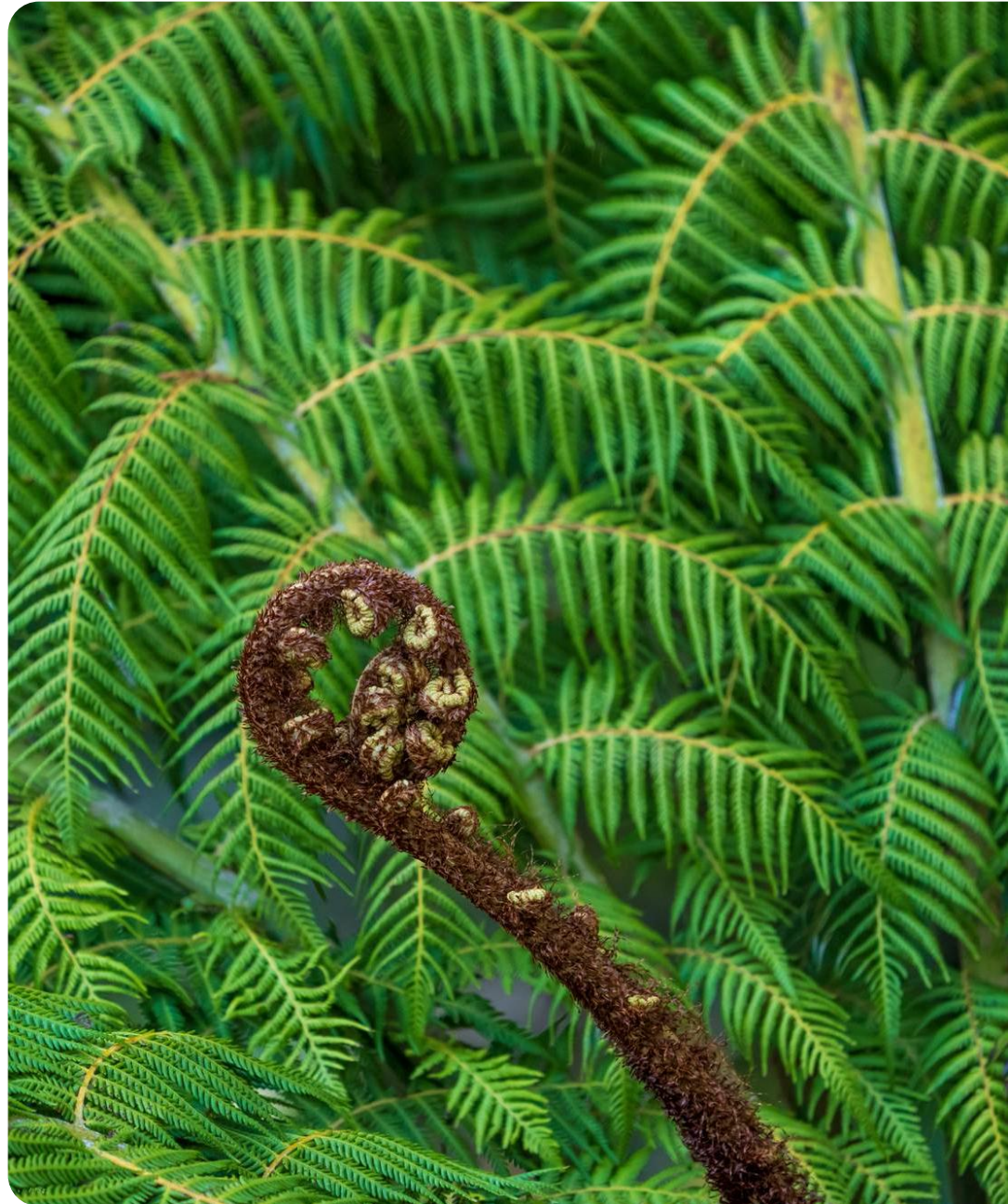


Insights report

Findings from survey and stakeholder engagement to
inform a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy for the
legal profession in Aotearoa New Zealand

Final Report



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Preface

This report has been prepared for the New Zealand Law Society (NZLS) by Jess Ashley and Kate Clark from MartinJenkins (Martin, Jenkins & Associates Ltd).

For over 30 years MartinJenkins has been a trusted adviser to clients in the government, private, and non-profit sectors in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. Our services include organisational performance, employment relations, financial and economic analysis, economic development, research and evaluation, data analytics, engagement, and public policy and regulatory systems.

We are recognised as experts in the business of government. We have worked for a wide range of public-sector organisations from both central and local government, and we also advise business and non-profit clients on engaging with government.

Kei te āwhina mātau ki te whakapai ake i a Aotearoa. We are a values-based organisation, driven by a clear purpose of helping make Aotearoa New Zealand a better place. Our firm is made up of people who are highly motivated to serve the New Zealand public, and to work on projects that make a difference.

Established in 1993, we are a privately owned New Zealand limited liability company, with offices in Wellington and Auckland. Our firm is governed by a Board made up of Executive Partners and Independent Directors. Our Independent Directors are Jenn Bestwick and Chair David Prentice. Our Executive Partners are Sarah Baddeley, Nick Carlaw, Allana Coulon, and Nick Davis.



About this report

This report draws on both survey findings and engagement with the profession to understand experiences of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and to identify opportunities for action.

Our approach

This report brings together findings from engagement to inform the development of a DEI strategy for the legal profession in Aotearoa New Zealand. The evidence base combines survey data with insights gathered through a series of interviews and workshops with the profession.

- **Profession-wide survey:** in March and April 2026, we undertook a profession-wide survey to understand experiences, perceptions and priorities. The survey received 528 responses. Survey respondent demographics are provided in Appendix one.
- **Interviews and workshops:** alongside the survey, a series of interviews and workshops with over 90 attendees were undertaken to explore issues in greater depth and to test emerging themes from the survey. These engagements brought together a broad range of participants from across the profession, including practitioners at different career stages, representatives of professional groups, people and culture leaders, in-house lawyers, and barristers. They generated detailed insights about challenges, opportunities and potential actions.

We also conducted a high-level desktop review of domestic and international DEI strategies to understand what already existed and was considered good practice.

How to read this report

The survey findings provide insight into the prevalence of views and experiences across the profession. Interviews and workshops help explain why these issues matter and how they are experienced in practice. Together they provide a richer understanding than either source alone.

Acknowledgments

MartinJenkins would like to thank the many individuals who generously gave their time and shared their experiences, perspectives and ideas as part of this research. Their openness and thoughtful reflections have provided valuable insight into how the profession is experienced today, and where there may be opportunities to strengthen inclusion, belonging and participation.

We would also like to thank the New Zealand Law Society and the External Advisory Group for their guidance, responsiveness, and collaborative approach throughout this work.



Executive summary

What we were asked to do

The NZLS commissioned MartinJenkins to conduct a survey, high-level desktop review of domestic and international DEI strategies, and a series of engagements to inform the development of a DEI strategy for the legal profession. This report focuses on bringing together the survey results and engagement with the profession to identify key challenges, opportunities and priorities for action.

The evidence shows broad support for creating a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable legal profession, but there is no shared view of the profession's current state. Survey findings and engagement highlighted significant differences in how inclusion is experienced across the profession, particularly for under-represented groups.

Key themes emerging from the research

Access to the profession is not experienced equally

Participants described how access to the profession is influenced by existing networks, familiarity with legal environments and the extent to which people can see themselves reflected in the profession. A lack of visible role models and

representation in senior positions was seen as reinforcing perceptions about who belongs and who succeeds. Participants highlighted the importance of outreach, broadening access to professional networks, and increasing visibility of the wide range of career pathways available within the profession as important enablers of change.

A sense of belonging, and feeling included and supported influence whether people stay and progress

Participants emphasised that retention and progression are shaped by whether people feel included, supported and able to succeed within the profession. Psychological safety, improving workplace culture, and mentoring and support networks were seen as critical to creating a sense of belonging, whereas bullying, harassment, stress and burnout were identified as factors that contribute to attrition. This is reflected in the survey, where belonging and feeling valued and supported emerged as two of the aspirations that resonated most strongly with respondents.

Experiences of inclusion differ significantly across the profession

While overall survey findings presented mixed perceptions of DEI within the profession, respondents from under-represented groups consistently reported more negative experiences

and perceptions than the profession overall. This indicates that barriers to inclusion are not experienced evenly across the profession, and that under-represented groups continue to face significant challenges.

The profession wants practical action, not aspiration alone

Most participants supported the intent of a DEI strategy but emphasised the need to move beyond aspiration to practical action. There was strong support for interventions that improve pathways into and through the profession, strengthen workplace culture, build capability, and provide practical tools that organisations can adapt to their own context.

Lasting change will require leadership and accountability

Participants emphasised that meaningful progress would depend on visible leadership and shared responsibility across the profession. There was strong support for better use of data, measurement and reporting to understand where barriers remain and to demonstrate progress over time. Participants also highlighted that responsibility for change should not sit with under-represented groups but be actively championed by leaders and supported through formal structures and commitments.



Insights from engagement



Access to the profession is shaped by existing networks, visibility, and representation

Representation helps people see what is possible

A consistent theme across the engagement was that access to the profession is not experienced equally. At the earliest stages of the career pipeline, participants described the legal profession as being narrow, exclusive, and better suited to people from certain backgrounds. While law was often seen as an attractive field of study, participants from under-represented groups noted that this did not always translate into confidence that they could build a successful career within the profession.

A recurring theme was the importance of seeing people with similar backgrounds, experiences, or identities in senior positions. The absence of visible role models was seen as reinforcing perceptions about who belongs and who succeeds in the profession. Participants emphasised that visibility matters not only because it signals what is possible, but also because it helps create mentoring, sponsorship and support opportunities for future generations of lawyers.

"People cannot aspire to what they cannot see." – Interview participant

Participants highlighted the importance of early outreach to change perceptions of the profession. While many participants noted that some firms and organisations are already undertaking outreach activities, like speaking at high-schools, there was a view that these efforts could be expanded to reach a broader range of communities.

Networks and familiarity create advantages

Early career lawyers described a strong perception that corporate law is the default or most valued pathway, and that other career options or pathways are far less visible. This limited perceptions of choice.

Access to the profession was also described as being strongly shaped by existing networks. Participants noted that recruitment often favoured candidates with family connections or familiarity with legal environments, disadvantaging first-generation lawyers and those without access to informal advice or guidance. This was reinforced by recruitment practices across both large and small firms, which were perceived to embed bias early in the process. Examples included perceptions of name-based screening

and limited interview opportunities for candidates from under-represented groups.

Participants also spoke about practical barriers including uncertainty regarding professional norms, such as what to wear to interviews or networking events, and the financial cost of suitable clothing. Clearer guidance, practical resources, and financial support, such as funding or vouchers for interview or work-appropriate clothing, were seen as ways to reduce these barriers.

Beyond practical barriers, participants identified a need for broader recognition of the value that people from different backgrounds and life experiences bring to legal work.

There was concern that traditional markers of merit place disproportionate weight on technical or academic criteria, while undervaluing capabilities such as communication, judgement, relationship-building, cultural competence and empathy. Participants noted that these soft skills are just as critical to effective legal practice and that technical skills can be developed over time with appropriate support.

Workplace culture and a sense of belonging influence whether people stay and progress

Early experiences shape long-term career decisions

Participants emphasised that retention and progression depend on the extent to which people feel included, supported and able to succeed once they enter the profession.

Experiences of workplace culture emerged as a significant factor shaping career decisions and long-term participation. Some participants described a range of early-career challenges, including bullying and harassment, excessive workloads, limited support, and a lack of psychological safety.

Many felt these experiences contributed directly to attrition, particularly among lawyers from under-represented groups. These participants also described feeling an additional burden of educating others about diversity and inclusion issues, as well as concerns about speaking up due to potential career consequences.

"The first few years are really horrible. No time to do anything else. Mentally exhausted." – Interview participant

"Many leave the profession within the first two to three years, often due to poor first job experiences." – Interview participant

Barriers to inclusion are ongoing

Challenges relating to inclusion and accessibility were not confined to the early stages of practice. Participants highlighted ongoing barriers associated with cultural inclusion, disability and access to appropriate workplace accommodations. There was a strong view that many workplaces still rely on individuals to advocate for their own needs rather than creating environments where support is embedded and readily available.

"Everyone should feel they have a place in the profession, with no discrimination based on background, gender, or identity." – Interview participant

Mentoring, support and connection help people stay and succeed

Across the engagement, inclusion was consistently described as extending beyond representation. Participants wanted a profession where people feel they belong. Support programmes, leadership programmes, mentoring and access to diverse role models were identified as important mechanisms for strengthening belonging and reducing attrition. However, participants also recognised

that meaningful mentoring requires time, investment and organisational commitment. There was concern about over-reliance on a small number of individuals from under-represented groups to provide mentoring and support.

Some participants felt organisations should take a more intentional approach to mentoring and sponsorship, focusing on creating meaningful connections, broadening professional networks and supporting progression throughout a legal career.

Regional and smaller firms face different challenges

Participants noted that experiences differ across regions and organisation types. Regional and smaller firms often face different challenges, with some examples raised including limited access to development opportunities and smaller peer and mentoring networks. At the same time, some participants noted these environments can provide broader exposure to work, stronger community connections and more direct access to senior lawyers.

"Geographic inclusion matters. Lawyers in smaller centres and remote areas can be excluded from professional conversations and opportunities." – Interview participant



Sustainable careers require greater flexibility

The engagement identified a strong desire for career pathways that can accommodate different life circumstances and career journeys.

Participants described traditional models of legal practice as no longer reflecting the diverse needs, experiences and aspirations of today's workforce.

Flexibility looks different across career stages

Flexibility emerged as a particularly significant issue during mid-career stages but was also discussed in relation to early-career development.

Participants recognised that the early years of practice are an important period for learning, relationship-building and professional development. Many felt that spending time in the workplace provides opportunities for observation, mentoring and informal learning that can be difficult to replicate remotely.

At the same time, participants emphasised that flexibility should not be viewed as incompatible with professional development. Rather, it should evolve across different career stages and recognise the varying needs of individuals over time.

Flexibility is a shared responsibility

While often discussed in relation to parental leave and caring responsibilities, participants highlighted that flexibility is important for a much broader range of circumstances, including disability, community commitments, career breaks and non-traditional career pathways. Flexibility was described as spanning location, style of work, number of hours worked and when those hours are worked, as well as access to appropriate technology and support to enable effective participation.

Participants generally viewed successful flexible working arrangements as requiring commitment from both employers and employees. Flexibility was seen as being supported by trust, clear expectations, good communication and appropriate technology, rather than simply being about working from home.

Some participants shared positive examples of organisations that had successfully implemented flexible ways of working while maintaining strong team cultures, professional development opportunities and client outcomes. In these environments, flexibility was often modelled by senior leaders, helping to normalise different ways

of working and signalling that career progression and leadership were compatible with flexible working arrangements. Participants noted that leadership behaviours played an important role in setting expectations and creating cultures where flexible work was viewed as a legitimate way of working rather than an exception to traditional practice.

Career breaks should not limit future opportunities

Participants raised concerns about the impact on progression opportunities of parental leave, career breaks and movement between sectors. Many described uncertainty about whether stepping away from traditional career pathways would affect future opportunities, remuneration, client relationships or advancement.

There was a view that progression models should better recognise non-linear career journeys and provide greater support for those re-entering the profession or taking alternative pathways.

Participants also highlighted the importance of creating sustainable careers that allow people to remain within the profession over the long term, rather than feeling forced to choose between career progression and other commitments.

The DEI strategy needs to be practical, compelling and capable of driving change

Ambition needs to be matched by action

Participants consistently supported a strategy that is bold and future focused, but also credible and grounded in the realities of the profession.

There was strong support for a strategy that clearly acknowledges existing issues, sets tangible priorities, and commits to practical action rather than aspiration alone. We also heard a desire to see clear goals, defined actions, and commitment of appropriate resources to build confidence that the strategy would deliver change over time.

There was also recognition that organisations are at different stages of maturity. Participants noted that firms vary considerably in size, capability, culture and challenges, meaning a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to succeed. Instead, participants supported the development of practical tools, guidance and frameworks that organisations can adapt to their own context, while still supporting a consistent direction of travel across the profession.

"What's missing is the guide that turns aspiration into action." – interview participant

The profession needs a compelling case for change

Participants emphasised the importance of clearly articulating why this work matters. While many supported the objectives of diversity, equity and inclusion, some noted that the language of "DEI" can be polarising.

There was support for a strategy that uses clear, values-based language and frames DEI initiatives around fairness, professionalism, legitimacy and the long-term sustainability of the profession. Participants emphasised the importance of clearly explaining why change is needed, including changing demographics, evolving workforce expectations, and the need to attract and retain future talent.

Many felt the strategy should acknowledge both the organisational and commercial benefits of diversity, including attracting and retaining talent, strengthening client relationships, and supporting a profession that reflects the communities it serves. Participants also wanted the strategy to lead with a people-first narrative focused on creating fair, respectful and effective workplaces.

Leadership will drive change

Participants emphasised that meaningful progress would require clear accountability and visible leadership, supported across the profession. While participants acknowledged that not everyone agrees there is a problem, or that some believe the profession has already gone too far on DEI, they were pragmatic that the strategy does not need to persuade everyone to be effective. Instead, there was agreement that change must be led by those with the authority and influence to drive it.

Participants highlighted the importance of partner and senior leadership buy-in, noting that strong signalling from leaders helps counter the perception that diversity and inclusion is a "nice to have."

Participants emphasised that progress would require active leadership. Senior leaders and partners were seen as critical in setting expectations, signalling priorities, and driving change across the profession. Participants also highlighted the importance of allyship, particularly from men in leadership positions, who were seen as having a key role in challenging behaviours and advocating for change.

Meaningful change requires accountability, evidence and capability

Research, data, and reporting

Participants emphasised the role of research and data in strengthening accountability and maintaining momentum over time. There was strong support for the use of meaningful metrics and reporting to track progress, particularly at key career stages.

"What gets measured gets done." – Interview participant

"If you don't measure it, then it won't happen." – Interview participant

Publishing diversity data was seen as one way to increase transparency and focus attention on where barriers remain. Participants emphasised that data was needed to better understand how experiences differ across groups and whether actions are leading to meaningful change. There was also a call for more research into why people leave the profession. Other gaps in available data were also identified, including under-reporting of disability status.

Participants cautioned that measures and reporting frameworks need to be carefully designed. Poorly designed targets risk encouraging tokenism or reinforcing perceptions that diversity initiatives undermine merit.

Education and capability building

Education and capability building were seen as important enablers of change. There was broad agreement that under-represented groups should not continue to shoulder the responsibility of educating others.

"Education is important here and empowering people on how to be a good ally." – Interview participant

Participants highlighted the need for greater understanding of unconscious bias, cultural competence and inclusive leadership across the profession. Views were mixed on whether training should be compulsory, with some participants supporting embedding this learning into existing structures, such as Continuing Professional Development requirements and established programmes like Stepping Up, to support consistency, uptake, and long-term capability.

Mixed views on Gender Equality Charter

Participants offered mixed views on the existing Gender Equality Charter. Some saw value in the Charter as a tool for signalling and commitment,

while others questioned whether it goes far enough to drive meaningful change. Concerns were raised about a lack of clarity around what success looks like and how progress is measured.

While there was no strong view that participation should be mandatory, participants emphasised that stronger accountability, clearer expectations, and greater transparency would be needed for initiatives such as the Charter to have sustained impact.

Insights from the survey



Survey respondents showed broad support for the proposed aspirations but highlighted areas for greater emphasis

While there was broad support for aspirations centred on belonging, fairness, wellbeing and accessible career pathways, respondents also highlighted several areas they felt were missing from the proposed vision for the profession.

- Survey respondents were asked which aspirational statements resonated most positively with them and why. 57 respondents (11.4%) indicated that none of the statements resonated with them, while 16 respondents (3.2%) indicated that all the statements resonated.
- The **most strongly supported aspirations related to belonging, fair and accessible career pathways, and feeling valued and supported within the profession.**
- Respondents wanted stronger recognition of **Te Tiriti o Waitangi** and the profession's obligations and responsibilities in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Many felt the discussion of diversity and inclusion should sit alongside a clear emphasis on **merit, professional competence and excellence**, rather than being seen as separate concepts.
- There were calls for more explicit recognition of **mental health, wellbeing and sustainable careers**, particularly given concerns about retention and long-term participation in the profession.
- Respondents wanted greater emphasis on **access to justice, client outcomes and service to communities**, with inclusion viewed as a means of improving outcomes beyond the profession itself.
- Some felt the aspirations did not adequately reflect the experiences of **disabled and neurodivergent lawyers**, while others highlighted the need to address workplace culture, bullying, integrity, ethics and structural barriers within professional pathways.
- A minority of respondents questioned whether diversity, equity and inclusion should be a strategic priority for the profession at all, illustrating the range of views that exist across the profession.

Appendix one (Table 1) presents the statements in order of how frequently they were cited, alongside some key themes as to why.

There were mixed views on the overall state of DEI within the profession

Survey responses indicated that there is no clear consensus on whether the profession is equitable, inclusive and safe. While some respondents viewed the profession positively, substantial neutral and negative responses indicate experiences and perceptions vary considerably.

- Respondents were asked to rate various statements about inclusion, equity, and safety in the legal profession using a five-point scale from *Always true* to *Never true*.
- **No statement attracted consistently strong agreement** across the profession. Even the most positively viewed statements showed a large neutral component.
- Statements relating to **cultural respect, belonging, and safety received higher positive responses** than those relating to hiring practices, career advancement, and pathways for under-represented groups.
- The **highest levels of negative response were concentrated around equitable pathways, fair hiring, and career advancement**.
- While some respondents rated the profession positively on not tolerating discrimination, a sizeable neutral and negative share suggests this is not a universally shared view.

Appendix one (Figure 1) presents the statements in order of how frequently they were cited, alongside some key themes as to why.

Experiences of inclusion differed significantly across groups within the profession

While overall survey results presented a mixed picture, respondents from under-represented groups consistently reported more negative experiences than the profession overall. This indicates that barriers to inclusion are not experienced evenly across the profession, and that under-represented groups continue to face significant challenges.

- Respondents were asked to assess whether “The legal profession is an equitable, inclusive, and safe place to work” for people from the following groups within the profession: Women, Māori, Pasifika, Asian, Other non-Pakeha, Individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- The results showed mixed views on whether the profession is equitable, inclusive and safe for different groups. While positive responses outweighed negative responses for some groups, including women and LGBTQIA+, disagreement was still substantial across all groups and was highest for individuals with disabilities.
- To understand how lived experience differs from broader perceptions, responses from individuals who identified as members of each group were compared with the responses of all other survey respondents, excluding members of that group from the comparison.
- The results showed that across all groups, **respondents who identify with the group being rated expressed consistently more negative perceptions than those that do not identify with the group.** The largest differences were seen for individuals with disabilities, women, and Pasifika respondents.
 - **Individuals with disabilities:** strong disagreement was much higher among respondents with a disability (42%) than respondents who did not identify as having a disability 16%.
 - **Women:** women were more likely to disagree (43% compared with 15% of respondents who did not identify as women), and much less likely to strongly agree (8% compared with 37%).
 - **Pasifika respondents:** strong disagreement was notably higher among Pasifika respondents (28%) than respondents who did not identify as Pasifika (8%).

Appendix one (Figure 2 and Table 2) shows how respondents rated the statement for each group and how perceptions differ when respondents identify with the group being rated.

Respondents identified structural barriers as the main drivers of unequal outcomes

Respondents pointed to leadership representation, career progression, hiring practices, pay equity, workplace culture and access to opportunities as key drivers of unequal outcomes.

- Respondents were asked what key gaps or weaknesses need to be addressed to enable the profession to better reflect the communities it serves and promote inclusive and equitable practices. 66% of respondents answered this question and several themes emerged from respondents' comments:
- **Leadership representation is seen as uneven**, with Māori, Pasifika, Asian and other minority groups under-represented in senior leadership and decision-making roles.
- **Access to the profession is shaped by socioeconomic background and networks**, with first-generation lawyers and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds facing significant barriers.
- **Bias in hiring, progression and promotion practices** continues to be seen as a barrier, with concerns that pathways often rely on informal networks and personal connections.
- **Workplace culture remains a concern**, with reports of bullying, harassment and hierarchical environments affecting inclusion, retention and progression.
- **Disability, neurodiversity and flexible career pathways** were identified as areas where support and accommodations remain insufficient.
- Respondents were also invited to comment on examples that they believe show the profession is doing well in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion. 52% of respondents answered this question.
- The most mentioned positive development was the increased representation of women in senior legal and judicial roles. Progress was also seen through more diverse judicial and leadership appointments, increasingly diverse graduate cohorts, and growing visibility of cultural, Māori and LGBTQIA+ initiatives across the profession.
- Respondents also mentioned and expressed support for internal organisational efforts within law firms and organisations, including DEI committees and the introduction of leadership, mentorship and sponsorship programmes.

Respondents supported capability building and practical tools to strengthen inclusion across the profession

Respondents placed the greatest value on practical interventions and capability building that help create more inclusive workplaces. Priorities focused on strengthening workplace culture, improving employment practices, and building capability to address barriers experienced by different groups across the profession.

- Respondents were asked to indicate the priority they place on developing new training and tools across eleven topic areas. Across all topics, most respondents rated these as either high or medium priority, indicating broad support for further investment.
- **Culture and people practices emerged as the strongest areas of focus**, with creating a culture of belonging and respect ranked a high priority by 55% of respondents. Other highly rated priorities included mentoring and sponsorship, unconscious bias and discrimination, and creating psychological safety.
- **Respondents also identified opportunities to strengthen equity within employment processes**, including recruitment, remuneration and progression. Equitable recruitment and hiring practices were rated a high priority by 41% of respondents.
- **Additional areas for capability building reflected a desire to address barriers experienced by specific groups**, for example:
 - greater understanding of, and better accommodation for individuals with a disability and neurodivergent individuals
 - training on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, tikanga Māori, and te ao Māori frameworks for legal practice
 - addressing workload, stress, and burnout as barriers to inclusion
 - improved understanding of trans, non-binary, and gender diverse individuals, and
 - leadership training on leading diverse teams.

Appendix one (Figure 3) shows how respondents prioritised the list of suggested training and tools.

Respondents supported practical action, stronger accountability and greater transparency

Respondents generally favoured practical actions that address barriers and improve opportunities across the profession. The strongest support was for initiatives that strengthen pathways, improve accountability, and increase transparency, alongside a preference for approaches that deliver measurable outcomes.

- Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for a range of strategies intended to encourage and strengthen DEI. Overall, most proposed strategies and actions attracted strong or moderate support, although levels of endorsement varied across initiatives.
- **The strongest support was for actions that strengthen pathways into and through the profession**, including diversifying the talent pipeline through encouragement of under-represented groups and creating mentorship and sponsorship programmes.
- **There was strong support for greater transparency and accountability**, including tracking and publicly reporting organisation-level diversity data, such as representation in senior leadership roles.
- **Views on a profession-wide charter were relatively evenly split**, with around half of respondents in support and nearly half expressing concerns or opposition. If a charter approach is pursued, respondents highlighted several factors that would need careful consideration, including:
 - ensuring it drives meaningful change rather than becoming a symbolic commitment
 - providing flexibility for firms of different sizes and capabilities, and
 - clearly demonstrating how participation would lead to improved outcomes and accountability, rather than creating additional compliance requirements without clear benefit.
- Additional strategies and tools suggested by respondents included earlier outreach to schools and under-represented communities, genuine and visible commitment from senior leaders, and greater support for flexible and non-linear career journeys.

Appendix one ([Figure 4](#)) shows how respondents rated the list of suggested strategies and actions.

Appendix one



Survey respondent demographics

Survey respondents represented a diverse mix of genders, ethnicities, identities, career stages, organisation types and geographic locations across Aotearoa New Zealand.

528 responses to the survey were received.

- **Gender:** Over half of the respondents that answered this question identified as female (62%) and 34% identified as male. A small proportion (2%) identified as non-binary or transgender.
- **Ethnicity:** Sixty percent of respondents identified as New Zealand European. All other ethnic groups, including Māori, were represented at less than 10% each. Respondents were able to select more than one ethnicity, and ethnicity results are therefore reported on a total-response basis.
- **Disability status:** Fifteen percent of respondents identified as an individual with a disability, 85% did not.
- **Sexual orientation:** Fourteen percent of respondents identified as LGBTQIA+, 86% of respondents did not.
- **Post qualification experience (PQE):** Participation was spread evenly across most career stages at around 8 to 11% per band. Very early career practitioners (less than one year PQE) and very senior practitioners (over 36 years PQE) accounted for smaller shares, between 3% and 6%.
- **Organisation type:** Law firms made up the largest group of respondents, led by small firms with 1 to 4 partners or directors (25%). This was followed by mid-sized firms combined (11%) and then larger firms with more than 20 partners (9%). Other well-represented organisation types included barristers sole or chambers (17%) and central government agencies (15%).
- **Current role:** Responses were concentrated in practitioner roles, with the largest groups including law firm employees (25%), law firm partners or directors (23%), in house lawyers (21%), and barristers (17%).
- **Geographic location:** The largest proportion of respondents were based in Auckland (32%), followed by Wellington (26%) and Canterbury (9%). All other geographic locations were represented at less than 5% each.

Note: Demographic results are based on respondents who answered each demographic question. Response rates varied across questions, with a notable proportion choosing not to respond.

Extent to which aspirational statements resonated with survey respondents

Survey respondents were asked which aspirational statements resonated most positively with them and why. Table 1 presents the statements in order of how frequently they were cited. Respondents were able to reference more than one statement. 57 respondents (11.4%) indicated that none of the statements resonated with them, while 16 respondents (3.2%) indicated that all the statements resonated.

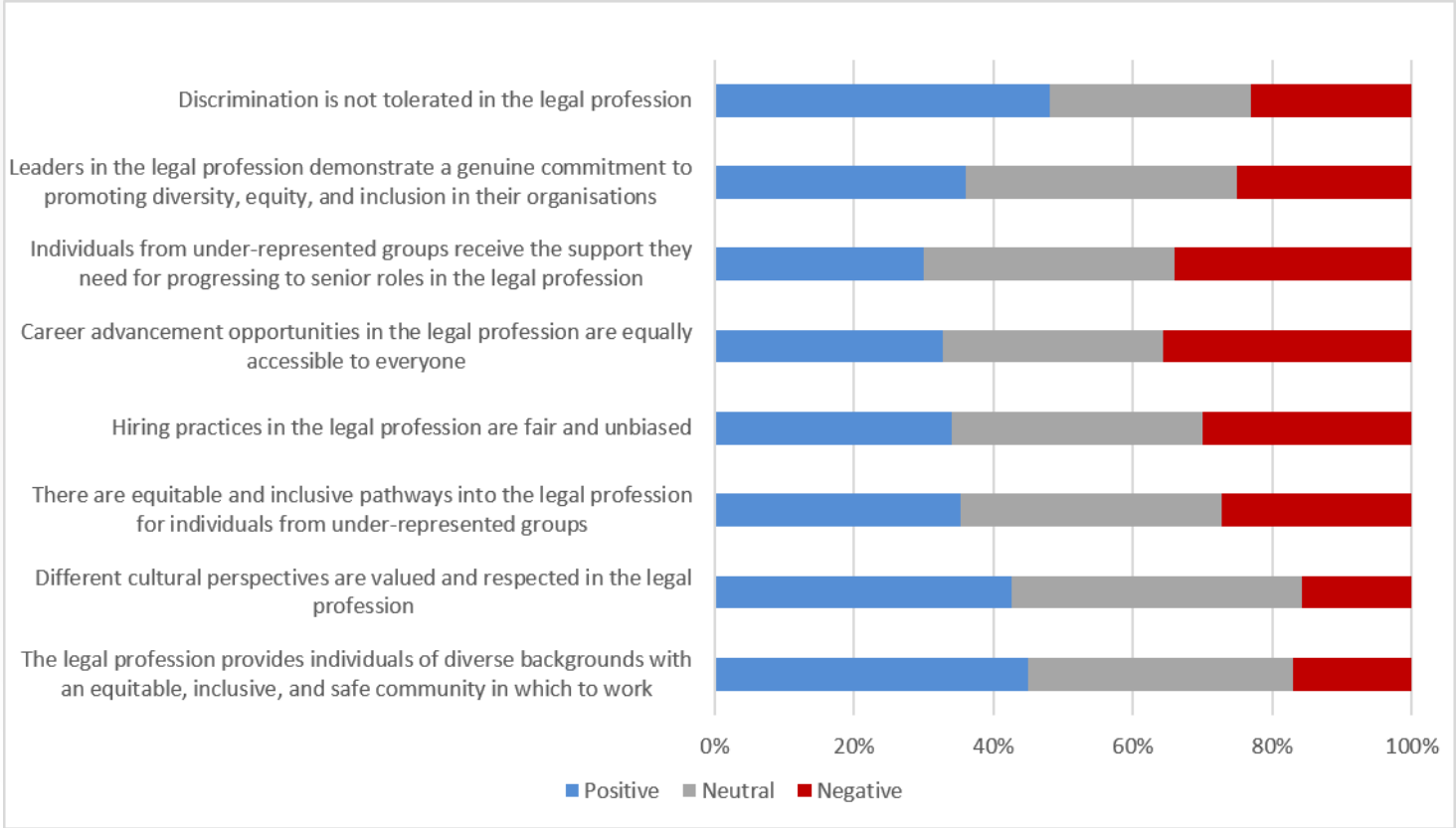
Table 1: Proportion of survey respondents that indicated an aspirational statement resonates

#	Statement	Percentage cited	Key themes in accompanying comments
1	People from all types of backgrounds see a place for themselves in the legal profession and feel like they belong	19.3%	• Sense of belonging • Representation at senior levels
2	There are fair, flexible and accessible ways to enter, progress within, and re-enter the profession	19.1%	• Personal experience • Career flexibility • Opportunities for juniors
3	All members of the legal profession feel valued, heard, and supported in their work	12.7%	• Psychological safety • Wellbeing • Holistic support
4	The makeup of the legal profession reflects the demographics of the country	12.4%	• Representation • Ability to serve community • Legitimacy of justice system • Role models
5	Hiring, promotion, and compensation practices are equitable and free from bias or discrimination	9.2%	• Equal opportunity • Merit-based advancement
6	Incidences of workplace discrimination are extremely rare	5.2%	Insufficient comment provided

How respondents rated statements about the legal profession

Respondents were asked to rate various statements about inclusion, equity, and safety in the legal profession using a five-point scale from *Always true* to *Never true*. For reporting purposes, responses were consolidated into three categories, positive (*Always true* and *Usually true*), neutral, and negative (*Rarely true* and *Never true*). This approach simplifies interpretation and highlights broad patterns in sentiment across the survey while retaining the distinction between positive, neutral, and negative perceptions.

Figure 1: How respondents rated statements about the legal profession



How perceptions differ across groups within the profession

Respondents were asked to assess whether the legal profession is an equitable, inclusive, and safe place to work for people from different groups within the profession (**Figure 2**). To understand how lived experience differed from broader perceptions, responses from individuals who identified as members of each group were compared with the responses of all other survey respondents, excluding members of that group from the comparison (**Table 2**).

Figure 2: Extent to which respondents agree with the statement *The legal profession is an equitable, inclusive and safe place to work for those in the profession who are....*

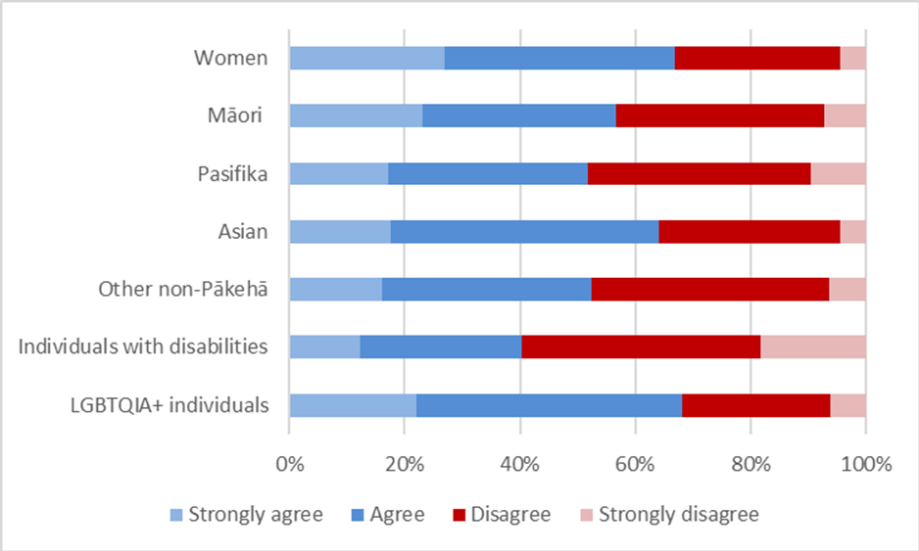


Table 2: How perceptions differ when respondents identify with the group

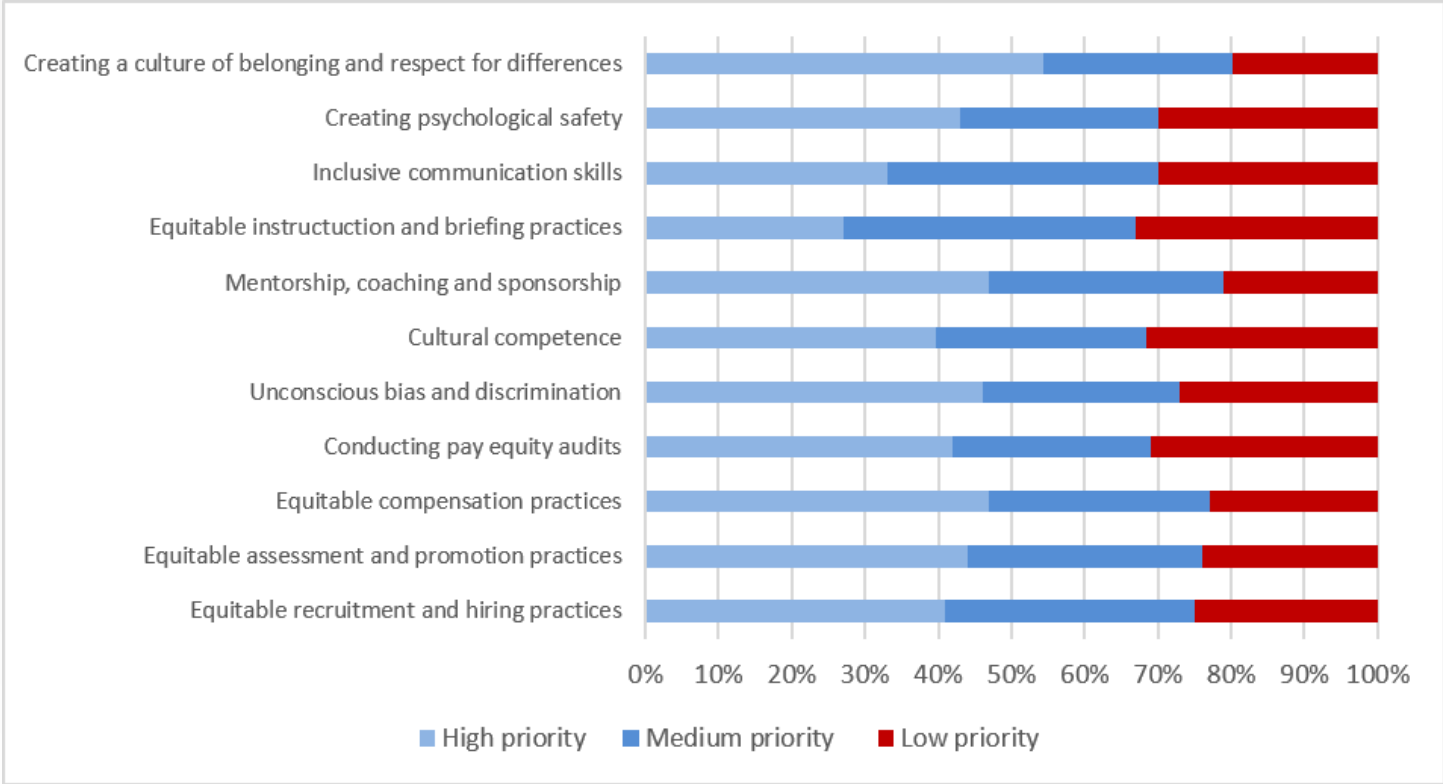
Group respondents identify with	Key differences when compared with survey respondents that do not identify with the group
Women	Women were far more likely to disagree with the statement (43% vs 15%) and much less likely to strongly agree (8% vs 37%).
Māori	Māori respondents showed higher disagreement with the statement overall (47% vs 35%), with over double the rate of strong disagreement (16% vs 6%) and substantially lower agreement.
Pasifika	Pasifika respondents rated the statement more negative overall, with 44% disagreeing (vs 38%) and a very high rate of strong disagreement (28% vs 8%).
Asian	Only 2% strongly agreed with the statement (vs 19%), while nearly half disagreed (49% vs 30%).
Individuals with disabilities	Strong disagreement was markedly higher for respondents with a disability (42% vs 16%).
LGBTQIA+ individuals	Higher disagreement (39% vs 29%) and strong disagreement (13% vs 6%) compared to respondents that did not identify as LGBTQIA+.



How respondents prioritised training and tools

Respondents were asked to indicate the priority they place on developing new training and tools across eleven topic areas. Across all topics, most respondents rated these as either *High priority* or *Medium priority*, indicating broad support for further investment.

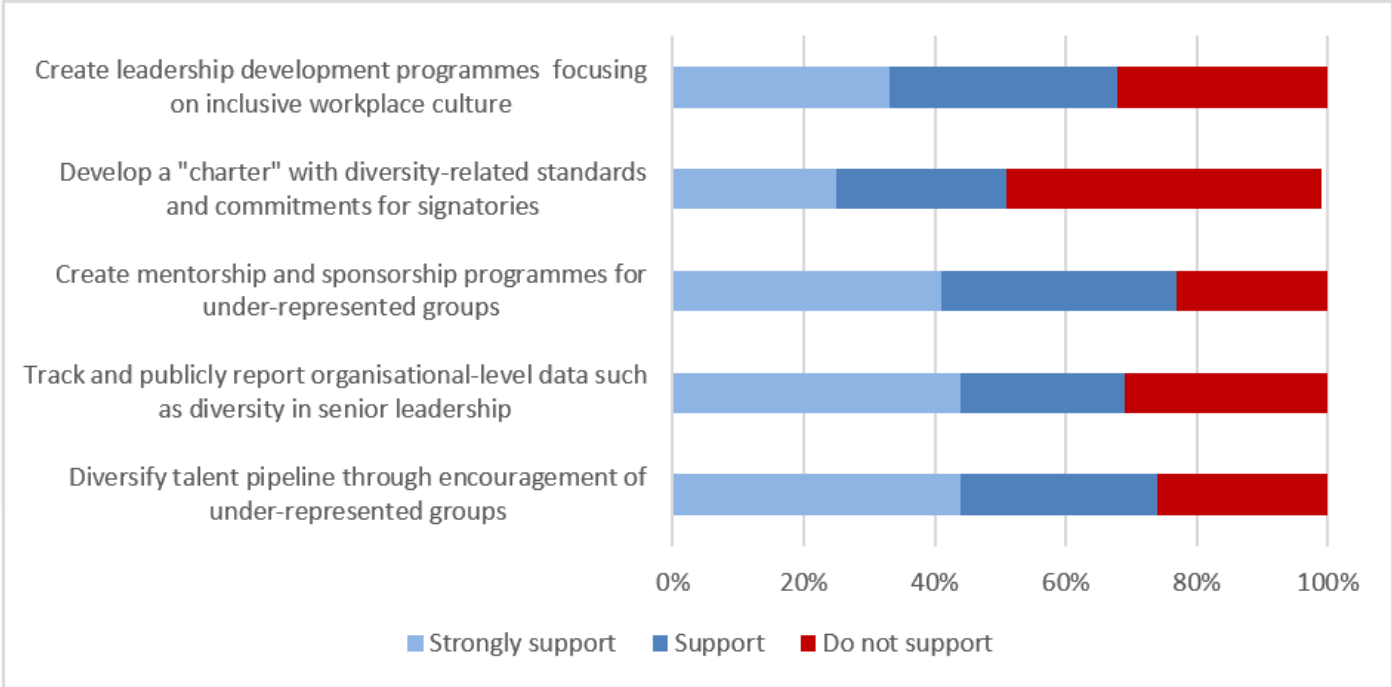
Figure 3: How respondents prioritised suggested training and tools



How respondents rated suggested strategies and actions

Respondents were asked about their level of support for a range of potential strategies and actions. Overall, most proposed actions attract *Strong support* or *Moderate support*, although levels of endorsement vary across initiatives.

Figure 4: How respondents rated suggested strategies and actions





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