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Document Version

Final published version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Hodgkinson, G. P., Gulati, S., James, A., Nokes, K., & Kununka, S. (2023). Solicitors' attitudes toward lawtech adoption: Summary of findings and implications for the legal sector. The Law Society.
<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/research/read-our-new-report-on-attitudes-towards-lawtech-adoption>

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Solicitors' attitudes toward lawtech adoption: Summary of findings and implications for the legal sector

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June 2023

Suggested citation: Hodgkinson, G. P., Gulati, S., Nokes, K., James, A.D., & Kununka, S. (2023). Solicitors' attitudes toward lawtech adoption: Summary of findings and implications for the legal sector. London: The Law Society.

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ISBN: 978-1-78446-245-1

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Background

The adoption of digital technologies and related advances in artificial intelligence in the delivery of legal services is an issue that has rightly been a major focus of attention over the past decade, given the potential of these developments to fundamentally transform how the sector operates in respect of all aspects of its work.

However, the rate and character of adoption of any new technology is fraught with uncertainty. The displacement of traditional ways of working and the accompanying shift of mind-set needed to fully embrace the potential opportunities that a new technology can offer presents significant behavioural challenges. Hence, **the adoption of legal technologies poses some highly important unanswered questions** regarding the attitudes and behaviour of legal services professionals toward them.

Addressing this shortfall, this report summarises the findings of a **representative, cross-sectional survey of the attitudes and beliefs of 656 solicitors in England and Wales** concerning the adoption of lawtech.

The study, which was conducted online during February and March 2023, examined **participants' perceptions of the nature and extent of lawtech adoption, their attitudes and beliefs towards lawtech, and the extent of their current and intended future usage of lawtech.** While the data were gathered in collaboration with The Law Society, the study was conceived and otherwise run independently by the authors of this report, a team of academic researchers based at the University and Manchester and University College London.

Key findings of the study

- The adoption of lawtech remains relatively limited and is driven by two principal motives:
 - 1) **Improving the quality of legal services delivery**
 - 2) **Improving the efficacy of legal services delivery**
- There was an **indifference toward technological advancement** among many legal professionals and a lack of confidence in their ability to engage and experiment with lawtech.
- Although legal professionals saw the positive benefits of organizational adoption of lawtech in terms of increasing productivity, as shown in the chart on the next page, they were generally less convinced of the benefits to them personally.
- Perceptions of managerial and organizational support for lawtech adoption were negative or at best neutral.
- Participants had **mixed perceptions as to whether top managers considered lawtech a strategic priority** and therefore worthy of investment and other forms of support.

- **Similarly, perceptions of client satisfaction with lawtech provision were mixed.** Almost half of the sample judged it to be fair to middling, with few respondents reporting that their clients are either very satisfied or very dissatisfied.
- Over half of the respondents reported using some type of lawtech at least weekly, although more than one third of the sample said that they didn't use lawtech at all or used it infrequently.

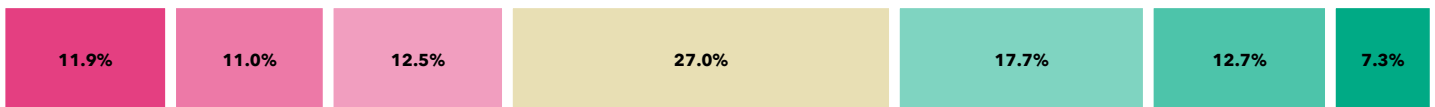


More than half of the respondents (**60.9%**) said that they intended to **use lawtech more frequently in the next five years.**

32.3% of respondents said that they used lawtech daily.

Perceptions of managerial and organizational support for lawtech adoption

In general, my organization has supported me in my use of lawtech

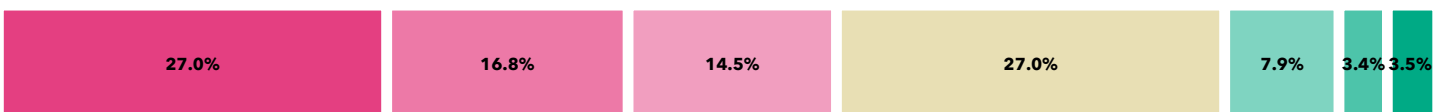


The senior management of my organization has been helpful in the use of lawtech



Perceived usefulness of lawtech to professional efficiency and effectiveness and personal recognition and reward

If I use lawtech, I will increase my chances of getting promoted



Using lawtech increases my productivity



14.6% strongly agree that lawtech is useful in their job.

14.2% strongly agree using lawtech enables them to accomplish tasks more quickly.

However, **25.9%** strongly disagree that by using lawtech, it will increase their chances of getting a pay rise.

Implications for lawtech adoption by the legal sector

These findings suggest a number of important actions for enabling the potential of lawtech to be realised throughout the legal services sector:

- ✓ The role of **senior leadership is critical** to the effective adoption of virtually any innovation and, reflecting this reality, the senior leaders of firms need to provide greater direction and momentum to lawtech initiatives.
- ✓ **Organizational encouragement and support** for lawtech need to be improved markedly, particularly in the form of tangible and symbolic support on the part of senior managers.
- ✓ A strong business case is necessary but not sufficient for the adoption of lawtech. Senior leaders need to pay attention to the **development of a compelling case for the personal benefits** of adoption for legal professionals.
- ✓ Organizational decision makers must ensure that the **necessary resources are available** to support the adoption of lawtech, not least mechanisms to provide technical service support to staff engaging with new technologies.

In sum **the present study shows a strong recognition among legal professionals of the potential of lawtech**. At the same time, it **highlights** some of the **behavioural challenges that still need to be overcome**, if lawtech is to be adopted widely and effectively.

Acknowledgements

This report was written by Gerard P. Hodgkinson, Siddharth Gulati, Karen Nokes, and Andrew D. James, with the assistance of Sophia Kununka. The study was supported by funding from the University of Manchester Law & Technology Initiative, a collaboration between the University and several legal services organizations.

The authors are grateful to The Law Society research team, in particular, Steve King for review at the design and reporting stages, support in operationalising the survey, and editing of the final report. They are also grateful to Patrice Neita of the Law Society for her assistance in the pilot stages of the study. The views expressed are those of the research team, which are entirely independent, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding body or the Law Society.

Contributors' Biographies

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At the commencement of the work outlined in this report, Dr Sophia Kununka was based at the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research, where she was employed over a two-year period from October 2019-June 2022 as a member of the research team, in which capacity she assisted in the conceptualization and development of the reported study and in the development and pilot testing of the survey instrument.

Steve King is Head of Research and Insight, and Patrice Neita is Insight Manager, working in the Futures and Insight department, at The Law Society.

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