



The Law Society

# Trends in the solicitors' profession Annual Statistics Report 2016

## June 2017

Representing, promoting and supporting solicitors

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# Key statistics on the solicitors' profession for 2015 and 2016

	31 July 2015	31 July 2016	Annual % change
<b>Solicitors on the Roll</b>	<b>168,226*</b>	<b>175,160</b>	<b>+4.1%</b>
<b>Solicitors with Practising Certificates (PCs)</b>	<b>133,367</b>	<b>136,176</b>	<b>+2.1%</b>
<b>Private practice firms registered in E&amp;W</b>	<b>9,403</b>	<b>9,430</b>	<b>+0.3%</b>
Women solicitors with PCs	65,147	67,393	+3.4%
Women partners	8,098	8,105	+0.1%
Solicitors from minority ethnic groups with PCs	18,547**	19,145	+3.2%
Solicitors working in private practice ***	91,062	91,166	+0.1%
Solicitors employed outside private practice	26,242	26,894	+2.5%
New solicitors admitted to the Roll (in year to 31 July)	6,077	6,346	+4.4%
Trainee solicitor registrations (in year to 31 July)	5,457	5,728	+5.0%

\* The number of solicitors on the Roll from 2015 is not directly comparable with total Roll numbers from previous years, following cessation by the SRA of an annual exercise of updating Roll records.

\*\* Following a change to online provision of ethnicity information by solicitors in 2014 there is a greater incidence of non-reporting than before that date.

\*\*\* Private practitioners in England and Welsh law firms.

# Executive summary

## Qualified solicitors and firms

- As at 31 July 2016 there were 136,176 solicitors with practising certificates (PC holders), and 175,160 individuals in total on the Roll of solicitors. The number of solicitors with practising certificates was 2.1% higher than at 31 July 2015, with the total number on the Roll 4.1% higher than a year earlier. The Roll increase is likely to reflect the SRA's decision to cease an annual Roll keeping exercise from 2014.
- Representation of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups amongst PC holders rose to 16% in 2016 and has more than doubled over the past 15 years. The proportion of female PC holders in BAME groups (57%) was greater than the share amongst those of White European origin (48%).
- In 2016 the number of PC holders working in-house was 2.5% higher than a year earlier. This led to further expansion of the share of all practising solicitors working in-house: from 16% of PC holders in 2001 to 22% in 2016.

Chart 1: Solicitors on the Roll in England and Wales

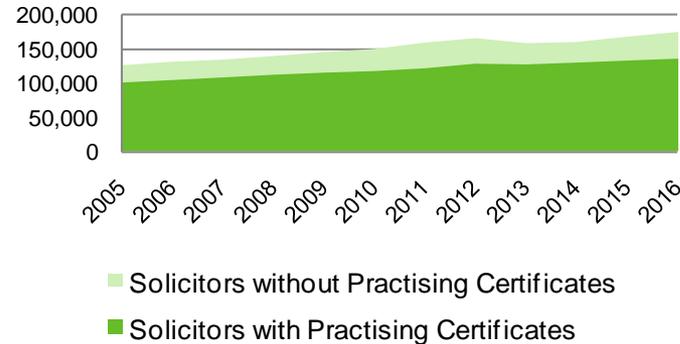
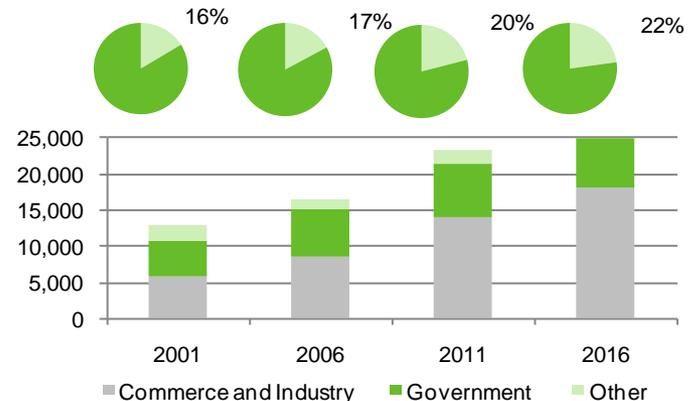


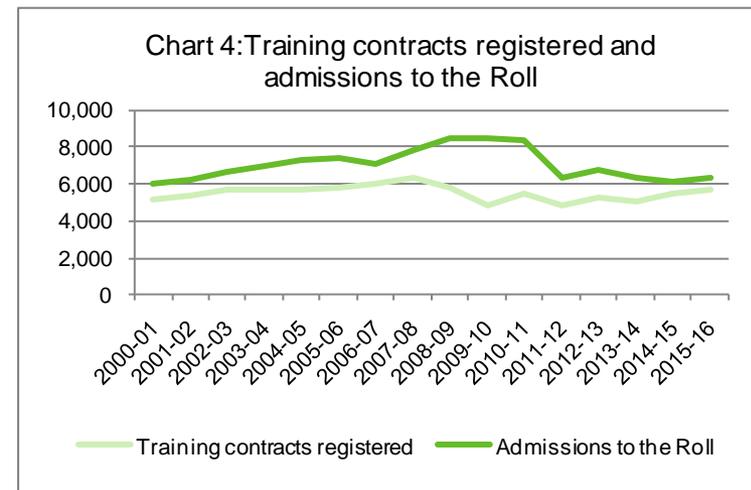
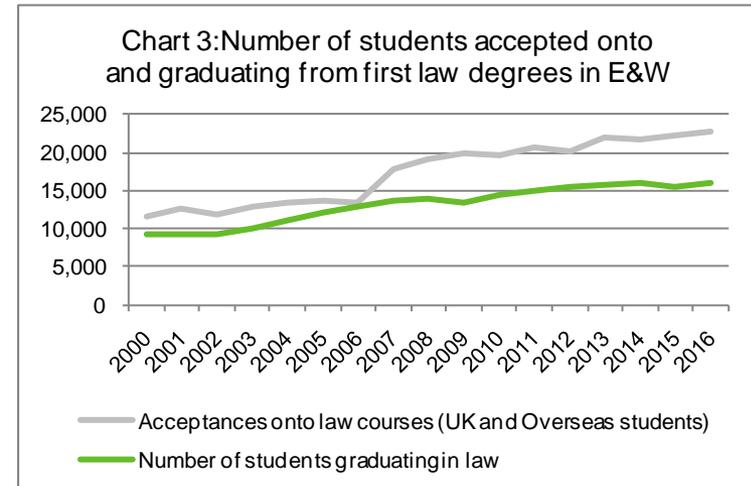
Chart 2: In-house share of employed solicitors with in-house levels by employer type



# Executive summary

## Development and entry of new solicitors

- A total of 15,950 students graduated with first degrees in law from universities in England and Wales in 2016 – up 3% on levels recorded in 2015. The number of students accepted onto first degree law courses in England and Wales for the academic year 2016-17 was 2% higher than for 2015-16, with the number of male acceptances increasing for the first time since 2013.
- The number of trainee registrations in the year to 31 July 2016 was 5% higher than in the previous 12-month period. Continuing the long-term trend, registrations for women represented 62% of all registrations. The increase in the number of trainee registrations (271 in 2016), was almost evenly split; 49% of additional trainee registrations were for men, 51% were for women.
- After two years of decline, the number of new admissions increased by 4% on 2014-15 figures, to 6,346. Roll admissions grew strongly throughout the early 2000s, peaking at 8,491 in 2008-09, but fell back and stabilised over the subsequent period.



# Introduction

The Law Society's Annual Statistics Report (ASR) has been compiled for over thirty years and therefore provides a comprehensive picture of how the solicitors' profession has evolved over the long-run in terms of size and structure. The Report provides an authoritative record of the numbers of solicitors and the types of organisations they work for.

The emphasis of the ASR has tended to be on private practice which continues to employ the majority of practising solicitors. However, the numbers now employed in-house by organisations ranging from FTSE and private companies to local authorities now make up almost one-quarter of the profession. This year's report continues to show steady growth of the in-house sector.

The report maintains the approach to compiling data that was initiated in 2014. The new approach reflects changes to the Management Information systems used by the Law Society Group, requiring different arrangements for extracting and manipulating raw data to generate the tables for the ASR. Historically production of ASR figures from source databases was undertaken by a third party. The 2014-2016 reports use data sourced with the help of the Business Intelligence (BI) team at the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), with tables generated by the Law Society's Research

Unit. Care has been taken to ensure consistency with the historical data presented.

Information on the solicitors' profession contained in the ASR is unique in terms of the depth of analysis of individuals and firms. Consistent timing of data capture during the year permits reliable time-series analysis (see Appendix A for details on the timing of data collection).

Part 1 of the Report focuses on qualified solicitors, sectors and the entities in which they work, and provides some analysis of the diversity within the profession. Here, the focus is on solicitors holding practising certificates. As Part 1 explains, the approach to the keeping of the Roll of solicitors (including those not currently practising) changed in 2015 from previous years. The focus of Part 2 of the report is the route to qualification as a solicitor and entry into the profession.

The ASR is part of a suite of in-depth research and economic analyses undertaken by the Law Society's Research Unit. Please contact Joanne Cox with any queries or comments on the report:

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# The Law Society Research Unit and acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by Joanne Cox and Steve King of the Law Society's Research Unit. Thanks are also due to Edward Self of the SRA BI team for assistance in supplying and providing support on the data, and to UCAS and HESA for supplying data used in Chapter 5.

The Research Unit designs, conducts and commissions research and analysis in order to provide information about the legal services market to solicitors and evidence to underpin the Law Society's strategy and policy development. As such, the Unit helps the Council of the Law Society to assess the changing nature of the profession, and respond to those changes in an informed way.

The Research Unit has published reports on the shape, nature and size of the profession, as well as particular issues within legal service provision, public perceptions of solicitors, the work and organisation of the solicitors' profession, entry to the profession, how solicitors manage their practices, and comparisons with legal professions based in other jurisdictions.

## **Get a copy of the full report**

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