

## Key facts about the solicitors' profession in the South West region

The Law Society conducts research on the solicitors' profession in England and Wales. This fact sheet presents key figures on the profession for the South West region as at November 2010.

### Key statistics as at November 2010

	No	%
<b>Solicitors with practising certificates</b>	<b>8,114</b>	
Male solicitors with practising certificates	4,368	53.8
Female solicitors with practising certificates	3,746	46.2
 Solicitors in private practice	 6,568	 84.8
Solicitors in commerce and industry	479	6.2
Solicitors in central and local government	593	7.7
Solicitors in other sectors	109	1.4
 Solicitors in sole practices	 505	 6.5
Solicitors in practices with 2-4 partners	2,599	33.5
Solicitors in practices with 5-10 partners	1,123	14.5
Solicitors in practices with 11-25 partners	1,071	13.8
Solicitors in practices with more than 26 partners	2,451	31.6
 <b>Trainees</b>		
Number of trainees	<b>350</b>	
Number of male trainees	137	39.1
Number of female trainees	213	60.9
Starting salary (median)	£19,000	
 <b>Organisations</b>		
Organisations employing solicitors (head office)	<b>1,436</b>	
Private practices (head office)	759	52.9
Other organisations employing solicitors <sup>1</sup>	677	47.1

<sup>1</sup> Non private practice comprises of organisations employing solicitors by the following type of business: Commerce & Industry; Government (Government Department, Local Government, Court Government funded services, and Crown Prosecution Service); Other (Advice service, Educational establishment, Churches etc.).

## Practising certificate holders

Table 1 shows the ethnicity of all practising certificate holders in the region compared with all the regions in England and Wales, and Chart A illustrates their age distribution. Under one-third (28.8%) of solicitors are aged between 26-35 years old which is less than in the profession as a whole where 35.3% fall into this age range. Older solicitors are slightly over-represented in this region. The ethnicity profile shows that White solicitors are present in significantly higher proportions in this region than in England and Wales in general.

Table 2 provides details of the number of years of post qualification experience of practising certificate holders within the South West region compared to the profession as a whole. It shows that there are more experienced solicitors with 20-49 years of practice in this region (almost a third) than in England and Wales as a whole.

The top three main areas of work for practising certificate holders in this region are business affairs (17.1%), wills and probate (8.9%) and conveyancing (6.4%). In comparison with the profession as a whole, conveyancing is cited by 4.6% and wills and probate by 7.2% of the profession with business affairs dominating at 21.0%.

## Trainees

In 2010 41.4% of trainees are aged 25 and under, with 4.3% of trainees aged over 41 years, compared with 45.8% and 3.2% respectively for the profession as a whole.

Table 3 shows trainee registrations by ethnicity for the South West region and for the entire profession. It demonstrates that there are proportionately fewer BME trainees in the region in comparison with the profession as a whole.

The overwhelming majority (93.1%) of trainees work in law practices, with 2.3% in commerce and industry and 4.3% in local and central government.

Almost half (47.7%) of trainees are based in large firms of more than 26 partners, which is very similar to the profession as a whole (49.7%). Four percent of trainees are employed in sole practices, compared with 6.0% for the profession as a whole.

## Private practice firms

There are 759 private practice head offices in the region. The distribution of size of firms across the region is shown in table 4. It illustrates that 44.4% of firms employing solicitors are sole practices and 37.9% are firms with 2 to 4 partners.

## Further reading

*Trends in the solicitors' profession, Annual statistical report 2009.* Bill Cole, Nina Fletcher, Tara Chittenden and Joanne Cox. Strategic Research Unit. The Law Society. 2009.

**Table 1 Ethnicity of practising certificate holders**

	South West		All regions	
	No	%	No	%
African Caribbean	21	0.3	798	0.7
Asian	93	1.2	7,438	6.6
Chinese	26	0.3	924	0.8
African	26	0.3	1,417	1.3
Other Ethnicity	68	0.8	2,117	1.9
White	7,348	90.6	90,337	79.7
Unknown	532	6.6	10,341	9.1
Total	8,114	100	113,372	100

**Chart A Age distribution of practising certificate holders**



**Table 2 Experience of practising certificate holders by years qualified**

	South West		All regions	
	No	%	No	%
0-9	3,012	37.1	49,666	43.8
10-19	2,098	25.9	29,646	26.1
20-29	1,421	17.5	16,146	14.0
30-39	1,032	12.7	10,136	8.9
40-49	163	2.0	1,734	1.5
50+	23	0.3	291	0.3
Unknown	365	4.5	5,753	5.1
Total	8,114	100	107,619	100

**Table 3 Ethnicity of trainees**

	South West		All regions	
	No	%	No	%
African Caribbean	2	0.6	45	0.7
Asian	9	2.6	787	11.5
Chinese	2	0.6	152	2.2
African	5	1.4	145	2.1
Other Ethnicity	5	1.4	274	4.0
White	301	86.0	4,972	72.4
Unknown	26	7.4	493	7.2
Total	350	100	6,868	100

**Table 4 Size of firms (head office)**

	South West		All regions	
	No	%	No	%
Sole practice	337	44.4	4,583	45.1
2-4	288	37.9	4,185	41.1
5-10	88	11.6	898	8.8
11-25	28	3.7	310	3.1
26+	18	2.4	196	1.9
Total	759	100	10,172	100

Source: The Law Society REGIS database