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# Costs Lawyers: Diversity in the profession 2023

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23 April 2024

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Costs Lawyer Standards Board

CLSB  
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# Introduction

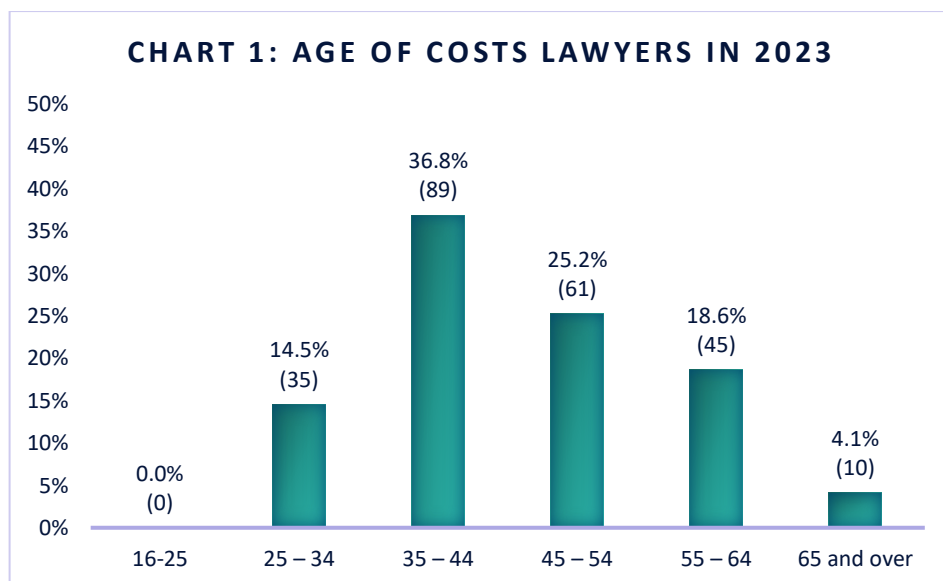
The Costs Lawyer Standards Board, or CLSB, is the regulator of Costs Lawyers in England and Wales. We exist to serve the public interest by setting and maintaining the standards of professional conduct by which Costs Lawyers must abide.

As a regulator, we have a statutory objective to “encourage an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession” under the Legal Services Act 2007. We do this in various ways, including by monitoring the diversity of the profession in order to identify areas of under-representation and consider action that could be taken to address these.

This diversity report provides data on the diversity of the regulated Costs Lawyer profession as at the end of 2023.

## Diversity categories

### 1. Age



In 2023, the majority of respondents were aged 35 to 44 (36.8%, 89 individuals). When taken together with the proportion in the 25 to 34 bracket, this means that just over half of respondents were aged 44 years old or younger. The majority of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms are also aged 44 or younger (59%). Table 1 below shows a comparison of age brackets between Costs Lawyer respondents and lawyers in SRA-regulated firms.

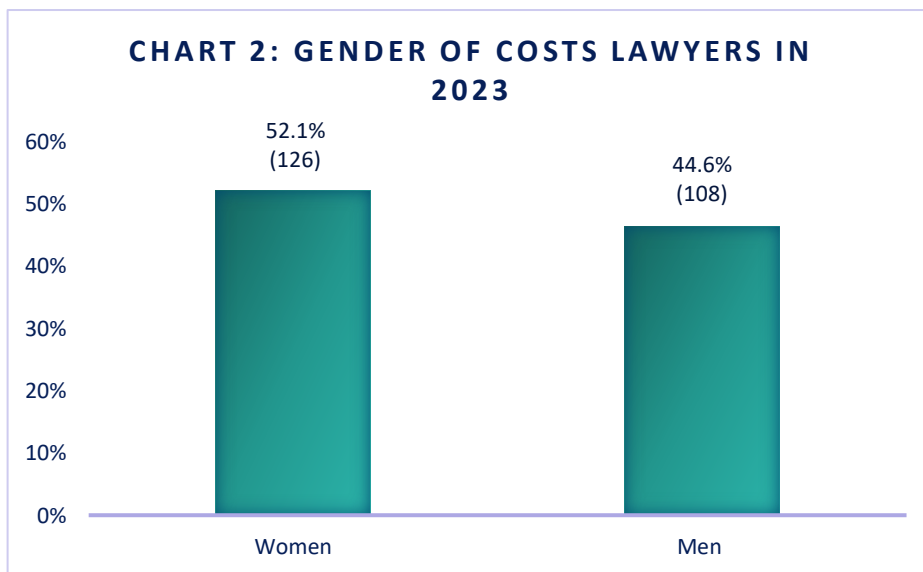
Table 1 – Age, comparative data

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>1</sup>
16 – 25	0%	0%
25 – 34	14.5%	30%
35 – 44	36.8%	29%
45 – 54	25.2%	22%
55 – 64	18.6%	13%
65 and over	4.1%	4%
Prefer not to say	0.8%	2%

Comparative data for the population of England and Wales is not included in Table 1 as the age categories used for the Census 2021 were slightly different to the age categories used for the CLSB and SRA diversity monitoring surveys. However, according to the Census 2021:<sup>2</sup>

- 17.4% of the population (10.4 million) in England and Wales was under 15 years old;
- 64.1% (38.2 million) was aged 15 to 64 years; and
- 18.6% (11.1 million) was aged 65 and over.

## 2. Gender



<sup>1</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>2</sup> [Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), Office for National Statistics, published 28 June 2022.

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In 2023, 52.1% of respondents were women (126 individuals) and 44.6% were men (108 individuals).

As Table 2a shows, the proportions of Costs Lawyers who are women and men are broadly similar to those of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms, but slightly higher than the proportions in the population of England and Wales.

*Table 2a – gender, comparative data*

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>3</sup>	Population of England and Wales <sup>4</sup>
Women	52.1%	53%	51%
Men	44.6%	45%	49%

The number of Costs Lawyer respondents who identified as non-binary or gender fluid, and the number of respondents who preferred not to say, were each below 5. Consequently that data has not been included in this report.

## 2.1 Gender identity

We asked respondents whether the gender they identify with is the same as their sex registered at birth. 98.8% of respondents (239 individuals) said that their gender was the same as their sex registered at birth. This is higher than the proportion of lawyers working in SRA-regulated firms, and the proportion of the England and Wales population that said the gender they identify with is the same as their sex registered at birth, as shown in Table 2b.

The number of Costs Lawyer respondents who answered that their gender was different to their sex registered at birth, and the number who preferred not to say, were both less than 5 and therefore this data has not been included in the report.

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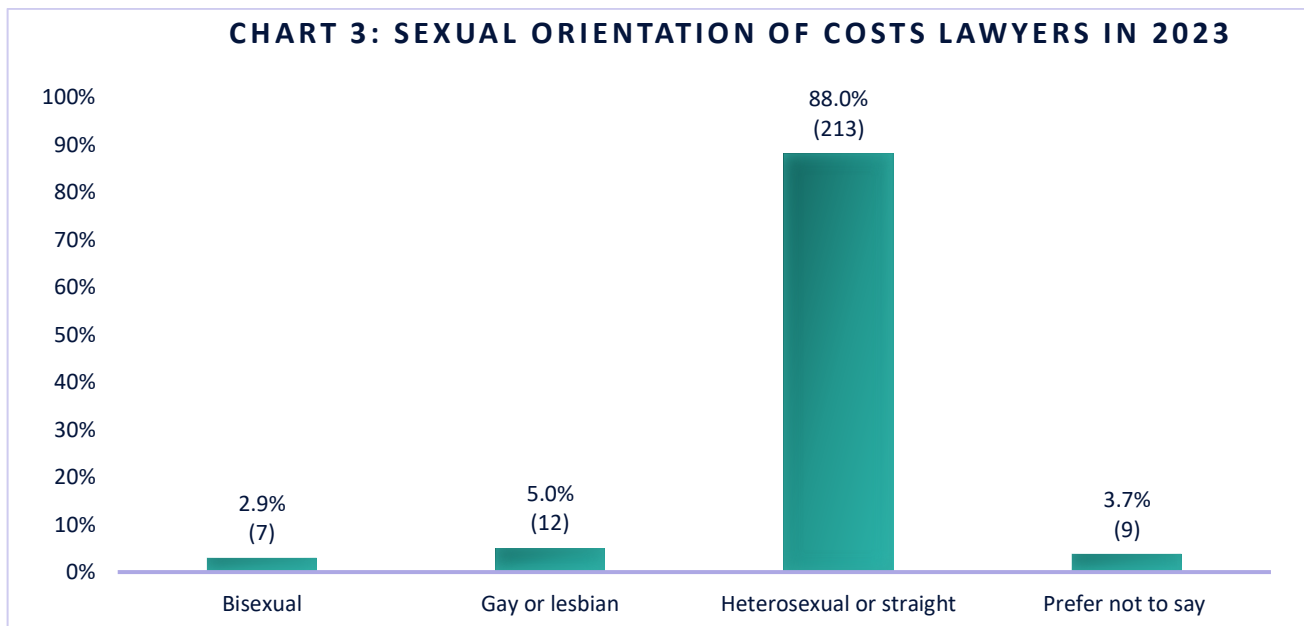
<sup>3</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>4</sup> [Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), Office for National Statistics, published 28 June 2022.

Table 2b – gender identity, comparative data

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>5</sup>	Population of England and Wales <sup>6</sup>
Gender identity same as sex registered at birth	98.8%	96%	93.5%
Gender identity different to sex registered at birth	-	0%	0.5%
Prefer not to say	-	3%	6.0%

### 3. Sexual orientation



In 2023, 2.9% of respondents (7 individuals) identified as bisexual and 5.0% (12 individuals) as gay or lesbian. This is slightly higher than the proportions of bisexual and gay or lesbian lawyers in SRA-regulated firms, and the proportions of bisexual, gay and lesbian individuals in the population of England and Wales, as shown in Table 3. However, as the figures for lawyers in SRA-regulated firms and population of England and Wales are based on larger samples of people and higher response rates, caution should be taking when making comparisons between these datasets.

<sup>5</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>6</sup> [Gender identity, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), Office for National Statistics, published 6 January 2023

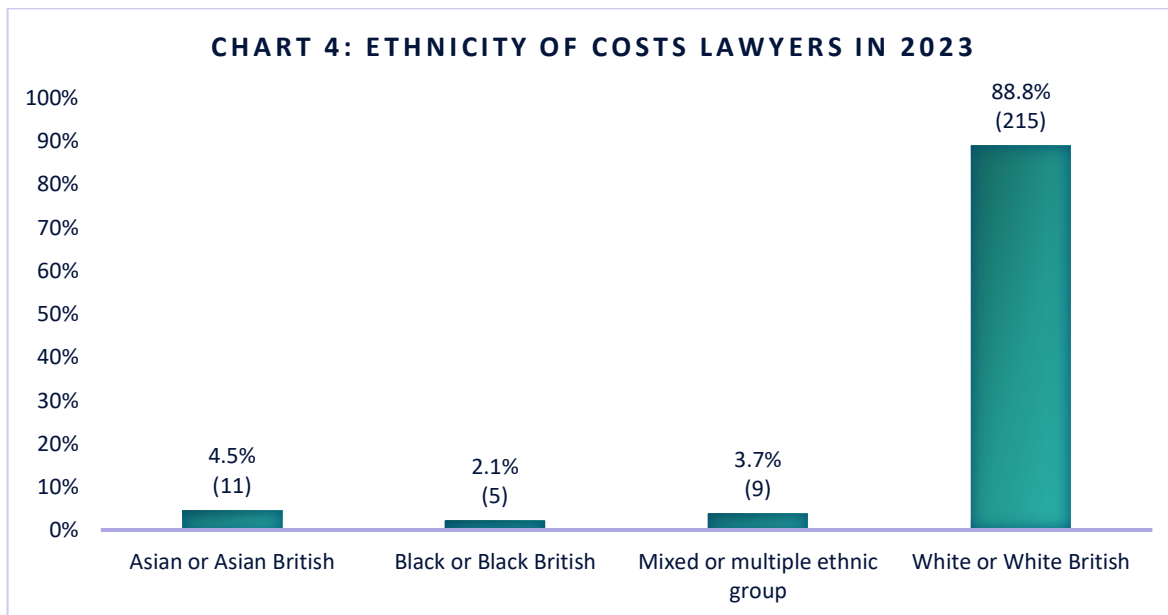
88.0% of Costs Lawyer respondents identified as heterosexual or straight (213 individuals) in 2023. This is slightly lower than the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms, and the proportion of the England and Wales population that identifies as heterosexual.

3.7% (9 individuals) of respondents preferred not to say their sexual orientation. The number of respondents who described their sexual orientation differently was less than 5 and has therefore not been included in this report.

Table 3 – sexual orientation, comparative data

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>7</sup>	Population of England and Wales <sup>8,9</sup>
Bisexual	2.9%	1%	1.3%
Gay or lesbian	5.0%	3%	6%
Heterosexual	88.0%	89%	89.4%
Prefer not to say	3.7%	6%	N/A

## 4. Ethnicity



<sup>7</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>8</sup> [Sexual orientation, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), Office for National Statistics, published 6 January 2023.

<sup>9</sup> According to the 2021 Census, 89.4% of the population aged 16 years and over in England and Wales identified as heterosexual or straight (43.4 million). 1.3% of the population described themselves as bisexual (624,000 individuals), 1.5% as gay or lesbian (748,000 individuals) and 0.3% described themselves as 'other sexual orientation' (165,000 individuals). The overall proportion of the population in England and Wales aged 16 and over who identified with an LGB+ orientation was 3.2% (1.5 million people).

In 2023, 10.3% of respondents identified as Black, Asian, Mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds (25 individuals). This is the lower than the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (19%), and the proportion of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in the England and Wales population (18.3%).

In 2023, 4.5% (11 individuals) of Costs Lawyer respondents identified as Asian or Asian British, 2.1% (5 individuals) as Black or Black British, and 3.7% (9 individuals) as mixed or multiple ethnic groups. Table 4 shows how this compares to lawyers in SRA-regulated firms and the population of England and Wales. However, as the figures for lawyers in SRA-regulated firms and the population of England and Wales are based on larger samples of people and higher response rates, caution should be taking when making comparisons with the Costs Lawyer profession.

In 2023, 88.8% of Costs Lawyer respondents identified as White or White British (215 respondents), which is higher than the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms who identified as from these groups. It is also higher than the proportion of the population of England and Wales who identified as White or White British.

Fewer than 5 Costs Lawyer respondents preferred not to provide their ethnicity and therefore that data has not been included in this report.

*Table 4 – ethnicity, comparative data*

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>10</sup>	Population of England and Wales <sup>11, 12</sup>
<b>Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds combined</b>	10.3%	19%	18.3%
<b>Asian</b>	4.5%	12%	9.3%
<b>Black</b>	2.1%	3%	4.0%
<b>Mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds</b>	3.7%	3%	2.9%
<b>Other ethnic group</b>	0%	1%	2.1%
<b>White backgrounds</b>	88.8%	77%	81.7%

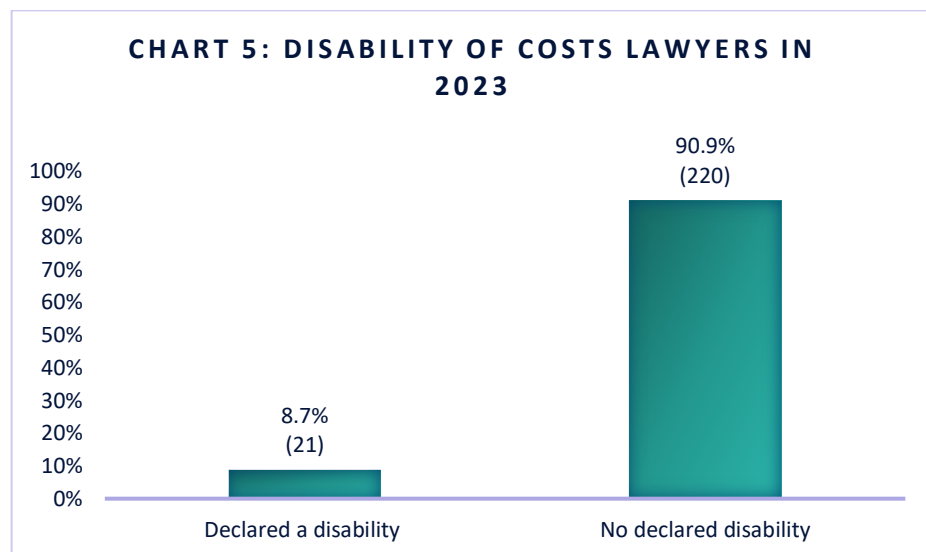
<sup>10</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>11</sup> [Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), Office for National Statistics, published 29 November 2022.

<sup>12</sup> According to the 2021 Census, 9.3% (5.5 million) of the population of England Wales identified as Asian, 4.0% (2.4 million) as Black, 2.9% (1.7 million) as mixed or multiple ethnic groups and 2.1% (1.3 million) as other ethnic groups. 81.7% (48.7 million) identified as White.



## 5. Disability



In 2023, 8.7% of respondents said they had a disability (21 individuals). This is higher than the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms who declared a disability in 2023, but lower than the proportion of disabled people in the working age population, as shown in Table 5.

In 2023, 90.9% of Costs Lawyer respondents said they did not have a disability (220 individuals), almost the same as the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms who said they did not have a disability.

*Table 5 – disability, comparative data*

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>13</sup>	Working age population <sup>14</sup>
<b>Declared a disability</b>	8.7%	6%	24%
<b>No declared disability</b>	90.9%	90%	-

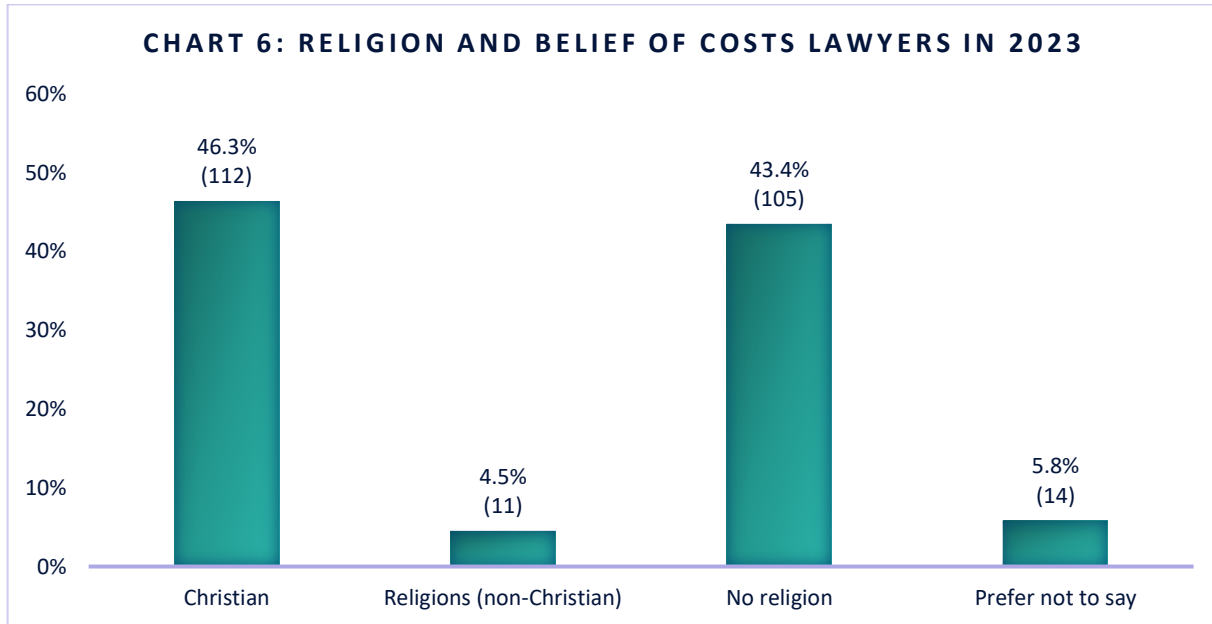
Of those respondents who said they had a disability, 52% had a physical disability (13 individuals) and 28% had a social disability, mental health condition, learning difference or neurodivergence (7 individuals). The remaining respondents preferred not to provide information about their disability, or had a different kind of disability. In both of the latter cases,

<sup>13</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>14</sup> [Disabled People in Employment](#), House of Commons Research Briefing, published 18 March 2024. According to the Office for National Statistics, 24% (10.21 million) of the working-age population (people aged 16 to 64) was disabled in October to December 2023.

the number of respondents in each category was less than 5 and has therefore not been included in this report.

## 6. Religion and belief



In 2023, the majority of Costs Lawyer respondents identified as Christian (46.3%, 112 individuals). This is higher than the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms who identified as Christian, but similar to the proportion of Christians in the population of England and Wales, as shown in Table 6.

The second highest proportion of Costs Lawyer respondents identified as 'no religion' in 2023 (43.4%, 105 individuals). This is higher than the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms who identified as having no religion in 2023, and higher than the proportion of the population of England and Wales who identified as such.

In 2023, 4.5% (11 individuals) identified as non-Christian religions including Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh, however, the number of respondents in each individual category was below 5 and therefore too small to report on separately. This is lower than the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms, and the proportion of people in England and Wales, who identify with non-Christian religions.

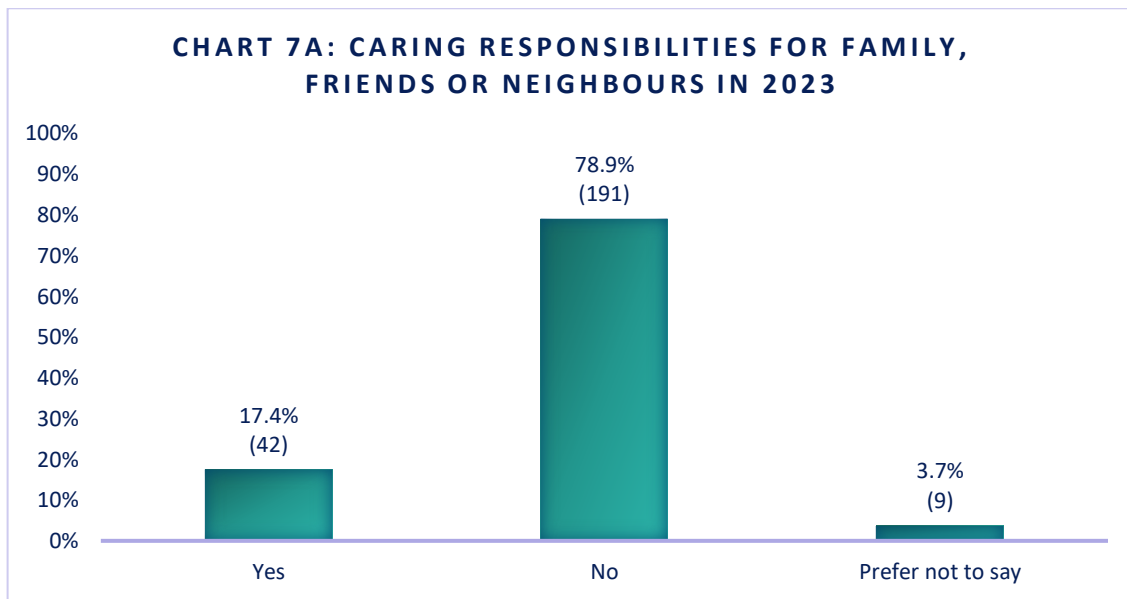
5.8% (14 individuals) preferred not to provide information about their religion and belief.

Table 6 – religion and belief, comparative data

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>15</sup>	Population of England and Wales <sup>16</sup>
Christian	46.3%	41%	46.2%
Other religions	4.5%	15%	10.6%
No religion	43.4%	36%	37.2%
Prefer not to say	5.8%	8%	6.0%

## 7. Caring responsibilities

### 7.1 Family, friends or neighbours



In 2023, 17.4% of respondents (42 individuals) said they looked after, helped or supported a family member, friend or neighbour with long-term health needs or problems related to old age on an unpaid basis. This compares to 8% of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms and 9% of the population of England and Wales, as shown in Table 7(a).

<sup>15</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>16</sup> [Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), Office for National Statistics, published 29 November 2022. According to the 2021 Census, 46.2% (27.5 million) of the population in England Wales were Christian, 37.2% (22.2 million) had no religion and 6.5% (3.9 million) were Muslim. 1.7% (1.0 million) of the population in England and Wales was Hindu, 0.9% (524,000) Sikh, 0.5% Jewish (271,000) and 0.5% Buddhist (273,000). 0.6% (348,000) of the England and Wales population identified with other religions, and 6.0% (3.6 million) did not answer the question.

Table 7(a) – adult caring responsibilities, comparative data

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>17</sup>	Population of England and Wales <sup>18</sup>
Caring responsibility for family, friends or neighbours	17.4%	8%	9%
No caring responsibility for family, friends or neighbours	78.9%	87%	-
Prefer not to say	3.7%	5%	-

In 2023, 12% (29 individuals) provided support for less than 20 hours per week and 3.7%% (9 individuals) provided support for between 20 and 50 hours per week. The number of Costs Lawyer respondents who said they provided support for over 50 hours per week was below 5 and therefore has not been included in this report. Table 7(b) shows how this compares to lawyers in SRA-regulated firms and the population in England and Wales.

Table 7(b) – number of hours of adult caring responsibilities, comparative data

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated law firms <sup>19</sup>	Population of England and Wales <sup>20</sup>
Less than 20 hours of care per week	12%	6%	4.4%
Between 20 and 50 hours of care per week	3.7%	1%	1.9%
Over 50 hours of care per week	-	1%	2.8%

<sup>17</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

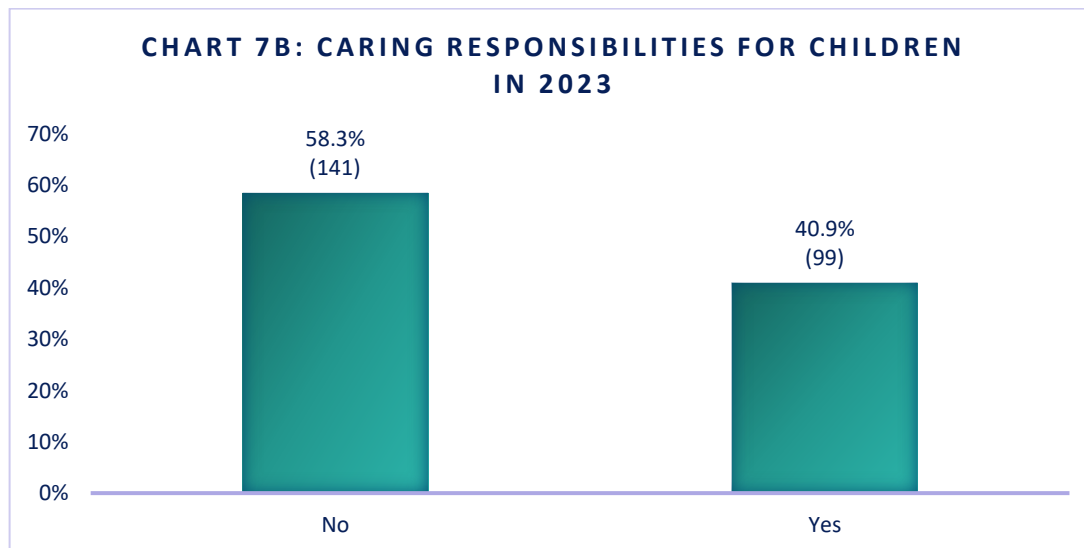
<sup>18</sup> [Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics, published 19 January 2023](#). According to the 2021 Census, 9% (5 million) of people in England and Wales provided unpaid care in 2021 relating to an adult.

<sup>19</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>20</sup> [Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics, published 19 January 2023](#). According to the 2021 Census, 9% (5 million) of people in England and Wales provided unpaid care in 2021 relating to an adult.

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## 7.2 Children



In 2023, 40.9% of respondents (99 individuals) said they are the primary carer for a child or children aged under 18, compared to 58.3% of respondents who said they are not (141 individuals). This compares to 35% of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms who said they have caring responsibilities for a child, and 61% who said they did not.<sup>21</sup>

The number of respondents who preferred not to say was less than 5 and has therefore not been included in this report.

## 8. Social mobility

The Social Mobility Commission ('SMC') describes social mobility as the link between an individual's income and occupation and the income and occupation of their parents. Ensuring that people from different socio-economic backgrounds are able to join and progress in the profession is an important aspect of improving diversity and inclusion in the legal sector.

In this year's diversity survey, we asked Costs Lawyers about the following, which the SMC identifies as indicators of economic, cultural and social advantage:

- The type of school they attended between the ages of 11 and 16.
- Whether either of their parents attended university

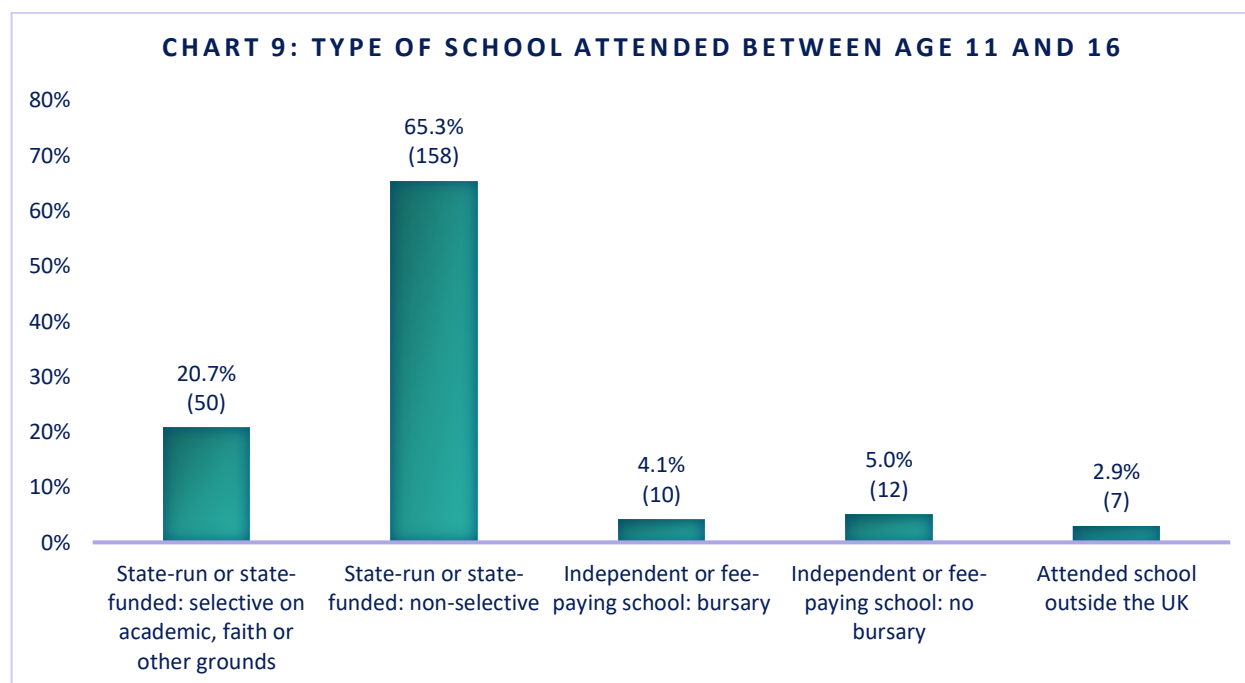
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<sup>21</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

- Whether they were the ‘first in family’ to go to university;
- Whether they were eligible for free school meals.

Further information about social mobility in the Costs Lawyer profession can be found in our [diversity survey for 2022](#), which focused on social mobility.

## 8.1 Type of school attended between ages 11 and 16



In 2023, 86% of Costs Lawyer respondents had attended a state school (208 individuals), compared to 64% of lawyers working in SRA-regulated law firms.

In 2023, 9.1% of Costs Lawyer respondents (22 individuals) had attended an independent or fee-paying school. This is lower than the proportion of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms who had attended an independent or fee-paying school (21%), but higher than the proportion of UK schoolchildren who attend independent schools (5.9%).<sup>22</sup>

2.9% of Costs Lawyer respondents (7 individuals) had attended school outside of the UK, compared to 9% of lawyers working in SRA-regulated firms.

<sup>22</sup> [Independent Schools Council](#) website, as at 4 April 2024.

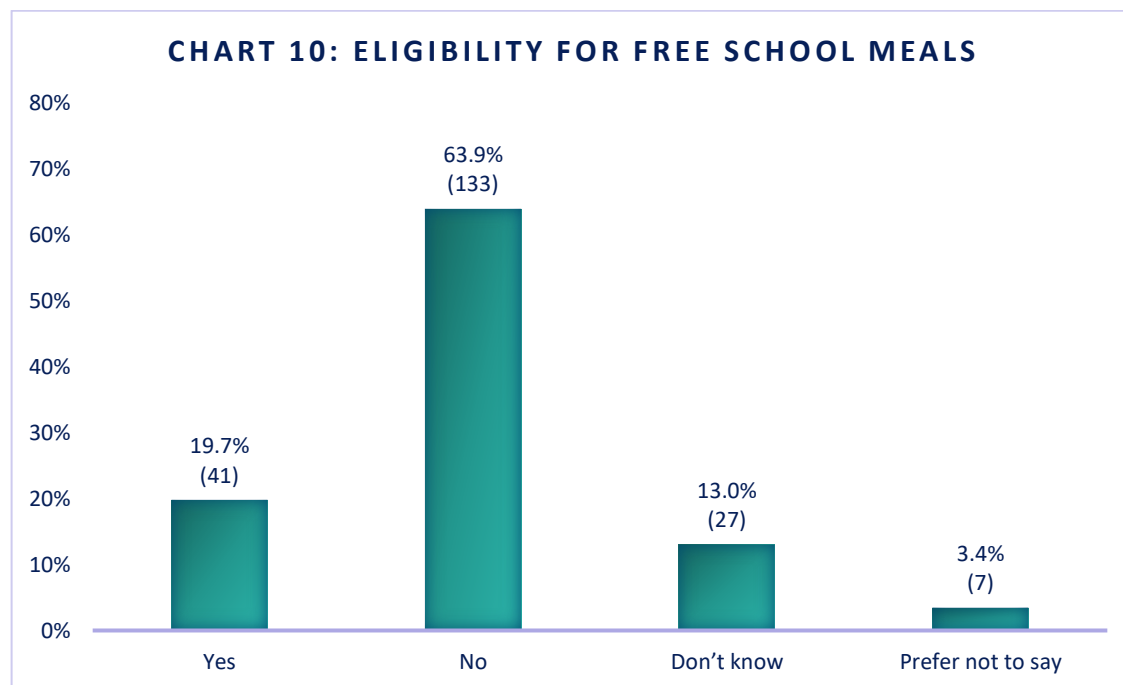
The number of Costs Lawyer respondents who had attended another type of school, and the number who preferred not to say, were each below 5 and have therefore not been included in this report.

Table 8 shows a detailed comparison of Costs Lawyer respondents and lawyers working in SRA-regulated firms.

Table 8 – type of school attended

Category	Costs Lawyers	Lawyers in SRA-regulated firms <sup>23</sup>
<b>State school</b>	86%	64%
- Selective state school	20.7%	20%
- Non-selective state school	65.3%	44%
<b>Independent school</b>	9.1%	21%
- With a bursary	4.1%	3%
- Without a bursary	5.0%	18%
<b>Attended school outside the UK</b>	2.9%	9%

## 8.2 Eligibility for free school meals

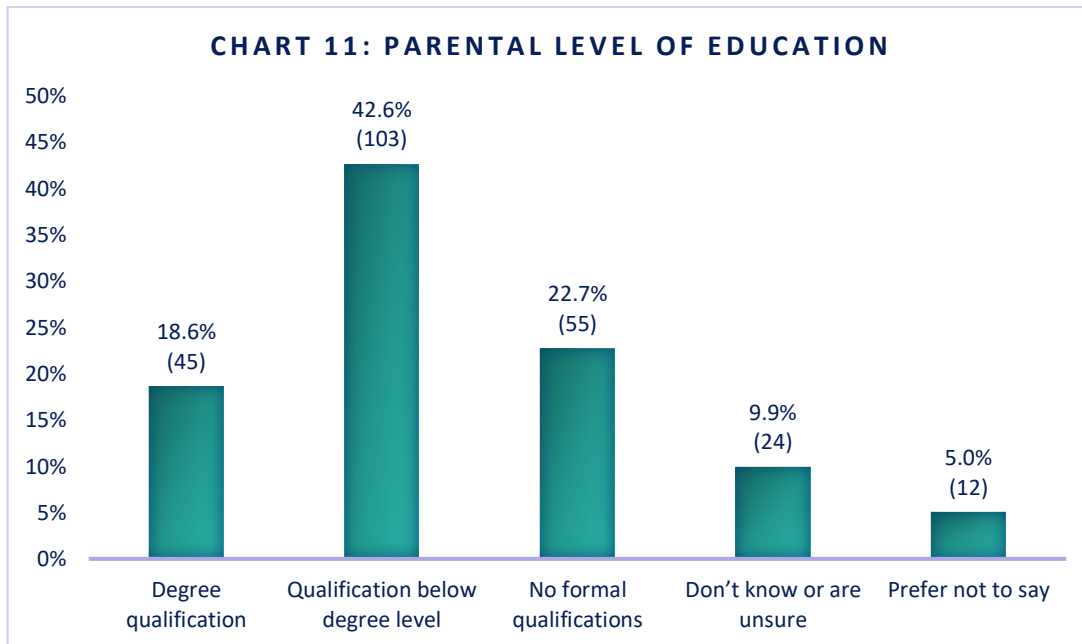


<sup>23</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

In 2023, 63.9% of respondents (133 individuals) said they had not been eligible for free school meals while in education, compared to 19.7% (41 individuals) who said they are were. For comparative context, in 2023, 23.8% of pupils were eligible for free school meals (over 2 million pupils).<sup>24</sup>

13.0% (27 individuals) said they didn't know if they had been eligible for free school meals, and 3.4% (7 individuals) preferred not to say.

### 8.3 Social mobility by parental level of education



In 2023, the majority of respondents said their parents' highest level of education was a qualification below degree level, for example, vocational qualifications or A Levels (42.6%, 103 individuals).

18.6% (45 individuals) said one or more of their parents had a degree qualification. This compares to 42% of lawyers working in SRA-regulated firms who had one or more parents with a degree qualification.

22.7% (55 individuals) said their parents had no formal qualifications. 9.9% (24 individuals) didn't know or were unsure about their parents' level of education, and 5.0% (12 individuals)

<sup>24</sup> Department for Education, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics - academic year 2022/23](#), published 8 June 2023.



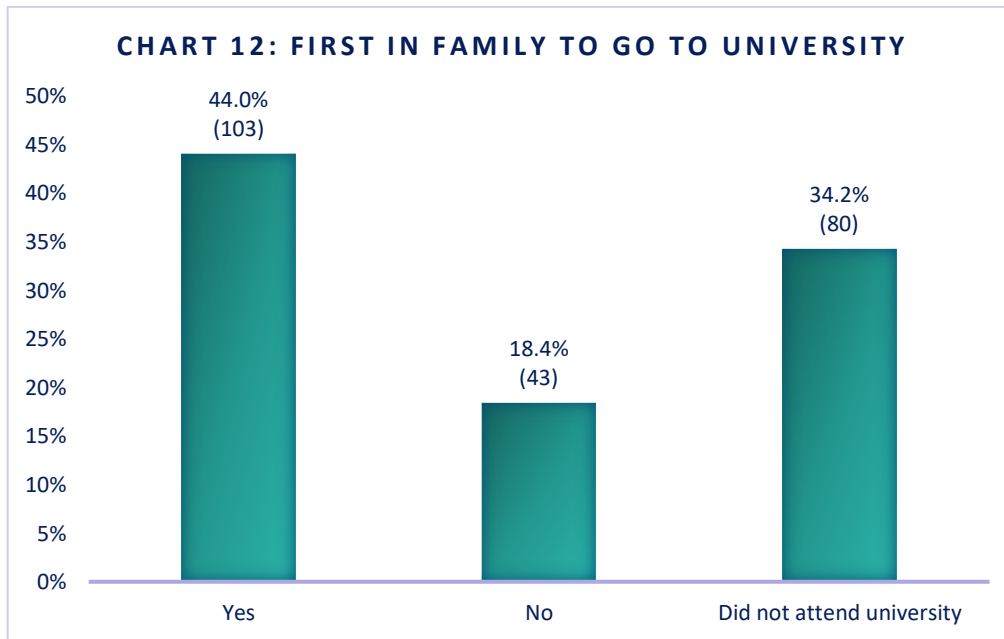
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preferred not to say. As fewer than 5 respondents described their parents level of education as 'other', this data has not been included in this report.

The SRA reported on parental level of education based on whether one or more parents attended university in 2023. It also reported on parental professional background in 2023.<sup>25</sup> Whilst this latter data is not directly comparable to the data above, it has been included here for general context.

In 2023, 57% of lawyers working in SRA-regulated firms had parents with professional occupations, 13% had parents with intermediate occupations, and 18% parents with lower socio-economic occupations.<sup>26</sup> 9% of lawyers preferred not to declare information about parental occupation.

#### 8.4 First in family to go to university



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<sup>25</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

<sup>26</sup> The professional (higher) socio-economic category is made up of modern and traditional professional occupations and senior, middle or junior managers or administrators. The intermediate socio-economic category is made up of clerical and intermediate occupations and small business owners who employ fewer than 25 people. The lower socio-economic (working class) category is made up of technical and craft occupations and long-term unemployed.

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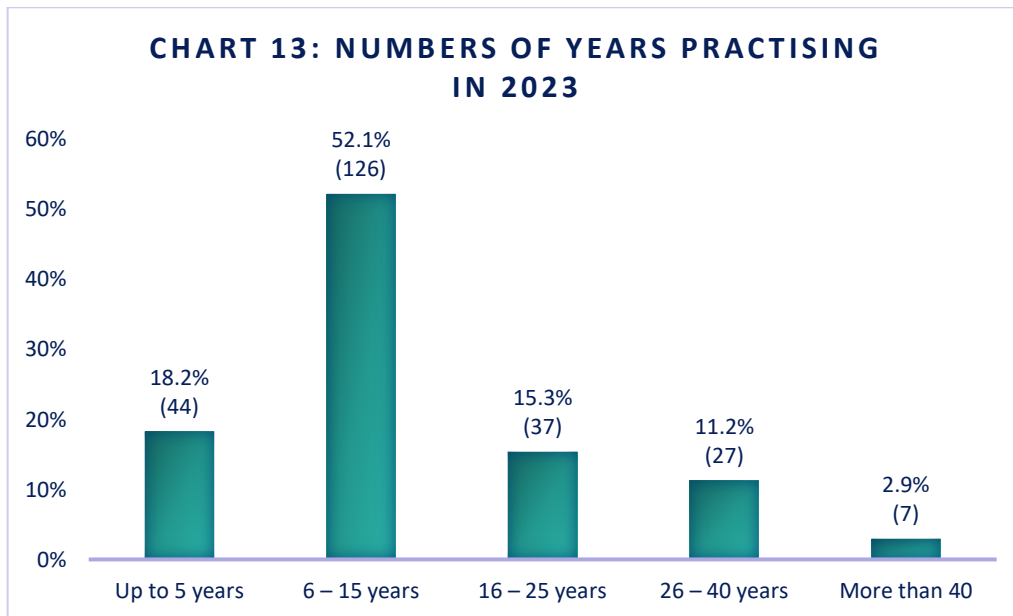
In 2023, 44% of respondents (103 individuals) were the first generation in their family to go to university. This compares to 52% of lawyers working in SRA-regulated firms who did not have parents who went to university.<sup>27</sup>

18.4% of respondents (43 individuals) were not the first generation in their family to go to university. This compares to 42% of lawyers in SRA-regulated firms who had one or more parents who had gone to university.

In 2023, 34.2% (80 individuals) of Costs Lawyer respondents did not attend university. The number of respondents who answered 'I don't know' or preferred not to say was less than 5 and has therefore not been included in this report.

## 9. Professional background

### 9.1 Number of years practising



In 2023, the majority of respondents had been practising for between 6 and 15 years (52.1%, 126 individuals).

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<sup>27</sup> [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#), Solicitors Regulation Authority, updated 10 January 2024.

18.2% (44 individuals) of respondents had been practising for up to 5 years, and 15.3% (37 individuals) for between 16 and 25 years. 11.2% (27 individuals) had been practising for between 26 and 40 years, and 2.9% (7 individuals) for more than 40 years.

The number of respondents who preferred not to say was less than 5 and has therefore not been included in this report.

## 9.2 Number of years practising by gender

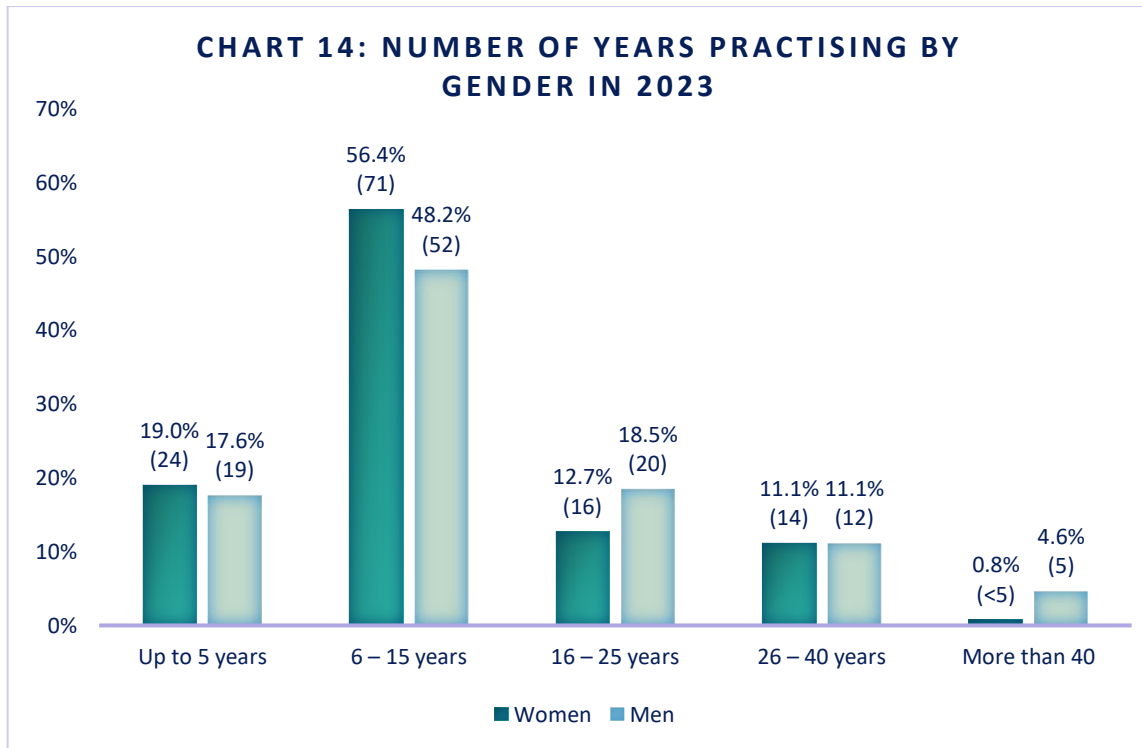
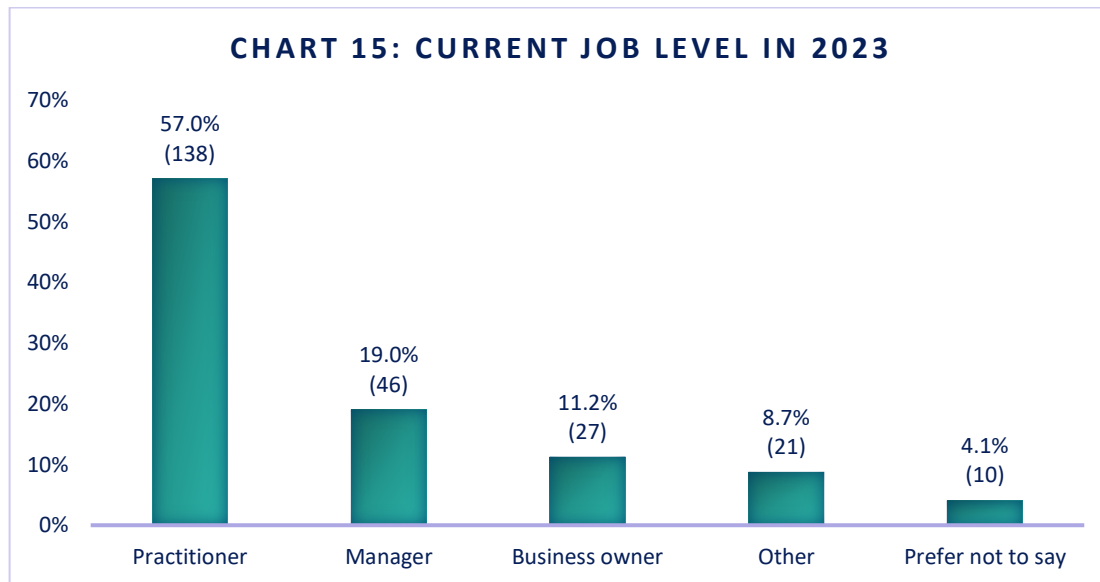


Chart 14 shows the difference in number of years practising by gender in 2023. It shows the proportion of women is higher than of men for up to 15 years of practice, after which point the proportion of men becomes higher than that of women. Specifically:

- A higher proportion of respondents practising for up to 5 years were women (19.0% women compared to 17.6% men).
- A higher proportion of respondents practising for between 6 and 15 years were women (56.4% women compared to 48.2% men).
- A higher proportion of respondents practising for between 16 and 25 years were men compared to women (18.5% men compared to 12.7% women).
- The proportion of respondents practising for between 26 and 40 years was 11.1% for both men and women.

- A higher proportion of male respondents had been practising for more than 40 years (4.6% men compared to 0.8% women).

### 9.3 Current job level



In 2023, the majority of respondents were practitioners (57.0%, 138 individuals). 19.0% (46 individuals) were managers and 11.2% (27 individuals) were business owners. 8.7% (21 individuals) described their current job level as 'Other' and 4.1% (10 individuals) preferred not to say.

## 9.4 Current job level by gender

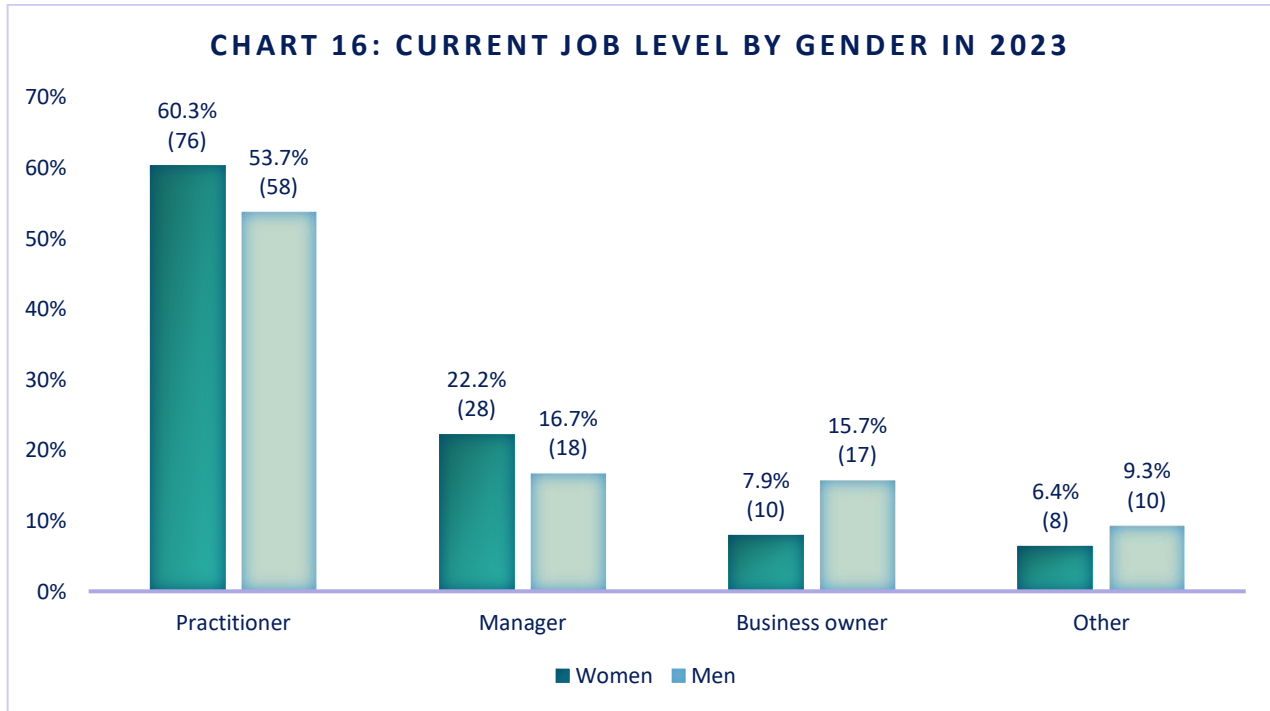


Chart 16 shows the difference in current job level by gender in 2023. It shows that:

- The proportion of women practitioners is higher than that of men (60.3% women compared to 53.7% men).
- The proportion of women managers is higher than that of men (22.2% women compared to 16.7% men).
- A higher proportion of business owners are men compared to women (15.7% men compared to 7.9% women).
- A higher proportion of men declared their current job level as 'other' (9.3% men compared to 6.4% women).

As the chart reflects only 35% of the Costs Lawyer profession, care must be taken when drawing conclusions from the data. However, the higher proportion of male business owners may be linked to the fact that a higher proportion of male Costs Lawyers have been practising for 15 years or over compared to women.

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# Notes and next steps

## About the data

The data on Costs Lawyers in this report was collected in a survey carried out in November to December 2023 alongside the annual practising certificate renewal process. We collect diversity data from practitioners on a voluntary basis; completing the diversity survey was not mandatory.

A total of 687 practitioners were contacted, of whom 242 responded, representing 35% of the profession. As the data in this report does not reflect the entire regulated Costs Lawyer profession, caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from the data and/or making comparisons with other data sets.

## Declarations

The contents of this report are based on data that is explicitly and voluntarily declared by respondents.

All questions on the survey contained an option of 'prefer not to say' and not all respondents chose to provide their diversity information.

In the instances where a data set is too small to be meaningfully representative (i.e. fewer than five respondents) or there is the risk that an individual might be identifiable from the data, it has been excluded from the report.

Regarding ethnicity, we followed the approach adopted by the UK Census 2021 and used the following aggregate categories: Asian or Asian British, Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, White, Other ethnic group.

## Comparative data

Surveys were carried out every three years by the CLSB up to 2019. The data in this report is not directly comparable to that collected in previous surveys. However, to give context to the data, we have included comparative diversity data for the solicitor profession, as published by the Solicitors Regulation Authority, and the general population of England Wales based on the 2021 Census.

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## Comparisons to the Solicitors Regulation Authority's (SRA's) data

The SRA's data, collected in summer 2023 and published in January 2024, can be found in its publication, [Diversity in law firms' workforce](#).

The SRA collects diversity data from the law firms it regulates in England and Wales every two years. 99% of law firms reported their data in the SRA's latest survey, covering more than 203,000 people working in 9,276 firms. This higher response rate means the SRA's data is more representative of the total target population than that collected by the CLSB. However, we believe the broad comparisons we have presented in this report remain valid in providing useful context.

### Next steps

We will continue our work on improving our data collection, with a particular focus on improving the response rate and understanding more about the Cost Lawyer profession in Wales specifically.

Since the publication of our last full diversity report in 2020, we have published focused data on social mobility, and pay and earnings in the profession. We will continue to collect, analyse and publish data on discrete aspects of diversity, in line with our mid-term strategy and business plan.