



An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhíse Dlí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority

Breaking Down Barriers: *Understanding the challenges facing early career legal professionals*

An LSRA Report
March 2022



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Introduction

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) is pleased to submit this report to the Minister for Justice in accordance with section 34(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act).

This report follows a request from the Minister for Justice in November 2020 for the Authority to “consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and the Law Society, respectively.”

The Minister asked the Authority to give consideration to the following areas in particular:

- The remuneration of trainee barristers and solicitors;
- The other costs associated with joining each profession;
- The information available to prospective trainee barristers and solicitors on available masters and solicitors firms, the information available on the terms and conditions available, and how they are selected;
- Any other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors, including the ability to take maternity leave.

In considering these issues, the Minister requested that the Authority “pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions.” The Minister also asked the Authority to make recommendations in relation to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.

This document summarises the steps taken by the LSRA to consider these issues and also sets out the key research findings and the evidence upon which these findings are based.

This report is submitted to the Minister for Justice on 31 March 2022. A detailed research report, upon which this report is based, will be published separately.

How the LSRA Gathered Evidence

The research findings set out in this report are based on evidence drawn from several sources:

- The LSRA's first comprehensive survey of the young legal professions, with responses from a total of 433 trainee and early career practising solicitors, 366 student and early career practising barristers and 590 law undergraduates in 15 higher education institutes. (Early career practitioners surveyed were those with up to a maximum of seven years post-qualification experience, regardless of age.)
- The survey was conducted during October and November 2021, with a follow up survey of a total of 86 non-practising recently qualified solicitors and barristers in February 2022, as further requested by the Minister.
- The LSRA engaged an external research company, Behaviour & Attitudes (B&A) to conduct the online anonymised surveys. The surveys were distributed with the assistance of the Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society of Ireland, the Bar of Ireland and the law departments of 15 higher education institutes.
- A total of 16 in-depth interviews with early career practising solicitors and barristers, carried out by B&A.
- More than 25 interviews with a range of employers and practitioners, carried out by the LSRA executive.
- Analysis of a total of 34 written submissions received in response to a public consultation carried out by the Authority under section 34 of the Act. Submissions were received from 21 organisations – including the professional bodies, NGOs, academic institutes and lawyers' networks – and 13 individuals.



Key Research Findings

The key research findings, along with a summary of the research evidence, are set out below.

Early Career Challenges - Barristers

Early career self-employed barristers face considerable challenges in earning a living, with job security and better remuneration the key motivations for barristers taking up employed positions. Despite these challenges, junior barristers show moderate levels of career satisfaction.

Summary of evidence

The early career years (years 1 to 7) for barristers at the self-employed Bar involve personal expense, generally low and erratic earnings and persistent career uncertainty and risk. This inhibits diversity at the Bar, as it excludes those who do not have an independent source of income or support to self-sustain a career for an extended period.

LSRA survey findings on early career challenges

The survey of barrister-at-law (BL degree) students and practising barristers found the following key working environment challenges/anticipated challenges: the time it takes to build up a practice (76%); difficulties getting paid (67%); and remuneration (62%).

Remuneration and retention

It is widely observed that it can take between 7 to 10 years of practice at the Bar to earn a living, with ongoing retention issues facing early career practitioners. A pattern was observed during the research of self-employed barristers spending several years “cutting their teeth” in the Law Library, and sometimes supplementing their income with side jobs like teaching, before moving to the security of employed positions with regular incomes and other benefits including maternity leave.

Employed and non-practising barristers

Decent and secure salaries as well as structured training opportunities, holiday pay, pensions, sick and maternity leave are widely available to barristers in employment. Approximately three quarters of employed barristers surveyed said more reliable income (78%) and pay and conditions (73%) were their main reasons for choosing employed roles. Similarly, recently qualified non-practising barristers surveyed said their main reasons for not practising were because they wanted a job with better remuneration (52%) and a more secure job (45%).

Key structural and cultural factors for challenges

A number of key structural and cultural factors were identified in the research as contributing to the economic challenges facing early career self-employed barristers:

- The prevailing funding model means barristers are not paid their fees or the bulk of their fees until the end of a case; in some cases a barrister may not receive fees until several years after accepting the initial brief. This convention makes it difficult even for busy junior barristers to establish a reliable income flow, and this is exacerbated by reported delays in payments including from State agencies.
- Non-payment or delayed payment of fees is a particularly acute problem for those in the early years of practice, with an ingrained reluctance among junior barristers to vigorously pursue complaints against instructing solicitors for fear of losing out on future work.
- There has been downward pressure on professional fees for legal work on behalf of the State in recent years with a series of financial emergency (FEMPI) reductions during the years 2009-2011. This has particularly impacted junior barristers in criminal practice in the District Court.
- General demand for barristers' services is sensitive to economy-wide forces and, in the absence of formal limits on the number of places for new barrister apprenticeships (pupillages) at the Bar each year, this can lead to issues of over-supply.

Parental leave

Women barristers face early career challenges related to both cultural issues and work demands which make it difficult to plan childcare and take maternity leave as self-employed professionals. Some may defer having children until their careers are established. 8 in 10 (84%) of the small number of those surveyed who had taken maternity leave agreed that it has had or will have a negative impact on their professional career.

Discrimination

One in five student and early career barristers surveyed (20% overall, 35% women and 42% people with a disability) reported having experienced discrimination in the past three years while studying, looking for work or working as a barrister. The discrimination related to gender (59%); socio economic status (29%); and age (28%). The areas of discrimination were: accessing or being awarded jobs/cases (54% overall 76% for self-employed barristers); bullying or harassment (36%) work conditions (25%) and pay (19%).

Despite challenges, career satisfaction is moderate

Young professionals enjoy moderate levels of career satisfaction, with 65% of practising barristers surveyed stating that their experience working in the profession has exceeded or matched expectations, and considerably higher satisfaction among self-employed barristers compared to employed barristers (36% self-employed and 9% in-house say it has exceeded or greatly expectations).

Working environment improvements sought

Three quarters of survey respondents (74%) agreed that the working environment in the barrister profession needs improvement. Of those who agreed that improvements were needed, 69% favoured new business models (including Legal Partnerships¹), while 68% backed improved remuneration and 48% supported a greater variety of career pathways in the profession. Written submissions included many recommendations for improved remuneration for early career barristers, as well as greater supports for the junior Bar including for women, those with disabilities and criminal practitioners.

¹ Section 2(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 defines a legal partnership as "a partnership formed under the law of the State by written agreement, by two or more legal practitioners, at least one of whom is a practising barrister, for the purpose of providing legal services". The 2015 Act permits two different types of legal partnership: partnerships between barristers and partnerships between solicitors and barristers.

Early Career Challenges - Solicitors

The main challenges facing early career solicitors are long working hours and lack of workplace flexibility and the impact of these on work-life balance. Despite these challenges, junior solicitors show moderate levels of career satisfaction.

Summary of evidence

The key challenges in the early career years (years 1 to 7) for solicitors relate to the time-consuming nature of their work, with a prevailing culture of long working hours which results in poor work-life balance. These challenges may impact on diversity as those with significant commitments outside work, including caring responsibilities, may find it difficult to devote the necessary hours to their employers.

LSRA survey findings on early career challenges

The survey of trainee and practising solicitors found the following key working environment challenges/ anticipated challenges: working hours (77%); impact on personal life (77%); and lack of workplace flexibility (52%). Solicitors working in large law firms are more likely to find working hours to be a challenge (87%) compared to 50% of solicitors working in small firms and 71% of respondents working in-house. Solicitors working in small firms view remuneration as more of a challenge (76%) compared to only 23% of those working in large law firms and 37% working in-house in the public or private sector. The survey results also show the gendered nature of the challenges, with females much more likely to cite familial/parental/ caring challenges and males more likely to cite challenges related to working hours and making partner in a firm.

Remuneration and retention

Remuneration levels within the early profession vary considerably. Earnings for solicitors in large and medium law firms are generous compared to those working in smaller firms and the public sector. (A newly qualified solicitor in a corporate law firm may have a starting salary of €60,000, while the entry grade salary for a solicitor in a State agency is approximately €33,000). This asymmetry in remuneration creates problems for State agencies and other employers in recruiting newly qualified solicitors. Trainees generally remain in their training firm for the early career years, becoming associates before seeking partnership opportunities.

In-house and non-practising solicitors

Two thirds (67%) of surveyed solicitors working in-house in the public or private sectors said they took up positions outside of law firms for reasons of work-life balance, with a further two in five (42%) stating that having more regular hours was a key reason for choosing an in-house role. Similarly, over half (58%) of the small number of solicitor respondents in the survey of recently qualified non-practising lawyers said their main reason for not practising at this time was because they wanted a job with better work-life balance.

Parental leave

The survey found generally high levels of satisfaction among solicitors in relation to the payments received and the duration of maternity/paternity/adoptive leave (73%). However, maternity leave can cause challenges for females in the profession with 8 in 10 (82%) of the small number of those surveyed who had taken maternity leave reporting that it has had or will have a negative impact on their professional career.

Discrimination

The survey found that almost one in five respondents reported experiencing discrimination within the last three years while training, looking for work or working as a solicitor (19% overall, 32% people with a disability and 32% people with parental responsibilities compared to 17% for those without). The discrimination related to gender (52%), socio-economic status (31%) and age (26%). The areas of discrimination were: work conditions (41%); training contract (37%); pay (30%); and bullying or harassment (28%).

Despite challenges, career satisfaction is moderate

The survey showed moderate levels of career satisfaction among junior solicitors, with almost two thirds (63%) of practising solicitors stating that their experience working in the profession has exceeded or matched expectations. Those working in large and small law firms are more likely to say that their expectations have been exceeded or greatly exceeded (21% large firm and 17% small firm) compared to in-house (14%) and medium firm (8%).

Working environment improvements sought

Survey respondents were almost unanimous (92%) in agreeing that the working environment in the solicitor profession needs improvement. Of those who agreed that improvements were needed, 88% favoured reduced working hours and enhanced workplace flexibility, while 57% supported remote working options and 44% backed measures to ensure pay equality (e.g. gender pay gap). Written submissions also included recommendations to ensure all trainee solicitors receive a living wage, expand and diversify traineeship opportunities and improve reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.

Barriers to Entry - Qualification

The most significant barriers to entry to the legal professions are the costs of qualification and the length of time it takes post-graduation before a prospective solicitor or barrister can expect to qualify and begin to earn a reasonable salary.

Summary of evidence

Both professions face challenges in opening access to individuals from more diverse backgrounds because of the significant costs of professional training and the mechanisms for obtaining and undertaking practical training. For candidates with different needs and responsibilities, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, the direct and indirect costs involved may act as a deterrent to entry to the professions, sending them instead into other career pathways.

LSRA survey findings on entry barriers - solicitors

The key barriers or anticipated barriers to entry to the profession identified in the survey of trainee and practising solicitors were: the cost and time it takes to complete the eight-paper entrance exam (Final Examination Part I or FE-1) to the professional training course (62%) (this can take from six months to several years – most candidates take at least two sittings to complete all papers, although they could take them all in one go); the overall costs of qualifying (56%); and difficulties in securing a training contract (53%).

LSRA survey findings on entry barriers - barristers

The key barriers or anticipated barriers to entry to the profession identified in the survey of trainee and practising barristers were: the lack of income during the mandatory one year of unpaid pupillage for barristers at the Law Library (82%); the overall costs of qualifying (64%); and lack of networks (59%).

Key direct and indirect costs of qualification

The direct and indirect costs of qualification are different for each profession, although common expenses include training course fees and the cost of living in or commuting to Dublin where the two professional training course providers are based and the bulk of training opportunities exist. Course expenses are only somewhat mitigated by the availability of some State-funded SUSI grants and a range of scholarships, bursaries and access initiatives provided by the professional bodies, the King's Inns, the Law Society and the Bar of Ireland.

Solicitor training: costs, remuneration and quality

- Overall the process to qualify as a solicitor can take between three to five years to complete post-graduation (depending on individuals' circumstances, for some it may take even longer). This includes time spent in getting to the point of eligibility for a solicitor traineeship by passing the FE-1 exam and securing a training sponsor. The in-office training period for solicitors is 21 months and the full-time course tuition period is 9 months.
- There is intense competition among elite law undergraduates to secure training contracts with large law firms whose training salaries and terms and conditions are generous. The entry related fees for the Professional Practice Course (PPC) for graduates (excluding prep courses) are €1,680, with course fees of €12,800.
- A part-time PPC, the PPC Hybrid, was introduced in 2019 to provide a more flexible route to qualification (it has attracted a more diverse profile of trainee solicitors including mature and regional students, who may continue to work full-time or nearly full-time).
- Only the full-time PPC course is currently approved for SUSI contributions towards fees and maintenance (maximum fee contribution is €6,270 and maximum maintenance grant is €6,115).
- There is considerable asymmetry in availability of training opportunities and remuneration. The large commercial law firms train about a half of the annual trainee solicitor intake. They cover PPC fees for their recruits and remunerate them well throughout the training period (trainee salaries of €40,000 are the norm). Those undertaking training with smaller firms are more likely to have to self-fund part or all of their training course, and some are paid minimum wage or below as trainees. Up to eight in ten training positions were provided in Dublin each year in the last decade, reflecting the capital's dominance in the legal services employment market. In 2021, 81% of training firms were located in Dublin.
- Public sector employers generally do not run annual solicitor trainee direct intake programmes, although the research established interest in enhanced direct trainee recruitment among State agencies including the Chief State Solicitors office and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. One in five solicitors currently works in-house but they are generally recruited post-qualification.
- The survey found generally high levels of satisfaction among solicitors with both the training contracts they secured (83%) and the quality of in-office training (76%).

Entry improvements sought - solicitors

The vast majority of survey respondents (92%) agree that the solicitor qualification process needs improvements. Among this cohort, there was significant support for reduction in the costs of qualification (61%), improved remuneration for trainees (55%) and direct entry to the professional training course for law graduates (52%). Written submissions also supported a range of initiatives to address cost-related entry barriers, increase and diversify access routes to qualification and training opportunities, support underrepresented groups and increase diversity.

Barrister training: costs, remuneration and quality

- For barristers, the qualification process is more streamlined, with a BL degree course which takes one academic year full-time or two years part-time. The entry related fees for the BL degree are €600 for the application and entrance exams for the King's Inns. The BL degree fees are €12,560. As with the PPC, the full-time BL course is eligible for SUSI postgraduate funding for fees (which cover a maximum of half of the professional course fees (€6,270) and also maintenance supports (maximum maintenance grant is €6,115). Barristers are much more likely to self-fund their professional training than solicitors, although some employers may sponsor BL students.
- Qualifying barristers wishing to practice in the Law Library must undertake a minimum 12-month unpaid pupillage or supervised apprenticeship with an experienced barrister known as a master. Although the Bar of Ireland since 2021 requires all masters to pay Law Library fees for their incoming pupils, it is not an employee/employer relationship and pupils are not required to be remunerated by their masters, who are themselves self-employed barristers (although a range of informal financial supports often exist). Currently pupilages may only be undertaken with masters whose practice is predominantly or solely Dublin-based.
- Given the bespoke nature of pupillage – where pupils effectively work inside their masters' practices – experiences vary considerably. The research found moderate levels of satisfaction with the quality of the experience gained during pupillage (66%) and the extent to which the pupillage year equipped respondents to begin practice as a barrister (59%), although only 32% agreed that there was or is sufficient oversight of the quality of the pupillage year.
- Masters can play a significant role in providing opportunities for their pupils to gain experience, make connections and develop their own practices.

Entry improvements sought - barristers

The survey found strong support (84%) for the need for improvements in the barrister qualification process. Among this cohort, there was significant support for enhanced financial support for pupils (86%), reduction in the costs of qualification (74%) a formalised structure around securing a master (74%) and increased availability of government grants for barrister pupils (68%). Written submissions also supported a range of initiatives to address cost-related entry barriers, increase access routes to qualification, support underrepresented groups and increase diversity.

Barriers to Entry - *Information*

There is a lack of easily available, full and clear information for prospective solicitors and barristers about training and pupillage opportunities and selection processes, as well as the various career pathways that may be available.

Summary of evidence

The current system for qualifying barristers to identify and secure a master for their mandatory pupillage year at the Law Library is opaque and ad hoc, with scant information available online. For solicitors, there is considerably more information available on securing training contracts, although this is not all in one place and the pathway to traineeships with large law firms are most visible due to their significant recruitment drives targeting certain undergraduates. The professional bodies all have information on their websites as well as outreach programmes and initiatives with schools and universities.

Barrister pupillages: information provision and opportunities

The Bar publishes on the Law Library website a Register of Masters spreadsheet and it is the responsibility of a prospective pupil to make contact with any individual on that list to establish their availability and compatibility. The list contains brief information on the masters' practice area and circuit. Masters on the list are marked as available or unavailable for the forthcoming legal year.

The survey and interviews showed a heavy reliance on informal connections in order to secure a master and a high degree of informality to the selection process. This puts at a disadvantage those who have no existing links to the legal profession in order to reach out informally to meet potential masters. Two thirds of respondents in the barristers survey (65%) agreed the process to secure a master was so informal they did not know what to expect. Only 30% considered there was sufficient information and guidance available on the process of securing a pupillage. The informality of the master-pupil selection process was also highlighted in written submissions and interviews with practitioners, who noted the advantages this confers on those with pre-existing legal connections (although interviewees also stressed that connections alone were not career defining).

Solicitor traineeships: information provision and opportunities

There is no single comprehensive resource or “one-stop-shop” for aspiring solicitors who are seeking to learn how training contracts work or where to find one. The information that exists is spread across a range of channels, including the websites and social media platforms of the Law Society, recruiters, law firms, and third level student societies. Large law firms sponsor and take part in recruitment fairs and other initiatives targeting law undergraduates in certain third level law programmes. They recruit trainee solicitors annually in highly competitive and well-advertised “milk rounds” with extensive and detailed application and interview processes which are process-driven and merit-focused. Their training contract terms and conditions are attractive and are generally available on their company websites.

Solicitor training opportunities outside the larger firms are not systematically well signposted and for smaller firms training opportunities are much less frequently available and may be quite casually arranged.

Many large commercial firms fill training places two or more years in advance.

In addition, with large law firms paid summer internships for undergraduates are increasingly becoming a gateway to securing a training contract. This may put at a disadvantage those students who do not have sufficient means or contacts to access and undertake summer internships, most of which are in Dublin.

Only 37% of respondents in the solicitor survey agreed there was sufficient information and guidance on the process of securing a training contract, while 40% of respondents agreed that there was sufficient information on available training firms and organisations.

Improvements sought

Many written submissions made recommendations for enhanced information provision and other initiatives to raise awareness of career pathways in the legal professions, beginning in second level and continuing into third level and beyond, with a particular focus on targeting underrepresented groups.

Barriers to Entry - *Diversity & Connections*

There is a perception that the legal professions lack diversity and are heavily reliant on prior connections and networks, which may discourage candidates from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds from considering the professions as a career.

Summary of evidence

There is a growing focus on diversity within the Irish legal professions, with specific attention to protected characteristics under equality legislation, such as gender and ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, socio-economic background. The LSRA survey found that only 14% of solicitors, 23% of barristers and 28% of law undergraduates agree that the professions are diverse (representative of the population).

LSRA survey findings on role of connections

The perceived importance of networks to gain entry to the professions is strong among trainee and early career solicitors as well as student and junior barristers. The survey found that 63% of solicitors and 67% of barristers consider that success in securing a solicitor training contract or a barrister master is based largely on who you know/contacts in the profession.

Almost all (96%) of law undergraduates surveyed agree that it is easier to establish yourself as a solicitor/barrister if you have existing networks. In addition, 91% of student and practising barristers and 84% of trainee and practising solicitors agree that it is much harder to establish oneself in the profession without existing contacts.

The issue of prior connections generally aligns closely with the socio-economic background of aspiring legal professionals, with research showing that there is a tendency of children with parents working in law to follow in their occupational footsteps in what is referred to as “micro-class reproduction”.²

Like many perceptions, whether or not justified, the view of the legal professions as lacking in diversity and being heavily reliant on informal networks has a strong element of self-fulfilment. The concern is that such perceptions can discourage people from less privileged backgrounds and other underrepresented groups from even considering the legal profession as a career. This in turn would serve to further entrench lack of diversity in the professions.

Demographic profile of young professions

The perception of the professions as socially exclusive is reflected in the demographic profile gathered in the survey of trainee and early career solicitors and barristers. This shows a young profession that is almost exclusively White Irish with a high proportion of professionals from higher socio-economic backgrounds (72% of barrister survey respondents and 70% of solicitor survey respondents from ABC1 social class; 31% of barrister survey respondents and 27% of solicitor survey respondents having attended fee paying secondary schools) (including non-responses).

One in ten (10%) of solicitor survey respondents and 12% of barrister survey respondents reported that they have a disability (including non-responses).

In addition, trainee data from the Law Society shows a lack of diversity in the annual intake to its PPC course in terms of academic backgrounds, with almost half of all trainees in the past decade holding law degrees from Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and University College Cork.

It is important to note that as there is currently no comprehensive baseline data on the demographics of the professions in general, the data collected in the LSRA survey provides only a snapshot of the diversity of the young professions.

² Friedman, Sam and Laurison, Daniel. (2019) *The Class Ceiling: Why It Pays to Be Privileged*. Bristol, UK, Policy Press.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The LSRA's research findings show that aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers face a range of economic and other barriers on their career pathways, and that these barriers are more magnified for certain groups.

There is an intersectional dimension to the findings, with multiple barriers including individual, structural and institutional dimensions, some of which are systemic.

Given the multi-faceted nature of the barriers identified in this report, the Authority is of the view that there is scope to make recommendations for actions for reform to be taken by range of stakeholders, including itself.

The Authority is also of the view that its existing proposals for substantial reform of the legal practitioner education and training system (made in its 2020 *Setting Standards* report) would go some way to addressing entry barriers identified in the research. In addition, the forthcoming introduction of Legal Partnerships would, in some part, satisfy the clear demand from young barristers for new business models in which to practice.

The Authority now intends to carefully consider the findings and to undertake a short period of further engagement and consultation with key stakeholders. Following this engagement the Authority will submit a further report to the Minister for Justice outlining the recommendations it considers to be appropriate to address the barriers identified.





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Breaking Down Barriers

*Exploring the challenges facing
early career legal professionals*

March 2022



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Glossary

BL	Barrister-at-Law
CCPC	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
CSSO	Chief State Solicitor's Office
DCU	Dublin City University
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
DSBA	Dublin Solicitors Bar Association
EEA	European Economic Area
FE-1	Final Examination – First Part
FLAC	Free Legal Advice Centres
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HEA	Higher Education Authority
ICCL	Irish Council for Civil Liberties
IRC	Irish Refugee Council
LAB	Legal Aid Board
NDA	National Disability Authority
OAG	Office of the Attorney General
PPC	Professional Practice Course
UCD	University College Dublin
QLTT	Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Origin and purpose of this report

This research study represents a detailed examination by the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) of the economic and other barriers facing junior solicitors and barristers.

The background to this research is a request from the Minister for Justice in November 2020 for the Authority to “*consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and the Law Society, respectively.*”

The Minister asked the Authority to give consideration to the following areas in particular:

- *The remuneration of trainee barristers and solicitors;*
- *The other costs associated with joining each profession;*
- *The information available to prospective trainee barristers and solicitors on available masters and solicitors firms, the information available on the terms and conditions available, and how they are selected;*
- *Any other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors, including the ability to take maternity leave.*

In considering these issues, the Minister requested that the Authority “*pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions.*” The Minister also asked the Authority to make recommendations in relation to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.

This research documents the findings of the Authority’s first comprehensive survey of early career solicitors and barristers. Barriers to entry and early year progression in the profession is examined. The study also considers in detail the current arrangements for the training of solicitors and barristers, including issues of costs as well as information and arrangements for aspirant legal professionals seeking practical training opportunities. The research reviewed submissions and recommendations to an LSRA statutory consultation process and obtained new stakeholder inputs concerning aspects of the study. Based on the evidence, this report identifies economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers. It also documents recommendations made by a range of stakeholders.

As an exploratory report, this study does not make findings or recommendations.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Surveys

The LSRA engaged an external research company, Behaviour & Attitudes (B&A) to conduct a series of online anonymised surveys. The surveys were distributed with the assistance of the Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society of Ireland, the Bar of Ireland and the law departments of 15 higher education institutes.

Comprehensive survey of early career solicitors and barristers

To obtain insights from early career solicitors and barristers about the economic and other barriers they face, the LSRA undertook its first comprehensive survey of the young profession as well as law undergraduates.

Responses were received from a total of 433 trainee and early career practising solicitors and 366 student and early career practising barristers. Early career legal practitioners surveyed were those with up to a maximum of seven years post-qualification experience, regardless of age. The surveys were conducted in October and November 2021.

The survey questionnaire was designed with the valuable input of legal professionals, students and experts who were invited by the LSRA, following a stakeholder analysis, to be part of an External Reference Group. The group included solicitors, barristers and students from a range of backgrounds as well as members of representative groups and networks within the profession.

In addition to the survey, a total of 16 in-depth interviews with early career practising solicitors and barristers were carried out by B&A.

The objective of the research was to understand the experiences that people have in their early career as a solicitor and barrister and also on the path to qualification. Specifically, the surveys sought to understand:

- The economic and other barriers to qualification in the early career years.
- The experience of working day to day in the profession.
- Attitudes towards the profession.
- Key issues, trends and behaviours around equity of access to the profession and diversity within the profession.

Survey of law undergraduates

A separate survey was conducted of law and joint law undergraduates, many of whom may be considering a legal career. The expectations of challenges ahead, whether real or perceived, may in themselves act as barriers for aspiring legal professionals when considering career pathways. The aim of the survey of law undergraduates was therefore to understand the nature and prevalence of these barriers. Responses were received from a total of 590 law undergraduates in 15 higher education institutes. The surveys were conducted in October and November 2021.

This research sought to understand the barriers and perceived barriers to entering the solicitor or barrister profession. Specifically, the survey sought to understand:

- The barriers or perceived barriers to entering the solicitor or barrister profession.
- The level of working experience within the legal profession amongst law undergraduates.
- Attitudes towards the profession and key processes of qualifying (i.e. training contracts for solicitors and pupillages for barristers).

Survey of non-practising recently qualified solicitors and barristers

A survey was also carried out of recently qualified solicitors and barristers who are currently not practising. This survey was undertaken following a supplementary request from the Minister for Justice in October 2021 for the Authority to also survey “*those people who have completed King’s Inns or the Law Society in recent years, but who have chosen not to practice at this time*”.

A total of 86 non-practising recently qualified solicitors and barristers took part in this survey. This research sought to understand the profile of qualified legal professionals who were not currently practising, as well as the contributing reasons and potential barriers to practising in the profession. The survey was carried out in February 2022.

1.2.2 Stakeholder interviews

A series of 34 one-on-one telephone or zoom meetings with a range of interviewees were carried out between June and December 2021. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of the Minister’s request for engagement with specific stakeholders and/or in order to develop the research team’s understanding of barriers and diversity within the profession. The interviewees included long standing members of both professions, trainee and junior practising solicitors, student and junior practising barristers, law graduates and representatives of law firms and State agencies which both directly employ solicitors and barristers and also procure the services of self-employed barristers. More individual barristers than solicitors were interviewed on the basis that the early career pathways of self-employed barristers tend to be quite varied, compared to solicitors who generally work in employed settings where career pathways are standardised. A full list of the types of organisations and individuals representing various bodies of opinion who were interviewed is available in Appendix E, along with the interview methodology used.

1.2.3 Analysis of written submissions

The LSRA carried out a statutory consultation inviting written submissions under section 34 of the Act. A total of 34 written submissions were received and analysed. Submissions were received from 21 organisations – including the professional bodies, NGOs, academic institutes and lawyers’ networks – as well as 13 individuals.

The organisations which made submissions included: the professional bodies under the Act (the Honorable Society of King’s Inns, the Law Society of Ireland and the Bar of Ireland (Bar Council)); universities; State agencies; non-governmental organisations and a range of networks and groups within the legal profession.

Individual respondents included student and practising barristers and solicitors and law graduates. A list of those who made written submissions is available at Appendix D.

1.3 Structure of this report

This research study is in six parts, based around the framework for the research as set out in the Minister's request for the Authority to consider the economic and other barriers faced by young solicitors and barristers following their professional qualification.

Following the introduction, **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the junior legal profession, which for the purposes of this study are solicitors and barristers in their first seven years of practice. It describes the current qualification processes and documents the costs and time to qualify as well as the information available to aspirant solicitors and barristers on career pathways. It also sets out the current practical stage training arrangements. While issues of equity of access and entry into the legal profession are explored throughout this report, this chapter documents existing initiatives aimed at achieving greater diversity within the profession.

Chapter 3 contains the findings of the Authority's first comprehensive survey of the junior legal profession, as well as law undergraduates and qualified solicitors and barristers who are not currently practising. Also included in this chapter are the testimonies of a total of 16 junior practising solicitors and barristers whose experiences provide a greater understanding of what lies behind the purely quantitative survey responses.

Chapter 4 summarises the views provided to the Authority through written submissions in response to the statutory consultation and also through interviews with a range of stakeholders.

Chapter 5 summarises the suggestions for reform put forward by respondents to the consultation and interviewees.

Chapter 6 sets out the next steps to be undertaken by the Authority on foot of this exploratory research study.

1.4 Acknowledgements

The Authority would like to express its gratitude to the wide range of organisations and individuals who contributed to the completion of this research. Particular thanks go to members of the External Reference Group established to provide expert guidance and assist with the content of the data collection stage of this research.

The representative groups and networks who were part of the External Reference Group were: the Bar of Ireland's Young Bar Committee; the Bar of Ireland's Equality and Diversity Committee; Diversity in Law; the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association's Young Members Committee; the In-House Legal Network; the Irish Women Lawyers' Association; the Law Society's Younger Members Committee; the Law Society's In-House and Public Sector Committee; the OUTlaw Network; and the Society of Young Solicitors in Ireland. The group also included individuals. Its members are listed in Appendix A of this report.

In addition, the Authority is very appreciative of the co-operation of staff at the professional bodies for assisting with data collection and the distribution of surveys to early career solicitors and barristers as well as student barristers and trainee solicitors. These are the Law Society of Ireland, the Bar of Ireland and the Honorable Society of King's Inns. Thanks are also due to the Law Schools in universities and Institutes of higher education who assisted the LSRA with the distribution of the survey of law undergraduates. All of these bodies are also to be thanked for their help in raising awareness of the surveys among the target groups via a range of communications channels.

The Authority is also very appreciative of inputs from a range of stakeholders who were either interviewed for this research or who made written submissions, or both. These include law firms, State bodies and individual legal practitioners. These are named in Appendices D and E of this report. The written submissions and interviews with stakeholders contained many useful insights and proposals, and the Authority is grateful for the input from such a wide range of stakeholders.

The Authority also thanks market research company Behaviour and Attitudes (B&A) for securely collecting and analysing the survey data. It also thanks all of those respondents who took part in the online anonymised surveys for their most valuable input.

Chapter 2

Overview of the Junior Legal Profession

2.1 About the junior profession – solicitors

2.1.1 Early career solicitor pathways and remuneration

Overview

Solicitors in their first seven years of practice make up what is considered the junior profession for the purposes of this study.¹ The junior solicitor profession is generally young in age, with three quarters (75%) aged 37 and under and 25% aged over 37. Women outnumber men in the junior profession which is 57% female.²

Junior solicitors work in law firms of different sizes and in independent law centres. A growing number of junior solicitors work in-house servicing the internal legal functions of commercial and public sector organisations including government departments, State agencies, enterprises and banks. Women tend to dominate the in-house sector, which may be due to better provision in the sector for work-life balance.³

The work of junior solicitors spans a range of practice areas including litigation, corporate law, conveyancing, probate and family law, as well as more specialist areas such as commercial litigation, banking, employment, human rights and public interest law, and aircraft leasing.

While the profession is traditionally exclusively office based, since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic an increased number of solicitors work remotely on either a part-time or full-time basis, and there appears to be a strong appetite within the junior profession for hybrid and flexible working arrangements.⁴

Career pathways

Solicitors spend their first seven years of practice post-qualification establishing their careers and building their skills, knowledge and expertise. Most newly qualified solicitors embark on their early career with the employer they completed their in-office training with; employers who have invested time and resources into training junior solicitors generally want to retain them once qualified.

However, depending on factors including employers' staffing needs, not all trainees may be offered a permanent job with the firm or organisation which sponsored their practical training. In addition, newly qualified solicitors may choose to move employer after qualifying into a different practice, specialisation or location.

The career progression routes for solicitors vary depending on the type and size of law firm or organisation they work in. In large law firms (those with 50 solicitors or more) career progression paths are highly structured. Newly qualified solicitors are Associates or Solicitors before progressing to Senior Associate or Senior Solicitor after five or six years, and thereafter to senior positions of salaried or equity Partner, Managing Partner or the position of "Of Counsel".⁵

¹ There were 3,394 junior solicitors in practice in October 2021, accounting for just under a third (30%) of the total working profession of 11,483 in that year. Source: Law Society of Ireland.

² Ibid.

³ More than two-thirds of all in-house solicitors are women. See Murphy, K. 'In-house Growing Like Topsy', Law Society Gazette, April 2018.

⁴ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *The Future Way We Work*.

⁵ The Of Counsel role exists in some large law firms in Ireland, particularly those with UK or US headquarters. Dublin firms with Of Counsel solicitors include Maples Group, Matheson, A&L Goodbody and Arthur Cox.

In medium and small law firms, career progression routes vary. In some firms, legal practitioners will maintain the title Solicitor throughout their career while in others they will progress to Associate and Senior Associate or Senior Solicitor. Upon qualification, solicitors may also choose to establish their own practice as a sole practitioner or sole principal or to form a solicitor partnership.⁶

State bodies which employ significant numbers of solicitors, such as the Office of the Attorney General/ Chief State Solicitor's Office, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Legal Aid Board, have progression paths which map largely onto civil service grades.⁷

The range of professional opportunities for newly qualified solicitors in Ireland is widening, enabling them to make career moves at an early stage.⁸ Law firm solicitors who do not have ambitions to become partners may move to an in-house role in the public or private sectors. Since 2020, solicitors with significant experience may apply to become "senior counsel," a title previously reserved only for barristers.

In addition, the forthcoming introduction of legal partnerships as a new business model will open up additional career pathways for solicitors. Legal partnerships will for the first time allow solicitors and barristers to jointly provide legal services in one business entity. Legal partnerships are provided for in the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, and the relevant provisions are due to be enacted in 2023.⁹

Remuneration

Remuneration levels within the early years in the solicitor profession vary considerably. Earnings for solicitors in large and medium law firms are generally higher than for those working in smaller firms and the public sector. In 2021, the starting salary for a newly qualified solicitor in a large law firm was €60,000 plus, while the entry grade salary for a solicitor in a State agency was approximately €33,000. Public sector bodies may face recruitment challenges, as they are not able to compete with the salaries offered by larger law firms.

⁶ The Law Society states that its policy is to encourage newly qualified solicitors to obtain a minimum of one year's experience in an established practice prior to setting up on their own. See: Law Society of Ireland, *Information for Solicitors Setting Up In Practice* [website].

⁷ According to figures supplied to the LSRA by the AG, CSSO and DPP, the three bodies employed a total of 453 solicitors in 2021. The Legal Aid Board had approximately 120 solicitors in 2021.

⁸ GradIreland, *Solicitor* [website].

⁹ Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022.

2.1.2 The qualification process

Professional solicitor training is provided exclusively by the Law Society of Ireland (the Law Society). The training is comprised of a taught programme, the Professional Practice Course (PPC) and a 24 month in-office training period. Once completed, graduates are eligible for admission to the Roll of Solicitors.

Entry and enrolment

To apply to attend the PPC course, an aspiring solicitor must pass a set of eight exams collectively known as the Final Examination-First Part (FE-1). Graduates as well as law clerks and legal executives are eligible to sit the FE-1. Non-graduates and non-approved degree holders must first pass a Preliminary Examination.

All eight FE-1 subject exams are held twice a year and undergraduate students are eligible to begin sitting the exams after their first year of study.¹⁰ Candidates can take one or more subject exam in any sitting and all eight exams must be passed within seven years. Most aspiring solicitors take at least two sittings to complete the examination.

Securing in-office training

In order to be considered for the PPC, applicants must have secured in advance a training contract with an eligible training solicitor. The in-office training period lasts 24 months and trainees' additional work experience in the training firm may accrue as "credit" towards this total.

Professional Practice Course (PPC)

The PPC is provided full-time and, since 2019, also as a part-time or hybrid course. The full-time PPC is taught on a five day week basis, blending in-person and online lectures and tutorials. The PPC Hybrid is taught largely through weekend seminars and is also delivered in a blended manner with pre-recorded online lectures combined with on-site tuition. Due to the course structure, PPC Hybrid trainees can work while also undertaking the course, with the Law Society recommending that trainees work only four days a week.¹¹

Solicitor trainees enrolled in 2021 were the last to be taught the PPC in its traditional two-part structure of a PPC1 succeeded by a PPC II. From September 2022 onwards, the PPC will be delivered in one academic course running from September to June, followed by an unbroken period of in-office training.¹² The previous "sandwich" PPC model had been criticised as quite restrictive for training firms.¹³

The PPC includes a compulsory Irish language module, the Elementary Legal Practice Irish Course, as required by the the Legal Practitioners (Irish Language) Act 2008. There is no visa scheme for non-EEA graduates to undertake the PPC.

Figure 2.1 sets out the qualification routes and the process as delivered for trainees up to 2021, after which changes to the PPC were introduced, as outlined above.

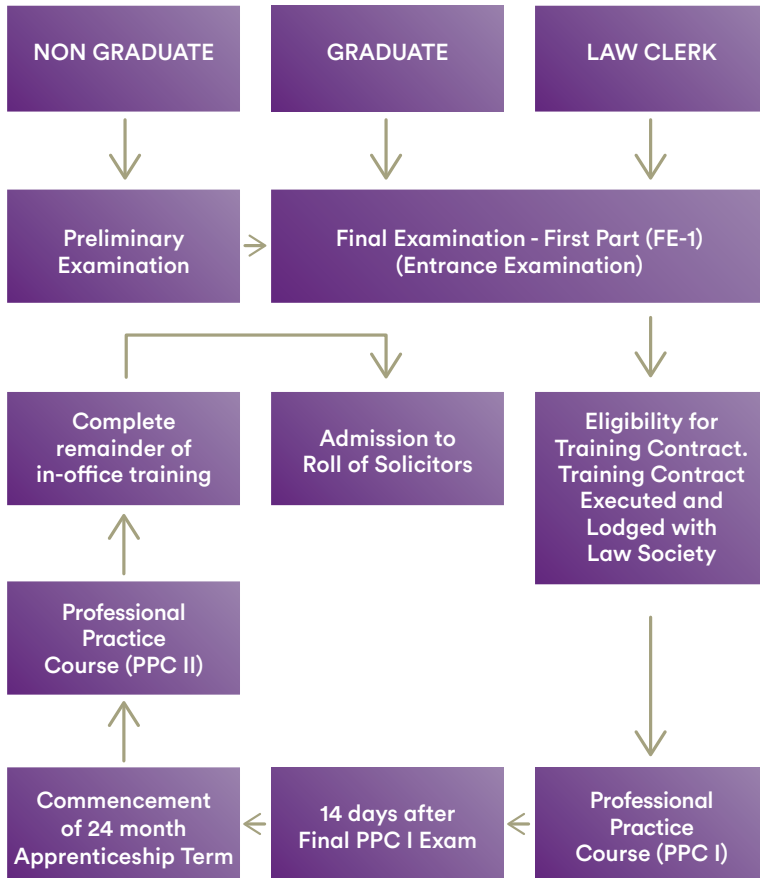
¹⁰ To be eligible to sit the FE-1, candidates must have completed the first or any subsequent year of a course leading to a qualification at level 7 or higher on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications or hold a degree awarded by a university in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

¹¹ Law Society of Ireland, *PPC Hybrid* [website].

¹² The end of the two-part PPC and the introduction of a part-time PPC were proposed in a 2018 Law Society report. See Law Society of Ireland (2018) *Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority as Part of a Public Consultation Prior to a Report to the Minister for Justice and Equality on the Education and Training Arrangements in the State for Legal Practitioners*.

¹³ The end of the two-part PPC and the introduction of a part-time PPC were proposed in a 2018 Law Society report. See Law Society of Ireland (2018) *Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority as Part of a Public Consultation Prior to a Report to the Minister for Justice and Equality on the Education and Training Arrangements in the State for Legal Practitioners*.

Fig. 2.1 Qualification as a solicitor



Source: Law Society of Ireland

Admission to the Roll of Solicitors

Trainee solicitors who have successfully completed in-office training and passed the PPC exams may apply to be admitted to the profession by having their names entered on the Roll of Solicitors which is maintained by the Law Society.

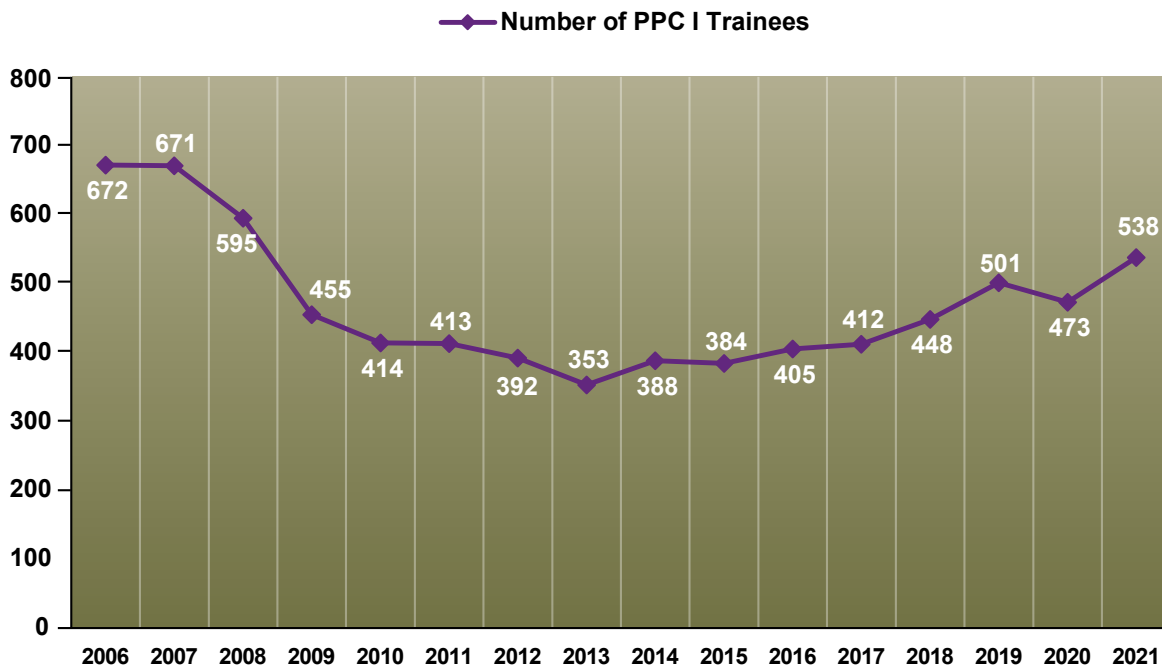
Practising certificates

In order to practise, a solicitor must be issued with an annually renewable practising certificate by the Law Society. Two categories of solicitors are exempt from the requirement to hold a practising certificate; solicitors in the full-time service of the State and those employed solely to provide conveyancing services for a non-solicitor employer.

How many trainee solicitors are there each year?

The numbers of trainee solicitors enrolling on the PPC have been gradually increasing in recent years and are approaching intake levels last seen prior to the economic crisis of 2008 (see Figure 2.2.) Of the 538 trainee solicitors who began the PPC in 2021, 429 were enrolled on the full-time PPC I and a further 109 were enrolled on the PPC Hybrid, indicating a significant demand for this more flexible training option which was introduced in 2019.

Fig. 2.2 New trainee solicitors (PPC I) 2006-2021



Source: Law Society of Ireland

Where are solicitors training?

Trainee solicitors are permitted to undertake their in-office training with practising solicitors in law firms and in-house settings. Large and medium sized urban law firms are the main recruiters of trainee solicitors each year, with the majority of training firms based in Dublin, reflecting the capital’s dominance in the legal services employment market.¹⁴

¹⁴ In 2021, out of a total of 538 new trainee solicitors, 248 (46%) had their training contracts with ten large commercial firms.

Expansion of in-house solicitor training opportunities

Traditionally very few solicitors secure training contracts in in-house settings in the public or private sectors. Despite being considerable employers of solicitors, public sector bodies generally do not have established annual direct intake trainee programmes on the scale operated by commercial law firms. Although small numbers of direct intake traineeships have taken place, it is more common for such bodies to sponsor existing members of staff such as legal executives to train to become solicitors.

There has been a modest expansion of in-house solicitor training contracts on offer in recent years, facilitated in part by the introduction of the PPC Hybrid.¹⁵

The Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO), which is one of the largest employers of solicitors in the State, has shown initiative in this area. It undertook its first external solicitor trainee intake in 2021, offering places for two trainees in an open competition. Candidates had to have already passed the FE-1 exam to be eligible to apply under the Open Trainee Solicitor Scheme, which included payment of PPC fees and related expenses as well as a salary starting at €27,000.¹⁶

In addition, the CSSO has arrangements with other public sector bodies to take on existing trainees to gain experience in particular areas, generally on the basis of a six month secondment signed off on by the Law Society.

Who is training to become a solicitor?

Diversity information on trainee solicitors is limited to what is routinely collected by the Law Society at trainee enrolment. This data shows a high level of homogeneity in terms of age and educational background, with the majority of new trainees in 2021 aged under 30 and holding law undergraduate degrees from leading Irish universities. Solicitor trainees taking the PPC Hybrid tend to be older than the full-time PPC trainees.

Barristers transferring to the solicitor profession

Barristers qualified in Ireland can transfer to become solicitors without undergoing the full training programme for trainee solicitors. A barrister must have been called to the Bar and, for a minimum of three years: have practised as barristers in the State; been a member of the judiciary; been employed in the provision of services of a legal nature; and/or been employed by the State in the provision of services of a legal nature.

As part of the application process, barristers must submit detailed documentation to the Law Society, along with an application fee of €70.¹⁸ Applicants may be called for interview by the Law Society and may be required to spend up to six months in the office of a practising solicitor. Applicants must also attend the Law Society's Essentials of Legal Practice course, which runs annually for approximately three weeks in August and September. The fee for the 2022 course is €2,860.¹⁹ In the decade up to 2022, a total of 213 barristers transferred to the solicitor's profession.²⁰

¹⁵ One in five (20%) of PPC I Hybrid trainees in 2021 secured traineeships in-house in the private and public sectors. Source: Law Society of Ireland.

¹⁶ The Trainee Solicitors Specified-Purpose Contract Candidate Information Booklet (July 2021) set out a PPC salary scale of €27,401 in year one, rising to €29,751 in year three.

¹⁷ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Annual Report on Admission Policies of Legal Professions*. (Submission to LSRA.)

¹⁸ Law Society of Ireland, *Barrister Transfer* [website].

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2023) *Pathways to the Professions 2022: Annual Report on Admission Policies of the Legal Professions*.

Transfer arrangements for foreign lawyers

There are several routes for lawyers from other jurisdictions to qualify as Irish solicitors by applying to the Law Society for admission to the Roll of Solicitors.

Solicitors qualified in Northern Ireland, England and Wales may obtain admission as an Irish solicitor by applying for a Certificate of Admission. Applicants must supply documents including certificates of good standing and three character references and pay a fee of €300.²¹

EU qualified lawyers may apply to practise in Ireland under their home title by being entered on the Register of Registered Lawyers.²² After three years the Registered Lawyer may seek admission to the Roll of Solicitors. Register applicants must provide documentation including a certificate of good standing and pay a fee of €350.²³

Lawyers and attorneys qualified in a limited number of jurisdictions, as well as England and Wales qualified barristers, must pass a Law Society conversion test to qualify as a solicitor in Ireland.²⁴ The Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT) consists of one oral and six written exams which are offered twice each year. The total cost of the exam fees is €1,395.²⁵ Lawyers can apply for exemptions from some exam papers based on their qualifications and experience. Preparatory courses for the QLTT can cost between €2,500 and €2,900.²⁶ Before applying to sit the QLTT, lawyers must first apply to the Law Society for a Certificate of Eligibility (application fee €430).²⁷ Once admitted to the Roll of Solicitors, solicitors who have passed the QLTT examinations are not required to undertake a training contract.

All other foreign qualified lawyers are required to undergo the standard solicitor training process, as described elsewhere in this chapter.

2.1.3 Costs and time to qualify

Overall the process to qualify as a solicitor in Ireland can take three to five years to complete post-graduation (depending on individuals' circumstances; for some it may take even longer).²⁸ This includes time spent in getting to the point of eligibility for a solicitor traineeship by passing the FE-1 entrance exam for the PPC and securing a training sponsor for the mandatory in-office training.

The total direct and indirect costs of qualifying as a solicitor in Ireland depends on a variety of factors, including an individual's educational background and financial circumstances. These factors can impact upon the time it takes to study for, sit and pass the eight FE-1 exam papers for the PPC and to find a suitable training opportunity. The fixed costs of qualifying as a solicitor in 2021 are set out in Table 2.1.

²¹ Law Society of Ireland, *Certificate of Admission* [website].

²² Under Establishment Directive (98/5/EC)

²³ Law Society of Ireland, *EU Registered Lawyers* [website].

²⁴ For a list of eligible jurisdictions see: *Law Society of Ireland, Foreign Lawyers* [webpage].

²⁵ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test Application Form*.

²⁶ For example, see City Colleges, *Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test Programme* [website].

²⁷ Law Society of Ireland, *Certificate of Eligibility* [website].

²⁸ Hook Tangaza (2018) *Legal Practitioner Education and Training: Report of Independent Review Team*.

Table 2.1 Fixed costs of qualifying as a solicitor in 2021²⁹

Stage of qualification	Cost
Preliminary Examination fee	€400
Law Society FE-1 fees	€105 per paper (€840 total)
Register of apprenticeship (indentures)	€840
PPC I fee	€8,300
PPC II fee	€4,500
Application to Education Committee	€75
Entry to Roll of Solicitors	€300

Source: Law Society of Ireland

FE-1 preparatory courses

The Law Society does not provide tuition for the FE-1, but it does provide a list of tutors and preparatory courses.³⁰ While the preparatory courses are not formally part of the entry process, there is a perception amongst candidates that the courses are necessary, and this adds to the cost of entering the profession.³¹ The costs of preparatory courses vary and can range up to €2,600.³² It has been estimated that a student could potentially spend up to €4,000 (excluding living costs) to get through the FE-1 entrance exam.³³

Grants and funding

Solicitor trainees on the full-time PPC are eligible to apply for the State-funded Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) post-graduate fee contribution and maintenance grants if they meet the relevant income thresholds. PPC Hybrid trainees are not eligible for SUSI funding, which is only available for full-time courses.

There are a number of Law Society grants and scholarships available. The main scheme is the Access Scholarship programme which assist students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A total of 149 individuals have qualified as solicitors with financial support under this scheme since 2001, according to the Law Society.

The Law Society also operates a hardship fund and a limited bursary scheme for each course. Trainees must have started the PPC course before they can apply for a bursary on the basis that their own resources or available family resources are inadequate to fund their study. Financial supports for trainees under the bursary scheme range from €500 to €6,000.

While training solicitors are not required to pay PPC fees for their trainees, many do so, in particular large law firms that may also offer to reimburse the FE-1 fees of their trainees.

²⁹ The fixed costs were due to be revised in 2022.

³⁰ Law Society of Ireland (2020) *Persons and Institutions Holding Themselves Out as Preparing Candidates for the Final Examination-First Part (FE-1)*.

³¹ Hook Tangaza (2018) *Legal Practitioner Education and Training: Report of Independent Review Team*.

³² Law Society of Ireland (2020) *Persons and Institutions Holding Themselves Out as Preparing Candidates for the Final Examination-First Part (FE-1)*.

³³ Maharg, P., Ching, J. and Crewe, J. (2018) *Solicitor Education in Ireland Review Report*.

Table 2.2 Grants and funding for trainee solicitors

Grant or funding	Recipients	Support provided	2021 awards
Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)	Full-time PPC trainees	Fee contribution €3,500 to max €6,270; Maintenance grant up to €6,115	10 PPC I trainees and 14 PPC II trainees
Law Society Access Scholarship Programme Since 2001	Access students and trainees from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds	Reduced/waived FE-1 exam fees for students; Fee contribution and maintenance funding for PPC trainees; Fee waivers for access to Roll of Solicitors	69 PPC trainees and 115 FE-1 candidates
Scott Scholarship Since 2020	Students and trainees from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds	Exam, course and registration fees totalling €15,000	1 PPC trainee per year
Law Society Small Practice Traineeship Grant Since 2020	Solicitor traineeships in rural 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)	5 firms / trainees per year

Source: Law Society of Ireland

2.1.4 Trainee information, recruitment, pay and conditions

What information is available to prospective trainee solicitors on training opportunities?

There is no dedicated online portal or “one-stop-shop” for aspiring solicitors who are seeking to learn how training contracts work or where to find one.³⁴ The information that exists is spread across a range of channels, including the websites and social media platforms of the Law Society, recruiters, law firms, and third level student societies.

The Law Society makes available a considerable amount of general information on its website, including useful first person testimonies and advice from former solicitor trainees. The Law Society runs an annual seminar for prospective trainees on finding a training contract. On-campus careers events are also regularly organised by student law societies or university bodies.

Current trainee solicitor opportunities are generally advertised on the websites of individual law firms and recruiters and also the Law Society’s Legal Vacancies web page. However, not all training contracts are advertised, and some, particularly in smaller firms, are only secured by a potential trainee directly approaching a firm. The Law Society has noted that “*the apparently random nature of the recruitment process makes the process harder and it is easy to get discouraged*”.³⁵

The Law Society’s website has a Traineeship Register which highlights firms that welcome applications from prospective trainees, but is not a comprehensive listing of all law firms in Ireland which routinely offer training contracts.³⁶ No general information is provided about training opportunities or career pathways that may exist in other settings outside of private practice.

³⁴ See for example the website www.thelawyerportal.com

³⁵ Law Society of Ireland (2018) *Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority as part of a public consultation prior to a report to the Minister for Justice and Equality on the education and training arrangements in the state for legal practitioners.*

³⁶ In January 2022 there were a total of 30 law firms listed on the Traineeship Register web page, including only one of the top ten largest training law firms Law Society of Ireland, *Firms Offering Traineeships* [website].

Large law firms

The pathways to training contracts with large law firms are generally well known, primarily through the firms' substantial presence on the main university campuses where they sponsor careers fairs and other initiatives such as open days to promote their annual internship and graduate training programmes.³⁷ Large firms also have "campus ambassadors" – undergraduate law students who may have completed internships or secured training contracts and whose role is to promote the firms' brands and workplace opportunities.

Large law firms generally provide detailed recruitment materials and information on their websites describing the trainee experience and the terms and conditions of the training period. Most describe their salaries as "competitive" or "top of the market" and they all list non-salary benefits such as health insurance, pension, gym membership, PPC fee payment etc. One large law firm interviewed by the LSRA reported that future trainees are supported by the firm in the year before their traineeship with guidance, advice and mentoring particularly around the FE-1 exam.

Small and medium law firms

Depending on a range of business factors, a medium sized firm may take on between one to five trainee solicitors each year, while a small firm may never recruit a trainee solicitor or may sponsor only one or two over a period of decades. Accordingly, the pathway for trainee recruitment tends to be less standardised and less visible. Small and medium firms may advertise individual positions locally or on job search websites including the Law Society's website.

Generally there is limited information publicly available on the terms and conditions offered by smaller law firms, which tend not to have a standard offering for trainees like those provided by larger firms. Direct contact with the firm is often required to determine details of a training contract on offer, including terms and conditions and also the details of the recruitment process.

Public and private sector organisations

Private sector bodies advertise positions for externally recruited trainee solicitors on their own websites and those of recruiters. Public sector bodies also advertise positions via the Public Appointments Service. These set out salary levels and terms and conditions in their candidate information booklets as standard.

How are trainee solicitors recruited?

The process of securing a training contract varies greatly, depending on the training solicitor firm or organisation.

Professional experience and volunteer work

Many law undergraduates begin gathering professional experience, both paid and unpaid, during their degree years as a route to securing a contract. Advice provided by former trainees in the Law Society's FE-1 student resource pack highlights that summer internships, volunteer work, high academic grades and personal contacts are some frequent methods employed to secure a training contract.³⁸

³⁷ The majority of the "Top 20" largest firms attend university career fairs and run campus events.

³⁸ Law Society of Ireland (undated) *Want to be a solicitor? Here's what you need to know about the FE-1.*

Large law firms

Securing a training contract with a large law firm is a highly competitive process. Applications for traineeships generally open in the autumn and include an annual October “milk round” recruitment process. One firm interviewed by the LSRA said it received approximately 600 applications for 20 to 30 traineeship places advertised in 2020. Many large law firms recruit trainees several years in advance of the traineeship start date, subject to successful completion of the FE-1.

The trainee selection process for large law firms usually consists of an online application followed by individual and group interviews, which may involve one or more rounds. Some firms also require trainee applicants to undertake aptitude or psychometric tests, such as the Watson Glaser test.

Several trainee applicants interviewed by the LSRA described the application process for large firms’ trainee intake programmes as detailed and extensive. One trainee who started applying for traineeships as a second year law undergraduate at UCD said:

“Each application form has a different word limit and it’s out there that if you aren’t hitting the word limit you won’t get an interview...it’s really really time consuming answering all the questions.....we are all the same undergraduates with good grades and extra-curricular achievements.”

Medium and small law firms

For medium and small law firms, the application process for a training contract generally includes the submission of a CV along with a cover letter prior to an interview. At very small firm level, recruitment practices may be quite informal. As already noted, in some cases trainee solicitor positions may not be advertised at all and opportunities may be based on “word of mouth” and through local networks. One small solicitor firm interviewed by the LSRA described their trainee selection process as informal, with importance placed on an applicant’s personality and whether they would fit in with the culture of the firm.

Summer internships – a gateway to training contracts

Summer internships, paid and unpaid, are an important gateway to training contracts with larger firms. Paid summer internships with large law firms usually last four weeks, with recruitment at the start of the calendar year often open to undergraduates in the penultimate and final years of their degree.

Many large firms advertise that interns are automatically considered for training contracts.³⁹ Some firms say they only consider candidates for training contracts if they have completed an internship.⁴⁰ As a result, summer internships are highly sought after and can be difficult to secure. One large firm interviewed by the LSRA reported having more than 1,000 applicants for 60 internships in 2021. Internship selection criteria varies somewhat from firm to firm. The majority of large law firms advertise that internships are open to undergraduates of any discipline. Some firms require minimum undergraduate grades of 2.1 while others require Leaving Certificate points as an academic indicator.⁴¹ Some firms run psychometric or aptitude tests as part of their internship recruitment process.⁴²

³⁹ At least half of the Top 20 firms advertise this. Also see: D. Griffin (2013) ‘Internships increasingly used as a route into the legal profession’, The Irish Times.

⁴⁰ Maples and Calder, *Graduates* [website]; Dillon Eustace, *Graduate Programmes* [website].

⁴¹ Pinset Masons, *Vacation Placements — Republic of Ireland* [website].

⁴² Matheson, *Summer Internship Programme* [website]; Pinset Masons, *Vacation Placements — Republic of Ireland* [website].

⁴³ Pinset Masons, *Vacation Placements — Republic of Ireland* [website].

Some of the largest law firms provide payment during the internship period; one leading firm advertised a payment of €500 per week for interns in 2021.⁴³

Once successful, large law firm interns are on a track towards a traineeship, but they must perform adequately during the internship and are often required to complete an interview or other assessments before securing a training contract.

Undergraduate work placement programmes

A large number of universities and institutes of technology run clinical work placement programmes with law firms and other legal practice settings as part of their law degrees. Programme lengths vary from several weeks to full academic year placements.

For example, Dublin City University's Bachelor's Degree in Civil Law includes an "INTRA" year which is an eight months placement in range of settings including corporate, general practice or public interest law firms, as well as accountancy and finance and company secretarial firms.⁴⁴ Trinity College Dublin offers a shorter clinical legal education module to final year law undergraduates which includes work placements in private, public and non-profit sectors.⁴⁵

What are the terms and conditions of training contracts?

Traineeships are formalised by an Indentures of Apprenticeship deed, also known as a training contract. This deed, issued by the Law Society, outlines the terms and conditions of the traineeship and the responsibilities of trainees and training solicitors.⁴⁶ Training solicitors may also provide an employment contract to trainees, and large firms routinely do so. Additionally, the Law Society provides a Code of Conduct for trainee and training solicitors which outlines the obligations and required values of trainee and training solicitors.⁴⁷ The Law Society recommends that a trainee works 36 hours per week and receives the corresponding rest periods and annual leave as set out in the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.⁴⁸

With permission from the Law Society and the training solicitor, a trainee may be seconded to spend up to a maximum of six months of the in-office training period working in employment elsewhere other than in the training solicitor's office.

Content of solicitor training

During the in-office training period, training solicitors are required to provide trainees with experience in three specified areas of law, as well as practical experience in areas such as legal research, advocacy, letter writing and other skills.⁴⁹ Training firms are also expected to provide guidance to their trainees on a regular basis.

The Law Society's Traineeship Executive (a staff member responsible for overseeing the traineeship period) acts as a contact point for both training solicitors and trainees. According to the Law Society, the Traineeship Executive visits approximately 45 training firms each year to review the adequacy of training and address any concerns (approximately 10% of trainees each year).⁵⁰ Where a difficulty arises with a particular training contract, the matter may be referred to the Law Society Education Committee for its direction. The Law Society advises that any breaches of the Indentures of Apprenticeship deed by a trainee or training solicitor should be reported to the Traineeship Section of the Law Society.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Dublin City University, *DCU Law School Introduces Year-Long Work Placement* [website].

⁴⁵ Trinity College Dublin, *Clinical Legal Education in the Law School* [website].

⁴⁶ Law Society of Ireland (2020) *Indenture Deed*.

⁴⁷ Law Society of Ireland (No date) *Code of Conduct for Trainee Solicitors and Training Solicitors during the Period of In-Office Training*.

⁴⁸ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Employment Rights*.

⁴⁹ Law Society of Ireland, *Indenture Deed* [website].

⁵⁰ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Economic and Other Barriers to the Legal Profession — LSRA Barriers to the Profession Report 2021 (Submission to the LSRA)*.

⁵¹ Law Society of Ireland, *Indenture Deed* [website].

How are trainees remunerated?

Remuneration levels for trainee solicitors vary significantly depending on the training solicitor firm or organisation. A training solicitor is obliged to pay trainees the minimum wage under the National Minimum Wage Act 2000. However, the Law Society of Ireland recommends that a training solicitor gives consideration to paying a trainee a “living wage” which in 2021 was €12.30 per hour.⁵²

The Law Society provides guidance on trainee salaries during the PPC I and PPC II, which vary depending on when the trainee started working in-office and whether the training solicitor is paying PPC course fees on behalf of the trainee.⁵³ Trainees must obtain written consent from the Law Society if they wish to work in a second job during their in-office training period.⁵⁴

Law firm trainee salaries

Large and leading law firms offer attractive packages to trainees including competitive salaries and additional benefits such as health insurance, pension contributions, subsidised meals and social activities. Some large firms provide training contract salaries which are fixed for the duration of the training period, while others offer annual increments.

According to the Law Society, trainee salaries in large Dublin law firms in 2021 were in the range of €40,000 - €45,000 per annum. Salaries in medium firms were in the region of €28,000 per annum with smaller firms offering salaries in the range of €22,000 to €25,000 per annum. Outside of Dublin, trainee solicitors could expect to earn in the range of €18,500 to €25,000 per annum.⁵⁵

Remuneration for trainees in public sector bodies are based on fixed salary scales. A 2022 competition for a trainee solicitor position with the Dublin City Council Law Department offered a starting salary for external candidates of €29,253 with full salary payments during PPC I and PPC II courses.⁵⁶ According to the Law Society, trainee solicitors working in-house may receive a higher salary than those in private practice firms outside of Dublin.

While training solicitors are not required to pay PPC fees for their trainees, many do so, in particular large law firms that may also reimburse the FE-1 fees of their trainees. Other firms may cover full or partial PPC fees and some may not pay any PPC fees, leaving the trainee to self-fund the cost of the fees through savings, loans or other informal arrangements, or to apply for state grants or supports from the Law Society.

⁵² Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Guidance on Trainee Salaries*.

⁵³ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Guidance on Trainee Salaries*.

⁵⁴ Law Society of Ireland (2021) PPC I Application Pack 2021.

⁵⁵ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Economic and Other Barriers to the Legal Profession — LSRA Barriers to the Profession Report 2021*. (Submission to the LSRA).

⁵⁶ Dublin City Council (2022) *Candidate Information Booklet. Trainee Solicitor (Temporary) Law Department — Dublin City Council*.

2.1.5 Maternity/adoptive leave

Trainee solicitors

Trainee solicitors are entitled to statutory and additional maternity/adoptive leave during their in-office training. The Law Society grants 18 weeks 'credit' to trainees on maternity/adoptive leave, meaning they are required to complete 18 weeks less than the standard 24 month in-office training period. According to the Law Society, trainees taking maternity/adoptive leave are given the option to continue or defer the PPC.⁵⁷

Qualified solicitors

Employed solicitors are entitled to statutory and additional maternity/adoptive leave and usually maternity benefit payment for 26 weeks or adoptive benefit for 24 weeks. Depending on company policy, an employer may also provide payment during the leave period. Many employers provide additional pay to solicitors on maternity/adoptive leave to equal full salary.

Eligibility of self-employed solicitors for maternity benefit is based on the solicitor's level of social insurance contributions.⁵⁸ Solicitors who plan to take a period of maternity or adoptive leave, or indeed any kind of break from practice, must surrender their practising certificate.⁵⁹

Solicitors who take a period of leave including maternity, adoptive or parental leave can have their continuous professional development requirement reduced proportionally in relation to the number of weeks of leave taken in the given period.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Economic and Other Barriers to the Legal Profession — LSRA Barriers to the Profession Report 2021*. (Submission to the LSRA).

⁵⁸ Government of Ireland, *Maternity Benefit* [website].

⁵⁹ S.I. No. 558/2018 — Solicitors Practising Certificate Regulations 2018.

⁶⁰ Law Society of Ireland, *The Continuing Professional Development Scheme* [website].

2.2 About the junior profession – barristers

2.2.1 Early career barrister pathways and remuneration

Overview

Barristers in their first seven years of practice make up what is considered the junior profession for the purpose of this study.⁶¹ Newly qualified barristers may go straight into self-employed practice or into an employed position. Many barristers begin their careers as self-employed members of the Law Library, which is the central and primary place of practice for the Bar of Ireland and is administered by its ruling body, the Bar Council.⁶² Of the 590 junior barristers who are members of the Law Library, two thirds (66%) are aged 40 and under and 33% are aged over 40.⁶³

Barristers practising as members of the Law Library are bound by the rules in the Bar of Ireland's Code of Conduct.⁶⁴ Each practitioner is a sole trader, and entering into partnerships with other barristers is forbidden.⁶⁵

Career pathways

Barristers spend their first seven years of practice post-qualification establishing their careers and building their skills, knowledge and expertise and, if self-employed, their individual practices. There is considerable scope for variation in the potential career pathways for barristers, who may operate as self-employed professionals or in employed positions, or move between both.

The forthcoming introduction of legal partnerships as a new business model will open up additional career pathways for barristers. A legal partnership is a partnership between two or more legal practitioners, at least one of whom is a practising barrister, for the purpose of providing legal services. Legal partnerships will for the first time allow solicitors and barristers, and barristers and barristers, to jointly provide legal services in one business entity. Legal partnerships are provided for in the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, and the relevant provisions are due to be enacted in 2023.⁶⁶

Self-employed barristers

Junior barristers in self-employed practice may work in criminal or civil law for private clients or State bodies. A junior barrister's practice may include taking instructions from solicitors, providing advice and opinions, drafting writs or pleadings, making applications to court, representing clients (mainly in the lower courts), and negotiating settlements of proceedings.⁶⁷

Membership of the Law Library requires newly qualified barristers to undertake not less than a year of unpaid pupillage, also known as devilling, with a more senior colleague, called a master.⁶⁸ This exposes junior barristers primarily to their master's areas of practice. Many barristers continue informally as devils in their second year of self-employed practice.

⁶¹ There were 785 junior practising barristers in 2021, accounting for 27% of the total working profession of 2,933 in that year. Of these, 590 (75%) were in self-employed practice as members of the Law Library, while 195 barristers (25%) were not Law Library members. Source: Bar of Ireland and LSRA.

⁶² The Law Library includes the Law Libraries in Dublin and Cork and the Law Library Buildings at Church Street in Dublin. See: Bar of Ireland (2021) *Code of Conduct for the Bar of Ireland, Rule 8.1*.

⁶³ Data provided by the Bar of Ireland, October 2021.

⁶⁴ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Code of Conduct for the Bar of Ireland*.

⁶⁵ See Hogan, C., T. Nesterchuk, M. Smith (2019) *Values and Functions of Referral Advocate*.

⁶⁶ Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022.

⁶⁷ Reid, S. BL, (2014) *The Devil's Handbook*.

Work for new Law Library entrants generally comes from a combination of referrals or handovers from more senior colleagues and from State-funded civil and criminal legal aid schemes. Personal networks within the Law Library play an important role in securing referral work. These include a barrister’s “devil family” of colleagues who completed their pupillage with the same master and may refer work among each other.

By its nature, the career path of a self-employed barrister is less defined than that of a barrister in employment. Given the flexible nature of the self-employed profession, it can be attractive to people seeking a second career having previously worked in a range of other sectors.

The Department of Justice administers the main criminal legal aid scheme and pays barristers professional fees based on agreed set rates. The Legal Aid Board, which is responsible for legal services in civil law matters, also pays professional fees on a set rates basis. The board maintains a panel of barristers who can be briefed by solicitors under its scheme. Law Library members are not permitted to have their name placed on a Legal Aid Panel until they have completed six months of their pupillage or have been members of the Law Library for one year.⁶⁹

Self-employed barristers are responsible for the administrative work and costs associated with running a business, including paying VAT at 23% on their professional fees.

From their second year on, junior barristers who are members of the Law Library are required to pay annual member subscription fees for services and benefits provided. These subscription rates increase with each year of membership; 2020/21 rates for junior counsel ranged from €2,265 for barristers in their second year of membership to €4,915 for those in their seventh year.⁷⁰

Barristers at the independent referral bar do not receive instructions from clients directly; their work comes through solicitors or in-house counsel.⁷¹ Since 1990, the Bar of Ireland has authorised some approved bodies and their members to have direct access to its members in non-contentious matters. Direct access means they can instruct barristers as clients directly without having to go through a solicitor. The Direct Professional Access Scheme is limited to legal assistance, including opinions, and does not include litigation services (e.g. court proceedings).⁷²

Section 101 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 extends the provision of direct access to barristers for legal services to all members of the public in non-contentious matters.⁷³ However, this section of the Act has not been commenced.

⁶⁸ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Code of Conduct for the Bar of Ireland*. Rule 8.7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority on the Admission Policies of the Legal Professions as Required by Section 33 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015*.

⁷¹ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Code of Conduct for the Bar of Ireland*. Rule 4.1.

⁷² For a list of approved bodies under the Direct Professional Access Scheme see <https://www.lawlibrary.ie/legal-services/dpa/list-of-approved-dpa-bodies/>

⁷³ Section 101 states: “No professional code shall operate to prevent a barrister from providing legal services as a practising barrister in relation to a matter, other than a contentious matter, where his or her instructions on that matter were received directly from a person who is not a solicitor.”

Employed barristers

The work of an employed barrister can vary depending on the nature of the employer. Many employed barristers work in specialist legal departments advising only the organisation they work for. A growing number of those holding the title of barrister are employed and work in the corporate or public sector or with law firms, generally holding positions such as “legal counsel” or “legal advisor”.

Since the passage of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, all qualified barristers intending to provide legal services in the State must apply to have their names entered on the Roll of Practising Barristers which is maintained by the LSRA.⁷⁴

Section 212 of the Act provides that a barrister whose name is on the Roll of Practising Barristers may take up paid employment, and as part of that employment provide legal services for his or her employer, including by appearing on behalf of that employer in a court, tribunal or forum for arbitration. Previously, employed barristers were not permitted to represent their employers, or any other client.

The LSRA has previously noted that section 212 is silent on some key issues that require clarification. These would include whether a solicitor is required to brief a barrister who is representing their employer in a court, tribunal or forum for arbitration and whether a barrister is permitted to provide legal services to his or her employer where their employer acts in representation of third parties. The LSRA has previously recommended that section 212 be amended to provide clarity as to how it will operate in practice.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See: www.lsr.ie/for-law-professionals/roll-of-practising-barristers/

⁷⁵ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2019), Review of the Operation of the Legal Services Regulation Act, 2015: Report to the Dáil and Seanad under section 6 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.

Remuneration

Remuneration levels within the early profession vary considerably, depending on a range of factors including whether the barrister is self-employed or employed.

Self-employed barristers

The early career years are a time of considerable financial uncertainty for most self-employed barristers. It is widely observed that it can take seven to ten years of practice at the Law Library before earning a living. Barristers also may face problems getting paid and are unable to sue solicitors for fees owed.⁷⁶

Part-time work, financial support from family members or reliance on savings, are often required during the early years while self-employed barristers build their careers. Lecturing, tutoring, discovery and document review are popular areas of work, although junior barristers may also work part-time in areas outside of the legal profession, with some restrictions.⁷⁷ If a barrister is earning below a certain threshold, they may qualify for a social welfare payment.⁷⁸

Barristers' fees include a brief fee which covers preparatory work, and can represent many months or even years of preparatory work, and refresher fees for subsequent days in court. The conventional funding model of full payment at the end of a case can place financial pressure on junior barristers.⁷⁹ According to the Bar of Ireland, in effect, the barrister gives the client several years' credit. (For more discussion of this see chapter 4.)

In addition professional fees currently paid to barristers by the State in criminal matters are at 2002 rates following reductions in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.⁸⁰

Law Library members pay an entry fee and annual subscription fees which increase yearly. They are also required to hold an annually renewable practising certificate.

Employed barristers

A career as an employed barrister offers more security in terms of income and additional benefits. An analysis of 2019 salaries paid to in-house counsel put a typical junior legal counsel salary in Dublin at between €55,000 and €80,000 and for a senior legal counsel at between €85,000 and €145,000.⁸¹

The Office of the Attorney General, which employs significant numbers of barristers, generally employs legal practitioners with "significant post-qualification experience" to the roles of Assistant Parliamentary Counsel and Advisory Counsel.⁸² The starting salary for new entrants to these positions in 2021 was approximately €70,000. While traditionally the office of the Attorney General generally recruited Law Library barristers, it now also recruits solicitors and employed barristers.

⁷⁶ See: Tottenham M. BL (2020) *The rule against barristers suing for their fees.* [website] <https://decisis.ie/legal-news/the-rule-against-barristers-suing-for-their-fees/>

⁷⁷ See the Bar of Ireland's Code of Conduct, which also prohibits practising barristers from engaging in part-time occupations which are inconsistent with the Code and which prevent regular attendance at Court or the Law Library during term.

⁷⁸ Reid, S. BL (2014) *The Devil's Handbook.*

⁷⁹ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Council of the Bar of Ireland Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority Barriers for Early Career Barristers and Increasing Diversity, June 2021.*

⁸⁰ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2022) *Pathways to the Professions 2021: Annual Report on Admission Policies of the Legal Professions.*

⁸¹ IrishJobs.ie 2020 Salaries for Legal Professionals. December 2019.

⁸² AGO Staff Recruitment [web page]

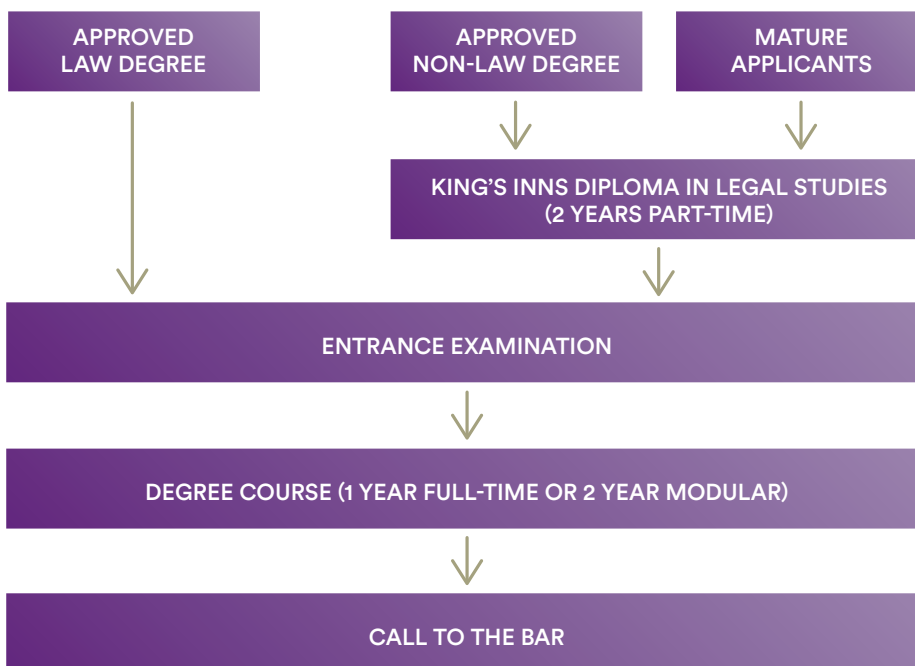
2.2.2 The qualification process

Professional barrister training is delivered exclusively by the Honorable Society of King's Inns (King's Inns). Graduates of the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law programme are qualified barristers with full rights of audience before all courts, as soon as they are called to the Bar of Ireland. The King's Inns describes the teaching and examination of the BL degree course as having a "fit to practice" standard.⁸³

Entry and enrolment

To be eligible to sit the entrance exam for the BL degree course, an aspiring barrister must either hold a law degree or postgraduate diploma approved by the King's Inns or have completed the King's Inns own two year part-time Diploma in Legal Studies, which is delivered in person and online. Figure 2.5 sets out the qualification routes and process.

Fig. 2.3 Qualification as a barrister



Source: Law Society of Ireland

⁸³ Honorable Society of King's Inns (2022) *Legal Services Regulatory Authority Annual Report on the Admission Policies of the Legal Professions - Submission on behalf of the Honorable Society of King's Inns.*

Barrister-at-Law Degree (BL)

The BL degree can be completed as a one year full-time course or as a two years part-time/modular course mainly taught over weekends. Both courses start in October and end in late May or early June. According to the King's Inns, modular students usually work full-time while studying.

The course involves classroom tuition, court visits, workshops and mock-trials.⁸⁴ It includes a compulsory module on Irish language legal terminology which does not have an exam component.

During the degree there is also a focus on custom and networking. BL degree students are required to dine at the King's Inns on ten occasions during their study period. The King's Inns describes the dining custom as one which allows students to make connections with colleagues and mentors.⁸⁵

Admission and call to the Bar

Students who successfully complete the BL degree course are eligible to be admitted to the BL degree and "called to the Bar" by the Chief Justice of Ireland, with full rights of audience before all courts in the State and to practise as a barrister independently. The King's Inns' Competency Statement asserts that it "teaches and examines the Barrister-at-Law Degree course to a 'fit to practise' standard."⁸⁶

However, the King's Inns Professional Code of Conduct requires that barristers undertake a "*continuous period of not less than nine months' pupillage with a barrister of at least seven years' standing whose practice involves regular appearances before the courts representing clients*" before they can represent clients before courts.⁸⁷

As pupillages are only available through the Bar of Ireland, the King's Inns Code could be seen to restrict barristers wishing to enter sole private practice, or join a legal partnership when established, unless they have first joined the Bar of Ireland and completed most of their pupillage.

Practising at the Bar of Ireland/Law Library - pupillage

Newly qualified barristers are eligible to apply to become members of the Law Library and begin a 12-month period of unpaid pupillage, also known as devilling. Pupillage or devilling represents the practical training stage of qualification and is a formal requirement for those seeking to practise through the Law Library.

In order to register for pupillage, barristers must first secure a master, who must be a junior counsel who has practised for a minimum of seven years, whose practice is predominantly or solely Dublin based, and who is registered with the Bar of Ireland.⁸⁸ Pupils (also known as devils) develop skills and learn the etiquette, customs and conduct rules of the Bar of Ireland from the masters.

⁸⁴ Honorable Society of King's Inns (2022) *Degree of Barrister at Law*.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Council of the Honorable Society of King's Inns (11 November 2020) *Statement of the Required Competencies of a Barrister*.

⁸⁷ Honorable Society of King's Inns (2018) *Professional Code of Conduct for Barristers on the Register of Members of the Society*. Rule 60: "*Barristers shall not, unless exempted by the Society or a relevant professional body, represent clients before courts without undertaking a continuous period of not less than nine months' pupillage with a barrister of at least seven years' standing whose practice involves regular appearances before the courts representing clients.*"

⁸⁸ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Code of Conduct for the Bar of Ireland. Rule 8.9 and Bar of Ireland (2021) Master Guidelines – Approved March 2021*.

Pupillage is an opportunity to build relationships and potential pipelines for future work. Pupils may undertake routine work such as drafting legal documents, researching issues, and preparing for and handling routine procedural motions and court lists for their masters.

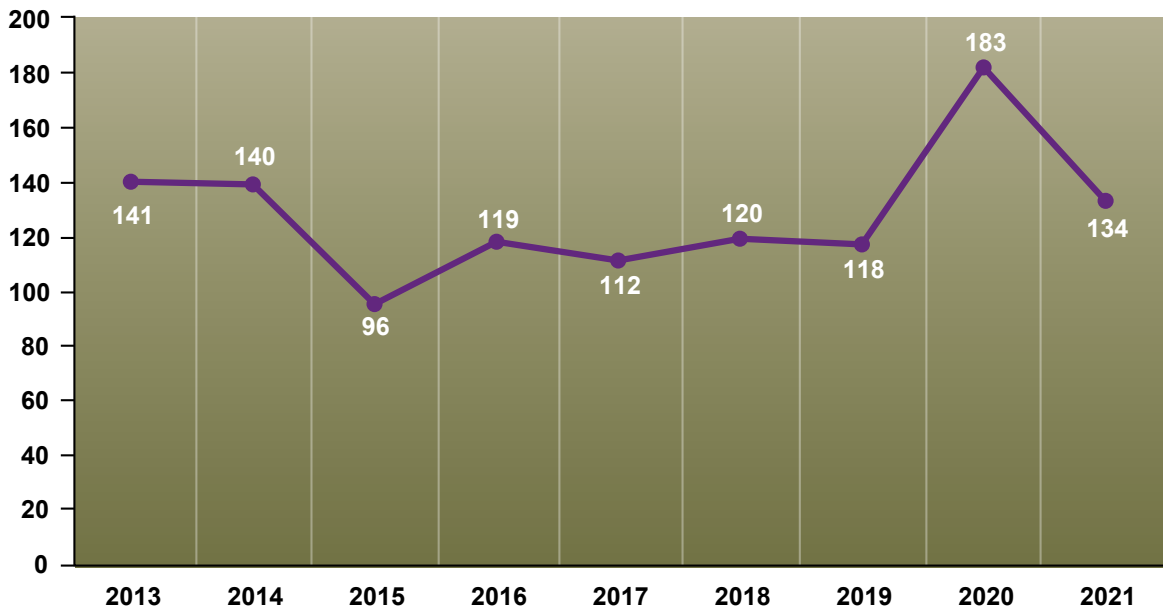
Pupils are not employed by the master and pupillages are unpaid. A range of informal arrangements are common, including masters paying their pupils stipends or periodic cash payments in addition to hospitality and other informal supports. While pupils are entitled to accept work as a barrister on their own behalf during this period, this is subject to restrictions by the Bar of Ireland, which sets the rules around pupillage for members of the Law Library. The Bar of Ireland says the aims of pupillage are:

- to train and prepare pupils for practice as an independent barrister at The Bar of Ireland as part of a supervised practical training year.
- to assist the pupil in establishing the skills necessary for professional practice as an independent barrister.
- to enhance and build on, by way of practical experience, the knowledge and skills gained at the academic and vocational stages of education.
- to assist in the development of the pupil's professional and ethical approach to practice as a barrister, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, the customs and standards of the Bar, and the LSRA Code of Practice.
- to develop and encourage the pupil's proficiency in all areas of advocacy, oral and written, including by:
 - (a) providing opportunities to practice and/or to observe other advocates in court or other tribunals/dispute resolution fora.
 - (b) providing opportunities to develop drafting skills including opinions, pleadings and submissions.
- to educate the pupil in how to deal with relationships between barristers, solicitors and clients including by encouraging them to attend consultations or settlement meetings.
- to develop the pupil's application of effective research skills and to develop the pupil's analytical skills.

How many student barristers are there each year?

The number of student barristers enrolling on the BL degree course has varied somewhat in recent years, as shown in Figure 2.4.⁸⁹ Of the 134 students who began the BL degree course in 2021, approximately half were full-time and half were part-time.⁹⁰

Fig. 2.4 New student barristers (BL degree) 2013-2021



Source: Honorable Society of King’s Inns

⁸⁹ The number of students commencing the course in 2020 (during the Covid-19 pandemic) took account of the net impact of deferrals to a later year and returning deferrals from previous years.

⁹⁰ Honorable Society of King’s Inns (2022) *Legal Services Regulatory Authority Annual Report on the Admission Policies of the Legal Professions*. (Submission to LSRA)

Who is studying to become a barrister?

Diversity information on student barristers is currently limited to what is collected by the King's Inns at student enrolment. Part-time BL degree students tend to be older than their full-time counterparts, with 56% of full-time students in 2021 aged between 21 and 28 compared to 35% of modular students.⁹¹

Solicitors transferring to the barrister profession

Solicitors can apply to the King's Inns to be admitted as barristers if they have been in continuous practice in Ireland for at least three years immediately preceding their application. They must have held a practising certificate from the Law Society for this time, or be exempt from the requirement to hold a certificate. The solicitor must attend the one month Solicitor Transfer course at King's Inns, which takes place in June each year. The solicitor must certify their removal from the Roll of Solicitors and submit documentation including a certificate of good standing and copies of practising certificates and pay fees of €3,000.⁹²

Transfer arrangements for foreign lawyers

Qualified barristers from other jurisdictions who seek admission to the Bar of Ireland may apply to the King's Inns to be admitted to the BL degree. Applicants are required to supply certificates of good standing from their relevant authorities and copies of practising certificates, as well as paying an administration fee of between €500 and €1,500.⁹³

Barristers from Northern Ireland must have been practising for at least three years immediately preceding their application. England and Wales qualified barristers, while not required to have been practising for a specified period of time, may have to pass a written aptitude test on the Irish legal system and Irish Constitutional law. Qualified lawyers from EU Member States may be required to complete a more extensive aptitude test. There are also arrangements in place for barristers from countries where a reciprocal arrangement is in place for members of the Bar of Ireland.

2.2.3 Costs and time to qualify

The process to qualify as a barrister in Ireland can take one or two years post-graduation and up to four years for non-graduates. The total direct and indirect costs of qualifying as a barrister depends on a variety of factors, including an individual's educational background, financial circumstances, and the pathway taken. The most significant costs for individuals seeking to practise as members of the Law Library is that they are required to undergo a 12-month period of unpaid pupillage. The fixed costs of qualifying as barrister in 2021 are set out in Table 2.3.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Honorable Society of King's Inns (2021) *Education Rules — Edition of June 2021*.

⁹³ Honorable Society of King's Inns (2021) *Education Rules — Edition of June 2021*.

Table 2.3 Costs of qualifying as a barrister

Stage of Qualification	Cost
Diploma in Legal Studies (if required)	€10,150
King's Inns Entrance Examination fees	€600 (€1,000 late fee)
Barrister-at-Law degree course fees	€12,560
Law Library Application Fee	€150 (€800 late fee)
Law Library Entrance Fee and First Year Subscription (covered by master)	€1,500 + €1,9500 = €3,400

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

Entrance exam preparatory courses

The King's Inns does not provide any preparatory courses for the BL degree course entrance exam, but several private providers offer courses costing between €1,350 and €1,500.⁹⁴

Grants and funding

Students on the full-time BL degree are eligible to apply for the State-funded Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) post-graduate fee contribution and maintenance grants if they meet the relevant income thresholds. Part-time BL degree students are not eligible for SUSI funding which is only available for full-time courses. There are also a small number of scholarships, fellowships and bursaries available, funded by the Bar of Ireland, the King's Inns and private donors.

Table 2.4 Grants and funding for aspiring barristers

Grant or funding	Recipients	Support provided	2021 awards
Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)	Full-time BL degree students	BL degree fee contribution €3,500 - €6,270; Maintenance up to €6,115	16 BL students
King's Inn and Bar of Ireland Denham Fellowship	Two students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds	Full fee waiver for BL degree; annual stipend of €7,000 for 5 years; waiver of Law Library fees for first 4 years	2 BL students
McCarthy family and others McCarthy Bursary	One student otherwise unable to take BL degree	Full fee waiver for BL degree; maintenance grant; internship in Strasbourg Court of Human Rights	1 BL student
King's Inns Maurice Gaffney Fellowship	Disadvantaged students	Full or part remission of fees for Diploma in Legal Studies	6 x year 1 Diploma students 5 x year 2 Diploma students

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

⁹⁴ Griffith College (2022) *King's Inns Entrance Preparation Course*; City Colleges (2022) *King's Inns Preparation Course*; *Lawschool.ie* (2022) *King's Inns*.

2.2.4 Pupillage information, process and arrangements

What information is available to prospective pupils on available masters?

The Bar of Ireland hosts on its website a Register of Masters which is a spreadsheet list of masters it has approved. This provides prospective pupils with the following information about each master: name; availability; area of practice; whether they practise on Circuit. Barristers wishing to be added to the Register of Masters must apply by the end of May to be included on the list for the next legal year.⁹⁵

Barristers who wish to be registered as masters with the Bar of Ireland must apply to its Education and Training Committee, and must fulfil a set of criteria including that they have been in practice for a minimum of seven years.

According to the Bar of Ireland, in deciding to admit a practitioner to the Register, the Committee must be satisfied that the prospective master is sufficiently senior, has enough work to enable the pupil to receive practical training, is a member in good standing and will give the pupil appropriate professional support.

How are masters secured?

The Bar of Ireland's Pupil Guidelines include information on the master/pupil relationship, which state that the process of securing a master can be "quite competitive." The guidelines recommend that barrister students speak to Law Library members in their second or third year of practice to help identify a potential master from the Register. They also suggest that that prospective pupils provide a detailed cover letter when contacting prospective masters.⁹⁶

While personal connections can often play a role in securing a master, for those without connections cold-calling masters on the Register is often the only viable approach.

The Bar of Ireland's Master Guidelines include information on becoming a master and the master/pupil relationship. The guidelines advise masters to meet with prospective pupils to discuss the practicalities and mutual expectations of the pupillage relationship.⁹⁷

What kind of terms and conditions can pupils expect?

By their nature, pupillage experiences can vary greatly depending on the individuals involved and the nature of the master's practice. The Bar of Ireland's Master Guidelines state that a master should "supervise and engage" a pupil to gain experience in three key areas: advocacy, drafting and research and preparing for and advising in consultations.

⁹⁵ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Pupil Guidelines – Approved October 2021*.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Masters are also required to ensure that pupils make applications to court. The guidelines caution that masters who are not in a position to do this should not take a pupil.⁹⁸

According to the Rules of Membership of the Law Library, all pupillages must take place in Dublin.⁹⁹ In 2021, 52% of new pupils provided a home address outside of Dublin.¹⁰⁰

The Code of Conduct of the Bar of Ireland requires that masters carry out their obligations to their pupils in accordance with such guidelines as may be issued from time to time by the Bar Council of the Bar of Ireland, the Professional Practices Committee or the Education and Training Committee.¹⁰¹

Separate from and in addition to the pupil and master relationship, new Law Library members are assigned a senior counsel mentor. The Bar of Ireland describes the mentor's role as "informal, intended to support and enhance the new entrant's experience of the Bar in traditional collegiality."¹⁰²

Pupils, and first year members of the Law Library, are obliged to attend a New Practitioners' Programme which consists of a series of seminars during the legal year.

How are pupils remunerated?

Both masters and pupils are self-employed barristers and there is no requirement for masters to pay their pupils. The Code of Conduct of the Bar of Ireland states that: "*Nothing in the relationship between the master and the pupil shall be deemed to be a contract of employment or contract of service.*"¹⁰³ However, masters are required to ensure that a pupil does not incur any expenses relating to the master's practice.

Since October 2021, masters are required to cover the cost of their pupil's Law Library entry fee, annual subscription and professional indemnity insurance for the year of pupillage.¹⁰⁴ This amounted to a total of €3,475 in 2021.¹⁰⁵

The arrangements followed changes to the Bar of Ireland's Code of Conduct introduced following a motion passed by Law Library members at its Annual General Meeting in 2019. Previously, any such payments were a matter of an informal arrangement between pupils and their masters.

There is no restriction on masters providing ex gratia payments to pupils such as an end of term payment.¹⁰⁶ Pupils and masters are advised in the respective guidelines to agree on any additional financial support that a master may provide.

Under the pupil guidelines, pupils are expected to dedicate their time to their pupillage and their master's practice. Nonetheless, pupils remain practising barristers and as such are entitled to accept work on their own behalf, subject to other provisions of the Code of Conduct.

⁹⁸ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Master Guidelines* – Approved March 2021.

⁹⁹ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Rules of Membership of the Law Library* — last amended Oct 2021.

¹⁰⁰ Bar of Ireland (2021) Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority on the Admission Policies of the Legal Professions as Required by Section 33 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.

¹⁰¹ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Code of Conduct for the Bar of Ireland*.

¹⁰² Bar of Ireland (2021) *Council of the Bar of Ireland Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority Barriers for Early Career Barristers and Increasing Diversity*, June 2021.

¹⁰³ *Bar of Ireland (2021) Code of Conduct for the Bar of Ireland*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ This comprises: Law Library entrance fee €1,500; first year membership fee (subscription rate) €1,900; Professional Indemnity Insurance €75.

¹⁰⁶ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Master Guidelines* – Approved March 2021.

Working a part-time job in addition to working as a barrister is common place for pupils and early-career barristers to supplementing any income earned at the Bar.

Maternity / adoptive leave

Self-employed barristers

2.2.5 Like any other self-employed professional, self-employed barristers are eligible for State-funded maternity/ adoptive benefit based on their level of social insurance contributions.

For self-employed barristers, an extended period of leave, such as maternity or adoptive leave, leads to a break in earnings. It also impacts future earnings as barristers may need to hand over existing briefs and will also not be able obtain new briefs during the leave period. A 2016 survey of female members of the Law Library identified balancing childcare and family responsibilities as one of the biggest challenges they faced. In the absence of any formal support, many new mothers reported that they took very little maternity leave, if any at all.¹⁰⁷

Several Law Library barristers interviewed by the LSRA noted that typically members take a period of months out of work after having a child, with some planning their pregnancies so their maternity leave period would fall over the summer courts recess. Given the unpredictable nature of the work, barristers with more than one child tend to recruit childminders rather than using institutional crèches as this provides more flexibility.

The Bar of Ireland permits barristers to take parental leave from their Law Library membership (maternity, adoptive and paternity leave) of up to 12 months in total. While parental leave is not considered by the Bar of Ireland to be a break in practice, Law Library members are generally not permitted under their rules of membership to practice while on parental leave. Members are entitled to reductions in their Law Library membership subscriptions during parental leave and, since 2019, if they return to work during the 12 month parental leave period.¹⁰⁸

The Bar of Ireland has a 'Parental Support Hub' which provides information about parental leave options, relevant support services and nursing facilities.

Employed barristers

Employed barristers are entitled to statutory and additional maternity/adoptive leave and usually maternity benefit payment for 26 weeks or adoptive benefit for 24 weeks. Depending on company policy, an employer may also provide payment during the leave period.

¹⁰⁷ Gallagher, A., 'Women's Issues?' *The Bar Review*, Volume 22, Number 2, 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Bar of Ireland (2021) *Rules of Membership of the Law Library* (last amended October 2021).

2.3 Diversity in the legal profession

A legal profession which reflects the diversity of society is in the public interest and has the potential to promote greater societal confidence, better meet the needs of consumers and increase access to legal services. It also ensures access to employers of the widest pool of talent.

In its 2022 Justice Plan, the Department of Justice commits to increasing diversity across the justice sector, including in the legal profession.¹⁰⁹ This report, and the Authority's recommendations to follow, are a part of that initiative.

In requesting this report, the Minister for Justice asked that the Authority “pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the profession.”

Issues of equity of access and entry into the legal professions are explored throughout this report. This section contains information on existing initiatives aimed at achieving greater diversity within the profession. Appendix B documents the diversity profile of respondents to the solicitor and barrister survey.

2.3.1 Diversity data on the legal profession in Ireland

Data on the legal profession in Ireland is limited to routine information collected by the professional bodies and the LSRA in fulfilment of their statutory functions or business needs.

Solicitors

According to the Law Society, in 2014 the Irish solicitor profession became the first legal profession in the world to achieve a female majority, with women making up 51% of practising certificate holders.¹¹⁰ Since then, women have continued to make up over half of the profession: in 2021, 53% of the total of 11,839 practising solicitors were women.¹¹¹ The female majority is also reflected in solicitor trainee numbers. In 2021, 61% of new trainees on the Law Society's Professional Practice Course were female.¹¹² However, this gender balance is not reflected at senior levels of the profession where only 35% of law firm partners are women.¹¹³

One third (34%) of solicitors in practice in 2021 were aged 20-39, with a further 32% aged 40-49 and 29% percent were aged 50-79, according to Law Society data.¹¹⁴

Barristers

In 2021, female barristers made up just over a third (37%) of the total number of barristers in private practice at the Law Library which stood at 2,115.¹¹⁵ Women accounted for 40% of the total of 1,763 junior counsel. At senior counsel level, the proportion of women dropped to 18%.

There are no gender statistics available for employed barristers and self-employed barristers who are not members of the Law Library, who accounted for one in four barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers in 2021.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Department of Justice (2022) *Justice Plan 2022*.

¹¹⁰ Kelly, T., 'Profession's Perfect Parity', *Law Society Gazette*, February 2015.

¹¹¹ Law Society of Ireland (2022) *Annual Report on Admission Policies of Legal Professions 2021*. [Submission to the LSRA].

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Law Society of Ireland, *Law Society calls for renewed collective efforts to increase access to legal leadership roles for women on International Women's Day*. [Press release March 2021].

¹¹⁴ Law Society of Ireland (2022) *Annual Report on Admission Policies of Legal Professions 2021*. [Submission to the LSRA].

¹¹⁵ Figures for June 2021. Bar of Ireland (2021) *Annual Report 2020-2021*.

¹¹⁶ There were 2,933 barristers on the Roll on 31 December 2021. Of these, 2,180 were members of the Law Library and 753 were not members of the Law Library. Source: LSRA

The Bar of Ireland does not routinely publish data on the age of members of the Law Library. Instead, it publishes statistics on its membership based on the number of years spent at the Bar. These show that a quarter of Law Library members (26%) were in years one to seven of practice in 2021, with 14% in practice for eight to eleven years and 60% in practice for over 12 years.¹¹⁷

Of the 102 barristers beginning pupillage in 2021, 60% were aged 20-30, 21% were aged 31-40, 11% were aged 41-50 and 10% were aged 51 and over.¹¹⁸

2.3.2 Equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives

There is a growing recognition among employers of the need to encourage workforce diversity and inclusion beyond minimum legal requirements.¹¹⁹ Within the Irish legal profession too there is a growing focus on diversity with specific attention to protected characteristics under equality legislation such as gender and ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, socio-economic background. Clients of large law firms are reportedly seeking evidence of a diverse workforce.¹²⁰

Both the Law Society of Ireland and the Bar of Ireland have a range of initiatives aimed at promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

Law Society EDI initiatives for solicitors

In 2019 the Law Society established a Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion in the Society and the solicitors' profession. Its 2020 Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Charter has more than 150 signatories.¹²¹ In 2021, it also launched a Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy for adoption by solicitors in their workplaces.¹²²

In addition, since 2016, the Law Society has run a Women in Leadership Mentoring Programme to support women with a minimum of five years' experience to advance their careers.¹²³ According to the Law Society, 118 successful solicitor mentorships were arranged between 2016 and 2021.

In 2021, the Law Society commissioned independent research on bullying, sexual, and other forms of harassment in the solicitors' profession. This included a Dignity Matters survey of trainees and practising solicitors which found that one in three women and one in two men experienced bullying while one in two women and one in nine men experienced harassment.¹²⁴

Following the publication of some survey findings in November 2021, the Law Society committed itself to implementing the recommendations in the Dignity Matters report and to "work with members, and firms, to eliminate unacceptable behaviour that does not align with the values of integrity, trust and respect that are the foundation of our profession."¹²⁵

¹¹⁷ Figures for June 2021. Bar of Ireland (2021) *Annual Report 2020-2021*.

¹¹⁸ Bar of Ireland (2022) *Submission to the Legal Services Regulatory Authority on the Admission Policies of the Legal Professions*. (Submission to the LSRA).

¹¹⁹ See for example Government of Ireland (2017) *Our Public Service 2020 and Government of Ireland (2021) Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy 'Building on our Strengths'*.

¹²⁰ Tucker B. C., M.T. González and M. Montoya, (2010) *The Next Steps*, The American Bar Association.

¹²¹ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion [website].

¹²² Law Society of Ireland (2021) *Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*.

¹²³ Law Society of Ireland, *Women in Leadership Mentoring Programme* [website].

¹²⁴ Law Society of Ireland, *Dignity Matters Report Available* [website].

¹²⁵ Law Society of Ireland, *Dignity Matters Project* [website].

Education and training initiatives

Since 2019 the Law Society has provided a part-time professional training course, the PPC Hybrid. The aim of the course is to provide greater access to the profession for trainees from diverse educational, professional and socio-economic backgrounds.¹²⁶ The PPC Hybrid is discussed in detail earlier in this chapter.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the Law Society also offers several funding support programmes to assist students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to access solicitor training.

The Law Society also since 2020 operates a Small Practice Trainee Grant Scheme with the aim of providing greater access to the profession for trainees from rural backgrounds. The scheme provides annual grants of €25,000 per firm towards the cost of training a solicitor.

The Law Society is also involved in a number of outreach initiatives which introduce secondary school students, including students from disadvantaged schools, to the legal profession.

Bar of Ireland EDI initiatives for barristers

Many of the Bar of Ireland's initiatives have traditionally focused on supporting women and addressing their under-representation in certain areas of practice and at the Inner Bar where women make up just 18% of senior counsel. These include:

- Since 2016, a Law & Women Mentoring Programme providing supports to around 20 barristers per year.
- Workshops and other events on topics including negotiation skills and confidence building as part of a series of female-oriented CPD and events.
- A Lean in Circle of female barristers which provides an opportunity to network, set career goals and receive help and advice.
- Since March 2020 the Bar of Ireland is a member of the Irish chapter of the global 30% Club, which aims to build awareness of the benefits of increased diversity and achieve better gender balance in Irish business.

In October 2020, the Bar produced a Dignity at Work Protocol which was developed in response to a member survey which showed that 43% of respondents saw discrimination and sexual harassment as widespread at the Bar and 33% saw bullying as widespread.¹²⁷ The protocol aims to promote respect, dignity, safety, and equality between members.

The Bar is developing an Equitable Briefing Policy which seeks to encourage briefing entities (State bodies and solicitors firms) to make efforts to distribute briefs equitably between male and female counsel in all areas of practice. Such policies exist in New Zealand and Australia.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Law Society of Ireland, *Annual Report and Accounts 2019/2020* [website].

¹²⁷ Bar of Ireland and B&A (2019) *Balance at the Bar: Members Survey, October 2019*.

¹²⁸ New Zealand Law Society and New Zealand Bar Association (2017) *Gender Equitable Engagement and Instruction Policy*; New South Wales Government (2018) *NSW Government Equitable Briefing Policy for Women Barristers*.

Education initiatives

The King's Inns offers a part-time (modular) BL degree course to facilitate a more flexible route to qualification. The modular BL degree is discussed in detail above.

The Bar of Ireland runs an annual Look into Law outreach programme for transition year students interested in a career as a barrister. At least 20% of places are reserved for students from disadvantaged schools.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the Bar of Ireland and the King's Inns provide fellowships and grants to support a small number of aspiring barristers to undertake a professional course. Since 2021, masters are required to fund the cost of their pupils' Law Library entrance fees, membership subscription and professional indemnity insurance for the pupillage year. The Bar says this new arrangement will improve access to the profession.

EDI initiatives in the legal sector

Individual law firms, representative bodies and educators are taking steps to encourage and promote diversity within their organisations and membership. A number of bodies have been formed by lawyers themselves to promote diversity and inclusion within the profession.

- Founded in 2002, the Irish Women Lawyers Association supports women in the legal profession through advocacy, education and professional support.
- The OUTlaw network promotes the inclusion of LGBT+ people in the Irish legal sector through networking, support and promotion of best practice.
- The DisAbility Legal Network was formed in 2021 with the aim of promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the legal sector.

Law firms are increasingly incorporating diversity and inclusion initiatives and practices into their recruitment processes and workplace culture. In 2021, 65% of law firms had a diversity and inclusion policy in place (100% of the 'top 20' firms). This compares to 2019 when only 43% of firms had such a policy in place.¹²⁹ Larger law firms also sponsor scholarship programmes in law schools across the main universities often with the aim of increasing access to and diversity within the profession.¹³⁰

Public sector organisations are guided by the 'Our Public Service 2020' framework which provides a model for progressing equality, diversity and inclusion.¹³¹ The Public Appointments Service's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy guides recruitment across all public sector bodies.¹³²

¹²⁹ Smith and Williamson (2022) *10th Annual Survey of Law Firms in Ireland*.

¹³⁰ For example: DLA Piper sponsor a scholarship in NUIG, Arthur Cox sponsors a scholarship in DCU, Matheson sponsors a scholarship in TCD.

¹³¹ Government of Ireland (2020) *Our Public Service 2020*.

¹³² Public Appointments Service (2021) *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021 – 2023*.

2.3.3 Accessibility initiatives

The Courts Service

The Courts Service is committed to ensuring that courts services and information are accessible to and supportive of all users with disabilities.¹³³ ¹³⁴ Measures to support accessibility outlined by the Courts Service on its website include: induction loops in all refurbished buildings; signage and directions in refurbished courthouses, signage and contact details for court offices in Braille; wheelchair ramps and accommodations for wheelchair users giving evidence in many courthouses.¹³⁵ The Courts Service also has a dedicated Access Officer.

The Bar of Ireland

The Bar of Ireland commits to ensuring equal opportunity in the profession and full and equal participation of members with a disability. Any members with special requirements are advised to contact its member services team.¹³⁶ Its Equality Action Plan commits to providing open and accessible information on disclosure and reasonable accommodations. The Bar is also a signatory to the DisAbility Legal Network.¹³⁷

The Law Society of Ireland

The Law Society Law commits to providing an equal opportunities learning environment.¹³⁸ It offers exam and study arrangements for students with a disability. The Law Society also provides guidance for law firms on increasing accessibility for persons with disabilities and has supported the work of the DisAbility Legal Network.¹³⁹

The King's Inns

The King's Inns commits to ensure that "students with a disability have as complete and equitable access to all facets of higher education life as can reasonably be provided".¹⁴⁰ Under its code of practice for students with a disability it provides "reasonable accommodation" as needed.

¹³³ Department of Justice and Equality (2017) *National Disability Inclusion Strategy*.

¹³⁴ Courts Service (No date) *Supporting Access to Justice in a modern, digital Ireland – Long-term Strategic Vision 2030*.

¹³⁵ Courts Service, *Accessibility* [website].

¹³⁶ Bar of Ireland (No Year) *Disability Support Statement*.

¹³⁷ Bar of Ireland, *Bar of Ireland pledges support to disAbility Legal Network* [website].

¹³⁸ Law Society of Ireland (2014) *Policy and Procedures for Students and Staff on Alternative Exam & Study Arrangements for Students with a Disability and / or Those Requiring Temporary Adapted Exam Arrangements*.

¹³⁹ Law Society of Ireland, *Assistive technology in the legal profession* [website].

¹⁴⁰ Honorable Society of King's Inns (2022) *Document of Disability Support 2022 – 2023*.

Chapter 3

Survey Findings of Barriers

3.1 Introduction

In order to help establish the economic and other barriers facing junior solicitors and barristers and to gain insights and understanding of their qualification and early career experiences, the LSRA undertook its first comprehensive survey of the junior legal profession.

Three separate surveys were undertaken, as set out in detail below. All the surveys were conducted with the market research company Behaviour & Attitudes (B&A) and were hosted on B&A's secure server.

The surveys were supplemented by in-depth interviews with a total of 16 junior practising solicitors and barristers, thereby providing a greater understanding of what lies behind the purely quantitative survey responses.

3.1.1 Who was surveyed

Junior legal professionals, barrister students and solicitor trainees

In determining who to survey, the first step was to consider the request from the Minister for Justice for the Authority to *“consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and the Law Society respectively.”*

For both solicitors and barristers, the core survey target group identified was practising solicitors and barristers in years one-to-seven post-qualification.

The Minister’s request further required an examination of several specific areas of solicitor and barrister academic and practical training, including the information available to aspiring legal professionals, how they are remunerated and the costs of joining the profession. In order to gather up to date inputs in this area, the target group for the surveys was extended to also include current solicitor trainees and barrister students and pupils.

This inclusive approach allowed the LSRA to gather the most up-to-date and relevant data on the expectations and experiences of junior legal practitioners as well as those expecting to qualify in the two branches of the profession in the coming years. The same set of survey questions was distributed to junior practitioners, trainees, students and pupils.

Law undergraduates

In addition to the core survey target group, a separate survey was conducted of law and joint law undergraduates, many of whom may be considering a legal career. The expectations of challenges ahead, whether real or perceived, may in themselves act as barriers for aspiring legal professionals when considering career pathways. The aim of the survey of law undergraduates was therefore to understand the nature and prevalence of these barriers.

Non-practising solicitors and barristers

A survey was also carried out of recently qualified solicitors and barristers who are currently not practising. This survey was undertaken following a supplementary request from the Minister for Justice in October 2021 for the Authority to also survey “those people who have completed King’s Inns or the Law Society in recent years, but who have chosen not to practice at this time”. This survey allowed the LSRA to examine the factors which prompt qualified legal professionals to work in other arenas and to analyse whether these align with the barriers and challenges that those still working in the profession say they face.

3.1.2 Survey methodology

Solicitor survey

An online anonymised survey was conducted of solicitor trainees on the Law Society’s Professional Practice Courses and solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors for seven years or less and with a current practising certificate.¹⁴¹

A unique questionnaire link was produced for each potential respondent, allowing the survey to be completed in more than one sitting and ensuring that there was no duplication of responses. The survey was distributed on behalf of the LSRA by the Law Society directly to solicitor trainees and practising certificates holders on its databases.

An advance “warm-up” email was issued to all potential respondents before the survey work began. This was followed by a survey distribution email and two reminder emails to encourage survey participation. A link to a Privacy Notice on the LSRA website was included with the survey distribution emails, which also provided potential respondents with the option to “opt out” of further survey-related emails.

The survey was open from 22 October 2021 to 15 November 2021, including an extension of several days to encourage any final responses. The timing of the survey field work in October and November 2021 meant that the academic year had just begun for new trainee solicitors.

The analysis of the survey is based on 433 completed responses. Respondents comprise 175 trainee solicitors and 258 practising solicitors at various stages in early career, up to seven years post-qualification. The completion rate was 9%. Corrective weighting was applied to the totals based on the universe sizes provided by the Law Society. Once weighting was applied, 29% of the sample were trainee solicitors and 71% were practising solicitors.

¹⁴¹ A total of 1,405 solicitor trainees and 3,394 practising solicitors.

Barrister survey

An online anonymised survey was conducted of student barristers on the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law (BL) degree course and practising barristers with up to seven years post-qualification experience.¹⁴²

A unique questionnaire link was produced for each potential respondent, allowing the survey to be completed in more than one sitting and ensuring that there was no duplication of responses.

The survey was distributed on behalf of the LSRA by the King's Inns to student barristers on its database and by the Bar of Ireland to Law Library members in years one to seven on its database. The LSRA directly distributed the survey to barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers who were called to the Bar from 2014 onwards and who are not members of the Law Library.

An advance "warm-up" email was issued to all potential respondents before the survey work began. This was followed by a survey distribution email and two reminder emails to encourage survey participation. A link to a Privacy Notice on the LSRA website was included in the survey distribution emails, which also provided potential respondents with the option to "opt out" of further survey-related emails.

The survey was open for student barristers from 26 October 2021 to 12 November 2021 and for practising barristers from 27 October 2021 to 12 November 2021. The timing of the survey field work in October and November 2021 meant that the legal and academic years had just begun. New student barristers were starting the Barrister-at-Law degree while incoming barrister pupils were beginning their pupillage year.

The analysis of the survey is based on 366 completed responses. Respondents comprise 95 barrister students and 271 practising barristers at various stages in early career, up to seven years post-qualification. The completion rate was 32%. Corrective weighting was applied to the totals based on the King's Inns, Bar of Ireland, and LSRA universe sizes. Once weighting was applied, 23% of respondents were student barristers and 77% were practising barristers.

Law undergraduate survey

An online anonymised survey was conducted of law and joint law undergraduates studying across 15 third-level institutions.¹⁴³ The survey questionnaire link was distributed by email through the various institutions to their law undergraduate students.¹⁴⁴ A unique link was produced for each educational institution, allowing the same survey link to be distributed to all students within that institution.

The survey was open from 18 October 2021 to 7 November 2021. It was prompted via the social media platforms of the third level institutions and the LSRA. In addition, students were advised in class by lecturers to check their emails for the survey link.

The analysis of the survey is based on 590 completed responses. The completion rate was approximately 8%. Weighting was applied to totals within each institution to ensure that each is represented in the total sample in their correct proportion.

¹⁴² A total of 211 barrister students and 785 practising barristers.

¹⁴³ Athlone IT, IT Carlow, Dublin Business School, Dublin City University, Griffith College, Letterkenny IT, Limerick IT, Maynooth University, NUI Galway, TU Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, University of Limerick and Waterford IT.

¹⁴⁴ With exception of Waterford IT which instead shared a link to the survey with law undergraduates via the Moodle programme pages of its law courses.

Non-practising solicitors and barristers survey

An online anonymised survey was conducted of solicitors and barristers who qualified in or after 2014 and who were not practising at the time of the survey.

Because the LSRA had no way to directly identify and contact people in this cohort, links to the survey questionnaire could not be emailed to individuals in the way it was done for the other surveys. Instead, a link to the survey was made available on the LSRA's website. Potential respondents were directed to the survey via notifications and targeted advertisements on social media, primarily LinkedIn. The King's Inns and the Law Society of Ireland also helped raise awareness of this survey through online channels.

The survey was open between 10 and 21 February 2022. It was completed by 86 individuals: 73 qualified barristers, 12 qualified solicitors and one person who is qualified as both a solicitor and a barrister.

Data analysis

The survey data in this report is rounded to the nearest percentage point, therefore the sum of all percentages on some charts may not total 100%. The purpose of not using decimal places in reporting data is for ease of review.

3.1.3 Survey design

The survey questions were based around the requests to the Authority made by the Minister for Justice. The survey questionnaires are in Appendix F. The LSRA's Privacy Notices are in Appendix G.

Input of External Reference Group

The core survey questionnaire was designed with the valuable input of legal professionals, students and experts who were invited by the LSRA, following a stakeholder analysis, to be part of an External Reference Group (ERG).

The ERG included solicitors, barristers and students from a range of backgrounds as well as members of representative groups and networks within the profession.

The representative groups and networks were: the Bar of Ireland's Young Bar Committee; the Bar of Ireland's Equality and Diversity Committee; Diversity in Law; the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association's Young Members Committee; the In-House Legal Network; the Irish Women Lawyers' Association; the Law Society's Younger Members Committee; the Law Society's In-House and Public Sector Committee; the OUTlaw Network; and the Society of Young Solicitors in Ireland. The ERG also included an academic expert and an access project coordinator from University College Dublin. The members of the ERG are listed in Appendix A.

For practical purposes, ERG members met over Zoom as two separate professional groups, one for solicitors and one for barristers. They provided input and feedback to the LSRA in developing topics and themes for the design of the core surveys and in-depth interviews. The LSRA is indebted to all ERG members who gave so freely of their time and expertise.

Awareness-raising activities were undertaken through a range of channels to encourage survey participation with assistance from the Law Society, the Bar of Ireland, the King's Inns, third level institute law departments and student societies, law firms, solicitors' bar associations, trainee solicitor year representatives, and members of the ERG and their respective organisations. The LSRA issued press releases and promoted the surveys through paid advertisements in a specialist legal publication and on its website and social media channels.

3.1.4 In-depth interviews

The surveys were supplemented by in-depth interviews carried out over Zoom by B&A with a total of 16 junior members of the legal profession. A cross-section of individuals were recruited by completing a contact form presented to them at the end of the surveys.

Eight solicitor interviewees were selected based on criteria including gender, region, disability, educational background and years of post-qualification experience.

Eight barrister interviewees were selected based on criteria including employed and self-employed, Law Library members and those practising outside the Law Library, gender, region, disability, educational background and years of post-qualification experience.

Solicitor Survey

Key Insights

Barriers to entering the profession



Cost and time to complete FE-1



Overall cost of qualifying



Difficulty securing a training contract

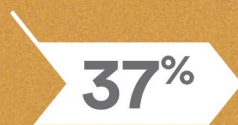


Lack of networks or contacts

Views on training contracts



8 in 10 satisfied with the contract secured



Sufficient information on available training firms



Success in securing a contract is based on who you know



Process of securing training contract could be improved

Solicitor Survey

Key Insights

Working challenges

77% Long working hours

77% Impact on personal life

52% Lack of workplace flexibility

Almost **7 in 10** solicitors working in-house say work-life balance is a key reason for working in-house



Diversity and discrimination

84% say minority groups face additional barriers

80% say women face more barriers to progression than men

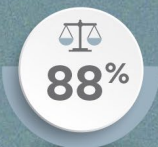
25% report experience of discrimination

8 in 10 who have taken maternity leave say it has a negative impact on career

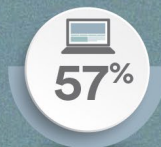


Improvements to working environment

9 in 10 say working environment improvements are needed



Reduced working hours/better work-life balance



Better remote working options



Measures to ensure pay equality
(61% of women; 18% of men)



A greater variety of career pathways

3.2 Solicitor survey findings

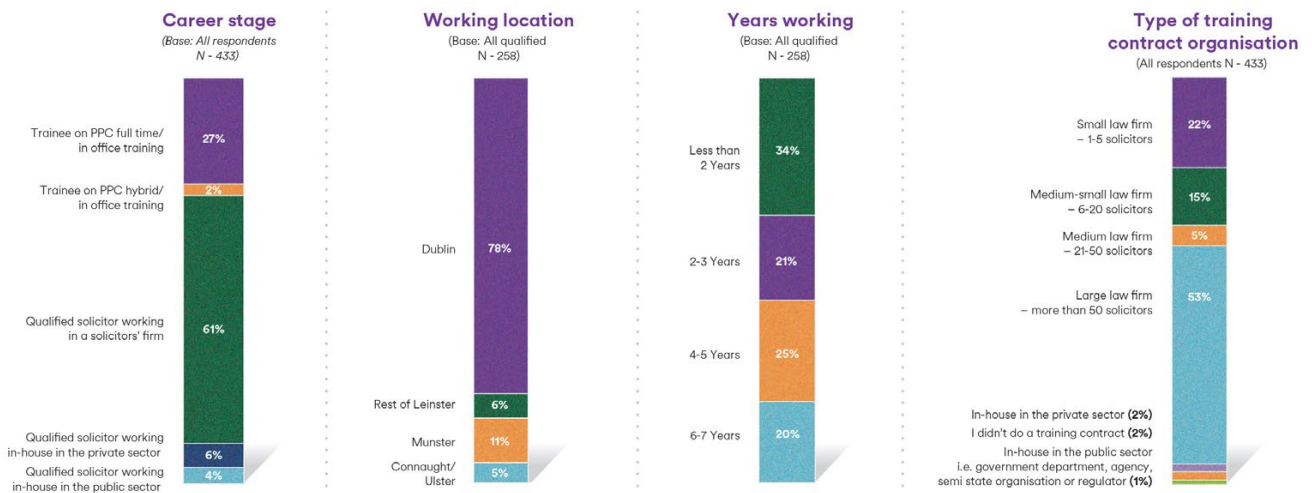
3.2.1 Overview of survey participants

Respondents were asked about their career stage, work location, size and sector and their experience and training background. Seven in ten of all respondents (71%) are qualified junior solicitors and 29% are solicitor trainees. Half of the qualified junior solicitor respondents are working in a large law firm with 50 solicitors or more and 12% are working in-house.

Almost eight in ten (78%) of junior solicitor respondents are working in Dublin, with 6% in the rest of Leinster, 11% in Munster and 5% in Connaught/Ulster.

More than half of all respondents (53%) are doing or did their solicitor training in a large law firm.

Fig. 3.1 Career stage and training background



Q.1 At what stage are you in the qualification process or your career?

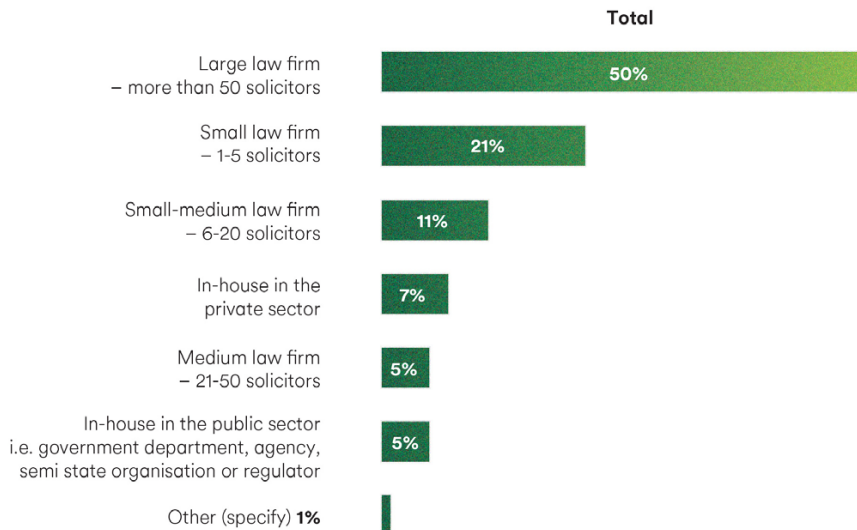
Q.1c What county are you currently working in?

Q.2 How many years have you been working in the profession post qualification?

Q.3a In what type of organisation did you do/are you doing your training contract in?

Fig. 3.2 Workplace size and sector

Base: All qualified N - 258

**Q.3c** What type of organisation do you work in currently?

3.2.2 Barriers to entering the solicitor profession

It is widely acknowledged that among the most significant economic and other barriers that trainee and junior solicitors encounter are those that they face on the pathway to qualification – that is before they enter the profession. With this in mind, respondents were first asked to rank the top five barriers they considered have acted or might act as a barrier to entry to the solicitor profession.

1. Cost and time of entrance exams – 62%

The most commonly identified barrier to entry, cited by 62% of all respondents, was the cost and time it takes to complete the entrance exams to the Professional Practice Course for solicitors, including study time and preparatory courses

2. Overall cost of qualifying – 56%

The second most cited barrier, with 56% of respondents mentioning it, was the overall financial cost of qualifying, including the costs of courses and accommodation. The detailed survey data shows that this is ranked higher as a barrier by those who are training or trained in a small law firm (84%) compared to large firm (38%). This is likely due to the fact that large law firms generally cover the full cost of their trainees' professional course fees and also pay a full salary throughout the entire training period. Respondents who attended a fee-paying secondary school are less likely to identify the costs of qualifying as an entry barrier (49%) compared to those who didn't attend a fee paying school (58%).

3. Difficulty in securing a training contract – 53%

The entry barrier ranked third and identified by over half of respondents (53%) is difficulty in securing a training contract. The data shows that more respondents who trained or are training in a small firm (71%) identify this as a barrier they have faced or might face, compared to 46% of those who trained in a large firm.

4. Lack of networks – 51%

A lack of networks or contacts in the profession is the fourth ranked barrier, cited by 51% of respondents. Those from working-class backgrounds are more likely to cite this as an entry barrier (62%) compared to those from middle class backgrounds (48%).¹⁴⁵

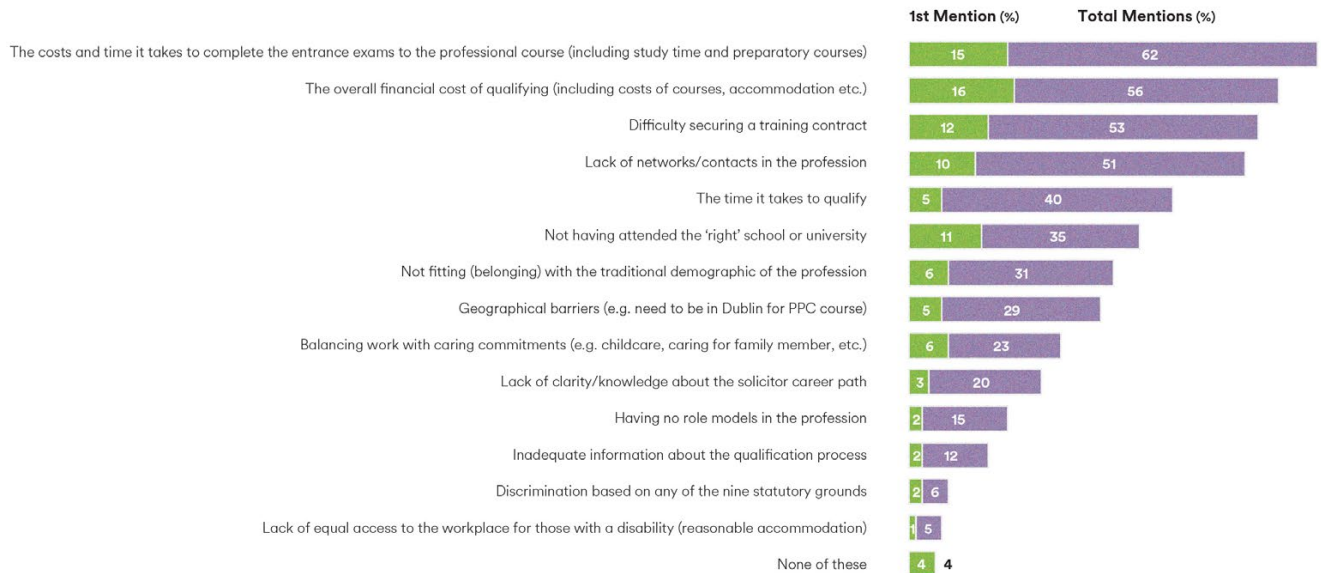
5. Time takes to qualify – 40%

Four in ten respondents (40%) cited the time it takes to qualify as a solicitor as a barrier. This is more of a barrier for those aged 28 and under (52%).

Beyond the top five barriers to entry identified by respondents, just over one third of respondents (35%) cite not having attended the “right” school or university as a barrier, with 31% citing “not fitting” (belonging) with the traditional demographic of the profession.

Fig. 3.3 Barriers to entering the solicitor profession

Base: All respondents N - 433



Q.21 Which of the following, if any, do you think has acted or might act as a barrier to you entering the solicitor profession? If you feel there were/are barriers, please rank the top five barriers you think you experienced/may experience.

¹⁴⁵ Middle class background equates to ABC1 National Readership Survey social grade; working class background equates to C2DE social grade.

What Solicitors Say: Challenges of Working in the Profession

Solicitors say there is a high level of time and effort required to complete all eight exams that make up the Final Examination Part 1 (FE-1) which is the entrance exam to the Professional Practice Course or PPC. They say it was a highly stressful time that had a substantial impact on their personal lives.

“I remember thinking and if I didn’t pass the four first exams for the FE-1s, I was going to pack it in because I was spent intellectually and mentally from all the studying.”

Solicitor in large law firm

“You hear some people talking about doing all the FE-1s in one sitting or in a really short space of time. But that is people who are living at home and have their parents paying for everything. That was not an option for me so I spread them out a little more.”

Solicitor in a small law firm

The overall cost of qualifying is consistently raised by solicitors in in-depth interviews, with many saying that entering the profession was difficult without financial support from family. The need to be in Dublin for the PPC is described as a particularly challenging experience for those based outside of Dublin, resulting in significant expense and inconvenience. Those from outside Dublin and those training in smaller firms also describe feeling socially isolated during the PPC course, as social groups tended to form based on training organisation, with the larger law firms dominating trainee intake.

“People from a small practice might say, well I’m the only solicitor from Mayo here, and you know there’s this gang of 30 people from Arthur Cox or William Fry or whatever, or Matheson.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

Many solicitors interviewed say they feel that law firms, particularly larger law firms, prioritise recruiting solicitors from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds, which can put people off from considering a career in the profession in the first place.

“I remember using different addresses at one point on application forms because I was not hearing back, like using a friend’s address in a ‘better’ part of Dublin, and I would get an interview.”

Solicitor working in-house

“I didn’t go to one of the schools that everyone went to. There’s an exclusionary language, even in terms of how people are describing their training contracts, you know.”

Solicitor working in-house

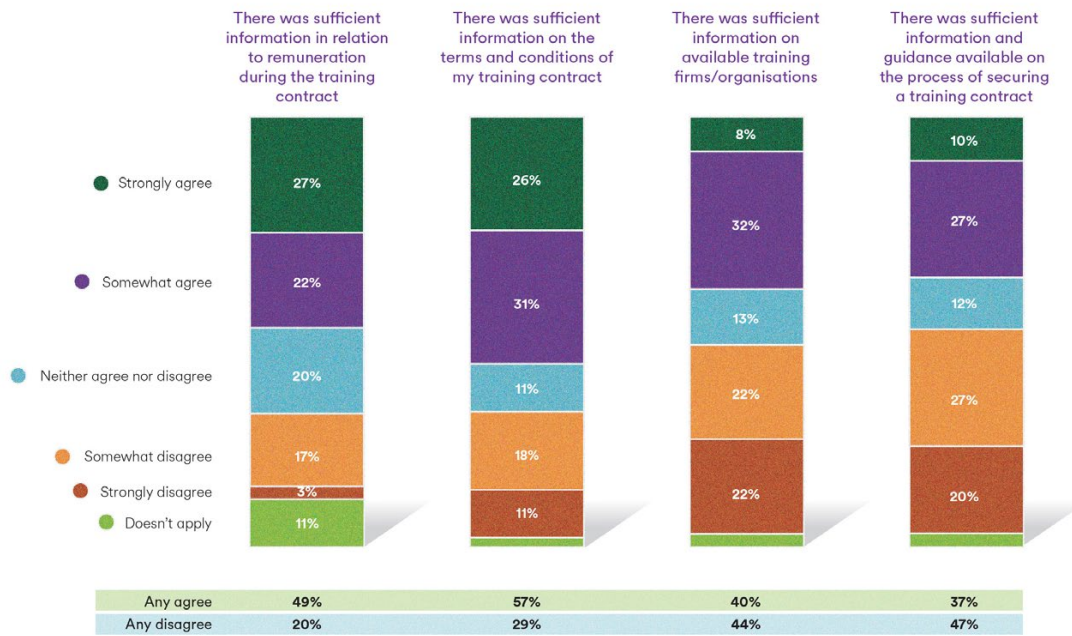
3.2.3 The road to qualification

Training: information, selection, costs, pay and satisfaction

Trainee and junior solicitors were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements related to available information about identifying and securing a training contract.¹⁴⁶

Fig. 3.4 Information on training contracts

Base: All solicitors (excluding those who transferred from the barrister profession) N - 429



Q.11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your training contract?

¹⁴⁶ Reference to trainee and junior solicitors and respondents throughout this section discussing training contracts excludes the respondents (<1%) who transferred from the barrister profession.

Information on the process of securing a training contract

Just over one third (37%) of respondents say there was sufficient information and guidance available on the process of securing a training contract. By contrast, almost half (47%) say that available information and guidance on the process was not sufficient.

Information on training opportunities

In relation to information on available training firms or organisations with whom to undertake a training contract, 40% of respondents say it was sufficient. Those who trained or are training in a large law firm (51%) or a medium law firm (48%) say there was sufficient information on available training firms. This compares to 27% of those who trained or are training in a small law firm.

Information on terms and conditions of training contracts

Over half (57%) of respondents say there was sufficient information on the terms and conditions of their training contract. This rises to 70% among those who trained or are training in a large law firm and drops to 45% among those who trained or are training in a small law firm.

Information on remuneration

Just under half (49%) of respondents say there was sufficient information in relation to remuneration during their training contract. This is more keenly felt by those who trained or are training in a large law firm (65%) or in-house in the public sector (70%) compared to 30% among those who trained in a small law firm.

What Solicitors Say: Information on Training Contracts

“There’s just this gap between college and Blackhall [Place] that needs to be filled in terms of just better quality of information around how the interviews go, when they are.”

Solicitor working in-house

“The training contract was very clear to me, it said the number of hours, salary, the terms and conditions under standard employment contract details.”

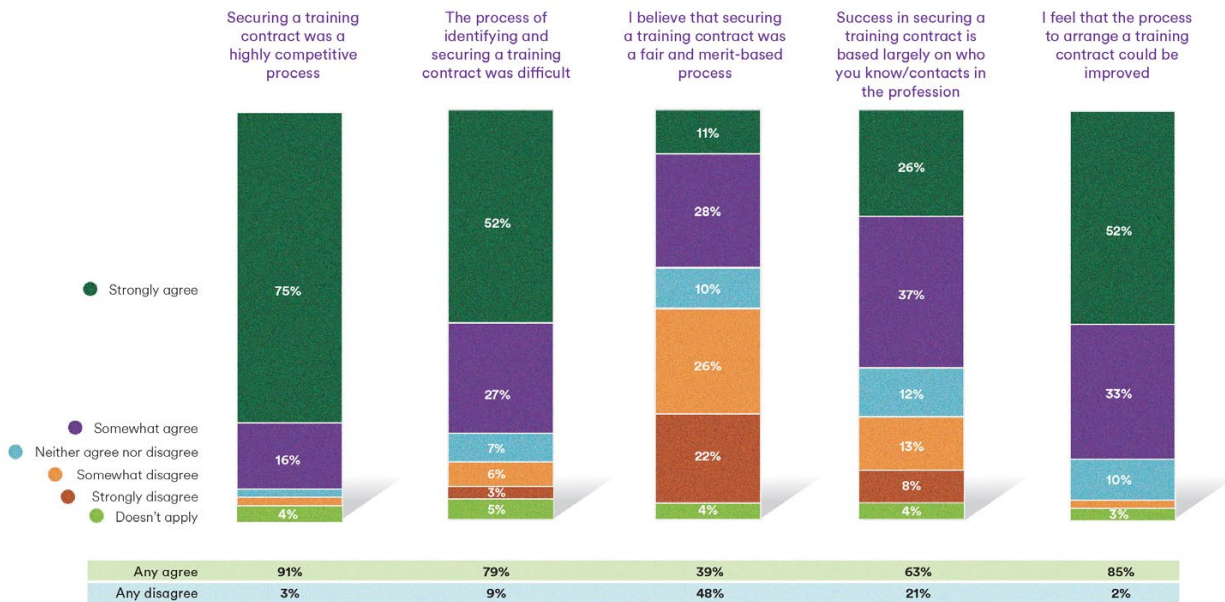
Solicitor in a large law firm

Securing a training contract

Trainee and junior solicitors (excluding those who have transferred from the barrister profession) were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements related to the process of securing a training contract.

Fig. 3.5 Securing a training contract

Base: All solicitors (excluding those who transferred from the barrister profession) N - 429



Q.11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your training contract?

Competition to secure contract

The vast majority of respondents (91%) view the process of securing a training contract as being highly competitive. In addition, 79% say the process of identifying and securing a training contract was difficult. For respondents with disabilities, this rises to 89%.

Fair and merit-based

Almost four in ten respondents (39%) say they believe that securing a training contract was a fair and merit-based process. This belief is higher among those who trained or are training in large firms (51%) compared to small firms (21%). By contrast, 47% of all respondents do not believe that securing a training contract was a fair and merit-based process.

Importance of contacts in profession

Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents say success in securing a training contract is based largely on who you know or contacts in the profession. The data shows firm size as an important factor influencing respondents' views on the importance of prior contacts in the profession. Just over a half (53%) of respondents who trained or are training in a large law firm say that success in securing a training contract is based largely on who you know or contacts in the profession. This rises to 74% among respondents who trained or are training with a small law firm.

Improvements to training contract process

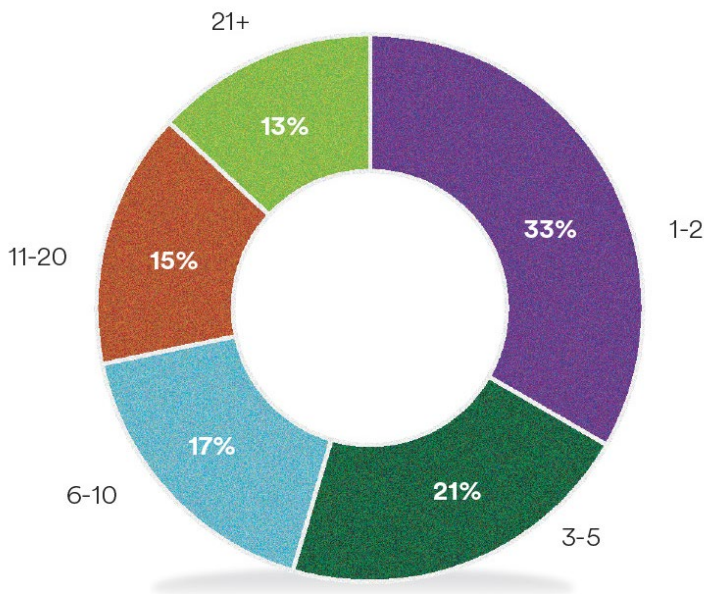
A large majority of respondents (85%) say they feel the process to arrange a training contract could be improved. Those who trained or are training in a small firm (93%), are more likely to agree that the process could be improved compared to those who trained or are training in a large firm (83%).

Number of training contract applications

Current trainees were asked to indicate the number of applications they made before securing a training contract. More than half (54%) secured a training contract following five or fewer applications, with 33% securing a training contract after only one or two applications. However, 28% needed to apply for more than ten training contracts before securing one.

Fig. 3.6 Number of applications to secure training contract

Base: All current training contracts N - 175



Q.3b How many training contracts did you apply for before you secured one?

Actions taken to secure training contract

Trainee and junior solicitors (excluding those who have transferred from the barrister profession) were asked to identify what actions they took to improve their chances of securing a training contract. A total of 65% say they undertook paid work experience, while 53% also report that they achieved high academic grades; this seems more relevant for trainees in large law firms (75%) than small law firms (25%). Charity work or extra-curricular activities also appear to have been more important for large law firm trainees (50%) than small law firm trainees (14%).

Those from a middle class background (25% compared to 8% working class background) are more likely to have used personal contacts as a method to secure a training contract.

What Solicitors Say: Securing a Training Contract

Securing a training contract is viewed to be a highly competitive process, particularly for those who applied to large law firms for traineeships. Some of those who applied to smaller firms say they felt they didn't fit what the larger firms were looking for. There is a perception that large law firms are only looking for law graduates from top-ranked universities, such as TCD, UCD, NUIG. Having connections in the profession is considered to be an advantage and, by some, a necessity to securing a training contract.

"I got the impression that the big firms only recruit from Trinity or UCD and students with over 500+ Leaving Certificate points. So I didn't even bother applying."

Solicitor in a small law firm

"I think when it was at interview stage for traineeships, early on, I really struggled. Like the UCD degree will get you in the door to most places, once I sat before an interview panel, you seemed to get the vibe that you weren't the right type of person for them. So, kind of after a couple of those interviews with the bigger firms, I just eventually opted out."

Solicitor in a large law firm

"I was looking for a trainee contract, if you don't have the law background, like family... it's not as easy to get a training contract."

Solicitor in a medium law firm

"There was 120 people there at the event for the larger firm and I knew that there were only 20 places. So I only had a one in six chance of getting it, it's very competitive."

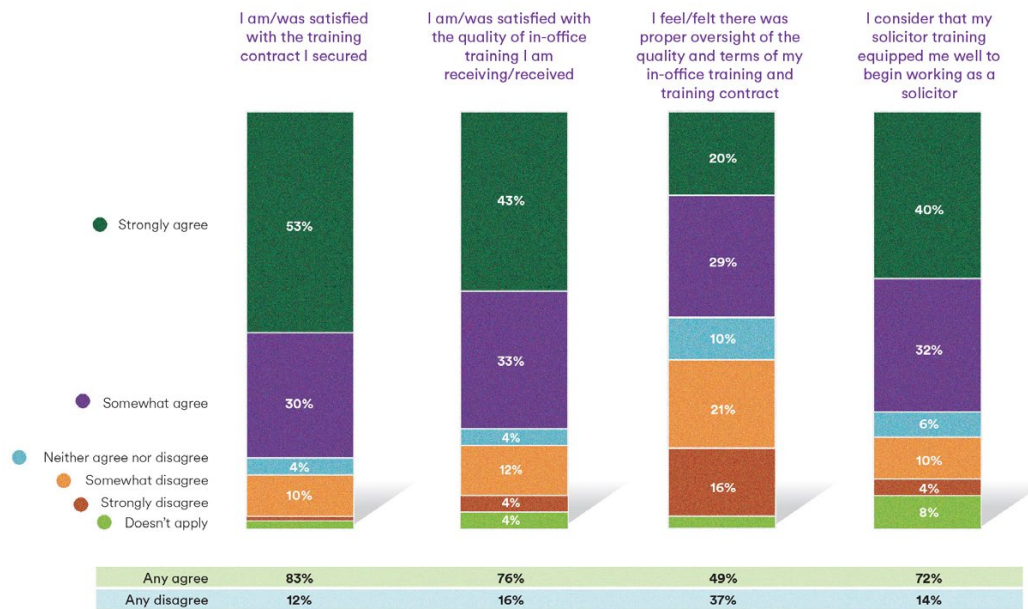
Solicitor in a large law firm

Satisfaction with training

Trainee and junior solicitors (excluding those who have transferred from the barrister profession) were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements related to their satisfaction with their training contract.

Fig. 3.7 Satisfaction with training

Base: All solicitors (excluding those who transferred from the barrister profession) N - 429



Q.11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your training contract?

Satisfaction with training contracts secured

Overall, the level of satisfaction with training contracts is very high, with 83% of respondents saying they are satisfied with the contract they secured. Levels of satisfaction are highest among those with training contracts in large law firms (95%) or in-house private sector settings (100%).

Satisfaction with quality of in-office training

A total of 76% of respondents are satisfied with the quality of in-office training they received or are receiving. Levels of satisfaction are again highest among large law firm training contract holders (82%) compared to 75% small firm training contracts.

Satisfaction with oversight of training and contracts

Half of respondents (50%) say they feel there was/is proper oversight of the quality and terms and conditions of their training contract. However a significant minority, at 37%, do not feel there was proper oversight.

What Solicitors Say: Satisfaction with Training

The majority of solicitors interviewed say that they had a positive experience during their training contract and most felt that their training prepared them well for a career as a solicitor. The experience gained during a training contract differs depending on firm size. According to solicitors interviewed, experience gained in large and medium firms tends to be more specialised, whereas experience gained in small firms is more general. Those trained in larger law firms also speak about long hours and sometimes menial work.

“Sometimes you are literally like photocopying hundreds of pages and other administration work like that and you could be all night doing that.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

“You didn’t just do everything, I was in the litigation department, so that’s where I just kind of stayed. Even the larger firms have to rotate you every six months.”

Solicitor in medium law firm

“You are working late nights, weekends you are doing all you can to prove yourself to get a contract in the future.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

“I would define my training contract as diverse. I got to see lots of different areas ... really any type of case could come through the door.”

Solicitor in a small law firm

Costs and remuneration during PPC and training

Trainee and junior solicitors were asked about how they funded the PPC and the level of payment they received during their training.

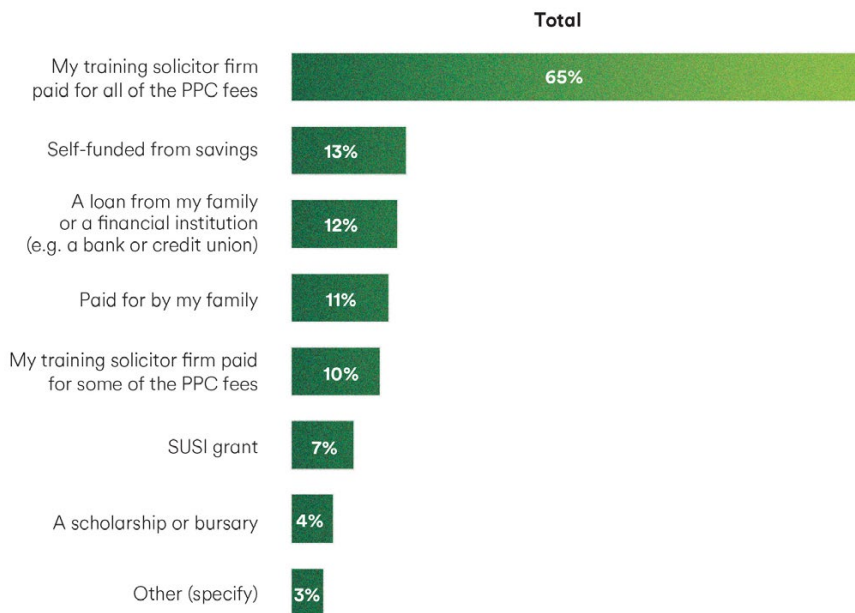
Course fees

Almost two thirds of respondents (65%) had their Professional Practice Course (PPC) fees fully covered by their training firm, 13% self-funded from savings, 12% funded the fees through a loan, 11% say their fees were paid for by family and 10% say their fees were partially covered by their law firm.

Almost all (96%) respondents who trained or are training with large law firms report that they had their PPC fees fully covered by their training firm, compared to just 13% of those in small firms.

Fig. 3.8 Funding of Professional Practice Course fees

Base: All training contracts N - 425



Q.7 How did you/are you paying for the PPC course fees? Please select all that apply.

Payment during training

Three quarters (74%) of respondents report that they were paid minimum wage or above throughout their in-office training and the PPC. Once again, firm size is a determining factor in the level of financial support, with 95% of large law firm trainees reporting that they received minimum wage or above throughout compared to 53% of small law firm trainees.

What Solicitors Say: Costs and Remuneration

“I was on €35k, which was really good for a training contract to be honest, and got the PPC paid for too.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

“I found it challenging, because I suppose I was used to my wages (50k) and then I went down to the minimum wage. If it wasn't for my husband's salary I would not have been able to do it.”

Solicitor in a small law firm

“To Blackhall [Law School], you had to go in every day, so like, I mean it was costing something like 125 euro a week, around that, €130 just on travel, without anything else.”

Solicitor in a small law firm

3.2.4 Early career challenges

Trainee and junior solicitors were asked to rank the top five challenges they experienced or may experience while working as solicitors.

1. Long working hours – 77%

Working hours are the most substantial challenge or expected challenge of working in the profession, cited by 77% of respondents. Qualified solicitors working in large law firms are more likely to find long working hours to be a challenge (87%). This compares to 50% of solicitors working in small law firms, 69% in medium law firms and 71% of respondents working in-house.

2. Impact on personal life – 77%

The impact of work on personal life is the second most cited challenge identified. A total of 77% of respondents cite the impact on their personal life (e.g. delaying starting a family) as a challenge, with two in ten (21%) identifying it as the top challenge. This challenge (e.g. delaying starting a family) is identified more among women aged 28 and younger (87%) compared to 76% of men of the same age and 70% of men of any age.

3. Lack of workplace flexibility – 53%

A total of 53% of respondents say that lack of workplace flexibility is a challenge or anticipated challenge. Respondents aged 28 and under are more likely to cite this challenge. This finding reflects a growing preference among trainee and junior solicitors for remote and hybrid working arrangements, which may be related to positive experiences of more flexible working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Balancing work with caring commitments – 46%

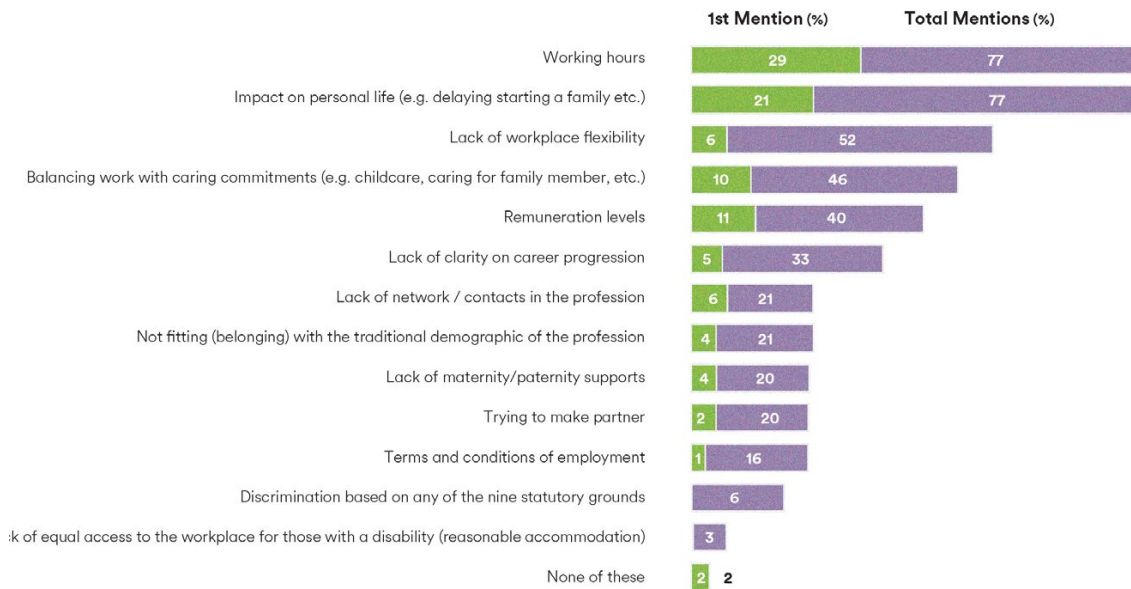
Balancing work with caring commitments (e.g. childcare, caring for family member etc.) is a challenge or expected challenge for 46% of respondents. Women are more likely to identify this challenge (51%) compared to 36% of men. This is the top challenge cited by respondents with parental responsibilities, with 73% ranking it first.

5. Remuneration levels – 40%

Remuneration levels are identified as a challenge by 40% of respondents. Qualified solicitors working in small firms view remuneration levels as much more of a challenge (76%) compared to 23% of those in large law firms, 50% in small-medium law firms, 62% in medium law firms and 37% of those working in-house. More than half of respondents outside of Dublin (54%) view remuneration levels as a challenge compared to 33% in Dublin, with these findings likely reflecting the dominance of larger law firms with higher salaries in the capital. There is also a notable gender dimension with 44% of women viewing remuneration levels as a challenge compared to 31% of men.

Fig. 3.9 Challenges of working in solicitor profession

Base: All respondents N - 433



Q.22 Which of the following, if any, do you think have been, or might be a challenge to you working in the solicitor profession? If you feel there were/are challenges, please rank the top five challenges you think you experienced or may experience.

What Solicitors Say: Challenges of Working in the Profession

Long working hours, poor work-life balance and an emphasis on “presenteeism” are common challenges facing junior solicitors, particularly in large law firms. Solicitors in smaller firms say they have a good work-life balance, although it is also noted that they earn less than large firm solicitors.

“You are expected to be physically there, for no other reason than that is how it always has been done. And it would be frowned upon if you left at 5.30. Nothing would be said, but you can’t possibly reach your targets if you leave at 5.30.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

“I made the decision to not look to work in a larger firm because I don’t want to be working every hour of the day because I had a young son at the time.”

Solicitor in a small law firm

“In terms of hours, it’s notoriously long hours...that’s not something that’s really made clear to you by the firm. But you know it going in through rumours.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

“Right now I have great work life balance. The office shuts completely from one to two we finish at half 5. When I leave, I leave.”

Solicitor in a small law firm

“The advantages [of working in-house] are mainly for my health and lifestyle. I couldn’t be talking to you right now if I worked in a large law firm.”

Solicitor working in-house

One solicitor with a disability spoke in the in-depth interviews of the impact that remote working during the pandemic response had on their work satisfaction:

“One thing that was so challenging for me was their reluctance to allow working from home the culture of presenteeism. Since I’ve been working at home due to Covid my working satisfaction has greatly improved. There needs to be a greater adoption of flexible policies.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

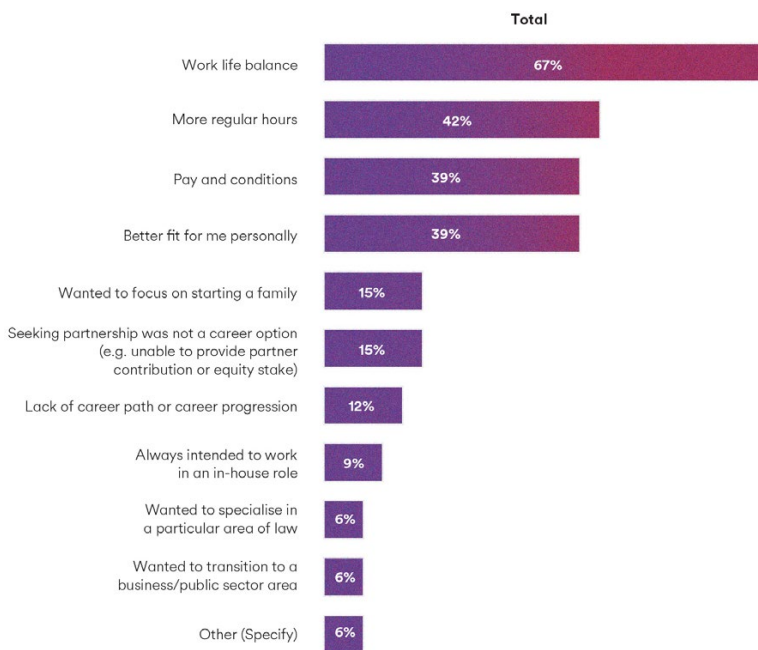
Solicitors choosing in-house roles

Respondents employed as in-house solicitors were asked to provide the reasons for choosing an in-house role.¹⁴⁷ Two thirds (67%) cite work-life balance as the key reason for choosing an in-house role, with four in ten (42%) stating that having more regular hours was a key reason. Pay and conditions is another reason given by 39% of solicitors as was the fact that it was a better fit for them personally (39%).

Fig. 3.10 Reasons for solicitors choosing an in-house role

Base: All working in house role N - 33*

*Note small sample size



Q.4 Why did you choose to work in an in-house role?

¹⁴⁷ Note small sample size.

The role of connections

The survey asked respondents a series of questions relating to their previous connections with the legal profession. Only two in ten respondents (19%) say they had previous connections with the legal profession prior to starting their legal education or qualifying. Most had a connection who was a solicitor.

Unsurprisingly, the socio-economic background of respondents and their parents is a factor in the prevalence of connections. Those who attended a fee-paying secondary school are twice as likely to have an existing connection with the legal profession (29%) compared to 15% among those who did not attend a fee-paying school. Two in ten (22%) of those from a middle class background had existing connections with the legal profession, compared to 7% of those from a working class background.

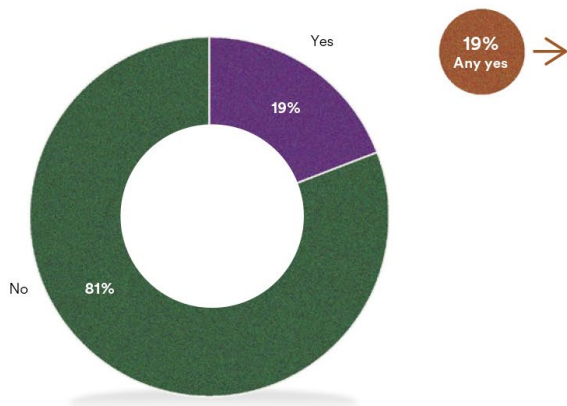
Respondents from Dublin and Leinster combined account for 41% of those with previous connections in the legal profession, with 18% from Munster and 11% from Connaught.

Of those who had previous connections, 66% say these connections helped them to advance their career, with 45% strongly agreeing with this.

Fig. 3.11 Did connections help advance career in the solicitor profession?

Connections with the legal profession

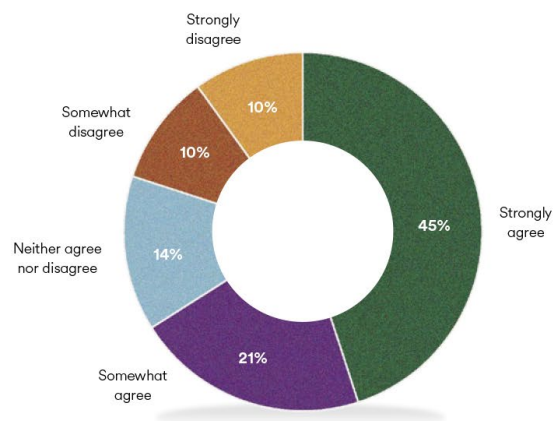
Base: All respondents N - 433



19% Any yes

Did connections help advance career?

Base: All had previous connections N - 79



Any agree **66%**
Any disagree **20%**

Q.5c To what extent do you agree or disagree that these connections helped you to advance your own career?

What Solicitors Say: The Role of Connections

“I always got the sense that some of the firms were looking at you, as what your family connections were, as to whether you could bring in business for them.”

Solicitor in a small law firm

“A lot of what happens in law tends to be word of mouth, you know, where opportunities arise, so, if you’re not connected, you tend not to know what’s going on.”

Solicitor working in-house

Maternity, adoptive and paternity leave

Fewer than one in ten (6%) of survey respondents say they have taken maternity leave while training or working as a solicitor, 4% having taken paternity leave and no respondents have taken adoptive leave.

Satisfaction with leave

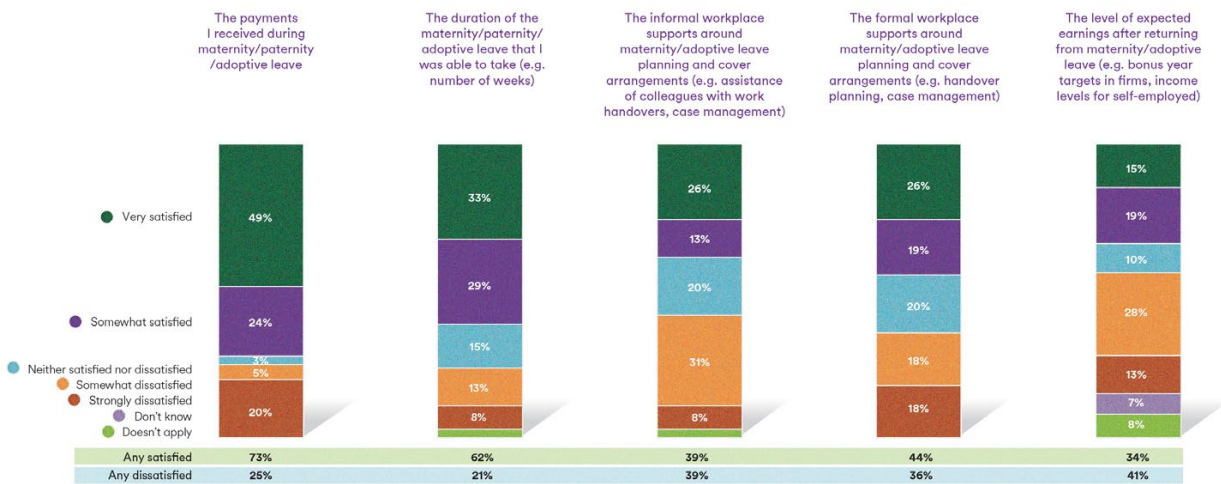
The majority (73%) of respondents who have taken leave were satisfied with the payments they received while on leave.¹⁴⁸ Almost two thirds (62%) of all respondents who have taken leave were satisfied with the duration of the leave. When considering both informal and formal workplace supports, satisfaction levels drop. Fewer than half (44%) of those who have taken leave were satisfied with the level of formal workplace supports around leave planning and cover arrangements, such as handover planning and case management, and 39% were satisfied with informal supports. One third (34%) were satisfied with their level of expected earnings after returning from maternity or adoptive leave.

¹⁴⁸ Note small sample size.

Fig. 3.12 Satisfaction with maternity/adoptive/paternity leave in the solicitor profession

Base: All who have taken leave N - 40*

*Note small sample size



Q.16 How satisfied were you with the following aspects of maternity / paternity / adoptive leave provision and arrangements in your profession / workplace?

Impact on career

The majority (82%) of respondents who have taken maternity leave say that it has had or will have a negative impact on their professional career, with 31% strongly agreeing with this.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Note small sample size.

What Solicitors Say:

Maternity Leave

Solicitors interviewed who have taken maternity and adoptive leave report losing client relationships while on leave and then feeling 'out of the loop' and also 'snowed under' when they return to work.

"I did find it an impact, especially the second one. I think where I was, you're automatically as soon as you have a child, if you're a woman, not if you're a man, you're seen as less dedicated. It's assumed that you won't be staying late, and you won't be doing this and that anymore."

Solicitor in a small law firm

"You're out of the office, you would have had a lot of files say that you were working on and when you go back, all those files are given out to other people, and you're kind of starting, it's like starting again."

Solicitor in a large law firm

"I don't feel that the partners I work for valued me as much as my male counterparts at a similar career level because I took time out and am now a working mother. I feel that they kind of expect me to just disappear into the background. I also did not receive useful or good support or training before, during or on my return from maternity leave."

Solicitor in a large law firm

"My office have been supportive. I received a pay rise upon my return. I work in criminal litigation. My local District Court has no female practitioners. My male colleagues have been openly hostile towards me upon my return. I had been back at work for more than two weeks before any of them acknowledged my presence at all. They tell me that I should go home and mind my baby. They note that if they took six months off they would not expect to get paid for it. They say that I do not want to work. I have been repeatedly told that I should be working for the DPP as this would suit my lifestyle better."

Solicitor in a small-medium law firm

3.2.5 Experience of discrimination

The survey explored respondents' experiences of discrimination during solicitor training, while looking for work as a solicitor or in the workplace as a solicitor.

Prevalence of discrimination

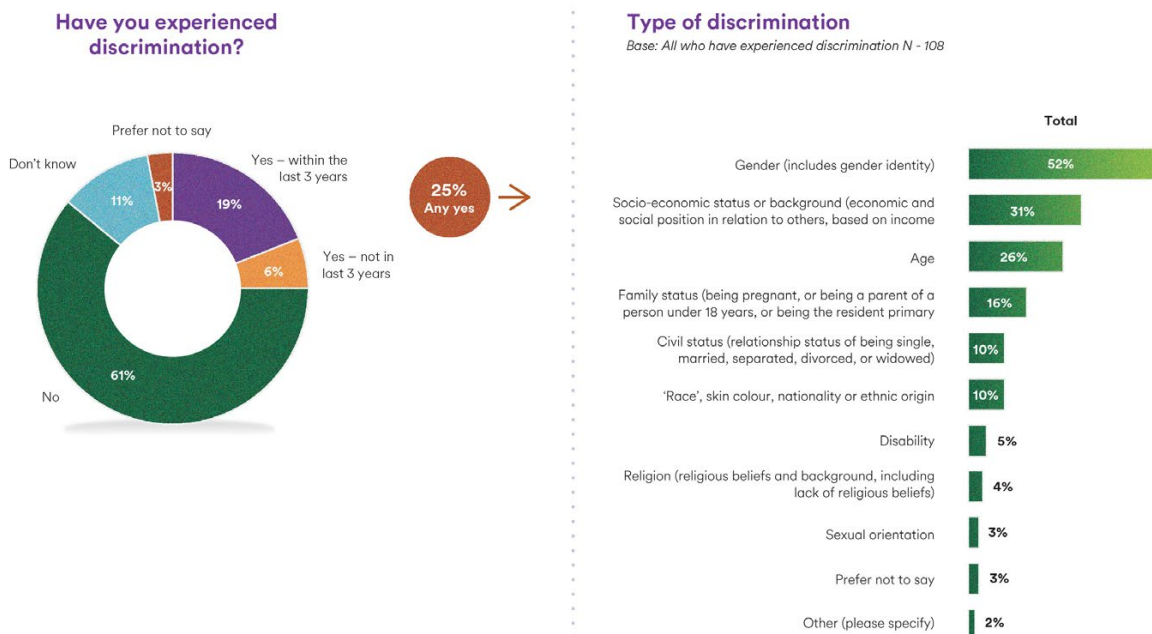
One in four trainee and junior solicitors (25%) state that they have experienced discrimination in the profession, with two in ten (19%) experiencing it in the last three years. The data shows that women are twice as likely as men to say they have experienced discrimination in the last three years (22% compared to 11%).

Type of discrimination

- Half of respondents (52%) who report having experienced discrimination say it related to gender. Women are substantially more likely to report gender based discrimination (63% of women compared to 19% of men). This also appears to be more significant among women between the age of 29 and 36 (73%).
- Socio-economic status or background is the second most reported type of discrimination, at 31%, followed by age at 26%.

Fig. 3.13 Experience of discrimination in the solicitor profession

Base: All respondents N - 433



Q.23 Have you experienced discrimination in your solicitor training, while looking for work as a solicitor or in the workplace as a solicitor related to the areas of discrimination listed on the previous page?

Q.23b If yes, please select which area(s) it related to.

What Solicitors Say: Discrimination

“He [solicitor] told me that it would be difficult for me to get a job on account of my colour. He felt like he was doing me a favour by giving me a job there.”

Solicitor in a small law firm

“My boss said one day to me, I can’t put her in front of clients because of her accent.”

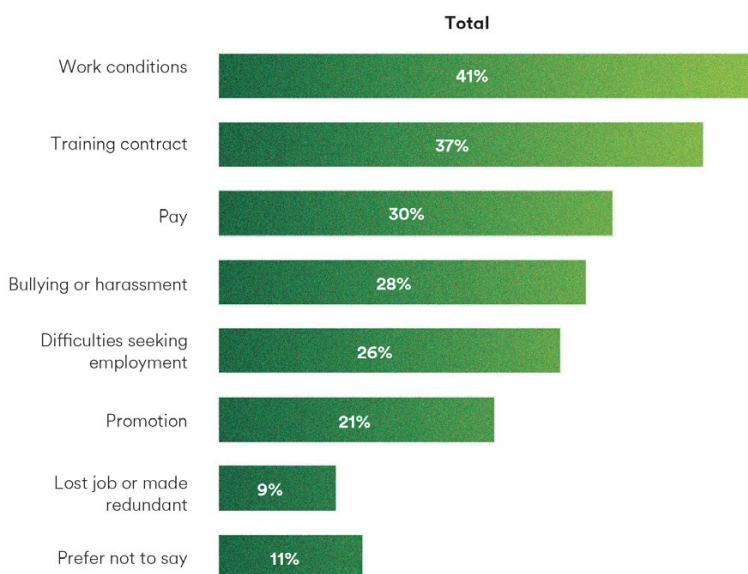
Solicitor in a small law firm

Areas of discrimination

The most commonly reported area of discrimination relates to working conditions (41%) Almost four in ten (37%) respondents who say they experienced discrimination, report that it related to training contracts. Three in ten (30%) report that the discrimination related to pay.

Fig. 3.14 Areas of discrimination in the solicitor profession

Base: All experience discrimination N - 108



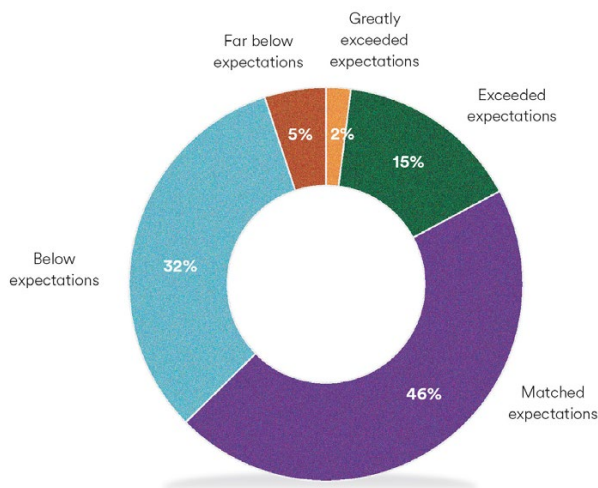
Q.23c What did the discrimination relate to?

3.2.6 Attitudes towards the profession and diversity

Respondents were also asked about their career expectations and satisfaction as well as general attitudes to the profession including diversity within the profession. The survey showed moderate levels of career satisfaction among junior solicitors, with almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents stating that their experience working in the profession has exceeded or matched expectations. A total of 37% of respondents state that their experience has fallen below their expectations.

Fig. 3.15 Has the experience of working in the solicitor profession met expectations?

Base: All qualified solicitors N - 258



Any (exceeded)	17%
Matched expectations	46%
Any (below expectations)	37%

Q.18 To what extent has your experience working within the solicitor profession met your expectations?

Do benefits outweigh challenges?

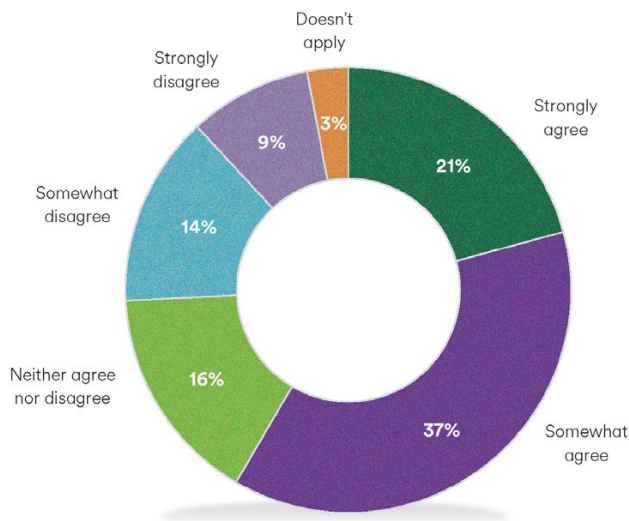
More than half of respondents (58%) say that the benefits outweigh any challenges they may have faced in qualifying as a solicitor. This view is stronger among men (64%) and those from a middle class background (62%).

Notably, only 38% of qualified solicitors working in a law large firm say the benefits of qualifying as a solicitor outweigh any challenges. This is compared to 55% of solicitors working in a small firm and 59% of solicitors working in-house. These findings suggest that career satisfaction for junior solicitors goes beyond a focus on financial compensation and that issues related to workplace flexibility, working hours and work-life balance may also have a bearing.

When focusing on those who do not consider that the benefits of qualifying outweigh any challenges, once more junior solicitors with large law firms dominate. Just under half (46%) of those working in large law firms disagree that the benefits of qualifying outweigh any challenges, compared to 23% of all respondents.

Fig. 3.16 Do the benefits outweigh the challenges of qualifying as a solicitor?

Base: All respondents N - 433



Any agree **59%**
 Any disagree **23%**

Q.25 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the benefits of qualifying as a solicitor outweigh any challenges you may have faced in qualification?

Attitudes towards the profession

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements about the solicitor profession.

Increased diversity

Nine in ten respondents (91%) say the solicitor profession would benefit from enhanced diversity while 76% disagree that the solicitor profession is a diverse profession.

Barriers faced by minority groups

The majority (84%) of trainee and junior solicitors agree that people from minority groups face additional barriers in the profession.

Eight in ten (80%) of respondents say that women face more barriers to progression than men. There is a significant difference in the views of men and women in this regard, with 93% of women agreeing with this statement compared to 58% of men.

Importance of connections

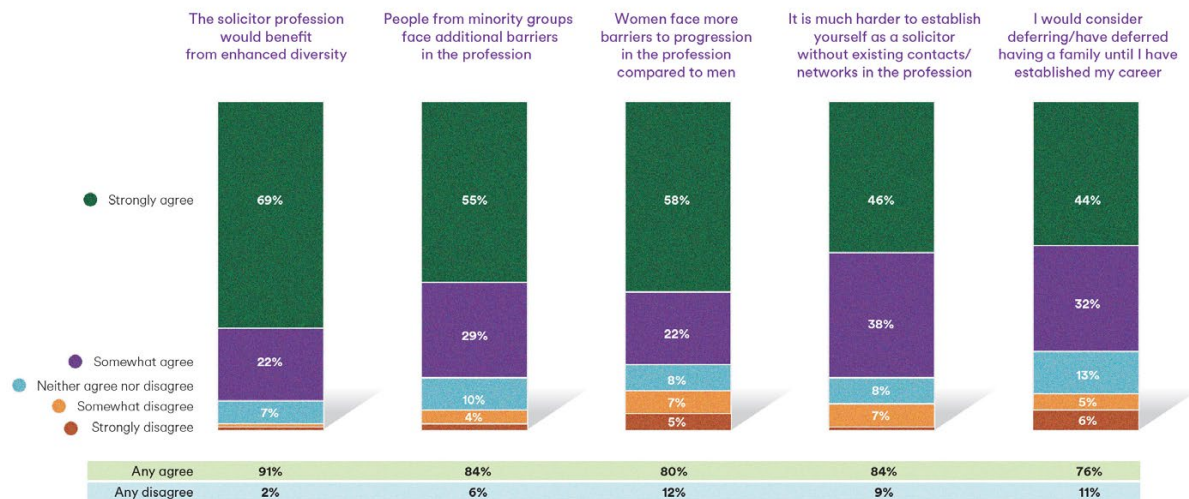
The majority of respondents feel that connections play an important role in establishing a career, with 84% agreeing that it is much harder to establish yourself in the profession without existing contacts.

Impact on family life

More than three quarters (76%) of trainee and juniors solicitors say that they would consider deferring starting a family until they have established their career. Trainees (83%) and respondents aged 28 and younger (84%) are more likely to agree with this statement.

Fig. 3.17 Attitudes towards the solicitor profession - 1

Base: All respondents N - 433



Q.26 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Role models and belonging

Two thirds (66%) of respondents say they feel that they belong in the profession. This feeling is more prevalent in those who attended a fee-paying secondary school (74%) compared to 63% of those who did not attend a fee-paying secondary school. Seven in ten (70%) respondents from a middle class background say they feel they belong in the profession, compared to 55% of those from a working class background.

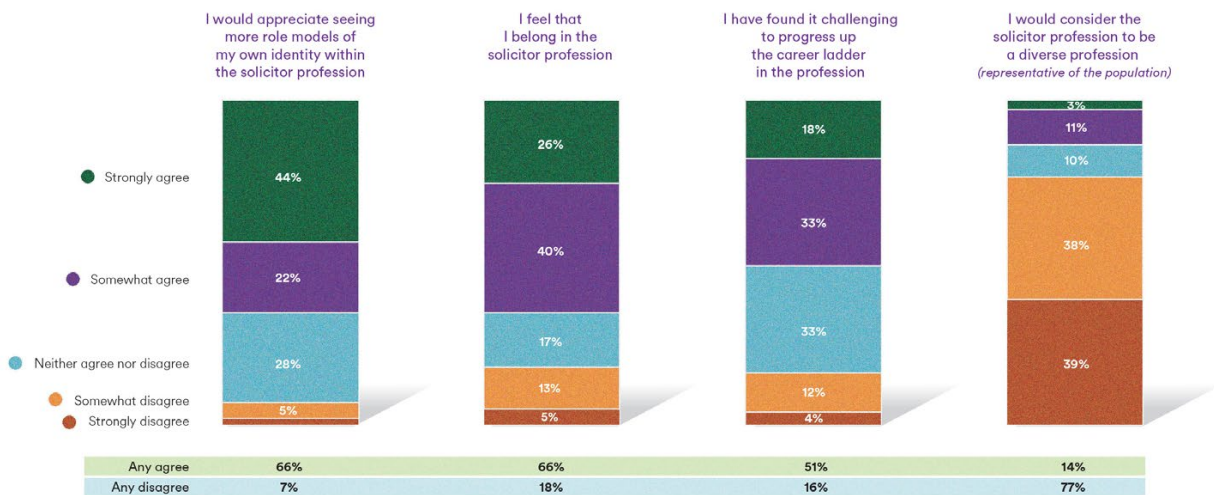
Two thirds (66%) of trainee and junior solicitors say that they would like to see more role models of their own identity in the profession.

Career progression

Half (51%) of trainees and junior solicitors say that they have found it challenging to progress up the career ladder in the profession. Respondents aged 37 and older (75%) and those with parental responsibilities (69%) are all more likely to have found it challenging to progress up the career ladder in the profession.

Fig. 3.18 Attitudes towards the solicitor profession - 2

Base: All respondents N - 433



Q.26 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

3.2.7 Improvement areas

Improvements to qualification process

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that there are areas within the qualification process that need improvement. Those who agreed improvement is needed were then asked to rank the top five possible avenues for improvement.

More than nine in ten (92%) of respondents say there are areas within the qualification process that need improvement, with this heightened among current trainees (96%) and respondents aged 28 and under (97%).

Among those who agree improvements are needed, the survey findings show support for the following initiatives:

1. Reduction in cost of qualifying – 61%

A reduction in the cost of qualifying is the top improvement identified, supported by 61% of respondents.

2. Improved remuneration during training – 55%

Over half (55%) of respondents cite improved remuneration during the training period. This second ranked improvement area was suggested by 73% of those who trained or are training in a small law firm. This compares with large law firm current and past trainees (48%) and those who trained or are training in-house (24%).

This finding reflects the prevailing arrangements whereby solicitors who train with large law firms or in-house positions are generally remunerated throughout their training contract, while their counterparts in smaller law firms may only be remunerated for part of the training period, and are also likely to be paid at lower rates.

3. Direct entry for law graduates to professional training – 52%

Direct entry for law graduates to the solicitors' Professional Practice Course, (PPC), is the third ranked area for improvement in the qualification process. Just over half of respondents (52%) say that allowing direct entry for law graduates to the course would improve the process. Direct entry for law graduates to the PPC would mean not requiring them to sit the entrance exams, the FE-1s. This is more likely to be cited by those aged 28 or under (65%) and current solicitor trainees (64%) as well as holders of law degrees (60%).

4. Increased financial supports and better oversight of traineeships – 47%

Just under half (47%) say increased measures to support trainees financially could improve the process.

5. Better oversight of traineeships – 43%

Better oversight of traineeships to ensure the quality of training provided was the fifth ranked improvement area in the qualification process, cited by 43% of those who agreed improvements were needed.

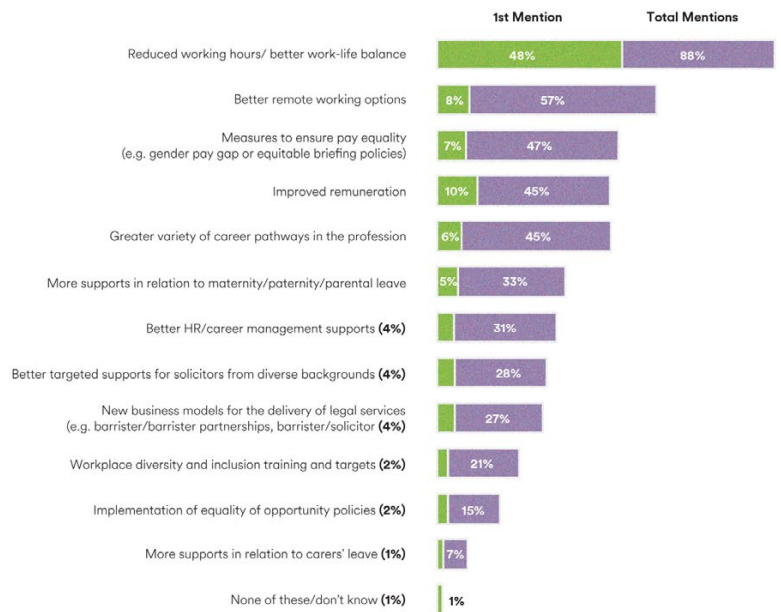
Fig. 3.19 Improvements to solicitor qualification process

Base: All respondents N - 433



Which of the following could improve the working environment?

Base: Any agree N - 401



Q.27 To what extent do you agree or disagree that there are areas within the qualification process that need improvement?

Q.28 Which, if any of the following, could improve the solicitor qualification process? When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button.

Improvements to working environment

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that the working environment in the solicitor profession needs improvement. Respondents were almost unanimous (92%) in saying that the working environment in the solicitor profession needs improvement.

Those that agreed that improvements are needed were then asked to rank the top five types of improvements. The survey findings show support for the following initiatives:

1. Reduced working hours – 88%

Reduced working hours and better work–life balance are by far the top areas identified to improve the working environment in the solicitor profession, supported by 88% of respondents. There is a notable degree of consensus around this, with almost half of respondents (48%) identifying reduced working hours/better work-life balance this as their priority improvement (first mention).

2. Better remote working options – 57%

Over half (57%) say better remote working options could improve the working environment within the solicitor profession. Demand for this second ranked improvement area is slightly higher among those with parental responsibilities (66% compared to 56% of those without parental responsibilities).

3. Measures to ensure pay equality – 47%

Measures to ensure pay equality is the third ranked area for improvement in the working environment. Almost half of respondents (47%) who agree that improvements are needed identify such measures, including to address the gender pay gap. Unsurprisingly, women are very much more likely to identify this as a key area for improvement (61% compared to 18% of men).

4. Improved remuneration – 45%

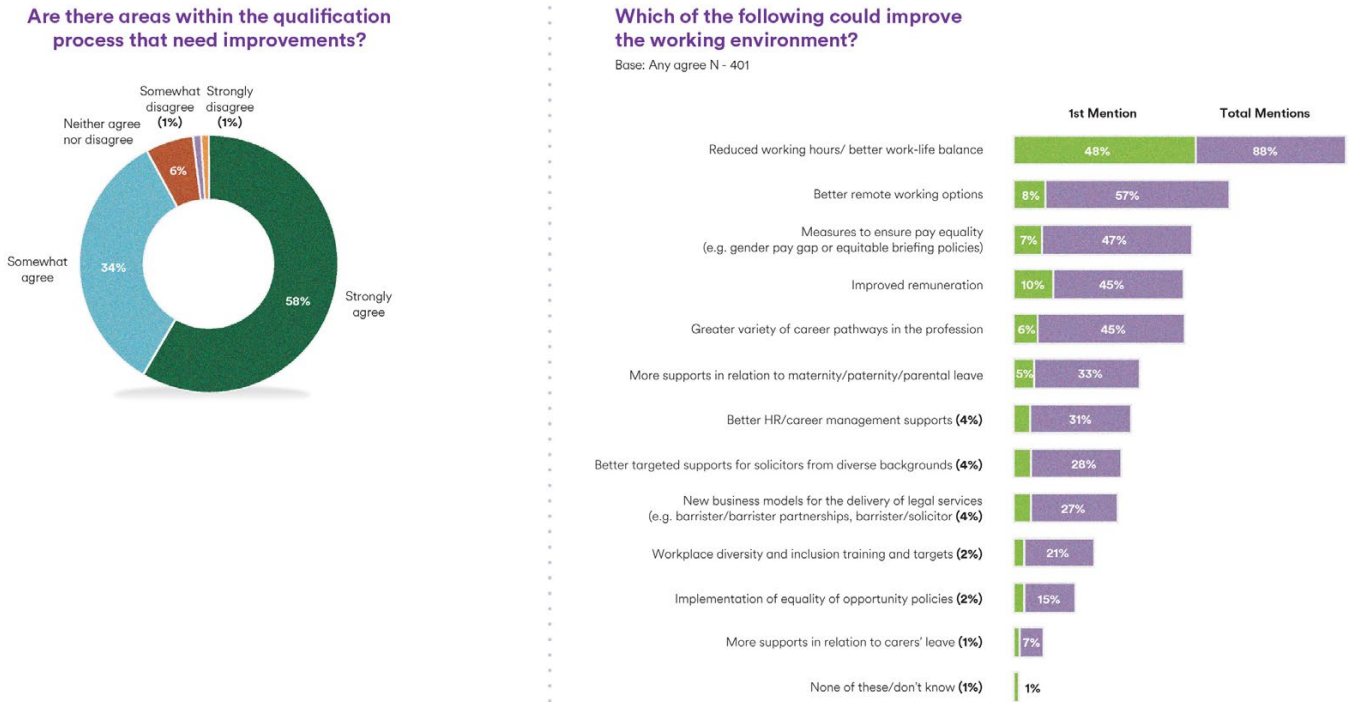
Just under half (45%) cite remuneration as an area for improvement. More qualified solicitors working in small law firms cite this as an improvement area (69%), compared to large firms (36%). It is also a more important improvement area for solicitors aged 37 and over (61%), who are likely to have more financial responsibilities and outgoings, than those aged 28 and under (39%).

5. Greater variety of career pathways – 45%

Under half of respondents (45%) identify a greater variety of career pathways in the profession as a type of improvement to the working environment they would like to see.

Fig. 3.20 Improvements to the solicitor working environment

Base: All respondents N - 108



Q.29 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the working environment within the solicitor profession needs improvement?

Q.30 Which, if any of the following, could improve the working environment within the solicitor profession?

What Solicitors Say: Improvements to the Working Environment

“I think definitely more can be done to make work-life balance better for lawyers...and just promoting a culture that allows that to happen is really important.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

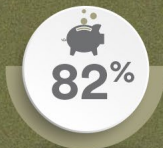
“I suppose there need to be more female partners and more female judges. We have a lot of female solicitors, but we have yet to move up and take senior positions.”

Solicitor in a large law firm

Barristers Survey

Key Insights

Barriers to entering the profession



Lack of income during pupillage



Overall cost of qualifying



Lack of network or contacts

9 in 10 say it is much harder to establish a career as a barrister without existing contacts

Views on pupillage



2 in 3 satisfied with experience gained during pupillage



Process of arranging a master could be improved



Success in securing a master is based largely on who you know



Sufficient information available on process of securing pupillage and a master

Barristers Survey

Key Insights

Working challenges

76% Time it takes to build up a practice

67% Difficulties getting paid

62% Inadequate remuneration

Almost **8 in 10** barristers working in-house say they chose an employed role for a more reliable income



Diversity and discrimination

69% say minority groups face additional barriers

67% say women face more barriers to progression than men

21% report experience of discrimination

Over **8 in 10** barristers who have taken maternity leave say it has a negative impact on career



Improvements to working environment

3 in 4 say working environment improvements are needed



New business models



Improved remuneration



Greater variety of career pathways



Measures to ensure pay equality
(54% of women; 27% of men)

3.3 Barrister survey findings

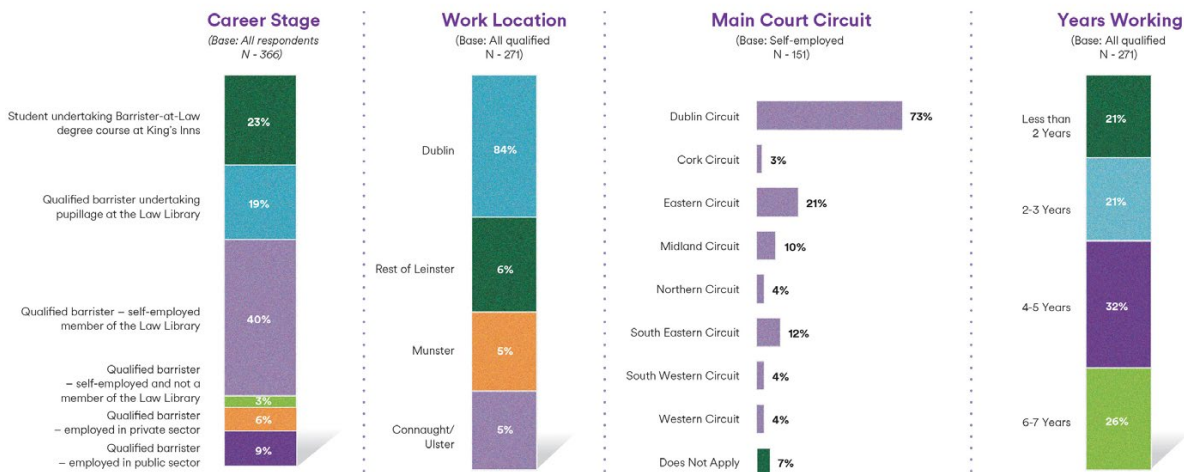
3.3.1 Overview of survey participants

Respondents were asked about their career stage, work location and experience and the main court circuit they work on. Almost one in five (23%) of respondents are barrister students undertaking the Barrister-at-Law degree (BL) at the King’s Inns. The rest (77%) are qualified barristers working either as sole-traders or in employed roles and including 19% who are undertaking pupillage.

Eight in ten (84%) of the qualified barristers list their work location in Dublin, with 6% in the rest of Leinster and 5% each in Munster, Connacht and Ulster.

Almost two thirds of the self-employed barristers (62%) say they work mostly in civil law, 21% say they work across both civil and criminal law and 14% say they work mostly in criminal law.

Fig. 3.21 Career stage and work



Q.1 At what stage are you in the qualification process or your career?

Q.1b What county is your workplace in/do you mainly work in?

Q.1c What court circuit do you mostly work in?

Q.2 How many years have you been working in the profession post qualification?

3.3.2 Barriers to entering the barrister profession

It is widely acknowledged that many of the economic and other barriers that student and junior barristers face are encountered along the pathway to qualification – that is before they enter the profession. With this in mind, respondents were asked to rank the top five barriers they considered have acted or might act as a barrier to entry to the barrister profession.

1. Lack of income during pupillage – 82%

The lack of income during the period of unpaid pupillage is the top entry barrier identified, cited by 82% of respondents and with 31% first mentioning it. Respondents aged 28 years and under are more likely to identify this entry barrier, with 91% citing it. Employed barristers (93%) are also more likely than self-employed barristers (excluding pupils) (72%) to identify a lack of income during pupillage as a barrier to entering the profession.

2. Overall financial cost of qualifying – 64%

Nearly two thirds (64%) of student and junior barristers identify the overall financial cost of qualifying (including costs of courses, accommodation, etc.) as a barrier to entering the profession. This cost was identified by 76% of student barristers.

3. Lack of networks – 59%

A lack of networks or contacts in the profession is identified as a barrier to entering the profession by 59% of student and junior barristers. Respondents from a working class background are more likely to identify this barrier compared to those from a middle class background (68% working class; 56% middle class).¹⁵⁰

4. Cost of living in Dublin – 51%

Half (51%) of student and junior barristers cite the cost of living in or travelling to Dublin as a barrier to entering the profession. Those aged 28 and under (72%) are more likely to identify this barrier. Unsurprisingly, those who are based outside of Dublin (61%) are also more likely to cite the cost of living in or travelling to Dublin as a barrier to entering the profession than those who are based in Dublin (45%).

5. Lack of knowledge of barrister career path – 28%

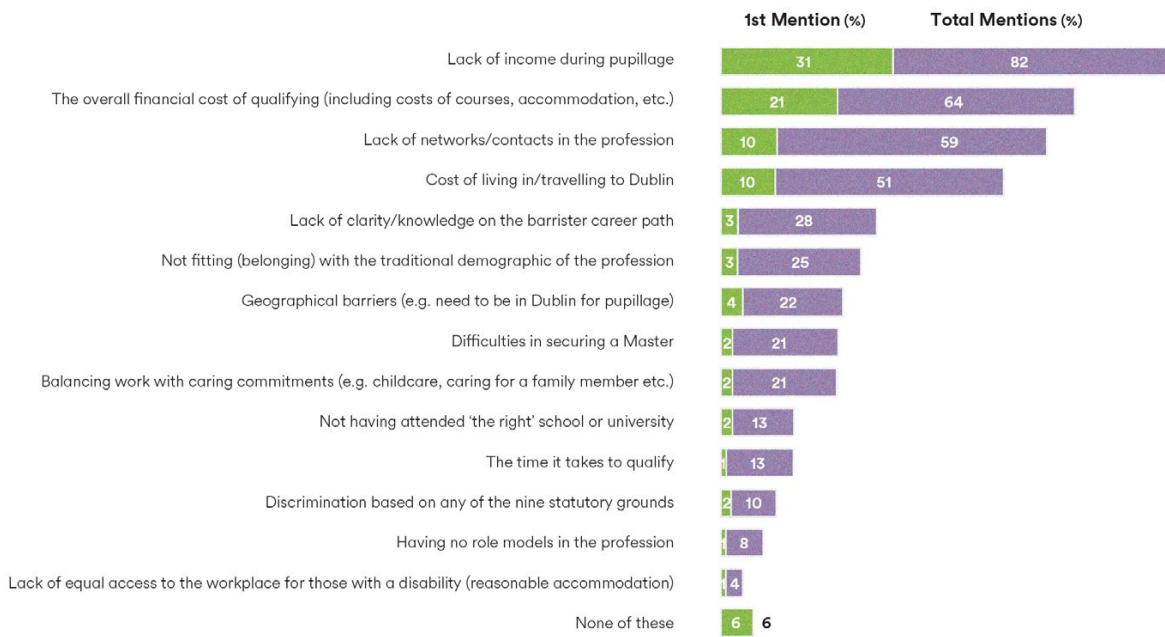
A lack of clarity or knowledge about the barrister career path is identified as a barrier to entering the profession by over one quarter (28%) of student and junior barristers.

Beyond the top five barriers to entry identified by respondents 26% of respondents cited not fitting in or belonging with the traditional demographic of the profession while geographical barriers such as the need to be in Dublin for pupillage was identified by 22% of respondents.

¹⁵⁰ Middle class background equates to ABC1 National Readership Survey social grade; working class background equates to C2DE social grade.

Fig. 3.22 Barriers to entering the barrister profession

Base: All respondents N - 366



Q.18 Which of the following, if any, do you think has acted or might act as a barrier to you entering the barrister profession? If you feel there were/are barriers, please rank the top five barriers you think you experienced/may experience.

What Barristers Say: Barriers to Entering the Profession

Many barristers interviewed say that prior to entering the profession, they were aware of the potential financial challenges ahead of them. Some note that they were pre-emptively 'warned' by others (colleagues, mentors etc.) to avoid the profession as a result of the anticipated financial difficulties. Some say that without family support or considerable savings, entering the profession can be a significant challenge.

"Everyone was like 'don't do it, you won't make a living.' They told me 'why don't you just go and be a solicitor.'"

Self-employed barrister

"If I didn't have a partner who was working full time and who has a decent job I could not have done this."

Employed barrister

"You can't become a barrister without having some family support. It's impossible, it's just not feasible."

Self-employed barrister

A lack of connections in the profession is noted as a key challenge, particularly when securing pupillage and developing a pipeline of work post-qualification.

"I think a lack of connections is the biggest barrier to entering the profession. If you are not known and you do not have someone who introduces you and takes you under their wing I don't see you making it in this profession, sorry."

Self-employed barrister

The need to be in Dublin and the resulting accommodation and travel expenses during the qualification period, including pupillage, is also mentioned by some as a significant challenge.

"I was living in a family friend's house Dublin. Had I had to pay 800 quid a month for accommodation I don't know how I could have afforded it during the BL and devilling."

Self-employed barrister

3.3.3 Overview of survey participants

Pupillage: information on pupillage and the process of securing a master

Student and junior barristers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements related to available information about pupillage and securing a master.¹⁵¹ The year of pupillage with an approved predominantly or solely Dublin-based practitioner (also known as devilling) is a mandatory requirement by the Bar of the Ireland for barristers who wish to be members of the Law Library.

Fig. 3.23 Information on pupillage and securing a master

Base: All intending to complete/completing/completed pupillage N - 319



Q.8 *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your pupillage. Please select one only for each statement.*

¹⁵¹ Results reporting pupillage excludes respondents who did not or did not intend to undertake pupillage (4% of total).

Information on the process of securing a master

Fewer than one third (30%) of respondents say there is or was sufficient information and guidance available on the process of securing a master with whom to undertake the mandatory one-year pupillage as a member of the Law Library. Only 13% of student barristers say there was sufficient information and guidance available on the process of securing a master. It should be noted that the survey was undertaken early in the academic year so not all students had necessarily engaged with the pupillage process. Respondents without an undergraduate law degree (20%) are less likely to say that information and guidance is or was sufficient.

Information on available masters

Just over one third (35%) of respondents say there is or was sufficient information on available masters. Student barristers (22%) are less likely to say there was sufficient information, while current pupils (43%) are more likely to find information on available masters to be sufficient. Men (42%) are also much more likely than women (27%) to say there is or was sufficient information on available masters.

Information on conditions of pupillage year

A total of 37% of respondents say there is or was sufficient information about the conditions of pupillage and what to expect during the pupillage year. Again, student barristers (15%) are least likely to say that information is sufficient.

Information on remuneration during pupillage

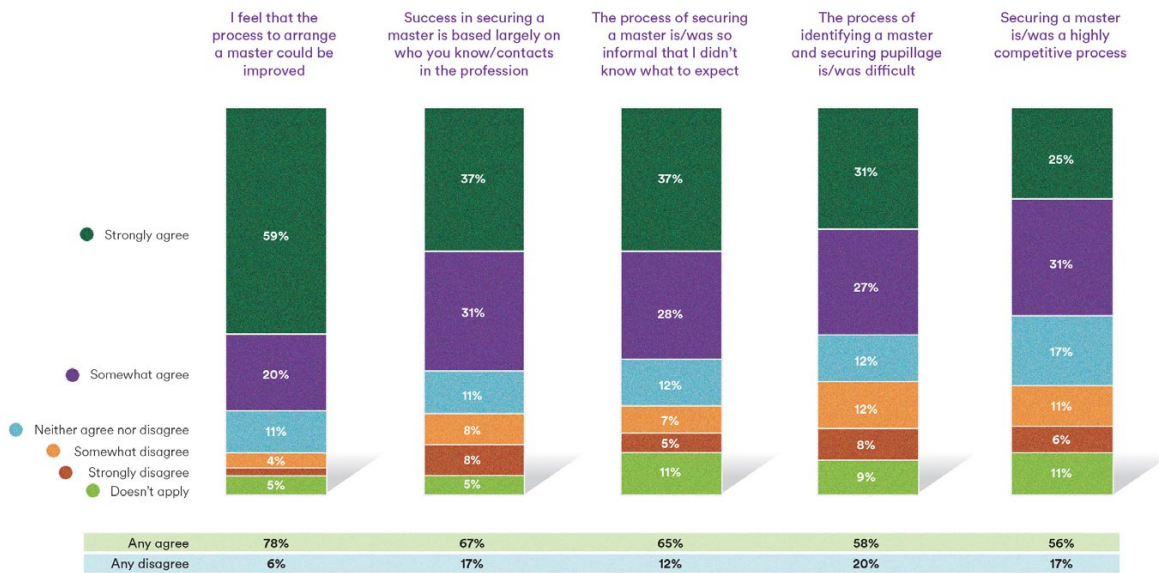
While pupillage is an unpaid period of supervised practical training, informal arrangements may exist whereby masters remunerate pupils. A total of 29% of respondents say there is or was sufficient information available about remuneration during pupillage. Once again, student barristers (13%) are least likely to say that there was sufficient information available.

The process of securing a master

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements related to the process of securing a master.

Fig. 3.24 Securing a master

Base: All intending to complete/completing/completed pupillage N - 319



Q.8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your pupillage. Please select one only for each statement.

Improvements to the process of finding a master

Over three quarters (78%) of respondents say they feel the process of arranging a master could be improved. Student barristers (85%) are more likely to agree with this statement.

Informality of master process

Two thirds (65%) of respondents say the process of securing a master is or was so informal that they didn't know what to expect. Current pupils (69%) and self-employed barristers (70%) are more likely to hold this view compared to student barristers (58%).

Competition to find a master

Over half (56%) of respondents say that securing a master is a highly competitive process. Similarly, 59% of respondents say the process of identifying a master and securing pupillage is or was difficult. Student barristers (67%) and current pupils (63%) are slightly more likely to say that the process was difficult than self-employed barristers (55%) and employed barristers (46%).

Importance of contacts in profession

Two thirds (67%) of respondents say that success in securing a master is based largely on who you know or your contacts in the profession. Student barristers (78%) are more likely to hold this view as are respondents who report having experienced discrimination (76%).

What Barristers Say: Experience of Pupillage

Barristers interviewed describe the relationship with a master as highly important in the career of a barrister. It has a strong impact on their future trajectory and is key for building a network for their future career. Barristers describe a wide range of experiences during pupillage, some positive and some negative, with the experience largely dependent on the master they secured. Those with positive experiences report receiving lots of exposure to cases and autonomy to do important work.

“It could be either, depending on who you get. Some masters are very organised and will say, right, this is what we’re going to do and this is how we’re going to do it, others would be more, let us say, iterative in the process.”

Self-employed barrister

Some barristers feel there was an element of luck involved in terms of their experience with regards to getting financial assistance, experience gained and alignment with their area of interest.

“I was lucky in that my master gave me a lot of responsibility and I got great experience that way.”

Self-employed barrister

Some barristers speak of continuing their pupillage into a second year to gain more experience.

“There’s no requirement for a second year. But the problem is like, it’s all about contacts. It’s all about getting more experience and getting more work and basically everyone does a second year. and then most people do a third year as I understand at the moment”.

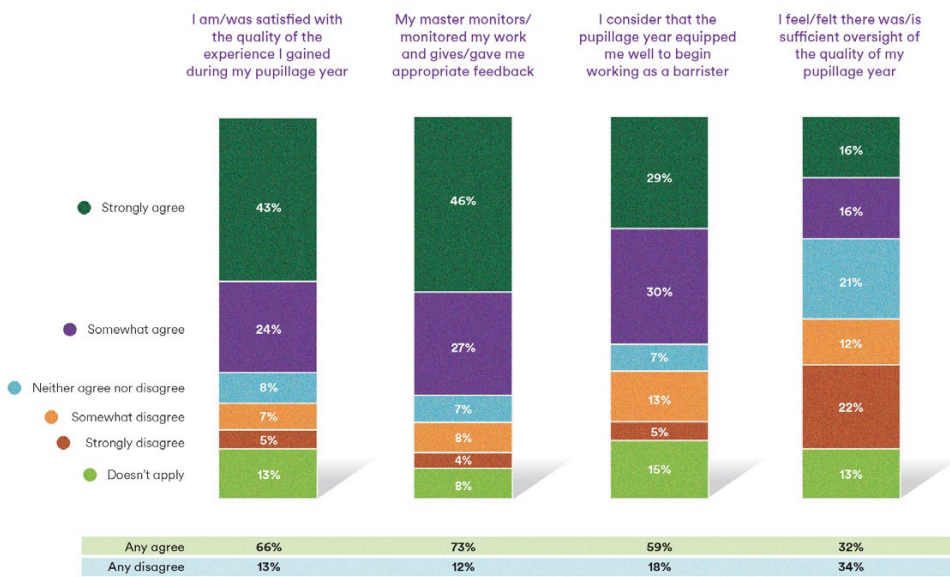
Self-employed barrister

Satisfaction with pupillage

Barristers who have completed pupillage or who are currently pupils were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements related to their experience of pupillage.

Fig. 3.25 Satisfaction with pupillage

Base: All completing/completed pupillage (*students excluded*) N - 240



Q.8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your pupillage. Please select one only for each statement.

Satisfaction with quality of experience

When reflecting on their experience during pupillage, two thirds (66%) of respondents say that they are satisfied with the quality of the experience that they gained during pupillage. It is important to note that at the time of the survey, current pupils had only recently commenced their pupillage.

Similarly, 59% of those who have completed or are currently completing pupillage say that their pupillage year equipped them well to begin working as a barrister.

Satisfaction with master feedback

Almost three quarters (73%) say that their master monitored or monitors their work and gave or gives appropriate feedback. This view is held strongly by current pupils (86%).

Satisfaction with oversight of pupillage quality

Only one third (32%) say that there was or is sufficient oversight of the quality of their pupillage year, this view is slightly higher for current pupils (42%).

Information about master's practice

Nearly six in ten (58%) respondents say they had sufficient information in advance of their pupillage about the specialism of their master's practice.

What Barristers Say: Information on Securing a Master

Barristers say that when looking for a master, the list of potential masters provided by the Bar of Ireland is helpful. However, all those interviewed say that the list lacks sufficient information to make an informed decision, such as the master's area of expertise. Many extend their search beyond the list to try and find more information about listed masters. Some barristers report frequently not hearing back from the masters that they contacted.

"There were some persons on the list that identified themselves in speciality areas. But, when I looked at the list, I wasn't even getting a response from anyone at all."

Self-employed barrister

"I think she was surprised, because I would say that every other devil she has had has come to her through some sort of personal connection. So that is my sense of it, is that it was really unusual and she was a bit taken aback."

Self-employed barrister

"I can't remember how many hundred people are on the list. But like, there's a big list comes out, so you might as well get an old dart, and stick it in."

Self-employed barrister

"You literally had to sit down and go through the list name by name by name, calling people and reaching out to people."

Self-employed barrister

Barristers with a disability who required reasonable accommodation say that finding a suitable master can be very difficult. They report that key information that is required by those who need reasonable accommodation appears unattainable through the current process of master recruitment (for example some may be searching for specifically desk-based roles due to a physical disability).

"I contacted seven or eight [masters] and I made it clear what I could and could not do and I was ghosted for the most part."

Self-employed barrister with a disability

Costs and remuneration during study and pupillage

All respondents were asked how they funded the BL degree and how they supported themselves during the degree. Qualified barristers were asked about financial support during the pupillage period.

Course fees

When paying for the BL degree course fees, half (49%) of respondents say they self-funded the course through savings while 22% had their fees paid for by their family and a further 21% took out a loan to cover the cost of course fees. Those from a working class background are less likely than those from a middle class background to pay for the BL degree course fees through self-funded savings (37% working class; 51% middle class) or through family funding (11% working class; 26% middle class). Those from a working class background are more likely than those from a middle class background to take out a loan to pay for the BL degree (32% working class; 17% middle class).

Financial supports for students and pupils

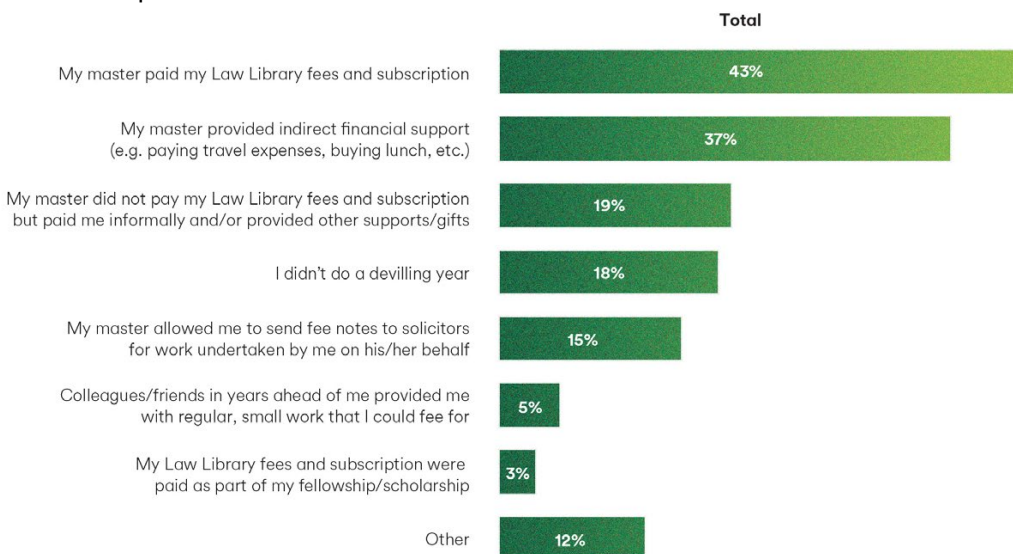
When supporting themselves financially day-to-day during the BL degree course, almost 39% of respondents had a full time job, with this rising to almost half (47%) among those from a working class background.

The large majority (82%) of current barrister pupils indicate that these fees have been paid for by their master. Of all qualified barrister respondents, 43% indicated that their master paid their Law Library fees and subscription, 19% indicated that their master did not pay their fees but made informal payments or provided other supports.¹⁵²

More than one third (37%) of qualified barristers indicate that they receive or received indirect financial support (e.g. paying travel expenses, buying lunch, etc.) from their master.¹⁵³ A total of 15% of qualified barrister respondents indicated that their master allowed them to issue fee notes to solicitors for work they had undertaken on the master’s behalf. Men (17%) are more likely say they were allowed to issue fee notes than women (9%).

Fig. 3.26 Financial arrangements in place with master

Base: All qualified barristers N - 271



Q.7c While undertaking your one-year pupillage/devilling, what kinds of financial arrangements were/are in place with your Master?

¹⁵² Percentage calculations include 18% of respondents who indicated that they did not do pupillage.

¹⁵³ Percentage calculations include 18% of respondents who indicated that they did not do pupillage.

What Barristers Say: Training Costs and Remuneration

Barristers interviewed say that the direct and indirect cost of the BL degree is a significant barrier for many. This includes not only the course fees, but also the travel and accommodation expenses for those living outside of Dublin and the lost income for those pursuing the course on a full-time basis. Barristers acknowledge that the part-time BL degree course is helping make the profession more accessible. But even with the part-time degree, most barristers say that family support is required to proceed through the qualification process and especially help with the income uncertainty following qualification.

“So overall about 27 grand in outlay. That was for three years for the undergrad, plus two years part-time in the King’s Inns. The first few years of being a barrister were basically unpaid too, so there is an additional cost there too.”

Self-employed barrister

The master and pupil relationship is a training relationship between two self-employed barristers and not an employment relationship. Barristers report a variety of experiences when it comes to financial support from their masters. Some report having received consistent (sometimes weekly or monthly) financial support from their masters. Many say they relied mainly on family support, savings or other jobs to stay financially afloat during pupillage. Some mentioned receiving sporadic gifts from their masters during the year. Financial challenges during the pupillage year were mentioned as a substantial barrier.

“She would do things like, just unexpectedly write me a cheque ... every now and then, but I never knew when it was coming. They don’t have to pay you at all, so it’s like, oh thank you very much, that’s very generous, but at the same time, given the number of hours that you do ...”

Self-employed barrister

“I had been working quite a long time and I had savings so I could actually fund myself through it (pupillage).”

Self-employed barrister

“I’m doing another job online for like 20, 25 hours a week, which is the only guaranteed income that I have, and is keeping me afloat.”

Self-employed barrister

3.3.4 Early career challenges

Respondents were asked to rank the top five challenges they experienced or may experience while working as barristers.

1. Length of time to build up practice – 76%

The time it takes to build up a practice is the most substantial challenge or expected challenge of working in the profession, cited by 76% of student and junior barristers, with two in ten (21%) first mentioning it.

2. Difficulties getting paid – 67%

Difficulties with getting paid is the second most cited challenge of working in the barrister profession, identified by 67% of respondents. Barristers working mostly in criminal law are significantly more likely to find this to be a challenge, with 80% citing it.¹⁵⁴

3. Remuneration – 62%

Remuneration in general is identified by 62% of respondents as a challenge, with just over two in ten (23%) first mentioning it. The data shows that men (66%) are more likely to see remuneration as an issue compared to women (56%).

4. Lack of networks – 45%

Just under half (45%) of respondents report a lack of network or contacts in the profession as a challenge. Respondents from a working class background (52%) are more likely to cite lack of contacts as a challenge than those from a middle class background (42%).

5. Cost of living in Dublin – 38%

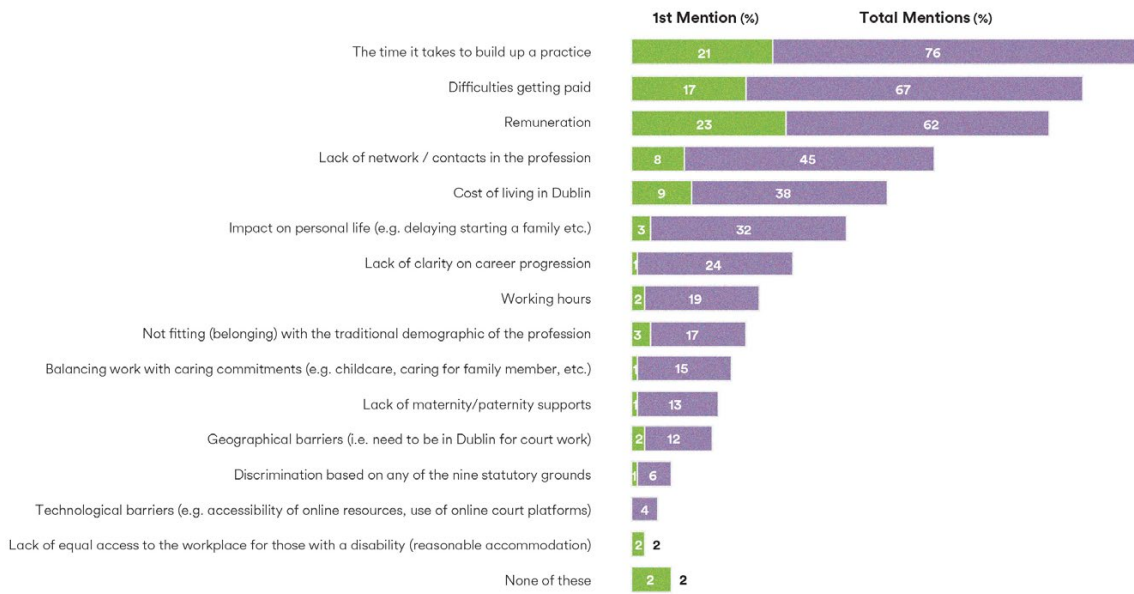
For 38% of respondents, the cost of living in Dublin is a challenge. This is heightened for those under the age of 28 (62%), and those who work mostly in criminal law (57%). Geographic barriers (i.e. need to be in Dublin for court work) is seen as a challenge by 12%, with this rising to 26% for those who do not live in Dublin.

Beyond the top five challenges, (32%) of respondents identify the impact on their personal life (e.g. delaying starting a family etc.) as a challenge, while a lack of clarity on career progression is identified as a challenge by 24% of respondents.

¹⁵⁴ Note small base of 31 barristers.

Fig. 3.27 Challenges of working in barrister profession

Base: All respondents N - 366



Q.19 Which of the following, if any, do you think have been, or might be a challenge to you working in the barrister profession? If you feel there were/are challenges, please rank the top five challenges you think you experienced or may experience.

What Barristers Say: Challenges of Working in the Profession

Self-employed barristers early in their career report feeling pessimistic about their future. Many cannot see how they can develop a pipeline of work that will give them an income that they can live on. Self-employed barristers speak of having difficulty in accessing opportunities to make money and facing challenges getting paid promptly for the work they actually do. Some self-employed barristers say that there is an over-supply of barristers in the profession.

“It’s still up in the air at the moment whether or not I’ll be able to continue to do this. Hopefully I’ll be able to make some money out of it earning even like 20 or 30 grand a year.”

Self-employed barrister

“I don’t see it getting any better, and I don’t see a way out. I don’t see what is going to practically change, regardless of how passionate I am about it.”

Self-employed barrister

“I am struggling and all of my colleagues at my level are struggling to earn anything. We are all trying to get lecturing gigs and discovery projects online because we’re trying to earn a living.”

Self-employed barrister

“There is a general rule of thumb that it takes seven years as a barrister to earn a liveable salary. Before entering the profession, I kept hearing that and it is probably pretty accurate. But at the time I said ‘no it can’t be true, he can’t be telling the truth’.”

Self-employed barrister

Barristers choosing employed roles

Nearly four in five (78%) employed barristers say they chose to work in-house for a more reliable income. A further three quarters (73%) say that pay and conditions is a reason they chose to work in an employed role. Just under one third cite work-life balance as their reason for choosing an employed role, with this reason more common among women (41%) than men (25%). Women are also more likely to identify wanting to start a family (36% women; 25% men) and having more regular hours (36% women; 19% men) as a reason for choosing to work in employed role as a barrister.

What Barristers Say: Choosing Employed Role

Barristers working in employed positions report having a more reliable income, job security and good work-life balance.

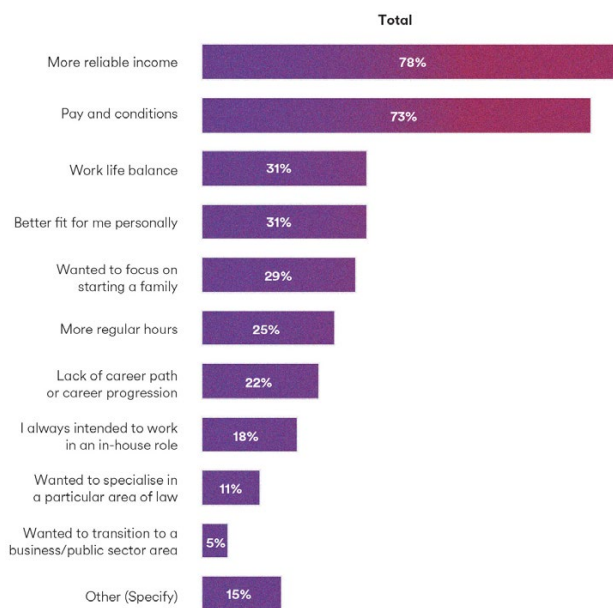
“I earn an income and I have a decent terms and conditions. I have decent security of employment. I get to help people who I have a particular interest in. So my arrangement is good.”

Employed barrister

“Unless you have some sort of independent wealth it is very difficult to go down the self-employed route. I wouldn’t have taken the chance of losing my home if I couldn’t have a guaranteed income that is what made going in-house an attractive option for me.”

Employed barrister

Fig. 3.28 Reasons for barristers choosing an employed role
Base: All employed N - 55



Q.4 Why did you choose to work in an employed role?

The role of connections

The survey asked respondents a series of questions relating to their previous connections with the profession.

About one in six (16%) student and junior barristers say they had previous connections with the legal profession prior to starting their legal education or qualifying. Unsurprisingly, the socio-economic background of respondents and their parents is a factor in the prevalence of connections

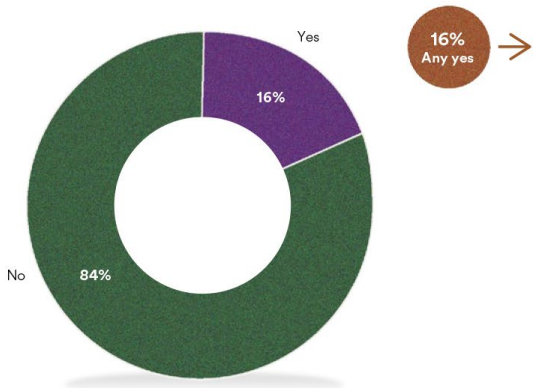
Respondents from a middle class background are four times as likely to say that they had an existing connection with the legal profession compared to those from a working class background (20% middle class; 5% working class).

Of those who have existing connections 57% say that these connections helped them to advance their career, with 21% strongly agreeing with this.

Fig. 3.29 Did connections help advance career in the barrister profession?

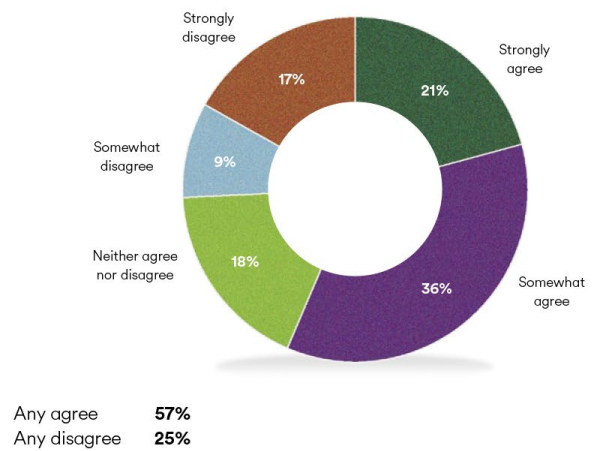
Connections with the legal profession

Base: All respondents N - 433



Did connections help advance career?

Base: All had previous connections N - 59*
*Small base size



Q.5c To what extent do you agree or disagree that these connections helped you to advance your own career?

What Barristers Say: The Role of Connections

Barristers interviewed said that having connections within the profession is very advantageous, particularly when securing a master. Connections are also thought to be an advantage when securing work post-qualification, providing greater opportunities and connections to solicitors.

“Everybody finds a master eventually. But still the people who are getting first pick and really know what’s going on generally have existing connections within the profession. There is a kind of asymmetry of information available.”

Self-employed barrister

“I wouldn’t say that it’s [the profession] necessarily open, I would say that it’s quite close-knit. It’s really who you know who determines your path, and if you are not in the know, then it’s difficult to navigate.”

Self-employed barrister

Maternity, adoptive and paternity leave

Only 5% of respondents say they have taken maternity leave, 3% have taken paternity leave and no respondents have taken adoptive leave while studying or working as a barrister. However, among just those barristers who are in employed roles, 16% had taken maternity leave.¹⁵⁵

Satisfaction with leave

Just over one third (35%) of respondents who have taken maternity or paternity leave were satisfied with the level of payment that they received during the leave period.¹⁵⁶ A total of 41% of respondents that have taken maternity or paternity leave were satisfied with the amount of leave they were able to take.

Less than one third (28%) of those who have taken leave were satisfied with the level of formal workplace supports around leave planning and cover arrangements, such as handover planning and case management, and 36% were satisfied with informal supports. One quarter (25%) were satisfied with their level of expected earnings after returning from maternity or adoptive leave.

Impact on career

Among those who have taken maternity leave, 84% say that taking maternity leave has had or will have a negative impact on their professional career.¹⁵⁷

Fig. 3.30 Satisfaction with maternity/adoptive/paternity leave in the barrister profession
Base: All taken leave N - 31



Q.13 How satisfied were you with the following aspects of maternity / paternity / adoptive leave provision and arrangements in your profession /workplace?

¹⁵⁵ No respondents indicated taking adoptive leave.
¹⁵⁶ Note small sample size.
¹⁵⁷ Note small sample size of 19 who had taken maternity leave.

What Barristers Say: Maternity, Adoptive and Paternity Leave

Barristers interviewed say that taking maternity leave has a profound impact on the career of junior female barristers. This is thought to be the case largely because of the importance of maintaining strong relationships with solicitors and that taking time out during the early stages of their career can erode any progress that has been potentially made in terms of building a network of contacts for their practice. As such, many appear to feel the need to return to work quickly after giving birth.

"I decided to get pregnant while I was training because I didn't see how I could make it work once I was at the bar, particularly in the early years because everything is based on personal contacts."

Self-employed barrister

"My understanding is, that if you keep yourself out of it long enough, you will suffer, in terms of it's very difficult to break back in and just pick up where you left off. The profession seems to be unforgiving in that way."

Self-employed barrister

3.3.5 Experience of discrimination

The survey explored respondents' experiences of discrimination during barrister training, while looking for work as a barrister, or in the workplace as a barrister.

Prior to answering questions about discrimination, respondents were presented with a list of ten areas of discrimination which included the nine grounds on which discrimination is outlawed in the Equality Acts (excluding the housing assistance ground) and socio-economic status or background. Questions relating to discrimination asked respondents to consider whether they had experienced discrimination based on any of the listed grounds. Respondents were not provided with a definition of discrimination. Responses are therefore based on respondents' perceptions on what constitutes discrimination.

Prevalence of discrimination

One fifth of student and junior barristers (21%) report that they have experienced discrimination in the profession, with 20% experiencing it in the last three years.

The data shows that women are five times more likely than men to say they have experienced discrimination in the last three years (35% compared to 7%). Those with a disability are two and a half times more likely to have experienced discrimination in the last three years than those without a disability (42% compared to 17%).¹⁵⁸

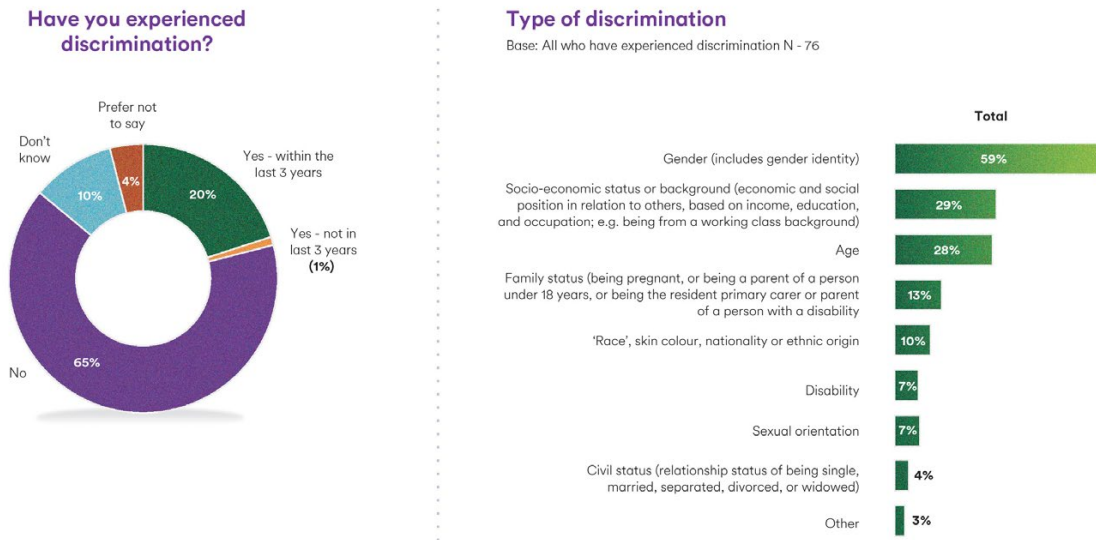
Type of discrimination

Of those who have experienced discrimination, over half report that the discrimination related to gender, followed by socio-economic status or background (29%) and age (28%). Women (73%) are substantially more likely to cite gender based discrimination compared to men (6%). Of the men who state that they have experienced discrimination, they are more likely than women to report discrimination relating to race, skin colour nationality or ethnic origin (25% men; 7% women) or socio-economic status or background (38% men; 24% women) and sexual orientation (13% men; 2% women).

¹⁵⁸ Note small sample size of 43 with a disability.

Fig. 3.31 Experience of discrimination in the barrister profession

Base: All respondents N - 366



Q.20 Have you experienced discrimination in your barrister training, while looking for work as a barrister or in the workplace as a barrister related to any of the areas of discrimination listed on the previous page?

Q.20b If yes, please select which of the area(s) it related to.

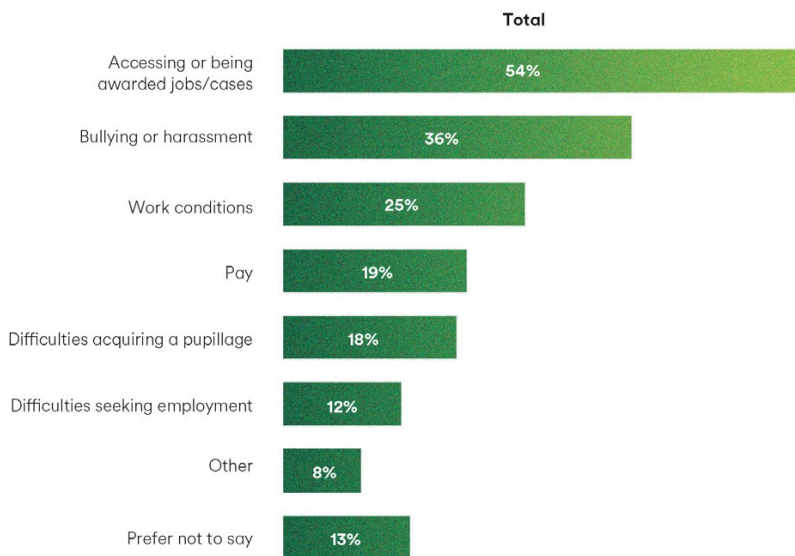
Areas of discrimination

Over half (54%) of those who report having experienced discrimination say the discrimination related to being awarded jobs or cases.¹⁵⁹ Over one third (36%) of those who report having experienced discrimination say it related to bullying or harassment. One quarter (25%) say the discrimination related to working conditions.

¹⁵⁹ Percentages calculated including a non-response (prefer not to say) rate of 13%.

Fig. 3.32 Areas of discrimination in the barrister profession

Base: All experience discrimination N - 76

*Q.20c What did the discrimination relate to?*

3.3.6 Attitudes towards the profession and diversity

By its nature, the survey focused on barriers and challenges facing student and junior barristers. However, respondents were also asked about their career expectations and satisfaction as well as general attitudes to the profession including diversity within the profession.

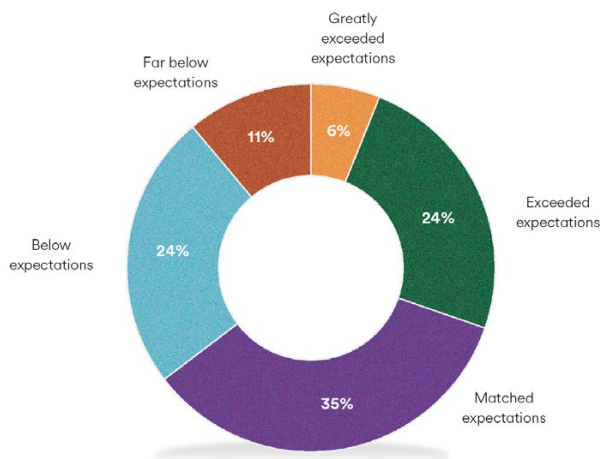
Expectations of the profession

The survey showed moderate levels of career satisfaction among junior barristers, with 65% of qualified barristers stating that their experience working in the profession has exceeded or matched expectations.

Employed barristers are more likely to say that their expectations have been met (47% employed; 26% self-employed barristers excluding pupils) and self-employed barristers (excluding pupils) are more likely to say that their expectations have been exceeded (36% self-employed; 9% employed).

Just over one third (35%) of qualified junior barristers indicate that their experience working in the profession has fallen below their expectations, this increases to 38% of self-employed barristers (excluding pupils) and 44% of employed barristers. Barristers with six to seven years post-qualification experience are also more likely to say that their experience working in the profession has fallen below their expectations (48%).

Fig. 3.33 Has the experience of working in the barrister profession met expectations?
 Base: All qualified barristers N - 271



Any (exceeded)	30%
Matched expectations	35%
ANY (below expectations)	35%

Q.15 To what extent has your experience working within the solicitor profession met your expectations?

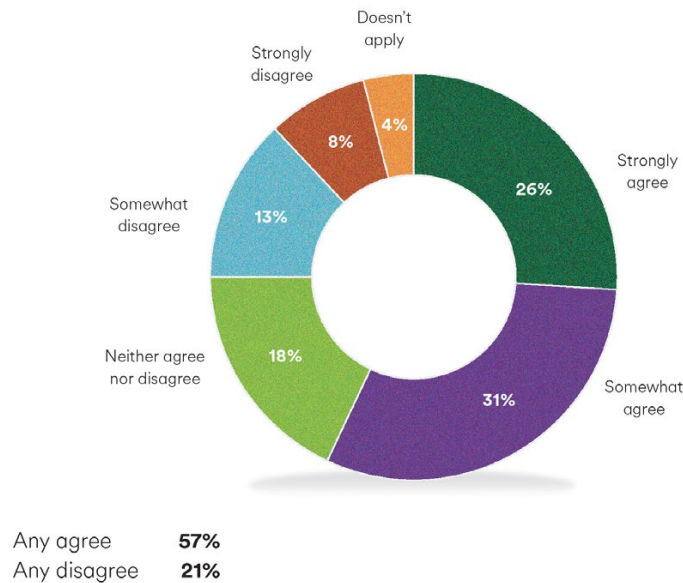
Do benefits outweigh challenges?

More than half (57%) of student and junior barristers say the benefits of qualifying as a barrister outweigh the challenges they have faced in qualifying.¹⁶⁰ This view is stronger among those with a disability (70%), those who don't have a law degree (64%), barristers working in a mixture of criminal and civil law (69%) and barristers who have qualified in the last two years (65%). One fifth (21%) of student and junior barristers say that the benefits of qualifying do not outweigh the challenges.

¹⁶⁰ Note small sample sizes.

Fig. 3.34 Do the benefits outweigh the challenges of qualifying as a barrister?

Base: All respondents N - 366



Q.22 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the benefits of qualifying as a barrister outweigh the challenges you faced in qualification?

Attitudes towards the barrister profession

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements about the barrister profession.

Benefits of diversity

Over three quarters (76%) of student and junior barristers say that the barrister profession would benefit from enhanced diversity. This view is strongest among women (81%), respondents aged 36 and under (81%), employed barristers (84%) and respondents who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and pansexual (87%).¹⁶¹ Only 23% of respondents say that the profession is diverse / representative of the population.

Additional barriers for minority groups

Over two thirds (69%) of respondents say that people from minority groups face additional barriers in the profession, with women (77%) and respondents who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and pansexual (84%) more likely to hold this view.¹⁶²

More barriers for women

Similarly, 67% of respondents say that women face more barriers in the profession than men. There is a stark difference in the views of men and women with 90% of women holding this view compared to only 49% of men. Younger respondents are also more likely to say that women face more barriers than men (78% of those aged 28 and under compared to 54% of those aged 37 and older).

¹⁶¹ Note small sample size of 44 LGBT respondents.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Fig. 3.35 Attitudes towards the barrister profession - 1

Base: All respondents N - 366



Q.23 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Belonging

Just under two thirds (64%) say that they feel like they belong in the profession. Employed barristers tend to not feel this as strongly, with fewer than half (47%) saying that they feel like they belong in the profession.

Role models

Women are more likely to say that they would like to see more role models of their own identity in the profession with 64% of women holding this view compared to 38% of men.

Deferring having children

Just over half of respondents (53%) say that they would consider deferring having children until their career is established. Respondents aged 29 and under (80%) are much more likely to hold this view and women (65%) are more likely to hold this view than men (45%).

Existing contacts

Almost all respondents (91%) say that it is much harder to establish a career as a barrister without existing contacts or networks in the profession.

Progression challenges

Almost two thirds (64%) of respondents say they have found it challenging to progress up the career ladder and one third (36%) say they are considering or have considered transferring to the solicitor profession.

Fig. 3.36 Attitudes towards the barrister profession - 2

Base: All respondents N - 366



Q.23 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

3.3.7 Improvement areas

Improvements to qualification process

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that there are areas within the qualification process that need improvement. Those who agreed improvement is needed were then asked to rank the top five possible avenues for improvement.

The majority of respondents (84%) say there are areas within the qualification process that need improvement. Student barristers (91%) and those aged 28 and younger (91%) are more likely to agree that improvements are needed.

Among those who agree improvements are needed, the survey findings show support for the following initiatives:

Enhanced financial supports during pupillage

Enhanced financial supports or improved remuneration during pupillage is a key improvement area identified by 86% of respondents. One third (34%) of respondents listed this as their first improvement, making it the highest first mentioned of all ranked improvements.

Reduction in costs of qualification

Almost three quarters (74%) of respondents identify a reduction in the costs of qualification as a needed improvement. Current pupils (87%) and barristers working mostly in criminal law (92%) are more likely to propose this as a key improvement.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Note small sample size 29 criminal law barristers.

Formalised structure around securing a master

A formalised structure for securing a master is identified as a needed improvement by 74% of respondents. Student barristers (90%) and employed barristers (83%) are more likely to seek this improvement, compared to current pupils (65%) and self-employed barristers (excluding pupils) (66%). Respondents from a working class background are also more likely to identify this improvement area (82% working class; 73% middle class).

Increased availability of government grants for pupils

Increased availability of government grants for pupils is the improvement sought by 68% of respondents. Respondents from a working class background (77%) and respondents with a disability (81%) are more likely seek increased availability of grants for pupils.¹⁶⁴

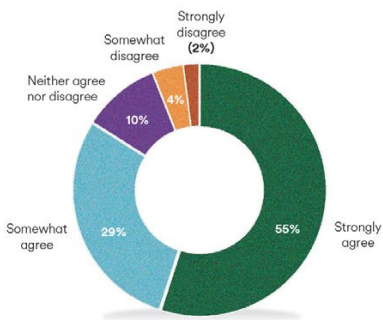
Additional study supports

Over half (54%) of respondents say additional study supports (book buying schemes, learning resources, BL fee coverage) would improve the qualification process.

Fig. 3.37 Improvements to barrister qualification process

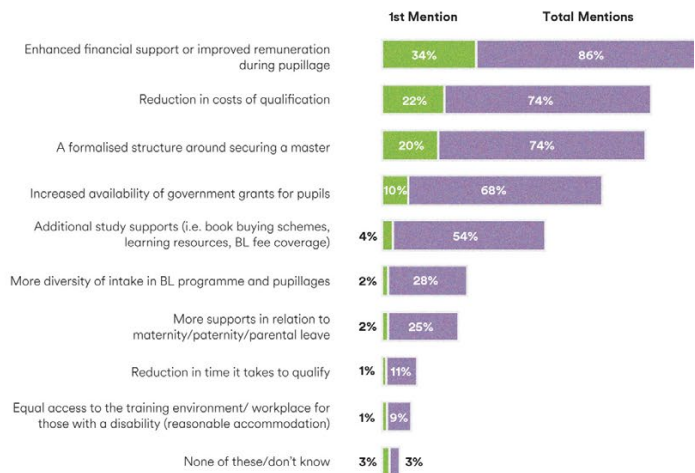
Base: All respondents N - 366

Are there areas within the qualification process that need improvements?



Which of the following could improve the qualification process?

Base: Any agree N - 306



Q.24 To what extent do you agree or disagree that there are areas within the qualification process that need improvements?

Q.25 Which, if any of the following, could improve the barrister qualification process?

¹⁶⁴ Note small sample size 37 respondents with a disability.

Improvements to working environment

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree that the working environment in the barrister profession needs improvement. Those that agreed that improvements are needed were then asked to rank the top five types of improvements.

The majority (74%) of student and junior barristers say that improvements are needed in the working environment. Almost all (95%) employed barristers and almost three quarters (73%) of self-employed barristers (excluding pupils) agree that improvements are necessary.

Among those who agree improvements are needed, the survey findings show support for the following initiatives:

New business models

New business models for the delivery of legal services (e.g. barrister/barrister partnerships, barrister/solicitor partnerships, direct access, multi-disciplinary practices) is the top improvement identified to improve the working environment in the barrister profession, supported by 69% of respondents. Almost one third (32%) of respondents listed this as their first improvement, making it the highest first mentioned of all ranked improvements. Support for this improvement is heightened among respondents aged 37 years and older (81%), as well as barristers currently in employed roles (83%).

Improved remuneration

Over two thirds (68%) identify remuneration as an area that needs to be improved within the profession. The majority (90%) of criminal barristers cite that improved remuneration would improve the working environment of the profession.¹⁶⁵

Greater variety of career pathways

Almost half (48%) say that a greater variety of career pathways in the profession would be a good improvement. The demographic data shows that student barristers (62%) and employed barristers (60%) are all more likely to identify this improvement area.

Measures to ensure pay equality

A total of 39% identify measures to improve pay equality as a potential improvement. Women are twice as likely as men to cite pay equality as a needed improvement with 54% of women and only 27% of men identifying it.

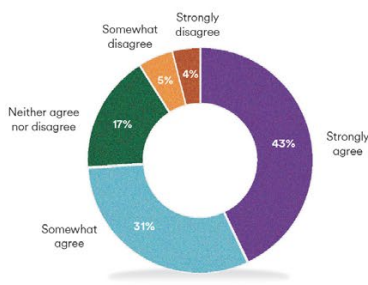
More supports for maternity and paternity leave

Over one third (36%) of respondents say more supports for maternity and paternity leave would improve the working environment. Women (47%) are also more likely than men (26%) to identify this potential support.

¹⁶⁵ Note small sample size 28 criminal law barristers.

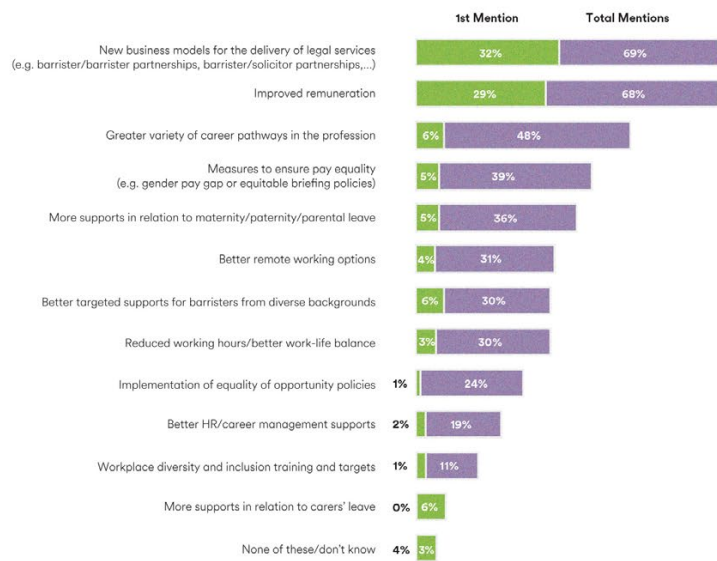
Fig. 3.38 Improvements to barrister working environment
 Base: All respondents N - 366

Are there areas within the working environment that need improvements?



Which of the following could improve the working environment?

Base: Any agree N - 269



Q.26 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the working environment within the barrister profession needs improvement?

Q.27 Which, if any, of the following could improve the working environment within the barrister profession?

What Barristers Say: Improvements to the Working Environment

Barristers interviewed say the adoption of new business models to help improve equality of opportunity in the profession would be a key area of innovation in the coming years. Some barristers noted that there is a need to move away from the conservative traditions of the profession. Others mentioned a need for a human resources structure in which complaints can be filed so that there is the possibility for people to be held accountable for their behaviour.

“If a group of young qualified barristers could hang their name above a door, put up a website and offer their services directly to the public, it would be far easier for them to get a fair shot at it.”

Employed barrister

“There is no reason why the law should be cloaked in some traditional archaic mystery. It’s a technical job.”

Self-employed barrister

“There needs to be a HR structure in which you can complain about people. Currently, there is no way to hold people accountable for behaving in unacceptable ways.”

Self-employed barrister

Undergraduate Survey

Key Insights

Career plans

45% plan to become a solicitor



15% plan to become a barrister



Anticipated entry barriers

63% Cost of qualifying



57% Lack of network or contacts



Diversity and discrimination

78% say minority groups face additional barriers



70% say women face more barriers to progression than men



9 in 10 students who plan to become a solicitor say completing a summer internship is necessary to secure a training contract



3.4 Undergraduate survey findings

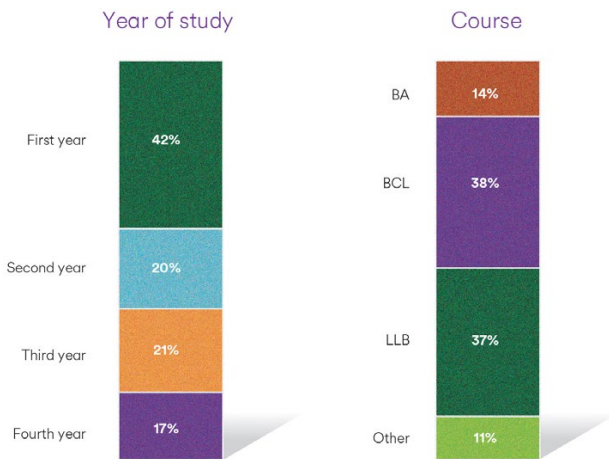
3.4.1 Overview of survey participants

Respondents were asked about their study stage, the course they were undertaking and the educational institution they were attending. They were also asked a series of demographic questions to help further analyse the survey results.

Respondents were spread across 15 universities, institutes of technology and independent colleges.¹⁶⁶ Of the students that completed the survey, 37% were enrolled in a BCL, 38% were enrolled in an LLB, 14% were enrolled in a BA and 11% were enrolled in other degrees (e.g. BSc, BBus). Four in ten respondents (42%) were in the first year of their degree, 20% were in second year, 21% were in third year and 17% were in fourth year.

Fig. 3.39 Course and study stage

Base: All respondents N - 590



Q.1b What year of your law degree are you currently undergoing?

Q.1c What degree course are you currently studying?

¹⁶⁶ Maynooth University (24%), University College Dublin (13%), Dublin City University (11%), National University of Ireland Galway (10%), Trinity College Dublin (9%), University College Cork (8%), Technical University Dublin (6%), University of Limerick (4%), Institute of Technology Carlow (3%), Griffith College (3%), Athlone Institute of Technology (3%), Letterkenny Institute of Technology (2%), Waterford Institute of Technology (2%), Dublin Business School (1%) and Limerick Institute of Technology (1%).

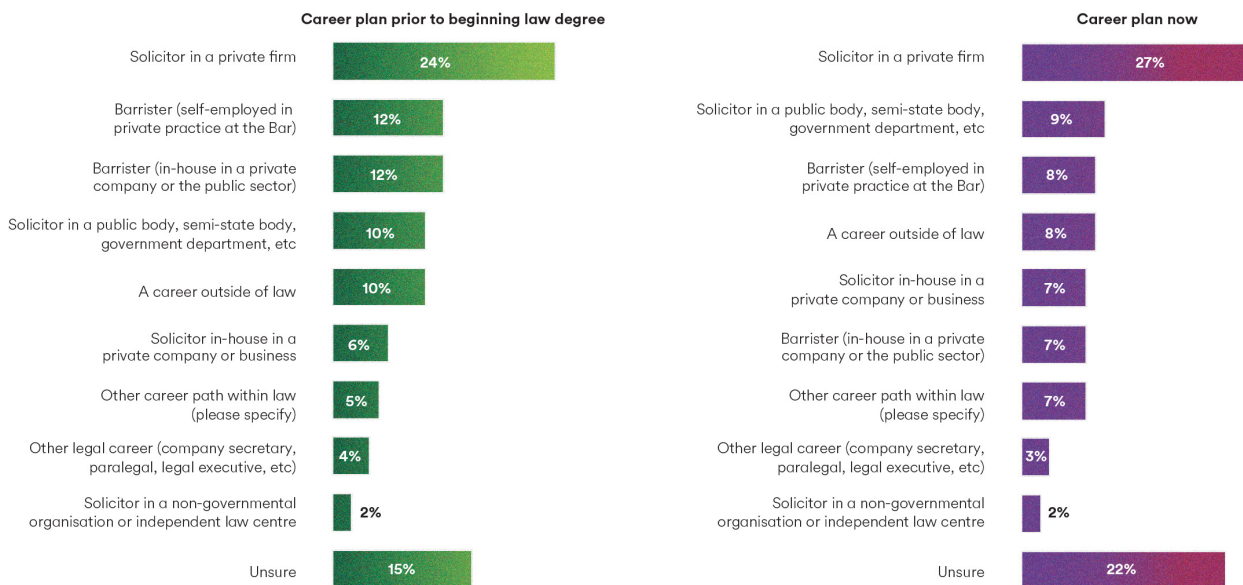
3.4.2 Overview of survey participants

Career plans Respondents were asked to indicate their planned career path both prior to beginning their law degree and at the time of the survey. Students aspiring to a career as a solicitor went from 42% prior to beginning their law degree to 45% at the time of the survey. In contrast, those aspiring to a career as a barrister decreased from 24% prior to beginning their law degree to 15% at the time of the survey.

A total of 15% of law undergraduates say that they were unsure of their career plans prior to starting their degree; this increases to 22% who say they are unsure now. One in ten respondents (10%) say that prior to beginning their law degree they hoped to pursue a career outside law; this drops to 8% of respondents currently.

Fig. 3.40 Career plans

Base: All respondents N - 590



Q.2a Thinking back prior to beginning your law degree, what career path did you hope/plan to follow?
Please select only one.

Q.2b At this current stage of your studying, do you know what career path you wish to follow?
Please select only one.

3.4.3 Legal work experience, training contracts and internships

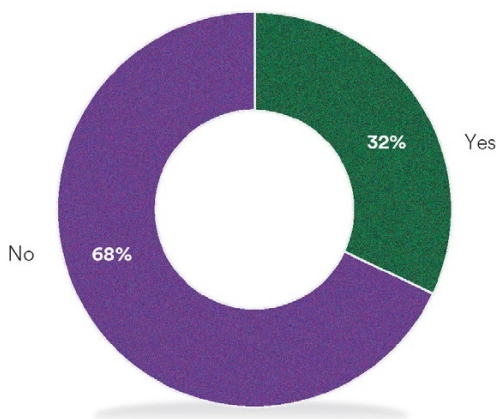
Legal work experience

One third (32%) of law undergraduates who responded to the survey have engaged in either paid or unpaid work experience, placements or internships with a legal focus.

Fourth years are more likely to have legal work experience, with over half (55%) reporting so. Undergraduates studying for a BCL (41%) are also more likely to have undertaken legal work experience. Those studying for a BA degree are less likely to have legal work experience (10%). Work placements are a formal part of many law degrees, particularly BCLs.

Fig. 3.41 Legal work experience

Base: All respondents N - 590



Q.1d Have you ever undertaken any work experience/placements and/or internships (either paid or unpaid) with a legal focus?

Training contracts

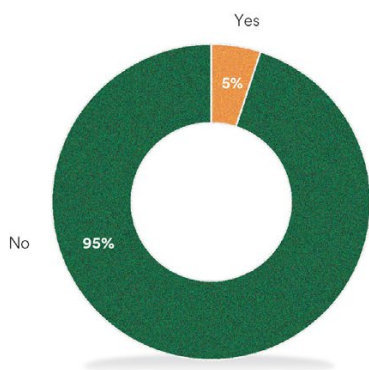
A total of 5% of law undergraduates surveyed have secured a solicitor training contract. Unsurprisingly, those in fourth year (22%) and those with legal work experience (15%) are more likely to have secured a training contract at this stage. Law undergraduates in TCD (12%), UCD (14%) and UCC (11%) are more likely to have secured a training contract.

Of those who have secured a training contract, the majority (77%) only made one or two applications before securing one.

Fig. 3.42 Training contracts

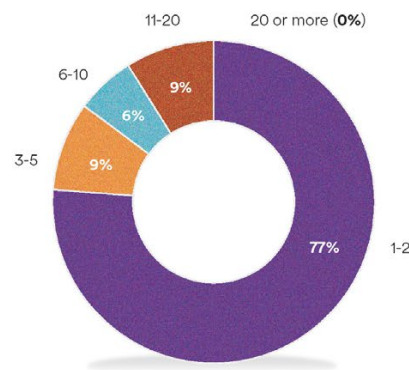
Base: All respondents N - 590

Have you secured a training contract?



How many training contracts did you apply for?

Base: All those secured training contract N - 24



Q.1e Have you secured a training contract as a solicitor?

Q.1f How many training contracts did you apply for before you secured one?

Solicitor internships

Over nine in ten (93%) respondents who plan to become a solicitor say that summer internships are necessary to secure a training contract, with 65% strongly agreeing. Those in later years of study and those studying for the BCL degree are more likely to strongly agree that a summer internship is necessary.

Connections

One in five law undergraduates (20%) who responded to the survey report having a personal connection with the legal profession. Those with a middle class background are twice as likely to report having legal connections (24%) than those from a working class background (11%).¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, students in first year (27%) are more likely to report a personal connection to the profession than students in other years (second year 14%, third year 16%, and fourth year 17%).

Of those that report having a legal connection, 73% agree that having a connection will help advance their career. Those with legal work experience (83%) are more likely to agree that their connection(s) will help advance their career than those without legal work experience (66%).

¹⁶⁷ Middle class background equates to ABC1 National Readership Survey social grade; working class background equates to C2DE social grade.

3.4.4 Level of understanding of qualification process

The time it takes to qualify

There is a mixed level of understanding among law undergraduates who responded to the survey about the process to qualify as a solicitor or barrister. More than two thirds (69%) say they are well informed about the time it takes to qualify as a solicitor or barrister. Unsurprisingly, those who are 23 years of age and older (83%), those in fourth year (85%) and those with legal work experience (86%) are more likely to consider themselves well informed about the time it takes to qualify in both professions.

The cost of qualifying

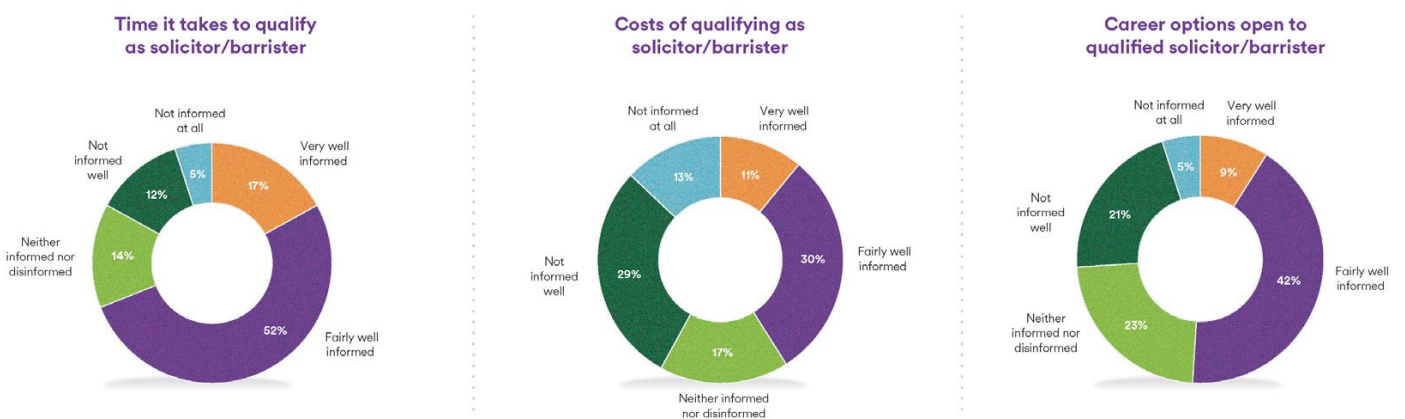
Four in ten (41%) respondents say they are well informed when it comes to the costs of qualifying as a solicitor or barrister. Again, students aged 23 and over (52%), fourth years (64%) and those with legal work experience (51%) are all more likely to consider themselves well informed.

Career options

Half (51%) of respondents consider that they are well informed on the career options that are open to them as qualified solicitors or barristers. Those in fourth year (66%) and those with legal work experience (62%) are more likely to consider themselves well informed. Undergraduates who report having a disability (62%) are also more likely to say they are well informed of their career options, compared to undergraduates without a disability (49%).

Fig. 3.43 Understanding of the qualification process

Base: All respondents N - 590



Q.3 How informed do you consider yourself to be about the following aspects of the process of qualifying as a solicitor or barrister? Please select one only for each of the professional qualification processes stated.

3.4.5 Anticipated barriers to entering the profession

Respondents were asked to rank the top five anticipated barriers to entering the legal profession.

1. Cost of qualifying – 63%

The cost of qualifying is considered to be the most significant potential barrier to entering the legal profession, identified by nearly two thirds (63%) of respondents.

2. Lack of contacts – 57%

Over half (57%) of law undergraduates identify a lack of networks/contacts in the legal profession as a future barrier, making it the second highest ranked barrier by all respondents.

3. Cost of living in or commuting to Dublin – 45%

The costs of living in or commuting to Dublin for solicitor or barrister training is the third most anticipated barrier, with 45% of respondents citing it.

4. Time it takes to qualify – 46%

The fourth highest ranked anticipated barrier is the overall time it takes to qualify, cited by almost half (46%) of respondents.

5. Difficulties securing a training contract or pupillage – 46%

Just under half (46%) of respondents identify difficulties in securing a solicitor training contract or a master for pupillage as a potential barrier.

Fig. 3.44 Anticipated barriers to entering the legal profession

Base: All respondents N - 590



Q.7 Which of the following, if any, do you think will act as a barrier to you entering the legal profession? If you feel there are barriers, please rank the top five you think you are most likely to experience.

3.4.6 Anticipated challenges of working in the profession

Respondents were asked to rank the five main anticipated challenges when working in the legal professions.

1. Lack of contacts – 55%

Lack of network or contacts in the profession is considered to be the most significant potential challenge when working in the legal profession, identified by more than half (55%) of those law undergraduates who responded to the survey. Undergraduates who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual or other (64%), undergraduates with a disability (63%) and undergraduates from a working class background (62%) are all more likely to identify this challenge.

2. Working hours – 48%

Almost half (48%) of respondents identify working hours as a potential challenge when working in the profession, making it the second most cited challenge. Men (38%) and those with a disability (36%) are less likely to identify this challenge.

3. Lack of reliable income – 47%

Just under half (47%) identify a lack of reliable income as a potential challenge when working in the profession. Undergraduates with a disability are more likely to cite this challenge (58%).

4. The time it takes to build up a practice as a self-employed barrister – 41%

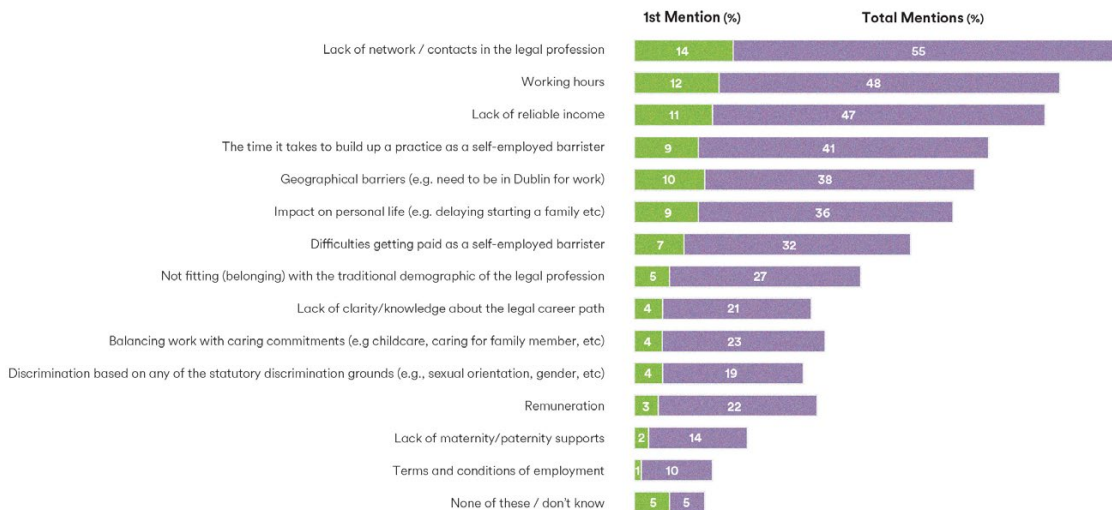
Four in ten (41%) of respondents identify the time it takes to build up a practice as a self-employed barrister as a potential challenge of working in the profession.

5. Geographical barriers – 38%

Geographical barriers – for example the need to be in Dublin for work – is also a significant anticipated challenge with four in ten (38%) selecting it as an issue.

Fig. 3.45 Anticipated challenges of working in the legal profession

Base: All respondents N - 590



Q.8 Which of the following, if any, do you think will be a challenge for you working in the legal profession as a solicitor or barrister? If you feel there are challenges, please rank the top five you think you are most likely to experience?

3.4.7 Attitudes towards the profession

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements about the legal profession.

Existing networks

Almost all law undergraduates who responded to the survey (96%) agree that it is easier to establish yourself as a solicitor or barrister if you have existing networks. Agreement with this statement is consistent across all demographics.

Career progression

More than eight in ten (83%) of respondents say they expect it will be challenging for them to enter and progress up the career ladder in the legal profession.

Additional barriers for minority groups

The majority (78%) of law undergraduates agree that people from minority groups face additional barriers in the legal profession. Seven in ten (70%) respondents agree that women face more barriers to progression in the legal profession compared to men.

Role models in the profession

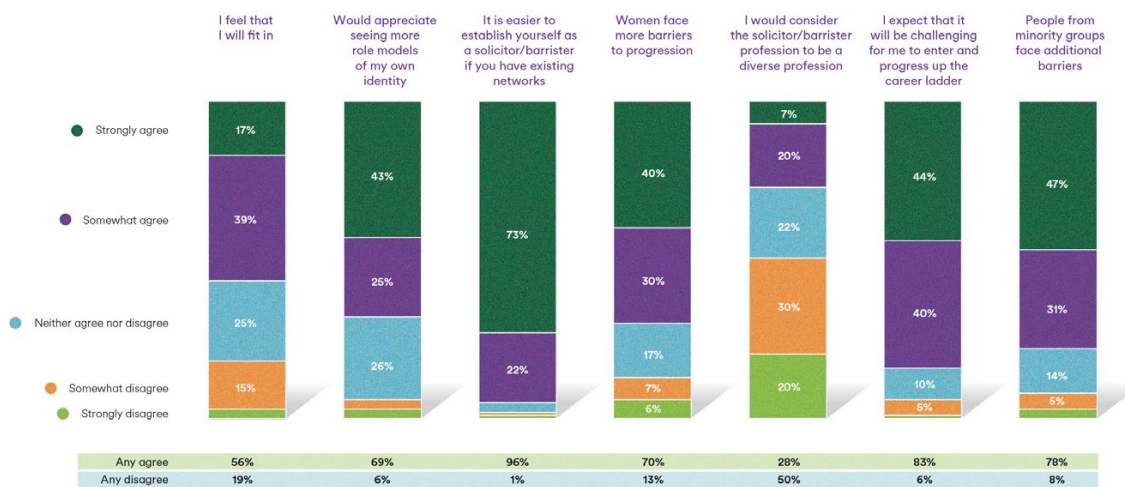
Just over one third (69%) of respondents agree that they would appreciate seeing more role models of their own identity in the legal profession.

Fitting in with the profession

Over half (56%) of law undergraduates feel that they will fit in with the legal profession.

Fig. 3.46 Attitudes towards the profession

Base: All respondents N - 590



Q.9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 is 'strongly agree' and 5 is 'strongly disagree'. Please note that we are interested in your perceptions of the profession as well as your experience.

3.4.8 Demographic profile of respondents

Two thirds (66%) of respondents identified as female, 32% as male and 1% as non-binary. The majority (84%) of respondents were aged under 23. Three quarters (76%) of respondents identified as heterosexual, 14% as bisexual or pansexual, 6% as gay or lesbian, 1% as 'other' and 4% opted not to say. Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents had a middle class background and 27% had a working class background, 10% opted not to indicate. One quarter (25%) of respondents attended a fee-paying secondary school and 12% of respondents were awarded a place in college through an Access programme.

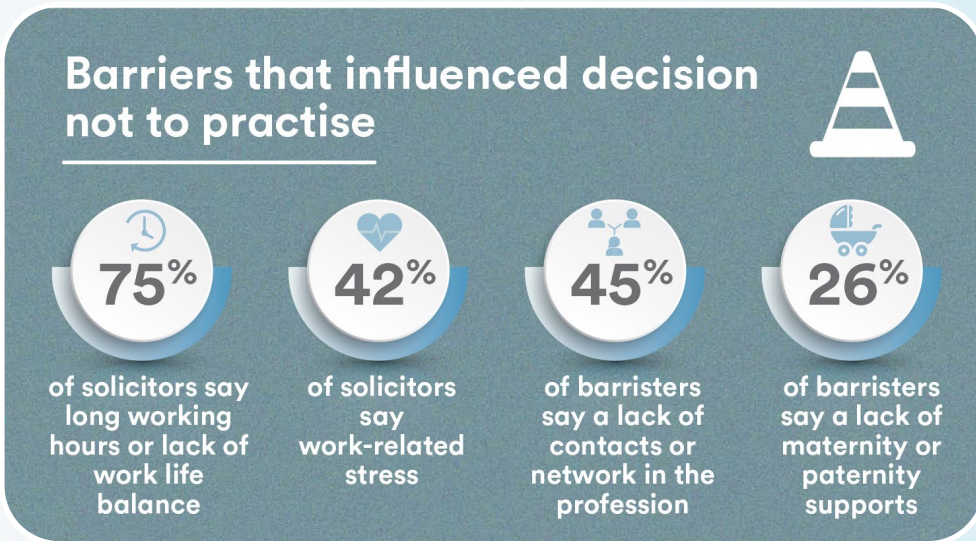
Fig. 3.47 Demographic profile of respondents

Base: All respondents N - 590



Non-Practising Solicitor and Barrister Survey

Key Insights



3.5 Non-practising solicitors and barristers survey findings

3.5.1 Overview of survey participants

Respondents were asked about their professional qualifications, their current work status and whether or not they ever practised as a solicitor or barrister.

All respondents had qualified in or after 2014 and were not practising at the time of the survey. Almost half (47%) had qualified within the last three years (since 2019).

Half of the respondents (50%) are former Law Library practising barristers, while 47% are former solicitors in a firm (35%) or the public or private sector (12%). A total of 4% were formerly barristers employed in-house in the public or private sector.

Four in ten of those who responded to the survey (41%) say they are currently employed in the private sector such as business, industry, banking or a not-for-profit. A further 40% say they are employed in the public sector such as a local authority, government body or semi-state body. The remainder identify as self-employed (3%) unemployed (3%) in full-time studying or full-time caring/parent (3% each) with other at 5% and 1% on a career break.

Just over half of respondents (57%) are not currently working in the legal services area, while 43% are.

Many more of the qualified barristers surveyed say they had never actually practised as a barrister (79%) compared to 17% of solicitors who say they never practised as a solicitor. This may in part indicate that the barrister qualification is viewed as a more general qualification. However, it may also be related to the barriers identified by barristers surveyed in relation to remuneration.

Of those barristers who had ever practiced, 50% did so for two years or less with 81% having practiced for five years or less.

3.5.2 Reasons for not practising

Respondents were asked to rank the main reason or reasons why they decided not to practise as a solicitor or barrister at this time.

Reasons for qualified solicitors deciding not to practise

Wanting a job with better work-life balance was the key reason for deciding not to practise given by 58% of former solicitors surveyed. This is followed by a desire to move into another professional area or sector (25%). No solicitors indicate that they had never intended to practice as a solicitor.

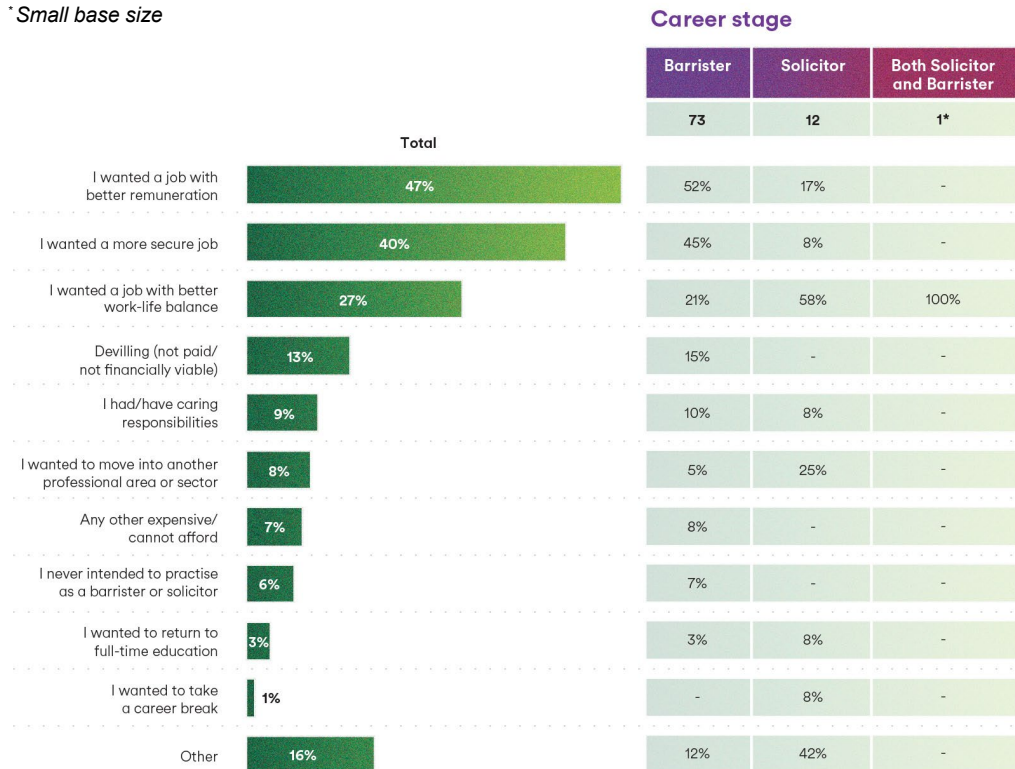
Reasons for qualified barristers deciding not to practise

Wanting a job with better remuneration was the key reason for deciding not to practise given by 52% of non-practising barristers who responded to the survey. Wanting a more secure job was the reason given by 45%. Unpaid devilling emerged spontaneously as a reason for a decision not to practise at this time, given by 13% of barrister respondents. This barrier was not prompted in the survey to all respondents, indicating that its significance may be higher than was captured in the survey. Only 7% of barristers indicate that they had never intended to practice as a barrister.

Fig. 3.48 Main reasons for deciding to not practise

Base: All respondents N - 86*

* Small base size



Q.7 Which of the following best describes the main reason or reasons why you decided not to practise as a barrister or solicitor at this time? Please rank up to five barriers in order of significance (i.e. where 1st is the most significant, then rank the 2nd one, 3rd etc. up to 5th if necessary).

3.5.3 Barriers influencing decisions to not practise

Respondents were further asked to rank the main barriers they faced or anticipated they would face influencing their decision not to practise as a solicitor or barrister at this time.

Key barriers influencing qualified solicitors

Long working hours/ lack of work-life balance is identified as a key barrier that influenced the majority of qualified solicitor respondents (75%) in deciding not to practise at this time. This is followed by followed by “work too stressful” (42%) and in third ranking is inability to earn a sufficient income (25%) and unable to balance work with caring commitments (25%).

These findings strongly align with the findings in the survey of trainee and junior solicitors and barristers, with barristers placing more emphasis on remuneration levels and solicitors emphasising work-life balance issues ahead of pay-related issues.

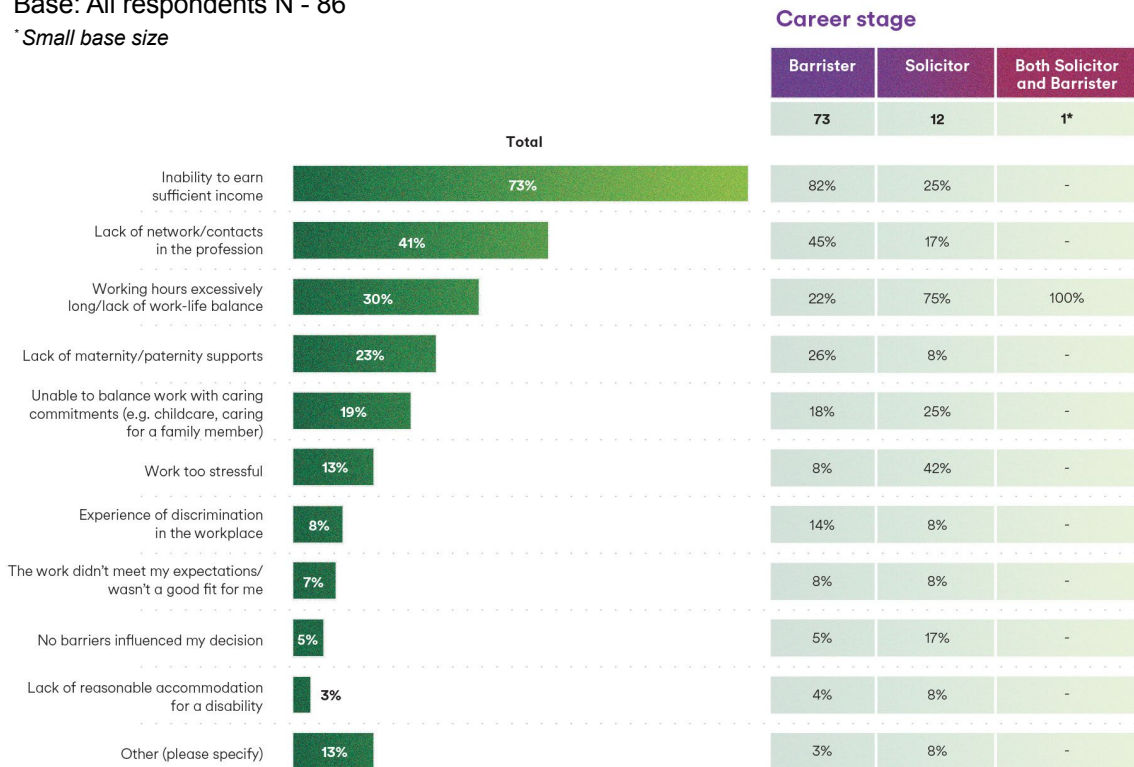
Key barriers influencing qualified barristers

Inability to earn a sufficient income is the most common barrier or anticipated barrier identified as influencing qualified barrister respondents’ decision not to practise at this time (82%), followed by a lack of network/ contacts in the profession (45%) and a lack of maternity/paternity supports (26%).

Fig. 3.49 Barriers influencing decision to not practise

Base: All respondents N - 86*

* Small base size



Q.6 Did any of the following barriers influence your decision to not practise as a solicitor or barrister at this time? Please rank the main barriers that you faced or anticipated you would face that influenced your decision not to practise as a solicitor or barrister in Ireland. Please rank up to five barriers in order of significance (i.e. where 1st is the most significant, then rank the 2nd one, 3rd etc. up to 5th if necessary).

3.5.4 Satisfaction with decision not to practise

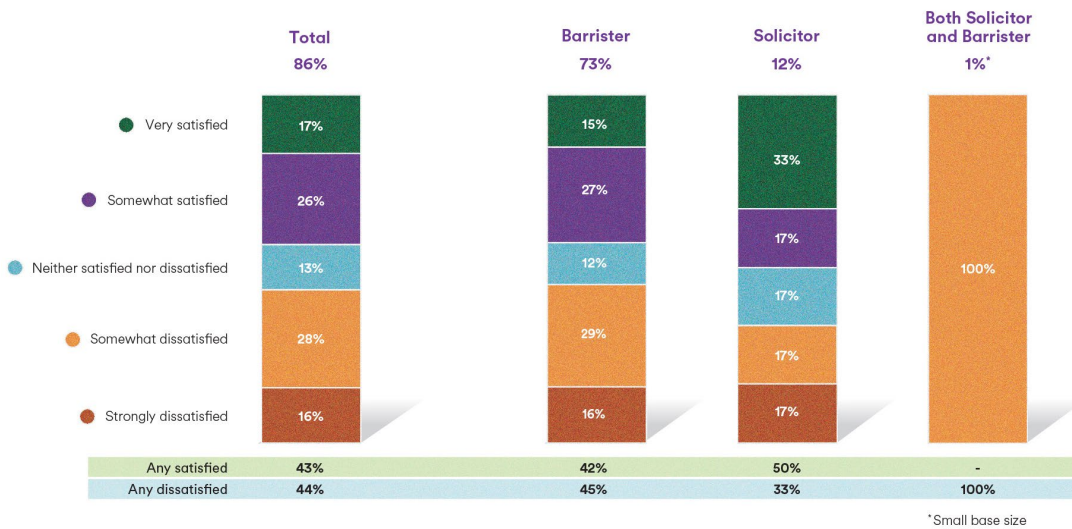
Both solicitors and barristers are divided in terms of their level of satisfaction with their decision not to practise at this time. One third (33%) of solicitors surveyed say they are dissatisfied with their decision not to practise, while one half (50%) say they are satisfied with the decision.

Slightly more barristers (45%) say they are dissatisfied with their decision not to practice than those who say they are satisfied with the decision (42%).

One third of solicitors (36%) and barristers (33%) further say that they intend to practise in their profession in future.

Fig. 3.50 Degree of satisfaction with decision to not practise

Base: All respondents N - 86



Q.10 How would you describe your satisfaction with your decision to not practise as a solicitor or barrister at this time?

Chapter 4

Views of Stakeholders

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Methodology for gathering stakeholder input

The 2015 Act requires the Authority under section 34(1) to undertake an “appropriate public consultation process” in preparing reports to the Minister on specified matters.

Several techniques were used to gather views and opinions from a range of stakeholders and stakeholder groups on the economic and other barriers for early career solicitors and barristers. These were in addition to the core method of engagement through surveys and in-depth interviews with those with the lived experience of these barriers, as set out in chapter 3 of this report.

Statutory consultation – call for written submissions

The LSRA’s statutory consultation process under section 34(1) of the Act launched on 11 May 2021 with the publication of a short discussion paper inviting written submissions (see Appendix D). The discussion paper contained a set of ten questions stimulated by the terms of reference of this report as set out in the Minister’s letter of request.

The discussion paper and consultation notice were published on the Authority’s website and distributed directly to an email distribution list of 295 organisations and individuals who have either expressed a prior interest in the work of the Authority or whose views were likely to be pertinent. The statutory consultation was also promoted on the LSRA’s social media platforms.

The consultation was open for a period of eight weeks, which falls within the suggested timescales contained in the governmental guidance.¹⁶⁸

The LSRA received a healthy response to its consultation with a total of 34 written submissions; 21 from organisations and 12 from individuals. The organisations which made submissions included: the professional bodies under the Act (the Honorable Society of King’s Inns, the Law Society of Ireland and the Bar of Ireland (Bar Council)); universities; State agencies; non-governmental organisations and a range of networks and groups within the legal profession.

Individual respondents included student and practising barristers and solicitors and law graduates. A list of those who made written submission is available at Appendix D. The submissions contained many useful insights and proposals and the Authority is grateful for the input from such a wide range of stakeholders.

Interviews with stakeholders

The LSRA’s research team undertook a series of 34 one-on-one telephone or zoom meetings with a range of interviewees between June and December 2021. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of the Minister’s request for engagement with specific stakeholders and/or in order to develop the research team’s understanding of barriers and diversity within the profession.

The interviewees included long standing members of both professions, trainee and junior practising solicitors, student and junior practising barristers, law graduates and representatives of law firms and State agencies which both directly employ solicitors and barristers and also procure the services of self-employed barristers. More individual barristers than solicitors were interviewed on the basis that the early career pathways of self-employed barristers tend to be quite varied, compared to solicitors who generally work in employed settings where career pathways are standardised.

¹⁶⁸ Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (2019) *Public Consultation Principles and Guidance*, January 2019.

The interviews with individual practitioners and others are not intended to be representative in any statistical sense. Their purpose was to ensure that the LSRA received input from a range of legal professionals in different sectors and with different roles and experiences. The experiences and opinions of these interviewees are documented in this section where relevant.

A full list of the types of organisations and individuals representing various bodies of opinion who were interviewed is available in Appendix E, along with the interview methodology used.

4.2 Economic and other barriers

This section summarises consultees' views on the economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers. It documents views on the key issues for consideration as set out in the Minister's request, namely:

- The remuneration of trainee barristers and solicitors;
- The other costs associated with joining each profession;
- The information available to prospective trainee barristers and solicitors on available masters and solicitors firms;
- The information available on the terms and conditions available, and how they are selected;
- Any other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors, including the ability to take maternity leave.

4.2.1 Professional training entry barriers

Views on costs and duration of professional training and impact on diversity

In contrast to other careers where a third level graduate can begin work directly after college, in the case of the barrister and solicitor professions, a significant further period of study and training is necessary. This comprises vocational or professional training which is typically followed by a period of supervised practical training.

As set out in chapter two of this report, the direct and indirect costs associated with joining the legal profession are significant. In addition to professional training course fees, direct costs include fees for entrance exams, preparatory courses, exam resits and appeals. Trainee solicitors and barrister students and pupils who live outside the capital may also have accommodation or travel costs, as both legal practitioner training institutes and many practical training opportunities are Dublin-based. Indirect costs include time out of the workforce while studying for and sitting examinations.

Many contributors to the consultation, both organisations and individuals, identified the overall costs of qualification as the primary, and for some insurmountable, barrier to candidates pursuing a career in the profession. Some consultees submitted that the upfront qualification costs are in themselves a powerful deterrent to even attempting to enter the profession, sending talented individuals instead into other career pathways or fields.

Some also highlighted the indirect costs of professional qualification as a barrier for those without independent means of support. These indirect costs include the unpaid time involved either in gaining entry to solicitor training whilst studying for the FE-1, in studying for the King's Inns Entrance Exam, or in undertaking unpaid barrister pupillage.

Barristers in general are more likely than solicitors to self-fund their professional training. Trainee solicitors by contrast must be sponsored during their training period and the training solicitor or firm generally covers some or all of the professional course fees.

A recurring theme in submissions in relation to economic barriers to the profession was the high cost of accommodation in Dublin where the professional training centres for solicitors and barristers are based and where the majority of demand for legal professionals exists. These costs could be a significant barrier for student barristers and trainee solicitors outside of Dublin, including undergraduates who are offered internships by Dublin law firms as the start of a pathway to a legal career, as these rely on students being able to support themselves in Dublin for a few months.

Views on impact of costs and duration of qualification process on diversity in the profession

“My experience of Blackhall [Place], while extremely positive, was not just that the solicitors’ profession was failing to offer opportunities to potential lawyers from disadvantaged backgrounds, but that most trainees came from very affluent families and the trainee profile was deeply unrepresentative of wider Irish society. In other words the average Irish household was not represented there either.”

Recently qualified solicitor

“It is our experience that many students who would otherwise wish to practice at the bar, and would have the talents and skills to do so, find the high barriers to entry and ongoing costs associated with the first number of years at the bar prohibitive and this reinforces existing social inequalities.”

Dublin City University School of Law and Government

“Lack of diversity, including socio-economic diversity in the backgrounds of lawyers is a serious issue for the legal profession, but much more importantly, it is a barrier to access to justice for wider society.”

Recently qualified solicitor

“It is more difficult for students from disadvantaged backgrounds or who have their own financial commitments or family dependents to reach that point. Furthermore, once they have passed their exams and obtained a traineeship, they then have another approx. 2/2.5 years as a trainee before they will be qualified and remunerated accordingly. A question to be posed is how a student from a lower socio-economic background can continue to self-fund during this period of time. In reality they will need to concurrently work significant hours. If in addition they have family support responsibilities such as children or other dependents, the reality of their ability to continue to pursue their law career must be in doubt.”

Chief State Solicitor’s Office

Solicitors

For solicitors, the cost of sitting the FE-1, as well as the time it takes to complete all eight papers, were cited as key barriers to entry in written submissions from non-governmental organisations, aspiring and practising solicitors, and public and private sector employers. It is not uncommon for graduates to either take a year out or to work part-time or full-time while studying for and sitting the FE-1.

It was also broadly held that the FE-1 system resulted in duplication of learning for law undergraduates and significant additional costs, including preparatory courses for the exams.

In its response to the consultation, the **Chief State Solicitor's Office** characterised the length of time before a prospective solicitor can expect to qualify and begin earning a reasonable salary as *"one of the most significant economic barriers to entry"*. It noted that it can take a number of sittings to pass all eight FE-1 exam papers, during which time earning capacity will be limited.

"This structure necessarily impacts on diversity as a prospective solicitor will need to have some form of financial support, whether from family or otherwise, in order to get to the point of eligibility for a solicitor traineeship," it said.

A joint submission from **certain members of the 2021 graduating class of the UCD Sutherland School of Law** provided a direct view from law graduates considering entering the solicitor profession.

The submission said the costly and time-consuming nature of the FE-1 *"hampers the ability of law students to become financially independent and acts as a barrier to entry to the solicitors' profession... In addition, the high fees which the Law Society charges for sitting the exams, obtaining past papers, and re-checking papers serve as an economic barrier to entry for less well-off law graduates."*

Arthur Cox in its submission stated that many Irish law graduates opt to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales where there is a quicker and more affordable route to qualification.¹⁶⁹

Preparatory courses for the FE-1 are an additional expense. **A law graduate** interviewed by the LSRA said they spent €350 per preparatory course, a total of €2,800, which the candidate funded by working part-time while living at home.

"There's a notion that if you have done law [as an undergraduate degree] you don't need to do a preparatory course, but these exams [the FE-1] are very different to college where you have feedback on an ongoing basis and know what to expect," the interviewee said.

The Law Society of Ireland, which administers the FE-1 system, submitted that the exam provides an assurance of prior knowledge of academic law and acts as a "leveller" for the subsequent period of study. It also pointed out that an entrance examination for the vocational stages of education is common practice across other jurisdictions, and there was a "compelling public interest" in maintaining the FE-1.

The Law Society also highlighted the accelerated access scheme introduced in 2020 whereby candidates can now take the FE-1 exam papers during their undergraduate degree, can sit and pass fewer exams in their first attempt, and have a longer timeframe to pass all eight subjects. These changes, the Society submitted, provide a more flexible approach to becoming a solicitor.

However, other consultees raised issues in relation to the impact of these FE-1 reforms in terms of entry barriers and diversity in the profession.

¹⁶⁹ Solicitor training in the UK is currently undergoing significant reform through the planned introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE). The total cost of the SQE assessments will be £3,980 (€4,642 approx.) See: <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/career-advice/becoming-a-solicitor/solicitors-qualifying-examination-sqe/requirements-and-cost>

Arthur Cox said it had concerns regarding social mobility issues with the accelerated FE-1 access system, as those students from wealthier families who could afford not to work while at college were more likely to sit the exams during their undergraduate studies. **UCD’s Sutherland School of Law** said students must generally still give up part-time jobs to sit the exams during their undergraduate years, or else forego taking part in overseas student exchange programmes.

By contrast, **certain UCD law graduates** welcomed the change to allow students to sit one FE-1 exam at a time as an improvement.

The **Competition and Consumer Protection Commission** noted that students often take test preparation courses to prepare for the FE-1s and may potentially spend up to €4,000 on fees. **A FE-1 candidate** interviewed by the LSRA said they felt pressure to pay for exam preparatory courses because *“everyone is doing them”*.

Several other respondents to the consultation also highlighted the additional impact of costs on specific groups including minorities, notwithstanding the availability of some scholarships and a range of support schemes. The view was put forward by the **Irish Refugee Council** and others that these were not sufficient to cover demand.

In addition, the **National Disability Authority** raised accessibility concerns about the complexity and length of the application process for the Law Society’s Access Scholarship programme, including what it called the inaccessible format of the application form.

While noting change underway to amend the methods of admission to the Law Society and King’s Inns, it said both methods remain *“onerous in terms of time, work and cost, and therefore may create barriers for a number of potential candidates, including those with disabilities.”*

The **DisAbility Legal Network**¹⁷⁰ in its submission said that many of the materials produced by the Law Society as part of training are not fully accessible and there can be a breakdown of communication between course co-ordinators and tutors leading to a breakdown in the accommodation provided to the trainee. It characterised this as *“a major barrier to learning and progression within the profession.”*

The Network also said that access to and within Blackhall Place and employer buildings is a clear barrier for solicitors and trainees who are wheelchair users. The Network said its committee members had raised a number of issues relating to the physical environment including wheelchair accessible bathrooms, automatic doors and ramps for access.

Foreign qualified lawyers and overseas students

The particular entry barriers that exist for experienced foreign qualified lawyers seeking to transfer their qualification to be admitted to the solicitor profession in Ireland were highlighted by the **Irish Refugee Council**.

“Unfortunately, the requirement that the majority of foreign-qualified lawyers undergo the standard training process acts as a major deterrent to such individuals. The time and cost means that many refugees and migrants who would otherwise seek to re-enter the legal professions in Ireland are prevented from doing so,” it said.

The **Law Society** in its submission highlighted the difficulty that non-EEA students, who in many instances may have completed third level education in Ireland, have in securing a study visa to facilitate them undertaking PPC and training contracts. The Law Society said it has been in correspondence with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service since 2018 seeking that a formal visa scheme be published for trainee solicitors similar to the scheme currently available for trainee accountants. *“Whilst INIS has been helpful to individual visa applicants, the lack of a published scheme or indeed a response to the Society’s correspondence is unfortunate, particularly where the Society wishes to assist students of all nationalities to pursue the Irish Solicitor qualification,”* it said.

¹⁷⁰ At the time of the submission, this network did not have a formal name.

Barristers

Focusing on barristers, the **Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)** pointed out that the fees to study the BL degree at the King's Inns are nearly twice the maximum grant than can be offered by the State's Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant.¹⁷¹

“For students who may have obtained their law degree via the SUSI grant, the prospect of having to pay such a substantial fee to study at the King's Inns after graduating is undoubtedly a deterring factor which may influence their decision as to whether to work and save with the hopes of being able to take the Bar at some point in the future, or simply taking another route in law, such as working as a solicitor,” the ICCL said.

It was recognised by several respondents that the BL degree may be taken on a two-year part-time basis, which at least means students can continue to work full-time while taking the course. It was also recognised that the advent of remote classes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic improved access to courses by candidates who cannot afford to live in or travel to Dublin.

In its response to the consultation, **Maynooth University Department of Law** said the socio-economic barriers for its students in accessing careers at the Irish Bar were more significant than the challenges for professional qualification and career success as solicitors. It cited its own survey of law undergraduates which showed *“extremely high levels of pessimism”* about the practical challenges of achieving qualification and success as a barrister including the costs of the BL degree course and the unpaid nature of pupillage.

The King's Inns pointed out in its consultation response that the costs of its BL degree course have remained unchanged since 2009, and compared very favourably with training leading to a professional qualification. It also pointed out that in contrast with other jurisdictions: *“There is no cap on the number of places available on the degree course, and indeed the numbers undertaking the course has fluctuated considerably over the years in line with the level of demand and interest in qualifying as a barrister. It is submitted that the flexibility of King's Inns in this regard plays an important role in ensuring that entry to the profession is equitable and, subject to certain necessary requirements, open to all.”*

The King's Inns also highlighted the diversity impact that flows from the fact that graduates from its own Diploma in Legal Studies are eligible to sit the Entrance Exam for the BL degree course. It noted that BL students who hold Diplomas are generally older than their counterparts holding other approved qualifications, *“indicating that the Diploma course provides an avenue for more mature students and those who may not previously have had the opportunity to study at third level to pursue legal studies and enter the profession.”*

In its response to the consultation, the **Bar of Ireland** provided figures to indicate there are 45 barristers per 100,000 population in Ireland, a higher concentration than several other jurisdictions where there is an independent referral bar.¹⁷²

The Bar of Ireland stated that it is highly probable that the high concentration of barristers *“arises from the fact that there are no, or very low barriers to entry to the profession of barrister. Unlike other jurisdictions where there is often a limit on the number of places for pupillage, Ireland has no such limit in place meaning that any newly qualified barrister who wishes to undertake a year of pupillage and become a member of the Law Library may do so with relative ease.”*

“While the goal of removing barriers to entry to the profession may have been achieved, as advocated by the Competition Authority in 2006, the consequence of the absence of a limit on numbers entering the profession means that there are greater challenges for early career barristers in building and maintaining a practice as there is an excessive supply of barristers in most areas of practice, with the exception of criminal law.”

Several respondents were critical of the fact that under the Bar of Ireland's rules, only barristers who are primarily based in Dublin can act as masters.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ There are two possible contributions to fees that can be obtained by students applying to SUSI. A contribution of €3,500 or a grant for fees of up to a maximum of €6,270. The BL degree costs €12,000.

¹⁷² The comparator countries include New Zealand with 25 barristers per 100,000 population, Australia with 24, England and Wales with 23 and Scotland with eight.

¹⁷³ Bar of Ireland/The Law Library (2021) *Code of Conduct of the Bar of Ireland*, Rule 2.9.

Views of barrister professional training costs as an economic barrier

“The cost of qualifying is prohibitively expensive for young people and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In particular, the €12,000 fee to attend the King’s Inns is often an insurmountable obstacle for many. I am aware of several individuals with great potential who have been steered away from a career as a barrister by this initial financial burden. In my own case I was fortunate enough to be in a position to take out a loan to attend the course, however this is not the reality for every potential candidate.”

Practising barrister

“For pupils who get through their pupillage years, frequently the only viable career option is to pursue work in legal areas involving high fees. Less profitable legal areas are not viable career options, which potentially lessens the quality of advocacy and advice offered in these sectors.”

Practising barrister

“My experience of the King’s Inns is that too many students are admitted to the course, for whom there is no realistic chance of success, given the over-saturation in the Law Library of newly qualified barristers.”

BL student

4.2.2 Practical training stage barriers

Views on securing practical training and role of social connections

Respondents to the statutory consultation highlighted a range of barriers facing aspiring solicitors and barristers at the practical stage training. The view of many was that both branches of the profession face challenges in opening access to individuals from more diverse backgrounds because of the current mechanisms for obtaining practical training.

The requirements for aspiring solicitors to obtain a training contract in order to enter professional training and for qualified barristers to secure a master to undertake pupillage as a member of the Law Library were identified as entry barriers, particularly for those without prior connections in the sector.

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, in its submission pointed out that the issue of prior connections generally aligns closely with the socio-economic background of aspiring legal professionals, with research showing that there is a tendency of children to follow in their parents' occupational footsteps in what is referred to as "*micro-class reproduction*".¹⁷⁴

FLAC cited a UK study which indicated that children of lawyers are 17 times more likely to enter the legal profession than the average person.¹⁷⁵ It said: "*As a result, the legal industry continues to exclude (whether consciously or sub-consciously) those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who do not have parents in the profession or pre-existing connections/contacts.*"

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission pointed to the importance of social connections in accessing the profession and in particular internship opportunities in the legal sector, which are often a way to obtain solicitor trainee positions, while individuals wishing to train as barristers may also lack the information necessary to access the appropriate apprenticeship.

DCU School of Law and Government contrasted the provision of "*experiential education*" opportunities for solicitors, such as structured summer internships and work placement programmes, with the absence of any similar such opportunities for early career barristers, such as internships or mini-pupillages.

Views on remuneration of trainee solicitors and pupil barristers

Remuneration arrangements during the practical training stage were raised by many respondents to the consultation as posing an important early career barrier for barristers and, to a lesser extent, for solicitors. The unpaid nature of the practical stage of barrister training (pupillage or devilling for those practising as members of the Law Library) generated particularly strong views from academics, non-governmental organisations and student and junior barristers who responded to the statutory consultation or were interviewed by the LSRA.

¹⁷⁴ Friedman, S. and D. Laurison (2019) *The Class Ceiling: Why It Pays to Be Privileged*.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Barristers – unpaid pupillage

The Bar of Ireland, which represents members of the Law Library, emphasised in its submission the nature of the relationship between master and pupil as not being defined as employer/employee. It said:

“It is not an employer/employee relationship and consequently, the question of remuneration, insofar as it is meant as a salary or a wage, does not arise. Furthermore, the structure of the independent referral bar that is founded upon a set of values and ethics, where each barrister is a self-employed professional, does not lend itself to an employer/employee relationship.”

The Bar of Ireland also pointed out that, since October 2021, newly qualified barristers have their first-year Law Library fees and Professional Indemnity Insurance paid by the masters on behalf of their pupils. It said that prior to 2021, a “significant number” of masters made arrangements to pay the membership subscriptions of their pupil. The changed arrangements “should have the positive effect of improving access to the profession and support for a new practitioner in the commencement of their professional career.”

However, other respondents, while welcoming the arrangements, maintained that significant financial barriers still exist for newly qualified barristers joining the Law Library.

A junior barrister said in a written submission that it was unacceptable to require devils from outside of Dublin to pay rents in a city with one of the highest rent rates in Europe, or commute for hours each day.

“This makes devilling in Ireland much less attractive than pupillage in the UK, where pupils are provided with financial supports, in addition to other fundamental supports such as maternity leave and sick pay.”

Another junior barrister in a submission said the unremunerated nature of the devilling period explained why many people begin training as barristers later than is the case in other professions, or as a second career.

A barrister student contrasted the economic situation of devils with that of trainee solicitors, actuaries, and accountants and graduates joining financial institutions or the civil service, all of whom have incomes.

Several individual respondents cited the importance of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment to devils during the Covid-19 pandemic period, with one respondent saying he was aware of a number of devils who would have left the bar if it were not for the state payment.

A practising barrister interviewed by the LSRA commented on the “rigidity” of the pupillage system, with pupillages beginning at the start of the new legal term each October, which he characterised as “a requirement to start your career on the first Monday in October.”

Views on unpaid barrister pupillage as a barrier

“Requiring barristers to spend at least a year outside of the job market without getting paid, after two expensive years qualifying, can consist of a heavy financial burden for many. For many, including certain socio-economic groups, this constitutes a very real barrier to entry.”

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, CCPC

“It should be noted that in civil law it is the norm for trainee barristers to “devil” or apprentice for two years instead of one. There is no requirement for a supervisor to pay the fees of second year trainee barristers.”

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties, ICCL

“The Irish Bar....appears to be organised primarily – though not exclusively – around the principle that only those who are best-resourced to survive are most likely to establish a sustainable career.”

Maynooth University Department of Law

“I am not aware of any other apprenticeship where a lack of remuneration for work is accepted – it is truly incomparable to the high wages paid to trainee solicitors in large commercial firms. The current system means that Ireland compares unfavourably with the chambers system in England and Wales.”

BL student

“The issue of supporting oneself while devilling is nebulous, with little information given as to what acceptable arrangements are in place for remuneration while devilling. It is evident that a devil is to expect to receive little if any financial benefit during this period. This is no doubt a great barrier to entry to the profession. An issue also arises as barristers who find themselves requiring to undertake part-time employment, on top of the work of a barrister, find themselves at a significant disadvantage to those who have the financial means to dedicate their full attention to establishing their practice.”

BL student

Solicitors – variations in payment of trainees

Unlike barrister pupils, trainee solicitors are generally paid by their training sponsor during their in-office training period. Several respondents highlighted the fact that the payment for trainees can vary significantly across the sector, depending on the training firm or organisation.

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission noted that the largest law firms sponsor trainee solicitors to qualify, paying for their fees while also providing them with a small salary. However, for prospective trainee solicitors who do not obtain sponsorship by a law firm, “fees can be expensive and can prove to be a barrier to entry.”

DCU’s School of Law and Government, which said the majority of its students pursue a career as a solicitor, said that at trainee entry level, financial barriers are evident in particular legal practices and areas of law. *“For example, many criminal law practices and in general, smaller law practices will offer less competitive salary packages. This is financially prohibitive for many who may not be able to afford to supplement a lower salary or pay the required fees”* it said.

The Irish Refugee Council acknowledged that trainee solicitors are in a somewhat more advantageous position than pupil barristers, in that they are paid the national minimum wage at least. However, the Council added that: *“The minimum wage does not provide an adequate income to enable trainees to afford an acceptable standard of living without supplementing their traineeship with an alternative, part-time income.”*

The Chief State Solicitor’s Office in its submission said it did not have a comment on the remuneration of solicitor trainees during in-office training. It added: *“However, the ability for firms to avoid remunerating trainees during their PPC1 and PPC2 courses is likely an economic challenge for some prospective solicitors. We understand that the Law Society now offers a ‘hybrid’ arrangement whereby the academic and practical parts of the traineeship can be combined. This may improve equity of access as it would ensure that trainees were continued to be paid and also that firms could afford to do as they would be getting value for their remuneration.”*

Views on information available on practical training opportunities

Barristers

The provision of information for barristers to identify and secure a master for their supervised pupillage year at the Law Library, as outlined in chapter 2 of this report, generated strong views from some respondents, particularly student and practising barristers.

Several individual respondents said there was insufficient information available to prospective pupils about prospective masters. Individual respondents also saw the need for a more hands on role for both the Bar of Ireland and the King’s Inns in assisting prospective barristers to secure suitable masters.

In its consultation response, **the Bar of Ireland** said prospective pupils are responsible for making contact with any individual on the Register of Masters on its website to establish their availability and compatibility. It said:

“A master is not obliged to take a pupil just because he/she has been asked to do so, though many masters adopt this practice. It is recommended that a master should meet with the prospective pupil before entering the arrangement and ensure that there is a mutual understanding of what the relationship would involve, the types of practical learning opportunities which would be available, and whether it would be of mutual benefit. Clarifying expectations at the outset assists in the smooth operation of the relationship for the year.”

The Bar of Ireland further pointed out that there is no cap on the number of pupils, with an average of 80 new barristers entering membership of the Law Library at the start of the legal year in October and a sufficient supply of masters to meet pupillage needs.

In its consultation response, **the King's Inns** stated that while it plays no formal role in assisting students to secure pupillages, informal supports are available and pupillage is also discussed in practice management sessions on the BL degree course.

The King's Inns said it was not aware of any members of the Barrister-at-Law degree graduating class of 2020 who were unable to secure pupillage.

"In this jurisdiction, it therefore appears that any person who wishes to enter private practice as a member of the Law Library has the opportunity of doing so and can arrange a master with whom to undertake pupillage. There is no ultra-competitive chambers system, in contrast to the system in England and Wales, where non-traditional entrants and minorities are under-represented in obtaining pupillages and tenancies. In England and Wales, where rights of audience are limited, many students, having gone to both the effort and financial expense of obtaining professional qualification as a barrister, find themselves unable to obtain the pupillage that is required to enable them to complete the process to fully enter practice."

The King's Inns also said it was worth noting that while its Barrister-at-Law degree course is primarily focused on preparing students for a career at the independent referral Bar, many students undertake the course with other career goals in mind.

No other respondents to the consultation raised shortages of masters as a current issue or barrier. However, **one recently qualified barrister** from a minority background drew on personal experience of being unable to secure a master with whom to undertake pupillage.

This barrister stated that: *"I am now in limbo as I have found the door securely shut for me to practise as barrister due to the requirement of pupillage which is not forthcoming.....It is not hard to imagine how I feel after going through the academic and professional stage of training as a legal practitioner only to find a dead end due to lack of finding a Master."*

In addition, some respondents raised concerns that certain barristers whose names are on the Register of Masters are consistently advance booked and, accordingly, consistently marked as unavailable.

Views on information available on finding a master

“Pre-Booking’ of Masters some years in advance often is related to the professional reputation of the practitioner, his/her type of practice and the support they may offer a devil. For someone without the legal contacts or information about the profession, the process of finding a master can seem like an attempt to acquire “insider information” in circumstances where their contacts for finding this information is limited. This limitation of information can lead to a dissatisfactory devilling.”

Griffith College

“The onus is placed on prospective barristers to seek out masters through personal contacts, this imparts a significant advantage on those who come into the profession with legacy contacts. If the King’s Inns and the Bar of Ireland took a more active role in this process, providing further information and organising events and consultations, it would certainly be of benefit to those who need to build these contacts themselves, and would result in increased diversity.”

BL student

“Very little assistance is provided either by the King’s Inns or by the Bar Council in respect of finding a Master, other than being directed to the publicly available list of Masters. In my experience, this system is opaque and Masters are typically obtained through personal or family connections, as opposed to a transparent or merit-based system.”

BL student

“There is very little information available to prospective devils about masters. Those with family connections have an obvious advantage. They are expected to ask around and do their best to work out who would be a good fit for them. A website, possibly password-protected, specifically for matching masters and pupils, should be established, with detailed information about the work the master does and what the pupil should expect to do while working with them.”

Practising barrister

Solicitors

In its consultation response, the Law Society of Ireland outlined the information resources it provides to assist trainees in finding a training contract with a training solicitor, as documented in chapter 2 of this report. No other consultees shared views in their written submissions on the extent or quality of the information available to prospective trainee solicitors on available solicitors firms.

The LSRA interviewed a number of law graduates about their sources of information on a career as a solicitor and their traineeship recruitment experiences, which are documented in the box below.

Views on information available on finding solicitor training contracts

One aspiring solicitor said the Law Society's legal vacancies web page and the jobs website Indeed.com were the two primary sources of information on training opportunities with small and medium sized firms. According to this respondent, information on salaries and terms and conditions offered was often a "complete black hole".

This respondent, who had already passed the FE-1 entrance exam, was offered a training contract with a small firm on a minimum wage salary with the potential for modest incremental increases.

The interviewee said: *"When the firm offered me the minimum wage I rang friends who told me I'd be mad to take that. They wanted me to start as soon as possible and to do the PPC Hybrid course, which would have meant working for a minimum wage or just above for two to three years. I couldn't afford to do that."*

Another law graduate who was studying for the FE-1 and had been offered a training contract with a large firm said much of the information in college about becoming a solicitor was from large firms and word of mouth among the student body and student law societies.

"I went to the legal 500 website and looked for the top ten firms and I went to their websites and applied for summer internships. For me the Law Society website never came into it. It was through TCD Law Society social media and word of mouth...I started in third year applying for big firms. I made 30 applications to 30 different firms and I did a summer internship with one at the end of third year, and was rejected for a training contract there," said this interviewee.

This law graduate said the "prevailing mindset" was to do a training contract in a corporate law firm. *"It never crossed my mind that you might be able to qualify outside of a corporate firm."*

Another law graduate said of training opportunities: *"I had a misconception that you had to have a summer internship to get a training contract [with a large firm] because everyone in college seemed to do summer internships and get training contracts off the back of those. I was happily surprised to get a training contract offer without having done a summer internship."*

4.2.3 Early career challenges

Long working hours, lack of workplace flexibility, poor work-life balance and low remuneration were the main challenges cited by a range of respondents as impacting on legal professionals in building and maintaining their early careers.

That these challenges impact particularly on individuals with different needs and responsibilities was raised by many respondents including the Bar of Ireland, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, the DisAbility Legal Network, the Irish Refugee Council, the Chief State Solicitor's Office and individual respondents. There were no issues raised in written submissions in relation to barriers facing early career barristers who are in employed positions.

Dublin City University School of Law and Government submitted that gender disparities are evident in both professions and are reflected by a much higher proportion of male practitioners at senior counsel and partner levels rather than females. It said: *“Work culture, environment and structure of legal practices tend to favour, to a certain degree, the progression of a higher proportion of male solicitors and barristers to senior positions, and in some circumstances, can inhibit progression for female solicitors and barristers.”*

Barristers

The critical challenges that face junior self-employed barristers in building their practices and earning sufficient income in the early career years were raised by many respondents, both individuals and organisations.

In addition to irregular income, early career barristers in self-employment do not have the benefit of paid holidays, sick pay, health care or maternity or paternity leave, and may have to look for additional employment to sustain their legal career.

The Bar of Ireland in its written submission estimated that it can take up to 10 years of practice to earn a living as a barrister. It described this as an impediment, *“in particular for those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who do not have access to financial supports to sustain a career at the Bar for such an extended period.”*

It highlighted concerns about late or non-payment of fees and said that of particular concern is the increasing evidence of delayed or even non-payment of fees to barristers from agencies of the State. **The Bar of Ireland** was also very critical of the funding model, specifically the convention that barristers are not paid until the end of a case, a feature which it said is “inherited from a bygone age” and has an adverse impact on barristers in years 1 to 7 and also on diversity within the profession.

The Irish Refugee Council noted that the challenges for self-employed barristers of earning an income through fees rather than by a regular salary can act as a major disincentive for prospective barristers, in particular refugees and migrants, many of whom come from modest backgrounds and who would require a regular and steady income to support themselves during this period.

Griffith College raised the issue of the cab-rank rule for barristers at the independent referral bar which it said *“means that barristers can be unaware of what work will be presenting and the time commitment and fees related to same. As a result, barristers in the early years of practice secure additional employment to ensure a regular income, increasing their working hours significantly.”*

The **Irish Council for Civil Liberties** said in addition to these financial barriers, the cost of annual subscription fees to the Law Library which gradually increase each year, is a *“real and substantial barrier to survival for practitioners who are not earning money in their early years.”*

For its part, **the Bar of Ireland** said the tiered nature of its Law Library membership subscription rates mean that the most junior within the profession pay the least amount for the services available for all members of the Law Library.

However, **a barrister** respondent who is a member of the Law Library was critical of the level of representation of young practitioners on the Bar Council, the ruling body of the Bar of Ireland. This barrister said:

“The young bar, years 1-7 makes up a significant proportion of barristers yet there are no specifically allocated seats on the Bar Council for this group, instead the elections are open to all junior counsel. In contrast, senior counsel make up a much less overall percentage of barristers but are allocated half the seats on the Council. There is obviously a significant merit to this and their experience is invaluable but if a small number of seats were specifically for the young bar this would lead to better representation.”

Several respondents also pointed out that other costs facing court going junior barristers include the wig and gown.

Concerns about the impact of the inability of junior barristers to make a living in the early career years on the wider legal services sector and the administration of justice. These include barristers leaving the self employed profession to take up salaried positions, including becoming Prosecutors at the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions or Advisory Counsel at the Office of the Attorney General. This pattern was highlighted by **one individual barrister** respondent as *“potentially creating an imbalance in access to justice in Ireland, with the State having ready access to talented barristers in need of a structured career path and guaranteed salary.”*

The particular challenges facing junior barristers in criminal practice in earning sufficient income was raised by respondents and interviewees, with some cautioning that the impact was to drive new practitioners away from careers in criminal practice.

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties described the fees for those practising in criminal law as “inordinately low” at District Court level where younger barristers deal with remands and, less frequently, with hearings. It said:

“A remand is remunerated at circa €25 and a hearing is remunerated at circa €70 (both legal aid rates as private clients are not common for young practitioners or for most working in criminal law). Further, given the unpredictability of the lists in the District Court, matters which may be listed for hearing will frequently be adjourned. The practical reality is that barristers may expend hours of their time preparing for a hearing, will travel to the relevant Court, hold a consultation with their client, and then for reasons out of their control the matter will be adjourned and the barrister, for this substantial level of work, will receive €25. The incredibly low fees make a practice in the criminal bar almost unsustainable for the first number of years without some other form of income.”

The Bar of Ireland was critical of reductions in the criminal fee rates paid by the State to defence and prosecution barristers during the financial crisis of 2008 to 2011 as part of a range of Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI).

The Bar of Ireland said a skilled and experienced criminal prosecution bar can only emerge after many years of practice in the junior ranks of criminal defence law. *“It is imperative that newly qualified talented barristers are encouraged to practice in the area of criminal law. One significant form of such encouragement is to be fairly and reasonably rewarded for their services.”*

It said two thirds of barristers who commence a career in criminal law leave after six years in practice and that this is as a direct consequence of the cuts applied during the FEMPI years. It said: *“The publicly available information on fees paid to barristers in criminal matters demonstrates that 75% of junior barristers are paid less than the average full-time salary in Ireland of €49,000 per annum as recorded by the CSO in June 2020.”*

The Bar of Ireland said that over the past five years, it had tried to engage with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, in relation to State fees for criminal barristers. In June 2021, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform said his department had sought evidence to support any claims that the fee reductions were linked to significant recruitment and retention issues, thereby potentially adversely impacting the administration of justice. Minister Michael McGrath said: *“While my Department has not yet been provided with evidential data to support such claims, it remains available to review any further information that may be provided the department would continue to keep the issue under review.”*¹⁷⁶

Junior criminal barristers – split fees and problems with payment

Several junior barristers cited low legal aid earnings for criminal defence work at the District Court, where many barristers gain early professional experience. They also detailed problems with being paid by some instructing firms of solicitors.

District Court legal fees are paid by the Department of Justice under the State-funded Criminal Legal Aid Scheme.¹⁷⁷ Under the scheme, where instructing solicitors are paid directly by the State, under an ad hoc system, they agree to claim the fees and split them in half with the barrister.

One junior barrister interviewed by the LSRA said: *“If you do District Court defence work you can split the fee with solicitors and some people who have connections with solicitors can get that work. The solicitor applies for the payment. It is an informal arrangement and the most I did in one day was 35 appearances at €25.20 each.”*

The split-fee arrangements appear to be largely Dublin-based, as in District Courts outside the capital solicitors generally appear on behalf of clients directly under the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme.

One recently qualified barrister interviewed by the LSRA quit practising in 2021 after three years in exclusively criminal legal aid-funded practice at the District Court in county Dublin, with estimated earnings for their final year of €10,000. This barrister said: *“What I found just incredible is that some solicitors just do not pay. This is not the reason I am leaving the Bar, but I got fed up with working for nothing. Barristers take a lot of flak from solicitors, clients, families, gardaí, social workers and judges. I get calls at 10 at night ...solicitors email and ring you continually but no one pays me.”* This barrister also said that junior barristers in the Law Library tend to be deterred from complaining about non-payment by some solicitors for criminal defence work. *“The solicitors will say ‘Oh don’t worry about little fees I will get you a Book of Evidence,’ so people say nothing,”* said this barrister.

A Book of Evidence is required for trials for more serious criminal offences which are usually held in the Circuit Court, where barristers are paid directly when assigned as counsel by the court and fee rates are higher. Several individual barriers also highlighted concerns about the fact that State financial emergency fee reductions for criminal barristers have not been restored, and the impact of this on individuals’ livelihoods as well as socio-economic diversity within the profession. In a written submission a junior barrister who works primarily in criminal practice described the pay rates for District Court defence work *“as something of a running joke.”*

“Where there is no incentive for young barristers to commence a career practising in criminal law, the system will eventually grind to a halt. In my own year I believe there were only six criminal devils and should this continue I am of the opinion that the administration of criminal justice will suffer.”

¹⁷⁶ See Oireachtas debate: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-06-17/237/>

¹⁷⁷ Department of Justice and Equality Courts Policy Division (2019) *Procedures Governing the Payment of Criminal Legal Aid Fees*.

Solicitors

Among the challenges for early career solicitors highlighted by respondents was the time consuming and demanding nature of their work as well as less competitive salaries in smaller practices including criminal law practices.

The Chief State Solicitor's Office said that working hours and conditions *"may impact on diversity as anyone with significant commitments outside the office may find it difficult to combine the two."*

A culture of long working hours in the sector was also raised by the **DisAbility Legal Network** which stated that law firms have been slow to adopt remote or flexible working policies.

"This has been a barrier for some disabled people, where remote or flexible working is a reasonable accommodation that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic was not encouraged. Where flexible or remote working is not widely accepted, disabled people that work remotely or flexibly (as part of an adjustment) can have difficulty getting quality work and it may impact their promotion prospects and sense of self-worth. Remote working has obviously been widely adopted by the profession during the pandemic. This has been a breakthrough for many with disabilities."

Griffith College submitted that while a career within law may be viewed relatively as well-paid and lucrative, there is variation in solicitors salaries, depending on factors including the area of law practised, the number of years post qualification experience and the size and location of the law firm. It said: *"This variance in salary may result in decisions regarding career progression being based on monetary decisions alone, as opposed to a preferred area of law or location."*

4.2.4 Maternity and adoptive leave and other barriers

Views on maternity/adoptive leave as a barrier

There was a strong view among respondents to the statutory consultation that taking maternity leave can have a negative impact on career progression for both solicitors and barristers and that this barrier feeds into the gender pay gap in the profession. It was also recognised that barristers and solicitors who are self-employed often do not have the same range of supports and benefits as those who are employed, with several respondents acknowledged that many such challenges are not unique to the legal professions.

The **Competition and Consumer Protection Commission**, citing OECD research, said individuals from certain demographic groups can fail to enter a market or maintain their position in a market if they face legal or informal barriers to entry. This has negative consequences for equality, and potentially for market competition.

“One of these barriers arises from the ‘opportunity cost’, whereby a parent chooses not to participate in a certain market because of a lack of complementary infrastructure services, such as childcare services, and because not being in that market may provide them with more flexible working conditions,” it added.

Barristers

As outlined in chapter two, under the rules of membership of the Bar of Ireland, Law Library members may take unpaid parental leave (defined as maternity, adoptive and paternity leave) of up to 12 months in total. In its submission to the consultation, **the Bar of Ireland** said barristers must hand over their briefs when they go on maternity leave and build up their practice again each time they return from maternity leave.

It said: *“They are deprived not only of the earnings they would otherwise have accrued during maternity leave but of all future earnings associated with the briefs they have handed over. This in turn adversely affects their prospects of promotion since they lose those briefs as a basis upon which to apply for silk.”*

Law Library members are entitled to reduced membership subscriptions during parental leave and, since 2019, if they return to work during the 12 month parental leave period.

The Bar of Ireland said it hoped its policy *“will send out a positive message to the female membership having a baby and that support structures are in place to afford women greater flexibility in balancing family life with a practice at the Bar.”*

However, not all respondents were satisfied with the supports provided in this area. **A junior counsel** interviewed by the LSRA said:

“So many women leave the Bar before getting to the point of having kids....they leave the Bar in order to get paid maternity leave. They go to the Attorney General’s Office, the Central Bank, semi-State and State bodies where they get maternity leave.

“The Bar Council has ignored the way in which women are leaving the Bar at a certain point because they can’t stay and have children. I delayed having children, and that is so true of many people. Having kids in the first five years at the Bar will massively impact your career. It’s a job that is very much based around presenteeism.”

Several women barristers interviewed said that a significant issue for barristers taking maternity leave was related to the fee structures for barristers, with the largest component of the fee being the “brief fee”. It was also noted that in most years there are more women beginning devilling and the numbers of women drop off over the early career years and up to senior counsel level where there are many more men barristers than women.

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, submitted that the Bar of Ireland’s sole-trader rule *“disproportionally impacts female barristers, who in the absence of paid maternity leave, face the risk of losing a practice they have spent years building if they do not return to practice just mere weeks after giving birth.”*

Solicitors

The Chief State Solicitor’s Office said that for a solicitor taking a full maternity leave of approximately 11 months is time out of the office which naturally can impact on career progression. *“It is difficult to see how that can be rectified until perhaps such time as maternity leave becomes a shared parental leave which men are equally entitled to take. This would of course be a matter for policy at governmental level,”* it said.

4.2.5 Disability

The barriers faced by persons with disabilities in entering and progressing within the legal profession were raised by a number of respondents, and in particular detail by the National Disability Authority and two separate lawyers’ networks, the Disability Rights Lawyers Network and the DisAbility Legal Network.

Some barriers have been addressed in other parts of this section. The next section summarises the views of respondents in relation to a range of additional barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers with disabilities.

The DisAbility Legal Network identified the two key barriers for solicitors and trainees as being a lack of awareness and a lack of practical support. The lack of awareness includes general lack of awareness about different disabilities and a lack of appreciation by colleagues and managers of needs and accommodations required by a disabled person. The lack of practical support comprised having a designated person to liaise with on reasonable accommodation needs in both the workplace and the Law Society’s Law School for trainees.

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, said the main disability-related barriers facing young legal professionals are: a) discrimination and bias; b) lack of action; and c) lack of mentors, connections and representation.

Reasonable accommodation in practice

The DisAbility Legal Network submitted that “reasonable accommodation” is a legal requirement under Irish equality legislation. It said in practical terms a disabled trainee or solicitor may explain at the outset what they need to work effectively but when they move roles or work with new colleagues or managers, they have to each time explain their accommodation needs. The network submitted that *“this a barrier to a person carrying out their job effectively and getting good quality work.”*

Chapter 5

Changes Sought by Stakeholders

5.1 Introduction

Many of the respondents who made submissions to the Authority's consultation exercise made recommendations for changes to mitigate or remove barriers and challenges facing early career solicitors and barristers and to increase diversity and inclusion in the profession. These were in addition to the proposed solutions put forward by respondents to the surveys which are documented in section 3.

The recommendations received from respondents fell into the following broad categories of changes to:

- Widen access routes to qualification from second and third level, support underrepresented groups and increase diversity.
- Address entry barriers for solicitor trainees and barrister pupils.
- Improve working conditions for early career solicitors and barristers.

5.2 Recommended changes to widen access routes and increase diversity

Many respondents argued for measures to widen access to the profession, particularly from underrepresented groups including ethnic minorities, immigrants, students with disabilities and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A range of different recommendations were made for changes at the early stage of the pathway towards becoming a solicitor or barrister.

(a) Recommendations on access to education – second and third level students

Targeted supports for second level students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to continue on to third level education to study law were recommended by the **Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC**, and the **Chief State Solicitor's Office, CSSO**. In addition, the **CSSO** recommended a range of supports from education providers at second level, and particularly targeted at students from less privileged backgrounds, to break down barriers, address formal and informal structures which deter entry to university, and address cultural constraints and students' perceptions of the legal profession as inaccessible.

FLAC advocated for the creation of networks at second and third level for students from socio- economically disadvantaged and other minority backgrounds to create contacts and build connections and relationships with established legal professionals.

Similarly, the **Irish Refugee Council, IRC**, recommended that the LSRA initiate partnerships with third level institutions, the professional training bodies and the legal sector to provide mentoring and guidance to refugee and migrant students in relation to belonging, self-confidence and insights into the legal profession.

The National Disability Authority recommended that the King's Inns explore a partnership with third-level institutions around the country to provide further accessibility to candidates outside the capital, including remote training provision.

Several respondents recommended increased funding for bursaries, fellowships and grants for both undergraduate courses and professional training courses.

The IRC said the LSRA should encourage third-level education providers to expand or increase the number of scholarships and bursaries available specifically for refugees and people seeking international protection, particularly for those seeking to study law or law-adjacent subjects. It also said that existing support schemes, bursaries and scholarships should be publicly listed and advertised so as to ensure as wide an uptake as possible.

(b) Recommendations on access routes for non-graduates

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, said there needs to be access routes for non-graduates to professional training for both professions, such as a diploma. It also said it would welcome the introduction of Legal Sector Apprenticeships similar to those available in the UK for school leavers¹⁷⁸ as an alternative route to qualification for non-graduates.

The Chief State Solicitor's Office, CSSO, said the LSRA may wish to consider specific ways in which access targets and milestones could be set and reached by law firms, who have a significant role to play in ensuring fair access to traineeships.

An individual respondent submitted that said the professional bodies should conduct and publish an annual student census on access to the profession.

¹⁷⁸ Law Society, *Legal Sector Apprenticeships* [website].

(c) Recommendations on admissions to professional training courses

A majority of respondents argued for changes in the system of entry into legal practitioner training for solicitors and, to a lesser extent, for barristers. In particular, these included changes to the solicitor system of the FE-1 entrance exam, up to and including an exemption from the exam for law graduates from universities in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The Authority has previously given extensive consideration to stakeholders' views and recommendations in this area. Following a detailed review of legal practitioner education and training between 2018 and 2020, the Authority made recommendations to the Minister for Justice in its 2020 report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*.

The recommendations included the establishment of an independent Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee (the LPET Committee) with a wide range of statutory responsibilities including accrediting new providers of legal education and training and encouraging diversity in legal education and training.

Several respondents to the consultation expressed general support for the concept of the LPET Committee and put forward recommendations as to the work priorities of the LPET Committee, once it is established.

The Higher Education Authority, HEA, said the LSRA's findings and proposals in this area aligned with the objectives in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education. This includes a goal "to increase access to the profession, high-points courses and postgraduate courses by students from target groups."¹⁷⁹

The HEA said:

"Implementing the proposals would have the potential of opening the legal professions to a wider cohort of students, including in different locations throughout the country. Encouraging and allowing students to study on a flexible or part-time basis would be welcome. This would provide opportunities for learners who may not be able to pursue full-time programmes to access the legal professions. A more diverse landscape of providers and modes of study would be a first step to achieving greater equity of access for the NAP target groups to the legal professions."

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, CCPC, said the LPET Committee should facilitate entry of additional legal education and training providers into the market to foster competition, which in turn would support increased access and encourage diversity in the legal profession. It also said a key aspect of LPET's work should be to ensure that training for solicitors reflects the skills needed and takes into account market demand in the sector. **The CCPC** also identified a need for additional research, by the LPET Committee or the LSRA, to identify the degree to which "limited access to traineeships and internships" represents a barrier to entry to the legal profession.

(d) Recommendations on increased State funding and supports for trainees

Additional funding supports for candidates undertaking professional training courses were proposed by the Law Society as well as non-governmental organisations and individual respondents.

The Law Society pointed out that trainees on its PPC Hybrid, which is delivered both on-site and online, were not eligible for state funding for fees or maintenance from Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). It said it had made representations to SUSI "but the situation has not changed and we feel this is a funding issue that needs revision."

¹⁷⁹ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021. The target groups are: 1 entrants from socio-economic groups that have low participation in higher education; 2. first-time mature students; 3. students with disabilities; 4. part-time/flexible learners; 5. further education and training award holders; and 6. Irish Travellers.

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties, ICCL, recommended an increase in SUSI grants to cover the full course fees for the Barrister-at-Law degree course at the King's Inns; currently the maximum SUSI contribution covers approximately half of the course fees.¹⁸⁰ The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, recommended additional bursaries, fellowships and grants for participants on the Law Society and King's Inns courses. It further recommended the continuation, if needed, of supports at professional training level for students who availed of "access routes" to obtain their third level education.

The Chief State Solicitor's Office, CSSO, suggested further research on available tuition and accommodation grants and bursaries for solicitor traineeships, firstly to identify their adequacy, and secondly to assess whether the monies capable of being disbursed would cover greater numbers of eligible candidates were more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to start applying.

Arthur Cox submitted that the application fee and course fees for solicitor training should be reduced while **Dublin City Council** suggested loan schemes for professional training course fees.

(e) Recommendations on measures to facilitate admission of foreign qualified lawyers

The Irish Refugee Council, IRC, recommended that the LSRA undertake a thorough review of the transfer arrangements for foreign qualified lawyers in order to streamline the process and facilitate the inclusion of foreign trained lawyers who seek to enter the Irish legal profession. It said:

"Many foreign-trained lawyers possess valuable skills that the profession could benefit from. This is particularly true of refugees and migrants, whose drive, determination and lived experiences are of vital importance to those the profession seeks to represent."

(f) Recommendation on changes to delivery of professional training courses

Several detailed recommendations were made for changes to the delivery of the solicitor training course, the PPC, to increase access and diversity. These came from public sector employers of solicitors, non-governmental organisations and a large law firm, who cited the dividends that accrued from the delivery of training on a remote basis during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chief State Solicitor's Office, CSSO, said the Law Society initiatives in blended learning, whereby trainees may not have to be based rigidly in Dublin, could allow for more regional based and online learning. This could be made available to more students to facilitate more mature students, those with familial responsibilities and those who may struggle with the cost of living in Dublin. *"Completely reconfiguring how to become a trainee to deal with economic and family constraints is the best way to ensure a more diverse profession,"* it said.

The National Disability Authority, NDA, said moving the PPC course online would ease barriers faced by candidates due to a number of factors including location, socio-economic backgrounds and disability.

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, said a mechanism to allow trainee solicitors to commence their traineeship prior to commencing the course would allow them to undertake gainful employment in the legal sector.

The Law Society raised concerns about the statutory barrier posed by the Irish language course which is compulsory for all trainee solicitors taking its PPC, irrespective of previous Irish language knowledge.¹⁸¹

It said: *"The existence of an Irish language course is an improvement on having compulsory examinations but it is a barrier to would be trainees particularly those that have not come through the Irish Education System. We would support an optional Legal Practice Irish Course."*

¹⁸⁰ The Barrister-at-Law degree course fees cost €12,560 in 2021 and the maximum SUSI fee contribution was €6,270.

¹⁸¹ As required by s. 40 (2A) of the Solicitors Act 1954 as amended by the Legal Practitioners (Irish Language) Act 2008.

In relation to the content of the PPC, **Dublin City Council** said it needs to better address the public sector, including public law, local authority law, statutory bodies, governance and ethics. It also said there should be more supervision and review of solicitors supervising trainees to ensure that they are receiving the appropriate ethics and practical guidance throughout their traineeships.

Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, recommended that the LSRA consider the feasibility of retention of vocational training for both solicitors and barristers on a hybrid basis – that is combining online lectures with face-to-face tuition – *“to facilitate those who are blocked from training, due to socio-economic issues such as childcare commitments, being unable to afford leaving full time employment or not having the financial means to source suitable accommodation within the capital.”*

5.3 Recommended changes to address entry barriers

A range of proposals were put forward to reduce barriers identified by respondents at the practical stage of training for solicitors and barristers which serve to inhibit access and diversity. Public sector bodies and non-governmental organisations proposed changes to enable solicitors to do their training contracts in a wider range of settings outside of law firms.

(a) Recommendations on changes to practical training stage – solicitors

The Irish Refugee Council, IRC, said the LSRA and the Law Society should establish funding for prospective solicitors to undertake traineeships with the State's independent Law Centres, particularly trainees from non-traditional or underrepresented backgrounds.

Dublin City Council said the civil service and local authorities should be supported to roll out trainee solicitor programmes to build their own in-house legal teams.

Several respondents called for enhanced supports to enable rural law firms to take on trainees. **The CSSO**, said the Law Society's Small Practice Traineeship Grant for smaller practices (fewer than five solicitors) outside of the main urban districts of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway could be extended to more firms and to medium size firms.

The CSSO also called for the expansion of the Law Society scheme which permits solicitors' practices to pool together to take on a trainee with two or three firms giving them a few days' work each week. It said: *"As this has the potential to increase the number of trainee contracts offered and allow some trainees to remain in their regional towns at a reduced cost of living in an urban city/town and to increase diversity of training, this scheme could be expanded and made accessible to more trainees."*

Griffith College said the extension of schemes supporting small firms outside of the main cities to offer contracts for trainee solicitors would be of assistance, particularly for those seeking positions in general practice in more rural areas.

The CSSO, submitted that the Law Society regulates law firms and is a significant actor in incentivising firms to behave in certain ways including under its guidance documentation. Changes to selection and recruitment processes by firms whereby transparency in the selection process is available similar to that operated by the Public Appointments Service, including its commitment to equality of access, could open up additional access on socio-economic and ethnicity grounds. Further, it said firms could be encouraged to set aside a certain number of places for such students who after all have met all the relevant criteria for entry to traineeship.

The Irish Refugee Council, IRC, said the LSRA and Law Society should work to ensure that all trainee solicitors are paid a living wage, to ensure an acceptable standard of living, whilst also providing greater access to the profession.

In a similar vein, **Griffith College** suggested that the LSRA should seek to widen the government's Apprenticeship Scheme to include trainee solicitors. It also recommended a scheme of financial supports for trainee and new qualified solicitors to cover the costs of early years of practice.

The CSSO said there should be some mechanism for monitoring of terms and conditions of work of trainees. It said legislation governing terms and conditions of work should be adhered to, including pay and annual leave. Firms who sign indentures for training contracts should pay the trainees the pay rate set out by the Law Society and trainees should be paid while attending both PPC I and PPC II.

The CSSO said: *“We understand this is not always the case and trainees should be permitted to anonymously report errant behaviour by employers in a way that does not jeopardise their training contract.”*

The Law Society said it wished to explore granting a level of recognition to barristers qualified less than three years, with reciprocal terms offered for solicitors qualified less than three years to make it easier for legal professionals to transfer between the two branches of the profession. It said: *“We have proposed this to the Honorable Society of King’s Inns on reciprocity for such a measure. Barristers and Solicitors are extremely well qualified lawyers. There should be a framework in place for even partial mutual recognition for those who wish to transfer from one branch to another.”*

(b) Recommendations on changes to practical training stage – barristers

The majority of the recommendations for addressing barriers at the practical stage of barrister training focused on the selection process for masters and the remuneration of barrister pupils. These recommendations were made by non-governmental organisations, academic institutes and individual students, early career barristers, as well as barristers with experience as masters.

Several respondents recommended increased transparency in the selection process for pupil masters.

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, suggested a more transparent and fair system be managed by the Bar of Ireland. **An individual practising barrister** suggested the creation of a dedicated website, possibly password-protected, specifically for matching masters and pupils. This, it was suggested, should include detailed information about the work the master and what the pupil should expect to do while working with them.

Griffith College cited a need for enhanced information and regulation around the Register of Masters to assist those without legal contacts or information about the profession who may find the process of finding a master like an attempt to acquire “insider information”.

The college said: *“This limitation of information can lead to a dissatisfactory devilling year for both Master and Devil and can also have effects later in the young barrister’s career.”*

Several respondents also called for the Bar of Ireland and the King’s Inns to be more proactive in assisting barristers seeking to undertake pupillage to secure masters, particularly those without prior legal connections.

A King’s Inns BL student said this could include providing further information and organising events and consultations. This would benefit those who lack existing connections and need to build these contacts, and would result in increased diversity.

Several individual respondents made recommendations to change the rules of pupillage to allow for more access and diversity. **A recently qualified barrister** suggested that people be allowed to devil with a master on the court circuit outside of Dublin, as long as minimum requirements are met in terms of High Court lists etc.

Several respondents, including non-governmental organisations and the Bar of Ireland, made recommendations for remuneration of pupils.

The Bar of Ireland proposed that the government should widen access to the July 2020 Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme to barristers. Under the scheme, apprenticeship employers were eligible for a €3,000 payment for each new apprentice registered between the 1 March and 30 June 2021. A total of €2,000 per apprentice was payable at the point of registration. A further €1,000 was payable in Quarter 3 2021 for each eligible apprentice retained on their apprenticeship.

The Bar of Ireland said: *“If the Government is genuine about measures to support diversity of access to the profession, the State should give consideration to expanding this scheme to barristers.”*

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, recommend that consideration be given to a statutory minimum payment, or the entitlement to certain social welfare benefits, for newly qualified barristers during their pupillage.

The Irish Refugee Council, IRC, suggested that the LSRA should encourage the Bar of Ireland to introduce a formal mechanism of financial compensation for pupil barristers.

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties, ICCL, said the Bar should set a minimum stipend that all masters should provide to their pupils on a monthly basis.

Griffith College recommended a scheme of financial supports for devilling and junior barristers to cover costs of early years of practice.

A range of proposals for remuneration of pupil barristers were also put forward by barristers interviewed by the LSRA who have experience as masters. These included provision of a minimum guaranteed income for pupils and allowing pupils to bill for their own fees after six months in practice, along with an efficient system of collecting fees.

One practising barrister proposed a monthly stipend for pupils, two-thirds funded by the master and one-third paid for by the Law Library, possibly drawn from the Law Library fees paid by senior counsel. This individual also suggested “nationalising” the Bar by paying barristers out of public funds in the same way that members of the judiciary are paid from the public purse.

5.4 Recommended changes to improve working conditions

(a) Recommendations on improved remuneration – early career barristers

A range of recommendations aimed at improving remuneration levels for early career barristers were put forward by the Bar of Ireland, non-governmental organisations and individual practitioners, with a particular focus on fee levels for criminal defence barristers in the District Court.

The Bar of Ireland submitted that the Government should be urged by the LSRA to immediately restore the link with public sector pay agreements and engage in a process to unwind the cuts applied to the professional fees of criminal barristers.

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties, ICCL, said legal aid remuneration for criminal practitioners must be increased to ensure junior practitioners can earn a living wage.

Griffith College recommended a scheme of financial supports for trainee and new qualified solicitors and devilling and junior barristers to cover costs of early years of practice. Recommendations were also put forward by the Bar of Ireland and individual practitioners to address the challenges junior barristers face in getting paid.

The Bar of Ireland proposed that the LSRA undertake further in-depth research into this issue. *“The eradication of this long-standing problem, the non-payment of fees owed and outstanding to barristers, would have a profoundly positive impact on the ability of all early career barristers to build and maintain a practice at the Bar.”*

The Bar of Ireland recommended that solicitors should be required, in their initial letter to clients regarding costs, to explain that they will be expected to discharge the costs on an ongoing basis but that if they ultimately obtain a costs order at the end of the case they will be reimbursed in part or in whole in that regard. It also said the Government should *“issue a dictat to all departments and State agencies to abide by the normal payment timelines applied in respect of other professional services purchased by the State.”*

Several junior barristers interviewed by the LSRA said they should be able to get direct payment from the State for State-funded District Court work, as they do for Circuit Court legal aid work.

One junior barrister proposed a collection service to enable young barristers to be paid for discreet work on an ongoing basis, for example such as motions in a personal injury case, while allowing senior barristers' fees to be recoverable at the end.

Another junior barrister interviewed highlighted issues with State's procurement system for legal services, which they said is designed in a way that tends to favour large firms rather than sole-traders. Others suggested that the Minister for Justice could make recommendations to the Attorney General that a certain amount of State work should go to early career barristers.

Another junior barrister said the Bar should phase out additional costs for barristers such as the purchase of court dress including wigs and gowns, noting that the requirement is no longer a legislative one but was purely cultural.

(b) Recommendations on greater supports for junior bar and Chambers system

Griffith College said greater emphasis is needed for more dedicated recognition within the Bar Council of the specific position of younger barristers in the first 5 years of practice, both in terms of their professional vulnerability compared to more established colleagues and their willingness to seek enforcement of payment against a solicitor.

It said: “A ‘one size fits all’ structure may not be suitable in terms of the support needed in this regard. This is particularly the case at the Irish Bar where there is no Chambers system which usually satisfy this role in some other jurisdictions.”

The Bar of Ireland said its governing Council will keep under ongoing review the structure under which the independent referral bar operates to ensure that it can attract and facilitate newly qualified barristers to pursue a viable career path in the profession.

Several individual barristers suggested that a Chambers system, along lines of Scottish system, would help guarantee incomes for early career barristers and deal with insecurity aspects of the early years at the independent referral bar.

One individual barrister interviewed recommended that the Bar should conduct exit interviews with all departing Law Library members to find out who is leaving and why. Another **individual barrister** said this data should include the age and gender of those who quit the bar.

An individual practising barrister submitted that the LSRA should review its levy rate, which applies at the same rate to first year barristers as experienced senior counsel.

Several barrister students and practising barristers suggested limiting the numbers of newly qualified barristers who may join the Law Library each year in order to ensure better earnings prospects for junior members.

(c) Recommendations on maternity policies and practices

The Bar of Ireland recommended that the State and its agencies who instruct barristers should ensure that payment is made to barristers for all work done to date when briefs are returned by a barrister who is taking maternity leave. It also said that the Courts Service and all other statutory decision-making bodies should make a commitment to the provision of permanent nursing rooms/facilities in each courthouse throughout the country.

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, CCPC, recommended that the LSRA undertake further research to identify the kinds of issues which may prompt the exit of well-trained professionals who are parents from the legal sector.

Individual barristers interviewed by the LSRA had a range of proposals in relation to maternity supports. **One junior barrister** who has taken maternity leave suggested the Bar of Ireland establish a paternity/maternity fund (along the lines of its existing benevolent fund) to collect voluntary contributions from Law Library members to subsidise barristers taking leave for this purpose.

Another barrister in a written submission said part of the problems facing barristers who wish to take maternity leave could be addressed by directions or guidelines to the court. *“I’ve heard that some judges will allow short adjournments of non-urgent matters to ensure that a barrister does not have to hand over work during maternity leave, whereas others would insist on something going on. There should be guidelines on reasonable accommodations, while maintaining the priority for clients’ interests.”*

Two barrister students in separate written submissions advocated a structured Chambers system as a solution to this barrier. One said this would improve choices and outcomes for both women and children and make the career of barrister a viable choice for people who also want to have a family.

The other said: *“How can we truly achieve gender equality in the Law Library when women are expected either not to have children, to resume work immediately after giving birth (which regularly happens!) or to sacrifice their careers in order to have a family? This is out-dated and should be dealt with as a matter of priority.”*

Other suggestions included a drop-in community crèche with Law Library barristers providing on-site informal childcare for barrister parents who need last-minute support for a motion or injunction.

(d) Recommendations on diversity initiatives and further research

Non-governmental organisations, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and the Free Legal Advice Centres, as well as the Chief State Solicitor’s Office identified a pressing need to begin collecting comprehensive demographic data on the profession in order to establish a baseline from which to develop and measure actions and outcomes.

The Chief State Solicitor’s Office, CSSO, said the LSRA may wish to delegate the collection of demographic data to the professional bodies, noting the approach of the Law Society of Scotland. **The CSSO** said the LSRA may also wish to consider setting targets for increased diversity in the profession. Likewise, **the Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC**, said the data should be evaluated to develop evidence based disability focused policies, practices and initiatives.

Equality proof training and recruitment practices

The Irish Refugee Council, IRC, said the LSRA ought to encourage the implementation of inclusive recruitment practices across the legal sector, having regard for best practice as well as the relevant equality legislation.

Dublin City University School of Law and Government said the LSRA should consider the potential for ethnic equality monitoring. It also said the LSRA should develop a strategy to increase the engagement of ethnic minorities in the legal profession.

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, recommended that the LSRA takes steps to ensure that the terms and conditions of and access to professional legal education be equality proofed and allow for the establishment of Parental Leave, Career Break and other Flexible Working Policies.

The CSSO said the LSRA should encourage “champions” from diverse backgrounds in similar fashion to the Public Appointments Service initiative under its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Further research

On suggested further research, **the CPPC** recommended that the LSRA play key role in conducting research on barriers for progression for certain socio-economic and demographic groups in the legal market.

The CSSO suggested a discrete study on access to traineeships for persons from minority backgrounds, including ethnic minority communities and the Traveller community. In addition, it proposed qualitative LSRA research of solicitor trainees from ethnic minority and lower socio-economic backgrounds to understand the barriers they faced in seeking a career in law.

The Irish Refugee Council, IRC, said the LSRA ought to commission research into best practice examples for the inclusion of students from non-traditional and underprivileged backgrounds in the legal profession, particularly prospective lawyers with a refugee or migrant background. It also suggested that the LSRA undertake a systemic review of the regulations pertaining to legal education and training to ensure that they are equality proofed.

FLAC recommended that a comprehensive study and research (similar to that conducted by the Solicitors Regulatory Authority in the UK) be conducted by the LSRA to properly understand the issues faced by disabled members of the profession, their needs and barriers that they face.

(e) Recommendation to address practical training stage barriers

A range of changes were proposed for the practical stage of training for barristers. There were considerably fewer suggestions for changes to the practical training stage for solicitors.

To address socio-economic barriers, **DCU School of Law and Government** recommended the further support of “experiential education”, for example through valuable internship opportunities which open doors and “levels the playing field”.

In relation to both professions, **Griffith College** said the LSRA should consider providing incentives for employers to offer summer internships for law students so they can benefit from on-the-job training, and increase their employability/engagement as trainee solicitors or barrister devils.

Dublin City Council said the LSRA should consider facilitating and having more policies for secondments in the public sector and the voluntary sector which will provide more transparency and knowledge about the legal profession. It said: *“Promotion of secondments for both solicitors and barristers in the public sector and local authorities would be invaluable in promoting diversity and well-rounded education for those training to be legal professionals. The public sector would benefit from having access to motivated and skilled trainees in both professions looking to further their legal careers while providing a service and learning about the public sector.”*

An individual barrister proposed short-term low-interest loan schemes and greater promotion of part-time work in the legal sphere, so that early career barristers don’t spend too much time working in areas that don’t enhance their career.

Centralised information on prospective trainee solicitors

The Chief State Solicitor’s Office, CSSO, said that, as an office which is beginning to offer an external solicitor traineeship programme, it would welcome a greater role for the Law Society in providing centralised information on prospective trainee solicitors.

“If the Law Society were to maintain a register with an opt-in GDPR option for prospective trainees for their details to be shared with prospective employers, this may be of significant assistance to a more diverse cohort of trainees who would not necessarily have the knowledge or resources to know how to target and apply themselves to a range of relevant solicitors’ firms. It would also allow small and medium size firms to consider cohorts of prospective trainees other than the usual contact they may receive.”

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, CCPC, said the LSRA or LPET Committee should carry out research on factors that limit access to traineeships and internships for solicitors. It also recommended that arrangements be put in place to enable trainees to develop specialisms. **The CCPC’s** submission also noted that it continues to support the establishment of a new profession of conveyancer.

(f) Recommendations on improvements in area of disability

Extensive recommendations were made in written submissions from the National Disability Authority (NDA), non-governmental organisations and two lawyers' networks the Disability Rights Lawyers Network (DRLN) and the DisAbility Legal Network (DLN).¹⁸²

Training stage improvements

The National Disability Authority, NDA, noted that the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2019 names students with disabilities as one of the target under-represented groups. It said both the Law Society and King's Inns should "*consider what needs to be put in place to meet the obligations to increase the number of students with disabilities in their courses.*"

For solicitors training, the **NDA** said it hoped that the PPC Hybrid course for solicitors will form the basis of a more accessible approach to future training. For barristers training, the **NDA** advised exploring options around a partnership between King's Inns and third-level institutions around the country in order to provide further accessibility to the profession to candidates outside the capital.

For both training institutes, it said increased remote learning may provide opportunities to make training more accessible. In addition, the **NDA** recommended that the Bar of Ireland maintain an online version of its Look into Law programme for transition year students, observing that the delivery of this programme online during the pandemic vastly extended its reach and may open careers in law to students with accessibility concerns.

The **NDA** also recommended more actions by the professional bodies and law firms around the opportunities involved in employment of people with disabilities including awareness building around reasonable accommodations, universal design, accessibility of built environment, communications and ICT, and Irish Sign Language Act obligations.

The Disability Rights Lawyers Network and the **DisAbility Legal Network** recommended that a designated 'disability liaison officer' be appointed to the Law Society of Ireland for PPC and diploma courses. They also proposed that educators at the Law Society be required to undergo training on working with those with disabilities.

Wheelchair accessibility

In terms of wheelchair access to the Law Society's training centre at Blackhall Place in Dublin, the **Disability Rights Lawyers Network** and the **DisAbility Legal Network** requested a full review of the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations 2010, with a view to considering any proposals set out by the NDA's Centre of Excellence for Universal Design. The networks said they endorse adopting a universal design approach to accessibility.

Remote working

The Disability Rights Lawyers Network and the **DisAbility Legal Network** endorsed the National Remote Work Strategy and recommend that any regulation of the legal sector in the future be mindful of the positive impact of remote/flexible working on those with disabilities and indeed all employees. It said that while the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the benefits of remote working for those with disabilities, it should not detract from ensuring workplaces are accessible and inclusive for those with disabilities, as for all workers.

Education and training on disability and anti-discrimination

Both networks were joined by the **Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC**, in recommending the introduction of education and training programmes around disability and anti-discrimination at industry level to educate solicitors and barristers about disabilities and how to assist disabled colleagues.

¹⁸² The DRLN submission endorsed the submission from the DLN. The DLN was in formation when the submission was made to the LSRA. It subsequently became named as the DisAbility Legal Network. See: <http://www.disabilitylegalnetwork.ie/>

The Disability Rights Lawyers Network and the **DisAbility Legal Network** suggested disability training for trainee solicitors and also requiring disability awareness training be part of annual continuing professional development (CPD) requirements.

They also recommended engagement with staff disability networks to tap into established knowledge and expertise, and also training and education programmes to support and encourage open discussion about disability within the profession. A further recommendation was that the Law Society appoint a designated ‘disability liaison officer’ for PPC and diploma courses. They also proposed that educators at the Law Society be required to undergo training on working with those with disabilities.

Disability passport scheme

The Disability Rights Lawyers Network and the **DisAbility Legal Network** recommended the introduction of a “disability passport scheme” by employers in the legal sector for solicitor trainees and qualified practitioners who disclose a disability to their employer. The idea is that the passport documents the reasonable adjustments agreed with the employer to eliminate barriers in the workplace. These could include, for example, providing specially adapted equipment (like a chair, desk or computer), temporarily changing the duties of the job, changing break times or working patterns, or allowing flexible working or time off for medical appointments.¹⁸³ The agreed adjustments documented in the passport are transferable so that employees do not have to explain their requirements every time their line manager changes or they change roles. The reasonable accommodation passport scheme is backed by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

Disability liaison officers

The Disability Rights Lawyers Network and the **DisAbility Legal Network** also recommended that all law firms (apart from sole practitioners) be required to designate a properly trained ‘disability liaison officer’ to meaningfully engage with disabled employees on their reasonable accommodation needs.

An individual barrister interviewed by the LSRA also recommend that accommodation supports in the Law Library be more formalised and less reliant on goodwill of staff. The barrister also suggested that judges should be trained in how to accommodate barristers with disabilities during court hearings.

Work placement and reverse mentoring

The Free Legal Advice Centres, FLAC, recommended work experience opportunities for disabled people and individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds across the legal sector. It also recommended the introduction of “reverse mentoring schemes,” where disabled people and individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds mentor senior legal personnel in an effort to change attitudes, biases and misconceptions.

An individual barrister with master experience interviewed by the LSRA suggested the Bar should supply additional training for barristers willing to take on pupils with disabilities.

New business models

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, CCPC, recommended that legislation should be enacted to allow for the formation of legal partnerships by barristers and solicitors to provide a route for early career practitioners to develop their legal practice.

¹⁸³ See: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments-disability-passports>

Chapter 6

Next Steps

This research study represents a detailed examination by the Legal Services Regulatory Authority of the economic and other barriers facing junior solicitors and barristers. As an exploratory exercise it examines evidence from a range of sources, including the Authority's first comprehensive surveys of early career solicitors and barristers as well as student barristers, trainee solicitors, law undergraduates and recently qualified legal professionals who are currently not practising.

The Authority intends to analyse the evidence gathered in this research study to arrive at a set of findings, which it will present to the Minister in a statutory report. The Authority then intends to carefully consider its findings and to undertake a period of further engagement with key stakeholders on the recommendations it considers to be appropriate to address the economic and other barriers identified in the research study.

Appendices

Appendix A – External Reference Group

The LSRA established an External Reference Group to provide expert guidance to assist with the content of the data collection stage of this research. The aim was to ensure that all potential hypotheses or thoughts around key areas of focus for the online surveys and in-depth interviews were included.

Following a stakeholder analysis, the LSRA invited individuals to be part of the External Reference Group. Members fell into three broad categories:

- Representatives from voluntary committees, networks, associations and groups within the barrister and solicitor professions.
- Individual trainees, students and early career solicitors and barristers from diverse backgrounds, including those with ‘protected characteristics’ under equality laws.
- Academics.

External Reference Group members were invited to assist with the following aspects of the research:

- Provide input and feedback to develop topics/themes for the design of the online surveys.
- Provide input and feedback to develop in-depth interview topic/theme guides for qualitative in-depth interviews.
- Assist the LSRA in identifying potential respondents for interviews consistent with the research objectives.
- Assist the LSRA in ‘spreading the word’ about the research through networks and encouraging respondents to take part in the surveys.

External Reference Group Members

Gregory Benson, Solicitor, Dublin Solicitors’ Bar Association Young Members Committee

Henry Brefo, Pathways to the Professions Project Coordinator, University College Dublin

Tarisai May Chidawanyika, Solicitor, Founder of Diversity in Law

John Considine, Solicitor, Limerick

Gráinne Cuddihy, Solicitor, Cork

Anna-Marie Curry, Solicitor, Law Society In-House and Public Sector Committee

Cathal Daly, Solicitor, OUTlaw Network

Aoibhinn Farrell, TCD law undergraduate

Anita Finucane BL, Bar of Ireland Young Bar Committee

Avril Flannery, Solicitor, Law Society Younger Members Committee

Jennifer Good BL

Brendan Hayes, Solicitor, Law Society Younger Members Committee

Stephen Heary, Solicitor, In-House Legal Network

David Joyce, Solicitor

Joy-Tendai Kangere, BL candidate, Co-Founder Rooted in Africa-Ireland

Sofiya Kalinova, BL candidate, Irish Sign Language user

Patrick Longworth, Solicitor, Dublin Solicitors’ Bar Association Young Members Committee

Aoife McNicholl, Solicitor, Irish Women Lawyers’ Association

Aoife McNickle BLP, Bar of Ireland Equality and Diversity Committee

Colm MacCarvill BL, In-House Legal Network

Chris Murnane, Solicitor, OUTlaw network

Rafael O'Leary BL

Tara Roche, Solicitor, Society of Young Solicitors in Ireland

Rachel Rock, Solicitor, Chair of Society of Young Solicitors in Ireland

Judy Walsh BL, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice University College Dublin

Appendix B – Survey Respondent Population

Respondents were asked demographic and other questions to facilitate deeper analysis of the survey findings and support a greater understanding of the experience of individuals and different cohorts within the population.

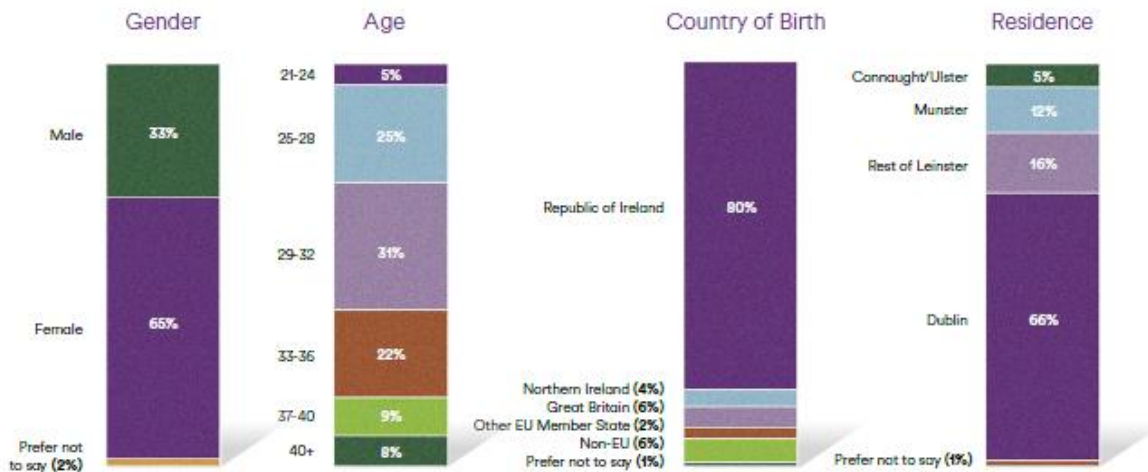
Survey diversity findings

- The majority of respondents to the solicitor survey (96%) and the barrister survey (92%) categorise themselves as White or White Irish. In the 2016 Census of the Population White Irish accounted for 82% of the population.¹
- Two thirds (65%) of solicitor survey respondents and 44% of barrister survey respondents are female.
- One in ten (10%) solicitor survey respondents and 12% of barrister survey respondents report that they have a disability. According to the 2016 Census of the Population, people who stated they had a disability accounted for 13.5% of the population and 6.7% of the workforce.²
- Over one quarter (27%) of solicitor survey respondents and 31% of barrister survey respondents say they attended a fee paying secondary school. This compares to the national figure of 7% of secondary school pupils attending a fee-paying school in 2021.³

Solicitor survey

Demographic profile

Base: All respondents N - 433



*Additional gender options of transgender, non-binary and other were provided, but yielded no responses.

Questions: Please select your gender. What age band do you fall into? Where were you born? Which county do you live in?

¹ Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population 2016 – Profile 8 Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion* [website].

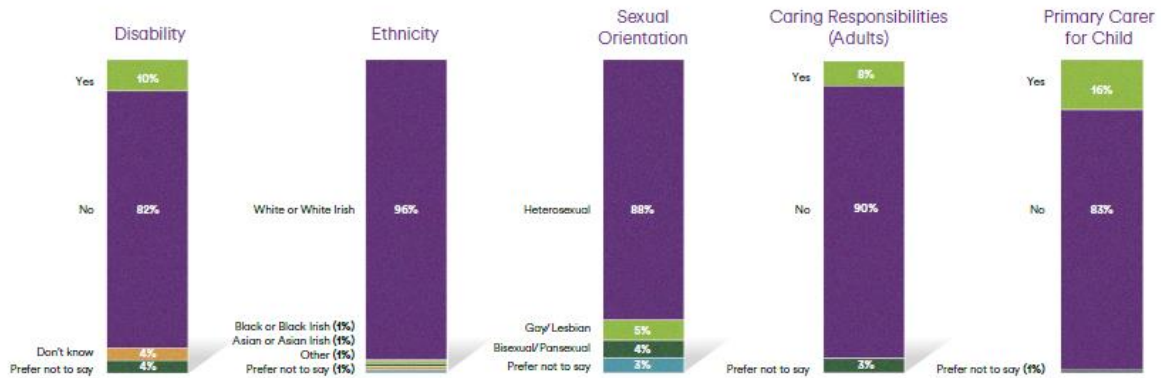
² Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population 2016 – Profile 9 Health, Disability and Carers* [website].

³ In 2020 there were 379, 184 pupils attending post-primary schools, of which 26,226 (6.9%) were in fee-paying schools. Department of Education, *Post Primary Schools 2020/2021* [website].

Solicitor survey: Disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and caring responsibilities

Demographic profile

Base: All respondents N - 433

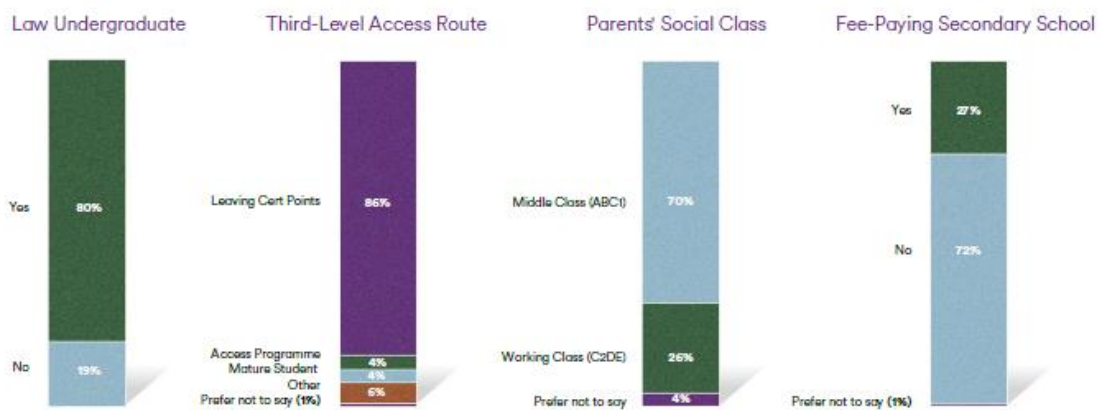


Questions: Do you have a disability (including episodic conditions such as mental health)? Which of the options below best describes your ethnic or cultural background? How would you describe your sexual orientation? Do you have any caring responsibilities (e.g. for a parent or a relative with disabilities)? Are you a primary carer for a child or children under 18?

Solicitor survey: Law degree, access and socio-economic background

Demographic profile

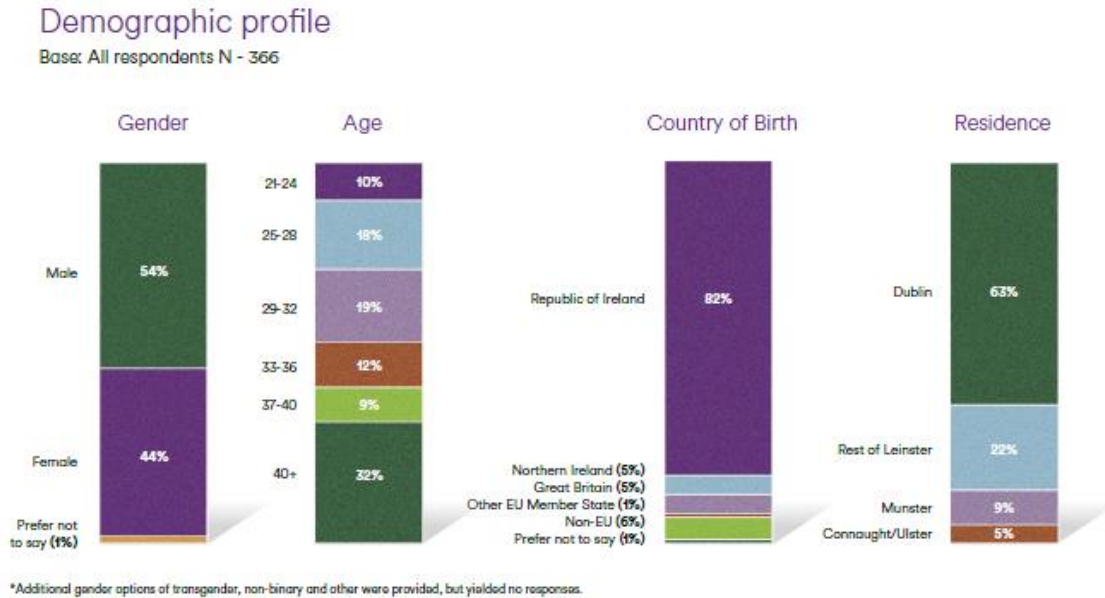
Base: All respondents N - 433



Questions: Do you have an undergraduate law degree? Did you secure a place at a third level institution solely as a result of your leaving certificate points (or equivalent) or did you avail of an access programme or mature student entry? Which of the following best describes the occupation of your parent/guardian who is /was the main income provider? Did you attend a fee-paying secondary school?

Barrister survey

Barrister survey: Gender, age, country of birth and location of residence



Questions: Please select your gender. What age band do you fall into? Where were you born? Which county do you live in?

Barrister survey: Disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and caring responsibilities

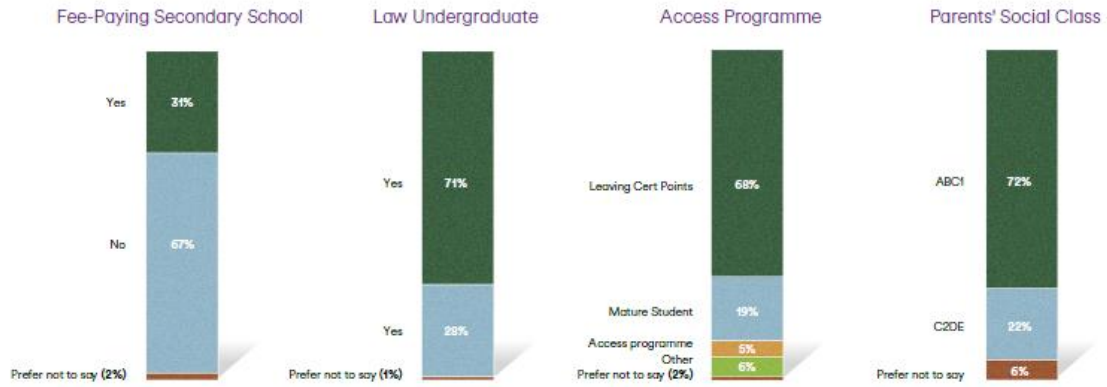


Questions: Do you have a disability (including episodic conditions such as mental health)? How would you describe your sexual orientation? Which of the options below best describes your ethnic or cultural background? Do you have any caring responsibilities (e.g. for a parent or a relative with disabilities)? Are you a primary carer for a child or children under 18?

Barrister survey: Law degree, access and socio-economic background

Demographic profile

Base: All respondents N - 366



Questions: Do you have an undergraduate law degree? Did you secure a place at a third level institution solely as a result of your leaving certificate points (or equivalent) or did you avail of an access programme or mature student entry? Which of the following best describes the occupation of your parent/guardian who is /was the main income provider? Did you attend a fee-paying secondary school?

Appendix C – Consultation Notice



An tÚdarás Rialála
Seirbhíse Dlí
Legal Services
Regulatory Authority

11 May 2021

Invitation by the Legal Services Regulatory Authority for Written Submissions on Barriers for Early Career Solicitors and Barristers and Increasing Diversity

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority invites written submissions as part of a public consultation prior to a report to the Minister for Justice in relation to the economic and other barriers for early career solicitors and barristers.

The Authority is conducting a public consultation under section 34(1)(d) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 as part of its preparation of a report to the Minister.

The consultation is based on a request from the Minister for Justice for the Authority to:

“Consider the economic and other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors following their qualification from the King’s Inns and Law Society respectively and to submit a report with recommendations for her consideration.”

The Minister has stated that this research is part of her plan to [increase diversity across the justice sector](#) including the legal profession. The Minister has asked the Authority to examine:

- The remuneration of trainee barristers and solicitors;
- The other costs associated with joining each profession;
- The information available to prospective trainee barristers and solicitors on available masters and solicitors firms; the information available on the terms and conditions available, and how they are selected;
- Any other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors, including the ability to take maternity leave.

The Minister has also asked that the Authority pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions.

The LSRA will shortly be conducting online anonymous surveys of trainee and practising solicitors and barristers with up to seven years post qualification experience working in firms, in private practice, and in-house in the public and private sectors. The LSRA also intends to survey undergraduate law students. The research will also involve a series of in-depth interviews with trainee and early career solicitors and barristers.

Scope of the Consultation

The Authority seeks submissions in respect of the economic and other barriers and challenges faced by solicitors and barristers at the start of their careers and also potential solutions to include the following issues:

1. The **key economic and other barriers to entry** to the professions of solicitor and barrister, and their impact in terms of equity of access and entry into the legal professions and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the profession.
2. Proposals on how **key economic and other barriers to entry** to the professions of solicitor and barristers may be addressed in order to improve equity of access and entry into the legal profession and achieve greater diversity within the professions, and by whom.
3. The **other costs associated** with joining each branch of the profession.
4. The **quality of apprenticeship selection processes** – including the information available to prospective barristers on available Masters for their pupillage year, and to prospective trainee solicitors on training firms – and any impact this may have on the objective of increased diversity.
5. The **availability and quality of “on-the-job” mandatory apprentice training** for solicitors and the “devilling” programme for barristers. This includes “terms and conditions,” remuneration, arrangements for supervision and oversight, support and evaluation, and any impact the existing availability and quality of this training/experience may have on access and diversity.
6. The extent to which **existing arrangements for the remuneration of trainee barristers** during the pupillage year poses a barrier in terms of equity of access to and diversity within the barrister profession.
7. The extent to which **existing arrangements for the remuneration of trainee solicitors** during their in-office training poses a barrier in terms of equity of access to and diversity within the solicitor profession.
8. The arrangements in place and provision for **maternity/adoptive leave for solicitors and barristers** and the extent to which availing of such leave may have implications for career progression.
9. The **key economic and other challenges for early career** solicitors and barristers (up to seven years post-qualification experience) in **maintaining and building their careers** in the profession, and their impact in terms of the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions.
10. Proposals on how these **key economic and other challenges for early career** solicitors and barristers may be addressed, and by whom, in order to achieve greater diversity within the profession.

The above list of issues is not closed. Respondents may wish to comment also on other issues which may be relevant to the issue under consideration. Respondents may also wish to comment on one branch of the legal profession or both. It would be helpful for any views expressed to be substantiated and, if necessary, supported with any available evidence. Responses which provide

insight into the experience of arrangements in operation in other relevant jurisdictions would also be useful.

Regulatory Objectives

In considering any evidence presented, the LSRA will be guided by the regulatory objectives set down in section 13 of the 2015 Act, which are:

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

Following the public consultation and other evidence gathering activities including surveys and in-depth interviews, the Authority will draw up a report to be submitted to the Minister for Justice.

Deadline for Submissions

This consultation is seeking views from a wide range of organisations and individuals in the legal services arena, including law firms, members of the legal professions, trade unions, academics, experts, statutory agencies, representative bodies, voluntary associations, non-governmental organisations and consumers of legal services.

Respondents are asked to indicate on whose behalf they are responding, for example as an individual or a firm/organisation within the solicitor or barrister profession, a client or a body representing collective interests etc.

Interested parties wishing to contribute to the consultation should send a written submission as soon as possible but in any event to be received no later than 30 June 2021.

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:

- By e-mail to: publicconsultations@lsra.ie
- By post to: Section 34 Consultation
Legal Services Regulatory Authority
P.O. Box 12906, Dublin 7

Freedom of Information

Attention is drawn to the fact that information provided to the Authority may be disclosed in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014. Therefore, should it be considered that any information provided is commercially sensitive, please identify same, and specify the reason for its sensitivity. The Authority will consult with interested parties making

submissions regarding information identified by them as sensitive before making a decision on any Freedom of Information request. Any personal information, which you volunteer to the Authority, will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Protection Acts, 1998 and 2003 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when commenced.

Publication of Submissions

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

ENDS

Appendix D – Respondents to Statutory Consultation

Arthur Cox

Certain Members of the 2021 Graduating Class of the UCD Sutherland School of Law

Chief State Solicitor's Office

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

Council of the Bar of Ireland

Disability Network

Disability Rights Lawyers Network

Dublin City Council

School of Law and Government, Dublin City University

Dublin Solicitors Bar Association

Free Legal Advice Centres

Griffith College

Higher Education Authority

Honorable Society of King's Inns

Irish Council for Civil Liberties

Irish Refugee Council

Law Society of Ireland

Department of Law, Maynooth University

Mediators Institute of Ireland

National Disability Authority

UCD Sutherland School of Law

A total of 13 personal submissions were also received, These were from early career practising barristers, barrister students, laws graduates and one practising solicitor.

Appendix E – List of Interviewees and Interview Methodology

Interviewees were contacted directly by the LSRA or came forward to volunteer their views. In certain cases, organisations meeting certain criteria (e.g. size and geographical location of law firm, barristers with a range of professional experience) were approached directly from publicly available lists (e.g. the Law Society register of solicitors, the Law Library’s member database and list of pupil masters) and requested for their input. All individuals participating in interviews did so voluntarily. Interviews were either conducted by Zoom or by telephone (due to Covid-19 health restrictions, face-to-face interviews were not possible).

Interviewees were informed that their views would be used to supplement and deepen the researchers’ understanding of the results and impressions gathered through the statutory consultation and surveys. Interviewees were provided with topic guides in advance of the interviews, which were not recorded, although detailed notes were kept.

Where quotes are used in the report, their accuracy has been checked with the individual concerned, even though no recognisable attribution has been given in the report. The research team’s approach to gathering information through interviews was guided by the Economic and Social Research Council’s ethical research principles. These are:

- Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm.
- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected.
- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed.
- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency.
- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined.
- Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit.

Interviews

The following were interviewed:

- Eleven practising barristers in different areas of legal practice and with a range of years of experience, including three barristers who are current or former masters.
- Four qualified barristers (qualified since 2010) who are currently not practising as barristers, all former Law Library members.
- Two student barristers undertaking the Barrister-at-Law degree, one on a full-time basis and another on a part-time basis.
- Five solicitors working in private practice.
- Two law graduates who were undertaking the solicitor professional course entry exams, the FE-1s.
- An office manager and trainee solicitor from a small regional law firm.
- A managing partner of a medium sized regional law firm.
- A graduate recruitment manager of a large Dublin based law firm.

- Senior staff of Dublin City Council, the Chief State Solicitor’s Office, the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Legal Aid Board.

Appendix F – Survey Questionnaires

LSRA survey on the experiences of trainee and early career solicitors

SECTION 1

Q.1 At what stage are you in the qualification process or your career? Please select one only.

- 1 Trainee on PPC full time/in office training
- 2 Trainee on PPC hybrid/in office training
- 3 Qualified solicitor working in a solicitors’ firm
- 4 Qualified solicitor working in-house in the private sector
- 5 Qualified solicitor working in-house in the public sector
- 6 Qualified solicitor working in an independent law centre, not-for-profit/non-governmental organisation

Q.1b What county are/were you based in for your training contract? Please select one only.

- 1 ANTRIM
- 2 ARMAGH
- 3 CARLOW
- 4 CAVAN
- 5 CLARE
- 6 CORK
- 7 DERRY
- 8 DONEGAL
- 9 DOWN
- 10 DUBLIN
- 11 FERMANAGH
- 12 GALWAY
- 13 KERRY
- 14 KILDARE
- 15 KILKENNY
- 16 LAOIS
- 17 LEITRIM
- 18 LIMERICK
- 19 LONGFORD
- 20 LOUTH
- 21 MAYO
- 22 MEATH
- 23 MONAGHAN
- 24 OFFALY
- 25 ROSCOMMON
- 26 SLIGO
- 27 TIPPERARY
- 28 TYRONE
- 29 WATERFORD
- 30 WESTMEATH
- 31 WEXFORD
- 32 WICKLOW
- 33 I did not do a training contract

Q.1c What county are you currently working in? Please select one only.

- 1 ANTRIM

- 2 ARMAGH
- 3 CARLOW
- 4 CAVAN
- 5 CLARE
- 6 CORK
- 7 DERRY
- 8 DONEGAL
- 9 DOWN
- 10 DUBLIN
- 11 FERMANAGH
- 12 GALWAY
- 13 KERRY
- 14 KILDARE
- 15 KILKENNY
- 16 LAOIS
- 17 LEITRIM
- 18 LIMERICK
- 19 LONGFORD
- 20 LOUTH
- 21 MAYO
- 22 MEATH
- 23 MONAGHAN
- 24 OFFALY
- 25 ROSCOMMON
- 26 SLIGO
- 27 TIPPERARY
- 28 TYRONE
- 29 WATERFORD
- 30 WESTMEATH
- 31 WEXFORD
- 32 WICKLOW

Q.2 How many years have you been working in the profession post qualification? Please select one only.

- 1 Less than 2 years
- 2 2-3 years
- 3 4-5 years
- 4 6-7 years

Q.3a In what type of organisation did you do / are you doing your training contract? Please select one only.

- 1 Small law firm – 1-5 solicitors
- 2 Medium law firm – 6-20 solicitors
- 3 Medium law firm – 21 – 50 solicitors
- 4 Large law firm – more than 50 solicitors
- 5 In-house in the private sector
- 6 In-house in the public sector i.e. government department, agency, semi state organisation or regulator
- 7 Independent law centre, not-for-profit/non-governmental organisation
- 8 Other (specify)
- 9 I didn't do a training contract

Q.3b How many training contracts did you apply for before you secured one? Please tick all that apply.

- 1 1-2
- 2 3-5
- 3 6-10
- 4 Between 11-20
- 5 21 or more

Q.3c What type of organisation do you work in currently? Please select one only.

- 1 Small law firm – 1-5 solicitors
- 2 Medium law firm – 6-20 solicitors
- 3 Medium law firm – 21 – 50 solicitors
- 4 Large law firm – more than 50 solicitors
- 5 In-house in the private sector
- 6 In-house in the public sector i.e. government department, agency, semi state organisation or regulator
- 7 Independent law centre, not-for-profit/non-governmental organisation
- 8 Other (specify)

Q.4 Why did you choose to work in an in-house role? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Pay and conditions
- 2 Work life balance
- 3 More regular hours
- 4 Wanted to focus on starting a family
- 5 Wanted to specialise in a particular area of law
- 6 Always intended to work in an in-house role
- 7 Better fit for me personally
- 8 Seeking partnership was not a career option (e.g. unable to provide partner contribution or equity stake)
- 9 Wanted to transition to business/public sector area
- 10 Lack of career path or career progression
- 11 Other (specify)
- 12 None of the above

Q.5a Prior to starting your legal education or qualifying, did you have any previous connections with the legal profession? E.g. Family member working in legal profession. Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q.5b Please tick all connections that apply to each legal profession stated. On mobile, open the tab for each legal profession stated and tick all connections that apply before moving to the next tab:

	Parent/close relative	Friend/family friend	Close friend	Other (specify)	None
Barrister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Judge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other role in legal sector (e.g. paralegal, support staff in a law firm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General business or work connections in the legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.5c To what extent do you agree or disagree that these connections helped you to advance your own career? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.6 Which, if any, of the following did you do in order to secure your training contract? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Paid work experience (e.g. as legal executive, administrative support, secretary, paralegal)
- 2 Unpaid work experience

- profession)
- 3 Use of my personal connections (e.g. family member, colleague, friend with links to the profession)
 - 4 Use of an academic connection (e.g. a lecturer or a tutor)
 - 5 Achieve high academic grades
 - 6 Charity work or extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports)
 - 7 Completion of one or more post-graduate programmes (e.g. a Master's degree)
 - 8 Did not complete a training contract
 - 9 Other (specify)
 - 10 None of these

Q.7 How did you/are you paying for the PPC course fees? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Self-funded from savings
- 2 SUSI grant
- 3 A scholarship or bursary
- 4 A loan from my family or a financial institution (e.g. a bank or credit union)
- 5 My training solicitor firm paid for all of the PPC fees
- 6 My training solicitor firm paid for some of the PPC fees
- 7 Paid for by my family
- 8 Other (specify)

Q.8 How were/are you remunerated during training/ the PPC course? Please select all that apply.

- 1 I am/was unpaid throughout the in-office training and PPC I and II
- 2 I am/was paid throughout the in-office training and PPC I and II – below minimum wage
- 3 I am/was paid throughout the in-office training and PPC I and II – the minimum wage
- 4 I am/was paid throughout the in-office training and PPC I and II - above the minimum wage
- 5 I am/was paid only during in-office training – below the minimum wage
- 6 I am/was paid only during in-office training – the minimum wage
- 7 I am/was paid only during in-office training – above minimum wage
- 8 Other (specify)

Q.9 How did you/are you supporting yourself financially day-to-day when doing the PPC course? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Self-funded from savings
- 2 SUSI grant
- 3 A scholarship or bursary
- 4 A loan from a financial institution (e.g. bank or credit union)
- 5 Family support
- 6 Part-time job
- 7 Full-time job
- 8 My training solicitor firm paid me during some or all of the PPC
- 9 Other (please specify)

Q.10a Have you converted to the solicitor profession from the barrister profession? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q.10b If yes, what were the main reasons for converting? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Pay and conditions
- 2 Work life balance
- 3 More regular hours
- 4 More reliable income
- 5 Wanted to focus on starting a family
- 6 I always intended to work as solicitor
- 7 Better fit for me personally
- 8 Lack of clear career path or career progression
- 9 Other - please specify

Q.11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your training contract. Please select one only.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Doesn't apply
There was sufficient information and guidance available on the process of securing a training contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process of identifying and securing a training contract was difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There was sufficient information in relation to remuneration during the training contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Securing a training contract was a highly competitive process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Success in securing a training contract is based largely on who you know/contacts in profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe that securing a training contract was a fair and merit-based process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel that the process to arrange a training contract could be improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discrimination is an obstacle I have faced/face when qualifying as a solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt/feel there was/is proper oversight of the quality and terms of my in-office training and training contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There was sufficient information on available training firms/organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There was sufficient information on the terms and conditions of my training contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am/was satisfied with the training contract I secured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am/was satisfied with the quality of the in-office training I am receiving/received	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I consider that my solicitor training equipped me well to begin working as a solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.12 Have you taken any of the following types of leave during your training or career as a solicitor? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Maternity leave

- 2 Paternity leave
- 3 Adoptive leave
- 4 None of these

Q.13 Does your employer provide paid maternity / paternity / adoptive leave? This refers to payment separate from or in addition to statutory Maternity Benefit, Paternity Benefit or Adoptive Benefit. Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know
- 4 Doesn't apply (self-employed)

Q.14a Which of the following best describes the income / financial support you received during your leave period? Please select one only.

- 1 State Maternity / Paternity / Adoptive Benefit plus additional pay from employer to equal full salary
- 2 State Maternity / Paternity / Adoptive Benefit plus additional pay from employer to equal partial salary
- 3 State Maternity / Paternity / Adoptive Benefit (no additional pay from employer)
- 4 No State Maternity / Paternity / Adoptive Benefit or payment from employer
- 5 Other (specify)

Q.14b What was the duration of your maternity / paternity / adoptive leave? (Note: statutory leave entitlements are as follows: paternity = 2 weeks, maternity = 26 weeks, adoptive = 24 weeks) Please select one only.

- 1 Full statutory leave duration
- 2 Partial statutory leave duration
- 3 Other (specify)

Q.14c Did you take additional unpaid maternity / adoptive leave? (The statutory entitlement is for up to 16 weeks unpaid leave) Please select one only.

- 1 Yes, less than 16 weeks
- 2 Yes, 16 weeks
- 3 Yes, more than 16 weeks
- 4 No

Q.15 To what extent do you agree or disagree that taking maternity / adoptive leave has had or will have a negative impact on your professional career? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.15b Please describe how you consider that your professional career has been or may be negatively impacted by taking maternity / adoptive leave. Please type answer in box below.

Q.16 How satisfied were you with the following aspects of maternity / paternity / adoptive leave provision and arrangements in your profession /workplace? Where 1 is 'very satisfied' and 5 is 'strongly dissatisfied'. Please select one only.

	1. Very satisfied	2. Somewhat satisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4. Somewhat dissatisfied	5. Strongly dissatisfied	Don't know	Doesn't apply
The payments I received during maternity / paternity / adoptive leave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The duration of the maternity / paternity / adoptive leave that I was able to take (e.g. number of weeks).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The formal workplace supports around maternity / adoptive leave planning and cover arrangements (e.g. handover planning, case management).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The informal workplace supports around maternity / adoptive leave planning and cover arrangements (e.g. assistance of colleagues with work handovers, case management).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The level of expected earnings after returning from maternity / adoptive leave (e.g. bonus year targets in firms, income levels for self-employed).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.17 How satisfied do you expect yourself to be with the following aspects of maternity / paternity / adoptive leave provision and arrangements in your current profession / workplace if you do take maternity / paternity / adoptive leave in the future? Where 1 is 'very satisfied' and 5 is 'strongly dissatisfied'. Please note that this question is about your perceptions. Please select one only.

	1. Very satisfied	2. Somewhat satisfied	3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4. Somewhat dissatisfied	5. Strongly dissatisfied	Don't know	Doesn't apply
Payment entitlements during maternity / paternity / adoptive leave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The duration of maternity / paternity / adoptive leave (e.g. number of weeks).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal workplace supports around maternity / adoptive leave planning and cover arrangements (e.g. handover planning, case management).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Informal workplace supports around maternity / adoptive leave planning and cover arrangements (e.g. assistance of colleagues with work handovers, case management).

That your earnings after returning from maternity / adoptive leave will not be negatively impacted (e.g. bonus year targets in firms, income levels for self-employed).

Q.18 To what extent has your experience working within the solicitor profession met your expectations?

- 1 Greatly exceeded expectations
- 2 Exceeded expectations
- 3 Matched expectations
- 4 Below expectations
- 5 Far below expectations

SECTION 2

Q.19 In your opinion, what are the main barriers, if any, that you may face/have faced in entering the solicitor profession? Tell us all that apply. *NOTE: Responses will be edited to ensure respondents' anonymity.* Please type answer in box below. Please type 'none' if you don't feel you will face any barriers.

Q.20 In your opinion, what are/will be the main challenges, if any, for you when working in the solicitor profession? Tell us all that apply. *NOTE: Responses will be edited to ensure respondents' anonymity.* Please type answer in box below. Please type 'none' if you don't feel you will face any challenges.

Q.21 Thank you for indicating your spontaneous thoughts on barriers in the previous question. We are also interested in your rankings of the following barriers. Which of the following, if any, do you think has acted or might act as a barrier to you entering the solicitor profession? If you feel there were/are barriers, please rank the top five barriers you think you experienced/may experience. *When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button.* If you feel there were / are no barriers, please select 'None of these'. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

- 1 The costs and time it takes to complete the entrance exams to the professional course (including study time and preparatory courses)
- 2 Having no role models in the profession
- 3 The overall financial cost of qualifying (including costs of courses, accommodation etc.)
- 4 Inadequate information about the qualification process
- 5 Lack of networks/contacts in the profession
- 6 The time it takes to qualify
- 7 Geographical barriers (e.g. need to be in Dublin for PPC course)
- 8 Lack of clarity/knowledge about the solicitor career path
- 9 Balancing work with caring commitments (e.g. childcare, caring for family member, etc.)
- 10 Not having attended the 'right' school or university
- 11 Difficulty securing a training contract
- 12 Not fitting (belonging) with the traditional demographic of the profession
- 13 Discrimination based on any of the nine statutory grounds
- 14 Lack of equal access to the workplace for those with a disability (reasonable accommodation)
- 15 None of these

Q.22 And now, which of the following, if any, do you think have been, or might be a challenge to you working in the solicitor profession? If you feel there were/are challenges, please rank the top five challenges you think you experienced or may experience. When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button. If you feel there were / are no challenges, please select 'None of these'. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

- 1 Lack of network / contacts in the profession
- 2 Balancing work with caring commitments (e.g. childcare, caring for family member, etc.)
- 3 Not fitting (belonging) with the traditional demographic of the profession
- 4 Trying to make partner
- 5 Lack of clarity on career progression
- 6 Remuneration levels
- 7 Terms and conditions of employment
- 8 Working hours
- 9 Discrimination based on any of the nine statutory grounds
- 10 Lack of maternity/paternity supports
- 11 Impact on personal life (e.g. delaying starting a family etc.)
- 12 Lack of workplace flexibility
- 13 Lack of equal access to the workplace for those with a disability (reasonable accommodation)
- 14 None of these

Please read the following list of areas of discrimination prior to moving to the next question:

Gender (includes gender identity)

Civil status (relationship status of being single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed)

Family status (being pregnant, or being a parent of a person under 18 years, or being the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability)

Age

Disability

Sexual orientation

'Race', skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin

Religion (religious beliefs and background, including lack of religious beliefs)

Membership of the Traveller community

Socio-economic status or background (economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation; e.g. being from a working-class background)

Q.23 Have you experienced discrimination in your solicitor training, while looking for work as a solicitor or in the workplace as a solicitor related to the areas of discrimination listed on the previous page. Please select one only.

- 1 Yes – within the last 3 years
- 2 Yes – not in last 3 years
- 3 No
- 4 Don't know
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.23b If yes, please select which area(s) it related to. Please select all that apply.

- 1 Gender (includes gender identity)
- 2 Civil status (relationship status of being single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed)
- 3 Family status (being pregnant, or being a parent of a person under 18 years, or being the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability)
- 4 Age
- 5 Disability
- 6 Sexual orientation
- 7 'Race', skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- 8 Religion (religious beliefs and background, including lack of religious beliefs)
- 9 Membership of the Traveller community
- 10 Socio-economic status or background (economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation; e.g. being from a working-class background)
- 11 Other (please specify)
- 12 Prefer not to say

Q.23C What did the discrimination relate to? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Training contract
- 2 Pay
- 3 Promotion
- 4 Difficulties seeking employment
- 5 Work conditions
- 6 Bullying or harassment
- 7 Lost job or made redundant
- 8 Prefer not to say

Q.23D How often have you experienced these acts of discrimination? Please select one only.

- 1 Once
- 2 2-3 times
- 3 4-6 times
- 4 7-9 times
- 5 10+ times
- 6 Prefer not to say

Q.24 Are you aware of an existing hiring diversity policy within your workplace? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Doesn't apply

SECTION 4

Q.25 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the benefits of qualifying as a solicitor outweigh any challenges you may have faced in qualification? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 6 Doesn't apply

Q.26 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 is 'strongly agree' and 5 is 'strongly disagree'. Please note that we are interested in your perceptions of the profession as well as your experience Please select one only.

	1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neither Agree nor Disagree	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
I feel that I belong in the solicitor profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would appreciate seeing more role models of my own identity within the solicitor profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is much harder to establish yourself as a solicitor without existing contacts/networks in the profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women face more barriers to progression in the profession compared to men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would consider the solicitor profession to be a diverse profession (representative of the population)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have found it challenging to progress up the career ladder in the profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would consider deferring/have deferred having a family until I have established my career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People from minority groups face additional barriers in the profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The solicitor profession would benefit from enhanced diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 5

Q.27 To what extent do you agree or disagree that there are areas within the qualification process that need improvements? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree

- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.28 Which, if any of the following, could improve the solicitor qualification process? When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

- 1 Reduction in time it takes to qualify
- 2 Improved remuneration for trainee period
- 3 More diversity of intake on trainee programmes
- 4 Implementation of equality of opportunity policies
- 5 Increased availability of SUSI grants for PPC trainees
- 6 Increased measures to support trainees financially during training
- 7 Introduction of traineeship schemes funded by government (e.g. state sponsored traineeship/apprenticeship schemes)
- 8 Reduction in the costs of qualification
- 9 Equal access to the training environment/workplace for those with a disability (reasonable accommodation)
- 10 More supports in relation to maternity/paternity/parental leave
- 11 Better oversight of traineeships to ensure quality of training provided
- 12 Direct entry to professional training course for law graduates
- 13 Allowing solicitors to qualify without having to undergo an office based traineeship
- 14 None of these / don't know

Q.29 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the working environment within the solicitor profession needs improvement? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.30 Which, if any of the following, could improve the working environment within the solicitor profession? When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

- 1 Improved remuneration
- 2 Workplace diversity and inclusion training and targets
- 3 Better targeted supports for solicitors from diverse backgrounds
- 4 More supports in relation to maternity/paternity/parental leave
- 5 More supports in relation to carers' leave
- 6 Reduced working hours/ better work-life balance
- 7 Greater variety of career pathways in the profession
- 8 Implementation of equality of opportunity policies
- 9 Measures to ensure pay equality (e.g. gender pay gap or equitable briefing policies)
- 10 New business models for the delivery of legal services (e.g. barrister/barrister partnerships, barrister/solicitor partnerships, direct access, multi-disciplinary practices)
- 11 Better HR/career management supports
- 12 Better remote working options
- 13 None of these / don't know

Please take some time to fill in the following demographic questions. We are asking these questions about your background and characteristics in order to help us understand your responses to the survey questions. We would like to reiterate that this is an anonymised survey and all information provided will be aggregated to prevent against any identifiable information for individuals. If you do not wish to answer some of the more sensitive questions listed here, you can chose the option "Prefer not to say" in order to move on to the next question.

Q.1 Please select your gender

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Transgender
- 4 Non-binary
- 5 Other
- 6 Prefer not to say

Q.2 What age band do you fall into?

- 1 Under 21
- 2 21-24
- 3 25-28
- 4 29-32
- 5 33-36
- 6 37-40
- 7 40+

Q.3 Where were you born?

- 1 Republic of Ireland
- 2 Northern Ireland
- 3 Great Britain
- 4 Other EU Member State
- 5 Non-EU
- 6 Prefer Not to Say

Q.4 Which county do you live in?

- 1 ANTRIM
- 2 ARMAGH
- 3 CARLOW
- 4 CAVAN
- 5 CLARE
- 6 CORK
- 7 DERRY
- 8 DONEGAL
- 9 DOWN
- 10 DUBLIN
- 11 FERMANAGH
- 12 GALWAY
- 13 KERRY
- 14 KILDARE
- 15 KILKENNY
- 16 LAOIS
- 17 LEITRIM
- 18 LIMERICK
- 19 LONGFORD
- 20 LOUTH
- 21 MAYO
- 22 MEATH
- 23 MONAGHAN
- 24 OFFALY
- 25 ROSCOMMON
- 26 SLIGO
- 27 TIPPERARY
- 28 TYRONE
- 29 WATERFORD
- 30 WESTMEATH
- 31 WEXFORD
- 32 WICKLOW

Q.5 Which of the following best describes the area you mainly grew up in:

- 1 A city
- 2 A large town (5000+ population)
- 3 A rural area
- 4 A small town (1,500 – 4,999 population)
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.6 What is your native language?

- 1 Irish
- 2 English
- 3 Irish Sign Language
- 4 Other (please specify)
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.7 Which languages do you use to communicate in your practice?

- 1 Irish
- 2 English
- 3 Irish Sign Language
- 4 Other (please specify)
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.8 Are you:

- 1 Single
- 2 Married/Civil Partnership
- 3 Cohabiting
- 4 Widowed
- 5 Separated/divorced
- 6 Prefer not to say

Q.9 Are you a primary carer for a child or children under 18?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say

Q.10 Do you have any caring responsibilities (e.g. for a parent or a relative with disabilities)?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say

Q.11 Which of the options below best describes your ethnic or cultural background?

- 1 White or White Irish
- 2 Black or Black Irish
- 3 Asian or Asian Irish
- 4 Other, including mixed ethnicity (please specify if you wish)
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.12 How would you describe your sexual orientation?

- 1 Heterosexual
- 2 Gay/Lesbian
- 3 Bisexual/Pansexual
- 4 Other
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.13 Do you have a disability (including episodic conditions such as mental health)?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Do not know
- 4 Prefer not to say

Q.14 If you went to a third level institution (Ordinary Bachelors degree or higher), were you part of the first generation of your family to do so? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say
- 4 Don't know

Q.15 Which of the following best describes the occupation of your parent/guardian who is /was the main income provider?

- 1 Employer / senior manager
- 2 Higher Professional
- 3 Lower Professional
- 4 Non-manual
- 5 Manual Skilled
- 6 Semi-skilled
- 7 Unskilled Labour
- 8 Farmer or agricultural worker
- 9 Prefer not to say

Q.16 Did you attend a fee-paying secondary school?

- 1 Yes – paid all fees
- 2 Yes – awarded a scholarship
- 3 No
- 4 Prefer not to say

Q.17 Which of the following institutions were you awarded a degree from? Select all that apply.

- 1 Athlone IT (TUS)
- 2 IT Carlow
- 3 Dublin Business School
- 4 Dublin City University
- 5 Griffith College
- 6 Letterkenny IT
- 7 Limerick IT (TUS)
- 8 Maynooth University
- 9 NUI Galway
- 10 Queens University Belfast
- 11 TU Dublin (previously DIT)
- 12 Trinity College Dublin
- 13 University College Cork
- 14 University College Dublin
- 15 Ulster University
- 16 University of Limerick
- 17 Waterford IT
- 18 King's Inns
- 19 Other third level institute
- 20 Non-Graduate
- 21 Prefer not to say

Q.18 Do you have an undergraduate law degree?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say

Q.19 Did you secure a place at a third level institution solely as a result of your leaving certificate points (or equivalent) or did you avail of an access programme or mature student entry?

- 1 Leaving Cert points
- 2 Access programme
- 3 Mature student
- 4 Other
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.19a Which access programme did you avail of?

- 1 Disability Access Route to Education
- 2 Higher Education Access Route
- 3 Other (please specify)
- 4 Prefer not to say

LSRA survey on the experiences of student and early career barristers

Q.1 At what stage are you in the qualification process or your career? Please select one only.

- 1 Student undertaking Barrister-at-Law degree course at King's Inns
- 2 Qualified barrister undertaking pupillage at the Law Library
- 3 Qualified barrister– self-employed member of the Law Library
- 4 Qualified barrister– self-employed and not a member of the Law Library
- 5 Qualified barrister– employed in-house in private sector
- 6 Qualified barrister– employed in public sector

Q.1b What county is your workplace in/do you mainly work in? Please select one only.

- 1 ANTRIM
- 2 ARMAGH
- 3 CARLOW
- 4 CAVAN
- 5 CLARE
- 6 CORK
- 7 DERRY
- 8 DONEGAL
- 9 DOWN
- 10 DUBLIN
- 11 FERMANAGH
- 12 GALWAY
- 13 KERRY
- 14 KILDARE
- 15 KILKENNY
- 16 LAOIS
- 17 LEITRIM
- 18 LIMERICK
- 19 LONGFORD
- 20 LOUTH
- 21 MAYO
- 22 MEATH
- 23 MONAGHAN
- 24 OFFALY
- 25 ROSCOMMON
- 26 SLIGO
- 27 TIPPERARY
- 28 TYRONE
- 29 WATERFORD
- 30 WESTMEATH
- 31 WEXFORD
- 32 WICKLOW

Q.1c What court circuit do you mostly work in? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Dublin Circuit
- 2 Cork Circuit
- 3 Eastern Circuit
- 4 Midland Circuit
- 5 Northern Circuit
- 6 South Eastern Circuit
- 7 South Western Circuit
- 8 Western Circuit
- 9 Does Not Apply

Q.2 How many years have you been working in the profession post qualification? Please select one only.

- 1 Less than 2 years
- 2 2-3 years

- 3 4-5 years
- 4 6-7 years

Q.3a In which area of law do you work? Please select one only.

- 1 Mostly criminal
- 2 Mostly civil
- 3 Mixed criminal and civil
- 4 In-house
- 5 Other (specify)

Q.3b In which area of law do you intend to work? Please select one only.

- 1 Mostly criminal
- 2 Mostly civil
- 3 Mixed criminal and civil
- 4 In-house
- 5 I don't intend to practise as a barrister
- 6 Other (specify)

Q.4 Why did you choose to work in an in-house role? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Pay and conditions
- 2 Wanted to transition to a business/public sector area
- 3 Work life balance
- 4 More regular hours
- 5 More reliable income
- 6 Wanted to focus on starting a family
- 7 Wanted to specialise in a particular area of law
- 8 I always intended to work in an in-house role
- 9 Better fit for me personally
- 10 Lack of career path or career progression
- 11 Other (Specify)
- 12 None of the above

Q.5a Prior to starting your legal education or qualifying, did you have any previous connections with the legal profession? E.g. Family member working in legal profession. Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q.5b Please tick all connections that apply to each legal profession stated. On mobile, open the tab for each legal profession stated and tick all connections that apply before moving to the next tab:

	Parent/close relative	Friend/family friend	Close friend	Other (specify)	None
Barrister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Judge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other role in legal sector (e.g. paralegal, support staff in a law firm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General business or work connections in the legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.5c To what extent do you agree or disagree that these connections helped you to advance your own career? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree

- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.6 Which, if any, of the following did you do in order to find your Master? Or if you have not yet found your Master, which of the following, if any, do you consider will help you find one? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Use of my personal connections (e.g. family, colleague, friend with links to the profession)
- 2 Use of an academic connection (e.g. a lecturer or tutor)
- 3 I don't intend to undertake pupillage
- 4 Didn't undertake pupillage
- 5 Other (specify)
- 6 None of these

Q.7a How did you pay/are you paying for the BL degree course fees? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Self-funded from savings
- 2 SUSI grant
- 3 A bursary or fellowship
- 4 A loan from my family or a financial institution (e.g. a bank or credit union)
- 5 Paid for by my employer – full fees
- 6 Paid for by my employer – some fees
- 7 Paid for by my family
- 8 Other (specify)

Q.7b How did you support/are you supporting yourself financially day-to-day while doing the BL degree? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Self-funded from savings
- 2 SUSI grant
- 3 A bursary or fellowship
- 4 A loan from a financial institution (e.g. bank or credit union)
- 5 Family support
- 6 Part-time job
- 7 Full-time job
- 8 Other (specify)

Q.7c While undertaking your one-year pupillage/devilling, what kinds of financial arrangements were/are in place with your Master? Please select all that apply.

- 1 My Master paid my Law Library fees and subscription
- 2 My Law Library fees and subscription were paid as part of my fellowship/scholarship
- 3 My Master did not pay my Law Library fees and subscription but paid me informally and/or provided other supports/gifts
- 4 My Master allowed me to send fee notes to solicitors for work undertaken by me on his/her behalf
- 5 My Master provided indirect financial support (e.g. paying travel expenses, buying lunch, etc.)
- 6 Colleagues/friends in years ahead of me provided me with regular, small work that I could fee for
- 7 I didn't do a devilling year
- 8 Other (please specify)

Q.8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your pupillage. Please select one only for each statement.

	1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neither Agree nor Disagree	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree	Doesn't apply
There is/was sufficient information and guidance available on the process of securing a pupillage with a Master	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process of identifying a Master and securing a pupillage is/was difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is/was sufficient information on available Masters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is/was sufficient information about the conditions of the pupillage and what to expect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is/was sufficient information in relation to remuneration during the pupillage year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel that the process to arrange a Master could be improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The process of securing a Master is/was so informal that I did not feel I knew what to expect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My Master monitors/monitored my work and gives/gave me appropriate feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am/was satisfied with the quality of the experience I gained during my pupillage year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel/felt there was/is sufficient oversight of the quality of my pupillage year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel/felt I had sufficient information in advance of my pupillage about the practice area/specialism of my Master's practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Securing a Master is/was a highly competitive process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Success in securing a Master is based largely on who you know/contacts in the profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I consider that the pupillage year

equipped me well to begin working as a barrister

Discrimination is an obstacle I have

faced/face when qualifying as a barrister

Q.9 Have you taken any of the following types of leave during your training or career as a barrister? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Maternity leave
- 2 Paternity leave
- 3 Adoptive leave
- 4 None of these

Q.10 Does your employer provide paid maternity / paternity / adoptive leave? This refers to payment separate from or in addition to statutory Maternity Benefit, Paternity Benefit or Adoptive Benefit. Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know
- 4 Doesn't apply (self-employed or BL student)

Q.11a Which of the following best describes the income / financial support you received during your leave period? Please select one only.

- 1 State Maternity / Paternity / Adoptive Benefit plus additional pay from employer to equal full salary
- 2 State Maternity / Paternity / Adoptive Benefit plus additional pay from employer to equal partial salary
- 3 State Maternity / Paternity / Adoptive Benefit (no additional pay from employer)
- 4 No State Maternity / Paternity / Adoptive Benefit or payment from employer
- 5 Other (specify)

Q.11b What was the duration of your maternity / paternity / adoptive leave? (Note: statutory leave entitlements are as follows: paternity = 2 weeks, maternity = 26 weeks, adoptive = 24 weeks) Please select one only.

- 1 Full statutory leave duration
- 2 Partial statutory leave duration
- 3 Other (specify)

Q.11c Did you take additional unpaid maternity / adoptive leave? (The statutory entitlement is for up to 16 weeks unpaid leave) Please select one only.

- 1 Yes, less than 16 weeks
- 2 Yes, 16 weeks
- 3 Yes, more than 16 weeks
- 4 No

Q.12 To what extent do you agree or disagree that taking maternity / adoptive leave has had or will have a negative impact on your professional career? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.12b Please describe how you consider that your professional career has been or may be negatively impacted by taking maternity / adoptive leave. Please type answer in box below.

Q.13 How satisfied were you with the following aspects of maternity / paternity / adoptive leave provision and arrangements in your profession /workplace? Please select one only for each aspect.

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied	Don't know	Doesn't apply
The payments I received during maternity / paternity / adoptive leave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The duration of the maternity / paternity / adoptive leave that I was able to take (e.g. number of weeks).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The formal workplace supports around maternity / adoptive leave planning and cover arrangements (e.g. handover planning, case management).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The informal workplace supports around maternity / adoptive leave planning and cover arrangements (e.g. assistance of colleagues with work handovers, case management).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The level of expected earnings after returning from maternity / adoptive leave (e.g. bonus year targets in firms, income levels for self-employed).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.14 How satisfied do you expect yourself to be with the following aspects of maternity / paternity / adoptive leave provision and arrangements in your current profession / workplace if you do take maternity / paternity / adoptive leave in the future? Please select one only for each aspect.

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied	Don't know	Doesn't apply
Payment entitlements during maternity / paternity / adoptive leave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The duration of maternity / paternity / adoptive leave (e.g. number of weeks).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal workplace supports around maternity / adoptive leave planning and cover arrangements (e.g. handover planning, case management).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal workplace supports around maternity / adoptive leave planning and cover arrangements (e.g. assistance of colleagues with work handovers, case management).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
That your earnings after returning from maternity / adoptive leave will not be negatively impacted (e.g. bonus year targets in firms, income levels for self-employed).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.15 To what extent has your experience of working within the barrister profession met your expectations? Please select one only.

- 1 Greatly exceeded expectations
- 2 Exceeded expectations
- 3 Matched expectations
- 4 Below expectations
- 5 Far below expectations

SECTION 2

Q.16 In your opinion, what are the main barriers, if any, that you may face/have faced in entering the barrister profession? Tell us all that apply. NOTE: Responses will be edited to ensure respondents' anonymity. Please type answer in box below. Please type 'none' if you don't feel you will face / have faced any barriers.

Q.17 In your opinion, what are/will be the main challenges, if any, for you when working in the barrister profession? Tell us all that apply. *NOTE: Responses will be edited to ensure respondents' anonymity.* Please type answer in box below. Please type 'none' if you don't feel you will face / have faced any challenges.

Q.18 Thank you for indicating your spontaneous thoughts on barriers in the previous question. We are also interested in your rankings of the following barriers. Which of the following, if any, do you think has acted or might act as a barrier to you entering the barrister profession? If you feel there were/are barriers, please rank the top five barriers you think you experienced/may experience. *When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button.* If you feel there were / are no barriers, please select 'None of these'. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

- 1 Difficulties in securing a Master
- 2 Having no role models in the profession
- 3 Lack of income during pupillage
- 4 Lack of networks/contacts in the profession
- 5 The overall financial cost of qualifying (including costs of courses, accommodation, etc.)
- 6 Cost of living in/travelling to Dublin
- 7 Geographical barriers (e.g. need to be in Dublin for pupillage)
- 8 The time it takes to qualify
- 9 Not having attended 'the right' school or university
- 10 Lack of clarity/knowledge on the barrister career path
- 11 Balancing work with caring commitments (e.g. childcare, caring for a family member etc.)
- 12 Not fitting (belonging) with the traditional demographic of the profession
- 13 Lack of equal access to the workplace for those with a disability (reasonable accommodation)
- 14 Discrimination based on any of the nine statutory grounds
- 15 None of these

Q.19 And now, which of the following, if any, do you think have been, or might be a challenge to you working in the barrister profession? If you feel there were/are challenges, please rank the top five challenges you think you experienced or may experience. *When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button.* If you feel there were / are no challenges, please select 'None of these'. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

- 1 Lack of clarity on career progression
- 2 Lack of network / contacts in the profession
- 3 Balancing work with caring commitments (e.g. childcare, caring for family member, etc.)
- 4 Not fitting (belonging) with the traditional demographic of the profession
- 5 Remuneration
- 6 Cost of living in Dublin
- 7 Geographical barriers (i.e. need to be in Dublin for court work)
- 8 Working hours
- 9 The time it takes to build up a practice
- 10 Difficulties getting paid
- 11 Discrimination based on any of the nine statutory grounds
- 12 Lack of maternity/paternity supports
- 13 Impact on personal life (e.g. delaying starting a family etc.)
- 14 Technological barriers (e.g. accessibility of online resources, use of online court platforms)

- 15 Lack of equal access to the workplace for those with a disability (reasonable accommodation)
- 16 None of these

Please read the following list of areas of discrimination prior to moving to the next question:

Gender (includes gender identity)

Civil status (relationship status of being single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed)

Family status (being pregnant, or being a parent of a person under 18 years, or being the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability)

Age

Disability

Sexual orientation

Race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin

Religion (religious beliefs and background, including lack of religious beliefs)

Membership of the Traveller community

Socio-economic status or background (economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation; e.g. being from a working-class background)

Q.20 Have you experienced discrimination in your barrister training, while looking for work as a barrister or in the workplace as a barrister related to any of the areas of discrimination listed on the previous page. Please select one only.

- 1 Yes – within the last 3 years
- 2 Yes – not in last 3 years
- 3 No
- 4 Don't know
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.20b If yes, please select which of the area(s) it related to. Please select all that apply.

- 1 Gender (includes gender identity)
- 2 Civil status (relationship status of being single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed)
- 3 Family status (being pregnant, or being a parent of a person under 18 years, or being the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability)
- 4 Age
- 5 Disability
- 6 Sexual orientation
- 7 Race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- 8 Religion (religious beliefs and background, including lack of religious beliefs)
- 9 Membership of the Traveller community
- 10 Socio-economic status or background (economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation; e.g. being from a working-class background)
- 11 Other (please specify)
- 12 Prefer not to say

Q.20c What did the discrimination relate to? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Difficulties acquiring a pupillage
- 2 Pay
- 3 Accessing or being awarded jobs/cases
- 4 Difficulties seeking employment
- 5 Work conditions
- 6 Bullying or harassment
- 7 Lost job or made redundant
- 8 Other (please specify)
- 9 Prefer not to say

Q.20d How often have you experienced these acts of discrimination? Please select one only.

- 1 Once
- 2 2-3 times
- 3 4-6 times
- 4 7-9 times
- 5 10+ times
- 6 Prefer not to say

Q.21 Are you aware of an existing hiring diversity policy within your workplace? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Doesn't apply

SECTION 4

Q.22 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the benefits of qualifying as a barrister outweigh the challenges you faced in qualification? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree
- 6 Doesn't apply

Q.23 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 is 'strongly agree' and 5 is 'strongly disagree'. Please note that we are interested in your perceptions of the profession as well as your experience Please select one only for each statement.

	1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neither Agree nor Disagree	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
I feel that I belong in the barrister profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would appreciate seeing more role models of my own identity within the barrister profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

It is much harder to establish yourself as a barrister without existing contacts/networks in the profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women face more barriers to progression in the profession compared to men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would consider the barrister profession to be a diverse profession (representative of the population)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am considering / have previously considered transferring to the solicitor profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have found it challenging to progress up the career ladder in the profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would consider deferring/have deferred having children until I have established my career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People from minority groups face additional barriers in the profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The barrister profession would benefit from enhanced diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 5

Q.24 To what extent do you agree or disagree that there are areas within the qualification process that need improvements? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.25 Which, if any of the following, could improve the barrister qualification/pupillage process? *When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.*

- 1 Reduction in time it takes to qualify
- 2 Enhanced financial support or improved remuneration during pupillage
- 3 Additional study supports (i.e. book buying schemes, learning resources, BL fee coverage)
- 4 More diversity of intake in BL programme and pupillages
- 5 Increased availability of government grants for pupils
- 6 A formalised structure around securing a Master
- 7 Reduction in costs of qualification
- 8 Equal access to the training environment/ workplace for those with a disability (reasonable accommodation)
- 9 More supports in relation to maternity/paternity/parental leave
- 10 None of these / don't know

Q.26 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the working environment within the barrister profession needs improvement? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.27 Which, if any of the following, could improve the working environment within the barrister profession? When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

- 1 Improved remuneration
- 2 Workplace diversity and inclusion training and targets
- 3 Better targeted supports for barristers from diverse backgrounds
- 4 More supports in relation to maternity/paternity/parental leave
- 5 More supports in relation to carers' leave
- 6 Reduced working hours/ better work-life balance
- 7 Greater variety of career pathways in the profession
- 8 Implementation of equality of opportunity policies
- 9 Measures to ensure pay equality (e.g. gender pay gap or equitable briefing policies)
- 10 New business models for the delivery of legal services (e.g. barrister/barrister partnerships, barrister/solicitor partnerships, direct access, multi-disciplinary practices)
- 11 Better HR/career management supports
- 12 Better remote working options
- 13 None of these / don't know

Please take some time to fill in the following demographic questions. We are asking these questions about your background and characteristics in order to help us understand your responses to the survey questions. We would like to reiterate that this is an anonymised survey and all information provided will be aggregated to prevent against any identifiable information for individuals. If you do not wish to answer some of the more sensitive questions listed here, you can chose the option "Prefer not to say" in order to move on to the next question.

Q.1 Please select your gender

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Transgender
- 4 Non-binary
- 5 Other
- 6 Prefer not to say

Q.2 What age band do you fall into?

- 1 Under 21
- 2 21-24
- 3 25-28
- 4 29-32
- 5 33-36
- 6 37-40
- 7 40+

Q.3 Where were you born?

- 1 Republic of Ireland
- 2 Northern Ireland
- 3 Great Britain
- 4 Other EU Member State
- 5 Non-EU

- 6 Prefer Not to Say

Q.4 Which county do you live in?

- 1 ANTRIM
 2 ARMAGH
 3 CARLOW
 4 CAVAN
 5 CLARE
 6 CORK
 7 DERRY
 8 DONEGAL
 9 DOWN
 10 DUBLIN
 11 FERMANAGH
 12 GALWAY
 13 KERRY
 14 KILDARE
 15 KILKENNY
 16 LAOIS
 17 LEITRIM
 18 LIMERICK
 19 LONGFORD
 20 LOUTH
 21 MAYO
 22 MEATH
 23 MONAGHAN
 24 OFFALY
 25 ROSCOMMON
 26 SLIGO
 27 TIPPERARY
 28 TYRONE
 29 WATERFORD
 30 WESTMEATH
 31 WEXFORD
 32 WICKLOW

Q.5 Which of the following best describes the area you mainly grew up in?

- 1 A city
 2 A large town (5000+ population)
 3 A small town (1,500 – 4,999 population)
 4 A rural area
 5 Prefer not to say

Q.6 What is your native language?

- 1 Irish
 2 English
 3 Irish Sign Language
 4 Other (please specify)
 5 Prefer not to say

Q.7 Which languages do you use to communicate in your practice?

- 1 Irish
 2 English
 3 Irish Sign Language
 4 Other (please specify)
 5 Prefer not to say

Q.8 Are you:

- 1 Single
 2 Married/Civil Partnership
 3 Cohabiting
 4 Widowed

- 5 Separated/divorced
- 6 Prefer not to say

Q.9 Are you a primary carer for a child or children under 18?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say

Q.10 Do you have any caring responsibilities (e.g. for a parent or a relative with disabilities)?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say

Q.11 Which of the options below best describes your ethnic or cultural background?

- 1 White or White Irish
- 2 Black or Black Irish
- 3 Asian or Asian Irish
- 4 Other, including mixed ethnicity (please specify if you wish)
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.12 How would you describe your sexual orientation?

- 1 Heterosexual
- 2 Gay/Lesbian
- 3 Bisexual/Pansexual
- 4 Other
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.13 Do you have a disability (including episodic conditions such as mental health)?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Do not know
- 4 Prefer not to say

Q.14 If you went to a third level institution (Ordinary Bachelors degree or higher), were you part of the first generation of your family to do so? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say
- 4 Don't know

Q.15 Which of the following best describes the occupation of your parent/guardian who is /was the main income provider?

- 1 Employer / senior manager
- 2 Higher Professional
- 3 Lower Professional
- 4 Non-manual
- 5 Manual Skilled
- 6 Semi-skilled
- 7 Unskilled Labour
- 8 Farmer or agricultural worker
- 9 Prefer not to say

Q.16 Did you attend a fee-paying secondary school?

- 1 Yes – paid all fees
- 2 Yes – awarded a scholarship
- 3 No
- 4 Prefer not to say

Q.17 Which of the following institutions were you awarded a degree from? Please select all that apply.

- 1 Athlone IT (TUS)
- 2 IT Carlow
- 3 Dublin Business School
- 4 Dublin City University
- 5 Griffith College
- 6 Letterkenny IT
- 7 Limerick IT (TUS)
- 8 Maynooth University
- 9 NUI Galway
- 10 Queens University Belfast
- 11 TU Dublin (previously DIT)
- 12 Trinity College Dublin
- 13 University College Cork
- 14 University College Dublin
- 15 Ulster University
- 16 University of Limerick
- 17 Waterford IT
- 18 King's Inns
- 19 Other third level institute
- 20 Non-Graduate
- 21 Prefer not to say

Q.18 Do you have an undergraduate law degree?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say

Q.19 Did you secure a place at a third level institution solely as a result of your leaving certificate points (or equivalent) or did you avail of an access programme or mature student entry?

- 1 Leaving Cert points
- 2 Access programme
- 3 Mature student
- 4 Other
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.19a Which access programme did you avail of?

- 1 Disability Access Route to Education
- 2 Higher Education Access Route
- 3 Other (please specify)
- 4 Prefer not to say

ENDS

LSRA Survey on the experience of Law Undergraduates

SECTION 1**Q.1a At which university/IT are you currently studying? Please select one only.**

- 1 Athlone IT (TUS)
- 2 IT Carlow
- 3 Dublin Business School
- 4 Dublin City University
- 5 Griffith College
- 6 Letterkenny IT

- 7 Limerick IT (TUS)
- 8 Maynooth University
- 9 NUI Galway
- 10 TU Dublin
- 11 Trinity College Dublin
- 12 University College Dublin
- 13 University College Cork
- 14 University of Limerick
- 15 Waterford IT

Q.1b What year of your law degree are you currently undergoing? Please select one only.

- 1 First year
- 2 Second year
- 3 Third Year
- 4 Fourth Year

Q.1c What degree course are you studying? Please select one only.

- 1 BA
- 2 BCL
- 3 LLB
- 4 Other (specify)

Q.1d Have you ever undertaken any work experience/placements and/or internships (either paid or unpaid) with a legal focus? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q.1e Have you secured a training contract as a solicitor? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q.1f How many training contracts did you apply for before you secured one? Please select one only.

- 1 1-2
- 2 3-5
- 3 6-10
- 4 Between 11-20
- 5 21 or more

Q.2a Thinking back prior to beginning your law degree, what career path did you hope/plan to follow? Please select one only.

- 1 Solicitor in a private firm
- 2 Solicitor in a public body, semi-state body, government department, etc
- 3 Solicitor in-house in a private company or business
- 4 Solicitor in a non-governmental organisation or independent law centre
- 5 Barrister (self-employed in private practice at the Bar)
- 6 Barrister (in-house in a private company or the public sector)
- 7 Other legal career (company secretary, paralegal, legal executive, etc)
- 8 Other career path within law (please specify)
- 9 A career outside of law
- 10 Unsure

Q.2b At this current stage of your studying, do you know what career path you wish to follow? Please select one only.

- 1 Solicitor in a private firm
- 2 Solicitor in a public body, semi-state body, government department, etc
- 3 Solicitor in-house in a private company or business
- 4 Solicitor in a non-governmental organisation or independent law centre
- 5 Barrister (self-employed in private practice at the Bar)
- 6 Barrister (in-house in a private company or the public sector)
- 7 Other legal career (company secretary, paralegal, legal executive, etc)

- 8 Other career path within law (please specify)
- 9 A career outside of law
- 10 Unsure

Q.3 How informed do you consider yourself to be about the following aspects of the process of qualifying as a solicitor or barrister? Please select one only for each of the professional qualification processes stated.

	Very well informed	Fairly well informed	Neither informed nor dis-informed	Not informed well	Not informed at all
The length of time it takes to qualify as a solicitor or barrister after graduation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The costs of qualifying as a solicitor or barrister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The career options open to me as a qualified solicitor or barrister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.4a Do you have any connections with the legal profession? E.g. Family member working in legal profession Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q.4b Please tick all connections that apply to each legal profession stated. On mobile, open the tab for each legal profession stated and tick all connections that apply before moving to the next tab:

	Parent/close relative	Friend/family friend	Close friend	Other (specify)	None
Barrister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Judge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other role in legal sector (e.g. paralegal, support staff in a law firm)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General business or work connections in the legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.4c To what extent do you agree or disagree that these connections will be helpful in advancing your future career? Please select one only.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Somewhat agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Somewhat disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Q.4d To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement, where 1 is 'strongly agree' and 5 is 'strongly disagree'. Please note that we are interested in your perceptions as well as your experience. Please select one only. I expect that it will be necessary to obtain a summer internship with a solicitors firm in order to increase my chances of securing a training contract

- 1 1. Strongly Agree
- 2 2. Somewhat Agree
- 3 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 4. Somewhat Disagree
- 5 5. Strongly Disagree

SECTION 2

Q.5 In your opinion, what do you think are the main barriers, if any, that you may face in entering the legal profession – that is qualifying as a solicitor or barrister? *NOTE: Responses will be edited to ensure respondents' anonymity*. Please type answer in box below. Please type 'none' if you don't feel you will face any barriers.

Q.6 In your opinion, what do you think will be the main challenges, if any, for you when working in the legal profession as a solicitor or barrister? *NOTE: Responses will be edited to ensure respondents' anonymity*. Please type answer in box below. Please type 'none' if you don't feel you will face any challenges.

Q.7 Thank you for indicating your spontaneous thoughts in the previous question. We are also interested in your ranking of the following barriers and challenges. Which of the following, if any, do you think will act as a barrier to you entering the legal profession? If you feel there are barriers, please rank the top five you think you are most likely to experience. When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button. If you feel there were / are no barriers, please select 'None of these'. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

(5 maximum responses)

- 1 Difficulties in securing a solicitor training contract or a Master for a barrister pupillage
- 2 Having no role models in the legal profession
- 3 Lack of remuneration during training/pupillage
- 4 Lack of guaranteed remuneration in the early years
- 5 Lack of networks/contacts in the legal profession
- 6 The cost of qualifying
- 7 Costs of living in/commuting to Dublin for solicitor or barrister training
- 8 The overall time it takes to qualify
- 9 Lack of clarity/knowledge about legal career paths
- 10 Not having attended the 'right' school or university

- 11 Balancing work with caring commitments (e.g childcare, caring for family member, etc)
- 12 Not fitting (belonging) with the traditional demographic of the legal profession
- 13 Expectations of the legal profession (e.g. long working hours)
- 14 Discrimination based on any of the statutory discrimination grounds (e.g, sexual orientation, gender, etc)
- 15 Impact on personal life (e.g. delaying starting a family etc)
- 16 None of these / don't know

Q.8 And now, which of the following, if any, do you think will be a challenge for you working in the legal profession as a solicitor or barrister? If you feel there are challenges, please rank the top five you think you are most likely to experience? When finished ranking (up to 5), please press the 'Next Question' button. If you feel there were / are no challenges, please select 'None of these'. To rank items, please select each item in the order of rank that you wish to give them beginning with 1. To deselect an item click on it again.

(5 maximum responses)

- 1 Geographical barriers (e.g. need to be in Dublin for work)
- 2 Lack of clarity/knowledge about the legal career path
- 3 Lack of network / contacts in the legal profession
- 4 Balancing work with caring commitments (e.g childcare, caring for family member, etc)
- 5 Remuneration
- 6 Not fitting (belonging) with the traditional demographic of the legal profession
- 7 Terms and conditions of employment
- 8 Lack of reliable income
- 9 Working hours
- 10 The time it takes to build up a practice as a self-employed barrister
- 11 Difficulties getting paid as a self-employed barrister
- 12 Discrimination based on any of the statutory discrimination grounds (e.g, sexual orientation, gender, etc)
- 13 Lack of maternity/paternity supports
- 14 Impact on personal life (e.g. delaying starting a family etc)
- 15 None of these / don't know

SECTION 4

Q.9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 is 'strongly agree' and 5 is 'strongly disagree'. Please note that we are interested in your perceptions of the profession as well as your experience. Please select one only for each statement.

	1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neither Agree nor Disagree	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
I feel that I will fit in with the legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would appreciate seeing more role models of my own identity within the legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is easier to establish yourself as a solicitor/barrister if you have existing networks within the legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Women face more barriers to progression in the legal profession compared to men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would consider the solicitor/barrister profession to be a diverse profession (representative of the population)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect that it will be challenging for me to enter and progress up the career ladder in the legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People from minority groups face additional barriers in the legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please take some time to fill in the following demographic questions. We are asking these questions about your background and characteristics in order to help us understand your responses to the survey questions. We would like to reiterate that this is an anonymised survey and all information provided will be aggregated to prevent against any identifiable information for individuals. If you do not wish to answer some of the more sensitive questions listed here, you can choose the option “Prefer not to say” in order to move on to the next question.

Q.1 Please select your gender Please select one only.

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Non-binary
- 4 Other
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.2 What age band do you fall into? Please select one only.

- 1 17-19
- 2 20-22
- 3 23-25
- 4 26-28
- 5 Over 29

Q.3 Where were you born? Please select one only.

- 1 Republic of Ireland
- 2 Northern Ireland
- 3 Great Britain
- 4 Other EU Member State
- 5 Non-EU
- 6 Prefer Not to Say

Q.4 Which county do you live in?

- 1 ANTRIM
- 2 ARMAGH
- 3 CARLOW
- 4 CAVAN
- 5 CLARE
- 6 CORK
- 7 DERRY
- 8 DONEGAL
- 9 DOWN
- 10 DUBLIN

- 11 FERMANAGH
- 12 GALWAY
- 13 KERRY
- 14 KILDARE
- 15 KILKENNY
- 16 LAOIS
- 17 LEITRIM
- 18 LIMERICK
- 19 LONGFORD
- 20 LOUTH
- 21 MAYO
- 22 MEATH
- 23 MONAGHAN
- 24 OFFALY
- 25 ROSCOMMON
- 26 SLIGO
- 27 TIPPERARY
- 28 TYRONE
- 29 WATERFORD
- 30 WESTMEATH
- 31 WEXFORD
- 32 WICKLOW

Q.5 Which of the following best describes the area you mainly grew up in? Please select one only.

- 1 A city
- 2 A large town (5000+ population)
- 3 A small town (1,500 – 4,999 population)
- 4 A rural area
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.6 What is your native language? Please select all that apply.

(4 maximum responses)

- 1 Irish
- 2 English
- 3 Irish Sign Language
- 4 Other (please specify)
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.7 Are you:

- 1 Single
- 2 Married/Civil partnership
- 3 Cohabiting
- 4 Widowed
- 5 Separated/divorced
- 6 Prefer not to say

Q.8 Are you a primary carer for a child or children under 18?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say

Q.9 Do you have any caring responsibilities (e.g. for a parent or a relative with disabilities)? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say

Q.10 Which of the options below best describes your ethnic or cultural background?

- 1 White or White Irish
- 2 Black or Black Irish
- 3 Asian or Asian Irish

- 4 Other, including mixed ethnicity (Please specify if you wish)
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.11 How would you describe your sexual orientation? Please select one only.

- 1 Heterosexual
- 2 Gay/Lesbian
- 3 Bisexual/Pansexual
- 4 Other
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.12 Do you have a disability (including episodic conditions such as mental health)? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Do not know
- 4 Prefer not to say

Q.13 Are you part of the first generation of your family to study at a third level institution? (Ordinary Bachelors degree or higher) Please select one only.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Prefer not to say
- 4 Don't know

Q.14 Which of the following best describes the occupation of your parent/guardian who is /was the main income provider? Please select one only.

- 1 Employer / senior manager
- 2 Higher Professional
- 3 Lower Professional
- 4 Non-manual
- 5 Manual Skilled
- 6 Semi-skilled
- 7 Unskilled Labour
- 8 Farmer or agricultural worker
- 9 Prefer not to say

Q.15 Did you attend a fee-paying secondary school? Please select one only.

- 1 Yes – paid all fees
- 2 Yes – awarded a scholarship
- 3 No
- 4 Prefer not to say

Q.16 Are you attending a third level institution solely as a result of your Leaving Certificate points (or equivalent) or did you avail of an access programme or mature student entry? Please select one only.

- 1 Leaving Cert points
- 2 Access programme
- 3 Mature student
- 4 Other
- 5 Prefer not to say

Q.17a Which access programme did you avail of? Please select one only.

- 1 Disability Access Route to Education
- 2 Higher Education Access Route
- 3 Other (please specify)
- 4 Prefer not to say

Many thanks again for having taken the time to contribute your views and opinions to this research; it is greatly appreciated.

Please click Next Question below to submit your response.

LSRA survey on the experiences recently qualified solicitors and barristers who are currently not practising

1. Are you a qualified solicitor or barrister, having qualified in Ireland?

- Solicitor
- Barrister
- Qualified as both solicitor and barrister
- Neither

2. Are you currently practising as a solicitor or barrister in Ireland?

- Yes
- No

3. What year did you complete your professional training as a solicitor or barrister?

- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021

4. Did you ever practise as a solicitor or barrister in Ireland?

- Yes – solicitor
- Yes – barrister
- Yes – both

4a. For how long did you practise as a solicitor or barrister?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

4b. What was the nature of your practice, or, if mixed, your main practice?

- Solicitor in a firm
- Solicitor in-house in public or private sector
- Barrister self-employed
- Barrister in-house in public or private sector

5. Which of the following best describes the main reasons why you are not currently practising as a barrister or solicitor? Please select all that apply.

- I wanted a job with better work-life balance

- I wanted a job with better remuneration
- I wanted a more secure job
- I wanted to take a career break
- I had / have caring responsibilities
- I wanted to return to full-time education
- I never intended to practise as a barrister or solicitor
- I wanted to move into another professional area or sector
- Other (please specify)

6. Did any of the following barriers influence your decision to not practise as a solicitor or barrister at this time? Please select all that apply.

- Inability to earn sufficient income
- Working hours excessively long/work too stressful
- The work didn't meet my expectations/wasn't a good fit for me
- Work too stressful
- Experience of discrimination in the workplace
- Lack of reasonable accommodation for a disability
- Lack of network / contacts in the profession
- Lack of maternity / paternity supports
- Unable to balance work with caring commitments (e.g. childcare, caring for a family member)
- No barriers influenced my decision
- Other (please specify)

7. Which of the following best describes your current work or employment status?

- Employed in private sector
- Employed in public sector
- Self-employed (including consultancy work)
- Unemployed
- Full-time carer/parent
- Career break
- Full-time study
- Other (specify)

8. Do you work in the legal services area?

- Yes
- No

8a. What sector of the economy do you now work in?

- Financial Corporation (e.g. banks and insurers)
- Non-Financial Private Corporations (e.g. industry, business)
- Public Sector (e.g. local authority, semi-state body, government department, teaching)
- Non-Profit Institution (e.g. Charities)
- Other (please specify)

9. How would you describe your satisfaction with your decision to not practise as a solicitor or barrister at this time?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

10. Do you intend to practise as a solicitor or barrister in the future?

- I definitely will
- I probably will
- Unsure
- I definitely will not
- I probably will not

Appendix G – Privacy Notices

Annex F: Privacy Notices

Privacy Notice / Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQ") - LSRA survey of early career legal professionals and law undergraduates

The Minister for Justice (the "Minister") has asked the Legal Services Regulatory Authority ("LSRA") to consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King's Inns and the Law Society respectively. In considering these issues, the Minister has requested that the LSRA pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions. The Minister has asked the LSRA to engage appropriately with all relevant stakeholders, including with university law students, those students currently studying in the King's Inns and the Law Society and newly qualified members of both professions. The Minister has further asked that the LSRA, having considered these issues, make recommendations for changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.

On foot of the Minister's request, the LSRA proposes to prepare a report for the Minister (the "Report") in accordance with section 34(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the "2015 Act"). For the purpose of preparing the Report, and in accordance with section 13(2)(i) the 2015 Act, the LSRA proposes to carry out an anonymous survey of (a) trainee and qualified solicitors with up to 7 years post qualification experience, (b) student barristers and barristers with up to 7 years post qualification experience and (c) certain law undergraduates (the "Online Anonymised Survey"). The LSRA has engaged an external research/survey company, Behaviour & Attitudes ("B&A"), in order to assist with the design of, and to conduct, the Online Anonymised Survey. The Online Anonymised Survey will be distributed by email with the support of the Registration, Levy and Fees Unit of the LSRA, the Law Society of Ireland, the King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland (the "Representative Bodies") and certain colleges and ITs (the "colleges") as follows: Athlone IT; IT Carlow; DCU; Limerick IT; LYIT; Maynooth University; NUIG; Technical University Dublin; TCD; UCD; UCC; UCD; University of Limerick; Griffith College; and Dublin Business School. Waterford IT will share a link to the Online Anonymised Survey with law undergraduates via the Moodle programme pages of law courses.

This Privacy Notice/FAQ has been prepared to provide respondents with certain information in relation to the processing of their data for the purposes of carrying out the Online Anonymised Survey and to answer some frequently asked questions that you may have.

1. How does the Online Anonymised Survey work?

Participation in the Online Anonymised Survey is entirely voluntary. The Online Anonymised Survey will be distributed online and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The Online Anonymised Survey will be hosted by Microsoft Azure.

Where you receive a survey link from the Representative Bodies, the survey does not need to be completed in one go. When the survey is restarted, it will resume at the last unanswered question. Only fully completed surveys will be processed.

Where you receive a survey link from the colleges, you will need to complete the survey in one go. Only fully completed surveys will be processed.

No personal details will be captured on the Online Anonymised Survey.

The Online Anonymised Survey will be augmented by a number of in-depth one-to-one qualitative interviews with a small number of respondents. Respondents will be asked in the Online Anonymised Survey if they are open to taking part in a one-to-one in-depth interview. If a respondent answers yes, they will be re-directed to a separate qualitative recruitment screener survey where, among other matters, they will be asked to provide their email address. Those respondents who have indicated a willingness to participate in an interview will receive an acknowledgment email. Some of those who have indicated a willingness to participate will be further contacted and invited to participate in an in-depth interview; others will receive an email indicating that they will not be invited to participate in an in-depth interview.

2. Can I object to being included in the Online Anonymised Survey?

Yes. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to be contacted again in relation this Online Anonymised Survey please reply to the emails you receive in relation to the Online Anonymised Survey by typing "REMOVE" in the subject line and you will not be contacted again in relation to the Online Anonymised Survey. Alternatively you can contact us by using the contact details provided under the "How to contact us" heading below.

3. Will my personal data appear in the Online Anonymised Survey?

By design, access to the survey will be:

- via unique URL without pre-assigned identifiers attached to individual participants for the purpose of survey distribution,
- or
- via a generic link.

No names, addresses or personal contact details will be captured in the Online Anonymised Survey.

The survey results will be reviewed in aggregate anonymous form as a statistical report and will not be linked back to respondents in any way. Any identifiable responses will be edited to ensure that

the respondent remains anonymous. The anonymous results will be held separately from the unique URLs. This will avoid potential matching between participants and their survey response.

Where you indicate a willingness to participate in a one-to-one in-depth interview, you will be re-directed to a separate qualitative recruitment screener survey to provide your email address for the purpose of contacting you to enable that interview to take place. B&A will store your email address in a password protected file on a private drive with access limited to the Field Manager and Researcher which will be destroyed 8 weeks after the project concludes.

B&A will share the aggregated Online Anonymised Survey results with the LSRA however no personally identifiable data will be shared with the LSRA to ensure respondent anonymity.

4. What is the purpose of the Online Anonymised Survey?

As set out above, the LSRA is conducting an Online Anonymised Survey for the purpose of reporting to the Minister on the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King's Inns and the Law Society respectively.

Due to the subject matter of the survey, some of the questions in the Online Anonymised Survey relate to potentially sensitive subjects (e.g. ethnicity, health etc.). If at any stage you feel uncomfortable answering any question or would prefer not to say, please just answer 'prefer not to say' to move to the next question.

5. What is the legal basis for the processing?

Participation in the Online Anonymised Survey is entirely voluntary therefore the legal basis is consent. Your consent to participate can be withdrawn at any point. To do this, simply do not complete the full survey and/or you can choose to opt out at any time by closing your browser and not returning to the survey. Please note it will not be possible to withdraw consent once the survey has been completed as individual participants cannot be identified.

6. Who will the results of the Online Anonymised Survey be shared with?

The results of the Online Anonymised Survey will be used by the LSRA for the purpose of preparing the Report for the Minister. It is envisaged that the results of the Online Anonymised Survey and Report will be shared with the following:

- The Minister for Justice;
- The Department of Justice.

It is also envisaged that the results of the Online Anonymised Survey and Report may be shared with the following, for the purpose of further consultation in relation to making recommendations to the Minister:

- The Representative Bodies;
- The External Reference Group (a group made up of representatives of the Bar of Ireland Young Bar Committee, the Bar of Ireland Equality and Diversity Committee, Dublin Solicitors'

Bar Association Young Members Committee, the Law Society In-House and Public Sector Committees, Diversity in Law, the Law Society's Younger Member's Committee, the In-House Legal Network, the Solicitors OUTlaw Network, the Irish Women Lawyers' Association and the Society of Young Solicitors in Ireland as well as individual solicitors and barristers from a variety of backgrounds, an academic expert and a university access worker).

However, no personal data will be shared in circumstances where survey results will be reviewed in aggregate anonymous form as a statistical report and will not be linked back to respondents.

The Report will be laid before each House of the Oireachtas in accordance with the 2015 Act and will be publicly available on the LSRA's website.

7. How does B&A keep data secure?

Security is integrated into the Azure platform with multiple levels of encryption, back up, and vulnerability assessment tests are run on B&A's online servers in Dublin on a quarterly basis. Specific measures taken include:

- Responses to the Online Anonymised Survey are encrypted in transit, storage and at rest.
- Respondent email addresses, obtained via the online recruitment survey, will be stored password protected on a private drive with access limited only to the Field Manager and Researcher. Once the qualitative one to one in-depth interviews have been completed, respondent contact details will be electronically shredded eight week after project close. B&A is certified to ISO27001:2013 Information Security Management System.

8. Will my personal data be transferred internationally?

It is not anticipated that data will be transferred outside of the EEA. The Online Anonymised Survey will be hosted by Microsoft Azure in Dublin.

9. How long will the survey be retained?

Respondent email addresses, where they are provided via the recruitment screener survey, will be stored for 8 weeks after the project concludes and after this time will be electronically destroyed. Anonymised online survey response data will be held for a period of 12 months after the project concludes, after which it will be electronically destroyed.

Recordings of the qualitative in-depth interview will be stored for 6 months after the project close and after this time will be electronically destroyed. Transcripts of recordings are anonymised and will be stored for 12 months after the project close.

10. What are my data protection rights?

You have the following data protection rights:

- If you wish to **access, correct, update or request deletion** of your personal information, you can do so at any time by contacting us using the contact details provided under the "How to contact us" heading below.
- In addition, you can **object to processing** of your personal information, ask us to **restrict processing** of your personal information or **request portability** of your personal information. Again, you can exercise these rights by contacting us using the contact details provided under the "How to contact us" heading below.

- You have the **right to complain to a data protection authority** about our collection and use of your personal information. The Data Protection Commission can be contacted at info@dataprotection.ie.

11. Cookies

B&A do not collect cookies for the conduct of their online surveys. The cookies function is disabled.

12. How to contact us?

The data controller for the purpose of the Online Anonymised Survey is the LSRA. If you have any questions or concerns about our use of your personal information, please contact our data protection officer using the following details: dpo@lsra.ie. You can contact the LSRA at PO Box 12906, Dublin 7.

The Law Society of Ireland is a joint controller for the purpose of the Online Anonymised Survey insofar as their registrants are concerned.

You can contact B&A's data protection officer by emailing the DPO Officer at emma@banda.ie. A copy of B&A's Privacy Policy is available here <https://banda.ie/privacy-policy/>

Privacy Notice / Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQ") - LSRA Survey of Recently Qualified Solicitors and Barristers Who Are Currently Not Practising

The Minister for Justice (the "Minister") has asked the Legal Services Regulatory Authority ("LSRA") to consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King's Inns and the Law Society respectively. In considering these issues, the Minister has requested that the LSRA pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions. The Minister has asked the LSRA to engage appropriately with all relevant stakeholders, including with university law students, those students currently studying in the King's Inns and the Law Society and newly qualified members of both professions. The Minister has also requested that the LSRA survey those people who have completed King's Inns or the Law Society in recent years, but who have chosen not to practise at this time. The Minister has further asked that the LSRA, having considered these issues, make recommendations for changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.

On foot of the Minister's request, the LSRA proposes to prepare a report for the Minister (the "Report") in accordance with section 34(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the "2015 Act"). For the purpose of preparing the Report, and in accordance with section 13(2)(i) the 2015 Act, the LSRA has carried out an anonymous survey of (a) trainee and qualified solicitors with up to 7 years post qualification experience, (b) student barristers and barristers with up to 7 years post qualification experience and (c) certain law undergraduates (the "Online Anonymised Survey"). The LSRA now proposes to carry out a further survey to engage with those people who have completed

King's Inn or the Law Society in recent years, but who have chosen not to practise at this time ("the Non-Practising Survey"). The LSRA has engaged an external research/survey company, Behaviour & Attitudes ("B&A"), in order to assist with the design of, and to conduct, the Non-Practising Survey.

This Privacy Notice/FAQ has been prepared to provide respondents with certain information in relation to the processing of their data for the purposes of carrying out the Non-Practising Survey and to answer some frequently asked questions that you may have.

13. How does the Non-Practising Survey work?

Participation in the Non-Practising Survey is entirely voluntary. The Non-Practising Survey will be hosted on B&A's website and potential respondents will be directed to the survey via the LSRA website and notifications and advertisements on social media. The Non-Practising Survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The Non-Practising Survey will be hosted by Microsoft Azure.

The survey does not need to be completed in one go. When the survey is restarted, it will resume at the last unanswered question. Only fully completed surveys will be processed.

No personal details will be captured on the Non-Practising Survey.

14. Can I object to being included in the Non-Practising Survey?

Yes. Participation is entirely voluntary.

15. Will my personal data appear in the Non-Practising Survey?

By design, access to the survey will be via a generic link.

No names, addresses or personal contact details will be captured in the Non-Practising Survey and respondents are instructed not to provide any personal data or information in response to those questions which provide for an open text response.

The survey results will be reviewed in aggregate anonymous form as a statistical report and will not be linked back to respondents in any way.

B&A will share the aggregated Non-Practising Survey results with the LSRA however no personally identifiable data will be shared with the LSRA to ensure respondent anonymity.

16. What is the purpose of the Non-Practising Survey?

As set out above, the LSRA is conducting research, which includes the Non-Practising Survey, for the purpose of reporting to the Minister on the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King's Inns and the Law Society respectively. In particular, the purpose of the Non-Practising Survey is to obtain insight from those people who have completed King's Inn or the Law Society in recent years, but who have chosen not to practise at this time.

Due to the subject matter of the survey, some of the questions in the Non-Practising Survey relate to potentially sensitive subjects (e.g. discrimination, disability etc.).

17. What is the legal basis for the processing?

Participation in the Non-Practising Survey is entirely voluntary therefore the legal basis is consent. Your consent to participate can be withdrawn at any point. To do this, simply do not complete the full survey and/or you can choose to opt out at any time by closing your browser and not returning to the survey. Please note it will not be possible to withdraw consent once the survey has been completed as individual participants cannot be identified.

18. Who will the results of the Non-Practising Survey be shared with?

The results of the Non-Practising Survey will be used by the LSRA for the purpose of preparing the Report for the Minister. It is envisaged that the results of the Non-Practising Survey and Report will be shared with the following:

- The Minister for Justice;
- The Department of Justice.

It is also envisaged that the results of the Non-Practising Survey and Report may be shared with the following, for the purpose of further consultation in relation to making recommendations to the Minister:

- The Representative Bodies;

However, no personal data will be shared in circumstances where survey results will be reviewed in aggregate anonymous form as a statistical report and will not be linked back to respondents.

The Report will be laid before each House of the Oireachtas in accordance with the 2015 Act and will be publicly available on the LSRA's website.

19. How does B&A keep data secure?

Security is integrated into the Azure platform with multiple levels of encryption, back up, and vulnerability assessment tests are run on B&A's online servers in Dublin on a quarterly basis. Specific measures taken include:

- Responses to the Non-Practising Survey are encrypted in transit, storage and at rest.
- B&A is certified to ISO27001:2013 Information Security Management System.

20. Will my personal data be transferred internationally?

It is not anticipated that data will be transferred outside of the EEA. The Non-Practising Survey will be hosted by Microsoft Azure in Dublin.

21. How long will the survey be retained?

Non-Practising Survey response data will be held for a period of 12 months after the project concludes, after which it will be electronically destroyed.

22. What are my data protection rights?

You have the following data protection rights:

- If you wish to **access, correct, update or request deletion** of your personal information, you can do so at any time by contacting us using the contact details provided under the “How to contact us” heading below.
- In addition, you can **object to processing** of your personal information, ask us to **restrict processing** of your personal information or **request portability** of your personal information. Again, you can exercise these rights by contacting us using the contact details provided under the “How to contact us” heading below.
- You have the **right to complain to a data protection authority** about our collection and use of your personal information. The Data Protection Commission can be contacted at info@dataprotection.ie.
- You have the right to **withdraw consent** – this is dealt with in section 5 of this policy.

23. Cookies

B&A do not collect cookies for the conduct of their online surveys. The cookies function is disabled.

24. How to contact us?

The data controller for the purpose of the Non-Practising Survey is the LSRA. If you have any questions or concerns about our use of your personal information, please contact our data protection officer using the following details: dpo@lsra.ie. You can contact the LSRA at PO Box 12906, Dublin 7. You can contact B&A's data protection officer by emailing the DPO Officer at emma@banda.ie. A copy of B&A's Privacy Policy is available here <https://banda.ie/privacy-policy/>

Appendix H

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An tÚdarás Rialála
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Breaking Down Barriers

*Addressing the challenges facing
early career legal professionals*



January 2024

INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the recommendations made by the Authority to the Minister for Justice under section 34 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (as amended). The recommendations are intended to address findings of the research undertaken, which established that aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers face a range of economic and other barriers on their career pathways and that these barriers are magnified for certain groups and have a negative impact on diversity in the legal profession.

The Authority has already noted that there is an intersectional dimension to the findings of its research, with multiple barriers including individual, structural and institutional dimensions, some of which are systemic.

Given the multi-faceted nature of the barriers identified, the Authority's recommendations call for range of actions to be taken by various stakeholders including itself.

Many of the recommendations set out in this report build upon the Authority's earlier proposals for reform of legal practitioner education and training.¹ A central component of these reforms is the establishment of an independent Legal Practitioners Education and Training Committee (the LPET Committee).

The functions of the LPET Committee, as recommended by the Authority, include encouraging diversity in legal education and training. Accordingly, several of the recommendations in this report are addressed to the LPET Committee, once established.

By recognising and dismantling entry barriers and early career challenges, the Irish legal profession can become more vibrant and inclusive, reflecting the full diversity of the population it serves.

¹ Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2020) *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*.

1. BARRIERS TO ENTRY

Qualification

The most significant barriers to entry to the legal professions are the costs of qualification and the length of time it takes post-graduation before a prospective solicitor or barrister can expect to qualify and begin to earn a reasonable salary.

Both branches of the profession face challenges in opening access to individuals from more diverse backgrounds because of the significant costs of professional training and the mechanisms for obtaining and undertaking practical training. For candidates with different needs and responsibilities, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, the direct and indirect costs involved may act as a deterrent to entry to the professions, sending them instead into other career pathways.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Professional training pathways

Opening up pathways to qualification will reduce barriers and provide greater access to the legal profession for people from different backgrounds. The challenges to increasing diversity through the current training pathways for solicitors and barristers are significant but potentially could be addressed by increasing flexible routes to qualification which may be attractive in particular to mature and regional students. This starts with collecting diversity data on student and trainee intakes to establish a baseline upon which to build.

1. 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.

ACTION BY:

The Law Society, King's Inns, any future training provider, LSRA and LPET Committee.

2. Legal practitioner training providers should report annually using agreed templates to the LSRA, and the LPET Committee once established, on the diversity of intake in all legal practitioner training courses. The data gathered would be used to enhance and expand flexible training routes, including hybrid, blended, remote and asynchronous learning.

ACTION BY:

The Law Society, King's Inns, any future training provider, LSRA and LPET Committee.

3. The LSRA and the professional bodies should explore the use of the annual levy on the professions and other funding mechanisms to develop increased financial support for prospective solicitors and barristers to increase diversity of intake.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland and Law Society.

Barrister pupillage



The unpaid nature of pupillage and the concentration of pupillages in Dublin is challenging, particularly for those from disadvantaged socio-economic groups. This impacts upon diversity, which is also affected by the difficulties for newly qualified barristers to support themselves in the early years of self-employed practice. Among solutions advanced through the consultation and surveys was the introduction of appropriate financial supports for barrister pupils. Another partial solution may lie in the forthcoming introduction of legal partnerships, which could provide another route to practising as a barrister through employment. The King's Inn Code of Conduct requires that a barrister shall not, unless exempted by the Honorable Society of King's Inns or a relevant professional body, represent clients before courts without undertaking a continuous period of not less than nine months' pupillage with a barrister of at least seven years' standing whose practice involves regular appearances before the courts representing clients. The only pupillages available are through the Bar of Ireland. The King's Inn Code could therefore be seen to prevent barristers entering sole private practice or joining legal partnerships (or multi-disciplinary practices once established) unless they have first completed 9 months of their 12 month pupillage.

4. The Honorable Society of King's Inns should review the mandatory requirement in its Code of Conduct that barristers undertake nine months' pupillage before they can represent clients before courts. This should be done once the King's Inns demonstrates to the LPET Committee, once established, that its Barrister-at-Law degree meets the competency framework standard for entering practice as a barrister.

ACTION BY: *The King's Inns, LPET Committee.*

5. The LSRA and the Bar of Ireland should explore innovative solutions to develop appropriate financial supports for barrister pupils, including undertaking an analysis of a minimum payment for barristers within their year of pupillage.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, Bar of Ireland.*

6. The Bar of Ireland should allow pupils to undertake their pupillages with barristers whose practices are not predominantly Dublin based.

ACTION BY: *Bar of Ireland.*

7. The Bar of Ireland should introduce greater standardisation of the training provided to all barrister pupils and institute a system of quality assurance and more formalised oversight of pupillages including mandatory training of prospective masters.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland.*

Solicitor traineeships



Facilitating additional solicitor training contracts outside large law firms in urban areas will broaden the type of training contracts available and provide more opportunities for trainees from different backgrounds. Solutions to issues of cost and access could also explore the introduction of a new apprenticeship route for solicitors aimed at school leavers or career changers seeking an alternative to university. These could allow apprentices to “earn as they learn” to become solicitors over a period of six to seven years. Enhanced measures to help ensure all trainee solicitors receive a minimum pay threshold would assist trainees from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may face financial challenges.

8. The LSRA and the LPET Committee once established should engage with key stakeholders to explore the introduction of solicitor apprenticeships, including provision for grants for employers of apprentices.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, law firms, Law Society, SOLAS, Higher Education Authority, National Apprenticeship Office, QQI, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.*

9. The Law Society should actively engage with firms and organisations which train solicitors to ensure that all solicitor trainees receive a minimum pay threshold during training. Legislative amendments should be introduced to allow the Law Society to monitor and enforce breaches of the minimum pay threshold for trainees.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, training firms and organisations.*

10. The Law Society should work with key stakeholders to actively encourage and support direct intake of trainee solicitors in the public and private sectors, with particular focus on the civil and public service. Public sector agencies that routinely recruit solicitors are encouraged to establish direct trainee intake schemes.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, relevant State agencies and public sector bodies, local authorities, private corporations.*

11. The Law Society should increase its financial supports for small firms to provide training contracts and also extend this funding to include independent law centres. It should also increase flexible options for training firms to take on trainees such as allowing several small firms to share one trainee solicitor.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society.*

Access programmes and initiatives

An evaluation of the impact of existing access initiatives and funded programmes will enable understanding of how effective they have been at increasing access to legal practitioner training among applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds. Impact evaluation will identify what is working well and will also allow improvements to be made, including where to allocate further investment aimed at increasing diversity of intake in the legal profession.

- 12.** The LPET Committee once established should, as a priority, evaluate the effectiveness and impact of existing access initiatives and identify additional measures to increase access to the legal profession, including flexible training options and additional access route for non-graduates. The LPET Committee to engage with employers, professional bodies, education and training providers, interest groups and academics working in the field to achieve a shared vision of how to improve diversity within the profession and to put in place and monitor initiatives to achieve this vision.

ACTION BY: *The LPET Committee.*

- 13.** 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.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland and any future provider of legal education.*

- 14.** 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).

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland.*

2.**BARRIERS TO ENTRY****Information**

There is a lack of easily available, full and clear information for prospective solicitors and barristers about training and pupillage opportunities and selection processes, as well as the various career pathways that may be available.

The current system for qualifying barristers to identify and secure a master for their mandatory pupillage year at the Law Library is opaque and ad hoc, with scant information available online. For solicitors, there is considerably more information available on securing training contracts, although this is not all in one place and the pathway to traineeships with large law firms are most visible due to their significant recruitment drives targeting certain undergraduates. The professional bodies all have information on their websites as well as outreach programmes and initiatives with schools and universities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Information on career pathways and opportunities



Greater levels of quality information provision around careers pathways and opportunities in the legal profession can play a role in addressing systemic inequalities in access to reliable careers information. Improved information provision and more transparent systems can also help counter perceptions of the legal profession as being heavily reliant on connections and informal networks, which in turn may discourage people from under-represented groups from considering careers as solicitors or barristers. For barristers, a clear need was advanced through the consultation and surveys for more transparency and formality in the master selection process, while solicitors sought better information and guidance on training contracts and opportunities.

15. The Law Society should work with relevant stakeholders to improve the information, outreach and supports available on how to secure training contracts by addressing the barriers identified in the LSRA research, particularly around information gaps and information asymmetry. A merit-based system for the recruitment of trainee solicitors should be open and transparent, with greater clarity for all on the pathways, terms and conditions and selection processes and improved supports for trainees and training firms during the training period. The Law Society should consider the introduction of a centralised portal or online resource for prospective trainee solicitors.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, law firms.*

16. The Bar of Ireland should work with the Honorable Society of King's Inns and relevant stakeholders to improve the information, outreach and supports available for prospective barristers to identify masters with whom to undertake their mandatory pupillage year at the Bar. A reformed system for the selection of masters should be more formalised, fair and transparent, with enhanced mechanisms for support and supervision of pupillages during the pupillage period.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland, King's Inns.*

17. The LPET Committee, once established, should engage with the Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society and public and private sector employers to highlight different career pathways for barristers and solicitors. Further, the introduction of legal partnerships is an opportunity for the LSRA and the LPET Committee once established, in collaboration with the King's Inns and the Law Society, to roll out an information campaign and enhanced outreach as well as other supports for barristers and solicitors interested in this new business model.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, LPET Committee, Law Society and King's Inns.

3.

EARLY CAREER CHALLENGES

Solicitors

The main challenges facing early career solicitors are long working hours and lack of workplace flexibility and the impact of these on work-life balance. Despite these challenges, junior solicitors show moderate levels of career satisfaction.

The key challenges in the early career years (years 1 to 7) for solicitors relate to the time-consuming nature of their work, with a prevailing culture of long working hours which results in poor work-life balance. These challenges may impact on diversity as those with significant commitments outside work, including caring responsibilities, may find it difficult to devote the necessary hours to their employers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Solicitors workplace culture



Improvements to workplace culture in law firms will benefit the health and wellbeing of early career solicitors, while also enabling them to better support clients, thereby improving public confidence in the profession.

- 18.** The LSRA should collaborate with law firms and the professional bodies on the introduction of measures to ensure positive workplace culture and employee wellbeing. The LSRA to engage with the Law Society in consultation with other key stakeholders to create a self-assessment template to be completed and reported on an annual basis to the Law Society and the LSRA by all law firms over a stated size. This self-assessment will measure activity undertaken by the firm to ensure a positive workplace culture, dignity in the workplace, a reasonable work-life balance for staff, and employee wellbeing. These reports will be published on the websites of the LSRA and Law Society and by the firms themselves.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Law Society, law firms.

4.

EARLY CAREER CHALLENGES

Barristers

Early career self-employed barristers face considerable challenges in earning a living, with job security and better remuneration the key motivations for barristers taking up employed positions. Despite these challenges, junior barristers show moderate levels of career satisfaction.

The early career years (years 1 to 7) for barristers at the self-employed bar involve personal expense, generally low and erratic earnings and persistent career uncertainty and risk. This inhibits diversity at the bar, as it excludes those who do not have an independent source of income or support to self-sustain a career for an extended period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainability of self-employed barristers' early careers



While it is evident that the demands of a career as a self-employed barrister may not be suitable for everyone, particular risks to diversity arise from the difficulties for newly qualified self-employed barristers to support themselves in the early years of practice. Measures to increase direct access to barristers may present new opportunities for some, while in the longer term the introduction of new business models offer the potential for a greater variety of career pathways for barristers to practice in employed settings.

Given the particular career progression challenges faced by self-employed women barristers, career sustainability initiatives could usefully include a focus on barriers identified in the LSRA's research, including the ability to take maternity leave.

19. The LSRA should engage with the barrister profession to consider initiatives to make a career as a self-employed practising barrister more sustainable in the early years, in particular for women and under-represented groups. Reforms could include, for example, targeted initiatives, practical information on the self-employed profession, practical supports in relation to building and managing a practice, alternative career pathways and new business models including legal partnerships, professional wellbeing, mentoring and personal development.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Bar of Ireland and self-employed barristers who are not members of the Law Library.

20. The LSRA should engage with the Department of Justice on introducing direct professional access to barristers in non-contentious matters. This would be achieved with the commencement of section 101 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015. Section 101 states that no professional code shall operate to prevent a barrister from providing legal services as a practising barrister in relation to a matter, other than a contentious matter, where his or her instructions on that matter were received directly from a person who is not a solicitor. The LSRA to engage with the profession and develop and provide guidance where necessary on the receipt of direct instructions in non-contentious matters.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, Department of Justice.*

21. The LSRA should progress work on a scheme for expanded direct access to barristers. The LSRA previously recommended that direct access to barristers be permitted to organisational clients in contentious matters in certain circumstances.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

22. The LSRA should revisit the introduction of multi-disciplinary practices (MDPs). The LSRA has previously considered the introduction of MDPs under the 2015 Act and for reasons of sequencing and resources prioritised the prior introduction of legal partnerships and limited liability partnerships. Following the introduction of legal partnerships, the LSRA should monitor their uptake and impact and revisit the introduction of MDPs.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

23. The LSRA should develop guidance for barristers and employers on section 212 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 which allows an employed practising barrister to appear on behalf of their employer in a court, tribunal or forum of arbitration.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

Barristers' fees and fee recovery



Improvements in the area of fees, fee structure and briefing policies will help address some of the early career sustainability challenges for self-employed barristers which inhibit socio-economic diversity in the legal profession.

- 24.** Relevant stakeholders should collaborate on measures to ensure that barristers are paid fees in a timely manner.

ACTION BY:

The Bar of Ireland, Law Society, Department of Justice, LSRA and relevant State agencies.

- 25.** The LSRA should consult with key stakeholders on options for changing the law to allow barristers to sue for their fees, and report on the matter with recommendations to the Department of Justice.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Bar of Ireland, Law Society, non-Law Library practising barristers

- 26.** Engagement between relevant stakeholders should be intensified so that the concerns identified in the LSRA research around the levels and structure of professional fees for State funded legal aid work undertaken by junior barristers are explored and addressed.

ACTION BY:

The Departments of Justice and Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform, Bar of Ireland, relevant State agencies.

- 27.** The Department of Justice should consider current mechanisms across all government departments and State agencies to ensure transparency in the procurement and distribution of State funded work for early career barristers and solicitors including the potential for the introduction of equitable briefing policies and standards.

ACTION BY:

The Department of Justice, government departments, State agencies, buyers of legal services on behalf of the State.

5.**BARRIERS TO ENTRY****Diversity and Connections**

There is a perception that the legal profession lacks diversity and is heavily reliant on prior connections and networks, which may discourage candidates from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds from considering the profession as a career.

There is a growing focus on diversity within the Irish legal profession, with specific attention to protected characteristics under equality legislation, such as gender and ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, socio-economic background. The LSRA survey found that only 14% of solicitors, 23% of barristers and 28% of law undergraduates agree that the professions are diverse (representative of the population).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Diversity and inclusion



- 28.** The Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society, the Bar of Ireland and the Courts Service should create an action plan to address issues facing members of the legal profession with disabilities. Employers should consider introducing a form of reasonable accommodation or disability passport for the legal profession.

ACTION BY: *The Courts Service, Bar of Ireland, King's Inns, Law Society, employers.*

- 29.** The LSRA, the professional bodies and other legal profession stakeholders should commit to taking targeted actions towards building solicitor and barrister professions that reflect the diversity of modern Irish society.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, Law Society, Bar of Ireland, King's Inns, law firms, employers, Department of Justice.*

- 30.** Demographic data on the legal profession should be routinely collected and published to establish a diversity profile and to inform and monitor actions to encourage greater diversity. The data should include the range of protected characteristics under equality legislation, as well as socio-economic status. The LSRA and the LPET Committee once established, to engage with the professional bodies on defining, lawful gathering and monitoring of the required data.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, King's Inns, Law Society, Bar of Ireland.*

Overseas students



31. The LSRA, the LPET Committee once established, the Law Society and the Honorable Society of King's Inns should review training arrangements for non-EEA students in order to remove barriers to entry.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, Law Society, King's Inns, Department of Justice.*

Transfer arrangements



32. The professional bodies should consider reducing entry requirements on a reciprocal basis for transfers between both branches of the legal profession, including a mutual recognition framework for solicitors and barristers with less than three years post-qualification experience. Transfer arrangements for foreign-qualified lawyers should also be reviewed. This should be done once appropriate Competence Frameworks and standards have been established for solicitors and barristers. The LPET Committee, once established, should regularly review transfer arrangements.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, King's Inns, LPET Committee.*



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Breaking Down Barriers

*Final Report to the
Minister for Justice*



January 2024

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Acknowledgements

The Authority would like to express its gratitude to the wide range of organisations and individuals who contributed to the completion of this research. Particular thanks go to members of the External Reference Group established to provide expert guidance and assist with the content of the data collection stage of this research.

The representative groups and networks who were part of the External Reference Group were: the Bar of Ireland's Young Bar Committee; the Bar of Ireland's Equality and Diversity Committee; Diversity in Law; the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association's Young Members Committee; the In-House Legal Network; the Irish Women Lawyers' Association; the Law Society's Younger Members Committee; the Law Society's In-House and Public Sector Committee; the OUTlaw Network; and the Society of Young Solicitors in Ireland.

In addition, the Authority is very appreciative of the co-operation of staff at the professional bodies for assisting with data collection and the distribution of surveys to early career solicitors and barristers as well as student barristers and trainee solicitors. These are the Law Society of Ireland, the Bar of Ireland and the Honorable Society of King's Inns. Thanks are also due to the Law Schools in universities and institutes of higher education who assisted the LSRA with the distribution of the survey of law undergraduates. All of these bodies are also to be thanked for their help in raising awareness of the surveys among the target groups via a range of communications channels.

The Authority also thanks market research company Behaviour and Attitudes (B&A, now Ipsos B&A) for securely collecting and analysing the survey data. It also thanks all of those respondents who took part in the online anonymised surveys for their most valuable input.

The Authority is also very appreciative of inputs from a range of stakeholders who were either interviewed for this research or who made written submissions, or both. These include law firms, State bodies and individual legal practitioners. The written submissions and interviews with stakeholders contained many useful insights and proposals, and the Authority is grateful for the input from such a wide range of stakeholders.

Executive Summary

- 1.** In November 2020, following the submission of the *Setting Standards* report which made a number of recommendations to reform professional legal education and training, the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) was asked by the Minister for Justice to “*consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and the Law Society, respectively.*”
- 2.** The Minister also requested that the Authority pay particular attention to equity of access and entry to the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions. The Minister asked the Authority to make recommendations in relation to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.
- 3.** In fulfilment of the Minister’s request, the Authority undertook a three-phased process in which it first *explored* the barriers and challenges facing early career legal professionals through an extensive research study and consultation; secondly the Authority analysed the findings of the research project to better *understand* the nature and scope of those barriers; and finally, the Authority identified a range of measures to *address* the identified barriers through a series of recommendations to the Minister for Justice. At each stage of this three-phased process, the Authority produced a separate report.
- 4.** The Authority has made a total of 32 recommendations to the Minister for Justice. The aim of these reforms is to improve equity of access and entry into the legal profession and increase diversity within the profession. The recommendations are wide ranging, and include that the Authority should collaborate with law firms and the professional bodies on the introduction of measures to ensure positive workplace culture and employee wellbeing; that the Authority and the Bar of Ireland should explore innovative solutions to develop appropriate financial supports for barrister pupils; and that demographic data should be collected and published to establish a diversity profile of the legal profession and to inform and monitor actions to encourage greater diversity.



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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This is the final report from the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) to the Minister for Justice on the economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers. This report summarises the evidence, findings and recommendations of extensive research and stakeholder engagement conducted by the Authority under section 34(1) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (the Act). This is contained in the following three supporting reports:
- a. ***Breaking Down Barriers: Exploring the challenges facing early career legal professionals.*** This research report sets out the research undertaken by the Authority to examine the issue of barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers.
 - b. ***Breaking Down Barriers: Understanding the challenges facing early career legal professionals.*** This report, which was submitted to the Minister in March 2022, sets out the key findings of the research undertaken.
 - c. ***Breaking Down Barriers: Addressing the challenges facing early career legal professionals.*** This report sets out the detail and rationale of 32 recommendations for reform made by the Authority to the Minister for Justice.
- 1.1.2 These reports are made in fulfilment of the Minister’s written request of November 2020 for the Authority to “*consider the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young barristers and solicitors following their professional qualification from the King’s Inns and the Law Society, respectively.*”
- 1.1.3 In considering these issues, the Minister requested that the Authority “*pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions, and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions.*”
- 1.1.4 The Minister also asked the Authority to make recommendations in relation to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.

1.2 The Authority’s Work to Date on Legal Education and Training

- 1.2.1** The submission to the Minister for Justice of this report represents another significant milestone in the Authority’s extensive work since 2018 in reporting to the Minister and making recommendations in relation to the education and training arrangements in the State for legal practitioners.
- 1.2.2** This statutory research and reporting has been carried out under section 34 of the Act and has included both qualitative and quantitative research projects as well as public consultations inviting written submissions and a host of stakeholder engagement events and meetings.
- 1.2.3** A chronology of this work is set out below.

First Education and Training Report – September 2018

- 1.2.4** Section 34(1)(a) of the Act required that the Authority, following an appropriate public consultation process, prepare and furnish to the Minister for Justice and Equality a report on the education and training arrangements for legal practitioners, including the manner in which such education and training was provided. The Act further required that this report be submitted to the Minister by 1 October 2018.¹
- 1.2.5** Section 34(3)(b) of the Act required that the report contain:
- “a review of the existing arrangements relating to the education and training of legal practitioners and make such recommendations as it considers appropriate in relation to the arrangements that in the opinion of the Authority should be in place for the provision of the education and training referred to in that subsection, including the accreditation of bodies to provide such education and training, and the reforms or amendments, whether administrative or legislative, that are required to facilitate those arrangements.”*

¹ Section 34(3) of the 2015 Act required that the report into legal education and training be provided to the Minister within 2 years of the establishment date of the Authority, which was 1 October 2016. The first report was submitted to the Minister on 28 September 2018.

- 1.2.6** The first report of the Authority into legal education and training in the State under section 34(1)(a) was submitted to the Minister for Justice and Equality on 28 September 2018.
- 1.2.7** The report was in two parts. The first part was a report from the Authority to the Minister and the second part was a research report from Hook Tangaza, the external Review Team engaged by the Authority to undertake the research, manage the public consultation exercise and report to the Authority on their findings.
- 1.2.8** The Hook Tangaza Review Team submitted its report to the LSRA in August of 2018. The review team found evidence of:
- a lack of clarity around the competencies required of a solicitor or barrister,
 - the existence of indirect barriers to entry into the professions,
 - the existence of unnecessary duplication in learning and assessment,
 - a mismatch of the skills taught in current professional qualification courses with the needs of the users of legal services,
 - the existence of some quality gaps, and
 - a lack of independent oversight of the system of legal practitioner education and training.
- 1.2.9** The review team submitted 14 proposals to the Authority for its consideration. These proposals aimed to:
- provide a clear definition of professional legal competence, and
 - ensure that the design of a new competence framework meets the requirement of all stakeholders,
 - remove barriers to access, including by reducing duplication in learning and in the costs and time required to qualify,
 - reduce duplication and costs in learning,
 - ensure the provision and assessment of education is aligned with goals of developing and assuring professional competence, and
 - ensure ongoing independent oversight of legal education and training in the State.

- 1.2.10** The Authority considered the Review Report by Hook Tangaza. It decided that the public interest would best be served by submitting that report along with its own report to the Minister for Justice and Equality in compliance with the statutory deadline and outlining the further steps that it proposed to take without prejudice to its final proposals.
- 1.2.11** In its report, the Authority stated that:
- the research report set out a detailed case for reform of the education and training of legal practitioners, and
 - the proposals, if implemented, had the capacity to significantly affect the education and training of legal practitioners and the wider legal services sector, and
 - legislative change would also be required.
- 1.2.12** The Authority expressed the view that such significant change should only be made following careful consideration and informed debate on both the proposals for change and their proposed implementation and impact. The Authority therefore advised the Minister that it would make its final recommendations and set out a proposed implementation process after further consultation with stakeholders in legal services, legal education and training, and in the wider community.
- 1.2.13** The Authority subsequently undertook a detailed consultation exercise, including hosting a one day symposium on Legal Education and Training in September 2019, prior to making a set of substantial recommendations in its second report to the Minister on legal practitioner education and training under section 34(1)(a) of the Act, which it submitted in September 2020.

Second Education and Training Report – September 2020

1.2.14 The Authority's second report on legal education and training, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*, made a total of twelve recommendations for reform of legal practitioner education and training, with the following two central recommendations:

1. A clear definition of the competence and standards required to practise as a solicitor or barrister should be developed.

2. The introduction of a statutory framework to establish a new and independent Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee (the LPET Committee). The LPET Committee would be statutorily required and empowered to:

- Set the Competency Framework for legal practitioner education and training;
- Develop a common set of competencies and standards for admission to professional legal training;
- Ensure that existing providers of legal education and training adhere to the standards required by the Competency Framework on an ongoing basis;
- Scrutinise and accredit new providers of legal education and training based on set criteria established by the LPET Committee;
- Monitor the quality of legal education and training;
- Encourage innovation in the provision of legal education and training;
- Encourage diversity in legal education and training;
- Engage with key stakeholders in legal education and training.

1.3 Request from Minister for Research into “Barriers”

- 1.3.1** In a letter dated 18 November 2020, the Minister for Justice welcomed the Authority’s *Setting Standards* report and requested that, in support of the Minister’s ongoing consideration of the report, the LSRA also give consideration to “*the economic and other barriers that continue to be faced by young solicitors and barristers and make a further report with recommendations.*”
- 1.3.2** The Minister asked the Authority to give particular consideration to the following:
- The remuneration of trainee barristers and solicitors;
 - The other costs associated with joining each profession;
 - The information available to prospective trainee barristers and solicitors on available masters and solicitors firms, the information on the terms and conditions available and how they are selected,
 - Any other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors, including the ability to take maternity leave.
- 1.3.3** The Minister asked the LSRA to pay particular attention to equity of access and entry into the legal professions and the objective of achieving greater diversity within the professions. The Minister asked the Authority, having considered these issues, to make recommendations in relations to changes which could be introduced by way of effective reform of the present system.
- 1.3.4** The Minister asked the Authority to engage appropriately with all relevant stakeholders in particular university law students, those students currently in the King’s Inns and the Law Society, and newly qualified members of both professions including the Young Bar Committee and the Society of Young Solicitors Ireland, as well as more long standing members of both professions and their representative bodies. A subsequent request was also received from the Minister asking the Authority to extend consideration of the barriers to include those who had completed the King’s Inns or Law Society professional courses in recent years but who had not chosen to practice law at this time.

- 1.3.5** The Minister also committed to engaging with the LSRA on an implementation plan to reform the way legal professional education currently works.
- 1.3.6** On foot of the Minister’s request, the Authority embarked on the research and engagement required to prepare the requested report in accordance with section 34 of the Act. The Authority also commenced engagement with Department of Justice officials on an implementation plan for the reform of legal practitioner education and training set out in the *Setting Standards* report.
- 1.3.7** A summary of this work is set out below.



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2 AUTHORITY'S THREE PHASED BARRIERS PROCESS

2.1

PHASE 1: BARRIERS RESEARCH: *Exploring the Challenges*

- 2.1.1** In the first phase of the process the Authority undertook a range of evidence gathering activities to explore and identify the potential barriers facing early career legal practitioners. These included a statutory consultation and the Authority's first comprehensive surveys of early career solicitors and barristers as well as student barristers, trainee solicitors, law undergraduates and qualified but non-practising legal professionals. This led to the production of a research study, *Breaking Down Barriers: Exploring the challenges facing early career legal professionals*. This research study was based around the framework for the research as set out in the Minister's request.
- 2.1.2** This report documented the findings of the Authority's surveys. Barriers to entry and early career progression in the profession were examined. The study also considered in detail the current arrangements for the training of solicitors and barristers, including issues of costs as well as information and arrangements for aspirant legal professionals seeking practical training opportunities.
- 2.1.3** The research reviewed submissions and recommendations to an LSRA statutory consultation process and obtained new stakeholder inputs concerning aspects of the study through direct interviews. Based on the evidence, this report identified a range of economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers. It also documented recommendations made by a range of stakeholders.

Barriers Research Evidence Gathering

Survey responses from:

433

TRAINEE AND EARLY
CAREER PRACTISING
SOLICITORS



590

LAW UNDERGRADUATES
IN 15 HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTES



16

IN-DEPTH
INTERVIEWS WITH
EARLY CAREER
SOLICITORS AND
BARRISTERS



366

STUDENT AND EARLY
CAREER PRACTISING
BARRISTERS



86

NON-PRACTISING
RECENTLY QUALIFIED
SOLICITORS AND
BARRISTERS

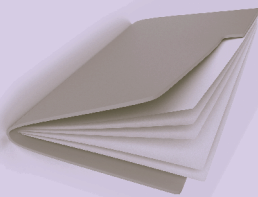


34

INTERVIEWS
WITH A RANGE OF
EMPLOYERS AND
PRACTITIONERS

1

CONSULTATION
DOCUMENT WHICH
LAUNCHED A TWO
MONTH STATUTORY
CONSULTATION PROCESS



34

WRITTEN
SUBMISSIONS

2.2

PHASE 2: BARRIERS RESEARCH: *Understanding the Challenges*

- 2.2.1** In phase two, the Authority analysed the evidence gathered during its research study, and in March 2022 submitted to the Minister for Justice its research findings report, *Breaking Down Barriers: Understanding the challenges facing early career legal professionals*.
- 2.2.2** The Authority’s research findings showed that aspiring and early career solicitors and barristers face a range of economic and other barriers on their career pathways, and that these barriers are more magnified for certain groups. The report identified an intersectional dimension to the findings, with multiple barriers including individual, structural and institutional dimensions, some of which are systemic.
- 2.2.3** The Authority summarised the key barriers and challenges facing early career solicitors and barristers as follows:

- 1.** The most significant barriers to entry to the legal professions are the costs of qualification and the length of time it takes post-graduation before a prospective solicitor or barrister can expect to qualify and begin to earn a reasonable salary.
- 2.** There is a lack of easily available, full and clear information for prospective solicitors and barristers about training and pupillage opportunities and selection processes, as well as the various career pathways that may be available.
- 3.** The main challenges facing early career solicitors are long working hours and lack of workplace flexibility and the impact of these on work-life balance. Despite these challenges, junior solicitors show moderate levels of career satisfaction.
- 4.** Early career self-employed barristers face considerable challenges in earning a living, with job security and better remuneration the key motivations for barristers taking up employed positions. Despite these challenges, junior barristers show moderate levels of career satisfaction.
- 5.** There is a perception that the legal professions lack diversity and are heavily reliant on prior connections and networks, which may discourage candidates from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds from considering the professions as a career.

The Implementation Plan for Reform of Legal Practitioner Education and Training

- 2.2.4** During 2022 and 2023 the Authority held a series of meetings with Department of Justice officials to discuss the findings and explore the mechanics of implementing the reforms identified in its *Setting Standards* report.
- 2.2.5** Following this engagement the Authority commenced the establishment, in September 2023, of an Education and Training Committee under section 16 of the Act. The section 16 Education and Training Committee established by the Authority will lay the foundations and build the framework for the introduction of the independent statutory Legal Practitioners Education and Training Committee (LPET Committee) as recommended in the *Setting Standards* report.
- 2.2.6** The section 16 Education and Training Committee of the Authority will develop the processes to enable the independent statutory LPET Committee, once the required legislation has been commenced, to accredit new and existing legal education and training providers. The Committee will work with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to ensure that any of its existing processes and expertise are availed of to the maximum extent possible. The Committee will also make recommendations in relation to the funding model of the LPET Committee and any legislative changes that may be required.
- 2.2.7** Another priority for the section 16 Education and Training Committee will be the development of a competency framework for solicitors and barristers, in consultation with QQI as well as the professional legal training bodies and other key stakeholders. This work is ongoing.

Further Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.2.8** In its *Breaking Down Barriers* research findings March 2022 report, the Authority noted that, given the multi-faceted nature of the barriers identified in this report, there was scope to make recommendations for actions for reform to be taken by range of stakeholders, including itself.
- 2.2.9** The Authority also submitted to the Minister that the proposals for substantial reform of the legal practitioner education and training system (made in its *2020 Setting Standards* report) would go some way to addressing entry barriers identified in its findings report. In addition, it was noted that the forthcoming introduction of legal partnerships would, in some part, satisfy the clear demand, from young barristers in particular, for new business models in which to practice.
- 2.2.10** The Authority undertook to carefully consider its findings and to undertake a period of further engagement and consultation with stakeholders before submitting to the Minister a further report with the recommendations it considers to be appropriate to address the barriers identified.

Updates and Progress Made by Key Stakeholders

- 2.2.11** The Authority is aware of a range of developments that have taken place since it submitted its *Breaking Down Barriers* research findings report to the Minister in March 2022. These include the progress it has itself made towards the establishment of a statutorily independent LPET Committee as outlined above.
- 2.2.12** Furthermore, the Authority acknowledges that since it began examining this area, the professional bodies for solicitors and barristers have introduced a range of initiatives and reforms which may in themselves help to alleviate some of the barriers to entry and early career challenges identified in its *Breaking Down Barriers* research findings report, which it submitted to the Minister in March 2022.

2.2.13 The Authority commends the professional bodies for being proactive in this important area. The initiatives include but are not limited to:

- The Law Society of Ireland in March 2022 established the Law Society Psychological Services with Dignity at Work at the core of its long-term, strategic ambitions. The Service actions projects and supports throughout six stages of the legal lifecycle to help build safe, healthy and high functioning workplace cultures.
- The Law Society in September 2023 changed the structure of its Professional Practice Course (PPC) for solicitors. The course is now taught in one continuous block followed by an unbroken period of in-office training. Previously, the PPC course was delivered in two separate blocks sandwiched with two periods of in-office training. The structure of the sandwich PCC model had been criticised as restrictive for training firms.
- The Law Society and the King's Inns have developed their own Competency Frameworks. As outlined above, the introduction of Competency Frameworks are one of the two central recommendations made in *Setting Standards* report.
- The Bar of Ireland in March 2023 introduced an Equitable Briefing Policy, which seeks to ensure the wide areas of legal practice benefit from the contribution of all genders and to address the underrepresentation of female counsel at senior levels. The policy invites briefing entities – solicitor firms, in-house legal departments and State bodies, as well as counsel – to endeavour to consider gender when presenting or constructing panels of counsel, once satisfied that requisite standard of expertise, skill and seniority has been met.
- The Bar of Ireland in June 2022 launched its first Equality Action Plan with recommended actions for its own committees and departments to promote and enhance equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar, with a particular focus on addressing the challenges faced by underrepresented, disadvantaged and minority groups.

- The Bar of Ireland in June 2022 published a significant externally commissioned strategic review of its future landscape, conducted by Ernst and Young. This report concluded that social and economic barriers limit access to the profession and that diversity and inclusion is an issue for the Bar of Ireland. The report made a series of recommendations. These included that the Bar of Ireland should consider changing its business model to allow barristers to form groupings (called ‘meitheal’) of senior and junior counsel and new entrants. The report further recommended that as such groupings come on stream, the Bar of Ireland should review the idea of a minimum payment for barristers within their year of pupillage, similar to that in the Bar Council of England and Wales. The Council of the Bar of Ireland did not favour the introduction of this new business model but said it would explore alternative ways of addressing challenges identified in the report.
- Criminal barristers in October 2023 engaged in a high-profile one-day withdrawal of professional services. The Council of the Bar of Ireland recommended the action to its members as part of its campaign calling on Government to implement a meaningful, independent and time-limited mechanism to determine the fees payable to barristers by the Director of Public Prosecutions and under the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) scheme.

The Minister for Justice announced funding in Budget 2024 of €9 million to make progress in increasing the fees payable to legal professionals for criminal legal aid by 10% in early 2024. In conjunction with the increase in fees, the Minister stated an intention to build on the strengths of the criminal legal aid scheme while addressing any issues relating to how it is structured.

2.3

PHASE 3: BARRIERS RECOMMENDATIONS: *Addressing the Challenges*

- 2.3.1** Having considered the findings from the Barriers research project, the Authority developed a series of 32 recommendations for reform which are designed to improve equity of access and entry into the legal profession and over time to achieve greater diversity within the profession. These recommendations and the rationale are set out in full in the Authority’s report *Breaking Down Barriers: Addressing the Challenges Facing Early Career Legal Professionals* and are summarised below.
- 2.3.2** Given the multi-faceted nature of the entry barriers and early career challenges identified, the Authority’s recommendations call for range of actions to be taken by various stakeholders including itself.
- 2.3.3** Many of the recommendations build upon the Authority’s earlier proposals for reform of legal practitioner education and training contained in its *Setting Standards* report. As has been set out above, a central component of these reforms is the establishment of an independent LPET Committee. The functions of the LPET Committee, as recommended by the Authority, include “*encouraging diversity in legal education and training*”. Accordingly, several of the *Breaking Down Barriers* recommendations are addressed to the LPET Committee, once established.



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3 ACTION ON BARRIERS

32 Recommendations

1. 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.

ACTION BY:

The Law Society, King's Inns, any future training provider, LSRA and LPET Committee.

2. Legal practitioner training providers should report annually using agreed templates to the LSRA, and the LPET Committee once established, on the diversity of intake in all legal practitioner training courses. The data gathered would be used to enhance and expand flexible training routes, including hybrid, blended, remote and asynchronous learning.

ACTION BY:

The Law Society, King's Inns, any future training provider, LSRA and LPET Committee.

3. The LSRA and the professional bodies should explore the use of the annual levy on the professions and other funding mechanisms to develop increased financial support for prospective solicitors and barristers to increase diversity of intake.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland and Law Society.

4. The Honorable Society of King's Inns should review the mandatory requirement in its Code of Conduct that barristers undertake nine months' pupillage before they can represent clients before courts. This should be done once the King's Inns demonstrates to the LPET Committee, once established, that its Barrister-at-Law degree meets the competency framework standard for entering practice as a barrister.

ACTION BY:

The King's Inns, LPET Committee.

5. The LSRA and the Bar of Ireland should explore innovative solutions to develop appropriate financial supports for barrister pupils, including undertaking an analysis of a minimum payment for barristers within their year of pupillage.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Bar of Ireland.

6. The Bar of Ireland should allow pupils to undertake their pupillages with barristers whose practices are not predominantly Dublin based.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland.*

7. The Bar of Ireland should introduce greater standardisation of the training provided to all barrister pupils and institute a system of quality assurance and more formalised oversight of pupillages including mandatory training of prospective masters.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland.*

8. The LSRA and the LPET Committee once established should engage with key stakeholders to explore the introduction of solicitor apprenticeships, including provision for grants for employers of apprentices.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, law firms, Law Society, SOLAS, Higher Education Authority, National Apprenticeship Office, QQI, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.*

9. The Law Society should actively engage with firms and organisations which train solicitors to ensure that all solicitor trainees receive a minimum pay threshold during training. Legislative amendments should be introduced to allow the Law Society to monitor and enforce breaches of the minimum pay threshold for trainees.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, training firms and organisations.*

10. The Law Society should work with key stakeholders to actively encourage and support direct intake of trainee solicitors in the public and private sectors, with particular focus on the civil and public service. Public sector agencies that routinely recruit solicitors are encouraged to establish direct trainee intake schemes.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, relevant State agencies and public sector bodies, local authorities, private corporations.*

11. The Law Society should increase its financial supports for small firms to provide training contracts and also extend this funding to include independent law centres. It should also increase flexible options for training firms to take on trainees such as allowing several small firms to share one trainee solicitor.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society.*

12. The LPET Committee once established should, as a priority, evaluate the effectiveness and impact of existing access initiatives and identify additional measures to increase access to the legal profession, including flexible training options and additional access route for non-graduates. The LPET Committee to engage with employers, professional bodies, education and training providers, interest groups and academics working in the field to achieve a shared vision of how to improve diversity within the profession and to put in place and monitor initiatives to achieve this vision.

ACTION BY: *The LPET Committee.*

13. 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.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland and any future provider of legal education.*

14. 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).

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, King's Inns, Bar of Ireland.*

15. The Law Society should work with relevant stakeholders to improve the information, outreach and supports available on how to secure training contracts by addressing the barriers identified in the LSRA research, particularly around information gaps and information asymmetry. A merit-based system for the recruitment of trainee solicitors should be open and transparent, with greater clarity for all on the pathways, terms and conditions and selection processes and improved supports for trainees and training firms during the training period. The Law Society should consider the introduction of a centralised portal or online resource for prospective trainee solicitors.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, law firms.*

16. The Bar of Ireland should work with the Honorable Society of King's Inns and relevant stakeholders to improve the information, outreach and supports available for prospective barristers to identify masters with whom to undertake their mandatory pupillage year at the Bar. A reformed system for the selection of masters should be more formalised, fair and transparent, with enhanced mechanisms for support and supervision of pupillages during the pupillage period.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland, King's Inns.*

17. The LPET Committee, once established, should engage with the Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society and public and private sector employers to highlight different career pathways for barristers and solicitors. Further, the introduction of legal partnerships is an opportunity for the LSRA and the LPET Committee once established, in collaboration with the King's Inns and the Law Society, to roll out an information campaign and enhanced outreach as well as other supports for barristers and solicitors interested in this new business model.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, Law Society and King's Inns.*

18. The LSRA should collaborate with law firms and the professional bodies on the introduction of measures to ensure positive workplace culture and employee wellbeing. The LSRA to engage with the Law Society in consultation with other key stakeholders to create a self-assessment template to be completed and reported on an annual basis to the Law Society and the LSRA by all law firms over a stated size. This self-assessment will measure activity undertaken by the firm to ensure a positive workplace culture, dignity in the workplace, a reasonable work-life balance for staff, and employee wellbeing. These reports will be published on the websites of the LSRA and Law Society and by the firms themselves.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Law Society, law firms.

19. The LSRA should engage with the barrister profession to consider initiatives to make a career as a self-employed practising barrister more sustainable in the early years, in particular for women and under-represented groups. Reforms could include, for example, targeted initiatives, practical information on the self-employed profession, practical supports in relation to building and managing a practice, alternative career pathways and new business models including legal partnerships, professional wellbeing, mentoring and personal development

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Bar of Ireland and self-employed barristers who are not members of the Law Library.

20. The LSRA should engage with the Department of Justice on introducing direct professional access to barristers in non-contentious matters. This would be achieved with the commencement of section 101 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015. Section 101 states that no professional code shall operate to prevent a barrister from providing legal services as a practising barrister in relation to a matter, other than a contentious matter, where his or her instructions on that matter were received directly from a person who is not a solicitor. The LSRA to engage with the profession and develop and provide guidance where necessary on the receipt of direct instructions in non-contentious matters.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Department of Justice.

- 21.** The LSRA should progress work on a scheme for expanded direct access to barristers. The LSRA previously recommended that direct access to barristers be permitted to organisational clients in contentious matters in certain circumstances.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

- 22.** The LSRA should revisit the introduction of multi-disciplinary practices (MDPs). The LSRA has previously considered the introduction of MDPs under the 2015 Act and for reasons of sequencing and resources prioritised the prior introduction of legal partnerships and limited liability partnerships. Following the introduction of legal partnerships, the LSRA should monitor their uptake and impact and revisit the introduction of MDPs.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

- 23.** The LSRA should develop guidance for barristers and employers on section 212 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 which allows an employed practising barrister to appear on behalf of their employer in a court, tribunal or forum of arbitration.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA.*

- 24.** Relevant stakeholders should collaborate on measures to ensure that barristers are paid fees in a timely manner.

ACTION BY: *The Bar of Ireland, Law Society, Department of Justice, LSRA and relevant State agencies.*

- 25.** The LSRA should consult with key stakeholders on options for changing the law to allow barristers to sue for their fees, and report on the matter with recommendations to the Department of Justice.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, Bar of Ireland, Law Society, non-Law Library practising barristers*

- 26.** Engagement between relevant stakeholders should be intensified so that the concerns identified in the LSRA research around the levels and structure of professional fees for State funded legal aid work undertaken by junior barristers are explored and addressed.

ACTION BY:

The Departments of Justice and Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform, Bar of Ireland, relevant State agencies.

- 27.** The Department of Justice should consider current mechanisms across all government departments and State agencies to ensure transparency in the procurement and distribution of State funded work for early career barristers and solicitors including the potential for the introduction of equitable briefing policies and standards.

ACTION BY:

The Department of Justice, government departments, State agencies, buyers of legal services on behalf of the State.

- 28.** The Honorable Society of King's Inns, the Law Society, the Bar of Ireland and the Courts Service should create an action plan to address issues facing members of the legal profession with disabilities. Employers should consider introducing a form of reasonable accommodation or disability passport for the legal profession.

ACTION BY:

The Courts Service, Bar of Ireland, King's Inns, Law Society, employers.

- 29.** The LSRA, the professional bodies and other legal profession stakeholders should commit to taking targeted actions towards building solicitor and barrister professions that reflect the diversity of modern Irish society.

ACTION BY:

The LSRA, Law Society, Bar of Ireland, King's Inns, law firms, employers, Department of Justice.

- 30.** Demographic data on the legal profession should be routinely collected and published to establish a diversity profile and to inform and monitor actions to encourage greater diversity. The data should include the range of protected characteristics under equality legislation, as well as socio-economic status. The LSRA and the LPET Committee once established, to engage with the professional bodies on defining, lawful gathering and monitoring of the required data.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, King's Inns, Law Society, Bar of Ireland.*

- 31.** The LSRA, the LPET Committee once established, the Law Society and the Honorable Society of King's Inns should review training arrangements for non-EEA students in order to remove barriers to entry.

ACTION BY: *The LSRA, LPET Committee, Law Society, King's Inns, Department of Justice.*

- 32.** The professional bodies should consider reducing entry requirements on a reciprocal basis for transfers between both branches of the legal profession, including a mutual recognition framework for solicitors and barristers with less than three years post-qualification experience. Transfer arrangements for foreign-qualified lawyers should also be reviewed. This should be done once appropriate Competence Frameworks and standards have been established for solicitors and barristers. The LPET Committee, once established, should regularly review transfer arrangements.

ACTION BY: *The Law Society, King's Inns, LPET Committee.*



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