



Upholding Professional Standards - Diversity Monitoring, Supporting Report

July 2021

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Introduction

We published findings on the diversity characteristics of people in our enforcement processes in our [Upholding Professional Standards 2018/19 report](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/2018-19-review/upholding-professional-standards/) [\[https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/2018-19-review/upholding-professional-standards/\]](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/2018-19-review/upholding-professional-standards/), along with a [detailed supporting report](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/2018-19-review/upholding-professional-standardssupporting-report/) [\[https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/2018-19-review/upholding-professional-standardssupporting-report/\]](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/2018-19-review/upholding-professional-standardssupporting-report/), and provided [an update on our work since the 2014 Independent Comparative Case Review](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/iccr-response/) [\[https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/iccr-response/\]](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/iccr-response/) on the profile of solicitors in our enforcement work, undertaken by Professor Gus John. Reviewing our systems and processes to make sure they are free from bias and non-discriminatory is a vital part of embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the work we do. We not only do this because we have a public duty to do so, as set out under the Equality Act and Legal Services Act, but because it is the right thing to do.

This is the second year we have published this information, and we will continue to annually report on these findings. This work will also help us to evaluate the impact of our new Enforcement Strategy and Standards and Regulations, brought in in 2019.

We have taken the same approach as in 2018/19 (the detail of which can be found in the next section, the scope of our analysis). This allows us to start to draw comparisons and identify trends year on year. In the key findings section, we have highlighted where there are differences between the data in 2018/19 and 2019/20. This is, however, subject to the limitations in the data we hold and the difficulties with drawing any meaningful analysis from the very small numbers in the later stages of the enforcement process.

In the further work and research section, we set out what action we are taking to better understand why some groups are overrepresented in our enforcement processes. We also provide an update on the work we are carrying out to assure that our processes are free from bias, as noted in the 2018/19 report.

The overrepresentation of men and solicitors from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in concerns raised with us and those we investigate is one we have seen for some time and reflects the pattern seen across many professions and regulators.



We have commissioned several external reviews to look at these issues, building on work that the Law Society undertook in 2006 before we were established. None of the reviews found any evidence of discrimination, but each review highlighted overrepresentation of certain groups and provided recommendations for us and others, which have helped to shape our approach to enforcement.

You can find more information on the [diversity section of our website](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/diversity-work/) [<https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/diversity-work/>].

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Scope of our analysis

We looked at the representation of gender, ethnicity, age and, in some areas where numbers were sufficient, the disability of individuals at the following stages of our enforcement process for the 2019/20 year:

- stage 1 - individuals named on concerns reported to us
- stage 2 - individuals named on concerns which we took forward for an investigation
- stage 3 - individuals named on cases with an internal sanction and the types of sanctions we imposed (path A)
- stage 4 - the cases which were concluded at the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT) by way of a hearing or an agreed outcome, and the types of sanctions the SDT imposed (path B).

They are broadly aligned with the key stages when considering a concern diagram in the [Upholding Professional Standards report](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/upholding-professional-standards-2019-20/1) [<https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/archive/reports/upholding-professional-standards-2019-20/1>].

1. Individuals named on the concerns reported to us
2. Individuals names on concerns taken forward for an investigation
3. Path A: Individuals names on cases with an internal sanction
4. Path B: Individuals names on cases concluded at the SDT

The individuals counted at stage 2 (individuals named on concerns taken forward for an investigation in 2019/20) are a subset of stage 1 (the individuals named on the concerns reported to us in 2019/20).

At stages 3 and 4, we count the individuals named on cases who received an internal sanction or who were named on cases concluded at the SDT in 2019/20. Although there may be some overlap between the individuals involved in stages 1 and 2 and those involved in stage 3 in this report for 2019/20, it is unlikely to be significant. This is because cases are not always received and concluded in the same year. Similarly, there is very unlikely to be any overlap between the individuals involved in stages 1 and 2 and those involved in stage 4. This is because it takes longer than a year to investigate, refer, and conclude a matter at the SDT.

Starting with a breakdown of the practising population, we have compared the proportions of each diversity group at the different stages of our enforcement process. For example, men make up:



- 48% of the practising population
- 65% of individuals named on concerns reported to us (stage 1)
- 75% of the individuals taken forward for investigation (stage 2)
- 73% of the individuals named on cases with an internal sanction (stage 3, path A)
- 80% of individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT (stage 4, path B).

The number of individuals gets smaller at each stage of the process, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions at stages 3 and 4. Overall, in 2019/20, there were:

- 6,293 individuals named on concerns reported to us (stage 1)
- 1,647 individuals taken forward for investigation (stage 2)
- 275 individuals named on cases with an internal sanction (stage 3)
- 129 individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT (stage 4).

Our analysis looks at the known population among those groups - that is, the people for whom we hold diversity information. For gender and age, we have information for 93% and 99.9% of the practising population, respectively, and 73% for ethnicity. Because of the way we have collected disability data in the past¹, we can only identify the proportion of people who have declared a disability, which is 1% of the practising population.

From the [Diversity profile: Stages 1 and 2 section](#) onwards, a full set of the tables showing the data at each of the stages can be found. We have also looked at how the cases at the SDT have been concluded, in particular, whether there is a difference by diversity characteristic in the use of agreed outcomes. We have provided the diversity declaration rates at each stage.

Key findings 2019/20

In this section, we have set out an overview of the key findings for each diversity characteristic at all four stages of the enforcement process for 2019/20 (where there was sufficient data to allow us to do this). To allow for comparison, we have included the tables for 2018/19 and have highlighted where the findings differ.

A more detailed analysis of the data at each stage of our processes can be found later in the report, starting from the [Diversity profile: Stages 1 and 2 section](#). In the sections that look at stages 3 and 4 - where we imposed a sanction and where the SDT imposed a sanction, respectively - we have also broken down the outcomes imposed on individuals. And, at the [Diversity profile: Agreed outcomes section](#), we look at individuals at stage 4 who resolved their case at the SDT either by a hearing or by an agreed outcome. In each of these sections, we have drawn comparisons with the 2018/19 findings. A full set of the 2018/19 data tables and information can be found in the [Upholding Professional Standards - Diversity Monitoring Supporting Report 2018/19](#) (<https://jobs.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/research/upholding-professional-standards-diversity-monitoring-supporting-report-2018-19.pdf?version=491e6e>).

We are using the data about the practising population that we hold in our systems as the starting point for the analysis of how the profile of people

changes through our enforcement processes. More information about the breakdown of the practising population and the source of this data can be found in the annex.

Low numbers at stages 3 and 4

Due to the low numbers involved in stages 3 and 4, we cannot confirm with confidence if the changes seen are statistically significant, or whether they are a result of chance. This is because the numbers are too small for statistical tests to reliably establish differences between groups. Any differences between groups should, therefore, be treated with caution.

Although the numbers at stages 3 and 4 are likely to remain relatively small, we are taking action to increase disclosure rates and we will continue to monitor this area so we can identify patterns over time.

Gender

Gender breakdown of practising population and at stages 1-4 of our enforcement process

	Gender	Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation	Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction	Stage 4 (path B): Cases concluded at the SDT
2018/19	Male	49%	67%	73%	70%	85%
	Female	51%	33%	27%	30%	15%
2019/20	Male	48%	65%	75%	73%	80%
	Female	52%	35%	25%	27%	20%

There is an overrepresentation of men throughout our enforcement process, and the overall breakdown at each stage is largely comparable with the 2018/19 data. Men are overrepresented in concerns reported to us, and this overrepresentation increases at each stage of our enforcement process.

Compared with a practising population of 48:52, men to women, the proportion of men at stages 1-3 ranges from 65% to 75%, with a corresponding decrease for women.

However, the proportion of men increases to 80% when looking at stage 4, cases concluded at the SDT, with a corresponding decrease for women.

Ethnicity

We break ethnicity down into five main groups: White, Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic group. Where the numbers in each group are large enough to report without the risk of identifying individuals, we will report data about each group separately. If the numbers are too small, while the experience of people making up the Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic group will not be the same,

we will report these groups together, alongside the White group. We refer to this group as the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group, and, unlike the report for 2018/19, we will not be using the acronym 'BAME'. This is why, in the overview table below, only the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group and the White group are shown. A more detailed breakdown can be found under [Diversity profile: Stages 1 and 2, Ethnicity \[#Ethnicity\]](#).

Ethnicity breakdown of practising population and at stages 1-4 of our enforcement process

	Gender	Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation	Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction	Stage 4 (path B): Cases concluded at the SDT
2018/19	White	82%	74%	68%	65%	65%
	Black, Asian and minority ethnic	18%	26%	32%	35%	35%
2019/20	White	82%	74%	65%	71%	72%
	Black, Asian and minority ethnic	18%	26%	35%	29%	28%

The Black, Asian and minority ethnic group, as a whole, makes up 18% of the practising population and 26% of individuals reported to us. Asian and Black individuals make up 12% and 3% of the practising population, respectively, yet are overrepresented when looking at the number of reports made to us (stage 1), at 18% and 4%. This has not changed when compared with stages 1 and 2 in the 2018/19 findings.

The proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals increases from 26% to 35% of those whose cases were taken forward for investigation at stage 2, a slightly greater increase to that seen in 2018/19.

The small numbers beyond stage 2 mean that we do not know if any changes - between stages or over time - are meaningful. The proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals represented at stages 3 and 4 (29% and 28%, respectively) are lower when compared to the investigation stage (35%). This is different to the 2018/19 findings, where there was, subject again to the difficulty with small numbers, an apparent increase in the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the outcomes seen at stages 3 and 4 (35% for both), compared to the investigation stage (32%).

We do not know if this is a real change or due to variations within a small group. We will look at our decision making (whether to refer a matter for

investigation) that takes place at stage 2 of our process as part of the independent research that we are, at the time of writing, commissioning. There is more information on this in the further work and research section.

Age

In this table, we have grouped together the 16-24-year-old and 25-34-year-old categories. This is because the numbers of 16-24-year-olds named at stages 1-3 were nominal, and there were no 16-24-year-olds named on cases concluded at the SDT.

Age breakdown of practising population and at stages 1-4 of our enforcement process

2018/19

	16-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Practising population	25%	32%	24%	14%	5%
Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	12%	26%	30%	22%	10%
Stage 2: Investigation	11%	26	30%	23%	10%
Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction	13%	25	27%	22%	13%
Stage 4 (path B): Concluded at the SDT	9%	27	31%	20%	13%

2019/20

	16-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Practising population	24%	33%	24%	14%	5%
Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	13%	27%	28%	22%	10%
Stage 2: Investigation	12%	29%	28%	22%	9%
Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction	14%	28%	24%	20%	14%
Stage 4 (path B): Cases concluded at the SDT	5%	25%	30%	25%	16%

Please note, the stage 4 data for 2019/20 adds up to 101%. This is due to rounding.

The representation of all age groups throughout our enforcement process is largely the same as it was in 2018/19. There is an underrepresentation of people in the younger age categories (44 and under) named on concerns reported to us compared with their proportion of the practising population. The opposite is true for those in the older age categories (55 and over) who are overrepresented when compared with the practising population. The 45-54 age group represented at stage 1 is largely proportionate with the practising population.

When looking at cases involving individuals taken forward for investigation, there is little difference for any of the age groups. For all age groups, the percentage of individuals named on cases concluded internally at stage 3 is largely proportionate to those whose cases were taken forward for investigation (stage 2), apart from the 65+ age group, where representation is slightly higher.

For all age groups, the percentage of those whose cases were concluded at the SDT (stage 4) is largely proportionate to those whose cases were taken forward for investigation (stage 2), with some differences for the youngest and oldest groups. Those under 34 made up 12% of cases investigated and 5% of those concluded at the SDT. Those aged 65 and over made up 9% of concerns taken forward for an investigation and 16% of cases concluded at the SDT.

Disability

Because of the very small numbers involved, we are only able to report the numbers of disabled people involved in our enforcement processes at stages 1, 2 and 4. For the same reason, we were only able to report the numbers of disabled people involved in our enforcement processes at stages 1 and 2 in 2018/19.

Disability recorded among practising population and in our enforcement process

2018/2019

	Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Concerns taken forward for an investigation
No disability recorded	99%	98%	98%
Disability recorded	1%	2%	2%

2019/2020

	Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Concerns taken forward for an investigation	Stage 4 (path B): Cases concluded at SDT
No disability recorded	99%	98%	98%	95%
Disability recorded	1%	2%	2%	5%

As with last year, we see overrepresentation of disabled individuals in concerns reported to us compared with the practising population. There were 106 disabled individuals named on the concerns we received (2% of the total) compared with 1% in the practising population.

Of those named on the concerns reported to us, 38 disabled people had their cases taken forward for investigation (2% of the total number of cases investigated).

At stage 4, six individuals were named on cases concluded at the SDT (5%).

Declaration rates for disability need to improve before we can draw any meaningful conclusions from the data.

Further work and research

Since the publication of our 2018/19 report in December 2020, we have made progress in our work to better understand why we see overrepresentation of some groups in our enforcement processes. The findings of our 2019/20 report are broadly similar to last year's, and so the work we committed to in last year's report is still relevant now and will take into account findings from both years.

The table below sets out the work we committed to and the action we have since taken.

Work we have committed to	Action we have taken
We will commission independent research into the factors that drive the reporting of concerns about Black, Asian and minority ethnic solicitors to us, to identify what we can do about this and where we can work with others to make a difference.	Procurement started in March with an open invitation to external organisations to express an interest in carrying out this work. We are carrying out a formal tender in the summer, with a view to starting the research in autumn 2021.
Alongside our ongoing work to establish an in-house, arms-length quality assurance team, we will undertake a forward review of decision making in our assessment and early resolution process, where the decision to refer a matter for investigation is made.	We are establishing a group of external stakeholders to support this work. Its role will be to help to shape the research and provide expertise and insight to support the researchers through the life of the project.
We will work to increase the number of individuals who disclose information concerning their diversity characteristics to us.	The review of decision making in our assessment and early resolution process will be undertaken by an external agency as part of the independent research outlined above.
	Our in-house, arms-length quality assurance team has now been established, and it will start to develop and pilot its approach to quality assurance in the coming months, adding value to our existing quality assurance arrangements.
	We updated the diversity questions we have on our systems for solicitors and, in May 2021, launched a campaign to encourage individuals to review and update their diversity data.

This involved social media and direct communications to all 10,100 law firms and groups where we know the declaration rates are low. We have seen a good initial response rate at the conclusion of phase one of this campaign and will continue to engage with the profession to encourage individuals to provide their diversity data.

Supporting us with this campaign is the Law Society and the diversity groups we work with in the profession.

We are also looking at ways to encourage people to provide their diversity information when they first enter the profession. As we noted in the 2018/19 report, we have seen a falling number of newly enrolled solicitors provide their diversity data to us, following our move to an online admissions process. This has fallen year on year and explains the drop in declaration rates [seen in the annex. \[#collapse_11bb\]](#)

We will report annually on the profile of people in our enforcement processes and include intersectional analysis where we can.

We will evaluate the changes we have made through our regulatory reform programme, with understanding the impacts on EDI forming a key part of the work.

We will continue to build on our wider work to promote and support diversity in the profession and our ongoing work to support small firm compliance.

This is the second year we have reported on this information. In the coming year, we will begin to analyse the data and explore intersectionality where possible, based on the information available.

We are evaluating the impact of our new Enforcement Strategy and new Standards and Regulations introduced in November 2019. The findings from 2018/19 gave us a baseline for future monitoring and, with the latest data, will feed into this evaluation work.

In a review of our [EDI initiatives in 2019/20](#) [<https://jobs.sra.org.uk/sra/equality-diversity/archive/edi-work/>], we set out a range of work that we are taking forward in 2020/21, including:

- To support small firm compliance, our programme of workshops targeted at smaller firms remains ongoing. For example, we carried out a workshop on anti-money laundering with the Society of British Bangladeshi Solicitors in February, with more to come for other diversity networks and groups.
- In a further example, we delivered a webinar for small firms on how to meet our Transparency Rules requirements, which we have shared through the Sole Practitioners Group and other diversity groups we know have a high membership of solicitors in small firms and other networks.



- We rolled out refreshed unconscious bias training for all staff in March and are following up this work with bespoke workshops.
- As part of our wider work to promote EDI in the profession, we are developing new resources for firms in key areas, including social mobility, creating healthy workplaces and pregnancy and maternity. And, we will add to our [existing resources \[https://jobs.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/diversity-toolkit/\]](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/diversity-toolkit/) to promote race equality, disability inclusion, wellbeing and LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Diversity profile: Stages 1 and 2

This section covers the profile of the individuals named on the concerns reported to us (stage 1) and the concerns we take forward for investigation (stage 2), seen against the breakdown of the practising population.

Numbers at these stages

In 2019/20, 9,642 concerns were reported to us. Of these, 5,555 - 58% of all concerns - were about one or more individuals. The data in this section relates to the 6,293 individuals named on those concerns. We counted an individual each time they appeared on a concern reported to us, so some individuals may be reported more than once. Because our focus is on the diversity breakdown of individuals in our enforcement processes, concerns relating to firms have not been included.

Of the 6,293 individuals named on the concerns we received, 1,647 individuals were taken forward for investigation.

Broken down by four diversity characteristics (ethnicity, gender, age, and disability), the tables in this section show:

- the practising population
- stage 1 - individuals named on concerns reported to us for the 2019/20 year
- stage 2 - individuals named on those 2019/20 concerns which we took forward for investigation.

Disclosure rates

The tables in this section represent a breakdown of known populations and known individuals only - that means the individuals for whom we have diversity data. The proportion of individuals for whom diversity data is known is varied and set out for each characteristic.

Gender

There is an overrepresentation in the proportion of men named on the concerns we receive (65%) when compared with their representation in the practising

population (48%). This increases when we look at the individuals taken forward for investigation, where 75% are men.

The patterns are very similar to those found in 2018/19, where men made up 49% of the practising population, 67% of individuals named on concerns reported to us and 73% of individuals taken forward for investigation.

Stage 1 and 2 - gender breakdown

	Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation
Male	48%	65%	75%
Female	52%	35%	25%

The proportions in the tables should be considered alongside the following context:

- Practising population - gender was known for 149,702 of the 160,498 practising population (93%) as of 1 Nov 2020.
- Stage 1 - gender was known for 6,047 of the 6,293 individuals named on concerns we received (96%).
- Stage 2 - of the 1,647 individuals who were taken forward for investigation, gender was known for 1,546 individuals (94%).

Ethnicity

In this section, we have been able to break down the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group because the four groups represented in the tables are large enough not to risk identifying individuals. In later sections, which look at the outcomes of cases, the populations become much smaller. Because of this, we can only present data for the wider Black, Asian and minority ethnic group. To allow for comparison across all stages of the enforcement process, we have also set out the tables showing the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group as one.

There is an underrepresentation of White individuals named on concerns reported to us compared with the practising population. This decreases when looking at White individuals named on concerns taken forward for investigation. The opposite is true for individuals in the Asian and Black groups.

Stage 1 and 2 - ethnicity breakdown

	Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation
White	82%	74%	65%
Asian	12%	18%	26%
Black	3%	4%	6%
Mixed	2%	1%	1%
Other ethnic group	2%	1%	2%

Please note, the practising population data adds up to 101% and the stage 1 data adds up to 98% due to rounding.

As a whole, individuals from the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group make up 18% of the practising population, 26% of those named on the concerns we received, and 35% of individuals taken forward for investigation.

The patterns are very similar to those found in 2018/19, where individuals from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background also made up 18% of the practising population and 26% of individuals named on concerns reported to us. The proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic solicitors taken forward for investigation was 32% in 2018/19 and has risen slightly to 35% this year.

Stage 1 and 2 - ethnicity breakdown (White and Black, Asian and minority ethnic)

	Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation
White	82%	74%	65%
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	18%	26%	35%

The proportions in the tables should be considered alongside the following context:

- Practising population - ethnicity was known for 117,765 of the 160,498 practising population (73%) as of 1 Nov 2020.
- Stage 1 - ethnicity was known for 5,191 of the 6,293 individuals named on the concerns we received (82%).
- Stage 2 - of the 1,647 individuals who were taken forward for investigation, ethnicity was known for 1,330 individuals (81%).

Age

People in the younger age categories (16-34) are underrepresented in the concerns reported to us compared with their proportion of the practising population. The opposite is true for those in the older age categories (55 and over) who are overrepresented in reports compared with the practising population. The number of 35-44 and 45-54-year-olds named on concerns reported to us is largely proportionate with the practising population. There is little difference for any of the age categories in the rate at which concerns involving individuals are taken forward for investigation.

The patterns are very similar to those in 2018/19, except that the proportion of those in the 45-54 category who were named on concerns reported to us this year (28%) is slightly more in line with the practising population, which was 24% for both years. In 2018/19, 45-54-year-olds represented 30% of individuals at stage 1.

Stage 1 and 2 - age breakdown

Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation
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16-34	24%	13%	12%
35-44	33%	27%	29%
45-54	24%	28%	28%
55-64	14%	22%	22%
65+	5%	10%	9%

The proportions in the tables should be considered alongside the following context:

- Practising population - age was known for 160,306 of the 160,498 practising population (99.9%) as of 1 Nov 2020.
- Stage 1 - age was known for 6,252 of the 6,293 individuals named on the concerns we received (99%).
- Stage 2 - of the 1,647 individuals who were taken forward for investigation, age was known for 1,624 individuals (99%).
- Because the number of individuals aged 16-25 in the practising population represent less than 1%, they have been grouped with the 25-34 age bracket. The number of concerns received and taken forward concerning 16-24-year-olds were nominal and, therefore, too small to represent on their own.

Disability

Although the numbers are small, and this is an area where declarations of disability are low, there is an overrepresentation of disabled individuals named on concerns we received and took forward for an investigation, compared with the practising population. The proportions at these stages are the same as they were in 2018/19.

Disability recorded

	Practising population	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation
No disability recorded	99%	98%	98%
Disability recorded	1%	2%	2%

The proportions in the tables should be considered alongside the following context:

- Practising population - 1,663 of 160,498 (1%) recorded having a disability, as of 1 Nov 2020. We consider that this is underrepresented in light of 20% of the working age population who report that they are disabled.^{[2](#)}
- Stage 1 - Of the 6,293 individuals named on the concerns received, disability was recorded on 106 of them (2%).



- Stage 2 - of the 1,647 individuals who were taken forward for an investigation, disability was recorded for 38 individuals (2%).

Diversity profile: Path A - stages 1, 2 and 3

This section concerns the cases concluded via enforcement path A, meaning the reports which are taken forward for investigation (stage 2) and result in an internal sanction (stage 3).

There were 274 investigations in 2019/20 which resulted in us taking internal enforcement action and issuing a sanction. Of these, 248 cases concerned one or more individual. Overall, 275 individuals were named on cases with an internal sanction.

There may be some overlap between the individuals involved in stages 1 and 2 and those involved in stage 3 in this report for 2019/20, although it is unlikely to be significant. This is because cases are not always received and resolved in the same year. Our analysis is based on activity within the 2019/20 year, not the outcomes for a single group of cases.

There are two tables for each diversity characteristic in this section. The first shows the profile of:

- stage 1 - individuals named on concerns reported to us for the 2019/20 year
- stage 2 - individuals named on those 2019/20 concerns which we took forward for investigation.
- stage 3 - individuals named on cases which resulted in an SRA sanction for 2019/20.

The second table shows the diversity breakdown of individuals who received a letter of advice, a finding and warning, a rebuke, and a fine, although there are some limits to reporting on this data (read more information below).

Limits in reporting data

There are limitations in what we have been able to report in this section:

- We have not been able to include a breakdown for disability because the numbers concerned were too small to present on their own and could risk revealing someone's identity. For the same reason, ethnicity is broken down into two groups: Black, Asian and minority ethnic, and White. We have also grouped together the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups when looking at the outcome types, and it should be noted that the number of 16-24-year-olds who received a sanction represented is nominal.
- Again, because of the small numbers represented in some of the individual outcome types, which could risk revealing someone's identity, we have only been able to report on letters of advice, findings and warnings, rebukes, and fines. Because the numbers represented in each of these groups is too small to represent on their own, we have grouped the sanction types into pairs: the more serious sanctions (rebukes and fines) and the less serious sanctions (letters of advice and findings and warnings).

- We have also removed other sanction types, such as conditions placed on practising conditions and section 47 (2)(g) orders³, as the data in this category was too small to represent on its own.
- We have not included information on section 43 orders. This type of sanction is applied to non-lawyers working in the law firms and businesses we regulate, and, as such, they are largely not on the roll of solicitors, do not hold a practising certificate and do not have mySRA accounts. As a result, we do not hold diversity data for these individuals as we do for the practising population.

Low numbers at stage 3

Due to the low numbers involved in stages 3 and 4, we cannot confirm with confidence if the changes seen are statistically significant, or whether they are a result of chance. Any differences between groups should, therefore, be treated with caution.

Although the numbers at stages 3 and 4 are likely to remain relatively small, we are taking action to increase disclosure rates, so that our information is better able to support analysis.

And, because the numbers in the sanction types tables are so small and percentage breakdowns can be misleading, we have also provided numbers.

Our findings

Gender

As noted above, although the numbers are low at stage 3, which makes it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions, there is little difference in the proportion of men and women named on investigations and named on cases which resulted in an internal sanction. At each of these stages, the proportion is roughly three-quarters men and one-quarter women.

The patterns are very similar to those in 2018/19, although the increase from stage 1 (65%) to stage 2 (75%) for men is greater than last year. In 2018/19, the increase was from 67% at stage 1 to 73% at stage 2.

Path A: Stages 1, 2 and 3 - gender breakdown

	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation	Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction
Male	65% 3,959 inds	75% 1,166 inds	73% 114 inds
Female	35% 2,088 inds	25% 380 inds	27% 53 inds

Of the 275 individuals named on cases which resulted in an internal sanction, the table represents 197 where gender was known (72%).

Outcomes - gender

The 3:1 ratio of men to women represented at stages 2 and 3 is largely seen in the more serious sanctions types, involving a rebuke or a fine. There is a

decrease of 5%, however, in the representation of men when looking at the less serious sanction types, letters of advice or finding or warning, and a corresponding increase for women.

The patterns are similar to those in 2018/19, when 70% of those at stage 3 were men and 74% of those given a rebuke or a fine.

Path A: Outcomes types - gender breakdown

	Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction	Letter of advice or finding and warning	Rebuke or fine
Male	73% 144 inds	68% 54 inds	77% 64 inds
Female	27% 53 inds	32% 25 inds	23% 19 inds

Gender was known for:

- 79 of 93 letters of advice and findings and warnings (85%)
- 83 of 101 rebukes and fines (82%).

Ethnicity

The proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals named on cases at stage 3 is lower than those represented at stage 2, with a corresponding increase for White individuals. However, as noted above, the numbers at this stage are very small, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the data.

In 2018/19, we saw a small increase for the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group, rising from stage 2 (investigations at 32%) to stage 3 (internal sanctions at 35%). Again, the numbers were too small to apply the statistical methodology required to understand whether this is meaningful or chance variation.

And, due to the small numbers involved, it is also not possible to draw year-on-year comparisons.

Path A: Stages 1, 2 and 3 - ethnicity breakdown

	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigations	Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction
White	74% 3,864 inds	65% 870 inds	71% 114 inds
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	26% 1,327 inds	35% 460 inds	29% 46 inds

Of the 275 individuals named on cases with an internal sanction, ethnicity was known for 160 individuals (58%).

Outcomes - ethnicity

Compared to the breakdown of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals named on cases with an internal sanction (29%), there is a slightly lower proportion in the less serious outcomes (letters of advice and findings and warnings), at 23%, and a slightly higher proportion in the more serious sanction types (rebukes and fines), at 34%.

The pattern is slightly different from 2018/19, where 35% of individuals at stage 3 were Black, Asian and minority ethnic, 33% of those with a letter of advice or a finding and warning and 30% with a rebuke or fine. Again, the small numbers prevent any meaningful analysis.

Path A: Outcomed types - ethnicity breakdown

	Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction	Letter of advice or finding and warning	Rebuke or fine
White	71% 144 inds	77% 51 inds	66% 42 inds
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	29% 46 inds	23% 15 inds	34% 22 inds

Ethnicity was known for:

- 66 of 93 individuals who received a letter of advice and/or a finding and warning (71%)
- 64 of 101 individuals who had a rebuke and/or fine (63%).

Age

Again, although the numbers are low at stage 3, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions, the percentages are broadly proportionate when comparing those named on cases with an internal sanction (stage 3) with those investigated (stage 2). There is, however, a slight increase for the 65+ age group, which represents 9% at stage 2 and 14% at stage 3.

There are similarities with the patterns seen in 2018/19: there are slight increases to the proportions for the youngest (16-34) and oldest (65+) age groups between stages 2 (investigation) and 3 (internal sanction). In 2018/19, the increase was from 11% to 13% for the 16-34 group and 10% to 13% for the 65+ group.

Path A: Stages 1, 2 and 3 - age breakdown

	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigations	Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction
16-34	13% 799 inds	12% 190 inds	14% 34 inds
35-44	27% 1,680 inds	29% 479 inds	28% 66 inds
45-54	28% 1,754 inds	28% 447 inds	24% 56 inds



55-64	22% 1,403 inds	22% 358 inds	20% 48 inds
65+	10% 616 inds	9% 150 inds	14% 34 inds

Of the 275 individuals named on cases with an internal sanction, age was known for 238 individuals (87%).

The number of individuals aged 16–24 who were named on cases with an internal sanction were too small to represent on their own. As mentioned in the diversity profile: individuals named on reports and referred for investigation section, the numbers of 16–24-year-olds named on reports in stages 1 and 2 are nominal.

Outcomes - age

Looking at internal and external sanction types across age categories, there is no clear pattern and the numbers are too small to draw any conclusions from the findings. The number of 16–24-year-olds with a sanction was nominal. It was also difficult to see a clear pattern from the findings in 2018/19.

Path A: Outcomed types - age breakdown

	Stage 3 (path A): Cases with an internal sanction	Letter of advice or finding and warning	Rebuke or fine
16-34	14% 34 inds	13% 11 inds	16% 15 inds
35-44	28% 66 inds	21% 18 inds	29% 27 inds
45-54	24% 56 inds	28% 24 inds	21% 20 inds
55-64	20% 48 inds	26% 22 inds	17% 16 inds
65+	14% 34 inds	12% 10 inds	17% 16 inds

Age was known for:

- 85 of 93 individuals who received a letter of advice and/or a finding and warning (91%)
- 94 of 101 individuals who had a rebuke and/or fine (93%).

Diversity profile: Path B - stages 1, 2 and 4

This section concerns the cases concluded via enforcement path B: that is, the concerns taken forward for investigation (stage 2) and concluded at the SDT. We prosecute the most serious cases at the SDT. It is the SDT which makes the decisions in the cases referred to in this section. It is independent of us and can impose a wider range of sanctions than we can.

There were 112 cases concluded at the SDT in 2019/20, with 129 individuals named on these cases. The 112 cases include those resolved by way of an



agreed outcome. This section concerns the 129 individuals and the sanctions the SDT made as a result of these cases.

One case can result in more than one sanction for the individual concerned. For example, if an individual has received a strike off and a fine, they will be counted against each one. This year, however, none of the individuals named on cases received more than one outcome, resulting in 129 outcomes.

There is very unlikely to be any overlap between the individuals involved in stages 1 and 2 and those involved in stage 4. This is because it takes longer than a year to investigate, refer, and conclude a matter at the SDT. Our analysis is based on activity within the practising year, not the outcomes for a single group of cases.

There are two tables for each diversity characteristic in this section. The first shows:

- stage 1 – individuals named on reports made to us for the 2019/20 year
- stage 2 – individuals named on those 2019/20 reports which we took forward for investigation
- stage 4 – individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT in 2019/20.

The second table shows the diversity breakdown of individuals who received each sanction type.

Limits in reporting data

There are limitations in what we have been able to report in this section:

- We have not been able to break down the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group any further than as presented, as to do so could risk revealing someone's identity. This is why ethnicity is broken down into two groups: Black, Asian and minority ethnic group, and White.
- The small number of people also means we have not been able to report on all sanction types, as to do so could risk revealing information about the people concerned. Because of this, we have only been able to report data on fines for ethnicity and age. For the same reason, we have grouped together the 25–34 and 35–44 age groups.

Low numbers at stage 4

Due to the low numbers involved in stages 3 and 4, we cannot confirm with confidence if the changes seen are statistically significant, or whether they are a result of chance. Any differences between groups should, therefore, be treated with caution.

Although the numbers at stages 3 and 4 are likely to remain relatively small, we are taking action to increase disclosure rates and we will continue to monitor this area so we can improve analysis over time.

And, because the numbers in the outcome types tables are so small and percentage breakdowns can be misleading, we have also provided numbers.

Our findings

Gender

Although numbers are small at this stage, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions, there is overrepresentation of men and underrepresentation of women named on cases concluded at the SDT when compared with those named on reports taken forward for an investigation. The proportion of men grows, from 75% to 80%, and the proportion of women decreases, from 25% to 20%.

This pattern, where the proportion of men increases at stage 2 and stage 4, is similar to the 2018/19 findings. However, the increase in the proportion of men from stage 2 to stage 4 was greater in 2018/19, rising from 73% to 85%, with a corresponding decrease for women.

Path B: Stages 1, 2 and 4 - gender breakdown

	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigation	Stage 3 (path B): Cases with an internal sanction
Male	65% 3,959 inds	75% 1,166 inds	80% 99 inds
Female	35% 2,088 inds	25% 380 inds	20% 25 inds

Gender was known for 124 of the 129 individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT (96%).

SDT outcomes - gender

The percentage of men and women who received a strike off is slightly less proportionate compared with those named on cases concluded at the SDT. Of the individuals struck off, the proportion of men decreases from 80% to 75%, and the proportion of women increases from 20% to 25%.

This pattern appears different from that seen in 2018/19, where 85% of those named on cases concluded at the SDT were men and 92% of those struck off. A greater proportion of women were struck off in 2019/20 (25% or 14 individuals) compared with 8% (or 6 individuals) in 2018/19 – but the numbers are small, making it difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions.

Path B: Outcome types - gender breakdown

	Stage 4 (path B): Cases conducted at SDT	Strike off
Male	80% 99 inds	75% 42 inds
Female	20% 25 inds	25% 14 inds

Gender was known for 56 of the 57 individuals (98%) who received a strike off.

Ethnicity

There is an increase in the proportion of White individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT (stage 4) and a corresponding decrease of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals. The proportion of White individuals increases from 65% to 72%, and the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic

individuals decreases from 35% to 28%. However, as noted above, the numbers at this stage are low, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions.

In 2018/19, we saw a small increase for the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group from stage 2 (investigations at 32%) to stage 4 (individuals named at cases concluded at the SDT at 35%), again with the caveat that, with such small numbers, we do not know if this is meaningful.

Path B: Stages 1, 2, and 4 - ethnicity breakdown

	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigations	Stage 4 (path b): Cases with an internal sanction
White	74% 3,864 inds	65% 870 inds	72% 81 inds
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	26% 1,327 inds	35% 460 inds	28% 31 inds

Ethnicity was known for 112 of the 129 individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT (87%).

SDT outcomes - ethnicity

There is little difference in the proportion of White and Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals who were fined (29%) or struck off (29%) when compared with the breakdown of individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT (28%).

There was a similar pattern in 2018/19, with broadly a proportionate breakdown of Black, Asian and minority ethnic and White groups seen across decisions involving a fine or strike off.

Path B: Outcome types - ethnicity breakdown

	Stage 4 (path b): Cases conducted at SDT	Fine	Strike off
White	72% 81 inds	71% 24 inds	71% 38 inds
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	28% 31 inds	29% 10 inds	29% 15 inds

Ethnicity was known for 34 of the 36 individuals who were given a fine (94%) and 51 of 57 individuals who were struck off the roll (89%).

Age

Again, it should be noted that the numbers are low at stage 4, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions. For the 45-54 and 55-65-year-old age groups, the percentage of those whose cases were concluded at the SDT (stage 4) is largely proportionate to those whose cases were taken forward for



investigation (stage 2). There are some differences for the youngest and oldest groups. Those under 34 made up 12% of cases investigated and 5% of those named on cases concluded at the SDT. A similar decrease can be seen in the 35-44-year-old age group, where 29% are represented at stage 2 and 25% at stage 4. However, those aged 65 and over made up 9% of cases investigated and 16% of those named on cases concluded at the SDT.

There was a similar pattern in 2018/19, with a decrease from stage 2 to stage 4 for the youngest group and an increase for the oldest group, although the change was less pronounced for both groups. For those aged 16-34, the decrease was from 11% to 9% in 2018/19 and for the 65+ group the increase was from 10% to 13%.

Path B: Stages 1, 2 and 4 - age breakdown

	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigations	Stage 4 (path B): Cases with an internal sanction
16-34	13% 799 inds	12% 190 inds	5% 6 inds
35-44	27% 1,680 inds	29% 479 inds	25% 31 inds
45-54	28% 1,754 inds	28% 447 inds	30% 38 inds
55-64	22% 1,403 inds	22% 358 inds	25% 31 inds
65+	10% 616 inds	9% 150 inds	16% 20 inds

Please note, the stage 4 adds up to 101% due to rounding.

Age was known for 126 of the 129 individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT (98%). There were no 16-25-year-olds named on cases heard at the SDT for 2019/20, and the number of 16-24-year-olds named on concerns reported to us in stages 1 and 2 is nominal.

SDT outcomes - age

Outcome types across all age categories are broadly proportionate when compared with the age groups represented at stage 4. The only exception is the 25-44 age group, where there is a slight increase when looking at individuals named on cases with a fine (33%) when compared with individuals named on cases. However, the number of fines in this group is small, making it difficult to draw any firm conclusions.

There are similarities with the 2018/19 findings: the majority of age groups were proportionately represented across decisions involving a strike off, except the 55-64 age group.

Path B: Stages 1,2 and 4 - age breakdown

Stage 4 (path B): Inds named on cases concluded at SDT	Fine	Strike off
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25-44	30% 37 inds	33% 12 inds	28% 16 inds
45-54	30% 38 inds	28% 10 inds	28% 16 inds
55-64	24% 31 inds	22% 8 inds	26% 15 inds
65+	16% 20 inds	17% 6 inds	18% 10 inds

Age was known for all the individuals who received the sanctions above (36 fines and 57 strike offs).

Disability

Although the findings at stage 4 relate to only six individuals, we have included the findings in the report this year. However, the low numbers involved at this stage and the low declaration rates concerning disability make it difficult to draw any meaningful conclusion.

There appears to be a higher proportion of disabled individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT when compared with those named on reports taken forward for an investigation. The proportion grows, from 2% (representing 38 individuals) to 5% (representing 6 individuals), again with the limitation that such small numbers preclude any meaningful analysis.

Path B: Stages 1, 2 and 4 - disability breakdown

	Stage 1: Concerns reported to us	Stage 2: Investigations	Stage 4 (path B): Cases with an internal sanction
No disability recorded	98% 6,187 inds	98% 1,609 inds	95% 123 inds
Disability recorded	2% 106 inds	2% 38 inds	5% 6 inds

SDT outcomes - disability

The proportion of individuals who who received a strike off is broadly proportionate with those represented at stage 4.

Path B: Stages 1, 2 and 4 - disability

	Stage 4 (path B): Cases conducted at SDT	Fine	Strike off
No disability recorded	95% 12381 inds	91% 6 inds	
Disability recorded	91% 52 inds	9% 5 inds	



There were 57 individuals stuck off, five of whom had a disability, or 9% of the total.

We have not been able to make a comparison with 2018/19 as there were too few individuals named on cases at this stage, and to report this data could risk, and could have risked, revealing the identity of those individuals.

It is difficult to draw a meaningful conclusion from this particular piece of data, as it is such a small set, and to add or subtract just one outcome would significantly shift the proportions.

Diversity profile: Agreed outcomes

Agreed outcomes allow us to protect both consumers and the public interest swiftly, efficiently and at a proportionate cost.

In addition, changes to the SDT's rules in 2019 include a new rule that allows either us or the respondent to propose that a case should be resolved by way of an agreed outcome. This is encouraging more cases to be resolved by way of an agreed outcome and we are likely to see more cases resolved this way in the future.

The tables in this section compare the diversity breakdown of those individuals whose case was concluded at the SDT by way of an agreed outcome and those whose case was concluded by a hearing. Of the 112 cases concluded at the SDT in 2019/20, 42 were resolved by way of an agreed outcome, with 49 individuals named on those cases. A remaining 72 cases were concluded following a hearing, with 80 individuals named on those cases. The number of agreed outcomes has increased from 33 cases in 2018/19 and which involved 34 individuals.

There is a discrepancy between the total number of cases concluded at the SDT (112) when the total number of cases concluded by a hearing (72) and those concluded by way of an agreed outcome (42) are added together (114). This can happen when a case concerns more than one individual. For example, we may be able to reach an agreed outcome with one of the individuals in the case, but we are unable to reach one with another and a full hearing is needed to resolve the matter. In 2019/20, there were two cases which were concluded this way.

Limits in reporting data

The proportions of cases concluded by way of an agreed outcome are broken down by three diversity characteristics: ethnicity, gender, and age. Due to the number of cases resolved by way of an agreed outcome, we have not been able to present information on the outcomes of these cases, as to do so could risk revealing personal information about those people involved. For the same reason, ethnicity is broken down into two groups: Black, Asian and minority ethnic, and White, and we have not been able to publish any information relating to disability. For the same reason, we have grouped together the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups.

Low numbers



Due to the low numbers involved when looking at agreed outcomes, we cannot confirm with confidence if the changes seen are statistically significant, or whether they are a result of chance. Any differences between groups should, therefore, be treated with caution.

Although the numbers relating to agreed outcomes are likely to remain relatively small, we are taking action to increase disclosure rates and we will continue to monitor this area so we can identify patterns over time.

Gender

Although the numbers are small, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the data, there is a higher percentage of women named on cases concluded by way of an agreed outcome (25% made up of 12 individuals) compared with those concluded by of a hearing (17% made up of 13 individuals).

In 2018/19, there was no difference between the breakdown of men and women who resolved their case either by way of an agreed outcome or by hearing (85% men and 15% women).

Agreed outcomes - gender breakdown

	Case concl. by SDT hearing 19/20	Case concl. by SDT agreed outcome 19/20
Male	83% 63 inds	75% 36 inds
Female	17% 13 inds	25% 12 inds

Gender was known for 48 of 49 individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT by way of an agreed outcome (98%). It was known for 76 of the 80 individuals where a case was concluded by an SDT hearing (95%).

Ethnicity

Although the numbers are small, making it difficult to draw conclusions from the data, there is a smaller proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals named on cases concluded by way of an agreed outcome (23% made up of 10 individuals) when compared with those concluded by a hearing (30% made up of 21 individuals).

Although the gap appears to have narrowed this year, there was a similar pattern in 2018/19, with a lower proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals concluding their case by way of an agreed outcome when compared with a hearing. In 2018/19, the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group represented 17% (five individuals) of those who concluded their matter by way of an agreed outcome, compared with 40% (38 individuals) of those who concluded the matter by way of a hearing.

Agreed outcomes - ethnicity breakdown

Case concl. by SDT hearing 19/20	Case concl. by SDT agreed outcome 19/20
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White	70% 48 inds	77% 33 inds
Black, Asian minority ethnic	30% 21 inds	23% 10 inds

Ethnicity was known for 43 of the 49 individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT by way of an agreed outcome (88%). It was known for 69 of the 80 individuals where a case was concluded by an SDT hearing (86%).

Age

There is a smaller proportion of individuals aged 55-64 named on cases resolved by way of an agreed outcome when compared with those concluded by a hearing, decreasing from 27% to 21% - although the numbers are small (21 and 10 individuals, respectively). The opposite is true for individuals aged 65+, increasing from 14% to 19% (11 and nine individuals, respectively). Again, there are only a small number of individuals within this group, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions from the data.

The pattern in 2019/20 is more proportionate across the age categories than it was in 2018/19, where there were some greater differences for the 45-54 and 64+ groups than seen this year.

Agreed outcomes - age breakdown

	Case concl. by SDT hearing 19/20	Case concl. by SDT agreed outcome 19/20
25-44	28% 22 inds	31% 15 inds
45-54	31% 24 inds	29% 14 inds
55-64	27% 21 inds	21% 10 inds
65+	14% 11 inds	19% 9 inds

We have grouped together the 25-34 and 35-44 age brackets due to the small numbers involved.

Age was known for 48 of the 49 individuals named on cases concluded at the SDT by way of an agreed outcome (98%). It was known for 78 of the 80 individuals where a case was concluded by an SDT hearing (97%).

[Annex: Diversity profile of the people we regulate](#)

The tables in this annex show the diversity breakdown of the practising population, made up of:

- individuals on the roll who hold a current practising certificate
- registered European lawyers, registered foreign lawyers or exempt European lawyers
- depending on the role, some non-lawyers, such as managers and compliance officers.



The data is based on a 'snapshot' taken on 1 November 2020 from data provided by individuals through their mySRA accounts. The practising population as of this date was 160,498.

As the reports and cases considered in this report are from 2019/20, this was the most appropriate data source against which to compare the diversity profile of people represented in our enforcement processes. This data is different from that collected every other year in our [firm diversity data collection](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/diversity-toolkit/law-firm-diversity-tool-2/1) [https://jobs.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/diversity-toolkit/law-firm-diversity-tool-2/1], which covers solicitors, other lawyers and other staff working in law firms, and it uses statistical modelling to estimate the diversity breakdown across all characteristics.

It should be noted, however, that not all the individuals who pass through our enforcement process will be among the practising population set out below. We have a role in regulating everyone working in a law firm, so we can and do investigate concerns about people who are not solicitors. This includes, for example, paralegals and legal secretaries and some non-lawyer managers. They are not on the roll of solicitors, do not hold a practising certificate and do not have mySRA accounts, so we do not have diversity information for these individuals.

Disclosure rates

When looking at the practising population, the known population for each of the four diversity characteristics ranges from 73% (for ethnicity) to 99.9% (for age). This diversity data is taken from individual mySRA accounts, where it is not mandatory for people to declare their diversity characteristics.

We are also looking at ways to encourage people to provide their diversity information when they first enter the profession. As we noted in the 2018/19 report, we have seen a falling number of newly enrolled solicitors provide their diversity data to us, following our move to an online admissions process. This has fallen year on year and explains the drop in some of the disclosure rates seen below.

Gender

The table below shows the breakdown of 149,702 of the practising population where gender was known. It represents 93% of the practising population as of 1 Nov 2020. The proportion of men has fallen by 1% since 2019 and there has been a drop of 4% in the known population data, which was 97% in 2019.

Practising population - gender breakdown

Male 48%
Female 52%

Ethnicity

The table below shows the breakdown of 117,765 of the practising population where ethnicity was known. It represents 73% of the practising population as of

1 Nov 2020. There has been no change in the breakdown of the profession by ethnicity since 2019, but there has been a 3% drop in the known population data, which was 76% in 2019.

Practising population - ethnicity breakdown

White	82%
Asian	12%
Black	3%
Mixed	2%

Other ethnic group

Please note, the practising population data here adds up to 101% due to rounding.

We break ethnicity down into five main groups: White, Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic group. Where the numbers in each group are large enough to report without the risk of identifying individuals, we will report data about each group separately. If the numbers are too small, while the experience of people making up the Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic group will not be the same, we will report these groups together, alongside the White group. We refer to this group as the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group, and, unlike the report for 2018/19, we will not be using the acronym 'BAME'.

Age

The table below shows the breakdown of 160,306 of the practising population where age was known. It represents 99.9% of the practising population as of 1 Nov 2020.

The 16-24 age bracket had 359 individuals recorded in it, which accounts for less than 1% of the practising population. Compared with 2018/19, the combined 16-24 and 25-34 age group has decreased by 1%. The 35-44 age group has increased by 1%. There was no change in the three groups representing those aged 45 or over since 2018/19.

Practising population - age breakdown

16-34	24%
35-44	33%
45-54	24%
55-64	14%
65+	5%

Disability

The table below shows the 1,663 practising solicitors who have declared a disability (of 160,498). There has been no change since 2018/19.

We know disability status is underreported across law firms. [During our firm diversity data collection exercise in 2019](https://jobs.sra.org.uk/risk/outlook/priority-risks/diversity/) [https://jobs.sra.org.uk/risk/outlook/priority-risks/diversity/], only 3% of lawyers declared they had a disability. We consider that this is underrepresented, in light of 20% of the working age population who report that they are disabled.⁴ [n4]

Practising population - disability breakdown

No disability recorded 99%

Disability recorded 1%

[Footnotes](#)

1. We have not always collected disability data in the way we do now, and this means that we are not able to differentiate, with certainty, between people who have actively declared they do not have a disability and those who have simply not answered the question.
2. [Disabled people in employment](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7540/) [https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7540/], UK Parliament House of Commons Library, April 2021.
3. This means a former solicitor who has been removed from the roll cannot be restored unless the SDT allows it.
4. [Disabled people in employment](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7540/) [https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7540/], UK Parliament House of Commons Library, April 2021.