

What Does It Mean to Be a Woman in Law? Lawmatics Customers Answer

Article By:

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According to the American Bar Association's 2022 Profile of the Legal Profession, just 38% of lawyers and 30% of judges in the United States are women. While that portion has been climbing steadily over decades, law is still a male-dominated industry.

That's why we wanted to take Women's History Month as an opportunity to ask our female-identifying customers what being a woman in law means to them. Here are some of their responses.

What does it mean to you to be a woman in law?

“Being a woman in law means I can continue the legacy of women that have gone before me to fight for the rights of the oppressed, help those who would otherwise not afford help, and better society.”

— **Anonymous**

“It means that I am a leader. I'm showing my daughters that gender and social expectations do not need to limit our dreams.”

— **Anonymous**

“It's empowering. It is an opportunity to uplift voices historically excluded from the legal and policy realm. It is an opportunity to challenge patriarchal systems of privilege, hierarchy, ownership, dominance, and exclusion.”

— **Mara Yarbrough, Staff Attorney, New Mexico Environmental Law Center**

“To be a woman in law means to be a woman of power and responsibility.

Being a woman in law means being consistently under-estimated and having to work harder than your male colleagues to be heard and respected. Women are expected to be nice, polite and reasonable. If we behave assertively or with confidence, we are labeled “aggressive” or worse. A man can interrupt a woman without notice or regard, but when a woman interrupts a man during the same conversation, it rarely goes unnoticed or unchastised.

Being underestimated (and often over-criticized) is a strength. We yield power through bias. When we get fierce it’s shocking. When we call out bad behavior, it’s even more so.

We have the power to make change. We have the responsibility to step up and speak out. We have a responsibility to create change and opportunities for the next generation of women and men.”

— **Kristen Prinz, Founder & Managing Partner, The Prinz Law Firm**

“Those statistics are interesting to me because I do see that the industry is still male dominated, but [it’s] so much better than 20 or 30 years ago, so there is progress. I have been practicing so long that it feels natural to practice law as a woman, but I still run into male lawyers who want to dominate the conversation, act aggressive, and treat me differently. Clients and judges too. Not so long ago, I had a woman tell me that she wouldn’t want to work at my firm because she just doesn’t want a female boss.”

— **Sharon Pratt, President, Pratt & Associates, APC**

“For me as an owner, it has provided me with financial security and the ability to handle a variety of situations and not feel undervalued or minimized.”

— **Anonymous**

“Strong, focused, resilient and determined to succeed against all odds in a male-dominated profession.”

— **Anonymous**

“It can feel like a powerful position, but it is clearly a field run primarily by men.”

— **Anonymous**

Have you been mentored by a woman in the legal industry? What qualities of theirs have stayed with you?

“The key qualities I've retained from my mentors are: 1) Be authentic and speak your mind; 2) honor your plan; 3) you are doing the best you can with what you have; 4) you are doing enough; 5) you are enough!”

— **Jeanette Mora, Attorney, Family First Firm**

“Qualities that have been very important to me and that I continue to apply in my daily life are: never compare myself with others, we all have different purposes and different rhythms. To have discipline, since in life everything is achieved based on determination, perseverance and work. To transmit confidence, both to my clients and to my work team. To trust in my skills and knowledge and never let anyone else question them; and finally, to always keep myself updated because we live in a changing world that is evolving faster and faster.”

— **Melissa Zúñiga de la Fuente, Legal Marketing Consultant, Gericó Associates**

“Hard work, intelligence, and focus.”

— **Anonymous**

“Compassion, patience”

— **Anonymous**

“Very early in my career I was told by one of the female partners, in training me how to take a deposition, not to be so "ladylike", which was good advice at the time because I was raised to be polite and unassuming, which is not the best demeanor for a deposition, especially when you are young. These days I practice with a lot more confidence and hardly think about whether someone is male or female. I think more about whether they are good at what they

do. When I am mentoring younger females, I want them to know that it is all about confidence.”

— **Sharon Pratt, President, Pratt & Associates, APC**

“The recognition that I have skills to share in legal areas that others may not.”

— **Nadine Atkinson-Flowers, Attorney, Law Office of Nadine Atkinson-Flowers**

“I have been supported and sponsored by so many women in the legal industry. Their tenacity, strength, humor, and friendship have stayed with me.”

— **Kristine Palkowetz, Marketing Director, C. Todd Smith Law**

“Perseverance, strength, motivation, kindness, intelligence, respect.”

— **Mara Yarbrough, Staff Attorney, New Mexico Environmental Law Center**

Have you been mentored by a woman in the legal industry? What qualities of theirs have stayed with you?

“If you're interested in law, the best thing you can do is to start. Take an internship, apply, or start a class. Most importantly, just start!”

— **Kristine Palkowetz, Marketing Director, C. Todd Smith Law**

“Value your time.”

— **Anonymous**

“I wholeheartedly feel that I am impacting lives one at a time as I work with my clients. In the end, that is what it is all about.”

— **Jeanette Mora, Attorney, Family First Firm**

“Shortly after I was hired at a firm years ago, I found out that a man with less experience and credentials than me had been offered a higher starting salary. He didn’t negotiate a higher starting salary. He negotiated from a higher starting point than offered to me. When I approached the male hiring partner and asked why my male colleague was offered a higher starting salary, he told me it was “because men won’t take as little as women.”

Too often, he has been proven correct. Women undervalue our own contributions because we want to be nice, polite and reasonable. Instead, let’s be bold. Let’s be aggressive. Let’s be powerful.”

— **Anonymous**

“The gap between men and women in law-related positions is still quite large and it is important to close it because the lack of inclusion has too high a cost. The positive thing is that more and more women are making our way and opening doors for each other, which helps us to believe and bet on the professional capacity of women, which should not be overshadowed or left aside by external factors.”

— **Melissa Zúñiga de la Fuente, Legal Marketing Consultant, Gericó Associates**

Final Thoughts

We appreciate each woman who took the time to complete our survey. Your honest comments provided powerful insight into the strengths and challenges involved in being a woman in law.

We hope that by sharing your thoughts and experiences, we can further propel meaningful conversations that recognize the critical role of women in law.

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