

# 2025 ACC CHIEF LEGAL OFFICERS SURVEY

## KEY FINDINGS



772 Participants



20 Industries



48 Countries

01

### The CLO's Influence Over Corporate Functions Outside of Legal is Expanding

Most CLOs oversee multiple functions, with 70 percent managing at least two additional areas such as risk, compliance, privacy, and ethics. This broader scope of responsibility extends to strategic decision-making, with 58 percent of CLOs heavily involved in mergers and acquisitions and other corporate transactions. Furthermore, CLOs play a crucial role in advising the CEO and shaping overall business strategy, as 44 percent of them identified these as their greatest impact on the organization.

03

### The Volume, Cost, and Complexity of Disputes and Investigations Are Increasing for Many CLOs

Forty-two percent of CLOs report an uptick in litigation volume, while 44 percent have seen a rise in internal investigations. External investigations have also increased for 24 percent of CLOs. This increased legal activity comes with growing complexity. Thirty-eight percent of CLOs find litigation to be increasingly complex, followed by internal investigations (31 percent) and external investigations (21 percent). More complexity results in higher costs, with 60 percent of CLOs experiencing increased litigation expenses.

02

### CLOs Are Taking More Strategic Ownership Across Their Organizations

A global majority (79 percent) of CLOs report directly to the CEO, with the highest percentage in the US (83 percent) and the lowest in Australia (57 percent). This direct reporting structure empowers CLOs to influence key business decisions. Additionally, CLOs are actively seeking greater collaboration with other business units, such as operations (29 percent), finance (18 percent), and sales (15 percent).

04

### CLOs Rank Operational Efficiency as Their Top Strategic Initiative

Thirty-five percent of CLOs globally identified operational efficiency as their department's top strategic initiative for the next year. Technology implementation is the second most frequently cited initiative (14 percent). This emphasis on efficiency and cost-cutting may be linked to the fact that 41 percent of law departments received a cost-cutting mandate from their organization in the past year.

05

## Being Understaffed is the Biggest Barrier Legal Departments Face

When asked about the biggest barriers facing their legal departments, respondents identified understaffing as the primary challenge.

Thirty percent of CLOs plan on increasing the number of lawyers they hire this year and nearly half plan to do so in larger companies. Other barriers include regulatory uncertainty (23 percent), lack of strong processes in place (18 percent), and lack of budget (14 percent).

06

## Nearly One Quarter of Organizations Have Been Subject to a Regulatory Investigation Over the Past Year

Twenty-three percent of organizations were subject to a regulatory investigation or enforcement action over the past year. CLOs are most concerned about industry-specific regulatory enforcement (72 percent), followed by labor and employment related issues (37 percent) and third-party risk management enforcement (35 percent). Larger companies express greater concern with antitrust (41 percent) and AI regulatory enforcement (26 percent).

07

## Four in Ten Law Departments Will Implement New Legal Technology in 2025

Forty-four percent of CLOs say they plan to adopt new legal technology in their departments to improve efficiency in the next year. CLOs in larger companies are significantly more likely to implement new technology, while there is more uncertainty among those in smaller companies. Contract management (62 percent), document management (32 percent), and workflow tools (26 percent) are the most frequently cited technology categories that CLOs plan on implementing.

08

## CLOs Anticipate Sending More Work to Law Firms in 2025

A significant increase in the use of outside counsel is expected in 2025, with 43 percent of CLOs planning to increase the volume of work outsourced to law firms. This represents a substantial 17-percentage-point jump compared to the previous year. Furthermore, 43 percent of CLOs attribute this increased reliance on external counsel to the evolving global regulatory landscape, highlighting the growing complexity and risk associated with navigating these changes.

09

## Over One-Third of CLOs Say They Are Significantly More Prepared to Handle Data-Related Risks Compared to Three Years Ago

A large majority of CLOs (93 percent) report being more prepared to handle data-related risks compared to three years ago, with 36 percent indicating a significant improvement. This increased preparedness can be attributed to a heightened awareness of data-related risks (92 percent) and proactive measures taken by organizations. These measures include implementing technology solutions (52 percent), developing comprehensive data management strategies (41 percent), and hiring dedicated data privacy or compliance officers (17 percent).

10

## CLOs Want Their Staff to Develop Greater Business Acumen

CLOs prioritize business acumen in their legal teams, with 59 percent citing it as a top skill to develop. While the demand for communication skills and executive presence has decreased by 12 percent and eight percent respectively, there has been a five percent increase in the desire for technological fluency and a three percent increase in the demand for industry-specific skills.

**QUESTIONS? CONTACT: [research@acc.com](mailto:research@acc.com)**

**DOWNLOAD THE FULL REPORT: [acc.com/clo2025](http://acc.com/clo2025)**



ACC Headquarters Office  
1001 G St., NW, Suite 300W  
Washington, DC 20001 USA  
Tel +1 202.293.4103 | [acc.com](http://acc.com)