



GEN-Z:

**Now Influencing
Today's Law
Firm Culture**



**MAJOR,
LINDSEY
& AFRICA**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are thrilled to present our 2023 survey, *Gen-Z: Now Influencing Today's Law Firm Culture*. The Gen-Z population was born between the years of 1995 and 2012, and the oldest members of this generation are now joining law firm ranks as associates. Our survey aims to capture the perspectives, attitudes and thoughts of the Gen-Z population on law firm life.

The global pandemic has had a profound impact on the world, and the legal industry is no exception. The way we work, interact and think about our careers has been completely transformed, and we believe it is important to understand how this has affected the attitudes and motivations of the Gen-Z cohort.

Our previous survey, conducted in 2020, provided valuable insights into what drives Gen-Z lawyers, and we are excited to explore how this has changed in the wake of the pandemic and the new normal. We anticipate that the data from this survey will help law firms navigate the new challenges and opportunities that have arisen in the legal industry.

As the first generation of digital natives, Gen-Z lawyers will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the legal industry. By understanding their perspectives, law firms can attract and retain the best talent and adapt to the new realities of our post-pandemic world.

We are excited about sharing the results of this survey with you and continuing the conversation about the future of the legal industry.

Sincerely,
Nathan Peart & Jacqueline Bokser LeFebvre
Major, Lindsey & Africa | Associate Practice Group



Nathan Peart
Managing Director & Practice Lead
npeart@mlaglobal.com



Jacqueline Bokser LeFebvre
Managing Director
jbokser@mlaglobal.com

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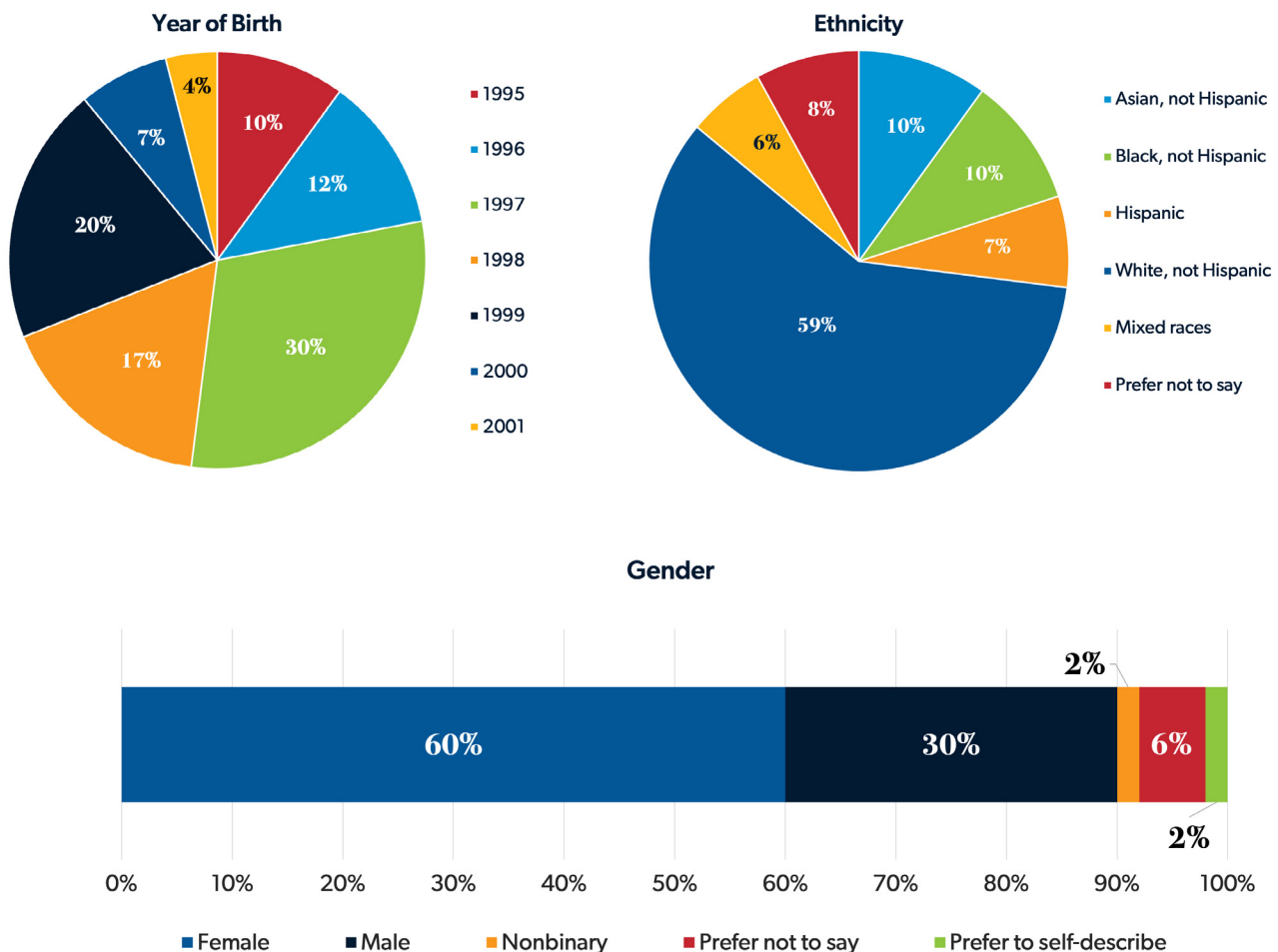
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Introduction

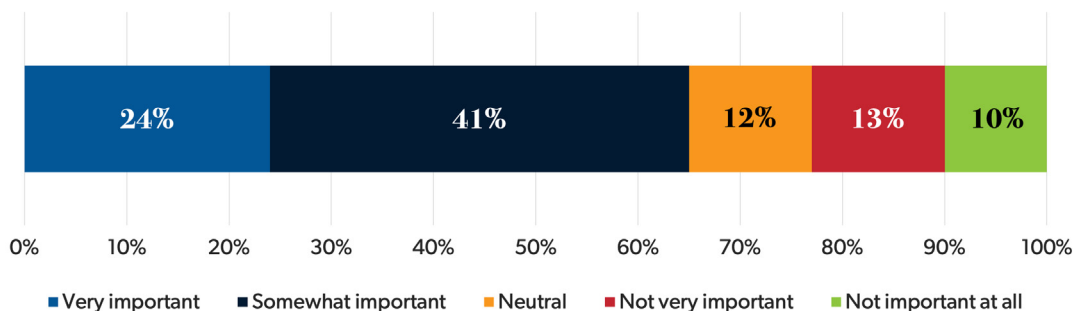
As the legal profession continues to navigate the changing landscape brought about by the global pandemic, Major, Lindsey & Africa sought to explore how Gen-Z members view their professional lives and future legal selves on a global scale. In this new survey, we expanded our target respondent pool to include law students and young lawyers from around the world, with a particular focus on those attending the top 100 law schools as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*. Our questionnaire centered around culture, development, and career expectations and was distributed through a variety of channels, including emails to law school career services offices and direct messaging through LinkedIn and Instagram. By examining the trends and changes since our 2020 survey, we hope to provide valuable insights for law firms seeking to attract and retain the best talent from this rising generation.

Who Responded

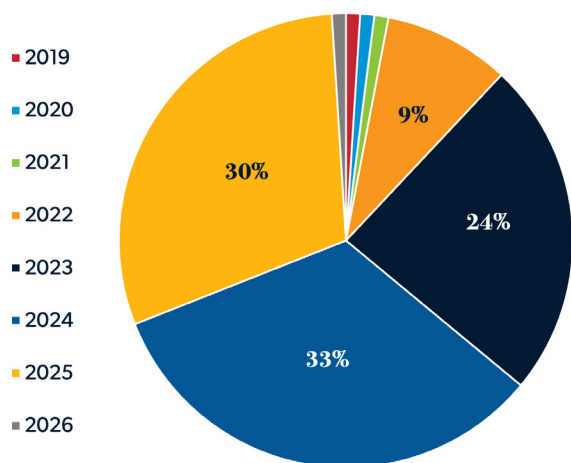
In this iteration of the survey, we wanted to include a wider and more diverse pool of Gen-Z students and young lawyers and took steps to include a global element to our outreach. While 91% of our responses came from U.S. residents, our survey was answered by Gen-Zers in Croatia, Chile, Germany, UK, Qatar and Malaysia.



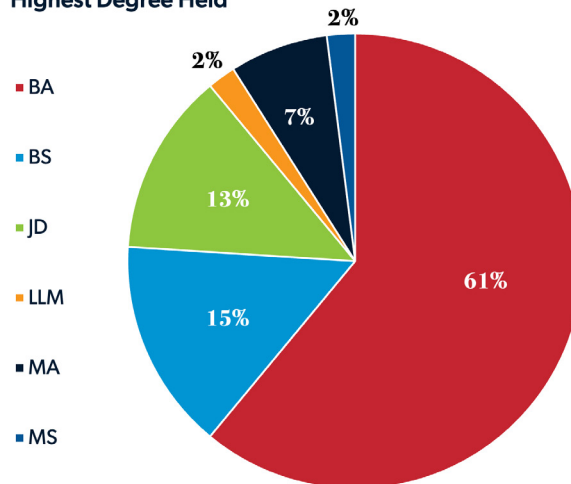
Importance of Rankings When Selecting a Law School



Year Graduated/Expected to Graduate Law School



Highest Degree Held



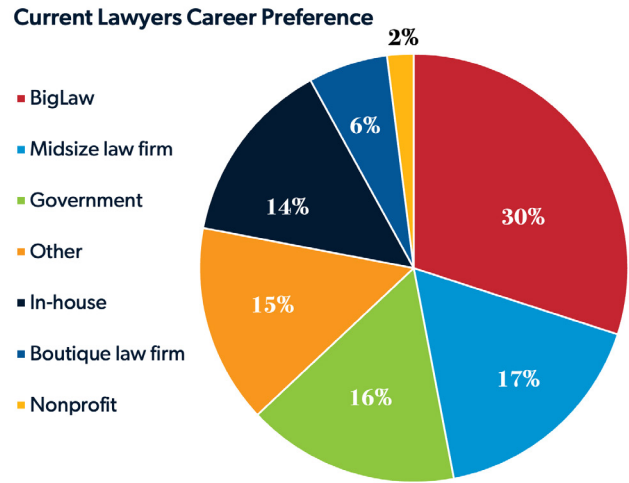
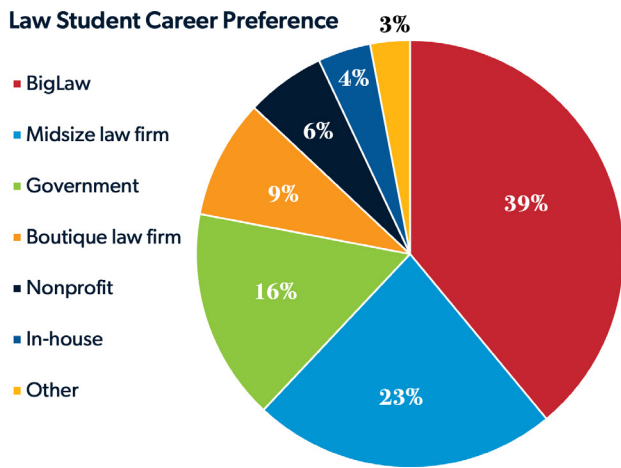
Employment After Law School

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their plans after law school. Key findings:

What size law firm do you plan to join after completing law school?

Over 70% of respondents who were current law students said they planned to begin working for a law firm after graduation; however, priorities seem to be shifting as to the type of firm. Thirty-nine percent of law students would like to join a BigLaw firm (e.g., AmLaw 200), in contrast with 59% in our 2020 survey. Twenty-three percent would like to go to a midsize firm and 9% would like to go to a boutique.

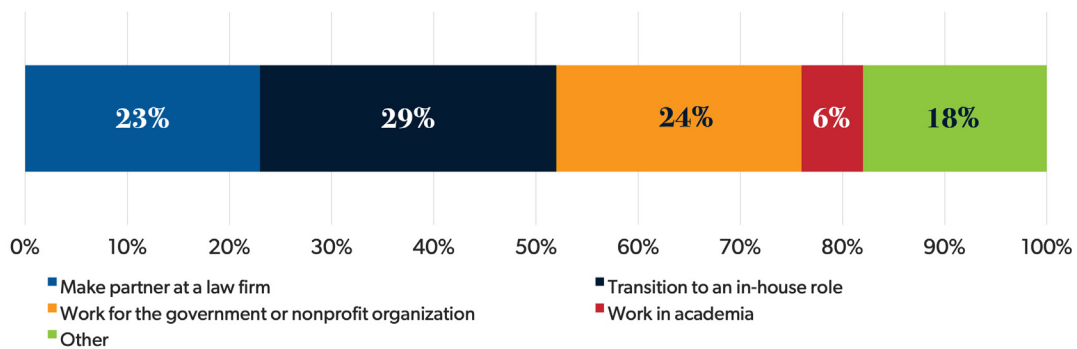
Interestingly, 16% would like to go into government and 6% would like to join a nonprofit. The fact that the majority of respondents are interested in joining a law firm after graduation is likely attributed to a desire for higher compensation and to pay off their student debt. The students who are interested in going into the government or a nonprofit are likely motivated by altruistic factors as well as job security.



If you are currently working as a lawyer/clerk, which employer are you most attracted to for your next legal job?

When asked about the size of the firm where they hoped to work next, 30% of current lawyers/clerks want to be at a large law firm, 17% would like to be at a midsize firm, and 6% would like to be at a boutique. Each category related to law firms saw a drop in interest from existing lawyers and clerks, whereas the desire to go in-house rose significantly to 14% and the interest to go into government stayed consistent at around 16%. This data set shows that once practicing at a firm, many clerks and associates are interested in practicing law in a different, non-law-firm environment.

What is your long-term career goal?

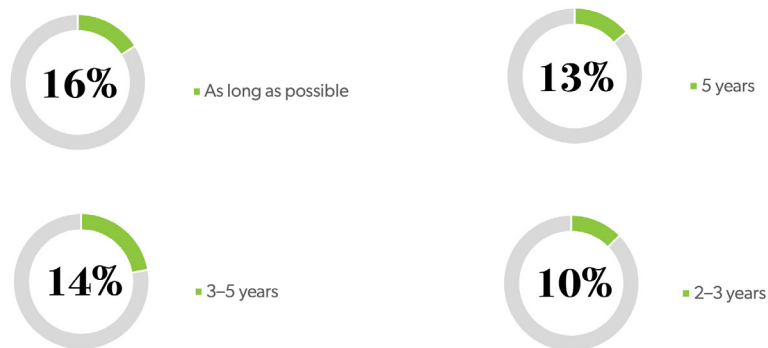


Based on survey responses, Gen-Zers' long-term career objectives are veering away from traditional law firm paths. Twenty-nine percent of respondents were interested in transitioning to an in-house role long term, followed by 24% who were interested in transitioning into the government or a nonprofit. There are perceptions among Gen-Z respondents that in-house opportunities and government positions offer a better work-life balance than do law firms. Gen-Zers are highly motivated to achieve work-life balance, so their answers are not surprising. We also see altruism and the pursuit of meaningful work as a strong motivator for Gen-Z's desire to work in the nonprofit sector or government long term. Only 23% of Gen-Z survey participants seek to pursue law firm partnership as a long-term career goal; this percentage speaks to the challenges associated with retaining talent and high attrition at law firms.

What do you think the path to partnership looks like?

There was a wide range of responses to the question regarding how long it will take individuals to make partner, but some patterns and trends emerged. The most common response was 10 years, followed by 8–10 years, and 5–10 years. There were also a substantial number of individuals who were unsure or did not have a frame of reference for how long it would take to make partner. Some individuals mentioned factors that may influence the timeline for making partner, such as the size of the firm and the partner track. There were also a few individuals who expressed a desire for flexibility and remote work in the partner track. Overall, there was a general expectation that making partner would take a significant amount of time and effort, but there was also a desire for transparency and clarity around the partner track and the factors that influence the timeline. Employers may need to focus on providing clear and realistic expectations around the partner track to attract and retain top talent in this demographic.

How long do you plan to stay at your first job?



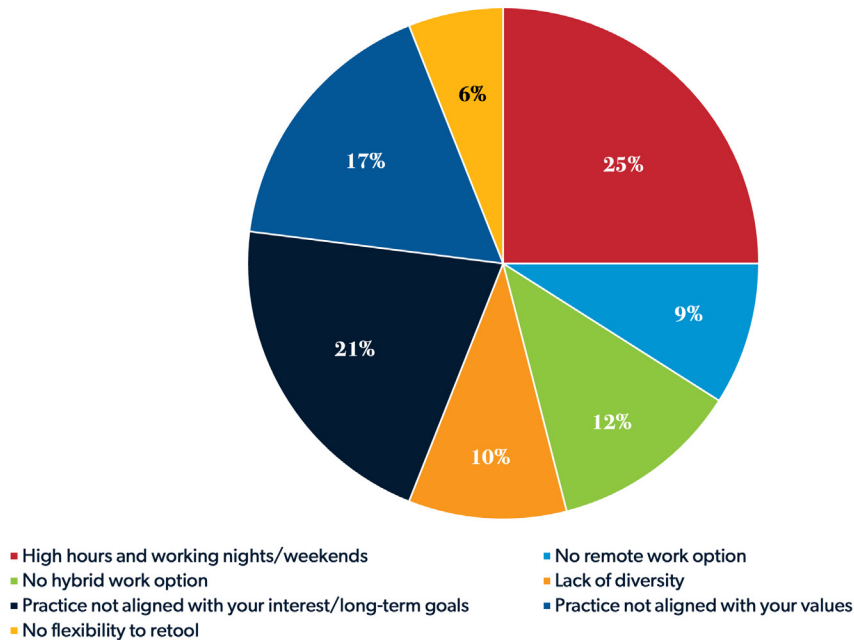
When asked how long someone would stay at their first job, the most common response was “as long as possible”, followed by 3-5 years, and then 5 years. There were also a substantial number of individuals who were unsure or undecided about how long they plan to stay, as well as those who expressed a willingness to stay as long as they are happy and productive. Some individuals mentioned factors that may influence their decision to stay, such as the opportunity for growth and development, compensation, and work-life balance. However, there were also individuals who expressed a willingness to leave if they find a better job or if their current job is unsatisfactory. Overall, many Gen-Z lawyers are looking for opportunities to grow and develop professionally, but they are also open to exploring new opportunities if they arise. Employers may need to focus on providing opportunities for growth and development to retain top talent in this demographic.

What would make you stay in BigLaw long term? Select the one(s) that apply.

Gen-Z respondents had two clear front-runners for this question: (1) opportunities for advancement and (2) highest market salary. Being promoted to partnership ranks is an honor bestowed on a select few lawyers. This understanding may contribute to attrition from BigLaw. Gen-Z desires opportunities for advancement within BigLaw. Moreover, Gen-Zers are consistent in their motivation stemming from financial stability. This is a core motivator for them and may contribute to longer tenure within BigLaw, especially given their student debt. In fact, the third-highest selected factor was student loan assistance. This is not currently a benefit we see afforded within BigLaw, but it may be one that curbs attrition.

What would make you leave your law firm job? Select the one(s) that apply.

The clear front-runners were high hours and working nights/weekends as motivators for leaving a law firm job. This correlates with Gen-Z's desire for work-life balance as a key motivator. The second most common answer for why they would leave their law firm job is that the practice was not aligned with their interest/long-term goals, and the third most frequent response was that the practice was not aligned with their values. Gen-Z has been characterized as a generation whose members are motivated deeply by their intrinsic values and seek work that aligns with these values. Offering more pro bono work that aligns with Gen-Z's social and moral values could curb attrition related to this factor.



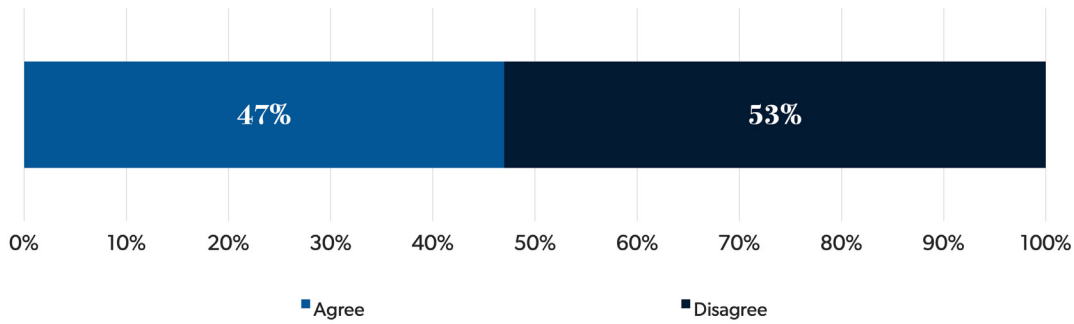
Perceptions About Law Firm Culture

Diversity is important to Gen-Z, but only half of the respondents felt that law firms genuinely care about diversity. There are still a sizeable number of future lawyers in this generational group who feel diversity messaging at law firms does not match the reality of practice.

Do law firms and partners care about associates?

The responses of Gen-Z students to the question of whether law firms and partners care about associates were divided nearly equally, with 53% of respondents disagreeing with that statement and 47% agreeing. This data suggests a perception among future lawyers that law firms and partners may not prioritize the well-being and development of their associates. The legal industry is known for its long hours and demanding workload, and it is important for law firms to provide resources and support to associates to prevent burnout and promote a healthy work-life balance. Acknowledging these challenges, particularly during the recruiting process, can help win prospective talent.

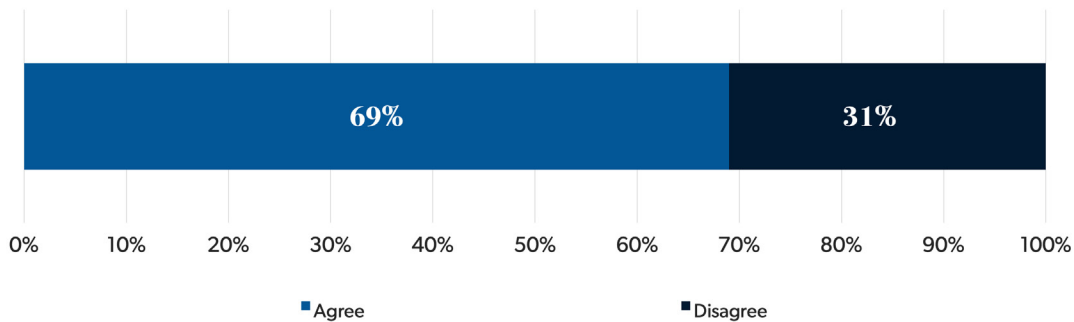
Law Firms and Partners Care About Associates



Is the legal industry changing for the better?

The data suggests a perception that the legal industry is undergoing positive changes. This could be attributed to the increased focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the legal industry, as well as the adoption of new technologies and work-life balance initiatives. Overall, the data suggests that this generation is optimistic about the direction of the legal industry, but there is still room for improvement and growth. As future lawyers, it is essential for Gen-Z students to stay informed about these changes and to actively work toward creating a more inclusive and equitable legal industry themselves.

The Legal Industry Is Changing for the Better



For which of the following, if any, would you trade a portion of your compensation? Pick your top three.

The clear top answers were more time off (62%), flexible work schedule (60%), and an almost tie between student loan assistance and reduction in billable hours (44% and 41%, respectively). This shows us that Gen-Z is motivated by work-life balance and values that balance above all else. Student loan assistance is likely attractive to respondents because they are the most indebted generation to date and value employers that are willing to help them address these financial concerns.

For Which of the Following Would You Trade a Portion of Your Compensation?

TOP ANSWERS:

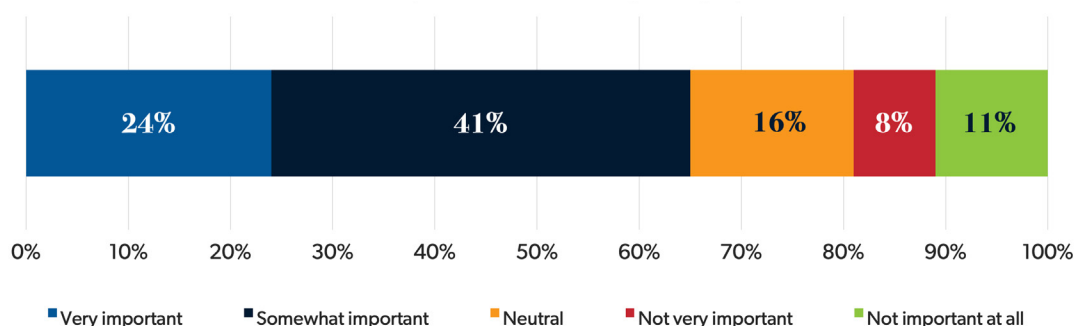
- 1 More time off
- 2 Flexible work schedule
- 3 Student loan assistance
- 4 Reduction in billable hours

Important Factors When Evaluating a Potential Employer

When selecting an employer, most respondents consider an employer’s racial, ethnic, religious, and gender composition to be somewhat or very important in their choice. This indicates that Gen-Z is increasingly aware of the importance of diversity in the workplace when considering which firms to apply to and where to accept offers. Employers that prioritize diversity and inclusion and openly demonstrate these values will not only attract a diverse pool of candidates but will also provide an attractive work environment to this up-and-coming generation of lawyers.

According to the survey results, the most important diversity benchmarks to look for in a potential employer are employees of various races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This highlights the need for law firms to actively recruit and retain diverse candidates from various backgrounds and sources.

How important is a firm’s racial, ethnic, religious and gender composition when selecting an employer?



The survey also highlights the presence of a sexist culture at law firms, with 79% of respondents agreeing that this is a problem. Law firms need to actively address and eliminate sexism in the legal industry and increase dialogue around these issues, as it is a key part of Gen-Z’s view of law firm life.

Ranking of factors when choosing an employer

The No. 1 factor in selecting an employer was tied between two categories: (1) formal mentorship and training and (2) highest compensation and bonus for geographic location. Other important factors included billable hours, diversity and remote work.



Very surprisingly, rotational programs and law firm prestige were not compelling reasons for Gen-Z respondents to choose an employer. Highlighting mentorship, training, market compensation, and bonus during on-campus interviews (OCI) and recruitment efforts is likely to capture the attention of Gen-Z talent.

Law firm corporate social responsibility programs are authentic and valued.

Sixty percent of Gen-Z respondents did not agree with this statement. Given that this is a core motivator for this generation of talent, law firm employers should emphasize social responsibility programs during OCI and recruiting, which will resonate with potential candidates. Highlighting how Gen-Z participates in these programs may create the personal connection that may move the needle so more Gen-Zers feel these programs are authentic.

How important is a potential employer’s pro bono program to you in selecting an employer?

Cumulatively, 61% of respondents said that an employer’s pro bono program was either very important or somewhat important. This generation is motivated by their core values. Having a pro bono program that resonates with their value set will help attract and retain this generation of talent.

How important is a potential employer’s corporate responsibility program to you in selecting an employer?

Cumulatively, 60% of Gen-Z respondents shared that a potential employer’s corporate responsibility was either very important (22%) or somewhat important (38%) in selecting an employer. Employers emphasizing their corporate responsibility programs in an authentic manner during OCI and interviewing may resonate with Gen-Z talent and help differentiate your platform.

How important are a potential employer’s social justice initiatives to you in selecting an employer?

For 63% of Gen-Z respondents, a potential employer’s social justice initiatives were either very important or somewhat important when selecting an employer. Social justice initiatives related to environment, gender equality, racial equity, LGBTQ+ rights and many others strike a chord with this generation. Highlighting your social justice initiatives will make your platform stand out to this generation. Furthermore, communicating how Gen-Z members could potentially be involved in social justice initiatives should they join your firm will be an even more compelling recruitment tool.

Important Factors in Selecting an Employer



What mental health initiatives from a prospective employer are most attractive to you? Pick your top two.

The clear front-runner — with 58% of the vote — was optional reduced hours or part-time policies, which is not surprising given that we know this generation is seeking work-life balance. Given the demands of the legal profession and the high burnout rate, offering these mental health initiatives may improve overall mental health and reduce the high levels of attrition in the profession.

Then, 39% of Gen-Z respondents ranked, each, (1) mental health leave and (2) free subsidized gym membership as the second most compelling mental health initiatives. There is a stigma associated with taking mental health leave, but talking about the high burnout rate in the profession and normalizing mental health leave as an acceptable choice that is not stigmatized may reduce attrition and would certainly help avoid burnout. Gen-Z seems similarly motivated by going to the gym as a mental health benefit, and this is certainly one to encourage.

Expectations for Work Life

What are the top three challenges you see facing the legal industry/legal practice?

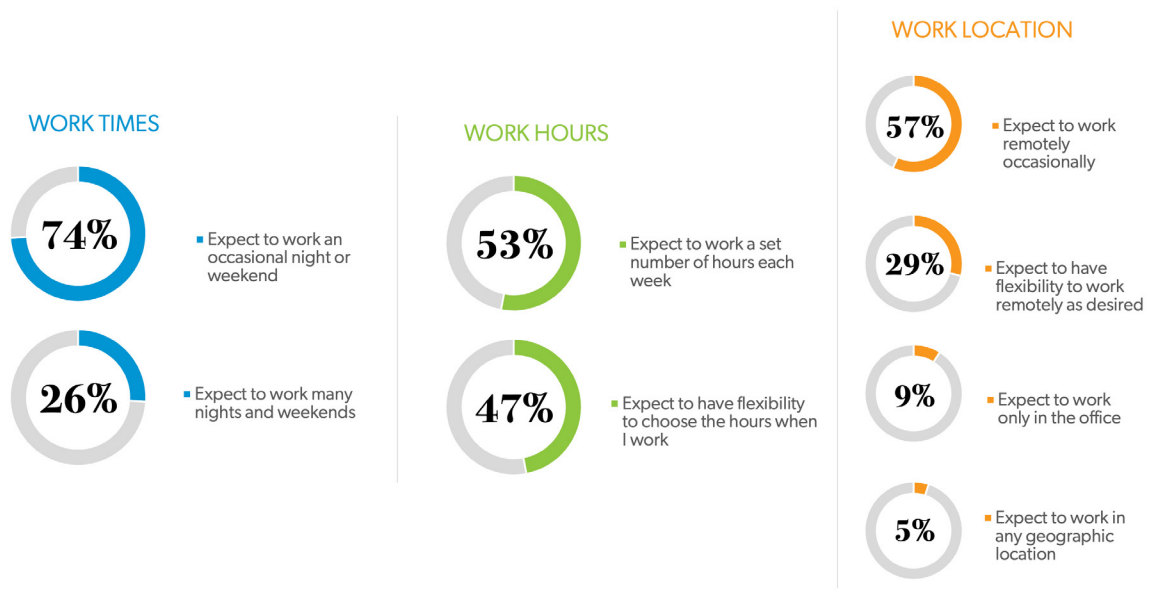
There were two clear front-runners to this question: (1) long hours and lack of work-life balance and (2) mental health/burnout. This is a core motivator for Gen-Zers— they are seeking a life that has strong boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Lack of diversity in the profession and working for firms/clients that do not align with personal ethics were also high on the list of challenges noted by the respondents.

Gen-Z is the most diverse generation to date, and its members want to see professional environments that mirror that diversity. Members of this generation are motivated by meaningful work that aligns with their personal ethics, and investing in initiatives such as days of service and pro bono opportunities may well address some of these problems.

What kind of mentorship or training program are you seeking at your firm?

Select the one(s) that apply.

Gen-Z is most motivated by an open-door environment and informal training that provides consistent constructive feedback on assignments. Although some respondents were also motivated by formal mentorship programs and assigned mentors, the informal day-to-day training was most important to them. Earlier in this report, we presented data related to which factors are most important in selecting an employer, and mentorship and training are the most important factors. Given this insight, emphasizing both formal and informal training to attract this generation of talent is key.



On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not important at all and 5 being extremely important), how would you rate the importance of work-life balance in your career?

The majority of respondents (74%) expect to work an occasional night or weekend, while 26% of respondents expect to work many nights and weekends. This indicates that Gen-Zers are willing to make some sacrifices in terms of their work schedule when entering the workforce. Additionally, the majority of respondents (53%) expect to work a set number of hours each week, highlighting the importance of work-life balance for them.

In addition, most respondents (92%) rate the importance of work-life balance in their career as important or very important. This reflects a growing trend among Gen-Z members, who prioritize a healthy work-life balance and value flexible work arrangements. This is supported by the responses to the question on work location, where 86% of respondents expect to have the flexibility to work remotely as they desire or on occasion.

Overall, the survey results suggest that Gen-Z members prioritize work-life balance and value flexible work arrangements. Employers in the legal industry must be aware of these trends and adapt their work policies and culture to attract and retain the best talent.

What type of technology do you expect from your employer?

There is a consistent expectation for employers to provide necessary technology for employees to perform their duties effectively. From our data, this includes computers; laptops; cloud storage; automated billing software; access to legal research databases, such as Westlaw and LexisNexis; and remote work capabilities. Some respondents also expect their employer to provide multiple screens, ergonomic furniture and cutting-edge technology, such as AI-powered drafting software, pointing to the digital native status of this generation. There is also a preference for using MacBook laptops and Apple products, and there were a few respondents who expressed frustration with inefficient or outdated technology.

It is clear that technology is a crucial aspect of the workplace for Gen-Z lawyers, and employers will need to prioritize providing adequate and up-to-date technology in the workplace to attract and retain top talent.

Effects of the Global Pandemic

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the legal industry and the next generation of lawyers. The survey results indicate that the pandemic has influenced what Gen-Z students value in an employer, with 69% of respondents answering that it was impactful in some way. Additionally, 65% of respondents answered yes when asked whether the pandemic has influenced their work style, indicating that young lawyers will be trailblazers when it comes to new ways of working. Furthermore, 63% respondents answered yes to the question of whether the pandemic has impacted their desire to work in the office versus remotely, highlighting the shift toward more flexible work arrangements as the norm and expectation among this group.

Many respondents expressed a desire for more flexibility in terms of remote and hybrid work options. Some mentioned valuing employers that prioritize the health and well-being of their employees, offer sick leave, and have a supportive culture.

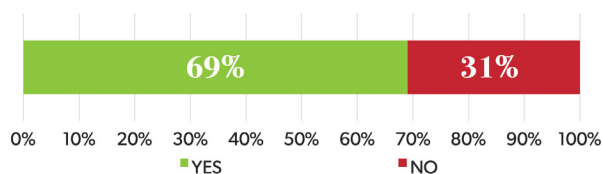
Others mentioned valuing clearly defined expectations around in-office versus remote work and not wanting to work for employers that put profits ahead of employee safety.

Some respondents said they now work from home more often or prefer hybrid work options. Some also mentioned that they have become more comfortable with virtual meetings and working remotely, while others enjoy the ability to work longer hours at home when they are most productive.

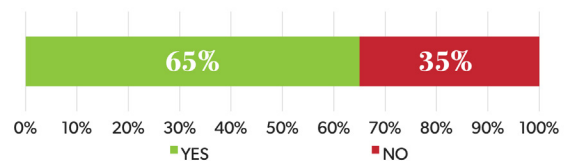
One benefit seen by this group of the pandemic and its effect on work is that they are more forgiving of themselves when they can't get work done. Others said they are more self-reliant, organized, and able to handle unexpected tasks. It is worthwhile noting that there were also some respondents who mentioned that the pandemic did not influence their work style or that they still prefer in-person work. Other reasons for preferring remote work included avoiding office politics or wanting to save time and money on commuting, although it was noted that there was value in in-person interaction and in being around colleagues.

Did the Global Pandemic Influence...

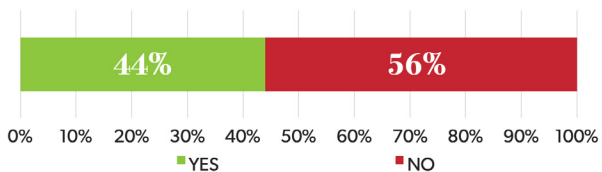
What You Value in an Employer



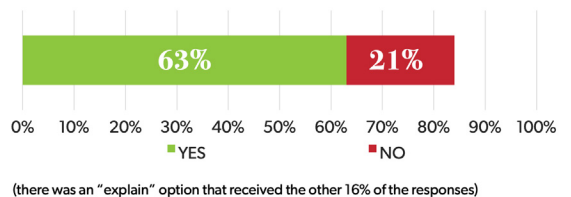
Your Work Style



Your Career Goals



Your Desire to Work In-Office Versus Remotely



The pandemic has also impacted the quality of legal education and work experience for law students, with 39% of respondents stating that the summer associate program was most impacted, and 49% respondents stating that mentorship from professors and other legal professionals was most impacted. This indicates that the pandemic has disrupted traditional interactions between legal education and work experience, and law schools and law firms must adapt to provide students with the necessary skills and mentorship opportunities but deliver them in a different way.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the legal industry and the next generation of lawyers. Employers in the legal industry must adapt to these changes and provide more flexible work arrangements and mentorship opportunities to attract and retain the best talent, while also helping them grow their practice and capitalize on opportunities in the market. Law schools must also adapt to provide students with the necessary skills and mentorship opportunities in a post-pandemic world through catch-up and focused development sessions, along with new education delivery formats.

Conclusion

Gen-Z students are interested in a diverse range of career paths even though the majority are expecting to move into a law firm after graduation. That being said, the pandemic has had a significant impact on Gen-Z's values, career goals and workplace preferences.

Respondents have high expectations around work-life balance and flexibility to choose when to work set hours. While they anticipate occasional night or weekend work, Gen-Zers want strict boundaries between work and nonwork life and expect remote work to be an option to some degree. Mental health initiatives, such as optional reduced hours or part-time policies, free/subsidized gym memberships and mental health leave, will be attractive benefits to Gen-Z lawyers. They also expect their employers to support their work with tools like access to legal research databases and up-to-date technology.

In summary, law firms that prioritize Gen Z's preferences and ideas are more likely to win the talent war in the long run and cement their longevity in the market.



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