



An tÚdarás Rialála  
Seirbhísí Dlí  
Legal Services  
Regulatory Authority

# Pathways to the Professions 2023

Annual Report on  
Admission Policies of  
the Legal Professions







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## Executive Summary and Assessment

1. This is the 2023 annual report from the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (the Authority) to the Minister for Justice under section 33 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 as amended (the Act). It is the fifth annual report that the Authority has submitted under section 33 of the Act, which was commenced on 7 October 2019.
2. As required under section 33(1)(a) and (b) of the Act, the Authority documents in this report the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors and barristers during 2023. For the fifth consecutive year, it documents small increases in the numbers of new trainee solicitors and student barristers, as well as increases in the numbers of new entrants to both professions.
3. This report also provides an update on developments during 2023 in legal practitioner education and training and an overview of data on both the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the costs of legal services. It also includes a summary of relevant submissions made to the Authority as part of its statutory consultation under section 33(2) of the Act.
4. Certain limitations with the availability of relevant statistical data in the areas of demand for and costs of legal services continue to pose constraints for the Authority when it comes to the areas which require its assessment under section 33(1)(c) of the Act. These were noted too in a Department of Justice report on the control of litigation costs prepared by Indecon International Consultants, which found “major gaps” in the available information on litigation costs.
5. The Authority will continue to closely monitor and report on available data on legal services demand and costs in its annual reports to the Minister.
6. In the year under review the Irish economy continued to demonstrate resilient growth. The population exceeded five million people for the first time in 171 years and the labour market continued to perform in a robust manner with record high employment at 74%. While continued growth in the economy is an opportunity, it can also create recruitment and retention challenges in the legal services sector, where ongoing internationalisation of the market continues to have an impact.



## Solicitor admissions in 2023

### *Number of new solicitor trainees continues to grow*

7. A total of 561 trainee solicitors enrolled on the Law Society's Professional Practice Course (PPC) in 2023, a marginal increase from 560 in 2022. Of these, 467 trainees began the full-time PPC, with 94 trainees starting the part-time course, the PPC Hybrid, which was introduced in 2019.
8. The PPC intake of new solicitor trainees for 2023 has continued the general upward trend of recent years. Much of this growth is due to enrolment in the PPC Hybrid; in 2023, for the third consecutive year, one in six of new solicitor trainees were on PPC Hybrid. This indicates a healthy demand for this flexible alternative to the full-time programme.
9. PPC trainees are required to undertake a 24 month period of in-office training under contract with a law firm. A total of 83% of all new solicitor training contracts in 2023 were with Dublin law firms, reflecting the dominance of the country's capital in the legal services market.
10. Almost two thirds (62%) of new trainee solicitors were undertaking their training contract with a large corporate law firm (those with 50 solicitors or more).

### *Increase in solicitors Roll admissions and in practising solicitors*

11. A total of 772 new solicitors were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2023, an increase of 257 from 2022. Of the total, 548 (71%) were solicitors newly qualified in Ireland by the Law Society, and 158 (20%) were England and Wales-qualified. The Roll of Solicitors is maintained by the Law Society. Once entered on the Roll, solicitors can apply for a practising certificate. Practising certificates are issued/renewed by the Law Society at the start of each calendar year.
12. A total of 11,871 solicitors held practising certificates on 31 December 2023. This is an increase of 219 (2%) from 2022. It is the second year in a row in which there has been a small increase in the number of practising certificates held. The majority of practising certificates (7,923, 67%) were held by solicitors working in Dublin. In 2023 there were 416 practising certificates issued to first-time practising certificate holders.

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

13. An ongoing trend identified once again in the year under review is that more than one in five solicitors work in the corporate or public "in-house" sector. This reflects the fact that both commercial and public sector organisations have internal legal functions supporting their business needs. The total number of solicitors holding practising certificates and working in-house in 2023 was 2,688 (22% of the total 11,871 practising certificates in 2023).



14. In another trend highlighting the scale of provision of legal services by corporate law firms, more than one in four practising solicitors in 2023 (28%) worked with a total of twenty employers. These comprised 15 large corporate law firms and five large public sector bodies who, combined, accounted for a total of 3,337 practising certificates held.

## **Barrister admissions in 2023**

### *Small increase in new barrister students*

15. A total of 131 students started the King's Inns Barrister-at-Law (BL) degree course in 2023, a marginal increase from 130 in 2022. The BL degree intake for 2023 consisted of 56 students (43%) on the full-time one year course and 75 (57%) students on the two year Modular or part-time course.

### *Increase in barrister admissions*

16. A total of 163 persons were called to the Bar and admitted to practise by the Chief Justice of Ireland in 2023, allowing them to exercise a full right of audience before all courts. This is up 16 (11%) from 147 in 2022.
17. Once admitted to practise, barristers may begin practising either as self-employed practitioners or in employed positions. Traditionally, most newly admitted barristers have proceeded into self-employed practice as members of the Law Library. New Law Library members must undertake a mandatory 12-month period of unpaid pupillage, also known as devilling, with a more senior barrister called a master.

### *Decrease in number of new pupil barristers*

18. A total of 72 barristers began their 12-month pupillage at the start of the legal year in October 2023, down from 90 in 2022. Of the 72 barristers who began their pupillages in 2023, 56 were called to the Bar in the same year, while the rest were called to the Bar in 2022 and earlier.

### *Increase in barristers on Roll*

19. The number of barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers stood at 3,051 at the end of 2023, an increase of 94 (3%) from 2,957 in 2022. Of the total, 2,139 (70%) were barristers practising as members of the Law Library and 912 (30%) were not members of the Law Library. There was an increase of 128 (3%) barristers on the Roll who were not members of the Law Library since 2022 when there were 784 such barristers on the Roll.
20. The Roll of Practising Barristers is a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State. It is maintained and routinely updated by the LSRA.



### *Demand for and costs of services of solicitors and barristers*

21. As noted in previous annual reports, determining the level of demand for the services of practising solicitors and barristers in any given year poses challenges as there is no one source which explicitly captures this data. A 2022 report by EY consultants for the Bar of Ireland indicated that the Law Library is “over-populated” with barristers, while also noting increased demand for barristers’ services in some areas and decreased demand in other areas.
22. National skills data from State agency SOLAS did not flag any supply shortages for the combined occupational group of solicitors, barristers, judges, and related professionals, despite a slight decrease in the numbers employed in this group.
23. The Authority notes the King’s Inns submission that evidence has emerged in recent years of a shortage of senior barristers to both prosecute and defend cases in the criminal courts.
24. In relation to the cost of legal services, the Authority notes that concerns continue to be raised by the National Competitiveness and Productivity Council and others about high legal costs and litigation costs in Ireland. A 2024 report by Indecon International Consultants for the Department of Justice on models for the control of litigation costs noted that litigation costs in Ireland are significant and vary by settlement channel. It found “*some evidence that litigation costs in other countries are lower than in Ireland although causation is difficult to determine.*”

### **Developments in legal practitioner education and training in 2023**

25. The Authority remains ever mindful that the assessment required of it under section 33 of the Act is not purely a numerical exercise. In addition to its wider regulatory objectives, it must also have regard to the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to the solicitors and barristers professions.
26. Legal practitioner education in Ireland is due to undergo significant changes on foot of recommendations made by the Authority to the Minister for Justice in September 2020 in a report issued under section 34 of the Act. The report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*, made a total of twelve recommendations for reform of legal education and training for solicitors and barristers.
27. The two core recommendations were:
  1. A clear definition of the **competence and standards** required to practise as a solicitor or barrister should be developed; and



2. The establishment of a new and independent **Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee** (the LPET Committee).
  
28. The Authority notes that the Department of Justice’s Justice Action Plan for 2023 contains an action to: *“Bring proposals to Government to agreement and commence reform of professional legal education, introduce independent oversight for the first time, and remove barriers to becoming a solicitor or barrister.”*
  
29. In support of this commitment, in 2023 the Authority continued to engage with Department of Justice officials around implementation of its *Setting Standards* recommendations.
  
30. Following this engagement the Authority in September 2023 commenced the establishment of an Education and Training Committee under section 16 of the Act. The section 16 Education and Training Committee 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. The Authority looks forward to further future engagement with the Department on reform in this important area.
  
31. The Authority will also continue to engage with the Department of Justice on its recommendations to address barriers and challenges faced by early career legal professionals. These arose from extensive research and a suite of reports submitted to the Minister in January 2024.
  
32. The year under review was the second year of the Law Society’s new format PPC. The course is now taught in a single block of instruction spanning a full academic year. This format replaced the traditional two-part course delivered in blocks called PPC I and PPC II.
  
33. For barristers, the Bar of Ireland reported a positive response from members and high levels of compliance with its competency based CPD Scheme, which is now in its third year.





## Diversity trends

34. The statistical information on trainee solicitors supplied by the Law Society shows that slightly more women than men began solicitor training in the year under review and that the majority (90%) of new trainees were aged 30 or under. Almost nine in ten new solicitor trainees (89%) had a law degree while 10% had another degree and 1% had no degree. Four in five (83%) secured training contracts with law firms in Dublin.
35. The statistical information on barrister students supplied by the King's Inns similarly shows that more women than men started the Barrister-at-Law degree in the year under review. Half of new barrister students in 2023 were aged 30 or under, while just over half had a King's Inns approved law degree.

## Conclusion and looking ahead

36. The year under review saw a continuation of the generally upward trend in the numbers enrolling in professional training for solicitors and barristers. There were more notable increases in the numbers of new entrants to both professions, but a decrease in the number of barristers starting pupillage in the Law Library.
37. The concentration of legal practitioners in Dublin remains a feature of the legal services market, and there was once more some evidence of recruitment and retention challenges in the solicitors' profession and concerns about the supply of senior barristers in criminal cases.
38. The year under review also saw a significant development in legal education and training, with the establishment by the LSRA of an Education and Training Committee under section 16 of the Act which will lay the foundations for the independent statutory Legal Practitioners Education and Training Committee, as recommended in its *Setting Standards* report. The Authority looks forward to further future engagement with the Department of Justice on reform in this important area.
39. Looking ahead, the Authority anticipates developments in the legal services market in 2024 with the planned introduction of new legal partnerships. This new business model will, for the first time, enable barristers, or barristers and solicitors, to form partnerships together to provide legal services. A legal practitioner will be able to provide legal services as a partner in, or an employee of, a legal partnership. In time, their introduction may impact on the numbers admitted to the professions and the demand for and costs of the services of practising solicitors and barristers.
40. The Authority will continue to both drive and monitor developments in the legal services sector in accordance with its statutory functions. These efforts will continue to shape and inform its annual assessments under section 33 of the Act. The Authority hereby commends this report to the Minister for Justice.



## Section 1: Introduction

### Origin and purpose of this report

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

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

The report is required to be submitted to the Minister not later than four months after the end of each financial year i.e. no later than 30 April 2024.

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

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

- (a) protecting and promoting the public interest,*
- (b) supporting the proper and effective administration of justice,*
- (c) protecting and promoting the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services,*
- (d) promoting competition in the provision of legal services in the State,*
- (e) encouraging an independent, strong and effective legal profession,*
- (f) promoting and maintaining adherence to the professional principles of legal practitioners specified in subsection 5.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Section 13(5) of the Act.



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

### **Statutory consultation**

- 1.5 This report includes the views of stakeholders who were invited to respond to a consultation carried out by the Authority under section 33(2) of the Act. Under this section, the Authority shall consult with the professional bodies under the Act, the Law Society of Ireland (the Law Society), the Bar Council (Bar of Ireland), the Honorable Society of King's Inns (King's Inns), and such persons as the Authority considers appropriate for the purposes of preparing this annual report under section 33(1).
- 1.6 On 14 December 2023, the executive of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority wrote to the three above professional bodies requesting information under section 33(3), including statistical data, to assist the Authority in preparing this report.
- 1.7 In addition, on 15 December 2023, the LSRA executive issued an invitation by email to 309 recipients on its consultations list, calling for written submissions. The LSRA also published a consultation notice on its website. Written responses were requested by 9 February 2024. The call for written submissions provided for a consultation period of eight weeks, which falls within the suggested timescales contained in the guidance on public consultations published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.8 Recipients of the consultation notice were asked a set of questions. Consultees were also offered an opportunity to share any data or analysis that they considered relevant. The consultation notice is included in Annex B. The Authority is grateful to those organisations and individuals who took the time to make written submissions, in particular the professional bodies for supplying detailed statistical data on admissions in 2023. All of the information supplied and observations made were extremely useful for the Authority in preparing this report to the Minister.

### ***Breakdown of responses***

- 1.9 The Authority received a total of 11 written submissions. A list of respondents is set out in Annex A. A breakdown of these by type of respondent is set out in Table 1.1. The written submissions will be published in due course on the LSRA's website.

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

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

<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Professional bodies under the Act	3
Universities	1
Statutory bodies	2
Professional and representative bodies	3
Individuals	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

### *Report structure*

- 1.10 This report sets out the statistical data required under section 33(1), the results of the consultation, and the Authority's assessment for the year 2023. The report is divided into the following sections:

Executive Summary and Assessment

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Statistics on Admissions

Section 3: Key Developments in 2023 and Views on Section 33 (1)(c) Assessment

Section 4: Conclusion and Looking Ahead



## Section 2: Statistics on Admissions

- 2.1 Section 33(1) of the Act requires the Authority to report annually on the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors and barristers during the year. In preparing this report, the Authority submitted a number of questions seeking statistical data on admissions for 2023 from the Bar Council (Bar of Ireland), the Law Society of Ireland (the Law Society) and the Honorable Society of King's Inns (King's Inns).
- 2.2 This section sets out this data, as well as other relevant statistical information. The data on trainee solicitors and solicitor admissions was provided by the Law Society which is the educational, representative and regulatory body of the solicitor profession in Ireland.
- 2.3 The data on student barristers and barrister admissions was supplied by the Bar of Ireland and the King's Inns. The Bar of Ireland is the representative body for barristers at the independent referral Bar, which consists of members of the Law Library. The King's Inns is Ireland's "Inn of Court" which trains and admits legal professionals awarded the degree of Barrister-at-Law necessary to be called to the Bar by the Chief Justice of Ireland.
- 2.4 This section also includes statistical data from the Roll of Practising Barristers which the LSRA maintains under the Act. It includes graphs and charts on admissions data. Further detailed statistical information is provided in tables in Annex C.



# Admissions to the Solicitor Profession 2023



## Trainee Solicitors

561 = 467 + 94

Number of new trainee solicitors  
*(Less than 1% increase)*

Full-time PPC trainees

PPC Hybrid trainees

57% Female

90% Aged 30 or under

89% Law degree

## Training Contracts

83%

Of training contracts in Dublin

62%

Of training contracts with a large law firm

4%

Of training contracts "in-house" in private or public sector

## Roll of Solicitors

772 Number of solicitors admitted to Roll

71% Newly-qualified in Law Society of Ireland

## Practising Certificates

11,871 Number of solicitors with practising certificates

22% Working in-house

## Solicitor trainee admissions 2023

- 2.5 The vocational training for solicitors in Ireland is the Law Society’s Professional Practice Course (PPC). The PPC is provided full-time (Full-time PPC) and, since 2019, also as a part-time course (PPC Hybrid). The full-time course runs from September–April, and the PPC Hybrid is delivered over a calendar year from December–December. Trainees must also complete four Advanced Electives which run from May–June each year.
- 2.6 Law graduates wishing to become trainee solicitors must pass the Law Society’s Final Examination–First Part (FE-1). Non-graduates, and those without an approved qualification need to take a Preliminary Examination before they can sit the FE-1.<sup>3</sup> The Preliminary Examination tests core English language skills, understanding of Irish politics and government and general knowledge.
- 2.7 The FE-1 consists of a total of eight exams which are held twice a year, with sittings in March and October. A candidate can sit one or more exam paper in each sitting. In addition to passing the FE-1, aspiring solicitors must secure a 24 month training contract with a solicitor or solicitors firm before they can enrol in the PPC.
- 2.8 While parts of the PPC are taught online, both the full-time and part-time courses require attendance at the Law Society’s Education Centre in Blackhall Place in Dublin city.
- 2.9 The part-time course facilitates distance learning to a greater extent; nearly all lectures (approximately 95%) are pre-recorded and released at the start of the course. Part-time trainees can also avail of online catch-up sessions.
- 2.10 Part-time trainees are required to attend 21 workshop/tutorial weekends over the course of the academic year. Of these, nine are taught ‘live’ online and 12 are delivered ‘in-person’ onsite. Due to the course structure, part-time trainees can work while also undertaking the course, with the Law Society recommending that trainees work only four days a week.
- 2.11 On the full-time course, all tutorials and workshops take place onsite. Approximately two thirds of the lectures are onsite and are also livestreamed, so full-time trainees have the option to attend those lectures either in Blackhall Place or online.
- 2.12 The in-office training period starts after trainees have completed their final PPC exams. After successfully completing the PPC and in-office training, they can then apply to the Law Society for admission to the Roll of Solicitors.

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<sup>3</sup> Law clerks and legal executives with at least five years’ experience can apply to the Law Society’s Education Committee for an exemption from the Preliminary Examination. Candidates who hold a degree awarded by a university in another country if the degree is equivalent to a Level 7 or higher award on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications may also apply for an exemption. Law Society of Ireland (2024) *Preliminary Examination* (website). Available [here](#)

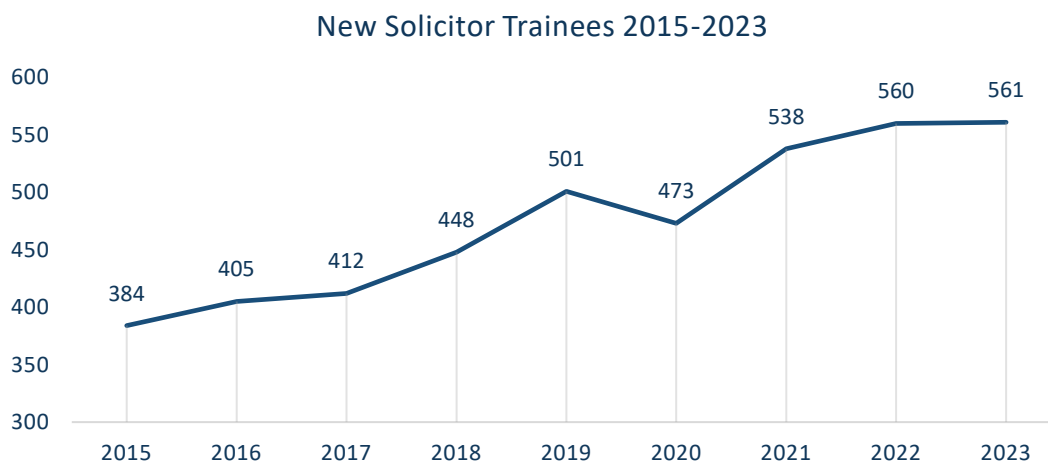


### ***Increase in numbers sitting PPC entrance exams (FE-1)***

2.13 A total of 3,174 candidates sat FE-1 exams in 2023, up from 2,891 candidates in 2022. A total of 13 candidates sat the Law Society's Preliminary Examination in 2023.

### ***New solicitor trainee intake continues to increase***

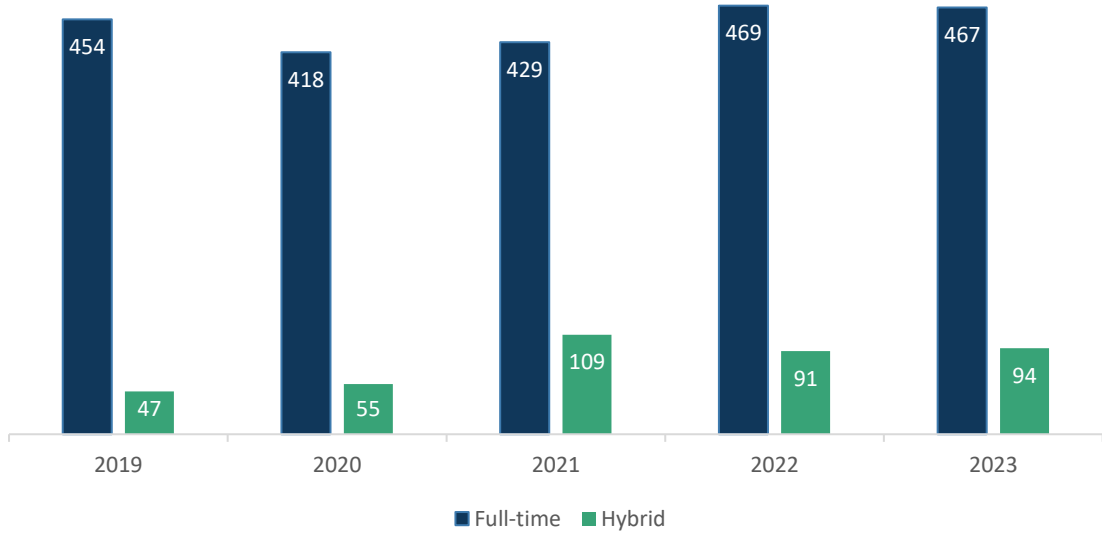
2.14 A total of 561 trainee solicitors enrolled on the PPC in 2023. As can be seen in the graph below, this is a continuation of the generally upward trend of new solicitor trainees enrolling in the PPC in recent years.



2.15 The total PPC intake for 2023 was comprised of 467 trainees undertaking the full-time course and 94 trainees on the part-time course. Part-time trainees amounted to 17% of the total trainee intake for 2023 which is a slight increase on 2022, when they accounted for 16% of the total intake of 560 trainees.



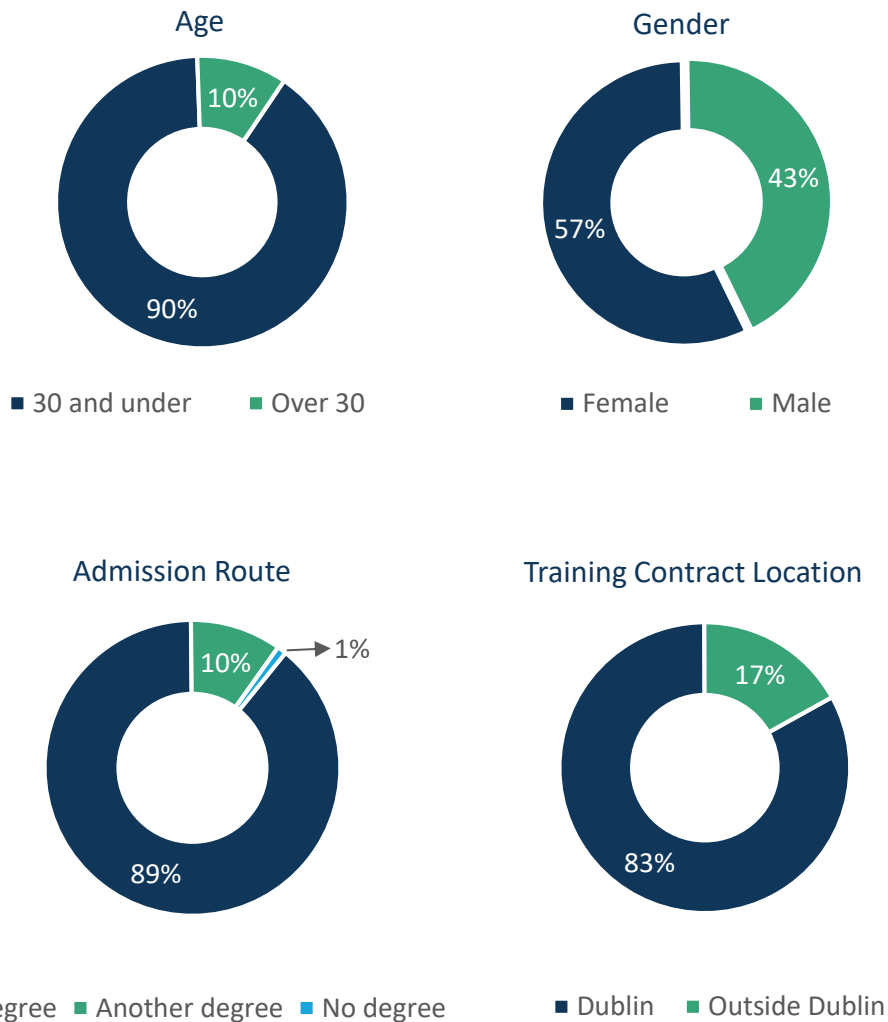
### New Solicitor Trainees 2019–2023: Full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid



#### *New solicitor trainees — diversity profile*

- 2.16 This section contains demographic data for all solicitor trainees who began their training in 2023. It also shows separate diversity data for trainees on the two PPC courses, the full-time PPC and the part-time PPC Hybrid.
- 2.17 Of the 561 new solicitor trainees in 2023, 57% identified as female and 43% identified as male. This compares to 65% female trainees and 35% male in 2022. The age of new solicitor trainees aligns with previous years with 90% aged 30 or under and 10% aged over 30. The majority of new solicitor trainees had training contracts in county Dublin (83%) with the remaining 17% obtaining a training contract outside of Dublin.
- 2.18 The majority (89%) of new PPC trainees in 2023 had a law degree, while 10% had another (non-law) degree and 1% had no degree. The proportion of new intake trainees that are law graduates in 2023 is the highest it has been in the recent years; 84% of new trainees in 2022 had law degrees, with 83% in 2021 and 82% in 2020.

### 561 New Solicitor Trainees 2023



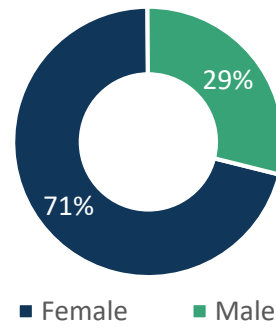
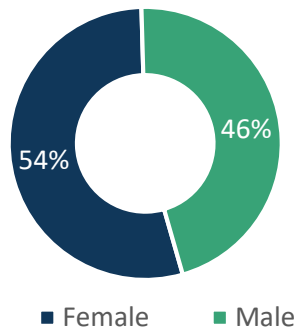
#### Diversity trends in the full-time PPC and PPC Hybrid

2.19 In comparing full-time trainees with part-time trainees, the data shows that there was a higher proportion of women on the part-time course (71%) compared to the full-time course (54%). A significantly higher proportion of part-time trainees were over the age of 30 (33%) compared to their full-time counterparts (5%). One in five part-time trainees (19%) did not have a law degree, compared to one in ten (10%) on the full-time course. The majority of trainees on the part-time course secured a training contract outside Dublin (60%) whereas only a small minority of trainees on the full-time course secured a training contract outside Dublin (8%).

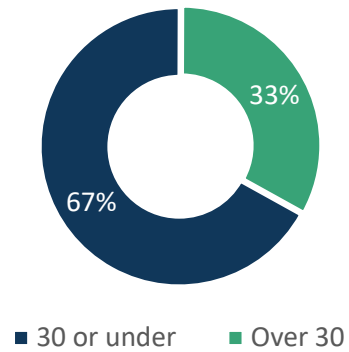
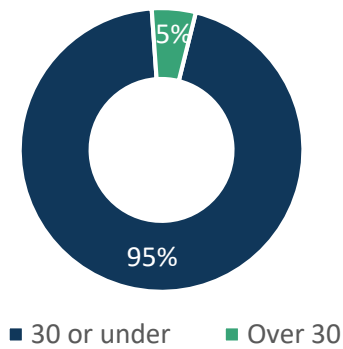
### 467 Full-time PPC Trainees

### 94 PPC Hybrid Trainees

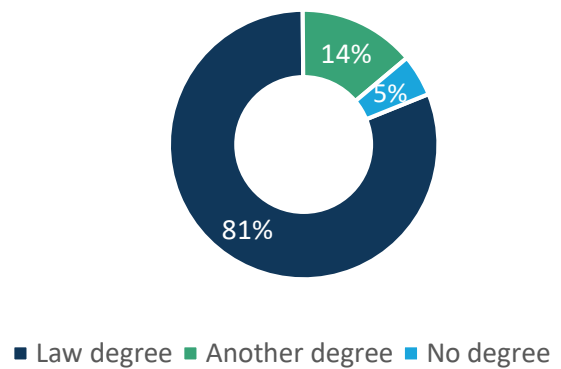
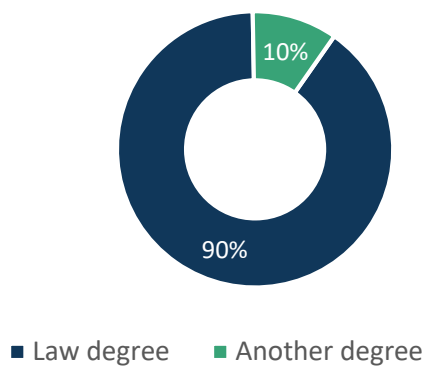
#### Gender



#### Age



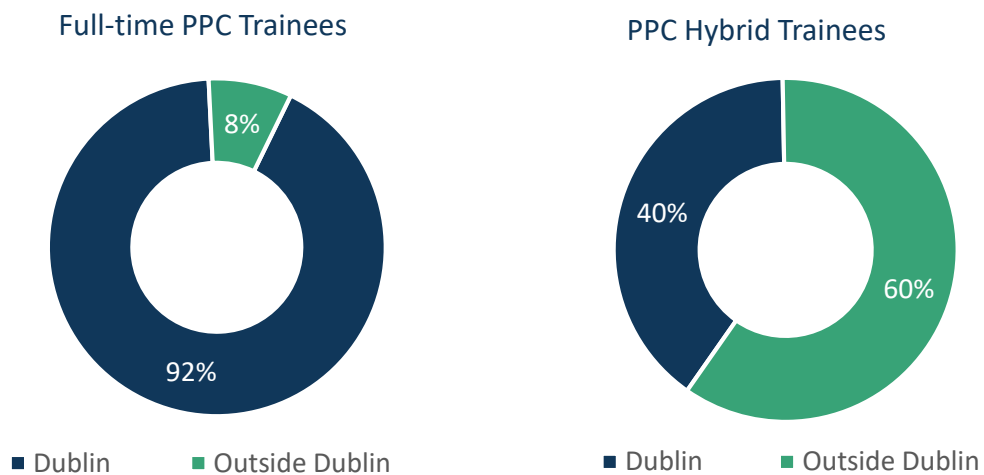
#### Admission route





### Training contracts for new solicitor trainees

- 2.20 The vast majority of the new solicitor trainees (83%) secured their training contracts with firms in Dublin and the remaining 17% secured their training contracts outside of Dublin.
- 2.21 Of the 467 full-time trainees, 92% secured training contracts in Dublin, and 8% secured training contracts outside of Dublin. On the part-time course the majority of trainees (60%) secured training contracts outside of Dublin while the remaining 40% of part-time trainees secured a training contract in Dublin.



### Training contract sponsors

- 2.22 The main training contract sponsors in 2023 remained large law firms. As Table 2.1 illustrates, 348 of the 561 new solicitor trainees in 2023 (62%) secured a training contract with a total of 20 large law firms (75% of full-time PPC trainees). Fifteen of these firms were also in the top 20 largest law firms in 2023 based on the number of practising certificates issued (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.1 Top 20 law firms by PPC trainee intake in 2023**

Ranking	Firm/Employer	Number of trainees
1	Arthur Cox LLP	52
2	Matheson LLP	48
3	A&L Goodbody LLP	47
4	McCann FitzGerald LLP	42
5	William Fry LLP	20
6	Eversheds Sutherland LLP	20
7	Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	16
8	Maples and Calder (Ireland) LLP	11
9	Ronan Daly Jermyn LLP	10
10	Fieldfisher LLP	10
11	Byrne Wallace LLP	10
12	Hayes Solicitors LLP	9
13	Ogier Leman LLP	8
14	Addleshaw Goddard LLP	8
15	Dillon Eustace LLP	7
16	Beauchamps LLP	7
17	Walkers LLP	6
18	Phillip Lee LLP	6
19	LK Shields Solicitors LLP	6
20	DLA Piper LLP	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>348<sup>4</sup></b>

Source: Law Society of Ireland

### In-house training contracts

- 2.23 Approximately 9% of part-time trainees secured their training contracts in-house, in corporate settings or public bodies, compared to 3% of full-time trainees. The public bodies included the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Chief State Solicitor's Office and Dublin City Council. The private corporations that offered training contracts to solicitor trainees in 2023 included KPMG Ireland, Deloitte LLP and the Electricity Supply Board.

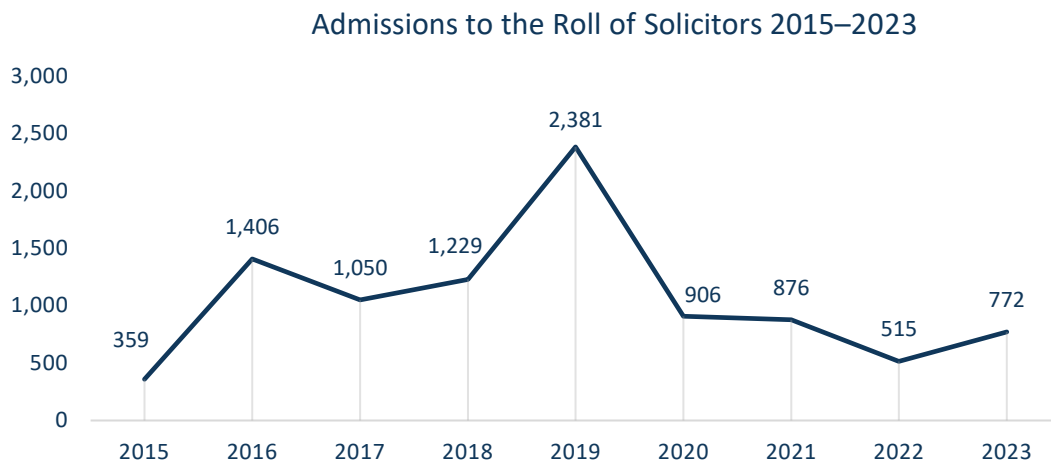
<sup>4</sup> All 348 solicitor trainees who secured these training contract were on the full-time PPC.



## Solicitor admissions 2023

### *Solicitor Roll admissions increased significantly in 2023*

- 2.24 A total of 772 solicitors were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2023. This is an increase of 257 (50%) from the 2022 total of 515.



- 2.25 In 2023 the Law Society had the highest number (548) of newly qualified solicitors admitted to the Roll since 2011, which accounted for 71% of the admissions to the Roll. England and Wales–qualified solicitors accounted for 20% of the total (158 solicitors, up from 134 in 2022). There were 31 solicitors (4%) admitted to the Roll from Northern Ireland. The remaining 5% of new entrants to the Roll were made up of lawyers from other common law jurisdictions and EU states as well as transferring barristers.
- 2.26 The total number of solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors at the end of 2023 was 24,161. A total of five solicitors applied to be voluntarily removed from the Roll in 2023, while two solicitors were struck off the Roll.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.27 Admission to the Roll of Solicitors does not legally entitle a solicitor to provide legal services in Ireland, although it is a prerequisite for applying to the Law Society for an annual practising certificate to do so.

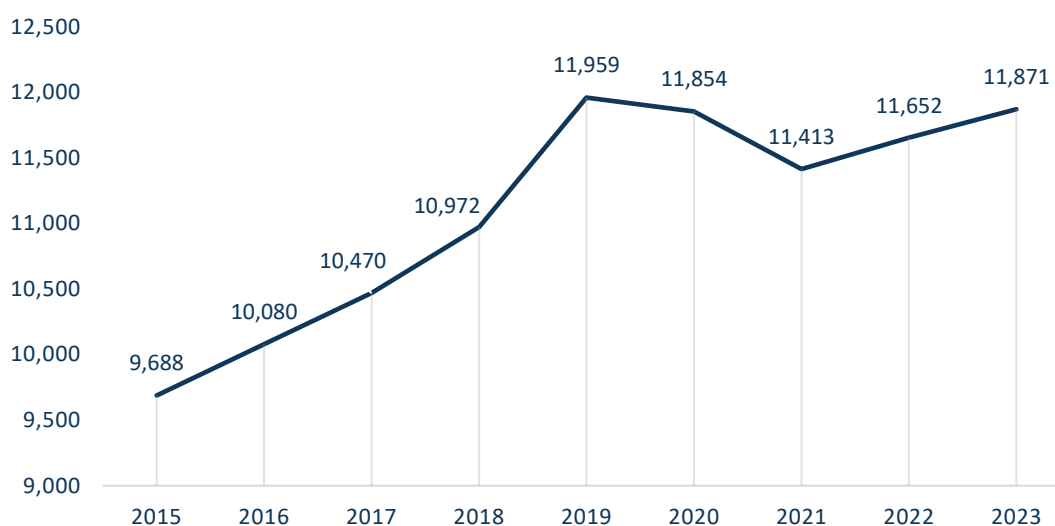
<sup>5</sup> For breaches of the Solicitors Accounts Regulations, including the misappropriation of client funds, and breaches of the Anti-Money Laundering Regulations.



### Annual certification – slight increase in number of practising certificates

- 2.28 Practising solicitors are legally required to hold a practising certificate, which must be renewed on an annual basis. In 2023 there were 416 practising certificates issued to first-time practising certificate holders.
- 2.29 There were 11,871 solicitors with practising certificates in Ireland on 31 December 2023. This is an increase of 219 (2%) from 2022.

Total Practising Certificates 2015–2023



- 2.30 Since January 2021, the Law Society only issues practising certificates to solicitors who are practising or intending to practise in Ireland from an establishment based in this jurisdiction. They must also have appropriate professional indemnity insurance. Practising certificates are no longer issued to enrolled solicitors who are practising other than from an establishment in Ireland. This follows a regulatory review undertaken by the Law Society in November 2020.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Law Society of Ireland (2020) *Practising certificates and solicitors outside the jurisdiction*, (website). Available [here](#)



### *More than one in four solicitors worked with twenty employers*

- 2.31 As Table 2.2 shows, a total of 3,337 (28%) of solicitors with practising certificates at the end of 2023 were employed by a total of 20 employers, comprising large law firms and public sector bodies.
- 2.32 The top five law firms for 2023 in terms of numbers of solicitors holding practising certificates remained the same as in 2022. Outside commercial law firms, practising certificates were also issued in significant numbers for solicitors working in the Chief State Solicitor's Office, the Legal Aid Board, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Allied Irish Banks plc and the Central Bank of Ireland.

**Table 2.2 Top 20 employers by practising certificate numbers 2023<sup>7</sup>**

Ranking	Firm/Employer	Practising Certificates
1	A&L Goodbody LLP	365
2	Matheson LLP	361
3	Arthur Cox LLP	326
4	McCann FitzGerald LLP	290
5	Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	279
6	William Fry LLP	208
7	Chief State Solicitor's Office	186
8	Byrne Wallace LLP	148
9	Legal Aid Board	129
10	Maples and Calder (Ireland) LLP	123
11	Ronan Daly Jermyn LLP	115
12	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	106
13	Allied Irish Banks plc	99
14	Eversheds Sutherland LLP	98
15	Beauchamps LLP	97
16	Dillon Eustace LLP	94
17	Central Bank of Ireland	85
18	Hayes Solicitors LLP	84
19	Phillip Lee LLP	74
20	Fieldfisher LLP	70
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,337</b>

Source: Law Society of Ireland

<sup>7</sup> Total practising certificates held as at 31 December 2023.





### ***In-house solicitors one in five of practising certificate holders***

- 2.33 Both commercial and public sector organisations employ solicitors as part of their internal legal functions to support their business needs. In-house solicitors are required to hold practising certificate regardless of the areas of law in which they practise.<sup>8</sup> However, solicitors in the full-time service of the State and solicitors employed full-time to provide conveyancing services for a non-solicitor employer are not required to hold practising certificates.<sup>9</sup>
- 2.34 A total of 2,688 in-house solicitors held practising certificates in 2023, accounting for just over one in five (23%) of all practising certificates. A further 476 solicitors on the Roll were classified by the Law Society as being in the full-time service of the State in 2023.

### ***Practising certificates surrendered and suspended***

- 2.35 A total of 80 practising certificates were surrendered during 2023, and one solicitor had their practising certificate suspended.

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<sup>8</sup> Solicitors practising as a solicitor by providing legal services as an employee of a non-solicitor. Law Society (2021) *In-house solicitors – requirement to hold a practising certificate* (website). Available [here](#)

<sup>9</sup> *Solicitors Amendment Act 1994*, section 56(3)(b).



# Admissions to the Barrister Profession 2023



## Student Barristers

**131** = **75** + **56**  
Number of new barrister students (Less than 1% increase)      Modular      Full-time

**57%** Female

**50%** Aged 30 or under

**54%** Approved Qualification

## Called to Bar

**163** Number of barristers called to the Bar      **82%** King's Inns BL Degree holders

## Pupillage

**72** Number of new pupil barristers

## Roll of Practising Barristers

**3,051** Number of practising barristers on the Roll

**70%** Law Library members

**10%** Working in full-time service of the State



## Barrister student admissions 2023

- 2.36 The vocational training for barristers in Ireland is the Barrister-at-Law Degree (BL) degree course which is provided by the King's Inns on both a one year full-time basis and as a two year modular or part-time course.
- 2.37 In order to enrol on the course, candidates must pass an entrance exam. Candidates who apply to sit the entrance exam must have a King's Inns approved law undergraduate or master's degree, or a Diploma in Legal Studies from the King's Inns.<sup>10</sup> The entrance exam consists of five exams and is held in August every year.
- 2.38 The academic year for the full-time course runs from October to June. According to the King's Inns, full-time work is not compatible with the full-time course workload, and part-time work would need to be chosen carefully around the timetable and other course commitments.
- 2.39 The two academic years for the part-time course run from October to June. It is taught on average every second weekend during the academic year. According to the King's Inns, students who undertake the part-time course usually maintain full-time work positions.
- 2.40 The BL degree course is run on a hybrid model with some modules delivered in-person at the King's Inns in Dublin and other modules taking place online. A higher proportion of the part-time course takes place via online delivery, taking account of the fact that part-time students are more likely to live further afield from Dublin and to have additional professional commitments.<sup>11</sup>

### *Increase in number of candidates sitting entrance exams*

- 2.41 A total of 158 applicants sat the entrance exam for the BL degree course in 2023, up from 131 in 2022. A total of 140 candidates passed the exam and 18 failed. Students who pass the entrance exam and are offered a place on the BL degree course may apply to defer their place to a subsequent year.

### *Number of new student barristers remains stable*

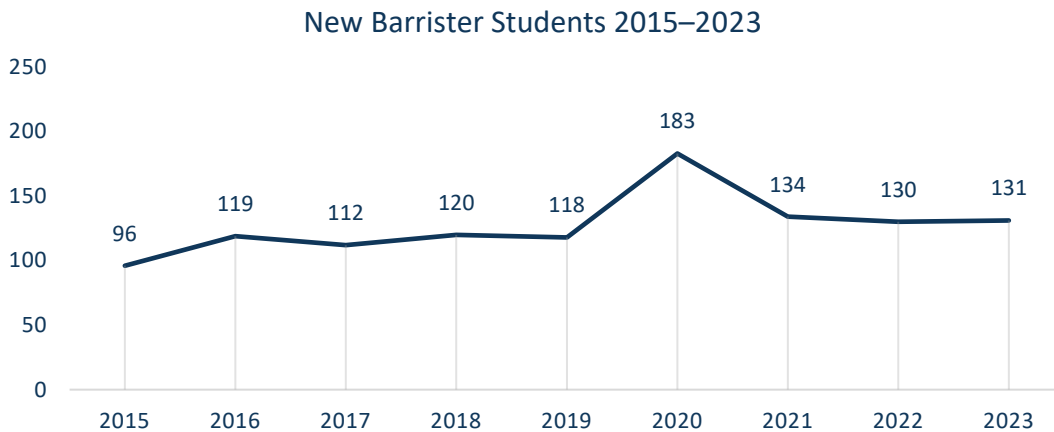
- 2.42 A total of 131 students started the BL degree course in 2023, up only slightly from 130 in 2022.<sup>12</sup>

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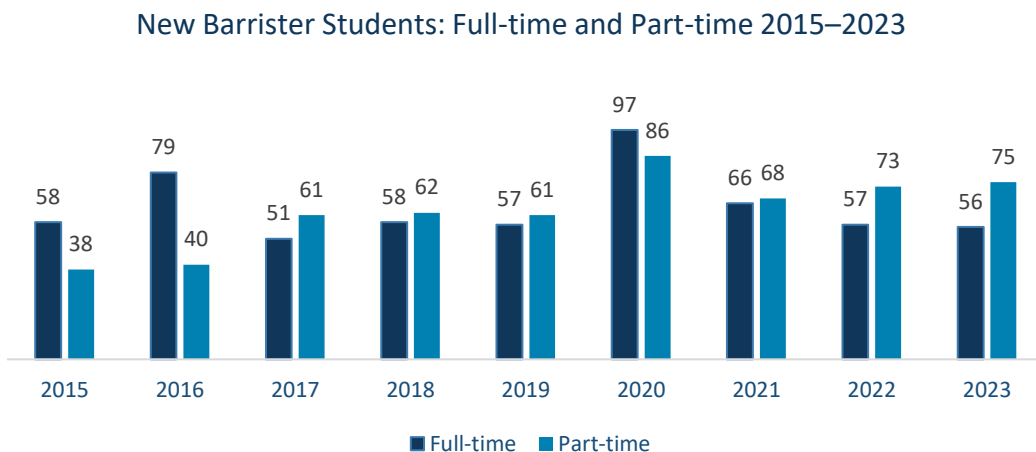
<sup>10</sup> Honorable Society of King's Inns (2023) *Schedule of Law Degrees / Qualifications Approved by King's Inns for the purposes of eligibility to sit the Entrance Examination*. Available [here](#)

<sup>11</sup> Honorable Society of King's Inns (2024) *Degree of Barrister-at-Law*. April 2024 [Web page] Available [here](#)

<sup>12</sup> The number of students who commenced the BL course in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic was 183. This takes account of the net impact of applicants who had deferred enrolment from previous years and deferrals to a later year.



2.43 The BL degree intake for 2023 consisted of 56 full-time students and 75 part-time students.

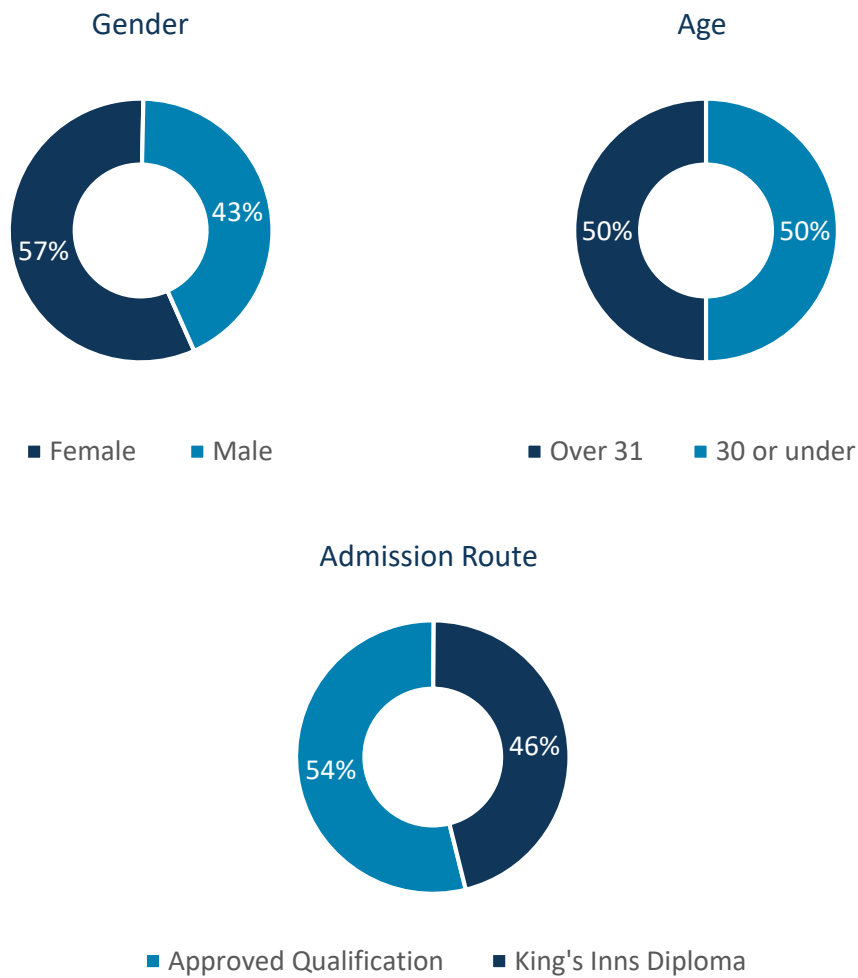


### *New barrister students — diversity profile*

2.44 This section contains demographic data for all barristers who started on the BL degree course in 2023. It also shows the data separately for full-time and part-time students. The data indicates that the provision of the BL degree as a part-time course facilitates more mature students, who may be working full-time, to train as barristers.

2.45 Of the 131 students who started the BL degree in 2023, 57% identified as female and 43% as male. In terms of the age profile of new barrister students in 2023, 50% were aged 30 or under and 50% were aged over 31. The admission route of new barrister students aligned with previous years' intake. The majority (54%) of students had an approved qualification and the remaining 46% had the King's Inns Diploma in Legal Studies.

### 131 New Barrister Students 2023



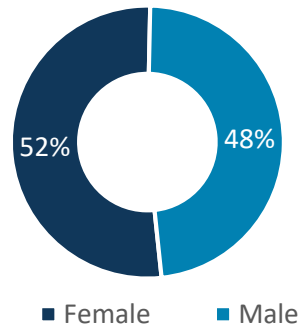
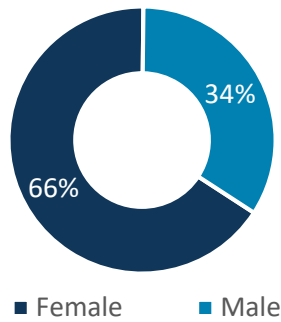
***Diversity trends in the full-time and modular BL degree course***

2.46 In comparing full-time and part-time students, the data shows that there was a higher proportion of older students (aged 31 and over) on the part-time course (64%) compared to the full-time course (32%). There were also slightly more students on the part-time course with a Diploma in Legal Studies (48%) than there were on the full-time course (43%). The majority of students on the full-time course identified as female (66%) whereas on the part-time course there was almost an even split (52% female and 48% male).

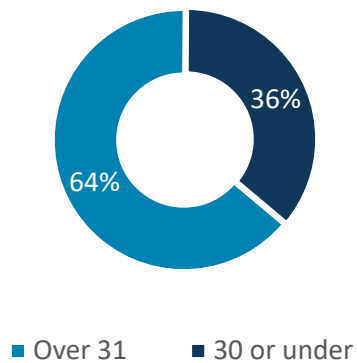
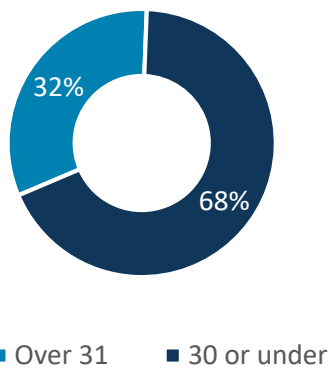
### 56 Full-time BL Degree Students

### 75 Modular BL Degree Students

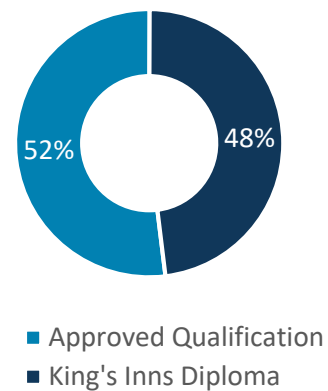
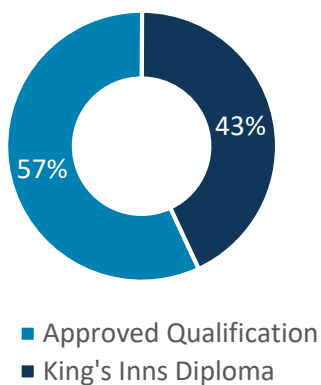
#### Gender



#### Age



#### Admission Route





## Barrister admissions 2023

### *Increase in barrister admissions in 2023*

- 2.47 Those who wish to practise as a barrister in Ireland must first be “admitted” to the BL degree.<sup>13</sup> Traditionally, the main route of admission to the barrister profession in Ireland is to complete the BL degree course at the King’s Inns.
- 2.48 Under the King’s Inns Education Rules, there is also a route for solicitors, barristers from Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and qualified lawyers from other jurisdictions to be admitted to the BL degree, without having completed the degree at the King’s Inns.<sup>14</sup>
- 2.49 Once admitted to the BL degree, barristers are entitled to be “called to the Bar” by the Chief Justice of Ireland, allowing them to exercise a full right of audience before all courts. The number of barristers being called to the Bar having completed the BL degree has remained relatively stable in recent years. In 2023, BL degree graduates accounted for 83% (135) of admissions to the Bar.<sup>15</sup> The remaining 17% were admitted to the BL degree and called to the Bar either under the King’s Inns Education Rules or on the basis that they satisfied other eligibility requirements.<sup>16</sup>
- 2.50 A total of 163 persons were called to the Bar in 2023. This is up 16 (11%) from the total of 147 in 2022.

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

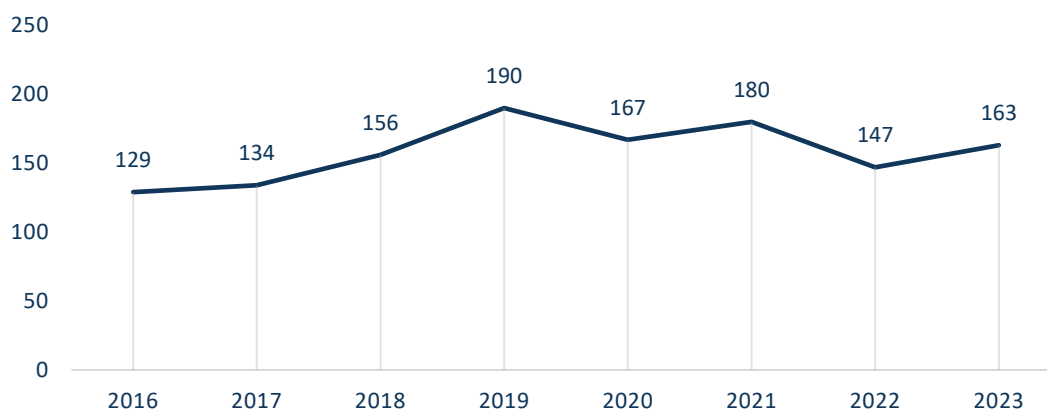
<sup>14</sup> The Honorable Society of King’s Inns (2021) *Education Rules*, Edition of June 2021. Available [here](#)

<sup>15</sup> This figure is mainly barristers who completed the BL degree course in 2023, but also includes a small number who were admitted to the degree in an earlier year.

<sup>16</sup> According to the King’s Inns, these are applicants who hold legal qualifications of an academic or professional nature (or both) from another EU Member State and who, as a result, are partly qualified in that Member State. The applicants’ qualifications are assessed and to the extent that there is any shortfall in knowledge or skills, the applicant will be required to complete a number of assessments. See C-313/01 Christine Morgenbesser v Consiglio dell’Ordine degli avvocati di Genova.



Barristers Called to the Bar 2016–2023



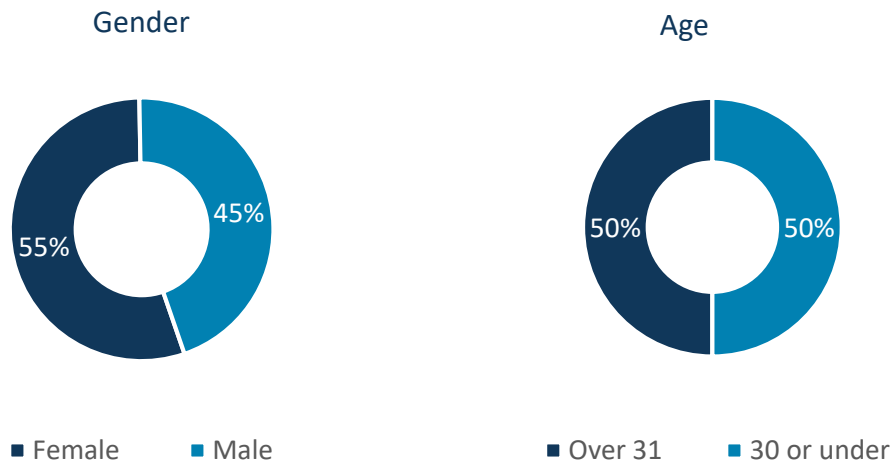
### *Decrease in newly qualified barristers joining the Law Library*

- 2.51 Once admitted to the BL degree and called to the Bar, barristers may begin practising either as self-employed practitioners or in employed positions. Traditionally most newly admitted barristers proceed to practise as sole traders at the independent referral Bar, the model under which members of the Law Library currently operate. Newly admitted barristers must begin their membership of the Law Library at the start of the legal year each October. Under Bar of Ireland rules, they must undertake a mandatory 12-month period of unpaid pupillage, also known as devilling, with a more senior barrister called a “master”.
- 2.52 According to data provided by the Bar of Ireland, 72 new members commenced pupillage at the start of the legal year in October 2023, down from 90 in 2022. Of the 72 new pupils, 56 were called to the Bar in 2023; the remaining 16 new pupils were called to the Bar between the years 2010–2022, but deferred commencing pupillage until 2023.
- 2.53 Of the 72 new barrister pupils in October 2023, 55% identify as female and 45% identify as male. In terms of age profile, 50% of new pupils were aged 30 or under and 50% were over the age of 30.





## 72 New Barrister Pupils in 2023



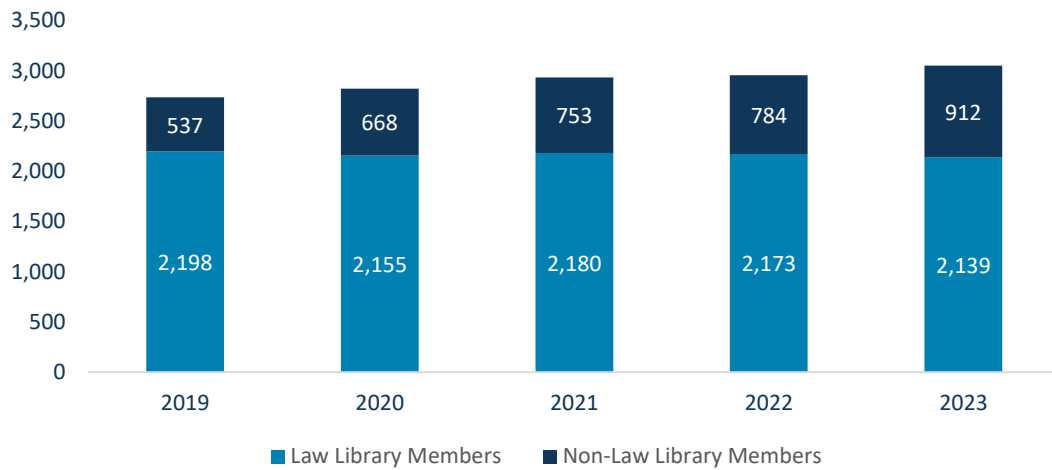
### *Slight increase in numbers on Roll of Practising Barristers*

- 2.54 Since 2019, the LSRA has maintained the Roll of Practising Barristers (the Roll), a searchable online register of all barristers entitled to provide legal services in the State. Qualified barristers who intend to provide legal services in the State must apply to the LSRA to have their name entered on the Roll. It is an offence to provide legal services as a barrister without being named on the Roll. The Roll is comprised of self-employed barristers (both members of the Law Library and barristers who are not Law Library members), and barristers in employment in the public and private sectors. The Roll also includes barristers who may primarily practise in other jurisdictions, and retired barristers who are volunteering their services but are still required to be on the Roll.
- 2.55 The number of barristers on the Roll at the end of 2023 was 3,051, an increase of 94 (3%) from 2,957 in 2022.<sup>17</sup> A total of 77 barristers were removed from the Roll in 2023.
- 2.56 More than two thirds of barristers on the Roll at the end of 2023 (2,139, 70%) were members of the Law Library and 912 (30%) were not members of the Law Library. Of the 912 barristers practising outside of the Law Library, 294 were recorded on the Roll as working in the full-time service of the State.

<sup>17</sup> Figures from LSRA recorded on 31 December each year.



Barristers on the Roll of Practising Barristers 2019–2023



***Small number of transfers between the professions***

2.57 A total of eight barristers transferred to become solicitors and were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors in 2023. Four solicitors transferred to be barristers in the same year.



## Section 3: Key Developments in 2023 and Views on Section 33(1)(c) Assessment

- 3.1 Section 33(1)(c) of the Act requires the Authority to provide an annual assessment as to *“whether or not, having regard to the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise, the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers and solicitors in that year is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of such services at a reasonable cost.”*
- 3.2 In its previous four annual reports under section 33 to the Minister, the Authority provided an overview of available statistical data on the demand for and costs of legal services to consumers, including the State, in order to establish a useful benchmark for subsequent annual assessments.
- 3.3 Previous reports also highlighted limitations in the availability of statistical data on both demand and costs. This continues to pose constraints for the Authority when it comes to drawing conclusions in relation to the areas which require its assessment under section 33(1)(c) of the Act. The Authority will continue to closely monitor and report on available data on legal services demand and costs in its annual reports to the Minister.
- 3.4 For its statutory consultation under section 33(2) of the Act, the Authority invited respondents to provide their views under the following four areas as set out in the scope of the consultation notice:
1. The level of demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors in 2023.
  2. The costs of legal services in 2023 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers.
  3. The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise.
  4. The extent to which the admission policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practise.
- 3.5 This section provides an update on key developments in these areas in 2023. It also summarises respondents’ analysis and views under the four headings as set out above.



## Demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors

### *Summary and key developments in 2023*

- 3.6 The Irish economy has experienced strong growth since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. However growth subsided in the latter half of 2023. This is in line with the global economy, which by the end of 2023 had moderated.<sup>18</sup>
- 3.7 In the second quarter of 2023, Ireland experienced its highest recorded rate of employment to date, at 74.2%.<sup>19</sup> Ireland's population in 2023 exceeded five million people for the first time in 171 years.<sup>20</sup>
- 3.8 The government's Ireland for Law initiative, which began in 2019, continued in 2023 to promote Irish law and legal services to the international business community. Members of the strategy group include nominees from several government departments, the Industrial Development Authority Ireland and the professional bodies for solicitors and barristers, as well as the Attorney General and Chief Justice.<sup>21</sup> Since 2019, 25 international law firms have opened an office in Dublin, continuing the trend of internationalisation of the Irish legal services markets and driving recruitment and retention challenges.<sup>22</sup>

### *Data sources for level of demand of services of solicitors and barristers limited*

- 3.9 Determining the level of demand for the services of practising solicitors and barristers in any given year poses challenges, as there is no one source which explicitly captures this data. In previous annual reports under section 33 of the Act, statistical data from the Evelyn Partners' annual *Survey of Law Firms in Ireland* provided useful data on the performance of Irish law firms. This contributed to the analysis of the demand for legal services. The 2022/2023 annual survey was not available as a data source for the year under review, but is scheduled to resume in 2024.
- 3.10 A 2023 survey by the Law Society of solicitors and trainees found that a total of 82% of practitioners cited recruitment and retention challenges and 34% said recruitment and retention was extremely challenging.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> McQuinn K., C. O'Toole, E. Kenny & L.Hauser, ESRI (2023) *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, Winter 2023. Available [here](#)

<sup>19</sup> Central Statistics Office (2024) *Ireland 2023: The Year in Numbers* (website). Available [here](#)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Government of Ireland (2024) *Ireland for Law* (website). Available [here](#)

<sup>22</sup> Carman, D. (2023) 'Dublin Disruptors: throwing down the gauntlet', *Reports Legal, Ireland Report*' (June 2023). Available [here](#)

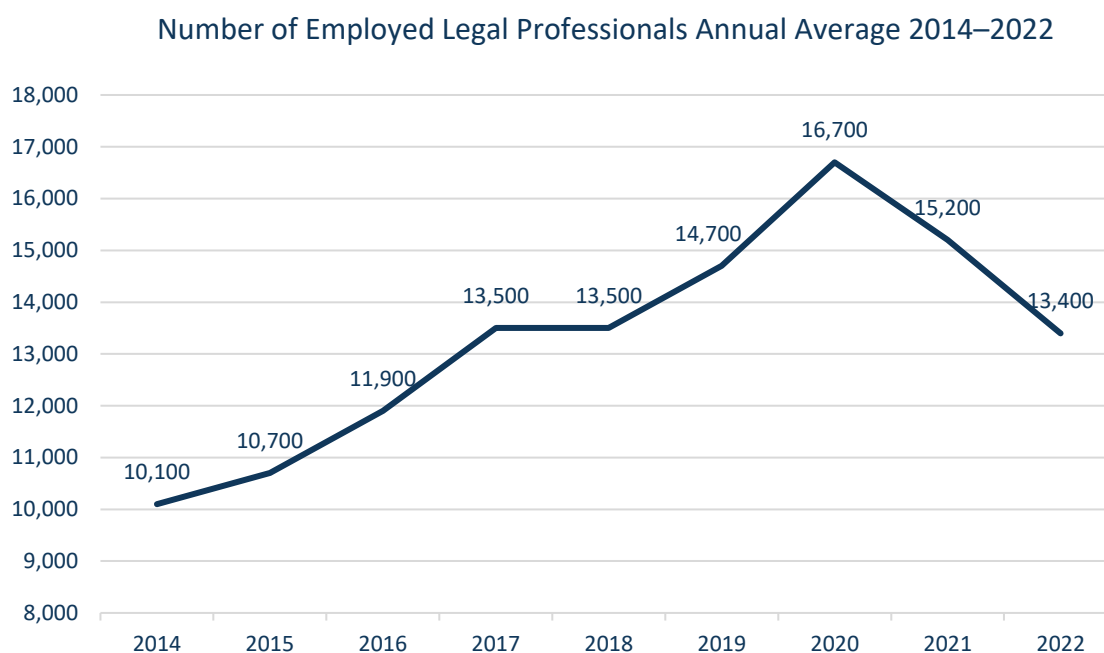
<sup>23</sup> Law Society Gazette (2023) *Helicopter View*, July 2023. Available [here](#)



### *Decrease in employment in legal professions – but no shortages flagged*

- 3.11 According to the SOLAS National Skills Bulletin for 2023 (which reports on data from 2022), there was a decrease in the numbers employed in the occupational group which combines solicitors, barristers, judges, and related professionals. Employment levels have declined annually since 2020 for these professionals, with a total of 13,400 persons employed in 2022, a decrease of 1,800 (12%) on the previous year.<sup>24</sup> This has resulted in a negative growth rate of -0.2% for SOLAS’s five year annual average, compared to an employment growth rate of 3% for the total workforce.
- 3.12 Despite these decreases, SOLAS’ assessment of shortages in skills and occupations has not flagged any shortages for the legal professionals in recent years, including in 2022.

#### **Legal professionals employed — annual averages 2014–2022**



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

<sup>24</sup> SOLAS (2023) *National Skills Bulletin: A Report by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council*, October 2023. Available [here](#)



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

- 3.13 Each of the three professional bodies in their submissions to the Authority highlighted the challenges in quantifying the level of demand for services for solicitors and barristers on an annual basis as there is no one source which explicitly captures this data.
- 3.14 **The Law Society** in its submission referenced its 2023 survey of solicitors and trainees which found that solicitors are generally upbeat about the profession, particularly those working in large firms and in-house in the private and public sector. However it reported that these findings were not consistent across urban and rural areas.
- 3.15 **The King's Inns** in its submission reported that *“over the last three years, evidence has emerged pointing to a shortage of barristers to prosecute and defend cases in the criminal courts. This manpower shortage is manifesting itself most prominently at Senior Counsel level, where there have been several occurrences of cases in which the prosecution of criminal matters has been impeded owing to Senior Counsel being unavailable. Evidence of this situation first began to emerge in July 2021 and unfortunately, the situation persists all around the country. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that Junior Counsel at provincial Circuit venues are finding it increasingly difficult to identify Senior Counsel who are available to travel to defend matters in which, given the gravity of the offending and possible sanction, a certificate for second Counsel has been granted by the Court.”*
- 3.16 **The King's Inns** pointed out that many barristers *“find it difficult to establish a viable practice at the independent referral Bar and many leave the independent referral Bar and cease their membership of the Law Library within their first seven years of practice”*. It stated that this was indicative of there being a highly competitive market for the services of barristers, and not of an unmet demand in the market for the services of barristers.
- 3.17 **The King's Inns** also highlighted the fact that *“many barristers now operate outside of the traditional route of the independent referral Bar within the Law Library.”* Many barristers are in full-time employment in both the public and private sectors *“while others pursue careers outside of the law but enhanced by their legal expertise”*.
- 3.18 **The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)** in its submission proposed that a more competitive and innovative market would help to ensure that the admissions policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest and ensure the availability of the legal services at a reasonable cost.
- 3.19 **The Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)** welcomed the opportunity in its submission to draw attention to the importance of fostering a legal system that is reflective of the diversity of Irish society. It recommended that *“measures aimed at delivering diversity, equity and inclusion in the legal professions should be actionable, monitored, periodically evaluated and properly*



*budgeted, and should address structural barriers and inequities in the access and exercise of the legal professions.”*

- 3.20 **The School of Law and Government, Dublin City University**, in its submission expressed concern that rural firms and criminal firms are struggling in terms of costings to hire solicitor trainees, and that *“this will have a knock-on effect across the criminal justice system as a whole. The issues relating to recruitment of lawyers into both criminal law, and rural practice, and a combination of the two, are in need of urgent attention.”*



## Costs of legal services provided by barristers and solicitors

### Summary and key developments in 2023

- 3.21 As noted in previous annual reports under section 33 of the Act, there are ongoing challenges in assessing legal costs in Ireland due to data limitations. The Authority notes the finding of a Department of Justice commissioned report by Indecon International Consultants that there is an absence of information on the detailed components of legal costs, and also on the variations between different legal service providers.<sup>25</sup> The report, which evaluated options for the control of litigation costs, stated that:
- 3.22 *“Despite the progress made in recent years in collating and publishing data on certain legal costs, major gaps in information on the costs of litigation still exists. In particular there is no comprehensive information available on what are the detailed components of legal costs for most cases which proceed to litigation or how these costs have changed over time. There is also an absence of comprehensive data on how the costs vary between different providers of legal services. The resultant lack of transparency exasperates the challenges faced by consumers of litigation services. This also hinders evidence-based policy development.”*<sup>26</sup>
- 3.23 The Indecon report concluded that litigation costs in Ireland are significant and vary by settlement channel. It found *“some evidence that litigation costs in other countries are lower than in Ireland although causation is difficult to determine”*.<sup>27</sup>
- 3.24 The National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) has expressed concerns for a number of years about high legal costs and high litigation costs in Ireland and their impact on national competitiveness.<sup>28</sup>
- 3.25 In its *Ireland’s Competitive Challenge 2023* report, it stated that: *“In addition, delays and uncertainty caused by the legal system are a source of indirect costs. These failings have been highlighted by the European Commission in its Rule of Law annual report which specifically emphasises Ireland’s prohibitive legal costs.”*<sup>29</sup>
- 3.26 The main source of quantitative data on the cost of legal (and other) services in Ireland is the Central Statistic Office’s experimental data series, the Services Producer Price Index (SPPI). The SPPI measures changes in the average prices charged by domestic service producers to other business customers for a selected range of services. For the SPPI report, the first

<sup>25</sup> Indecon International Consultants (2024) *Multi-Criteria Impact Evaluation of Options for the Control of Litigation Costs*, submitted to Department of Justice 2024. Available [here](#)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (2023) *Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2023*, September 2023. Available [here](#)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. See also European Commission (2023) *2023 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Ireland, Commission Staff Working Document*, 5 July 2023. Available [here](#)





limitation is that the data is presented as an index; it only gives information about changes in prices rather than absolute prices. Secondly, the most granular SPPI sectoral data on legal services is in a group which also includes accounting, PR and business consultancy services costs. Therefore, changes in the data can be driven by price changes in any one or more of these areas.

- 3.27 Bearing in mind these limitations, the SPPI data shows that service prices for legal, accounting, PR and consultancy services in the year to Quarter 4 2023 were on average 1.3% higher when compared to the same period in the previous year. In the same period (Quarter 4 2023) there was a 0.4% increase for all service producer prices.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Excessive costs – 2% of complaints to LSRA in 2023***

- 3.28 The LSRA began receiving and investigating complaints about solicitors and barristers under Part 6 of the Act on 7 October 2019. The Authority is required under section 73 of the Act to report on the performance of its complaints function every six months. In 2023, two such reports were published, in April and October. One of the three types of complaints that the LSRA can receive and investigate is that the amount of costs sought by a legal practitioner in respect of legal services provided to the client was or is excessive.
- 3.29 In 2023, the LSRA received a total of 1,290 complaints. Of these, 30 were complaints of excessive costs only (accounting for 2% of the total), with excessive costs issues also raised in a further 90 complaints.<sup>31</sup>

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

- 3.30 **The Law Society, King's Inns and the Bar of Ireland** in their submissions to the Authority stated that due to limitations around publicly available data, it is difficult to determine whether legal services were available to consumers at a reasonable cost in 2023.
- 3.31 **The Law Society** said that *“the cost of legal services may be considered to be broadly reasonable for the majority of consumers”* based on the CSO SPPI figures and relatively low number of complaints of excessive costs to the LSRA.
- 3.32 **The Bar of Ireland** referred to a joint submission, (along with the Law Society), that it made to Indecon Consultants in preparation for its report for the Department of Justice on the control of litigation costs. This submission, it said, *“strongly refutes assertions made by a number of bodies that legal costs in Ireland are high.”*

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<sup>30</sup> Central Statistics Office (2023) *Services Producer Price Index Experimental (Selected Services) Quarter 4 2022*, (22 March 2023). Available [here](#)

<sup>31</sup> Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2024) *LSRA Annual Report 2023*



- 3.33 **The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)** in its submission pointed to previous submissions in which it said that *“consumers should have access to information on price, service and quality available in a market in order to make informed purchasing decisions and drive competition”*. It recommended that *“work undertaken by the LSRA around raising public awareness of legal costs should also enable the collection of comprehensive data around legal costs”*.
- 3.34 **The CCPC** suggested that *“this data collection process should enable tracking the evolution of legal costs over time. The LSRA could consider issuing annual reports on cost and price trends.”*
- 3.35 **The Irish Council of Civil Liberties (ICCL)** in its submission advocated for fee restoration for State funded criminal legal aid work. It stated: *“that fees have not been restored is a shocking undervaluation of the crucial work of barristers in Ireland’s criminal justice system. It is very concerning that about two-thirds of barristers in criminal practice in Ireland leave after six years.”*.
- 3.36 **The ICCL** further commented on the legal aid system which it stated *“must be properly resourced to protect the rights of people who come before the courts and the rule of law.”* It noted *“that the Civil Legal Aid scheme has been repeatedly criticised for its overly strict two-tier test”* and *“many people are still excluded from accessing the courts for this reason.”*
- 3.37 **The Irish Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX)** in its submission said that the high and perceived high cost of legal services is preventing people on lower incomes from equal access to justice. The ILEX restated its call for the regulation of legal executives which is said would provide a greater choice to the consumer and more competitive legal costs



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

### Summary and key developments in 2023

- 3.38 The Authority's work in the area of legal practitioner education and training reform continued in 2023, with a focus on implementation of reforms set out in the Authority's 2020 report, *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*.<sup>32</sup>
- 3.39 The two core recommendations in the *Setting Standards* report were:
1. A clear definition of the **competence and standards** required to practise as a solicitor or barrister should be developed; and
  2. The establishment of a new and independent **Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee** (the LPET Committee).
- 3.40 The Authority notes that the Department of Justice's *Justice Plan* for 2023 contains an action to: "Bring proposals to Government to agreement and commence reform of professional legal education, introduce independent oversight for the first time, and remove barriers to becoming a solicitor or barrister."<sup>33</sup>
- 3.41 In support of this commitment, in 2023 the Authority continued to engage with Department of Justice officials around implementation of its *Setting Standards* recommendations.
- 3.42 Following this engagement the Authority in September 2023 commenced the establishment of an Education and Training Committee under section 16 of the Act. The section 16 Education and Training Committee will lay the foundations and build the framework for the introduction of the independent statutory Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee (LPET Committee) as recommended in the *Setting Standards* report. The Authority looks forward to further future engagement with the Department on reform in this important area.
- 3.43 The Authority in 2023 also continued to engage stakeholders on recommendations arising from its research findings on the economic and other barriers facing early career solicitors and barristers. This report was requested by the Minister in November 2020, with the Authority submitting its research findings in March 2022. In January 2024 the Authority submitted to the Minister its final report with a total of 32 recommendations for further reforms.
- 3.44 For the second academic year the Law Society has delivered the new "fused" format PPC. The traditional two-part PPC, delivered in blocks called PPC I and PPC II, is now consolidated into a single block of taught instruction spanning a full academic year.

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<sup>32</sup> Legal Services Regulatory Authority (2020) *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*, September 2020. Available [here](#)

<sup>33</sup> Department of Justice (2023) *Justice Plan 2023*. Available [here](#)



- 3.45 The PPC Hybrid was introduced in 2019. This course provides “blended learning,” combining online lectures with on-site tuition at weekends, instead of the traditional PPC requirement to attend Blackhall Place in Dublin full-time.
- 3.46 The core curriculum on the full-time PPC now runs from September to April and the core curriculum on the PPC Hybrid runs from January to December.

### *Views of respondents on standard of education and training*

- 3.47 **The Bar of Ireland** in its submission focused on its CPD scheme which is now in its third year. It stated that the response from its members has been “*very positive with very high levels of compliance with the new requirements*”.
- 3.48 **The Bar of Ireland** submitted that for those barristers who are on the Roll of Practising Barristers who are not members of the Law Library, the same level of assurance in relation to their competence cannot be provided. It said: “*As noted in our previous submission, this represents a regulatory risk and one that should be prioritised by the LSRA in the interest of protecting and promoting the interests of consumers relating to the provision of legal services as provided under section 13(4)(c) of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015.*”
- 3.49 **An individual barrister** in a submission noted that there is no centrally coordinated CPD regime for employed barristers and that the lack of a regulatory approach to CPD for employed barristers “*may be difficult to understand, including by employers*”.
- 3.50 **The King’s Inns** in its submission said it believes that the appropriate standard of education and training for a person admitted to practise as a barrister is “*fit to practise*”. It pointed out that this standard of legal education for prospective barristers is now underpinned by the Statement of the Required Competencies of a Barrister which it published in November 2020.<sup>34</sup> **The King’s Inns** said it believes this statement “*represents a comprehensive expression of the knowledge, professional skills and personal attributes required to be a competent practising barrister*”.
- 3.51 **The King’s Inns** further stated that: “*No other body or institution in Ireland has ever had, or will ever have, the education and training of barristers as its core and primary function. Moreover, the governance structure of King’s Inns ensures a strong level of interest and involvement of the practising Bar in the education and training of future members of the profession.*”
- 3.52 **The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)** in its submission referred to the 2020 LSRA report *Setting Standards: Legal Practitioner Education and Training*. It said it

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<sup>34</sup> Council of the Honorable Society of King’s Inns (2020) *Statement of the Required Competencies of a Barrister*. Available [here](#)



- welcomed the Authority's recommendations for the establishment of an independent Legal Practitioner Education and Training Committee (LPET Committee). It also supported the proposal that the LPET committee leverage the existing capabilities of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) to undertake the accreditation of providers.
- 3.53 **The CCPC** recommended in its submission that the LPET Committee and the LSRA should gather further data and evidence around the potential issues which might affect entry to the legal professions in Ireland.
- 3.54 **The CCPC** recommended that the LPET Committee, once in place, should consider the creation of new routes to legal qualification, including for non-law graduates, which *“should include recognition for prior learning and experience, benchmarked against a competency framework.”*
- 3.55 **The Chief State Solicitor’s Office (CSSO)** in its submission focused on the education and training provided by the King’s Inns and the Law Society of Ireland, post admission, in particular CPD lectures, ‘masterclass’ sessions and subject specific conferences and seminars. **The CSSO** stated that each year a number of the solicitors employed at the CSSO had availed of these training opportunities, and that *“feedback from solicitors undertaking these courses as to the standards had been extremely positive”* and it was of the view that there is *“a high standard of education and training available for practising solicitors”*.
- 3.56 **The CSSO** recommended the development of legal education and training courses that would have a broad focus, and provide refresher type training to practitioners to enable them to remain current in their expertise. It suggested *“general topics such as civil litigation / advanced dispute resolution or commercial law /corporate transactions to cover advances and changes in these areas and to support solicitors who may, for example, be moving from a transactional practice into a litigation practice without having run litigation files in a number of years or vice versa.”*
- 3.57 **DCU School of Law and Government** in its submission referred to previous submissions it made to the LSRA which highlighted the socio-economic barriers facing those seeking admission to the legal professions. Its submission included an account from a BCL graduate of DCU who set out their experience of the barriers to entering the legal profession. The difficulties cited by this individual included a lack of connections or network within the industry and a lack of financial support when undertaking the FE-1 entrance exam.
- 3.58 The graduate stated that they had benefitted from the Law Society Access Programme but that many people were not aware the programme, proposing that the Law Society promote it more prominently on its website.



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

### *Views of respondents on assessment*

- 3.59 The LSRA's consultation notice invited respondents to provide their views on: *"The extent to which the admissions policies of the legal professions are consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practise."*
- 3.60 **The Law Society** in its submission noted that there has been continued growth in admissions to the profession which it stated would *"help to dampen the challenges faced by the sector in finding and retaining talent"*.
- 3.61 **The Law Society** highlighted a 2022 Evelyn Partners survey finding that salary inflation was emerging as a key challenge for firms as a direct result of recruitment and retention issues in the sector.<sup>35</sup> It noted that the ability to offset such costs may become more difficult as economic uncertainty continues, and that price increases may need to be passed on to the consumer.
- 3.62 **The Bar of Ireland** in its submission said that in June 2021, the Council put forward a submission in response to the LSRA consultation on economic and other barriers faced by young barristers and solicitors. It said its submission included *"eleven recommendations that would address the challenges in building and maintaining a career at the Bar and support the goal of achieving greater diversity within the profession. We await with interest the publication of this report by the LSRA which is long overdue given that the public consultation occurred over 30 months ago."*
- 3.63 **The King's Inns** in its submission said that in examining this question, it was necessary to examine and contextualise the cost of providing professional legal training to an appropriate standard. It said the fees for its BL degree course, currently at €12,560, had not changed since 2009 and that it believed it compared very favourably with other types of education and training leading to a professional qualification.
- 3.64 In relation to admission policies, **the King's Inns** said that entry was fair and open, with every person who meets the entry requirements and passes the entrance exam may embark on professional training and there no "unmet" demand in the market.
- 3.65 **The King's Inns** said that this can be contrasted with other jurisdictions, for example, in Northern Ireland, where there is a cap on the numbers admitted to professional training leading to

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<sup>35</sup> Evelyn Partners, *Survey of Law Firms in Ireland 2022, Emerging from the pandemic — what does the future hold? 2021/2022*. Available [here](#)



qualification as a barrister; or in England and Wales, where many students *“find themselves unable to obtain the pupillage that is required to enable them to complete the process to fully enter practice”*.

- 3.66 **The King’s Inns** also stated that in the absence of any cap or quota, and in circumstances where the cost of the degree course has not increased since 2009, *“it is reasonable to conclude that the number admitted to the profession each year fluctuates in response to the demand for the services of practising barristers.”*
- 3.67 **The King’s Inns** stated that there are no numerical restrictions on attending the Barrister-at-Law degree course or on admission to the degree. It concluded that it believes the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers in 2023 *“is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of legal services at a reasonable cost”*. It also stated that the admissions policies to the BL degree course and to the barrister profession are *“rigorous and not restrictive,”* and that the policies achieve the objectives contained in section 13(4) of the 2015 Act.



## Section 4: Conclusion and Looking Ahead

- 4.1 The year under review in this report saw the Irish economy perform well with high employment. The government's Ireland for Law initiative, which began in 2019, continued in 2023 to promote Irish law and legal services to the international business community and there were continued signs of internationalisation of the legal services market. While continued growth in the economy is an opportunity, it can also create recruitment and retention challenges in the legal services sector.
- 4.2 In terms of admissions to the solicitor and barrister professions, this report documents for the fifth consecutive year small increases in the numbers of new trainee solicitors and student barristers. There were also increases in the numbers of new entrants to both professions.
- 4.3 Looking ahead, the Authority anticipates developments in the legal services market in 2024 with the planned introduction of legal partnerships as a new business model which will enable barristers and barristers, and barristers and solicitors, to form partnerships to jointly provide legal services for the first time. In time, their introduction may impact on the numbers admitted to the professions and the demand for and costs of the services of practising solicitors and barristers.
- 4.4 Building on progress to date, the Authority will continue to engage with the Department of Justice on its commitments to reform professional legal education, introduce independent oversight for the first time, and remove barriers to becoming a solicitor or barrister.
- 4.5 The Authority will continue to both drive and monitor developments in the legal services sector in accordance with its statutory functions. These efforts will continue to shape and inform its annual assessments under section 33 of the Act. The Authority hereby commends this report to the Minister for Justice.





## Annexes

### Annex A: List of Respondents to Statutory Consultation

Bar of Ireland
Chief State Solicitor's Office
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
Dublin City University, School of Law and Government
Individuals (2)
Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers
Irish Council for Civil Liberties
Irish Institute of Legal Executives
Honorable Society of King's Inns
Law Society of Ireland



## Annex B: Public Consultation Notice

14 December 2023

### **Invitation for Written Submissions on Admission Policies of the Legal Professions 2023 Annual Report**

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

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

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

The LSRA's report will contain the following elements:

- (a) the number of persons admitted to practise as solicitors during 2023;
- (b) the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers during 2023;
- (c) an assessment as to whether or not, having regard to the demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors and the need to ensure an adequate standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise, the number of persons admitted to practise as barristers and solicitors in 2023 is consistent with the public interest in ensuring the availability of such services at a reasonable cost.

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

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



Following the consultation and other evidence gathering activities, the LSRA will draw up a report to the Minister of Justice. The final report will be submitted to the Minister by 30 April 2024.

### Scope of Section 33 Consultation

The Authority invites written submissions in respect of the admission policies of the legal professions to include the following issues:

1. The **level of demand** for the services of practising barristers and solicitors in 2023.
2. The **costs of legal services** in 2023 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers.
3. The **standard of education** and training for persons admitted to practise.
4. The extent to which the admission policies of the legal professions are **consistent with the public interest** in ensuring the **availability of legal services at a reasonable cost**, taking into account the demand for services and the need to ensure adequate education and training standards for persons admitted to practise.

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

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

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

### Closing date and address for submissions

Interested parties wishing to contribute should send a written submission as soon as possible but in any event to be received no later than **Friday 9th February 2024**.



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

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

- By e-mail to: [publicconsultations@lsra.ie](mailto:publicconsultations@lsra.ie) or
- By post to:  
Section 33 Consultation  
Legal Services Regulatory Authority  
P.O. Box 12906  
Dublin 7

### **Freedom of Information**

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

### **Publication of Submissions**

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

Legal Services Regulatory Authority  
14 December 2023



## Annex C: Tables and Statistics

**Table 1: Admissions to the Roll of Solicitors 2013-2023**

Year	Qualifying Trainees	England & Wales Solicitors	Northern Ireland Solicitors	All other Lawyers*	Transferring Barristers	Admissions Total	% increase/decrease
2013	468	33	24	18	10	553	
2014	475	36	15	16	15	557	0.7%
2015	233	70	30	11	15	359	- 36%
2016	525	806	27	14	34	1,406	292%
2017	423	547	29	17	34	1,050	- 25%
2018	443	690	43	23	30	1,229	17%
2019	419	1,837	61	37	28	2,381 <sup>36</sup>	94%
2020	390	443	33	20	20	906	62%
2021	513	278	35	34	16	876	- 3%
2022	307	134	35	22	17	515	- 41%
2023	548	158	31	27	8	772	50%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

\*Other common law jurisdictions and EU states.

**Table 2: Solicitors holding practising certificates 2015-2023<sup>37</sup>**

Year	Practising Certificate Holders	No. increase/decrease on previous year	% increase/decrease on previous year
2015	9,688	444	5%
2016	10,080	392	4 %
2017	10,470	390	4%
2018	10,972	502	5%
2019	11,959	987	9 %
2020	11,854	-105	- 1%
2021	11,413	-441	- 4%
2022	11,652	239	2%
2023	11,871	219	2%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

<sup>36</sup> Total includes 12 additional transferring EU lawyers admitted through the Establishment Directive rather than the Qualified Lawyers Test. Source: Law Society

<sup>37</sup> Total practising certificates held as at 31 December of each year.

**Table 3: Admissions PPC 2012-2023**

Year	Total Enrolment	Male	Female	30 yrs or under	Over 30 yrs	Law degree	Other degree	Non-graduate
2012	392	149 (38%)	243 (62%)	87%	13%	-	-	-
2013	353	145 (41%)	208 (59%)	89%	11%	-	-	-
2014	388	140 (36%)	248 (64%)	87%	13%	-	-	-
2015	384	160 (42%)	224 (58%)	86%	14%	80%	22%	-
2016	405	169 (42%)	236 (58%)	87%	13%	78%	21%	1%
2017	412	169 (41%)	243 (59%)	90%	10%	84%	14%	2%
2018	448	180 (40%)	268 (60%)	89%	11%	79%	19%	2%
2019	501	205 (41%)	297 (59%)	88%	12%	79%	20%	1%
2020	473	166 (35%)	307 (65%)	90%	10%	82%	17%	1%
2021	538	209 (39%)	329 (61%)	88%	12%	83%	16%	1%
2022	560	195 (35%)	365 (65%)	89%	11%	84%	15%	1%
2023	561	242 (43%)	319 (57%)	90%	10%	89%	10%	1%

Source: Law Society of Ireland

**Table 4: PPC Admissions by course type 2019-2023**

Year	Total Enrolment	Full-time	Hybrid
2019	501	454 (91%)	47 (9%)
2020	473	418 (88%)	55 (12%)
2021	538	429 (80%)	109 (20%)
2022	560	469 (84%)	91 (16%)
2023	561	467 (83%)	94 (17%)

Source: Law Society of Ireland



**Table 5: Diversity data for full-time PPC & PPC Hybrid**

PPC Hybrid							
Year	Male	Female	30 yrs or under	Over 30 yrs	Dublin training contract	Outside Dublin training contract	Total
2020	15 (27%)	40 (73%)	30 (55%)	25 (45%)	18 (33%)	37 (67%)	55
2021	46 (42%)	63 (58%)	83 (76%)	26 (24%)	54 (50%)	55 (50%)	109
2022	27 (30%)	64 (70%)	52 (57%)	39 (43%)	47 (52%)	44 (48%)	91
2023	27 (29%)	67 (71%)	63 (67%)	31 (33%)	38 (40%)	56 (60%)	94
PPC full-time							
Year	Male	Female	30 yrs or under	Over 30 yrs	Dublin training contract	Outside Dublin training contract	Total
2020	154 (37%)	264 (63%)	396 (95%)	22 (5%)	200 (48%)	218 (52%)	418
2021	169 (39%)	260 (61%)	410 (96%)	19 (4%)	380 (89%)	49 (11%)	429
2022	190 (40%)	279 (60%)	446 (95%)	23 (5%)	424 (90%)	45 (10%)	469
2023	215 (46%)	252 (54%)	443 (95%)	24 (5%)	430 (92%)	37 (8%)	467

Source: Law Society of Ireland



**Table 6: Admissions to Barrister-at-Law degree course 2013-2023**

Year	Sitting BL Entrance Exam	Commencing BL degree Full time 1-year/ Modular 2-year <sup>38</sup>	Admission: Approved Qualification	Admission: King's Inns Diploma
2013	168	141 (87/54)	96 (68%)	45 (32%)
2014	157	140 (80/60)	91 (65%)	49 (35%)
2015	120	96 (58/38)	65 (68%)	31 (32%)
2016	133	119 (79/40)	74 (62%)	45 (38%)
2017	131	112 (51/61)	67 (60%)	45 (40%)
2018	143	120 (58/62)	85 (71%)	35 (29%)
2019	150	118 (57/61)	84 (71%)	34 (29%)
2020	195	183 (97/86)	126 (69%)	57 (31%)
2021	161	134 (66/68)	82 (61%)	52 (39%)
2022	131	130 (57/73)	78 (60%)	52 (40%)
2023	158	131 (56/75)	71 (54%)	60 (46%)

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

**Table 7: Diversity data for the full- time BL degree course and modular degree course**

Modular BL Degree							
Year	Male	Female	30 yrs or under	Over 31 yrs	Admission: Approved Qualification	Admission: King's Inns Diploma	Total
2023	36 (48%)	39 (52%)	27 (36%)	48 (64%)	39 (52%)	36 (48%)	75
Full-time BL Degree							
Year	Male	Female	30 yrs or under	Over 31 yrs	Admission: Approved Qualification	Admission: King's Inns Diploma	Total
2023	19 (34%)	37 (66%)	38 (68%)	18 (32%)	32 (57%)	24 (43%)	56

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

<sup>38</sup> Figures of students commencing the BL degree course in any given year may include those who sat and passed the entrance exam in a prior year.




**Table 8: Barrister admissions 2016-2023<sup>39</sup>**

Year	Total	+/- on previous year	Completion of KI's BL degree <sup>40</sup>	England, Wales & Northern Ireland qualified lawyers	Transferring solicitors	Morgenbesser eligibility* <sup>41</sup>
2016	129	-7%	116	10	1	2
2017	134	+4%	109	22	3	0
2018	156	+16%	91	59	6	0
2019	190	+22%	109	76	3	2
2020	167	-12%	116	47	3	1
2021	180	+ 8%	142	34	2	2
2022	147	-18%	133	11	0	3
2023	163	+ 11%	135	23	4	1

Source: Honorable Society of King's Inns

**Table 10: Barristers commencing pupillage 2019-2023**

Year	New pupils <sup>42</sup>
2019	82
2020	69
2021	102
2022	90
2023	72

Source: Bar of Ireland

<sup>39</sup> Total number of persons admitted to the Barrister-at-law degree and called to the Bar.

<sup>40</sup> The figure includes BL graduates from the same year and also those from earlier years who have deferred their Call to the Bar.

<sup>41</sup> According to the King's Inns, these are applicants who hold legal qualifications of an academic or professional nature (or both) from another EU Member State and who, as a result, are partly qualified in that Member State. The applicants' qualifications are assessed and to the extent that there is any shortfall in knowledge or skills, the applicant will be required to complete a number of assessments. See C-313/01 *Christine Morgenbesser v Consiglio dell'Ordine degli avvocati di Genova*.

<sup>42</sup> Barristers beginning their period of pupillage at the start of the new legal term in October.



**Table 12: Barristers on Roll of Practising Barristers 2019-2023**

Year	Total Roll	+/- on previous year % & No	Law Library Members	Non-Law Library Members
2019	2,735	-	2,198 (80%)	537 (20%)
2020	2,823	+3% (88)	2,155 (76%)	668 (24%)
2021	2,933	+4% (110)	2,180 (74%)	753 (26%)
2022	2,957	+1% (24)	2,173 (73%)	784 (27%)
2023	3,051	+3% (94)	2,139 (70%)	912 (30%)

Source: Legal Services Regulatory Authority

**Table 13: Transfers between the professions 2015-2023**

Year	Barristers becoming solicitors	Solicitors becoming barristers
2015	15	1
2016	39	1
2017	24	3
2018	21	6
2019	28	3
2020	20	3
2021	16	2
2022	17	0
2023	8	4

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

**Table 14: Legal professionals employed – annual average growth rate 2014-2022**

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

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

\*Includes barristers, solicitors, judges and related professionals.

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





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