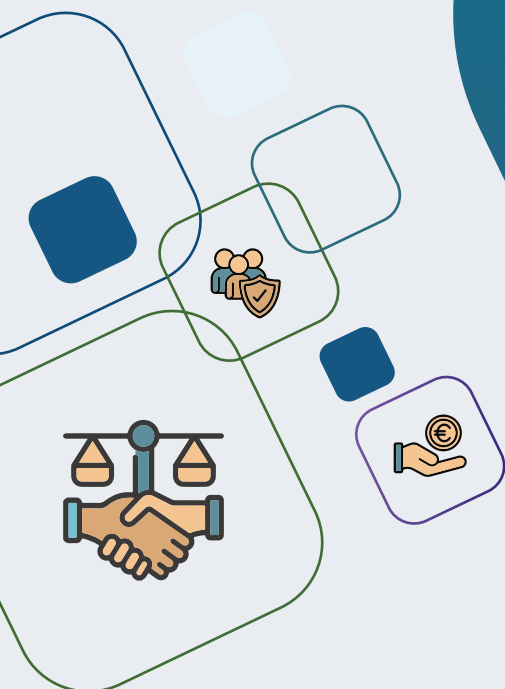




An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhísí Dlí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority



PATHWAYS TO THE PROFESSIONS

Report on Admission Policies
of the Legal Professions

2025

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the LSRA) is pleased to present to the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration its seventh annual report on the admission policies of the legal professions.
2. The report outlines the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors and barristers during 2025. It provides an update on developments in legal practitioner education and training, and an overview on the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the cost of those legal services.
3. As in previous years, limitations in the availability of relevant statistical data in the demand for, and cost of legal services continue to constrain the LSRA's assessment under section 33(1)(c) of the Act.
4. The LSRA would like to thank the 11 respondents that made submissions to the consultation conducted in preparation of this report. Relevant summaries are included in this report.

Increase in numbers entering professional training with ongoing strong demand for part-time training programmes

5. There was an increase in numbers enrolling on the taught professional training programmes for solicitors and barristers in 2025. A total of 581 trainee students began the Law Society's one-year Professional Practice Course (PPC), up 7% from 2024. A total of 139 students undertook the King's Inns one or two-year Barrister-at-Law (BL) degree course, up from 120 in 2024 (an increase of 16%).
6. The number of trainee solicitors enrolling on part-time or Hybrid PPC has continued to grow since its introduction in 2019. In 2025, part-time trainees accounted for almost one in five (18%) of the total 581 solicitor trainee intake.
7. Part-time (modular) students have outnumbered full-time students on the BL degree course in recent years. This trend continued in 2025, with 97 students opting for the two-year modular programme compared to 42 on the full-time course.
8. The continued popularity of part-time training routes suggests that more flexible training options are meeting a previously unmet demand. These part-time programmes for both professions also attract a more diverse cohort than the full-time routes.
9. In 2025, 27% of PPC Hybrid trainees held either a non-law undergraduate degree or did not have a degree, compared to 14% of their full-time counterparts.
10. On the part-time BL degree course, almost half of students (46%) were 31 years and over, compared to 29% on the full-time course.

Solicitor training contracts concentrated in corporate law firms in Dublin, and increase in barristers undertaking pupillage

11. Trainee solicitors must secure training contracts before enrolling on the PPC course. The mandatory two-year period of in-office training starts for trainees after they successfully complete the PPC. The concentration of the legal services market in Dublin and in corporate law firms is reflected in the fact that the majority of the 581 new solicitor trainees in 2025 secured training contracts in county Dublin (82%), and nearly two thirds (65%) with a large law firm, in contrast 4% secured a contract in-house with either a private company or State body.
12. There was a 9% increase in the number of barristers who began the Law Library's mandatory 12-month period of unpaid pupillage with a more senior barrister called a master (89 pupils compared to 82 in 2024). Unlike solicitor trainees, barrister pupils do not enter into formal contracts with their masters – the nature of the relationship is one of supervised practical training.

Increase in numbers qualifying into the legal professions

13. The numbers of newly qualified solicitors and barristers admitted to practise increased in 2025 compared to 2024.
14. In 2025, 558 newly qualified Law Society solicitors were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors. First-time Practising Certificates were issued to 583 newly qualified Law Society solicitors, an increase of 54% from 378 in 2024. The majority (95%) entered practice in law firms, with the remaining 5% in-house in the private sector
15. A total of 150 persons were “called to the Bar” and admitted to practise by the Chief Justice of Ireland, allowing them to exercise a full right of audience before all courts. This is up 10% from 136 in 2024.

Growth in number of legal practitioners in Ireland

16. At the end of 2025 the combined total of practising legal practitioners (solicitors and barristers) in Ireland stood at 16,089, a 6% increase from 15,246 in 2024. This represents approximately 0.5% of total employment in the State.
17. The number of solicitors holding annual Practising Certificates issued/renewed by the Law Society at the end of 2025 was 12,430, up 2% from 2024. A further 531 solicitors were practising in the full-time service of the State (4%), bringing the total number of practising solicitors at the end of 2025 to 12,961, this represents 81% of the combined total of practising legal practitioners at the end of 2025.
18. The number of barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers maintained by the LSRA stood at 3,128 at the end of 2025, up 2% from 3,071 in 2024. Of these, 2,137 (68%) were members of the Law Library. An increasing number of barristers are practising outside of the Law Library (32%), and over one third are recorded as employed full-time in the service of the State.

Breaking Down Barriers

19. As part of its ongoing work under *the Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan*, the LSRA for the second time sought additional information from the legal professional bodies on their flexible training routes and access initiatives, for this report.
20. The LSRA notes significant work undertaken by the professional bodies to increase flexible training routes and access initiatives, including new initiatives such as:
 - the development of the Law Society's Professional Practice Course (PPC) Hybrid course on a modular basis
 - a new apprenticeship model of solicitor training developed by the Law Society
 - introduction of Law Society member contribution to the grant-funded access programmes
 - a new Law Society traineeship grant with an Independent Law Centre
 - adoption of a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy by the King's Inns
 - the development of a King's Inns outreach programme for secondary schools
 - expansion of The Bar of Ireland Internship Programme
 - expansion of The Bar of Ireland's transition year programme opening access to all transition years students wishing to avail of it.
21. The LSRA welcomes these developments and will continue to work with the professional bodies to address economic and other barriers facing aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers.

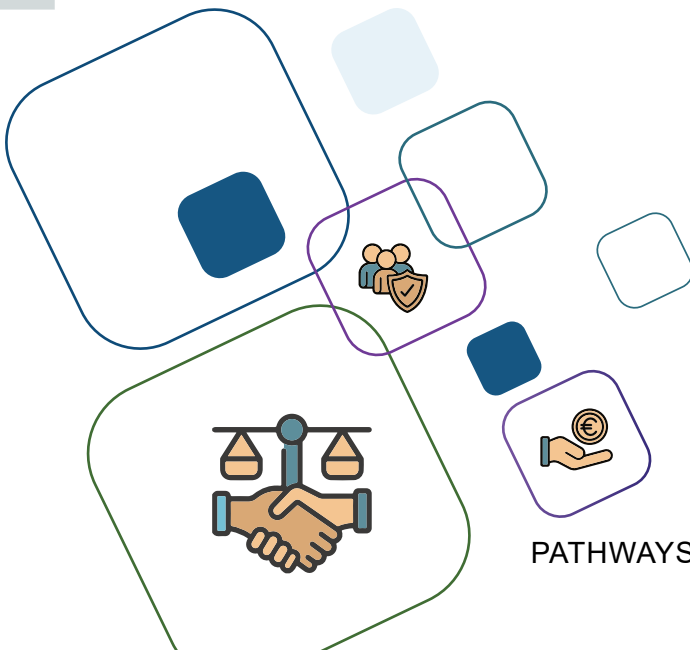
Demand and cost of legal services of solicitors and barristers

22. As in previous reports, assessing the level of demand for and cost of the services of practising solicitors and barristers remains challenging due to the absence of a single comprehensive data source.
23. Submissions received for this report indicate continued demand for solicitors in the public sector. This was highlighted by the Citizens Information Board, which reported ongoing demand from clients seeking legal advice, particularly in family law, employment law, immigration law, and matters relating to the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015. Reports elsewhere suggest ongoing demand for solicitors in the private sector, particularly at a senior level.
24. Further increases in demand are anticipated. Submissions from both the Chief State Solicitors Office (CSSO) and Dublin City Council Law Agent and Legal Department highlighted this increasing demand, with the CSSO noting an approximate 30% growth in solicitor numbers in the Office over the past five years.

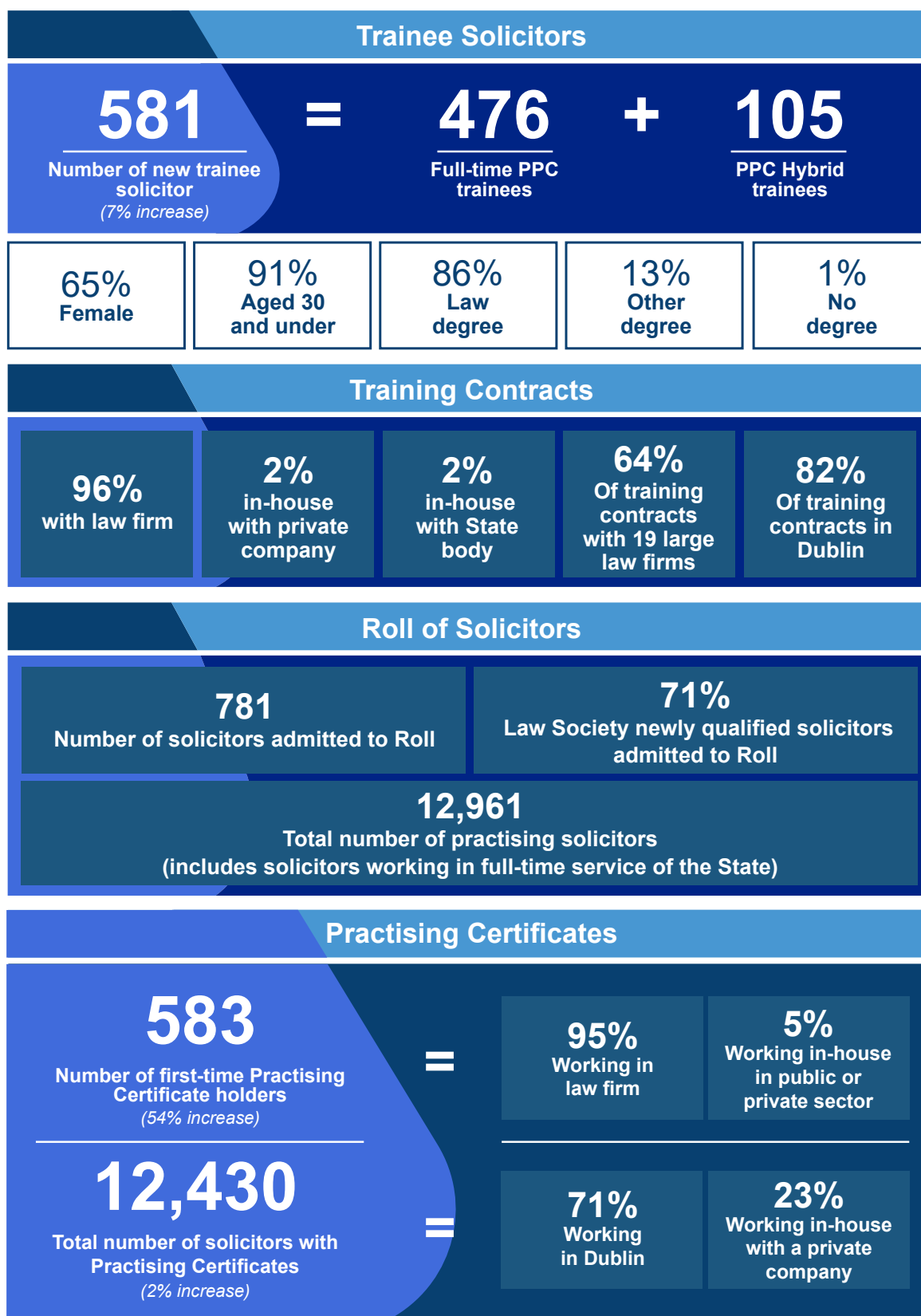
25. Regional disparities persist. Just under one-third of Practising Certificates are held by practitioners outside Dublin city, indicating continued concentration of the solicitor profession in the capital and shortages in other regions particularly the west of Ireland.
26. Available evidence from national and international sources indicates that legal costs in Ireland, particularly litigation costs, are high.

The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise

27. Work on reforming legal education and training continued in 2025. The Legal Education and Training Committee met for the first time to begin implementing the recommendations set out in the LSRA's 2020 report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*.
28. Development of a new National Competency Framework for solicitors and barristers commenced in late 2025 and is expected to be complete in mid-2026.
29. Other developments include the Law Society's new 'Introduction to Specialist Areas of Practice' course, to cover introductory content on family law, taxation law, and criminal litigation, and greater coverage of the use of AI in the legal content.
30. The Bar of Ireland is progressing a focused programme of work to enhance the standardisation, consistency and oversight of pupillage.
31. The value of early legal exposure through paid internships was highlighted in submissions from both the UCD Sutherland School of Law and Dublin City Council Law Agent and Legal Department. They recommended State bodies, professional and regulatory bodies and law firms consider making these available.
32. Looking ahead, the LSRA will continue to progress reforms set out in both the *Setting Standards* report and *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan* aimed at improving access to, and standards within, the legal professions.

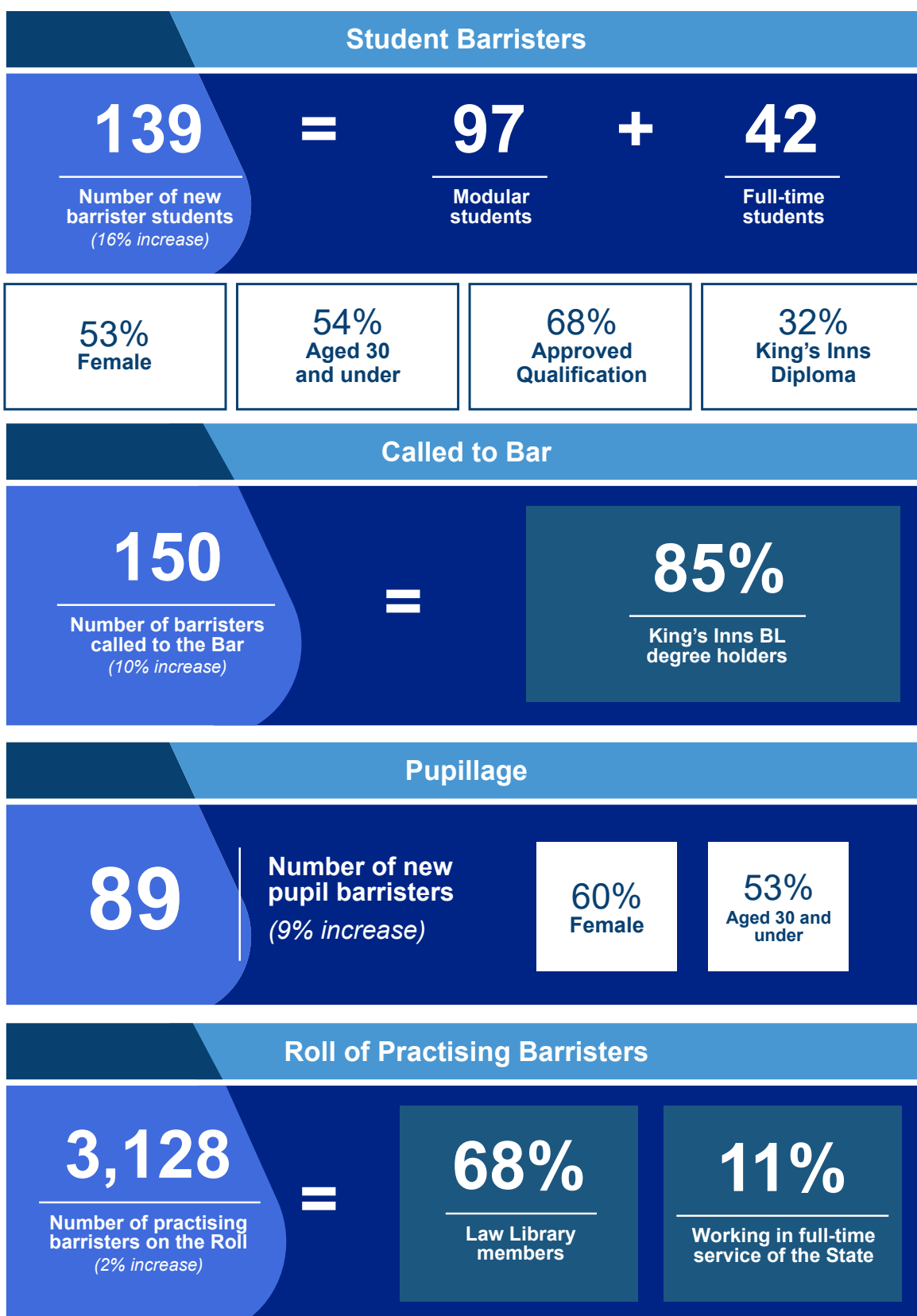


Admissions to the Solicitor Profession 2025

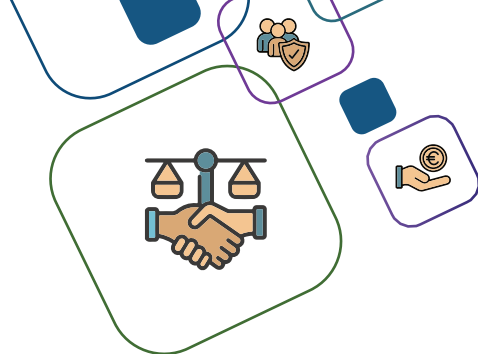


Source: Law Society of Ireland

Admissions to the Barrister Profession 2025



Source: The Honorable Society of King's Inns, The Bar of Ireland and The Legal Services Regulatory Authority



Introduction

Background

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the LSRA) is an independent statutory body established under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act). The LSRA was established on 1 October 2016. It is responsible for regulating the provision of legal services by barristers and solicitors, and for ensuring the maintenance and improvement of standards in the provision of those services.

Origin of report

Pathways to the Professions 2025: Report on the Admission Policies of the Legal Professions, has been prepared under section 33 of the Act, which was commenced on 7 October 2019. It is the seventh annual report that the LSRA has submitted to the Minister.

In preparing this report, the LSRA is mindful not only of its obligations under section 33 of the Act, but also of its other statutory commitments. The LSRA'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*

The LSRA 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.

Purpose of report

Section 33(1) mandates the LSRA 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.

1. Section 13(5) of the Act

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.*

The LSRA 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 qualified lawyers who's training adequately equips them for entry into professional practice.

Statutory consultation

In preparation of this report, and in accordance with section 33(2) of the Act, the LSRA 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 LSRA considers appropriate.

The LSRA wrote to the three professional bodies, on 31 October 2025, requesting information under section 33(3), including statistical data, to assist it in preparing this report.

This report also includes the views of stakeholders who were invited to respond to a consultation carried out by the LSRA under section 33(2) of the Act.

On 12 December 2025, the LSRA issued an invitation by email to 330 recipients on its public consultations list, calling for written submissions. The LSRA published a consultation notice on its website and it was promoted on social media. Written responses were requested by 30 January 2025. The consultation notice is provided in Annex A.

The call for written submissions provided for a consultation period of seven weeks, which falls within the government's suggested timescales for public consultations.²

The LSRA received a total of 11 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.

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

Data used in this report

The data on solicitor admissions in this report was provided by the Law Society which has educational, representative and regulatory functions in respect of the solicitor profession in Ireland.

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, a pre-requisite to be called to the Bar by the Chief Justice of Ireland.

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.

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.

Expansion of the scope of report

Since 2024 the LSRA has been progressing its *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan* which is part of the LSRA's ongoing work on the *Breaking Down Barriers* project that began in late 2020. The implementation plan consists of 32 recommendations to tackle economic and other barriers facing aspiring and early career legal professionals and to increase diversity in the legal professions.

The LSRA 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 on their ongoing work to progress the *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan*.

Therefore, in addition to the statistical data requested under section 33(3) of the Act, the LSRA requests 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.
- » Their evaluation of their funded access programme.

This information is reported in section 4 of this report.

Statistics on Solicitor Admissions for 2025

Solicitor trainee admissions

Vocational training for solicitors in Ireland is provided exclusively by the Law Society's Professional Practice Course (PPC). 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.

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.

Since 2020, the Law Society has allowed third-level undergraduate 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.

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

The in-office training period starts after trainees have successfully completed their final PPC exams. After 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 (2026) 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 (2026) *Final Examination - First Part (FE-1)*. (Accessed on 24 April 2026). Available [here](#).

5. Law Society of Ireland (2026) *Training Contract*. (Accessed on 24 April 2026). Available [here](#).

Trends in solicitor trainee course admissions

The following statistical trends are apparent in the numbers sitting the PPC entrance exam and enrolling on the course in 2025.

Steady increase in numbers sitting PPC entrance exams (FE-1)

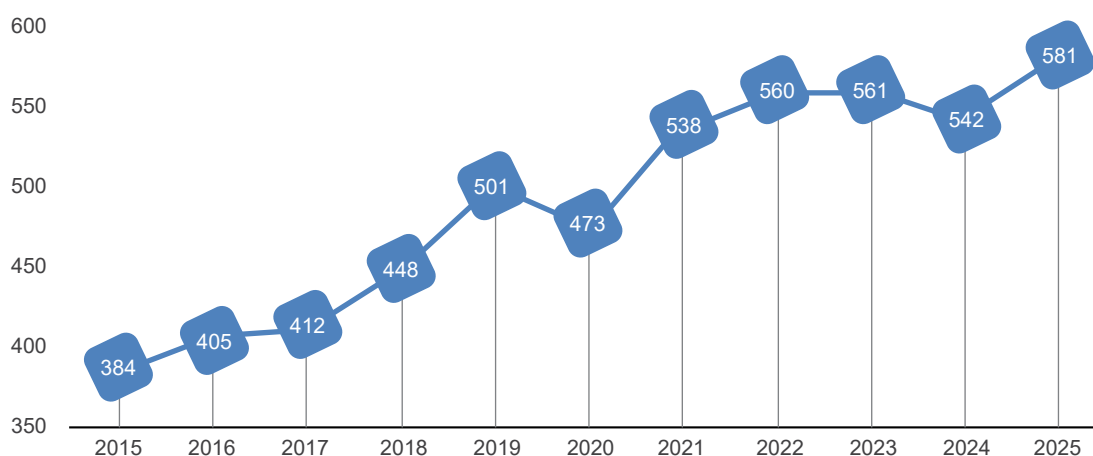
A total of 4,457 candidates sat FE-1 exams in 2025, an increase of 19% from 3,740 candidates in 2024. This included 566 third-level undergraduate students, up from 497 in 2024.

There was an increase in the number of candidates that sat the Law Society's Preliminary Examination in 2025 (12), compared to 2024 (7).

New solicitor trainee intake returns to general upward trend

A total of 581 trainee solicitors enrolled on the PPC in 2025, a 7% increase from 2024. As can be seen in the graph below, this is a return to the general upward trend in solicitor trainees' intake in recent years, with the exception of 2024.

New solicitor trainees 2015–2025



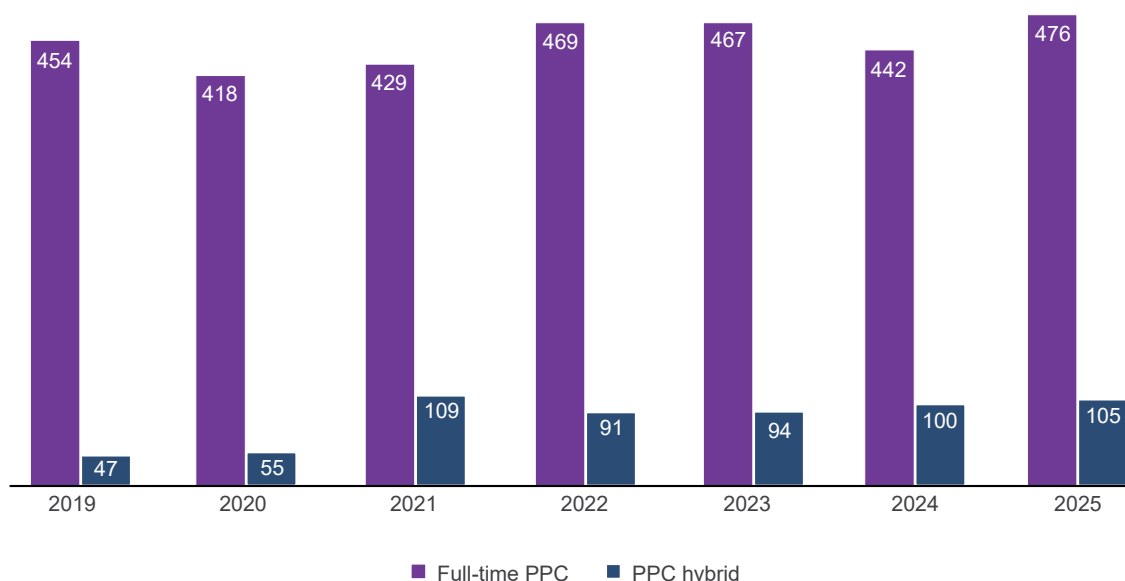
Source: Law Society of Ireland

Part-time solicitor trainees account for almost one in five of total intake

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 total PPC intake for 2025 was comprised of 476 full-time trainees and 105 trainees on the part-time PPC Hybrid. Part-time trainees accounted for almost one in five (18%) of the total trainee intake for 2025, which is unchanged from last year.

New solicitor trainees: full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid 2019–2025



Source: Law Society of Ireland

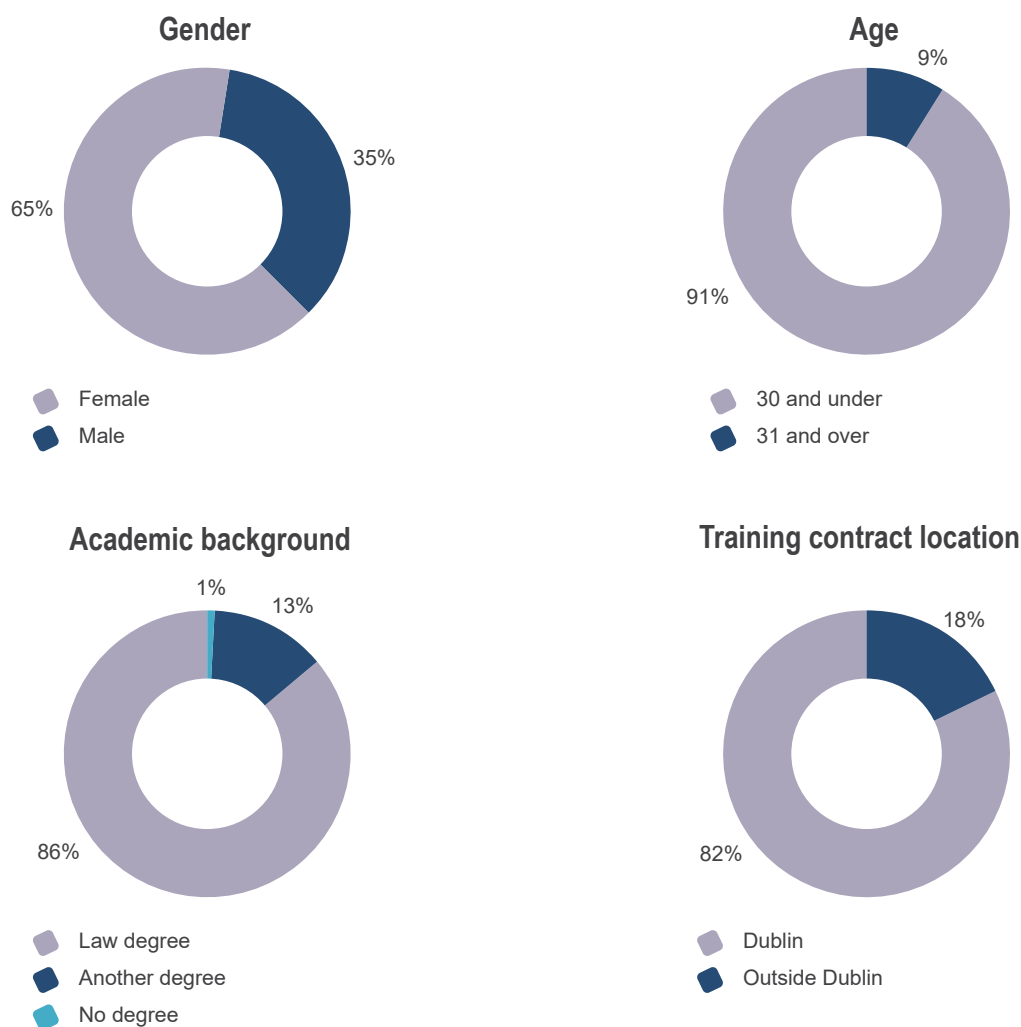
Diversity profile of new solicitor trainees

This section contains diversity data for all solicitor trainees who began their training in 2025. 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. The diversity profile of the 2025, new solicitor trainee intake is broadly consistent with that of the 2024 intake.

Of the 581 new solicitor trainees in 2025:

- » **Gender:** 65% of trainees identified as female, down from 66% in 2024, and 35% identified as male.
- » **Age:** Identical to 2024, 91% of trainees were aged 30 and under and 9% were 31 and over.
- » **Academic background:** The majority (86%) of new trainees in 2025 had a law degree, up from 83% in 2024. A further 13% had another (non-law) degree, down from 16% in 2024. Just 1% of new trainees had no degree, which is the same proportion as in 2024.
- » **Training contracts:** Most new solicitor trainees secured training contracts in county Dublin (82%) down from 83% in 2024, with the remaining 18% obtaining training contracts outside of Dublin.

581 New solicitor trainees



Source: Law Society of Ireland

Diversity trends in the full-time PPC and part-time PPC Hybrid

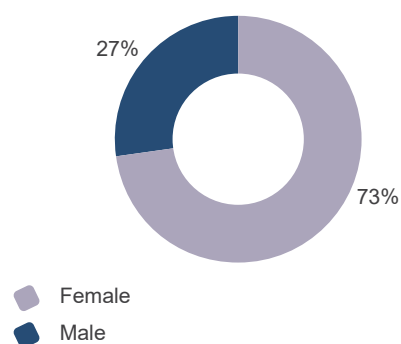
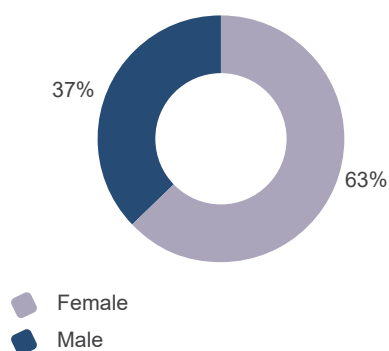
In comparing full-time PPC trainees with their part-time counterparts, the following trends are apparent:

- » **Gender:** A higher proportion of women enrolled on the part-time course (73%) compared to the full-time course (63%).
- » **Age:** A significantly higher proportion of part-time trainees were aged 31 and over (33%) compared to their full-time counterparts (4%).
- » **Academic background:** Almost one in five part-time trainees (19%) held degrees other than in law compared to one in eight (12.5%) on the full-time course. More part-time trainees had no degree (8%) compared to less than 1% of their full-time counterparts.

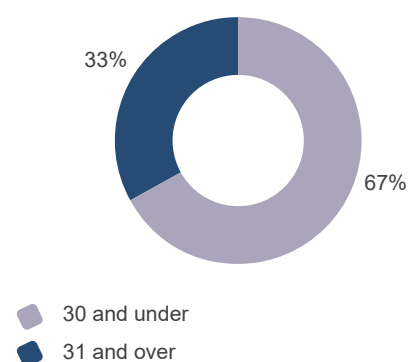
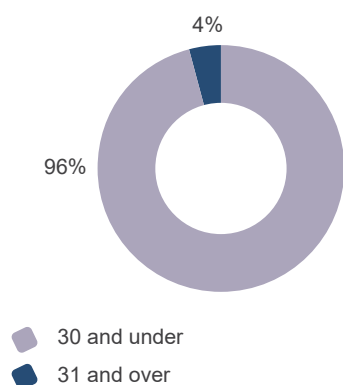
476 Full-time PPC trainees

105 PPC Hybrid trainees

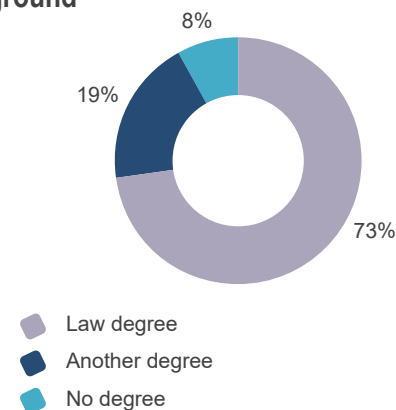
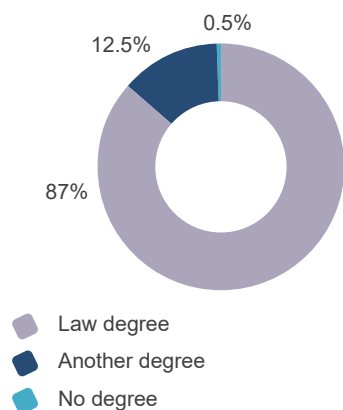
Gender



Age



Academic background



Source: Law Society of Ireland

Trends in distribution of in-office training contracts

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

6. Law Society of Ireland (2026) *Training Contract*. (Accessed on 24 April 2026). Available [here](#).

The following trends are apparent in the distribution and type of training contracts secured by the 2025 PPC intake of new solicitor trainees.

Full-time trainees more likely to secure training contracts with large law firms

Most trainees (557) secured a training contract with a law firm in 2025. In line with 2024, the main training contract sponsors were large law firms. As the table below illustrates, 371 (excluding the five trainees that secured a training contract with the Chief State Solicitor's Office) out of the 581 new solicitor trainees in 2005 (64%) secured a training contract with a total of 19 law firms.

Consistent with 2024, all solicitor trainees who secured training contracts with the 19 law firms set out in the table below, were on the full-time course — representing 78% of full-time cohort. In contrast, none of the trainees on the part-time course secured a contract with any of the law firms in the table below.

Ranking	In-office training contract providers for 2025	Total number of trainees
1	Arthur Cox LLP	63
2	Matheson LLP	56
3	McCann Fitzgerald LLP	47
4	A&L Goodbody LLP	40
5	William Fry LLP	35
6	Eversheds Sutherland Ireland LLP	19
7	Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	16
8	RDJ LLP	14
9	Byrne Wallace Shields LLP	12
10	Maples & Calder LLP	12
11	Dillon Eustace LLP	8
12	Philip Lee LLP	8
13	Addleshaw Goddard (Ireland) LLP	7
14	DLA Piper LLP	7
15	Fieldfisher LLP	6
16	Kennedys Solicitors LLP	6
17	Beauchamps LLP	5
18	Comyn Kelleher Tobin LLP	5
19	Chief State Solicitor's Office	5
20	Hayes Solicitors LLP	5
Total		376

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Small number of trainees, training in-house

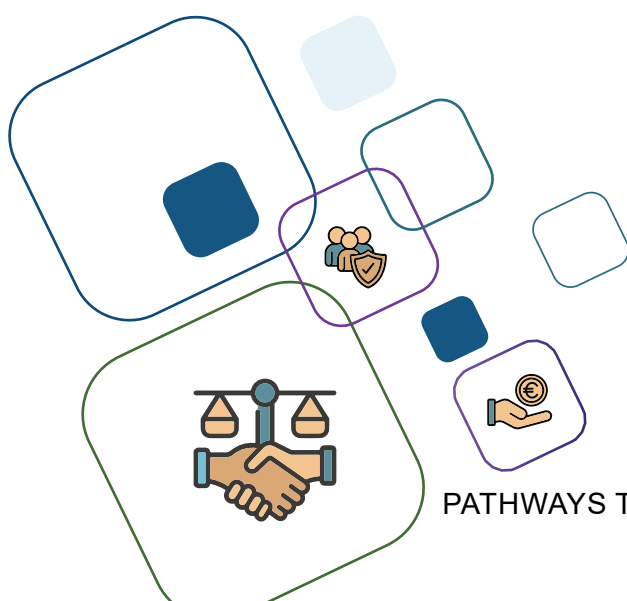
Only 24 new solicitor trainees in 2025 (4%) secured a training contract either in-house with a private company (2%) or with a State body (2%). This is a slight reduction from 2024 when 5% of trainees secured an in-house training contract. Comparatively, a higher proportion of part-time trainees (11%) secured an in-house training contract than full-time trainees (3%). The State bodies that took on trainee solicitors in 2025 are: the Chief State Solicitor's office Dublin City Council, the ESB legal department, the Office of the DPP and Tusla.

Vast majority of solicitor training sponsors in Dublin

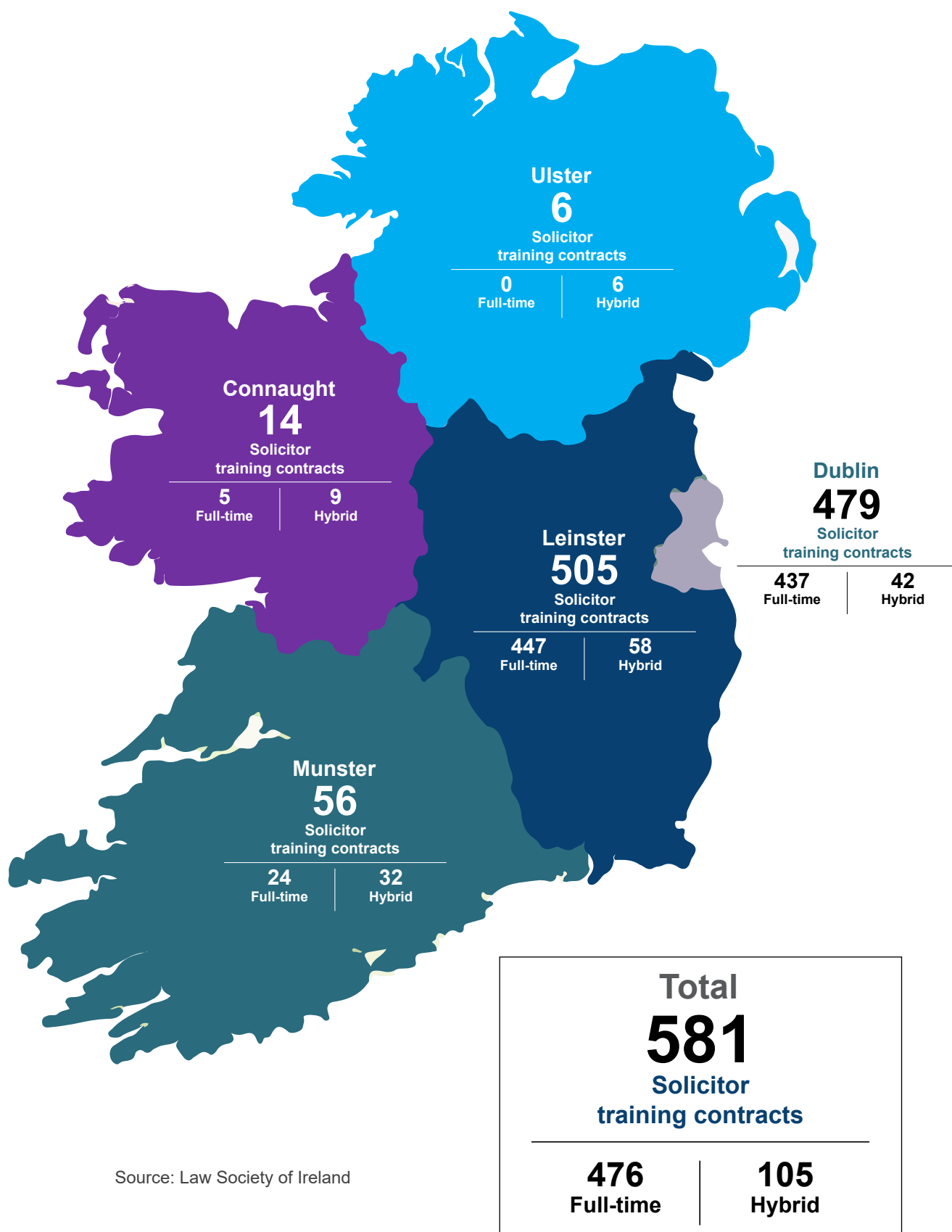
As in previous years, the vast majority of new solicitor trainees (82%) secured their training contracts in Dublin, reflecting the capital's dominance in the legal services market.

The geographical distribution of training contracts is quite different for the full-time and part-time trainees. A significantly higher proportion of the full-time trainees secured training contracts in Dublin (92%), compared to 40% of the part-time trainees. A considerable proportion (21%) of part-time trainees had training contracts in Cork, compared to full-time trainees (3%).

The map below provides a full breakdown of training contract locations between full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid trainees at provincial level in 2025.



Solicitor Training Contracts per province 2025



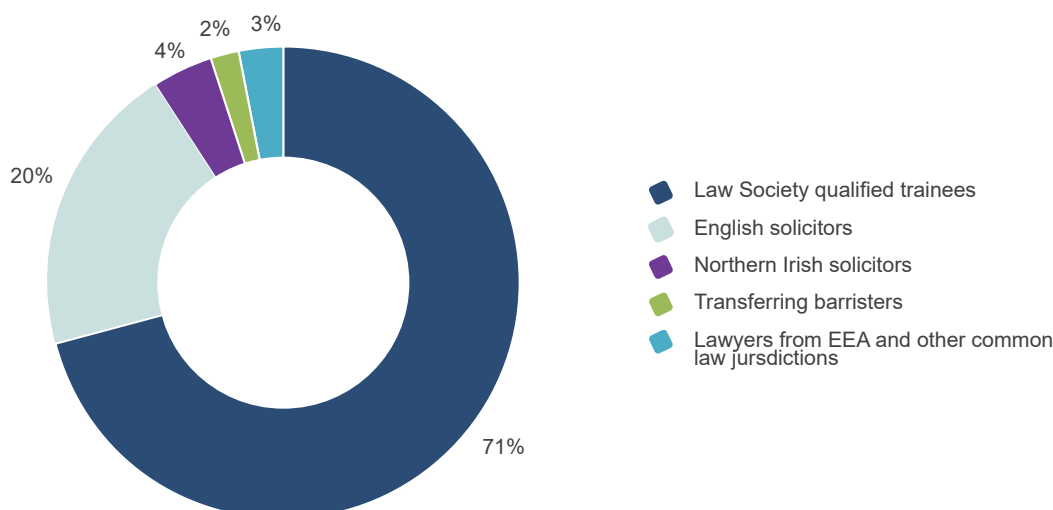
Trends in solicitor admissions

The following statistical trends are apparent in the numbers of persons admitted to practise as solicitors in 2025.

Increase in new solicitors admitted to the Roll of Solicitors

A total of 781 new solicitors were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2025. This represents a 32% increase in the number of solicitors admitted to the Roll in 2025 compared to 2024 (590). The majority of solicitors admitted to the Roll were Law Society newly qualified trainees (558), as illustrated in the pie chart below.

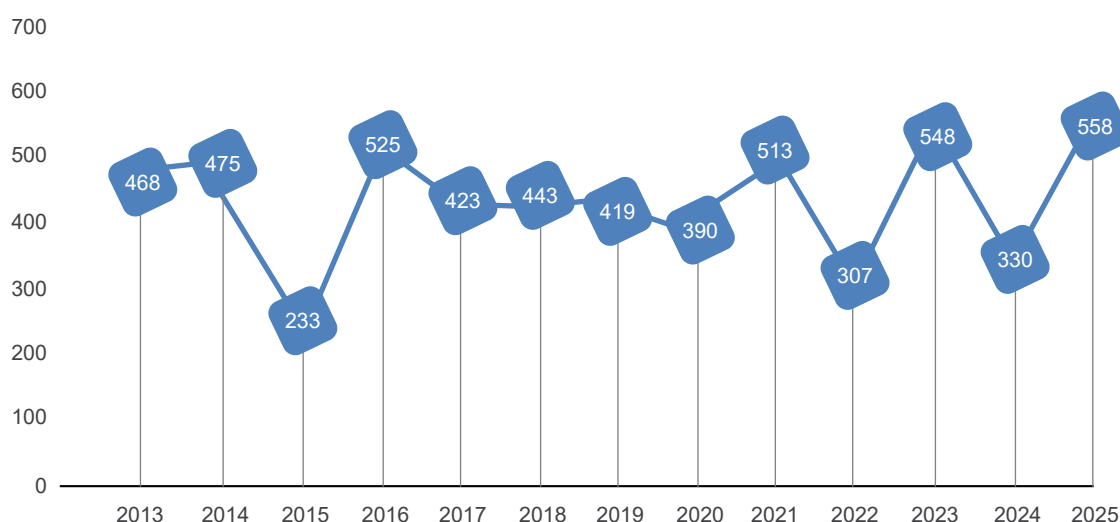
Route of admission to the Roll of Solicitors 2025



Source: Law Society of Ireland

The graph below represents the year-on-year number of Law Society qualified trainees admitted to the Roll of Solicitors. According to the Law Society, the recent fluctuations in the number of Law Society qualified trainees admitted to the Roll, is a direct result of the restructuring of PPC, due to the timing of completion. In 2022, the PPC was “fused” into a single block of taught instruction, replacing the previous model under which two separate blocks of taught instruction were delivered before and after the training period.

Law Society qualified solicitors admitted to the Roll of Solicitors 2015–2025



Source: Law Society of Ireland

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 Certificate

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.⁷ Solicitors working in the full-time service of the State are also exempt from the requirement to hold a Practising Certificate.⁸

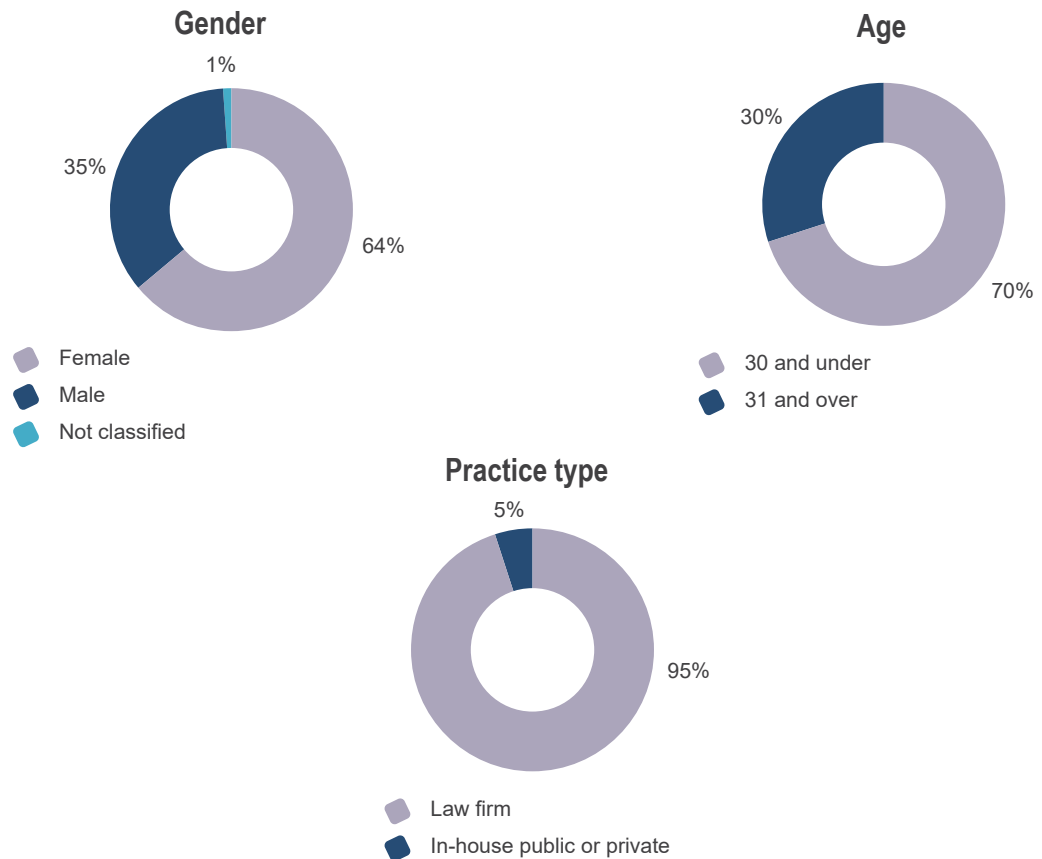
Increase in first-time Practising Certificate holders

In 2025 there were 583 Practising Certificates issued to newly qualified, Law Society solicitors. This is up 54% from 378 in 2024. The majority of which were, female (64%), aged 30 or under (70%) and secured a role within a law firm (95%).

7. Law Society of Ireland (2026) *Practising certificates and solicitors outside the jurisdiction* (Accessed on 28 April 2026). Available [here](#).

8. A solicitor is only regarded in the full-time service of the state if the solicitor devotes the whole of their time to the service of the state as a solicitor, and, the solicitor is remunerated in respect of that service wholly out moneys provided by the Oireachtas.

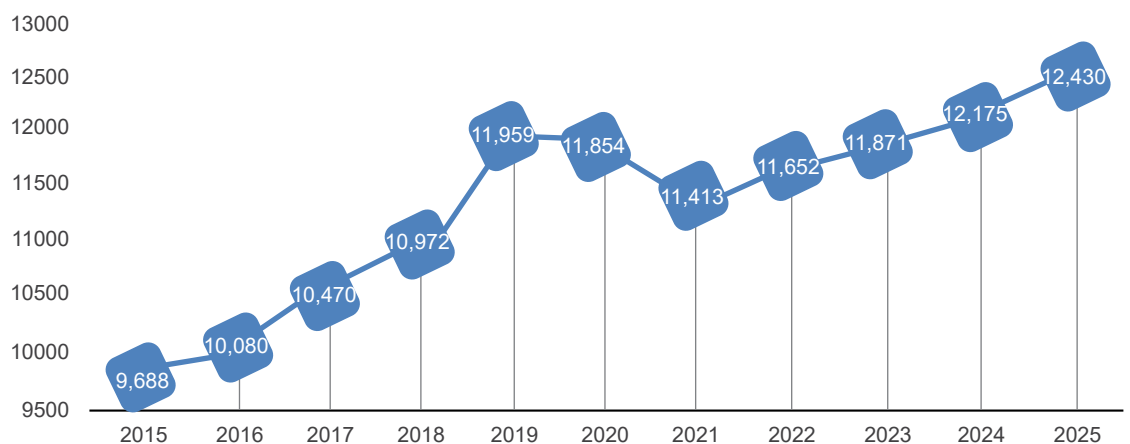
583 Newly qualified Law Society solicitors



Total number of practising solicitors in 2025

The total number of solicitors with Practising Certificates at the end of 2025 was 12,430. A further 531 solicitors were practising in service of the State, bringing the total number of practising solicitors to 12,961 at the end of 2025. This represents 81% of the combined total of legal practitioners (solicitors and barristers) in Ireland in 2025 (16,089). As illustrated in the graph below, there has been continued growth (28%) in the number of practising solicitors in Ireland in the last 10 years, and a 2% increase on 2024.

Total Practising Certificates 2015–2025



Source: Law Society of Ireland

More than one in four solicitors worked with 20 employers

The table below sets out the top 20 employers by the number of Practising Certificates held at the end of December 2025. A total of 3,594 solicitors with Practising Certificates (29%) were employed by a total of 20 employers, comprising mostly of large law firms, but also public sector bodies and semi-State bodies.

The composition of the top five firms has remained unchanged over the past six years, however, their positions within the ranking have varied during that period. 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 692 solicitors, 6% of the total (12,430) Practising Certificates at the end of 2025.

Ranking	Firm/ Employer	Practising Certificates
1	A&L Goodbody LLP	399
2	Matheson LLP	370
3	Arthur Cox LLP	344
4	Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	328
5	McCann Fitzgerald LLP	289
6	William Fry LLP	220
7	Chief State Solicitor's Office	208
8	Byrne Wallace Shields LLP	205
9	Legal Aid Board	144
10	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	128
11	Central Bank of Ireland	117
12	RDJ LLP	115
13	Beauchamps LLP	105
14	Philip Lee LLP	102
15	Maples and Calder (Ireland) LLP	97
16	Allied Irish Banks plc	95
17	Addleshaw Goddard (Ireland) LLP	86
18	Dillon Eustace LLP	84
19	DLA Piper Ireland LLP	79
20	Fieldfisher LLP	79
Total		3,594

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Over two thirds of solicitors with Practising Certificates are Dublin-based

Out of the 12,430 Practising Certificates held in 2025, 8,827 were held by solicitors operating in Dublin (71%), and the remaining 4,134 Practising Certificates were held by solicitors working in the rest of Ireland.

Over one in five practising solicitors working in-house

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. 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. There were 531 solicitors on the Roll (4%) classified by the Law Society as being in the full-time service of the State in 2025.

A total of 2,911 worked in-house with a private company in 2025, accounting for over one in five (23%) of all Practising Certificates.



9. Solicitors practising as a solicitor by providing legal services as an employee of a non-solicitor. Law Society (2026) *In-house solicitors – requirement to hold a practising certificate*. (Accessed on 28 April 2026). Available [here](#).

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

Statistics on Barrister Admissions for 2025

Barrister student admissions

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.

To enrol on the course, candidates must pass an entrance exam, which consists of five exam papers and is held in August every year.

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,¹¹ to be eligible to sit the entrance exam. The two-year Diploma in Legal Studies is primarily a course for people who do not hold a law degree.

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.

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

The following statistical trends are apparent in the numbers sitting the BL degree course entrance exams and enrolling on the course in 2025.

Increase in number of candidates sitting King's Inns entrance exam

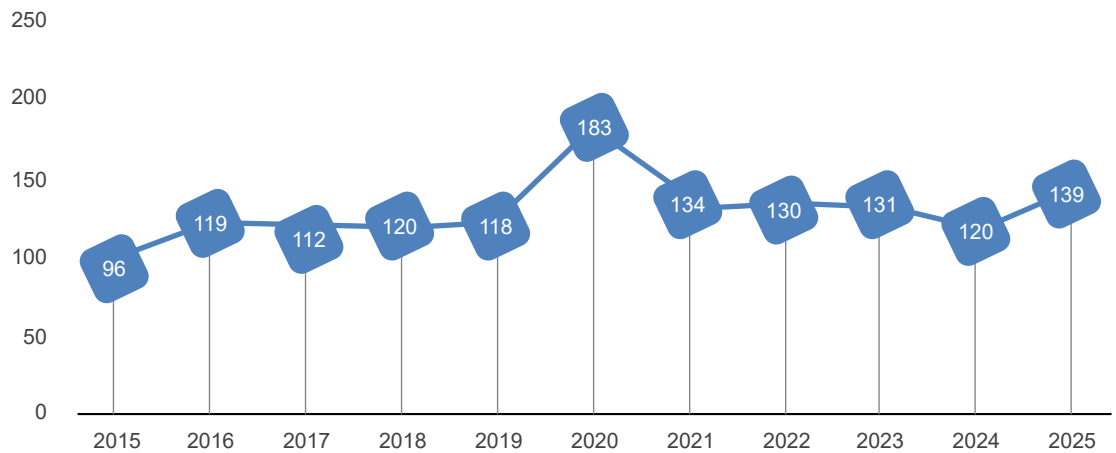
A total of 181 candidates sat the entrance exam for the BL degree course in 2025, up 25% from 2024, and 80% of the candidates passed the exam. Students who pass the entrance exam and are offered a place on the BL degree course may apply to defer their place to a subsequent year.

11. 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. (Accessed 23 April 2026). Available [here](#).

Increase in number of new barrister students

A total of 141 students started the BL degree course in 2025, up 16% from 120 in 2024. Two students on the modular course were granted a leave of absence, accordingly 139 students undertook the BL degree course in 2025.

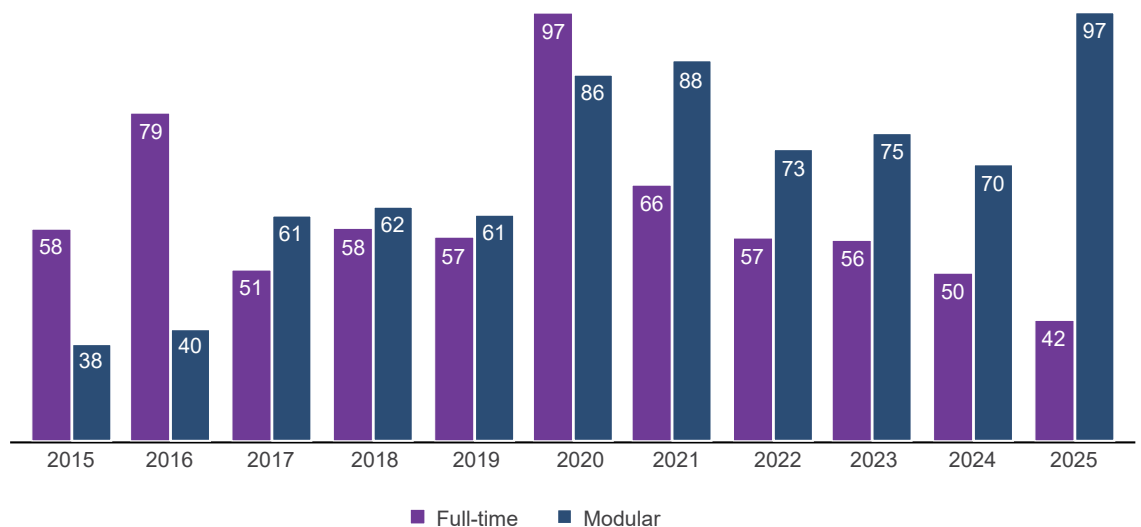
New barrister students 2015–2025



Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

The BL degree intake for 2025 consisted of 42 full-time students (30%) and 97 part-time students (70%). As can be seen from the chart below, the number of part-time barrister students has been steadily growing since 2015. In 2025, for the first time, the number of part-time students was over twice that of full-time students.

New barrister students: full-time and modular 2015–2025



Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

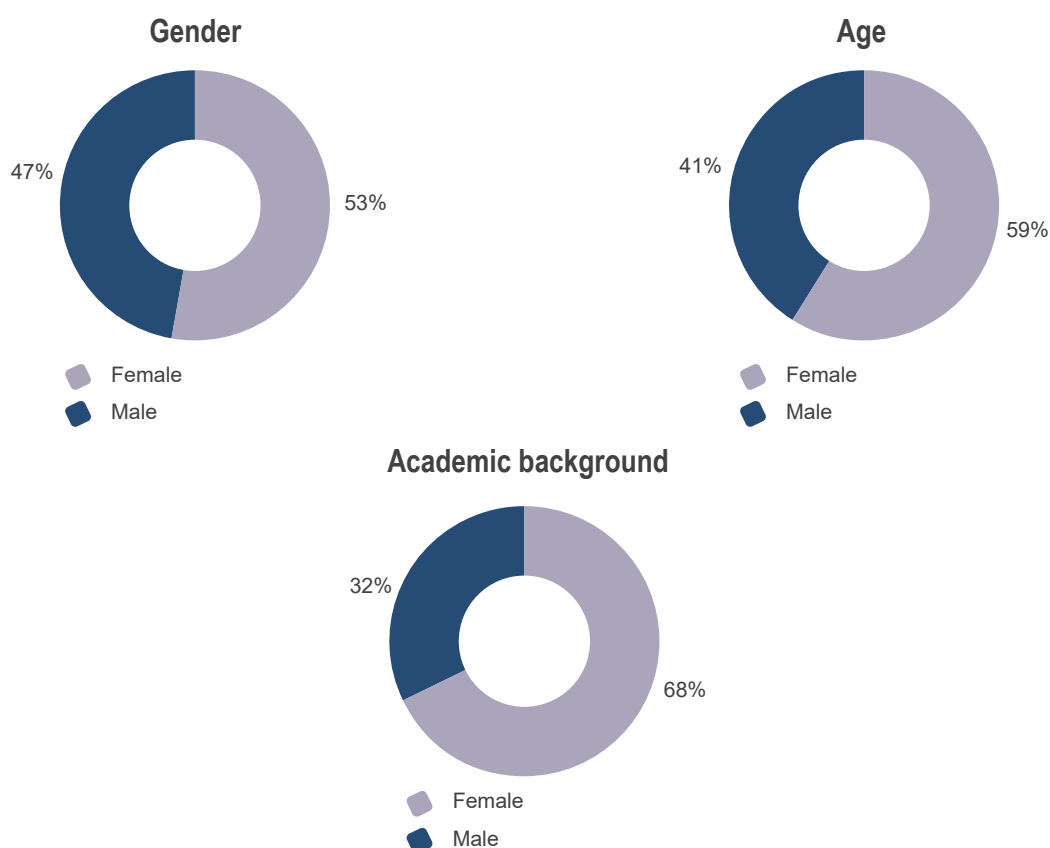
Diversity profile of new barrister students

This section contains demographic data for barristers who started on the BL degree course in 2025. It also shows the data separately for full-time and part-time students.

Of the 139 students who undertook the BL degree in 2025:

- » **Gender:** Broadly balanced with 53% identified as female, and 47% as male, compared to 2024 when 57% identified as female and the remaining 43% male.
- » **Age:** Fewer barrister students were in the 31 and over age category in 2025 (41%) compared to 2024 (46%).
- » **Academic background:** Fewer barrister students in 2025 (32%) 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), compared to 2024 (38%).

139 New barrister students



Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

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

In comparing full-time and part-time students, the data shows that females and males are more equally represented (51% female: 49% male) on the part-time course, compared to the full-time course (60% female: 40% male).

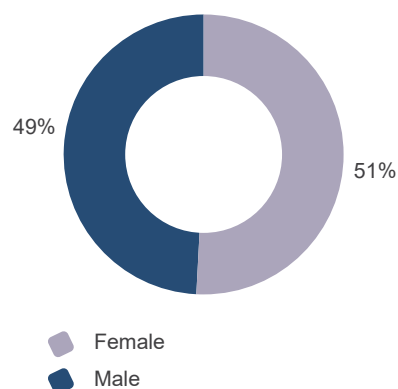
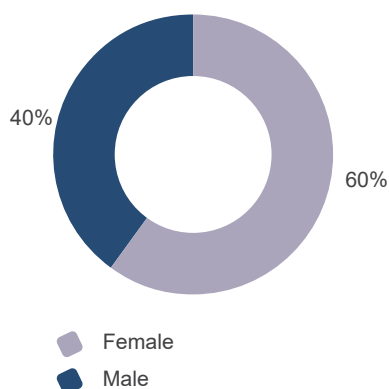
There is a higher proportion of students on the part-time course in the upper age categories (46% were aged 31 and over) compared to the full-time course (29% were aged 31 and over).

In relation to the route of admission to the BL degree course, a slightly higher proportion of enrolees on the part-time course (34%) held the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies than their full-time counterparts (26%).

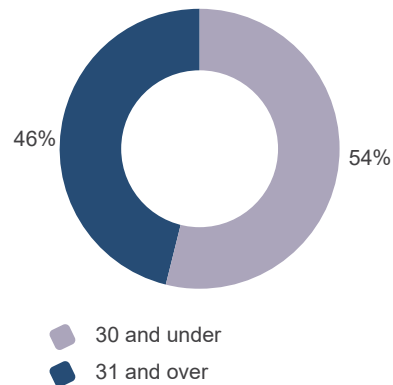
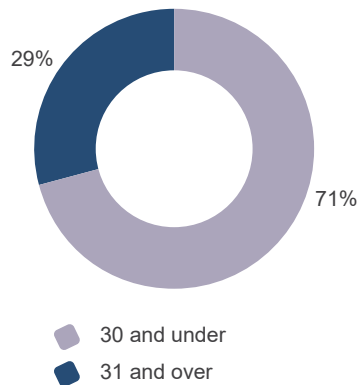
42 Full-time BL degree students

97 Part-time BL degree students

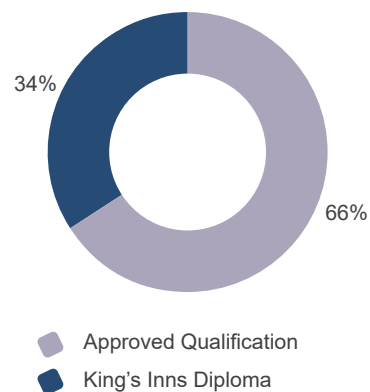
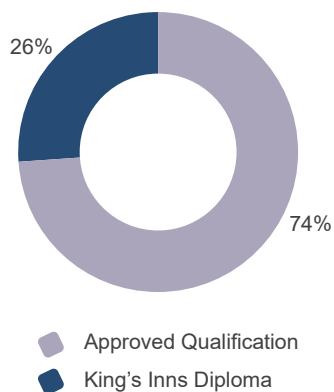
Gender



Age



Academic background



Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

Trends in barrister admissions

Those who wish to practise as a barrister in Ireland must first be “admitted” to the Barrister-of-Law degree.¹² Traditionally, the main route of admission to the barrister profession in Ireland is to complete the BL degree course at the King’s Inns.

In 2025, graduates who completed the full-time King’s Inns BL Degree course were significantly more likely to enter pupillage directly after graduating from King’s Inns, with 35 of 51 full-time graduates doing so, compared to 17 of 76 modular graduates.

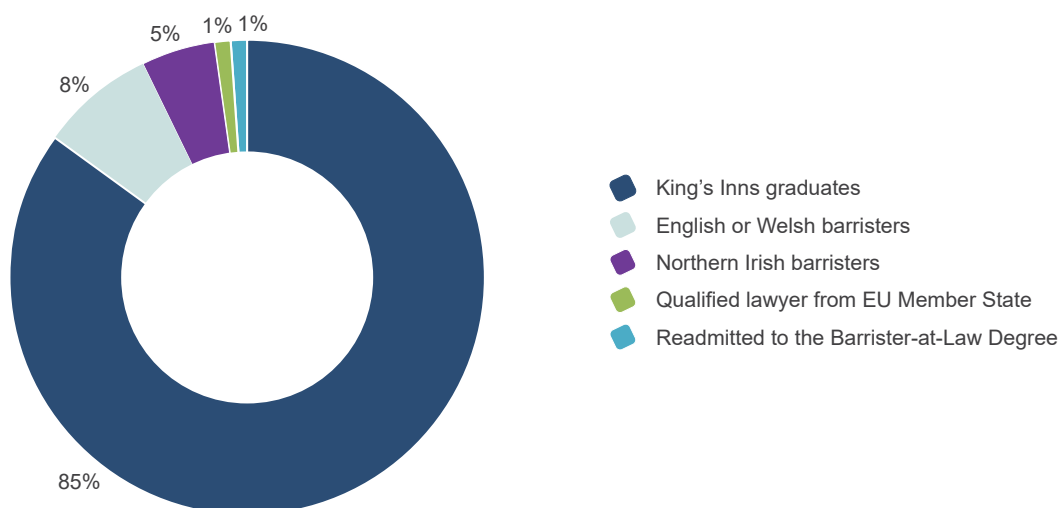
There is also a route for solicitors, barristers from Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and qualified lawyers from other jurisdictions to transfer to the BL degree without having studied the course at the King’s Inns.¹³

The following statistical trends are apparent in the numbers of persons admitted to practise as barristers in 2025.

Increase in barrister admissions

A total of 150 barristers were called to the Bar in 2025, this represents a 10% increase from the total of 136 in 2024. The majority were graduates of the King’s Inns BL degree course (127), as illustrated in the pie chart below.

Route of admission to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and call to the Bar in 2025



Source: Honorable Society of King’s Inns

12. 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.

13. The Honorable Society of King’s Inns (2021) *Education Rules*, Edition of June 2021. (Accessed 28 April 2026). Available [here](#).

Call to the Bar

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.¹⁴ 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.

Pupillage at the Law Library

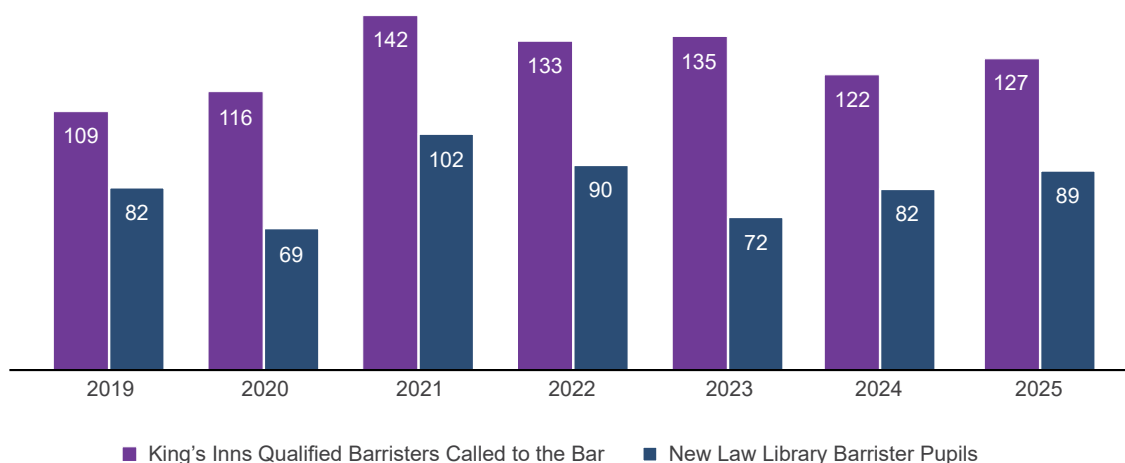
Newly admitted barristers must begin their membership of the Law Library at the start of the legal year each October.

Under The 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 163 masters on the Register of Masters List for the 2025/2026 legal year.¹⁵

Increase in newly qualified barristers joining the Law Library

In 2025 a total of 89 new Law Library members commenced pupillage at the start of the legal year in October 2025, up 9% from 82 in 2024. This represents 70% of graduates of the King’s Inns BL degree course, joining the Law Library and entering pupillage.

King's Inns qualified barristers called to the Bar and new Law Library barrister pupils 2019–2025



Source: Honorable Society of King’s Inns and The Bar of Ireland

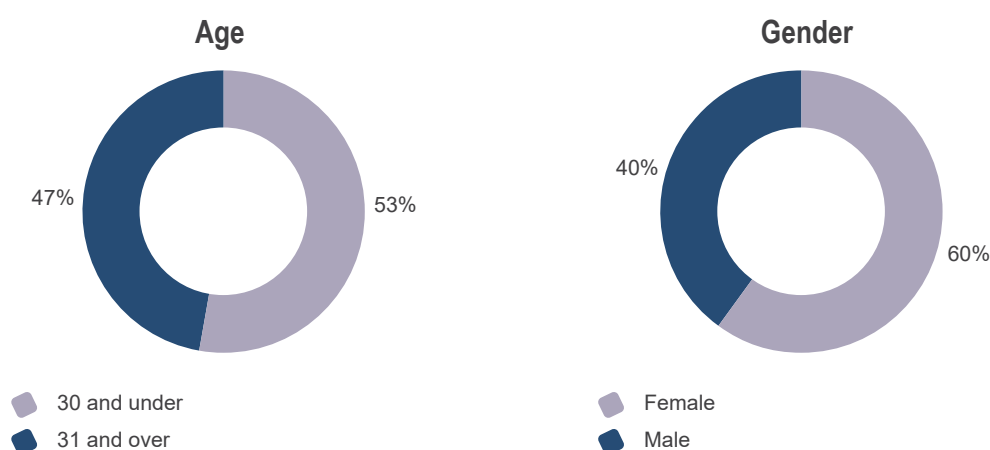
14. The figures given for those called to the Bar include BL graduates from the same year and also those from earlier years who have deferred their call to the Bar.

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

Diversity profile of new pupils

Of the 89 new pupils, 56 were called to the Bar in 2025 while 33 were called to the Bar between the years 1990–2024, but deferred commencing pupillage until 2025. Over half (60%) of the pupils identify as female and 40% identify as male. In terms of age profile, 53% of the new pupils were aged 30 and under and 47% were aged 31 and over.

89 New barrister pupils



Source: Bar of Ireland

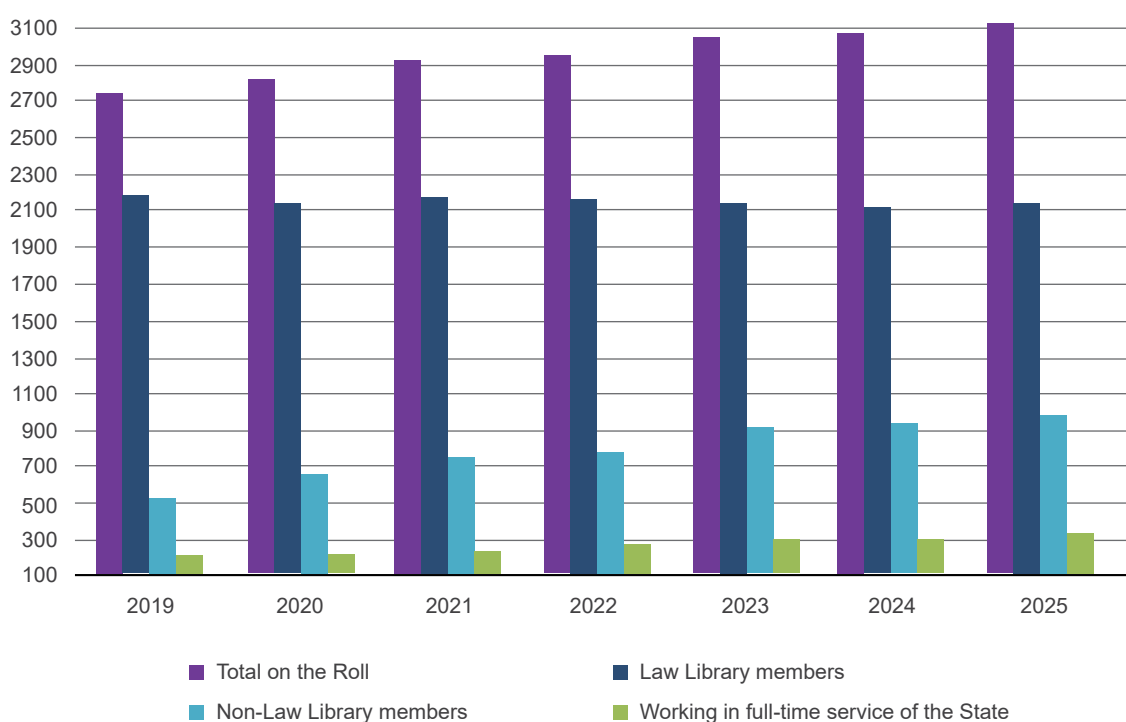
Roll of Practising Barristers

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.

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.

The number of barristers on the Roll at the end of 2025 was 3,128, an increase of 57 (2%) from 3,071 in 2024.

Barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers 2019–2024



Source: Legal Services Regulatory Authority

Increasing number of practising barristers working outside of Law Library

Approximately two thirds of barristers on the Roll at the end of 2025 (2,137) were members of the Law Library¹⁶ and 991 (32%) were not members of the Law Library.

While the number of Law Library practising barristers on the Roll has remained relatively steady since 2019, the number of practising barristers on the Roll that are working outside of the Law Library has almost doubled from 537 in 2019 to 991 in 2025.

Of the 991 barristers practising outside of the Law Library, over one third (349) were recorded on the Roll as working in the full-time service of the State representing a steady increase over the last five years.

16. There were 2,137 members of the Law Library on the Roll of Practising Barrister on 31 December 2025. The Bar of Ireland confirmed to the LSRA on 15 January 2026 that there were 2,130 members Law Library on 31 December 2025. Eight barristers advised The Bar of Ireland that they were leaving membership but did not contact the LSRA requesting an amendment to their details or voluntary removal by 31 December 2025. One Law Library member was on the Roll as a barrister who was not a member of the Law Library because they did not request a change to their details by the end of 2025.

Breaking Down Barriers

In early 2021, the LSRA began examining economic and other barriers facing many aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers. This was following a request from the then Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, who asked the LSRA to pay particular attention to equity of access and entry to the legal professions, with the objective of achieving greater diversity. This work culminated in the *Breaking Down Barriers* report, which was submitted to the Minister in January 2024 and set out 32 recommendations to address the challenges identified.

The Minister welcomed these recommendations as “*meaningful reforms that will make a real difference*” and requested the LSRA to prepare an implementation plan, with progress indicators and timelines, and to provide six-monthly progress reports to the Department. The LSRA published its *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan* in September 2024, which was noted by Government in October 2024.

For the second year, this report includes additional information, summarising work undertaken by the professional bodies on the following three recommendations from its *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan*, 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.

Recommendation 14: Funded access programmes

The Law Society, the Honorable Society of King’s Inns and the Bar of Ireland should evaluate the effectiveness and impact of their existing funded access programmes and consider their expansion (e.g. bursaries, awards, sponsorships etc., targeted internships for under-represented groups, philanthropic funding for bursaries).

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

18. Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2024) *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan*, September (2024). Available [here](#).

Recommendation 1: Flexible training routes

This section summarises the information provided to the LSRA by the Law Society and the King's Inns on their existing flexible training routes and their impact. It also outlines new initiatives progressed by the training providers and the anticipated impact.

Law Society initiatives and their impact

PPC Hybrid

- » A 12-month part-time version of the Professional Practice Course introduced in 2019.
- » The course combines online lectures with in-person weekend sessions at Blackhall Place in Dublin. As a result, trainees are no longer required to relocate to Dublin for extended periods, and it permits them to stay in full-time employment while completing the academic component.

Impact

- » The course continues to facilitate 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.

New initiative: Modular PPC Hybrid

- » From 2027, a new form of the PPC Hybrid will be offered on a modular basis.

Anticipated impact

- » The modular PPC Hybrid will allow trainees to access the course over a longer timeframe to best meet their own individual needs.

New initiative: Apprenticeship model of training

- » The Law Society is examining a solicitor apprenticeship model as a new route to qualification for school leavers, and legal executives/law clerks.
- » The drafting of new Professional Solicitor Apprenticeship Regulations has commenced. Once approved by the Education Committee and Council, they will require final approval from the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

Anticipated impact

- » Solicitor apprenticeships will lower entry barriers, particularly for individuals who might not have access to the traditional academic pathways into law or who may have financial barriers that prevent full-time study.
- » Apprenticeships will enable trainees to remain in their community during training, which may provide a pipeline for regional legal services.

King's Inns initiatives and their impact

New initiative: Adoption of a Recognition of Prior Learning policy

- » The Recognition of Prior Learning policy is a mechanism through which prior learning is identified, assessed and formally recognised by educational institutions within programmes on the National Framework of Qualifications. It recognises that knowledge, skills and competencies can be acquired from a range of learning experiences.

Anticipated impact

- » Adopted by the King's Inns in 2025, it will enable an increased level of flexibility in recognising prior learning undertaken by applicants to the Diploma programme, widening participation, and enhancing access to the programme for mature entrants.

Study skills course prior to the Diploma in Legal Studies

- » The provision of an online course, covering a range of study skills aimed at mature entrants and those who have been out of education for some time.

The Diploma in Legal Studies

- » A two-year part-time course, open to candidates with no third-level education and graduates from disciplines other than law, leading to a qualification which allows holders to sit the entrance exam for the King's Inns' Barrister-at-Law degree.
- » The course takes place online to facilitate access, and is taught at evenings and weekends, allowing students to work full-time while studying if necessary.

Impact

- » In 2025, 32% of new BL degree student barristers, did not have an approved legal qualification and instead held the Diploma in Legal Studies.

The modular BL degree and hybrid elements of both BL degree programmes

- » Introduced in 2008, the two-year part-time modular course, is primarily taught at weekends so that students can work full-time while studying if necessary.
- » The hybrid delivery model is also a key feature of the BL degree in both the full-time and modular programmes. The modular version is particularly designed to accommodate students with other responsibilities including full-time jobs.

Impact

- » Following the trend in recent years, in 2025 the number of modular students continued to outnumber full-time students, with a higher proportion aged 31 and over, compared to their full-time counterparts.

Recommendation 13: Access initiatives at second and third-level

This section summarises the information provided to the LSRA by the Law Society, the King's Inns, and The Bar of Ireland on the effectiveness and impact of their existing access initiatives at second and third-level. It also outlines new initiatives planned by the professional bodies and the anticipated impact.

Law Society access initiatives and their impact

Solicitors of the Future programme (Second-level)

- » An annual week-long programme for transition year (TY) students during the school mid-term break. It provides interactive workshops and mock trials onsite at the Law Society campus.
- » It promotes early awareness of legal processes, civic rights, and careers in law for second-level students and helps schools, that might otherwise lack resources, to give pupils exposure to the legal profession.

Impact

- » In early 2025, 40 TY students participated, and overall, around 360 students have taken part since 2017. Approximately 20% of participants in recent years have come from DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools.

Street Law programme (Second-level)

- » An annual initiative, which places trainee solicitors into partnering DEIS schools to teach law to transition year students.

Impact

- » Since 2013, 3,000 students have participated in the programme.

Transition Year law module (Second-level)

- » Programme provides free access to presentations and lessons for both teachers and students on legal topics such as criminal law, climate justice, human rights and juvenile justice, delivered on a flexible timetable through weekly video lessons and interactive content.

Impact

- » 2,000 students took part in the TY Law Module in 2024/early 2025.

Becoming a Solicitor symposium (Third-level)

- » An annual online event for third-level students which offers presentations, panels and Q&A sessions on career pathways, flexible training options, and funding supports. Students are provided direct interaction with Law Society staff, trainees and practicing solicitors.

King's Inns access initiatives and their impact

New initiative: Pilot programme for secondary schools

- » Currently at the design stage, this programme will provide outreach to secondary schools, particularly DEIS schools. It will involve a mixture of experiential learning and practical advice.

Anticipated impact

- » The King's Inns will seek feedback from schools involved, if upon review the programme is found to be effective, the King's Inns plans to expand the programme.

Open day (Third-level)

- » For third-level and mature students interested in King's Inns programmes. Taking place on a Saturday to facilitate attendance by those based outside the Dublin area.

Impact

- » The number of attendees in 2025 (160) was almost double that of 2024 (87).

Be a law student for a day (Third-level)

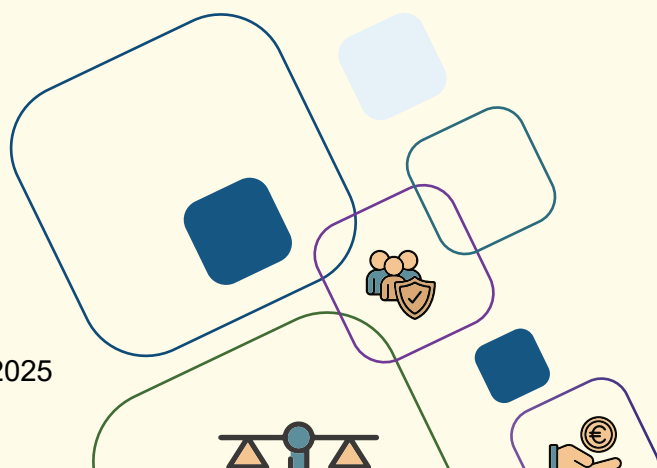
- » An annual online event, primarily aimed at adults who may be interested in undertaking the Diploma in Legal Studies. This event is also held on a Saturday, to facilitate attendance.

Impact

- » In 2025, 43 people attended the event.

Engagement events for second-level and third-level students

- » Tours of the King's Inns, for approximately 100 participants of The Bar of Ireland's TY Programme, for other school groups and for students of an Education Training Board.
- » Presentations at nine university law schools, institutes of further education or technical universities.
- » Attendance at a secondary school careers fair and seven university Law Career fairs.



The Bar of Ireland's access initiatives and their impact

Look into Law (Second-level)

- » A Transition Year programme that includes delivery of an online Q&A event open to all schools where a panel of barristers answer students' questions about a career as a barrister.
- » 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 mock trials.¹⁹ Following feedback from participants, the hybrid programme has been updated for 2026 to consist of one day of online content and a three-day onsite component.

Impact

- » The programme for 2025 received a 4.2/5 score for participant satisfaction with the programme. Feedback collected indicated that the programme has a positive impact on a student's intention to pursue a career in law.
- » The longer-term impact of the programme is starting to emerge at university level law career fairs and in the annual new intake of pupils, where participants are reporting that the TY programme was a factor in their decision to pursue a career in law.

New initiative: Expansion of online component of hybrid programme

- » The online day of content will now be open to all transition year students that wish to avail of it.

Internship programme (Third-level)

- » A two-week funded 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.

New initiative: Expansion of internship programme

- » The internship programme will be expanded in 2026 to make more places available.

Engagement events for second-level and third-level students

- » Promotion of their outreach work on their Instagram account.
- » Podcast interview on Pathways to the Bar with UCC Law Society.²⁰
- » A programme of activity across universities including attendance at approximately 10 -12 law career fairs annually to promote the barrister profession.

19. 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.

20. UCC Law Society Podcast (2025) 'Pathways to the Bar' Series 2 Episode 5, (8 April 2025). Available [here](#).

Recommendation 14: Funded access programmes

This section summarises the information provided to the LSRA by the Law Society, the King's Inns, and The Bar of Ireland on the effectiveness and impact of their existing funded access programmes. It also outlines new funding opportunities progressed by the professional bodies and the anticipated impact.

Law Society funded access programmes and their impact*

The Law Society Access Programme

- » The programme was introduced in 2001 to provide financial and practical assistance to financially and socio-economically disadvantaged students from FE-1 exam stage through to qualification as a solicitor.

Impact

- » 126 individuals are currently pursuing FE-1 exams and receiving financial support from the Access Scholarship Scheme.
- » A further 86 trainees have successfully passed the FE-1 exams with Access funding and are currently progressing through the PPC or the in-office training period.
- » 267 trainees have qualified as solicitors with financial support provided through the programme.

New initiative: Introduction of member contribution

- » In 2025, the Law Society introduced a member contribution at the Practising Certificate renewal stage to sustain funding and access supports.

Impact

- » This initiative generated an additional €170,000 for grant-funded access programmes, as a result, the Law Society expanded the Access Programme by funding five additional PPC places and twenty additional FE-1 examination places.

New grant: The Independent Law Centre Traineeship Grant

- » In 2025, a new grant scheme received approval for funding, worth €25,000.

Anticipated Impact

- » Commencing in 2026, there will be an annual grant to support solicitor training contracts with an independent law centre.

*Details of financial supports for trainee solicitors are available at Table 15 in Annex C.

King's Inns funded access programmes and their impact*

The Maurice Gaffney Scholarship

- » Since 2017 this scholarship is available for a limited number of students each year who have experienced a challenge or disadvantage in their life.
- » The scholarship provides total or partial payment of the fees for the Diploma in Legal Studies and any repeat assessments on course up to the limit of attempts permitted under the Education Rules of King's Inns.
- » If the Maurice Gaffney scholar proceeds to undertake the entrance examination to the degree of Barrister-at-Law course, the scholarship covers the total or partial fee for one attempt at that examination.

The McCarthy Bursary

- » Annual financial support for a student, who has overcome a physical, social or financial challenge, to undertake the degree of BL degree course.

Impact

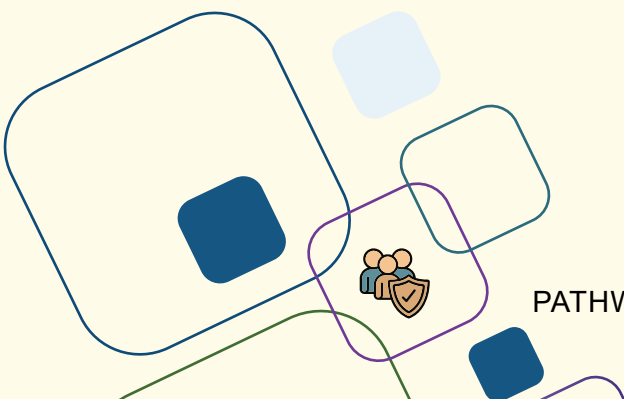
- » Since 2002 there have been 23 recipients of the award to date:
 - 62% are members of the Law Library
 - 14% are in other legal roles including academic
 - 5% are members of the Judiciary
 - 5% are a practising barrister but not a Law Library member
 - 5% have a senior policy role

The Denham Fellowship

- » A funded access initiative jointly operated with The Bar of Ireland which supports two prospective barristers each year from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to do the BL degree course.

Impact

- » Launched in 2017, 17 students have availed of the award, 15 of which have completed and two are currently on the BL degree course.



Bar of Ireland funded access programmes and their impact*

The Denham Fellowship

- » A funded access initiative jointly operated with the King's Inns, it supports two prospective barristers each year from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds with their professional practice at the Law Library.

Impact

- » An assessment of the longer-term impact of the programme will be commenced in 2027.

*Details of financial supports for barrister students and barrister pupils is available at Table 16 in Annex C.

Submissions relevant to the *Breaking Down Barriers* project

In its submission, the UCD Sutherland School of Law states that greater support is needed from law firms, professional and regulatory bodies to provide early legal exposure through paid internships and to open professional networks through more structured and inclusive approaches to help create fairer access to the legal profession.

It also states that the recruitment processes of law firms can be intimidating and may place undue emphasis on background “fit” or “polish” rather than ability. It states that recruitment should be more transparent and focused on skills and potential, with reduced reliance on background indicators.

The submission also highlights that expectations around how to speak, present, and network can also leave capable students feeling out of place despite their interest and potential and students without existing connections face barriers in accessing informal networks, mentoring, and an understanding of how the profession operates.

“The aim should be to change the system rather than expecting individuals to adjust themselves or accept a diminished experience simply because they need a different mode of study.”

- University College Dublin Sutherland School of Law



Key Developments and Stakeholder Views

The LSRA places significant importance on the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise. This includes ensuring that the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers and solicitors in that year is consistent with the public interest and the availability of such services at a reasonable cost.

Section 33(1)(c) of the Act requires the LSRA to provide an annual assessment on:

“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.”

For its statutory consultation under section 33(2) of the Act, the LSRA 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 2025.
2. The costs of legal services in 2025 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.

In its previous six annual reports under section 33 to the Minister, the LSRA provided an overview of available 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.

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 LSRA 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 international and national reports, surveys, labour market data and industry commentary which are summarised below. The LSRA will continue to closely monitor and report on available data on legal services demand and costs in its annual reports to the Minister.

This section provides an update on key developments in these areas in 2025. 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 and labour market overview 2025

The Irish economy performed well, and towards the end of the year was considered the fastest-growing advanced economy in the world.²¹ Ireland's strong economic performance was supported by an international trading environment, which remained robust this year.²² Average weekly earnings were the highest on record, and in Q3 were up almost 50% than the same time 10 years previous.²³

Employment in Ireland continued to grow, however the rate of increase moderated. The rate of unemployment has increased marginally, with a slight weakening in the labour market.²⁴ The estimated number of people in employment in Q4 stood at 2,961,300, up 2% from Q4 2024.²⁵

As noted elsewhere in this report, the number of practising solicitors at the end of 2025 was 12,961 and the number of practising barristers at the end of 2025 was 3,128. The combined total of 16,089 legal practitioners represents approximately 0.5% of the total number of people recorded as in employment in Ireland in 2025.²⁶

The SOLAS National Skills Bulletin is an annual report that analyses Ireland's labour market to identify current and emerging skills needs across occupations and sectors. According to the 2025 National Skills Bulletin (which reports on data from 2024) there have been fluctuations in employment levels for the legal occupation group (which combines solicitors, barristers, judges and related professionals) over the five year period 2019–2024, but no reports of shortages in this category.²⁷

Data from the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice indicates that the number of lawyers in Ireland per inhabitant is over twice that of the European average.²⁸

21. Burke-Kennedy, E. (2025) 'Despite global headwinds, the Irish economy is projected to grow by almost 11%' *The Irish Times*, 24 October 2025. Available [here](#).

22. Barrett, A. O'Toole, C. O'Shea, D. ESRI (2025) *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, Winter 2025. Available [here](#).

23. Central Statistics Office (2025) *Ireland 2025: The Year in Numbers* (website). (Accessed on 13 April 2025). Available [here](#).

24. Barrett, A. O'Toole, C. O'Shea, D. ESRI (2025) *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, Winter 2025. Available [here](#).

25. Central Statistics Office (2025) *Ireland 2025: Labour Force Survey Quarter 4 2025* (website). (Accessed on 13 April 2025). Available [here](#).

26. Calculation based on the CSO estimated number of people in employment in Q4 2025.

27. SOLAS (2025) *National Skills Bulletin: A Report by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council*, October. Available [here](#).

28. Two studies prepared for the European Commission by CEPEJ (the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice) on the functioning of judicial systems in the EU Member, Part 2 - Country fiches for each EU Member States (2017) published 26 April 2019, P.370. Available [here](#).

Internationalisation of Irish legal services market

In the wake of Brexit, Ireland is primed as a key jurisdiction to conduct legal business.²⁹ The Government's Ireland for Law initiative, which began in 2019, continued in 2025 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, focusing on key sectors such as aviation finance, funds, insurance, tech, pharma, and life sciences.

In the four years between 2019 and 2023, 25 international law firms opened an office in Dublin.³⁰ However after a few years of expansion there are indications that the growth of international law firms opening Dublin offices has slowed.³¹

Demand for solicitors at a senior level continues to outpace supply

Despite the slowdown of international entrants to the legal services market, the market remains competitive due to ongoing demand for skilled solicitors and continued lateral hiring between large law firms.³²

Recruitment challenges are particularly apparent at a senior level, with some Dublin law firms recruiting from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa in recent years.³³ However there are indications that retention rates may be improving, with the rate of people moving and the availability of jobs at a junior and mid-level reducing.³⁴

Given the ongoing competition for experienced solicitors, many Irish firms are increasingly placing greater emphasis on graduate recruitment and investing in training and development from an early stage.³⁵ Newly qualified solicitors can expect a salary of between €65,000 and €80,000 in the leading law firms in Dublin.³⁶

Recruitment and retention challenges for small and regional legal practices

Despite the record high number of solicitors with Practising Certificates, reports of recruitment and retention issues amongst solicitors continued throughout 2025.

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

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

31. Carman, D. (November 2025) 'Culture war: Dublin elite battles to recruit and retain the best', Reports Legal, Ireland Report'. Available [here](#).

32. Carman, D. (November 2025) 'Culture war: Dublin elite battles to recruit and retain the best', Reports Legal, Ireland Report'. Available [here](#).

33. Carman, D. (November 2025) 'Keane McDonald: A recruiter's view on what young Irish lawyers really want', Reports Legal, Ireland Report'. Available [here](#).

34. Byrne, G. (March 2025) 'Consolidation and Specialisation', Business Plus, Issue 2, 2025. Available [here](#).

35. Carman, D. (November 2025) 'Culture war: Dublin elite battles to recruit and retain the best', Reports Legal, Ireland Report' Available [here](#).

36. Legal Cheek, 'The Firms Most List – Most money: Newly qualified' [website] (accessed 16 April 2026). Available [here](#).

The competitive draw of Dublin with large corporate firms that offer higher salaries and a greater career variety, makes it difficult for regional practices to match what the capital can offer. Smaller firms outside the cities face greater challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified solicitors.³⁷ Of the 12,430 Practising Certificates held by solicitors at year-end 2025, less than one third (4,134) of Practising Certificates were held by practitioners outside Dublin city, an indication that the solicitor profession is concentrated in the capital.³⁸ A further shortage of solicitors is expected in rural areas where 65% of sole practitioners are over 50 years of age.³⁹

According to a KPMG report prepared for the Law Society and The Bar of Ireland, since 2011, the number of people working in legal activities per capita has slightly declined across Ireland, when adjusting for population growth. The west of Ireland has seen the most decline, with an 8% decrease in the past 11 years.⁴⁰

Lower pay levels affecting the provision of State-funded legal services

The comparatively lower pay levels within the Legal Aid Board (LAB) relative to other public sector legal roles have been identified as affecting the ability to attract and retain solicitors, resulting in a significant gap between demand for civil legal aid services and the availability of solicitors.⁴¹

“This leads to difficulties in hiring and retaining LAB staff, which in turn leads to critical legal aid deserts in some areas and an overreliance on the private practitioner scheme, where there is a low take up due to the low level of payment.”⁴²

Statistical information provided by the LAB shows that at the end of December 2025, the maximum waiting time for a first consultation with a solicitor from the private practitioner scheme in Sligo was 64 weeks, and the average maximum waiting time for a first consultation stood at 27 weeks, over the 31 LAB law centres.⁴³

The limited availability of State-funded solicitors services is not occurring in isolation, it coincides with reports of a substantial exodus of barristers from the civil legal aid system after several years of practice.⁴⁴ According to the Bar Council, higher levels of specialisation and preparation are required for increasingly complex cases which has meant that civil legal aid work is no longer economically viable for many barristers, and those that are undertaking this work are doing so for vocational reasons.⁴⁵

37 Law Society Gazette, ‘Thrive to survive’ (Law Society Gazette, 9 March 2026). Accessed 23 March. Available [here](#).

38 Ibid.

39 Law Society Gazette, ‘Shaping Ireland’s legal future’ (Law Society Gazette, 12 March 2025) accessed 16 April 2026. Available [here](#).

40 KPMG (2025) *Economic Impacts of the Irish legal profession*, October 2025. Available [here](#).

41 Statement from Legal Aid Board CEO to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration 17 February 2026. (Accessed 14 April 2026) Available [here](#).

42 Opening Statement of FLAC Chief Executive to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration 17 February 2026. Available [here](#).

43 Legal Aid Board, Waiting Times [website] (accessed 14 April 2026) Available [here](#).

44 Statement from designate representative Cliona Cleary from The Council of the Bar of Ireland the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration 17 February 2026. Available [here](#).

45 Statement from the Chair of the Bar of Ireland Sean Guerin on behalf of the Bar Council of Ireland to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration 17 February 2026. (Accessed 14 April 2026). Available [here](#).

Extent and areas of demand

Findings from a 2025 OECD survey examining the extent of legal need in Ireland, showed that justice problems in Ireland are widespread and ubiquitous. The survey which used a sample size of just over 2,400 adults found that 80% of people experienced at least one justice problem in the last two years, with the most prevalent issues relating to products and services, money and debt, neighbour disputes and housing.⁴⁶

The preliminary analysis from the survey found that of the respondents that reported having a justice problem in the preceding two years, 66% were able to get all the expert help they needed.⁴⁷

In its submission to the LSRA, the Citizens Information Board states that its staff routinely deal with queries from clients in need of legal expertise. It highlighted that there is an ongoing barrier to clients accessing solicitors to assist with the creation of an Enduring Power of Attorney. In 2025, there was an almost 30% increase, compared to 2024 in queries relating to the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015. It also highlighted that there is likely to be increased demand in access to solicitors through the Legal Aid Board arising from the implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact anticipated in June 2026.

The majority of referrals that Citizen's Information staff made to the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) were queries related to areas of employment law, family law and immigration law and in 2024, 1,706 people were given appointments with approximately 250 volunteer FLAC lawyers.

According to its submission to the LSRA, the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) anticipates an increase in the level of demand for the services of practising solicitors. The Office has seen a growth in solicitor numbers over the last five years (approximately 30%). It believes that this growth within the Office is potentially illustrative of an overall increase in demand for the services of practising solicitors in 2025.

Likewise, in its submission to the LSRA, the Dublin City Council Law Agent and Law Department notes that demand for in-house legal services continues to grow in terms of the increasing complexity of legal issues arising and new areas of law.

At a corporate level, according to the KPMG report, the top four industry sectors that engage with legal professionals are financial services; technology, media and entertainment and telecommunications; head office and management consultancy; and manufacturing.⁴⁸ Expansion in these areas has led to demand for highly skilled solicitors, particularly those with experience in complex legal matters like mergers and acquisitions, intellectual property, and international trade law.⁴⁹

46. OECD (2025) *Enhancing Access to Justice through People-Centred Justice*, (November 2025). Available [here](#).

47. Ibid.

48. KPMG (2025) *Economic Impacts of the Irish legal profession*, October 2025. Available [here](#).

49. Law Society Gazette, 'Shaping Ireland's legal future' (Law Society Gazette, 12 March 2025). Accessed 16 April 2026. Available [here](#).

Courts Service of Ireland data

Information provided in the Courts Service of Ireland Annual report 2024⁵⁰ gives an overview of activity in the courts for that year. Although the information provided does not give a breakdown of the proportion of cases in which a legal practitioner was involved, the data may give some insight into the level of demand for solicitors and barristers for the year 2024.

Criminal Business by Offence ⁵¹	Full-time	Hybrid
	2024	2023
Misdemeanour and/or minor criminal offences: District Court	350,852	329,714
Serious criminal offences: Central Criminal Court; Special Criminal Court; Circuit Criminal Court	22,822	19,569
Appeals: Supreme Court; Court of Appeal; Circuit Court	16,484	17,773
Total	390,158	367,056

Civil Business by Jurisdiction	Full-time	Hybrid
	2024	2023
District Court	136,120	133,000
Circuit Court	25,772	28,954
High Court	21,371	17,346
Court of Appeal	293	325
Supreme Court	231	175
Total	183,787	179,800

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

While accurate metrics for total national demand for legal services are limited by data constraints, multiple indicators such as economic contributions, and sectoral engagement, indicates that demand for barristers' and solicitors' services in 2025 is not only sustained but is increasingly exerting upward pressures on the likes of labour costs and capacity.

- The Law Society of Ireland

"The continued application of FEMPI-era pay cuts, long after the process of public sector pay restoration has been completed, is wholly unjustifiable. The Government should implement the immediate and complete reversal of those pay cuts. It is vital that equal priority be given to addressing pay structures and rates within the civil legal aid system. The right of access to justice for all citizens depends on ensuring that practitioners are adequately supported to continue this essential work."

- The Bar of Ireland

50. Courts Service (2024) Courts Service Annual Report 2024. (Accessed 23 April 2026) Available [here](#).

51. A person appearing before the courts may have more than one offence.

Costs of legal services provided by barristers and solicitors

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. However, some reports indicate that legal costs, in particular litigation costs, in Ireland, are high.

The European Commission 2025 Rule of Law Report for Ireland notes that concerns on the issues of costs linked to litigation persist, but that Ireland has made

*“some further progress on taking 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.”*⁵²

According to the 2025 report from the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council, litigation in Ireland is very slow and expensive, with legal fees often equalling or exceeding compensation and litigation expenses are among the highest in the EU.⁵³

The report identifies personal injury claims *“as a major cost driver for businesses in Ireland through their significant influence on insurance premiums and risk assessments.”* The report noted that legal costs in personal injury litigation are disproportionately high, and in some cases, legal fees equalled or exceeded the claimant’s compensation.⁵⁴

The report also identifies slow progress on civil justice reform which inflates litigation costs stating *“urgent action is needed to modernise the operation of Ireland’s Courts, improve data integration, and strengthen competition in legal service provision.”*⁵⁵

The OECD Economic Survey of Ireland 2025 identifies a lack of transparency around legal costs as affecting competitiveness amongst legal service providers.⁵⁶

*“Comprehensive information on the detailed components of legal costs by type of litigated and settled cases, and on cost variation by provider and over time, is lacking. In addition to hindering evidence-based policymaking, this also increases inefficiencies, as the information asymmetries generated by weak transparency impose indirect costs on consumers of litigation services due to more muted competition.”*⁵⁷

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.

⁵² European Commission (2025) 2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Ireland, Commission Staff Working Document, 8 July 2025. Available [here](#).

⁵³ National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (2025) Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2025, July 2025. Available [here](#).

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ OECD (2025) OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland February 2025. Available [here](#).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

SPPI data for 2025 shows that service prices for the combined grouping of legal, accounting, PR and business management consultancy services in the year were on average 9.1% higher in Q4 2025 when compared to the same period in the previous year. In the same period (Quarter 4 2024 – Quarter 4 2025) there was a 3.6% increase for all service producer prices.⁵⁸

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

“Assessing the costs of legal services in Ireland shows a nuanced and evolving landscape. In many market segments, legal fees continue to reflect professional input costs and the complexity of client needs, especially in specialised areas.”

- The Law Society of Ireland

“Eligibility for civil legal aid is complex, and income thresholds have not kept pace with inflation or changes to the social welfare code, resulting in many on low incomes not being eligible.... Additionally, a client may qualify for legal aid but still have difficulty paying the contribution fee to the Legal Aid Board.”

- The Citizens Information Board

“The most optimal manner to positively impact on legal costs is through a combination of four measures:

- 1. Increased investment in the justice system, in particular the number of judges and support staff, better case management and adoption of technology.*
- 2. Investment in effective civil legal aid to ensure access to justice for all regardless of means.*
- 3. The introduction of non-binding guidelines in respect of legal costs.*
- 4. A reduction in state-imposed revenue on a Bill of Costs.”*

- The Bar of Ireland

“The high and perceived high cost of legal services is preventing people on lower income levels from equal access to justice. Recognised and regulated legal executives professionals could assist in providing access to lower cost legal advice for all consumers, especially in circumstances where Legal Aid is limited or restricted and is not accessible to many due to means testing or lengthy waiting lists.”

- Irish Institute of Legal Executives

58. Central Statistics Office (2025) Services Producer Price Index Experimental (Selected Services) Quarter 4 2025, (Accessed on 16 April 2026). Available [here](#).

Education and training standards for persons admitted to practise

Summary and key developments in 2025

The LSRA's work in the area of legal practitioner education and training reform continued in 2025, with a focus on implementation of reforms set out in the LSRA's 2020 report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*.⁵⁹

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 *Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee* (the LPET).⁶⁰

In 2025 the interim Education and Training Committee met for the first time and commenced work on its prescribed programme of work. At the end of 2025, following a competitive tendering process, the consulting firm Forvis Mazars, was appointed to develop the National Competency Framework for solicitors and barristers.

Work commenced on developing processes to allow the LPET Committee develop standards for accreditation for both new and existing legal education and training providers. This included a review of the current higher education landscape to establish how the LPET Committee should operate within it.

Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan

During the year under review, the LSRA worked closely with the other members of the *Breaking Down Barriers* Implementation Working Group (the Law Society of Ireland, the King's Inns and The Bar of Ireland). The group met on four occasions, to progress the 32 recommendations in *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan* which was submitted to the Minister for Justice, in September 2024.⁶¹

Information on progress made on recommendations relating to increasing flexible training routes, and access initiatives, including funded access initiatives is available in section four of this report.

The LSRA will continue to engage with the professional bodies and other relevant stakeholders to tackle economic and other barriers facing aspiring and early career legal professionals to widen access to the profession and, in doing so, support the development of a profession that better reflects the diversity of the population in Ireland.

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

60. The establishment of the LPET Committee requires some legislative amendment, in the meantime and interim Education and Training Committee was established under section 16 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 in September 2023 to lay the foundations and build the framework for the LPET Committee.

61. Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2024) *Breaking Down Barriers Implementation Plan*, September (2024). Available [here](#).

Additions made to the PPC core-syllabus

In its submission, the Law Society notes that as part of the first biennial review of the 'fused' PPC, additional changes have been incorporated into the core-syllabus. These changes include the addition of a new 'Introduction to Specialist Areas of Practice' course, to cover introductory content on family law, taxation law, and criminal litigation, and greater coverage of the use of AI in the legal content.

Enhanced standardisation, consistency and oversight of pupillage

In its submission, The Bar of Ireland notes that it has progressed a focused programme of work to enhance the standardisation, consistency and oversight of pupillage. This will include refinement of the aims of pupillage and a consultation to identify learning outcomes for pupillage and the core competencies required for independent practice. These learning outcomes are designed to support greater consistency of pupillage across diverse practice settings. Updated guidelines for pupils and masters will be published in the coming months.

Views of respondents on education and training standards

"In general, the overall standard of education and training of trainees and newly qualified solicitors is quite high. We have been happy with the knowledge gained by the trainees in the main areas that they have studied. There is a danger however that the training has become or is becoming too narrow and focussed on the needs of the "big firms" with an overly heavy emphasis on large scale commercial issues....We would welcome further training options for regulatory enforcement and quasi criminal proceedings."

- Dublin City Council, Law Agent and Law Department

There is a "need for appropriate training and guidelines for legal practitioners in communicating with people who may lack decision-making capacity....An important role for the Authority (the LSRA) lies in it ensuring that legal practitioners are trained and competent in communicating with vulnerable adults and people with an intellectual disability...., some clients who present to CIS (Citizens Information Services) are experiencing domestic violence and require legal information and assistance. Their need for appropriate support from legal professionals during these experiences is evident."

- Citizens Information Board

"We take on DCU students for paid internships for an academic year and pay them a proper wage. They gain immensely valuable hands-on experience which really makes them a practical asset at a later trainee stage. More bodies should be encouraged to do similarly to boost the options available."

- Dublin City Council, Law Agent and Law Department

"The responsiveness to factors such as digitalisation, regulatory complexity, and client service expectations, through flexible training pathways, mandatory continuing professional development, and continued monitoring, ensures an overall standard of education and practical readiness of newly admitted practitioners."

- The Law Society of Ireland

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

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

"The cost of sitting the FE1s has risen substantially over the last few years. Many smaller firms do not cover fees for the PPC nor do they facilitate Fridays off where trainees are availing of the PPC Hybrid. The Law Society has issued guidance, but it is only guidance and is not binding."

- Dublin City Council, Law Agent and Law Department

"The financial cost of taking the required FE1 examinations and additional preparatory courses creates a social exclusion for students from low socio-economic backgrounds... abolish entrance examinations for students with law degrees from Irish universities, which, unlike these entrance examinations, are already assessed against an independent statutory quality assurance process."

- University College Dublin Sutherland School of Law

"The expectation to take part in devilling and to work without payment is very challenging and unrealistic for many, particularly given the requirement to devil with a Dublin-based master."

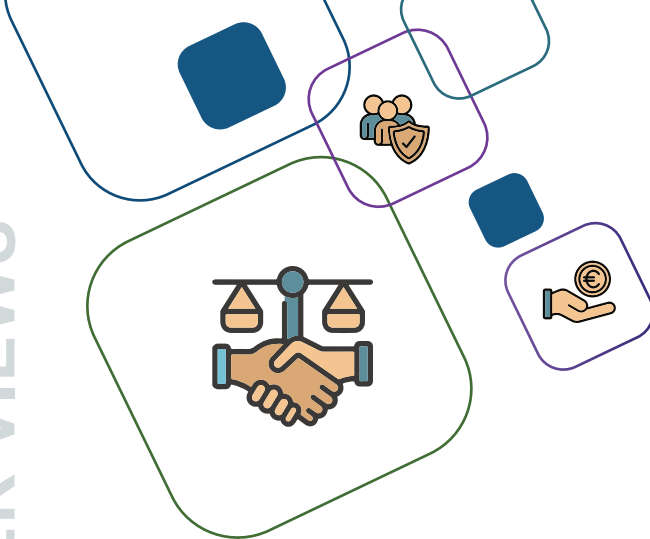
- University College Dublin Sutherland School of Law

"On balance, current admissions policies demonstrate a public-interest orientation by safeguarding educational rigor while progressively lowering barriers to practise. However, continued policy attention is needed to ensure that these policies translate into improved availability and reasonable costs of legal services, particularly in underserved communities and for economically vulnerable populations."

- The Law Society of Ireland

"Section 13(4) of the Legal Services Regulation Act sets out key objectives for the Authority, including protecting and promoting the public interest, supporting the proper and effective administration of justice, and encouraging education and training standards. The education and admission policies currently in place align closely with these objectives. They ensure that the profession is well equipped to serve the needs of the public and the justice system. These policies also support the Authority's mandate to uphold standards in legal education and promote the availability of high-quality legal services."

-The King's Inns



The LSRA acknowledges and highlights the public interest in having clear and accessible pathways to legal practitioner training to meet the broad and diverse nature of the legal services demanded by a modern-day Irish society.

The LSRA also acknowledges the limitations in reaching a clear stance on whether the numbers admitted to practise as a barrister or solicitor in a year, has an evidenced based, direct and measurable impact on the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost.

Societal and public interest is well served by the improved availability and broadened access to legal services, by all members of our society.

To this end and to continue supporting the high standards enjoyed in legal education, the LSRA is focusing on the development of standards of accreditation for programmes of legal training, to ensure that a clear, objective and consistent standard of legal practitioner education is available and accessible. This may encompass capacity of training places available which may improve availability and broaden access to legal services.

In focusing on the foundation stone of standards of accreditation for programmes of legal education, the LSRA along with the professional bodies and any new providers of legal practitioner training, will ensure graduates continue to have the requisite skills and competence upon their eligibility to join the Roll of Solicitors or the Roll of Practising Barristers.

Conclusions and Looking Ahead

The year under review saw an increase in numbers entering professional training amid ongoing strong demand for part-time training programmes. Both the part-time PPC Hybrid and the modular BL degree course continue to grow in popularity and are facilitating more flexible pathways to the professions for people from diverse backgrounds.

This report documents a continued concentration of solicitor training contracts with corporate law firms in Dublin, a trend that is mirrored in the solicitor profession with over two thirds of solicitors working in Dublin.

There was an increase in the number of solicitors and barristers qualifying in 2025 and entering the legal profession. There are year-on-year increases in both the number of Practising Certificates issued to solicitors and the number of barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers. With increasing numbers of barristers practising outside of the Law Library and growth in the numbers on the Roll recorded as working in full-time service of the State.

Reports of strong demand for solicitor services continues, with demand outpacing supply at a senior level, and reports of recruitment and retention challenges in the legal aid sector and regional disparities and shortages outside of Dublin.

Looking ahead, the LSRA will continue to focus on implementing the reforms set out in its *Setting Standards* report and the 32 recommendations from its *Breaking Down Barriers* project aimed at tackling economic and other barriers facing aspirant and early career solicitors and barristers.

The LSRA 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 LSRA hereby commends this report to the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

Annexes

Annex A: Public consultation notice

12 December 2025

**Invitation for written submissions on
Admission Policies of the Legal Professions
Annual Report 2025**

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, Home Affairs and Migration, 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 seventh annual report.

The LSRA's report will contain the following elements:

- a. the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors during 2025
- b. the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers during 2025
- 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 2025 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, Home Affairs and Migration. The final report will be submitted to the Minister by 30 April 2026.

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 2025.
2. The costs of legal services in 2025 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 by Friday 30 January 2026.

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
12 December 2025

ENDS

Annex B: List of respondents to statutory consultation

11 Submissions received from:

The Bar of Ireland

Chief State Solicitor's Office

Citizens Information Board

Competition & Consumer Protection Commission

Dublin City Council – Law Agent, and Law Department

Honorable Society of the King's Inns

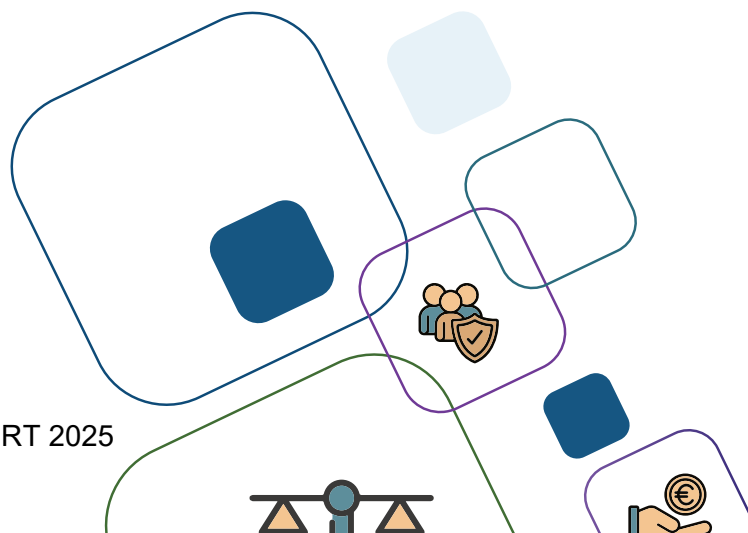
Irish Institute of Legal Executives

Individual submission

Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers

Law Society of Ireland

University College Dublin, Sutherland School of Law



Annex C: Tables and statistics

Table 1: PPC admissions 2012–2025

Year	Total	Male	Female	30 & under	31 & over	Law degree	Other degree	No degree
2012	392	38%	62%	87%	13%	-	-	-
2013	353	41%	59%	89%	11%	-	-	-
2014	388	36%	64%	87%	13%	-	-	-
2015	384	42%	58%	86%	14%	80%	22%	-
2016	405	42%	58%	87%	13%	78%	21%	1%
2017	412	41%	59%	90%	10%	84%	14%	2%
2018	448	40%	60%	89%	11%	79%	19%	2%
2019	501	41%	59%	88%	12%	79%	20%	1%
2020	473	35%	65%	90%	10%	82%	17%	1%
2021	538	39%	61%	88%	12%	83%	16%	1%
2022	560	35%	65%	89%	11%	84%	15%	1%
2023	561	43%	57%	90%	10%	89%	11%	<1%
2024	542	34%	66%	90%	10%	83%	16%	1%
2025	581	35%	65%	91%	9%	86%	13%	1%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 2: PPC admissions by course type 2019–2025

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%)
2025	581	476 (82%)	105 (18%)

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 3: Diversity data for full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid 2020–2025

PPC full-time							
Year	Male	Female	30 & under	31 & over	Dublin training contract	Outside Dublin training contract	Total
2020	27%	73%	55%	45%	33%	67%	55
2021	42%	58%	76%	24%	50%	50%	109
2022	30%	70%	57%	43%	52%	48%	91
2023	29%	71%	67%	33%	40%	60%	94
2024	26%	74%	68%	32%	46%	54%	100
2025	27%	73%	67%	33%	40%	60%	105

PPC Hybrid							
Year	Male	Female	30 & under	31 & over	Dublin training contract	Outside Dublin training contract	Total
2020	37%	63%	95%	5%	48%	52%	418
2021	39%	61%	96%	4%	89%	11%	429
2022	40%	60%	95%	5%	90%	10%	469
2023	47%	53%	95%	5%	92%	8%	467
2024	36%	64%	96%	4%	92%	8%	442
2025	37%	63%	96%	4%	92%	8%	476

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 4: Admissions to the Roll of Solicitors 2013–2025

Year	Qualifying Trainees	England & Wales Solicitors	Northern Ireland Solicitors	All other Lawyers*	Transferring Barristers	Admissions Total
2013	468	33	24	18	10	553
2014	475	36	15	16	15	557
2015	233	70	30	11	15	359
2016	525	806	27	14	34	1,406
2017	423	547	29	17	34	1,050
2018	443	690	43	23	30	1,229
2019	419	1,837	61	37	28	2,381
2020	390	443	33	20	20	906
2021	513	278	35	34	16	876
2022	307	134	35	22	17	515
2023	548	158	31	27	8	772
2024	330	174	35	33	18	590
2025	558	159	29	22	13	781

Source: Law Society of Ireland

*EEA, Scotland, USA, Australia and New Zealand

Table 5: Newly qualified Law Society solicitors: Practising Certificates issued and professional setting 2023–2025

Year	Practising Certificates issued	Law Firm	In-House
2023	416		
2024	378		
2025	583	95%	5%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 6: Solicitors holding Practising Certificates 2015–2025 ⁶²

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%
2025	12,430	255	2%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 7: Number of Practising Certificates surrendered or suspended 2022–2025

Year	Total
2022	65
2023	81
2024	87
2025	116

Source: Law Society of Ireland

⁶². Total Practising Certificates held as at 31 December of each year.

Table 8: Candidates for the Barrister-at-Law degree course 2013–2025

Year	Sat entrance exam	Commenced BL Degree ⁶³
2013	168	141
2014	157	140
2015	120	96
2016	133	119
2017	131	112
2018	143	120
2019	150	118
2020	195	183
2021	161	134
2022	131	130
2023	158	131
2024	145	120
2025	181	141 (2 sought leave of absence)

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

Table 9: Admissions to BL Degree course with breakdown of full-time and modular attendance and data on gender, age and route of admission 2023–2025

Total BL Degree students							
Year	Male	Female	30 & under	31 & over	Approved Qualification	King's Inns Diploma	Total
2023	56 (43%)	75 (57%)	65 (50%)	66 (50%)	71 (54%)	60 (46%)	131
2024	53 (43%)	68 (57%)	65 (54%)	55 (46%)	74 (62%)	46 (38%)	120
2025	65 (47%)	74 (53%)	82 (59%)	57 (41%)	95 (68%)	44 (32%)	139
Modular Degree							
Year	Male	Female	30 & under	31 & over	Approved Qualification	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
2025	49 (51%)	48 (49%)	52 (54%)	45 (46%)	64 (66%)	33 (34%)	97
Full-time BL Degree							
Year	Male	Female	30 & under	31 & over	Approved Qualification	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
2025	17 (40%)	25 (60%)	30 (71%)	12 (29%)	31 (74%)	11 (26%)	42

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

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

Table 10: Route of admission for barristers admitted to the BL Degree and called to the Bar 2016–2025⁶⁴

Year	Completed King's Inns BL Degree ⁶⁵	Rule 20 ⁶⁶	Rule 20 ⁶⁷	Rule 20 ⁶⁸	Rule 20 ⁶⁹	Morgenbesser eligibility ⁷⁰	Total
2016	116	6	1	0	4	2	129
2017	109	8	3	0	14	0	134
2018	91	19	6	1	39	0	156
2019	109	52	3	0	24	2	190
2020	116	12	3	35	0	1	167
2021	142	11	2	23	0	2	180
2022	133	1	0	0	10	3	147
2023	135	10	4	0	13	1	163
2024	122	2	0	0	12	0	136
2025	127	8	0	1	13	0	150*

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

* 1 barrister was readmitted to the BL Degree

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

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

66. King's Inns Education Rule 20: Pursuant to a mutual recognition regime, a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland who has been in practice for at least three years immediately preceding the application may be admitted to the BL degree and called to the Bar, without taking an examination.

67. King's Inns Education Rule 23: A solicitor who has been in continuous practice in the State for three years or more immediately preceding an application to transfer and who has held a Practising Certificates from the Law Society of Ireland for the entirety of that period (or is exempted from the requirement to hold such certificate) may, having attended the four week Solicitor Transfer Course at King's Inns, be admitted to the degree of Barrister-at-Law and called to the Bar.

68. King's Inns Education Rule 24: Pursuant to the European Union (Recognition of Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2017 (S.I. No. 8), King's Inns is the competent authority in respect of the profession of barrister for the purposes of Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications.

69. King's Inns Education Rule 25: A member of the Bar of England and Wales who is fully qualified to practise in that jurisdiction may, at the discretion of the benchers of the King's Inns, be admitted to the BL degree. Applicants may have to pass a written aptitude test on the Irish legal system and constitutional law.

70. According to the King's Inns, these are applicants who hold legal qualifications of an academic or professional nature (or both) from another EU Member State and who, as a result, are partly qualified in that Member State. The applicants' qualifications are assessed and to the extent that there is any shortfall in knowledge or skills, the applicant will be required to complete a number of assessments. See C-313/01 *Christine Morgenbesser v Consiglio dell'Ordine degli avvocati di Genova*.

Table 11: Barristers commencing pupillage 2019–2025

Year	New pupils ⁷¹	Female	Male	30 & under	31 & over
2019	82	-	-	-	-
2020	69	25 (36%)	44 (64%)	45 (65%)	24 (35%)
2021	102	46 (45%)	56 (55%)	60 (59%)	42 (41%)
2022	90	39 (43%)	51 (57%)	46 (51%)	44 (49%)
2023	72	40 (56%)	32 (44%)	36 (50%)	36 (50%)
2024	82	39 (48%)	43 (52%)	48 (59%)	34 (41%)
2025	89	53 (60%)	36 (40%)	47 (52%)	42 (48%)

Source: The Bar of Ireland

Table 12: Barristers on Roll of Practising Barristers 2019–2025

Year	Total Roll	+/- on previous year % & no.	Law Library Members	Non-Law Library Members	Working in full-time service of the State
2019	2,735	N/A	2,198 (80%)	537 (20%)	237 (9%)
2020	2,823	+3% (88)	2,155 (76%)	668 (24%)	229 (8%)
2021	2,933	+4% (110)	2,180 (74%)	753 (26%)	253 (9%)
2022	2,957	+1% (24)	2,173 (73%)	784 (27%)	269 (9%)
2023	3,051	+3% (94)	2,139 (70%)	912 (30%)	294 (10%)
2024	3,071	+1% (20)	2,134 (69%)	937 (31%)	308 (10%)
2025	3,128	+ 2% (57)	2,137 (68%)	991 (32%)	349 (11%)

Source: Legal Services Regulatory Authority

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

Table 13: Transfers between the professions 2015–2025

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
2025	14	0

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

Table 14: Cessation of Law Library membership 2022–2025

Reason for leaving the Law Library	2022	2023	2024	2025
No reason given	31	20	26	27
Work elsewhere	44	19	21	24
Retired	16	16	22	14
Deceased	7	3	4	10
Personal reasons (including financial, family and health)	20	15	15	8
Became a judge	11	15	11	6
Excluded for not having Personal Insolvency Insurance	2	5	2	5
Converted to Solicitor or Disbarred	0	0	0	2
Excluded for Arrears	9	7	8	1
Excluded LSRA Levy	0	0	1	0
Total	140	100	110	97

Source: The Bar of Ireland

Table 15: Financial and other supports for trainee solicitors

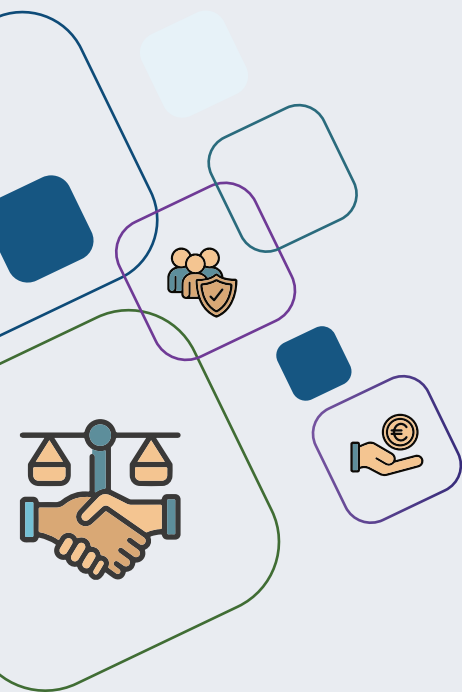
Grant or funding	Criteria	Support provided	Number provided in 2025
The Law Society Access Programme Since 2001	Students from socio-economic backgrounds	- A waiver or reduction of PPC entrance exam fees. - Provision of or a contribution towards overnight accommodation during the eight PPC entrance exams, 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 and/or fees for four Law Society Advanced Electives. - Payment of the fee for registration of indentures. - Maintenance funding to assist with expenses incurred attending the PPC. - Payment of the admission fee to enter the Roll of Solicitor	212 individuals participating on the Access Scholarship Scheme. 26 out of the 212 joined the PPC in 2025
Scott Scholarship Since 2020	Students and trainees from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.	- Exam, course and registration fees.	Five awards
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)	Six grants
The Bursary Scheme	Insufficient resources to fund studies.	- Provides maintenance grants to trainees attending the PPC, - €175,000 is awarded annually.	25 trainees received busaries

Source: Law Society of Ireland

Table 16: Financial supports for barrister students and pupils

Grant or funding	Criteria	Support provided	Number provided in 2025
King's Inns Maurice Gaffney Fellowship	Disadvantaged students.	- Full or part remission of fees for Diploma in Legal Studies.	Four full or part scholarships
McCarthy family and others McCarthy Bursary	Have faced and overcome a physical, social or financial challenge.	- Full remission of fees 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 for five years beginning at the start of the BL degree, - Waiver of Law Library fees for first four years.	Two Fellowships

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns and The Bar of Ireland



An tÚdarás Rialála
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