

From rankings to strategic insight

Discover how legal market intelligence builds on rankings, using legal data insights and analytics to drive smarter strategy, growth and competitive advantage.

What is legal market intelligence? Legal market intelligence goes beyond knowing what the market looks like and knowing how to use those insights.

At its best, legal market intelligence brings together independent research, structured data and real market signals to answer the questions leadership teams face: where should we grow, what is changing in client demand, how are we perceived, and which moves will create an advantage? That is why legal market intelligence is moving from a specialist function to a leadership essential, as it sits at the intersection of strategy, performance and client development.

The wider legal industry is navigating faster cycles, increased scrutiny on value and more complex buying behaviour. Chambers' global legal industry trends analysis highlights a sharp rebound in deal activity and a parallel rise in disputes, with global M&A value reaching \$4.8 trillion in 2025 and private equity investment hitting a four-year high of \$2.1 trillion. Those shifts matter because they indicate the change in client needs, which practices require investment, and what credible expertise looks like.

Legal data vs legal intelligence: understanding the difference

If data is the input, intelligence is the desired output. Many firms now have access to legal data analytics - whether that is pipeline reporting, matter and pricing data, CRM activity, or external signals such as rankings and public deal information. The challenge is turning insights into strategic decisions. That is where legal data intelligence comes in, combining data with interpretation, context and a clear view of how the market is moving.

One simple test: does your data and intelligence help you prioritise? Your data must provide insight into where performance is slipping, where client expectations are tightening and where competitors are making moves that will

reshape the field. It also brings together the "why" behind numbers, using qualitative evidence to help leaders act with confidence.

Chambers' research points to how quickly this shift is happening. We recently surveyed senior legal professionals across US and UK law firms. We found that legal data is already embedded in firm workflows, used for internal performance optimisation, planning, pricing and market positioning. In other words, data analytics in the legal industry is no longer experimental, but operational.

The role of rankings in legal market intelligence

Rankings are often the starting point. In the same Legal Challenges 2026 study, Chambers found that rankings function as trust signals, validation mechanisms and client acquisition tools. A clear majority of law firm respondents (85–90%) use rankings to attract new clients and business opportunities, and firms also use rankings to strengthen brand positioning and marketing content.

In-house counsel use rankings in similarly practical ways. Chambers' in-house study, based on responses from 204 senior in-house counsel across the US and UK, shows rankings being used as practical procurement tools across the lifecycle, from sourcing specialist support to validating decisions and evaluating existing relationships. In the US, the most common use case is to find experts in practice areas (76%). In the UK, it's finding new legal representation (80%). Identifying experts in specific practice areas also scores strongly (67%).

This is why rankings form an integral part of legal market intelligence. They are a high-trust, independent signal of market position, and when combined with wider data, help leaders see both perception and performance.

From rankings to law firm competitive intelligence

The step-change comes when firms stop treating rankings as a static credential and

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start using them as law firm competitive intelligence.

Recent Chambers' research uncovered the various ways firms use data and intelligence. In the US, internal and partner performance optimisation is the top use at 27%, followed by strategic planning and growth at 24% and marketing and business development at 22%. In the UK, the pattern is more performance-led, with performance and resource optimisation at 43% and market trends and client insights at 36%. Competitor benchmarking is also prominent, with 23% of UK respondents using data to understand their position relative to peers.

This is where law firm data analytics become strategic rather than descriptive. The value is not only "what happened?" but "what is changing?" and "what should we do next?" When you combine year-on-year movement, peer comparisons and market perception, you can make clearer calls on practice investment, lateral planning, pricing and messaging.

Using legal data insights and analytics strategically

Our research shows that, in practice, law firm leaders use legal data insights and analytics to make decisions in four key areas.

First, performance and resourcing. The Chambers data shows that performance optimisation is the single most common use case for legal data in both the US and UK. That includes benchmarking teams, assessing productivity and allocating resources more effectively.

Second, growth planning. Firms use intelligence to identify where demand is rising, which practices are best positioned to win it and which geographies justify investment. Chambers Business Intelligence is built for this kind of view, providing a global picture of the market using our independent research, with competitive and peer intelligence enabling year-on-year performance analysis.

Third, client development. Rankings and research can inform how you position expertise, but the best outcomes are achieved by connecting market signals to targeted action. Powered by 200,000+ client responses each year, Market Pulse shows regional coverage and what is driving demand for legal advice, helping business development teams focus efforts

where they will count and build stronger thought leadership using quotable data.

Fourth, submission and reputation strategy. Firms often know they want to improve their rankings but struggle to pinpoint what will make the difference. Chambers Insight provides a data-driven view of firm perception, including anonymous client feedback, research scores, ranking trajectories and competitor comparisons, giving teams focus.

Finally, for the in-house counsel: decision quality and performance impact. In-house counsel are increasingly using data to assess partner performance, forecast spend and support strategic planning. They also use rankings to reduce risk when sourcing specialist support in new jurisdictions or unfamiliar practice areas. That is the “mission-critical” shift; data is being used to justify decisions, not merely to report on them.

The future of legal market intelligence

The next wave of legal intelligence will be defined by integration and credibility. Integration matters because the best insight comes from putting the pieces together. That means looking at your own numbers alongside what clients are saying, what

work is coming in and what is changing in each market. Credibility matters because decisions are increasingly visible to boards, procurement and the market.

Two additional trends are worth watching. First, the legal market is becoming more selective in how it buys and sells expertise. Firms want evidence of differentiation and clients want reassurance that they are choosing advisers who can deliver. Second, as AI tools become part of the workflow, the premium on trusted, independent research increases. AI can help summarise, but it cannot replace market validation.

Key takeaways

- ▶ Legal intelligence turns information into decisions, combining independent research with internal data so leaders can prioritise with confidence.
- ▶ Rankings are a high-trust starting point, but the value increases when you use them alongside pipeline, client feedback and performance data.
- ▶ Most firms already use legal data analytics operationally, particularly for performance and resourcing, growth planning and business development.
- ▶ Competitive intelligence is where the advantage sits, tracking year-

on-year movement, competitor comparisons and how the market perceives you.

- ▶ The next wave is more connected, linking what clients say, what work is coming in and what is changing across markets.
- ▶ The goal is measurable impact, better decisions on investment, pricing confidence and the messaging that wins work.

Turn insight into advantage

Legal market intelligence helps you move from market visibility to better decisions. If you want a clearer view of where you stand and where to focus next, explore how firms are using data to drive growth.

Explore Chambers Business Intelligence at <https://chambers.com/products/business-intelligence>



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