



THE LAW SOCIETY
OF SINGAPORE

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PRESS RELEASE

THE LAW SOCIETY OF SINGAPORE RELEASES KEY FINDINGS OF STUDY ON LEGAL PROFESSION SUSTAINABILITY

1. The Law Society of Singapore today announced the key findings of the *Law Society–Anthro Insights Legal Profession Sustainability Study*, the most comprehensive, data-driven examination of talent sustainability ever conducted for Singapore’s legal sector.
2. Spanning four years, the independent study provides the first statistically grounded explanation of the long-standing challenges surrounding talent retention, workplace well-being and early-career sustainability. It offers evidence to guide profession-wide reform and to support the long-term resilience of the legal community.
3. Commissioned by the Law Society and conducted by people-science consultancy Anthro Insights, the study draws on **855 survey responses** and **31 in-depth interviews** across the ecosystem, including senior partners, junior lawyers, in-house counsel, academics and former practitioners.

BACKGROUND

4. In his 2022 Opening of the Legal Year address, the late former Law Society President Mr Adrian Tan highlighted a “perfect storm” of rising departures and diminishing new entrants to practice. The Law Society thereafter commissioned a systematic study to understand the structural and cultural drivers behind these trends.
5. This study moves beyond anecdote, offering a robust evidence base that clarifies what drives both firm-level retention and profession-wide sustainability.

KEY FINDINGS

Firm Retention and Occupational Retention Are Different Challenges

6. Lawyers leave *firms* primarily because of workplace culture. Lawyers leave the *profession* due to sustained impacts on mental well-being.

Workplace Culture Is the Strongest Predictor of Firm Commitment

7. Three factors have the most powerful independent effects:
 - **Organisational support** – being valued as people, not merely billing units.
 - **Family- and life-supportive practices** – where balance is genuinely practised.
 - **Supervisory stewardship** – supervisors who shield, support and advocate.

8. Traditional assumptions, such as compensation, firm size or seniority, have significantly weaker influence once culture is accounted for.

Well-Being Determines Whether Lawyers Stay in the Profession

9. Poor workplace culture harms mental health over time. Once well-being declines significantly, practice becomes unsustainable regardless of the firm environment. Crucially, the study finds that wellness programmes alone cannot counteract harmful work structures.

System-Level Pressures Affect All Firms

10. Certain forces lie beyond the control of any single organisation, including:
 - **Billable-hour structures** that penalise efficiency and intensify unhealthy competition.
 - **Court-related pressures**, such as timelines and interpersonal demands.
 - **Gaps between legal education and practice**, despite existing practice-oriented components designed to bridge the gap.
 - **Early-career structures** that drive premature specialisation and heavy reliance on a single supervisor.

Young Lawyers Are Most Vulnerable

11. The study rejects generational stereotypes. Instead, it identifies structural issues, such as heavy workload, limited psychological safety and early-career design, as the primary drivers disproportionately affecting junior lawyers.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PROFESSION

12. The report sets out six priority areas where coordinated action can meaningfully strengthen sustainability:
 - (a) **Diagnose before intervening:** Firms should identify the cultural factors most affecting their teams.
 - (b) **Coordinate ecosystem-wide responses:** Issues such as billable hours and early-career structures require industry-level solutions.
 - (c) **Redesign early-career structures:** Including rotations, delayed specialisation and broader supervisor exposure.
 - (d) **Embed mentorship in daily work:** Prioritising hands-on, real-time guidance over standalone programmes.
 - (e) **Track well-being with rigour:** Using validated assessments and treating well-being metrics as seriously as financial ones.
 - (f) **Strengthen the education-to-practice bridge:** Supporting graduates with realistic expectations and identity-building tools during role transitions.

13. **Professor Tan Cheng Han SC, President of the Law Society**, said,

“High attrition rates within professions are not new. Within the legal profession, many who leave law practices stay within the profession, usually as in-house counsel or government lawyers. Some who leave the profession entirely transition into other productive roles. These trends are natural and, overall, positive. They reflect the human desire for fulfilment and purpose. What the profession has to consider is whether there are systemic issues that cause lawyers to leave legal practice or the profession entirely and if so, what solutions can sensibly be undertaken.”

This study offers insight into the structural and cultural pressures that have caused the respondents to the survey to leave legal practice. While it does not canvass the many positive aspects that cause many to remain within legal practice, it provides one data point that highlights the need for coordinated, profession-wide action to further strengthen the well-being and resilience of our lawyers. The Law Society is committed to working with all partners to build a healthier, future-ready profession and recognises that all stakeholders are equally committed to this endeavour.”

NEXT STEPS: LAW SOCIETY BEGINS SECTOR-WIDE ENGAGEMENT

14. To translate these findings into action, the Law Society has convened a taskforce to:

- examine and review the findings and data;
- identify and assess feasibility and implementation pathways; and
- engage key partners such as the judiciary, regulators, law schools and law firms, including through the Judiciary-Law Society Joint Working Committee.

15. This taskforce will consider practical reforms grounded in data, with the aim of building a healthier, more sustainable and future-ready profession.

16. Anthro Insights will publish the full report in June 2026. The Law Society is releasing these highlights today to support informed industry conversation and to anchor upcoming reforms in a clear, evidence-based foundation.

17. An infographic summarising the study’s key insights accompanies this release.

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About the Law Society of Singapore

Established in 1967, the Law Society of Singapore is a body established under the Legal Profession Act 1966. It carries out various statutory functions prescribed under the Legal Profession Act 1966, including maintaining and improving the standards of conduct and learning of the legal profession in Singapore, the facilitation of the acquisition of legal knowledge by members of the legal profession, and protecting and assisting the public in all matters ancillary or incidental to the law.

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