

Barristers' Working Lives 2025

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings from the latest survey of barristers' working lives, following previous surveys carried out from 2011 onwards with the most recent being in 2023. The survey was designed to explore a range of topics relevant to those working as a barrister in 2025, such as experiences of in-person and remote hearings, access to justice, barristers' wellbeing and work-life balance, experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination, career development, professional ethics, and views about Bar Council services. The research was conducted by the Institute for Employment Research and Employment Research Ltd for the Bar Council.

The full results to the survey are presented within the report. The findings related to the key themes of bullying, harassment and discrimination, access to justice, and professional ethics are summarised here (and deeper explorations into access to justice and ethics will be published in separate reports).

Experiences of bullying, harassment, and discrimination

The proportion of barristers who reported that they had personally experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination at work or while working online in the last two years was lower than the proportion in 2023, reversing the steady increase that had occurred from 2017 to 2023. Overall, just under one in three barristers (31%) reported personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination, down from 35% in 2023, while the proportions in the 2017 and 2021 surveys were 21% and 30% respectively.

Experiences of bullying or harassment in person at work was the most commonly reported type of negative behaviour, mentioned by 24% of barristers, while 14% of barristers said that they had personally experienced discrimination at work, 10% said that they had experienced bullying or harassment while working online, and 5% said that they had personally experienced discrimination while working online. These proportions were slightly lower than those in the 2023 survey.

In addition, barristers were asked if they had observed any incidents of bullying, harassment or discrimination. One in ten respondents (10%) had observed incidents but not personally experienced any themselves. Thus 41% of barristers had either experienced incidents themselves, in person or online, or observed them, down from 44% in 2023 but slightly higher than the figure of 38% in 2021.

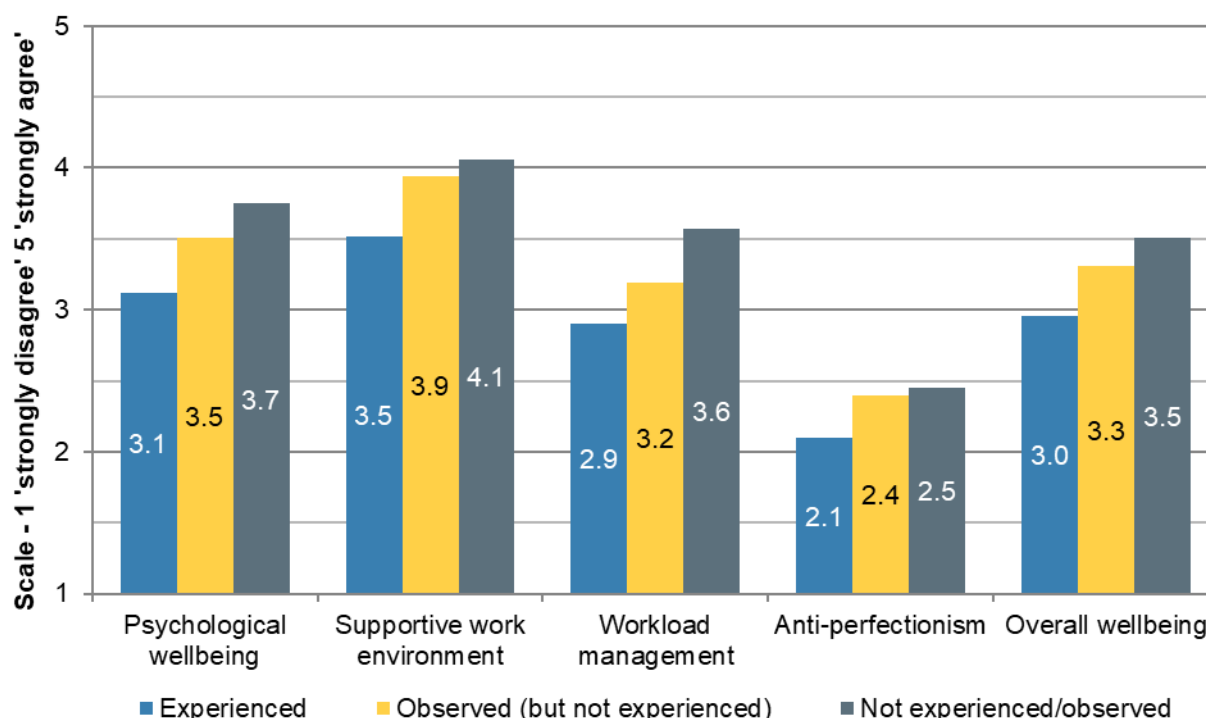
Barristers with certain characteristics were more likely than others to report experiencing or witnessing bullying, harassment or discrimination. By practice area, barristers in criminal and family practice were most likely to have personally experienced or observed bullying, harassment or discrimination (55% and 52% respectively) while those in

commercial and chancery practice were least likely (27%). The likelihood of experiencing or observing bullying, harassment or discrimination decreased with time since Call to the Bar, from 51% of New Practitioner barristers in their first two years since Call, to 33% of later practice barristers with 23 years or more since Call.

Barristers with protected characteristics under the Equality Act were significantly more likely than other barristers to report experiences of bullying, harassment and discrimination:

- 46% of female barristers reported personal experiences compared with 18% of male barristers.
- 48% of barristers from black ethnic backgrounds, 47% of those from Asian backgrounds, 42% of those from mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds, and 41% of those from other ethnic backgrounds reported personal experiences, compared with 28% of white barristers.
- 52% of barristers with a disability reported personal experiences compared with 28% of those without a disability.
- 41% of barristers with non-Christian beliefs reported personal experiences compared with 30% of those with Christian beliefs and 27% of those with no religious beliefs.
- 40% of bisexual or gay barristers reported personal experiences compared with 29% of heterosexual barristers.

Experiencing incidents of bullying, harassment or discrimination, or even observing them, had a negative impact on barristers' working lives, as it had done in the previous two surveys. Figure 1 shows that barristers who personally experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination were neutral about their overall wellbeing, while barristers that neither experienced nor observed these behaviours were positive. The disparity was apparent across all wellbeing factors and was largest for workload management. Observing, but not experiencing, bullying, harassment or discrimination had a smaller negative effect on wellbeing scores, in comparison with those that neither experienced nor observed these behaviours, and again this was apparent across all of the wellbeing factors.

Figure 1 Wellbeing factor scores by experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Exploring below the broader wellbeing factors to the individual statements that comprise them, personally experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination had the greatest negative effects on:

- I do not tend to feel down or low in spirits;
- I am able to integrate the things that are most important to my life and work;
- Within the environment in which I work, I feel comfortable to express my opinions, thoughts and ideas; and
- Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole.

Thus, the effects of bullying, harassment and discrimination may be more widespread than on the individual who experiences the negative behaviour and may impact on the broader work environment in which the behaviour occurred.

When asked what the bullying, harassment or discrimination related to, gender was the most common response (39%), while age and race were also commonly mentioned (17% mentioning each); however 34% of respondents said that it was another form of discrimination or bullying unrelated to protected characteristics or to class. Barristers who experienced discrimination only and did not report bullying or harassment were most likely to say it was related to gender (54%) or race (39%). Ridicule or demeaning language, and misuse of power or position, were the most commonly reported types of bullying or discriminatory behaviour, mentioned by around three fifths of barristers who experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination, while around one in three (30%) mentioned

overbearing supervision, undermining of work output or constant unproductive criticism. Three quarters (76%) of barristers who experienced or witnessed sexual harassment said that it took the form of sexual or sexist comments, remarks or sounds, while inappropriate physical contact and sexual propositions were each mentioned by two fifths of respondents.

Members of the judiciary and more senior barristers (but not heads of chambers) were most commonly cited as the individuals responsible for the bullying, harassment and discrimination, as was the case in 2023. Just over half (53%) of barristers who experienced or observed bullying or harassment said that the perpetrator was a member of the judiciary and 36% said it was a more senior barrister, while 35% of barristers who experienced or observed discrimination said that a member of the judiciary was responsible, and 37% said that it was a more senior barrister. The most common location where barristers experienced or observed bullying, harassment or discrimination was court, mentioned by three fifths (61%) of respondents who had experienced or observed these negative behaviours, while two fifths (43%) said that it happened at the workplace, 15% said via remote working, and 10% said at a work social event.

Just under one in three respondents (29%) who had experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or discrimination had reported the incident, slightly higher than the proportion in the 2023 survey of 26%. Reports were most commonly made to barristers' employer or chambers, or to another barrister (47% and 27% respectively), while 21% (18% in 2023) had used the Bar Council's Talk to Spot app. Relatively few had reported to the Bar Standards Board (BSB) (12%, the same as in 2023). Reporting incidents to employers or chambers, or to another barrister, generally led to more satisfactory outcomes than reporting to the BSB or the Talk to Spot app.

The most common reasons for not reporting an incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination were very similar to those in the 2023 survey, and were fear of repercussions, mentioned by 43% of those that did not report an incident after experiencing or observing one, followed by profile/status of the perpetrator (38%), lack of confidence in reporting procedures (27%), not wanting to revisit the incident (25%) and feeling that the incident was endemic to the workplace (22%).

Access to justice

The survey asked barristers whether or not they thought that people were able to access justice at an acceptable level in England and Wales at the time of the survey. Overall, one in five (22%) said that people were able to access justice at an acceptable level, two thirds (63%) said that people were not able to access justice at an acceptable level, and 15% said that they did not know. Excluding the "don't know" responses, 26% of barristers felt people could get adequate access to justice and 74% said that they could not.

There were substantial differences in response by practice area, with only 21% of barristers in criminal practice feeling that people could access justice adequately, compared with 24% of barristers in civil practice, 27% of those in commercial and

chancery, and 32% of those in family practice and personal injury/professional negligence.

Those respondents who did not think that access to justice was at an acceptable level at present were asked to comment on why they felt this was the case, and the key messages are summarised below. However it should be borne in mind that the responses were unprompted remarks following a negative answer to the general question '*are people able to access justice at an acceptable level*', with explanations as to why this might be the case, and responses ranged from long accounts detailing the respondent's reasoning, to very brief or even one-word answers such as '*delays*', '*costs*', '*underfunding*' or '*backlogs*', or short summaries along the lines of '*the whole system is a shambles*'.

- **Endemic court delays** were almost universally cited by those who felt justice was not at an acceptable level, with delays affecting every level of the justice system, from criminal trials to civil and family proceedings. Trials were routinely delayed by months or even years, undermining confidence in outcomes and deterring complainants and witnesses, and cases often collapsed due to these delays, particularly in criminal and family courts.
- There were widespread mentions of the **legal aid crisis**, with severe underfunding and restrictive eligibility criteria leading to "legal aid deserts," particularly in immigration, family, and housing law. Legal aid rates were so low that many experienced solicitors and barristers had left the sector, leaving clients without competent representation, and respondents noted that even eligible individuals struggle to find providers willing to take on legal aid work.
- **Unsustainable legal costs** were also commonly mentioned, with respondents viewing civil and family court fees as prohibitively expensive, and giving numerous examples of fees exceeding the recoverable costs. Middle-income individuals – too wealthy for legal aid, too poor for private representation – were felt to be particularly disadvantaged. The high cost of litigation was felt to foster inequality and deter legitimate claims, while fixed fee regimes disincentivise quality advocacy.
- The growth in **Litigants in Person (LiPs)** was placing unsustainable pressure on the courts and judicial time, as LiPs often struggled with complex procedural rules and failed to present cases effectively, which prolonged hearings and led to unjust outcomes.
- **Infrastructure and staffing issues**, such as court closures, a shortage of judges, deteriorating court buildings, and a lack of administrative staff, were frequently mentioned. While remote hearings might alleviate some of the issues, there was also a feeling that they could create new access barriers for the digitally excluded.
- **Backlogs in the criminal justice system** were felt to be particularly acute, and criminal trials were commonly delayed for three years or more. This led to defendants remaining in custody or on bail for extended periods, while victims suffered prolonged trauma and often disengaged from proceedings. The quality of case preparation had declined due to lack of time and overworked legal professionals.
- Finally, there were also **equality and fairness concerns**, as structural barriers disproportionately affected vulnerable people, such as people on low incomes, disabled

people, immigrants, and those without legal knowledge. In family cases, inconsistent legal aid provision between parties (e.g. alleged abuser vs. alleged victim) was a particular factor undermining fairness.

The widespread backlogs and delays in the system, coupled with the funding and equality issues, led many respondents to the overall conclusion that '*justice delayed is justice denied*'.

Professional ethics

This year's survey included a section asking barristers about their understanding of the barristers' code of conduct and their professional ethical obligations, support and training in relation to ethics, and factors that caused challenges with their professional ethics.

Overall, barristers felt that they had a very good understanding of the code of conduct and their professional ethical obligations, with 54% rating their understanding as 9 or 10 on a scale of 1-10 where one represented no understanding at all and 10 represented understanding it fully, 39% giving a score of 7 or 8, and only 7% rating it as 6 or less.

Barristers working in criminal practice gave higher ratings of their understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethical obligations, with 61% giving a score of 9 or 10, while those working in civil practice gave the lowest ratings with only 49% giving a score of 9 or 10. Employed barristers gave lower ratings of their understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethical obligations than those working in a self-employed capacity.

Barristers' rating of their understanding of the code of conduct and their ethical obligations tended to decrease somewhat over the first 12 years since their Call, and then increased; barristers with 8-12 years since Call were least likely to give a score of 10 and were most likely to give a score of less than eight.

One in three respondents (33%) said that they had ethical questions that required support a few times a year, or more frequently, while 61% said that they very seldomly had ethical questions that required support, and 6% said they never had ethical questions, or they did not seek support for them. More than half of barristers in the young Bar (up to 7 years since Call) had ethical questions a few times a year or more frequently, while only one in five later practice barristers (23 years or more since Call) had ethical questions at that level of frequency.

Regardless of whether or not respondents had ethical questions that required support, they would most commonly turn to colleagues, or senior colleagues/managers, for support with ethical issues, with 79% and 70% respectively saying they would be very likely to use these sources of support, while 46% said they would be very likely to use the BSB handbook. Barristers generally felt that they had sufficient support in meeting their professional ethical obligations, with 56% saying that they definitely had sufficient support and a further 37% saying that they had sufficient support to some extent. Views on the sufficiency of support were strongly correlated with barristers' views on their understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethical obligations.

One in three barristers (33%) said that they had undertaken training or another form of continuous professional development (CPD) on professional ethics within the last year, and a further 35% said that they had undertaken training or CPD between one and five years ago. However, 6% said that they had undertaken training or CPD more than 20 years ago, and 11% said that they had never received any formal training, or that they did not know if they had undertaken any training or CPD on professional ethics. Recent training was associated with higher ratings of barristers' understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethics. Colleagues, and senior colleagues/managers were the most likely sources of ethical training that barristers would turn to, followed by the Bar Council's Ethics and Practice Hub website.

Barristers were asked about the extent to which a range of issues had caused them challenges with their professional ethics, and very few reported that issues had caused them ethical challenges to a great extent. Pressure from clients to act in a way that might be unethical was the issue that caused the most widespread challenges, with half of barristers (515) reporting that it caused them challenges (3% to a great extent, and 48% to some extent). This was followed by maintaining independence (3% to a great extent, 29% to some extent), and pressures from others to act in a way which might be unethical (1% to a great extent, 19% to some extent).

1 Introduction

In autumn 2024 the Bar Council commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to undertake the sixth working lives survey of the Bar. These surveys, first conducted in 2011 by IES, and supported by Employment Research Ltd, provide a wealth of data and insight into the profession. In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic forced a delay to the survey, which was put back just over a year, to April 2021. As such the 2021 survey was something of an anomaly being conducted in unusual times: the impact of the pandemic led to a series of changes to working patterns, backlogs in cases and new modes of working. In 2023 the survey was conducted at a point in time when a 'new normal' had been established, and as such provides a valuable insight into a changing profession. The survey this year examines how these new working patterns have bedded down after another two years. It also looks at changes over time across a multitude of working life characteristics.

The main objectives of the 2025 survey and report included:

- Providing demographic and employment data and information on the profile of the Bar, including information on equality and diversity issues within the Bar for different areas of practice, Silk and sectors of the Bar (i.e. employed and self-employed, both within chambers and sole practitioners).
- Income, earnings and finances, including details of pension contributions, income declared at Practising Certificate renewal and standard hourly rates charged. The section also looks at earnings and workload in publicly funded practice and the volume of work that comes from crime prosecution and magistrates' courts.
- Following on from the evaluation of remote hearings in 2023 the report looks at how use of remote hearings has changed in the last two years in relation to physical attendance, whether or not problems have been addressed/minimised and views of how they might be used going forward. This section also includes analysis of barristers' views of extended operating hours and the introduction digital projects in recent years.
- Understanding the current wellbeing of barristers and their views on work-life balance, comparing responses with an identical series of questions in 2021.
- Exploring current workload and working hours, distribution of work, levels of pro-bono work provided and views of how barristers would like to see their working lives change.

- Investigating the degree of bullying and harassment and discrimination at the Bar, both experienced in person or online and witnessed, and views of the sources and how it has been dealt with by employers and the profession.
- Presenting views of practice and career development and working practice, in relation to reviews, mentoring and appraisals as well data on involvement in public access and international work.
- Examining the views of the Bar in relation to sustainability and Net Zero including strategies, policies and initiatives currently employed or seen as worthwhile in improving sustainability.
- Collating views on professional ethics and the support and training received in addressing ethical issues that arise in the course of barristers' practices.
- Take up and use of Bar Council services and payment and views of the Bar Representation Fee are also addressed.

Where possible comparisons are made with data and findings from previous surveys of the Bar.

1.1 The survey

The survey in 2025 followed a slightly different approach to those adopted in the previous three iterations being mailed individually to all barristers but also, as in previous years, marketed through a wide variety of communication channels over a period of approximately four weeks. As a result, the survey was not anonymous this year, to allow the follow up of non-respondents and achieve a slightly better response rate.

1.1.1 Questionnaire design

Much of the content of the survey was predetermined to provide some continuity with previous versions. As in the previous two surveys, questions developed at the University of Portsmouth concerning work-life balance and wellbeing (see chapter 6) were included, to allow for changes over time in the wellbeing of the profession between the surveys to be explored. Again, the Bar Council was interested in examining the extent of bullying, harassment, and discrimination at the Bar, and comparing these figures with previous surveys.

Most questions were formulated by the Bar Council in conjunction with IES and discussed in a series of steering group project meetings between the Bar Council and IES.

The final survey was redrafted several times to incorporate suggestions from the Bar Council and a small pilot survey of barristers, and was finalised in early April 2025 for emailing to members on 30 April.

1.2 Sample

The survey was sent to all barristers registered with the Bar Council and wider communication was also used to promote the survey via BarTalk emails (an e-newsletter that goes to all practising barristers) and social media and adverts/mentions in *Counsel* magazine. This improved methodology increased the response rate to over 25% which provides sufficient responses to allow for analysis by important sub-groups of barristers. The Barristers' Working Lives survey is the only mechanism for surveying the entire Bar and, as such, provides key monitoring data for the profession.

The total population of barristers registered with the Bar Council contains 17,773 records and all those registered were sent an invitation to take part.

1.2.1 Survey process

The first emails were distributed on 30 April 2025 and the survey remained open for five weeks, during which time three reminders were sent out, as well as various further communications from different professional practice groups within the Bar, Specialist Bar Associations, the Circuits, and Inns, as well as directly from the Chair. The survey was finally closed on 5 June 2025.

1.3 Response information

After removing identifiable duplicates and insufficiently completed questionnaires, this response included a total of 4,603 returns (including usable partial returns – identified as anyone who had completed at least one of the substantive sections of the questionnaire).

17,773 barristers received personal emails inviting them to participate in the survey. After removing those who opted out or where invitations had bounced back, this left a sample of 17,067. Just under 30% accessed the survey and 27% completed at least enough of the survey to be included in the final response set of 4,603. This represents a significantly higher response than achieved in the previous two surveys in 2023 and 2021, where around 21% completed the survey, including partial responses.

This response is felt to be excellent during a time when obtaining responses to online surveys is challenging.

Table 1.1 Aggregate response details 2025

	Numbers:
Whole membership	17,773
Opted out ¹	465
Bounce backs/disabled	241
Valid sample	17,067
Not started	12,736
Opened link	265
Partial completion	622
Saved	154
Completed	4,010
Usable partials	594
Total usable dataset	4,603
	Response rate:
Accessed survey ²	29.6%
Usable response rate ³	27.0%

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Before presenting the main substantive analysis and commentary it is useful to show the distribution of respondents comparing these figures with the Bar population data. This gives an indication of where there may be some bias in the respondent profile. Tables 1.2 to 1.4 show the aggregate response information across some key variables of interest.

Table 1.2 shows that across the main areas of practice (where barristers spend at least 70% of their working time) the respondent profile is broadly similar to the Bar population, albeit containing a slightly higher proportion of barristers working in commercial practice areas and a slightly lower proportion of barristers working in criminal practice than is the case across the population.

¹ From feedback these were included members who said they were retired or that the survey was not relevant to them, or they did not agree with the purpose of the survey, or just had no time or did not want to take part.

² Includes all those who at least opened the survey, completed all or some of the survey.

³ Includes everyone who completed some of the survey but including section B or C onwards. These two sections were deemed as important so all responses here were included in the data set.

Table 1.2 Broad area of practice: respondents to the survey and Bar population (2023 figures/proportions in brackets)

	Survey respondents	% respondents	% Bar Population
Criminal	1,108 (960)	24.1 (27.2)	27.1
Civil	1,080 (790)	23.5 (24.0)	22.7
Personal injury/professional negligence	514 (404)	11.2 (11.4)	8.9
Commercial	952 (584)	20.7 (16.5)	17.0
Family	786 (699)	17.1 (20.1)	16.6
Other/International	163 (88)	3.5 (2.5)	6.4
All responses	4,603 (3,535)	100.0 (100.0)	100.0

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table 1.3 presents the analysis by area of practice, along with the broad categories into which each individual area of practice was grouped. Throughout the tables here, and in the remainder of the report the figures in brackets are the 2023 figures.

Other than in criminal practice as shown above, there is very little difference between the response distribution of participants compared with 2023 or the Bar population.

Table 1.3 Detailed area of practice: respondents to the survey and Bar population (2023 figures/proportions in brackets)

	Respondents	Percentage in survey	Percentage across the whole Bar	Main groups for analysis
Admiralty	7 (2)	0.2	0.1	Civil
Arbitrator or Umpire or Mediator	30 (16)	0.7	1.2	Civil
Chancery (Contentious)	266 (194)	5.8	4.2	Commercial
Chancery (Non-Contentious)	9 (10)	0.2		Commercial
Commercial & Financial	567 (317)	12.3	11.2	Commercial
Competition	54 (24)	1.2	0.8	Commercial
Construction	80 (60)	1.7	1.4	Civil
Crime	1108 (960)	24.1	27.1	Criminal
Defamation	21 (20)	0.5	0.1	Civil
Employment	191 (146)	4.1	3.6	Civil
European	10 (1)	0.2	0.1	Other/Int'l
Family (Children)	619 (578)	13.4	16.6	Family
Family (Other)	167 (147)	3.6	-	Family
Immigration	80 (68)	1.7	2.2	Civil
Insolvency	56 (39)	1.2	0.8	Commercial
Intellectual Property	53 (24)	1.2	1.1	Civil

	Respondents	Percentage in survey	Percentage across the whole Bar	Main groups for analysis
International	79 (33)	1.7	1.5	Other/Int'l
Landlord & Tenant (Non-Residential)	28 (21)	0.6	2.5	Civil
Landlord & Tenant (Residential)	79 (61)	1.7	-	Civil
Licensing	3 (3)	0.1	0.1	Civil
Other Common Law	86 (58)	1.9	1.8	Civil
Personal Injury	383 (307)	8.3	6.4	PI/PN
Planning	70 (42)	1.5	1.3	Civil
Professional Discipline	93 (61)	2.0	1.9	PI/PN
Professional Negligence	38 (36)	0.8	0.5	PI/PN
Public Law	302 (225)	6.6	5.9	Civil
Revenue	50 (44)	1.1	1.1	Civil
Other	74 (38)	1.6	1.2	Other/Int'l
Mixed	0 (0)	0	4.8	Other/Int'l
Total	4,603 (3,535)	100	100	

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

This year the under-representation of the employed Bar is not as great as has been the case in previous years. The new methodology, and a concerted effort to raise awareness among employed barristers, seems to have reaped a positive response from this key section of the Bar.

Table 1.4 highlights the employed/self-employed Bar disparity in responses and the fact that this gap has reduced this year with employed barristers representing 13.4% of all respondents compared with 16.9% of the population. In 2023 just 9.8% of respondents were from the employed Bar. Similarly, 1.8% of respondents work in both the self-employed and employed Bar, despite dual capacity barristers being 2.7% of the Bar population. These differences are sufficiently small to not have to require weighting the data on these key variables.

Table 1.4 Section of the Bar: respondents to the survey and Bar population (2023 figures/proportions in brackets)

	Survey respondents	Percentage respondents	Percentage Bar population
Employed practice only	615 (345)	13.4 (9.8)	16.9
Self-employed practice (in chambers)	3,772 (3067)	81.9 (86.8)	80.4 ⁴
Self-employed practice (sole practitioner)	136 (73)	3.0 (2.1)	
Both (Self-employed AND employed practice)	81 (50)	1.8 (1.8)	2.7
<i>All responses</i>	<i>4,604 (3,535)</i>	<i>100 (100.0)</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

The only other areas where there was a significant difference in the respondent profile compared with the population was in 'stage of career', as indicated by 'year of Call', and sex. To simplify the analysis and presentation of results, a number of variables are conflated into broad groups, including time since Call. This has been grouped into six broad categories:

1. The young Bar (new entrants) (0–2 years into their careers)
2. The young Bar (3–7 years since 'Called to the Bar')
3. Middle practice (8–12 years)
4. Middle practice (13–17 years)
5. Middle practice (18–22 years)
6. Later practice (more than 22 years).

It is important to note though that the length of time since Call is not necessarily commensurate with length of service, as some respondents may well have taken career breaks. The age of barristers has also been conflated into five broad groups: under 25s; 25–34; 35–44; 45–54; 55–64; and 65 plus. It is interesting to note that there are a small number of barristers among respondents aged 65 plus who are in the young Bar (n=10, 12 in 2023).

⁴ The population data does not break the self-employed Bar down in to 'chambers' and 'sole practitioners'.

Table 1.5 Time since Call: respondents to the survey and Bar population (2023 figures/proportions in brackets)

	No. respondents 2025 (2023)	Percentage respondents 2025 (2023)	Percentage respondents 2021	Percentage respondents 2017	Bar Population 2025
Young Bar new practitioners (0-2 years)	217 (94)	4.7 (2.7)	2.2	3.6	4.3
Young Bar (3-7 years)	840 (391)	18.2 (11.1)	13.5	11.0	13.9
Middle practice (8-12 years)	577 (491)	12.5 (13.9)	14.8	14.9	13.0
Middle practice (13-17 years)	634 (496)	13.8 (14.0)	13.9	28.7 ⁵	13.1
Middle practice (18-22) years	658 (459)	14.3 (13.0)	15.8		12.9
Later practice (23 years or more)	1,677 (1,604)	36.4 (45.4)	39.7	41.9	42.8
<i>All responses</i>	<i>4,603 (3,535)</i>	<i>100.0 (100.0)</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

A third (36%) of respondents were from the later stages of their careers, compared with 43% of the population. This proportion is lower than recorded in 2023 when 45% of respondents were in the later stages of their career. This is explained by the fact that younger barristers were more likely to respond to the email invitation and engage with the survey, hence the increased numbers of respondents from the young Bar (23% of respondents compared with 14% in 2023 and 18% across the population in 2025).

There remains a difference in response patterns by sex, although this has narrowed significantly since 2021, with 43% of all respondents being female compared with 41% of the Bar population. The split of the whole Bar by sex has changed little in the last 15 years. In 2011 female barristers made up 37% of the whole Bar.

Again, some analysis of the impact of these disparities was conducted and there was little evidence that weighting the data altered the results significantly when compared with the unweighted data. It was decided that the data should not be weighted as this provides for easier comparisons with previous years, more transparent reporting, as well as more easily interpreted data but, again, differences by stage of career, age band and sex will be highlighted in the analysis in the following chapters where necessary.

Table 1.6 highlights that although this year the young Bar were more likely to engage with the survey (as demonstrated above in table 1.5) there are disproportionate numbers of older barristers in the response set. This is largely because older barristers, once starting the questionnaire were slightly more likely to get to the end of the survey and complete the biographical questions, than their younger colleagues.

⁵ In the 2017 survey the two middle practice categories were combined.

Table 1.6 Age band: respondents to the survey and Bar population (2023 figures/proportions in brackets)

	No. respondents 2025 (2023)	Percentage respondents 2025 (2023)	Bar Population 2025
Under 35	546 (518)	14.0 (16.9)	18.8
35 – 44	943 (790)	24.3 (25.8)	27.0
45 – 54	1,082 (901)	27.7 (29.5)	26.3
55 – 64	926 (622)	23.7 (20.3)	20.6
65 plus	400 (227)	10.3 (7.4)	7.4
Valid total	3,902 (3,058)	100.0	100.0
Prefer not to say	67		
Missing	410		
<i>All responses</i>	<i>3,535</i>		

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

As in 2023 the Bar Council supplied population data for the income band supplied at the most recent practising certificate renewal. It can be seen from Table 1.7 that there is a response bias in the data here whereby the population of barristers contains a higher proportion of lower income barristers than is the case among the respondents – 17% of all barristers declared an income of £40,000 or less but only 8% of respondents said their declaration was £40,000 or less.

Smaller differences between respondents and the population, in the same direction, were apparent for those declaring incomes up to £90,000, while for those on higher incomes there were proportionally more in the response set than was the case in the population. Again, weighting the data by income level was tested but found it made little or no difference to the key variables, gender, type of practice and stage of career.

Table 1.7 Income band declared at practising certificate fee renewal: respondents to the survey and Bar population (2023 figures/proportions in brackets)

Income band	No. respondents 2025 (2023 ⁶)	Percentage respondents 2025 (2023)	Bar Population 2025 (2023)
Band 1 £0-£40,000	371 (199)	8.2 (5.7)	16.7 (15.0)
Band 2 £40,001-£60,000	282 (358)	6.2 (10.3)	6.0 (11.1)
Band 3 £60,001-£90,000	563 (482)	12.4 (13.8)	12.8 (14.7)
Band 4 £90,001-£150,000	1,001 (935)	22.0 (26.8)	20.1 (21.8)
Band 5 £150,001-£240,000	819 (679)	18.0 (19.5)	18.6 (15.5)
Band 6 £240,001-£350,000	497 (324)	10.9 (9.3)	9.4 (8.1)
Band 7 £350,001-£500,000	339 (204)	7.5 (5.9)	6.0 (5.2)
Band 8+ £500,001 and higher	673 (302)	14.8 (8.7)	10.3 (8.5)
Valid total	4,545 (3,483)	100.0	100.0
Missing	59 (52)		
<i>All responses</i>	<i>4,603 3,535</i>		

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Also, reflecting the fact that more higher income barristers completed the survey there is also a higher proportion of King's Counsel in the response set than is the case across the population, 17% compared with 12%.

The other areas where it is possible to compare with the population data include:

- **Ethnicity:** 17% of the population are from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with 16% of the survey respondents
- **Disability:** Nine per cent of the population are recorded as having a disability (although there is a lot of missing data) and 10% said they had a condition that affected their day-to-day activities that had lasted for a year or more, while 11% of survey respondents reported having a disability.
- **Childcare:** a third (33%) of the Bar population said they are the primary carer for a child(ren) under 18, the same as recorded in the survey (34%)
- **Adult care:** 15% of the population of barristers said they have adult caring responsibilities compared with 17% of the survey respondents.
- **State school educated:** Six in ten barristers in the Bar Council data said they went to a state school, 33% to a fee-paying school compared with equivalent figures from the 2025 survey of 56% and 36%.

The main equality and diversity variables (i.e. ethnicity, sexuality and religious affiliation) have been collapsed into broad groups, as the numbers of barristers in the minority groups are mostly not sufficient to enable further analysis. However, where there are

⁶ In 2023 the band started at £0-30,000 this was increased to £40,000 in 2025 and other bands remained unchanged.

large statistical differences in specific smaller groups, in particular specific ethnic minority groups, these will be reported in the commentary.

In summary, the data are broadly representative of the population, but where differences in the data are reported by sector (employed/self-employed), area of practice, stage of career, income band and age band, there will be a marginal impact on the aggregate results for these particular questions.

1.4 Report structure

The following chapters report on the substantive sections of the questionnaire, highlighting differences between key employment break variables including area of practice, type of work (employed/self-employed), junior/KC status, income banding, and reliance on publicly funded work. In addition, differences in response within key demographic variables (age, sex, ethnicity) and others including disability, sexuality, caring responsibilities and region will also be explored.

The report is divided into the following chapters, broadly following the structure of the questionnaire:

- Chapter 2: Employment and demographic profile of respondents.
- Chapter 3: Finances: income, hourly rates and pensions
- Chapter 4: Courts and tribunals: experiences of in-person/remote hearings.
- Chapter 5: Sustainability and the Bar Council's involvement in supporting progress toward net zero.
- Chapter 6: Wellbeing and work-life balance
- Chapter 7: Working hours and patterns.
- Chapter 8: Pro bono work.
- Chapter 9: Bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
- Chapter 10: Practice and career development.
- Chapter 11: Bar Council services.
- Chapter 12: Professional ethics

2 Employment and demographic profile of respondents

This chapter summarises the respondents to the survey, presenting correlations between different employment and demographic variables to help understand the patterns of response to the main substantive sections of the survey. First, it looks at the main correlations between the key demographic variables used in the survey, and highlights where there are notable differences to figures reported in 2023.

2.1 Demographic profile

The data here are presented as summaries for each variable. In summary:

- 43% (48% in 2023) of all respondents were female.
- 38% (43%) were aged under 45 and 34% (28%) were 55 plus.
- 16% (14%) of all respondents were from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Just under half of respondents indicated they had no religion and 44% said they were Christian, the same as in 2023.
- 9% said they were LGBTQ, the same as in 2023.
- 17% (18%) said they have adult caring responsibilities and a third (34%, 37% in 2023) had caring responsibilities for a child.
- Over half (56%) of respondents indicated that they went to state schools (36% independent schools). These figures are slightly different to those recorded in 2023 when 65% went to state and 29% to independent schools. Schooling was correlated with age and this year there were relatively fewer respondents in the data set who completed the biographical data.
- A third (32%) went to Oxbridge, 37% to Russell Group universities and 27% to other UK universities.
- At age 14, 51% of respondents lived in homes where the main household earner was in a senior management position or in one of the 'traditional' professions (4% were in homes with barristers or judges). A further one in four (23%) were in homes where the main household earner worked in one of the 'modern' professions.
- One in nine (11%) respondents were recorded as having a disability. This year more detail was sought concerning the nature of the disability with nine options and respondents could select more than one. Of all respondents, 5% said they had a neurodivergent or mental health disability (some also had a physical disability) and a further 5% had a physical disability but no neurodivergent disability.

There was significant variation in the demographic make-up of different sub-groups of barristers, and these are explored further below, alongside changes in the profession over time comparing demographics in this survey with those presented in previous Barristers' Working Lives (BWL) surveys, as well as comparing with the Bar Council's own statistics.

The Appendix tables (Tables A1-A13) present summary demographic data for each of the key variables, showing differences by sector (employed versus self-employed Bar), stage of career (in decades), stage of practice (young, middle, later practice), age band, type and area of practice, region, Circuits, Specialist Bar Associations, Inns, income bands and KC/junior barristers.

2.1.1 Sex and gender

As shown above, this year the response from female barristers was more representative of the Bar population than in previous years. Just over four in ten of all respondents (43%) were female barristers (2% did not want to say). In 2017 the equivalent figure was 40%.

The key demographic differences between male and female barristers were:

- Female barristers were more likely to be in the younger age groups. One in four (24%, 18% in 2023) were aged over 54, compared with 41% (37%) of male barristers in the same age group. Conversely, 18% (22%) were aged under 35, compared with 11% (12%) of male respondents.
- Fewer female barristers were in their 'later practice' (23 or more years since Call). Just 7% qualified pre-1990 compared with 20% of male barristers and one in four (27%) were in later practice compared with nearly a half (46%) of male barristers).
- Partly reflecting the above age profile, and partly societal norms, nearly half of female barristers 44% (45%) were the main carer for children under the age of 18, compared with one in four male barristers (27%). Both these figures are more or less the same as recorded in 2023 but slightly higher than in 2021.
- In addition, despite more male barristers being of an age that might suggest they were more likely to have elderly relatives to care for, more female barristers reported having regular caring responsibilities for elderly relatives or other adults with care needs (21%, compared with 14% of male barristers). Although these are similar results to 2023 the gap between male and female barristers has widened marginally.
- More male barristers reported having been educated at independent schools than female barristers (41% and 29% respectively). Again, more or less the same figures as reported in 2023.
- As reported in previous surveys there were no differences between male and female barristers in sexuality and religious affiliation.
- More female barristers report having a disability (12%) compared with male (9%), both in physical and neurological categories.

- This year there were two additional demographic questions included in the survey: University attended; and the occupation of the main household earner when the respondent was aged 14.
- The university attended by respondents differed significantly by sex. Over a third (36%) of male barristers went to Oxbridge compared with 27% of female barristers, with females more likely to have gone to other UK universities, including Russell Group (69% compared with 59% of male barristers).
- Female barristers were less likely to come from homes where the main earner was a senior manager or from one of the traditional professions including barrister (47% compared with 55% of male barristers) but more likely to come from a home where the main earner was in a modern profession (25% compared with 21% of male barristers).

Of all those who answered the question, fewer than 1% reported that the gender they identified with was not the same as the sex registered at birth, and 3% did not want to say.

2.1.2 Ethnic and religious composition of the Bar

This sub-section summarises the key demographic differences for the main broad ethnic groups. Of those who answered the question, more than four in five respondents identified as white (84%, 86% in 2023), 6% from Mixed backgrounds, 6% as Asian/Asian British, 4% black or black British, and 2% as from other ethnic origins (additionally 4% did not want to report their ethnic origin). The largest ethnic minority group was Indian, which accounted for 3% of all those who answered the question. There has been a marginal increase in representation of barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds but by and large these figures are the same as those reported in 2021 and 2017.

- As in 2021 and 2023, reinforcing the reliability of the data, more black and black British barristers were female than across the whole profession (58%, compared with 42% of white barristers). Across all barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds, 59% were female.
- Slightly fewer barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds were aged 65 plus (7% compared with 11% of white barristers responding to the survey).
- There was no significant difference between different ethnic minority groups in their likelihood to report being a main carer for a child under 18. However, there was some difference in the likelihood of having adult caring responsibilities with 20% of barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds having these responsibilities compared with 16% of white barristers. These differences were smaller than recorded in 2023.
- Many more barristers from white backgrounds reported having no religious affiliation (49%, compared with 29% of barristers responding to the survey from ethnic minority backgrounds) and this difference had widened slightly from 2023.
- In terms of education, three times as many barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds reported being educated abroad or in international schools while fewer were educated in UK independent or fee-paying schools (29% compared with 37% of white respondents).

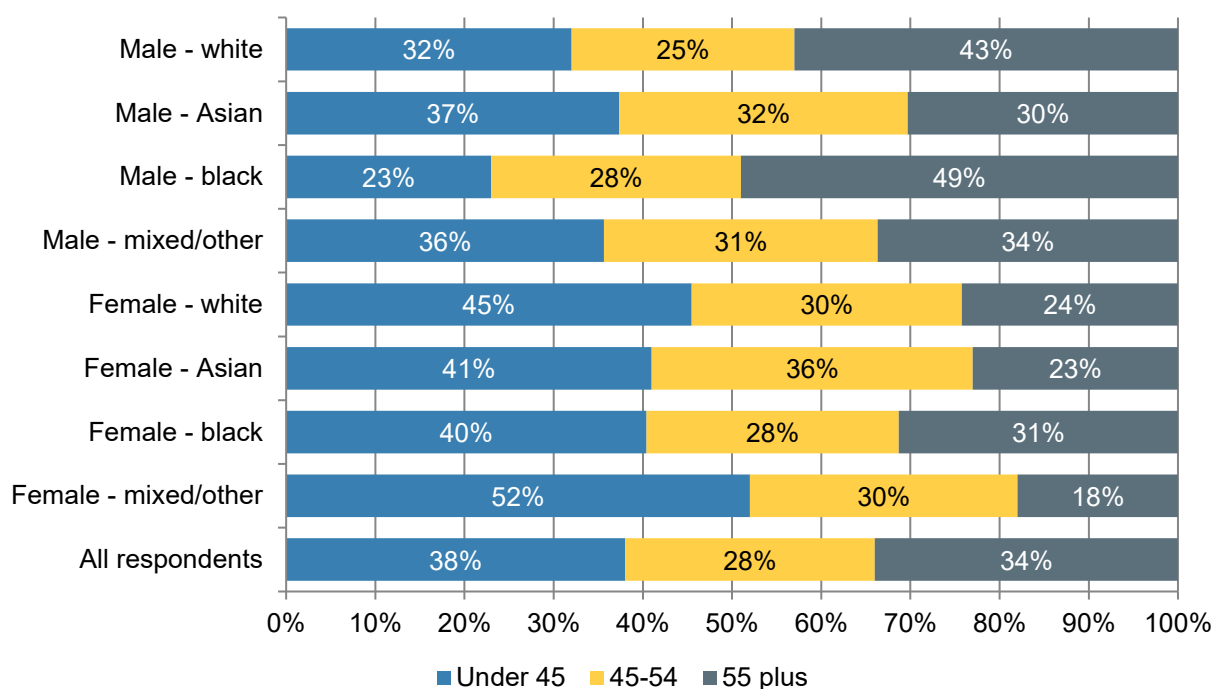
- There were no statistical differences by ethnicity in likelihood of indicating LGBTQ or having a disability.
- Barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds were less likely to have come from homes where the main earner was in professional occupations (47% senior management and traditional professions and 19% modern professional backgrounds) than white respondents (52% and 23% respectively). A third (34%) came from homes where the main earner was in unskilled manual/service occupations compared with one in four (25%) of white barristers.
- Finally, fewer barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds went to Oxbridge than their white counterparts (23% compared with 34% of white barristers).

Looking at responses to the religious affiliation question, nearly half of barristers (45%) said they do not identify with any religion, slightly fewer than in 2023 but similar to the 2021 figure. A similar proportion (44%) said they were Christian, with the next largest groups being Jewish (5%) and Muslim (2%). Taken together, barristers reporting Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh religions amounted to 3% of the total.

The intersectionality of ethnicity and sex was an important differentiating characteristic at the Bar, and to this end a composite variable has been created in the last two surveys to conflate these data, that incorporates both variables. Appendix Table A12 summarises the key demographics of this composite variable.

White and Black Afro Caribbean males had older age profiles than all the other groups, and in particular white and Asian females.

Figure 2.1 Sex and ethnicity: broad age band profiles (percentages)



2.1.3 Age and the Bar

This section presents a brief summary of the demographic differences between the age bands included in the survey (under 35, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64 and 65 plus). Across all respondents, one in five – 18%, slightly fewer than in 2021 (20%) – were aged under 35, one in four (27%) were aged 35–44, 30% aged 45–54, 19% were between the ages of 55 and 64 and 5% were aged 65 plus. Comparing with the Bar Council records these figures were more or less the same as across the whole Bar. The demographics of respondents by age group are summarised in Appendix Table A5.

Female barristers made up 43% of all respondents but just 38% of barristers responding to the survey aged 45 plus (46% of respondents aged 45–54, 34% of those aged 55–64 and 21% of those aged 65 plus). At first glance, given that female barristers have made up relatively higher proportions of the younger age groups in the Bar in previous surveys as well as this one, it would seem that attrition from the Bar in Middle and later practice was higher among women than it was among men. However, looking at the respondents from 2012, just under half (48%) of barristers responding to the survey who were in the first 12 years of their career were female and this figure is almost identical to the proportion recorded this year who were 12–24 years into their careers (49%). This would suggest that there was little difference between men and women in attrition from the profession in the 12 years between these surveys.

- Older barristers were less likely to be from ethnic minority backgrounds (11% of those aged 65 plus compared with 17% of those aged under 55).
- Older barristers in the survey were more likely to declare that they have a religious affiliation (66% of those aged 65 plus compared with 47% of those aged under 45).
- Almost five times as many barristers aged under 35 reported being LGBTQ (19% compared with declining proportions among the older age groups and just 4% of the 65 plus age group). This is more or less the same as in 2023.
- Older barristers responding to the survey were more likely to have attended UK independent schools – 40% of those aged 45 plus compared with 31% of those aged under 45. Among those aged 65 plus, 42% went to UK independent schools.
- One in four (22%) respondents aged 45 plus had adult caring responsibilities compared with 9% of those aged under 45.
- Barristers aged 35–44 and those aged 45–54 were most likely to have childcare responsibilities (respectively: 55% and 53%). This compares with 37% across all respondents and just 12% of those aged 55 plus and 14% of those aged under 35. All these figures are more or less the same as recorded two years ago.
- Barristers over the age of 44 were more likely to come from homes where the main household earner was in a skilled/semi-skilled manual or service occupation (29%) and less likely to come from homes where the main earner was in a modern profession (20%) than was the case among barristers aged under 45 (22% and 27% respectively).
- Perhaps surprisingly those aged 45 plus were less likely to have gone to Oxbridge (30%) or a Russell Group university (34%) and more likely to have attended another

UK university (31%) than their younger colleagues (where 35%, 41% and 20% respectively attended Oxbridge, Russell Group and other UK universities).

Appendix Table A1 shows how the key demographics of the Bar have changed over time, showing cohorts of barristers currently working by when they were Called to the Bar. The key changes are:

- Females were better represented among those who were Called after 2000 but there has been little change since then. Only 21% of those who were Called pre-1990 were women, and 38% of those who were Called between 1990 and 1999, but over 50% of all those who qualified in the 2000s and later were female. This suggests either attrition during their careers, or increased representation among females at least up to 2000-2010.
- A growth in ethnic minority representation up to the early 2000s Call but little change since then (12% of barristers Called pre-1990, 16% of those Called 1990 to 2000, 17% of those Called 2000-2020 and 19% of those Called in the 2020s).
- A steady growth among those who say they have 'no religion', from 33% of those who were Called pre-1990 to 54% of those Called in the 2020s.
- A similar significant growth over the Call decades among those who declared as LGBTQ from 6% of those Called pre-2000 to 19% of those Called in the 2020s.
- Little change in the proportion of barristers who were Oxbridge educated over the Call decades, hovering at just over 50% of all barristers responding to the survey.
- A similar minimal change in the proportion who state they were state school educated, again at around 50% of each cohort.
- An increase from under one in five barristers who were Called pre-2000 to 30% of those Called in the 2020s who say they come from homes where the main household earner was in a modern profession.
- A significant increase in the proportion of barristers by Call decade who indicated they have a disability, and neurological disability in particular. In terms of neurological disabilities less than 1% of those who were Called pre-1990 indicated they had a condition of this type while 12% of those who were Called in the 2020s said they had this type of condition.

2.1.4 Disability

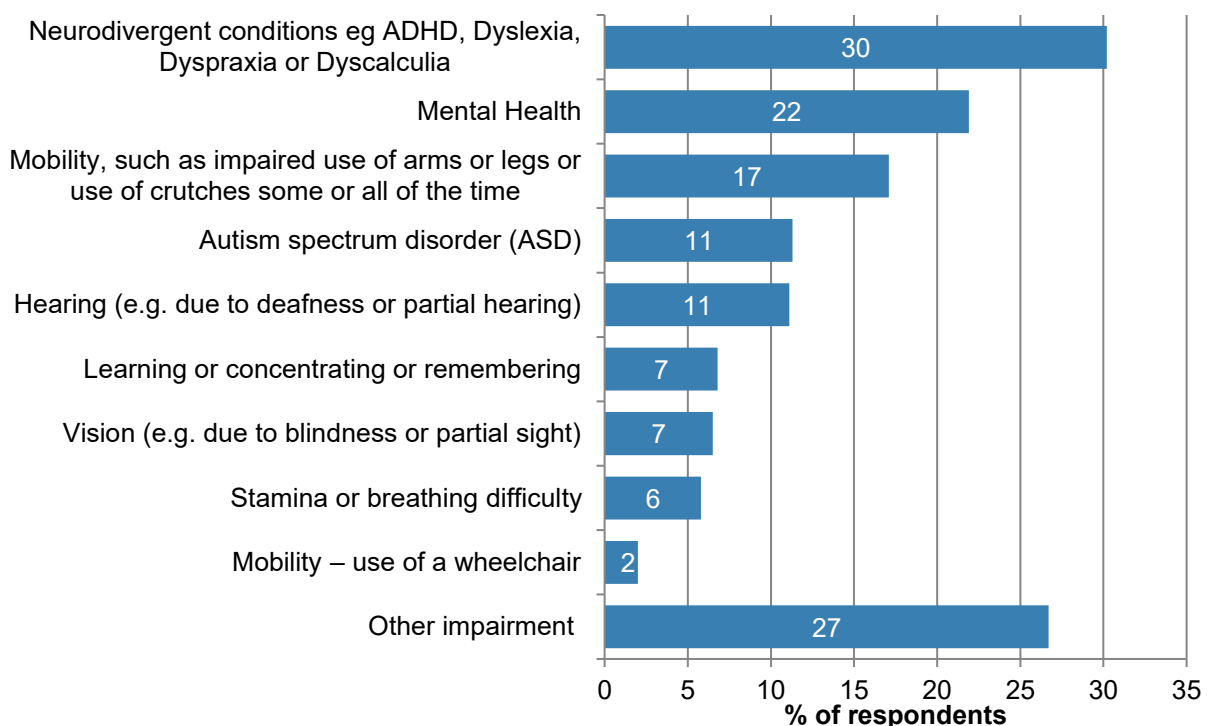
As the last point in the previous section demonstrates, in recent years there has been a significant increase in the proportion of barristers responding to the survey who have indicated that they have a disability as defined by the 2010 Equality Act, the overall figure doubling from 8% among those who were Called pre 1990 to 16% among those who were Called in the 2020s.

One in nine (11%, 408 respondents) reported a disability. This figure is slightly higher than that recorded by the Bar Council database (9% of those providing information, although there is a large amount of missing data). However, as demonstrated above there

has been a large increase in recent years in those recording a disability so the Bar Council wanted to explore the nature of the disability and therefore introduced a subsidiary question to gather more detailed information about respondents' conditions.

All those who recorded a disability were then asked to indicate the nature of their disability. Figure 2.2 shows the distribution of respondents across different types of disability. Of those who indicated they had a disability, 379 respondents provided further details, 18 preferred to not say and there were 11 non-respondents. Respondents could indicate more than one condition, and many did. A new variable was created whereby if respondents indicated any one of the mental health/neurodivergent conditions they were given a 'neurological' issue code, and then all those who were left but only indicated a 'physical' condition formed the remainder in a binary code. This ensured that each respondent could only be counted once in the new variable.

Figure 2.2 Nature of disability: percentages



Source: IES/Bar Council: *Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=397)*

Three in ten (30%) of respondents who declared a disability said they had 'neurodivergent' conditions including but not limited to: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Dyscalculia. A fifth (22%) said they had mental health issues, 11% had Autism Spectrum Disorder and 7% said they had difficulties learning, concentrating or remembering. Of the physical conditions the most commonly cited was mobility issues including impaired use of arms or legs and/or use of crutches some or all of the time. Just 2% said they used a wheelchair. 11% had a hearing impairment and 7% were visually impaired.

More than one disability could be declared by respondents. A third (31%) said they had more than one disability and this tended to be among those with neurodivergent

conditions. Just under a half (47%) of those with neurodivergent conditions said they had more than one disability (32% had two conditions and 15% had three or more), compared with 16% of those who said they had a physical condition but no neurodivergence.

In the combined variable described above 200 (5.3%) of all respondents had 'neurological' conditions (some including physical conditions) and a further 179 (4.7%) had physical conditions only. Nine in ten (90%) had no disability. This figure is slightly different to the response to the initial disability question as 18 respondents gave no further details on the nature of their disability, and have been excluded.

The variables most strongly correlated with this combined nature of disability variable were age and time since Call and sexuality. As shown above and in Appendix Table A1, those most recently Called to the Bar were most likely to have indicated that they had a neurological condition (12% of all those Called since 2020 compared with 1% of those Called before 1990 and 4% of those Called between 1990 and 2009 and 8% of those Called between 2010 and 2019).

Similarly, more than twice as many respondents aged under 45 indicated that they had a neurodivergent condition (8% compared with 4% of those aged 45 plus); 6% of those aged 45 plus said they have a physical condition only, compared with 3% of those aged under 45.

There was a strong correlation between sexuality and the combined disability variable. Around one in eight (13%) LGBTQ barristers indicated a neurodivergent condition compared with 4% of straight/heterosexual barristers. More also had physical disabilities only (8% compared with 4%). Among gay/lesbian women this figure rose to 21%, bisexual respondents 15% and gay men 8% and 'other' 20%.

Nine in ten (91%) respondents to the question on sexuality indicated they were straight or heterosexual (the same as in 2023), 4% said they were a gay man, 3% said they were bisexual, 1% said they were a gay woman/lesbian, 1% indicated 'other' types of sexuality, and 6% preferred to not say. These figures were also more or less the same as in 2021 following gradual increases in numbers reporting they were not heterosexual between 2011 and 2021, driven by increases in numbers from younger age groups who were more inclined to report that they were not straight/heterosexual. As reported in 2023, this pattern might have plateaued out now.

2.1.5 Schooling, university and home occupational backgrounds

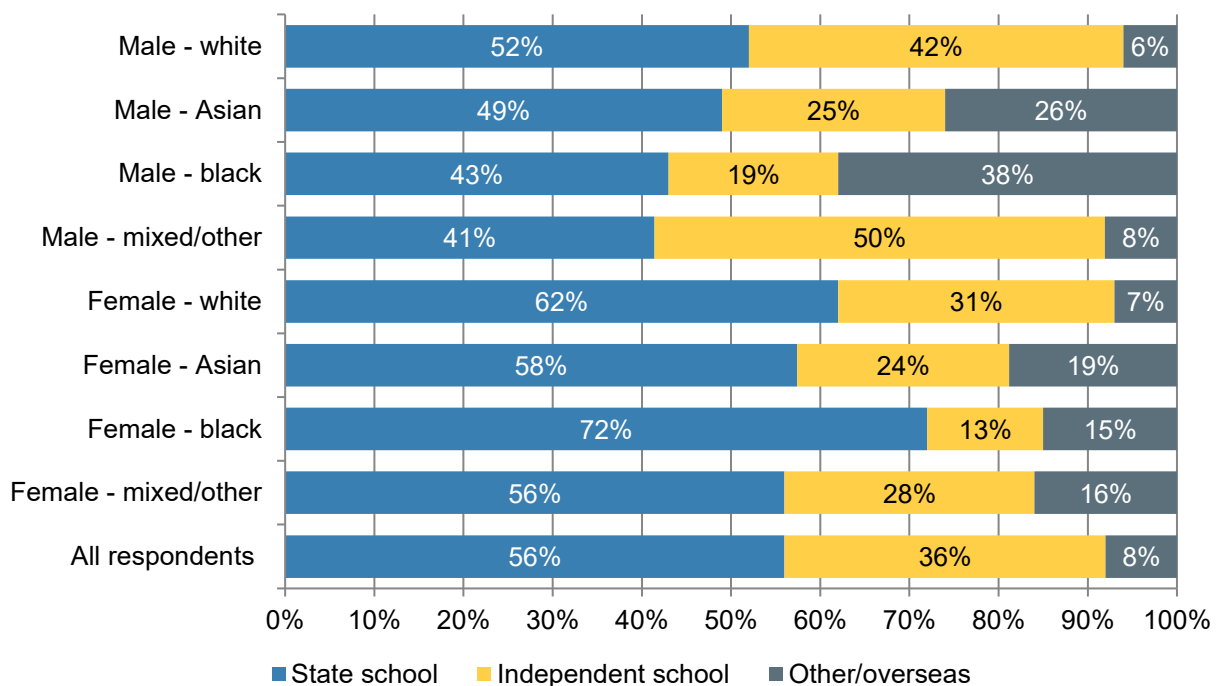
In 2021 the question on schooling was altered to differentiate between respondents who had been to selective schools and those who went to independent schools on a bursary compared, respectively, with all those attending state and independent schools. It is worth noting here that female barristers included in the survey were more likely to have attended state schools than male barristers (62% compared with 53% of male barristers), although this gender difference has narrowed slightly since 2021 (to 64% and 51% respectively).

One in five (19%, the same as in 2023) of those who provided an answer said they went to a selective (on academic, faith or other grounds) UK state school, 38% (37% in 2023) went to non-selective UK state schools, 6% went to a UK independent school with a bursary, and a third (30%, the same as in 2023) went to a UK independent school with no bursary. Other schools, including those outside the UK, were attended by 8%, and 3% preferred to not say.

Fewer female respondents went to independent schools (29%, compared with 41% of males) with 62% going to state schools compared with 51% of male respondents. In addition to this there was a correlation by ethnicity with black and Asian respondents more likely to have gone to schools overseas. Black/black British (16%) and Asian/Asian British barristers (24%), both male and female, were also less likely to have attended independent schools compared with white respondents (37%). The intersection of this and sex is presented in Figure 2.3.

There were correlations with stage of practice/age. Fewer respondents in the young Bar (27%) went to independent schools, compared with 34% of middle practice respondents and 43% of those in later practice.

Figure 2.3 Secondary school background by ethnicity and sex (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,676)

In terms of university attended it is still the case that the Bar contains a high proportion of barristers who attended Oxbridge at just under a third (31%) of all respondents. Just over a third (36%) went to Russell Group universities and 12% went to other research-intensive universities and pre-1992 universities (6% to each) while the remaining 15% went to other UK universities and 3% to non-UK universities, 3% preferred to not say and 1% did not attend university. Key correlations include:

- Female barristers were less likely to have attended Oxbridge (27% compared with 36% of their male colleagues).
- Respondents aged 45 plus were less likely to have attended Oxbridge (30%) and Russell Group universities (34%) compared with 35% and 41% respectively of the under 45 age group
- There were differences by ethnicity with fewer black and Asian barristers having attended Oxbridge (23% compared with 34% of white barristers).
- Just one in four (24%) state school educated barristers went to Oxbridge compared with 46% of those who went to independent schools. Conversely 35% went to 'other' UK universities (not Oxbridge or Russell Group) compared with 16% of barristers educated in the independent sector. This is the strongest demographic correlation with type of school attended.

This year the survey collected details from respondents on their family backgrounds, looking at the type of occupation the main household earner held when respondents were aged 14. Just under one in three respondents were in homes where the main household earner was a barrister or judge (4%) or was in a traditional profession (e.g. architect, doctor, solicitor, accountant, scientist etc.; 26%). For 17% of respondents the main earner was a senior manager or director (e.g. co-ordinating, organising managing, planning work etc.). A fifth (21%) said the main earner was in modern professions (e.g. nurse, teacher, social worker etc.), 9% said the main earner was in technical and craft type occupations (e.g. plumber electrician etc.), 6% in clerical and intermediate occupations (e.g. secretary, PA, clerical assistant etc.) and 9% in semi-routine or routine manual occupations (e.g. postal worker, operative, security, cleaner etc.). Just under one in ten barristers did not give details, with 5% saying they preferred to not say, 2% saying it did not apply to them and 1% saying they did not know.

These were grouped into senior and traditional professional occupations (51%), modern professions (23%) and skilled/semi/unskilled manual and service occupations (26%) to enable further analysis. Younger and more recently Called barristers were more likely to come from homes where the main earner was in a modern profession (30% of those aged under 35 compared with 18% of those aged 55 plus and 30% of the young Bar compared with 18% of later practice barristers).

A third (34%) of barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds came from homes where the main earner was in a service or manual occupation compared with 25% of white barristers.

Not surprisingly there was a strong correlation with parental jobs and university attended. Two thirds (64%) of barristers who went to Oxbridge came from homes where the main earner was a senior manager or in traditional profession. Among those who went to other UK universities (not Oxbridge or Russell Group) 42% came from homes where the main earner was in a skilled/semi/unskilled service or manual occupation. Disabled barristers were more likely to come from manual/service occupational home backgrounds (37%) than those with no disability (25%).

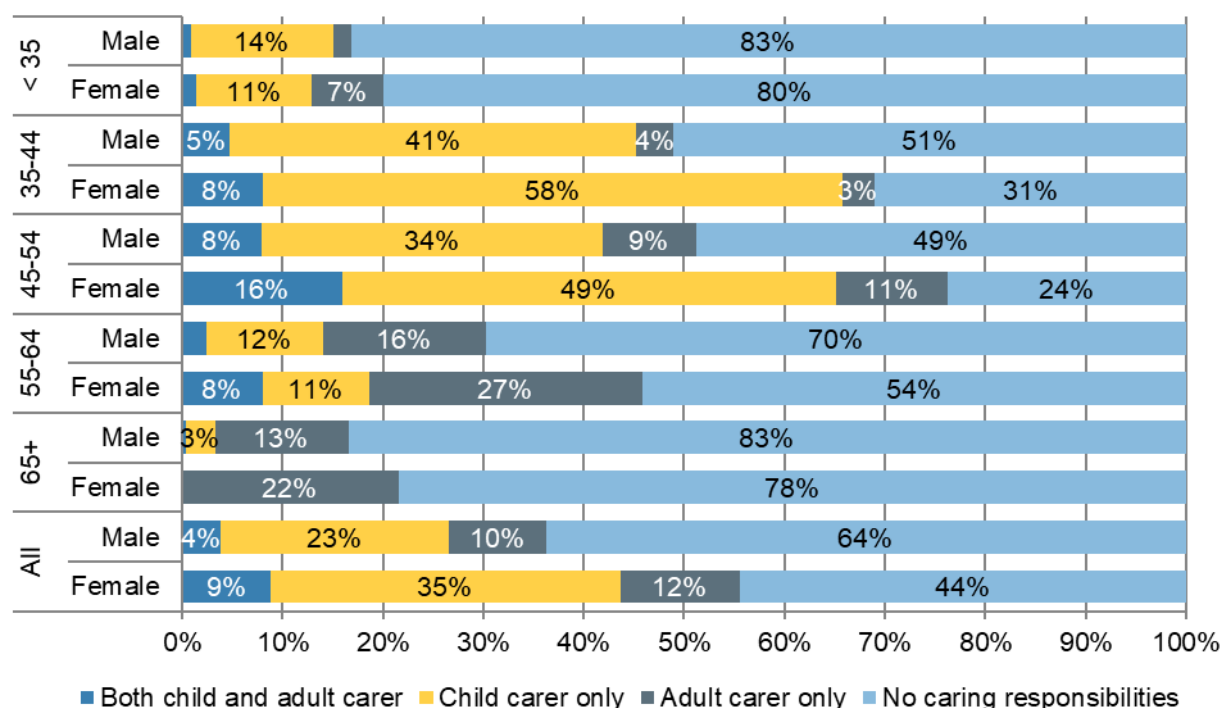
2.1.6 Caring responsibilities

A third of respondents (34%, 36% in 2023) were the primary carer for a child aged under 18 (more or less the same as the 33% of those providing information direct to the Bar Council), and around one in five (17%) had regular caring responsibilities for adults. Nine in ten (91%) of the respondents who undertake adult/elderly care do so between 1-19 hours per week. Both of these figures for caring responsibility are more or less the same as recorded in 2023.

Sex and age were the two demographic characteristics that were most strongly correlated with both child and adult/elderly care responsibility. Four in ten (44%) females were the primary carer for a child (or children) compared with 27% of male barristers. More than half (54%) of barristers aged 35-54 were the primary carer for children compared with just 14% of those aged under 35, 16% of those aged 55-64 and 3% of the 65 plus age group. Middle practice barristers were most likely to be primary child carers (54%).

Looking at adult/elderly caring responsibilities much of the caring commitment falls on 45–64-year-olds where 23% were caring for adults/elderly relatives. In terms of career stage, later practice barristers were most likely to be caring for adults/elderly relatives (23%) compared with 16% of middle practice and 9% of the young Bar. Female barristers were also more likely to be providing care to this group (21%) to 14% of males.

Looking at both caring roles together, 45-54-year-olds were most likely to be doing both and females in particular. Indeed, it was significant that among 45-54-year-old women, just one in four (24%) did not have some caring responsibility and this was half any other combined age and sex figure. There is no doubt that at a key stage in career development females were much more likely to have additional caring demands on their time (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 Caring responsibilities by age group and sex: percentages

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023 (N=3,681)

The demographic profiles of different sections of the Bar are summarised in the tables contained in the Appendix.

2.2 Employment profile

This section looks first at the main employment variables, then at demographic differences in where and how barristers were employed and the correlations between them. This helps to provide a biographical context to underpin the findings from the more substantive sections of the survey.

2.2.1 Section of the Bar

Barristers were classified as: 'employed'; 'self-employed – chambers'; or 'self-employed – sole practitioner'. Very few barristers (2%) worked in dual practice (both employed and self-employed) roles – similar to the national Bar Council statistics (3%). Overall, 13% (10% in 2023) of respondents said they worked at the employed Bar, 82% were self-employed (chambers), and 3% were self-employed (sole practitioners). Appendix Table A2 contains summaries of the demographic distributions by type of employment.

The key demographic differences between sections of the Bar were that mid-career barristers were more likely to be working in the employed Bar than others; 16% of those in middle practice compared with 9% of the young Bar and 13% of later practice. This pattern was also evident when looking at variation by age, with 15% of those aged 35-64

working in the employed Bar compared with 9% of those aged under 35 and 6% of those aged 65 plus.

Fewer barristers early in their careers, the young Bar, were self-employed working as sole practitioners – just 6% compared with 23% across the whole Bar having this status. Working independently as a sole practitioner would seem to be a later stage career move with 60% of sole practitioners being in later practice (23 years into their careers or more). And 30% of sole practitioners were aged 65 plus compared with 10% across the Bar as a whole.

There was a higher likelihood of female barristers working in employed practice (55%), while more male barristers worked as sole practitioners (67%) or both employed and self-employed (65%).

Barristers from black, black British, Caribbean and African origins were significantly more likely to be employed (32% compared with 13% across all barristers). For black females this figure rises to 41% compared with 20% of black males. Barristers with disabilities were also more likely to be in employed practice than those with no disability (21% compared with 13% of those with no disability).

Among the employed Bar, one in five (19%, 21% in 2023) respondents were working in solicitors' firms (26% in 2021, suggesting that there might be a gradual reduction in this area of work for employed barristers). One in five (21%, 18% in 2023) were working for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), 11% for the Government Legal Department (part of the total Government Legal Profession), and 5% for the other areas of the Government Legal Profession, such as the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), HMRC, and the National Crime Agency (NCA)⁷.

One in seven (14%) worked elsewhere in the public sector. Just 5% were working for professional, membership or regulatory bodies, 3% in BSB-regulated entities (including Alternative Business Structures (ABS)), 2% in other regulatory bodies and 2% were employed in charitable, voluntary or third sector organisations. Finally, one in nine (11%) worked for private sector organisations.

Employed barristers at the young Bar were more likely to be working in solicitors' firms (34%) but less likely to be employed at the CPS, GLP or private sector organisations.

Two thirds (66%, 58% in 2023) of barristers employed in criminal practice were working at the CPS, while 38% of those in civil practice were employed at the GLP. A third (32%) of those working in commercial practice worked in solicitors' firms and 36% worked in other private sector organisations. There were insufficient numbers employed in other areas of practice to assess the distribution across different employer types.

⁷ The question changed here in 2025, splitting the Government Legal Profession into two categories; the Government Legal Department (GLD) and CMA/HMRC/NCA.

2.2.2 Area of practice

One in four (24%, 27% in 2023) respondents to the survey worked in criminal practice, the largest area of practice. A similar proportion (24% 22% in 2023) worked in civil practice (including admiralty, arbitration, construction, defamation, employment, immigration, intellectual property, landlord and tenant, licensing, other common law, planning, public law and revenue). One in six (17% 21% in 2023) worked in family practice (children and other family practices), a fifth (21%, 17% in 2023) worked in commercial (including chancery, competition, and insolvency) and 11% (same as in 2023) worked in personal injury/professional negligence. A further 4% (2% in 2023) worked in other or international fields of practice. These figures are similar to those reported in 2023 and as those collected by the Bar Council in their population statistics. Appendix Tables A3a and A3b contain summaries of the demographic distributions across the main areas of practice.

There were fewer barristers who worked in family practice and personal injury/professional negligence at the employed Bar, and more barristers working in international/other areas of practice who were at the employed Bar. Otherwise, the distribution of respondents between the different types of employment was similar by area of practice.

Table 2.1: Broad area of practice by type of work (row percentages)

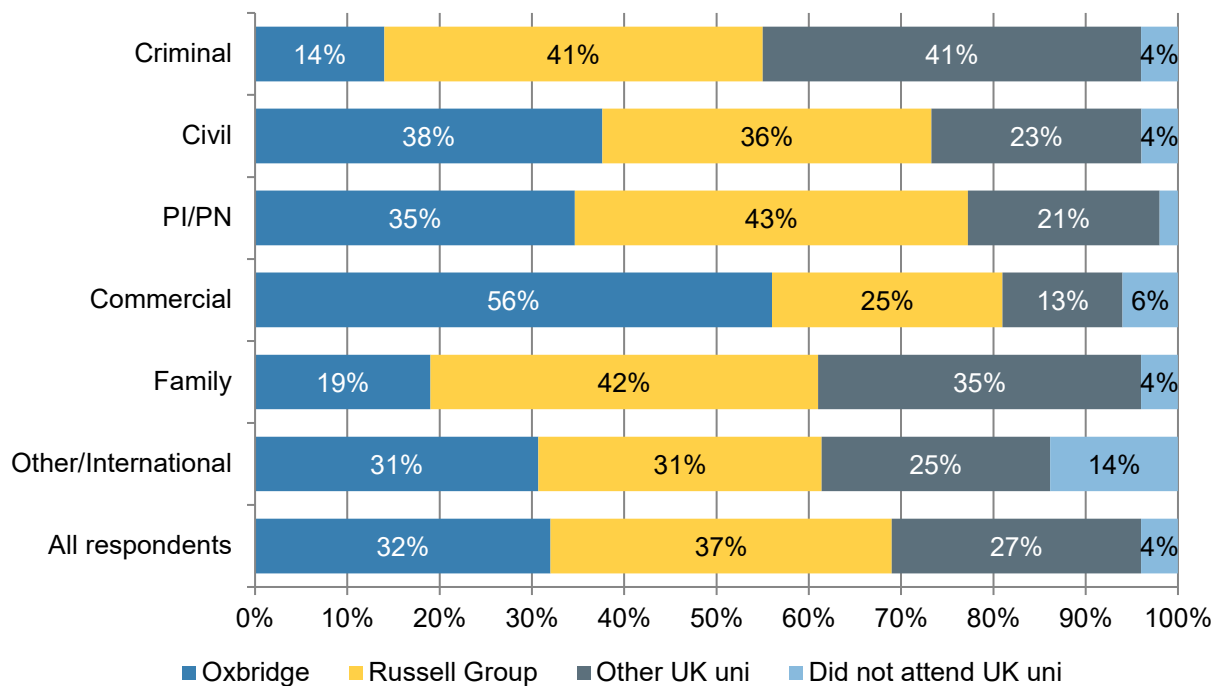
Area of practice	Employed	Self-employed (chambers)	Self-employed (sole practitioner)	Both employed/self-employed	Base N=
Criminal	18%	77%	3%	1%	1108
Civil	17%	77%	5%	2%	1080
PI/PN	11%	85%	2%	2%	514
Commercial	10%	87%	2%	2%	952
Family	3%	94%	2%	1%	786
Other/International	39%	52%	6%	4%	163
All respondents	13%	82%	3%	2%	4603

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023

Difference between respondents in where they worked was correlated most strongly with sex and schooling/university attended – again very similar correlations to those recorded in 2023 and 2021. Female barristers were much less likely to work in commercial areas of practice; just one in four (26%) of respondents in this area were female, compared with 43% of all respondents – and they were much more likely to work in family practice, where 68% of respondents were female. Female respondents were represented in civil (43%), criminal (45%) and personal injury/professional negligence (PI/PN) (34%) areas of practice in similar proportions to the average across respondents from the whole of the Bar.

Schooling and university attended were strongly correlated with practice area. Four in ten barristers (44%) who worked in commercial practice were educated in independent schools, compared with one in three of those respondents who worked in criminal (30%) and family practice (31%). Looking at the university attended by respondents shows that 56% of those who were in commercial practice went to Oxbridge, compared with 14% of those at the criminal Bar, 19% of those in family practice areas, and 38% and 35% of those in civil and PI/PN practice respectively. Figure 2.5 summarises these data.

Figure 2.5 Type of schooling by area of practice (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,645)

Respondents who worked in civil practices were more likely to have disabilities (15%, more or less the same percentage as recorded in the last two surveys) than barristers who worked in all other areas of practice (10%). Further detail on the demographic composition of all areas of practice (as well as the five main groups) is provided in Appendix Tables A3a and A3b.

There was little difference in where the young Bar were employed, being distributed across the main areas of practice in similar proportions to the other stages of practice.

2.2.3 Region and circuits

Respondents were asked to indicate which region their practice was **mostly** based in. Appendix Table A7 presents summaries of the demographic distributions across the different regions. Much Bar work was concentrated in Greater London with more than a half of all respondents (51%) indicating that they mainly worked there, and a further 16% of all respondents worked in the South East.

The key difference across the country was between Greater London and the other regions. In addition to this, the demographic and employment composition of those working overseas had more similarity with Greater London than the rest of the regions across England and Wales.

In particular this was true in terms of the main areas of practice as highlighted in Table 2.2 below. This table looks at which areas were practiced in the different regions. A third (32%) of all barristers working in Greater London were working in commercial practice compared with an average of 7% of those working in all the other regions of England and Wales, and 36% of those working primarily overseas.

Table 2.2: Region of practice by area of practice (percentages)

Region	Criminal	Civil	PI/PN	Commercial	Family	Other/Int'l	Base N=
Wales	34%	11%	11%	6%	38%	0%	90
North East	41%	14%	15%	3%	27%	0%	150
North West	30%	14%	22%	9%	24%	2%	359
Yorks. & Humber	42%	11%	8%	8%	29%	2%	126
West Midlands	38%	17%	11%	11%	22%	2%	204
East Midlands	34%	6%	12%	4%	41%	3%	109
South West	32%	15%	12%	7%	34%	1%	273
South East	39%	20%	10%	7%	21%	2%	751
East of England	48%	8%	6%	9%	28%	2%	65
Greater London	14%	31%	10%	32%	10%	4%	2,338
Europe	0%	20%	3%	35%	0%	43%	40
Other overseas	5%	22%	5%	36%	2%	30%	81
All respondents	24%	23%	11%	21%	17%	4%	4,586

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Demographic and employment profile data for the Circuits, Inns and Specialist Bar Associations are included in Appendix Tables A9-A11.

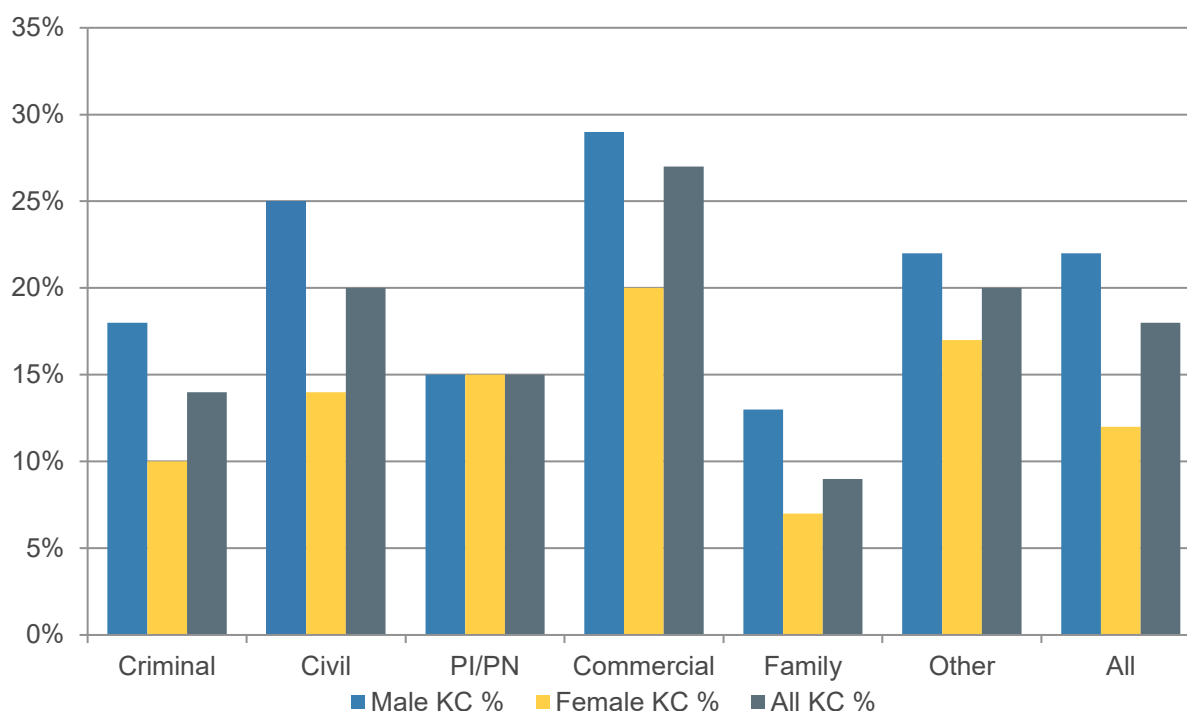
2.3 King's Counsel (KC) – Silk

Across all barristers who responded to the survey, 17% were King's Counsel having obtained Silk, a slightly higher figure than recorded in 2023 and 2021. The demographics of respondents by Silk status were summarised in Appendix Table A6. The key differences between Silk and junior barristers were the following:

- **Education:** Silks were almost twice as likely as junior barristers to be Oxbridge educated (54%) compared with 28% of juniors, with little difference by experience level of juniors. And 30% of juniors went to 'other' UK universities (not Oxbridge or Russell Group) compared with just 12% of Silks. In addition, more than a half (53%) of Silks went to independent schools compared with 32% of juniors and again with little difference by time since Call.

- **Career stage:** As would be expected stage of career was strongly correlated with Silk status, nearly three quarters (71%) of Silks were in later practice compared with 29% of juniors (17% of Silks were in middle practice (18-22 years) and 9% in middle practice (13-17 years).
- **Region:** Barristers working in Greater London were more than twice as likely to be Silks as those practicing elsewhere in England and Wales (23% were Silks compared with just 10% of those in the other regions).
- **Type of work:** Just 2% of employed barristers were Silks, compared with 20% of self-employed (in chambers), 10% of sole practitioners and 6% of dual practice barristers.
- **Area of practice:** By area of practice commercial barristers were much more likely to be Silks (26%) compared with 14% of those practicing at the criminal Bar, 8% of those in family practice, 19% of those in civil practice and 15% of those working in personal injury/professional negligence.
- **Diversity:** There was a relationship between Silk status and both sex and ethnicity in the data: 23% of white male respondents were Silks compared with 13% of white females, and 18% of ethnic minority males were Silks compared with 8% of females from ethnic minority backgrounds. Both these relationships were partly a function of areas of practice employed by different groups of barristers, e.g. white male barristers were found in larger numbers in the commercial Bar (see Appendix Table A3a) where there was a higher proportion of Silks than in other areas of practice (see Figure 2.6 below). Furthermore, at an aggregate level just 6% of black and black British respondents were Silks compared with 12% of Asian/Asian British and 19% of white respondents.
- **Caring responsibility:** 14% of those with a primary caring responsibility for a child(ren) were KCs compared with 20% of those with no child caring responsibilities.
- **Disability:** Barristers with no disabilities were twice as likely to be KCs as those with a disability. This is not merely a function of the recent increases among younger barristers in likelihood of reporting a disability, as looking at those aged 45 plus 13% of respondents with a disability were Silks compared with 28% of those with no disability. And although the numbers were a little small, just 10% of those with neurodivergent disabilities were Silks compared with 16% of those with physical disabilities.

The low proportion of barristers achieving Silk in family practice was not connected with stage of career, as 51% of barristers in family practices had been in the profession for 18 years or more, compared with 44% of those working in commercial areas of practice, similar to the other areas of practice. It may, however, be connected with sex, as just 12% of female barristers had achieved Silk, compared with 22% of male barristers; and female barristers were more likely than male barristers to be employed in family practice (68% of all those in family practice were female compared with just 26% of those working in commercial practice).

Figure 2.6 King's Counsel by type of practice and sex: percentages

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023 (N=3,861)

Female barristers were on average younger than male barristers, which may partly explain the difference in proportions of KCs, but even controlling for age and experience, it was noticeable that female barristers were still disadvantaged; for example, 37% of male barristers in later practice were KCs, compared with 26% of female barristers in the same bracket. This disparity between male and female barristers was also similar across all 45 plus age groups – 31% of male barristers aged 45 plus were KCs compared with 21% of females.

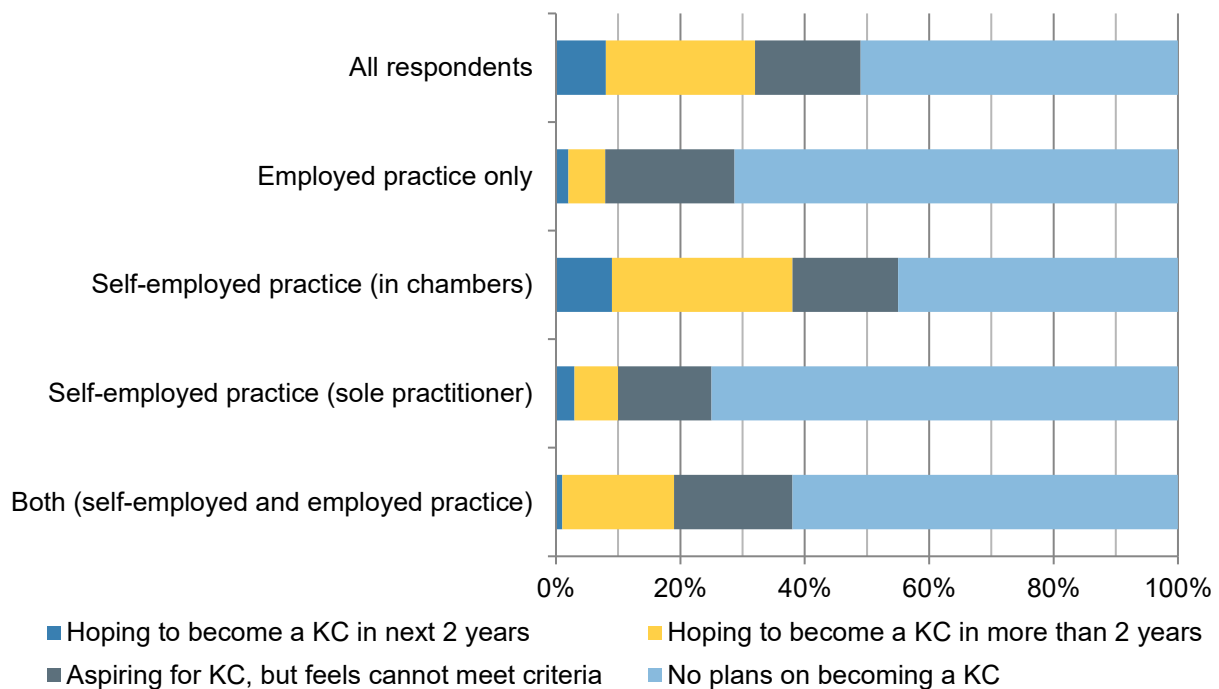
2.3.1 Silk intentions

Of those who said they were not KC, 8% said that they hoped to become a KC in the next two years, a further one in four (25%) said that they hoped to transition to KC in more than two years' time, 17% said they would like to become a KC but did not believe they could meet the criteria and the remaining half (51%) said they had no plans to become a KC.

In terms of type of work, employed barristers were much less likely to have plans to become a KC with just 8% (2% within next two years and 6% in more than two years' time) looking to attain Silk. This was a similar figure to that reported by self-employed sole practitioners (10%) but a far smaller proportion than the 38% of self-employed (in chambers) barristers (9% within 2 years, 29% in more than two years' time) who had aspirations to become a KC. One in five (19%) of dual capacity barristers aspired to be a KC and intended to transition at some point, and the same figure aspired to but believed they cannot meet the criteria.

One in five employed barristers aspired to be a KC but believed they cannot meet the criteria. The equivalent figure for self-employed barristers was 17%. Nearly three quarters (72%) of employed barristers had no KC aspirations compared with 45% of self-employed (chambers) barristers. It was also possibly the case that respondents who reported 'no plans on becoming a KC' answered this way because they knew they cannot meet the criteria and were resigned to KC status not being part of their career trajectory.

Figure 2.7 King's Counsel aspirations by section of the Bar: percentages



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023 (N=3,754)

There were significant differences in response to this question by area of practice, but it is worth noting that the difference between the employed and self-employed Bar remain for each area of practice. Barristers in commercial areas of practice were much less likely to say they had no plans on becoming a KC (29%) compared with 69% of barristers in family practice and more than half of barristers in every other broad area of practice. More than half of barristers working in commercial practice hoped to become a KC in the short or medium term (see Table 2.3).

There were significant differences between male and female barristers but once area of practice was controlled for in the analysis the differences in KC aspirations all but disappeared.

Table 2.3: Intentions to transition to Silk by area of practice (percentages)

Becoming a KC...	Criminal	Civil	PI/PN	Commercial	Family	Other/Int'l	All
Hoping to in next 2 years	8%	7%	6%	10%	5%	13%	8%
Hoping to in > 2 years	21%	27%	18%	42%	15%	18%	24%
Aspire to but believe cannot meet the criteria	15%	18%	24%	20%	12%	18%	17%
No plans to	56%	48%	52%	29%	69%	51%	51%
Base N=100%	939	855	432	869	707	132	3,754

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Perhaps predictably, age was also correlated with KC aspirations with increased age associated with increased likelihood of barristers not having plans to become a KC. Two thirds (65%) of the 45 plus group had no plans to become a KC compared with 34% of the under 45s. Another key variable was previous education. Oxbridge educated barristers were more likely than Russell group educated barristers, who in turn were more likely than barristers educated in other UK universities, to be intending to apply for Silk in the short and medium term. This applies to all the broad areas of practice. For example, in the commercial Bar, 65% of Oxbridge educated respondents aspired to be a KC, compared with 32% of Russell Group respondents and 18% of those educated at other UK universities.

Region was also strongly correlated with KC aspiration. For example, 45% of barristers based primarily in Greater London intended to become a KC at some point compared with just 21% of those based elsewhere in England and Wales. In commercial practice just 23% of barristers based in Greater London had no intention of attaining Silk compared with 49% of barristers based elsewhere in England and Wales. Similar albeit smaller differences were apparent in the other areas of practice.

This year for the first time the survey sought views on the transition process from all barristers who were not currently a KC, and 533 respondents offered views on the process. The key points from their responses are as follows:

1. Structural barriers in the process (cited by 58% of respondents)

Almost all the employed Bar (93%) cited structural barriers inhibiting them becoming a KC. Cost Prohibitions: 9% cited the application fee and associated costs (e.g. consultants, lost time (4%)) as deterrents.

Access to appropriate development opportunities: emphasis on oral advocacy (16%) in higher courts excludes many (e.g. those in advisory roles (1%), employed barristers (13%), or areas with high settlement rates like personal injury/professional negligence (11%) or lack of support/guidance (3%)).

2. Career stage and lifestyle considerations (29% of respondents)

Late entry or career breaks: too junior (6%), part-time incompatibility (1%), practitioners returning from maternity leave, illness, or public sector roles found re-entry and progression difficult, impact on earnings/practice (7%).

Work-life balance: becoming KC seen as incompatible with personal and family life (12%), stressful (3%) especially for single parents and carers.

3. Institutional and cultural criticisms (19% of respondents)

Perceived elitism (4%) and nepotism (2%): belief that KC appointments were not accessible (6%) favour certain sets (1%), Oxbridge backgrounds, and networking within elite circles.

Opaque and arbitrary process: intimidating (6%) dissatisfaction with how assessments were conducted and criteria interpreted (4%).

4. Geographic and practice area challenges (16% of respondents)

Provincial and tribunal-based practices: those practicing outside London (4%) or in tribunals (e.g., immigration, employment) felt disadvantaged (1%).

Areas with high settlement rates: areas like clinical negligence and personal injury struggle to meet criteria due to infrequent trials (11%).

5. Cynicism and disillusionment (12% of respondents)

Perceived decline in meritocracy (3%): concerns that KC status no longer signifies excellence (1%) but reflects form-filling skill or consultant use.

Value of the title: some feel the KC designation no longer enhances practice or career and view it as unnecessary or outdated (3%).

6. Discrimination and lack of inclusivity (10% of respondents)

Ethnic (2%) and gender (3%) disparities: concerns from black, Asian, female, and working-class barristers (1%) about systemic biases and underrepresentation.

Parental and caring responsibilities (1%): particularly among women, career interruptions and the demands of caregiving were cited as limiting career progression.

3 Finances: income, hourly rates and pensions

This section looks at the income bands declared by barristers in the recent (April 2025) Practice Certificate fee renewal process (Authorisation to Practise), the standard hourly rate charged when an hourly rate is used, and self-employed barrister contributions to their pension schemes. It then covers how much of the criminal Bar's work is prosecution work and how much is conducted in the magistrates' court, and the total aged debt for publicly funded magistrates' court work. Finally, it examines the proportion of publicly funded work undertaken by barristers in the criminal, civil and family practice areas.

For self-employed barristers 'gross earnings' is the total gross fees generated (excluding VAT) before they pay rent, expenses, professional insurance, and the other costs/expenses associated with being self-employed.

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 contributions and sick leave.

In this report the terms '*gross earnings*', '*gross fee income*' and '*earnings*' are used interchangeably to refer to the amount of money barristers are generating in fees before any expenses, tax, national insurance or other costs are deducted.

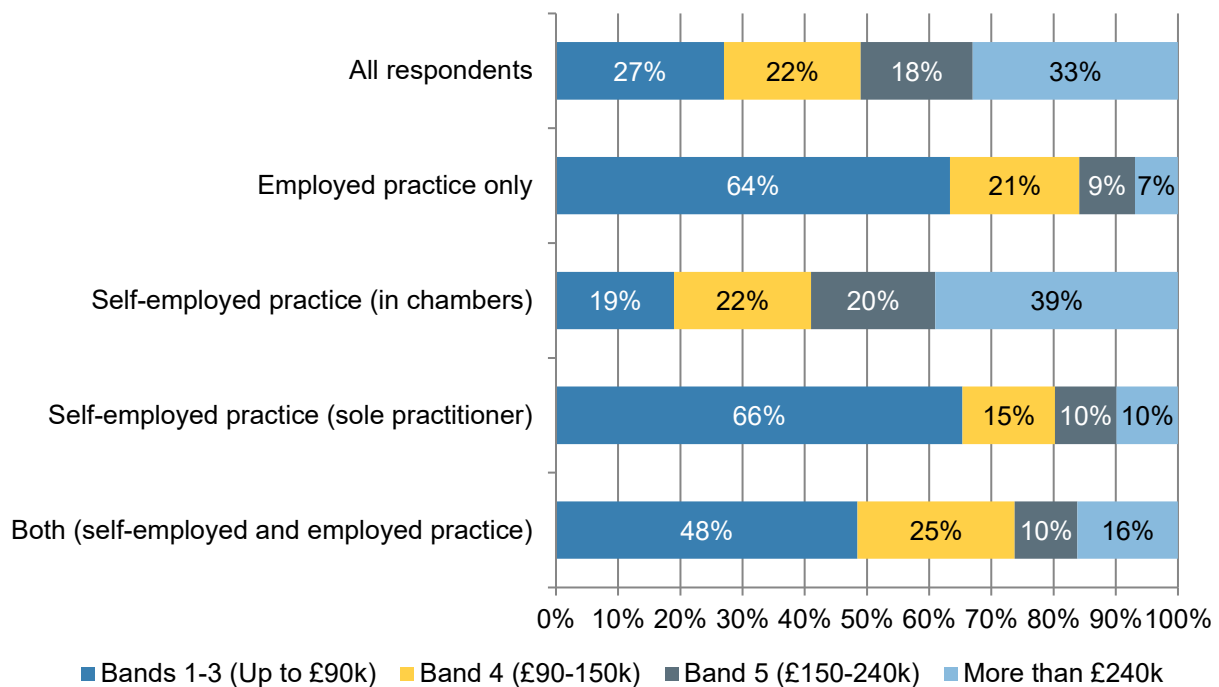
3.1 Income bands

Respondents were asked to provide details, as per their declaration at their Practice Certificate fee renewal (Authorisation to Practise) in 2025, of their income bands. These are categorised as: up to £40k; £40–60k; £60–90k; £90–150k; £150–240k; £240–350k; £350–500k; £500–750k; £750k–1m and more than £1m. The bands were changed from 2023 with £40k being the bottom band but thereafter the same as in 2023.

Just 8% of respondents earned up to £40,000 per annum (in 2023, 5% earned up to £30k), 6% declared their income in the £40–60k bracket (10% in 2023 earned £30–60k), 12% £60–90k, one in five (22%) £90–150k, 18% £150–240k, 11% £240–350k and 8% £350–500k – 15% declared more than £500k. The latter figure represents an increase from 2023 when 9% earned more than £500k. This will be, at least partly, a function of the increase in responses from KCs this year. Appendix Tables A13a-c present summary tables for income bands by type of work, area of practice and stage of practice and Table 8 contains the demographic summaries for each income band.

Before looking at the key demographic variables correlated with income band it should be noted that there was significant variation with type of employment and area of practice. Two thirds (64%) of employed barristers declared at Bands 1-3, as did self-employed sole practitioners (66%) earning up to £90k per year before tax and deductions, while just 19% of self employed in chambers declared in these bands and four in ten declared at over £240k per year (Bands 6-11).

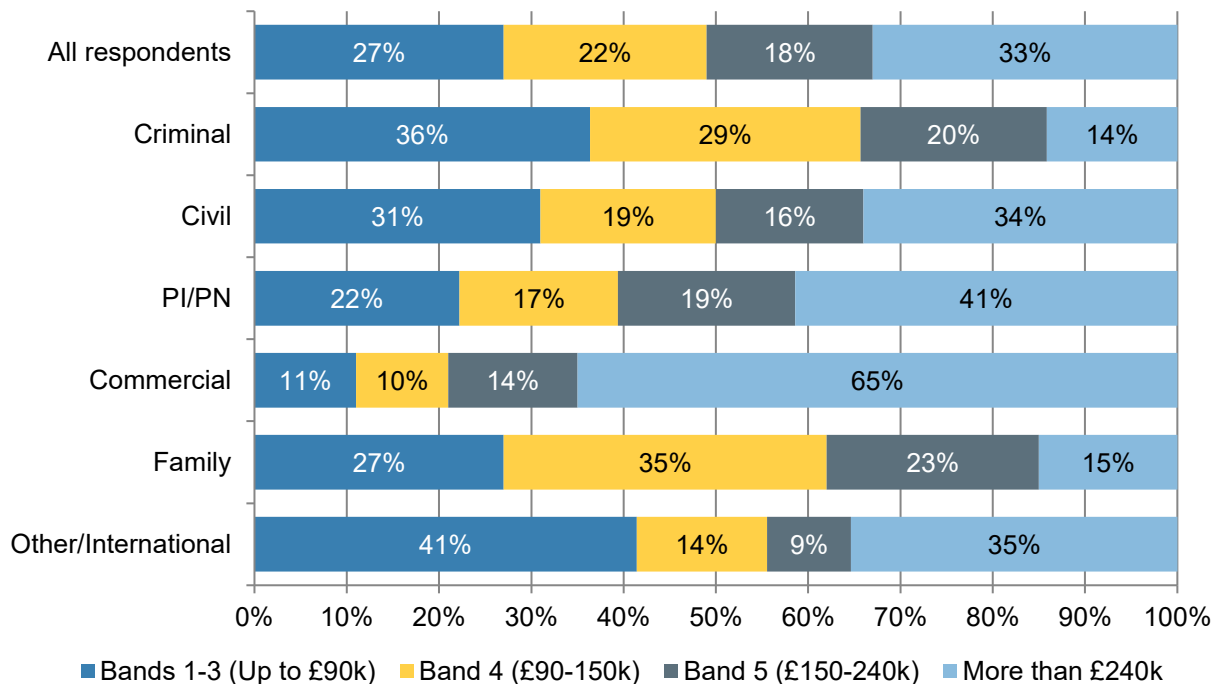
Figure 3.1 Income/Fee bands by type of employment (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=4,544)

While these results show self-employed barristers 'earning' more than employed barristers, this might not be the case as it is not comparing like with like. The self-employed figure was fees received out of which chambers rent etc. was then deducted, while the employed figure was salary which does not have such deductions.

In terms of practice area, two thirds of respondents working in commercial practice declared more than £240k fee income in 2025 compared with 14% of those working in criminal practice, 15% of those in family practice, 34% of those working in civil practice and 41% of those working in PI/PN areas of practice (see Figure 3.2).

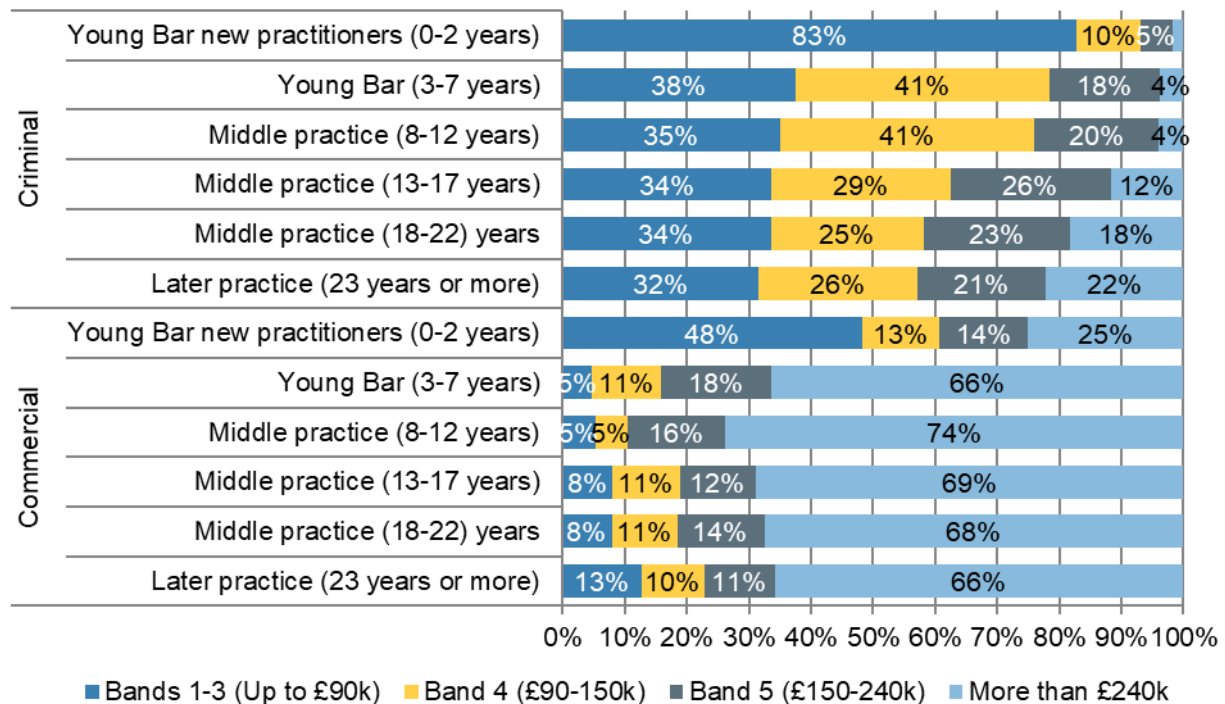
Figure 3.2 Income bands by area of practice (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=4,544)

The key demographic differences in income bands declared at the practicing certificate renewal are as follows:

- **Years in practice:** the distribution across the different income bands changed little after 8 years since Call when looking across all practice areas. However, there were some differences by practice area, with the proportion in the £240,000 plus income band growing throughout barristers' careers in criminal practice, while in commercial practice the proportion in the £240,000 plus band peaks among those 8 to 12 years since Call and then declines gradually. Figure 3.3 highlights the patterns for these practice areas.

Figure 3.3 Income/Fee bands by stage of career (percentages, criminal and commercial practice only)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

- **Sex:** there was a significant difference between males and females across each area of practice, with the difference being widest at the criminal Bar where 45% of female barristers declared in Bands 1-3 (less than £90k) compared with just 26% of males. In commercial practice 56% of female barristers declared at over £240k compared with more than two thirds (69%) of male barristers. Ethnic origin was a further factor here with black and Asian males more likely to have declared in Bands 1-3 than White males (29% compared with 19%) and the same was true for black and Asian Women compared with white women (41% compared with 30% of white females). All the other bands were declared in higher proportions by white respondents than black/Asian respondents, across both sexes.
- **University attended** was also strongly associated with differential income bands. However, as elsewhere there were interconnections with area of practice in that those who work in, for example, commercial practice, where income levels are higher were also more likely to have attended Oxbridge. However, it remains the case that within each area of practice those who went to Oxbridge were much more likely to have declared the higher income bands. For example, within commercial practice three quarters (76%) of those respondents who went to Oxbridge declared in Bands 8-11 (£240k plus) compared with 58% of those who went to Russell Group universities and 35% of those who went to other UK universities. A similar, albeit not so marked, difference occurs when comparing income bands for those who went to independent schools compared with state schools.

- **Region:** barristers working predominantly in London were much more likely to be in the top income bands (above £240k) (46%) compared with 19% across all other England and Wales regions. The regions with the highest proportion of respondents in Bands 1-3 (under £90k) were Yorkshire and the Humber (44%), East Midland (37%) and Wales.
- **Disability:** barristers with no disability were twice as likely as those with a disability to have declared in the top Bands (above £240k) – 37% compared with 17% of those with a disability. This difference applies for every area of practice; in civil practice 15% of barristers with a disability declared in Bands 8-11 compared with 38% of those with no disability, the difference was wider still in PI/PN (15% and 46% respectively).

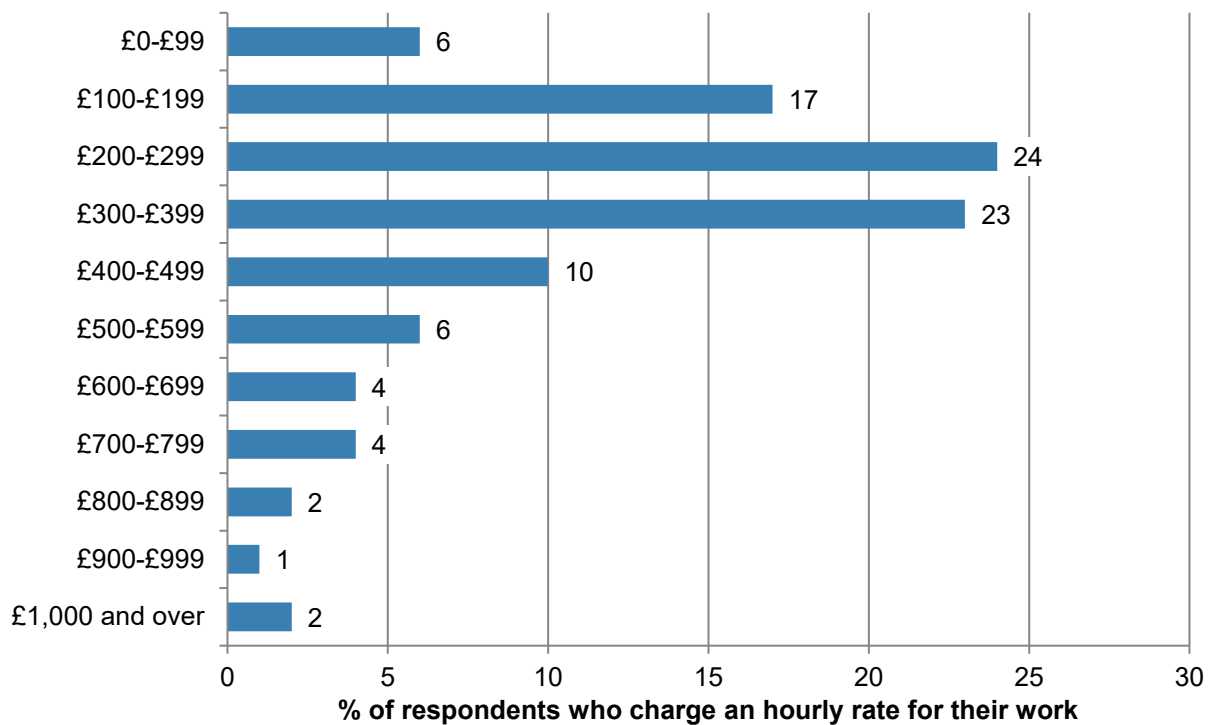
3.2 Hourly rates

In 2023, for the first time, the survey sought data on the standard hourly rates charged by barristers for work which was charged in this way.

In this latest survey, of those who responded, 21% (13% in 2023) said that they don't charge an hourly rate for their work. These barristers were primarily in the employed Bar where 69% did not charge an hourly rate compared with 27% of self-employed sole practitioners, 17% of dual practice barristers and 13% of the self-employed in chambers barristers.

Looking now only at those who did charge an hourly rate, Figure 3.3 shows the distribution of responses across the different bands.

Not surprisingly the variables correlated with hourly rate bands were more or less the same as those described above for income bands. Aside from experience, as measured by years since Call, and age, the main variables that were correlated with the level of hourly rate were area of practice, gender, university attended, schooling and disability, all similar to the data presented above.

Figure 3.3 Hourly rates charged (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: *Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025* (N=3,553⁸)

Table 3.1 presents the hourly rate band data by area of practice. One in four (24%) of respondents at the criminal Bar charge £100 or less, compared with less than 5% of all the other main groups and 0% of those who worked in commercial areas of practice. The number of respondents in the lower charging brackets was lower than it was in 2023. This is explained above with a higher completion rate among KCs and higher income barristers than has traditionally been the case.

The differences between males and females in the hourly rate charged for work was widest in civil and PI/PN and narrowest in family/commercial. In civil practice twice as many females (24%) charge less than £100 per hour as males (12%). In the criminal Bar the equivalent figures were 58% and 42% charging less than £100 per hour.

⁸ Only those who provided an hourly rate (an additional 929 respondents said they do not charge an hourly rate).

Table 3.1: Hourly rate bands charged by area of practice (percentages)

Hourly rate band	Criminal	Civil	PI/PN	Commercial	Family	Other/Int'l	All respondents
£0-£99	24%	4%	2%	0%	3%	5%	6%
£100-£199	27%	14%	16%	5%	31%	10%	17%
£200-£299	20%	27%	27%	18%	31%	20%	24%
£300-£399	11%	25%	37%	24%	21%	17%	23%
£400-£499	7%	10%	7%	19%	5%	11%	10%
£500-£599	5%	7%	4%	7%	4%	11%	6%
£600-£699	3%	5%	4%	6%	3%	5%	4%
£700-£799	2%	4%	1%	8%	2%	4%	4%
£800-£899	1%	2%	0%	4%	0%	7%	2%
£900-£999	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	5%	1%
£1,000 and over	1%	2%	0%	6%	0%	7%	2%
<i>Base N=100%</i>	<i>618</i>	<i>900</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>875</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>3,553</i>

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

When looking at schooling there was little or no overall difference between independent and state schooled respondents in family, PI/PN and criminal practice, but a significant gap by type of schooling in civil and commercial practice, particularly at the higher-earning levels. For example, 43% of barristers working in commercial practice who went to independent schools charged more than £400 per hour compared with 26% of barristers who were state school educated and working in these areas of practice. A similar difference was apparent in civil practice (25% and 15% respectively).

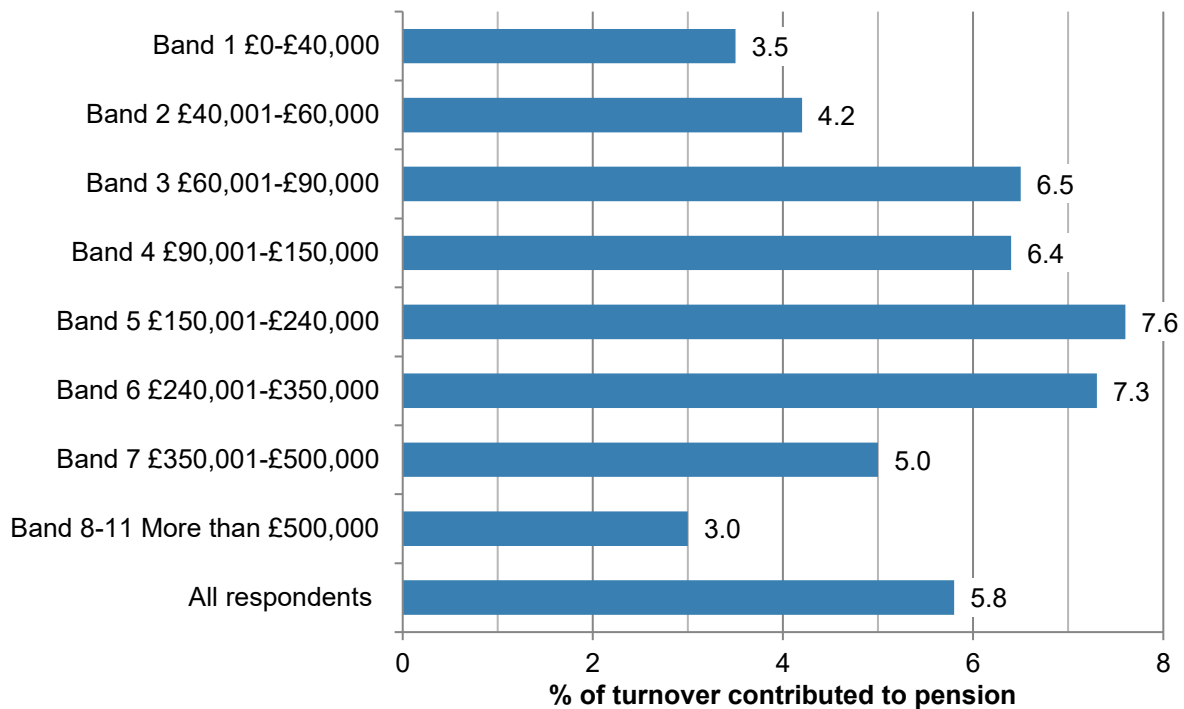
3.3 Pension contributions (self-employed only)

A new question was introduced this year to explore the degree to which self-employed barristers were contributing to their pensions. Self-employed barristers were asked '*on average, what proportion of your turnover for the year do you spend on pension contributions?*' A third (35%) of respondents did not contribute any of their turnover to a pension, one in five contributed between 1-4% of their turnover, 17% of barristers contributed 5-9%, 15% contributed 10-14% and 13% contributed 15% or more of their annual turnover on average. The overall mean contribution across the self-employed Bar was 5.8%.

There were few obvious patterns in the data. The strongest correlation was with income declared by respondents. In summary, those declaring least were most likely to say that they were not contributing anything to their pensions (67% of those who declared income band 1: £40k or less), compared with 57% of those who declared income band 2, £40-60k, 43% of those who declared income band 3, £60-90k. This figure reduces to 23% of Band 6 income before rising again in the higher income bands. Figure 3.4 shows the mean percentages of turnover contributed to pensions by the income bands declared by

barristers at the recent 2025 practice certificate renewal. It demonstrates again that percentage contributions were highest among the middle-income bands and lowest among those who declared on the lowest and highest bands.

Figure 3.4 Mean percentage of turnover contributed to pensions by income band



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,678)

Looking at area of practice there was a significant variation that is likely to be partly a function of the income band differences reported above. At the criminal Bar 40% of respondents did not contribute anything on average to the pensions, compared with an overall figure of 35% and only 23% among PI/PN. PI/PN barristers were also those who contributed most to their pensions.

Table 3.2: Pension contributions (percentage of turnover) by area of practice (percentages and mean)

% of turnover contributed	Criminal	Civil	PI/PN	Commercial	Family	Other	All respondents
Mean %	6.1%	5.9%	6.4%	4.5%	6.1%	6.5%	5.8%
Zero	40%	36%	23%	35%	35%	43%	35%
1% to 4%	14%	18%	28%	29%	16%	11%	20%
5%-9%	17%	16%	18%	15%	21%	18%	17%
10%-14%	15%	16%	16%	13%	15%	11%	15%
15% or more	15%	14%	15%	8%	13%	16%	13%
Base N=100%	618	900	462	875	595	103	3,553

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

As might be expected junior barristers (not KCs) on average contributed more to a pension than KCs (average 6.1% of turnover compared with 4.2% among KCs). The young Bar (0-2 years) contributed less than the remainder of the Bar and 56% did not contribute anything to their pensions compared with 30% among the remainder of the young Bar and middle practice barristers. The figure rose to 39% among later practice barristers. There was some correlation with age with more older barristers, those aged 55 plus, not paying anything into their pension pots compared with their younger colleagues.

Sex was also a factor with 32% of female self-employed barristers paying in at least 10% of turnover compared with 24% of males and the mean contribution among women was 6.5% of turnover compared with 5.2% among males.

3.4 Crime prosecution and magistrates work (criminal Bar only)

A series of questions looks at the volume of prosecution work at the criminal Bar, the proportion of earnings that comes from work in magistrates' courts and the total aged debt for publicly funded magistrates' court work.

In total, 1,107 respondents working at the criminal Bar gave details of the proportion of their work that was prosecution. Three in ten (29%) indicated that none of their work was prosecution and one in five (18%) said that all of it was. The mean percentage across all respondents was 47%. KCs undertook less prosecution work than juniors. Among KCs an average of 30% of all work was prosecution compared with 50% among all juniors working at the criminal Bar.

Females reported higher percentages than males (52% did prosecution work compared with 43% among males). Income band declared was also correlated with the amount of prosecution work undertaken, with much lower amounts of prosecution work undertaken among barristers on income bands of £240k or more (22% of those on income bands of above £240k did prosecution work, compared with 52% among barristers on income bands less than £240k). Among those on income bands 2/3 (£40-90k), 69% of all work was prosecution.

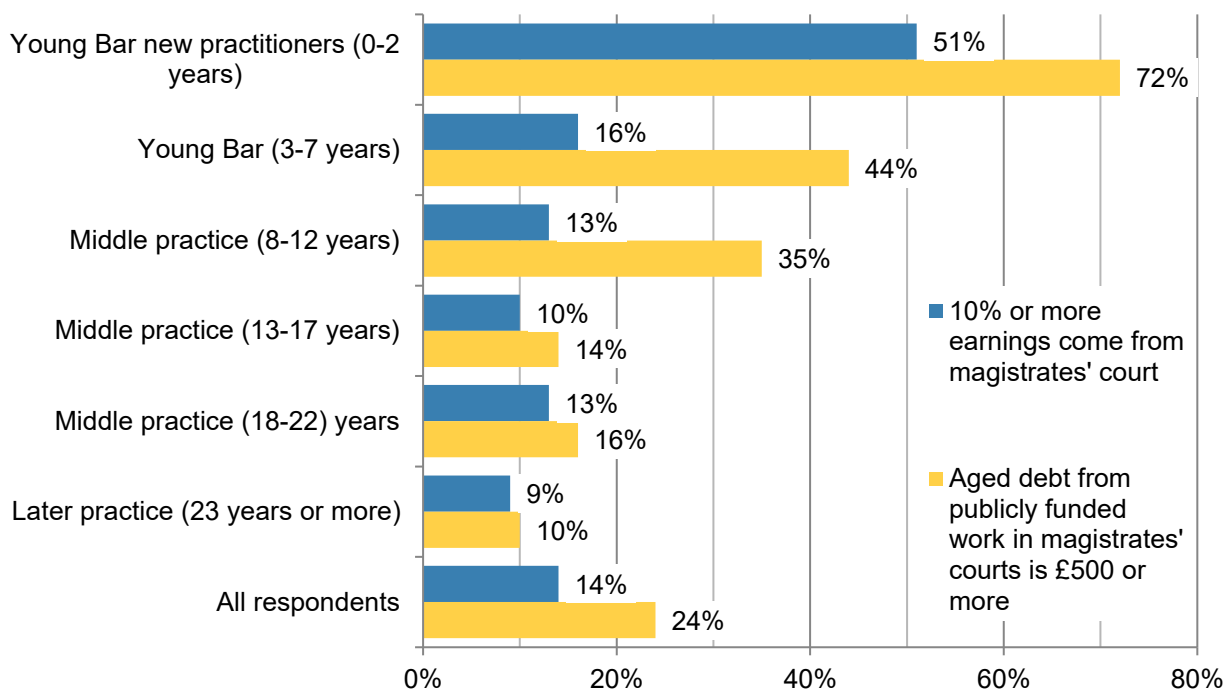
The only other variable where there was a significant correlation was region. The average volume of prosecution work undertaken by barristers working mainly in Greater London was 40%, a lower proportion than across the other England and Wales regions taken together (50%). The highest volumes of prosecution work were in Wales, the South West and East of England where the amount of prosecution work was above 60%.

Across all respondents working at the criminal Bar nine in ten (87%) indicated that less than 10% of their earnings comes from work in the magistrates' court. 5% said that between 10-25% comes from magistrates' courts, 3% said between 26-50% from this court and 5% said that more than 50% of their earnings comes from magistrates' courts. In 2023 82% of the criminal Bar reported that less than 10% of their earnings comes from the magistrates' court and 8% said that more than 50% of their earnings comes from this

source, suggesting there has been a slight shift away from magistrates' court work at the criminal Bar.

Again, income band declared was significantly correlated with the amount of magistrates' work undertaken, with the proportion undertaking less than 10% magistrates' court work decreasing as income rises, from 60% of those who declared on income bands 1-2 (i.e. less than £60k) to 85% among those on band 3 and well over 90% of all other income bands. Magistrates' court work would also appear to be the domain of the young Bar, with 15% of juniors compared with 3% of KCs doing more than 10% magistrates' court work. Magistrates' court work also accounted for 10% or more of total earnings for a higher proportion of females (17% compared with 9% among men). Looking in more detail at the young Bar, 51% of those within their first two years since Call, and 16% of those 3-7 years since Call, did more than 10% magistrates' court work, as Figure 3.5 shows.

Figure 3.5 Earnings from magistrates' court accounts for 10% or more AND aged debt from publicly funded magistrates' court work by stage of career (percentages, criminal Bar only)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=1,080)

Among the criminal Bar as a whole three quarters (76%) said that their total aged debt for publicly funded magistrates' court work was between £0-499, while 5% said that they had between £500-999 aged debt, 7% £1,000-1,999 and 5% £2,000-4,999 and 7% said they had £5,000 or more aged debt for publicly funded magistrates' court work. As might be expected, those who did more magistrates' court work had higher debts from these courts for publicly funded work. For those where 10% or more of their earnings came from magistrates' court work, 45% reported that their total aged debt from publicly funded work was £500 or more (12% £500-999 debt, 10% £1000-1999, 14% £2000-4999 and 10% said they have £5000 or more aged debt from publicly funded magistrates' court work).

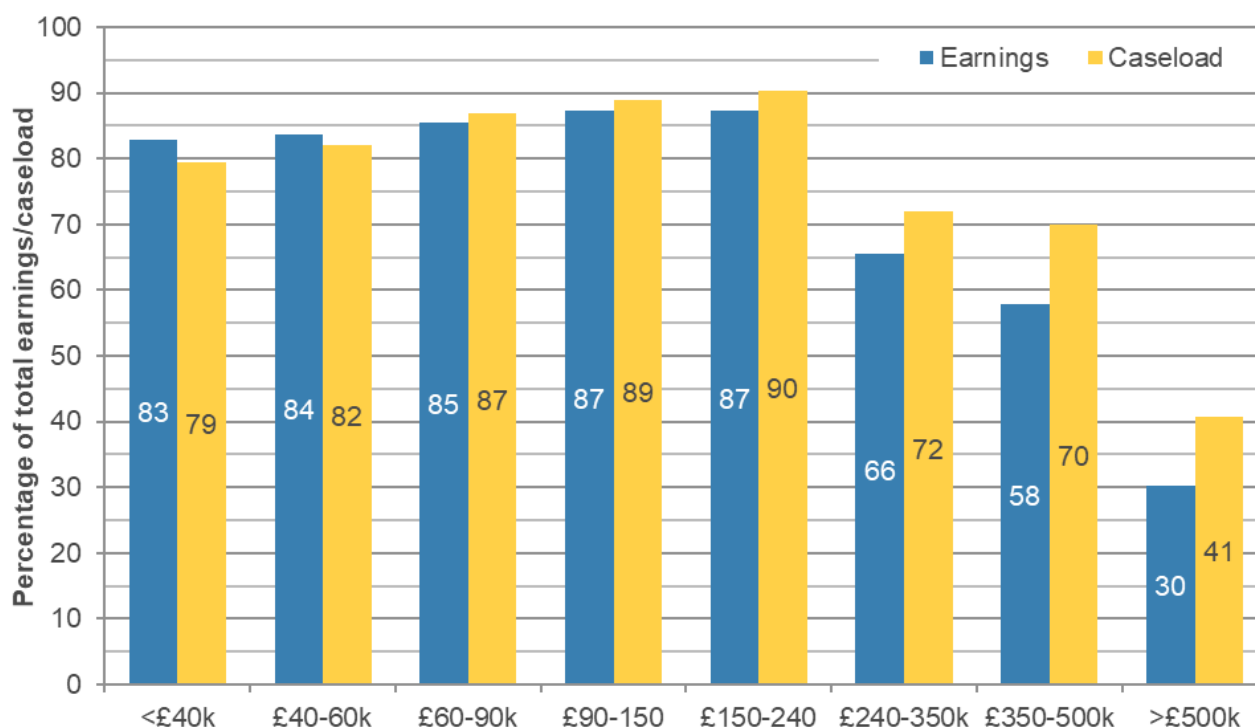
Although KCs do less magistrates' court work, more of them had £500 or more aged debt (27% compared with 5% of juniors). The young Bar (3-7 years) would seem to carry a disproportionate level of the magistrates' court financial burden with a half of them (50%) having a total aged debt of £500 or more, compared with 20% of those in middle practice (8-22 years since Call) and 10% of later practice (23 years plus since Call) barristers working at the criminal Bar.

3.5 Publicly funded work

Barristers working in practice areas in which there could be publicly funded work – criminal, civil and family practice – were asked to indicate what proportion of their earnings and caseload came from publicly funded work.

The majority of criminal barristers' earnings and caseload came from publicly funded work – 82% of their earning (83% in 2023), and 84% of their caseload (87% in 2023). Furthermore, the majority of family barristers' earning and caseload came from publicly funded work, although a lower proportion than for criminal barristers – 56% of family barristers' earnings came from publicly funded work (59% in 2023) and 57% of their caseload (61% in 2023). However, among civil barristers only a small proportion of their earning and caseload came from publicly funded work – 22% of their earnings (25% in 2023) and 25% of their caseload (27% in 2023).

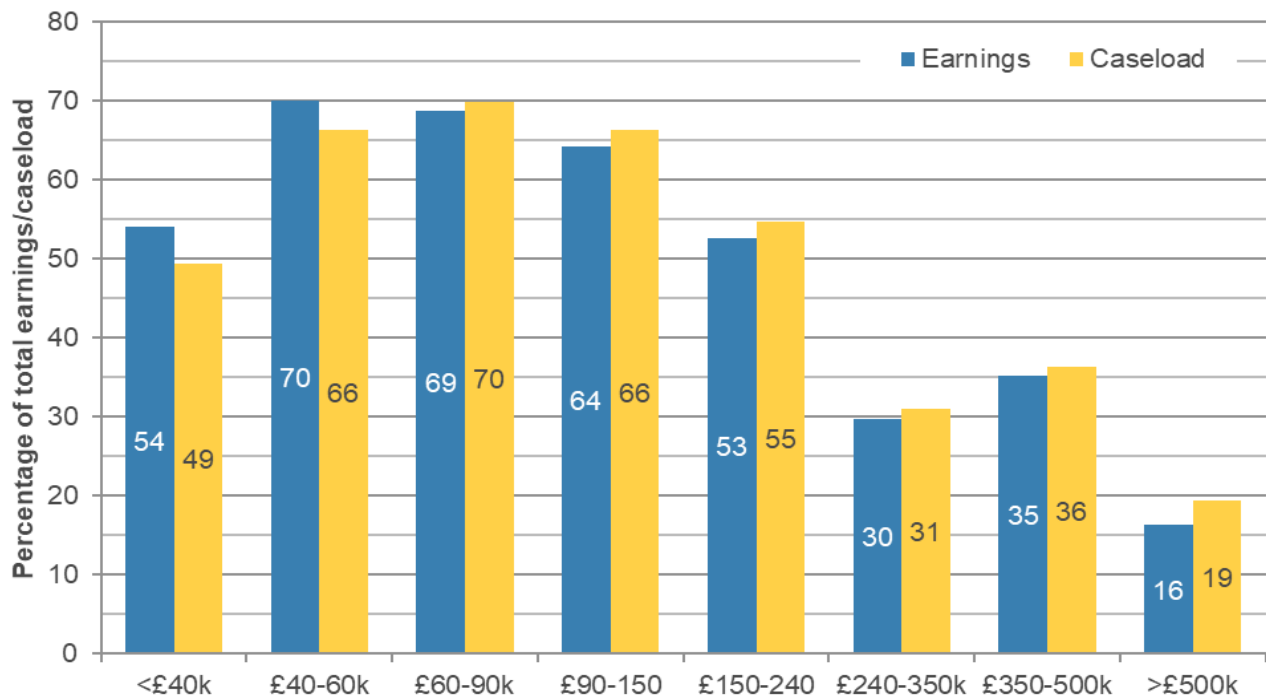
Figure 3.6 Mean proportion of earnings/caseload from publicly funded work by total earnings level, criminal Bar



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=1,080)

Figure 3.7 shows that once a family barrister reaches a fee income above £90k, the higher their income is, the less legal aid work they do.

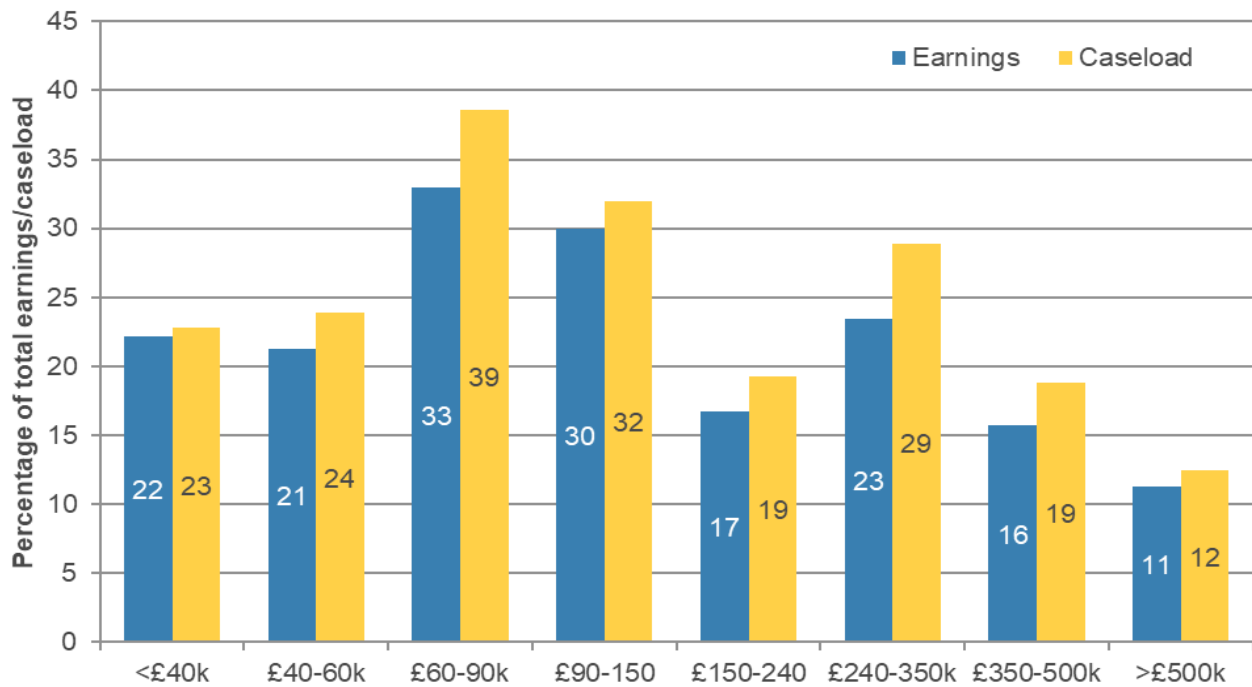
Figure 3.7 Mean proportion of earnings/caseload from publicly funded work by total earnings level, family Bar



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=1,080)

Figure 3.8 shows the pattern in the civil Bar, where barristers whose earnings were in the range £60,000 to £150,000 had the highest proportions of earnings and caseload from publicly funded work.

Figure 3.8 Mean proportion of earnings/caseload from publicly funded work by total earnings level, Civil Bar



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=1,080)

4 Courts and tribunals: experiences of in-person/remote hearings

As reported in 2023, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a significant change in ways of working in many sectors. The Bar was not immune to this change, and indeed the repercussions for ways of working have continued since restrictions were lifted, as the justice system seeks ways to alleviate the backlog of cases and hearings. Since working lives have started returning to 'normal' there has been some debate over the last three years within the Bar around the current and future use of remote and hybrid hearings, with some wanting them to be retained, and even extended, while others would like to see in-person hearings return as the norm and many seeing a mix as being appropriate. This section of the survey in both 2023 and 2025 sought to collect barristers' experiences of working in the justice system remotely and their views of the effectiveness of different modes of working. The report this year also seeks to explore the degree to which the use and experience of remote and hybrid hearings has changed since the 2023 survey.

4.1 Experience of in-person/remote hearings

Eight in ten (83%, 86% in 2023) of all respondents had attended a court or tribunal *in person* in the three months prior to the survey. And just under half (49%, down from 64% in 2023) had attended a court or tribunal *remotely* in the previous three months. Just 13% (10% in 2023) had neither attended in person or remotely. Fewer than half (46%) had attended a court and/or a tribunal both in person and remotely in the three months prior to the survey. This figure represents a significant decrease from 2023 when 60% had attended a court or tribunal both in person and remotely. **There has been a significant reduction in the use of remote hearings at courts and tribunals since 2023.**

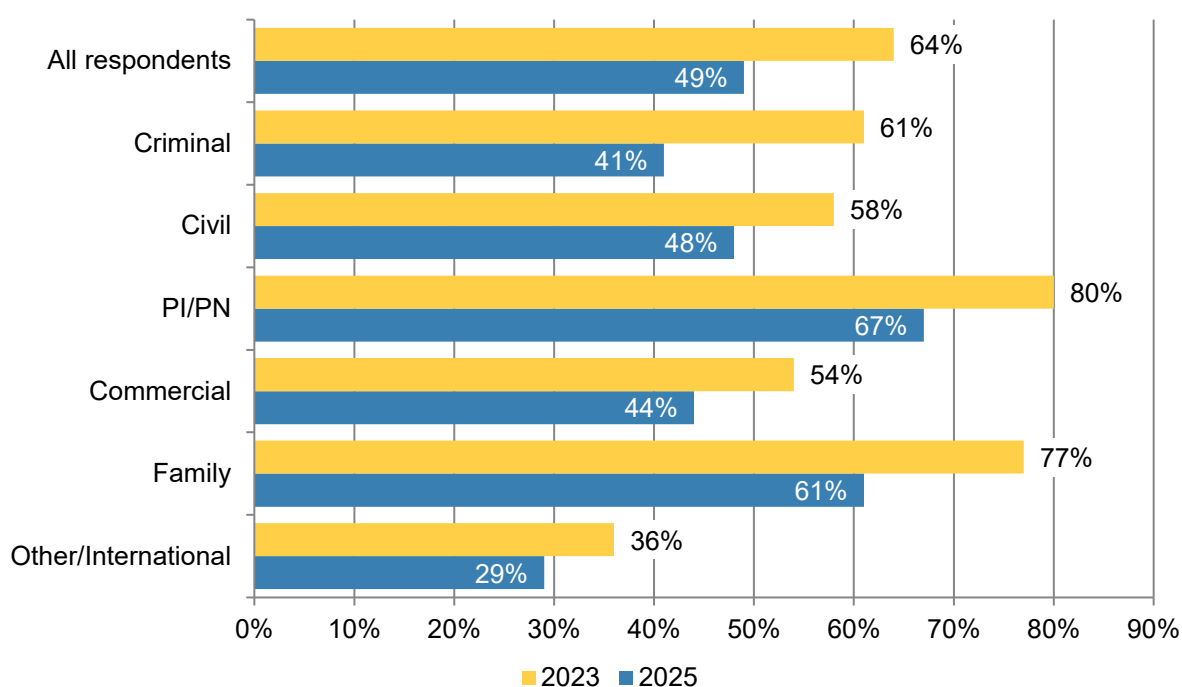
In 2023 it was reported that “overall, out of 3,491 responses a half (49%) said remote links ‘should be used more frequently’, 38% said ‘it is about right at the moment’, 8% said ‘they should be used less frequently’, 1% said they ‘should not be used at all’ and 4% said they ‘did not know’”. The last two years have seen a significant reduction in remote hearings reported by barristers, suggesting that the court and hearing system has moved in a direction contrary to the wishes of the main professional users, barristers. Responses to the same question this year suggest barristers would still like to see an increase in remote hearings, or at least for their use to not be reduced. Four in ten (43%) thought that remote links should be used more frequently and 48% thought the use of remote links was more or less right at the moment with 7% stating that the use of remote links should be reduced.

Furthermore, the main split in the profession in 2023 was between barristers working in criminal or family practice and the remainder. Two thirds of those working in family practice (65%) and 62% of barristers in criminal practice said that remote hearings should

be used more frequently, compared with 35% of all those working in other areas of practice and 30% of barristers in commercial practice.

Looking in more detail at the findings in 2025, those respondents working in personal injury/professional negligence and family areas of practice were most likely to have conducted remote hearings/tribunals (67% and 61% respectively, compared with 42% of those working at the criminal Bar, 48% of those in civil practice and 44% of those in commercial practice). However, all these figures were significantly reduced from those recorded in 2023 and this was especially the case for barristers at the criminal Bar as can be seen in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Attending hearings remotely in 3 months prior to the survey by area of practice



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=4443) and 2023 (N=3531)

In addition, barristers working at the employed Bar (20%, 24% in 2023) were much less likely than those in chambers (55%, 69% in 2023) to have attended hearings or tribunals remotely but all sections of the Bar witnessed reductions in the use of remote hearings.

There also remained in 2025, as in 2023, a correlation with age with 58% (78% in 2023) of barristers under the age of 35 having attended a court/tribunal remotely compared with a half (54%, 68% in 2023) of the 35–44 group, 51% (65% in 2023) of the 45–54 group, 48% of the 55–64 group and 39% (48% in 2023) of those over the age of 65.

Table 4.1: Court attendance *in person* and *remotely* by age group (percentages 2023 figures in brackets)

	Age group					All respondents
	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 plus	
Both remote and in person	56 (76)	51 (64)	47 (61)	43 (53)	33 (42)	47 (61)
In person only	35 (17)	36 (22)	36 (26)	37 (32)	37 (31)	36 (25)
Remote only	2 (2)	3 (5)	4 (4)	5 (4)	6 (5)	4 (4)
Neither remote nor in person	6 (5)	10 (10)	13 (9)	16 (11)	24 (22)	13 (10)
<i>Base N=</i>	<i>545 (516)</i>	<i>944 (780)</i>	<i>1,080 (884)</i>	<i>925 (602)</i>	<i>400 (212)</i>	<i>3,894 (2,994)</i>

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 and 2023

The reduction in the use of remote hearings between 2023 and 2025 was greatest among those aged 25-34, down 20 percentage points (Table 4.1).

As in 2023 the comments concerning remote hearings and the current operation of courts and tribunals highlighted some regional differences. This was reinforced by the data in Table 4.2 which shows the proportion of respondents based in each area that had attended court in person or remotely in the three months prior to the survey.

Table 4.2: Court attendance *in person* and *remotely* by region (percentages 2023 figures in brackets)

	Both remote and in person	In person only	Remote only	Neither remote nor in person	<i>Base N=</i>
Wales	48 (68)	43 (20)	3 (4)	6 (9)	<i>89 (54)</i>
North East	52 (69)	41 (24)	1 (2)	6 (5)	<i>145 (187)</i>
North West	55 (71)	38 (23)	2 (2)	5 (4)	<i>345 (303)</i>
Yorkshire and the Humber	49 (74)	36 (13)	2 (5)	13 (8)	<i>117 (100)</i>
West Midlands	55 (79)	38 (18)	2 (1)	5 (3)	<i>196 (128)</i>
East Midlands	49 (75)	39 (18)	1 (2)	11 (5)	<i>105 (93)</i>
South West	54 (67)	35 (25)	4 (2)	7 (6)	<i>264 (190)</i>
South East	44 (61)	43 (29)	3 (2)	10 (8)	<i>727 (602)</i>
East of England	43 (56)	35 (23)	0 (5)	22 (15)	<i>60 (38)</i>
Greater London	44 (54)	36 (26)	4 (6)	16 (14)	<i>2,264 (1,252)</i>
All respondents	45 (61)	37 (25)	4 (4)	13 (10)	<i>4,427 (2,999)</i>

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 and 2023

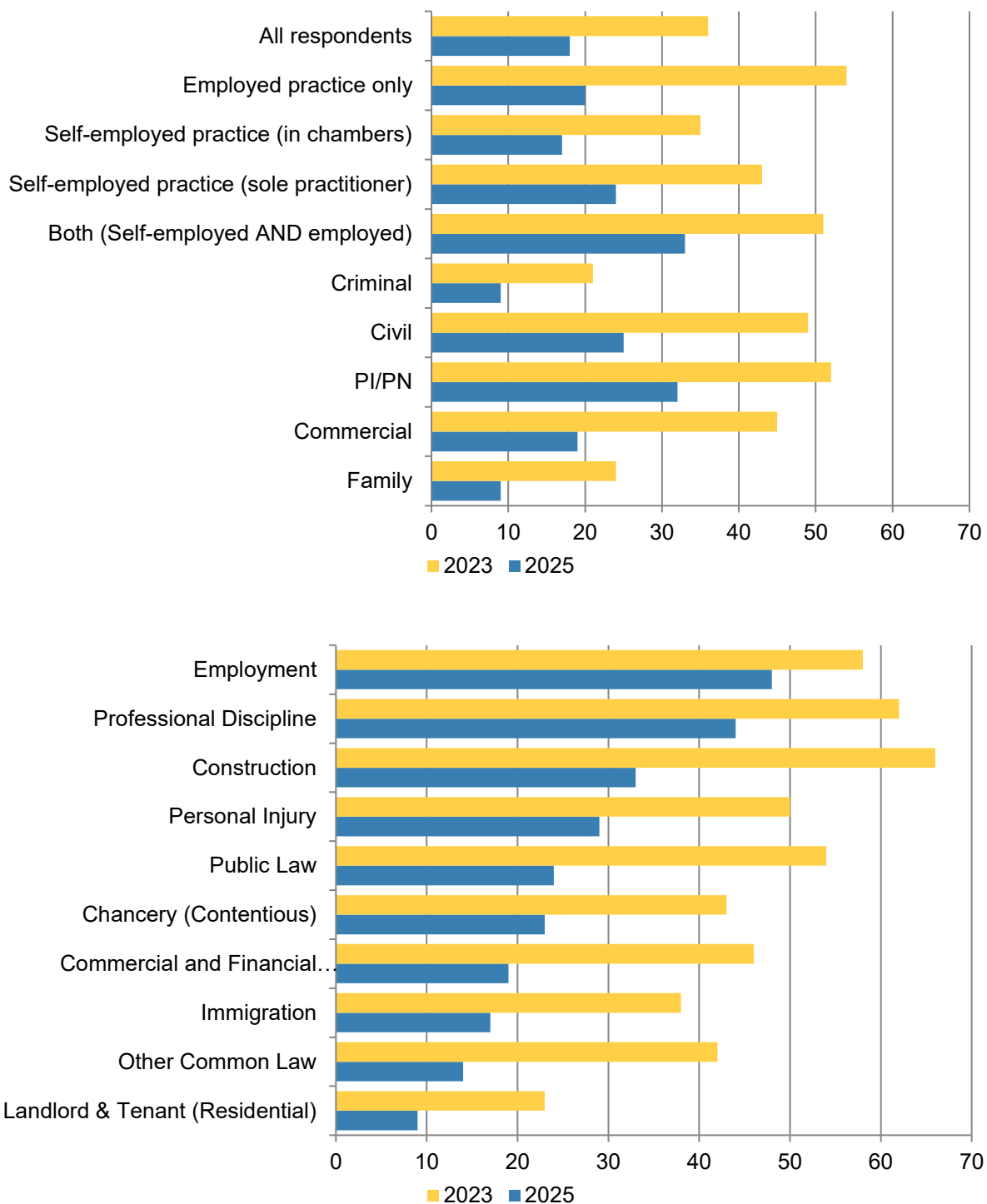
The biggest reduction in remote hearings since 2023 has been witnessed in the Midlands and Wales where there has been a 20 percentage point increase in the use of in person only hearings. Of the respondents (3,948 cases) who had attended a court or tribunal in the previous three months, both in person *and* remotely, the average proportion of total *hearing time* that was conducted remotely was 18%, half the figure reported in 2023

(36%). **This also represents a significant decrease, not only in the incidence of barristers undertaking remote hearings, but also the overall proportion of time spent in remote hearings as reported by barristers.**

As in 2023, this varied considerably for different areas of practice with less time in criminal (21% of all court/hearing time), landlord and tenant (23%) and family (24%) hearings/tribunals conducted remotely, than in other areas of practice, in particular construction (66%), professional discipline (62%) and employment, public law and personal injury where more than 50% of hearing/tribunal time was undertaken remotely.

All areas of the Bar witnessed large decreases in remote hearing time as well as incidence. The reduction in the use of remote hearings was steepest in the employed Bar (down from 54% of hearing time in 2023 to 20% in 2025). Among barristers working in chambers the reduction was from 35% to 17% of hearing time. In the criminal and family Bar less than 10% of hearing time was remote which was less than half the equivalent figures reported in 2023.

Figure 4.2 Mean % of time spent in remote hearings over the last three months by status and practice area (top chart), and by selected area of practice (bottom chart)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,795) and 2023 (N=2,183, practice areas N>30)

As in 2023 there was little difference by any of the other demographic variables in either likelihood of having attended courts/tribunals remotely or the proportion of hearing time having been conducted remotely.

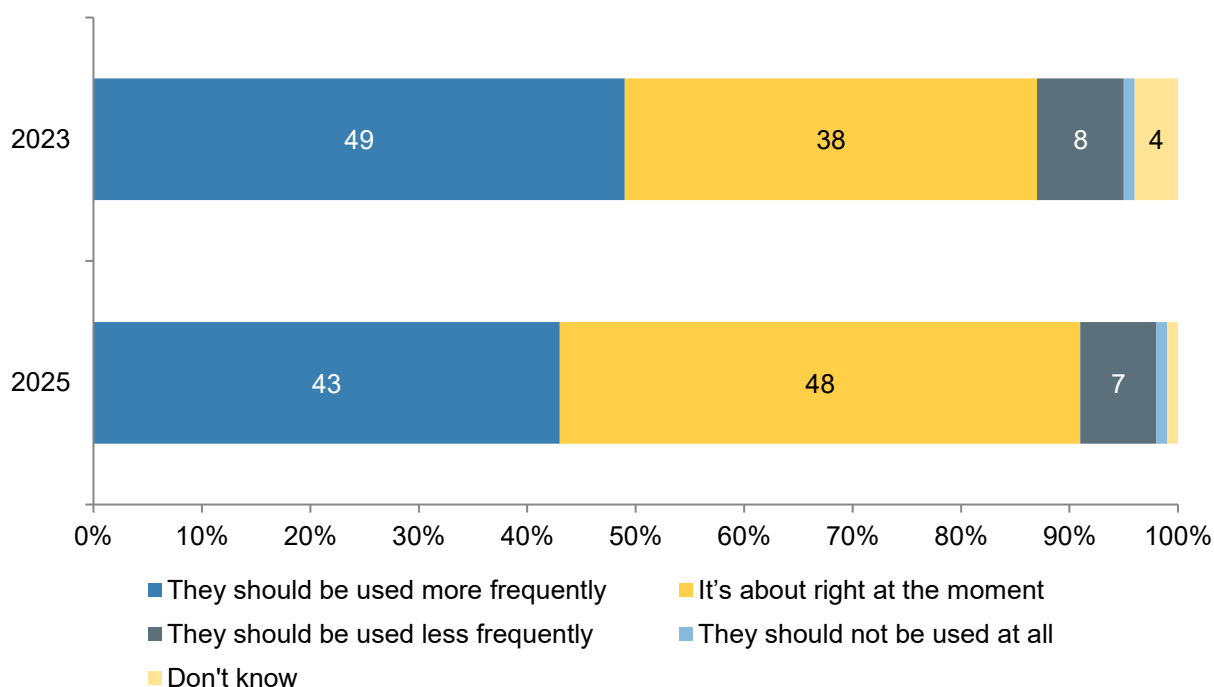
4.2 Going forward

As noted above, in 2023 around half of barristers (49%) who had attended court, be it in person or remotely, were of the opinion that remote links should be used more frequently, and a further 38% said that remote links were being used about the right amount at the time. Just one in 12 (8%) thought that they should be used less frequently, 1% said they should not be used at all and 4% said they did not know.

Following the 2023 survey the last two years have seen a significant reduction in the use of remote hearings by barristers responding to the survey. Far fewer had used remote links in the three months prior to the survey, and among those who had attended court, remotely and/or in person, a much lower estimated total time attending court remotely was reported.

This survey asked the same question of barristers to see if their preferences going forward had changed at all. The views as can be seen in Figure 4.3 were more or less the same as reported in 2023. Four in ten (43%) thought that remote links should be used more frequently and 48% thought the use of remote links was more or less right at the moment with 7% thinking that the use of remote links should be reduced.

Figure 4.3 Using remote links in future by area of practice percentages in 2023 and 2025



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,763) 2023 (N=3,491)

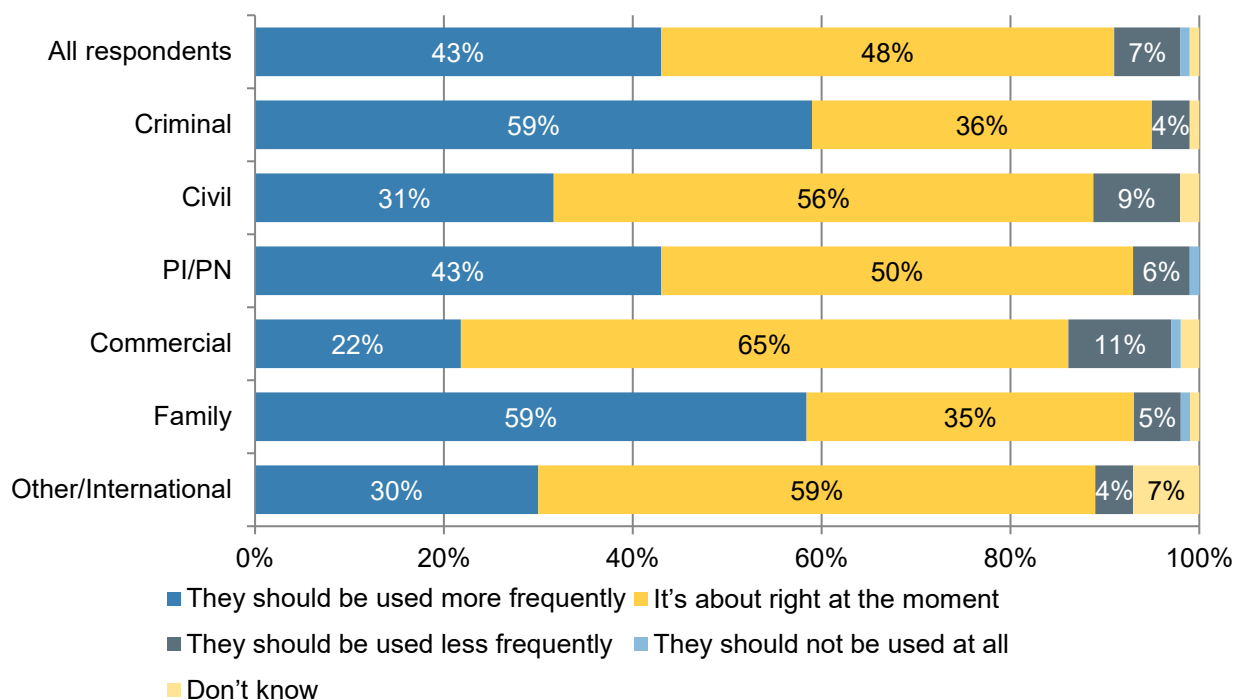
This year just 1% said they did not know whether the use of remote hearings should remain the same, increase or decrease, compared with 4% in 2023. There was clearly a desire within the profession to see at least the maintenance of remote hearings and a large minority of around four in ten would like to see their use widened.

In 2023, barristers in the employed Bar were much more likely than those working as sole practitioners or in chambers to indicate that they did not know if there should be a change or not in the prevalence of remote links in their area of work. This year there was little difference in views between the employed and self-employed Bar with just 4% saying they did not know compared with 28% in 2023.

Again, the main split in the profession was between barristers working in criminal or family practice and the remainder, as Figure 4.4 demonstrates.

Six in ten barristers (59%) working in family practice and criminal practice said that remote hearings should be used more frequently, compared with 31% of those working in all other areas of practice and just 22% of barristers in commercial practice. These figures were very similar to those reported in 2023, with little or no change in views, despite the fact that it was barristers working in family and criminal practice who were most likely to identify problems in attending courts and hearings, as demonstrated in Table 4.3 below.

Figure 4.4 Using remote links in the future by area of practice

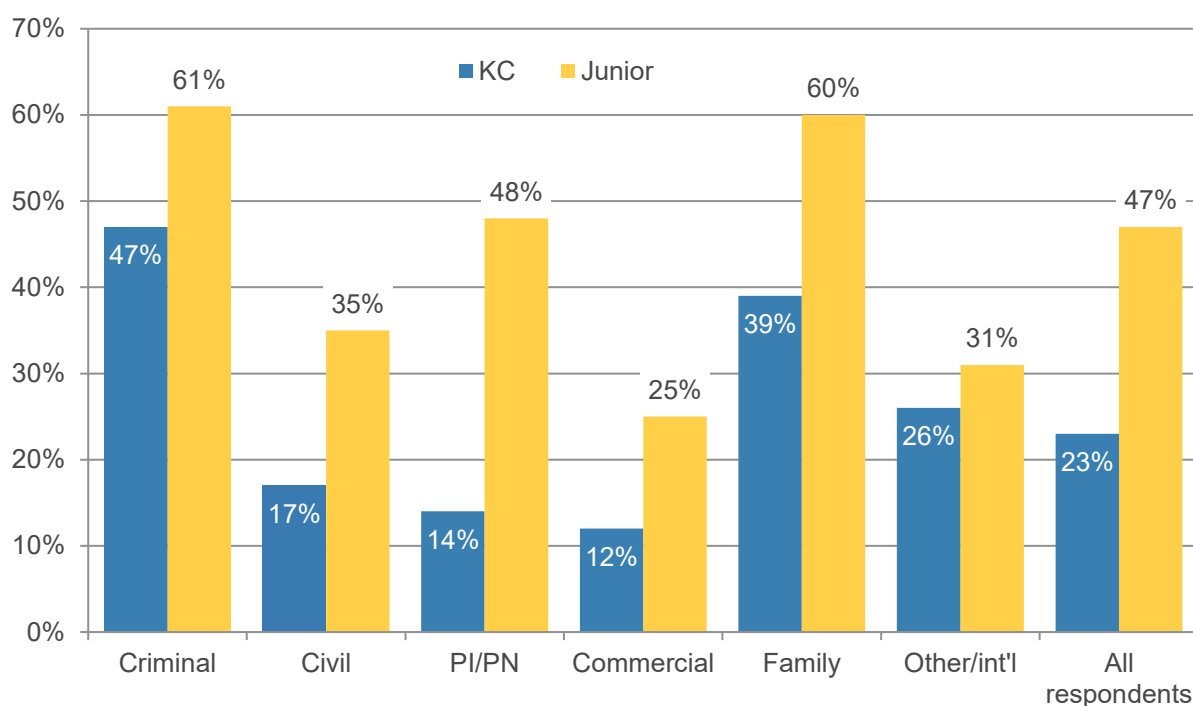


Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,763)

As in 2023, income and fee rates were both strongly correlated with views of future use of remote links, as was KC status. Figure 4.5 shows that the proportion who think that remote links should be used more frequently was twice as high among juniors than among KCs, across all practice areas and within civil and commercial practice, while in PI/PN, three times as many juniors as KCs think that remote links should be used more frequently. This also helps to explain some of the aggregate change in views since 2023 as KCs were less likely to support an increase in the use of remote hearings and in 2025 a higher proportion of KCs were included in the response set than was the case in 2023.

The gap between the views of KCs and juniors was narrowest in criminal practice and other/international. A higher proportion of KCs working in criminal practice thought that remote links should be increased than was the case across the whole profession (47%).

Figure 4.5 Remote links should be used more frequently by area of practice and KC status (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,726)

It was interesting to note that among those currently not KCs, junior barristers who aspired to be KCs were less likely to have indicated that remote hearings should be used more frequently (36% compared with 51% of those who aspire to be KCs but believe they cannot meet the criteria and 53% of those who have no intention of becoming a KC).

Region of practice emerged as a differentiating factor and largely because there was a difference in opinion between those working in the Greater London area compared with those working elsewhere in England and Wales. A third (32%) of respondents working in London would like to see remote links used more extensively compared with more than a half of all other respondents and up to two thirds of those working in the Wales and the East of England. The reduction in numbers wanting to see remote links used more frequently has been largely among barristers working in London (40% in 2023 to 32% in 2025), the views of those working elsewhere have remained broadly unchanged since 2023 (56% in 2023 to 54% in 2025).

In terms of demographics, it was important to note that 59% of barristers who indicated they were physically disabled said they would welcome an increase in the frequency of remote hearings compared with 50% of those who were neurodivergent and 42% of those with no disability. Many of the other demographic characteristics, for instance social background and university attended, were also linked to KC status and area of practice so

when these were controlled for most of the difference was eliminated, although there does still remain some difference between those educated at Oxbridge and those who went to other UK universities, for example among KCs in the criminal Bar, with 36% of those who went to Oxbridge indicating they would like to see an increase in the frequency of remote hearings compared with 52% of those who went to other UK universities.

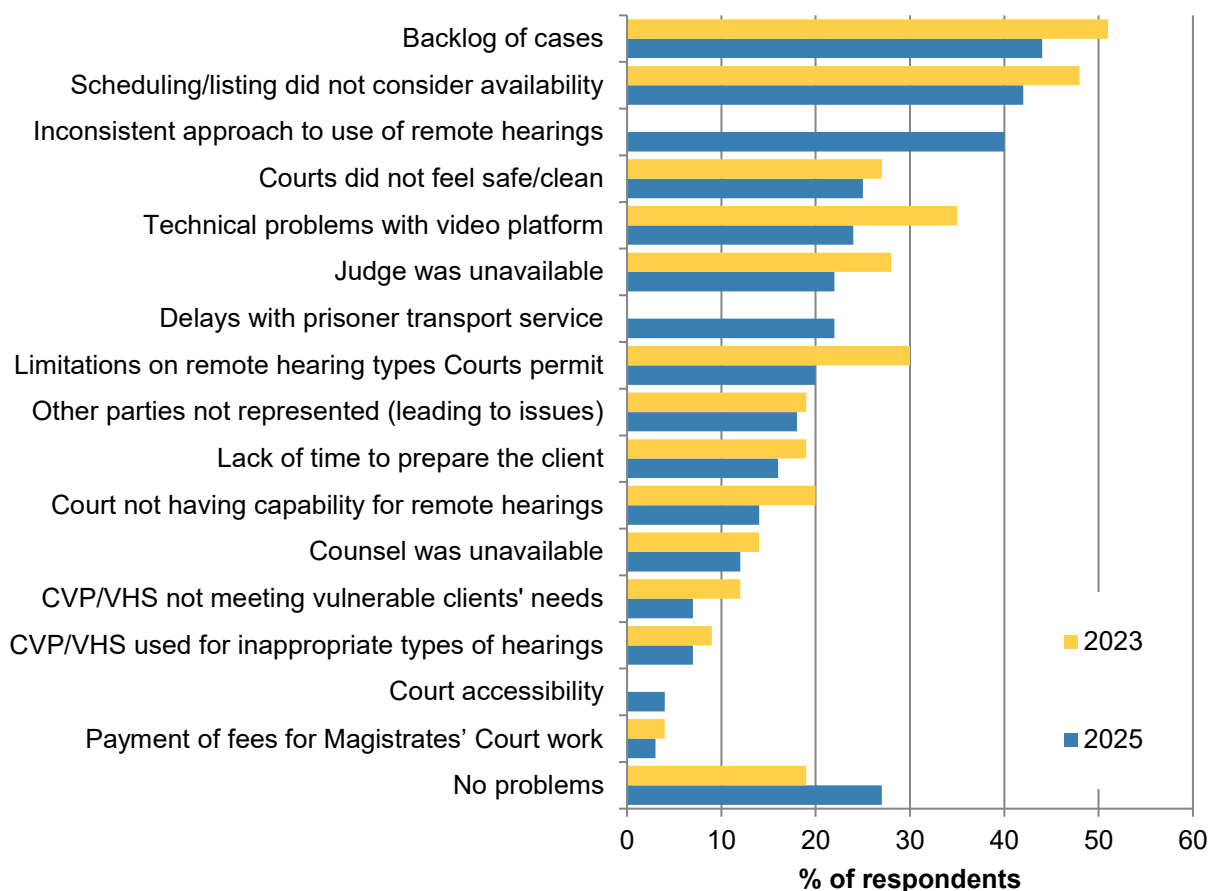
One in three (29%) barristers who already spent more than half of their total court time in remote hearings thought remote hearings should be used more frequently and a further 61% thought that the frequency of remote hearings was about right. On the other hand, those barristers who spent up to 50% of their time in remote hearings were more likely to indicate that remote hearings should be used more frequently (45%) and 47% thought it was about right at the moment.

4.3 Problems experienced attending court/tribunals

Next, respondents were asked to indicate if they had experienced problems with attending courts/tribunals in the three months prior to the survey. A list of 13 possible items was presented against which respondents indicated if they had experienced them or not.

Figure 4.6 presents the list of problems associated with attending courts/hearings in the three months prior to the surveys in 2023 and 2025 ordered by the most frequently cited. Across all types of problems, the number of respondents citing each had reduced or remained unchanged. The backlog of cases remains the most pressing problem – albeit with a reduced percentage of 44% down from 51% of all respondents citing this issue. Scheduling/listing not considering barrister availability was also cited by approximately half the respondents (42% down from 48% in 2023). This year the ‘inconsistent approach to the use of remote hearings’ was provided as an option and was cited by 40% of all respondents.

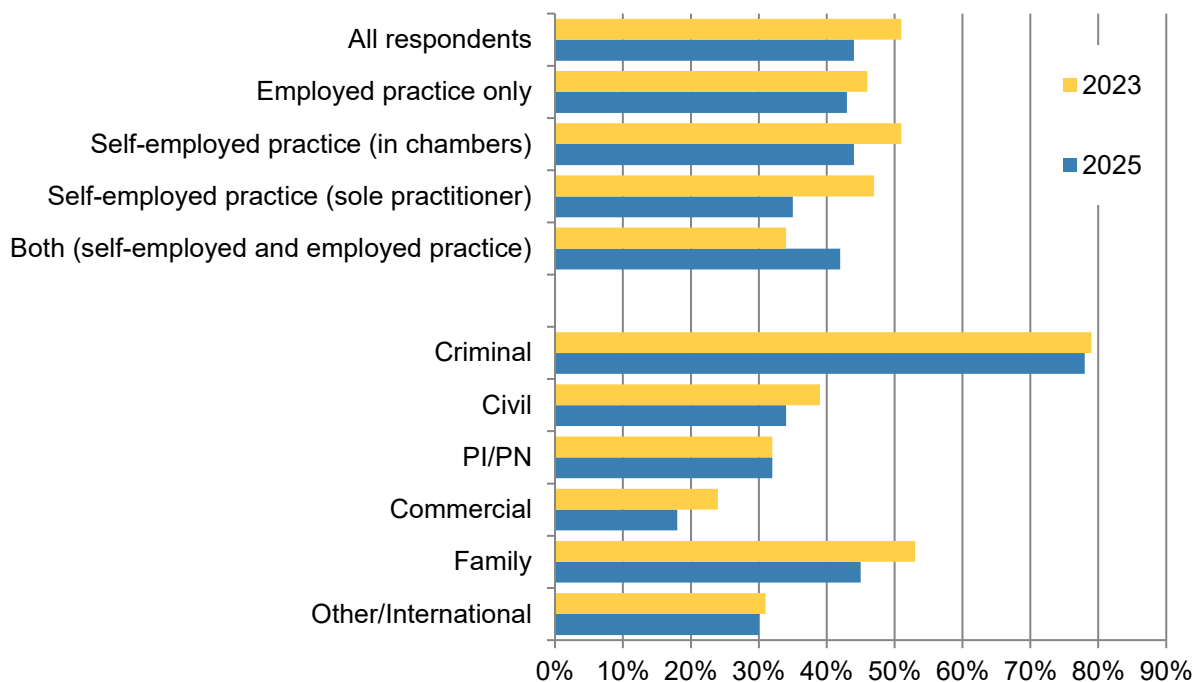
Respondents who worked in commercial practice (53%, 47% in 2023), civil practice (35%, up from 26% in 2023) and PI/PN (30%, same as in 2023) were much more likely to indicate that they had experienced no problems attending courts or tribunals in person in the three months prior to the survey. This compares with just 6% (up from 4% in 2023) and 14% (up from 9% in 2023) of barristers working in crime and family respectively.

Figure 4.6 Problems attending courts/tribunals in last 3 months (n=3,552/2,999 in 2025/2023)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023 and 2025

Figure 4.7 shows that it was at the criminal Bar where most respondents were concerned about the backlog of cases and in similar proportions to the 2023 figures (78%) followed by the family Bar (45%, slightly lower than the 2023 figure of 53%). However, it was also possible that the backlog in cases relating to crime might be affecting other areas of the Bar.

Figure 4.7 Backlog of cases cited as a problem by status and area of practice (percentages 2023 and 2025)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023 and 2025 (N=3,552 2025, N=2,999 2023, practice N>30)

By region the backlog was mentioned by more barristers in the East of England, East Midlands, South East, North West and West Midlands where a half or more barristers highlighted this issue, albeit in slightly lower proportions than the 60% in 2023. Scheduling not taking account of availability was cited by more barristers in Yorkshire and Humberside, East and West Midlands, South East and East of England where again more than half cited this issue and again in slightly lower proportions than in 2023.

Although there were correlations between the likelihood of mentioning a backlog of cases and other demographic/employment variables, such as stage of career, age band, income and fees charged etc., these were largely as a result of the demographic make-up of the criminal Bar than any additional effect.

Barristers working in crime and family were more likely to have experienced all the problems listed than those working in other areas. When offered the option that there were no problems, nearly ten times as many barristers in practice areas other than crime and family said there were no problems than was the case among those at the criminal Bar. The difference between barristers in crime and family practice areas were listed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Problems attending court/tribunals experienced by barristers working in crime and family areas of practice compared with others (percentages indicating problem area and figures in brackets are from 2023)

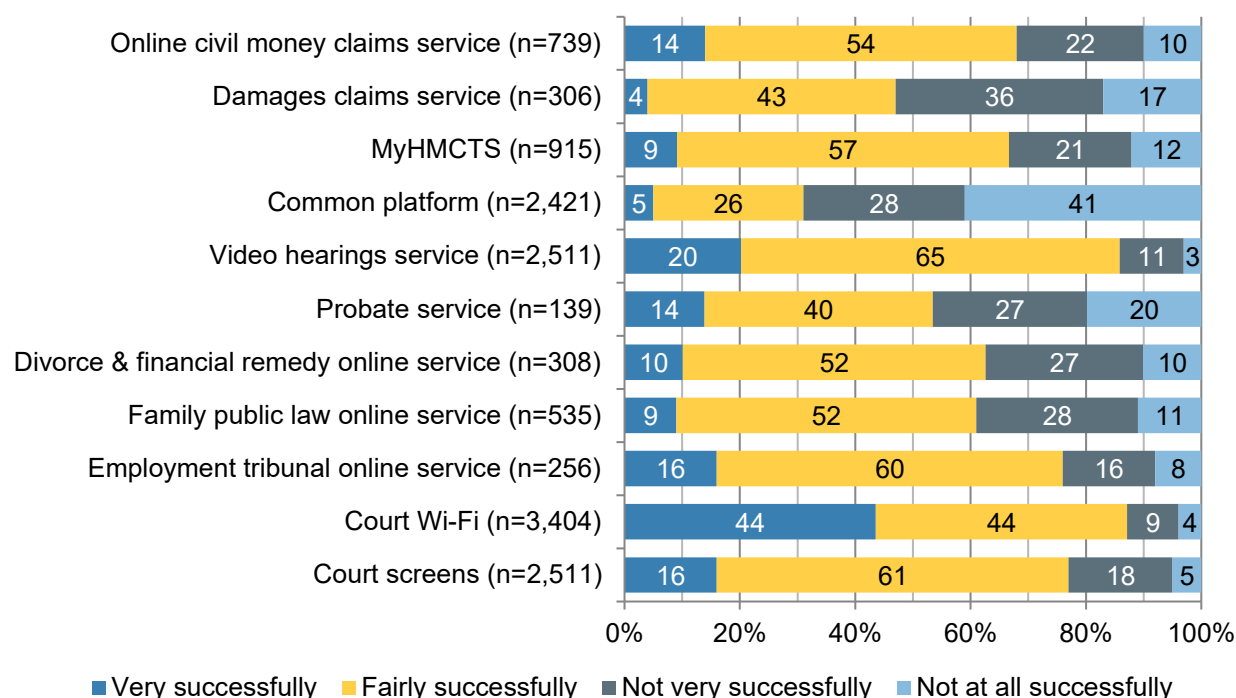
Problem	Criminal Bar	Family Bar	Others	All respondents
No problems	6 (4)	14 (9)	41 (34)	27 (19)
Scheduling/listing did not consider my availability	74 (77)	46 (51)	26 (29)	42 (48)
Backlog of cases	78 (79)	45 (53)	28 (32)	44 (51)
Courts did not feel safe/clean	45 (45)	34 (31)	12 (14)	25 (27)
Courts not having capability for remote hearings	23	17	9	14
Inconsistent approach to using remote hearings	61	49	27	40
Limitations on the types of remote hearings that the court will permit	36 (45)	27 (39)	11 (17)	20 (30)
Court accessibility	7	5	3	4
CVP/VHS used for inappropriate types of hearings	13 (11)	9 (7)	4 (10)	7 (9)
Technical problems with video platform	43 (53)	31 (38)	12 (22)	24 (35)
Video platform not meeting the needs of vulnerable clients	11 (15)	14 (22)	3 (6)	7 (12)
Lack of time to prepare the client	38 (37)	19 (21)	5 (6)	16 (19)
Delays with prisoner transport service	74	7	3	22
Judge was unavailable	31	19	19	22
Counsel was unavailable	41 (41)	4 (4)	2 (2)	12 (13)
Payment of fees for magistrates court work	7	2	1	3
Other parties not represented (leading to further issues)	24	29	11	18
Base N=	912 (889)	688 (689)	1952 (1,421)	3,552 (2,999)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023

Again, with many of the demographic and employment-related characteristics being correlated with area of practice, it was not possible to discern additional effects of these variables.

4.4 Digital projects

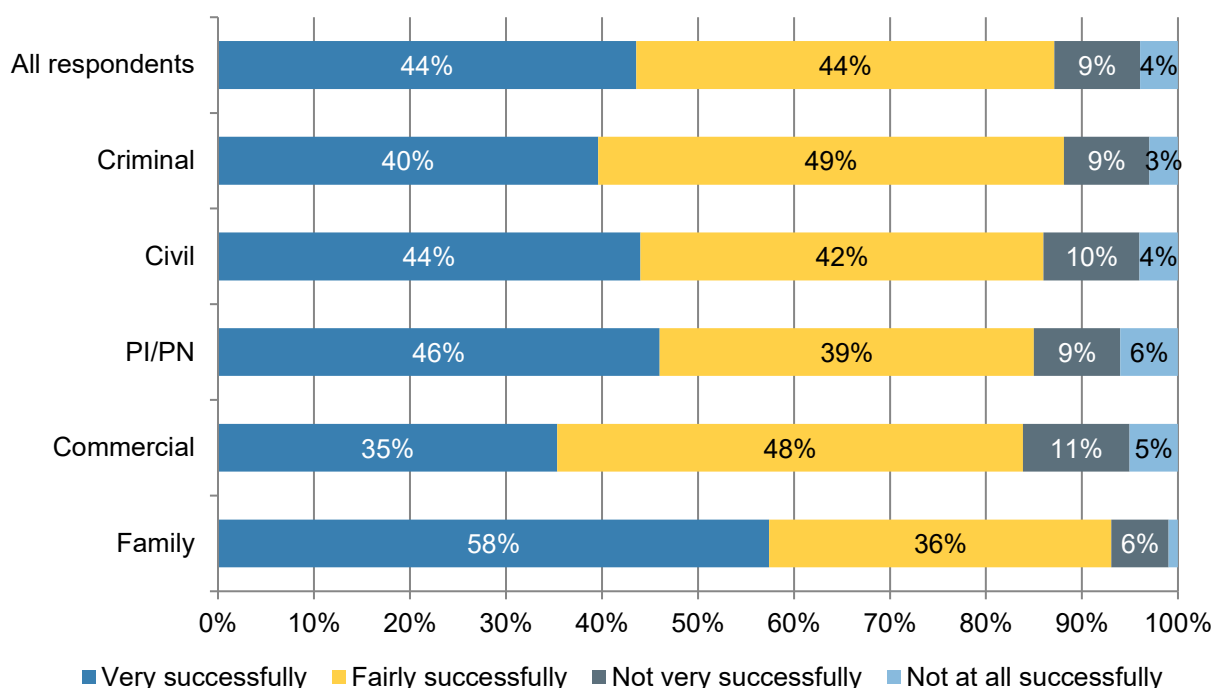
This year barristers were asked to indicate how successfully they felt a series of digital projects had been implemented. In some cases, there were only a small number of respondents who had experience of the project.

Figure 4.8 Digital project implementation success (percentages)⁹

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

The most successful projects were perceived to be 'court Wi-Fi' where 44% of all respondents said it had been implemented 'very successfully' and a further 44% said it had been implemented 'fairly successfully'. This was among 3,404 respondents and only 564 said it was not relevant to their practice. Three quarters of respondents felt that 'court screens' had been implemented at least 'fairly successfully' – 16% said 'very successfully'.

⁹ The 'n' figure in brackets alongside each project name represents the number of respondents who had experience of the project in their practices.

Figure 4.9 Implementation of 'court Wi-Fi' (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Barristers working in family practice responded most positively in relation to the implementation of court Wi-Fi with 94% indicating that it had been implemented at least fairly successfully of which 58% felt it had been implemented very successfully. Barristers in commercial practice were less positive albeit relatively and marginally.

KCs were significantly less inclined to respond positively with 16% saying that they felt it had not been implemented very successfully compared with 12% of juniors and 30% said it had been implemented very successfully compared with nearly half (47%) of juniors. There was little or no difference in the views of KCs and juniors on all the other digital projects.

Court Wi-Fi was generally received slightly more positively among the young Bar than the middle Bar who in turn were slightly more positive than those in later practice.

The 'Common Platform' drew a very negative response from the criminal Bar with a half (51%) of all respondents from this area of practice saying that it had not been implemented at all successfully compared with just 15% of those working in family practice and 21% across all other areas of practice. Those working in the regions were also slightly more negative about this digital project than barristers based in Greater London (43% saw it as not at all successful compared with 35% of those in London). A similar albeit weaker correlation by region was apparent in relation to the Video Hearings Service.

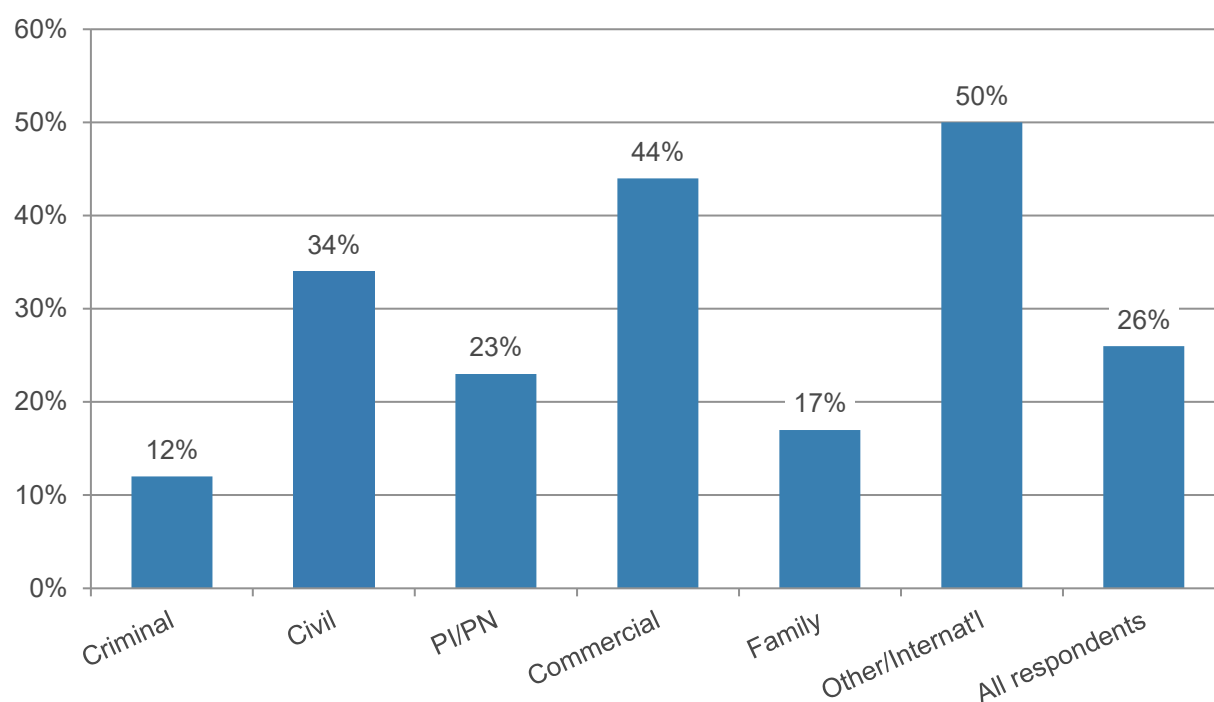
On the other digital projects there was little to differentiate between subgroups of barristers.

4.5 Extended operating hours

Respondents were next asked if they would support the introduction of extended operating hours (EOH). Overall, one in four (23%) said they would support the introduction of EOH, two thirds (64%) said they would not and 13% said they did not know. Whether or not respondents did not know was not significantly correlated with employment or demographic characteristics, so they were excluded from the following analysis, which reveals a strong correlation between views on EOH and area of practice, type of employment, region, gender, child care responsibilities and age.

Across all respondents, and taking out 'don't knows', 26% said they would support the introduction and 74% would not, but those in criminal and family practice had very different views to the other areas of practice as shown in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10 Support for the introduction of extended operating hours (EOH) (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,755)

Just 12% of those in criminal practice and 17% of barristers in family practice said they would support the introduction of EOH compared with 44% of those in commercial and 34% in civil practice. Across the whole Bar, one in five (22%) self-employed barristers in chambers would support the introduction compared with 51% of employed practice barristers and 47% of those who were working as sole practitioners. In addition to this a third (32%) of barristers based in Greater London would support the introduction of EOH compared with just 18% of those working in other regions.

Stage of career was also important, and this would seem to tie in with childcare responsibilities. Four in ten (41%) of the young Bar, in their first two years of practice, supported the introduction of EOH compared with 24% of the young Bar (3-7 years),

reducing to a fifth of those in middle practice, before rising again to a third (31%) of those in later practice. This link was also corroborated by the fact that 23% of barristers aged under 55 supported EOH compared with 32% of those aged 55 plus, and 22% of those with childcare responsibilities supported it compared with 29% of those without.

4.6 Views of the functioning of courts/tribunals and remote/hybrid hearings

As in 2023 respondents were invited to comment on their experience of the functioning of the courts and tribunals and/or remote/hybrid hearings. Respondents could write as much as they wanted, and the analysis coded up to 11 different points. Sometimes a point might be made more than once, in several different ways, but in these instances only one code would be given. It was not always straightforward to interpret the point being made and often points would be nuanced with a positive or negative reference to remote hearings but given with caveats. Views in 2025 were similar to those presented in 2023 and generally, again, there was strong support for remote hearings, albeit not for all types of hearings, despite an apparent reduction in their use over the last two years.

4.6.1 Support for remote hearings

Overall, two thirds of barristers indicated, at the very least, broad support for remote hearings (68%) and even among those who reviewed them in a less positive light some said they can be used in some situations. Many (at least 10%) advocated for greater use of remote and hybrid hearings, especially for administrative, interim, and short-duration matters.

There could be more extensive use of remote/hybrid hearings where it is more convenient for injured claimants and their families, and to save costs when all legal representatives have to travel a considerable distance.

Some (5%) commented that they should be the default mechanism in a variety of situations.

All procedural hearings should be remote as a default.

Remote hearings were seen as efficient, cost-effective, and important for maintaining work-life balance, particularly for those with caring responsibilities.

Too much time being wasted on interim hearings in person - directions by remote hearing with a specified time slot are far more efficient.

Many noted that remote access reduces unnecessary travel and helps ease the burden on an overstretched legal system. They were also seen as more environmentally friendly.

Would prefer if many more hearings were remote and hybrid. It saves a huge amount of time and is far less physically tiring. Fewer people travelling is also better for the environment.

The government, HMCTS, parties (and litigation funders i.e. insurers), advocates and other court users all have duties to reduce emissions. I (and others) have travelled hundreds of miles causing unnecessary CO2 emissions. There needs to be a broad and consistent policy for remote interlocutory hearings in civil claims, save for where there is good reason to depart from this (judge's discretion and a lack of facilities not being a good reason!).

Some 7% said that remote hearings should be used notwithstanding the need for some exemptions, in particular trials and longer hearings although opinions varied as to where the cut off should be.

Remote hearings can be used effectively for hearings that don't require evidence to be given. Other than that, I favour in-person hearings.

Remote hearings were also thought to allow better use of professional time, both within the legal profession but also for external experts (e.g. social workers, doctors) who otherwise lose entire days to brief hearings.

4.6.2 Frustrations with (remote) hearings

Four in ten respondents (44%) cited problems with the practicalities of administering hearings some of which related specifically to remote hearings, although it was not always straightforward to determine which type of hearing was being referred to.

Technology (cited by 8% of respondents) and CVP (Cloud Video Platform) in particular was criticised by many and there was a feeling among some that Teams should be used more.

The equipment in courts is inadequate and often does not work. This causes delay

CVP is not fit for purpose. Constant problems with video/audio.

Administrative issues were criticised widely (at least 14%) with references to communication issues, listing and changes made at short notice.

Communicating with courts is little short of a nightmare. Documents sent to courts, including those for onward transmission to judges, are not dealt with within a reasonable time. Orders made by judges are often not issued by courts within a reasonable time. Listing is too often haphazard (I had a final hearing listed before one of the judges who could not hear it, as set out in the previous order, because he had heard the FDR). The delays are outrageous. It can take 12-15 months for people to go through the divorce process, during which their lives are often on hold. That should not happen.

Inconsistencies in use were mentioned, with some judges/courts enforcing in-person attendance while others used remote options selectively, sometimes seen as being for the judge's own convenience (9%).

There needs to be consistency in approach. Some Courts (e.g. Reading Crown Court) are openly hostile to CVP being used without a very good reason, whereas

others (e.g. Warwick) leave it to counsel's judgment as to whether CVP is appropriate for short hearings. A consistent approach would be appreciated.

Some barristers reported professional reasons for opposing remote hearings (4%). But as the quote below highlights, there was nevertheless acceptance that remote hearings were a useful mechanism for executing some hearings.

My strong personal preference is face to face hearings - unless it is a short direction hearing or the client is physically unable to travel - or some other very good reason. My experience is that face to face hearings on important issues simply work better from a human, lawyer and judicial perspective. However, I accept that's not everyone's preference and view, and I also recognise it's very useful and important that we have the option of remote/hybrid hearings, to increase the Courts' work capacity and flexibility.

There were many instances of barristers commenting on the backwards steps that the system has taken since Covid restrictions were ended. This comment summarises the frustration felt by some:

We are led by a judiciary wilfully determined to learn nothing from Covid. I hated my job before lockdown. Covid was the best thing that ever happened to my wellbeing in that suddenly I could do the job in a reasonable number of hours. For 20 years I existed on 5.5 hours sleep and it was damaging my physical and mental health. During Covid I could do all my work and get 7-8 hours sleep. I was far more productive, as for the first time in my career I was doing 2-3 cases per day. I'm back to 5.5 hours sleep a night, I hate the job, doing only one case a day. I have no sympathy with the senior judges' complaints about lack of resources when they could easily increase our productivity with more remote hearings. If they used remote hearings sensibly they have a near infinite court estate, limited only by the number of judges they can get to sit.

Some argued that some types of hearings—such as contested trials or those involving vulnerable parties—required in-person attendance for fairness and impact. Professional reasons of quality of justice, as well as the professional development of the young Bar were cited as reasons to not depend too highly on remote hearings.

In my area of practice almost all hearings are remote. I do not consider that this is satisfactory both for the quality of the hearing and the administration of justice but also for the practitioner. It is not a satisfactory professional life only to meet colleagues and others involved in the process on a screen. Although it is convenient, long term it is poor for networking, progression and professional development and satisfaction.

4.6.3 Court and justice system infrastructure

There were various issues raised concerning the courts and judiciary. Nearly four in ten (39%) mentioned problems with various aspects of the court estate, including the judiciary, resistance to remote hearings, conference space, funding and empty buildings.

The court estate, particularly County Courts, was often described (by 9% of respondents) as dilapidated and unfit for purpose (e.g. broken toilets, poor Wi-Fi, lack of conference space – 3%). Concerns were raised about insufficient judges (and other professional and administrative staff) (8%), and subsequent delays exacerbated by poor administration as mentioned above. These comments highlight some of the concerns:

The Courts are inhospitable environments. They are shabby, there is no access to hot drinks, no safe ways to meet the needs of vulnerable clients, e.g. separate entrances and waiting areas. There is an increase in aggression and the courts feel less safe. The efforts to reduce backlog and increase efficiency are laudable aims but have led to an increase in judicial bullying.

There are huge delays in getting cases listed. There are not enough judges. Cases are pulled from the list at short notice. There is a considerable lack of conference rooms which makes having confidential conferences with clients very difficult in sensitive family cases. There is a real lack of facilities, or willingness on the part of the courts, to accommodate vulnerable parties where special measures/participation directions are required in family cases. Family court judges are overworked, meaning they are unable to deal with cases properly and often appear stressed, unhappy and sometimes rude.

Underfunding (cited by 8% of respondents) was clear in many responses whether it was stated explicitly or not. This results in a system that seems to be at breaking point.

The Court system is not functioning well. It is underfunded which leads to stretching of judicial and administration services, resulting in a poor customer experience. A number of occasions hearings have been vacated at the last minute.

A lack of investment over many years and a leaching of funds away from criminal justice has created the current crisis. There are not enough advocates or judges. The number of sitting hours is inadequate. The result has been that practitioners have left criminal work in their droves to the extent that even if more sitting days now became available it is unlikely the system could fully utilise them. There should be a protocol to standardise when and how remote hearings are conducted it is being done on a piecemeal basis court to court at present which makes the burden on the Bar and barristers' clerks too high.

4.6.4 Working conditions and wellbeing

Often overlapping with the points made above there were clear implications for work life balance, wellbeing and workload for many working in the justice system, not only barristers. At least 12% of respondents cited wellbeing issues, 6% unprompted expressed opposition to extended operating hours, and 5% mentioned excessive workloads specifically, although workloads were a theme that was apparent in many comments albeit not necessarily directly.

Many barristers expressed concern over excessive workloads (5%), unrealistic listing times (14%), and some references to expectations to work long hours without

compensation – some said that the justice system was keeping going partly on the goodwill of barristers.

Due to the amount of email traffic and generally being considered "available"/working even at evenings and weekends, exhaustion and burnout are rampant at the family Bar. It is simply impossible to read a 1500+ page bundle when we get the papers the night before and are expected to do an attendance note and order after court, whilst also prepping for the next day. Barristers, and solicitors are at breaking point. Extended hours will not rectify this as work-life balance is non-existent. People are sacrificing their relationships with their own families too much already. Extra judicial sitting days are the only way to remedy the backlog as there are plenty of barristers (and future barristers) who could cover this work without heaping pressure on those of us who are already at breaking point.

Poor morale among court staff (mentioned directly by 1% and indirectly by many more), and equipment failures contributed to case backlogs and inefficiencies. Delays and backlogs were referred to by many (6%) and again implied by others.

Nobody seems particularly happy, courts look shabby, respect for the system clearly declining. Significant increase in out-of-court procedures.

Although this was not asked directly, extended court operating hours were broadly opposed (5%), with concerns raised about the impact on preparation, family life, and mental health, especially for junior barristers and women. Below is an example of the comments:

I cannot physically take on any more work: I diversified my work to include employment in order to reduce my workload and stress levels. I know I am not alone as colleagues tell me repeatedly that they are exhausted. Increasing court hours will not help because the lawyers who do this work cannot do anymore.

4.6.5 Impact on access to justice and efficiency

Although access to justice is dealt with directly in the following section there were also many references to this issue when barristers were commenting about the courts and tribunals and remote/hybrid hearings, mentioned directly by at least 5% of respondents. The seeming increase in LiPs (Litigants in Person) was seen as a reflection of this demise.

The increase in the number of unrepresented litigants (successive legal aid cuts) has resulted in more delays, longer trials and an absence of any understanding of the applicable law. Unrepresented litigants try hard to co-operate but have no idea what is relevant/irrelevant nor any idea how to present their case, causing delay and often injustice, which would be avoided were they represented by a lawyer.

Calls were made for standardised national protocols, more funding for recorders and court staff, and use of higher quality video conferencing platforms (e.g. Teams over CVP).

There needs to be much more consistency with the use of remote/hybrid hearings. It is often entirely and arbitrarily unpredictable when hearings will be remote. There should be clear standard procedure (e.g. hearings of less than half a day where there are no witnesses or complicated issues should be remote unless there is reason for them not to be, whereas default should be in person for longer hearings, those with witnesses, those with more complicated issues).

We cannot continue to pretend to be concerned about the retention of women and the promotion of women in the profession without wider use of remote hearings. The job is a nightmare for any primary carer of a child with an expectation that we work nights and weekends and that we travel to court at a time when children need to be taken to school. We do not earn enough for nannies to be paid to do this instead.

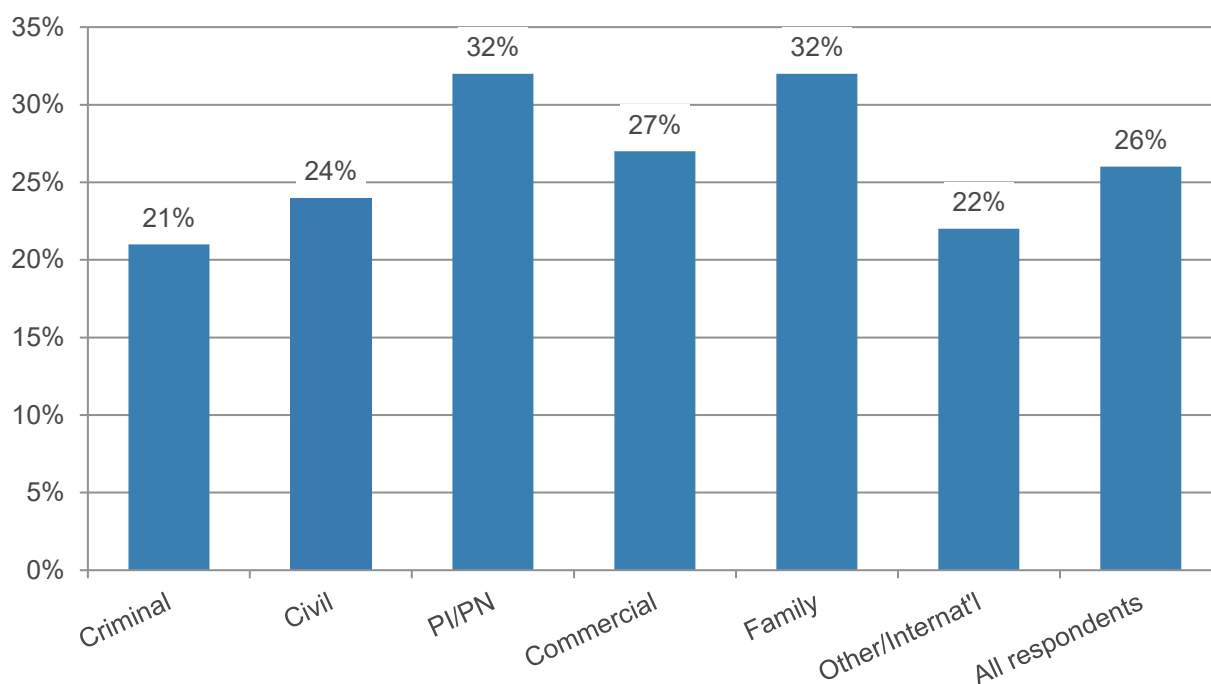
All courts and tribunals should use Teams. It is pointless to have CVP also. Clients are more often familiar with Teams.

4.7 Access to justice

One in five of all respondents (22%) said that people get access to justice at an acceptable level at present, two thirds (63%) said that people do not and 15% said they did not know. Again, removing the 'do not knows' from the analysis leaves 26% thinking people get adequate access to justice and 74% who do not. Area of practice was again the key correlation with fewer respondents working in criminal practice responding positively (21%), particularly when compared with those working in family and PI/PN (32%; see Figure 4.11).

The lowest proportion of barristers who felt that people were able to access justice at an acceptable level were those with neurodivergent conditions (17%) compared with 24% of those with physical disabilities and 27% of those with no disability. Also 21% of those with both adult and child caring responsibilities feel that access to justice was at an acceptable level. Otherwise, there was little difference between groups of respondents.

Those respondents who did not think that access to justice was at an acceptable level at present (2,714 respondents) were asked to comment on why they felt this was the case. Over 90% (2,477 barristers) offered responses, many of which were detailed and comprehensive, often indictments on a justice system that seems to be failing practitioners, users and public alike, with chronic problems in many areas. Across all respondents 53,000 words were written. These figures alone demonstrate a high level of concern, and commitment from the profession to the justice system. Some respondents commented, saying they never usually complete this kind of survey but feel that it has become essential to have their voice heard, with the system in urgent need of support.

Figure 4.11 Access to justice at an acceptable level (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025 (N=3,669)

Often it was not clear which part of the system respondents were referring to, be it levels of court, areas of practice, different staff groups or types of hearing. In reading this summary, it should be remembered that these were not responses to direct questions as to whether or not respondents perceive specific issues to be a problem in accessing justice or not. They were unprompted remarks following a negative answer to the general question *'are people able to access justice at an acceptable level'*, with explanations as to why this might be the case. It provides pointers to the main areas of concern. Some provided long accounts, detailing their reasoning, sometimes with specific and detailed examples they had witnessed or experienced, while at the other end of the spectrum some barristers provided one-word answers such as *'delays'*, *'costs'*, *'underfunding'* or *'backlogs'*, while others provided general short summaries, along the lines of *'the whole system is a shambles'*.

The overall, and loud, message from well over half of all respondents to the survey, was describing a system that had enormous difficulties, was underfunded in many areas which was, in part at least, perceived to be causing a plethora of difficulties, including a growth in self-representation (partly stemming from access to representation issues and inequalities), legal deserts, court closures, regional variability, poor infrastructure, unsustainable workloads, wastage and shortages of professionals and court staff...as many said, *'the list goes on'*.

The backlogs and delays that were reported as so widespread led many to the overall conclusion that *'justice delayed is justice denied'*.

The main points can be summarised as below, and detailed findings in relation to each point follow:

Endemic court delays

Almost universally cited, delays affected every level of the justice system—from criminal trials to civil and family proceedings.

Trials were routinely delayed by months or even years, undermining confidence in outcomes and deterring complainants and witnesses.

Cases often collapsed due to these delays, particularly in criminal and family courts.

Legal aid crisis

Severe underfunding and restrictive eligibility criteria had led to "legal aid deserts," particularly in immigration, family, and housing law.

Legal aid rates were so low that many experienced solicitors and barristers have left the sector, leaving clients without competent representation.

Practitioners noted that even eligible individuals struggle to find providers willing to take on legal aid work.

Unsustainable legal costs

Civil and family court fees were prohibitively expensive, with numerous examples of fees exceeding the recoverable costs.

Middle-income individuals—too wealthy for legal aid, too poor for private representation—were particularly disadvantaged.

The high cost of litigation fosters inequality and deters legitimate claims, while fixed fee regimes disincentivize quality advocacy.

Litigants in Person (LiPs)

The growing number of self-represented parties was placing unsustainable pressure on the courts and judicial time.

LiPs often struggled with complex procedural rules and fail to present cases effectively, prolonging hearings and leading to unjust outcomes.

Infrastructure and staffing

Court closures, a shortage of judges, deteriorating court buildings, and lack of administrative staff were frequently mentioned.

Remote hearings had created new access barriers, particularly for the digitally excluded.

Criminal justice system backlog

Professionals reported that criminal trials were commonly delayed 3–5 years.

Defendants remained in custody or on bail for extended periods, while victims suffered trauma and disengaged from proceedings.

The quality of case preparation had declined due to lack of time and overworked legal professionals.

Equality and fairness concerns

Structural barriers disproportionately affected the vulnerable: the poor, disabled, immigrants, and those without legal knowledge.

In family cases, inconsistent legal aid provision between parties (e.g. alleged abuser vs. alleged victim) undermined fairness.

4.7.1 Long delays and large backlogs

Delays and backlogs were mentioned unprompted by a significant majority of all respondents to the question, across most areas of practice, and impacted on most areas of the justice system. Trials were routinely delayed by months or even several years, undermining confidence in outcomes and deterring complainants and witnesses. The word 'delay' was used by just over 700 respondents, and 60% of all respondents cited delays or backlogs as one of the reasons people cannot access justice to an acceptable level; 4% specifically mentioned delays in criminal courts but this figure is likely to be much larger given the problems that were apparent in many responses with the criminal justice system. A typical response, that also goes on to discuss a legal aid issue, was:

The delays are unjustifiable and destructive. Justice delayed really is justice denied. It has an appalling impact on complainants and witnesses. It is unfair on the accused. It also results in lesser sentences for the guilty. This ultimately puts off many complainants from supporting prosecutions. In addition, legal aid is not sufficiently available. It is not available for many magistrates' court offences - just because the sentence may be lower, doesn't mean that the impact of a conviction is any less on that individual.

A small number of respondents (1%) mentioned inappropriate cases going to court where affordable representation might have avoided it, also contributing to the backlog and delay.

The lack of availability of civil legal aid means that cases are run to trial which are hopeless (but which judges won't generally allow to be struck out because of an inherent and understandable desire not to 'disadvantage' LiPs).

Many respondents referred to cases that had collapsed (5%), or where litigants had given up on the process and lost faith in the system (4%). Instances where there was no continuity of representation due to the delays were given. Backlogs were cited in many areas and in particular in civil, criminal and family courts.

Delays and inefficiencies in the system cause people, defendants, witnesses, and complainants, to lose faith in the system and cases keep collapsing. Justice is not always achieved in these cases.

There were listing problems (mentioned by 4%), the system was too slow, cases frequently collapsed, or were repeatedly adjourned or moved. Confidence was undermined with a perception that crime was going unpunished. Many referred to the impact on families in child protection cases with excessive lead times and the trauma associated with these delays.

The listing backlog for cases is horrendous, both the delay in being charged and case starting at court years after the offence and then further delays of years in listing the case for trial. If it is a bail case we are well into 2027, and there is no guarantee that the case will even be heard when it is listed because it is listed to float and not a fixture.

In the criminal courts, some reported that criminal trials can be delayed for 3–5 years or more, victims can feel that justice was not being executed, sentences become meaningless, and defendants remained for long periods of time in remand or on bail.

The delays in criminal trials ruins both complainants and defendants lives. Waiting 4 years on bail with the inevitable result that memories have faded, witnesses have dropped out, and if there is a conviction then sentences are reduced does not feel like justice.

The following sections, while describing separate issues, also provide insight into what was seen to be possibly contributing to these delays.

4.7.2 Funding issues

Significant underfunding over many years, the erosion of legal aid, and restrictive eligibility criteria had led to 'legal aid deserts'. There was concern about inequity in accessing the justice system; it only being possible for the very poor or the very rich. The phrase 'legal aid' was used, invariably in a negative context, by 674 respondents. Funding issues were mentioned by more than half of all respondents (55%).

There is manifestly an insufficient level of resource being put into the criminal justice system at the moment. Victims and defendants are having to wait far too long for cases to come to trial, with obvious negative impacts upon mental health, prisons, trust in the justice system and effectiveness of justice.

As well as making it difficult to access the justice system for those with little or no resources, the erosion of legal aid rates was such that many experienced solicitors and barristers had left the sector, leaving clients without competent representation due to the poor levels of remuneration.

Funding being cut means good barristers keep leaving the profession and it's hard to justify staying in it as a highly qualified and skilled person capable of earning much higher income outside of the criminal Bar. This impacts availability of good counsel which in turn affects quality of and access to justice.

Respondents noted that even eligible individuals struggled to find providers willing to take on legal aid work.

4.7.3 Costs and access

Civil and family court fees were prohibitively expensive, with numerous mentions of fees exceeding the recoverable costs. A third (34%) of respondents cited issues around the cost of legal representation with only the wealthy (both individuals and organisations) being able to afford representation.

Justice should be available without reference to the sums involved or parties abilities to afford lawyers. The result is that financial might overcomes what may be right. The procedures handicap those acting in person or who cannot field or afford good representation. The answer is to have litigant in person courts with an easier disciplined procedure.

Middle-income individuals, too wealthy for legal aid, too poor for private representation were particularly disadvantaged and this led to increases in Litigants in Person (LiPs).

Many people have too much money for legal aid, but not enough to pay privately. When a defendant is not represented it causes problems, inconvenience and delays, often greatly increasing the length and therefore the cost of hearings.

Inequality issues were raised by one in ten respondents and the high cost of litigation fosters inequality and deters legitimate claims, while fixed fee regimes were thought to negatively impact on quality advocacy.

In crime if you don't qualify for legal aid you have to be very rich to afford a decent level of representation.

The removal of publicly funded work and the introduction of fixed fees has created a situation in which it is unaffordable for solicitors to run cases of modest or low value unless liability is admitted and/or the case can be settled at an early stage.

Structural barriers disproportionately affected the vulnerable: the poor, disabled, immigrants, and those without legal knowledge.

As ever it is the most vulnerable in society that are excluded but also you now Courts have closed and there's a lack of court staff to support client access. The cost of litigation with the lack of access to Legal Aid. Judges over worked. Long waits for hearing denies justice. We have reached the stage we should be ashamed.

In family cases, inconsistent legal aid provision between parties (e.g. alleged abuser vs. alleged victim) was thought to undermine fairness.

Alleged perpetrators of DV are at an immediate disadvantage cf to those receiving legal aid having made such allegations.

Furthermore, many referred to regional inequalities (3%) due to courts closing, cost of travelling to courts further afield, on top of the cost of securing representation.

The courts are distant from people's homes, many local courts having closed. The lack of legal aid and the lack of investment in the court estate and staffing denies realistic access for anyone who is not abundantly resourced.

4.7.4 Litigants in Person (LiPs)

The growing number of self-represented parties was placing unsustainable pressure on the courts and judicial time, and 6% of barristers highlighted issues around LiPs.

I have seen a marked increase in litigants in person seeking my help via the Bar's Direct/Public Access Scheme. Their experience of the court system is heart breaking. And some of the orders I see coming out of decision making well, let's just say they are not ideal.

It's a system designed for parties who are represented by specialist lawyers, but is increasingly used by litigants in person, who don't know the systems, don't know the law and so don't know what's expected of them and what is or isn't relevant.

LiPs often struggled with complex procedural rules and failed to present cases effectively, prolonging hearings and leading to unjust outcomes as well as delays.

It is easier for people to self-litigate and accessibility to this has improved with online portals but the knock-on effect is actually clogging the system which doesn't improve overall access to justice.

4.7.5 Infrastructure and shortages

Reduced, or a lack of, funding was also thought to have impacted the court infrastructure with many court closures, a shortage of judges, deteriorating court buildings and fittings, and lack of administrative staff being frequently mentioned. This seemed to be especially the case in local courts with costs to users in often having to travel long distances to get to court, and then perhaps only to find cases adjourned. Issues connected with the court

estate were mentioned by 9% of respondents. Many respondents highlighted court closures, the dilapidated state of courts, particularly County courts and the general state of disrepair with some remarking on the contrast between areas of practice.

The closure of courthouses reflects a withdrawal from the justice system from many communities. This is compounded by the expense of commencing legal proceedings (or even getting basic advice) means that most people cannot and do not enforce their legal rights.

Everything works perfectly fine in the Commercial Court, which provides some of the best commercial dispute resolution in the world. By contrast, my experience of the County Court system is that the only reason it even barely keeps together is the dedication of the people working there, but the systems which they are given (in every single area: resources, equipment, buildings, IT, central administrative systems - literally anything) are of a standard which would be shameful in the 80s. Given that probably 90% of disputes are resolved in those courts (and to the parties there, those disputes may well be of huge importance), that is an utter disgrace.

Staff shortages among the judiciary (4% of respondents mentioned this), of barristers and solicitors (3% mentioned) and other staff (2%) were highlighted alongside workload issues (6%), wastage in terms of professionals leaving the Bar (3%), or moving into more highly paid areas of the sector due to the poor remuneration rates (3%).

Lack of judges and backlogs in listing. Too many times outside of London (e.g. Barnet and Canterbury recently) was a hearing cancelled by the court the day before when all fees were incurred due to lack of judges. I believe there are enough Recorders and DDJs for the court to be able to set up a remote hearing with an available Judge in these circumstances but too often it fails to do so.

Barristers in criminal justice are completely overworked. Too many cases to handle and have to take on large amounts of work just to afford to live - client care falls, deadlines are missed, barristers become exhausted and apathetic. Advocates don't even have access to clean drinking water at the large majority of courts, let alone food or adequate breaks.

Overworked barristers (and solicitors) on both sides who are chasing their tails constantly results in an impact on the administration of justice on a daily basis. In crime, we are still losing too many colleagues to other areas of law or failing to keep people doing that work after pupillage as they can earn far more in other areas of work.

There were mixed views around remote hearings and their role in accessing the justice system; some wanted more (1%) and felt this might alleviate some of the backlogs and delays while others felt that remote hearings had created some new access barriers, particularly for the digitally excluded.

Waiting times too long, too little use of remote hearings to make the system run more efficiently and reduce waiting times

The online reforms in family do not work for the benefit of court users, e.g. paper bundles. Courts are not equipped for digital working. Remote hearings seriously disadvantage court users. It is not acceptable to join a court hearing from a smart phone in your bedroom

The quality of case preparation was also perceived to have declined due to lack of time and overworked legal professionals.

Cases need to be piled high to make a living. Better pay and a smaller workload would improve the quality of representation.

In addition to specific reasons why people might not be able to access justice at an acceptable level, there were a number of summary, general comments to the effect of the justice system being in a desperate state. The overriding sentiment that came across in the open responses from the Bar concerning access to justice was that:

The court service is on its knees

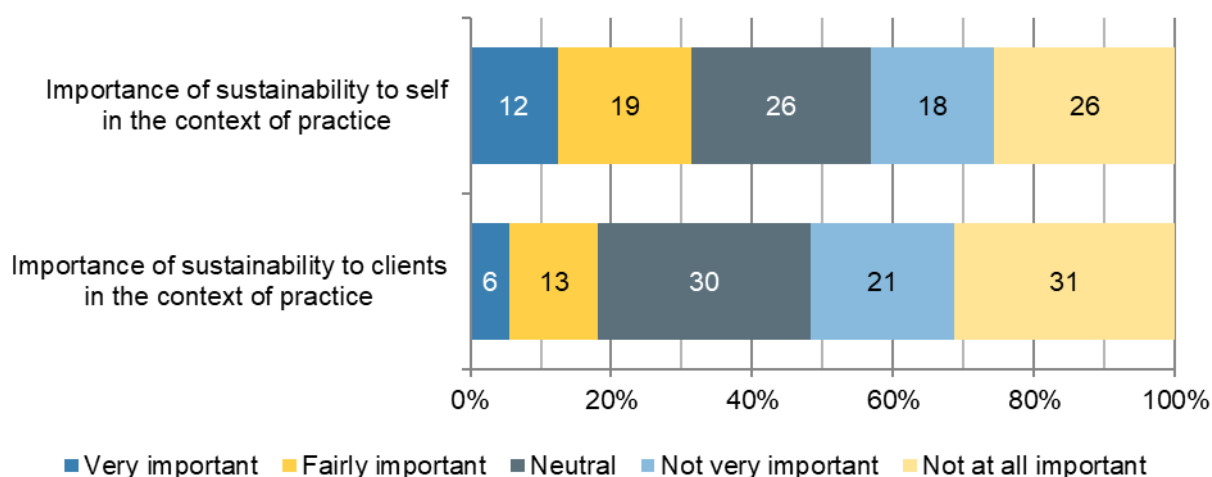
5 Sustainability and the Bar Council's involvement in supporting progress toward net zero

Questions on sustainability and progress towards net zero were first asked in the 2023 survey, and the current survey included a section on this topic although the questions were different to those asked in the previous survey and so it is not possible to make comparisons over time.

5.1 Views on importance of sustainability

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they felt sustainability or climate impact was important to them, and to their clients, in the context of their practice. Figure 5.1 shows that a slightly higher proportion of barristers felt that sustainability was not important to them than felt it was important (44% compared with 31%), and this difference was even greater when thinking about the importance of sustainability to clients (52% feeling it was not important to clients compared with 19% thinking it was important).

Figure 5.1 Views on importance of sustainability to barristers and clients (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Employed barristers were more likely than self-employed barristers to say that sustainability was important to them and their clients, with 40% of employed barristers saying it was important to them (and 31% saying it was not important to them), and 31% saying sustainability was important to their clients (compared with 35% saying it was not important).

Barristers working in civil practice were more likely than those in other practice areas to say that sustainability was important, with 39% saying it was important to them and 29% saying it was important to their clients.

Barristers in the young Bar were more likely than more experienced barristers to say that sustainability was important to them, but less likely to say that it was important to their colleagues. Just over one in three barristers in the young Bar (37%) said that sustainability was important to them, compared with 32% of barristers in the middle Bar and 27% of those in later practice. However, only 16% of barristers in the young Bar said that sustainability was important to their colleagues compared with 19% of those in the middle Bar and in later practice.

5.2 Calculating carbon footprint

Respondents were asked if they recorded their travel to support them, their chambers or their employer in calculating their carbon footprint, and if they did not, whether they would be willing to record travel to support carbon footprint calculations.

Only a small minority of barristers, 6%, said that they were currently recording their travel to enable calculation of their carbon footprint, while of the rest there were more barristers who said they were willing to record travel than those who said they were not – 22% of those not currently recording travel said that they were definitely willing to record travel, and 37% said that they were possibly willing to record travel. Thus, looking at all barristers, 6% were currently recording travel, 21% were definitely willing to record travel, 34% were possibly willing to record travel, and 39% said that they would not be willing to record travel to support carbon footprint calculations.

Employed barristers were three times more likely to be currently recording travel than self-employed barristers in chambers, with 15% of employed barristers recording travel compared with 5% of self-employed barristers in chambers, and 41% of self-employed barristers said that they were not willing to record travel compared with 26% of employed barristers. However, there was relatively little variation by practice area in current recording of travel, or views on recording travel.

The proportion of barristers who were currently recording travel was slightly higher in the young Bar than among more experienced barristers, although their views on recording travel were much more positive than those of more experienced barristers. Among new practitioner barristers (up to two years since Call), 30% said that they were definitely willing to record travel, and 32% said that they were not willing, while only 17% of barristers in later practice were definitely willing to record travel and 44% said that they were not willing.

There were strong associations between views on the importance of sustainability and practice regarding recording travel to support carbon footprint calculations, with 16% of barristers who said that sustainability was very important to them saying that they currently recorded travel and 22% of those who said that sustainability was very important to their clients saying that they currently recorded travel, and just over one in ten of these saying that they would not be willing to record travel in the future.

5.3 Advising clients with respect to climate risks

The last question relating to sustainability asked barristers if they felt sufficiently informed to advise clients with respect to climate risks and opportunities relevant to the area of law in which they practised. One in ten barristers (10%) said that they felt fully informed about advising clients, 15% said that they felt partly informed, 31% said that they were not very well informed, and 44% said that they were not at all informed.

Employed barristers felt they were slightly more informed than self-employed barristers in chambers, with 29% of employed barristers saying they felt fully or partly informed compared with 24% of self-employed barristers in chambers, and 39% of employed barristers feeling that they were not at all informed compared with 45% of self-employed barristers in chambers.

Barristers in international/other practice areas were much more likely than other barristers to feel fully or partly informed (17% and 28% respectively), followed by barristers in civil practice (14% and 20% respectively). There was little variation by time since Call.

Barristers who felt that sustainability was very important to them or their clients were most likely to report that they felt fully informed to advise clients with respect to climate risks and opportunities (21% of those saying sustainability was very important to them, and 28% of those saying it was very important to clients), but barristers who said that sustainability was not at all important to them were also more likely than average to feel fully informed to advise clients (15% of those saying sustainability was not at all important to them, and 13% of those saying it was not important to their clients). This suggests that this latter group saw little relevance of sustainability to their practice area and as a result were fully informed to advise clients of the low level of risks or opportunities.

6 Wellbeing and work-life balance

This chapter presents key findings on the views of barristers towards their working lives. A full analysis of barristers' views is presented in a separate report.

The Bar Council worked with Darren Van Laar from the University of Portsmouth's Quality of Working Life Research Group to incorporate the Barrister Wellbeing (BWB) scale into the survey. The BWB scale has an overall wellbeing score, made up of sub-scales assessing a person's psychological wellbeing (PWB), perfectionism (PER), workload management (WLM) and supportive work environment (SWE). The scale has been developed in barrister populations in England and Wales, and in Australia. In the survey, barristers were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements in question on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The statements were as follows:

1. Within the environment in which I work, there is generally a sense of co-operation and collaboration.
2. I have significant control over the content and pace of my work.
3. I am able to integrate the things that are most important to my life and work.
4. I tend to feel down or low in spirits.
5. I experience little interest or pleasure in doing things.
6. A case going badly has an impact on my confidence.
7. Overall, I find my workload manageable.
8. I tend to dwell on my mistakes.
9. My current mood is good.
10. I tend to be very critical of myself.
11. My relationships with other colleagues are as good as I would want them to be.
12. Within the environment in which I work, I feel comfortable to express my opinions, thoughts and ideas.
13. I am able to confide in work colleagues regarding challenges experienced with my cases.
14. Overall, taking everything into consideration, I am satisfied with my job as a whole.

These questions were first asked in the 2021 survey of barristers' working lives, which allows for comparisons to be made to track changes in barristers' views over time.

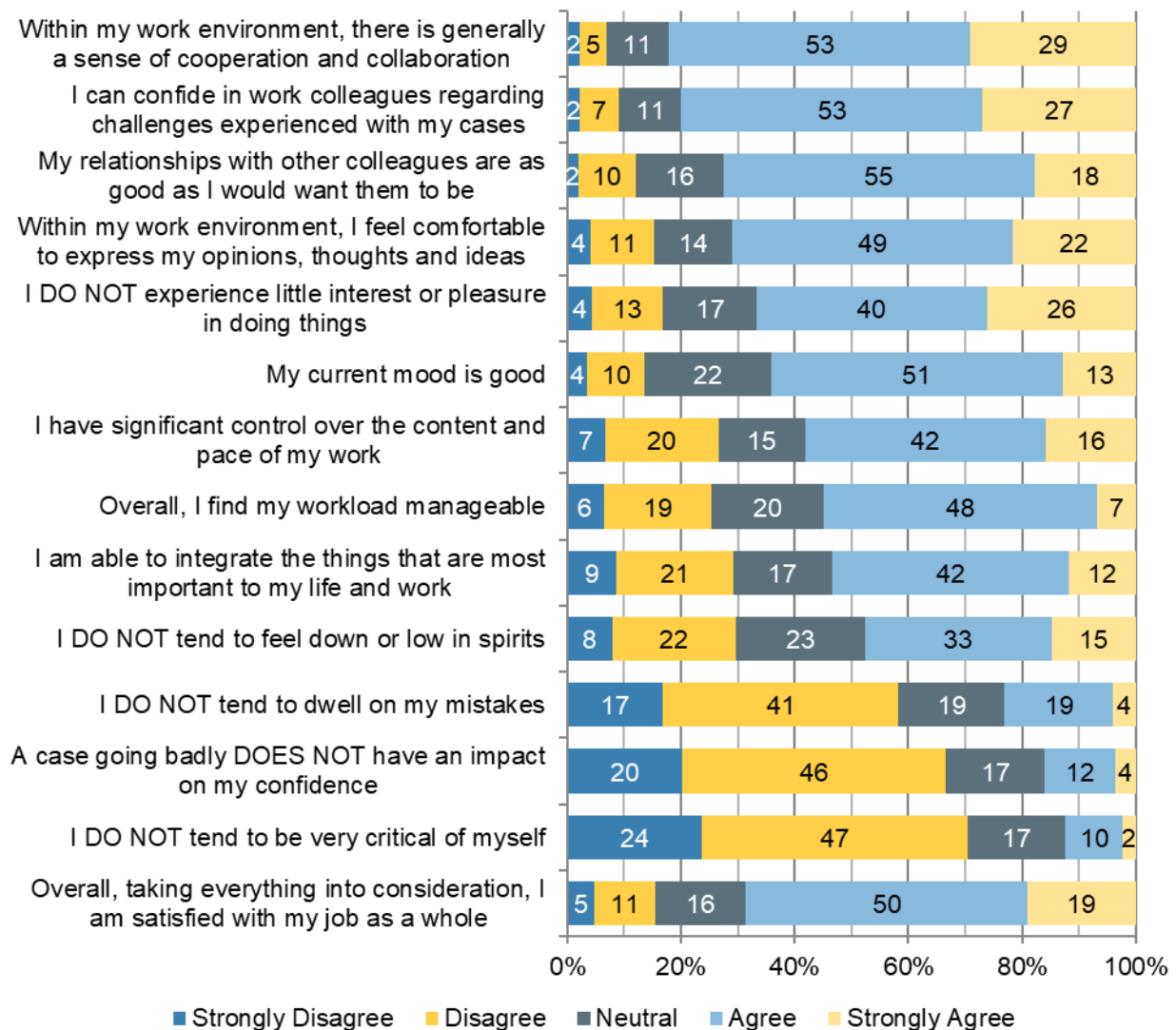
6.1 Views about individual statements

Some of the statements were negatively worded (e.g. 'I tend to feel down or low in spirits', where agreement represents a negative view rather than a positive view), and these have been reversed so that all of the items are scaled in the same direction, with disagreement being negative, and agreement positive.

- Nearly three quarters agreed that their relationships with other colleagues were as good as they would want them to be, and that they felt comfortable to express their opinions, thought and ideas at their workplace.
- Views were negative about not dwelling on mistakes, cases going badly not having an impact on barristers' confidence, and not being very critical of themselves (that is, on average barristers agreed that they dwelt on mistakes, were self-critical, and were affected by cases going badly).
- Overall, barristers were satisfied with their job as a whole, taking everything into account, with 69% agreeing, and only 16% disagreeing.

Figure 6.1 shows the responses to the individual statements. Key points to note are:

- Four fifths of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there was a sense of co-operation and collaboration in barristers' workplaces, and that they could confide in work colleagues about challenges in their cases.
- Nearly three quarters agreed that their relationships with other colleagues were as good as they would want them to be, and that they felt comfortable to express their opinions, thought and ideas at their workplace.
- Views were negative about not dwelling on mistakes, cases going badly not having an impact on barristers' confidence, and not being very critical of themselves (that is, on average barristers agreed that they dwelt on mistakes, were self-critical, and were affected by cases going badly).
- Overall, barristers were satisfied with their job as a whole, taking everything into account, with 69% agreeing, and only 16% disagreeing.

Figure 6.1 Responses to the wellbeing questions

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

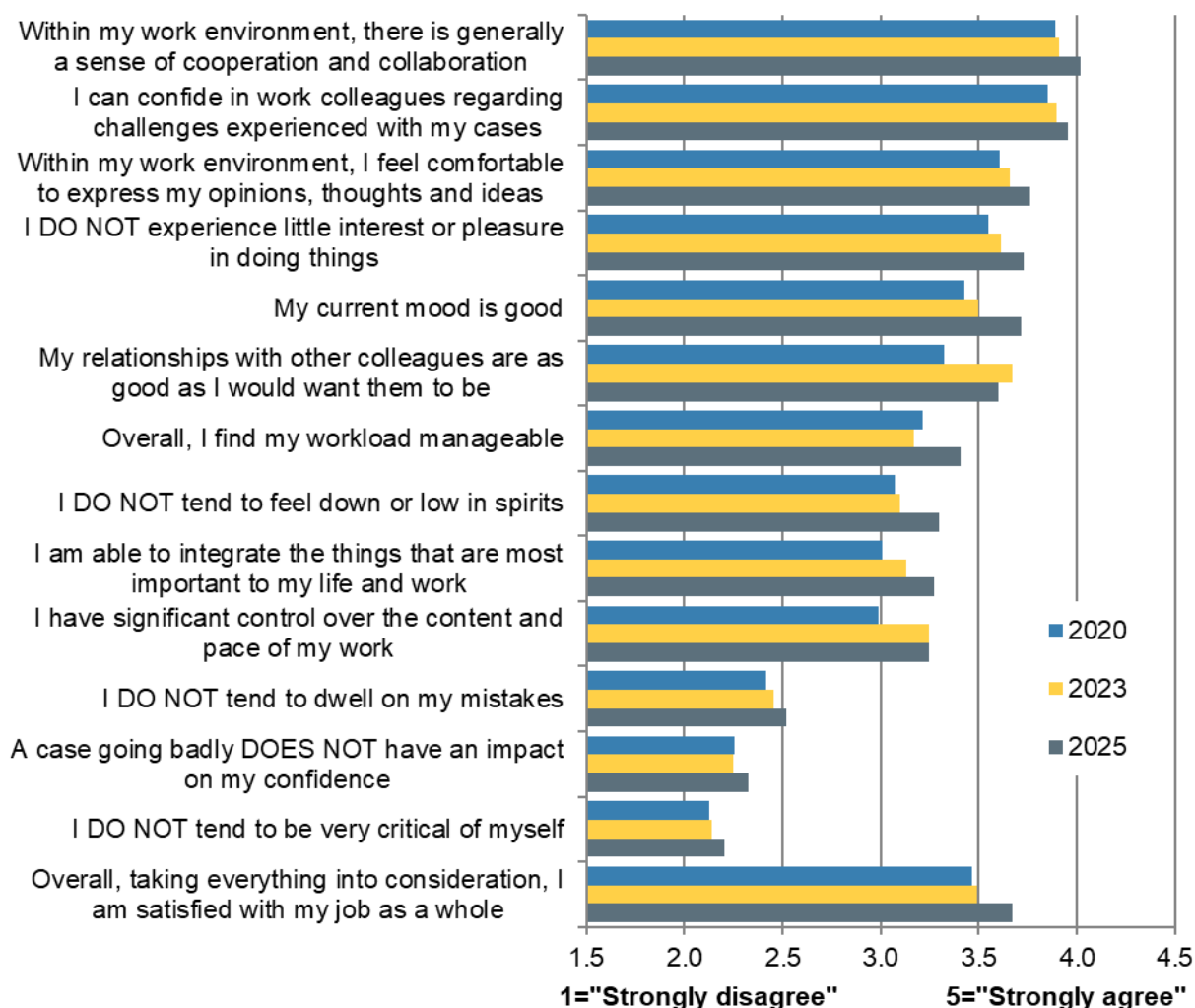
6.2 Changes over recent years

As the same questions have been asked since the 2021 survey it is possible to see how barristers' view about wellbeing have changed since then, and these are shown in Figure 6.2. Barristers were more positive about every statement in the current survey than they were in 2021, with the largest improvements in views for:

- My current mood is good;
- My relationships with other colleagues are as good as I would want them to be;
- I am able to integrate the things that are most important to my life and work; and
- I have significant control over the content and pace of my work.

However, views about relationships with other colleagues were slightly less positive in comparison with the 2023 survey, while views about workloads being manageable showed the largest improvement since 2023.

Figure 6.2 Average scores to the wellbeing questions, 2021, 2023 and 2025



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

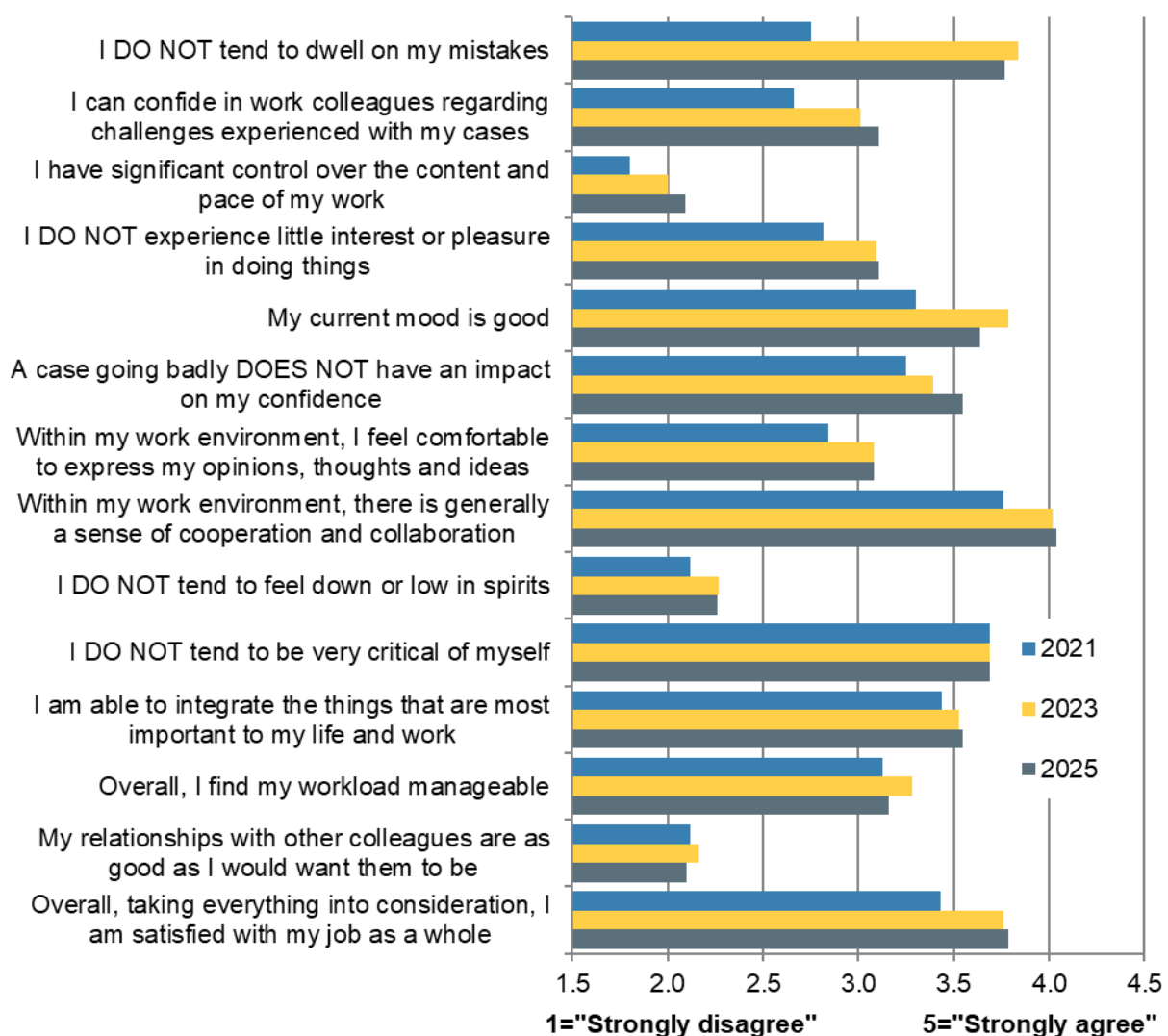
6.2.1 Focus on the views of new practitioners

Figure 6.3 shows the views of new practitioner barristers, those in the first two years since Call, have changed over the last three surveys – statements are sorted by the size of the change between views in 2021 and those in the current survey. Across nearly all statements in the wellbeing scales, views were more positive in the current survey than in 2021, although for some the current views were slightly less positive than in 2023. The statements with the greatest improvements in views were:

- I DO NOT tend to dwell on my mistakes – in 2021 new practitioners disagreed with this, but in 2023 and 2025 they agreed (although views in 2025 were slightly less positive than in 2023).
- I can confide in colleagues regarding challenges with my cases – new practitioners disagreed with this statement in 2021, were neutral in 2023, and were slightly positive in 2025.
- I have significant control over the content and pace of my work – views were negative in all three surveys but showed a steady improvement from 2021 onwards.

However, views were little changed regarding finding workloads manageable, and relationships with colleagues being as good as new practitioners would want them to be. Overall views regarding job satisfaction improved substantially between 2021 and 2023, and then showed a slight further improvement between 2023 and 2025.

Figure 6.3 Average scores to the wellbeing questions for new practitioners, 2021, 2023 and 2025



6.3 Work-life themes

The first 13 statements (i.e. excluding the final statement about overall job satisfaction) reflect four underlying themes about working lives:

Supportive work environment

1. Within the environment in which I work, there is generally a sense of co-operation and collaboration.
11. My relationships with other colleagues are as good as I would want them to be.
12. Within the environment in which I work, I feel comfortable to express my opinions, thoughts, and ideas.
13. I am able to confide in work colleagues regarding challenges experienced with my cases.

Workload management

2. I have significant control over the content and pace of my work.
3. I am able to integrate the things that are most important to my life and work.
7. Overall, I find my workload manageable.

Psychological wellbeing

4. I DO NOT tend to feel down or low in spirits.
5. I DO NOT experience little interest or pleasure in doing things.
9. My current mood is good.

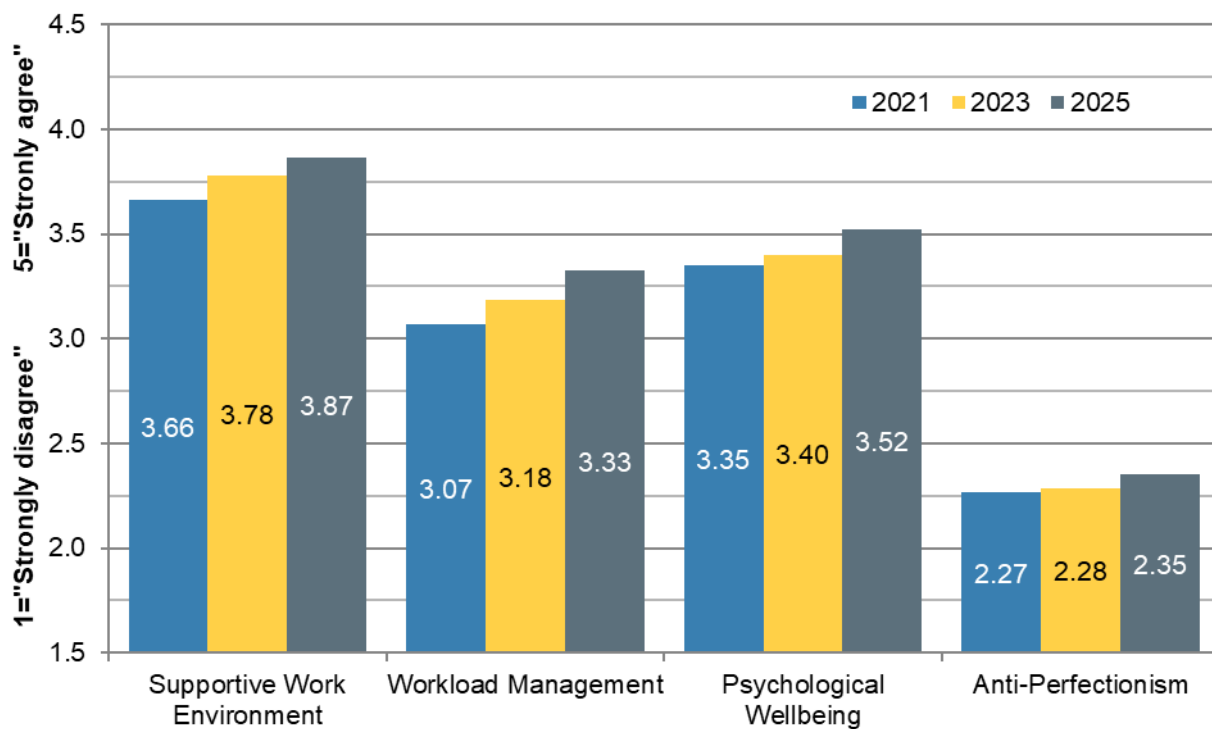
Anti-perfectionism (this is reversed so the scale runs in the same direction as other factors)

6. A case going badly DOES NOT have an impact on my confidence.
8. I DO NOT tend to dwell on my mistakes.
10. I DO NOT tend to be very critical of myself.

6.3.1 Changes over time

Figure 6-4 shows the average scores for the four work-life themes for 2021, 2023 and 2025, and shows that there have been improvements in all four factors over the last two years, continuing the trend observed between 2021 and 2023 albeit with only a very small increase in the score for anti-perfectionism from 2021 to 2023. The largest increase between 2023 and 2025 was for workload management.

Figure 6-4 Views on work-life themes, 2021, 2023 and 2025



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

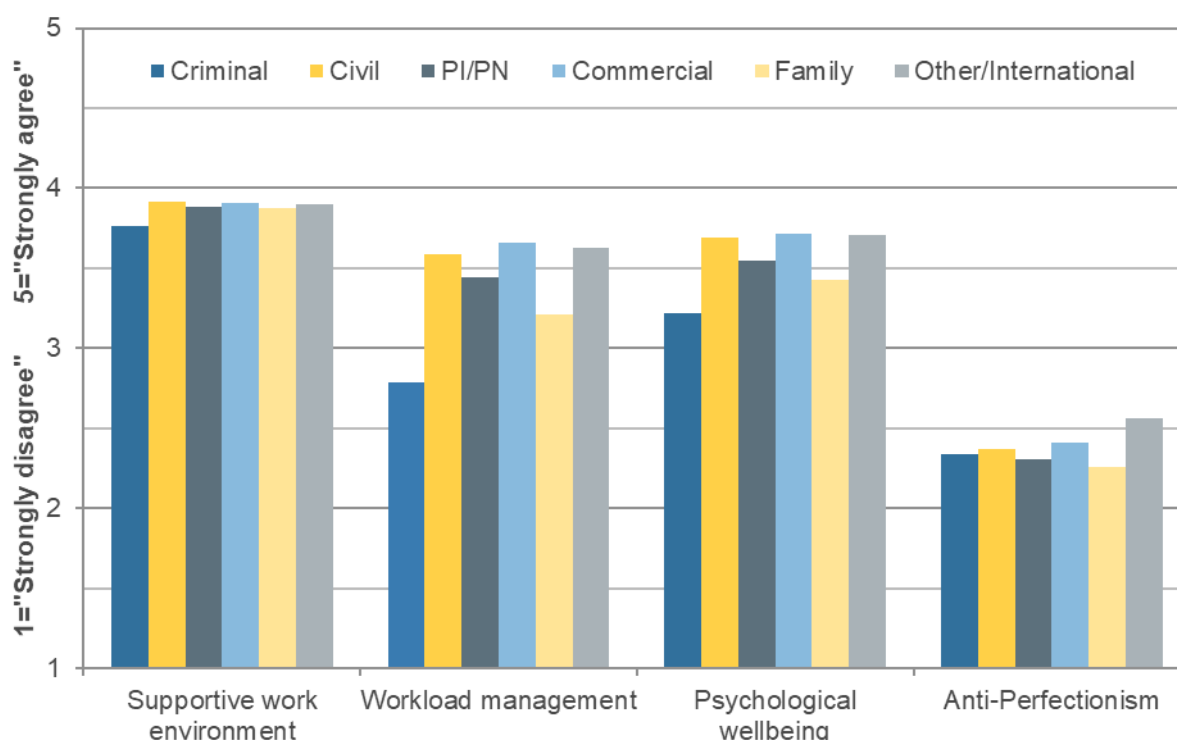
6.3.2 Variation by barristers' characteristics

There were significant differences in views on the themes by barristers' characteristics. The separate report on wellbeing presents full details of these, although some of the key breakdowns have been presented here, and the relationship between the work characteristics presented later in this report, and views on these themes, are summarised within each chapter.

Barristers in criminal practice were less positive about supportive work environment, workload management and psychological wellbeing than barristers in other areas, as Figure 6.5 shows. The difference was largest for workload management, with criminal barristers being negative on average about this theme. However, barristers in personal injury/professional negligence and in family practice were less positive than criminal barristers about anti-perfectionism.

Although criminal barristers were less positive than other barristers, their views had become more positive since 2023, particularly regarding workload management. Barristers in personal injury/professional negligence had similar views to in the 2023 survey, while views about anti-perfectionism among barristers in commercial and family practice were also little changed since 2023.

Figure 6.5 Views on work-life themes by area of practice



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

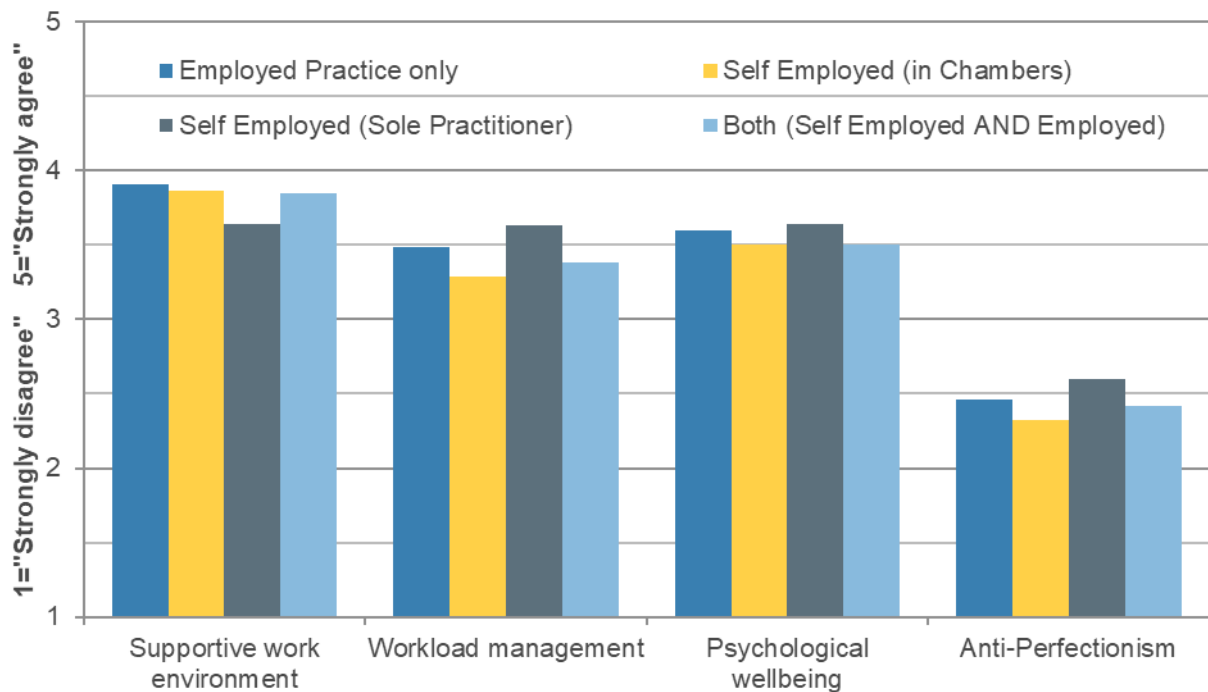
Figure 6.6 shows how views on the themes vary by barristers' employment status. The patterns are similar to those found in 2021, with sole practitioner barristers reporting the least positive views about supportive work environment, but the most positive views about workload management and anti-perfectionism. Views of employed barristers on psychological wellbeing were slightly less positive than in 2023, while views of self-employed barristers (including those also working as employed barristers) were much more positive than in 2023, leading to little variation by employment status in the current survey.

KCs had the most positive views about all four themes, while barristers who were hoping to become a KC in the next two years were less positive about all four themes than other non-KC barristers. This is a similar pattern to that observed in the 2023 survey, suggesting that there is a significant workload and psychological toll in preparing for taking silk.

Views on supportive work environment became more positive as incomes increased, although for the other three themes views became slightly less positive as incomes increased from the bottom income band up to the £90,000-£150,000 band, before starting

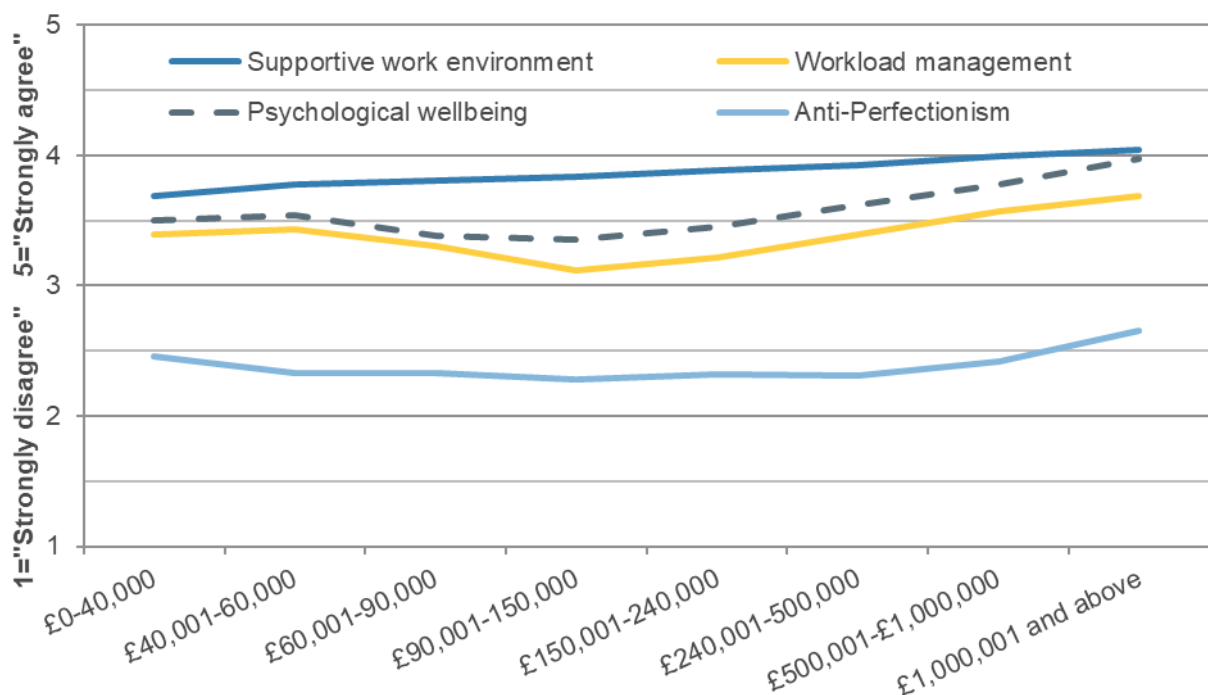
to increase again (Figure 6.7). Barristers with incomes of £1,000,000 or more had the most positive views about all four themes.

Figure 6.6 Views on work-life themes by employment status



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

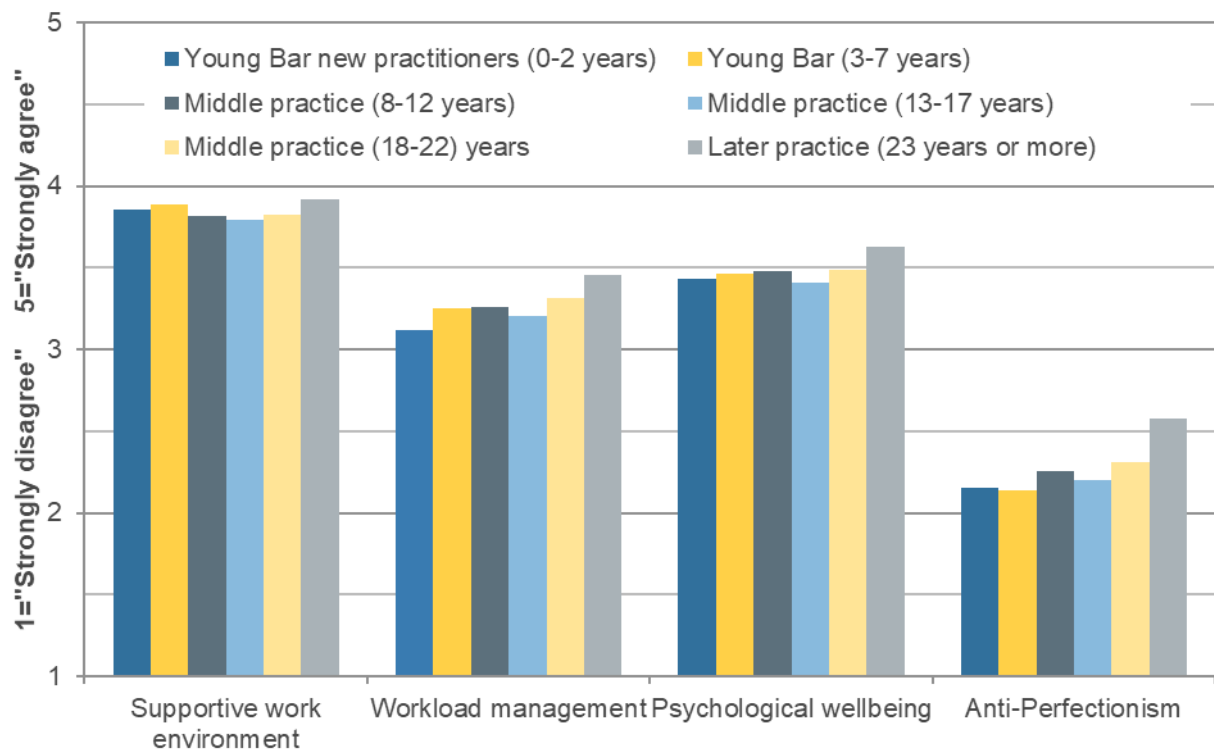
Figure 6.7 Views on work-life themes by income band



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Figure 6.8 shows that views about workload management, psychological wellbeing and anti-perfectionism tend to increase as barristers' careers progress from their Call, while there was little variation in views about supportive work environment by time since Call.

Figure 6.8 Views on work-life themes by time since Call



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

7 Working hours and patterns

This chapter explores issues around barristers' working hours, working patterns, and work practices.

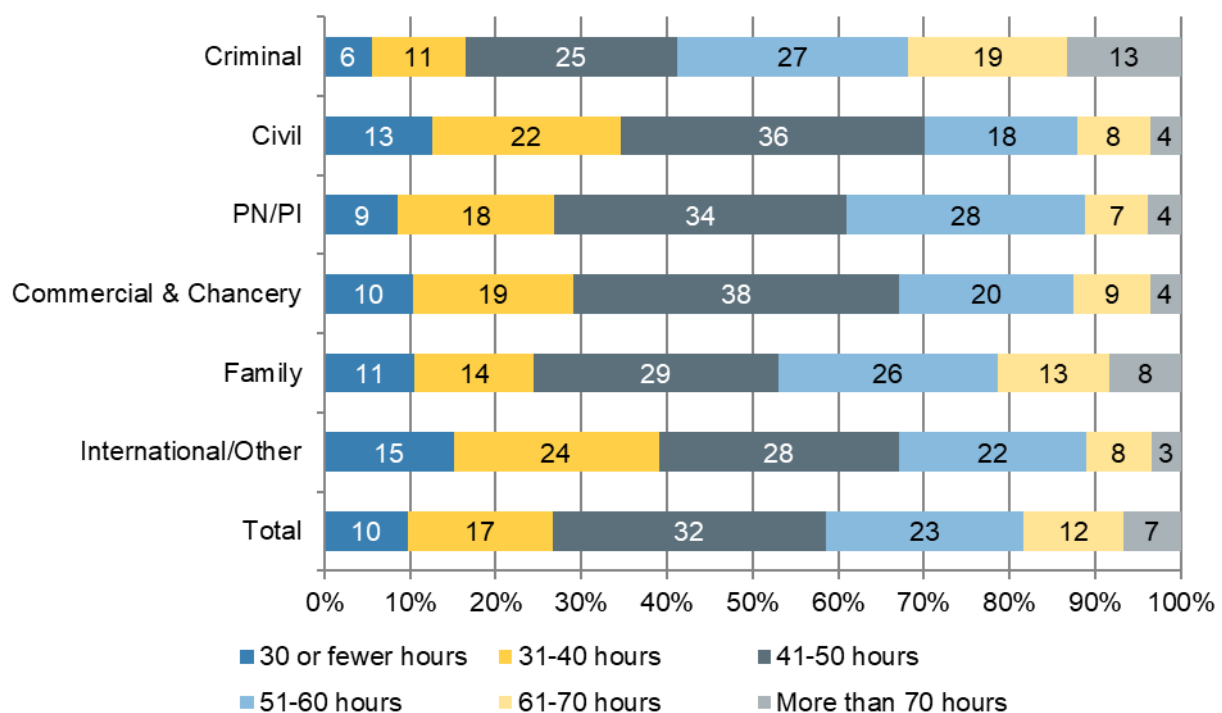
7.1 Working hours

7.1.1 Typical and actual hours

Typical working hours

One in three barristers (32%) reported that they typically worked between 41 and 50 hours per week, with just over one in four (27%) working 40 hours or fewer per week, and 42% working more than 50 hours per week (23% working 51 to 60 hours, 12% working 61 to 70 hours per week, and 7% working more than 70 hours per week). In comparison with the 2023 survey, there were more barristers working 50 hours or fewer per week (in 2023 29% worked 41-50 hours and 24% worked up to 40 hours), and fewer barristers working more than 50 hours per week (47% in 2023).

Figure 7.1 Typical working hours by practice area



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

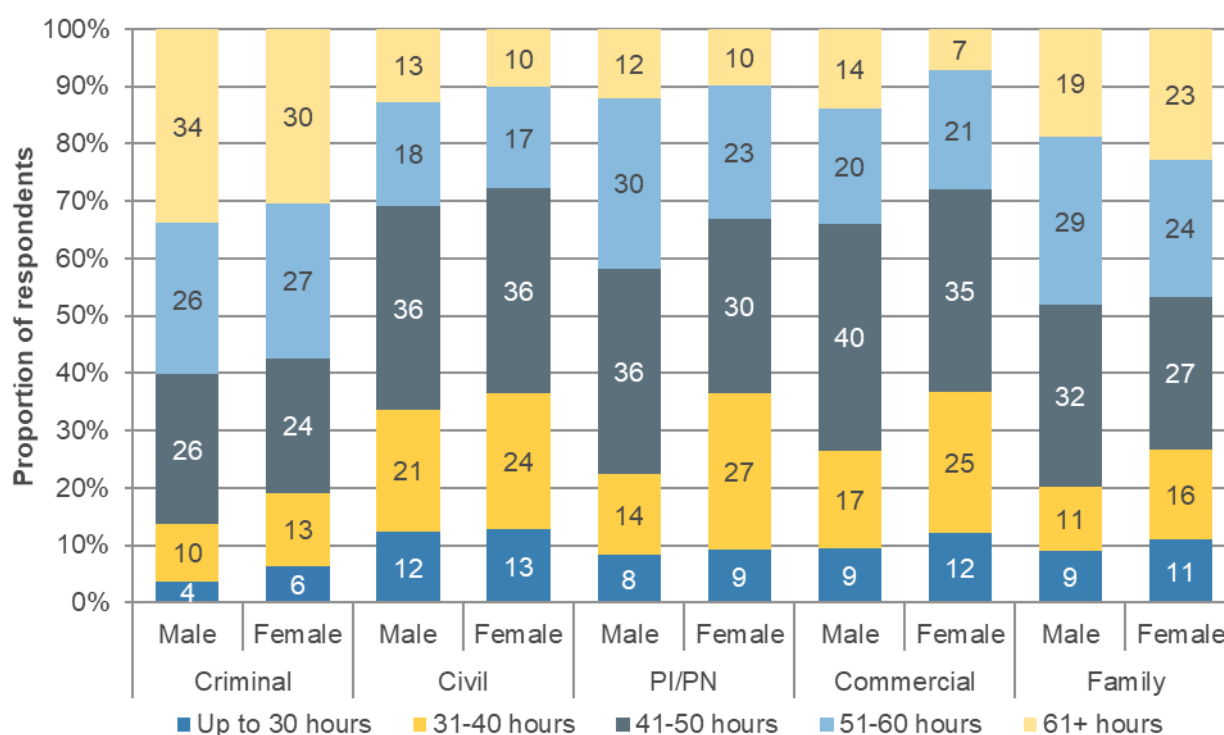
Around one in three barristers in criminal practice (32%) had a long typical working week of more than 60 hours per week (34% in 2023), as did one in five (21%) of barristers in family practice (Figure 7.1). Barristers in civil practice were most likely to have short working weeks of 40 hours per week or fewer (35%).

Nearly half of all self-employed barristers in chambers (46%) typically worked a long week of more than 50 hours per week, and a similar proportion worked between 31 and 50 hours per week, while employed barristers were much more likely to work between 31 and 50 hours (70%) and just under one in five (19%) worked long weeks of more than 50 hours per week. Sole practitioner self-employed barristers and those working as both self-employed and employed were most likely to work short working weeks of 30 hours or fewer per week (25% and 22% respectively). These patterns were broadly similar to those in the 2023 survey.

Female barristers were more likely than male barristers to work for 40 hours or less per week (30% and 25%) respectively, although they were just as likely as male barristers to work long weeks of more than 60 hours (18% for both males and females), while male barristers were more likely to work 41 to 50 hours per week (34% and 30% respectively).

Figure 7.2 shows the distribution of working hours by sex within the five main practice areas (international/other has too few respondents for this analysis). Female barristers in commercial practice and PI/PN were much more likely than their male counterparts to be working 40 or fewer hours a week, while in family practice, a higher proportion of female than male barristers worked for more than 60 hours per week.

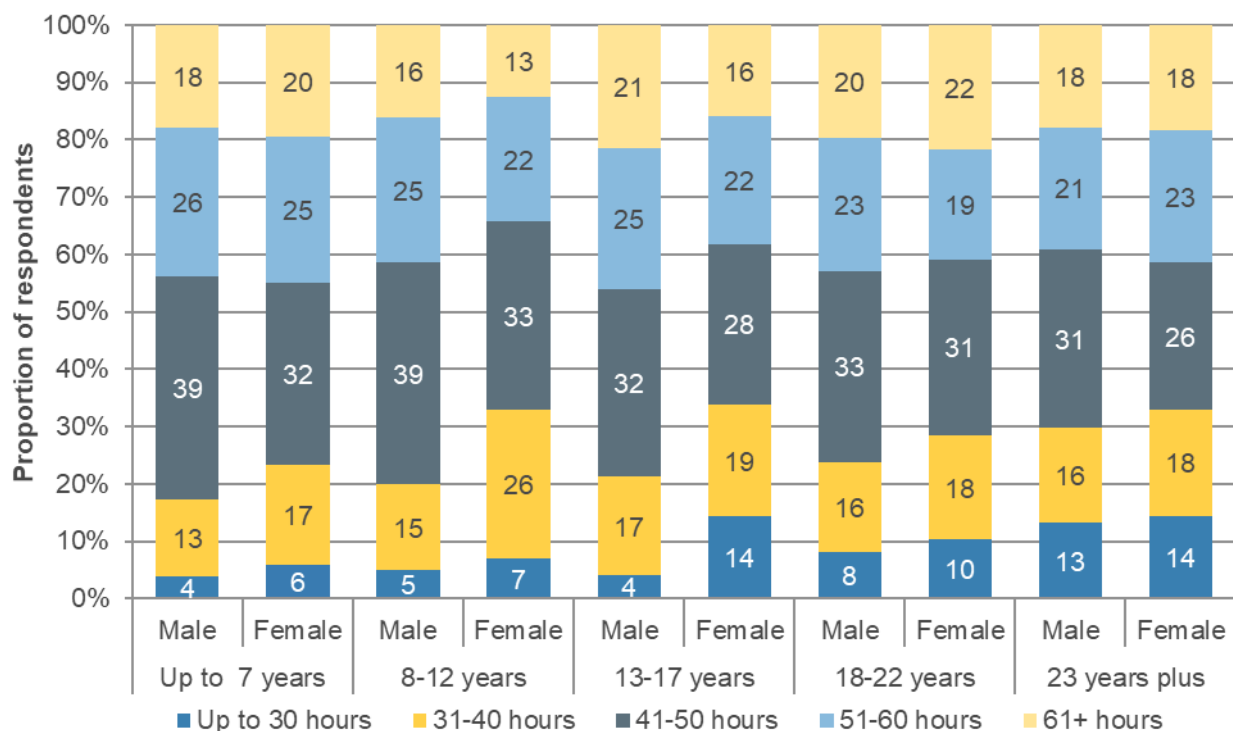
Figure 7.2 Typical working hours by sex and practice area



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Figure 7.3 shows the distribution of working hours by sex and time since Call. The largest differences were among barristers who were between eight and 17 years from Call, with one in three female barristers working 40 or fewer hours per week compared with one in five male barristers. This was likely to reflect greater childcare responsibilities among female barristers in the early to middle part of their careers. Among barristers with up to seven years since Call, female barristers were slightly more likely to work up to 40 hours per week, but were also slightly more likely to work over 60 hours per week, as were female barristers with between 18 and 22 years since Call, while among later practice barristers (23 years or more since Call) there was very little difference in working hours between males and females.

Figure 7.3 Typical working hours by sex and time since Call



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Hours worked in most recent week

Barristers were also asked how many hours they had worked in their most recent week, to help understand how actual working hours may vary from typical working hours. In comparison with barristers' typical working hours, there were more working shorter hours, with 38% working 40 hours or fewer per week in their most recent week, compared with 27% who typically worked this number of hours. Only 44% worked between 41 and 60 hours in their most recent week, compared with 55% typically working this many hours. However, the proportion who worked 61 or more hours in their most recent week was the same as the proportion who typically worked long hours, at 18%. This was a very similar pattern to that seen in the 2023 survey when comparing hours worked in most recent week compared with typical working hours.

One in three barristers (32%) reported that they worked fewer hours in the most recent week than they typically worked (33% in 2023), while 54% said they worked similar hours and 14% said they worked more hours (50% and 17% respectively in 2023). Barristers in family practice were most likely to work fewer than their typical hours (37%) while barristers in commercial practice were most likely to work more than their typical hours (17%). Employed barristers were much more likely to work similar hours to their typical patterns than self-employed barristers in chambers (72% compared with 50%). New practitioner barristers (up to two years since Call) were most likely to work more than their typical hours (21%), whereas in the 2023 survey they were most likely to have worked fewer hours than their typical hours.

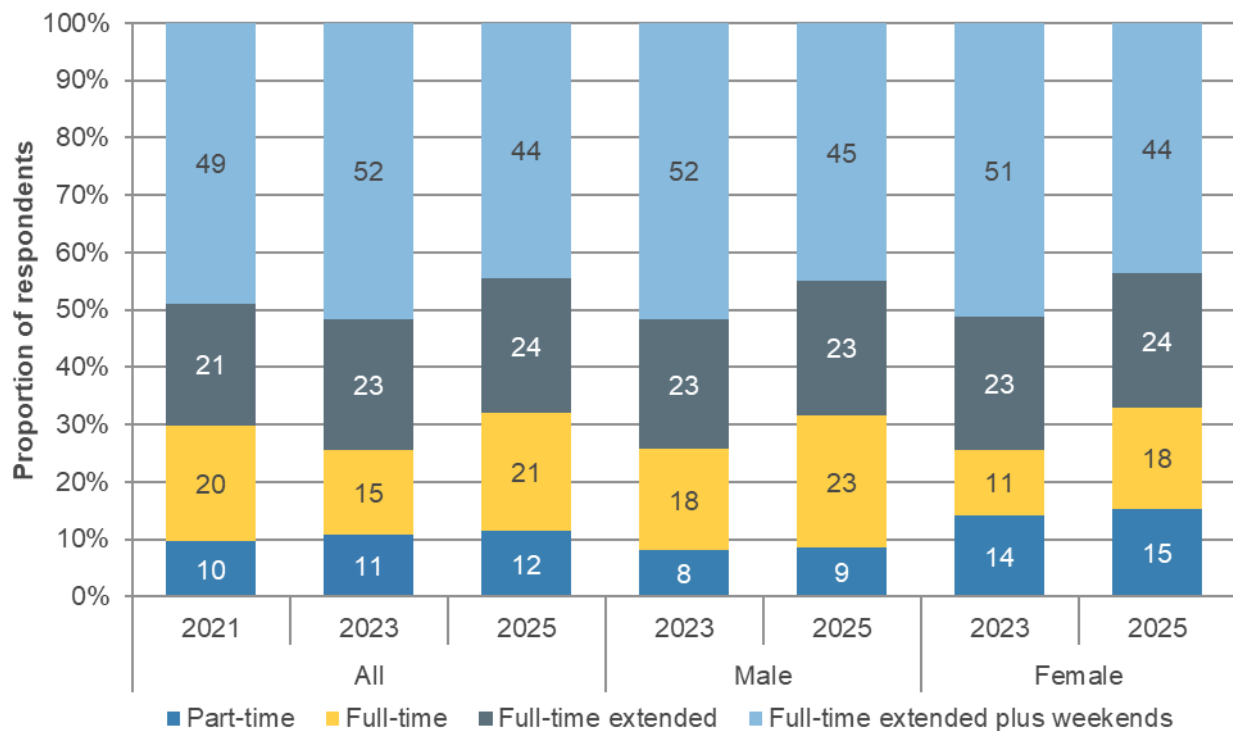
7.1.2 Full or part-time working

Respondents were asked to describe their typical working hours as full-time or part-time, based on the following distinction:

- Full-time (you are available to work all day in office hours on each working day).
- Full-time extended hours (you regularly work weekday evenings and/or early mornings but try not to work weekends).
- Full-time extended but including weekends (you regularly work on one or both weekend days).
- Part-time (there are working days where you do not or try not to work as a barrister).

Just over one in ten barristers (12%) said that they worked part-time, in that they did not or tried not to work on some working days, and this had increased slightly over recent surveys (Figure 7.4). The proportion working standard full-time patterns with no extended hours was higher than in 2023, at 21% compared with 15%, while the proportion working extended hours including weekends was lower than in 2023, at 44% compared with 52%. Female barristers were more likely than male barristers to work part-time, as was the case in 2023, although they were just as likely to work extended hours or weekends.

The majority of barristers in criminal and family practice reported that they worked extended hours including weekends, 60% and 53% respectively, although these proportions were lower than in 2023 (71% and 59%). However, barristers in family practice were more likely than average, along with those in civil practice, to work part-time (15% and 16% respectively). The most common type of working for employed barristers was full-time standard hours (42%), while for self-employed barristers in chambers the most common pattern was extended hours including weekends (50%); sole practitioners and barristers who were both self-employed and employed were most likely to work part-time (27% and 22% respectively). New practitioner barristers (up to two years since Call) were most likely to work extended hours including weekends (64%) and were least likely to work part-time (2%), while the proportion working part-time increased as barristers' careers progressed, up to 15% among later practice barristers (23 years or more since Call).

Figure 7.4 Typical working hours by sex and time since Call

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

7.1.3 Unpaid hours

The proportion of barristers who reported doing unpaid hours, apart from pro bono work, was 87%, slightly lower than the proportion in 2023 of 89%. Just under one in three (30%) reported working less than five unpaid hours per week, and a slightly higher proportion (35%) reported working between six and 10 unpaid hours per week, and just under one in four (23%) worked more than 10 unpaid hours per week. Barristers who worked extended hours including weekends were much more likely than average to do unpaid hours, with 94% doing some unpaid hours, and 35% working more than 10 unpaid hours per week.

Employed barristers were much less likely to work unpaid hours, with only 64% undertaking them, compared with 91% of self-employed barristers in chambers. Barristers in criminal and family practice areas were most likely to do any unpaid hours (91% and 95% respectively), and were most likely to work more than 10 unpaid hours per week (40% and 32% respectively). New practitioner barristers (up to two years since Call) were more likely than more experienced barristers to do unpaid work (92%), although there was relatively little difference in the number of unpaid hours worked.

7.2 Flexible working arrangements

Respondents were asked if they currently had a flexible working arrangement in place, where a flexible working arrangement was defined as a formal agreement with their

chambers or employer that allowed them to work in a way that suits their need, such as working part time, job sharing, flexible start and finish times, or compressed hours.

One in four barristers (24%, up from 22% in 2023) said that they had a flexible working arrangement in place, while 16% did not but would like to have one, and 60% did not and that suited them. While 64% of barristers who worked part-time said that they had a flexible working arrangement, just over one in four (26%) barristers working full-time standard hours had a flexible working arrangement, as did 22% of those working extended full-time hours, and 14% of those working extended hours including weekends.

There was substantial variation by respondents' work and personal characteristics:

- Nearly six out of ten employed barristers (57%, 59% in 2023) had a flexible working arrangement, compared with 18% of self-employed barristers in chamber (17% in 2023).
- Four out of ten barristers in international/other practice areas (42%) had a flexible working arrangement, while barristers in family and civil practice were also more likely than average to have flexible working arrangements (30% and 28% respectively).
- One in three female barristers (31%) had a flexible working arrangement compared with 19% of male barristers (in 2023 the proportions were 28% and 17% respectively).
- There was variation by age and by career stage, although the patterns were heavily gendered:
 - By age, the proportion of barristers with a flexible working arrangement was 16% for under 35s, 25% for those aged 35 to 44, 24% for those aged 45 to 64, and 31% for those aged 65 and over. For male barristers the proportion was below 20% for barristers aged under 65, while for female barristers the proportion increased substantially between under 35s and the 35 to 44 age group, from 19% to 34%, before dipping to 32% for those aged 45 to 64, and among the 65 and over group, 28% of male barristers and 43% of female barristers had a flexible working arrangement.
 - By time since Call, the proportion of barristers with a flexible working arrangement was higher among those in the middle practice years, and particularly those with 13 to 17 years since Call (27%), compared with barristers in the young Bar (22%) or in later practice (23). Among female barristers this pattern of the proportion of barristers with flexible working arrangement peaking in middle practice was more pronounced, with 40% of those 13 to 17 years since Call having a flexible working arrangement, while among male barristers the proportion fell between the young Bar and middle practice, with only 14% of those 13 to 17 years since Call having a flexible working arrangement.
- Barristers from black ethnic backgrounds were most likely to have a flexible working arrangement (45%).
- Just over half (54%) of barristers working up to 40 hours per week had a flexible working arrangement compared with 10% of barristers working more than 70 hours per

week. However, one in three (33%) of those working more than 70 hours per week said that they would like to have a flexible working arrangement.

7.3 Changes in practice/working patterns

Barristers were asked whether there was anything about their practice or working patterns they would like to change in the future. Additional options were included in the 2025 survey that were not included in 2023, centred on looking to become a KC and to do more international work. The responses are shown in Table 7.1.

Increasing earnings was the most common desired change, mentioned by 53% of barristers, followed by more remote working (31%) and more flexible working for work/life balance reasons (29%). The proportions mentioning more remote working and more flexible working were much lower than in the 2023 survey, when they were mentioned by 44% and 43% respectively. One in four barristers (25%) said that they were looking to become a KC, while 12% said that they wanted to leave the Bar (15% in 2023), 11% said they wanted to do more international work, and 11% said they wanted to do less legal aid work (15% in 2023). The proportion of barristers who said that they did not want to change anything was higher at 14%, compared with 10% in 2023.

Table 7.1 Changes in practice/working patterns

	Number	%	2023 %
Increase my earnings	2,162	52.9	55.1
More remote working	1,282	31.3	44.4
More flexible working for work-life balance reasons	1,192	29.1	43.4
Look to become a KC	1,038	25.4	-
Leave the Bar	477	11.7	14.9
Do more international work	468	11.4	-
Do less legal aid work	452	11.1	14.9
Looking to retire	425	10.4	9.2
Work part-time	343	8.4	10.5
Move to a different employer/chambers	319	7.8	9.3
Move area of practice	267	6.5	8.9
Less remote working	137	3.3	4.3
Look to become employed	77	1.9	4.3
Look to become self-employed	52	1.3	1.4
Do more legal aid work	37	0.9	1.2
Other	213	5.2	6.3
Nothing I would like to change	581	14.2	10.0
Total	4,090		

Source: IES/Bar Council: *Barristers' Working Lives Survey*

There were substantial differences between the practice areas regarding the changes barristers would like to see. Barristers in criminal practice and family practice were most likely to report wanting to do less legal aid work (24% and 21%) and have more remote

working (44% and 52%). Criminal barristers were most likely to want to leave the Bar (21%, compared with 25% in 2023).

7.4 Changes in chambers

Self-employed barristers in chambers, and those working as both self-employed and employed, were asked which areas they thought their chambers could improve on to better support the day-to-day management and overall development of their practice. The responses are shown in Table 7.2.

The most common response was monitoring earnings to understand the distribution of work, mentioned by just over one in three respondents (35%), closely followed by opportunities for personal and professional training and development (32%), while around one in four respondents mentioned staffing structures and management (27%), use of legal technology (26%) and flexibility of chambers' charging structure (22%).

Table 7.2 Changes in chambers to better support management and development

	Number	%
Monitoring earnings to understand distribution of work	816	34.6
Opportunities for personal and professional training and development	758	32.2
Staffing structures and management	624	26.5
Use of legal technology	606	25.7
Flexibility of chambers' charging structure	520	22.1
Sharing legal resource help, e.g. paralegals or PAs	484	20.5
Governance and committee structures	467	19.8
Use of space (including opportunities for flexible working and hot-desking)	467	19.8
Local marketing and business development (including, for example, bidding for tenders and submitting legal directory entries)	408	17.3
International marketing and business development	319	13.5
Use of appropriate policies, procedures and schemes to assist with regulatory and legislative compliance	187	7.9
Improve access for disabled members, staff, employees	165	7.0
Other	200	8.5
Total	2,357	

Source: IES/Bar Council: *Barristers' Working Lives Survey*

7.5 Distribution of work

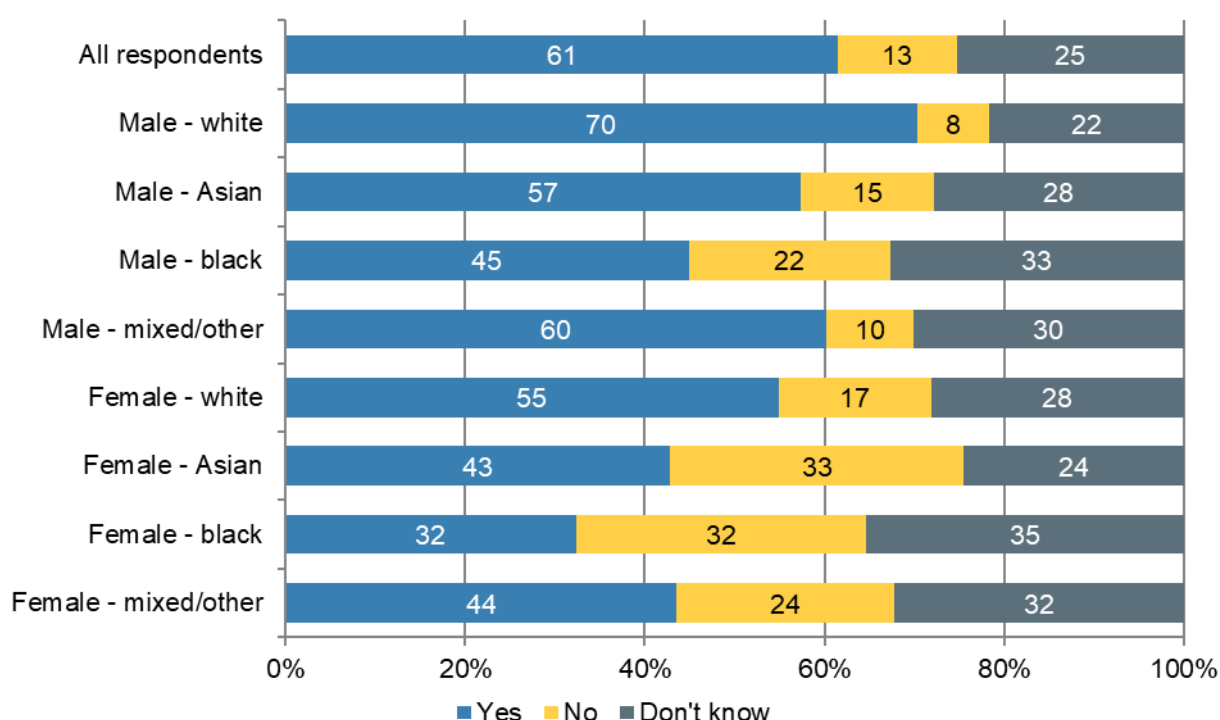
The 2023 survey introduced a question asking respondents' views about the distribution of work within their organisations, to investigate the extent to which barristers felt that work was distributed unfairly, and this question was repeated in the current survey.

The responses were very similar to those in 2023, with six in ten respondents (61%, 62% in 2023) saying that work was distributed fairly within their chamber/employer, 13% (same as in 2023) said that they did not think work was distributed fairly, and 25% (same as in 2023) said that they did not know. Male respondents were more likely than female

respondents to think that work was distributed fairly, and white respondents were more likely than those from ethnic minority backgrounds to think that work was distributed fairly, as shown in Figure 7.5.

New practitioner barristers (up to 2 years since Call), those working in criminal and family practice areas, and sole practitioners and those working as self-employed and employed were less likely than other barristers to feel that work was distributed fairly in their organisation.

Figure 7.5 Is work distributed fairly at your chambers/organisation in your area of practice, by sex and ethnicity (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Barristers who felt that work was not fairly distributed at the employer/chambers were asked what they thought could or should be done about work distribution. As with the 2023 survey, the most common responses focused on themes of reducing favouritism and promoting fair/equal access, greater monitoring and transparency of data around work allocation, and greater accountability of clerks and senior management.

A substantial proportion of responses highlighted the issue of either positive favouritism, or lack of fair and equal access to work for particular groups of barristers, although in many cases the responses just highlighted the issue rather the providing suggestions for actions that could be taken to improve the situation:

Work is distributed to whoever is complaining loudest at any given time. It has a fairly random feel to it. Occasionally senior barristers pick their latest "golden child", and that person gets a huge boost in the quality of their work. The "golden children"

are not any better than their peers, and the reason for their being picked is impossible to understand or quantify.

The firm clearly plays favourites and this affects the quality of the work I have been asked to do which is more at a paralegal level than of a newly qualified barrister

Ensure equity in the distribution of work. If parents cannot travel, allocate cases closer to their home address. Provide flexible rent arrangements for parents who take time off work for childcare reasons.

Ethnic minorities still not being clerked properly and they have to rely more on establishing their own contacts and keep an eye on their own practice as chambers then think they are managing well and the circle is complete so they don't really do anything except when they need help to cover minor cases.

Fairer monitoring and accountability for the clerks about why certain people are always put forward (white) and others (non-white) are not. Tougher sanctions for chambers and clerks that do subconsciously discriminate and unfairly distribute work opportunities.

I am now a sole practitioner but when I left chambers it was very apparent that most of the women got much less good quality work than the men. This was especially true after I had children. To change this the senior male members of chambers would need to recognise that they have an endemic problem with chauvinism and change not only their own behaviour but the way in which they enable it and encourage it in the clerks room. Equality is easy to pay lip service to.

I think we should be monitoring who is put forward for what level of case. I feel my male contemporaries are put forward for higher level work and solicitors do not wish to instruct me for lower level work because more junior colleagues can be charged out more cheaply.

A large number of comments also highlighted the need for greater transparency around the data on work allocation, and monitoring of this data to identify the nature and scale of any unfairness:

Greater transparency of what goes to who - and from whom - to expose distribution and patronage patterns. If those are unfair they can then be challenged/addressed.

Independent monitoring by independent body to check the chambers' data and better sources of data since currently it too easy for it to be manipulated by clerking teams. A recognition that fair opportunities need to be measured not just in terms of quantity but quality of instructions/whether the instructions are from a firm that can provide repeat business etc.

There should be monitoring by a chambers committee outside of the clerking structure, as the senior clerk tightly controls work.

There were many comments around increasing the accountability of clerks, but also the need for senior management to take a more active role in ensuring fairness in work allocation:

Very difficult to know. After 20 plus years at the Bar, I wonder whether we will really be able to change things fundamentally w/o overhauling the clerking room. There are very easy work rounds for the clerks to ensure that their "favourites" get more consideration than others for new work.

Clerks do their job properly as cab rank is frequently ignored to maintain better paid work for some while the rest pick up the remaining low paid work.

It should be transparent and you should be able to see who they put forward for what. We try to do this but the clerks have ways of distorting the stats, for example by offering you cases when your diary is marked unavailable. They'll put it down as work refused so it looks like they've offered work around.

There should be equal distribution of work on a strict basis. Often, clerks and barristers forge a friendship, which is fine. However, this should not border into the professional realm, where "favours" are done by giving work to "preferred" barristers that clerks have a close relationship with. Unfortunately, it happens and there should be stricter policies in place in chambers to prevent this from happening.

I think there needs to be a proper HR department and for barristers to no longer be dependent on clerks who do not fully understand how to operate an HR department and principles of fairness. you need those who understand fairness in employment, discrimination etc to remedy work distribution. Having a senior clerk does not cut it either as he is just an older example.

Accountability of senior members of the firm is needed - the process needs to be transparent, and open to suggestions regarding improvement.

Management should listen more when concerns are raised about clerks. the fact that it is difficult to evidence perceived bias in clerking through figures (because there are too many variables to evidence a direct causal link) does not mean that bias is not present.

I have reported concerns about fair allocation of work to my chambers management, as it appeared to me that there was a potential infringement of chambers' applicable policy. Nothing was really done about it and I was regarded as having caused trouble for myself and others.

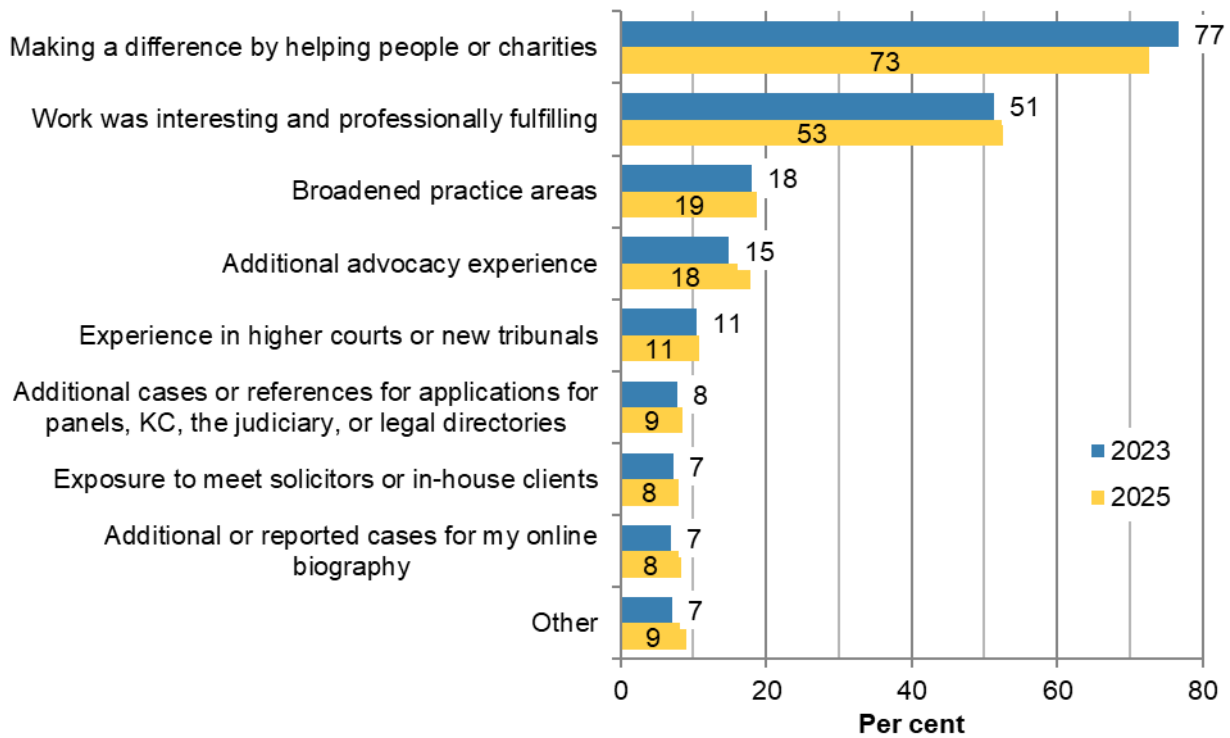
8 Pro bono work

Around half of all respondents (49%) said that they had undertaken pro bono work in the last 12 months. This was the same as the proportion in the 2023 survey, and higher than in the previous waves of the BWL surveys – 43% in 2021, 48% in 2017 and 39% in 2013. One in three of all barristers (33%) had provided up to five days of pro bono work (35% in 2023), 7% had provided 6-10 days (7% in 2023), and 8% had provided more than 10 days (7% in 2023).

Employed barristers were much less likely to have provided pro bono days than self-employed barristers, as was the case in the 2023 survey. Only one in four employed barristers (25%) had provided any pro bono days, compared with 52% of self-employed barristers in chambers, 60% of both self-employed and employed barristers, and 63% of self-employed sole practitioners. Barristers in criminal practice were least likely to have provided pro bono days, with only 35% undertaking any pro bono work in the last 12 months, while those in civil practice were most likely, with 62% providing some pro bono days. New practitioner barristers (up to 2 years since Call) were more likely than average to have provided some pro bono days (55%), but there was little variation in likelihood of providing pro bono days among more experienced barristers.

The most commonly reported benefit to barristers of doing pro bono work was making a difference by helping people or charities, with nearly three quarters of barristers who did pro bono work reporting this benefit (73%, compared with 77% in 2023), followed by the work being interesting and professionally fulfilling (53%, compared with 51% in 2023). Other common benefits, mentioned by around one in five barristers, were broadening their practice area, and gaining additional advocacy experience (Figure 8.1).

Employed barristers, and barristers in criminal practice, were less likely than average to report making a difference by helping people or charities as a benefit of doing pro bono work (61% and 63% respectively).

Figure 8.1 Benefits of undertaking pro bono work

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

9 Bullying, harassment and discrimination

This chapter explores the prevalence and nature of bullying, harassment, and discrimination in the workplace, and who was responsible. The questions are the same as those used in the 2023 survey (although there were changes between the 2021 and 2023 surveys are these are explained in the 2023 report).

As in the 2023 survey, at the start of this section of the questionnaire respondents were asked if they were 'happy to complete questions on bullying, harassment and discrimination'. Those who wished to skip the section comprised 13% of all respondents (somewhat higher than the 7% who skipped the section in the 2023 survey), leaving 87% (3,622 respondents) willing to complete the section. Men were more likely than women to skip the section (16% compared with 7%), and sole practitioners (21%) and barristers working as both employed and self-employed (24%) were much more likely than average to skip the section. It is possible that giving this option to respondents slightly skews the data on the findings related to bullying, harassment and discrimination, although it is difficult to determine in which direction this might be.

The questions posed in the survey were presented as below with a simple yes/no option to each.

During the past two years, have you:

- a) Personally experienced bullying or harassment in person at work?
- b) Personally experienced bullying or harassment while working online (via email, CVP, videoconferencing, networking or other online space)?
- c) Observed bullying or harassment in your workplace, in person at work?
- d) Observed bullying or harassment in your workplace while working online?
- e) Personally experienced discrimination in person at work?
- f) Personally experienced discrimination while working online (via email, CVP, videoconferencing, networking or other online space)?
- g) Observed discrimination in your workplace, in person at work
- h) Observed discrimination in your workplace while working online?

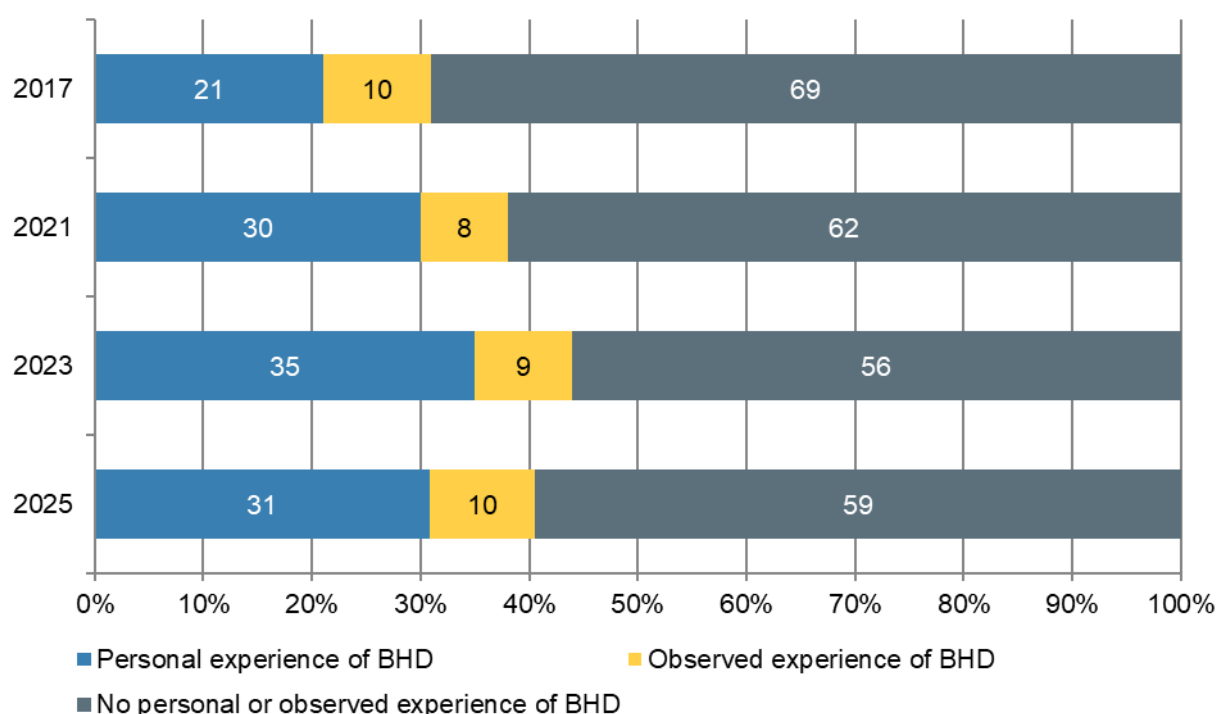
9.1 Prevalence

Just under one in three barristers (31%) reported that they had personally experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination at work or while working online in the last two years

(and may also have observed these types of negative behaviour). Figure 9.1 shows that this was lower than the proportion in the 2023 survey (35%) and similar to the proportion in the 2021 survey (30%), although it should be remembered that in the 2021 survey the questions were asked in a slightly different way. A further 10% of barristers reported that they had observed bullying, harassment or discrimination without personally experiencing it, and this was very similar to the proportions in the earlier surveys.

Thus 41% of barristers in the current survey had experienced and/or observed bullying, harassment or discrimination at work, either in person or while working online, lower than the 44% in the 2023 survey but higher than the 38% in the 2021 survey.

Figure 9.1 Personal experience and observation of bullying, harassment or discrimination in person or online 2025, 2023, 2021 and 2017 (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

In terms of the different types of experiences:

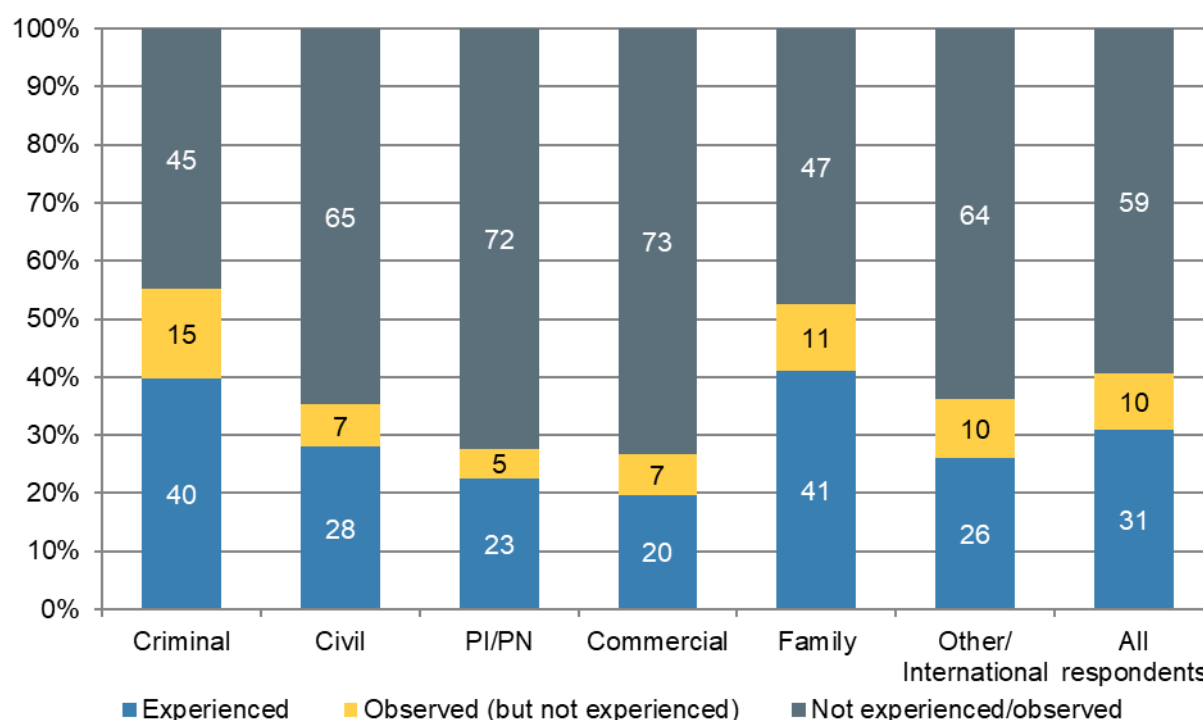
- 24% of barristers reported that they had personally experienced bullying or harassment in person at work (26% in 2023) and 10% said that they had experienced it while working online (15% in 2023).
- Similarly, 24% said that they had observed bullying or harassment in their workplace, in person at work (24% in 2023) and 9% said that they had observed it while working online (11% in 2023).
- 14% said that they had personally experienced discrimination at work in person (16% in 2023) and 5% said that they had personally experienced it while working online (7% in 2023).

- 14% said that they had observed discrimination in their workplace in person (15% in 2023) and 5% said that they had observed it while working online (7% in 2023).

There was little difference between employed barristers and self-employed barristers in chambers in the proportions experiencing or observing bullying, harassment or discrimination, although self-employed sole practitioners and barristers working in both roles were more likely to have personally experienced bullying, harassment and discrimination (37% and 40% respectively). However, there was some relationship between stage of practice and experiences of negative behaviour, with 51% of new practitioner barristers (within first 2 years since Call) experiencing or observing bullying, harassment or discrimination compared with 47% of those with between three and seven years since Call, 45% of those with between 8 and 17 years since Call, 40% of those with between 18 and 22 years since Call, and 33% of later practice barristers (23 years plus).

There was significant variation by area of practice with more than half of barristers in criminal and family practice experiencing or observing bullying, harassment or discrimination (55% and 53% respectively), compared with 27% of barristers in commercial practice and 28% of those in personal injury/professional negligence (Figure 9.2). The proportion of barristers in criminal practice reporting personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination was lower than in the 2023 survey (40% compared with 48%), although the proportion of barristers in family practice reporting personal experiences was slightly higher than in 2023 (41% compared with 39%).

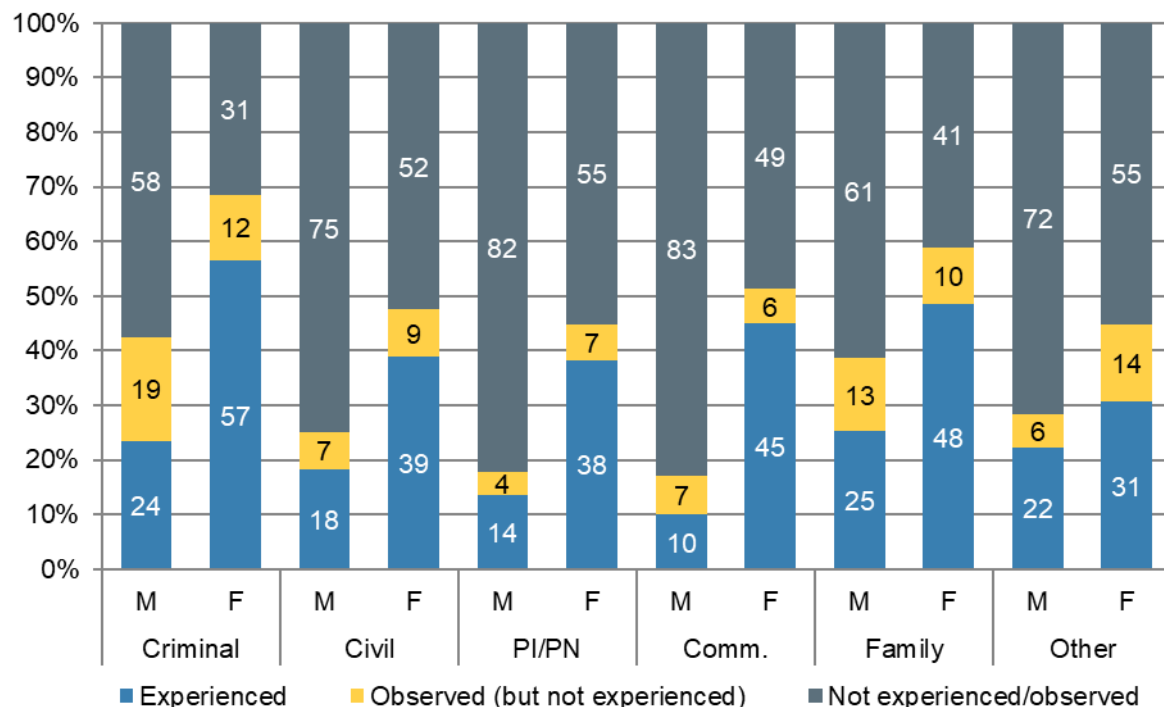
Figure 9.2 Personal experience and observation of bullying, harassment or discrimination by area of practice (percentages)



There were large and statistically significant differences in the prevalence of experiences and observations of bullying, harassment and discrimination by socio-demographic characteristics of barristers, particularly sex and ethnicity. Nearly half (46%) of female barristers reported experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination in person at work, compared with 18% of male barristers, and while these proportions were lower than in the 2023 survey, the decrease was larger for males than females (2023 proportions of 22% and 48% respectively). There was no difference between males and females in the proportions of barristers observing, but not experiencing, bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Figure 9.3 shows the variation in prevalence of experiences and observations of bullying, harassment and discrimination by sex and practice area. Although commercial practice was the area with the lowest prevalence of personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination (20%), it was in this area where there was the largest gap between male and female barristers, with more than four times as many females as males reporting personal experiences of these negative behaviours (45% of women compared with 10% of men). Family practice had the smallest difference between females and males in the prevalence of personal experiences, with around twice as many female barristers as male barristers reporting personal experiences (48% and 25% respectively).

Figure 9.3 Personal experience and observation of bullying, harassment or discrimination by sex and area of practice (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

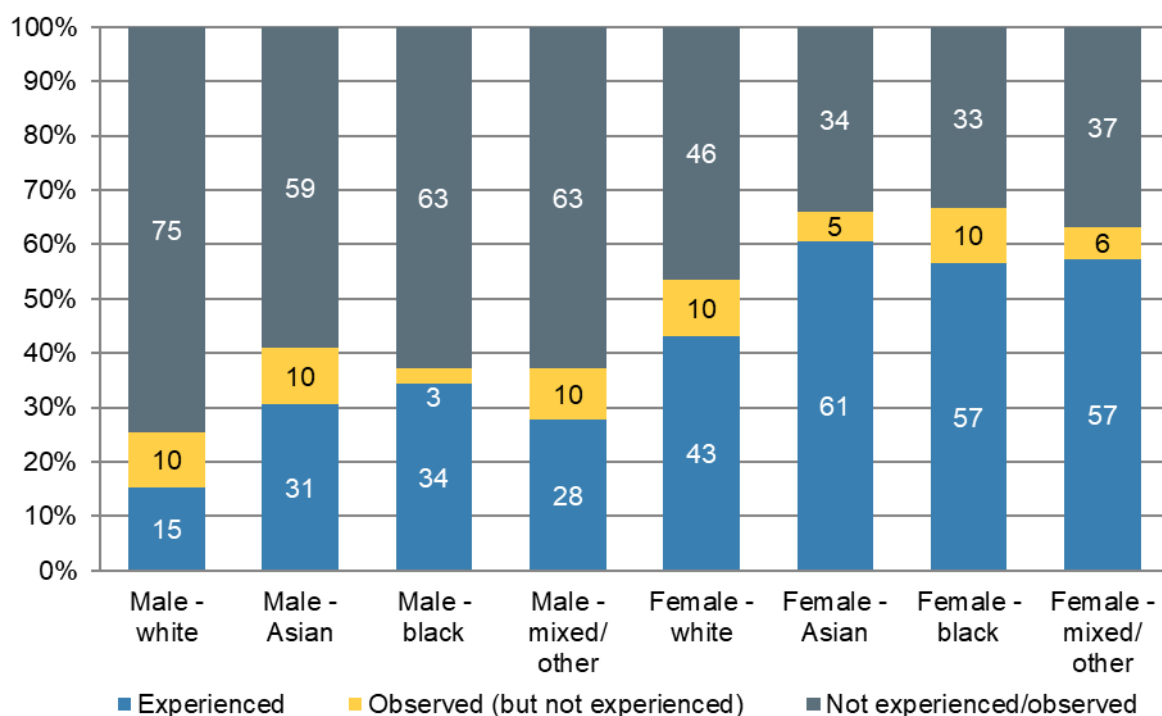
Barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds were much more likely than white barristers to report personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination, although the prevalence had fallen sharply since 2023 for many ethnic minority groups. Among white

barristers, 28% reported personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination, down from 31% in 2023, while among barristers from other backgrounds:

- 48% of barristers from black, black British, Caribbean or African backgrounds personally experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination, down from 67% in 2023;
- 47% of barristers from Asian or Asian British backgrounds personally experienced these negative behaviours, down from 56% in 2023;
- 43% of barristers from mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds had personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination, down from 46% in 2023; and
- 41% of barristers from other ethnic backgrounds personally experienced these negative behaviours.

Figure 9.4 shows variation in prevalence of personal experiences by sex and ethnicity combined. Male barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds were twice as likely to report having personally experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination as white male barristers. While the relative differences among female barristers were smaller, the combined effect of being female and from an ethnic minority background meant that around three fifths had personally experienced negative behaviours. However, the proportion of female barristers from black backgrounds who reported personally experiencing these negative experiences was much lower than in 2023 (57% compared with 76%).

Figure 9.4 Personal experience and observation of bullying, harassment or discrimination by gender and ethnicity (percentages)



In terms of differences by other socio-demographic characteristics:

- 52% of barristers with a disability reported personally experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination compared with 28% of barristers without a disability. In 2023, the same proportion of barristers with a disability (52%) reported they had experienced bullying, harassment and discrimination, while 32% of those without a disability report such experiences.
 - Focusing on barristers with neurodivergent conditions or mental health problems, they were more likely than those with physical, sensory or other types of disabilities to report personal experiences (56% compared with 46%).
- The prevalence of personal experiences of bullying, harassment or disability decreased with age, from 38% of barristers aged under 35 to 28% of those aged between 55 and 64, and just 12% of those aged 65 and over (these findings reflect the relationship between prevalence and time since Call).
- Barristers with non-Christian religious beliefs were much more likely than other barristers to report personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination (41%, compared with 30% of barristers with Christian beliefs and 27% of barristers with no religion).
- 40% of bisexual or gay barristers, or those with other non-heterosexual sexual orientations, reported personal experiences, compared with 29% of heterosexual barristers.
- Education background was associated with significant differences in prevalence of bullying, harassment or discrimination:
 - 24% of barristers who attended UK independent schools reported personal experiences compared with 29% of those who attended UK state schools that selected on academic grounds, and 35% of those who attended other UK state schools (these patterns mirror those in the 2023 survey when 28% of barristers from independent schools reported experiences compared with 38% of those from state schools).
 - 21% of barristers who attended Oxford or Cambridge reported personal experiences compared with 32% of those who attended Russell Group universities, 35% of those who attended other pre-1992 universities, and 40% of those who attended other UK universities (university attended was asked for the first time in this survey and so there are no comparisons with 2023).
- 33% of barristers with primary caring responsibilities for a dependent child reported personal experiences, as did 40% of those with adult caring responsibilities, and among the latter group the prevalence was higher among those who spent 20 or more hours a week caring for an adult (51%).

9.1.1 Prevalence of experiences of bullying and harassment versus discrimination

This section examines the prevalence of experiences of bullying and harassment, and experiences of discrimination, separately, in contrast to the previous section which explored experiences of any type of negative behaviour.

Overall, 26% of respondents said that they had experienced bullying or harassment in person or online, while a further 10% had observed it (in person or online) but had not experienced it themselves; the corresponding figures in 2023 were 30% and 9%. The prevalence of experiences of discrimination was lower, with 15% of respondents reporting that they had experienced it in person or online (18% in 2023), and a further 6% had observed it but not experienced it (6% in 2023).

Bullying and harassment

Barristers working in criminal and family practice were more likely than average to have experienced bullying or harassment (36% in both practice areas, compared with 43% and 37% respectively in 2023), as were sole practitioners and those working as both employed and self-employed (37% and 32% respectively). New practitioner barristers (up to 2 years since Call) were most likely to have experienced bullying or harassment (34%), although those in later practice (23 or more years since Call) were the only group by time since Call to have a below average incidence of personal experiences of bullying or harassment. There was significant variation by personal and social characteristics:

- 40% of female respondents had experienced bullying or harassment compared with 15% of male respondents (41% and 19% respectively in 2023).
- 32% of barristers aged 34 and younger had experienced bullying or harassment compared with 28% of those aged 35 to 54, 24% of those aged 55 to 64, and 10% of those aged 65 and over.
- 34% of barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds had experienced bullying or harassment (43% in 2023) compared with 24% of white barristers (27% in 2023).
- Nearly half (48%) of female barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds had experienced bullying or harassment, compared with 38% of white female barristers, 20% of male barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds, and 13% of white male barristers.
- 32% of barristers with non-Christian religious beliefs had experienced bullying or harassment (38% in 2023), compared with 27% of those with Christian beliefs (30% in 2023), and 24% of those with no religion (27% in 2023).
- 36% of LGBTQ barristers had experienced bullying or harassment, compared with 24% of straight barristers (38% and 28% respectively in 2023).
- 44% of barristers with a disability had experienced bullying or harassment, compared with 24% of those without a disability (46% and 28% respectively in 2023), although the prevalence was much higher among barristers with neurodivergent conditions or

mental problems, at 49%, than among those with physical/sensory conditions only, at 36%.

- 31% of barristers who went to a UK non-selective state school had experienced bullying or harassment, compared with 20% of those who went to an independent/ fee-paying school.
- 17% of barristers who attended Oxford or Cambridge had experienced bullying or harassment, compared with 28% of those who attended Russell Group or other pre-1992 universities, and 35% of those who attended post-1992 universities.
- 39% of barristers who had adult caring responsibilities for 20 or more hours per week had experienced bullying or harassment, compared with 34% of those who cared for an adult relative for less than 20 hours per week, and 24% of those with no adult caring responsibility.

Discrimination

Turning to variation in the prevalence of discrimination, barristers in criminal practice were most likely to report having experienced discrimination (in person or online), with 19% experiencing discrimination (24% in 2023), followed by those in civil practice (16%, compared with 18% in 2023). Sole practitioners and barristers working as both employed and self-employed were much more likely than average to have experienced discrimination (20% and 21% respectively). By time since Call, barristers in middle practice with between 13 and 17 years were most likely to have experienced discrimination (18%), closely followed by other middle practice barristers with between eight and 12 years since Call, or between 18 and 22 years since Call (17% for both groups).

There was significant variation by personal and social characteristics:

- 23% of female respondents had experienced discrimination compared with 8% of male respondents (26% and 9% respectively in 2023).
- 16% of barristers aged 54 and younger had experienced discrimination compared with 14% of those aged 55 to 64, and 6% of those aged 65 and over.
- 30% of barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds had experienced discrimination (39% in 2023) compared with 11% of white barristers (14% in 2023).
- 37% of female barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds had experienced discrimination, compared with 22% of male barristers from ethnic minority backgrounds, 19% of white female barristers, and 5% of white male barristers.
- 26% of barristers with non-Christian religious beliefs had experienced discrimination (31% in 2023), compared with 14% of those with Christian beliefs, and 12% of those with no religion (18% and 14% respectively in 2023).
- 19% of LGBTQ barristers had experienced discrimination, compared with 13% of straight barristers (22% and 16% respectively in 2023).
- 32% of barristers with a disability had experienced discrimination (up slightly from 31% in 2023), compared with 12% of those without a disability (down from 16% in 2023).

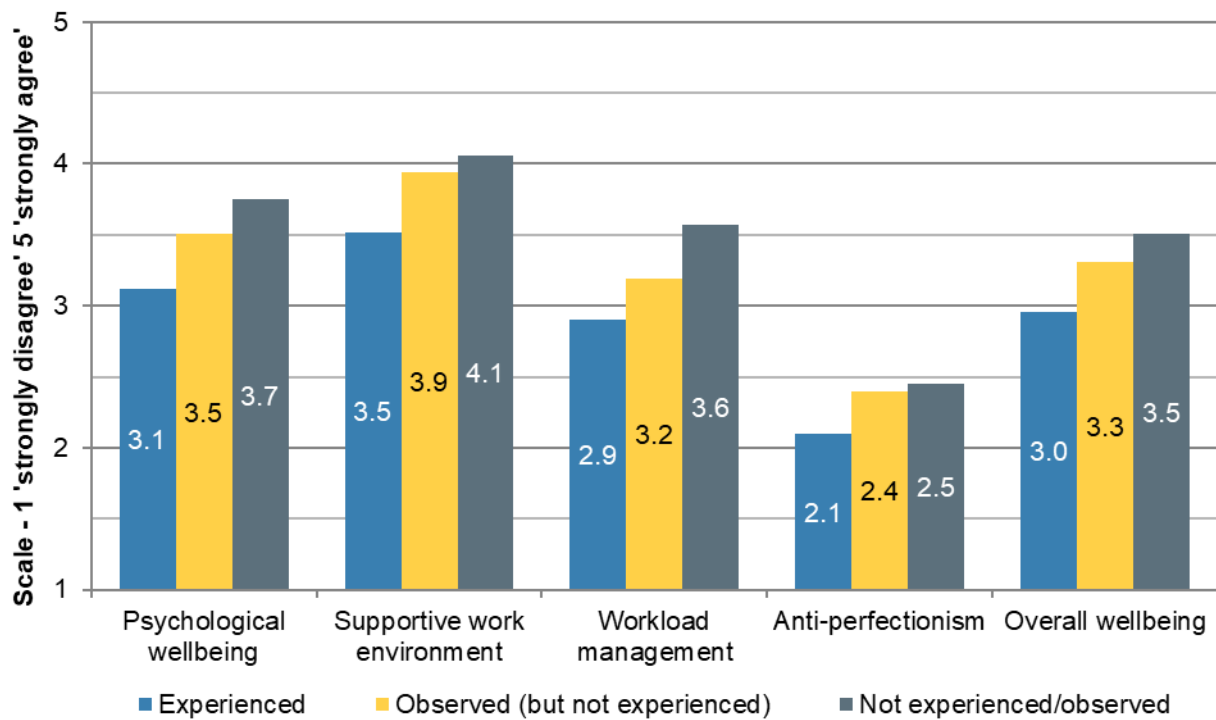
There was little difference in the proportions experiencing discrimination between those with neurodivergent/mental health conditions, and those with physical/sensory conditions only (33% and 31% respectively).

- 17% of barristers who went to a state school or who were educated overseas had experienced discrimination (20% and 27% respectively in 2023), compared with 10% of those who went to an independent school (14% in 2023).
- 10% of barristers who attended Oxford or Cambridge had experienced bullying or harassment, compared with 15% of those who attended Russell Group or other research-intensive universities, and 20% of those who attended other pre-1992 universities or a post-1992 university.
- 17% of barristers with childcare responsibilities had experienced discrimination compared with 13% of those with no childcare responsibilities (21% and 16% respectively in 2023).
- 35% of barristers who had adult caring responsibilities for 20 or more hours per week had experienced bullying or harassment, compared with 23% of those who cared for up to 20 hours per week, and 12% of those with no adult caring responsibility.

9.2 Wellbeing and bullying, harassment and discrimination

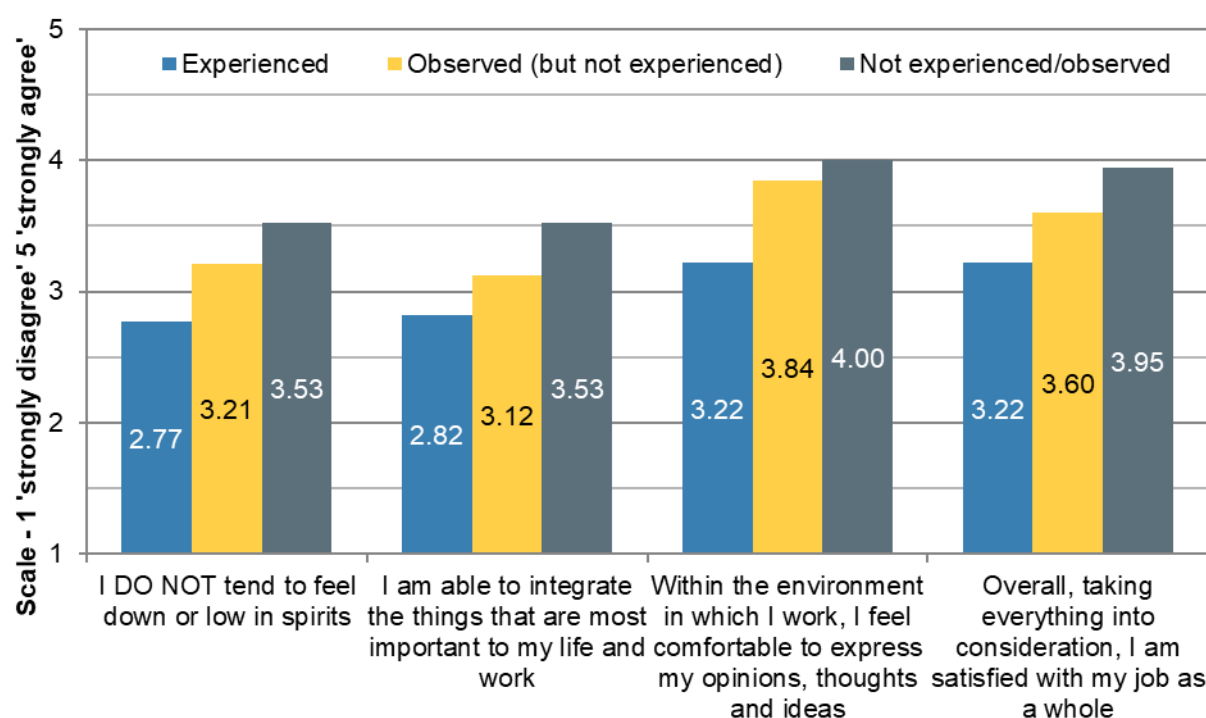
There was a strong relationship between experiences and observations of bullying, harassment or discrimination and barristers' views about their working lives and wellbeing (overall wellbeing findings are reported in Chapter 5). Figure 9.5 shows that barristers with personal experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination reported much lower scores on the wellbeing factors than barristers who had observed but not experienced such behaviours, who in turn reported lower scores than barristers with no experiences or observation of these negative behaviours. This pattern has also been observed in the 2021 and 2023 surveys, demonstrating that it is a significant and enduring relationship, which has a broadly similar impact across each of the different work-life factors.

Figure 9.5 Wellbeing factor scores by experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Looking within the different factors at the individual items within the wellbeing model, the items which were most affected by experiences of bullying, harassment and disability were not tending to feel down or low in spirits, being able to integrate the most important things in life and work, feeling comfortable to express opinions, thoughts and ideas at work, and being satisfied with their job as a whole. For these items, the wellbeing scores for barristers with personal experiences of bullying, harassment and discrimination were around 80% of the value of the scores for those who did not experience or observe these behaviours (Figure 9.6).

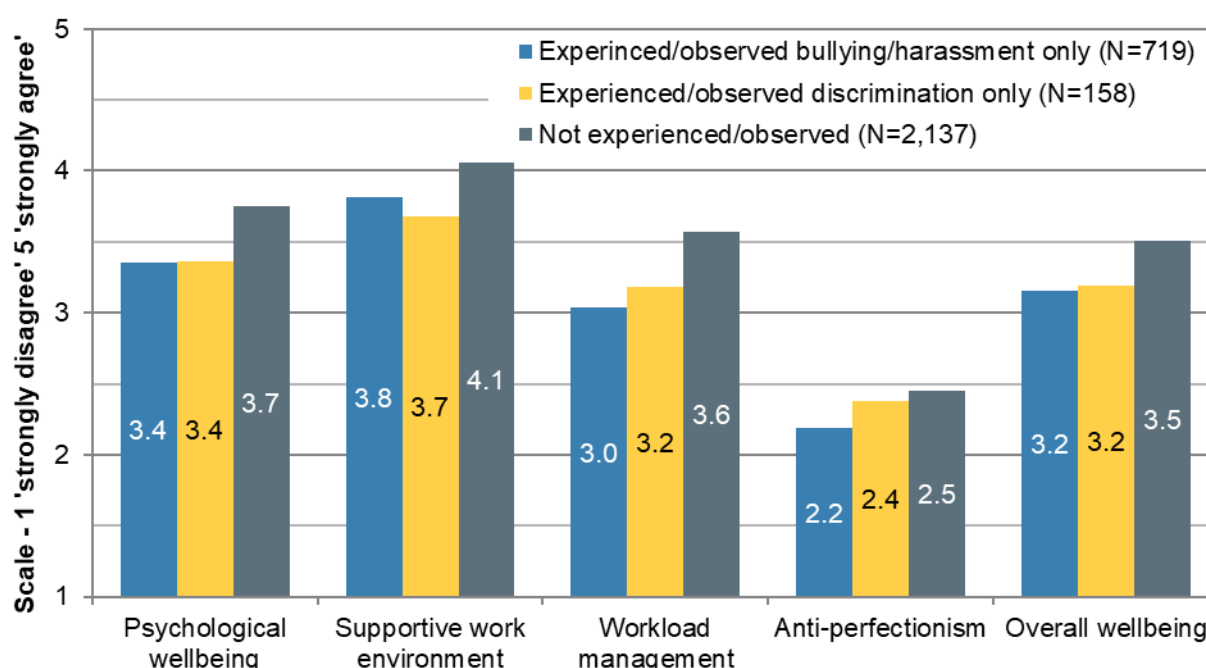
Figure 9.6 Personal experience and observation of bullying, harassment or discrimination by gender and ethnicity (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

9.2.1 Impact on wellbeing of experiences of bullying and harassment versus discrimination

Figure 9.7 shows the wellbeing factor scores separately for barristers who reported experiencing or observing bullying or harassment only (i.e. did not experience or observe discrimination as well), and those who reported experiencing discrimination only (i.e. did not experience or observe bullying/harassment as well). The two types of negative behaviour had different impacts on barristers' scores for wellbeing items, with barristers who had experienced or observed discrimination only reporting lower scores on the supportive work environment factor, and those who had experienced or observed bullying or harassment only reporting lower scores on the workload management and anti-perfectionism factors.

Figure 9.7 Wellbeing factor scores by experiences of bullying or harassment, and of discrimination



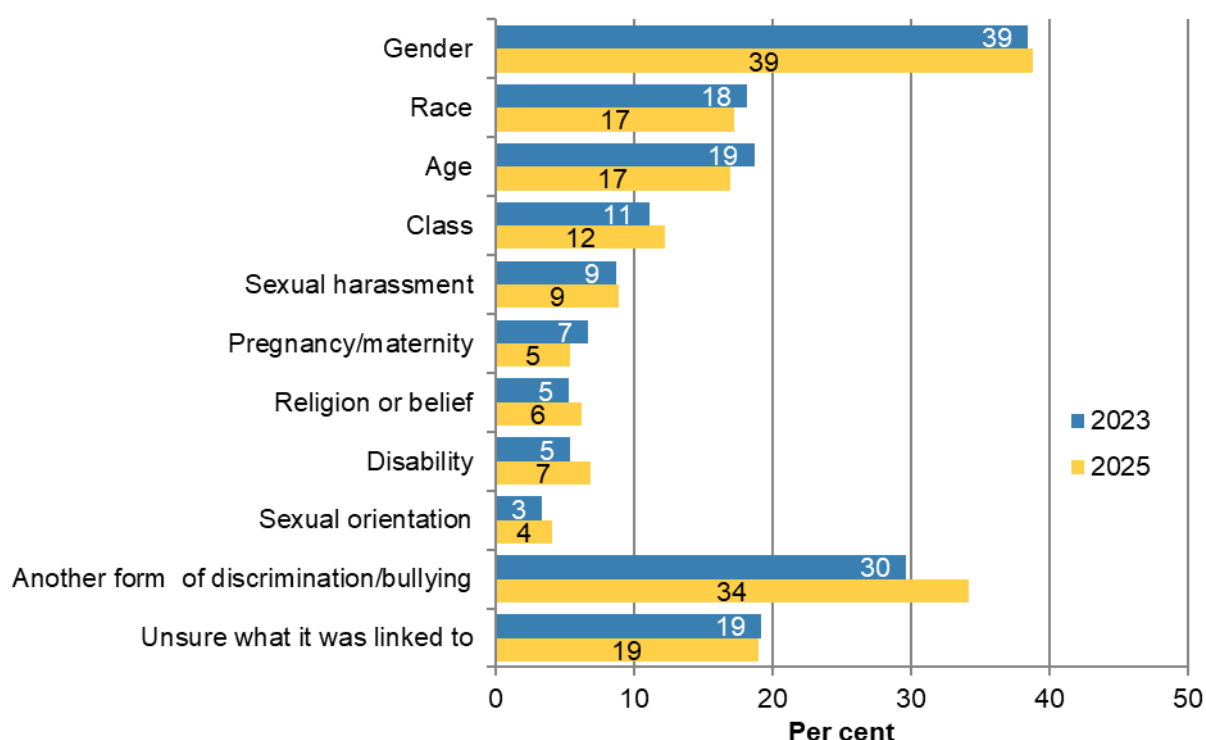
Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

9.3 Type of bullying, harassment or discrimination

9.3.1 What the bullying, harassment or discrimination was related to

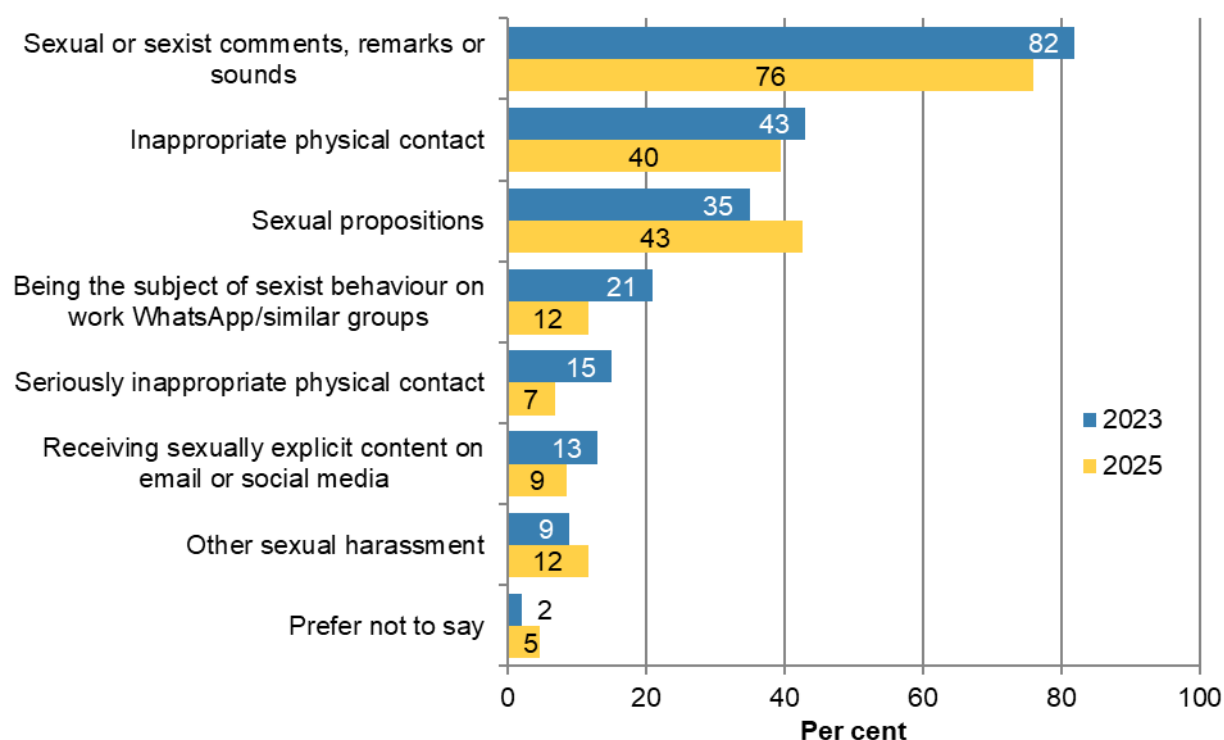
Respondents who had indicated that they had experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or discrimination were asked to indicate what they saw as the nature of the behaviour they had experienced or observed, based on a pre-populated list. Figure 9.8 shows the responses.

Negative behaviour related to gender was the most commonly reported type, mentioned by two fifths (39%) of those who had experienced or observed bullying, harassment or discrimination, and this proportion was unchanged from the 2023 survey. Race and age were the next most commonly reported factors associated with the negative behaviours, with each being reported by just under one in five barristers, followed by class (11%) and sexual harassment (9%), and these proportions are similar to those in 2023. One in three respondents (34%) said that the negative behaviour was related to another form of discrimination or bullying than the ones presented in the questionnaire, up from 30% in 2023, while one fifth (19%) said that they were unsure what it was linked to (the same as in 2023).

Figure 9.8 Nature of bullying, harassment or discrimination (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Barristers who reported that they had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment (129 respondents) were asked what form it took. Figure 9.9 shows that sexual or sexist comments, remarks or sounds was the most common type of sexual harassment experienced or observed, with three quarters (76%) mentioning this, though lower than the proportion mentioning it in 2023 (82%). The proportion mentioning sexual propositions had increased from the 2023 survey, up from 35% to 43%, so that in the current survey it was the second most commonly reported type of sexual harassment after sexual/sexist comments. Inappropriate physical contact was mentioned by 40% of barristers who experienced or observed sexual harassment (43% in 2023).

Figure 9.9 Nature of sexual harassment (percentages)

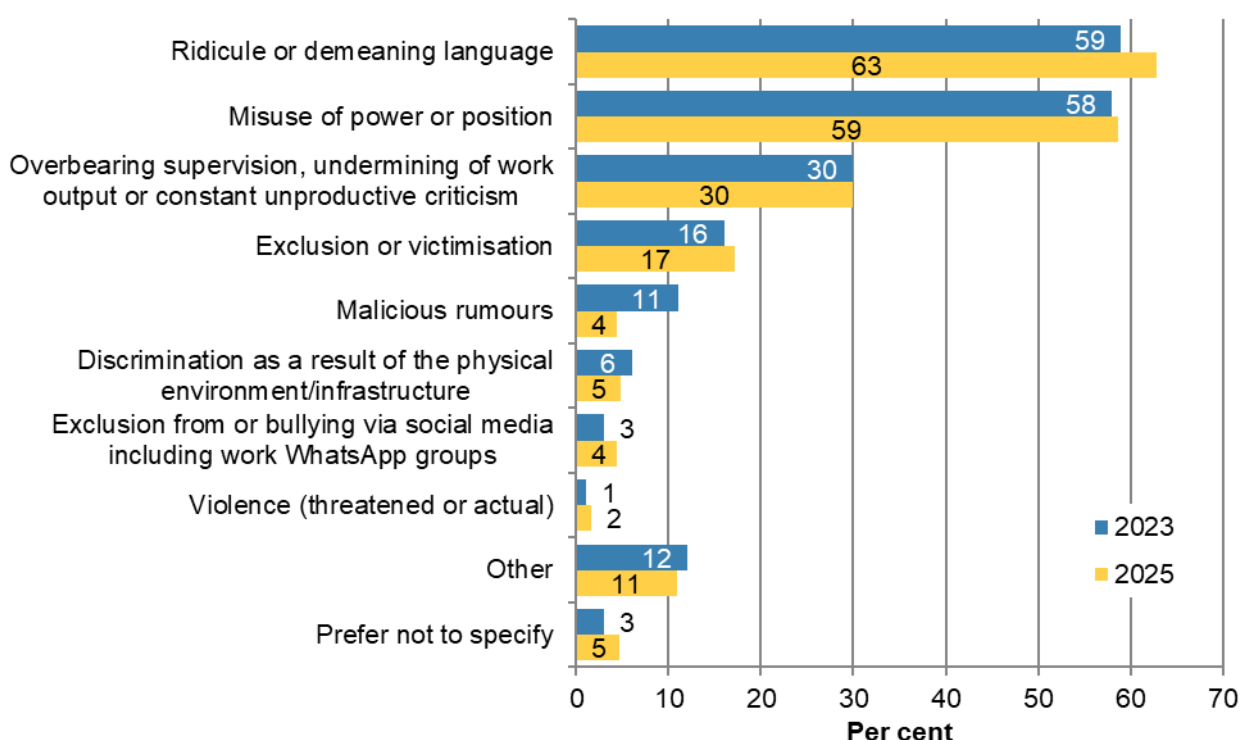
Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

9.3.2 The type of bullying, harassment or discrimination

In addition to being asked about what the bullying, harassment or discrimination was related to, respondents were also asked about the type of bullying, harassment or discrimination they had experienced or observed.

Ridicule and demeaning language, and the misuse of power and position, were the most commonly reported forms of bullying, harassment or discrimination, with around three fifths of those who experienced or observed these negative behaviours mentioning these types (63% and 59%, similar to the proportions in 2023). Overbearing supervision, undermining of work output or constant unproductive criticism was the next most commonly mentioned form (30%) followed by exclusion or victimisation (17%); all other types were mentioned by fewer than one in ten respondents.

Table 9.1 shows the proportion of barristers by practice area who reported each of the four most commonly reported types of bullying, harassment or discrimination. Barristers in criminal and family practice were more likely than average to report that the negative behaviours took the form of ridicule or demeaning language, while barristers in commercial or civil practice were more likely than average to report that it took the form of exclusion or victimisation.

Figure 9.10 Type of bullying/harassment/discrimination (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Table 9.1 Type of bullying/harassment by area of practice (percentages)

	Criminal	Civil	PI/PN	Commercial	Family	All
Ridicule or demeaning language	70.1	56.1	60.2	54.2	65.6	62.8
Misuse of power or position	64.6	56.1	49.6	54.7	59.1	58.6
Overbearing supervision, undermining of work output or constant unproductive criticism	36.0	26.4	21.2	33.3	22.6	29.9
Exclusion or victimisation	14.3	20.8	11.5	24.5	13.8	17.2
N=	475	303	113	192	340	1,469

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

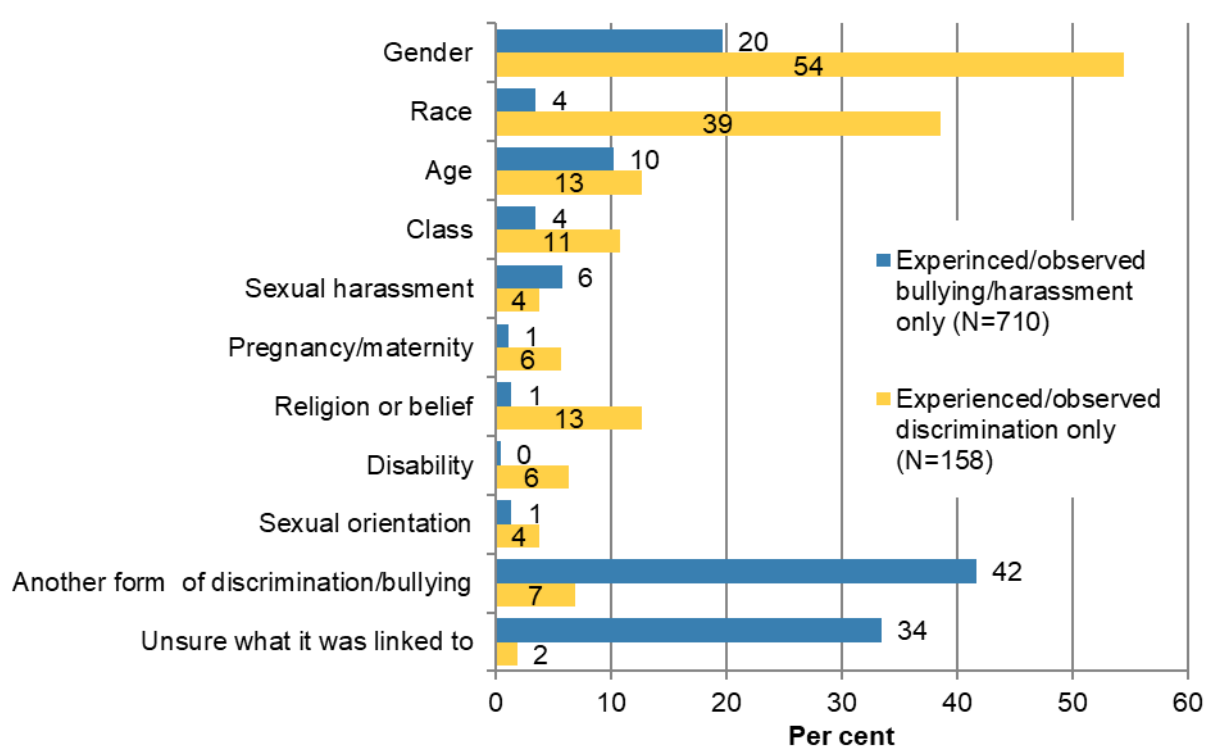
9.3.3 Type of experiences of bullying and harassment versus discrimination

This section looks at the nature of the negative behaviours under the two separate headings of bullying or harassment, and discrimination. The analysis was conducted separately for barristers who reported experiencing or observing bullying or harassment only (i.e. did not experience or observe discrimination as well), and those who reported experiencing discrimination only (i.e. did not experience or observe bullying/harassment as well). The analysis therefore excludes respondents who said that they experienced or

observed both types of negative behaviour as the responses would be then ambiguous as to whether they were referring to bullying/harassment or discrimination.

Figure 9.11 shows that discrimination was predominantly linked to gender or race, with just over half (54%) of barristers who reported experiencing or observing discrimination saying that it was related to gender, and two fifths (39%) saying that it was related to race. These are similar proportions to those in the 2023 survey. While gender was the most common specific factor behind bullying or harassment, it was mentioned by only 20% of barristers who reported experiencing or observing bullying/harassment, and age was more commonly mentioned than race as the factor behind bullying/harassment. Bullying or harassment was commonly related to other factors than protected characteristics (42%), or barristers were unsure what it was linked to (34%).

Figure 9.11 Nature of bullying or harassment, and discrimination (percentages)



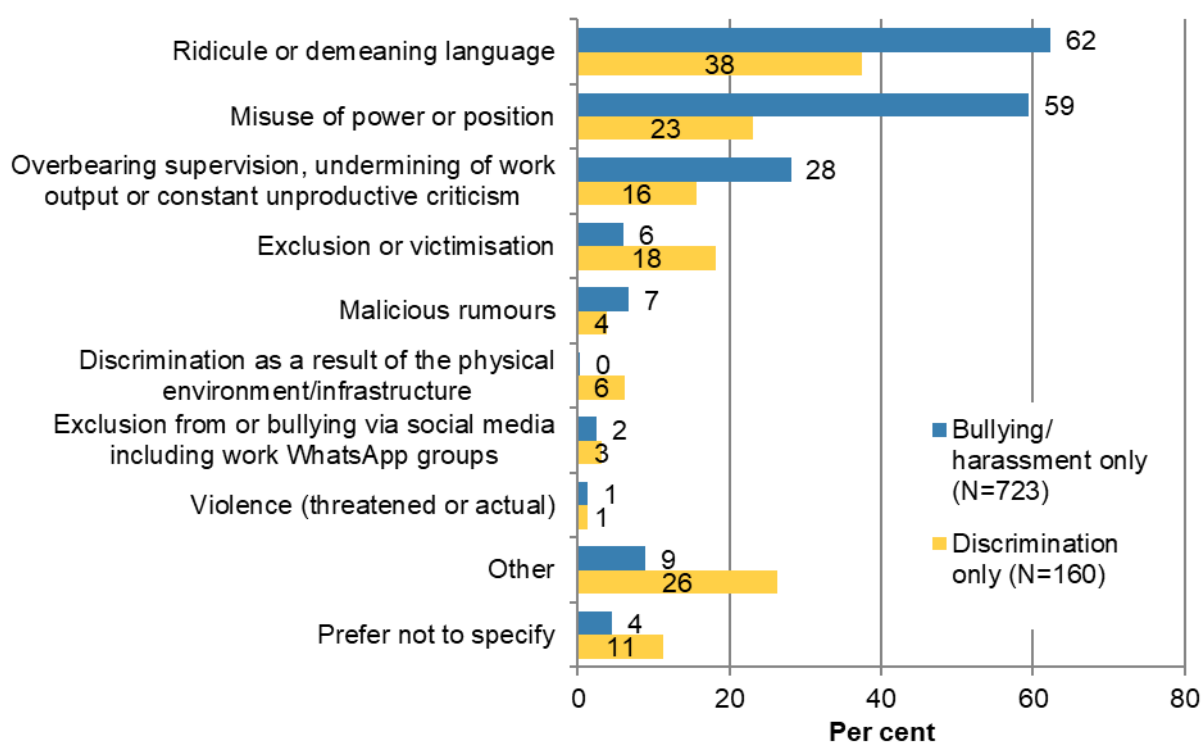
Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

There were some differences in the type of negative behaviour between those who reported bullying/harassment only and those who reported discrimination only, as Figure 9.12 shows. The patterns were very similar to those found in the 2023 survey, and key points to note are:

- Ridicule or demeaning language, and misuse of power, were the most common types of bullying or harassment, mentioned by 62% and 59% respectively of barristers who experienced/observed bullying/harassment only.
- Those types were also the most common types of discrimination, although mentioned by fewer respondents than mentioned them as types of bullying/harassment (38% and 23% respectively).

- Overbearing supervision, undermining of work output or constant unproductive criticism was more commonly mentioned as a type of bullying/harassment than as a type of discrimination (28% and 16% respectively).
- Exclusion or victimisation was more commonly mentioned as a type of discrimination than as a type of bullying/harassment (18% and 6% respectively).

Figure 9.12 Type of bullying/harassment, and discrimination (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

9.4 Person responsible for bullying, harassment or discrimination

Respondents were asked to indicate who they saw as the person or persons responsible for the bullying/harassment, or the discrimination, that they had experienced or observed. The findings are reported separately for the two types of negative behaviour.

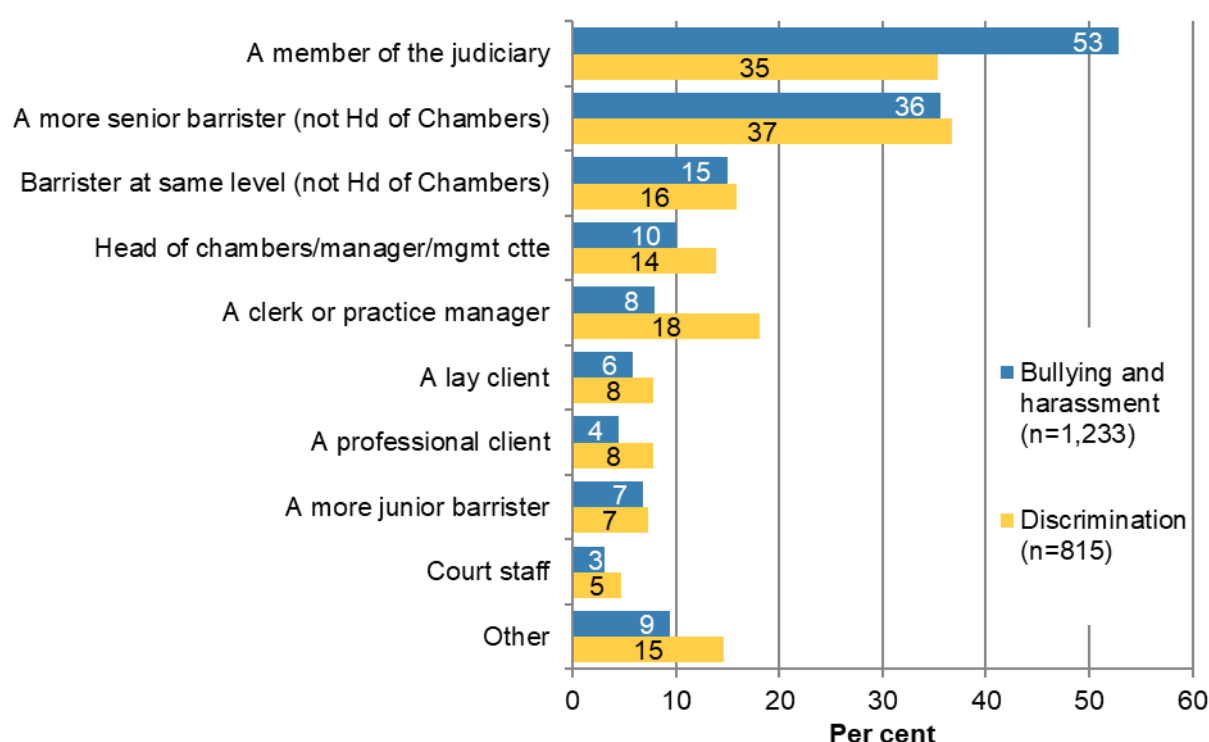
9.4.1 Reported perpetrators of bullying and harassment

More than half of barristers who experienced or observed bullying or harassment said that the perpetrator was a member of the judiciary, as shown in Figure 9.13. The next most commonly mentioned perpetrators of bullying or harassment were a more senior barrister but not a head of chambers (36%) or a barrister at the same level but again not a head of chambers (15%). These are all very similar proportions to those found in the 2023 survey.

More than two thirds (69%) of barristers in criminal practice who experienced or observed bullying or harassment said that it was carried out by a member of the judiciary, as did

60% of their counterparts in family practice and 54% in PI/PN. Barristers in commercial or civil practice were more likely to report that bullying or harassment was carried out by a more senior barrister than by a member of the judiciary – 42% of barristers in commercial practice said it was carried out by a more senior barrister compared with 28% mentioning a member of the judiciary, and 41% of civil barristers reported that it was carried out by a more senior barrister compared with 38% mentioning a member of the judiciary. Barristers with a disability were much more likely than those without a disability to report that bullying or harassment was carried out by another barrister, regardless of level, or by a head of chambers, while female barristers were much more likely than male barristers to report that bullying or harassment was carried out by a more senior barrister but not head of chambers (40% and 31% respectively).

Figure 9.13 Person responsible for bullying, harassment or discrimination (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

9.4.2 Reported perpetrators of discrimination

Turning to the perpetrators of discrimination, a more senior barrister (but not head of chambers) was the most commonly reported perpetrator, mentioned by 37% of barristers who experienced or observed discrimination, and they were closely followed by a member of the judiciary (35%). Other commonly mentioned perpetrators of discrimination were a clerk or practice manager (18%), a barrister at the same level but not a head of chambers (16%) and a head of chambers or barrister who was a manager or on a management committee (14%).

As was the case with bullying or harassment, barristers in criminal or family practice were much more likely than average to report that discrimination was perpetrated by a member

of the judiciary (51% and 39% respectively), while in other areas the most commonly reported perpetrator was a more senior barrister (but not head of chambers) rather than a member of the judiciary. Higher proportions of female barristers than male barristers reported that the discrimination was carried out by a more senior barrister excluding heads of chambers (40% and 33% respectively) or by a clerk or practice manager (22% and 13% respectively), while higher proportions of disabled barristers than non-disabled barristers reported discrimination being carried out by fellow barristers at all levels.

9.5 Where the incident occurred

The most common location where barristers experienced or observed bullying, harassment or discrimination was court, mentioned by three fifths of respondents who had experienced or observed these negative behaviours (61%, similar to the proportion in 2023 of 59%). This was followed by at the workplace (43%, 36% in 2023), via remote working (15%, 20% in 2023) and at a work social event (10%, 8% in 2023).

In line with the findings that the most commonly reported perpetrators for barristers in criminal and family practice were members of the judiciary, around three quarters of barristers in these practice areas said that the incident occurred at court (79% of criminal barristers and 73% of family barristers). For barristers in commercial and civil practice, higher proportions said that the incident happened at the workplace rather than at court, and civil barristers and those in international/other practice areas were most likely to report that the incident happened online (24% and 27% respectively).

Three quarters of employed barristers (76%) reported that the incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination happened at work, compared with 37% of self-employed barristers in chambers, while 68% of self-employed barristers in chambers reported that the incident occurred at court, compared with 19% of employed barristers.

9.6 Workplace policies relating to bullying and harassment

Nearly nine out of ten respondents (88%) said that their workplace had a policy relating to bullying and harassment. This continues the trend observed over recent surveys of more and more workplace having bullying/harassment policies, up from 81% in the 2021 survey and 84% in the 2023 survey. Of those who did not say that their workplace had a bullying/harassment policy, most said that they did not know whether there was a policy or not, and only 1% of respondents said that their workplace did not have a policy. Nearly all employed barristers (96%) said that their workplace had a policy, with the remaining 4% saying they did not know. Most barristers who said that their workplace did not have a policy were self-employed sole practitioners; of these, 16% said that they did not have a policy, but 62% said that they did have one.

Respondents who reported that their workplace had a policy relating to bullying and harassment were asked if they thought the policy was fit for purpose. Around three quarters (78%) said that the policy was fit for purpose, while 6% said that it was not fit for

purpose, and 16% did not know. Employed barristers were most likely to say that the policy was not fit for purpose (16%, compared with 4% of self-employed barristers in chambers), so although they were nearly all covered by policies, there were concerns about the policies among a substantial minority of employed barristers. There was a strong association between experiences of bullying, harassment and discrimination and views about whether policies were fit for purpose, with only 63% of barristers who personally experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination rating their workplace's policy as fit for purpose, compared with 80% of barristers who observed bullying, harassment or discrimination but did not personally experience it, and 85% of barrister who neither experienced nor observed bullying, harassment or discrimination.

9.7 Reporting incidents of bullying or harassment

Barristers were next asked to indicate if they had **ever** reported an incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination at the Bar. The timeframe for this question differed to the questions about personally experiencing or observing bullying, harassment or discrimination which was focused on the last two years. Of all barristers who answered questions about bullying, harassment or discrimination, 16% had reported or disclosed an incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination, while 38% said that they had not reported an incident, and 46% said that they had not observed or experienced any incidents. Focusing just on those who had observed or experienced any incidents of bullying, harassment or discrimination (n=1,917), 29% had reported or disclosed an incident.

Barristers who had only observed, but not experienced, an incident in the last two years were less likely to have reported or disclosed it – 20% had reported or disclosed compared with 30% of barristers who had personally experienced an incident in the last two years, and 32% of those who had experienced or observed an incident more than two years ago.

Barristers who had reported or disclosed an incident most commonly did so to their employer or chambers (47%), followed by to another barrister (27%), or to the Bar Council's Talk to Spot tool (21%). Only 12% had reported or disclosed an incident to the Bar Standards Board.

Barristers who reported or disclosed incidents to their employer/chambers or to another barrister were more likely to be satisfied with the response than those who reported or disclosed to the Bar Council's Talk to Spot tool or to the Bar Standards Board (58% compared with 32% of those whose cases were not still ongoing).

Table 9.2: Satisfaction with reporting incident to different people/organisations (percentages)

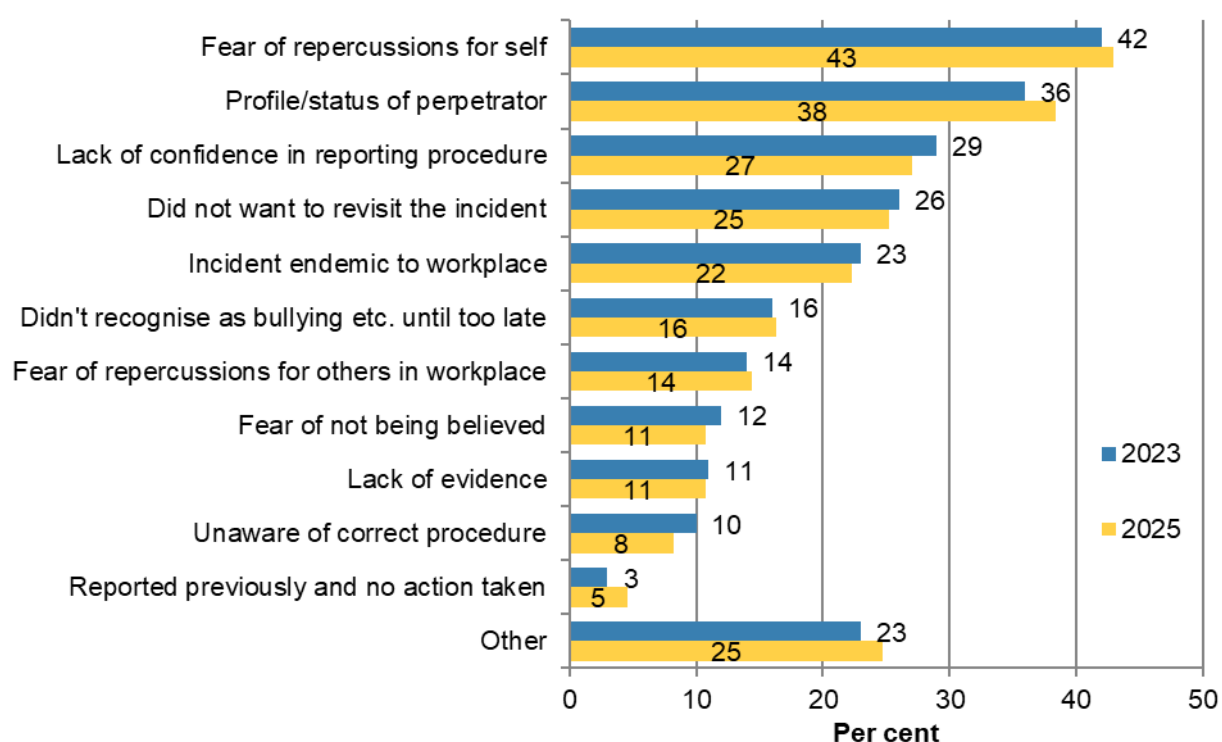
	The Bar Standards Board (the BSB)	Another barrister	My employer or chambers	The Bar Council's Talk to Spot tool	Other
Satisfied	26.2	58.7	54.0	30.8	39.6
Not satisfied	52.3	24.5	32.8	23.4	39.6
Don't know	9.2	14.7	8.0	40.2	16.0
Still ongoing	12.3	2.1	5.2	5.6	4.7
N=	65	143	250	107	106

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

9.7.1 Reasons for not reporting incidents

Barristers who had not reported or disclosed an incident were asked for their reasons for not reporting, and the results are shown in Figure 9.14.

Fear of repercussions was the most common reason for not reporting (43%), followed by the profile or status of the perpetrator (38%), lack of confidence in reporting procedures (27%) and not wanting to revisit the incident (25%). These findings are very similar to those in the 2023 survey.

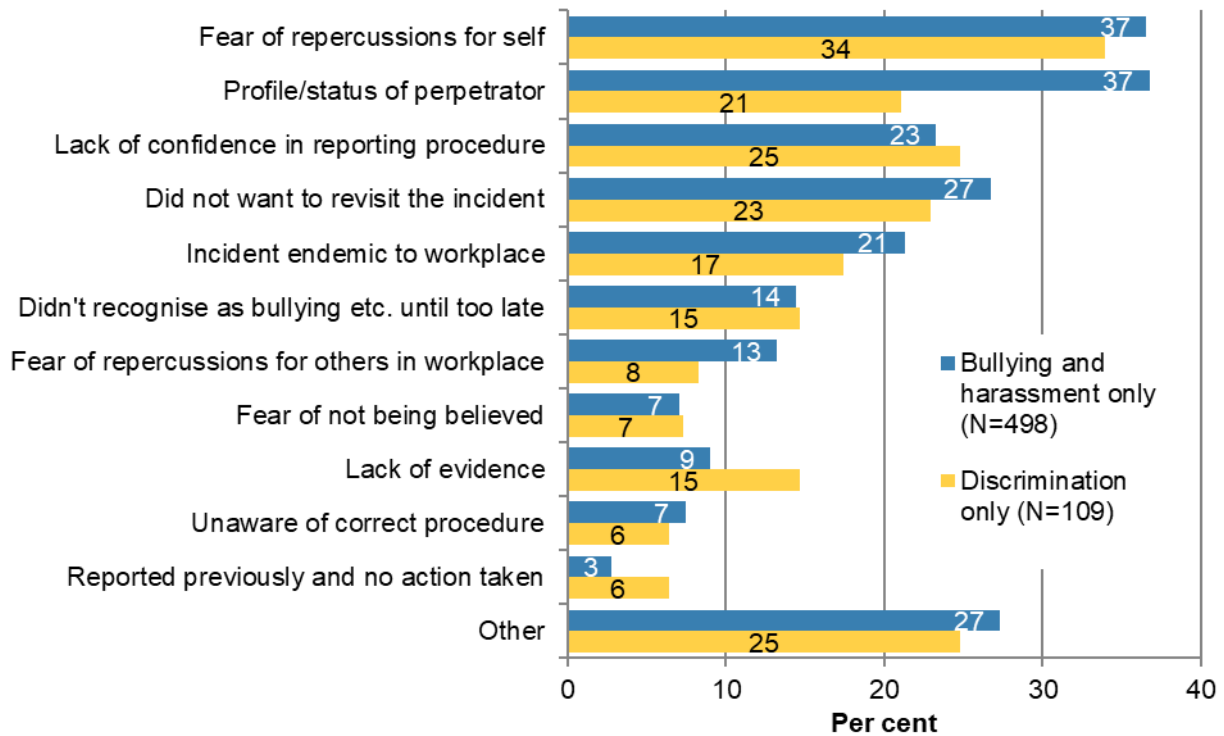
Figure 9.14 Reasons for not reporting bullying, harassment or discrimination (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

The profile or status of the perpetrator was a much more common reason for not reporting an incident of bullying or harassment compared with incidents of discrimination, as Figure

9.15 shows. Lack of evidence was more commonly cited as a reason not to report an incident of discrimination rather than bullying/harassment (15% and 9% respectively).

Figure 9.15 Reasons for not reporting bullying/harassment, or discrimination (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

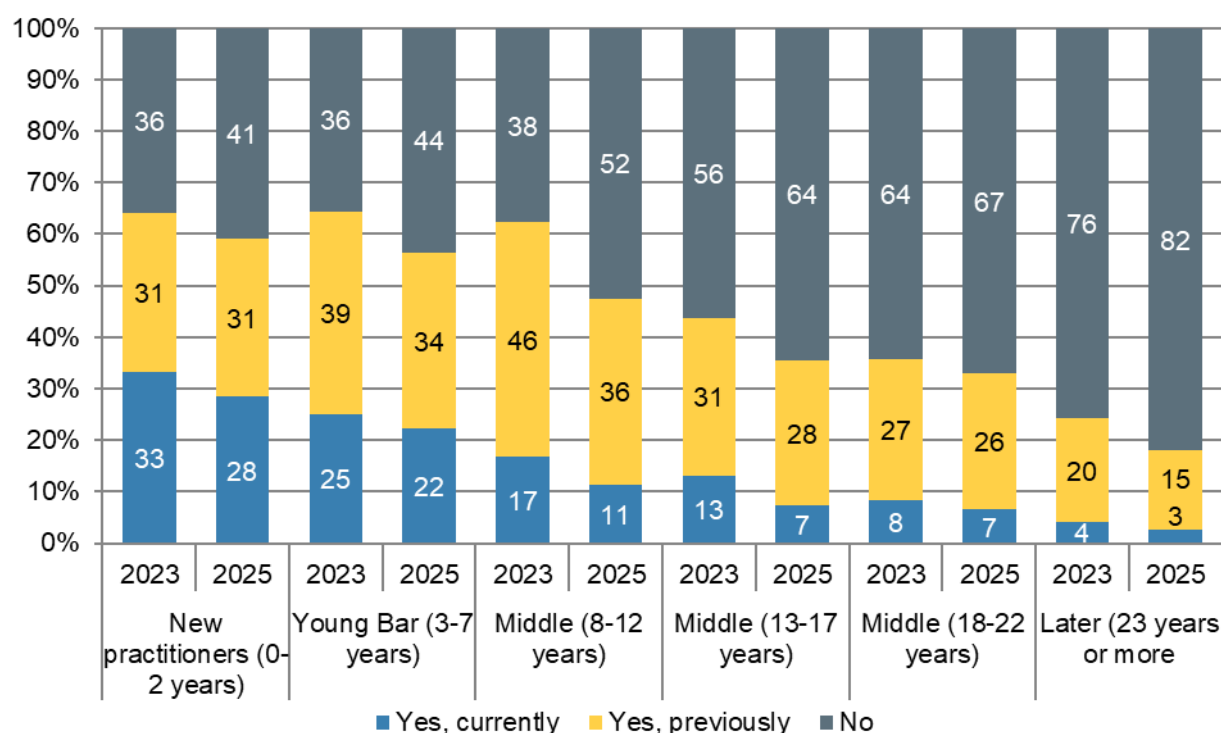
10 Practice and career development

This chapter looks at barristers' experiences of having a mentor, and issues around practice reviews and career development, and public access work.

10.1 Mentoring

Around one in ten barristers (9%) said that they currently had a lawyer mentor, slightly lower than the proportion of 11% in the 2023 survey, and a further 25% (28% in 2023) said that they had previously had a mentor; thus 65% (61% in 2023) had never had a mentor. Barristers in civil and commercial practice areas were more likely than average to have a mentor currently (11%), while sole practitioners were much less likely than other barristers to currently have a mentor (3%). Figure 10.1 shows the likelihood of having a mentor currently decreases with length of time since Call, while the likelihood of having had a mentor in the past was highest among barristers who were between eight and 12 year since Call.

Figure 10.1 Have a lawyer mentor by time since Call



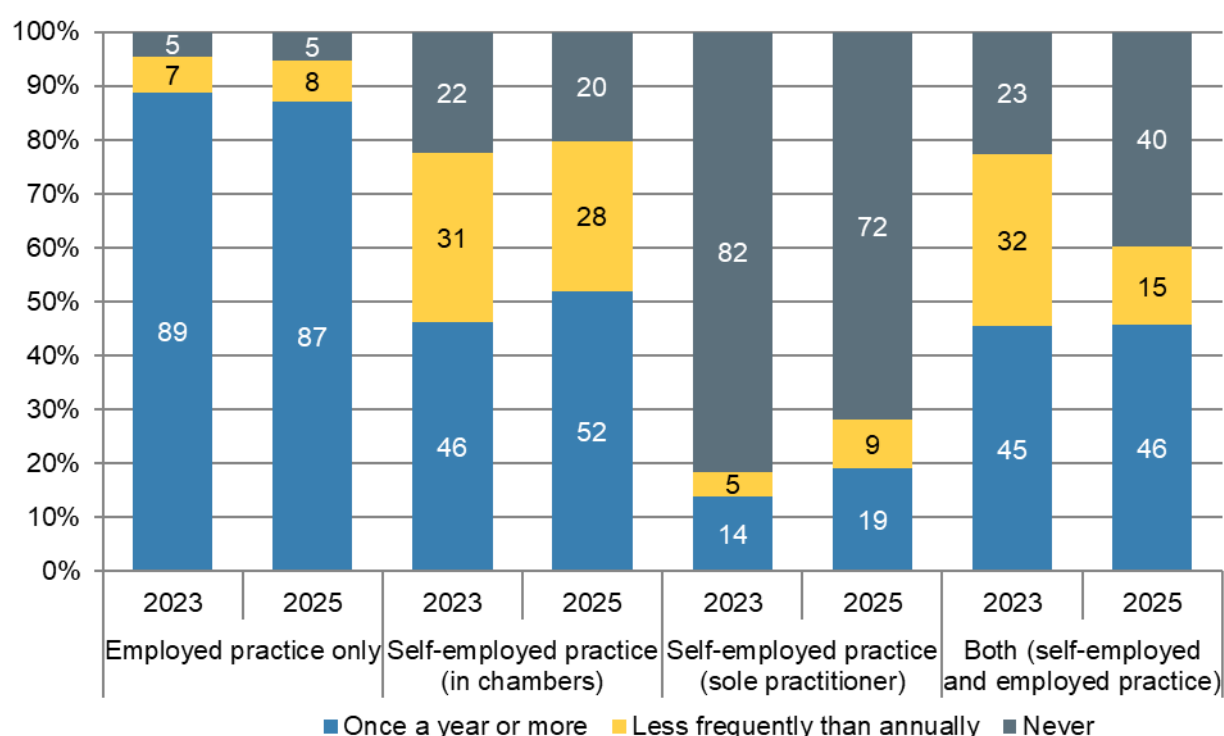
Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

10.2 Practice reviews

Respondents were asked how often they had practice/performance reviews with a line manager, senior colleague, clerk or chambers management, and just over half of barristers (56%) said that they had a practice review at least once a year, while 24% said that they had one less frequently than annually, and 20% said that they had never had a practice review. In 2023, 50% of barristers had a practice review annually or more frequently, 28% had them less frequently than annually, and 28% had never had one.

Almost nine out of ten employed barristers had a practice review at least once a year, compared with around half of self-employed barristers in chambers and those working both as self-employed and employed, and only one in five sole practitioners (Figure 10.2). Barristers in criminal and family practice were less likely to have annual (or even more regular) practice reviews, with 44% of family barristers and 47% of criminal barristers saying they had them at least once a year, while barristers with up to 12 years since Call were more likely than average to have practice reviews at least annually (62%) and those with 23 or more years since Call were less likely to have annual reviews (50%).

Figure 10.2 Frequency of a practice review by type of employment

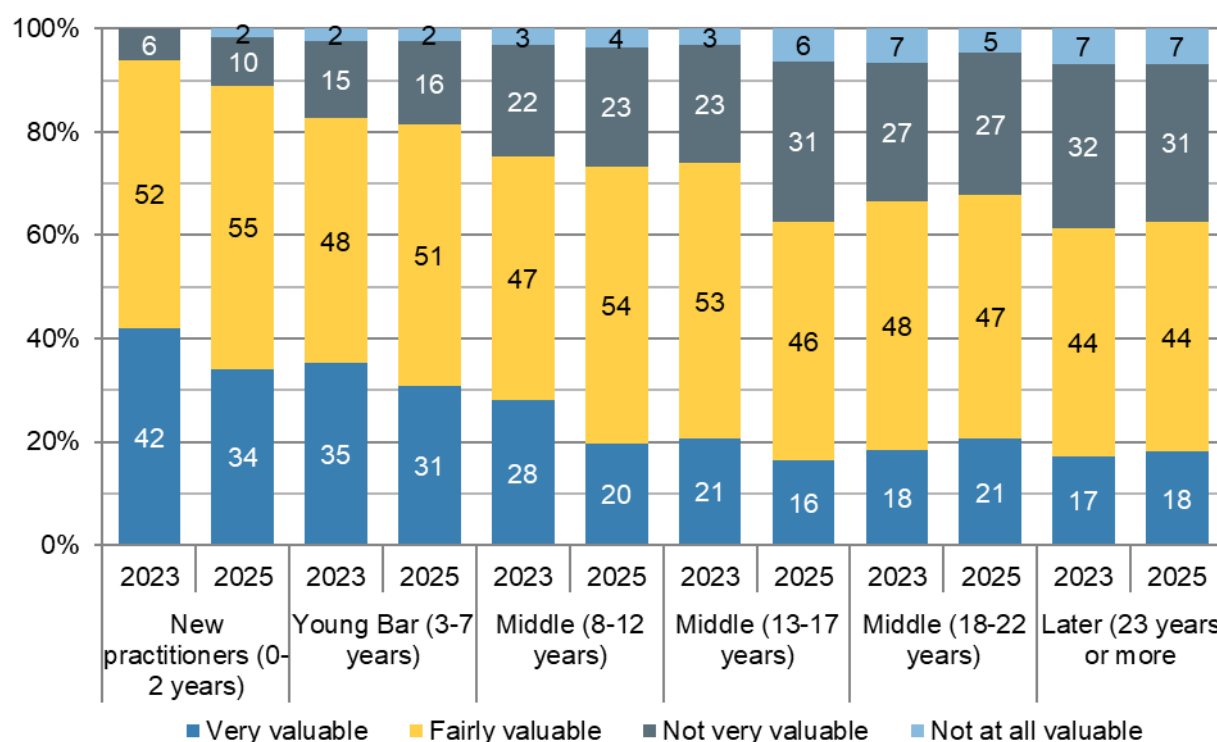


Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Barristers who said that they had practice reviews, either annually or less frequently, were asked how valuable they found them. Almost one in four barristers (22%) found them very valuable, 48% found them fairly valuable, 26% found them not very valuable, and 5% found them not valuable at all, and these proportions were the same as those found in the 2023 survey.

Barristers' views on the value of practice reviews tended to become less positive as their careers progressed. Figure 10.3 shows that one in three new practitioner barristers (up to 2 years since Call) rated practice reviews as very valuable, and this drops to around one in five (20%) of those more than seven years from Call; this pattern was also observed in the 2023 survey. There was relatively little difference in views on the value of practice reviews by employment status or area of practice.

Figure 10.3 Value of review by time since Call



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

10.3 Public access work

Just over one in three barristers (35%) said that they accepted work on a public access basis, slightly lower than the proportion in 2023 of 38%. Barristers in family practice (46%) and civil practice (44%) were most likely to undertake public access work, while very few employed barristers did public access work (4% compared with 39% of self-employed barristers in chambers, 50% of both self-employed and employed barristers, and 56% of sole practitioners). Barristers in the young Bar (up to 7 years since Call) were much less likely than more experienced barristers to undertake public access work, with 11% of new practitioners (up to 2 years since Call), and 25% of those with between three and seven years since Call reporting that they accepted public access work.

Three quarters of barristers who did public access work (75%) said that public access work accounted for less than 10% of their time on public access work, slightly lower than the 78% in the 2023 survey. However, a higher proportion of barristers than in 2023 reported that public access work took up more than 30% of their time, 10% compared with

7% in 2023. Barristers in criminal practice and PI/PN were more likely to report spending less than 10% of their time on public access work (89% and 86% respectively).

10.4 International instructions

One in three barristers (33%) said that they received international instructions (that is, a dispute where at least one party is domiciled outside England and Wales or advice about a foreign individual/entity), compared with 27% in the 2023 survey. The majority of barristers in commercial practice (76%) and international/other practice (54%) said that they received international instructions, compared with 9% of criminal barristers, 17% of PI/PN barristers and 19% of family barristers, and these are similar patterns to those in 2023.

Those barristers who did receive international instructions were asked to give the percentage of their total instructions that were from lay clients based outside the UK, and lay clients based inside the UK, using bands of percentages, from 0% up to more than 50%. Almost half (45%) of barristers that received international instructions reported having fewer than 10% of lay clients outside the UK, and 7% stated that they have no international lay clients, very similar proportions to 2023. Half of barristers in international/other practice (51%) and one third of those in commercial practice (32%) who received international instructions said that more than half of their lay clients were from outside of the UK.

Three quarters of barristers who received international instructions (73%) said that the instructions for their international work came from solicitors' firms in the UK, while half (51%) said that their instructions for international work came from foreign law firms abroad, and one in four (23%) said that international instructions came from foreign law firms in the UK.

In terms of the jurisdictions from where international instructions were received, patterns were similar to those in the 2023 survey, with the largest sources of instructions being:

- UK – 44%, compared with 41% in 2023.
- Europe, with 29% from EU countries (30% in 2023) and 13% from other European jurisdictions (15% in 2023).
- US – 27%, compared with 26% in 2023 (Canada and Mexico accounted for a further 1%).
- Middle East/Gulf states/Israel – 26%, compared with 27% in 2023 (of which 16% was UAE).
- Channel Islands and Isle of Man – 15%, compared with 18% in 2023.
- BVI – 9%, compared with 7% in 2023.
- Cayman Islands – 8% compared with 7% in 2023.
- Singapore/Malaysia – 8%, compared with 7% in 2023.
- Ireland – 5%, same as in 2023.

In terms of the jurisdictions from where barristers anticipated future international instructions would be generated, the largest future sources were:

- UK – 39%, compared with 37% in 2023.
- Middle East/Gulf states/Israel – 34%, compared with 30% in 2023 (of which 23% was UAE).
- US – 22%, compared with 23% in 2023.
- Europe, with 21% from EU countries (26% in 2023) and 8% from other European jurisdictions (12% in 2023).
- Channel Islands and Isle of Man – 14%, compared with 15% in 2023.
- Cayman Islands – 11% compared with 9% in 2023.
- BVI – 11%, compared with 9% in 2023.
- Singapore/Malaysia – 10%, compared with 7% in 2023.
- India/Pakistan – 7%, compared with 4% in 2023.

11 Bar Council services and Bar Representation Fee

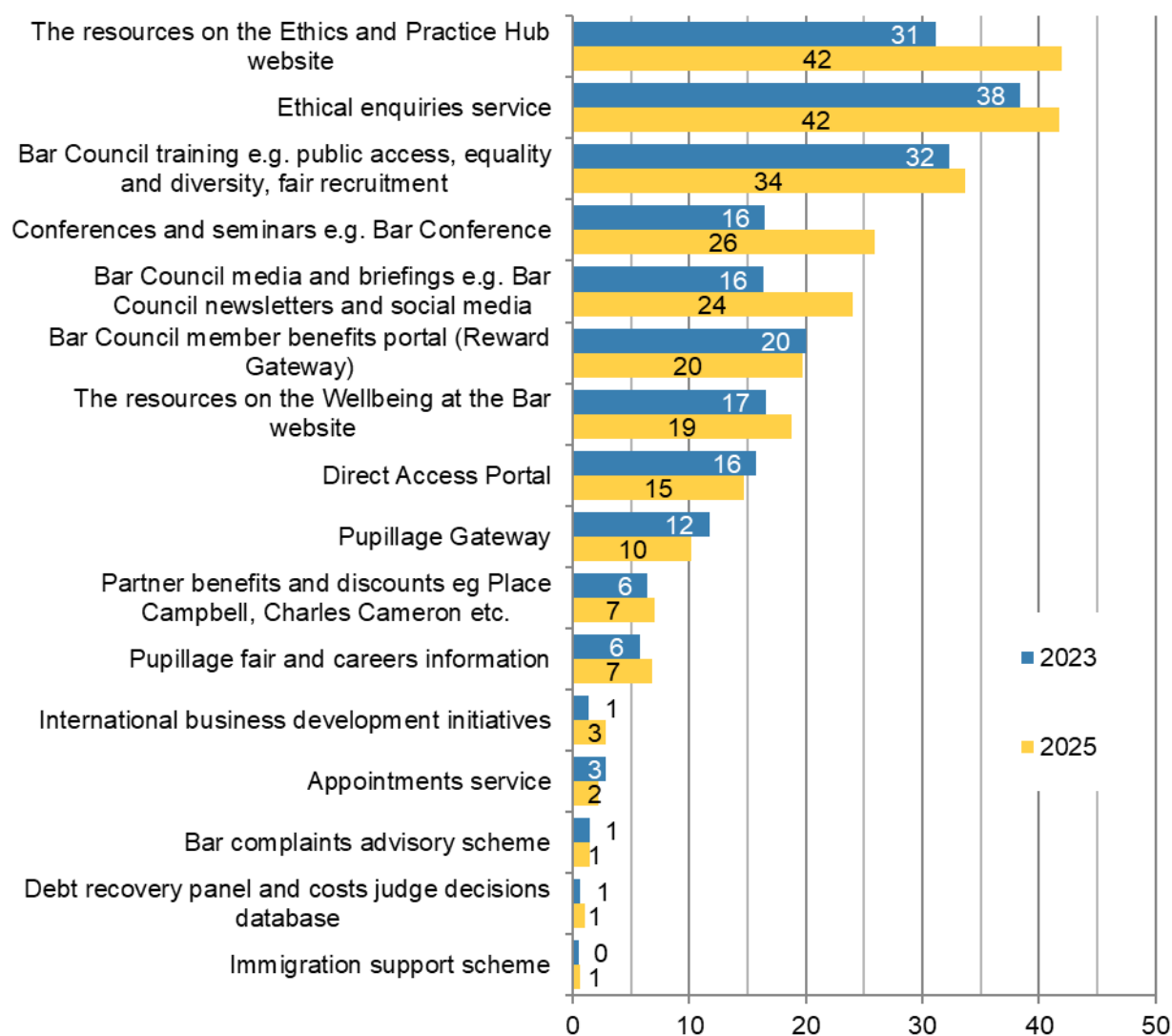
This section looks at the services that the Bar Council offers and respondent reports of whether they have made use of any services, and their take up

11.1 Bar Council services

Two thirds of respondents (66%) said that they had used Bar Council services in the previous two years, slightly higher than the figure in 2023 of 62%. Employed barristers were much less likely to have used Bar Council services (41%, compared with 70% of self-employed barristers in chambers), while barristers in family practice were most likely to have used Bar Council services (77%). The use of Bar Council services declines by time since Call, from 84% of new practitioner barristers with up to two years since Call, to 57% of later practice barristers who were 23 years or more since Call. Barristers earning between £90,000 and £500,000 were more likely than those earning less or more to have used Bar Council services.

Figure 11.1 shows the services used by barristers who had used Bar Council services in the last two years, in comparison with the 2023 survey findings. The resources on the Ethics and Practice Hub website and the ethical enquiries service were the two most commonly used services, with two fifths (42%) using each of these services, and these proportions are higher than in 2023 (31% and 38% respectively). Bar Council training (e.g. public access, equality and diversity, fair recruitment) was used by one in three barristers (34%, 32% in 2023), while around one in four barristers used conferences and seminars (e.g. Bar Conference) and Bar Council media and briefings (e.g. Bar Council newsletters and social media), and these proportions were much higher than in 2023 (17% and 16% respectively).

Employed barristers were less likely than self-employed barristers to use the ethical enquiries service and the resources on the Ethics and Practice Hub website, and Bar Council training, while they were more likely to use Bar Council media and briefings (see Table 11.1). Barristers in family practice were less likely to use the resources on the Ethics and Practice Hub website (34%) but were more likely to use the ethical enquiries service (51%). Use of the resources on the Ethics and Practice Hub website declined as careers progressed, from 56% of barristers in the young Bar (up to 7 years since Call) to 30% of later practice barristers (23 years or more since Call), and use of the ethical enquiries service was lower than average among barristers earning £240,000 or more per year. Use of the Pupillage Gateway was highest among new practitioner barristers (29%) and those earning up to £40,000 per year (16%), which is to be expected given the focus on the recruitment function of the Gateway, although it was still used by around 10% of barristers in middle practice and 8% of those in later practice.

Figure 11.1 Bar Council services used in last two years (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Table 11.1: Use of Bar Council services by section of the Bar (percentages)

	Employed	Self-employed (chambers)	Self-employed (sole practitioner)	Both employed/ self-employed	Total
The resources on the Ethics and Practice Hub website	36.7	42.8	28.6	41.2	41.9
Ethical enquiries service	27.1	42.6	49.2	61.8	41.8
Bar Council training (e.g. public access, EDI, fair recruitment)	19.1	35.1	30.2	38.2	33.7
Conferences and seminars e.g. Bar Conference	28.2	25.4	33.3	26.5	25.9
Bar Council media and briefings (e.g. Bar Council newsletters, social media)	32.4	23.4	17.5	29.4	24.0
Bar Council member benefits portal (Reward Gateway)	12.2	20.6	17.5	14.7	19.8
Wellbeing resources at the Bar website	13.8	19.5	9.5	20.6	18.8
Direct Access Portal	6.9	14.6	41.3	14.7	14.7
Pupillage Gateway	5.9	10.8	4.8	8.8	10.2
Partner benefits & discounts (e.g. Place Campbell, Charles Cameron etc.)	3.7	7.4	6.3	2.9	7.0
Pupillage fair and careers information	3.2	7.4	1.6	2.9	6.8
N=	188	2,054	63	34	2,339

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

11.2 Bar Representation Fee

Around two thirds (65%) of respondents said that they paid the Bar Representation Fee (BRF), while 31% said that they did not pay it, and 5% did not know whether they paid it or not. Self-employed barristers in chambers were most likely to pay it (70%) and employed barristers were least likely (32%). By practice area, barristers in commercial practice were most likely to pay it (76%) and barristers in criminal practice were least likely (50%). Barristers in the young Bar were less likely than more experienced barristers to pay it, with 40% of new practitioners (up to two years since Call) and 53% of barristers with between three and seven years since Call saying that they paid the BRF.

Barristers that did not pay the BRF were asked about their reasons for not paying it. Feeling that it did not offer barristers value, and barristers not being prepared to pay anything above the Practising Certificate Fee (PCF) were the two most common reasons for not paying the BRF, with each reason mentioned by just under one in three barristers, while just over one in four barristers said that they could not afford to pay the BRF.

Self-employed barristers in chambers were much more likely than employed barristers to say that they were not prepared to pay anything above the PCF (35% compared with 20%) and that they did not think the BRF offered them value (34% compared with 24%). Barristers working in criminal practice and personal injury/professional negligence were most likely to say that they were not prepared to pay anything above the PCF (39% and 36% respectively), while barristers in family practice were most likely to say that they

could not afford to pay the BRF (42%). Barristers in commercial practice and in PI/PN were most likely to say that they did not think the BRF offered them value (38% and 36% respectively).

New practitioner barristers (up to two years since Call) were most likely to say that they could not afford to pay the BRF (47%) but were least likely to say that they were not prepared to pay anything above the PCF (19%). Barristers on low incomes also gave similar responses, with 53% of barristers with incomes up to £40,000 saying that they could not afford to pay and only 15% saying they were not prepared to pay anything above the PCF. Half (50%) of all barristers with incomes of £500,000 or more who did not pay the BRF said that they did not think it offered them value.

Table 11.2: Reasons for not paying the Bar Representation Fee

	Number	%
I don't think paying the BRF offers me value	363	31.0
I am not prepared to pay anything above the PCF	358	30.6
I can't afford to pay	313	26.8
I don't think The Bar Council needs additional funding	139	11.9
I don't know/understand what the BRF is	53	4.5
Other	161	13.8
N=	1,170	

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Barristers that did not pay the BRF were also asked which out of a list of factors would make them pay it. Just over two fifths (42%) said that BRF subscriber benefits that they valued would make them pay it, while 31% said that more clarity around how the BRF supports the Bar would make them pay it, and 18% said that knowing that the BRF funded initiatives that they were passionate about would make them pay it. Barristers working in criminal practice and family practice were more likely than those working in other areas to say that BRF subscriber benefits that they valued would make them pay (46% and 44% respectively), and early career barristers (up to 12 years since Call) were more likely than more experienced barristers to report subscriber benefits that they valued as a factor likely to make them pay the BRF.

12 Professional ethics

The survey included a section on professional ethics for the first time, and this section presents barristers' views on their understanding of the barristers' code of conduct and professional ethical obligations, sources of support and training in relation to ethical issues and challenges with professional ethics.

12.1 Views on understanding of the barristers' code of conduct and professional ethical obligations

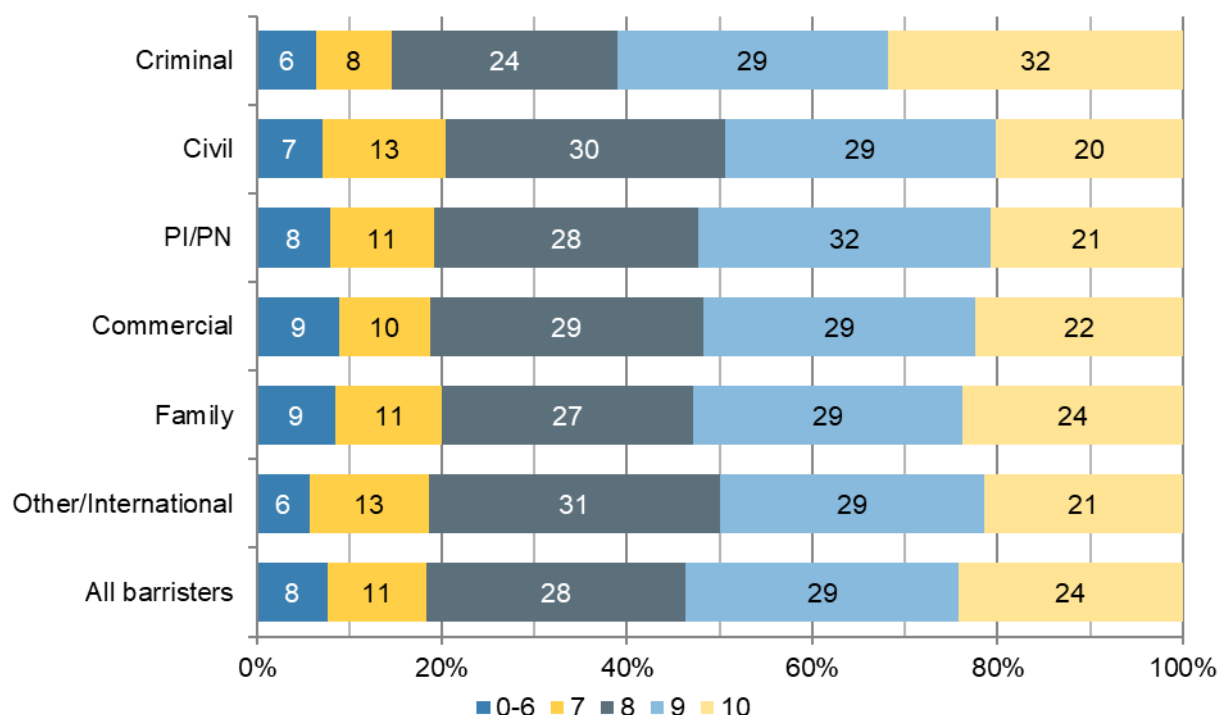
Barristers were asked to rate their understanding of the barristers' code of conduct and their professional ethical obligations, on a 1-10 scale where one represented no understanding at all and 10 represented understanding it fully.

One in four barristers (24%) said that they understood the code of conduct and their professional ethical obligations fully, giving a score of 10, while 30% gave a score of nine and a further 28% gave a score of eight. Less than 1% of barristers gave a score of three or less, while 7% gave a score between four and six, and 11% gave a score of seven. The mean score across all barristers was 8.45.

Barristers working in criminal practice gave the highest ratings of their understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethical obligations, with one in three (32%) giving a score of 10 indicating full understanding, and the mean score of criminal barristers was 8.65 (see Figure 12.1). Barristers in civil and commercial practice had the lowest mean scores, of 8.37 and 8.36 respectively.

Employed barristers gave lower ratings of their understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethical obligations (8.13) than those working as both self-employed and employed (8.36) and self-employed barristers (8.50).

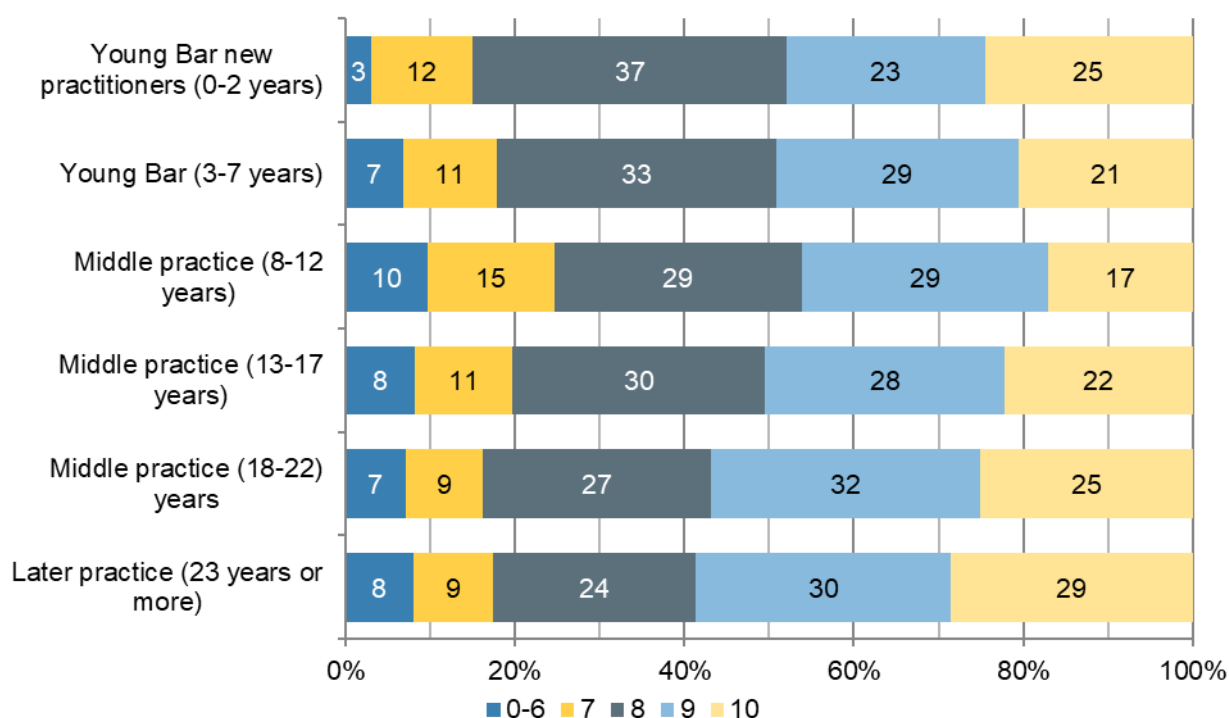
Figure 12.1 Barristers' rating of understanding of code of conduct and professional obligations by area of practice (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

New practitioner barristers (up to 2 years since Call) and those with 18 or more years since Call gave the highest ratings of their understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethical obligations, with mean scores of 8.53. Figure 12.2 shows that new practitioners had the lowest proportion indicating low scores of 6 or less (3%), while later practice barristers with 23 or more years since Call had the highest proportion indicating a score of 10 (29%). The lowest rating of understanding of ethics was among middle practice barristers with between eight and 12 years since Call, with only 17% giving a score of 10 indicating full understanding.

Figure 12.2 Barristers' rating of understanding of code of conduct and professional obligations by time since Call (percentages)



Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

12.2 Ethical questions and support

Respondents were asked how often they had ethical questions that required them to seek support. Only 2% of barristers said that they had ethical questions that required support every month, although nearly one in three (31%) said that they had ethical questions a few times a year. Three fifths of barristers (61%) said they very seldomly had ethical questions, and a further 6% said that they never had questions, or that if they did, they did not tend to seek support for them (4% reported that they never had questions, and 2% said that they did not tend to seek support for any questions they had).

The majority of barristers that said they had ethical questions that required support every month were those in the young Bar, with up to seven years since Call; 13% of new practitioners (0-2 years since Call) said that they had questions on a monthly basis, as did 5% of barristers with between three and seven years since Call. Additionally, half of barristers in the young Bar said that they had ethical questions that required support a few times a year. By contrast, only one in five barristers in later practice (23 years or more since Call) said that they had ethical questions a few times a year or more frequently.

Table 12.1: Frequency of ethical questions that required support, by time since Call

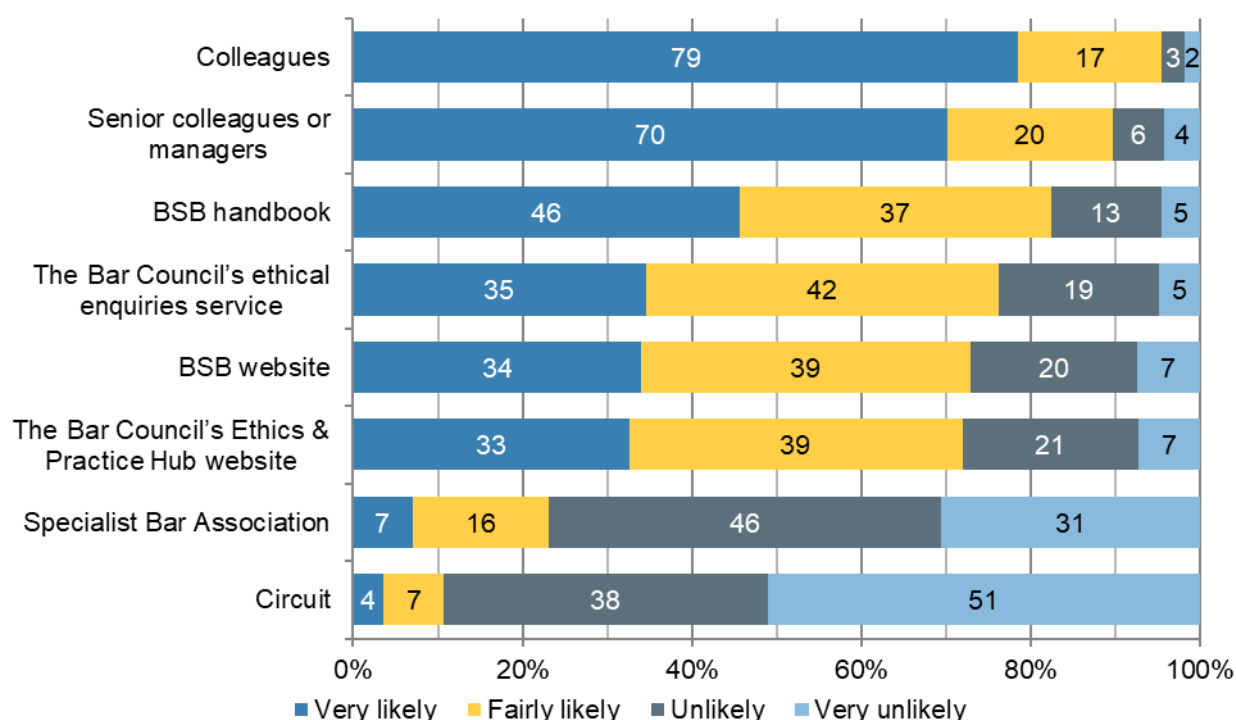
	Young Bar new practitioners (0-2 years)	Young Bar (3-7 years)	Middle practice (8-12 years)	Middle practice (13-17 years)	Middle practice (18-22) years	Later practice (23+ years)	All barristers
Monthly or more	12.6	4.5	1.0	1.3	0.8	0.8	2.0
A few times a year	56.9	49.1	40.3	29.0	27.3	19.5	31.3
Very seldom	28.1	44.4	55.5	65.4	65.6	71.4	61.2
Never	1.8	1.4	2.2	3.3	5.0	5.6	3.9
I don't seek support	0.6	0.6	1.0	1.1	1.2	2.6	1.6
N=	167	711	499	549	596	1,513	4,035

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Self-employed barristers in chambers were most likely to regularly have questions that required support, with 37% having questions a few times a year or more frequently, compared with 31% of both self-employed and employed barristers, 19% of self-employed sole practitioners, and 16% of employed barristers. Employed barristers and sole practitioners were most likely to report never having ethical questions, or never seeking support for them (15% and 14% respectively). Criminal barristers were more likely than those in other practice areas to have ethical questions a few times a year or more frequently (36%).

Barristers who reported that they had ethical questions that required support on a monthly basis gave lower ratings of their understanding of the barristers' code of conduct and professional ethical obligations, with a mean score of 8.28.

Regardless of whether or not barristers had ethical questions that required support, respondents were asked how likely they would be to use a range of potential sources of ethical support. The results are shown in Figure 12.3. Colleagues or senior colleagues/managers were the sources that barristers were most likely to use, with 79% saying that they were very likely to use barristers for support and 70% saying they were very likely to use senior colleagues or managers for support. The BSB handbook was also likely to be used as a source of support, with 46% of barristers saying they were very likely to use it, and around one in three barristers said that they were very likely to seek support from the Bar Council's ethical enquiries service, the BSB website, or the Bar Council's Ethics & Practice Hub website. However very few said that they were likely to use a Specialist Bar Association or Circuit.

Figure 12.3 How likely were barristers to use each source of ethical support (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Self-employed barristers in chambers were more likely than other barristers to report that they were very likely to use colleagues or senior colleagues/managers for support (82% and 73% respectively), while employed barristers (excluding those in both self-employed and employed roles) were much less likely to use the Bar Council and BSB resources for ethical support. Just over half of sole practitioner self-employed barristers and both self-employed and employed barristers said that they were very likely to use the Bar Council's ethical enquiries service.

By practice area, barristers in personal injury/professional negligence and family practice were most likely to report that they were very likely to use colleagues and senior colleague/managers for ethical support, with 83% of PI/PN barristers and 82% of family barristers being very likely to use colleagues, and 77% of family barristers and 72% of PI/PN barristers being very likely to use senior colleagues/managers. Half of family barristers (50%) said that they were very likely to use the Bar Council's ethical enquiries service, and just over half of PI/PN barristers (56%) said that they were very likely to use the BSB handbook. Nearly one in four criminal barristers (23%) said that they were very likely or fairly likely to use a Circuit for ethical support.

New practitioner barristers (up to two years since Call) were most likely to report that they were very likely to use the BSB handbook (69%), the BSB website (52%) and the Bar Council's Ethics and Practice Hub website (49%), with likelihood tending to decrease as barristers' careers progress, although there was little variation in the likelihood of using the Bar Council's ethical enquiries service by time since Call. Barristers in the young Bar

were also much more likely to use colleagues as a source of support, but even among later practice barristers, 72% said that they were very likely to use colleagues for support.

Barristers generally felt that they had sufficient support in meeting their professional ethical obligations, with 56% saying that they definitely had sufficient support and a further 37% saying that they had sufficient support to some extent. Views on the sufficiency of support were strongly correlated with barristers' views on their understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethical obligations, with those who said that they definitely had sufficient support having an understanding rating of 8.79 compared with 8.10 for those who though they had sufficient support to some extent, and 7.58 for those who said that they did not really have sufficient support or definitely did not have sufficient support.

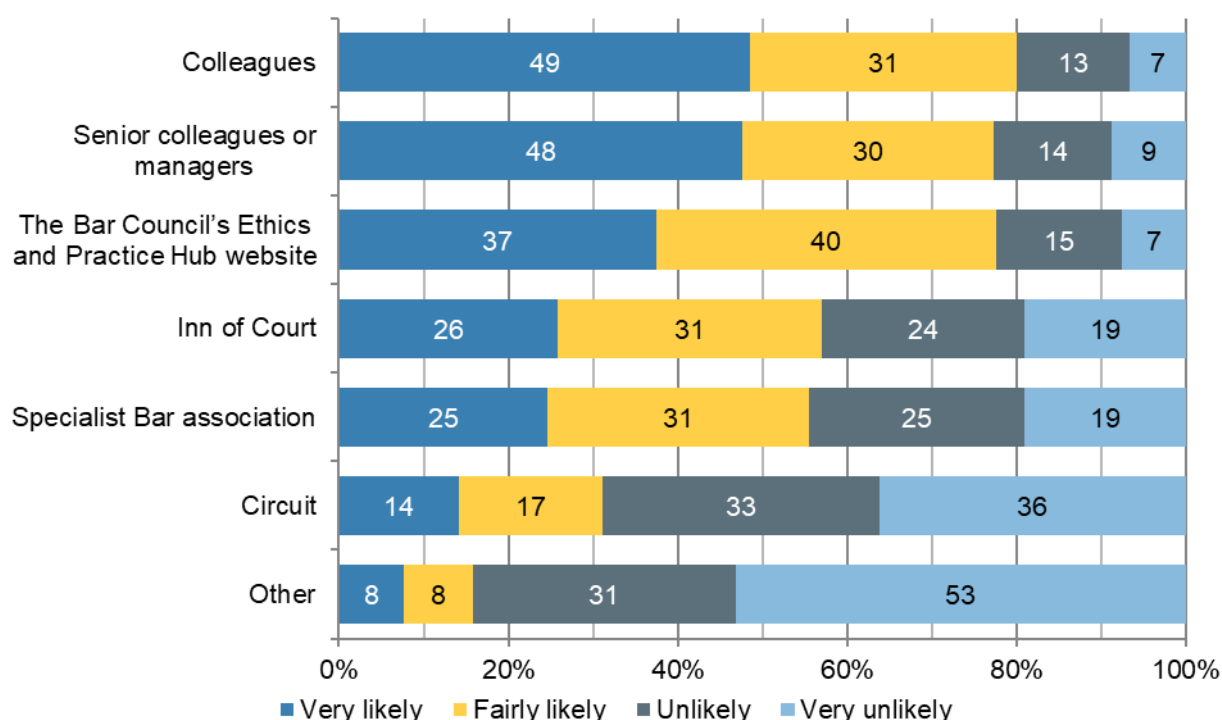
12.3 Training and CPD on professional ethics

One in three barristers (33%) said that they had undertaken training or another form of continuous professional development (CPD) on professional ethics within the last year, and a further 35% said that they had undertaken training or CPD between one and five years ago. However, 6% said that they had undertaken training or CPD more than 20 years ago, 6% said that they had never received any formal training, and 5% said that they did not know if they had undertaken any training or CPD on professional ethics.

Barristers who were both employed and self-employed were most likely to say they had undertaken training/CPD on ethics in last year (47%) while sole practitioner self-employed barristers were least likely to have undertaken training/CPD in the last year (30%). There was little variation in take up of training/CPD by practice area.

Barristers who had undertaken training/CPD in the last year gave the highest ratings of their understanding of the code of conduct and professional ethical obligations, with a score of 8.62 compared with 8.47 for barristers who had undertaken training/CPD between one and five years ago, 8.26 for barristers who had undertaken training/CPD more than five years ago, and 8.03 for barristers who had never received any formal training.

Respondents were asked how likely they would be to use a range of potential options for ethical training, and as with potential sources of support for ethical issues, colleagues and senior colleagues/managers were the sources that barristers would be most likely to use for ethical training. Figure 12.4 shows that just under half of barristers said that they would be very likely to use colleagues and senior colleagues/managers for ethical training. Just over one in three would be very likely to use the Bar Council's Ethics and Practice Hub website, and around one in four said they would be very likely to use their Inn of Court or a Specialist Bar Association.

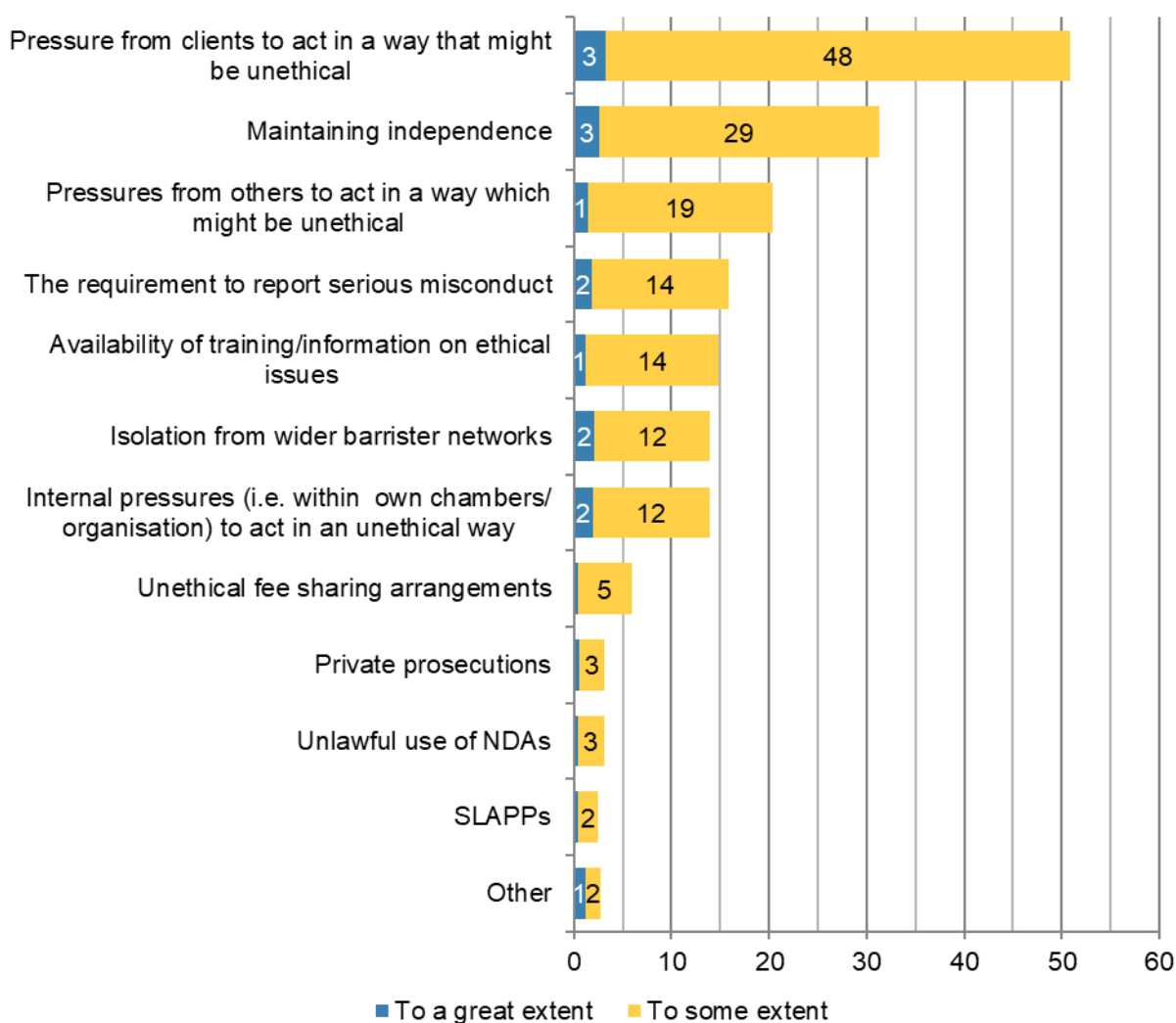
Figure 12.4 How likely were barristers to use each source of ethical training (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

12.4 Challenges with professional ethics

The final question about ethics asked barristers the extent to which a range of issues had caused them challenges with their professional ethics, with options for 'A great extent', 'Some extent' or 'Not at all', as well as for 'Don't know'. The results are shown in Figure 12.5.

Very few barristers reported that issues had caused them ethical challenges to a great extent, with at most 3% of barristers reporting that any particular issue had caused them challenges to a great extent. Pressure from clients to act in a way that might be unethical was the issue that caused the most widespread challenges, with half of barristers (515) reporting that it caused them challenges (3% to a great extent, and 48% to some extent). This was followed by maintaining independence (3% to a great extent, 29% to some extent), and pressures from others to act in a way which might be unethical (1% to a great extent, 19% to some extent).

Figure 12.5 Factors causing challenges with professional ethics (percentages)

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey

Appendix tables

Table A1: Decade in which Called to the Bar: key demographics¹⁰

Decade of Call...	Female	Ethnic Minority ¹¹	No religion ¹²	LGBTQ	State school ¹³	Trad profs ¹⁴	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse ¹⁵	Physical disability ¹⁶	Main child carer ¹⁷	Adult carer ¹⁸	Base N= ¹⁹
Pre-1990	21.2%	11.8%	33.0%	6.6%	50.7%	56.5%	14.9%	31.8%	0.9%	6.8%	5.4%	20.5%	651
1990 to 1999	38.3%	15.5%	41.3%	4.9%	55.9%	51.7%	19.6%	31.6%	4.0%	5.7%	29.7%	24.5%	1,172
2000 to 2009	50.0%	17.1%	44.9%	7.9%	56.4%	48.5%	24.7%	33.8%	4.9%	4.6%	57.1%	17.7%	1,258
2010 to 2019	48.3%	17.3%	53.5%	14.7%	59.6%	50.4%	26.6%	31.6%	7.6%	3.1%	36.0%	9.2%	1,119
2020 to 2025	54.7%	19.3%	53.5%	19.3%	55.5%	49.1%	30.1%	29.1%	12.4%	2.8%	14.0%	7.2%	403
All respondents	42.6%	16.1%	44.9%	9.4%	56.1%	51.0%	22.8%	32.0%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,603

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

¹⁰ Percentages of key demographics listed. All the subsequent tables use the same categories. The data here quantify the demographic and employment composition of respondents, as well as pointing to variables that are correlated to inform subsequent analysis of differences between groups of respondents.

¹¹ Ethnic minority origin (Eth. Min). See Table A1j for more detail on this broad group and its constituent demographics.

¹² Respondents identifying as not having a religious affiliation.

¹³ Respondents indicating they were state school educated (selective and comprehensive) at secondary level as opposed to independent school educated.

¹⁴ Traditional professions and senior managers

¹⁵ Respondents reporting that they have a neurodivergent disability that includes any or all of the following (difficulty learning, concentrating or remembering; mental health issue, neurodivergent conditions including but not limited to: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Dyscalculia and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Respondents indicating a neuro divergent condition may also have a physical disability.

¹⁶ Respondents reporting that they have a disability (physical but not neurodivergent) according to the definition of the Equality Act 2010.

¹⁷ Respondents that report being the primary carer for a child/children under the age of 18.

¹⁸ Respondents indicating that they have a caring responsibility of at least an hour a week for an adult (or relative) with long-term physical or mental health needs.

¹⁹ The total base number is based on the maximum number of respondents, in this case Call year.

Table A2: Section of the Bar: key demographics

Section of the Bar...	Female	Young Bar ²⁰	Later practice	Ethnic Minority	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Employed practice	54.5%	16.1%	36.1%	18.2%	40.1%	8.2%	67.1%	42.9%	26.4%	17.4%	8.8%	6.8%	41.2%	20.2%	615
Self-employed practice (chambers)	41.2%	24.8%	35.4%	15.2%	46.1%	9.7%	53.9%	52.5%	22.4%	35.1%	4.7%	4.2%	33.3%	16.4%	3,771
Self-employed practice (sole practitioner)	33.0%	6.6%	59.6%	23.8%	33.3%	5.5%	64.2%	52.5%	16.8%	19.6%	6.7%	8.7%	23.1%	21.9%	136
Both (self-employed AND employed)	34.8%	17.3%	49.4%	34.4%	44.8%	13.8%	67.7%	38.2%	23.6%	19.4%	4.9%	9.8%	30.2%	16.1%	81
All respondents	42.6%	23.0%	36.4%	16.1%	44.9%	9.4%	56.1%	51.0%	22.8%	32.0%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,603

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

²⁰ Young Bar defined as those barristers with up to 7 years since Call

Table A3a: Broad area of practice: key demographics

Broad area of practice...	Female	Young Bar	Later Practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Criminal	44.1%	24.1%	40.8%	16.9%	46.6%	7.2%	64.8%	45.2%	23.3%	13.9%	5.5%	4.8%	32.8%	18.4%	1,096
Civil	42.5%	23.4%	35.3%	18.0%	46.6%	13.5%	55.1%	52.0%	23.5%	37.5%	7.9%	6.0%	34.8%	16.8%	1,062
PI/PN	33.3%	17.1%	38.4%	11.9%	47.5%	5.7%	56.2%	49.5%	25.4%	34.9%	3.9%	3.4%	38.6%	17.2%	510
Commercial	25.6%	26.8%	32.0%	14.1%	44.4%	8.1%	42.5%	60.3%	21.2%	56.5%	4.2%	4.0%	30.2%	13.3%	938
Family	67.4%	21.4%	35.4%	17.8%	38.5%	11.4%	63.7%	46.3%	21.2%	19.0%	4.5%	5.1%	34.4%	20.9%	780
Other/International	44.1%	18.4%	38.2%	17.3%	46.9%	8.8%	48.3%	55.1%	22.7%	29.9%	2.8%	2.8%	39.5%	14.8%	217
All respondents	42.6%	23.0%	36.4%	16.1%	44.9%	9.4%	56.1%	51.0%	22.8%	32.0%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,603

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A3b: Main area of practice (with 10 or more respondents): key demographics

Area of practice...	Female	Young Bar	Later Practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Arbitrator or Umpire or Mediator	16.7%	10.3%	75.9%	-	27.3%	-	39.1%	47.8%	21.7%	54.2%	4.2%	-	16.7%	17.4%	29
Chancery (Contentious)	23.9%	17.7%	40.6%	13.2%	40.1%	13.9%	50.4%	56.0%	20.4%	45.7%	5.7%	5.3%	27.0%	14.7%	266
Commercial and financial services	23.9%	30.7%	30.2%	15.3%	45.9%	5.4%	37.9%	62.8%	21.0%	60.9%	3.8%	3.8%	30.7%	13.6%	553
Competition	44.2%	35.2%	20.4%	9.3%	47.4%	11.1%	36.6%	60.5%	27.9%	62.8%	4.7%	-	33.3%	7.1%	54
Construction	35.9%	21.3%	38.8%	17.5%	34.4%	6.9%	46.7%	56.9%	24.1%	53.1%	3.3%	-	31.7%	13.3%	80
Crime	44.1%	24.1%	40.8%	16.9%	46.6%	7.2%	64.8%	45.2%	23.3%	13.9%	5.5%	4.8%	32.8%	18.4%	1,096
Defamation	35.3%	23.8%	42.9%	26.7%	64.3%	7.1%	50.0%	50.0%	21.4%	30.8%	13.3%	-	50.0%	40.0%	21
Employment	46.5%	25.7%	34.6%	20.8%	49.7%	15.1%	59.4%	47.4%	28.2%	41.8%	9.9%	10.5%	35.7%	21.3%	191
European	33.3%	10.0%	50.0%	10.0%	62.5%	-	60.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	-	-	50.0%	10.0%	10
Family (Children)	71.3%	22.6%	33.9%	18.3%	39.8%	11.7%	68.2%	42.6%	23.3%	15.6%	4.8%	6.0%	33.6%	22.0%	619
Family (Other)	53.1%	16.8%	41.0%	15.9%	33.8%	10.3%	47.1%	60.3%	13.5%	31.4%	3.6%	2.1%	37.1%	17.1%	161
Immigration	58.8%	13.8%	31.3%	38.2%	40.6%	18.0%	55.7%	42.2%	25.0%	14.1%	7.2%	8.7%	32.4%	24.6%	80
Insolvency	31.9%	25.0%	17.9%	12.8%	47.7%	4.7%	53.3%	62.8%	20.9%	63.0%	-	-	40.0%	4.4%	56
Intellectual Property	21.3%	17.0%	50.9%	15.6%	55.6%	16.7%	46.7%	80.0%	11.1%	56.5%	2.2%	2.2%	21.7%	17.8%	53
International	34.4%	26.6%	31.6%	27.7%	50.8%	10.5%	36.1%	54.1%	26.2%	30.6%	-	-	39.4%	16.9%	79
All respondents	42.6%	23.0%	36.4%	16.1%	44.9%	9.4%	56.1%	51.0%	22.8%	32.0%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,603

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A3b (cont.): Main area of practice (with 10 or more respondents): key demographics

Area of practice...	Female	Young Bar	Later Practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N= ²¹
Landlord & Tenant (Non-Residential)	30.8%	21.4%	46.4%	-	39.1%	19.0%	52.0%	41.7%	33.3%	60.0%	16.0%	8.0%	38.5%	7.7%	28
Landlord & Tenant (Res.)	34.4%	30.4%	21.5%	12.5%	60.7%	12.7%	69.2%	40.0%	26.7%	26.2%	10.2%	3.4%	34.4%	7.8%	79
Other Common Law	36.4%	26.8%	39.0%	24.6%	33.3%	10.5%	59.4%	56.4%	18.2%	20.3%	6.3%	4.8%	36.8%	15.2%	82
Personal Injury	31.2%	17.9%	38.5%	9.0%	48.6%	4.6%	54.3%	51.6%	24.4%	33.7%	4.2%	2.4%	39.7%	20.4%	379
Planning	30.5%	20.3%	46.9%	3.4%	42.1%	10.5%	54.4%	50.9%	32.7%	52.6%	5.1%	-	27.1%	11.9%	64
Professional Discipline	40.3%	14.0%	37.6%	18.2%	44.0%	7.5%	66.2%	37.1%	28.6%	26.3%	3.9%	5.2%	39.2%	9.0%	93
Professional Negligence	39.4%	15.8%	39.5%	27.3%	43.8%	12.9%	51.6%	57.1%	28.6%	67.7%	-	10.0%	25.0%	3.3%	38
Public Law	55.0%	24.7%	26.4%	16.5%	51.9%	16.8%	55.5%	52.3%	22.6%	32.9%	8.2%	8.6%	41.1%	13.8%	295
Revenue	25.0%	30.0%	38.0%	20.5%	37.8%	3.2%	44.7%	62.9%	5.7%	46.2%	12.2%	2.4%	26.8%	19.5%	50
Other	50.4%	14.1%	41.4%	11.8%	43.5%	8.4%	54.2%	57.1%	19.0%	28.6%	4.7%	4.7%	38.5%	14.0%	128
All respondents	42.6%	23.0%	36.4%	16.1%	44.9%	9.4%	56.1%	51.0%	22.8%	32.0%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,603

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

²¹ The percentages used in these tables are estimates and reliability is increased the larger the sub-sample size. Where N<50 additional caution should be applied when using the figures.

Table A4: Stage of practice: key demographics

Stage of practice...	Female	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Young Bar (0-2 years)	56.3%	22.2%	49.7%	17.5%	53.6%	53.3%	24.8%	29.5%	11.9%	2.0%	14.9%	6.5%	217
Young Bar (3-7 years)	50.8%	15.8%	55.6%	18.4%	58.8%	46.4%	31.0%	28.8%	9.5%	3.2%	24.8%	9.9%	840
Middle practice (8-12 years)	45.2%	18.3%	49.2%	11.2%	58.2%	57.1%	20.8%	35.1%	6.0%	3.9%	50.5%	8.2%	577
Middle practice (13-17 years)	48.5%	16.5%	48.3%	8.5%	56.6%	46.8%	26.5%	35.9%	5.4%	4.5%	57.7%	16.1%	634
Middle practice (18-22) years	52.0%	18.8%	40.6%	4.9%	58.3%	47.7%	23.9%	32.5%	4.3%	5.2%	53.2%	21.7%	658
Later practice (23 years or more)	30.7%	13.8%	38.5%	5.9%	53.5%	53.6%	17.7%	31.3%	2.7%	5.9%	18.7%	23.0%	1,677
All respondents	42.6%	16.1%	44.9%	9.4%	56.1%	51.0%	22.8%	32.0%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,603

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2023

Table A5: Age band: key demographics

Age band...	Female	Young Bar	Later practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Under 35	55.2%	95.8%	0.2%	16.4%	55.2%	19.3%	60.2%	50.0%	29.6%	32.9%	8.9%	3.3%	13.8%	6.0%	546
35-44	47.9%	22.0%	0.2%	16.8%	51.7%	12.7%	58.4%	50.9%	25.7%	36.5%	7.7%	2.7%	55.1%	10.3%	948
45-54	46.4%	6.7%	33.9%	17.7%	43.2%	6.3%	52.6%	50.1%	23.5%	34.6%	3.8%	4.7%	52.9%	21.8%	1082
55-64	34.1%	3.6%	80.0%	14.9%	39.5%	6.6%	55.7%	51.0%	19.0%	26.5%	4.1%	7.0%	15.8%	24.7%	926
65 plus	21.1%	2.5%	89.3%	10.5%	34.0%	4.0%	52.1%	56.4%	14.2%	28.2%	1.3%	6.1%	2.5%	15.4%	400
All respondents	42.5%	21.7%	37.6%	15.9%	45.1%	9.5%	55.7%	51.1%	22.9%	32.2%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	16.8%	3902

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A6: King's Counsel: key demographics

Silk...	Female	Middle Practice	Later practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Yes	28.5%	28.0%	71.4%	11.9%	43.7%	6.8%	42.7%	60.6%	16.5%	53.6%	1.3%	3.3%	26.6%	20.4%	769
No	45.6%	43.1%	29.2%	17.0%	45.3%	10.0%	58.8%	48.9%	24.1%	27.6%	6.1%	5.1%	35.7%	16.2%	3,785
All respondents	42.6%	40.6%	36.3%	16.1%	45.0%	9.4%	56.0%	51.0%	22.7%	32.2%	5.3%	4.7%	34.1%	16.9%	4,554

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A7: Region of practice: key demographics

Region...	Female	Young Bar	Later Practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Wales	52.7%	22.2%	35.6%	5.5%	51.4%	4.7%	82.4%	57.1%	20.0%	8.0%	9.3%	4.0%	39.2%	25.7%	90
North East	43.3%	22.7%	39.3%	10.7%	53.5%	3.6%	61.7%	52.3%	21.1%	9.2%	2.5%	4.2%	32.0%	20.2%	150
North West	42.6%	24.8%	40.4%	10.1%	46.8%	7.5%	70.3%	38.2%	26.2%	14.6%	5.2%	4.8%	33.8%	19.9%	359
Yorkshire and the Humber	51.0%	29.4%	26.2%	12.8%	39.8%	9.5%	80.6%	36.8%	17.9%	10.7%	9.1%	5.1%	40.2%	21.4%	126
West Midlands	38.6%	23.0%	40.7%	22.2%	36.8%	6.9%	77.2%	41.2%	23.0%	16.5%	4.5%	2.6%	34.2%	16.5%	204
East Midlands	56.8%	23.9%	26.6%	12.1%	42.2%	8.9%	79.6%	26.1%	28.4%	6.4%	8.6%	3.2%	43.2%	18.9%	109
South West	49.8%	23.4%	34.4%	10.0%	47.1%	8.1%	58.9%	48.5%	30.0%	22.5%	5.4%	7.1%	36.6%	16.7%	273
South East	45.9%	16.2%	44.2%	17.9%	40.5%	7.2%	56.5%	46.2%	23.1%	23.6%	4.3%	5.4%	33.2%	20.3%	751
East of England	44.2%	21.5%	53.8%	8.0%	34.0%	11.6%	63.5%	54.9%	19.6%	11.8%	9.6%	7.7%	17.3%	26.4%	65
Greater London	40.5%	25.3%	32.9%	18.0%	46.5%	11.4%	48.3%	56.9%	21.8%	44.9%	5.4%	4.5%	33.7%	14.9%	2,338
Europe/overseas	32.3%	10.0%	52.5%	15.2%	44.8%	3.8%	54.5%	57.6%	18.2%	42.4%			26.5%	18.8%	40
Other overseas	16.7%	8.6%	46.9%	20.0%	42.6%	11.3%	37.9%	60.3%	13.8%	31.0%	1.8%	1.8%	33.9%	8.8%	81
All respondents	42.6%	23.0%	36.4%	16.2%	44.9%	9.5%	56.1%	51.1%	22.7%	32.1%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,586

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A8: Income Band: key demographics

Income Band	Female	Young Bar	Later Practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Ox-bridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Band 1 £0-40,000	49.1%	35.0%	38.0%	24.2%	40.1%	10.6%	59.0%	45.1%	25.3%	24.3%	8.6%	6.1%	25.3%	12.9%	371
Band 2 £40,001-60,000	60.3%	33.3%	33.3%	20.0%	35.5%	6.7%	65.5%	44.7%	23.5%	18.7%	11.4%	8.6%	34.2%	17.5%	282
Band 3 £60,001-90,000	54.3%	23.7%	32.7%	21.5%	44.2%	9.1%	66.8%	43.4%	25.1%	17.0%	7.5%	7.5%	34.6%	21.5%	562
Band 4 £90,001-150,000	52.5%	29.8%	30.6%	15.7%	46.5%	10.2%	62.7%	45.7%	24.5%	18.9%	6.7%	3.4%	33.8%	18.1%	1,001
Band 5 £150,001-240,000	41.7%	21.2%	34.3%	14.0%	45.8%	13.8%	58.6%	49.6%	24.3%	28.6%	4.7%	6.1%	36.3%	16.0%	819
Band 6 £240,001-350,000	36.7%	18.9%	35.6%	15.5%	51.9%	7.0%	52.9%	56.5%	20.9%	38.5%	2.3%	3.7%	38.6%	18.6%	497
Band 7 £350,001-£500,000	27.7%	14.5%	44.2%	14.1%	43.1%	6.8%	47.2%	57.6%	16.3%	45.7%	2.4%	2.0%	34.5%	16.9%	339
Band 8 £500,001-£750,000	27.7%	15.6%	42.6%	11.0%	41.5%	7.9%	33.6%	67.6%	17.8%	57.1%	4.0%	0.9%	37.0%	13.6%	263
Band 9 £750,001-£1m	21.2%	12.8%	40.5%	11.5%	44.1%	9.8%	40.6%	65.9%	16.3%	61.5%		2.3%	29.5%	13.7%	148
Band 10 £1,000,001-£1.5m	20.2%	6.5%	49.6%	9.4%	44.2%	6.7%	38.1%	56.7%	26.0%	71.9%	1.7%	3.5%	31.0%	11.2%	139
Band 11 More than £1.5m	15.1%	1.6%	65.0%	13.2%	45.0%	2.0%	37.6%	54.7%	25.3%	72.4%	1.0%	3.9%	24.0%	17.8%	123
All respondents	42.7%	23.0%	36.4%	16.1%	44.9%	9.4%	56.1%	50.8%	22.8%	32.0%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,544

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A9: Circuits: key demographics

Circuit...	Female	Young Bar	Later practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
None	39.6%	23.4%	34.1%	15.2%	47.0%	9.7%	51.1%	54.9%	21.9%	40.9%	5.1%	5.0%	35.3%	15.3%	2,059
Midland	41.9%	17.2%	42.9%	18.7%	38.1%	9.6%	72.9%	39.0%	21.2%	15.6%	4.6%	2.7%	38.4%	18.3%	319
Northern	42.8%	24.2%	39.4%	12.2%	45.6%	7.8%	69.3%	37.5%	25.7%	15.7%	6.7%	4.9%	33.3%	23.1%	343
North Eastern	47.7%	24.1%	35.7%	10.3%	48.9%	8.0%	68.0%	50.3%	20.4%	14.7%	5.1%	3.1%	36.4%	20.0%	241
South Eastern	46.2%	23.2%	35.3%	22.1%	42.5%	11.2%	54.6%	49.9%	24.3%	29.0%	5.7%	4.8%	32.4%	17.5%	1,183
Wales and Chester	47.1%	24.0%	33.7%	9.4%	46.9%	8.1%	78.2%	54.9%	23.2%	9.1%	9.1%	5.7%	31.8%	21.8%	104
Western	42.8%	23.3%	42.6%	7.2%	44.9%	7.0%	53.4%	52.4%	21.7%	27.9%	4.8%	6.3%	27.0%	20.1%	305
European	40.6%	5.6%	63.9%	12.1%	40.0%		41.9%	56.7%	23.3%	50.0%	5.9%	5.9%	35.3%	26.5%	36
All respondents	42.5%	23.0%	36.3%	16.2%	45.0%	9.5%	56.2%	51.1%	22.6%	31.8%	5.2%	4.7%	33.9%	17.2%	4,424

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A10: Inns: key demographics

Inn...	Female	Young Bar	Later practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Gray's Inn	41.3%	23.8%	44.8%	13.8%	45.7%	10.0%	56.9%	49.3%	22.8%	30.8%	5.9%	4.9%	30.2%	17.2%	888
Lincoln's Inn	40.9%	25.2%	25.9%	18.8%	45.3%	9.0%	55.7%	51.2%	24.4%	34.4%	4.4%	4.3%	36.9%	13.8%	1,138
Inner Temple	44.0%	23.7%	35.3%	16.3%	45.3%	10.8%	57.1%	49.6%	23.0%	26.6%	5.8%	5.6%	33.2%	18.8%	1,167
Middle Temple	43.9%	20.0%	40.4%	15.1%	43.9%	8.4%	54.5%	53.6%	21.5%	36.0%	5.2%	4.2%	34.7%	18.1%	1,376
All respondents	42.7%	23.0%	36.4%	16.1%	45.0%	9.5%	55.9%	51.1%	22.9%	32.2%	5.3%	4.7%	34.0%	17.1%	4,569

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A11: Specialist Bar Associations (SBA): key demographics

SBA...	Female	Young Bar	Later practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
None	45.3%	20.6%	38.3%	19.5%	42.4%	7.0%	66.8%	42.4%	24.8%	16.2%	6.8%	5.9%	37.3%	16.5%	846
Administrative Law Bar Association	46.8%	29.7%	27.4%	14.8%	55.3%	15.9%	49.3%	52.2%	26.8%	48.2%	7.0%	7.4%	36.5%	14.0%	347
Admiralty Bar Group	15.0%	16.0%	40.0%	30.0%	23.5%	-	5.3%	66.7%	16.7%	52.6%	11.1%	5.6%	33.3%	29.4%	25
Bar Association for Commerce Finance and Industry	41.4%	9.1%	30.3%	13.3%	35.7%	14.3%	76.7%	51.9%	29.6%	23.3%	10.3%	10.3%	30.0%	31.0%	33
Bar European Group	39.2%	23.0%	38.9%	12.0%	51.1%	7.1%	33.0%	62.1%	17.9%	55.9%	4.0%	5.1%	28.4%	13.1%	113
Chancery Bar Association	27.0%	23.6%	34.8%	11.4%	45.0%	11.5%	46.6%	58.8%	21.7%	57.4%	4.2%	4.2%	27.1%	12.3%	543
Commercial Bar Association	28.5%	31.7%	27.9%	14.8%	46.8%	8.0%	36.4%	64.5%	20.6%	66.6%	2.8%	2.8%	32.3%	13.0%	734
Court of Protection Bar Association	65.3%	26.4%	27.1%	10.3%	50.9%	19.8%	57.8%	50.0%	25.9%	30.3%	7.7%	8.5%	42.6%	17.9%	140
Criminal Bar Association	42.0%	23.1%	41.8%	17.1%	45.7%	8.0%	61.8%	47.0%	22.8%	16.2%	5.0%	4.6%	32.7%	18.3%	862
Employment Law Bar Association	43.9%	27.0%	29.8%	21.1%	49.2%	13.3%	53.1%	52.0%	24.0%	47.2%	9.5%	10.1%	32.6%	19.7%	215
Family Law Bar Association	66.3%	20.9%	35.5%	18.2%	38.8%	11.9%	62.6%	46.6%	21.8%	20.8%	4.4%	4.9%	34.7%	22.2%	724
FDA (trade union)	69.2%	13.3%	33.3%	-	53.8%	9.1%	58.3%	30.0%	30.0%	33.3%	38.5%	23.1%	41.7%	15.4%	15
Intellectual Property Bar Association	28.2%	14.9%	51.1%	13.2%	57.9%	13.9%	39.5%	78.4%	16.2%	61.5%	2.6%	2.6%	18.4%	21.1%	47

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A11 (cont.): Specialist Bar Associations (SBA): key demographics

SBA...	Female	Young Bar	Later practice	Ethnic Min.	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Ox-bridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
London Common Law and CBA	25.2%	16.5%	41.9%	13.6%	42.7%	4.5%	33.8%	65.8%	18.6%	67.9%	3.8%	4.1%	32.9%	13.4%	327
Midland Chancery and CBA	28.6%	24.0%	28.0%	23.8%	38.1%	5.0%	63.6%	42.1%	26.3%	40.9%	-	-	45.0%	14.3%	25
Northern Business and Property Bar Association	14.3%	11.8%	47.1%	14.3%	21.4%	-	53.6%	51.9%	22.2%	37.0%	3.7%	-	18.5%	21.4%	34
Parliamentary Bar Mess	30.0%	-	40.0%	-	33.3%	-	50.0%	66.7%	22.2%	60.0%	10.0%	-	50.0%	11.1%	10
Personal Injuries Bar Association	32.8%	19.2%	37.0%	9.3%	48.0%	7.3%	53.3%	53.1%	23.7%	35.4%	4.3%	2.1%	38.0%	19.1%	432
Planning and Environmental Bar Association	30.6%	27.7%	40.4%	4.8%	47.6%	13.6%	56.1%	46.8%	30.4%	45.1%	3.6%	1.2%	26.2%	13.3%	94
Professional Negligence Bar Association	32.0%	14.3%	46.9%	10.7%	41.0%	11.2%	45.0%	62.5%	15.8%	55.6%	3.1%	4.7%	31.6%	18.7%	294
Property Bar Association	26.9%	23.8%	33.1%	10.4%	49.6%	11.4%	54.5%	53.2%	24.5%	49.0%	6.3%	6.3%	29.0%	9.6%	160
Revenue Bar Association	20.6%	23.3%	39.5%	18.8%	38.7%	3.4%	38.7%	70.0%	13.3%	51.5%	9.1%	-	28.6%	14.3%	43
Technology and Construction Bar Association	33.0%	22.7%	35.6%	13.6%	37.7%	5.9%	44.7%	57.7%	23.7%	64.8%	4.8%	1.9%	30.3%	14.0%	132
All respondents	42.6%	22.8%	36.5%	15.8%	44.9%	9.4%	56.2%	51.1%	22.7%	32.7%	5.1%	4.6%	33.9%	17.1%	4,383

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A12: Intersection of gender and ethnic background: key demographics

Gender and Ethnicity...	Under 35	Age 35-45	Young Bar	Later practice	No religion	LGBTQ	State school	Trad profs	New profs	Oxbridge	Neuro-diverse	Physical disability	Main child carer	Adult carer	Base N=
Male - white	10.6%	21.9%	17.8%	46.9%	46.8%	9.7%	52.2%	54.9%	21.5%	37.6%	4.7%	3.6%	26.5%	13.3%	1,859
Male - Asian	16.5%	20.9%	27.8%	32.2%	21.4%	7.6%	49.1%	44.7%	7.8%	21.4%	2.8%	10.1%	30.1%	18.8%	115
Male - black	8.5%	14.9%	20.4%	44.9%	12.8%	6.8%	42.6%	40.5%	24.3%	12.8%	2.0%	2.0%	25.0%	10.2%	49
Male – mixed/other	10.5%	25.2%	15.3%	38.9%	40.3%	7.4%	41.2%	60.0%	19.2%	34.3%	6.1%	6.9%	25.7%	13.9%	144
Female - white	18.4%	26.9%	26.5%	27.5%	50.8%	9.8%	61.9%	47.8%	26.2%	28.3%	6.1%	5.3%	44.2%	20.1%	1,331
Female - Asian	20.6%	20.6%	25.5%	23.5%	12.1%	4.8%	57.7%	45.1%	14.3%	25.3%	3.3%	7.6%	38.3%	22.6%	98
Female - black	14.9%	25.4%	22.1%	32.4%	13.4%	3.1%	71.6%	32.3%	25.8%	4.6%	7.8%	7.8%	31.8%	21.5%	68
Female – mixed/other	13.8%	38.2%	25.0%	25.0%	42.9%	13.5%	56.0%	50.0%	26.4%	22.5%	6.8%	6.0%	46.7%	29.1%	124
All respondents	13.9%	24.2%	21.6%	37.7%	45.1%	9.4%	55.7%	51.2%	22.8%	32.0%	5.2%	4.7%	33.9%	16.7%	3,788

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A13a: Income Bands: section of the Bar

Income Band	Employed	SE (Chambers)	SE (Sole Practitioner)	Both	All respondents
Band 1 £0-40,000	6.9%	6.7%	41.8%	31.6%	8.2%
Band 2 £40,001-60,000	18.5%	4.0%	12.7%	5.1%	6.2%
Band 3 £60,001-90,000	38.2%	8.2%	11.2%	11.4%	12.4%
Band 4 £90,001-150,000	20.7%	22.4%	14.9%	25.3%	22.0%
Band 5 £150,001-240,000	8.5%	20.0%	9.7%	10.1%	18.0%
Band 6 £240,001-350,000	2.3%	12.7%	3.7%	6.3%	10.9%
Band 7 £350,001-500,000	1.5%	8.7%	3.0%	3.8%	7.5%
Band 8 £500,000 plus	3.4%	17.3%	3.0%	6.3%	14.8%
<i>Base N=100%</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>3,721</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>4,544</i>

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A13b: Income Bands: area of practice

Income Band	Criminal	Civil	PI/PN	Commercial	Family	Other/Int'l	All respondents
Band 1 £0-40,000	8.3%	10.0%	7.1%	5.3%	8.0%	13.9%	8.2%
Band 2 £40,001-60,000	10.0%	7.2%	3.4%	1.4%	5.8%	10.6%	6.2%
Band 3 £60,001-90,000	18.0%	13.5%	11.9%	3.8%	12.9%	13.9%	12.4%
Band 4 £90,001-150,000	29.3%	18.9%	17.6%	9.3%	35.0%	18.1%	22.0%
Band 5 £150,001-240,000	20.2%	16.6%	18.2%	14.1%	23.0%	12.0%	18.0%
Band 6 £240,001-350,000	8.3%	11.9%	16.2%	12.6%	7.6%	12.5%	10.9%
Band 7 £350,001-500,000	3.4%	7.8%	12.3%	11.9%	4.5%	6.9%	7.5%
Band 8 £500,000 plus	2.4%	14.2%	13.3%	41.6%	3.2%	12.0%	14.8%
Base N=100%	1,087	1,043	505	916	777	216	4,544

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Table A13c: Income Bands: stage of practice

Income Band	Young Bar new practitioners (0-2 years)	Young Bar (3-7 years)	Middle practice (8-12 years)	Middle practice (13- 17 years)	Middle practice (18- 22) years	Later practice (23 years plus)	All respondents
Band 1 £0-40,000	35.3%	6.5%	4.0%	5.0%	7.1%	8.5%	8.2%
Band 2 £40,001-60,000	17.7%	6.8%	5.4%	5.0%	4.9%	5.7%	6.2%
Band 3 £60,001-90,000	14.9%	12.2%	11.7%	15.2%	12.8%	11.1%	12.4%
Band 4 £90,001-150,000	17.2%	31.5%	24.2%	20.8%	19.7%	18.5%	22.0%
Band 5 £150,001-240,000	7.4%	19.1%	20.6%	19.1%	19.6%	17.0%	18.0%
Band 6 £240,001-350,000	5.6%	9.9%	12.0%	12.7%	12.0%	10.7%	10.9%
Band 7 £350,001-500,000	0.5%	5.8%	6.6%	7.1%	8.9%	9.1%	7.5%
Band 8 £500,000 plus	1.4%	8.2%	15.5%	15.2%	14.9%	19.4%	14.8%
<i>Base N=100%</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>828</i>	<i>574</i>	<i>624</i>	<i>649</i>	<i>1,654</i>	<i>4,544</i>

Source: IES/Bar Council: Barristers' Working Lives Survey, 2025

Inclusive Terminology

The terminology used to define ethnicity continues to evolve, and greater awareness has arisen about gender, cognitive differences as well as of disability. IES seeks to be a learning organisation; as such we are adapting our practice in line with these shifts. We aim to be specific when referring to each individual's ethnicity and use their own self-descriptor wherever possible. Where this is not feasible, we are aligned with Race Disparity Unit (RDU) which uses the term 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except white British. RDU does not use the terms BAME (black, Asian, and minority ethnic) or BME (black and minority ethnic) as these terms emphasise certain ethnic groups and exclude others. It also recommends not capitalising ethnic groups, (such as 'black' or 'white') unless that group's name includes a geographic place. More broadly, we understand that while individuals may have impairments it is society that disables them, hence we refer to disabled people. Not all people identify with male or female and we reflect their self-descriptions in our work and use the term non-binary should abbreviation be necessary. We value neurodiversity. Where possible we always use people's self-descriptors rather than impose categories upon them.

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