



ON THE HORIZON

# A 2025 AFRICAN GC PERSPECTIVE

Afriwise



**ACGC**  
African Corporate & Government  
Counsel Forum

RESEARCH REPORT



# CONTENTS

## INTRO

FOREWORD	4
ORGANISERS AND EDITORS	7
ABOUT ACGC / ABOUT AFRIWISE	8
EXPERT COMMENTATORS	9

## PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND & DEMOGRAPHICS

1. OPERATING REGIONS ACROSS AFRICA	12
2. ROLE DEFINITION AND SCOPE	13
3. TENURE IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION	13
4. ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES BEYOND LEGAL DUTIES	14
5. INDUSTRY/SECTOR OF OPERATION	14
6. COMPANY CLASSIFICATION	14

## STRATEGIC FOCUS & PRIORITIES

7. ANTICIPATED LEGAL CHALLENGES FOR 2025 AND BEYOND	16
8. KEY CHALLENGES FACING IN-HOUSE COUNSEL IN YOUR COUNTRY	19
9. PRIMARY AREAS OF FOCUS DURING A TYPICAL MONTH	22
10. MAJOR DISRUPTORS IMPACTING YOUR ROLE IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS	22
11. TOP STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR 2025	25

## REGIONAL OPERATIONS & REGULATORY STRATEGY

12. ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES	28
13. NAVIGATING IN-COUNTRY AND REGIONAL REGULATIONS	28
14. ANTICIPATED REGULATORY SHIFTS AMID THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE	29
15. TAILORING LEGAL STRATEGIES TO DIVERSE AFRICAN CONTEXTS	32
16. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPREHENSIVE IN-COUNTRY LEGAL INTELLIGENCE	33
17. TOOLS FOR MANAGING RAPID REGULATORY CHANGE	34

## FUTURE SKILLS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

18. ESSENTIAL LEGAL SKILLS FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS	36
19. CRITICAL NON-LEGAL SKILLS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS	36

## LEGAL DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS & WELLBEING

20. ENHANCING EFFICIENCY: MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN YOUR LEGAL DEPARTMENT	40
21. KEY TIME-CONSUMING AREAS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS	40
22. ASSESSING WORK-RELATED ANXIETY AND STRESS LEVELS	40
23. STAFFING AND TEAM SIZE OF YOUR LEGAL DEPARTMENT	43
24. STRUCTURE OF YOUR LEGAL TEAM	43
25. CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT OF LEGAL STAFF	43
26. PROJECTED GROWTH OF YOUR IN-HOUSE LEGAL TEAM OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS	44
27. PRESENCE OF LEGAL TEAMS IN OTHER AFRICAN JURISDICTIONS	44

## ORGANISATIONAL & FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

28. OVERALL BUSINESS ANNUAL TURNOVER	46
29. ANNUAL EXPENDITURE ON THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT	46
30. SHARE OF THE LEGAL BUDGET ALLOCATED TO EXTERNAL SERVICES	47
31. TOP INVESTMENT PRIORITIES IN LEGAL TECHNOLOGY FOR 2025 AND BEYOND	47
32. AREAS EXPECTED TO SEE INCREASED ACTIVITY IN THE COMING YEAR	50
33. EXPERIENCING PRESSURE TO IMPLEMENT STRICTER INTERNATIONAL POLICIES	50

## ENGAGING WITH EXTERNAL COUNSEL

34. KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING OUTSIDE COUNSEL	55
35. AREAS MOST LIKELY TO BE OUTSOURCED BY YOUR LEGAL DEPARTMENT	57

### Background

This report presents the most comprehensive study to date on the challenges, disruptions, and opportunities facing in-house counsel across Africa. Drawing on responses from over 129 legal professionals spanning 41 African countries, our research provides an unparalleled insight into the realities on the ground for General Counsels. In addition to the survey data, we have incorporated commentary from more than 20 industry experts, enriching our findings and providing a well-rounded perspective on the evolving legal landscape across the continent.

### Disclaimer

The survey was open to all General Counsels across Africa, and every response was completely anonymized to ensure the privacy of all participants. The insights and perspectives presented in this report reflect the views of the surveyed legal professionals and do not represent the official positions or opinions of ACGC or Afriwise. This study is intended solely to map the African perspective and contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the region's legal industry.

This report is intended for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data presented, the findings are based on survey responses and expert commentary collected from legal professionals across Africa. As such, the data is provided "as is," without any guarantees or representations regarding its completeness, accuracy, or suitability for any particular purpose. Neither Afriwise NV nor ACGC shall be held liable for any decisions, actions, or outcomes resulting from the use of the information contained in this report.

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# FOREWORD

On behalf of the African Corporate & Government Counsel Forum, we are delighted to present, "On The Horizon: A 2025 African GC Perspective." This comprehensive study, undertaken in collaboration with our partners, Afriwise, is the first in-depth survey on the evolving landscape of in-house legal counsel across the African continent.

This is the most extensive survey ever conducted on African in-house counsel, with an unprecedented number of General Counsel contributing their insights. No previous study has gathered this level of participation, making this report the definitive benchmark for understanding the evolving role of GCs across the continent.

In an era marked by rapid regulatory changes, technological advancements, and economic fluctuations, the role of General Counsel (GC) has never been more critical. This report captures the voices of in-house legal professionals from diverse industries, offering a panoramic view of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Study findings highlight the increasing complexity of legal responsibilities, with many GCs now wearing multiple hats, balancing core legal duties with broader strategic roles. The data underscores the pressing need for legal departments to integrate cutting-edge technology, enhance regulatory compliance, and navigate the intricate web of cross-border regulations.

One of the most striking revelations is the emphasis on innovation and adaptability.

“As we move further into 2025, the ability to leverage legal technology, manage regulatory risks, and foster strong relationships with governments and regulators will be paramount.”

This is a reflection of the increasing pressure to implement stricter policies based on international standards, particularly in areas like ESG, data protection, and anti-money laundering compliance but also the new opportunities for cross-border trade and investment across the continent. The report also sheds light on the growing importance of non-legal skills such as financial acumen, effective communication, and

leadership, which are essential for GCs to thrive in their multifaceted roles.

This survey is not just a reflection of the current state of in-house legal counsel in Africa but a roadmap for the future. The scale and reach of this research will ensure that its findings set the standard for discussions on the future of legal leadership in Africa. It provides actionable insights and strategic recommendations that will empower legal professionals to navigate the complexities of their roles with confidence and foresight.

Many thanks to Afriwise for their valuable support and partnership and to all the participants who contributed their time and perspectives. Together, we are shaping the future of legal counsel in Africa, ensuring that the in-house legal professional is well-equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow.



**Cynthia Lareine**  
Director and Co-Founder, ACGC



**Nankunda Katangaza**  
Director and Co-Founder, ACGC

# AFRICAN GENERAL COUNSEL AT THE CROSSROADS OF COMPLEXITY AND TRANSFORMATION



**by Steven De Backer,**  
Founder and CEO of Afriwise

I've spent almost two decades practicing law, working across Africa, and engaging with legal professionals at every level - whether in private practice, corporate legal teams, or policymaking circles. But over the years, one truth became increasingly clear: the legal profession in Africa was struggling with deep-rooted inefficiencies, regulatory complexity, and a fundamental lack of access to reliable, structured legal intelligence. I realized that the system was broken - not for lack of talent or expertise, but because in-house legal teams were drowning in complexity without the right tools to navigate it. That realization led me to step away from my legal career and build Afriwise - a company born out of a simple yet powerful belief: access to accurate, up-to-date legal intelligence is crucial for every business operating in Africa.

This is why the 2025 African GC Perspective survey, conducted by Afriwise in collaboration with ACGC, resonates so deeply with me. It confirms what I've known for years - African in-house legal teams are being asked to do more with less, in an environment where regulation is unpredictable, cross-border compliance is a maze, and technology adoption is lagging far behind the need.

The survey results are a wake-up call - but also a

roadmap for how we can change the future of legal operations in Africa.

## Regulatory Uncertainty: The Defining Challenge of In-House Legal Teams

If there's one dominant theme from the survey, it's this: in-house legal teams in Africa are overwhelmed by regulatory complexity.

- 56% of respondents cited changing/increasing regulatory demands as their top challenge.
- 53% said regulatory change was one of the biggest disruptors to their legal function over the past year.

This doesn't surprise me.

“Africa's regulatory landscape is one of the most dynamic and fragmented in the world.”

Laws are evolving rapidly, yet there is little uniformity across jurisdictions. Compliance requirements shift with political changes, and in many cases, regulatory updates are not easily accessible, making it difficult for legal teams to keep up. What did surprise me, however, was this: Only 19% of GCs are using tools that provide a "bird's eye view" of their legal and regulatory obligations across jurisdictions.

I find this staggering. The legal profession in Africa is caught in a paradox: we acknowledge the need for better regulatory tracking and intelligence, yet most legal teams are still relying on manual processes, external counsel, or outdated information sources.

This is exactly the kind of problem that led me to start Afriwise in the first place.

“We cannot expect legal teams to thrive in Africa if they don't have access to real-time, structured legal intelligence and become more data driven.”

## Technology and Legal Intelligence: A Widening Gap Between Recognition and Action

One of the most perplexing findings in the survey is how legal teams in Africa acknowledge the importance of legal technology but are failing to adopt it.

- 70% of respondents said having access to in-country legal intelligence is "extremely important".
- Yet, the same percentage, 70%, said they do not use any tools to manage regulatory change.



This contradiction points to a fundamental issue in how legal departments are structured and funded in Africa. Could it be that the legal function is still perceived in Africa as a cost center rather than a value driver? This could explain why investment in legal technology seems to be often deprioritized. But this contradicts the finding discussed below, namely that in-house legal departments play an increasingly important role within the company.

In any event, here's the reality: the current way of working is unsustainable. Legal teams cannot keep relying on external counsel for every regulatory update. They cannot afford to track compliance manually across multiple jurisdictions. And they cannot keep using outdated contract management systems while their businesses are moving toward digital transformation.

Change is coming - but it won't happen unless we, as legal professionals, push for it.

**The Expanding Role of General Counsel: Lawyers as Business Enablers**

Another key takeaway from the survey is that the role of General Counsel in Africa has expanded far beyond traditional legal responsibilities.

- 83% of GCs also manage compliance.
- 41% oversee ethics, and 37% handle government relations.
- More than 75% of legal teams are expected to provide input across various business functions.

This shift reflects a global trend - but in Africa, it's even more pronounced. Here, legal teams are often the first line of defence in managing business risks, government relations, and regulatory compliance.

While definitely an excellent development, this also comes at a cost for in-house legal departments. I've had countless conversations with GCs who feel stretched thin - expected to be lawyers, risk managers, compliance officers, and business strategists, all while operating in understaffed teams with limited budgets. The survey confirms this struggle:

- 48% of legal teams said they are understaffed.
- 53% reported increased stress and anxiety over the past year.

The message is clear for board members and CEO's: your GCs need more support!

**How Africa's Legal Landscape Differs from the Rest of the World**

While many of these trends are global, there are Africa-specific challenges that make the GC role even more complex:

- Regulatory Fragmentation: Unlike Europe or North America, where regulatory harmonization

is well advanced, Africa still has vastly different legal frameworks across its 54 countries.

- Lack of Regional Legal Presence: The survey revealed that the majority of companies do not have lawyers on the ground in all African jurisdictions they are active in or are short-staffed on the ground. This means that lots of GCs are forced to manage cross-border compliance without in-house expertise, relying instead on external counsel or informal networks.
- Budget Constraints: Globally, in-house legal teams are investing heavily in AI, automation, and compliance tools. But in Africa, 56% of respondents operate on an annual expense budget of less than \$150,000. This makes large-scale digital transformation nearly impossible - at least in the short term.
- External Pressures from Global Standards: 42% of GCs feel pressured to comply with international standards that are stricter than local laws, particularly in ESG, anti-corruption, and data protection.

**Looking Ahead: The Future of the African GC**

So, what's next? What does the future of the African GC look like?

If this survey tells us anything, it's that legal teams in Africa are at an inflection point. The challenges are real, but so are the opportunities.

- Legal technology adoption must accelerate - Manual processes are no longer sustainable. African legal teams must push for better digital solutions tailored for their specific needs.
- Regulatory intelligence is no longer optional - With 79% of GCs prioritizing compliance, companies must invest in real-time, structured legal intelligence tools to manage risk effectively.
- Legal teams need a seat at the strategy table - GCs are no longer just legal advisors; they are business enablers, risk mitigators, and policy influencers. Companies that integrate legal leadership into strategic decision-making will have a competitive edge.

Through innovation, intelligence, and collaboration, we can create a legal ecosystem that truly supports business growth, risk management, and regulatory compliance.

***The role of the African GC is evolving. The question is: are we ready to evolve with it?***

ORGANISERS AND EDITORS

This report is the result of months of dedicated research, collaboration, and analysis by a team committed to mapping the perspectives of General Counsels and in-house legal professionals across Africa. From the initial design of the survey to its distribution, data collection, and in-depth analysis, every step of this process has been thoughtfully executed to ensure that this report provides meaningful insights into the challenges, opportunities, and evolving role of in-house counsel on the continent.

Our team has worked tirelessly to bring together the voices of legal professionals from across 41 African countries, translating their experiences into a comprehensive and data-driven report. We extend our gratitude to all contributors, survey participants, and expert commentators who have played a role in shaping this invaluable resource for the African legal industry. We also give special mention to our organisers and editors of this research report, without whom this would not have been possible.



**Cynthia Lareine**  
Director and Co-Founder, ACGC



**Nankunda Katangaza**  
Director and Co-Founder, ACGC



**Jessica Knight**  
Head of Marketing, Afriwise



**Oladimeji Balogun**  
Community & Marketing Manager, ACGC



**Marzanne van den Berg**  
Law Firm Relations Manager, Afriwise



**Ronelle Pather**  
Marketing Coordinator, Afriwise



**Glenda Benson**  
Engagement and BD Lead, Afriwise



## ABOUT ACGC

ACGC is a professional association that aims to serve the professional needs of Africa's in-house legal community by providing a network, information, resources, training, and other services that support their roles in business and government across the continent.

Our growing community supports almost 1500+ in-house counsel across the continent of Africa. The objective of ACGC is to equip in-house lawyers working in corporates and the public sector with key knowledge and insights on important issues that build their capacity to deliver effectively in their positions.

## Afriwise

## ABOUT AFRIWISE

Afriwise is an award-winning legal intelligence platform, transforming and democratising access to legal and regulatory information across Africa and beyond. At Afriwise, we help organisations, whatever their size, advance their business in Africa and gain a competitive advantage by providing them with business, legal and regulatory intelligence based on technology and human expertise.

Afriwise is the result of years of experience and trust building, through close collaboration with firms across Africa, to give you easy and instant access to the expertise and know-how you need about local markets on the continent. Our collaboration with over 180 law firms on the continent and coverage spanning 40+ countries is further testimony of our team's deep links within Africa.

By leveraging our unparalleled database, cutting-edge NLP technology, in-house expertise, and extensive network we help solve our clients' most pressing legal and regulatory challenges.

## EXPERT COMMENTATORS



**Abidemi Ademola**  
Legal Director & Company  
Secretary, Guinness Nigeria Plc



**Adeola Olumeyan**  
Executive Director, EMET Hill



**Allan Rwakakooko**  
Head of Legal Services,  
Umeme Ltd



**Anastasia Posokhov**  
Regional Head of Legal: Africa,  
Middle East and Asia, Aggreko



**Cynthia Lareine**  
Director and Co-Founder,  
ACGC



**Daphine Ampumaza**  
Associate Legal Officer, UN  
Regional Service Centre  
Entebbe (RSCE)



**Georgina Ogalo**  
Senior Legal Counsel, Airtel  
Africa plc



**Godwin-Amenyinu**  
In-House Counsel for Africa,  
Inter-Con Security Systems



**Iyiola Alokolaro-Oyefeso**  
Group Head Legal Services,  
AA&R Investment Group



**Mulisa Thovhakale**  
Regional Legal Counsel – South  
Africa, Stryker



**Nankunda Katangaza**  
Director and Co-Founder,  
ACGC



**Olynda Nyamanhindi**  
Group Head of Legal, CBRE  
Excellerate



**Onyedikachi Obi**  
Legal/Compliance Officer,  
Glover



**Ozim Ibeziako**  
Executive General Counsel,  
Sub-Saharan Africa,  
GE Vernova



**Pat Mbugua**  
Head, Legal, Client Coverage,  
CCIB, East Africa at Standard  
Chartered Bank Kenya Limited



**Steven De Backer**  
CEO and Founder, Afriwise



**Sandra Adu-Gyamfi**  
General Counsel & Company  
Secretary, Danone



**Tayo Mustapha**  
Senior Counsel, Moniepoint



**Velma Okoth**  
Senior Legal Counsel, KCB  
Bank Group



**Yewande Bisiolu**  
Legal Officer, FCCPC Nigeria



**Zainab Bachoo**  
Chief Legal Officer, BulkStream  
Limited



# PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND & DEMOGRAPHICS

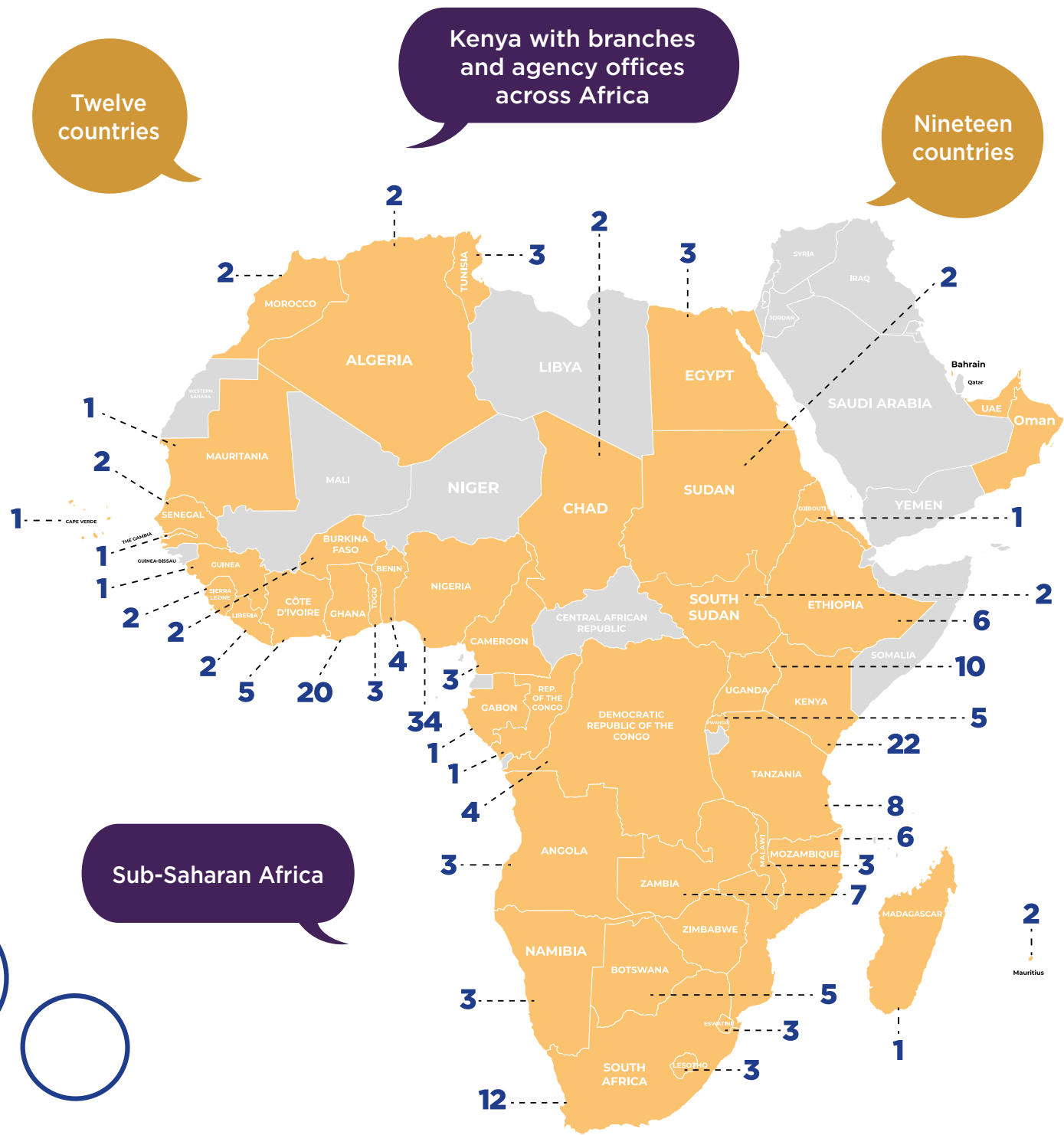
- 1 OPERATING REGIONS ACROSS AFRICA
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- 5 INDUSTRY/SECTOR OF OPERATION
- 6 COMPANY CLASSIFICATION

*The opinions expressed in the commentaries are solely those of the individuals and do not reflect the views of the organizations or entities they are affiliated with. Nor do they represent the views of ACGC or Afriwise as administrators and organisers of this research.*



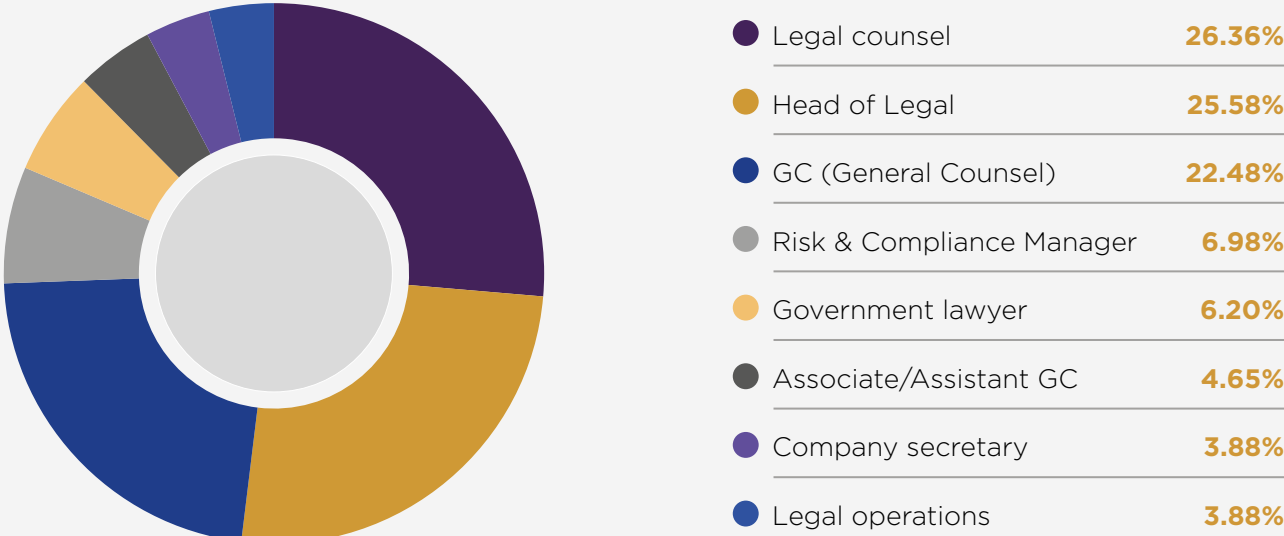


➤ Q1: Which country(ies) across Africa do you operate in?



Nigeria	34	Côte d'Ivoire	5	Chad	2	Madagascar	1
Kenya	22	Benin	4	Sudan	2	Gabon	1
Ghana	20	Togo	3	South Sudan	2	Congo	1
South Africa	12	Cameroon	3	Mauritius	2	Gambia	1
Uganda	10	Tunisia	3	Morocco	2	Djibouti	1
Tanzania	8	Malawi	3	Sierra Leone	2	Equatorial Guinea	1
Zambia	7	Angola	3	Liberia	2	Mauritania	1
Ethiopia	6	Lesotho	3	Algeria	2	Cape Verde	1
Mozambique	6	Namibia	3	DRC	4	Dominican Republic (non-African country, mentioned once)	
Botswana	5	Eswatini	3	Egypt	3		
Rwanda	5	Burkina Faso	2	Senegal	2		

➤ Q2: Which of the following best describes your role?

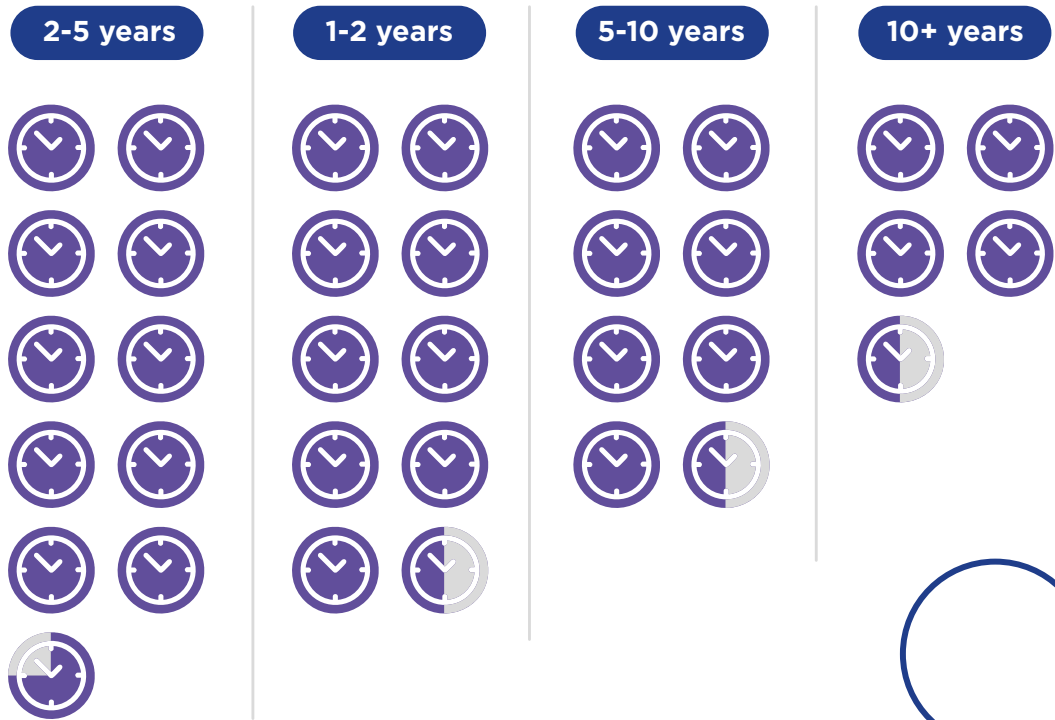


Other answers:

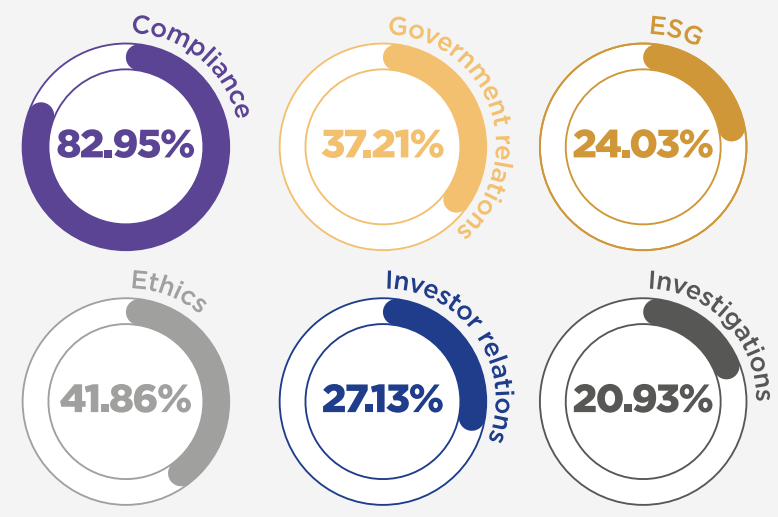
General Counsel & Company Secretary | Legal Director & Company Secretary | Head Legal and Business Operations Lawyer | Regional Legal Director | Legal Manager | Vice President & Head, Legal & Compliance | Regional Counsel Government Lawyer | Compliance Officer | General Manager

➤ Q3: How long have you been in your current role?

Total Number of Responses: 129 ⌚ = 4



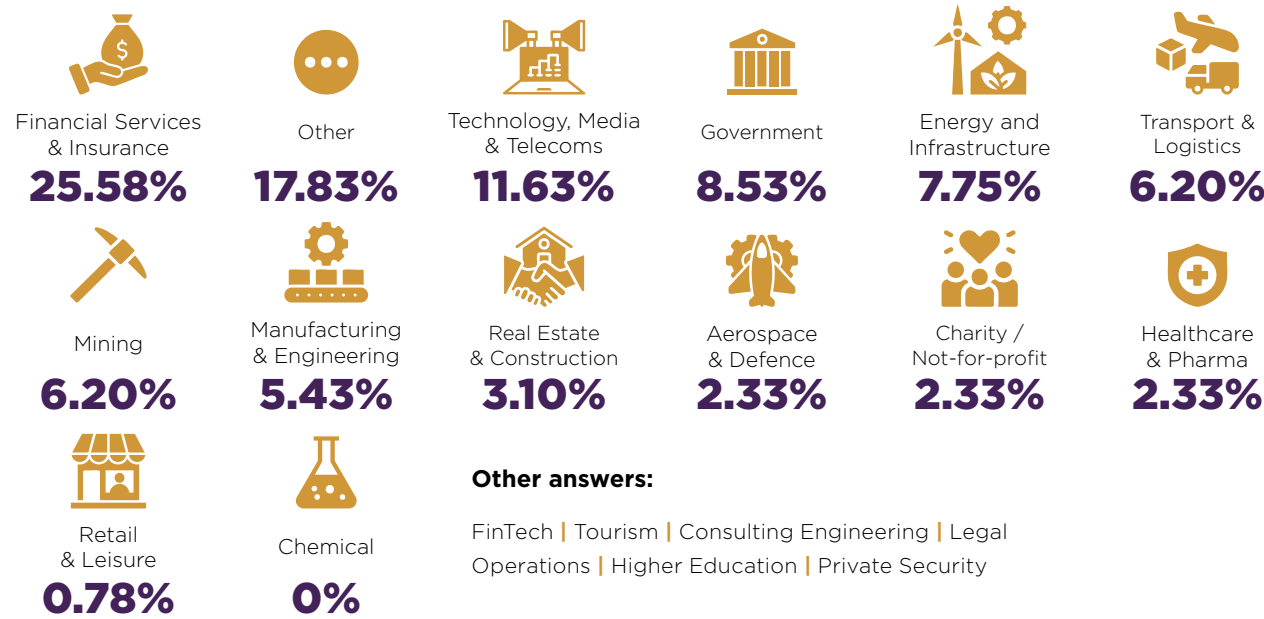
➤ **Q4: In addition to your legal responsibilities, do you have other accountabilities?**



**Other answers:**

- Dispute Resolution
- Contract Lifecycle Management
- Company Secretarial functions
- Corporate Governance
- Supply Chain Management
- Corporate Security and Brand protection
- Brand, Marketing & Communications
- Risk Management
- Strategic Support
- Data Protection & Privacy
- Credit
- Business Development

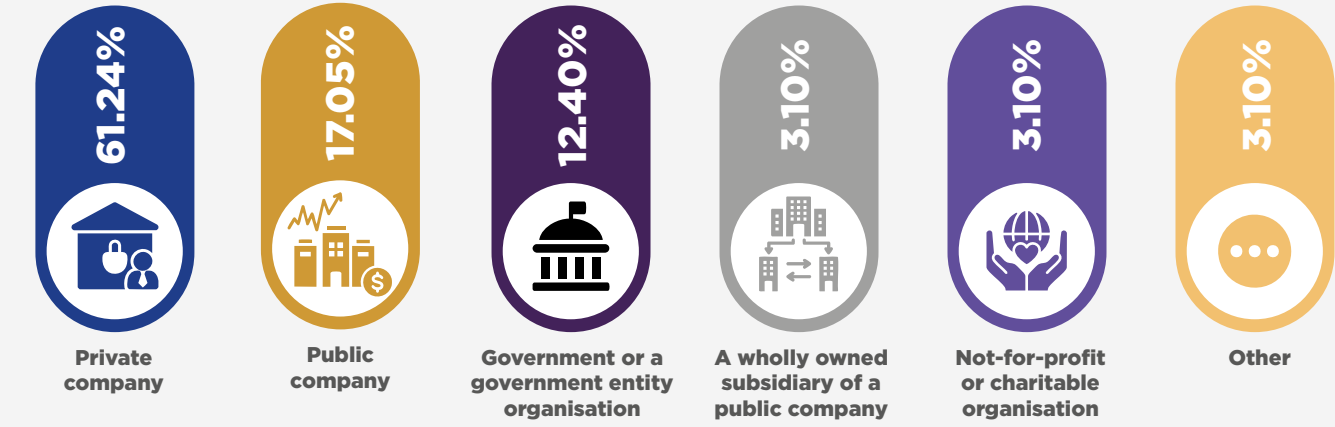
➤ **Q5: In which industry/sector does your company operate?**



**Other answers:**

FinTech | Tourism | Consulting Engineering | Legal Operations | Higher Education | Private Security

➤ **Q6: Which of these best describes your company?**



2

STRATEGIC FOCUS  
& PRIORITIES

7

ANTICIPATED LEGAL CHALLENGES FOR 2025  
AND BEYOND

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KEY CHALLENGES FACING IN-HOUSE COUNSEL  
IN YOUR COUNTRY

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PRIMARY AREAS OF FOCUS DURING A TYPICAL MONTH

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MAJOR DISRUPTORS IMPACTING YOUR ROLE IN THE LAST  
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TOP STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR 2025

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15





## ► Q7: The greatest legal challenge I expect to face in 2025 and beyond is?

### COMMENTARY

#### Navigating Legal Challenges in 2025: A Shifting Landscape

the below represents a summary of anonymous respondent data derived from the survey

As African businesses evolve in an increasingly complex environment, legal professionals anticipate a wave of challenges that will define their roles in 2025 and beyond. Among the most pressing concerns is **regulatory uncertainty**, with respondents highlighting the ever-changing legal frameworks across multiple jurisdictions. The rapid advancement of **technology and artificial intelligence (AI)** also poses significant challenges, particularly in areas of data privacy, cybersecurity, and automation of legal processes. While AI presents opportunities for efficiency, it also raises questions around compliance, ethical considerations, and job displacement.

**Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance** is another critical area, with increasing regulatory scrutiny on sustainability, corporate governance, and responsible business practices. Many legal teams foresee difficulties in aligning their organizations with both local and international ESG requirements while managing rising compliance costs.

Additionally, respondents noted the growing pressure to **do more with fewer resources**, as legal

budgets shrink while workloads expand. Cost-cutting measures, coupled with rising external legal fees, place significant strain on in-house legal teams.

Finally, political and economic instability remains a concern, with several respondents pointing to the **impact of elections, leadership changes, and shifting policies** on regulatory enforcement and business continuity. These uncertainties, combined with an expanding digital economy, will require legal professionals to remain agile, proactive, and innovative to navigate the evolving landscape successfully.

In 2025, the role of legal counsel will extend beyond compliance; it will demand strategic foresight, technological adaptability, and a keen understanding of global and regional trends.



#### Velma Okoth

Senior Legal Counsel, KCB Bank Group

The legal landscape in 2025 and beyond is poised for transformation, driven largely by rapid technological advancements and evolving consumer expectations. One of the most prominent challenges that legal departments in the banking and finance sectors will face is navigating the complexities of emerging technologies, particularly in the areas of digital currencies and blockchain. These technologies, while offering significant potential for innovation, also bring regulatory and compliance risks that must be addressed proactively.

As digital currencies and blockchain technologies continue to disrupt traditional financial systems, financial institutions and regulators must work closely to build frameworks that address both the opportunities and risks these innovations present. For example, the Central Bank of Kenya has yet to develop a comprehensive regulatory approach for digital currencies, creating uncertainty for financial institutions that are already dealing with increasing consumer adoption of these technologies. In response, we must stay agile and forward-looking, by developing policies that not only ensure compliance with existing financial regulations but also allow for the seamless integration of these technologies. A practical strategy might include collaborating with tech firms to pilot blockchain-based solutions while simultaneously lobbying for clear regulatory guidelines from the Central Bank of Kenya.

For instance, the European Union has already begun to take steps toward regulating digital assets with the Markets in Crypto-assets Regulation (MiCA). This regulation aims to create a clear legal framework for crypto-assets, enhancing consumer protection and market stability. By keeping an eye on such



#### Yewande Bisiolu

Legal Officer, FCCPC Nigeria

The greatest legal challenge I expect to face in 2025 and beyond as a public sector lawyer is keeping up with the fast-paced, rapidly evolving nature of technological trends that are shaping economic laws and regulatory compliance. The very fabric of the public service is wrought in bureaucratic processes that makes it difficult for the public sector to catch up with evolving technological trends in real-time. I also expect to encounter challenges in developing subject-matter expertise in the evolving technological changes and regulatory frameworks.

global initiatives, and consumer patterns in Kenya, we can anticipate similar regulatory trends and be better prepared as lawyers for the challenges of 2025 and beyond.

The rise of FinTech presents another significant challenge for us. As new financial products and services emerge, the need for regulatory compliance becomes even more pressing. We will be tasked with ensuring that these innovations align with existing banking laws and regulations, which may be ill suited to handle the complexities of modern financial services. For example, once we have proper regulations, we will soon start seeing business-embracing products involving peer-to-peer lending, robo-advisors, or AI-driven credit assessments. This means that we must carefully scrutinize such products and come up with policies and/ or suitable contracts to avoid violations of local and international financial regulations.

One of the strategies I am looking at for addressing this challenge includes developing flexible compliance frameworks that can be quickly adapted as new technologies emerge. For example, incorporating continuous legal education for staff



on emerging financial technologies can ensure that the legal team stays ahead of the curve. Additionally, engaging in strategic partnerships with FinTech startups can provide valuable insight into regulatory gaps and help shape policies that are both forward-thinking and pragmatic.

The rapid growth of digital banking has also led to heightened concerns over data privacy. With customers now globally dispersed and more aware of their rights, we face the challenge of balancing local data protection laws with international privacy standards like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the United States. We must ensure that data privacy policies are not only compliant with local laws but also align with global standards, especially as banks handle vast amounts of personal and financial data.

One of the strategies is to leverage technology to streamline data management and privacy compliance. We must also consider investing in training programs to ensure employees are well-versed in global data privacy laws and their implications for the business.

In my view, the legal challenges in 2025 and beyond will be shaped by rapid technological advancements, evolving consumer expectations, and increased regulatory scrutiny. The legal departments in the banking and finance sectors must adopt agile, forward-looking strategies that address emerging trends such as blockchain, FinTech innovations, ESG compliance, and data privacy. By collaborating with expert external counsel and leveraging new technologies, we can navigate these challenges effectively thereby turning potential risks into growth opportunities.



**Georgina Ogalo**  
Senior Legal Counsel, Airtel Africa plc

The growing compliance requirements with the area of competition law especially with respect to various regional bodies. Companies operating across Africa have to grapple with various regional bodies such as ECOWAS, AfCfta, COMESA and EAC with various competition law requirements for cross-border transactions. This and managing costs as a legal department are the greatest legal challenges for 2025 and beyond.

**Tayo Mustapha**  
Senior Counsel, Moniepoint

One of the greatest legal challenges I foresee for General Counsel (GCs) in 2025 and beyond is adapting to rapidly evolving regulatory frameworks in response to emerging technologies, especially in areas like fintech, digital finance, and AI. The speed at which technology is advancing outpaces the development of regulatory guidelines in many jurisdictions, especially across Africa where the regulatory environment is diverse and often fragmented. A practical example can be seen in the fintech sector, where African countries are at different stages of regulating cryptocurrencies and digital payments.

Balancing compliance with fragmented regulations, managing cross-border legal risks, and adapting to new governance requirements particularly in areas like data privacy, cybersecurity, and ESG standards will demand proactive and strategic legal leadership. To tackle these challenges, GCs will need to play an active role in shaping and responding to regulatory changes, prioritizing regulatory foresight, developing flexible governance frameworks, and leveraging legal technology to streamline compliance. Building strong relationships with regulators will also be critical to navigating change and turning legal challenges into growth opportunities.

**Abidemi Ademola**  
Legal Director & Company Secretary,  
Guinness Nigeria Plc

It is rife to see continued macro-economic pressures across the world and with particular reference to sub-Saharan Africa. The greatest challenge of 2025 for corporates generally and indeed the legal industry is increased scrutiny on capital investment choices and related cost pressure. While Africa has been muted as the next big investment destination, the weak macros, poor governance, currency instability, inflation, insecurity etc. have not been able to unlock investors to optimize their heightened investment aspirations within Africa.

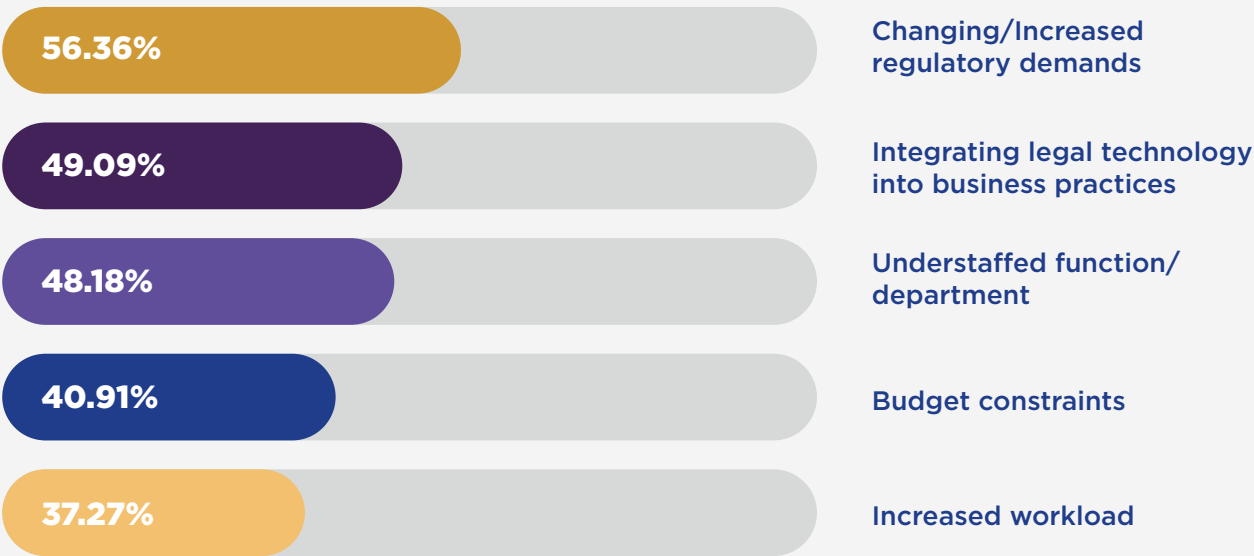
The trends have shown inconsistent capital movement across Africa. While some African economies have been rated stable enough to be beneficiaries of real investments portfolio, others have been rated as red flags and have experienced significant capital flight resulting in enhanced economic pressure within the business operating environment.

The Legal industry is not insulated from this huge impact. It has in fact continued to translate into

tactical responses and amplified scrutiny on costs, chief amongst which being legal costs. Legal expenditure choices are increasingly being interrogated and stripped to the bone. Legal investments decisions are progressively made strictly on affordability and prioritization basis rather than on a need to achieve cutting edge development and improvements in service delivery. The need to justify investments in legal talents, resources, technologies and support have escalated significantly causing GCs and Legal departments to question every line item in the cost base and finding copious reasons to defend them.

I recently witnessed a business decision to migrate from a Board tool strictly based on the cost outlay involved. This trend is expected to continue even beyond 2025 and we as in-house legal community must therefore anticipate, brace up, shelve every fat and create value that ensures Legal remains a fundamental consideration for business investments.

► **Q8: What do you see as the most significant challenges facing in-house lawyers in your country?**



**Other answers:**  
Business Risks | Fraud

**Iyiola Alokolaro-Oyefeso**

Group Head Legal Services, AA&R  
Investment Group

One of the most significant challenges I anticipate in 2025 will be guiding my organization through the intricate legal and regulatory complexities of expanding into a new market. As we do this, my focus will be on identifying and collaborating with experienced legal counsel in the jurisdiction, negotiating favourable terms with local partners, and gaining a deep understanding of the relevant laws that will impact our operations.

A key priority will be developing a robust compliance framework that ensures seamless adherence to local regulations while supporting the organization's broader business objectives.



activities of all functions of an organisation (emphasis on all: HR, procurement, commercial divisions, Finance, Governance, CEO reporting etc). Notwithstanding the efforts to streamline or to create templates etc. a certain level of responsibility still rests with Legal to ensure that all Legal documents (contracts) and legal advisory services are above board and sound. These are daunting tasks. Though the tasks are daunting, the Legal departments are expected to execute their functions with speed and accuracy. As business goals or objectives evolve, so too does legal work, so too does misconduct or HR related matters, so too does legal risks that need expert legal opinions etc.

Though there is a significant and noticeable increase of work as a result of business changes, Legal departments are expected to operate with minimal resources. With Legal, the increase in workload does not mean allocation of resources; however, expectations to execute with speed and accuracy remains.

Further to the above is the budget constraints, Legal may try to innovate i.e bring legal tools or AI initiatives to reduce workload and to ensure speed and accuracy. However, budget restrictions to Legal departments mean we must spend our pennies on projects or fees that are a priority. It is difficult to

prioritise which action item deserves the budget at a given year since there are many needs. Legal Departments always have to fight for budget: budget for fees, budget for services, budget for resources etc. Unavoidably, Legal allocates a huge spend to external counsel (this is of course to ensure proper management of legal risk). A proper budget allows Legal to hire resources, to investigate AI initiatives etc. Because many global organisations deem Legal as a support function, Legal is allocated the budget it "needs" to operate, this is limiting in relation to hiring resources or undertaking innovative initiatives.

Legal nuances across Africa are always related to the business tolerance or nuances. The profitability of an African market determines the level of Legal support that market gets. It is important to mention that each African market has a different regulatory framework. Therefore, most global companies, through jurisdiction and governing laws, try to avoid local laws and make their engagements or contracts governed by South African Laws or UAE Laws (through the commerce arbitration process) – this strategy works, for different reasons in different regions:

- **Nigeria:** Nigeria or the West African Market is mainly supported by volumes; however, the market is very much legal challenging and faces corruption. More to this, the market is flooded with counterfeits. Operating in this market brings about many legal challenges. This market requires a robust compliance system program to make sure that the business does not involve itself in corrupt activities with officials or customers. Further, Regulators in this market tend to abuse powers for purposes of soliciting bribes from organizations; this is where a robust compliance program is necessary to ensure the business always does the right thing. A robust compliance program means budget and it means workload, because it is a consistent and vigorous assessment of business engagement.

Nigeria is also known for frivolous litigations. Meaning customers can drag organizations to court for silly reasons; court process that threaten operating in that market. And of course, judicial corruption is a major problem. For this reason, many Global Organizations prefer arbitration processes in the UAE.

- **Kenya:** Kenya or East Africa is also supported by volumes. Unlike Nigeria, this market is less challenging and corrupt. It is predominantly English and with efficient legal systems; further to this, most South African law firms have presence in Kenya. The presence of South African or global law firms in Kenya means that legal risk in this market can be outsourced as and when required. Outsourcing of legal risk

means budget and obviously managing the external counsel, again budget and workload. To deal with the workload and/or budget issues I think considerable effort must be dedicated into simplifying internal legal process and integration of available AI tools into the operation of Legal. AI tools can simply be a contracting tool that generates contracts for the business with ease, the tool must also have capabilities to monitor the contract (performance and termination dates etc). The tool must be business friendly, meaning it must be easy to interact with.

These sorts of initiatives obviously require budget, therefore Global will is required to undertake these initiatives.

- **Simplification** is one of the most important opportunities that in-house legal counsels should focus on. Simplifications allow business to run with certain minor things and therefore allowing legal time to focus on strategic matters. Therefore, constant efforts need to be dedicated into simplifications.
- **Ways to increase business engagement with Legal:** Business is always busy and Legal is always last in the mind until there is some legal challenge. This is an opportunity. How do we address engagement internally?
- **Automated legal trainings:** Yearly, all organizations run legal training. This does not change and is always the same content. How do we make this better or automate it? How do we make legal training more interactive and more real?
- **Identification and monitoring of legal risks:** Mostly, legal functions keep informed of legal developments through seminars or legal articles or attending conferences. But at times, information gathered in these seminars gets lost. Therefore, we need to find ways to keep up with or monitor legal developments.

**Mulisa Thovhakale**

Regional Legal Counsel – South Africa, Stryker

I have worked in-house in three Global Companies. These Companies adopt different strategies, suited to their commercial goals and business sustainability. However, "Increased workload" and "Budget constraints" are common challenging factors, in my view, across these Companies. Further, in my view, they are intrinsic to "Understaffed functions/department" and "Integrating legal technology into business practices".

Increased workload in Legal departments is primarily because Legal has to cater for business

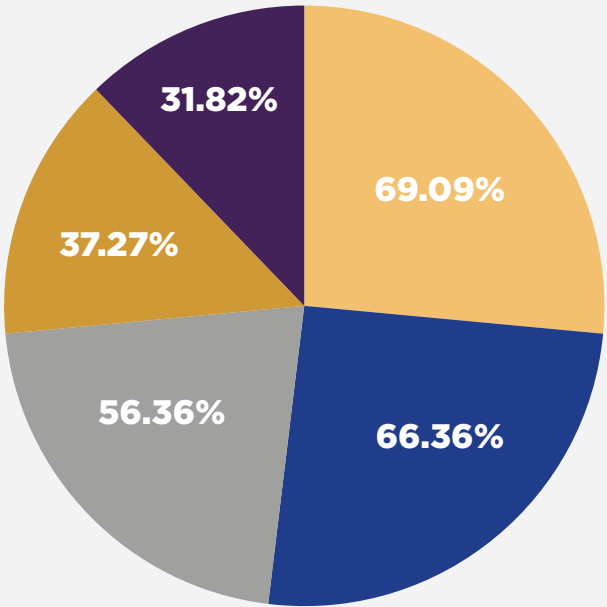


➤ **Q9: What do you spend most of your time on during a typical month? (Pick your top 3)**

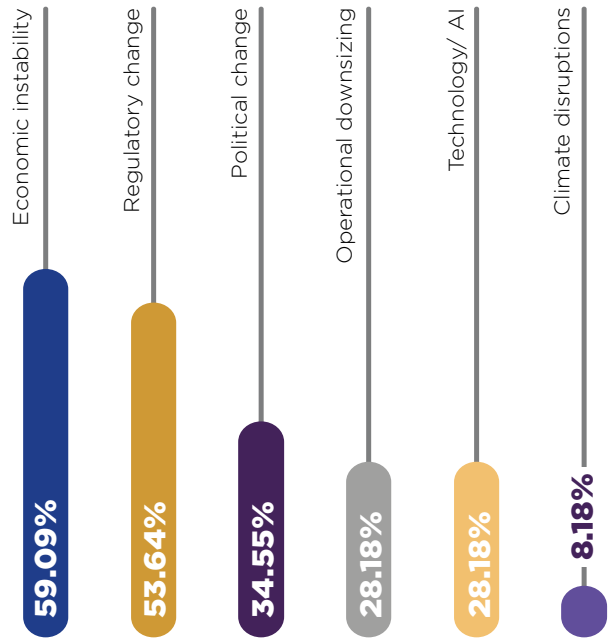
- Core legal issues
- Compliance and regulatory risk management
- Management/administration matters
- Wider organisation strategy
- Legal research & Intelligence gathering

**Other answers:**

- Documentation and Contracts
- Training and Sensitisation



➤ **Q10: What has been the greatest disruptor to your role or department in the last 12 months? (Pick your top 3)**



**Other answers:**

Lack of proper strategy and implementation | Company's financial position | Fraud | Exchange rate risk | Internal reorganisation and shifts | Enforcement by regulators and local government | Increased workload due to business expansion | Organizational strategic change | Political influence | Tax

COMMENTARY



**Anastasia Posokhov**

Regional Head of Legal: Africa, Middle East and Asia, Aggreko

**Economic Instability: A Persistent Challenge**

Economic instability emerged as the most cited disruptor, affecting 59.09% of respondents in the survey. While the impact of economic challenges varies across industries, my role as Regional Head of Legal at Aggreko—a global energy solutions provider—has provided unique insights into this issue. Operating in over 30 African jurisdictions, we often find ourselves in economically fragile environments

where emergency power supply is critical. For us, economic instability is somewhat expected and integrated into our operational model. However, it remains a pervasive backdrop influencing business decisions and client operations across the continent.

**The Interplay of Political and Regulatory Changes**

Political change (34.55%) and regulatory change (53.64%) are intrinsically linked, often creating a dual challenge that profoundly impacts legal and corporate operations. In West Africa, for instance, political instability has directly influenced regulatory landscapes, particularly in resource-dependent sectors like mining. Aggreko's experience across various countries highlights the ripple effects of evolving sector codes and local content regulations. These changes not only affect large local operators but also extend to service providers like us, necessitating constant vigilance and adaptability.

Local content requirements are a prime example of how governments are leveraging regulations to maximize domestic benefits. While this is a fair approach, the implementation often introduces complexities that legal teams must navigate. The need for proactive horizon scanning and leveraging on-the-ground intelligence becomes crucial to staying ahead of these changes.

**Operational Downsizing and Technology: A Mixed Impact**

Operational downsizing was reported by 28.18% of respondents as a disruptor, but Aggreko has been fortunate to experience growth rather than contraction. Despite some organizational restructuring, we have not faced resource constraints within the legal department, allowing us to maintain and even expand our capabilities.

On the technology front, tools like ChatGPT and AI systems are being adopted gradually but have not yet significantly disrupted our daily operations. Legal work often requires a hands-on approach, and while AI holds promise for enhancing efficiency, its integration into our processes remains a work in progress.

**Climate Disruptions: Emerging but Limited Impact**

Only 8.18% of respondents identified climate disruptions as a top disruptor, which aligns with my perspective. While renewable energy is a strategic focus for Aggreko, the broader African context remains less advanced in adopting green energy solutions. Economic constraints often prioritize basic energy supply over sustainability. That said, South Africa stands out as a more

progressive market, with increasing attention to renewable energy and carbon credits. This shift is gradually influencing business strategies and legal considerations, though its impact on day-to-day operations remains modest for now.

**Navigating the Future: The Role of Horizon Scanning**

To effectively manage these disruptors, horizon scanning has become an indispensable tool. Platforms like Afriwise provide valuable daily alerts on regulatory developments. However, the most critical intelligence often comes from our local networks, including sales staff and in-country lawyers, who provide early warnings about impending changes. This combination of digital tools and human insight enables us to respond proactively to dynamic environments.

**Conclusion: Adapting to a Complex Landscape**

In summary, regulatory and political changes have been the most significant disruptors over the past year, closely followed by economic instability. These factors are deeply intertwined, requiring legal and corporate teams to adopt a multifaceted approach to risk management and strategic planning. By leveraging local insights, embracing technology, and focusing on proactive measures, businesses can navigate the complexities of operating in Africa's diverse and challenging jurisdictions.







**Onyedikachi Obi**

Legal/Compliance Officer, Glover

Currently working as a Company Secretariat/ Compliance Officer, I would say that the greatest disruptors to my role and the department include the following underlisted:

### 1. Regulatory Changes

This is one major element that has disrupted roles and responsibilities. Given that I operate in a Dynamic Regulatory Environment, updates to laws like the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) or other SEC and NGX Regulations, and the introduction of new rules, regulations and policies have been one major disruptor to responsibilities. This has, in most cases, increased the complexity of compliance and reporting obligations.

To adjust to this disruption, it is pertinent that regular updates and training are conducted, staying informed about changes to laws like CAMA, SEC, or NGX regulations by attending workshops, seminars, and subscribing to relevant legal and compliance updates also helps.

### 2. Stakeholder Demands

Shareholders and other stakeholders have the tendency to demand more detailed disclosures and proactive governance strategies. Given the Company Secretary is the bridge between the Shareholders/Stakeholders and the Organisation, the need to adhere to the demands of stakeholders and effectively manage the relationship between the stakeholders and the Organizations has also been a form of disruption to my role and department.

Furthermore, Board Dynamics i.e., ensuring Board compliance and Compliance with the provisions of Corporate Governance and managing diverse expectations also added complexity to my role and department.

To overcome this disruption, it is necessary to enhance communication by using plain, concise

language for disclosures to build transparency and trust with stakeholders, holding regular briefings with the board, shareholders, and regulatory bodies to address concerns and maintain alignment.

### 3. Economic and Political Climate

Macroeconomic Instability: Currency devaluation, inflation, and unstable markets have also been a disruptor to my role and department. The cost of setting up and preparing for meetings, Board Meetings, Committee meetings etc. have skyrocketed, also the cost of software and tools used by the department, which in the long run impacts on the Budget of the Organisation further creating pressures on corporate governance and decision-making processes.

### 4. Post-Pandemic Adjustments

Another major disruptor is adjusting to Hybrid Meetings for the Board and Management. Managing board and shareholder meetings with both physical and virtual participants has posed logistical and procedural challenges. The tendency of the meeting recording needed for the preparation of minutes of meetings to be unclear, is very high, resorting in most cases to a minutes that does not accurately capture the proceedings at the meeting.

### Pat Mbugua

Head, Legal, Client Coverage, CCIB, East Africa at Standard Chartered Bank Kenya Limited

One of the greatest disruptors over the last 12 months has been organisational strategic change that has necessitated a relook at our legal team's goals and objectives for sharpened value and relevance. It has been important for us to take time to fully understand and internalise the organisation's business priorities and customize our areas of focus for close alignment, including where we can directly contribute to the bottom line outside the traditional cost saves on external counsel spend, for example our heightened interventions on distressed debt recovery strategies.

We have proactively immersed ourselves in cross-functional working groups and stretched outside our comfort zone to contribute to process efficiencies that would translate to speed to market and enhancing the overall customer experience. Plugging into strategy sessions and sales meetings with our business stakeholders has been critical in building our commercial acumen and reputation as a valued business partner.

This has seen us get quickly pulled into projects and transactions and be in a position to provide timely innovative ideas and legal solutions at an early stage. A business mindset has been key in this process.

### ► Q11: What is your greatest strategic priority as a GC or member of an in-house team going into 2025?

## Strategic Priorities for 2025: The Evolving Role of In-House Legal Teams

the below represents a summary of anonymous respondent data derived from the survey

As in-house legal teams prepare for 2025, their strategic priorities reflect the evolving challenges of modern corporate governance. A dominant theme among respondents is the integration of technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, to enhance efficiency, streamline legal processes, and manage growing workloads. Many see AI as a tool to bridge headcount and budget gaps while ensuring compliance with increasing regulatory demands.

Regulatory compliance and risk management remain top concerns, with legal teams striving to stay ahead of shifting legal landscapes, particularly in areas like data privacy, cybersecurity, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance), and corporate governance. Respondents emphasize the need for proactive strategies to navigate these evolving frameworks while aligning legal functions with broader business goals.

Another critical focus is building and strengthening legal teams. Upskilling in emerging legal and technological areas is a key priority, ensuring that legal departments can support business growth while remaining agile in an unpredictable regulatory environment. Some respondents also highlighted resource constraints, pointing to the need for cost management, lean operations, and maximization of external legal partnerships.

Beyond compliance and efficiency, legal professionals are also prioritizing business alignment. Many respondents stress the importance of shifting from a reactive legal function to a proactive, strategic business partner. This involves ensuring that legal teams contribute directly to business objectives, mitigate risks without obstructing innovation, and enhance their role in corporate decision-making.

Ultimately, the legal function in 2025 will need to be more agile, tech-driven, and business-oriented, balancing regulatory obligations with the need to drive corporate success in an increasingly complex global environment.



**Sandra Adu-Gyamfi**

General Counsel & Company Secretary, Danone

My greatest strategic priority as a General Counsel going into 2025 is to strengthen our compliance framework and ensure robust governance across all operations. In the rapidly evolving regulatory and business environment, particularly in the FMCG sector, proactive compliance and governance are critical to navigating increasing complexities. The regulatory landscape is evolving at an unprecedented pace, with heightened focus on food safety, product labelling and sustainability standards. This requires bolstering our risk management processes and fostering a culture of compliance across the landscape. Regional nuances in a multinational business operating in West Africa present unique challenges such as navigating regulatory inconsistencies and adapting to local enforcement mechanisms. To stay ahead, we must not only comply with existing laws but also anticipate future regulatory developments. To achieve this, I am committed to actively participating in industry-led advocacy efforts, which provide a platform to engage in critical discussions and influence decisions on essential topics. Having a seat at the table where such conversations occur will be vital to ensuring our interests are represented and aligned with emerging industry standards.

In line with global trends, I aim to leverage innovative legal technologies such as Microsoft Copilot, to streamline our legal processes, improve efficiency, and reduce costs. By integrating artificial intelligence and data analytics into our operations, we can automate routine tasks like drafting, data analysis and report generation, allowing the legal team to focus on strategic priorities. I know as a legal professional; legal analysis is not exactly my forte so any tool to enhance my capabilities around that area will be embraced wholeheartedly.

Sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) will also be a key focus. As an employee of a multinational that is seeking to achieve B Corp certification by all its subsidiaries 2025, I am

proud to lead the West Africa business to ensure that our business practices are environmentally sound and socially responsible. In order to be B Corp certified, we submit ourselves to rigorous standards where the business practices are tested in areas such as governance, workers' rights, community engagement and environmental practices. Ensuring that our commitments to CSR are met will be essential for our reputation and our impact on the communities we serve.

Lastly, fostering strong relationships with external stakeholders, including regulators, industry groups, and the communities in which we operate, will be essential. With a new government elected, building relationships with key policymakers and officials will help us navigate business challenges more effectively and promote our interests on a broader scale. By fostering collaboration and open communication, we can better anticipate industry changes, adapt our strategies and strengthen our position as a trusted and responsible business partner.



### Abidemi Ademola

Legal Director & Company Secretary,  
Guinness Nigeria Plc

My greatest strategic priority as a GC is to continually escalate the value that Legal brings to business success and sustainability. It is pivotal to think strategically, innovate and seize opportunities for the Legal function to deliver impact and commercial value to the organization more than ever before.

This will involve laser focus on developing and sharpening Legal Talent in terms of mindset shift and skill set. Empowering the team to think out of the box, constantly scanning the horizon and anticipating legal trends and risks, collaborating with subject matter experts and valued external Counsel to build the muscle for strategic leadership and entrepreneurship in addition to core legal skills and experiences.

The Legal team needs to leverage digital and technology to undertake routine and non-value adding aspects of legal services and deploy its core skills to strategic legal work that unlocks value for the organization. No time has the in-house counsel been more required to think and operate as a CEO and demonstrate commercial/business acumen in delivering legal services to the business. Our ways of working would need to embrace speed and agility while balancing same with quality and expertise.

One of the changes I had to make to the team very recently to align with this strategic thrust is to restructure the Legal Function with a business partnering focus to give team members the opportunity to own and support specific functions end to end to achieve their functional objectives and overall business success. This new structure is aligned with my overarching priority as a GC is to provide solutions that transcend just deploying legal expertise on a need basis but to be consulted as a well-rounded business leader who delivers value across all facets of the organization.

Heightened focus on ESG, Data Privacy and business reconstructions across Africa also present unique opportunities to develop new skills within the Legal Talent pool and deploy incremental legal value.

### Godwin Amenyinu

In-House Counsel for Africa, Inter-Con  
Security Systems

My greatest strategic priority can be summarised as one main question: How as a legal counsel can I help the business grow while being mindful of regulatory compliance matters?

As a multinational private security company's in-house counsel for Africa, my main role is to make sure our businesses are conducted in accordance with local laws. This goes through a lot of due diligence, legal research and constant interaction with people from various jurisdictions. It can be really challenging as access to local laws and regulations is not always easy. All information is not easily accessible online, and it's not necessarily cost efficient to travel before finding information.

My strategic priority is then to structure a greater approach to legal research. The great progress made with IT solutions and AI tools will also be helpful. I believe we shouldn't fear these changes. As lawyers, we are trained to be careful on how to handle legal information no matter the source it comes from. In other words, our critical thinking remains important; it's up to us to apply it thoroughly.

## REGIONAL OPERATIONS & REGULATORY STRATEGY

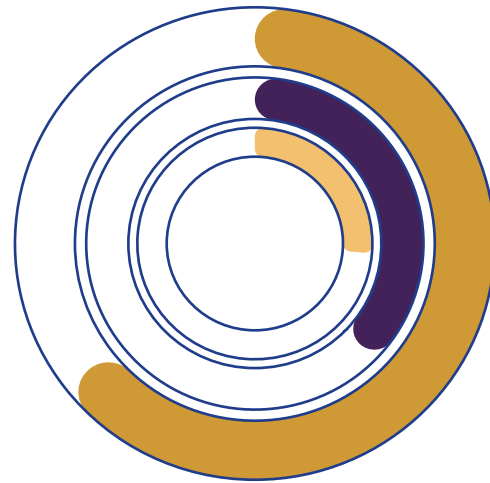
- 12 ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES
- 13 NAVIGATING IN-COUNTRY AND REGIONAL REGULATIONS
- 14 ANTICIPATED REGULATORY SHIFTS AMID THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE
- 15 TAILORING LEGAL STRATEGIES TO DIVERSE AFRICAN CONTEXTS
- 16 THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPREHENSIVE IN-COUNTRY LEGAL INTELLIGENCE
- 17 TOOLS FOR MANAGING RAPID REGULATORY CHANGE

*The opinions expressed in the commentaries are solely those of the individuals and do not reflect the views of the organizations or entities they are affiliated with. Nor do they represent the views of ACGC or Afriwise as administrators and organisers of this research.*





➤ **Q12: Which of the following are a priority for your organisation? (Select all that apply)**

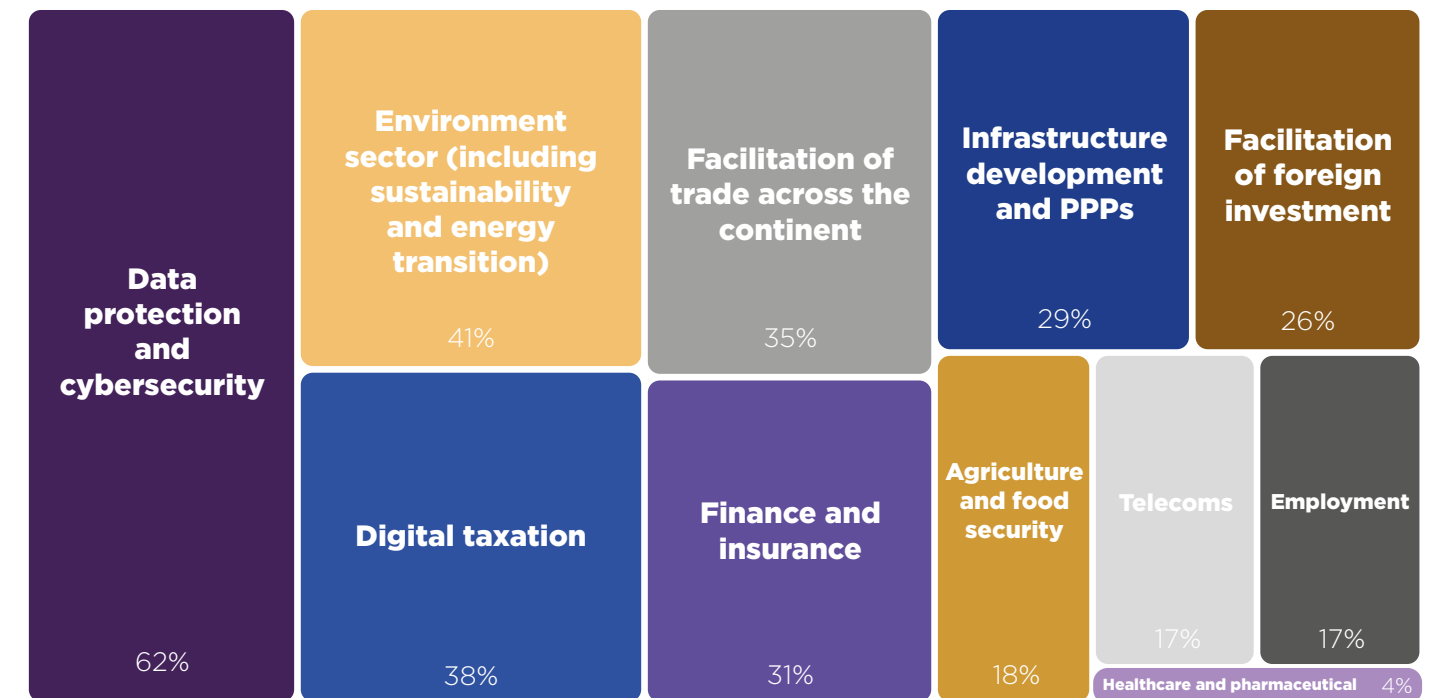


- Innovation in legal and regulatory risk management
- Investment in legal department technology
- Neither

➤ **Q13: How do you navigate in-country and regional regulations across different countries in Africa, especially in regions with cross-border projects? (Pick your top 3)**



➤ **Q14: Given the current economic climate in the country(ies) you operate in, which areas do you anticipate will see the biggest regulatory shifts in 2025? (Pick your top 3)**



**Other answers:**

Issuance and trading of Carbon Credits | E-commerce and Consumer Protection

## COMMENTARY



**Adeola Olumeyan**  
Executive Director, EMET Hill

As we approach 2025, several African nations are set to implement significant regulatory changes in response to evolving economic, technological, and environmental landscapes. Businesses operating in Africa must navigate new compliance obligations across sustainability (ESG), digital governance, taxation, trade policies, and labour laws.

The biggest regulatory shifts I expect to happen in 2025 in Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Uganda, Mauritius, Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are in Sustainability and ESG; Digital and data governance; Taxation and trade policies; labour reforms.

### 1. Sustainability and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Compliance

ESG continues to gain momentum in Africa. African nations are increasingly aligning their regulations with global sustainability frameworks such as the IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards (SDS) and EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) to attract investment.

Governments are enforcing ESG compliance to drive sustainability, improve economic resilience, and promote responsible business practices.

Regional Nuances and Practical Examples

- Nigeria:** The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has mandated sustainability reporting for telecom operators, signalling an increased focus on ESG compliance. Nigeria has also adopted IFRS SDS, requiring companies to disclose sustainability-related financial information.
- South Africa:** Stricter environmental reporting regulations for mining, energy, and manufacturing industries will be introduced in 2025, enhancing transparency and accountability.
- Mauritius:** As a financial hub, Mauritius is expected to implement ESG-linked investment incentives, mandating sustainability disclosures for businesses accessing tax incentives.

GC Strategies for 2025

- Integrate ESG into Corporate Strategy:** Embedding sustainability principles into core business operations will enhance compliance and global competitiveness
- Invest in ESG Capacity Building:** Businesses should train teams on new ESG standards to ensure compliance.
- Proactive Stakeholder Engagement:** Collaboration with investors, regulators, and local communities will be crucial for navigating evolving ESG expectations.

2. Digital and Data Governance

We are seeing African governments updating regulations to strengthen data sovereignty, cybersecurity, and digital trust. For example, in Ghana, anticipated revisions to the Data Protection Act will regulate cross-border data flows and ensure international compliance for fintech firms. While in Kenya, upcoming enhancements to the Country's Data Protection Act will focus on AI ethics and digital lending regulations, ensuring responsible technology use. Across several countries, the rise of AI-powered services and blockchain adoption is prompting new regulatory frameworks for AI governance and ethical use.

GC Strategies

- Develop Comprehensive Data Governance Frameworks to meet evolving cybersecurity and privacy laws.
- Develop AI policies and invest in AI Compliance Programs to ensure ethical AI usage and legal compliance.
- Strengthen Cross-Border Data Compliance to align with global privacy laws (e.g., GDPR, CCPA).

3. Taxation and Trade Policies

Post-Pandemic economic recovery seems to be driving governments to reform tax structures to boost revenue while balancing business growth. We are seeing increased interest in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In response, AfCFTA aims to harmonize tax and trade policies, fostering intra- African trade.

To give some examples of the above, Nigeria is set to increase taxation on multinational companies and luxury goods to boost domestic revenue. The Country is also proposing an overhaul of its VAT structure. In Zambia, we expect mining tax reforms to maximize government revenue from mineral resources.

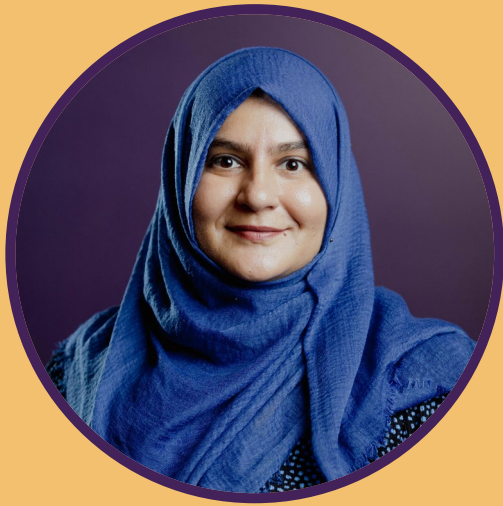
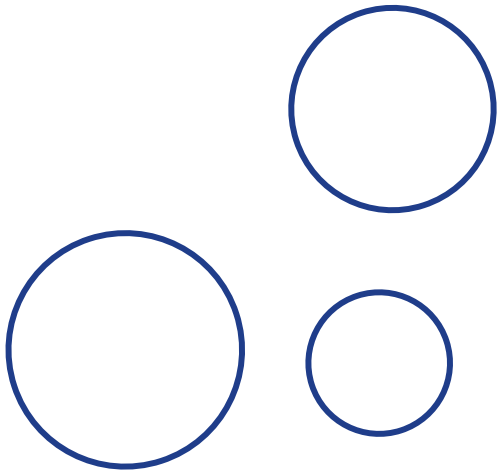
Looking into the crystal ball, recommended GC strategies are:

- Optimize Tax Compliance & Planning to align with new tax regimes.
- Leverage AfCFTA Opportunities to expand trade and cross-border market access.
- Engage with Policy Advocacy Groups to shape tax reforms in favour of business growth.

4. Labour Laws and Workforce Protection

Economic instability is driving skilled labour migration to Western countries, prompting retention policies in organizations across the Continent. Some governments are also taking proactive steps with regards to labour laws. For example, in Kenya, anticipated labour reforms will enhance protections in agriculture, mining and the informal sector. In Uganda, new gig economy labour laws will establish fair wages and worker protections for digital freelancers.

Keeping in mind labour migration, it is recommended that corporate counsel work closely with HR teams to strengthen workforce retention strategies through policies (like work-from-anywhere policy), competitive salaries and benefits.



Zainab Bachoo  
Chief Legal Officer, BulkStream Limited

In Kenya, I think the focus would be on two key areas that are a direct result of the current economic climate in the region and global trends:

- Data privacy - I believe that even though Kenya enacted the Data Protection Act in 2019, this is a rapidly evolving space and the jurisprudence coming out of both the ODPC and the courts is evidence of that. The economic push toward digital services and cross-border trade is likely to further shape these regulatory developments.
- Digital transformation and AI – the Ministry of ICT and Digital Economy has unveiled the Kenya National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2025-2030. One of its key goals is to review existing or develop new regulatory frameworks to meet the demands of AI and emerging technology. Given the increasing adoption of digital solutions across sectors, we should expect new legislation and policies governing this area.

Pat Mbugua  
Head, Legal, Client Coverage, CCIB, East Africa at Standard Chartered Bank Kenya Limited

The future-ready in-house counsel's imperative has evolved to not only extend to horizon scanning for risks and their potential adverse impact (and playing an active role in their mitigation) but also to proactively spotting new opportunities for their organisations in a constantly evolving regulatory landscape across the African continent.

Some of the areas I anticipate regulatory shifts in

- Kenya this year include:
- Digital taxation in the wave of increased ecommerce and online user activity and implementation of austerity measures in our economy.
  - The re-opening of exploratory discussions by the Finance Ministry on the hitherto precluded digital assets space.
  - Carbon markets following the National Environment Management Authority being mandated as the Designated National Authority under the Kyoto Protocol and the recent gazettelement of its Technical Committee.



Godwin-Amenyinu  
In-House Counsel for Africa, Inter-Con Security Systems

The biggest regulatory shifts I am anticipating are related to data privacy and employment regulations.

Regarding Data Privacy, it's not a complete shift anymore per se but more like the continuity of a trend that started a couple of years ago. A huge part of my daily job happens to be done online. Being in a private security industry, we deal with sensitive information every day. Data privacy regulations are occupying the African legal landscape these days, and new laws and regulations are being adopted at a fast pace. Legal monitoring is then a priority here to determine how these regulations will be implemented.

About employment regulations, the main challenge has always been to strike a balance between the interests of the company and the interest of the



employees. You might feel like walking a tight rope while doing so. Depending on the locations some labour laws appear to be more protective of the employees than the others. Also, working both on civil law systems and common law systems, the philosophy can be different. It makes it almost impossible to apply the same employment policy everywhere. The general policy must be adapted to the concerned location. Additionally, labour and employment regulations are more than ever, a key part of ESG requirements. Labour practices are part of the seven core subjects of ISO 26000 standards for social responsibility.

We have seen Labour regulations becoming more protective in some countries like where it used to be employment at will. These sudden changes led to wrongful termination lawsuits that we were fortunate to eventually settle amicably. In other locations, there have been increases of base wages which required to renegotiate contracts with clients. While this renegotiation is not easy, we made sure to have contracts containing clauses to anticipate such changes in the law. We are waiting for similar scenarios in other jurisdictions as bills are currently being discussed.

➤ **Q15: How, if at all, are you tailoring your legal strategies to specific African contexts (such as in-country governance requirements, technology adoption, or regulatory changes)?**

**Tailoring Legal Strategies to the African Context in 2025**

the below represents a summary of anonymous respondent data derived from the survey

As businesses in Africa prepare for the future, legal teams are increasingly focusing on adapting their strategies to the unique challenges of the African landscape. One key area of attention is **local governance requirements**. Many respondents emphasized the importance of aligning legal practices with national regulations, including engaging with local authorities to ensure compliance and foster strong relationships with governments. This involves customizing legal frameworks to meet both **cultural and socio-economic conditions** that vary across the continent.

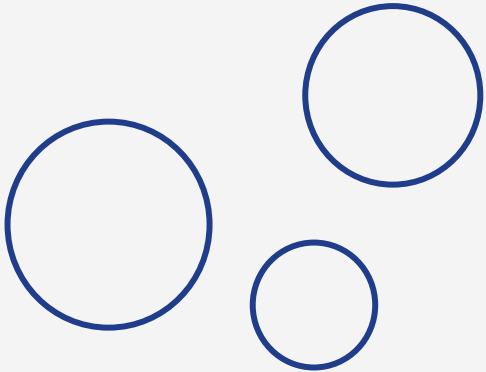
Another priority is the growing focus on **technology adoption**. Legal teams are seeking to integrate new technologies, such as AI and automated legal tools, into their operations. These tools not only streamline processes but also help legal departments navigate the complexities of evolving **data privacy laws, cybersecurity regulations**, and other tech-related legal issues. Many respondents pointed out the need for **ongoing training** and collaboration with **external legal counsel** to stay ahead of regulatory changes, particularly in the tech space.

**Regulatory uncertainty** is another significant challenge, with many legal professionals citing the need to closely monitor and adapt to

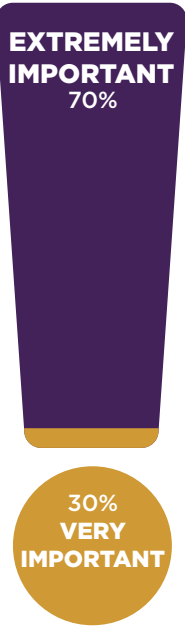
**shifting regulatory landscapes**. This includes understanding the impact of new **fiscal policies, tax laws**, and **environmental regulations** that can differ widely across African countries. Tailoring legal strategies to these changes often involves creating **flexible legal frameworks** and **scenario planning** to ensure that organizations can swiftly adapt when regulations change.

Moreover, respondents also mentioned the importance of **capacity building**, with a focus on **training local teams** and ensuring that legal departments are equipped to address both **regional nuances** and **global business requirements**. By strengthening local teams and leveraging expertise from various jurisdictions, companies aim to create more **adaptable and responsive legal strategies** that can thrive in Africa's diverse and dynamic markets.

In sum, the legal strategies for 2025 will demand a **tailored, adaptive approach** that blends local regulatory knowledge with global best practices, while embracing technological advancements and fostering strong relationships with key stakeholders across the continent.



➤ **Q16: How important is it for you to have access to comprehensive in-country legal intelligence?**



COMMENTARY



**Olynda Nyamanhindi**

Group Head of Legal, CBRE Excellerate

Access to comprehensive in-country legal intelligence is extremely important for organizations operating across multiple jurisdictions in Africa and the Middle East. Let me explain why this is particularly crucial in our context.

Operating a network of 38 entities across 26 countries presents unique challenges and opportunities that make real-time legal intelligence indispensable. From a practical standpoint, maintaining in-house counsel or retaining local attorneys in each jurisdiction

would be prohibitively expensive and logistically complex. Instead, access to comprehensive legal intelligence serves as a force multiplier for our legal department, enabling efficient risk management and proactive compliance across our diverse operational footprint.

Recent developments across several key areas underscore the importance of staying current with legal requirements:

**Data Protection and Privacy:** The rapid evolution of data protection frameworks across African markets requires constant vigilance. Each jurisdiction is developing its own approach, often influenced by international standards like GDPR but adapted to local contexts. This directly impacts how we handle customer data, employee information, and cross-border data transfers.

**Artificial Intelligence Regulations:** The emergence of AI-specific regulations across different jurisdictions presents new challenges for contract drafting and compliance. Markets are taking varying approaches to AI governance, making it crucial to understand local requirements when implementing AI-driven solutions across our operations.

**Regional Business Requirements:** The Middle East, in particular, maintains specific trade license requirements that vary by jurisdiction and business activity. For instance, the UAE's recent relaxation of foreign ownership restrictions to permit 100% foreign ownership presents significant opportunities for business restructuring and expansion. Similar developments in Tunisia demonstrate a broader regional trend toward liberalization that could be leveraged for strategic growth.

Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, several factors make in-country legal intelligence even more critical:

1. **Regulatory Harmonization Initiatives:** Various regional economic communities are working toward regulatory harmonization, but the pace and scope vary significantly. Understanding these developments helps position our business to benefit from emerging opportunities while managing compliance requirements.
2. **Digital Transformation:** As our operations increasingly leverage digital solutions, understanding evolving legal frameworks around digital services, e-commerce, and financial technology becomes crucial for maintaining compliance and competitive advantage.



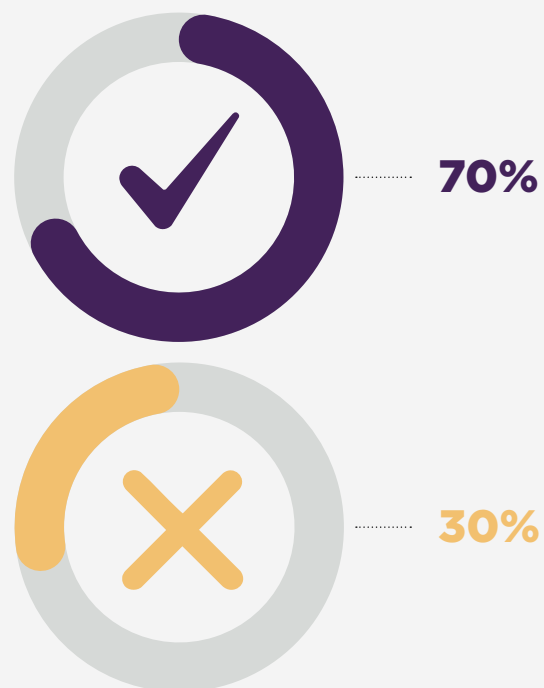
3. **Market Entry Opportunities:** Changes in foreign investment regulations, such as those seen in the UAE and Tunisia, create opportunities for market entry or expansion. Early awareness of such developments through robust legal intelligence enables strategic planning and first-mover advantages.

The value of comprehensive legal intelligence extends beyond risk management to become a strategic business enabler. It helps identify opportunities for growth, optimize operational structures, and ensure sustainable compliance

across our diverse operational landscape. The cost of maintaining access to quality legal intelligence is significantly outweighed by the benefits of avoiding regulatory penalties, identifying growth opportunities, and maintaining efficient operations across multiple jurisdictions.

In conclusion, given our organizational footprint and the dynamic regulatory environment across Africa and the Middle East, comprehensive in-country legal intelligence isn't just important – it's fundamental to our operational success and growth strategy.

► **Q17: Are you using any tools to manage the rapid pace of regulatory change?**



COMMENTARY

**Summary of tools being used by respondents who answered “Yes”**

the below represents a summary of anonymous respondent data derived from the survey

The data reveals a strong reliance on various tools to manage the rapid pace of regulatory change, with a notable emphasis on **Afriwise**, which was mentioned multiple times by respondents. Other frequently cited tools include **AI**, **LexisNexis**, and **Thomson Reuters Regulatory Intelligence**, indicating a preference for platforms that offer regulatory tracking,

legal research, and compliance updates. Additionally, **Microsoft Teams** and **Slack** are popular for cross-functional coordination, while **Ironclad** and **PwC** are utilized for specific needs such as contract lifecycle management and tax updates. Many respondents also rely on local tools like **IP Track** and **Solarwind**, alongside **external legal counsel** and **collaboration with law firms** to ensure compliance with the diverse and evolving regulatory environments across African countries. These insights highlight the growing integration of technology in managing regulatory compliance while leveraging both global and local resources.

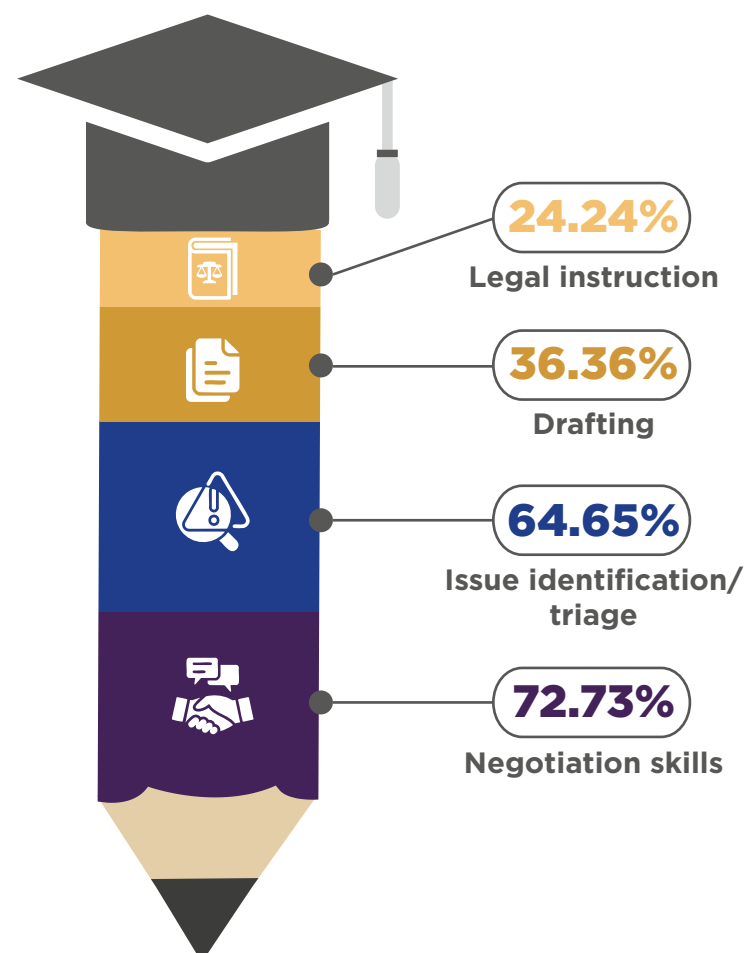


## FUTURE SKILLS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 18 ESSENTIAL LEGAL SKILLS FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS
- 19 CRITICAL NON-LEGAL SKILLS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

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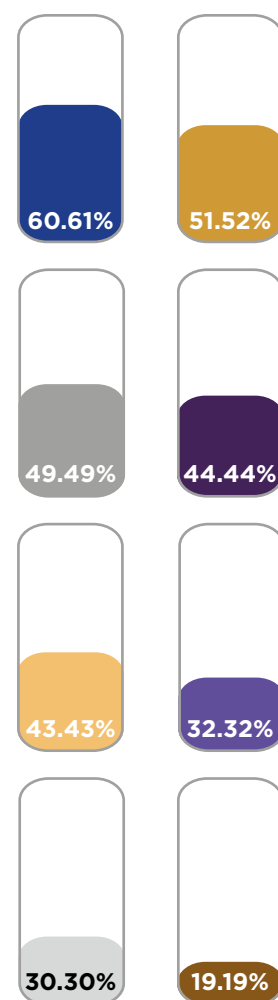
➤ **Q18: Which legal skills do you consider will be most important for you to be able to perform your role in the next two (2) years? (Pick your top 2)**



**Other answers:**

Gen AI usage | ESG Capability | Leadership Skills | Compliance Skills  
Regulatory Knowledge | Risk Assessment and Management

➤ **Q19: Which non-legal skills do you consider will be most important for you to be able to perform your role in the next two (2) years? (Pick your top 3)**



- Risk management
- Effective usage of AI tools
- Financial and business acumen
- Leadership and talent management
- Business planning and management skills
- Analytical skills
- Communication skills
- Horizon scanning capabilities



COMMENTARY



**Ozim Ibeziako**

Executive General Counsel, Sub-Saharan Africa, GE Vernova

The non-legal skill which I consider most important in the performance of my role in the next two years, includes clear understanding of the industry trends, the role and impact of Artificial Intelligence in our corporate environment, the risks to be aware of, and how best to manage them in our evolving world.

Strong business, and financial acumen will be key as well, as companies drive growth with minimal cost. And how to engage and communicate as a leader is also important, especially with diverse internal and external stakeholders.



**Tayo Mustapha**

Senior Counsel, Moniepoint

1. Risk Management
2. Effective Usage of AI Tools will be transformative for legal departments.
3. Financial and Business Acumen is crucial for aligning legal strategies with broader business objectives.
4. Digital Fluency - As technology becomes increasingly integral to business operations, GCs must possess a deep understanding of how new technologies like AI, big data, and cloud computing impact their organizations. They will need to be comfortable engaging with legal tech tools that enhance efficiency and provide innovative solutions for legal processes.



**Onyedikachi Obi**

Legal/Compliance Officer, Glover

Some of the non-legal skills that I consider as crucial for performing my role as a Company Secretary/Compliance Officer over the next two years:

**1. Communication and Interpersonal Skills**

This is very important as there is the need to always interact with board members, shareholders, regulators, and other stakeholders effectively. Clear and concise communication, both written and verbal, should be developed as it is important in the performance of your roles and responsibilities. Also, diplomacy and conflict resolution in addressing sensitive issues.

**2. Organizational and Time Management Skills**

Managing multiple compliance deadlines and governance responsibilities demands efficiency. It is important to maintain a detailed compliance calendar and prioritize tasks to handle urgent matters without neglecting long-term goals.

**3. Technological Proficiency**

The world is advancing at a rather fast pace with technology and the increasing reliance on digital tools for compliance, document management, and communication. It is essential to be abreast of technology tools and board management software and other compliance tools.

**4. Emotional Intelligence (EQ)**

The role of Company Secretariat officer often requires handling sensitive matters, managing team dynamics, and maintaining board harmony. It is pertinent to build trust and rapport with stakeholders and at the same time, demonstrating empathy and discretion.

**5. Change Management Skills**

Adapting to regulatory changes, technological advancements, or shifting corporate priorities is crucial, and I consider this an important skill in handling the responsibilities of a Company Secretary/Compliance Officer. Change management skills is essential in leading the organization in adopting new compliance frameworks and ensuring smooth transitions during organizational changes or mergers.

**Daphne Ampumuza**

Associate Legal Officer, UN Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE)

- **Strong analytical and problem-solving skills** - navigating complex risk management and compliance issues.
- **Effective communication and stakeholder engagement** - while coordinating matters and providing clear, actionable legal guidance.
- **Project management skills** - tracking and implementing certain tasks efficiently.
- **Adaptability and a strategic mindset** - to anticipate and respond to evolving organizational needs and regulatory changes.



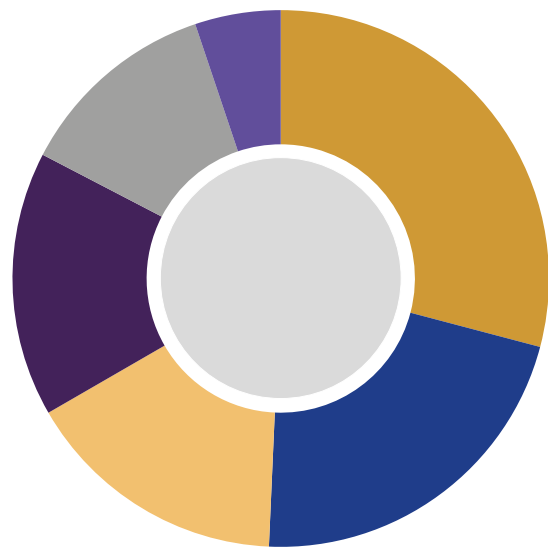
# LEGAL DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS & WELLBEING

- 20 ENHANCING EFFICIENCY: MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN YOUR LEGAL DEPARTMENT
- 21 KEY TIME-CONSUMING AREAS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS
- 22 ASSESSING WORK-RELATED ANXIETY AND STRESS LEVELS
- 23 STAFFING AND TEAM SIZE OF YOUR LEGAL DEPARTMENT
- 24 STRUCTURE OF YOUR LEGAL TEAM
- 25 CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT OF LEGAL STAFF
- 26 PROJECTED GROWTH OF YOUR IN-HOUSE LEGAL TEAM OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS
- 27 PRESENCE OF LEGAL TEAMS IN OTHER AFRICAN JURISDICTIONS

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➤ **Q20: What management practices are you employing to improve efficiency/effectiveness in your legal department? (Tick all that apply)**



Outsourcing specialised work to law firms	65.26%
Requiring early case assessments for matters handled internally	48.42%
Insourcing work formerly performed by law firms or other service providers	35.79%
Shifting work from large traditional law firms to mid-size and/or mid-market law firms (that may charge less)	35.79%
Outsourcing work to alternative legal service providers	27.37%
Shifting work to non-legal resources	11.58%

➤ **Q21: Over the past 12 months, which of the following areas took up most of your legal department's (lawyer only) time? (Pick your top 3)**



Other answers:

Managing External Counsel and Litigation | Credit Management

➤ **Q22: In the last 12 months, my work-related anxiety and stress levels have**



COMMENTARY

**Work-Related Anxiety and Stress: The Impact of Increased Workloads and Limited Resources on Legal Professionals in 2024**

the below represents a summary of anonymous respondent data derived from the survey

In the past year, many respondents have experienced an **increase in work-related anxiety and stress levels**, primarily driven by **increased workloads** and the growing complexity of legal cases. Several respondents noted that their **departments were understaffed**, with many facing the dual challenge of **higher workloads** and **limited resources**, often exacerbated by **budget constraints**.

For some, the **evolving regulatory and compliance landscape** added pressure, requiring more time and

attention to manage increasing legal obligations. In contrast, a few respondents highlighted a **decrease in stress** due to changes in their roles, such as moving to less challenging positions or transitioning to the **public sector**, where the pace and pressure were perceived to be lower.

However, common themes of **financial challenges, staffing constraints, and unclear career growth paths** also contributed to the stress felt by many professionals. Despite these challenges, some respondents sought relief through **better organization, delegating tasks**, and using **project management tools** to manage their workload more effectively.

Overall, the data paints a picture of legal professionals struggling to balance increasing responsibilities with fewer resources, creating a stressful work environment for many.

**Zainab Bachoo**

Chief Legal Officer, BulkStream Limited

We are operating in a fast-evolving jurisdiction. Kenya has, in the last five years, enacted privacy legislation, signed various treaties, and agreed to comply with global standards. This has increased the workload (and consequently stress!) for legal practitioners, especially those in-house, as there is a greater focus on compliance and risk management.

Gone are the days when in house counsel were mainly focused on reviewing contracts. Increasingly, this role demands that we understand the business operations deeply and be part of the business strategy. While this is a welcome change, it requires that we self-educate, understand, advise, and implement policies and frameworks to ensure the companies and businesses we work for are not only compliant with these global standards but also have a robust legal and risk strategy. These demands have definitely increased work-related stress, particularly when managing time-sensitive compliance deadlines alongside regular legal work.

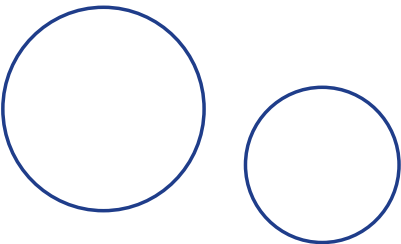
**Yewande Bisiolu**

Legal Officer, FCCPC Nigeria

The levels of work-related anxiety and stress I have experienced in the last 12 months have varied from extreme anxiety and stress to regular/mild work-related stress and anxiety, with extreme anxiety being the least.

Though the public sector has a lesser workload since there are more hands, there are other stress-inducing factors that come with the territory of working in the public sector. For example, there's a constant need to study the Public Service Rules (PSR) just to be sure you're not stepping on anyone's toes.

The extreme anxiety also stems from the lack of adequate digital skills knowledge which makes some tasks cumbersome.





### Pat Mbugua

Head, Legal, Client Coverage, CCIB, East Africa  
at Standard Chartered Bank Kenya Limited

I am passionate about wellbeing, and pursued certification in mental health first aid to understand this area better and be part of the change we need to see, both in the organisation I serve, and more broadly.

The legal profession globally has over time been associated with high work demands that take a heavy toll on mental health. Not surprisingly but of concern is that over half of the respondents of the Survey registered increased work-related anxiety and stress levels. Recurring themes include capacity constraints, increased workload, complexity of cases, evolving compliance landscape, reduced budget and career stagnation.

One of the topical areas discussed during the breakout sessions at the ACGC 2024 Annual Conference in Ghana was unpacking organisational blindspots from a contextual and cultural perspective and the impact those have on wellbeing.

The rich insights shared were as varied as the participants, and while acknowledging that the contributors to stress and anxiety may differ across public and private sector and the pathways to improved mental health are not a one size fits all, one of the conclusions was that in-house lawyers have a significant role to play in elevating organisational awareness as trusted advisors, and being part of the solutions that would lead to more conducive working environments.

The World Economic Forum 2020 Future of Jobs report predicted that the top 10 most sought-after skills of 2025 would include resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility. GCs and Heads of Legal Departments across the continent need to role model vulnerability as well as elevate wellbeing practices and healthy coping strategies as part of building their team members Adversity Quotient, which is a much-overlooked yet critical component of success and business productivity, that can be replicated by other units.

### Daphine Ampumuza,

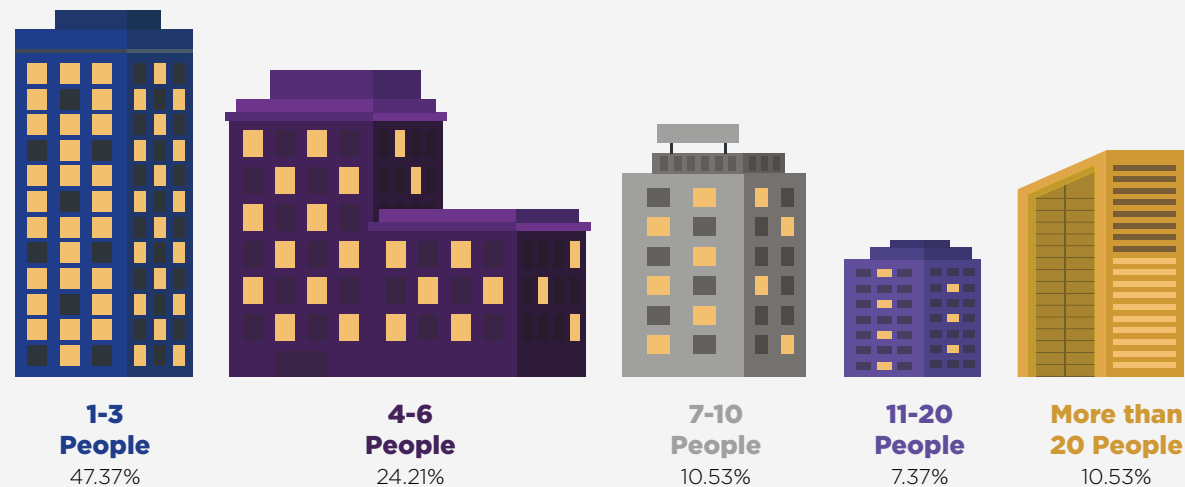
Associate Legal Officer, UN Regional  
Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE)

I experienced moderate to high work-related stress, primarily due to tight deadlines, high-stakes legal matters, and the need to manage multiple priorities simultaneously. However, maintaining structured workflows, clear communication, and an effective tracking system (such as the open items tracker) has helped mitigate some of these pressures. While the workload remains demanding, I actively manage stress through organization, prioritization, and professional support where necessary.



### Q23: How many people (lawyers and support staff) work in your department?

Total Number of Responses: 95 ■ = 1



### Q24: How would you describe the structure of the legal team?

77.89%



Centralised, with one legal department for the entire organisation

18.95%



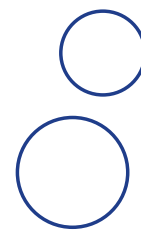
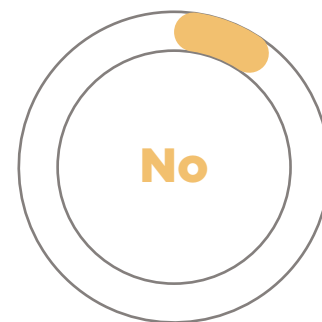
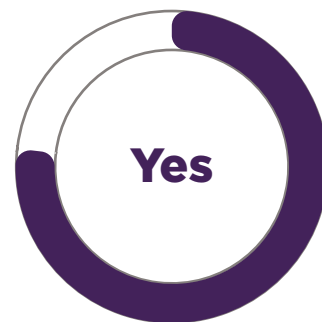
Hybrid, with lawyers or legal departments found within business units, but all lawyers or legal department report to one central legal department

3.16%



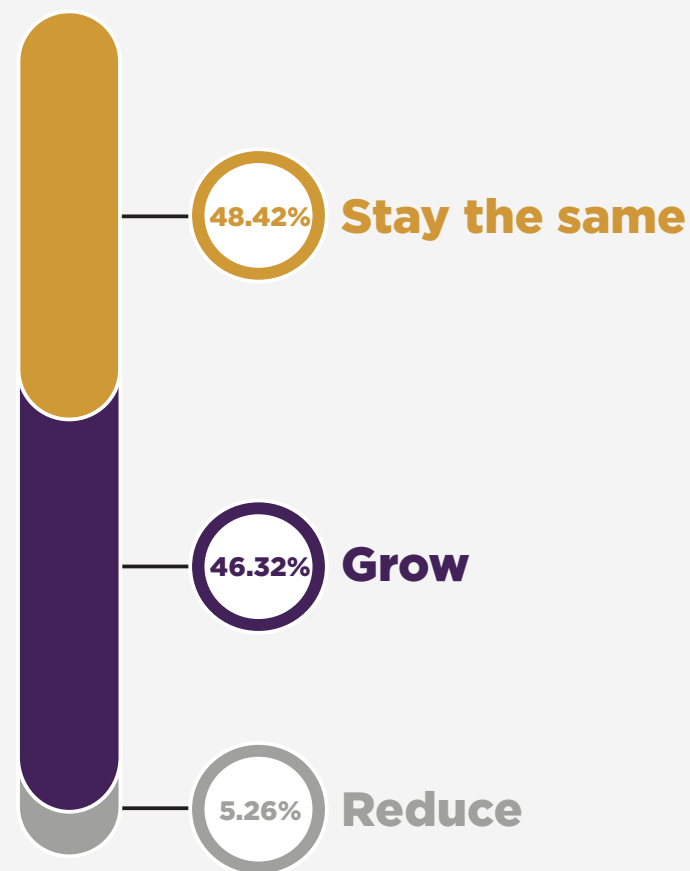
Decentralised, with various autonomous lawyers or legal departments found in each business unit

### Q25: Are members of your legal department sufficiently involved in other areas of the business (knowing how other departments operate, empowered to provide input in other departments, etc.)?

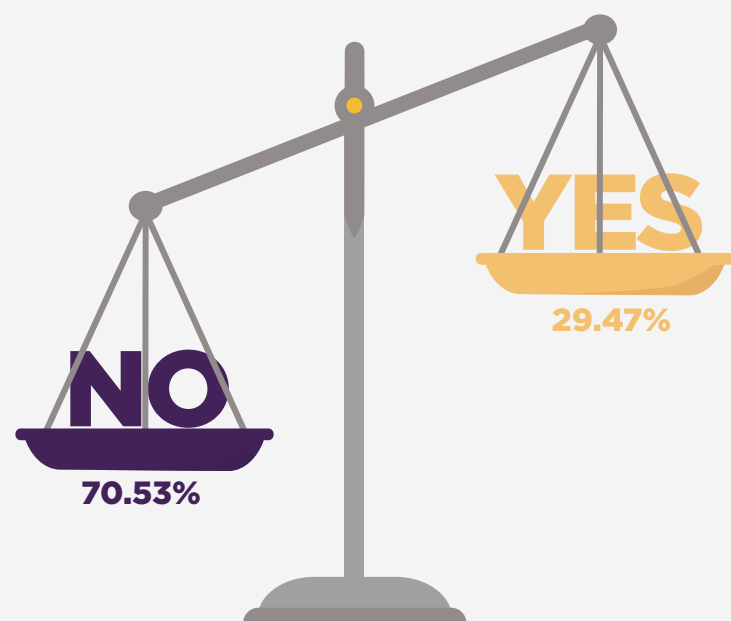




► **Q26: Over the next 12 months, I expect the size of my in-house legal department to:**



► **Q27: Does your organisation have lawyers in other African jurisdictions?**



# 06

## ORGANISATIONAL & FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

- 28** OVERALL BUSINESS ANNUAL TURNOVER
- 29** ANNUAL EXPENDITURE ON THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT
- 30** SHARE OF THE LEGAL BUDGET ALLOCATED TO EXTERNAL SERVICES
- 31** TOP INVESTMENT PRIORITIES IN LEGAL TECHNOLOGY FOR 2025 AND BEYOND
- 32** AREAS EXPECTED TO SEE INCREASED ACTIVITY IN THE COMING YEAR
- 33** EXPERIENCING PRESSURE TO IMPLEMENT STRICTER INTERNATIONAL POLICIES

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➤ Q28: What is the annual turnover of your overall business?

40.23%

Prefer not to say

18.39%

Over USD 50M

17.24%

Under USD 1M

10.34%

USD 1.1M to USD 5M

6.90%

USD 25.1M to USD 50M

5.75%

USD 5.1M to USD 10M

1.15%

USD 10.1M to USD 25M

➤ Q29: What is your business' approximate annual spend on the legal department?

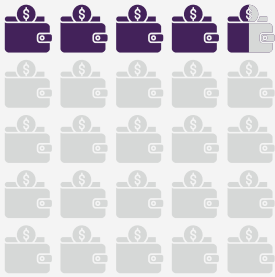
Total Number of Responses: 87  = 2



Below USD 150,000



USD 150,000- USD 300,000



USD 300,000- USD 600,000

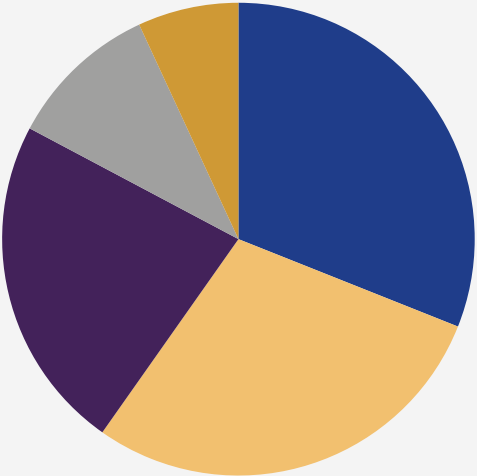


Over USD 1M



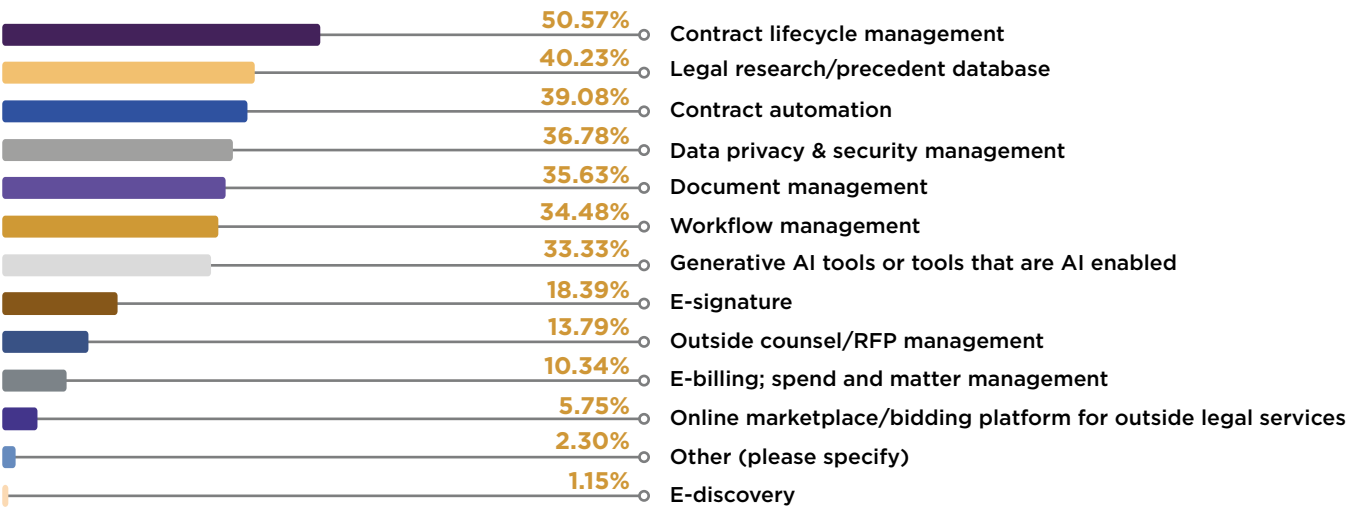
USD 600,000- USD 1M

➤ Q30: What proportion of your annual in-house department budget is spent externally?



Less than 25%	31.03%
I don't know	28.74%
Between 25% and 50%	22.99%
Between 50% and 75%	10.34%
More than 75%	6.90%

➤ Q31: What are your top 3 priorities for investment in legal department technology for 2025 and beyond?



#### COMMENTARY

**Sandra Adu-Gyamfi**

General Counsel & Company Secretary, Danone

Does anyone talk about Legal operations enough? It often feels like an overlooked burden tied to functional work in the department. As a General Counsel, my top priorities for investment in legal department technology for 2025 and beyond would be Contract Lifecycle Management, Contract Automation and Document Management in that order. These

tools are critical for simplifying processes and improving efficiency.

Contract Lifecycle Management (CLM) tools are at the top of my list. Given that our department dedicates a significant amount of time to reviewing and drafting contracts, a robust CLM tool would significantly streamline our processes. It would help us efficiently manage the entire contract lifecycle, from creation to renewal, ensuring we never miss critical deadlines. This tool will also enhance our ability to monitor contract performance and compliance, making



our contract management system more effective and less cumbersome.

**Contract Automation:** By leveraging contract automation, we can expedite the drafting, review, and approval processes, reducing the manual workload and minimizing errors. This will allow us to focus on more strategic initiatives and provide more timely legal support to the business.

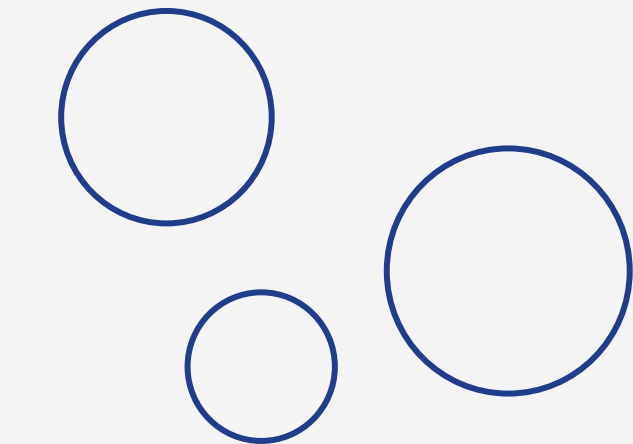
**Document Management:** Effective document management is essential given the volume of documents flowing in and out of our department. We need a sophisticated tool that helps us organize, store, and retrieve documents efficiently. Such a system would ensure that critical documents are easily accessible when needed, improving our overall productivity and reducing the risk of misplaced or lost information. Additionally, it would enhance our ability to maintain records in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Anyone with a practical or manual way of doing so should drop me a line.

### Tayo Mustapha

Senior Counsel, Moniepoint

My top priorities for legal tech investment are:

1. Contract Lifecycle Management.
2. Data Privacy & Security Management: With increasing regulatory scrutiny, investing in tools that strengthen data protection and compliance monitoring is critical to mitigate cybersecurity risks and ensure adherence to evolving privacy laws.
3. Generative AI Tools: Leveraging AI-powered solutions for legal research, document drafting, and risk analysis will enhance productivity and enable smarter, data-driven decision-making within legal teams.



### Allan Rwakakooko

Head of Legal Services, Umeme Ltd

My top three are:

1. Document management.
2. Workflow management.
3. Contract lifecycle management.

The focus of in-house counsel is efficiency and cost effectiveness. The legal department supports every part of the business and often acts as a risk manager. Given that many companies have shifting priorities and increasing risk exposure, and the legal function is called upon to do more, but is usually underfunded and understaffed, technology is now a necessity.

**Document management:** Most lawyers are custodians of critical documentation. Properly kept documents can be a game changer in litigation, or in dealing with regulators. Cases have been won or lost on the wording of, or even the existence of a document. Additionally, in-house counsel is best placed to ensure confidentiality of documents.

**Workflow management:** In-house departments work closely with external counsel and other departments, which have different KPIs and priorities. We should therefore adopt a project management approach to work and deploy workflow management to properly coordinate activities and ensure accountability and reporting with a focus on quality, cost and time. Workflow management also creates efficiency by allowing the in-house counsel to focus on strategic matters without the laborious manual follow up of administrative tasks. Technology is especially necessary for project implementation, litigation management,

quality oversight and risk management.

**Contract lifecycle management:** The in-house counsel has oversight over the procurement process, contract negotiation, project implementation and post implementation, and works to prevent or manage any disputes that may arise. In-house counsel therefore needs visibility of the process to ensure that it aligns with the legal, regulatory and commercial interests of the company. Wherever the in-house counsel does not have real time visibility, the risk of deviation from the agreed contract terms, and disputes increases, and the company is exposed to financial risk.

### Abidemi Ademola

Legal Director & Company Secretary,  
Guinness Nigeria Plc

From my perspective, the top three priorities for investment in legal department technology for 2025 and beyond would be contract life cycle management & automation, Legal research & template database tool and automated document repository. End to end management of contracts still requires adept technology that reduces manual interventions and speeds up the process to enable corporates to reduce human error and take advantage of business opportunities with improved agility. It would therefore be a top pick especially within the context of recent ownership transfer of the business and resultant loss of the global contract management tool previously used.

In addition, one of the thrusts of my Legal Team is to increasingly minimize routine and low value legal work to enable limited available legal resources to focus on high value/strategic work. A Legal research and template database tool powered by AI would be of great assistance in this area. It would be fantastic to have robust and accurate legal information and precedent documents at the touch of a button without compromising on quality, to navigate increasingly fast-paced business environments.

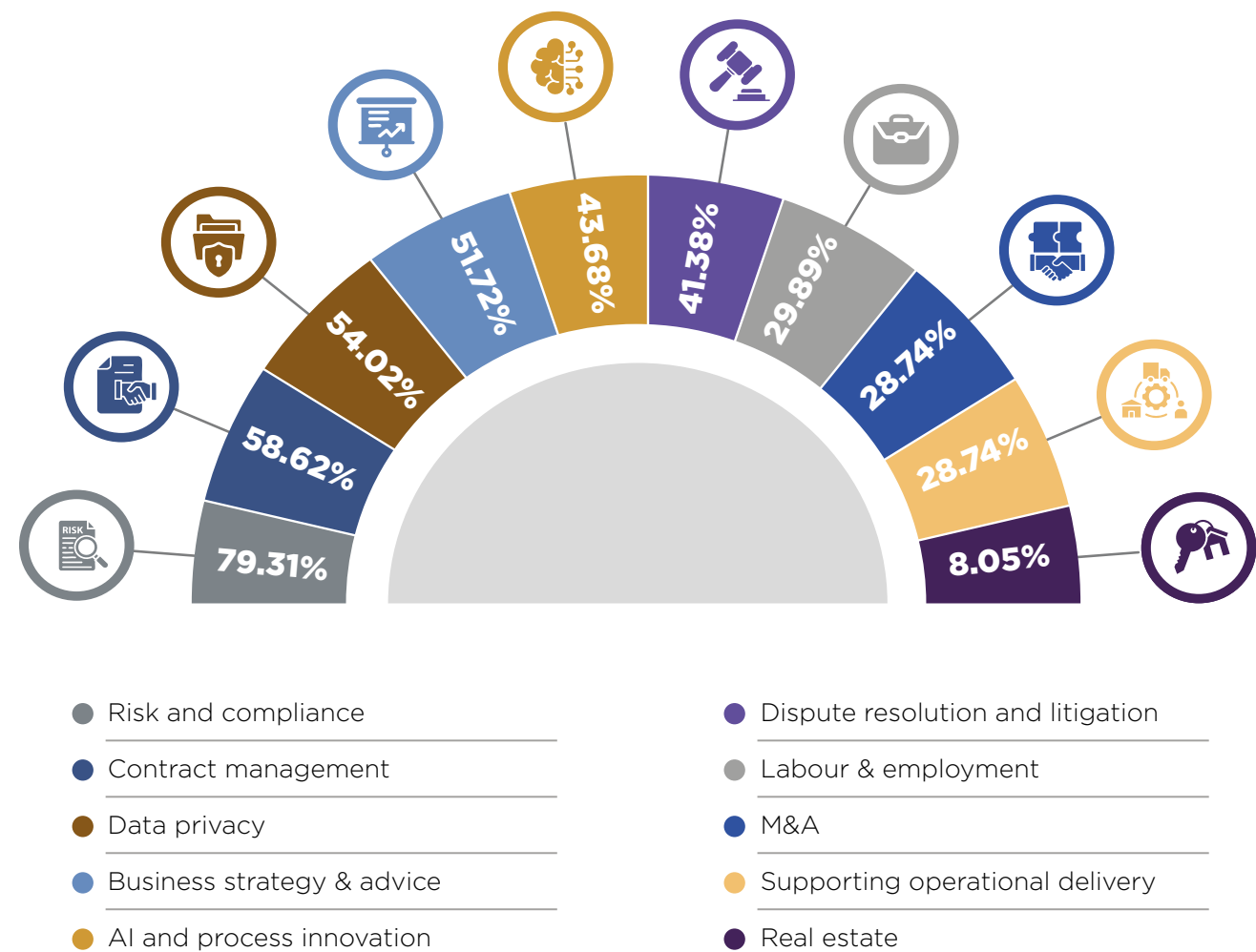
Precedents also enable business partners to carry out self-service using pre-approved legal templates available on a template database. This avoids incessant requests and unnecessary engagements with the Legal team. It is a growing trend for AI to be used to develop Legal templates and carry out routine

reviews of standard agreements with record accuracy.

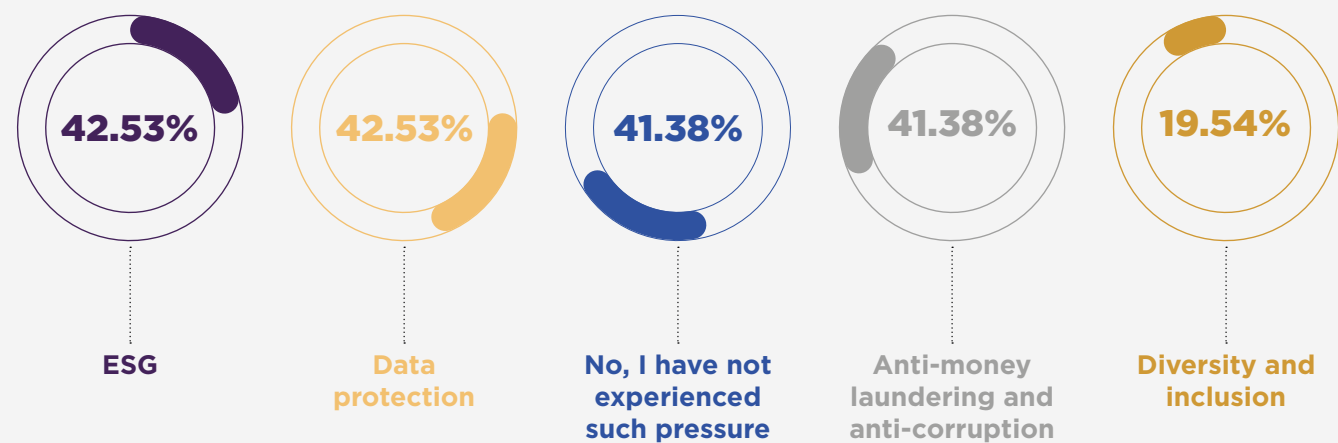
Finally, Corporates are faced with significant risks related to document retention and management. To effectively manage growing regulatory investigations, third party and litigation claims etc., quick access to historical information and documents to defend and support these processes are imperative. Legal Departments are usually looked up to throughout data/document life cycle i.e. development, storage, retention and disposal of corporate data/documents. An automated document repository and management tool will enhance the quality and efficiency of the process for the benefit of all stakeholders.



➤ **Q32: Over the next 12 months, I expect activity in the following areas to increase: (Tick all that apply)**



➤ **Q33: Have you experienced pressure to implement stricter policies than those required in your country based on international policies or best practices? If so, please specify the field/s affected. (Tick all that apply)**



COMMENTARY

**Iyiola Alokolaro-Oyefeso**

Group Head Legal Services, AA&R Investment Group

As a General Counsel that has advised organizations on international business transactions, I have frequently felt the pressure to implement stricter policies and best practices. Some of my specific experiences include the need to include anti-corruption provisions in agreements and to ensure compliance with regulations such as UK Bribery Act and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. More recently, there is also a growing need to adhere to ESG standards in alignment with prospective partners' organizational objectives.

**Georgina Ogalo**

Senior Legal Counsel, Airtel Africa plc

Stricter policy requirements in the areas of data privacy, anti-corruption and bribery, money laundering and technology eg. AI.

**Allan Rwakakooko**

Head of Legal Services, Umeme Ltd

I work for an electricity distribution company that is listed on the Uganda and Nairobi Securities exchanges. We also work with international banks and development institutions, and we have a number of private, public, local and international stakeholders, and investors. In order to manage their diverse interests, we implement policies beyond the requirements of the laws of Uganda.

Environment Safety Governance: There is no express law governing ESG in Uganda. However, the company invests in ESG management to ensure that it is responsible and does not violate its social contract with the public. This is also necessary for strategic relationships with the Government and sector regulators. Brand and public image management has also increased our credit rating and enables us to get more favourable terms with international financial institutions.

Data Protection: Utilities are custodians of customer data which is confidential. While the Data Protections Act is new in Uganda, the

confidentiality requirements have been in place since the sector was established.

Anti Money Laundering: The anti-money laundering law is relatively new in Uganda. As a listed entity, the anti-money laundering and disclosure requirements were expanded to take into account the laws and best practices of our investor's countries of origin and the country where the company shares are traded.

The in-house counsel recognizes the additional requirements and take them into consideration in providing strategic advice to the business. It is prudent to implement stricter policies since restricting ourselves to the local laws could result in regulatory exposure.

**Adeola Olumeyan**

Executive Director, EMET Hill

As a General Counsel operating in Africa, I have experienced the pressure to implement stricter policies than those required by national regulations. This was largely driven by global regulatory alignment, and evolving industry best practices; although I am aware that in certain situations, international investors may drive the pressure. In several instances, businesses operating in Africa must meet higher compliance standards to maintain access to international markets, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and uphold partnerships with multinational corporations.

One example of this relates to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policies. DEI has become a global corporate priority, with many multinational companies requiring DEI compliance across all their subsidiaries, regardless of local laws. While some African nations—such as South Africa—have established employment equity laws, many other countries do not have explicit DEI regulations, and in some cases, certain aspects of DEI initiatives conflict with local legal or cultural norms.

For example, in Europe and North America, companies are increasingly expected to report on workforce diversity metrics, including gender, ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQ+ representation. However, in some African nations, LGBTQ+ rights remain legally restricted or socially sensitive, creating significant compliance challenges for General Counsels managing operations across multiple jurisdictions.

While working for an organization with footprints in both Nigeria and the UK, I encountered a



significant legal and ethical challenge when required to report on LGBTQ+ hiring metrics in the UK. One of the mandatory UK reporting requirements involved disclosing the number of transgender and non-binary employees in the workforce. However, this posed a legal risk in Nigeria, where being transgender is illegal and acknowledging such identities in company records could lead to legal exposure under Nigerian law.

This created a major compliance dilemma:

1. If we reported LGBTQ+ data for all employees (including those in Nigeria), we risked violating Nigerian law.
2. If we refused to provide the information in the UK, we risked non-compliance with UK reporting obligations.

To resolve this legal conflict, we developed a practical workaround:

Employees in Nigeria were given the option to select “Prefer Not to Disclose” in the gender identity and sexual orientation reporting section.

- This approach allowed us to comply with UK reporting requirements (since “Prefer Not to Disclose” was an acceptable response) while ensuring we did not violate Nigerian law by officially acknowledging transgender identities.
- Internally, we implemented additional confidentiality measures to protect employee data and ensure compliance with both UK privacy laws and Nigerian legal sensitivities.

This experience underscores a broader challenge for General Counsels managing global compliance obligations:

1. Understand Conflicting DEI Regulations Across Jurisdictions
  - GCs must carefully map out DEI-related legal requirements in each jurisdiction where the company operates.
  - Identify potential conflicts between local laws and international DEI expectations, particularly in hiring, anti-discrimination policies, and employee self-identification data collection.
2. Develop Alternative Compliance Strategies
  - Use workarounds like “Prefer Not to Disclose” options where DEI data collection conflicts with local laws.

- Consider aggregated or anonymized reporting to meet international obligations without exposing individual employees to risk.
3. Implement DEI Policies That Balance Global Standards with Local Sensitivities
    - Ensure that corporate DEI policies are culturally aware and legally compliant in all jurisdictions.
    - Provide diversity training for HR teams to help navigate cross-border DEI challenges.

Apart from the above, there are few other key areas where stricter policies than national laws are being implemented:

#### A. ESG Compliance and Sustainability Reporting

The push for Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliance has grown significantly, particularly due to investor expectations, financing requirements, and global supply chain accountability. While African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya are starting to implement sustainability disclosure standards, these remain less stringent than international frameworks like:

- EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)
- IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards (SDS)
- Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)

As a practical example, in Nigeria, while the Climate Change Act (2021) mandates large companies to report emission reductions, it does not impose sector-specific, independently verified ESG disclosures. However, many multinational corporations and investors in the region require businesses to comply with EU-aligned ESG reporting, which includes Scope 3 emissions tracking, ESG-linked executive compensation, and ethical supply chain audits.

#### B. Data Protection and Cross-Border Compliance

The rapid growth of Africa's digital economy has heightened concerns about data privacy, cybersecurity, and cross-border data transfers. Several African nations—including Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana—have national data protection laws. However, many businesses must comply with stricter international frameworks, such as:

- EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)
- UK Data Protection Act

For example, many Data Protections Acts in Africa regulates data collection and processing but does not mandate GDPR-level fines or require Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) for every AI application, AI algorithm transparency disclosures or Cybersecurity resilience testing.

#### C. Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Anti-Corruption Compliance

The rise of digital payments, cryptocurrency, and international banking partnerships has led to heightened AML and anti-corruption enforcement. While Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana have AML laws, stricter compliance requirements often stem from:

- Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Recommendations
- UK Bribery Act
- US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA)

Some of the stricter provisions in these laws often require stronger whistleblower protection mechanisms, global risk-based due diligence for third-party vendors and quarterly compliance training for all senior executives.

However, with South Africa and Nigeria aiming to exit the FAFT grey list by 2025, it is expected that these countries will intensify AML oversight to prevent terrorist financing and financial crimes. It is also expected that African governments will collaborate more with businesses to actively implement FATF standards and enhance the compliance frameworks which are essential for integrating into the global financial system and mitigating financial crime risks.

More African Central banks are also implementing Crypto-Linked AML Regulations with enhanced KYC (Know Your Customer) and transaction monitoring requirements. Governments are also introducing mandatory ownership disclosure rules to prevent shell companies and illicit financial flows.

All of the above mean African GCs should expect intensified AML oversights and must put strategies in place for compliance.

#### Conclusion

For GCs in Africa, the challenge is not just legal compliance. It is ensuring that the Companies we represent remain competitive, compliant, and attractive to international investors by proactively embedding global best practices into our corporate governance frameworks. We must therefore manage dual compliance obligations, balancing local legal constraints with international expectations. This requires a strategic, proactive approach to ensure business continuity, risk mitigation, and long-term access to global markets.



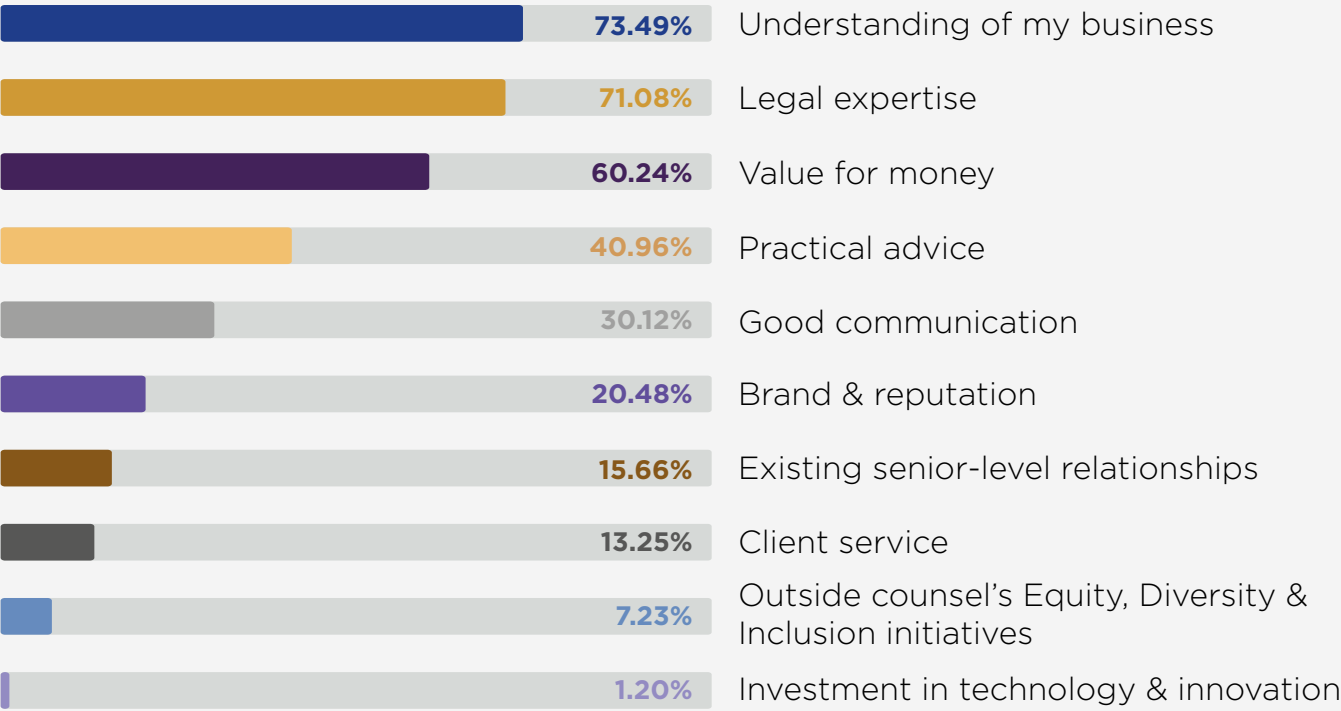
# 7

## ENGAGING WITH EXTERNAL COUNSEL

- 34 KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING OUTSIDE COUNSEL
- 35 AREAS MOST LIKELY TO BE OUTSOURCED BY YOUR LEGAL DEPARTMENT

The opinions expressed in the commentaries are solely those of the individuals and do not reflect the views of the organizations or entities they are affiliated with. Nor do they represent the views of ACGC or Afriwise as administrators and organisers of this research.

### Q34: When you select outside counsel, what are your top 3 considerations?



#### COMMENTARY

##### Ozim Ibeziako

Executive General Counsel, Sub-Saharan Africa, GE Vernova

My priorities in choosing external counsel include firms that make a good effort to understand our business, and what we consider as value-proposition. Then next is their expertise in the areas that we need their support and also value for money.

I will also prioritize reputable firms that give practical advice and understand my business environment and are willing to go above and beyond to proffer solutions to help our business continuity and growth, with minimal risk. Firms that are multilingual, excellent communicators, with diverse professionals, in tune with technological trends will be preferred.





As the legal landscape evolves, the selection of outside counsel will play a crucial role in helping financial institutions navigate complex regulatory challenges. When choosing external counsel for 2025 and beyond, it is critical to focus on the following strategic considerations:

Expertise:

The external law firm should be a reputable and established entity with a proven record of accomplishment of success, particularly in the relevant area of law. Whether in employment law, intellectual property, or any other specialized field, the firm's expertise must be both deep and broad. It is essential that external counsel not only understands the intricacies of the law but also appreciates the practical realities of the banking and finance sectors. This includes recognizing the impact of technological advancements and providing strategic guidance that mitigates risk while helping the organization move forward effectively. Legal counsel should offer solutions that align with both regulatory requirements and business objectives.

Costs:

It is widely understood that the legal department is often perceived as a cost center within organizations. A core focus for the department in the upcoming year is efficient budget management. Therefore, it is vital to work with law firms that are transparent and flexible with pricing, especially when handling complex matters where outcomes may be uncertain. An external counsel that views the relationship as a partnership, rather than a transactional arrangement, fosters a collaborative environment where legal fees are negotiated with fairness and foresight is preferable. This approach ensures that all projects, regardless of scope, are delivered with clear cost expectations in mind.

Turnaround Time (TAT):

As we look ahead to 2025, one of the primary strategies will be to resolve outstanding matters, particularly in the context of litigation. Turnaround time (TAT) should be a critical consideration when selecting external counsel, as it directly affects the efficiency of case progression and the timely resolution of legal matters. In addition to being cost-conscious and highly knowledgeable, external counsel must demonstrate the agility to drive cases

to a swift resolution. While I understand that external counsel cannot control every aspect of litigation, as they work closely with the bench, a good fit for the role would be an external firm that:

- Actively seeks alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to expedite the closure of long-standing cases.
- Prioritizes quick yet ethical solutions to conclude litigation, steering away from counsel who prolongs matters simply to increase billable hours.
- Possesses the right combination of experience, organizational skills, and cutting-edge technology to handle cases efficiently and ensure timely outcomes.

By ensuring that external counsel aligns with these criteria, legal teams can ensure that litigation is handled effectively and in the best interests of the business. Reduction of court cases reduces the organization's contingent liability.

Iyiola Alokolaro-Oyefeso  
Group Head Legal Services, AA&R  
Investment Group

- Experience in the specific area of law or experience dealing with similar issues.
- Professional Fees.
- Responsiveness of the firm to client's needs.

Georgina Ogalo  
Senior Legal Counsel, Airtel Africa plc

- Expertise of the counsel within a specific area of law.
- Relationship with the counsel- people tend to send work to counsel that they can work with easily and have a good relationship with.
- Cost.
- Availability of the counsel to handle the matter.

Sandra Adu-Gyamfi  
General Counsel & Company Secretary, Danone

Good Understanding of My Business:

It is crucial that the external counsel has a deep and comprehensive understanding of our business, particularly in the FMCG sector where I'm currently doing business. This ensures they can provide advice that is both practical and aligned with the nuances of the industry. Their understanding of the business landscape significantly impacts the quality of their guidance. My current counsel has worked for other multinationals like Diageo, AbInBev and currently Danone, so they excel in this area, leveraging their expertise to support our business needs effectively.

Good Communication:

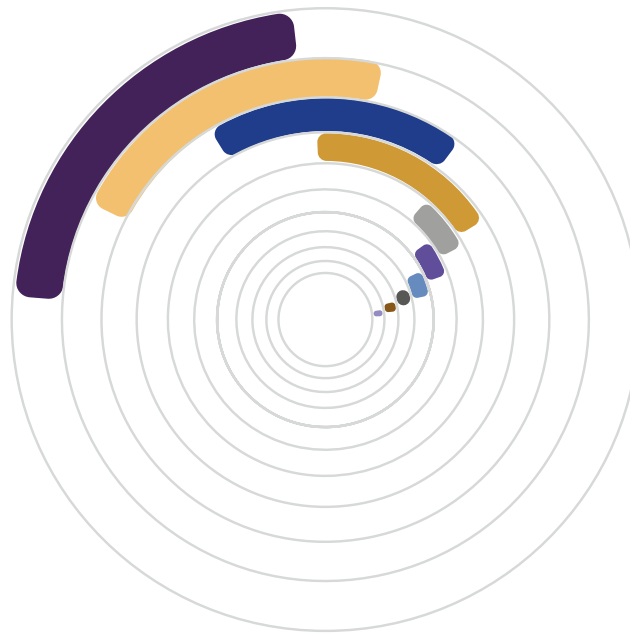
Accessibility and clear communication are non-negotiable. My external counsel must be easily reachable, whether it's a quick phone call or a prompt email response. The ease of communication fosters a closer working relationship and ensures that we can address legal matters swiftly and efficiently. Unfortunately, my previous counsel did not meet this criterion as their reliance on traditional communication methods, such as hard copy letters, proved to be inefficient and ultimately led to the end of our relationship. In contrast, my current counsel is just a dial away, which I greatly appreciate.

Value for Money:

Cost-effectiveness is also a significant consideration. The legal services provided must offer good value for the fees charged. This doesn't necessarily mean the lowest price but rather a fair balance between the cost and the quality of services rendered. Ensuring that the fees charged align with the level of expertise and service provided.

Having experienced the challenges of working with extremely traditional law firms, I place a premium on progressive, tech-savvy, and accessible legal partners who align with the fast-paced demands of our industry.

Q35: The area(s) my in-house legal department is/are most likely to outsource are: (Tick all that apply)



Transactions or activities where we want external counsel assurances/ opinions/ coverage	62.65%
Transactional activities where we don't have the internal capacity	60.24%
Seeking expert advice in emerging areas of law	54.22%
Seeking expert advice in an area new to you	48.19%
Legal intelligence gathering	16.87%
Legal register and compliance tools	13.25%
Work requiring a short timeframe	10.84%
Translation services	8.43%
Contract drafting/management	6.02%
E-discovery	4.82%

Other answers:

Dispute Resolution | Litigation | Specialist Areas

# ANNEXURE

## ► QUESTION LIST

1. Which country(ies) across Africa do you operate in?
2. Which of the following best describes your role?
3. How long have you been in your current role?
4. In addition to your legal responsibilities, do you have other accountabilities?
5. In which industry/sector does your company operate?
6. Which of these best describes your company?
7. The greatest legal challenge I expect to face in 2025 and beyond is:
8. What do you see as the most significant challenges facing in-house lawyers in your country?
9. What do you spend most of your time on during a typical month?
10. What has been the greatest disruptor to your role or department in the last 12 months?
11. What is your greatest strategic priority as a GC or member of an in-house team going into 2025?
12. Which of the following are a priority for your organisation?
13. How do you navigate in-country and regional regulations across different countries in Africa, especially in regions with cross-border projects?
14. Given the current economic climate in the country/ies you operate in, which areas do you anticipate will see the biggest regulatory shifts in 2025?
15. How, if at all, are you tailoring your legal strategies to specific African contexts (such as in-country governance requirements, technology adoption, or regulatory changes)?
16. How important is it for you to have access to comprehensive in-country legal intelligence?
17. Are you using any tools to manage the rapid pace of regulatory change?
18. Which legal skills do you consider will be most important for you to be able to perform your role in the next two (2) years?
19. Which non- legal skills do you consider will be most important for you to be able to perform your role in the next two (2) years?
20. What management practices are you employing to improve efficiency/effectiveness in your legal department?
21. Over the past 12 months, which of the following areas took up most of your legal department's (lawyer only) time?
22. In the last 12 months, my work-related anxiety and stress levels have been:
23. How many people (lawyers and support staff) work in your department?
24. How would you describe the structure of the legal team?
25. Are members of your legal department sufficiently involved in other areas of the business (knowing how other departments operate, empowered to provide input in other departments, etc.)?
26. Over the next 12 months, I expect the size of my in-house legal department to:
27. Does your organisation have lawyers in other African jurisdictions?
28. What is the annual turnover of your overall business?
29. What is your business' approximate annual spend on the legal department?
30. What proportion of your annual in-house department budget is spent externally?
31. What are your top 3 priorities for investment in legal department technology for 2025 and beyond?
32. Over the next 12 months, I expect activity in the following areas to increase
33. Have you experienced pressure to implement stricter policies than those required in your country based on international policies or best practices?
34. When you select outside counsel, what are your top 3 considerations?
35. The area(s) my in-house legal department is/are most likely to outsource are:



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**Afriwise®**

afriwise.com  
info@afriwise.com  
+32 2 808 92 74

Avenue Louise 292,  
1000 Brussels, Belgium



**ACGC**  
African Corporate & Government  
Counsel Forum

acgc.africa  
mail@acgc.africa  
+2347064777154

140A Tachbrook Street,  
London, United Kingdom,  
SW1V 2NE