



An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhísí Dlí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority

Pathways to the Professions 2022

Annual Report on
Admission Policies of
the Legal Professions

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Executive Summary and Assessment

Introduction

1. This is the 2022 annual report from the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) to the Minister for Justice under section 33 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act). It is the fourth annual report that the Authority has submitted under section 33 of the Act, which was commenced on 7 October 2019.
2. As required under section 33(1)(a) and (b) of the Act, the Authority documents in this report the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors and barristers during 2022.
3. This report provides an update on developments during 2022 in legal practitioner education and training and an overview of data on both the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the costs of legal services. It also includes a summary of relevant submissions made to the Authority as part of its statutory consultation under section 33(2) of the Act.
4. Certain limitations with the availability of relevant statistical data in the areas of demand for and costs of legal services continue to pose constraints for the Authority when it comes to the areas which require its assessment under section 33(1)(c) of the Act. The Authority will continue to closely monitor and report on available data on legal services demand and costs in its annual reports to the Minister.
5. The start of 2022 saw the easing of Covid-19 restrictions in Ireland. However, the pandemic continued to impact all aspects of society and the economy throughout the year. New challenges emerged for the global and domestic economies, with economic uncertainty driven by the war in Ukraine, inflation and rising energy costs and interest rates.
6. The impact of these challenges on the domestic legal services sector is evident: the economy and inflation were seen as key issues for the sector by a large number of law firms in 2022, followed by recruitment and retention issues. In addition, the ongoing internationalisation of the legal services market in Ireland had an impact in terms of competition, recruitment and retention, and salary inflation. The government's *Ireland for Law* initiative continued in 2022 to promote Irish law and legal services to the international business community.
7. A return to the physical workplace began in the legal services sector during the year, with remote and hybrid work practices remaining in place to differing degrees for office-based legal professionals amid employee demand for more flexible working practices.

Decrease in admissions to Roll of Solicitors and increase in practising solicitors

8. The total number of solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors stood at 23,323 in 2022, up from 22,945 in 2021. Approximately half of these (11,652) held practising certificates in the year. The Roll of Solicitors is maintained by the Law Society.
9. Traditionally, solicitors qualifying through the Law Society's Professional Practice Course (PPC) have accounted for the majority of those joining the Roll of Solicitors each year. This trend was disrupted in recent years when large numbers of England and Wales-qualified solicitors sought admission to the Roll in the apparent hope that it would assist them in maintaining practising rights in the EU post-Brexit.
10. The year 2022 saw the number of England and Wales-qualified solicitors admitted to the Irish Roll decline for the third consecutive year from an unprecedented peak in 2019. Overall, a total of 515 solicitors were admitted to the Roll, a decrease of 361 (41%) from the 2021 total of 876. Of the total, 307 (60%) were solicitors newly qualified in Ireland, and 134 (26%) were England and Wales-qualified.
11. As admissions to the Roll continue to stabilise year on year in the wake of Brexit, it is expected that Irish newly qualified solicitors will in due course once again account for the significant majority of annual Roll of Solicitor admissions.
12. Admission to the Roll of Solicitors is effectively the first stage of applying for an Irish practising certificate. Annual practising certificates are issued/renewed by the Law Society at the start of every calendar year.
13. A total of 11,652 solicitors held practising certificates in Ireland on 31 December 2022. This is an increase of 239 (2%) from 2021, which followed two years of slight decreases from a recent high in 2019 of 11,959 practising certificates. This too indicates an ongoing correction following the short-lived Brexit-related phenomenon of large international law firms with no establishment in Ireland taking out Irish practising certificates for their solicitors.

One in five solicitors in-house and one in four with large law firms

14. An ongoing trend identified in the year under review is that approximately one in five solicitors work in the corporate or public "in-house" sector. This reflects the fact that both commercial and public sector organisations have internal legal functions supporting their business needs. The total number of solicitors holding practising certificates and working in-house in 2022 was 2,605 (22% of the total 11,652 practising certificates in 2022).
15. In another trend highlighting the scale of provision of legal services by corporate law firms, more than one in four (28%) of practising solicitors in 2022 worked with a total of twenty employers. These comprised the main large law firms and large public sector bodies, who combined, accounted for a total of 3,211 practising certificates held.

Highest number of trainee solicitors in fifteen years

16. A total of 560 trainee solicitors enrolled on the Law Society's PPC in 2022. This is the highest intake of PPC trainees in the past 15 years. There were 469 trainees undertaking the full-time PPC and 91 trainees on the PPC Hybrid.

Small increase in numbers on Roll of Practising Barristers

17. The LSRA maintains the Roll of Practising Barristers, a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State which is routinely updated.
18. The number of barristers on the Roll stood at 2,957 at the end of 2022, an increase of 24 (1%) from 2,933 in 2021. Of the total, 2,173 (73%) were barristers practising as members of the Law Library and 784 (27%) were not members of the Law Library.

Decrease in barrister admissions and new Law Library members

19. A total of 147 persons were "called to the bar" and admitted to practice by the Chief Justice of Ireland in 2022, allowing them to exercise a full right of audience before all courts. This is down 33 (18%) from 180 in 2021.
20. Traditionally, graduates of the King's Inns BL degree programme have accounted for the majority of those called to the bar each year. In a similar pattern to that observed with solicitors, the number of barristers from Northern Ireland and England and Wales called to the bar in Ireland increased in recent years due to concerns over Brexit, peaking in 2019 before tapering off. In 2022, numbers returned to pre-Brexit levels, with King's Inns BL degree holders accounting for 133 (90%) of the 147 persons called to the bar.
21. Once admitted to practice, barristers may begin practising either as self-employed practitioners or in employed positions. The majority of newly admitted barristers proceed to practice as sole traders at the independent referral bar, the model under which members of the Law Library currently operate. Under Law Library rules, new members must undertake a mandatory 12-month period of unpaid pupillage, also known as devilling, with a more senior barrister called a master.
22. A total of 92 new members joined the Law Library at the start of the new legal year in October 2022, down 17 (16%) from 109 in 2021. Of these, 90 began their 12-month pupillage and two were applicants from another jurisdiction who were not required to undergo pupillage.
23. Of the 90 barristers who began their pupillage in 2022, 67 were called to the bar in the same year, while 11 were called to the bar in 2021 and four in 2020. This indicates that some barristers may have deferred beginning pupillage until the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions on the courts which curtailed the activity levels of many practitioners.

Small decrease in barrister student intake

24. A total of 130 students started the King’s Inns Barrister-at-Law (BL) degree course in 2022, down slightly from 134 in 2021. The BL degree intake for 2022 consisted of 57 full-time students and 73 modular course students.

Demand for and costs of services of solicitors and barristers

25. As noted in previous annual reports, determining the level of demand for the services of practising solicitors and barristers in any given year poses challenges as there is no one source which explicitly captures this data. Available data sources include annual surveys of the performances of law firms and labour market data.
26. For both professions, national skills data published in 2022 from state agency SOLAS did not flag any supply shortages for the combined occupational group of barristers, judges, solicitors and related professionals, despite a slight decrease in the numbers employed in this group. In addition, the legal professional bodies in their submissions to the Authority for this report noted an increased demand for the services of both practicing solicitors and barristers in 2022.
27. According to the 2022 Evelyn Partners *Law Firm Survey* (formerly the Smith & Williamson *Annual Survey of Law Firms in Ireland*) the optimism and confidence in the sector that was beginning to return in 2021 diminished in 2022. A total of 85% of firms reported an increased or steady revenue in the previous 12 months. However, only 41% reported an increase in profits. The survey highlighted increasing salary and operational costs as factors impacting on firms’ profitability. One in three smaller law firms surveyed by Evelyn Partners reported that they continued to use Covid-19 related government supports during 2022. Two-thirds of firms reported having increased their fees during the year.
28. For barristers at the independent referral bar, the Authority notes the Bar of Ireland’s assessment that back-logs across most court divisions which built up during the pandemic generated demand for barristers’ services in 2022, as it had previously predicted.
29. Separately, the Authority notes that the Bar of Ireland in 2022 published a strategic review of its future landscape conducted by Ernst & Young (EY) which concluded that the Law Library is “over-populated with barristers”. The report stated that even assuming a growth projection of 1 million people by 2040, an appropriate size for the profession within the Law Library is 1,515 full-time and part-time barristers (658 fewer members than in 2022).
30. Elsewhere, the EY report noted a number of trends relating to both increased and decreased demand for barristers’ legal services. It found that demand was growing for legal services in Ireland, leading to increased work for barristers, and that Brexit had displaced demand for European legal services from the UK, which previously hosted 20% of all EU legal work.

31. In addition, EY identified threats to the work and income of junior barristers from legal research work now being conducted by major solicitor firms using AI and software, and from the impact of recent legislative changes on how personal injury claims are handled in the courts.
32. The Authority will continue to monitor and report on available data on legal costs in its annual reports to the Minister under section 33 of the Act. It notes in this report the ongoing work by the Department of Justice on foot of the recommendations in the 2020 *Report on the Administration of Civil Justice* on reducing litigation costs.

Developments in legal practitioner education and training

33. The Authority remains ever mindful that the assessment required of it under section 33 of the Act is not purely a numerical exercise. In addition to its wider regulatory objectives, it must also have regard to the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to the solicitors and barristers professions.
34. Legal practitioner education in Ireland is due to undergo significant changes on foot of recommendations made by the Authority to the Minister for Justice in September 2020 in a report issued under section 34 of the Act. The report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training* made a total of twelve recommendations for reform of legal education and training for solicitors and barristers.
35. The two core recommendations were:
 1. A clear definition of the **competence and standards** required to practise as a solicitor or barrister should be developed; and
 2. The establishment of a new and independent **Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee** (the LPET Committee).
36. The Authority notes that the Department of Justice's Justice Plan for 2021 and 2022 contained commitments to "*progress work to open up and reform professional legal education, introduce independent oversight for the first time, and remove barriers to becoming a solicitor or barrister.*"
37. The Authority engaged with the Department of Justice around implementation of its *Setting Standards* recommendations in 2022, and looks forward to further future engagement.
38. In March 2022, the Authority submitted a further report to the Minister for Justice on the barriers and challenges faced by early career legal professionals. The report was a summary of extensive research including comprehensive surveys of trainee and early career solicitors, student and early career barristers and law undergraduates.

39. This research and report was in response to a request from the Minister in November 2020 for the Authority to *“consider the economic and other barriers faced by young barristers and young solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and Law Society respectively”*.
40. During 2022, the LSRA engaged with key stakeholders on draft recommendations arising from this report and the Authority intends to publish the report and recommendations in 2023.
41. The year under review saw a significant development in the admissions policies of the Law Society, which in September 2022 changed the format of the PPC for trainee solicitors. The traditional two-part course, delivered in blocks called PPC I and PPC II, was consolidated into a single block of taught instruction spanning a full academic year. This change was a key proposal from a 2018 Law Society submission to the LSRA on its education and training arrangements. It was proposed on the basis that the traditional sandwich model was restrictive for training firms.
42. For barristers, the Bar of Ireland reported a positive response from members and high levels of compliance with its competency based CPD Scheme, which is now in its second year.

Diversity trends

43. The year 2022 was the fourth year of enrolment for the Law Society’s part-time professional practice course for solicitors, the PPC Hybrid. A total of 91 trainees enrolled on the PPC Hybrid in 2022 (469 began the full-time PPC). Demographic data supplied by the Law Society shows that, compared to the full time course, the PPC Hybrid had a higher proportion of more mature trainees, female trainees and trainees sponsored by firms outside of Dublin.
44. The King’s Inns BL degree course is provided on a full-time one year basis or a part-time two year basis. In 2022, a total of 73 trainees enrolled on the part-time course (57 began the full-time course). Demographic data supplied by the King’s Inns shows that, compared to the full-time course, the part-time BL degree course had a higher proportion of mature students, some of whom may be working full-time while studying for the degree during evenings and weekends.

Conclusion and looking ahead

45. The year under review in this report was dominated by global and domestic economic uncertainty with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022, leading to a humanitarian crisis which damaged global economic growth and has had an impact on all aspects of the Irish economy.
46. The year saw a waning of the joint impacts of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of numbers and patterns of admissions to the professions and the overall dynamics at play in the legal services sector.

47. Looking ahead, the Authority anticipates developments in 2023 with the planned introduction of new legal partnerships, which will enable barristers and solicitors to jointly provide legal services for the first time. In time, their introduction may impact on the numbers admitted to the professions and the demand for and costs of the services of practising solicitors and barristers.
48. In addition, the Authority will report to the Minister for Justice on the potential creation of a new profession of conveyancer, as requested under section 34 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.
49. The Authority will also report to the Minister on economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers with recommendations for how these may be overcome, as also requested. The LSRA has undertaken survey research and a statutory consultation as part of its preparation of this report to the Minister, which it anticipates will build on recommendations made in its 2020 *Setting Standards* report on legal practitioner education and training.
50. The Authority will continue to both drive and monitor developments in the legal services sector in accordance with its statutory functions. These efforts will continue to shape and inform its annual assessments under section 33 of the Act. The Authority hereby commends this report to the Minister for Justice.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Origin and purpose of this report

1.1 The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) is pleased to present to the Minister for Justice its fourth annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions. This report has been prepared under section 33 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act). The Authority was established on 1 October 2016 and section 33 of the Act was commenced on 7 October 2019. Section 33(1) mandates the Authority to prepare and submit to the Minister an annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions containing the following elements:

- a) the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors during that year;*
- b) the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers during that year;*
- c) an assessment as to whether or not, having regard to the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise, the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers and solicitors in that year is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of such services at a reasonable cost.*

The report is required to be submitted to the Minister not later than four months after the end of each financial year i.e. no later than 30 April 2023.

1.2 In preparing this report, the Authority has been mindful not only of its obligations under section 33 of the Act, but also of its other statutory commitments.

1.3 The Authority's role in reporting on the admission policies of the legal professions is important in ensuring that its regulatory objectives are met. These regulatory objectives as set out under section 13(4) of the Act are:

- (a) protecting and promoting the public interest,*
- (b) supporting the proper and effective administration of justice,*
- (c) protecting and promoting the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services,*
- (d) promoting competition in the provision of legal services in the State,*
- (e) encouraging an independent, strong and effective legal profession,*
- (f) promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles of legal practitioners specified in subsection 5.¹*

1.4 The Authority also views its annual reporting obligation under section 33 of the Act in the context of its function under section 13(2)(a) of the Act to keep under review and make recommendations on admission requirements and policies.

¹ Section 13(5) of the Act.

1.2 Statutory consultation

- 1.5 This report includes the views of stakeholders who were invited to respond to a consultation carried out by the Authority under section 33(2) of the Act. Under this section, the Authority shall consult with the professional bodies, the Law Society of Ireland (the Law Society), the Bar Council (Bar of Ireland), the Honorable Society of King’s Inns (King’s Inns), and such persons as the Authority considers appropriate for the purposes of preparing this annual report under section 33(1).
- 1.6 On 7 December 2022, the executive of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) wrote to the three above professional bodies requesting them under section 33(3) to furnish information including statistical data to assist the Authority in preparing this report.
- 1.7 In addition, on 9 December 2022, the LSRA executive issued an invitation by email to 311 recipients on its consultations list, calling for written submissions. The LSRA also published a consultation notice on its website. Written responses were requested by 24 February 2023. The call for written submissions provided for a consultation period of 11 weeks, which falls within the suggested timescales contained in the guidance on public consultations published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.²
- 1.8 Recipients of the consultation notice were asked a set of questions. The consultation notice is included in Annex A. Consultees were also offered an opportunity to share any data or analysis that they considered relevant. The Authority is grateful to those organisations and individuals who took the time to respond, in particular the professional bodies for the detailed statistical data supplied on admissions in 2022. All of the observations made were extremely useful for the Authority in preparing this report to the Minister.

Breakdown of responses

- 1.9 A total of 14 responses were received to the Authority’s statutory consultation.³ A list of respondents is set out in Annex B. A breakdown of these by type of respondent is set out in Table 1.1. The written submissions will be published in due course on the LSRA’s website.

² Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (January 2019) *Public Consultation Principles and Guidance*. Available [here](#)

³ The LSRA received responses from four organisations stating that they had no comment to make or their observations from previous submissions still stood.

Table 1.1: Responses to section 33 consultation by type of respondent

Respondent Type	Number of Responses
Professional bodies under the Act	3
Universities	2
Statutory bodies	4
Professional & representative bodies	4
Individuals	1
Total	14

Report structure

- 1.10 This report sets out the statistical data required under section 33(1), the results of the consultation, and the Authority's assessment for the year 2022. The report is divided into the following sections:

Executive Summary and Assessment

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Statistics on Admissions

Section 3: Key Developments in 2022 & Views on S33 (1)(c) Assessment

Section 2: Statistics on Admissions

- 2.0 Section 33(1) of the Act requires the Authority to report annually on the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors and barristers during the year. In preparing this report, the Authority submitted a number of questions seeking statistical data on admissions for 2022 from the Bar of Ireland, the Law Society of Ireland (the Law Society) and the Honorable Society of King’s Inns (King’s Inns).
- 2.1 This section sets out this data, as well as other relevant statistical information. The data on solicitor admissions was provided by the Law Society, which is the educational, representative and regulatory body of the solicitor profession in Ireland.
- 2.2 The data on barrister admissions was supplied by the Council of the Bar of Ireland and the King’s Inns. The Council of the Bar of Ireland is the representative body for barristers at the independent referral bar, which consists of members of the Law Library. The King’s Inns is Ireland’s “Inn of Court”, which trains and admits legal professionals awarded the degree of Barrister-at-Law necessary to be “called to the bar” by the Chief Justice of Ireland.
- 2.3 This section also includes statistical data from the Roll of Practising Barristers, which the LSRA maintains under the Act. It includes graphs and charts on admissions data. Further detailed statistical information is provided in tables in Annex C.

Admissions to the Solicitor Profession 2022

515

Solicitor Roll Admissions

560

New Solicitor Trainees

469

Full-time PPC trainees

91

PPC Hybrid trainees

4% Increase ↑

11,652

Practising Certificates

2% Increase ↑

65%
Female



89%
Aged 30
or under



84%
Law
degree



Admissions to the Barrister Profession 2022

147

Called to the Bar

130

New Barrister Students

57

Full-time students

73

Modular students

3% Decrease ↓

90

New Barrister Pupils

12% Decrease ↓

57%
Female



57%
Aged 32
or under



60%
Approved
qualification



2,957

Practising Barristers on Roll

1% Increase ↑

2,173

Law Library Members

784

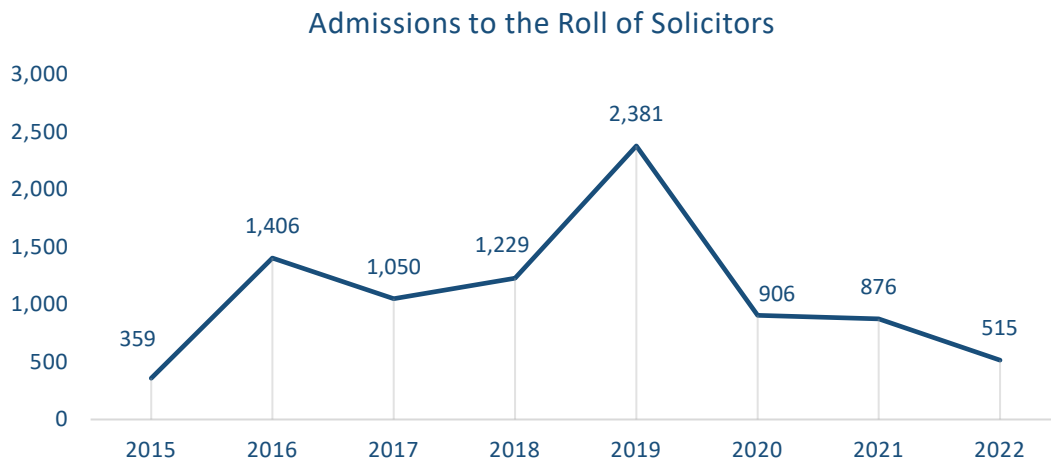
Non-Law Library Members



2.1 Solicitor admissions 2022

Solicitor Roll admissions decreased significantly in 2022

- 2.4 According to data provided by the Law Society, a total of 515 solicitors were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2022. This is a decrease of 361 (41%) from the 2021 total of 876.



- 2.5 Law Society qualifying trainees accounted for 60% of the 2022 Roll admissions (307 solicitors, down from 513 in 2021) while England and Wales-qualified solicitors accounted for 26% of the total (134 solicitors, down from 278 in 2021). According to the Law Society, the decrease in Irish qualifying trainees admitted to the Roll in 2022 compared to 2021 is related to the timing of training contracts, and does not accurately reflect the upward trend of the numbers completing the PPC.
- 2.6 Admission to the Roll of Solicitors does not legally entitle a solicitor to provide legal services in Ireland, although it is a pre-requisite for applying to the Law Society for an annual practising certificate to do so.
- 2.7 The number of England and Wales-qualified solicitors admitted to the Irish Roll has fallen each year since 2019 following a Brexit-fuelled spike in admissions by solicitors seeking to join the Roll in an apparent bid to preserve their access to EU legal markets.⁴ Following the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 December 2020, a new reciprocal qualifying agreement was entered into by the Law Society and the Solicitors Regulation Authority in England and Wales for entry to their respective Rolls.⁵

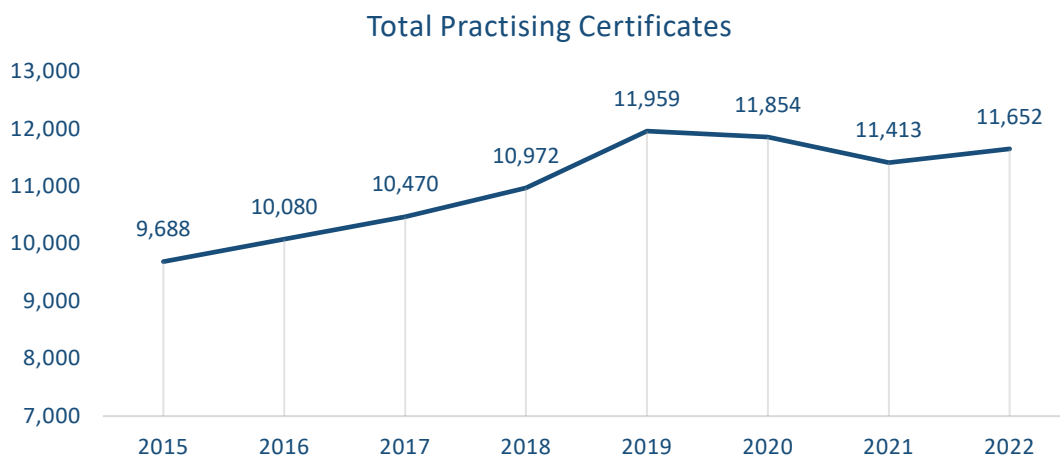
⁴ Rigby, Ben (2020) ‘Huge disappointment’ as Irish law society blocks bid by English lawyers to preserve EU access’, *The Global Legal Post*, 13 November 2020. Available [here](#)

⁵ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Law Society offers open access to Irish Roll of Solicitors despite Brexit*, 1 April 2021. Available [here](#)

- 2.8 Traditionally, solicitors qualifying through the Law Society’s Professional Practice Course (PPC) have accounted for the majority of those joining the Roll of Solicitors each year. As admissions to the Irish Roll continue to stabilise year on year in the wake of Brexit, it is expected that Irish newly qualified solicitors will in due course once again account for the significant majority of annual Roll of Solicitor admissions.
- 2.9 The total number of solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors at the end of 2022 was 23,323. A total of 13 solicitors applied to be voluntarily removed from the Roll in 2022, while one solicitor was struck off the Roll.

Annual certification – slight increase in number of practising certificates

- 2.10 There were 11,652 solicitors with practising certificates in Ireland on 31 December 2022. This is an increase of 239 (2%) from 2021, which follows two years of slight decreases since 2019.



- 2.11 Since January 2021, the Law Society only issues practising certificates to solicitors who are practising or intending to practise in Ireland from an establishment based in this jurisdiction. They must also have appropriate professional indemnity insurance. Practising certificates are no longer issued to enrolled solicitors who are practising other than from an establishment in Ireland. This follows a regulatory review undertaken by the Law Society in November 2020 ahead of the end of the UK’s post-Brexit transition period.⁶
- 2.12 This ended the practice of the Law Society issuing practising certificates to solicitors outside the jurisdiction, which it said may have created the erroneous impression that it permitted practice pursuant to the Irish practising certificate outside Ireland.⁷

⁶ Law Society of Ireland (2020) *Practising certificates and solicitors outside the jurisdiction*, November 2020. Available [here](#)

⁷ Ibid.

2.13 As reported by the Law Society in 2021, *“the phenomenon of large international law firms, with no establishment in this jurisdiction, taking out Irish practising certificates for their solicitors who have recently come on the Roll here was a by-product of Brexit and has now come to an end.”*⁸

2.14 As this correction continues, it is now to be expected that the primary driver for the number of practising certificates held each year will be solicitors who have qualified through the Law Society’s PPC.

More than one in four solicitors worked with twenty employers

2.15 As Table 2.1 shows, a total of 3,211 solicitors with practising certificates at the end of 2022 were employed by a total of 20 employers, including large law firms and public sector bodies. These practising solicitors accounted for more than one in four (28%) of the total of 11,652 solicitors with practising certificates on 31 December 2022.

2.16 The top five law firms for 2022 in terms of numbers of solicitors holding practising certificates remained the same as in 2020 and 2021, however their rankings changed. These are: A&L Goodbody LLP; Matheson LLP; Arthur Cox LLP; McCann FitzGerald LLP; and Mason Hayes & Curran LLP. Outside commercial law firms, practising certificates were also issued in significant numbers for solicitors working in the Chief State Solicitor’s Office, the Legal Aid Board and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions as well as the Central Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Banks plc.

In-house solicitors one in five of practising certificate holders

2.17 Both commercial and public sector organisations employ solicitors as part of their internal legal functions to support their business needs. Such “in-house solicitors” are required to hold practising certificate regardless of the areas of law in which they practise.⁹ However, solicitors in the full-time service of the State and solicitors employed full-time solely to provide conveyancing services for a non-solicitor employer are not required to hold practising certificates.¹⁰

2.18 A total of 2,605 in-house solicitors held practising certificates in 2022, accounting for just over one in five (22%) of all practising certificates. A further 421 solicitors on the Roll were classified by the Law Society in 2022 as being in the full-time service of the State in 2022.

⁸ Law Society Gazette, *Matheson surges from third to top*, 5 February 2021. Available [here](#)

⁹ Solicitors practising as a solicitor by providing legal services as an employee of a non-solicitor. Law Society (2021) *In-house solicitors – requirement to hold a practising certificate* (website). Available [here](#)

¹⁰ Solicitors Amendment Act 1994 section 56(3)(b) and S.I. No. 655/2020 - Solicitors Practising Certificate Regulations 2020 section 3.

Table 2.1 Top 20 employers by practising certificate numbers 2022¹¹

Ranking	Firm/Employer	Practising Certificates
1	A&L Goodbody LLP ¹²	348
2	Matheson LLP	336
3	Arthur Cox LLP ¹³	318
4	McCann FitzGerald LLP	292
5	Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	282
6	William Fry LLP	216
7	Chief State Solicitor's Office	154
8	Byrne Wallace LLP	144
9	Legal Aid Board	142
10	Maples and Calder (Ireland) LLP	115
11	Ronan Daly Jermyn LLP	106
12	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	99
13	Allied Irish Banks plc	98
14	Eversheds Sutherland	94
15	Beauchamps LLP	93
16	Dillon Eustace LLP	85
17	Central Bank of Ireland	77
18	Hayes Solicitors LLP	74
19	Phillip Lee LLP	74
20	Fieldfisher LLP	64
Total		3,211

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Practising certificates surrendered and suspended

- 2.19 A total of 65 practising certificates were surrendered during 2022. In 2021, three solicitors were suspended from practice by order of the High Court. All three suspensions remained in place in 2022.

¹¹ Total practising certificates held as at 31 December 2022.

¹² A&L Goodbody LLP also held 14 practising certificates for Northern Ireland solicitors.

¹³ Arthur Cox LLP also held two practising certificates for Northern Ireland solicitors.

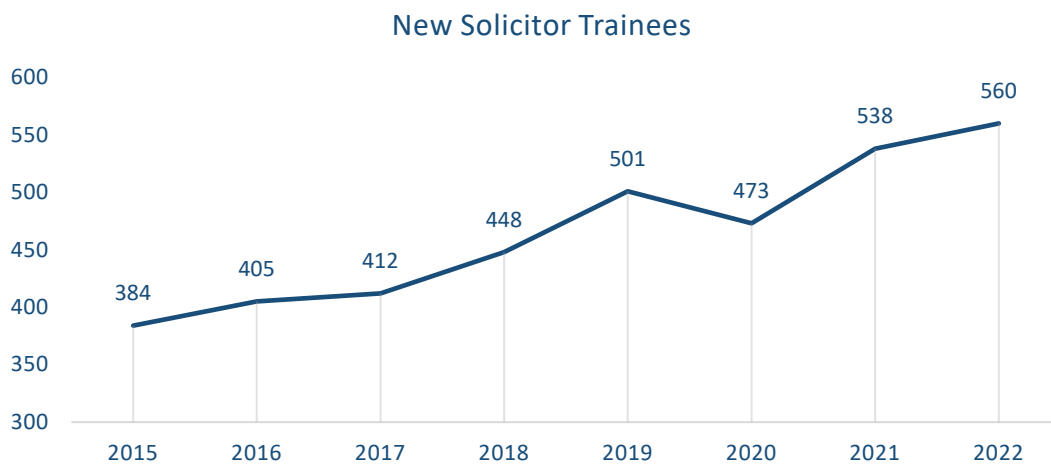
2.2 Solicitor trainee admissions 2022

New “fused” Professional Practice Course format

2.20 The Law Society introduced a new format Professional Practice Course (PPC) in September 2022. The traditional two-part PPC, delivered in blocks called PPC I and PPC II, is now consolidated into a single block of taught instruction spanning a full academic year. The core curriculum on the full-time PPC now runs from September to April and the core curriculum on the PPC Hybrid runs from December to December. The new “fused” PPC format is discussed further in Section 3.

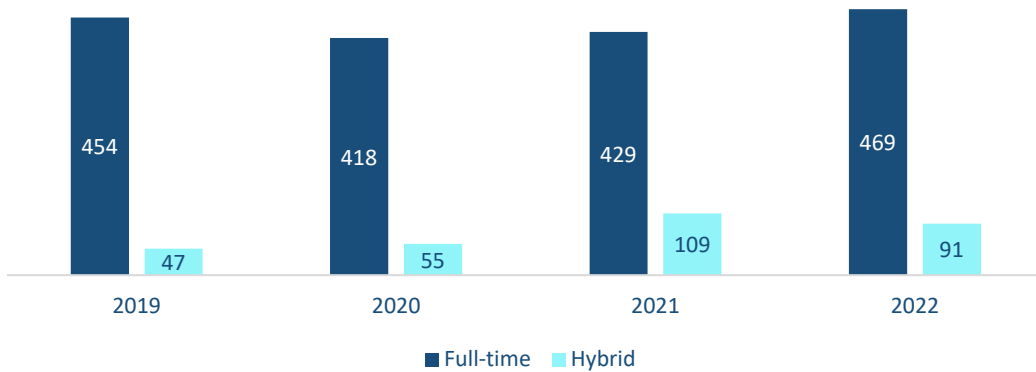
Highest solicitor trainee intake in fifteen years

2.21 According to data provided by the Law Society, a total of 560 trainee solicitors enrolled on the PPC in 2022. This is 22 more than in 2021, amounting to a 4% increase, and is the highest intake of PPC trainees in the past 15 years.



2.22 The total PPC intake for 2022 was comprised of 469 trainees undertaking the full-time PPC and 91 trainees on the PPC Hybrid. PPC Hybrid trainees amounted to 16% of the total trainee intake for 2022, which is a decrease on 2021 when they accounted for 20% of the total intake of 538 trainees. The PPC Hybrid was introduced in 2019. This course provides “blended learning,” combining online lectures with on-site tuition at weekends, instead of the traditional PPC requirement to attend Blackhall Place in Dublin full-time.

Solicitor Trainee Intake by Course Type



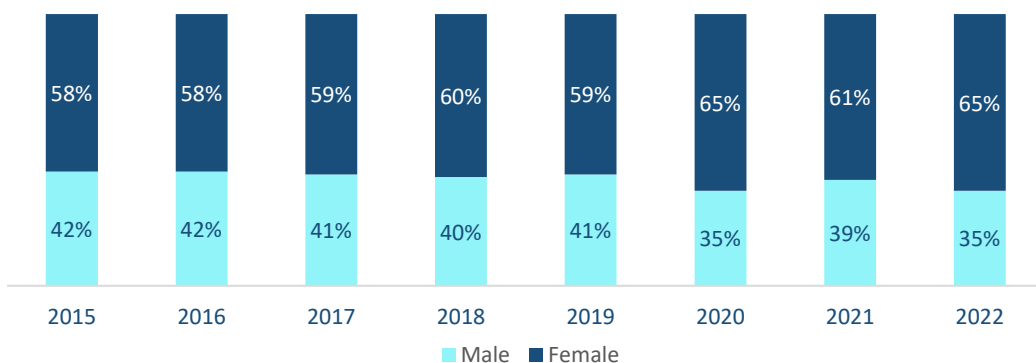
New solicitor trainee demographics

2.23 This section contains demographic data for all PPC trainees who began their solicitor training in 2022 and going back to 2015. It also shows the separate demographic data for trainees on the two PPC courses, the full-time PPC and the Hybrid PPC. This shows that the PPC Hybrid course attracted trainee solicitors who are older than their full-time PPC counterparts (43% aged over 30 years, compared to 5% of full-time PPC trainees). In addition, almost half of new PPC Hybrid trainees in 2022 (48%) had secured their solicitor training contract outside of Dublin, compared to 5% of their full-time counterparts.

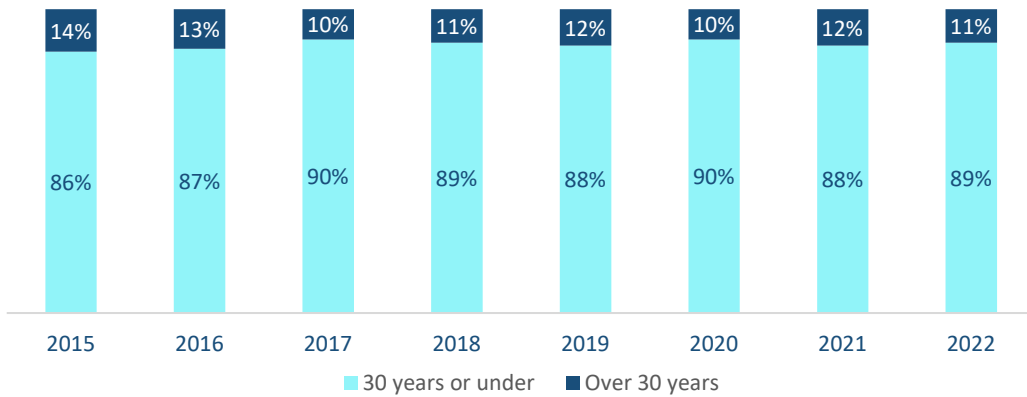
All PPC trainee demographics 2022

- 2.24 The gender breakdown of the 560 new solicitor trainees in 2022 broadly aligns with previous years, with 65% female and 35% male trainees. The age of new PPC trainees also aligns with previous years, with 89% aged 30 or under and 11% aged over 30.
- 2.25 The academic background of new PPC trainees in 2022 is also largely consistent with previous years. The majority (84%) of trainees had a law degree, 15% had another (non-law) degree and 1% were non-graduates.

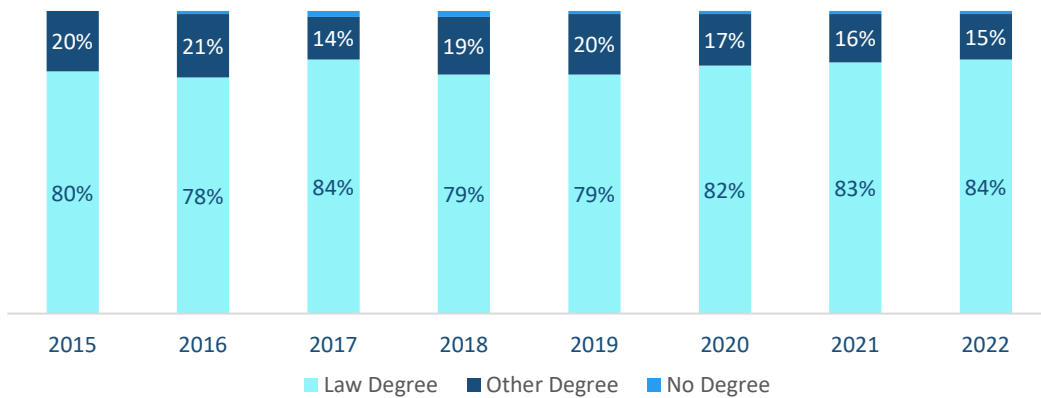
Gender - New Solicitor Trainees



Age - New Solicitor Trainees



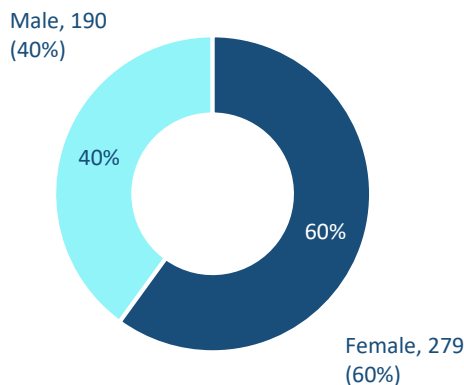
Academic Background - New Solicitor Trainees



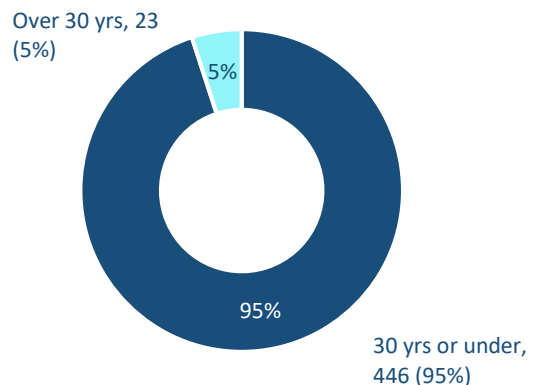
Full-time PPC new trainee demographics 2022

2.26 Of the 469 new full-time PPC trainees in 2022, 60% were female and 40% were male. The age profile of the full-time PPC course is young, with 95% aged 30 years old or under and only 5% aged over 30 years. The vast majority (90%) of full-time trainees were undertaking training contracts in Dublin.

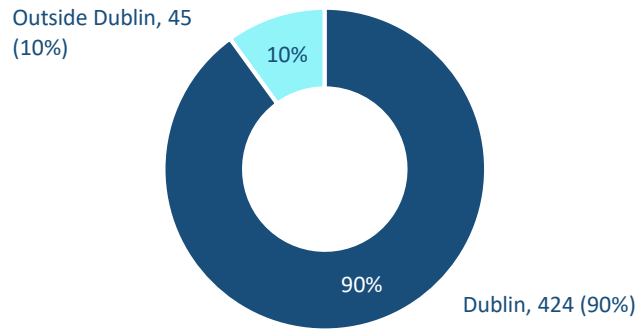
Gender - Full-time Trainees



Age - Full-time Trainees



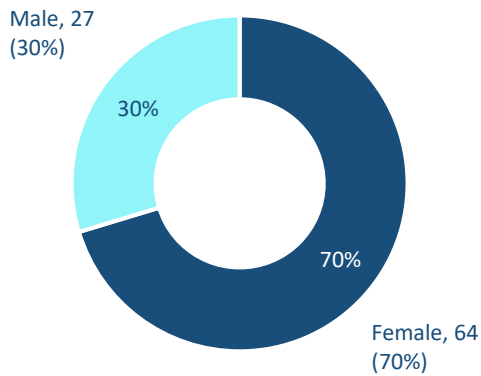
Training Contract Location - Full-time Trainees



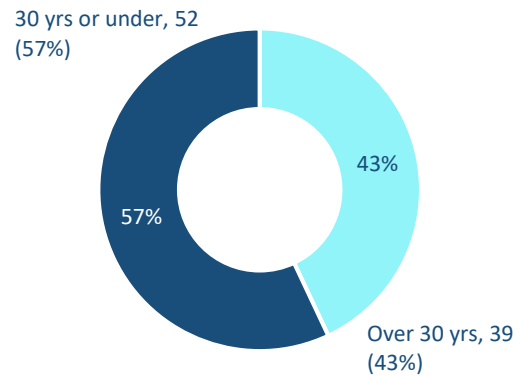
PPC Hybrid new trainee demographics 2022

2.27 Of the 91 new PPC Hybrid trainees in 2022, 70% were female and 30% male. Four in ten (43%) of 2022 PPC Hybrid trainees were aged over 30 years old, with 57% aged 30 years or younger. Almost half (48%) of new PPC Hybrid 2022 trainees had secured training contracts with firms located outside Dublin, with 52% in Dublin.

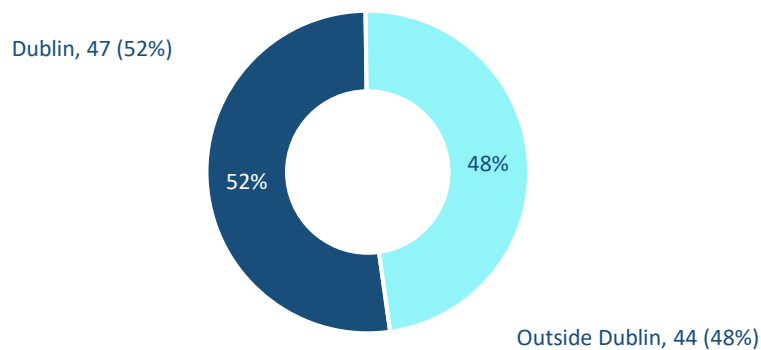
Gender - Hybrid Trainees



Age - Hybrid Trainees



Training Contract Location - Hybrid Trainees



Training contract sponsors

- 2.28 Approximately 10% of PPC Hybrid 2022 trainees secured their training contracts in “in-house” corporate settings or public bodies. For the full-time PPC trainees, the main training contract sponsors in 2022 remained the large law firms, with many taking on only full-time PPC trainees. A&L Goodbody LLP took on 52 full-time trainees, with 48 for Arthur Cox LLP, 45 for Matheson, 31 for William Fry LLP and 30 for McCann Fitzgerald LLP.

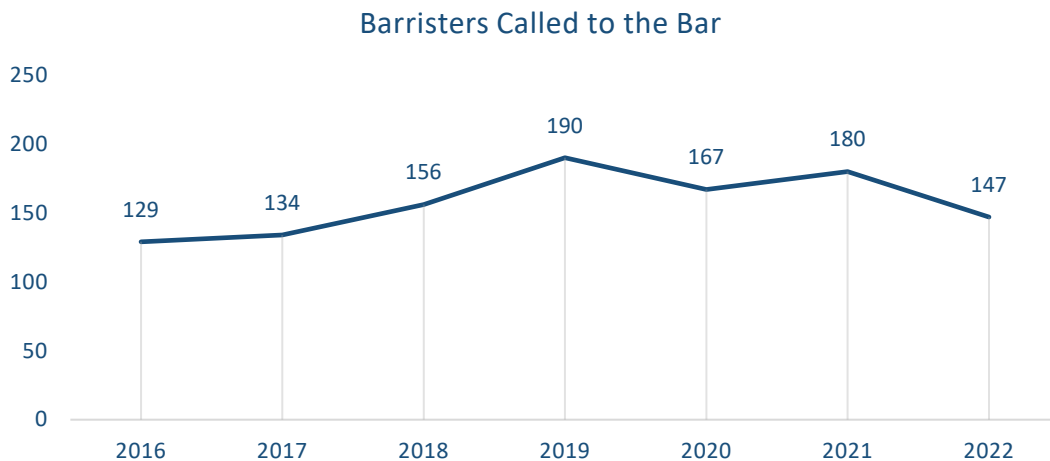
PPC entrance exams (FE-1s)

- 2.29 A set of eight exams collectively known as the Final Examination First Part (FE-1) are the gateway to the PPC. All eight exams are held twice a year with sittings in March and October. A candidate can sit one or more exams in each sitting. A total of 2,891 candidates sat FE-1 exams in 2022, this is down from 3,204 candidates in 2021. A total of six candidates sat the Law Society’s Preliminary Examination for non-graduates in 2022.

2.3 Barrister admissions 2022

Slight decrease in barrister admissions in 2022

2.30 According to data provided by the King’s Inns, a total of 147 persons were “called to the bar” by the Chief Justice of Ireland in 2022, allowing them to exercise a full right of audience before all courts. This is down 33 (18%) from the total of 180 in 2021.



2.31 To be called to the bar and practise as a barrister in Ireland, lawyers must be admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law (BL) provided exclusively by the King’s Inns. The benchers of the King’s Inns admit persons to the BL degree.¹⁴ Qualifying lawyers from other jurisdictions and solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors in Ireland can also apply to be admitted to the BL degree by the King’s Inns under its Education Rules.¹⁵

2.32 Traditionally, the main route to admission to the barrister profession in Ireland is to complete the BL degree course at the King’s Inns. The number of barristers being called to the bar via this route has remained relatively stable in recent years. BL graduates accounted for 133 of the barrister admissions in 2022, a decrease of nine on 2021. This figure is mainly barristers who completed the BL degree course in 2022, but also includes a small number who were admitted to the degree in an earlier year.

2.33 In a similar pattern to that observed with solicitors, the number of persons called to the bar having obtained their professional qualifications in England and Wales and Northern Ireland increased in the years following the UK’s 2016 decision to leave the EU. According to the King’s Inns, most of the barristers admitted as part of this Brexit-related influx have not proceeded to commence practice in Ireland. In recent years the numbers of barristers admitted from England, Wales and Northern Ireland has steadily decreased. In 2022, numbers returned to a pre-Brexit level of 11, down from a high of 76 in 2019.

¹⁴ The benchers of the Honorable Society of King’s Inns include all judges of the Superior Courts and a number of elected practising barristers.

¹⁵ The Honorable Society of King’s Inns (2021) *Education Rules*, Edition of June 2021. Available [here](#)

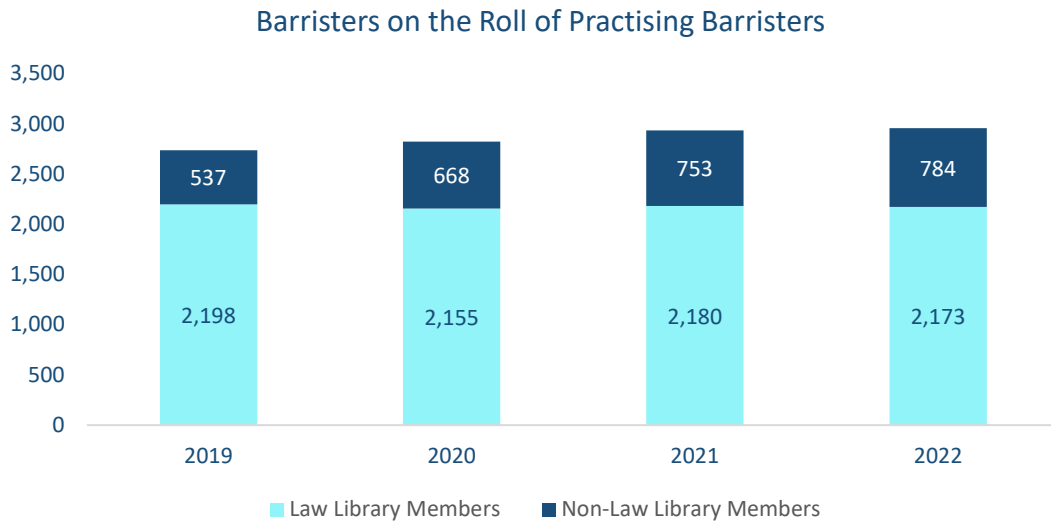
Decrease in newly qualified barristers joining the Law Library

- 2.34 Once admitted to the BL degree and called to the Bar, barristers may begin practising either as self-employed practitioners or in employed positions. The majority of newly admitted barristers proceed to practice as sole traders at the independent referral bar, the model under which members of the Law Library currently operate. Newly admitted barristers must begin their membership of the Law Library at the start of the legal year each October. Under Bar of Ireland rules, they must undertake a mandatory 12-month period of unpaid pupillage, also known as devilling, with a more senior barrister called a “master”.
- 2.35 According to data provided by the Bar of Ireland, a total of 92 new members joined the Law Library in October 2022, down from 109 new Law Library members in 2021. In addition, a total of 14 barristers re-entered membership of the Law Library during the legal year 2021-2022.
- 2.36 Of the 92 new members, 90 commenced pupillage and two were applicants from another jurisdiction and were not required to undertake pupillage. This compares to 102 new pupils in October 2021.
- 2.37 Of the 90 new members of the Law Library who began their pupillage year in October 2022, 67 were called to the bar in 2022 and 11 were called to the bar in 2021. Of the 90 new barrister pupils in October 2022, 51 were male and 39 were female. Just over half (51%) of new pupils in 2022 were aged between 20 and 30 while 27% were aged 31-40 and 22% were aged 41 and older.
- 2.38 The Bar of Ireland reported on challenges in 2021 among prospective pupils in obtaining barrister masters. This situation, described as unusual by the Bar, was due to a range of factors, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Bar did not report any similar challenges with the availability of masters in 2022 in its submission to the LSRA for this report.
- 2.39 During the legal year 2021/2022, 140 members ceased membership of the Law Library. Of these, 44 (31%) provided to the Bar of Ireland as their reason for leaving that they were going to work elsewhere, while 20 (14%) cited personal reasons and a further 16 retired. The numbers leaving the Law Library increased in 2022, following several years of decreases.

Slight increase in numbers on Roll of Practising Barristers

- 2.40 Since 2019, the LSRA has maintained the Roll of Practising Barristers, a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State. The Roll is comprised of self-employed barristers (both members of the Law Library and barristers who are not Law Library members), and barristers in employment in the public and private sectors. The Roll also includes barristers who may primarily practise in other jurisdictions, and retired barristers who are volunteering their services but are still required to be on the Roll.

2.41 The number of barristers on the roll at the end of 2022 was 2,957, an increase of 24 (1%) from 2,933 in 2021.¹⁶ Of the total, 2,173 (73%) were members of the Law Library and 784 (27%) were not members of the Law Library. Of the 784 barristers practising outside of the Law Library, 269 were recorded on the Roll as working in the full-time service of the State.



Transfers between the professions remain low

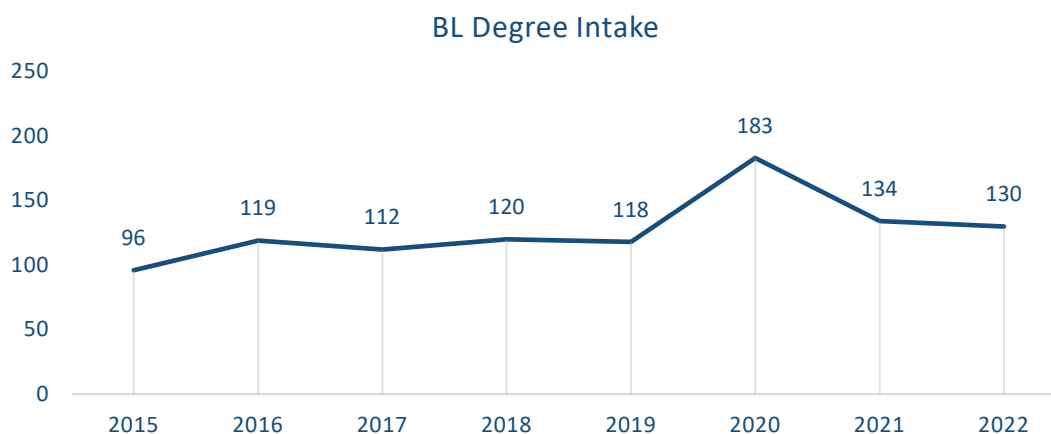
2.42 A total of 17 barristers transferred to become solicitors and were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2022. No solicitors transferred to be barristers in the same year.

¹⁶ End of year figures from LSRA recorded on 31 December each year.

2.4 Barrister student admissions 2022

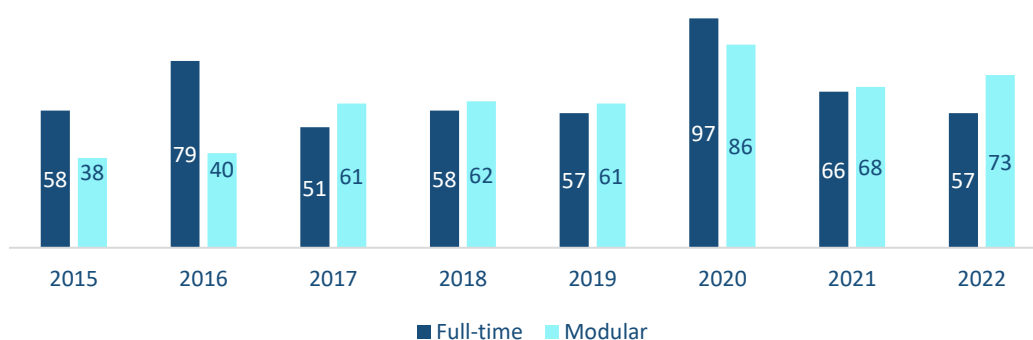
Slight decrease in barrister student intake

- 2.43 According to data provided by the King's Inns, a total of 130 students started the Barrister-at-Law (BL) degree course in 2022, down slightly from 134 in 2021.



- 2.44 The BL degree is provided by the King's Inns as both a one year full-time course and a two year part-time or modular course. The academic year for the full-time course runs from October to the following June. According to the King's Inns, full-time work is not compatible with the full-time course load and part-time work would need to be chosen carefully around the timetable and other course commitments.
- 2.45 The two academic years for the modular course run from October to June. It is taught on average every second weekend during the academic year and offers a higher proportion of online classes than the full-time course. According to the King's Inns, students who undertake the part-time course usually maintain full-time work positions.
- 2.46 The BL degree intake for 2022 consisted of 57 full-time students and 73 modular course students.

Barrister Student Intake by Course Type



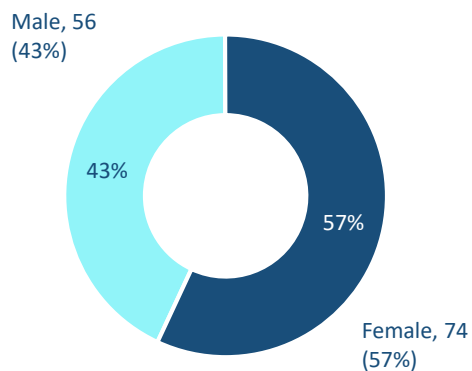
New barrister student demographics

2.47 This section contains demographic data for all barristers who started on the BL degree course in 2022. It also shows the demographic data separately for full-time and part-time/modular students. It is apparent that that the modular BL degree course in 2022 attracted student barristers who were older than their full-time counterparts (51% aged over 32 years, compared to 33% of full-time students). The provision of the BL degree as a part-time course facilitates more mature students, who may be working full-time, to train as barristers.

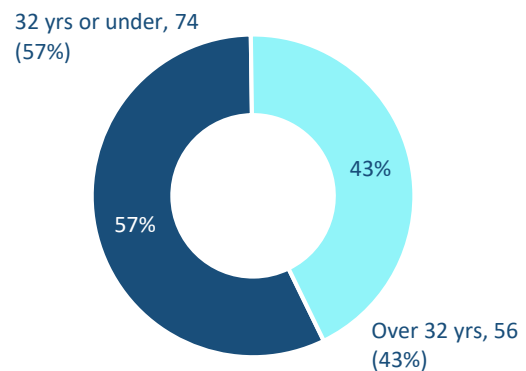
All BL degree student demographics 2022

2.48 Of the 130 students who started the BL degree in 2022, 56 students (43%) identified as male and 74 (57%) as female. In terms of the age profile of new barrister students in 2022, 74 (57%) were aged 32 or under and 56 (43%) were aged over 32. The admission route of new barrister students aligned with previous years. The majority (60%) of students had an approved qualification and the remaining 40% had the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies.

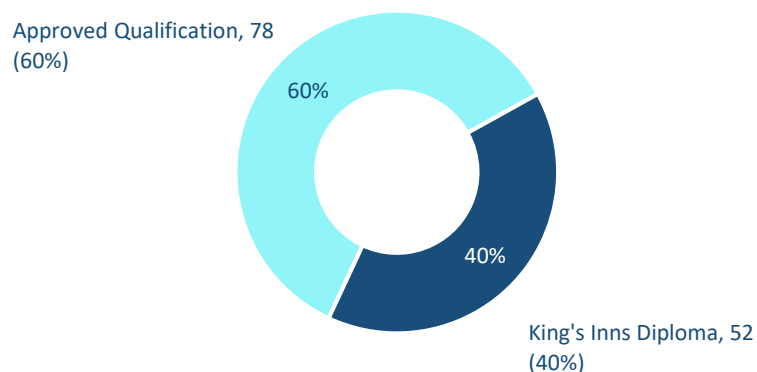
Gender - Barrister Students



Age - Barrister Students



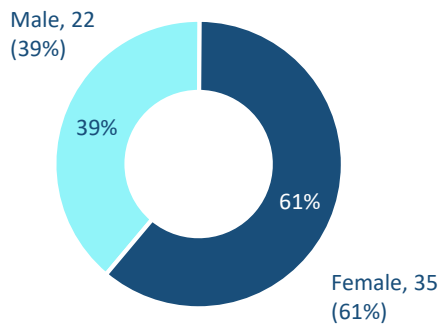
Admission Route - Barrister Students



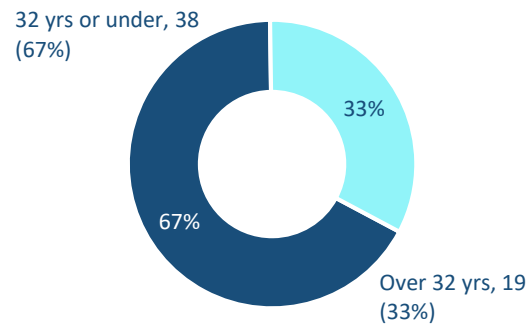
Full-time BL degree student demographics 2022

- 2.49 Of the 57 students who began the full-time BL degree in 2022, 22 (39%) identified as male and 35 (61%) identified as female. In terms of the age profile of new full-time BL degree students, 38 (67%) were aged 32 years and under compared to 19 (33%) aged over 32 years.

Gender - Full-time Barrister Students



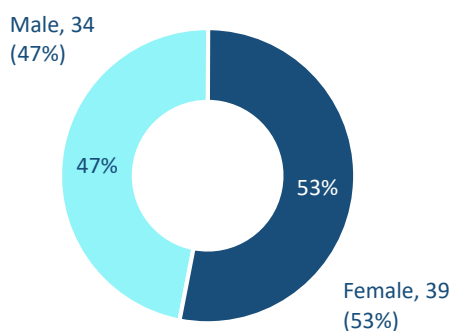
Age - Full-time Barrister Students



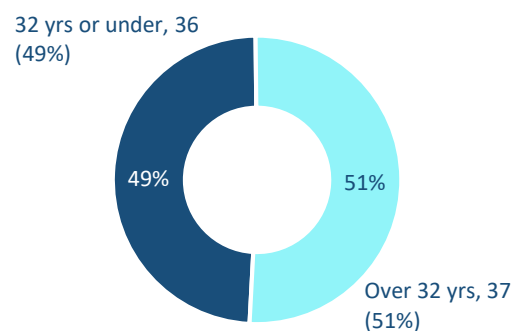
Modular BL degree student demographics 2022

- 2.50 Of the 73 students who began the modular BL degree in 2022, 34 (47%) identified as male and 39 (53%) identified as female. In terms of the age profile of new modular BL degree students, 36 (49%) were aged 32 years and under compared to 37 (51%) aged over 32 years.

Gender - Modular Barrister Students



Age - Modular Barrister Students



BL degree entrance exams

- 2.51 A total of 131 applicants sat the entrance exam for the BL degree course in 2022, down from 161 in 2021. A total of 116 candidates passed the exam and 15 failed. Students who pass the entrance exam and are offered a place on the BL degree course may apply to defer their place to a subsequent year.

Section 3: Key Developments in 2022 & Views on S33(1)(c) Assessment

- 3.1 Section 33 (1)(c) of the Act requires the Authority to provide an annual assessment as to *“whether or not, having regard to the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise, the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers and solicitors in that year is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of such services at a reasonable cost.”*
- 3.2 In its previous three annual report under section 33 to the Minister, the Authority provided an overview of available statistical data on the demand for and costs of legal services to consumers, including the State, in order to establish a useful benchmark for subsequent annual assessments.
- 3.3 Previous reports also highlighted limitations in the availability of statistical data on both demand and costs. This continues to pose constraints for the Authority when it comes to drawing conclusions in relation to the areas which require its assessment under section 33(1)(c) of the Act. The Authority will continue to closely monitor and report on available data on legal services demand and costs in its annual reports to the Minister.
- 3.4 For its statutory consultation under section 33(2) of the Act, the Authority invited respondents to provide their views under the following five areas as set out in the scope of the consultation notice:
1. The level of demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors in 2022.
 2. The costs of legal services in 2022 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers.
 3. The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise.
 4. The extent to which the admissions 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.
 5. Any ongoing impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic on the above matters.
- 3.5 This section provides an update on key developments in these areas in 2022. It also summarises respondents’ analysis and views under the five headings as set out above.

3.1 Demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors

Summary and key developments in 2022

- 3.6 The economy bounced back quickly in 2022 as the Covid-19 threat subsided.¹⁷ The start of the year saw the easing of public health restrictions across all areas of society. In February, the government published guidance to support a transition back to the workplace.¹⁸ Its support programme for employers, the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme, was discontinued in May.
- 3.7 Physical in court business was resumed on a phased basis during the year, but continued to be impacted by the pandemic with backlogs across most court divisions. The availability of staff, judiciary, practitioners, litigants and witnesses was reduced at the start of the year due to the ongoing presence of Covid-19.¹⁹ Measures such as mask wearing, physical distancing and remote hearings in certain cases were recommended and facilitated by the Courts Service throughout the year.²⁰
- 3.8 The Law Society and the Bar of Ireland both noted increases in demand for the services of practicing solicitors and barristers in 2022 in their submissions to the Authority for this report.
- 3.9 As a return to physical workplaces took place across the legal services sector, remote and hybrid working practices have remained a part of the working landscape in the legal services sector, with increased flexibility and the availability of hybrid working now expected by many employees.
- 3.10 New challenges emerged in 2022 for the global and domestic economy with economic uncertainty driven by the war in Ukraine, inflation at its highest level in 38 years, rising energy costs and interest rates.²¹
- 3.11 The government's Ireland for Law initiative, which began in 2019, continued in 2022 to promote Irish law and legal services to the international business community. Members of the strategy group include nominees from several government departments, the IDA and the professional bodies for solicitors and barristers, as well as the Attorney General and Chief Justice.²²

¹⁷ OECD (2022) *OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland 2022*. Available [here](#)

¹⁸ Government of Ireland (2022) *Transitional Protocol Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19*. Available [here](#)

¹⁹ The Courts Service (2022) *High Court - President's Notice – Easter and Trinity Terms 2022 - Dublin Sittings* (website). Available [here](#)

²⁰ The Courts Service (2022) *Covid-19 Response Updates* (website). Available [here](#)

²¹ Central Statistics Office (2023) *Ireland 2022: The Year in Numbers – Part 2 Business and Economy*. Available [here](#)

²² Government of Ireland (2022) *Ireland for Law* (website). Available [here](#)

- 3.12 Determining the level of demand for the services of practising solicitors and barristers in any given year poses challenges, as there is no one source which explicitly captures this data. Available data sources include annual survey performance of law firms and annual labour market data, which are summarised below.

Law firm survey shows revenue improved but outlook deteriorated

- 3.13 According to the 2022 Evelyn Partners *Law Firm Survey* (formerly the Smith & Williamson Annual Survey of Law Firms in Ireland) 85% of firms reported an increased or steady revenue during the year.²³ This shows improvement on 2021 survey results when 68% reported the same.
- 3.14 However, despite 55% of firms reporting an increase in revenue in 2022, only 41% reported an increase in profits. The survey highlighted increasing salary and operational costs as factors putting pressure on profit margins.
- 3.15 The survey found that Covid-19 remains an issue for the sector, particularly small firms, with almost half of smaller law firms surveyed reporting that Covid-19 continued to significantly impact their firm in 2022. Additionally, 61% of firms reported that their business had been negatively affected by the impact of the pandemic on the courts system. One in three smaller law firms surveyed reported that they continued to use Covid-19 related government supports during 2022.
- 3.16 Recruitment and retention remains more of an issue for top 20 firms (86%) and Dublin based firms (76%). The survey reported that the entrance of international and UK firms to the Irish marketplace has increased competition for qualified solicitors and partners. Larger firms have responded by increasing salaries – 57% of the top 20 firms have reported pay increases above 10%. Pay increases are not as common outside of Dublin with 65% of regional firms reporting no change in pay for solicitors.
- 3.17 Trainee intake over the year remained the same as 2021 for almost two-thirds (64%) of firms and increased for 30%. However, seven in 10 of the top 20 firms report an increased intake. Looking ahead 71% of all firms and 64% of the top 20 firms anticipate that their trainee intake will remain the same in the next 12 months and 26% of all firms expect their trainee intake to increase.
- 3.18 The Evelyn Partners Law Firm Survey took place in autumn 2022 and canvassed 108 large, mid-tier and small firms across the country, including 14 of the top 20 firms.

²³ Evelyn Partners (2022) *Survey of Law Firms in Ireland*. Available [here](#)

Decrease in employment in legal professions

- 3.19 According to the SOLAS National Skills Bulletin for 2022 (which reports on data from 2021), there was a decrease in the numbers employed in the occupational group of barristers, judges, solicitors and related professionals in 2021. As set out in Table 3.1, a total of 15,200 persons were employed in this occupational group in 2021, a decrease of 1,500 on the previous year. This is the first year that has seen a decrease in numbers in this occupation group since 2015. Between 2016 and 2021, the annual employment growth rate for this occupation group was 0.3%. This compares to an annual average employment growth rate of 2.3% nationally over the same period.²⁴
- 3.20 According to SOLAS: *“Employment growth for this occupation was below the five-year national annual average, with levels declining in 2021 when compared to 2020. The majority are employed in the professional, scientific and technical activities sector.”*²⁵
- 3.21 The annual SOLAS National Skills Bulletins include assessments of shortages in skills and occupations. These have not indicated any supply shortages of legal practitioners and related professionals in recent years, although in 2017 SOLAS noted an increased demand for corporate, taxation, compliance and merger lawyers.²⁶

Table 3.1: Legal professions numbers employed – annual averages 2014-2021

Year	Legal Professionals*	Five-Year Growth Trend**
2014	10,100	-0.1% decrease
2015	10,700	-2.4% decrease
2016	11,900	+1.2% increase
2017	13,500	+0.1% increase
2018	13,500	+1.6% increase
2019	14,700	+3.8% increase
2020	16,700	+4.8% increase
2021	15,200	+0.3% increase

Source: SOLAS National Skills Bulletins (SLMRU analysis of CSO data) 2014-2022

* Includes barristers, judges, solicitors and other legal professionals.

**Average overall employment growth rate over preceding five years.

²⁴ SOLAS (2022) *National Skills Bulletin: A Report by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council*, October 2022. Available [here](#)

²⁵ Ibid, page 134

²⁶ SOLAS (2017) *National Skills Bulletin: A Report by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council*, December 2017. Available [here](#)

Bar of Ireland strategic review findings

- 3.22 In July 2022 the Bar of Ireland published a strategic review of its future landscape, conducted by Ernst & Young (EY), which included an assessment of the future market, demand and expectations for the services of barristers.²⁷ In terms of the demand for the services of practising barristers, the report identified that:
- Demand was growing for legal services in Ireland, leading to increased work for barristers.
 - Brexit has displaced demand for European legal services from the UK. The UK previously hosted 20% of all EU legal work and, post Brexit, Ireland can offer an attractive common law, English speaking alternative jurisdiction.
 - Facilitating “direct access” to suitably qualified in-house counsel on a wider range of briefs (contentious and non-contentious) could lead to increased demand for barristers services.
- 3.23 The EY report also found that the internal market for barrister services at the independent referral bar was acutely competitive, with well-known counsel benefitting from an excess of referrals, whereas junior barristers seeking to establish their practices struggle to find sufficient work. This in turn, it concluded, led to a particularly high attrition rate among barristers within their first decade of practice, who cannot afford to support themselves for extensive periods of time with little income.
- 3.24 It also stated that recent legislative changes were a cause for concern, particularly among junior counsel working personal injury cases, as the reduction in the amount of court awards will likely see cases drop from the Circuit to the District Court, where the use of barristers is not always encouraged or required.
- 3.25 In addition, the strategic review identified the trend that legal research and drafting work, which would formerly been undertaken by more junior barristers is now regularly won by the major solicitor firms. These larger practices have invested heavily in artificial intelligence and bespoke software capable of conducting legal searches in a far more efficient and cost effective manner. The negative impact is most keenly felt by junior barristers, who would previously have relied on the associated fee income.
- 3.26 The EY report stated: *“Such trends are difficult to reverse, and other areas of barrister competence are also likely to face new competition. It is more pertinent than ever to ensure that the work traditionally available to junior barristers doesn’t get lost to solicitors (or others)”*.

²⁷ Ernst & Young (2021) *Strategic review of the future landscape for The Bar of Ireland Preparing for the Future: Pushing Boundaries*. Available [here](#)

- 3.27 It concluded that: *“The current number of barristers in Ireland, with 45 per 100,000 of population, is at the higher end of EY’s international benchmarking. When EY examine the number of barristers per 100,000 population in each of the other jurisdictions, the median figure is 25.5. While the other jurisdictions have differences that limit comparability, this would indicate that an appropriate size for the Irish market of barristers is 1,260 assuming the population remains relatively stable. When EY account for Eurostat’s population projection that the population of Ireland is to increase by 1 million people by 2040, an appropriate size for the Law Library is 1,515. This suggests that the Law Library is over-populated with barristers, and the numbers leaving the profession due to an inability to ascertain enough of work further confirms the suggestion.”*

Views of respondents on demand for solicitors’ and barristers’ services

- 3.28 **The Law Society** in its submission to the Authority said that legal firms generally reported an upturn in demand for practicing solicitors in 2022 and an overall improved outlook for the 12 months ahead.
- 3.29 **The Bar of Ireland** in its submission observed that backlogs across most Court divisions that developed over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic generated a demand for barristers’ services in 2022. It also noted that a lack of available judges and judicial resources was hindering the clearing of the backlog and *“continues to impact on the progression of various lists in a timely fashion”*.
- 3.30 It stated that the findings of the strategic review by EY, as summarised above, supported its view that *“the Irish legal market is over-populated with barristers”*.
- 3.31 **The Bar of Ireland** submission also referred to increases in the number of members leaving the Law Library (see section 2.3) and attributed this to their inability to generate an income. It also highlighted the 2008 cuts to barristers’ professional fees for work in the public sector as an ongoing key challenge for barristers.
- 3.32 **The King’s Inns** in its submission pointed out that many barristers now operate outside of the traditional route of the independent referral bar within the Law Library. Many barristers are in full-time employment in both the public and private sectors while others pursue careers outside of the law but enhanced by their legal expertise. It said it was its experience that most students on its BL degree course intended to enter the Law Library, and this is supported by the consistency in the average numbers entering the Law Library each year, when compared to the overall number called to the bar each year.

- 3.33 It added: *“While this is not directly a matter for King’s Inns, and we therefore do not maintain figures in this respect, it is well understood that many barristers find it difficult to establish a viable practice at the independent referral Bar and many leave the independent referral Bar and cease their membership of the Law Library within their first seven years of practice. This is not indicative of an unmet demand in the market for the services of barristers. It is, in fact, indicative of the opposite being the case and of there being a highly competitive market for the services of barristers.”*
- 3.34 **Dublin City Council’s Law Agent** in their submission said there has been a notable increase in the demand for legal services in 2022. The Law Agent said that state bodies and local authorities should be more involved in the training of legal professionals by having trainee solicitor programmes *“providing and advertising secondment opportunities to state bodies and public bodies and working with the Law Society and other training bodies on the delivery of their courses”*.

3.2 Costs of legal services provided by barristers and solicitors

Summary and key developments in 2022

- 3.35 As noted in previous annual reports under section 33 of the Act, there are ongoing challenges in measuring the costs of legal services provided by barristers and solicitors in Ireland due to substantial data limitations.²⁸ The two primary sources of quantitative data on the costs of legal services in Ireland for previous reports were the Central Statistic Office's experimental data series, the Services Producer Price Index (SPPI), and the World Bank's *Doing Business* report.
- 3.36 The World Bank Group announced in September 2021 that it had discontinued its *Doing Business* report series due to country specific data irregularities in the 2018 and 2020 reports.²⁹ The 2020 *Doing Business* report suggested that Ireland was a slow and expensive jurisdiction in which to enforce a commercial contract, with Irish businesses facing higher legal costs than their counterparts in many other countries.³⁰
- 3.37 The SPPI measures changes in the average prices charged by domestic service producers to other business customers for a selected range of services. For the SPPI report, the first limitation is that the data is presented as an index, so it only gives information about changes in prices rather than absolute prices. Secondly, the most granular SPPI sectoral data on legal services is in a group which also includes accounting, PR and business consultancy services costs. Therefore, changes in the data can be driven by price changes in any one or more of these areas.
- 3.38 Bearing in mind these limitations, the CSO data shows that service prices for legal, accounting, PR and consultancy services in Quarter 4 2022 were on average 3.1% higher in the year when compared to the same period in the previous year. This is above the average increase for all service producer prices of 2.3% in the same period.³¹
- 3.39 The 2022 Evelyn Partners *Law Firm Survey* reported that “in an effort to preserve margins as operating costs and salary costs increase” nearly two thirds of firms (62%) increased their fees. This marks a significant increase in the numbers of firms raising fees compared to previous surveys (2020: 29%, 2021: 35%).

²⁸ Section 138 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 provides the following definitions: “Legal costs” means fees, charges, disbursements and other costs incurred or charged in relation to contentious or non-contentious business....; “Contentious business” means legal services provided by a legal practitioner for the purposes of, or in contemplation of, proceedings before a court, tribunal or other body, the Personal Injuries Assessment Board or an arbitrator appointed under the Arbitration Act 2010 or in connection with an arbitration, mediation or conciliation; “Non-contentious business” means legal services that do not relate to contentious business. (As a category, non-contentious business encompasses costs incurred in relation to uncontested matters such as sales, purchases, leases, mortgages, settlements, and other matters of conveyancing.)

²⁹ The World Bank engaged WilmerHale LLP to review data irregularities in its 2018 and 2020 reports in relation to data for China, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan. See: WilmerHale (2021) *Investigation of Data Irregularities in Doing Business 2018 and Doing Business 2020*. Available [here](#)

³⁰ World Bank Group (2020) *Doing Business 2020*. (Individual country reports available [here](#))

³¹ CSO (2023) *Services Producer Price Index Experimental (Selected Services) Quarter 4 2022*, 14 March 2023. Available [here](#)

- 3.40 The National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) has expressed concerns for a number of years about the costs of legal services and their impact on national competitiveness.³²
- 3.41 In its 2022 annual report to government on competitiveness, the NCPC highlighted that Ireland is has some of the highest civil litigation costs internationally and stated that “controlling litigation costs is crucial to managing high legal costs in Ireland”.³³ The NCPC highlighted the need to fully understand the cause of high legal costs before they can be properly addressed. It said it recognised there is a lack of “granular” data on legal services costs and recommended that the CSO continues to expand the SPPI survey.
- 3.42 The Authority notes the Department of Justice’s ongoing work in this area on foot of the 2020 *Review of Administration of Civil Justice* report which made recommendations on reducing litigation costs.³⁴ In response to the Review Group’s report, the Department has commissioned economic research to consider its recommendations and also identify other potential options to reduce legal costs.³⁵

Excessive costs – 4% of complaints to LSRA in 2022

- 3.43 The LSRA began receiving and investigating complaints about solicitors and barristers under Part 6 of the Act on 7 October 2019. The Authority is required under section 73 of the Act to report on the performance of its complaints function every six months. In 2022, two such reports were published, in April and October. One of the three types of complaints that the LSRA can receive and investigate is that the amount of costs sought by a legal practitioner in respect of legal services provided to the client was or is excessive.
- 3.44 In 2022, the LSRA received a total of 58 complaints of excessive costs, accounting for 4% of the total of 1,352 complaints received during the year (multiple complaints can be made against one individual). This is a decrease on the previous year when there were 78 complaints of excessive costs comprising 5% of the total number of complaints received.³⁶

³² National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (2022) *Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2022*, September 2022. Available [here](#)

³³ National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (2022) *Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2022*, September 2022. Available [here](#). NCPC notes that data on international litigation rankings was sourced from: Review Group (2020), *Review of the Administration of Civil Justice Report*, 30 October 2020. Available [here](#)

³⁴ Review Group (2020), *Review of the Administration of Civil Justice Report*, 30 October 2020. Chairperson: The Hon. Mr. Justice Peter Kelly, Former President of the High Court. Available [here](#); Government of Ireland (2022) *Response to Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2022: Publication of the Government’s response to the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council report*, 29 November 2022. Available [here](#)

³⁵ Government of Ireland (2022) *Response to Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2022: Publication of the Government’s response to the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council report*, 29 November 2022. Available [here](#)

³⁶ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2023) *LSRA Annual Report 2022* (Forthcoming)

Views of respondents on costs of services of practising barristers and solicitors

- 3.45 **The Law Society** in its submission to the Authority stated that due to limitations around publicly available data, it is difficult to determine whether legal services were available to consumers at a reasonable cost in 2022.
- 3.46 **Both the Law Society and the Bar of Ireland** in their submissions highlighted their jointly-commissioned 2022 report on options to control legal costs carried out by Ernst & Young (EY).³⁷ This report was produced in response to the 2020 report, the *Review of Administration of Civil Justice*. It has been submitted to the Department of Justice which is carrying out follow up research on the review’s recommendations. The EY analysis contests the assertion that legal costs in Ireland are high, stating that this is not strongly supported by evidence, with its analysis showing a decrease in profession legal fees over the period 2011 to 2019 of 9% to 13%.
- 3.47 **The Bar of Ireland** further outlined its view on the best way to positively impact on legal costs. It proposed a combination of four measures: *“1. Increased investment in the justice system, in particular the number of judges and support staff, better case management and adoption of technology. 2. Investment in effective civil legal aid to ensure access to justice for all regardless of means. 3. The introduction of non-binding guidelines in respect of legal costs. 4. A reduction in state-imposed revenue on a Bill of Costs.”*
- 3.48 **The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)** in its submission highlighted the findings of the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council that the limited availability of data on legal costs is a challenge to defining and measuring legal costs. It said that a *“collection of comprehensive data is required in order to ensure policy measures in the area of legal services are based on the highest quality evidence”*.
- 3.49 **The CCPC** suggested that the LSRA *“consider establishing a method of tracking the evolution of legal costs over time and issuing annual reports on cost and price trends”*. It also recommended that the LSRA should *“explore ways which enable consumers to review and compare information about legal services and help consumers understand the quality of service offered by competing providers”*.
- 3.50 **The Irish Institute of Legal Executives** in its submission said that the high and perceived high cost of legal services is preventing people on lower incomes from equal access to justice.
- 3.51 **Dublin City Council’s Law Agent** said there is an issue as to the cost to the public purse of legal service to the state and to public bodies and that these costs can also indirectly effect the cost to consumers of legal services.

³⁷ Ernst & Young (2022) *Analysis of the impact of proposals to reduce legal costs in Ireland*. (May 2022) Available [here](#)

3.3 The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise

Summary and key developments in 2022

LSRA education and training research and recommendations

- 3.52 In September 2020, the Authority's recommendations for reforms in the area of legal practitioner education and training were submitted to the Minister for Justice under section 34(1)(a) of the Act in a report called *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training* under section 34(1)(a) of the Act.³⁸
- 3.53 The two core recommendations in the *Setting Standards* report were:
1. A clear definition of the **competence and standards** required to practise as a solicitor or barrister should be developed; and
 2. The establishment of a new and independent **Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee** (the LPET Committee).
- 3.54 In November 2020, the Minister welcomed the findings of the *Setting Standards* report and requested that the Authority consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King's Inns and the Law Society respectively
- 3.55 The Minister asked that the LSRA give specific consideration to the following:
- The remuneration of trainee barristers and solicitors;
 - The other costs associated with joining each profession;
 - The information available to prospective trainee barristers and solicitors on available masters and solicitors firms, the information available on terms and conditions, and how they are selected;
 - Any other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors including the ability to take maternity leave.
- 3.56 In considering these issues, the Minister requested that the LSRA pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions. The Minister also asked the Authority to make recommendations in relation to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the existing system.

³⁸ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2020) *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*, September 2020. Available [here](#)

- 3.57 The LSRA undertook extensive research to meet the Minister’s request, including its first comprehensive survey of law undergraduates, trainee solicitors, student barristers and early career legal practitioners, as well those who had recently qualified but were not currently practising as a solicitor or barrister. In March 2022, the LSRA submitted a report to the Minister for Justice on the barriers and challenges faced by early career legal professionals. The Authority will report to the Minister with its recommendations in 2023.
- 3.58 The Department of Justice’s Justice Plan 2021 and 2022 contained commitments to *“progress work to open up and reform professional legal education, introduce independent oversight for the first time, and remove barriers to becoming a solicitor or barrister.”*³⁹
- 3.59 In Justice Plan 2022, the actions set out were to: *“Finalise approach to mainstream proposed reforms of professional legal education; Develop and begin implementation of action plan to expand provision of professional legal education, enhance access to the profession and introduce independent oversight and quality assurance.”*⁴⁰
- 3.60 The Authority engaged with the Department of Justice around implementation of its legal practitioner education and training recommendations in 2022, and looks forward to further future engagement.

New “fused” Professional Practice Course format for trainee solicitors

- 3.61 In September 2022, Law Society introduced a new “fused” Professional Practice Course (PPC). The course provides the taught elements of solicitor training in one academic year. It replaces the traditional “sandwich” PPC model, which combined periods of teaching interspersed with periods of office-based training.
- 3.62 PPC trainees now complete their 24 month in-office training contract in one solid block rather than in two blocks. The core curriculum on the full-time PPC now runs from September to April. The core curriculum on the Hybrid course runs from December to December. In addition to the core curriculum, trainees must also complete four or more advanced electives. Electives can be completed at any point during the traineeship period.
- 3.63 A fused PPC format was a key proposal from a 2018 Law Society submission to the LSRA on its education and training arrangements. It was proposed on the basis that the traditional sandwich model was restrictive for training firms with trainee movement in and out of firms creating a “formidable logistical challenge”.⁴¹

³⁹ Department of Justice (2021) *Justice Plan 2021* (Action 66). Available [here](#). Department of Justice, (2022) *Justice Plan 2022* (Action 57). Available [here](#)

⁴⁰ Ibid. (Action 57)

⁴¹ Law Society of Ireland (2018) *Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority as Part of a Public Consultation Prior to a Report to the Minister for Justice and Equality on the Education and Training Arrangements in the State for Legal Practitioners*.

Development of CPD at the Bar of Ireland

- 3.64 The Bar of Ireland introduced a new competency based CPD scheme for its members in October 2021. As part of this scheme, Law Library members are required to complete a minimum of 20 CPD hours annually, up from the previous 12 hours. The new framework is built around four competency domains of: legal knowledge, procedures and skills; advocacy, dispute resolution and negotiations; ethics and professional standards; personal professional development and practice management.
- 3.65 Of the 20 annual CPD points achieved, one must be in respect of ethics, with at least 12 attributable to a structured or formal activity such as a seminar, lecture or conference, and the balance attributable to unstructured activities such as reading, listening to podcasts, reflection on practice or writing articles.
- 3.66 Members of the Law Library are required to certify annually that they have complied with the minimum CPD requirement. Compliance and certification is overseen by the Bar of Ireland’s Professional Practices Committee and Education and Training Committee. In addition, in December 2022, the Council of the Bar of Ireland approved the introduction of an annual randomised audit of member CPD, commencing with an audit of the 2023/24 CPD year. The Bar of Ireland is also developing a quality charter outlining what members can expect from its CPD offering.⁴²

Views of respondents on standard of education and training

- 3.67 **The Law Society** in its submission to the Authority described its new PPC format as representing *“the biggest change to Solicitor training since 2000”*. The unitary course delivers all the taught elements of solicitor training in one academic year, which, according to **the Law Society**, will provide *“significant logistical and practical advantages to trainees and firms”*.
- 3.68 **The Bar of Ireland** in its submission said that in the second year of its new CPD scheme *“the response from members has been very positive with very high levels of compliance with the new requirements”*.
- 3.69 **The Bar of Ireland** submitted that for those barristers who are on the LSRA Roll of Practising Barristers who are not members of the Law Library, the same level of assurance in relation to their competence cannot be provided. *“As noted in our previous submission, this represents a regulatory risk and one that should be prioritised by the LSRA in the interest of protecting and promoting the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services as provided under section 13(4)(c) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.”*

⁴² The Bar of Ireland (2023) *The Bar Review*, Volume 28, Number 2, April 2023. Available [here](#)

- 3.70 **The King's Inns** said it believes that the appropriate standard of education and training for a person admitted to practise as a barrister is *"fit to practise"*. It pointed out that this standard of legal education for prospective barristers is now underpinned by the Statement of the Required Competencies of a Barrister, which it published in November 2020.⁴³
- 3.71 **The CCPC** in its submission referred to the 2020 LSRA report *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*. It said it welcomed the LSRA's recommendations for the establishment of an independent Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee (LPET Committee).
- 3.72 **The CCPC** said it particularly welcomed that a statutory objective of the LPET Committee would be to encourage greater access to legal education and training opportunities. It highlighted common barriers to entering the profession such as costs of qualification (including unpaid time involved in studying for the FE-1 or undertaking pupillage), the time to qualify and lack of contacts in the profession.
- 3.73 It also welcomed the LSRA recommendation that the LPET Committee develop and maintain a set of standards required to practise as a solicitor or barrister. It suggested that the LPET committee should periodically review these standards considering whether any rule or standard could act as a barrier to entry.
- 3.74 **The CCPC** recommended in its submission that once established, the LPET Committee should review *"any existing arrangement which would add up to unnecessary costs and inconvenience and would dissuade new potential entrants to the professions"*. **The CCPC** suggested areas for the LPET Committee to consider such as the creation of new routes to legal qualification and arrangements for switching between the solicitor and barrister profession.
- 3.75 In reference to its submission to the LSRA on the establishment of a new profession of conveyancer, **the CCPC** said that the LPET Committee's responsibility for the accreditation of providers of legal education and training should include providers of conveyancing education and training. It also said that the LPET Committee, assisted by the LSRA, *"should set and assure standards for conveyancing education and training"*.
- 3.76 **DCU School of Law and Government** referred to previous submissions it made to the LSRA, which highlighted the socio-economic barriers facing those seeking admission to the legal professions.
- 3.77 **UCD Sutherland School of Law** submitted that the degree and subject requirements for admission to King's Inns makes it more difficult for students wishing to become barristers to take joint degrees or degrees involving study abroad, which it says reduces the skill-set students take into practice. It also said that this makes it more difficult to offer *"cutting-edge subject choice to engage with global legal issues"*.

⁴³ Council of the Honorable Society of King's Inns (2020) *Statement of the Required Competencies of a Barrister*. Available [here](#)

- 3.78 It also said that the entrance exams for the professions result in duplication, delay, and significant costs for those who have already obtained a law degree. It proposed abolition of these entrance exams for students with law degrees from Irish universities.
- 3.79 **Dublin City Council’s Law Agent** made a number of suggestions for the possible improvement of the standard of education and training including that training bodies should provide a greater understanding of the users of legal services such as the state and local authorities and their needs. They suggested the provision of specific training in public law, emphasising that a better understanding of how the state works *“will lead to delivery of better legal services and better outcomes for clients in both private and public sector”*.

3.4 The assessment under section 33(1)(c) of Act

Views of respondents on assessment

- 3.80 The LSRA's consultation notice invited respondents to provide their views on: *"The extent to which the admissions 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."*
- 3.81 **The Law Society** in its submission said that in May 2022 it recorded the largest intake of trainee solicitors since 2008. It linked this to *"greater access and fewer barriers to the profession, across diverse educational, professional and socio-economic backgrounds"*. It added that a *"key barometer for the future of the sector is the intake of trainee solicitors"*.
- 3.82 **The Law Society** highlighted the Evelyn Partners survey finding that fewer law firms reported an increase in staff numbers in 2022 (33%) compared to 2021 (59%). **The Law Society** attributed this to economic uncertainty and firms' ability to replace staff losses with new employees.
- 3.83 **The Law Society** also reported that there are challenges in the legal sector with regard to recruitment and retention. It said there was significant salary inflation in 2022 particularly in Dublin-based firms and the top 20 firms. It attributed this salary inflation to a so called 'war for talent' which has seen firms review salaries, bonuses and benefit packages.
- 3.84 **The Bar of Ireland** in its submission said that in June 2021, the Council put forward a submission in response to the LSRA consultation on economic and other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors. It said its submission included *"eleven recommendations that would address the challenges in building and maintaining a career at the Bar and support the goal of achieving greater diversity within the profession. We await with interest the publication of this report by the LSRA which is long overdue given that the public consultation occurred over 18 months ago."*
- 3.85 **The King's Inns** in its submission said that in examining this question, it was necessary to examine and contextualise the cost of providing professional legal training to an appropriate standard. It said the fees for its BL degree course, currently at €12,560, had not changed since 2009 and that it believed it compared very favourably with other types of education and training leading to a professional qualification.
- 3.86 In relation to admission policies, **the King's Inns** said that entry was fair and open, with every person who meets the entry requirements and passes the entrance exam may embark on professional training and there no "unmet" demand in the market.
- 3.87 **The King's Inns** said that this can be contrasted other jurisdictions, for example, in Northern Ireland, where there is a cap on the numbers admitted to professional training leading to

qualification as a barrister; or in England and Wales, where aspiring barristers may not be able to obtain a pupillage after obtaining the professional qualification.

- 3.88 **The King's Inns** also stated that in the absence of any cap or quota, and in circumstances where the cost of the degree course has not increased since 2009, it is reasonable to conclude that the number admitted to the profession each year fluctuates in response to the demand for the services of practising barristers.
- 3.89 **The King's Inns** submitted that it believes the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers in 2022 *"is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost."* It also stated that the admissions policies to the BL degree course and to the Barrister-at-Law profession are *"rigorous and not restrictive"*, and that the policies achieve the objectives contained in section 13(4) of the 2015 Act.

3.5 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit on the above matters.

Views of respondents on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit

- 3.90 In relation to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, **the Bar of Ireland** said it continues to engage with the Courts Service Modernisation Programme Legal Practitioners Engagement Working Group. It also said that the family reform programme, the civil reform programme and ICT are high on the agenda of the working group.
- 3.91 In relation to the impact of Brexit, **the King's Inns** noted admission trends of barristers from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It highlighted that there was an influx of these barristers following Brexit which then eased in last couple of years. **The King's Inns** said *“most of those admitted through these routes have not commenced practice in Ireland”*.
- 3.92 In relation to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, **the King's Inns** said that in the academic year 2022 – 2023 it maintained a hybrid timetable for both full-time and modular students. Students have been required to attend skill-focussed sessions such as those on advocacy and drafting in person. Other sessions were delivered live online.
- 3.93 **DCU School of Law and Government** said in its submission that Brexit, and the resulting influx of global law firms to Dublin, has had a positive impact on DCU's INTRA (Integrated- Training) programme. It said this emergence of Dublin as a leading location for international law firms has expanded opportunities for DCU's internship and placement programmes and thus increased access to networking and mentoring for students.
- 3.94 It also said that the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting shift to online learning and continuous assessment during the pandemic period has presented challenges for teaching and learning. It said the return to in-person exams in 2022 meant many students required additional supports as they had never before sat traditional law exams. It also highlighted that the increase in online teaching and the surge in availability and use of artificial intelligence technologies has led to an increase in academic integrity concerns and presents a challenge for law schools to best deal with emerging technologies.
- 3.95 **UCD Sutherland School of Law** submitted that during the pandemic the King's Inns relaxed its requirement for in-person exams. It said that the King's Inns reinstated the requirement due to unacceptability of e-proctored exams (monitored online exams). **UCD Sutherland School of Law** suggested that *“assessment by coursework, reflective diary etc. would allow for more authentic assessment and do not present the same challenges to academic integrity as e-proctored exams”*.
- 3.96 **Dublin City Council's Law Agent** said that the Covid-19 pandemic clarified the possibilities of online delivery of legal education as a positive development, which provides access to more to legal education.

Conclusion and looking ahead

- 3.97 The year in review in this report was dominated by global and domestic economic uncertainty with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022, leading to a humanitarian crisis which damaged global economic growth and has had an impact on all aspects of the Irish economy.⁴⁴
- 3.98 The year saw a waning of the joint impacts Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of numbers and patterns of admissions to the professions and the overall dynamics at play in the legal services sector.
- 3.99 Looking ahead, the Authority anticipates developments in 2023 with the planned introduction new legal partnerships, which will enable barristers and solicitors to jointly provide legal services for the first time. In time, their introduction may impact on the numbers admitted to the professions and the demand for and costs of the services of practising solicitors and barristers.
- 3.100 In addition, the Authority will report to the Minister for Justice on the creation of a new profession of conveyancer, as requested under section 34 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.
- 3.101 The Authority will also report to the Minister on economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers with recommendations for how these may be overcome, as also requested. The LSRA has undertaken survey research and a statutory consultation as part of its preparation of this report to the Minister, which it anticipates will build on recommendations made in its 2020 *Setting Standards* report on legal practitioner education and training.
- 3.102 The Authority will continue to both drive and monitor developments in the legal services sector in accordance with its statutory functions. These efforts will continue to shape and inform its annual assessments under section 33 of the Act.

⁴⁴ International Monetary Fund (2022) *World Economic Outlook, April 2022: War Sets Back The Global Recovery*, April 19, 2022. Available [here](#)

Annexes

Annex A: List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation

An Bord Pleanála*
Bar of Ireland
Chief State Solicitor's Office*
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
School of Law and Government, Dublin City University (DCU)
Faculty of Notaries Public*
Individual
Irish Institute of Legal Executives
Kings Inns
Law Agent, Dublin City Council
Law Society
Liston Family Law
Southern Law Association*
Sutherland School of Law, University College Dublin (UCD)

* The LSRA received correspondence from these organisations stating that they had no comment to make or their observations from previous submissions still stood.

Annex B: Public Consultation Notice

9 December 2022

Invitation for Written Submissions on Admission Policies of the Legal Professions 2022 Annual Report

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) invites written submissions as part of a consultation prior to its annual report to the Minister for Justice on the admission policies of the legal professions.

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority was established on 1 October 2016 to regulate the provision of legal services by legal practitioners and to ensure the maintenance and improvement of standards in the delivery of such services.

Under section 33(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act), the LSRA is required to prepare and submit to the Minister for Justice an annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions. For the purposes of preparing this report, the LSRA is required under section 33(2) of the Act to conduct a consultation with professional bodies and such persons as it considers appropriate. Section 33 of the Act was commenced in 11 October 2019 and this is the Authority's fourth annual report.

The LSRA's report will contain the following elements:

- (a) the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors during 2022;
- (b) the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers during 2022;
- (c) an assessment as to whether or not, having regard to the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise, the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers and solicitors in 2022 is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of such services at a reasonable cost.

The LSRA is interested to hear from those who are directly involved in the provision of legal services as well as from employers, state agencies, non-governmental bodies and other organisations and individuals who deliver and use legal services.

The LSRA is interested in views on whether there are any potential developments which are external to the legal sector (e.g. economic, social or technological) which might impact on admissions to the legal professions and the availability of the services of solicitors and barristers at a reasonable cost.

Following the consultation and other evidence gathering activities, the LSRA will draw up a report to the Minister of Justice. The final report will be submitted to the Minister by 30 April 2023.

Scope of Section 33 Consultation

The Authority invites written 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 practising barristers and solicitors in 2022.
2. The **costs of legal services** in 2022 and whether these were **available at a reasonable cost** to consumers.
3. The **standard of education and training** for persons admitted to practise.
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.
5. Any ongoing **impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic** on the above matters.

The above list of issues is not closed. Respondents may wish to comment on any other issues which have a bearing on the admissions policies of the legal professions and the assessment to be conducted under section 33(1)(c). Respondents may also wish to comment on any other issues in relation to the operation of the Act including the objectives of the Authority under section 13(4) of the Act, which are:

- a) protecting and promoting the public interest,
- b) supporting the proper and effective administration of justice,
- c) protecting and promoting the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services,
- d) promoting competition in the provision of legal services in the State,
- e) encouraging an independent, strong and effective legal profession, and
- f) promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles of independence and integrity, acting in the client's best interests, compliance with duties owed to the court and confidentiality.

It would be helpful for respondents to set out reasons for views expressed, and to provide any available evidence which may be deemed relevant.

Closing date and address for submissions

Interested parties wishing to contribute should send a written submission as soon as possible but in any event to be received no later than **Friday 24 February 2023**.

The Authority may contact respondents to explore any issues raised in responses in more depth and it will also be gathering evidence to use in its report from a variety of other sources.

Submissions may be sent to **Section 33 Consultation**:

- By e-mail to: publicconsultations@lsra.ie or
- By post to:

Section 33 Consultation
Legal Services Regulatory Authority
P.O. Box 12906
Dublin 7

Freedom of Information

Attention is drawn to the fact that information provided to the Authority may be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014. Therefore, should it be considered that any information provided is commercially sensitive, please identify same, and specify the reason for its sensitivity. The Authority will consult with interested parties making submissions regarding information identified by them as sensitive before making a decision on any Freedom of Information request. Any personal information, which you volunteer to the Authority, will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Protection Acts, 1998 and 2003 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when commenced.

Publication of Submissions

The Authority intends where appropriate to publish any submissions received by it on its website and otherwise. Please note that a decision on any such publication may occur without prior consultation with respondents to this consultation notice. It is in the interest of respondents to highlight, in their submissions, any commercially sensitive or confidential information, which they would not wish to be disclosed.

Legal Services Regulatory Authority
9 December 2022

Annex C: Tables and Statistics

Table 1: Admissions to the Roll of Solicitors 2013-2022

Year	Qualifying Trainees	England & Wales Solicitors	Northern Ireland Solicitors	All other Foreign Lawyers*	Transferring Barristers	Admissions Total	% increase/decrease
2013	468	33	24	18	10	553	
2014	475	36	15	16	15	557	0.7%
2015	233	70	30	11	15	359	- 36%
2016	525	806	27	14	34	1,406	292%
2017	423	547	29	17	34	1,050	- 25%
2018	443	690	43	23	30	1,229	17%
2019	419	1,837	61	37	28	2,381 ⁴⁵	94%
2020	390	443	33	20	20	906	62%
2021	513	278	35	34	16	876	- 3%
2022	307	134	35	22	17	515	- 41%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

*EEA, USA, Australia and New Zealand

Table 2: Solicitors holding practising certificates 2015 - 2022⁴⁶

Year	Practising Certificate Holders	No. increase/decrease on previous year	% increase/decrease on previous year
2015	9,688	444	5%
2016	10,080	392	4 %
2017	10,470	390	4%
2018	10,972	502	5%
2019	11,959	987	9 %
2020	11,854	-105	- 1%
2021	11,413	-441	- 4%
2022	11,652	239	2%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

⁴⁵ Total includes 12 additional transferring EU lawyers admitted through the Establishment Directive rather than the Qualified Lawyers Test. Source: Law Society

⁴⁶ Total practising certificates held as at 31 December of each year.

Table 3: PPC admissions 2012-2022

Year	Total Enrolment	Male	Female	30 yrs or under	Over 30 yrs	Law degree	Other degree	Non-graduate
2012	392	149 (38%)	243 (62%)	87%	13%	-	-	-
2013	353	145 (41%)	208 (59%)	89%	11%	-	-	-
2014	388	140 (36%)	248 (64%)	87%	13%	-	-	-
2015	384	160 (42%)	224 (58%)	86%	14%	80%	22%	-
2016	405	169 (42%)	236 (58%)	87%	13%	78%	21%	1%
2017	412	169 (41%)	243 (59%)	90%	10%	84%	14%	2%
2018	448	180 (40%)	268 (60%)	89%	11%	79%	19%	2%
2019	501	205 (41%)	297 (59%)	88%	12%	79%	20%	1%
2020	473	166 (35%)	307 (65%)	90%	10%	82%	17%	1%
2021	538	209 (39%)	329 (61%)	88%	12%	83%	16%	1%
2022	560	195 (35%)	365 (65%)	89%	11%	84%	15%	1%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 4: PPC admissions by course type 2019-2022

Year	Total Enrolment	Full-time	Hybrid
2019	501	454 (91%)	47 (9%)
2020	473	418 (88%)	55 (12%)
2021	538	429 (80%)	109 (20%)
2022	560	469 (84%)	91 (16%)

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 5: Demographic breakdown for PPC full-time & PPC Hybrid

PPC Hybrid							
Year	Male	Female	30 yrs or under	Over 30 yrs	Dublin training contract	Outside Dublin training contract	Total
2020	15 (27%)	40 (73%)	30 (55%)	25 (45%)	18 (33%)	37 (67%)	55
2021	46 (42%)	63 (58%)	83 (76%)	26 (24%)	54 (50%)	55 (50%)	109
2022	27 (30%)	64 (70%)	52 (57%)	39 (43%)	47 (52%)	44 (48%)	91
PPC full-time							
Year	Male	Female	30 yrs or under	Over 30 yrs	Dublin training contract	Outside Dublin training contract	Total
2020	154 (37%)	264 (63%)	396 (95%)	22 (5%)	200 (48%)	218 (52%)	418
2021	169 (39%)	260 (61%)	410 (96%)	19 (4%)	380 (89%)	49 (11%)	429
2022	190 (40%)	279 (60%)	446 (95%)	23 (5%)	424 (90%)	45 (10%)	469

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 6: Barrister admissions 2016-2022⁴⁷

Year	Total	+/- on previous year	Completion of KI's BL degree ⁴⁸	Lawyers from other jurisdictions ⁴⁹	Transferring solicitors	Morgenbesser eligibility* ⁵⁰
2016	129	-7%	116	10	1	2
2017	134	+4%	109	22	3	0
2018	156	+16%	91	59	6	0
2019	190	+22%	109	76	3	2
2020	167	-12%	116	47	3	1
2021	180	+ 8%	142	34	2	2
2022	147	-18%	133	11	0	3

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

⁴⁷ Total number of persons admitted to the Barrister-at-law degree and called to the bar.⁴⁸ The figure includes BL graduates from the same year and also those from earlier years who have deferred their Call to the Bar.⁴⁹ Includes Northern Ireland barristers and England and Wales barristers.⁵⁰ According to the King's Inns, these are applicants who hold legal qualifications of an academic or professional nature (or both) from another EU Member State and who, as a result, are partly qualified in that Member State. The applicants' qualifications are assessed and to the extent that there is any shortfall in knowledge or skills, the applicant will be required to complete a number of assessments. See C-313/01 *Christine Morgenbesser v Consiglio dell'Ordine degli avvocati di Genova*.

Table 7: Barrister admissions - lawyers from Northern Ireland, England and Wales 2016-2022

Year	Northern Ireland qualified lawyers	England and Wales qualified lawyers	Total
2016	6	4	10
2017	8	14	22
2018	19	39	59*
2019	52	24	76
2020	12	35	47
2021	11	23	34
2022	1	10	11

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

*Total includes 1 admission from another jurisdiction

Table 8: Barristers commencing pupillage 2019-2022

Year	New pupils ⁵¹
2019	82
2020	69
2021	102
2022	90

Source: Bar of Ireland

Table 9: Barristers leaving the Law Library 2015-2022

2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021 / 2022
135	152	150	141	105	166	128	109	122	81	140

Source: Bar of Ireland

Table 10: Roll of Practising Barristers 2019-2022

Year	Total Roll	+/- on previous year % & No	Law Library Members	Non-Law Library Members
2019	2,735	-	2,198 (80%)	537 (20%)
2020	2,823	+3% (88)	2,155 (76%)	668 (24%)
2021	2,933	+4% (110)	2,180 (74%)	753 (26%)
2022	2,957	+1% (24)	2,173 (73%)	784 (27%)

Source: Legal Services Regulatory Authority

⁵¹ Barristers beginning their period of pupillage at the start of the new legal term in October.

Table 11: Transfers between the professions 2015-2022

Year	Barristers becoming solicitors	Solicitors becoming barristers
2015	15	1
2016	39	1
2017	24	3
2018	21	6
2019	28	3
2020	20	3
2021	16	2
2022	17	0

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns and Law Society of Ireland

Table 12: Admissions to Barrister-at-Law degree course 2013-2022

Year	Sitting BL Entrance Exam	Commencing BL degree Full time 1-year/ Modular 2-year ⁵²	Admission: Approved Qualification	Admission: King's Inns Diploma
2013	168	141 (87/54)	96 (68%)	45 (32%)
2014	157	140 (80/60)	91 (65%)	49 (35%)
2015	120	96 (58/38)	65 (68%)	31 (32%)
2016	133	119 (79/40)	74 (62%)	45 (38%)
2017	131	112 (51/61)	67 (60%)	45 (40%)
2018	143	120 (58/62)	85 (71%)	35 (29%)
2019	150	118 (57/61)	84 (71%)	34 (29%)
2020	195	183 (97/86)	126 (69%)	57 (31%)
2021	161	134 (66/68)	82 (61%)	52 (39%)
2022	131	130 (57/73)	78 (60%)	52 (40%)

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

Table 13: Age of students commencing Barrister-at-Law degree course 2022

Age	21-24 years	25-28 years	29-32 years	33-36 years	37-40 years	40+ years	Total
BL Full-Time 2022	18 32%	16 28%	4 7%	4 7%	4 7%	11 19%	57
BL Part-Time 2022	17 23%	15 21%	4 5%	7 10%	8 11%	22 30%	73
All BL Students 2022	35 27%	31 24%	8 6%	11 8%	12 9%	33 25%	130

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

⁵² Figures of students commencing the BL degree course in any given year may include those who sat and passed the entrance exam in a prior year.



**An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhíse Dlí**

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