

## Gender Mainstreaming in the Legal Profession: A Study of Women Lawyers Practicing in the Punjab and Haryana High Court

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to explore the motivation and professional fulfillment of women lawyers litigating primarily at the Punjab and Haryana High Court at Chandigarh. The process of the relevant data collection began with a questionnaire designed to investigate various aspects, including the factors that drive women to pursue a career in law, their level of satisfaction with their profession, and the challenges they face in their professional journey. The questionnaire was distributed amongst the women lawyers in this specific legal setting in order to gain deeper insights into their unique experiences and varied perspectives of gender bias found in the practice of law. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics and nuances of the legal profession for women practitioners in this specific context.*

### Introduction

Women lawyers in India have made significant strides in recent years, with their growing presence and an increased participation in the legal profession. Although the usual challenges persist, such as gender bias and discrimination, many women have successfully carved out their place in the field and in important positions. The number of women lawyers continues to rise, and with a concerted effort to promote gender equality, creation of more opportunities for advancement are underway. This overview sheds light on the advancements made by women lawyers in India, underscoring their increasing presence and active participation in the legal profession. Despite such progress, achieving equal representation and fair treatment for women lawyers in India still remains an ongoing challenge. Although, women graduating from top law schools and entering the legal profession at junior levels are equivalent in numbers to their male counterparts, this parity does not extend to equal representation in the workplace or advancement to higher positions (PTI, 2020)

There is therefore a need to address the barriers and biases that women lawyers face in order to ensure equal opportunities and a more inclusive legal profession in India.

The Indian government has shared statistics regarding the enrollment of women lawyers in the country. The data presented by the Law Ministry in Parliament reveals that only 15.3 percent of lawyers in India are women. Among the states, Meghalaya boasts the highest proportion of women lawyers, with 59.3 percent of the 821 lawyers enrolled with the Bar Council being women. In contrast, Uttar Pradesh has the lowest representation, with just 8.7 percent of over 4 lakh lawyers being women (Mathur, 2022). On Women's Day 2023, it was revealed that only a small fraction of Senior Advocates in the Supreme Court and High Courts of India are women. Despite the current Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud's belief that the future of the legal profession belongs to women, the current situation paints a

different picture. Among the 3,149 Senior Advocates in the country's courts, a mere 3.4% or 106 are women (Benwal, 2023).

This data highlights the ongoing struggle faced by women lawyers in carving a niche for themselves in the legal profession.

It underscores the existing barriers that women encounter, such as societal expectations and gender biases, which lead to breaks in their careers or even abandonment of their legal practice.

Women lawyers, while making progress and contributing significantly, still face the challenges of balancing professional aspirations with personal responsibilities. Marriage, childcare, and maternity often require women to put their legal careers on hold, affecting their opportunities for professional growth and recognition. Efforts must continue to break down the patriarchal mindset and create an inclusive legal profession that supports and encourages women lawyers. This could involve initiatives such as mentorship programs, flexible work arrangements, and policies that promote work-life balance. By addressing these challenges, women lawyers can have a better representation among Senior Advocates, allowing them to truly carve their niche in the legal field and contribute to shaping the future of the profession.

According to a news article “50% jump in women lawyers in Chandigarh district courts in three years” which was published in 2017, the increased presence of women lawyers and judicial officers in family courts and cases related to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act has proven beneficial, as victims feel more at ease confiding in women judicial officers regarding such sensitive matters. According to one perspective, being a woman should not serve as a deterrent in any profession if one is passionate about their work. The Punjab and Haryana High Court has particularly witnessed a significant rise in the number of women lawyers.

<b>DISTRICT COURTS</b>		
Year	Women lawyers	Women Judicial officers
2013-14	250-275	11
2014-15	275-300	11
2015-16	350	12
2016-17	400	8
2017	-----Status quo-----	
(Source: District Bar Association)		
<b>PUNJAB &amp; HARYANA HIGH COURT</b>		
Year	Total lawyers	Women lawyers
2014	8,000	800
2017	11,000	1,900
(Source: Punjab and Haryana High Court Bar Council Association)		

Source: Hindustan Times, Chandigarh

### Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine the motivations and job satisfaction levels of women in the legal profession, with a specific focus on women advocates practicing in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. The study aims to gain insights into what drives women to pursue a

career in law and to understand their level of satisfaction with their work and workplace environment. By exploring these aspects, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the motivation and professional satisfaction of women legal practitioners.

## Methodology

This research work is grounded in an empirical study employing descriptive analysis. The primary data for the study was collected through a survey method utilizing an questionnaire. The research methodology adopted for this study encompassed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data was obtained through questionnaires, while qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. This combination of methodologies allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the research subject, providing a broader understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and insights of women legal practitioners in the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

## Literature Review

The following review of existing literature sheds light on the interplay between work-life balance and job satisfaction among women in the legal profession. It delves into the various factors that impact their ability to effectively manage their work and personal lives.

The study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) titled "Breaking barriers: Unconscious gender bias in the workplace" underscores the significance of tackling unconscious biases, particularly gender bias, within work environments. The study proposes that employers' organizations should implement targeted training programs aimed at addressing these biases. It suggests a structured approach to the training, which includes recognizing biases, illustrating their impact, and providing participants with skills and strategies to overcome them. Furthermore, the study highlights the unconscious bias training pack developed by the National Women's Council of Ireland. This training pack specifically targets unconscious gender bias prevalent in recruitment, promotion, and retention policies. It emphasizes the negative consequences of disregarding such biases and emphasizes the benefits of achieving gender balance in decision-making positions.

The study titled "The experiences of women in occupations dominated by men: An inquiry using constructivist grounded theory" provides valuable insights into the difficulties encountered by women working in professions predominantly populated by men. It sheds light on how these challenges affect their ability to stay in the profession and achieve career success. The findings highlight that these challenges arise from entrenched gender hierarchies and societal norms, which permeate from familial structures to organizational policies and practices. This research is pertinent to the experiences of women lawyers, as they also operate within a predominantly male-dominated occupation. It encompasses the expectations and biases that marginalize women's roles and contribute to a workplace culture that is biased against women.

The findings presented in the ILO-Gallup report titled "Advancing towards a brighter future for women and work: Perspectives from women and men" highlight the global endorsement for women's engagement in paid employment. The report reveals that a majority of both women and men worldwide express a preference for women to have paid

jobs, signifying a shift in attitudes towards gender equality and achieving a better work-life balance. These findings imply that there is a growing acknowledgement of the significance of family-friendly policies that enable women to pursue and advance in their paid employment while also encouraging men to take on caregiving responsibilities. In the context of women lawyers, this suggests that there might be an increasing acceptance and support from spouses towards their wives' career choices and aspirations, allowing for a better equilibrium between work and personal life commitments.

The study titled "Challenges Faced by Women Legal Practitioners: A Study" by Dr. Puneet Pathak and Roli Singh investigates the obstacles experienced by women in the legal profession. It emphasizes the quantitative increase in the number of women in law but emphasizes the need for qualitative improvements. The research employs an empirical approach, collecting primary data through surveys. Findings indicate challenges such as limited case choices, low earnings, client interactions, and lack of guidance from senior advocates. Recommendations include fostering a supportive work environment, providing stipends to new lawyers, and facilitating guidance from senior advocates for women practitioners' active involvement in the justice system.

The study "Gender Discourse Among Women Legal Professionals in Lucknow Courts" (Mishra, 2014) examines the gender dynamics within the legal profession in Lucknow, India, with a specific focus on women legal professionals. Despite significant gender disparity in the Central Bar Association of Lucknow (181 women compared to approximately 3,531 men), women have persistently entered the male-dominated field. The research explores the gender discourse among male and female legal professionals in the Lucknow District Court. It addresses various factors including individual perspectives, family challenges, the hostile court environment, discrimination from clients and judges, and subtle gender-based behaviors. Through interviews with around seventy-three women practitioners, this study aims to gain insights into their experiences, struggles, and determination to survive and succeed within the male-dominated legal profession in Lucknow.

The article "Advancement of Women in the Indian Legal Profession since Independence" explores the progress of women in the Indian legal profession since independence. It begins with Cornelia Sorabji's historic entry into the High Court of Allahabad in 1921, which opened doors for women as advocates. The Legal Practitioners' (Women) Act of 1923 further allowed women to practice law. This reformative measure empowered women to advocate for others, challenging societal norms and oppressive laws. The article acknowledges the collective efforts of educated men and determined women who fought for women's inclusion in the legal profession. Their struggle paved the way for women's representation and advancement, contributing to the ongoing progress of women's rights and social justice in India.

The book "The First Women Lawyers: A Comparative Study on Gender, Law, and the Legal Professions" (Mossman, 2006) explores the lives of pioneering women who challenged the male-dominated legal professions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It examines their efforts within a context of societal change and legal reforms, exploring the intersection of historical gender norms and perceptions of legal professionalism at that time. The study focuses on the experiences of women seeking entry into the legal profession across various jurisdictions, including the United States, Canada, Britain, New Zealand and Australia, India, and western Europe. By analyzing systemic issues and the strategies employed by individual women to overcome barriers, the book examines how evolving notions of gender and legal

professionalism influenced women's opportunities and choices. It also sheds light on the support and opposition they encountered. Through a comparative approach, the book highlights the diverse perspectives on gender and legal professionalism among the first women lawyers during this transformative period.

The empirical study "Examining Work-Life Balance Satisfaction Among Women Lawyers: An Empirical Study" (Kannan, 2013) focuses on assessing the satisfaction level of women lawyers regarding their work-life balance. It recognizes the need to address internal barriers rooted in persistent sex role stereotypes and norms that subordinate women in both public and private realms. While the study acknowledges the challenges women face in reconciling traditional domestic roles with their professional commitments, it emphasizes the importance of taking small steps towards creating a more supportive environment for women to thrive in the legal profession. One such step is the proposal to establish a daycare facility in the Delhi High Court for children of women advocates and court employees. While these initiatives demonstrate progress, the study suggests that more comprehensive efforts are needed to bring about significant change and enable women to achieve successful legal careers.

The article "Women in the Legal Profession: Challenges and Experiences" (Ranasinghe, 2021) addresses the challenges faced by women in the legal profession in Sri Lanka and their experiences in entering and retaining positions in the field. Despite female law students outnumbering males in law faculties, women are underrepresented in leadership roles and high-profile positions. This gender disparity affects women's rights, access to justice, and the overall effectiveness of the justice system. The article draws insights from panel discussions conducted in two districts, exploring the experiences shared by women attorneys and suggesting new approaches to overcome barriers.

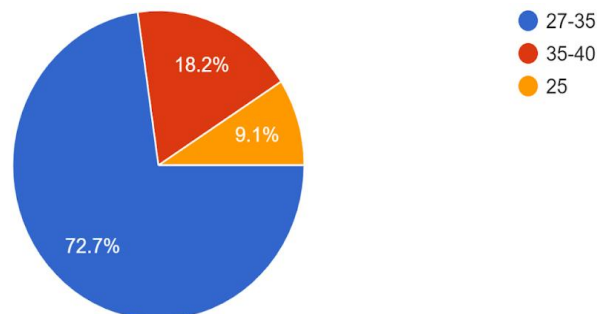
The article "Personality Traits and Glass Ceiling Beliefs: Impact on Women Advocates' Career Development" (Nisha & Vasumathi, 2020) examines how personality traits influence glass ceiling beliefs among women advocates and their subsequent career development. It addresses the challenges faced by women in various fields, impacting job satisfaction and professional growth. The study emphasizes the need to minimize glass ceiling issues and promote greater participation of women in the legal profession. Findings reveal the positive impact of personality traits on career growth, with socioeconomic factors significantly influencing advancement. The study's implications extend to women advocates and other women employees in diverse industries. By focusing on women advocates' ability to overcome glass ceiling barriers, this study sheds light on the unique role of personality traits in shaping their perceptions and career success.



## Research Findings

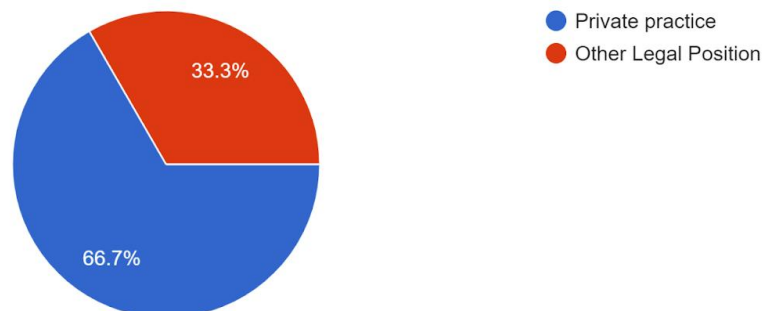
The results of the survey are summarized below:

### 1. Age



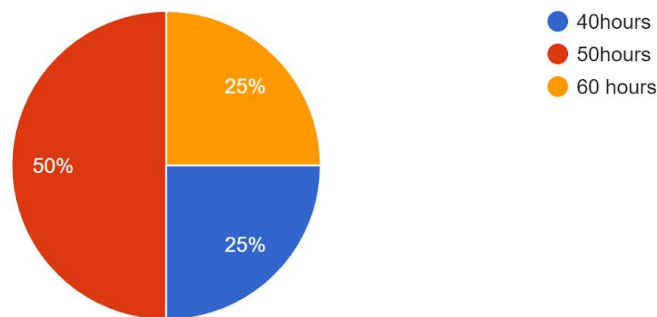
The majority of the surveyed women lawyers are young, with 73% falling within the age range of 27-35. This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents are in the early stages of their legal careers. It also suggests a growing interest among young women in pursuing a career in law and signifies a positive trend towards increased representation and opportunities for women in the legal profession.

### 2. What is the category of your occupation?



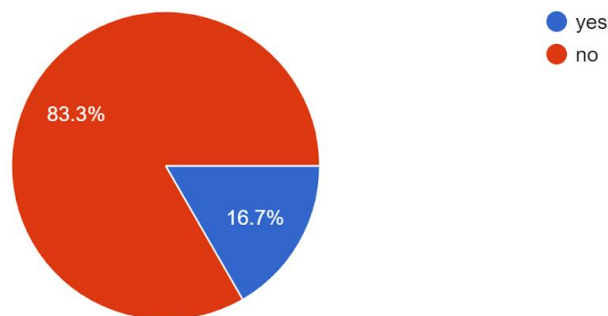
The occupation categories reported by the respondents are as follows: 67% of them are engaged in private practice, while 33.3% hold other legal positions. The majority of the respondents work in private practice, either as independent practitioners or affiliated with law firms. This indicates that a significant proportion of women advocates are actively involved in providing legal services to clients, representing them in various legal matters. Some respondents work as practitioners with their own associates, while others hold positions as corporate counsel, work as associates to senior advocates, or serve as public prosecutors and in other government panel roles. Additionally, there are those who work as associates, court staff, or practice with their spouses. This variety of occupations demonstrates the breadth of opportunities and specializations available within the legal field.

### 3. Average work hours per week



A majority of the women advocates surveyed work approximately 50 hours per week. A significant portion reported working 40 hours, while another quarter reported longer work weeks of 60 hours. These numbers suggest that the legal profession often demands significant time commitments, with many women advocates dedicating extensive hours to their work.

#### 4. Do you feel there is enough representation of women lawyers in the court?



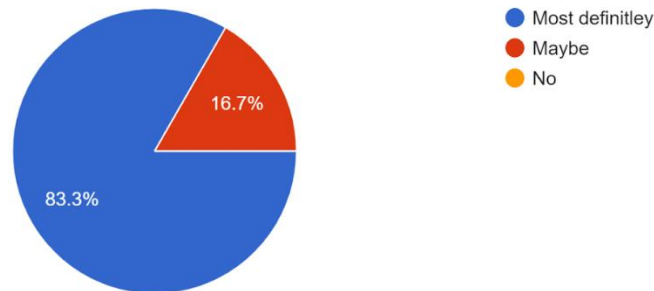
The survey responses indicate that the majority of the respondents, 83.3%, do not feel that there is enough representation of women lawyers in the court. Conversely, only 16.7% of the respondents expressed the belief that there is sufficient representation of women lawyers. These results suggest a widespread perception among the surveyed women advocates that there is still a significant gap in gender representation within the legal profession, particularly in courtrooms. This finding highlights the need for continued efforts to promote gender diversity and equal representation in the legal field.

#### 5. If no then why do you feel so?

The perceived lack of representation of women lawyers in the court is attributed to several factors according to the respondents. Firstly, women tend to prioritize security and opt for careers in the judiciary due to better safety measures. Additionally, many women drop out of the legal profession after marriage as they face time constraints and family commitments. The patriarchal nature of society discourages families from supporting their daughters' pursuit of a legal career, as it is not seen as a conventional 9-5 job, while clients, particularly in Punjab, may not take young-looking female counsels seriously, perpetuating gender stereotypes. Moreover, the demanding nature of the profession, combined with household and childcare responsibilities, often leads women lawyers to take sabbaticals or leave the profession altogether. Limited opportunities for women in private practice, gender bias and discrimination, unwelcoming atmospheres in the legal profession, and the underrepresentation of women in senior advocate and judicial positions further contribute to

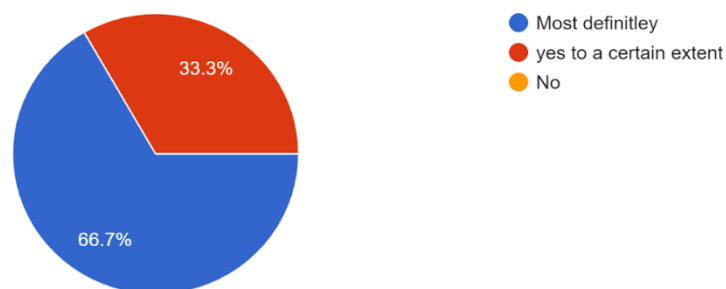
the lack of representation. These various factors highlight the complex barriers that women lawyers face in achieving equal representation and emphasize the need for systemic changes to promote gender equality in the legal field.

**6. Do you think the legal profession has evolved over the years when it comes to the number of women advocates in the profession?**



The majority of respondents, 83.3%, believe that the legal profession has indeed evolved over the years in terms of the number of women advocates in the profession. A smaller proportion, 16.7%, responded with a more uncertain "maybe," while none of the respondents disagreed with the notion. This indicates a general consensus among the surveyed women advocates that there has been positive progress in increasing the representation of women in the legal profession. The respondents do believe that women are carving a niche for themselves in the legal profession. It reflects a growing recognition of the contributions and achievements of women in the field, highlighting their ability to establish a unique and significant presence within the profession. The belief in women carving a niche for themselves signifies a positive trend towards greater gender equality and empowerment within the legal profession.

**7. Do you feel this profession is predominantly male-dominated even in today's time where women are breaking the glass ceiling? In what ways do you feel that it is male dominated?**



The survey responses indicate that the majority of respondents, 66.7%, believe that the legal profession is still predominantly male-dominated even in today's time, despite women breaking the glass ceiling. A smaller proportion, 33.3%, expressed the view that it is to a certain extent. None of the respondents disagreed with the notion. These responses reflect the perception that while progress has been made in promoting gender equality and breaking barriers, there is still a significant presence of male dominance within the legal profession. It suggests that further efforts are needed to achieve full gender parity and create a more inclusive and balanced professional environment.

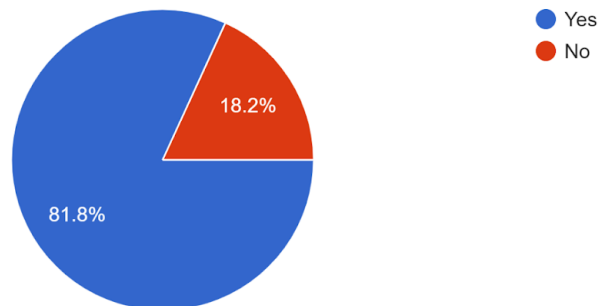


According to the respondents, the dominance of men is evident in the profession through factors such as less representation of women, lack of trust from clients, and challenges in client dealing and case procurement. The demanding nature of the profession, requiring long work hours, is seen as a hindrance for women who face the burden of managing household responsibilities, creating a cycle that perpetuates gender inequality. Disparities in case procurement, gender pay differences, growth opportunities, and the conduct of support staff further reinforce the male-dominated landscape. The underrepresentation of women in judgeships and designated advocate positions creates a hostile environment for female professionals in court, leading to client preference for established male advocates. The effectiveness of arguments is also perceived as biased towards male counsels, with few women in senior advocate roles. Additionally, men have advantages in acquiring new clients, especially from lower court lawyers and clients who tend to prefer male lawyers. Balancing childcare responsibilities becomes a challenge for women, impacting their ability to keep pace with male counterparts. In private practice, women face difficulties in procuring work, particularly in rural areas, where gender biases persist. Judgmental attitudes towards women within the profession further contribute to the perception of male dominance. Overall, these responses indicate that the legal profession still grapples with gender disparities and biases that hinder the progress of women advocates and perpetuate a male-dominated culture.

## **8. How do women specifically contribute towards the profession?**

The contributions of women to the legal profession are multifaceted, as noted by the respondents. Women are often described as possessing qualities such as patience and compassion, which they bring to their work. Their contributions to the profession are seen in a similar vein as any other gender, emphasizing that their impact is not limited by their gender. Additionally, women are recognized for their higher emotional intelligence (E.Q.), which can positively influence their interactions within the profession. Despite facing less favorable or supportive factors, women continue to make noteworthy contributions in the legal field. It is acknowledged that the legal profession plays a vital role in shaping society, necessitating active participation from the female diaspora to maintain a balanced power dynamic and avoid regressive paths. Women bring their intellect and take a holistic viewpoint when approaching cases, adding valuable perspectives to the profession. In line with their male counterparts, women contribute to legal research, arguments, and drafting, as the profession does not discriminate based on gender. Moreover, there is an encouraging trend of women assuming more roles and actively engaging in activities organized by bar associations, as well as taking on active positions as mediators. These responses collectively illustrate the diverse and essential contributions that women make to the legal profession, enhancing its overall vitality and effectiveness.

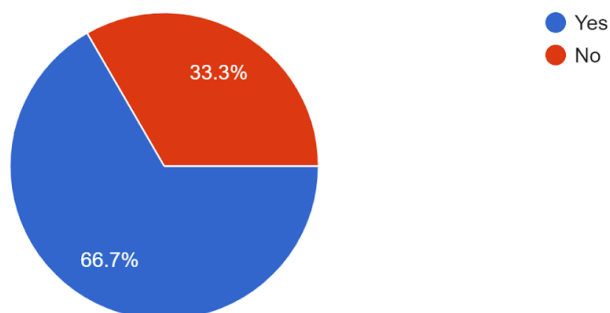
**9. Have you faced any sort of gender discrimination in the profession or felt that you were treated differently only because of your gender? If yes, then please elaborate.**



The majority of respondents, 82%, indicated that they have faced some form of gender discrimination in the legal profession or felt that they were treated differently solely because of their gender. Conversely, 18.2% responded that they have not experienced such discrimination. These responses suggest that a significant proportion of women in the profession have encountered gender-based challenges or biases during their careers.

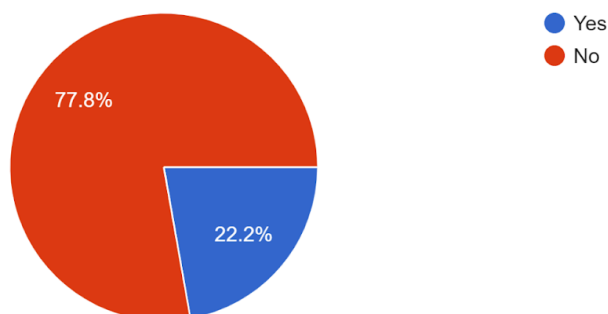
Many respondents shared that they have faced some form of gender discrimination or felt treated differently solely because of their gender. However, some noted that their experiences have been predominantly positive, with judges providing encouragement to young women in the profession. Fortunately, a few respondents mentioned that they have not encountered any discrimination thus far. One respondent humorously described an incident where their name was excluded from an article simply because they are a woman. Others expressed concerns about disparities in pay and perks, where women may receive less compensation for the same level of work and effort compared to their male counterparts. It was also mentioned that some clients tend to prefer male lawyers due to discomfort with female presence, assuming that women's domestic and family responsibilities may interfere with their professional commitments. Additionally, the presence of the respondent made others feel conscious during a casual discussion. Another respondent shared experiences of the courts granting relief to male counsel while denying the same relief to them based on similar facts and legal propositions, identifying specific courts as discriminatory and orthodox in their practices. These responses shed light on the varied instances of gender discrimination experienced by women in the legal profession, ranging from client preferences and biases to disparities in professional opportunities and treatment within the court system.

**10. Have you personally experienced or witnessed any inappropriate sexual jokes, questions, gestures or looks by male lawyers?**

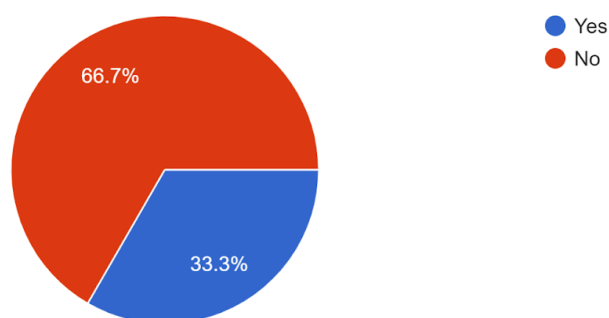


The majority of respondents, 66.7%, stated that they have personally experienced or witnessed inappropriate sexual jokes, questions, gestures, or looks by male lawyers. On the other hand, 33.3% responded that they have not encountered such behavior. These findings suggest that a significant portion of women in the legal profession have been subjected to or have observed instances of inappropriate and unwelcome behavior from male colleagues. Such incidents highlight the need for creating a safe and respectful work environment that promotes gender equality and addresses issues of harassment and misconduct.

**11. If yes then did you report did you report the incident to your immediate supervisor or someone else?**

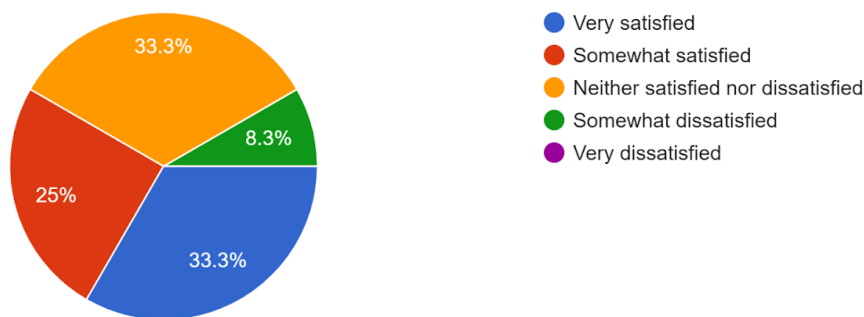


**12. If yes then was the issue resolved or handled to your satisfaction?**



From the responses, it can be observed that a minority of respondents, 22.2%, reported incidents of inappropriate sexual jokes, questions, gestures, or looks by male lawyers. The majority, 78%, chose not to report such incidents. Among those who did report, only 33.3% indicated that the issue was resolved or handled to their satisfaction, while 67% expressed dissatisfaction with the resolution. These findings suggest that there may be a lack of effective mechanisms or support systems in place to address and resolve issues related to inappropriate behavior within the legal profession. It underscores the importance of establishing robust reporting and response mechanisms to ensure the safety and well-being of all professionals and to foster a workplace environment free from harassment and misconduct.

### 13. How satisfied are you with your legal career?



The responses reveal a diverse range of satisfaction levels among the women advocates surveyed regarding their careers. Around one-third of the respondents expressed a high level of satisfaction, stating that they are very satisfied with their legal careers. This group likely finds fulfillment in their work, feels valued in their roles, and experiences a sense of accomplishment in their professional endeavors. Another quarter of the respondents reported being somewhat satisfied with their legal careers. These individuals have a generally positive outlook, yet still have areas where they would like to see improvement or feel that certain aspects of their careers could be more fulfilling.

Interestingly, another one-third of the respondents expressed a neutral stance, neither fully satisfied nor dissatisfied with their legal careers. It suggests that these individuals have a mixed or ambivalent perception of their professional journey, perhaps experiencing a combination of positive and challenging aspects in their roles. A smaller percentage of respondents, 8.3%, indicated feeling somewhat dissatisfied with their legal careers. This group may be facing specific challenges or limitations that impact their overall satisfaction, such as work-related stress, limited growth opportunities, or a lack of work-life balance.

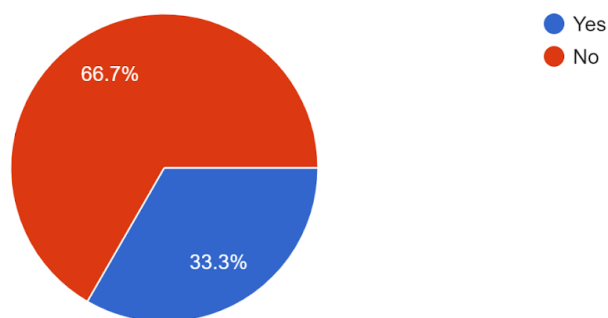
Notably, no respondents reported being very dissatisfied with their legal careers, indicating that the overall level of dissatisfaction is relatively low among the participants.

### 14. Is it tough getting work done as a woman lawyer?

The responses to the question regarding the difficulty of getting work done as a woman lawyer reflect a range of perspectives. Some respondents acknowledge the challenges that come with being a woman in the legal profession but maintain that it is not impossible to overcome them. They recognize that securing work as a woman lawyer may require extra

effort but emphasize that the work itself can be accomplished. Others express a more optimistic view, stating that they do not find it particularly tough to get work done as a woman lawyer. They believe that times are changing and that competence and skill are what ultimately earn respect in the profession. However, a few respondents acknowledge that there can be biases and stereotypes working against women lawyers, with both their colleagues and judges questioning their competence. They note that women may need to work harder to prove themselves. Overall, the responses highlight the nuanced experiences and perceptions of women lawyers regarding the challenges they face in getting work done, but also demonstrate resilience and determination in pursuing their legal careers.

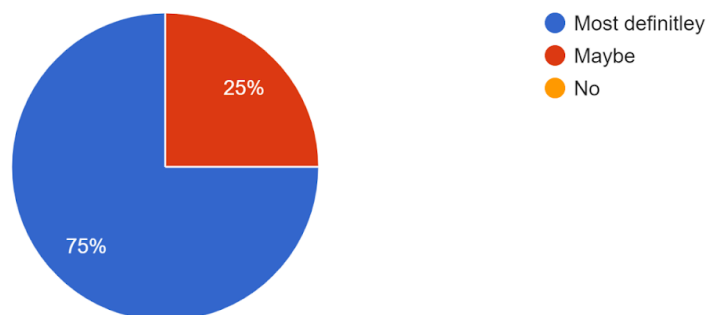
**15. Do you feel you have the same career advancement opportunities as compared to your male counterparts? If no, then please elaborate.**



Among the respondents, 66.7% feel that they have the same career advancement opportunities as compared to their male counterparts. However, 33.3% believe otherwise and feel that they face limitations in their career advancement. The elaborations provided by these respondents shed light on the challenges they perceive. Some respondents express that opportunities are limited for everyone in the legal profession, but women face additional barriers and biases. They feel that male lawyers are often given more recognition and support in advancing their careers. Others mention that men in the profession are not always supportive of women's advancement, unless there is a personal connection. Some respondents also note that the flexibility of work hours may provide more opportunities for men. The absence of a female Advocate General in any state is also highlighted as an example of limited opportunities for women in top positions. Despite acknowledging these challenges, some respondents also recognize that being well-prepared and standing out can help overcome biases and gain recognition. Overall, the responses suggest a mixed perception regarding career advancement opportunities for women compared to their male counterparts, with some recognizing biases and limitations in the profession.



## 16. Do you see yourself continuing in the same profession?



The majority of respondents, 75%, see themselves continuing in the same profession. They express a strong commitment and dedication to their legal careers. However, 25% of respondents are uncertain and indicate that they may consider other possibilities in the future. It is worth noting that no respondents stated a definite "no" to continuing in the profession, suggesting a generally positive outlook towards their legal careers and a desire to continue in the field.

## 17. Which is a better working environment for women- corporate law firm or active court practice?

The responses to the question regarding which is a better working environment for women, corporate law firms or active court practice, vary. Some respondents express a preference for active court practice, citing their love for the dynamic nature of the courtroom and the satisfaction they derive from practicing law in that setting. A few respondents specifically mention corporate law firms as a better working environment for women. One respondent mentioned "none" as their answer, indicating that they do not believe either corporate law firms or active court practice is a better working environment for women. It is evident that individual experiences and perspectives play a significant role in shaping their preferences and perceptions.

## 18. Would you recommend other women to join the legal profession? especially when it comes to starting one's own practice?

The responses to whether other women should join the legal profession, especially when it comes to starting their own practice, are diverse. Some respondents enthusiastically recommend it, expressing a positive outlook and encouraging other women to pursue a career in law. They believe it is worth the struggles and challenges involved. However, one respondent expresses a cautious perspective, suggesting that joining the legal profession and starting one's own practice may be more suitable in exceptional cases where the woman is not the primary breadwinner and possesses the determination to fight against the system. Another respondent mentions providing honest information about the hardships of starting one's own practice and letting individuals make their own decision based on their grit and determination. Overall, the responses indicate a range of opinions, with some strongly

advocating for women to join the legal profession while others approach it with more caution and consideration.

### **19. Please mention some suggestions for a smoother integration of women lawyers into the profession.**

To facilitate a smoother integration of women lawyers into the profession, several suggestions were provided by respondents. Firstly, they emphasized the importance of approaching the profession with determination and dedication, acknowledging that success requires effort and resilience. Secondly, it was recommended to spend time developing a well-thought-out plan before entering any office or workspace, ensuring preparedness for the challenges ahead. Additionally, there was a call to end gender-based roles in society and empower women to become economically independent and confident individuals. Equal representation of women in key positions such as the judiciary, Advocate General's office, and senior advocate roles was advocated for, along with providing additional support and perks to help women manage their personal responsibilities. Some respondents highlighted the need for more appointments of female judges and senior advocates, particularly those who are first-generation lawyers, and urged state governments to consciously appoint female lawyers as Advocate General. Lastly, it was encouraged to maintain perseverance and not give up on the profession, as consistent effort and determination can lead to long-term success. These suggestions aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women lawyers, enabling them to thrive and contribute to the legal profession. Some respondents shared their positive experiences of starting their careers with supportive and respectful senior advocates, emphasizing the importance of such mentorship and encouragement for new women lawyers entering the profession. These suggestions focus on fostering a culture of support, mentorship, and empowerment within the legal profession to facilitate the smooth integration of women lawyers and enhance their professional growth.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, the suggestions provided by the subjects highlight the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment for women lawyers. Encouragement and support from the benches were identified as crucial in fostering the active participation of young women counsels in courtroom arguments. The need for women lawyers and judges to uplift and mentor their fellow women in the profession was emphasized, with mentorship programs being proposed as a means to guide and assist younger lawyers in navigating various challenges. Addressing issues such as appropriate courtroom attire and facilitating effective interactions with male lawyers and clients were also seen as essential for women's success. Ultimately, the importance of self-belief and the determination to pursue one's goals were highlighted as key attributes possessed by women, enabling them to overcome obstacles and thrive in the legal profession. These suggestions collectively aim to promote a more inclusive and supportive environment that facilitates the smooth integration and professional growth of women lawyers.

### **Acknowledgements**

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the women advocates who generously shared their time and participated in our survey. Their valuable contributions and willingness to provide

insights have been instrumental in shaping our understanding of the challenges and experiences faced by women in the legal profession. Their willingness to share their perspectives has greatly enriched our research and will undoubtedly contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the profession. We sincerely appreciate their cooperation and support in making this study possible.

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