

Second Profile of the Legal Profession of the Republic of Maldives

October 2023



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Executive Summary

Overview

The Profile of the Legal Profession in the Maldives is based on a 113-question survey answered by 226 legal professionals in the Maldives. This report begins with a detailed background of the legal climate in the Maldives, continuing with a disaggregation of respondent demographics along the strata of gender, age, location of origin, and location of operation. General demographic trends of respondents showed they were split along gender lines, relatively young, largely operating in the Male' Atoll, and primarily recently licensed.

To better assess the educational context of lawyers and legal systems in the Maldives, the study approaches the question of education through five sections: general education, local education, foreign education, supplemental studies, and practical studies. Following demographic disaggregation, the second section of the report outlines the general elements of respondents' education through undergraduate degrees, post-graduate degrees, and certificates other than CLE/CPD, which are each disaggregated by locations of national and independently aggregated international educational institutions, type of post-graduate degree obtained, year of completion, and specialization of degree.

The third and fourth sections delve more deeply into local and foreign education respectively to explain modules offered in subject areas such as Maldivian law, common law, international law, and Shariah law; primary language of instruction, exams, and textbooks; and preparedness for working in the Maldivian legal field. The fifth section, supplemental studies, explains participants' experiences with practical studies in the course of their legal education. The education portion of the report concludes with respondent participation in practical training--externship, work placement, or trainee program programs--and an assessment of their usefulness.

Following on the information attained through the educational information segment of the study comes five additional sections aimed at better understanding the legal profession in practice in the Maldives: qualification, employment, CPD/CLE, pro-bono work, and lifestyle and wellness. The qualification section presents data concerning licensing and the year of licensure for the High Court, Supreme Court, and foreign jurisdictions. Additionally, it offers insights into lawyers who have obtained licenses after completing the Bar examination and the mandatory traineeship as stipulated by the Legal Profession Act of 2019 (LPA). This section also encompasses information about lawyers who were licensed through the Special Licensing Training Program (SLTP) following the enactment of LPA 2019. The employment section data captures employment rate, respondents working multiple jobs, the nature of respondent employment and practice area, time spent in the legal industry and with their current employer as well as position held, income, and discrimination in seeking and engaging in employment.

Data pertaining to Continuing Professional Development/Continuing Legal Education (CPD/CLE) includes participation in development, employer coverage of training, assessed

usefulness of trainings, and perceived necessity of CPD/CLE trainings. The pro-bono work section describes respondents' provision of pro-bono services, including time dedicated to pro-bono work, the framework of pro-bono work, pro-bono challenges, and its importance. Additionally, data on pro-bono services to marginalized or vulnerable groups, along with the associated challenges is also included in this section. Finally, the report concludes with an assessment of lawyers' lifestyle and well-being, taking into consideration aspects such as marital status, parental responsibilities, delays in obtaining undergraduate law degrees, motivation for pursuing a legal career, stress levels, student debt, experiences with depression and anxiety, disabilities, and the availability of accommodations for disability status in their workplace, court environments, and other work-related settings.

Background

Following the establishment of the Bar Council of the Maldives (BCM) in July 2019, the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI) extended its support to the newly-elected Executive Committee to offer support and technical assistance in developing the BCM's organizational infrastructure. After conducting a needs assessment, it became apparent that a first priority would be identifying the demographics, educational and professional background, and priorities of Maldivian lawyers. As such, ABA ROLI and BCM set out to design a survey of the Maldivian legal profession, with the goal of producing a public report similar to the annual Profile of the (American) Legal Profession produced by the ABA. In this context, ABA ROLI and BCM released the inaugural report in December 2020 as part of the baseline reporting phase. The survey was designed using Qualtrics, with the collaborative efforts of ABA ROLI's Research, Evaluation, and Learning Office, in coordination with the staff of the BCM. It was open for responses over a one-month period, from 13 July to 17 August 2023. Subsequently, data was analyzed, and this report was drafted in August and September 2023.

Limitations

The data collected by the survey has several limitations. It was distributed via electronic means for voluntary responses, so survey respondents do not constitute a random sample of Maldivian lawyers. The survey was taken by 226 respondents who are currently licensed and practicing lawyers. The 226 responses from currently licensed and practicing lawyers represent approximately 10% of practicing lawyers. The survey was designed and conducted in-house by ABA ROLI with the goal of quickly collecting data that could help inform the BCM's strategic plan and activities, and funding limitations prevented ABA ROLI from hiring independent evaluators to conduct analysis and reporting on the data.

Major Conclusions

Despite these limitations, ABA ROLI and BCM believe that some important conclusions can be drawn. The Maldivian bar is overwhelmingly young, with respondents having a median age of 39 and a large majority of respondent lawyers having received their license in the past 10 years. Although lawyers come from around the country, with only 39% of respondents originally being from Male', the vast majority (89%) of respondents are currently based in Male'.

Among the respondents, 98% completed an undergraduate degree in law, of whom 76%

completed their degree at a Maldivian university. Of Maldives-educated lawyers, 85% said their law school offered modules in Maldivian law, while 67% responded that the primary language of instruction was English and 89% responded that their textbooks were in English. Only 43% of Maldives-educated respondents believed that their law school education did not prepare them to practice law in the Maldives, with 43% citing lack of practical experience, 27% citing lack of knowledge of the Maldivian legal system, and 21% citing lack of knowledge of legal Dhivehi as the reasons why they felt unprepared. Similarly, only 44% of foreign-educated respondents felt unprepared to practice law in the Maldives, with 23% citing lack of practical experience, 28% citing lack of knowledge of the Maldivian legal system, 23% citing lack of knowledge of legal Dhivehi and 15% citing lack of knowledge of Shariah.

78% of respondent lawyers are currently employed in a legal capacity, with 14% working non-legal jobs and 8% being unemployed. A majority of lawyers earn MVR 15,000 to MVR 30,000 per month. 27% of respondents reported being employed at a law firm, with the next most common employment being in the government (27%), and as a solo practitioner (10%). While many lawyers have multiple areas of practice, the most common are civil law, employment law, and commercial law. Slightly more than half (58%) of lawyers had participated in professional development or continuing legal education (CPD/CLE), but 98% of lawyers indicated that they believed that CPD/CLE is necessary in the Maldivian legal profession and 60% believed licensing should be contingent on completion of CPD/CLE.

The most common reasons why respondents chose a career in law are because they are passionate about legal work, they wanted to be helpful to others, the allure of high-paying positions within the legal field, and because they felt that the law degree would prepare them for many types of jobs. Many Maldivian lawyers demonstrated a commitment to providing pro bono legal services. 98% stated that they believe lawyers should provide pro bono legal services, although only 65% have actually done so. The most common forms of pro bono services were litigation, consultation and advice, form filing, and legal drafting. Lawyers reported that lack of time and lack of funding and lack of resources were the most common obstacles to providing pro bono services. Furthermore, a significant proportion of lawyers, approximately 56%, extended pro bono legal representation, assistance, or advice to marginalized groups. For these efforts, lawyers faced recurring challenges such as limited time, inadequate resources, insufficient administrative support, and logistical challenges in terms of transportation when working to deliver pro bono services to marginalized communities.

A majority of respondent lawyers (90%) reported experiencing stress at work, with about 39% experiencing stress always or most of the time. Approximately 38% of respondent lawyers experience depression or anxiety, a plurality of 78% said their symptoms were exacerbated by work. A large workload, financial concerns and the work environment were the most common causes of stress. Most manage stress through work-life balance, exercise, support of family and friends, or hobbies.

Acknowledgments

ABA ROLI Senior Technical Advisor Jessie Tannenbaum, Technical Advisor Hawwa Naffath Nasir, and BCM Director of Programs Yasmeen Shamaal led the development of the survey which was disseminated by BCM Director of Programs Yasmeen Shamaal and Anitha Moosa. ABA ROLI Technical Advisor Hawwa Naffath Nasir, Senior Program Officer Aishath Shaahy Habeeb and Program Director, Humadha Ahmed led the survey analysis. The Profile of the Legal Profession in the Maldives was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Award No. AID-OAA-L-15-00007. Any conclusions stated herein are the work of the authors and not necessarily the opinions of the United States Government or the American Bar Association.

Findings

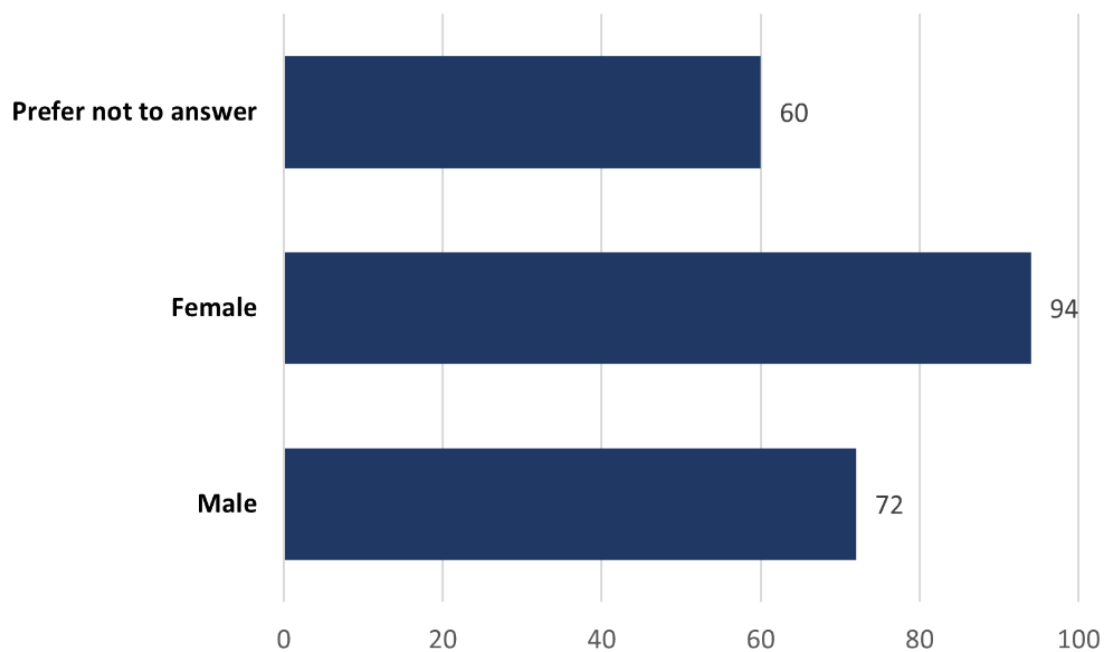
Demographics

Roughly the same amount of men took this survey as women. There is a clear age bias in this survey, as most of the respondents are in their 20s and 30s, with the median age being 39. Unsurprisingly, the densely populated Male' Atoll was the most popular location that lawyers both came from and worked in. A large percentage received their license in the past five years, speaking to the young age of the lawyers who responded to this survey.

Gender

Of the 226 survey participants who answered this question, 94 (41.6%) were female, 72 (31.9%) were male, and 60 (26.5%) preferred not to answer.

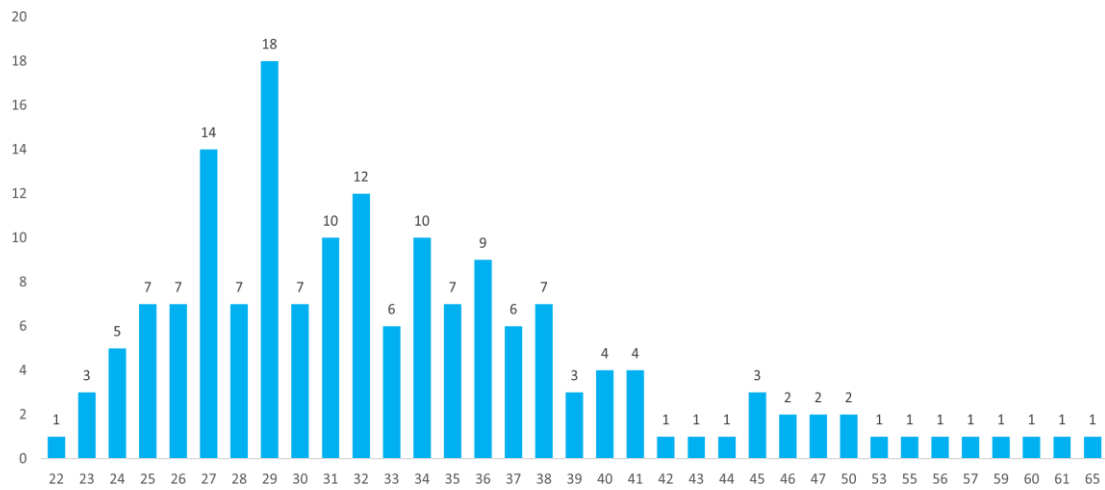
Gender Breakdown



Age

Most of the Maldivian lawyers surveyed are quite young and fall between the ages of 22 and 65. The average age of a lawyer in the Maldives who took this survey is 39.

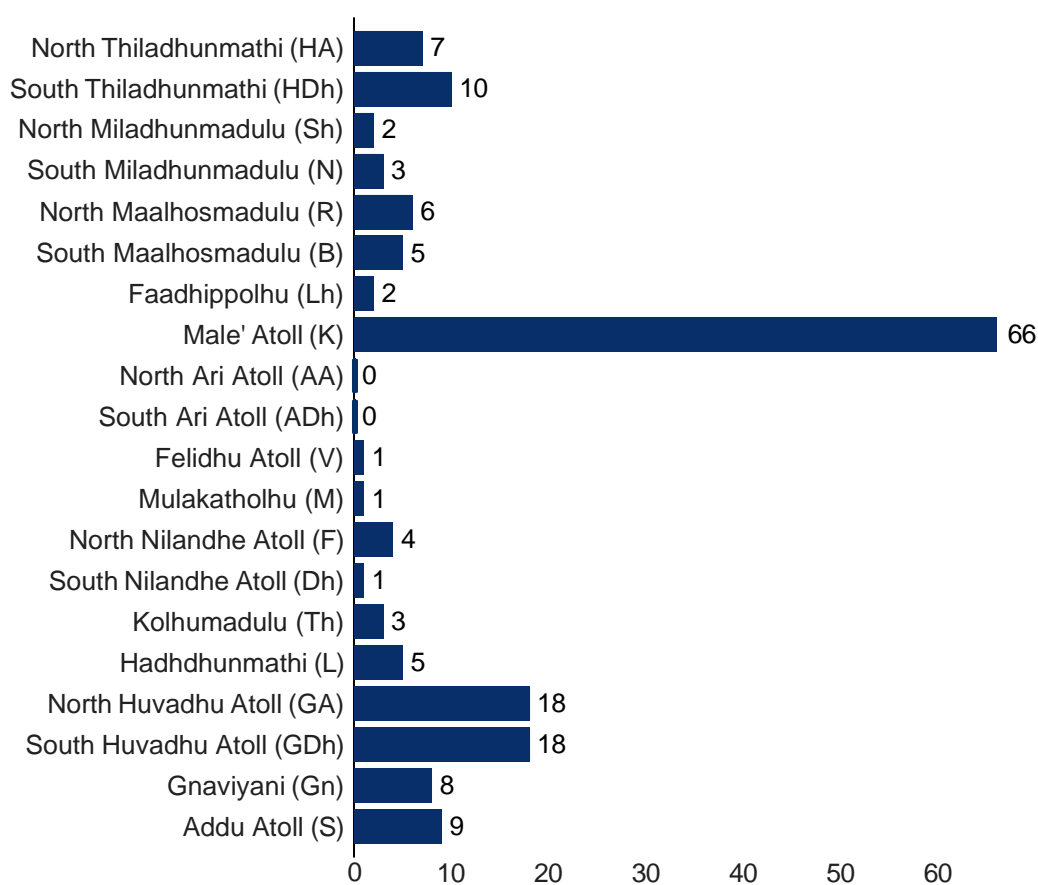
Age of Lawyers in the Maldives



Location

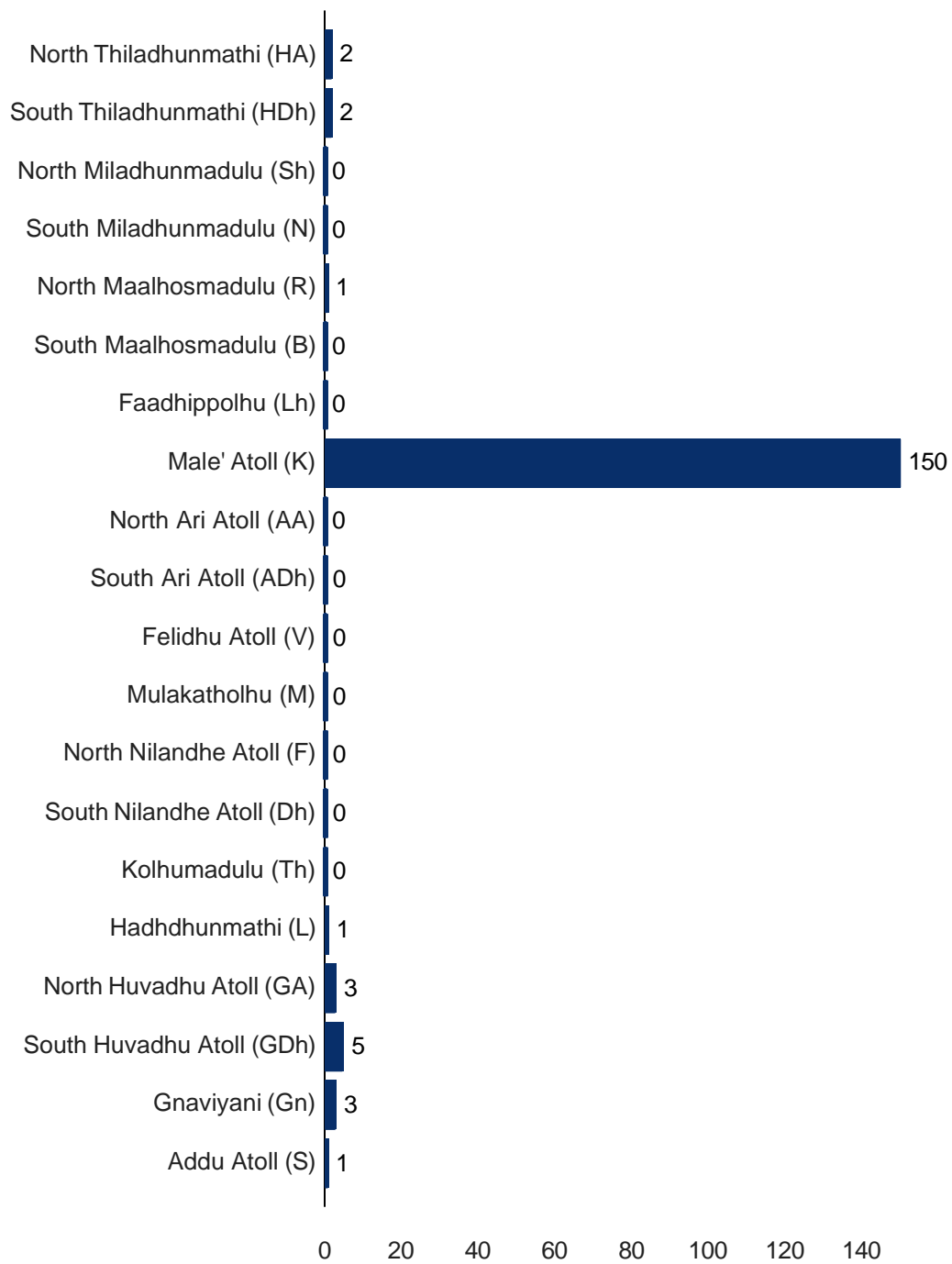
Most of the lawyers are from Male' Atoll (66%), North Huvadhu Atoll (18%), South Huvadhu Atoll (18%), South Thiladhunmathi Atoll (10%), Gnaviyani Atoll (8%), Addu Atoll (9%), North Thiladhunmathi Atoll (7%) and North Maalhosmadulu Atoll (6%). The other regions each represent less than 5% of the survey population.

Where Lawyers Come From



While there are a small number of lawyers scattered across regions, the vast majority (89%) are primarily based in Male' Atoll.

Where Lawyers are Based



General Education

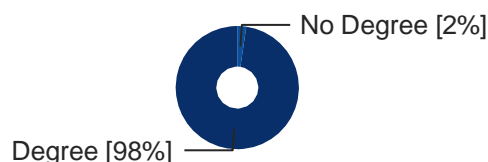
Almost all of the lawyers who took this survey have completed an undergraduate legal education. About two thirds of these lawyers completed this undergraduate education in the Maldives, with Maldives National University being the most popular local university. Of the lawyers who completed their undergraduate legal education abroad, the most popular location was the United Kingdom. The young age of the lawyers who took this survey was highlighted by the data showing the year in which they completed their undergraduate education, with many answering that they did so in the last 5 years.

While the vast majority of Maldivian lawyers have an undergraduate law degree, 73 of the surveyed lawyers have a post-graduate legal education. The breakdown of where these lawyers got post-graduate degrees was similar to that of undergraduate degrees; the most popular local university was Villa College, and the most popular foreign country was the United Kingdom. Most of these lawyers had received their post-graduate degrees in the last six years. Of these lawyers with a post-graduate education, less than a quarter have certificates other than CLE/ CPD.

Undergraduate Legal Education Rate

Almost all (98%) survey participants have completed an undergraduate law degree.

Undergraduate Legal Education Rate



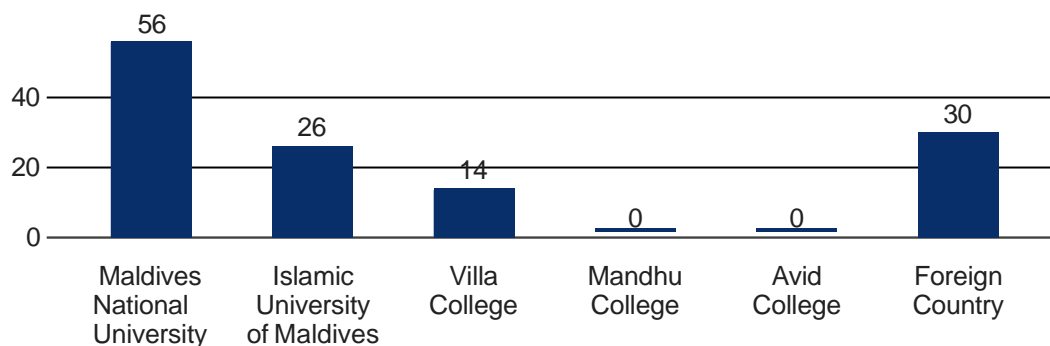
Certificates

The 0.01% who responded they did not complete an undergraduate law degree were asked about certificates that they hold, and only one person responded that they held a diploma in Sharia and Law, while others chose to not respond as the survey questions are entirely voluntary. It should be noted that all survey participants they hold a license to practice law in Maldives.

Location of Undergraduate Education

Seventy-six percent of the survey participants completed their undergraduate education in the Maldives, with 44% attending Maldives National University, 21% attending Islamic University of Maldives, 11% attending Villa College. None of the participants completed their undergraduate education at Mandhu College and Avid. The other 24% completed their undergraduate education in foreign countries.

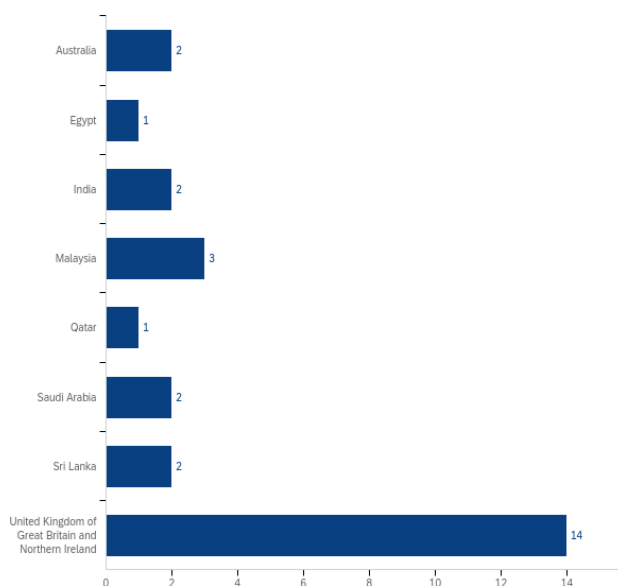
Where Lawyers in the Maldives Completed Their Undergraduate Legal Education



International Undergraduate Education

The lawyers who reported completing their undergraduate legal education in a foreign country went to universities in Australia, India, Malaysia, Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and the United Kingdom, with 50% of survey participants attending universities in United Kingdom.

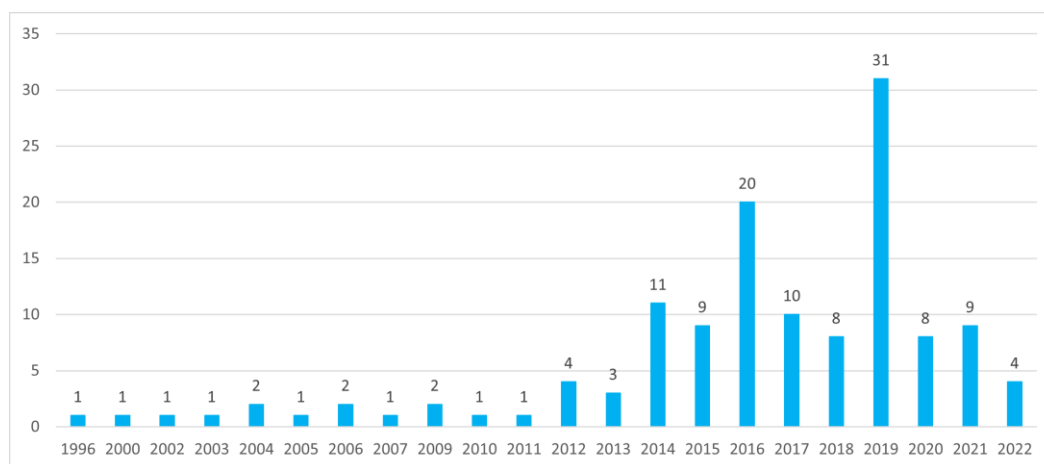
Foreign Countries Where Maldivian Lawyers Completed Undergraduate Degrees



Year of Completion of Undergraduate Education

Most (84.8%) of the lawyers who took this survey completed their undergraduate education, either locally or abroad, in the last 10 years.

Year of Completion of Undergraduate Degree

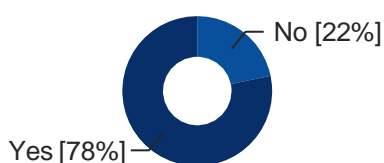


Teaching and graduating institutions

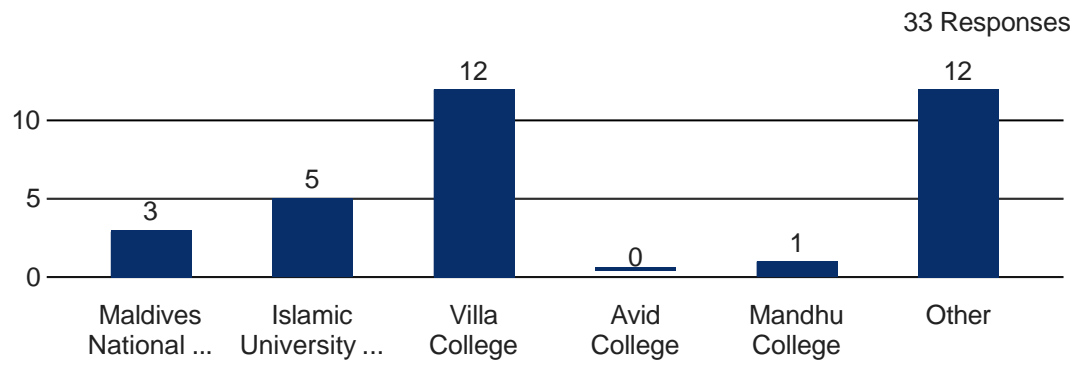
In some instances, lawyers who completed their undergraduate degrees in Maldives and abroad, attended different teaching and graduating institutions. According to the survey results, the majority of respondents (78%) indicated that their teaching and graduating institutions for their undergraduate degrees were the same.

Was the teaching Institution and graduating institution of your undergraduate education the same?

161 Responses



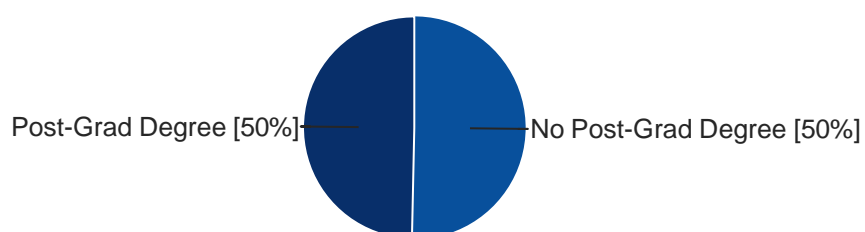
Amongst the lawyers who graduated from Maldivian institution, most (36%) attended Villa college, (15%) attended Islamic University of Maldives, (9%) attended Maldives National university and (3%) attended Mandhu College. The remaining 36% indicated that they pursued their undergraduate education at other universities. Among these lawyers, 40% graduated from the University of West England and 20% graduated from the University of London. Others noted institutions such as the University of Staffordshire and Al-Azhar University as the graduating institution.

Teaching Institution of undergraduate education

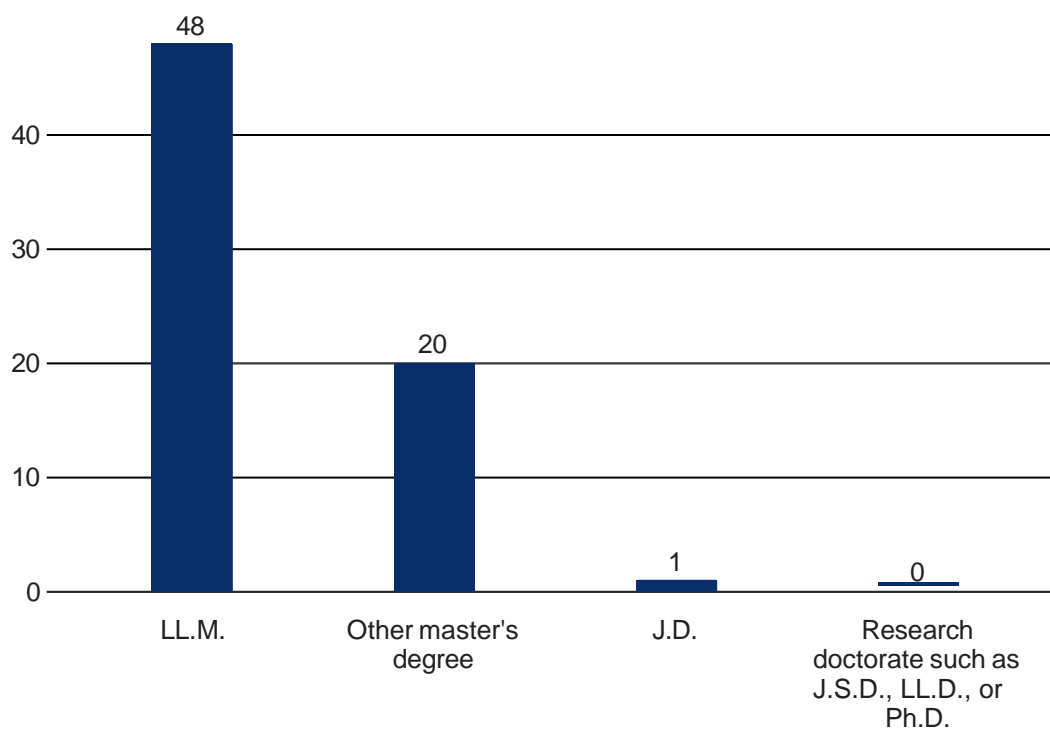
Post-Graduate Legal Education

Of the lawyers surveyed, the number of lawyers who have received a post-graduate legal education and those who have not are almost equal. 74 lawyers (50%) have not completed a post graduate law degree while 73 lawyers (50%) have completed a post graduate law degree. Of the lawyers who have completed a post-graduate legal education, most reported having an L.L.M, others completed other master's degrees, with one completing a J.D.

Post-Graduate Legal Education Rate

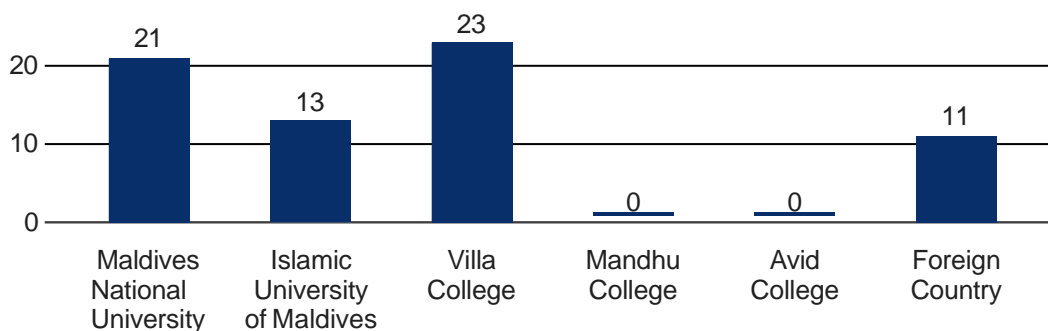


Breakdown of Post-Graduate Legal Education Obtained

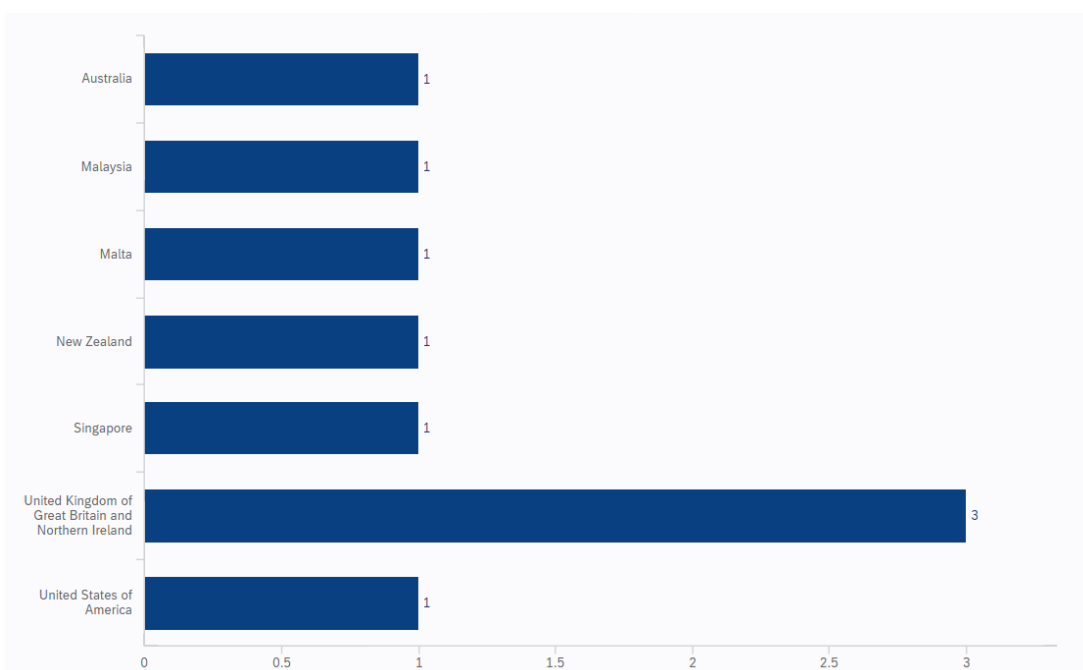


Where Maldivian Lawyers Completed Post-Graduate Legal Education

Of the lawyers who completed post-graduate legal education, a vast majority (84%) stayed in the Maldives to study. The remaining 16% who left the Maldives to pursue a post-graduate legal education went to study in Australia, Malaysia, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

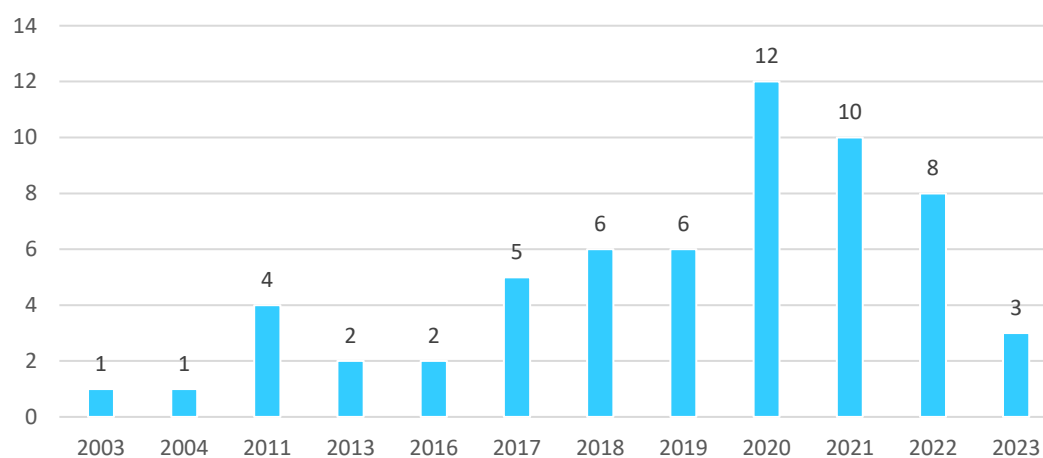


Breakdown of Foreign Post-Graduate Education by Country

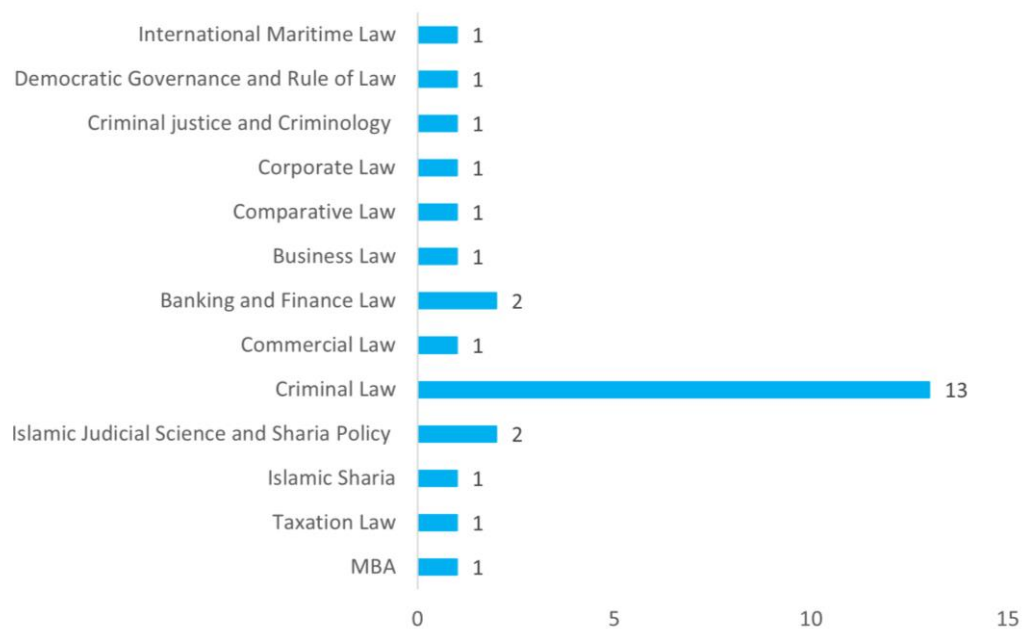


Of the lawyers who had reported completing a post-graduate law degree, whether that was an L.L.M., research doctorate, or other type of degree, most (75%) had completed the degree in the last 6 years.

Year of Completion of Post-Graduate Legal Degree



Specialization of Degree

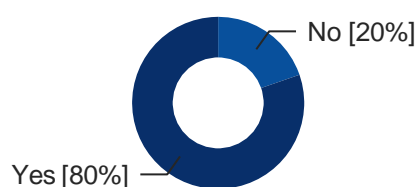


Teaching institutions and graduating institutions

In some instances, lawyers who completed their post-graduate degrees in Maldives and abroad attended different teaching and graduating institutions. According to the survey results, the majority of respondents (80%) indicated that their teaching institution and graduating institution for their post-graduate education were the same.

Was the teaching institution and graduating institution of your post-graduate education the same?

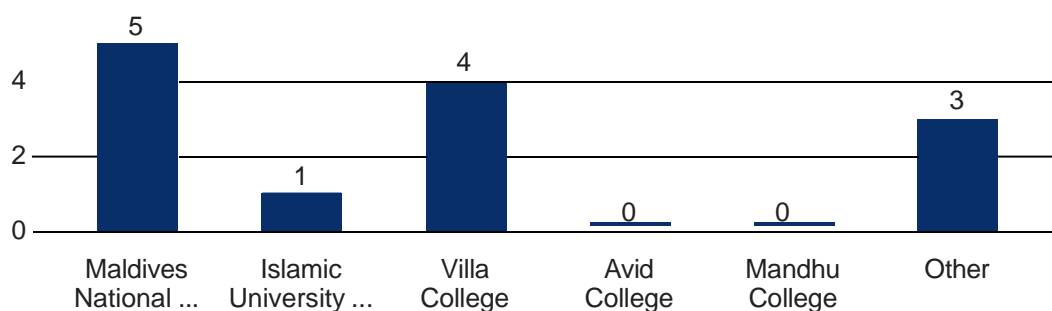
66 Responses



Lawyers who attended institution in Maldives, most (38%) attended Maldives National University, (31%) attended Villa College, and (8%) attended Islamic University of Maldives. The remaining 23% indicated that they attended other universities. Among these respondents, some noted University of Canterbury, University of Western Australia, and International Maritime Law Institute as teaching institutions for their post-graduate degree.

Teaching institution of post-graduate education

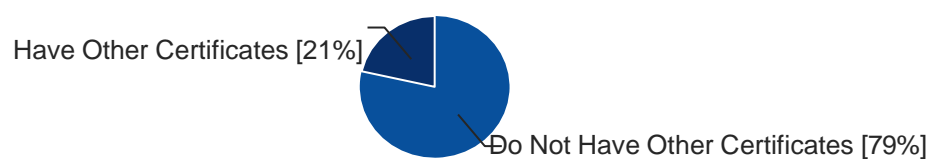
13 Responses



Certificates Other Than CLE/CPD

Less than a quarter of the lawyers who have completed post-graduate legal education reported holding certificates in law other than continuing legal education or continuing professional development.

Percentage of Post-Graduate Degree Holders Who Have Certificates Other Than CLE/CPD



Local Education

Lawyers Who Attended Maldivian Law Schools That Offered Modules in Maldivian Law

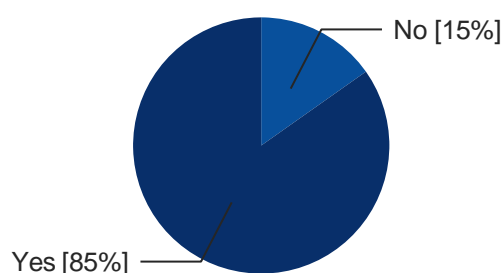
Lawyers who completed their legal education in the Maldives were asked about the modules that their schools offered. Almost all schools had offered modules in common law while most schools offered modules in international law, Maldivian law and Shariah law.

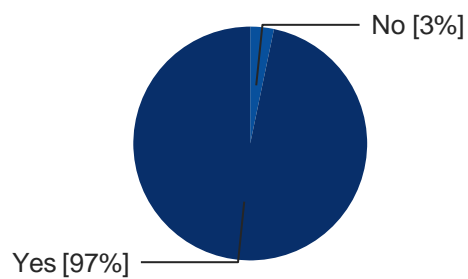
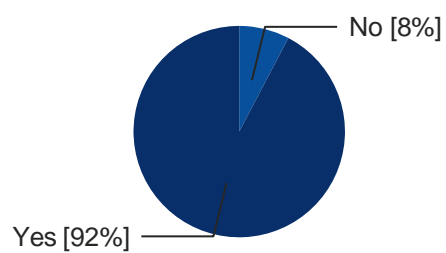
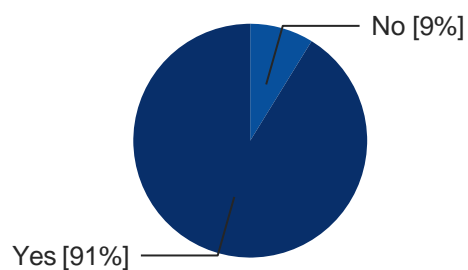
Three-quarters of lawyers responded that the primary language of instruction and exams was English, not Dhivehi. Significantly more, almost 90%, answered that their textbooks were primarily in English.

43% of lawyers who completed their legal education in the Maldives felt that their law schools prepared them for working in the legal profession in the Maldives. The most common reasons given by those who did not feel prepared were having a lack of practical experience, a lack of knowledge of the Maldivian legal system, and a lack of knowledge of legal Dhivehi.

Modules

Survey respondents who attended law school in the Maldives indicated the modules they were offered at the law schools they attended. More than two thirds (85%) of the lawyers attended law schools that offered modules in Maldivian law. Almost all (97%) attended law schools that offered modules in common law and 92% attended law schools that offered modules in international law. Majority (91%) attended law schools that offered modules in Shariah law.

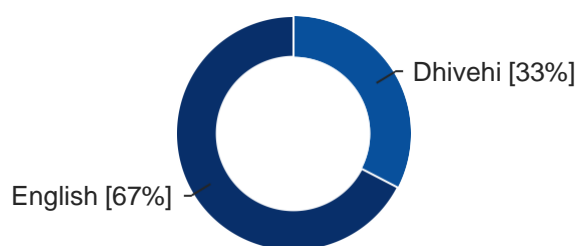


Lawyers Who Attended Maldivian Law Schools That Offered Modules in Common**Law****Lawyers Who Attended Law Schools That Offered Modules in International Law****Lawyers Who Attended Law Schools That Offered Modules in Shariah Law**

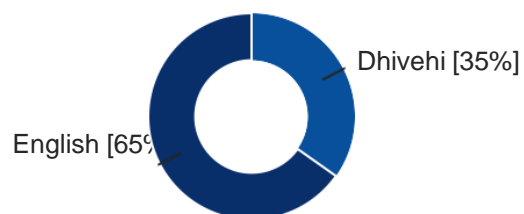
Language of Education

When lawyers who attended law school in the Maldives were asked about the primary language in which the classes were taught at their law schools, roughly two third of them said that English was the primary language in which their classes were taught and also in which their exams were conducted. The vast majority (89%) of textbooks were written in English, not Dhivehi.

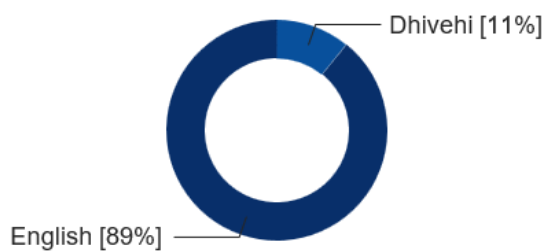
Primary Language of Instruction



Primary Language of Exams



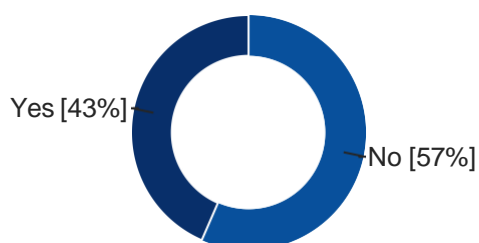
Primary Language of Textbooks



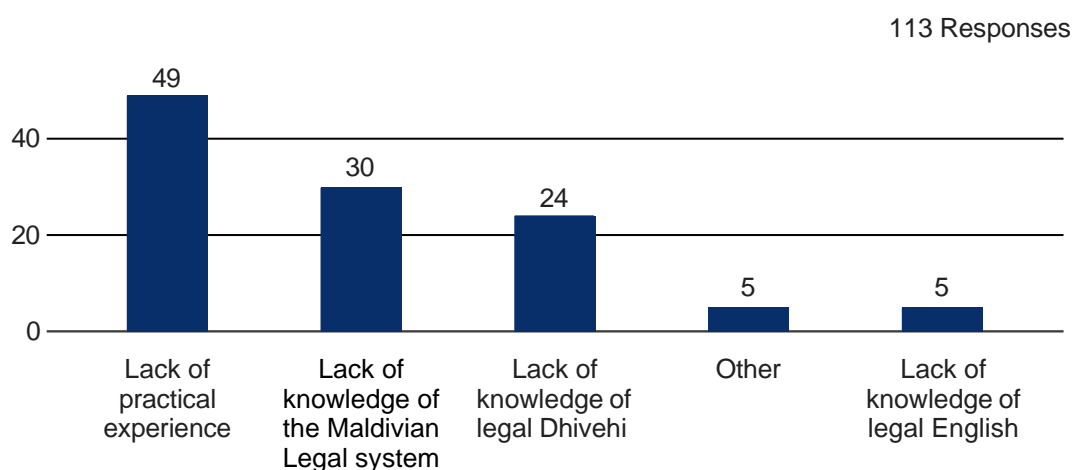
Level of Preparedness

Of lawyers who attended universities in the Maldives, 43% feel that their law school adequately prepared them for the realities of working in the legal profession in the Maldives. Those who felt that their law school did not adequately prepare were asked why they felt that way. 27% of respondents felt they had a lack of knowledge of the Maldivian legal system, 43% felt they had a lack of practical experience, 21% of respondents felt they had a lack of knowledge of legal Dhivehi, 4% of respondents felt they had a lack of knowledge of legal English, and 4% answered that they felt unprepared for other reasons.

Do Lawyers Feel Their Maldivian Law Schools Prepared Them for Working in the Legal Profession in the Maldives?



Reasons Why Maldivian Lawyers Feel That Their Local Law Schools Did Not Prepare Them for Working in the Legal Profession in the Maldives



Foreign Education

Lawyers who completed their legal education outside of the Maldives were asked similar questions to those who had completed their legal education in the Maldives. Most of the modules were offered widely, but significantly fewer lawyers were offered modules on lawyers' ethics.

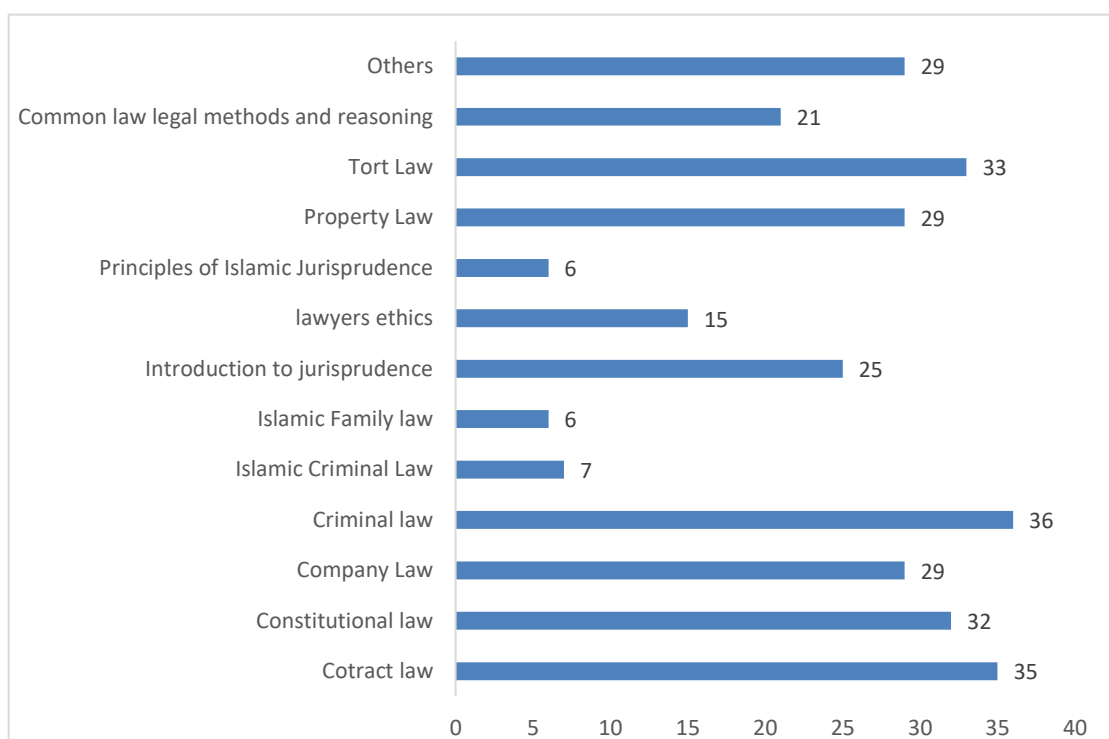
44% of lawyers who completed their legal education abroad responded that they felt prepared to work in the legal profession in the Maldives. Interestingly, this is almost the exact same percentage as those who studied in the Maldives. The reasons for those who did not feel prepared were most commonly a lack of practical experience and a lack of knowledge of the Maldivian legal system and legal Dhivehi, which were the two most popular answers for those who studied in the Maldives as well.

Among the lawyers who completed their education in a foreign country, there is an almost equal division between those had a hard time adjusting to the Maldivian legal profession and those who found it easy to adjust. The remaining responded that they found it neither easy nor difficult.

Core Modules

Maldivian lawyers who attended foreign universities to complete their legal education were asked about the core modules offered at their universities. These lawyers selected all the modules that applied. The most commonly offered modules were tort law, contract law, criminal law, and constitutional law.

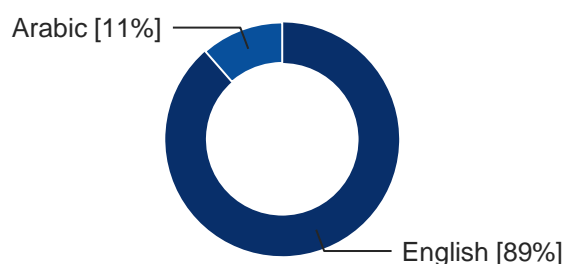
Modules Offered at Foreign Law Schools



Language of Education

At universities abroad where Maldivian lawyers completed their legal education, classes were taught primarily in English 86% of the time and primarily taught in Arabic 8% of the time.

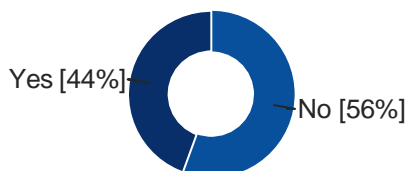
Primary Language of Instruction



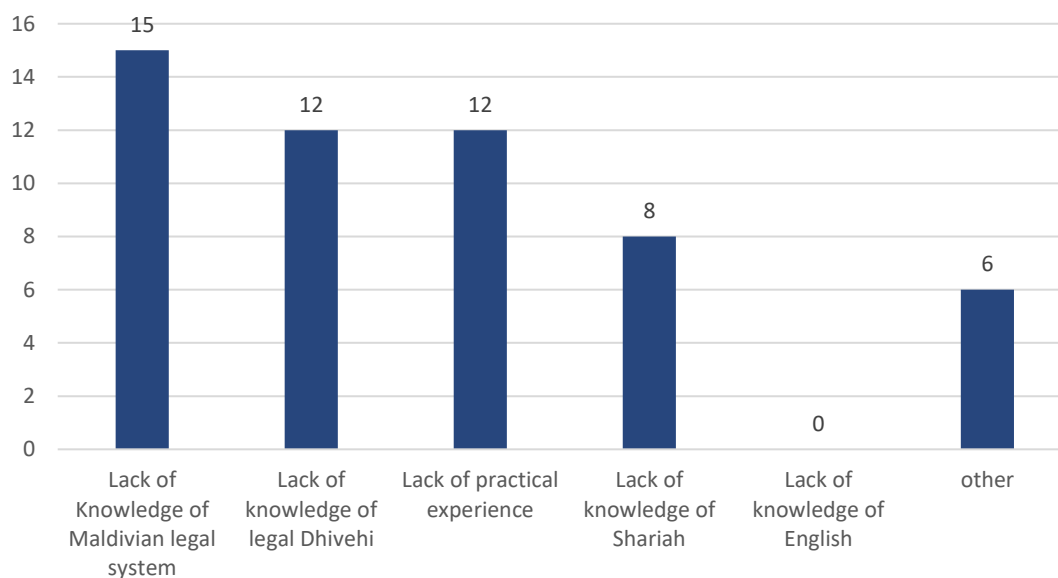
Level of Preparedness

Of lawyers in the Maldives who completed their legal education abroad, 44% answered that they believed their law school adequately prepared them for the realities of working in the legal profession in the Maldives. Those who felt that their law school did not adequately prepare them were asked why they felt that way. 28% felt that they had a lack of knowledge of the Maldivian legal system, 23% felt they had a lack of practical experience, 23% felt they had a lack of knowledge of legal Dhivehi and 11% answered that they felt unprepared for other reasons.

Do Lawyers Feel Their Foreign Law Schools Prepared Them for Working in the Legal Profession in the Maldives?

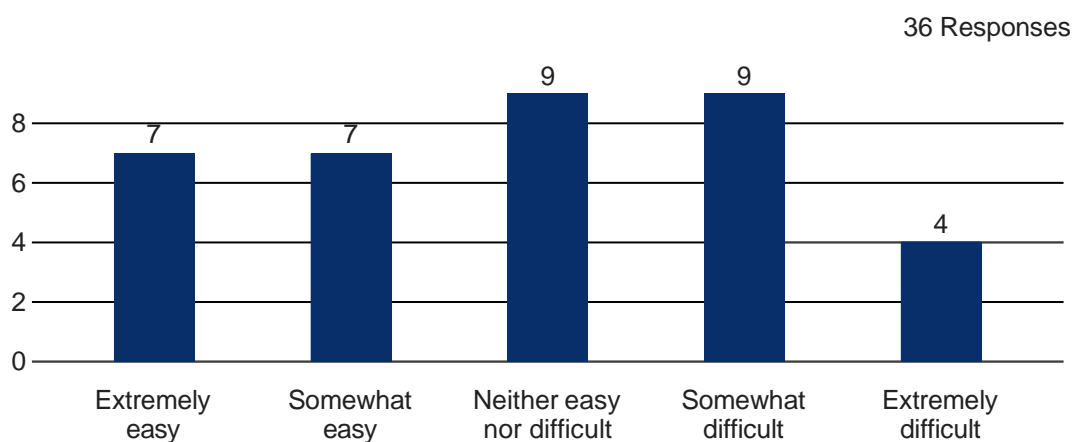


Reasons Why Maldivian Lawyers Feel That Their Foreign Law Schools Did Not Prepare Them for Working in the Legal Profession in the Maldives



Maldivian lawyers who attended law school in other countries were asked how difficult was to adjust to the Maldivian legal profession. 25% answered that they found it neither easy nor difficult, while 25% of lawyers also felt it was somewhat difficult. 19% felt it was somewhat easy and the same amount of lawyers felt it was extremely easy. 11% felt it was extremely difficult.

Level of Difficulty Adjusting to the Maldivian Legal Profession



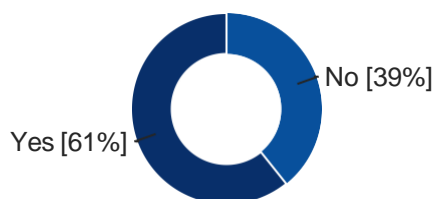
Supplemental Studies

Almost two-thirds of lawyers surveyed had participated in practical studies during their undergraduate education, with the most common being mooting, and the least common being client interviewing. Of the 39% who did not participate in practical studies, almost all cited a lack of availability in law school as their reason for not participating. Most lawyers feel that they did not have sufficient opportunities to participate in practical studies, but that including practical studies is important, with mooting being viewed as the most important practical skill.

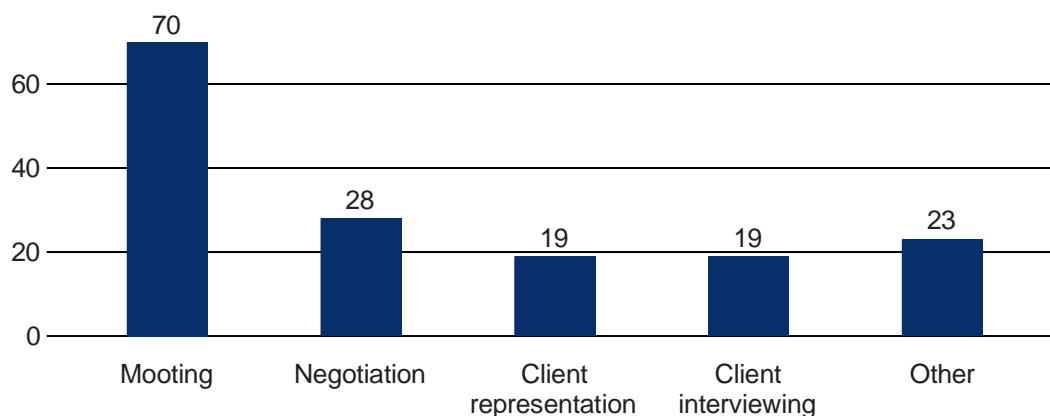
Practical Studies

Lawyers in the Maldives were asked about their participation in practical studies during their undergraduate studies. The majority (61%) answered that they had participated in practical studies. Mooting was the practical study that had been participated in most widely, followed by negotiation, client representation, and then client interviewing.

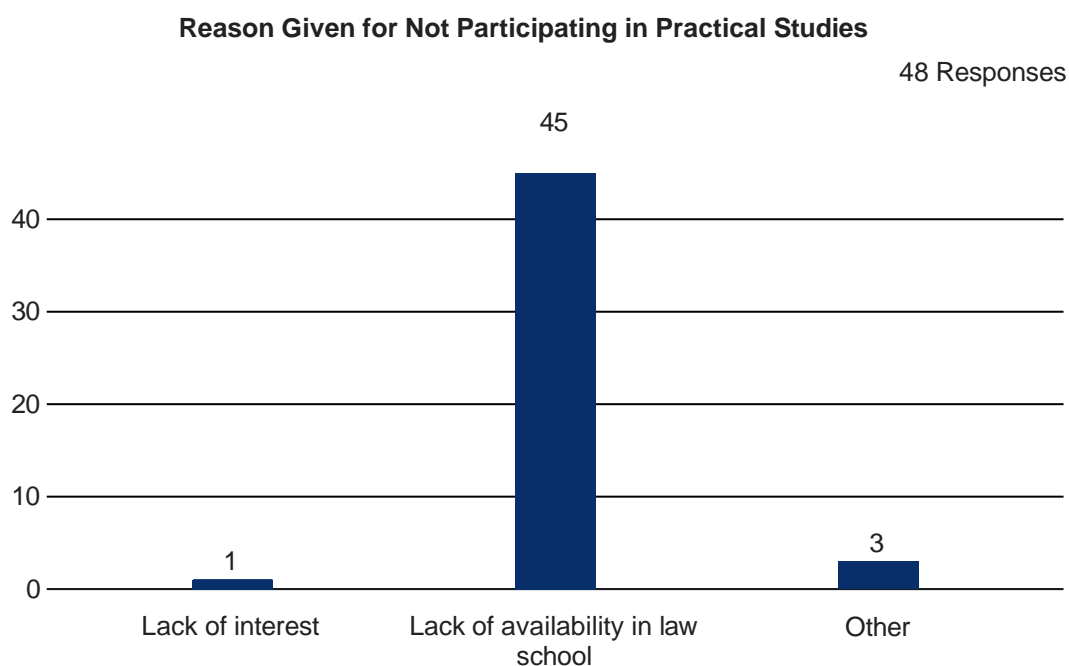
Did Lawyers Participate in Practical Studies?



Breakdown of Participation in Practical Studies

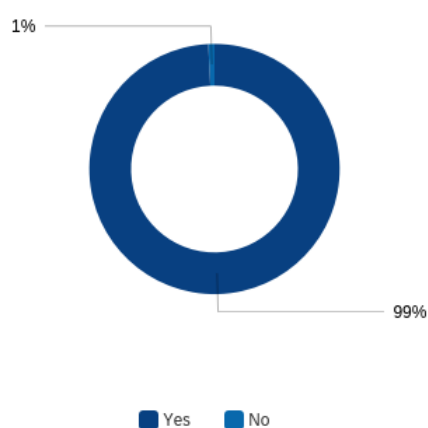


Those who had not participated in practical studies during their undergraduate legal education were asked why they did not participate. An overwhelming majority (92%) answered that there was a lack of availability at their law school, with only 2% responding that they chose not to participate in practical studies due to lack of interest and 6% answered that they chose not to participate due to other reasons.

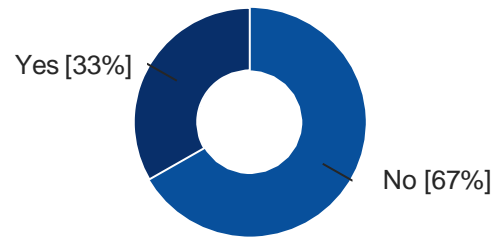


Lawyers were asked whether they had sufficient opportunities to participate in the practical skills mentioned. (67%) of the respondents felt that they did not get sufficient opportunity to participate in practical skills. The lawyers were subsequently asked whether they felt that these practical skills are important to include in an undergraduate degree. Almost all respondents answered yes.

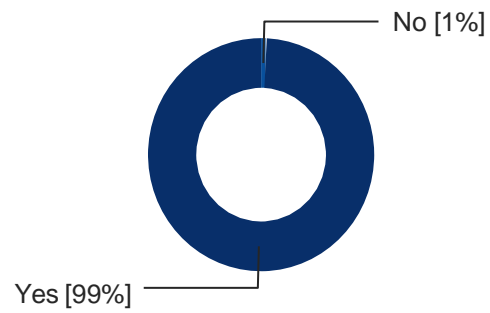
Do you believe the inclusion of practical skills is important



Do you believe you had sufficient opportunities to participate in practical skills training during your undergraduate studies

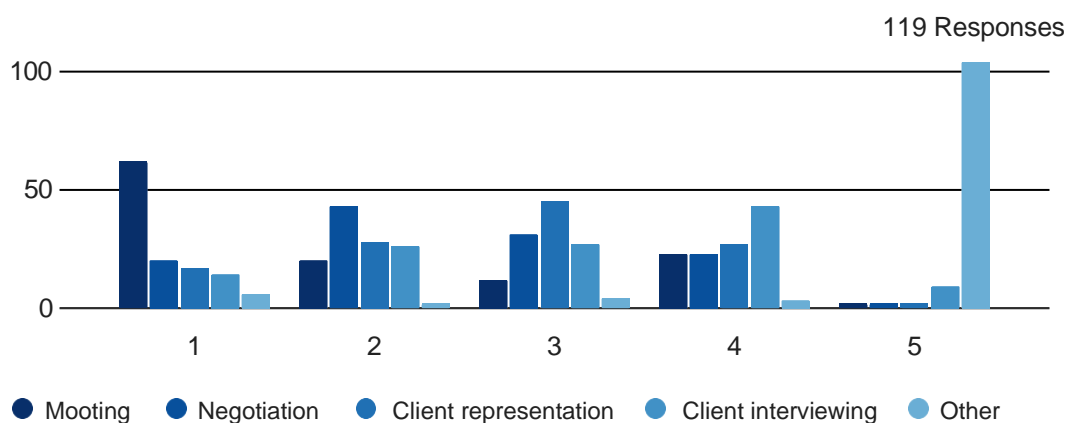


Is Inclusion of Practical Skills Important?



Lawyers were asked to rank the aforementioned practical skills in order of importance. Mooting was the most commonly picked option for the most important skill, negotiation was the most commonly picked option for the second most important skill, client representation was the most commonly picked option for the third most important skill, and client interviewing was the most commonly picked option for the least important skill.

Order of Importance of Practice Skills According to Maldivian Lawyers



Training

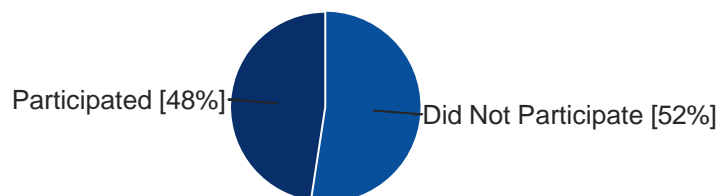
Slightly less than half of the lawyers who took this survey participated in some kind of externship, work placement, or trainee program during their legal education. Of those who did, less than half responded that their program was mandatory. Shorter training programs that lasted less than 3 months were the most commonly participated in. Most training programs were part of a formal structure through either a university or employer.

More than half of the lawyers who participated in some sort of training found that it was useful for practicing in the Maldivian legal profession.

Participation in Training Programs

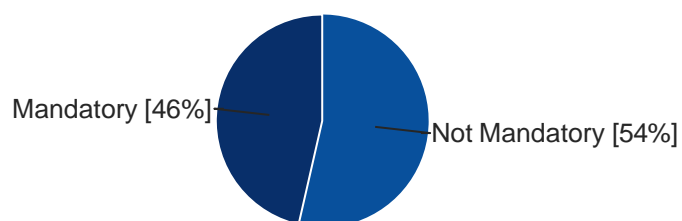
Over half (52%) of the lawyers surveyed participated in an externship, work placement, or trainee program during their legal education.

Lawyers Who Participated in an Externship/ Work Placement/ Trainee Program



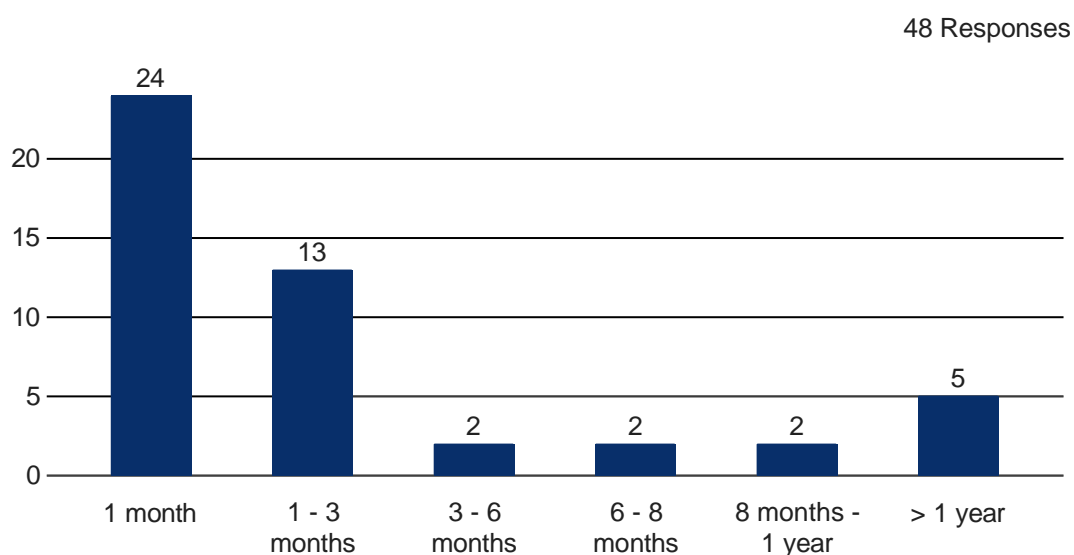
Of those who participated in a program, slightly less than half (46%) responded that their program was mandatory.

Whether or Not Training Program Was Mandatory



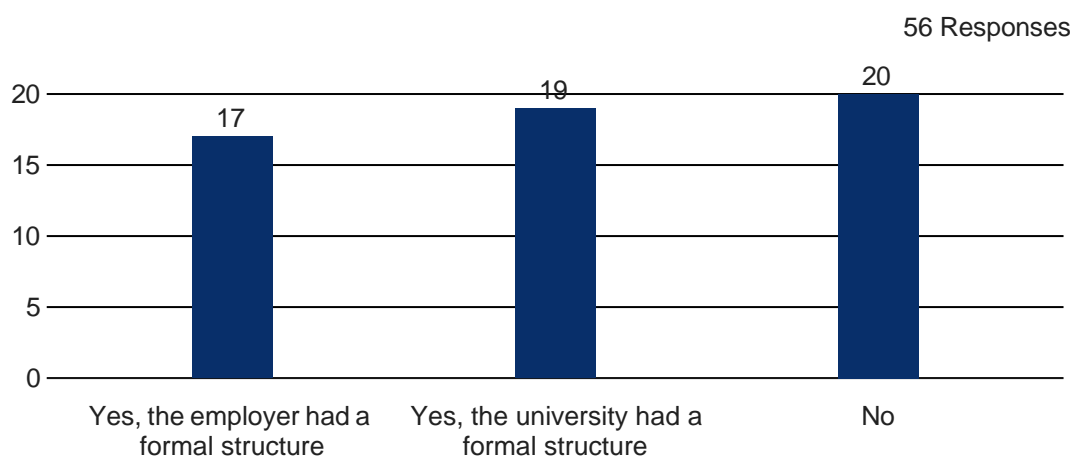
Lawyers participated in training programs of varying lengths, most commonly programs that lasted one month or somewhere between one and three months.

Length of Training Program



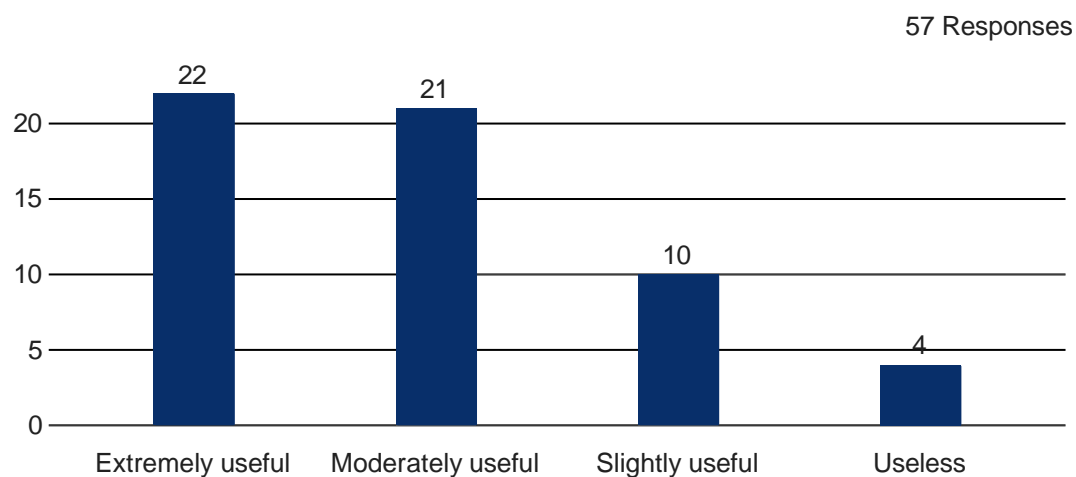
When asked about the structure of their programs, 34% of lawyers responded that the university had a formal structure, 30% responded that the employer had a formal structure, and 36% responded that there was no formal structure.

Presence of Formal Structure in Training Programs



39% of lawyers reported that they found their training programs to be extremely useful for practicing in the Maldivian legal profession. 37% of the lawyers found the program to be moderately useful and 18% found it to be slightly useful. Only 7% found their programs to be useless.

Usefulness of Training Programs



Qualification

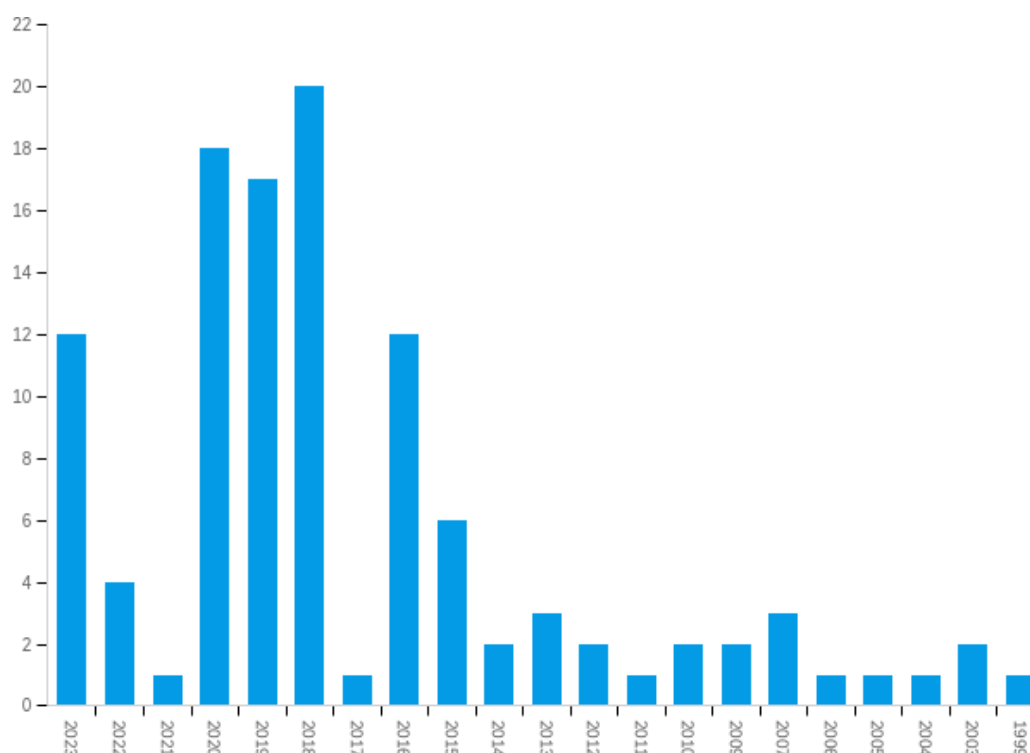
Over 80% of the lawyers obtained their licenses within the last 10 years. According to the survey responses 21% of lawyers acquired their licenses through the Special Licensing Training Program (SLTP) in the year 2020.

13 lawyers responded having passed the bar exam. Majority of these lawyers expressed that the bar examination adequately assessed the fundamental knowledge and skills essential for their roles in the legal profession within the Maldives. These respondents had also successfully completed a traineeship that was a prerequisite for licensing, as authorized by the BCM. Within this group of respondents, more than two-thirds stated that this traineeship assisted in equipping them with the essential skills and knowledge required prepare them for the realities of working in the legal profession in the Maldives.

31% of lawyers who took this survey are licensed to practice in the High Court, while 17% are licensed to practice in the Supreme Court. Most of these lawyers received their licenses to practice in these courts in the last 10 years. Only 3% of the lawyers who took this survey reported being licensed to practice in a foreign jurisdiction.

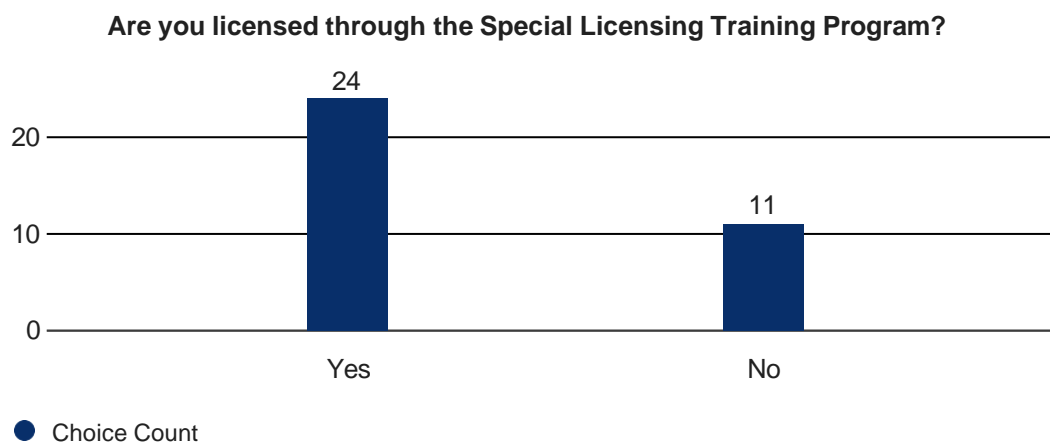
Year of licensing

More than 80% of the lawyers acquired their licenses in the last decade. Almost 50% of these lawyers were licensed between 2018 and 2020. However, licensing years were spread out until 1999. A large percentage receiving their license in the past six years highlights the young age of the lawyers who responded to this survey. Notably, there was a gap in licensing between 2021 and 2022; coinciding with the implementation of the Legal Profession Act 2019 following the SLTP and the administration of the bar exam held in 2022.



Special Licensing Training Program (SLTP)

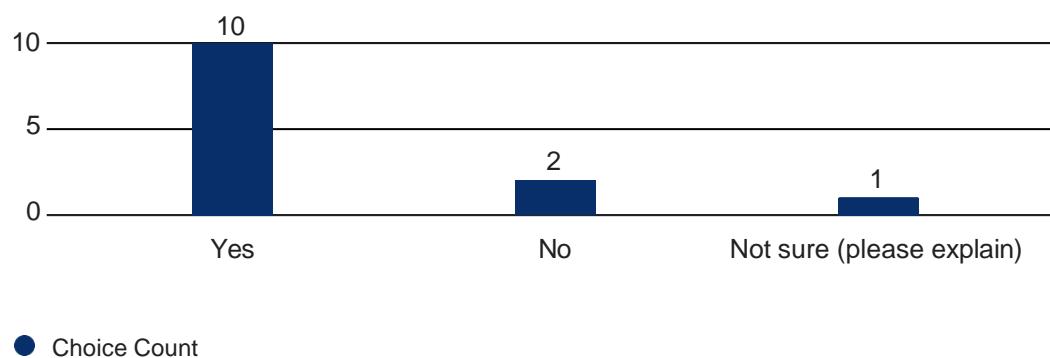
According to the survey response 24 lawyers obtained their licenses via the Special Licensing Training Program (SLTP).



Bar Examination

13 lawyers responded having completed the inaugural Bar examination administered in 2022. 77% of these lawyers expressed that the bar examination adequately assessed the fundamental knowledge and skills essential for their roles in the legal profession within the Maldives, while 15% of those felt that it did not, and 8% was unsure.

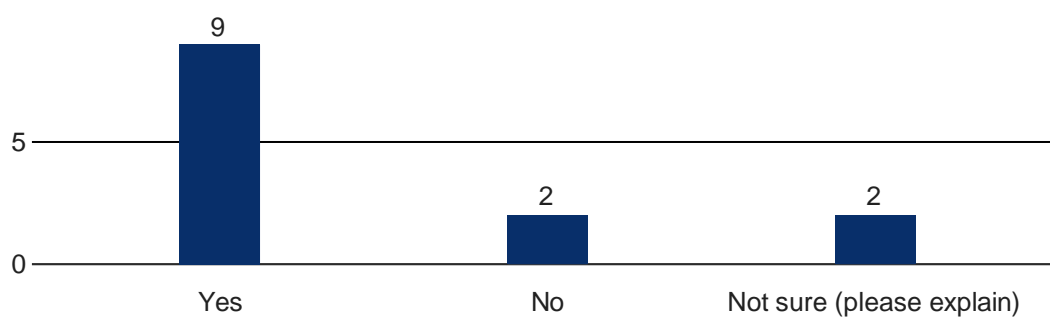
Did the bar examination test the basic knowledge and skills necessary to prepare for the realities of working in the legal profession in the Maldives?



Mandatory traineeship

13 lawyers responded having successfully completed a traineeship that was a prerequisite for licensing. Within this group of respondents, 69% stated that this traineeship assisted in equipping them with the essential skills and knowledge required prepare them for the realities of working in the legal profession in the Maldives.

Did the traineeship help to obtain the basic skills and knowledge necessary to prepare for the realities of working in the legal profession in the Maldives?

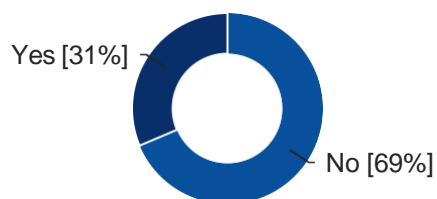


● Choice Count

High Court Licensing

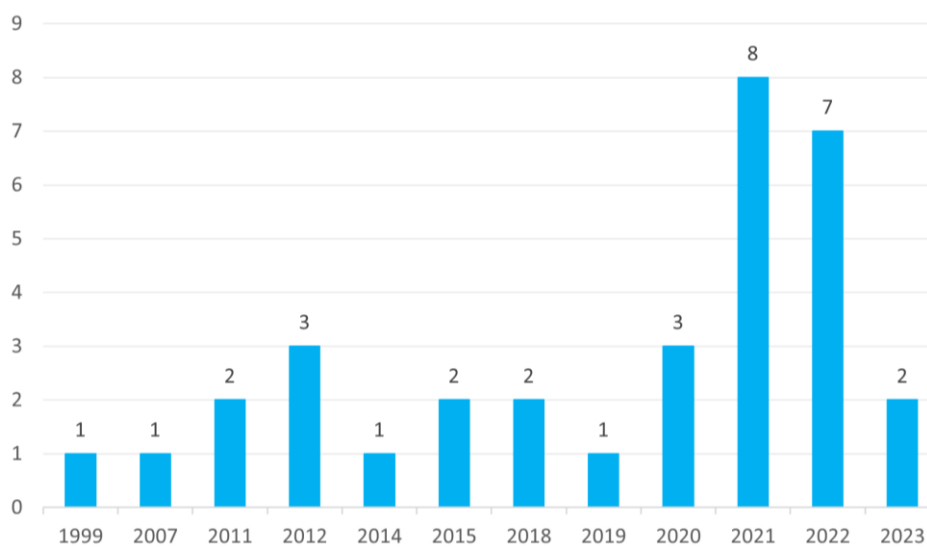
Approximately 31% of the lawyers surveyed are licensed to practice in the High Court.

Are you licensed to practice in the High Court?



Of the lawyers who responded that they are licensed to practice in the High Court, most received their license in the last ten years.

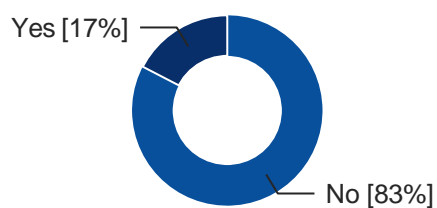
Year of Licensing for Practice in the High Court



Supreme Court Licensing

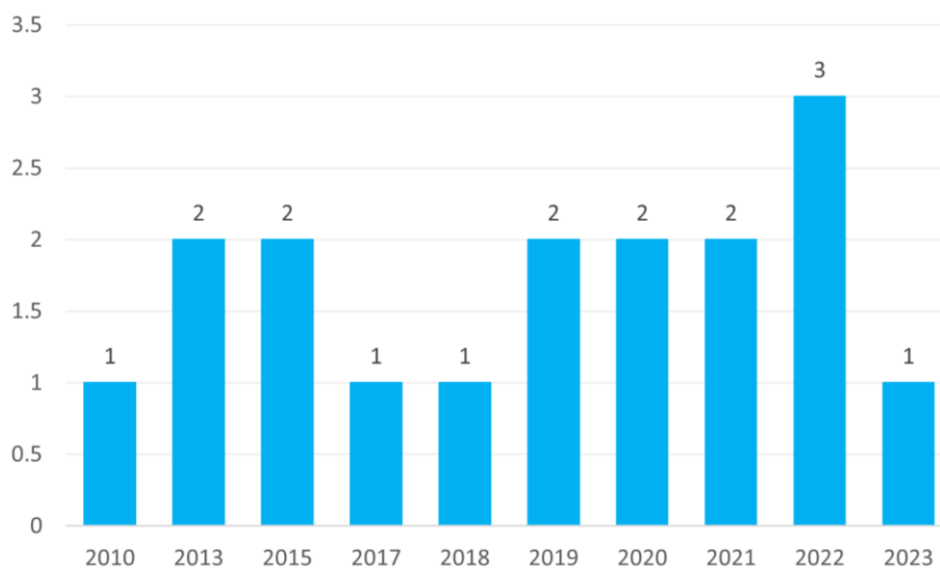
17% of the lawyers surveyed are licensed to practice in the Supreme Court.

Are you licensed to practice in the Supreme Court?



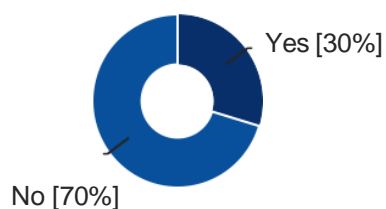
Of the lawyers who responded that they are licensed to practice in the Supreme Court, most received their license in the last ten years.

Year of Licensing for Practice in the Supreme Court



Public notary

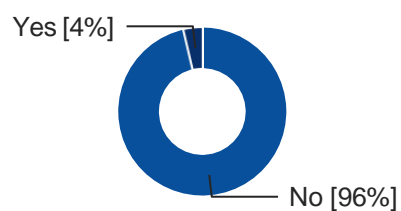
Amongst the respondents, only 30% reported having registered as a public notary.



Foreign Jurisdiction Licensing

Out of the lawyers surveyed, only five lawyers held licenses to practice law in a foreign jurisdiction. Among the respondents, one lawyer is licensed to practice in New Zealand, one is licensed to practice in United Kingdom and others preferred to not disclose. Two lawyers stated that they obtained their licenses in 2021 and 2022.

Are you licensed in a foreign jurisdiction?



Employment

78% of lawyers who took this survey were employed in a legal capacity, at the time of the survey. The majority of lawyers only work one job, but some reported working as many as 3 or 4 jobs. Of these lawyers who work multiple jobs, 42% reported working some jobs in a legal capacity and some jobs in a non-legal capacity.

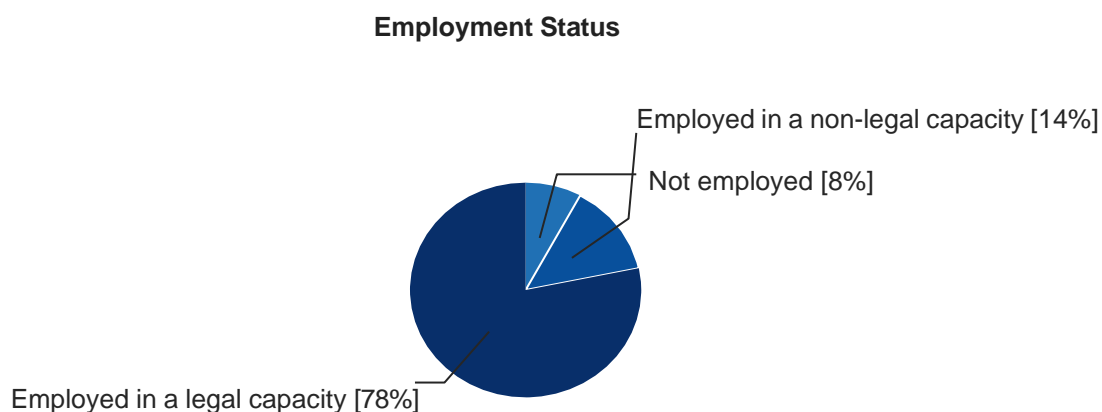
The most common area of employment was in a law firm. The most common practice areas that these lawyers practice was civil law, employment law and commercial law. Unsurprisingly, due to the young age of the lawyers who took this survey, most lawyers reported starting their legal employment within the last 10 years. This also helps explain the high volume of lawyers who reported having spent a few years or less at their current place of employment. Lawyers who took this survey were more heavily concentrated in beginning and mid-level positions than high-level positions.

The most common monthly income reported by lawyers in the Maldives is between 15,001 MVR and 20,000 MVR. Very few made less than 5,000 MVR or more than 50,000 MVR per month.

44% of lawyers reported that they felt they had been discriminated against when seeking employment. 34% of lawyers felt that they had been discriminated during their employment.

Employment Rate

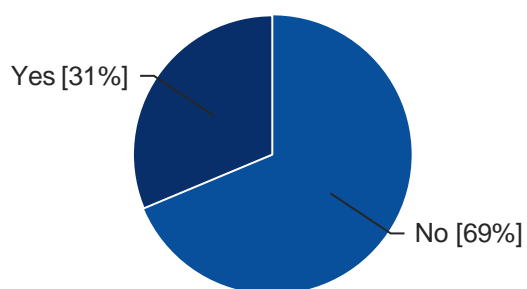
When asked about their current employment status, 78% of the lawyers responded that they are currently employed in a legal capacity, 14% responded that they are currently employed in a non-legal capacity, and 8% responded that they are currently unemployed.



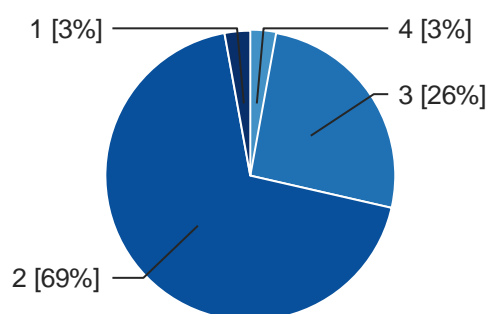
Multiple Jobs

Almost one-third of lawyers in the Maldives work more than one job. 69% of these lawyers work two jobs, but some work as many as 3 or 4 additional jobs.

Do you have more than one job?

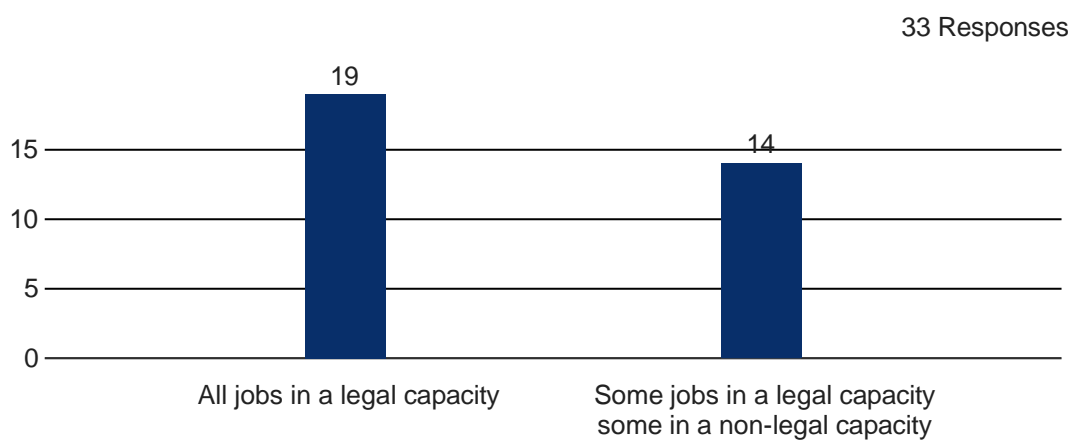


How many jobs do you have?



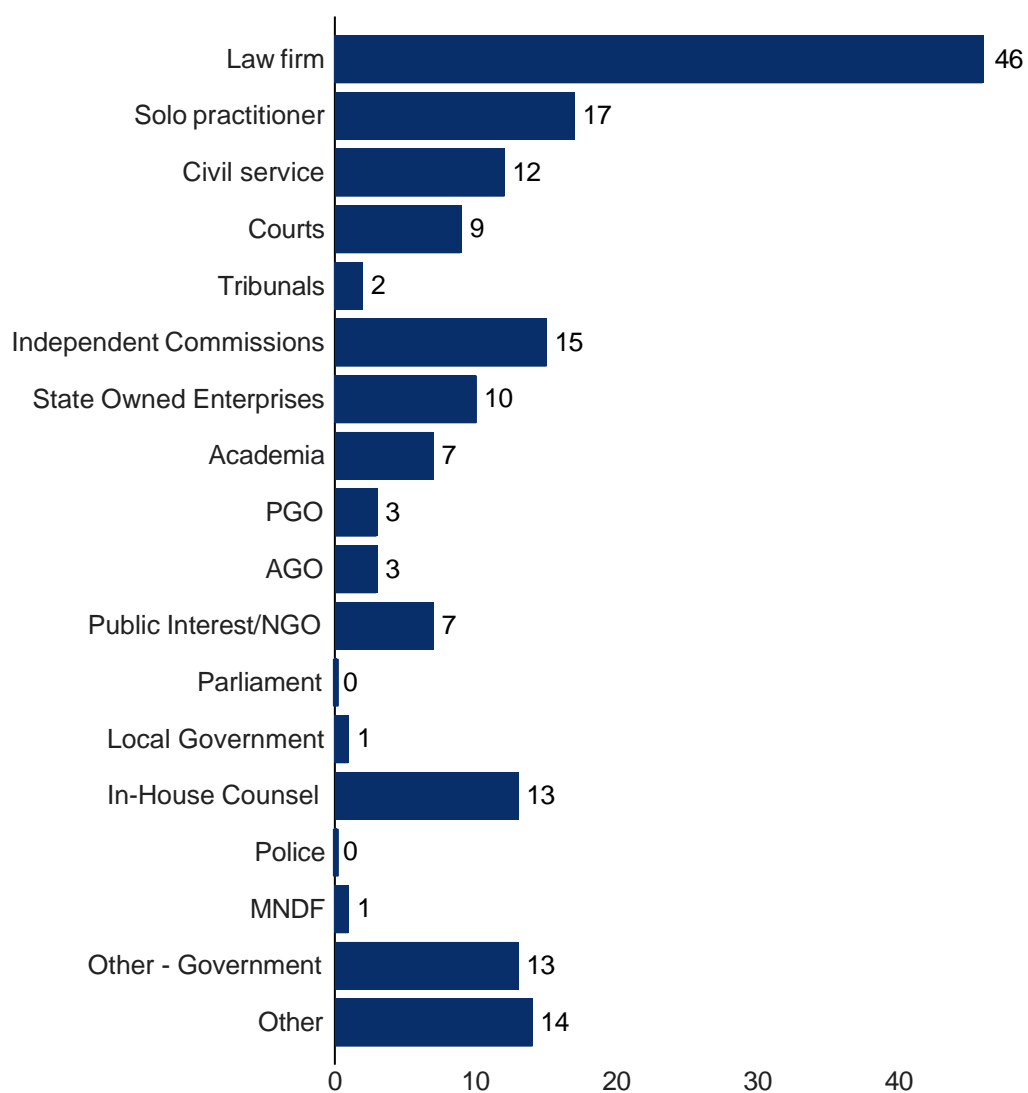
Nature of Employment

Of the lawyers working multiple jobs, 58% of the lawyers reported that all of their jobs are in a legal capacity, while 42% responded that some jobs are in a legal capacity while other jobs they work are in a non-legal capacity.



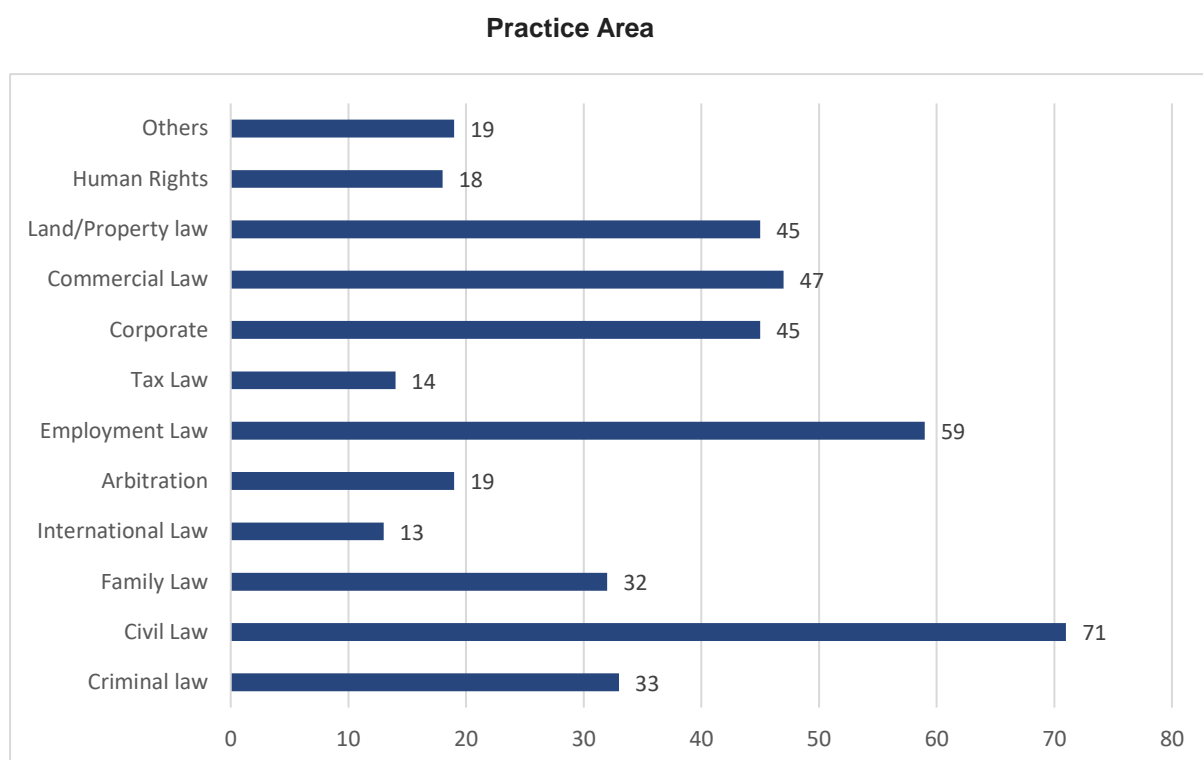
Area of Employment

Of the following areas of employment, the most commonly worked in was law firms (27%). Other popular areas were as a solo practitioners (10%) and independent commissions (9%).



Practice Area

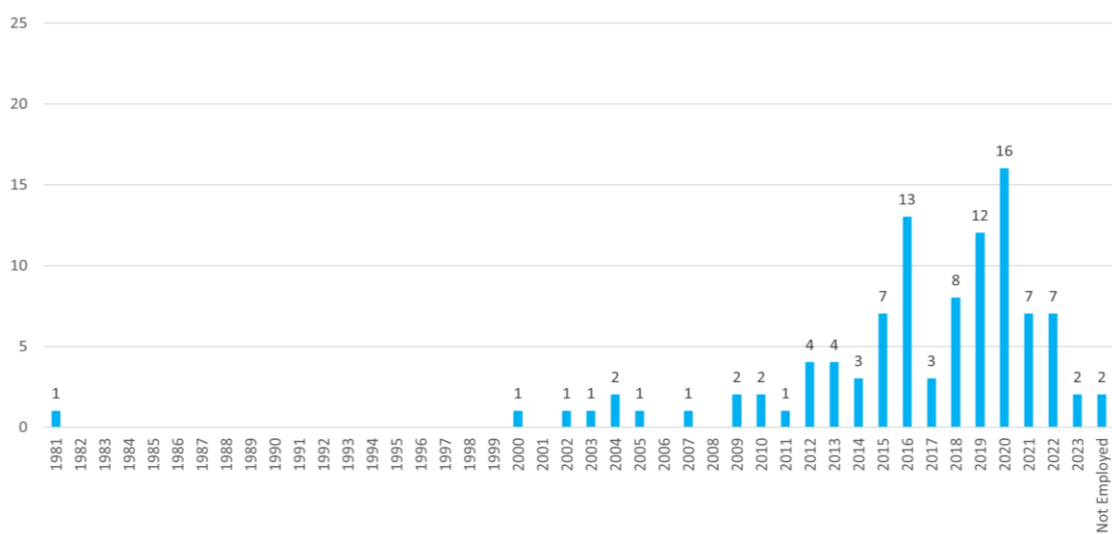
The most common practice area for lawyers who took this survey is civil law (68%), followed by employment law (56%) and commercial law (45%). The least common is international law.



Time Spent Working in the Legal Industry

In general, the lawyers who responded to this survey started their legal employment over the last 20 years. Only one lawyer started their legal employment before 2000. Two lawyers who responded were currently not employed.

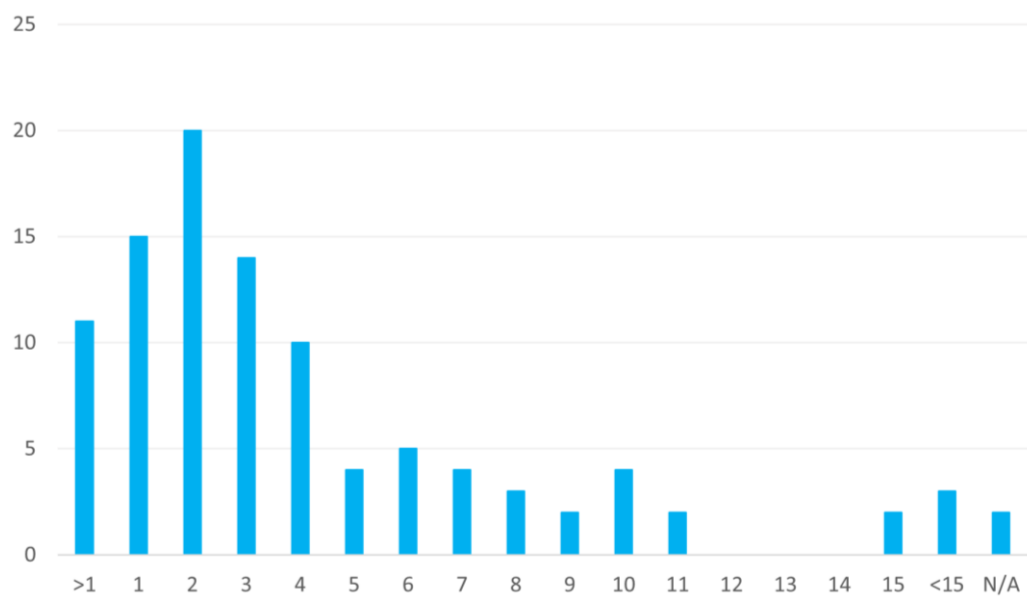
Year of Commencement of Legal Employment



Length of Time with Current Employer

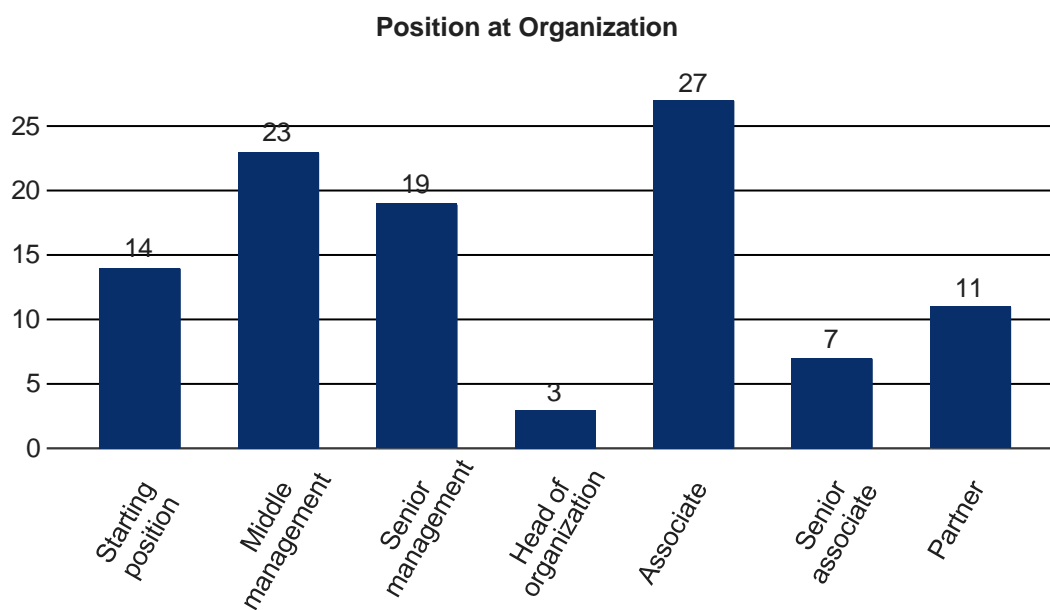
Many of the respondents joined the legal industry within the past several years, resulting in a significant portion of lawyers who indicated that they have been with their current employer for less than a year or just a few years.

Years Spent at Current Place of Employment



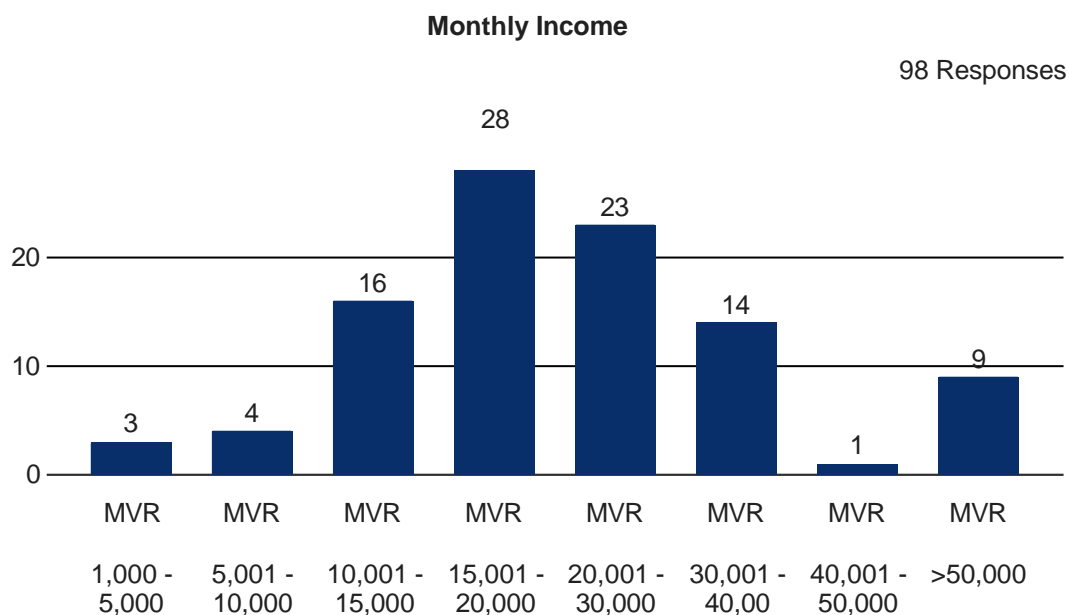
Position Held

The breakdown of positions held by lawyers in the Maldives is spread across a variety of roles: starting positions, middle management, senior management, head of organizations, associates, senior associates, and partners. The survey population was more heavily concentrated towards beginning and middle level positions than upper-level positions.



Income

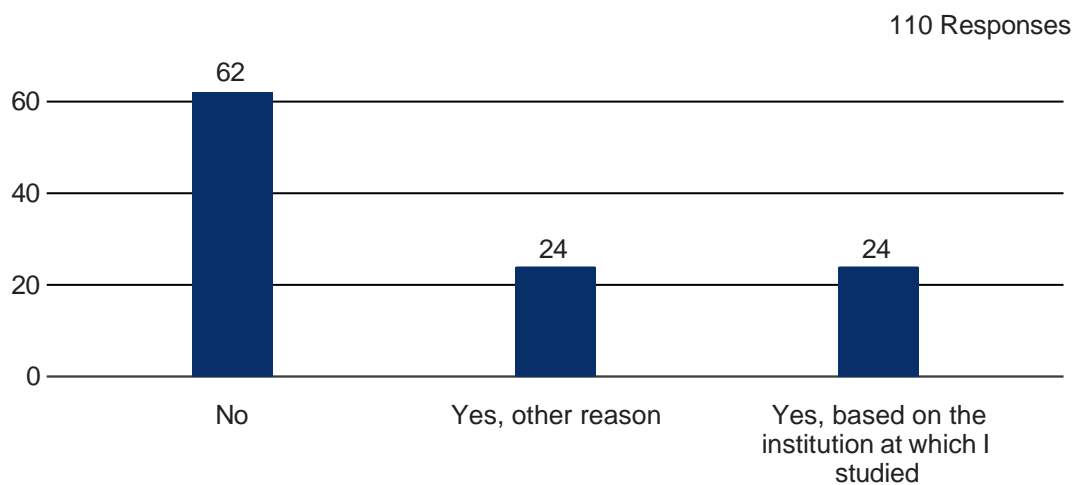
The most common (29%) monthly income reported by lawyers in the Maldives is between 15,001 and 20,000 MVR. 3% reported making less than 5,000 MVR per month and 9% reported making more than 50,000 MVR per month.



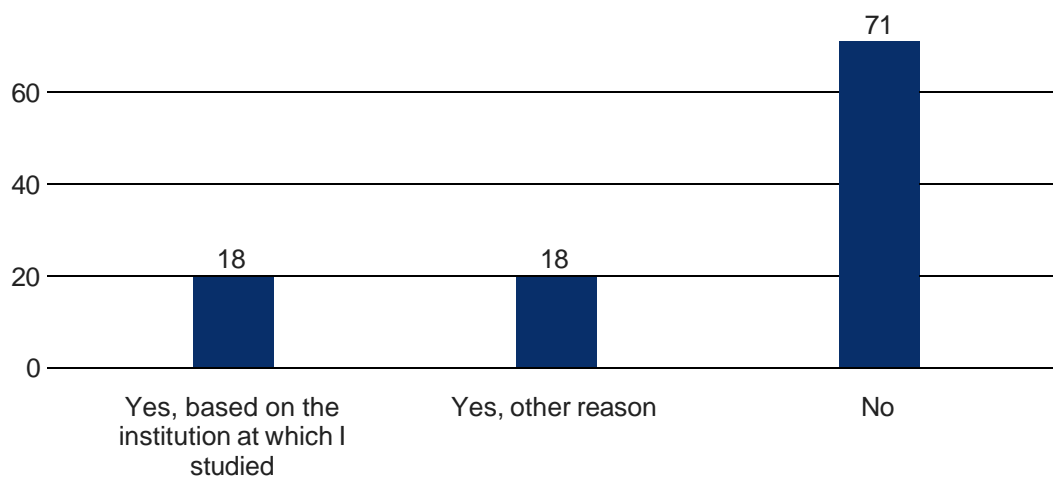
Discrimination

Lawyers were asked whether they had been discriminated against when seeking employment and in employment. 22% of respondents believed they had been discriminated against based on the institution at which they studied, while 22% believed they were discriminated against for other reasons, and 56% of lawyers believe that they were not discriminated against while seeking employment. During the course of their employment, the majority (66%) of respondents believed that they were not discriminated against, while an equal number of respondents felt that they were discriminated against; based on the institution at which they studied and for other reasons.

Discrimination in Seeking Employment



Discrimination in Employment



CPD/CLE

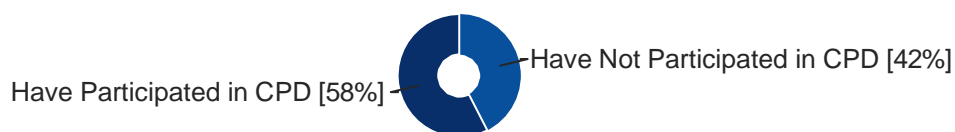
More than half of the lawyers surveyed have participated in continuing professional development opportunities. 44% of the lawyers reported that the expense of their trainings was covered by their employer. Almost all lawyers found these trainings useful, believes CLE/CPD should be necessary. 60% felt that licensing should be contingent on the completion of set hours of continuing professional development every year.

When lawyers were asked to rank the importance of different continuing professional development areas, ethics and professional responsibility was ranked most important and practice management and business skills were ranked as least important.

Participation in Continuing Professional Development

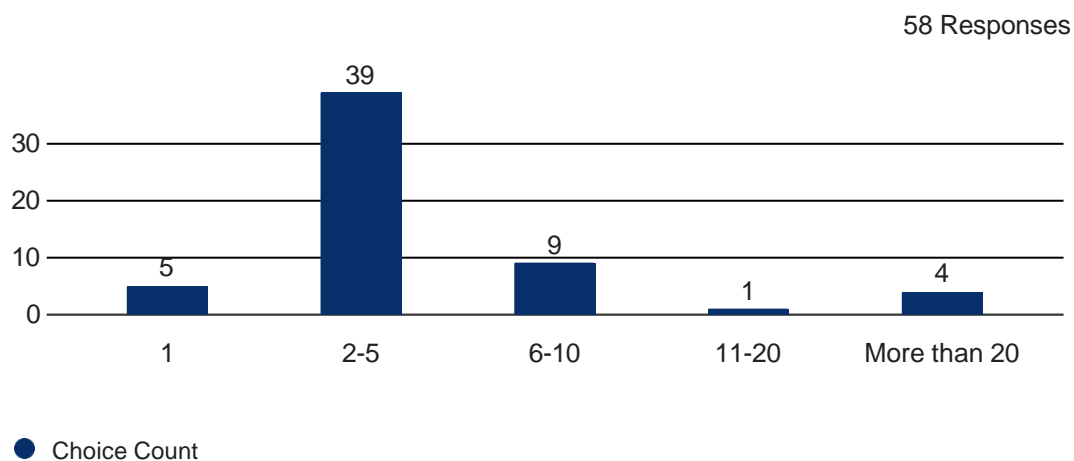
More than half of the lawyers surveyed reported participating in continuing professional development opportunities after receiving their license.

Participation in CPD



Those who had reported participating in CPD/CLE were asked how many trainings they participated in. Approximately 67% indicated that they had completed between 2 to 5 trainings.

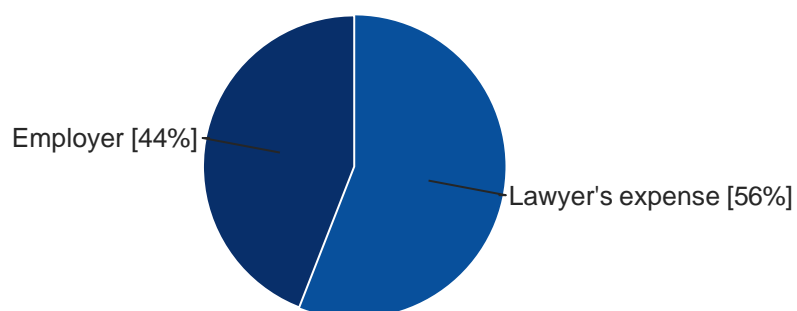
Number of Trainings Participated In



Coverage of Training by Employer

More than half (56%) of the lawyers indicated that they personally covered the costs of the trainings, while the remaining 44% stated that their employer funded their training expenses.

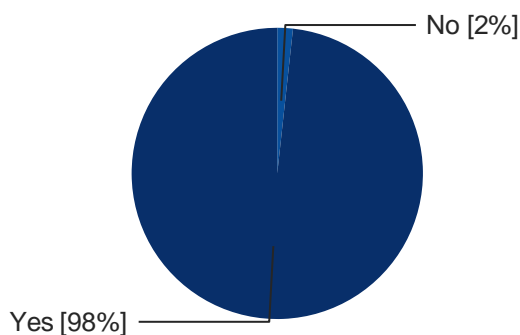
Expense of CPD/CLE Trainings



Usefulness of Trainings

Almost all lawyers who have participated in CPD/CLE trainings believe that these trainings are useful for their practice.

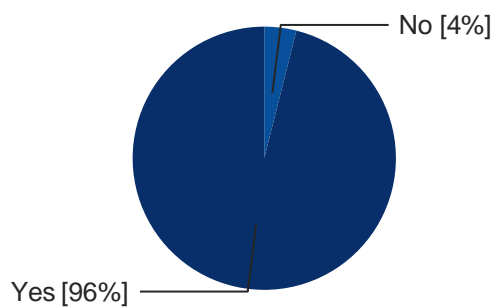
Were the Trainings Useful for Your Practice?



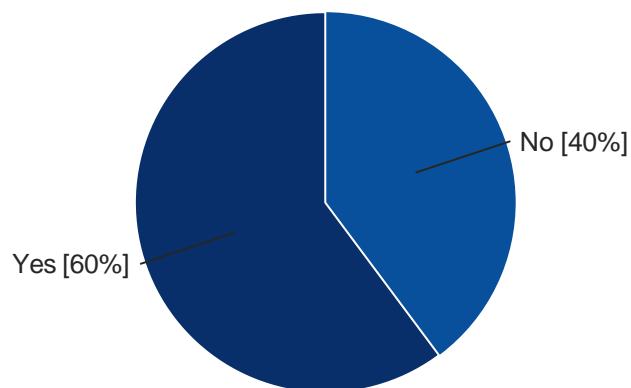
Necessity of CPD/CLE Trainings

When asked whether they believe continuing professional development is necessary in the Maldivian legal profession, almost all lawyers, including those who had not participated in any continuing professional development, responded yes. More than half (60%) of the lawyers responded that they believe licensing should be contingent upon completion of set hours of continuing professional development every year.

Do You Believe CPD is Necessary in the Maldivian Legal Profession?

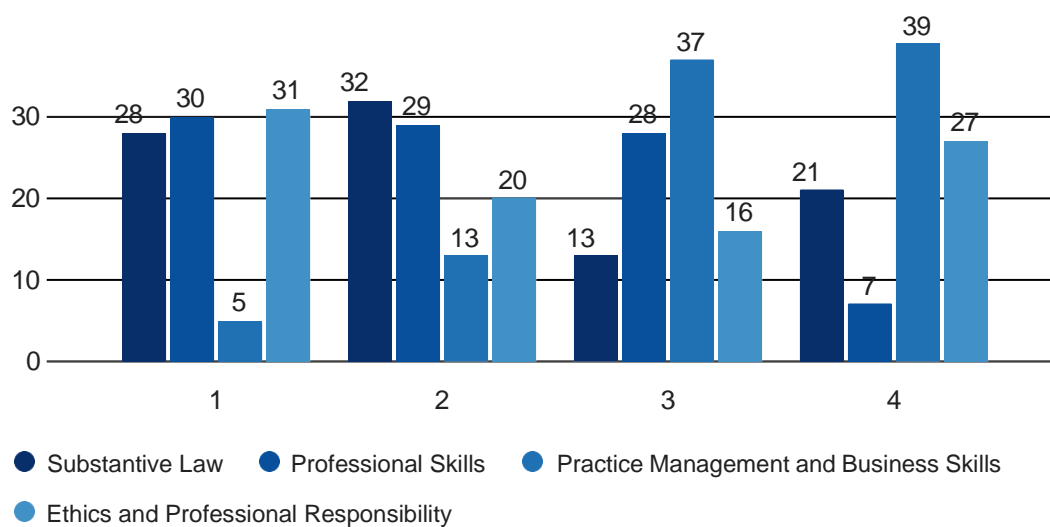


Should Licensing be Contingent on Completion of CPD?



When lawyers were asked to rank the importance of different continuing professional development areas, they ranked ethics and professional responsibility first the most, followed by professional skills and then substantive law. Practice management and business skills were ranked as least important by the majority of respondents.

Importance of Different CPD Areas



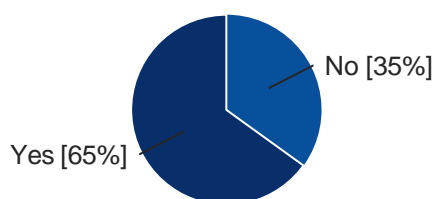
Pro Bono

Almost two-thirds of lawyers had provided pro-bono legal assistance at some point since they received their license. This most commonly took the form of litigation, consultation and advice, form filling, and drafting. Although some lawyers provided pro-bono assistance in collaboration with an NGO or third party or through their place of employment, most did so on their own. The most common challenge associated with pro-bono work that lawyers reported was a lack of time. 90% of lawyers who took this survey believe that lawyers should provide pro-bono legal services in the Maldives.

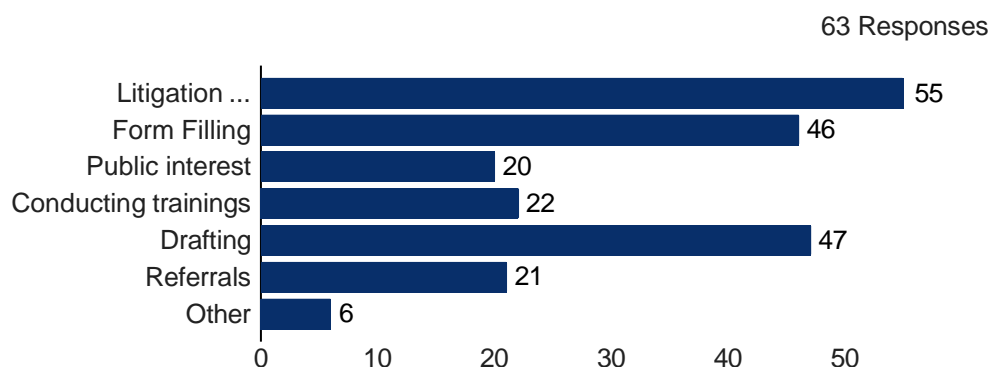
Providing Pro-Bono Legal Assistance

65% of the lawyers who took this survey have provided pro-bono legal assistance after they were licensed. This assistance took many forms, including litigation consultation and advice (25%), drafting (22%), form filling (21%), conducting trainings (10%), referrals (10%) and public interest (9%),

Have you provided pro-bono legal assistance after you were licensed?



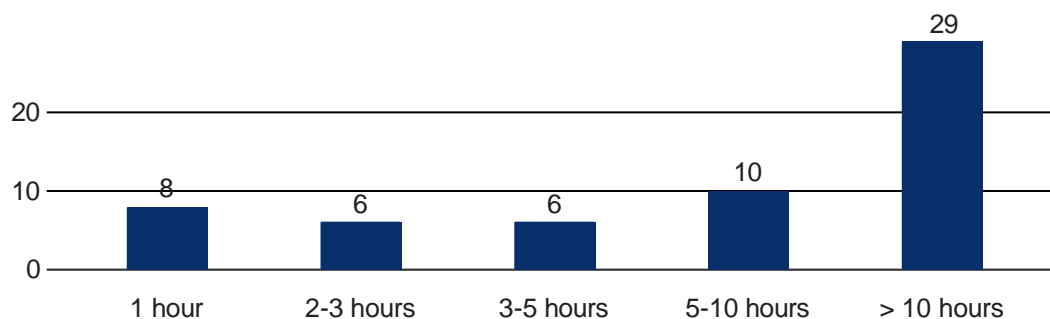
Nature of Pro-Bono Assistance



Time Dedicated to Pro-Bono Work

Lawyers were asked how often they provide pro-bono services. Responses were spread out, with almost half (49%) doing more than 10 hours of pro-bono work over the past year.

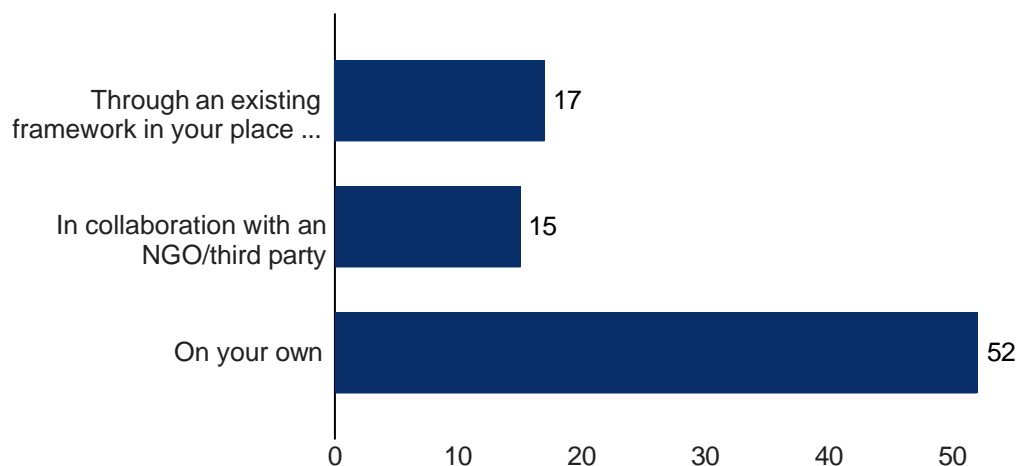
Time Spent Providing Pro-Bono Services



Framework of Providing Pro-Bono Services

62% of the lawyers who provided pro-bono legal services did so on their own. Some lawyers (20%) did so through an existing framework at their place of employment, and others (18%) collaborated with an NGO or a third party to provide pro-bono legal services.

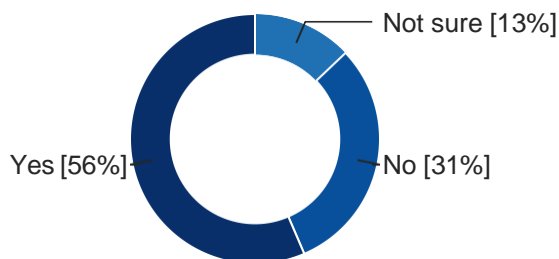
How Did You Provide Pro-Bono Legal Assistance?



Pro-bono legal advice, or representation to member of marginalized or vulnerable groups

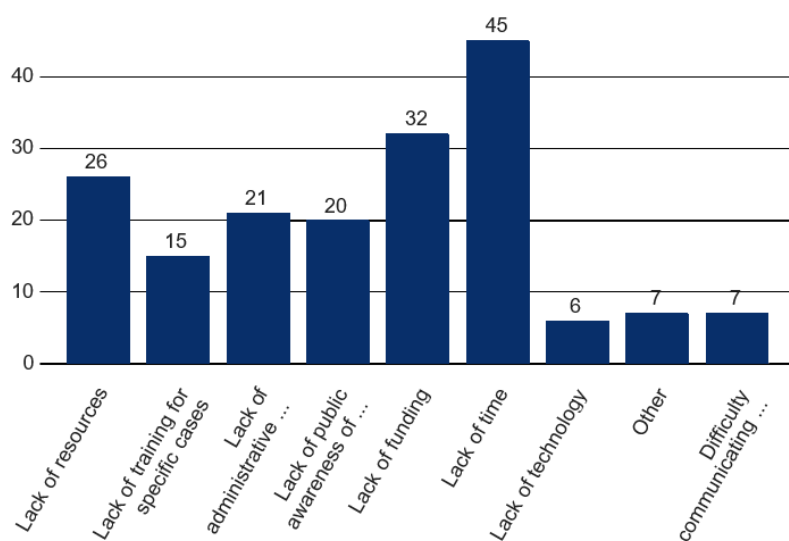
More than half (56%) of lawyers that responded reported having offered pro-bono legal assistance, advice, or representation to individuals belonging to these marginalized or vulnerable communities, addressing issues related to their marginalized or vulnerable status. Approximately one-third of the respondents (31%) reported that they had not extended pro-bono services to members of these groups, while 13% remained uncertain about whether they had provided their services to marginalized or vulnerable groups.

Have you provided pro-bono legal assistance, advice, or representation to members of marginalized groups?

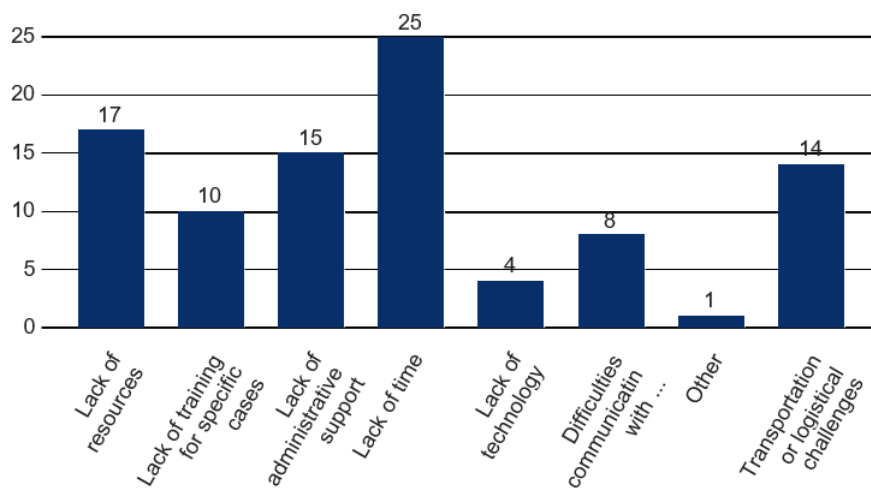


Pro-Bono Challenges

The lawyers reported facing a number of challenges when providing pro-bono legal services. The biggest challenge seemed to be lack of time (25%), lack of funding (18%), and lack of resources (15%). Other challenges included lack of training for specific cases, lack of administrative support, lack of public awareness of availability of services, lack of funding, and lack of technology.



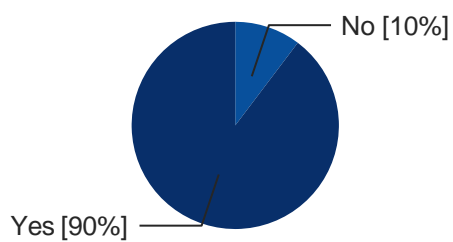
When inquired about the challenges encountered when offering pro-bono legal aid to marginalized or vulnerable groups, lawyers highlighted the biggest challenges as lack of resources (26%), lack of resources (18%). Other challenges include lack of training for handling specific cases, lack of administrative support, and limited access to technology. Additionally, respondents emphasized the difficulties posed by language barriers and transportation or logistical challenges.



Importance of Pro-Bono Legal Assistance in the Maldives

90% who responded to this question, including those who had not provided pro-bono services, believe that lawyers should provide pro-bono legal assistance in the Maldives.

Should Lawyers Provide Pro-Bono Legal Services in the Maldives?



Lifestyle and Wellness

More than two-thirds of the lawyers surveyed are married and most do not have children. 50% of the lawyers delayed starting their undergraduate degree by 1-2 years. Of those that delayed their legal education, almost half delayed by more than two years. The most common reason for delaying was lack of finances and being uncertain about their career.

When asked for their motivation to become a lawyer, respondents gave a wide range of answers. The most popular reasons were passion for work and being able to help others or be useful for society.

Lawyers were asked to rank how often they felt stressed at work on a range from never to always. The most popular response was sometimes. The most common source of stress at work was having a large workload. When asked how they manage their stress, the most popular responses were having a work-life balance, exercise, and family support.

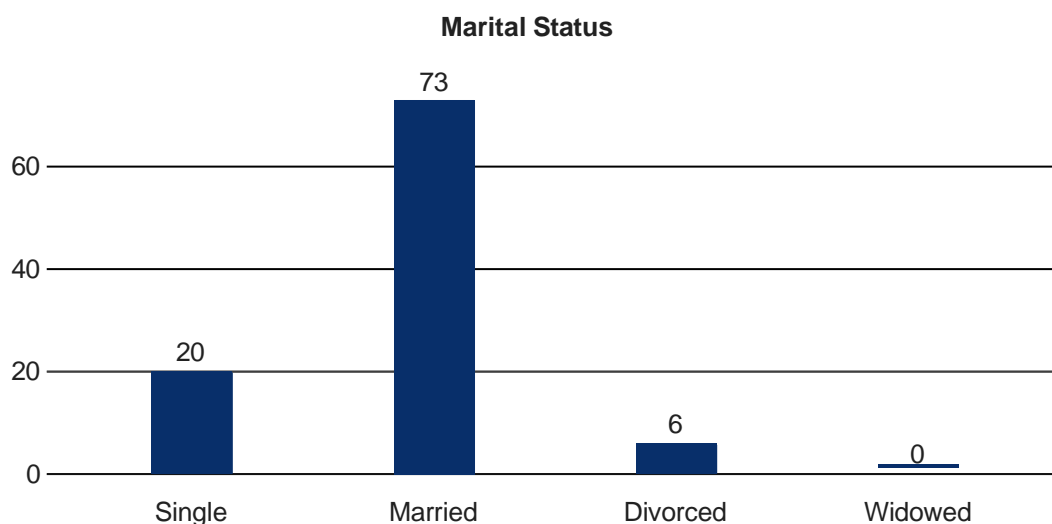
Less than a third of lawyers surveyed reported having student debt from their legal education. For those who incurred student debt, most reported having less than MVR 100,000 in debt.

38% of lawyers reported experiencing depression or anxiety. More than two-thirds of those who experience depression or anxiety believe it is exacerbated by work.

Only 1% of lawyers surveyed identified as having a disability. Those who identify as having a disability believe that they do not receive adequate accommodation for their disability at their workplace, courts and any other work-related setting, and that this has impeded the success of their career.

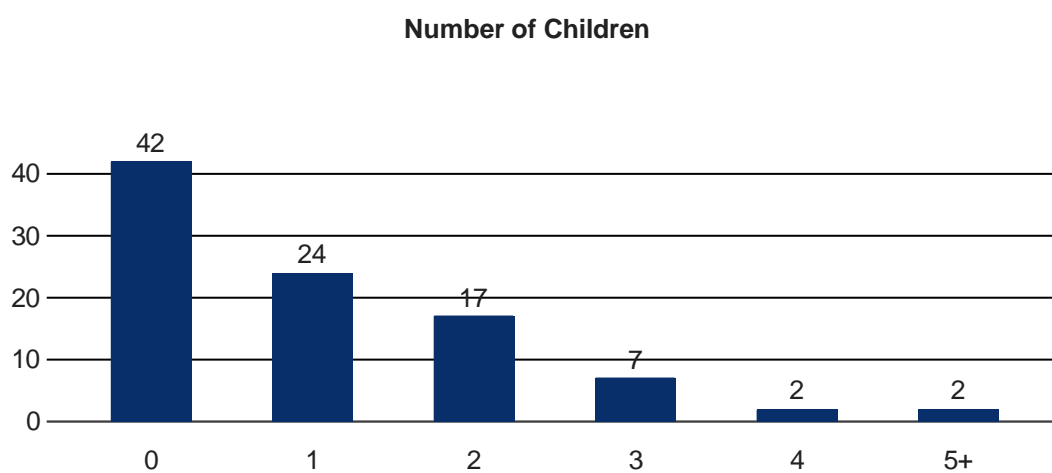
Marital Status

The majority (74%) of the lawyers who took this survey are married. 20% of the lawyers are single and 6% are divorced. None of the lawyers are widowed. The low number of divorced and widowed lawyers is likely related to the skew towards younger lawyers taking this survey.



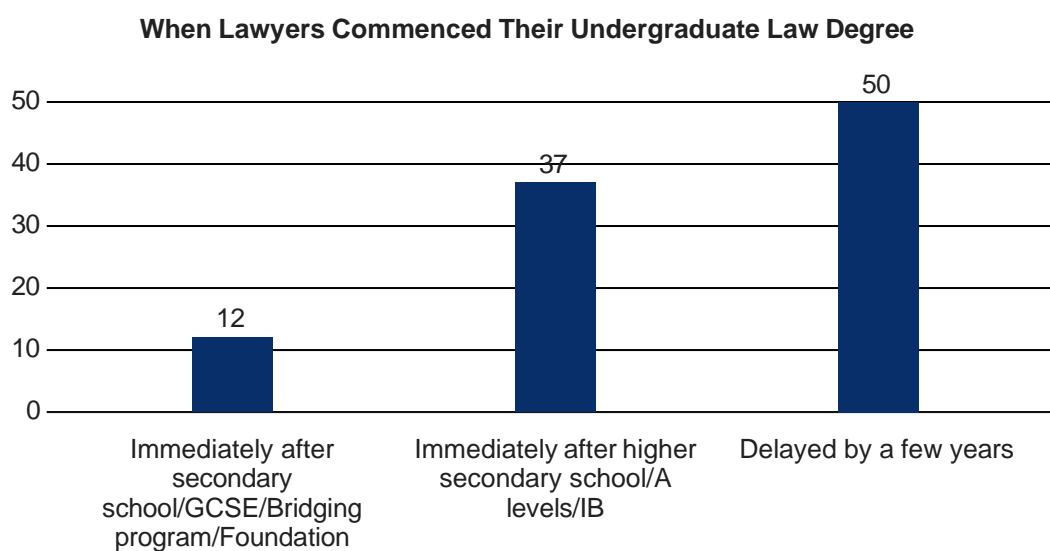
Children

45% of the lawyers who took this survey do not have children. Of those that have children, most (44%) report having between 1-2 children, while only 2% of the respondents have 5 or more children.

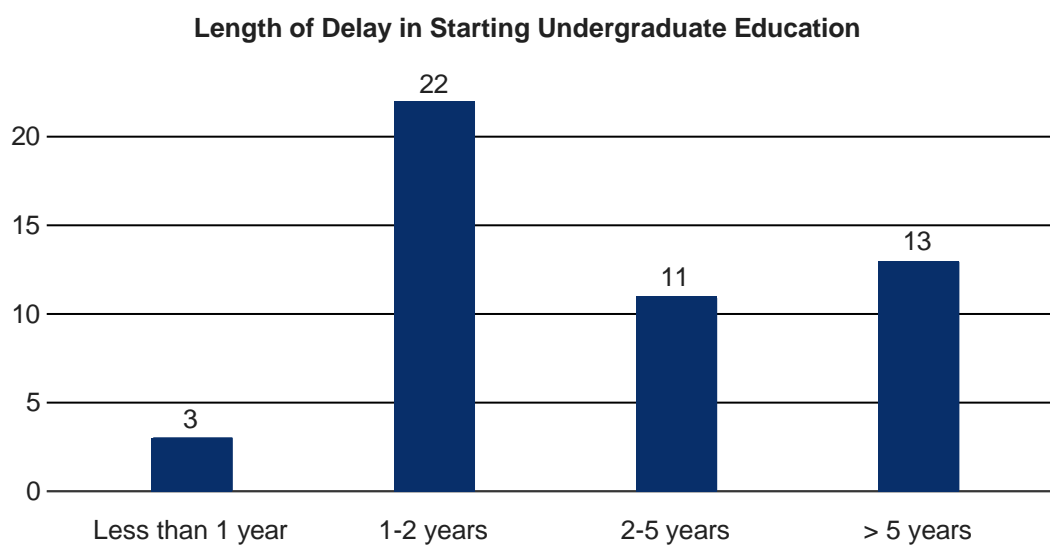


Delays in Commencing Undergraduate Law Degree

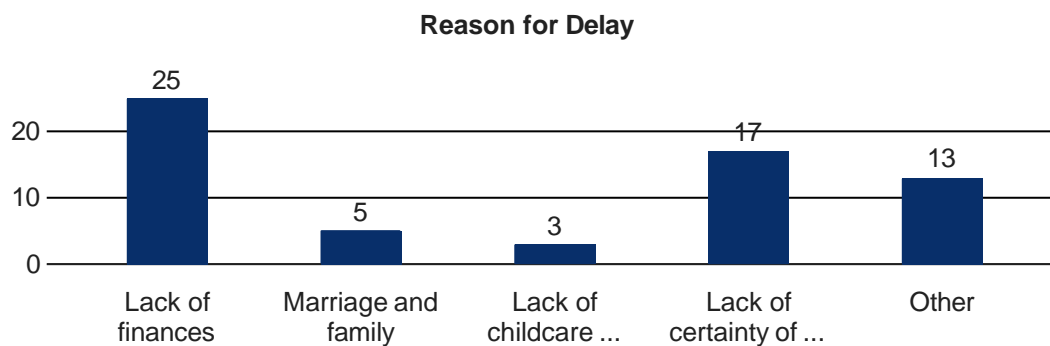
Almost half (51%) of the lawyers responded that they delayed starting their undergraduate law degree by a few years. 37% started immediately after higher secondary school/ A levels/ IB and 12% started immediately after secondary school/ GCSE/ Bridging program/ Foundation.



Of those who delayed starting their undergraduate education, 6% delayed it by less than one year, 45% delayed it by 1-2 years, 22% delayed it by 2-5 years, and 27% delayed it by 5 or more years.

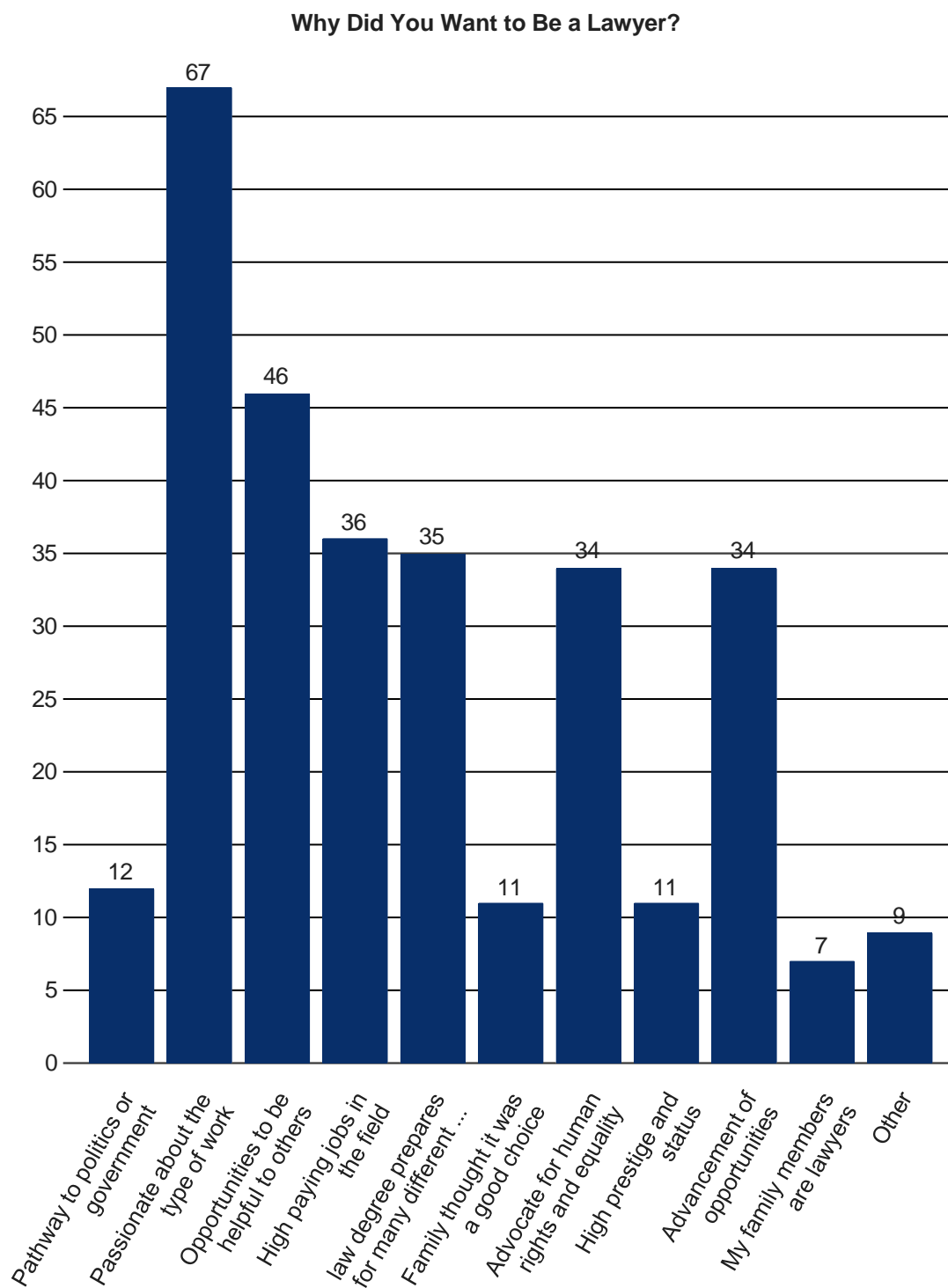


The most common reason for delaying the commencement of an undergraduate law degree was a lack of finances (40%). Other reasons given were lack of certainty of a career choice, marriage and family, and lack of childcare services. 21% listed having another reason for delaying their degree.



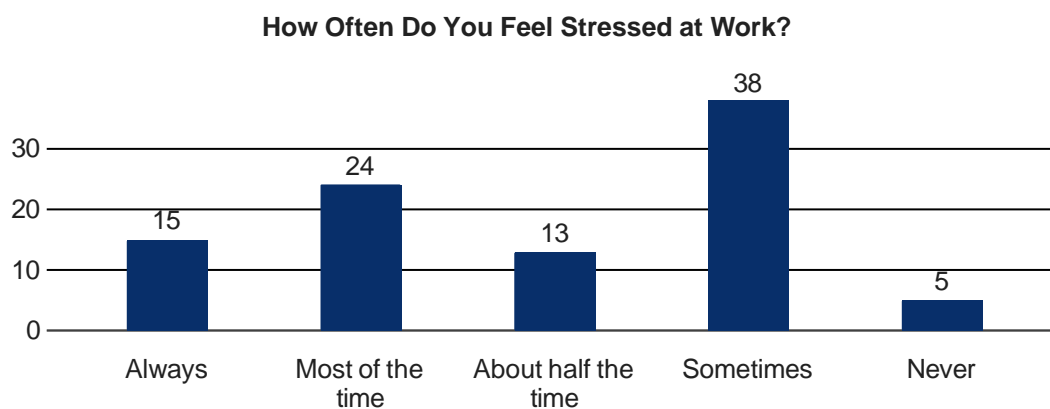
Motivation for Becoming a Lawyer

When asked why they wanted to become a lawyer, respondents gave many reasons. The most common were passion for work (22%) and opportunities to be helpful to others or useful for society (15%).



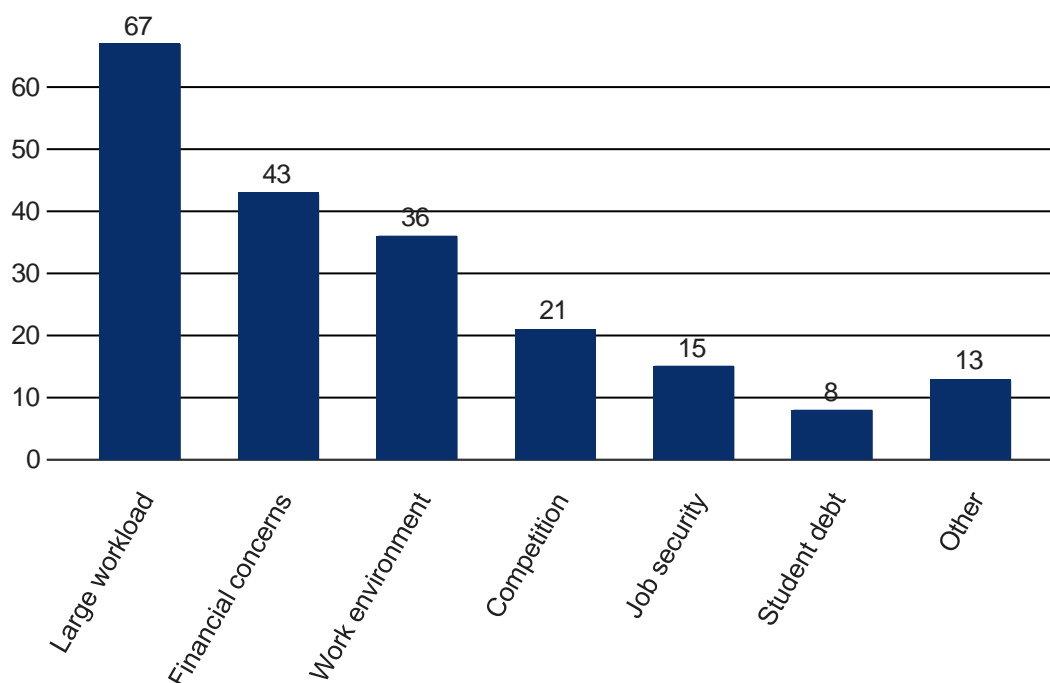
Stress

Lawyers were asked about their stress levels at work. 40% of respondents reported that they felt stress at work sometimes. Most lawyers fell somewhere in the middle of the stress spectrum, with few claiming they always or never felt stressed at work.



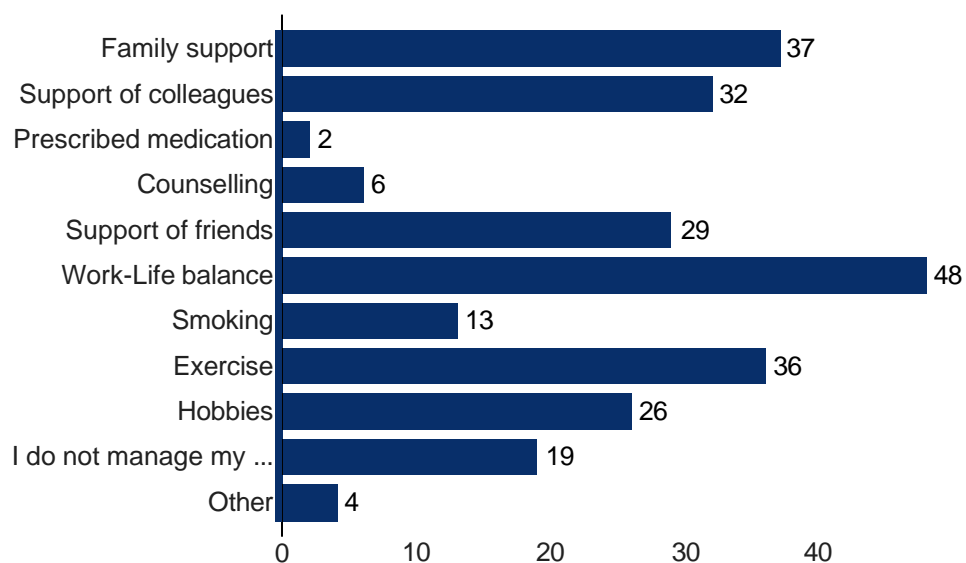
The sources of stress at work that lawyers reported are a large workload, financial concerns, work environment, competition, job security, and student debt, among other concerns. The most common source of stress among these was having a large workload (33%) and the least common was student debt (4%).

Sources of Stress at Work



When asked about how they manage their stress at work, lawyers responded that they manage their stress most commonly through work-life balance (19%), support from family (15%), exercise (14%), support from friends (12%) and colleagues (12%) and through their hobbies (10%).

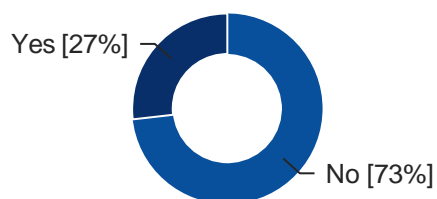
Managing Stress



Student Debt

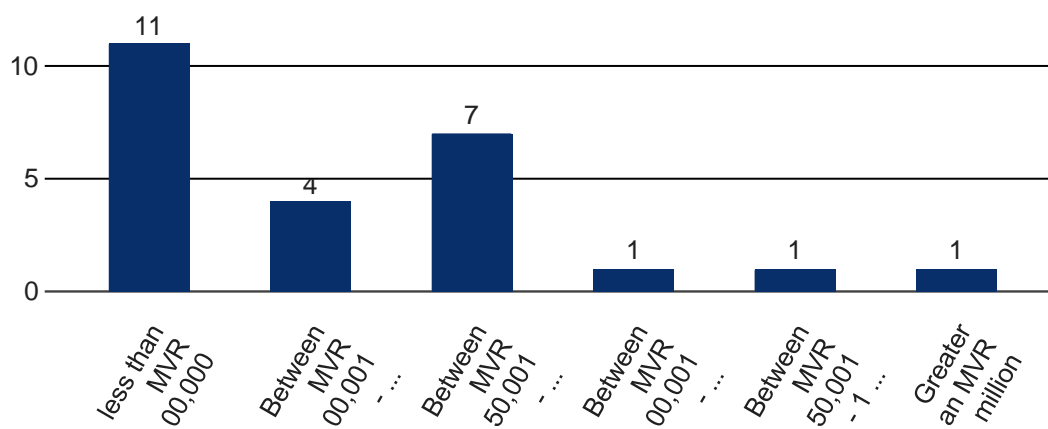
Of the lawyers surveyed, 27% reported having student debt arising from their legal education.

Do you have student debt arising from your legal education?



Those who had student debt were asked how much debt they owed. 44% reported having less than 100,000 MVR. Only 8% reported having more than 750,000 MVR in student debt.

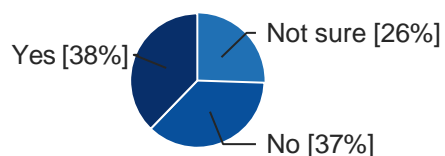
Debt From Legal Education



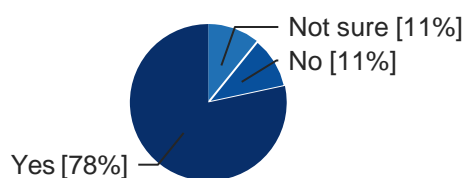
Depression and Anxiety

Over a third of the lawyers reported experiencing depression or anxiety. Of those who do, more than two-third believe their depression or anxiety is exacerbated by their work.

Do You Experience Depression or Anxiety?



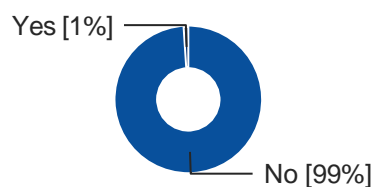
Do you believe your depression or anxiety is exacerbated by your work?



Disability

Only 1% of the lawyers who took this survey reported identifying as having a disability. The respondents noted that appropriate accommodations were not made for their disability in their workplace, the courts, and other work-related contexts. They also believe that the lack of accommodations had impeded their career advancement.

Do you identify as having a disability?



Profile of the Legal Profession of the Republic of Maldives
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