



TOWARDS A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE OF LAW IN CANADA



Phase II | 2022-2024

RESEARCH REPORT **PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

Under the scientific direction of
Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D., CRHA

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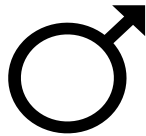
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Phase I participants description: Law Society of Prince Edward Island



62.1% of **women** with an average age of **40.2** years



37.9% of **men** with an average age of **45.1** years

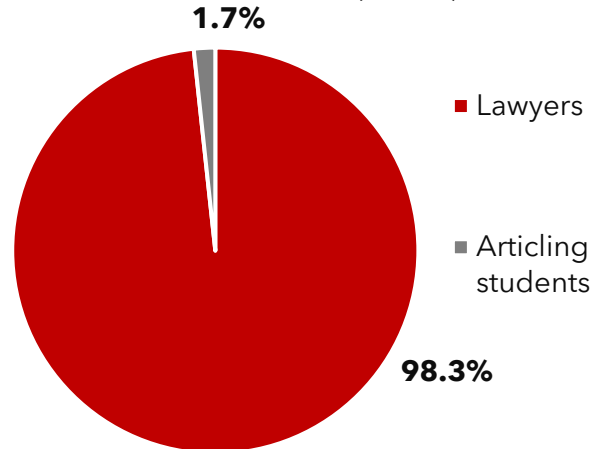


0% of **non-binary people** among participants

Portrait of **diversity** among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island (n = 58)



Proportion of participating legal professionals by **profession** in Prince Edward Island (n = 58)



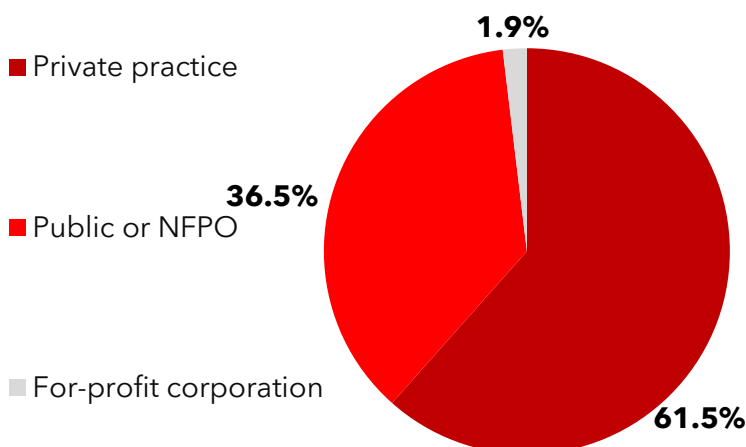
63.8%

Participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island are members of the Canadian Bar Association CBA (n = 58)

0.8%

Participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island are qualified from the National Committee on Accreditation NCA (n = 58)

Proportion of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island by **work setting** (n = 52)

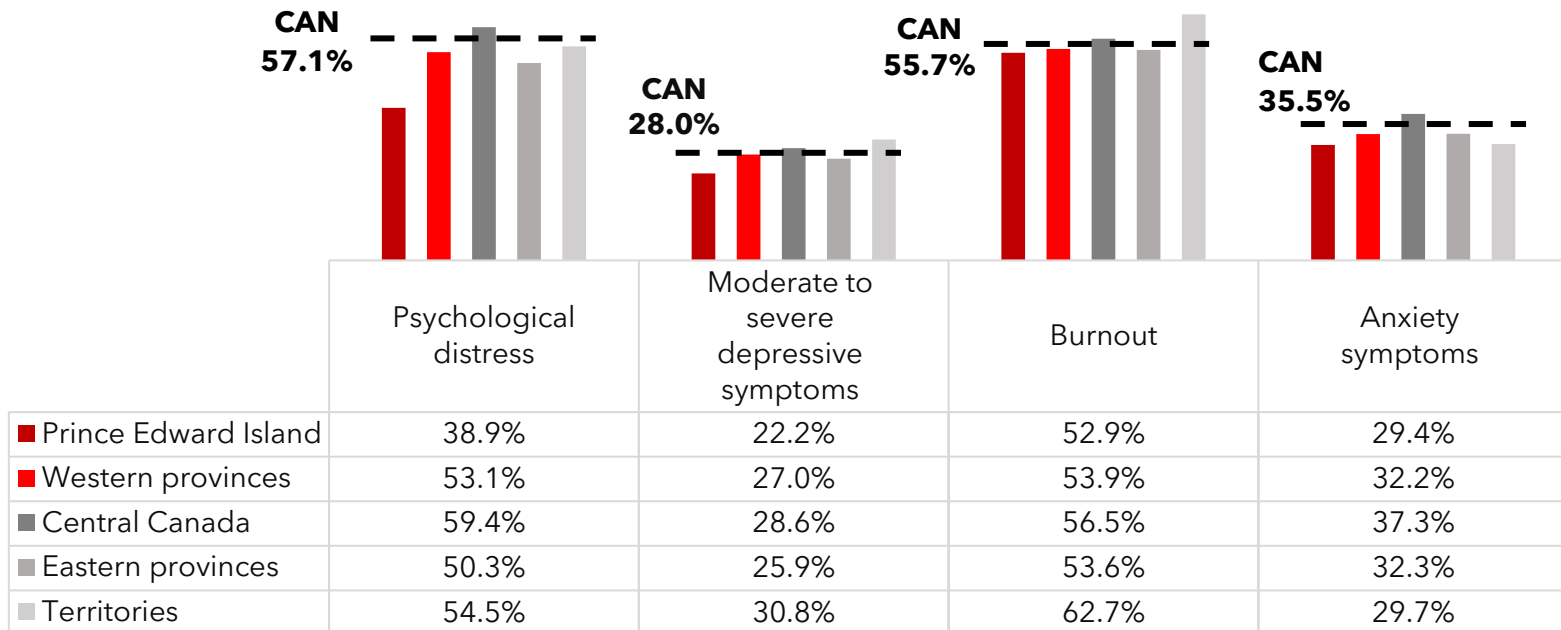


Area of practice :

- Family Law (29.3%)
- Criminal Law (12.1%)
- Civil Litigation (31.0%)
- Business, Corporate and Commercial Law (32.0%)
- Human Rights, Public and Administrative Law (12.1%)
- Labour and Employment Law (17.2%)
- Real Property (41.4%)
- Wills, Estates and Trusts (36.2%)
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (6.9%)
- Other (13.8%)

Mental health indicators (Phase I): Law Society of Prince Edward Island

Proportion of participating legal professionals mental health indicators in Prince Edward Island by Canadian geographical regions (n = 6,901)



11.8%

Participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island have had **suicidal thoughts** since the beginning of their career (n = 51). The average in Canada is **24.1%**



50.9%

Participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island were **unable to seek help because of psychological health issues despite feeling the need for it** (n = 55). The average in Canada is **46.8%**
Three main reasons for not seeking help:

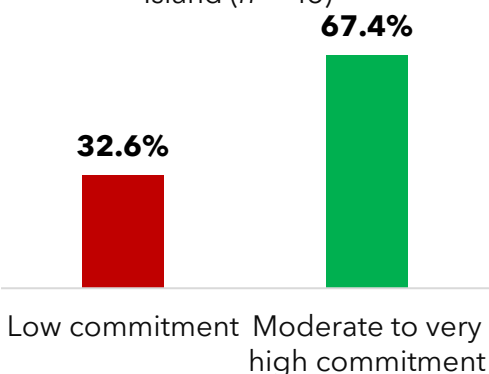
1. Thoughts that the issue is temporary **27.6%**
2. Not being sure of help necessity **17.2%**
3. Lack of energy of seeking help **15.5%**



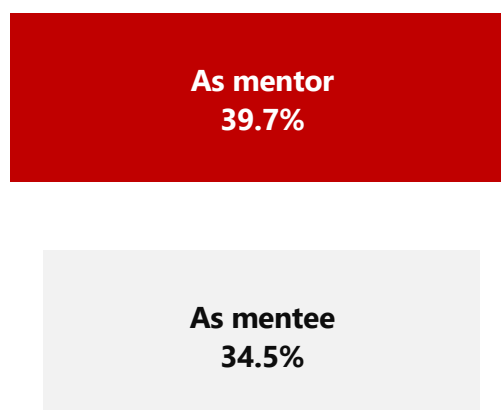
12.1%

Participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island who **have taken more than three months of medical leave** in the past five years (n = 58)

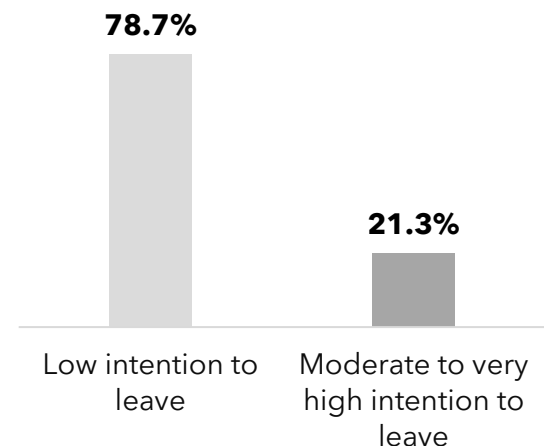
Proportion of **affective commitment to the profession** among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island (n = 46)



Proportion of **mentorship participation** among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island (n = 57)



Proportion of **intention to leave the profession** among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island (n = 47)



INTRODUCTION | HEALTH AND WELLNESS PRIORITIES IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

This report is part of Phase II of the “Towards a Healthy and Sustainable Practice of Law in Canada” project. Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, this report has three main objectives:

- 1) Paint an accurate picture of the main psychological health and wellness issues in the workplace among participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island based on Canadian data collected during Phase I (Cadieux et al., 2022);
- 2) Contextualize the quantitative results obtained in Phase I through interviews with legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island;
- 3) Make targeted recommendations to address important health and wellness issues among participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island.

The first objective was achieved through quantitative data collected in Prince Edward Island during the first phase of this national project ($n = 18$). The second objective is based on qualitative data gathered through interviews. As part of Phase II, ten legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island, including one articling student and nine lawyers, volunteered to participate in a semi-structured interview. Participants were then selected ($n = 5$) among the volunteers and semi-structured interviews were conducted with these legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island. In order to identify the priorities of legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island, a list of 10 key themes arising from Phase I (Cadieux et al., 2022) was included in the invitation sent to potential participants through their law society. These themes focus on the determinants of health and wellness in the practice of law. When expressing their interest to participate in an interview, legal professionals were asked to rank each of these priorities in order of importance. The three themes that were most important to them were then selected for the purposes of this report. Table 1 lists these priorities in order of importance.

Table 1

Prioritization of mental health and wellness themes according to participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island who expressed an interest in being interviewed

Theme	Contents	# of legal professionals for whom the theme is among the three most important themes to address
1	Working conditions and cognitive demands	8
2	Work-life balance	6
3	Coping strategies and lifestyle	6
4	Training and mentorship	4
5	Technology and legal practice (technostress)	2
6	Diversity and inclusion in the practice of law in Canada	2
7	Return to work after a prolonged medical leave/absence	1
8	Telework	1
9	Regulation and practice review	0
10	Billable hours	0

Based on the results presented in Table 1, this report addresses the three themes most frequently reported as priorities: (1) working conditions and cognitive demands, (2) work-life balance, and (3) coping strategies and lifestyle. The results presented for each theme are based on weighted quantitative data obtained during Phase I in Prince Edward Island ($n = 18$) and on interviews conducted ($n = 5$).

1.1 THEME 1 | WORKING CONDITIONS AND COGNITIVE DEMANDS

Authors: Prof. Geneviève Robert-Huot, Ph.D., CRHA, Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D., CRHA

The most important theme identified by participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island was working conditions and cognitive demands in the practice of law. To understand how workplace stress is perceived, it is important to look at how each individual evaluates the demands of their work and the resources available to cope with these demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In other words, working conditions include both the work-related demands that can jeopardize employees' wellness (i.e., constraints) and the resources that can help protect their wellness.

PORTRAIT OF CONSTRAINTS AT WORK

Table 2 summarizes the proportions observed among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island of various constraints that emerged as important. This table reflects participating legal professionals' perception of the presence of these constraints. Note, however, that this does not mean that there is a significant correlation between these constraints and the mental health of legal professionals. These findings do, however, shed some light on the context in which they practise.

Table 2

Presence of significant constraints in the practice of legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island (%)

Constraints in the practice	Constraint present (in %)
Qualitative overload	86.0%
Billable hour pressure	68.4%
Work-life conflict	58.0%
Long work hours (≥ 50 h/week)	55.1%
Emotional demands	52.0%
Pressure to perform	41.7%
Quantitative overload	36.0%
Lack of resources	32.0%
Workplace incivility	16.0%
Job insecurity	7.4%
Workplace violence	6.0%

A high proportion of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island reported facing a qualitative overload (86.6%) and, to a lesser extent, a quantitative overload (36.0%). Pressure to meet billable-hour targets, work-life conflict, long working hours, and emotional demands were also reported as constraints by over 50% of participating legal professionals.

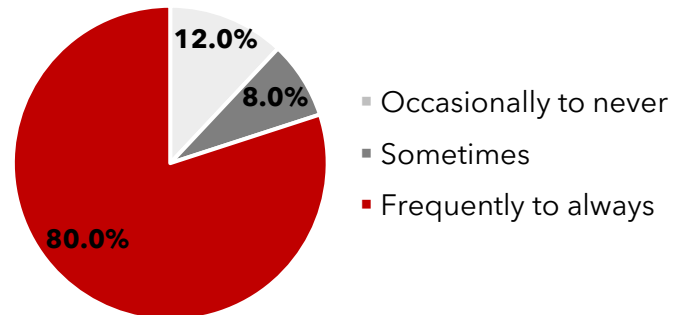
To provide a better understanding of the context in which these constraints operate, the following sections provide examples of qualitative overload, emotional demands, and quantitative overload among participants.

Qualitative overload

Qualitative overload was the most prevalent constraint among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island (86.0%). As illustrated in Graph 1, no less than 80.0% of participants reported that they often or always feel that their work is mentally taxing.

To better understand this phenomenon, one must remember that legal professionals face demands that go beyond legal knowledge. As mentioned in the quote below, their work demands that they possess a wide array of technical and social skills, which can fuel the perception of qualitative overload.

Graph 1
Frequency at which participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island feel that their work is mentally taxing ($n = 50$)



“Performance requirements would be more around: calmness, consideration, being able to coordinate both a legal and a social or psychological approach in all matters, and being able to find additional resources that are not within your area of expertise.” **PEI-2**

On a technical level, legal professionals frequently deal with cases where the facts they need to analyze are unusual, which further contributes to the complexity of their work. The peculiarities of many such cases result in constant concern over having identified the right arguments.

“I think for me, a big source of stress is [not] knowing if you’ve done everything you can. If you’ve read the version or if you’ve looked into something enough, or if you’ve got enough information, make sure that you’ve given the client all the available options to them. That is a source of stress for me. And I think the biggest one was making sure you didn’t forget something.” **PEI-3**

On a social level, legal professionals have to deal with the conflict inherent in the cases they handle, in addition to the psychological distress of the stakeholders with whom they have to collaborate. Some cases are more complex due to the multitude of stakeholders involved, as illustrated in the excerpt below.

“[...] It’s a lot of time because you’re not only interviewing the parents, so you get two parents or caregivers to look at and speak with and try to help them co-parent better. But you’re also dealing with the collateral, whether it’s the school or child protection or other professionals that might be involved with the family—counsellors, whatnot—and finding out all kinds of sources of information from them in order to get the whole situation with his family.” **PEI-4**

In short, the frequent need to operate at the intersection of legal work and social work is characteristic of the qualitative overload that some legal professionals struggle to cope with in their practice. This aspect of the profession is closely linked to the high emotional demands addressed in the next section and reported by more than half participating legal professionals (52.0%).

Emotional demands

The emotional demands to which legal professionals are exposed include exposure to clients' suffering and strong negative emotions. The level of emotional demands can also be exacerbated when cases involve vulnerable clients, such as children.

Indeed, it's difficult to witness the suffering of clients who find themselves in horrific situations beyond their control. As the following excerpts illustrate, when legal professionals work with vulnerable clienteles—particularly with children—they can feel a greater sense of responsibility towards them. The situation is even more taxing when the clients in question do not have access to a safe and secure environment from which to enforce their rights.

"[...] the emotional demands of the work are seeing kids in very bad situations and having it be your risk, partially or significantly your responsibility, to help improve those conditions knowing that the kids themselves have very little ability to do that on their own." **PEI-2**

"In the area of law that I practise, well, it's different representing children as opposed to adults such that you can't always get instructions from your clients. They may be too young in their ability to understand. Also, children's unique position in the sense that though they may give you instructions; the children may not want you to reveal information to parents because the children have to live there, right? And so, sometimes you're operating with your hands tied behind your back because although you may know certain things, you can't save them because the children haven't given you instructions to do so. And the reason why they might not do that is because of the situation at home, one parent or both parents might not take it well. What can I say about that? You're representing clients." **PEI-4**

There is no denying that certain legal cases are very emotionally charged. These situations are likely to trigger strong emotional responses in clients that legal professionals often witness first-hand. Clients are singularly focused on their own needs, but for legal professionals, the client is but one among many.

"What do you see as your priorities? I mean, every client's going to think like 'if you're being sued, [...] [that] could very well be the number one stressor in your life.' But how does that stack up against the lawyer or [when] you only have, as a person, so many hours in the day or so much capacity to dedicate to what's going to be on your priority list of all of these emergencies. Everybody's trying, everybody wants it dealt with as soon as possible, but you're only one person. So, I think that trying to manage client expectations would be another source of stress." **PEI-1**

This last excerpt raises the possibility of a dynamic relationship between qualitative overload, emotional demands and quantitative overload. In fact, every new case added to a legal professional's workload further limits the time they have to deal with qualitative overload and high emotional demands.

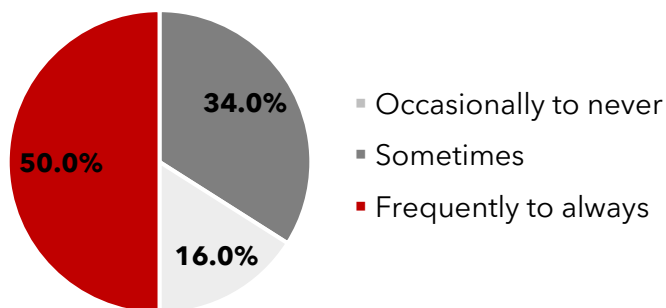
Quantitative overload

Quantitative overload often translates to the perception of not having enough time to complete tasks (see Graph 2).

“[...] but if you’re doing that, you know, back and forth after a long day in court, it can really be tiring. So, there can be periods when it’s very stressful. But, you know, on an ongoing basis, mostly it’s just that [...], in the background, kind of wearing you down like: “Oh my God, I still have six more things that I really should get out tomorrow”. And I don’t have any time tomorrow [...].” **PEI-5**

Graph 2

Frequency with which participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island feel that they have so many urgent matters to deal with at work that they don’t have enough time in a day to do all their tasks ($n = 50$)



OVERVIEW OF WORKPLACE RESOURCES

Table 3 presents a summary of the most important resources available to participating legal professionals on Prince Edward Island. While the use of skills represents a resource for all participants, autonomy, consistency of values, telework, and recognition are also perceived as key resources by a majority of them.

The contextual elements detailed in the following subsections relate more specifically to the way in which autonomy, consistency of values, and support act as resources.

Table 3

Presence of significant resources in the practice of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island (in %)

Resources in the practice	Resource present (in %)
Skill utilization	100.0%
Autonomy	66.0%
Consistency of values	64.0%
Telework	52.0%
Recognition	51.9%
Support from colleagues	34.0%
Support from supervisor	33.3%
Career opportunities	14.8%

Autonomy and consistency of values: two resources that are generally available

Participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island generally felt that they had sufficient autonomy (66.0%). More specifically, they reported having a certain amount of freedom in the way they carry out their work. However, the “ability to say no” is also a factor when it comes to autonomy, as expressed in the following excerpt.

“Or I think that [is] something [like] one of the biggest stressors for me, I think, is just not knowing... or like always, like, you're never quite sure what you're taking on. Or you're always taking on more stuff [...] or, like, you don't feel like you can say no to any file. And I feel like having more autonomy over if I'm able to take myself off the cold call list for, you know, the next month or something, so I can catch up on the files I have. [...].” **PEI-1**

Consistency of values is a second resource perceived as generally present among participants (64.0%). However, the fact remains that legal professionals are sometimes required to defend cases for which they are not entirely convinced of the merits. As described in the excerpt below, in certain cases and at certain times, not being able to act consistently with one's own values seems to be an inherent part of the job.

“

“There’s also the stress of representing views or pushing and arguing for views that aren’t consistent with my values—on a personal level. [...] So, for example, let’s say it’s in a criminal case, if it was back when I was a prosecutor and the law that I was required to enforce, I personally didn’t feel it was just still needed to enforce it because that’s what my job is. In family law, when I was a parent’s lawyer, if I knew that a parent is not an appropriate person for the child to be with, needing to argue—because the parent wants to argue that the child should be returned to them—needing to argue that.” **PEI-2**

Support from colleagues and superiors: two resources that are difficult to access

Support from superiors and colleagues, whether other lawyers, office managers (PEI-5), a support person (PEI-4) or an assistant (PEI-1), can take many forms: being able to ask questions, feeling that we can count on each other, being able to confide in each other, or relieving the time-consuming administrative workload. These forms of support are extremely important, as they are likely to mitigate the effect of demands such as qualitative overload, emotional demands, and quantitative overload.

“

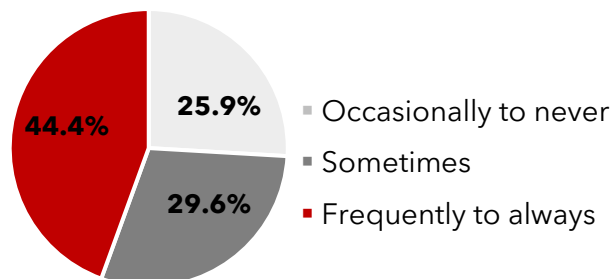
“Certainly, I have colleagues that I can talk to about it and feel similar ways, sharing information about files, so that we can kind of all talk about things and talk about stressful situations.” **PEI-2**

However, only a minority of respondents (44.4%) reported always or often receiving help and support from their supervisor (see Graph 3).

Yet, it is precisely this form of support that creates a sense of “psychological security” (PEI-2) when dealing with the many threats perceived by participating legal professionals in their practice. The following excerpt illustrates the importance of support from one’s supervisor in the context of legal practice.

Graph 3

Frequency at which participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island feel that they receive help and support from their superior (n = 50)



“[...] we’re always going to have to defend ourselves from clients, parents, like the exterior problems. And so that’s your main front, and it’s an inherent nature of the job. But from management and colleagues, you want those people to kind of be protecting your back and your sides. So, when you’re not secure in feeling like they’re on your team, that’s what I mean by kind of watching your own back because you know that there is a threat from the outside. And that’s not going to change, the hope would be that you don’t need to worry about a threat from the inside as well.” **PEI-2**

In short, even though it is recognized as an important resource, access to support can be limited in certain work settings. The constraints associated with quantitative overload in particular raise a number of questions that help shed some light on the situation, as further illustrated in the following excerpt.

“And I would say I feel like I can go to anybody if I have a question. I could go to somebody who’s a more knowledgeable practitioner, but it’s just everybody’s so busy. And so, it’s this bit of a tension between like, I know that, or I feel fortunate that I have support from my colleagues. And I know like when I was a student or like an articled clerk, I was able to like rely on a lot of people or other associates and other partners. If I had questions, you know, [all I have to do is ask], Have you done this before? Like, what did you do? But in the last couple of years, we’ve had those people leave and they haven’t been replaced yet. So, you don’t have as many people, you know, to work with. And then, everybody else is so busy, you’re all trying to pick up the slack where you can. And so, people are still there for support. But when it’s just tough sometimes if nobody’s in their office because you’re always in meetings, you’re always in class, you’re always like, you know, you’re trying to hammer out a document on a deadline. And so, sometimes, it makes it difficult to access those services or those supports [...]” **PEI-1**

To conclude this section, it should be noted that the relatively limited sampling of Prince Edward Island legal professionals did not allow us to conduct robust association analyses between the constraints and resources presented above and the various mental health indicators measured in the province. However, the nationwide analyses conducted as part of this project, in keeping with the current literature, allow us to hypothesize a direct link between several of these factors and the mental health of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island. These constraints and resources therefore serve as means whereby organizations can reduce the pressure on professionals’ mental health, and thus sustain their professional practice.

1.2 THEME 2 | WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Authors: Prof. Amira Driss, Master's Candidate, Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D., CRHA

Participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island chose work-life balance as their second topic of interest. In a world where responsibilities and commitments are ever increasing, finding a healthy work-life balance has become a major challenge in the workplace (Lockwood, 2023). Several research studies have shown a correlation between a healthy work-life balance and a high level of overall life satisfaction (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). Conversely, the presence of conflict between these two spheres is likely to have significant physical and psychological consequences (Cadieux et al., 2022; Karani et al., 2022).

WORK-LIFE CONFLICT

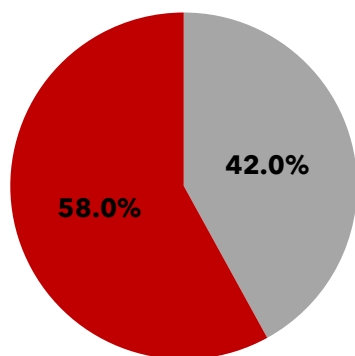
“In my experience [...], wellness was pretty much non-existent because people were working long hours and sacrificing everything for the job, and it was just entirely unhealthy [...].” **PEI-5**

The excerpt presented above illustrates how one participating legal professional in Prince Edward Island perceives the balance between work and wellness. The participant in question explained that wellness was non-existent in their workplace and not fully taken into account, mainly due to the long working hours and the focus on prioritizing one's career.

As illustrated in Graph 4 below, 58.0% of participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island experience work-life conflict.

Graph 4

Proportion of participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island by presence or absence of work-life conflict ($n = 50$)



■ Absence of work-life conflict ■ Presence of work-life conflict

An analysis of participants' specific responses to questions regarding work-life balance reveals that 68.0% (see Graph 5) feel that their work takes up so much of their energy that it has a negative effect on their personal life. This figure is consistent with the various testimonials provided by participating legal professionals in the province.

As the excerpt below shows, work dominates this legal professional's life. The legal professional in question explained that their work requires them to draw heavily on the vast majority of their skills, including their emotional control, even under normal circumstances.

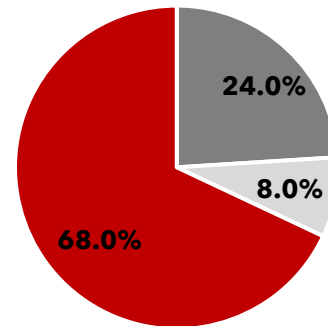
“[...] My work life basically takes up most of my abilities, my emotional regulation abilities, when things are normal [...].” **PEI-2**

Despite the challenges associated with the demands of the profession, legal professionals who match certain profiles are more likely to experience greater difficulties than others. For instance, Table 4 shows that among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island, women were more likely to experience work-life conflict (62.5%) than men.

Participants aged 34 and under experience the highest level of work-life conflict (70.6%), followed by those with less than 10 years of experience, those with children (66.7%), and those in private practice (67.9%). Finally, work-life conflict was twice as high among participating legal professionals who work with clients (60.0%) compared to those who do not.

Graph 5

Extent to which participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island agree with the following statement: "You feel that your work drains so much of your energy that it has a negative effect on your private life" (n = 50)



- Somewhat to strongly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat to strongly agree

Table 4

Presence of a work-life conflict by specific characteristics among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island (%)

		Presence of work-life conflict (in %)
Gender¹	Women	62.5%
	Men	50.0%
Age	34 or under	70.6%
	35 to 49	52.6%
	50 or over	50.0%
Work experience	0 to 9	68.4%
	10 or more	48.3%
Work setting	Public and NFPO	29.4%
	Private practice	67.9%
Dependent children	No	66.7%
	Yes	47.8%
Working with clients	No	28.6%
	Yes	60.0%

The personal experiences shared by participating legal professionals in the following box are consistent with these findings. These excerpts highlight the challenges faced by women in balancing career and

¹ Given the limited sample of genders other than men and women, only those two were compared.

family life. Men, on the other hand, are mainly confronted with a lack of time to devote to their families due to long working hours. Exhaustion is also an issue. In the second excerpt, the participant highlighted being too tired to take part in personal or leisure activities at the end of the day.



“I would say that for women in my profession, the biggest barrier to having a family is the likelihood that that will be held against them in promotions, in the private sector, even if it’s not formally held—certainly. Young women who have children get promoted to partner way slower than their male or no children counterparts. For men, I would say the biggest barrier is time, the idea that they’re going to be at the office so many hours every day that they’re not going to have the time to spend with their kids and with their family or their spouse if that’s what they all have at that point.” **PEI-2**

“I go to work [at ...] eight in the morning. I come home at six, and all I want to do is eat and go to bed, and like I don’t [...] do a good job of dealing with it.” **PEI-1**

“[...] For me, [...] I’m emotionally and mentally tired at the end of the day, [and] that often will affect what hobbies I decide to pursue. So [...] I won’t be taking on necessarily complicated mental tasks as a hobby.” **PEI-2**

The numbers presented in Table 5 reinforce the thought shared by participating legal professionals regarding the implications of their work on their ability to start a family.

Table 5

Proportion of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island who want to start a family and who somewhat to strongly agree with select statements regarding the fear of starting a family (in %)

75.0%	I feel that my workload conflicts with my ability to start a family.
66.7%	If I decide to have children, I could lose my job or not have my contract renewed.
66.7%	My profession is incompatible with family life.

The percentages reflect major concerns about the impact of their careers on their personal and family lives. Nearly three quarters of participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island felt that their work conflicts with their ability to start a family, and almost 67% feared losing their jobs if they chose to have children. These alarming statistics highlight the challenges related to maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

SKILLS THAT HELP DEAL WITH CONFLICT

While faced with many constraints, legal professionals in Prince Edward Island seemed to demonstrate certain key skills that contribute to lessening work-life conflict. Assertiveness (ability to set limits) and psychological detachment (ability to psychologically detach oneself from work) are among the skills measured in this project. Table 6 shows the presence of work-life observed among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island in relation to the presence or absence of these skills (in %).



Table 6
Proportions of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island experiencing work-life conflict by selected skills

	Presence of work-life conflict (in %)
Low assertiveness	73.0%
High assertiveness	15.4%
Low psychological detachment	62.8%
High psychological detachment	28.6%

If we compare the following figures with the results from other provinces, the disparity in work-life conflict between those who possess these skills and those who do not is quite high (Cadieux et al., 2022).

In the following excerpts, participants share that the need to work around the clock is a common belief. Certain participants expressed their desire to set clearer boundaries and give greater priority to personal wellness, but admit to finding it hard to put these intentions into practice.

It is clear that high productivity expectations and the difficulty of prioritizing personal wellness in a demanding profession are shared by many legal professionals. Not surprisingly, those working in Prince Edward Island are no exception.



"[...] In the past, how I would have coped with a busy period would be... I would just keep working like I would work long hours [...] and, you know, get close to burnout [...]" **PEI-5**

"[...] I need to be more comfortable with setting more clear boundaries for myself [...]" **PEI-1**



"[...] And it's this misconception that if you're not working all to the same extent as some of your other colleagues, you're lazy or you're not working as hard. And that's something I still [...] I know it's a mixed conception, but it's still hard [...] and it's] something I struggle with. I think that I would aspire [more on the] practice, you know, [...] setting more clear boundaries and [...] taking more care in the wellness side of things. But I'm still kind of struggling with that, like putting that into practice sometime [...]" **PEI-1**



1.3 THEME 3 | COPING STRATEGIES AND LIFESTYLE

Authors: *Audrée B. Camille, M.Sc., CRHA, DBA Candidate; Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D., CRHA*

The stress that people experience at work is the result of their individual assessment of the constraints to which they are exposed and resources available to cope with them (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When exposed to constraints that exceed the resources available to them, people tend to use various coping strategies to restore their emotional balance. Coping strategies are complex and unique to each individual. As such, the choice of coping strategy varies depending on the source of the stress as well as the individual characteristics of the person in question. Certain strategies such as conflict resolution focus on problem-solving, while others such as emotional expression therapy focus on managing difficult emotions (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; 1988).

SOURCES OF WORKPLACE STRESS REPORTED BY PARTICIPATING LEGAL PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

The coping strategies used can vary according to the specific sources of stress in any given context (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). During interviews, several legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island provided insight into the different sources of stress they encounter in their legal practice. These notably include those listed in Box 1 below.

Box 1

Sources of workplace stress reported by participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island

- Lack of support from higher-level management (**PEI-2**)
- Workload coming through and staff retention (**PEI-1** and **PEI-2**)
- Client expectations: being more demanding or requiring more hand-holding (**PEI-1** and **PEI-4**)
- Clients threatening professional complaints (**PEI-2**)
- Vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue experienced due to exposure to the stress of others (**PEI-1** and **PEI-4**).
- Representing, pushing and arguing views that aren't consistent with my personal value (**PEI-2**)

At times, the stressful situations that legal professionals face in the context of their practice can prevent them from adopting or maintaining healthy lifestyle habits—such as eating a balanced diet or getting regular sleep—that could help them cope with stress. One participating legal professional from Prince Edward Island shared their concerns about the impact of workplace stress on wellness.

“Your wellness just goes out the window, temporarily, where you're not eating very well, and you might not be getting enough sleep.” **PEI-5**

”

What's more, recurring stressful situations can have an overflow effect. In this regard, one participant spoke of the cumulative effect that some legal professionals experience in the excerpt below.

“When coupled, these stresses worsen because you're trying to defend all the way around: clients, the people your clients are fighting with, and your workplace, which isn't safe in itself.” **PEI-2**



Brabban and Turkington (2002) illustrate stress management by using the imagery of a “stress bucket,” a widely used metaphor for how individuals experience and cope with stress (Conolly et al., 2022; Miller, 2021). The rainwater (stressors) fills the bucket, the taps (coping strategies) act as a release valve allowing excess water to drain away, and the level of water maintained in the bucket (stress level) represents emotional balance. Accordingly, a high water level in the bucket represents a high level of stress. Coping strategies keep the bucket from overflowing with the emotional and physiological consequences of stress, according to Lazarus & Folkman (1984).

OVERVIEW OF COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY PARTICIPATING LEGAL PROFESSIONALS IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND TO MANAGE STRESS

In work environments, exposure to sources of stress or stressful situations is unavoidable (Demerouti et al., 2001). As such, the need to adopt coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) is equally unavoidable.

Some of the participating legal professionals interviewed in Prince Edward Island reported having used a support program to help them overcome stress.

“In my earlier days, I used to be more of a workaholic, and I had a short fuse; counselling really helped address that.” **PEI-5**

Many participating legal professionals reported using a variety of relatively simple coping strategies, such as keeping a regular schedule, spending time with family during downtime and taking allocated vacations, as shown in the box below.

“It is rejuvenating to spend time—downtime—with family and friends. You feel more relaxed once you've had time to decompress and spend time with people you love.” **PEI-1**



“Taking vacation time where I do not check emails; being able to disconnect from the office. I think that that would probably be the biggest help in that area.” **PEI-2**

Others had to take steps to address their workload and make time for things other than work.



“Trying to be as organized as possible; trying to separate work from your personal life. [...] Trying to compartmentalize it all.” **PEI-4**

“Being more comfortable with setting boundaries for myself. [...] It helps me focus on what I can control instead of things out of my control.” **PEI-1**

“In the past, I would have coped with a busy period by working long hours, not looking after myself and getting close to burnout. Now, I am better at setting boundaries. I’ll say, ‘I’m not accepting new clients,’ or, ‘I am unable to file anything for you at the moment.’” **PEI-5**



“I’ve joined volunteer organizations, and I go to the gym in the evenings; I do something other than just work. [...] It is important to me to be part of my community, to be involved and to do things outside of work.” **PEI-1**

Developing or reinforcing coping strategies can benefit the legal profession as a whole as well as its mission to protect the public. One of the participating legal professionals interviewed in Prince Edward Island stated that the importance assigned to wellness in the legal profession is evolving, albeit with differing opinions regarding attitudes and approaches to work.



“The view of taking care of oneself and the importance of wellness in the legal profession is changing. However, in the shift towards people viewing self-care as an important thing to have in the profession, there is a divide between seasoned professionals and professionals new to the career regarding how they see themselves, their work, and what fulfills them professionally.” **PEI-1**

COPING STRATEGIES THAT COMPROMISE LEGAL PROFESSIONALS’ HEALTH

When faced with sources of stress, many participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island resort to harmful strategies (Cadioux et al., 2022), such as the use of alcohol, drugs or gambling, which may help reduce the stress they feel in the short term, but are likely to lead them to develop dependencies or more serious illnesses. In the first phase of this study, alcohol consumption and drug use were surveyed by the questionnaire. The following paragraphs present the results around alcohol and drug use among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island who participated in the first phase of the study.

Alcohol consumption

Among participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island, 18.0% ($n = 50$) reported high-risk alcohol consumption (AUDIT 10 score $\geq 8/40$).

Table 7 shows the proportions of participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island and other Canadian provinces who consume alcohol 4 or more times per week.

Behaviours with respect to alcohol consumption are likely to vary according to certain demographic characteristics such as gender, age and years of experience. Table 8 presents the proportion of participating legal professionals who reported an alcohol consumption that is considered harmful or hazardous according to the AUDIT-10 scale (AUDIT-10 score $\geq 8/40$) (Babor et al., 2001) by selected demographic characteristics.

Table 8

Proportion of harmful or hazardous alcohol consumption (AUDIT-10 score $\geq 8/40$) (Babor et al., 2001) (in %) by selected practice-related characteristics among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island

Demographic characteristics		High-Risk Alcohol Consumption (AUDIT-10 score $\geq 8/40$)
Gender	Women	15.6%
	Men	21.1%
Age	34 or under	17.6%
	35 to 49	15.8%
	50 and over	20.0%
Years of work experience	0 to 9	15.8%
	10 to 19	25.0%
	20 or more	16.7%

Note: Given the limited sample of genders other than men and women, only those two were compared.

In Phase I of this study (Cadieux et al., 2022), several sources of stress were measured. Table 9 shows the proportion of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island who reported high-risk alcohol consumption by selected demands associated with the practice of the profession.

Table 7

Proportion of participating legal professionals who consume alcohol 4 or more times per week, by the main place of practice

Canadian region	Alcohol consumption of 4 or more times per week (in %)
Prince Edward Island	18.0%
Other Atlantic provinces	20.2%
Western Canada	19.2%
Central Canada	20.3%
Territories	26.9%

Table 8 shows that among participating legal professionals who are members of the Law Society of Prince Edward Island, men are more likely than women to report harmful or hazardous alcohol consumption (21.1% of men vs. 16.6% of women). We also note that one in four participating legal professionals who have between 10 and 19 years of work experience reported an alcohol consumption that is considered "harmful" or "hazardous" according to the AUDIT-10 score. In terms of age, 20.0% of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island aged 50 and over reported at-risk drinking.

Table 9

Proportion of harmful or hazardous alcohol consumption (AUDIT-10 score $\geq 8/40$) (Babor et al., 2001) by selected practice-related characteristics among participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island.

Practice-related characteristics	High-risk alcohol consumption (in %)	
Work setting	Public and NFPO	17.6%
	Private practice	17.9%
Billable-hour targets	Yes	26.3%
Working with clients	Yes	15.0%
Presence of high quantitative overload		11.1%
Presence of high emotional demands		10.0%

Drug use

With respect to the use of drugs, 16.0% of participants who are members of the Law Society of Prince Edward Island reported using drugs other than medications administered for medical purposes in the 12 months preceding Phase I of this study. It should be noted that the statistical interpretation and conclusions that might be drawn from this analysis are limited by the number of participating legal professionals from Prince Edward Island in Phase I.

The development and application of coping strategies – specifically those focused on problem-solving or emotion regulation to help legal professionals cope with stress – promote holistic wellness. A legal professional whose “stress bucket” is regularly drained by using coping strategies and maintaining a healthy lifestyle will undoubtedly be better able to support a healthy and sustainable professional practice. The following section examines some of the potential solutions put forward by participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island.



1.4 POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS PUT FORWARD BY PARTICIPATING LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

Authors: Marc-André Bélanger, M.Sc., Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D., CRHA

The interviews conducted with participating legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island allowed different solutions to emerge; these are broken down into five focus areas: (1) optimizing support from supervisors, (2) improving available resources, (3) formalizing mentorship, (4) improving work organization, and (5) promoting a work culture focused on wellness.

FOCUS AREA 1: OPTIMIZING SUPPORT FROM SUPERVISORS

Improving supervisor support by considering a manager's key competencies

As previously mentioned under the "Working conditions and cognitive demands" theme, supervisor support is an important resource that one third (33.3%) of participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island reported receiving (see Table 3). This means that two thirds of respondents (66.7%) felt that they did not receive support from their supervisor².

As one participating legal professional put it, lawyers in management positions, while good lawyers, are not necessarily good managers. According to the participant in question, having managers with good managerial skills would make a huge difference and would address some of the shortcomings observed in the profession, particularly with respect to social support and psychological safety in the workplace. This would involve revising hiring profiles for legal professionals in management positions to recruit people with stronger management profiles.

“

“I think high-quality management within the legal profession using professional managers rather than professional lawyers could help. I think expanding the knowledge of the importance of supporting employees even just by listening and having them feel psychologically safe could be a major benefit to the legal profession. So, taking in some of those things that the corporate world has learned or is learning, or the business organization or business school and applying them in the law management area. Lawyers in management positions tend to be good lawyers rather than good managers.” **PEI-2**

“High-quality, knowledgeable management. I think that would make the biggest difference because it is a way of solutions to most of the other problems. It's kind of a precondition to solving the issues that I've seen.” **PEI-2**

Using recognized practices in general management that can be applied to legal management would ensure that legal professionals in management positions have core management skills, including the ability to support their subordinates. According to one participant, supervisor support is a precondition for finding solutions to other workplace issues. In this regard, the literature tends to confirm the existence of a relationship between support from supervisors, on the one hand, and reduced intention to leave the profession (Cadieux et al., 2022), work-life conflict, depressive symptoms, stress, and health

²It is important to point out that participating legal professionals who answered “no” to the question “do you have a supervisor?” did not answer the questions regarding support received from their supervisor. Consequently, they are excluded from these statistics.

problems on the other (Shockley et al., 2013). Also, supervisor support would improve the feeling of psychological safety in the workplace (Lee, 2021), as mentioned by this same participant.

Alternatively, the solution put forward by the participant suggests a need to develop the skills of managers (lawyers) within the legal profession and to prioritize employee relations with an emphasis on supportive practices.

FOCUS AREA 2: IMPROVING AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The second focus area that emerged was improving the resources available to legal professionals to facilitate their work, including available information (particularly with respect previous cases handled by other professionals in the firm) and access to a social worker for cases involving vulnerable clients.

Improving available information

One of the participating legal professionals mentioned that a source of stress in their job was the uncertainty regarding providing all available options for their clients and the fear of not having enough information or forgetting something important. One solution put forward by the participant in question was to create a “checklist” of all the cases worked on by their firm that could then be referenced to find relevant precedents and to see what was done in previous cases that are similar to the case on which they are currently working. As such, it would be a helpful resource to ensure that the maximum amount of relevant information is being found for each case.

Participant: “So, for me, a lot of that looks like a checklist and relying on the experience of the staff and the other lawyers I work with; using precedents and being able to look at other people’s files to see what they did in similar situations.”

Interviewer: “And how could your workplace improve in the future?”

Participant: “I think having just more—and I’m sure it’s the same in a lot of firms—checklists are usually created just by individuals. And then people might all have their own. I think having a standardized one that everybody uses could be most beneficial to take everybody’s individual checklists and melt them together. Um, yeah, I think that would be a big one that they could improve on.” **PEI-3**

“”

Providing access to a social worker when working on cases involving vulnerable clients

Cases involving special circumstances, especially when children are involved, are often more sensitive and difficult to handle. Legal professionals must draw on specific skills when interacting with children (or other vulnerable clients) as part of a case and when deciding what direction to take in certain circumstances, since the consequences can be significant for these clients. The assistance of a social

worker during meetings between a legal professional and a child would be an effective solution to better support interactions with vulnerable clients.

“I would have a social worker employed within our office to help with our meetings with the children, how to talk about maybe certain direction to take with that particular case. So, an in-house social worker.” **PEI-4**

FOCUS AREA 3: FORMALIZING MENTORSHIP

One participant shared their thoughts on the lack of mentorship in their workplace, which they attribute to heavy workloads that hinder the development of effective mentorship relationships.

“For me, it’s probably a lack of mentorship. I don’t really feel that I have that; I have people that are checking up on me and making sure that I’m doing okay. But I think when you have a busy practice, making time for developing that kind of relationship with a mentor, it’s kind of one of the first things to go. Yeah. For me, I would need more of a ‘structured mentorship’ would be beneficial.

[...]

I think I can see, especially here, kind of like what we’re saying earlier with there being the way that people practise law in Prince Edward Island. And I think if you had a mentor that was really experienced in dealing with the courts or dealing with other lawyers; if you have somebody who shows you the ropes in terms of that and like not having to figure it out on your own. If that information was just readily available to you, I think it would help to lessen those kinds of anxieties that people get about. ‘Oh, I was like an idiot, or I went to the wrong person,’ and stuff like that. And I think there’s an element of mentorship that includes sponsorship, having somebody introduce you to more senior members of the bar or even just clients or anything. And to say, you know, ‘This is [name], this lawyer is wonderful,’ even if it’s not in an official mentor role, but also in helping you to establish yourself.” **PEI-3**

Yet, it has been shown that when a mentorship relationship is experienced as a positive one, it helps develop the mentee’s sense of competence, identity affirmation, and self-esteem (Kram 1983).

With that in mind, this solution aims to formalize mentorship in order to capitalize on the mentorship relationships that emerge. It should be noted that mentorship is the preferred development plan tool used in organizational settings (Langlois & Paquette, 2020; Duchesne, 2010; Bach Ouerdian et al., 2018) and, in particular, within the legal community (Nguyen & Patel, 2018).

Through mentorship, young legal professionals would benefit from better access to information, which is likely to reduce anxiety related to the possibility of making mistakes, according to the participant quoted above. It should also be noted that mentorship, through its ability to reinforce cross-disciplinary skills that are vital to professional practice, appears to be a protective factor for individuals dealing with work-related stress (Cadieux & Gladu-Martin, 2016). Mentorships could also prove beneficial in a setting where over 75% of lawyers with less than three years of experience feel stress related to the possibility of making a mistake in the course of practising (Cadieux et al., 2022).

What's more, according to this participant, formal mentoring facilitates the development of a network for the mentee, helping them to establish themselves in the organization.

Obviously, this relationship is closely linked to the overall quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. To this end, numerous studies to date have highlighted a direct link between the quality of the mentoring relationship and a number of benefits, including the health, career and self-efficacy of young professionals (Chan, Guan & Choi, 2011; West et al., 2018).

FOCUS AREA 4: IMPROVING WORK ORGANIZATION

The fourth focus area that emerged deals with improving work organization, more specifically through teamwork (first solution) and autonomy (second solution).

Setting up multidisciplinary teams

One participant mentioned the relevance of multidisciplinary teams to better share the workload and foster collaboration. The idea is that everyone brings their own value and experience to the team. In turn, these teams foster the emergence of available resources by enabling the exchange of information while offering support when a legal professional has questions about how to handle a case.

”

“So, you have (to have) many hands to make light(er) work. And so, you have more people to kind of share the workload or more people to go to if you have questions. Everybody brings so much value with their own, experience in their own practice where if they work somewhere else and I just feel like there's so much value in that diversity of experience. And so, I feel like having more people to share the workload and to provide that (would) help each other kind of thing. And then having that or feeling more supported in [...], autonomy over my practice kind of thing.” **PEI-1**

Promoting work autonomy

The same participant explained that what would make the biggest difference in their practice would be having greater autonomy, including with respect to work time and the amount of work taken on.

“I think something that would bring like the biggest difference to my practice would be more (the) feeling (of having) more autonomy over my time or like how much time I'm expected to put into the job. [...] And so I feel like having more autonomy over how much work I'm expected to take on so that I'm able to kind of feel like I am doing them or feel competent with the files I do have so that I'm able to do my best work and then still being able to get a decent sleep and spend time with my partner or go for a walk or something like that, I feel like that would make the biggest difference.” **PEI-1**

”

For the participant in question, having this autonomy would bolster their confidence in their abilities and let them do their best work while promoting a healthy work-life balance.

FOCUS AREA 5: PROMOTING A WORK CULTURE FOCUSED ON WELLNESS

Finally, the last set of solutions focuses on wellness, with two aspects: openness to discussion as part of the profession's culture, and accessibility of mental health resources for consultation.

Wellness: professional culture (openness)

Three of the participating legal professionals interviewed in Prince Edward Island expressed that the best way to improve wellness in the profession is first and foremost to promote a culture of openness when discussing mental health and wellness in the profession.

"I think the biggest way that the Law Society could help is by creating a culture of openness to discuss mental health and a culture where lawyers should value mental health of other lawyers and value other lawyers. I think that's the biggest contribution they could make, because if we can change the culture, then we can work on the details, as we go along." **PEI-2**

"[...] because I think that it's beneficial for people to know that you're not alone, like chatting with other people to know, like everybody's kind of struggling. [...] I feel like it's like this tension between wanting to be [and] wanting people to feel like they can come to you and wanting to feel like you can have an honest conversation with people." **PEI-1**

"[...] certainly, organizations and employers are trying to place more emphasis on workplace mental health. I think that needs to continue placing an emphasis on that and having open discussions about the challenges people may face from time to time. That needs to continue, so, people feel free to do that. I think as more people work from home, that's something to keep in mind as well, because you can easily not be in touch with them as often. And so that's something to be mindful of and to be regularly checking in on how people are doing and promoting openness around that. I think that's all I can think of." **PEI-4**

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According to one participant, it is beneficial for legal professionals to know that they are not alone in struggling with wellness. This underscores the importance of promoting the health and wellness of legal professionals by fostering an environment where they feel free to openly discuss any challenges they may be facing. One of the participants also mentioned the importance of checking in on legal professionals working from home, who are more isolated than others. It is important to consider those working remotely and to check in on how they are doing.

Wellness: improving the availability of consultation services

In the same spirit of openness to discussions regarding wellness challenges, three participants also suggested improving the availability of consultation services.

“I think something that would also be like beneficial in terms of those mental health benefits (is) including some kind of coverage for like counselling, like as part of like the benefits offered through work.” **PEI-1**

“I think by... So, expanding the amount of assistance—EAP, mental health benefits and benefit packages—that are there would help.” **PEI-2**

“But certainly, I would think people would benefit from having the longer-term counselling. [...] with the lawyer assistance program, I could use someone in [British Columbia] or [Alberta], something like that, and it would be like 7 p.m. or 8 p.m. [in] my time. We would do it virtual and so no one had to know, and I didn’t have to leave work and all of the things that people can sometimes view as barriers just weren’t there.” **PEI-5**

Firstly, one participant suggested that consultation services be included in the health insurance coverage provided by employers. In the same vein, another participant mentioned that it would be beneficial to improve health insurance allowances for mental health and wellness services. Finally, one participant suggested taking advantage of time zone differences across the country so that people could benefit from consultation services provided in Western time zones. They mentioned that this enables them to book virtual consultations during regular working hours in western time, but around 7 or 8 p.m. local time. In doing so, confidentiality is better protected and there’s no need to leave the office during regular work hours, which reduces some of the barriers to access.

1.5 CURRENT INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE OF LAW IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Authors: Marc-André Bélanger, M.Sc., Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D., CRHA

In the report issued following Phase I of this study, which concluded in 2022 (Cadieux et al., 2022), 10 targeted recommendations and 35 secondary recommendations were presented to the various stakeholders in the Canadian legal community (law societies and bar associations, academic institutions, assistance programs, organizations, etc.). Rooted in the data collected, these recommendations aim to reduce the prevalence of measured health issues (e.g., the prevalence of depressive symptoms), to tackle the source determinants of these issues (risk factors and protective factors, including stigma) and to maximize the mental health support and resources available to legal professionals.

A number of initiatives that align with the recommendations presented in Cadieux et al. (2022) previously existed or were implemented following the publication of the Phase I report. More specifically, our team identified four different major initiatives stemming from five recommendations. Table 12 presents each of these initiatives and compares them to the recommendations made by Cadieux et al. (2022). This table shows that certain proposed initiatives are in line with the needs expressed by participating legal professionals in Prince Edward Island and reported in this report concerning the importance of improving the support available to legal professionals in their practice.

The initiatives listed below are just a few examples of the most important ones being implemented by the Law Society of Prince Edward Island and may not represent all the actions currently being taken to improve the health and wellness of legal professionals within their practice. They reflect the initiatives in place at the time this report was drafted. It should also be noted that Table 12 does not include initiatives that may have been implemented by private or public organizations within the province or by various associations or interest groups, which were not accessible to the research team. As such, the initiatives examined are limited to those brought to the attention of our research team by the partners organizations involved, i.e., the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, the Canadian Bar Association, and the Law Society of Prince Edward Island.

Table 12

Health and wellness initiatives for legal professionals implemented by the Law Society of Prince Edward Island and related recommendations from the Phase I report by Cadieux et al. (2022)

Initiative	Initiative-related recommendation(s) from Phase I
(i) The Law Society Mentorship Pilot Program for Articled Clerks - this new pilot program is designed to help articling students hone their skills in practice management and professional judgment and to promote improved collaboration between legal professionals. It has been expanded to include lawyers with less than 3 years of experience and they are looking at expanding it again to lawyers with under 5 years of experience soon.	2) Improve supports and guidance available at entry to the profession.

Initiative	Initiative-related recommendation(s) from Phase I
(i) Delivery and accreditation of continuing professional development (CPD) focused on wellness.	3) Improve the continuing professional development (CPD) of legal professionals.
(iii) Implementation of an open-door policy to encourage ongoing discussions, to help eliminate the stigma associated with mental health issues, and to promote wellness in general. As part of the bar admission program, trainees receive information and support regarding mental health awareness and wellness strategies. Shared strategies include the message that mental health is an important part of well-being, and that mental illness is no different from any other illness. They are encouraged to look out for and protect each other, and are given examples of situations that might indicate a problem that needs to be addressed.	5) Implement actions aimed at destigmatizing mental health issues in the legal profession; 8) Consider the health of legal professionals as integral to legal practice and the justice system.
(iv) Reimbursement of expenses incurred during parental or disability leave.	7) Promote diversity within the profession and review practices, policies and procedures that may include or create discriminatory biases.

1.6 TARGETED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH TEAM

Author: Prof. Nathalie Cadieux, Ph.D., CRHA

The Law Society of Prince Edward Island has implemented various initiatives to support the mental health of its members. Recognizing the unique challenges that legal professionals face, these efforts support the resilience of legal professionals and foster a culture in which psychological wellness is a top priority.

These initiatives are a source of inspiration and are paving the way towards the future of the profession in this province. The recommendations arising from Phase II of this national project have been developed with the following considerations in mind: (1) the results stemming from the priority themes analyzed; (2) the solutions put forward by Phase II participants in Prince Edward Island; (3) the identified initiatives that are currently being implemented by the Law Society of Prince Edward Island; and (4) the coverage rate of the various Phase I recommendations in relation to these initiatives. Three recommendations were made and are presented below.

RECOMMENDATION 1 EVALUATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ALTERNATIVE WORK ORGANIZATION MODELS THAT LIMIT THE IMPACT OF CERTAIN RISK FACTORS ON HEALTH

The results highlight the need for alternative approaches to work organization. Currently, many legal professionals and organizations continue to operate in silos, a system that limits the benefits of effective collaboration. Teamwork offers considerable advantages: it creates a peer support system, which is essential for mental health, while facilitating a more balanced workload distribution. For example, sharing emotionally demanding files can reduce the pressure on each individual and promote healthier stress management.

Structures based on billable hours also present specific challenges. They generate constant pressure on legal professionals to extend their working hours in order to maximize productivity at the cost of their wellness. This pressure causes an imbalance between legal professionals' work life and personal life, which, when combined with high workloads and emotional demands, exposes them to increased risks of burnout and exhaustion. For this reason, it is imperative to consider more sustainable working models. Furthermore, business models based on billable hours limit the amount of quality time available for mentorship activities, making it all the more important to consider alternative work models.

Changing how work is organized also involves alleviating the sense of isolation that many legal professionals feel; one way to accomplish this is to encourage collaboration methods that strengthen ties between colleagues and promote the sharing of productivity-enhancing tools. Creating work environments built on shared responsibility and mutual support would create a more balanced professional culture, where mutual help and collegiality are valued. This could also involve introducing flexible policies aimed at better reconciling work and personal life by offering alternatives such as hybrid telework, flexible working hours, or extra time off to meet family needs.

Such initiatives would not only benefit the health of individuals, but also positively transform the professional culture as a whole. Adopting these models would foster greater job satisfaction, increased commitment to the profession and, ultimately, positive outcomes for organizations, customers, and the public at large.

RECOMMENDATION 2
IMPROVE THE PREPARATION OF FUTURE LEGAL PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT THEM TO DEAL WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH ISSUES

The results obtained across a range of themes highlight the challenges that accompany the practice of law, particularly with regard to working conditions, work-life conflicts, and coping strategies for managing stress and maintaining a healthy emotional balance. Young legal professionals appear to be particularly vulnerable when they first enter the profession. On the one hand, they are less equipped than their more experienced counterparts to deal with the day-to-day stressors inherent in the practice of law. On the other hand, they are often simultaneously exposed to professional and personal pressures, such as the purchase of a first home, job insecurity, or having a child.

Universities and bar associations play an essential role in preparing the next generation of legal professionals. Academic curricula should incorporate cross-disciplinary skills such as time management, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence, all of which are crucial to the practice of law.

At the same time, efforts should be made to emphasize and promote the benefits of programs such as the Law Society Mentorship Pilot Program, which enables young legal professionals to benefit from mentoring. High-quality mentoring, present from the very first years of a young lawyer's career, is essential. They need to be able to count on solid support, be it through workplace mentoring, law society activities tailored to new members, or peer support committees. These initiatives are crucial not only to help protect their mental health, but also to help them acquire effective work methods that will benefit them throughout their careers.

Moreover, this type of support is likely to strengthen young legal professionals' affective commitment to the profession and ultimately increase their long-term loyalty and intention to remain in the profession throughout their career. Fostering an environment that supports and guides young lawyers from the very beginning of their career will help build a strong, resilient professional culture, one that is prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

RECOMMENDATION 3
IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORT RESOURCES AND
BREAK DOWN BARRIERS THAT LIMIT ACCESS TO THESE RESOURCES

Improving access to mental health resources is paramount for legal professionals working in Prince Edward Island. Despite increased awareness regarding mental health issues and initiatives such as open-door policies and training activities, barriers persist that prevent some legal professionals from seeking the help they need. The stigma associated with asking for help, the fear that it will harm their career, or simply a lack of knowledge about the resources at their disposal can prevent them from seeking support. This situation highlights the need to remove these barriers, while regularly renewing the message that it's healthy and important to reach out for help.

Normalizing conversations about mental health is extremely important. Creating a culture that encourages open, non-judgmental dialogue would enable legal professionals to express themselves more freely about the challenges they face, especially in a field as demanding as law. Law associations, law firms, and professional organizations should adopt non-discrimination policies towards those seeking support, emphasizing that mental health is a priority and that seeking help is not a sign of weakness. Organizations should also encourage senior counsel to openly discuss mental health challenges, including their own, where they're comfortable doing so. They need to model vulnerability for their subordinates to show that one can be a lawyer and a human being at the same time, even if they are top lawyers.

Secondly, awareness programs should be improved to better inform legal professionals of the resources at their disposal. Increasing the visibility of these programs and simplifying access to them will ultimately encourage their use. This could take the form of regular information sessions, webinars or partnerships with associations that specialize in mental health.

What's more, it's crucial to make services more affordable. For young legal professionals who often struggle with debt at the beginning of their careers, the cost of mental health services can be a deterrent. The inclusion of these services, or the enhancement of certain allowances, in the insurance programs offered by law firms or through bar associations could help reduce this barrier.

By addressing these barriers head-on, PEI's legal professionals could benefit from greater access to mental health resources, improving their overall wellness and creating a more resilient professional community.

1.7 SUPPORT RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR LEGAL PROFESSIONALS IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

EMERGENCY RESOURCES

Prince Edward Island Lawyer Assistance Program (24/7)
Phone: **1-800-663-1142** or **1-888-384-1152**

Canadian Mental Health Association General inquiries: **902-566-3034**

Island helpline. Toll-free (24/7): **1-800-218-2885**

PROGRAMS OR WEBSITES ON THE THEMES OF WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Prince Edward Island Lawyer Assistance Program [by [Homewood Health](#)]
- Wellness Together: Mental health and substance use Canada.
Phone: **1-866-585-0445**. Text message (SMS): WELLNESS to **741741**
[Online peer support for Addiction](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
Phone: **902-566-3034**. Email: division@cmha.pe.ca
- [PEI Alliance for Mental Well-Being \(Advancing resilience\)](#)
- [Bridge the gApp \(mental health program and services\)](#)
- [Medical Society of PEI](#)

SEE OTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE RESOURCES IN THE TOPICS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Government of Prince Edward Island - [Department of Health and Wellness](#)

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