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CLSB

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## Introduction

The Costs Lawyer Standards Board, or CLSB, is the regulator of Costs Lawyers in England and Wales. We exist to serve the public interest by setting and maintaining the standards of professional conduct by which Costs Lawyers must abide.

As a regulator, we have a statutory objective to “encourage an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession” under the Legal Services Act 2007. We do this in various ways, including by monitoring the diversity of the profession in order to identify areas of under-representation and consider action that could be taken to address these.

Our 2024 survey focussed on entry into, and progression within, the Costs Lawyer profession. The aim of the survey was to find out more about the different paths that led individuals to a career in costs law. This is part of a wider programme of work aimed at understanding Costs Lawyers’ career experiences, and what steps the CLSB could take to strengthen the current profession and support the next generation of Costs Lawyers.

### About the data

The data on Costs Lawyers in this report was collected in a survey carried out in November to December 2024 alongside the annual practising certificate renewal process. We collect diversity data from practitioners on a voluntary basis; completing the diversity survey was not mandatory.

A total of 701 practitioners were contacted, of whom 159 responded, representing 23% of the profession. Because the sample size is therefore very small, it has not been possible to break down the data to enable further comparisons (for example, to identify if age, gender or other characteristics affect career pathways in any way).

As the data in this report does not reflect the entire regulated Costs Lawyer profession, caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from the data and/or making comparisons with other data sets.

### Declarations

The contents of this report are based on data that is explicitly and voluntarily declared by respondents.

All questions on the survey contained an option of ‘prefer not to say’ and not all respondents chose to provide their diversity information.

In the instances where a data set is too small to be meaningfully representative (i.e. fewer than five respondents) or there is the risk that an individual might be identifiable from the data, it has been excluded from the report.

Regarding ethnicity, we followed the approach adopted by the UK Census 2021 and used the following aggregate categories: Asian or Asian British, Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, White, Other ethnic group.

### **Next steps**

We will continue our work on improving our data collection, with a particular focus on improving the response rate to enable us to analyse data in a more granular way.

We will work with the Association of Costs Lawyers, ACL Training, the Apprenticeship Trailblazer Group, and Costs Lawyers themselves, to identify practical steps that can be taken to support career progression and support future entrants.

The CLSB published its last full diversity report in 2023. We have published focused data on social mobility, and pay and earnings in the profession. We will continue to collect, analyse and publish data on discrete aspects of diversity, in line with our mid-term strategy and business plan. Previous diversity reports can be found on the CLSB [website](#).

## Key messages

- This year's survey provided interesting insights into how respondents found out about careers in costs law, the factors that influenced their decision to join the Costs Lawyer profession, and how they would like their careers to develop in the future.
- Almost half of respondents found out about costs law as a career option in the workplace or through another job they had at the time (44.5%, 69 individuals – see chart 5), and around a quarter of respondents said they chose to work in costs because they were encouraged to do so by their firm or manager (24.2%, 37 individuals – see chart 5). Just 2.6% of respondents (4 individuals) said that they chose to work in costs because it was a profession they were interested in while studying. This data suggests that more needs to be done to raise awareness of costs law as a career option at school and university level.
- The majority of respondents had not worked in another non-legal career before working in costs law (61.7%, 95 individuals – see chart 6), or been regulated in another branch of the legal profession before becoming a Costs Lawyer (chart 9). However, 94.8% of respondents had been worked as a costs draftsperson before becoming a regulated Costs Lawyer (chart 8).
- Being part of a regulated profession was an important factor in the decision to become a regulated Costs Lawyer for many respondents (chart 10). 71% of respondents identified 'personal pride in my regulatory status' as a very important factor in their decision to become a regulated Costs Lawyer. Almost 60% of respondents said that the 'ability to market myself to clients as a regulated professional' was a key factor in their decision. The majority of respondents also thought that greater clarity about the distinction between Costs Lawyers and unregulated costs advisors would help to support career progression and encourage new entrants into the profession (70.1%, 101 individuals – see chart 14).
- Most respondents had not had a mentor, coach or sponsor themselves, but over half had been a mentor, sponsor or coach to someone else during their career (see chart 11).
- Respondents were asked which, if any, factors they thought would help to support the career progression of current Costs Lawyers, and encourage new entrants into the profession in future (chart 14). As stated above, over 70% of respondents thought that more clarity about the distinction between Costs Lawyers and unregulated costs advisors was essential. Over half of respondents highlighted more training opportunities. More

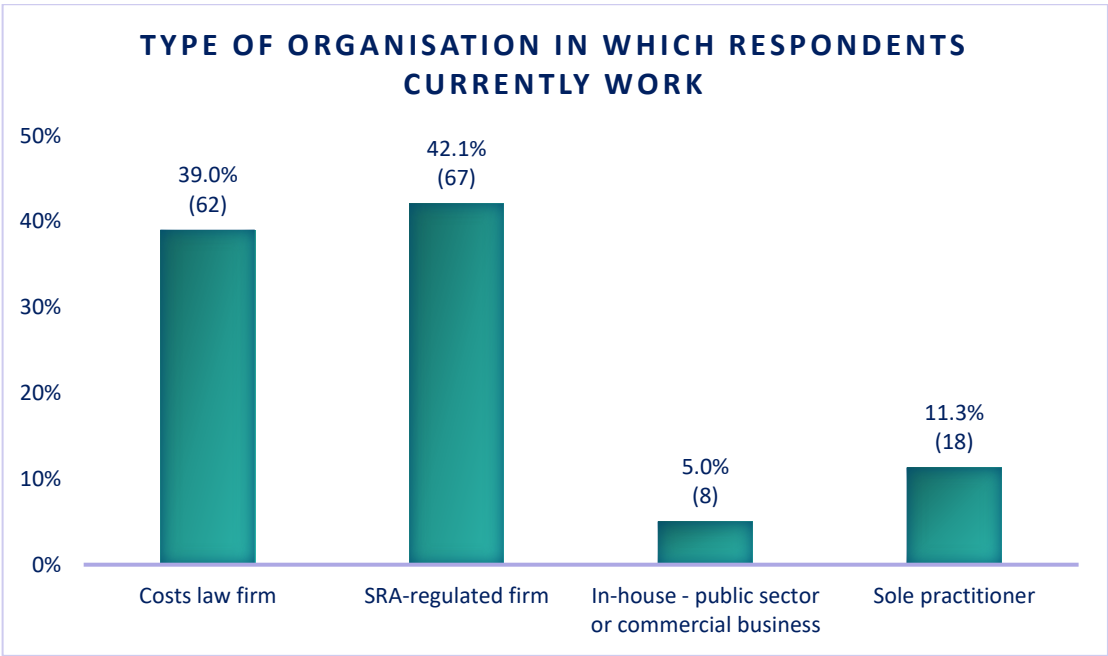
mentoring, sponsorship and coaching opportunities, as well as more management and leadership opportunities, were identified as important by over a third of respondents.

- Many respondents felt that more support for different groups within the profession would assist career progression and the new entrants, including those from non-traditional backgrounds. Over a third thought that more support for Costs Lawyers from non-traditional backgrounds, and more support for Costs Lawyers dealing with work-related stress was needed (chart 14). Respondents also identified wider recognition from the judiciary, Costs Lawyers becoming eligible to apply for judicial posts, and greater visibility for the profession as changes that would be beneficial for the current and future profession.
- The CLSB will work with the Association of Costs Lawyers, ACL Training, the Apprenticeship working group, and Costs Lawyers themselves, to identify practical steps that can be taken to support the career progression of Costs Lawyers and support future entrants, in line with the findings of this survey.

# The results

## 1. Current organisation

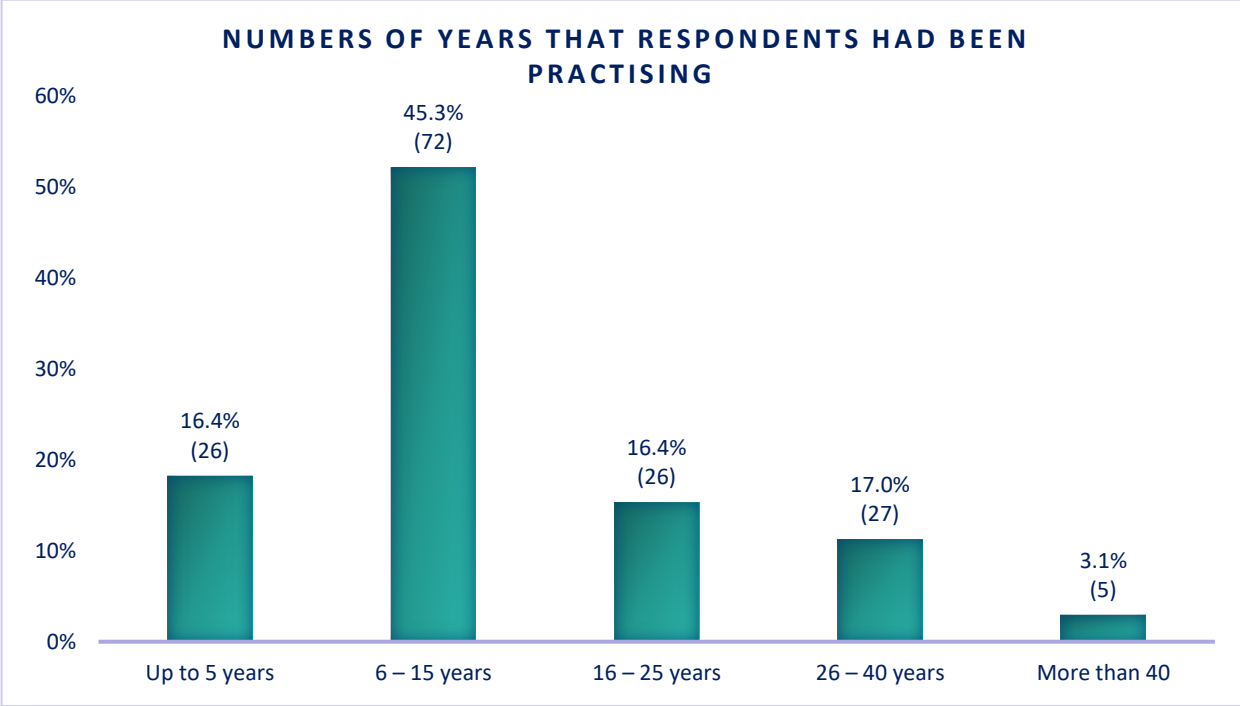
Chart 1



In 2024, the majority of respondents worked in an SRA-regulated firm (42.1%, 67 individuals). The proportion of respondents working in a costs law firm was 39.0% (62 individuals). 5.0% of respondents worked in-house in either the public sector or a commercial business (8 individuals). 11.3% (18) of respondents were sole practitioners.

## 2. Number of years practising

Chart 2

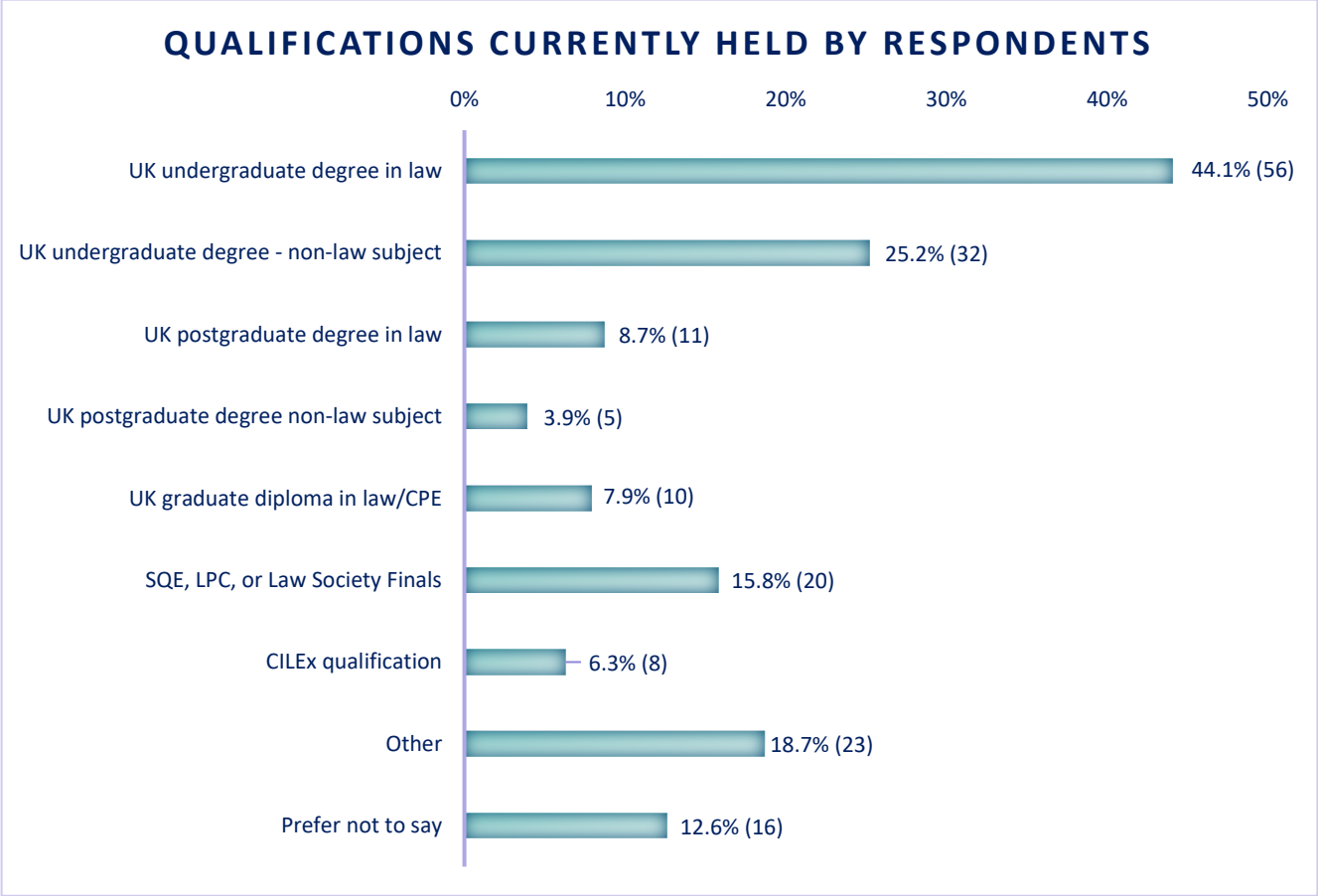


In 2024, the majority of respondents had been practising for 6 to 15 years (45.3%, 72 individuals). 16.4% of respondents had been practising for up to 5 years (26 individuals) and the same proportion and number had been practising for between 16 and 25 years. 17.0% of respondents had been practising for between 26 and 40 years, and 3.1% (5 individuals) had been practising for more than 40 years.



### 3. Qualifications currently held by respondents

Chart 3



In 2024, the majority of respondents held an undergraduate degree. Of those, the highest proportion held an undergraduate law degree (44.1%, 56 individuals). 25.2% of respondents held an undergraduate degree in a non-law subject (32 individuals).

12.6% of respondents held a postgraduate degree. Of those, 8.7% held a postgraduate law degree (11 individuals) and 3.9% held a postgraduate degree in a non-law subject (5 individuals).

Several respondents also held a professional qualification of some kind. Of those, 15.8% had completed the SQE, LPC or Law Society Finals (20 individuals), 7.9% had completed a UK graduate diploma in law or CPE (10 individuals) and 6.3% had completed a CILEx qualification (8) individuals.

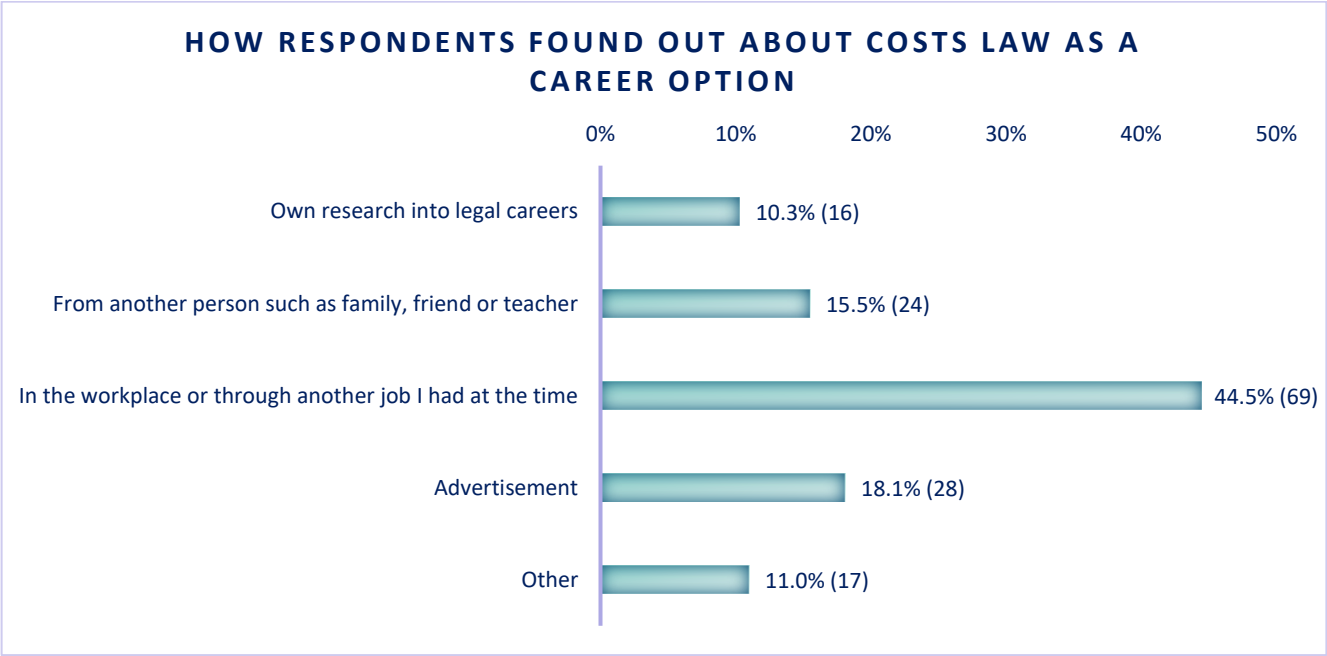
18.7% of respondents (23 individuals) held another kind of qualification. Those other qualifications included the BPTC, BVC or Bar Finals, paralegal diploma or other

paralegal qualifications, international qualifications at undergraduate or postgraduate levels, BTEC and costs lawyer qualifications.

12.6% of respondents preferred not to provide information about the qualifications they currently hold (16 individuals).

4. How respondents found out about costs law as a career option

Chart 4



The majority of respondents said that they found out about costs law as a career option in the workplace or through another job they had at the time (44.5%, 69 individuals).

Almost a fifth of respondents found out about costs law as a career option through an advertisement (18.1%, 28 individuals).

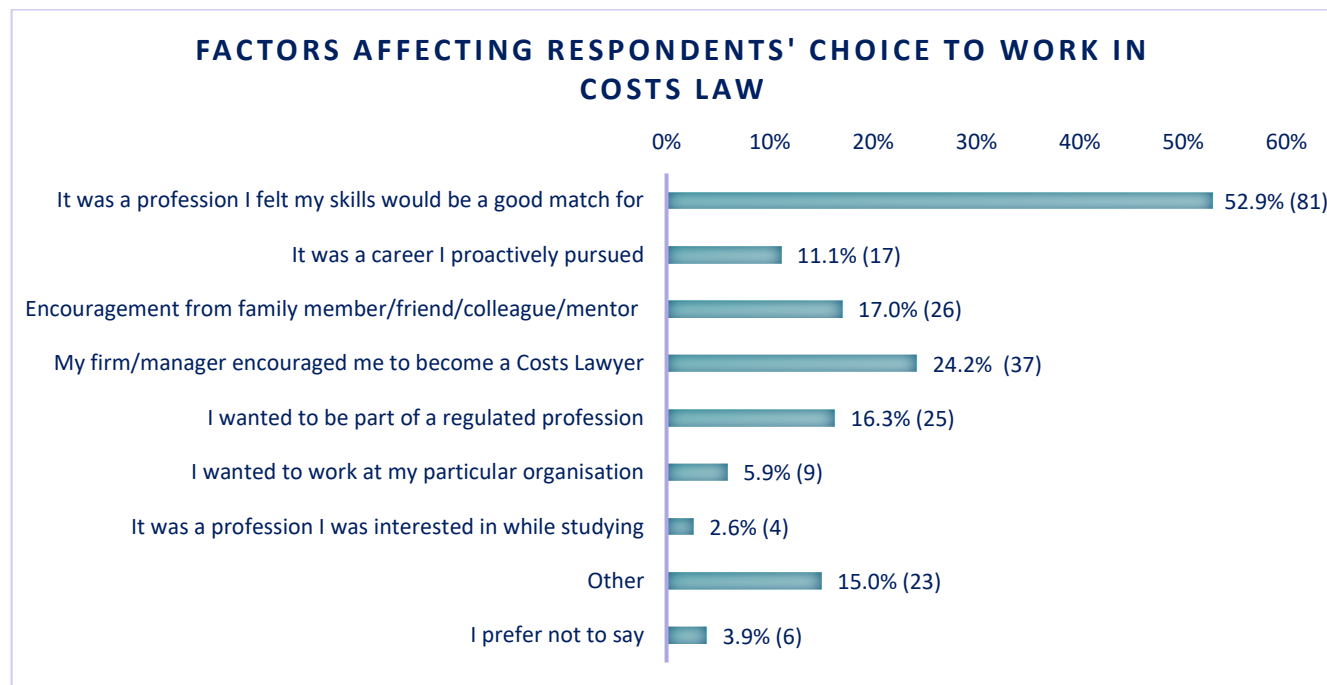
15.5% of respondents (24 individuals) found out about costs as a career option from another person such as a family member, friend or teacher.

10.3% of respondents (16 individuals) found out about costs careers through their own research into legal careers.

11.0% of respondents (17 individuals) found out about costs law as a career option through other sources. These other sources included job fairs, seminars, job agencies and recruitment consultants, finding out ‘by accident’, and finding out while studying for another professional qualification.

## 5. Factors affecting respondent's choice to work in costs law

Chart 5



Respondents were asked which factors affected their choice to work in costs law.

The majority of respondents said that they chose to work in costs because it was a profession for which they felt their skills would be a good match (52.9%, 81 individuals).

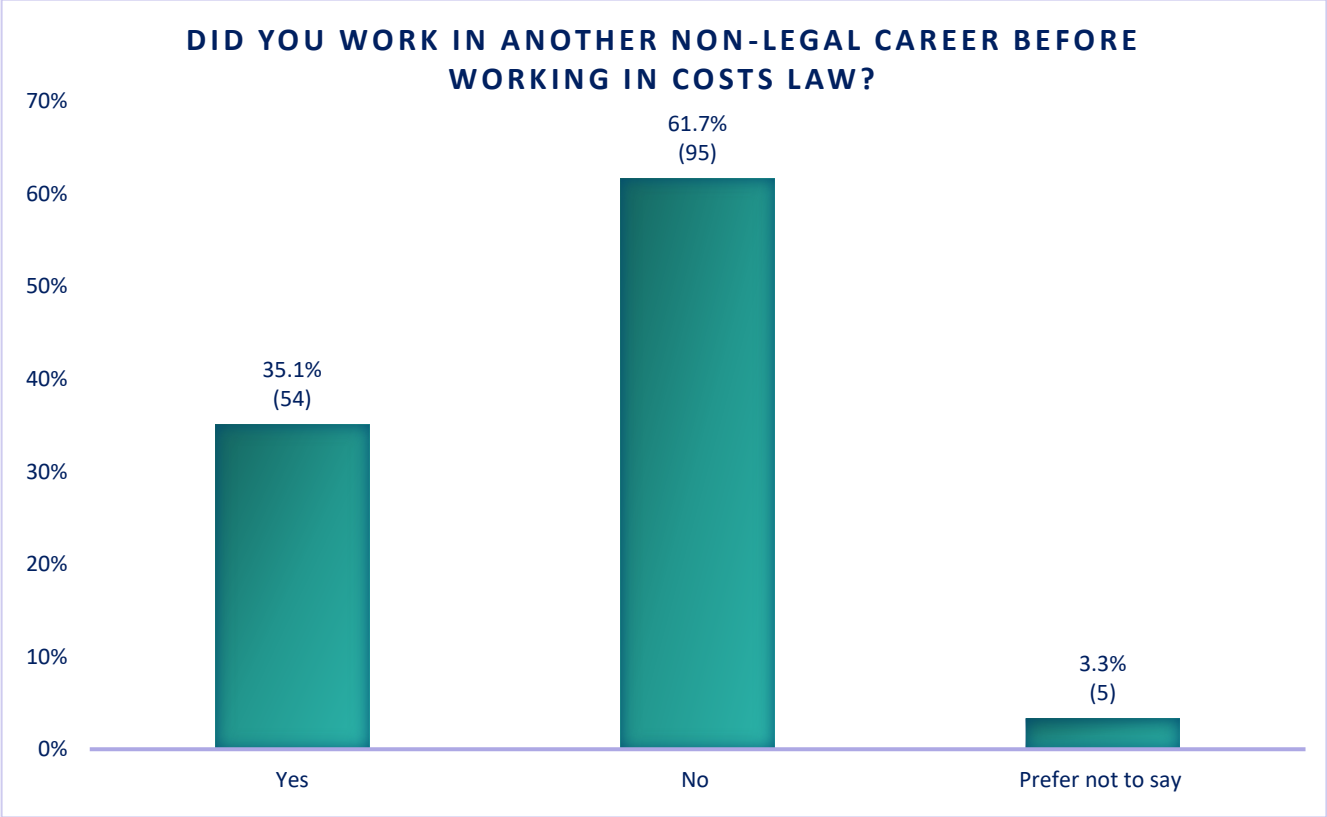
Encouragement from others was an important influence for many respondents. Almost a quarter of respondents said they chose to work in costs because they were encouraged to do so by their firm or manager (24.2%, 37 individuals). 17.0% of respondents (26 individuals) said that encouragement from a family member, friend, colleague or mentor was a key factor in their decision.

16.3% (25 individuals) said that they chose to work in costs because they wanted to be part of a regulated profession, 11.1% (17 individuals) said it was a career they actively pursued, and 5.9% (9 individuals) said that they chose to work in costs because they wanted to work at their particular organisation. 2.6% of respondents (4 individuals) said that they chose to work in costs because it was a profession they were interested in while studying.

15.0% of respondents said that other factors affected their choice to work in costs law. Those factors included financial necessity, looking for a new job or career change, and work-life balance. Several respondents who responded 'other' mentioned that they 'fell into' costs law in some way, but stayed in the profession because they enjoy it.

6. Working in other careers before costs law

Chart 6



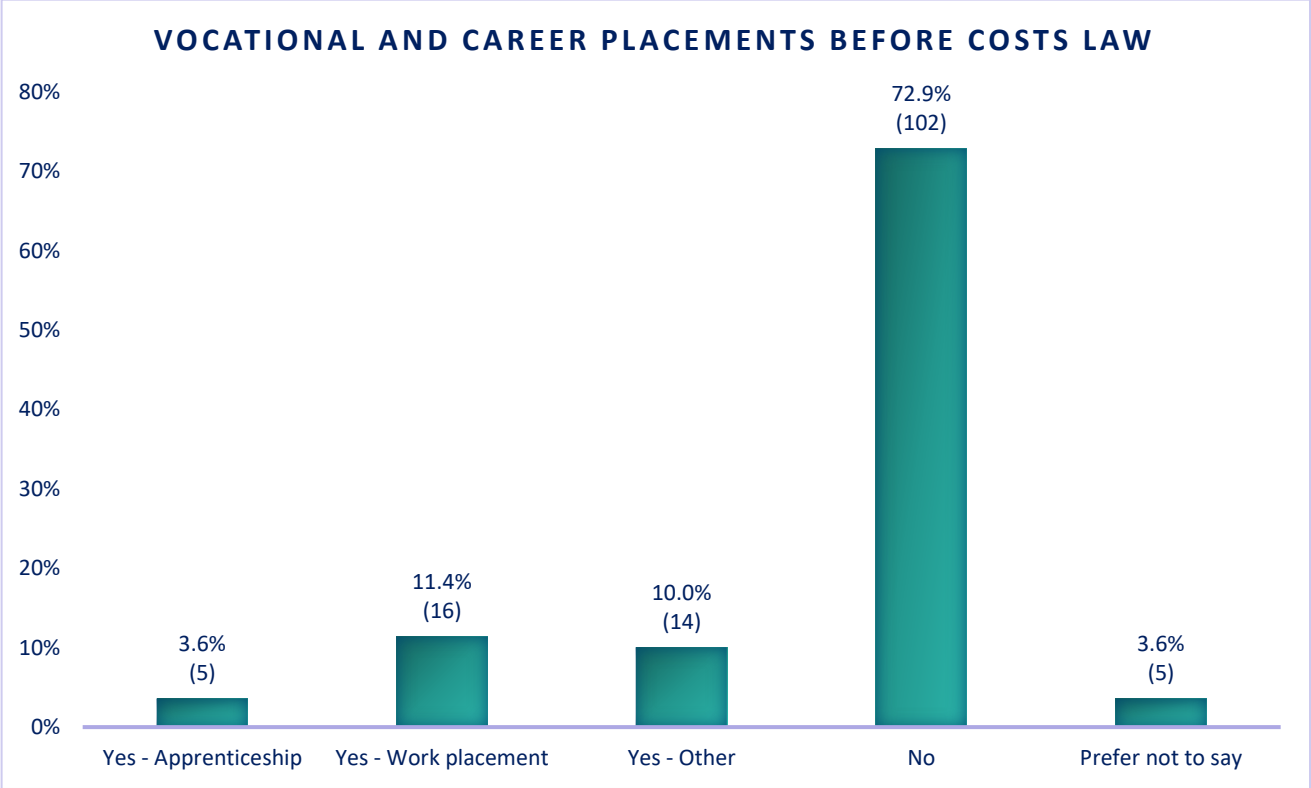
The majority of respondents had **not** worked in another, non-legal career before working in costs law (61.7%, 95 individuals).

35.1% (54 individuals) said they had worked in another non-legal career before working in costs law. The non-legal careers of these respondents were varied and included roles in finance, insurance, pensions, hospitality, leisure, local government, retail, accountancy, farming, healthcare, the Civil Service and the military.

3.3% of respondents (5 individuals) preferred not to provide information about their previous careers.

7. Vocational or career placements

Chart 7



Respondents were asked whether they had completed any vocational or career placements before starting to work in costs law.

The majority of respondents said they had **not** completed any vocational or career placements prior to their career in costs law (72.9%, 102 individuals).

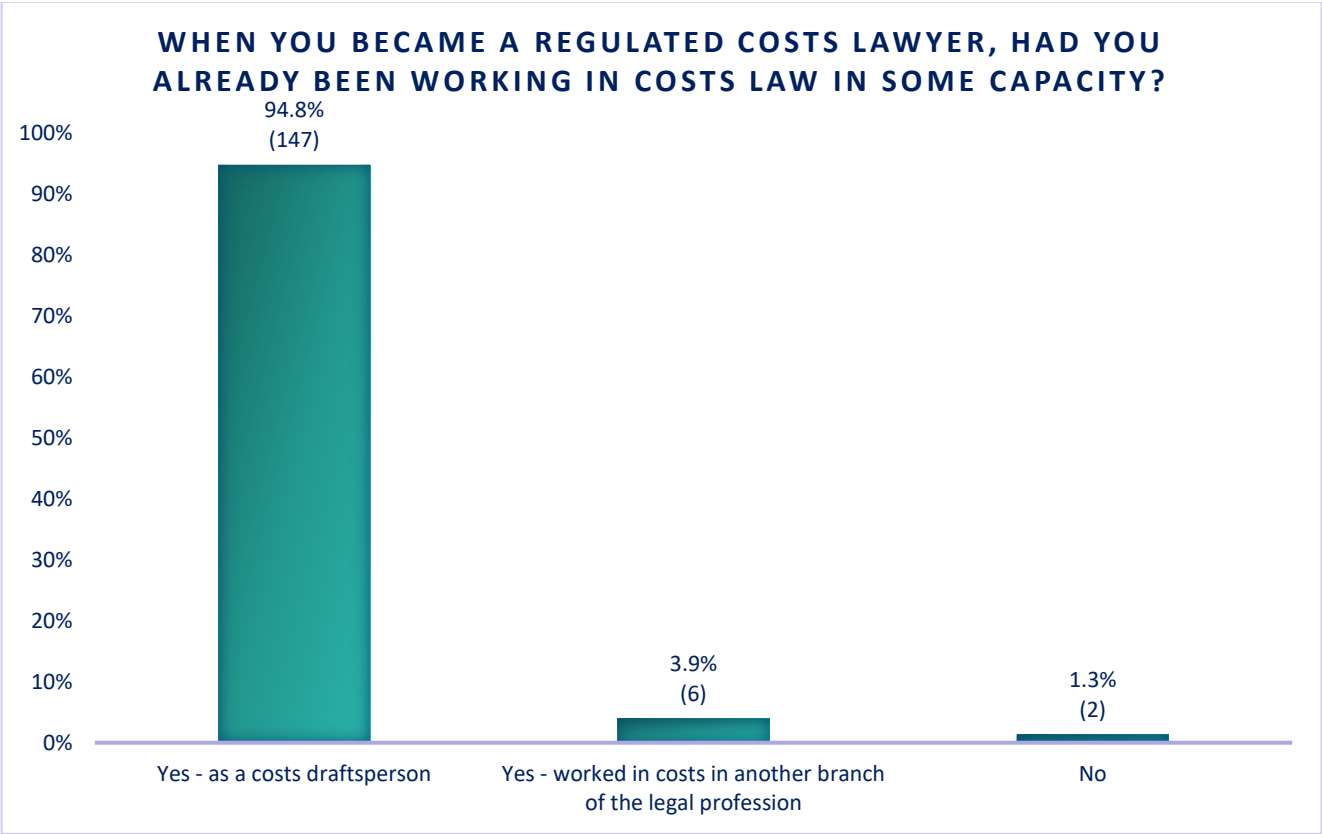
A quarter of respondents said they had completed a vocational or career placement before starting to work in costs law. Of those, 11.4% (16 individuals) had completed a work placement and 3.6% (5 individuals) had completed an apprenticeship.

10.0% (14 individuals) had completed another type of placement prior to their career in costs law. These other types of placement included paralegal or clerk roles, and placements in accountancy and engineering.

3.6% of respondents (5 individuals) preferred not to provide information about their previous vocational or career placements.

8. Previous work in costs law before becoming a regulated Costs Lawyer

Chart 8



Respondents were asked whether they had already been working in costs law in some capacity when they became a regulated Costs Lawyer.

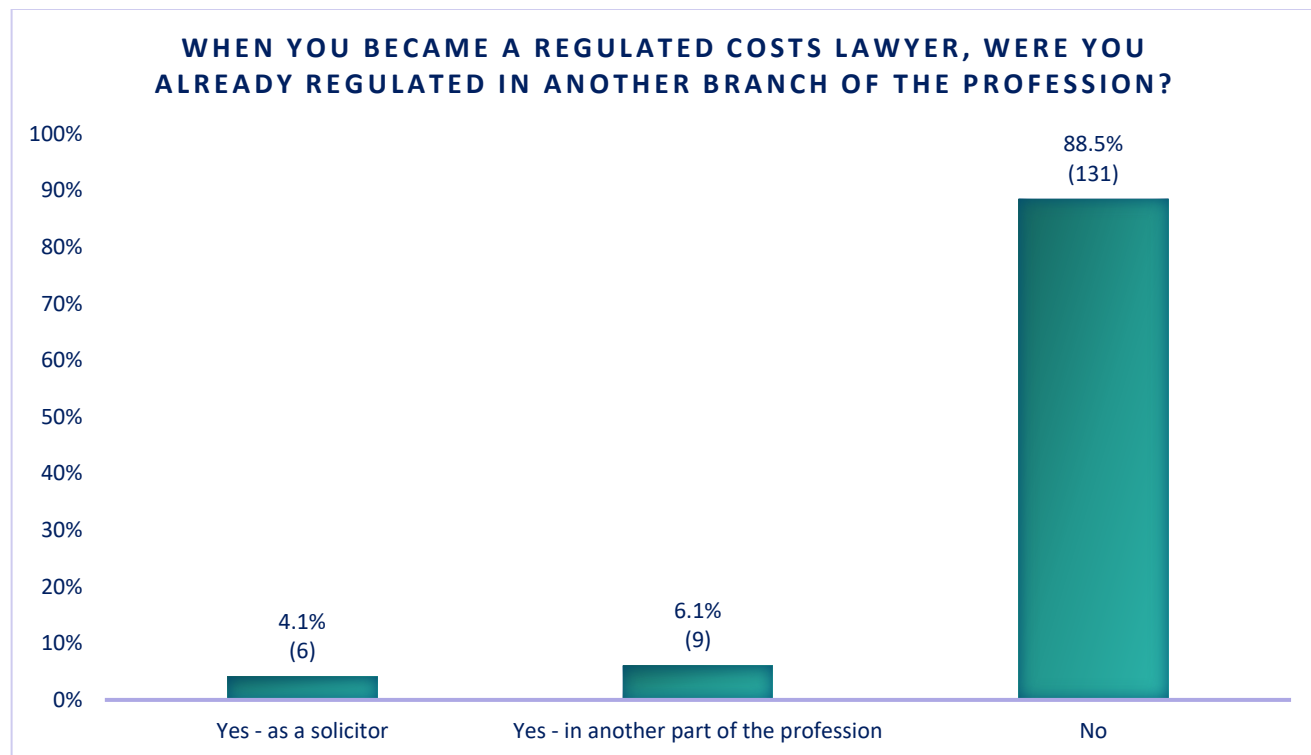
The majority of respondents said that they had been working as a costs draftsman before becoming a regulated Costs Lawyer (94.8%, 147 individuals).

3.9% of respondents (6 individuals) had previously worked in costs in another branch of the legal profession. 1.3% of respondents (2 individuals) had not previously worked in costs.



## 9. Working in another regulated profession before becoming a regulated Costs Lawyer

Chart 9



Respondents were asked whether they were already regulated in another branch of the profession when they became a regulated Costs Lawyer.

The majority of respondents were **not** already regulated in another branch of the profession (88.5%, 131 individuals). 4.1% of respondents were already regulated as solicitors (6 individuals) and 6.1% (9 individuals) were regulated in other branches of the professions, such as the Bar or CILEx.

## 10. Factors affecting the decision to become a regulated Costs Lawyer

Chart 10

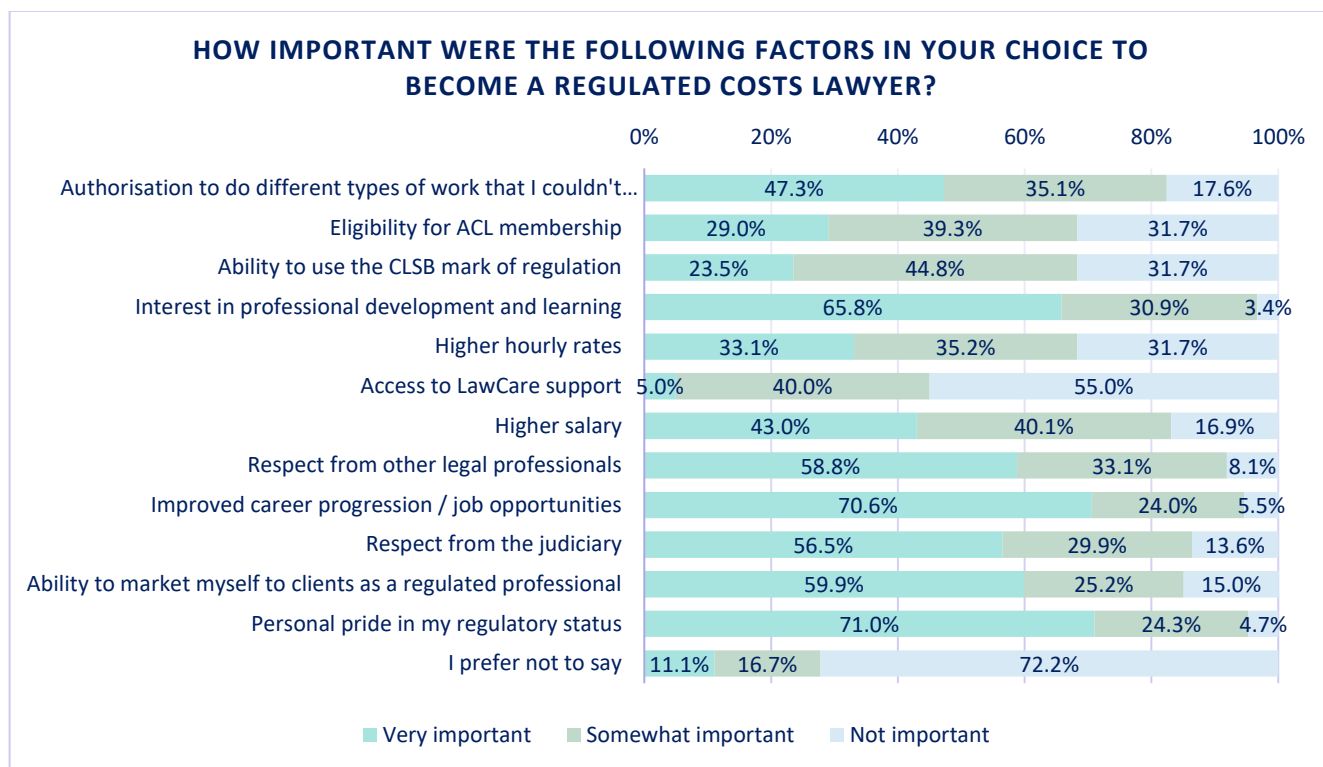


Table 1

Factor	Very important		Somewhat important		Not important	
	%	Individuals	%	Individuals	%	Individuals
Authorisation to do different types of work that I couldn't otherwise do(e.g. advocacy, conducting litigation)	47.3%	70	35.1%	52	17.6%	26
Eligibility for ACL membership	29.0%	42	39.3%	57	31.7%	46
Ability to use the CLSB mark of regulation	23.5%	34	44.8%	65	31.7%	46
Interest in professional development and learning	65.8%	98	30.9%	46	3.4%	5
Higher hourly rates	33.1%	47	35.2%	50	31.7%	45
Access to LawCare support	5.0%	7	40.0%	56	55.0%	77
Higher salary	43.0%	61	40.1%	57	16.9%	24
Respect from other legal professionals	58.8%	87	33.1%	49	8.1%	12
Improved career progression / job opportunities	70.6%	103	24.0%	35	5.5%	8
Respect from the judiciary	56.5%	83	29.9%	44	13.6%	20
Ability to market myself to clients as a regulated professional	59.9%	88	25.2%	37	15.0%	22
Personal pride in my regulatory status	71.0%	105	24.3%	36	4.7%	7
I prefer not to say	11.1%	2	16.7%	3	72.2%	13

Respondents were asked how important a series of factors were in their decision to become a regulated Costs Lawyer, and asked to rate those factors as ‘very important’, ‘somewhat important’ or ‘not important’.

A high proportion of respondents identified ‘personal pride in my regulatory status’ as a very important factor in their decision (71.0%, 105 individuals). Respondents also identified ‘improved career progression/job opportunities’ as a very important factor (70.6%, 103 individuals) and ‘interest in professional development and learning’ as very important (65.8%, 98 individuals).

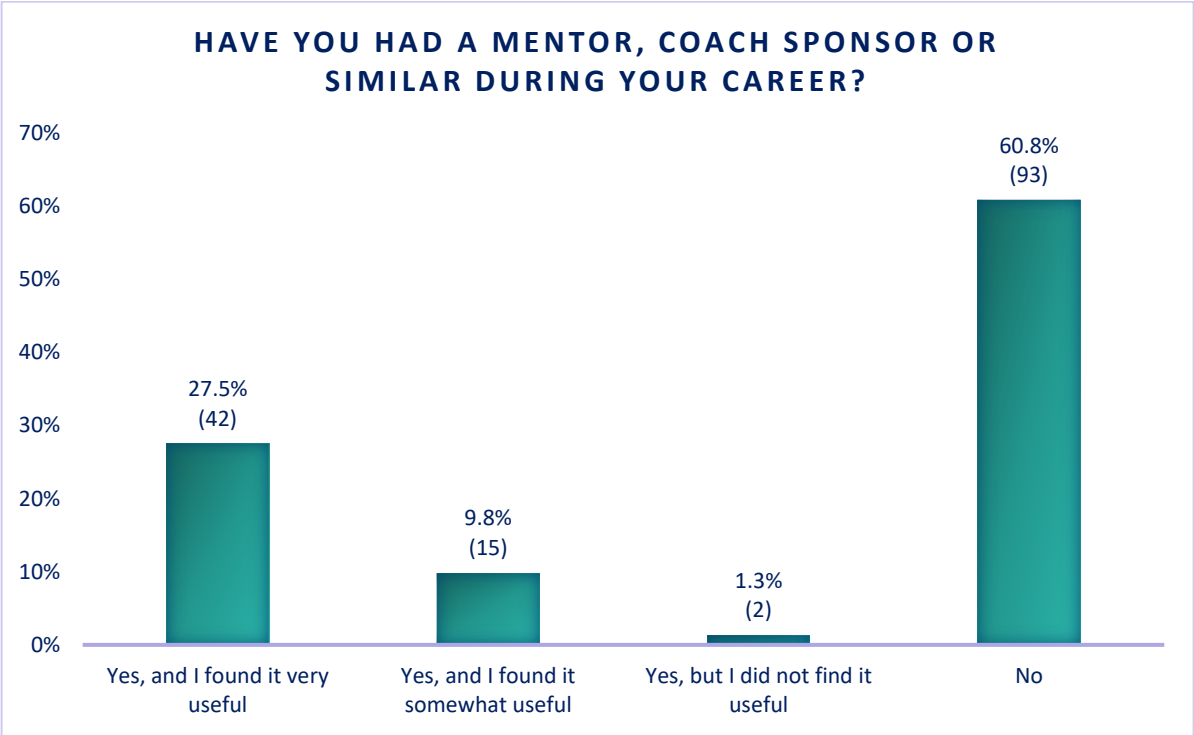
Over 50% of respondents said that the ‘ability to market myself to clients as a regulated professional’ was a key factor in their decision to become a regulated Costs Lawyer (59.9%, 88 individuals). Over half of respondents also identified ‘respect from other legal professionals’ as a very important factor (58.8%, 87 individuals) and over half selected ‘respect from the judiciary’ as a very important influence on their decision (56.5%, 83 individuals).

The majority of respondents rated ‘ability to use the CLSB mark of a regulation’ as a ‘somewhat important’ factor in their decision (44.8%, 65 individuals). Other factors rated as ‘somewhat important’ include ‘access to LawCare support’ (40.0%, 56 individuals), ‘higher salary’ (40.1%, 57 individuals), ‘eligibility for ACL membership’ (39.3%, 57 individuals), and ‘higher hourly rates’ (35.2%, 50 individuals).

The ability to use the CLSB mark of a regulation, access to LawCare Support, eligibility for ACL membership, and higher hourly rates were all factors that were rated as ‘not important’ in the decision to become a regulated Costs Lawyer by over 30% of respondents. 31.7% of respondents (46 individuals) said that the ‘ability to use the CLSB mark of a regulation’ was not an important factor in their decision. The same proportion said that ‘eligibility for ACL membership’ and ‘higher hourly rates’ were not an important factor in their choice to become a regulated Costs Lawyer (46 individuals and 45 individuals respectively). Over half of respondents said that ‘access to LawCare support’ was not an important factor in their decision (55.0%, 77 individuals).

## 11. Mentoring, coaching and sponsorship

Chart 11

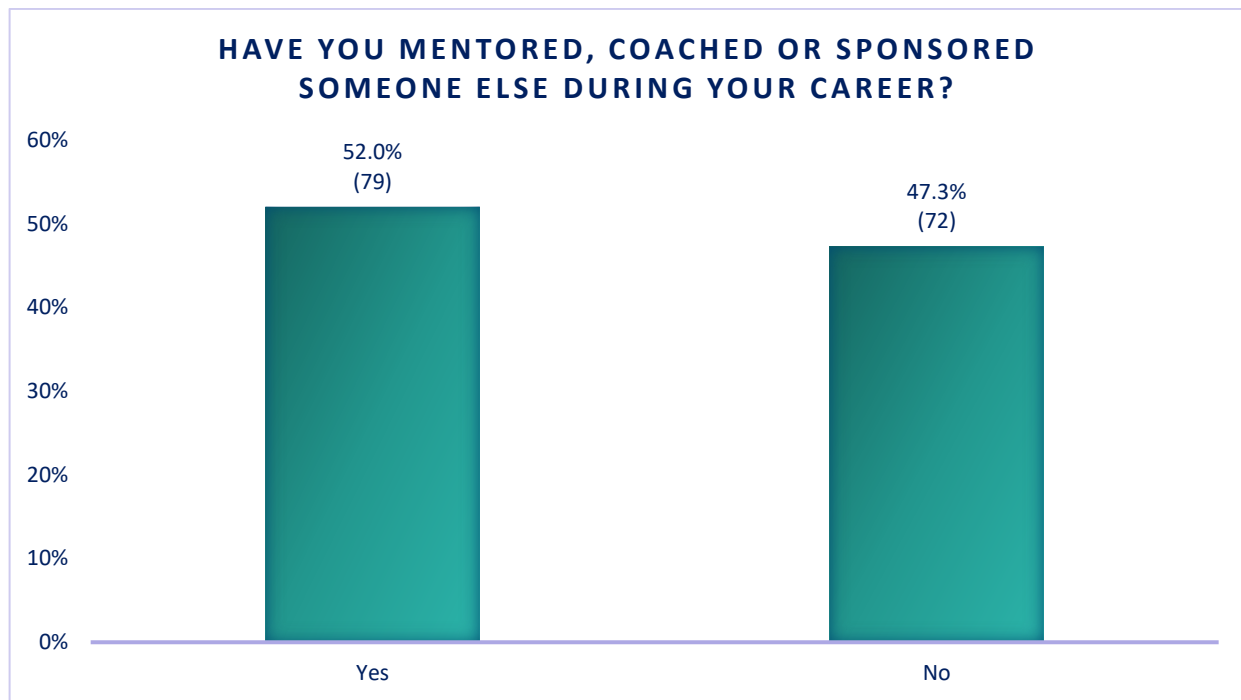


Respondents were asked if they had had a mentor, coach, sponsor or similar during their career.

The majority of respondents had **not** had a mentor, coach, sponsor or similar during their career (60.8%, 93 individuals).

38.6% of respondents said they had a mentor, coach, sponsor or similar during their career. Of those, 27.5% (42 individuals) said they found the experience very useful, 9.8% (15 individuals) said they found it somewhat useful, and 1.3% (2 individuals) said they did not find it useful.

Chart 12

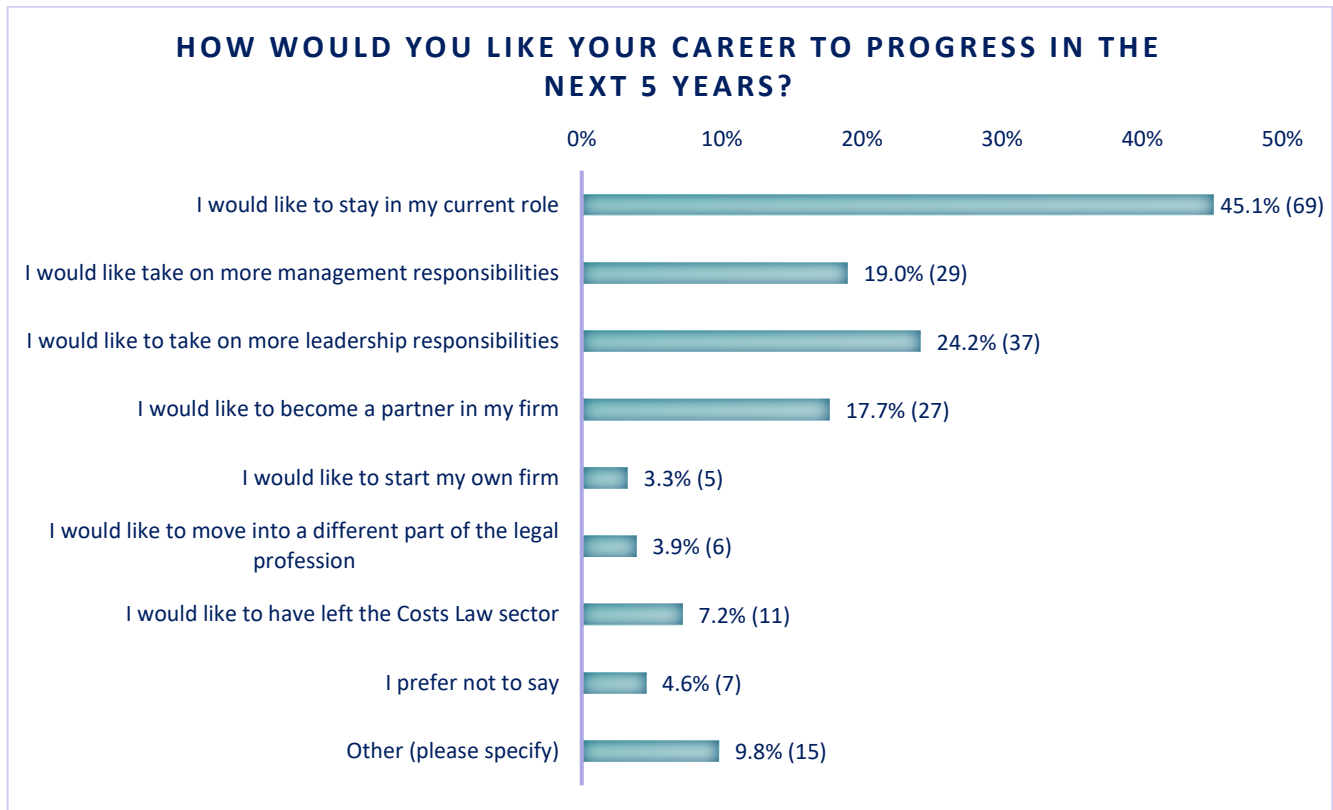


Respondents were also asked whether they had mentored, coached or sponsored someone else during their career.

Just over half of respondents said that they had done so (52.0%, 79 individuals), and 47.3% of respondents (72 individuals) had not mentored, coached or sponsored someone else during their career.

## 12. Career aims

Chart 13



Respondents were asked how they would like their career to progress in the next 5 years.

The majority of respondents said that they would like to stay in their current role (45.1%, 69 individuals).

Almost a quarter of respondents said that they would like to take on more leadership responsibilities (24.2%, 37 individuals) and almost a fifth wanted to take on more management responsibilities (19.0%, 29 individuals). 17.7% (27 individuals) said they would like to become a partner in their firm, while 3.3% (5 individuals) wanted to start their own firm.

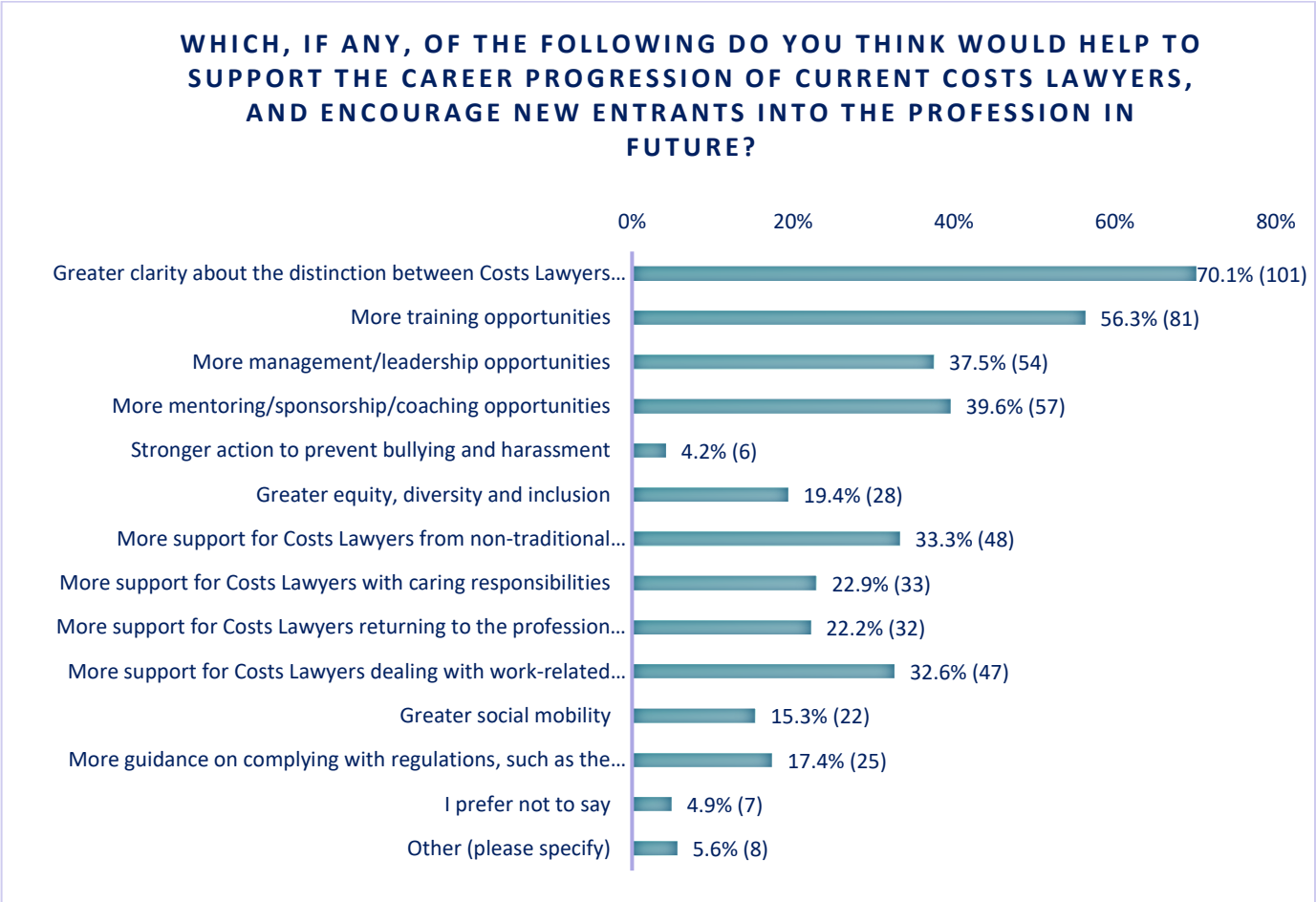
11.1% of respondents expressed a desire to move out of costs law in some way. Of those, 7.2% (11 individuals) said they would like to have left the costs law sector, and 3.9% (6 individuals) said they would like to move into a different part of the legal profession.

9.8% of respondents (15 individuals) said that they would like their career to progress in another way. Those other ways included retirement and achieving a judicial appointment.

4.6% of respondents (7 individuals) preferred not to say how they would like their career to progress in the next 5 years.

### 13.Supporting the career progression of current Costs Lawyers, and future entrants

Chart 14



Respondents were asked which, if any, factors they thought would help to support the career progression of current Costs Lawyers, and encourage new entrants into the profession in future.

The majority of respondents thought that greater clarity about the distinction between Costs Lawyers and unregulated costs advisors would help to support career progression and encourage new entrants into the profession (70.1%, 101 individuals).

Over half of respondents said that more training opportunities were key to supporting the current profession and new entrants (56.3%, 81 individuals). More mentoring, sponsorship and coaching opportunities was selected by 39.6% of respondents (57 individuals). A similar proportion identified more management and leadership opportunities as important (37.5%, 54 individuals).



Many respondents felt that more support for different groups within the profession would assist career progression and the new entrants. Over a third of respondents thought that more support for Costs Lawyers from non-traditional backgrounds would be helpful (33.3%, 48 individuals), and over a third felt that more support for Costs Lawyers dealing with work-related stress was needed (32.6%, 47 individuals). Over a fifth thought that more support for Costs Lawyers with caring responsibilities was needed (22.9%, 33 individuals) and a similar proportion thought that more support for returners to the profession would be beneficial (22.2%, 32 individuals).

Respondents also thought that more diversity and inclusion with the profession would be helpful to career progression for current Costs Lawyers and new entrants to the profession. 19.4% (28 individuals) identified greater diversity and inclusion as important, and 15.3% (22 individuals) identified greater social mobility as a factor that would help current and future Costs Lawyers. 4.2% (6 individuals) thought that stronger action on bullying and harassment was needed to support career progression and future Costs Lawyers.

17.4% of respondents (25 individuals) thought that current and future Costs Lawyers' careers would be helped by more guidance on complying with regulations, such as the Costs Lawyer Code of Conduct.

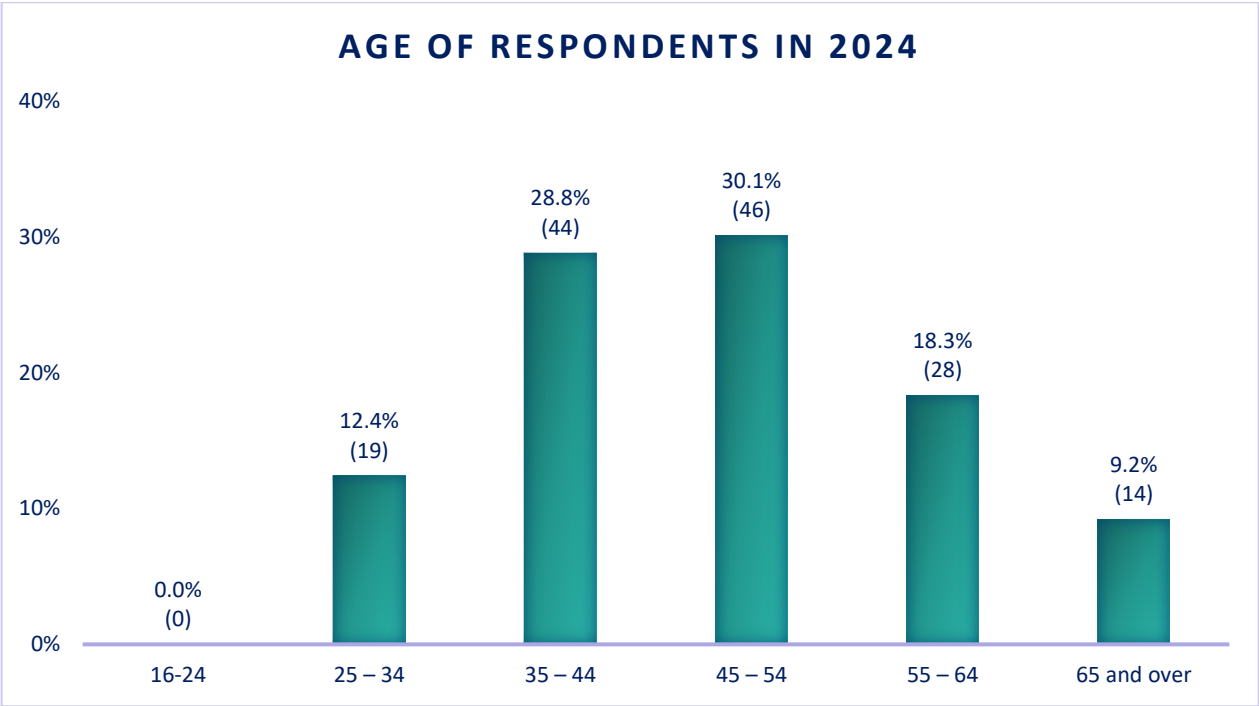
5.6% (18 individuals) identified other factors that they thought would help current Cost Lawyers' career progression and that of new entrants. Those factors included wider recognition from the judiciary, Costs Lawyers becoming eligible to apply for judicial posts, training for judicial posts, more learning opportunities relating to legal areas outside of costs, and greater visibility for the profession in the legal sector and society more broadly.

4.9% of respondents (7 individuals) preferred not to answer this question.

# About the respondents

## 14. Age

Chart 15



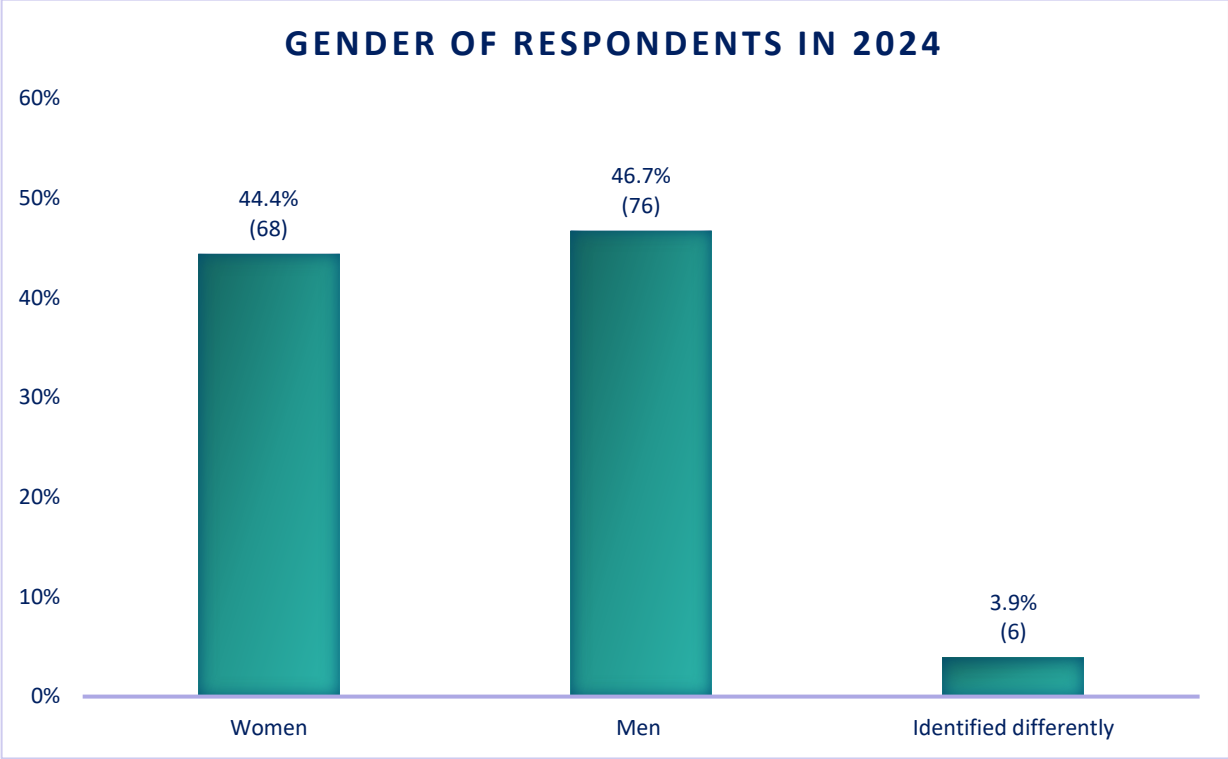
The majority of Costs Lawyers who responded to this year’s survey were aged between 45 and 54 (30.1%, 46 individuals).

Almost a third of respondents were aged between 35 and 44 (28.8%, 44 individuals).

Of the other respondents, 18.3% (28 individuals) were aged 55 to 64, 12.4% (19 individuals) were aged 25 to 34, and 9.2% (14 individuals) were aged 65 and over. No respondents were aged between 16 and 24.

15. Gender

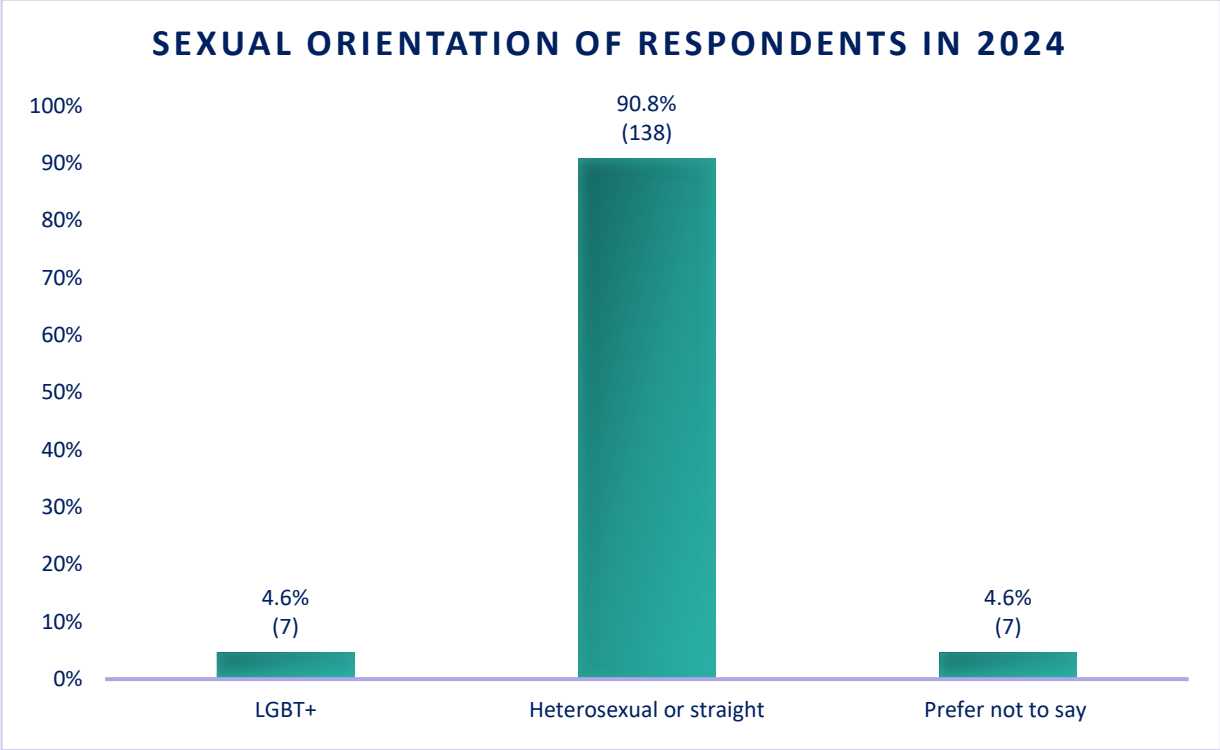
Chart 16



Of those who responded to this year’s survey, 44.4% were women (68 individuals), 46.7% were men (76 individuals) and 3.9% (6 individuals) identified differently.

16. Sexual orientation

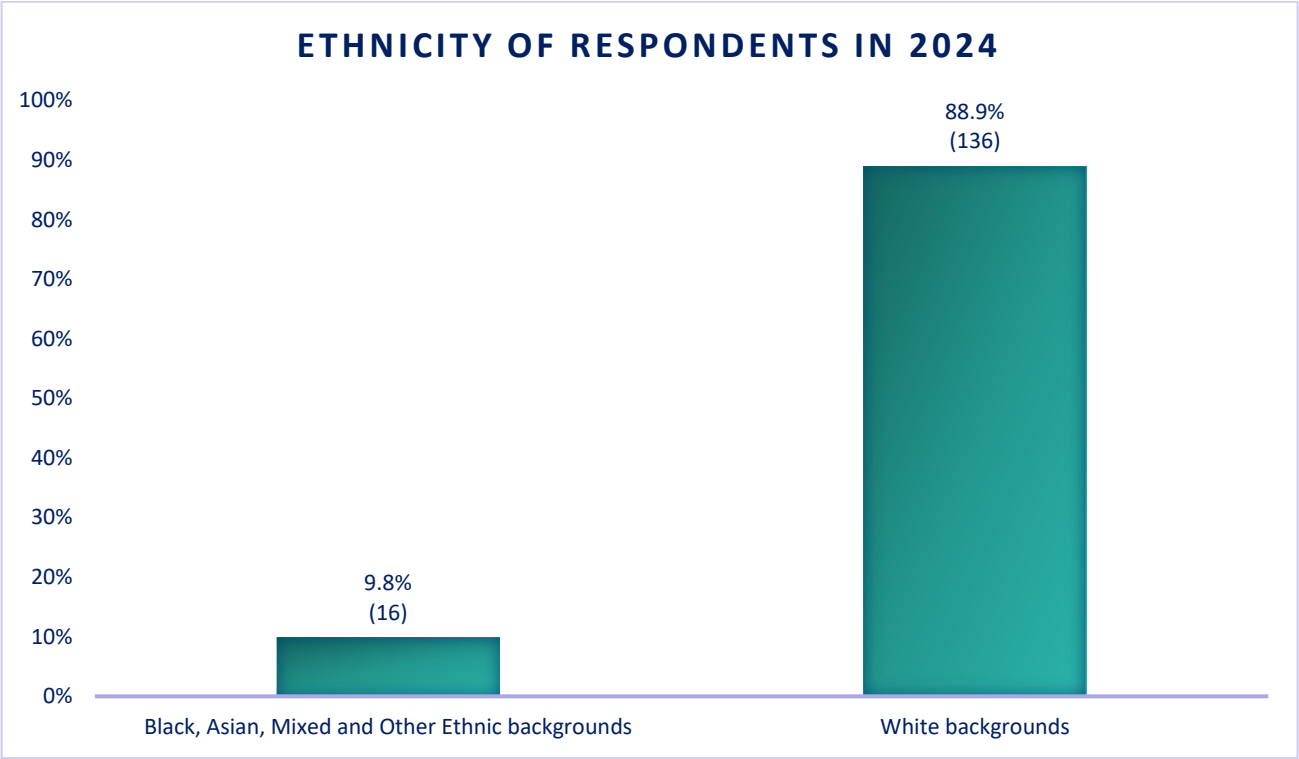
Chart 17



The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual or straight (90.8%, 138 individuals). 4.6% of respondents identified as gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual or identified differently (4.6%, 7 individuals). 4.6% of respondents (7 individuals) preferred not to provide this information.

17.Ethnicity

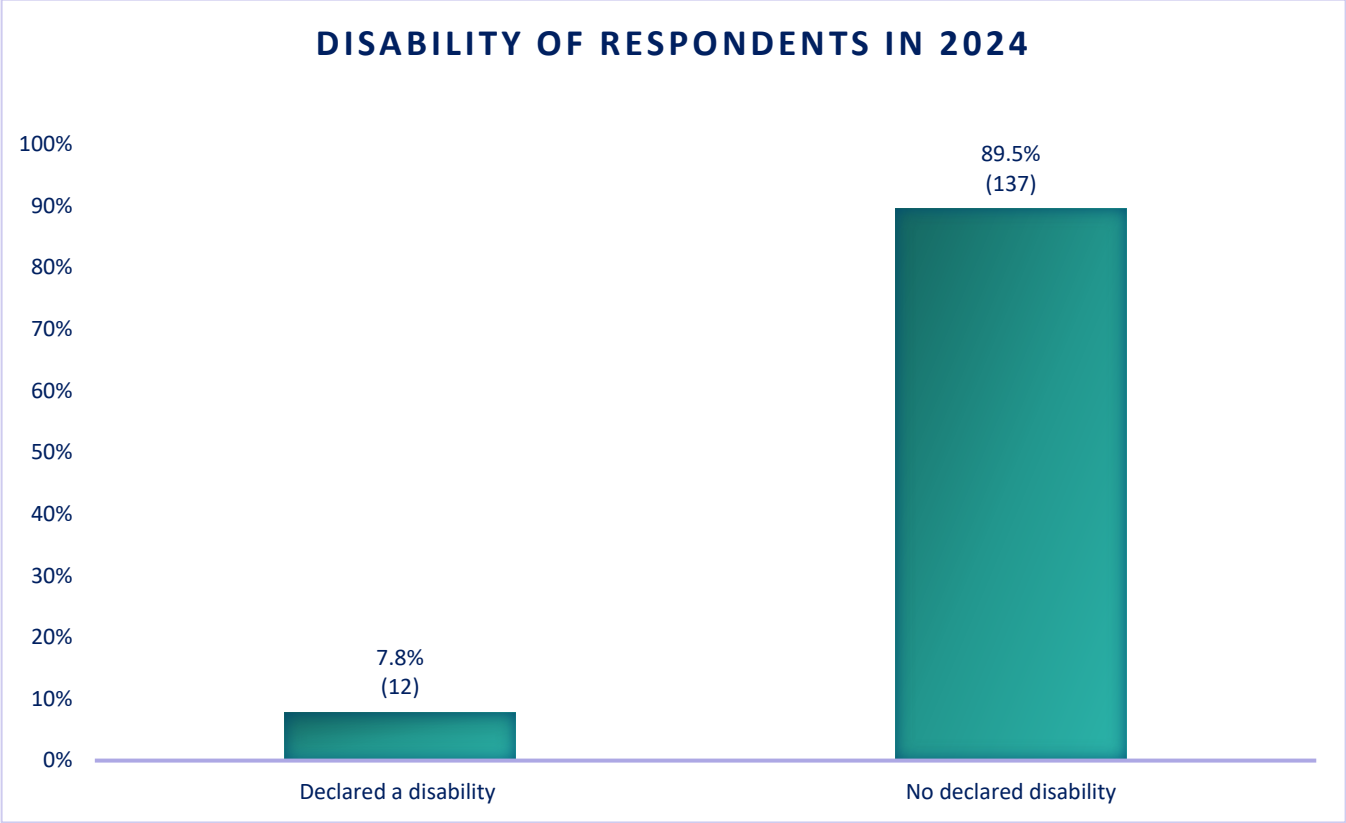
Chart 18



Of those who responded to this year’s survey, 88.9% were from white backgrounds (136 individuals) and 9.8% (16 individuals) were from Black, Asian, Mixed and other ethnic minority backgrounds.

18.Disability

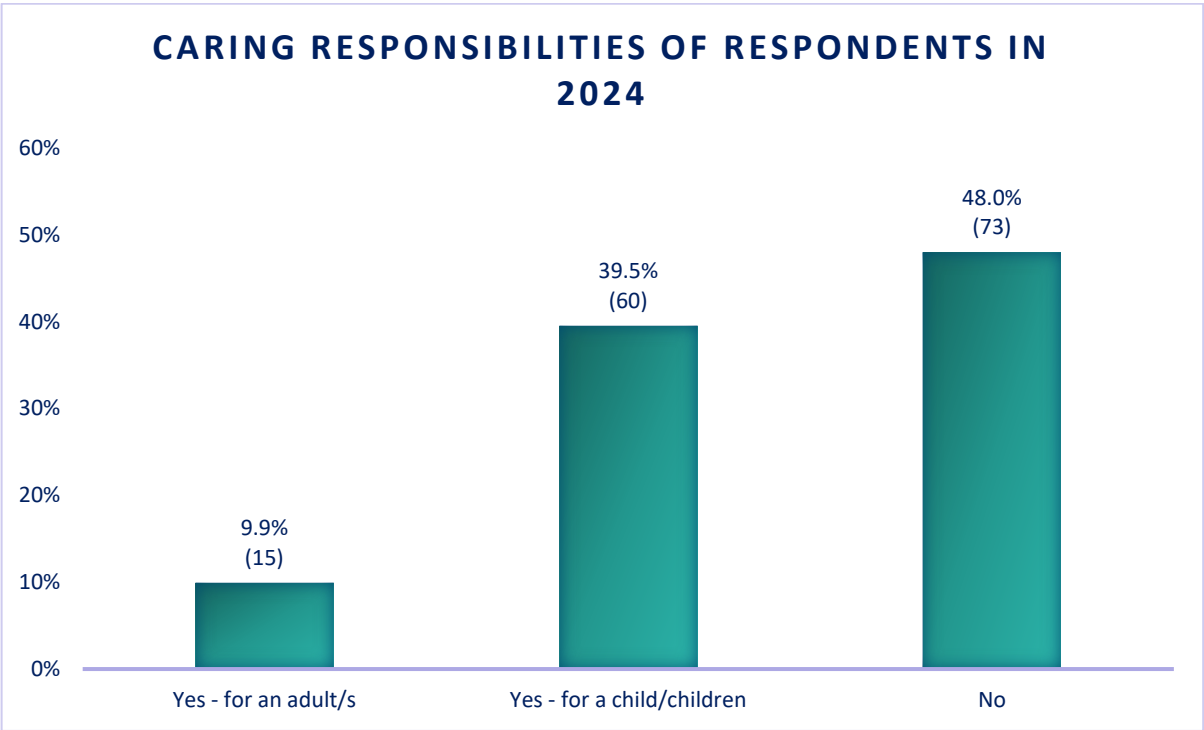
Chart 19



The majority of respondents said they did not have a disability (89.5%, 137 individuals). 7.8% of respondents (12 individuals) said that they did have a disability.

# 19.Caring responsibilities

Chart 20



Almost half of respondents had caring responsibilities of some sort. Of those, 39.5% (60 individuals) had caring responsibilities for a child or children, and 9.9% (15 individuals) had caring responsibilities for an adult.

48.0% of respondents (73 individuals) said that they did not have any caring responsibilities.