

Survey Reveals Gen Z Lawyers and Law Students Shifting Away from BigLaw Career Appeal



A new survey by legal recruiting firm Major, Lindsey & Africa suggests that most Generation Z attorneys and law students plan to pursue careers outside traditional BigLaw firms. The report, *Gen Z: Now Influencing Today's Law Firm Culture*, surveyed 250 law students and lawyers between January and March 2023, focusing on those attending the top 100 law schools as ranked by U.S. News & World Report.

According to the report, while 70% of respondents said they would pursue employment at a law firm, only 39% said they would like to work for an Am Law 200 firm, down from 59% in Major, Lindsey & Africa's 2020 survey report. In addition, 53% said that in the long term, they would rather work in-house, in government, or at a nonprofit. The survey also revealed that work-life balance and flexibility were important to Gen Z lawyers, with many valuing these factors over prestige or higher salaries.

Jacqueline Bokser LeFebvre, managing director in the associate practice group of Major, Lindsey & Africa and co-author of the report, says the survey suggests that "the interest in law firms as a whole seems to be declining amongst this generation," and that a desire for work-life balance is driving the changes. LeFebvre says many younger lawyers and law students likely see firms as a short-term option to help set themselves up financially and get good training.

According to the report, "there are perceptions among Gen Z respondents that in-house opportunities and government positions offer a better work-life balance than do law firms." The report suggests that law students surveyed were also motivated to work at nonprofits or in government jobs for altruistic reasons and because they want to do meaningful work.

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The survey found that respondents would trade a portion of their compensation for more time off (62%), a flexible work schedule (60%), student loan assistance (44%), and a reduction in billable hours (41%). While 69% of respondents agreed that the legal industry is "changing for the better," 79% also agreed that sexism remained a problem.

The report suggests that firms could keep younger lawyers by providing opportunities for advancement and the "highest market" salary. Frequently working long hours, late nights, and weekends are among the top reasons they would leave, along with working somewhere not aligned with their interests, goals, and 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," according to the report.

In addition, the survey found that respondents would trade a portion of their compensation for more time off (62%), a flexible work schedule (60%), student loan assistance (44%), and a reduction in billable hours (41%).

The report also found that respondents were concerned about social justice issues and corporate social responsibility. A majority, or 60%, did not agree with the statement that "law firm corporate social responsibility programs are authentic and valued." In addition, 63% of respondents said social justice initiatives are "very important" or "somewhat important" as they decide who they want to work for.

Overall, the survey suggests that law firms must adapt to the changing priorities and values of Gen Z lawyers and law students if they hope to attract and retain top talent. This may include offering more work-life balance and flexibility and opportunities to do meaningful work that aligns with their social and moral values.