

Evolving Workforces

Law Firm Benchmarking Survey Highlights 2026

REPORT

Law Firm Practice
Group & Americas
Consulting

CBRE INSIGHTS
MARCH 2026

CBRE



Executive Summary

The 2026 Law Firm Benchmarking Survey reveals a legal industry that is stabilizing hybrid work models while steadily pushing toward stronger in-office engagement.

As firms navigate higher utilization goals, shifting talent expectations and a renewed focus on workplace experience, real estate strategies are evolving toward purposeful, culture-driven investment.

At the same time, operational priorities—from modernization of space to AI adoption—signal a sector preparing for measured growth and long-term transformation.

To take the survey and access the full report, please visit cbre.com/LawFirmSurvey



KEY FINDINGS

Hybrid is stabilizing, but firms are pushing for more in-office presence.

Most firms maintain hybrid attendance, but the trend is shifting toward stricter in-office expectations, especially at AM Law firms. Firms largely prefer encouragement over mandates as they work to strengthen in-office culture.

Talent attraction and workplace experience now outweigh cost reduction.

Across firm types, talent and workplace experience are the top real estate drivers, outranking cost savings. Cost-reduction priorities have dropped 10 percentage points year-over-year, as firms move toward investments in culture and experience.

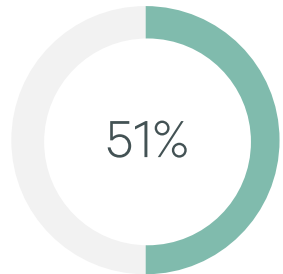
Space modernization and efficiency upgrades are accelerating.

AM Law firms lead in adopting universal office sizes, interior offices and tech-enabled administrative space upgrades. Renovations to meet new design standards are the #1 strategy to optimize real estate.

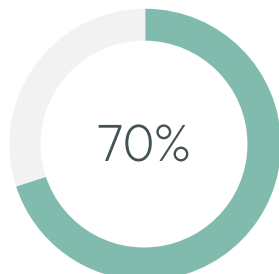
Office Policy & Culture

Law firms expect higher attendance. Most encourage working in the office at least three days a week by fostering an **appealing** firm culture rather than using mandates.

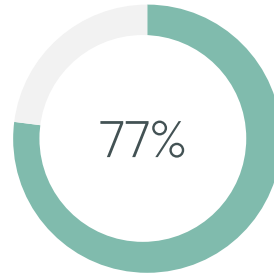
KEY FINDINGS



of firms have now **adopted a "primarily in-office" attendance policy**, typically requiring three or more days per week. Encouragement and role modeling are more successful approaches over strict mandates.



of firms surveyed indicate that their **office attendance policies will remain status quo** in the future, signaling a stabilization of the hybrid work model across the legal sector.



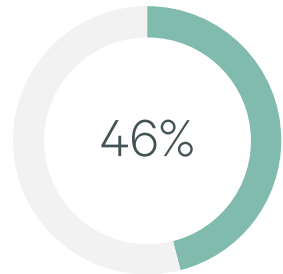
of firms report **average utilization of two or more days a week**, indicating a **narrowing gap** between policy and reality, but some markets have considerably higher or lower utilization than the firm average.



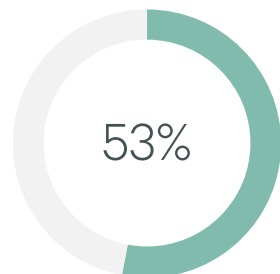
Real Estate Priorities

Real estate strategies are driven by business expansion and the need to attract and retain top talent. Firms have shifted away from contraction to footprint expansion and renovations, driven by expected business and headcount growth.

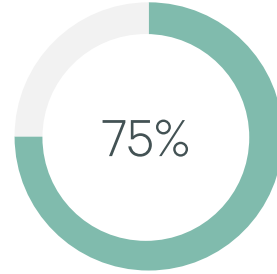
KEY FINDINGS



of law firms **intend to maintain their current office footprint**, reflecting a significant shift away from space reductions. For the first time in three years, more firms plan to expand rather than contract.



of firms are **renovating their offices to accommodate more efficient design standards**, 52% also cite maximizing current space to accommodate headcount growth.



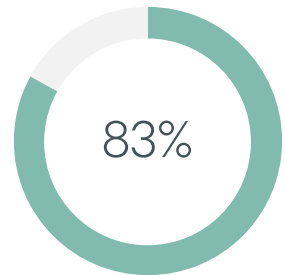
of firms **prioritize footprint efficiency as a key building selection priority**, followed by public transportation access and amenities, including food and beverage nearby.



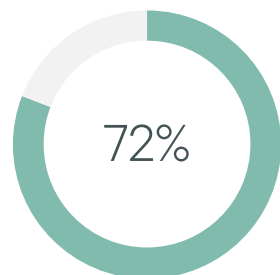
Space Planning & AI Impact

Firms are continuing to modernize through reduced file retention and office standardization. While the long-term impact of AI remains uncertain, the immediate priority is creating efficient, tech-enabled workspaces for all staff.

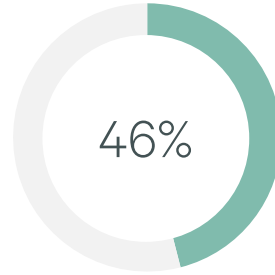
KEY FINDINGS



of firms are **reducing physical file storage** to reclaim valuable square footage for more collaborative, tech-enabled and efficient administrative work zones.



of firms are **implementing or actively considering universal office sizes for lawyers** to streamline layout flexibility, eliminate hierarchical space allocation and simplify future renovations.



of law firm leaders report they are **still unsure of the long-term impact of AI**, while 21% believe it will result in headcount reductions.



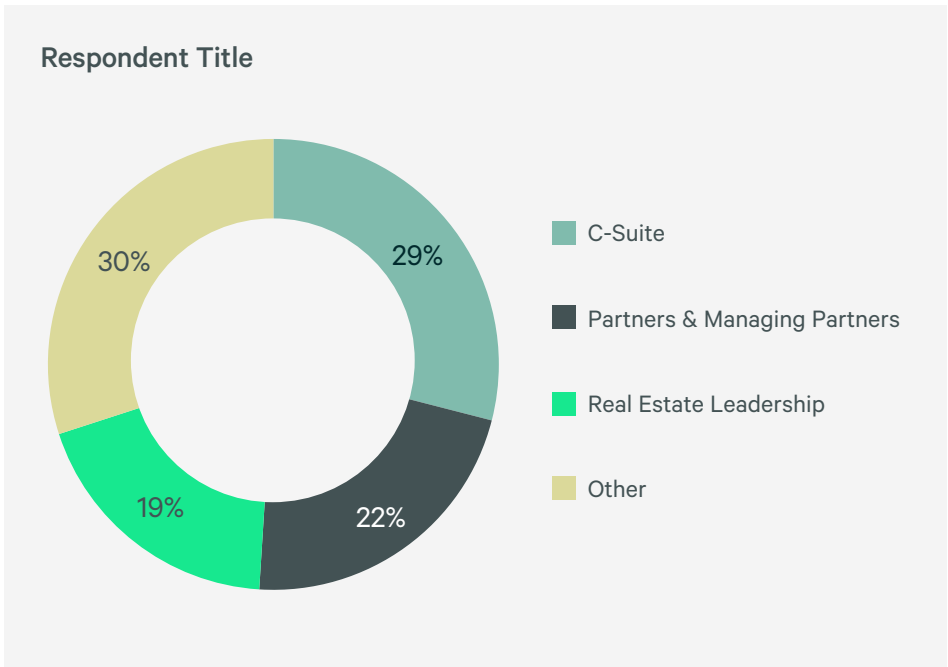
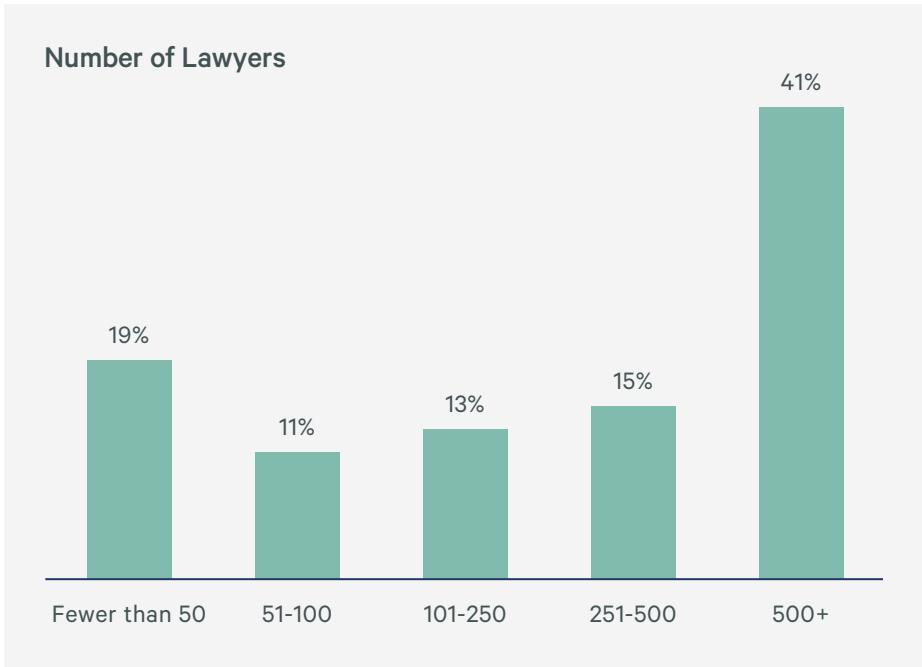
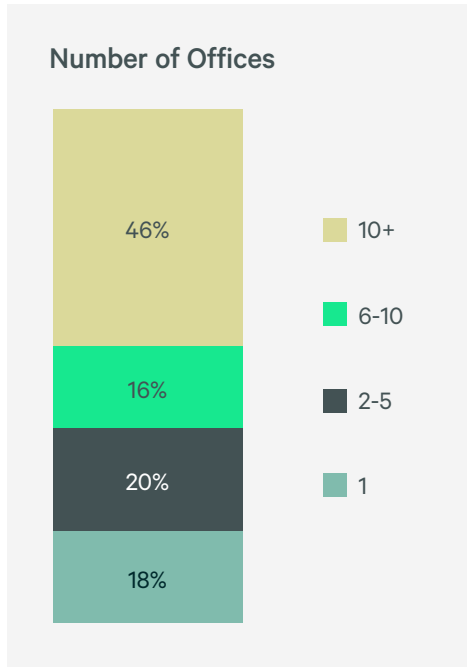
Survey Methodology

In Q4 2025, CBRE carried out an annual benchmarking survey to explore the real estate priorities of law firm leaders. Responses came from a spectrum of law firm sizes and portfolios.

143 Law Firm Leaders Participated¹

AM Law, Global 200 & Magic Circle
74 Firms (52%)

Boutique Firms
69 Firms (48%)

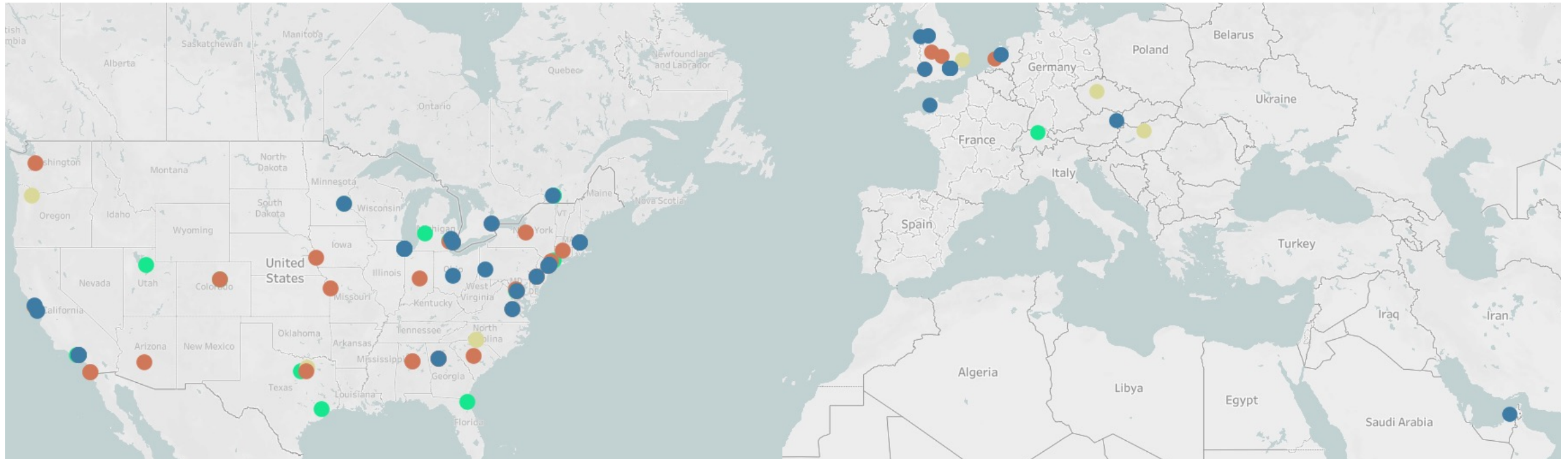
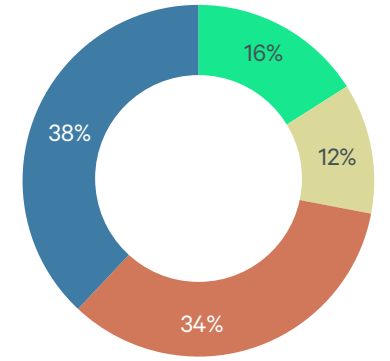


¹ CBRE's law firm clients & prospects, and Law Firm Practice Group content subscribers were invited to participate, with only one response per firm included. Source: CBRE Americas Consulting and Law Firm Practice Group, 2026.

Response Geography

2026's survey received 143 responses, half in the U.S. only and half with a global presence. Responses represent firms headquartered in 25 U.S. states, 24 firms in the U.K. and six in Canada. The HQ markets with the highest representation are London, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and Boston.

- Single office
- Regional offices
- National offices
- Multinational offices



Source: CBRE Americas Consulting and Law Firm Practice Group, 2026.

Full Survey Report

Available exclusively to survey participants, our full report comprises 30 pages of detailed results, data and observations including:

- The largest data set in the real estate industry, including direct insights from +140 law firm leaders (c-suite, managing partners and real estate leads)
- Results shown by Am Law vs. non-Am Law Firms and select results for the Am Law 50
- YoY data trends since 2023
- Details on shifting metrics for rentable sq. ft./lawyer
- Law firm trends to watch in 2026

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Contacts

Josh Bank

Executive Managing Director
Law Firm Practice Group Leader
Josh.Bank@cbre.com

Emily Botello

Managing Director
Americas Consulting
Emily.Botello@cbre.com

Sarah Gibbons-Scheets

Managing Director
Americas Consulting
Sarah.Gibbons@cbre.com

Kasia Kolpa-Zarowska

Director
Americas Consulting
Kasia.KolpaZarowska@cbre.com

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