



The Law  
Society

# Resilience and wellbeing survey 2019

## Survey report

Junior Lawyers Division

April 2019

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## **Junior Lawyers Division**

### **Resilience and wellbeing survey report 2019**

#### **Introduction**

Three years ago, in my role as a Council Member for the Law Society of England and Wales representing solicitors 0-5 years' PQE, I pledged to help raise awareness of and take steps to tackle the high levels of negative stress and mental-ill health experienced by junior lawyers in the profession.

When starting your legal career, whether as a paralegal or trainee solicitor, this may be your first time working in a professional environment. As well as adjusting to working in the legal profession, paralegals and trainee solicitors are under an increased amount of pressure as they try to prove themselves to their employers, either to be awarded a much sought after training position, or to be offered a newly-qualified position at the end of it. Many junior lawyers feel unable to raise issues with their employers when they are struggling to cope with the pressures of their role. It can be difficult to juggle your workload particularly in circumstances where, as a junior, you are accepting work from several different members of staff, more senior than you, in the department, and with the entrenched view that stress is a given that we should all just accept.

The transition from trainee to becoming a newly qualified solicitor can be a tricky one as you try to establish yourself in the department you have qualified into. This can come with its own complications and additional pressure as many junior lawyers have a tendency to worry and over-prepare when they are released from the protective shield of being a trainee. Many junior lawyers are also under increasing pressure to meet ever-increasing billable hours' targets. Unless we can break the cycle of pressure, stress and ill-health learned as a junior lawyer then we are consolidating unhealthy and damaging practices in all of our colleagues that will significantly impact the wellbeing of individuals and the whole profession now as well as in the future.

#### *About the Junior Lawyers Division*

Membership of the Junior Lawyers Division of The Law Society of England and Wales (**JLD**) is free and automatic for legal practice course (**LPC**) students (including paralegals who have undertaken their LPC), trainee solicitors and solicitors with up to five years' post qualification experience. The JLD's membership is currently over 70,000. You can find more about the JLD and sign up to its mailing list [here](#).

The JLD website now has a dedicated page which contains all of its work on resilience and wellbeing including blogs, webinars and links to charities/resources. You can access the page [here](#).

#### *Surveys*

The JLD resilience and wellbeing survey is now in its third year and engagement with the survey has grown year on year thanks to the many people, firms and organisations with an interest in the profession who have been supporting the work the JLD has been doing. The 2017 resilience and

wellbeing survey received 214 responses (view report [here](#)), the 2018 survey received 959 (view report [here](#)) and this year's survey has received 1,803 responses.

This year's survey was open between January and March 2019 and was published through the JLD's social media channels and emails to JLD members. This year the JLD benefitted from a number of law firms supporting the survey and advertising it internally on the firm's intranet. The survey's results are being released at the JLD's 2019 annual conference on 6 April 2019.

The key statistics from the survey are set out in the report's executive summary. In summary, the survey found that 93.5% of respondents had experienced stress in their role in the last month with almost a quarter (24.8%) of those respondents experiencing severe/extreme levels of stress. It is concerning (albeit understandable given the connection between mental and physical ill-health) that 34.5% of respondents stated that work-related stress also had a negative impact on their physical health (physically sick and chest pains). It is extremely concerning that 1 in 15 junior lawyers (6.4%) have experienced suicidal thoughts, in the month leading up to taking the survey.

In relation to mental ill-health, around half (48%) of respondents stated that they had experienced mental ill-health (whether formally diagnosed or not) in the last month. This is a substantial increase on the 38% reported in the 2018 survey. Only around one-fifth (19.3%) of those respondents experiencing mental ill-health indicated their employer was aware.

38% of respondents did not know of any organisations that were there to help if they wanted to discuss stress or mental ill-health at work. There is, therefore, a lot more for the JLD and the profession to be doing to raise awareness of support available for junior lawyers.

This year the survey asked a number of new questions on the demographic of junior lawyers completing the survey. These included additional questions on age, ethnicity and sexual orientation as well as, for example, the type of practice the respondent is working for if in private practice. A number document focussing on the specific findings of this data in time for Mental Health Awareness Week (13-19 May 2019).

I wanted to pick up on a few points about the demographic of junior lawyers who have completed this year's survey. Over 90% of respondents work in private practice, just over 30% of respondents work with vulnerable clients and over a quarter work in the City of London. Interestingly, only a quarter of respondents are male with three quarters being female (or those who prefer to self-define/not to say).

### *Employer Guidance*

The JLD launched its best practice guidance for employers on how to support the resilience and wellbeing of their employees on Time to Talk Day in February 2018; you can view the guidance [here](#). The aim of this guidance is to address the concerning finding from the survey that many junior lawyers do not feel supported by their employers and, in turn, did not know where to turn for support. The guidance is split into three core pillars (1) education/training, (2) support and (3) culture.

The intention for the guidance is that it will encourage organisations to adopt a more proactive and inclusive approach to wellbeing and mental health. The guidance has already been very well received by the profession and the JLD is aware that employers have been using the guidance to develop their internal strategies to support employee wellbeing. The JLD is pleased that its guidance has helped to bring these issues to the top of employers' agendas and expects that it should continue to tackle the stigma of talking about wellbeing and mental health in the workplace.

This year the survey asked for additional information from respondents on what their employers are currently or could be doing to support employees experiencing stress at work or employees experiencing mental ill-health. The JLD will use the information it has obtained to feed into the review of its employer guidance which is currently taking place. A revised version of the guidance will be released over the summer.

### *Employer Roundtables*

Nick Bloy of Wellbeing Republic and I have hosted three employer roundtable events on behalf of the JLD to promote mentally healthy workplaces. These roundtable events include a discussion on the recommendations in the guidance. As part of the conversations, participants (including those responsible for the mental wellbeing in their law firms) are encouraged to share their best practice and positive/negative experiences of running initiatives internally. By giving employers an opportunity to speak openly about their wellbeing strategies and what they are doing, it helps give ideas to other organisations who are still in the process of planning their own strategies.

As well as attendees from a variety of law firms and in-house legal teams, these events have been attended by representatives from the London Mayor's Office, The City of London (Business Healthy), ReThink Mental Illness, Mental Health First Aid England, The Law Society, the Solicitors Regulation Authority and LawCare.

### *Thanks*

I would like to finish by saying a very big thank you to a number of individuals who have provided me with invaluable support with this work as I step down as a Law Society Council Member in July 2019. My fellow Council Member for solicitors 0-5 years PQE, Laura Uberoi, Nick Bloy of Wellbeing Republic, Elizabeth Rimmer of LawCare, Sarah Alonge in The Law Society's Diversity & Inclusion Team, Yvonne Treacy the JLD's Community Manager at The Law Society and Jo Cox in The Law Society's Research team. I would also like to extend my thanks to all of the individuals who have reviewed the JLD's best practice guidance for employers on supporting resilience and wellbeing in the workplace. Without your assistance and support, the JLD's work on supporting resilience and wellbeing for junior lawyers in the profession would not have been able to happen.

### *Next steps*

It is clear that negative stress and mental ill-health continue to adversely affect the legal profession as a whole. There is real value in investing time and resources to improve employees' wellbeing and mental health. The legal profession is at risk of losing some of its best talent if employers do not begin

to embrace their employees' wellbeing as a key asset for their business. By supporting employees and providing them with the necessary tools and resources to succeed, employers can reduce absences, reduce the risk of mistakes, increase engagement, collaboration, productivity and overall job satisfaction and create organisations which attract and retain the best talent.

The JLD is extremely grateful for all of the support it has received from firms and organisations that have sent the survey to their junior lawyers. The JLD hopes to run the survey again next year and to continue its work to support junior lawyers experiencing negative stress and mental ill-health in the workplace.

**Kayleigh Leonie**

**Law Society Council Member**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between January and March 2019, 1,803 members of the JLD responded to an online survey regarding negative stress and mental ill-health.

The proportion of respondents reporting regularly feeling unable to cope as a result of stress in the month prior to the survey remains at around one-fifth (19%). The proportion reporting either 'regularly' or 'occasionally' feeling unable to cope has decreased slightly on 2017 figures (55% in 2017, 54% in 2018 and 52% in 2019).

A higher proportion of women (21%) compared to men (13%) reported 'regularly' feeling unable to cope as a result of stress. A higher proportion of respondents (28.8%) working in small firms (1-4 partners) reported regularly feeling unable to cope as a result of stress at work, compared to 16.7% of those working in larger firms (26+ partners). Over one-fifth (22.9%) of respondents working with vulnerable clients regularly felt unable to cope, compared to 17.3% of those not working for this client group.

### *Work-Related Stress*

Over one-third (37%) of respondents had regularly felt stress (defined here as being under too much emotional or mental pressure), in the month prior to the survey as a result of work, slightly up on the 35% reported in 2017.

One quarter of respondents in the 2019 survey reported experiencing either 'severe' or 'extreme' levels of work-related stress, consistent with the proportion reporting the same in both the 2017 and 2018 cohorts. Half of respondents (51%) reported 'moderate' levels of stress.

Just 3% of respondents experienced no negative stress in the previous month.

As in the previous surveys, high workload (64%) and client demands and expectations (52%) were the most commonly selected causes of stress.

Most frequently mentioned consequences of work-related stress in 2019 were disrupted sleep (66%) and negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (60%).

Exercise and meditation/mindfulness were the most frequently mentioned strategies or mechanisms that individuals used to deal with stress at work.

### *Mental Ill-Health*

Around half of respondents reported mental ill-health (whether formally diagnosed or not) in the month prior to the 2019 survey, a substantial increase on the 38% reported in the 2018 survey.

A significantly higher proportion of women (50.2%) compared to men (41.4%) reported having experienced mental ill-health. Almost two-thirds (64.2%) of respondents identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (**LGBT+**) reported mental ill-health, compared to 47% of those identifying as heterosexual/straight.

Around one-fifth of those respondents experiencing mental ill-health indicated their employer was aware. A higher proportion of women (21%) than men (14%) reported their employer was aware.

Disrupted sleep (74%) and a negative impact on physical health (feeling physically sick, chest pains) (60%) were the experiences most commonly mentioned by those experiencing mental ill-health. A higher proportion of women (63%) than men (50%) reported that mental ill-health also had a negative impact on their physical health (feeling physically sick/chest pains).

Around half (49%) of respondents worked for organisations which offered help guidance and support in relation to mental health. Around one-quarter (26%) of respondents did not know about their organisation offering such provisions – suggesting that existing employer schemes should be better promoted.

The majority of respondents thought their employer could do more to provide help, guidance and support in relation stress at work (77%) and to mental ill-health at work (78%).

Many respondents, when asked about what employers are currently or could be doing to support employees experiencing stress at work, commented on the need for employers to tackle the root cause of work-related stress by addressing workloads, how work is allocated and ensuring sufficient qualified and support staff are available to assist with the volume of work.

38% of respondents did not know of any organisations that were there to help if they wanted to discuss stress or mental ill-health at work.

## PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Question 1: Please confirm which category of JLD member you fall into

Answer	2017 (n=214)	2018 (n=959)	2019 n=1,803	2019 %
LPC students (including paralegals)	14.0%	9.6%	214	11.9%
Trainee solicitors	32.2%	37.6%	471	26.1%
Solicitors with up to five years' post qualified experience	53.7%	52.8%	1,118	62.1%
Total	100%	100.0%	1,803	100.0%

Question 2: Please confirm what type of organisation you work for

Answer	2017 (n=214)	2018 (n=959)	2019 n=1,802	2019 %
Private practice (all)	90.7%	91.6%		91.7
Small firm (1-4 partners)	-	-	219	12.1%
Medium firm (5-25 partners)	-	-	384	21.3%
Large firm (26+ partners)	-	-	1052	58.3%
In-house	5.1%	5.5%	94	5.2%
Government	2.3%	1.8%	37	2.1%
Third sector	0.9%	0.5%	6	0.3%
Other (please specify)	0.4%	0.6%	10	0.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	1,802	100.0%

Question 3: As part of your job, do you work for vulnerable clients? (introduced in 2018)

**Vulnerable by virtue of age, mental or physical health difficulty, as a result of being in custody, through lack of capacity, through experience of trauma, or who are vulnerable for any other reason.**

Answer	2017	% (n=959)	2019 n=1,800	2019 %
Yes	-	25.4	552	30.7%
No	-	73.6	1,248	69.3%
Unknown	-	0.9		
Total	-	100.0	1,800	100.0%



Question 4: Which region do you work in? (introduced in 2018)

Answer	2017	(2018) (n=959)		2019	
		n	%	n	%
The City of London	-	279	29.1	475	26.3%
Greater London	-	54	5.6	125	6.9%
North East	-	27	2.8	222	12.3%
North West	-	109	11.4	188	10.4%
East	-	17	1.8	51	2.8%
Midlands	-	111	11.6	257	14.3%
South East	-	95	9.9	191	10.6%
South West	-	85	8.9	216	12.0%
Wales	-	17	1.8	64	3.5%
Outside England and Wales	-	10	1.0	11	6.0%
No response	-	3	0.3	3	0.1%
Total	-	959	100.0	1,803	100.0%

Question 5: Please confirm your gender

Answer	2017 (n=214)	2018 (n=959)	2019 n	2019 %
Female	72.9%	73.1%	1328	73.7%
Male	26.6%	25.7%	457	25.3%
Non-binary/third gender	-	-	-	-
Prefer to self-define	na	0.2%	9	0.5%
Prefer not to say	0.5%	1%	8	0.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	1,803	100.0%

Question 6: Please confirm your age

(introduced in 2019)

Answer	2019 n	2019 %
18 – 25	397	22.0%
26 - 35	1,288	71.4%
36 - 45	93	5.2%
46 - 55	20	1.1%
56+	1	0.1%
Unknown	4	0.2%
Total	1,803	100.0%

Question 7: Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?

(introduced in 2019)

Answer	2019 n	2019 %
White	1,484	82.3%
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	75	4.2%
Asian or Asian British	169	9.4%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	44	2.4%
Prefer not to say	20	1.1
Other (please specify)	9	0.5%
Unknown	2	0.1%
Total	1,803	100.0%

Question 8: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

(introduced in 2019)

Answer	2019 n	2019 %
Bisexual	67	3.7%
Gay man	37	2.1%
Gay woman / lesbian	16	0.9%
Heterosexual / straight	1,619	89.8%
Prefer not to say	62	3.1%
Other (please specify)	1	0.1%
No response	1	0.1%
Total	1,803	100.0%

## STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

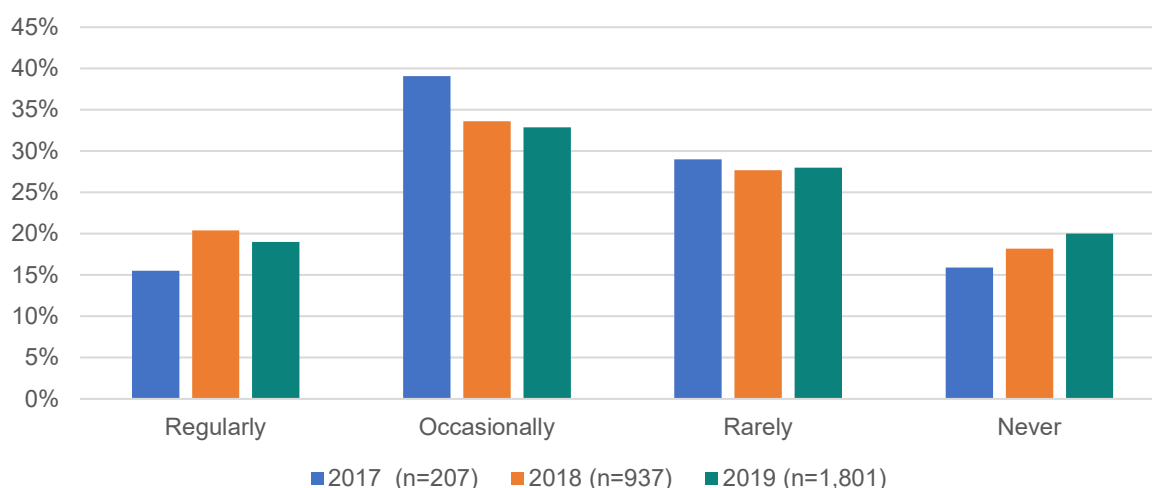
### Question 9: How often in the last month have you felt unable to cope as a result of stress?

A similar proportion of respondents in 2019 reported regularly feeling unable to cope as a result of stress (19.1%) compared to 2018 (20.4%).

A higher proportion of women than men reported being 'regularly' unable to cope as a result of stress. Black and Minority Ethnic (**BAME**) respondents were less likely to report 'never' when asked if they have felt unable to cope as a result of stress (13%) compared to 22% of White respondents. Just under one-third (30%) of LGBT+ respondents reported 'regularly' feeling unable to cope compared to under one fifth (17.7%) of those identifying as heterosexual/straight.

A significantly higher proportion of solicitors working in small firms reported regularly feeling unable to cope (28.8%) compared to those in the larger (26+ partner) firms (16.7%). A higher proportion of the 551 respondents working with vulnerable clients reported 'regularly' feeling unable to cope (22.9%) compared to 17.3% of those not working for this client group.

Answers	2017 (n=207)	2018 (n=937)	2019 (n=1801) - %
Regularly	15.5%	20.4%	19.1%
Occasionally	39.1%	33.6%	32.9%
Rarely	29.0%	27.7%	28.0%
Never	15.9%	18.2%	51.9%



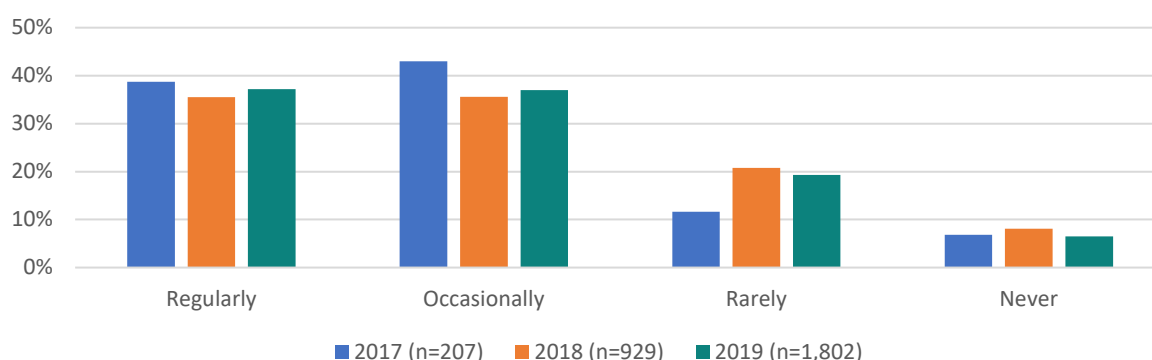
**2019**

	Male (n=457)	Female (n=1,326)	LPC (n=213)	Trainee (n=471)	0-5 PQE (n=1,117)
Regularly	13.1%	21.0%	23.5%	11.9%	21.2%
Occasionally	28.7%	34.2%	33.8%	30.4%	33.8%
Rarely	31.3%	27.1%	26.8%	34.4%	25.6%
Never	26.9%	17.6%	16.0%	23.4%	19.3%

Question 10: How often in the last month have you felt stressed (defined as being under too much emotional or mental pressure) as a result of work?

The proportion of respondents reporting feeling stressed as a result of work appears to have increased slightly on 2018 figures 71% of respondents to the 2018 survey reported either regularly or occasionally feeling stressed within the last month compared to 74% in 2019.

Answers	2017 (n=207)	2018 (n=929)	2019 (%) (n=1,802)
Regularly	38.7%	35.5%	37.2%
Occasionally	43.0%	35.6%	37.0%
Rarely	11.6%	20.8%	19.3%
Never	6.8%	8.1%	6.5%



**2019**

	Male (n=457)	Female (n=1,327)	LPC (n=214)	Trainee (n=470)	0-5 PQE (n=1,118)
Regularly	35.7%	37.8%	33.6%	25.5%	42.8%
Occasionally	32.2%	38.6%	33.6%	42.8%	35.2%
Rarely	22.1%	18.4%	25.2%	23.0%	16.6%
Never	10.1%	5.3%	7.5%	8.7%	5.5%

A similar proportion of men and women reported regularly experiencing work related stress, a higher proportion of women reported occasionally experiencing stress (38.4%) compared to 32% of men.

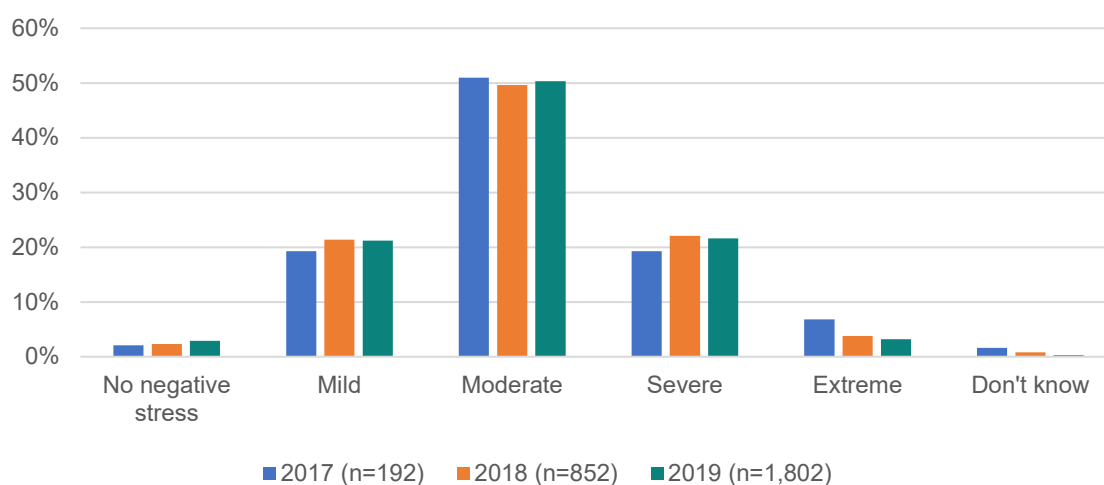
Over two-fifths (42.8%) of respondents with 0-5 years' PQE reported regularly experiencing stress, compared to one-third of LPC students (including paralegals) (33.6%) and a quarter of trainee solicitors (25.5%).

A higher proportion of respondents based in Greater London (including the City) reported 'regularly' feeling stressed as result of work, 42.8% compared to 33.6% of those based in the rest of England. Just over half (51.6%) of those working in small firms (1-4 partner firms) reported 'regularly' feeling stressed, compared to 34.2% of respondents in larger practices (26+ partner firms).

Question 11: If so, how would you describe the level of stress?

Answer	2017 % (n=192)	2018 % (n=852)	2019 % (n=1,802)
No negative stress	2.1%	2.3%	2.9%
Mild	19.3%	21.4%	21.2%
Moderate	51.0%	49.6%	50.8%
Severe	19.3%	22.1%	21.6%
Extreme	6.8%	3.8%	3.2%
Don't know	1.6%	0.8%	0.3%

A similar proportion of respondents reported experiencing either severe or extreme levels of stress (25%) compared the 2018 survey (26%).



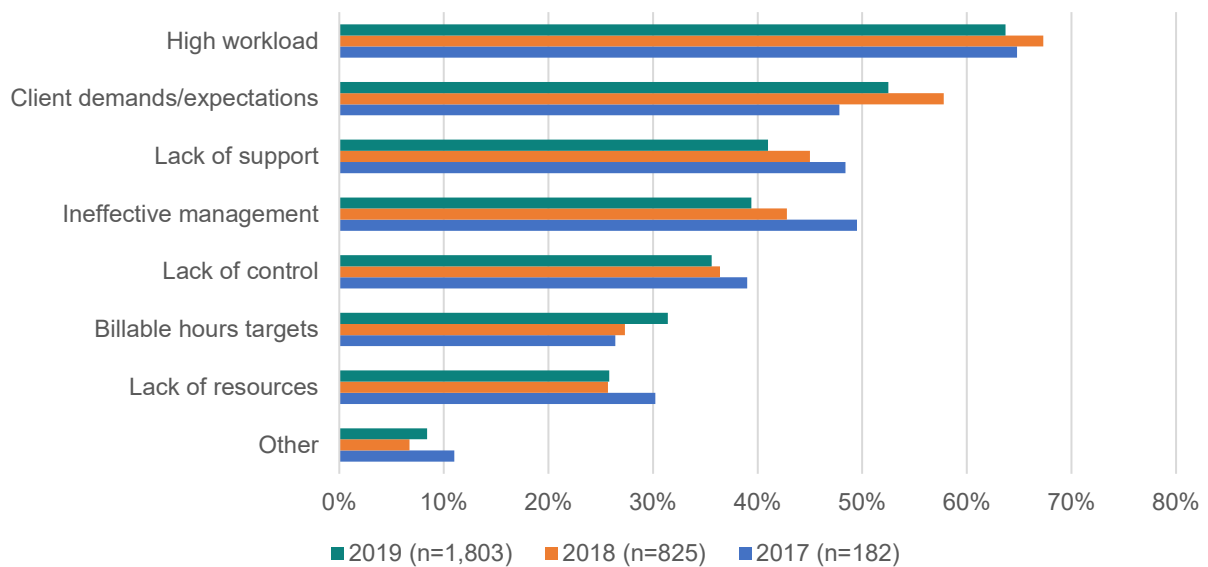
	<b>Male</b> (n=457)	<b>Female</b> (n=1,327)	<b>LPC</b> (n=214)	<b>Trainee</b> (n=471)	<b>0-5 PQE</b> (n=1,117)
No negative stress	4.4%	3.2%	4.7%	4.2%	2.0%
Mild	21.4%	21.3%	22.4%	25.5%	19.2%
Moderate	49.0%	51.5%	49.1%	49.9%	51.6%
Severe	20.6%	21.7%	20.1%	18.7%	23.1%
Extreme	4.2%	2.8%	2.3%	1.5%	4.0%
Don't know	0.4%	0.3%	1.4%	0.2%	0.2%

Solicitors with 0-5 years' PQE were the group most likely to report experiencing severe or extreme levels of work-related stress, being 27% of such group compared to 20% of trainees and 22% of LPC students (including paralegals).

**Question 12: If so, what do you consider to be the cause of the stress at work you experience?**

Of those experiencing stress, the most frequently mentioned cause was high workload, the same as in the 2018 and 2017 survey. The proportion of solicitors reporting that 'client demands/expectations' was a cause of stress decreased from 58% in the 2018 survey to 52% in 2019.

<b>Answer</b>	<b>2017 %</b> (n=182)	<b>2018 %</b> (n=825)	<b>2019 %</b> (n=1,803)
High workload	64.8%	67.3%	63.7%
Client demands/expectations	47.8%	57.8%	52.5%
Lack of support	48.4%	45.0%	41.0%
Ineffective management	49.5%	42.8%	39.4%
Lack of control	39.0%	36.4%	35.6%
Billable hours targets	26.4%	27.3%	31.4%
Lack of resources	30.2%	25.7%	25.8%
Other	11.0%	6.7%	8.4%



Top two answers	Answer 1	Answer 2
<b>Overall (2019)</b>	<b>High workload</b>	<b>Client demands/expectations</b>
Overall (2018)	High workload	Client demands/expectations
Overall (2017)	High workload	Ineffective management
Male	High workload	Client demands/expectations
Female	High workload	Client demands/expectations
LPC students (including paralegals)	High workload	Client demands/expectations
Trainee solicitors	High workload	Client demands/expectations
Solicitors with up to five years' post qualified experience	High workload	Client demands/expectations
Those experiencing severe or extreme level of stress	High workload	Lack of support

#### Other causes of stress mentioned – People-related

Attitudes and behaviours of work colleagues

Attitudes and behaviours of boss/supervisors (lack of constructive feedback, lack of supervision, lack of support/staff)

Client behaviours (changing instructions and expectations, situational – client’s vulnerability having experiencing trauma or grief)

Negative behaviours such as bullying, harassment, racism

Own expectations and fear of failure, making mistakes and lack of experience

**Other causes of stress mentioned – Work-related**

Being new to the job

Lack of training, development and career progression

Lack of flexible working

Long hours

Long commute

Stress of job (compliance and regulatory obligations)

Deadlines and pace of workflow

Fee targets

Lack of work

Lack of IT support

Poor office culture – not feeling valued

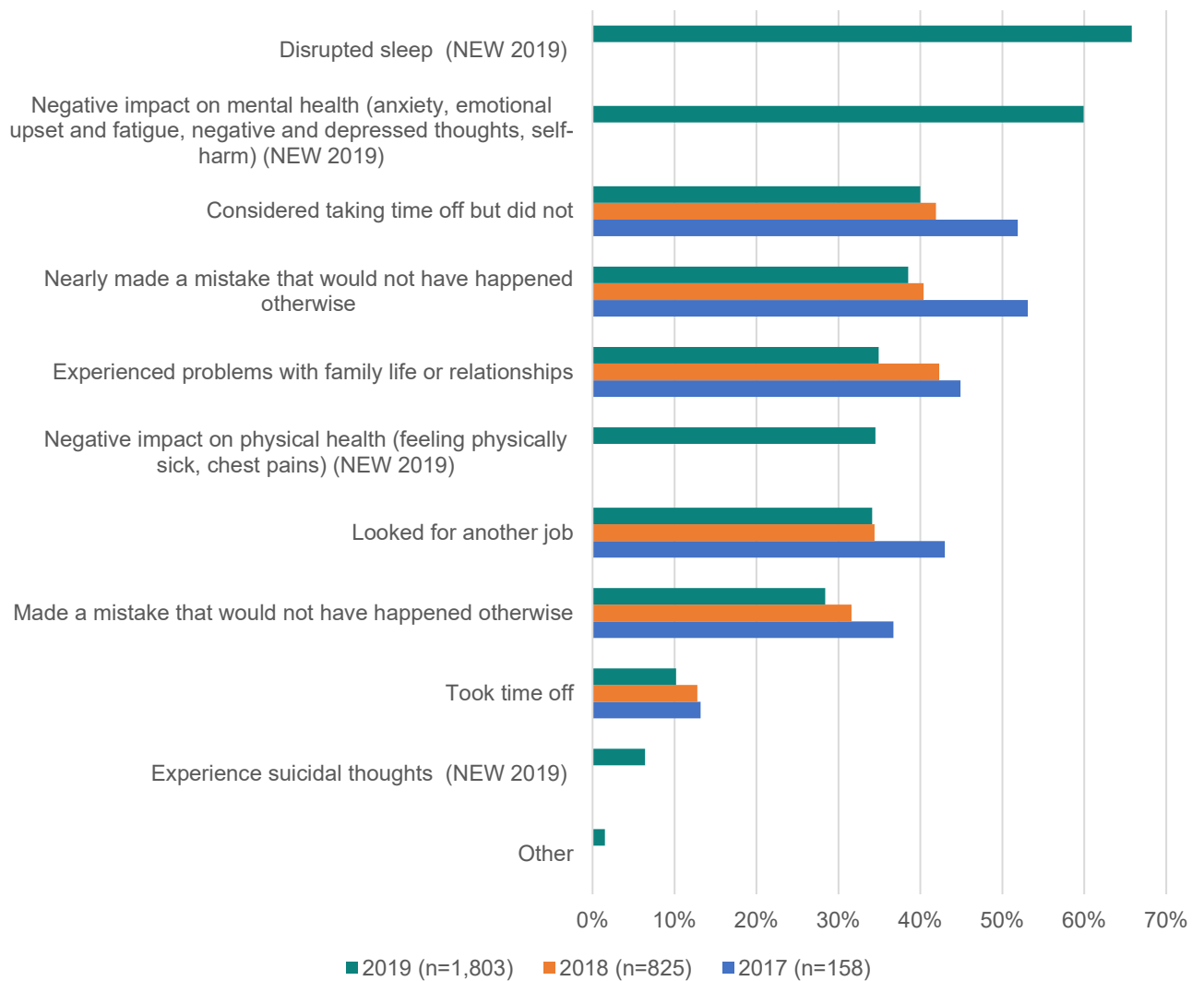
Question 13: In the last month, have you experienced any of the below situations as a result of work-related stress?

Answer	2017 (n=158)	2018 (n=825)	2019 (n=1,803)
Disrupted sleep (NEW 2019)	-	-	65.8%
Negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (NEW 2019)	-	-	59.9%
Experienced problems with family life or relationships	44.9%	42.3%	34.9%
Considered taking time off but did not	51.9%	41.9%	40.0%
Nearly made a mistake that would not have happened otherwise	53.1%	40.4%	38.5%
Negative impact on physical health (feeling physically sick, chest pains) (NEW 2019)	-	-	34.5%
Looked for another job	43.0%	34.4%	34.1%
Made a mistake that would not have happened otherwise	36.7%	31.6%	28.4%
Took time off	13.2%	12.8%	10.2%
Experienced suicidal thoughts (NEW 2019)	-	-	6.4%
Other (specified)	-	4.2%	1.5%



Other situations, caused by stress included the following:

- Changes to appetite and diet (weight gain or weight loss).
- Agitation due to office noise.
- Headaches, migraines, high blood pressure, panic attacks.
- Exhaustion / tiredness, overworked, crying.
- Reduced immunity and adverse impact on disability.



Top two answers	Answer 1	Answer 2
Overall (2019)	Disrupted sleep (New 2019)	Negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (NEW 2019)
Overall (2018)	Experienced problems with family life or relationships	Considered taking time off but did not
Overall (2017)	Nearly made a mistake that would not have happened otherwise	Considered taking time off but did not
Male	Disrupted sleep	Negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (NEW 2019)
Female	Disrupted sleep	Negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (NEW 2019)
LPC students (including paralegals)	Disrupted sleep	Negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (NEW 2019)
Trainee solicitors	Disrupted sleep	Negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (NEW 2019)
Solicitors with up to five years' post qualified experience	Disrupted sleep	Negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (NEW 2019)
Those experiencing severe or extreme level of stress	Negative impact on mental health (anxiety, emotional upset, fatigue, negative and depressed thoughts, self-harm) (NEW 2019)	Disrupted sleep (NEW 2019)

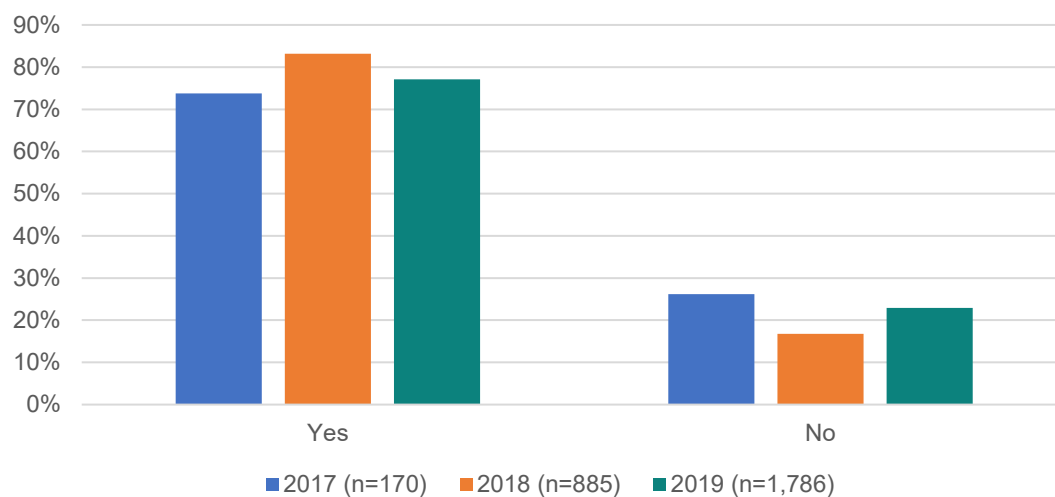
Question 14: What strategies or mechanisms do you have in place to manage or reduce your stress levels?

- Exercise (walking, sports or gym) was the most commonly cited strategy. For some the ability to exercise was restricted due to the long working hour culture and being 'too exhausted'.
- Meditation techniques and breathing exercises were employed to help refocus and re-prioritise wellbeing. Respondents mentioned practising yoga, positive thinking and mindfulness (e.g. Headspace App).
- Comments on managing workload included both:
  - ability to manage workload
    - Being realistic on what can be achieved;
    - Breaking tasks down into manageable sections and prioritising by list making;
    - Re-prioritising and re-organising work;
    - Creating and updating 'To do' lists;
    - Consciously turning down work;
    - Knowing when to stop working;
    - 'Extreme diary management to ensure there is no risk of anything getting missed'; and
    - Organising workload and pushing back on deadlines where possible.
  - inability to manage workload
    - Finishing work at home if I am overwrought after hours;
    - Getting in early to get a head start on the day;
    - Working longer hours to reduce workload to accomplish tasks;
    - 'Often working long hours to clear the backlog of work and keep on top of things'; and
    - 'Spending extra time (unpaid) coming into the office to manage caseload'.
- Taking a break / time off – responses varied from taking five minutes away from desk to clear head, to taking lunch breaks and full annual leave entitlement ('book holidays to look forward to').
- Talking to family, friends or partner to express feelings, share problems and for support.
- Have a clear break between work and home life – comments related to being able to switch off from work, not working at home (no checking emails at the weekend or when on holiday) or thinking about work at home. This could require discipline, some respondents mentioned they read or listened to music on the commute to help separate work and home life.
- Socialising / talking to colleagues about concerns, communicating workloads and discussing issues with those who have a shared understanding and experience. Need for a good social network at work.
- Seeking medical help (formal therapy from GP or counsellor, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, medication (anti-depressants)).
- Help from manager, partner, supervisor – some respondents commented that speaking to their line manager had helped: 'Spoke to my manager about my concerns and had some work reassigned, managed client expectations regarding response times'.

- Hobbies / activities outside of the workplace, relaxing at home – from self-care (massages and manicures) to crafts, date nights, computer games and cinema - ‘arranging fun activities outside of work (for something to look forward to)’.
- Being aware of sleep patterns and getting plenty of sleep.
- Managing diet – for some this meant healthy eating and drinking plenty of water, for other periods of stress were associated with comfort eating.
- Alcohol / drugs – comments on use of alcohol varied, from social use with friends to abuse.
- Listening to music, reading.
- Prayer, faith – ‘seeking strength through prayer & faith’.
- No strategies – many respondents reported having no personal strategies, nor access to workplace provision.
- Other comments related to people leaving or changing their workplace due to high levels of stress, stoicism - ‘getting on with it’ and diary writing.

Question 15: Do you think your organisation could do more to provide help/guidance/support to employees in relation to stress at work?

Answer	2017 (n=170)	2018 (n=885)	2019 (n=1,786)
Yes	73.8%	83.2%	77.1%
No	26.2%	16.8%	22.9%



A similar proportion of respondents within each organisation type indicated their employer could do more to provide help, guidance and support to employees in relation to stress at work.

## Question 16: What is your employer currently doing, or could be doing to support employees experiencing stress at work?

Whilst some respondents commented on positive actions that individual organisations were taking to support employees experiencing stress at work, a large proportion reported that employers were either doing nothing, or despite discussion and good intentions, very little was being done in terms of making the practical changes necessary to help.

Many commented on the need for employers to address the root cause of work-related stress in relation to workloads, unrealistic and unnecessary client deadlines and staff shortages (qualified fee-earners and support staff).

Other positive actions from employers mentioned include:

- Employee assistance schemes, telephone helplines, online hubs and access to free counselling.
- Mental health champions, ambassadors, committees, task forces, HR and mental health practitioners employed to promote good mental health, raise awareness and reduce the stigma around mental ill-health and to provide support.
- A focus on wellbeing through campaigns, awareness weeks, workshops and wellbeing schemes, posters, leaflets on how to improve wellbeing.
- Supportive managers, approachable senior staff who take an interest in their staffs' work and wellbeing. Checking in on staff working long hours. Frank, honest check-ins, acknowledging problems where they exist and providing support.
- Resilience and wellbeing training, mental health seminars.
- Supportive workplace cultures, encouraging a good work-life balance, open door policies and open discussion around mental health and wellbeing. Maximum working hour policies. Family friendly working hours.
- Regular one to ones with line managers/supervisors. Managers who listen and help manage workload, client expectations, spending time to answer questions and keep everyone 'in the loop', being aware of how workloads are spread across members of the team.
- Agile and flexible working patterns. Ability to take time off when needed for stress or mental health reasons, or to work from home.
- Supportive colleagues – regular team meetings, cohesive and collaborative working. Peer group support networks, people to talk to and share concerns.
- Access to mindfulness sessions (in person or through apps), yoga, massage, talks on nutrition.
- Staff surveys to measure staff morale and wellbeing.

## MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Question 17: Within the last month, have you experienced mental ill-health (whether formally diagnosed or not)?

Answers	2017 (n=172)	2018 (n=879)	2019 (n=1,787)
Yes	25.7%	38.5%	48%
No	74.3%	61.5%	52%

### 2019

Answers	Male (n=452)	Female (n=1,318)	LPC (n=201)	Trainee (n=468)	0-5 PQE (n=1,109)
Yes	41.4%	50.2%	51.1%	46.4%	46.8%
No	58.6%	49.6%	41.9%	53.6%	53.2%

Overall, the proportion of respondents experiencing mental ill-health (whether formally diagnosed or not), within the prior month had increased on 2018 figures, from 38.5% in 2018 to 48% in 2019.

Over half (53%) of those working with vulnerable clients reported experiencing a mental ill-health over the prior month, compared to 46% of those not working with this client group.

A significantly higher proportion of women (50.2%) compared to men (41.4%) reported having experienced mental ill-health. Almost two-thirds of respondents identifying as LGBT+ reported experiencing mental ill-health, compared to 47% of those identifying as heterosexual/straight.

Question 18: Was your employer aware that you were experiencing mental ill-health?

Almost one-fifth of respondents experiencing mental ill-health reported that their employer was aware. A higher proportion of women (21%) compared to men (14%) reported their employer was aware.

Answers	2017 (n=45)	2018 (n=341)	2019 (n=841)
Yes	23.9%	17.9%	19.3%
No	76.0%	82.1%	80.7%

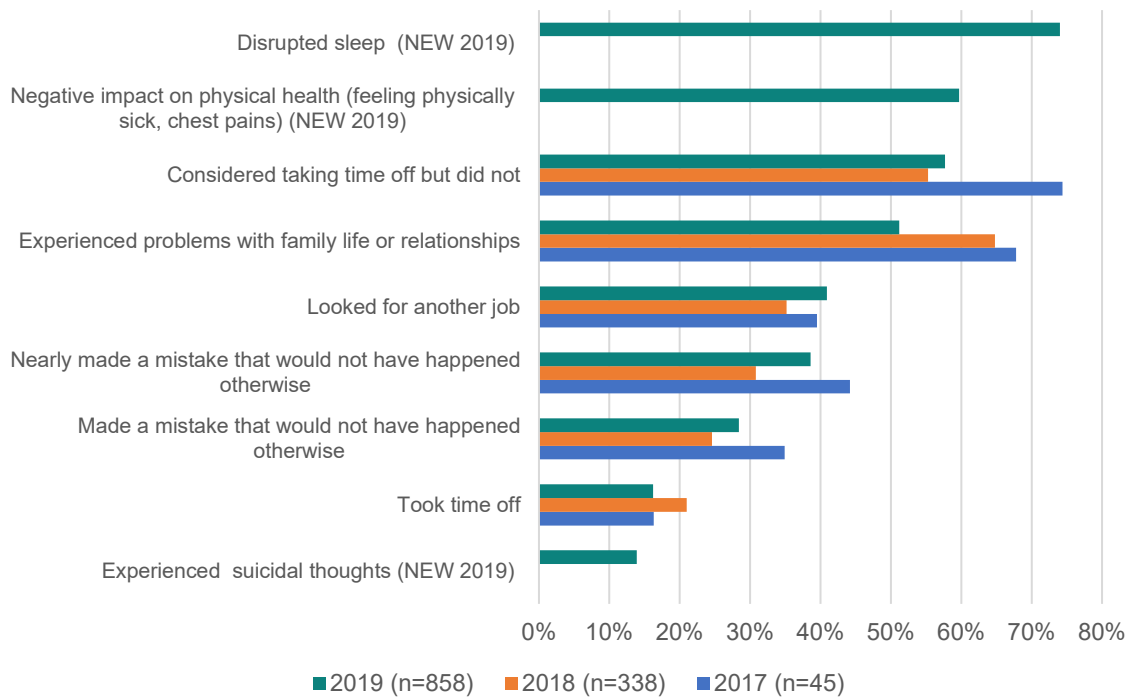
	<b>Male</b> (n=64)	<b>Female</b> (n=274)	<b>LPC</b> (n=30)	<b>Trainee</b> (n=182)	<b>0-5 PQE</b> (n=129)
Yes	14.0%	20.9%	22.2%	16.8%	19.6%
No	86.0%	79.1%	77.8%	83.2%	80.4%

Question 19: In the last month, have you experiences any of the below situations as a result of your mental ill-health?

<b>Answer</b>	<b>2017 (n=45)</b>	<b>2018 (n=338)</b>	<b>2019 (n=858)</b>
Disrupted sleep (NEW 2019)	-	-	74.0%
Negative impact on physical health (feeling physically sick, chest pains) (NEW 2019)	-	-	59.7%
Considered taking time off but did not	74.4%	55.3%	57.7%
Experienced problems with family life or relationships	67.8%	64.8%	51.2%
Looked for another job	39.5%	35.2%	40.9%
Nearly made a mistake that would not have happened otherwise	44.2%	30.8%	38.6%
Made a mistake that would not have happened otherwise	34.9%	24.6%	28.4%
Took time off	16.3%	21.0%	16.2%
Experienced suicidal thoughts (NEW 2019)	-	-	13.9%

Respondents also mentioned experiencing panic attacks, tension headache, repetitive anxious thoughts, projecting negative scenarios and recurrent nightmares. Such experiences led to resignations and seeking medical help, including taking prescribed medication for depression/anxiety.





	Most commonly cited	
	Answer 1	Answer 2
Overall (2019)	Disrupted sleep (New 2019)	Negative impact on physical health (feeling physically sick, chest pains) (NEW 2019)
Overall (2018)	Experienced problems with family life or relationships	Considered taking time off but did not
Overall (2017)	Considered taking time off but did not	Experienced problems with family life or relationships
Male	Disrupted sleep (New 2019)	Considered taking time off but did not
Female	Disrupted sleep (New 2019)	Negative impact on physical health (feeling physically sick, chest pains) (NEW 2019)
LPC students (including paralegals)	Disrupted sleep (New 2019)	Considered taking time off but did not = Negative impact on physical health (feeling

		physically sick, chest pains) (NEW 2019)
Trainee solicitors	Disrupted sleep (New 2019)	Considered taking time off but did not
Solicitors with up to five years' post qualified experience	Disrupted sleep (New 2019)	Negative impact on physical health (feeling physically sick, chest pains) (NEW 2019)

Question 20: Does your organisation provide any help/guidance/support to employees in relation to mental health at work?

Answer	2017 (n=45) with mental ill- health	2018 (n=338) with mental ill- health	2018 (n=872) Full sample	2019 (n=1,776) Full sample	2019 (n=849) with mental ill- health
Yes	26.1%	35.2%	37.2%	48.9%	44.4%
No	39.1%	33.5%	23.7%	24.6%	32.9%
Don't know	34.8%	31.1%	39.1%	26.5%	22.7%

The proportion of respondents experiencing mental ill-health reporting that their organisation provided help, guidance and support in relation to mental health at work increased from 37% in 2018 to 49% in 2019. The proportion giving a 'don't know' response decreased from 39% to 23% over the same period, perhaps suggesting that employers are now better promoting the support available to employees.

Question 21: Do you think your organisation could do more to provide help/guidance/support to employees in relation to mental health at work?

Answer	2017 (n=171)	2018 (n=323)	2019 (n=1,750) Full sample	2019 (n=847) experiencing mental ill- health
Yes	50.4%	80.2%	78.4%	87.1%
No	49.6%	19.8%	21.6%	12.9%

A similar proportion of all respondents in the 2019 and 2018 surveys thought their employer could do more to provide help, guidance and support to employees in relation to mental health at work.

Question 22: What is your employer currently doing, or could be doing to support employees in relation to mental health at work?

Around one-fifth of those responding to this question reported that nothing was being done within their organisation to support people experiencing mental ill-health. This issue was ignored or dismissed by some employers:

*'Employer does not consider mental health as an issue worth considering'.*

*'Doing nothing despite me being signed off due to stress at work. In fact they made me feel guilty for taking time off'.*

Responses largely reflected comments relating to provision of support for work-related stress, with some respondents commenting that provision of support covered both stress and mental ill-health. Most commonly cited activities that employers were currently doing were providing employee assistance schemes, telephone helplines and counselling and mental health advisors or champions within the organisation. Several individuals mentioned that the cost of counselling was not always covered and for some, time to utilise such services was a prohibiting factor. The need for better signposting and awareness raising of what support is available was also mentioned by respondents.

*'Be more open, make resources more publicly known (advertise them more)'*

*'At the outset of employment sets out clear, defined procedures concerning any issues of mental health'.*

Campaigns and awareness raising were often restricted to particular national awareness days or weeks, rather than being embedded in organisational practice. Some respondents mentioned that their employers had mental health policies or had signed up to external charters.

Respondents wanted mental ill-health to be acknowledged and discussed, at senior level and amongst their peers so that stigma around the experience of mental ill-health could be addressed. Support from senior staff was not felt to be consistent, with level of support being dependent on the personality and availability of line managers.

*'Mental health issues need to become less of a taboo and more people need to talk about their issues at all levels'*

*'Leaders in the business need to demonstrate how to maintain good mental health e.g. by having hobbies and prioritising family life'.*

As with work-related stress respondents wanted the root causes of mental ill-health to be tackled, providing examples of experiences relating to number of billable hours per day, workload, lack of support staff and the long working hour culture.

*'Reduce billable hours targets. It's impossible to hit 6-7 billable hours within a 7.5-hour contractual day'*

*'Not have arbitrary quotas for x amounts of sick days triggering disciplinary proceedings.'*

Question 23: Do you know of any organisation that are there to help you if you want to discuss stress at work or any other mental health issues?

In 2019, around three-fifths (62%) of respondents were aware of organisations that were there to help if they wanted to discuss stress at work or any other mental health issues.

Answer	2017 (n=171)	2018 (n=324)	2019 (n=1,769)
Yes	50.3%	65.7%	62.2%
No	49.7%	34.3%	37.8%

	Male (n=450)	Female (n=1302)	LPC (n=209)	Trainee (n=463)	0-5 PQE (n=1,097)	Mental - ill-health (n=848)	Severe / extreme stress (n=435)
Yes	61.9%	62.0%	60.8%	59.4%	63.6%	60.8%	57.0%
No	36.9%	38.0%	39.2%	40.6%	36.4%	39.2%	43.0%

## SUPPORT AND ADVICE

[www.lawcare.org.uk](http://www.lawcare.org.uk)

A charity that supports and promotes good mental health and wellbeing in the legal community. As well as a website packed full of factsheets, personal stories and wellbeing resources, LawCare provides a confidential helpline for anyone in the legal professional and their families (0800 279 6888)

[www.sba.org.uk](http://www.sba.org.uk)

Charity that helps solicitors in serious financial need as a result of illness, accident, redundancy or other adversity (020 8675 6440)

[www.thesas.org.uk/](http://www.thesas.org.uk/)

Confidential help and advice for all solicitors, trainees and anyone working in the legal profession in England and Wales, their families and employees on any problem troubling them, whether personal or professional.

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Mental health charity

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Support for depressed individuals, in particular those considering suicide

[www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk)

Aims to help create a society in which people with mental ill-health enjoy equal chances in life

[www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)

Practical advice about wellbeing

[www.hse.gov.uk/stress](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress)

Guidelines for managing stress at work

[www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)

Information and support on depression

[www.tacklementalhealth.org.uk](http://www.tacklementalhealth.org.uk)

Mental health information for employers

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

De-stigmatising mental illness

[www.ias.org.uk](http://www.ias.org.uk)

Education charity providing advice on alcohol consumption

[www.downyourdrink.org.uk](http://www.downyourdrink.org.uk)

Advice on alcohol consumption

[www.time-to-change.org.uk](http://www.time-to-change.org.uk)

De-stigmatising mental illness

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

Mental health charity

You can find further sources of help and guidance on the JLD's website [here](#).