



# The IBA report on the social and economic impact of the legal profession

2024



# Foreword

It is with enormous pride that, on behalf of the International Bar Association, I introduce the IBA report on the social and economic impact of the legal profession.

When I was preparing my Presidency of the International Bar Association for years 2023-2024, I asked myself how I could bring something of real value not only for the Association, its members, and the legal profession, but also for society.

I have always been convinced that what we lawyers contribute through our professional lives, in our everyday work, goes beyond going to court, drafting and closing agreements, or advising our clients in so many different ways. Being in touch with members of the legal profession from all over the planet, I realized that our work weaves a tapestry of trust that significantly contributes to the daily lives of citizens and businesses, the relations between them and the state, the good functioning of justice, and the strengthening of the Rule of Law, allowing modern democracies to function at their best.

I therefore focused on how the IBA, as the voice of the global legal profession, the world's largest and most influential association of legal practitioners, could demonstrate and highlight those positive contributions. How could we prove the intangible value of lawyers' work for the good operation of society? How could we render tribute to so many invisible legal professionals who participate in what may appear as small legal matters- which they are not- and to others who gain greater visibility because of the type of the cases on which they work? How could we also rectify a sometimes unfair and negative perception of lawyers? Finally, how could we shed light on why the Rule of Law is indispensable, especially nowadays when the Rule of Law is deteriorating in almost 60% of the world jurisdictions?

These thoughts describe the origin of the idea of measuring, for the first time, the social and economic impact of the legal profession in society. **The resulting facts are now clear: the work of the over twelve million lawyers across the globe impacts, directly or indirectly, the lives, health and well-being of citizens throughout the world. Our contribution to the Rule of Law generates wealth, promotes innovation and education, limits the overreach of the governments, levels inequality and upgrades environmental sustainability.**

Having the measurements, we then identified those areas that deserve more attention and action: increased access to legal representation, advocacy on critical issues to further peace and progress, education and communication on the Rule of Law and the role of lawyers, and ethical stewardship. This call for action encompasses us all - bar associations, law societies, law firms, law departments, and other stakeholders - to preserve and strengthen the profession's impact.

This Report is the result of more than a year of sustained collective effort at the IBA. Its achievement would have been impossible without the invaluable work of David W. Rivkin, who has co-chaired with me the Impact Task Force leading this ambitious project. David is former President of the IBA, one of the best legal brains I have come across and a delight to work with. The IBA and I, personally, owe David a debt impossible to quantify and pay back as he would deserve.

This outcome would also not have been attainable without the great work of the Impact Task Force, the continued support of the Management Board, and the contributions from the interviewees who accepted providing us with their opinions and unique experiences. The names of all these remarkable contributors appear in page 125. My acknowledgement also goes to the IBA staff who have paved the way to allow us finishing this work. Finally, our recognition goes to the McKinsey team, who have contributed to the collection and analysis of the data. We could not have had better companions for this journey.

The IBA has taken this important first step, which highlights a now undeniable reality: the role of the legal profession is crucial for all of us and for the better world we aspire to continue building, which improvement is nowadays being challenged.

Our ambition at this point must be to make a collective endeavor to sustain and increase our positive impact, collaborating in the above priority areas. The IBA is already committed to doing so. I sincerely hope that you may join us in bringing this effort to its next level.

Almudena Arpón de Mendívil Aldama

IBA President 2023-2024.

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# Executive summary



# Executive summary

“Lawyers have their duties as citizens, but they also have special duties as lawyers. Their obligations go far deeper than earning a living as specialists in corporation or tax law. They have a continuing responsibility to uphold the fundamental principles of justice from which the law cannot depart.” —

Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General of the United States, 1961-1964

## Purpose of this report

This report aims to assess the impact of the legal profession on society, explore the relationship between this role and the general public's perception of it, and identify the levers to improve its positive impact.

Lawyers' contributions to society often are not well known or recognized even within the legal profession itself. This lack of awareness of and appreciation for what lawyers contribute to society is even greater among the general public, civil society, institutions and states.

For this reason, the International Bar Association (IBA) has produced this report drawing on multiple sources, with McKinsey & Company as a contributor to the analysis. The IBA wishes to raise awareness among the public of the vitally important role the legal profession plays. As a result, this report seeks to make the intangible and sometimes difficult to comprehend daily contributions of the legal profession more intelligible, relevant, and easier to understand. The legal profession itself should also become more conscious of the importance of its role and the responsibility attached to it.

Lawyers have a special status in society. Lawyers and bar associations are regulated by law. In turn, the law recognizes that for lawyers to undertake this role, and to protect the best interests of their clients, communications must be protected by attorney-client privilege and professional confidentiality. Moreover, lawyers must be free from ethical conflict, and the profession must be free from state control. Also, lawyers have a duty to follow ethical rules and if they violate these rules they may be disbarred. Clients of lawyers and society as a whole benefit from these protections, which do not apply, for example, to consultants or other advisors.

One of the main – but often unnoticed – contributions lawyers make to society involves the access to a good operating and independent system of justice, which forms the foundations of a strong Rule of Law. As described in this report, it is well documented that respect by all players for the Rule of Law contributes to economic growth and social welfare.

It is therefore a major responsibility for lawyers as well as for bar associations, law societies and associations such as the IBA, to assume the function of a watchdog on behalf of citizens in the defense and promotion of the Rule of Law. Lawyers have a duty to draw the public's attention to threats to the Rule of Law, whenever such threats emerge, especially nowadays when the Rule of Law is declining in almost 60% of the countries. Lawyers should also ensure that human rights and the Rule of Law are always given their proper place in the mindset of the legislator. In order to perform this duty, lawyers must be guaranteed independence.

Lawyers – who, for the purpose of this report, include private practitioners, in-house counsel, judges, prosecutors, academics, and lawyers in the government service – partake in many aspects of daily life in society. Lawyers engage in important occasions of a **person's life** (e.g., purchasing one's home, and drawing up and managing wills), **business interactions** (e.g., labor and employment agreements, purchasing goods online, and insurance agreements), **citizens' relations with the state** (e.g., providing support to immigrants, especially unaccompanied minors, the requirements to register a birth, the payment of taxes, ensuring the

enforcement of criminal law and the protections afforded to criminal defendants), **business to business relationships** (e.g., purchase and sale agreements of any goods or services, joint ventures, and investment agreements such as in start-ups), **state to state relationships** (e.g., trade agreements, tax conventions and peace treaties), and of course, in resolving disputes in any of these relationships.

However, for many individuals, the legal system is simply too daunting and expensive. Access to justice can be difficult or even impossible to achieve, which may create a negative impression of the role of lawyers. Some stereotypes portray lawyers as purely driven by financial gains in the provision of their services, and the media, from time to time, focuses on lawyers facilitating unethical or even criminal behavior. While these cases unfortunately do exist, they are the rare exception rather than the rule. However, they affect the general public's perception. Indeed, the information gathered for this report clearly shows that an overwhelming majority of citizens unrelated with the legal profession pays significant attention to lawyers' ethical performance.<sup>1</sup>

In other instances, the accused person's fundamental right to defense, which is essential for the proper administration of justice, can cast lawyers in a negative light. For example, legal professionals performing their job in an adversarial system where they support the accused in a trial should be seen as positive for society, and not negative, because they strengthen the Rule of Law that benefits everyone. An independent legal profession and an independent judiciary are utterly essential for justice to operate as it should.

The IBA understands the essential role of the legal profession and has therefore launched this report to assess – **for the first time** – the social and economic contribution of the legal profession **in a comprehensive way** and identify how to enhance this contribution. Based on a **bespoke methodology** developed for this purpose, this report provides a comprehensive assessment of the profession's contribution to society.

The qualitative evaluations and the quantitative data analysis in the report provide evidence of the legal profession's contributions to society. Some findings relate specifically to private practitioners, while others highlight the contributions and impact of the entire legal profession. The IBA also recognizes that non-lawyers – non-legal state officials (elected and appointed), non-governmental organizations, governmental bodies, and the media – are also fundamental to the Rule of Law. The harmonious, collective contribution of all parts of society is required to build a strong Rule of Law that heightens the social and economic impact described in this report.

## About the Rule of Law

The report constantly refers to the Rule of Law. Indeed, it is one of the most relevant areas to which lawyers contribute and, at the same time, upholding the Rule of Law is one of the most relevant duties of the legal profession.

Although the Rule of Law is in place for only a minority of the world's population, its benefits are widely accepted and endorsed because of its intrinsic value, as well as for its contribution to economic growth and social welfare.<sup>2</sup> However, its precise meaning is subject to certain flexibility and, most importantly, the standards it should be held up to, are not clearly defined nor widely accepted.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey performed for this report reveals that 70% of non-legal respondents and 50% of legal respondents support actions addressed at pursuing the highest ethical standards. See Section *Looking Ahead* of this Executive Summary and page 120 of the Report.

<sup>2</sup> The Rule of Law index published by the World Justice Project is one of the best-documented examples of the relationship between the Rule of Law and growth: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/>. There are multiple recognitions of this fact. For example, the Declaration of the UN High-Level Meeting on the Rule of Law, September 24th 2012, states "We agree that our collective response to the challenges and opportunities arising from the many complex political, social and economic transformations before us must be guided by the rule of law, as it is the foundation of friendly and equitable relations between States and the basis on which just and fair societies are built <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n12/478/66/pdf/n1247866.pdf?token=eX4Zy2s3N7y3rRpr4o&fe=true>. See also the European Commission Annual Rule of Law Reports initiated in 2020. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2023-rule-law-report\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2023-rule-law-report_en). The doctrine also recognizes this aspect: "The Rule of Law is held to be not only good in itself, because it embodies and encourages a just society, but also a cause of other good things, notably growth", quoted by Lord Bingham at *The Rule Of Law*, 2010, from 'Economics and the Rule of Law: Order in the Jungle', *The Economist*, 13 March 2008.

To avoid any misunderstanding, when using the Rule of Law concept, this report does so with the extent of the formulation offered by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. He said:

*“For the United Nations, the Rule of Law refers to a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions, and entities, public and private, including the state itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency”.<sup>3</sup>*

Lord Tom Bingham formulated the Rule of Law concept along the same lines, which he then broke down into eight sub-rules:

1. The law must be accessible and as far as possible, intelligible, clear, and predictable.
2. Questions of legal rights and liabilities should ordinarily be resolved by application of the law and not the exercise of discretion.
3. Laws of the land should apply equally to all, save to the extent that objective differences justify differentiation.
4. The law must afford adequate protection of fundamental human rights.
5. Means must be provided for resolving, without prohibitive cost or inordinate delay, bona fide civil disputes which the parties themselves are unable to resolve.
6. Ministers and public officers at all levels must exercise the powers conferred on them reasonably, in good faith, for the purpose for which the powers were conferred and without exceeding the limits of such powers.
7. Adjudicative procedures provided by the state should be fair.
8. The existing principle of the Rule of Law requires compliance by the state with its obligations in international law, the law which whether deriving from treaty or international custom and practice governs the conduct of nations.

Thus, the Rule of Law does not simply impose formal rules on the legal systems. It also contains an essential substantive element: the Rule of Law must include protection of human rights and adherence to international law, which connects the concept to modern international legal conventions.<sup>4,5</sup>

The relevance of law regulating relations between nations should not be underestimated especially at present times. This is done by treaty law, but also increasingly by International Conventions. Following the conclusion of World War Two, there was a common resolution to work towards an international ‘rules-based order’, leading to the establishment of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the International Law Commission, and the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The idea was to establish order in times of peace and conflict alike. Many of the great issues we face today are cross border: climate change, cyber-attacks, national security, trafficking of humans, drugs, or arms. They require global responses, with lawyers working to bridge gaps in existing international law.

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<sup>3</sup> Mr. Kofi Atta Annan was Secretary General of United Nations for the term 1997-2006, being awarded with The Peace Nobel Prize in 2001, jointly with the UN.

<sup>4</sup> “I firmly believe in the Rule of Law as the foundation for all our basic rights”, US Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> See Toward a Common Ground Definition of the Rule of Law Incorporating Substantive Principles of Justice, University of Pittsburgh Law Review, Volume 72, Issue 2, Winter 2010, by Dr Mark Ellis, IBA Executive Director.

International law is now acknowledged as a tool to enhance global cooperation, resolve conflicts by means other than war, protect human rights and advance common interests. Inevitably, there need to be international courts and tribunals to recognize and uphold this law, and an increasing number of lawyers around the world support these efforts through international arbitration or by taking cases to international courts or tribunals such as the International Criminal Court. Through these activities, lawyers add considerable value to our global fabric.

Despite the acknowledged benefits of the Rule of Law, it is suffering a constant erosion in recent years, to the point that some already refer to the risk of the rule of *lawlessness*.<sup>6</sup> Attacks on Rule of Law proliferate all over the world. There are flagrant cases, diametrically opposed to the Rule of Law, which require a complete reversal of the situation. A more subtle attrition, but equally dangerous, happens in many countries with democratic governments.<sup>7</sup> Last year, and for the sixth year in a row, the Rule of Law declined in most countries in the world (59% out of the 140 jurisdictions reviewed).<sup>8</sup>

The legal profession can take a more active role being spokespersons for the Rule of Law's values, educating the public about them, increasing awareness of their importance, and finally, denouncing the failures of its operation.<sup>9</sup> These actions are further developed in the report.

## Approach and methodology

The assessment in this report is based on **four major sources of insight**; McKinsey & Company's having been a contributor to their collection and analysis:

- An extensive review of existing studies and impact assessment tools developed by independent or multilateral entities (e.g., ClarityAI, the United Nations).
- A big data analysis that **has never before been performed in the context of assessing the profession's impact**, measured according to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Two global surveys, one including approximately 700 legal professionals and the other including approximately 7,600 members from the general public, on their perception of the profession's impact.
- Interviews with over 50 leading legal experts from different regions, practising law in different ways (e.g., judges, academics) and, in the case of private practitioners, from different areas of practice and across multiple legal systems, including civil and common law.

Regarding the big data analysis in particular, the bespoke methodology developed has helped identify and quantify statistical links between the work of legal professionals and the indicators that reflect their social and economic impact. To achieve this, the methodology builds the analytical model in five stages:

1. Stage 1 builds a long list of KPIs that can be used as proxies for the activities of the legal profession (approximately 200 KPIs) and to measure the different SDG areas (as defined by the UN). SDGs were chosen to structure the impact assessment because they are globally recognized for their ability to guide sustainable development. Many institutions (for example, companies and industry associations) therefore use SDGs to measure their socioeconomic impact.
2. Stage 2 collects the data for the KPIs identified in Stage 1, from all available countries and years. Based on availability, KPIs were narrowed down to approximately 60, with 20 linked to the activities of legal professionals and 40 linked to SDGs.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/2023/01/13/un-chief-warns-that-rule-of-law-risks-turning-into-rule-of-lawlessness>

<sup>7</sup> See Rule of Law: our daily bread? by Almudena Arpón de Mendivil at <https://www.ibanet.org/About-the-IBA/Presidency-Blog-May-2023>

<sup>8</sup> <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/insights#global-decline>

<sup>9</sup> See IBA presidential initiative, The IBA Legal Agenda 2023-2028, item 7, at <https://www.ibanet.org/document?id=IBA-Legal-Agenda-2023-2028>.



3. Stage 3 builds and runs a correlation model with the 60 KPIs per country by year and their evolution over time. The model also segments countries into four quartiles based on their GDP per capita to better control developmental differences.
4. Stage 4 prioritizes the KPI pairs with the most significant correlations. It is worth noting that, while the analysis identifies strong links between the activities of legal professionals and indicators of social and economic progress, the latter are often the result of complex social changes and phenomena, thus making it impossible to isolate the changes that can be attributed to the work of legal professionals. Therefore, these relations should be considered as mere strong directional relations between the selected pairs. In short, this is not cannot be considered as true correlations.
5. Finally, stage 5 quantifies the potential impact of bringing all the countries up to the performance of the top-quartile countries in terms of KPIs related to the legal professionals' activities. In some cases, where information was available, the GDP impact is also estimated.

The conclusions and recommendations of the report have been prepared by the International Bar Association.

## Findings

The results of the assessment are structured into **three mutually reinforcing categories** of the legal profession's impact:

- social impact,
- indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law, and
- direct economic impact.

The following examples illustrate the interconnection among the three types of impact:

- A citizen reclaiming their right to property expropriated by the state through legal representation creates a social impact (providing security versus the state), indirect economic impact (protecting the property and its future production), and direct economic impact for the lawyers involved.
- A lawyer defending an heir in a succession trial creates social impact (by preserving the will of the deceased), and a direct impact for the defendant if the trial is won (through the protection of their wealth) and the professionals involved (through the legal fees and taxes generated).
- The work of a law firm on an Intellectual Property patent registration creates social impact (by promoting creativity and future innovations), indirect economic impact (through protecting innovation and its economic benefits) and direct impact for the lawyers representing the parties.

Moreover, these effects **have a cumulative and long-term nature**, as the property recovered supports the citizen in their livelihood, the inheritance passes on to future generations, and the patent protection funds continuous research and development to discover, for example, new medicines that extend human life.

Thus, almost any legal professional activity creates one or more types of social impact, indirect economic impact, and direct economic impact.

## Social Impact

The work of the legal profession contributes to weaving the tapestry for the Rule of Law to operate at its best, spurring social impact and triggering the advancement of democracies and the development of societies.

The report structures this impact category according to the following five areas of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):<sup>10</sup> (1) peace, justice, and institutional strength; (2) equality and inclusion; (3) education; (4) environmental sustainability; and (5) health and well-being.

## 1. Peace, justice, and institutional strength

The legal community helps establish the foundation for **peace, justice, and institutional strength**.

Lawyers often serve as **peacemakers** preventing disputes from escalating by bringing the parties to a fair agreement, achieving settlements that reduce the strain on saturated courts, and avoiding unforeseen judgments and additional costs for the parties involved. This was also Gandhi's view, following his experience as a practising lawyer:

*"I realized the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder. The lesson was so indelibly burnt into me that a large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases. I lost nothing thereby- not even money, certainly not my soul"- Mahatma Gandhi<sup>11</sup>*

Lawyers' efforts are essential to the implementation of the Rule of Law and the provision of access to justice. The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers emphasize that lawyers have a vital role to play in upholding the Rule of Law by informing the public about their rights and duties under the law and in protecting their fundamental freedoms.<sup>12</sup> Lawyers' advocacy work provides the public with access to the courts to enforce their rights and resolve disputes, often without court intervention. Lawyers with expertise in human rights promote justice through taking on cases in the defense of people facing grave deprivation of their basic human rights and liberties, often putting their own safety at risk in the process. There are many lawyers who devote their efforts to the prosecution of war crimes such as the late Mr. Ben Ferencz, prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials. His mottos were "law not war" and we must "never give up" in the pursuit of justice. Through the above activities, lawyers help expand a country's justice system, promote dispute resolution, help curb criminality, and generally contribute to the advancement of justice in society. Much of this type of work is conducted on a pro bono *publico* basis, meaning "for the public good" where lawyers offer their expertise to assist members of the public with meaningful causes and without the burden of fees.

The legal profession also pursues justice by restraining the executive and protecting the separation of powers within the state. These are both essential tenets of the Rule of Law. To illustrate, consider the efforts of the Malaysian Bar Association to uphold the separation of powers in the aftermath of the 1980s elections, or the 2019 UK Supreme Court challenge related to Prime Minister Boris Johnson's attempt to prevent the United Kingdom Parliament from passing laws against his Brexit deal.<sup>13</sup> The profession's independence acts as a check on the executive power, which serves to strengthen the institutions. Indeed, countries with greater access to civil justice tend to experience lower levels of state abuse.

The "eyeWitness to Atrocities" app, which the IBA developed with support from LexisNexis, is a flagship example of how lawyers contribute to human rights and justice.<sup>14</sup> This app facilitates the collection and submission of visual evidence of atrocities while protecting the identity of witnesses and preventing evidence tampering. It aids criminal prosecution in the most challenging circumstances, such as war zones, where access to unadulterated evidence is especially difficult.

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<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this report, the 17 SDGs have been grouped into six clusters. Five of them are related to social impact (peace, justice, and institutional collaboration; education; environmental sustainability; equality and inclusion; and health and well-being), and the sixth to economic impact.

<sup>11</sup> An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Part II, 14. Preparation for the Case, at page 159 of <https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/An-Autobiography.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-role-lawyers>

<sup>13</sup> See page 43 for further details.

<sup>14</sup> See page 48 for further details.

**Institutional strength** is essential in today's world, both at global and local levels to ensure that peace and justice are maintained and upheld. This requires effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, that collaborate with each other, and which generate citizens' trust. Lawyers contribute to this goal through efforts to improve anti-corruption laws, regulations, enforcement, and compliance,<sup>15</sup> by for example, denouncing governments' wrongful conduct and promoting collaboration among them to ensure a consistent application of different regulations and developing common standards or positions. An excellent example of this is that of convergence and cooperation within the International Competition Network (ICN). This body, which the IBA played a major role in founding in 2002, brings together over 100 antitrust agencies from more than 90 countries. The ICN has provided benchmarks, recommendations and other work product which provide greater coherence and convergence in the world's ever-growing number of antitrust laws.<sup>16</sup> Looking ahead, collaboration between the relevant authorities in charge of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) regulations, at global level as well as between the EU and national authorities, will be essential to ensure a harmonized legal framework. The legal profession is already playing an important role in this.<sup>17</sup>

The big data analysis performed for this report shows that if all countries were similar to the highest level (the so-called "top quartile") of accessible and affordable civil justice, there would be 25% fewer executive overreaches. The benefit of this improved access to justice would also improve the Rule of Law by 20%.

Overall, the results of the survey found that both legal professionals and the general public agreed - with a high level of alignment between the two groups - that peace, justice, and institutional strength is the area where the legal profession has the most positive impact.

Despite this, the interviews conducted for this report, the big data analysis and the surveys suggest that **actions** related to increasing access to legal representation, fighting against corruption, and policymaking to promote state effectiveness could further strengthen the legal profession's contribution to this impact area.

## 2. Equality and Inclusion<sup>18</sup>

Legal professionals also act as champions of increased **equality and inclusion**. Empathy, placing themselves in the shoes of their clients and listening are qualities *sine qua non* for any successful legal professional. A law firm of diverse lawyers, providing an inclusive environment, conducting reports on how to promote these essential values, acting pro bono to counsel, and representing the underrepresented in our society, strongly furthers equality and inclusion.

Many legal professionals go a step further by independently and actively addressing inequality, especially defending human rights.

On the very relevant area of gender equality, women around the world are still facing serious inequities and legal reform must remain high on the legal agenda. Lawyers play a vital role in arguing the case for women's rights and the creation of justice systems which will achieve that end. For example, legal professionals have been instrumental in advancing the #MeToo movement, which has been pivotal in the fight for gender

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<sup>15</sup> See the different works of the IBA Anticorruption Committee, such as the Task Force created to help Ukraine address, and avoid, the common pitfalls countries make during the reconstruction process following war or natural disasters <https://www.ibanet.org/unit/Criminal+Law+Section/committee/Anti-Corruption+Committee/3119>.

<sup>16</sup> The ICN is unique as it is the only global body devoted exclusively to competition law enforcement and its members represent national and multinational competition authorities. More on the ICN and the role of the IBA can be found <https://internationalcompetitionnetwork.org/about/>.

<sup>17</sup> See the "AI&IBA Presidential Project" at <https://www.ibanet.org/Artificial-intelligence-hubpage> also accessible through <https://www.ibanet.org/IBA-Presidency-Blog>. Bar associations and law societies are also undertaking significant steps regarding the effects of AI in the legal profession such as the American Bar Association ([https://www.americanbar.org/groups/leadership/office\\_of\\_the\\_president/artificial-intelligence/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/leadership/office_of_the_president/artificial-intelligence/)) and The Law Society of England and Wales (<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ai-and-lawtech/generative-ai-the-essentials>).

<sup>18</sup> For this report, the Cambridge Dictionary definitions of equality ("a situation in which men and women, people of different races, religions, etc. are all treated fairly and have the same opportunities") and inclusion ("the act of allowing many different types of people to do something and treating them fairly and equally") are used.

equality. Lawyers represented the women who came forward, helped them understand their legal rights, and allayed their fears of speaking out.<sup>19</sup>

The defense of LGBTIQ+ minorities has been of similar importance. The law, especially in Anglophone countries, played - until recently - a strong role in reinforcing prejudice, hatred, and violence against sexual minorities, and some lawyers enforced this discrimination. Following the advocacy work of many legal professionals and institutions, including the IBA, the situation has been successfully reversed in most jurisdictions.<sup>20</sup> Sadly, some countries are moving in the opposite direction.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, this remains a field where the active commitment of the legal profession remains of essence.

The impact of legal representation on such issues is, unfortunately, heavily dependent on the economic status of the population at both the country and individual levels. Most statistical relationships show that the impact applies to high-income countries. High-income households also remain 2.5 times more likely to use legal services than low-income ones.

The report's big data analysis found that a higher share of legal professionals in a country's population does not necessarily guarantee lower levels of inequality. In fact, better access to legal aid, for example, relates more positively with greater equality. As mentioned earlier, access to justice can be expensive and difficult or even impossible to achieve, due to the affordability barrier to access to justice that exists in many countries. By lowering this barrier through mechanisms such as legal aid, inequality decreases.

**The report's big data analysis found that better access to legal aid positively relates with greater equality: if all analyzed countries had the same level of access to justice as those ranking in the highest levels, inequality would be lowered by 5%.**

The survey reveals that, compared to legal professionals, the general public has a more positive perception of the impact of lawyers in this area. This poorer perception among legal professionals may be rooted in the struggle to increase diversity and inclusion within their own professional staff.

The surveys, interviews, and the big data analysis suggest reenergized *efforts* to increase access to legal representation and legal aid, advocacy on equality as a matter of law and improving the performance in diversity and inclusion within the legal profession itself as potential levers to further enhance the legal profession's contribution to this impact area.

### 3. Education

Education is the departure point to ensure that equal opportunities are granted to citizens so that legal and economic justice exists for all. Legal professionals contribute to this impact area by drafting policies, advocating, and fighting for the **universal right to education**, and teaching citizens about their rights and the legal system. This connects again with the important role of lawyers in supporting the Rule of Law by informing the public about their rights and duties under the law and in protecting their fundamental freedoms.

There are many good examples in this area. First, the *Serrano v. Priest* case in California illustrates how a legal battle ignites institutional reforms to address economic-based disparities in public education. Second, legal professionals are fighting alongside the United Nations to compel Afghanistan's reinstated Taliban

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<sup>19</sup> See page 57 for further details.

<sup>20</sup> Examples of these are Mauritius (<https://www.humandignitytrust.org/resources/ah-see-v-the-state-of-mauritius-case-digest/>), Botswana (<https://www.humandignitytrust.org/resources/attorney-general-of-botswana-v-motshidiemang-ors-2021/>), Dominica (<https://www.humandignitytrust.org/resources/b-g-v-the-attorney-general-of-the-commonwealth-of-dominica-and-others/>), and Singapore (<https://www.humandignitytrust.org/news/singapore-prime-minister-announces-plan-to-decriminalise-of-homosexuality/>)

<sup>21</sup> Whilst very recently the Human Rights Council of the United Nations has adopted, for the first time, an expression of commitment to the abolition of discrimination against "Intersex" persons, unfortunately in Uganda and Ghana, laws have been introduced to the legislature; signed into law; or upheld as constitutionally valid; and enforced. Moreover, in the Russian Federation and countries within its orbit have moved backwards to restoration of oppression and state organized violence in recent years. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/04/united-nations-passes-groundbreaking-intersex-rights-resolution>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2024/04/human-rights-council-adopts-seven-resolutions-extends-mandates-human>

rulers to remove the widespread restrictions on girls' and women's access to education. Several bar associations (e.g., Ireland, China) are also launching initiatives to educate underprivileged communities on their rights.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond these illustrative cases depicting the impact of individual legal professionals, the research conducted for this report shows that increased participation in formal education is linked to higher levels of access to civil justice within a country. Indeed, being educated about one's rights seems to ease one's resort to them; for example, an individual's lack of knowledge about his property rights would impede him from claiming what should belong to him.

**Upholding the Rule of Law, a critical contribution of the legal profession, has a significant impact in increased access to formal education.** The big data analysis conducted for this report clearly shows that given a stronger adherence to the Rule of Law, reaching the levels of those countries having the best positions, 30% more girls would be graduating from secondary education. A second very relevant consequence resulting from the data analysis is that youth's engagement would be improved: reaching the level of the top quartile of countries in the Rule of Law Index could reduce the number of youths not engaged in education, working or training by 34 million.

Based on the respondents' answers, 70% of legal professionals and 60% of the general public perceived lawyers' roles in furthering education as having a positive impact.

They also identified increasing educational and communication activities as potential *actions* the legal profession, especially through bar associations and law societies, could take to further contribute to this impact area.

#### 4. Environmental sustainability

The work of legal professionals also promotes **environmental sustainability**. This is achieved through policymaking, advising on the drafting and implementation of international climate agreements, representation in environmental cases, advocacy efforts, creating awareness for their clients about the impact of their activities, encouraging proactive behaviors to minimize such impact, and providing the legal advice required in the aftermath of disasters.

A decisive step for climate justice in Europe which could have global impact, derives from the landmark European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)'s ruling on global warming, declaring that Switzerland had failed to comply with its duties under the Convention on Human Rights concerning climate change.<sup>23</sup> This is the first time an international court has issued a decision in the environmental area related to human rights, which may inform other upcoming opinions by international courts, including the International Court of Justice.

Communities around the world are taking their governments to Court over their inadequate climate action.<sup>24</sup> For example, the 2023 court ruling that the US state of Montana,<sup>25</sup> by supporting the fossil fuel industry,

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<sup>22</sup> See pages 65, 67 and 70 for further details on these cases.

<sup>23</sup> Ruling on the Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland case, delivered on 9 April 2024; <https://www.echr.coe.int/w/grand-chamber-rulings-in-the-climate-change-cases>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-68768598>. This case follows a previous very significant national judgement dictated in The Netherlands in 2019, the "Urgenda Case", where a Dutch environmental group, the Urgenda Foundation and 900 Dutch citizens sued the Dutch Government for failure to prevent global climate change. The Netherlands Supreme Court upheld that by failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by, at least, 25% by end of 2020, the Dutch government was in breach of the ECHR. See Urgenda Foundation v. State of the Netherlands, judgement of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, 20 December 2019. <https://climatecasechart.com/non-us-case/urgenda-foundation-v-kingdom-of-the-netherlands/>. Urgenda 77 for further details.

<sup>24</sup> According to the "Global trends in climate change litigation: 2023 snapshot", there are 2,341 environmental litigation cases, 190 of which were filed in the period June 2022 to May 2023, [https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Global\\_trends\\_in\\_climate\\_change\\_litigation\\_2023\\_snapshot.pdf](https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Global_trends_in_climate_change_litigation_2023_snapshot.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> See page 80 for further details.



violates its youth's rights to a clean and healthy environment was obtained by the legal case initiated by a non-profit organization with lawyers whose fees depend on donations to the non-profit.

Of course, as in all impact areas above, lawyers act on both sides of environmental disputes. In some cases, the lawyers aim to hold states accountable to international climate agreements or restrict private businesses' carbon emissions, while in others, they have challenged state actions intended to mitigate climate change or prevent environmental damage. The principal purpose of such litigation, whether viewed as pro-environmental or not, is to ensure that states comply with their law and international obligations.

**In fact, this report's research demonstrates that countries that uphold a strong Rule of Law tend to experience decreased air pollution and more rapid adoption of renewable energy initiatives. This is linked to a better regulatory quality that can result in up to 53% lower pollution in the air.**

Perhaps due to the nature of this type of litigation, both surveyed legal professionals and the general public view the profession's impact on environmental sustainability as relatively less favorable than the other SDGs. In fact, almost 50 percent of the general public and 40 percent of legal professionals do not see a link between the legal profession and environmental sustainability.

This indicates an opportunity for *actions* addressed at improving awareness, intensifying the legal profession's advocacy efforts in environmental matters, and playing a more relevant role in this area, to enhance the profession's contribution to this impact area.

## 5. Health and well-being

Lawyers also advance the **health and well-being** of society by drafting healthcare policies, representing people from underserved communities in important court cases, and advocating for more effective healthcare systems. Two examples powerfully illustrate this: (1) legal teams in the US successfully advocated for the enforcement and development of Medicaid policy, a program that helps cover medical costs for some people with limited income and resources,<sup>26</sup> and (2) the South African Treatment Action Campaign and Legal Resources Centre that challenged the South African government's denialist position on HIV/AIDS and managed to expand treatment to all adults in the country.

**Data demonstrates that a country's Rule of Law is a strong indicator of its level of access to healthcare. The stronger the Rule of Law, the higher the country's level of access to healthcare. This again highlights the beneficial spillover effects of the Rule of Law on health and well-being. Such impact is visible in multiple areas of the big data analysis performed in the context of this report, improving the Rule of Law in all countries could extend life expectancy in the world by 13 years on average (from 62 to 75 years).**

Regulatory quality and government effectiveness would yield additional benefits. A regulatory quality such as that maintained by countries ranking top in this field could extend health coverage to an additional 1.4 billion people. Finally, an increase in government effectiveness to the level of those countries in the top quartile could enable the survival of additionally 350,000 mothers during pregnancy and childbirth as well as reduce undernourishment by 520 million people.

Survey respondents are split on lawyers' impact on health and well-being: only 37 percent of legal professionals see a positive effect by the legal profession in this area, while 30 percent see a negative one. The legal professional respondents are likely influenced by the impact of the profession within their own community, where concerns about mental well-being and work-life balance need particular attention.<sup>27</sup> Respondents from the general public are evenly split between positive or no impact at all.

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<sup>26</sup> See page 88 for further details.

<sup>27</sup> The IBA established the Commission on Well-being to find ways to improve societal attitudes towards mental health and related issues, which has developed a curriculum for law schools to address well-being issues. <https://www.ibanet.org/Mental-wellbeing-in-the-legal-profession>

Interviews, survey's respondents, and the big data analysis prioritize *actions* to improve access to legal representation relating to healthcare and well-being to increase awareness on the relevance of well-being at the workplace, especially within the legal profession, to enhance the contribution to this impact area.

## Indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law

A relevant indirect economic impact of legal professionals relates to upholding the Rule of Law – a required element to create the foundations for economic growth. The statistics developed for this report show a strong correlation between a strong Rule of Law protected by a fair, effective, independent, and accessible justice system and GDP's dedication to research and development, allowing for greater innovation for the benefit of society. A strong Rule of Law encourages higher levers of inward investment and M&A (e.g., the Rule of Law is among the top three considerations when multinationals make FDI decisions, together with "ease of doing business" and "a stable political environment")<sup>28</sup>, which can support broader economic growth and prosperity. Most importantly, the Rule of Law is the foundation for all basic human rights and is held to be not only good in itself, because it embodies and encourages a just society, but also as a cause of other good things, notably economic growth.<sup>29, 30</sup>

Empirical evidence demonstrates a substantial relationship between the Rule of Law and economic growth. The World Bank has found the correlation between the Rule of Law and the GDP/capita to be very strong, more than 80% in 2022. That is, a one-point increase in the Rule of Law Index could bring an 0.82% increase in GDP.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, the report's data analysis concludes that improving the effectiveness of civil justice to the level of countries in the top quartile in such area could unlock additional USD 82 billion for research and development.

When legal practitioners interpret and apply the law for their clients, when they explain it, when they ensure that the advice provided is correct and fair, when they create contractual relationships or solve their client's problems, when they defend a case because a rule was breached or incorrectly applied, when they strongly prepare a case allowing for a better debate and decision by the court, they are supporting the Rule of Law.

Lawyers also support private individuals in their personal and professional lives, such as buying a house, writing a will, and registering for self-employment. These actions provide significant economic and social benefits. For instance, the International Labor Organization (ILO) develops legal frameworks tailored to the two billion people employed in the informal economy.<sup>32, 33</sup> This ILO project advances economic stability, improves working conditions, and may pave the way for participation in the formal economy. The big data analysis performed for this report indicates that this impact is far from isolated: greater access to legal representation correlates with lower rates of informal employment.

The report's survey also found that legal professionals view their work as providing substantial indirect economic impact. Legal professional respondents view their role in economic development as the strongest

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.roleuk.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/FDI%26RoL.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> "The Rule of Law is held to be not only good in itself, because it embodies and encourages a just society, but also a cause of other good things, notably growth", quoted by Lord Bingham at The Rule of Law, 2010, from 'Economics and the Rule of Law: Order in the Jungle', The Economist, 13 March 2008.

<sup>30</sup> "I firmly believe in the Rule of Law as the foundation for all our basic rights", US Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, 2009. See also note 4 above.

<sup>31</sup> See page 98 for details.

<sup>32</sup> Engaged in an employment relationship that is, in law or in practice, not subject to national labor legislation, income taxation, social protection, or entitlement to certain employment benefits <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/103bf23e-en.pdf?expires=1704891826&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=5D3B61C155E063D2AC35576509C81B41>

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_627189/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_627189/lang--en/index.htm)

area of impact ahead of any other social impact areas. Curiously, the surveyed general public has a different view of the impact: they rank peace, justice and institutional strength first, followed by economic growth, and finally health and well-being and environmental sustainability.

The *actions* identified to further improve the legal profession's indirect economic impact relate to strengthening the Rule of Law such as facilitating access to legal representation, educating on the relevance of the Rule of Law, mainly by bar associations and law societies, and increasing advocacy on the importance of respecting the Rule of Law at national and international level.

## Direct economic impact

Employed lawyers produce revenues and generate tax contributions. This direct impact leads to an ecosystem that includes business and employment for legal personnel, suppliers, and the broader economy.

Legal services employ approximately 20 million professionals and create an additional 14 million jobs related to legal work. Legal professionals also make an outsized contribution to the GDP. Even though they represent only 0.25 percent of the world's population, they generate approximately USD 1.6 trillion of economic value, or 1.7 percent of the world's GDP (directly and through their supplier ecosystem).

This economic contribution is substantial not only for the many people employed by the legal profession. The taxes generated by this work contribute to the provision of social protection, healthcare, education, public order, and other state functions.

Overall, this report's surveys found that the direct economic impact of the profession is perceived positively by both legal professionals and the general public. Interestingly, the indirect economic impact is perceived by all respondents even more positively than the direct impact, which reinforces the value of the indirect nature of the legal profession's contribution.

## Looking ahead

This report is only the first step toward **assessing the contributions** of the legal profession to society and **continuing to enhance** its positive social and economic impact. The research has identified actions to preserve and strengthen the profession's impact. These actions focus on access to legal representation, efforts in advocacy and policymaking, communication on and education about the Rule of Law and the role of the legal profession, and the pursuit of the highest ethical standards. These goals should be complemented by efforts to advance health and well-being and equality, diversity, and inclusion within the legal community itself.

The IBA is already driving multiple initiatives in the areas described above in collaboration with law societies, bar associations, law firms, law departments, multiple national and international partners, and other relevant stakeholders in the profession.

1. To help **enhance access to legal representation**, the IBA supports its Access to Justice and Legal Aid Committee and its Pro Bono Committee. These Committees work on building and disseminating research on barriers to access and ways to overcome them, including through pro bono legal services. Examples include a cost-benefit analysis of legal aid in collaboration with the World Bank,<sup>34</sup> a report on the link between access to justice and equality presented at the UN Commission on the Status of

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<sup>34</sup> A tool for Justice, the cost benefit analysis of legal aid, 2019, <https://www.ibanet.org/MediaHandler?id=DB027287-2352-4269-8D0F-C1446B1023BC>

Women,<sup>35</sup> and a report on children and access to justice with the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law.<sup>36</sup>

The Annual IBA Pro Bono and Human Rights Award program is another mechanism through which the IBA encourages members' efforts to make legal representation more accessible, especially to the most vulnerable people.<sup>37</sup> The IBA section dedicated to work on substantive law areas - the Legal Practice Division<sup>38</sup> - enhances the visibility and understanding of its covered practices to facilitate improved access to representation.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, the IBA is leading dedicated collaborations aimed at helping victims of genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes access justice through, for example, the activities of the IBA Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), the IBA Human Rights Committee, the War Crimes Committee, collaborations with the International Criminal Court and the development of the "eyeWitness to Atrocities"<sup>40</sup> mobile application.

2. The IBA is also engaged in **advocacy and the support of policy-making efforts**, which include issuing public statements condemning actions undertaken by states to the detriment of the Rule of Law and human rights, building and disseminating research, guidelines, best practices and legal advice on issues such as human rights, media freedom, modern slavery, arbitration or AI regulation, and advocacy efforts in support of specific cases of potential violations of human rights (primarily through the work of the IBAHRI and the IBA Rule of Law Forum).<sup>41</sup> The leading role that the IBA has played in addressing the abolition of criminal punishments of LGBTIQ+ individuals should also be highlighted.<sup>42,43</sup> The Legal Practice Division committees provide their views on policy-making through submissions to authorities, such as the European Commission, in areas like tax, antitrust and insolvency.
3. As the "global voice of the legal profession," a significant share of the IBA's efforts is related to **education and communication**.<sup>44</sup> This includes building educational programs to enhance the expertise of young lawyers, increasing the public's understanding of the Rule of Law,<sup>45</sup> raising awareness about social issues through publications, documentaries, conferences, or webinars, promoting social consciousness among members, and providing human rights training and technical assistance to legal practitioners and institutions.<sup>46</sup>
4. Regarding professional **ethics stewardship**, the IBA actively creates guidelines and best practices to help legal professionals uphold the highest possible ethical standards (e.g., the Anti-Corruption

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<sup>35</sup> Report on the UNCSW67 side event: 'Access to Justice – a Sine Qua Non for Inclusion and Equality' (<https://www.ibanet.org/report-uncsw-side-event-access-to-justice>)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/access-to-justice-and-legal-aid-2022-annual-conference-report>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/Scholarships-and-Awards>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/lpd>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/Covid-19-and-Court-Procedures-An-Access-to-justice-Report>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.eyewitness.global/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/IBAHRI>

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.ibanet.org/Human\\_Rights\\_Institute/About\\_the\\_HRI/HRI\\_Activities/sexual-orientation;](https://www.ibanet.org/Human_Rights_Institute/About_the_HRI/HRI_Activities/sexual-orientation;)

<https://www.ibanet.org/unit/Section+on+Public+and+Professional+Interest/committee/LGBTQI%2B+Law+Committee/3282>.

<sup>43</sup> The IBAHRI work targets state representatives to change legislation. Some examples regard the IBAHRI intervention letter to Ugandan government in 2009 and 2012 regarding the illegality of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009; the letters sent in 2012 and 2014 to President Dmitry Medvedev urging the President to take immediate action to prevent the enactment of discriminatory laws in Russia, and to take measures to implement anti-discrimination laws; the writ sent to the UN Committee against Torture highlighting the IBAHRI concerns over the allegations of massive arrests, detention, torture, and other forms of abuse of certain men on account of their real or suspected sexual orientation in Chechnya. The IBAHRI have also released statements on Ghana, Uganda and Kenya (IBAHRI calls on President Akufo-Addo to repeal discriminatory LGBTQ+ Bill | International Bar Association (ibanet.org), IBAHRI Co-Chairs' statement on Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 | International Bar Association (ibanet.org), IBAHRI states Kenya High Court's LGBTQ+ rights ruling very 'disappointing' and supports appeal | International Bar Association (ibanet.org)), among other.

<sup>44</sup> Notable in this respect are the IBA Policy Guidelines for Training and Education of the legal profession (23 October 2014) <https://www.ibanet.org/MediaHandler?id=1ff85676-0cdb-4ead-91c3-b533fdc79550>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/rule-of-law-videos-en>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/education-and-internships>





# Relevant data findings

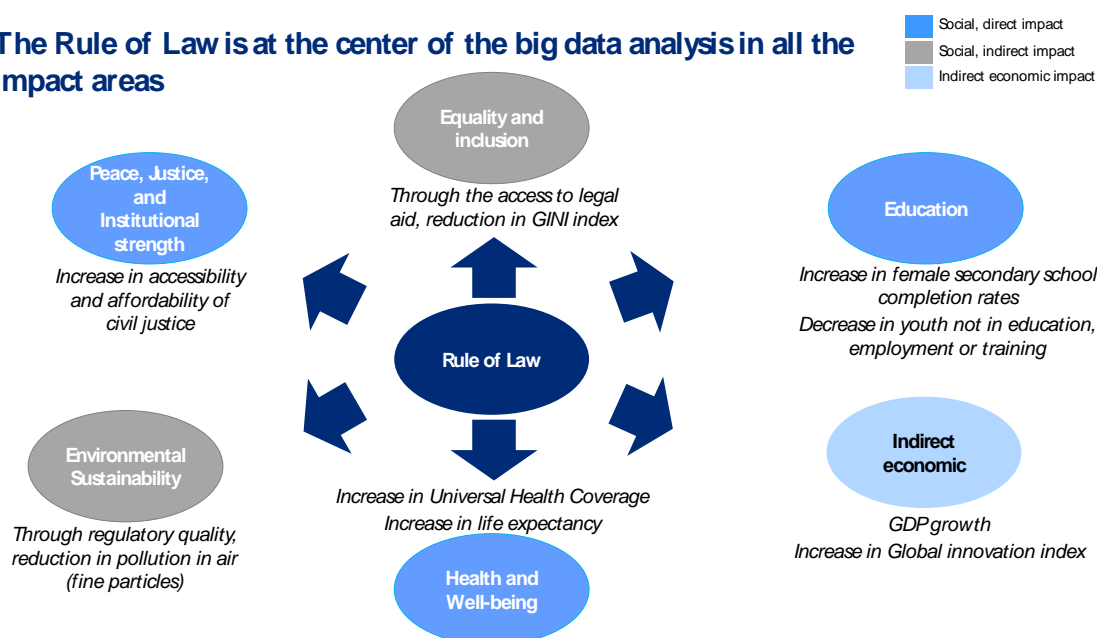


# Relevant data findings

As stated earlier, one of the sources of insights for this report is a big data analysis that identifies and quantifies statistical links between the work of legal professionals and the indicators that reflect their social and economic impact. Out of an initial list of 200 KPIs to quantify the work of legal professionals (i.e., proportion of lawyers in the population) and SDG impact areas (i.e., maternal mortality rate), a final list of 60 were selected based on data availability. On those, more than 24,000 pair-to-pair analysis were conducted to identify the ones with relevant relations. The most important of those are summarized below. It is worth remembering that, while the analysis identifies strong links between the activities of legal professionals and indicators of social and economic progress, the latter are often the result of complex social changes and phenomena, thus making it impossible to isolate the changes that can be attributed to the work of legal professionals. Therefore, these relations cannot be considered as true correlations but just a strong directional relation between the selected pairs.

Exhibit 1, Relevant data findings in correlations with the Rule of Law

## The Rule of Law is at the center of the big data analysis in all the impact areas



## Social Impact

### 1. Peace, justice, and institutional strength

Relation	Impact from convergence to the top quartile
A more accessible and affordable civil justice could help limit executive overreach	25% cases of executive overreaches could be avoided
A more accessible and affordable civil justice could increase the Rule of Law	20% improvement in the Rule of Law

## 2. Equality and inclusion

Relation	Impact from convergence to the top quartile
An increase in legal aid could lower inequality	5% lower inequality
More lawyers in the population could increase inequality	4% higher inequality

## Education

Relation	Impact from convergence to the top quartile
A higher Rule of Law could help increase female education rates	30% more girls would be graduating from secondary education
A higher Rule of Law could help lower the share of idle youth	+34Million of youth studying or working

## 3. Environmental sustainability

Relation	Impact from convergence to the top quartile
A higher regulatory quality could help lower air pollution (4th GDP quartile countries)	53% less air pollution
More lawyers in the population could increase fossil fuel subsidies (2nd GDP quartile countries)	N/A (few countries)

## 4. Health and well-being

Relation	Impact from convergence to the top quartile
A higher regulatory quality could help increase the universal health coverage	+1.4billion people with health coverage
A higher Rule of Law could help increase life expectancy	+13 years longer life (from 62 to 75)
Higher government effectiveness could help lower maternal mortality	+350,000 mothers surviving pregnancy and childbirth
Higher government effectiveness could help lower undernourishment	-520million people suffering from undernourishment

## Indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law

An increase in the Rule of Law drives increase in GDP growth	+0.82% GDP increase per 1pp of improvement in RoL index
A higher effectiveness of civil justice could help increase R&D expenditure	+USD83billion in additional R&D investment



# 1. Purpose and methodology



# 1. Purpose and methodology

## 1.1. Purpose of this report

The legal profession is closely intertwined with the development of the democratic world. Through their day-to-day work, legal professionals contribute to building and maintaining the Rule of Law, which is a fundamental pillar of functional and prosperous societies.

Throughout history, **legal professionals have been at the forefront of social change**. From Nelson Mandela in his fight for the end of the South Africa's apartheid, Mahatma Gandhi leading the Indian independence movement, Montesquieu devising the separation of powers as the basis of modern democratic societies, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg leading a lifelong fight for gender equality, to numerous legal professionals with less international acclaim, many individuals in the legal profession have stood up for and defended their clients' rights in moments of historic and personal struggle.

The legal profession's work is nonetheless far from finished. Every day, 20 million legal professionals around the world continue to build the Rule of Law. Their protection of the Rule of Law is key to their ability to support the economic prosperity and social development of their communities.

Lawyers – who, for the purpose of this report, include private practitioners, in-house counsel, judges, prosecutors, academics, and lawyers in the government service – partake in many aspects of daily life in society. Lawyers engage in important occasions of a **person's life** (e.g., purchasing one's home, and drawing up and managing wills), **business interactions** (e.g., labor and employment agreements, purchasing goods online, and insurance agreements), **citizens' relations with the state** (e.g., providing support to immigrants (especially unaccompanied minors), the requirements to register a birth, the payment of taxes, and complying with the requirements of criminal law designed to protect the person and property of every individual), **business to business relationships** (e.g., purchase and sale agreements of any goods and services, joint ventures, and investment agreements such as in start-ups), **state to state relationships** (e.g., trade agreements, tax conventions, and peace treaties), and of course, in resolving disputes in any of these relationships.

The legal profession day-to-day work contributes to **social development**. Across the globe, numerous legal professionals work on socially relevant issues both new and old, from leading anti-intimidation cases, to giving a voice to the families of “desaparecidos” or opposing military coups.

The social impact of the legal professionals' work extends far beyond the most prominent cases. Research shows that many legal activities such as representing individuals in day-to-day transactions, championing family or employment issues, or drafting and advocating for effective policies, are strongly related to indicators of social development. These include advancements in peace, justice and institutional strength, education, equality and inclusion, health and well-being, and environmental sustainability.

The legal profession is also a significant **underlying force of economic development**. By continuing to build and maintain the Rule of Law, legal professionals help set the foundation for economic collaboration, growth, and innovation. Research shows the Rule of Law is strongly linked with a country's GDP per capita as well as to key drivers of economic development, such as R&D, international cash inflows, or formal employment.

Finally, the legal profession is a significant direct contributor to the global economy. While only representing approximately 0.2 percent of the global population, legal professionals are responsible for generating 1.7 percent of the global GDP (USD 1.6 trillion) through legal services, tax contributions, and value-adding effects in their immediate ecosystem and within the broader economy. Moreover, on top of the 20 million legal professionals, the legal services sector also generates an additional 14 million jobs worldwide in related areas. This economic contribution is substantial not only for the many people employed by the legal profession. The taxes generated by this work contributes to the provision of social protection, healthcare, education, public order, and other state functions.



These different types of impact are **strongly synergetic and mutually reinforcing**. For example, by fighting for the right to treatment of HIV/AIDS patients in South Africa, the legal professionals involved not only help improve the health and quality of life of the respective patients, but also contribute to people's ability to live active lives, provide for their families, and educate their children.

These effects have a **cumulative and long-term nature**. As an illustration of these effects, when more HIV/AIDS patients access treatment, they become less contagious, helping curb the epidemic and contributing to the long-term social and economic development of the region.

However, for many individuals, the legal system is simply too daunting and expensive. Access to justice can be difficult or even impossible to achieve, which may create a negative impression of the role of lawyers. Some stereotypes portray lawyers as purely driven by financial gains in the provision of their services, and the media, from time to time, focuses on lawyers facilitating unethical or even criminal behavior. While these cases unfortunately do exist, they are the rare exception rather than the rule.

In other instances, the accused person's fundamental right to defense, which is essential for the proper administration of justice, can cast lawyers in a negative light. For example, legal professionals performing their job in an adversarial system where they support the accused in a trial should be seen as positive for society, and not negative, because they strengthen the Rule of Law that benefits everyone. An independent legal profession and an independent judiciary are utterly essential for justice to operate as it should.

The IBA understands the essential role of the legal profession and has therefore launched this report to assess – **for the first time** – the social and economic contribution of the legal profession **in a comprehensive way** and identify how to enhance this contribution. Based on a **bespoke methodology** developed for this purpose, this report provides a comprehensive assessment of the profession's contribution to society.

The qualitative evaluations and the quantitative data analysis in the report provide evidence of the legal profession's contributions to society. Some findings relate specifically to private practitioners, while others highlight the contributions and impact of the entire legal profession. The IBA also recognizes that non-lawyers – non-legal state officials (elected and appointed), non-governmental organizations, and the media – are also fundamental to the Rule of Law. The harmonious, collective contribution of all parts of society is required to build a strong Rule of Law that heightens the social and economic impact described in this report.

Beyond creating this reference, the assessment also comes at a time when the legal profession is facing significant **transformational challenges**, making it paramount for the profession to rethink its impact and role in today's society. The world is in a state of flux, and the legal profession needs to adapt to it:

- High inflation rates are creating significant productivity pressure, making clients, especially businesses, increasingly cost aware and more likely to scrutinize the contribution of the professional services they receive.
- Accelerated technological advancements and the generative artificial intelligence (gen AI) revolution in particular, are transforming all areas of work. While many legal tasks are poised to become automated, it is also likely that high-quality, comprehensive legal advice and representation will become more valuable than ever.
- (Geo)political instability and polarization are rising around the world, in both developed and least developed countries, creating a strong need for balance and the protection and consolidation of the Rule of Law.
- Businesses are increasingly expected to consider their overall influence and commit to positive social impact and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the commitment bar is rising, as the public is becoming increasingly more aware of virtue-signaling and greenwashing attempts and is demanding tangible indications of progress.
- The younger generations (especially Gen Z) want to work in purpose-driven professions, and increasingly care about their own well-being and work-life balance. And talent is scarce: the number of law school

enrollments in the United States has been dropping since 2010, reaching in 2022 levels not seen since the 1980s.<sup>48</sup>

Many of these challenges are also faced by other professions and organizations, whose responses span various areas of action and levels of ambition. Some organizations (e.g., the World Economic Forum, the World Bank, and the Open Society Foundations) focus on supporting initiatives by generating and disseminating knowledge, creating a convening space for stakeholders to engage, or financing impactful initiatives. Others (e.g., the World Health Organization, the G20, or the International Federation of Accountants) also attempt to act as beacons in their respective fields by building a common vision, taking active stances on high-relevance issues, or tracking and reporting progress against best practices or professional standards. A few organizations around the world also aim to actively shape their respective environments (e.g., the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the European Commission) by getting directly involved in the generation and implementation of technical solutions to enhance impact, as well as in institutional reforms and policy change.

According to the survey run in the frame of this report, 84 percent of legal professionals believe the legal profession needs to actively invest in improving both its impact and how the profession is perceived by the public.

Multiple efforts of individual legal professionals, law firms, law departments, bar associations, law societies, foundations, and associations, including the IBA, are moving in this direction. However, you cannot change what you cannot measure. The Impact Project is the result of a year-long engagement of all IBA constituencies and an in-depth analytical effort. While the starting point of the project is the assessment of the legal profession's comprehensive impact, the effort has also identified actions that can help enhance the legal profession's positive impact building on what is already being done.

## 1.2 About the Rule of Law

The report constantly refers to the Rule of Law. Indeed, it is one of the most relevant areas to which lawyers contribute and, at the same time, upholding the Rule of Law is one of the most relevant duties of the legal profession.

Although the Rule of Law is in place for only a minority of the world's population, its benefits are widely accepted and endorsed because of its intrinsic value, as well as for its contribution to economic growth and social welfare.<sup>49</sup> However, its precise meaning is subject to certain flexibility and, most importantly, the standards it should be held up to, are not clearly defined nor widely accepted.

To avoid any misunderstanding, when using the Rule of Law concept, this report does so with the extent of the formulation offered by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. He said:

*"For the United Nations, the Rule of Law refers to a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions, and entities, public and private, including the state itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent*

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.lawschooltransparency.com/trends/enrollment/all>

<sup>49</sup> The Rule of Law index published by the World Justice Project is one of the best-documented examples of the relationship between the Rule of Law and growth: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/>. There are multiple recognitions of this fact. For example, the Declaration of the UN High-Level Meeting on the Rule of Law, September 24th 2012, states "We agree that our collective response to the challenges and opportunities arising from the many complex political, social and economic transformations before us must be guided by the rule of law, as it is the foundation of friendly and equitable relations between States and the basis on which just and fair societies are built <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n12/478/66/pdf/n1247866.pdf?token=eX4Zy2s3N7y3rRpr4o&fe=true>. See also the European Commission Annual Rule of Law Reports initiated in 2020. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2023-rule-law-report\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2023-rule-law-report_en). The doctrine also recognizes this aspect: "The Rule of Law is held to be not only good in itself, because it embodies and encourages a just society, but also a cause of other good things, notably growth", quoted by Lord Bingham at The Rule Of Law, 2010, from 'Economics and the Rule of Law: Order in the Jungle', The Economist, 13 March 2008.

*with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency".* <sup>50</sup>

Lord Tom Bingham formulated the Rule of Law concept along the same lines, which he then broke down into eight sub-rules:

1. The law must be accessible and as far as possible, intelligible, clear, and predictable.
2. Questions of legal rights and liabilities should ordinarily be resolved by application of the law and not the exercise of discretion.
3. Laws of the land should apply equally to all, save to the extent that objective differences justify differentiation.
4. The law must afford adequate protection of fundamental human rights.
5. Means must be provided for resolving, without prohibitive cost or inordinate delay, bona fide civil disputes which the parties themselves are unable to resolve.
6. Ministers and public officers at all levels must exercise the powers conferred on them reasonably, in good faith, for the purpose for which the powers were conferred and without exceeding the limits of such powers.
7. Adjudicative procedures provided by the state should be fair.
8. The existing principle of the Rule of Law requires compliance by the state with its obligations in international law, the law which whether deriving from treaty or international custom and practice governs the conduct of nations.

Thus, the Rule of Law does not simply impose formal rules on the legal systems. It also contains an essential substantive element: the Rule of Law must include protection of human rights and adherence to international law, which connects the concept to modern international legal conventions. <sup>51,52</sup>

The relevance of law regulating relations between nations should not be underestimated especially at present times. This is done by treaty law, but also increasingly by International Conventions. Following the conclusion of World War Two, there was a common resolution to work towards an international 'rules-based order', leading to the establishment of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the International Law Commission, and the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The idea was to establish order in times of peace and conflict alike. Many of the great issues we face today are cross border: climate change, cyber-attacks, national security, trafficking of humans, drugs, or arms. They require global responses, with lawyers working to bridge gaps in existing international law.

International law is now acknowledged as a tool to enhance global cooperation, resolve conflicts by means other than war, protect human rights and advance common interests. Inevitably, there need to be international courts and tribunals to recognize and uphold this law, and an increasing number of lawyers around the world support these efforts through international arbitration or by taking cases to international courts or tribunals such as the International Criminal Court. Through these activities, lawyers add considerable value to our global fabric.

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<sup>50</sup> Mr. Kofi Atta Annan was Secretary General of United Nations for the term 1997-2006, being awarded with The Peace Nobel Prize in 2001, jointly with the UN.

<sup>51</sup> "I firmly believe in the Rule of Law as the foundation for all our basic rights", US Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> See Toward a Common Ground Definition of the Rule of Law Incorporating Substantive Principles of Justice, University of Pittsburgh Law Review, Volume 72, Issue 2, Winter 2010, by Dr Mark Ellis, IBA Executive Director.

Despite the acknowledged benefits of the Rule of Law, it is suffering a constant erosion in recent years, to the point that some already refer to the risk of the rule of *lawlessness*.<sup>53</sup> Attacks on Rule of Law proliferate all over the world. There are flagrant cases, diametrically opposed to the Rule of Law, which require a complete reversal of the situation. A more subtle attrition, but equally dangerous, happens in many countries with democratic governments.<sup>54</sup> Last year, and for the sixth year in a row, the Rule of Law declined in most countries in the world (59% out of the 140 jurisdictions reviewed).<sup>55</sup>

The legal profession can take a more active role being spokespersons for the Rule of Law's values, educating the public about them, increasing awareness of their importance, and finally, denouncing the failures of its operation.<sup>56</sup> These actions are further developed in the report.

## 1.3. Synthesis of the methodology

To assess the social and economic impact of the legal profession, this report relies on a comprehensive analysis of multiple sources as well as on the development of a bespoke framework and methodology never developed before. This subchapter presents a brief description of the methodology. The Appendix to this report includes a more detailed description of the methodology as well as a summary of the existing literature, tools and interviews conducted.

### 1.3.1. The four sources of insight

As shown in the exhibit below, the report relies on the detailed analysis of **four complementary sources of insight**:

1. An extensive review of existing studies and impact assessment tools developed by independent or multilateral entities (e.g., ClarityAI, the United Nations).
2. A big data analysis that has never before been performed in the context of assessing the profession's impact, measured according to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. Two global surveys, one including approximately 700 legal professionals and the other including approximately 7,600 members from the general public, on their perception of the profession's impact.
4. Interviews with over 50 leading legal experts from different regions, practising law in different ways (e.g., judges, academics) and, in the case of private practitioners, from different areas of practice and across multiple legal systems, including civil and common law.

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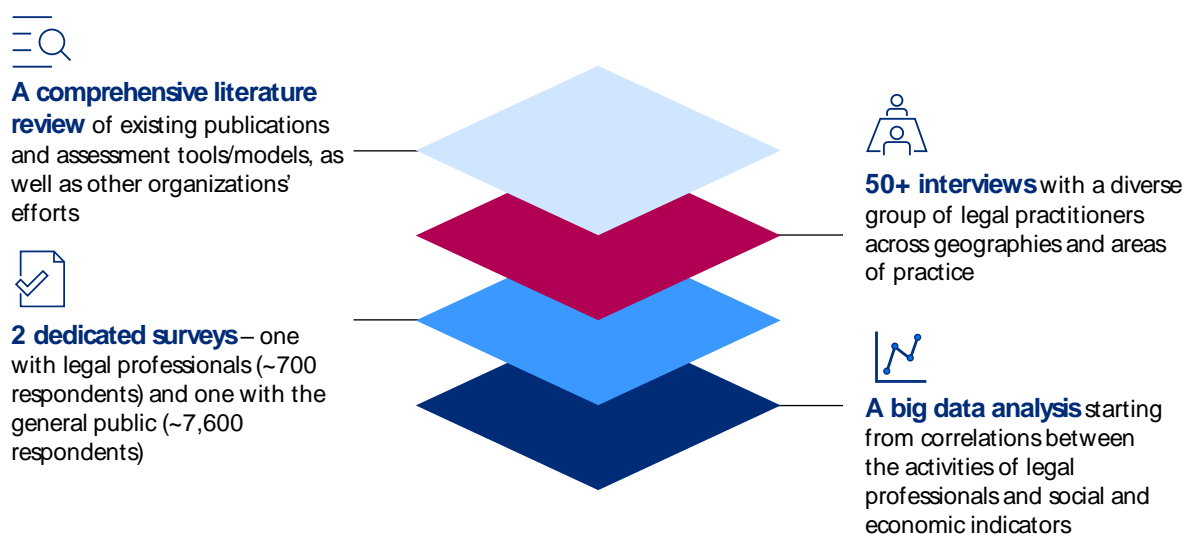
<sup>53</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/2023/01/13/un-chief-warns-that-rule-of-law-risks-turning-into-rule-of-lawlessness>

<sup>54</sup> See Rule of Law: our daily bread? by Almudena Arpón de Mendiola at <https://www.ibanet.org/About-the-IBA/Presidency-Blog-May-2023>

<sup>55</sup> <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/insights#global-decline>

<sup>56</sup> See IBA presidential initiative, The IBA Legal Agenda 2023-2028, item 7, at <https://www.ibanet.org/document?id=IBA-Legal-Agenda-2023-2028>.

## The Impact Project relies on 4 complementary analyses and data sources



5. **The literature review** included numerous publications (such as journal articles, press releases, and books) and impact assessment tools. The results of this review led to numerous examples and concrete data points found throughout the report (e.g., the 2021 Law Project Report published by the Law Council of Australia contributed to the calculation of indirect economic impact and the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index represented a key data point in the big data analysis). At the same time, the literature review also led to the realization that, to date, there appears to have been no study or tool aimed at assessing the comprehensive impact of the legal profession (or of any other profession). Existing reports typically focus on qualitative discussions of the role and perception of professions or quantifications of the impact of specific, time-bound initiatives. This created the need to develop a bespoke methodology in collaboration with legal and social impact experts.
6. **The big data analysis** helped identify statistical relations between KPIs linked to activities of legal professionals (e.g., share of legal professionals among the population, Rule of Law Index, access to civil justice, timeliness of case resolution) and indicators of progress toward the SDGs (e.g., GDP growth, income inequality, life expectancy). From the 25,000 correlations assessed, approximately 60 were prioritized (based on the quantitative and qualitative significance of the correlation). To control for the effect of a country's level of development, the analysis was run both globally and by GDP quartile. The prioritized correlations (e.g., between the Rule of Law and life expectancy or between the number of legal professionals by population and the GINI Index)<sup>57</sup> were then used to quantify the potential gain in the output KPI, if all countries analyzed had performed as those in the top quartile in terms of input KPI (e.g., the additional years of life if all countries where data is available had the same levels of life expectancy as those in the top quartile in terms of Rule of Law). This analysis was nonetheless limited by the relatively lower availability of data in some cases, especially in least developed countries. As such,

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<sup>57</sup> The GINI Index is a measure of the distribution of income across a population. The coefficient can take values between 0 and 1, with 0 representing perfect equality and 1 representing perfect inequality.

the prioritized relations cannot be considered as correlations. Calculating correlations would have required a broader availability of data to isolate individual effects. They are strong directional relations between the selected pairs.

7. **The two surveys** helped enrich the literature review, analysis, and expert input with the quantitative views of approximately 700 legal professionals and 7,600 people from the general population (excluding legal professionals or family members) across 16 countries. The surveys contributed to identifying areas of social impact and activities of legal professionals where the impact is most visible to the legal professionals and to the general population. They also helped identify differences between the views/perception of the two cohorts (legal professionals and the general population) and the outcomes of the impact analysis. Finally, they provided areas of agreement/disagreement between the two cohorts and differences in perception among geographic regions. Moreover, the survey dedicated to legal professionals gauged the appetite for change and helped collect concrete ideas related to potential initiatives to be undertaken.
8. **The experts interviewed** included over 50 leading legal professionals across various regions (Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and Oceania, and Africa) and areas of law (business, individual/civil, government, and criminal). This expert input contributed to the development of the methodology (e.g., the articulation of survey questions and the identification of additional relevant research), the collection of a rich set of examples, and the detailing of case studies. At the same time, the interviews also helped identify potential ways to enhance the positive impact of the profession and to address limitations. The list of interviewed participants can be found in the Acknowledgement section.

### 1.3.2. Methodology

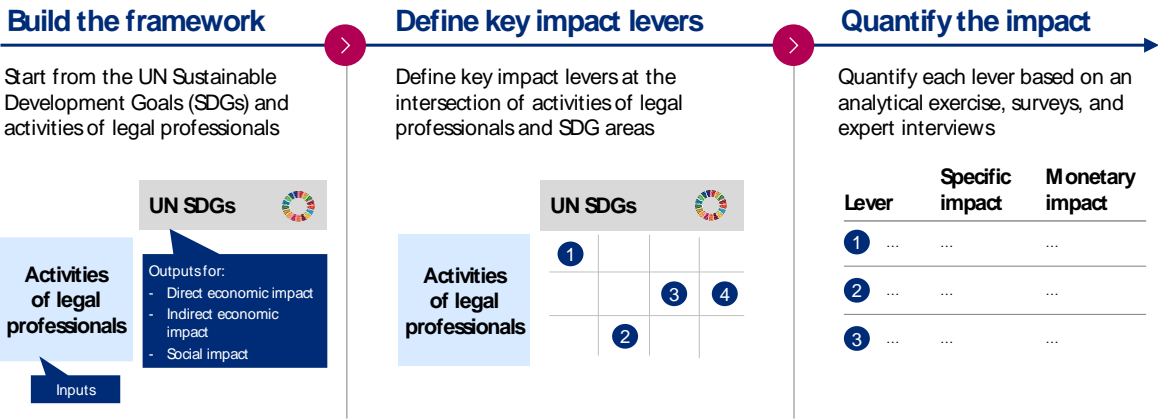
As discussed above, the proposed report aims to create a detailed assessment of the social and economic impact that legal professionals create through their day-to-day work.

In a nutshell, as shown in the following exhibit, the methodology focuses on identifying and assessing the links between activities of legal professionals across the different areas of law (e.g., representing parties in relevant cases, contributing to policy development, participating in advocacy) and indicators of social and economic progress, as defined in the SDGs.



Exhibit 3. Schematic view of the impact assessment methodology

A bespoke methodology for assessing the impact of the legal profession has been developed



The 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) have been developed by the United Nations in collaboration with multiple public and private stakeholders to provide a quantifiable and broadly applicable frame for assessing social and economic progress across multiple dimensions (including economic growth, environmental sustainability, health and well-being, education, equality and inclusion, peace, justice, and institutional strength).

The decision to use the SDG areas to structure the impact of the legal profession was mainly based on two factors:

1. The relatively high availability of public data, given SDG indicators are regularly used by the United Nations to monitor countries’ development.
2. Their broad and increasing use by other organizations, which can help build a more recognizable and applicable framework.

When it comes to the activities of legal professionals that drive the economic and social impact, as shown in the following exhibit, the methodology relies on analyzing the potential impact mechanisms across three scopes: the legal profession internal operations, their core value chain, and their community engagement.

1. **The internal operations** scope not only refers to the GDP and employment contributions of law firms and independent legal professionals, but also to the way areas such as health and well-being, equality, diversity, and inclusion, or environmental sustainability are handled within the legal community. For example, multiple law firms have explicit programs aimed at improving the representation of women among their employees and leadership.
2. **The core value chain** scope refers to the main activities of legal professionals in areas such as public administration and governance (e.g., drafting policies or running checks on states), criminal (e.g., representing parties in criminal cases), business (e.g., facilitating contractual relations, business operations, intellectual property, competition and technology, international trade, or alternative dispute resolutions), and civil / individual (e.g., supporting individuals in cases of property division, inheritance, family law). This also includes contributions through guidelines aimed at helping professionals navigate the complexity and diversity of regulations among jurisdictions.

3. **The community engagement** scope refers to the efforts of legal professionals related to advocacy, educational activities aimed at increasing the understanding of the Rule of Law, and voluntary work to increase access to justice or to offer individuals and communities affected by disasters some relief in the form of legal assistance.

Exhibit 4. Activities of legal professionals creating social and economic impact

**To identify the drivers of impact, the activities relevant to the legal profession have been analyzed across 3 scopes**

Scope and area	1. Internal operations 	2. Core value chain 				3. Community engagement 
		2a. Public	2b. Criminal	2c. Business	2d. Individual	
<b>Activity</b>	Generating employment (directly and in the immediate value chain) Paying salaries and taxes Creating economic value through service provision Driving internal diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts	Facilitating checks on governments, e.g., through audits Contributing to the development and drafting of effective policies and procedures	Supporting effective criminal investigations (including fraud, homicides, human rights violations, environmental harm)	Helping define and enforce contracts Supporting business operations such as M&A, transactions, and tax compliance Supporting IP rights, fair competition, and the introduction of new technologies Facilitating international trade Facilitating alternative resolution mechanisms	Securing access to individual representation (property, inheritance, immigration, human rights, consumer, employment) Supporting the resolution of family issues (e.g., divorce)	Providing pro bono representation (mandated or voluntary) Volunteering for community-relevant causes (e.g., disaster response) Participating in advocacy efforts Educating and building an understanding of the law

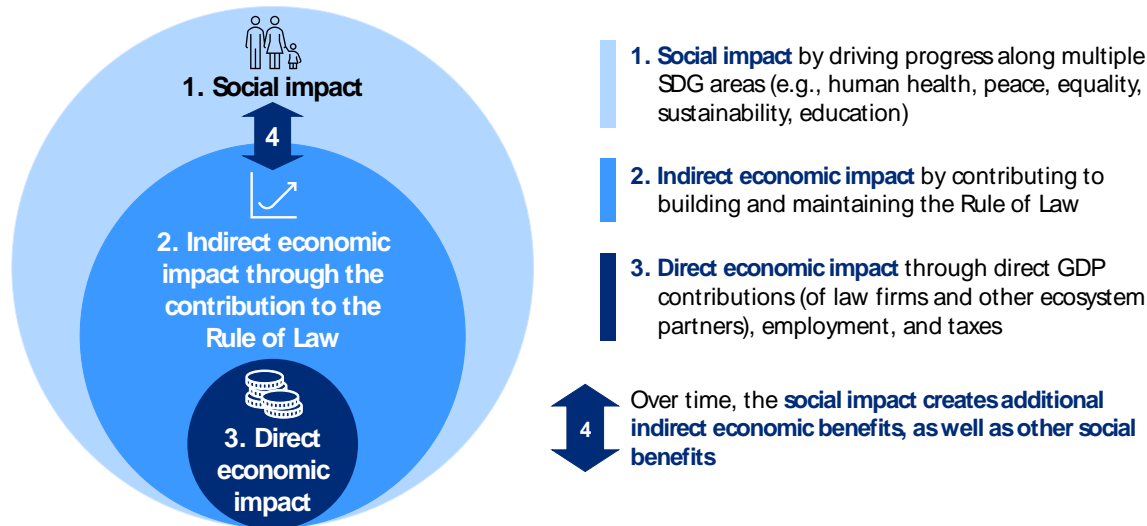
While some of the impact generated through these activities is direct (especially that related to the economic contribution), most of it, whether economic or social, is indirect. For the purposes of this report, **the impact has been divided into three areas:**

- social impact,
- indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law, and
- direct economic impact

It is important to note that the areas of impact are often **mutually reinforcing**, creating significant synergies. For example, progress in environmental law not only leads to lower CO2 emissions but also to health benefits and subsequent savings in healthcare costs. Also, many of these effects are cumulative over time and dependent on development levels of the countries in scope.

Exhibit 5. The three types of impact of the legal profession (social impact, indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law, and direct economic impact)

**The holistic impact of the legal profession can be split into 3 main categories: social impact, indirect economic impact and direct economic impact**



The proposed methodology aims to be:

- **Comprehensive** (assessing a broad set of impact areas and activities of legal professionals)
- **Specific to the legal profession** (analyzing impact areas specific to legal activities)
- **Recognizable** (translating the impact into globally recognized metrics [SDGs])
- **Quantitative** (not only identifying, but also quantifying each impact lever)
- **Qualitative** (enriching the findings with specific examples and case studies).

At the same time, this methodology is bound by a **set of limitations**. First, the availability of data, both on activities of legal professionals and SDG indicators, varies from country to country with many KPIs only available for a subset of countries. Also, most indicators have only just started being tracked systematically in the last few decades, ruling out the possibility for an in-depth historical analysis of impact. Lastly, while the analysis has identified strong links between the activities of legal professionals and indicators of social and economic progress, the latter are often the result of complex social changes and phenomena, thus making it impossible to isolate the changes that can be attributed to the work of legal professionals. Therefore, the report does not attempt to reach one number summing up the different areas of impact. It rather focuses on quantifying a large set of concrete areas of impact, which offer a collective indication of the significant social and economic impact of the legal profession.

Given that the review of approximately 20 existing impact assessment tools (including models and databases) did not reveal any tool built for measuring the social and economic impact of professions, legal or otherwise, this report is also accompanied by an analytical tool that codifies the applied methodology and that can help track and update the assessment over time.

## 2. The wide-reaching impact of the legal profession



## 2. The wide-reaching impact of the legal profession

### 2.1. The legal profession's impact

The work of legal professionals is intimately intertwined with almost all areas of people's private and professional lives. The seemingly straightforward resolution of an insurance claim following a car accident relies on the work and expertise of multiple legal professionals, as well as on decades of refining the relevant legislation through policy drafting and precedent-setting cases. At the same time, this apparently simple case has multiple effects: the resolution of a claim enables the insured person to recover their financial damage and use the proceeds for the creation of future economic activity. The legal professionals involved charge fees, receive salaries, and pay taxes. In some cases, this can also enable people to continue paying for medical bills and cover their post-accident recovery. And, over time, the just and effective resolution of more and more insurance claims can lead to a broader spread of insurance coverage and a better awareness and management of risks.

To help simplify the assessment of such complex sets of effects, this report structures them into three types of impact: social impact, indirect economic impact through its contributions to the Rule of Law, and direct economic impact.

- **The social impact of the legal profession** represents the ways in which legal professionals contribute to social progress, through building and maintaining the Rule of Law, as well as through core activities such as advising and representing organizations and individuals, actively participating in the development of social policies, or engaging in advocacy for social causes. For the purposes of this report, the social impact category is divided into five areas that, together with the economic impact, work toward the achievement of the 17 UN SDGs. The five areas are 1) peace, justice, and institutional strength, 2) equality and inclusion, 3) education, 4) environmental sustainability, and 5) health and well-being.

Similar to the indirect economic impact, the legal profession's social impact cannot be quantified in a single number. The different areas of social impact are also deeply synergetic – they create social benefits in other social areas as well as additional economic benefits (e.g., reducing informal employment is a driver of economic impact, yet it also helps create social impact through increased security of employment and more decent working conditions).

- **The indirect economic impact of the legal profession through its contribution to the Rule of Law** comprises the way legal professionals contribute to economic growth and development as an effect of their day-to-day work. This effect is primarily facilitated through their continuous building and maintaining of the Rule of Law, creating an environment in which private property is protected and contractual agreements are respected. This, in turn, contributes to multiple drivers of economic development such as innovation and formal employment, which drive economic growth and development.
- **The direct economic impact** of the legal profession amounts to USD 1.6 trillion (0.75 percent of the world's GDP in 2022). This encompasses the economic contributions generated through the provision of legal services as well as through tax contributions. On top of this, the direct economic impact also includes the incremental GDP contribution that legal professionals generate in their ecosystems (e.g., for suppliers such as notaries or translators) as well as their contribution to the broader economy. This economic contribution is substantial not only for the many people employed by the legal profession. For example, the taxes generated by the work of legal professionals support states in their provision of social protection, healthcare, education, public order, and other state functions.

Beyond the contribution to GDP, the direct economic impact as defined in this report also includes the generation of employment, both linked to the provision of legal services (lawyers, paralegals, administrators) and to the creation of additional jobs in the supplier ecosystem of the legal sector and in the broader economy.

## 2.2. Perception of the impact

The assessment of the legal profession's impact in this report was also enriched with a survey collecting the perception of approximately 700 legal professionals and 7,600 members of the general population.

Most respondents see the profession's economic and social impact as positive. However, the **professionals' self-perception appears to be significantly more positive than the one of the general population**. While 78 percent of legal professionals believe they have a positive economic and social impact, only 54 percent of the general population would agree. Similarly, only 8 percent of legal professionals see the impact as negative, compared to 12 percent of the respondents representing the general population. Several factors contribute to this situation. As mentioned earlier, some stereotypes portray lawyers as purely driven by financial gains, and the media, from time to time, focuses on lawyers facilitating unethical or even criminal behavior. In other instances, the accused person's fundamental right to defense, which is essential for the proper administration of justice, can cast lawyers in a negative light.

When it comes to the **type of impact**, legal professionals participating in the survey see most impact in the contribution to economic development through their role in upholding the Rule of Law, followed by peace, justice, and institutional strength. The latter is also seen as the highest area of impact by representatives of the general population, followed by the legal professionals' work in advancing equality and inclusion.

### The areas of impact

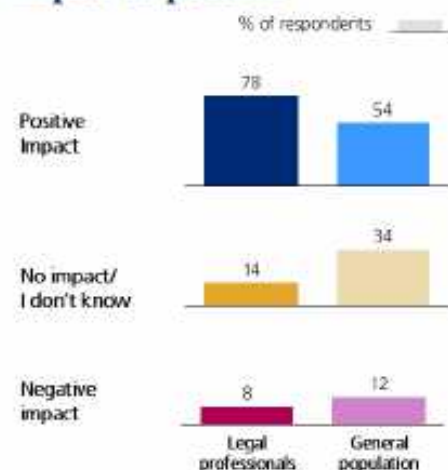
The following sections include a detailed assessment of each of the areas of the social and economic impact of the legal profession: 5 types of social impact related to 1) peace, justice, and institutional strength, 2) equality and inclusion, 3) education, 4) environmental sustainability, and 5) health and well-being; indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law; and direct economic impact. Each section includes:

- A short **background** on the relevance of the area.
- A detailed **description of the impact mechanisms** (the ways in which the work of legal professionals create impact in the respective area), including **examples, case studies and quantitative analyses**.
- A **comparative discussion on how the impact is perceived** by legal professionals and by members of the general population according to this report's surveys.
- A **conclusion of the assessment**.

After detailing the different areas of impact, the report proceeds to a discussion of the relative variations observed in between regions and socio-demographic groups, followed by a discussion of future opportunities. The future opportunities section includes ways of advancing the assessment exercise and emerging actions through which the legal profession could enhance the positive impact of the profession.

Exhibit 6. Perception of the impact

**Most survey respondents see the legal profession's impact as positive**





### 3. Social impact



## 3. Social impact

### Introduction

Legal professionals' work is social at its very core, dealing with people and the dynamic relations between them across all aspects of their private and professional lives. As a result, their impact permeates from individual cases to communities and society overall and grows over time.

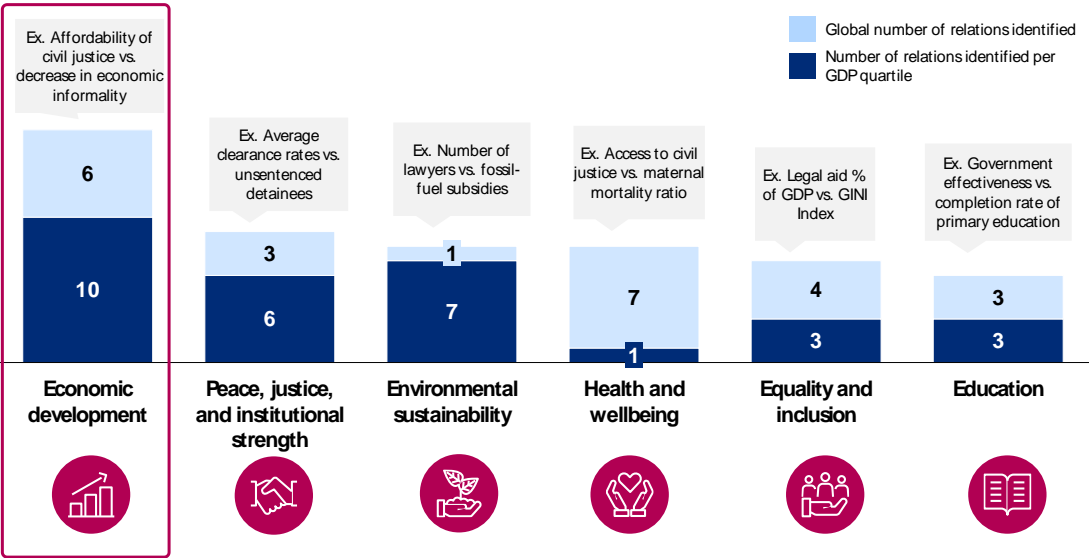
In their day-to-day work, legal professionals create wide-reaching social impact through drafting policies, counseling and representing individuals and organizations, ensuring the neutrality of the application of the law, or advocating for human rights. For the purposes of this report, **social impact is grouped into five areas** based on common themes across the SDGs. These five areas are 1) peace, justice, and institutional strength, 2) equality and inclusion, 3) education, 4) environmental sustainability, and 5) health and well-being.

As described earlier, these five areas of social progress are deeply synergetic and mutually reinforcing, making it impossible to sum them up into one single number. Similarly, while the magnitude of the social impact goes far beyond economic terms, progress in each of these areas also translates into economic benefits, especially in the long term (i.e., a reduction in maternal mortality has an impact on individuals and communities by safeguarding the lives of mothers and children, but also by increasing their access to education and decent work).

The relationship between the work of legal professionals and social development is confirmed by numerous statistical links between indicators of activities of legal professionals and indicators of SDG progress. As shown in the exhibit below, almost 70 percent of the correlations identified in this report's big data analysis links to areas of social, rather than economic, impact and are relatively evenly distributed among the five areas of social impact. For example, the higher the access to legal aid within a country, the lower the levels of income inequality within its population. Similarly, the better the access to civil justice, the lower the levels of maternal mortality. Yet, while some areas (e.g., health and well-being) show more impact at a global level, others (e.g., environmental sustainability) mostly exhibit links within individual GDP quartiles. This suggests that the overarching level of economic development of a country may be a stronger determinant of social progress in those areas than the legal activities analyzed.

Exhibit 7. Relationship between legal professionals’ activities and indicators of social and economic impact by SDG area

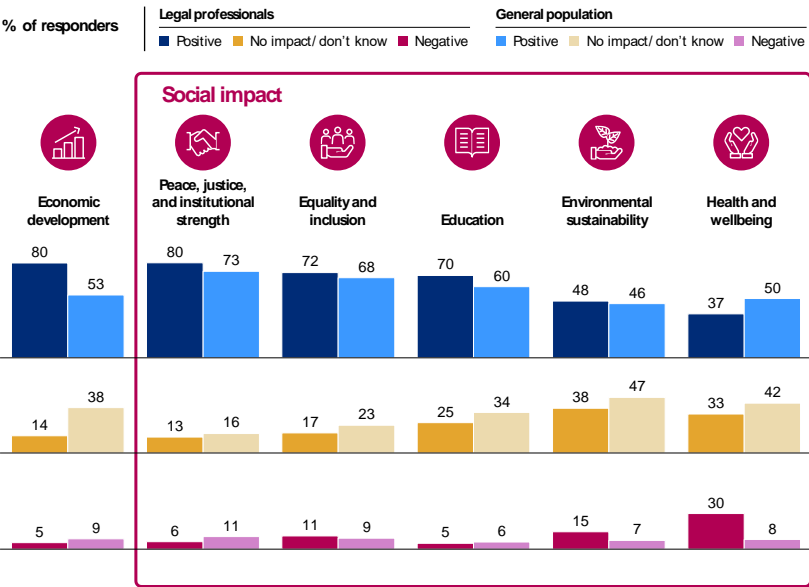
Out of 54 relations identified, only 16 relate directly to economic development, indicating a stronger relation to an indirect economic impact



Similarly, as shown in the following exhibit, many of the respondents to the surveys launched as part of this project, perceive significant social impact emerging from the activities of legal professionals. Moreover, the general population even sees the profession’s social impact as more positive, on average, than the economic one, especially when it comes to peace, justice, and institutional strength, equality and inclusion, and education.

Exhibit 8. Legal professionals and the general population perception on the social and economic impact of the legal profession by SDG area

Survey respondents see many areas of significant social impact emerging from the activities of legal professionals



In the following subchapters, this report deeps dive into each of these areas of social impact, focusing on the mechanisms of impact and its quantification, and the most illustrative impact examples.





## 3.1. Peace, justice, and institutional strength

### Background

Promoting peace, ensuring justice, and fostering institutional strength are intimately intertwined with the legal profession. People everywhere are meant to be free of fear from all forms of violence and safe as they go about their lives, no matter what their nationality, ethnicity, faith, or sexual orientation is.<sup>58</sup> The Rule of Law is a core instrument to making this a reality.

Advancements in peace, justice, and institutional strength cannot be taken for granted, and the past decades have shown some worrisome reversal trends. This is evident in the emergence of new armed conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and in the Gaza strip, the rise of autocratic states in many countries, including established democracies in Europe and North America, as well as a growing anti-globalization movement. In addition, the legal profession itself today faces several threats from legislators and governments, both at the national and international level. The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers<sup>59</sup> establish that lawyers should be (a) able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics. However, in far too many countries today, lawyers are prevented from performing their professional duties according to these Basic Principles, especially with regards to their independence and lack of interference, non-identification with their clients, and safety. All of these trends create the need for intensified efforts in building and maintaining peace, justice, and institutional strength.

#### 3.1.1. Legal professionals' contribution to peace, justice, and institutional strength

As architects and stewards of the Rule of Law, legal professionals have a significant role to play in these efforts. Their impact can be grouped in **six mutually reinforcing mechanisms**:

1. Building and continuously improving the justice system
2. Preserving the separation of powers and freedom of the press
3. Protecting human rights and social justice
4. Fighting against atrocious crimes
5. Defending the universal right to representation
6. Promoting international and institutional strength

##### 3.1.1.1. Building and continuously improving the justice system

Through their day-to-day work, legal professionals continuously build and solidify the justice system, promoting its independence. Many new cases challenge existing policies and legislation, steering their advancement and adaptation to the complexities of a changing world.

Lawyers routinely advise members of the public as to their legal rights. Through their advocacy work, they provide the public with access to the courts to enforce their rights and resolve disputes, often without court intervention. Lawyers with expertise in human rights promote justice through taking on cases to defend people facing grave deprivation of their basic human rights and liberties, often putting their own safety at risk in the process. There are many lawyers who devote their efforts to the prosecution of war crimes such

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<sup>58</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>

<sup>59</sup> See principle #16 at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-role-lawyers>

as the late Mr. Ben Ferencz,<sup>60</sup> former prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials. His mottos were "law not war" and we must "never give up" in the pursuit of justice.

Through the above activities, lawyers help expand a country's justice system, promote dispute resolution, help curb criminality, and generally contribute to the advancement of justice in society. Much of this type of work is conducted on a pro bono *publico* basis, meaning "for the public good", where lawyers offer their expertise to assist members of the public with meaningful causes without the burden of fees.

Many lawyers explicitly dedicate their work to promoting legal reform and improving the justice system. By advocating for changes to laws and legal procedures and helping draft effective policies, they help create a more independent, just, and effective legal system. Numerous examples illustrate this effect, from the work of legal organizations and NGOs in Singapore to outlaw the death penalty, to the support of legal professionals in decriminalizing homosexuality all over the world.

This is a key prerogative of the legal profession in times of peace, but maybe even more so in times of war and crises. An inspirational example of service is that of the Ukrainian Bar Association, which is tirelessly working together with Ukrainian state authorities and civil society to keep the Ukrainian legal system and economy afloat in times of war.

One of the key challenges of most judicial systems in developed and least developed countries alike seems to be that of **the agility of the legal process**. This research shows strong variations from country to country. Access to civil justice is a prerequisite for legal professionals to be able to contribute to the justice system. For instance, countries in the top quartile in terms of accessibility and affordability of civil justice have a 20 percent higher Rule of Law Index.<sup>61</sup> In addition, this report's big data analysis shows a strong relation between the accessibility and affordability of civil justice and the limitation of state powers, indicating again the control role that an effective legal profession can play on the state.

This research also found a strong relation between the proportion of lawyers in the population and the national compliance with labor rights for the second quartile of countries, indicating a higher benefit in this group of countries on this issue.

**20%**  
**improvement  
in the Rule of  
Law**

**could come from an  
increased access to justice**

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<sup>60</sup> <https://benferencz.org/>

<sup>61</sup> Based on 136 countries globally where data was available for both the input and output KPIs.



### 3.1.1.2. Preserving the separation of powers and freedom of the press

Legal professionals often act as stewards of the separation of power within the state and as active shields against executive overreaches.

Powerful examples include the Malaysian Bar Association's work to protect the separation of powers in the aftermath of the 1980s elections, the 2016 UK Supreme Court challenge of Boris Johnson's attempt to block the UK Parliament from passing laws against his Brexit deal, or the 2023 efforts of the Mexican bar to protect the judiciary from presidential attacks.

The effect legal professionals have on limiting the abuse of state power and ensuring the independence of the law also appears to be backed by statistical facts. This report's research suggests that, if the access to civil justice in all countries analyzed<sup>62</sup> reached the same level as that of countries in the top quartile, there would be 25 percent fewer cases of executive overreach.

Preserving a strong separation of powers within the state often requires protecting the freedom of the press. The case of the unmasking of Mr. Roberts-Smith, an alleged Australian war hero who proved to be a war criminal, shows how legal professionals can act as stewards of freedom of the press, a fundamental contributor to a free society.

**25% cases  
of executive  
overreaches**

could be avoided  
through an increased  
access to justice

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<sup>62</sup> Based on 137 countries globally where data was available for both the input and output KPIs.

## Case study – Defending the right of media organizations to report on a “war hero” case<sup>63 64 65 66</sup>

When Australian media uncovered the extrajudicial killings committed in Afghanistan by Ben Roberts-Smith, one of the country’s most decorated soldiers, the country was shaken by the scandal. A legal case was brought against the newspapers that uncovered the scandal, in an attempt to silence them.

Mr. Roberts-Smith sued the Sydney Morning Herald, the Canberra Times, The Age, and the journalists who penned the articles for defamation, claiming that they had ruined his life by portraying him as a “callous man who had broken the rules of war and disgraced his country by doing so.” After a lengthy trial that lasted 110 days, with hundreds of witnesses and thousands of documents as evidence, the judge ruled that the reporting of the media organizations was “substantially true,” given that four murder allegations against Mr. Roberts-Smith had been proven.

The case brought many challenges for the legal professionals due to both the vast resources that Mr. Roberts-Smith had obtained due to his popularity and the intrinsic nature of the case. Among others, these challenges included coordinating witness testimony from Afghanistan

and obtaining onerous security clearances so that staff could handle the confidential documents related to the case.

This ruling became a very high-stakes issue for Australian press freedom, as a negative outcome for the media organizations would have made a significant difference for freedom of speech:

- Media organizations and investigative journalists would have become more unwilling to publish stories that could subject them to a defamation suit regardless of the truth behind their reporting.
- Legal professionals would have become more willing to advise media organizations to settle the claims made against them rather than litigate in court in fear of the negative consequences associated with defamation suits.

This case shows how the dedication of a group of legal professionals sent a powerful message that journalists should be able to report on sensitive issues involving powerful people without fear of prosecution, and safeguarded the rights of citizens to access comprehensive information about issues they care about

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<sup>63</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-65773942>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-65717684>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/nov/28/ben-roberts-smith-defamation-trial-pay-media-legal-costs>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.lawyrsweekly.com.au/biglaw/37544-what-it-took-to-win-australia-s-biggest-defamation-trial>

### 3.1.1.3. Protecting human rights and social justice

Many legal professionals dedicate their work to the protection of human rights and social justice all over the world. Representing the families of “desaparecidos” before the Inter-American Human Rights Court of Justice, protecting the rights of immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe (the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland post-Brexit, the Mediterranean countries), Latin America or the United States, or helping fight unlawful evictions in South Africa are just a few examples of their contributions. By advocating for the rights of marginalized groups and working to eliminate discrimination, the legal profession helps create a more just and equitable society, which not only reduces human suffering but can also help alleviate tensions and promote peace.

A critical role in protecting human rights and social justice is also played by **restorative justice**. By ensuring that individuals and organizations are held accountable for their actions, restorative justice helps deter wrongdoing and promotes future fairness and social justice. There are abundant examples of legal professionals taking part in historically significant legal processes that have helped heal profound social wounds. The Nuremberg trials in the aftermath of World War II in Germany or the legal process against the members of the Argentinian military juntas are situations in which lawyers, prosecutors, and judges were not only punishing those guilty of major crimes, but also restoring a wider sense of justice and equality among citizens.

There also examples of legal work aimed at protecting social justice that take place in more ordinary settings, such as that of the UK post office workers wrongly accused of false accounting and theft by evidence collected through a faulty software. Initially, courts condemned over 900 sub-postmasters based on this erroneous evidence. Some of them had their convictions overturned through lengthy appeals processes. Several legal campaigns in defense of these wrongly condemned postmasters achieved legal victories with regards to the compensation to be paid for this miscarriage of justice. Finally, recently, the UK government agreed to pass legislation to exonerate and compensate all the affected Post Office workers.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-56718036>

## Case study – Judging the crimes of Argentina’s military juntas<sup>68 69</sup>

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In 1976, the Argentinian military seized power through a coup d’état and unleashed a violent campaign to eradicate left-wing sympathizers. During this campaign, known locally as the “Dirty War,” over 30,000 people were killed or forcibly disappeared by the security forces or the military.

In 1983, the military dictatorship ended after the Argentinean defeat in the Falklands War. Raul Alfonsín was elected president on the promise to transform Argentina into a modern democracy, and for that, the first step was to deliver justice for the many victims of the “Dirty War.”

President Alfonsín assembled a group of prominent legal professionals and philosophers and asked them to propose how to carry out a judicial review of the crimes committed during the dictatorship period. This review should include the legal changes required to do so and the legal basis to formally charge the former military leaders.

The reform devised by this group of legal scholars balanced the need for the effective application of justice with the threat of further insurrection from the military by:

- Reversing the “self-amnesty” law passed by the military junta before handing over power to the newly elected President.

- Maintaining the jurisdiction of military courts over crimes committed by the military, while handing civilian courts the jurisdiction over recourse against the verdicts given by the military courts.
- Establishing well-differentiated levels of responsibility so that low-level soldiers were not judged by the crimes they committed under direct orders of their superiors.

Military courts stalled the judicial processes, so in the end, a court composed of civil law judges applying the ordinary criminal laws was the one responsible for handing out the guilty verdicts to the leaders of the Argentinean military juntas.

This outcome would not have been possible without the political decision made by President Alfonsín, the legal modifications devised by legal scholars and passed by the Congress, and the relentless work of victims’ organizations, prosecutors, and legal professionals involved in the proceedings.

As such, this judicial process and the legal professionals involved enabled the establishment of democracy in Argentina, reduced the influence of the military in the political sphere, and helped ensure a strong rejection of political violence.

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<sup>68</sup> <https://internationalcrimesdatabase.org/Case/1118/Juicio-a-las-Juntas-Militares/>

<sup>69</sup> <https://notevenpast.org/the-trial-of-the-juntas-reckoning-with-state-violence-in-argentina/>

<sup>70</sup> [https://www.clarin.com/juicio-a-las-juntas/decision-politica-soparto-todas-presiones\\_0\\_r1oexnn6P7g.html](https://www.clarin.com/juicio-a-las-juntas/decision-politica-soparto-todas-presiones_0_r1oexnn6P7g.html)

<sup>71</sup> [https://www.bbc.com/mundo/america\\_latina/2010/01/100106\\_0317\\_archivos\\_argentina\\_irm](https://www.bbc.com/mundo/america_latina/2010/01/100106_0317_archivos_argentina_irm)

#### 3.1.1.4. Fighting against atrocious crimes

Many legal professionals operate at the intersection of human rights and criminal law, in an effort to raise awareness of and curb the incidence of atrocious crimes. The creation of the “eyeWitness to Atrocities” App by the IBA, which was developed with support from LexisNexis, is a unique example of how combining law and technology can help advance human rights and social justice and help reduce crime. As described in the dedicated case study, the app enables the secure submission of images and videos of war zones while securing the chain of custody. By doing that, the proof submitted through it can then be used in legal proceedings.

#### 3.1.1.5. Defending the universal right to legal representation

A fundamental component of an equitable justice system is the right to universal representation. Regardless of the gravity of the crime one is accused of, the right to a fair trial and legal representation needs to be guaranteed. This often puts legal professionals in the position of defending people whose crimes stand against their own moral beliefs and exposes them to public criticism, affecting the general public’s perception of the profession. An independent legal profession and an independent judiciary that preserve the fundamental right of defense are cornerstones for Justice to operate at its best. Lawyers doing their job in an adversarial system should be seen as positive for society – not negative – because they strengthen the Rule of Law that benefits everyone. There are countless examples of this phenomenon, from the defense of terrorists such as the Unabomber or Anders Breivik or convicted murderers such as Oscar Pistorius.

Beyond honoring a human right, the defense of alleged criminals can also help advance the justice system itself and the way lawmakers view and decide to punish different types of crime. For example, the defense of Yong Vui Kong, a 19-year-old Malaysian sentenced to death for bringing drugs into Singapore, led not only to a temporary moratorium on the death penalty, but also to a change in legislation, allowing judges to apply less severe punishments under certain circumstances.



## Case study – Prosecuting atrocity crimes combining law and technology – the eyewitness to atrocities App <sup>72 73 74</sup>

The prosecution of atrocity crimes (war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide) often becomes a nearly impossible task for law enforcement agencies and courts due to the difficulty of obtaining access to eyewitnesses and physical evidence to present in a legal setting. Launched by the IBA in 2015, the eyeWitness App is intended to fill this vacuum.

The eyeWitness App allows users to take photo and video evidence of crimes and store it safely with all the metadata attached. This content is then anonymously uploaded to a secure vault that keeps an original unaltered copy of the evidence of the crime. In this way, this evidence should be admissible by law enforcement agencies or courts in legal proceedings given that:

- The location, date, and time are recorded by the app when capturing the photo or video.
- By uploading the evidence to the eyeWitness vault, a secure record is created demonstrating that the chain of custody has been protected and that the file has not been tampered with.

The evidence uploaded by users is then reviewed by a team of pro bono legal professionals, which catalogue the footage and prepare dossiers with evidence for submission to relevant institutions, such as international or national courts, state bodies, or law enforcement agencies.

Evidence submitted through the app has already been used to compile over 40 dossiers that have been shared with the relevant institutions, including about possible war crimes in Ukraine and Palestine and extrajudicial killings in Nigeria. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, evidence submitted to the court through the eyeWitness App proved crucial in the verdict of two commanders of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda found guilty of crimes against humanity.

The eyeWitness App reflects a major shift in the use of legal technology by facilitating the prosecution of grave crimes while protecting the eyewitnesses from the negative consequences that reporting them can have in places where there is little protection from retaliation. Its expanded use has the potential to change the balance of power from criminals to victims and provide the evidence needed to bring many war criminals to justice, turning it into a major contribution of legal professionals to advancing peace and justice.

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<sup>72</sup> <https://www.eyewitness.global/>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.eyewitness.global/our-impact>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.eyewitness.global/Bringing-historical-crimes-to-a-domestic-court-in-the-DRC>

## Case study - Assisting a death row inmate and advocating for the abolition of mandatory death penalty for drug offences in Singapore<sup>75 76 77 78 79 80</sup>

In 2009, 19-year-old Yong Vui Kong entered Singapore from his home country of Malaysia carrying a package of heroin. He was arrested in possession of 47 grams of the drug, convicted of drug trafficking, and condemned to the mandatory death penalty. He initially filed an appeal but then decided to withdraw it, asking for clemency from the President of the Republic of Singapore instead. His petition was nonetheless dismissed.

Two days before his scheduled execution, human rights lawyer Ravi Madasamy, with the assistance of several non-governmental organizations such as the Death Penalty Project and Amnesty International, took over his defense and started a series of legal actions aiming to challenge not only the sentence of his client, but the legal framework itself that prevented the tribunal from considering alternative, more lenient penalties for Mr. Kong.

Mr. Madasamy exhausted all possible avenues of recourse, including:

- Challenging the withdrawal of the previous appeal on the basis that his client was led to believe he could not challenge the constitutionality of the death penalty,
- Challenging the constitutionality of the mandatory death penalty for drug offences, and

- Challenging the constitutional limits of the President's discretion in accepting or rejecting clemency petitions.

While these attempts were unsuccessful at overturning Mr. Kong's death penalty, his execution was delayed and the view that supported a revision of the mandatory death penalty in Singapore gained traction. A moratorium on death row inmates' execution was followed by a change in the Misuse of Drugs Act, providing judges with the discretion to sentence drug offenders to life imprisonment if they only act as couriers or help authorities in the fight against drug trafficking.

When this legislative change was passed, Mr. Madasamy appealed again against the death penalty and the High Court granted a new sentence of life imprisonment and 15 strokes of the cane (a form of punishment still legal in Singapore).

This case is a single example of the many activist challenges that Mr. Madasamy has launched in Singapore and other countries advocating the abolition of the death penalty and the decriminalization of homosexuality, among other human rights causes. His courageous work in the fight for human rights has granted him the 2023 International Bar Association (IBA) Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Legal Practitioner to Human Rights.

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<sup>75</sup> <https://deathpenaltyproject.org/yong-vui-kong-removed-from-death-row-in-singapore/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://deathpenaltyproject.org/my-journey-with-vui-kong/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/es/documents/ASA36/005/2009/en/>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/drug-courier-spared-death-now-challenges-caning-sentence>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/Ravi-Madasamy-receives-IBA-Human-Rights-Award-2023>

<sup>80</sup> <https://adpan.org/singapore-case-study-yong-vui-kong/>

### 3.1.1.6. Promoting international and institutional strength

**Institutional strength** is essential in today's world, both at global and local levels, to ensure that peace and justice are maintained and upheld. This requires effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, that collaborate with each other and which generate citizen's trust. Lawyers contribute to this goal through efforts to improve anti-corruption laws, regulations, enforcement, and compliance.<sup>81</sup> By denouncing governments' wrongful conduct and promoting collaboration among them, legal professionals ensure a consistent application of different regulations and develop common standards or positions.

The work legal professionals do to promote international strength and understanding is also notable. By working on cross-border issues and promoting international law, legal professionals can help build bridges between nations and promote peaceful relations. One such example is the work of the legal team assisting the European Commission and the US Trade Department in resolving a 17-year long trade battle between the United States and the European Union over state aid given to the large aircraft manufacturers Airbus and Boeing. After rulings by the WTO that would have imposed mutual tariffs, the institutions involved managed to reach an agreement to suspend the application of tariffs and prevent their negative effects on competition and jobs.<sup>82 83</sup>

Another example of impact beyond a specific case is the "lava jato" process in Brazil, which opened up new ways of responding to corporate corruption across the world.

Finally, the IBA has a strong track record of promoting collaboration across countries. An excellent example of this is that of convergence and cooperation within the International Competition Network (ICN). This body, which the IBA played a major role in founding in 2002, brings together over 100 antitrust agencies from more than 90 countries. The ICN has provided benchmarks, recommendations and other work product which provide greater coherence and convergence in the world's ever-growing number of antitrust laws. The IBA takes part in this effort by bringing together regulators in the fields of antitrust and communications.

Looking ahead, collaboration between the relevant authorities in charge of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) regulations, at global level as well as between the EU and national authorities, will be essential to ensure a harmonized legal framework. The legal profession is already playing an important role in this.<sup>84</sup>

These examples and statistical evidence prove how the legal profession is entrusted with a key role in the maintenance of peace, the delivery of justice, and the promotion of institutional strength. As the world faces both new and longstanding challenges to these three goals, it is crucial that lawyers strengthen their efforts to continuously improve the justice system, safeguard the independence necessary to uphold the spirit and letter of the law, protect human rights, and collaborate with public and private organizations that share these goals.

### 3.1.2. The perception of the impact

According to the results of the surveys conducted to assess the perception of the legal profession, **both legal professionals and the general population believe that peace, justice, and institutional strength is the area in which legal professionals create the most positive impact**. As shown in the following exhibit, the general population is nonetheless less convinced (73 percent) about the positive impact of the legal profession than

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<sup>81</sup> See the different works of the IBA Anticorruption Committee, such as the Task Force created to help Ukraine address, and avoid, the common pitfalls countries make during the reconstruction process following war or natural disasters <https://www.ibanet.org/unit/Criminal+Law+Section/committee/Anti-Corruption+Committee/3119>.

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/eu-us-set-unveil-truce-17-year-aircraft-battle-2021-06-15/>

<sup>83</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_3001](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3001)

<sup>84</sup> See the "AI&IBA Presidential Project" at <https://www.ibanet.org/Artificial-intelligence-hubpage> also accessible through <https://www.ibanet.org/IBA-Presidency-Blog>. Bar associations and law societies are also undertaking significant steps regarding the effects of AI in the Legal profession such as the American Bar Association ([https://www.americanbar.org/groups/leadership/office\\_of\\_the\\_president/artificial-intelligence/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/leadership/office_of_the_president/artificial-intelligence/)) and The Law Society of England and Wales (<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ai-and-lawtech/generative-ai-the-essentials>).

legal professionals themselves are (80 percent), potentially suggesting the need for better and broader communication with the general population.

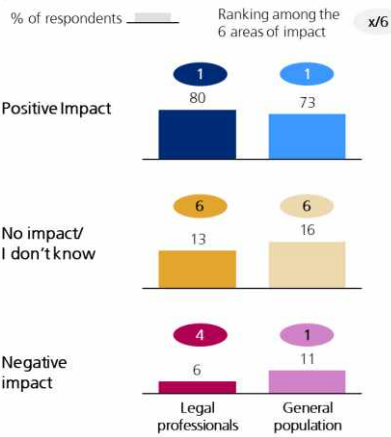
However, while only 11 percent of respondents from the general population believe that the impact of legal professionals in this area is negative, this share is greater than in any other area. This may be related to the negative connotations associated with the obligation of legal professionals to also represent criminals, given that the right to defense is a human right that should not be denied to any individual.

Responses to the survey also reflect that the work done by legal professionals related to the development of legal procedures is seen as their most valuable contribution both internally and externally, while the representation of parties in criminal offenses is least positively regarded both within and outside of the profession. Work in the formalization of business ventures and private activities is the only area in which the general population values the role of legal professionals more positively than legal professionals themselves. This may reflect the view that the general population has a more practical understanding of the legal profession, as opposed to legal professionals themselves who appreciate the impact in more aspirational areas such as the development of the Rule of Law or the promotion of public international law.

In summary, the responses received in the surveys reinforce the impression that the impact of the legal profession on peace, justice, and institutional strength is more clearly felt than in any other area.

Exhibit 9. The perception of the legal profession’s impact on peace, justice, and institutional strength

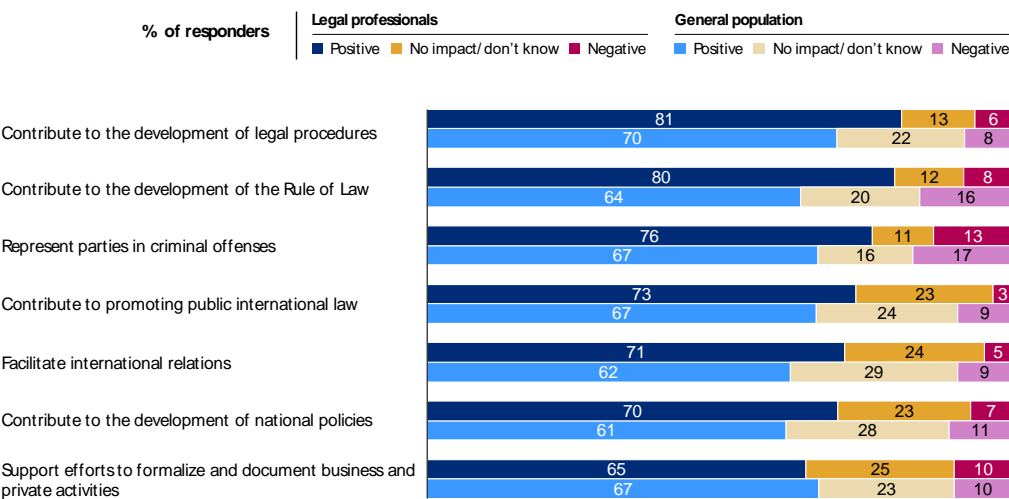
**The impact on peace, justice, and institutional strength is best regarded among legal professionals**



Source: IBA Impact Project surveys with legal professionals and the general population

Exhibit 10. The perceived drivers of the legal profession’s impact on peace, justice, and institutional strength

**Survey respondents see most impact in the contribution to the development of legal procedures**



## Conclusion

Legal professionals' work is core to the **preservation and enhancement of peace, justice, and institutional strength**. However, this impact is reliant on an effective and accessible justice system. **Actions** related to increasing access to legal representation, fighting against corruption, and policymaking to promote state effectiveness could further strengthen the legal profession's contribution to this impact area.







## 3.2. Equality and inclusion<sup>85</sup>

### Background

The last centuries have brought significant progress in key developmental areas such as economic growth and overall life expectancy. The distribution of progress has nonetheless been far from uniform and **inequality has risen** as a result. In 1820, the average income of the top 10 percent of earners was 18 times higher than that of the bottom 50 percent. Fast forward to 2020, and this ratio has increased to 38 times higher.<sup>86</sup> Clearly, the income gap between the wealthiest and poorest individuals has widened significantly over the past two centuries.

Since 1980, efforts in international development as well as increased trade, have managed to curb the levels of “between-country inequality” by approximately 30 percent. Yet, the opposite effect has happened “within countries” where income has become increasingly concentrated in the top 10 percent and the top 1 percent.<sup>87</sup>

The issue of economic **inequality is a global phenomenon** widely recognized to lead to polarization, discontent, and instability.<sup>88</sup> As such, it is more and more present on the agendas of states and international organizations.

Beyond economic inequality, the global community has also become increasingly aware of many other areas of inequality and exclusion, whether based on gender (e.g., women worldwide are paid 33 percent less than men for the same job),<sup>89</sup> sexual orientation (e.g., same-sex relationships continue to be criminalized in 64 countries worldwide),<sup>90</sup> disability (e.g., 1.3 billion people worldwide suffer from some form of disability,<sup>91</sup> facing 80 to 100 percent higher levels of unemployment),<sup>92</sup> ethnicity, race, or other causes. Another growing type of inequality is represented by the unequal access to technology and internet connectivity, contributing to a growing digital divide.

Over the past decades, an increasing number of organizations have become committed to addressing issues of inequality through dedicated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts focused mostly on issues of gender, sexual orientation, disability, and race. Their commitment is mainly anchored in the issue being an ethical and human prerogative, but also in that it is “good for business”. According to McKinsey’s “Why diversity matters” report series, organizations with diverse leadership, (gender or ethnicity-based) have 25 to 36 percent better financial performance than those with less diverse leadership.<sup>93</sup>

Advancing economic and social equality and inclusion is core to the mandate of legal professionals. By contributing to building and maintaining the Rule of Law, lawyers act as independent mediators of power and stewards of the equal rights of disadvantaged groups.

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<sup>85</sup> For this report, the Cambridge Dictionary definitions of equality (“a situation in which men and women, people of different races, religions, etc. are all treated fairly and have the same opportunities”) and inclusion (“the act of allowing many different types of people to do something and treating them fairly and equally”) are used.

<sup>86</sup> <https://wir2022.wid.world/chapter-2/>

<sup>87</sup> <https://wir2022.wid.world/chapter-2/>

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abd4201>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/gender-pay-gap-statistics/#:~:text=Worldwide%20gender%20pay%20gap%20statistics,lowest%20in%20Luxembourg%20at%200.7%25.>

<sup>90</sup> <https://database.ilga.org/criminalisation-consensual-same-sex-sexual-acts>

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

<sup>92</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_norm/@declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_decl\\_fs\\_87\\_en.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@declaration/documents/publication/wcms_decl_fs_87_en.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

### 3.2.1. Legal professionals' contribution to equality and inclusion

Legal professionals' work can have a significant impact on the advancement of equality and inclusion. Through the drafting of anti-discrimination policies, the participation in strategic litigation in defense of human rights, and the provision of legal services to economically disadvantaged groups, lawyers help drive increased equality and inclusion across multiple dimensions including gender, sexual orientation, race, or income. For the purposes of this assessment, this report details **three impact mechanisms** identified:

1. Advancing anti-discrimination policies and advocating for human rights
2. Fighting social and economic inequality and the unequal access to justice
3. Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the legal profession

#### 3.2.1.1. Advancing anti-discrimination policies and advocating for human rights

Legal professionals have contributed to the drafting of various antidiscrimination policies. One example is the **EU directive on equal pay** that will require companies to disclose the percentage gap in pay between men and women. It will also require the disclosure of the total compensation ratio of the highest paid individual to the average total compensation for all employees. Similar legislation is being enacted in Switzerland through the Gender Equality Act.

This policy-related work is often complemented by the participation in strategic litigation, which can lead to breakthrough sentences, and, over time, to further changes in policies and social standards. This type of work by legal professionals is often related to the protection of human rights. For instance, legal firms in the United Kingdom contributed to a widespread campaign aimed at **decriminalizing homosexuality** through multiple cases in, e.g., Belize, India, and Singapore. This campaign is believed to have ultimately contributed to advancements in the decriminalization of homosexuality in those countries. According to the teams who worked on the cases, a large part of the success was attributed to a gradual shift in the thinking of the judges and policymakers they interacted with, highlighting the educational component of legal engagements. Similarly, a group of legal professionals in Ireland supported the amendment of the Irish Adoption Act. This helped disadvantaged mothers who were victims of forced adoptions between 1922 and 1998 find their children and contributed to a shift in public opinion that eventually led to the partial decriminalization of abortion in 2019.

Often the support of legal professionals goes beyond legal representation, including psychological and even logistical help. An example of this phenomenon is the multifaceted work of legal professionals in support of the women coming forward in the #MeToo movement.

## Case study – Equal pay in EU law <sup>94 95 96 97 98 79 80 81 82</sup>

The principle of equal pay for equal work has been at the forefront of the fight for equality since the incorporation of women into the labor market. In the European Union, this plight became a founding principle of the Union, enshrined as such in the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Despite this major recognition and several legislative developments introduced in later years, the effective implementation and enforcement of this principle remains a major challenge.

In 2021, to address the shortcomings of existing equal pay legislation, the European Commission introduced a proposal for a new directive on pay transparency that required companies to:

- Publish starting salaries in job announcements or before interviewing candidates.
- Report their gender pay gap to the relevant national authorities and carry out a joint pay assessment with workers' unions if the pay gap is higher than 5 percent (for companies with more than 250 employees).

In 2023, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union agreed to the proposal and the new directive was passed.

Legal professionals have contributed to three key aspects of this milestone:

- As part of professional organizations and civil society, they have helped shape the policy change by providing feedback on the legal vacuums left by the pre-existing legislation and the suggested approaches to address them.
- As part of the legal services of the EU bodies that have drafted the proposal and introduced amendments during the legislative process.
- As part of the legal services of EU Member States that have helped to transpose the directive to each of the national legal systems for its effective implementation.

While the real impact of the new regulation will only be seen in the coming years, the reduction of the gender pay gap, from today's 12.7 percent to the 5 percent threshold established in the pay transparency directive, would increase annual income for women in the EU by approximately EUR 240 million. The complete eradication of the gender pay gap would increase that figure to close to approximately EUR 390 million.

By advancing the fight for equal pay, legal professionals not only contribute to gender equality but also promote the utilization of a diverse pool of talent resources, taking society one step closer to achieving both goals.

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<sup>94</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_881](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_881) .

<sup>95</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/eu-action-equal-pay\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/eu-action-equal-pay_en)

<sup>96</sup> European Commission, 2021. *Proposal for a DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work for work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.*

<sup>97</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20221219-3>

<sup>98</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender\\_statistics#Earnings](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_statistics#Earnings)

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/movements/me-too/>

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.caase.org/pro-bono-project/>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.rainn.org/articles/statutes-limitations-sex-crimes>

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/fastfact.html>

## Case study – #MeToo movement<sup>103 104 105 106</sup>

The #*MeToo* movement began in 2006 to raise awareness about sexual harassment and assault, particularly in the workplace. Sexual harassment is a very common form of violence, with over 50 percent of women suffering some sort of sexual violence involving physical contact, and over 25 percent of women having suffered a rape attempt, with severe disparities making it even more prevalent in disadvantaged communities.

Legal professionals have played a significant role in the #MeToo movement in three distinct ways:

- Legal teams have counseled victims in very popular cases where the plaintiff or the defendant are public personalities, but also in many others where victims are anonymous women with limited resources. Many grassroots organizations have emerged to support these women through pro bono legal work, including the Victim Rights Law Center or the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, among others.
- Legal professionals have also been active in defending the need for legal changes to better protect victims of sexual harassment and assault. They have pushed for stronger laws around consent, workplace harassment, and the statute of limitations for reporting sexual crimes. For instance, the Rape, Abuse

& Incest National Network (RAINN) works with a global law firm offering pro bono support to maintain a database of each US state's statute of limitations for all sex crimes.

- Legal professionals have also played a role in educating the public about the legal aspects of the #MeToo movement. They have given interviews, written articles, and spoken at events to raise awareness about the legal rights of victims and the legal implications of sexual harassment and assault.

On the other hand, legal professionals have also been instrumental in defending people accused of committing crimes related to sexual violence. While this has sometimes led to negative attention, it is the obligation of those in the legal profession, and a testament to their independence, to participate in the process and ensure defendants receive a fair trial no matter how grave the accusations they face may be. What's more, this defense has revealed false accusations on occasions, and justice has prevailed.

The work of legal professionals in the context of the #MeToo movement is nonetheless an example of how lawyers can generate systemic change. It also illustrates the complex nature of legal professionals' support including representation, counseling, advocacy, and public education efforts.

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<sup>103</sup> <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/movements/me-too/>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.caase.org/pro-bono-project/>

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.rainn.org/articles/statutes-limitations-sex-crimes>

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/fastfact.html>

### 3.2.1.2. Fighting social and economic inequality and the unequal access to justice

Income inequality and barriers to accessing justice are closely interrelated. This report's survey shows that **low-income people are 2.5 times less likely to use legal services than higher-income people**, while usually being those in higher need of the equalizing power of justice. Legal professionals can play a significant role in reducing income inequality by improving access to legal representation. There are already several examples of doing so, one being the IBA awardee Elba Gutierrez. She helped design a legal education syllabus for non-profit organizations based on her work providing legal assistance to those in need after the 2017 Mexico City earthquake and assisting impact litigation involving COVID-19 vaccines for children, harassment in the workplace, and state reparations for severe human rights violations.

This research shows that countries with a higher share of legal aid tend to experience lower levels of income inequality. Yet, this effect cannot be achieved simply by increasing the share of lawyers within the population. In fact, developed countries with a higher proportion of lawyers often experience higher levels of income inequality. A possible explanation for this phenomenon may have to do with the fact that legal representation is typically more accessible to wealthier individuals, who can then use it to protect their social and economic status.

Exhibit 11. Relationship between number of legal professionals and income inequality

**Among developed countries, higher proportions of lawyers among the population do not link to lower levels of income inequality**

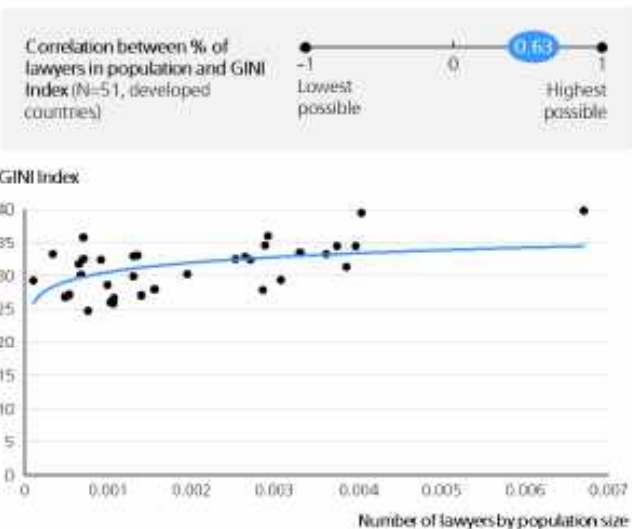
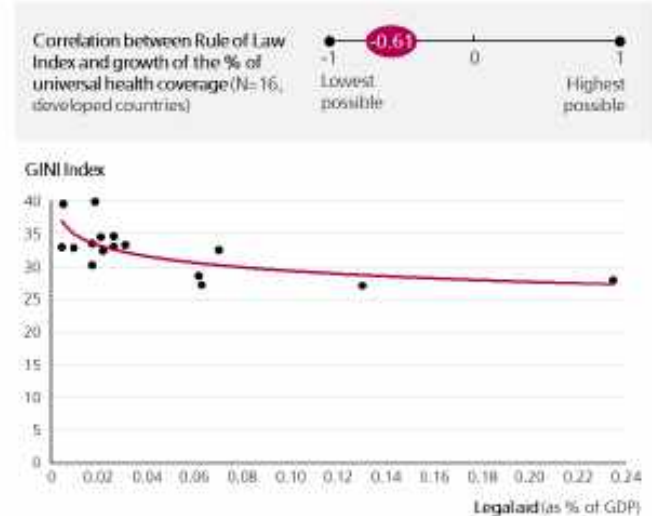


Exhibit 12. Relationship between legal aid and income inequality

**Yet, the higher the % of legal aid in GDP, the lower the income inequality**



Therefore, if no emphasis is put on improving the access less-resourced groups have to legal professionals, having a higher number of legal professionals can act as a defense mechanism for maintaining the status quo of income and wealth distribution.

To quantify this impact, were all countries analyzed<sup>107</sup> to have the same GINI Index<sup>108</sup> as those in the top quartile in terms of density of legal professionals, inequality would be 4 percent higher. At the same time, if the GINI Index in all countries analyzed<sup>109</sup> was at the same level as that of those countries in the top quartile in terms of legal aid, inequality would be 5 percent lower.

**-5%**  
**reduction in  
inequality**  
could result from an increase  
in available legal aid

**+4%**  
**growth in  
inequality**  
could nonetheless result from  
increasing the number of  
lawyers alone

### 3.2.1.3. Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the legal profession

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is also an area of struggle within the legal profession, more notably in terms of gender and race. **Women and people of color are underrepresented in leadership positions**, and many testify to facing discrimination and bias in the workplace.

While many organizations have launched dedicated programs aimed at enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion among their staff, there appears to be significant work ahead in terms of addressing the root causes, driving diversity in leadership/senior roles, and looking into broader types of diversity beyond gender.

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<sup>107</sup> Based on 51 developed countries where data on both the input and output KPIs was available

<sup>108</sup> The GINI Index is a measure of the distribution of income across a population. The coefficient can take values between 0 and 1, with 0 representing perfect equality and 1 representing perfect inequality.

<sup>109</sup> Based on 16 developed countries where data on both the input and output KPIs was available



# Looking inwards – Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession

Research shows that having more diverse teams within organizations creates a positive impact that reverberates across many dimensions such as:

- Financial performance: Companies with more diverse teams, particularly in executive roles, tend to outperform their peers in terms of profitability and long-term value creation.
- Talent attraction and retention: Having diverse teams can attract a wider pool of qualified candidates and enhance the organization's ability to recruit and retain top talent.
- Employee engagement: Inclusion and diversity can enhance employee engagement and morale, leading to higher productivity.
- Decision-making and innovation: Diverse teams tend to be more creative and innovative than homogenous groups. This is because diverse teams bring different experiences, perspectives, and approaches to problem-solving.

Nevertheless, diversity and inclusion remains an area of struggle within many professions, including the legal one, particularly in terms of gender and racial diversity. This being said, many law firms, especially larger ones, are becoming increasingly convinced that strong diversity and inclusion policies and metrics are required to make significant progress in this realm and have committed resources to implementing them.

In the United States, women now hold 55 percent of summer associate positions in law firms, while 42 percent of the positions are held by non-white

people. The percentage of LGBTI summer associates is now close to 9 percent, while only 7 percent of the US population identifies as such.

In contrast, only 26 percent of partners at law firms are women in the United States, while 12 percent of partners are non-white. Similar figures can be found in other countries such as Spain (with 21 percent of partners in law firms identifying as female), the United Kingdom (35 percent), or Australia (33 percent).

In March 2021, the IBA launched the "50:50 by 2030" project aiming to uncover the root causes of the lack of gender parity in senior positions in the legal profession, with research to be conducted until 2030. Preliminary results show that the legal profession faces gender-related challenges at all levels. In Chile, for example, women account for 39 percent of legal professionals within law firms but hold only 18 percent of senior positions. In Uganda, women account for 49 percent of legal professionals but hold only 40 percent of senior positions. The seniority gap is even greater in Spain (54 percent vs. 31 percent) and England and Wales (51 percent vs. 32 percent).

The IBA has also published a global directory of anti-discrimination rules within the legal profession with data from approximately 170 countries and jurisdictions on anti-discrimination provisions (guidelines, codes of conduct, or professional principles) that specifically apply to legal professionals.

110 National Association for Law Placement (2023). *2022 Report on Diversity in US Law Firms*.

111 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx>

112 [https://www.elconfidencial.com/juridico/2023-03-07/mujeres-socias-despachos-abogacia\\_3587518/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/juridico/2023-03-07/mujeres-socias-despachos-abogacia_3587518/)

113 <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/diversity-in-the-legal-profession>

114 <https://www.afr.com/companies/professional-services/women-partners-surge-at-top-law-firms-to-one-third-20230704-p5dlne>

115 [https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity?utm\\_source=Lilli&utm\\_medium=web](https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity?utm_source=Lilli&utm_medium=web)

116 [https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters?utm\\_source=Lilli&utm\\_medium=web](https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters?utm_source=Lilli&utm_medium=web)

117 <https://www.bakerdonelson.com/the-double-glazed-glass-ceiling-why-women-of-color-consider-leaving-the-legal-profession-and-what-can-be-done-to-keep-them>

118 <https://www.globallegalpost.com/news/less-than-half-of-women-lawyers-believe-measures-to-reduce-gender-inequality-are-effective-1703681737>

119 American Bar Association (2020). *Left Out and Left Behind. The Hurdles, Hassles, and Heartaches of Achieving Long-Term Legal Careers for Women of Color*.

120 <https://www.ibanet.org/gender-equality-in-the-legal-profession>

### 3.2.2. The perception of the impact

The complex relationship between legal professionals' work and equality may also be reflected in the perception of survey respondents. The area ranks among the top three areas of impact for both the general population (i.e., 68 percent of people see the impact as positive) and legal professionals (i.e., 72 percent see the impact as positive). The relatively less positive perception of members of the legal community vs. other areas may be linked to the continuous fight for increased diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

While almost one quarter of respondents from the general population do not see any connection between the work of legal professionals and advancements in equality and inclusion, the area is still one of the most visible (only surpassed by the impact on peace, justice, and institutional strength). This may be related to people's intuitive understanding of the equalizing nature of the Rule of Law and the work done by legal professionals.

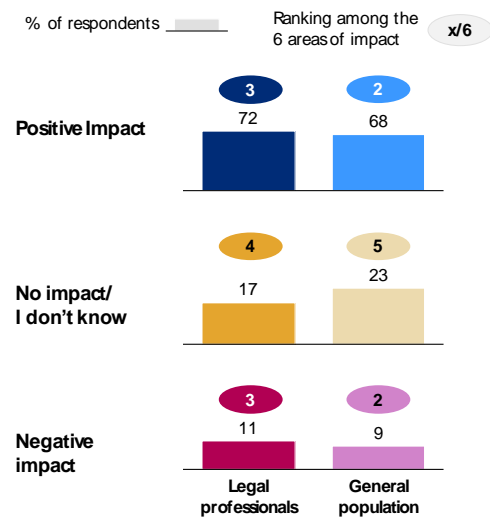
Nevertheless, 9 percent of the respondents in the general population survey and 11 percent in the legal professionals' survey see the impact as negative. According to respondents' comments, this phenomenon is often linked to limitations related to access to justice, especially those driven by lack of economic means.

On the other hand, the work done by legal professionals representing people in discrimination and human-rights-related cases is seen as most impactful. Yet, while the development of policies is seen as a strong factor by legal professionals themselves, respondents to the general population survey see a higher contribution in the work done by legal professional in family-related issues. This may also be related to the general population being more exposed to the practical nature of the legal profession and less aware of the indirect types of impact, such as that generated by contributions to policymaking by legal professionals.

Overall, the survey shows that while the legal profession is seen as a relatively strong driver of equality and inclusion, there is room for improvement – both by increasing the affordability of legal representation and by better communicating the legal profession's equalizing mandate.

Exhibit 13. The perception of the legal profession's impact on equality & inclusion

#### The impact of legal professionals on equality and inclusion is highly-regarded among the general population



Source: IBA Impact Project surveys with legal professionals and the general population

Exhibit 14. The perceived drivers of the legal profession's impact on equality & inclusion

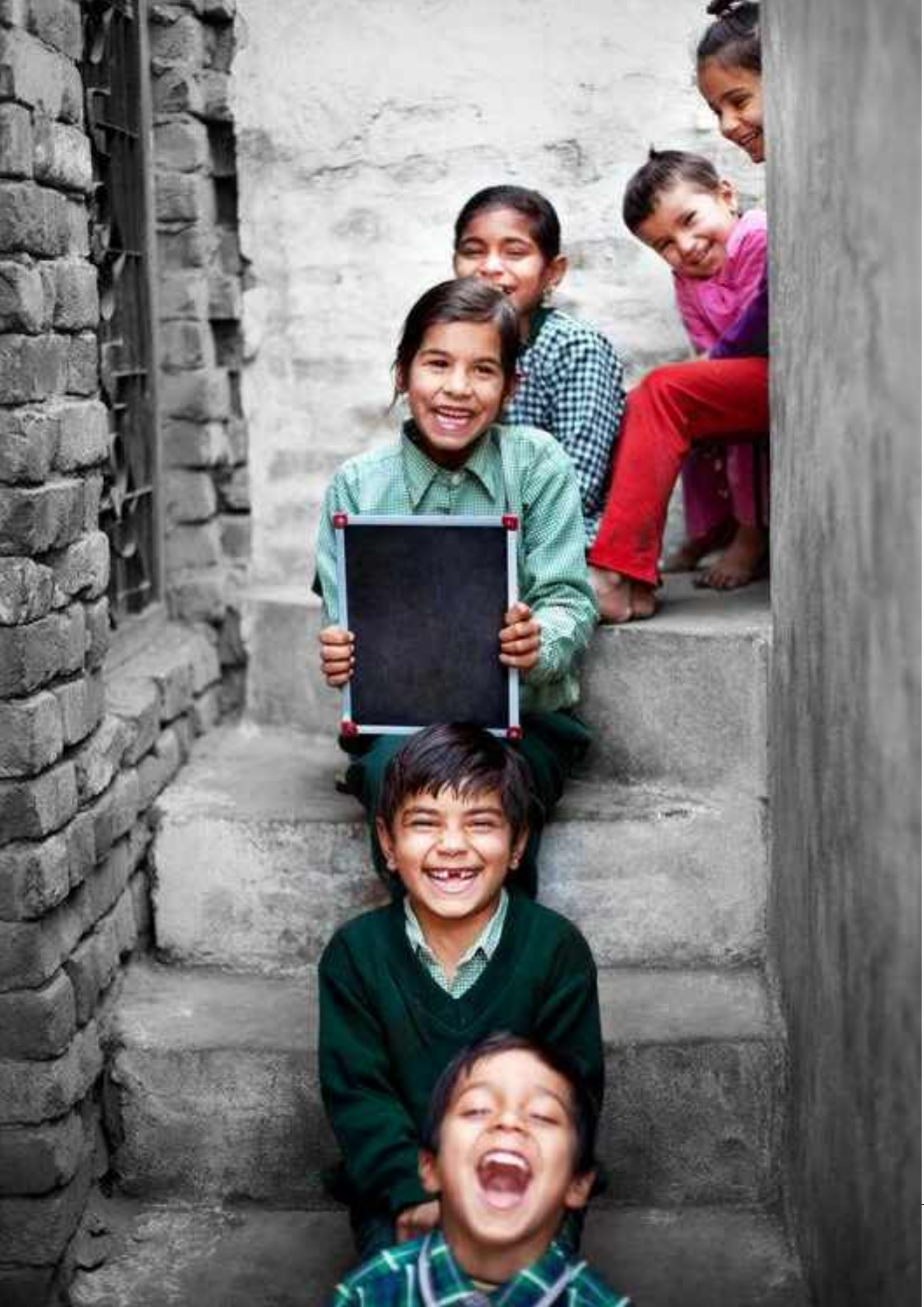
## Legal professionals and the general population are aligned on which specific activities have more positive impact



## Conclusion

Legal professionals' work is meant, by its own nature, to function as a **regulator of power and a driver of equality and inclusion**. As shown by both the data analysis and the survey, the legal profession's ability to continue delivering on its equalizing mandate and enhancing its contribution to this impact area requires reenergized **efforts** to increase access to legal representation, advocacy on equality and inclusion as a matter of law and improving the situation in these areas within the legal profession itself.





## 3.3. Education

### Background

Education is arguably the basic **building block of every society**, but also the means to many other desirable ends. Quality education contributes to building peace, eradicating poverty, and driving sustainable development.<sup>121</sup>

Ever since its recognition as a human right, the extension and improvement of education has been a priority for states, international organizations, and civil societies alike. As such, quality education has been enshrined as one of the UN SDGs, setting targets for access to pre-primary, primary and secondary education, gender parity, employability, education financing, and infrastructure.

While progress remains positive (school completion rates continue to increase at all education levels), the world is off-track to achieve the SDG targets related to education set for 2030 (e.g., the pre-primary education rate has stagnated at 75 percent and 25 percent of educational facilities still lack access to basic services). Furthermore, learning losses due to COVID-19-related school closures are yet to be accounted for.<sup>122</sup>

#### 3.3.1. Legal professionals' contribution to education

As part of their jobs, legal professionals engage with a diverse range of subjects that contribute to advancing education. These can be structured into **three impact mechanisms**, namely:

1. Contributing to the shaping of education policies.
2. Defending the universal human right to education and information.
3. Helping people better understand their rights and obligations and navigate the legal system.

##### 3.3.1.1. Contributing to the shaping of education policies

Legal professionals often have the chance to influence the development of education policies. This can either be done through the direct drafting of regulations or through their work on cases that help build precedent and lead to a gradual improvement in access to education for different population groups.

Several such cases have helped shape the financing of public K-12 (primary and secondary) schools in the United States. In the example of *Serrano v. Priest* (California, 1971) described below, the California Supreme Court declared the state's public school funding system illegal. It noted that funding the system through property tax meant that students in lower-income districts would receive lower-quality education, violating the equal protection clause of the US constitution.<sup>123</sup> This led to a change in the financing mechanism of public education. However, it is important to note that emblematic cases such as this one, pushed by legal professionals, are just one step toward effective policy change. Significant state-led reform work is also necessary to achieve the desired impact.

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<sup>121</sup> <https://www.unesco.org/en/education>

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

<sup>123</sup> <https://edeq.stanford.edu/sections/section-4-lawsuits/landmark-us-cases-related-equality-opportunity-k-12-education>



## Case study – Advocating for equal funding for K-12 schools in the US: *Serrano v Priest* <sup>124 125 126 127 128 129</sup>

In the 1970s, the funding of public K-12 education in the United States heavily relied on property taxes. This funding mechanism led to significant disparities in educational resources and opportunities between wealthier and lower-income districts. Students in lower-income districts often faced inadequate facilities, outdated materials, and limited access to quality educational programs.

The *Serrano* case was initially brought as a class action by public interest attorneys representing a class of California public school students. Legal professionals argued that the reliance on property taxes for school funding violated their constitutional right to equal educational opportunities protected by the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The California Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, declaring that the reliance on property taxes for school funding was unconstitutional. Nonetheless, *Serrano*'s federal repercussions were short-lived, as two years later the US Supreme Court rejected its reasoning in interpreting the Equal Protection Clause in its decision in *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*.

While the direct effects of the *Serrano v. Priest* case were more limited than initially expected due

to the intervention of the Supreme Court, the ruling started a significant shift in the financing of public K-12 education. This shift led to the reform of school finance systems in over 30 states.

As of today, public K-12 education is funded through a combination of federal, state, and local contributions in which property tax still plays a relevant role. However, 48 states now consider the “ability to pay” to assign funding to each school district, meaning that wealthier districts will contribute more funding coming from property taxes (and other sources) to education, while less affluent ones will receive more funding from the state to compensate for the reduced property tax income.

Despite these positive developments, K-12 public schools still show significant funding differences. In school districts with high concentrations of Latino or Black students, the funding gap can reach approximately USD 5,000 per student compared to districts with a majority of white students.

This case illustrates how legal professionals can influence policymaking through the combined effect of advocacy and representation in court.

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<sup>124</sup> <https://edeq.stanford.edu/sections/section-4-lawsuits/landmark-us-cases-related-equality-opportunity-k-12-education>

<sup>125</sup> <https://corporate.findlaw.com/law-library/separate-and-unequal-serrano-played-an-important-role-in.html>

<sup>126</sup> <https://www.pgpf.org/budget-basics/how-is-k-12-education-funded>

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/property-taxes-fuel-k-12-budgets-how-well-does-that-work/2022/11>

<sup>128</sup> Education Commission of the States (2013). *Who Pays the Tab for K-12 Education?*

<sup>129</sup> <https://tcf.org/content/about-tcf/tcf-study-finds-u-s-schools-underfunded-nearly-150-billion-annually/>

### 3.3.1.2. Defending the universal human right to education and information

Another impact mechanism relates to legal professionals and organizations **defending the human right to education in places with significant access challenges**. For instance, NGOs such as Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International have employed their legal teams to prepare reports outlining evidence of the Taliban persecution of women by restricting their access to education in Afghanistan. This proof was shared with national states and international organizations, such as the United Nations, in the hopes of increasing momentum for imposing sanctions and other punitive measures on Taliban leaders.

This contribution also appears grounded in data at a global level. For example, if all countries analyzed<sup>130</sup> had the same levels of females graduating from secondary education as the top quartile countries in terms of Rule of Law, 30 percent more girls would be graduating from secondary education. This would create significant economic and social impact, given the incremental opportunities and quality of life of girls and women with a higher access to education.

**30%**  
**more girls**  
could complete secondary  
education following an  
improvement in the  
**Rule of Law**

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<sup>130</sup> Based on 131 countries globally where data is available for both the input and output indicator

## Case study – Prosecution and sanctions against the Afghan government in response to restrictions on female education <sup>131 132</sup> <sup>133 134 135 136 137</sup>

In 2021, the Taliban took over the government of Afghanistan, bringing back some policies, fundamentally violating human rights. One such example is regulations restricting female education.

These regulations were gradually reinstated soon after the Taliban's return to power:

- In September 2021, the Taliban announced that women could only attend universities in gender-segregated classrooms.
- In March 2022, girls were banned from attending secondary schools until further notice on the same day that schools were due to reopen after a seven-month break.
- In December 2022, women were banned from attending university, in order to preserve the "national interest" and women's "honor".

The United Nations has been working to persuade the Taliban to lift these restrictions on the basis that the denial of education and employment to Afghan girls and women is gender discrimination, which should count as a crime against humanity and should be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The legal response proposed by the United Nations through Special Envoy Gordon Brown includes referring its legal opinion to the ICC with a request to investigate and prosecute Taliban leaders in charge of these restrictions as well as pushing for sanctions on the individuals that designed and implemented these restrictions. Other legal scholars and international organizations such as Human Rights Watch are advocating for the ICC to look at the broader Taliban policies rather than individualized actions, as they could amount to a crime of persecution.

These actions have already produced tangible political effects. In March 2023, the Council of the European Union enacted sanctions against the acting Taliban ministers for Higher Education and for the Propagation

of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. The sanctions, based on the EU global human rights sanction regime enacted by the European Council in 2020, consist of a travel ban for listed individuals, an asset freeze for listed individuals/entities, and a prohibition on making funds or economic resources available to the listed individuals and entities.

These sanctions, if successfully implemented and complemented by other legal and political measures, could contribute to reinstating the significant progress achieved in female education in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2021:

- Over 3.8 million girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools.
- Over 80,000 female teachers working in public and private schools.
- Over 100,000 women per year enrolled in tertiary education.

Limiting women's access to education has significant negative impacts on both countries and individuals. In particular, the lost potential earnings for the cohort of over 3.8 million Afghan girls would amount to over USD 5.4 billion over their lifetime or approximately 25 percent of Afghanistan's GDP in 2020. However, the impact of limiting female education goes far beyond economic considerations. It also leads to a higher likelihood of child marriage and early childbearing, and a higher risk of illness and death.

While in this case delivering real impact by restoring the rights that have been taken away seems particularly challenging, legal professionals play an essential role in maintaining the topic in the spotlight. They continue working with states, international organizations, and courts to pressure those liable for this backtracking in the rights of millions of women in Afghanistan.

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<sup>131</sup> Unicef. 2022. *Cost of Inaction: Girl's education in Afghanistan*.

<sup>132</sup> <https://www.unmultimedia.org/avlibrary/asset/3080/3080337/>

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/04/taking-terrible-toll-talibans-education-ban>

<sup>134</sup> World Bank. 2018. *Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls*.

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/03/07/violence-against-women-and-girls-eu-sanctions-nine-individuals-and-three-entities-under-its-global-human-rights-sanctions-regime/>

<sup>136</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/21/timeline-taliban-crackdown-on-afghan-womens-education-rights>

<sup>137</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-has-new-powerful-tool-protect-human-rights-eu-global-human-rights-sanctions-regime-0\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-has-new-powerful-tool-protect-human-rights-eu-global-human-rights-sanctions-regime-0_en)

This research shows that, beyond specific cases and advocacy efforts, the building of the **Rule of Law is strongly related to positive outcomes in access to education**. For example, if all countries analyzed<sup>138</sup> had the same level of youth not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET) as the top quartile in terms of Rule of Law Index, 34 million more young people would be studying or working. This would represent a 12 percent drop in the countries' youth NEET. Like in other impact areas, the impact legal professionals can have on education is nonetheless mediated by the level of access to civil justice and quality of judicial processes.

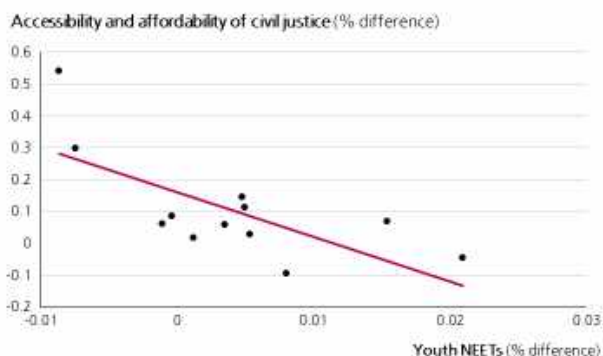
This might be related to the fact that the necessity to abandon school and potentially join the informal or even illegal economy is greater in places where the accessibility and effectiveness of the justice system are limited. In places where the justice system works effectively, attending school in order to get a decent job is a more direct way to escape poverty and improve one's economic and social condition.

One initiative that increases the awareness of citizens' rights, is the *Constitutional Week (Tydzień konstytucyjny)* organized yearly by the Holda Association (named after Zbigniew Hołda, a famous Polish professor in criminal law). This initiative draws the attention of high school students to the practical dimension of the validity of the Constitution and the Constitutional Tribunal to show, in an interesting way, that constitutional issues have a direct impact on everyday life. In 2022, more than 600 lawyers and 16,000 students participated across Poland.

**-34 million  
young NEETs**  
could be avoided through a  
reinforcement of  
the Rule of Law

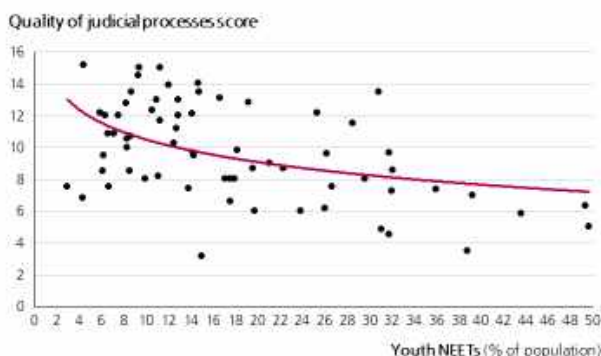
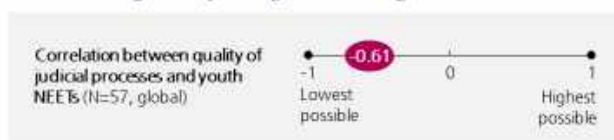
Exhibit 15. Relationship between access to justice and youth NEET (not in employment, education, or training) (left); relationship between quality of judicial processes and youth NEET (right)

### Improving the accessibility and affordability of civil justice is linked to a reduction in the % of youth NEETs<sup>1</sup> ...



1. Not in education, employment or training

### ... and so do improvements in the overall quality of judicial processes



<sup>138</sup> Based on 59 countries globally where data is available for both the input and output KPIs

### 3.3.1.3. Helping people better understand their rights and obligations and navigate the legal system

Beyond their contribution to advancing access to education, legal professionals also play an important role in raising the general population's awareness of their rights and obligations. Many legal professionals provide counseling to their communities, helping people understand the rights they are entitled to, their legal obligations, and how best to navigate the legal system. For example, in Poland, a non-profit organization called *Free Courts (Wolne Sady)* was established by four independent lawyers. This organization provides legal representation and support in matters that affect the Rule of Law. It also conducts educational campaigns on attacks on the independence of the judiciary, prosecutors, and judges.

As described in one of the case studies detailed below, many legal professionals dedicate their time to legal clinics aimed at providing these educational services to disadvantaged groups.

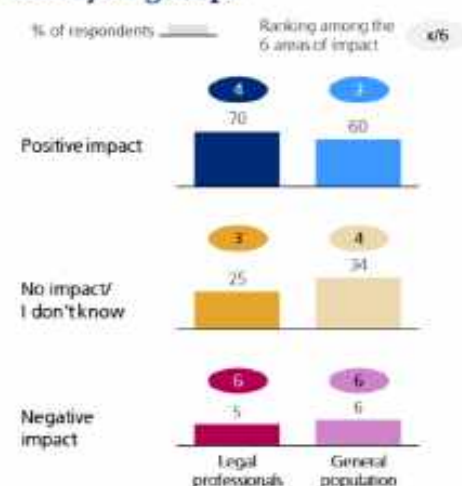
### 3.3.2. The perception of the impact

The surveys conducted among legal professionals and the general population provide insightful information on how the impact of the legal profession is perceived. Respondents to the general population survey and the legal professionals' survey believe that education is an area in which lawyers create a moderate level of positive impact and the least negative impact. As in other areas, legal professionals perceive the positive impact to be higher than the general population (70 percent as opposed to 60 percent).

The work lawyers do to improve and provide knowledge on the legal system is seen as their most valuable contribution, both internally and externally, by over 70 percent of respondents. However, lawyers' work on driving policy development and representing parties in education-related disputes appears to be significantly less visible, including to members of the legal profession.

Exhibit 16. The perception of the legal profession's impact on education

**Education is the area in which legal professionals have the least negative impact according to both surveyed groups**



Source: IBA Impact Project survey with legal professionals and the general population



## Case study – Legal clinics in China <sup>139 140 141 142</sup>

Legal clinics play a crucial role in educating the population about their rights and providing legal assistance to those in need. These clinics are typically operated by law schools, legal aid organizations, or NGOs with the aim of promoting legal awareness and empowering individuals to exercise their rights effectively. While legal clinics have become a global phenomenon to assist the segment of the population that typically cannot access or afford legal advice, their growth and relevance in China, particularly, is worth addressing.

Legal clinics in China typically offer the following services:

- Free or low-cost legal advice and consultations to individuals seeking guidance on their rights and legal options. They help individuals understand the relevant laws and regulations applicable to their specific situations.
- Representation to individuals who cannot afford legal assistance, by accompanying them in court proceedings, negotiations, and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Public legal education programs to raise awareness about legal rights and responsibilities. This may include developing educational materials, organizing community

outreach events, and collaborating with other organizations to disseminate legal knowledge.

In terms of legal education, different organizations offer workshops and seminars on a variety of topics such as labor rights, consumer protection, family law, property rights, and criminal justice. For example, China Labor Watch has launched worker and activist outreach projects focused on labor issues such as collective bargaining rights and approaches to engaging with employers regarding wage and working conditions negotiations. The International Labor Rights Forum has partnered with local legal aid centers to provide training focused on difficult legal problems commonly faced by migrant workers in both origin and destination regions.

Official figures show that in 2021, volunteer legal professionals working on a national campaign on legal aid handled more than 5,000 legal assistance cases, accepted over 74,800 legal consulting requests, and delivered over 1,000 lectures promoting the Rule of Law. They also helped resolve over 1,400 disputes. While these figures exclude the impact of countless non-official legal aid and educational resources, they help shed light on the importance of such initiatives for the most disadvantaged segments of the Chinese population.

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<sup>139</sup> <https://www.cecc.gov/legal-aid>

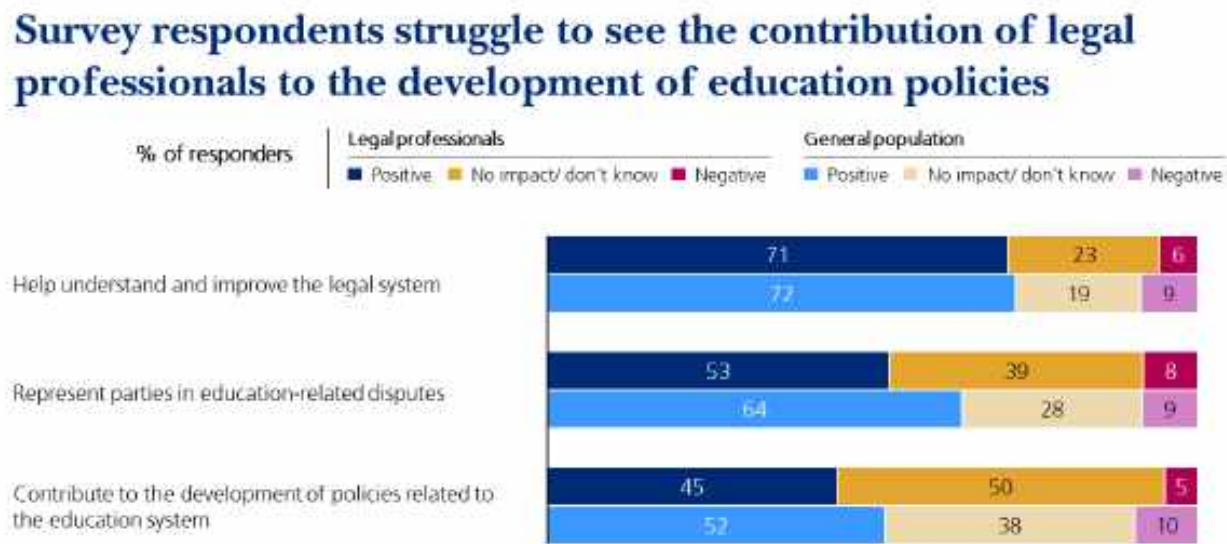
<sup>140</sup> <https://chinalaborwatch.org/what-we-do/training/>

<sup>141</sup> <https://laborrights.org/regions-countries/legal-aid-china>

<sup>142</sup> [https://english.www.gov.cn/statecouncil/ministries/202203/16/content\\_WS6231e277c6d02e5335327d9e.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/statecouncil/ministries/202203/16/content_WS6231e277c6d02e5335327d9e.html)

These results may indicate a need to increase the understanding, both within and outside the legal community, of the role the legal profession plays in advancing education. Moreover, they can also serve as a call to action to increase the involvement of legal professionals in a field that is essential for the creation of mature and responsible societies.

Exhibit 17. The perceived drivers of the legal profession’s impact on education



Conclusion

Legal professionals contribute to advancements in education in multiple ways. Their policy-drafting work and representation in precedent-setting cases help drive educational reform, their advocacy helps defend people’s fundamental rights to education and information, and their day-to-day work with clients or at dedicated legal clinics helps expand people’s understanding of their rights and obligations, as well as their ability to navigate the legal system.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the **Rule of Law is a strong indicator of people’s access to education**; in countries where the justice system works better, more children remain in school for longer periods, with a direct positive impact on their development.

The interviews, big data analysis and surveys also identified increasing educational and communication activities as potential **actions** the legal profession, especially through bar associations and law societies, could take to further contribute to this impact area.



## 3.4. Environmental Sustainability

### Background

Over the past decades, the issue of environmental sustainability has become increasingly prevalent on the agendas of world leaders, across geographies and industries. Seven of the 17 UN SDGs relate to environmental sustainability, ranging from climate action and the protection of life on land and under water to the access to clean water and sanitation, affordable clean energy, responsible consumption and production patterns, and the chance to live in sustainable cities and communities.

Businesses around the world are also increasingly **committing to environmental sustainability**, making it core to their strategies and operations. 96 percent of S&P 500 companies issued an environmental sustainability report in 2022 (a historic high),<sup>143</sup> almost 4,000 of the largest companies worldwide have set science-based carbon targets,<sup>144</sup> and approximately 500 have pledged to reach net zero emissions by 2050.<sup>145</sup> Beyond their direct (scope 1) commitments, businesses are also focusing on their broader effects, aiming to engage with suppliers and partners who share their commitments.

Younger generations are also increasingly aware of and committed to environmental sustainability, using it as a driver in their choice of products, services, and even jobs. Research shows climate change is one of the issues that Gen Z (the generation born between 1996 and 2010) care about most,<sup>146</sup> and a 2022 survey of 2,000 workers in the United Kingdom revealed that half of them would consider leaving a job because of the employer's net-zero policies. At the same time, McKinsey's latest Global Survey on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues found that one-third of employees think their organization's work on ESG topics has a strong positive effect on their own commitment to the organization and, in turn, to overall employee retention.<sup>147</sup>

As environmental sustainability becomes a key concern of citizens, companies, states, and international organizations, it is also becoming more and **more central to the work of legal professionals**. Their involvement in drafting environmental policies, representing people and organizations in cases with high environmental implications, advocating for climate-related causes, or supporting communities to build resilience when facing environmental disasters makes an indirect, yet significant, contribution to promote environmental sustainability.

### 3.4.1. Legal professionals' contribution to environmental sustainability

The work of legal professionals indirectly advances the environmental sustainability agenda in multiple ways. They contribute to the creation of environmental policies or international climate agreements, represent parties in environmental-related cases, advocate for state action, create awareness for their clients about the impact of their activities and encourage proactive behaviors to minimize such impact, and support communities in the aftermath of natural disasters.

In the following paragraphs, this report details **four types of impact mechanisms**, including illustrative examples and relevant statistical findings. These categories include:

1. Shaping environmental policy and international climate agreements.

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<sup>143</sup> <https://www.ga-institute.com/research/ga-research-directory/sustainability-reporting-trends.html>

<sup>144</sup> <https://sciencebasedtargets.org/companies-taking-action>

<sup>145</sup> <https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/charts/number-of-companies-with-net-zero-targets-by-year-and-sector>

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-gen-z>

<sup>147</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/esg-momentum-seven-reported-traits-that-set-organizations-apart?cid=other-eml-mtg-mip-mck&hlkid=3049fd9096c34404935ccd8fa718a91e&hctky=1926&hdpid=5f47d8ae-27ad-464c-a8df-9884a588b7ee>



2. Leading environmental sustainability cases and advocacy efforts
3. Providing assistance in the aftermath of environmental disasters
4. Implementing internal programs for environmental stability

### 3.4.1.1. Shaping environmental policy and international climate agreements

The contribution of legal professionals to environmental policies and agreements is one of their leading drivers of impact in this area. This is because both international climate agreements, such as the Conferences of the Parties (COPs), and the corresponding national policies play a key role in the setting and tracking of environmental targets. In addition, some of the most important actors in the environmental sustainability space come from highly regulated industries (e.g., energy generation, heavy industries, transportation).

For example, European Commission directives have been a key driving force in the penetration of new renewable energy sources into the European energy mix. They have also contributed to an increased network development and interconnectivity, key prerequisites for the effective integration of renewable energy sources. Similarly, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is expected to significantly accelerate the US journey towards environmental sustainability.

While legal professionals are not the main actors of the policymaking process, their role in drafting the legislative acts makes them contributors to the impact of the resulting policies. Furthermore, this report's research shows that these policies are paying off, as the better the regulatory quality of a country, the lower its levels of air pollution.

For example, had all countries analyzed<sup>148</sup> experienced the same levels of pollution as those in the top quartile in terms of regulatory quality, they would have experienced 53 percent less pollution and better air quality.

The contributions of legal professionals to environmental policies are not limited to Europe and North America. In regions with a high reliance on fossil fuels and, especially, coal mining, such as Australia and South Africa, legal professionals are also actively engaged in the incorporation of ESG goals into their national legislation.

Apart from the specific direct impact detailed above, legal professionals' work in environmental sustainability also generates other types of social

**53%**  
**less air  
pollution**  
could be achieved by  
improving **regulatory  
quality**

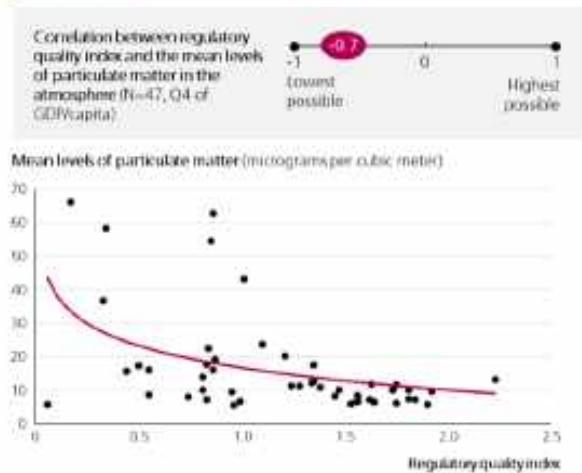
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<sup>148</sup> Based on 47 developed countries where data on both the input and output KPIs is available



Exhibit 18. Relationship between regulatory quality and air pollution

**The higher the regulatory quality in a country, the lower the levels of air pollution**



and indirect economic impact. For instance, lower levels of air pollution can decrease the number of cases of respiratory disease while also generating savings in healthcare costs, creating **synergetic effects** across different impact areas.

### 3.4.1.2. Leading environmental sustainability cases and advocacy efforts

As environmental protection regulation evolves, so does the number of cases in need of legal representation. According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and Columbia University, in the past five years, there have been 2,180 climate-related lawsuits in over 65 jurisdictions, **more than double** the amount of the previous period.<sup>149</sup>

A decisive step for climate justice in Europe which could have global impact, derives from the landmark European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)'s ruling on global

warming, declaring that Switzerland had failed to comply with its duties under the Convention on Human Rights concerning climate change.<sup>150</sup> This is the first time an international court has issued a decision in the environmental area related to human rights, which may inform other upcoming opinions by international courts, including the International Court of Justice.

Communities around the world are taking their governments to Court over their inadequate climate action.<sup>151</sup> One such example is the case of the class action brought against Anglo American on behalf of over 100,000 Zambian people residing close to a former lead mine and suffering the severe consequences of continuous exposition to lead poisoning, which is detailed in a case study below.

Another example is the 2023 court ruling that the US state of Montana,<sup>152</sup> by supporting the fossil fuel industry violates its youth's rights to a clean and healthy environment was obtained by the legal case initiated by a non-profit organization with lawyers whose fees depend on donations to the non-profit.<sup>153</sup>

There is a notorious increase in cases in least developed countries as well, accounting for almost 20 percent of the total, especially in countries home to vast rainforests.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-change-lawsuits-more-than-double-5-years-impacts-hit-home-2023-07-27/>

<sup>150</sup> Ruling on the Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland case, delivered on 9 April 2024; <https://www.echr.coe.int/w/grand-chamber-rulings-in-the-climate-change-cases>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-68768598>. This case follows a previous very significant national judgement dictated in The Netherlands in 2019, the "Urgenda Case", where a Dutch environmental group, the Urgenda Foundation and 900 Dutch citizens sued the Dutch Government for failure to prevent global climate change. The Netherlands Supreme Court upheld that by failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by, at least, 25% by end of 2020, the Dutch government was in breach of the ECHR. See Urgenda Foundation v. State of the Netherlands, judgement of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, 20 December 2019. <https://climatecasechart.com/non-us-case/urgenda-foundation-v-kingdom-of-the-netherlands/>. See page 77 for further details.

<sup>151</sup> According to the "Global trends in climate change litigation: 2023 snapshot", there are 2,341 environmental litigation cases, 190 of which were filed in the period June 2022 to May 2023, [https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Global\\_trends\\_in\\_climate\\_change\\_litigation\\_2023\\_snapshot.pdf](https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Global_trends_in_climate_change_litigation_2023_snapshot.pdf)

<sup>152</sup> See page 80 for further details.

<sup>153</sup> Ruling on the Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland case, delivered on 9 April 2024; <https://www.echr.coe.int/w/grand-chamber-rulings-in-the-climate-change-cases>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-68768598>

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-change-lawsuits-more-than-double-5-years-impacts-hit-home-2023-07-27/>

The resolution of cases in court appears to be linked to better environmental outcomes at a macro level. For example, countries with higher resolution rates of court cases have higher shares of protected biodiversity.

In other cases, lawyers support through arbitration processes to settle the differences between the parties.

Beyond representing clients in court, many legal professionals are also involved in advocacy actions related to environmental sustainability. The Rights of Nature movement is an example of a legal instrument developed to enable natural elements (e.g., ecosystems, species) to have inherent rights and legal protection similar to individuals or institutions.

## Case study – European Court of Human Rights Ruling against Switzerland on Climate Change<sup>155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160</sup> (1/2)

On April 9, 2024, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that the Swiss government was not taking sufficient action to mitigate the effects of climate change. The ECtHR determined that there had been a violation of the right to respect private and family life covered by article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) by the Swiss authorities. Further, the Court declared a breach of Article 6 § 1 of the ECHR on the right of access to the court, given Swiss authorities' dismissal of the complaints raised by the Swiss Senior Climate Women arguing lack of sufficient justification.

- The idea of a climate case in Switzerland was suggested by Greenpeace, following the ruling of the Urgenda Foundation vs the State of Netherlands case. The Swiss Firm leading the procedure was convinced that the debate on climate change should not be restricted to the political sphere, but that human rights issues in this regard should be, in order to move these issues forward, answered by the courts. A young female lawyer designed the strategy to articulate it through the Swiss Senior Climate Women Association.
- The complaint was filed in 2016 before the Swiss federal government by an

association which initially represented a few hundred members, a number that grew up to over 2,500 Swiss women above the age of 64 (the Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz or Senior Women for Climate Protection), at the time the judgment was issued. The association argued that the State was not doing enough under its national legal obligations to guarantee the good health of elderly people, who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of sharp temperature increases linked to climate change.

- In order to make the case suitable for Strasbourg, it was necessary to substantiate the human rights argument in detail from the outset, i.e., already in the 2016 application. Following its submission in 2016, the government refused to decide it on its merits in 2017. In 2018, the Federal Administrative Court dismissed the appeal, as did the Federal Supreme Court in 2021. The case was then brought before the ECtHR. The 3<sup>rd</sup> section gave it priority, and in 2022, relinquished its jurisdiction in favor of the Grand Chamber.

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<sup>155</sup> <https://www.klimaseniorinnen.ch/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Judgment-Verein-KlimaSeniorinnen-Schweiz-and-Others-v.-Switzerland-Violations-of-the-Convention-for-failing-to-implement-sufficient-measures-to-combat-climate-change.pdf>

<sup>156</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/three-climate-change-rulings-from-the-european-court-of-human-rights#:~:text=Switzerland%2C%20the%20Court%20found%20violations,measures%20to%20combat%20climate%20change>

<sup>157</sup> <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/131548-switzerland-condemned-echr-decisive-step-climate-justice-europe>

<sup>158</sup> <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/a-new-precedent-for-climate-change-in-human-rights-law/#:~:text=Verein%20KlimaSeniorinnen%20Schweiz%20argued%20that,and%20adapt%20to%20climate%20change>

<sup>159</sup> <https://www.ciel.org/news/historic-climate-ruling-on-climate-justice/>

<sup>160</sup> See Urgenda Foundation v.State of the Netherlands, judgment of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, 20 December 2019. <https://climatecasechart.com/non-us-case/urgenda-foundation-v-kingdom-of-the-netherlands/>. See page 14 in Executive Summary

## Case study – European Court of Human Rights Ruling against Switzerland on Climate Change (2/2)

The ECtHR established that article 8 of the Convention recognized the right of individuals to effective protection by the State authorities against the serious adverse effects of climate change in their life, health, wellbeing, and quality of life. It went even further pointing out that States must establish relevant targets and timetables within a domestic regulatory framework to enable effective mitigation measures of greenhouse gas emissions, up to including “net neutrality”. The Court found that the implementation of this framework had serious shortcomings. In addition, the three national instances, two of them courts, which decided that the complaint did not have to be considered on its merits, amounted to the Swiss authorities failing to take account of the incontrovertible scientific

data on climate change and failed to take seriously the grievances of the association.

The ECtHR judgment in this case is final and its implementation will be supervised by the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers.

Probably the largest contribution of this ruling is that it sets up a precedent for the countries party to the ECHR (46 countries). It may also inform other climate appeals on the responsibility of countries in relation to climate change before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Inter-American Court of Human Rights and before the International Court of Justice. The judgment also reinforces the vital role of courts at international and domestic level to hold governments to their legal obligations to protect human rights from environmental risk.

## Case study – Class action to remove lead pollution in Zambia <sup>161</sup>

162 163 164 165 166 167

The Broken Hill mine in Zambia was, for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the largest lead smelter in the African continent. It was operated by the South African subsidiary of Anglo American, one of the largest mining companies in the world.

While the mine ceased operations decades ago, the population of the nearby town of Kabwe is likely still suffering from its effects. The exposure to high and unsafe levels of lead may have caused a significant share of the population of Kabwe to suffer from some form of lead poisoning. The effects of lead poisoning include learning difficulties, behavioral problems, impaired growth, anemia, and organ damage. After prolonged exposure, the effects become irreversible. Lead also increases the risk of miscarriage and can be transmitted through both the placenta and breastmilk.

Despite the health impact of lead poisoning, efforts to remove the polluted soil have been very weak, as neither Anglo American nor the Zambian government have assumed responsibility over the clean-up. As a result, citizens of Kwana presented a class action on behalf of over 140,000 women and children affected by lead poisoning before the High Court of South Africa. Legal support was provided by Amnesty International and the Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC), a joint initiative of the IBA and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa. The SALC's purpose is to promote and advance human rights, democratic

governance, Rule of Law, and access to justice in Southern Africa through strategic litigation, advocacy, and capacity strengthening.

Amnesty International and the SALC participated in the proceedings as *amici curiae*<sup>168</sup> to avail the jurisdiction of the court to hear such a case. The case was presented in South Africa (the country of origin of Anglo American, the company that operated the smelter), rather than Zambia. This is due to the fact that collective representation such as that achieved through class action is not allowed in Zambia.

However, in 2023 the tribunal in charge dismissed the case. The decision was motivated by the insufficient evidence of the link between Anglo American's operation of the smelter and the lead poisoning, as well as the argument that a business that operated a long time ago cannot be held accountable to the same standards that would apply in the present day. However, the people of Kabwe and the organizations supporting them have shown their intent to appeal the judgment.

This verdict goes on to show the challenges in applying restorative justice, but also how collective representation, strategic litigation, and advocacy can help advance cases with significant environmental and health implications and push the envelope in a way that allows the justice system to evolve in its social mandate.

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<sup>161</sup> <https://mg.co.za/the-green-guardian/2022-03-26-anglo-knew-for-decades-about-lead-poisoning-at-zambia-mine-lawyers-say/>

<sup>162</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/08/zambia-south-africa-anglo-american-mining-court-lawsuit/>

<sup>163</sup> <https://www.southernafricalitigationcentre.org/about/>

<sup>164</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/south-africa-hears-historic-class-action-for-lead-poisoning/>

<sup>165</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/dec/18/south-african-judge-throws-out-kabwe-zambia-lead-poisoning-class-action-case-against-anglo-american-mining>

<sup>166</sup> <https://www.angloamerican.com/media/our-position-on-kabwe>

<sup>167</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/23/we-have-be-worried/impact-lead-contamination-childrens-rights-kabwe-zambia>

<sup>168</sup> Amicus curiae, (Latin: "friend of the court"), one who assists the court by furnishing information or advice regarding questions of law or fact. He is not a party to a lawsuit and thus differs from an intervenor, who has a direct interest in the outcome of the lawsuit and is therefore permitted to participate as a party to the suit. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/amicus-curiae>



## Case study – Youth v. State of Montana <sup>169</sup> <sup>170</sup> <sup>171</sup> <sup>172</sup>

In March 2020, a group of 16 youths between the ages of five and 22 sued the State of Montana for violating their right to a clean environment through the support of a fossil-fuel-driven energy system. The youths were represented by a team of legal professionals from “Our Children’s Trust,” an NGO specializing in environmental law, together with the Western Environmental Law Center and McGarvey Law. Lawyers’ fees who worked on this case were dependent on donations received by the NGO.

In August 2021, despite the State’s attempt to prevent the case from going to court, Judge Kathy Seeley from the First Judicial District Court of Montana allowed the case to proceed to trial. In response, in June 2022, the Attorney General of Montana filed a Writ of Supervisory Control and Motion to Stay, requesting the Supreme Court of Montana to take supervisory control of the case away from the trial judge. The Supreme Court denied the request, allowing the case to go to trial.

Starting in June 2023, the trial included the testimonies of multiple youths who found themselves physically harmed by the immediate effects of environmental damage (e.g., two brothers who had to leave their hometown because of how the bad air quality was affecting their asthma) as well as testimonies from climate, energy, and medical experts (e.g., Christopher Dorrington, Director of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, and Dr. Terry Anderson, economist and senior fellow at Stanford University).

In August 2023, judge Kathy Seeley ruled that the State was indeed violating the youths’ constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment, as well as their rights to dignity, health and safety, and equal protection of the law. The ruling was supported by the Constitution of the State of Montana which states that “the State and each person shall maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment in Montana for present and future generations.” The court also declared recent alterations to the Montana Energy Policy Act, which were limiting the environmental considerations used for project permitting, as unconstitutional.

The current ruling is nonetheless declaratory, as the District Court of Montana does not have the power to mandate the State to engage in the process of fundamentally altering its policies. In addition, the Attorney General of Montana intends to appeal to the Supreme Court. Yet, the case is seen as a landmark win by the environmental and youth activist community and expected to be a first step toward a fundamental change in the way policymakers in the United States and beyond address fossil-fuel energy projects.

According to the International Monetary Fund, in 2022, fossil fuel subsidies accounted for USD 7.1 trillion, over 7 percent of the world’s GDP. Eliminating these subsidies would reduce fossil fuel CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 43 percent below baseline levels in 2030, setting the world on track for attaining the Paris Agreement goal of containing global warming to 1.5° - 2°C.

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<sup>169</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2023/08/about-our-human-rights-us-youths-win-landmark-climate-case#:~:text=In%20the%20case%2C%20the%20plaintiffs,them%20both%20mentally%20and%20physically.>

<sup>170</sup> <https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/montana>

<sup>171</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/un-seeks-help-children-battling-climate-change-court-2023-08-28/>

<sup>172</sup> <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/montana-youth-climate-plaintiffs-get-historic-win-in-state-case>

Despite these examples, the work of legal professionals does not always link to progress against environmental sustainability targets. The Rule of Law is often higher in more developed countries, with higher levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and overall environmental footprints. While this is the result of more complex historical, social, economic, and political factors, many legal professionals also help protect the status quo of, e.g., the persistence of fossil fuel subsidies as part of the adversarial legal system. As in all impact areas above, lawyers also need to act on both sides of environmental disputes. In some cases, the lawyers aim to hold states accountable to international climate agreements or restrict private businesses' carbon emissions, while in others, they have challenged state actions intended to mitigate climate change or prevent environmental damage. The principal purpose of such litigation, whether viewed as pro-environmental or not, is to ensure that states comply with their law and international obligations.

### 3.4.1.3. Providing assistance in the aftermath of environmental disasters

Legal professionals often play a key role in communities' or countries' ability to withstand and recover from environmental crises and disasters. The aftermath of such events generates a multitude of problems of legal nature: from the need to access relief or insurance to the complex need of dealing with the administrative burden of having lost somebody. At the same time, those hit hardest by disasters often come from economically and socially vulnerable communities who struggle to understand the complexities of legal procedures, and likely lack access to support.

For example, in the aftermath of the Fukushima Daiichi earthquake and related nuclear disaster, the work of legal professionals was key to the structuring and distribution of relief and aid measures, as well as to the prosecution of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) representatives found responsible for the disaster.<sup>173</sup> The response of the Australian legal community during the 2019-20 bushfire emergencies is another emblematic example of legal professionals supporting their communities in times of natural disasters.

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<sup>173</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/30/world/asia/japan-fukushima-tokyo-electric.html>

## Case study – Legal aid in the aftermath of the Fukushima earthquake and nuclear accident <sup>174 175 176 177</sup>

On March 11, 2011, a 9.0-magnitude earthquake hit the Eastern coast of Japan. A tsunami followed a few minutes later, flooding many coastal areas and damaging the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, which suffered a major failure in its cooling systems that led to the release of nuclear material to the environment. The “triple tragedy” of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident caused over 20,000 deaths (most caused by the earthquake and tsunami, very few related to the nuclear accident), destroyed over 120,000 buildings and damaged over 1 million more, and led to the evacuation of 470,000 citizens. As of today, the estimated cost of the disaster amounts to USD 220 billion.

The heavy toll this took on victims’ displacements and livelihoods led to an unprecedented need for relief and compensation. Even though the nuclear accident had been triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake, a natural disaster, the operator of the Fukushima Power Plant (Tokyo Electric Power – Tepco) was strictly liable for covering the compensation costs under Nuclear Damage Compensation Law.

Yet, both distributing and accessing the compensation posed difficulties. Fairly and promptly distributing the compensation brought the challenge of rapidly defining the legal framework and guidelines, as well as of processing a very high volumes of claims.

In terms of accessing the compensation, many victims had limited knowledge of their rights and ways to claim them, as well as insufficient resources to pay for legal representation.

To help address these issues, the Japanese authorities set up a dedicated Nuclear Damage Claim Dispute Resolution Center (“Center”) in cooperation with the Japanese legal community and the bar. The Center was in charge of handling

the mediation of damage claims arising from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident.

To handle a growing volume of requests, the Center employed approximately 300 mediators and 200 legal clerks at the peak of its activity. It also invested in developing expedited claim management processes. The Japanese legal community and the bar contributed to the creation of a special law aimed at relaxing the requirements for legal aid, in order to facilitate the access to legal representation for a higher number of victims.

At the end of 2023, the TEPCO had paid out JPY 10 trillion in compensation to the victims of the nuclear power plant accident, with the Center facilitating some of those payments. Approximately 27,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain in evacuation and some legal proceedings including mediation at the Center are still ongoing for the compensation claims of these IDPs. There have been disputes related to the necessity of their evacuation for those who had evacuated without government’s orders or recommendations. Nevertheless, besides its contribution to the resolution of a significant volume of claims, the Center has also facilitated the development of standard procedures and expertise that can be leveraged in other crises conditions.

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<sup>174</sup> [https://www.reconstruction.go.jp/english/topics/Progress\\_to\\_date/English\\_December\\_2023\\_genjoutorikumi-E.pdf](https://www.reconstruction.go.jp/english/topics/Progress_to_date/English_December_2023_genjoutorikumi-E.pdf)

<sup>175</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/Japan-earthquake-and-tsunami-of-2011>

<sup>176</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56252695>

<sup>177</sup> Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (2012). *Learning from Megadisasters Knowledge Note 6-3*.

#### 3.4.1.4. Implementing internal programs for environmental sustainability

Legal professionals and firms are becoming increasingly aware of the opportunities and challenges related to the implementation of environmental sustainability policies within their organizations. Many legal organizations and law firms have launched environmental sustainability programs, often prioritizing work in areas where they can achieve the greatest impact with limited disruption to their operations, such as sustainable procurement, more energy-efficient office buildings, and a reduction of business travel.

#### 3.4.2. The perception of the impact

Environmental sustainability is the area where both the legal professionals and the general population surveyed were least likely to attribute any type of impact to the legal profession. Moreover, 15 percent of the legal professionals surveyed saw the impact as negative.

The activities in which respondents to the surveys see the most positive environmental impact are the representation of parties in environmental cases and the contribution to the drafting of environmental policies (64 and 63 percent of positive impact respectively).

While the relatively low perception of positive impact may be influenced by respondents' own levels of concern about environmental sustainability, there is a perception of lawyers preventing a change of the *status quo* when defending the "big emitters". As previously discussed, ensuring independent legal representation for both sides of an issue is a fundamental right. There is still a need to better communicate the role of the work of legal professionals in driving environmental sustainability, as well as to address potential deterrents of an enhanced positive impact.

Exhibit 19. The perception of the legal profession's impact on environmental sustainability

#### The impact of legal professionals on sustainability is least visible among both legal professionals and the general population

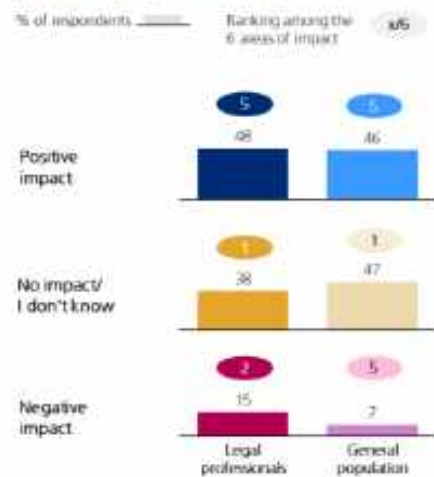
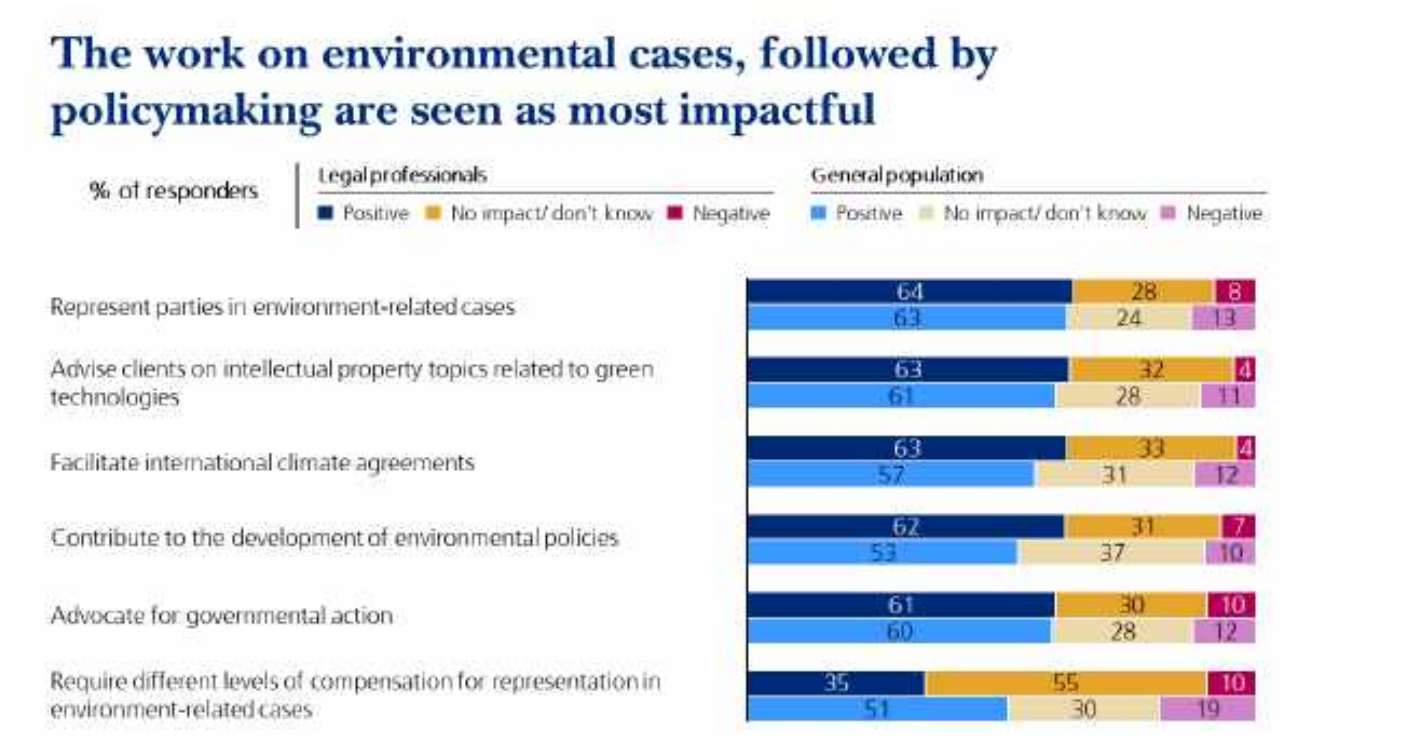


Exhibit 20. The perceived drivers of the legal profession’s impact on environmental sustainability



Conclusion

Businesses, international organizations, and the civil society worldwide are increasingly committed to environmental sustainability targets.

The work of legal professionals is closely linked to the environmental sustainability agenda through their contributions to policymaking, representation of parties in environmentally related cases, advocacy efforts, or community work in the aftermath of disasters, as described in the cases above.

However, this is the area where both legal professionals and the general public perceive a lower impact of the legal profession. This indicates an opportunity for **actions** addressed at improving awareness, intensifying the legal profession advocacy efforts in environmental matters, and playing a more relevant role in this area to enhance the profession’s contribution to it.





## 3.5. Health and well-being

### Background

Being healthy is universally accepted as the key to living a fulfilling life. At the same time, according to the United Nations, human health and well-being are also key to building healthy economies and prosperous societies.<sup>178</sup>

Over the past decades, **health and well-being have become increasingly relevant** for national states, NGOs, and employers and employees alike, emerging as one of the 17 UN SDGs. This focus has fueled significant efforts and the emergence of a strong supporting ecosystem spearheaded by leading international organizations (e.g., World Health Organization, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation).

While new challenges unfold (e.g., the growth of antibiotic resistance, staggering numbers of cancer cases), there has also been significant progress: life expectancy has never been higher (75 percent of countries have met or are on track to meet the SDG targets related to under-five infant mortality)<sup>179</sup> and more and more countries are making sustained efforts to grow their universal health coverage.

Moreover, the last decades have also witnessed a **shift in the paradigm of health**. While in the past practitioners predominantly focused on a neutral state of health, defined by the absence of disease, today, there is increased attention on “well-being,” defined by the World Health Organization as a positive health aspiration. Similarly, the past decades have seen an increased clinical and policy focus on mental health as an integral part of human health and well-being.

### 3.5.1. Legal professionals’ contribution to health and well-being

The legal profession contributes to advancements in health and well-being in a multitude of ways. Lawyers help draft effective and inclusive healthcare policies, represent parties in relevant court cases, and advocate for more equitable access to healthcare services. Internally, many legal professionals and organizations also dedicate their efforts to specific initiatives aimed at improving issues related to health and well-being within the legal profession itself.

In the following pages, this report details the legal profession’s impact along **three dimensions**:

1. Advancing healthcare systems and policies.
2. Legal representation and advocacy for health and well-being.
3. Addressing health and well-being issues within the legal profession.

#### 3.5.1.1. Advancing healthcare systems and policies

Legal professionals act as an enabler behind the evolution of healthcare policies and systems. For example, they directly contribute to the drafting of healthcare policies and legislation or help advance the development and enforcement of healthcare policies by representing impacted organizations or individuals in court.

Many legal teams have helped structure the Food and Drug Administration and European Medicines Agency processes for drug approval, supporting the development of more effective and safer treatments. Complementary to this support, a significant number of legal professionals work alongside pharmaceutical

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<sup>178</sup> [https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/3\\_Why-It-Matters-2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/3_Why-It-Matters-2020.pdf)

<sup>179</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>

and MedTech companies supporting the legal procedures related to the discovery and approval of novel therapies and diagnostics. Legal professionals and courts are also recognized for having played a major role in shaping the US Medicaid policy by interpreting and enforcing the laws on an ongoing basis in thousands of cases. This positive impact can also take the shape of strategic litigation and advocacy, such as the process to expand access to HIV/AIDS treatment in South Africa.

Beyond the numerous examples of impact, this report's research shows that the Rule of Law and quality of a country's regulations are linked to positive outcomes of its healthcare system increasing life expectancy and access to universal health coverage.

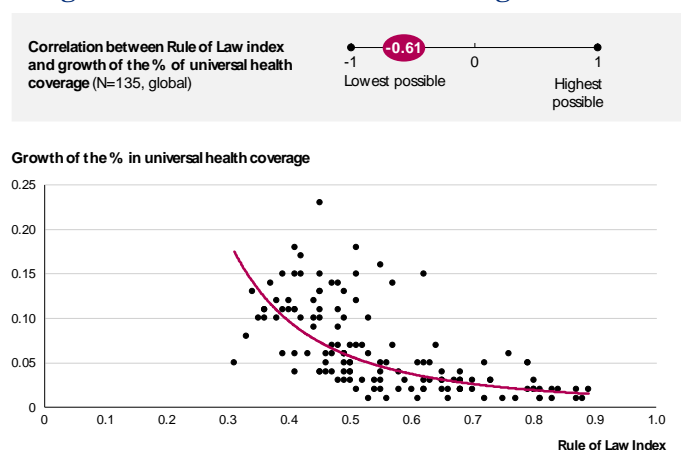
For example, if all countries analyzed<sup>180</sup> had the same levels of life expectancy as the top quartile in terms of Rule of Law Index, on average citizens would live 13 years longer (from 62 to 75 years).

Similarly, if all countries analyzed<sup>181</sup> had the same levels of universal health coverage as the top quartile in terms of regulatory quality, an additional 1.4 billion people (more than 20 percent of the global population) would benefit from health coverage. This would create an additional USD 184 billion in GDP impact through individual healthcare savings.

Yet, as shown in the exhibit below, the relationship between the Rule of Law and the growth in universal health coverage is negative. This may indicate a saturation effect, namely that after a certain threshold in terms of healthcare coverage, the Rule of Law can also link to barriers in its further expansion.

Exhibit 21. Relationship between the Rule of Law and the evolution of universal health coverage

### The higher the Rule of Law Index, the slower the growth in universal health coverage



**+13 years  
in life  
expectancy**  
could be aided by greater  
adherence to the Rule of Law

**+1.4 billion  
people with  
health coverage**  
could be enabled by an  
increase regulatory quality

Overall, through various contributions to the shaping of health policies and systems, legal professionals make an undeniable contribution to the advancement of health and well-being. Nevertheless, this contribution must be tailored to the specific healthcare challenges of each country and to the existing level of development of its healthcare system and regulations.

<sup>180</sup> Based on 136 countries globally where data is available for both the input and the output KPI

<sup>181</sup> Based on 135 countries globally where data is available for both the input and the output KPI



## Case study – Shaping and enforcing Medicaid in the United States

182 183 184 185 186 187

Medicaid is a federal and state-funded program in the United States that provides healthcare coverage to low-income individuals and families, as well as people with disabilities and certain other groups. It plays an important role ensuring that vulnerable populations have access to essential healthcare services. It supports the healthcare system by providing funding to healthcare providers.

Legal professionals have shaped virtually all aspects of Medicaid policy, including beneficiaries' rights, the expansion of eligibility to selected groups, and the application of work requirements:

- **Protection of Medicaid Beneficiaries' Rights:** Legal professionals have been instrumental in protecting the rights of Medicaid beneficiaries. They have taken authorities to court in cases involving issues such as access to care, coverage denials, and the adequacy of Medicaid provider networks. For instance, the Florida Health Justice Project and the National Center for Law and Economic Justice brought a class action against Florida's Medicare agencies when they failed to provide coverage to vulnerable people whose eligibility criteria had changed, restoring Medicaid for over 32,000 of these people.
- **Enforcement of Medicaid Expansion:** Courts and legal professionals have been involved in

enforcing the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). In 2012, the US Supreme Court ruled that this expansion should be optional for individual states. Since then, several legal challenges have arisen regarding the implementation of Medicaid expansion, with legal battles still ongoing in various state supreme courts.

- **Challenges to Medicaid Work Requirements:** In recent years, some states have sought to impose work requirements as a condition for Medicaid eligibility. However, these requirements have faced legal challenges, with courts ruling that they are inconsistent with the objectives of the Medicaid program. These rulings have prevented the implementation of work requirements in several states and have helped maintain health coverage for the citizens affected by these restrictions.

The expansion of Medicaid to the 14 states that have not voluntarily opted in would provide healthcare coverage for approximately seven million more people and create more than one million jobs. It would also increase GDP by approximately USD 440 billion and personal income by approximately USD 240 billion from 2022 to 2025 alone.

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<sup>182</sup> <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2018/jun/medicaid-and-role-courts>

<sup>183</sup> <https://www.healthcare.gov/medicaid-chip/medicaid-expansion-and-you/>

<sup>184</sup> <https://www.floridahealthjustice.org/publications--media/advocates-file-suit-against-florida-state-agencies-for-improperly-stripping-medicaid-from-patients-whose-original-eligibility-was-related-to-their-adoption-or-disabilities>

<sup>185</sup> <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/an-overview-of-medicaid-work-requirements-what-happened-under-the-trump-and-biden-administrations/>

<sup>186</sup> <https://healthlaw.org/news/major-supreme-court-victory-for-medicaid-beneficiaries/>

<sup>187</sup> <https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/our-research/2019/02/medicaid-s-impact-on-health-care-access-outcomes-and-state-economies.html>

### 3.5.1.2. Legal representation and advocacy for health and well being

A significant share of the impact that legal professionals make on health and well-being comes from representing individuals in landmark case. Such is the case of *Best v. Wellcome*, a series of legal challenges that, for over twenty years, strived to bring justice to the family of a one-year-old child who suffered severe brain damage after being injected a vaccine that did not meet the required safety criteria.

The impact of **stronger regulatory frameworks** and state effectiveness on the health of women and youth also appears to be backed by statistical data. For instance, if all countries analyzed<sup>188</sup> had the same levels of maternal mortality as those in the top quartile in terms of state effectiveness, maternal mortality would dramatically drop (by more than 94 percent) and almost 350,000 more mothers would survive pregnancy and childbirth.

Additionally, if all countries analyzed<sup>189</sup> had the same levels of undernourishment as those in the top quartile in terms of state effectiveness, undernourishment would be 78 percent less prevalent. This translates into 520 million less people suffering from undernourishment, which in turn would create an additional USD 760 billion in GDP through the avoidance of related healthcare and productivity costs.

**- 78% drop  
in malnutrition**

could be achieved through by an improved **state effectiveness**

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<sup>188</sup> Based on 184 countries globally where data is available for both input and output KPI

<sup>189</sup> Based on 157 countries globally where data is available for both input and output KPI



## Case study - Best v. Wellcome: ensuring protection against pharmaceutical and medical malpractice<sup>190 191 192 193</sup>

Kenneth Best was born a healthy boy in 1969. A few months later, he suffered catastrophic brain damage following the administration to him of a vaccine manufactured by one of the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies at the time, Wellcome. As a result, doctors expected him to live a full lifetime, but with the development level of a 1-year-old child.

In 1978, his mother contacted a local solicitor and brought a suit against Wellcome, the doctor and nurse who administered the vaccine, and the Irish health system. Highly complex legal issues of negligence, causation, or burden of proof, many of them unprecedented in Irish law, were raised by the case. This meant that the parties, especially the defendants, spared no efforts or resources to convince the judge of their position given the impact this case could have by setting an example on the expected behavior of pharmaceutical companies. The existence of a batch of the vaccine that did not meet the production requirements, which should not have been released after failing some tests, only emerged following an order for discovery that had been resisted by Wellcome.

The court that first heard the case dismissed it on the basis that there was a delay of a few weeks between the vaccination and the onset of symptoms, based on which the judge expressed doubt regarding the causality of events. The plaintiff then appealed to the Supreme Court,

where the judges unanimously voted in favor of the plaintiff on the issues of negligence and causation. The issues of damages and costs were remitted to the High Court for assessment and took a further five years of litigation before a final settlement in 1997. Kenneth Best, already 27 at the time, received what was then by far the highest ever award of damages from an Irish court.

The entire burden and cost of bringing this enormous case was borne by Kenneth Best's legal team, particularly the Cork-based solicitor initially contacted by the mother to bring the suit.

This case set a significant precedent in large-scale medical negligence in Ireland. Before the ruling, such cases were virtually unheard of in Ireland, but ever since the outcome of the Best v. Wellcome case, many families have successfully sued the State, hospitals, or drug manufacturers in cases of medical negligence or defective products.

In addition, this case also exemplifies the role of many ordinary legal professionals that take up cases brought to them by people in their communities with uncertain prospects of financial compensation, following their professional commitment to justice.

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<sup>190</sup> <https://ie.vlex.com/vid/best-v-wellcome-foundation-793607149>

<sup>191</sup> <https://ie.vlex.com/vid/best-v-wellcome-foundation-793004681>

<sup>192</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/vaccine-case-resulted-in-pounds-2-75m-award-1.88495>

<sup>193</sup> <https://cantillons.com/blog/five-momentous-cantillons-cases-which-have-changed-the-way-we-live-and-are-governed-in-ireland/>

### 3.5.1.3. Addressing health and well-being issues within the legal profession

The issue of health and well-being is a well-known, yet ongoing struggle of the legal profession. Long working hours, mental pressure, and difficulties balancing professional and personal lives accumulate to cause high levels of burnout, mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, and even substance abuse. According to the IBA study on Mental Well-being in the Legal Profession explained as a case study below, 35 percent of the members of the legal community reported that their work had a negative impact on their mental well-being.<sup>194</sup>

Some firms, particularly larger ones, are beginning to acknowledge and address these issues. This includes implementing measures that target underlying causes, such as cultural norms, beliefs, and cost structures within the legal profession. Addressing these issues is key for the profession to continue to attract talent, foster a healthy professional culture, and deliver on its social mandate.

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<sup>194</sup> See also the work of the IBA Commission on Well-being quoted at the Executive Summary of this Report in footnote 27

## Looking inwards – Health and well-being in the legal profession

195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 (1/2)

Working in the legal profession enables talented, motivated professionals to take part in activities with impact across many dimensions. However, this can often imply long hours and heavy workloads to manage in high-stakes environments. These factors can contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, as well as substance abuse and addiction. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need to address these challenges and prioritize the health and well-being of legal professionals.

According to the IBA study on Mental Well-being in the Legal Profession, 35 percent of respondents reported that their work had a negative impact on their mental well-being. This percentage was even higher for legal professionals under the age of 35, those working in medium-sized firms (50 to 100 employees), and those based in North America. Similar results were found by Bloomberg in its attorney workload survey for H1 2023 which found that legal professionals felt burnt out 48 percent of the time.

According to the IBA study, the most commonly cited reasons for negative mental well-being were stress (57 percent), intense work/time demands (57 percent), and poor work-life balance (56 percent). These reasons align closely with the

results from Bloomberg, which cited the inability to disconnect from work (59 percent), heavy workloads (55 percent), and trouble focusing on work tasks (44 percent) as the main causes of burnout.

These symptoms have a direct impact on the health of legal professionals. According to the IBA survey, the most prevalent health issues caused by work were fatigue (57 percent), disrupted sleep (57 percent), and anxiety (56 percent).

Moreover, a study done by the American Bar Association together with the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation showed that more than 20 percent of licensed, employed legal professionals had problematic drinking habits compared to approximately 12 percent of the total workforce with the same level of education.

These health issues can also directly impact on-the-job performance. The IBA report revealed that 26 percent of respondents admitted to making mistakes as a result of mental well-being issues and 24 percent admitted to nearly making them. Furthermore, high levels of stress and dissatisfaction can lead to increased turnover rates, with 46 percent of respondents considering taking extended time off and 31 percent actively looking for different jobs

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195 International Bar Association (2021). *Mental Well-being in the Legal Profession: A Global Study*.

196 International Bar Association (2021). *Mental Well-being in the Legal Profession: A Global Study*.

197 Bloomberg Law (2023). *Attorney Workload and Hours Survey Analysis*.

198 <https://theiop.org/mental-health-legal-profession/>

199 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/01/06/happiest-jobs-on-earth/>

200 <https://www.ft.com/content/9477e38a-a1e2-48b9-b2c8-6689465a77ec>

201 <https://lawcouncil.au/media/news/information-for-the-legal-profession-covid-19>

202 [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer\\_assistance/well-being-in-the-legal-profession/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/well-being-in-the-legal-profession/)

203 <https://clp.law.harvard.edu/knowledge-hub/magazine/issues/approaching-lawyer-well-being/capitalizing-on-healthy-lawyers/>

## Looking inwards – Health and well-being in the legal profession (2/2)

The Bloomberg survey also highlighted the impact on personal relationships, with 32 percent of legal professionals reporting issues in their personal lives due to work-related stress.

When compared to workers in other fields, legal professionals rank behind most other professionals in terms of well-being. In the United Kingdom, insurer Bupa's Workplace Well-being Census found that 46 percent of legal professionals suffered a negative impact on well-being from their workload, the highest rate among 12 industry sectors surveyed.

In the United States, the Washington Post analyzed data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and similarly found that professional services ranked third in terms of stress levels by industry, behind finance and insurance and education professionals. Legal professionals came out on top as having the single most stressful job of those analyzed.

Law firms are aware of the challenges faced by their employees and have started to take steps to address them. According to the IBA survey, 72 percent of firms reported having implemented measures to improve well-being. However, less than one-third of these firms had allocated specific funding for these measures, collected data, or measured the impact of their initiatives.

Some of the measures implemented individually by law firms include:

- Training for partners and managers: Some firms have provided training programs to help partners and managers identify and address well-being concerns among their teams.
- Free counseling services: Some firms have introduced free counseling services for their employees. This provides a confidential space for legal professionals to seek professional help and support for their mental health.
- Wellness programs: Multiple firms have implemented wellness programs that focus on physical and mental well-being.

Additionally, professional associations and bar councils are setting up initiatives to support legal professionals struggling to maintain their well-being. Examples of this are the Law Council of Australia Mental Health and Well-being portal or the American Bar Association Well-Being Pledge Campaign. Both initiatives centralize the resources available to legal professionals in need of assistance.

3.5.2. The perception of the impact

According to the surveys conducted, health and well-being is perceived as the area in which legal professionals create the least positive impact. Moreover, it is the area where the highest share of legal professionals (30 percent) sees the impact as negative. This negative view is likely linked to the health and well-being within the profession, which is seen by 26 percent of legal professionals as a negative area of impact.

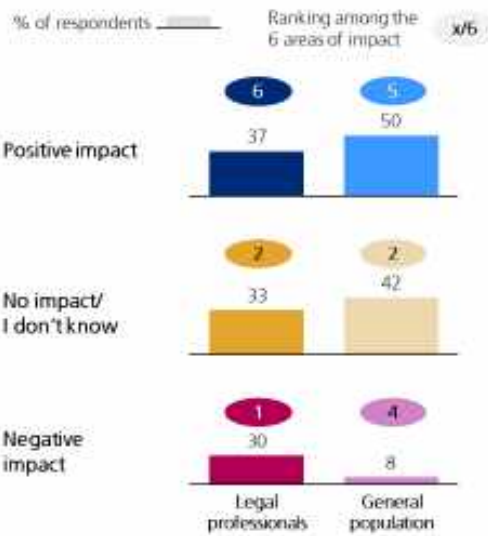
While legal professionals see most of their positive impact coming from the advisory in intellectual property issues linked to the discovery of new drugs, the general population has a more positive perception of their representation of parties in healthcare-related cases.

The contribution of legal professionals to the development of healthcare policies appears to be relatively less visible and less positively perceived by the general population, although it emerges as a strong area of positive impact in this report’s research (including relevant literature, interviews with leading legal professionals, and big-data analysis).

On the other side of the spectrum, the way legal professionals manage and influence health and well-being within their community and organizations appears as least positively perceived, especially by legal professionals themselves. This view is likely fueled by the continuous struggle to improve the health and well-being of the members of the legal community.

Exhibit 22. The perception of the legal profession’s impact on health and well-being

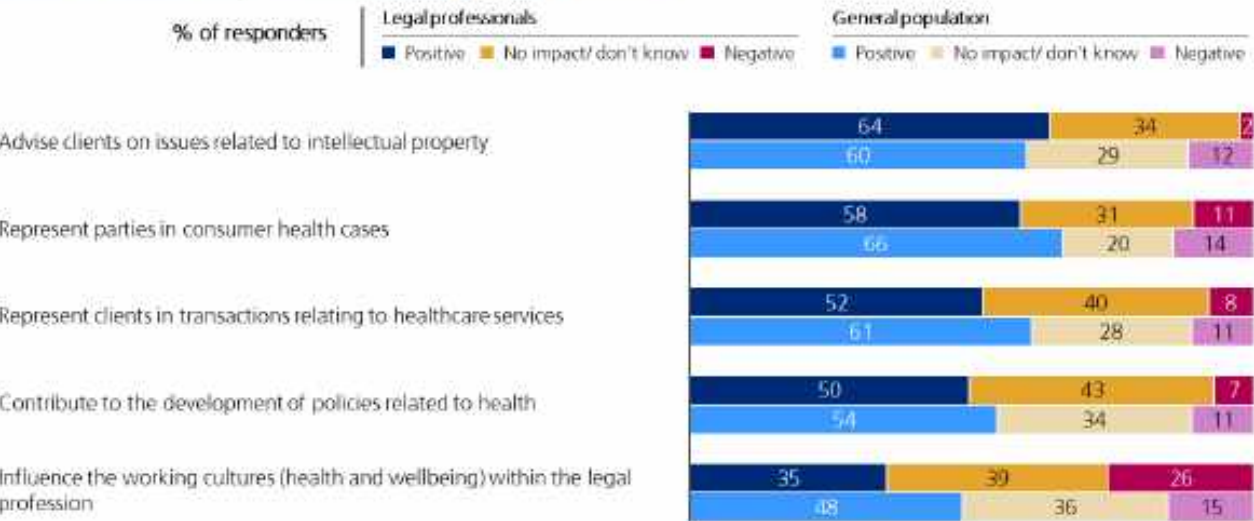
The impact of legal professionals on health and wellbeing is the least positively regarded



Source: IBA Impact Project surveys with legal professionals and the general population

Exhibit 23. The perceived drivers of the legal profession’s impact on health and well-being

The views of legal professionals are likely driven by issues of health and wellbeing within the profession





## Conclusion

While the effects of the legal profession on health and well-being seem more distant than in other impact areas, legal professionals contribute to health and well-being by directly participating in legal processes to shape healthcare policies and systems, guiding the approval of new medicines, representing defendants in groundbreaking cases, and leading advocacy efforts to help drive enhanced access to healthcare for vulnerable groups.

Nevertheless, the legal professionals' impact on their own health and well-being, especially on the younger members of their community, requires further attention. The surveys and the big data analysis prioritize **actions** to increasing awareness on the relevance of well-being at the workplace, especially within the legal profession, to enhance the contribution to this impact area.

## 4. Indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law



## 4. Indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law

### Background

Lawyers' impact emerges from their presence in different types of relationships across citizens, businesses, and states. Legal professionals engage in important occasions of a **person's life** (e.g., purchasing one's home, and drawing up and managing wills), **business interactions** (e.g., labor and employment agreements, purchasing goods online, and insurance agreements), **citizens' relations with the state** (e.g., providing support to immigrants (especially unaccompanied minors), the requirements to register a birth, the payment of taxes, and complying with the requirements of criminal law designed to protect the person and property of every individual), **business to business relationships** (e.g., distribution agreements of any goods, joint ventures, and Intellectual Property licenses), **state to state relationships** (e.g., peace treaties, trade agreements, tax conventions), and of course, in resolving disputes in any of these relationships.

By building and maintaining the Rule of Law and defending private property, the legal professionals' work helps businesses operate effectively and sets the premises for collaboration among economic agents, driving economic growth and innovation. A strong Rule of Law encourages higher levels of inward investment and M&A (e.g., the Rule of Law is among the top three considerations when multinationals make FDI decisions, together with "ease of doing business" and "a stable political environment")<sup>204</sup>, which can support broader economic growth and prosperity.

The Rule of Law is also a driving force that helps people escape poverty and precarity by formalizing important aspects of private life, such as providing legal identity, securing ownership of residence, and protecting employee rights. This, in turn, enables individuals to thrive and make productive contributions to society.

While difficult to fully quantify, the indirect economic impact of the legal profession enables lawyers to act as true drivers of economic growth and development, "one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and increasing the quality of life".<sup>205</sup>

### 4.1. Legal professionals' contribution to economic growth and development

Lawyers' continuous efforts to build and reinforce the Rule of Law are the core drivers of their impact on economic growth and development. As explained above, the power of the Rule of Law to generate economic impact is reflected both in the world of business and in individual private and professional lives. For the purposes of structuring the analysis, the impact is grouped into **three mechanisms**:

1. Building the Rule of Law
2. Supporting growth and innovation
3. Helping individuals improve their economic condition

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<sup>204</sup> <https://www.roleuk.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/FDI%26RoL.pdf>

<sup>205</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/derec/unitedkingdom/40700982.pdf>

4.1.1. Building the Rule of Law

The Rule of Law, as described in section 1.2 of this report, is widely believed to be a key component of economic development.<sup>206</sup>

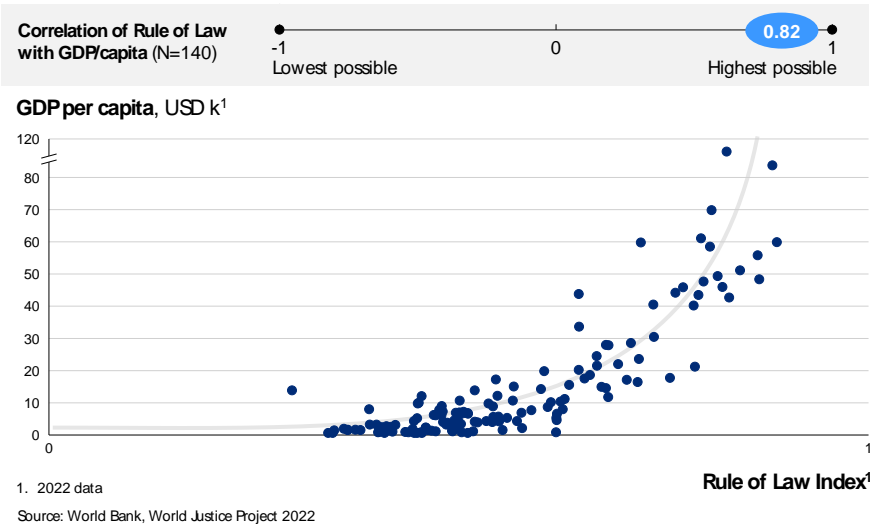
According to the United Nations, the Rule of Law and economic development are both strongly linked and deeply synergetic: “The Rule of Law and development are strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing, the advancement of the Rule of Law at the national and international levels is essential for sustained and inclusive economic growth, sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, all of which in turn reinforce the Rule of Law.”<sup>207</sup>

The strong relationship between the Rule of Law and economic growth is also backed by empirical evidence. As shown in the exhibit below, the Rule of Law is strongly linked with GDP/capita across the globe.<sup>208</sup> A one point increase in the Rule of Law Index brings an 0.82% increase in GDP. By building and maintaining the Rule of Law, legal professionals help create the foundations for economic growth.

Exhibit 24. Relationship between the Rule of Law and GDP per capita

By building and maintaining the Rule of Law, legal professionals help create the foundations for economic growth

Around the world, the Rule of Law is strongly correlated with GDP/ capita



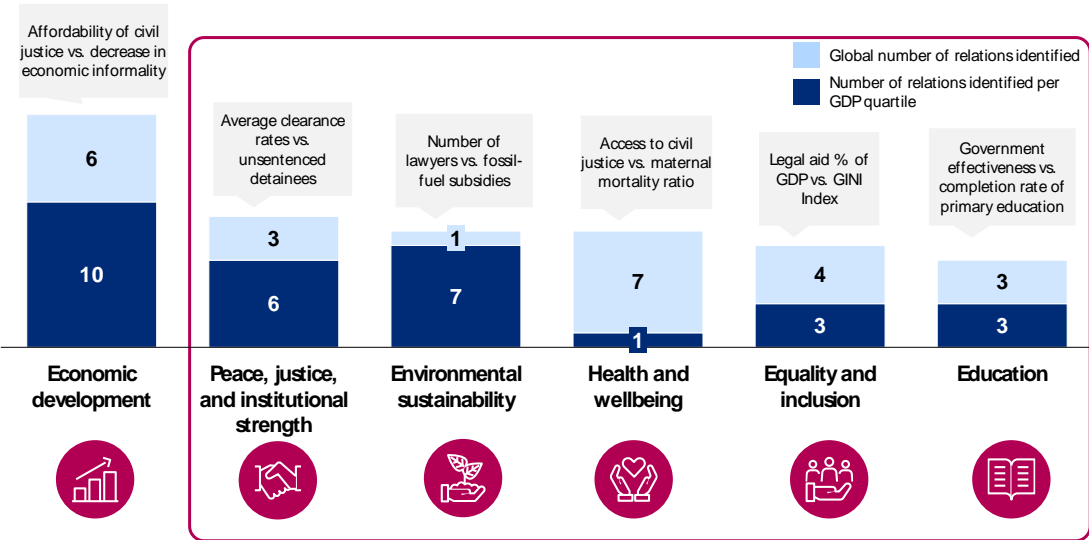
The link between the Rule of Law and indicators of economic growth and development is not unique. The big data analysis performed in the frame of this report has identified multiple relationships between the activities of legal professionals and indicators of economic growth. In fact, as shown in the exhibit below,

<sup>206</sup> [https://elibrary.law.psu.edu/fac\\_works/162/](https://elibrary.law.psu.edu/fac_works/162/)  
<sup>207</sup> <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/rule-of-law-and-development/>  
<sup>208</sup> Based on 140 countries where data is available for both input and output indicators

over 30 percent of the correlations identified are related to economic development, suggesting that economic development may be the strongest area of impact of the legal profession.

**Exhibit 25.** Relationships between the activities of legal professionals and indicators of social and economic impact by SDG area

**Out of 54 relations identified, 38 relate to areas of social impact**



Beyond indicating an indirect type of impact, the relationship between the Rule of Law and economic development is likely linked to a cumulative effect. As in any relationship, there are outliers like China that, despite ranking low in the Rule of Law, has enjoyed a fast economic growth in the last decades.<sup>209</sup> Additionally, the relationships found are often influenced by each country’s individual stage of development, social, economic, cultural, and political context. Therefore, any general suggestion presented in the following subchapters about the impact areas are not to be seen as blanket prescriptions. Any potential action to increase the impact would need to be tailored to countries’ specific needs and realities.<sup>210</sup>

While the relationship between the Rule of Law and economic development mostly originates in Western economies, the phenomenon is also observable in other regions. For instance, the legal changes to regulate private property ownership in South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan in the aftermath of World War II is seen as a key contributor to their accelerated economic development.<sup>211</sup>

In the following paragraphs, this report details the ways in which the legal profession helps drive economic growth and development, in both the business world and in people’s individual lives.

<sup>209</sup> <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/global>  
<sup>210</sup> <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/the-rule-of-law-and-economic-growth-where-are-we/>  
<sup>211</sup> The mystery of capital, Hernando de Soto



#### 4.1.2. Supporting growth and innovation

One of the main ways in which the Rule of Law promotes economic growth and development is based on the fact that the Rule of Law helps create an **environment of collaboration** between economic agents, promoting both contractual agreements and the protection of individual rights.<sup>212</sup>

Legal professionals act as agents of this effect through their work mediating business transactions, from a simple purchase agreement to a large-scale M&A, or creating an independent framework that protects the rights of different parties that may not know or trust each other, so that they can feel safe doing business together. This results in increased collaboration among economic agents, capital generation, and business growth.

This increased level of collaboration between economic agents also often leads to an increased focus on innovation. By pooling together resources and ideas, economic agents are more likely to innovate and generate advances in science, health, or technology.

For instance, the expedited development and approval process of COVID-19 vaccines would not have been possible without partnerships between research labs, pharmaceutical companies, and regulatory agencies. Such partnerships are governed by legal agreements, protections, and joint liabilities that make companies more willing to take long-term bets and investments.

This phenomenon also appears to be statistically proven by the strong relationships between countries' Rule of Law Index and their Global Innovation Index, as well as that between countries' levels of civil justice and R&D share of their GDP.

Countries in the top quartile in terms of Rule of Law have in average a 20 percent higher Innovation index.<sup>213</sup> If all countries analyzed<sup>214</sup> had the same levels of R&D as a share of GDP as those in the top quartile in terms of effectiveness of civil justice, they would benefit from USD 83 billion in additional R&D investments. This represents an approximately 0.5 percent growth in R&D investment and could potentially be generating up to USD 150 billion (0.2 percent) in GDP impact.

This effect is nonetheless strongly dependent on the speed and effectiveness of legal systems. Countries with long disposition times, an indicator of inefficient justice systems, appear to have lower levels of high-tech manufacturing and growth in GDP/capita.

**USD 83  
billion**

**additional R&D investment  
could be unlocked by an  
improvement in the  
effectiveness of civil justice**

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<sup>212</sup> <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/the-rule-of-law-and-economic-growth-where-are-we/>

<sup>213</sup> Based on 122 countries where data is available for both input and output indicators

<sup>214</sup> Based on 77 countries where data is available for both input and output indicators

### 4.1.3. Helping individuals improve their economic condition

Beyond contributing to the macroeconomic business environment, a lot of the work that legal professionals do **helps mediate private affairs and people's relationships with the laws and regulations** of the country they reside in. This includes, for example, supporting on issues such as family affairs (e.g., inheritance, separation of goods), tax filings, rental contracts, access to benefits, or employer relations, as well as dedicated efforts to helping the two billion informal workers worldwide escape the informality trap.

Multiple KPIs linked to legal professionals' activities are positively related with an **increased level of formalization in the economy**. Countries with a higher Rule of Law tend to have less informal employment and, more specifically, those that experience improvements in the effectiveness, timeliness, access, and affordability of civil justice also see drops in the levels of informal employment. For example, if all countries analyzed<sup>215</sup> had the same levels of informal employment as those in the top quartile in terms of access and affordability of civil justice, they would have an additional 34 million people legally employed, representing a 28 percent drop in informality.<sup>216</sup>

These findings indicate that the legal professionals' work not only generates economic impact through its support to business activities, but also through lawyers' day-to-day efforts in helping individuals more seamlessly navigate and manage their legal affairs.

**+34  
million  
people**

could become formally  
employed following an  
improvement in access  
and affordability  
of civil justice

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<sup>215</sup> Based on 12 least developed countries where data is available for both input and output KPIs

<sup>216</sup> Based on 12 least developed countries where data is available for both input and output KPIs

## Case study – Escaping the informality trap <sup>217 218 219 220 221 222</sup>

Two billion people, over 60 percent of the world's employed population are informally employed, 93 percent of which are located in emerging and least developed countries. Informality limits people's productivity, access to social protection, fair pay, decent working conditions, and, often, opportunities for development. But many informal workers fear that complying to national laws and regulations is too high of a cost, or even a threat, to their ability to work at all. This phenomenon creates the so called "informality trap."

This has inspired vast amounts of policy research, but also specific initiatives, of international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and national states. Two examples are the International Labor Organization's tool to extend the scope of the International Labor Standards (ILS) to the informal economy and WIEGO's Administrative Justice Project.

- **Extending the scope of the application of labor laws to the informal economy** is a tool aimed

at helping national policymakers create tailored regulatory frameworks and enforcement practices for the informal economy, in a way that acknowledges their contributive effect, while helping avoid human rights violations such as child labor or forced labor.

- **WIEGO's Administrative Justice Project** was launched in 2017 to help informal workers (including, e.g., street vendors and waste pickers) and informal worker organizations know about and advocate for their rights. The project engages beneficiaries (informal workers and organizations), authorities, and local legal professionals in trainings, workshops, and one-on-one sessions.

Such initiatives represent a significant step toward escaping the "informality trap," potentially paving the way for two billion people to gradually transition to legally protected and more productive forms of employment.

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<sup>217</sup> ILO. 2018. *Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture (third edition)*.

<sup>218</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/005c14aa-8ba6-5c91-8c11-ecaea3527feb/content>

<sup>219</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_emp/@emp\\_policy/documents/publication/wcms\\_210446.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@emp_policy/documents/publication/wcms_210446.pdf)

<sup>220</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---normes/documents/publication/wcms\\_125855.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/publication/wcms_125855.pdf)

<sup>221</sup> <https://www.wiego.org/our-work-impact/themes/law-informality>

<sup>222</sup> <https://www.wiego.org/administrative-justice>

## 4.2. The perception of the impact

This report's research shows how the indirect economic impact of the legal profession is a core part of the lawyers' contribution to society. Based on the results of the survey, most legal professionals and the general population agree with these conclusions.

The legal profession's impact on economic development (direct and indirect) is regarded by legal professionals as the highest among all impact areas. It ranks both highest in terms of positive impact (as per 80 percent of respondents) and lowest in terms of negative impact (chosen by only 6 percent of respondents). Legal professionals also see the indirect positive economic impact of their work as higher than the direct contribution.

Yet, this appears less visible to the general population. While 53 percent of people see a positive impact, 47 percent do not see any relationship between the work of legal professionals and economic growth and development. This significant gap in perception between legal professionals and the general population shows there is room for improvement in terms of how lawyers communicate the connections between their profession and economic activities to make the general population more aware of it.

According to members of the legal community, the most important drivers of economic impact are guidance on business activities, the facilitation of international relations, and the representation of parties in employment-related cases. Respondents to the general population survey, however, view the primary sources of positive impact of the legal profession as the resolution of business disputes followed by the representation of individuals in employment-related issues.

Exhibit 26. The perception of the legal profession's impact on economic development

### The impact of legal professionals on economic development is best regarded among legal professionals

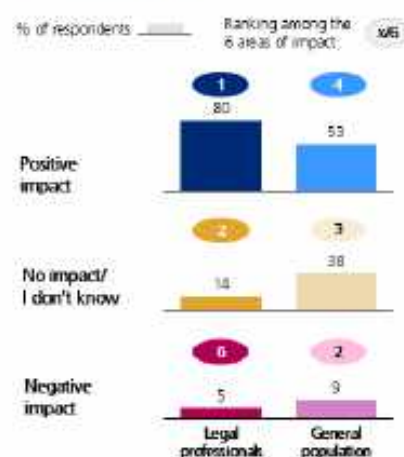
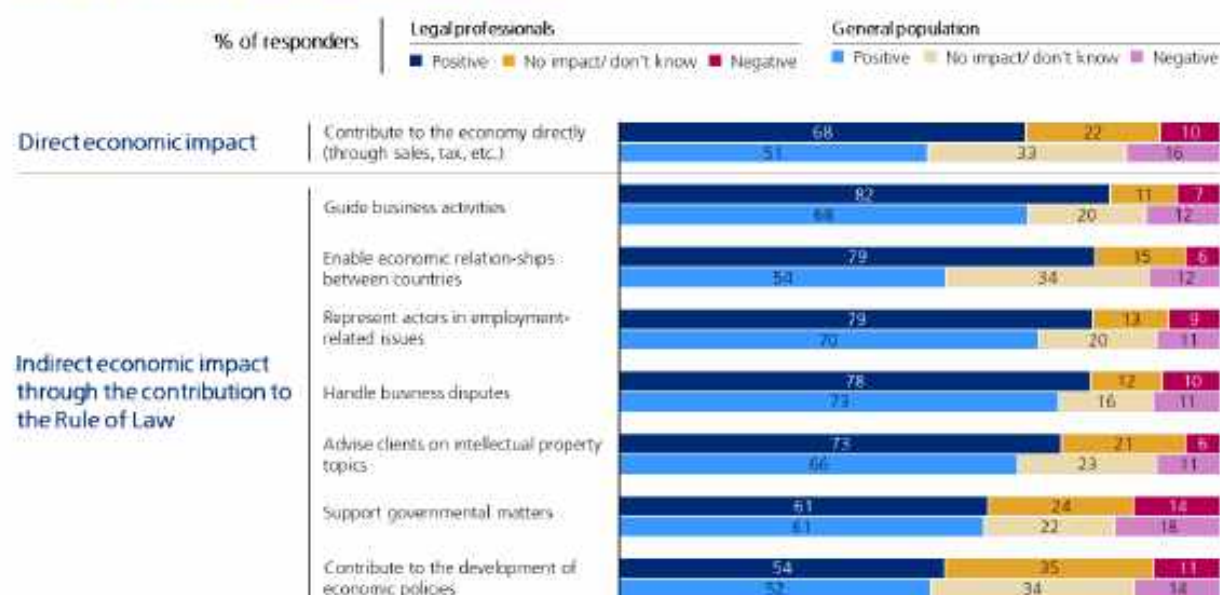


Exhibit 27. The perceived drivers of the legal profession's impact on economic development

## Survey respondents rate many areas of indirect economic impact even higher than direct impact



## Conclusion

All in all, the legal profession is a **significant indirect driver of economic growth and development thanks to its efforts to continuously build and maintain the Rule of Law**. It does this by helping to create an environment of collaboration and innovation among economic agents and helping people improve their individual economic condition. While difficult to quantify, it is fair to say that the indirect economic impact of the legal profession is significant both in its breadth and depth, as recognized by the two cohorts responding to this report's survey.

The **actions** identified to further improve the legal profession's indirect economic impact relate to those connected to strengthening the Rule of Law such as facilitating access to legal representation, educating on the relevance of the Rule of Law mainly by bar associations and law societies, and increasing advocacy on the importance of respecting the Rule of Law at national and international level.



## 5. Direct economic impact



## 5. Direct economic impact

### Background

The direct economic impact of the legal profession refers to the **employment** and the **GDP contributions** that it creates through its core operations. This primarily includes the revenues generated through the provision of legal services, tax contributions, and employment within legal practices (including lawyers, paralegals, operational, and administrative support). Beyond this, the direct economic impact contributed to the economy by the legal profession also includes the revenues and employment it generates in its supplier ecosystem (e.g., notaries, translators) and the consumption it induces (e.g., legal employees using their salaries to purchase additional goods and services).

### 5.1. Legal professionals' direct economic impact

The direct economic impact of the legal profession takes **two main forms**: 1. Employment generation and 2. GDP contribution.

#### 5.1.1. Employment generation

The legal profession creates approximately **20 million jobs worldwide**.<sup>223</sup> This not only includes 12 million lawyers, but also approximately 4 million paralegals and an additional 4 million operational and administrative staff members.

Beyond the 20 million legal professionals mentioned above, the legal profession also creates an **additional 14 million jobs**<sup>224</sup> within its supplier ecosystem (e.g., notaries or translators) and throughout the broader economy.

Exhibit 28. Employment generated by the legal services profession

**The legal services profession alone employs over 20 mn professionals around the world**



**... and generates an additional 14 mn jobs in its ecosystem and broader economy**

<sup>223</sup> International and national BARs, World Bank, Law department management benchmarking report 2021, McKinsey Global Institute Input-Output multipliers database

<sup>224</sup> McKinsey Global Institute Input-Output multiplier database, OECD. Analysis based on applying the employment multipliers for the three levels (direct/immediate ecosystem, indirect/tier2+ suppliers, and induced) to the output of the legal services profession. Multipliers based on professional services category.

Exhibit 29. Share of legal professionals in the population by region

**The number of legal professionals and share of the total population varies greatly across regions**



As shown in the adjacent exhibit the number of legal professionals varies greatly from region to region, ranging from 0.9 percent of the population in Latin America to 0.1 percent in Asia and Oceania. Accurately accounting for the number of legal professionals is difficult, particularly in regions where individuals without formal legal training may provide legal services.

- 1.1.1
- 1.1.2
- 1.1.3

## 5.2. GDP contribution

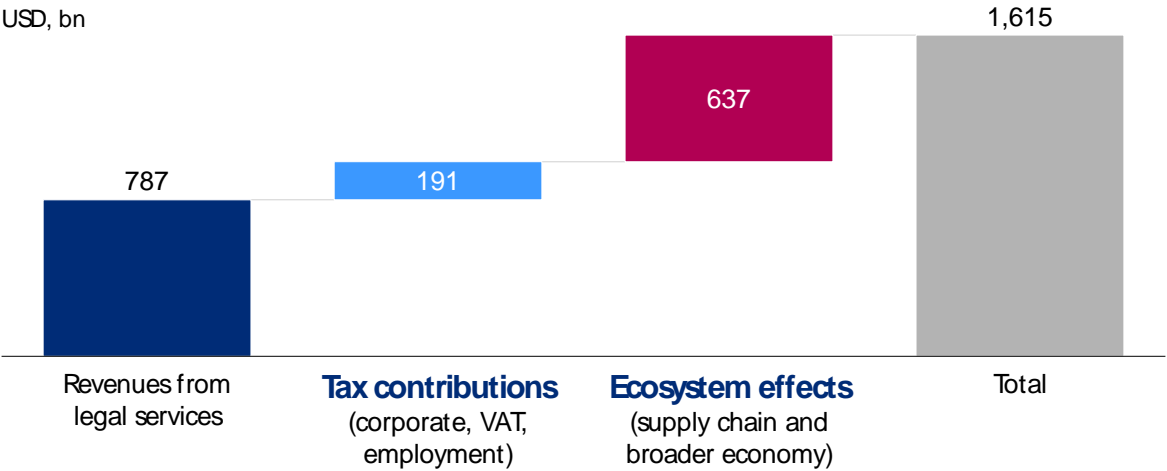
While legal professionals only represent approximately 0.25 percent of the world’s population, they have an outsized economic contribution. In 2022, legal professionals directly contributed USD 1.6 trillion – 1.7 percent of the global GDP. As shown in the exhibit below, this impact is driven by three distinct types of contributions:

- a. Revenues from legal services (USD 787 billion)
- b. Tax contributions (USD 191 billion)
- c. Ecosystem effects (USD 637 billion)



Exhibit 30. Breakdown of the direct economic impact of the legal profession

The legal services profession and its ecosystem directly contribute over USD 1.6 tn to the global economy



Source: International and national bar associations, American Bar Association, Profound 2023 Report on the Legal ServicesMarket, World Bank

a. Revenues from legal services

The direct revenues from legal services reached USD 787 billion in 2022, reflecting a 20 percent growth since 2017.<sup>225</sup> As shown in the exhibit below, the highest contribution derives from corporate law, a USD 222 billion market accounting for 28 percent of the total market for legal services, followed by the litigation market (USD 193 billion accounting for 25 percent of the market).

The revenues from legal services also differ significantly from region to region. North America and Europe represent 80 percent of the market. While Asia and Oceania account for approximately 15 percent of the legal services market, this represents a far smaller share of the continents' GDP (0.3 percent, compared to 1.4 percent in North America and 0.8 percent in Europe).

Exhibit 31. Direct GDP contribution by type of law

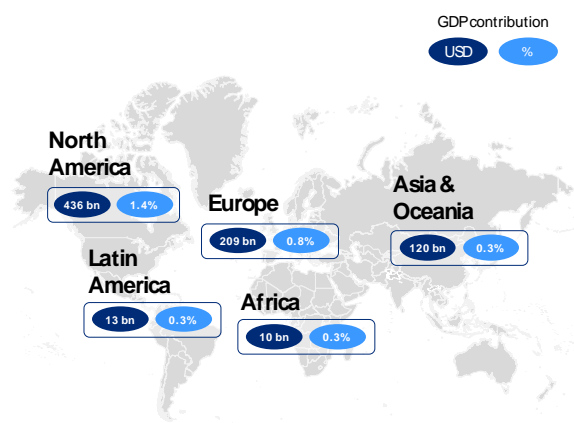
The profession contributed USD 787 bn (0.75%) to the world's 2022 GDP, mostly driven by corporate and litigation law



<sup>225</sup> 2022 Profound report on the legal services market.

Exhibit 32. Regional distribution of the GDP contribution

## Most of the legal profession's contribution to GDP happens in North America, followed by Europe and Asia



Together, Africa and Latin America contribute to less than 5 percent of the legal services market. While the GDP contributions in Latin America and Africa are relatively low, the share of legal professionals among the population is higher than their GDP contribution, indicating lower levels of revenue generated by each legal professional and, potentially, higher affordability of legal representation.

### b. Tax contributions

The legal profession also generates USD 191 billion in tax contributions, including VAT, corporate tax, and social security payments. Most tax contributions come from European legal professionals – despite only representing 26 percent of the legal services market, they contribute 46 percent of the global taxes levied on the provision of legal services, potentially representing systems with higher taxes. The next highest-contributing region in absolute terms is North America (34 percent of global taxes).<sup>226 227 228</sup> These contributions have an indirect social dimension, given their subsequent use for the financing of public education and healthcare, unemployment, or pension benefits.

### c. Ecosystem effects

Looking into the broader ecosystem, the legal profession also generates USD 637 billion along its value chain and in the overall economy. As shown in the following exhibit, the immediate suppliers of the legal services profession (tier 1, i.e., translators, notaries) benefit from USD 143 billion, while tier 2+ suppliers (subcontractors of tier 1+ suppliers) see a value addition of USD 78 billion. Most of the economic effect comes from the consumption induced in the broader economy (e.g., by legal employees using their salaries to purchase additional goods and services) which amounts to USD 417 billion.<sup>229</sup>

The distribution of the ecosystem effects across regions is strongly linked to the relative sizes of the legal markets and the productivity levels of each region/economy. In this case again, North America, followed by Europe and Asia and Oceania see the largest value addition.

<sup>226</sup> [https://www.cliffordchance.com/content/dam/cliffordchance/About\\_us/responsible-business/2022/annual-review-fy22.pdf](https://www.cliffordchance.com/content/dam/cliffordchance/About_us/responsible-business/2022/annual-review-fy22.pdf)

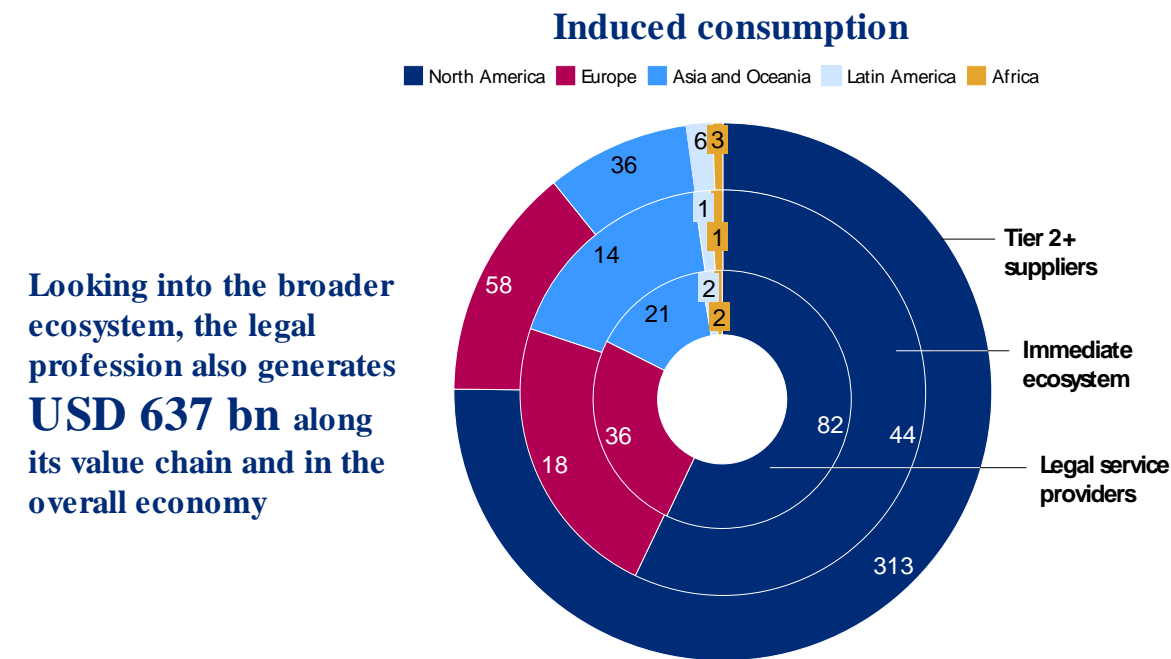
<sup>227</sup> McKinsey Economics Analytics Platform

<sup>228</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list>

<sup>229</sup> McKinsey Global Institute Input-Output Multiplier Database, OECD. Analysis based on applying the value-add multipliers for the three levels (direct/immediate ecosystem, indirect/tier2+ suppliers, and induced) to the output of the legal services profession. Multipliers based on professional services category.



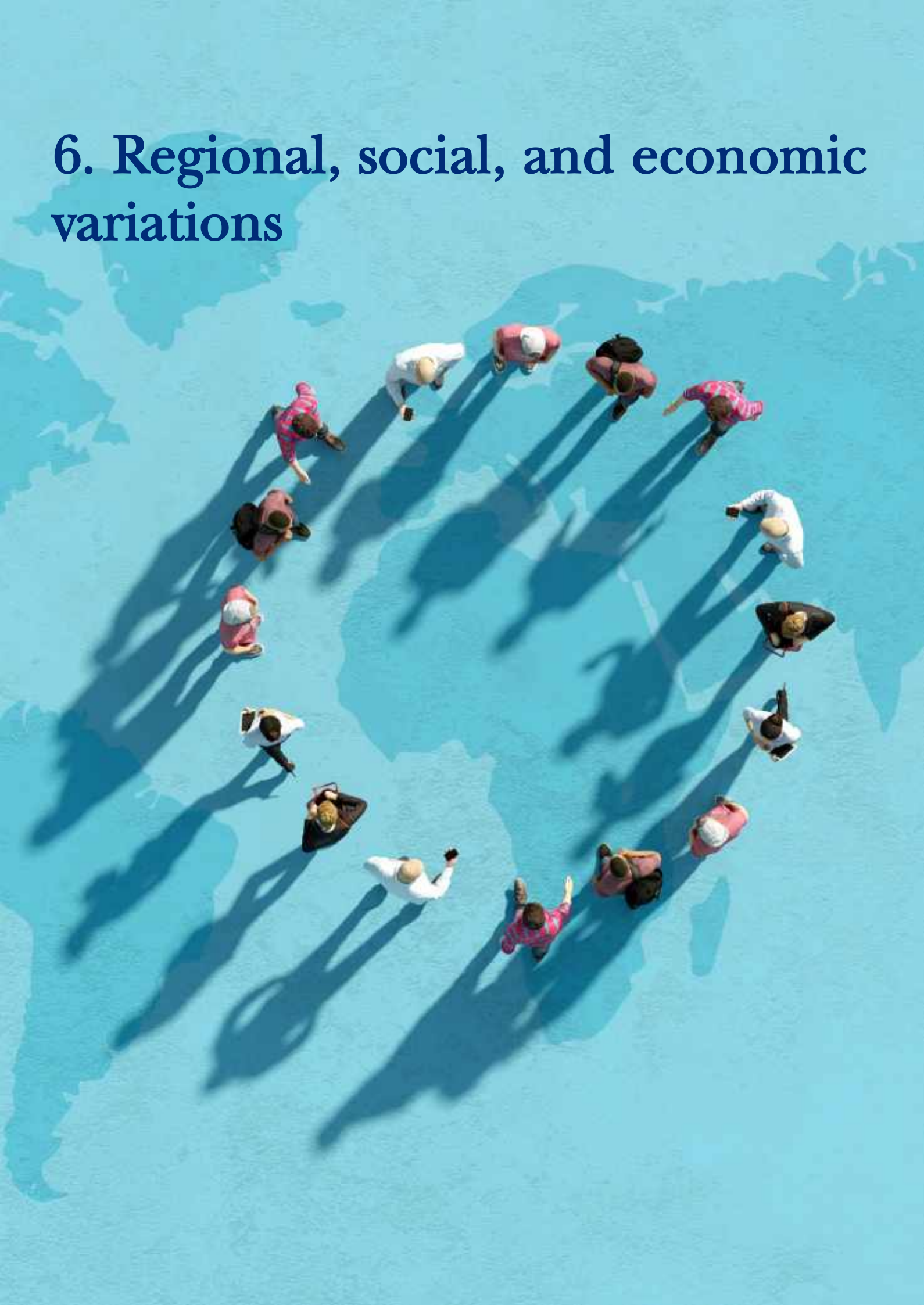
Exhibit 33. GDP effects along the ecosystem and broader economy



## Conclusion

While only representing 0.25 percent of the world’s population, the 20 million legal professionals worldwide generate an outsized economic impact – namely USD 1.6 trillion, or 1.7 percent of the world’s GDP. This economic contribution is substantial not only for the many people employed by the legal profession; the taxes generated by this work support states in their provision of social protection, healthcare, education, public order, and other state functions.

## 6. Regional, social, and economic variations



# 6. Regional, social, and economic variations

## Background

The work of legal professionals does not equally impact all communities and people. This report's research shows that the legal profession's social and economic impact is strongly dependent on two closely related dimensions – the region/continent people live in and their social and economic condition.

By presenting a more detailed view of some of these regional, social and economic variations, this chapter aims to provide a closer understanding of how the legal profession can enhance its impact in a targeted manner, focusing its efforts on the concrete challenges of the communities it operates in.

## 6.1. Impact variations

These regional and socio-demographic differences in the way the legal professionals' work creates impact can be observed across the **three types of impact**: social impact, indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law, and direct economic impact.

### 6.1.1. Social impact

Social impact, covering the five areas of peace, justice, and institutional strength; equality and inclusion; education; environmental sustainability; and health and well-being, is stronger in more developed regions. This phenomenon is likely due to the cumulative effect of the Rule of Law built throughout a longer period of development.

One indication of the higher levels of social impact in developed regions is the fact that the vast majority of statistical relationships this report has identified between the indicators of activities of legal professionals and indicators of social impact (e.g., access to healthcare, levels of pollution) appeared in countries with a relatively higher level of development (such as those in the first and second quartile of GDP/capita). That being said, the identification of additional statistical connections between indicators of the activities of legal professionals and indicators of social impact in developed regions is also **impacted by the relatively higher availability of data** related to developed regions – a methodological limitation of this research.

This research also identified regional variations with regards to the **areas of impact**. For example, in highly developed regions, most legal activities were found to be statistically related to progress in education and environmental sustainability. On the other hand, in least developed regions, most links relate to equality and inclusion and health and well-being.

These impact differences between developed and least developed regions are also likely related to the differences in the **access and affordability of justice**. As shown in the exhibit below, the highest levels of access to justice are found in Europe and Latin America, where most of the impact appears to concentrate.

Looking at the evolution of the access to justice in the different regions may also provide an indication of the evolution of the legal profession's impact. Disconcertingly, both North America and Africa have experienced a decrease in the access and affordability of civil justice over the past ten years (of 2 percent and 0.6 percent respectively). While the other three regions have experienced a slight increase, their progress is relatively slow (0.3 percent in Latin America, 0.2 percent in Europe, and only 0.02 percent in Asia and Oceania).

Exhibit 34. Share of statistical relationships identified by countries' level of development

**Most statistical relations between the activities of legal professionals and social outcomes are observable in developed regions**

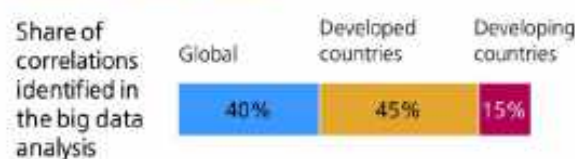
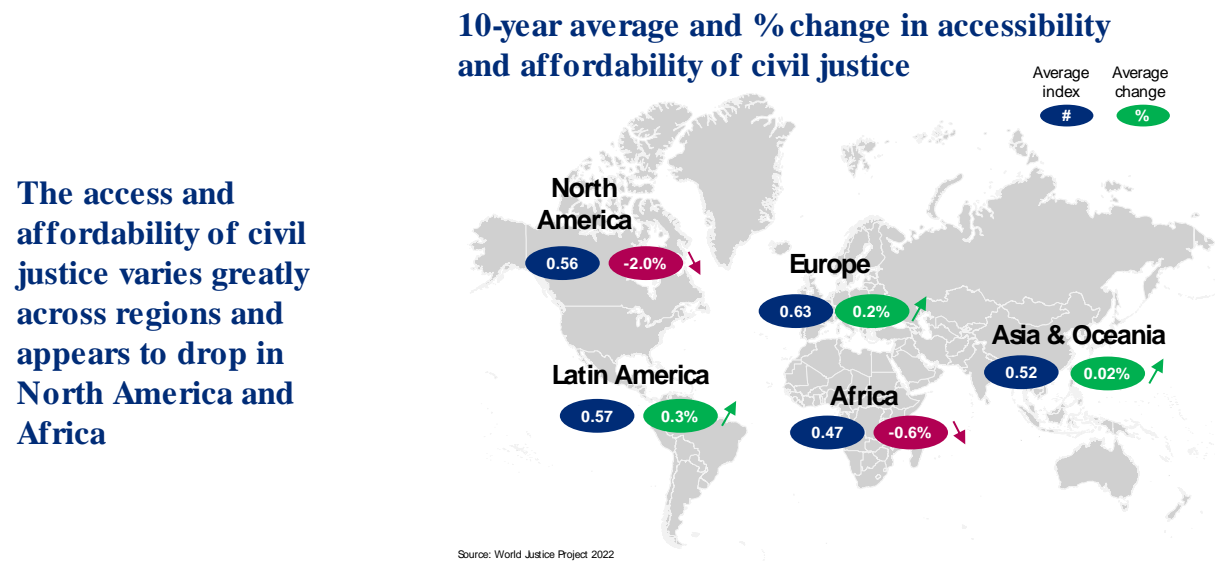


Exhibit 35. 10-year average and percent change in the access and affordability of civil justice.



6.1.2. Indirect economic impact through the contribution to the Rule of Law

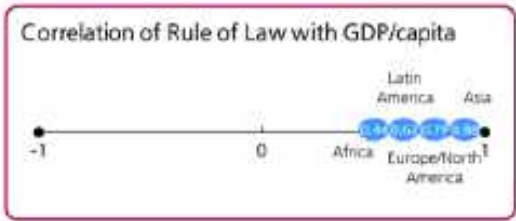
The number of legal professionals varies greatly from region to region, ranging from 0.9 percent of the population in Latin America or 0.7 percent in North America to 0.1 percent in Asia and Oceania. Despite the very low share of legal professionals in Asia and Oceania, the Rule of Law appears to have the strongest link with those **regions’ economic growth**, indicating the potential for high indirect economic impact. However, the relationship between the Rule of Law and economic growth appears less strong in Latin America, and especially, in Africa.

This phenomenon could potentially be explained through the historically **cumulative social and economic effect of the Rule of Law**: more developed countries have a longer history of building and consolidating their Rule of Law, which also puts them in the position of reaping more benefits out of it.

At the same time, the currently lower level of development and weaker Rule of Law of countries in Africa could potentially also create the premises of larger economic and social returns on efforts to advance the Rule of Law. This expectation appears in line with the relatively more positive perception that respondents in least developed countries appear to have about the impact of the legal profession, according to this report’s survey.

Exhibit 36. Regional relationships between Rule of Law and GDP/capita

**The relation between the Rule of Law and GDP/capita is highest in North America, Europe, and Asia, and lowest in Latin America and Africa**



### 6.1.3. Direct economic impact

As shown in the following exhibit, the legal services market, and thus, the legal profession direct economic impact is not uniform across regions.

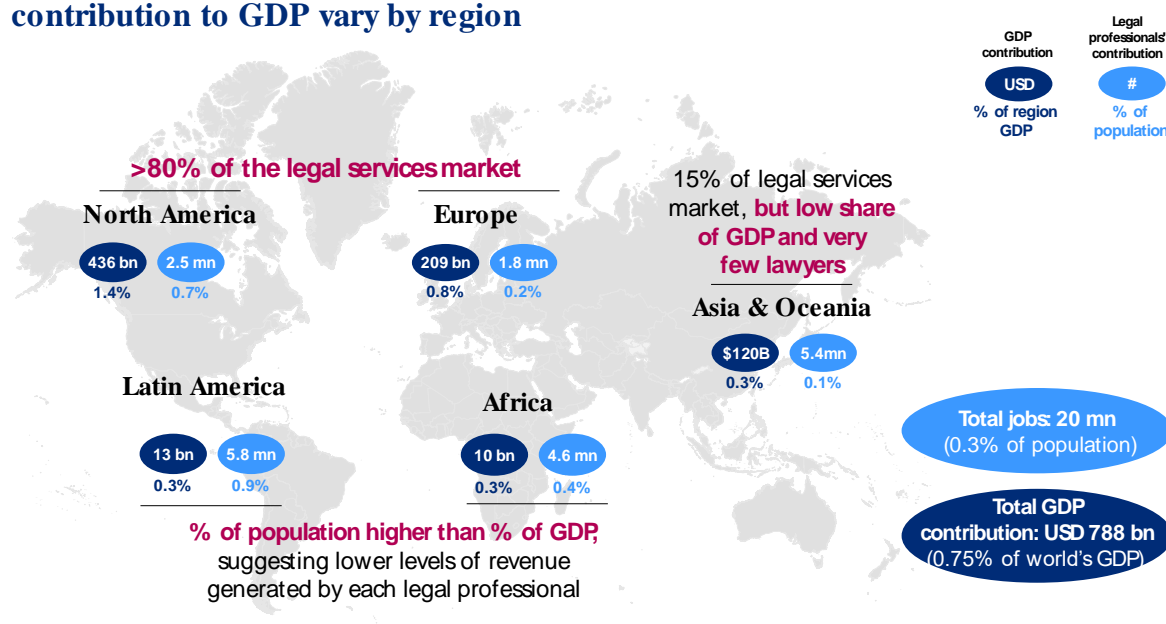
As mentioned in the previous section, the number of legal professionals varies greatly from region to region, ranging from 0.9 percent of the population in Latin America or 0.7 percent in North America to 0.1 percent in Asia and Oceania. Accurately accounting for the number of legal professionals is difficult, particularly in regions where individuals without formal legal training may provide legal services.

When it comes to GDP contribution, North America and Europe have the highest shares, accounting for more than 80 percent of the legal services market. While Asia and Oceania account for approximately 15 percent, this represents a far smaller share of the continents' GDP (0.3 percent, compared to 1.4 percent in North America and 0.8 percent in Europe).

Together, Africa and Latin America only make up less than 5 percent of the legal services market. Nonetheless, while the GDP contributions in Latin America and Africa are relatively low, the share of legal professionals among the population is higher than their GDP contribution, indicating lower levels of revenue generated by each legal professional and, potentially, higher affordability of legal representation.

Exhibit 37. Regional distribution of legal professionals and the legal services market

#### Both the number of legal professionals and their direct contribution to GDP vary by region



## 6.2. Perception differences

The impact observations described above are not fully aligned with the regional variations in perception emerging from the survey conducted with legal professionals and the general population across regions.

While most quantitative indications of impact, both economic and social, can be traced in developed regions, especially in North America and Europe, people in least developed regions (i.e., Africa, Asia, and Latin America) appear to have a significantly more positive perception of the legal profession's impact.

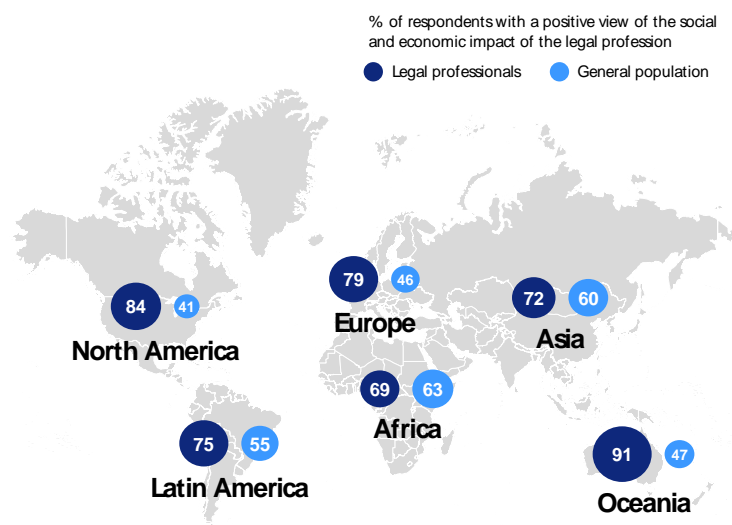
At the same time, legal professionals in more developed regions see both the economic and social impact of the legal profession as more positive than their counterparts in less developed regions.



Exhibit 38. Perception of the positive impact of the legal profession across regions

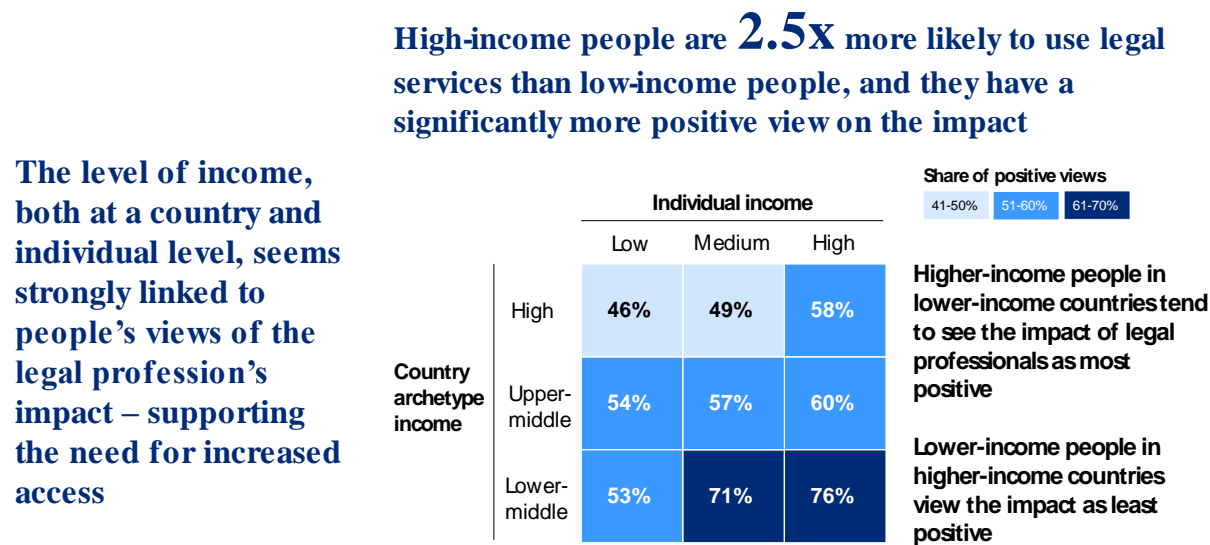
**The impact observations of the general population are not fully aligned with those in the legal profession**

**People in developing regions see the impact more positively than those in developed regions. The opposite effect appears among legal professionals**



People's level of individual household income compared to the national average seems strongly related to their views of the legal profession's social and economic impact. As shown in the exhibit below, higher-income households in lower-income countries tend to see the impact of legal professionals as most positive. Yet, lower-income households in higher-income countries view it as least positive. This difference in perception may be linked to income inequality more than to poverty, as well as to the relative level of access to legal representation. This rationale appears backed by the fact that people living in relatively higher-income households are not only more positive about the profession's impact, but also appear 2.5 times more likely to have used legal services.

Exhibit 39. Perception of the legal profession’s impact by relative level of country and household income



Conclusion

The way the legal profession generates economic and social impact is far from uniform – it appears strongly concentrated in developed regions and lagging in least developed ones. This finding is likely related to the historically cumulative effect of the Rule of Law in developed regions but may also be influenced by the greater availability of data for these more developed regions.

At the same time, according to this report’s survey, the impact of the legal profession appears to be perceived more positively by the general population in least developed countries than those in developed countries.

These regional and socio-demographic variations provide an indication of the need for actions increasing the access and affordability of legal professional services both across and within regions.

# 7. Future opportunities





## 7. Future opportunities

### 7.1. Improving the assessment

This assessment has relied on a set of complementary data sources, including a comprehensive review of the existing literature and tools, a big data analysis (of more than 25,000 pairs of indicators of activities of legal professionals and SDG indicators in approximately 190 countries over many years), two surveys (one with more than 700 responses from legal professionals and one with 7,500 responses from representatives of the general population in 16 countries), and interviews with more than 50 legal experts with different areas of law expertise from various regions.

In the future, there are two ways in which the analysis could potentially be enhanced:

- **Enriching the dataset and group of indicators assessed as more data becomes available:**

As mentioned in the methodology section, the big data analysis has relied on the historic data of more than 60 KPIs (approximately 20 are linked to activities of legal professionals and approximately 40 are indicators of progress along the SDG areas) for all countries where sufficient data was available. Thus, the analysis is partially limited by the availability of data both historically and in terms of the coverage of countries. The relationships that were studied in the analysis were only those for which there was sufficient data to draw statistically significant conclusions.

As the global monitoring mechanisms of progress along the SDG indicators advance and more data is added to the global databases (e.g., those of the United Nations or World Bank), the analysis could be enhanced with data from more countries, especially those from least developed countries, and additional indicators could be studied. By collecting these additional pieces of data as they become available and adding them to the analysis, this assessment will be able to see how they progress over time and even analyze whether relationships between variables that were found to be not significant could become significant, enabling the IBA to draw additional conclusions on the impact of the legal profession.

- **Tracking the progress over time:**

This assessment represents a snapshot of the social and economic impact of the legal profession based on the latest available data. To allow for updates to the analysis and insights over the coming years, this report includes an impact assessment tool. Refreshed with the latest data on the input KPIs (proxies to the activities of legal professionals) and output KPIs (indicators of social and economic progress), the tool can help monitor and track the evolution of the various forms of impact over time, as well as get a sense of how potential initiatives aimed at enhancing the impact are yielding.

### 7.2. Actions to enhance the impact of the legal profession

As discussed in previous chapters, the work of legal professionals creates indirect social impact across many different areas. Legal professionals advocate for regulations that streamline judicial processes to make them more accessible to the population, support and represent the victims of human rights abuses, and create tools to protect those that report them. Their work also has an impact on health, education, and environmental sustainability thanks to their case representation and advocacy in relevant issues.

The legal professionals' work as shapers and defenders of the Rule of Law – as part of the broader legal community - creates indirect economic impact through the creation of an environment of trust and certainty that is conducive to establishing business agreements, conducting transactions, and investing in innovation. It also helps formalize economic activities of individuals, providing reassurance that their rights and obligations will be respected.

Throughout the analyses, surveys, and expert interviews, this report has identified a set of prevalent factors that drive the Rule of Law and, as a result, the social and economic impact of legal professionals. These factors can

amplify or limit the legal professionals' influence and form the basis of potential initiatives that can help address limitations and enhance their positive impact.

At a high level, this report has identified **four types of actions** and enablers that are particularly important for the legal community to focus on to preserve and enhance their positive impact:

1. Further improving the access to legal representation.
2. Continuing to engage in advocacy efforts and shaping policymaking.
3. Doubling down on communication and educational activities to help people better understand the Rule of Law and the way legal professionals create social and economic impact.
4. Continuing to strive for the highest ethical standards – openly rewarding best practices and sanctioning instances that fall below the legal profession's professional standards.

These actions should be complemented by efforts to advance health and well-being, and equality, diversity, and inclusion within the legal community itself.

Exhibit 40. Main actions that can help enhance the legal profession's economic and social impact

#### 4 types of actions and enablers emerge as key to enhancing the legal profession's impact across the different analyses and engagements



For each of the four types of actions and enablers, there are multiple concrete activities that can contribute to the desired effect.

1. When it comes to **enhancing the access to legal representation**, potential actions can span from increasing the pro bono work done and legal aid provided by legal professionals to expanding the reach of specific legal instruments such as legal aid, simplifying legal procedures, or even designing innovative fee structures that make legal assistance more accessible to broader segments of the population.
2. In terms of **advocacy and policymaking**, initiatives could be focused either on increasing the number of hours spent on advocacy and supporting the policymaking process or on potentially strengthening internal standards (e.g., deciding to not collaborate with actors whose core activity goes against an SDG goal)



3. The **education and communication** efforts could focus on helping people better understand their rights and the Rule of Law (through, e.g., introducing Rule of Law education in high schools or expanding the work of legal clinics) and creating more transparency on the work of legal professionals both in terms of how they can add value to people's lives and society overall and the necessity of certain features of their work (e.g., the obligation to also represent criminals).
4. Maintaining **high ethical standards** is also key for the legal professionals' ability to create social and economic impact as trusted advisors. This could be enhanced by continuing to both reward cases of outstanding ethics (e.g., the many instances when legal professionals take significant risks in the fight for the Rule of Law) and publicly denouncing cases where legal professionals engage in behaviors that fall below the standards of the profession. On top of this, legal professionals also need to continue supporting individual colleagues in navigating the ethical difficulties often encountered in their work.

Beyond these four areas, it is key that legal professionals continue leading by example. In the previous sections, this report has highlighted a set of issues internally related to the legal profession, whether to the levels of health and well-being, diversity and inclusion, or environmental sustainability. Many law firms and legal societies are actively working on driving progress in each of these areas, but according to the results of the surveys conducted, these efforts do not yet result in an improved perception.

## 7.3. Looking ahead

This report is only the first step toward **assessing the contributions** of the legal profession to society and **continuing to enhance** its positive social and economic impact. The research has identified actions to preserve and strengthen the profession's impact. These actions focus on access to legal representation, efforts in advocacy and policymaking, communication on and education about the Rule of Law and the role of the legal profession, and the pursuit of the highest ethical standards. These goals should be complemented by efforts to advance health and well-being and equality, diversity, and inclusion within the legal community itself.

The IBA is already driving multiple initiatives in the areas described above in collaboration with law societies, bar associations, law firms, law departments, multiple national and international partners, and other relevant stakeholders in the profession.

1. To help **enhance access to legal representation**, the IBA supports its Access to Justice and Legal Aid Committee and its Pro Bono Committee. These Committees work on building and disseminating research on barriers to access and ways to overcome them, including through pro bono legal services. Examples include a cost-benefit analysis of legal aid in collaboration with the World Bank,<sup>230</sup> a report on the link between access to justice and equality presented at the UN Commission on the Status of Women,<sup>231</sup> and a report on children and access to justice with the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law.<sup>232</sup>

The Annual IBA Pro Bono and Human Rights Award program is another mechanism through which the IBA encourages members' efforts to make legal representation more accessible, especially to the most vulnerable people.<sup>233</sup> The IBA section dedicated to work on substantive law areas - the Legal Practice Division<sup>234</sup> - enhances the visibility and understanding of its covered practices to facilitate improved access to representation.<sup>235</sup> Additionally, the IBA is leading dedicated collaborations aimed at helping victims of

<sup>230</sup> A tool for Justice, the cost benefit analysis of legal aid, 2019, <https://www.ibanet.org/MediaHandler?id=DB027287-2352-4269-8D0F-C1446B1023BC>

<sup>231</sup> Report on the UNCSW67 side event: 'Access to Justice – a Sine Qua Non for Inclusion and Equality' (<https://www.ibanet.org/report-uncsw-side-event-access-to-justice>)

<sup>232</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/access-to-justice-and-legal-aid-2022-annual-conference-report>

<sup>233</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/Scholarships-and-Awards>

<sup>234</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/lpd>

<sup>235</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/Covid-19-and-Court-Procedures-An-Access-to-justice-Report>

genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes access justice through, for example, the activities of the IBA Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), the IBA Human Rights Committee, the War Crimes Committee, collaborations with the International Criminal Court and the development of the “eyeWitness to Atrocities”<sup>236</sup> mobile application.

2. The IBA is also engaged in **advocacy and the support of policy-making efforts**, which include issuing public statements condemning actions undertaken by states to the detriment of the Rule of Law and human rights, building and disseminating research, guidelines, best practices and legal advice on issues such as human rights, media freedom, modern slavery, arbitration or AI regulation, and advocacy efforts in support of specific cases of potential violations of human rights (primarily through the work of the IBAHRI and the IBA Rule of Law Forum).<sup>237</sup> The leading role that the IBA has played in addressing the abolition of criminal punishments of LGBTIQ+ individuals should also be highlighted.<sup>238,239</sup> The Legal Practice Division committees provide their views on policy-making through submissions to authorities, such as the European Commission, in areas like tax, antitrust and insolvency.
3. As the “global voice of the legal profession,” a significant share of the IBA’s efforts is related to **education and communication**.<sup>240</sup> This includes building educational programs to enhance the expertise of young lawyers, increasing the public’s understanding of the Rule of Law,<sup>241</sup> raising awareness about social issues through publications, documentaries, conferences, or webinars, promoting social consciousness among members, and providing human rights training and technical assistance to legal practitioners and institutions.<sup>242</sup>
4. Regarding professional **ethics stewardship**, the IBA actively creates guidelines and best practices to help legal professionals uphold the highest possible ethical standards (e.g., the Anti-Corruption Strategy for the Legal Profession).<sup>243</sup> The IBA Professional Ethics Committee seeks to promote high standards of professional conduct and ethics among member lawyers. The IBA Arbitration Committee has published Guidelines on Conflicts of Interest for Arbitrators and Guidelines on Party Representation in International Arbitration. The IBA also works with bar associations to help enhance the dissemination and adoption of guidelines. Some examples include the cross-committee collaboration to address ethically ambiguous aspects of legal practice, notably in corporate law.

The IBA is committed to continuing to strengthen its efforts to enhance the legal profession’s impact on society, as well as playing a leading role in driving a collective effort across the legal community to uphold the Rule of Law and promote easy access to justice. Though much remains to be done, the creation of this report is an

<sup>236</sup> <https://www.eyewitness.global/>

<sup>237</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/IBAHRI>

<sup>238</sup> [https://www.ibanet.org/Human\\_Rights\\_Institute/About\\_the\\_HRI/HRI\\_Activities/sexual-orientation;](https://www.ibanet.org/Human_Rights_Institute/About_the_HRI/HRI_Activities/sexual-orientation;)  
<https://www.ibanet.org/unit/Section+on+Public+and+Professional+Interest/committee/LGBTQI%2B+Law+Committee/3282>.

<sup>239</sup> The IBAHRI work targets state representatives to change legislation. Some examples regard the IBAHRI intervention letter to Ugandan government in 2009 and 2012 regarding the illegality of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009; the letters sent in 2012 and 2014 to President Dmitry Medvedev urging the President to take immediate action to prevent the enactment of discriminatory laws in Russia, and to take measures to implement anti-discrimination laws; the writ sent to the UN Committee against Torture highlighting the IBAHRI concerns over the allegations of massive arrests, detention, torture, and other forms of abuse of certain men on account of their real or suspected sexual orientation in Chechnya. The IBAHRI have also released statements on Ghana, Uganda and Kenya (IBAHRI calls on President Akufo-Addo to repeal discriminatory LGBTQ+ Bill | International Bar Association (ibanet.org), IBAHRI Co-Chairs' statement on Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 | International Bar Association (ibanet.org), IBAHRI states Kenya High Court's LGBTIQ+ rights ruling very 'disappointing' and supports appeal | International Bar Association (ibanet.org)), among other.

<sup>240</sup> Notable in this respect are the IBA Policy Guidelines for Training and Education of the legal profession (23 October 2014)  
<https://www.ibanet.org/MediaHandler?id=1ff85676-0cdb-4ead-91c3-b533fdc79550>

<sup>241</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/rule-of-law-videos-en>

<sup>242</sup> <https://www.ibanet.org/education-and-internships>

<sup>243</sup> Other initiatives include the IBA International Principles on Conduct for the Legal Profession ([https://www.ibanet.org/document?id=IBA%20International%20Principles%20on%20Conduct%20for%20the%20Legal%20Profession%20\(2018\)](https://www.ibanet.org/document?id=IBA%20International%20Principles%20on%20Conduct%20for%20the%20Legal%20Profession%20(2018))) the Report of the Task Force on the Role of Lawyers and International Commercial Structures (<https://www.ibanet.org/MediaHandler?id=3B4FDA81-D105-4C49-824C-2A3F6CB60BC2&.pdf&context=bWZkdGVyZGFzc2V0c3wzNDA1NjAwfGFwcGxpY2F0aW9uL3BkZnNoNjMvaDg0LzgzOTcwNTYwMDgyMjlvM0I0RkRBODEtRDEwNS00QzQ5LTgyNEMtMkEzRjZDQjYwQkMyLnBkZnNoMjZiY2NiOTQxNDRmMzAyYjJiNmVjMzM3ZDZlZjUwNDhiNDYxYjFhZWYxYjc1MzMmMzcwMzI3NjZjZmZmMmVj>), and the IBA Practical Guide on Business and Human Rights for Business Lawyers (<https://www.ibanet.org/MediaHandler?id=d6306c84-e2f8-4c82-a86f-93940d6736c4>).

important step in gaining a better understanding of the profession's social and economic impact, the factors that drive it, and the potential ways to improve it.



## 8. Conclusion



## 8. Conclusion

Legal professionals intervene in **all aspects of people's lives**. Legal professionals – whether acting as private practitioners, in-house counsel, judges, prosecutors, academics, or lawyers for the state – weave a tapestry for citizens to enjoy and exercise their most fundamental rights, which in turn, advances society. Lawyers are essential in ensuring access to justice through access to the courts, defense of human rights, prosecution of war crimes, and providing pro bono services.

One of the most important contributions of legal professionals to society involves the **good operation of Justice** which ultimately form the basis of a strong Rule of Law. As described in this report, the Rule of Law is the foundation for all basic human rights and is held to be not only good in itself, because it embodies and encourages a just society, but also as a cause of other good things, notably economic growth. Indeed, there is strong scientific evidence that the Rule of Law contributes to economic growth and social welfare.<sup>244</sup> Yet, the contributions of legal professionals to society through these daily activities often goes unnoticed.

The contributions of legal professionals to society are far from being well known or recognized. Not even the legal profession is sufficiently conscious of its relevance or of the responsibility attached to its duties. This lack of awareness of what legal professionals contribute to society reaches its peak among the general public, and to some extent, among institutions and states.

The qualitative evaluations and the quantitative data analysis in the report provide evidence of the contributions to society of all components of the legal profession. Almost any activity of a legal professional creates one (if not several) types of social impact, indirect economic impact through its contribution to the Rule of Law, and direct economic impact. The wide-reaching impact that the legal profession has on both social and economic development is reflected in a multitude of statistical relationships between the activities of legal professionals and indicators of progress against the SDGs. As such, countries where the **Rule of Law** is stronger have higher levels of economic development, higher life expectancies, and lower levels of pollution. While many of these effects are more visible in developed countries, data shows that advancements in terms of Rule of Law can help unlock significant economic and social development progress also in least developed countries.

This report is the first step toward **assessing the contributions** of the legal profession and **identifying** actions to preserve and strengthen the profession's impact. These actions focus on access to legal representation, efforts in advocacy and policymaking, communication on and education about the Rule of Law and the role of the legal profession, and the pursuit of the highest ethical standards. These goals should be complemented by efforts to advance health and well-being, equality, diversity, and inclusion within the legal community itself.

This report should allow the legal profession, bar associations, law societies, international professional associations such as the IBA, and other stakeholders to reflect on what they can do to achieve real positive change, enhancing the impact of the legal profession in today's world.

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<sup>244</sup> The rule of law index published by the World Justice Project, is one of the best documented examples of the relation between the Rule of Law and growth: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/>. There are multiple recognitions of this fact: The Declaration of the UN High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law, 24 September 2012, states "We agree that our collective response to the challenges and opportunities arising from the many complex political, social and economic transformations before us must be guided by the rule of law, as it is the foundation of friendly and equitable relations between States and the basis on which just and fair societies are built <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n12/478/66/pdf/n1247866.pdf?token=eX4Zy2s3N7y3rRpr4o&fe=true>. See also the European Commission Annual Rule of Law Reports initiated in 2020. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2023-rule-law-report\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2023-rule-law-report_en). The doctrine also recognizes this aspect: "The Rule of Law is held to be not only good in itself, because it embodies and encourages a just society, but also a cause of other good things, notably growth", *quoted by Lord Bingham at The Rule Of Law, 2010*, from 'Economics and the Rule of Law: Order in the Jungle', *The Economist*, 13 March 2008



# Acknowledgements



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# Appendix



# Appendix

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## A. Literature review

In the preparation of this report, a comprehensive literature review was one of the four sources of insight. The literature review enabled the identification of similar efforts to quantify the impact of the legal profession, or any other profession that could provide applicable lessons to this exercise.

The main sources reviewed as part of this effort can be found in the table below. While no document or report reviewed contained the same type of analysis as the one undertaken in this report, some of the sources have served as inspiration for possible statistical relations, data sources, and case studies included in this report.

This literature review is complemented by numerous other sources used as evidence for specific points made throughout the report.

Publisher	Report/article	Year	Summary
American Bar Association 	How Civic Education, Pro Bono, and Professional Integrity Strengthen the Rule of Law ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article on how legal professionals can “further the public’s understanding of and confidence in the Rule of Law and the justice system”.</li> <li>Focuses on two areas of impact, namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging in civic education activities that can help children and young people better understand and apply the Rule of Law by developing both knowledge and practical skills.</li> <li>Providing pro bono services to increase the access and affordability of legal representation and maintaining professional integrity in all interactions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>While the article provides insight into the merits of investing in the two areas of impact and proposes a set of practical actions, it does not attempt to assess the current impact that legal professionals generate in relation to them.</li> </ul>
Annual Review of Law and Social Science 	The Experience of a Legal Career: Attorneys’ Impact on the System and the System’s Impact on Attorneys ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article reviews existing research on the influence of attorneys in the legal system, both inside and outside of the litigation context.</li> <li>The discussion is mainly focused on the effects of trial attorneys on juries and clients, focusing on each procedural step undertaken as part of a trial (opening statements, jury selection, etc.)</li> <li>It only addresses the influence of attorneys outside of the litigation context in a very limited way, as it states that there is only “limited research on the role and impact of attorneys outside the litigation context”.</li> </ul>
Columbia Law School 	Lawyers, Community, and Impact ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2016-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Series of expert talks on concepts such as innocence, justice (e.g., of Sam Bankman-Fried), and career paths (e.g., of Damian Williams, US Attorney for the Southern District of NY).</li> <li>Individual expert talks touch upon topics of interest, such as the creation of a civil rights unit within the Southern District of New York’s Attorney Office, but do not go beyond the mere provision of examples of impact of the legal profession.</li> </ul>
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer 	A Legal Framework for Impact: Sustainability impact in investor decision-making ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report analyzes whether existing legal frameworks would allow the practice of “investing for sustainability impact” and lays out ideas for legal system reform to facilitate it.</li> <li>While it focuses on one of the target areas of impact for the legal profession (sustainability), it has a narrow activity focus (investing activities) and does not openly refer to the role that legal professionals could have in the reform process that it proposes.</li> </ul>
Gallup 	Honesty/Ethics in Professions ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historical series of surveys rating on the honesty and ethical standards of members of various professions.</li> <li>Most recent data shows that doctors are second only to nurses (and only since the pandemic), while lawyers rank 12th globally.</li> <li>Does not provide insight on the underlying motivations for the responses to the survey.</li> </ul>

Publisher	Report/article	Year	Summary
Global Alliance of Impact Lawyers 	All rise! Legal experts join forces to drive impact ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article on how lawyers could increase their contribution by helping decide where impact capital is invested (e.g., for social or sustainability topics).</li> <li>Argues that lawyers are well positioned to help companies adjust their business practices to meet current and future legal requirements.</li> <li>Refers to SDGs as the “agreed societal goals” that lawyers should pursue through their work.</li> <li>Focuses on the role of lawyers advising businesses and financial institutions but does not delve into lawyers’ work for individual clients or other ways to achieve impact (i.e., advocacy, drafting legislation).</li> </ul>
Hi-Med 	Impactful medical careers ( <a href="#">link</a> )	Accessed June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of various medical careers, their requirements, and their estimated impact.</li> <li>Highlights how clinical roles most likely lead to low-impact careers given the limitation of treating one patient at a time (which would not be the case in legal careers given the importance of precedent-setting decisions).</li> <li>Suggests that roles in research or health-related policymaking can multiply the impact as the product of such work can have an effect on a far higher number of people.</li> </ul>
International Bar Association 	Corporate sustainability greenwash and the risk to social and governance standards ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IBA report that acknowledges the difficulty of measuring corporate clients’ impact with a special focus on social impact.</li> <li>Highlights the responsibility of lawyers in advising clients in sustainability matters given the increased regulation and scrutiny that companies face.</li> <li>Concludes that lawyers contribute to corporate clients’ impact through due diligence of human rights, environmental effects, and correct reporting.</li> </ul>
	ESG Toolkit for Law Firms ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IBA Law Firm Management Committee toolkit for understanding the scope of ESG from a law firm perspective.</li> <li>Can provide a better understanding of the three pillars of ESG and assist with internal checks.</li> <li>Focused on the internal perspective of law firms, without mention of the implication this may have on client work.</li> </ul>
	Updated IBA Guidance Note on Business and Human Rights: The role of lawyers in the changing landscape ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IBA guidelines that outline the relevance of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) for law practitioners.</li> <li>Includes a background note, analysis of the most relevant trends, an overview of law areas directly impacted, challenges, and practical implications.</li> <li>While it indicates preferred approaches for lawyers when addressing topics at the crossroads of business and human rights, it does not attempt to estimate the impact of these activities.</li> </ul>
International Labor Organization 	Extending the scope of application of labor laws to the informal economy ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides data on informal economy, outlining its prevalence in developing Asia, Africa, and Latin America.</li> <li>Argues there is a delicate balance between incorporating more workers to the formal economy and preserving opportunities for livelihoods.</li> <li>Provides comments on how to extend the protection of international labor conventions to workers in the informal economy but does not address the role of legal professionals in such an endeavor.</li> </ul>
Ipsos 	Global Trustworthiness Index ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey on how trustworthy members of different professions are considered to be in their respective countries.</li> <li>Doctors rank first (currently and historically), while lawyers rank 8th globally.</li> <li>Does not provide insight on the underlying motivations for the responses to the survey.</li> </ul>
Japan Federation of Bar Associations 	Achievements and Challenges of Legal Aid – Human Rights Advocacy by Attorneys and Bar Associations ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report that discusses Japanese lawyers’ legal aid initiatives and support for vulnerable groups (e.g., refugees and victims of domestic violence)</li> <li>Defines target groups for the reception of legal aid, but only provides limited data on different KPIs related to legal aid delivery (number of cases and amounts subsidized).</li> <li>Includes advocacy call for government to fund legal aid initiatives that guarantee equal access to justice.</li> </ul>

Publisher	Report/article	Year	Summary
Law Council of Australia 	The Lawyer Project Report <sup>245</sup> ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report aims to study “the critical role of the Australian legal profession in contributing to the social, economic, and political health of the nation”.</li> <li>It defines four impact areas of the legal profession in Australia:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution to the Australian economy</li> <li>Contribution to the administration of justice</li> <li>Contribution in times of large-scale crisis or disaster</li> <li>Contribution to public policy and social and community contributions</li> </ul> </li> <li>Identifies and quantifies direct impact of legal profession, but only suggests areas of indirect impact through existing literature and examples.</li> </ul>
Law.com 	Social Impact: Lawyers Are Expected to Be “Agents of Change,” Says Michael Haggard ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interview with the owner of Haggard Law Firm in Coral Gables.</li> <li>Discusses the role of legal professionals in advocacy and policy-shaping efforts: lawyers “are looked up to, are looked to when there is trouble in society, and are expected to be agents of change in society”.</li> </ul>
ProPublica 	Non-Profit Journalism. Issues Around Impact ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on the feasibility of impact measurement for journalism based on the experience of ProPublica, a leading non-profit investigative journalism organization.</li> <li>Focuses on the methodological challenges related to impact measurement but does not attempt to quantify impact.</li> <li>Discusses the relevance of some possible KPIs for impact in journalism, such as audience, reach, and engagement.</li> </ul>
Roy Morgan 	Image of Professions Survey ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey on how people in Australia rate the honesty and ethical standards of members of various professions.</li> <li>Doctors are second only to nurses, while lawyers rank 14<sup>th</sup>.</li> <li>Does not provide insight on the underlying motivations for the responses to the survey.</li> </ul>
The Bar Council (UK) 	Chambers Social Responsibility Guide ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guide on corporate social responsibility (CSR) of the legal profession.</li> <li>The scope of legal CSR includes pro bono work, initiatives for social justice and human rights, and environmental responsibilities.</li> <li>Lists moral as well as business reasons for CSR and encourages being vocal about it (noting only 33/200 chambers do so on their website).</li> <li>However, it is prescriptive in nature and does not attempt to quantify the impact on the defined target areas.</li> </ul>
The Law Society 	Future Worlds 2050: Images of the future worlds facing the legal profession 2020-2030 ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on how external factors could influence the legal profession by 2050.</li> <li>Identifies upcoming issues that may affect the law, the legal profession, and society, such as disruption in global supply chains, data security, etc.</li> <li>Suggests that the role of legal professionals and its future impact should target the outlined issues but does not attempt to quantify the past and present impact of the legal profession.</li> </ul>
The Practice 	Drifting Law Students ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews of law students on changing ambitions from serving nonprofits and governments to working in private law firms</li> <li>Aims to provide a “qualitative look at the public-interest drift process examining the stories behind multiple-choice surveys on students’ evolving career orientations.”</li> <li>Finds that law students are mostly sincere when they manifest a public service orientation, even if they make other initial career choices based on economic or reputational reasons.</li> </ul>

<sup>245</sup> Multiple relevant impact drivers considered and selected for quantification



Publisher	Report/article	Year	Summary
	Finding purpose and having a social impact: Lawyers and tax professionals speak out ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey of lawyers rating their perception of the impact they generate.</li> <li>96 percent of law firm attorneys believe their work has a positive social impact.</li> <li>It helps depict the perception of the impact that these professionals have but does not offer comparisons to actual impact measurements.</li> </ul>
	2022 Report on the State of the Legal Market ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on recent trends in the legal market focusing on employment and financial results of law firms.</li> <li>Talent attraction and retention is the main risk to the legal profession.</li> <li>Compensation is not directly linked to the retention of talent, with other factors taking precedence.</li> <li>Inward-looking narrative, focused on impact of external factors in law firms.</li> </ul>
	Rule of Law and Development ( <a href="#">link</a> )	Accessed June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article stating that the Rule of Law is essential for sustainable development and poverty reduction.</li> <li>Discusses the “strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing” nature of Rule of Law and development.</li> <li>Mentions how the Rule of Law is integral to issues such as the property of land and access to natural resources but does not address the specific role of legal professionals in such topics.</li> </ul>
	UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidelines formulated “to assist (UN) Member States in their task of promoting and ensuring the proper role of lawyers should be respected and taken into account by governments”.</li> <li>Compiles best practices on access to justice and legal services, qualifications and training, guarantees for lawyers, etc.</li> </ul>
	Fostering Legal Indicators for Sustainable Development ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report aimed at promoting the implementation of legal impact indicators of the effective implementation of environmental law.</li> <li>Defines the methodology to define, test, and use such new indicators in the measurement of the effectiveness of environmental law, but does not provide a list of existing indicators or past data.</li> </ul>
	Missed Opportunities: The High Cost Of Not Educating Girls ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article on the social and economic impact of lack of education for girls in Afghanistan.</li> <li>Children in the least developed countries do not acquire the foundational skills that education systems should guarantee.</li> <li>Impact of reduced educational opportunities for girls can be seen in earnings and standards of living, child marriage and early childbearing, fertility, or health and nutrition.</li> </ul>
	World Inequality Report ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on trends and statistics linked to inequality.</li> <li>Provides existing quantitative data on the topic, but states that reliable data on inequality is still lacking and should be considered a global public good.</li> <li>Global inequality is close to early 20th century levels, with important geographic differences.</li> <li>National income is not reflective of inequality within countries.</li> </ul>
	Profession Perceptions ( <a href="#">link</a> )	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey on how happy people would be if their child started working in a particular profession.</li> <li>Doctors are second only to scientists, lawyers rank 5th globally.</li> <li>Does not provide insight on the underlying motivations for the responses to the survey or the likely differences across areas of law.</li> </ul>

## B. Methodology and detailed outputs of big data analysis

The contribution of this report to the impact quantification of the legal profession is also supported by a big data analysis that has helped identify and quantify statistical links between the work of legal professionals and the indicators that reflect their economic and social impact.

The methodology for building the analytical model consisted of five stages, as seen in Exhibit 1 below:

1. **Build long list of KPIs:** Defined long list of approximately 200 quantifiable KPIs that can be used as proxies for activities of legal professionals (e.g., number of legal professionals by population size, access to civil justice) and SDG areas (e.g., employment rate for economic development, GINI Index for equality and inclusion, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for environmental sustainability). The KPIs for the activities of legal professionals are based on interviews with legal experts, while the SDG-related KPIs are defined within each of the 17 SDGs (indicators measured and monitored by the United Nations and other multilateral organizations to report on the progress achieved in each of the targets defined).
2. **Collect data and prioritize KPIs:** Searched and collected historical data across all countries and years available for each KPI (e.g., from industry reports such as those from the World Justice Project, United Nations, and the World Bank). After the first data collection effort, we have also iteratively refined the KPI list based on data availability and relevance and narrowed down to approximately 60 of them (approximately 20 input KPIs linked to activities of legal professionals and approximately 40 output KPIs linked to SDGs).
3. **Build and run correlation model:** Built dataset with the 60 KPIs per country by year, as well as their evolution over time. For each KPI, we considered its absolute value, its average absolute year-on-year difference, and its average percent year-on-year difference. We also segmented the countries into four quartiles based on their GDP/capita to better control for developmental differences. Based on this, we have defined more than 25,000 pairs of input KPIs (linked to the activities of legal professionals) and output KPIs (linked to SDGs), both globally and by GDP quartile. We then built a model to compile the correlations between each of the 25,000 pairs.
4. **Prioritize correlations:** First, we filtered for the KPI pairs with the most significant correlations, defined as follows:
  - **Globally:** data available for more than 30 countries and correlation greater than +/-50 percent
  - **By GDP quartile** (when no global correlation identified): data available for more than 10 countries within quartile and correlation greater than +/-60 percent. By assessing the link between input and output KPI at a GDP quartile level, the analysis could partially isolate the effect of the differences in countries' levels of development, which is often a strong indicator of SDG performance.

We then prioritized the list of KPI pairs based on which were most likely to inform quantification by assessing the each KPI pair for, e.g., coincidental factors or irregular patterns among quartiles.

5. **Quantify the impact:** In the last stage, the potential impact of these significant correlations in the output KPIs was estimated as the effect on the output KPI of bringing all the countries analyzed to the input KPI performance of the top-quartile countries (in terms of input KPI). In some cases where information was available, the GDP impact was also estimated. For example, the correlation between regulatory quality and universal health coverage suggests that if all countries performed like those in the top quartile, an additional 1.4 billion people would benefit from healthcare coverage. In turn, these people would be able to save USD 184 billion on healthcare.

Exhibit 1. Five stages of the big data analysis.

**A big data analysis helped identify key correlations between the activities of legal professionals and social and economic indicators and helped quantify areas of potential indirect impact**

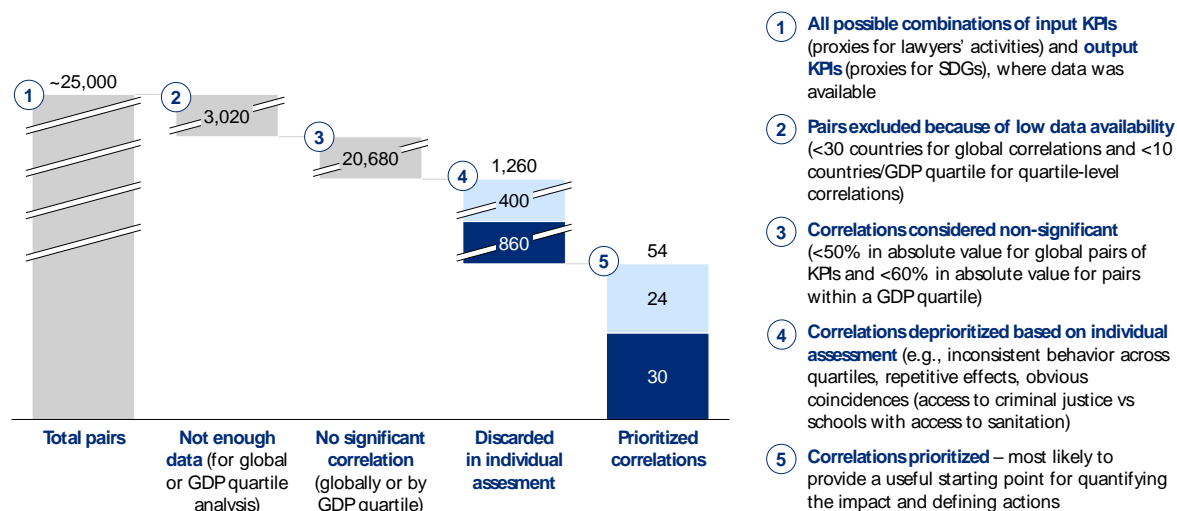
Build long list of KPIs	Collect data and prioritize KPIs	Build and run correlation model	Prioritize correlations	Quantify
<p>Defined long list of ~200 quantifiable proxies for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities of legal professionals</li> <li>SDG areas</li> </ul>	<p>Collected historical data and refined the <b>KPI list</b> to ~60 (~20 input KPIs linked to activities of legal professionals and ~40 output KPIs linked to SDGs)</p>	<p>Built model to compile correlations between each possible pair of input and output KPIs, both globally and by GDP quartile</p> <p><b>25,000</b> correlations assessed</p>	<p>Prioritized the <b>KPI pairs with most significant correlations</b> (both quantitatively and through expert assessments)</p> <p><b>54</b> correlations prioritized</p>	<p>Estimated the potential gain in the <b>output KPI</b> if all countries performed like those in the top quartile in terms of input KPI</p>

The result of this analysis shows that out of approximately 25,000 possible KPI pairs, approximately 24,000 showed no significant correlation or did not benefit from sufficient data to estimate the correlation. For the approximately 1,300 KPI pairs remaining where a significant correlation was found, approximately 1,260 were discarded in individual assessments, and the approximately 60 KPI pairs remaining were prioritized for further analysis and quantification. These correlations could be found either for the global sample analyzed (24 correlations) or within specific GDP quartiles (30 correlations).

Exhibit 2. Identifying the prioritized correlations.

## The analysis revealed multiple correlations between lawyers' activities and SDG areas

Global By GDP quartile



Of the significant correlations found, most of them relate to economic development, followed by peace, justice, and institutional strength. These results are aligned with those from the survey distributed among legal professionals and the general population, which concluded that legal professionals had a higher perceived impact on economic growth and an increasing awareness of their impact on peace, justice, and institutional strength.

Exhibit 3. Significant correlations by area of impact.

## Most correlations relate to economic growth, followed by peace, justice, and institutional strength; sustainability; and health and well-being

Global By GDP Quartile

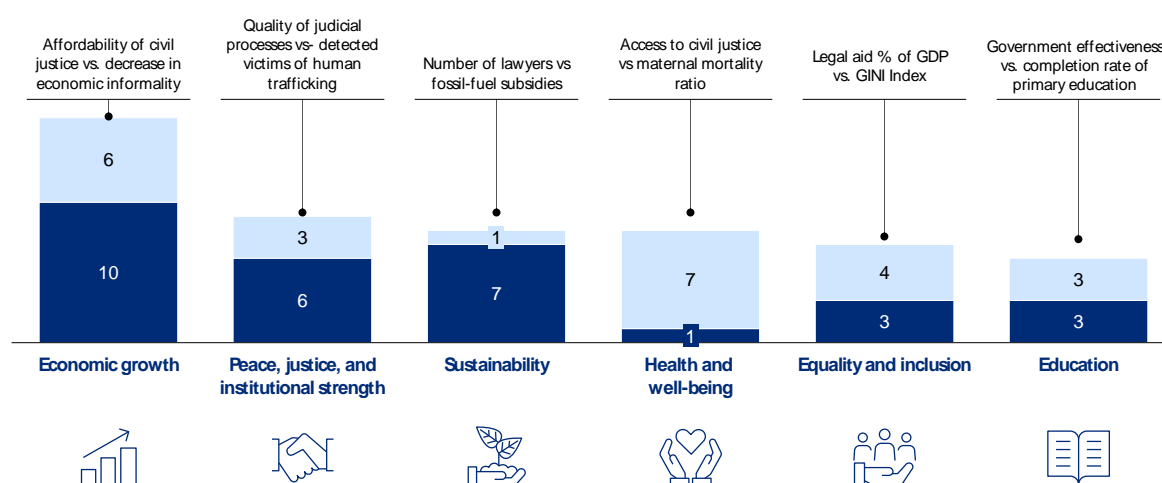
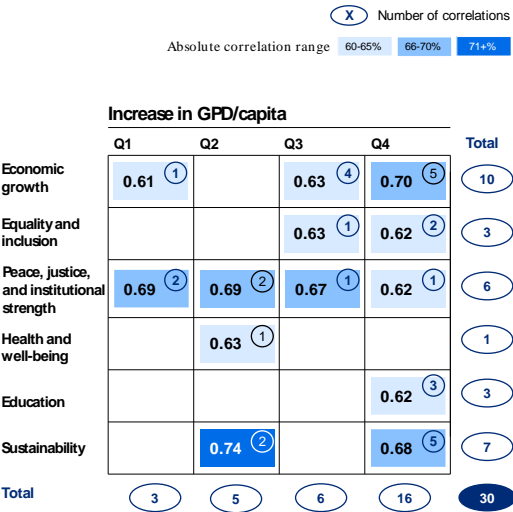






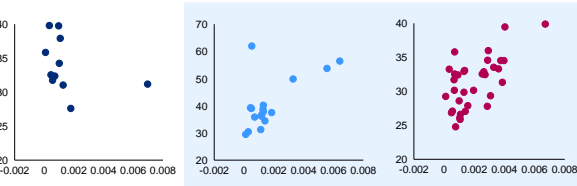
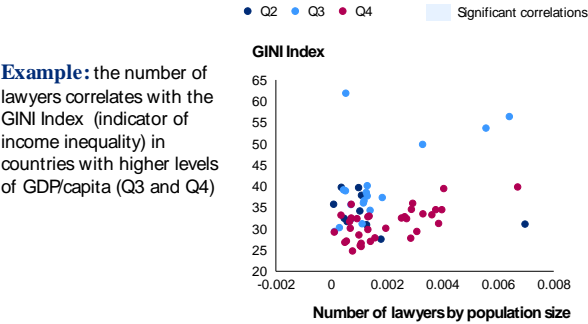
Exhibit 5. Average values of correlations within GDP quartiles.

Average correlations within GDP quartiles vary among SDGs



Yet, many correlations are significantly stronger within GDP quartiles than globally

Example: the number of lawyers correlates with the GINI Index (indicator of income inequality) in countries with higher levels of GDP/capita (Q3 and Q4)



Details of the 24 significant global correlations identified can be found below in Exhibits 6-8.

Exhibit 6. Global correlations (1/3)

## Global correlations (1/ 3)

xx Correlation value    xx # countries

SDG area	Input KPIs (closer to lawyer activities)	Output KPIs (closer to SDG areas)	Correlation value and number of countries	Impact implication
Economic growth	Effectiveness of civil justice (0-1)	Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP (%)	0.67 77	A higher effectiveness of civil justice could help increase R&D expenditure
	Relative growth in average disposition time of supreme courts (%)	Proportion of medium and high-tech manufacturing value added in total value added (%)	-0.63 43	Lowering disposition times could help increase high-tech manufacturing
	W.J.P Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Global Innovation Index (0-100)	0.88 122	A higher Rule of Law could help increase innovation
	Quality of judicial processes (0-18)	Proportion of informal employment (%)	-0.60 56	A higher quality of judicial processes could help lower informal employment
	W.J.P Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Proportion of informal output (% of GDP)	-0.66 126	A higher Rule of Law could help lower informal economic output
	W.J.P Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Proportion of informal employment (%)	-0.68 48	A higher Rule of Law could help lower informal employment
Education	Quality of judicial processes (0-18)	Proportion of youth not in education, employment or training (%)	-0.51 67	A higher quality of judicial processes could help lower the share of idle youth
	W.J.P Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Female secondary school completion rates (%)	0.61 131	A higher Rule of Law could help increase female education rates
	W.J.P Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Proportion of youth not in education, employment or training (%)	-0.68 57	A higher Rule of Law could help lower the share of idle youth

## Global correlations (2/ 3)

XX Correlation value    XX # countries

SDG area	Input KPIs (closer to lawyer activities)	Output KPIs (closer to SDG areas)	Correlation value and number of countries	Impact implication
Equality & inclusion	Timeliness and effectiveness of the criminal adjudication system (0-1)	Absolute difference in life expectancy (female – male) (years)	-0.55 46	A more timely and effective criminal adjudication system could help bridge the gender-based life expectancy gap
	Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score	Absolute difference in life expectancy (female – male) (years)	-0.61 49	A lower corruption perception could help bridge the gender-based life expectancy gap
	Government effectiveness (-2.5-+2.5)	Absolute difference in life expectancy (female – male) (years)	-0.63 49	Higher government effectiveness could help bridge the gender-based life expectancy gap
	Contract enforceability score (0-100)	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (%)	-0.61 148	Better contract enforceability could help lower food insecurity
Health & well-being	Government effectiveness (-2.5-+2.5)	Prevalence of undernourishment (%)	-0.65 157	Higher government effectiveness could help bridge lower undernourishment
	Regulatory quality (-2.5-+2.5)	Universal health coverage (UHC) service coverage index (0-100)	0.74 190	A higher regulatory quality could help increase the universal health coverage
	Government effectiveness (-2.5-+2.5)	Maternal mortality (deaths per 100k live births)	-0.61 184	Higher government effectiveness could help lower maternal mortality
	Accessibility and affordability of civil justice (0-1)	Maternal mortality (deaths per 100k live births)	-0.55 136	A more accessible and affordable civil justice system could help lower maternal mortality

## Global correlations (3/ 3)

xx Correlation value    xx # countries

SDG area	Input KPIs (closer to lawyer activities)	Output KPIs (closer to SDG areas)	Correlation value and number of countries	Impact implication
Health & well-being	WJP Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Life expectancy (years)	0.74 136	A higher Rule of Law could help increase life expectancy
	WJP Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Universal health coverage (1-100)	0.71 135	A higher Rule of Law could help increase universal health coverage
	WJP Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Change in universal health coverage (%)	-0.61 135	A higher Rule of Law could lower the rate of growth of universal health coverage
Peace, justice, & institutional strength	Accessibility and affordability of civil justice (0-1)	Limitation of government powers (0-1)	0.69 139	A more accessible and affordable civil justice could help limit government power
	Average disposition time first instance (days)	Time enforcing contracts (days)	0.78 44	Lower disposition times could lower the time required to enforce contracts
	Accessibility and affordability of civil Justice (0-1)	WJP Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	0.55 136	A more accessible and affordable civil justice could increase the Rule of Law
Sustainability	WJP Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Fossil CO2 emissions (Ton/capita)	0.60 135	A higher Rule of Law could increase fossil CO2 emissions

Details of the 33 significant correlations within GDP quartiles analyzed in the report can be found below in exhibits 9-12.

Exhibit 9. Correlations within GDP quartiles (1/4)

## Correlations within GDP quartiles (1/ 4)

XX # countries in GDP quartile with significant correlation  
(based on sufficient data availability and correlation value)

SDG area	Input KPIs (closer to lawyer activities)	Output KPIs (closer to SDG areas)	Correlation value by GDP quartile, number of countries	Impact implication
Economic growth	Relative change in accessibility and affordability of civil justice (%)	Proportion of informal employment (%)		A faster growth in the access and affordability of civil justice could help lower informal employment
	Relative change in timeliness of civil justice (%)	Proportion of informal employment (%)		An acceleration in the timeliness of civil justice could help lower informal employment
	Absolute change in effectiveness of civil justice (0-1)	Proportion of informal employment (%)		A faster growth in the effectiveness of civil justice could help lower informal employment
	Absolute change in average disposition time Supreme Courts (days)	Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita (%)		An acceleration of dispositions could help accelerate the growth of real GDP/capita
	Absolute change in average disposition time Supreme Courts (days)	Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person (%)		An acceleration of dispositions could help accelerate the growth of real GDP/employed person
	National compliance level with labor rights (0-10)	Relative change in high-tech manufacturing levels (%)		A higher compliance with labor rights could help increase high-tech manufacturing
	Relative change in the number of cases brought to court with legal aid	Relative difference in the proportion of informal employment (%)		A more rapid growth in legal aid could accelerate the drop in informal employment
	Relative change in the number of cases not brought to court with legal aid (%)	Relative change in DGE estimates of informal output as % of GDP (%)		A more rapid growth in legal aid could accelerate the drop in informal output



## Correlations within GDP quartiles (2/ 4)

XX # countries in GDP quartile with significant correlation  
(based on sufficient data availability and correlation value)

SDG area	Input KPIs (closer to lawyer activities)	Output KPIs (closer to SDG areas)	Correlation value by GDP quartile, number of countries	Impact implication
Economic growth	WJP Rule of Law Index: Overall score (0-1)	Change in annual growth rate in GDP per capita (%)		A higher Rule of Law could accelerate the growth in GDP/capita
	Change in WJP Rule of Law Index Overall score (%)	Proportion of informal employment (%)		A more rapidly growing Rule of Law could help lower informal employment
Education	Relative change in government effectiveness (%)	Primary completion rate gender gap (female - male) (%)		A more rapid increase in government effectiveness could help lower the gender-based education gap
	Relative change in access and affordability of civil justice (%)	Change in proportion of youth not in education, employment or training (%)		An accelerated growth in access and affordability of civil justice could accelerate the drop in idle youth
	Relative change in effectiveness of criminal investigation system (%)	Proportion of youth not in education, employment or training (%)		An accelerated growth in effectiveness of criminal investigations could lower the levels of idle youth
Equality & inclusion	Legal aid (% of GDP)	GINI index (0-100)		An increase in legal aid could lower inequality
	Proportion of lawyers in population	GINI index (0-100)		More lawyers in the population could increase inequality
	Proportion of lawyers in population	GINI index (0-100)		More lawyers in the population could increase inequality
Health & well-being	Limitation of government powers (0-1)	Change in access to affordable treatments for HPV (%)		More limitation of government powers could increase access to treatment

## Correlations within GDP quartiles (3/ 4)

XX # countries in GDP quartile with significant correlation  
(based on sufficient data availability and correlation value)

SDG area	Input KPIs (closer to lawyer activities)	Output KPIs (closer to SDG areas)	Correlation value by GDP quartile, number of countries	Impact implication
Peace, justice, & institutional strength	Accessibility and affordability of civil justice (0-1)	Relative change in government effectiveness (%)		A higher accessibility and affordability of civil justice could improve government effectiveness
	Change in accessibility and affordability of civil justice (0-1)	Change in effectiveness of civil justice (0-1)		An accelerated increase in accessibility and affordability of civil justice could accelerate improvements in its effectiveness
	Absolute change in average clearance rate across instances (%)	Absolute difference in unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population (%)		A faster growth in clearance rates could fasten the drop in unsentenced detainees
	Relative change in average disposition time in second instance courts	Absolute difference in time enforcing contracts (days)		A faster drop in disposition times could accelerate the enforcement of contracts
	Proportion of lawyers in population	National compliance level with labor rights (0-10)		More lawyers in the population could increase compliance with labor rights
	Proportion of lawyers in population	Absolute change in the number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population		More lawyers in the population could help accelerate the drop in victims of intentional homicide
Sustain- ability	Relative change in the number of cases not brought to court with legal aid (%)	Relative change in fossil CO2 emissions per capita (%)		More legal aid could help lower CO2 emissions
	Proportion of lawyers in population	Fossil-fuel subsidies (consumption and production) as a proportion of total GDP (%)		More lawyers in the population could increase fossil fuel subsidies

## Correlations within GDP quartiles (4/ 4)

XX # countries in GDP quartile with significant correlation  
(based on sufficient data availability and correlation value)

SDG area	Input KPIs (closer to lawyer activities)	Output KPIs (closer to SDG areas)	Correlation value by GDP quartile, number of countries	Impact implication
Sustain- ability	Proportion of lawyers in population	Relative change in renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption (%)		More lawyers in the population could accelerate the adoption of renewable energy
	Quality of judicial processes index (0-18)	Installed renewable electricity-generating capacity (watts per capita)		A higher quality of judicial processes could help increase the amount of renewable electricity
	Regulatory quality (-2.5-+2.5)	Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)		A higher regulatory quality could help lower air pollution
	Contract enforceability score (0-100)	Absolute change in installed renewable electricity-generating capacity (watts per capita)		A better contract enforceability could accelerate the increase in renewable electricity
	Relative change in total resolved cases (%)	Absolute change in the average proportion of Marine Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) covered by protected areas (%)		A more rapid increase in resolved cases could accelerate the growth of protected marine biodiversity

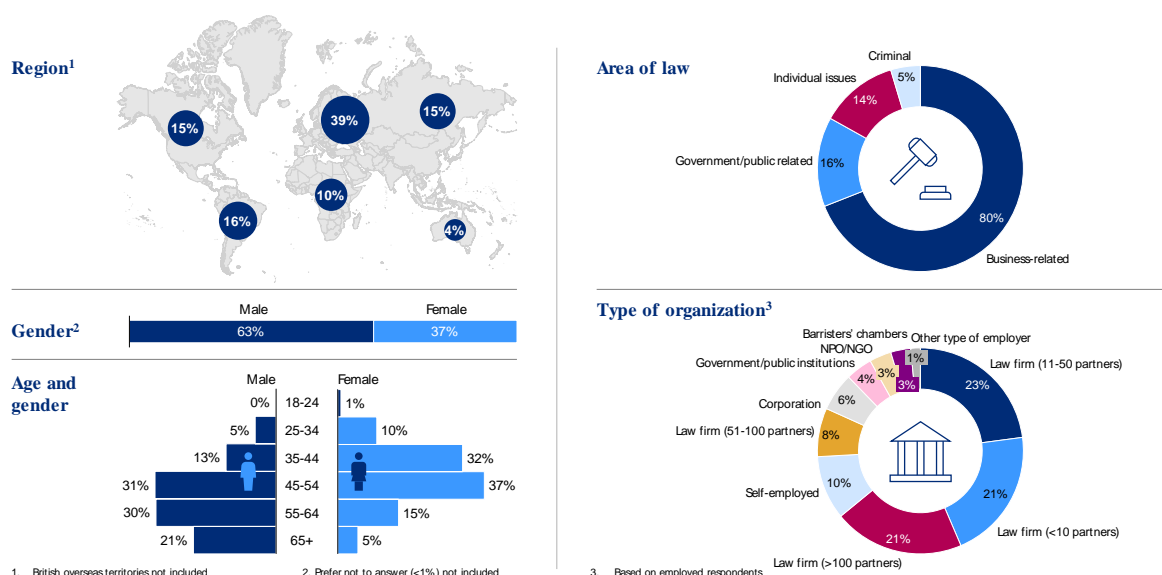
## C. Detailed survey results

To complement the analysis, two surveys were launched during September and October 2023: one with approximately 700 legal professionals and one with approximately 7,600 respondents from the general population in 16 countries. The surveys were aimed at:

- Understanding the views of a broader group of legal professionals, including IBA members and those of the general population (ultimate beneficiaries)
- Complementing the analytical assessment and drawing comparisons (e.g., analytical assessment of impact vs. self-perception of legal professionals vs. perception of broader population)
- Identifying trends and (in)validating hypotheses (e.g., deterioration of perception over time, generational differences in attitude)

Exhibit 13. Demographic distribution of internal survey respondents.

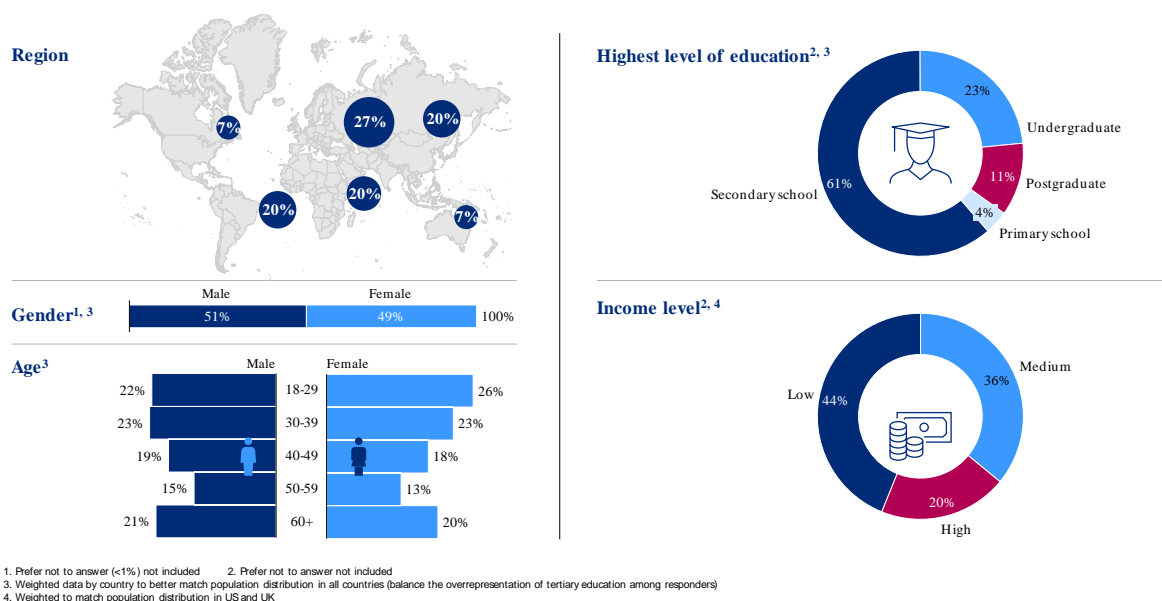
### Internal survey: Demographic distribution of the ~700 respondents



The exclusion criteria for the general population survey included legal professionals or their immediate family members and people aged 18 and under.

Exhibit 14. Demographic distribution of external survey respondents.

## External survey: Demographic distribution of the 7,581 respondents



After initial demographic questions, respondents to both surveys were asked about the impact of legal professionals on society. Possible answers ranged on a scale from one to five, with one indicating “very negative” and five indicating “very positive.”

The responses to this question show that though most people believe the legal profession has a positive social and economic impact, the self-perception of legal professionals is more positive than the view of the general population (78 percent vs. 54 percent believe the impact is highly or somewhat positive). 14 percent of legal professionals and 34 percent of the general population believe the profession does not have any impact or do not know about it. 8 percent of legal professionals and 12 percent of the general population believe the impact is negative.

The second question inquired about the impact of the legal profession on the six specific SDG areas covered in the report (economic growth; peace, justice, and institutional strength; equality and inclusion; education; environmental sustainability; and health and well-being). Possible answers were also based on a scale from one to five, with one representing “very negative impact” and five representing “very positive impact.” Legal professionals were randomly assigned to answer questions related to two of the 6 areas of impact.

Before being asked about the impact of the legal profession on the six specific areas, the general population was first asked to rate their interest in each of these six areas, along with five other areas not related to the legal profession (to avoid bias), with possible answers based on a scale from one to five, with one representing “very uninterested” and five representing “very interested.” Respondents were only asked about the impact of the legal profession in the areas in which they showed interest (responding “neither interested nor uninterested” or higher).

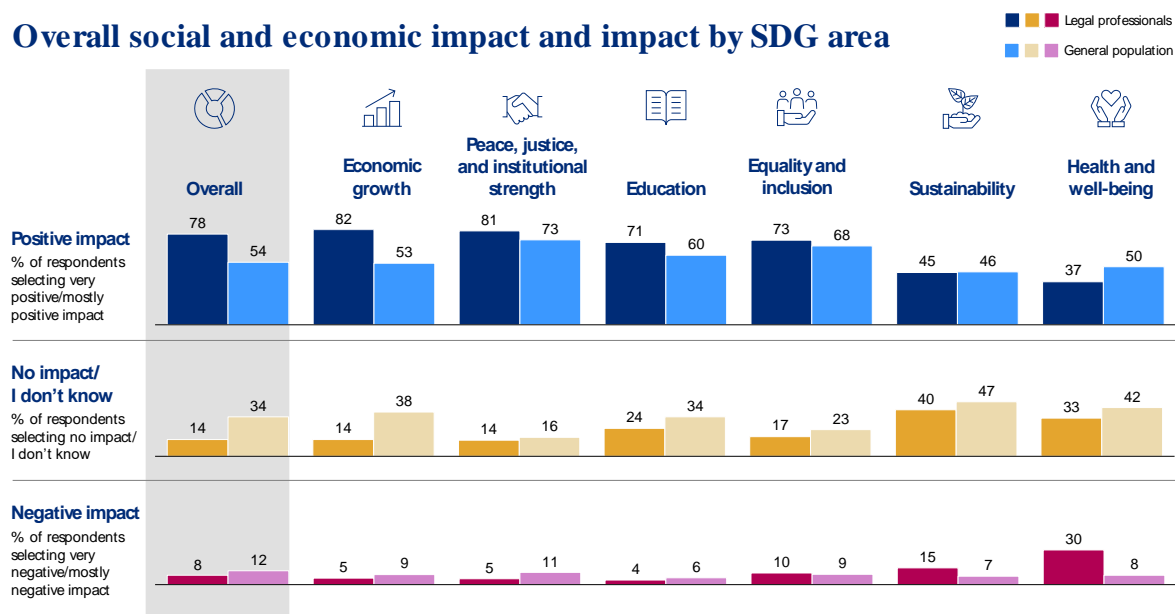
Based on the answers to this question, it can be inferred that legal professionals see most of their positive impact in driving economic growth (80 percent), yet this is ranked relatively lower by the general population (53 percent). When it comes to peace, justice, and institutional strength, both groups recognize a significant positive impact (with 80 percent and 73 percent, respectively).

Both legal professionals and the general population see the profession’s positive impact on education and equality and inclusion as moderate, yet legal professionals have a relatively more positive view. Sustainability and health and well-being are ranked relatively low by both groups. Moreover, 30 percent of legal professionals believe their work has a negative impact on health and well-being.



Exhibit 15. Overall socioeconomic impact and impact by SDG area.

## Overall social and economic impact and impact by SDG area

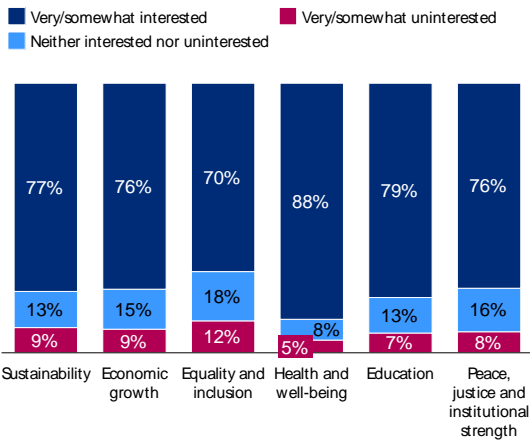


While the general population believes that that legal professionals have a lesser impact in most SDG areas than legal professionals themselves, the general population shows high levels of interest (over 70 percent are very/somewhat interested) in all SDG-related areas and its members are particularly interested in topics related to health and well-being (88 percent are very/somewhat interested). Nonetheless, health and well-being is one of the areas where they see least impact from the legal profession (50 percent see positive impact).

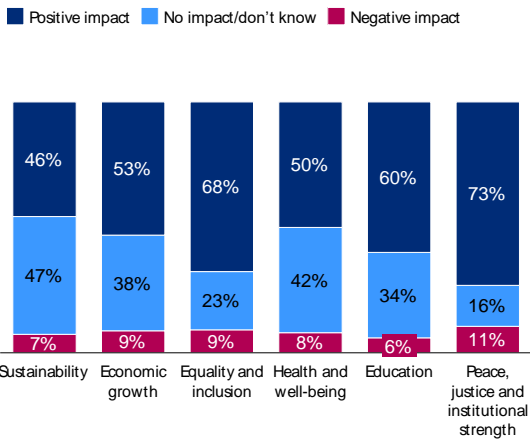
Exhibit 16. General population: SDG interest vs perceived impact

General population: SDG Interest vs. Impact

Interest in health and well-being is higher than in any other SDG area...



... but the general population does not particularly see the impact of legal professionals in that area (only 50% positive impact vs. 68% in equality and inclusion)

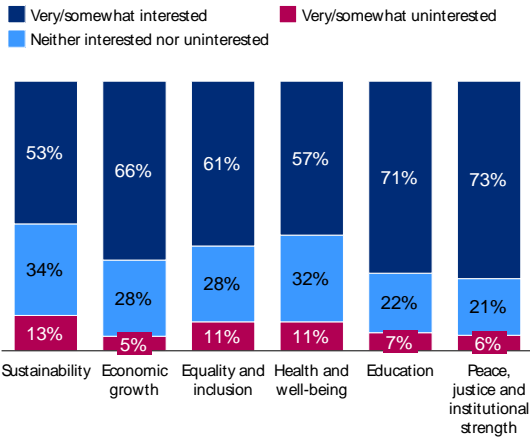


Legal professionals show lower levels of interest in SDG areas across the board than the general population. However, they are most interested in peace, justice and institutional strength, the area where they also see their profession as having most impact.

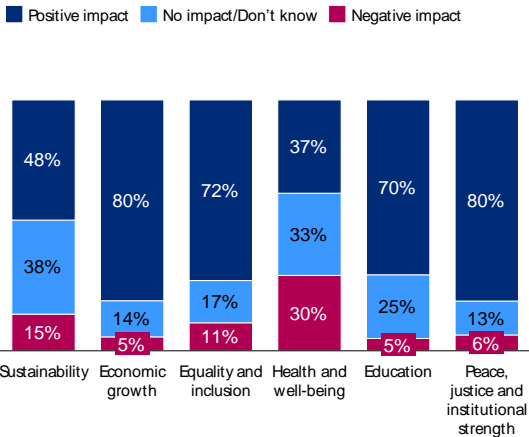
Legal professionals also agree with the general population that environmental sustainability and health and well-being are the areas in which their impact is more limited (48 percent and 37 percent, respectively, rate their impact positively), while they believe to have a very high impact on economic growth (80 percent see positive impact).

Legal professionals: SDG Interest vs. Impact

Legal professionals show highest interest in peace, justice and institutional strength



... which is also the area where they see the profession contributing most (alongside economic development)



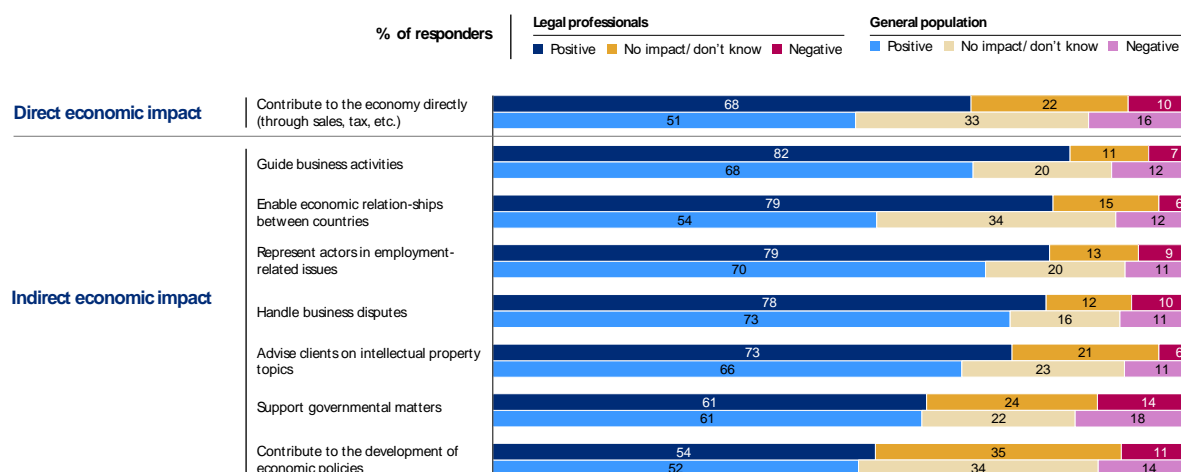
For the next part of the surveys, respondents were asked about their views on the impact of a series of activities that legal professionals participate in. Specifically, each respondent was asked about two of the six impact areas assessed. For each area, a list of activities was provided, with possible answers based on a scale from one to five with one representing “very negative impact” and five representing “very positive impact.” Specific results can be found in exhibits below.

Legal professionals see their economic-development-related activities as more impactful than the general population does. While legal professionals see most positive impact in their guidance of business activities, the general population ranks the work related to business disputes highest.

Both legal professionals and the general population rank employment-related activities highly in terms of their positive impact. When it comes to the negative drivers of impact, both legal professionals and the general population rate contributions to policy and government matters highest.

Exhibit 18. Views on economic development-related activities.

## Deep dive on economic-development-related activities: Legal professionals vs. general population

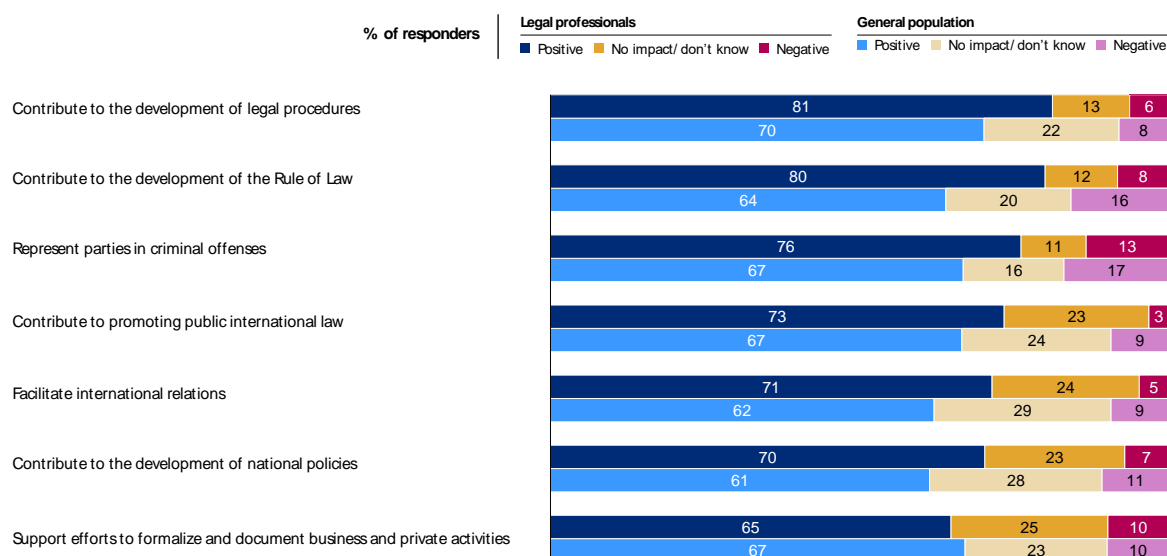


On average, legal professionals view their impact on peace, justice, and institutional strength more positively than the general population does. Both legal professionals and the general population see the most positive impact in their contribution to developing legal procedures.

However, the general population places more emphasis on the positive impact of the efforts of legal professionals related to formalization and documentation, as well as their representation of parties in criminal offenses and the promotion of public international law. At the same time, the representation of parties in criminal offenses is also seen by both cohorts as the highest driver of negative impact.

Exhibit 19. Views on peace, justice, and institutional strength-related activities.

## Deep dive on peace-, justice-, and institutional-strength-related activities: Legal professionals vs. general population



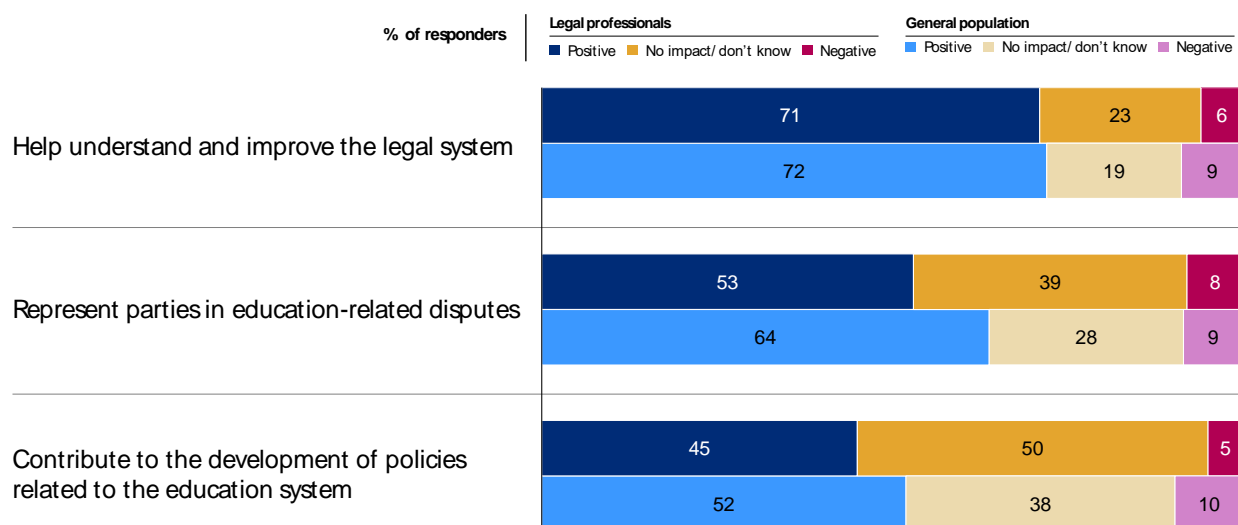
Education is the only SDG area where, on average, legal professionals view their positive impact as lower than the general population views it.

In terms of the ranking of activities, the two cohorts are aligned, with help in understanding and improving the legal system being seen as the leading driver of positive impact, followed by contribution to education-related disputes and education policies. However, the general population sees the latter two as significantly stronger drivers of positive impact than the legal professionals do.

When it comes to the negative drivers of impact, the largest difference in views relates to the contribution of legal professionals to education policies (rated more negatively by the general population).

Exhibit 20. Views on education-related activities.

## Deep dive on education-related activities: Legal professionals vs. general population

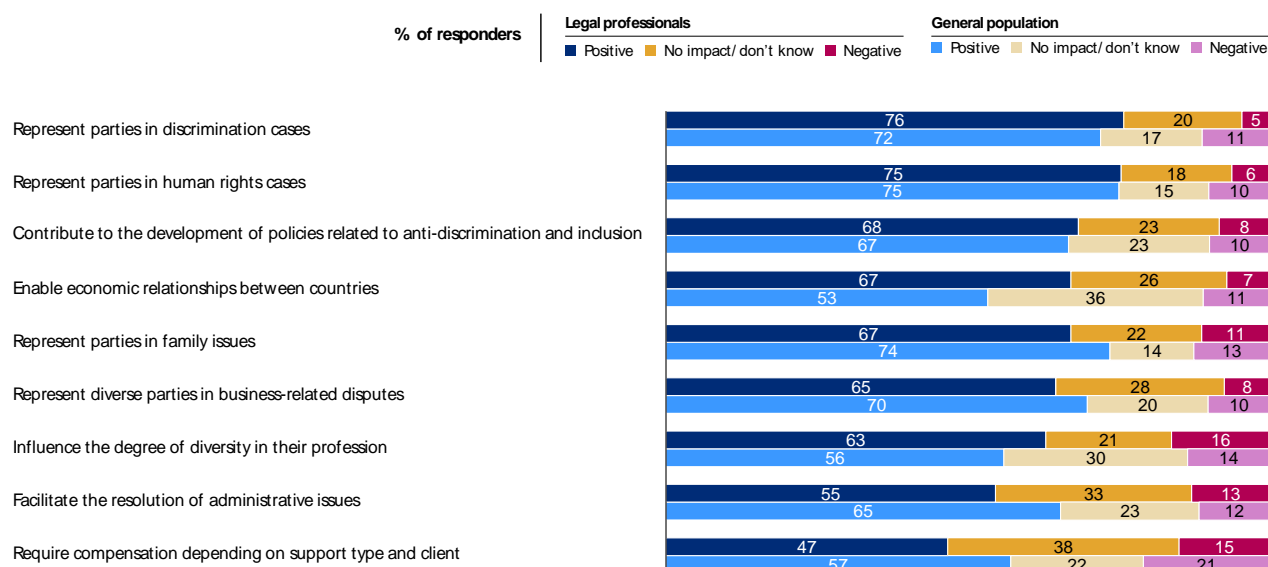


On average, legal professionals and the overall population rank the impact of the profession on equality and inclusion similarly. Both legal professionals and the overall population see representation in human rights cases and discrimination cases as the highest drivers of impact.

The highest differences in views appear in the facilitation of the resolution of administrative issues followed by representation on family issues (both ranked higher by the general population). When it comes to the negative drivers of impact, the largest difference in views relates to compensation rates (rated more negatively by the general population).

Exhibit 21. Views on equality and inclusion-related activities.

## Deep dive on equality- and inclusion-related activities: Legal professionals vs. general population



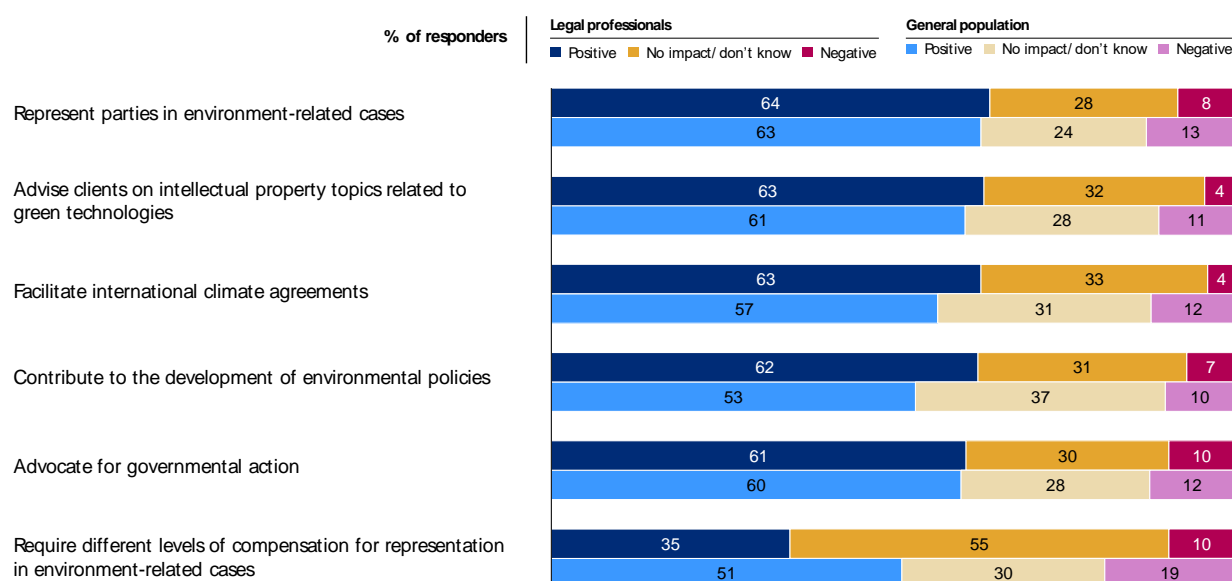


Overall, legal professionals see their environmental sustainability-related work as more impactful than the general population does. Both legal professionals and the general population see most positive impact coming from the representation of parties in environmental cases and the IP work related to green technologies.

When it comes to the negative drivers of impact, the largest differences in views relate to the compensation rates (rated more negatively by the general population).

Exhibit 22. Views on environmental sustainability-related activities.

## Deep dive on environmental sustainability-related activities: Legal professionals vs. general population



On average, legal professionals rank the impact of their profession on health and well-being lower than the general population.

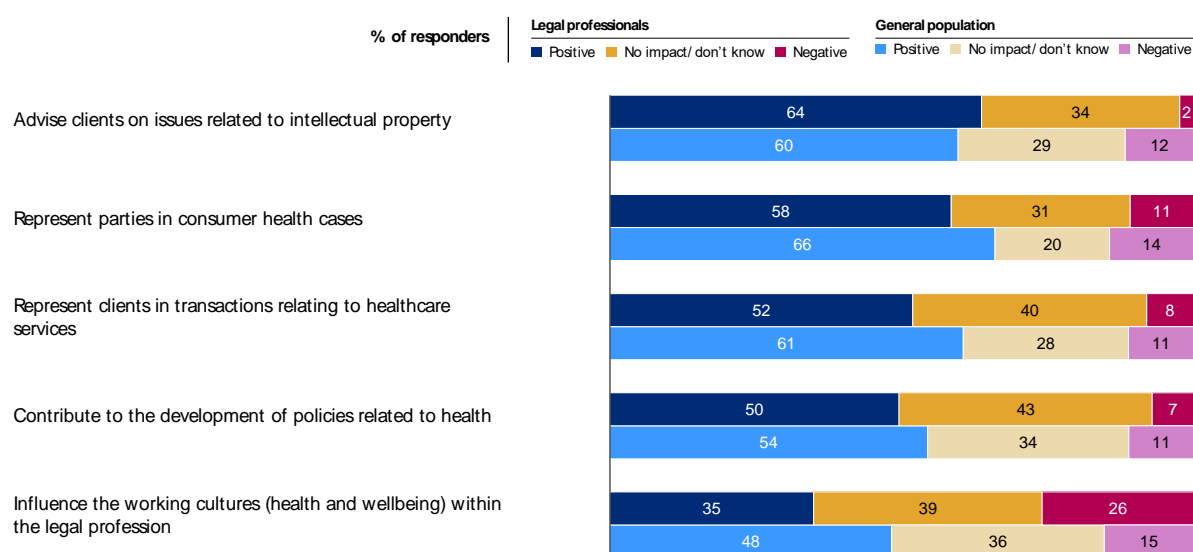
Both legal professionals and the overall population see the advice on IP (e.g., related to drug discovery) as one of the highest drivers of positive impact, as well as the representation of parties in consumer health cases.

The greatest differences in views appear in the influence of legal professionals on the working cultures of their organizations and in the representation of clients in transactions relating to healthcare services (both ranked more positively by the general population).

When it comes to the negative drivers of impact, both legal professionals and the general population see most issues related to the working cultures within the profession. Yet, the perception is significantly more negative among legal professionals themselves.

Exhibit 23. Views on health and well-being-related activities.

## Deep dive on health- and wellbeing-related activities: Legal professionals vs. general population



In the general population survey, respondents were also asked about their past experience with legal services. They were offered a list of six services, among which legal services was one, and asked to select those they had used in the last two years. For those that indicated they had used legal services, two follow-up questions were asked. The first one inquired about the type of legal service used, with four predefined answer options and a text box for other types. The second question asked about the satisfaction level with the outcome of the legal service used, with possible answers based on a scale of one to five with one representing “very satisfied” and five representing “very dissatisfied.”

These questions have helped identify how people’s exposure to and experience with legal services links to their perceived impact of the legal profession’s impact. Respondents who have used legal services in the past two years have a significantly more positive view than those who have not (71 percent vs. 49 percent).

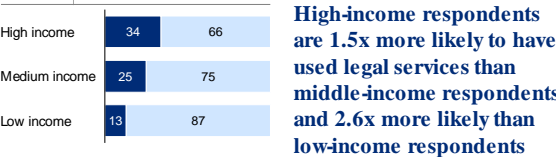
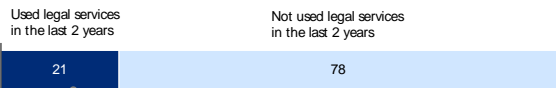
Responses to these questions were also cross-referenced to responses to the initial demographic questions. This led to the conclusion that income levels also seem to be a significant factor in the level of access to legal services. While only 21 percent of the general population has used legal services in the past two years, high-income respondents were 1.5x more likely to have used them than middle-income respondents and more than 2.5x more likely than low-income respondents. Additionally, high-income respondents were more likely to see the impact as positive than low-income ones (62 percent vs. 49 percent).

The types of legal services people had made use of seemed to have little impact on their perception, yet people who has used legal services in a business or criminal context seemed to be more positive about the profession’s impact than those who worked with legal professionals on individual or government-related issues.

Exhibit 24. General population: views by income level and exposure to different areas of law.

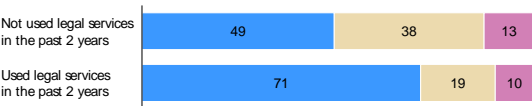
General population: Views by income level and exposure to different areas of law

Only 21% of the general population has used legal services in the past 2 years

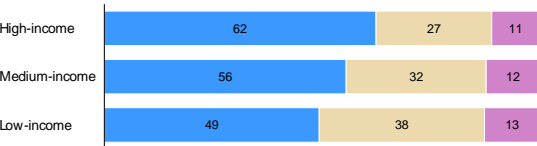


High-income respondents are 1.5x more likely to have used legal services than middle-income respondents and 2.6x more likely than low-income respondents

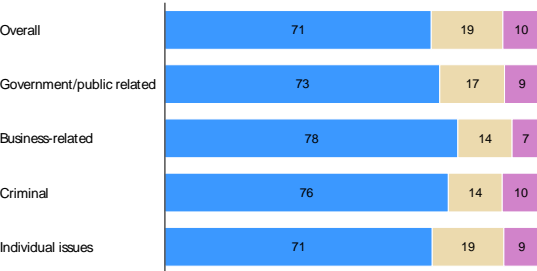
Respondents who have used legal services in the past 2 years have a significantly more positive view on the impact than those who have not



Similarly, high-income respondents are more likely to see the impact of the legal profession as more positive



Respondents have relatively similar views on the impact regardless of the area of law they have made use of

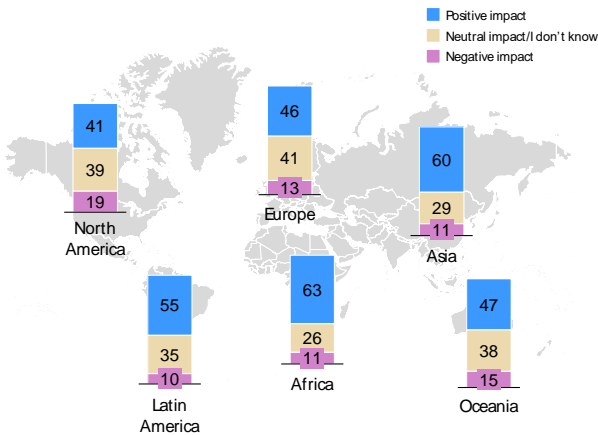


When it comes to geographic differences, respondents from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have the most positive views on the impact of the legal profession (approximately 60 percent) among the general population. Europe and North America rank last (approximately 43 percent). Higher-income people in lower-middle-income countries tend to see the impact of legal professionals as most positive, while lower-income people in high-income countries as least positive.

Exhibit 25. General population: views by geography and country-level income.

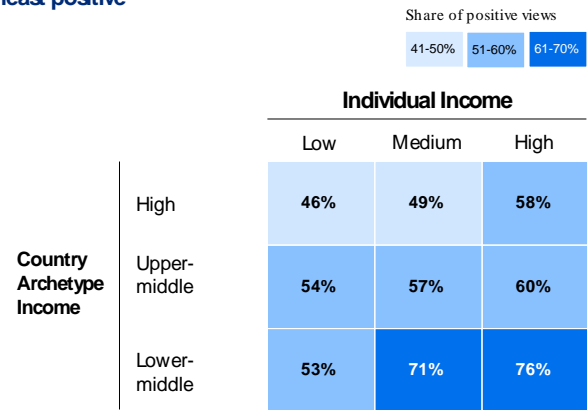
General population: Views by geography

Across geographies, respondents from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have the most positive views on the impact of the legal profession. Europe and North America rank last.



General population: Views by individual and country-level income

Higher-income people in lower-income countries tend to see the impact of legal professionals as most positive. Lower-income people in higher-income countries view impact as least positive



Level of education is also a moderate driver of the awareness of the impact of the legal profession, and of the belief in its positive impact (more than 60 percent of tertiary education graduates vs. 58 percent of primary school graduates and 51 percent of secondary school graduates).

Among the general population, younger respondents tend to view the impact of the legal profession more positively than those from the older generation (63 percent in the 25 to 34 group vs. 44 percent in the 65 and older group). This effect is not observable among legal professionals, where the younger respondents see the impact as slightly less positive (78 percent in the 25 to 34 group and 72 percent in the 35 to 44 group vs. 79+ percent in the 65 and older group see a positive impact).

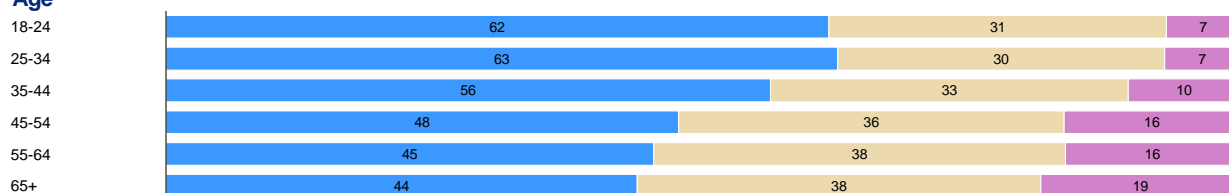
On the other hand, gender does not seem to significantly impact the views of the general population or the legal professional cohort. In the legal professionals' cohort, male respondents appear slightly more positive about the impact than female ones.

Exhibit 26. General population: views by age, gender, and highest level of education.

## General population: Views by age, gender, and highest level of education

Positive impact Neutral impact/I don't know Negative impact

### Age



### Gender



### Education level



Exhibit 27. Legal professionals: views by age, gender, and area of practice.

Legal professionals: Views by age, gender, and area of practice

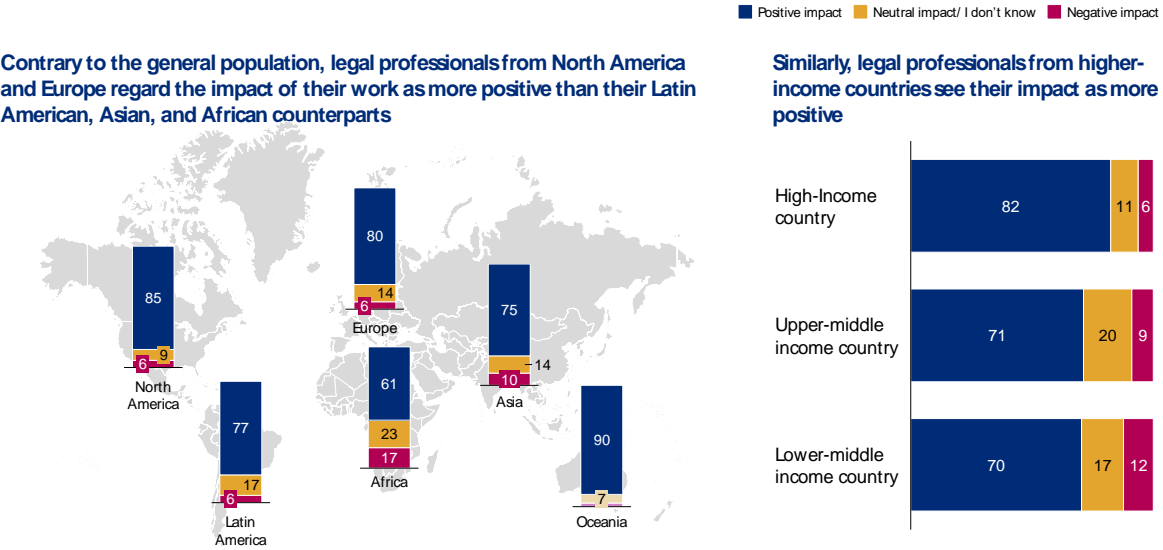


The area of practice drives some level of difference in the perception of impact among legal professionals. Those practicing criminal law and government / public related law have a slightly less positive view than professionals in other areas of law (75 percent vs. approximately 78-80 percent).

Contrary to the general population, legal professionals from North America, Europe, and Latin America regard the impact of their work as more positive than their Asian and African counterparts (approximately 80 percent vs. approximately 70 percent).

Exhibit 28. Legal professionals: views by geography and country-level income.

Legal professionals: Views by geography and income level of the country of origin

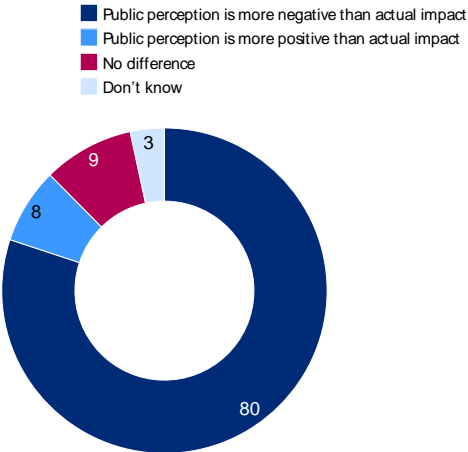


When asked about the difference between impact and perception, 80 percent of legal professionals believe that it is more negative than the actual impact. Leading causes are the negative stereotypes in popular culture (70 percent), followed by the tendency to associate legal professionals with problems (63 percent) and media attention and negative press (56 percent).

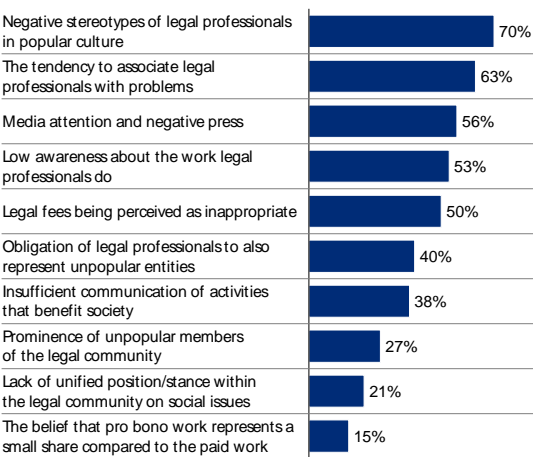
Exhibit 29. Legal professionals: perception of the legal profession’s impact and drivers.

Legal professionals: Perception and drivers

80% of legal professionals believe the public perception of the social and economic impact of the profession is more negative than the actual impact ...



... the leading causes being negative stereotypes in popular culture, followed by the tendency to associate legal professionals with problems, and media attention and negative press



In the last part of the survey, both legal professionals and the general population were asked about ways to enhance the impact of the legal profession on society.

Legal professionals were first asked how they believe the perception of the profession’s impact has developed over time, in a single-choice question with four options: improved, deteriorated, stayed the same, don’t know. They were then asked whether they believe there is a need to improve the public perception and impact of their profession in a single-choice question, with four response options suggesting the need to improve the perception, the actual impact, both, or none.

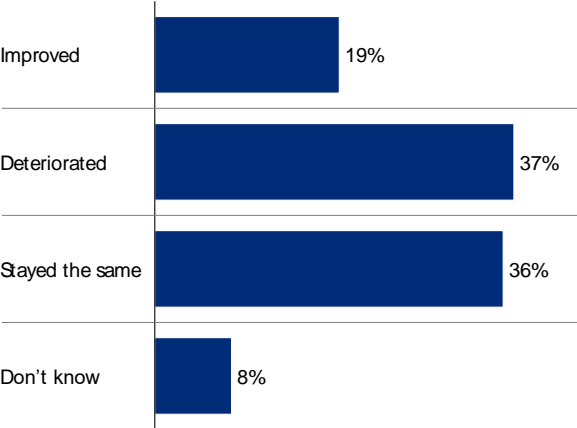
The results show that over time, 37 percent of legal professionals believe public perception has deteriorated in the last ten to 15 years and 36 percent believe that it has stayed the same. However, there is little disagreement among legal professionals on the need for the profession to improve both its perception and its social and economic impact (84 percent respondents agree there is a need to improve both).



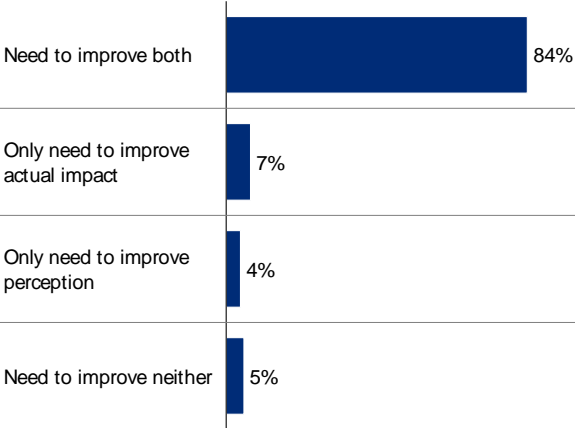
Exhibit 30. Legal professionals: evolution of perception of the legal profession and areas for improvement.

Legal professionals: Evolution of perception and improvement needs

38% of legal professionals believe the public perception of the social and economic impact of the profession has deteriorated in the last 10-15 years



84% believe it is necessary for the profession to improve both its perception and overall impact

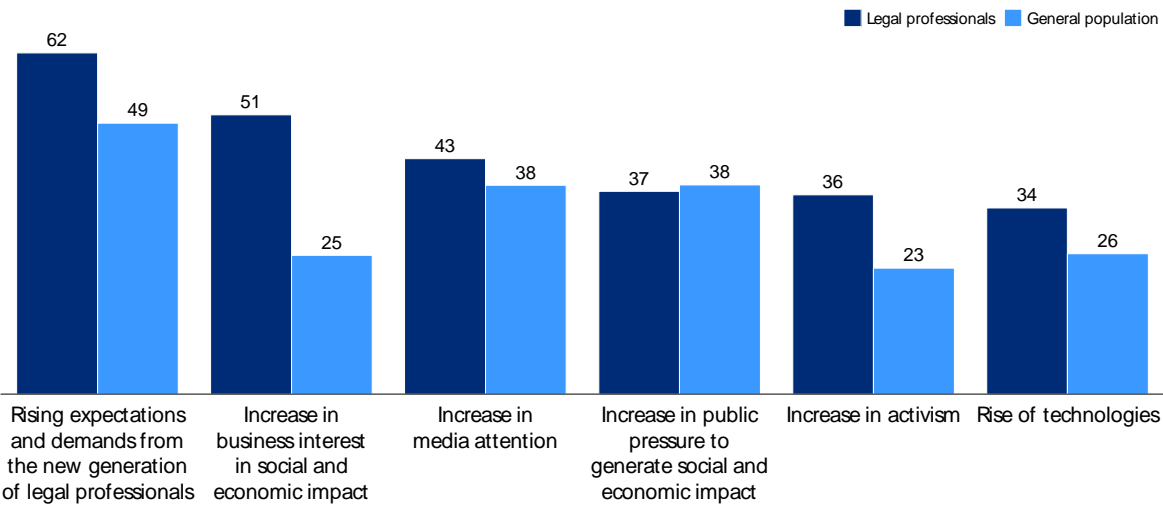


Both the general population and legal professionals were then asked about which drivers could put pressure on the legal profession to improve its impact on society through a list of six drivers as possible multiple-choice answers and an open space for other suggestions.

Both legal professionals and the general population see the leading driver of the need to enhance the impact to be the rising demands and expectations of the new generation of legal professionals (62 percent and 49 percent, respectively). However, while legal professionals see a push from the business environment, the general population is more attuned to public pressure and media attention.

Exhibit 31. Drivers of increased impact in the legal profession.

Drivers of improved impact: Legal professionals vs. general population

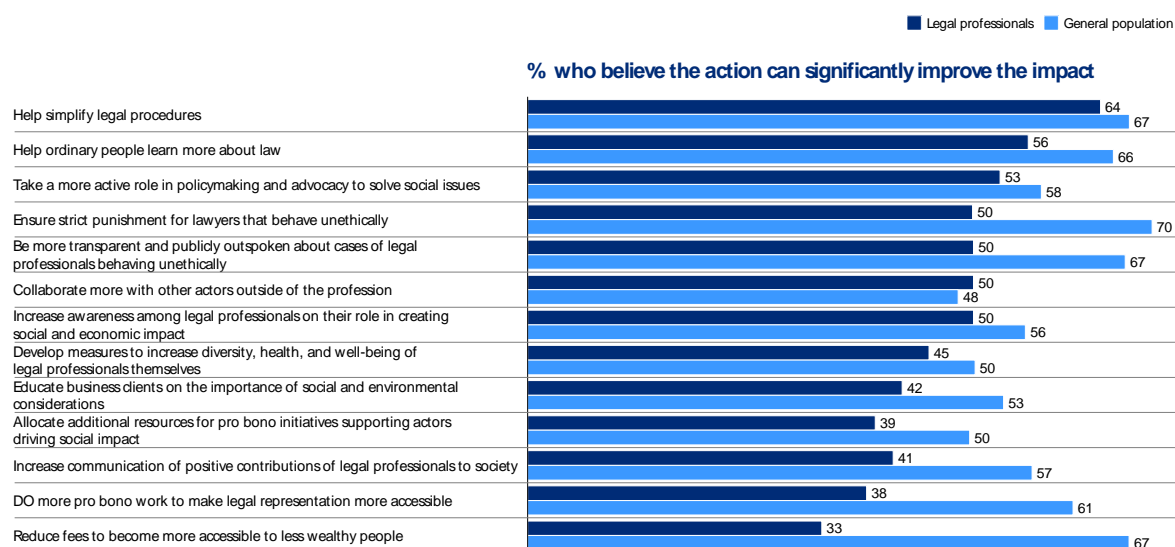


Next, both legal professionals and the general population were asked about the potential of a list of 13 actions that could be taken to increase the positive impact of the legal profession in society, with possible answers for each action based on a scale of one to three with one representing “significantly enhance impact” and three representing “have no effect.”

Both legal professionals and the general population emphasize the value of simplifying legal procedures and helping people better understand the law. However, the general population sees significantly more value in improving access (pro bono work, reduced fees) and in sanctioning unethical behaviors than legal professionals themselves (approximately 70 percent vs approximately 40 percent).

Exhibit 32. Actions for increased impact in the legal profession.

## Actions that will improve impact: Legal professionals vs. general population



Among the general population, there are significant differences in the assessment of these actions according to income levels. Overall, a greater share of those with upper-middle and lower-middle income levels believe that these actions can lead to improving the impact of the legal profession than those with higher incomes.

Significant differences can be found in actions such as helping ordinary people learn more about the law or taking a more active role in policymaking and advocacy.

Exhibit 33. General population: actions for increased impact in the legal profession by income level.

## General population: Actions that will improve impact by income level



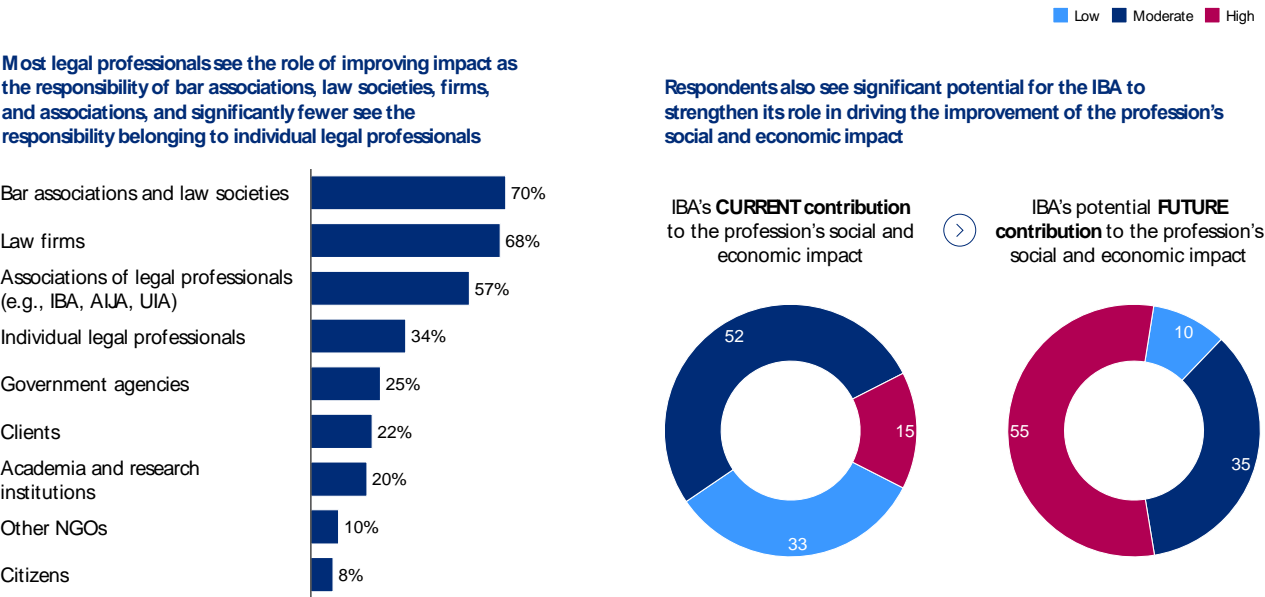
Finally, legal professionals were asked about which actors are better positioned to enhance the profession’s contribution to social and economic impact. A list of nine options was provided (individual legal professionals, law firms, government agencies, bar associations and law societies, associations of legal professionals, other NGOs, clients, academia and research institutions, citizens) plus a text box to add further options. Respondents were asked to rank their top three actors in order of importance.

Most legal professionals see the role of improving impact as the responsibility of bar associations and law societies (70 percent), law firms (68 percent), and associations (57 percent), and only 34 percent as a responsibility of individual legal professionals.

Finally, legal professionals were asked about the contribution of the IBA in driving the profession’s impact. While 15 percent of respondents find the IBA’s current contribution high, 55 percent believe it can be high in the future.

Exhibit 34. Legal professionals: preferences for actors to drive change and IBA contribution to impact.

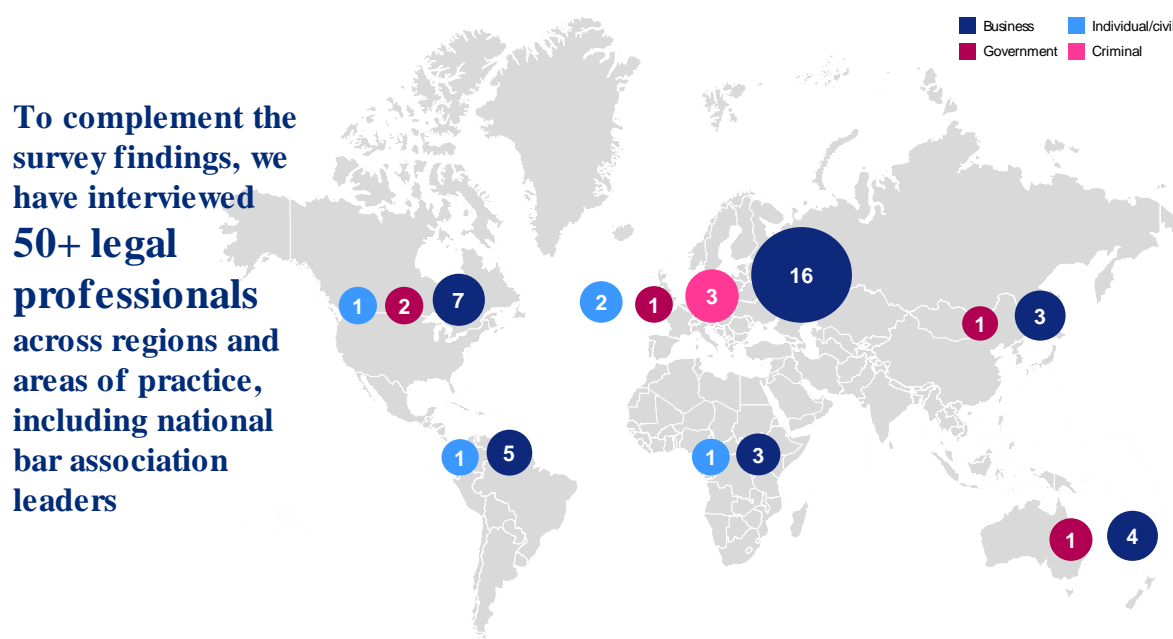
Legal professionals: who should drive the change and IBA’s role



## D. Interview summaries

As part of the research for this study, over 50 leading legal professionals were interviewed in an effort to better understand their expert views on the impact of the legal profession. These professionals are from different regions and areas of practice, and most of them currently or have recently practiced in Europe (43 percent) or North America (20 percent) and specialize in business law (73 percent) – in line with the composition of the IBA membership. A detailed breakdown can be seen in Exhibit 35 below. Most interviewees participated in individual interviews (over 30), while others shared their views in small groups of two to four participants. The individual interviews were conducted between June and November 2023, and the small group discussions took place during the IBA Annual Conference held in Paris in November 2023.

Exhibit 35. Breakdown of interviewees by region and area of practice.



The interviews followed a semi-structured format, with interviewees being asked five main questions with follow-up questions as deemed necessary. These five questions were:

1. How do lawyers create social and economic impact?
2. Can you share a “flagship” example from your practice?
3. How can we best measure this impact?
4. Which of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) areas does the legal profession most impact? How?
5. How is this impact evolving? Does it need to be enhanced? What is at stake if nothing is done?
6. What actions can be most effective at enhancing the profession’s positive impact?

Summaries of the interviews are presented in a consolidated matter to preserve the confidentiality of the interviewees.

The responses to these interview questions are summarized below according to the impact area that they refer to, starting with the Rule of Law as an overarching topic and continuing with each of the six areas and sub-areas of impact referred to in the body of the report (economic impact, peace, justice, and institutional strength,

equality and inclusion, education, environmental sustainability, and health and well-being). Following this, reflections on three main challenges to impact were summarized (quantification of impact, access to justice, and perception of the profession), along with suggestions on how to enhance the impact.

## Rule of Law

Interviewees believe that the role of legal professionals in **enforcing and expanding the Rule of Law** is one of the most important contributions of the legal profession to societies around the world. The Rule of Law is seen as an **enabler of social and economic progress** in a variety of areas, and legal professionals are perceived to play a significant role in matters that are central to it. Thus, most interviewees specifically mentioned lawyers' contributions to advancing and maintaining the Rule of Law, which can be considered an overarching topic in their responses. Examples of the matters regarding the Rule of Law mentioned by interviewees include the influence in the lawmaking process and their role in constraining intrusions from other powers in the justice system, guaranteeing and expanding the access to justice, and, essentially, "ensuring that the justice system works" and that "anybody accused of an offense is adequately represented." With regards to participation in the lawmaking process, respondents note that legal professionals are often involved in **drafting, interpreting, and enforcing laws**, which are essential tasks for maintaining the Rule of Law. Legal professionals also play a crucial role in **constraining intrusions from other powers in the justice system**, such as the executive or legislative branches of government. This helps to ensure that the justice system remains independent and impartial, which is essential for upholding the Rule of Law.

Another critical area where legal professionals see themselves contributing to the Rule of Law is in **guaranteeing and expanding access to justice**. They help to ensure that everyone has equal access to legal representation and that justice is served fairly and impartially. This is particularly important for marginalized and vulnerable groups who may not have the resources or knowledge to navigate the legal system on their own.

## Social impact

Most interviewees believe that the legal profession makes an important **social impact in various areas**, despite the many challenges associated with measuring and quantifying it. They acknowledged that **social impact is often implicit in their work** and challenging to measure due to its inherently diffuse nature, making it difficult to recognize in certain situations.

Some interviewees noted that "social impact" was not a phrase often used in their immediate work context. However, most of them agreed **there seems to be a "waking up" phenomenon**. Some interviewees also commented that legal professionals have traditionally seen impact as an individual issue, by helping a specific client in a specific case or helping them negotiate a contract or close a transaction, while others opposed this notion and mentioned that they **"were taught at law school that they had a responsibility to always look at the broader issue"** and see the implications of their decisions beyond their immediate environment.

The latter position seems to be growing in popularity, with interviewees recognizing that this is also being **driven by the increasing regulation** of environmental issues, equality, and health, which have forced companies to request advice from legal professionals on these topics more than ever before, enabling them to widen the scope of their impact. Many believe that the fact that social impact is becoming high on clients' agendas is a strong driving force for the legal profession as well. Many interviewees spoke about specific situations related to social impact that they had faced in their careers. These were grouped into the following five SDG impact areas: peace, justice, and institutional strength, equality and inclusion, education, environmental sustainability, and health and well-being.

## Peace, justice, and institutional strength

Interviewees agreed that legal professionals play a **leading role in making sure that laws are both respected and enforced to create stable legal and institutional frameworks**. This includes the defense of the separation of powers in cases of overreach from the executive or legislative branches, and, most notably, the obligation of government power to be subject to judiciary review. Examples provided by interviewees range from very high-stakes cases, such as the judicial process against the Argentinian military junta, to more targeted actions, such as the defense



of journalists accused of defamation for publishing factually true stories in SLAPP<sup>246</sup>-type cases, including those of Cambridge Analytica or the so-called Australian war hero Ben Roberts-Smith.

Interviewees also noted that legal professionals play a very significant role **shaping the legislative agenda and ensuring that laws being introduced are fair and contribute to the enforcement and expansion of the Rule of Law**. This influence is more regular and institutionalized in advanced democracies with a well-established Rule of Law, where legal professionals often act as the “transmission belt between politicians and reality,” helping materialize socially desirable political targets through legislation and ensuring that these binding rules are then applied independently through a justice system that acts as the “checks and balances” of the legislative and executive branches of government.

In contrast, interviewees pointed out that in **“places where the Rule of Law is still evolving,” legal professionals can have a greater influence through advocacy**. This can involve participating in the legal defense of activists or participating in landmark cases, such as the campaign against the annulment of the 1993 elections in Nigeria. They can also work with other stakeholders to advance human rights in areas where they are limited, for example, by suing governments to ensure that certain rights are enshrined in guidelines. These are only a few of the examples shared by interviewees across geographies and practice areas, proving that they see peace, justice, and institutional strength as one of their key areas of impact.

The work related to criminal law was also highlighted as a significant driver of impact. Developments such as the eyeWitness to atrocities app were highlighted as a meaningful example. However, multiple interviewees noted that legal professionals have the duty to also represent people whose acts go against popular, or their own beliefs. These cases are particularly common in the field of criminal law (see the defense of people on a death row) and are a fundamental part of legal professionals’ contribution to justice.

## Equality and inclusion

When asked about the impact of the legal profession on equality and inclusion, several interviewees agreed that their impact in this area was mostly focused on **ensuring that all people had access to the same rights as their peers**. In particular, they referred to the work that legal professionals often do on behalf of minorities who face barriers in accessing the justice system and therefore cannot ensure that their rights, which are protected by law, are respected, such as migrants and refugees from e.g., Latin America or the Middle East.

Other cases shared exemplifying rights that are protected by law but still require defense in courts to ensure equality include the role of legal professionals in supporting victims of sexual abuse during the rise of the #MeToo movement or the influence of legal professionals in the introduction and enforcement of equal pay legislation. Additional examples included advocacy in favor of a legislative change to facilitate the identification of parents and children involved in forced adoptions in Ireland or the involvement of legal professionals in several high-stakes legal defenses of homosexual people in countries where it was still criminalized, helping shift perspectives of policymakers and judges.

When discussing their impact on equality and inclusion, some interviewees also referred to the **internal change within the legal profession**, as law firms are making targeted efforts to **attract a wider, more diverse pool of talent** by actively recruiting from underrepresented groups and enhancing work-life balance policies to make the profession more sustainable for women. Interviewees also noted an increasing number of female legal professionals in senior positions, finally “breaking through the glass ceiling” that has historically prevented them from progressing. Most interviewees agreed, however, that there is still a lot of work to be done to address this issue.

## Education

Interviewees believe that legal professionals play an increasingly important role in education. They are often entrusted with the task of **disseminating the Rule of Law in society, which has a strong effect on people’s attitudes toward institutions, rights, and obligations**. According to some interviewees, people often do not have the time to inform themselves about what they can or cannot do due to the frequency and number of legislative changes,

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<sup>246</sup> Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation

and legal professionals are filling that vacuum. In addition, legal professionals are taking a more active role in **educating society on the importance of the Rule of Law in autocracies**. They are particularly involved with young people who have learned to peacefully question authorities when they do not agree with their policies. By educating young people on the importance of the Rule of Law, legal professionals are helping to create a more informed and engaged citizenry that is better equipped to hold those in power accountable. The case of pro bono legal clinics in China was given as an example.

Another key contribution of legal professionals in the field of education is related to their **advocacy efforts to improve access to education for those groups that face unfair restrictions**. A prime example of that is their role in fighting the recently reestablished restrictions on women and girls attending school in Afghanistan. But also, cases such as *Serrano vs. Priest* in improving the financing of the US public education system.

Interviewees also discussed the role of existing legal professionals in the **formal education of future** legal professionals. They pointed out that legal professionals have an important role to play in helping law schools train good lawyers. According to some interviewees, academic institutions need to be at the forefront of the change, and existing legal professionals can help to ensure that law schools are providing the necessary training and education to produce competent and ethical lawyers.

By fulfilling these roles, legal professionals are helping to shape more informed and engaged citizens and ensuring that the legal profession continues to play a vital role in society.

## Environmental sustainability

Most interviewees believe **environmental sustainability has become a very important subject for society, including the legal profession**. Some interviewees mentioned that businesses are becoming leading players in the pursuit of sustainability, with legal professionals also taking part by encouraging them to consider sustainability and incorporating it as a key element of their discussions and decision-making processes. This has already led to **increased awareness among businesses and financial institutions regarding the importance of SDGs for achieving sustainable development**.

Interviewees noted the **implication of legal professionals in many activities aimed at slowing climate change**, such as the permitting processes for renewable energy installations or the decommissioning of coal mines and thermal generation facilities. Legal professionals also play an important role in **vetting new legislation** that is being steadily approved, such as the EU Hydrogen Acts that define the conditions to produce green hydrogen (through renewable energy supply) or the translation of ESG goals into legislation to create a more sustainable coal mining industry in Australia. Class-action was quoted as instrumental in enabling this impact, examples including the *Youth vs. Montana* case in the United States and *Zambian children vs. Anglo American* in Africa.

Moreso, legal professionals also often act in cases on environmental disaster, an example being the support of the Japanese legal community in the aftermath of the Fukushima earthquake and nuclear disaster.

In some regions, interviewees also noted that **advocacy efforts to create a more sustainability-oriented legal framework are being led by legal professionals pushing less ambitious governments to change**. Some interviewees whose work is centered on least developed countries suggested that they are already seeing the effects of climate change in a harsher way than their colleagues in developed nations and are therefore more involved in sustainability topics. However, some interviewees cautioned that climate change “will just create incredible pressure, and people are looking for simple solutions” so legal professionals will need to balance their social duty with client requirements in this regard.

Many interviewees also recognized that “for every lawyer supporting an environmental cause, there is another one on the other side.” This balanced representation is a fundamental part of functioning legal systems, but also an indirect avenue for impact against environmental sustainability (e.g., by helping maintain subsidies for fossil fuels).

## Health and well-being

Health and well-being is the area in which interviewees struggled most with when thinking about the impact of the legal profession, even though some of them were able to comment and provide examples of their role both in terms of client work and advocacy.

Legal professionals have been involved in **shaping many processes directly linked to health systems and services**. For example, they have been involved in the regulatory approval processes for innovative medications and the enforcement of intellectual property restrictions to ensure that pharmaceutical companies have incentives to keep investing in new drugs. Similarly, breakthrough legal cases such as *Best vs. Wellcome* have helped shape pharmacovigilance.

However, more interviewees were keen to highlight the **importance of advocacy and legal aid in health and well-being**. Access to healthcare is still an important issue in least developed countries where legal aid organizations operate. In developed countries, legal aid organizations collaborate with NGOs to increase the access to healthcare. An emblematic example is the work in challenging the denialist position of the South African government on HIV/AIDS. In the United States, legal professionals and courts have played a key role in the enforcement and further development of Medicaid.

According to some interviewees, legal professionals also play a crucial role in **advocating for the rights of vulnerable populations, such as those with disabilities or mental health issues**. They work to ensure that these individuals have access to the healthcare services they need and that their rights are protected. Furthermore, legal professionals are involved in addressing issues related to public health, such as environmental pollution and workplace safety. They work to ensure that individuals and communities are protected from harm and that those responsible for causing harm are held accountable.

## Economic impact

While interviewees mostly recognize the direct economic impact created by the legal profession in terms of jobs, salaries, and tax revenues, **only a small number of them mentioned the direct economic impact** when asked about the wider impact of the legal profession. However, most interviewees were quick to recognize **that the most significant economic impact of the legal profession is indirect**.

Indirect economic impact can be achieved through the capacity of legal professionals to act as **advisors to companies and individuals** that contribute to economic growth by creating jobs and promoting trade and innovation. Among the interviewees, there were many corporate lawyers who could speak to these effects, such as the impact of companies that invest significant amounts of money in least developed countries, bringing additional tax revenues, more jobs, and opportunities for the transfer of skills to the local population. Some others also referred to the role of legal professionals in structuring complex M&A transactions, participating in arbitration mechanisms, or assisting governments in structuring financing deals (e.g., supporting the return of the International Financial Corporation to Argentina to enable the country to regain access to international debt markets), that indirectly contribute to economic development.

The indirect economic impact of the legal profession is also seen as **made possible thanks to the enforcement of the Rule of Law**, as discussed in the previous section. Legal professionals see their contribution as necessary to **help ensure an open economy**, which ultimately benefits members of society thanks to the establishment of new companies that increase competition and encourage the development of new technologies through the enforcement of copyrights and patents. Innovations such as the accelerated development of COVID-19 vaccines or carbon capture methods were given as examples. Another example of the interdependency between legal work and economic development put forward by interviewees links the economic progress of Southeast Asian countries, such as South Korea, Taiwan, or Japan, after the Second World War and the legal changes made to regulate private property during that time.

The work of legal professionals dealing with individual issues was also highlighted as an indirect, yet significant area of impact – given their role in helping people formalize multiple areas of their professional and family lives and improve their economic and social condition.

Despite these positive impact examples, some interviewees also drew attention to the fact that, sometimes, the work of legal professionals indirectly contributes to negative economic impacts for third parties. Some of the examples cited related to the role of legal professionals in facilitating illicit trade or in the consolidation of industries that then led to greater costs for consumers.

## Challenges to impact

Throughout the interviews, three topics were commonly referred to as challenges to the impact of the legal profession: the quantification of impact, the difficulty in accessing the services of legal professionals, and the way the profession is viewed/perceived.

### Quantification

In terms of quantification, the challenge is intrinsically linked to the consensus that most of the impact achieved by the legal profession is indirect, and therefore it would be very difficult to compile and distil the amount of impact that legal professionals have generated in the many economic and social activities in which they take part.

Several interviewees commented that the range of services and the many different ways to practice law (in law firms, in the public sector, as in-house legal professionals for private companies, or in nongovernmental organizations) add additional complexity to the quantification efforts.

Nonetheless, a few respondents also raised the need to focus on less conventional measurements of impact, more oriented toward measuring the social impact of the profession. The most frequently mentioned idea in this regard was measuring the access to justice as a proxy for how the legal profession can lead to improved social outcomes.

### Access to justice

The most widely shared concern about the impact of the legal profession is related to the access to justice. The mere existence of a fair justice system does not guarantee the fair implementation of justice if citizens have difficulty accessing it. Most interviewees believe that legal professionals are making a fair contribution to expanding access to justice through pro bono work and legal aid services offered to vulnerable people who otherwise would not be able to afford legal assistance. Interviewees provided numerous examples with several disadvantaged groups in mind, such as HIV/AIDS patients in Africa or aboriginal people with little knowledge of the justice system. They noted the many “people who are not represented in life-changing moments.”

There are significant regional and national variations in how this assistance is provided. In jurisdictions with no legal aid, there are numerous organizations with legal professionals that provide substantial legal aid on predefined, human-rights-related issues (e.g., access to water, family law, labor law). Some interviewees also highlighted the US system of class actions as another useful tool in increasing access to justice, as it allows associations or NGOs to act on certain interests, enabling “members of a class to represent a class.”

While all these actions were seen as helpful, most interviewees agreed they need to be strongly enhanced for the access issue to be resolved. Some interviewees put forward their desire to increase the role of legal professionals in increasing access to justice. Examples of how this can be done included increasing the amount of time and resources dedicated to legal assistance or by establishing a minimum mandatory commitment to increasing access for all legal professionals. However, many interviewees mentioned the need to go beyond pro bono work and look at more ambitious frameworks to improve access to justice, such as mechanisms to adjust fees for the less resourced.

### The view/perception of the profession

The third and most widely referred to challenge is related to the perception of legal professionals in wider society. Interviewees often commented that they believe society at large has a far more negative view of legal professionals’ work than they themselves, with many factors contributing to this perception.

One factor, which interviewees believe to be unavoidable, is that criminals and people with a bad reputation or public image are also entitled to have legal representation in a court of law, ensuring a fair trial for all parties. Oftentimes, public cases have an outsized influence on public opinion. Interviewees mentioned that “to some degree, social media has contributed to an increased exposure” of and reputational risk for legal professionals, as a small number of scandals are consumed as entertainment by a global audience.

Some interviewees argued that this perception is also linked to corporate lawyers defending companies with vast financial resources trying to circumvent rules that negatively affect them at the expense of less powerful citizens or the environment. In particular, they argued that “commercial law has been neglectful of the other participants in society that make business successful, focusing on shareholder value and neglecting stakeholder value.” Others noted the negative public sentiment related to cases linked to anti-SLAPP legislation, increasingly used by the

“rich and powerful to go after associations or journalists that have revealed uncomfortable facts about their businesses.”

While this view was shared by many interviewees, there were some regional and demographic variations in this regard. For example, some interviewees believe that minorities and less privileged groups have a more positive perception of the work of legal professionals as their exposure to them is mainly related to the defense of fundamental rights. In some countries where the legal profession has only more recently developed, interviewees also suggested that the work of legal professionals is still highly valued as opposed to in Europe or the United States.

All interviewees shared the view that there is a clear need to take specific actions to improve perception. If perception does not improve, they believe there is a risk of becoming less relevant actors within society, possibly leading to a diminishment of the impact of their work. That could in turn make it more difficult to attract talent to the profession, posing an existential threat.

## Ways to enhance impact

Enhancing the impact of the legal profession is seen as a priority for the majority of interviewees, with two complementary approaches: continuing to increase and facilitate access to legal representation and maintaining the role of legal professionals in advocacy and policymaking.

To further increase the impact through these approaches, two types of enablers were mentioned as improvement proposals: greater engagement and communication about the role of legal professionals and continuing to project the highest ethical standards, being vocal about both successes and shortcomings in this area.

Interviewees widely agreed that legal professionals and associations should be proactive in explaining what legal professionals do. Several mentioned that, in their opinion, law associations and bar associations are often inward looking and too focused on their bureaucratic responsibilities instead of speaking outwardly to the wider public, to regulators, and to many other valuable stakeholders in and around the profession.

Another point raised by interviewees referred to the need to increase engagement with international institutions and legislators to pursue legal action against problems denounced by society, such as money laundering. The image of law associations and bar associations actively engaging to find solutions to crimes and social problems was noted by some interviewees as a course of action worth pursuing.

Some interviewees also called for further engagement related to the achievement of SDGs. They suggested that this could even be achieved by including them in professional rules or codes of conduct as something that legal professionals should keep in mind in the exercise of their jobs. However, this point was disputed by other interviewees, who believe that law associations and bar associations should be cautious about engaging in topics in which stakeholders may have differing opinions, such as environmental sustainability.

In terms of improving access to justice, proposals from interviewees ranged from greater emphasis on pro bono work and partnership with legal aid organizations, to redesigning fee structures charged by law firms to provide less privileged groups with the possibility to have legal representation when they need it. Interviewees had differing views about whether these initiatives should be pursued individually by legal professionals and law firms, or whether the IBA and other legal organizations or bar associations should take the lead and propose collective actions. Nevertheless, most of them believed the IBA to be well-suited to address these topics and coordinate with national and local bar associations to implement the proposed measures that may arise as a result of this collective reflection.

## Conclusion

The many interviews carried out with legal professionals have confirmed that the legal profession has a significant impact on various areas of society. It contributes to enforcing and expanding the Rule of Law, driving economic development, and promoting economic development, peace, justice, and institutional strength, equality and inclusion, education, environmental sustainability, and health and well-being.

However, challenges such as negative perception, quantification of impact, and access to justice need to be addressed to maximize its overall impact. Legal professionals can enhance their impact by deepening engagement and communication and broadening access to justice.

Legal organizations, including the IBA and bar associations, are seen as well-positioned to take the lead in proposing collective actions to address these challenges. It is important for legal professionals to continue working toward ensuring equal representation and fair treatment for all individuals, especially marginalized and vulnerable groups, as well as providing resources and support to those who may not have the means or knowledge to navigate the legal system.





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