

How diverse are in-house lawyers, 2015

About the data 2015

Collecting diversity data continues to help us understand and promote diversity within legal services. Our firm diversity data exercise applies to all law firms in England and Wales and we have recently published the results of our latest collection.

Law firms employ around 73% of all solicitors that are practising. The remaining solicitor population are largely based in-house, employed by organisations that are not regulated legal businesses. These include local authorities, trade unions, the not-for-profit sector, commerce and industry.

The number of in-house lawyers has continued to grow and now represent around 20% of the total number of practising solicitors we regulate. We wanted to learn more about the diversity make-up of this group alongside the data we have collected from law firms.

Key findings

67% of in-house solicitors work in the private sector, compared to 26% in the public sector. The remaining 7% work in the third sector, which includes advice centres and registered charities.

The main services provided by in-house lawyers include commission, negotiation and transactional legal work.

Gender

Overall, women make up 57% of the in-house population compared to only 46% of the firm population. Female in-house lawyers are most strongly represented in the public sector, making up 66% of this group compared to only 53% of the in-house private sector.

The highest percentage of women working in-house are employed in advice centres and in the health service. The lowest percentage work as legal consultants.

Ethnicity

BAME individuals make up 17% of all in-house lawyers, which is slightly less than those working within law firms (18%). The highest proportion of BAME solicitors working in-house are employed in local government or advice centres. There is little variation between those BAME lawyers working in the in-house public sector (17%) and those based within the in-house private sector (16%).

Disability

Disabled people are significantly under represented amongst in-house solicitors (1.4%) compared to both law firm solicitors (3%) and the wider working age population (10%).

Age

Only 10% of in-house lawyers are under the age of 30. The majority of solicitors working in-house are between the ages of 31 and 50 (74%). Between the ages of 51 and 60, the percentage of in-house lawyers decreases to 13%. It decreases further between the ages of 61 and 65 (2%) and for those aged over 66 (1%).

Other diversity data

In addition to the above areas, we collect data from the firm population on sexual orientation, religion and belief, social mobility, and caring responsibilities. We do not have similar data for the in-house population.