How diverse is the legal profession?

Published 20 March 2020

We collect diversity data from the law firms we regulate in England and Wales every two years. Our most recent collection was in Summer 2019, when 96% of law firms reported their data to us. This represented information from more than 186,000 people working in over 9,500 firms.

In collating their data firms ask their staff to respond to a standard set of diversity questions and then report their overall information to us.

In compiling our results, we present information by distinct groups as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All lawyers (referred to as lawyers in the analysis)</th>
<th>Other staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solicitors/other lawyers</td>
<td>Other staff</td>
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<td>(referred to as solicitors in the analysis)</td>
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<td>Solicitor partner</td>
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<td>(sole practitioner /member/director)</td>
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<td>Solicitor (not partner)</td>
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<td>Barrister</td>
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<td>Patent or Trademark Attorney</td>
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<td>Notary</td>
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<td>Other fee earning role</td>
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<td>Role directly supporting a fee earner</td>
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<td>Managerial role</td>
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<td>IT/HR/other corporate services role</td>
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We have set out the key findings for each of the diversity categories, including comparisons of the data between firms of different size and work type. We have included data where we have it, for solicitors who work in-house for comparative purposes.

Age

There is little change in the age profile of all lawyers (solicitors and partners) since 2017.

- 31% are aged 25-34
- 29% are aged 34-44
- 22% are aged 45-54
- 13% are aged 55-64
- 5% are over 65.

More than half (59%) of all lawyers are aged between 25 and 44. The data reflects the average
career pattern of solicitors and when they might expect to become partners in a firm.

For partners, the largest age group for partners is 45 to 55 (36%), followed by 35 to 44 (29%).

For solicitors the largest group is 25 to 34 (48%), followed by 35 to 44 (28%).

People aged between 55 and 64 make up 13% of lawyers (down 1% since 2017). The group gets smaller as the firm size increases, so 23% of lawyers in firms with one partner are between 55 and 64, decreasing to 7% in firms with 50 plus partners.

The largest age group for other staff, is 25 to 34, who make up 29% of other staff in law firms. This is true for all firms regardless of size, although the proportion of people in this group ranges from 33% in the largest firms (50 plus partners) down to 25% in one partner firms and firms with six to nine partners.

**In-house comparison:**

- 58% of all in-house solicitors are aged between 25 and 44, (17% between 25 and 34 and 42% between 35 and 44). The armed forces, charitable sector and private sector all have a higher proportion of solicitors aged between 35 and 44, at 50%, 47% and 46% respectively.

- 12% of in-house solicitors are aged between 55 and 64, with a lower proportion of solicitors of this age working in the private sector (8%)

- The private sector organisations have a higher proportion of solicitors aged between 25 and 34 (19%) and aged between 35 and 44 (46%) and a lower proportion of solicitors aged between 45 and 54 (26%) and aged between 55 and 65 (8%).

**Gender**

Women make up 49% of lawyers in law firms, up by 1% since 2017. For the other staff working in law firms, women make up three quarters of the workforce (75%) with no change since 2017. The ONS Labour Market Survey [https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/december2019] shows that 47% of the UK workforce are women.

There is a greater proportion of female lawyers in mid-size and larger firms. Women make up:

- 55% of lawyers in firms with six to nine partners are women - up by 1% since 2017
- 51% of lawyers in firms with 10 to 50 partners – down by 3% since 2017
- 50% in firms with 50 plus partners - up by 1% since 2017.

There is a smaller proportion of female lawyers in smaller firms. Women make up

- 45% of lawyers in firms with one partner - up by 1% since 2017
- 48% of lawyers in firms with two to 5 partners - up by 1% since 2017.

Differences become more apparent when we look at seniority, as just 34% of partners are female in 2019. However, the gap has been narrowing over the past five years, with a slow but steady increase in female partners (up by 1% since 2017 and 3% since 2014). This represents an approximate increase of 10% in the proportion of female partners from 2014 to 2019. The proportion of female partners in firms of different sizes are set out below:

- 37% of partners in one partner firms are female – up by 1% since 2017
- 35% in firms with two to five partners - up by 1%
- 39% in firms with six to nine partners – up by 2%
- 34% in firms with 10 to 50 partners - no change
More than half (59%) of solicitors (ie those who are not partners) across all firms are female. There is a higher proportion of female solicitors in firms which have six to nine partners, 66% (up by 6% since 2014).

Overall 49% of lawyers are women but this varies by the type of legal work undertaken by firm:

- 54% of lawyers in firms mainly doing private client work up by 2% since 2017
- 40% of lawyers in firms mainly doing criminal work are female no change since 2017.

Across all categories, the number of people who preferred to describe their gender other than as a man or woman, was less than 1%. Because the numbers are so small, we have not added this category into the law firm diversity tool.

There is a higher proportion of women in the in-house population. Three in five (60%) of the in-house solicitor population are women.

The picture varies across the different groups of in-house solicitors with women making up:

- 56% in private sector organisations
- 68% in public sector organisations (74% in the Courts service, and 71% in local government organisations)
- 68% in other organisations (which rises to 74% in advice services).

Transgender

For the first time in 2017, we asked whether people had a gender identity that was different from their sex as registered at birth. For reporting purposes, we have referred to this group as transgender or trans, although we recognise the term might not be the preferred term for everyone in this category.

We had the same response in 2019, with 2% of solicitors, 1% of partners and 2% of other staff confirming their gender identity was different to that assigned to them at birth (this is 1% overall for lawyers).

There are some variations by firm size, for example, in firms with six to nine partners, 3% of solicitors are trans and in firms with 10 to 50 partners, 3% of other staff are trans.

There is a lack of good quality statistical data about transgender people in the UK but the Gender Identity Research and Education Service gave evidence to the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (PDF 99 pages, 822KB) estimating that approximately 1% of the general population are trans.

Ethnicity

The proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) lawyers working in law firms is 21% (no change since 2017). In 2018, Government figures on employment showed that 13% of the workforce in England, Scotland and Wales were BAME.

15% of lawyers are Asian (up 6% since 2014) compared to 7% of the workforce in England, Scotland and Wales in 2018. Asian lawyers make up over two thirds of BAME lawyers. Black lawyers make up 3% (no change since 2017) and this reflects the workforce in England Scotland and Wales in 2018 (3%). There has been no change in the proportion of lawyers from multiple/mixed ethnicity (2%) or other ethnic groups (1%).
Unlike the profile for women, there is very little difference by seniority among BAME lawyers, 21% of solicitors are BAME (down by 1% since 2017), compared to 22% of partners (up by 1% since 2017).

However, differences become apparent when we look at the breakdown of partners in firms by size. Both black and Asian lawyers are significantly underrepresented in mid to large size firms (those with six or more partners). The largest firms (50 plus partners) have the lowest proportion of BAME partners - only 8% (no change since 2017). This contrasts with one partner firms, where 36% of partners are from a BAME background (up 2% since 2017). The rate of increase in BAME partners in one partner firms from 2014 to 2019 (38%) is more than twice that of firms with 50+ partners (14%).

There has been an increase in BAME partners in firms with 2 to 5 partners at 26% (up by 3% since 2017) and in firms with 10 to 50 partners at 10% (up by 2% since 2017), but a fall for firms with 6 to 9 partners at 9% (down by 2% since 2017).

There are differences in the proportion of BAME lawyers according to the type of legal work undertaken by firms. Firms mainly doing criminal work and those mainly doing private client work both have a higher proportion of BAME lawyers. For criminal law firms, 24% of lawyers are Asian and 6% black (overall 33% BAME). For private client firms, 27% of lawyers are Asian and 10% black (overall 40% BAME). Firms doing a mixed range of work, those doing mainly corporate work and firms in the 'other' category all have the lowest proportion of BAME lawyers, both at 15%.

The proportion of BAME other staff working in law firms has increased to 18% (up 1% since 2017). The current data shows that 11% of other staff are Asian (compared to 7% in the UK workforce), 3% are black (compared to 3%), 2% are of multiple/mixed ethnicity (compared to 1%) and 1% from another ethnic group (compared to 2%).

For in-house solicitors, the proportion of BAME solicitors is higher than for people in employment in England, Scotland and Wales in 2018, but slightly less than the proportion in law firms. 18% of in-house solicitors are BAME (an increase of 4% compared with 2017). This includes 11% Asian solicitors, 3% black and 2% multiple/mixed ethnicity and 2% from other ethnic groups. The majority of BAME in-house solicitors (64%) are concentrated in private sector organisations.

There are significant differences in the various categories of organisation where in-house solicitors work. For example, BAME solicitors make up:

- 30% of solicitors working in advice services (from a total of 383 people)
- 20% of solicitors working in local government (from a total of 4,619)
- 18% of solicitors working in commerce and industry (from a total of 22,646)
- none of the solicitors working in the armed forces (of a total of 40 people).

**Disability**

The proportion of people declaring a disability working in law firms (4%) is lower than the wider population, where disabled people make up 13% of the workforce in the UK [https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/SummaryCBP-7540]. We found:

- 3% of lawyers are disabled - although not apparent in the diversity data tool because we round our figures up or down, there has been an increase of half a percent since 2017, to 3.49%
- 4% of other staff are disabled – up by 2% since 2014.

Although the numbers are small, there are some variations when we look further at the data:

- there is a higher proportion of lawyers in firms with 6 to 9 partners reporting a disability (5%), although this is the same as it was in 2014
• there is a slightly higher proportion of solicitors reporting a disability (4%) than partners (3%).

The proportion of in-house solicitors who are disabled (1.5%) is half that in law firms (3%). There are variations in the proportion of disabled solicitors working in the main in-house sectors:

• 2.5% in the public sector
• 1.1% in the private sector
• 2.2% in other sectors.

Sexual orientation

A greater proportion of lawyers identify as lesbian, gay or bi-sexual (LGB) in law firms (3%) compared to the UK population [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk2017] in 2017 (2%). There has been no change for lawyers since 2014.

Although the numbers are small, there are some variations when we look further at the data, for example, there is a slightly lower proportion of lawyers who identify as LGB in one partner firms (2%) and a slightly higher proportion in the largest firms (10 and 50 plus partners).

Religion and belief

Christians form the largest proportion of lawyers at 49% and this group has decreased steadily over the past five years (down by 8% since 2014). This compares to 52% in England and Wales, from the Annual Population Survey in 2018 [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/adhocs/009760religioningreatbritainbyregionoctober2017toseptember2018]. Those who have no religion or belief (including those reporting as atheists) form the second largest group at 30% (no change since 2017) which compares to 38% in England and Wales.

The next largest faith group is Muslim, which has increased steadily over the past 5 years to 10% (up 5% since 2014). There has been no change since 2017 for the Jewish (3%), Hindu (3%), Sikh (2%), Buddhist (1%) or those in other faith groups (2%).

The data for faith groups changes with firm size, reflecting the size of the Asian population in these firms. For example, 18% of lawyers in one partner firms are Muslim, compared to 3% of lawyers in the largest firms of 50 plus partners.

Social mobility

We started using new questions as a proxy for social mobility in 2019, using three standard questions from the Government recommend socio economic measures for the workforce (whose approach is recommended by the Sutton Trust). We asked about school age education, the level of qualification achieved by parents and parental occupation. The first question was similar to the one in 2017 although there were more response categories provided. We have been able to compare this data to that collected in 2017 by conflating the response categories where appropriate. The second question was too different to allow any comparison with the data collected in 2017 and the third question was used for the first time in 2019.

Attendance at fee paying schools

There is a significant gap between lawyers and the general population, as 21% of lawyers attended fee paying schools (comprising 5% with a bursary and 16% without). This compares to the general UK population [https://www.isc.co.uk/research/annual-census/] where 7% attended fee paying schools (2% with a bursary and 5% without). The figures for non-lawyer staff in law firms reflected the overall UK population stats.

Over the past five years there has been a change in the ratio of lawyers who attended fee paying schools and state schools - for every lawyer from a fee paying school in 2014, there were 2.6
lawyers who attended a state school, and in 2019 this had increased to 2.75.

There is a difference between partners and solicitors who attended a fee-paying school. 23% of partners (down by 1% since 2017), made up of 6% with and 17% without a bursary attended an independent or fee-paying school. This compares to 19% of solicitors (down by 1% since 2017), made up of 4% with and 15% without a bursary. It's also notable that the larger firms (50+ partners) have the highest proportion of lawyers that attended private school (32%).

The firms which mainly do corporate law have the lowest proportion of state educated lawyers at 46% (made up of 18% attending selective schools and 28% non-selective). Nearly four fifths (79%) of lawyers in firms doing mainly criminal work are state educated (made up of 26% from selective and 54% from non-selective schools).

**Highest level of parental qualification**

A greater proportion of lawyers had parents with a degree level qualification (51%) compared to 27% of other staff. 27% of the lawyers had parents with qualifications below degree level, compared to 37% of other staff and 16% of both groups had no formal qualifications. In 2017, 19% of the UK working age population [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elitist-britain-2019] held an undergraduate degree or higher qualification and 42% had attended some form of higher education.

There are some differences between the parental qualifications of solicitors and partners:

- 52% of partners had parents with a degree level qualification compared to 50% of solicitors
- 25% of partners had a parent with qualifications below degree level compared to 28% of solicitors.

**Parental occupation**

15% of lawyers had a parent who worked in one of the traditional professions (such as accountancy and legal) and 26% had a parent who worked in one of the modern professions (teaching etc). This compares to the other staff in law firms, 8% of whom had a parent in a traditional profession and 15% in a modern profession.

10% of other staff had a parent who worked in routine manual and service occupations, compared with 6% of solicitors and 6% of partners.

**Caring responsibilities**

A third of lawyers have primary caring responsibilities for children (34%) which has risen 3% since 2014. The proportion is slightly higher for partners (36%) than solicitors (32%). These differences are exaggerated when we look at the work type and size of firms:

- for those in firms which mainly do corporate law, 37% of partners and 23% of solicitors have childcare responsibilities
- those in firms with 50 plus partners, 42% of partners and 28% of solicitors have caring responsibilities.

There is a smaller proportion of people with primary caring responsibilities for children among other staff working in law firms at 25%, which ranges from 26% in one partner firms to 22% in the largest firms of 50 plus partners. This is likely to reflect the younger age profiles we noted in these groups, and the general trend of people having children later in their life or career.

Nearly one in ten (9%) of lawyers said they have caring responsibilities for someone other than a child (mostly stating that they provide between 1 and 19 hours of care a week.)

**In-house solicitors**
Where we hold the information, we reference corresponding data on in-house solicitors, who represent around 17% of all solicitors (34,545). Of these in-house solicitors:

- 66% work in the private sector (in areas such as commerce and industry)
- 27% work in the public sector (in areas such as local government and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS))
- 7% work in other sectors (in areas such as advice centres, charities and education).

**Response rates**

Using the raw data from our firm diversity survey, we have set out the response rates for lawyers working in law firms in the table below, which also shows the proportion of people who selected 'prefer not to say' and the proportion of people who gave no answer.

The table shows that we had an overall increase in response rates from lawyers in 2019 compared to 2017. The response rates increased this year for gender, transgender, school education, and child caring responsibilities. For all the other categories the response stayed the same.

There is a reduction in the prefer not to say rates for age and sexual orientation, and no change for the other questions. Throughout the survey we have rounded all answers to the nearest whole number.

**Notes**

**Firm size and type**

For the purposes of this research, firm size categories are based on the number of partners in a given firm.

- We classify 'small firms' as sole practitioners or firms with four partners or less.
- We classify 'large firms' as being those with 50 partners or more.

Firms are classed as specialising in a particular work type category if they have told us that this area accounts at least half of the overall work they do.

**Social mobility**

We asked three questions to indicate social mobility, about school education, the level of parents' qualifications and parents' occupation.

The question about school education was similar to the one asked in 2017 but had a wider range of response options; the two other questions were new in 2019. Not all firms were able to include these in their questionnaire so, when calculating the overall response rates, we excluded the people who did not have the opportunity to answer these questions. 5.9% of lawyers were not asked the school education question, 13.4% were not asked the parental qualifications question and 17.6% were not asked the parental occupation question.

**Transgender**

The trans question was new in 2017 and a few firms have still not been able to include this in their questionnaire, which amounted to 7.4% of lawyers.