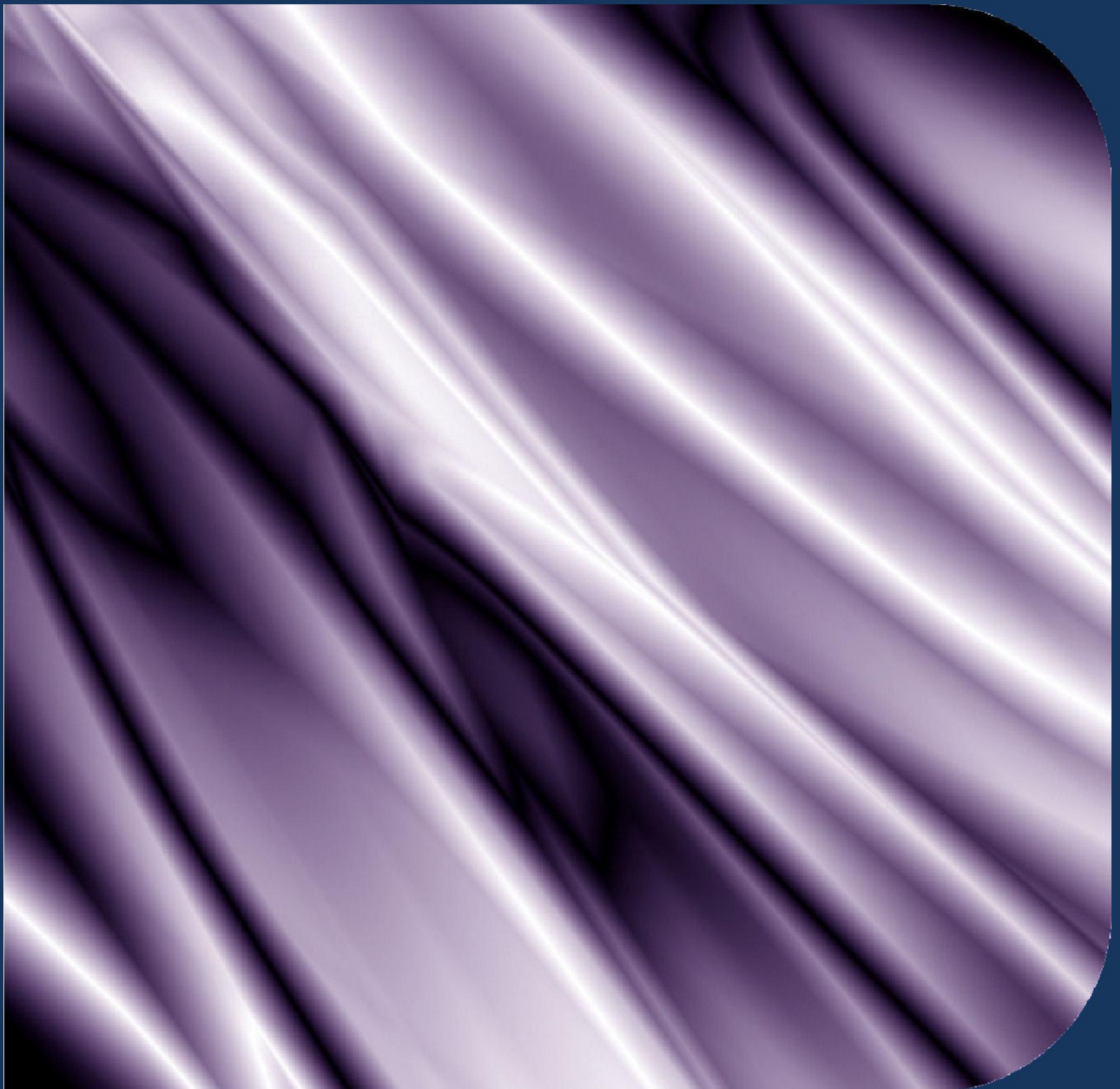


The Bar Council

Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Barrister Wellbeing (BWB) analysis

October, 2025



Executive Summary

The Bar Council Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 Barrister Wellbeing (BWB) Scale Analysis

Barristers' Working Lives Survey 2025

The General Council of the Bar, known as the Bar Council, is the Approved Regulator of the Bar of England and Wales, and the representative body for the profession. It discharges its regulatory functions through the operationally independent Bar Standards Board. The Bar Council represents all approximately 18,000 practicing barristers in England and Wales.

The Survey contained a series of questions about the work of barristers, as well as a number of demographic and attitude questions. The survey invitation was distributed by direct email invitation to the majority of the population of UK practising barristers. This report is based on the 3978 responses (23.0% of all eligible barristers) providing valid data for the 14-item version of the Barrister Wellbeing (BWB) scale contained within the survey.

What is Barrister Wellbeing?

Barrister wellbeing is that part of a barrister's overall wellbeing that is influenced by their work. It is a summary of the effect of their employment context as well as the individual and personal situation in which a barrister might evaluate the influence of work on their life. The BWB scale has an overall wellbeing score, made up of sub scales assessing a person's Psychological Wellbeing (PWB), Perfectionism (PER), Workload Management (WLM) and Supportive Work Environment (SWE). The scale has been developed in Australian and UK Barrister populations.

Key Findings

The Barrister Wellbeing scale scores, including the overall wellbeing scores were calculated and the data analysed across a number of categories linked to a series of demographic, work related and support questions asked of respondents to the survey. The key findings of these analyses are described below.

Overall analysis

1. In the 2025 BWB survey, respondents reported generally higher levels of work satisfaction and wellbeing compared to 2023, with all four main wellbeing measures being higher than in the previous survey.
2. 69% of respondents reported they had overall good job satisfaction with their job as a whole, compared to 61% of respondents in 2023.
3. Although 64% of respondents agreed they currently were in a good mood, over a quarter indicated they tended to feel down or in low spirits (29%), although both of these figures

are improvements on the 2023 survey, where the figures were 60% and 35% respectively.

4. Whilst approximately half (56%) of respondents reported they were managing their workloads well, more than a quarter (27.2%) indicated they were not managing well with their workloads.
5. Over 76% of respondents agreed they felt they had supportive colleagues and supportive work environments, a rise of 3% compared to 2023, and of 6% when compared to 2021.

Demographic and biographical questions

1. Female Barristers (43% of the total responding) reported significantly lower levels of overall wellbeing compared to the males responding to the survey. This was the same finding as was observed in 2023, although the wellbeing scores for both groups were higher in 2025.
2. Barristers who reported they were ethnically White (84% of all respondents) had significantly higher overall wellbeing than respondents who identified as Other ethnic / BAME (16% of respondents), although further analysis suggested this was due to poorer wellbeing in the Asian and Asian British groups rather than Black or other categories.
3. Generally, as barristers get older, they report higher levels of overall wellbeing, with the oldest age group (55+) reporting significantly higher wellbeing than all younger age groups.

Work category questions

1. Barristers working in the Criminal Bar reported significantly lower overall wellbeing than all other practice areas. Barristers working in Family Law had significantly lower overall wellbeing compared to most other Practice Areas, except for the Criminal Bar. Those Barristers practising in Commercial Law and in Other/ International areas reported the highest average overall wellbeing.
2. Those barristers who reported being in employed practice (only) were found to have significantly higher overall wellbeing than those who were self-employed in Chambers.
3. In general, those barristers called to the Bar more recently had lower levels of wellbeing than those called to the Bar before them; with those called to the Bar before 1990 reporting significantly higher rates of wellbeing compared to all other Call categories.
4. Those barristers working in the Greater London Region and Europe / Overseas reported higher average wellbeing than most other regions.
5. The Circuit respondents who indicated the highest job satisfaction were from the European Circuit (77% Agreed). The Midland Circuit respondents had the lowest overall agreement with this question (61%), although this had risen 6% since 2023.

Support category questions

1. Barristers who had experienced or observed any type of workplace bullying or harassment (41% of the total sample) reported significantly lower wellbeing than those who had no experience of this, although this was slightly higher than in 2023 (44%).
2. Only 12.5% of Barristers indicated they had sought help or support from the Wellbeing to the Bar website, compared to 17% in 2023 and 22% in 2021. Unsurprisingly, those who had sought online help reported significantly lower wellbeing than those who had not.
3. Those barristers in higher income groups reported significantly greater overall wellbeing than those in lower income groups.

For further details of the survey, or to discuss further surveys or analyses, please us at enquiries@qowl.co.uk.

Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Barrister Wellbeing scale overview	3
3.	Barrister Wellbeing scale summary	4
4.	Barrister Wellbeing details	5
5.	Analysis of Wellbeing scores by demographic category	11
6.	Analysis of Wellbeing scores by work category	13
7.	Analysis of Wellbeing scores by harass., mentoring & Pro Bono questions	15
8.	Advanced Analysis: predicting overall job satisfaction	17
9.	Appendices	18
	9.1 Analysis of Helpful Practices for Barrister Wellbeing.....	19
	9.1 Descriptive Statistics for individual barrister wellbeing questions and comparison across Area of Practice and Survey year	25
	9.2 Descriptive Statistics for individual barrister wellbeing questions and comparison across Circuit and Survey year.....	26

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary and analysis of the Barrister Wellbeing (BWB) scale items employed in the 2025 Bar Council Barristers' Working Lives Survey of barristers in England and Wales. Please note that this document provides an overview and therefore only analyses a small part of the rich data set gathered during the survey.

The full survey incorporated the 14 items of the Barrister Wellbeing scale as well as a number of other questions that assessed demographic and attitudinal items, including those about gender, age, and harassment and workplace bullying.

This combination of questions allows analysis of the important issues affecting the overall workplace experience of barristers, and enhances interpretation of the results within the broader context of work and individual related factors.

The Barrister Wellbeing scale assesses four discrete factors affecting the wellbeing of barristers. These four factors are labelled: Psychological wellbeing (PWB), Perfectionism (PER), Workload Management (WLM) and Supportive Work Environment (SWE). The combination of these four factors is used to calculate an Overall Barrister Wellbeing score.

The Barristers' Working Lives 2025 survey was distributed electronically via a web link so that respondents could enter the data in an online questionnaire. The survey was available for a total of 6 weeks between 18 April and 6 June 2025. 4,604 responses were received from a total of the 17, 308 barristers on the Bar Council circulation list (overall response rate = 26.6%). Some respondents did not provide data for all of the Barrister Wellbeing questions. This report is therefore based on the 3978 responses providing data for all BWB questions (valid response rate 23.0%).

This work report has been produced by the Quality of Working Life (QoWL) research group based in the Department of Psychology, University of Portsmouth. The QoWL group has been researching employee quality of working life, stress and wellbeing since 1998. The research of the QoWL team was judged to have 'Outstanding' Impact in the UK national university Research Excellence Framework. The team has conducted research and analysis in a variety of legal settings including the Police, and with England and Wales and Australian barrister associations. More information about QoWL research group is available at: www.qowl.co.uk. For further details of the BWB scale survey or analysis, please contact Dr Darren Van Laar, (darren.van.laar@port.ac.uk).

Privacy Policy

Please note that projects and research conducted by the employees and associates of the QoWL research group adhere to the professional ethical values of the British Psychological Society. Our non-research survey work adheres to the policies of the Market Research Society. Storage of data adheres to the UK data protection act. The raw data resulting from surveys may be used to further our research and benchmarking data. At no point are data from individuals reported, with reports arising from data analyses being limited to groups of a minimum of 10 people.

2. Barrister Wellbeing scale overview

The Barrister Wellbeing (BWB) scale provides a summary of the key factors which predict perceived wellbeing in the legal profession, including psychological wellbeing, workloads and support from colleagues. The BWB scale provides information about the wider individual, social and work context in which the work-life wellbeing of barristers can be evaluated. The overall aim behind the creation of the scale was to help identify best practice and to communicate how this might be best shared.

Many of the original items in the BWB scale were based on the psychometric analysis carried out in 2017 by the University of Portsmouth on data from the 2015 Bar Council 'Wellbeing at the Bar' survey by Positive. The Bar Council conducted a survey in 2021 and 2023 using the BWB questions, and comparisons with this previous survey are provided where relevant.

The 13 questions of the BWB produce four psychosocial factors which contribute to the overall wellbeing of barristers. A further item was included to provide a measure of the link between barrister wellbeing and overall job satisfaction: "*Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole*". All questions in the scale were responded to on a 5-point Likert scale comprising of: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree. The data was coded such that Strongly Disagree = 1 and Strongly Agree = 5. In this way higher scores indicate more agreement.

The four factors of the BWB scale are described below. Reliability is a measure of how well the questions all assess the same underlying trait or concept. The scores quoted are from the 2025 survey. Scores over .70 are good.

- Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) contains three items and has a sub-scale reliability of .87. Items are associated with aspects of psychological wellbeing and mental health, for example, "I tend to feel down or low in spirits".
- Perfectionism (PER) also contains three questions, and exhibits a reliability value of .81. The items pick up on the tendency for individuals to attempt to be perfect in their working behaviours and the negative psychological consequences when this is unachievable, for example, "I tend to dwell on my mistakes".
- Workload Management (WLM) has three items with a combined scale reliability of .84. The items in this subscale are related to perceived ability of an individual to control their workloads and the impact of this on their wider life. An example WLM question is: "I have significant control over the content and pace of my work".
- Supportive Working Environment (SWE) is represented by four items, with a subscale reliability of .79. The items are related to evaluations of workplace relationships and the extent to which an individual can influence their role: for example, "Within the environment in which I work, I feel comfortable to express my opinions, thoughts and ideas".

This combination of subscales allows the most important work and individual experiences affecting the overall wellbeing of barristers to be interpreted in a broad context.

3. Barrister Wellbeing scale summary

Barrister Wellbeing (BWB) Scale overview

The BWB scale was designed to assess the wellbeing of barristers and has 13 questions which contribute to four discrete wellbeing factors. The four factors are: Psychological Wellbeing (PWB), Perfectionism (PER), Workload Management (WLM) and Supportive Work Environment (SWE). The table below illustrates the BWB scale scores as a percentage of people (%Agree) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the items on that subscale. All questions for the Bar Council survey were answered on the same 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). The table below compares summary scores on the current, 2025, survey (3978 respondents) with the 2023 (3191 respondents) and the 2021 survey (3479 respondents).

Percentage Agreement rates for ‘BWB’ Subscales and Overall question	2025 Survey %Agree	2023 Survey %Agree	2021 Survey %Agree
Psychological Wellbeing (PWB): The questions associated with this factor are related to the extent to which an individual agrees they are currently experiencing a positive mood.	60	56	52
Perfectionism[†] (PER): The Perfectionism factor assesses the extent which an individual is critical of themselves or their work. Generally, a high score in Perfectionism is associated with lower overall wellbeing.	65	68	68
Workload Management (WLM): The six items in the workload management factor are associated with an individual’s sense of being able to manage the pressures or demand arising from work.	56	49	45
Supportive Work Environment (SWE): The supportive work environment factor is associated with a sense of being valued, and being supported in a social as well as a developmental sense.	76	73	67
Overall Barrister Wellbeing: The four BWB subscale scores can be used to generate an overall barrister wellbeing composite score to summarise the overall work-based wellbeing for barristers.	54	50	47

Notes: %Agree = percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to this factor;

†: Negatively phrased factor, where higher values indicate higher levels of self-criticism and therefore lower levels of wellbeing. **XX**: More than 5% above the previous survey. **XX**: More than 5% below the previous survey.

BWB scale summary

Three fifths of respondents (60%) reported they agreed or strongly agreed they generally had a positive mood, compared to 56% in 2023 and just over half in 2021 (52%). More than two thirds of respondents in both 2023 and 2021 said they were perfectionist and could be critical of themselves, but this was slightly lower in 2025. More than half of respondents (56%) agreed they managed their workload well, up 11% since 2021. 76% of respondents said they had supportive work colleagues (up by 9% since 2021), and 54% of barristers responding agreed they had overall good wellbeing as a barrister, the first time this value has been above 50%.

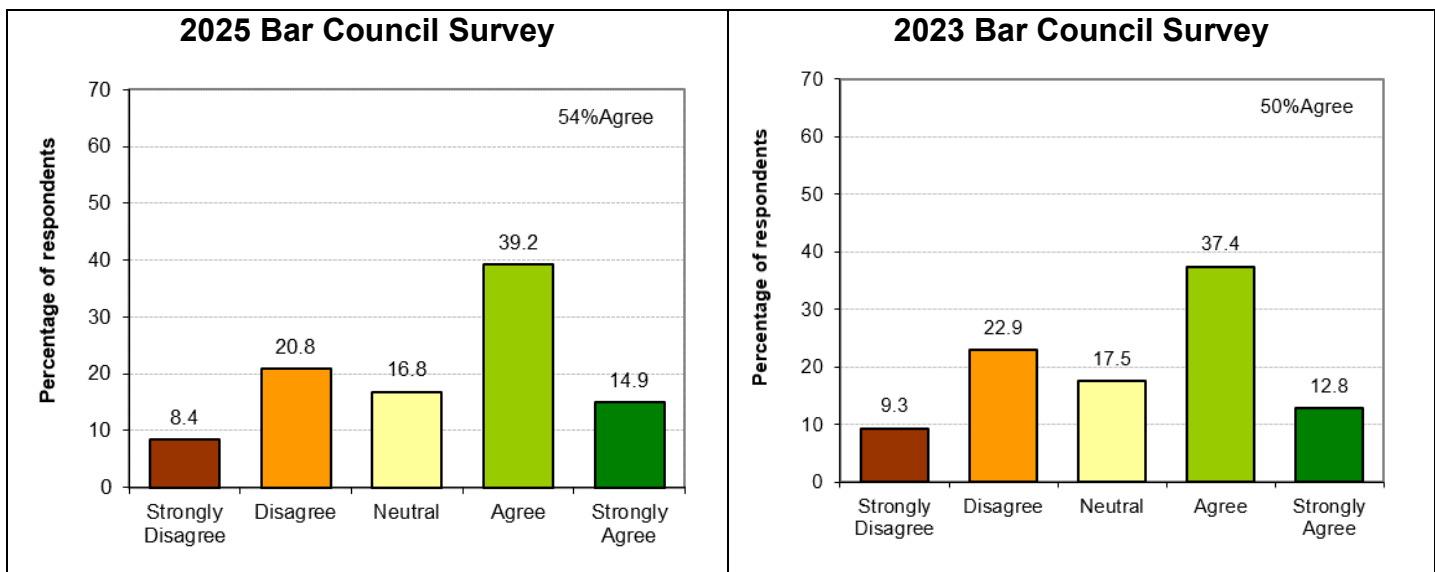
4. Barrister Wellbeing details

BWB: Overall Wellbeing - all questions

Overall, how much do you agree you feel generally content with your working life as a Barrister.

Taken together, the 13 questions contributing to the sub-factors of the BWB scale provide an overview of the key factors which predict the perceived wellbeing of Barristers and the wider individual, social and work contexts in which these issues are evaluated such as psychological wellbeing, workloads, the effect of striving to be perfect, as well as colleagues and the working environment.

The overall Barrister Wellbeing of the Bar Council respondents is shown below. The figures show the percentage of those responding who selected each of the ratings as answers in both the 2025 and the 2023 Bar Council surveys.

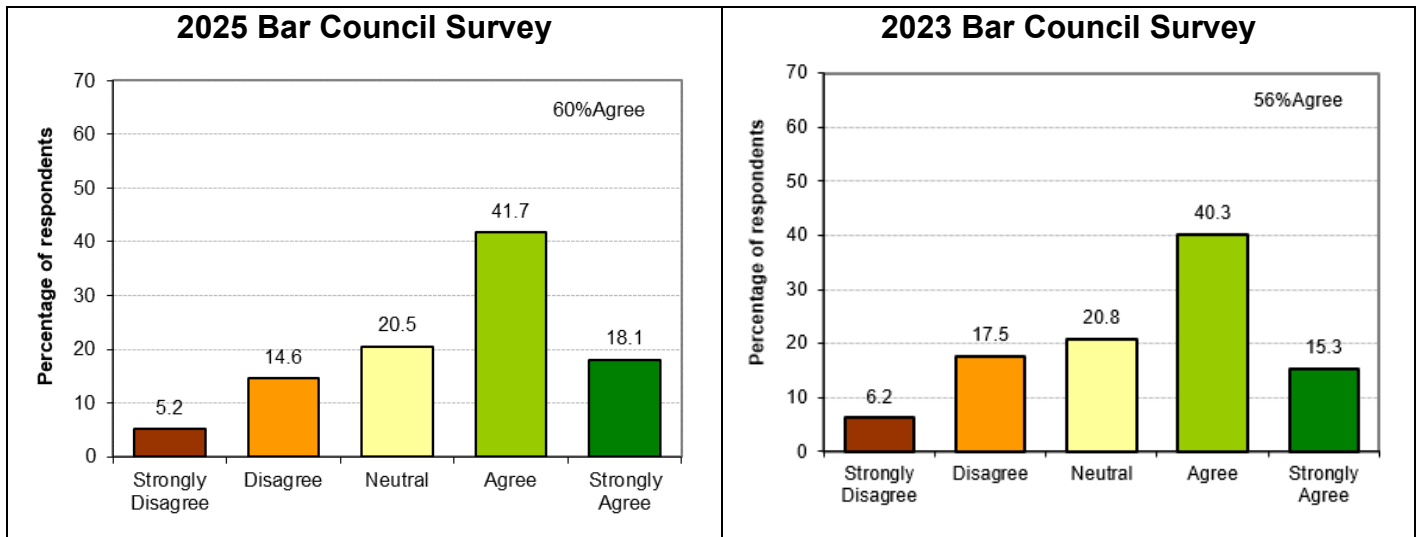


More than half (54%) of those responding to the BWB questions in this survey agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied overall with their wellbeing as barristers, a rise of 4% compared to the survey in 2023. However, nearly one third (29.2%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed they had good levels of overall wellbeing, although this was lower proportion (by 3%) when compared to the 2021 survey.

BWB: Psychological Wellbeing (PWB)

How much you agree you feel generally content with life.

Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) assesses the extent to which an individual feels good or content within themselves. Psychological wellbeing both influences, and is influenced by work and non-work factors. Ratings of Psychological Wellbeing are likely to incorporate both broader psychological wellbeing as well as general aspects of physical health.



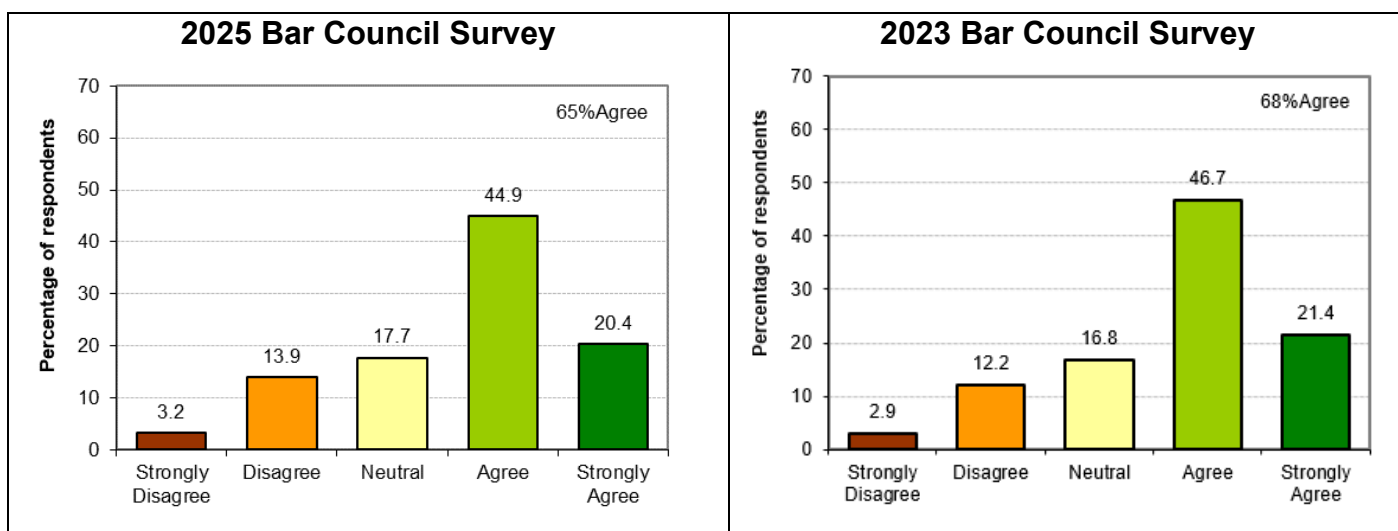
Approximately 60% of Bar Council respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt generally content with life, and this is up 4% since 2023. However, nearly 20% (19.8%) of Barristers responding in 2025 still disagreed or strongly disagreed with this sentiment.

Psychological wellbeing can affect an individual's performance at work for better or for worse. When people feel good, they work well and enjoy being at work more. On the other hand, when people feel low, or anxious, or ill at ease, regardless of whether the distress springs from their work or from difficulties at home, their work is likely to be adversely affected. In this way, improving the general wellbeing of people at work is best tackled through a positive approach, with attention being paid to prevention and health promotion rather than simply responding with provision of help when problems arise.

BWB: Perfectionism (PER)

The extent to which an individual is critical of themselves and their ability to be effective at their job.

Perfectionism (PER) is an individual psychological trait that drives an individual to achieve their best work, and the tendency to be self-critical when this cannot be achieved. Perfectionism is a characteristic of many high demand jobs with high responsibility and high consequences when things do not go well. Although acceptable levels of job-related perfectionism are important in professional roles, too high a sense of perfectionism can lead to self-criticism and poorer overall wellbeing. In this way, higher values of perfectionism are usually associated with lower wellbeing.

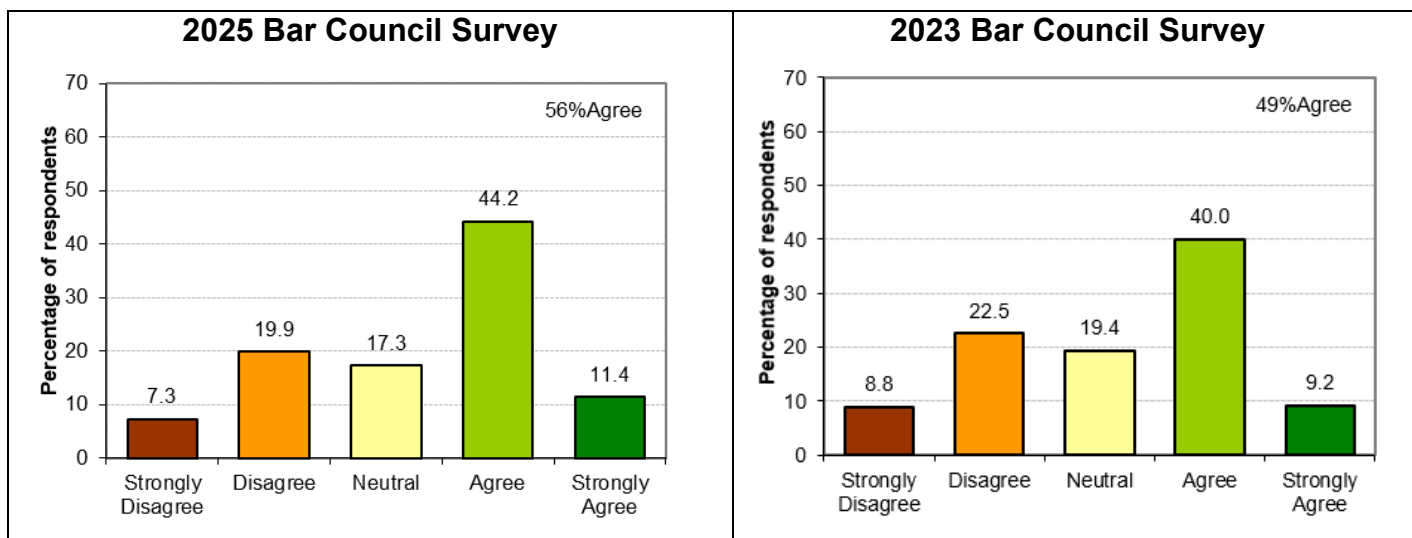


In 2025 65% of the Bar Council survey respondents agreed they exhibited perfectionist traits. The reputation and therefore success of a barrister can depend on their command of the law and the details and contents of the brief they are working on. Cases can be won or lost on whether the full details are understood. However, individuals high on perfectionism tend to dwell on mistakes and will often experience a reduction in confidence and consequently wellbeing. That the average Perfectionism score has dropped 3% from the 2023 survey is therefore likely to be a good thing for the wider wellbeing of respondents.

BWB: Workload Management (WLM)

The extent you agree that you can cope with the competing demands of your job.

Workload Management (WLM) assesses the extent to which an individual is satisfied with various aspects affecting their ability to juggle the demands of their job, including the pace of the work and their work-life balance. Individuals who are not able to successfully manage their workloads may find the quality of their work can start to suffer, with the consequence that other aspects of work and family life are negatively affected. This, when taken together with a perceived lack of control over workloads can lead to low levels of job-related wellbeing.



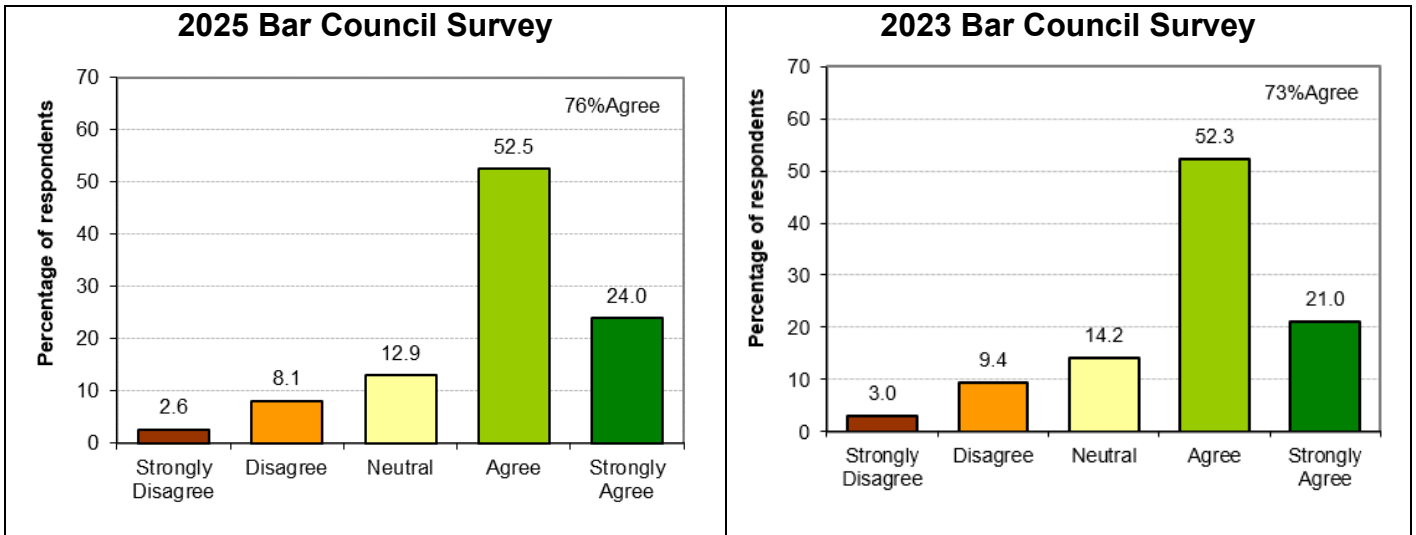
56% of respondents in the latest survey reported that they were able to successfully manage their workloads, up 7% since 2023. It was noted that although more than half of respondents agreed they were coping with their workload, more than a quarter (27.2%), disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were able to manage their workload well, although this was nearly a third in 2023 (31.3%).

The WLM factor is conceptually related to work-life balance and control of pace and demands at work. Traditionally in the profession, more senior barristers are often able to choose the type and number of cases they work on, whereas more junior colleagues are expected to take on as many cases as they can. The pressures and demands of an unmanageable workload can have serious implications for wellbeing.

BWB: Supportive Work Environment (SWE)

How far you agree you feel you are supported by colleagues and decisions that affect you at work.

Supportive Work Environment (SWE) reflects the level to which an employee, or a self-employed respondent working within chambers, feels they are supported by colleagues and can exercise what they consider to be an appropriate level of control within their work environment. This perception might be linked to various aspects of work, such as a sense of cooperation between colleagues, including the opportunity to contribute to the process of decision making that affect individuals.



In 2025, 76% of respondents agreed they had a Supportive Work Environment, up 3% since 2023 and 7% since 2021. Very few of the Barristers responding (11%) thought their work environment was not supportive.

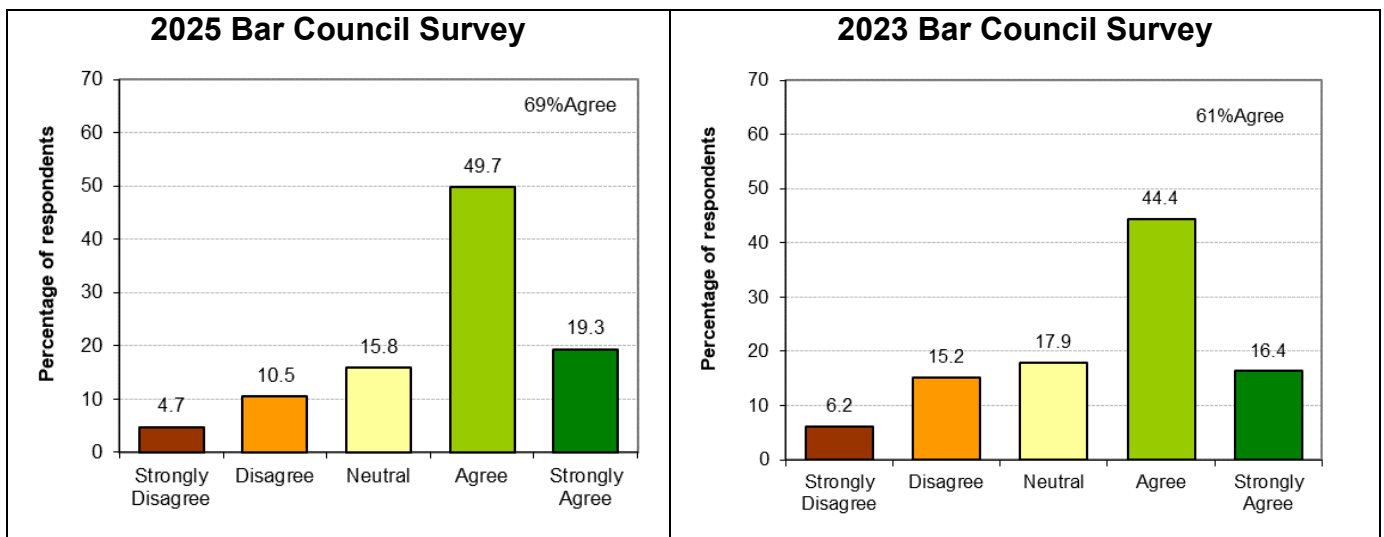
Most Barristers are self-employed, but often depend on others for much or their work and workplace support. In addition, the combative nature of the job, can mean that colleagues can be in direct competition in terms of winning clients or cases. This can mean a less supportive work environment than is present in other jobs.

BWB: Overall Job satisfaction – single question

Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole.

The BWB question set incorporated a single item measure of job satisfaction, which asked respondents to rate their agreement with the statement: ‘Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole’,. Although not a wellbeing question, the responses to the item will be indicative of general contentment with the job and is therefore worth considering in the context of the BWB wellbeing factors.

The figures below show the percentage of those responding who selected each of the ratings as answers to this question in both the 2025 and the 2023 Bar Council surveys.



IN 2025 more than two thirds of respondents agreed they were satisfied with their job as a whole (69%), up 8% on the scores of the same question asked in 2023 (61%).

5. Analysis of Wellbeing scores by demographic category

The overall average BWB score can be used to understand how different categories of barrister differ in their wellbeing. This in turn can be used to explore how best to support colleagues with lower wellbeing and perhaps form the basis of wellbeing interventions.

Table 5.1 shows the mean values for overall Barrister Wellbeing, broken down by 10 key demographic category questions. Where relevant, the statistical significance (an index of the reliability of the difference) between the sub-categories for each measure is also shown.

Overall Barrister Wellbeing demographic question summary

- In *all* of the demographic categories considered, the mean overall wellbeing score of respondents was slightly higher in 2025 compared to 2023.
- Female respondents (42.9% of the total) reported they experienced significantly lower overall wellbeing on the measures used in this survey compared with males. Although the Overall BWB mean was, although both male and female overall wellbeing scores were higher than in 2023.
- Generally, as respondents get older, they report higher levels of overall wellbeing, with the oldest age group (55+) having significantly higher wellbeing than all younger age groups. A similar profile was found in 2023.
- White respondents reported significantly higher overall wellbeing than BAME respondents (the same trend as was observed in 2023). However, a more detailed breakdown showed that only the Asian or Asian British sub-category of respondents reported significantly lower wellbeing than White respondents. Please note, it might be best to treat this finding with caution as the samples sizes are very unequal between the samples (84% of all Barristers responding were White). There was no difference observed in wellbeing between reported religions.
- As in 2023, respondents who considered themselves disabled, reported significantly lower levels of overall wellbeing compared to those who did not.
- Heterosexual / straight respondents reported significantly higher overall wellbeing than LGBTQ respondents. Similar trends were observed in both 2023 and 2021 surveys.
- Respondents who were primary carers for children under 18 or who had responsibility for caring for an adult reported significantly lower overall wellbeing than those who did not, the same trend as in 2023.
- In terms of type of School attended, those respondents who had attended an independent school reported significantly higher wellbeing than those who attended state schools, once again the same trend as was observed in 2023.

5.1 Barrister overall wellbeing scores by demographic category showing mean values and significant differences between sub-groups		Barrister Wellbeing Overall Mean 2025	Barrister Wellbeing Overall Mean 2023	2025 Category Sig. different from?	Count	%
Sex	a. Male	3.41	3.34	b	2089	57.1%
	b. Female	3.21	3.11	a	1570	42.9%
	Sig.	**	**			
Age	a. Under 45	3.23	3.14	c	1433	39.1%
	b. 45-54	3.27	3.21	c	1003	27.4%
	c. 55 plus	3.48	3.40	a, b	1225	33.5%
Sig.	**	**				
Broad ethnic group	a. White	3.35	3.25	c	3020	84.1%
	b. Mixed or Multiple	3.23	3.63	-	181	5.0%
	c. Asian or Asian British	3.19	3.05	a	208	5.8%
	d. Black and Black other	3.25	3.12	-	105	2.9%
	e. Other ethnic group	3.41	3.21	-	76	2.1%
Sig.	**	**				
BAME Split	a. White	3.35	3.25	b	3020	84.1%
	b. BAME	3.24	3.11	a	570	15.9%
Sig.	**	**				
Disability	a. Yes	3.08	3.01	b	371	10.3%
	b. No	3.36	3.26	a	3218	89.7%
Sig.	**	**				
Religion grouped	a. No religion	3.34	3.24	-	1583	45.3%
	b. Christian	3.33	3.24	-	1536	44.0%
	c. Other religion	3.32	3.20	-	372	10.7%
Sig.	ns	ns				
Sexuality (grouped)	a. LGBTQ	3.21	3.08	b	310	9.6%
	b. Straight	3.35	3.27	a	2923	90.4%
Sig.	**	**				
Primary carer for child under 18	a. Yes	3.25	3.16	b	1247	34.3%
	b. No	3.37	3.27	a	2387	65.7%
Sig.	**	**				
Adult caring responsibility	a. No	3.35	3.26	b	2986	83.2%
	b. Yes	3.21	3.11	a	602	16.8%
Sig.	**	**				
Broad type of school	a. State	3.28	3.17	b	2000	55.9%
	b. Independent	3.40	3.30	a	1285	35.9%
	c. Other/Intl	3.36	3.22	-	295	8.2%
Sig.	**	**				
All Data		3.31	3.21		3978†	100%

Notes: * = a significant difference between categories of $p < .05$; ** = a highly significant difference $p < .01$; - or ns = a non-significant difference between categories. NB. Some respondents may not have answered all questions. † = the maximum number of respondents. Categories with 10 or fewer respondents are not reported.

6. Analysis of Wellbeing scores by work category

In addition to basic demographic information about themselves, most respondents also provided information about their working arrangements and conditions.

The tables in this section show the mean values for Barrister Wellbeing, broken down by the six key work category questions. The statistical significance between the sub-categories for each measure is also shown.

Overall Barrister Wellbeing work question summary

- In almost all of the demographic work categories considered, the mean overall wellbeing score of respondents was slightly higher in 2025 compared to 2023.
- Table 6.1 shows that those respondents who reported being in employed practice (only) were found to have significantly higher overall wellbeing than other those self-employed in Chambers.
- Those who worked full-time extended hours, whether this included weekends or not, reported significantly lower wellbeing compared to respondents working part-time, or full-time in the office each day.
- In general, those respondents called to the Bar more recently reported lower levels of wellbeing than those called to the Bar before then; with those called to the Bar before 1990 having significantly higher wellbeing than all other categories. Respondents from the Young and Middle bar groups had similar wellbeing ratings to each other, but both were significantly lower than respondents in Later Practice.
- In terms of Area of Practice, respondents working in the Criminal Bar reported significantly lower overall wellbeing than all other practice areas. Although those in working in Family law reported significantly higher wellbeing scores compared the Criminal Bar, they had significantly lower wellbeing compared to all other areas of practice except PI/PN. The Wellbeing scores of all Areas were slightly higher than in 2023. Please note, scores for all 14 individual BWB questions, broken down by Area of Practice are shown in Table 9.1 in the Appendix.
- Those respondents working in the Europe / Overseas region reported significantly higher average wellbeing than all other regions except the East of England. Respondents in Greater London had higher scores than 8 of the other 11 regions, and significantly higher than 5 of these.
- Table 9.2 in the appendix shows scores for all 14 individual BWB questions, broken down by Circuit. The Circuit respondents with the highest Agreement score (the percentage who either agreed or strongly agreed) with the question 'Overall, taking everything in to consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole' were from the European Circuit (77% Agreement). The Midland Circuit respondents had the lowest overall agreement with this question (61%), although this had risen 6% since 2023.

6.1 Barrister overall wellbeing scores by work category showing mean values and significant differences between sub-groups		Barrister Wellbeing Overall Mean 2025	Barrister Wellbeing Overall Mean 2023	2025 Category Sig. difference from?	Count	%
Current work type	a. Employed Practice only	3.42	3.42	b	523	13.1%
	b. Self Employed practice (in Chambers)	3.3	3.19	a	3289	82.7%
	c. Self Employed Practice (Sole Practitioner)	3.44	3.35	-	101	2.5%
	d. Both (Self Emp. and Empl'd)	3.34	3.19	-	65	1.6%
	Sig.	**	**			
Typical working hours	a. Full-time (work in office hours each working day)	3.53	3.52	b, c	798	20.4%
	b. Full-time extended hours (not weekends)	3.38	3.33	All	915	23.3%
	c. Full-time extended (incl. WEs)	3.15	3.05	All	1759	44.9%
	d. Part-time	3.48	3.33	b, c	449	11.5%
	Sig.	**	**			
Year called to the Bar (banded)	a. Pre 1990	3.59	3.52	All	566	14.2%
	b. 1990-1999	3.36	3.24	All	1016	25.5%
	c. 2000-2009	3.23	3.13	a, b	1088	27.4%
	d. 2010 to 2025	3.24	3.14	a, b	1308	32.9%
	Sig.	**	**			
Practice Years	a. Young Bar	3.23	3.10	c	899	22.6%
	b. Middle Practice	3.24	3.15	c	1624	40.8%
	c. Later Practice	3.44	3.31	a, b	1455	36.6%
	Sig.	**	**			
Area of Practice (grouped)	a. Criminal	3.08	2.96	All	962	24.2%
	b. Civil	3.43	3.32	a, e	922	23.2%
	c. PI/PN	3.35	3.32	a, d	459	11.5%
	d. Commercial	3.46	3.42	a, c, e	814	20.5%
	e. Family	3.25	3.20	a, b, d, f	685	17.2%
	f. Other/International	3.49	3.35	a, e	136	3.4%
	Sig.	**	**			
Region	a. Wales	3.24	3.11	k	83	2.1%
	b. North East	3.15	3.10	j	124	3.1%
	c. North West	3.24	3.10	j	310	7.8%
	d. Yorkshire and the Humber	3.26	3.15	k	105	2.6%
	e. West Midlands	3.23	3.12	k	168	4.2%
	f. East Midlands	3.14	3.11	j, k	94	2.4%
	g. South West	3.22	3.23	j, k	245	6.2%
	h. South East	3.23	3.10	j, k	658	16.6%
	i. East of England	3.39	3.27	-	53	1.3%
	j. Greater London	3.38	3.28	b,c,f,g,h,k	2027	51.1%
	k. Europe / Overseas	3.62	3.44	All but i	97	2.4%
	Sig.	**	**			
	All data	3.31	3.21		3978†	100%

See Table 5.1 for notes about the table format.

7. Analysis of Wellbeing scores by harassment, mentoring and Pro Bono questions

The Barristers' Working Lives survey asked a number of questions about the support and harassment barristers experience, as well as about the Pro Bono work they do to help others. Table 7.1 shows the mean values for overall Barrister Wellbeing, broken down by these questions.

- In *all* of the demographic categories considered in this section, the mean overall wellbeing score of respondents was higher in 2025 compared to 2023.
- Respondents who had seen or experienced workplace bullying, harassment or discrimination (41% of those answering this question; 44% in 2023) reported significantly lower wellbeing than those who had no experience of this. In addition, those who had *personally* experienced bullying and harassment or discrimination (31% of those responding in 2025, 35% in 2023) also reported significantly lower overall wellbeing than those who did not..
- Respondents who reported they had a mentor had slightly lower wellbeing than those who did not (a similar difference was observed in 2023).
- Although 49% of respondents reported some level of Pro Bono work, there was no significant difference in overall wellbeing score between the individual sub-groups.
- Perhaps unsurprisingly, those 12.5% of responding barristers who indicated they had sought support from the Wellbeing at the Bar website and resources (down from 17% in 2023 and 22% in 2021) reported significantly lower wellbeing than those who did not.
- Respondents from the highest earning group reported significantly higher overall wellbeing than those in all of the groups with lower earnings. Those reporting earnings in the lowest band (up to 90K) reported significantly higher wellbeing than those in the next highest band (£90 to £150K).

7.1 Barrister overall wellbeing scores for Harassment, Mentoring and Pro Bono questions showing mean values and significant differences between sub-groups		Barrister Wellbeing Overall Mean 2025	Barrister Wellbeing Overall Mean 2023	2025 Category Sig. different from?	Count	%
I have seen or experienced workplace bullying, harassment or discrimination (any experience)	a. Yes	3.04	2.96	b	1391	40.6%
	b. No	3.51	3.43	a	2031	59.4%
	Sig.	**	**			
I personally experienced B&H or discrimination in person or online	a. Yes	2.95	2.88	b	1055	30.8%
	b. No	3.48	3.41	a	2367	69.2%
	Sig.	**	**			
I currently have a lawyer mentor	a. Yes	3.30	3.16	-	370	9.6%
	b. No	3.32	3.23	-	3470	90.4%
	Sig.	ns	ns			
Days of Pro Bono work provided in last 12 months	a. None	3.30	3.20	-	3.3	51.4%
	b. 5 or less days	3.36	3.27	-	3.36	33.5%
	c. 6-10 days	3.26	3.21	-	3.26	7.1%
	d. 11-20 days	3.38	3.02	-	3.38	3.6%
	e. More than 20 days	3.28	3.24	-	3.28	4.4%
	Sig.	*	**			
Used the Wellbeing at the Bar Website and Resources?	a. Yes	3.17	3.04	b	422	12.5%
	b. No	3.35	3.25	a	2948	87.5%
	Sig.	**	**			
Income group	a. Up to £90k (B1-B3)	3.28	3.12	b, d	1025	26.0%
	b. £90-150k (B4)	3.20	3.11	a, d	882	22.4%
	c. B5 £150-£240K (B5)	3.27	3.25	d	711	18.0%
	d. More than £240k	3.44	3.41	All	1327	33.6%
	Sig.	**	**			
All data		3.31	3.21		3978†	100%

See Table 5.1 for notes about the table format.

8. Advanced Analysis: predicting overall job satisfaction

The Bar Council's 2025 Barristers' Working Lives survey generated a very rich data set. To provide a more in-depth analysis of how wellbeing influences the experience of the job of a barrister, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted on the data. This type of analysis investigates how well sets of variables statistically predict scores on the overall job satisfaction question 'Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole'.

Three sets of variables were analysed, the first set controlled for sex and age, the second set controlled for ethnicity and area of practice. Taken together gender, age, ethnicity and area of practice predicted about 2% of the variance in the overall work satisfaction question (so, very little). When the four BWB factors were then added to the regression model, they were found to make a highly significant improvement and were able to predict 58% (a large amount) of the variance in the overall work satisfaction question (after controlling for gender, age, ethnicity and area of practice). The table below shows the significant predictors of overall job satisfaction.

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Err	Beta		
(Constant)	-0.121	0.121		-1.01	0.316
Sex	-0.091	0.024	-0.044	-3.8	<.001
Age band	-0.059	0.014	-0.048	-4.2	<.001
Broad ethnic group	0.02	0.013	0.017	1.5	0.12
Area of Practice (grouped)	0.01	0.007	0.015	1.3	0.183
Psychological Wellbeing (PWB)	0.454	0.016	0.42	28.16	<.001
Perfectionism (PER)	0.053	0.014	0.046	3.7	<.001
Workload Management (WLM)	0.304	0.015	0.289	20.7	<.001
Supportive Work Environment (SWE)	0.336	0.017	0.239	19.3	<.001

Dependent Variable: d1n: Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole
 Sig.: values of 0.05 or less are significant predictors of Overall job satisfaction, values of 0.01 or less are highly significant.

In the table above, those BWB areas with the largest 't' values (ignoring the negative sign) are the best predictors of overall job satisfaction. The table therefore shows that the PWB was the best predictor of ratings of overall job satisfaction followed by WLM and then SWE and then PER. These are therefore the factors might be prioritised when considering interventions to improve the job satisfaction of respondents.

9. Appendices

This section contains a detailed breakdown of the score for all Barrister wellbeing sub scales by the 14 BWB questions.

- 9.1 Analysis of Helpful Practices for Barrister Wellbeing
- 9.2 Descriptive Statistics for individual Barrister Wellbeing questions and comparison across Area of Practice and Survey year
- 9.3 Descriptive Statistics for individual Barrister Wellbeing questions and comparison across Circuit and Survey year

9.1 Analysis of Helpful Practices for Barrister Wellbeing

In the 2025 survey, 3978 people returned a valid response, and of these 1718 (43%) provided an answer to the question **‘Is there anything you do that is helpful in supporting your professional wellbeing?’**.

This report presents an inductive thematic analysis of 1,718 anonymised survey responses from the survey, focusing on statements describing what individuals find helpful in supporting their professional wellbeing. Please note, the definition of the themes and categories described in this section was supported by an AI analysis carried out on anonymised quotes within a secure virtual sandbox.

The analysis identified a range of practical strategies, resources, and cultural factors that barristers themselves report as making a positive difference to their wellbeing at work.

The most frequently cited sources of support are strong professional relationships, including mentoring, peer support, and a sense of community within chambers. Many barristers highlight the value of informal and formal mentoring, regular discussions with colleagues, and supportive family and friends as essential to coping with the demands of the profession.

Access to professional wellbeing services such as therapy, counselling, and reflective practice is also widely valued, particularly for those dealing with traumatic or high-pressure cases. Respondents note that regular exercise, mindfulness, and other healthy lifestyle practices are important tools for managing stress and maintaining resilience.

Work-life balance emerges as a critical theme, with barristers emphasising the importance of taking breaks, holidays, and setting boundaries between work and personal life. Flexible working arrangements, including remote or part-time work, are seen as beneficial where available.

Other helpful practices include engaging in hobbies and creative activities, participating in social and community events, and seeking financial or practical advice to reduce stressors outside the courtroom.

Overall, the findings suggest that a holistic approach combining personal, professional, and organisational support is most effective in promoting wellbeing at the Bar. The report concludes with recommendations for the Bar Council, chambers, and individuals to consider.

Professional Support and Wellbeing Services

Therapy and Counselling (320 quotes, 18.6%)

“Seeing a psychologist”

“I have ... been seeing a psychodynamic psychotherapist”

“I have seen a psychologist for years - I have to pay for this privately because of the NHS waiting lists, and also I need a psychologist with significant flexibility because of my uncertain work hours.”

“I have seen psychologists over my career. I would have said those were for personal issues about e.g. self-esteem but it is hard to separate them, and personal issues about how I think about myself affect my experience of my work.”

Wellbeing Meetings/Training/Resources (137 quotes, 8.0%)

“My well-being would be greatly improved by having the Bar Council focus ... on practical advice for those in self-employed practice. “

“Wellbeing meetings.”

“Learning and applying time management techniques.”

“I think that training which focuses on communication could be useful.”

Reflective Practice (28 quotes, 1.6%)

“Taking time out for reflection and self-actualisation tends to help me and put life and work pressures into perspective.”

“Reflective practice is helpful although would prefer clinical supervision as dealing with survivors of sexual violence which can lead to vicarious trauma”

“I also think that some sort of reflecting practice for pupil supervisors would be useful i.e. perhaps a Bar Association or Inn-run session for pupil supervisors whereby they feedback together on their experiences and reflect on lessons learnt.”

Supportive Relationships

Family and Friends (120 quotes, 7.0%)

“Family life”

“Courts need to allow for time for work to be done between counsel during court hours and not expect counsel toward tireless before and after court as well. I have had many judges say to myself and co-counsel that “the bar works through the night” which is antiquated with no consideration of mental health, personal well being and family commitments.”

“Having an understanding partner”

Mentoring (108 quotes, 6.3%)

“Mentoring would be helpful to establish a career path away from where I am at present.”

“Mentoring would certainly help. As i come from a non-conventional background to become a barrister, i would appreciate some more mentoring with drafting or advocacy.”

“Mentoring and a more structured career progression. Seeing people more often, when I started practice I would see colleagues every day, whereas now that is simply not the case.”

Colleague Support (21 quotes, 1.2%)

“The advocacy and fellow barristers make the job worth doing.”

“Good friends in chambers is more important than anything. We have a strong (Barrister) group that can phone each other to ask even the most basic “am I going mad” questions. The non-judgmental support is fantastic.”

“Peer support and constructive comment helps enormously”

“Chambers have been very welcoming and members of my practice team are almost always available to ask pressing questions. I feel comfortable asking them questions even when I think I have made a mistake.”

Organisational and Structural Support

Systemic Support (48 quotes, 2.8%)

“Peer review of cases; assisting less experienced colleagues, which is always good even when they come back and show me where I was wrong!”

“I manage a team of lawyers of all abilities including trainees. I have good support from my managers and I am able to access support through schemes set up via my employment.”

“Ensuring I book periods out of court in my diary every month to prepare cases”

“I would also like to see more training on how to lead and be led because that seems to me often a tricky relationship without much discussion about who does what and how to deal with emotions thrown up.”

Physical and Mental Health Activities

Exercise and Sport (118 quotes, 6.9%)

“Sport. The perfect antidote for long and tedious days in Court.”

“Exercise, walking, meditation”

“Going to the gym post work helps work off tension/depression etc - provides a sense of achievement and release even if the working day was difficult. Other physical de-stress activity helps - e.g., walking.”

“Gaining perspective - however you do that. Might be going for a walk, breath work, being outside etc. Getting enough sleep!”

Healthy Lifestyle (19 quotes, 1.1%)

“Countryside living. Discussion with colleagues. Irreverent humour which deflects the awfulness of some issues we have to see and deal with.”

“Going to church, exercise like going to the gym and running. talking to a trusted friend”

“Eating lunch. Sleep.”

“Taking breaks, walks in the fresh air”

Mindfulness and Meditation (16 quotes, 0.9%)

“Meditation and mindfulness practice”

“I attended a 10-day meditation course around two years ago, which equipped me with the tools to cope with the stresses of the job and gave a sense of perspective. It is not for everyone, but I would strongly recommend it. It was certainly more useful than any CPD I have completed.”

“Meditation and related exercises in stillness of mind, although my workload is such that I do not give this as much time as I would like to. Past practice of meditation has provided me with a degree of general calmness. It also helps to be kind and charitable to others, and not to have unrealistic expectations or be critical of others when they do not fulfil your hopes or expectations”

“I use meditation Apps.”

Work-Life Balance and Time Management

Taking Breaks and Holidays (29 quotes, 1.7%)

“Managing my diary to ensure I have 'downtime'.”

“Taking days out of the diary for prep and post-prep (an increasing aspect of the job). Not working in the evenings, as this then impacts on my sleep which is non-negotiable these days.”

“I go on holiday to very remote places where solicitors can't contact me”

“I try to take chunks of time off work after busy periods, and to carve out time to enjoy some absorbing hobbies to take my mind off work.”

Boundaries and Switching Off (27 quotes, 1.6%)

“Being able to say “no” to extra work coming in and having quieter periods (or short breaks / holidays, even just a long weekend) to balance out busy periods”

“I just need to have more of a work and life balance.”

“Having a life outside the law.”

“Trying to manage work life balance which inevitably means taking time away from work completely as a sensible balance is often too challenging to maintain.”

Flexible/Reduced Working (19 quotes, 1.1%)

“I work part-time and take regular time out of my diary.”

“I am fortunate and able to limit my working days but remain flexible.”

“Being able to work from home and to take breaks when I choose.”

“Being able to work from home”

Financial and Practical Support

Financial Security (8 quotes, 0.5%)

“I’m maintaining a part time judicial role to add diversity and balance, as well as a relatively consistent income.”

“I am glad to say that for me, life is pretty good! This is largely due to my sitting pattern as a fee-paid judge and occasional forays into sole practitioner practice, acting as a legally qualified adviser for misconduct hearings.”

“Being able to have more control over workload and taking more time to relax without financial penalty.”

Personal Interests and Hobbies

Other Activities (19 quotes, 1.0%)

“I try to attend social events where I can, which can be difficult sometimes as I am balancing the care of my family”

“I like that social media allows people to comment on their experiences. The feeling of “Phew, it's not just me” is very reassuring.”

“... attending conferences, crochet.”

“Headspace. ... Chambers Book Club. Other Chambers events.”

“Taking lessons in non-law things (e.g. music, Alexander technique etc.)”

“Choral Evensong”

“Gardening”

“Playing music.”

Recommendations

Based on the thematic analysis, we recommend the following actions for consideration:

1. Expand access to therapy and counselling services for barristers.

Many barristers report significant stress, trauma, and mental health challenges. Making confidential, affordable therapy and counselling widely available would address a core need, reduce stigma, and help practitioners manage the unique pressures of the profession.

2. Promote mentoring programs and peer support networks.

Mentoring and peer support help barristers—especially juniors—navigate career challenges, reduce isolation, and build resilience. Formal and informal networks foster knowledge-sharing, emotional support, and a sense of community, which are vital for wellbeing.

3. Advocate for fair legal aid rates and timely payments.

Financial insecurity and delayed payments are major sources of stress. Ensuring fair remuneration and prompt payment for work done would alleviate anxiety, improve morale, and help retain talented practitioners in publicly funded areas of law.

4. Encourage chambers to support work-life balance initiatives.

Long hours and unpredictable workloads undermine wellbeing. Chambers can help by promoting flexible working, respecting boundaries, and encouraging regular breaks, holidays, and time for family and personal interests, supporting sustainable careers.

5. Address systemic issues in court listing and judicial expectations.

Unpredictable court listings, late papers, and unrealistic judicial demands create excessive pressure. Collaborative reform—engaging the judiciary and court administrators—can improve scheduling, reduce last-minute changes, and foster a more respectful, manageable working environment.

9.1 Descriptive Statistics for individual barrister wellbeing questions and comparison across Area of Practice and Survey year	All % Agree	%Agree by members within each Area of Practice											
		Criminal		Civil		PI/PN		Commercial		Family		Other/Int	
		2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023
Question	2025	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023
d1a: Within the environment in which I work, there is generally a sense of cooperation and collaboration	82	76	70	85	82	84	84	86	84	82	79	81	84
d1b: I have significant control over the content and pace of my work	58	39	29	69	61	63	58	70	66	53	55	63	70
d1c: I am able to integrate the things that are most important to life and work	54	34	26	65	57	57	58	68	63	44	43	69	74
d1d: I tend to feel down or low in spirits (-ve)	29	43	48	22	30	27	29	22	23	33	36	18	23
d1e: I experience little interest or pleasure in doing things (-ve)	17	24	30	12	15	15	13	12	14	20	20	9	14
d1f: A case going badly has an impact on my confidence (-ve)	67	72	77	70	75	73	72	67	71	72	70	66	68
d1g: Overall, I find my workload manageable	55	37	32	63	56	59	58	67	63	51	46	60	49
d1h: I tend to dwell on my mistakes (-ve)	58	58	64	57	61	60	61	55	58	64	65	49	62
d1i: My current mood is good	64	53	52	70	64	65	63	72	69	63	59	71	61
d1j: I tend to be very critical of myself (-ve)	70	74	75	70	73	66	70	66	67	73	74	71	68
d1k: My relationships with other colleagues are as good as I would want them	72	72	63	71	68	72	69	69	67	75	72	78	63
d1l: Within the environment in which I work, I feel comfortable to express my opinions, thoughts and ideas	71	66	62	73	72	70	71	76	75	71	67	71	67
d1m: I am able to confide in work colleagues regarding challenges experienced with my cases	80	80	78	83	79	81	79	77	75	82	79	75	80
d1n: Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole	69	53	41	78	69	72	70	80	76	63	60	77	72
N =	3978	962	865	711	711	459	375	814	523	685	653	136	64

Notes:

- %Agree scores are the average % respondents who agree or definitely agree with questions.
- Colour coding indicates differences compared to the overall %Agree average for this question: **XX** = 5% worse; **XX** = 10% worse; **XX** = 5% better; **XX** = 10% better. Note colour coding for 2023 is related to the average question scores for that year.
- (-ve) = This question is negatively phrased, so that a higher %Agree indicates lower wellbeing stress. NB this means scores higher than average are colour coded red, etc..
- N = Number of respondents answering this question.

9.2 Descriptive Statistics for individual barrister wellbeing questions and comparison across Circuit and Survey year	All % Agree	%Agree by members indicating their Circuit															
		None		Midland Circuit		Northern Circuit		North Eastern Circuit		South Eastern Circuit		Wales and Chester Circuit		Western Circuit		European Circuit	
		2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023
Question	2025	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023	2025	2023
d1a: Within the environment in which I work, there is generally a sense of cooperation and collaboration	82	84	82	82	76	81	74	80	79	79	75	83	75	86	86	71	65
d1b: I have significant control over the content and pace of my work	58	66	59	53	48	50	43	51	45	50	45	48	46	56	54	65	58
d1c: I am able to integrate the things that are most important to life and work	54	63	57	43	43	42	38	42	38	44	37	47	43	49	49	61	65
d1d: I tend to feel down or low in spirits (-ve)	29	23	28	39	37	37	41	39	41	35	39	30	45	31	36	26	27
d1e: I experience little interest or pleasure in doing things (-ve)	17	13	16	24	22	21	22	24	24	20	23	16	16	17	20	7	19
d1f: A case going badly has an impact on my confidence (-ve)	67	66	69	66	72	63	70	71	71	68	70	66	71	69	70	58	62
d1g: Overall, I find my workload manageable	55	62	56	54	49	46	40	48	45	47	44	46	45	52	46	45	54
d1h: I tend to dwell on my mistakes (-ve)	58	57	62	55	60	57	62	63	68	60	61	60	64	62	61	58	62
d1i: My current mood is good	64	69	64	61	60	58	54	57	54	61	60	61	52	63	63	55	54
d1j: I tend to be very critical of myself (-ve)	70	68	71	71	75	71	74	75	77	73	72	76	73	73	75	74	62
d1k: My relationships with other colleagues are as good as I would want them	72	72	67	76	69	72	66	71	72	70	68	77	61	77	73	61	46
d1l: Within the environment in which I work, I feel comfortable to express my opinions, thoughts and ideas	71	72	71	66	68	71	64	67	60	71	67	69	64	76	77	68	65
d1m: I am able to confide in work colleagues regarding challenges experienced with my cases	80	80	78	81	80	81	80	81	77	79	79	80	74	84	83	77	62
d1n: Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole	69	74	68	61	55	64	57	64	52	65	56	65	55	68	63	77	65
N =	3984	1779	1149	271	244	297	312	208	271	1028	822	96	69	274	235	31	26

Notes:

- %Agree scores are the average % respondents who agree or definitely agree with questions.
- Colour coding indicates differences compared to the overall %Agree average for this question: **XX** = 5% worse; **XX** = 10% worse; **XX** = 5% better; **XX** = 10% better. Note colour coding for 2023 is related to the average question scores for that year.
- (-ve) = This question is negatively phrased, so that a higher %Agree indicates lower wellbeing stress. NB this means scores higher than average are colour coded red, etc..
- N = Number of respondents answering this question.

Copyright 2025 © by University of Portsmouth, UK

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without permission in writing from the publisher.

University of Portsmouth, UK authorises the commissioning organisation and its agent to distribute this report in full or in part within the commissioning organisation. The commissioning organisation may use the information contained within the report for internal communication and planning reasons, but must not allow the report to be made generally available (e.g. through the internet) without explicit permission in writing from the publisher.

Published by:

Quality of Working Life Research Group
Department of Psychology
University of Portsmouth
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO1 9DY
United Kingdom
+ (0) 44 2392 846306
enquiries@qowl.co.uk



QoWL Research Group
Department of Psychology
University of Portsmouth
Portsmouth
Hampshire, PO1 2DY
United Kingdom
+ (0) 44 2392 84 6306
enquiries@qowl.co.uk