TOWARDS A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE OF LAW IN CANADA

Phase II l 2022–2024

RESEARCH REPORT

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Under the scientific direction of
Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D. CRHA

UDS Université de Sherbrooke

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Authors of this report

Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D., CRHA
Principal Investigator

Marc-André Bélanger, M.Sc.
Research Professional

Prof. Marie-Michelle Gouin, Ph.D., CRIA
Co-Researcher

Prof. Jean Cadieux, Ph.D.
Chief Statistician and Co-Investigator

Audrée Bethsa Camille, M.Sc., CRHA
DBA Candidate, Research Assistant

Éveline Morin, M.Sc.
DBA Candidate, Research Assistant

Josbert Gahunzire, M.Sc.
DBA Candidate, Research Assistant

Marie-Louise Pomerleau
M.Sc. candidate in administration,
Research Assistant

Amira Driss
M.Sc. Candidate in administration,
Research Assistant

Prof. Geneviève Robert-Huot, Ph.D., CRHA
Collaborator

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The research team would also like to acknowledge the support of the entire Canadian legal community in the realization of this second phase, and in particular the support of the Law Society of British Columbia, the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, the Canadian Bar Association, and the Steering Committee created to support the realization and coordination of this national project.

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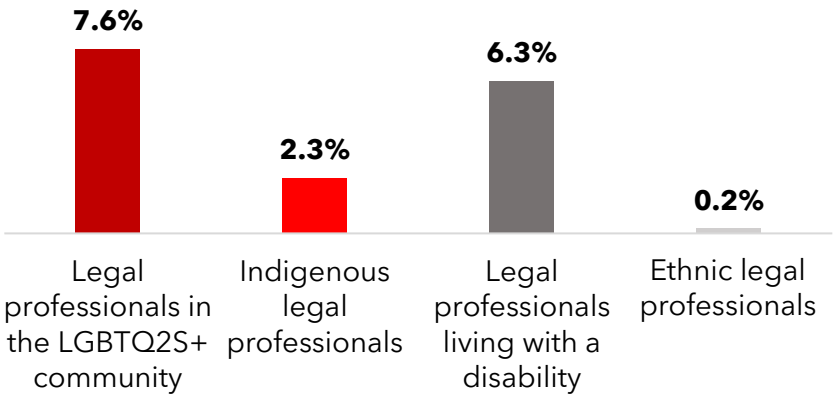
Phase I participants description: Law Society of British Columbia

41.6% of **women** with an average age of **43.1** years

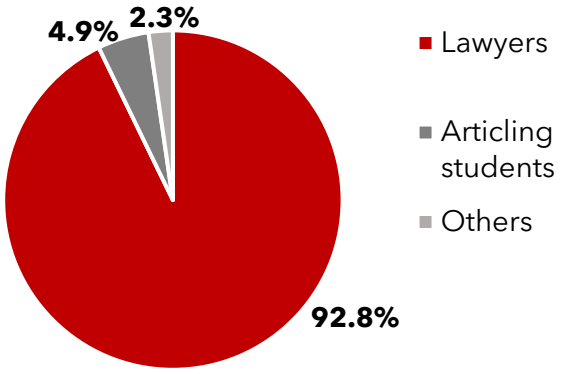
58.4% of **men** with an average age of **49.2** years

1.3% of **non-binary** people with an average age of **34.6** years

Portrait of **diversity** among participating legal professionals in British-Columbia (*n* = 770)



Proportion of participating legal professionals in British Columbia by **profession** (*n* = 770)



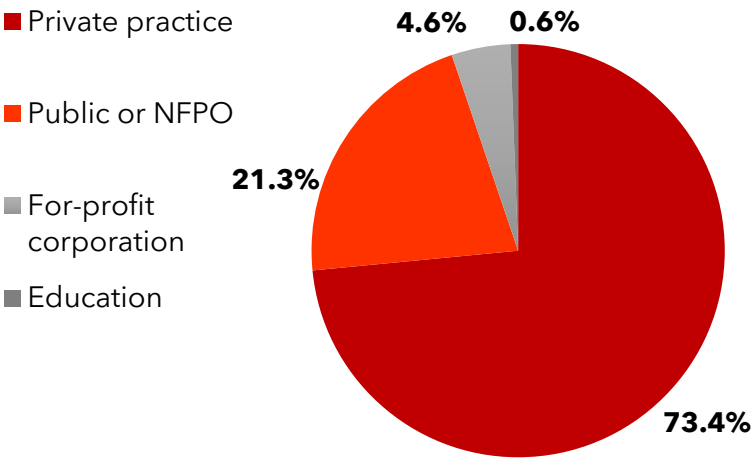
57.5%

Participating legal professionals in British Columbia are members of the Canadian Bar Association CBA (*n* = 770)

7.1%

Participating legal professionals in British Columbia are qualified by the National Committee on Accreditation NCA (*n* = 752)

Proportion of participating legal professionals in British Columbia by **work setting** (*n* = 709)

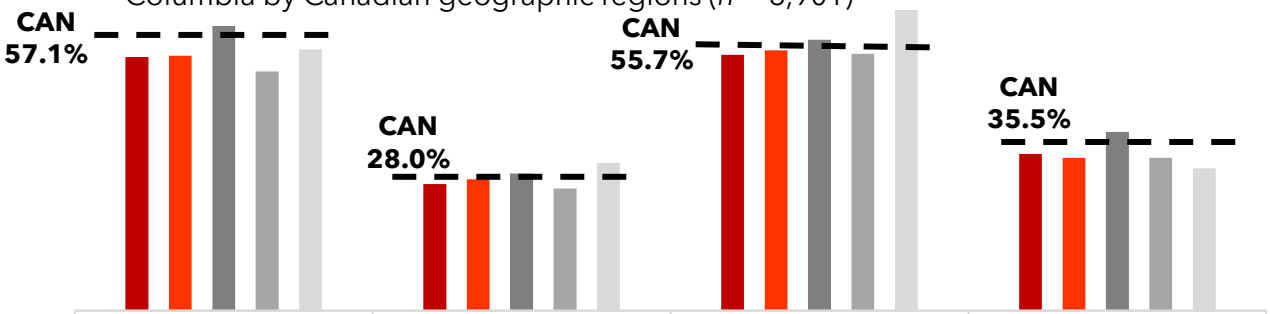


Areas of practice:

- Civil Litigation (33.8%)
- Business, Corporate and Commercial Law (24.4%)
- Wills, Estates and Trusts (17.6%)
- Real Property (16.5%)
- Family Law (14.8%)
- Criminal Law (12.3%)
- Labour and Employment Law (11.5%)
- Human Rights, Public and Administrative Law (7.5%)
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (6.0%)
- Other (10.1%)

Mental health indicators (Phase 1): Law Society of British Columbia

Proportion of mental health indicators of participating legal professionals in British Columbia by Canadian geographic regions (*n* = 6,901)



	Psychological distress	Moderate to severe depressive symptoms	Burnout	Anxiety symptoms
British Columbia	52.9%	26.4%	53.4%	32.7%
Western Provinces	53.2%	27.4%	54.3%	31.9%
Central Canada	59.4%	28.6%	56.5%	37.3%
Eastern Provinces	49.9%	25.5%	53.6%	31.9%
Territories	54.5%	30.8%	62.7%	29.7%

26.3%

Participating legal professionals in British Columbia who have had suicidal thoughts since the beginning of the career (*n* = 655). The average in Canada is **24.1%**

48.4%

Participating legal professionals in British Columbia did not seek help for their mental health issues, even though they felt the need to do so (*n* = 748). The average in Canada is **46.8%**.

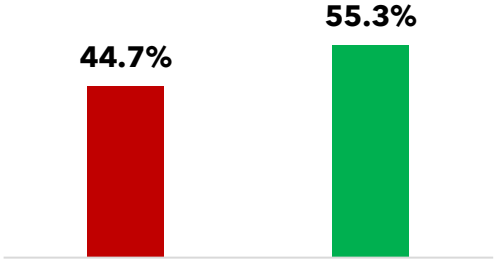
Three main reasons for not seeking help:

1. Thoughts that the issue is temporary **24.5%**
2. Lack of energy of seeking help **19.5%**
3. Not being sure about help necessity **10.9%**

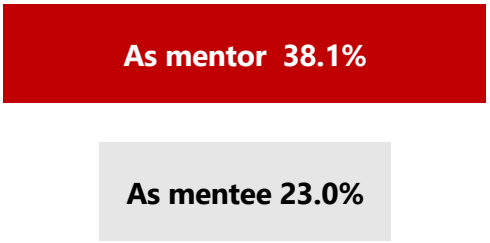
7.9%

Participating legal professionals in British Columbia who have taken more than three months of medical leave in the last five years (*n* = 770)

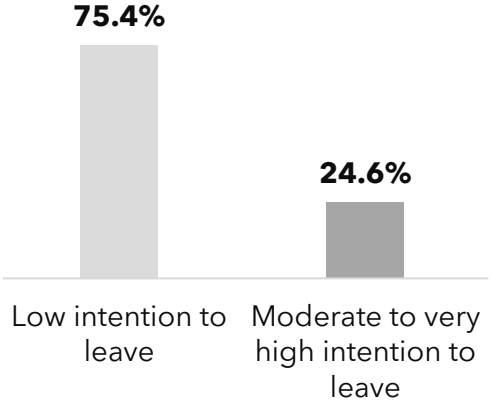
Proportion of **affective commitment to the profession** among participating legal professionals in British Columbia (*n* = 536)



Proportion of **mentorship participation** among participating legal professionals in British Columbia (*n* = 770)



Proportion of **intention to leave the profession** among participating legal professionals in British Columbia (*n* = 541)



INTRODUCTION | HEALTH AND WELLNESS PRIORITIES IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

This report is part of Phase II of the "*Towards a Healthy and Sustainable Practice of Law in Canada*" project. Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, this report has three main objectives:

1) Paint an accurate picture of the main psychological health and wellness issues in the workplace among legal professionals working in British Columbia based on Canadian data collected during Phase I (Cadieux et al., 2022);
2) Contextualize the quantitative results obtained in Phase I through interviews with legal professionals working in British Columbia;
3) Make targeted recommendations to address important health and wellness issues of legal professionals working in British Columbia.

The first objective was achieved through quantitative data collected in British Columbia during the first phase of this national project (n = 770). The second objective is based on qualitative data gathered through interviews. As part of Phase II, 151 legal professionals working in British Columbia, including 6 articling students and 145 lawyers, volunteered to participate in a semi-structured interview. Participants were then selected (n = 5) and semi-structured interviews were conducted with these legal professionals working in British Columbia. In order to identify the priorities of legal professionals in British Columbia, a list of 10 key themes arising from Phase I (Cadieux et al., 2022) was included in the invitation sent to potential participants through their law society. These themes focus on the determinants of health and wellness in the practice of law. When expressing their interest to participate in an interview, legal professionals interested in participating were asked to rank each of these priorities in order of importance. The three themes that were most important to them were then selected for the purposes of this report. Table 1 lists these priorities in order of importance.

Table 1

Prioritization of mental health and wellness themes according to legal professionals working in British Columbia who expressed an interest in being interviewed.

Theme	Contents	# of legal professional for whom the theme is among the top three important themes to address
1	**Work-life balance**	**101**
2	**Working conditions and cognitive demands**	**88**
3	**Coping strategies and lifestyle**	**76**
4	Training and mentorship	55
5	Billable hours	40
6	Diversity and inclusion in the practice of law in Canada	30
7	Law practice and technology (technostress)	19
8	Regulation and practice review	17
9	Telework	12
10	Return to work after a prolonged medical leave/absence	9

Based on the results presented in Table 1, this report addresses the three themes most frequently reported as priorities: (1) work-life balance, (2) working conditions and cognitive demands; and (3) coping strategies and lifestyle. The results presented for each theme are based on weighted quantitative data obtained during Phase I in British Columbia (n = 770) and on interviews conducted (n = 5).

1.1 THEME 1 | WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Authors : Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D. CRHA; Marc-André Bélanger, M.Sc.

Work-life balance was the most important issue for participants in British Columbia. This seems logical considering that nearly one in two legal professionals in Canada experience work-life conflict (Cadieux et al., 2022). This conflict stems from the tensions felt following the invasion of work into the personal and family lives of legal professionals (Kossek & Lee, 2017). Its importance for workers' health has been demonstrated (Jansen et al., 2006; Rashmi & Kataria, 2022), in particular involving psychological distress, anxiety and increased depressive symptoms (Cadieux et al., 2022; Karani et al., 2022; Sprung & Rogers, 2021).

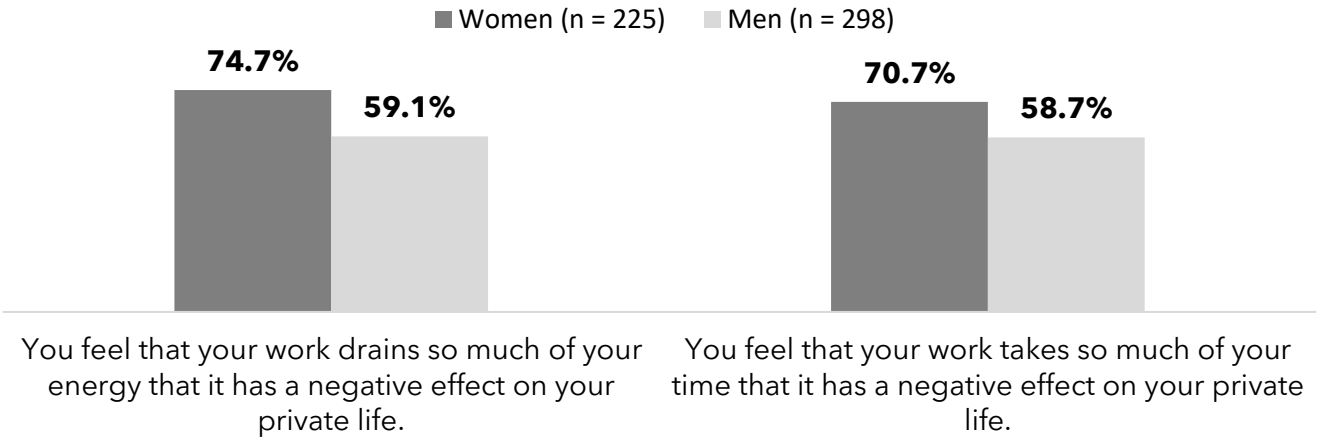
As soon as they begin their articling, legal professionals fully feel this conflict, which is an intrinsic feature of the profession itself and of the prevailing performance culture, as the following extract shows.

> *"There's a culture of people working a lot, people putting in lots and lots of time to be successful. And there's an expectation there as an articling student that you are really going to have to put in your time and to work really hard so that you can have a job. Which, of course, I want a job! I didn't go to school for seven years, not to have a job. So, yeah, I'll do it. I will work on weekends, I will work nights, I will put in the time, but I don't have time to take care of myself nor my family and that takes a toll after a while, you know."* **BC-3**

Graph 1 provides an overview of participants' responses to the various questions associated with work-life conflict.

Graph 1

Proportions of participating legal professionals who agreed or strongly agreed with statements related to work-life conflict, by gender



The analysis of work-life conflict according to various characteristics of legal professionals in British Columbia shows that this phenomenon is fairly widespread, even if certain profiles seem to experience it more than others.

Based on Table 2, the highest proportions of work-life conflict (shown in red) are observed among lawyers who have billable-hour targets (65.2%), are aged 34 and under (62.2%), and have less than

10 years of legal work experience (59.2%). Proportionally, articling students also appear to be significantly more likely to experience work-life conflict (60.5%).

Conversely, the legal professionals least exposed to work-life conflict (shown in green) are aged 50 and over (63.0%), do not work with clients (65.9%), or do not have billable hours targets (58.8%).

In terms of attributes that help protect the health and wellness of legal professionals, we also note that among those who demonstrate a strong ability to mentally detach themselves from work (85.4%) or who have a strong ability to set limits (68.5%), many seem impervious to conflict between their professional and personal lives. Table 2 details the proportions of legal professionals experiencing work-life conflict compared to those who do not, based on selected characteristics. Boxes highlighted in green or red indicate that the observed proportions are significantly higher compared to other reference categories.

Table 2

Proportions of participating legal professionals experiencing or not experiencing work-life conflict by selected characteristics

		Absence of work-life conflict	Presence of work-life conflict
Global	All	51.3%	48.7%
Gender[1]	Women	44.0%	56.0%
	Men	56.7%	43.3%
Age	34 and under	37.8%	62.2%
	35 to 49	43.6%	56.4%
	50 and over	63.0%	37.0%
Years of work experience	0 to 9 years	40.8%	59.2%
	10 years and over	56.1%	43.9%
Dependent children	No	50.2%	49.8%
	Yes	52.5%	47.5%
Work setting	Public and NFPO	55.9%	44.1%
	Private practice	47.9%	52.1%
Billable hours targets	No	58.8%	41.2%
	Yes	34.8%	65.2%
Working with clients	No	65.9%	34.1%
	Yes	48.3%	51.7%
Assertiveness	Poor ability to set limits	42.3%	57.7%
	Strong ability to set limits	68.5%	31.5%
Psychological detachment	Poor ability to detach psychologically from work	43.7%	56.3%
	Strong ability to detach psychologically from work	85.4%	14.6%
Profession	Lawyer	48.3%	51.7%
	Articling	39.5%	60.5%

Note : each highlighted proportion represents a significant proportion for that variable. Colors have been used to highlight the most important distinctions. Green means work-life conflict is absent and red means that work-life conflict is present.

[1] Given the small sample of genders other than woman and man, only these two genders are compared.

Whether legal professionals have children or not, the presence of work-life conflict is fairly widespread: there is no significant difference between respondents with children (47.5%) and those without (49.8%). Moving beyond mere prevalence, the simultaneous analysis of the most important risk and protective factors' impact on the mental health of legal professionals in British Columbia shows that work-life conflict is significantly correlated with mental health issues and is the risk factor with the greatest weight compared to other factors.

Further analysis reveals that, for respondents with children, work-life conflict is synonymous with tensions between their professional and parental roles. A higher proportion of legal professionals must fulfill these requirements on top of already high professional demands made upon them (Gingues, 2020; Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000). For legal professionals who do not have children, the conflict stems instead from tensions related to juggling professional obligations and individual or social needs. The interview excerpts presented in the following box clearly illustrate how this reality is experienced by a female lawyer with children compared to one without.

"*It's difficult to say to my kids on the weekend, in the middle of the summer: « sorry, guys like I have to work too this weekend, and you know, you're going to have to go to stay with your aunt tonight ».*" **Female lawyer in BC with children**

"*I like to run every day and I can't do that […]. And then there's a very immediate and obvious impact on my mental health when I can't run […] it really affects my social life when I don't have time to see my friends and I feel like it makes me a worse friend and a worse daughter, like I want to put time and energy into my relationships and I'm not able to do that.*" **Female lawyer in BC without children**

Although no significant difference was observed in the proportions of work-life conflict among legal professionals with children compared to those without, some legal professionals tend to associate work-life conflict with the children-private sector combination. During the interviews conducted, many participants mentioned that having children and working in private practice were incompatible with each other. The following box presents two interview excerpts reflecting these perceptions shared by respondents in British Columbia.

"I don't have children. I can't imagine being in private practice and having children. If I ever decide to have children, I feel like I would definitely try to leave." **BC-5**

"[…] In private practice, it wasn't a very welcoming environment, particularly for those who wanted to, for example, have children. I think they thought that if they were made in private practice, their careers and their family life would never really melt together. So, whereas at least if they came in a government office, they knew that there would be policies in place that would support them." **BC-4**

This finding is consistent with the statistics presented in Table 1. Thus, even if the difference is not significant, slightly more legal professionals in the private sector perceive work-life conflict. However, the gap is widest among legal professionals with billable hours (65.2%).

Thus, it seems logical to believe that regardless of sector (private vs. public), certain work contexts can lead to legal professionals having a negative perception of their work-life balance. This paves the way for a discussion on the importance of working conditions on legal professionals' perceived experience. This was the second most important theme identified by participants and is further discussed in the following section.

1.2 THEME 2 | WORKING CONDITIONS AND COGNITIVE DEMANDS

Authors: Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D. CRHA; Marc-André Bélanger, M.Sc.

The second theme that legal professionals in British Columbia wished to address was the working conditions that characterize legal practice. Working conditions can first be analyzed from the point of view of constraints, i.e., the stressors likely to add to the burden of legal professionals and ultimately influence their health. Conversely, working conditions can also be analyzed from the perspective of resources, i.e., the protective factors likely to alleviate the burden of these constraints that legal professionals have to deal with a daily basis. Ultimately, it is the individual's appraisal of the constraints, and of the resources at their disposal to help them cope with these constraints, that will lead them to experience stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

PORTRAIT OF CONSTRAINTS AT WORK

Table 3 summarizes the proportions observed in British Columbia of various constraints that emerged as important to respondents throughout this national project. In other words, this table reflects respondents' perception of the presence of these constraints. A high percentage, however, does not necessarily imply a significant correlation with legal professionals' mental health. The association of these constraints with health issues will be presented later in this section.

Table 3

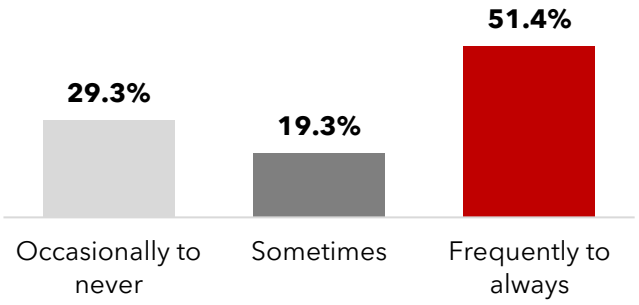
Presence of significant constraints in the practice of participating legal professionals in British Columbia (%)

Constraints in the practice	Constraint present (in %)
Qualitative overload	76.0%
Billable hour pressure	58.9%
Emotional demands	50.8%
Long hours worked (≥50 hrs/week)	50.4%
Quantitative overload	41.7%
Lack of resources	24.5%
Pressure to perform	14.1%
Workplace incivility	11.2%
Job insecurity	11.0%
Workplace violence	4.8%

The workload to which lawyers are exposed is significant, both qualitatively (76.0%) and quantitatively (41.7%). Quantitative overload leaves legal professionals feeling unable to cope with the daily volume of emergencies they have to manage. Graph 2 illustrates respondents' perceptions of this constraint. Thus, 51.4% of participating lawyers in British Columbia reported that they often or always feel that they have so many emergencies to deal with at work that they do not have enough time in a day to get everything done. This likely partly explains why many legal professionals tend to work longer hours, which unfortunately leads to tensions between their professional and personal lives, as explained in the previous section.

Graph 2

Frequency with which participating legal professionals in British Columbia feel they have so many urgent matters to deal with at work that they don't have enough time in a day to get everything done (*n* = 565)



When the workload is this heavy, it tends to add to the mental burden of legal professionals, as explained by one of the participants in the box below.

> *"I'd say, the same in mental and emotional demands. It's just a lot. It's a lot of mental demands and a lot of attention. If you tell them you're busy, they will physically come into the office to see if you're really busy because they need help. So the mental demands, I would say, are very stressful."* **BC-2**

When this cognitive demand is added to billable hours targets, respondents report a heightened sense of pressure. More specifically, 58.9% of participating legal professionals in British Columbia who work within a billable hours business model feel pressure to achieve their objectives (Cadieux et al., 2022). This leads them to work even longer hours than their colleagues without billable hours targets. In fact, 68.3% of legal professionals with billable hours targets work more than 50 hours per week, a threshold that compromises their health (Cadieux, 2012; Suwazono et al., 2003; Virtanen et al., 2011). In comparison, 42.9% of legal professionals not working in a billable-hour context work more than 50 hours a week, a significant difference of over 20%. In such a high-workload professional context, the billable hours targets can seem insurmountable to legal professionals. In fact, one of the participants interviewed in British Columbia uses the image of a mountain whose summit it is impossible to reach to illustrate how they feel about their billable hours.

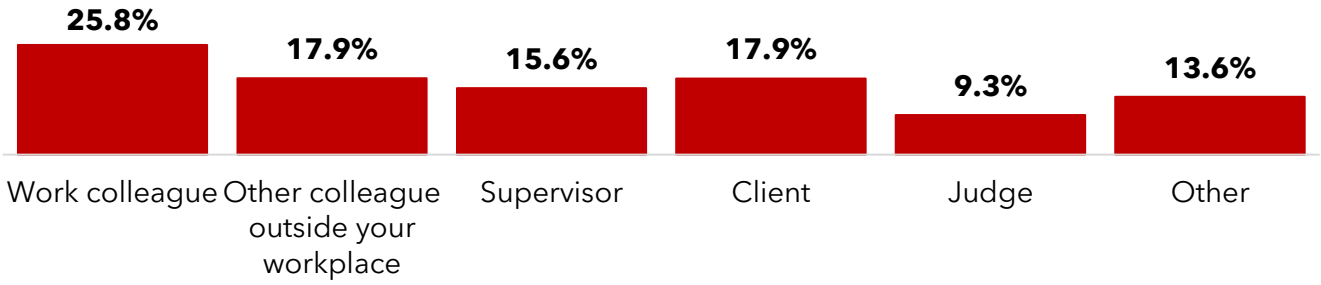
> "[…] It feels just like climbing a hill that doesn't ever have a top to it." **BC-1**

Finally, this high-pressure environment is unfortunately conducive to incivility and violence in the workplace. In this regard, 37.4% of participating legal professionals in British Columbia reported having experienced incivility (e.g., being ignored by colleagues or having one's opinion disregarded), 11.1% of whom reported the frequency as often to very often (Cortina et al., 2001). As shown in Graph 3, the majority of these incivilities are perpetrated by external colleagues, colleagues within the organization or supervisors. The interview excerpt in the box below also shows that lawyers are not the only victims of incivility, which is sometimes also directed at legal professionals at the bottom of the hierarchy, who nonetheless play an important role in the work done by lawyers.

> "I have found that many of my fellow lawyers tend not to give much consideration to the other people they work with. Particularly people in subordinate positions such as paralegals and assistants, and they seem to see them as just COGS in a machine." **BC-4**

Graph 3

Proportion of incivility experienced by participating legal professionals in British Columbia by source (person committing the incivility in %) (*n* = 441)



OVERVIEW OF WORKPLACE RESOURCES

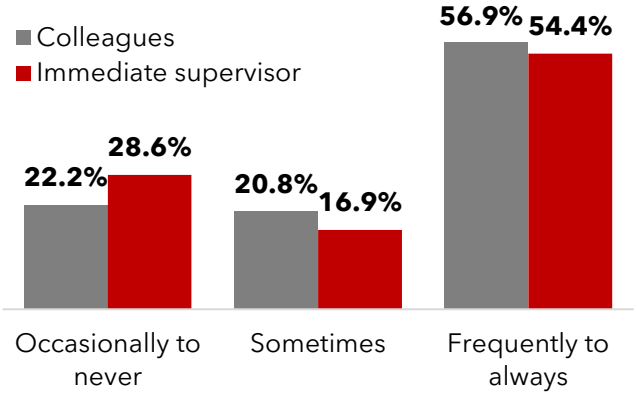
Table 4 below shows the proportions observed in British Columbia for the various resources likely to protect the mental health of legal professionals.

Table 4
Important resources for the health of participating legal professionals in British Columbia (%)

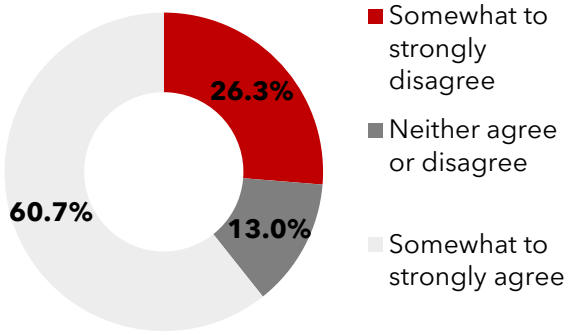
Resources in the practice	Resource present (in %)
Skill utilization	94.8%
Autonomy	68.3%
Consistency of values	66.1%
Recognition	52.8%
Support from supervisor	45.3%
Support from colleagues	40.4%
Career opportunities	21.1%

In terms of resources likely to alleviate the burden associated with the constraints listed above, those that appeared to be most important to legal professionals were autonomy (68.3%), skill utilization (94.8%), consistency of organizational and personal values (66.1%), and recognition (52.8%).

Graph 4
Proportion of participating legal professionals in British Columbia receiving support from their superiors (*n* = 244) or colleagues (*n* = 482), by frequency



Graph 5
Proportion of participating legal professionals in British Columbia by extent of agreement with the following statement: "*My peers and/or superiors don't hesitate to recognize my work*" (*n* = 245)



For clarity, the percentages indicate the presence of resources among legal professionals who participated in the study, but a higher proportion does not necessarily imply a significant correlation with their mental health. The correlation between these resources and the health of legal professionals is presented in the following section. In fact, many legal professionals seem to have mixed feelings towards certain resources in their workplace. This is particularly true of two resources traditionally recognized in the literature: support and perceived recognition from one's supervisor and colleagues. Graph 4 shows that almost one in four legal professionals (28.6%) receives little help from their line manager, with a frequency ranging from occasionally to never. The same applies to the support

received from colleagues, with 22.2% claiming to receive support from their colleagues with a frequency ranging from occasionally to never. Graph 5 also shows that 26.3% somewhat to strongly disagree that their peers or superiors recognize their work.

THE IMPACT OF CONSTRAINTS AND RESOURCES ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

Following the descriptive portrait painted of the constraints and resources with which British Columbian lawyers must contend on a daily basis, our team took an interest in: (1) their respective contribution to their mental health, and (2) the association between these constraints and resources and the mental health indicators measured. The team also examined (3) the links between these constraints and resources and lawyers' affective commitment to their profession and intention to leave it. Table 5 shows the main results obtained.

Table 5

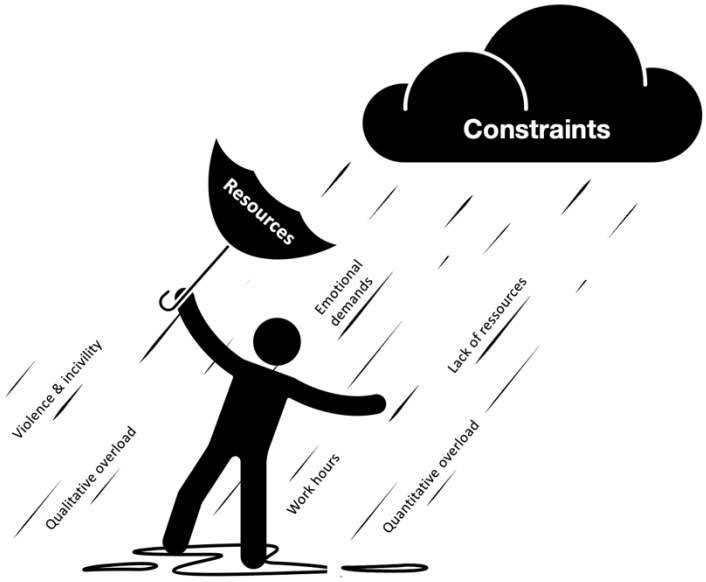
Contribution of constraints and resources to the mental health of participating legal professionals working in British Columbia

Indicators (VD)	Psychological distress	Depressive symptoms	Anxiety	Perceived stress	Burnout	Affective commitment to the profession	Intention to leave the profession
OVERALL CONTRIBUTION OF CONSTRAINTS	36.2%	31.9%	35.4%	38.3%	45.4%	15.6%	23.3%
Quanti. overload	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Quali. overload	ns	ns	↑↑	↑	↑↑	ns	↑
Emot. demands	↑↑↑	↑↑↑	↑↑↑	↑↑↑	↑↑↑	ns	ns
Hours worked (≥ 50 hrs/week)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	↑	↓↓
Lack of resources	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Incivility	↑↑	ns	↑	ns	ns	↓↓	ns
Violence	ns	↑↑	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
OVERALL CONTRIBUTION OF WORK-LIFE CONFLICT	5.8%	7.1%	4.5%	8.8%	11.5%	5.6%	10.6%
Work-life conflict	↑↑↑	↑↑↑	↑↑↑	↑↑↑	↑↑↑	↓↓↓	↑↑↑
OVERALL CONTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES	1.3%	0.5%	0.8%	0.2%	2.1%	14.7%	11.6%
Autonomy at work	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Skill utilization	ns	ns	ns	ns	↓↓	↑↑	↓
Consistency of values	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	↑↑↑	↓↓↓
Support from colleagues	↓	ns	ns	ns	ns	↑↑↑	↓↓↓
Telework	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

Note: ns = non-significant contribution considering all factors. (↓)= negative association (↑) = positive association. The analyses presented in this table take into account the contribution of the following control variables: participant gender and number of years of professional experience. The number of arrows indicates the intensity of the correlation observed.

The results highlight the predominant weight of constraints compared with resources in understanding the variation in mental health indicators, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1
Illustration of the weight of constraints compared to resources in understanding the health of participating legal professionals in British Columbia
Credit: Marie-Louise Pomerleau



Among constraints, emotional demands are undeniably the most important and are associated with a significant increase in psychological distress, depressive symptoms, anxiety, perceived stress and burnout. In terms of working conditions, the results also show a significant association between qualitative work overload and three health indicators: anxiety, perceived stress and burnout. This feeling of overload normally arises when the legal professional is exposed to several demands simultaneously, requiring the mobilization of a variety of skills. In contexts where workloads are high, such as in legal environments, legal professionals are unable to capitalize on the benefits of a certain "routine" in their work. The result can be a gradual loss of resources and a feeling of being out of breath over time. Table 4 shows that workplace incivility is significantly correlated with higher psychological distress and anxiety among legal professionals working in British Columbia. Workplace violence is significantly associated with an increase in depressive symptoms. Finally, work-life conflict is significantly and positively associated with all mental health indicators and with the intention to leave the profession. Conversely, this conflict between professional and personal spheres is significantly correlated with a decline in legal professionals' affective commitment to their profession. These results are consistent with the previously discussed observations made in Theme 1 regarding work-life balance.

As for resources, their effect on mental health appears marginal compared to that of constraints. For example, of all the factors that negatively or positively contribute to psychological distress, constraints account for 36.2% while resources only compensate with a weighting of 1.3%. However, the results indicate that beyond providing health benefits, resources would also have an important protective effect on affective commitment to the profession and are associated with a lower intention to leave the profession. In terms of mental health, support from colleagues was significantly associated with lower psychological distress among legal professionals, while skill utilization, a source of professional fulfilment, was significantly linked to lower symptoms of burnout. The same findings also apply to the protective effect of support from colleagues and skills utilization on affective commitment to the profession and intention to leave it. However, the results also indicate that the consistency of legal professionals values with those of their work environment would also have the effect of increasing affective commitment to the legal profession and reducing the intention to leave it.

These results highlight two findings. The first concerns the importance of prioritizing actions aimed at reducing the constraints to which legal professionals are exposed. The second concerns the importance of lifestyle habits and coping strategies used by legal professionals to deal with stress, a topic addressed in the next section.

1.3 THEME 3 | COPING STRATEGIES AND LIFESTYLE

Authors: Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D. CRHA; Marc-André Bélanger, M.Sc.

Lifestyle habits among legal professionals exposed to extreme stress are often the subject of a paradox: while healthy lifestyle habits make stress management easier, they are also difficult to maintain in situations where work stress in extremely high. In work environments, exposure to sources of stress or stressful situations is unavoidable (Demerouti et al., 2001). As such, the need to adopt coping strategies or coping mechanisms (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) is equally unavoidable.

Among the healthy lifestyle habits that become compromised in such situations, participating legal professionals in British Columbia reported the following:

- Reduced quality and quantity of sleep;
- Reduced physical activity;
- Reduced ability to adopt healthy eating habits (regularity of mealtimes and quality of food consumed).

The following box highlights the impact of work on the sleep of one of the participants.

"I don't sleep a lot […] and because I don't sleep a lot, I come to work, and I'm exhausted every day. But that's kind of a tautological reasoning there. It's that work doesn't allow me to sleep at night and because I don't sleep, I'm tired at work, so I don't know." **BC-3**

This excerpt is consistent with Phase I findings of the project and could very well ring true for many legal professionals across Canada. Indeed, the work of a lawyer is demanding: it involves not only a high workload often associated with long working hours, but also a high mental workload, as discussed in the previous theme. This reality, combined with a lack of effective coping strategies (see next section), is likely to have a negative effect on both the quantity and quality of sleep and is associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing anxiety (Bannai & Tamakoshi, 2014; Cadieux & Marchand, 2015; Virtanen et al., 2011).

The fast work pace imposed by the demands of the legal profession also impact the eating habits of certain legal professionals. In fact, the same participant who spoke of sleep-related challenges in the previous excerpt also exposed the effects of lack of time.

"I really enjoy making healthy meals, but I think that it's really difficult to do that with this job. It's really difficult to stay on top of your health and even exceed in your health and to be like: I want to be able to weightlift and feel strong, to exercise, to get proper nutrition and to meet those kinds of goals. It seems not really doable under the circumstances now." **BC-3**

MOST EFFECTIVE COPING STRATEGIES IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS FOR DEALING WITH STRESS

The data collected in each of the two phases of this project highlighted a number of effective strategies for coping with stress. These strategies have a beneficial effect not only on stress, but also on the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits.

Setting limits

Despite the high demands associated with practising law, one of the participants asserted having been able to maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout their career. He attributes this success to his ability to establish clear boundaries, an ability that is sometimes difficult to actualize in the work environments in which legal professionals operate. It is therefore clear that acquiring greater experience within the profession increases the ability of legal professionals to set limits, as highlighted in Phase I of this project (Cadieux et al., 2022).

35.3% of participants manage to set limits in the workplace.

"I tend to set strict boundaries in my life. Particularly with regards to aspects of health, exercise, and diet. I've drawn lines that other people in the legal profession generally don't."
BC-4

Getting support: someone to listen

A number of legal professionals stressed the importance of having access to local support, whether inside or outside the workplace. Moreover, the results presented under the second theme regarding working conditions support this finding: social support is associated with significantly lower psychological distress, as well as higher affective commitment to the profession and reduced intention to leave.

"[…] having someone to listen and commiserate with has really been a big help for me. And then also having someone to talk through a kind of strategizing about how you go about asking for more time on something or saying you don't want to be involved with something. So that's really, really helpful. I would say that in my experience, I've had a lot more support from my peers than from people who are more senior to me or people who are in like more of an HR type of role." ***BC-5***

Social support is an important resource for coping with stress. First, it provides legal professionals with a way to blow off steam when faced with challenges in the workplace practice. Beyond alleviating stress, work colleagues can also act as a sounding board and provide legal professionals with the means to validate certain strategies or decisions regarding their work, thus reducing their mental load in certain circumstances. As such, peer support is also perceived as a decision-making tool that helps legal professionals clarify their roles and tasks, particularly in terms of their scope and the appropriateness of investing energy in certain aspects their work. In contrary, studies have

shown that a lack of social support from colleagues at work is associated with higher levels of professional burnout among lawyers (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). This is all the truer in a context where stress levels are relatively high (Cohen & Wills, 1985), since support from colleagues reduces the overall level of stress experienced at work (Viswesvaran, Sanchez & Fisher, 1999).

Maintaining a balance between professional and personal life spheres and splitting energy between them

On a daily basis, legal professionals have to juggle constraints arising from several spheres of life (family sphere, organizational sphere, etc.). While these multiple roles have numerous benefits, balancing them and meeting the demands of each can be more complex (Nordenmark, 2004). For many participants, maintaining a healthy lifestyle also involves making choices regarding the energy they invest in these various spheres. However, even before they enter the legal profession, legal professionals are conditioned to excel in their work, to persevere and to give their best: first to get into law school, then to get the best articling position, then a good job and, finally, a partner position. Unfortunately, this frantic race leads many legal professionals to invest massive amounts of energy in their careers, to the detriment of their physical and emotional health.

> *"[…]So, I think that my own view is that we should all try to be complete humans. I think that a lot of people, particularly in professions where there's a lot of, how to put it, where you get on a very defined track, it's very easy to neglect the other parts of your life in favor of that track. So, for a lot of lawyers, for example, you focus on your profession. So maybe in high school, they work very hard so they can get into a good university or an undergrad and then as an undergrad, they work hard to get good marks to get into law school. Then in law school, they work very hard to get good articles. Articling students, they work very hard to get kept on as an associate; associates worked very hard to get made partner and so on and so forth. A disproportionate part of their energy goes into just that one track and they ignore, what I think, the other things to make a complete human look like emotion, love, artistic pursuits, you know, maintaining our physical bodies. So anyway, that's my view."* ***BC-4***

COPING STRATEGIES THAT COMPROMISE LEGAL PROFESSIONALS' HEALTH

The use of alcohol or drugs is among the strategies used to cope with stress, but it can have a detrimental effect on legal professionals' health.

Alcohol consumption

Frequency?

Table 6 shows that the proportion of legal professionals in British Columbia who drink four or more times per week is 28.2%. This proportion is slightly higher than in other Canadian provinces and territories.

Table 6

Proportion of participating legal professionals who consume alcohol 4 or more times per week, by main place of practice

British Columbia	Other Western provinces	Central Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Territories
28.2%	23.2%	25.1%	22.8%	27.3%

High-risk profiles?

The analysis of responses obtained for these different thresholds in Table 8 below shows that 15.4% of legal professionals present a score of 8 to 14 on the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-10), a threshold associated with dangerous or harmful consumption (Babor et al., 2001). The results also indicate that 6.6% of legal professionals working in British Columbia have a score equal to or greater than 15/40, indicating the likelihood of alcohol dependence or moderate to severe alcohol use disorder. Table 8 also compares these proportions with other Canadian provinces.

Table 8

Proportion of participating legal professionals by type of alcohol consumption and place of legal practice

	British Columbia	Other western provinces	Central Canada	Atlantic provinces	Territories
Low-risk consumption (AUDIT 10 score < 8/40)	78.0%	80.0%	77.9%	75.8%	74.5%
Dangerous or harmful consumption (high risk) (AUDIT 10 score ≥ 8/40)	15.4%	15.0%	16.4%	17.9%	18.2%
Probability of alcohol dependence/moderate to severe alcohol use disorder (high risk) (AUDIT 10 score ≥ 15/40)	6.6%	5.0%	5.6%	6.3%	7.3%

Finally, additional analyses compared two respondent profiles (legal professionals with a "high-risk" drinking profile and legal professionals with a "low-risk" profile) on the basis of various characteristics (individual and professional). The results of these analyses are presented in Table 9 on the following page.

Table 9

Proportion of participating legal professionals with low-risk and high-risk consumption profiles according to certain professional characteristics

		Low-risk consumption (AUDIT-10 score < 8/40)	High-risk consumption (AUDIT-10 score ≥ 8/40)
Global	All	78.1%	21.9%
Gender[2]	Woman	80.9%	19.1%
	Man	75.9%	24.1%
Age	34 and under	70.8%	29.2%
	35 to 49	74.9%	25.1%
	50 and over	83.5%	16.5%
Experience	Less than 10 years	71.8%	28.2%
	10 years and over	80.5%	19.5%
Work setting	Public sector and NPOs	79.5%	20.5%
	Private practice	77.7%	22.3%
Billable hours targets	No	79.9%	20.1%
	Yes	74.5%	25.5%
Working with clients	No	79.1%	20.9%
	Yes	77.4%	22.6%
High emotional demands	No	80.1%	19.9%
	Yes	68.8%	31.3%
Quantitative overload	No	80.6%	19.4%
	Yes	73.4%	26.6%
Assertiveness	Poor ability to set limits	76.2%	23.8%
	Strong ability to set limits	81.2%	18.8%
Psychological detachment	Poor ability to detach psychologically	75.9%	24.1%
	Strong ability to detach psychologically	85.3%	14.7%
Profession	Articling student	77.3%	22.7%
	Lawyer	79.0%	21.0%

Note : each highlighted proportion represents a significant proportion for that variable. Colors have been used to highlight the most important distinctions.

These characteristics provide a general portrait of "high-risk" and "low-risk" alcohol consumption profiles among respondents. In terms of individual characteristics, respondents with a "high-risk" alcohol consumption profile are significantly more likely to: (1) be younger (under 34 vs. 50 and over) and, consistently, (2) have less than 10 years of experience. What's more, respondents presenting a "high-risk" alcohol consumption profile are significantly more likely to (3) work in a context where they are subject to high emotional demands. Inversely, legal professionals presenting a "low-risk" alcohol

[2] Given the small sample of genders other than woman and man, only these two genders are compared.

consumption profile are significantly more likely to (4) have a strong ability to psychologically detach from work outside office hours. With a view to reducing the number of legal professionals presenting a "high-risk" alcohol consumption profile, reducing their emotional burden and reinforcing their ability to psychologically detach from work should be used as levers. As for individual characteristics, results are consistent insofar as legal professionals, as they age and gain experience, tend to develop strategies that facilitate their day-to-day work. More experienced legal professionals are also likely to have a greater ability to self-regulate their emotions, to develop coping strategies for stressful situations and to learn how to set limits and let go. At the same time, as they age, legal professionals are generally less exposed to other stressors in their personal lives, including financial responsibilities (which tend to decrease as age advances) and childcare responsibilities.

In terms of working conditions, the results show that legal professionals who work in a context where they are subject to high emotional demands are proportionately more likely to have high-risk drinking habits. In fact, they account for 31.3% of high-risk profiles compared with 19% among legal professionals who are not subject to high emotional demands.

Finally, by assessing the role of health-protective skills and their association with alcohol consumption, the beneficial impact of psychological detachment becomes apparent. Legal professionals who have a good ability to psychologically detach themselves from work outside office hours are more likely to be low-risk drinkers (85.5%) than legal professionals who have difficulty detaching themselves from work (75.9%).

Alcohol consumption, which is often an integral part of people's social lives, presents significant risks for both mental and physical health. In terms of mental health, the effects are multiple. For instance, a meta-analysis revealed that after consuming alcohol, the risk of committing suicide is seven times greater, and with severe consumption, it is thirty-seven times greater (Borges et al., 2017). In terms of physical health, the link between alcohol consumption and numerous diseases (e.g., cancer, cardiovascular disease, liver disease) has been proved more than once (World Health Organisation, 2018).

Drug use

The results show that almost one in four (23.1%) legal professionals working in British Columbia had used drugs for non-medical purposes in the 12 months preceding the survey. This proportion is relatively comparable (i.e., not statistically different) to those observed in the other Western Canadian provinces (23.7%) and in the other Canadian provinces and territories, where results range from 21.7% to 28.9%, according to their Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST 10) scores (Skinner, 1982).

These three themes lend themselves to certain potential solutions, including those proposed for the profession by the participants working in British Columbia and discussed in the following section.

1.4 SOLUTIONS SUGGESTED BY LEGAL PROFESSIONALS: THE PATH FORWARD FOR THE PROFESSION

Authors: Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D. CRHA, Marie-Michelle Gouin, Ph.D., CRIA

> "Our therapy budget per person increased, which is great, and hopefully that helps some people. But it's just a lot of Band-Aids without ever looking at what's causing the underlying problem." **BC-5**

The quote from participant BC-5 is eloquent, highlighting the fact that no resource can have a greater impact on health than acting directly on constraints at source. As highlighted in the section on Theme 2 of this report, the figures support this participant's views. As a reminder, constraints in the practice of law contribute negatively and predominantly to the health of legal professionals in comparison to resources. These views are also in line with the hierarchy of preventive measures or hierarchy of controls – a recognized principle in occupational health and safety – that emphasizes the importance of prioritizing measures designed to eliminate and control hazards at their source. Equipping workers with the means to face these hazards is a last resort (CNESST, 2023).

In high stress contexts, however, resources seem to have a significant effect on legal professionals' affective commitment to their profession and their intention to leave it, as evidenced by these same results.

Beyond these observations, the interviews helped identify potential solutions to sustainably support the health of legal professionals. Those solutions have been divided into two focus areas: (1) increase the support available to legal professionals and (2) improve work-life balance.

FOCUS 1: INCREASE THE SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

As the interviews progressed, many of the suggestions put forward had a common goal: to increase the support available to legal professionals in their practice. However, the type of support suggested varied from one participant to the next. Indeed, some participants stressed the important role played by support at work to get the job done, while others emphasized the importance of social support or of being able to access psychological support in certain circumstances.

Ensure better tracking of legal professionals' evolving needs throughout their careers

Participants suggested that ensuring a better tracking of their evolving needs and challenges as they progressed in their careers could be one way of improving their health. More specifically, one of the participants suggested that law societies could introduce a "roadmap" as a support measure designed to better track the evolution of professionals' needs throughout their careers. This participant explained that once people enter the legal profession and obtaining a licence to practise, the needs their specific practice needs are rarely, if ever, assessed by their law society. Consequently, training requirements are not aligned with these needs and suggested resources remain overly general rather than targeted to legal professionals' specific needs.

Improve support for articling students, including supervision in articling settings

Participants also stressed the importance of improving supervision of articling students in practice settings. Indeed, it seems that this supervision is not always equal from one work environment to the next. As a result, some articling students lack supervision and consequently fail to develop certain skills related to carrying out the work or tasks assigned to them. This lack of support sometimes leads to professionally embarrassing situations and can compromise the alignment of professional actions with established professional standards. Yet, articling students are at a critical stage in the development of their professional confidence and affective commitment to the profession. It is therefore important to standardize the expectations of organizations hosting articling student. For workplaces, this also means increased, consistent support that is tailored to articling students' individual progress and skills.

Improve access to social support within legal practice

The legal professionals interviewed also emphasized the important role played by their colleagues throughout their careers. Peer support therefore is seen as a key resource that facilitates decision-making in certain circumstances, for example, by providing a sounding board and suggested solutions that may not have been considered otherwise. The participants also highlighted the importance of seeking advice from other legal professionals when necessary. These other professionals could be colleagues within the workplace, other legal professionals outside the workplace (e.g., personal acquaintances), or even LinkedIn contacts.

In the workplace, better support means greater vigilance regarding the challenges facing legal professionals. One participant pointed out that it is frequent and natural for colleagues to ask an articling student about their workload or what challenges they are facing. However, once articling is over, this kind of support is less common in legal circles. Yet the challenges remain, and completing one's articling and acquiring a certain amount of experience does not mean that one no longer needs support in their practice.

Finally, participants stressed the importance of ensuring that the profession's regulations (e.g., the system for reporting concerns about a professional's mental health) do not constitute an obstacle or an impediment to seeking help when needed. For legal professionals, it is important that an alternative mechanism be available to legal professionals in case of need without their ability to practise being systematically called into question by the law society.

FOCUS 2: IMPROVE LEGAL PROFESSIONALS' WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Set limits

Participants stressed the importance of setting limits when faced with high demands in the workplace. Respecting these limits would not only promote a more balanced lifestyle, but would also, as presented under theme 3 of this report, facilitate the adoption and maintenance of healthy lifestyle habits.

Make work organization more flexible and promote telework

In many interviews, participants stressed the importance of facilitating hybrid telework models or implementing flexible work organization arrangements. Although the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily made telework or hybrid work models compulsory, it would seem that many workplaces have since forced a return to onsite work. Legal professionals emphasize the benefits of flexible work organization to better reconcile professional and personal obligations while ensuring a better work-life balance.

Implement actions to reduce workload and increase rest time

For some of the legal professionals interviewed, a better work-life balance means a reduced workload. However, in work environments where billable-hour targets must be met, the number of hours worked is likely to be greater as these targets increase, thus compromising legal professionals' work-life balance and ultimately their health. Legal professionals therefore suggest imposing a maximum number of billable hours annually.

The legal professionals interviewed also suggest a higher number of compulsory annual vacation days for all. Although the number of vacation days is already set for articling students (i.e., 10 days), some participants are very critical of the fact that this represents the maximum number of vacation days that can be taken annually. In their opinion, this number should be higher, or at least variable depending on the specific needs of legal professionals. It should also be extended to practitioners.

Leverage technology

To make the most of what technology has to offer, legal professionals need to be trained. In this regard, legal professionals stress the importance of improving their mastery of certain technological tools that are likely to improve their productivity.

Lastly, the legal professionals interviewed in British Columbia stressed the importance of making working conditions more humane, particularly in terms of hours worked. In this regard, legal professionals suggest implementing policies and management practices that promote the right to disconnect outside office hours, thereby facilitating legal professionals' ability to achieve a better work-life balance.

1.5 CURRENT INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE OF LAW IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Authors: Marc-André Bélanger, M.Sc., Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D. CRHA

In Phase I of this study concluded in 2022 (Cadieux et al., 2022), 10 targeted recommendations and 35 secondary recommendations were presented to the various stakeholders in the Canadian legal community (law societies and bar associations, academic institutions, assistance programs, organizations, etc.). Rooted in the data collected, these recommendations aim to reduce the prevalence of measured health issues (e.g., the prevalence of depressive symptoms), to tackle the source determinants of these issues (risk factors and protective factors, including stigma) and to maximize the mental health support and resources available to legal professionals.

A number of initiatives that align with the recommendations presented in Cadieux et al. (2022) previously existed or were implemented following the publication of the Phase I report. More specifically, our team identified 15 different major initiatives stemming from six recommendations. Table 10 presents each of these initiatives and compares them with the recommendations made by Cadieux et al. (2022). The table shows that certain proposed initiatives are in line with the needs expressed by participating legal profesionnals in British Columbia concerning the signifance of imporving the support available to legal professionals in their practice.

The initiatives listed below are just a few examples of the most important ones being implemented by the Law Society of Birtish Columbia and may not represent all the actions currently being taken to improve the health and wellness of legal professionals within their practice. They reflect the initiatives in place at the time this report was drafted. It should also be noted that Table 10 does not include initiatives that may have been implemented by private or public organizations within the province or by various associations or interest groups, which were not accessible to the research team. As such, the initiatives examined are limited to those brought to the attention of our research team by the partner organizations involved, i.e., the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, the Canadian Bar Association, and the Law Society of Birtish Columbia.

Table 10

Health and wellness initiatives by the Law Society of British Columbia for legal professionals and related recommendations from the Phase I report by Cadieux et al. (2022)

Initiative	**Initiative-related recommendation(s) from Phase I**
(i) Collaborating with the province's law schools to improve information and communication on the availability of support resources for mental health and substance use issues within the profession and help students make the transition to this support from what was provided to them during their studies.	1) Improve preparation of future professionals to support them to deal with psychological health issues; 6) Improve access to health and wellness support resources and break down barriers that limit access to these resources.

Initiative	Initiative-related recommendation(s) from Phase I
(ii) Providing Law Society staff with mental health training and access to appropriate resources. All new employees receive mental health training as part of their onboarding and orientation, and professional development on mental health is encouraged throughout the organization.	3) Improve the continuing professional development (CPD); 6) Improve access to health and wellness support resources and break down barriers that limit access to these resources.
(iii) Launching a pilot project for a list of pro bono support lawyers to help resolve "failure to respond" issues as part of an initiative to improve support for lawyers.	2) Improve supports and guidance available at entry to the profession.
(iv) Improving the content of Bencher resources for articling student interviews, by revising the orientation manual and related documents to ensure the use of non-stigmatizing language.	5) Implement actions aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues in the legal profession.
(v) Amending Rule 7.1-3 of the Code of Professional Conduct for British Columbia to eliminate stigmatizing language and to address the "duty to report."	5) Implement actions aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues in the legal profession; 8) Consider the health of legal professionals as integral to legal practice and the justice system.
(vi) Deleting the question on medical fitness from the admission program application form.	5) Implement actions aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues in the legal profession.
(vii) Launching a pilot project for an Alternative Disciplinary Process (ADP) focusing on remediation and rehabilitation in cases where there is a link between a health condition and a conduct problem that has given rise to a complaint and subsequent investigation. A case will only be referred to ADP if it is established that a health issue likely contributed to the conduct problem, that the lawyer could benefit from corrective interventions, and that it would be in the public interest for the lawyer to take part in such interventions. The main features of ADP are its voluntary nature, that participation in the process is without risk to either the legal professional or the Law Society, and the confidentiality guarantees associated with participation. The aim is to create a consent-based agreement, tailored to the lawyer's individual health and practice circumstances, that addresses both the driving issue and the underlying health problem.	5) Implement actions aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues in the legal profession.

Initiative	Initiative-related recommendation(s) from Phase I
(viii) Developing inclusive and non-stigmatizing language resources by creating best practice guidelines for the profession and updating the internal style guide.	5) Implement actions aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues in the legal profession.
(ix) Implementing a revised strategic plan. The previous strategic plan aimed to improve mental health within the legal profession by: (a) finding ways to reduce the stigma of mental health problems; and (b) developing an integrated mental health review of regulatory approaches to disciplinary matters and admissions. The current strategic plan aims to review regulatory processes to support and promote mental and physical health.	5) Implement actions aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues in the legal profession; 8) Consider the health of legal professionals as integral to legal practice and the justice system.
(x) Organizing a three-part forum on mental health consisting in: (1) a panel dedicated to lawyers' lived experience of mental health and addiction, (2) a series of sessions designed to explore the opportunities and challenges for legal employers in dealing with these issues, and (3) an expert panel providing information on the mental health resources and supports available to lawyers.	6) Improve access to health and wellness support resources and break down barriers that limit access to these resources.
(xi) Expanding the role of practice advisors to include confidential consultation on mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as support with stress and personal coping mechanisms, by ensuring that practice advisors are featured on the law society's website and other communication platforms, and by providing these advisors with enhanced training to help them fulfil this expanded role.	6) Improve access to health and wellness support resources and break down barriers that limit access to these resources.
(xii) Improving access to member assistance programs (LAP and LifeWorks) by removing the need for members to log into LifeWorks using their bar association username and password, by posting information on access to these services on the bar website in the right places, and by highlighting this information in a number of additional communications and documents aimed at the profession.	6) Improve access to health and wellness support resources and break down barriers that limit access to these resources.

Initiative	Initiative-related recommendation(s) from Phase I
(xiii) Improving mental health communication strategies. Examples include: creating a dedicated web page showcasing the work of the Mental Health Task Force; coordinating a communications campaign for Mental Health Week; promoting resources for the profession; developing communications relating to mental health issues in the Benchers' Bulletin, E-brief and Notice to the Profession, and using appropriate language relating to these issues; promoting participation in the Federation's National Wellness Study; facilitating messages from successive Law Society presidents relating to mental health awareness; organizing two virtual sessions on mental health and wellness during the pandemic; regularly reminding legal professionals about the importance of being mindful and of health and stress, as well as about the availability of support services and other resources.	6) Improve access to health and wellness support resources and break down barriers that limit access to these resources.
(xiv) Improving awareness and access to resources through technological tools and expert systems designed to expand the means by which licensed practitioners and candidates are made aware of and given access to appropriate support, resources and referrals for mental health and addiction issues.	6) Improve access to health and wellness support resources and break down barriers that limit access to these resources.
(xv) Updating the regulatory self-assessment tool used by law firms with specific guidance encouraging legal employers to implement policies and processes and to provide resources to support lawyers with mental health issues and substance abuse problems in light of the important role that access to appropriate resources plays on obtaining support and treatment.	6) Improve access to health and wellness support resources and break down barriers that limit access to these resources; 8) Consider the health of legal professionals as integral to legal practice and the justice system.

Currently, the Law Society of British Columbia is focused on improving the understanding of mental health issues among its member lawyers, ensuring that all recommendations issued by the Mental Health Task Force are based on best available data (i.e., current reports, studies and scholarship, input from the BC Centre on Substance Use, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the work of the U.S. National Task Force on Lawyer Wellbeing, Law Society data, etc.).

1.6 TARGETED RECOMMENDATIONS | PHASE II

Author: Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D. CRHA

The Law Society of British Columbia is actively pursuing a number of initiatives to improve the health and wellness of legal professionals across the province. In fact, the Law Society of British Columbia already had a dedicated wellness committee in place before the start of Phase I of this project. Needless to say, these initiatives are inspiring and pave the way for the future of the profession in this province. The recommendations arising from Phase II of this national project have been drawn up with the following considerations in mind: (1) the results stemming from the priority themes analyzed; (2) the solutions put forward by Phase II participants in British Columbia; (3) the identified initiatives that are currently being implemented by the Law Society of British Columbia; and (4) the coverage rate of the various Phase I recommendations in relation to these initiatives. Three recommendations were made and are presented below.

RECOMMENDATION 1
IMPROVING THE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE AVAILABLE WHEN ENTERING THE PROFESSION

At present, the Law Society of British Columbia is to be applauded for its many initiatives. Some of the initiatives currently being implemented are aimed specifically at young people entering the profession. These initiatives are carried out in collaboration with the province's law faculties. However, the discussions held with participants in Phase II of this project as well as the results obtained in Phase I of the national project underline the importance of improving the support and guidance available to legal professionals—and in particular for articling students –following their entry into the profession.

The data gathered in British Columbia as part of Phase II of the project also highlight the major challenges faced by legal professionals at the start of their careers, underlining the importance of providing a better framework for entry into professional practice, thus ensuring its sustainability. Insofar as legal professionals represent the future of the profession, it seems essential to protect their health to ensure their future affective commitment to the profession. As discussed in the second theme, the profession involves constraints and stressors that can affect the mental health and well-being of professionals. With the stigma surrounding mental health issues still very present, the apprehension of being perceived as vulnerable or weak is even more significant among new professionals. This is why many of them feel the need to hide it, without realizing that many professionals of all ages share the same feelings.

For the Law Society of British Columbia, this recommendation involves contemplating the creation of a plan for onboarding new members into the profession, thus facilitating the gradual, supervised acquisition of skills that are essential for the practice of the profession.

For the Canadian Bar Association as well as the business community, this recommendation underscores the importance of promoting the mentorship of those entering the profession. Such mentorship programs already exist across the country, including in British Columbia. However, it should be noted that only a minority of legal professionals actually take advantage of these programs. To support its efforts to promote these programs, the Canadian Bar Association could work with practice settings to understand the challenges that limit people from taking advantage of mentorship offerings in

professional settings. For practice settings, this recommendation means thinking about the importance assigned to mentorship in the organization's day-to-day operations. This recommendation also stresses the importance of reviewing the onboarding practices aimed at young legal professionals, particularly during the first 2 years of practice, in terms of work organization, available supervision and training, peer support, and performance management expectations.

RECOMMENDATION 2
EVALUATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ALTERNATIVE WORK ORGANIZATION MODELS THAT LIMIT THE IMPACT OF CERTAIN RISK FACTORS ON HEALTH

The legal professionals interviewed during Phase II of the project stressed the importance of reducing workloads and hours worked to ensure a better life balance. The qualitative and quantitative data gathered support this assertion. In fact, the data show that work stress among legal professionals is associated with difficulties in establishing and maintaining a healthy lifestyle in terms of sleep, diet, and physical activity, as well as with greater alcohol consumption.

None of the identified actions currently being taken in British Columbia specifically address this recommendation from Phase I of the national project. Although this aspect goes beyond the mandate of the bar associations, they remain key players in mobilizing stakeholders around this issue.

The post-pandemic landscape has brought its share of challenges, including a return to mandatory onsite work in many offices that have chosen to abandon telework and the flexibility that comes with it. At the same time, the overexposure of certain legal practitioners to stressors such as recurring emotional demands, as well as the deleterious effects of business models focused on billable hours, underscore the importance of assessing the potential implementation of alternative work models that would reduce the pressure on legal professionals. This includes considering alternatives to the traditional billable hours model as well as assessing the impact of teamwork and remote work models, including hybrid and collaborative work models. Such alternative work models and accommodations would also facilitate a better work-life balance while supporting productivity.

RECOMMENDATION 3
PROMOTING A BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Although work-life balance was a very important theme in Phase I of the project, it seems that the theme of work-life balance is once again unanimously supported in this second phase. This is not surprising, considering the significant pressure faced by legal practitioners in Canada, regardless of their field of practice. Among the actions that could support this recommendation, the implementation of work-life balance programs by organizations stands out as an important one. It should be noted that work-life conflicts are significantly associated with the presence of mental health issues presented in the second theme, as well as with lower affective commitment to the profession and a higher intention to leave it. From the perspective of improving the health and well-being of professionals and enhancing their retention, work-life balance emerges as an important factor.

Beyond all this, the stress caused by the omnipresence of work-life conflict in legal practice is also likely to affect commitment to the organization in which professionals work. However, employee commitment brings considerable benefits to the organization, including reduced staff turnover, decreased absenteeism, improved task performance, and increased organizational citizenship behaviors (Bélanger, 2023; Meyer et al., 2002).

Implementing policies that support the right to disconnect would also be important. Consistent with the previous recommendation and the findings presented in this report, it seems more important than ever for organizations in British Columbia and across Canada to make work organization and telework arrangements more flexible.

For legal professionals themselves, the importance of taking care of oneself and maintaining healthy lifestyle habits cannot be overstressed. The data analyzed in this national project also highlight the importance of promoting the development of cross-disciplinary skills that facilitate a better work-life balance. These skills include the ability to set limits and to psychologically detach from work outside of office hours.

1.7 SUPPORT RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR LEGAL PROFESSIONALS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

EMERGENCY RESOURCES

British Columbia Crisis Line (24/7 mental health support): **310-6789**

For people thinking about committing suicide or worried about someone who might:
Crisis Line – Association of BC (24/7): **1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433 310)**

Distress services (Vancouver Coastal Health Region): **604-872-3311**
Distress services (Howe Sound, Sunshine Coast, Bella Coola): **1-866-661-3311**

Indigenous helpline / KUU-US (toll-free number – 24/7): **1-800-588-8717**
Crisis line for adults and seniors (24/7): **250-723-4050**

BC Interior Crisis Line Network (24/7): **1-888-353-CARE (2273)**

Vancouver Coastal Region – Crisis Center
Toll Free (24/7): 1-866-661-3311/Toll Free TTY (24/7): **1-866-872-0113**
Online Service: www.CrisisCentreChat.ca

Health Hotline – Fraser Valley/Fraser
Toll Free (24/7): **1-877-820-7444/Crisis** Line (24/7): **604-951-8855**

CTC Teleassistance Crisis and assistance line (Christian crisis intervention, listening and guidance).
Toll Free: **1-888-852-9099** / Crisis Line: **604-852-9099**

Northern British Columbia Crisis Centre
Toll-free (24/7):**1-888-562-1214** / Crisis line (24/7): **250-563-1214**

Richmond, South Delta, Ladner and Tsawwassen
Chimo telephone crisis line (8 a.m. to midnight): **604-279-7070**

S.U.C.C.E.S.S Chinese language helplines
Cantonese crisis line (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.): **604-270-8233** / Mandarin crisis line (10 a.m. to 10 p.m.): **604-270-8233**

Vancouver Island Crisis line and chat
Toll-free (24/7): **1-888-494-3888** / Text message (crisis): **250-800-3806** / Chat (crisis): www.vicrisis.ca

PROGRAMS OFFERED BY THE LAW SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

- Continuing professional development (CPD) on professional wellness
- Equity Ombudsperson: Claire Marchant. Phone: **604-605-5303.** Email: equity@lsbc.org
- The Alternative Discipline Process (ADP)

SEE OTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE RESOURCES FROM THE LAW SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

- Law Society of British Columbia-Lawyer well-being hub
- Law Society of British Columbia-Lawyer wellness and personal support
- British Columbia Branch of the Canadian Bar Association – Lawyer wellness

PROGRAMS OR WEBSITES ON THE THEMES OF WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Lawyers' assistance program of British Columbia. Phone: **1-888-685-2171** or **604-685-2171**
- LifeWorks Canada
  Phone: **1-888-307-0590**
- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health
- Wellness Together Canada: Mental health and addiction support
  Phone: **1-866-585-0445** Text message (SMS): WELLNESS at **741,741** or **686,868**
  Online peer support for Addiction
- The Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division: Phone 204-415-7551
  Toll-free (BC only) **1-800-555-8222**. Email: help@cmha.bc.ca
- BC Centre on Substance Use. Phone: **778-945-7616**.
- Lawyers Indemnity Fund

SEE OTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE RESOURCES ON THE TOPICS OF WELLNESS- AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Lawyers with Depression
- The Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia
- The University of British Columbia | Peter A. Allard School of Law
- The Advocates' Society

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