# Lawyers face gender gap and cognitive risks as AI reshapes work-life balance



The rising integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the legal profession presents both opportunities and challenges, necessitating careful consideration of how it impacts lawyers' work-life balance. While AI tools promise enhanced efficiency and productivity, the potential for over-reliance poses significant risks to critical thinking skills among legal professionals.

Recent discussions highlight a critical dichotomy: lawyers must navigate the delicate balance between dependence on AI and the need for their own cognitive engagement. In a landscape where increased tech adoption is evident, a study from Berkeley Law revealed that only 21% of lawyers actively utilise AI. Furthermore, it noted a striking disparity in adoption rates between genders, with male attorneys reportedly embracing AI at three times the rate of their female counterparts. However, when provided equal access to advanced AI tools such as ChatGPT-4, both genders demonstrated equal increases in productivity, indicating a potential path to closing the gap. Many attorneys, nonetheless, express concerns regarding the accuracy of AI outputs, underscoring the need for careful verification.

The concept of an "AI-work-life balance" emerges as lawyers are encouraged to adopt AI tools judiciously. AI can enhance workflows by executing mundane tasks, allowing lawyers to redirect their focus towards more strategic and creative aspects of their work. For instance, automated document reviews and initial case law research can free up time. Yet, as highlighted by industry experts, such as Joel Hron from Thomson Reuters, the risk of cognitive laziness becomes apparent when reliance on AI stifles independent problem-solving skills.

Moreover, a study conducted by Microsoft offers further insights into this phenomenon. Findings revealed that dependencies on AI tools could diminish critical thinking and lead to a gradual decline in essential skills among users. Cognitive offloading, a term used in the study, refers to the tendency of users to rely on AI for tasks they feel less confident in tackling independently. To avoid this slippery slope, the legal field calls for a mindful approach where lawyers discern specific tasks that can be delegated to AI and those that should remain firmly in their control.

The advantages of AI for improving work-life balance are not merely theoretical. Incorporating AI tools can streamline operations, mitigate the hours spent on tedious tasks, and ultimately increase job satisfaction. Effective AI integration in legal workflows goes beyond straightforward automation; it requires lawyers to engage with their work critically and develop a symbiotic relationship with technology. By treating AI as a collaborative partner—akin to a well-trained assistant—lawyers can elevate their practice. AI should enhance, rather than replace, the nuanced judgment and strategic thinking that only trained professionals can offer.

Additionally, strategies for achieving a harmonious balance between AI use and personal well-being are indeed viable. Proactive measures, including setting boundaries and prioritising self-care strategies, can prevent burnout—a prevalent issue in the legal field exacerbated by increasing workloads and stresses. Research indicates that 85% of legal professionals in Singapore reported risks of burnout, underscoring the vital need for a supportive environment enhanced by AI, rather than overshadowed by it.

While the prospect of AI streamlining operations is enticing, it is essential that legal professionals maintain a healthy scepticism towards its outputs, ensuring diligent verification of any AI-generated content. The automation of routine tasks should not come at the cost of critical engagement; instead, it should catalyse a more profound connection to one's legal practices.

Ultimately, the path forward lies in leveraging the transformative power of AI while safeguarding the foundational skills that define the legal profession. The balance between efficiency and critical thinking is not merely aspirational; it is imperative for the future of the legal field. As lawyers embrace this dual role—engaged practitioners equipped with cutting-edge tools—they are tasked with redefining what it means to practice law in the AI era.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/blog/ai-work-life-balance/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/legal/transactional/ai-can-narrow-justice-gap-women-lawyers-slower-adopt-it-berkeley-study-shows-2024-03-21/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/legal/transactional/ai-can-narrow-justice-gap-women-lawyers-slower-adopt-it-berkeley-study-shows-2024-03-21/), [[3]](https://www.americanbar.org/content/aba-cms-dotorg/en/groups/law_practice/resources/law-technology-today/2025/responsible-ai-use-in-attorney-well-being/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.dol.gov/general/AI-Principles), [[5]](https://lawgazette.com.sg/practice/practice-support/ai-will-it-help-or-hinder-our-work-life-balance/), [[6]](https://edrm.net/2023/10/maximizing-efficiency-and-work-life-balance-in-the-ai-era-strategies-for-lawyers/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/corporates/lawyers-ai-time-savings/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://lawgazette.com.sg/practice/practice-support/ai-will-it-help-or-hinder-our-work-life-balance/), [[6]](https://edrm.net/2023/10/maximizing-efficiency-and-work-life-balance-in-the-ai-era-strategies-for-lawyers/), [[3]](https://www.americanbar.org/content/aba-cms-dotorg/en/groups/law_practice/resources/law-technology-today/2025/responsible-ai-use-in-attorney-well-being/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/blog/ai-work-life-balance/), [[3]](https://www.americanbar.org/content/aba-cms-dotorg/en/groups/law_practice/resources/law-technology-today/2025/responsible-ai-use-in-attorney-well-being/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/blog/ai-work-life-balance/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/legal/transactional/ai-can-narrow-justice-gap-women-lawyers-slower-adopt-it-berkeley-study-shows-2024-03-21/> - A study by Berkeley Law indicates that artificial intelligence (AI) can significantly enhance access to justice for low-income Americans by improving the productivity of legal aid attorneys. Despite these benefits, only 21% of attorneys used AI, with men adopting it three times more than women. However, this usage gap disappeared when both genders received access to AI tools like ChatGPT-4, CoCounsel, and Gavel. The majority of attorneys saw increased productivity and intended to continue using AI, albeit with concerns over accuracy, privacy, and the necessity of verifying AI-generated work. To maximise AI's benefits, the report suggests making the technology affordable and providing support, particularly for female attorneys.
3. <https://www.americanbar.org/content/aba-cms-dotorg/en/groups/law_practice/resources/law-technology-today/2025/responsible-ai-use-in-attorney-well-being/> - Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is one of the biggest challenges in the legal profession. AI-driven productivity tools can help attorneys establish better routines and prevent burnout by analysing work habits and suggesting smarter ways to manage time. These recommendations include automated scheduling assistants that suggest optimal times for deep work, breaks, and relaxation, as well as wearable devices like Fitbit and Apple Watch that monitor stress levels and provide reminders for movement, hydration, or mindfulness exercises. By offering data-driven insights and proactive strategies, AI enables legal professionals to set boundaries, maintain efficiency, and improve long-term well-being.
4. <https://www.dol.gov/general/AI-Principles> - Advancements in artificial intelligence are the product of human innovation, not the inevitable outcome of some mechanical process. So, too, will human agency determine how AI is used, for whose benefit, and to what ends. We should imagine a world where the human creativity that fuels AI is applied to make life better for working people and where AI is deployed in the workplace to improve the quality of jobs so that they are safer, more fulfilling, and more rewarding. This approach could introduce AI to the workplace in ways that would combat poverty, increase support for workers and their families, and expand worker autonomy. And AI-powered tools could amplify workers' voice in the workplace, including through their right to organise. In short, we should think of AI as a potentially powerful technology for worker well-being, and we should harness our collective human talents to design and use AI with workers as its beneficiaries, not as obstacles to innovation. AI's promise of a better world cannot be fulfilled without making it a better world for workers.
5. <https://lawgazette.com.sg/practice/practice-support/ai-will-it-help-or-hinder-our-work-life-balance/> - AI has been a hot topic and will continue to be so. However, a topic which has not been as deeply explored is the potential for AI to alter and improve lawyers’ work life balance. The pandemic, coupled with the stresses and strains of everyday life has created significant mental health issues, particularly in the high-stress profession of law. “Burnout” became one of the pandemic’s buzz words, with research from Mercer revealing that 85% of Singapore-based employees admitted they feel at risk of burnout. An improved work life balance seems to be the answer to ease stress and burnout – particularly amongst lawyers at the beginning of their careers. For example, a survey conducted by ALB revealed that, among lawyers with less than 10 years of PQE across Asia, nearly 73% of respondents cited “work life balance” as an important factor when choosing their current position. Commenting on this survey, Lyndon Choo, a counsel at Singapore-based Providence Law Asia, said “Work life balance is critical to allow lawyers to achieve their non-work-related priorities (be it to build a family or for further studies). This is often attributed to a pervasive culture of long working hours and an expectation to be constantly checking and responding to emails.
6. <https://edrm.net/2023/10/maximizing-efficiency-and-work-life-balance-in-the-ai-era-strategies-for-lawyers/> - By implementing these measures, lawyers can harness the benefits of AI without sacrificing their well-being or the quality of their legal work. The key is being proactive about setting expectations and protecting your time. Make sure increased efficiency translates to better work-life balance for you rather than simply doing more in the same amount of time. It is a delicate balance, but with proper planning, lawyers can use AI as a tool to enhance their practice rather than letting it dictate their work pace. Make GAI a blessing rather than yet another burden on your professional life.
7. <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/corporates/lawyers-ai-time-savings/> - For in-house lawyers, AI can function as the equivalent of adding to the team, but also creates time for better training and work-life balance. I recently posed the hypothetical question, “If lawyers had all the time in the world, what would they do with it?” The list of potential options or desires for in-house lawyers may be different, but it is equally impactful in its own way. At the outset, let’s quantify the potential time we’re talking about. According to the recently published Future of Professionals report from Thomson Reuters, the lawyers surveyed thought that the benefits of using artificial intelligence (AI) in their workflows could save them an average of 4 hours per week, or roughly 200 hours per year. For in-house counsel, operating under constant pressure to do more with less, this presents a rare opportunity for them to actually get more of something.