

# Women in the Law 2018

The largest international survey conducted on the topic of women in the law

As part of our continued work to **improve gender equality in the legal profession**, the Law Society conducted a survey between November 2017 and January 2018 to better understand key issues that affect women working in law. This follows our 2012 survey from which we draw comparisons, improvements and areas of concern.



# 7,781

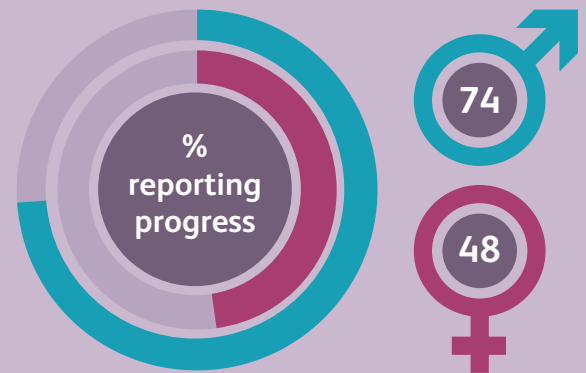
responses were collected

(5,758 women, 554 men, 20 other, and 1,449 unknown).

Almost 5% of the respondents identified as LGBT+, 13% identified as BAME and 4% identified as disabled.

We've made some progress over the last five years, but **perception is skewed**

**Half of respondents** said they thought there had been progress on gender equality over the last five years but there was a **large difference in perception by gender** with 74% of men reporting progress in gender equality compared to 48% of women.



**Unconscious bias** was perceived to be the main barrier to career progression in 2018

Respondents have become more aware of the role unconscious bias plays in **preventing many women from reaching senior positions within the legal profession.**

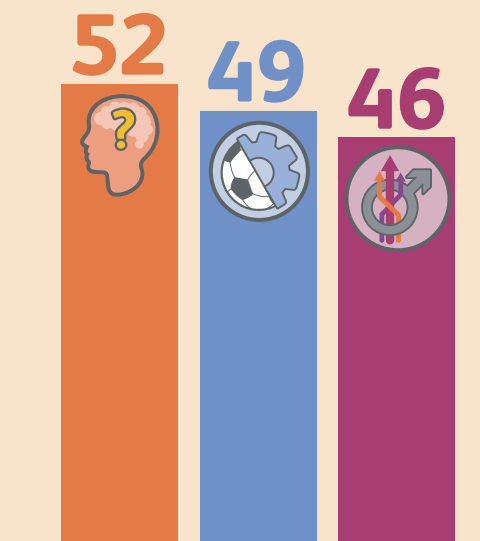
(Up from third reason cited in 2012)

This is also reflected in the scoring of the **least consistently enforced policies in the workplace:**

Only 11% reported **unconscious bias training** being consistently carried out in their organisation

# 11%

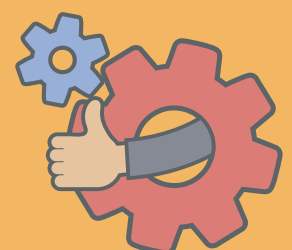
## Top reasons reported



- Unconscious bias (52%)
- Unacceptable work/life balance demanded to reach senior levels (49%)
- Traditional networks/routes to promotion are male orientated (46%)

## On a more positive note

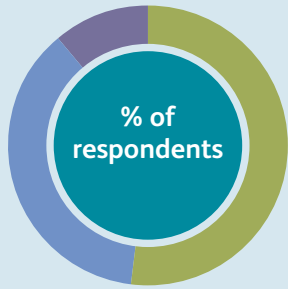
**41%** felt that they benefit from **regular performance and development reviews**; and **43%** reported having **diversity and inclusion training consistently enforced**



More people than ever think **flexible working really works for everyone**

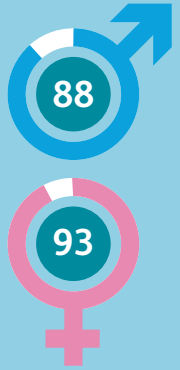
**91%**

of respondents felt that a **flexible working culture is critical to improving diversity** in the legal profession (86% in 2012)



- 52%** of respondents work in organisations where a **flexible working policy is consistently enforced**
- 37%** work in organisations where there's **provision**, but not consistently enforced
- 11%** work in organisations with **no provision** for flexible working

**Both men and women share this opinion** (88% and 93% in favour respectively)



Given the introduction of the new **Gender Pay Gap** reporting requirements, the 2017/18 survey also contained specific questions on this topic:



**60%**

of the 6,533 individuals responding to this section of the survey reported they were **aware of gender pay gap within their organisation**

Worryingly, of these **only 16%** reported **visible steps being taken** to address the gender pay gap within their organisation.



### What works: best practice highlighted by the survey

Some of the initiatives respondents said have worked in supporting women in the legal profession



**Access to and mainstreaming of flexible working**, for women and men and at all grades

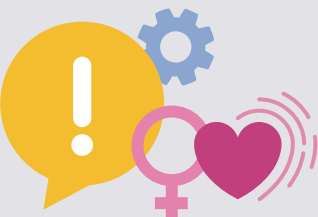


**Networking opportunities** at a local, city or regional level or through national networks

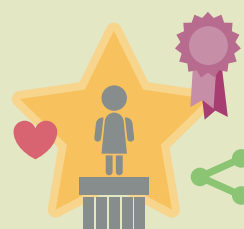
**Mentoring and sponsorship** including from senior staff, peers and reverse mentoring



**Engaging men in the equality debate**, to raise awareness of the issues, and to encourage shared parental leave and flexible working to enable men to participate more in family life



**Promotion and celebration / increased visibility of leading women in law:** in the judiciary, in executive office, in firms and organisations



**Role modelling** family friendly working practices, including through speaking at informal and formal events

If you are interested in getting involved in the next stages of this project, including hosting roundtables to generate in depth insights, or simply want to know more about it, please contact Alex Storer, Diversity & Inclusion Adviser: [alex.storer@lawsociety.org.uk](mailto:alex.storer@lawsociety.org.uk)

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