Background and Methodology

• Some totals may not equal 100% as a result of rounding.
• A total of 1,346 attorneys completed the online survey through the web host Survey Monkey.
• Online survey was completed in December 2018.
• The survey was conducted by the West Virginia State Bar to better understand the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of attorneys regarding a variety of issues.
• MBE was only responsible for the data analysis and interpretations included in this report. MBE was not solely responsible for sampling frame, questionnaire design, survey administration, et cetera.
Executive Summary
The good news is most lawyers in West Virginia are seemingly satisfied and optimistic about their professional lives. In fact, more than four in five say they are satisfied including one-third who say they are very satisfied. About one in three say they would become a lawyer if given the opportunity to do it all over again and another 33% say they would probably choose to do so. Respondents to this survey, on the whole, do not indicate there is a crisis of epic proportions within the profession. However, there are areas of concern which could be addressed.

While younger lawyers aren’t necessarily dissatisfied with their professional lives, they are certainly less optimistic and less hopeful about their careers than those lawyers with more experience. It seems younger lawyers in West Virginia would benefit from robust mentoring or advisory programs in which more seasoned attorneys communicated the realities of the profession to younger attorneys, helped manage professional expectations and fully communicated the challenges and rewards of the profession to younger lawyers. If such programs already do exist, it is clear that younger lawyers need to be more aware of them and actually utilize them.

As it relates to employment classifications, government lawyers significantly trail their counterparts in the private sector on important questions surrounding overall well-being. Their satisfaction, well-being, and optimism are noticeably lower than lawyers at private firms or corporate counsels. Programs specifically designed to improve professional lives of government lawyers should be evaluated and perhaps prioritized. Government lawyers are less satisfied financially but often indicate strong satisfaction regarding the challenging nature of their work and the support they receive from management or supervisors.

Female respondents to this study are less optimistic and less satisfied with their male counterparts. Women are less satisfied on key workplace attributes such as finances and the ability to advance. This is further indicated on questions tertiary to overall well-being and the like. Consideration should be given to specifically marketing assistance and wellness programs to female lawyers throughout the state, including and perhaps focusing on young female lawyers. The author is unaware of data regarding what percentage of lawyers in the state are women, but finds it reasonable to assume such is significant and therefore underscores the significance of robust and efficiently marketed gender specific assistance programs.

Attorneys under the age of 55 indicate they are not exercising at least three times per week. In fact, older respondents who are more satisfied and more likely to say their overall well-being is good also exercise more frequently. Younger respondents, who are often less satisfied, express less confidence in being able to balance careers and personal lives and rate their well-being less positively, also exercise less. This report does not claim to fully appreciate or understand the benefits of physical fitness on professional careers but as a matter of public opinion, those who exercise more are also more satisfied in their professions. Physical fitness programs should be marketed to all attorneys in the state, perhaps with emphasis on younger lawyers.
Executive Summary

Key Findings

More than four in five lawyers who responded to the survey are satisfied with their professional life. However, 50% of all respondents say they are only somewhat satisfied while just over one-third (34%) indicate they are very satisfied. Sixteen percent (16%) say they not very satisfied or not at all satisfied. Judges (76%) and Corporate Counsels (57%) are more likely to indicate they are very satisfied with their professional lives than other fields. Conversely, government lawyers (63%) and private lawyers (51%) are more likely to indicate they are only somewhat satisfied. Male attorneys (37%) are slightly more likely than female attorneys (30%) to say they are very satisfied. Also, there is a positive correlation between the years of practice and feeling very satisfied. The longer one has practiced law, the more likely he or she is to say they are very satisfied with their professional life.

Nearly one-third (29%) say they would not become a lawyer if they had it to do over again. Twenty-eight percent say they would definitely choose to become a lawyer again and 33% say they would probably choose to do so. Males (32%) are slightly more likely than females (22%) to say they would definitely become a lawyer again. One in three female attorneys indicate they would probably or definitely not become a lawyer again if given the opportunity. Government lawyers are significantly more likely to say they would not become a lawyer again when compared to other employment classifications.

More than half (52%) of all respondents describe their well-being as good, while under one-fourth (22%) say it is excellent. Twenty-six percent indicate their well-being is only fair or poor. Again, there appears to be a noticeable difference between the genders with 25% of men describing their well-being as excellent compared to 18% of women. Corporate counselors and judges are most likely to describe their well-being as excellent while government lawyers are least likely. Interestingly, those with more than 25 years of experience are more likely to describe their well-being as excellent than those with moderate or fewer years of experience. When asked to evaluate the well-being of their peers, 43% say fair, 43% say good, and 3% say excellent. Female attorneys are noticeably more likely to rate the well-being of their peers worse than males rate their peers.

Forty-four percent say they would not recommend law school to someone seeking advice. Those with more than 25 years of experience are far more likely to say they would advise someone to become an attorney while those with fewer than 10 years experience are far less likely to provide the same advice. Nearly half of all male respondents say they would definitely or probably recommend becoming an attorney compared to 38% of females. Private practice attorneys and judges are most likely to recommend the law as a profession while government lawyers are the least likely.

Almost half of all respondents say their professional careers have fallen short or failed their expectations from law school. However, 42% say their careers have met expectations and 13% say their expectations have been exceeded. Judges are significantly more likely say their careers have exceeded expectations while government lawyers are more likely to say their careers have fallen short or failed expectations. As firm size increases, so too do respondents who say their careers have exceeded expectations. Also, as age increases respondents are more likely to say their expectations have been met or exceeded when compared with younger lawyers.
Executive Summary

Respondents are most satisfied with the access to management and challenging work attributes of their professional lives. They are least satisfied financially and with their ability to balance work life. A 15% difference exists between men and women related to the ability to advance. While 45% of male respondents say they are very satisfied on this part of their careers, only 30% are. Twenty-eight percent of men are very satisfied financially compared to 20% of women. In fact, 41% of women are dissatisfied financially compared to 29% of men. Similarly, those with less experience are far less satisfied financially when compared to those who have practiced more than 25 years. Those with more experience are also significantly more satisfied with their ability to advance than those attorneys with far fewer years of experience. Government lawyers are noticeably more dissatisfied with their ability to advance and financially than respondents from other practice areas.

Nine in 10 agree (46% strongly/44% somewhat) their interactions with other lawyers in West Virginia during the past year have been civil and professional. Very little variability exists across demographic subsets as to this question.

Respondents are optimistic about their professional future but that optimism is soft with nearly half (47%) saying they only somewhat agree. Another 26% strongly agree while total disagreement is at 27%. Those who strongly agree they are optimistic about their future slightly increases as the size of the law firm for which they work increases. More than half (52%) of younger respondents strongly agree with this statement compared to 46% of middle-aged attorneys and 46% of those over the age of 55. Satisfaction as to this optimism questions is, interestingly, mostly equal among men and women who responded to this survey. Those with less experience are more likely to strongly agree their futures are optimistic than those with moderate and the most experience.

Nearly half (46%) indicate they engage in physical exercise at least three times per week while 20% say they exercise less than once per week. As age increases, so do the respondents who indicate they exercise more than three times per week. In fact, more than half of the respondents over the age of 55 say they exercise more than three times a week compared to 36% of those under the age of 25. Although just slightly, government lawyers are the least likely to indicate they exercise at least three times per week. Almost half of male attorneys (48%) say they exercise three time per week compared to 42% of females. Of note, those groups of respondents who are most likely to express dissatisfaction or self-identify their well-being in less favorable terms are seemingly the groups who also exercise less.

Seven in 10 (70%) of all respondents are satisfied with the professional support they receive in their current jobs while 21% express some degree of dissatisfaction. Government lawyers are least likely to say they are very satisfied while judicial law clerks and corporate counsels are most likely. Twelve percent of judges say they are not at all satisfied as to this question, and just 23% of judges say they are very satisfied.

More than half (52%) say they would be likely to contact the lawyer assistance program if they or a family member needed help. Nineteen percent (19%) say they would be very likely compared to 13% who say they are not at all likely to use the program. Those who say they would be very likely increases noticeably with age. For example, 24% of those over the age of 55 say they are very likely compared to just 12% of those under the age of 35. Interestingly, and perhaps alarmingly, just 14% of women say they would be very likely to use the program compared to 22% of men. It appears those demographic subsets who indicate higher satisfaction, well-being, and optimism are least likely to use the program for assistance.
Key Findings
Four in ten have been a member of the bar for over 25 years.

“How many years have you been admitted to the bar?”

- 42% Fewer than 10 yrs
- 34% 11-25 yrs
- 22% More than 25 yrs
- 1% Not practicing
Six in ten (61%) respondents are private practitioners.

"Which category best describes how you use your law license?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Practitioner</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government Lawyer</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judge</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>Corporate Counsel</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judicial Law Clerk</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (less than 2%)</td>
<td>13%</td>
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Three in ten private practitioners work in a firm of fewer than 50 attorneys.

“If you are a Private Practitioner, which of the following best describes your practice?”

- Solo Practitioner: 33%
- Firm 2-49: 31%
- Firm 50-100: 21%
- Firm 100+: 12%
- N/A: 3%
- Other: 0%
Over eight in ten (84%) say they are very/somewhat satisfied with their professional life – 16% are not.

“Generally how satisfied are you with your professional life?”

- Very Satisfied: 50%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 12%
- Not Very Satisfied: 34%
- Not At All Satisfied: 4%
Nearly one-third (29%) would likely NOT become a lawyer if they had to do it all over again.

“If you had to do it all over again, would you become a lawyer?”

- Definitely: 22%
- Probably: 33%
- Probably Not: 7%
- Definitely Not: 9%
- Unsure: 28%
Two in ten describe their overall well-being as excellent while one-fourth say it is fair/poor.

“How would you generally describe your well-being - meaning overall physical and mental health?”

- Excellent: 22%
- Good: 52%
- Fair: 22%
- Poor: 4%
Over half describe the overall well-being of other West Virginia lawyers as fair/poor.

“How would you generally describe your well-being - meaning overall physical and mental health - of the West Virginia lawyers you know?”
Respondents equally divided on recommending law school (43% def/prob versus 44% prob/def not).

“If someone asked your advice about whether to attend law school, would you encourage that person to attend law school?”
45% say professional experiences have fallen short or not met law school expectations.

"Thinking about your expectations before law school of what life would be like as a lawyer, how has your actual work as a lawyer compared to those expectations?"

![Pie chart showing distribution of responses to the question about expectations.](chart.png)
Half (49%) are very satisfied with their work environment.

“How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your professional life?” Work environment

- Very Satisfied: 49%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 38%
- Not Very Satisfied: 9%
- Not At All Satisfied: 3%
Six in ten (59%) are very satisfied with their access to management – 38% somewhat/not very satisfied.

“How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your professional life?” Access to management

- Very Satisfied: 59%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 27%
- Not Very Satisfied: 11%
- Not At All Satisfied: 3%
Four in ten (39%) are very satisfied with their ability to advance and 27% are not satisfied.

“How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your professional life?”  Ability to advance
Over half (55%) are very satisfied with the challenge of their work.

“How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your professional life?” Work is challenging

- Very Satisfied: 55%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 37%
- Not Very Satisfied: 6%
- Not At All Satisfied: <2%
One-third (31%) are unsatisfied with work/life balance.

“How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your professional life?” Work life balance

- Very Satisfied: 41%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 28%
- Not Very Satisfied: 10%
- Not At All Satisfied: 21%
One-third (33%) are unsatisfied with the financial aspect of their professional life and 25% are very satisfied.

“How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your professional life?” Financially

- Very Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Not Very Satisfied
- Not At All Satisfied
A majority agree that most interactions with fellow WV lawyers have been civil and professional.

“Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?”
During the past year or so, most of my interactions with other West Virginia lawyers have been civil and professional.
Nearly half (47%) only somewhat agree they are optimistic about professional future.

"Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?"
I am optimistic about my professional future.
More than half (54%) only exercise two times or fewer per week.

“How often do you engage in some type of physical activity or exercise?”

- Less than once per week: 20%
- Once or twice a week: 34%
- Three or more times a week: 45%
Nearly seven in ten (69%) are satisfied with the personal and professional support they receive.

“How satisfied are you with the personal and professional support you receive in your current employment?”

- Very Satisfied: 30%
- Some Satisfied: 39%
- Not Very Satisfied: 14%
- Not At All Satisfied: 6%
- N/A: 10%
41% are unlikely to contact WVJLAP for help.

“How likely would you be to contact the WV Judicial and Lawyer Assistance Program if you or a family member or friend needed help?”

- Very Likely: 18%
- Some Likely: 33%
- Not Very Likely: 28%
- Not Likely At All: 13%
- Unfamiliar with WVJLAP: 7%