



**Federation of  
Ontario Law  
Associations**

**The Voice of the Practising Lawyer**

## **Ivey Field Project**

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## Issue 1: Greying of the Bar

Stems from the lack of young legal talent entering rural regions of Ontario.

As senior lawyers retire they look for younger talent to take over. However, there is a lack of young talent who are attracted to these cities.

FOLA has an overarching goal to maintain access to justice and support lawyers across Ontario, a goal not met unless lawyers can provide services in rural regions.

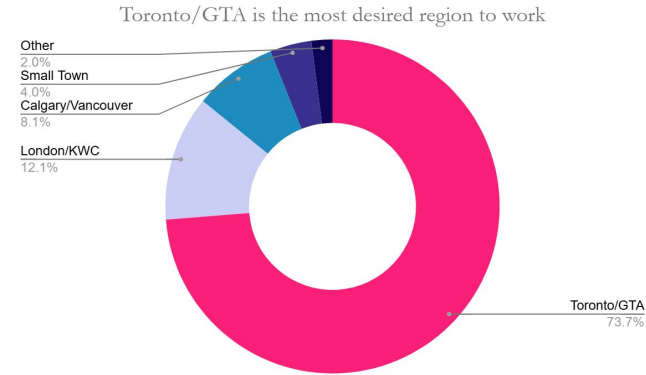


# Primary Research: Greying of the Bar in Rural Areas

Insights into Factors Motivating Young Lawyers Decisions of Where to Work (Geographically)

## Research Methodology

- **Microsoft Forms Survey**
- Young Lawyers - law students, articling students, and lawyers within their first 5 years of call.
- **49** Responses from a diverse pool of young lawyers working and studying in different markets.



## Key Factors

### Pay & Student Debt

Large Toronto firms pay roughly \$1900/week, mid-size often pay close to that range. In rural markets, however, the pay is significantly lower. This disincentivizes students with a large debt loads.

### Lifestyle

Lifestyle in Toronto/major markets is often more appealing to youth.

### Career Opportunity

There is perceived less mentorship and narrower diversity of clients due to location.

# Secondary Research

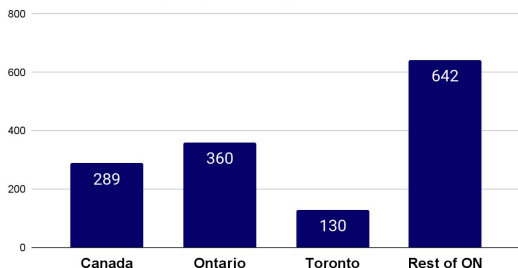
Lawyer Disparity, Aging Lawyers, and Urban Focus Threaten Access to Justice



## Lawyer Distribution

Toronto - People/Lawyer: 130  
Rest of ON - People/Lawyer : 642

Number of People per Lawyer



**High regional disparity** demonstrates there already is a rural shortage of legal professionals

## Aging Population

The average lawyer **retires at age 69**. The **current average age** of Ontario lawyers is **48**.



The **average age nearing retirement** forecasts there is a looming influx of job openings,

## Urban Focus

**82.6%** of **new lawyers** recently called to the bar **choose urban settings**.



Majority of **new lawyers favouring urban areas** worsens rural shortages as openings go unfilled



# Recommendation #1: The Current Formal Recruit Process

Currently, the major markets in Canada (Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, and London) have a formalized recruiting process governed by the Law Society.

## The Formal Recruiting Process

All participating firms follow the same pre-established timeline

Uniform application process through viRecruit

Centralized communication between law schools, firms and candidates

Formalized selection procedure

## Results of the Formal Recruit

# of 2L Students in Ontario

1,914

# of students hired in Toronto

339

# of Students Looking After

1,575

# Recommendation #1: Our Proposed Formal Recruit Process



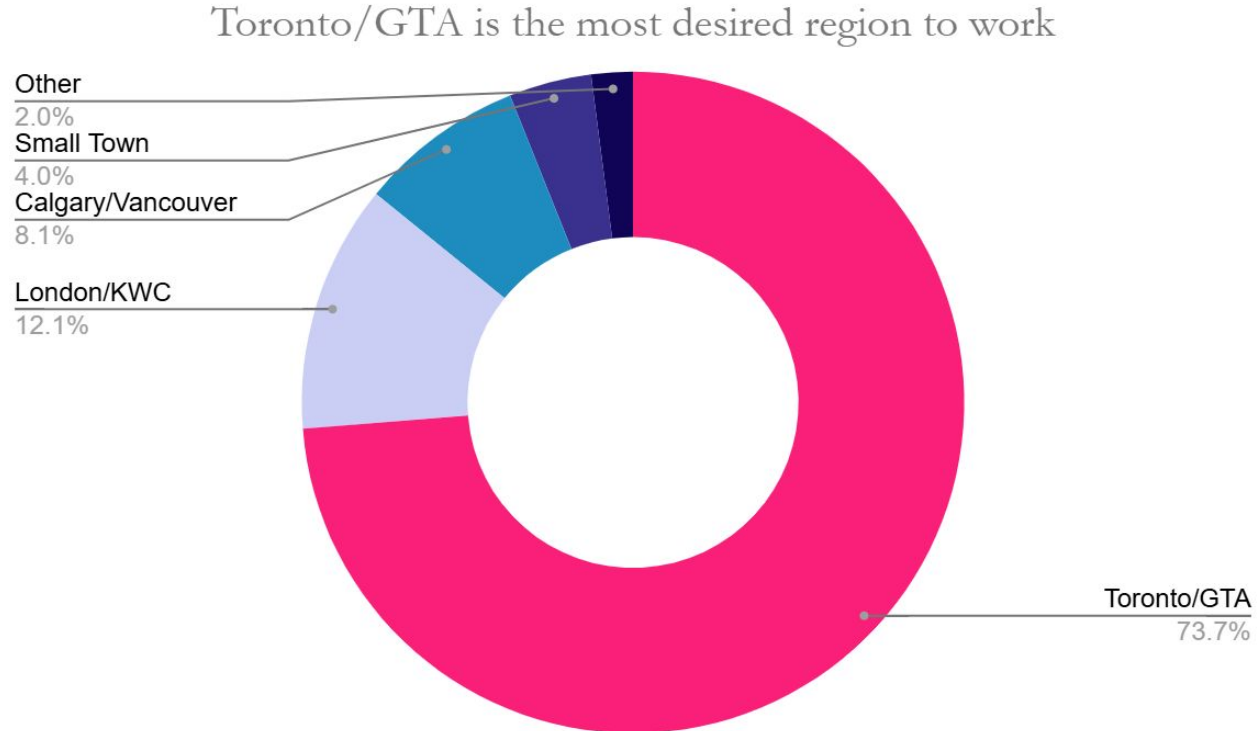
# Appendix





# Primary Research - Desired Regions to Work

Most common regions where young lawyers wish to work

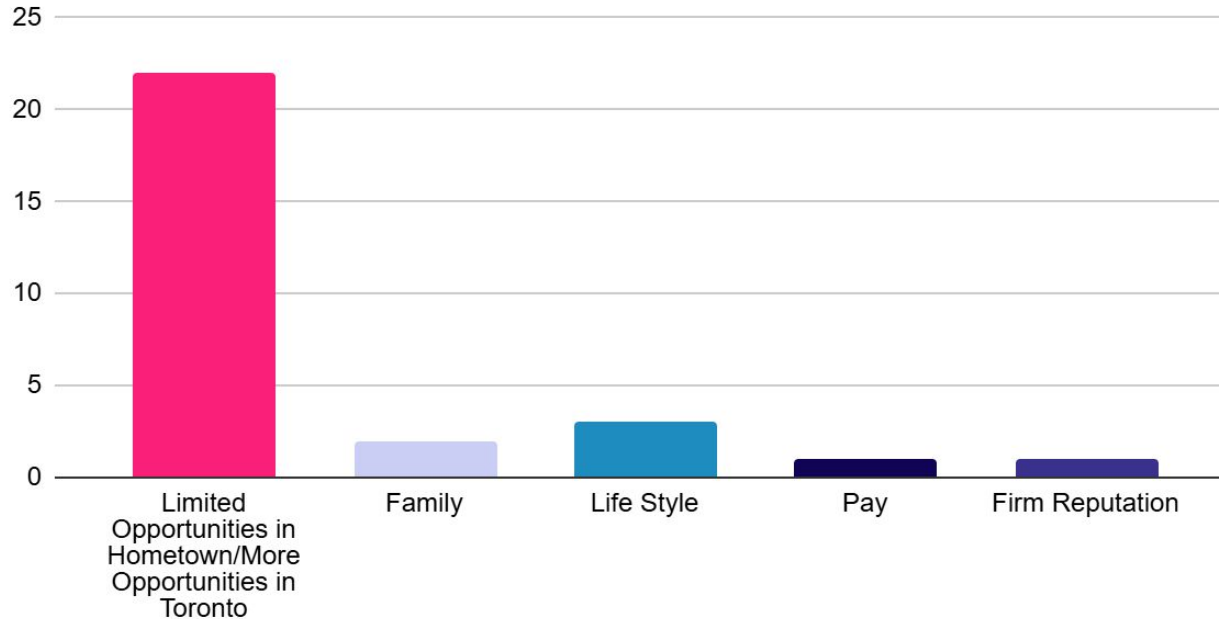




# Primary Research - Lack of Opportunities

Reasons why young lawyers do not wish to work in their hometowns

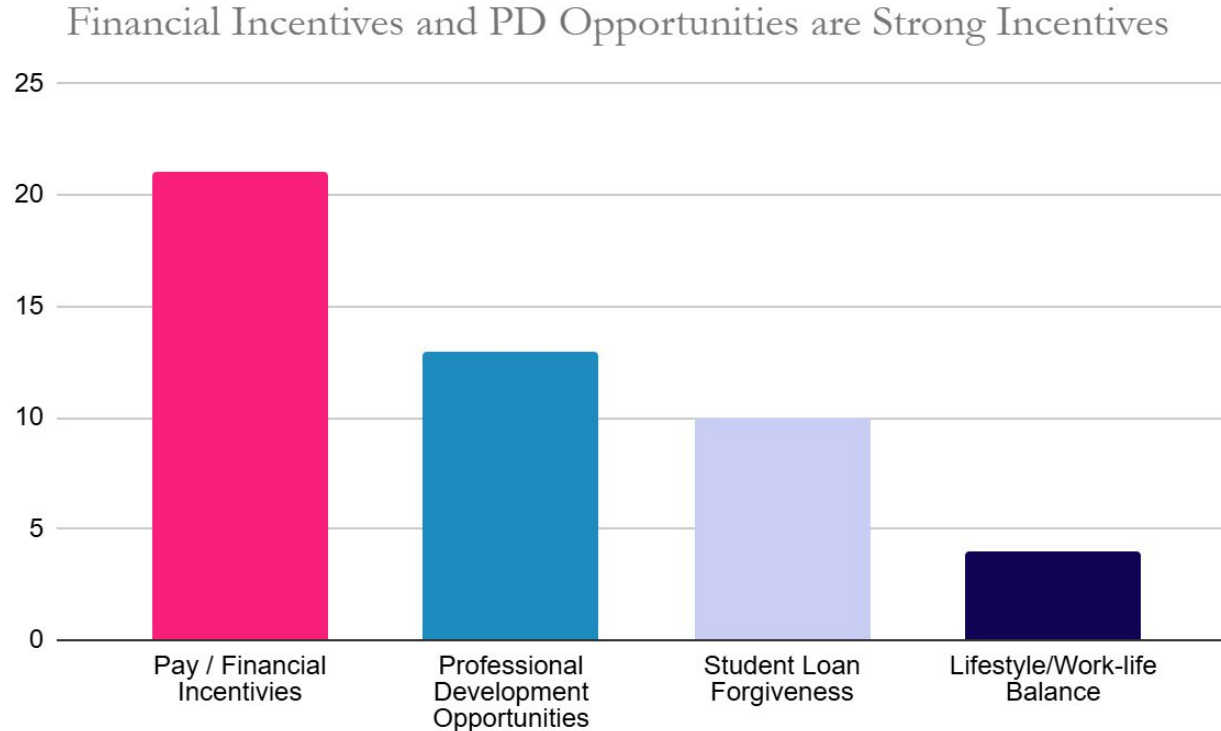
Lack of Opportunities is the most Prominent Reason why Young Lawyers do not work in their Hometowns.





# Primary Research - Lack of Opportunities

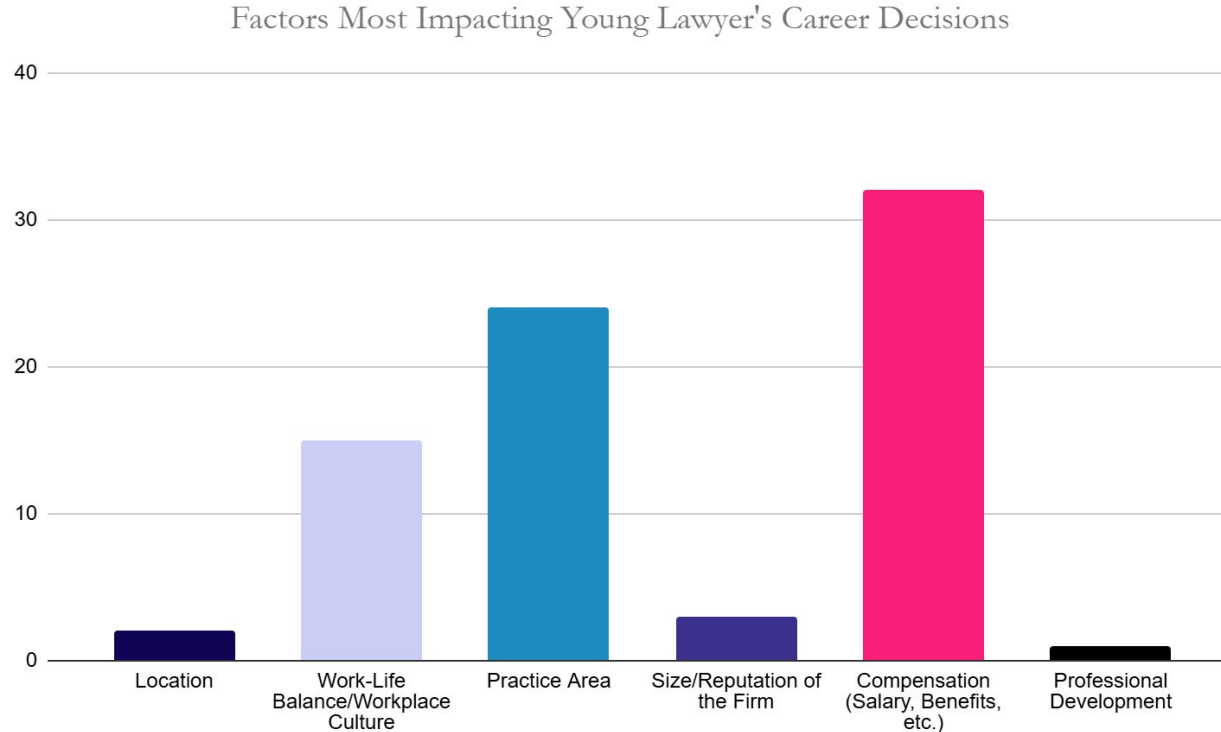
Factors that would incentivize young lawyers to pursue working in rural regions





# Primary Research - Lack of Opportunities

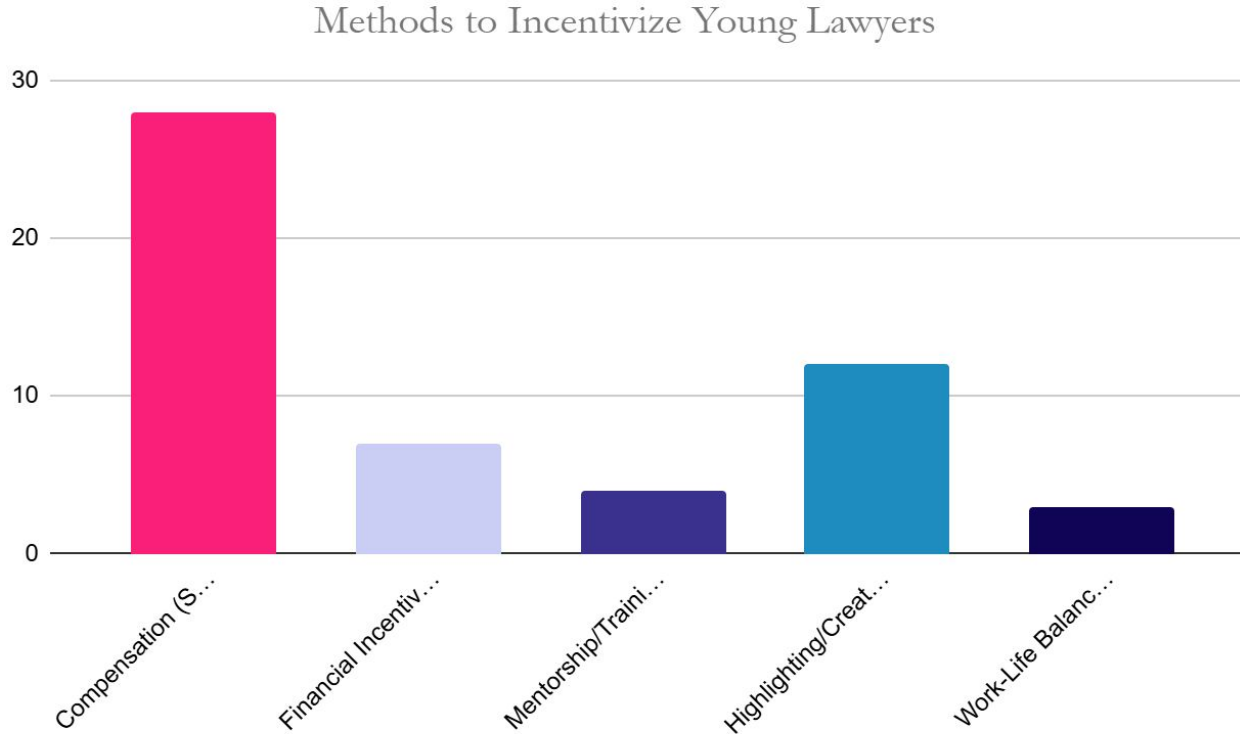
Factors that have the most impact on young lawyer's career decisions





# Primary Research - Lack of Opportunities

Suggestions to Incentivize Young Lawyers





# Primary Research - Lack of Opportunities

## Other Relevant Factors

- Spouse/Partner's Employment
- Housing Availability
- Distance from Family & Friends
- Cost of Living / General Affordability
- Community, Transportation, and Infrastructure
- Opportunity for Family
- Professional Development
- Lifestyle Preferences
- General Disinterest in Rural Life



# Historical Context in Rural Legal Services (Pre-2010)

## Stable Legal Workforce

Lawyers trained locally and formed community ties where they grew up

## Less Urban Migration influences

Localized practices, lower cost of education and positive social perception of working in a small town contributed to the stability of legal services.

Trend	Historically	Post 2010- Emerging Issues
Demographic Trend	-Most lawyers in rural areas were sole practitioners or part of community originated small firms. Retiring lawyers were replaced by active lawyers who started to practice in the 1970s and 1980s.	-Service Gaps growing in family and criminal law practices as aging lawyers leave the profession without successors. <i>*Young lawyers have preferred big city markets where mentorship opportunities, salary and lifestyle variety are higher</i>
Economic Trend	-Legal education costs were lower, enabling graduates to work in rural areas without significant financial pressure.	-Rising tuition costs and increasing student debt are pressuring students to larger markets where there are larger volumes of files and thus salaries. <i>*Rural firms cannot compete financially</i>
Population Trend	-Lower rates of urbanization allowed younger generations to stay within rural communities for education and work opportunities.	-General urbanization of cities have drawn younger populations to cities for career development and lifestyle variety. <i>*Challenging for Rural areas to retain young professionals</i>

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## Greying of the Bar



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