

FARORE LAW

**PROGRESSION OF WOMEN IN THE LEGAL
PROFESSION**

HOW FAR HAVE WE COME?

DATA AND ANALYSIS OF RECENT TRENDS

2026 Edition



FARORE LAW

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About Farore Law

Farore Law is a boutique firm, consisting of a highly specialised, knowledgeable and responsive team, led by Suzanne McKie KC, with unrivalled experience and expertise in our specialist areas.

Farore Law specialises in complex cases in the field of employment law. We have an excellent track record in representing clients in hard fought litigation, mediations, negotiating settlements and undertaking investigations. We have particular expertise in cases involving [discrimination](#), [whistleblowing](#) and [misconduct](#) in the workplace. We act for [senior executives](#), business owners, equity partners, companies and LLPs. We also provide gender and equal pay reports for companies, LLPs and Barristers' Chambers.

We advise from the very start to the very end of the process, including pre-action stages and all aspects of the litigation process. Unlike other solicitors' firms, Farore Law also includes the provision of advocacy services. We undertake inquiries and produce investigation reports on behalf of companies, professional services firms and assist those accused of regulatory and other misconduct. We provide mediation and witness training services in relation to disputes arising out of employment and partnerships.

Farore Law has been awarded several Client Satisfaction badges for the most recent edition of the Legal 500 (2026). This is a fantastic accolade as only 10% of firms within the Legal 500 directory are given that award.

Various legal directories recommend Suzanne and her team as leading specialists in their field:

"Suzanne McKie is all round exceptional. Her intellect is razor sharp combined with strong Emotional intelligence and an ability to draw out all the nuanced strengths and weaknesses of a case and communicate these simply and with significant impact."
[Legal 500, 2026].

"Suzanne is someone you really want on your side. She is very strong technically, great with clients and never gives up."
[Chambers & Partners, 2026].

"In my experience, this team combines deep legal expertise with a highly commercial and pragmatic approach. They have consistently demonstrated a thorough understanding of the legal landscape. What sets them apart is their responsiveness, clarity of

communication, and the ability to distil complex legal matters into clear guidance. They are not just technically excellent, but also a pleasure to work with — collaborative, approachable, and consistently focused on delivering value.” [Legal 500, 2026].

“What differentiates them from others I have encountered is their accessibility, consistency, and the way they blend deep technical expertise with a human touch. I have always felt listened to, supported, and prioritised, something that cannot be overstated in the context of a personal employment issue.”

[Legal 500, 2026].

Our 2026 Reporting

This report builds on and expands significantly Farore Law’s earlier publication in May 2019, which examined the [slow progression of women in the UK’s professional spheres](#). This report is not a simple update of old findings. It is a new and substantive piece of work, offering fresh data, analysis, and insights that demand renewed attention.

Several years on, it is striking how little progress has been made.

Unlike the previous report, we have separated the 2026 Report into two. This 2026 report focuses on the legal sector – an area with significant public data available from the relevant regulators, and within our professional expertise. **It will be followed by a further report, later in 2026, discussing the progression of women in other spheres, including professional services, the financial sector and the medical profession.**

We have produced many of the charts and graphs ourselves, analysing and extrapolating the data from scratch.

Not only have we produced our analyses based on published data, but also unpublished data kindly provided to us by relevant legal bodies.

The SRA/Law Society reports its relevant data every two years, and we will update this report briefly when they next report in Summer of 2026.

Executive Summary

The recurring theme across the Bar, Solicitors and the Judiciary is that while female representation is strong at the early stages, it decreases with seniority. This could be related to the pipeline of women who joined the profession 15-25 years ago – however, our report suggests that this cannot be the only reason.

The analyses we have produced are based on data concerning those who have identified themselves as female.

At this stage in the Report, we want to highlight some significant differences between the progression of women within the Solicitors profession compared to the Bar. It is notable that in the last 10 years, the percentage of women in the solicitors' profession has been close to 50:50 (even consistently surpassing it since 2017), while that of women at the Bar has not gone beyond 41%.

Among Solicitors

In our 2019 report, we found that law firms were failing to reflect the reality of women in the legal profession at their senior levels; unfortunately, and maybe unsurprisingly **this challenge remains**. The percentage of women in senior level positions in law firms remains significantly below 50%, with only 35% female representation at partner equivalent level. This is only two percentage points higher than it was in 2019, when 33% of partners were women.

At the Bar

In our 2019 report, we found that the trends at the time suggested that the gender balance of practising barristers would never be reached. This was because fewer women tended to move from Call to practice and because women have a higher attrition rate once in practice (with the proportion of women falling as seniority increases). This challenge remains today: while data suggests that there are more women called to the Bar, attaining pupillage, and securing tenancy, women continue to make up a smaller percentage of the overall profession (only 40.7% of the profession as of December 2024). It will require a very long period of substantial imbalance in favour of women at Call to achieve a balance of women in practice at the Bar.

In the Judiciary

The trend in the Judiciary has largely remained the same since our 2019 report. There has been an increase in female representation among court and tribunal judges since 2014. However, female representation at the judiciary decreases with seniority and female judges are better represented in tribunals than in the High Court. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that solicitors will more often make applications to be Tribunal judges rather than High Court judges. But nonetheless, the percentage of women in High Court level judiciary positions and above (where applicants would traditionally be taken from the Bar), are still not where they should be: with 30% female representation in the High Court and 23% in the Court of Appeal.

The progression of Solicitors vs Barristers

As part of the Executive Summary, we thought we should plot directly the progression on both sides of the profession. Although the female population is generally well represented in the legal profession as a whole, as of 2025, the proportion of women varied between the legal professions from 41% of barristers and 54% of solicitors.

Table 1.2: Legal professions in England and Wales: sex from 2015 to 2025

As at 1 April in each year

Profession	Breakdown	Category	Sex - % female										
			2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Barristers	PQE	0-4 years	44%	44%	45%	46%	46%	48%	49%	49%	50%	51%	53%
Barristers	PQE	5-6 years	46%	47%	45%	42%	44%	44%	45%	47%	48%	49%	48%
Barristers	PQE	7-9 years	46%	47%	45%	47%	45%	44%	43%	43%	44%	45%	47%
Barristers	PQE	10-14 years	44%	44%	45%	45%	46%	46%	47%	46%	45%	44%	43%
Barristers	PQE	15-19 years	37%	37%	40%	42%	44%	45%	45%	46%	46%	46%	46%
Barristers	PQE	20+ years	23%	24%	25%	26%	27%	28%	28%	29%	31%	32%	33%
Barristers	PQE	Total	36%	36%	36%	37%	38%	38%	39%	39%	40%	40%	41%
Barristers	PQE	15+ years	27%	28%	29%	30%	31%	32%	33%	33%	34%	35%	35%
Barristers	Junior barristers		38%	39%	39%	40%	40%	41%	41%	42%	42%	43%	44%
Barristers	King's Counsel		13%	14%	15%	16%	17%	17%	19%	20%	20%	21%	22%
Solicitors	PQE	0-4 years	60%	61%	62%	62%	63%	63%	64%	~	~	~	~
Solicitors	PQE	5-6 years	59%	59%	59%	60%	61%	62%	62%	62%	63%	65%	~
Solicitors	PQE	7-9 years	59%	59%	59%	59%	60%	59%	60%	61%	62%	62%	63%
Solicitors	PQE	10-14 years	55%	56%	57%	58%	58%	59%	59%	59%	59%	60%	60%
Solicitors	PQE	15-19 years	47%	49%	50%	51%	53%	54%	56%	57%	57%	58%	59%
Solicitors	PQE	20+ years	30%	32%	33%	34%	36%	37%	38%	39%	41%	42%	44%
Solicitors	PQE	Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42%	71%
Solicitors	PQE	Total	49%	49%	50%	51%	51%	52%	52%	53%	53%	53%	54%
Solicitors	PQE	15+ years	36%	38%	39%	40%	41%	43%	44%	45%	46%	47%	48%
Solicitors	Solicitors		56%	56%	56%	57%	57%	58%	58%	58%	58%	59%	59%
Solicitors	Partner		29%	29%	30%	30%	31%	32%	33%	34%	34%	35%	36%

Data sources: Bar Standards Board (barristers); Solicitors Regulation Authority (solicitors)

The proportion of females in both professions has gradually increased since 2015, with barristers and solicitors increasing 5 percentage points each.

Scope of research

This 2026 update was produced by **Suzanne McKie KC** and **Ariane Ordoobadi**.

The statistics contained within relate to the representation and progression of women in the legal sphere including solicitors, barristers, and judges.

Certain figures have been rounded up to the nearest whole number or tenth decimal place for ease of analysis. Basic averages were also produced to facilitate analysis. Any slight numerical discrepancies may be attributed to these factors. Whenever possible, official summaries of raw data were used, and all sources quoted or paraphrased.

Farore Law is grateful to the Law Society, SRA, Bar Council and Bar Standards Board for providing us with further information in addition to their public literature.

1. PROGRESSION OF FEMALE SOLICITORS

Summary

- **The profession has a younger female workforce**, with 56% of female practicing certificate (PC) holders under age 45 in contrast to 61% of male PC holders who are 45 years or older.
- **A higher proportion of female solicitors work in-house** compared to men (33% vs 25%).
- **Female solicitors have a strong presence across in-house and private practice types**, making up 60% of in-house solicitors and 51% of solicitors in private practice.
- **At partner equivalent level¹, female representation is only 35%.**
- The figures for female solicitors at partner or partner equivalent level are more positive than the percentage of female KCs.
- **The median pay gap in 2024 is 7.2%**, which is lower than the current UK median pay gap of 14.5% (Office of National Statistics 2023).

Unfortunately, there is more detailed data available about Solicitors in 2023 than there is about 2024. Data for 2025 and 2026 has not yet been published by either the Law Society or the SRA.

Training contracts / trainee retention

Farore Law is conscious that, akin to pupils at the Bar, trainee statistics have been healthy on a gender diversity front for ~20 years. As such, trainee statistics are not accounted for in this Report, nor any that note the relationship between gender/trainee retention.²

Admitted / practising solicitors

The number of qualified solicitors on the roll (practising and non-practising) are set out in the following table.³

¹ Partner equivalent refers to sole practitioners, directors, members, own accounts, partners, and senior partners within private practice.

² Should the reader be interested in viewing these statistics: the Law Society's Annual Statistics Reports contain figures dating back to 1987, as of their 1998 Report onwards.

³ The most recent Law Society Annual Statistics Report available covers August 2023-July 2025. Accessed here: [Snapshot of the solicitor profession](#)

Year	Total on the roll (as of July 2024)	Women	
		Total no. holding practising certificates	Female partners
2024	202,454	167,603 (53% of PC holders)	74,341 (35% of partners)

Source: Farore Law table based on Law Society Annual Statistics Report, 2024

In 2017, women practising certificate holders outnumbered men for the first time.⁴ However, women continue to experience fewer opportunities than male peers in the solicitors' profession, resulting in unequal pay and progression outcomes. This is despite the largely equal balance of men and women entering the profession each year: judging by the number of Admissions over the years, the number of women tends to be higher.

Year	No. of women Admitted	% of women Admitted	No. of men Admitted	% of men Admitted	No. of individuals unaccounted for
1990-91	2,027	47.5%	2,238	52.5%	0
1995-96	2,417	52.3%	2,203	47.7%	
2000-01	3,399	54.7%	2,819	45.3%	
2005-06	4,206	59.4%	2,869	40.6%	
2010-11	4,989	59.4%	3,413	40.6%	
2015-16	3,904	61.5%	2,442	38.5%	
2020-21	4,181	60.0%	2,284	32.7%	516

Sources: Law Society Annual Statistics Reports 2021, 2016, 2011, 1996, and 1991⁵

⁴ Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2017, pg. 7

⁵ 2021 data requested and received from Law Society directly. Data on this has discontinued since with many choosing not to declare their sex.

As can be seen in the table below, the profession has a younger female workforce, with 56% of female Practice Certificate (PC) holders under age 45, closely aligned with the national average of 57% for employed females in England and Wales.⁶ Male PC holders, by contrast have a more aged demographic with 61% of male PC holders 45 years or older.

Table 4: age of PC holders

Age group	Female	Male	No data shared	All PC holders
<35	16%	10%	79%	24%
35-44	40%	29%	17%	32%
45-54	28%	30%	3%	25%
55-64	13%	21%	1%	14%
65+	3%	10%	0%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2024

More recent data from the Law Society (2024) provides the following data: 33% of female solicitors work in-house compared to 25% of male solicitors.⁷ Female solicitors have a strong presence across in-house and private practice types, making up 60% of in-house solicitors and 51% of solicitors in private practice.⁸ Despite female solicitors making up the majority of private practice, only 35% at partner equivalent levels⁹ are female.¹⁰

Table 6: make up of solicitors in private practice based on sex

Private practice	Number of PC holders	Percentage
Female	41,012	51%
Male	39,647	49%
Total	80,659	100%

Table 7: make up of solicitors working in-house based on sex

In-house	Number of PC holders	Percentage
Female	20,218	60%
Male	13,301	40%
Total	33,519	100%

Table 6 and Table 7 exclude PC holders with no data shared on sex.

Source: Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2024

⁶ Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2024, pg. 8.

⁷ Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2024, pg. 9

⁸ Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2024, pg. 3 and 10.

⁹ Partner equivalent refers to sole practitioners, directors, members, own accounts, partners, and senior partners within private practice.

¹⁰ Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2024, pg. 3

Partnership

Research commissioned by the SRA demonstrates that while the proportion of women in law firms has risen to 53% in 2023 from 48% in 2015, the seniority gap for women remains but has narrowed slightly since 2015¹¹.

The SRA monitors the diversity of those it regulates and collects data from law firms every two years. The following statistics come from the SRA’s specialist “*Law firm diversity data*” online tool based on data collected in summer 2023¹². 53% of all lawyers (Partners and Solicitors) are female. 62% of Non-Partner Solicitors are female and 37% of Partners are female.¹³

	“All” <i>Everyone working in law firms</i>	“Partners” <i>Solicitors who are partners or partner equivalents</i>	“Solicitors” <i>Non-partner solicitors and other lawyers</i>	“Other staff” <i>Everyone not in the partner or solicitor categories</i>
Female	65%	37%	62%	74%
Male	33%	61%	36%	25%
Prefer not to say	2%	2%	2%	1%

Farore Law: Based on SRA data, July 2023

The Law Society’s Annual Statistics Report 2023 (which was more in depth than the 2024 report) states that female solicitors in private practice have a 13% chance of reaching partner equivalent levels, while male solicitors have more than double the opportunity with a 28% chance.¹⁴

¹¹ Solicitors Regulation Authority, “Diversity in law firms’ workforce” accessed at [SRA | Diversity in law firms' workforce | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#), updated on 3 January 2025 based on July 2023 data.

¹² This is the latest survey data available as of December 2025.

¹³ SRA’s “Law firm diversity data tool” accessed at [SRA | Law firm diversity data tool | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#).

¹⁴ The Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2023, accessed at [Annual statistics report 2023 | The Law Society](#).

According to the Law Society’s 2023 report, the likelihood of male solicitors reaching partner equivalent levels peaks at around age 54, while for female solicitors, the number of those in partner equivalent roles begins to decline after age 44.¹⁵

How does age and sex influence career progression

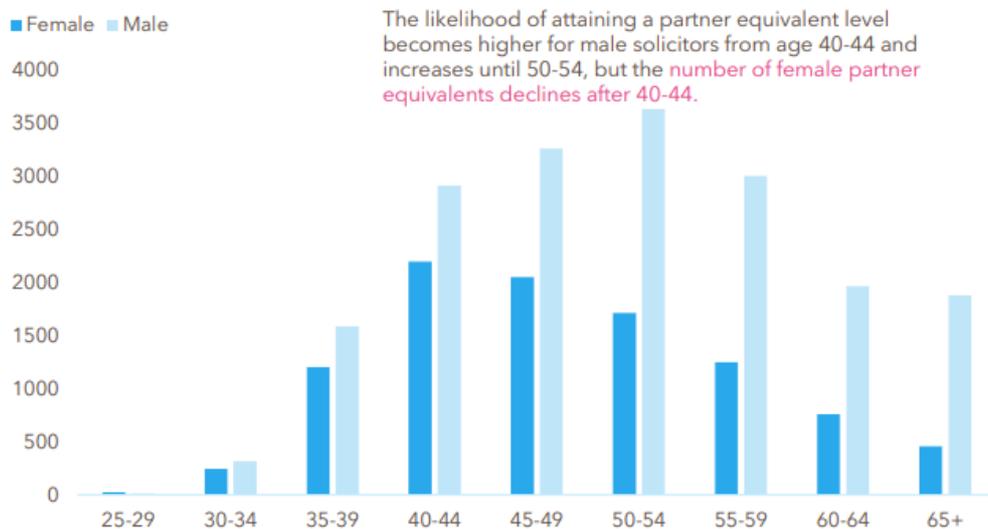


Figure 12: Breakdown of partner equivalents by age and sex

Source: *The Law Society Group, Annual Statistics Report 2023*

Per the figures above, there are more male than female partner equivalents across all admission cohorts; however, the trend has improved for female solicitors in recent cohorts. In cohorts admitted into the solicitors’ profession over 20 years ago, the ratio of male to female partner equivalents was 72:28. This has since improved, whereby for cohorts admitted within the last 2-19 years, there was a 58:42 ratio of male to female partner equivalents.¹⁵

¹⁵ The Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2023, page 18.

Gap between male and female partners narrows in recent cohorts

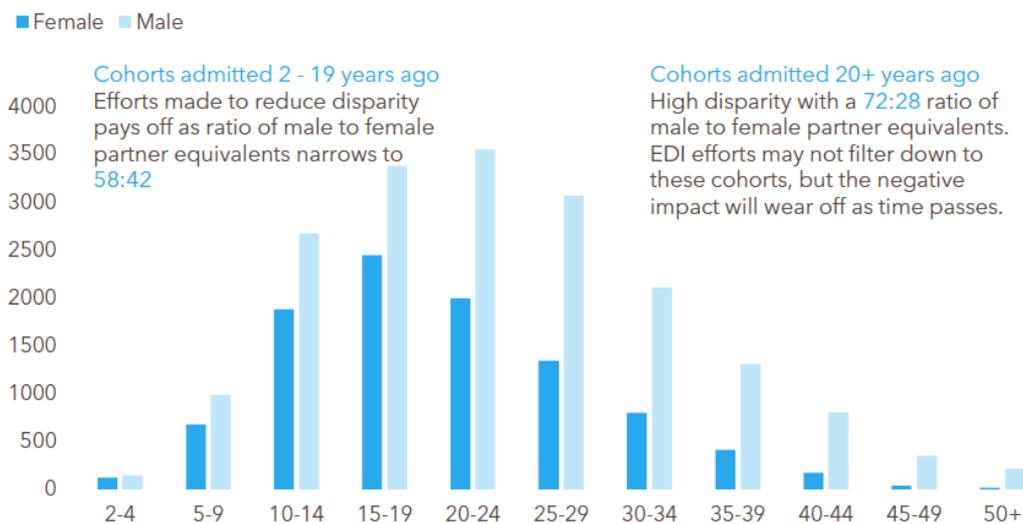


Figure 13: Partner equivalent evaluation by admission cohorts

Source: *The Law Society Group, Annual Statistics Report 2023*

The chart below shows the number of female and male solicitors who left partnership level and who attained partnership level. There are roughly 400 more male solicitors attaining partnership level compared to women (1,535 male solicitors compared to 1,133 female solicitors in 2024). There are also more male solicitors leaving partnership level (likely due to retirement) compared to women. The chart below shows this.

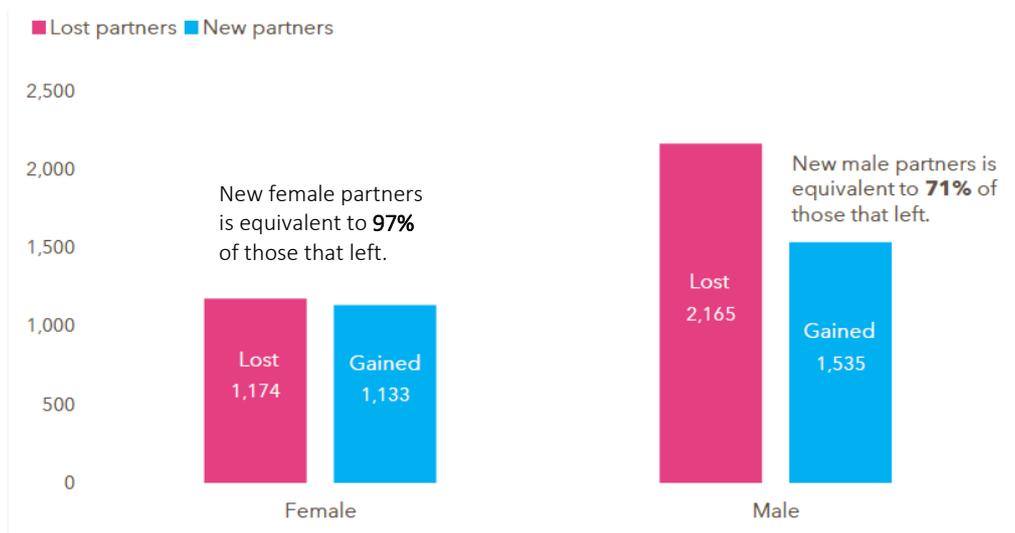


Figure 4: number of solicitors who left or attained partner equivalent levels in 2024

Source: *Law Society Annual Statistics Report 2024*

The figures for female solicitors at partner or partner-equivalent level are more positive than the percentage of female KCs. This might, however, be partly because of the fact that partnership is more likely to be offered at as little as 7-8 years PQE, or less for those in small or two-partner firms. The following table notes the number and percentage of female partners broken down by year.¹⁶ (Statistics for male partners are available at Appendix 1.)

Year ¹⁷	No. of female partners ¹⁸	No. of male partners ¹⁸	% of partners who are women
1983-4	977	18,958	4.9%
1984-5	1,283	20,828	5.8%
1985-6	1,464	20,750	6.6%
1987-8	2,047	21,009	8.9%
1989	n/a		
1990	2,937	20,513	12.5%
1991	3,203	22,846	12.3%
1992	3,396	22,779	13.0%
1993	3,510	22,512	13.5%
1994	3,706	22,404	14.2%
1995	3,954	22,365	15.0%
1996	4,115	22,436	15.5%
1997	4,420	22,445	16.5%
1998	4,802	22,776	17.4%
1999	5,056	22,987	18.0%
2000	5,418	23,108	19.0%
2001	5,757	23,238	19.9%
2002	6,043	23,265	20.6%
2003	6,182	22,859	21.3%
2004	6,165	21,926	21.9%
2005	6,095	20,851	22.6%
2006	5,727	18,954	23.2%
2007	7,420	24,204	23.5%
2008	7,710	24,071	24.3%

¹⁶ The Law Society do not have Annual Statistics Reports dated before 1984.

¹⁷ As of 31 July.

¹⁸ Partner or partner equivalents (members, directors, shareholders), including salaried partners, in practice.

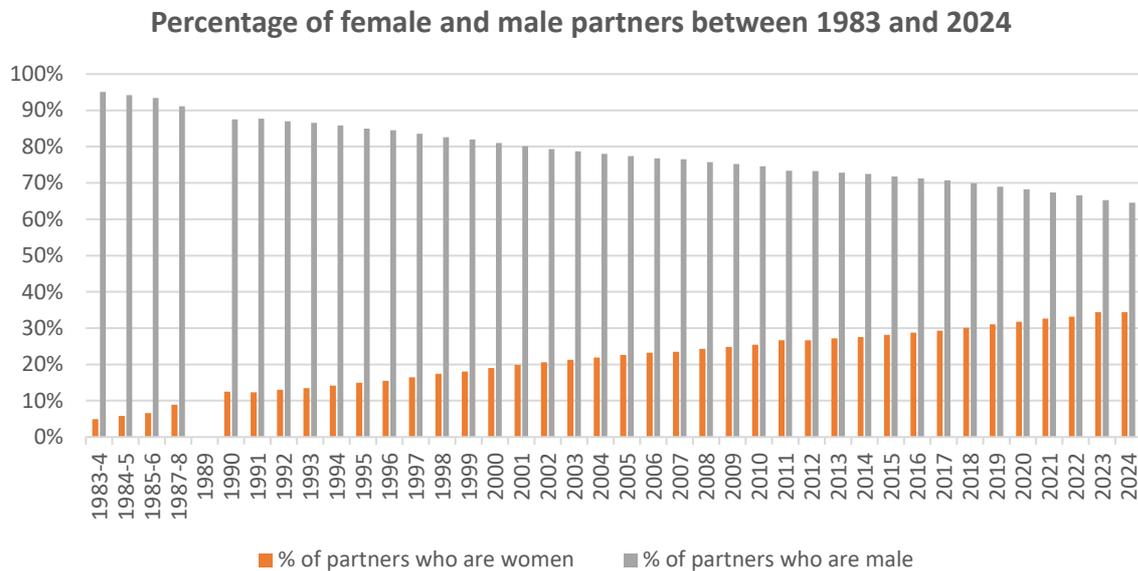
2009	7,854	23,806	24.8%
2010	8,002	23,458	25.4%
2011	8,208 ¹⁹	22,574	26.7%
2012	8,090	22,199	26.7%
2013	8,115	21,748	27.2%
2014	7,985	21,046	27.5%
2015	8,100 ²⁰	20,594	28.2%
2016	8,105	20,082	28.8%
2017	8,241	19,884	29.3%
2018	8,470	19,675	30.1%
2019	8,708	19,322	31.1%
2020	8,791	18,866	31.8%
2021	8,930	18,434	32.6%
2022	9,852	19,653	33.2%
2023	9,905	18,578	34.4%
2024	9,865	17,980	34.4%

Sources: Law Society Annual Statistics Reports; percentages calculated by Farore Law using Law Society data

¹⁹ There appears to be conflicting information in the Law Society's 2011 Annual Statistics Report. The higher statistic is included in this table.

²⁰ There appears to be conflicting information in the Law Society's 2015 Annual Statistics Report. The higher statistic is included in this table.

We produced the following graph to aid visualisation of the data in the table above. (Note that it excludes the year 1989 due to insufficient data.) As shown below: progression for female partners is steady, if slow.



Source: Chart prepared by Farore Law based on Law Society data

Talking Point: Given that large corporate firms account for nearly 70% of the partner population (along with the fact that the probability of securing partnership in other firms is still not high), women are evidently disadvantaged when it comes to career progression in the solicitors’ profession.²¹

Research suggests that the low female representation at partner level may be explained by the different types of disadvantages experienced by women, which includes (amongst others):

- a gender bias in recruitment and promotion;
- the use of male-focused activities to form and develop client relationships; and
- a “long-hours” culture and the challenges it poses for work-life balance. (It was also demonstrated that the expectation of 24/7 availability is not only a barrier to female career progression, but encourages them to leave private practice altogether.)²²

Retention

Non-practising certificate holders

Non-PC holders make up 17% of all solicitors on the roll. Non-PC holders cut across all age groups and sex, with 51% female, 40% male and 9% with no sex data available.

²¹ Mapping advantages and disadvantages (2017), pgs. 9, 45, 50

²² Mapping advantages and disadvantages (2017), pg. 13

Members who left the roll

Non-PC holders are more likely to leave the roll. Six in 10 female solicitors who left the roll were under 55, compared to just three in 10 male solicitors of the same age.

Gender Pay Gap

The SRA provides a statutory report on gender pay gap; their latest report is based on hourly rates of pay during the monthly pay period ending on 25 April 2024 and bonuses paid in the year up to 5 April 2024.

The gender pay gap is defined as the difference between the mean or median hourly pay rate that female and male staff receive.

The mean pay gap is the difference between hourly earnings by gender. This takes the sum of all hourly rates divided by the total number of female or male staff.

The median pay gap is the difference between the midpoints in the ranges of hourly earnings by gender. It takes all salaries in order from lowest to highest and picks the middle-most salary.

Difference in pay between females and males

	2021	2022	2023	2024	+/- percentage point change 2023-24
Mean pay gap	9.70%	13.40%	11.80%	9%	-2.80%
Median pay gap	9.30%	11.20%	9.30%	7.20%	-2.10%

Source: SRA Gender Pay Gap Report, 2024

The mean and median gender pay gap have reduced in 2024 compared to 2023.

The median pay gap in 2024 is 7.2%, which is lower than the current UK median pay gap of 14.5% (Office of National Statistics 2023). The gender pay gap has reduced in 2024, predominantly due to changes in males and females at the more senior levels.²³

²³ Solicitors Regulation Authority, Gender Pay Gap Report, 2024 accessed at <https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/gender-pay-gap-report-2024/>.

Difference in bonus pay between females and males

	2021	2022	2023	2024	+/- percentage point change 2023-24
Mean bonus gap	24.2%	25.6%	39.3%	49.7%	+10.4%
Median bonus gap	-14.3%	12.5%	20%	16.7%	-3.3%

Source: SRA Gender Pay Gap Report, 2024

Between 2023 and 2024, the mean bonus pay gap has increased and the median bonus pay gap has decreased.

SRA Proportions of males and females that received a bonus

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Male	82.2%	84.5%	84.8%	84.4%	77.7%
Female	78.9%	83.8%	79.4%	81.3%	79.4%

Source: SRA Gender Pay Gap Report, 2024

The chart below shows the gender split when the workforce is divided by ordering hourly rates of pay from highest to lowest and grouping the pay into four equal quartiles.

Proportion of female and male staff in each pay quartile 2024

Quartile distribution

		SRA Total	Top	Upper middle	Lower middle	Lower
2020	Male	39%	46%	44%	34%	31%
	Female	61%	54%	56%	66%	69%
2021	Male	39%	47%	44%	34%	30%
	Female	61%	53%	56%	66%	70%
2022	Male	37%	48%	42%	32%	27%
	Female	63%	52%	58%	68%	73%
2023	Male	37%	46%	41%	35%	27%
	Female	63%	54%	59%	65%	73%
2024	Male	36%	41%	42%	34%	28%
	Female	64%	59%	58%	66%	72%

Source: SRA Gender Pay Gap Report, 2024

Approximately 64% of solicitors are female and, as the 2024 pay quartile chart demonstrates, females continue to be well represented across all pay quartiles.

Challenges to Women’s Progression in the Solicitor Profession

Although the Law Society’s *“Influencing for Impact: The Need for Gender Equality in the Legal Profession”* (2019) report draws on data from 2017–2018, its key findings continue to resonate in 2026. The structural barriers identified in the 2019 report – subconscious bias, unequal remuneration, and limited access to flexible working – appear to remain deeply embedded in the profession’s culture, shaping women’s experiences and progression in subtle but persistent ways.

1. Subconscious bias

The report identified subconscious bias as the most common reason why women remain underrepresented in senior positions. Despite increased awareness and firm-level diversity programmes, the slow growth in female partners is still palpable. The percentage of female partners rose from 27.5% in 2014 to 34.4% in 2024 – this suggests that progress has been slow.

Today, this challenge likely persists in more nuanced forms. Women continue to report unequal access to high-value work, client exposure, and promotion opportunities. This implies that while the gender composition of the profession has evolved, the criteria for success remain shaped by traditional assumptions of leadership and commitment, traits often coded as masculine or “always available.”

2. Flexible working as a structural equality issue

The Law Society highlighted flexible working as a key driver of gender equality, a view echoed in later projects such as its Women in Leadership initiative. In 2025, the impact of post-pandemic hybrid work may continue to reinforce this finding.

While remote and flexible models are now widespread, women continue to face an unspoken “flexibility penalty,” where reduced office visibility or non-linear career paths can still hinder advancement. The challenge for firms is no longer whether to offer flexibility, but how to integrate it equitably so that it supports, rather than undermines, progression.

3. The pay and progression gap

Gender pay gap reporting has improved transparency since 2017, yet disparities in remuneration and reward structures remain a consistent barrier. Women’s slower progression into equity partnership and leadership roles perpetuates pay inequality and reinforces perceptions of limited opportunity.

The persistence of this gap underscores that achieving gender parity at entry level does not automatically translate into equality of influence or income.

4. Strategic career moves and the rise of in-house counsel

A notable trend identified in the 2019 report was the movement of women solicitors from private practice into in-house roles, often viewed as a strategic response to rigid working cultures. This trend has continued. The greater predictability and flexibility of in-house work remain appealing, particularly for those seeking to balance demanding workloads with family or other commitments.

However, evidence suggests that systemic bias does not disappear outside private practice. Even within in-house legal teams, women can face similar challenges to progression, albeit within different organisational cultures.

5. Cultural change lagging behind demographic change

By 2022, women outnumbered men among practising solicitors, reversing a 2010 deficit. However, this demographic shift has not yet translated into proportional representation at partnership or senior management level.

This gap points to a wider cultural lag: the structures and norms of legal practice have not

evolved as quickly as the workforce itself. Without targeted interventions that address bias, promotion criteria, and workplace design, the profession risks achieving numerical equality without substantive equality.

Conclusion

The Influencing for Impact report may predate today's hybrid and post-pandemic work landscape, but its findings would seem to remain relevant. The barriers it identified – bias, pay inequality, and inflexible working patterns – have likely adapted rather than disappeared. For meaningful progress, the legal sector must move beyond representation statistics and tackle the deeper cultural and structural norms that continue to shape women's professional trajectories.

2. PROGRESSION OF FEMALE BARRISTERS

The following statistics account for the progression of female barristers in the UK, starting from Call to KC.

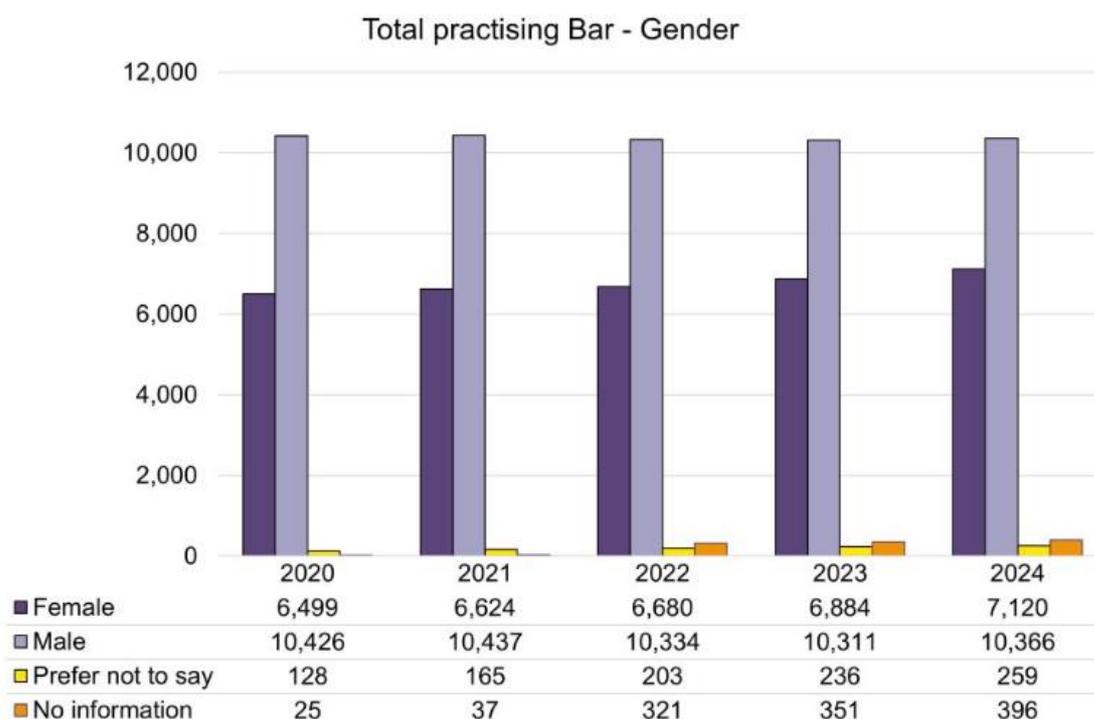
Summary

- **40.7% of practising barristers in 2024 were women;** a 5.1 percentage point rise since 2015.
- **There is a clear decline in the representation of women at the Bar from Pupillage through to senior levels** – falling from 53.7% female pupils, to 41.7% among junior barristers, and just 20.6% among KCs.
- **The proportion of practising female barristers of 15+ years Call has been improving consistently since 2010,** though the progression remains slow.
- **Women seem to make up a higher percentage of the practice areas of law which require soft skills or which relate to people** (for example, family law, employment law and immigration law), **as compared to the areas of law that may be considered more technical** such as construction law, commercial and financial services, chancery.
- **Female barristers continue to earn less than male barristers at the self-employed Bar.** Earnings gaps persist across every practice area, increasing from 0-3 years PQE band to the highest at mid-career level and at KC level. **The earnings gap is increasing.**
- **The gap between men and women in their experience of bullying, harassment or discrimination at work remains wide** with half (48%) of female barristers having experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination at work compared to 22% of male barristers. **It does not seem that higher representation of women in a practice area correlates with reduced exposure to bullying, harassment or discrimination.**

Total barristers in practice

In 2024, the Bar Standard Board's '*Statistics on practising barristers*' recorded that 7,120 of the 17,486 barristers practising (i.e. self-employed, employed, and dual capacity), were women²⁴. Thus 40.7% of the practising barristers were women in 2024: a 2.8 percentage point rise since our first Report in 2019 (37.9%) and a 5.1 percentage point rise since 2015.

²⁴ This excludes 259 individuals who elected not to disclose their gender or were otherwise unrecorded.



Source: BSB²⁵

The table below shows the approximate percentage of women as a percentage of total barristers (not including pupils) in practice.²⁶

Percentage of Women at the Bar

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
35.4%	35.6%	36.1%	36.7%	37.3%	37.9%	38.4%	38.8%	39.3%	40.0%	40.7%

The 40.7% percentage of women at the Bar compares to an estimated 50.8% of women in the UK working age population as of September 2024.²⁷

While the number of female barristers at the Bar has increased by 1,453 since 2015 (to 7,120 from 5,667) compared to 118 male barristers over the same period (to 10,366 from 10,248), this is likely due to a greater number of male barristers retiring. As of December 2024, 74% of those aged 55+ at the Bar were men.²⁸

²⁵ BSB website statistics on practising barristers, access at [Statistics on practising barristers](#).

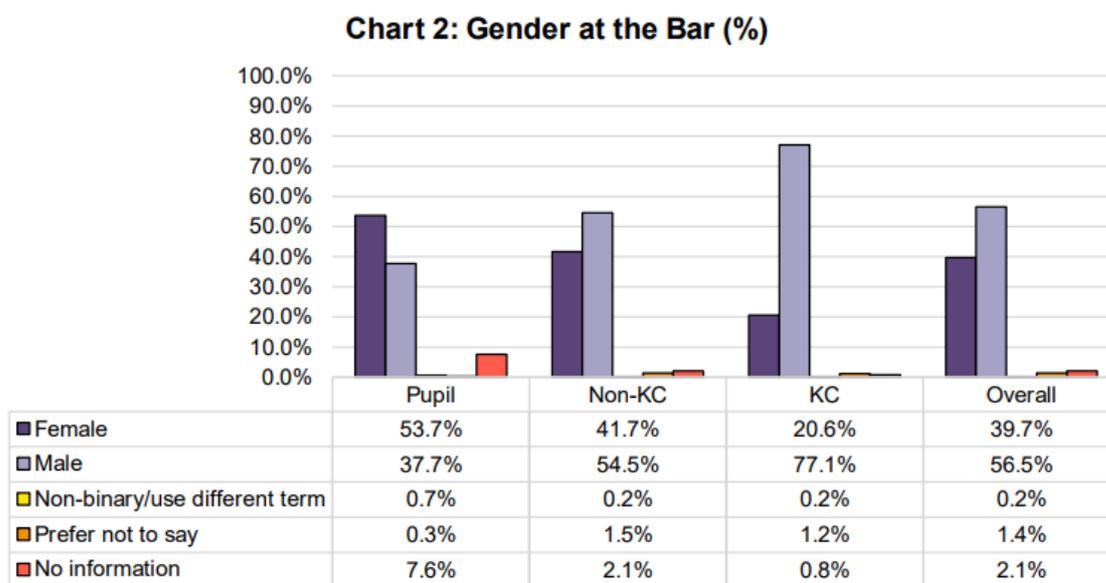
²⁶ Note that these percentages exclude individuals who elected not to disclose their gender or were otherwise unrecorded.

²⁷ Diversity at the Bar 2024, Published January 2025, pgs. 4, 12

²⁸ Diversity at the Bar 2024, Published January 2025, pg. 12

The percentage of women in practice at the self-employed Bar has increased significantly between 1985 and 2024 – from 13% to 39.2%²⁹. For a detailed breakdown of the data, please see Appendix 2.

Decline in representation of Women at the Bar based on Seniority



Source: BSB, Summary of diversity data on practising barristers available to BSB as of 01 December 2024³⁰

As the table above shows, there is a clear decline in the representation of women at the Bar from pupillage through to senior levels – falling from 53.7% female pupils, to 41.7% among junior barristers, and just 20.6% among KCs.

Call to the Bar

Historical trends

Getting ‘Called to the Bar’ refers to when barristers are formally recognised as having passed the vocational stage of training.

The following table and graph note the number of men and women Called to the Bar over the 5-year periods ending in 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. A more detailed breakdown of figures from 1984-85 onwards are available at Appendix 3.

²⁹ Please note that at certain points, the BSB’s method for collecting reporting data changed.

³⁰ Diversity at the Bar 2024, Published January 2025, pg. 12

Year ³¹	No. of women Called	% of women Called	No. of men Called	% of men Called	No. of individuals unaccounted for
1990-91	482	40.8%	697	59.0%	2
1995-96	640	39.7%	969	60.1%	3
2000-01	738	48.4%	785	51.5%	2
2005-06	784	50.2%	775	49.6%	4
2010-11	832	51.1%	795	48.8%	2
2015-16	684	52.6%	616	47.4%	0

2019-20	527	52.5%	472	47.0%	5
2020-21	792	56.2%	597	42.4%	20
2021-22	1,003	52.5%	880	46.1%	27
2022-23	871	52.8%	769	46.6%	10
2023-24	949	53.4%	824	46.3%	5

Source: BSB³²

Interestingly, apart from a small decrease in 1995, the percentage of women Called to the Bar has steadily gone up since the 1990s. It may be surprising to readers that in 1990, there were already a relatively high number of women being Called to the Bar – 40% women compared to 60% men – a percentage that rapidly rose to 50:50 in 2005.

By 2005-06, the number of women Called to the Bar surpassed the number of men (50.2% female vs. 49.6% male).

Although Call to the Bar figures may look encouraging, there is substantial attrition between Call and the attainment of pupillage. As many individuals do not progress to pupillage, Call-to-the-Bar data provides a limited picture of the profession.

Further, based on the 50:50 intake recorded in 2005, one might expect a similar 50:50 split among KCs today. However, this is not yet reflected in practice, as a significant number of male KCs aged over 60 remain active.

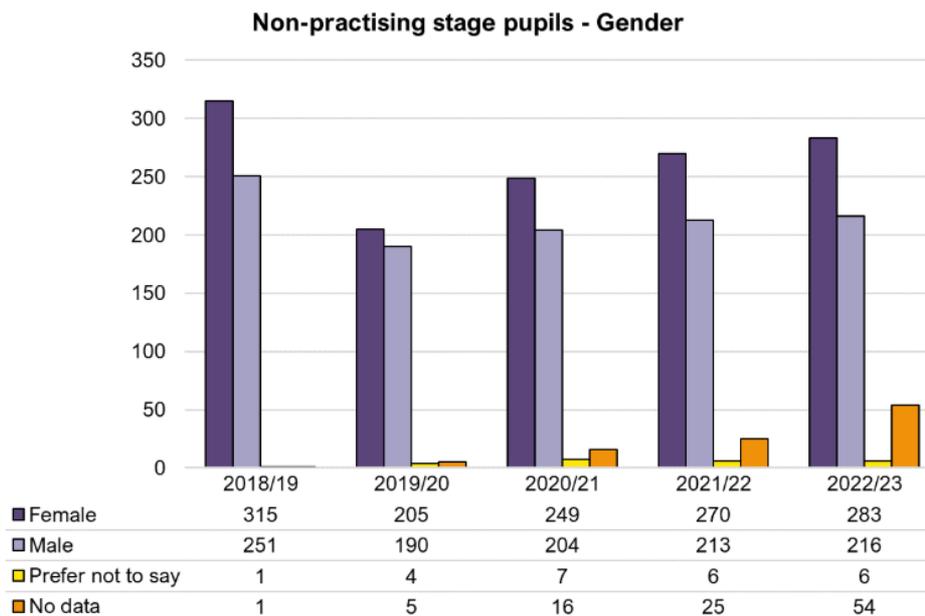
³¹ This refers to the legal year (i.e. between October 2024 – September 2025). The number of individuals Called to the bar refers to the number gaining tenancy within 6 months of the legal year of which they completed pupillage.

³² BSB Data as taken from [Call to the Bar and tenancy statistics](#).

Looking further back to 1990, when women made up around 40% of those Called to the Bar, provides a more credible view of the pipeline because drawing a comparison 35 years on offers a more realistic picture as many of the male KCs from that earlier period will have retired, allowing underlying trends in gender balance to become clearer. Making this comparison, one sees that in 1990, women made up around 40% of those Called to the Bar. By contrast, in 2024, women only make up 20.7% of KCs in practice. Thus, the high level of attrition obviously remains.

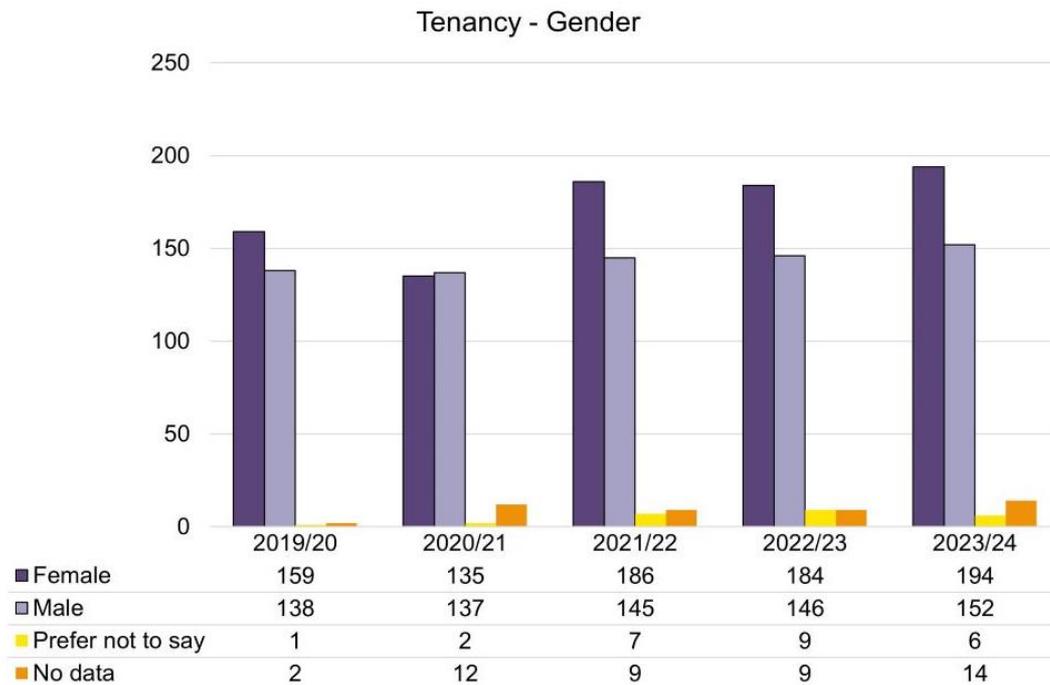
Pupillage and gaining tenancy

The figures below show that the percentage of women gaining pupillage remains very healthy. The same applies to the chart showing the genders who manage to obtain tenancy at the end of pupillage. Once tenancies are gained the barrister is self-employed and only in extreme situations will be forced to leave. The attrition we see later in the Report arises from the decision of women to leave the independent Bar.



Source: BSB³³

³³ BSB website statistics on pupillage, taken from [Pupillage statistics](#).



Source: BSB³⁴

Following the statistics between 2019/20 to 2023/24 below: between this period, out of 4,142 women who were called, 1,330 secured (a first six) pupillage, and 858 women went on to secure tenancy. Out of 3,542 men Called, 1,043 secured pupillage and 718 secured tenancy.³⁵

³⁴ BSB website statistics on Call to the Bar and tenancy, taken from [Call to the Bar and tenancy statistics](#). This graph refers to those who secured tenancy less than 6 months after the end of the legal year in which they completed pupillage.

³⁵ These are not precise figures given those individuals who did not provide data (combined with the fact that these may not be the same people who do not report their gender information each year). However, the figures may be considered as largely accurate.

The development of female representations from Call to pupillage between 2018-19 and 2023-24 is laid out in the following table:

Year	# Women Called	# Men Called	% Women Called	# Women in pupillage	# Men in Pupillage	% Women Securing Pupillage	# Women in Tenancy	# Men in Tenancy	% Women Securing Tenancy
2015-16	684	616	52.6%	204	218	48.3%	151	144	51.2%
2016-17	625	559	52.8%	255	216	54.1%	142	137	50.9%
2017-18	694	653	51.5%	237	260	47.7%	174	139	55.6%
2018-19	890	779	53.3%	315	251	55.7%	252	248	50.4%
2019-20	527	472	52.8%	205	190	51.9%	159	138	53.5%
2020-21	792	597	57.0%	249	204	55.0%	135	137	49.6%
2021-22	1,003	880	53.3%	270	213	55.9%	186	145	56.2%
2022-23	871	769	53.1%	283	216	56.7%	184	146	55.8%
2023-24	949	824	53.5%	323	220	59.5%	194	152	56.1%

2019-20 to 2023-24	4,142	3,542	53.9%	1,330	1,043	56.0%	858	718	54.4%
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**The data in this table refers to those that have completed pupillage and gone on to gain tenancy less than 6 months after the end of the legal year in which they completed pupillage.*

It is interesting that while the data suggests that there are more women Called to the Bar, attaining pupillage, and tenancy, that women continue to make up a smaller percentage of the overall profession (only 40.7% of the profession as of December 2024).

Talking Point: *Why then if women are being called to the Bar, securing pupillage and tenancy in greater numbers than men, do they continue to make up a smaller percentage of the overall profession?*

We consider that this may be due to a combination of the following:

- Lower propensity for women to move from Call to practice.
- A higher attrition rate once in practice.³⁶
- The greater number of older men in the profession.

As a result, it would require a very long period of substantial imbalance in favour of women at Call to achieve a balance of women in practice.³⁷

³⁶ Momentum Measures: Creating a diverse profession (2015), pg.2.

³⁷ Calculations indicate that even in 75 years the proportion of practising barristers will not reach 50%. (Momentum Measures: Creating a diverse profession (2015), pg.9)

Women in tenancy when considering years of Call

It is recommended that the following data is taken as an approximation only.³⁸

Year	Call	Total in practice	No. of women	% of total who are women	No. of men	% of total who are men	No. of individuals who preferred not to say	
2010	<5 years	2,663	1,230	46.2%	1,432	53.8%	n/a	
	15+ years	6,419	1,597	24.9%	4,822	75.1%		
2011	<5 years	2,454	1,126	45.9%	1,328	54.1%		
	15+ years	6,934	1,772	25.6%	5,162	74.4%		
2012	<5 years	2,252	1,030	45.7%	1,222	54.3%		
	15+ years	7,459	1,935	25.9%	5,524	74.1%		
2013	<5 years	1,969	875	44.4%	1,093	55.5%		
	15+ years	7,954	2,105	26.5%	5,849	73.5%		
2014	<5 years	1,542	656	42.5%	885	57.4%		
	15+ years	8,465	2,321	27.4%	6,144	72.6%		
2015	<5 years	1,339	584	43.6%	755	56.4%		
	15+ years	9,618	2,845	29.6%	6,773	70.4%		
2016	<5 years	1,300	606	46.6%	763	58.7%		1
	15+ years	9,834	2,998	30.5%	6,813	69.3%		3
2017	<5 years	1,407	628	44.6%	777	55.2%		2
	15+ years	10,208	3,218	31.5%	6,965	68.2%		22

³⁸ It is noted that the number of women and men do not consistently meet the relevant total. The reason for this is unclear, but based on the information provided, it seems likely that this is due to the number of individuals who did not provide information about their gender (as opposed to actively selecting “Prefer not to say”). As the number of these unknown individuals are likely to be negligible based on other recent statistics, these statistics should still help in building a picture, albeit a broad one.

2018	<5 years	1,414	635	44.9%	773	54.7%	3 ³⁹
	15+ years	10,351	3,352	32.4%	6,946	67.1%	49 ⁴⁰
2019	<5 years	1,575	729	46.3%	839	53.3%	4
	15+ years	10,564	3,455	32.7%	7,035	66.6%	67
2020	<5 years	1,568	750	47.8%	804	51.3%	9
	15+ years	10,740	3,585	33.4%	7,066	65.8%	77
2021	<5 years	1,492	710	47.6%	760	50.9%	16
	15+ years	11,049	3,750	33.9%	7,182	65.0%	97
2022	<5 years	1,570	734	46.8%	758	48.3%	22
	15+ years	11,260	3,839	34.1%	7,158	63.6%	130
2023	<5 years	1,569	760	48.4%	695	44.3%	24
	15+ years	11,476	3,998	34.8%	7,200	62.7%	147
2024	<5 years	1,630	783	48.0%	667	40.9%	26
	15+ years	11,660	4,131	35.4%	7,239	62.1%	162

Source: BSB, March 2025⁴¹

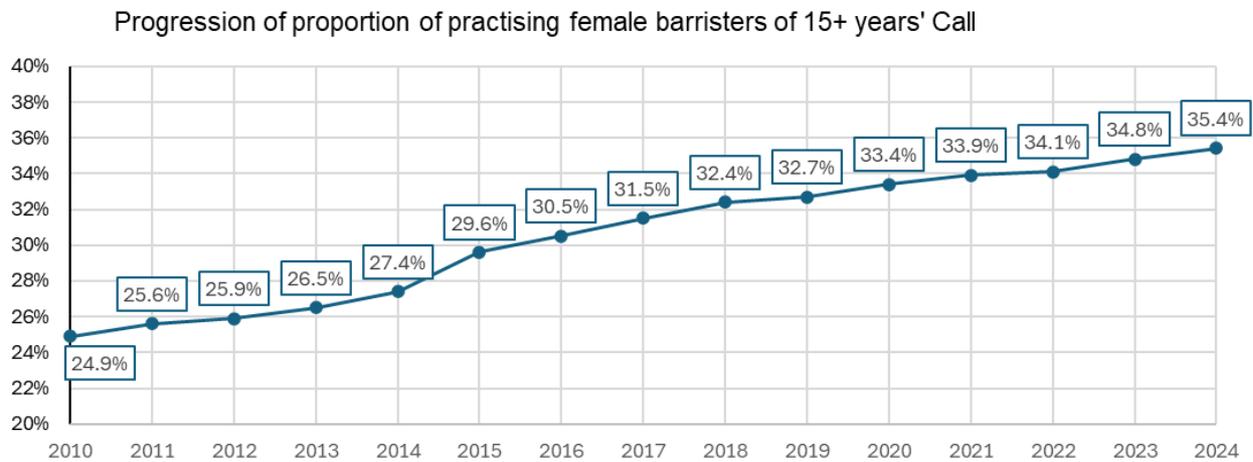
As can be seen in the table above, in 2010, there was a 21.3 percentage point difference between the percentage of women at the Bar at less than 5 years Call, as compared to the women with over 15 years call. That gap has narrowed over the years to a 12.6 percentage point difference in 2024 between the percentage of women at the Bar with less than 5 years Call, compared to the percentage of women with over 15 years call. Whilst the gap has narrowed, the discrepancy still seems significant. Later in this report, we consider some of the possible reasons women leave the Bar in greater numbers compared to men.

³⁹ Correction to the 2019 version of this table, based on new data.

⁴⁰ Correction to the 2019 version of this table, based on new data.

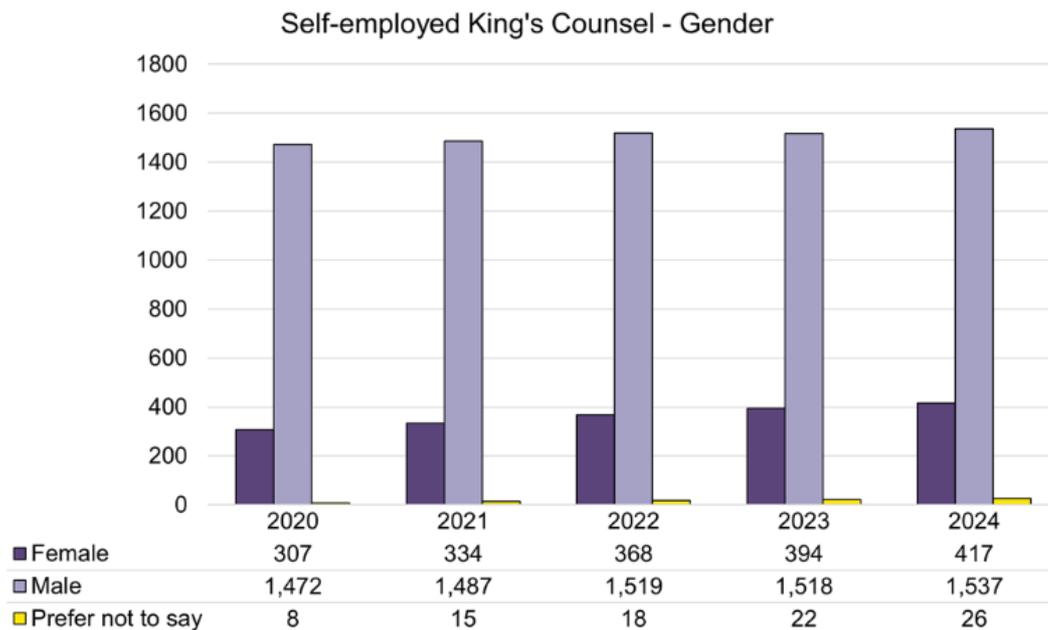
⁴¹ BSB Data Spreadsheet 2009-18; BSB website statistics on practising barristers taken from [Statistics on practising barristers](#).

The following graph demonstrates that the proportion of practising female barristers of 15+ years Call has been improving consistently since 2010, though the progression remains slow.



Source: BSB⁴²

King's Counsel

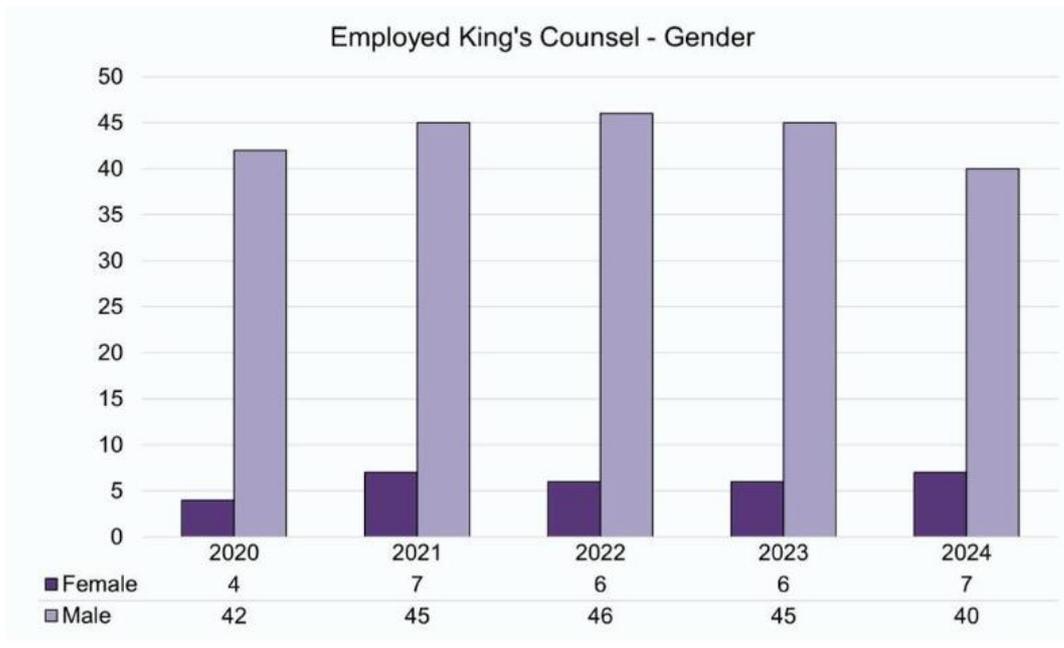


Source: BSB⁴³

⁴² Graph prepared by Farore Law, data taken from BSB website statistics on practising barristers: [Statistics on practising barristers](#).

⁴³ BSB website statistics on KCs as taken from [King's Counsel statistics](#).

The BSB has yet to update these statistics in light of the 2025/26 KC appointments. We are unable to do our own analysis as we do not have the data for the number of retirements of KCs, for those two years.



Source: BSB⁴⁴

There was an average of 1,903 self-employed KCs in each year between 2020 to 2024. Out of these, an average of 364 were women, whereas an average of 1,501 were men (not accounting for the average of 18 self-employed KCs per year who did not disclose their gender). There was an average of 50 employed KCs each year between 2020 to 2024. An average of 6 were women; 44 were men.⁴⁵ See Appendix 4 for a detailed list of applications and appointments to KC, broken down along gender lines. A full dataset showing the number and percentage of practising KCs between 1990 to 2024 is available at Appendix 5.⁴⁶

Elevation to King's Counsel

Applicants v awards

Between 1995 and 2025 (excluding 2004 and 2005), an average of 22 women achieved KC status each year, compared with 77 men.⁴⁷ The low number of applicants notwithstanding, women tend to outperform men each year in successfully applying for KC. Unfortunately, the data on appointments is not broken down by reference to different practice areas.

⁴⁴ BSB website statistics on KCs as taken from [King's Counsel statistics](#).

⁴⁵ All figures in this paragraph were rounded to the nearest whole number.

⁴⁶ This does not account for the small minority for whom information was unavailable.

⁴⁷ Calculated based on data from King's Counsel Appointment Statistics, "Monitoring statistics 1995-2023", accessed at [Monitoring-Stats-1995-2023.xls](#).

In January 2026, the results of the 2025 competition for KC appointment were published. 96 barristers were appointed as KCs. A record number of 86 women applied, two higher than in 2024. The success rate was 34%, far below the all-time high of 63% recorded in 2021, but still higher than for men, 29% of whom were appointed.⁴⁸ Women were also more likely than men to be interviewed (51% v 44%).⁴⁹

Not a single solicitor was appointed. This is significant because there are far more senior female solicitors than there are senior female barristers – both in absolute terms and as a proportion. Thus, the lack of successful solicitors attaining Silk arguably also impacts the progression of women towards attaining Silk.

The table on the next page sets out the percentage of successful KC applications by gender. As can be seen – the 33.7% success rate for female applicants who applied in 2025 (announced in 2026) was the worst percentage success rate for women in 20 years. The table reflects the year of application, but the KCs are only appointed, if successful, in the following year. Therefore, the 2025 statistics we provide are the very latest as announced in January 2026.

Talking Point: The lack of representation of female KCs identified in our 2019 Report remains the same in 2025/26, and the percentage of female KCs is not reflective of the increase in the number of women joining the practice in the preceding 15 to 20-year period.

⁴⁸ Rose, Neil, Legal Futures, “*Success rate falls again as 96 new KCs are named*”, 23 January 2026, accessed at <https://www.legalfutures.co.uk/latest-news/success-rate-falls-again-as-96-new-kcs-are-named>

⁴⁹ Rose, Neil, Legal Futures, “*Success rate falls again as 96 new KCs are named*”, 23 January 2026, accessed at <https://www.legalfutures.co.uk/latest-news/success-rate-falls-again-as-96-new-kcs-are-named>

Percentage of successful KC applications by gender						
Year	Female			Male		
of application	# of applicants	# of awards	% of female applicants who were successful	# of applicants	# of awards	% of male applicants who were successful
1995	42	8	19.0%	450	63	14.0%
1996	40	4	10.0%	448	62	13.8%
1997	41	5	12.2%	459	63	13.7%
1998	46	10	21.7%	465	50	10.8%
1999	49	9	18.4%	504	60	11.9%
2000	53	10	18.9%	453	68	15.0%
2001	51	10	19.6%	405	67	16.5%
2002	44	12	27.3%	385	101	26.2%
2003	39	9	23.1%	355	112	31.5%
2004	-	-	-	-	-	-
2005	-	-	-	-	-	-
2006	68	33	48.5%	374	141	37.7%
2007-08	51	20	39.2%	276	78	28.3%
2008-09	29	16	55.2%	215	87	40.5%
2009-10	46	20	43.5%	226	108	47.8%
2010-11	41	27	65.9%	210	93	44.3%
2011-12	40	23	57.5%	172	65	37.8%
2012-13	26	14	53.8%	155	70	45.2%
2013-14	42	18	42.9%	183	82	44.8%
2014-15	43	25	58.1%	180	68	37.8%
2015-16	48	25	52.1%	189	82	43.4%
2016-17	56	31	55.4%	198	82	41.4%
2017	50	32	64.0%	222	87	39.2%
2018	55	30	54.5%	186	78	41.9%
2019	52	30	57.7%	206	84	40.8%
2020	72	40	55.6%	209	76	36.4%
2021	72	45	62.5%	202	56	27.7%
2022	77	36	46.8%	202	59	29.2%
2023	79	30	38.0%	204	65	31.9%
2024	84	33	39.3%	239	72	30.1%
2025	86	29	33.7%	239	67	28.0%

Source: *Monitoring statistics 1995-2023*⁵⁰ and *King’s Counsel statistics from 2024 to present*.

⁵⁰ Data from King’s Counsel Appointment Statistics, “Monitoring statistics 1995-2023”, accessed at [Monitoring-Stats-1995-2023.xls](#). Statistics for 2004 and 2005 were not available because during those years, the new scheme, King’s Counsel Appointments Ltd (KCA), was being developed. KCA began in 2005-2006.⁵⁰ There were no appointments during these years and 2006 was the next appointment year. Thus, these years are

Practice area

The Bar Standards Board began collecting data on practice areas in relation to gender in 2018. This data is collected as part of the Bar Standards Board’s Authorisation to Practice renewal process,⁵¹ which all practising barristers are required to complete. Consequently, this dataset may be regarded as very accurate, albeit it is based on each individual’s assessment of their own practice.

The limited timespan of data, combined with the percentage of barristers who elected not to disclose information limits analysis. However, the reader is still encouraged to look at Appendix 6 for a fuller overview of the breakdown of practice areas by gender. The table below shows the first five areas in which the percentage of women ranked highest (highlighted in green) and lowest (highlighted in orange) compared to men:

Percentage of women, in main practice areas As of 4 June 2025	
Family	61%
Public Law	54%
Professional discipline	45%
Employment	41%
Immigration	40%
Crime	39%
Landlord & tenant	33%
Insolvency	33%
International	30%
Competition	30%
Personal injury	29%
Defamation	29%
Revenue	28%
Planning	26%
Intellectual property	26%
Construction	24%
Professional negligence	24%
Commercial and Financial Services	24%
Chancery	22%
Arbitrator or umpire or mediator	20%

Source: Data received direct from BSB

omitted from this graph and from the calculation of the rough average. The full dataset of applicants and awards during this time frame is available at Appendix 2.

⁵¹ Williams, Matthew et al, Institute for Employment Studies, “Barristers’ Working Lives: 2023 survey of the Bar”, accessed at <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/static/1d1fe11c-d6c3-4db3-af3f5b25e0ece36d/Bar-Council-Barristers-Working-Lives-report-2023.pdf>

To Farore Law’s knowledge, and since we first enquired in 2019, the Bar Standards Board has no plans to break these statistics down by date of Call. We believe that doing so would be helpful in providing an accurate overview of retention and seniority in relation to gender across the profession’s practice areas.

It may be unsurprising to readers that women seem to make up a higher percentage of the practice areas of law which require soft skills or which relate to people (for example, family law, employment law and immigration law), as compared to the areas of law that may be considered more technical such as construction law, commercial and financial services, chancery.

***Talking Point:** What could explain this difference in representation across different areas of law?*

We consider that this could be due to a number of factors:

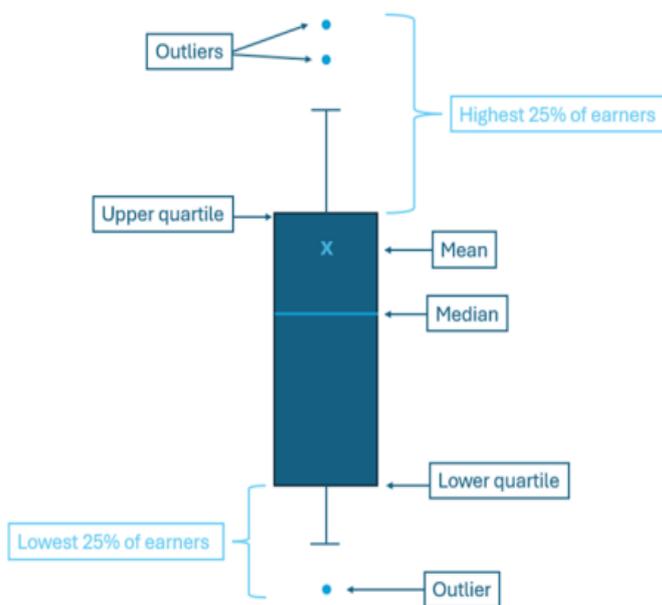
- While individuals have control over their area of practice, one’s practice is also heavily influenced by clerks allocating work. As such, sexist assumptions may mean that women are directed towards certain practices and away from others because they may be seen as having soft skills as barristers. This in turn might translate into doing legal aid work, or less ‘technical’ work.
- It may be that certain areas of practice, where men have historically dominated, have a more macho culture which is hard for women to penetrate.
- One has to reflect on whether women are attracted to areas of work that involve helping people and individuals more than men are.
- One also needs to consider whether there is a traditional view about men being the primary earners, and that they are therefore attracted to higher paid lines of work.
- Some areas of work may be seen in “male form”, such as banking, arbitration, and complex High Court litigation. This perception, that men have more gravitas than women, might lead to men being more likely to be instructed in such cases.

Income at the Bar

In their report published in November 2025, the Bar Council considers barrister earnings at the self-employed Bar. Data from their report titled, ‘Gross earnings by sex and practice area at the self-employed Bar 2025’ is based on 2024 earnings.

The report uses gross earnings data which are self-reported to the General Council of the Bar by self-employed barristers each year when they renew their practising certificate. **Gross earnings should not be confused with income, which is the taxable amount barristers earn, and is considerably less than the figures discussed in this report.** It is also important to remember that self-employed barristers need to make their own provision for pension contribution and sick leave or parental leave.

To understand the data provided by the Bar Council, please consider the following key.



The highest and lowest earners are represented by a line (whisker) extending above and below the box.

The box represents the range of gross earnings from the first quartile (25%) to the third quartile (75%). This is the middle 50% of data and it measures the variability of the data. If the box is long, it shows more variability of data

The median is the middle number in the data set, the 50th percentile, and is represented by the **line** in the box. The mean (average) is represented by the **X** in the box.

The report uses median values which are often seen as better measures of income comparison as they represent the middle value and are thus seen as a better representation of ‘typical’ incomes compared to mean values which can be skewed by outliers at the high end or low end of the distribution.

The findings of the Bar Council’s 2025 report, based on 2024 earnings data are as follows:

1. **Women were earning less than men at the self-employed Bar.**

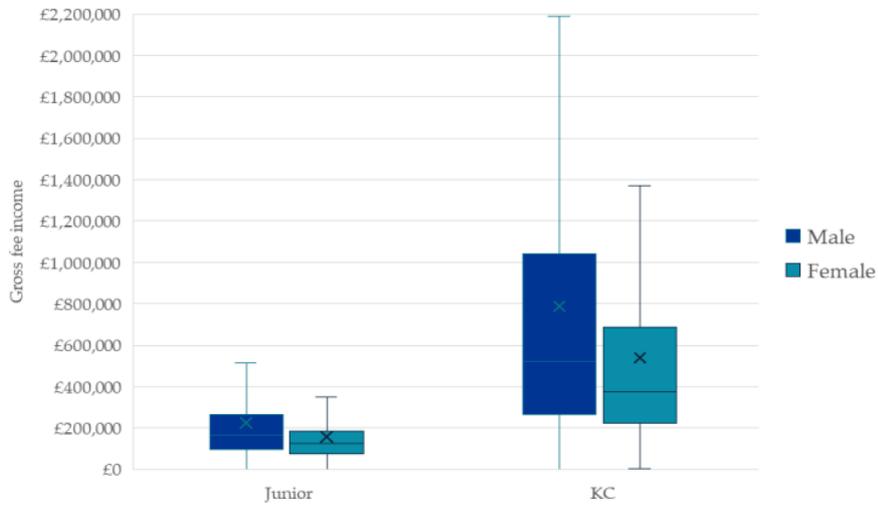
Annex 1: Median earnings of self-employed barristers by sex, 2024

Experience level	Male median	Female median	Gap
Junior	£162,800	£124,000	24%
KC	£520,100	£374,500	28%

Source: Bar Council Report on Gross Earnings by Sex, Nov 2025

- **At junior level**, men’s median earnings are £162,800, while women’s are £124,000. Thus, junior women are earning 76% of junior men’s earnings – nearly a quarter less. The earnings of junior women in the top quartile (the highest earning 25%), are 31% less than those of men in the top quartile.
- **At Silk level**, men’s average earnings are £520,100, while women’s are lower at £374,500. Female silks are earning on average 72% of their male colleagues’ median gross earnings. The top range of earnings for male silks is considerably higher than that of women – the highest 25% of male KCs are earning on average £1,041,000 while the highest earning 25% of female silks are earning over £687,000. This is a 34% gap.

Figure 1: Earnings of self-employed barristers by sex, 2024⁶



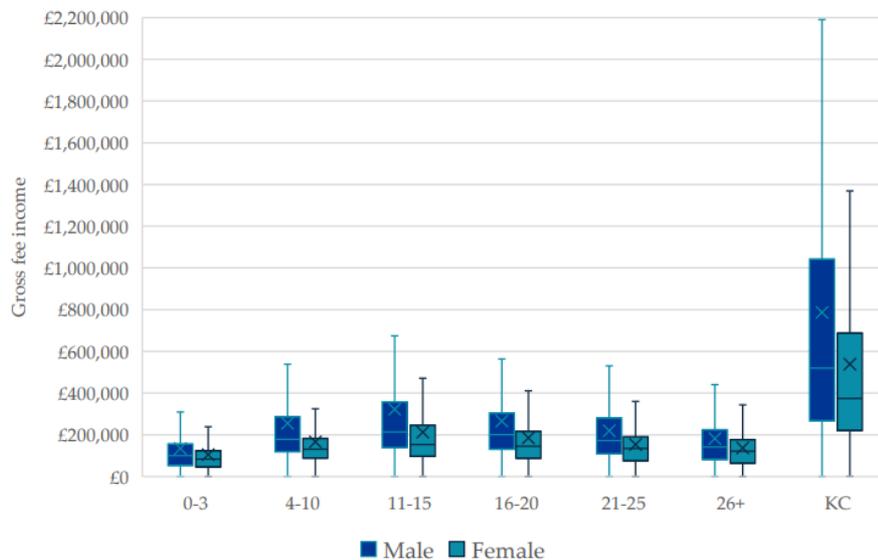
Source: Bar Council Report on Gross Earnings by Sex, Nov 2025

Talking Point: It is important for readers to bear in mind that the rates of pay differ significantly between barristers across different practice areas. Publicly funded work and family law work (which can qualify for legal aid in certain situations) attracts lower fees while other areas such as commercial law generate higher fees.

2. Earnings gap persists across every PQE band.

The earnings gap tends to be lowest at 0-3 years PQE and highest at mid-career level and at KC level. The highest earning men were consistently earning more than the highest earning women.

Figure 2: Earnings of self-employed barristers by sex and PQE, 2024⁷



Source: Bar Council Report on Gross Earnings by Sex, Nov 2025

Annex 2: Median earnings of self-employed barristers by PQE and sex, 2024

PQE band	Male median	Female median	Gap
0-3	£100,000	£83,500	17%
4-10	£178,600	£131,400	26%
11-15	£213,300	£153,000	28%
16-20	£200,800	£145,300	28%
21-25	£172,500	£135,200	22%
26+	£142,200	£121,100	15%
KC	£520,100	£374,500	28%

Source: Bar Council Report on Gross Earnings by Sex, Nov 2025

3. Earnings gaps persist across every practice area, increasing from 0-3 years PQE band to the highest at mid-career level and at KC level.

There were earning gaps in every area of practice.

The earning differentials and internal pattern vary between areas of practice, although **it is important to note that there is, in all PQE bands, and in all areas of practice, a consistent earnings gap between men and women starting right at the beginning of their careers.** The gap at 0-3 years PQE ranges from 10% in family law up to 34% in general civil.

The widest gaps were in commercial and chancery practice, where women at 21-25 years PQE were earning 57% of their male colleagues' median fee income.

	Crime			Family			Commercial & Chancery			General Civil		
Total # of barristers	3,180			2,446			1,235			2,449		
Women as % of total	36%			64%			22%			31%		
Women's earnings as % total	30%			59%			15%			23%		
	Median earnings			Median earnings			Median earnings			Median earnings		
PQE Band	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
0-3 years	£ 96,700	£ 75,900	22%	£ 99,700	£ 90,100	10%	£ 222,900	£ 193,700	13%	£ 124,100	£ 81,900	34%
4-10 years	£ 141,300	£ 127,400	10%	£ 151,700	£ 125,800	17%	£ 437,100	£ 356,600	18%	£ 215,000	£ 157,800	27%
11-15 years	£ 161,000	£ 133,100	17%	£ 173,000	£ 139,300	19%	£ 564,800	£ 353,400	37%	£ 261,900	£ 224,400	14%
16-30 years	£ 171,600	£ 149,100	13%	£ 169,000	£ 134,300	21%	£ 417,200	£ 387,200	7%	£ 266,500	£ 170,900	36%
21-25 years	£ 150,700	£ 133,700	11%	£ 153,200	£ 132,900	13%	£ 384,400	£ 219,700	43%	£ 203,500	£ 161,600	21%
26+ years	£ 137,700	£ 122,200	11%	£ 129,900	£ 125,000	4%	£ 179,900	£ 107,900	40%	£ 158,500	£ 115,600	27%
KC	£ 261,800	£ 237,900	9%	£ 394,600	£ 343,300	13%	£ 1,223,900	£ 902,600	26%	£ 654,500	£ 510,400	22%

Crime: This group covers barristers declaring 80% or more of their gross income from criminal law

Family: This group covers barristers declaring 80% or more of their gross fee income from family law

Commercial and Chancery: This group covers barristers declaring 80% or more of their gross income from Commercial and Chancery law

Crime: This group covers barristers with no specific civil specialism (ie those who do not declare over 80% of their gross fee income in any one civil area).

Source: Farore law based on data from Bar Council 2025 Report

The table above sets out median earnings by PQE band and the respective earnings gap. In orange, we highlight the PQE band with the highest earnings gap in a specific area of practice. In green, we highlight the PQE band with the lowest earnings gap in a specific area of practice.

Points of interest about the earnings gap across different practice areas from the report:

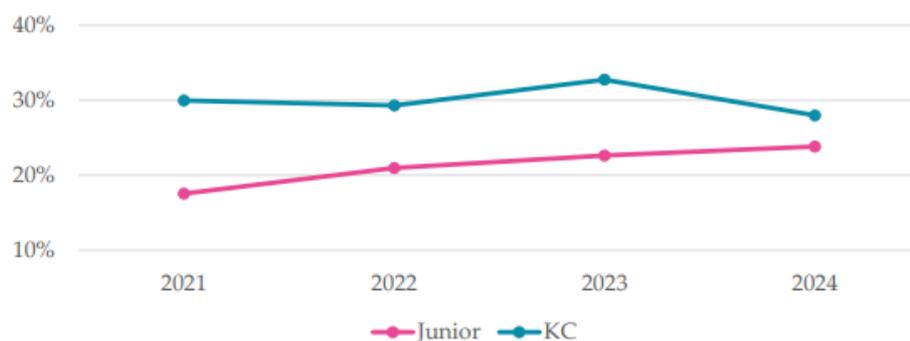
- **Crime:** Women’s median earnings are below men’s at all experience levels in criminal practice. The gap is largest at the start of a barrister’s career, at 0-3 PQE.⁵²
- **Family:** With 64% of family barristers identifying as female, family law is the only area of practice at the Bar where there are more women than men. Yet across all PQE bands in family law, men’s median gross income is higher than women’s.⁵³
- **Commercial and Chancery:** At 22%, there is a lower representation of women in commercial and chancery than in any other of the main areas of practice considered in this report. We also see the highest overall earning and the widest earnings gaps.⁵⁴

4. **The earnings gap is still increasing.**

During the previous 4 years (2021-2024), the most up to date statistics we have presently, the median earnings at the Bar increased for men and women. However, women’s earnings increased by less than men’s. This means the gap is increasing.

The figure below shows the trend in earnings gap from 2021 to 2024. The trend for juniors (pink line), shows that the disparity in earnings growth has been widening over time. For KCs, the gap is wider overall but has reduced over the last year.

Figure 20: Earnings gap trend at the self-employed Bar, 2021-2024⁵¹



Source: Bar Council Report on Gross Earnings by Sex, Nov 2025

Talking Point: *What could be the reason for discrepancy of income across gender?*

Research suggests several factors may contribute to income disparities at the Bar. Previous studies by the BSB⁵⁵ indicate that women may face unequal work allocation, with men more likely to be promoted to clients or given higher-value cases. Some respondents flagged less

⁵² Bar Council, [Bar-Council-gross-earnings-at-the-self-employed-Bar-report-2025.pdf](#) at p.21.

⁵³ Bar Council, [Bar-Council-gross-earnings-at-the-self-employed-Bar-report-2025.pdf](#) at p.24.

⁵⁴ Bar Council, [Bar-Council-gross-earnings-at-the-self-employed-Bar-report-2025.pdf](#) at p.27.

⁵⁵ *Women at the Bar*, BSB 2016.

work allocated to them if they attempted to work flexibly to care for children or when they returned from maternity leave. In addition, some respondents felt that female barristers were more likely to be expected to specialise in lower-earning, often publicly funded, practice areas – an expectation which impacts the type of work they are offered or allocated.

Further evidence shows that women are more likely to work part-time (14% vs 8% of men).⁵⁶

Retention

The following table shows the number of practising barristers (both employed and self-employed) each year between the fiscal year starting in 2000 and the fiscal year starting in 2024. These statistics were obtained directly from the Bar Standards Board and refer to barristers leaving practice indefinitely, i.e. those who have not returned to practice at all since the relevant year. As such, this does not include barristers who left practice but then returned at a later date.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Bar Council, *Working Lives Report 2023*, p.72.

⁵⁷ The years recorded by the BSB are by financial year which aligns with when a barrister is required to renew their practising certificate.

Year	No. of practising barristers on 1 December in given fiscal year ⁵⁸		No. of barristers leaving the Bar indefinitely		% leaving relative to total practising barristers of the same gender	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2000-01	3,706	9,053	167	348	4.3%	3.7%
2001-02	3,762	9,001	191	343	4.8%	3.7%
2002-03	4,207	9,394	147	221	3.4%	2.3%
2003-04	4,406	9,579	132	227	2.9%	2.3%
2004-05	4,636	9,728	135	237	2.8%	2.4%
2005-06	4,814	9,809	132	283	2.7%	2.8%
2006-07	4,970	9,920	122	245	2.4%	2.4%
2007-08	5,106	9,924	143	249	2.7%	2.4%
2008-09	5,183	9,999	177	267	3.3%	2.6%
2009-10	5,018	9,141	166	296	3.2%	3.1%
2010-11	5,163	9,706	180	241	3.4%	2.4%
2011-12	5,376	10,048	140	196	2.5%	1.9%
2012-13	5,400	10,032	189	300	3.4%	2.9%
2013-14	5,443	10,062	229	299	4.0%	2.9%
2014-15	5,545	10,140	155	263	2.7%	2.5%
2015-16	5,667	10,248	180	293	3.1%	2.8%
2016-17	5,782	10,233	142	264	2.4%	2.5%
2017-18	6,022	10,380	156	282	2.5%	2.6%
2018-19	6,158	10,348	187	296	2.9%	2.8%
2019-20	6,389	10,465	153	257	2.3%	2.4%
2020-21	6,499	10,426	167	348	2.5%	3.2%
2021-22	6,624	10,437	156	276	2.3%	2.6%
2022-23	6,680	10,334	163	274	2.4%	2.6%
2023-24	6,884	10,311	144	261	2.0%	2.5%
2024-25	7,120	10,366	177	312	2.4%	2.9%

Source: BSB⁵⁹

As can be seen, for the past five years, the percentage of men leaving the Bar has been consistently higher than women with an average of 161 female barristers (2.32% of female practising barristers) leaving in the last five years as compared to an average of 294 male barristers (2.9% of male practising barristers). However, it is important to note that this data

⁵⁸ Exclusive of those who preferred not to disclose their gender, or for whom information was unavailable.

⁵⁹ The statistics for 2018 to 2024 were obtained via the BSB's website at [Statistics on practising barristers](#) on March 2025). The statistics for barristers leaving indefinitely by year were obtained directly from the BSB in May 2025.

does not distinguish between the age of barristers leaving. We consider that as older men make up a large proportion of the Bar, the high attrition rates for men are likely to reflect the high number of male barristers retiring from practice. This theory is supported by the table in the next section, on ‘Reasons for Leaving’ which provides a breakdown of reasons for leaving practice from April 2020 – June 2025 by gender.

Below, we reference some data from the BSB’s 2021 report titled ‘*Trends in retention and demographics at the Bar 1990-2020*’. While the report is from a few years ago now, it shows trends over a long period of time, covering a 30-year time frame. The report finds that as of the 2020s, women were still leaving practice prematurely in greater numbers than men. The statistics **do not** include those who leave the independent Bar and become in-house lawyers or become employed by law firms, as they will of course retain their practising certificates.

The 2021 Report made the following findings:

1. **The age at which barristers leave for good is rising for both genders:** from 37 to 48 for women and 48 to 57 for men when comparing data from the early 1990s to 2014/15–2019/20.⁶⁰
2. **Women are far more likely to take career breaks than men:** whether partial-year practice, a full unregistered year, or leaving and later returning.⁶¹
3. **Women’s career-break ages haven’t shifted in 20+ years, but men’s have risen,** suggesting women step out at consistent, childcare-linked ages while men increasingly do so later.⁶²
4. **From about five years after pupillage, women become increasingly likely to be unregistered,** and the gap widens the longer their careers progress.⁶³
5. **By year 15, the gender gap becomes stark:**
 - In the 1990s, 35% of women had left by year 15 vs 24% of men.
 - For 2002–07 starters, within 15 years 27% of women leave the Bar vs 20% of men - still a clear gap.⁶⁴
6. **The biggest loss of women happens between years 5–15,** where they consistently leave practice at higher rates than men (though the gap has shrunk over time).⁶⁵

Talking point: It is curious to consider the question – if the average age of male barristers leaving practice indefinitely in the 1990s was 48, then why are older male barristers still making up such a large percentage of those in practice?

⁶⁰ BSB report ‘Trends in retention and demographics at the Bar: 1990-2020’, Published July 2021, at page 53: [Trends-in-demographics-and-retention-at-the-Bar-1990-2020-Main-Body.pdf](#)

⁶¹ BSB report ‘Trends in retention and demographics at the Bar: 1990-2020’, Published July 2021, at page 75: [Trends-in-demographics-and-retention-at-the-Bar-1990-2020-Main-Body.pdf](#)

⁶² BSB report ‘Trends in retention and demographics at the Bar: 1990-2020’, Published July 2021, at page 11: [Trends-in-demographics-and-retention-at-the-Bar-1990-2020-Main-Body.pdf](#)

⁶³ BSB report ‘Trends in retention and demographics at the Bar: 1990-2020’, Published July 2021, at page 61: [Trends-in-demographics-and-retention-at-the-Bar-1990-2020-Main-Body.pdf](#)

⁶⁴ BSB report ‘Trends in retention and demographics at the Bar: 1990-2020’, Published July 2021, at page 62: [Trends-in-demographics-and-retention-at-the-Bar-1990-2020-Main-Body.pdf](#)

⁶⁵ BSB report ‘Trends in retention and demographics at the Bar: 1990-2020’, Published July 2021, at page 71: [Trends-in-demographics-and-retention-at-the-Bar-1990-2020-Main-Body.pdf](#)

Reasons for leaving

The below table, based on data gathered annually by the Bar Standards Board, provides a summary of the reasons why female and male barristers have left practice between April 2020 and May 2025. The first two columns show the percentage breakdown for each reason given by gender. This is followed by absolute numbers who chose a specific reason for leaving by gender. The boxes in orange signify that a higher percentage and number of women chose the respective reason for leaving as compared to men. The boxes in green show the inverse – that a higher percentage and number of men chose the respective reason for leaving as compared to women.

Reason for leaving practice from April 2020 - June 2025	Female %	Male %	Total [where gender Female or Male]	# Female	# Male
Retiring	25.6%	74.4%	710	182	528
Career Break / Sabbatical	61.3%	38.7%	261	160	101
Judicial appointment	40.2%	59.8%	256	103	153
Change of career	48.4%	51.6%	157	76	81
Practising Certificate no longer required	51.6%	48.4%	153	79	74
Maternity / Additional Paternity Leave	97.4%	2.6%	115	112	3
Medical	41.1%	58.9%	90	37	53
Redundancy / Chambers Closure	40.0%	60.0%	60	24	36
Authorised to practise by another legal regulator	36.7%	63.3%	30	11	19
Total*	42.8%	57.2%	1,832	784	1,048

Source: Percentage figures direct from BSB, data as of 03 November 2025. Absolute figures calculated by Farore Law based on BSB data.

**Total figure excludes 1,061 individuals who answered 'previous subscriptions incomplete'⁶⁶, 419 individuals who answered 'no reason given', and 123 people who answered 'none of the above'.*

Main reasons for leaving practice

The boxes in orange in the above table highlight the 'reasons for leaving' that were predominantly given by women while the boxes in green show the 'reasons for leaving' predominantly given by men. As is abundantly clear, the biggest discrepancy is between the figures for individuals retiring and those taking parental leave. Specifically, 528 men answered that they were leaving for retirement as compared to 182 women. In stark contrast, 112 women gave parental leave as a reason for leaving as compared to 3 men.

⁶⁶ 'Previous subscription incomplete' is a category for those who leave practice by letting their practising certificates lapse and then do not renew them. This could also be Barristers doing non-legal work.

‘Career breaks/ sabbaticals’ was also a reason given by more female barristers leaving practice than male barristers leaving practice, while ‘judicial appointment’ and ‘career change’ were given as answers by more male barristers leaving practice than female barristers leaving practice.

The table below uses the same data provided by the BSB above but highlights how common a ‘reason for leaving’ was by gender. In orange are the most common reasons given by women leaving the Bar (excluding the figures for those who listed ‘previous subscription incomplete, no reason given, and none of the above’). In green, the same is shown for male barristers leaving practice.

Reason for leaving practice from April 2020 - June 2025	% of Female respondents relative to total female respondents	% of Male respondents relative to total Male respondents
Retiring	23.2%	50.4%
Career Break / Sabbatical	20.4%	9.6%
Judicial appointment	13.1%	14.6%
Change of career	9.7%	7.7%
Practising Certificate no longer required	10.1%	7.1%
Maternity / Additional Paternity Leave	14.3%	0.3%
Medical	4.7%	5.1%
Redundancy / Chambers Closure	3.1%	3.4%
Authorised to practise by another legal regulator	1.4%	1.8%
Total* [N=1,832]	100%	100%

*Source: Figures calculated by Farore Law based on BSB data in the table above. *Total figure excludes data from 1,061 individuals who answered ‘previous subscriptions incomplete’⁶⁷, 419 individuals who answered ‘no reason given’, and 123 people who answered ‘none of the above’.*

As can be seen, retirement is the main reason for leaving across both genders. For women, 23.2% stated that retirement was their reason for leaving, followed by career break/ sabbatical (20.4%) and parental leave (14.3%).

By contrast, for men, retirement far supersedes any other reason for leaving (50.4%), standing at 35.8 percentage points higher than the second most common reason for leaving among men (14.6%).

Career change? 22.8% of women are leaving the Bar to do something different entirely – as identified by the combined figures for ‘Judicial appointment’ and ‘Change in Career’.

⁶⁷ ‘Previous subscription incomplete’ is a category for those who leave practice by letting their practising certificates lapse and then do not renew them. This could also be Barristers doing non-legal work.

Leaving to become a solicitor? The table above suggests that the number of individuals who leave the Bar to become solicitors is a small figure (assuming people would mostly characterise that as ‘Authorised to practice by another legal regulator’ (2%) with some maybe expressing this as a ‘Change of Career’.) Within that small figure, when only considering those who have identified as ‘authorised to practice by another legal regulator’ the majority of those leaving to become solicitors are men: 19 men, 63% of the total 30.

Talking point: *Why are women leaving the Bar?*

We surmise that the following reasons may explain why women are leaving the Bar:

- **Parental Leave:** The Bar Council publishes Equality and Diversity Guides which include a guide for Maternity and Paternity Leave. However, according to a few different surveys about women at the Bar, despite high awareness of parental leave policies, many feel that taking parental leave has had a negative impact on their practice, with particular impacts on work allocation, progression and income. Further, respondents to the ‘Women at the Bar’ survey highlighted negative attitudes towards those returning from maternity leave as hindering a successful return to practice.⁶⁸
- **Family Reasons:** A few different surveys have found that a common factor for leaving the Bar is family reasons, with many citing the difficulty of combining a career at the Bar with caring responsibilities for children.⁶⁹ It is likely that the family reasons which disproportionately impact women include:
 - The difficulty of balancing work and life commitments
 - A desire to spend more time with family
 - Higher levels of care responsibilities for children
 - Negative impact of having children on their career⁷⁰
- **Demands of the Profession & Stress:** Surveys have also noted that the demands of the profession and the resultant stress are the next most common reasons given, with almost 25% of respondents to the ‘Women at the Bar’ survey giving these as reasons they had considered leaving the Bar. The unpredictability (in the levels of work, timetabling, and hours) inherent in the profession, the lack of work/life balance, and the anti-social hours were all cited by close to 1 in 7 respondents.⁷¹
 - **Income:** Income was cited as a reason by nearly 25% respondents.
 - **Discrimination:** Discrimination was cited as a reason by more than 10% of respondents. Gender-based income disparities at the Bar were discussed in detail earlier in this report.

⁶⁸ Women at the Bar (2016), pg. 4

⁶⁹ Women at the Bar (2016), pg. 51; Back to the Bar (2018), pg. 23; and, The Association of Women Barristers “In the age of ‘Us too’” Report 2019, pg.10.

⁷⁰ Women at the Bar (2016), pgs. 7-8

⁷¹ Women at the Bar (2016), pgs. 7-8

Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination as a reason for leaving

Reports of bullying, harassment, and discrimination at the Bar are increasing. Higher levels of identification and reporting may be related to greater awareness and coverage or greater high prevalence of bullying. Either way, the level reported is too high and suggests an unacceptable situation. Further, many continue to avoid reporting due to fear of repercussions.

It is largely recognised that women, people of colour, younger and more junior members of the Bar are at higher risk of experiencing bullying, harassment and discrimination. Further, those complained about are generally those in positions of power or influence such as judges, senior barristers, senior clerks and practice managers.

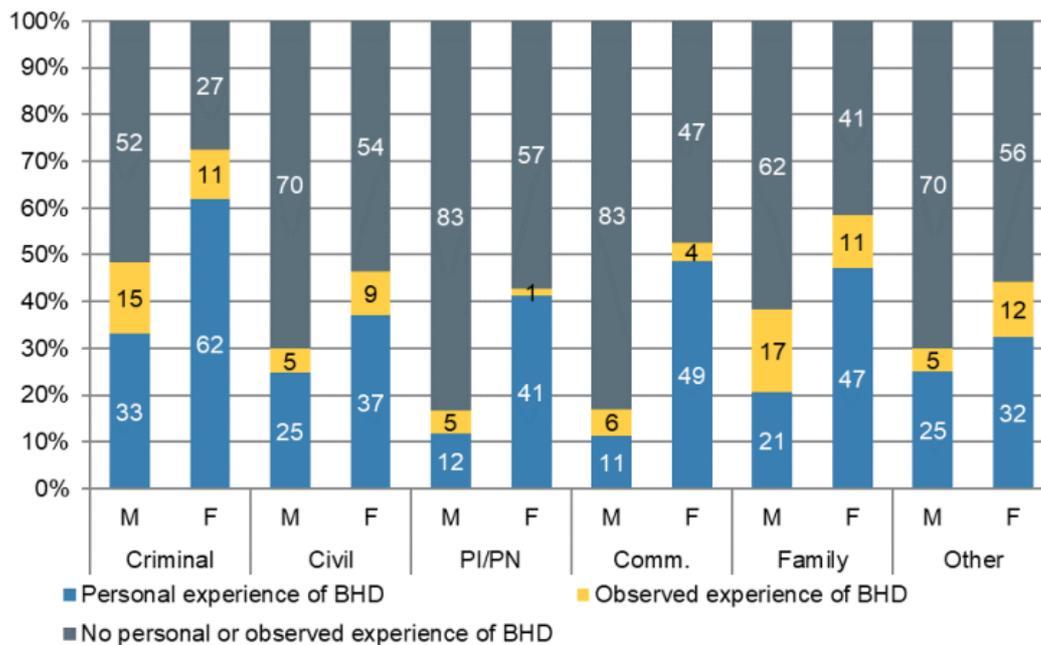
Research published by the Bar Council and the Bar Standards Board both highlight the commonality of bullying, harassment, and discrimination against women at the Bar – factors that may well be impacting the retention of female barristers at the Bar.

According to a 2023 Survey by the Bar Council titled “*Barristers’ Working Lives*” (the most recent survey currently available), the gap between men and women in their experience of bullying, harassment or discrimination at work remains wide with half (48%) of female barristers having experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination at work compared to 22% of male barristers. These figures are both five percentage points higher than in 2021.

Further, according to the survey, more than a third of female barristers had personally experienced *bullying and harassment* at work (35%) compared with 16% of male respondents. Similarly, 23% of female barristers had personally experienced *discrimination* at work compared with 8% of men.

The figure below presents the same data but by sex and broad area of practice. The numbers represent percentages.

Figure 8.3 Personal experience and observation of bullying, harassment or discrimination by gender and area of practice (percentages)

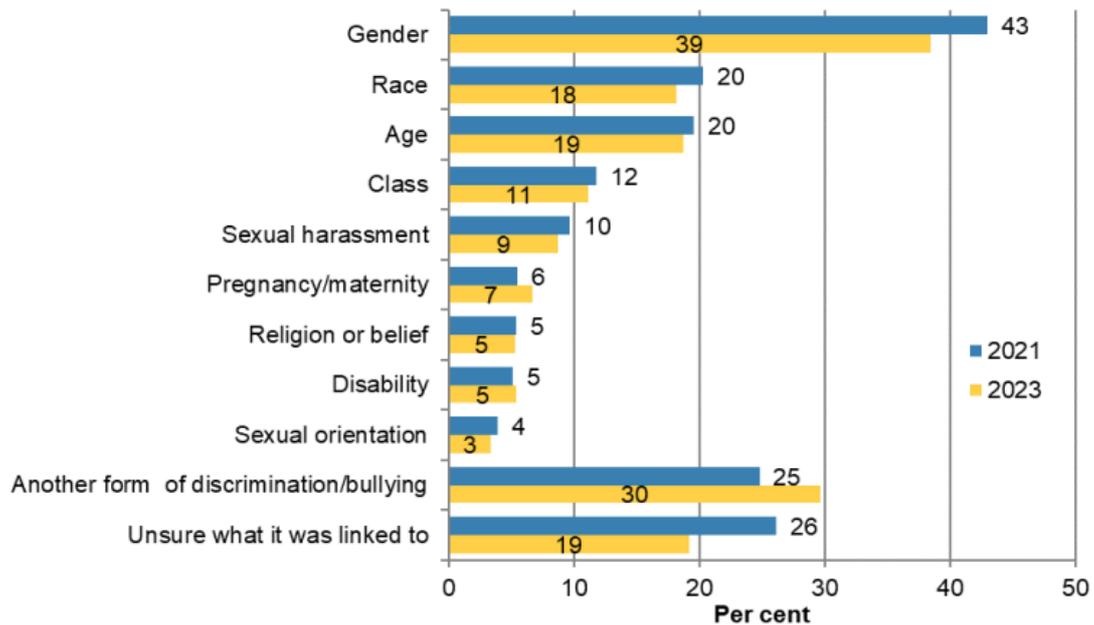


Source: Bar Council, 2023 Survey of the Bar⁷²

Disappointingly, the highest proportion of women reporting personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination (BHD) are found in criminal law (62%) – a troubling irony given the field’s central role in prosecuting sexual harassment, violence and related offences. This finding is particularly striking considering the comparatively higher proportion of women practising at the criminal and family Bar (where 47% reported personal experiences of BHD), as contrasted with areas such as commercial Law (49%) and personal injury/professional negligence (51%). Taken together, the data suggests that the percentage of women in a practice area is not the underlying driver of BHD; in other words, it does not seem that higher representation of women in an area correlates with reduced exposure to BHD.

⁷² “Barristers’ Working Lives: 2023 survey of the Bar”, pg. 105.

Figure 8.8 Nature of bullying, harassment or discrimination (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023 (N=1,344)

Source: Bar Council, 2023 Survey of the Bar⁷³

The report found that the most common type of bullying, harassment or discrimination was related to gender. Four in ten respondents said what they saw or experienced was linked to gender (39%), but this figure was 4 percentage points lower than the figure recorded in 2021 (43%). The data also indicated that women were much more likely to report 'inappropriate physical contact' (53%) compared with men (23%).⁷⁴

Talking Points: *How to address these issues?*

The data in this report has shown that women at the practising Bar have a far higher rate of attrition than men, with the proportion of women consistently falling as seniority (by year of Call) increases. Research has shown that among several issues facing women in practice, individual cultures and policies within Chambers have a huge impact on women's experience of bringing up children, and that some women feel disadvantaged by power structures within sets.

The BSB's 2018 report '*Women at the Bar: Research exploring solutions to promote gender equality*' identifies key recommendations for addressing gender inequality which remain relevant today. These are:

- **Expanding monitoring** in areas including the allocation of work, reasons for awarding work to a particular barrister, flexible working requests, and the number of workplace harassment and discrimination complaints within Chambers. This could help

⁷³ "Barristers' Working Lives", 2023, pg. 105.

⁷⁴ "Barristers' Working Lives", 2023, pg. 111.

identify where issues exist, ensuring any responses are driven by accurate information, and helping to ensure that Chambers are prompted to respond to issues identified.

- **Improving transparency** in areas including work allocation data, Equality and Diversity policies, and the way complaints of harassment and discrimination are dealt with. This includes key stakeholders doing more to promote and publicise good practice. This could help ensure that awareness of issues and policies are improved, and ensure that discussions are seen as being ‘driven by the data’ rather than individual complaints.
- **Introducing or improving policies.** Suggestions included: changes to parental leave policies, developing mentoring programmes, developing frameworks to improve communication between barristers and clerks, introducing an external ‘helpline’ to discuss discrimination and harassment, and creating an Equality and Diversity ‘kitemark’ for the profession.
- **Expanding Equality and Diversity training, in particular for clerks and senior management.** This would help raise awareness of potential issues around the impact of discrimination and effective approaches that can be taken to address them.
- **Cultural change:** a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach to unlawful discrimination and harassment, ensuring there is clear and visible support for improvement and change from senior leadership, making a clear business case for equality at the Bar.

It would be wise to make many of these compulsory as well as providing loans to maternity leavers, strengthening the power of the BSB by use of wholly independent committee members and a significant re-evaluation of the court timetabling and judicial demands that make work/life balance extremely difficult.

The cultural issue does not just apply to the issues of discrimination or harassment, but requires a shift from the macho, “*gentlemanly*”⁷⁵ culture that can pervade Chambers and which can mean a demand for high fees being generated, presenteeism, and result in favouritism and an intolerance for the personal set-backs that can beset some of the best practitioners at any time in their lives.

Research has also been produced regarding female representation in the solicitors’ sphere. It would not be unfair to draw a comparison between the two professions, particularly given the “*long hours*” working culture and the general problems associated with legal careers.

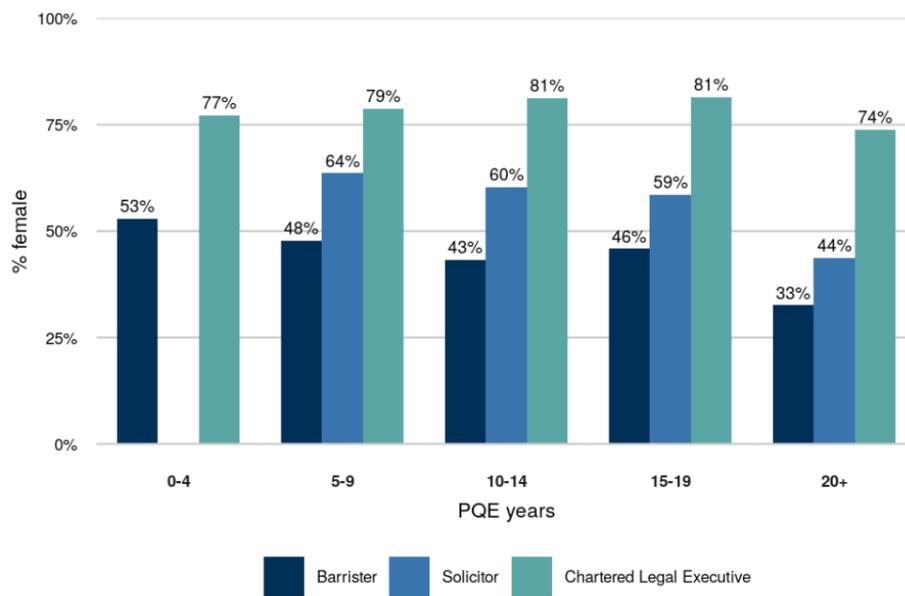
⁷⁵ The Association of Women Barristers, “In the age of ‘Us too’”, Report 2019, pg.8.

Barristers v Solicitors: A Comparison

Despite the gains of female representation among solicitors and barristers over the past decade, male practitioners continue to dominate senior positions across the legal professions. The chart below shows that across all legal professions, the proportion of women is significantly lower for those with 20+ years of experience.

Figure 1: Proportion of female legal professionals by PQE band, April 2025

Across all legal professions, the proportion of female professionals is notably lower for those having 20+ years' experience.



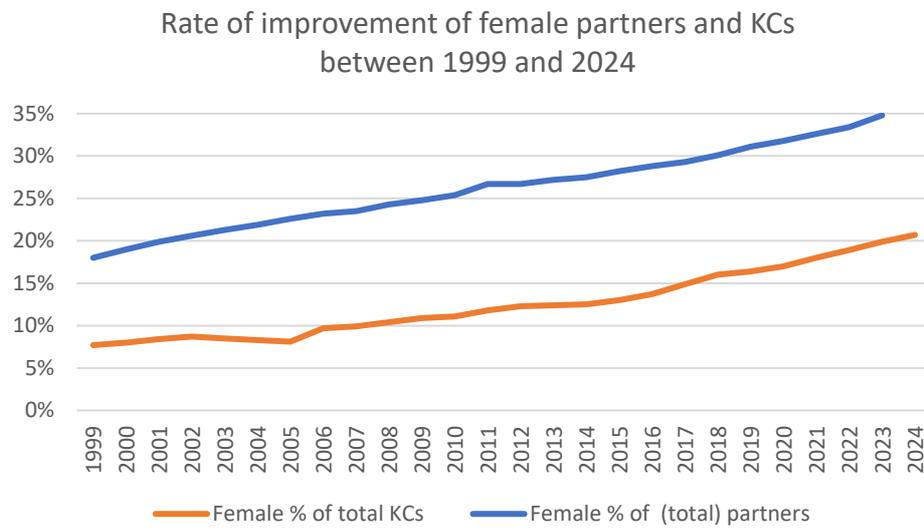
Source: Diversity of the Judiciary 2025 Statistics

The data from the Bar Standards Board and the Law Society demonstrate a consistently higher percentage of female partners compared to female KCs over the past two decades. The data is summarised in the following table:

Year	Female % of total KCs	Female % of (total) partners
1999	7.7%	18.0%
2000	8.0%	19.0%
2001	8.4%	19.9%
2002	8.7%	20.6%
2003	8.5%	21.3%
2004	8.3%	21.9%
2005	8.1%	22.6%
2006	9.7%	23.2%
2007	9.9%	23.5%
2008	10.4%	24.3%
2009	10.9%	24.8%
2010	11.1%	25.4%
2011	11.8%	26.7%
2012	12.3%	26.7%
2013	12.4%	27.2%
2014	12.5%	27.5%
2015	13.0%	28.2%
2016	13.7%	28.8%
2017	14.9%	29.3%
2018	16.0%	30.1%
2019	16.4%	31.1%
2020	17.0%	31.8%
2021	18.0%	32.6%
2022	18.9%	33.2%
2023	19.9%	34.4%
2024	20.7%	34.4%

Sources: BSB (see Appendix 4); Law Society Annual Statistics Reports

The slower rate of improvement in female representation at KC level is clear from the data in the previous table and is reproduced in the following graph by Farore Law.



3. PROGRESSION FOR WOMEN IN THE JUDICIARY

Here we look at composition and progression of women in the judiciary of England and Wales. We thought it would be interesting to consider whether progression in the judiciary is better than the private sector, given that it is part of the public sector. However, despite the obligation on the part of the Ministry of Justice to publish the judiciary's diversity statistics, and despite its repeated diversity drives and initiatives, gender equality within the judiciary remains a problem.

Summary

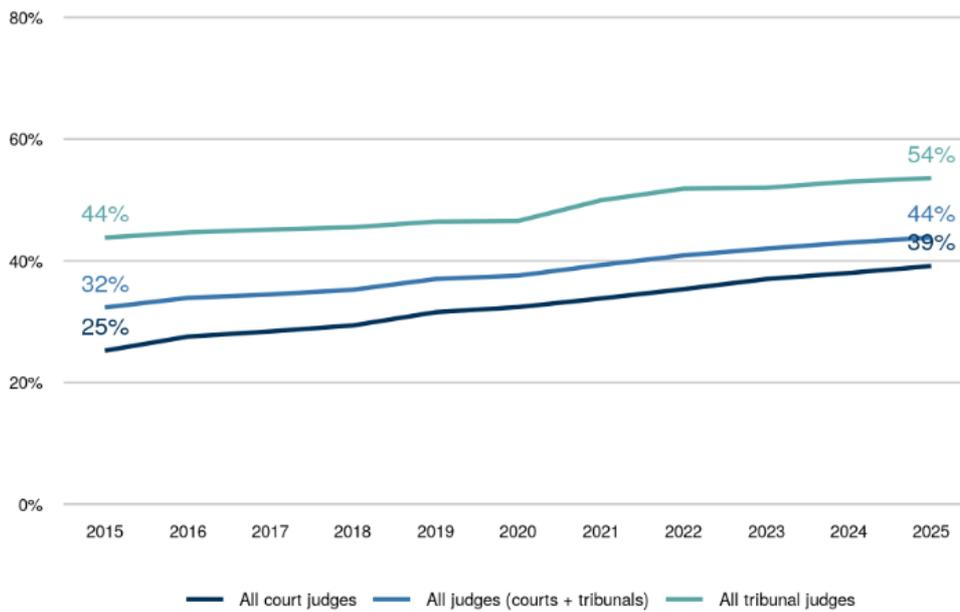
- **Female representation among judges has increased** for both courts and tribunal judges.
- **Of the new entrants to the judiciary** (i.e. those not previously holding a judicial appointment), **during 2024-25, 60% were female.**
- However, it is clear that **at higher levels of seniority within the judiciary, women's representation decreases.**
- The figures for the judiciary compare favourably to the numbers of female KCs.
- In the aggregate, there was no evidence of a disparity between female and male candidates in their selection to judicial posts.

Judicial Office Holders as of 2025⁷⁶

As can be seen in the chart below, female representation among judges in post has increased over recent years, for both courts and tribunal judges. As of April 1, 2025, women made up 39% of all court judges, an increase of 14 percentage points since 2015 and 54% of all tribunal judges, 10 percentage points higher than in 2015.

⁷⁶ Judicial Diversity Statistics 2025 statistics, accessed at [Diversity of the judiciary: Legal professions, new appointments and current post-holders - 2025 Statistics - GOV.UK.](#)

Figure 5: Proportion of female court and tribunal judges as at 1 April, from 2015.



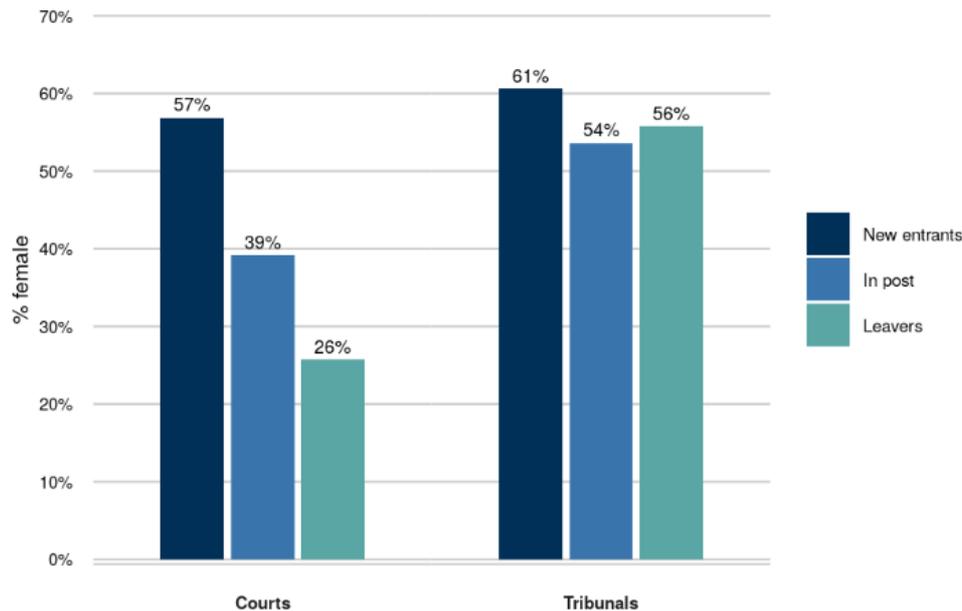
Source: Diversity of the Judiciary – 2025 Statistics

For a more detailed view of the percentage change in primary appointment of judges and non-legal members in courts and tribunals, by sex, between 2015 and 2025 - see Appendix 7 below.

Joiners and Leavers

- **New entrants:** Of the new entrants to the judiciary (i.e. those not previously holding a judicial appointment), during 2024-25, 60% were female.
- **Leavers:** Of those who left the judiciary during 2024-25, 39% were female (26% in courts and 56% in tribunals).

Figure 6: Representation of female court and tribunal judges leaving and joining the judiciary, 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.



Source: Diversity of the Judiciary – 2025 Statistics

Consideration of progress in gender balance in the judiciary requires comparison, not with the general population (i.e. an expectation of 50:50), but rather, through a comparison with the makeup of senior levels of the legal profession.

Talking Point: It seems that the female population is generally well represented in the judiciary.

According to data published by the Ministry of Justice on 23 July 2025⁷⁷, the breakdown in the legal profession for legal professionals with 20 or more years of experience is as follows in 2025:

- Female Barristers: 33% (2,576)
- Female Solicitors: 44% (25,885)

Overall, 31% of court judges and 62% of tribunal judges were from non-barrister backgrounds. When comparing the figures for proportion of female court judges (44%) with the proportion of female barristers with 20 or more years of experience (33%), **the female population seems to be generally well represented in the judiciary.**

The same is true when comparing the figures for proportion of female court tribunal judges (54%) as compared to both the figures for proportion for female solicitors with 20+ years of experience (44%) and female barristers with 20+ years of experience (33%).

This *may* be assisted by the Equal Merit Provision introduced by the Crime and Courts Act 2013, whereby when two or more applicants for the judiciary are assessed as being of equal

⁷⁷ Ministry of Justice, Dashboard for the Diversity of the Judiciary: [Microsoft Power BI](#)

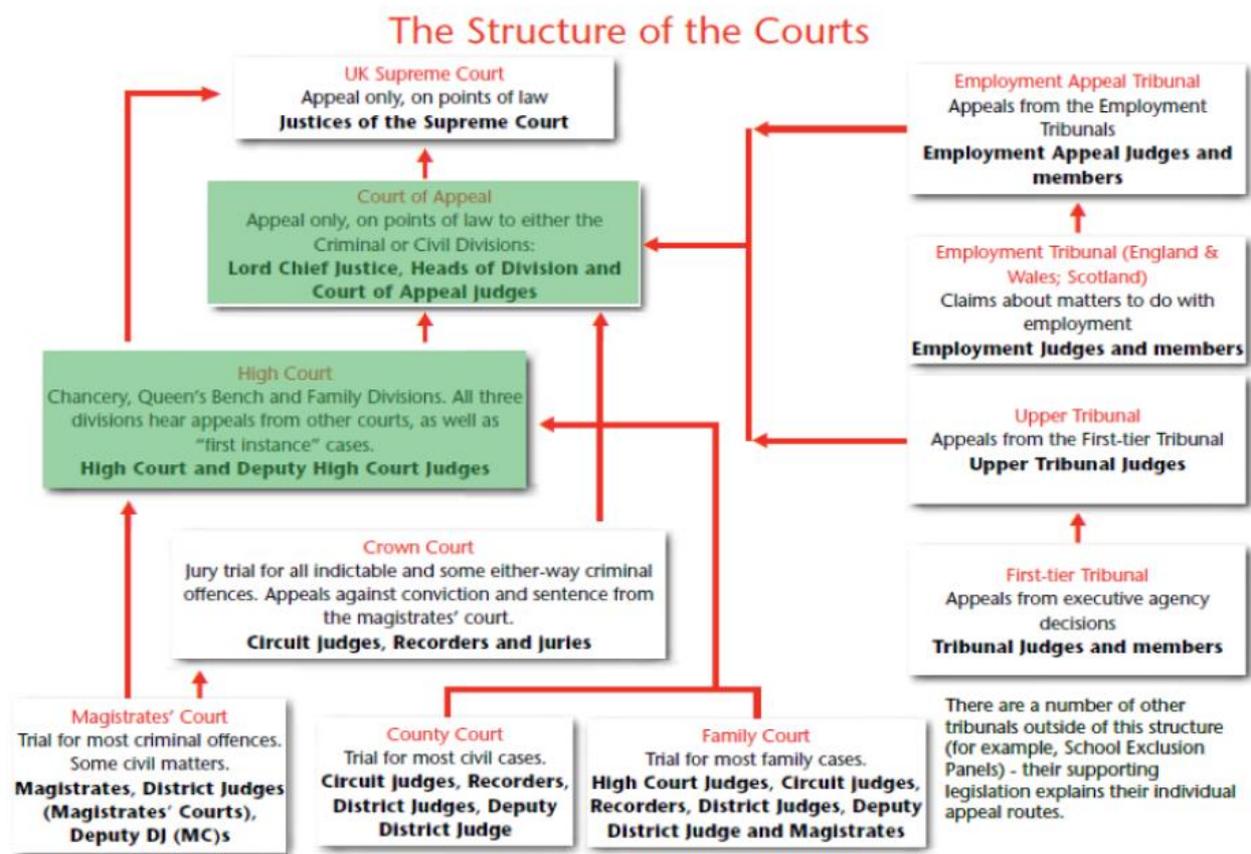
merit, the Judicial Appointments Commission can select an applicant for the purpose of increasing judicial diversity.

Female Representation Decreases with Seniority

It is clear that at higher levels of seniority within the judiciary, women's representation decreases.

Understanding the hierarchy of judges

Figure 1: A summary of the structure of the courts



Source: Ministry of Justice⁷⁸

The chart above depicts the structure of the courts which should be read alongside the below to better understand the level of judges by seniority.

1. **Court of Appeal Judges:** hear appeals at the Court of Appeal
2. **High Court Judges:** senior judges who hear serious civil cases and important criminal matters at the High Court (mainly appeals and judicial review). They sit in the King's Bench Division, Family Division, and Chancery Division.
3. **Deputy High Court Judges:** a part-time judge authorised to sit in the High Court when needed. Not as senior as a full High Court judge but can hear similar cases.

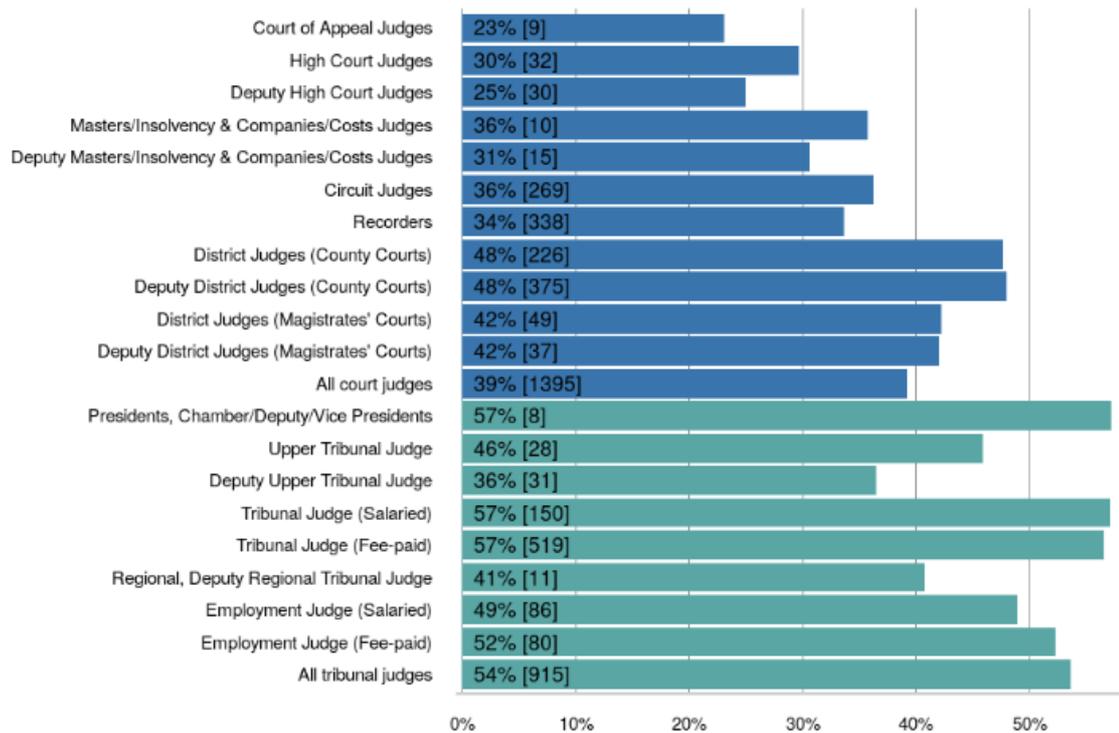
⁷⁸ Ministry of Justice, "Royal Courts of Justice Statistics Guidance document", accessed at [Royal Courts of Justice Statistics Guidance document - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612206/Royal_Courts_of_Justice_Statistics_Guidance_document.pdf)

4. **Circuit Judges:** full-time judges sitting mainly in the Crown Court and County Court.
5. **District Judges:** full-time judges in the County Court and Family Court. Sit below Circuit judges in seniority.
6. **Recorders:** part-time judges; sit in the Crown Court or County Court for a few weeks per year.
7. **Deputy District Judges:** Part-time District Judge. Hear similar types of cases but only sit a limited number of days per year.
8. **Magistrates:** Voluntary, lay judges who usually have no formal legal qualifications. They deal with less serious criminal cases and some family matters.

As of 1 April 2025, women held 28% of the most senior judicial positions (High Court and above). The highest level of female representation was among the District Judges and Deputy District Judges in the County Court, where women make up 48% of the judiciary.

The chart below shows that, in tribunals, female judges accounted for over half (54%) of the most senior roles (Presidents).⁷⁹

Figure 7: Female representation of court and tribunal judges by appointment, 1 April 2025.



Source: Diversity of the Judiciary – 2025 Statistics

⁷⁹ Including deputy and vice presidents. This percentage only includes primary appointments and therefore does not consider Upper Tier Tribunal Presidents and the Employment Appeal Tribunal President as these are not primary appointments.

Not included in the chart above, the proportion of women working as magistrates were higher than in the judiciary. Over half (57%) of all magistrates were female.⁸⁰

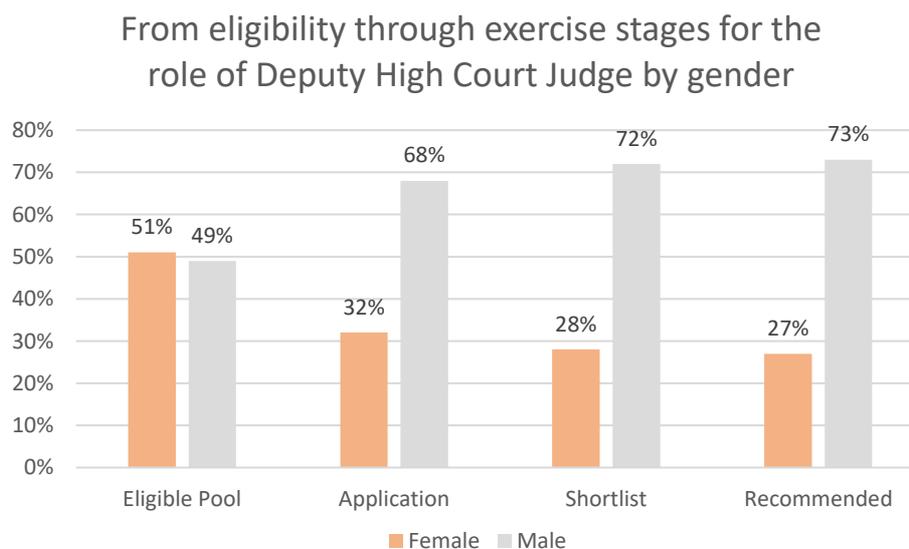
Judicial Appointments: Applications and Selections

In the aggregate, there was no evidence of a disparity between female and male candidates in their selection to judicial posts: female candidates represented 49% of the eligible pool and 52% of recommendations in legal judicial selection exercises.⁸¹

Across all Judicial Appointment Committee exercises in 2024-25, female candidates accounted for 49% of the applications (2,259), 47% of those shortlisted (470) and 52% of the recommendations for appointment (218).⁸²

Women at Senior Levels of the Judiciary

However, this positive outlook is tempered by the number of judicial appointments for the Deputy High Court, by gender. The table and chart below show that men are over-represented when recommended for a judicial post as a Deputy High Court judge (as compared to women).



Source: Produced by Farore Law, based on data from Diversity of the Judiciary 2025 table 2.9

Women seem to be under-represented as Deputy High Court judges due to lower application rates. See the table below which shows that the number and percentage of applications from women for the role of Deputy High Court judge is low relative to the eligible pool and that women apply at a lesser rate than men do.

⁸⁰ Judicial Diversity Statistics 2025 as accessed at [Diversity of the judiciary: Legal professions, new appointments and current post-holders - 2025 Statistics - GOV.UK.](#)

⁸¹ Judicial Diversity Statistics 2025 as accessed at [Diversity of the judiciary: Legal professions, new appointments and current post-holders - 2025 Statistics - GOV.UK.](#)

⁸² Those who do not disclose their sex or declare “Other” are excluded when calculating proportions.

Deputy High Court Judge				
	Female		Male	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Eligible Pool	74,781	51%	70,462	49%
Application	140	32%	295	68%
Shortlist	48	28%	124	72%
Recommended	16	27%	43	73%

Source: Produced by Farore Law, based on data from Diversity of the Judiciary 2025 table 2.9

The following table summarises the percentage of female court judges⁸³ in senior judiciary positions between 2015 and 2025. The data shows gradual but uneven progress in female representation across the senior judiciary. A female Head of Division was only appointed for the first time in 2020, and although representation rose to 40% in 2024, numbers remain too small to show stable trends. The Court of Appeal shows the most volatility: women increased from 21% in 2015 to a peak of 32% in 2023, but this has since fallen back to 23% in 2025. By contrast, the High Court shows more consistent improvement, rising from 20% in 2015 to around 30–31% in recent years. Representation among Deputy High Court Judges has also grown but remains lower and more fluctuating. Overall, the data suggests that although more women are entering senior judicial roles, progress at the very top remains slow and uncertain.

	Heads of Division	Court of Appeal	High Court	High Court (Deputies)
2015	0% (0 women)	21% (8 women)	20% (21 women)	n/a
2016		21% (8 women)	21% (22 women)	n/a
2017		24% (9 women)	22% (21 women)	21% (14 women)
2018		24% (9 women)	24% (23 women)	26% (19 women)
2019		23% (9 women)	27% (26 women)	25% (22 women)
2020	20% (1 woman)	21% (8 women)	28% (28 women)	23% (26 women)
2021	20% (1 woman)	27% (10 women)	30% (31 women)	21% (20 women)
2022	20% (1 woman)	27% (10 women)	31% (34 women)	23% (22 women)
2023	25% (1 woman)	32% (12 women)	30% (30 women)	25% (34 women)
2024	40% (2 women)	25% (9 women)	31% (33 women)	24% (35 women)
2025	n/a*	23% (9 women)	30% (32 women)	25% (30 women)

*2025: Figures for ‘Heads of Division’ are not shown as total numbers are small (under 10) and so percentages based on them are volatile and potentially misleading.

Source: Prepared by Farore Law, based on data in Judicial Diversity Statistics for each respective year.

⁸³ The Judicial Diversity Tables contain a more extensive list of judicial roles and their gender balance. The reader is encouraged to consult them if this data is of particular interest. According to the Judicial Diversity Tables 2020, the judicial role with the best female representation is District Judges (County Courts) with 39% female representation.

Talking Point: *Of those applying for the position of Deputy High Court Judge, why are only 32% women?*

In order to consider the figures in the judiciary today, it is important to look back at the entrants into the profession 20-25 years ago. The table below sets out the percentage of female barristers starting pupillage in the fiscal year 1995-6 and 2000-01 and solicitors admitted to the Roll in the same years.

	Fiscal Year	No. of Women	Women as a % of total
Barristers (female barristers starting pupillage)	1995-6	303	38%
Solicitors (no. of women admitted to the Roll)	1995-6	2,417	52.3%
Barristers (female barristers starting pupillage)	2000-01	304	49%
Solicitors (no. of women admitted to the Roll)	2000-01	3,399	54.7%

While the senior Judiciary is trying to diversity (by hiring a mixture of solicitor and barrister), it is predominantly made of barristers. In this context, when comparing the figures for Deputy High Court judges (25% female) and High Court judges (30% female), with the percentage of women qualifying as barristers in 2000 (45-49%), it is clear that women are under-represented in the senior judiciary. The numbers are even more stark when taking into consideration the percentage of women qualifying as solicitors.

The comparison is less dramatic, though still significant, when considering the percentage of female barristers who qualified in 1995-6 (38%), as compared to 25% female Deputy High Court judges and 30% female High Court judges, as of 1 April 2025.

This might leave the reader wondering, given the high attrition rate of women at the Bar, where do female barristers go if not to the judiciary or to senior levels of the Bar?

Talking point: *Why are there more women in lower-level judiciary roles?*

We consider the following reasons might explain the higher representation of women in lower-level judiciary roles as compared to higher-level judiciary roles:

1. There will be a lag between the Bar accepting 50% women, and them getting 20-25 years of experience to reach a higher position in the judiciary.

2. This could also relate to the areas of practice female barristers tend to specialise in. As more women tend to specialise in immigration and employment law, it may not come as a surprise that they are also more likely to apply for roles in the employment and immigration tribunal.
3. Female barristers outside commercial law may be discouraged from applying to the High Court because the role demands expertise in crime, civil, and commercial law. Since women make up only 24% of the commercial Bar, many may self-select out. This may be due to a combination of factors including worries about a boys-club in the commercial Bar and senior judiciary, or lack of confidence, lack of mentorship etc.
4. High Court judges usually sit in London, but they also travel to major court centres around the country. This may be difficult for female practitioners who may be parents of children under 16 or may have other caring responsibilities at the time.
5. Working as a full-time judge often comes at a reduced pay as compared to the Bar – again this may be a considering factor for women, especially single mothers.
6. It is possible that tribunal judges are more often than not appointed from the solicitors profession, which has a higher percentage of women compared to the Bar, from which High Court judges are often appointed.

Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

We do hope you've enjoyed reading this Report and found its contents both useful and thought-provoking. We will update the statistics later this year should the Law Society and SRA produce their 2026 statistics in good time. Towards the end of the year, we will also publish similar reports on progress of women in the medical profession, financial sector and professional services.

Solicitors' profession

Despite female solicitors having a strong presence across in-house roles (60%), and in private practice (51%), representation at partner level is still too low (35%). It is quite clear that lack of flexibility and the burden of family life (or the general work/life balance issue) is a significant part of the problem. There is a visible increase in the move across, on the part of senior lawyers, to "umbrella" consultancy law firms - which allow greater ability to control one's own practice and manage one's own time.

This flow of senior lawyers to "umbrella" consultancy law firms no doubt arises, in many cases, from the very high expectations placed on senior lawyers by law firms (in terms of business development, billing targets and supervision of staff). Time will tell if the flow turns into a torrent. There is of course, a potential downside in terms of a lack of sufficient legal support staff within the consultancy model (which may possibly change in time), and the downside of self-employment. The lack of maternity pay is likely to cause more junior lawyers to pause before moving to the consultancy model.

For those that wish to "break out on their own" there are significant burdens in starting and running law firms of your own. Obtaining Professional Indemnity insurance for a new firm, at a manageable cost, is an obvious problem. Some may argue that there is over-regulation, and a desire by the SRA to slowly shift solicitors across to larger firms and encourage the closure of smaller firms. By doing so, the burden on the SRA is thereby lessened. This perhaps has a greater impact on women whose desire to free up their time and manage their own practices can only be free of regulatory and insurance burdens if they move to umbrella firms. What is also clear is this flow to umbrella firms (or the desire run one's own law firm) would be lessened if traditional law firms were more imaginative about the ways in which a person can run their practice within those firms, and consider more carefully the considerable burden placed on those with caring responsibilities.

Having acted for many senior female lawyers, this firm is also aware of the considerable anxiety and concern that can arise in the minds of those aiming to return to fee-earning work after maternity leave.

In terms of what traditional law firms could do, this might include:

- Revisiting the balance between billing targets and time needed to supervise junior staff.
- More support when managing and supervising many fee earners.
- Flexibility packages that do not rely on individual requests and consent.
- Much greater pay and promotion transparency.
- More visible and accessible mentorship schemes, and internal mediation processes.
- Better ways of managing return from maternity leave, with stronger policies and procedures.
- Consideration given more readily to a 3-4 day week; or a reduction in drawings/equity based on extra annual leave to cover school holidays.

Barristers

The progress into the senior end of the barristers' profession remains poor, with the attrition rate too high. With a significant percentage of female barristers working in areas of law reliant on legal aid or government pay rates, the financial consequences of staying in practice are part of the problem. We are concerned that commercial law and High Court litigation may be seen by clerks and clients "in male form," and that tribunal work and work related to disputes involving individuals may be seen in "female form." In criminal law the issue may well be related to optical advantage of using a female defence lawyer in certain sorts of crimes.

From the many progression and equal pay reports we have conducted for barristers' chambers four things are clear to us:

1. There is lower average pay for female barristers.
2. There is a perception that male-dominated clerks' rooms manage the work in certain directions, along gender lines.
3. There is a belief that maternity leave and return from maternity leave is not well-supported.
4. Mental health and burnout is often ignored or over-looked.

In terms of what barristers' chambers could do, these might be:

- Reconsider the barristers' chambers model regarding the funnelling of work through a traditional clerks' room.
- Greater transparency regarding hourly rates and allocation of work.
- Better training for clerks and managers regarding the analysis of pay rates and the allocation of work.
- Stronger maternity rights and greater prevalence of maternity pay.
- Greater flexibility afforded to those with caring responsibilities.
- Better in-built support systems (e.g. use of legal secretaries).
- More prevalent use of independent investigation of internal discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Improved knowledge and awareness within chambers of mental health and significant life events, with much greater support for those going through a difficult time.
- Greater accountability for the decision-makers within chambers.

Judiciary

Over the last 10 years there has been greater movement from circuit courts to higher courts and from tribunals to higher courts (e.g. Employment Tribunal to Employment Appeal Tribunal). However, considerable progress is still needed in the High Court and above. In our view two things would make a significant difference here:

1. Widening further the access to the High Court bench to those in the solicitors' profession, where more female lawyers practice.
2. Removing some of the barriers to becoming a High Court judge, including expectations around circuit work and time spent as Deputy, before applications to become a High Court Judge can be made.

Other recommendations might include:

- Allowing people to move from the independent practice into a Judicial profession track, affording training into a judicial role.
- Greater access and knowledge of training in relation to applying to become a High Court Judge (or Deputy).
- Lowering expectations of previous judicial experience and sitting before becoming a High Court Judge. Some women have advised us that they feel once the burden of childcare is finished, they have “run out of time” to get on the judicial track.
- More positive encouragement of women to apply.
- Moving away from the need for an applicant to “orientate their practice” before they can apply to the Kings Bench Division as a High Court Judge. The Judicial Appointments website currently expects candidates to ensure that the portfolio of work they do before applying *is suitable for the role*. But this relies on fair allocation of work, and allocation of broader areas of work. This then relies, to a reasonable extent, on clerks in barristers' chambers, which may take us back to the old problem of perceptions and bias. Perhaps then the most practical solution is a two-three year part-time judicial track which involves training in areas not covered by the candidate's current practice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Solicitor Partners by Gender

The below table notes the number and percentage of partners in private practice broken down by year and gender, obtained from the Law Society's Annual Statistics Reports.⁸⁴ The Annual statistics report 2023 published in January 2025 is the most recent edition of the report. It evaluates the solicitors' profession in England and Wales from August 2022 to July 2023.

Year ⁸⁵	No. of female partners ⁸⁶	No. of male partners ⁸⁷	Female % of partners	Male % of partners
1983-4	977	18,958	4.9%	95.1%
1984-5	1,283	20,828	5.8%	94.2%
1985-6	1,464	20,750	6.6%	93.4%
1987-8	2,047	21,009	8.9%	91.1%
1989	n/a			
1990	2,937	20,513	12.5%	87.5%
1991	3,203	22,846	12.3%	87.7%
1992	3,396	22,779	13.0%	87.0%
1993	3,510	22,512	13.5%	86.5%
1994	3,706	22,404	14.2%	85.8%
1995	3,954	22,365	15.0%	85.0%
1996	4,115	22,436	15.5%	84.5%
1997	4,420	22,445	16.5%	83.5%
1998	4,802	22,776	17.4%	82.6%
1999	5,056	22,987	18.0%	82.0%
2000	5,418	23,108	19.0%	81.0%
2001	5,757	23,238	19.9%	80.1%
2002	6,043	23,265	20.6%	79.4%
2003	6,182	22,859	21.3%	78.7%

⁸⁴ The Law Society do not have Annual Statistics Reports dated before 1984.

⁸⁵ As of 31 July

⁸⁶ Partner or partner equivalents (members, directors, shareholders), including salaried partners, in practice

⁸⁷ Partner or partner equivalents (members, directors, shareholders), including salaried partners, in practice

Year ⁸⁵	No. of female partners ⁸⁶	No. of male partners ⁸⁷	Female % of partners	Male % of partners
2004	6,165	21,926	21.9%	78.1%
2005	6,095	20,851	22.6%	77.4%
2006	5,727	18,954	23.2%	76.8%
2007	7,420	24,204	23.5%	76.5%
2008	7,710	24,071	24.3%	75.7%
2009	7,854	23,806	24.8%	75.2%
2010	8,002	23,458	25.4%	74.6%
2011	8,208 ⁸⁸	22,574	26.7%	73.3%
2012	8,090	22,199	26.7%	73.3%
2013	8,115	21,748	27.2%	72.8%
2014	7,985	21,046	27.5%	72.5%
2015	8,100 ⁸⁹	20,594	28.2%	71.8%
2016	8,105	20,082	28.8%	71.2%
2017	8,241	19,884	29.3%	70.7%
2018	8,470	19,675	30.1%	69.9%
2019	8,708	19,322	31.1%	68.9%
2020	8,791	18,866	31.8%	68.2%
2021	8,930	18,434	32.6%	67.4%
2022	9,852	19,653	33.2%	66.6%
2023	9,905	18,578	34.4%	65.2%
2024	9,865	17,980	34.4%	64.6%

⁸⁸ There is conflicting information in the Law Society's 2011 Annual Statistics Report. The higher statistic is included in this table.

⁸⁹ There is conflicting information in the Law Society's 2015 Annual Statistics Report. The higher statistic is ~~in this~~ in this table.

Appendix 2 – Total barristers in practice: recent (1985 – 2024)

The following tables cover the numbers and percentages of female and male practising barristers from 1985 to 2024. Please note that at certain points, the BSB’s method for collecting reporting data changed. This is reflected by the three different tables: from 1995, employed barristers were included in the statistics; from 2009, the Bar Standards Board (BSB) further refined its methods of recording and reporting; and from 2010, barristers were permitted to register as “dual capacity” and were incorporated in the data accordingly.

As such, the data is not directly comparable across 1985 to 2024 but still serves as a useful indication that there is ultimately a clear and consistent increase in the number of women at the Bar (but for a slight regression in 2009, and apparently despite the impact of COVID-19).

Self-employed Bar		
Year	No. of women	Percentage of total in practice
1985	696	13.0%
1986	747	13.6%
1987	788	14.0%
1988	890	15.1%
1989	1,040	16.6%
1990	1,163	17.5%
1991	1,274	18.5%
1992	1,420	19.5%
1993	1,593	20.6%
1994	1,763	21.8%

Source: BSB⁹⁰

⁹⁰ BSB Dataset 1 (November 2018)

Self-employed and Employed Bar		
Year	No. of women	Percentage of total in practice
1995	2,848	25.9%
1996	3,073	26.9%
1997	3,210	27.2%
1998	3,410	28.0%
1999	3,535	28.4%
2000	3,706	29.0%
2001	3,762	29.5%
2002	4,207	30.9%
2003	4,406	31.5%
2004	4,636	32.3%
2005	4,814	32.9%
2006	4,970	33.4%
2007	5,106	34.0%
2008	5,183	34.1%

Source: BSB⁹¹

Self-employed; Employed Bar; and Dual Capacity			
Year	No. of women	Percentage of total in practice ⁹²	Percentage undisclosed
2009	5,018	35.4%	0.3%
2010	5,163	34.6%	0.3%
2011	5,376	34.8%	0.3%
2012	5,400	34.9%	0.3%
2013	5,443	35.0%	0.2%
2014	5,545	35.3%	0.2%
2015	5,667 ⁹³	35.6%	0.0%

⁹¹ BSB Dataset 1 (November 2018)

⁹² Percentages for 1985 to 2018 inclusive were confirmed by datasets provided by the BSB.

⁹³ There is a discrepancy between BSB Data Spreadsheet 2009-18 and BSB Dataset 1; the higher number is included here (the other datum being “5,660”). The total figure includes individuals who have not disclosed their gender and for whom there is no information.

2016	5,782	36.0%	0.2%
2017	6,022	36.6%	0.2%
2018	6,158	37.1%	0.6%
2019	6,389	37.6%	0.8%
2020	6,499	38.1%	0.9%
2021	6,624	38.4%	1.2%
2022	6,680	38.1%	3.0%
2023	6,884	38.7%	3.3%
2024	7,120	39.2%	3.6%

Source: BSB⁹⁴

⁹⁴ BSB Dataset 1 (November 2018); 2019-2024 figures taken from [Statistics on practising barristers](#).

Appendix 3 – Call to the Bar

The following statistics concern the number of men and women Called to the Bar between 1984-85 to 2022-23.

Year	No. of women Called	% of women Called	No. of men Called	% of men Called	No. of individuals unaccounted for
1984-85	347	36.3%	606	63.4%	3
1985-86	313	33.3%	626	66.5%	2
1986-87	345	38.8%	544	61.1%	1
1987-88	394	37.5%	655	62.4%	1
1988-89	383	37.9%	627	62.0%	1
1989-90	344	40.6%	500	59.0%	3
1990-91	482	40.8%	697	59.0%	2
1991-92	525	43.1%	691	56.7%	2
1992-93	655	42.9%	870	56.9%	3
1993-94	638	42.1%	876	57.9%	0
1994-95	706	45.7%	836	54.1%	3
1995-96	640	39.7%	969	60.1%	3
1996-97	660	41.1%	943	58.8%	2
1997-98	702	45.0%	851	54.6%	6
1998-99	613	45.6%	729	54.2%	3
1999-00	726	46.9%	816	52.7%	5
2000-01	738	48.4%	785	51.5%	2
2001-02	713	50.9%	684	48.8%	4
2002-03	781	52.2%	711	47.6%	3
2003-04	679	49.8%	682	50.0%	2
2004-05	703	48.5%	740	51.1%	6
2005-06	784	50.2%	775	49.6%	4
2006-07	886	49.8%	888	49.9%	5
2007-08	929	51.9%	857	7.9%	4
2008-09	921	51.5%	867	48.5%	0
2009-10	926	52.8%	825	47.1%	2

Year	No. of women Called	% of women Called	No. of men Called	% of men Called	No. of individuals unaccounted for
2010-11	832	51.1%	795	48.8%	2
2011-12	728	49.6%	741	50.4%	0
2012-13	691	51.3%	655	48.7%	0
2013-14	726	49.9%	730	50.1%	0
2014-15	577	48.7%	606	51.2%	1
2015-16	684	52.6%	616	47.4%	0
2016-17	625	52.7%	559	47.1%	2
2017-18 ⁹⁵	694	51.4%	653	48.3%	4
2018-19	890	53.2%	779	46.6%	3
2019-20	527	52.5%	472	47.0%	5
2020-21	792	56.2%	597	42.4%	20
2021-22	1,003	52.5%	880	46.1%	27
2022-23	871	52.8%	769	46.6%	10
2023-24	949	53.4%	824	46.3%	5

⁹⁵ Statistics for 2016-17 to 2022-23 were corrected/obtained from the BSB at [Call to the Bar and tenancy statistics](#), as accessed in March 2025.

Appendix 4 – KC applications and appointments by gender

KC applications and appointments				
Year	Female		Male	
	Applicants	Awards	Applicants	Awards
1995	42	8	450	63
1996	40	4	448	62
1997	41	5	459	63
1998	46	10	465	50
1999	49	9	504	60
2000	53	10	453	68
2001	51	10	405	67
2002	44	12	385	101
2003	39	9	355	112
2004 ⁹⁶	0	0	0	0
2005 ⁹⁷	0	0	0	0
2006 ⁹⁸	68	33	374	141
2007-08	51	20	276	78
2008-09	29	16	215	87
2009-10	46	20	226	108
2010-11	41	27	210	93
2011-12 ⁹⁹	40	23	172	65
2012-13 ¹⁰⁰	26	14	155	70
2013-14	42	18	183	82
2014-15 ¹⁰¹	43	25	180	68
2015-16 ¹⁰²	48	25	189	82

⁹⁶ In 2004 and 2005, a new scheme (KCA) was being developed. There were no appointments during these years.

⁹⁷ In 2004 and 2005, a new scheme (KCA) was being developed. There were no appointments during these years.

⁹⁸ In 2006, one applicant did not declare their gender information and so has been excluded from these figures.

⁹⁹ In 2011-12, two applicants did not declare their gender information and so has been excluded from these figures.

¹⁰⁰ In 2012-13, two applicants did not declare their gender information and so has been excluded from these figures.

¹⁰¹ One applicant is not included for the 2014-15 statistics as they withdrew from the competition prior to interview.

¹⁰² One applicant is not included for the 2015-16 statistics as they withdrew from the competition prior to interview.

KC applications and appointments				
Year	Female		Male	
	Applicants	Awards	Applicants	Awards
2016-17	56	31	198	82
2017	50	32	222	87
2018	55	30	186	78
2019	52	30	206	84
2020	72	40	209	76
2021	72	45	202	56
2022	77	36	202	59
2023	79	30	204	65
2024	84	33	239	72
2025	86	29	239	67

Source: *King's Counsel Appointments monitoring statistics 1995-2023* and [King's Counsel statistics from 2024 to present](#).

Appendix 5 – KCs in practice

This table notes the number and percentage of KCs with an active practising certificate. Figures between 1990 to 2017 were obtained in a dataset directly from the Bar Standards Board. Data for 2018-2024 was obtained and calculated based on data obtained from the BSB website.¹⁰³

The BSB has yet to update these statistics in light of the 2025/26 KC appointments. We are unable to do our own analysis as we have not been told of the number of retirements of KCs, for those two years, as yet.

Date	All	Female		Male		No information	
	Total	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1990	702	30	4.3%	669	95.3%	3	0.4%
1991	755	36	4.8%	716	94.8%	3	0.4%
1992	785	43	5.5%	739	94.1%	3	0.4%
1993	824	45	5.5%	776	94.2%	3	0.4%
1994	872	53	6.1%	816	93.6%	3	0.3%
1995	920	61	6.6%	856	93.0%	3	0.3%
1996	955	62	6.5%	890	93.2%	3	0.3%
1997	1,001	67	6.7%	931	93.0%	3	0.3%
1998	1,030	75	7.3%	952	92.4%	3	0.3%
1999	1,068	82	7.7%	983	92.0%	3	0.3%
2000	1,103	88	8.0%	1,011	91.7%	4	0.4%
2001	1,121	94	8.4%	1,023	91.3%	4	0.4%
2002	1,174	102	8.7%	1,068	91.0%	4	0.3%
2003	1,260	107	8.5%	1,149	91.2%	4	0.3%
2004	1,223	102	8.3%	1,117	91.3%	4	0.3%
2005	1,168	95	8.1%	1,069	91.5%	4	0.3%
2006	1,293	125	9.7%	1,164	90.0%	4	0.3%
2007	1,246	123	9.9%	1,119	89.8%	4	0.3%
2008	1,292	135	10.4%	1,153	89.2%	4	0.3%
2009	1,344	146	10.9%	1,193	88.8%	5	0.4%
2010	1,427	158	11.1%	1,262	88.4%	7	0.5%

¹⁰³ Data from [King's Counsel statistics](#).

Date	All	Female		Male		No information	
	Total	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2011	1,498	177	11.8%	1,314	87.7%	7	0.5%
2012	1,522	187	12.3%	1,328	87.3%	7	0.5%
2013	1,551	193	12.4%	1,351	87.1%	7	0.5%
2014	1,582	197	12.5%	1,377	87.0%	8	0.5%
2015	1,614	210	13.0%	1,396	86.5%	8	0.5%
2016	1,666	228	13.7%	1,430	85.8%	8	0.5%
2017	1,721	256	14.9%	1,457	84.7%	8	0.5%
2018	1,732	277	16.0%	1,447	83.5%	8	0.5%
2019	1,795	295	16.4%	1,492	83.1%	8	0.4%
2020	1,833	311	17.0%	1,514	82.6%	8	0.4%
2021	1,890	341	18.0%	1,532	81.1%	15	0.8%
2022	1,980	374	18.9%	1,565	79.0%	18	0.9%
2023	2,009	400	19.9%	1,563	77.8%	22	1.1%
2024	2,049	424	20.7%	1,577	77.0%	26	1.3%

Appendix 6 – Practice areas in relation to gender at the Bar

The below table contains information on the gender split for all practising barristers (employed and self-employed) across practice areas at the Bar as of 4 June 2025.

Main area of Practice - As of 4 June 2025	Female	Male	Other categories & no information	Grand Total
Arbitrator or umpire or mediator	42	159	11	212
Chancery	168	550	37	755
Commercial and Financial Services	485	1,412	109	2,006
Competition	43	94	8	145
Construction	63	179	16	258
Crime	1,895	2,781	164	4,840
Defamation	17	38	4	59
Employment	262	356	28	646
Family	1,814	1,090	63	2,967
Immigration	157	218	17	392
Insolvency	47	86	10	143
Intellectual property	50	130	15	195
International	82	181	10	273
Landlord & tenant	148	271	29	448
Other common law	99	212	15	326
Personal injury	333	782	28	1,143
Planning	60	163	7	230
Professional discipline	149	176	9	334
Professional negligence	23	64	8	95
Public Law	577	462	35	1,074
Revenue	57	131	13	201
Other	125	138	9	272
No information	355	493	46	894
Grand Total	7,051	10,166	691	17,908

Source: Direct from the BSB

Appendix 7 – Female Representation in the Judiciary

The below table shows the primary appointment of Judges and Non-legal Members in Courts and Tribunals in England and Wales, by Sex from 2015. The data is based on all judges/members in post as of 1 April each year.

Primary appointment of Judges and Non-legal Members in Courts and Tribunals in England and Wales, by Sex from 2015

All judges/members in post as at 1 April each year

Location Appointment		Sex - % Female										
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Courts	Heads of Division	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Court of Appeal Judges	21	21	24	24	23	21	27	27	32	25	23
	High Court Judges	20	21	22	24	27	28	30	31	30	31	30
	Deputy High Court Judges ¹	..	..	21	26	25	23	21	23	25	24	25
	Judge Advocates, Deputy Judge Advocates Masters, Insolvency and Companies Court Judges, Costs Judges ²	17	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Deputy Masters, Deputy Insolvency and Companies Court Judges, Deputy Costs Judges ²	26	27	28	23	30	34	38	41	39	37	36
	Circuit Judges ³	23	26	27	29	31	33	36	36	36	36	36
	Recorders	16	20	20	20	21	22	25	28	28	31	34
	District Judges (County Courts)	31	36	38	39	42	44	45	44	45	47	48
	Deputy District Judges (County Courts)	37	37	36	38	39	40	40	42	45	48	48
	District Judges (Magistrates' Courts)	31	33	35	35	37	38	38	35	38	39	42
	Deputy District Judges (Magistrates' Courts)	31	31	34	34	33	34	36	41	42	43	42
	All court judges	25	28	28	29	32	32	34	35	37	38	39
	Tribunals	Presidents, Chamber Presidents, Deputy and Vice Presidents ⁴	36	29	29	33	50	50	57	54	53	62	57
Upper Tribunal Judge		27	35	42	41	44	41	40	38	37	43	46
Deputy Upper Tribunal Judge		42	33	32	34	42	44	44	47	42	40	36
Tribunal Judge		46	47	47	47	48	48	52	54	55	56	57
Regional, Deputy Regional Tribunal Judge		31	24	28	22	27	24	27	30	37	36	41
Circuit Judges ³		..	..	..	..	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Employment Judge		41	41	42	42	44	44	47	50	50	50	50
Regional Employment Judge		36	36	42	42	40	*	40	40	*	*	*
All tribunal judges	44	45	45	46	46	47	50	52	52	53	54	
Courts & Tribunals All judges (courts + tribunals)	32	34	34	35	37	38	39	41	42	43	44	
Tribunals All tribunal members	46	47	49	50	51	52	53	56	56	57	58	
Tribunals All judges and non-legal members	45	46	47	49	50	50	52	54	55	56	56	

Data source: Judicial Office Judicial HR database

Key

All percentages are calculated using the proportion of individuals where the characteristic is known. A characteristic is considered to be 'unknown' if an individual has chosen to 'prefer not to say', or has left the answer blank.

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%, and 0% may not imply a count of 0.

percentages are highly volatile and potentially misleading

.. not available

Notes

1. Prior to 2016, only a very limited number of appointments of Deputy High Court Judges were made under the provisions of s9(4) of the Senior Courts Act 1981. As a result, the number of judges who held this appointment was not published between 2014 and 2016. Larger numbers have been appointed since 2016.

2. Registrars and Deputy Registrars titles have changed to Insolvency and Companies Court Judges and Deputy Insolvency and Companies Court Judges.

3. A very small number of Circuit Judges are appointed to Tribunals and are shown separately in this table. These figures were not published until 2019

4. Excludes Upper Tier Tribunal Presidents and the Employment Appeal Tribunal President as these are not primary appointments.

Source: Diversity of the Judiciary 2025 statistics: data tables

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