



An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhísí Dlí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority

Pathways to the Professions 2024

Annual Report on
Admission Policies of
the Legal Professions





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Executive Summary and Assessment

Introduction

1. This is the 2024 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 as amended (the Act). It is the sixth 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 2024. It finds slight decreases in the numbers of those both qualifying into the legal professions and enrolling in professional training in 2024 compared to 2023.
3. This report also provides an update on developments during 2024 in legal practitioner education and training and an overview 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.
5. Amid a year of strong growth in the Irish economy, the total number of practising solicitors in 2024 was 12,175 and the total number of practising barristers was 3,071. The combined total of 15,246 legal professionals represents approximately 0.5% of the total of 2.8 million people recorded as in employment in Ireland in 2024.
6. There were clear signs of a buoyant market for solicitors concentrated in Dublin and reports of regional disparities and shortages around the rest of Ireland. While continued growth in the economy is an opportunity, it can also create recruitment and retention challenges in the legal services sector and lead to increases in legal costs.

New solicitor trainee intake decreases for first time in four years

7. A total of 542 trainee solicitors enrolled on the Law Society's Professional Practice Course (PPC) in 2024, down 3% from 2023. These comprised of 442 trainees on the eight-month full-time course and 100 trainees on the 12-month part-time course, the PPC Hybrid.



8. The number of PPC Hybrid trainees has steadily grown in the six years since its introduction in 2019. In 2024, they accounted for almost one in five (18%) of the total solicitor trainee intake. The popularity of this part-time programme indicates that the more flexible training option has addressed a previously unmet demand within the solicitors' profession.
9. New solicitor trainees must secure a training contract prior to their enrolment on the PPC. Having completed their period of taught instruction, PPC trainees must then undertake a 24-month period of in-office training, under contract with a training solicitor. Eight in ten (83%) of new solicitor training contracts in 2024 were with Dublin law firms, reflecting the dominance of the country's capital in the legal services market.
10. In a similar trend to previous years, the main training contract providers for new PPC trainees in 2024 were large law firms. Almost two thirds of trainees (63%) in 2024 had secured a training contract with a total of twenty large law firms. In contrast, only 5% of trainees secured a contract in-house with a private company or with a State body.

Decrease in new solicitors admitted to Roll of Solicitors

11. A total of 590 solicitors were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2024, a 24% decrease from 2023. Of these, 56% were Law Society recently qualified solicitors, 35% were solicitors qualified in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the rest were lawyers from other common law jurisdictions or transferring barristers. According to the Law Society, the decrease in the number of new entrants to the Roll is a result of a restructuring of the PPC, and it expects that the number of Law Society qualifying trainees admitted to the Roll will return to normal levels in 2025.

Highest number practising certificates held in ten years

12. A total of 12,175 solicitors held practising certificates at the end of 2024, the highest number in ten years. Over two thirds of these (8,177) were solicitors working in Dublin. First time practising certificates were issued to 378 newly qualified Law Society solicitors in 2024, down 9% from 416 in 2023.

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

13. A consistent trend identified once again in the year under review is that more than one in five solicitors work in-house in the private sector. The total number of solicitors holding practising certificates and working in-house in 2024 was 2,827 (23% of the total 12,175 practising certificates).



14. In another trend highlighting the scale of provision of legal services by corporate law firms, more than one in five (23%) of practising solicitors in 2024 worked with a total of 15 large corporate law firms which accounted for a total of 2,791 practising certificates held.

Dip in number of new barrister students

15. A total of 120 students started the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law (BL) degree course in 2024, down 8% from 131 in 2023. The BL degree intake for 2024 consisted of 50 students (42%) on the full-time one year course and 70 (58%) students on the two year modular or part-time course. The part-time course was introduced in 2008 and each year since 2017, with the exception of 2020, part-time students have outnumbered full-time students, highlighting the importance of flexible training routes into the barrister profession.

Decrease in number of barristers called to the Bar

16. A total of 136 barristers were admitted to the BL degree and called to the Bar by the Chief Justice in 2024, allowing them to exercise full rights of audience before all courts. This is down 27 (17%) from 163 in 2023. Nine in ten (90%) of barristers called to the Bar in 2024 were newly qualified King's Inns barristers. The remaining 10% were barristers who qualified in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Increase in number of new barrister pupils

17. Newly admitted barristers intending to practise as members of the Law Library must undertake a mandatory 12-month period of unpaid supervised practice, called pupillage, with an established barrister (a master). A total of 82 barristers began their pupillage at the start of the legal year in October 2024, up 12% from 72 in 2023.

Small increase in barristers on Roll

18. The Roll of Practising Barristers is a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State. It is maintained and routinely updated by the LSRA.
19. The number of barristers on the Roll at the end of 2024 was 3,071, up just 1% from 2023. Of these, 2,134 (69%) were members of the Law Library and 937 (31%) were not members of the Law Library.

Diversity trends in trainee solicitors and barrister students in 2024

20. Two thirds (66%) of new solicitor trainees in 2024 were women, with 34% men. The vast majority (91%) of new solicitor trainees were aged 30 or under. Eight in ten (83%) of new solicitor trainees had a law degree, while 16% had a degree in another discipline and 1% had no degree.



21. More than half (57%) of new barrister students in 2024 were women and (43%) were men. More than half of new barristers students were aged 30 and under (54%). Two thirds of students (62%) had approved King's Inns qualifications, while 38% had completed the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies, which is the route by which non-law graduates can enter barrister training.

Incorporating *Breaking Down Barriers*

22. This report now incorporates additional information arising from the LSRA's ongoing *Breaking Down Barriers* project which seeks to address economic and other barriers facing aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers. The professional bodies have provided details of their flexible routes to professional training and also their access initiatives at second and third level which aim to increase the diversity of the legal professions.

New business model for legal services providers

23. In September 2024 the LSRA introduced the regulatory framework for legal partnerships as an alternative business structure for legal services providers. This innovation means that for the first time, solicitors may form partnerships with barristers, and barristers may form partnerships with other barristers, to deliver legal services to consumers.
24. Prior to the introduction of legal partnerships, only solicitors were permitted to form partnerships with other solicitors. It is envisaged that the introduction of legal partnerships will allow for greater flexibility and diversity of services delivered. By the end of 2024, the first solicitor-barrister legal partnership in Ireland had been established.

Demand and cost of legal 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.
26. The Evelyn Partners *Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024* highlighted a divergence in the legal sector between larger and smaller firms; almost all Top 20 firms reported increased profits within the previous 12 months whereas only half of the smaller firms surveyed reported increased profits and nearly one in five signalled a decline in their profitability. It also found that for Top 20 firms attracting and retaining staff is a key challenge, with the firms responding to this challenge by increasing pay and reward packages and at the same time increasing their fees.



27. In the year under review, recruitment and retention challenges were echoed elsewhere, with the Legal Aid Board reporting that it was struggling to recruit solicitors in a highly competitive job market amidst an increased demand for its services, in particular in the area of international protection.
28. The Authority appreciates the submissions it received for this year's report. It notes concerns raised in a submission from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions of the decreasing numbers of solicitors practising outside of Dublin and the other main cities, particularly on the Western seaboard.
29. The Bar of Ireland in its submission noted that an increasing number of barristers are withdrawing from providing services to agencies of the State in certain areas of civil work that is legally aided, while at the same time demands for their services are increasing. It attributed this situation to the Government's failure to address FEMPI-era fee cuts.
30. In relation to the cost of legal services, several national and international bodies raised concerns about high legal costs in Ireland, particularly litigation costs, and the lack of transparency around them. The *Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024* reported that 92% of the Top 20 Firms and 69% of other firms had increased their fees over the previous 12 months.

The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise

31. The Authority's work in the area of legal practitioner education and training reform continued in 2024, with a focus on implementation of reforms set out in the Authority's 2020 report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*. The Authority has set up a dedicated Education and Training Committee to deliver these reforms.
32. The year under review also saw the Authority submit its final *Breaking Down Barriers* reports to the Minister for Justice with 32 recommendations for reforms to tackle economic and other barriers facing aspiring and early career legal professionals and to increase diversity in the legal professions.
33. The LSRA also developed a *Breaking Down Barriers* Implementation Plan and began its work with the professional bodies and other key stakeholders to progress its recommendations in the coming years.
34. The Authority notes concerns raised in the submission from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions that the legal services market was beginning to be impacted by a decreasing number of solicitors graduating from the Law Society's Professional Practice Course having studied criminal litigation. Since 2022, the course's criminal litigation module is provided as an elective rather than a compulsory subject.



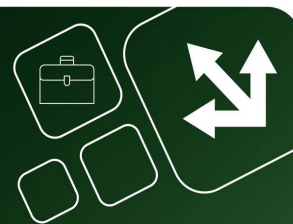
35. According to the Law Society, its Education Committee is considering the re-introduction of some compulsory taught elements of criminal litigation into its core PPC.

Conclusion and looking ahead

36. The year under review saw a slight downturn in numbers enrolling in professional training for solicitors and barristers and the numbers of new entrants to both professions. However, overall there was an increase in the total number of solicitors with practising certificates and a slight increase in the number of barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers at the end of 2024.
37. The part-time PPC Hybrid and modular BL degree course continue to grow in popularity and are facilitating more flexible pathways to the professions for people from more diverse backgrounds.
38. The concentration of legal practitioners in Dublin remains a feature of the legal services market, and reports of recruitment and retention challenges in the solicitors' profession in both the public and private sectors continue. Top 20 firms have responded to competitive challenges with staff pay rises and allied increases in their client fees.
39. The year under review saw significant innovation with the introduction of legal partnerships, a new business model which allows barristers and a solicitors to form partnerships in order to provide legal services together. 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.
40. Looking ahead, the LSRA will continue to focus on implementing the reforms set out in the Authority's 2020 report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training* and the LSRA's 32 recommendations from its *Breaking Down Barriers* project aimed at tackling economic and other barriers facing aspirant and early career solicitors and barristers.
41. Building on progress to date, the Authority will continue to engage with the Department of Justice on its commitments to reform professional legal education, introduce independent oversight for the first time, and remove barriers to becoming a solicitor or barrister.
42. 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.



Admissions to the Solicitor Profession 2024



Trainee Solicitors

542 = 442 + 100

Number of new
trainee solicitors
(3% decrease)

Full-time
PPC trainees

PPC Hybrid
trainees

66%
Female

91%
Aged 30
or under

83%
Law
degree

16%
Non law
degree

1%
No
degree

Training Contracts

83%

Of training
contracts
in Dublin

95% with
law firm
3% in-house

2% State
body

63%

Of training
contracts with Top
20 large law firms

Roll of Solicitors

590 = 56%

Number of
solicitors
admitted to Roll

Of Law Society
newly qualified
solicitors

35%

Of solicitors from
England, Wales &
Northern Ireland

Practising Certificates

378

First time practising
certificate holders
(9% decrease)

12,175

Number of solicitors with
practising certificates
(3% increase)

23%

Working in-house



Admissions to the Barrister Profession 2024



Student Barristers

120 = 70 + 50

Number of new barrister students
(8% decrease)

Modular students

Full-time students

57%
Female

54%
Aged 30
or under

62%
Approved
Qualification

38%
King's Inns
Diploma

Called to Bar

136 = 90% 10%

Number of barristers
called to the Bar
(17% decrease)

King's Inns BL
Degree holders

England, Wales & NI
qualified lawyers

Pupillage

82 Number of new
pupil barristers
(12% increase)

52%
Male

59%
Aged 30 or under

Roll of Practising Barristers

3,071 = 69% 10%

Number of practising
barristers on the Roll
(1% increase)

Law Library
members

Working in full-time
service of the State



Section 1: Introduction

Origin and purpose of report

- 1.1 The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) is pleased to present to the Minister for Justice its sixth annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions.
- 1.2 *Pathways to the Professions 2024: Annual Report on the Admission Policies of the Legal Professions*, has been prepared under section 33 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 as amended (the Act).
- 1.3 The Authority was established on 1 October 2016 and section 33 of the Act was commenced on 7 October 2019.
- 1.4 Section 33(1) mandates the Authority to prepare and submit to the Minister — not later than four months after the end of the financial year i.e. no later than 30 April each year — an annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions. The report must contain 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.*
- 1.5 The Authority broadly interprets its responsibilities under section 33 to encompass information in this report regarding not just individuals admitted to professional practice each year, but also those who began professional training in the year under review. This approach recognises the importance of a pipeline of newly qualifying lawyers whose training adequately equips them for entry into professional practice.
- 1.6 In preparing this report, the Authority is mindful not only of its obligations under section 33 of the Act, but also of its other statutory commitments. 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*

- 1.7 The Authority also views its annual reporting obligation in the context of its function under section 13(2)(a) of the Act to keep under review and make recommendations to the Minister in respect of admission requirements and policies relating to the solicitor and barrister professions.

Statutory consultation

- 1.8 For the purpose of preparing this annual report under section 33(1) of the Act, and in accordance with section 33(2), the Authority shall consult with the professional bodies under the Act, the Law Society of Ireland (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.
- 1.9 The executive of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA) wrote to the three professional bodies, on 19 December 2024, requesting information under section 33(3), including statistical data, to assist the Authority in preparing this report.
- 1.10 This report also 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.
- 1.11 On 13 December 2024, the LSRA executive issued an invitation by email to 330 recipients on its public consultations list, calling for written submissions. The LSRA also published a consultation notice on its website. Written responses were requested by 14 February 2025. The consultation notice is provided in Annex A.
- 1.12 The call for written submissions provided for a consultation period of eight weeks, which falls within the government's suggested timescales for public consultations.²

¹ Section 13(5) of the Act.

² Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (November 2016) Public Consultation Principles and Guidance. Available [here](#).



- 1.13 The Authority received a total of nine written submissions. A list of respondents is set out in Annex B. The written submissions will be published in due course on the LSRA's website.

Expansion of the scope of report

- 1.14 The Authority has expanded the scope of this annual report to include additional information arising from its ongoing work to both map and address entry and early career barriers to the legal professions. This work led to the publication in 2024 of the LSRA's *Breaking Down Barriers* reports which included a total of 32 recommendations for reforms to tackle economic and other barriers facing aspiring and early career legal professionals and to increase diversity in the legal professions.
- 1.15 The Authority considers that its annual *Pathways to the Professions* reports are an appropriate vehicle for it to publish information and data provided by the training providers.
- 1.16 As part of the annual reporting the LSRA will now request additional information from the professional bodies each year.
- 1.17 Therefore for the first year since this report has been published, the LSRA requested the professional bodies provide details on:
- Their initiatives to increase flexible routes for legal practitioner training and the impact of these.
 - Their access initiatives at second and third level and their plans to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives.
- 1.18 This information is reported in section 4 of this report.

Data used in this report

- 1.19 The data on solicitor admissions in this report was provided by the Law Society of Ireland which has educational, representative and regulatory functions in respect of the solicitor profession in Ireland.
- 1.20 The data on barrister admissions was supplied by the King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland. The King's Inns is Ireland's "Inn of Court" training and admitting legal professionals who wish to be awarded the degree of Barrister-at-Law necessary to be called to the Bar by the Chief Justice of Ireland.



- 1.21 The Bar of Ireland is the representative body for barristers at the independent referral bar, which consists of members of the Law Library. Barristers who wish to join the Law Library must undertake a 12-month period of unpaid pupillage.
- 1.22 The LSRA administers the Roll of Practising Barristers (the Roll). 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. Information on the number of practising barristers is provided from the Roll by the LSRA.



Section 2: Statistics on Solicitor Admissions for 2024

Solicitor trainee admissions

- 2.1 Vocational training for solicitors in Ireland is provided exclusively by the Law Society's Professional Practice Course (PPC). The PPC was traditionally delivered in two separate blocks of taught instruction, but since 2022 it is taught in a single block.
- 2.2 The PPC is provided on a full-time basis and, since 2019, also as a part-time course known as the PPC Hybrid. The full-time course lasts eight months, with a core curriculum running from September to April. The PPC Hybrid is a 12-month course, delivered from January to December. All PPC trainees must also complete four Advanced Electives.
- 2.3 The entrance exam to the PPC is the Law Society's Final Examination—First Part (FE-1) which consists of a total of eight exams held twice a year, with sittings in March and October. A candidate may sit one or more exam paper in each sitting.
- 2.4 Since 2020, the Law Society has allowed third level students to sit the FE-1 papers while undertaking their degree course.³ Prior to this change, candidates could only sit the FE-1 after they had received their degree. Candidates who do not meet the eligibility requirements to sit the FE-1 exams, including candidates who do not have a law degree, must first pass a Preliminary Examination.⁴ The Preliminary Examination tests core English language skills, understanding of Irish politics and government and general knowledge.
- 2.5 In addition to passing the FE-1, aspiring solicitors must secure a 24-month training contract with an eligible training solicitor before they can enrol on the PPC. Trainees are permitted to undertake their in-office training with a training solicitor working in a law firm, as a sole practitioner, in the public or private sectors, or in the full-time service of the State.⁵
- 2.6 The in-office training period starts after trainees have successfully completed their final PPC exams. After successfully completing the in-office training, newly qualified solicitors can then apply to the Law Society for admission to the Roll of Solicitors.

³ The Solicitors Acts 1954 to 2011 (Apprenticeship and Education) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 came into effect on 1 January 2020. Applies to students who have completed the first year of a course leading to a qualification at level 7 or higher on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications, or a degree awarded by a university in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

⁴ Law Society of Ireland (2025) Preliminary Examination [website]. Available [here](#). Law clerks and legal executives with at least five years' experience can apply to the Law Society's Education Committee for an exemption from the Preliminary Examination. Candidates who hold a degree awarded by a university in another country if the degree is equivalent to a Level 7 or higher award on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications may also apply for an exemption. Law Society of Ireland (2025) *Final Examination—First Part (FE-1)*. (Accessed on 9 April 2025). Available [here](#).

⁵ Law Society of Ireland (2025) *Training Contract*. (Accessed on 9 April 2025). Available [here](#).



Trends in solicitor trainee course admissions

- 2.7 The following statistical trends are apparent in the numbers sitting the PPC entrance exam and enrolling on the course in 2024.

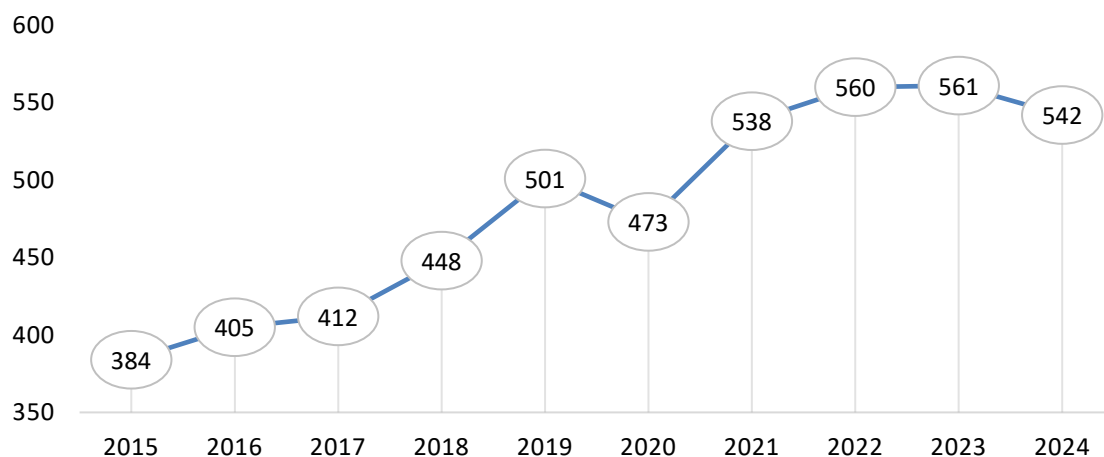
Increase in numbers sitting PPC entrance exams (FE-1)

- 2.8 A total of 3,740 candidates sat FE-1 exams in 2024, up 566 (18%) from 3,174 candidates in 2023. This included 497 undergraduates, up from 413 in 2023.
- 2.9 A total of seven candidates sat the Law Society's Preliminary Examination in 2024, down from 13 candidates in 2023.

New solicitor trainee intake decreases for first time in four years

- 2.10 A total of 542 trainee solicitors enrolled on the PPC in 2024. As can be seen in the graph below, this is a slight decrease from the generally upward trend in solicitor trainees' intake in recent years.

New Solicitor Trainees 2015–2024



Source: Law Society of Ireland

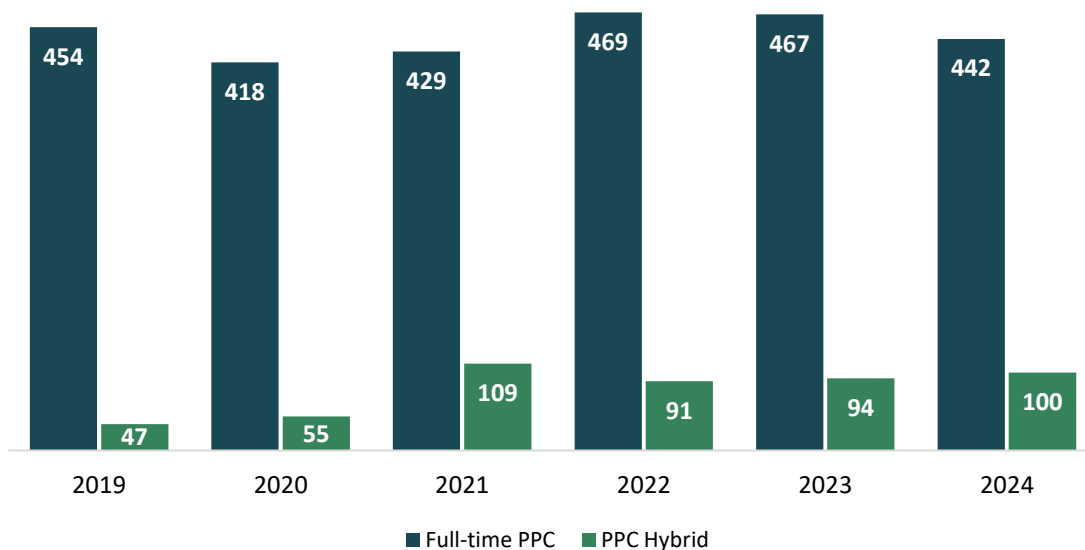
Increase in part-time solicitor trainees to almost one in five of total intake

- 2.11 The total PPC intake for 2024 was comprised of 442 full-time trainees and 100 trainees on the part-time PPC Hybrid. Part-time trainees accounted for almost one in five (18%) of the total trainee intake for 2024, a slight increase on 2023 when they accounted for 17% of the total intake of 561 trainees.



2.12 The increase in the number of trainee solicitors choosing to enrol in the PPC Hybrid since its introduction in 2019, demonstrates that this flexible training option has addressed a previously unmet demand within the solicitor profession. The proportion of solicitor trainees completing their training on a part-time basis has increased from approximately one in ten in 2019, to almost two in ten in 2024.

New Solicitor Trainees: Full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid 2019–2024



Source: Law Society of Ireland

Diversity profile of new solicitor trainees

2.13 This section contains diversity data for all solicitor trainees who began their training in 2024. It shows separate data for trainees on the full-time PPC and the part-time PPC Hybrid. It also includes information about where trainees have secured their 24-month training contracts.

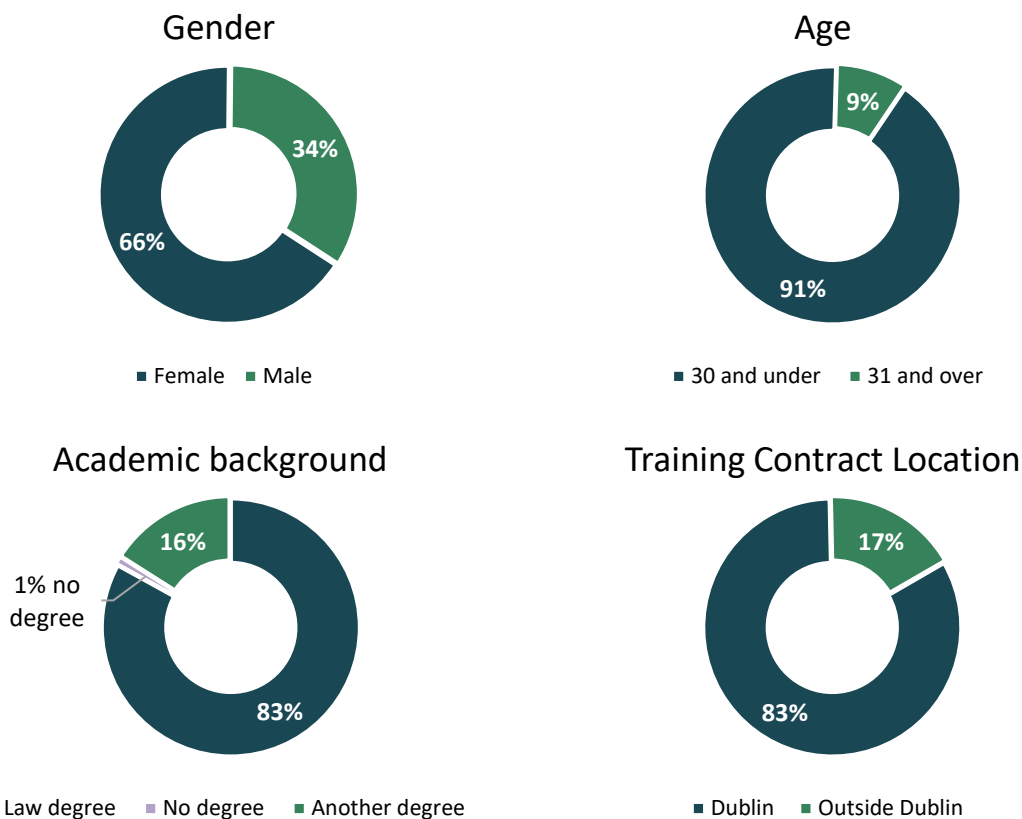
2.14 Of the 542 new solicitor trainees in 2024:

- **Gender:** 66% of trainees identified as female and 34% identified as male. This compares to 57% female trainees and 43% male in 2023.
- **Age:** Similar to previous years, 91% of trainees were aged 30 and under and 9% were 31 and over.
- **Academic background:** The majority (83%) of new trainees in 2024 had a law degree, down from 89% in 2023. A further 16% had another (non-law) degree, up from 10% in 2023. Just 1% of new trainees had no degree, which is the same proportion as in 2023.



- **Training contracts:** The majority of new solicitor trainees secured training contracts in county Dublin (83%) with the remaining 17% obtaining training contracts outside of Dublin, which is the same proportion as in 2023.

542 New Solicitor Trainees



Source: Law Society of Ireland

Diversity trends in the full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid

2.15 In comparing full-time PPC trainees with their part-time counterparts, the following trends are apparent:

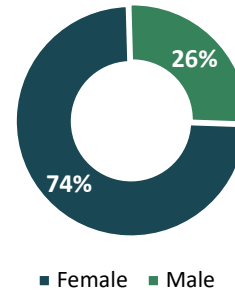
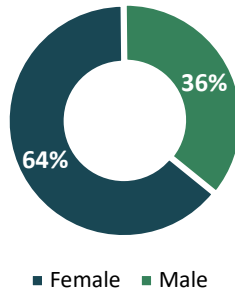
- **Gender:** A higher proportion of women enrolled on the part-time course (74%) compared to the full-time course (64%).
- **Age:** A significantly higher proportion of part-time trainees were aged 31 and over (32%) compared to their full-time counterparts (4%).
- **Academic background:** Almost one in four part-time trainees (23%) held degrees other than in law compared to one in seven (14%) on the full-time course. A total of 5% of part-time trainees had no degree, compared to less than 1% of their full-time counterparts.



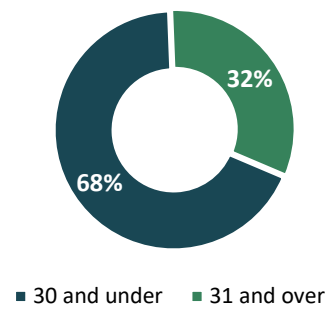
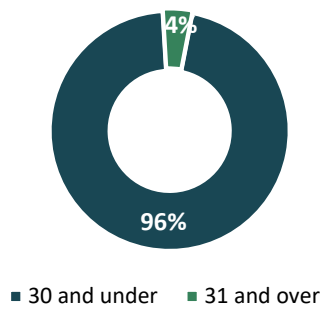
442 Full-time PPC Trainees

100 PPC Hybrid Trainees

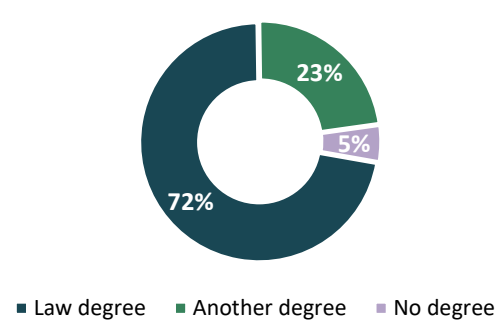
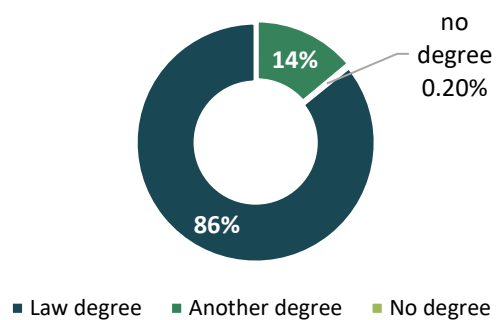
Gender



Age



Academic background



Source: Law Society of Ireland



Trends in distribution of in-office training contracts

- 2.16 PPC applicants must secure a training contract with a training solicitor working either in a law firm, as a sole practitioner, in the public or private sector or in the full-time services of the State.⁶
- 2.17 The following trends are apparent in the distribution and type of training contracts secured by the 2024 PPC intake of new solicitor trainees.

Majority of trainees with large law firms

- 2.18 The main training contract sponsors in 2024 remained large law firms. As Table 2.1 illustrates, 344 of the 542 new solicitor trainees in 2024 (63%) secured a training contract with a total of 20 law firms. All 344 solicitor trainees who secured these training contracts were on the full-time PPC. Fourteen of these firms were also in the 20 largest law firms in 2024 based on the number of employee solicitors holding practising certificates in the year (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.1 Top 20 in-office training contract providers for PPC trainee intake in 2024

| Ranking | Law firm | Number of trainees |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Matheson LLP | 47 |
| 2 | McCann FitzGerald LLP | 46 |
| 3 | Arthur Cox LLP | 45 |
| 4 | A & L Goodbody LLP | 41 |
| 5 | William Fry LLP | 24 |
| 6 | Mason Hayes & Curran LLP | 20 |
| 7 | Eversheds Sutherland LLP | 19 |
| 8 | Byrne Wallace Shields LLP | 16 |
| 9 | Ronan Daly Jermyn LLP | 13 |
| 10 | Maples & Calder LLP | 9 |
| 11 | Hayes Solicitors LLP | 9 |
| 12 | DLA Piper LLP | 9 |
| 13 | Dillon Eustace LLP | 7 |
| 14 | Addleshaw Goddard LLP | 7 |
| 15 | Beauchamps LLP | 6 |
| 16 | AMOSS LLP | 6 |
| 17 | Ogier (Ireland) LLP | 6 |
| 18 | Fieldfisher LLP | 5 |
| 19 | Flynn O'Driscoll LLP | 5 |
| 20 | Pinsent Masons LLP | 4 |
| Total | | 344 |

Source: Law Society of Ireland

⁶ Law Society of Ireland (2025) *Training Contract*. (Accessed on 9 April 2025). Available [here](#).



Small number of trainees training in-house

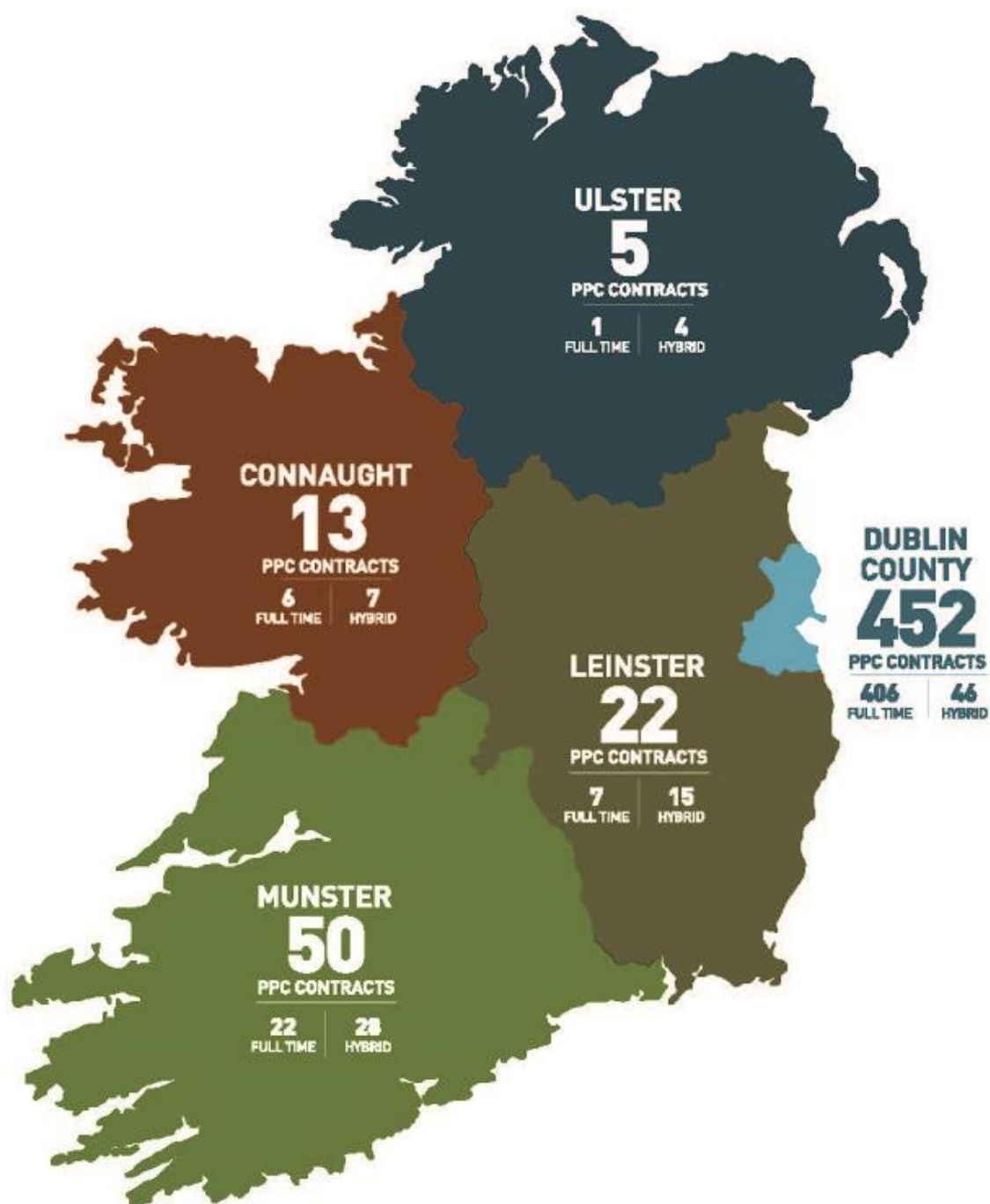
- 2.19 Only 26 new solicitor trainees in 2024 (5%) secured a training contract either in-house with a private company (3%) or with a State body (2%). The State bodies that took on trainee solicitors in 2024 are: the Chief State Solicitor's Office, An Garda Síochána, Dublin City Council, the Electricity Supply Board and the Legal Aid Board.

Vast majority of solicitor training sponsors in Dublin

- 2.20 As in previous years, the vast majority of new solicitor trainees (83%) secured their training contracts in Dublin, reflecting the capital's dominance in the legal services market. The remaining 17% secured their training contracts outside of Dublin.
- 2.21 The geographical distribution of training contracts is quite different for the 442 full-time and the 100 part-time trainees. A total of 92% of the full-time trainees secured training contracts in Dublin, compared to 46% of the part-time trainees.
- 2.22 More than half of the part-time trainees (54%) secured training contracts outside of Dublin, compared to only 8% of their full-time counterparts.
- 2.23 The map below provides a full breakdown of training contract locations between full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid trainees at provincial level in 2024.



Training contract locations 2024



Source: Law Society of Ireland



Trends in solicitor admissions

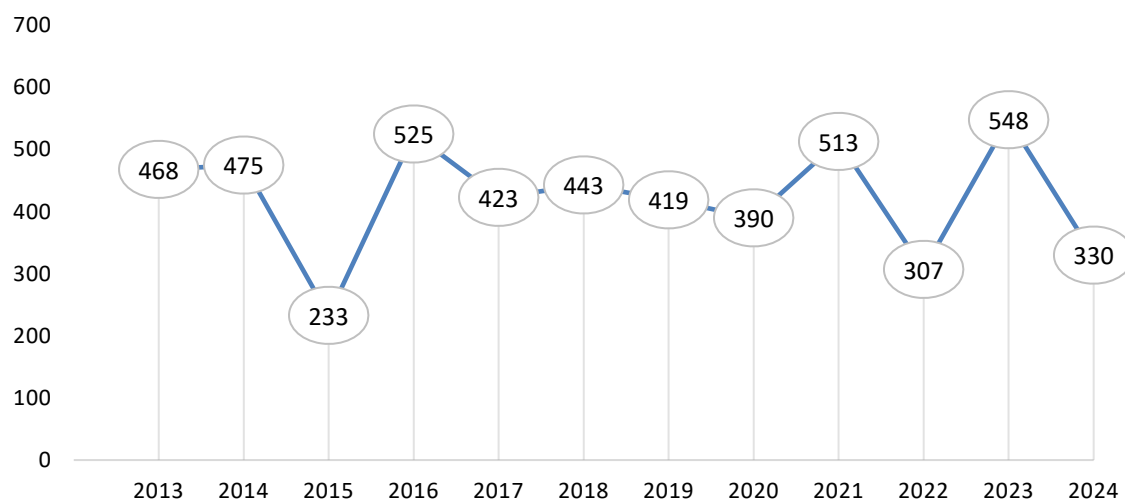
2.24 The following statistical trends are apparent in the numbers of persons admitted to practise as solicitors in 2024.

Decrease in new solicitors admitted to Roll of Solicitors

2.25 A total of 590 new solicitors were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2024. This is a decrease of 182 (24%) from the 2023 total of 772. Of these:

- 330 were newly qualified Law Society solicitors, accounting for 56% of the admissions to the Roll, down from 548 in 2023.⁷
- 174 were solicitors from England and Wales, accounting for 29% of the total, up from 20% in 2023. 35 solicitors (6%) were from Northern Ireland.
- The remaining 9% of new entrants to the Roll were lawyers from other common law jurisdictions and EU states as well as transferring barristers.

Law Society Qualified Solicitors Admitted to the Roll of Solicitors 2015–2024



Source: Law Society of Ireland

⁷ The Law Society noted that the number of newly qualified Law Society solicitors admitted to the Roll in 2024 is lower due to a restructuring of the PPC which was rolled out in 2023, and that there will be a higher intake onto the Roll in 2025.



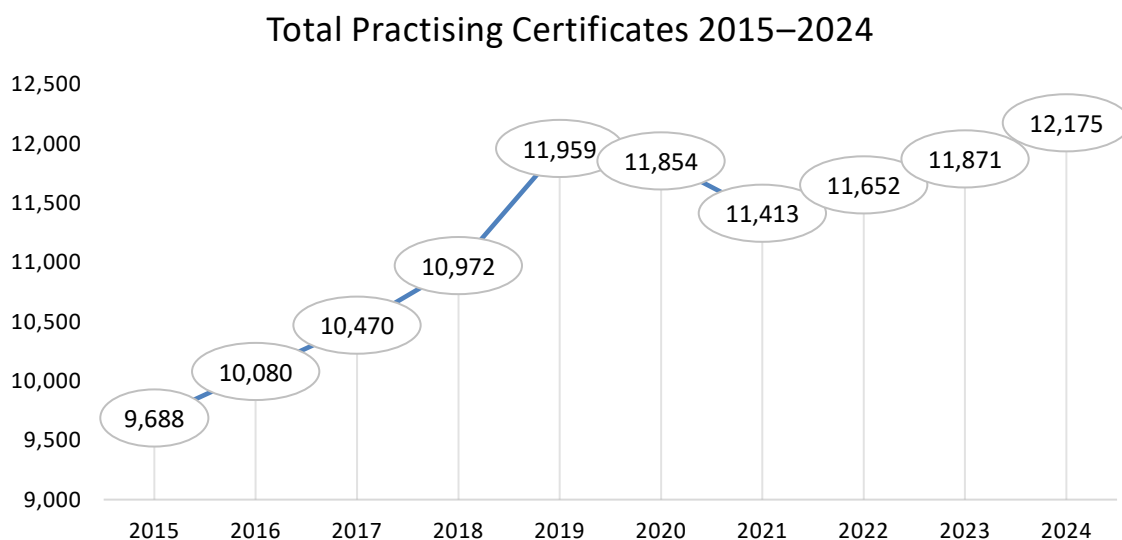
- 2.26 The total number of solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors in 2024 was 24,714, up from 24,161 in 2023. A total of four solicitors applied to be voluntarily removed from the Roll in 2024.
- 2.27 Admission to the Roll of Solicitors does not legally entitle a solicitor to provide legal services in Ireland, although it is a prerequisite for applying to the Law Society for an annual practising certificate to do so.

Trends in annual certification – practising certificates

- 2.28 Practising solicitors are legally required to hold a practising certificate, which must be renewed on an annual basis. They must also have appropriate professional indemnity insurance. 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.⁸

Increase in total number of practising certificates

- 2.29 The number of solicitors with practising certificates at the end of 2024, at 12,175, the highest that it has been in 10 years. It is an increase of 304 (3%) from 2023, an indication of a buoyant market for practising solicitors.



Source: Law Society of Ireland

⁸ Law Society of Ireland (2020) *Practising certificates and solicitors outside the jurisdiction* (Accessed on 3 April 2025). Available [here](#).



Decrease in first-time practising certificate holders

2.30 In 2024 there were 378 practising certificates issued to Law Society newly qualified solicitors. This is down 9% from 416 in 2023.

More than one in four solicitors worked with twenty employers

2.31 As Table 2.2 shows, a total of 3,460 solicitors with practising certificates in 2024 (28%) were employed by a total of 20 employers, comprising of large law firms and public sector bodies and semi-State bodies.

2.32 The top five law firms for 2024 in terms of numbers of solicitors holding practising certificates remained the same as in 2023. Practising certificates were also issued in significant numbers for solicitors working in the Chief State Solicitor's Office, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Legal Aid Board, the Central Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Banks plc. Taken together, these state and semi-state bodies employed a total of 669 solicitors in the year.

Table 2.2 Top 20 employers by practising certificate numbers⁹

| Ranking | Firm/ Employer | Practising Certificates |
|--------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Matheson LLP | 371 |
| 2 | A & L Goodbody LLP | 371 |
| 3 | Arthur Cox LLP | 333 |
| 4 | Mason Hayes & Curran LLP | 313 |
| 5 | McCann FitzGerald LLP | 290 |
| 6 | William Fry LLP | 216 |
| 7 | Chief State Solicitor's Office | 199 |
| 8 | Byrne Wallace Shields LLP | 153 |
| 9 | Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | 132 |
| 10 | Legal Aid Board | 121 |
| 11 | Central Bank of Ireland | 119 |
| 12 | Eversheds Sutherland LLP | 107 |
| 13 | Maples & Calder LLP | 107 |
| 14 | Ronan Daly Jermyn LLP | 105 |
| 15 | Beauchamps LLP | 98 |
| 16 | Allied Irish Banks plc | 98 |
| 17 | Phillip Lee LLP | 84 |
| 18 | Dillon Eustace LLP | 82 |
| 19 | Hayes Solicitors LLP | 81 |
| 20 | Addleshaw Goddard LLP | 80 |
| Total | | 3,460 |

Source: Law Society of Ireland

⁹ Total practising certificates held as at 31 December 2024.



Majority of practising solicitors are Dublin based

- 2.33 Out of the 12,175 practising certificates held in 2024, 8177 were held by solicitors operating in Dublin (67%), and the remaining 3,998 practising certificates were held by solicitors working in the rest of Ireland.

In-house solicitors one in five of practising certificate holders

- 2.34 Both commercial and public sector organisations employ solicitors as part of their internal legal functions to support their business needs. In-house and public sector solicitors are required to hold a practising certificate regardless of the areas of law in which they practise.¹⁰ However, solicitors in the full-time service of the State and solicitors employed full-time to provide conveyancing services for a non-solicitor employer are not required to hold practising certificates.¹¹
- 2.35 A total of 2,827 worked in-house with a private company in 2024, accounting for over one in five (23%) of all practising certificates. A further 508 solicitors on the Roll (4%) were classified by the Law Society as being in the full-time service of the State in 2024.

Practising certificates surrendered and suspended

- 2.36 A total of 85 practising certificates were surrendered during 2024 and two solicitors had their practising certificate suspended.

¹⁰ 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*. (Accessed on 3 April 2025). Available [here](#).

¹¹ Solicitors (Amendment) Act 1994, section 56(3).



Section 3: Statistics on Barrister Admissions for 2024

Barrister student admissions

- 3.1 The vocational training course for barristers in Ireland is the Barrister-at-Law (BL) degree which is provided by the King's Inns on both a one year full-time basis and as a two year modular or part-time course.
- 3.2 In order to enrol on the course, candidates must pass an entrance exam, which consists of five exam papers and is held in August every year.
- 3.3 To be eligible to sit the entrance exam, candidates must hold either a King's Inns approved law undergraduate or master's degree, or a Diploma in Legal Studies from the King's Inns.¹² The two year Diploma in Legal Studies is primarily a course for people who do not hold a law degree.
- 3.4 The academic year for the full-time BL course runs from October to June. According to the King's Inns, full-time work is not compatible with the full-time course workload, and part-time work would need to be chosen carefully around the timetable and other course commitments.
- 3.5 The two academic years for the part-time course run from October to June. It is taught on average every second weekend during the academic year. According to the King's Inns, students who undertake the part-time course can also maintain full-time work positions.

Trends in barrister student course admissions

- 3.6 The following statistical trends are apparent in the numbers sitting the BL degree course entrance exams and enrolling on the course in 2024.

Decrease in number of candidates sitting entrance exam

- 3.7 A total of 145 applicants sat the entrance exam for the BL degree course in 2024, down 8% from 158 in 2023. A total of 117 (81%) candidates passed the exam and 28 (19%) 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.

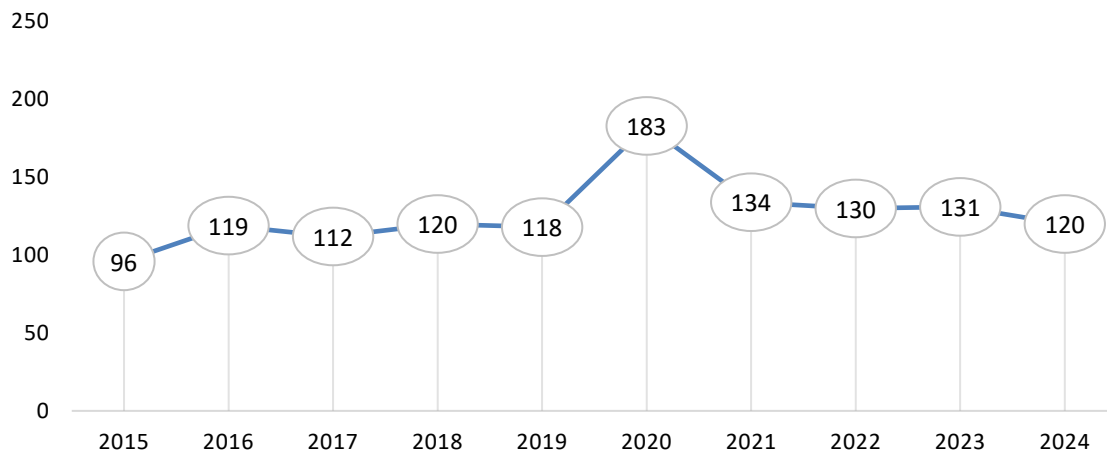
¹² Honorable Society of King's Inns (2024) Schedule of Law Degrees/Qualifications Approved by King's Inns for the purposes of eligibility to sit the Entrance Examination. Available [here](#).



Decrease in number of new barrister students

3.8 A total of 120 students started the BL degree course in 2024, down from 131 in 2023.

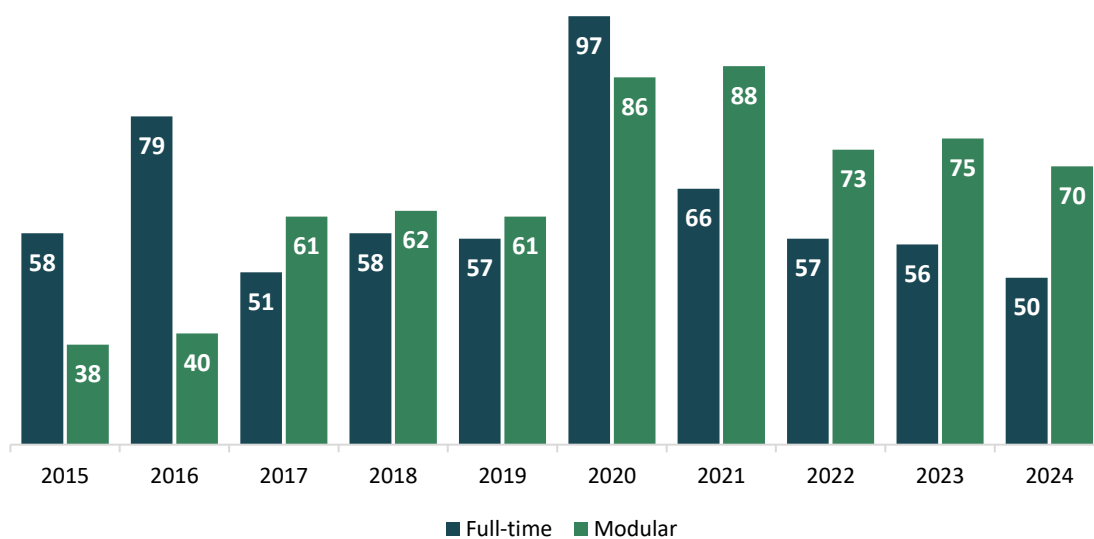
New Barrister Students 2015–2024



Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

3.9 The BL degree intake for 2024 consisted of 50 full-time students (42%) and 70 part-time students (58%).

New Barrister Students: Full-time and Modular 2015–2024



Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

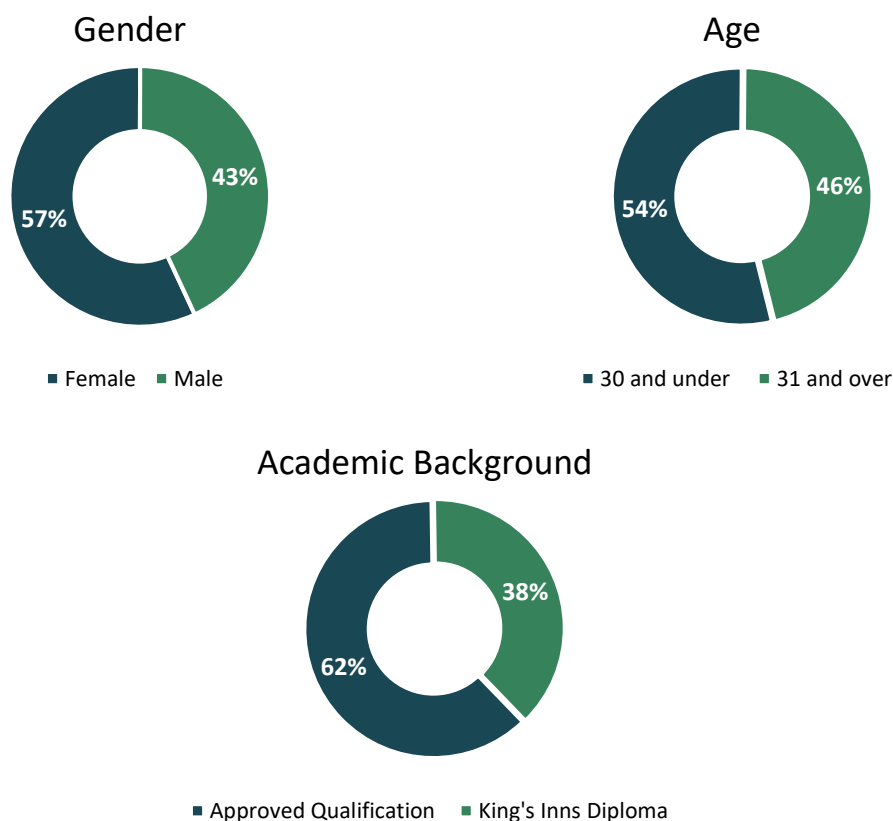


Diversity profile of new barrister students

3.10 This section contains demographic data for barristers who started the BL degree course in 2024. It also shows the data separately for full-time and part-time students. Of the 120 students who started the BL degree in 2024:

- **Gender:** 57% identified as female and 43% identified as male, the same as 2023.
- **Age:** 54% were aged 30 and under and 46% were aged 31 and over; in 2023, 50% were 30 and under and 50% were 31 and over.
- **Academic background:** 62% had an approved qualification and 38% had the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies (a legal qualification for non-law graduates that entitles them to sit the entrance exam for the BL degree course). This is an 8% increase in the number students with approved qualifications compared to 2023.

120 New Barrister Students



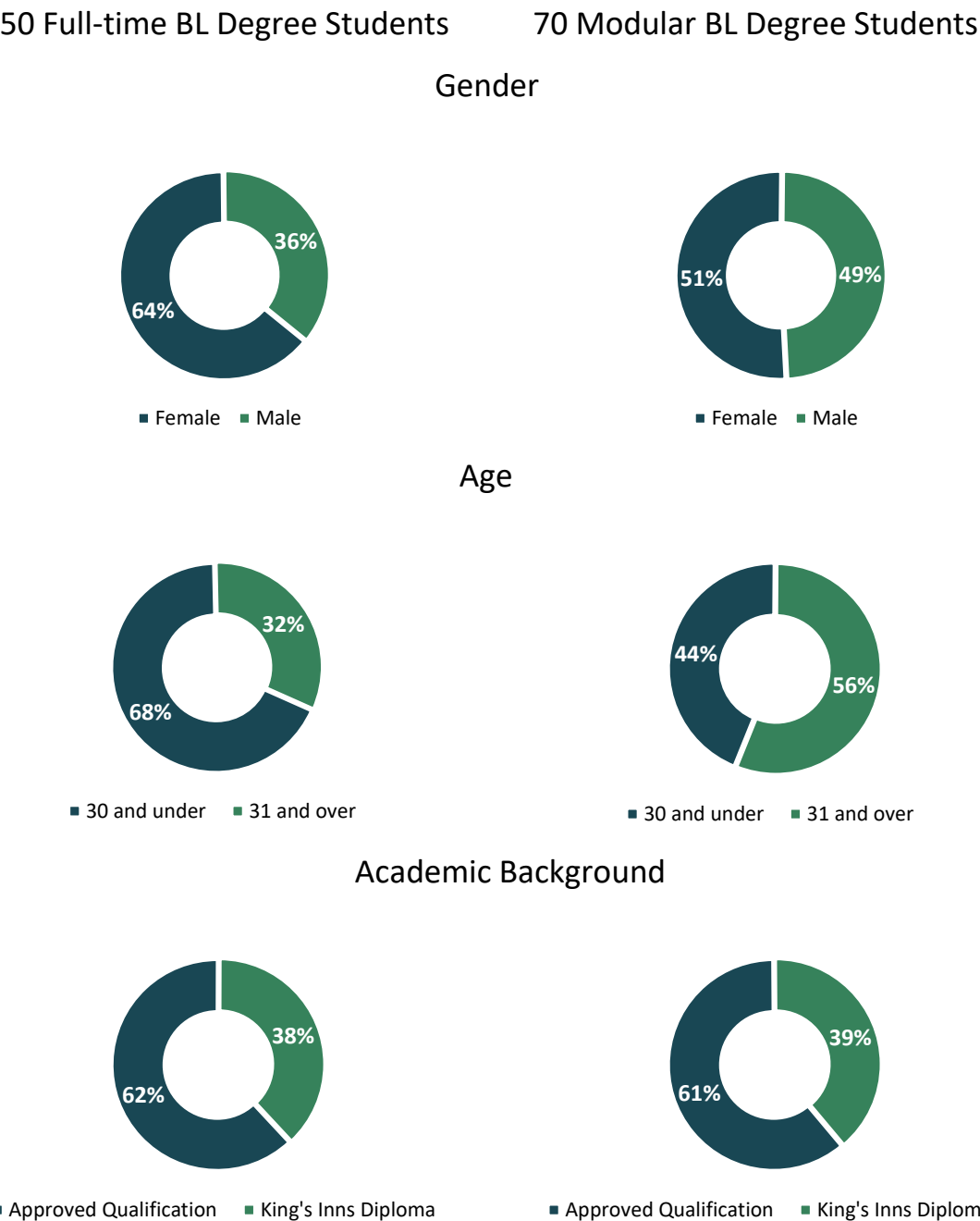
Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

Diversity trends in the full-time and part-time BL degree course

3.11 In comparing full-time and part-time students, the data shows that the majority of students on the full-time course were female (64%) and 30 years of age and under (68%). On the part-

time course, females and males are more equally represented (51% female and 49% male) and there are more people in the upper age categories (56% were aged 31 and over).

3.12 In relation to the route of admission to the BL degree course, a similar proportion of enrolees on the part-time course (39%) held the King’s Inns Diploma in Legal Studies as their full-time counterparts (38%).



Source: Honorable Society of King’s Inns



Trends in barrister admissions

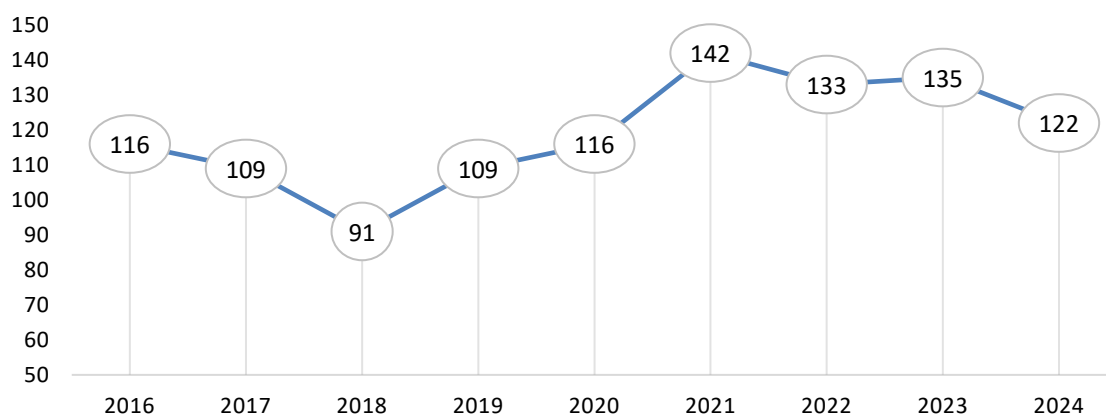
- 3.13 Those who wish to practise as a barrister in Ireland must first be “admitted” to the BL degree.¹³ Traditionally, the main route of admission to the barrister profession in Ireland is to complete the BL degree course at the King’s Inns.
- 3.14 There is also a route for solicitors, barristers from Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and qualified lawyers from other jurisdictions to transfer to the BL degree without having studied the course at the King’s Inns.¹⁴
- 3.15 Once admitted to the BL degree, barristers are entitled to be “called to the Bar” by the Chief Justice of Ireland, allowing them to exercise a full right of audience before all courts.
- 3.16 The following statistical trends are apparent in the numbers of persons admitted to practise as barristers in 2024.

Decrease in barrister admissions

- 3.17 A total of 136 persons were called to the Bar in 2024. This is down 27 (17%) from the total of 163 in 2023. Of these:

- 122 were graduates of the King’s Inns BL degree course.
- 14 were barristers from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

King's Inns Qualified Barristers Called to the Bar 2016–2024



Source: Honorable Society of King’s Inns

¹³ The Benchers of the Honorable Society of the King’s Inns, which includes all judges of the Superior Courts and a number of elected practising barristers, admit persons to the BL degree.

¹⁴ The Honorable Society of King’s Inns (2021) *Education Rules*, Edition of June 2021. Available [here](#).



Diversity profile of new barristers called to the Bar

3.18 Of the 122 barristers called to the Bar in 2024 having completed the King's Inns BL degree course, 65 (53%) were aged 30 and under and 57 (46%) were 31 and over.

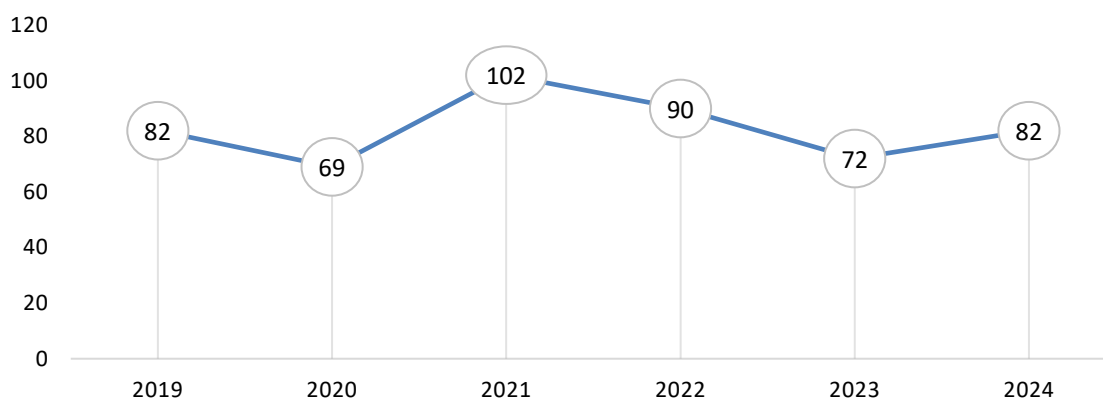
Increase in newly qualified barristers joining the Law Library – Pupillage

3.19 Once admitted to the BL degree and called to the Bar, barristers may begin practising either as self-employed practitioners or in employed positions. Traditionally, most newly admitted barristers proceed to practise as sole traders at the independent referral bar, the model under which members of the Law Library operate.

3.20 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”. According to The Bar of Ireland there were 165 masters on the Register of Masters for the 2024/2025 legal year.¹⁵

3.21 A total of 82 new Law Library members commenced pupillage at the start of the legal year in October 2024, up 14% from 72 in 2023.

New Barrister Pupils 2019–2024



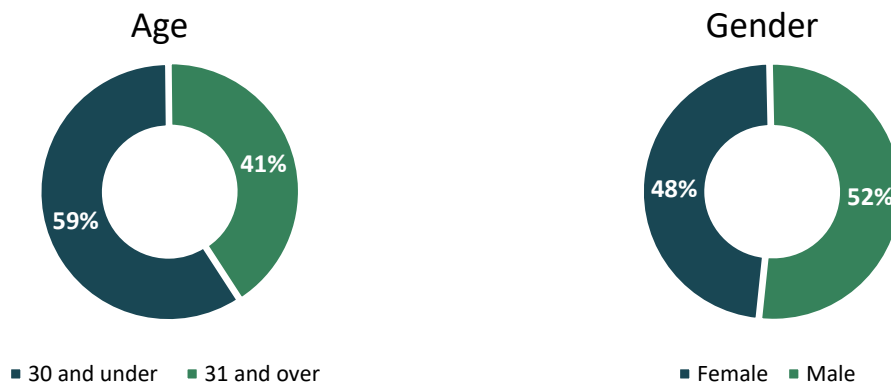
Source: Bar of Ireland

3.22 Of the 82 new pupils, 53 were called to the Bar in 2024 while 29 were called to the Bar between the years 2013–2023, but deferred commencing pupillage until 2024. Almost half (48%) of the pupils identify as female and 52% identify as male. In terms of age profile, 59% of the new pupils were aged 30 and under and 41% were aged 31 and over.

¹⁵ Not all of those on the Register for a given year will necessarily enter an arrangement with a pupil in that year.



82 New Barrister Pupils



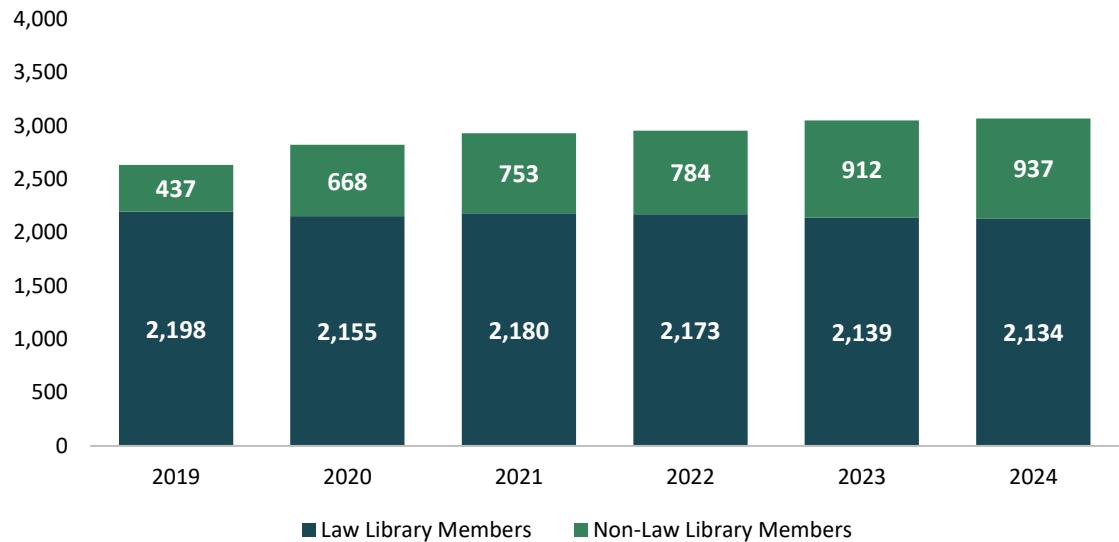
Source: Bar of Ireland

Slight increase in numbers on Roll of Practising Barristers

- 3.23 Since 2019, the LSRA has maintained the Roll of Practising Barristers (the Roll), a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State. Qualified barristers who intend to provide legal services in the State must apply to the LSRA to have their name entered on the Roll. It is an offence to provide legal services as a barrister without being entered on the Roll.
- 3.24 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.
- 3.25 The number of barristers on the Roll at the end of 2024 was 3,071, an increase of 20 (1%) from 3,051 in 2023. A total of 131 barristers were removed from the Roll in 2024.
- 3.26 Almost two thirds of barristers on the Roll at the end of 2024 (2,134, 69%) were members of the Law Library and 937 (31%) were not members of the Law Library. Of the 937 barristers practising outside of the Law Library, approximately one third (308) were recorded on the Roll as working in the full-time service of the State.



Barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers 2019—2024



Source: Legal Services Regulatory Authority

Number of barristers transferred to the solicitor profession

3.27 A total of 19 barristers transferred to solicitor profession and were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2024. No solicitors transferred to be barristers in 2024.



Section 4: Breaking Down Barriers

- 4.1 This is a new section of the LSRA's annual *Pathways to the Professions* report. It summarises the professional bodies' flexible routes to professional training and also their access initiatives at second and third level.
- 4.2 The inclusion of this information for the first time arises from the LSRA's ongoing *Breaking Down Barriers* project to address economic and other barriers facing aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers.
- 4.3 The LSRA sought additional information from the professional bodies this year in order to document existing initiatives that relate to the following two recommendations from its *Breaking Down Barriers* report published in September 2024:

Recommendation 1: Flexible training routes

The Law Society of Ireland and the Honorable Society of King's Inns should continue to increase flexible routes for legal practitioner training, reporting annually to the LSRA and the LPET Committee once established on their initiatives and their impact.

Recommendation 13: Access initiatives

The Law Society, the Honorable Society of King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland should evaluate the effectiveness and impact of their existing access initiatives at second and third level (DEIS school initiatives, transition year programmes, mentoring programmes, and other experiential education initiatives). Based on their findings, and the findings of the LSRA research, they should consider new initiatives (like targeted internships or mini-pupillages for DEIS/minority students to help them gain connections). These initiatives should be kept under review for efficacy.

- 4.4 From this year onwards, this annual report will record and report on further progress towards these two recommendations as well as others if relevant.

Initiatives to further increase flexible training routes

Flexible solicitor training routes

- 4.5 In response to a request for information on initiatives to further increase flexible routes for solicitor training and their impact, the Law Society provided information which is summarised below.



PPC Hybrid

- A 12-month part-time version of the Professional Practice Course introduced in 2019.
- The course is delivered through a mixture of online weekend sessions (with some pre-recorded e-lectures) and onsite instruction at Blackhall Place in Dublin. This permits trainees to stay in full-time employment during their studies if necessary.
- The course exams have a later daily start time and are spread out over a two-week period to allow trainees flexibility if travelling from outside of Dublin where the exams are held.
- The course has facilitated a cohort of trainees who are more demographically diverse than their full-time PPC counterparts in terms of their age, family and caring commitments, educational backgrounds and geographical locations.

Apprenticeship model of training

- The Law Society is examining a solicitor apprenticeship model as a new route to qualification for school leavers. The aim of this will be to encourage students from backgrounds of socio-economic disadvantage.

The Law Society Access Programme

4.6 The Access Programme, introduced in 2001, assists individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to train as solicitors. In 2024, combined funding of over €376,000 was provided to 203 individuals. The programme supports include:

- A waiver or reduction of PPC entrance exam fees valued at €1,000.
- Provision of overnight accommodation or a contribution of up to €55 per night for overnight accommodation during the eight PPC entrance exams, the Final Examination Part 1 (FE-1). Contributions towards exam-related childcare costs, support with loss of income while taking the examinations, and travel expenses to and from the examination venue in Dublin.
- The option of undertaking the FE-1 online.
- Access to the Law Society's library when preparing for the FE-1 examinations, with a book postage facility for candidates living outside of Dublin.
- Payment in full or part of PPC fees (€11,500) and/or fees for four Law Society Advanced Electives (€2,600).
- Payment of the fee for registration of indentures (€970).
- Maintenance funding to assist with expenses incurred attending the PPC.
- Payment of the admission fee to enter the Roll of Solicitor (€370).

4.7 Information on additional financial supports for trainee solicitors is available at Table 14 in Annex C.



New solicitor funded Professional Access Programme

- 4.8 All practising solicitors contributed €15 towards a new Law Society Professional Access Programme through their practising certificate fee for 2025. The role of the Professional Access Programme is to implement further initiatives which aim to reduce barriers for those seeking to enter, return to, or progress within the solicitors' profession. The objective of this initiative is to promote greater diversity in the legal profession, following the LSRA's *Breaking Down Barriers* reports.

Flexible barrister training routes

- 4.9 In response to a request for information on initiatives to further increase flexible routes for barrister training and their impact, the King's Inns provided information which is summarised below:

The Diploma in Legal Studies

- A two year part-time course leading to a qualification which allows holders to sit the entrance examination for the King's Inns' Barrister-at-Law degree.
- The course is open to candidates with no third level education and graduates from disciplines other than law.
- The course is taught at evenings and weekends, allowing students to work full-time while studying if necessary.
- All lectures and many tutorials are delivered in person and live online, with pre-recorded lectures also available for candidates to view in their own time.
- Course materials and online resources are provided to students via a Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle).
- 33% of new entrants to the Diploma in 2024 were mature students.

The modular Barrister-at-Law Degree course

- The two-year part-time or modular version of the Barrister-at-Law degree, introduced in 2008, is primarily taught at weekends so that students can work full-time while studying if necessary.
 - Students have access to a higher number of live online classes than their full-time counterparts, with a limited number of pre-recorded lectures also available.
 - Each year since 2017, with the exception of 2020, students on the modular course outnumbered students on the full-time course.
 - A higher proportion of modular course students are aged over 30-years old compared to their full time counterparts.
- 4.10 Information on financial supports for barrister students and barrister pupils is available at Table 15 in Annex C.



Limitations of SUSI grant

- 4.11 The limitations of the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant scheme eligibility rules have been noted by both the Law Society and the King's Inns.
- 4.12 While candidates on their full-time professional training programmes can apply for a SUSI grant, those studying part-time are not eligible.
- 4.13 They noted that the PPC Hybrid and the modular BL degree are structured to facilitate students and trainees from more diverse backgrounds who may be working full-time or have other commitments. Limiting SUSI funding to students on full-time courses may be at odds with the goal of breaking down barriers to the profession.

Access initiatives at second and third level

Law Society access initiatives

- 4.14 In response to a request for information on existing access initiatives at second and third level the Law Society provided information which is summarised below.

At second-level

- Its annual **Street Law** initiative teaches Transition Year students at partnering Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme schools about law. Since 2013, 3,000 students have participated in the programme. A total of 40 volunteer trainee solicitors participate each year.
- **Mock Trials** are hosted annually with pupils from local primary and secondary schools. The purpose of the initiative is to give students a basic understanding of how the legal system works.
- In 2024 a new project, **Taskmasters**, was piloted in five local primary schools, four of which are DEIS schools. Trainee solicitors worked with the pupils on challenges designed with a basis of learning the law. The pupils took part in a Taskmaster regional final hosted by the Law Society, with winning participants competing in the final at the University of Warwick in England.
- The **Solicitors of the Future** is an annual weeklong programme for Transition Year students during the school mid-term break. Interactive workshops and mock trials are held onsite at the Law Society campus.
- A **Transition Year Law module** programme provides online access to presentations and lessons in a range of legal subjects for both teachers and students. Over 18,000



students have taken part in both the Solicitor of the Future and TY module programmes.

At third-level

- An annual **Becoming a Solicitor Symposium** delivers online video presentations, live panel discussions and Q&A sessions and explores the opportunity to join the solicitor profession. It includes information on flexible routes to becoming a solicitor and the financial supports available to students throughout the training process. As a follow up, students can book a one-to-one careers session to discuss opportunities available. Over 3,000 students have participated in this event.
- Online talks and career seminars in collaboration with universities, colleges and law schools across Ireland take place during the year.

King's Inns access initiatives

4.15 In response to a request for information on its existing access initiatives at second and third level the King's Inns provided information which is summarised below.

At second-level

- Events include tours and information sessions as part of the Bar of Ireland's annual Transition Year Programme and with other secondary school groups.

At third-level

- An annual **Open Day** for third level students and members of the public.
- An annual online event, **Be a law student for a day**, primarily aimed at adults who may be interested in undertaking the Diploma in Legal Studies.
- Presentations about King's Inns courses at events by university law schools and attendance at law career fairs at third level institutions around Ireland.

The Bar of Ireland's access initiatives

4.16 In response to a request for information on its existing access initiatives at second and third level the Bar of Ireland provided information which is summarised below.

At second-level

- A **Look into Law** Transition Year programme that includes two online Q&A events open to all schools where a panel of barristers answer students' questions about a career as a barrister.



- As part of this programme there is a four-day hybrid course available for 100 students which consists of two days of online taught components covering key aspects of the justice system and the barrister profession and two onsite days where students tour the Courts and King's Inns, shadow barristers and participate in a mock trials.¹⁶

At third-level

- A programme of activity across universities including attendance at approximately 8-10 law career fairs annually to promote the barrister profession.
- A two-week funded **internship programme**, launched in 2025, that provides interns with a 'behind the scenes' experience of life as an independent referral barrister. In nominating candidates for the internship, universities are asked to consider diversity factors in addition to academic and general interest in a career at the Bar.

¹⁶ 20% of the 100 places are for students from DEIS schools although the final number of participants from DEIS schools is approximately 30-40% as DEIS schools which have not been initially allocated a place are retained in the lottery for the remaining 80 places on the programme.



Section 5: Key Developments in 2024 and Stakeholder Views

5.1 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.”

5.2 In its previous five annual reports 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.

5.3 Previous reports have also highlighted limitations in the availability of statistical data on both demand and costs as there is no one source which explicitly captures this data. 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. Available data sources include annual surveys of the performances of law firms and labour market data, which are summarised below. 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.

5.4 For its statutory consultation under section 33(2) of the Act, the Authority invited respondents to provide their views under the following four 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 2024.
2. The costs of legal services in 2024 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.

5.5 This section provides an update on key developments in these areas in 2024. It also summarises respondents’ analysis and views under the four headings as set out above.



Demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors

Economic overview

- 5.6 The Irish domestic economy grew at a strong pace in 2024.¹⁷ Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, fell to its lowest level in more than three years in August 2024, at 1.7%, while average weekly earnings have risen in every sector of the economy over the last 10 years.¹⁸
- 5.7 Approximately 55,000 additional workers were employed in 2024 compared to 2023.¹⁹ The employment rate for people aged 15-64 years was at its highest rate in 26 years at 75% in Q3, with just under 2.8 million people in employment.²⁰
- 5.8 The SOLAS *National Skills Bulletin* for 2024 (which reports on data from 2023) recorded a 21% year on year increase in the number of people employed in the legal occupation group which combines solicitors, barristers, judges and related professionals.
- 5.9 According to SOLAS, there were 16,300 employed in these professions in 2023, up from 13,400 in 2022 and a return to 2020 levels. The annual average growth rate for this legal occupation group since 2018 has been 3.7%, and SOLAS has not flagged any shortages in recent years. A small number of employment permits for this occupation were mainly for roles such as legal counsel/solicitors across a range of sectors including ICT, financial and professional activities.²¹

¹⁷ McQuinn K., C. O'Toole, E. Kenny & D. O'Shea, ESRI (2024) *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, Winter 2024. Available [here](#).

¹⁸ Central Statistics Office (2024) *Ireland 2024: The Year in Numbers*. (Accessed on 22 April 2025). Available [here](#).

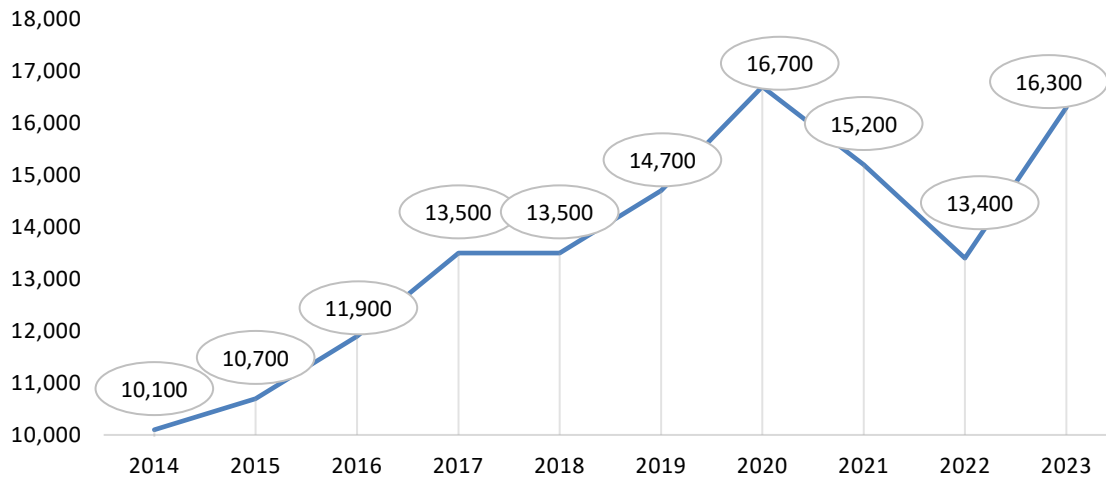
¹⁹ McQuinn K., C. O'Toole, E. Kenny & D. O'Shea, ESRI (2024) *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, Winter 2024. Available [here](#).

²⁰ Central Statistics Office (2024) *Ireland 2024: The Year in Numbers* (website). (Accessed on 22 April 2025). Available [here](#).

²¹ SOLAS (2024) *National Skills Bulletin: A Report by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council*, November 2024. Available [here](#).



Annual Average Employment — Legal Occupations 2014–2023



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

- 5.10 As noted elsewhere in this report, the number of practising solicitors at the end of 2024 was 12,175 and the number of practising barristers at the end of 2024 was 3,071. The combined total of 15,246 legal practitioners represents approximately 0.5% of the total of 2.8 million people recorded as in employment in Ireland in 2024.

New business model for legal services providers

- 5.11 In October 2024 the LSRA introduced the regulatory framework to permit legal partnerships as an alternative business structure for legal services providers. A legal partnership is a partnership formed under the law of the State by written agreement by two or more legal practitioners (solicitors or barristers) for the purpose of providing legal services. At least one partner in a legal partnership must be a practising barrister. Prior to the introduction of legal partnerships, only solicitors were permitted to form partnerships with other solicitors.
- 5.12 The introduction of legal partnerships broadens the scope of business models available to legal practitioners, allowing for greater flexibility and diversity of services delivered. A LSRA commissioned survey of legal practitioners in 2024 found that six in ten were in favour of the new business structure, with one in five indicating that their law firm would likely become a solicitor-barrister partnership in the next five years.



- 5.13 Legal practitioners surveyed saw benefits of legal partnerships accruing in many areas of law, with Litigation and Dispute Resolution and Environmental Planning being the areas that solicitors believed would benefit the most from their introduction.²² The first solicitor-barrister legal partnership in Ireland began operating in November 2024. The LSRA maintains a public Register of Legal Partnerships.²³

Internationalisation of Irish legal services market

- 5.14 The government's Ireland for Law initiative, which began in 2019, continued in 2024 to promote Irish law and legal services to the international business community. The initiative aims to encourage international business to see Ireland as a preferred jurisdiction in which to do business, undertake transactions, obtain legal services, advice, and resolve disputes.
- 5.15 In the wake of Brexit, Ireland is primed as a key jurisdiction to conduct legal business, with analysts noting an accelerating tide of international law firms opening in Dublin and targeting multinational clients in the Irish market and beyond.²⁴ Between 2019 and 2023, 25 international law firms opened an office in Dublin, driving competition and leading to recruitment and retention challenges.²⁵ However there are indications some international firms have decreased in size in Ireland.²⁶
- 5.16 A divergence in the Irish legal services sector between larger and smaller law firms in terms of profitability is described as "a tale of two markets" in the Evelyn Partners *Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024*.²⁷ According to the survey, almost all Top 20 firms reported increased profits within the previous 12 months whereas only half of the smaller firms reported increased profits and nearly one in five signalled a decline in their profitability.²⁸

Recruitment and retention challenges for law firms and state sector

- 5.17 Despite the highest number of solicitors with practising certificates in ten years, reports of recruitment and retention issues amongst solicitors continued throughout 2024. The *Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024* found that the number one key issue identified by Top 20 law firms was attracting and retaining the right people.

²² LSRA, "LSRA introduces legal partnerships as an alternative business structure for legal services providers", [press release] 8 October 2024. Available [here](#).

²³ LSRA (2025) *About Legal Partnerships* (Accessed on 15 April 2025). Available [here](#).

²⁴ Carman, D. (2024) 'Finding a new equilibrium', Reports Legal, Ireland Report' (September 2024). Available [here](#).

²⁵ Carman, D. (2023) 'Dublin Disruptors: throwing down the gauntlet', Reports Legal, Ireland Report' (June 2023). Available [here](#).

²⁶ Carman, D. (2024) 'Finding a new equilibrium', Reports Legal, Ireland Report' (September 2024). Available [here](#).

²⁷ Evelyn Partners (2024) *Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024*.

²⁸ In total 111 firms were surveyed, 13 Top 20 law firms and 98 other law firms.



- 5.18 Firms reported significant vacancy levels, with nearly seven in ten reporting five or more vacancies and a quarter of the Top 20 law firms had more than ten vacancies. These firms, primarily Dublin-based, responded with pay and reward increases, with nine in ten delivering pay increases of between 4–15% as well as a variety of other initiatives.
- 5.19 For smaller firms, staff retention did not appear to be an issue, with seven in ten reporting low staff turnover, 60% that they had no vacancies and 40% that they did not have to increase pay to retain staff.²⁹ The survey found that smaller firms put significantly more emphasis on key sectoral issues such as regulatory/compliance costs, downward pressure on fees, and managing their cashflow.
- 5.20 Competition amongst domestic law firms where lateral moves are commonplace is one reason given for the retention challenges. Another reason is that they may also be competing with law firms outside of Ireland, and also in-house roles in the multinational sector.³⁰
- 5.21 Supply issues are also apparent in the legal aid sector, with the Legal Aid Board reporting in 2024 that it found it increasingly challenging to attract and retain staff, in particular recently qualified solicitors, due to the highly competitive job market.³¹
- 5.22 Staffing shortages mean the Legal Aid Board often depends on private solicitors to assist its clients. However, in 2024 it had no private practitioners in Sligo or Longford on its Private Practitioner Panel which it uses when there is a shortage of Legal Aid Board solicitors in a particular area. The Board attributed this shortage to the fact that the current fee structure is not attracting solicitors to join its panels.³²
- 5.23 Allied with these challenges, the Legal Aid Board has indicated that it has experienced an increase in demand for its services over the last number of years in many areas, in particular in the area of international protection.³³
- 5.24 Supply concerns were echoed by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) in a submission to the LSRA in which it drew attention to the decreasing numbers of solicitors practising outside of Dublin and the other main cities, particularly on the Western seaboard. It said:

²⁹ Evelyn Partners (2024) *Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024*.

³⁰ Comyn, F. 'International law firms transformed the Irish market: Here's where they got their talent', *The Currency*, 22 April 2024.

³¹ Legal Aid Board Statement of Strategy 2024-2026, (p8). Available [here](#).

³² Chairperson Designate of the Legal Aid Board before the Joint Committee on Justice on 30 April 2024. (accessed on 26 February 2025). Available [here](#).

³³ *Ibid*



“There is a lack of solicitors with an expertise in criminal law which this Office predicts will put an increasing strain on the existing resources as the older model of solicitors in rural areas having a broad general practice is becoming less attractive to newly qualified solicitors. It is a significant concern that it will be difficult for the citizen to obtain informed legal advice in relation to criminal matters at a local level in the future.”

- 5.25 The DPP noted that training of solicitors was relevant to this matter, with the majority of solicitor trainees securing contracts in Dublin or Cork and concerns being expressed by a member of the Law Society Education Committee, reported in June 2024, that the result may mean that large swathes of the country become ‘legal deserts’ with access-to-justice issues if the trend continues.

Withdrawal of criminal barrister services

- 5.26 In October 2023 and in July 2024, criminal barristers withdrew their professional services nationwide calling for a reversal of the 40% FEMPI cuts that were made during the financial crisis. They also sought a mechanism to determine fees payable to barristers by the Director of Public Prosecutions and under the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) scheme.
- 5.27 Recent budgets have included professional fee restoration for criminal barristers; as part of Budget 2024 (10% from 1 January 2024) and again in Budget 2025 (8% from 1 January 2025).³⁴ However the fee levels in criminal and civil legal aid system were a matter of concern in many of the submissions which the LSRA received.

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

“The current operation of the civil legal aid system is a barrier to access of justice for structurally vulnerable groups including women; children; victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence; victims and survivors of trafficking and labour exploitation; international protection applicants; Travellers; Roma; disabled people; minority ethnic communities, and those on low incomes and in poverty.”

- The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

“The demand for barrister services in certain areas of civil work that is legally aided, arising from the failure of Government to address the fee cuts that were applied during the FEMPI era, is now translating into an increasing number of barristers withdrawing from providing services to agencies of the State while at the same time demands for their services are increasing. Evidence of this situation is now starting to emerge with a recent report on the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT).”

- The Bar of Ireland

³⁴ Department of Justice (2024). Minister McEntee secures record €3.9bn Budget [Press release]. 1 October 2024. Available [here](#).



"Fees and eligibility criteria for both civil and criminal legal aid work has remained relatively unchanged since before the 2008 financial crisis and is no longer reflective of the increasing complexity of work required, nor does it take account of the substantial increase in all associated costs and expenses (not to mention inflation) that have arisen in the intervening period."

- The Law Society of Ireland

"The Law Society has consistently advocated the restoration of criminal legal aid funding to pre-2008 levels, enabling solicitors—especially those in smaller practices—to effectively serve their clients. Without this restoration, many solicitors will continue to struggle to sustain legal aid case work, potentially leaving large sections of the population without access to adequate legal representation."

"Ireland is increasingly emerging as a key destination for legal advice and transactional services that support the global financial services industry, life-sciences sector, aviation and technology sectors which draws many trainee solicitors towards the larger urban centres to pursue training contracts, resulting in an increasing imbalance between different parts of the sector, resulting in regional disparities."

- The Law Society of Ireland

"A suite of targeted supports are required to safeguard access to small legal practices in rural communities."

- The Law Society of Ireland



Costs of legal services provided by barristers and solicitors

5.28 As noted in previous annual reports under section 33 of the Act, there are ongoing challenges in assessing legal costs in Ireland due to data limitations.

5.29 The National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) has expressed concerns for a number of years about high legal costs and high litigation costs in Ireland and their impact on national competitiveness.³⁵ Its 2024 *Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge* report stated that:

*"Firms continue to face challenging increases in the cost of doing business arising from outstanding and continuing legacy issues, such as managing debt, legal and insurance costs."*³⁶

5.30 A 2024 report by Indecon International Consultants for the Department of Justice on models for the control of litigation costs noted that litigation costs in Ireland are significant and vary by settlement channel. It found *"some evidence that litigation costs in other countries are lower than in Ireland although causation is difficult to determine."*³⁷

5.31 The Indecon report noted an absence of information on the detailed components of legal costs for most cases which proceed to litigation, and also on the costs variations between different legal service providers. With regard to litigation costs, the report found that the lack of transparency not only exasperates challenges faced by consumers of litigation services, it also hinders evidence-based policy development.³⁸

5.32 The impact of the perceived high litigation costs in Ireland was noted by the OECD in its latest periodic economic survey of Ireland, which stated that:

*"Inadequate data frameworks also hinder the monitoring and assessment of litigation costs, which are perceived as high and may reduce incentives to resort to legal action, when needed."*³⁹

5.34 The European Commission 2024 *Rule of Law Report* for Ireland recommended that Ireland:

³⁵ National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (2023) *Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2023*, September 2023. Available [here](#).

³⁶ National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (2024) *Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2024*, September 2024. Available [here](#).

³⁷ Indecon International Consultants (2024) *Multi-Criteria Impact Evaluation of Options for the Control of Litigation Costs*, submitted to Department of Justice 2024. Available [here](#).

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ OECD (2025) *OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland 2025*. Available [here](#).



*"Take forward the necessary legislative work aimed at reducing litigation costs to ensure effective access to justice, taking into account European standards on disproportionate costs of litigation and their impact on access to courts."*⁴⁰

- 5.35 The main source of quantitative data on the cost of legal (and other) services in Ireland is the Central Statistic Office's experimental data series, the Services Producer Price Index (SPPI). This index measures year on year changes in the average prices charged by domestic service producers to other business customers for a selected range of services. The data is limited however as legal services prices are grouped with other professional services.
- 5.36 SPPI data for 2024 shows that service prices for the combined grouping of legal, accounting, PR and business management consultancy services in the year were on average 4.1% higher when compared to the same period in the previous year. In the same period (Quarter 4 2023 – Quarter 4 2024) there was a 4.3% increase for all service producer prices.⁴¹
- 5.37 According to the OECD Economic Survey, Eurostat's harmonised index of consumer prices (HICP) suggests that legal fees in Ireland may have risen faster than the overall HICP over the last five years, in contrast to many other EU countries.⁴² However it is worth noting that, similar to the SPPI, the HICP lacks granularity as it groups legal and accountancy fees together.⁴³
- 5.38 A lack of transparency arising out of major gaps in available comparative information on the cost of conveyancing services was highlighted in a recent report to the Minister for Justice by the LSRA on the consideration of a new profession of conveyancer. The LSRA identified enhanced price transparency for conveyancing costs as a priority area for reform. The report stated that: *"Irish consumers incur higher costs and longer timescales to complete conveyancing transactions than in comparator countries."*⁴⁴
- 5.39 The Evelyn Partners *Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024* reported that 92% of the top 20 firms and 69% of other firms had increased their fees over the previous 12 months.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ European Commission (2024) *2024 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Ireland*, Commission Staff Working Document, 24 July 2024. Available [here](#).

⁴¹ Central Statistics Office (2024) *Services Producer Price Index Experimental (Selected Services) Quarter 4 2024*, (Accessed on 16 April 2025). Available [here](#).

⁴² OECD (2025) *OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland 2025*. Available [here](#).

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2023) *Consideration of a new profession of conveyancer*, November 2023. Available [here](#).

⁴⁵ Evelyn Partners (2024) *Ireland Law Firm Survey 2024*.



Affordability of High Court litigation

- 5.40 In the year under review, judicial commentary on the issue of high legal costs in the High Court included concerns about the affordability of litigation in Ireland, with "millionaire" legal costs which could be potentially ruinous for the ordinary person.⁴⁶
- 5.41 In 2023, 1,015 applications for adjudication were filed with the Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicators, up 2.5% from 2022. In total 181 cases were determined in 2023, with almost €9 million deducted from the original claims. The highest proportion of deductions were made in cases of medical negligence; the total amount deducted in all 15 of those cases was almost 50% of the original claim.⁴⁷

Excessive costs – 1% of complaints to LSRA in 2024

- 5.42 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 2024, 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 for legal services provided was or is excessive. In 2024, the LSRA received a total of 1,476 complaints, of which 23 (1%) were about excessive costs only, with excessive costs grounds also raised in 147 other mixed-grounds complaints.

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

IHREC stated that costs of legal services have to be viewed in the context of the significant delay to the reform of the civil legal aid scheme and effective resourcing of the Legal Aid Board.

"The persistent challenge of wage and cost inflation could potentially offset the benefits of higher admissions by driving up the cost of legal services. As a result, there is some level of unmet legal need in Ireland."

- **The Law Society of Ireland**

The **Irish Institute of Legal Executives** stated that the high costs of legal services is preventing people on lower income levels from equal access to justice. They stated that legal executives are "conducting high level of legal work on a daily basis that requires regulation/recognition to ensure that the very high standards of legal executives are maintained." They recommend the regulation of legal executives which would provide a greater choice to consumers and more competitive legal costs.

⁴⁶ *Connective Energy Holdings Limited v Energia Group ROI Holdings DAC* [2024] IEHC 23

⁴⁷ The High Court Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicators (2023) *Annual Report 2023*, March 2024. Available [here](#).



Education and training standards for persons admitted to practise

Summary and key developments in 2024

5.43 The Authority's work in the area of legal practitioner education and training reform continued in 2024, with a focus on implementation of reforms set out in the Authority's 2020 report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*.⁴⁸

5.44 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).⁴⁹

5.45 The Authority has established an Education and Training Committee, under section 16 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, to carry out preparatory work for the delivery of these recommendations.

Breaking Down Barriers reports and implementation plan

5.46 The year under review also saw the Authority submit its final *Breaking Down Barriers* reports to the Minister for Justice with 32 recommendations for reforms to tackle economic and other barriers facing aspiring and early career legal professionals and to increase diversity in the legal professions.⁵⁰

5.47 The LSRA also developed a *Breaking Downs Barriers* Implementation Plan and began its work with the professional bodies and the other key stakeholders to progress its recommendations in the coming years.

⁴⁸ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2020) *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*, September 2020 Available [here](#).

⁴⁹ The establishment of the LPET Committee requires some legislative amendment, in the meantime the Section 16 Committee was established in September 2023 to lay the foundations and build the framework for the LPET Committee.

⁵⁰ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2024) *Breaking Down Barriers: Addressing the challenges facing early career legal professionals*, January (2024). Available [here](#).



Concerns about removal of criminal litigation as a compulsory component of PPC

- 5.48 In a submission to the LSRA the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) highlighted the decreasing numbers of trainee solicitors choosing to study the criminal litigation module of the Professional Practice Course in the Law Society. Since 2022, the course's criminal litigation module is provided as an advanced elective rather than a compulsory subject
- 5.49 The DPP submitted that the legal services market is now beginning to see the effects of this recent policy change. It said: *"The Director is concerned that if this trend continues, a key pillar in any democratic state, namely an effective criminal justice system, will be compromised."*
- 5.50 In relation to the concerns raised by the DPP, the Law Society informed the LSRA that the syllabus of the PPC was being reviewed and its Education Committee was considering changes shortly, following an extensive consultation. The changes under consideration included *"the re-introduction of some compulsory taught elements of criminal litigation into the core-PPC."*

Views of respondents on education and training standards

The Chief State Solicitor's Office highlighted the importance of adherence to the rule of law and set out that it would *"encourage greater public awareness and education of the fundamentals of our Constitution, the profession's integrity that is tightly bound to that base, and within and across the profession a strong collegiate support in the upholding of those values."*

"A significant number of regulatory bodies/agencies also have criminal investigative functions, some of whom also have their own summary prosecution functions... Training lawyers in the skills required to provide legal advice on the conduct of criminal investigations, as well as to conduct summary prosecutions, is central to the proper functioning of these organisations, and to the services that they provide to the public."

- **Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions**

"Equality and human rights proofed admission policies are a key measure in ensuring a legal profession that is reflective of the diversity within Irish society. Increased representation of structurally vulnerable groups in the legal profession is important for structurally vulnerable group's access and experience of the legal system. Structural barriers to a more diverse legal profession should be identified and removed."

- **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission**

The **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** also recommended mandatory and comprehensive training for solicitors and barristers on disability awareness and realisation of UNCRPD rights.



The **National Disability Authority** said legal professional education should take a Universal Design in Education (UDE) approach that includes building disability competence amongst students. The Law Society and King's Inns should consider what measures are needed to increase the number of students with disabilities in their courses.

"Despite positive measures however, admission and training requirements for both King's Inns and the Law Society remain onerous in terms of time, work and cost, and may create additional barriers for some potential candidates, including those with disabilities. Candidates wishing to become solicitors are required to commit to a programme lasting 3–5 years, between FE-1 examinations, PPC courses and training requirements, while paying large education fees, and often accommodation fees, in Dublin."

- The National Disability Authority

"Equally, the Dublin-centric approach to barrister teaching and training by King's Inns means that candidates from around the country face barriers to admission unless they are willing and able to move to Dublin for at least two years. Similarly, pupillage or devilling remains concentrated in the capital, although we recognise that the strict formal rule of completing this apprenticeship in Dublin has been relaxed in recent years."

-The National Disability Authority



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

- 5.51 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."*

Views of respondents on assessment

"In order to better meet public demand and ensure the representativeness of the general public in the legal profession, the Law Society consistently supports a variety of learning models, offering part-time and remote routes into the profession. In addition, the Law Society is keen to develop an apprenticeship programme which will help to meet the demand for legal services especially in more rural areas and in a variety of specialisation areas."

- The Law Society of Ireland

The Bar of Ireland in its submission welcomed the publication of the LSRA's *Breaking Down Barriers* Reports and Implementation Plan. *"The Bar of Ireland has been reviewing the 32 recommendations and has proactively engaged with the LSRA in this regard and will continue to do so over the coming months and years along with the other stakeholders."*

- The Bar of Ireland



Section 6: Conclusions and Looking Ahead

- 6.1 The year under review in this report saw the Irish economy perform well with high employment. There were clear signs of a buoyant market for solicitors concentrated in Dublin and reports of regional disparities and shortages around the rest of Ireland. While continued growth in the economy is an opportunity, it can also create recruitment and retention challenges in the legal services and the legal aid sector and lead to increases in legal costs.
- 6.2 In terms of admissions to the solicitor and barrister professions, this report documents a slight year-on-year decrease in the numbers enrolling in professional training for solicitors and barristers and new entrants to both professions.
- 6.3 In a significant market development, the year under review saw the introduction of legal partnerships as a new business model for legal services providers. Legal partnerships may in time impact on the numbers admitted to the professions and the demand for and costs of the services of practising solicitors and barristers.
- 6.4 Looking ahead, the Authority will continue to work with stakeholders to implement the wide range of reforms it has recommended in the areas of legal practitioner education and training and entry to the legal professions. Building on progress to date, the Authority will continue to engage with the Department of Justice on its commitments to reform professional legal education, introduce independent oversight for the first time, and address economic and other entry barriers to becoming a solicitor or barrister.
- 6.5 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.



Annexes

Annex A: List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation

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| Bar of Ireland |
| Chief State Solicitor's Office |
| Honorable Society of King's Inns |
| Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission |
| Irish Institute of Legal Executives |
| Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers |
| Law Society of Ireland |
| National Disability Authority |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions |



Annex B: Public Consultation Notice

13 December 2024

Invitation for Written Submissions on Admission Policies of the Legal Professions *Annual Report 2024*

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 LSRA 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 sixth annual report.

The LSRA's report will contain the following elements:

- (a) the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors during 2024;
- (b) the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers during 2024;
- (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 2024 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, academics, 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 2025.

Scope of Admission Policies Report 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 2024.
2. The **costs of legal services** in 2024 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.

The above list of issues is not closed. Respondents may wish to comment on any other issues which have a bearing on the admission 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), 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 14 February 2025**.

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 LSRA, will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

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
13 December 2024

ENDS



Annex C: Tables and Statistics

Table 1: PPC Admissions 2012-2024

| Year | Total Enrolment | Male | Female | 30 yrs and under | 31 and over | 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% |
| 2023 | 561 | 242 (43%) | 319 (57%) | 90% | 10% | 89% | 11% | <1% |
| 2024 | 542 | 184 (34%) | 358 (66%) | 90% | 10% | 83% | 16% | 1% |

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 2: PPC Admissions by course type 2019-2024

| 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%) |
| 2023 | 561 | 467 (83%) | 94 (17%) |
| 2024 | 542 | 442 (82%) | 100 (18%) |

Source: Law Society of Ireland


Table 3: Diversity data for full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid 2020-2024

| PPC Hybrid | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Year | Male | Female | 30 and under | 31 and over | 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 |
| 2023 | 27 (29%) | 67 (71%) | 63 (67%) | 31 (33%) | 38 (40%) | 56 (60%) | 94 |
| 2024 | 26 (26%) | 74 (74%) | 68 (68%) | 32 (32%) | 46 (46%) | 54 (54%) | 100 |
| PPC full-time | | | | | | | |
| Year | Male | Female | 30 and under | 31 and over | 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 |
| 2023 | 215 (47%) | 252 (53%) | 443 (95%) | 24(5%) | 430 (92%) | 37 (8%) | 467 |
| 2024 | 158 (36%) | 284 (64%) | 423 (96%) | 19 (4%) | 406 (92%) | 36 (8%) | 442 |

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 4: Admissions to the Roll of Solicitors 2013-2024

| Year | Qualifying Trainees | England & Wales Solicitors | Northern Ireland Solicitors | All other 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 | 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% |
| 2023 | 548 | 158 | 31 | 27 | 8 | 772 | 50% |
| 2024 | 330 | 174 | 35 | 33 | 18 | 590 | -24% |

Source: Law Society of Ireland

*EEA, Scotland, USA, Australia and New Zealand

**Table 5: Practising certificates issued to newly qualified Law Society solicitors 2023-2024**

| Year | Practising certificates issued to newly qualified Law Society solicitors | No. increase/decrease on previous year | % increase/decrease on previous year |
|------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2023 | 416 | | |
| 2024 | 378 | -38 | - 9% |

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 6: Solicitors holding practising certificates 2015-2024⁵¹

| 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% |
| 2023 | 11,871 | 219 | 2% |
| 2024 | 12,175 | 304 | 3% |

Source: Law Society of Ireland

⁵¹ Total practising certificates held as at 31 December of each year.


Table 7: Admissions to Barrister-at-Law degree course 2013-2024

| 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%) |
| 2023 | 158 | 131 (56/75) | 71 (54%) | 60 (46%) |
| 2024 | 145 | 120 (50/70) | 74 (62%) | 46(38%) |

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

Table 8: Diversity data for the full- time BL degree course and modular degree course 2023-2024

| Modular BL Degree | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|----------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Year | Male | Female | 30 and under | 31 and over | Admission: Approved Qualification | Admission: King's Inns Diploma | Total |
| 2023 | 36 (48%) | 39 (52%) | 27 (36%) | 48 (64%) | 39 (52%) | 36 (48%) | 75 |
| 2024 | 34(49%) | 36 (51%) | 31 (44%) | 39 (56%) | 43 (61%) | 27 (39%) | 70 |
| Full-time BL Degree | | | | | | | |
| Year | Male | Female | 30 and under | 31 and over | Admission: Approved Qualification | Admission: King's Inns Diploma | Total |
| 2023 | 19 (34%) | 37 (66%) | 38 (68%) | 18 (32%) | 32 (57%) | 24 (43%) | 56 |
| 2024 | 18 (36%) | 32 (64%) | 34 (68%) | 16 (32%) | 31 (62%) | 19 (38%) | 50 |

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.

**Table 9: Barristers called to the Bar 2016-2024⁵³**

| Year | Total | +/- on year prior | Completion of KI's BL degree ⁵⁴ | England, Wales & Northern Ireland qualified lawyers | Transferring solicitors | Morgenbesser eligibility ⁵⁵ |
|------|-------|-------------------|--|---|-------------------------|--|
| 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 |
| 2023 | 163 | + 11% | 135 | 23 | 4 | 1 |
| 2024 | 136 | -17% | 122 | 14 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

Table 10: Barristers commencing pupillage 2019-2024

| Year | New pupils ⁵⁶ |
|------|--------------------------|
| 2019 | 82 |
| 2020 | 69 |
| 2021 | 102 |
| 2022 | 90 |
| 2023 | 72 |
| 2024 | 82 |

Source: Bar of Ireland

Table 11: Barristers on Roll of Practising Barristers 2019-2024

⁵³ Total number of persons admitted to the Barrister-at-law degree and called to the Bar.

⁵⁴ The figure includes BL graduates from the same year and also those from earlier years who have deferred their Call to the Bar.

⁵⁵ 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*.

⁵⁶ Barristers beginning their period of pupillage at the start of the new legal term in October.



| Year | Total Roll | +/- on previous year % and no. | Law Library members | Non-Law Library members |
|------|------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 2019 | 2,735 | N/A | 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%) |
| 2023 | 3,051 | +3% (94) | 2,139 (70%) | 912 (30%) |
| 2024 | 3,071 | +1% (20) | 2,134 (69%) | 937 (31%) |

Source: Legal Services Regulatory Authority

Table 12: Transfers between the professions 2015-2024

| 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 |
| 2023 | 8 | 4 |
| 2024 | 19 | 0 |

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

Table 13: Legal professionals employed and annual average growth rate 2014-2023

| Year | Legal Professionals* | Five-Year Growth Trend** |
|------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 2014 | 10,100 | - 0.1% |
| 2015 | 10,700 | - 2.4% |
| 2016 | 11,900 | + 1.2% |
| 2017 | 13,500 | + 0.1% |
| 2018 | 13,500 | + 1.6% |
| 2019 | 14,700 | + 3.8% |
| 2020 | 16,700 | + 4.8% |
| 2021 | 15,200 | + 0.3% |
| 2022 | 13,400 | - 0.2% |
| 2023 | 16,300 | + 3.5% |

Source: SOLAS National Skills Bulletins (SLMRU analysis of CSO data) 2014-2023

*Includes barristers, solicitors, judges and related professionals.

**Average employment growth rate over preceding five years.


Table 14: Additional financial support for trainee solicitors

| Grant or funding | Criteria | Support provided | Number provided in 2024 |
|--|--|---|-------------------------|
| Scott Scholarship Since 2020 | Students and trainees from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. | - Exam, course and registration fees totalling €15,000. | One award |
| Law Society Small Practice Traineeship Grant | Solicitor traineeships in small regional law firms. | - €25,000 per grant (€7,000 PPC fee discount and €18,000 to the training firm which must pay trainee at least living wage). | Five grants |
| The Bursary Scheme | Insufficient resources to fund studies. | - Provides maintenance grants to trainees attending the PPC, - €175,000 is awarded annually. | 39 grants |
| The Hardship Fund | An unexpected situation impacting on trainee's financial capacity. | In 2024, financial assistance of €1,500 was provided. | |

Table 15: Financial support for barrister students and barrister pupils

| Grant or funding | Criteria | Support provided | Number provided in 2024 |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|
| King's Inns Maurice Gaffney Fellowship | Disadvantaged students. | - Full or part remission of fees for Diploma in Legal Studies. | Seven full or part scholarships |
| McCarthy family and others McCarthy Bursary | Be from a background of difference and likely to have met and overcome some kind of physical, social or financial challenge. | - Full remission of fees (€12,560) for the BL Degree course, - A maintenance grant, - A bursary grant to cover travel and subsistence costs while interning in Strasbourg at the Court of Human Rights. | One award |
| The Denham Fellowship is run jointly with the King's Inns and Bar of Ireland | Socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. | - Remission of fees to the BL degree, including the Entrance Examination Fee and any repeat assessments, - Annual stipend of €7,000 for 5 years beginning at the start of the BL degree, - Waiver of Law Library fees for first 4 years. | Two Fellowships |



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