

Study Shows Lawyers' Suicidal Thoughts Linked to Stress and Overwork



A new study published in the journal *Healthcare* has highlighted the growing concerns around mental health challenges faced by the legal profession. The study reveals that lawyers facing high stress, overwork, and loneliness are more likely to contemplate suicide, with attorneys twice as likely as other working U.S. adults to have suicidal thoughts.

The study surveyed almost 2,000 lawyers in California and the District of Columbia on their mental health, substance abuse, workloads, and stress levels. The findings show that almost 9% of the respondents said they thought they would be better off dead or thought of hurting themselves at least several times.

The study's co-author, Patrick Krill, an attorney who advises legal employers on wellness issues, said this is the first study to explore what's driving higher rates of suicidal thinking among lawyers and how to identify those most at risk. The study found that the odds of having suicidal thoughts were 2.2 times higher among attorneys with "high work overcommitment" and 2.8 times more likely among lawyers who reported being lonely. Lawyers who have been diagnosed with at least one mental illness were 1.8 times more likely to report suicidal thoughts, the study found.

The study also highlighted that male lawyers were twice as likely to report suicidal thoughts than women lawyers. An unexpected finding is that women, in general, experience higher rates of suicidal thoughts but lower rates of death by suicide. Lawyers between the ages of 30 and 40 also reported higher rates of suicidal thoughts than older attorneys.

Among the lawyers who reported suicidal thoughts, 66% said their time in the legal profession had been detrimental to their mental health. And 46% said they considered leaving the profession due to stress or burnout.

According to the study, the new findings suggest that the legal profession should reduce the stressors attorneys face while also enhancing their ability to tolerate stress. However, the authors wrote that legal employers had focused their well-being efforts on stress management tools and self-care resources for individuals instead of pursuing structural changes such as easing unrealistic time pressures and reducing workloads.

The legal profession is known for its intense pressure, long hours, and high-stakes work. However, this study highlights the need for a cultural shift within the profession that recognizes the importance of mental health and well-being. Employers should be mindful of their employees' workloads and ensure that they are providing adequate support and resources to manage stress and burnout.

The legal industry must address this issue head-on and take meaningful steps to support its employees' mental health and well-being. By doing so, the profession can create a more supportive and sustainable work environment for its lawyers.

REFERENCES:

Stress and overwork linked to lawyers' suicidal thoughts, study says