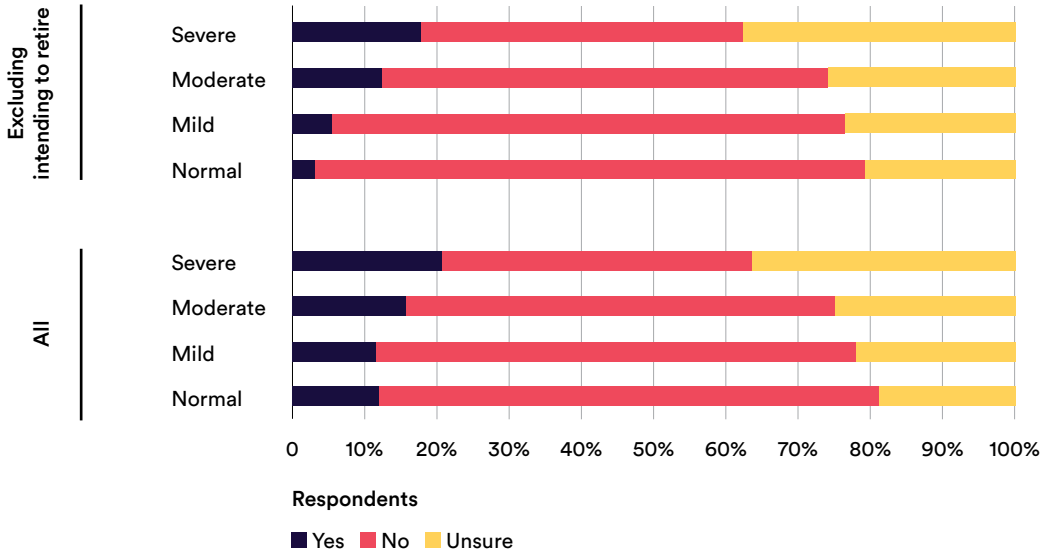
Intention to leave the profession

Overall, 14% of respondents (n = 249) indicated they intended to leave the legal profession within the next 5 years, while 61% (n = 1,105) had no intention to leave, and 25% (n = 444) were unsure.

Psychological distress (PHQ-4 category) was significantly related to intentions.[149] As shown in Figure 16, among those in the 'normal' category, the majority (69%) had no intention to leave, 12% intended to leave, and 19% were unsure. Of those reporting 'severe' psychological distress, the 'no intention to leave' group fell to 43% while both the 'unsure' group and the 'intending to leave' rose substantially (37% and 21% respectively).

The relationship strengthened further when those intending to retire (as a reason for leaving the profession) were excluded from the analysis (also shown in Figure 16).[150] Excluding retirees, among those in the 'normal' category, 76% had no intention to leave, only 3% intended to leave, and 21% were unsure. In contrast, among those reporting 'severe' psychological distress, the 'no intention to leave' group fell to 44%, the 'unsure' group increased to 38%, and the 'intending to leave' group rose to 18% – a more than five-fold increase.

Figure 16 – Intention to leave the legal profession within 5 years by psychological distress level (PHQ-4) for all respondents and excluding those intending to retire



149. $X^2_9 = 53.400$, $p<0.001$
150. $X^2_9 = 97.230$, $p<0.001$

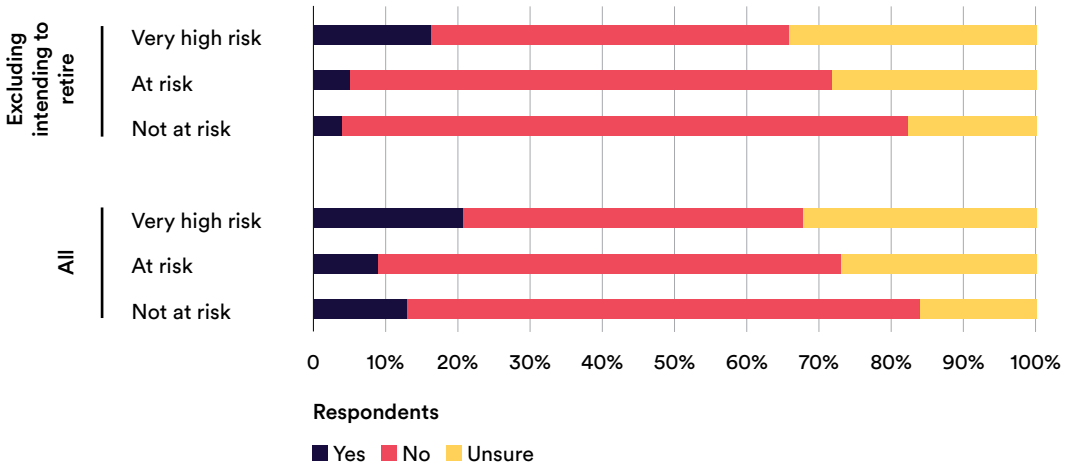
Burnout risk (BAT-4 category) was also significantly related to intentions.[151] As shown in Figure 17, among those not at risk of burnout, the majority (71%) had no intention to leave, 13% intended to leave, and 16% were unsure. For those at very high risk of burnout, the 'no intention to leave' group fell to 47%, the 'unsure' group doubled to 32%, and the percentage intending to leave rose to 21%.

As for psychological distress, the relationship strengthened further once those intending to retire were excluded from the analysis (also shown in Figure 17).[152] Excluding those intending to retire as a reason for leaving the profession, among those not at risk of burnout, 78% had no intention to leave, 4% intended to leave, and 18% were unsure. Among those at very high risk of burnout, the 'no intention to leave' group fell to 49%, the 'unsure' group increased to 34%, and the 'intending to leave' group rose to 16% – a more than four-fold increase.

Figure 17 – Intention to leave the legal profession within 5 years by burnout risk (BAT4) for all respondents and excluding those intending to retire

Respondents who indicated they were going to leave the profession in the next 5 years were asked their primary reason for leaving. Almost 50% of respondents were leaving the profession to retire, followed by career change to another field (22%), other (16%), and career break (5%).

Analysis of the free text responses for those who selected 'other' found that many respondents pointed to burnout, stress and fatigue, poor physical and mental health, disillusionment with their career or sector as a whole, and poor work–life balance. Other themes included toxic or unsupportive workplaces and high workload and billing pressure. For example, the responses included 'poor remuneration, poor career progression, unsupportive work environment', 'loss of enjoyment of life', and 'toxic industry and poor culture'.



151. $X^2_6 = 77.015$, $p<0.001$
152. $X^2_6 = 110.445$, $p<0.001$

Respondents who indicated they were leaving for a career break or to pursue a career change were also given the option of answering in their own words why they were intending to make such a change. These responses followed similar themes, with burnout and stress, toxic workplace / sector and inappropriate behaviour, long hours, and unsatisfactory remuneration all featuring strongly. Response examples included: 'Disillusioned with legal career, too much bullying and inappropriate conduct', 'I felt extremely burnt out from the emotional burden of this work', 'it is unsustainable for my physical and mental health', and 'the hours and nature of the work are exhausting and remuneration isn't commensurate'.

There was a significant relationship between a respondent's primary reason for leaving and PHQ-4.[153] As previously noted, the most common reported reason for leaving was retirement. However, those who were leaving the profession due to retirement were overrepresented in the group experiencing normal levels of psychological distress, and underrepresented in the cohort experiencing severe levels of psychological distress.[154] In contrast, those who answered 'other', were overrepresented in the cohort[155] experiencing severe levels of psychological distress. Again, the free text responses for 'other' reported burnout, stress and fatigue, poor physical and mental health, disillusionment with their career or sector as a whole, and poor work–life balance.[156]

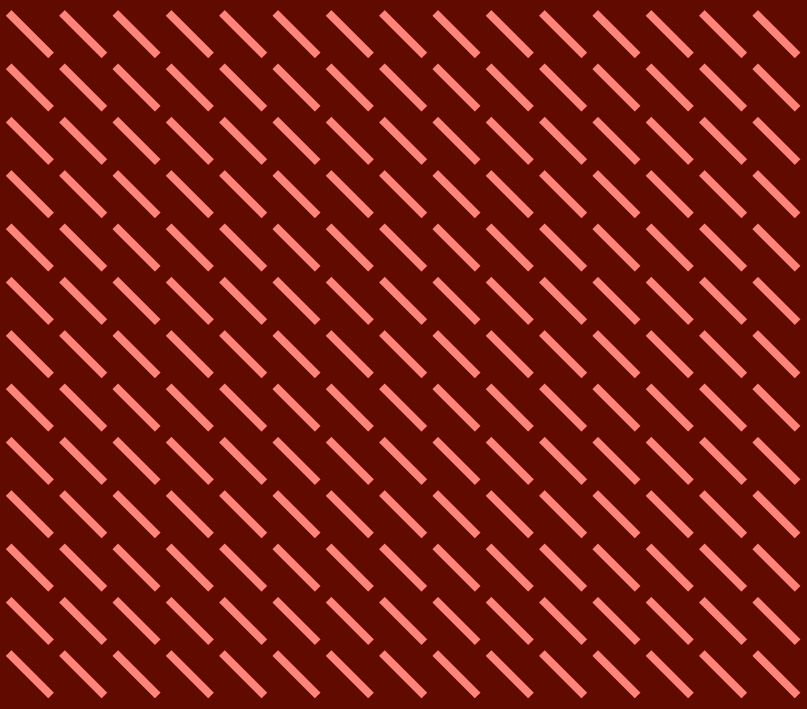
The findings around intention to leave and burnout closely mirror the findings for PHQ-4, with those leaving the profession due to retirement also overrepresented in the cohort not at risk and underrepresented in the cohort at very high risk.[157] Respondents who indicated they were leaving the profession for a career break or other reasons were overrepresented in the cohort who were at very high risk of burnout.[158] Again, free text associated with 'other' reasons for seeking to leave, as well as rationales for career breaks or career changes, frequently made direct reference to psychological distress and burnout, as well as adverse workplace culture and experiences.

153. A simple chi-squared test illustrates the significant variation in primary reason for leaving by PHQ-4 group; $X^2_{18} = 66.696$, $p < 0.001$.
154. The Pearson residuals were 3.1 and -3.3 respectively. Where values exceed around 2 or are less than -2 this indicates a lack of fit, pointing to the source of the significant variation.
155. The Pearson residual was 3.3.
156. A similar pattern was found when looking at findings for GAD-2 and PHQ-2, the anxiety and depression components of PHQ-4. Again, the respondents who answered 'other' were shown to be underrepresented in the cohort not experiencing symptoms and anxiety and depression and overrepresented in the cohort who were experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression. These findings were inversed for those who reported to be leaving the profession due to retirement.
157. The Pearson residuals were 3.1 and -3.2 respectively.
158. The Pearson residuals were 2.6 and 3.4 respectively.

07

Discussion

This section contextualises the key findings from the study with existing literature and practice, and considers their implications for the Victorian legal profession. It also discusses the factors that predict psychological distress and burnout amongst lawyers and considers directions for future action.



Summary

The 2025 Victorian Lawyer Census examined lawyer wellbeing using validated measures of psychological distress (PHQ-4) and burnout (BAT4), alongside measures of life satisfaction and intention to leave the profession. Bivariate analyses identified which personal characteristics, professional characteristics and adverse workplace experiences were associated with higher psychological distress and burnout. Multivariate analyses then isolated which factors were independently associated with these outcomes once all other measured characteristics were controlled for simultaneously.

The central finding is that adverse workplace conditions (unacceptable workloads, unfair compensation, sexual harassment, uncivil behaviours, and conflicts with professional obligations) were the strongest independent predictors of both psychological distress and burnout, although a number of personal and professional characteristics were also independently significant. Consistent with JD–R theory,[159] excessive job demands were associated with greater distress and burnout, while adequate job resources (particularly fair compensation) were associated with lower distress and burnout. In turn, both psychological distress and burnout were associated with lower life satisfaction across all domains and with greater intention to leave the profession.

Prevalence and patterns

Consistent with previous Australian and international studies, the findings paint a concerning picture. Over half (53%) of respondents experienced some form of psychological distress, and 13% experienced that distress at severe levels. Over a third (36%) experienced symptoms of anxiety and almost a quarter (23%) experienced symptoms of depression. Over half (53%) were at risk of burnout, with a quarter (25%) at very high risk of burnout.

Younger and early career lawyers fared worst. One in 5 lawyers aged under 30 reported severe psychological distress, and over half (56%) were at risk of burnout. However, psychological distress and burnout did not materially improve with experience and seniority, with rates only significantly easing at the 20-year mark.

159. Which proposes that working conditions influence employee outcomes through 2 processes: a health impairment pathway, where excessive job demands lead to burnout and strain; and a motivational pathway, where adequate job resources foster engagement and positive outcomes. Job resources may also buffer the negative impact of high demands (see for example Demerouti et al., “The Job Demands–Resources Model of Burnout,” 499-512; Bakker, “Job Demands–Resources Theory,” 285; Hakanen et al., “The Job Demands–Resources Model,” 224–241.)

Notably, while psychological distress decreased steadily with age, burnout followed a different pattern, peaking in mid-career (5 to 19 years of experience) before improving. Multivariate analysis confirmed this, with years of practice significantly associated with higher burnout risk even after controlling for age, while age itself was independently associated with lower risk. These 2 effects work in opposite directions, where experience in the profession is associated with greater burnout (at least past mid-career), but ageing is associated with less burnout. Burnout peaks in mid-career, where years holding a certificate have accumulated but the effect of age has not yet offset the risk of burnout.[160]

Those with long-term health conditions or disabilities showed significantly higher rates of psychological distress and burnout, which increased with the severity of the condition. Respondents who were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQA+, and non-binary or using another term all experienced higher rates of burnout. However, multivariate analysis indicated that many of these demographic associations, including gender, sexual orientation and whether respondents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, were no longer significant once workplace conditions were accounted for, suggesting these groups' poorer outcomes may be partly explained by differences in the workplace experiences they encounter.

Workplace conditions matter most

A range of workplace variables were significantly associated with psychological distress and burnout in bivariate analyses, including hours worked, perceptions of unacceptable workload and remuneration, ethical conflicts, sexual harassment, and uncivil behaviours. Multivariate analysis confirmed that these were the strongest independent predictors of both psychological distress and burnout, more so than personal or professional characteristics. Perceiving workload as unacceptable was the single most powerful factor in both models.

Both psychological distress and burnout were associated with reduced satisfaction with respondents' jobs and with every other life domain measured: physical health, personal relationships, time, financial situation, and life as a whole. Qualitative analysis of the reasons provided by lawyers intending to leave the profession revealed that adverse workplace conditions, including workload, bullying, excessive hours and poor remuneration, featured prominently in their rationales for intended departure.

160. Consistent with burnout (or exhaustion) as a long-term consequence of prolonged exposure to demands. See Demerouti et al., "The Job Demands–Resources Model of Burnout," 499–512.

Where do we go from here?

These findings point to 2 broad categories for action: workplace expectations and pressures, and workplace environment and culture.

Workplace expectations and pressures go to how employees are valued, treated and compensated. The recent VLSB+C *Systems Theory of Change for Lawyer Wellbeing*[161] was informed by 1,100 people working in the legal sector regarding drivers of poor outcomes. From that work, 45 key factors emerged, with some of the most influential being poor work–life balance, high workloads, and cultures of perfectionism. As Holmes et al. note,[162] excessive workloads and unreasonable hours are viewed by many as implicitly sanctioned structures that are part of the business model.

Structural changes at the organisational and sector level are needed. The VLSB+C *Wellbeing Guidelines* provide guidance for organisations about taking the first steps.[163] In addition, recent Victorian Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations provide clear guidance to employers on recognising and reducing or eliminating psychosocial hazards that have a detrimental impact on psychological health and safety.[164]

Workplace environment and culture are factors in whether employees feel safe and respected. The lawyer census established the prevalence of negative behaviours in legal workplaces, and this report sets out the clear link between these behaviours and elevated psychological distress, burnout, subjective wellbeing, and intention to leave.

Importantly, these factors were interlinked – experiencing one increased the likelihood of experiencing others. While this creates a compounding cycle, it also points to opportunity, where addressing any one issue may create broader improvement.

The lawyer census aims to continue monitoring lawyer wellbeing to build a longitudinal understanding of the profession's experiences. As Soon et al. note,[165] future research should also further explore positive dimensions of wellbeing, including work engagement, meaning and flourishing. Beyond monitoring, it will be essential to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions targeting workload, compensation and workplace culture to translate these findings into improved outcomes for lawyers and the communities they serve.

161. First Person Consulting, *Systems Theory of Change for Lawyer Wellbeing*.
162. Holmes et al., *Lawyer Wellbeing*.
163. Carly Schrever, *Wellbeing Guidelines* (Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner, 2025).
164. Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025.
165. See Soon et al., "Towards a Context-specific Approach," 550–573.

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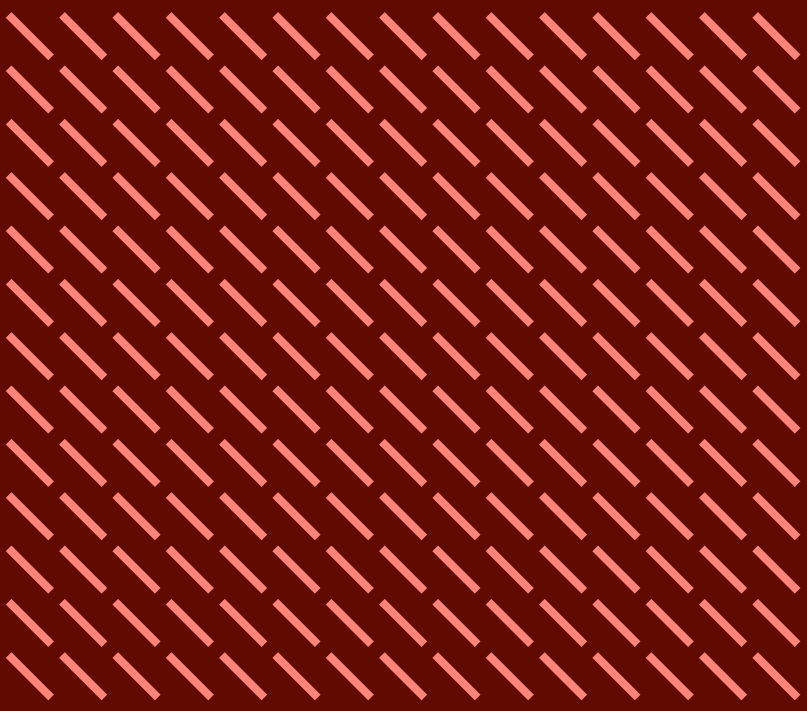
Appendices



Appendix A

Ordinal 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 (in other words, 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 negative coefficients indicate decreased risk. Larger absolute values show stronger associations. For example, a coefficient of 0.6 indicates a term associated with greater psychological distress (compared to the reference category for that variable), while accompanying statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the observed association is unlikely to have occurred by chance.[166]

Table A1 – Ordinal logistic regression model of psychological distress (PHQ-4)*

	Coefficients	SE	t	p	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Age group						
20–29 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
30–39	-0.130	0.241	-0.54	0.590	-0.604	0.343
40–49	-0.201	0.280	-0.72	0.474	-0.750	0.349
50–59	-0.511	0.306	-1.67	0.095	-1.112	0.089
60+	-0.816	0.327	-2.50	0.013	-1.457	-0.176
Gender						
Male (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Female	0.059	0.139	0.42	0.672	-0.214	0.332
Non-binary and other terms	0.561	0.470	1.19	0.233	-0.360	1.483
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.324	0.801	0.40	0.686	-1.247	1.894
Sexual orientation						
Heterosexual (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
LGBTIQA+	0.167	0.184	0.91	0.364	-0.194	0.528
Relationship status						
Married (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Single	0.247	0.163	1.52	0.130	-0.073	0.566
De facto	0.317	0.157	2.02	0.044	0.009	0.625

166. You can also take the exponential of coefficients to arrive at an odds ratio. In this case e0.60 = 1.8, which indicated that lawyers in this category have 82% higher odds of being in worse psychological distress categories compared to the reference group.

Table A1 – Ordinal logistic regression model of psychological distress (PHQ-4)* continued

	Coefficients	SE	t	p	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Children under 18						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.216	0.155	-1.40	0.163	-0.520	0.087
Caring responsibilities						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.109	0.206	-0.53	0.597	-0.514	0.295
Country of birth						
Australia (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	-0.030	0.172	-0.18	0.861	-0.368	0.308
Language spoken at home						
English (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	0.056	0.293	0.19	0.848	-0.518	0.630
Long-term illness or disability						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.754	0.158	4.79	<0.001	0.446	1.063
Years certificate held						
Less than 5 years (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
5 to 9 years	-0.137	0.242	-0.57	0.571	-0.613	0.338
10 to 19 years	-0.031	0.251	-0.12	0.901	-0.525	0.462
20 plus years	-0.226	0.291	-0.78	0.437	-0.797	0.344
Certificate type						
Principal (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Principal with trust authorisation	0.106	0.246	0.43	0.667	-0.376	0.588
Employee	-0.228	0.280	-0.81	0.415	-0.777	0.321
Employee with trust authorisation	0.693	0.598	1.16	0.247	-0.479	1.866
Barrister	-0.061	0.308	-0.20	0.842	-0.665	0.542
Corporate legal practitioner	-0.275	0.295	-0.93	0.351	-0.853	0.303
Government legal practitioner	-0.228	0.296	-0.77	0.441	-0.807	0.352
Volunteer / CLS	0.366	0.608	0.60	0.547	-0.825	1.557
Partnership status						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.166	0.273	-0.61	0.542	-0.701	0.368
Not applicable	-0.193	0.177	-1.09	0.276	-0.541	0.154

Table A1 – Ordinal logistic regression model of psychological distress (PHQ-4)* continued

	Coefficients	SE	t	p	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Number of employees						
1 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
2–4	-0.126	0.283	-0.44	0.657	-0.681	0.429
5–19	-0.149	0.295	-0.50	0.614	-0.726	0.429
20–199	-0.329	0.303	-1.09	0.277	-0.923	0.264
200+	-0.123	0.313	-0.39	0.694	-0.736	0.490
Taxable income						
Less than $50,000 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
$50,000–$80,000	0.237	0.432	0.55	0.584	-0.611	1.085
$80,001–$120,000	0.369	0.413	0.89	0.371	-0.440	1.178
$120,001–$160,000	0.390	0.421	0.93	0.354	-0.435	1.215
$160,001–$200,000	0.558	0.432	1.29	0.197	-0.289	1.405
$200,001–$250,000	0.424	0.435	0.97	0.330	-0.430	1.277
$250,001–$350,000	0.241	0.468	0.51	0.607	-0.676	1.158
$350,001–$450,000	0.141	0.561	0.25	0.801	-0.958	1.241
More than $450,000	0.210	0.516	0.41	0.684	-0.802	1.222
Sexual harassment (past 12 months)						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.523	0.209	2.50	0.012	0.114	0.933
Uncivil workplace behaviours						
Neither experienced nor witnessed often (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Witnessed often	0.223	0.252	0.89	0.376	-0.271	0.718
Experienced often	0.476	0.257	1.85	0.064	-0.027	0.979
Witnessed and experienced often	0.452	0.174	2.60	0.009	0.111	0.792
Workload acceptability						
Acceptable (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Unacceptable	1.036	0.143	7.23	<0.001	0.755	1.316
Fair compensation						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.529	0.144	-3.67	<0.001	-0.812	-0.247
Conflicts with professional obligations						
Not often (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Often	0.722	0.152	4.77	<0.001	0.425	1.019
/cut1	0.094	0.507			-0.901	1.089
/cut2	1.549	0.513			0.544	2.554
/cut3	2.660	0.519			1.643	3.677

*Note: Multiple-imputation estimates (20 imputations). N = 1,356. PHQ-4 categories (1 = normal, 2 = mild, 3 = moderate, 4 = severe). Higher coefficients indicate greater psychological distress.

Table A2 – Ordinal logistic regression model of burnout risk (BAT4)*

	Coefficients	SE	t	p	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Age group						
20–29 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
30–39	0.064	0.240	0.26	0.791	-0.407	0.535
40–49	-0.182	0.286	-0.64	0.524	-0.743	0.378
50–59	-0.611	0.304	-2.01	0.045	-1.208	-0.014
60+	-0.886	0.325	-2.72	0.006	-1.524	-0.248
Gender						
Male (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Female	0.254	0.140	1.81	0.070	-0.021	0.529
Non-binary and other terms	0.044	0.485	0.09	0.928	-0.906	0.993
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.037	0.875	0.04	0.966	-1.678	1.752
Sexual orientation						
Heterosexual (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
LGBTIQA+	0.172	0.183	0.94	0.345	-0.186	0.531
Relationship status						
Married (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Single	0.509	0.173	2.93	0.003	0.169	0.849
De facto	0.312	0.170	1.84	0.066	-0.020	0.644
Children under 18						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.058	0.163	0.36	0.720	-0.261	0.378
Caring responsibilities						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.539	0.215	-2.50	0.012	-0.961	-0.117
Country of birth						
Australia (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	0.119	0.194	0.61	0.539	-0.261	0.499
Language spoken at home						
English (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Other	-0.431	0.363	-1.19	0.235	-1.142	0.280
Long-term illness or disability						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.397	0.162	2.45	0.014	0.080	0.714

Table A2 – Ordinal logistic regression model of burnout risk (BAT4)* continued

	Coefficients	SE	t	p	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Years certificate held						
Less than 5 years (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
5 to 9 years	0.159	0.233	0.68	0.495	-0.299	0.617
10 to 19 years	0.627	0.244	2.57	0.010	0.147	1.106
20 plus years	0.687	0.289	2.38	0.017	0.121	1.254
Certificate type						
Principal (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Principal with trust authorisation	0.108	0.252	0.43	0.668	-0.386	0.603
Employee	0.510	0.297	1.72	0.086	-0.072	1.092
Employee with trust authorisation	1.131	0.634	1.78	0.074	-0.112	2.375
Barrister	-0.400	0.348	-1.15	0.250	-1.082	0.282
Corporate legal practitioner	0.299	0.326	0.92	0.359	-0.340	0.937
Government legal practitioner	0.068	0.319	0.21	0.831	-0.557	0.694
Volunteer / CLS	-0.266	0.549	-0.49	0.627	-1.342	0.809
Partnership status						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.305	0.279	-1.10	0.273	-0.852	0.241
Not applicable	-0.042	0.169	-0.25	0.804	-0.373	0.289
Number of employees						
1 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
2–4	-0.238	0.308	-0.77	0.441	-0.842	0.367
5–19	-0.410	0.316	-1.30	0.194	-1.029	0.209
20–199	-0.493	0.319	-1.55	0.122	-1.119	0.133
200+	-0.449	0.335	-1.34	0.181	-1.106	0.208
Taxable income						
Less than $50,000 (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
$50,000–$80,000	0.539	0.460	1.17	0.241	-0.363	1.440
$80,001–$120,000	0.935	0.426	2.19	0.028	0.099	1.770
$120,001–$160,000	1.236	0.438	2.82	0.005	0.378	2.094
$160,001–$200,000	1.190	0.447	2.66	0.008	0.314	2.067
$200,001–$250,000	1.156	0.455	2.54	0.011	0.263	2.048
$250,001–$350,000	0.816	0.472	1.73	0.084	-0.109	1.742
$350,001–$450,000	0.904	0.609	1.48	0.138	-0.290	2.098

Table A2 – Ordinal logistic regression model of burnout risk (BAT4)* continued

	Coefficients	SE	t	p	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
More than $450,000	0.988	0.516	1.92	0.056	-0.024	2.000
Sexual harassment (past 12 months)						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	0.747	0.230	3.25	0.001	0.296	1.198
Uncivil workplace behaviours						
Neither experienced nor witnessed often (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Witnessed often	0.505	0.248	2.03	0.042	0.019	0.992
Experienced often	0.394	0.234	1.68	0.092	-0.064	0.853
Witnessed and experienced often	0.182	0.182	1.00	0.318	-0.175	0.539
Workload acceptability						
Acceptable (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Unacceptable	1.004	0.145	6.92	<0.001	0.720	1.289
Fair compensation						
No (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Yes	-0.654	0.152	-4.31	<0.001	-0.951	-0.356
Conflicts with professional obligations						
Not often (base)	0	.	.	.	.	.
Often	0.853	0.144	5.90	<0.001	0.570	1.136
/cut1	1.560	0.535			0.511	2.609
/cut2	3.135	0.541			2.075	4.196

*Note: Multiple-imputation estimates (20 imputations). N = 1,368. Outcome: BAT4 categories (1 = not at risk, 2 = at risk, 3 = very high risk). Higher coefficients indicate greater burnout risk.

Appendix B

Table B1 – Percentage of respondents showing symptoms of anxiety

		Symptoms of anxiety			
		No		Yes	
		N	%	N	%
Age group	20–29	154	58.6%	109	41.4%
	30–39	281	55.4%	226	44.6%
	40–49	219	65.0%	118	35.0%
	50–59	155	71.1%	63	28.9%
	60–69	103	78.8%	28	21.2%
	70+	52	86.3%	8	13.7%
Gender	Male	429	73.1%	158	26.9%
	Female	526	58.7%	371	41.3%
	Non-binary and other terms	9	29.1%	21	70.9%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	No	950	63.8%	538	36.2%
	Yes	6	51.4%	6	48.6%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	789	66.0%	406	34.0%
	LGBTIQA+	121	53.2%	107	46.8%
Relationship status	Married	490	69.4%	216	30.6%
	Single	213	64.0%	120	36.0%
	De facto	209	56.7%	160	43.3%
Children under 18	Yes	348	68.4%	161	31.6%
	No	589	62.1%	360	37.9%
Caring responsibility for elderly or disabled adults	Yes	77	63.9%	44	36.1%
	No	857	64.5%	471	35.5%
Country of birth	Australia	770	63.3%	447	36.7%
	Other (please specify)	151	70.3%	63	29.7%
Language at home	English	906	64.4%	501	35.6%
	Other	33	53.4%	29	46.6%
Long-term health condition	No	782	68.1%	367	31.9%
	Yes	139	50.2%	138	49.8%
Level of restriction due to long-term health condition, impairment or disability	None or non-limiting	800	68.0%	376	32.0%
	Mild	60	46.6%	68	53.4%
	Moderate	48	53.4%	42	46.6%
	Severe or extreme	13	43.1%	17	56.9%
Practising certificate years	Less than 5 years	225	58.5%	159	41.5%
	5 to 9 years	154	62.3%	93	37.7%
	10 to 19 years	204	61.6%	127	38.4%
	20 plus years	252	75.0%	84	25.0%

Table B1 – Percentage of respondents showing symptoms of anxiety continued

		Symptoms of anxiety			
		No		Yes	
		N	%	N	%
Practising certificate type	Principal	95	69.3%	42	30.7%
	Principal with trust authorisation	137	74.2%	48	25.8%
	Employee	366	60.4%	240	39.6%
	Employee with trust authorisation	13	55.0%	11	45.0%
	Barrister	69	62.2%	42	37.8%
	Corporate legal practitioner	158	65.6%	83	34.4%
	Government legal practitioner	128	60.8%	83	39.2%
	Volunteer / CLS	5	58.2%	4	41.8%
Partner	No	643	61.7%	399	38.3%
	Yes	116	70.5%	48	29.5%
	Not applicable	211	67.8%	100	32.2%
Organisation type	Law firm	374	60.7%	242	39.3%
	Sole practitioner	150	68.7%	68	31.3%
	Incorporated legal practice	74	66.9%	36	33.1%
	Government employer	147	61.8%	91	38.2%
	Non-legal employer	110	64.7%	60	35.3%
	Community sector	64	66.4%	32	33.6%
	Other	46	75.5%	15	24.5%
Number of employees	1	129	69.6%	56	30.4%
	2–4	91	68.3%	42	31.7%
	5–19	151	63.6%	86	36.4%
	20–199	229	65.5%	121	34.5%
	200+	350	61.1%	223	38.9%
Annual taxable pay (excl. super/ other benefits)	Less than $50,000	44	70.9%	18	29.1%
	$50,000–$80,000	89	60.5%	58	39.5%
	$80,001–$120,000	268	62.0%	164	38.0%
	$120,001–$160,000	170	60.1%	113	39.9%
	$160,001–$200,000	103	63.6%	59	36.4%
	$200,001–$250,000	95	63.9%	54	36.1%
	$250,001–$350,000	68	72.8%	26	27.2%
	$350,001–$450,000	28	74.2%	10	25.8%
	More than $450,000	57	79.7%	14	20.3%

Table B2 – Percentage of respondents showing symptoms of depression

		Symptoms of anxiety			
		No		Yes	
		N	%	N	%
Age group	20–29	178	67.3%	87	32.7%
	30–39	364	72.7%	137	27.3%
	40–49	257	76.5%	79	23.5%
	50–59	191	87.7%	27	12.3%
	60–69	111	86.1%	18	13.9%
	70+	57	93.5%	4	6.5%
Gender	Male	461	79.1%	122	20.9%
	Female	676	75.8%	216	24.2%
	Non-binary and other terms	18	61.4%	11	38.6%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	No	1,136	76.8%	343	23.2%
	Yes	8	68.6%	4	31.4%
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	940	79.1%	248	20.9%
	LGBTIQA+	151	65.9%	78	34.1%
Relationship status	Married	584	83.0%	120	17.0%
	Single	228	69.2%	101	30.8%
	De facto	274	74.0%	96	26.0%
Children under 18	Yes	415	82.0%	91	18.0%
	No	706	74.6%	241	25.4%
Caring responsibility for elderly or disabled adults	Yes	97	79.6%	25	20.4%
	No	1,021	77.2%	301	22.8%
Country of birth	Australia	924	76.3%	286	23.7%
	Other (please specify)	177	82.4%	38	17.6%
Language at home	English	1,088	77.6%	314	22.4%
	Other	41	66.7%	20	33.3%
Long-term health condition, impairment or disability	No	927	80.8%	220	19.2%
	Yes	174	63.6%	99	36.4%
Level of restriction due to long-term health condition, impairment or disability	None or non-limiting	947	80.6%	227	19.4%
	Mild	85	68.9%	39	31.1%
	Moderate	53	57.4%	39	42.6%
	Severe or extreme	16	55.0%	13	45.0%
Practising certificate years	Less than 5 years	269	70.1%	115	29.9%
	5 to 9 years	183	74.1%	64	25.9%
	10 to 19 years	246	74.9%	83	25.1%
	20 plus years	293	88.2%	39	11.8%

Table B2 – Percentage of respondents showing symptoms of depression continued

		Symptoms of anxiety			
		No		Yes	
		N	%	N	%
Practising certificate type	Principal	115	84.5%	21	15.5%
	Principal with trust authorisation	156	85.5%	27	14.5%
	Employee	439	72.8%	164	27.2%
	Employee with trust authorisation	17	69.7%	7	30.3%
	Barrister	90	80.6%	22	19.4%
	Corporate legal practitioner	184	76.5%	56	23.5%
	Government legal practitioner	157	75.5%	51	24.5%
	Volunteer / CLS	6	65.9%	3	34.1%
Partner	No	773	74.5%	265	25.5%
	Yes	142	86.4%	22	13.6%
	Not applicable	247	79.7%	63	20.3%
Organisation type	Law firm	437	71.6%	173	28.4%
	Sole practitioner	183	84.7%	33	15.3%
	Incorporated legal practice	88	80.2%	22	19.8%
	Government employer	178	75.6%	57	24.4%
	Non-legal employer	130	76.6%	40	23.4%
	Community sector	86	86.5%	13	13.5%
	Other	51	86.3%	8	13.7%
Number of employees	1	152	82.9%	31	17.1%
	2–4	102	77.1%	30	22.9%
	5–19	177	76.8%	54	23.2%
	20–199	277	78.6%	75	21.4%
	200+	423	74.4%	146	25.6%
Annual taxable pay (excl. super/ other benefits)	Less than $50,000	49	78.1%	14	21.9%
	$50,000–$80,000	113	77.4%	33	22.6%
	$80,001–$120,000	303	70.8%	125	29.2%
	$120,001–$160,000	209	73.9%	74	26.1%
	$160,001–$200,000	121	74.9%	41	25.1%
	$200,001–$250,000	123	83.2%	25	16.8%
	$250,001–$350,000	88	93.1%	6	6.9%
	$350,001–$450,000	35	89.0%	4	11.0%
	More than $450,000	63	89.5%	7	10.5%

Appendix C

Table C1 – Area of law by PHQ-4 scores

	PHQ-4							
	Normal		Mild		Moderate		Severe	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Administrative law	101	51.2%	49	25.0%	24	12.4%	23	11.5%
Advocacy	51	49.7%	24	23.7%	13	12.5%	14	14.1%
Banking / finance	33	40.9%	26	32.2%	7	8.4%	15	18.5%
Civil litigation	157	48.4%	83	25.5%	41	12.7%	44	13.4%
Commercial law	223	49.2%	120	26.4%	57	12.6%	53	11.8%
Conveyancing / real property	96	44.8%	57	26.7%	30	14.1%	31	14.3%
Corporate law	128	51.4%	58	23.2%	29	11.6%	34	13.8%
Criminal law	101	44.9%	57	25.1%	29	12.8%	39	17.2%
Debts / insolvency	38	43.0%	30	33.7%	14	16.1%	6	7.3%
Employment / industrial law	92	55.3%	44	26.4%	21	12.7%	9	5.6%
Environmental law	23	56.0%	8	19.0%	5	12.2%	5	12.8%
Family law	110	45.5%	58	23.8%	39	16.0%	36	14.8%
Immigration law	29	48.9%	18	30.7%	8	13.3%	4	7.1%
IT / telecomms	29	47.6%	17	27.6%	4	7.4%	10	17.3%
Intellectual property	55	49.4%	28	25.5%	11	9.7%	17	15.4%
Litigation – general	126	54.0%	42	17.8%	30	12.7%	36	15.5%
Personal injury	47	34.4%	44	32.1%	19	13.6%	27	19.8%
Planning / local government	26	65.3%	7	17.3%	0	0.0%	7	17.4%
Small business	35	44.4%	22	28.1%	9	11.4%	13	16.1%
Taxation	19	47.0%	10	24.4%	5	11.9%	7	16.8%
Trade practice	33	59.6%	15	26.6%	7	12.4%	1	1.4%
Wills and estates	113	49.2%	50	21.8%	30	13.1%	37	16.0%
Other	109	48.1%	55	24.2%	35	15.3%	28	12.4%
Construction law	14	58.6%	4	16.3%	5	21.6%	1	3.4%
Insurance	2	17.7%	5	36.6%	1	8.0%	5	37.6%
Health law	11	67.9%	3	17.1%	2	9.6%	1	5.4%
Elder law	1	15.4%	3	72.3%	0	0.0%	1	12.3%
Regulation	4	50.5%	2	17.9%	1	6.6%	2	25.1%
Media / entertainment	3	53.2%	1	24.9%	1	21.9%	0	0.0%
Privacy law	5	52.1%	0	0.0%	3	33.9%	1	14.0%
Human rights	6	48.8%	5	38.1%	1	7.2%	1	5.9%
Class actions	2	46.4%	0	0.0%	2	53.6%	0	0.0%
Education law	1	37.0%	0	0.0%	2	40.8%	1	22.2%
Maritime law	0	0.0%	1	52.5%	0	0.0%	1	47.5%
First Nations	2	67.4%	0	0.0%	1	32.6%	0	0.0%
Sports law	1	27.7%	2	72.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Financial services	3	48.0%	3	52.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
International trade	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%
Government	8	69.0%	1	6.9%	1	10.1%	2	14.1%
Prefer not to say	7	40.5%	3	18.5%	3	14.9%	5	26.1%

Table C2 – Area of law by BAT4 scores

	Not at risk		At risk		Very high risk	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Administrative law	100	48.7%	65	31.7%	40	19.6%
Advocacy	61	54.8%	23	20.7%	27	24.6%
Banking / finance	36	41.2%	23	26.2%	28	32.6%
Civil litigation	171	50.8%	91	27.0%	75	22.3%
Commercial law	221	47.8%	142	30.6%	99	21.5%
Conveyancing / real property	112	50.1%	56	25.2%	55	24.7%
Corporate law	134	52.3%	64	25.1%	58	22.6%
Criminal law	111	47.9%	67	29.0%	54	23.1%
Debts / insolvency	46	49.3%	27	29.3%	20	21.4%
Employment / industrial law	95	54.8%	53	30.8%	25	14.4%
Environmental law	22	50.9%	14	32.2%	7	17.0%
Family law	121	47.2%	65	25.3%	70	27.5%
Immigration law	30	50.6%	21	34.6%	9	14.7%
IT / telecomms	29	46.6%	12	19.0%	22	34.4%
Intellectual property	58	51.3%	27	23.9%	28	24.9%
Litigation – general	123	50.3%	65	26.7%	56	23.0%
Personal injury	57	40.4%	38	26.9%	46	32.7%
Planning / local government	23	55.2%	10	23.6%	9	21.2%
Small business	45	53.8%	23	28.1%	15	18.2%
Taxation	20	45.6%	13	29.3%	11	25.0%
Trade practice	32	57.1%	17	29.9%	7	12.9%
Wills and estates	122	50.1%	59	24.1%	62	25.8%
Other	113	49.3%	66	28.5%	51	22.2%
Construction law	14	58.5%	7	29.1%	3	12.4%
Insurance	5	42.4%	1	8.0%	6	49.6%
Health law	8	51.3%	6	34.0%	2	14.7%
Elder law	1	15.4%	2	33.6%	2	51.0%
Regulation	4	50.5%	2	17.9%	3	31.6%
Media / entertainment	2	29.6%	3	44.6%	2	25.9%
Privacy law	3	38.0%	3	29.6%	3	32.4%
Human rights	7	55.8%	5	38.3%	1	5.9%
Class actions	2	46.4%	2	53.6%	0	0.0%
Education law	1	37.0%	0	0.0%	3	63.0%
Maritime law	0	0.0%	1	47.5%	1	52.5%
First Nations	2	67.4%	1	32.6%	0	0.0%
Sports law	1	27.7%	2	72.3%	0	0.0%
Financial services	3	63.3%	2	36.7%	0	0.0%
International trade	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%
Government	7	57.2%	2	12.7%	4	30.1%
Prefer not to say	8	38.0%	6	27.5%	7	34.5%

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