

2019 MILLENNIAL ATTORNEY SURVEY

New Expectations, Evolving Beliefs and Shifting Career Goals



**ABOVE
THE LAW**

 **MAJOR, LINDSEY & AFRICA**

Millennials currently make up the largest cohort of the legal profession, and their unique working style has shifted workplace dynamics. Technological disruption and market forces have brought major change to the field of law. At the same time, the evolving preferences and priorities of millennial lawyers herald further challenges and opportunities.

To help law firms understand this changing landscape, we have partnered with our friends at Major, Lindsey & Africa for the second time to dig deep into the dynamics of the cultural changes that this generation has brought to law firms. During the first few months of 2019, we surveyed the Above the Law audience to find out about the priorities and goals of younger lawyers, as well as generational differences between that group and more seasoned colleagues.

In our inaugural 2017 edition of this survey, we learned that partnership was the primary career goal for young lawyers. This year saw that trend continue, but their interest in becoming partner also came with substantial criticism of the law firm culture, business model, and compensation structure.

Change is coming one way or another—these same millennials are aspiring to partnership, after all—but forward-thinking organizations will consider the factors that keep this cohort committed and engaged in order to stay on top of the market and ahead of the pack.

READ ON FOR OUR FINDINGS >>

METHODOLOGY

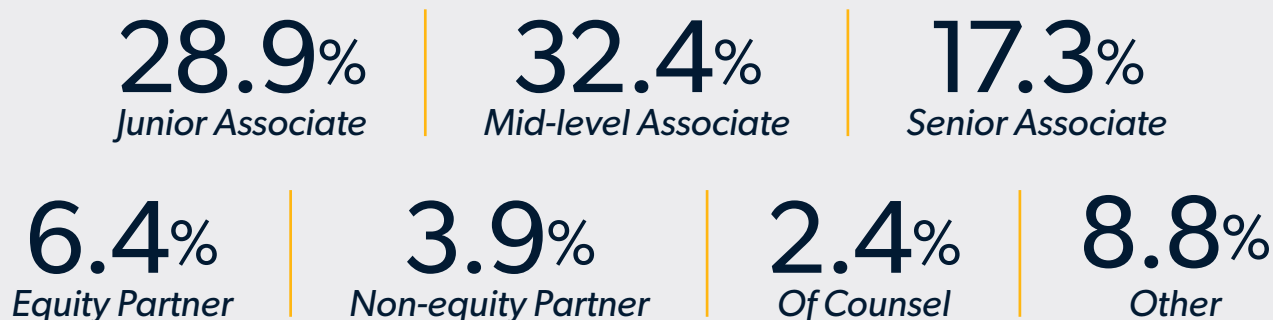
Between January and March of 2019, Above the Law fielded a series of surveys primarily targeting our millennial readership regarding their goals, priorities, and thoughts on generational differences and cultural shifts within law firms. Over 1,200 respondents shared their insights, which we have detailed here, segmented by overarching themes of the individual surveys.



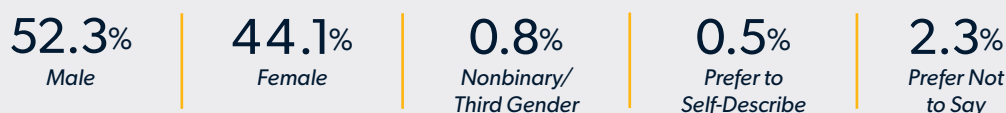
SURVEY RESPONDENTS

1,200+
respondents

Positions

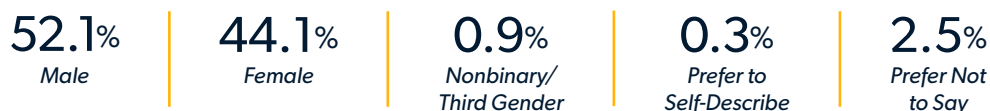


Overall Gender Breakdown

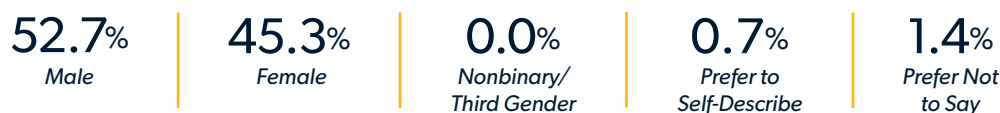


GENDER BREAKDOWN BY POSITION

Associates



Partner/Counsel





KEY FINDINGS

CAREER GOALS

- › **40% of millennial lawyers view partnership as their long-term career goal.**
- › After partnership, men are more likely to aspire to in-house counsel, while women prefer to go into non-profit and government work.
- › **Work-life balance remains the top priority for millennial lawyers.** Nearly 75% would trade a portion of their compensation for either more time off, a flexible work schedule, or a cut in billable hours.
- › Dissatisfaction with compensation (28.8%) and management/firm culture (21.9%) were the top two reasons cited by those seeking new opportunities.
- › While 70% of millennials self-described as loyal, over **75% were either open to new job opportunities or actively seeking them.**

LAW FIRM CULTURE

- › This high interest in partnership comes despite **clear criticism of law firm culture:**
 - **50.9% agree that the law firm business model is fundamentally broken.**
 - 66% agree that law firm partnership is less desirable than it was a generation ago.
 - 62.1% agree that millennials are transforming law firm policies and culture for the better.

GENDER AND WORK

- › **45% of women strongly agree that law firm culture is sexist,** compared to 14% of men.
- › **56% of women strongly agree that there is a gender pay gap,** compared to 18% of men.
- › Informal mentorships are more meaningful than formal ones, and women value informal mentorships more than men.

Table of Contents

GOALS

What do you see yourself doing in 10 years?	6
How confident are you that you will achieve your goal in 10 years?	7
Why are you interested in going in-house?	7
Ideally, how long would you like to work at your firm?	8
How “loyal” are you to your firm?	9
> Longitudinal comparisons charts	10
> Comparative chart percentages	11
How would you describe your firm’s level of transparency regarding associate career paths?	12
How important to you is your firm’s transparency regarding associate career paths?	12
Transparency/Loyalty	13
What would you like to spend more time doing?	13
How open are you to new job opportunities?	14
Loyalty/Openness to New Jobs	14
Please indicate the most important reason for your openness to a new job opportunity.	15

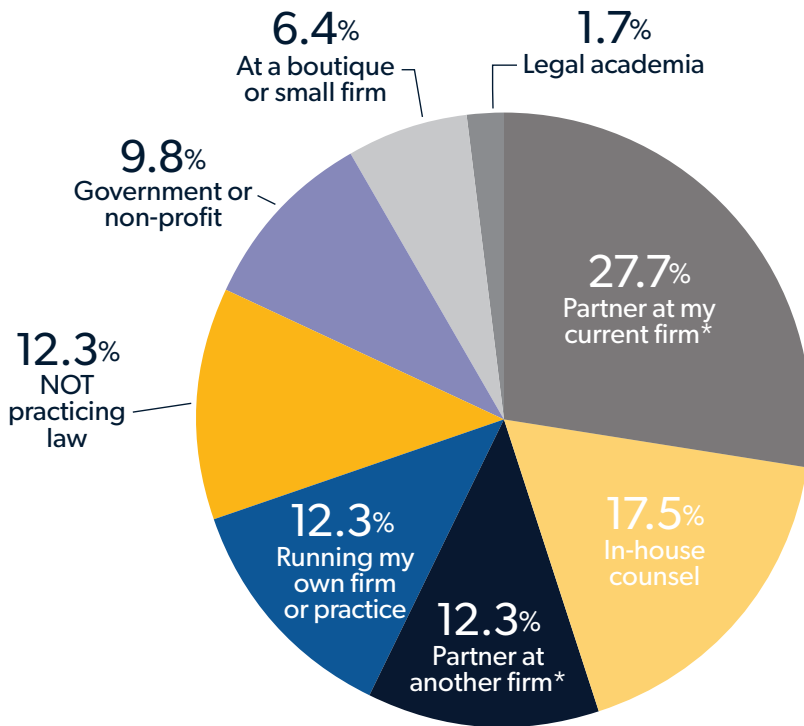
PRIORITIES

How important are the following to you in evaluating a potential employer?	16
Ranked by Variance	17
How important are the following to you in evaluating a prospective employer?	18
How important is it that your firm’s clients’ values align with your own?	18
Approximately how much time do you spend on business development?	19
How satisfied are you with the amount of time you spend on business development?	19
Which of the following does your business development activity entail?	20
Do you have a business development budget?	20
Which best describes your business development budget?	21
Which of the following, if any, would you trade a portion of your compensation for?	21
How important a role does or has an informal mentor played in your career?	22
How important a role does or has a formal mentor played in your career?	22
How would you rate the level of formal (i.e., assigned by firm) mentorship that you receive?	23
How would you rate the level of informal (i.e., personally developed) mentorship that you receive?	23

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Generational Differences	25
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What do you see yourself doing in 10 years?

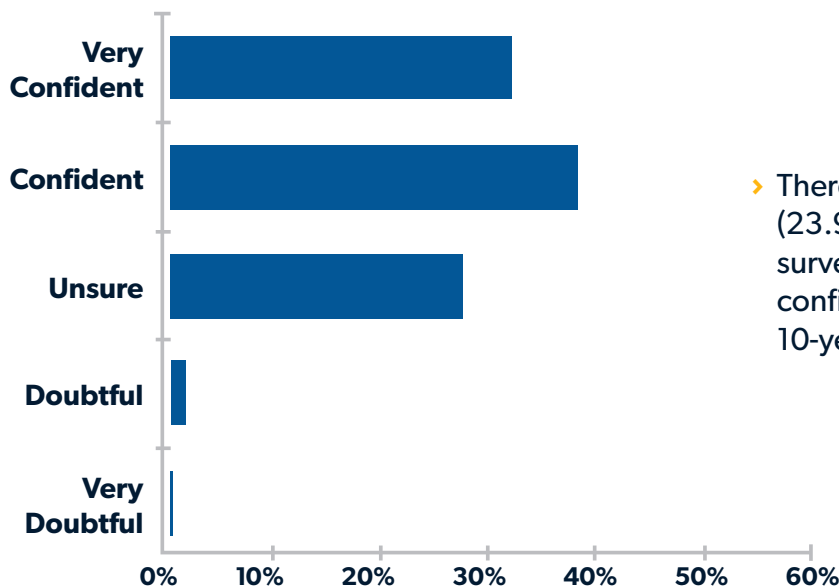


* 40% of respondents

aspire to become partner either at their own firm or at a different firm.

- › 12.3% of respondents indicated that in 10 years they would like to have left legal practice.
- › Many from that group reported they would like to own their own business instead of practicing law.
- › Since our first survey, the number of respondents who said they would like to be running their own firm or practice essentially doubled (6.0% to 12.3%).
- › There was a significant drop in those who said they would like to be doing government or non-profit work (17.2% to 9.8%).
- › In both surveys, the largest cohort of respondents indicated that they would like to make partner at their current firm. This year's survey found that nearly one-third of respondents would like to achieve this goal in the next 10 years.
- › 27.5% of **male** respondents reported that in 10 years they would like to be a partner at their current firm; the next largest cohort (17.5%) reported that they would like to be in-house counsel in 10 years.
- › 23.7% of **female** respondents reported that would like to be a partner at their current firm in 10 years; the next largest group (18.6%) indicated that they would like to be working for a government or non-profit organization in 10 years.

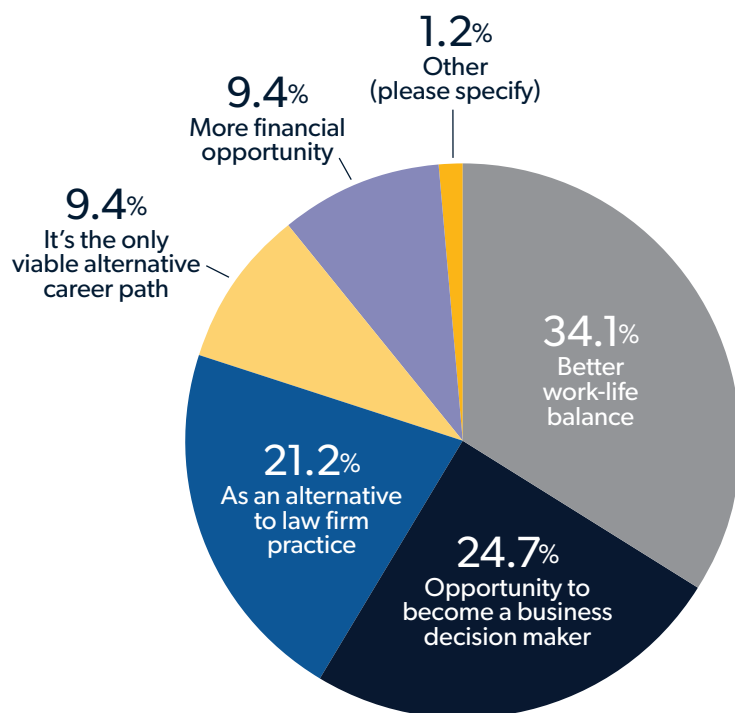
How confident are you that you will achieve your goal in 10 years?



- There was a substantial increase (23.9% to 31.9%) from the 2017 survey in respondents who were “very confident” they would achieve their 10-year goals.

Why are you interested in going in-house?

(select all that apply)



- “Better work-life balance” remains the primary reason respondents would go in-house.
- Yet, compared with our earlier findings, there was an almost 10% drop in those who wanted to go in-house for a “better work-life balance” (47.1% to 34.1%).
- In our earlier survey, 15.7% indicated they would go in-house “as an alternative to law firm practice,” whereas in this year’s survey that number increased to 21.2%.

LONGITUDINAL COMPARISONS

Ideally, how long would you like to work at your firm?

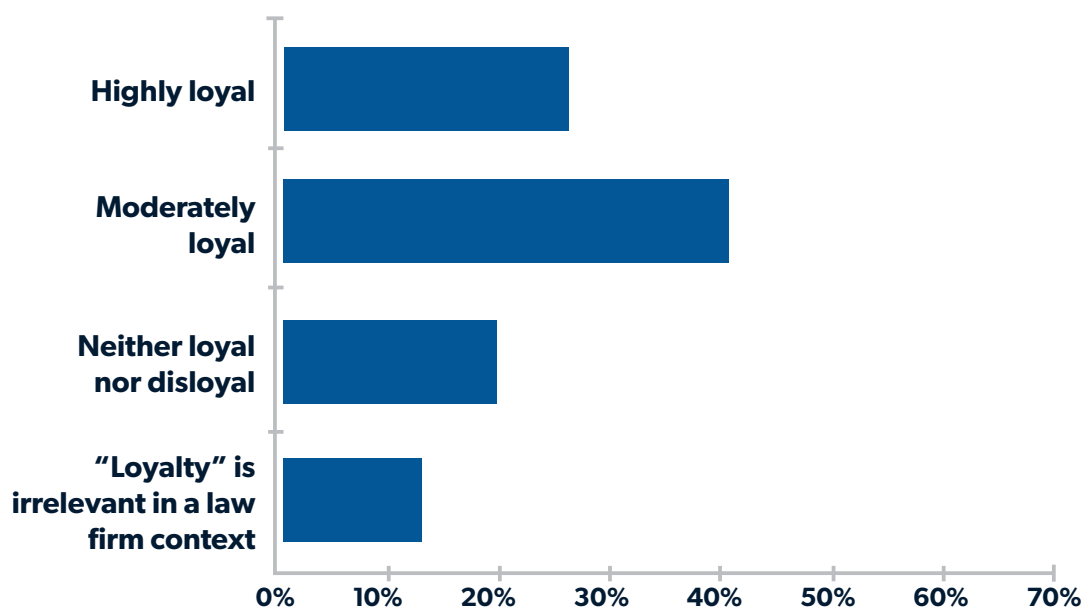


	1-2 years	3-5 years	5-7 years	Partnership
JUNIORS	27.3%	36.4%	10.2%	26.1%
MID-LEVELS	13.6%	30.9%	27.2%	28.4%
SENIOR	8.6%	20.0%	17.1%	54.3%

- › In our 2017 survey, a plurality of respondents (34.8%) indicated that they would like to make partner at their current firm. This year, the percentage dropped slightly to 30.0%.
- › Also notably, the number of respondents who stated they would stay at their firms for 5 to 7 years increased from 14.1% to 21.0%.
- › 33.3% of **male** respondents reported that they had partnership aspirations at their current firm, compared with 25.5% of their **female** peers.

LONGITUDINAL COMPARISONS

How “loyal” are you to your firm? (Overall)

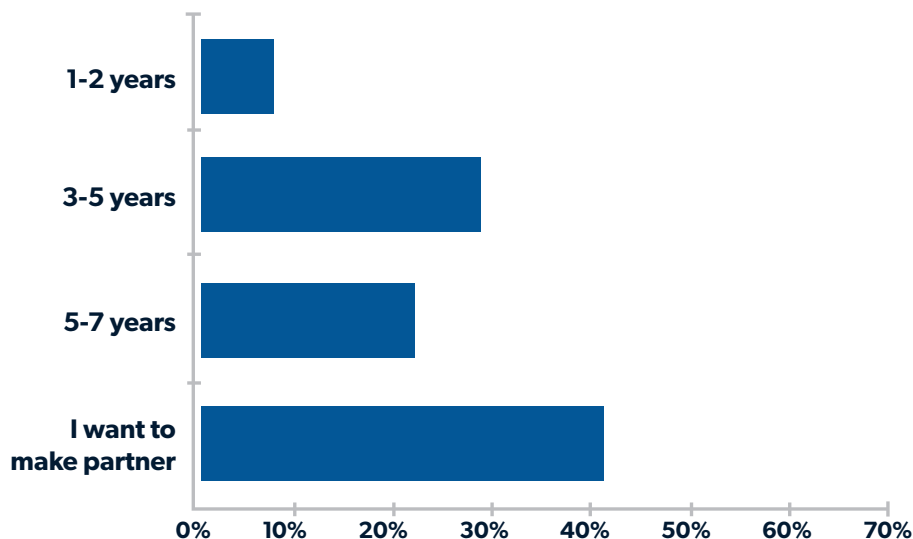


- › Compared to the 2017 survey, there was a decline in the cohort that characterized loyalty as “irrelevant,” from 16.2% to 12.9%.
- › 38.9% of **male** respondents self-described as “moderately loyal” to their firm; 26.7% self-described as “highly loyal.”
- › 52.0% of **female** respondents self-described as “moderately loyal” to their firm; only 17.4% self-described as “highly loyal.”

GOALS

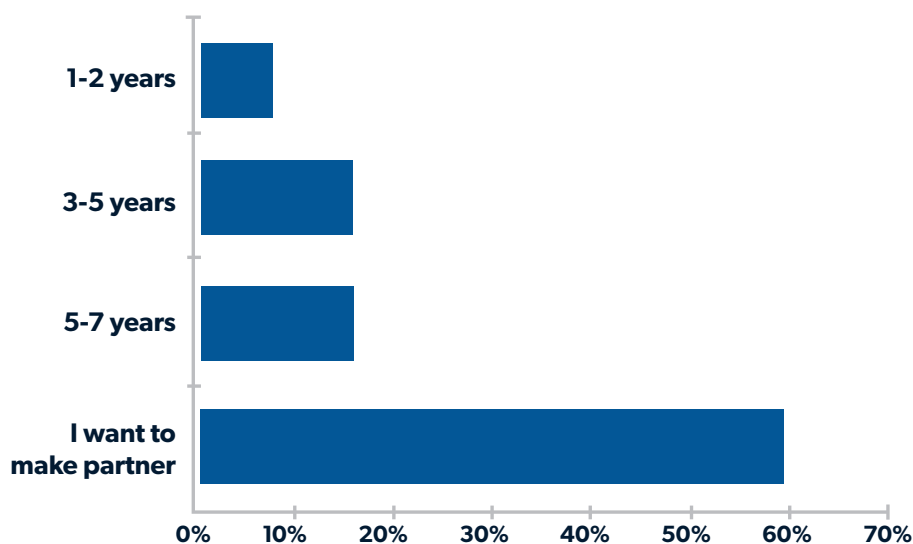
We isolated the responses from individuals who self-described as **“highly”** or **“moderately”** loyal and found that they were more likely to have aspirations to partnership at their current firm, at a rate of over 40% — 10% higher than the overall proportion.

Ideally, how long would you like to work at your current firm?



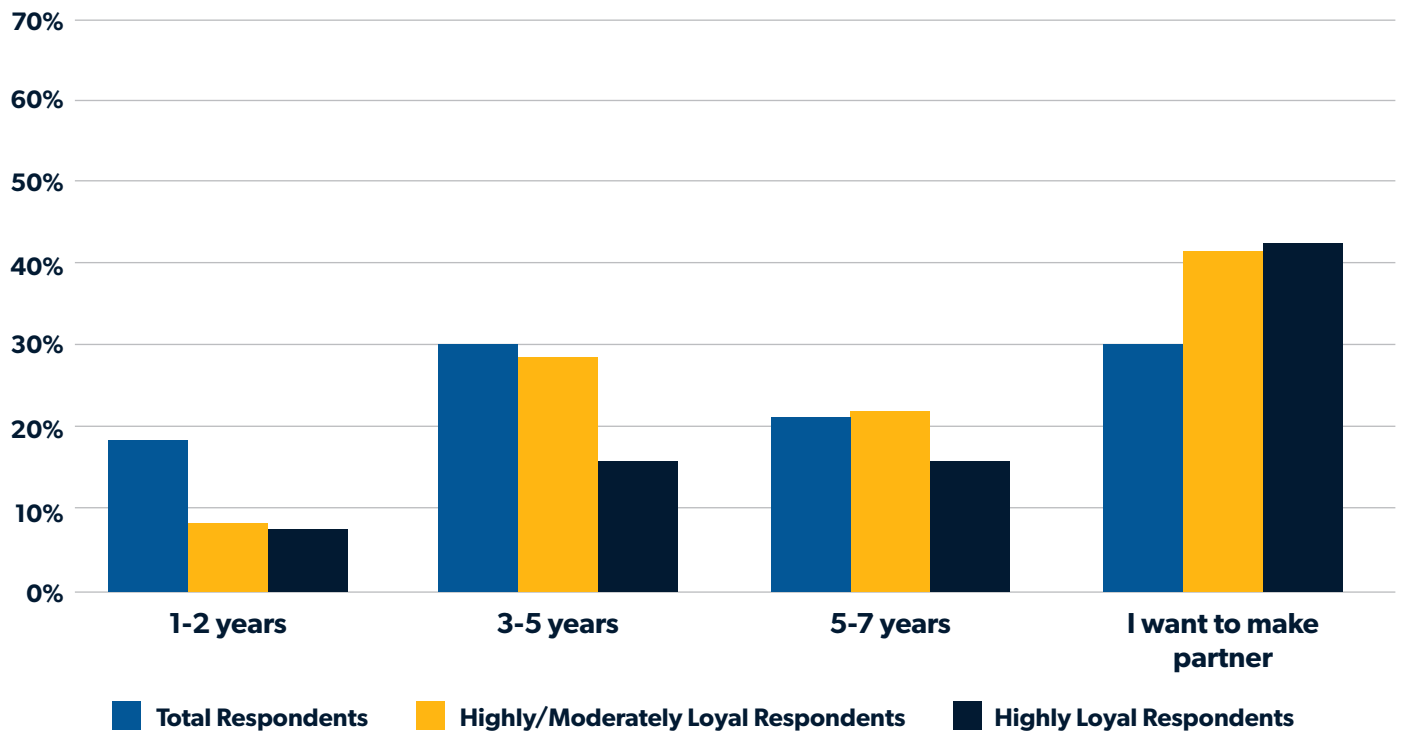
We also looked at individuals who described themselves as **“highly”** loyal and found that this cohort was even more likely to aspire to partnership at their current firm, at a rate of approximately 60%.

Ideally, how long would you like to work at your current firm?



COMPARATIVE CHART

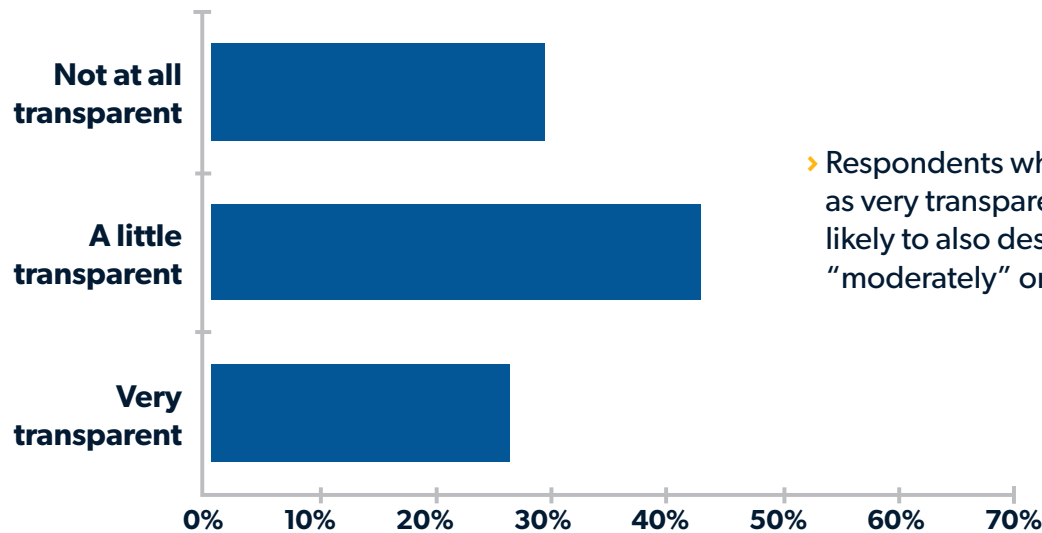
Ideally, how long would you like to work at your current firm?



- › Respondents who described themselves as “loyal” to some degree were 10.0% more likely to aspire to partnership than respondents as a whole.
- › Among respondents who described themselves as “highly loyal,” closer to 60.0% aspired to partnership.

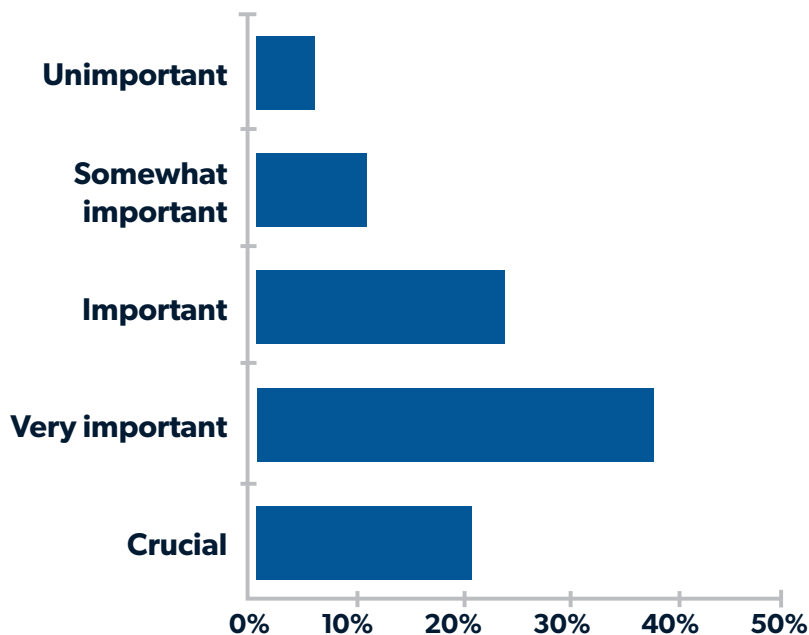
GOALS

How would you describe your firm's level of transparency regarding associate career paths (including feedback on whether an associate is on track for partnership)?



› Respondents who describe their firms as very transparent were 20.0% more likely to also describe themselves as "moderately" or "highly" loyal.

How important to you is your firm's transparency regarding associate career paths?

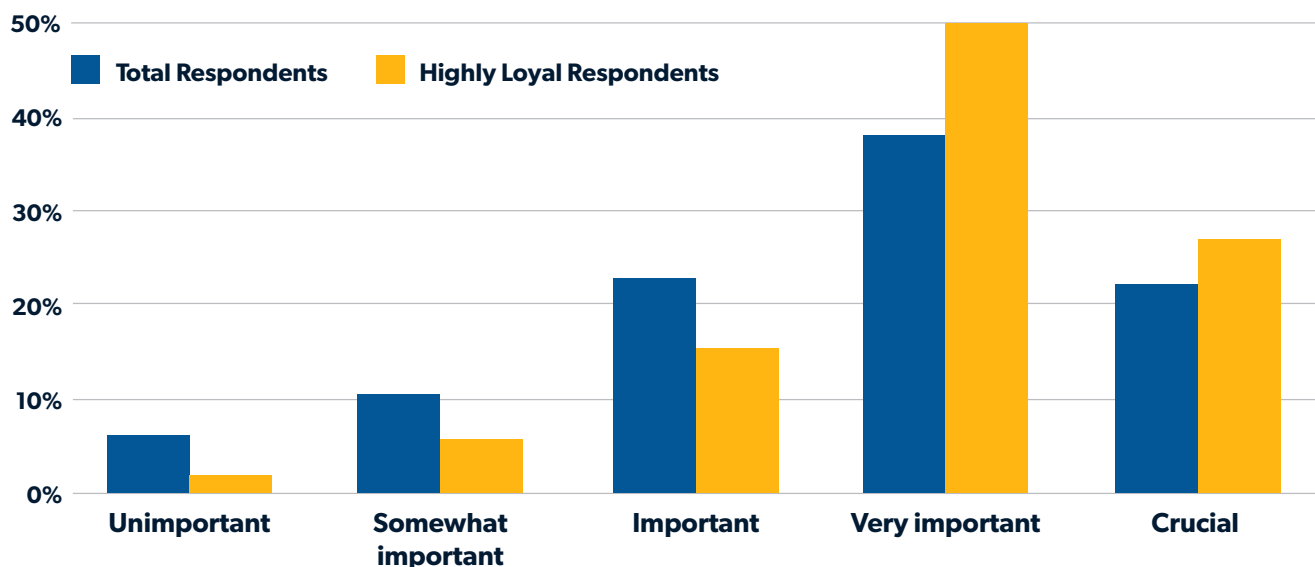


We segmented respondents by gender:

- › 35.9% of **male** respondents reported that firm transparency was "very important;" 22.1% reported that it was "crucial."
- › 40.2% of **female** respondents reported that firm transparency was "very important;" 19.6% reported that it was "crucial."

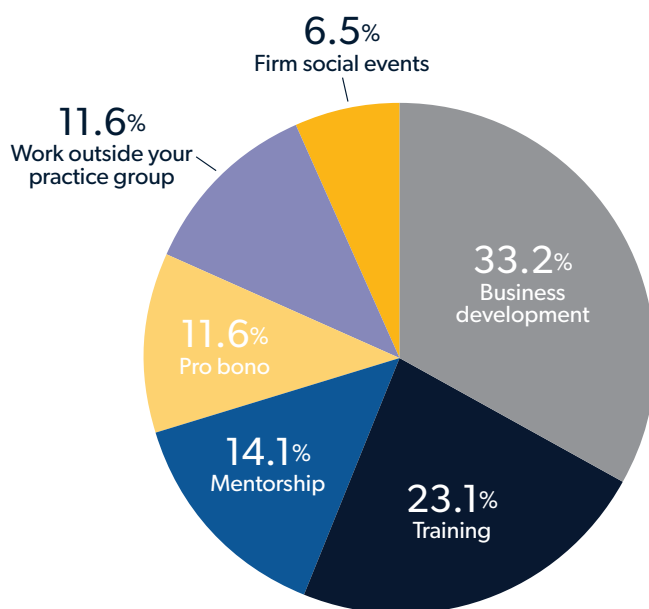
TRANSPARENCY/LOYALTY

How important to you is your firm's transparency regarding associate career paths?



- › Loyalty and transparency correlate; those who reported being highly loyal to their firms also tend to consider their firm's transparency regarding career paths to be very important.

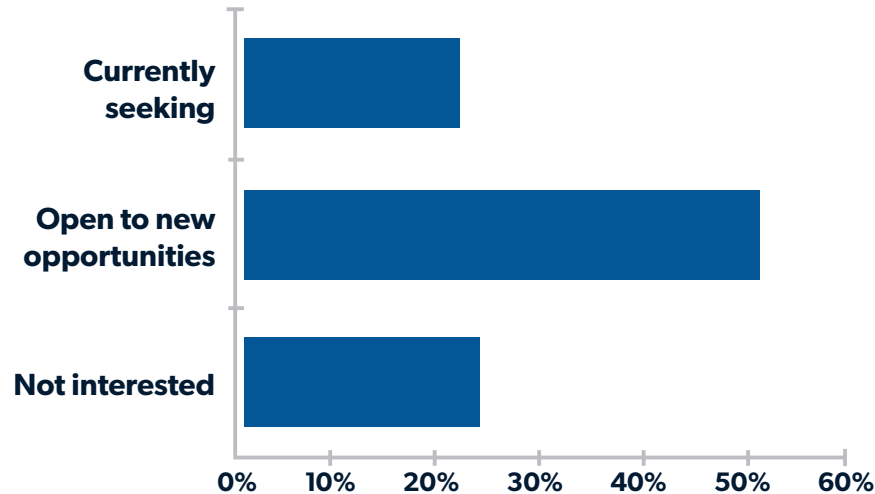
What would you like to spend more time doing?



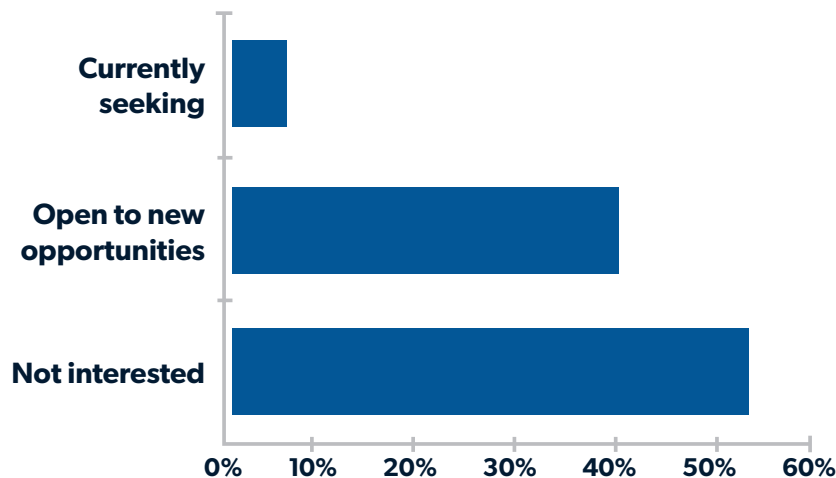
- › There were modest increases in respondents who wanted to participate in more firm social events (3.4% to 6.5%), and in training (19.7% to 23.1%), when compared to our 2017 survey.
- › There was a slight drop in those who wanted to participate more in business development (36.8% to 33.2%).

NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT GOALS

How open are you to new job opportunities?



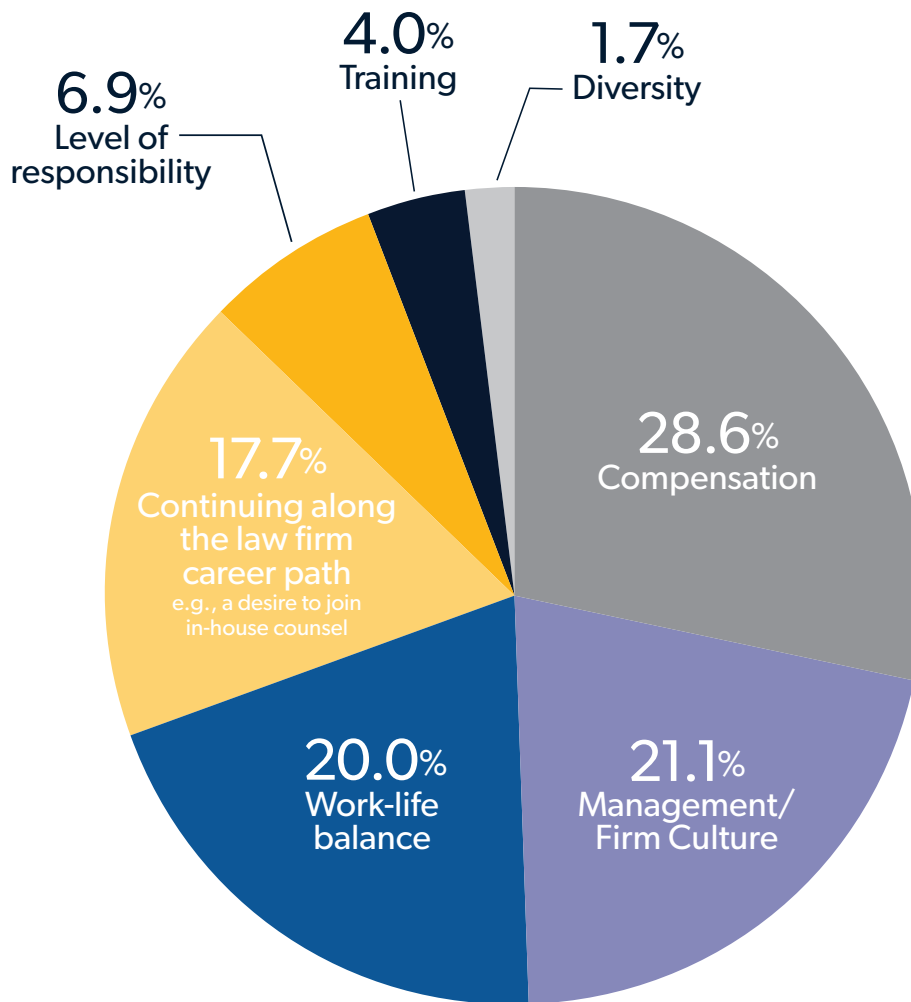
Loyalty/Openness to New Jobs



- › 53.9% of individuals who reported being "highly loyal" to their firm also reported that they were "not interested" in new job opportunities.
- › 40.0% of those who reported being "highly loyal" were open to new opportunities.
- › Only 6.2% of those who reported being "highly loyal" were currently seeking new jobs.
- › Associates who are more loyal tend to be less open to new jobs.

NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT GOALS

Please indicate the most important reason for your openness to a new job opportunity.



- › Dissatisfaction with compensation (28.6%) and management/firm culture (21.1%) were the top two reasons people were seeking new opportunities.
- › Dissatisfaction with diversity was the lowest ranking reason, with only 1.7% of respondents marking this option.

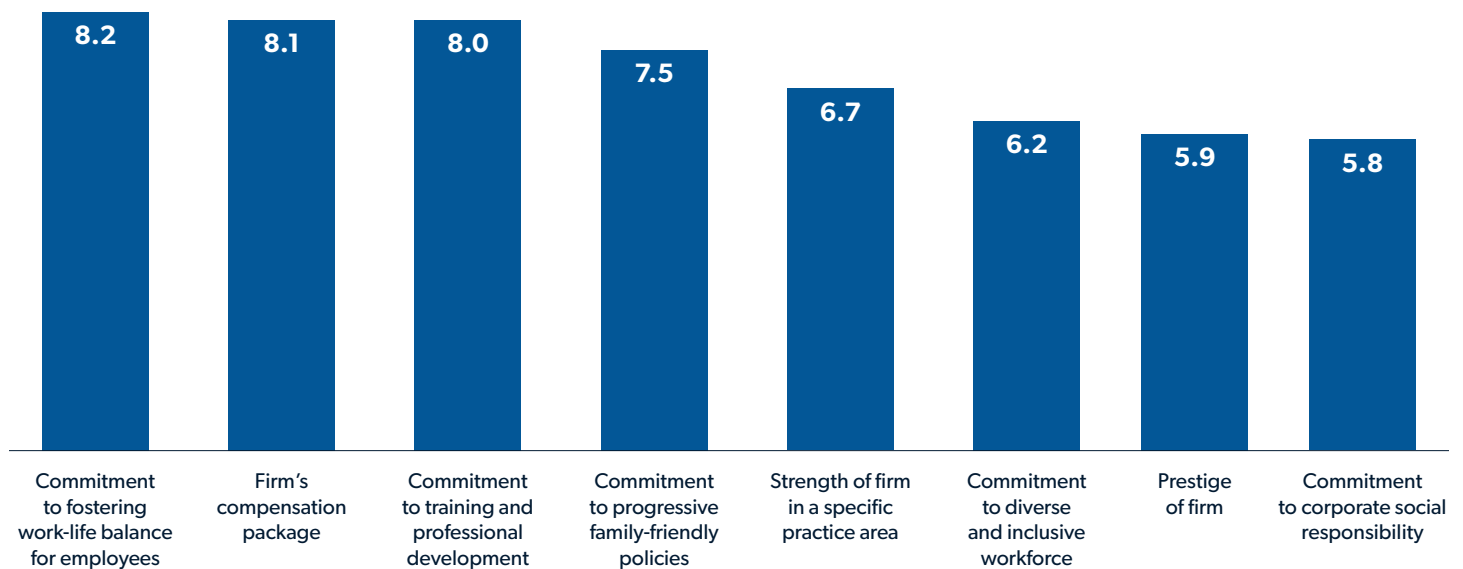
PRIORITIES



LONGITUDINAL COMPARISON

How important are the following to you in evaluating a potential employer?

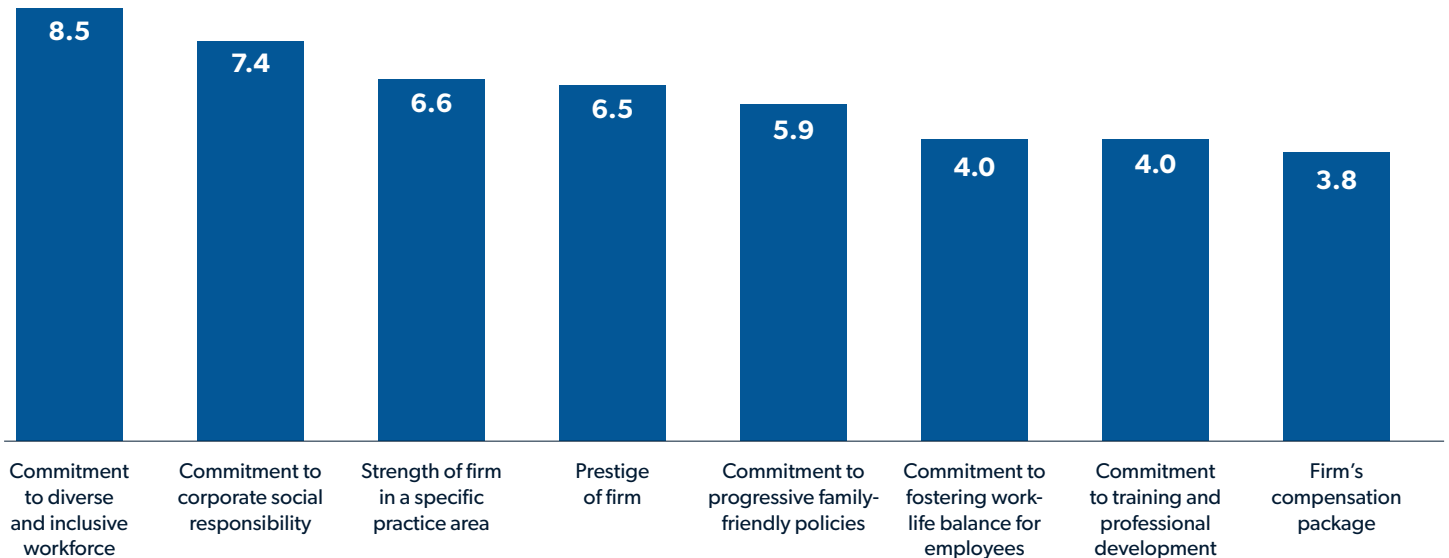
Assign a value from zero (irrelevant) to ten (very important):



PRIORITIES

Ranked by Variance

Higher variance indicates greater diversity of opinion on the importance of these factors when evaluating a potential employer.



- › Respondents in this year's survey value work-life balance and compensation packages over all other factors when evaluating potential employers.
- › Compared to our 2017 findings, there was an increase in how important respondents found potential employers' commitment to fostering work-life balance for employees and commitment to progressive family-friendly policies.
- › Firms' commitment to training and professional development and to progressive family-friendly policies were next in importance.
- › Consistent with earlier findings, the diversity and inclusion ratings saw a strikingly wide variance. Apparently, millennial attorneys typically care very much or very little about the issue.

PRIORITIES

How important are the following to you in evaluating a prospective employer?

Commitment to diverse and inclusive workforce	♂ 5.2	♀ 7.3
Commitment to corporate social responsibility	♂ 5.3	♀ 6.4
Strength of firm in a specific practice area	♂ 6.7	♀ 6.8
Prestige of firm	♂ 6.0	♀ 5.7
Commitment to progressive family-friendly policies	♂ 7.07	♀ 8.0
Commitment to fostering work-life balance for employees	♂ 8.0	♀ 8.6
Commitment to training and professional development	♂ 7.9	♀ 8.1
Firm's compensation package	♂ 8.2	♀ 7.8

› Respondents who identified as **male** indicated that the firm's compensation package was the most important factor when evaluating a potential employer.

› Respondents who identified as **female** indicated that a commitment to fostering work-life balance for employees was the most important factor when evaluating a potential employer, in line with the overall results.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT YOUR FIRM'S CLIENTS' VALUES ALIGN WITH YOUR OWN?

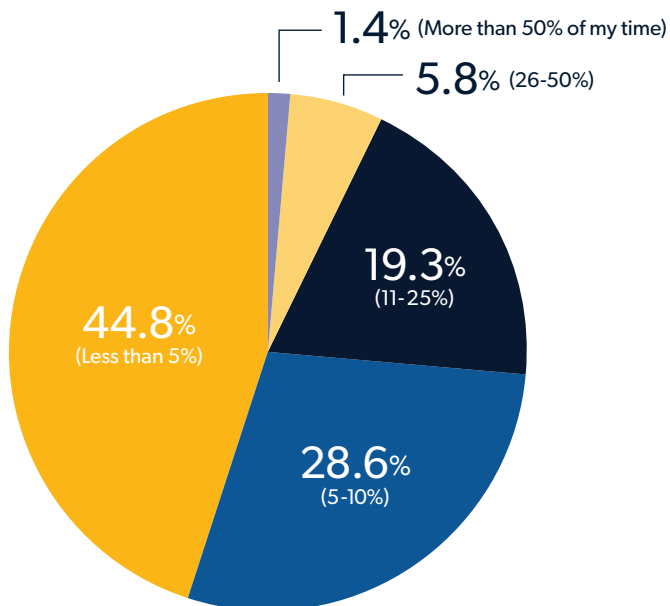
The average score was **5.2**

› Compared to our 2017 survey, there was an increase, from 4.8 to 5.2, in the importance of a firm's clients' values aligning with that of respondents.

› Respondents who identified as **female** found it more important that their firm's clients' values aligned with their own (5.7 as opposed to 4.8 reported by **males**).

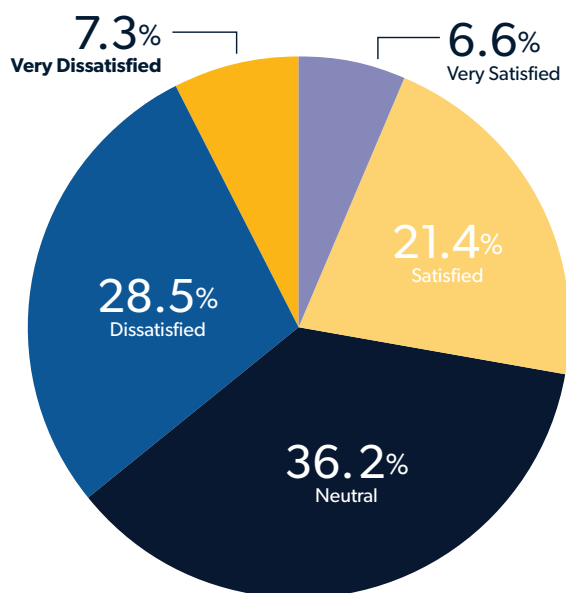
PRIORITIES

Approximately how much time do you spend on business development?



- › Compared to our 2017 survey, there was a notable increase in the percentage of respondents who stated that they spent less than 5% of their time on business development (35.2% to 44.8%).
- › The percentage of respondents who marked that they spent more than 50% of their time on business development jumped from .9% to 1.4% from 2016 to 2019 (albeit still under 2%).

How satisfied are you with the amount of time you spend on business development?

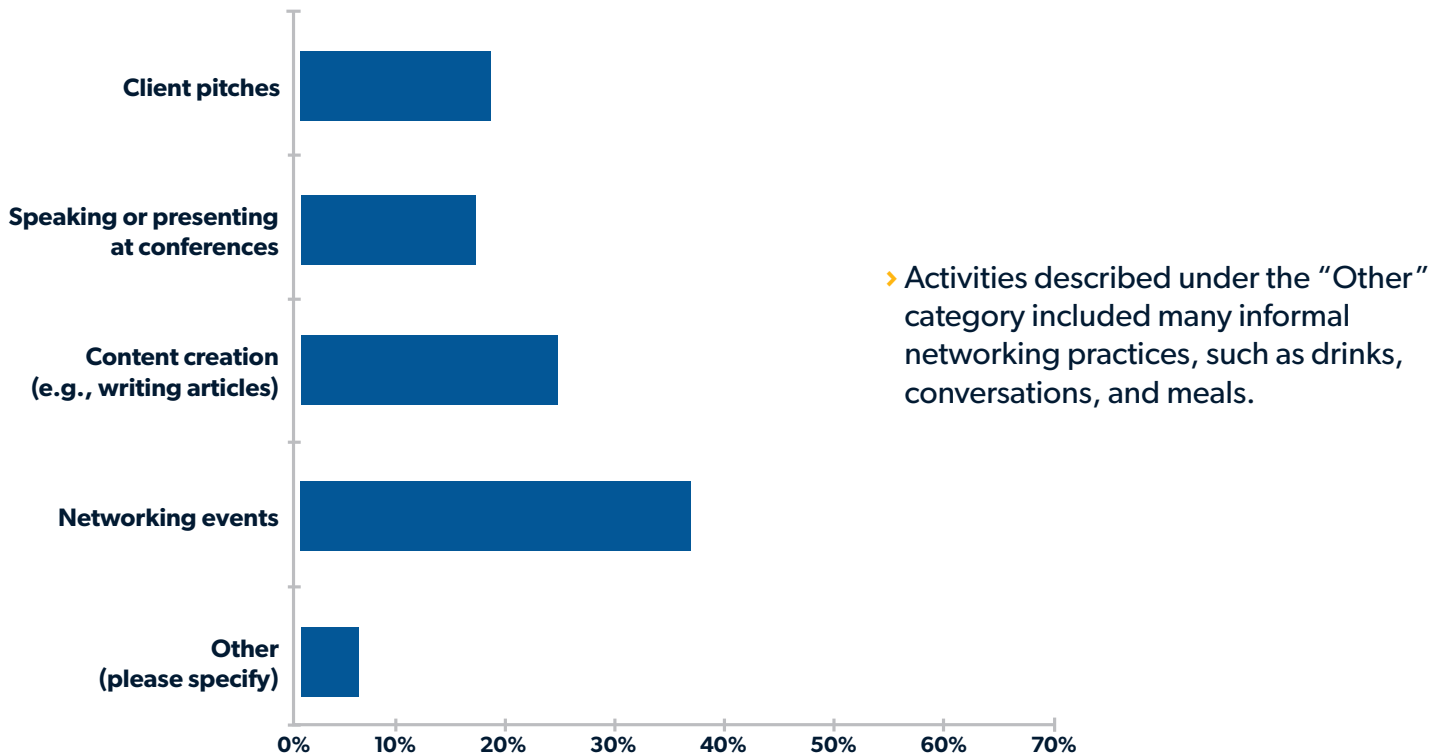


- › Notable changes compared to the 2017 survey include a drop in "very satisfied" responses, from 8.6% to 6.6%, and an over 5% increase in "dissatisfied" respondents, from 22.4% to 28.5%.

NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIORITIES

Which of the following does your business development activity entail?

Select all that apply.



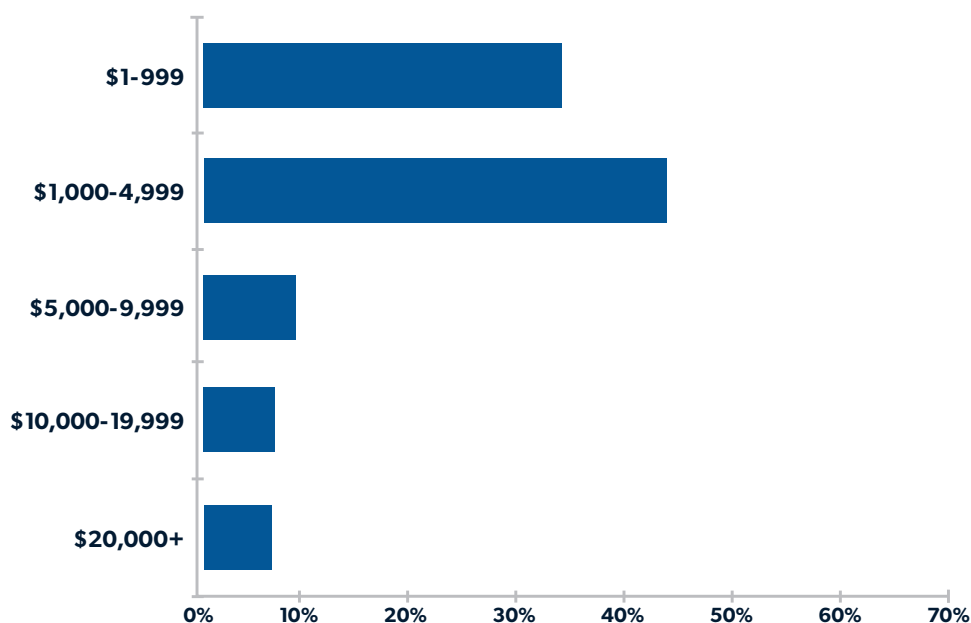
Do you have a business development budget?

34%
Yes

66%
No

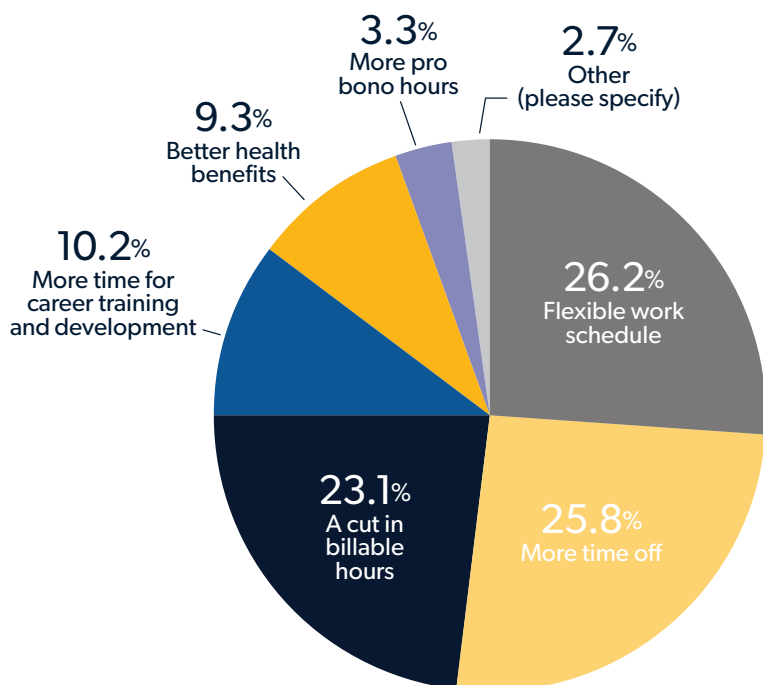
NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIORITIES

Which best describes your business development budget?



Which of the following, if any, would you trade a portion of your compensation for?

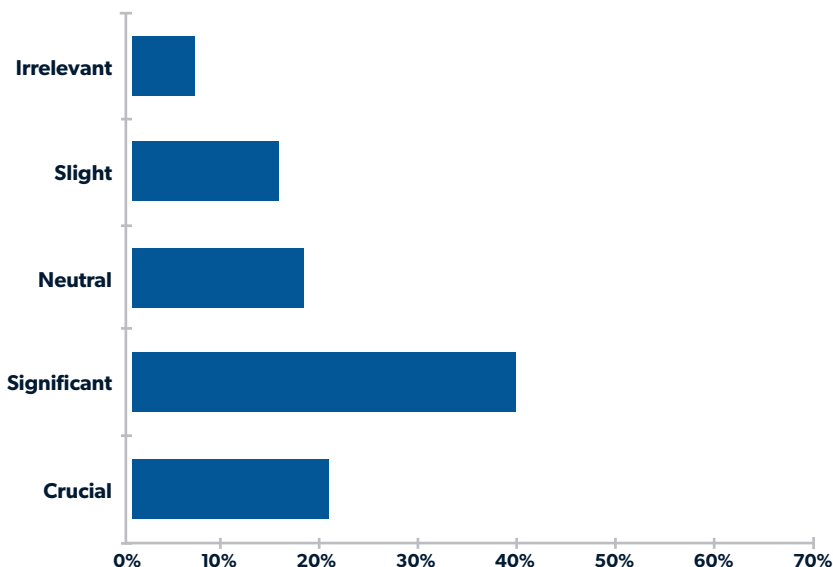
Select all that apply.



- › A flexible work schedule was the primary factor that respondents indicated that they would trade a portion of their compensation for (26.2%). This was followed by more time off (25.8%).
- › Respondents were least likely to trade compensation for more pro bono hours (of all of the specified options).
- › Both **male** (25.3%) and **female** (26.8%) respondents indicated that a flexible work schedule was the primary option that they would trade a portion of their compensation for. Both cohorts indicated that more time off would be the next option.

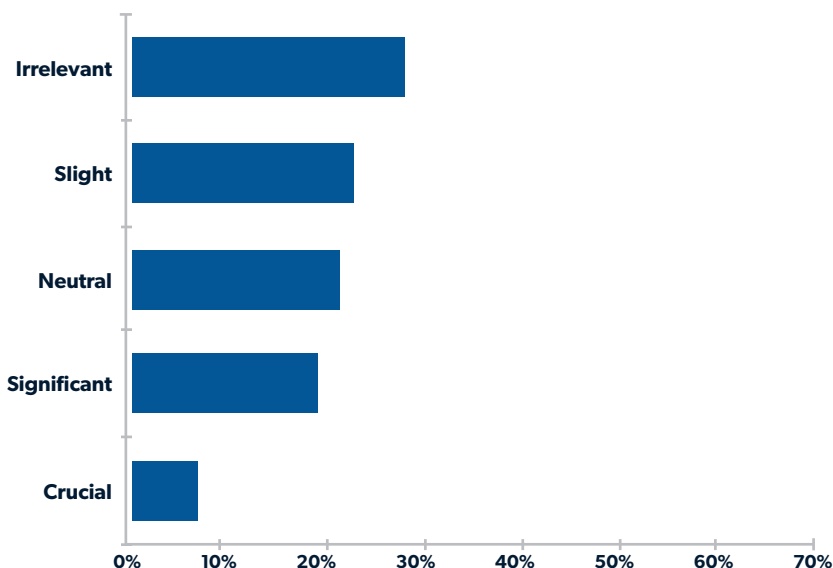
NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIORITIES

How important a role does or has an informal mentor played in your career?



- › A combined 61.0% of respondents reported that an informal mentor has had either a significant or crucial role in their career.
- › **Male** and **female** respondents felt equally that informal mentorship was "significant" or "crucial."

How important a role does or has a formal mentor played in your career?

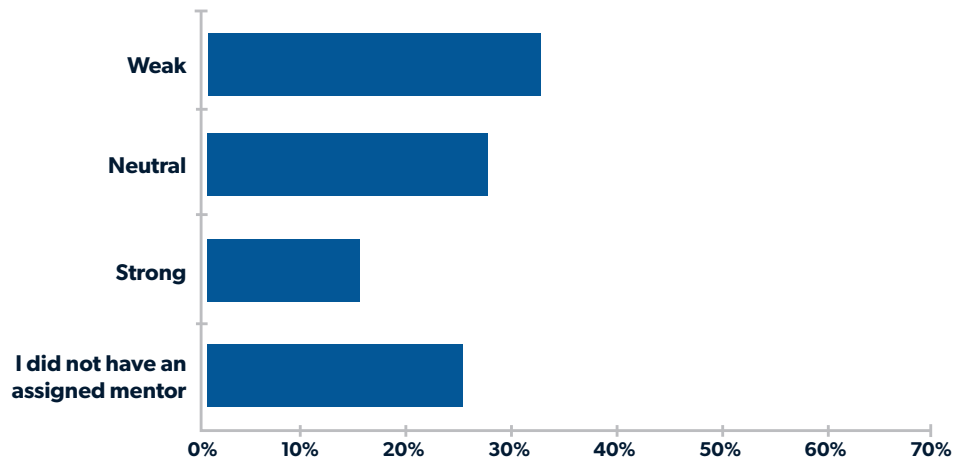


- › 28.4% of respondents indicated that formal mentorship was irrelevant.
- › **Male respondents:** 19.8% reported that formal mentorship was significant. 29.7% reported that formal mentorship was irrelevant.
- › **Female respondents:** 18.5% reported that formal mentorship was significant. 28.6% reported that formal mentorship was irrelevant.

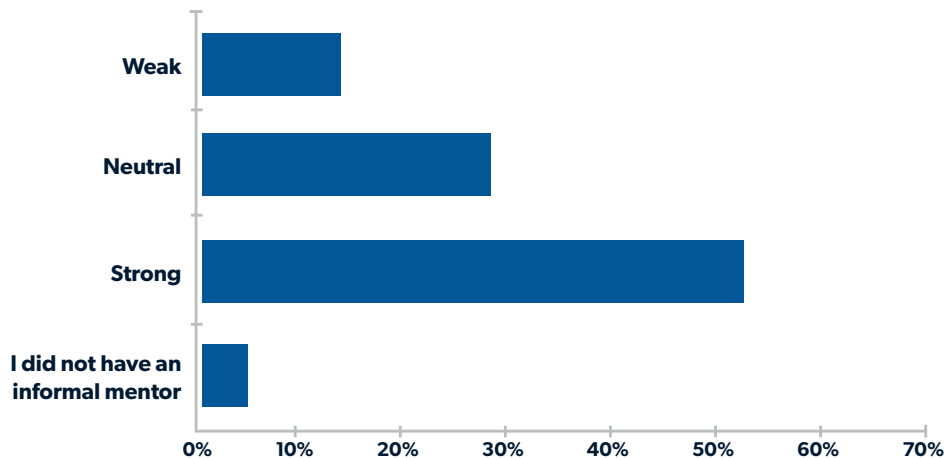
A notable finding: The majority of respondents reported that an informal mentor has had either a significant (40.1%) or crucial (20.9%) role in their career, whereas 28.4% of respondents indicated that formal mentorship was irrelevant

NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIORITIES

How would you rate the level of formal
(i.e., assigned by firm) mentorship that you receive?



How would you rate the level of informal
(i.e., personally developed) mentorship that you receive?



- › Slightly more **female** respondents than **male** respondents (56.3% vs. 50.2%) reported that informal mentorship was strong.
- › Most respondents indicated that the level of formal mentorship they received was weak (31.9%), whereas informal mentorship was viewed as strong (53.6%).



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GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements. Notable discrepancies along gender or position lines have been bolded.

When we segment responses along gender lines, rather than by position, many striking discrepancies surface:

The current generation of law firm leadership has overstayed their effectiveness.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	10.2%	22%	23.4%	34.2%	10.2%
ASSOCIATES	8.4%	19.4%	23.9%	36.1%	12.3%
PARTNERS	19.9%	24.3%	24.3%	29.7%	2.7%
MALES	12.3%	19.8%	28.3%	29.3%	10.4%
FEMALES	7.6%	23.6%	17.9%	39.6%	11.3%

The millennial generation of lawyers is transforming law firm policies and culture for the better.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	6.8%	8.7%	22.8%	39.3%	22.3%
ASSOCIATES	4.5%	5.2%	24.5%	39.4%	26.5%
PARTNERS	13.2%	21.1%	15.8%	42.1%	7.9%
MALES	9.4%	12.3%	25.5%	34.9%	17.9%
FEMALES	2.8%	9.4%	19.8%	39.6%	28.3%

Compensation increases at many law firms are a fair reflection of associate contributions to firm profitability.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	7.8%	21.4%	20.4%	34.2%	10.2%
ASSOCIATES	4.5%	18.1%	21.9%	32.3%	23.2%
PARTNERS	15.8%	34.2%	13.2%	26.3%	10.5%
MALES	5.7%	21.7%	25.5%	28.3%	18.9%
FEMALES	8.5%	25.5%	14.2%	33.0%	18.9%

Associate workloads have increased since compensation increases.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	6.8%	15.1%	31.1%	31.1%	16.0%
ASSOCIATES	3.9%	12.9%	32.9%	31.6%	18.7%
PARTNERS	15.8%	18.4%	26.3%	31.6%	7.9%
MALES	3.8%	19.8%	32.1%	27.4%	17.0%
FEMALES	10.4%	11.3%	29.3%	35.9%	13.2%

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Increased associate workloads are justified by the recent salary increases.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	17.0%	27.7%	26.7%	23.3%	5.3%
ASSOCIATES	20.7%	33.6%	25.2%	17.4%	3.2%
PARTNERS	7.9%	2.6%	36.8%	39.5%	13.2%
MALES	15.1%	27.4%	26.4%	26.4%	4.7%
FEMALES	17.0%	28.3%	27.4%	21.4%	5.7%

Law firms should strive for maximum transparency with regard to compensation.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	2.4%	4.4%	7.8%	21.8%	63.6%
ASSOCIATES	1.3%	2.6%	7.1%	20.7%	68.4%
PARTNERS	5.3%	7.9%	10.5%	26.3%	50.0%
MALES	0.9%	3.8%	8.5%	22.6%	64.2%
FEMALES	2.8%	3.8%	9.4%	21.7%	62.3%

Law firm partnership is much less desirable than it was a generation ago.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	6.8%	14.1%	13.6%	29.1%	36.4%
ASSOCIATES	5.8%	12.9%	15.5%	29.0%	36.8%
PARTNERS	13.2%	15.8%	10.5%	31.6%	29.0%
MALES	6.6%	17.0%	17.0%	25.5%	34.0%
FEMALES	6.6%	10.4%	12.3%	30.2%	40.6%

The partners at my firm genuinely care about associate professional development.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	12.8%	19.6%	12.3%	43.1%	12.3%
ASSOCIATES	14.9%	22.1%	13.0%	40.3%	9.7%
PARTNERS	5.4%	8.1%	13.5%	48.7%	24.3%
MALES	13.3%	26.7%	10.5%	39.1%	10.5%
FEMALES	13.3%	16.2%	16.2%	41.9%	12.4%

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

A diverse and inclusive workforce should be a priority for law firms.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	4.9%	7.3%	9.2%	27.2%	51.5%
ASSOCIATES	4.5%	7.7%	10.3%	26.5%	51.0%
PARTNERS	5.3%	5.3%	5.3%	23.7%	60.5%
MALES	6.6%	9.4%	16.0%	31.1%	36.8%
FEMALES	1.9%	3.8%	6.6%	24.5%	63.2%

➤ 36.8% of men “strongly agreed” that a diverse and inclusive workforce should be a priority for law firms, whereas 63.2% of women “strongly agreed.”

U.S. law firm culture is inherently sexist.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	8.7%	12.6%	13.6%	34.5%	30.6%
ASSOCIATES	8.4%	10.3%	15.5%	31.0%	34.8%
PARTNERS	10.5%	15.8%	7.9%	44.7%	21.1%
MALES	12.3%	19.8%	22.6%	31.1%	14.2%
FEMALES	3.8%	5.7%	5.7%	39.6%	45.3%

➤ 14.2% of males “strongly agreed” that U.S. law firm culture is inherently sexist, while 45.3% of females reported they “strongly agreed.”

Diminished associate loyalty to firms is an inevitable consequence of fundamental changes in the law firm business model.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	2.9%	11.2%	16.0%	31.1%	38.8%
ASSOCIATES	1.3%	7.7%	16.8%	36.8%	37.4%
PARTNERS	5.3%	21.1%	13.2%	7.9%	52.6%
MALES	1.9%	11.3%	19.8%	23.6%	43.4%
FEMALES	3.8%	12.3%	10.4%	39.6%	34.0%

Some form of non-attorney ownership of U.S. law firms would benefit the legal profession.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	33.2%	20.5%	25.4%	13.7%	7.3%
ASSOCIATES	29.9%	20.8%	27.3%	15.6%	6.5%
PARTNERS	50.0%	21.1%	15.8%	5.3%	7.9%
MALES	40.6%	19.8%	17.0%	17.0%	5.7%
FEMALES	28.6%	21.0%	30.5%	7.6%	12.4%

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

There is a gender pay gap at law firms.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	8.7%	8.3%	21.4%	24.3%	37.4%
ASSOCIATES	10.3%	7.7%	21.3%	21.9%	38.7%
PARTNERS	2.6%	10.5%	23.7%	26.3%	36.8%
MALES	12.3%	16.0%	32.1%	21.7%	17.9%
FEMALES	1.9%	2.8%	11.2%	28.0%	56.1%

➤ 17.9% of males reported that they “strongly agreed” that there is a gender pay gap at law firms, while 56.1% of females “strongly agreed.”

Since the advent of the #MeToo era, my law firm has made strides to address workplace gender issues.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	13.6%	19.4%	37.9%	22.8%	6.3%
ASSOCIATES	16.1%	19.4%	39.4%	20.7%	4.5%
PARTNERS	5.3%	18.4%	31.6%	31.6%	13.2%
MALES	17.9%	15.1%	33.0%	29.3%	4.7%
FEMALES	10.3%	25.2%	41.1%	15.9%	7.5%

➤ 34.0% of males reported that they “agreed” that law firms had made strides to address workplace gender issues since the advent of the #MeToo era, while only 23.4% of females “agreed.”

The law firm business model is fundamentally broken.

	ABSOLUTELY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
ALL	7.8%	13.6%	27.7%	29.6%	21.4%
ASSOCIATES	7.7%	12.9%	25.8%	29.0%	24.5%
PARTNERS	10.5%	15.8%	31.6%	31.6%	10.5%
MALES	13.2%	17.9%	22.6%	26.4%	19.8%
FEMALES	1.9%	11.3%	31.1%	34.0%	21.7%

About Major, Lindsey & Africa

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