



The Law Society

Solicitors' pro bono work

The Law Society's PC Holder Survey 2012



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Executive summary

A random sample of 1,503 Practising Certificate (PC) holders were interviewed by telephone during June and July 2012. Solicitors were asked about different aspects of their working lives and about any pro bono work they may have undertaken.

PC holders conducting pro bono work

- 61% of all PC holders indicated that they had undertaken pro bono work at some point during their legal career.
- 55% reported having undertaken work which fell into the definition of pro bono work used by the Pro Bono Protocol.
- Two-fifths of PC holders had undertaken at least one hour of pro bono work in the twelve month period prior to the survey.
- The majority (92%) of solicitors providing pro bono work during the past year were employed within private practice. A higher proportion of solicitors working in sole practices had undertaken pro bono work compared to those in larger practices.

- A substantial proportion pro bono solicitors within private practice were employed at partnership level (53%). Over two-thirds of sole practitioners (68%) and 63% of equity partners reported conducting pro bono work.

Number of pro bono hours provided

- The average number (using the mean) of pro bono hours worked by PC holders over the past year was 47 hours.
- Private practice solicitors had provided, on average, the most hours of pro bono work over the past twelve months, 49 hours compared to 25 hours by those working in government, and 24 hours by solicitors undertaking pro bono within commerce and industry.

Financial value of pro bono work

- The estimated value of pro bono work across all private practice solicitors is £510,613,053, equivalent to approximately 2.6% of the total turnover generated by solicitor firms.



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Approach

- During June and July 2012, 2,267 telephone interviews were conducted with Practising Certificate Holders in England and Wales. Interviews were conducted on behalf of the Law Society by Moulton Hall Ltd, an independent research agency.
- A group of 1,503 individuals were selected at random from the three sectors (private practice, government and the 'employed sector'). The additional 764 interviews were used as a booster to the private practice sample, to facilitate robust analysis in relation to ethnicity and gender.
- The random 'core' sample data has been weighted by gender and by years of post qualification experience (PQE) to ensure that findings are representative of the population of PC holders for these characteristics.
- Analysis in this report is based on the random core sample only.

- Sample sizes and confidence intervals associated with the random core are shown below.

Confidence intervals for core sample

Sector	Population	Core sample size	C.I + / - %
Private practice	86,608	756	3.55%
Government	7,510	349	5.12%
Commerce and industry	14,311	402	4.82%
All PC holders attached to an organisation	108,429	1,507	2.51%



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Defining pro bono work

- The Pro Bono Protocol - the best practice guidelines endorsed by the Law Society, Bar Council and ILEX defines 'pro bono work' as -

“Legal advice or representation provided by lawyers in the public interest including to individuals, charities and community groups who cannot afford to pay for that advice or representation and where public funding is not available

Legal work is Pro Bono Legal Work only if it is free to the client, without payment to the lawyer or law firm (regardless of the outcome) and provided voluntarily either by the lawyer or his or her firm’.

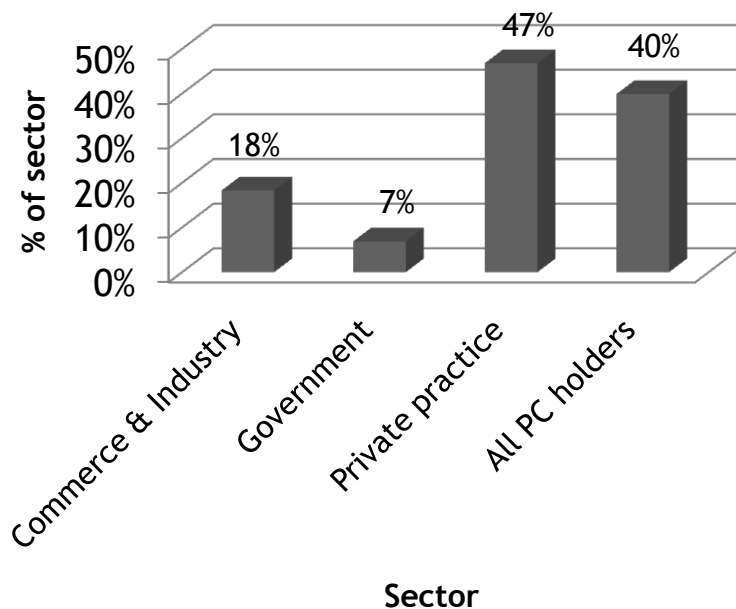
- This is a narrower definition than that used by the Law Society in previous surveys. The new definition excludes legal aid work and the work by solicitors who are paid to provide ‘free services’.

- As a result, findings are not directly comparable to previous survey reports. However, a similar pattern does emerge. Prior to the 2012 survey, pro bono had been described as the ‘delivery of free legal services to individuals, organisations and communities in need’. In 2011, almost three-fifths of PC holders (60%) indicated that they had conducted pro bono work at some point during their legal career and 41% had conducted pro bono work during the twelve months prior to the survey.
- Under the protocol definition, 55% of all PC holders had done work at some point during their legal career. Forty-percent had conducted at least one hour of pro bono work during the year prior to the interview.

92% of PC holders conducting pro bono work are employed within private practice

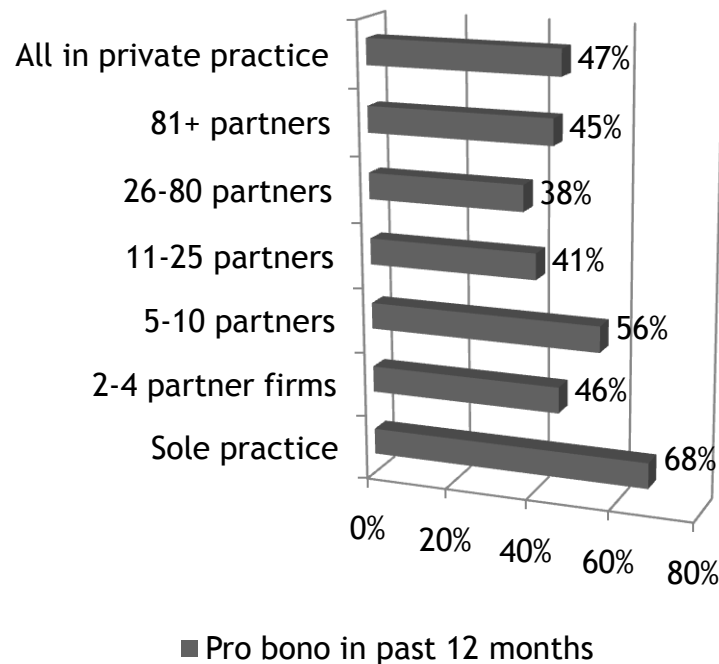
- Almost half of private practice solicitors had undertaken pro bono work during the last year (47%), compared to less than one-fifth (18%) of solicitors working in commerce and industry and one-tenth (7%) of those employed in government.

Pro bono undertaken in past 12 months, by sector (n=1,503)



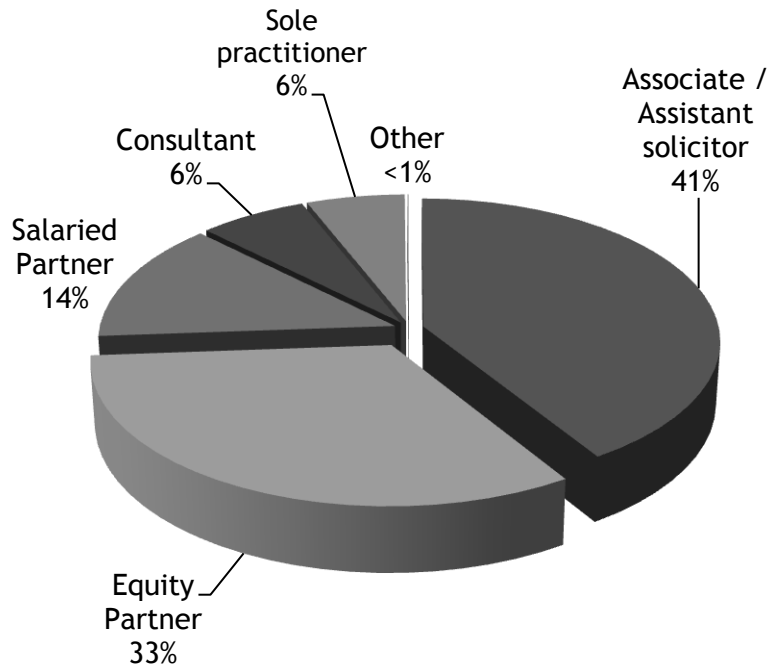
- Within private practice, two-thirds of solicitors working in sole practices reported having conducted pro bono work (68%).

Pro bono work undertaken in past 12 months, by size of firm (n=756)



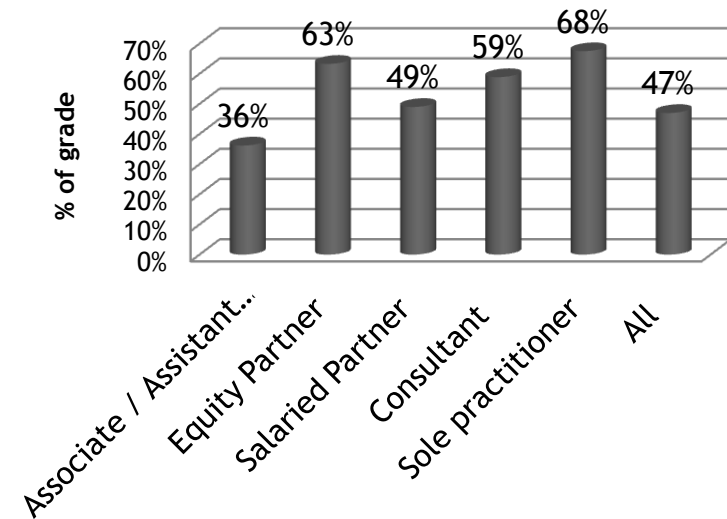
Within private practice, just over half of solicitors doing pro bono work were at partner level (53%)

Private practice grade of pro bono solicitors (n=399)



- A higher proportion of sole practitioners (67%) and equity partners (63%) reported having undertaken pro bono work during the past 12 months, compared to those in other positions (49% of salaried partners and 33% of assistant/associate solicitors, a likely reflection of seniority and autonomy).

Proportion of private practice grade conducting pro bono work (n=755)



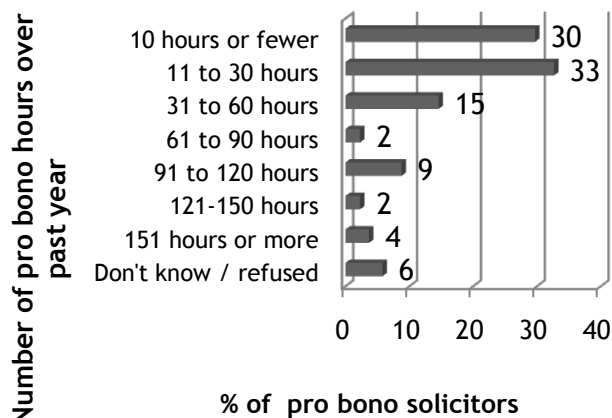


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Hours of pro bono work

- The average number (using the mean) of pro bono hours worked by PC holders over the past year was 47 hours.
- Private practice solicitors had worked, on average, the most hours, 49 hours compared to 25 hours by those in government, and 24 hours by pro bono solicitors within commerce and industry.
- Almost two-thirds of PC holders providing pro bono work had spent 30 hours or less on this work type over the past year.
- Within private practice, those in more senior grades worked the highest average number of hours, again a likely consequence of autonomy.

Number of pro bono hours worked over past year (n=431)



Private practice grade	Average (mean) number of hours
Equity partner	60
Sole practitioners	46
Assistant/associates	44
Salaried partners	43
Consultants	39



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The financial value of private practice pro bono work is estimated at £510m

- The financial value of pro bono work conducted by private practice solicitors during 2011-12 is estimated at **£510,613,053** equivalent to approximately **2.6%** of the total turnover generated by solicitor firms.
- This calculation is based on the 304 respondents who gave an absolute number of pro bono hours undertaken during the past twelve months and their charge out rate.

Value calculation 2012	
Average charge out rate	£256
Average number of pro bono hours	49 hours
Average value of pro bono work	£12,544
Total number of solicitors in private practice ¹	86,608 solicitors
% of private practice doing pro bono work	47%
Number of solicitors doing pro bono work	40,706
Total financial value of private practice pro bono	£510,613,053
Total turnover (July 2012)	£19,820,836,654
Estimated % of total turnover	2.6%
¹ Source: Law Society, July 2012, unpublished research	