



ANNUAL REPORT

ON ADMISSION
POLICIES
OF LEGAL
PROFESSIONS

2022

ADMISSIONS TO THE ROLL OF SOLICITORS

1. The number of solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors as at 31 December 2022.

23,323

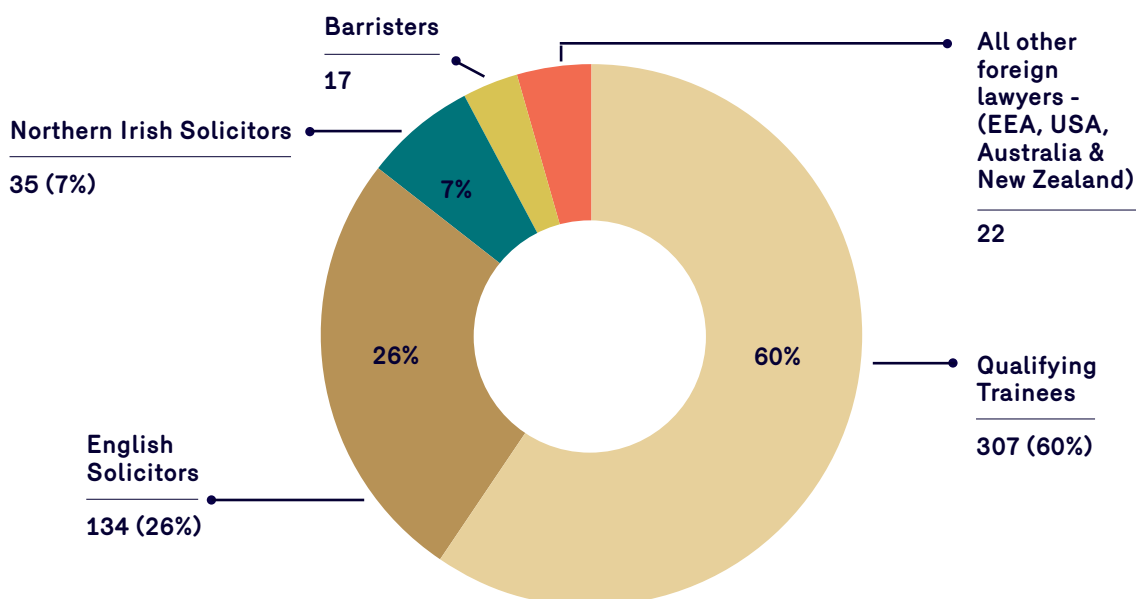
SOLICITORS WERE ON THE ROLL OF SOLICITORS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022.

2. Admissions numbers for 2022 have seen a decrease from the 2021 numbers.

This has been partly impacted by a drop in English admissions. A significant number of trainee solicitors indentures expired in late December 2022 and early January 2023. Since the end of 2022, 106 newly qualified solicitors have been admitted to the Roll of Solicitors. 98 of these are trainee solicitors where indentures of apprenticeship expired in January. Further applications for admission to the Roll of Solicitors will be submitted from trainees once their indentures of apprenticeship expire in March. The number of solicitors who were admitted to the Roll in 2022, with a breakdown by category of admissions (qualifying trainee, England & Wales qualified, NI qualified, s52, barristers, EU lawyers etc.,).

515

SOLICITORS WERE ADMITTED TO THE ROLL IN 2022.
See breakdown below.



ADMISSIONS BY CATEGORY										
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Qualifying Trainees	468	475	233	525	423	445	419	390	513	307
English Solicitors	33	36	70	806	547	688	1,837	443	278	134
Northern Irish Solicitors	24	15	30	27	29	43	61	33	35	35
Barristers	10	15	15	34	34	30	28	20	16	17
All other foreign lawyers - (EEA, USA, Australia & New Zealand)	18	16	11	14	17	23	37	20	34	22
Total	553	557	359	1,406	1,050	1,229	2,381	906	876	515

GENDER										
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Female	346 (63%)	319 (57%)	205 (57%)	711 (51%)	514 (49%)	603 (49%)	1076 (45%)	475 (52%)	469 (54%)	288 (56%)
Male	207 (37%)	238 (43%)	154 (43%)	695 (49%)	534 (51%)	626 (51%)	1305 (55%)	431 (48%)	407 (46%)	227 (44%)

“BREXIT ADMISSIONS” TO THE ROLL OF SOLICITORS IN IRELAND

UK ADMISSIONS SINCE 1 JANUARY 2016 (31 JANUARY 2023)										
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total	Applications being processed
English & Welsh solicitors	806	547	690	1,836	443	278	134	15	4,749	8
Northern Irish solicitors	27	29	43	61	33	35	35	4	267	2
Scots solicitors	0	0	4	4	1	0	0	0	9	0
Total	833	576	737	1,901	477	313	169	19	5,025	2035

FIRMS WITH MORE 26 OR MORE TRANSFERRING UK SOLICITORS		
1.	Linklaters LLP	393
2.	Allen & Overy LLP	308
3.	Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP	168
4.	Eversheds Sutherland LLP	167
5.	Latham & Watkins LLP	164
6.	Slaughter & May	158
7.	Ashursts LLP	105
8.	DLA Piper LLP	96
9.	White & Case LLP	92
10.	Dentons LLP	84
11.	Herbert Smith Freehills LLP	65
12.	Hogan Lovells LLP	63
13.	Clifford Chance LLP	59
14.	Norton Rose Fulbright LLP	50
15.	Pinsent Mason LLP	49
16.	Baker MacKenzie LLP	46
17.	Google UK Ltd	41
18.	Bird & Bird LLP	41

3. The number of solicitors who applied to be removed from the Roll in 2022 and the reasons for this.

13 solicitors applied to be removed from the Roll of Solicitors in 2022. (10 death, 3 requests).

4. The number of solicitors who were struck off the Roll in 2022.

01 solicitor was struck off the roll of solicitors in 2022.

PRACTISING CERTIFICATES

5. The number of practising certificates issued by the Law Society in 2022 and the number of practising certificates held as at 31 December 2022 if that figure is different.

11,729 PRACTISING CERTIFICATES WERE ISSUED BY THE LAW SOCIETY IN 2022.

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- **11,729** Practising Certificates were issued By the Law Society in 2022
 - **11,652** Practising Certificates held as at 31 December 2022
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6. The number of practising certificates suspended in 2022.

03 solicitors were suspended from practice by order of the High Court in 2021, all for non-compliance with legal obligations under the Solicitors Accounts Regulations. Each of the suspensions remains in place.

7. The number of practising certificates surrendered in 2022.

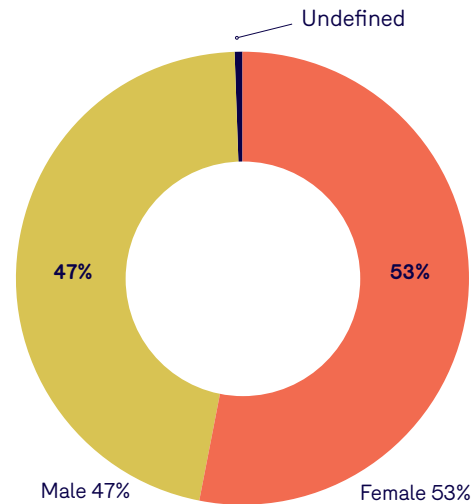
65 practising certificates were surrendered in 2022.

FACTS ABOUT THE PROFESSION

8. Based on the figure 12,114 as It includes all of the categories (Certificates of Attestation, solicitors in the full-time service of the State and those with Qualifying Certificates) making it a higher overall number than the PC number of 11652 at 31/12/22.

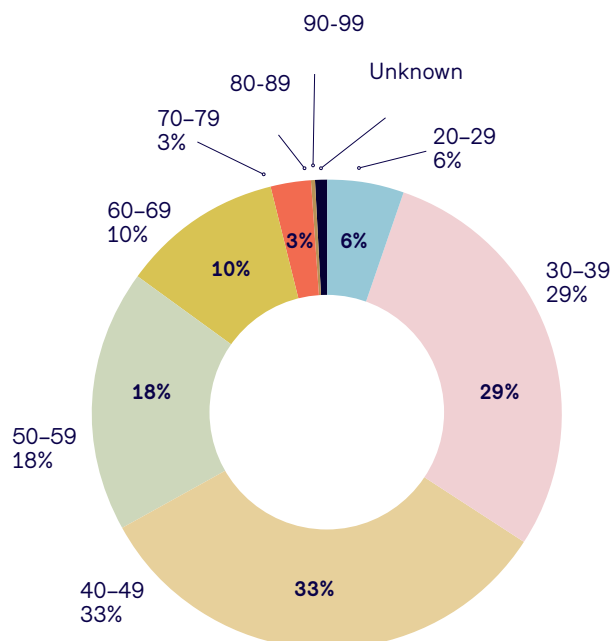
GENDER BALANCE | PRACTISING CERT HOLDERS

Female	6,439
Male	5,636
Undefined	39
Total	12,114



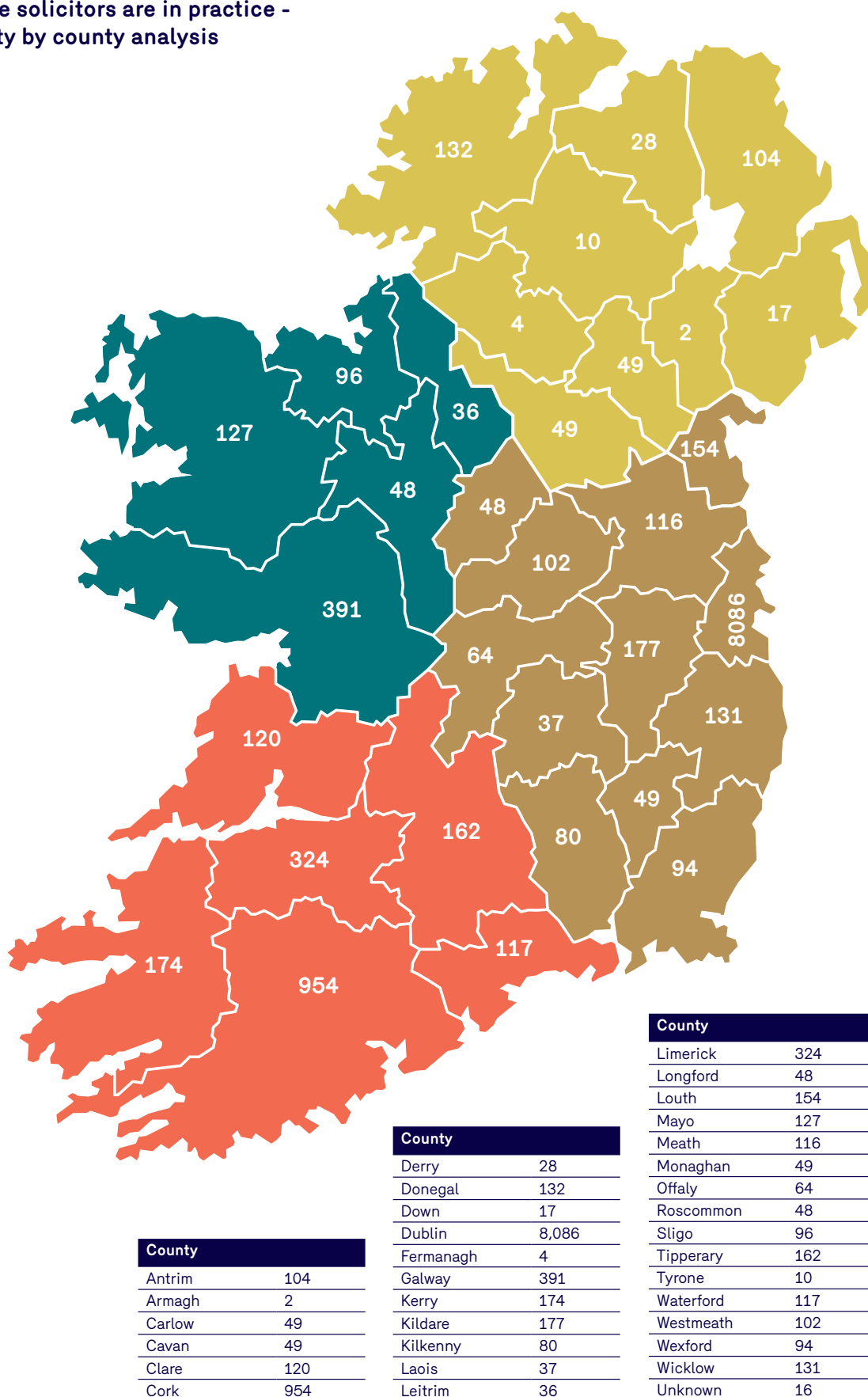
AGE PROFILE | PRACTISING CERT HOLDERS

Age	Amount
20-29	665
30-39	3,498
40-49	3,957
50-59	2,190
60-69	1,335
70-79	338
80-89	31
90-99	5
No DOB on record	95
Total	12,114



FACTS ABOUT THE PROFESSION

Where solicitors are in practice -
county by county analysis



9. A breakdown of the number of practising certificates held by each of the top twenty large law firms, as at 31 December 2022.

	Firm Name	Practising Certificates 2021	Practising Certificates 2022
1	A&L Goodbody LLP*	299	348
2	Matheson LLP	308	336
3	Arthur Cox LLP*	304	318
4	McCann FitzGerald LLP	273	292
5	Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	278	282
6	William Fry LLP	188	216
7	Chief State Solicitor's Office	165	154
8	ByrneWallace LLP	150	144
9	Legal Aid Board	106	142
10	Maples and Calder (Ireland) LLP	112	115
11	RDJ LLP	104	106
12	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	90	99
13	Allied Irish Banks plc	103	98
14	Eversheds Sutherland	111	94
15	Beauchamps LLP	86	93
16	Dillon Eustace LLP	89	85
17	Central Bank Of Ireland	80	77
18	Hayes Solicitors LLP	66	74
19	Philip Lee LLP	72	74
20	Fieldfisher LLP	63	64

The table above is based on practising certificates held in Ireland. Data based on the 32 Counties show that;

** A&L Goodbody hold 362 Practising Certificates. This number includes an additional 14 NI solicitors.*

** Arthur Cox LLP hold 320 Practising Certificates. This number includes an additional 2 NI solicitors.*

IN-HOUSE

10. The number of solicitors on the Roll recorded by the Law Society as working “in-house” at 31 December 2022, and the number of these in-house solicitors who also held practising certificates as at 31 December 2022.

3,120

SOLICITORS ON THE ROLL RECORDED BY THE LAW SOCIETY AS WORKING “IN-HOUSE” AT 31 DECEMBER 2022.

2,605

OF THESE IN-HOUSE SOLICITORS WHO ALSO HELD PRACTISING CERTIFICATES AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022.

11. The number of solicitors on the Roll and classified as being in the full time service of the State in 2022.

421

SOLICITORS ON THE ROLL ARE CLASSIFIED AS BEING IN THE FULL TIME SERVICE OF THE STATE IN 2022

12. The number of solicitors admitted to the Roll under the EU Recognition of Professional Qualifications Regulations 2017 (S.I. No 8 of 2017) who held practising certificates as at 31 December 2022.

22

SOLICITORS ADMITTED TO THE ROLL UNDER THE EU RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS REGULATIONS 2017 (S.I. NO 8 OF 2017) WHO HELD PRACTISING CERTIFICATES AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022.

-
- There are currently 17 Registered Lawyers practising in Ireland under the Establishment Directive (98/5EC).
 - Of the 22 solicitors, 20 have some through the QLTT.
-



TRAINEE SOLICITORS

13. The total number of candidates who sat FE-1s in 2022 and the overall pass rate.

Examination Sitting	No of Candidates
March 2022	1,418
October 2022	1,473

By virtue of the way candidates sit the examinations in multiple sequences there is no meaningful overall pass rate. Below is a breakdown of the pass rate per subject examination.

FE-1 March 2022

	Company	Constitutional	Contract	Criminal	Equity	EU	Property	Tort
Attended	523	415	488	493	442	352	331	332
Passed	255	330	265	393	296	266	201	240
% Passed	49%	80%	54%	79%	67%	76%	61%	72%

FE-1 October 2022

	Company	Constitutional	Contract	Criminal	Equity	EU	Property	Tort
Attended	520	325	509	389	509	342	502	313
Passed	333	258	263	295	344	277	458	246
% Passed	64%	79%	52%	76%	68%	81%	91%	79%

FE-1 2022 Total

	Company	Constitutional	Contract	Criminal	Equity	EU	Property	Tort
Attended	1,043	740	997	882	951	694	833	645
Passed	588	588	528	688	640	543	659	486
% Passed	56%	79%	53%	78%	67%	78%	79%	75%

14. The total number of candidates who sat the Preliminary Examination in 2022 and the overall pass rate.

2022 Preliminary Examination

No of Candidates	No Pass	% Pass
6	3	50%

15. The number of new trainees who commenced the Professional Practice Course I in 2021, with a breakdown in terms of all demographic and diversity data held by the Law Society on the trainees (e.g. gender, age, home location, third level institute attended, degree or other qualification for admission eligibility, etc.), with separate stats for the full-time and hybrid PPC courses.

2022 PPC

The total 2022 PPC intake (full time & hybrid) is at a 15-year high providing evidence of a healthy training market.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
392	353	388	384	405	412	448	501	473	538	560
-5%	-10%	+10%	-1%	+6%	+2%	9%	12%	-6%	14%	4%

GENDER											
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Female	243 (62%)	208 (59%)	248 (64%)	224 (58%)	236 (58%)	243 (59%)	268 (60%)	297 (59%)	307 (65%)	329 (61%)	365 (65%)
Male	149 (38%)	145 (41%)	140 (36%)	160 (42%)	169 (42%)	169 (41%)	180 (40%)	205 (41%)	166 (35%)	209 (39%)	195 (35%)

AGE											
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
30 or under	87%	89%	87%	86%	87%	90%	89%	88%	90%	88%	95%
Over 30	13%	11%	13%	14%	13%	10%	11%	12%	10%	12%	5%

LOCATION OF TRAINING FIRM											
County	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Dublin	282 (72%)	267 (76%)	319 (82%)	323 (84%)	335 (83%)	341 (83%)	387 (86%)	416 (83%)	410 (87%)	436 (81%)	472 (84%)
Cork	27 (7%)	21 (6%)	16	17	20 (5%)	21 (5%)	22 (5%)	24 (5%)	17	27 (5%)	26 (5%)
Galway	15	9	6	8	5	13	7	8	8	11	9
Limerick	9	5	7	10	7	8	5	8	6	9	9
Tipperary	10	1	2	1	3	4	3	4	3	6	1
Kerry	4	4	5	0	1	1	7	3	0	2	2
Kildare	2	6	1	2	4	1	2	4	4	5	6
Sligo	3	2	3	0	6	1	1	6	1	6	4

Louth	2	4	2	4	1	2	1	2	5	5	2
Donegal	1	1	4	0	4	3	1	0	4	8	5
Meath	6	6	1	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	4
Wicklow	6	3	1	3	3	2	1	2	1	2	3
Mayo	2	5	3	3	0	1	0	1	2	4	1
Westmeath	3	2	1	1	2	2	3	4	1	1	1
Waterford	1	2	4	2	1	0	1	2	2	4	2
Clare	3	1	4	2	1	2	3	3	0	2	2
Cavan	5	1	1	1	0	2	1	2	1	0	2
Kilkenny	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	1
Roscommon	2	4	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Monaghan	2	1	2	0	3	0	1	1	2	1	0
Carlow	1	1	1	2	3	1	0	2	1	0	1
Leitrim	3	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Offaly	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Longford	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0
Wexford	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
Laois	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1

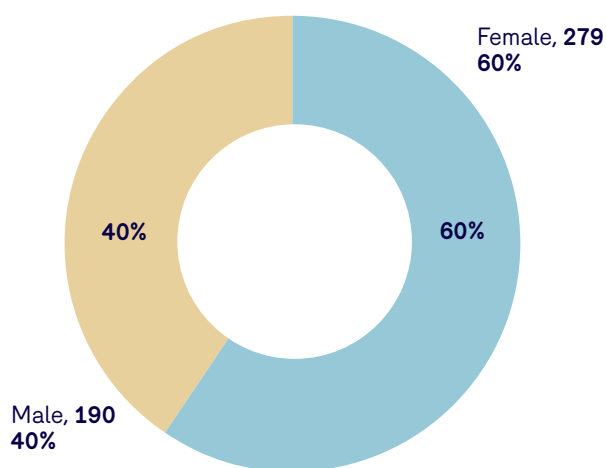


2022 full-time PPC (fused) Course

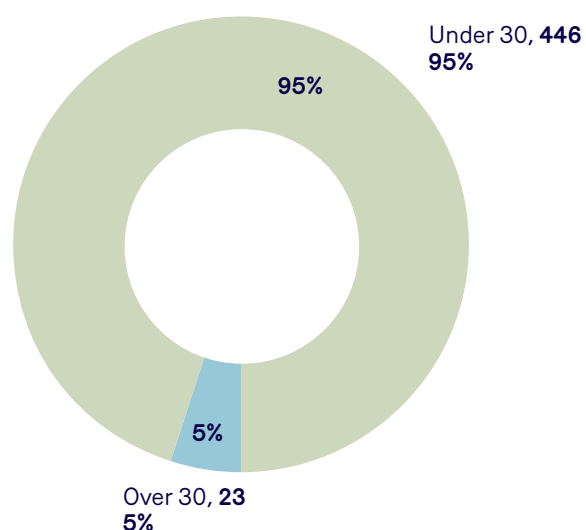
There are currently **469** trainees attending the full-time 2022 full-time PPC (fused) course which commenced on 6 September 2022. Please see a breakdown of demographic data in the table below:

BREAKDOWN DEMOGRAPHIC PPC I FULL-TIME (FUSED) 2022								
Male	Female	18 – 25	26 – 30	31 – 40	40 +	Dublin	Outside Dublin	Total
190	279	268	178	23	0	424	45	469

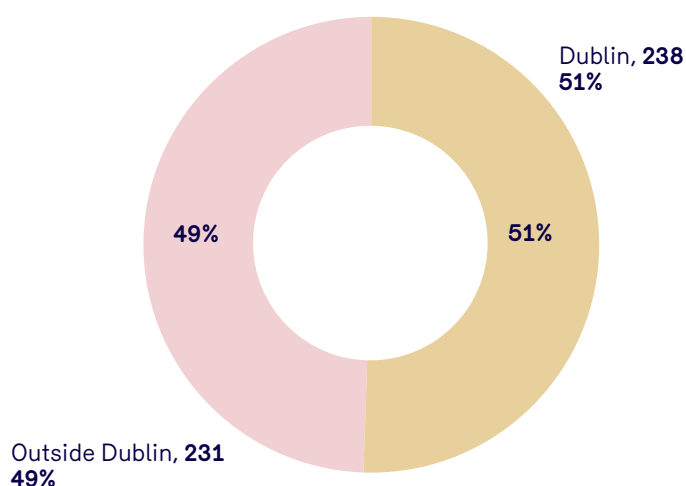
APPLICANTS PPC I FULL-TIME 2022



AGE PROFILE PPC I FULL-TIME TRAINEES



HOME LOCATION PPC I FULL-TIME TRAINEES



2022 PPC Hybrid (fused) course

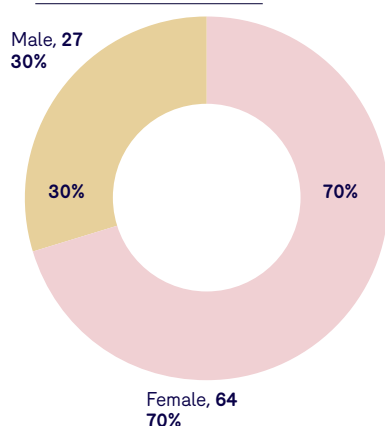
The new ‘fused’ Hybrid PPC 2022 commenced in December 2022 with 91 trainees joining the programme. This is the fourth iteration of the PPC Hybrid and underscores its ongoing viability and relevance as an alternative means of qualification. The PPC Hybrid makes greater use of best practice in online learning, doing away with the need to relocate to Dublin for an extended period. It also permits trainees to stay in full-time employment during the delivery of the PPC. As such it was deliberately structured in such a way so as to meet the Society’s priority with regard to diversity and inclusion, making the training more accessible for more mature trainees and those with family and other caring commitments. In this regard it should be noted that approximately 73% of trainees on the Hybrid PPC 2022 are female and approximately 47% are above the age of 30, both markers of greater diversity and inclusion. Other trends with regard to the PPC Hybrid include:

Geographical flexibility: The PPC Hybrid continues to provide geographical flexibility with approx. 47% 2022 traineeships located outside of the Dublin metropolitan area. Facilitating geographical diversity provides trainees with the opportunity to study, train and qualify into their local communities, ensuring the vibrancy of the profession in every part of the country.

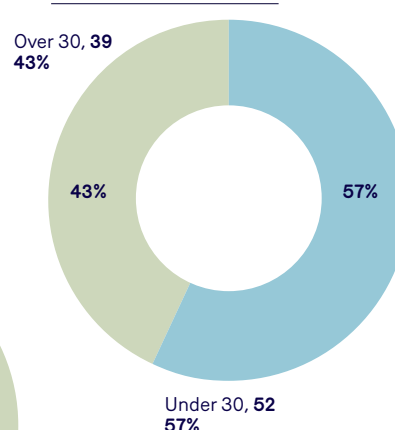
New types of traineeships - the part-time structure of the PPC Hybrid has provided new opportunities for traineeships. Approximately 10% of trainees on the Hybrid PPC 2022 have their traineeships in ‘in-house’ settings or Public Service Bodies.

BREAKDOWN DEMOGRAPHIC PPC HYBRID 2021								
Male	Female	18 – 25	26 – 30	31 – 40	40 +	Dublin	Outside Dublin	Total
27	64	16	36	32	7	47	44	91

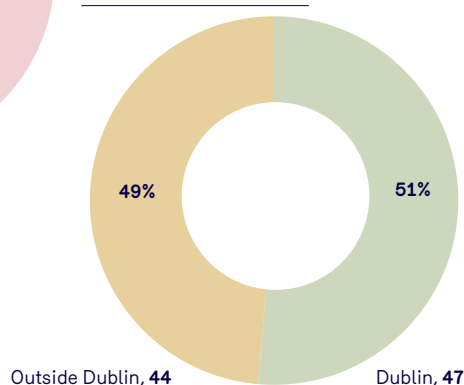
APPLICANTS PPC HYBRID 2022



AGE PROFILE HYBRID TRAINEES



HOME LOCATION HYBRID TRAINEES



Degrees 2022 full-time PPC (fused) Course

DEGREE	NO TRAINEES	DEGREE	NO TRAINEES
BCL (UCD)	57	BA (Cork)	1
LLB (TCD)	56	B. Vet Med	1
BCL (Cork)	50	BA(Leg&Bus)	1
BBL (UCD)	44	BBS (TCD)	1
LLB (Limerick)	28	BSC (Cork)	1
BCL (DCU)	26	BSC (UCD)	1
LLB (Maynooth)	25	BSC (TCD)	1
BCL (Galway)	23	BSocSc (DCU)	1
BCL (Maynooth)	20	LLB (Coventry University)	1
BA (UCD)	19	LLB (Maastricht University)	1
BA (TCD)	13	LLB (Manchester Metro University)	1
BCORP (Galway)	10	LLB (Symbiosis Law School, India)	1
LLB TUD (DIT)	9	LLB (Waterford IT)	1
BA (DCU)	7	LLB (University of Leicester)	1
BA (Law) (DCU)	7	LLB (University of Birmingham)	1
LLB (Griffith)	7	LLB (University Cluj Napoca, Romania)	1
BA (UL)	6	LLB (University Toulouse)	1
BSC(Bus&Law)(TUD)	5	LLB (Univeristy Federal Do Ceara, Brazil)	1
LLB (Galway)	5	Dip Legal Studies Griffith (Ex Prelim)	1
BA (Galway)	4		
LLB (Queens)	4		
BESS (TCD)	3		
BCOMM (UCD)	2		
BCOMM (Cork)	2		
BSC(Law&Mgmt)Blanchardstown IT	2		
BSC (DCU)	2		
BSocSc (UCD)	2		
LLB (Carlow IT)	2		
LLB (DBS)	2		
LLB (Cork)	2		
BA (NCI)	1		
BA (Alexandru Ioan Cuza Uni, Romania)	1		
BA (Cambridge)	1		
BA (TUD)	1		
BA (Griffith)	1		
BA (Maynooth)	1		

Degrees 2022 PPC Hybrid (fused) Course

DEGREE	NO TRAINEES
LLB (Maynooth)	8
BCL (Galway)	7
BCL (UCD)	6
LLB (Galway)	5
BCL (Maynooth)	4
LLB (Limerick)	4
BA (Galway)	3
BA (Trinity)	3
BCL (Cork)	3
LLB (Trinity)	3
LLB (Griffith)	3
BA (Cork)	2
BA (E,P&L) (DCU)	2
BCOMM (Cork)	2
BCORP (Galway)	2
LLB (Letterkenny IT)	2
LLB (Carlow IT)	2
BA (Sonoma State Uni)	1
BA (Maynooth)	1
BA (College of Linguistics)	1
BA (UCD)	2
BA (Limerick)	1
BA (Law) (Letterkenny IT)	1
BA (Law) (Waterford IT)	1
BA (Law) DIT	1
BA (LegSt&Bus) (Waterford IT)	1
BA (Criminology) (Glasgow Caledonian Uni)	1
BA (Leg&Bus) DBS	1
BBS (Law&Tax) (Limerick IT)	1
BCL (DCU)	1
BSC (Cork IT)	1
BSC (Cork)	1
BSC (UCD)	1
BSC (Maynooth)	1
BSOCSC (Cork)	1
Dip Leg St (Ex Prelim) DBS	1
LLB (DCU)	1
LLB (Independent College Dublin)	1
LLB (Uni Di Caxias do Sul, Brazil)	1
LLB (Queens)	1
LLB (Uni of Arges, France)	1
LLB (Uni Bucharest, Romania)	1
LLB (Waterford IT)	1
LLB (Ex Prelim) (University of Sibiu)	1
LLB (Ex Prelim) (University of Toulouse)	1
Prelim (Law Society)	1

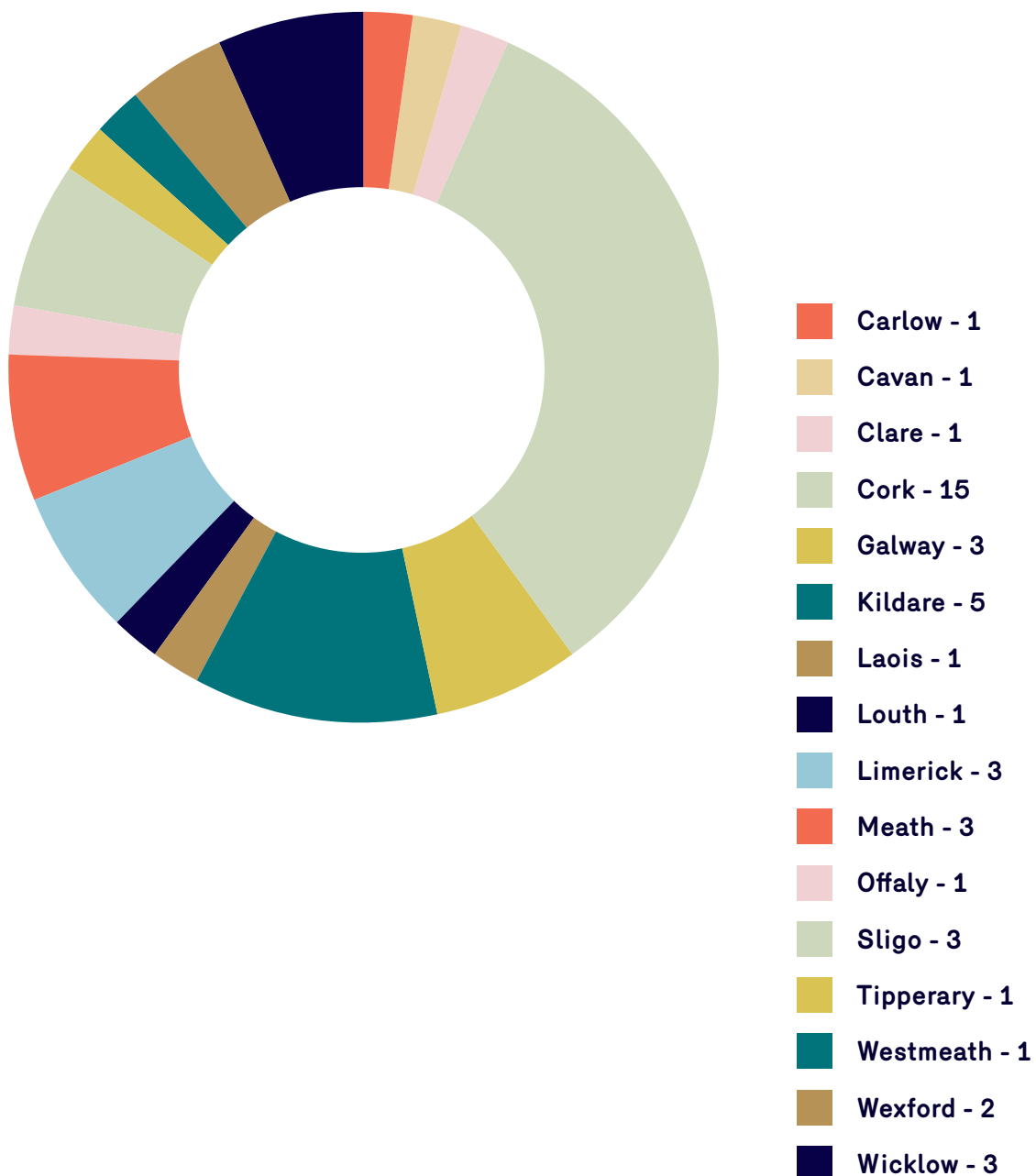
16. A county by county breakdown of the location of training firms and private or public bodies 2022 PPC course trainees, with separate statistics for the full-time and hybrid PPC.

2022 full-time PPC Course

424 DUBLIN

45 OUTSIDE OF DUBLIN

COUNTY BREAKDOWN OUTSIDE OF DUBLIN

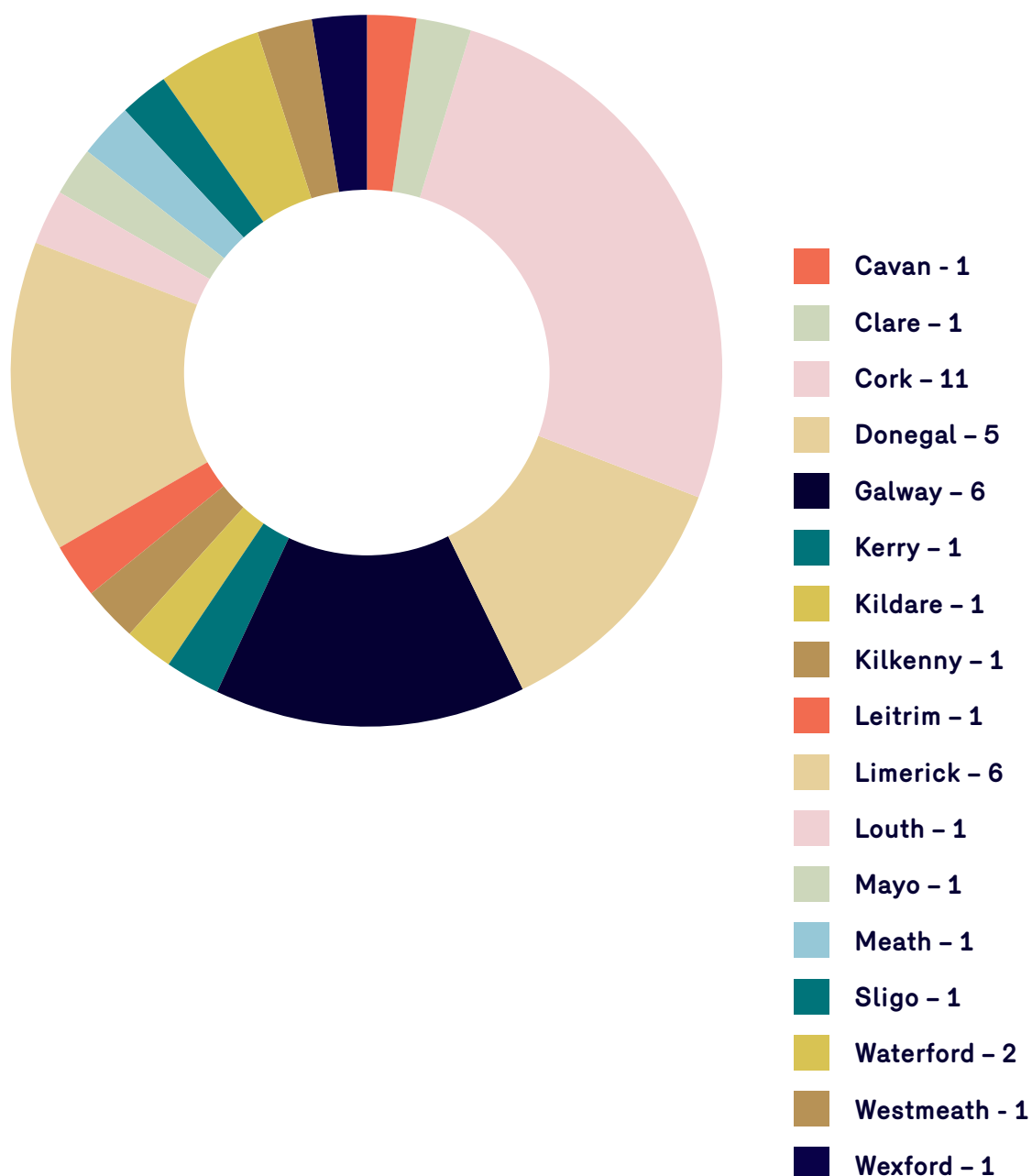


2022 PPC Hybrid Course

46 DUBLIN

42 OUTSIDE OF DUBLIN

COUNTY BREAKDOWN OUTSIDE OF DUBLIN



17. A breakdown by size of the training firms sponsoring trainee solicitors for the 2022 PPC course, with separate statistics for full-time and hybrid PPC trainees.

The data requested regarding firm size is not readily available from the Law School's database system. We set out below training contracts with the top 20 largest firms (based on total practising certificates held by solicitors working for said firms) and thereafter the remaining number of trainee solicitors not working for those top 20 large firms.

2022 full-time PPC Course

	Firm Name	Number of trainees
1	A & L Goodbody LLP	52
2	Arthur Cox LLP	48
3	Matheson	45
4	William Fry	31
5	McCann FitzGerald	30
6	Eversheds Sutherland	20
7	Maples & Calder LLP	16
8	Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	13
9	Ronan Daly Jermyn	11
10	Hayes	9
11	Byrne Wallace	8
12	Beauchamps	8
13	Dillon Eustace	8
14	Addleshaw Goddard	8
15	Philip Lee	7
16	Walkers	7
17	Fieldfisher	7
18	DLA Piper	7
19	Pinsent Masons LLP	4
20	LK Shields Solicitors LLP	4
21	Other	116

2022 PPC Hybrid course

	Firm Name	Number of trainees
1	Flynn O Driscoll	4
2	Sweeney McGann	3
3	Tusla	2
4	HD Keane	2
5	Other	77

18. The number of solicitor trainees on the PPC courses in 2022 who are in receipt of the SUSI grant.

As the Law Society has increased its financial support for trainee solicitors the corresponding supports from SUSI have dropped. The Society currently offers three scholarship programmes. The first programme is Access which provides financial support in respect of the cost of the FE-1 examination, indenture registration fee, PPC I, PPC II course fees and enrolment fee. This programme pays fees and maintenance for students from a background of socio-economic disadvantage.

The second scholarship programme is the “Scott Scholarship” which provides full funding in respect of the FE-1 examination, indenture registration fee, PPC I, PPC II course fees and enrolment fee.

The third scholarship programme is the Small Practice Traineeship Grant scheme which provides a trainee solicitor with €7,000 towards the PPC I course fee and also provides their training firm with a grant subsidy of €18,000 over the trainee solicitor’s 24 months training contract towards the cost of employing the trainee solicitor. This scheme is open to applicant firms comprising five or fewer solicitors and based outside of County Dublin and the cities of Limerick, Cork and Galway.

The SUSI eligibility criteria are extremely restrictive. If a trainee solicitor receives any of the above supports from the Law Society they do not qualify for a SUSI grant, even if they are from a background of socio-economic disadvantage. SUSI have also deemed trainees attending the hybrid course as ineligible for SUSI grant funding because the course is delivered through blended learning (on-site and online) with trainees attending the campus in a part-time capacity due to the online learning facilities.

The Law Society has appealed to SUSI on behalf of the trainee solicitors but there has been no change to the restrictions.

TRAINEES IN RECEIPT OF SUSI GRANT IN 2021		
PPC Course	Course term	Number in receipt of funding
2021 PPCI	7 September 2021 – 18 March 2022	10
2022 PPCII	11 April 2022 – 30 June 2022	7
2022 PPC	6 September 2022 – 28 April 2023	9

19. The number of solicitor trainees on the PPC courses in /2022 who received funding under the Law Society's Access Scholarship Programme.

ACCESS SCHOLARSHIP 2021

There are currently **173** individuals participating on the Access Scholarship Scheme. **105** individuals are currently pursuing FE-1 exams and receiving financial support in respect of same. **68** individuals are at post FE-1 level and receiving financial support in respect of the fulltime and Hybrid Professional Practice courses. Of the individuals at post FE-1 level, **38** joined the PPC fused courses in 2022 with Access funding. In addition, **185** individuals have qualified as solicitors with financial support from the Access Scholarship programme.

SCOTT SCHOLARSHIP

Three awards have been made to-date in respect of the Scott Scholarship during 2020, 2021 and 2022. Discussions are currently under way with the private donor in respect of the funding of another three Scott Scholarships during the period 2023 – 2025.

2020 Scott Scholarship	2020 PPC I Fulltime	1 Trainee, currently on post PPC I in-office training period
2020 Scott Scholarship	2020 PPC I Hybrid	1 Trainee, currently on post PPC I in-office training period
2021 Scott Scholarship	2021 PPC I Hybrid	1 Trainee, currently on PPC Course

SMALL PRACTICE TRAINEESHIP GRANT

In 2022, five additional grantees were provided with financial support via Small Practice Traineeship grant awards. This means 15 trainees have benefited since its introduction in 2020 and it is expected that another 5 grant awards will be made in 2023.

2020 SPTG Grant	2020 PPC I Fulltime	2 Trainees, current on post PPC I in-office training period
2020 SPTG Grant	2020 PPC I Hybrid	3 Trainees, currently on post PPC I in-office training period
2021 SPTG Grant	2021 PPC I Fulltime	2 Trainees currently on PPC Course
2021 SPTG Grant	2021 PPC I Hybrid	3 Trainees currently on PPC Course

SCOPE OF GENERAL CONSULTATION

S 33 Annual Report on Admission Policies 2022

In addition to the specific questions for the Law Society as set out above, the Authority seeks submissions in respect of the admission policies of the legal professions to include the following issues:

1. The level of demand for the services of practicing solicitors in 2022.

The Irish economy rebounded strongly in 2022, following a very turbulent 2020 and 2021 for many sectors. As Covid-19 pandemic related supports e.g., Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS), were wound down, and businesses returned to the office through 2022, legal firms generally reported an uptick in demand for practicing solicitors and an overall improved outlook for the 12 months ahead. However, significant headwinds prevail – war in Ukraine; supply chain issues; mounting inflationary pressures; staff costs etc. – that have acted to dampen a return to full pre-pandemic performance and demand.

In a 2021 survey of legal firms, most businesses reported an improved outlook for businesses in the legal sector – with 47% seeing an improvement and 31% reporting no change. This positive outlook has deteriorated significantly through 2022 on foot of the aforementioned challenges. Where 63% of legal firms had anticipated an improvement in the sector in 2022, just 13% of firms, in the most recent survey, anticipate improved conditions in 2023.

While expectations have deteriorated, the outlook is not uniform across law firms. 57% of the Top 20 firms expect conditions to improve in the next 12 months, compared to 86% last year, whereas closer to 50% of smaller firms expect a more stable outlook.

The level of demand for legal services can perhaps be inferred more accurately from the profitability reported by legal firms. Again, this was captured in the Evelyn Partners 2022 survey which illustrated that maintaining profitability proved a challenge for legal services in 2022. 14% of the Top 20 firms reported a decrease in profits through 2022. Regionally, too, there has been notable challenges for profitability. One-in-four smaller Dublin firms report a decrease in profits, and one-in-five of all regional firms indicated a decrease in profits over the past 12 months.

While some proportion of this may be linked to lower levels of demand, on foot of rising inflationary pressures across the economy, firms themselves have indicated that rising operating costs, such as wage inflation, have posed a significant challenge, and cannot fully be recouped from clients.

2. The costs of legal services in 2022 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers.

Due to limitations around publicly available data, it is difficult to accurately quantify if legal services were available at a reasonable cost to consumers in 2022. The Services Producer Price Index (SPPI), created by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), measures changes in the average level of prices charged by producers for a selected range of services supplied to businesses and government. Legal, Accounting, PR and Business Consultancy was the second largest contributor (after Air Transport) to the overall SPPI annual percentage change in Q3 2022, accounting for 0.5 percentage points of the 3.5% increase recorded in the 12 months.

In general terms, Consumer Price Index (CPI) is currently running at a 30-year high, with price inflation recorded across almost all sectors of the economy. The reasons for this are numerous though post pandemic supply chain issues and the Russian invasion of Ukraine are two of the primary factors. While it is not possible to isolate legal services within the CPI, 'Miscellaneous Goods and Services', under which legal services price changes are captured, was one of only two CPI headings to record a fall in prices in the 12 months to December 2022 (-0.4%). However, the 'Other Services' sub-category under this heading, which includes legal services, recorded a modest 0.3% annual increase.

A survey of legal firms identified that almost two in every three law firms have increased their fee levels to counteract the increases in their cost base over the past year. Factors such as rising operating costs, PI insurance costs, and recruitment costs were identified as some of the key drivers impacting profitability. 76% of all firms surveyed in 2022 reported either an increase or no change in profits in the past 12 months. While this marks a positive upward trend compared to activity in 2020 and 2021, it is some 10 percentage points lower than the 2019 level. Almost two-thirds of businesses have increased their fees in an effort to preserve margins, marking a significant increase on previous years (2020: 29%, 2021: 35%) and reflecting the significant challenges still facing the sector.

As part of the Justice Plan 2022 objective to support the reduction of legal costs and the length of legal proceedings, a report, published in July 2022, contends that the 'assertation that Ireland is a high legal costs jurisdiction is not strongly supported by evidence', and shows that legal fees over the period 2011 – 2019 have declined by between 9% - 13%.' The report, which is based on the international benchmarking of eight jurisdictions; a review of past reports; and analysis of over 250 litigation cases between 2011 and 2019, indicates that any move by the Department of Justice to reduce litigation costs would require greater expenditure on the justice system. For example, Ireland's current justice system expenditure of €59.50 per capita is significantly lower than other similar common law jurisdictions such as Scotland (€76.86) and England and Wales (€76.33).

The report concludes that the lack of consensus on the proposed model for reducing costs illustrates the complexity of the issue, and that due consideration to the level of investment required to improve the sector could result in unintended restriction on access to justice.

3. The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise.

Training solicitors to meet any and all challenges they will face in their careers is some of the most important work the Law Society carries out. The Law Society's vision is to train 21st century solicitors who will meet and exceed the exacting requirements of their clients and their firms. From the time a trainee solicitor begins the professional practice course (PPC) they are usually qualified and admitted to the Roll of Solicitors within about 2.5 years. This incorporates in office training and seminar-based training here at Blackhall Place.

The Law Society's education model is deeply rooted in the public interest and focussed on the future. The PPC model was originally consciously designed on an experiential, learning by doing model, with the new 'fused' PPC, which was introduced in September 2022 (see below), maintaining that experiential focus.

The new 'fused' PPC commenced in September 2022. The PPC 2022 represents the biggest change to Solicitor training since 2000. It is a unitary course which brings together into one academic year the entire taught elements of the solicitor training, thus providing significant logistical and practical advantages to trainees and firms. The core curriculum on the full-time PCC course will now run from September to April each year and will include a continued focus on such skills as negotiations, research, drafting, advocacy, interviewing and advising and presentation skills, together with an enhanced focus on more general skills such as leadership, project management, office and legal technology, and finance skills. Professional responsibility, including enhanced coverage of legal ethics, solicitors' accounts and rules of professional conduct and law firm life, will also form an integral part of the core curriculum. These are in addition to courses, such as business law, dispute resolution, land law, probate, family law and taxation. Psychology of a lawyer and legal practice Irish will continue to be part of the core curriculum.

Trainees must also complete four or more advanced electives as part of their overall training. Advanced electives can be completed at any point during the traineeship period, including during the in-office training period. A programme of advanced electives will be provided (i) by the Law School at Law Society of Ireland (ii) some will be co-provided and (iii) external advanced electives will also be accredited by the Law Society. A suite of 20 Law School advanced electives will be offered immediately following the completion of the compulsory element of the PPC in two distinct blocks, Block 1 in May and Block 2 in June. Our commitment, as always, is to enhance the skills and career opportunities of trainee solicitors. We strive to do this by providing a diverse range of advanced electives that cover core areas for every solicitor's practice, together with more niche innovative topics including topics outside the strictly legal domain.

Of the 469 trainee solicitors on the 2022 PPC, a very small number have deferred their electives to 2024. Trainees completing electives in May and June 2023 have spread their choices relatively widely with 20 Advanced Electives scheduled to be delivered by the Law Society.

Approx. 118 trainees have opted to complete electives with firms and none with outsider providers.

The new 'fused' Hybrid PPC commenced in December 2022. This is the fourth iteration of the PPC Hybrid and underscores its ongoing viability and relevance as an alternative means of qualification. The PPC Hybrid makes greater use of best practice in online learning, doing away with the need to relocate to Dublin for an extended period. It also permits trainees to stay in full-time employment during the delivery of the PPC. As such it was deliberately structured in such a way so as to meet the Society's priority with regard to diversity and inclusion, making the training more accessible for more mature trainees and those with family and other caring commitments. PPC Hybrid also provides geographical flexibility, with a much greater proportion traineeships located outside of the Dublin metropolitan area than on the full-time equivalent. Facilitating geographical diversity provides trainees with the opportunity to study, train and qualify into their local communities, ensuring the vibrancy of the profession in every part of the country. The part-time structure of the PPC Hybrid has also provided new opportunities for traineeships, with an enhanced number of traineeships located in 'in-house' settings or Public Service Bodies.

Our training programme is unique in that classes are almost all delivered by practising solicitors who are experts in their own areas of practice. Our associate faculty includes solicitors from large commercial firms, solicitors working for the State, general practitioners and in-house lawyers. We currently have in the region of 1,200 solicitors teaching for us; that means that more than 10% of all practising solicitors are involved in educating the next generation of the profession. Over 60% of all education is provided in small tutorial or skills groups of between 4 and 15 trainees working on legal or skills problems together. This interactive model of education requires students to prepare in advance and direct their own learning. Throughout PPC (on both the full-time and PPC Hybrid courses), the Society offers Free Time Concentrated Therapy sessions, which support trainees in achieving positive mental wellbeing.

4. The extent to which the admission policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practise.

In May 2022, the Law Society of Ireland recorded the largest intake of new solicitor trainees since 2008. This boost in admissions, up 10% on the previous year, is likely linked to greater access and fewer barriers to the profession, across diverse educational, professional and socio-economic backgrounds.

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) is currently undertaking research to explore the views and experiences of recently qualified solicitors and barristers who are currently not practicing. The survey will help the LSRA to understand the various barriers facing early career legal professionals and the reasons why recently qualified solicitors and barristers have chosen not to practice.

Greater access to the profession will help to appease the growing demand for talent in the sector. Economic uncertainty, and a firm's ability to replace staff losses with new employees, has resulted in fewer law firms reporting an increase in staff numbers in 2022 (33%) compared to 2021 (59%).

There are currently significant challenges within the market with regard to recruitment, retention and salary inflation. The so-called 'war for talent' has resulted in significant salary inflation in law firms, particularly amongst Top 20 firms and those based in Dublin and, as a consequence, many firms have had to review and refine their salary, bonus, and benefit packages in the past 12 months.

The Evelyn Partners 2022 survey of the sector found that non-partner pay increases have been significant in the past two years. To date, this has largely been offset through fee increases, turnover growth or reduced overhead expenditures. However, the ability to offset such costs is becoming more difficult as economic uncertainty increases.

A key barometer for the future of the sector is the intake of trainee solicitors. There are currently 1,500 trainees at various stages of their qualification journey - the largest recorded number of trainees in the system at any one time - and the outlook amongst law firms is positive. Trainee intake in the past 12 months either increased (64% of respondents) or remained the same as in 2021 (30%).

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