



LAW SOCIETY  
OF IRELAND

# ANNUAL REPORT

ON ADMISSION  
POLICIES  
OF LEGAL  
PROFESSIONS

# 2023

[www.lawsociety.ie](http://www.lawsociety.ie)





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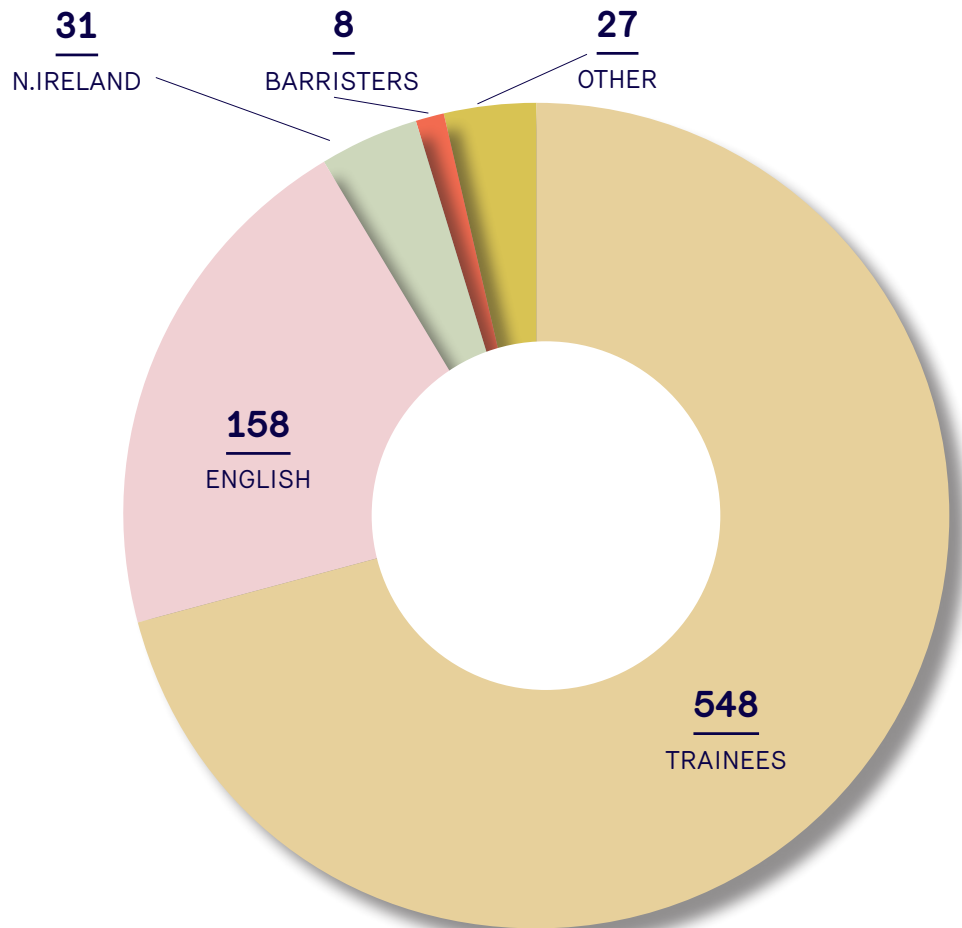
# ADMISSIONS TO THE ROLL OF SOLICITORS



**24,161** SOLICITORS WERE ON THE ROLL OF SOLICITORS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023.

**772** NEW SOLICITORS WERE ADMITTED IN 2023 – A 50% INCREASE ON THE 515 IN 2022.

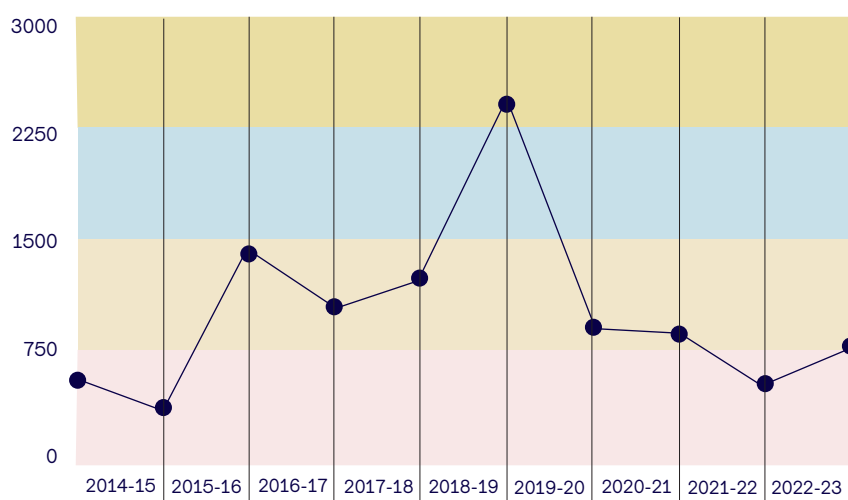
- 548 trainees were admitted – the highest figure since 2011. Admissions from England and Wales are at 158 an increase from 134 last year.
- Transferring barrister numbers have fallen from 12 in 2022 to 8. There were 27 foreign lawyer admissions in 2023 - 19 of these are from common law states with the remaining 8 being drawn from 6 different EU states. This is an increase from the 22 foreign lawyers admitted in 2022.
- In terms of gender, 2023 has seen an increase from 56% female admission to 60% this year.





## ADMISSIONS TO THE ROLL OF SOLICITORS

### TOTAL ADMISSIONS | 2014 - 2023



### ADMISSIONS BY YEAR AND GEOGRAPHY

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Qualifying Trainees</b>	233	525	423	445	419	390	513	307	548
<b>English Solicitors</b>	70	806	547	688	1,837	443	278	134	158
<b>Northern Irish Solicitors</b>	30	27	29	43	61	33	35	35	31
<b>Barristers</b>	15	34	34	30	28	33	16	17	8
<b>All other foreign lawyers - (EEA, USA, Australia &amp; New Zealand)</b>	11	14	17	23	37	20	34	22	27
<b>Total</b>	359	1,406	1,050	1,229	2,381	906	876	515	772
<b>% Change</b>		292%	-25%	17%	94%	-75%	-3%	-41%	50%

### ADMISSIONS BY YEAR AND GENDER

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Female</b>	711 (51%)	514 (49%)	603 (49%)	1,076 (45%)	475 (52%)	469 (54%)	288 (56%)	462 (60%)
<b>Male</b>	695 (49%)	534 (51%)	626 (51%)	1,305 (55%)	431 (48%)	407 (46%)	227 (44%)	310 (40%)

### Removal from Roll of Solicitors

The Society received 5 applications for removal from the Roll of Solicitors in 2023. Four of those applicants were seeking to be called to the Bar of Ireland and one was seeking to retire from practice. Two solicitors were struck off the Roll of Solicitors in 2023; one for breaches of the Solicitors Accounts Regulations, including the misappropriation of client funds, and breaches of the Anti-Money Laundering Regulations; and, one for breaches of the Solicitors Accounts Regulations, including the misappropriation of client funds.



# PRACTISING CERTIFICATES







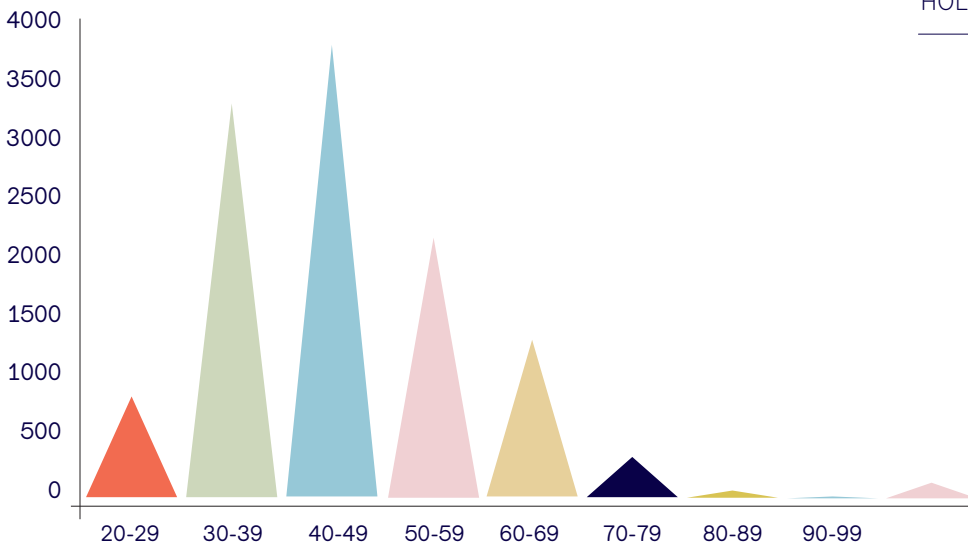
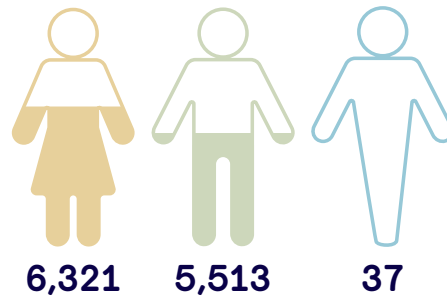
## PRACTISING CERTIFICATES

**11,954** PRACTISING CERTIFICATES WERE ISSUED BY THE LAW SOCIETY THROUGHOUT THE PRACTICE YEAR 2023.

On 31 December 2023 the Society's records indicate that 11,871 practising certificates were in place. This follows the surrender of 80 practising certificates throughout the practice year 2023, the suspension of one solicitor who was holding a practising certificate and two solicitors holding a practising certificate noted as deceased.

### GENDER BALANCE | PRACTISING CERT HOLDERS

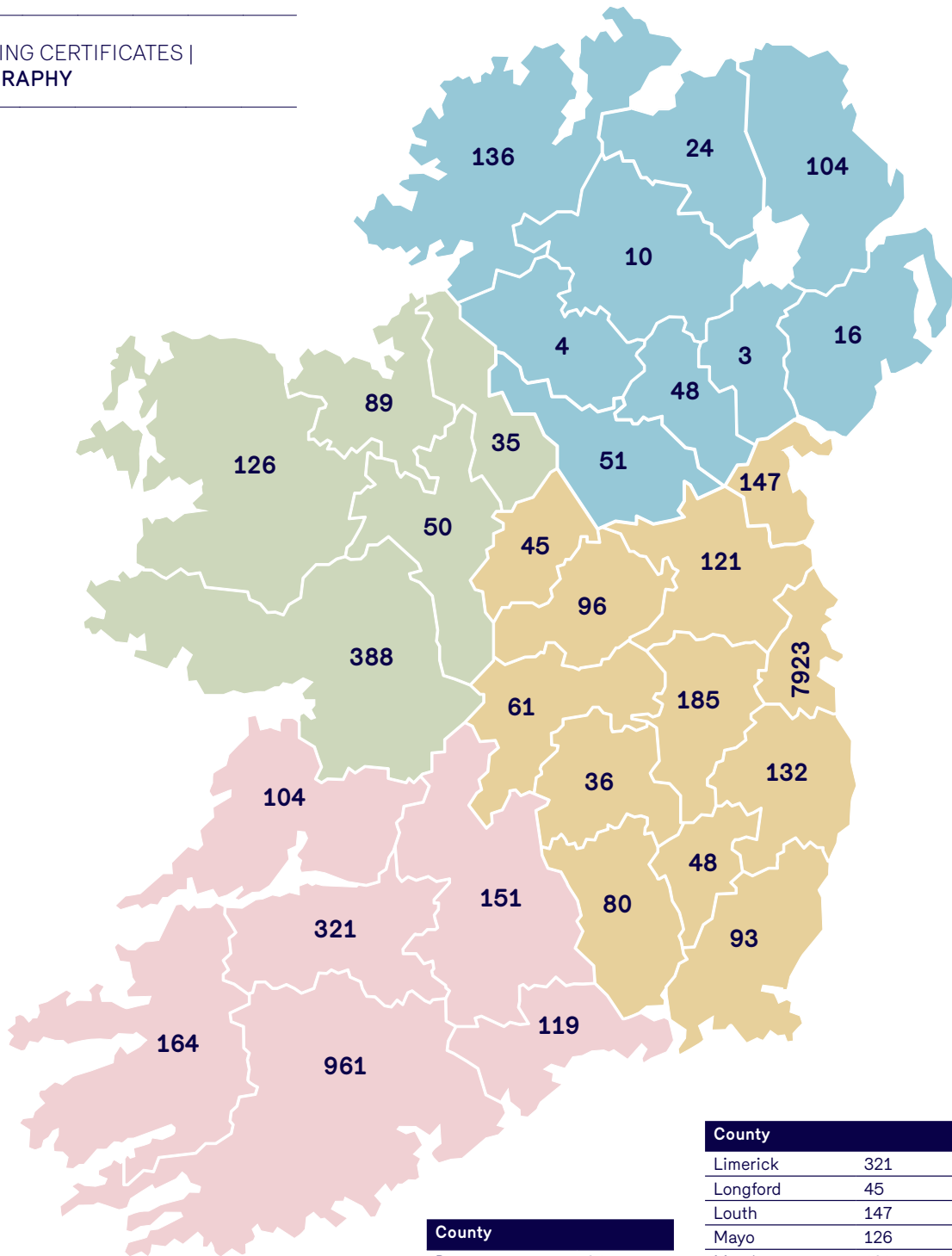
Female	6,321
Male	5,513
Unclassified	37



### AGE PROFILE | PRACTISING CERT HOLDERS

Age	Amount
20-29	684
30-39	3,318
40-49	3,894
50-59	2,199
60-69	1,299
70-79	363
80-89	36
90-99	4
No DOB on record	74

PRACTISING CERTIFICATES |  
BY GEOGRAPHY



County	
Antrim	104
Armagh	3
Carlow	48
Cavan	51
Clare	104
Cork	961

County	
Derry	24
Donegal	136
Down	16
Dublin	7,923
Fermanagh	4
Galway	388
Kerry	164
Kildare	185
Kilkenny	80
Laois	36
Leitrim	35

County	
Limerick	321
Longford	45
Louth	147
Mayo	126
Meath	121
Monaghan	48
Offaly	61
Roscommon	50
Sligo	89
Tipperary	151
Tyrone	10
Waterford	119
Westmeath	96
Wexford	93
Wicklow	132



## PRACTISING CERTIFICATES

Below table outlines the number of solicitors noted on our records as connected to each firm and holding a PC at 31 December 2023.

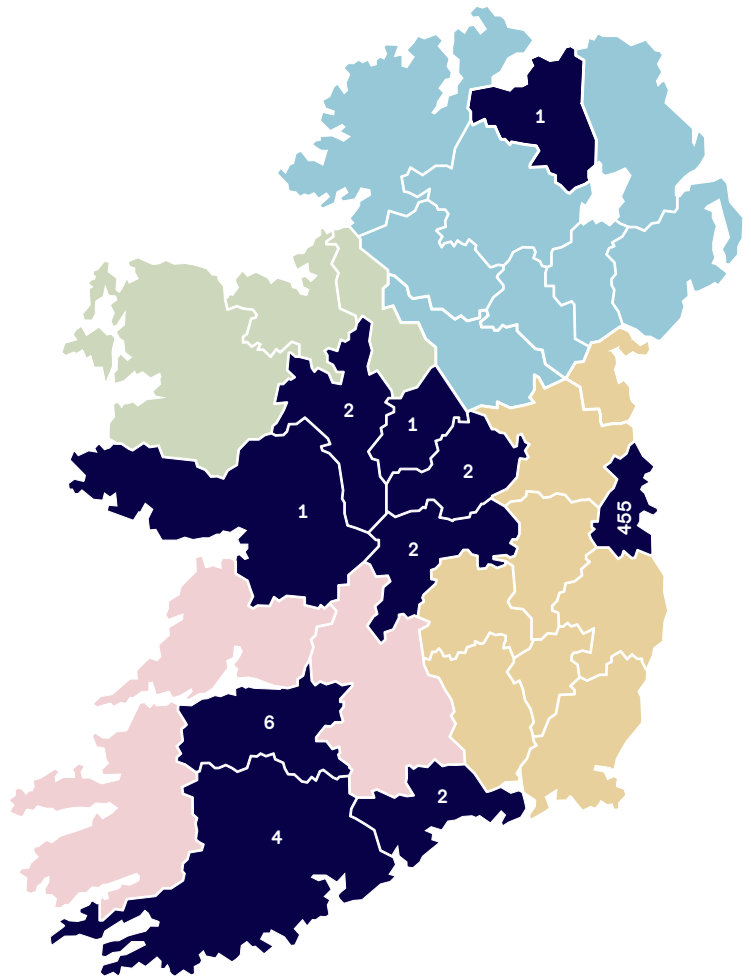
Firm Name	Practising Certificates 2021	Practising Certificates 2022	Practising Certificates 2023
1 A&L Goodbody LLP	299	348	365
2 Matheson LLP	308	336	361
3 Arthur Cox LLP	304	318	326
4 McCann FitzGerald LLP	273	292	290
5 Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	278	282	279
6 William Fry LLP	188	216	208
7 Chief State Solicitor's Office	165	154	186
8 ByrneWallace LLP	150	144	148
9 Legal Aid Board	106	142	129
10 Maples and Calder (Ireland) LLP	112	115	123
11 RDJ LLP	104	106	115
12 Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	90	99	106
13 Allied Irish Banks plc	103	98	99
14 Eversheds Sutherland	111	94	98
15 Beauchamps LLP	86	93	97
16 Dillon Eustace LLP	89	85	94
17 Central Bank Of Ireland	80	77	85
18 Hayes Solicitors LLP	66	74	84
19 Philip Lee LLP	72	74	74
20 Fieldfisher LLP	63	64	70

**3,239** SOLICITORS WERE NOTED ON THE ROLL IN 2023 AND RECORDED AS WORKING “IN HOUSE”. OF THESE 2,688 WERE HOLDING A PRACTISING CERTIFICATE AT 31 DECEMBER 2023.

**476** SOLICITORS ON THE ROLL ARE CLASSIFIED AS BEING IN THE FULL-TIME SERVICE OF THE STATE IN 2023

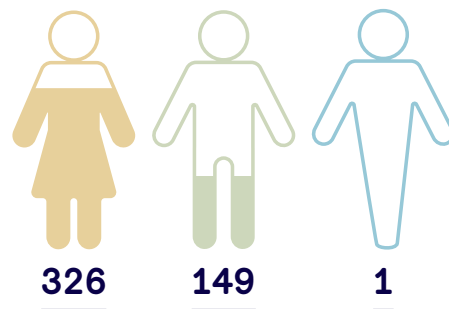
SOLICITORS IN SERVICE OF STATE |  
BY GEOGRAPHY

County	Count of SOS Holders
Dublin	455
Limerick	6
Cork	4
Roscommon	2
Offaly	2
Waterford	2
Westmeath	2
Galway	1
Derry	1
Longford	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>476</b>



SOLICITORS IN SERVICE OF STATE |  
BY GENDER

Gender	Count of SOS Holders
Female	326
Male	149
Others	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>476</b>

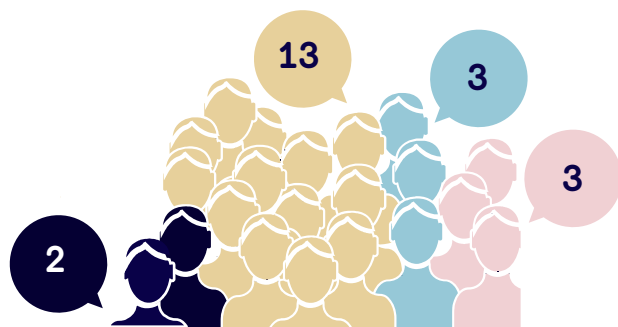
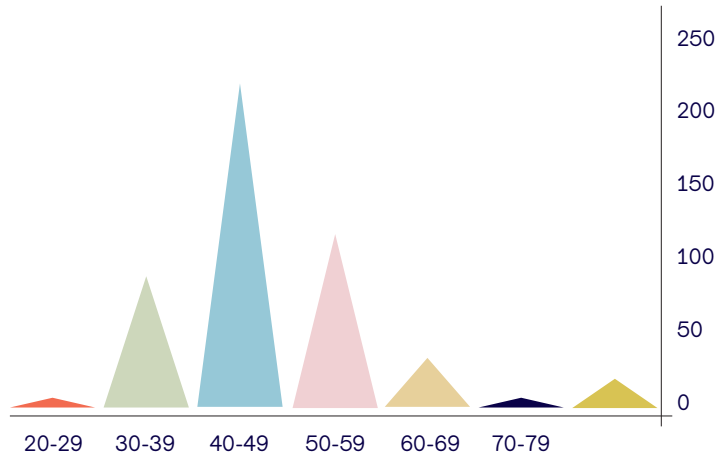




## PRACTISING CERTIFICATES

### SOLICITORS IN SERVICE OF STATE | BY AGE

Age Profile	Count of SOS Holders
20-29	1
30-39	89
40-49	217
50-59	116
60-69	33
70-79	1
No Birthdate	19



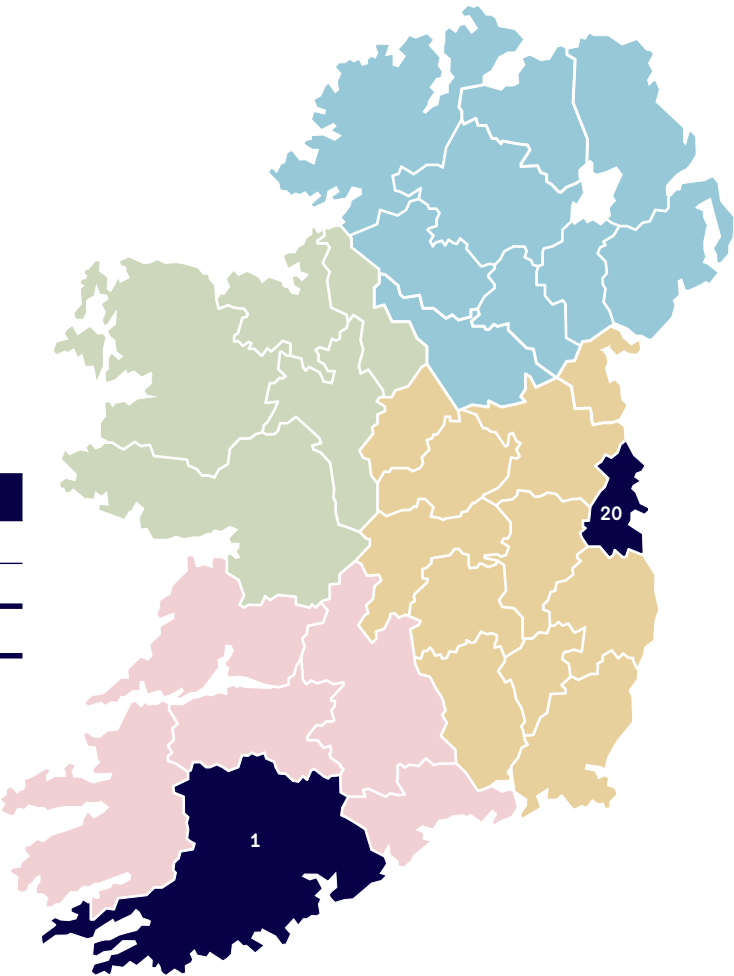
### QUALIFYING CERTIFICATE | BY AGE

Age Range	Count of Age
20-29	2
30-39	13
40-49	3
No Birthdate	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

The following lawyers have registered with the Society and have been issued with a qualifying certificate for the practice year ending 31 December 2023. The lawyers concerned are entitled to practise in this jurisdiction under their home title, as provided for by S.I. No.732 of 2003 European Communities (Lawyers' Establishment) Regulations, 2003 and S.I. No.752 of 2004 (European Communities (Lawyers' Establishment) (Amendment) Regulations, 2004.

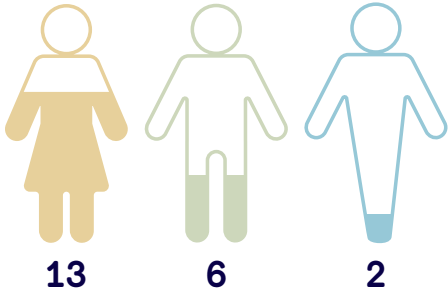
QUALIFYING CERTIFICATE | BY GEOGRAPHY

County	Count of QC
Dublin	20
Cork	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>



QUALIFYING CERTIFICATE | BY GENDER

Gender	Count of Gender
Female	13
Male	6
Others	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>



# TRAINEE SOLICITORS







## The Final Examination - First Part (FE-1)

The FE-1 is the entrance examination to the Law Society of Ireland. It is normally held twice a year in Spring and Autumn and consists of eight papers on core legal subjects.

1. **Company Law**
2. **Constitutional Law**
3. **Law of Contract**
4. **Criminal Law**
5. **European Union Law**
6. **Equity**
7. **Law of Property**
8. **Law of Tort**

This examination ensures that trainee solicitors, who come from third level studies of all disciplines, whether in arts, humanities, engineering or science, commence their practical training in the Law Society with a consistent standard of knowledge in those eight subjects.

## Candidates who sat the FE-1 in 2023

Examination Sittng	No of Candidates
March 2023	1,507
October 2023	1,667
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,174</b>

By virtue of the way candidates sit the examinations in multiple sequences there is no meaningful overall pass rate. Below is a breakdown of the pass rate per subject examination.

### MARCH 2023

EXAM	Company Law	Constitution Law	Law of Contract	Criminal Law	Law of the EU	Equity	Property Law	Law of Torts	TOTAL
Attended	475	384	496	481	368	435	361	402	3402
Passed	304	318	284	361	303	232	228	300	2331
% Passed	64%	83%	57%	75%	82%	53%	63%	74%	69%

### OCTOBER 2023

EXAM	Company Law	Constitution Law	Law of Contract	Criminal Law	Law of the EU	Equity	Property Law	Law of Torts	TOTAL
Attended	463	338	503	457	361	603	564	564	3853
Passed	280	261	290	324	279	448	394	302	2678
% Passed	60%	77%	58%	71%	77%	74%	70%	54%	67%

## Undergraduates sitting the FE-1 in 2023

Below is the number of undergraduate students who sat FE-1s in 2023 under the "accelerated access" scheme introduced in 2020, and a statistical breakdown of the universities and programmes of examinees is given below. The undergraduate data relates only to candidates who currently have the status of undergraduate and does not include those who started sitting the FE-1 as undergraduates but subsequently provided the Law Society with evidence of graduation.

Degree/Diploma	No of Candidates
Bachelor of Civil Law	189
Bachelor of Laws	151
Bachelor of Arts	52
Bachelor of Business and Law	11
Bachelor of Business Studies	7
Bachelor of Engineering	1
Bachelor of Science	1
Bachelor of Commerce	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>

Institution	No of Candidates
Maynooth University	84
University College Dublin	61
University of Galway	52
Trinity College Dublin	51
Dublin City University	46
University College Cork	41
TUS Limerick	27
Griffith College, Dublin	23
Technological University, Dublin	13
South East Technological University Waterford	4
Institute of Technology, Limerick	3
Dublin Business School	3
South East Technological University Carlow	2
ATU Donegal Letterkenny	2
Institute of Technology, Dundalk	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>

## Preliminary Examination

The Preliminary Examination which is designed for non-graduates is held once a year, usually in March. The examination consists of the following three papers: • English • Irish Government and Politics • General Knowledge.

**13** CANDIDATES SAT THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN 2023 AND THE OVERALL PASS RATE WAS **69%** (9 OF THE **13** CANDIDATES).



## TRAINEE SOLICITORS

### Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test (QLTT)

The QLTT is a conversion test which enables lawyers qualified in certain countries outside the Republic of Ireland, to qualify as solicitors in this jurisdiction. There are two sittings of the examination each year usually in Summer and Winter. The test consists of papers in Constitutional Law and Criminal Law or Company Law (at the option of the candidate), Contract and Tort, Land Law and Conveyancing, Probate and Taxation and Solicitors' Accounts. There is also an oral examination in Professional Conduct. As candidates can choose how many examinations to attempt in a sitting there is no meaningful overall pass rate.

### NOVEMBER 2023

EXAM	Constitutional Law & Company Law or Criminal Law	Contract & Tort	EU Law	Land Law & Conveyancing	Probate & Taxation	Professional Conduct	Solicitors' Accounts
No. Sat	13	9	6	14	15	12	13
No. Pass	9	6	6	13	13	11	12
% Pass	69%	67%	100%	93%	87%	92%	92%

### JUNE 2023

EXAM	Constitutional Law & Company Law or Criminal Law	Contract & Tort	EU Law	Land Law & Conveyancing	Probate & Taxation	Professional Conduct	Solicitors' Accounts
No. Sat	14	12	9	10	14	8	13
No. Pass	12	8	8	9	10	8	12
% Pass	86%	67%	89%	90%	71%	100%	92%

## Professional Practice Course

In 2023 the Society successfully delivered the full rollout of the new Solicitors' education model (the biggest change since 2002). This included the redesign of syllabi and teaching methods for the core PPC, as well as the provision of 21 new Advanced Electives and the introduction of the fused model for the PPC Hybrid.

## Fused PPC

The new 'fused' PPC brings together into one academic year the entire taught elements of the solicitor training, thus providing significant logistical and practical advantages to trainees and firms. The core curriculum on the full-time PCC course runs from September to April each year and includes a continued focus on such skills as negotiations, research, drafting, advocacy, interviewing and advising and presentation skills, together with an enhanced focus on more general skills such as leadership, project management, office and legal technology, and finance skills. Professional responsibility, including enhanced coverage of legal ethics, solicitors' accounts and rules of professional conduct and law firm life, also form an integral part of the core curriculum. These are in addition to courses, such as business law, dispute resolution, land law, probate, family law and taxation. Psychology of a lawyer and legal practice Irish continues to be part of the core curriculum.

## Fused Hybrid PPC

The first 'fused' Hybrid PPC commenced in December 2022 with 91 trainees on the programme. The PPC Hybrid makes greater use of best practice in online learning, doing away with the need to relocate to Dublin for an extended period. It also permits trainees to stay in full-time employment during the delivery of the PPC. As such it was deliberately structured in such a way so as to meet the Society's priority with regard to diversity and inclusion, making the training more accessible for more mature trainees and those with family and other caring commitments.

The second iteration of the new full-time and Hybrid PPC 2023 are well underway.

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THE LAW SOCIETY RECORDED AN INTAKE OF **561** NEW TRAINEES FOR 2023.

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**467** TRAINEES ENROLLED IN THE FULL-TIME PPC COURSE WHICH COMMENCED ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2023.

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**94** TRAINEES ENROLLED IN THE 2023 PPC HYBRID FUSED COURSE WHICH COMMENCED ON 13 DECEMBER 2023.

## TRAINEE SOLICITORS

### TOTAL PPC INTAKE (FULL-TIME & HYBRID)

YEAR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>TOTAL</b>	388	384	405	412	448	501	473	538	560	561
<b>%</b>	+10%	-1%	+6%	+2%	+9%	+12%	-6%	+14%	+4%	0%

### BREAKDOWN DEMOGRAPHIC PPC 2023

	Male	Female	18-25	26-30	31-40	40+	Dublin	Outside Dublin	TOTAL
<b>2023 Full-time</b>	215	252	286	157	18	6	430	37	467
<b>2023 Hybrid</b>	27	67	23	40	23	8	38	56	94

### PPC BY GENDER

YEAR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>FEMALE</b>	248 (64%)	224 (58%)	236 (58%)	243 (59%)	268 (60%)	297 (59%)	307 (65%)	329 (61%)	365 (65%)	319 (68%)
<b>MALE</b>	140 (36%)	160 (42%)	169 (42%)	169 (41%)	180 (40%)	205 (41%)	166 (35%)	209 (39%)	195 (35%)	242 (32%)

### PPC BY AGE

YEAR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>30 or Under</b>	87%	86%	87%	90%	89%	88%	90%	88%	95%	91%
<b>Over 30</b>	13%	14%	13%	11%	11%	12%	10%	12%	5%	9%

### EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

YEAR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Law Graduates</b>	299	307	315	346	357	398	386	447	467	498
<b>Other Graduates</b>	86	76	86	58	84	100	79	88	85	60
<b>Non Graduates</b>	2	1	7	8	7	3	8	4	6	3



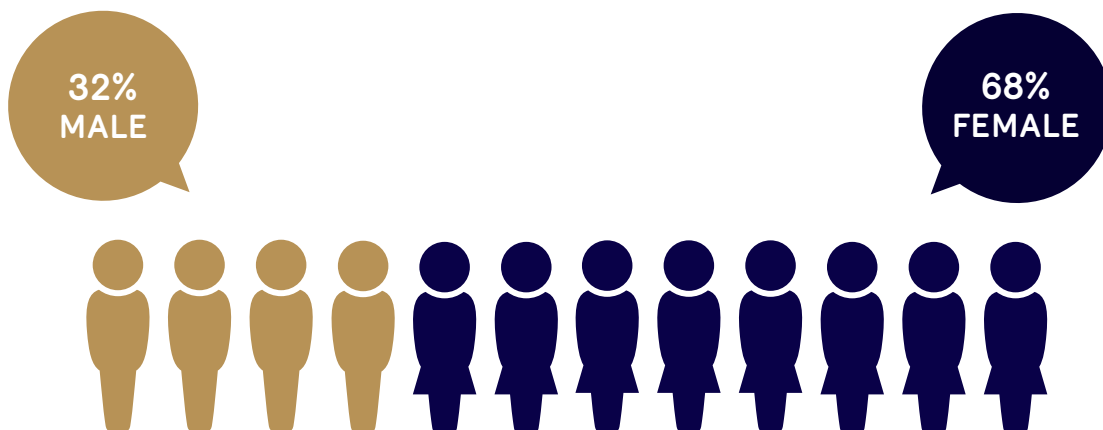
## TRAINEE SOLICITORS

TRAINING FIRM BY GEOGRAPHY										
County	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Dublin	319 (82%)	323 (84%)	335 (83%)	341 (83%)	387 (86%)	416 (83%)	410 (87%)	436 (81%)	469 (84%)	452 (81%)
Cork	16	17	20 (5%)	21 (5%)	22 (5%)	24 (5%)	17	27 (5%)	27 (5%)	36 (8%)
Limerick	7	10	7	8	5	8	6	9	9	12
Galway	6	8	5	13	7	8	8	11	9	11
Waterford	4	2	1	0	1	2	2	4	2	5
Donegal	4	0	4	3	1	0	4	8	5	4
Kerry	5	0	1	1	7	3	0	2	2	3
Mayo	3	3	0	1	0	1	2	4	1	3
Meath	1	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	4	3
Kildare	1	2	4	1	2	4	4	5	6	2
Sligo	3	0	6	1	1	6	1	6	4	2
Wicklow	1	3	3	2	1	2	1	2	3	2
Monaghan	2	0	3	0	1	1	2	1	0	2
Tipperary	2	1	3	4	3	4	3	6	1	1
Louth	2	4	1	2	1	2	5	5	2	1
Westmeath	1	1	2	2	3	4	1	1	1	1
Kilkenny	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	1	1
Offaly	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Longford	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1
Wexford	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	3	1
Clare	4	2	1	2	3	3	0	2	2	0
Cavan	1	1	0	2	1	2	1	0	2	0
Roscommon	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Carlow	1	2	3	1	0	2	1	0	1	0
Leitrim	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Laois	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0

## TRAINEE SOLICITORS

LAW DEGREES FILTERED BY THE 10 HIGHEST COHORT INTAKE										
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
BCL (Cork)	42	46	52	43	49	47	48	50	53	81
LLB (TCD)	57	51	52	65	77	83	80	75	59	72
BCL (UCD)	40	50	41	66	68	59	69	67	63	50
BBLS (UCD)	30	31	28	35	41	35	36	52	45	47
BCL (Galway)	15	13	21	19	12	18	19	28	30	42
LLB (Maynooth)	-	-	-	6	7	4	10	25	33	34
BCL (DCU)	1	9	5	14	18	24	21	27	27	29
LLB (Limerick)	20	18	21	24	22	32	26	22	32	25
BCL (Maynooth)	3	1	7	8	8	3	9	15	24	13
BA, Law & ... (DCU)	0	7	0	3	1	9	9	4	10	13

### PPC BREAKDOWN | BY GENDER 2023



**TOP 20 PPC TRAINING FIRMS FILTERED BY HIGHEST INTAKE**

<b>Firm Name</b>	<b>Number of trainees 2023</b>	<b>Number of trainees 2022</b>
1 Arthur Cox LLP	52	48
2 Matheson	48	45
3 A & L Goodbody LLP	47	52
4 McCann FitzGerald	42	30
5 William Fry	20	31
6 Eversheds Sutherland	20	20
7 Mason Hayes & Curran LLP	16	13
8 Maples & Calder LLP	11	16
9 Ronan Daly Jermyn LLP	10	11
10 Fieldfisher	10	7
11 Byrne Wallace	10	8
12 Hayes	9	9
13 Ogier Leman	8	9
14 Addleshaw Goddard	8	8
15 Dillon Eustace	7	8
16 Beauchamps	7	8
17 Walkers	6	7
18 Philip Lee	6	7
19 LK Shields Solicitors LLP	6	4
20 DLA Piper	5	7

### Financial Assistance Programmes

The Law Society Access Scholarship Programme has been operating successfully since 2001. Its aim is to financially and practically assist students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to enter professional legal education and be financially supported from the Final Entrance Exams – First part (FE-1) right through to admission to the role of solicitors.

The Access Programme is helping to promote greater diversity within the solicitors' profession. This is vital in building a legal profession that reflects the diversity of the society it serves.



## Financial Assistance Programmes

The Access Programme provides financial support in respect of the cost of the FE1 examination, indenture registration fee, Professional Practice Course fees and enrolment fee. This programme pays fees and provides maintenance for students from a background of socio-economic disadvantage. The Access Programme contributes to the Society's goal of encouraging diversity in respect of the trainee solicitor and qualified solicitor population in Ireland.

Each year the Law Society receives approximately 85 applications to join the scheme and over the last three years, approximately 80% of applicants have been successful in their applications to join the scheme. The scheme is open for applications from everyone. There is no age restriction for entry on to the scheme. The Access Programme assists the Law Society in creating an inclusive learning environment, facilitating individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds. Participants to the scheme may have faced additional challenges (sometimes at an early age) due to their life circumstance but those particular challenges faced by those individuals may aid them in becoming a well-rounded solicitor with wisdom gained from their experience in life. This will also help serve the future clients of these participants once they qualify as solicitors.

Participants on the scheme have many different backgrounds and no two applications to the Access Programme are the same. The overriding common trait amongst applicants to the scheme is that but for the assistance of the Access scheme, those individuals feel that they would not be in a position to train as a solicitor because of a lack of financial resources.



## Stages of education funding

Students are assisted throughout all stages of their professional legal education:

### Final Entrance Exams – First part (FE-1)

Funding is available for expenses directly related to taking FE-1 entrance exams to study to become a solicitor. This includes overnight accommodation during the week of exams, contributions towards additional childcare costs, support with loss of income while taking exams and travel expenses to and from the exam venue. Access FE-1 candidates are entitled to use the Law Society of Ireland library when preparing for exams. Students living outside of Dublin may have books posted to them.

### Procuring a training contract

The Law Society assists Access students with best practice tips on how to secure a traineeship. Law Society staff and experienced practicing lawyers work with students to provide vital information on what works best in terms of CVs, cover letters and approaches to interviews. Mentoring appointments are also available at all stages of the programme to help build confidence and communication skills.

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THERE ARE CURRENTLY **189** INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING ON THE ACCESS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME.

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**111** INDIVIDUALS ARE CURRENTLY PURSUING FE-1 EXAMS AND RECEIVING FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN RESPECT OF SAME.

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**78** INDIVIDUALS ARE AT POST FE-1 LEVEL AND RECEIVING FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN RESPECT OF THE FULL-TIME AND HYBRID PPC.

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OF THE INDIVIDUALS AT POST FE-1 LEVEL, **34** JOINED THE PPC FUSED COURSES IN 2023 WITH ACCESS FUNDING.

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IN ADDITION, **214** INDIVIDUALS HAVE QUALIFIED AS SOLICITORS WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE ACCESS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME.

## TRAINEE SOLICITORS

### QUALIFIED AS SOLICITORS BREAKDOWN BY GEOGRAPHY

Country	Total (214)
Ireland	166
UK	21
Nigeria	6
Poland	4
USA	3
Romania	2
Ukraine	2
Germany	1
Jamaica	1
New Zealand	1
Pakistan	1
Russia	1
Serbia	1
South Africa	1
Venezuela	1
Hong Kong	1
Philippines	1

### BREAKDOWN | BY GENDER



## Small Practice Training Grant

The Society launched the Small Practice Training Grant scheme to boost solicitor traineeship opportunities in practices outside the main urban districts. The scheme provides funding of €18,000 to the training firm over the course of the two-year training contract. It will also provide funding of €7,000 to the trainee solicitor by way of a discount on the Professional Practice Course (PPC) fee.

The grant can make a real difference to a rural practice’s ability to continue to provide a much-needed service and trusted expert advice to support businesses and residents in their local community. While the number of those training in Dublin (both in commercial and general practice firms) have continued to increase, the number of training contracts offered outside Dublin is declining. It has fallen to 9% of those starting the full-time course in September.

21 grants of €18,000 have been awarded since the introduction of the scheme with six grants awarded in 2023 (an increase from five in 2022).

Supporting small rural practices with the financial cost of employing a trainee solicitor plays an important role in providing greater access to the profession for trainees from rural and diverse backgrounds. With sole practitioners and smaller practices in almost every small town in every corner of Ireland, the Small Practice Traineeship Grant can offer a trainee solicitor the opportunity to stay in their local community, without having to relocate to Dublin.

LOCATION OF GRANTS AWARDED IN 2023	
County	Town
Kerry	Tralee
Monaghan	Castleblayney
Limerick	Newcastle west
Kilkenny	Urlingford
Westmeath	Athlone
Offaly	Edenderry

## Additional Financial Assistance Programmes

- The Scott Scholarship, named in memory of late Arthur Cox partner Frank Scott, supports students who are hoping for a career as a solicitor. The Scott Scholarship (funded by Ian Scott), provides full fees sponsorship to the successful candidate wishing to attend the PPC. The Scott Scholarship has provided five scholarships to date, with two awarded in 2023.
- The Society operates a Bursary Scheme which provides maintenance grants to trainees attending the Professional Practice Courses. This assists in reducing the financial burden on trainees when qualifying as a solicitor. It provides financial assistance where their own resources or those of their family are inadequate to fund their studies. The programme is helping to create a broader spectrum of solicitors; vital in building a legal profession reflecting the diversity of the society it serves. Applications are decided by the Bursary Committee (a sub-committee of the Education Committee) based on comparative hardship. €175,000 is awarded annually and in 2023 benefitted 39 candidates. Trainees can also avail of a Hardship Fund to cater for situations whereby they face an unexpected situation impacting on their financial capacity.
- Hardship fund for students on the PPC. €40,000 per year is available to meet the needs of students on the course who have pressing financial difficulties.

## SUSI Grant (Barrier to flexible delivery of programmes)

As the Law Society has increased its financial support for trainee solicitors the corresponding supports from SUSI have dropped. The SUSI eligibility criteria are extremely restrictive. If a trainee solicitor receives any supports from the Law Society they do not qualify for a SUSI grant, even if they are from a background of socio-economic disadvantage. SUSI have also deemed trainees attending the hybrid course as ineligible for SUSI grant funding because the course is delivered through blended learning (on-site and online) with trainees attending the campus in a part-time capacity due to the online learning facilities. The Law Society has appealed to SUSI on behalf of the trainee solicitors but there has been no change to the restrictions. We have seen information published that SUSI will be providing grants from September 2024 to part-time and distance learning students. We await confirmation that the Hybrid PPC course will be eligible under the new grant legislation to be introduced this year. Only eight trainees on the PPC 2023 were in receipt of SUSI grants in comparison to over 40% of trainees in 2004.

## Non-EEA Students

At present there is a difficulty that non-EEA students, who in many instances may have completed third level education in Ireland, have in securing a study visa to facilitate them undertaking the Professional Practice Courses and 24-month training contract. The Society has been in correspondence with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) since 2018 seeking that a formal visa scheme be published for trainee solicitors similar to the scheme currently available for trainee accountants. Whilst INIS has been helpful to individual visa applicants, the lack of a published scheme or indeed a response to the Society's correspondence is unfortunate, particularly where the Society wishes to assist students of all nationalities to pursue the Irish Solicitor qualification.











# GENERAL SCOPE

### Outreach and Public Legal Education

The Law Society places an emphasis on inclusion, diversity and student-centred learning and delivers a proactive outreach programme, which engages with those interested in pursuing the solicitor qualification. The programme provides access to the profession across diverse educational, professional and socio-economic backgrounds. It delivers a suite of initiatives that raise aspirations and empower people of all ages to make informed career choices. It offers an insight into the role of a solicitor in practice and delivers easy-to-consume information on the many flexible routes to qualification. There is a particular emphasis placed on providing a welcoming, encouraging and inclusive environment, which supports everyone on their route to qualification.

Engagement with our schools especially DEIS Schools (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) plays an important role in encouraging participation in higher education for traditionally underrepresented groups and the positive promotion of the solicitor profession as a career opportunity.

### Street Law

The Street Law initiative places trainee solicitors studying at the Law Society in local schools, prisons and community settings to teach about law.

Using a unique pedagogical approach and best practice in civic education, the programme taps into people's inherent interest in the law and aims to promote legal literacy, equality, access to law, and to teach high cognitive and social skills that enhance each participant's effectiveness in legal matters.

Over 3,000 transition year students have completed the Law Society's Street Law programme. Originally developed in Georgetown University in the United States, the Street Law programme has been run by the Law Society since 2013.

Each year, over 40 volunteer trainee solicitors participate. As part of the programme, the trainee solicitors attend an orientation weekend facilitated by Law Society staff and guest trainers from international universities. The intense weekend of training prepares the trainees to teach the Street Law course to Transition Year students at partnering DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools in the local community. They deliver the programme over six lessons and cover topics such as the court systems, family law, discrimination law and sexual offences.

### Street Law Mock Trial

Each year the Law Society invites pupils from local primary schools to take part in a Street Law mock trial. Ahead of the trial, the sixth-class pupils take part in four weeks of in-school rehearsals, being tutored in legal precepts. Mock trials help students gain a basic understanding of the legal mechanism through which society resolves many of its disputes. Pupils have taken part in trials such as the DPP v Mother Gothel in which Mother Gothel was found guilty on all charges relating to her holding Rapunzel in a tower for 18 years.

## T Y Law Module and Solicitors of the Future Programmes

Over 18,000 transition students have taken part on our T Y Law Module and Solicitors of the Future programmes. These programmes provide students an opportunity to explore a future career as a solicitor and learn how the law is relevant to their daily lives.

Through presentations and legal lessons, students learn from a broad range of material covering Climate Justice, Criminal Law, Employment Law, Human Rights Practice, Juvenile Justice, and The Children's Courts. The ease of access and flexibility of the programmes is one of the main reasons for its success. Teachers can access video presentations and information booklets, released online, when it suits the school's timetable. Students can opt to study alone or as part of a group. Interactive workshops and mock trials are also held during the school's midterm break.

## Becoming a Solicitor Symposium

Each year we host the Becoming a Solicitor Symposium for third-level students from around Ireland. Over 3,000 students have participated in the event which delivers online video presentations, live panel discussions and Q&A sessions and explores the opportunity to join the rewarding solicitor profession. Speakers focus on breaking down perceived barriers to entering the legal profession and highlighting the many flexible routes to becoming a solicitor and the financial supports available to students throughout the training process. As a follow up, students can book a one-to-one Zoom session which are career-focused and talk through the opportunities available to them as they plan their legal careers. From the success of the symposium, we started to host a selection of online pop-up talks and career seminars in collaboration with universities, colleges and law schools across Ireland.

## Gráinne O'Neill Memorial Legal Essay Competition

Each year the Law Society invites transition year students from across the country to enter the Gráinne O'Neill Memorial Legal Essay Competition. The competition aims to encourage young people to engage with the law and consider their own legal rights, and how the law impacts society. It challenges students in their learning to develop their creativity in an engaging way. With this competition, we honour the life and legacy of the late Judge Gráinne O'Neill. In 2014, Gráinne became the youngest judge in Ireland when she was appointed to the District Court. Gráinne died in 2018 following a period of illness but, during her life and especially during her years as a judge, Gráinne worked diligently to apply the law in a fair, rigorous and compassionate manner.

Essays go through two rounds of judging, with the first round facilitated by local Bar Associations and the national judging panel comprising of eight judges from across Law Society Committees, staff members and competition stakeholders. 30 student finalists, their parents, guardians, and teachers, are invited to Blackhall Place to celebrate their achievements.



## The level of demand for the services of practicing solicitors in 2023.

Generally, the post-pandemic economic performance of the country has continued to improve, despite entering a technical recession in the final quarter of 2023. Previously strong forecasts have softened following a sharp bounce back from the Covid-19 pandemic, with a dampening in inflation and consumer spending in line with pre-pandemic norms, acting as a buffer to the broader economic slowdown.

Quantifying the level of demand for services of practicing solicitors on an annual basis poses challenges as there is no one source which explicitly captures this data. In the past, Evelyn Partners has completed annual surveys of law firms, from which demand levels could be inferred. The 2022/2023 survey, however, is not scheduled to take place until March 2024 and so other data sources must be used.

According to the SOLAS National Skills Bulletin for 2023<sup>1</sup> (data for 2022), average annual employment in the barristers, judges, solicitors, and related professionals' group has declined for the second consecutive year, with some 13,400 employed. According to the 2023 Bulletin – “employment levels have declined annually since 2020 for this occupation, resulting in a negative growth rate for the five-year annual average.

The past three years have been challenging for legal firms. The most recent annual survey of law firms from Evelyn Partners for 2021/2022<sup>2</sup> highlighted challenges around the economy/inflation, recruitment, and retention of staff, and maintaining profitability. While there have been marked improvements in the post-pandemic economic performance and levels of inflation, it is likely that these challenges continued to burden legal businesses into 2023.

Despite these challenges, a recent survey carried out by the Law Society,<sup>3</sup> found that solicitors are generally upbeat about the profession – particularly those working in large firms and in-house in the private and public sector – with 41% optimistic about the professions future and 31% were neutral. The situation is not consistent across urban and rural areas however, with community-based services, and smaller and sole partner-operated firms outside of Dublin, more impacted by the aforementioned challenges.

It is likely, given emerging trends identified in recent Evelyn Partner surveys, that demand for the services of practicing solicitors in 2023 remains relatively robust with firm revenues having increased in each of 2021 and 2022, along with profit levels (though not to the same extent).

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1. 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

2. Evelyn Partners, *Survey of Law Firms in Ireland 2022, Emerging from the pandemic - what does the future hold*, 2021/2022

3. Law Society of Ireland, *Survey of Law Society Profession - Overview of Key Findings*, July 2023

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## The costs of legal services in 2023 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers.

Due to limitations around publicly available data, it is difficult to accurately quantify if legal services were available at a reasonable cost to consumers in 2023. The Services Producer Price Index (SPPI),<sup>4</sup> created by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), measures changes in the average level of prices charged by producers for a selected range of services supplied to businesses and government. On an annual basis, Legal, Accounting, PR and Business Consultancy grew by 1.4% on Q3 2022 levels. This is relatively low compared to sectors such as Employment and Human Resources Activities, and Architecture, Engineering and Technical Testing which recorded annual increases of 11% and 10.3% respectively. Legal, Accounting, PR and Business Consultancy was the fourth largest contributor to the overall SPPI annual percentage change in Q3 2023, accounting for 0.3%.<sup>5</sup>

Inflation has subsided considerably through 2023. Following 30-year highs recorded in 2022, the Consumer Price Index (CPI)<sup>6</sup> rose by 3.9% between November 2022 and November 2023 - the first month since September 2021 that the annual growth in the CPI has been below 5%. While it is not possible to isolate legal services within the CPI, 'Other Services' (sub-category under the 'Miscellaneous Goods and Services' division), includes legal services, and recorded a modest 1.8% annual increase.

Notwithstanding the modest increases in legal costs recorded via the SPPI and CPI, a 2022 report on legal costs in Ireland concluded that the 'assertion that Ireland is a high legal costs jurisdiction is not strongly supported by evidence'.<sup>7</sup>

Exceptions are captured through the Legal Services Regulatory Authority complaints report. Between September 2022<sup>8</sup> and September 2023,<sup>9</sup> 51 complaints were received on excess costs. This equates to 4.1% of all complaints received in the 12 months, largely unchanged on the 2021/2022 figures.<sup>10</sup>

Without a consistent method of capturing and tracking the cost of legal services in Ireland it is difficult to establish a consensus on whether services were made available to consumers at a reasonable cost. Based on the aforementioned sources, the cost of legal services may be considered to be broadly reasonable for the majority of consumers.

4. CSO, *Services Producer Price Index, Quarter 3 2023*

5. *As noted by the CSO – In most cases, the services captured by this Index are provided to business customers only and so individual price indices should not be considered indicative of more general price trends in the economy. The Index covers transaction costs from business to business and excludes consumers who are covered in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).*

6. CSO, *Consumer Price Index, November 2023*

7. *Analysis of the Impact of Proposals to Reduce Legal Costs in Ireland, the Bar of Ireland and the Law Society of Ireland, May 2022 (EY)*

8. *Legal Services Regulatory Authority, Independent Complaints Handling, Report 1 - 2023*

9. *Legal Services Regulatory, Independent Complaints Handling, Report 2 - 2023*

10. *Legal Services Regulatory Authority, Independent Complaint Handling, Report 1 - 2022 and Legal Service Regulatory Authority, Independent Complaints Handling, Report 2 - 2022*

## The extent to which the admission policies of the legal professions

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 extent to which legal services can be made available to consumers at a reasonable cost is predicated on a number of factors – namely, the outlook for the Irish economy and potential global headwinds in the form of inflation, interest rate uncertainty, and weaker global demand. The ability to attract and retain staff has been a long-standing issue for the sector, as reflected in Evelyn Partners' annual law firm surveys over the past number of years.

The LSRA's fourth annual report on admission policies of the legal profession established that 11,652 solicitors held a practicing certificate in Ireland at the end of 2022, representing a 2% increase on the previous year, and a return to positive growth following two years of marginal declines during the pandemic.<sup>11</sup> In total, there were 23,323 solicitors on the Roll of Solicitors at the end of 2022, again a marginal increase on the 2021 figure. As highlighted in the Law Society of Ireland's 2023 Annual Report, "trainee admissions are at a 15-year high, with trainee intake in 2023 up 4% on last year."<sup>12</sup>

Continued growth in admissions to the profession will help to dampen the challenges faced by the sector in finding and retaining talent. As indicated in the 2022 survey of law firms from Evelyn Partners, salary inflation was emerging as a key challenge for firms as a direct result of recruitment and retention issues in the sector. The ability to offset such costs may become more difficult as economic uncertainty continues into 2024, and as such, price increases may need to be passed on to the consumer.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Legal Services Regulatory Authority, *Pathways to the Professions 2022, Annual Report on Admission Policies of the Legal Professions*

12. Law Society of Ireland, *Annual Report and Accounts 2022/2023*

13. Evelyn Partners, *Survey of Law Firms in Ireland 2022, Emerging from the pandemic - what does the future hold, 2021/2022*

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