

## Mid-year corporate reporting

3 November 2023

To offer a timelier, more up-to-date insight into the operational areas of our work, we report headline statistics taken mid-way through our financial year. Our financial year runs from 1 November to 31 October and our first set of mid-year statistics reported are from the mid-year point in 2022. We have provided previous years' statistics to highlight trends in the data.

The latest period covers 1 November 2022 to 1 April 2023 and the numbers shown are as of April 2023. We have reported on aspects of our work where there were sufficient numbers within a set of data to sensibly and reliably identify trends at a mid-year point.

Please note that some data is shown as a 'snapshot' in time, where we give the year and month, such as in the Authorisation charts. Some data is the total for a six-month period only, such as in the routes to admission, concerns reported to us and interventions tables.

We will continue to update this webpage with year-end and mid-year statistics.

Our latest set of [corporate reports](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/corporate-reports-2021-22/) (<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/corporate-reports-2021-22/>) offers a more detailed analysis of our work.

[Open all \(#\)](#)

## Authorisation

### Profile of law firms

A glossary of terms used in this section can be found in our [authorisation report](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/authorising-profession-2021-22/) (<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/authorising-profession-2021-22/>).

### Breakdown of law firm types

The overall number of law firms in England and Wales remained relatively stable until 2019 but has dropped in recent years. This is potentially due to fewer new firms being established during the Covid-19 pandemic and the weaker economic outlook in the UK discouraging people from setting up a new business.

This is in contrast to the number of practising solicitors, which continues to grow year-on-year – see table below ([and profile of solicitor population](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/authorising-profession/#population)). (<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/authorising-profession/#population>)

Please note, numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

|            | <b>Sole practitioner</b> | <b>Partnership</b> | <b>Incorporated company</b> | <b>Limited liability partnership</b> | <b>Other</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Oct 2019   | 2,217 (21%)              | 1,584 (15%)        | 4,952 (48%)                 | 1,549 (15%)                          | 39 (0%)      | 10,341       |
| Oct 2020   | 2,060 (20%)              | 1,470 (15%)        | 5,015 (50%)                 | 1,526 (15%)                          | 36 (0%)      | 10,107       |
| Oct 2021   | 1,878 (19%)              | 1,352 (14%)        | 5,093 (52%)                 | 1,503 (15%)                          | 34 (0%)      | 9,860        |
| April 2022 | 1,806 (19%)              | 1,297 (13%)        | 5,137 (53%)                 | 1,495 (15%)                          | 35 (0%)      | 9,770        |
| Oct 2022   | 1,716 (18%)              | 1,227 (13%)        | 5,161 (54%)                 | 1,498 (16%)                          | 34 (0%)      | 9,636        |
| April 2023 | 1,655 (17%)              | 1,167 (12%)        | 5,164 (54%)                 | 1,480 (16%)                          | 34 (0%)      | 9,500        |

### Firms with an ABS licence

The number of law firms choosing to apply for an alternative business structure (ABS) licence (available to those with non-lawyer ownership or control) continues to increase. This business model can be attractive as it allows people to bring in non-lawyer expertise to help develop their businesses.

|            | <b>Total number of law firms</b> | <b>Firms with an ABS licence</b> |
|------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Oct 2019   | 10,341                           | 877 (8%)                         |
| Oct 2020   | 10,107                           | 945 (9%)                         |
| Oct 2021   | 9,860                            | 1,040 (11%)                      |
| April 2022 | 9,770                            | 1,074 (11%)                      |
| Oct 2022   | 9,636                            | 1,141 (12%)                      |
| April 2023 | 9,500                            | 1,172 (12%)                      |

## Profile of solicitor population

### Practising solicitors and all solicitors on the roll

The number of practising solicitors has continued to grow in recent years and, again, hit an all-time high in October 2022, showing that working as a solicitor in England and Wales remains an attractive career option.

The number of practising solicitors fluctuates throughout the year, but we continue to see overall growth on an annual basis. The number of solicitors on the roll has dropped in the second half of 2023, and, although it is now shown in the table below, this can be seen in the [regulated population statistics](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/regulated-community-statistics/data/population_solicitors/) [[https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/regulated-community-statistics/data/population\\_solicitors/](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/regulated-community-statistics/data/population_solicitors/)]. Because of recent changes to data legislation, we have a legal obligation to make sure that all information held on the roll of solicitors is up to date. All solicitors on the roll must now confirm the data we hold and publish on them is accurate and current. The number of solicitors who choose not to have their name on the roll is the reason behind the decrease.

Please note, the figures below relate to solicitors only and do not include registered European lawyers (RELS) or registered foreign lawyers.

|            | Practising solicitors | All solicitors on the roll |
|------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Oct 2019   | 150,349               | 199,181                    |
| Oct 2020   | 153,082               | 205,688                    |
| Oct 2021   | 156,928               | 212,601                    |
| April 2022 | 155,527               | 215,186                    |
| Oct 2022   | 160,676               | 219,424                    |
| April 2023 | 160,432               | 222,537                    |

### Wales

Around 4,000 practising solicitors and 400 head offices are based in Wales (this is an estimated figure due to cross-border working). This is around 4% of all law firm head offices.

### Practising certificate holders based in Wales

|            | Practising certificate holders based in Wales | Head offices based in Wales |
|------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Oct 2019   | 3,927   | 431                         |
| Oct 2020   | 4,003   | 420                         |
| Oct 2021   | 4,033   | 400                         |
| April 2022 | 3,992   | 399                         |
| Oct 2022   | 4,015   | 397                         |
| April 2023 | 4,019   | 396                         |

## Education and training

### Admission to the profession

The table below shows the number of individuals that joined the profession from various routes between 2018/19 and April 2023. The number of new solicitors entering the profession between 2018/19 and 2021/22 has averaged at around 7,000 per year.

With 3,530 new solicitors entering the profession by April 2023, it is likely the total number for the year will reach the annual average.

The number of RELs admitted to the profession appears to have flatlined partway through the 2021/22 year. Following the UK's exit from the EU in 2020 only Swiss lawyers have been able to qualify through this route from January 2021.

There also appears to have been a drop in the number of individuals qualifying from the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland. However, many individuals looking to qualify from these jurisdictions will do so through the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) route.

As the first SQE2 assessment did not take place until August 2022, those admitted through the SQE route from 1 November 2021 to the end of April 2022 were all qualified lawyers from other jurisdictions.

These individuals qualify through this route due to either full exemption from both SQE assessments or by sitting SQE1 and having an SQE2 exemption.

A glossary of terms and acronyms used in this section can be found in our [education and training report](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/education-training-2021-22/). [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/education-training-2021-22/>]

For details on the different routes to the profession see [pathways to qualification](https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/). [<https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/admission/pathways-qualification/>]

## Routes to admission

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| Year/time period     | SQE | LPC then PRT | QLTS  | CILEX and assistant justices' clerks | ROI | NI | EQM | REL | QLTT | Total |
|----------------------|-----|--------------|-------|--------------------------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|------|-------|
| 2018/19              | -   | 5,742        | 521   | 343                                  | 188 | 35 | 88  | 76  | 8    | 7,001 |
| 2019/20              | -   | 5,474        | 605   | 324                                  | 124 | 31 | 98  | 60  | 5    | 6,721 |
| 2020/21              | -   | 5,723        | 685   | 352                                  | 149 | 41 | 109 | 100 | 9    | 7,168 |
| 2021/22              | 433 | 5,196        | 1,306 | 240                                  | 4   | 2  | 114 | -   | 5    | 7,300 |
| Nov '21 to April '22 | 103 | 1,985        | 464   | 111                                  | 4   | 1  | 51  | 0   | 1    | 2,720 |
| May '22 to Oct '22   | 330 | 3,211        | 842   | 129                                  | 0   | 1  | 63  | 0   | 4    | 4,580 |
| 2022/23              | -   | -            | -     | -                                    | -   | -  | -   | -   | -    | -     |
| Nov '22 to April '23 | 545 | 2,618        | 168   | 148                                  | 1   | 0  | 47  | 1   | 2    | 3,530 |
| April '23 to Oct '23 | -   | -            | -     | -                                    | -   | -  | -   | -   | -    | -     |

## Higher rights of audience

A higher rights of audience qualification allows solicitors to act as an advocate in the higher courts. These are the Crown Court, High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court in England and Wales. The number of solicitors we regulate that have higher rights of audience can be seen below.

Historically, there has been a gradual increase in the number of solicitors with a [higher rights of audience qualification](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/regulated-community-statistics/data/higher_rights_of_audience/) ([https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/regulated-community-statistics/data/higher\\_rights\\_of\\_audience/](https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/regulated-community-statistics/data/higher_rights_of_audience/)). This rise is driven by increases in those with a qualification to appear in civil cases.

For the years between 2018/19 and 2021/22, the average total number of solicitors with a higher right of audience is just under 7,150. The total number for 2022/23 looks like it will be in line with this average.

The percentages represent a proportion of how many individuals have rights to appear in civil cases, criminal cases, or both for the year shown down the left-hand side.

|            | Civil       | Criminal    | Both        | Total |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Oct 2019   | 2,439 (35%) | 3,153 (45%) | 1,417 (20%) | 7,009 |
| Oct 2020   | 2,533 (35%) | 3,160 (44%) | 1,444 (20%) | 7,137 |
| Oct 2021   | 2,714 (38%) | 3,087 (43%) | 1,408 (20%) | 7,209 |
| April 2022 | 2,715 (38%) | 2,988 (42%) | 1,382 (20%) | 7,085 |
| Oct 2022   | 2,804 (39%) | 3,017 (42%) | 1,388 (19%) | 7,209 |
| April 2023 | 2,773 (39%) | 2,945 (42%) | 1,344 (19%) | 7,062 |

## Concerns reported to us

### Reporting concerns to us

Some concerns come to us direct from the profession, such as from solicitors or the compliance officers who work in law firms.

Others come from members of the public, the police and the courts. We also work closely with the Legal Ombudsman (LeO), the organisation that handles complaints about the standards of service people receive from their legal service provider. LeO will contact us if, during one of its investigations, it has concerns that a solicitor may have breached our rules. Like all regulators, we also monitor media and other reports.

We also identify concerns as we undertake other aspects of our work. For example, we carry out thematic reviews of particular types of legal work or requirements, such as anti-money laundering procedures.

### Who reports concerns to us

Due to IT changes in 2020/21, we cannot report the specific data on where reports came from as we have in previous years. We will return to fuller reporting on this in the future.

|            | Reports from the profession | Reports from outside the profession | Unknown |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Oct 2021   | 27%                         | 70%                                 | 3%      |
| April 2022 | 26%                         | 74%                                 | 1%      |
| Oct 2022   | 25%                         | 74%                                 | 1%      |
| April 2023 | 27%                         | 73%                                 | 2%      |

### Number of concerns reported to us

After a drop in the number of concerns reported to us in 2019/20, numbers increased in 2020/21. Reports likely dropped in 2019/20 due to effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

If the number of reports we receive for the rest of 2022/23 continue on the same trajectory we have seen up until the end of the first half of the year, we will probably see a number consistent with the last two years.

The majority of concerns do not result in us taking enforcement action or referring a case to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal. This is because, in many cases, we can resolve matters through engagement and without the need for enforcement action. In many others, we find that the solicitor or firm has not breached our rules. We keep all information sent to us and, if appropriate, can refer to it if concerns are raised in the future.

### Concerns reported to us mid-year 2021/22

| Year/time period     | Total received | Total dealt with | Investment into conduct | No investment * | Closed under AER | Investment not necessary (total) | Refer to LeO | Internal referral** | No action taken*** | No breach or serious breach of rules found | Investment ongoing |
|----------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------|
| 2018/19              | 10,576         | 9,649            | 3,602                   | 773             | 4,335            | 5,108                            | 798          | 8                   | 133                | 3,116                                      | 2,120              |
| 2019/20              | 9,642          | 9,375            | 2,279                   | 32              | 5,989            | 6,021                            | 861          | 18                  | 196                | 1,720                                      | 1,983              |
| 2020/21              | 10,358         | 9,329            | 1,816                   | N/A             | 6,959            | 6,959                            | 544          | 10                  | N/A                | 1,763                                      | 1,897              |
| 2021/22              | 10,121         | 9,972            | 1,741                   | N/A             | 7,117            | 7,117                            | 1,100        | 14                  | N/A                | 1,528                                      | 1,696              |
| Nov '21 to April '22 | 5,115          | 5,062            | 879                     | N/A             | 3,592            | 3,592                            | 582          | 9                   | N/A                | 811  | 1,724              |
| May '22 to Oct '22   | 5,006          | 4,910            | 862                     | N/A             | 3,525            | 3,525                            | 518          | 5                   | N/A                | 717  | 1,696              |
| 2022/23              | -              | -                | -                       | -               | -                | -                                | -            | -                   | -                  | -  | -                  |
| Nov '22 to April '23 | 5,270          | 5,790            | 876                     | N/A             | 4,172            | 4,172                            | 734          | 8                   | N/A                | 772  | 1,676              |
| May '22 to Oct '22   | -              | -                | -                       | -               | -                | -                                | -            | -                   | -                  | -  | -                  |

\* Information is used as part of our risk profiling

\*\* Because it is, eg a compensation fund claim or matter for Authorisation

\*\*\* Eg it is not in our jurisdiction to investigate

\*\*\*\* 6 or 12-month rolling average

Please note, there is not always a linear relationship between the number of reports we receive and the number dealt with in the same 12-month period. This is because not all cases will be resolved within that timeframe.

We redirect matters to LeO if we think it is a service level-related complaint.

Since the introduction of our new assessment and early resolution (AER) process, brought in across 2018/19 and 2019/20, all matters that do not progress to a full investigation are closed at this point.

This is why there are no files closed under the lines 'Does not warrant investigation but information used as part of our risk profiling' and 'No action taken as, for example, it is not in our jurisdiction to investigate' from 2020/21.

### Interventions

The number of interventions steadily decreased from 37 in 2018/19 to 25 in 2021/22.

The reason for this decrease may be that support packages offered during the Covid-19 pandemic provided a short-term financial solution to some firms that were otherwise struggling and could have faced an intervention during this time.

However, we carried out 28 interventions from 1 Nov 2022 to 30 Apr 2023. This suggests that the year-end numbers will be higher than we have seen in the previous five years.

### Year/time period Total number of interventions

|         |    |
|---------|----|
| 2018/19 | 37 |
| 2019/20 | 40 |
| 2020/21 | 26 |
| 2021/22 | 25 |

Nov '21 to Apr '22 16

May '22 to Oct '22 9

2022/23 -

Nov '22 to Apr '23 28

May '23 to Oct '23 -