

Breakdown of Welsh law firms' workforce diversity

26 March 2024

This overview covers solicitors and other employees working in SRA-regulated law firms that have their head office in Wales. It is based on data collected from firms in summer 2023. It does not include branch offices located in Wales if the head office is in England.

The data is taken from our firm diversity data tool [<https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/diversity-toolkit/law-firm-diversity-tool/>] which allows you to view the diversity breakdown of people in different role categories.

We updated these categories in 2023 by splitting the partner group into 'full-equity solicitor partners' and 'salaried or partial-equity solicitor partners'. For convenience, we will refer to these groups as 'full-equity' and 'salaried' partners. We look at the partner category as a whole, where there are notable trends over time.

The firm diversity data tool can be filtered to view the data by certain characteristics, including firm size, location and work type. Only one filter can be selected at a time so the data for Wales cannot be filtered by firm size. See our overview of the whole firm population [<https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/diversity-profession/diverse-legal-profession/#table>] for definition of the role categories.

Open all [#]

Sex

The proportion of women lawyers in Welsh law firms exceeds that of men and is continuing to rise:

- 57% of lawyers are women, no change from 2021
- 40% of lawyers are men down from 41% in 2021
- 0.2% of lawyers preferred another description, up from 0.1% in 2021.

Excluding the prefer not to say responses, women make up 59% of all lawyers in Welsh law firms. This compares to 48% of the Welsh workforce population [<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/headlinelabourforcesurveyindicatorsforwaleshi10/current/lmregtab111walesfebruary2024.xlsx>] in 2023.

Differences become more apparent when we look at seniority:

- 35% of full-equity partners are women
- 54% of salaried partners are women
- 68% of solicitors are women.

Looking at trends over time for all partners (as we only have the full-equity and salaried partner split for 2023), the proportion of women at partner level is 41% up from 33% in 2015. Four per cent of partners preferred not to say (up from 2% in 2021) and 2% of solicitors preferred not to say (up from 1% in 2021).

For other staff in Welsh law firms, there was a much higher proportion of women (83%) compared to men (16%), and 2% preferred not to say.

Ethnicity

Black, Asian and minority ethnic lawyers made up 5% of all lawyers working in Welsh law firms. The breakdown for this group is:

- 3% Asian
- 0% Black (rounded from 0.49%)
- 2% Multiple/Mixed
- 0% from Other ethnic groups (rounded from 0.2%).

Excluding the prefer not to say responses, Black, Asian and minority ethnic lawyers in Welsh law firms made up 6%, the same proportion as the population of Wales [<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021#how-ethnic-composition-varied-across-england-and-wales>] in 2021.

The breakdown for this group is:

- 3.1% Asian (compared to 2.9% of the Welsh population)
- 0.5% Black (compared to 0.9% of the Welsh population)
- 1.8% Multiple/Mixed (compared to 1.6% of the Welsh population)
- 0.2% from Other ethnic groups (compared to 0.9% of the Welsh population).

Looking at seniority:

- The proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic full-equity partners in Welsh law firms is 4% compared to 5% of salaried partners.
- The proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic partners in Welsh law firms has increased by three percentage points since 2015 (2% to 5%).

There was a larger proportion of full-equity partners who preferred not to say their ethnicity (6%), compared to salaried partners (3%). When looking at partners as a whole, 5% preferred not to say (up from 4% in 2021) compared to 3% of solicitors (up from 2% in 2021).

For other staff in Welsh law firms, the proportion of people from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background made up 6%, with 2% preferring not to say (no change since 2021).

Disability

Seven per cent of lawyers in Welsh law firms declared a disability, compared to 16% of the UK workforce [<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08>] as a whole. This is an increase from 3% in 2015. In 2023, 6% said their activities were limited a little, and 1% a lot.

When we break this down by seniority:

- A larger proportion of full-equity partners declared a disability (5%) than salaried partners (3%).
- 5% of full-equity partners said their activities were limited a little, 2% a lot. 6% of salaried partners said their activities were limited a little, 0% a lot.
- A larger proportion of full-equity partners preferred not to say whether they had a disability (5%), compared to salaried partners (3%).

(Please note that some percentages may show as zero due to rounding.)

Looking at partners as a whole, 5% declared a disability (no change from 2021), compared to 8% of solicitors (up from 6% in 2021).

For other staff in Welsh law firms, 8% declared a disability with 4% preferring not to say.

Socio-economic background

Parental occupation

We have reported parental occupation in accordance with the national approach, using three categories to indicate socio-economic background:

- The professional (higher) socio-economic category is made up of modern and traditional professional occupations and senior, middle or junior managers or administrators.
- The intermediate socio-economic category is made up of clerical and intermediate occupations and small business owners who employ fewer than 25 people.
- The lower socio-economic (working class) category is made up of technical and craft occupations and long-term unemployed.

Excluding prefer not to say responses, 57% of lawyers working in Welsh law firms are from a professional background. This is compared to 37% across the UK nationally [<https://socialmobility.independent-commission.uk/resources/socio-economic-diversity-and-inclusion-employers-toolkit/>].

Including the prefer not to say responses, the socio-economic background of lawyers in Welsh law firms:

- 52% from a professional background

- 15% from an intermediate background
- 23% from a lower socio-economic background
- 2% other
- 8% preferred not to say.

When we break this down by seniority:

- A larger proportion of salaried partners are from a professional background (59%), compared to full-equity partners (53%).
- Only 17% of full-equity partners are from a lower socioeconomic background compared to salaried partners (20%).
- A larger proportion of full-equity partners preferred not to say (12%), compared to salaried partners (6%).

For other staff in Welsh law firms, the proportion from a professional background (37%) is similar to the proportion from a lower socio-economic background (36%).

School attended

In Welsh law firms, 9% of lawyers went to an independent/fee-paying school, and 2% attended school outside the UK. Eighty-three per cent of lawyers went to a state school.

Excluding the prefer not to say responses, 10% of lawyers went to an independent/fee-paying school compared to 7.5% across the UK nationally [<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2019>] .

When we break this down by seniority:

- 12% of full-equity partners attended an independent/fee-paying school, compared to 10% of salaried partners
- 77% of full-equity partners attended a state school, compared to 86% of salaried partners
- 10% full-equity partners preferred not to say compared to 3% of salaried partners.

For other staff in Welsh law firms, 4% attended an independent/fee-paying school, 4% attended school outside the UK, and 87% attended a state school. Five per cent of other staff preferred not to say.

Age

The largest proportion of lawyers in Welsh law firms are in the age category 35-44 (28%), followed by 25-34 (24%) and 45-54 (21%).

Comparative to the whole population of lawyers, there is an aging population of full-equity partners in Welsh law firms. This reflects the usual age career pattern of solicitors and when they might expect to achieve full-equity partnership:

- The largest proportion of full-equity partners are aged 45-54 (31%), and the next largest proportion are aged 55-64 (30%).
- 41% of salaried partners are aged 35-44 and the next largest proportion are aged 45-54 (28%).

Looking at partners as a whole, the largest proportion are aged 45-54 (30%), compared to solicitors where the largest proportion are aged 25-34 (37%).

For other staff in Welsh law firms, there is a more even spread over the age categories with the exception of 65+, but the largest proportion are aged 25-34 (26%).

Religion

All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. This means some have been rounded down to 0%.

In the 2021 Census

[<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021#religion-in-england-and-wales>] , 6% of people in Wales chose not to answer this question, compared to 10% of all lawyers in Welsh law firms answering prefer not to say. When we break down all the faith groups:

- 49% are Christian (compared to 44% of the Welsh population)
- 36% have no religion or belief (compared to 47% of the Welsh population)
- 2% are Muslim (compared to 2% of the Welsh population)
- 1% are Buddhist (compared to 0% of the Welsh population)
- 1% have any other religion or belief (compared to 0% of the Welsh population)
- 0% are Hindu, Jewish or Sikh (compared to 0% of the Welsh population)

Breaking the lawyer population down by seniority:

- 54% of full-equity partners and 57% of salaried partners are Christian
- 1% of full-equity and salaried partners are Muslim
- 28% of full-equity partners and 29% of salaried partners said they had no religion or belief
- 14% of full-equity partners and 11% of salaried partners preferred not to say.

Looking at partners as a whole, 55% are Christian, 1% are Muslim, and all other faith groups round down to 0%. Of solicitors, 45% are Christian, 2% are Muslim, 1% are Buddhist or Hindu, and all other faith groups rounded down to 0%.

For other staff in Welsh law firms, the largest group is no religion or belief (49%), followed by Christian (37%), Muslim and any other religion or belief (1%). Eight per cent of other staff preferred not to say.

Caring responsibilities

Of lawyers working in Welsh law firms, 37% have caring responsibilities for children, and 10% have caring responsibilities for others.

A larger proportion of salaried partners have child-caring responsibilities (47%) than full-equity partners (36%). However, a slightly larger proportion of full-equity partners have other caring responsibilities (11%) than salaried partners (10%).

Looking at partners as a whole, 40% (an increase from 34% in 2015) of partners have child-caring responsibilities compared to 36% (an increase from 33% in 2015) of solicitors. Eleven per cent of partners have other caring responsibilities (down from 19% in 2015) compared to 10% of solicitors (down from 13% in 2015).

For other staff in Welsh law firms, 23% have child-caring responsibilities, and 11% have other caring responsibilities.

Sexual orientation

Due to small numbers, these statistics are shown to 1 decimal place.

In the 2021 census, 7.6% of the Welsh population

[<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualorientationenglandandwales/census2021>] did not answer this question, compared to our prefer not to say rate of 7.9%. Across the population of lawyers in Welsh law firms:

- 1.9% answered they were gay or lesbian (compared to 1.5% of the Welsh population)
- 1.9% answered they were bi (compared to 1.2% of the Welsh population)
- 0.3% preferred another description (same as the Welsh population)

Looking at seniority:

- 2% of full-equity partners identify as LGB, compared to 2.7% of salaried partners
- 13.4% of full-equity partners preferred not to say, compared to 6% of salaried partners
- Looking at partners as a whole, 2.2% identify as LGB, compared to 3.2% of solicitors.

For other staff in Welsh law firms, 4.9% identify as LGB and 0.6% prefer another description.

Gender identity

In 2021, 6.3% of the Welsh population

[<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/genderidentity/bulletins/genderidentityenglandandwales/census2021>]

chose not to answer this question, compared to our prefer not to say rate of 3.1%. Across the population of lawyers in Welsh law firms:

- 0.9% of lawyers declared their gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth (compared to 0.4% of the Welsh population)
- This is an increase of 0.3% from 2021.

Looking at seniority:

- 0.5% of full-equity partners said their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth, compared to 0.3% of salaried partners
- 0.6% of full-equity partners preferred not to say, compared to 2.7% of salaried partners
- Looking at partners as a whole, 0.4% said their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth, compared to 1.2% of solicitors.

For other staff in Welsh law firms, 1.2% said their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth. There was an increase of 0.5% since 2021 of prefer not to say responses (1.9% from 1.4% in 2021).