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URBIS

2022 ANNUAL PROFILE OF SOLICITORS NSW

Final

Prepared for
LAW SOCIETY OF NSW
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1. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Law Society of NSW compiles a profile of practising solicitors in NSW. This report presents a range of information about the profession in NSW. This includes demographic characteristics and various aspects of working life, such as sector of practice, hours worked per week and income earned.

This is a summary of the 2022 key findings, based on data collected as of 31 October 2022.

1.2. SNAPSHOT OF SOLICITORS AS AT OCTOBER 2022

Data from the Law Society of NSW database shows:	
Number of solicitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">38,265 solicitors had an NSW practising certificate
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">20,785 (54%) female solicitors17,480 (46%) male solicitors
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Average age of 42.7 years
Country of birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nearly a third of NSW solicitors were born overseas (30%)Of those born overseas, 42% were born in Asia and 14% in the UK/Ireland
Years since admission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Over half of solicitors had been admitted for more than 10 years (54%)Nearly one-fifth had been admitted for 6-10 years (19%)One-fifth had been admitted for 2-5 years (20%)Only 7% had been admitted for a year or lessOverall, male solicitors had been admitted for longer than females
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nearly half of solicitors worked in Sydney CBD (49%)A third worked in the suburbs of Sydney (33%)Just over one in ten worked in regional/rural NSW (12%)
Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Most solicitors were working in private practice (68%)Just over one-fifth were working as corporate legal practitioners (21%)Around one in ten were working as government legal practitioners (12%)
Private law practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">7,296 private law practices were operating in NSWThe majority were sole practices¹ (62%)One-quarter had one principal² (27%), while one in ten had two to four principals (10%)Private practices with 40 or more principals made up only 0.2% of all law practices in NSW, yet they employed a quarter of all non-principal employees in private law practices (26%)
Of solicitors who responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey:	
Areas of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nearly a third of respondents were practising commercial law (32%)Similar proportions were practising corporate law (23%), civil litigation (20%) or conveyancing/real property (20%)
Income (gross annual for FY2020-21)³	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Just under one in ten respondents were earning \$50,000 or less (7%)A quarter were earning between \$50,001-\$100,000 (23%)A third were earning between \$100,001-\$200,000 (35%)More than one in ten were earning between \$200,001-\$300,000 (13%)One in ten were earning over \$300,000 (10%)

¹ In this report, a “sole practice” is a law practice of one principal working without any employed solicitors.

² In this report, a “one principal practice” is a law practice of one principal working with one or more employed solicitors.

³ In this report, reported incomes exclude solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

1.3. 2022 HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS



The profession continued to grow, with 3% growth from 2021 to 2022 and 7% average growth annually since 1997.*



For the sixth consecutive year, female solicitors outnumbered male solicitors. There were 3,305 more female solicitors than male, with an even proportion of male and female solicitors reported in private practice for the first time.*



Nearly half of all solicitors were under 40 years old, with the age of female solicitors averaging over six years younger than their male counterparts.*



The profession was culturally diverse, with 30% of solicitors born overseas.*



Over one third (35%) of private practice partners/principals were female, a small increase from 33% in 2021 and a 9% increase since 2013.*



Almost three-quarters of solicitors were working full time but more women reported working part time (18% compared to 12% of male solicitors).**



Annual gross income for full-time solicitors varied considerably across sectors, with corporate legal practitioners earning the highest median income, followed by those in private practice and government legal.**



There is an even split between genders in the most senior corporate and government legal roles but women are still overrepresented in less senior roles.**



The gender pay gap remains evident across all practice sectors and among males and females of the same age and those who have been admitted for the same number of years.**



Members of the profession contributed \$128m in legal services free of charge to the community.**

* Data from the Law Society of NSW database. ** Data from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. THE ROLE OF THE LAW SOCIETY

The Law Society of New South Wales (NSW), as the professional association representing the solicitors of NSW, has commissioned this report to provide a profile of the legal profession.

The Law Society has two primary responsibilities: acting as the licensing authority and a co-regulator by maintaining professional standards of conduct, as well as investigating complaints against solicitors; and, representing and providing services to its members. The role of the Law Society of NSW is summarised by the objectives set out in its mission statement, which include to:

- undertake activities and services determined by the needs and welfare of members
- effectively represent the profession at government and community levels
- ensure a competitive national profession
- ensure the community is served by ethical, competent and independent legal practitioners
- ensure the community has reasonable and affordable access to justice
- advocate for ongoing reform of the law and the legal system.

Further information about the Law Society of NSW can be found at <https://www.lawsociety.com.au/>.

2.2. OBJECTIVES OF THIS REPORT

This report provides a profile of NSW solicitors with practising certificates in 2022, including information on:

- demographics, including age, gender, country of birth and number of years since first admission
- the nature of solicitors' work, including location, sector, areas of law practised, hours worked and annual income.

The report also identifies trends in the profile of solicitors by comparing 2022 information with data from previous years.

2.3. METHODOLOGY

The information contained in this report is obtained from two sources:

- annual census data obtained from the Law Society of NSW database
- the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

Annual census data from the Law Society of NSW Database

The Law Society of NSW maintains records of all solicitors who hold a NSW practising certificate. The data used in this report reflects the records of all solicitors who held NSW practising certificates as at 31 October 2022.

As the profession fluctuates over the course of the year, and October is considered the most stable month, this report uses data up to the end of October. While the Law Society has retained records of solicitors for many years, this report relies on information collected and stored in the Law Society database since 1988. From that year forward, the coding of information has been reliable and consistent.

The Law Society of NSW does not maintain records relating to people who are working in law-related fields in NSW (some of whom hold legal qualifications and may have been admitted to practice), but are not required to hold a practising certificate.

Since the 2020 Annual Profile Report, "sole practices" and "one principal practices" were separated into two separate categories to better understand the profile of private practices in NSW. A "sole practice" is a law practice of one principal working without any employed solicitors whereas a "one principal practice" is a law practice of one principal working with one or more employed solicitors.

Practising Certificate Survey

The Practising Certificate Survey has been conducted annually by the Law Society of NSW since 1993-94, and in its current form since 2007. Each year, as part of the practising certificate renewal process, solicitors are invited to complete the voluntary survey. The survey gathers additional demographic data, including information about main areas of practice, work hours, and income. A total of 16,970 solicitors responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey, representing a response rate of 46%.

The Law Society does not, and cannot, link the information collected through the Practising Certificate Survey to individual solicitors or the law practices and organisations in which they work.

2.4. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about this report, please contact:

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3. NUMBER OF SOLICITORS

A total of 38,265 solicitors held a NSW practicing certificate as at 31 October 2022, up from 37,186 in the previous year. This represents a 3% growth in the profession, slightly lower than the average annual rate of growth over the last 25 years. Since 1997, the number of solicitors holding a NSW practising certificate has grown from 13,409 to 38,265, an increase of 185%.

Table 1 – Number of solicitors by gender over time

Year	Male		Female		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
2022	17,480	46%	20,785	54%	38,265
2021	17,269	46%	19,917	54%	37,186
2020	16,900	47%	18,809	53%	35,709
2019	16,448	48%	17,909	52%	34,357
2018	15,882	49%	16,797	51%	32,679
2017	15,595	49%	16,043	51%	31,638
2016	15,085	50%	15,065	50%	30,150
2015	14,705	51%	14,230	49%	28,935
2014	14,204	52%	13,371	49%	27,575
2013	13,775	52%	12,633	48%	26,408
2012	13,463	53%	12,030	47%	25,493
2011	13,112	53%	11,431	47%	24,543
2010	12,845	54%	10,915	46%	23,760
2009	12,516	55%	10,347	45%	22,863
2008	12,260	56%	9,845	45%	22,105
2007	11,974	56%	9,281	44%	21,255
2006	11,712	58%	8,618	42%	20,330
2005	11,677	59%	8,132	41%	19,809
2004	11,368	60%	7,566	40%	18,934
2003	11,112	61%	6,980	39%	18,092
2002	10,815	63%	6,374	37%	17,189
2001	10,417	64%	5,803	36%	16,220
2000	10,060	65%	5,322	35%	15,382
1999	9,777	67%	4,866	33%	14,643
1998	9,414	68%	4,457	32%	13,871
1997	9,310	69%	4,099	31%	13,409

Source: Law Society of NSW database

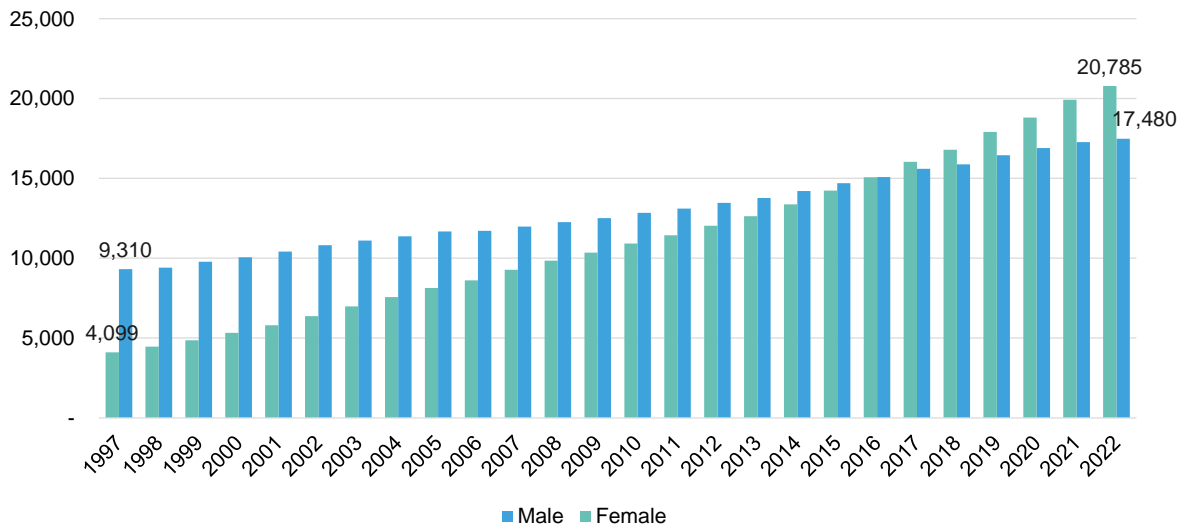
4. GENDER

4.1. GENDER AND GROWTH

In 2022, female solicitors outnumbered male solicitors for the sixth consecutive year. Of all NSW solicitors, 54% were female and 46% were male.

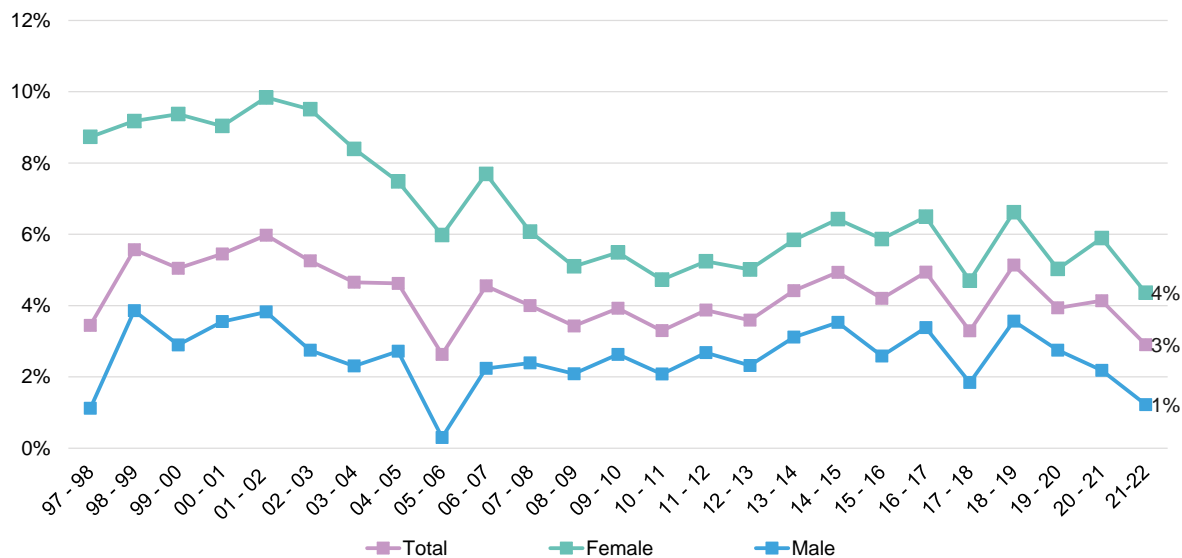
Since 1997, there has been steady growth in the overall number of solicitors; however, the growth rate of female solicitors has been consistently higher than the growth rate of male solicitors. Over this period, the number of female solicitors has grown approximately five-fold (from N=4,099 to N=20,785) while the number of male solicitors has less than doubled (from N=9,310 to N=17,480).

Figure 1 – Number of male and female solicitors over time



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Figure 2 – Annual growth rates in the number of male and female solicitors over time



Source: Law Society of NSW database

4.2. SNAPSHOT OF FEMALE AND MALE SOLICITORS

Table 2 provides a snapshot of the profile of female and male solicitors. Drawing on data from the Law Society of NSW database, the key differences between genders as at 31 October 2022 are:

- a larger proportion of female solicitors in NSW were working in the corporate and government legal sectors (23% and 15% respectively), compared to male solicitors (17% and 8% respectively)
- less than a third of female solicitors working in private practice were principals of their law practice (30%), compared to more than half of males working in private practice (53%).
- female solicitors had a younger age profile than male solicitors:
 - 21% of females were aged under 30 years, compared to 14% of males
 - 31% of females had been admitted as a solicitor for five years or less, compared to 23% of males.

Responses to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey further revealed that:

- Almost one fifth of female respondents reported working part time (18%), compared to only one in ten males (12%)
- overall, female solicitors reported lower incomes than male solicitors:
 - a greater proportion of female solicitors reported earning less than \$150,000 (58%), compared to male solicitors (47%)
 - over a quarter of males reported earning more than \$200,000 (28%), compared to 19% of females.

Table 2 – Profile of male and female solicitors

	Male	Female	Total
Base	17,480	20,785	38,265
Practice sector			
Private practice	75%	62%	68%
Corporate legal	17%	23%	20%
Government legal	8%	15%	12%
Role within private practice*			
Partner/principal	53%	30%	38%
Employee	47%	70%	62%
Years since admission			
One year or less	6%	8%	7%
Two to five years	17%	23%	20%
Six to 10 years	17%	21%	19%
11 to 14 years	10%	12%	11%
15 years or more	51%	37%	43%
Age			
<30 years	14%	21%	18%
30 to 39 years	27%	35%	31%
40 to 49 years	20%	25%	23%
50 to 59 years	17%	13%	15%
60 to 69 years	14%	6%	10%
70+ years	8%	1%	4%

From the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey			
	Male	Female	Total
Base	7,892	8,702	16,594
Mode of work**			
Full time	79%	69%	74%
Part time	12%	18%	15%
Not working as a legal practitioner	7%	9%	8%
On leave at time of survey	1%	4%	2%
Income of full-time and part-time solicitors^			
\$50,000 or less	8%	6%	7%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	18%	27%	23%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	21%	25%	23%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	12%	12%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	9%	8%	8%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	5%	4%	5%
Over \$300,000	14%	7%	10%
Prefer not to say	14%	11%	12%

Source: Law Society of NSW database (bases provided at top of table) and 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

*Role within private practice figures are from the Law Society of NSW database and include private practitioners only (bases: males N=11,663 females N=11,094, whole profession N=38,265)

**Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (bases: males n=7,892 females n=8,702, whole profession n=16,954). Whole profession figures in this table exclude those that selected 'non-binary', 'if you wish to specify otherwise' or 'prefer not to say' for their gender.

^Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (full-time and part-time solicitors bases: males=7,215, females n=7,597, whole profession n=14,812). Bases exclude solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey, and whole profession figures in this table exclude those that selected 'non-binary', 'if you wish to specify otherwise' or 'prefer not to say' for their gender. Note: Percentages in further analyses of gender in this report may slightly differ from these figures due to rounding.

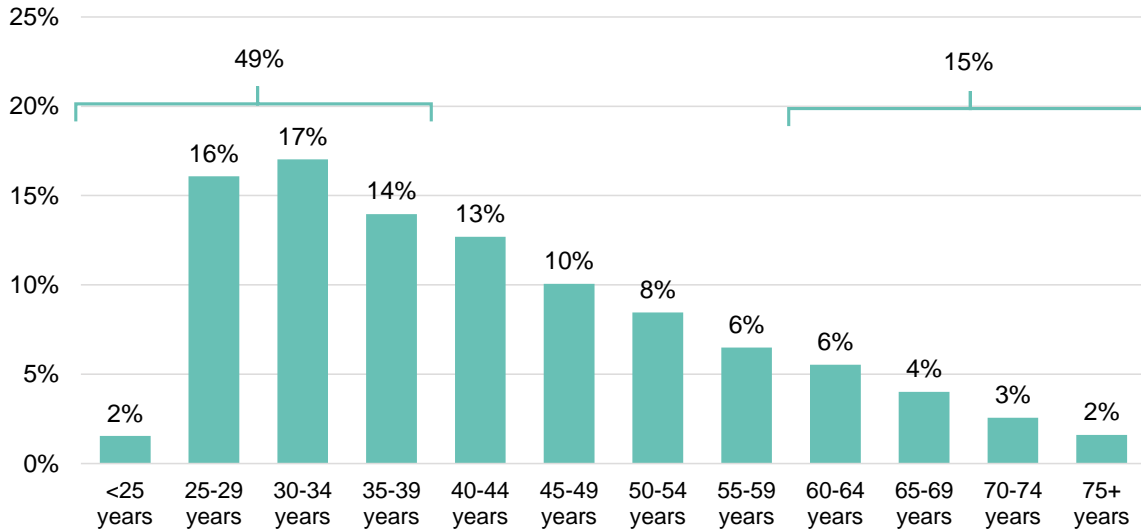
More detailed analysis of results based on gender is provided throughout this report.

5. AGE

The average age of all solicitors in NSW at 31 October 2022 was 42.7 years old, in line with last year's result (42.6 years).⁴

In 2022, nearly half of all solicitors in NSW were aged under 40 years (49%), while 15% of solicitors were aged 60 years or older.

Figure 3 – Age profile of solicitors

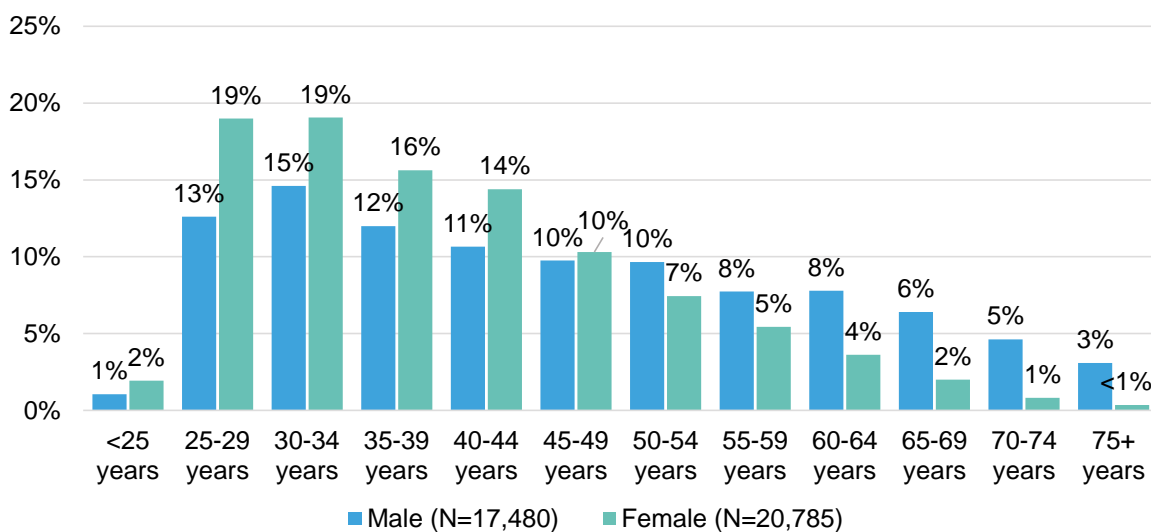


Source: Law Society of NSW database. Base N=38,265

Overall, female solicitors had a younger age profile than male solicitors:

- the average age of female solicitors was 39.8 years, compared to 46.1 years for males⁵
- over half of female solicitors were aged under 40 years old (56%), compared to two in five males (40%)
- 85% of females were aged under 50 years old, compared to 61% of males
- 22% of male solicitors were aged 60 years or older, compared to only 7% of females.

Figure 4 – Age profile of male and female solicitors



Source: Law Society of NSW database

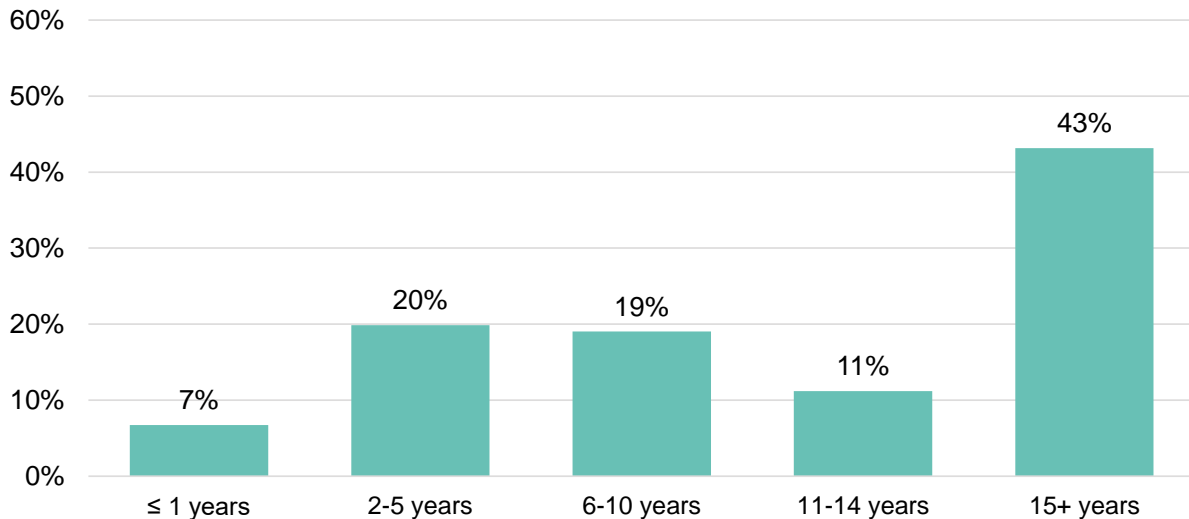
⁴ Source: Law Society of NSW database

⁵ Calculated using the mid-point of age bands

6. YEARS SINCE ADMISSION

In 2022, more than half of all NSW solicitors had been admitted for more than ten years (54%), while nearly two-fifths had been admitted for two to ten years (39%). Almost one in ten (7%) had been admitted for one year or less as at 31 October 2022.

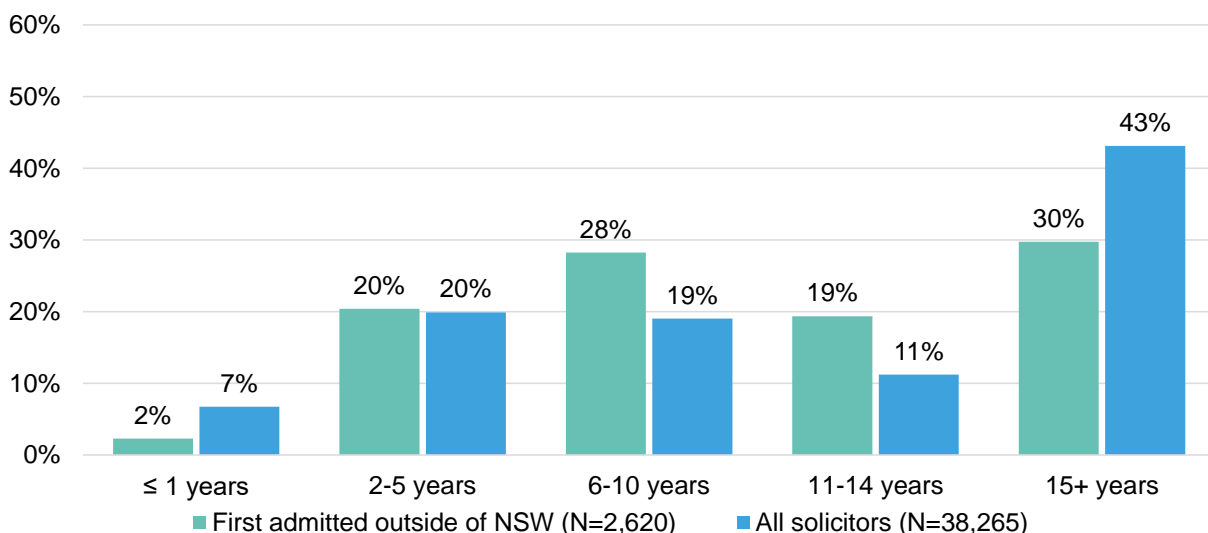
Figure 5 – Years since admission



Source: Law Society of NSW database. Base N=38,265

Of the 38,265 solicitors practising in NSW, 7% (or N=2,620) were first admitted as a solicitor outside NSW (including elsewhere in Australia or overseas). When looking at the years since admission of this group, a slightly greater proportion had been admitted for ten years or less (50%), compared to the whole profession (46%). There has been a small decrease in this gap from 2021 (50% compared to 53% in the last reporting period).

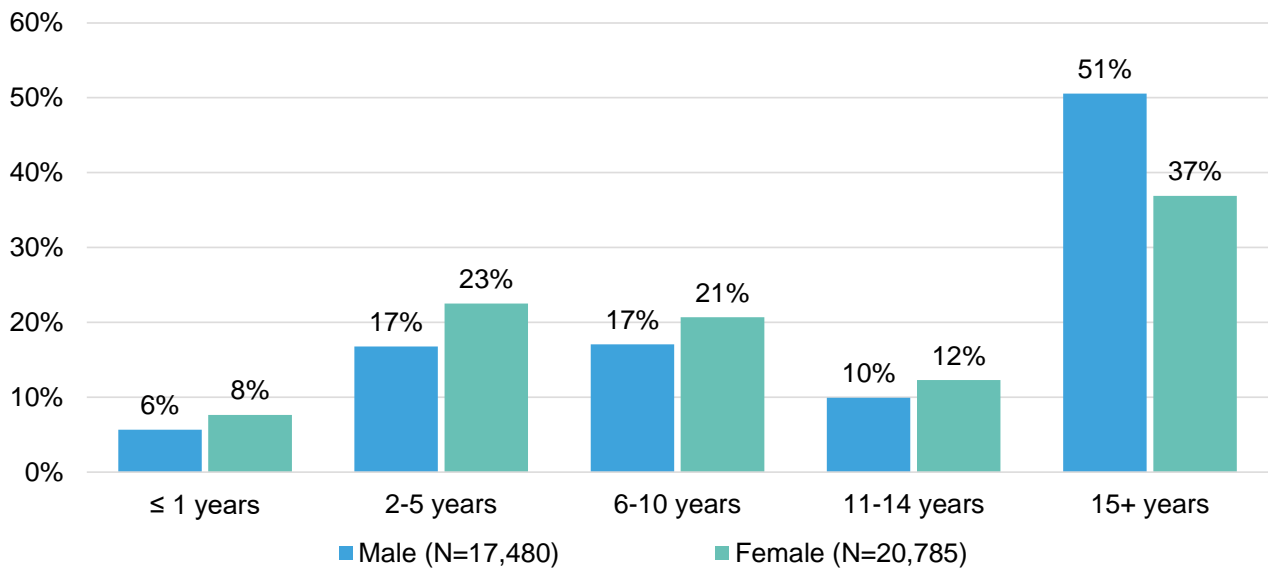
Figure 6 – Years since admission of solicitors who were first admitted outside NSW



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Overall, male solicitors had been admitted in NSW for longer than female solicitors. Half of all males had been admitted for 15 years or more as at 31 October 2022 (51%), compared to over a third of females (37%). This is consistent with the younger age profile of female solicitors compared to males (see Section 5).

Figure 7 – Years since admission of all solicitors by gender



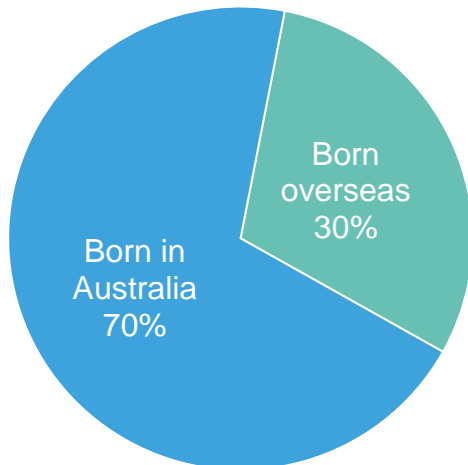
Source: Law Society of NSW database

7. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

7.1. COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Seven in ten NSW solicitors were born in Australia (70%) and over a quarter (30%) were born overseas. This is consistent with recent years and in line with the general population of NSW. Based on 2021 census data, 29% of all people living in NSW were born overseas.⁶

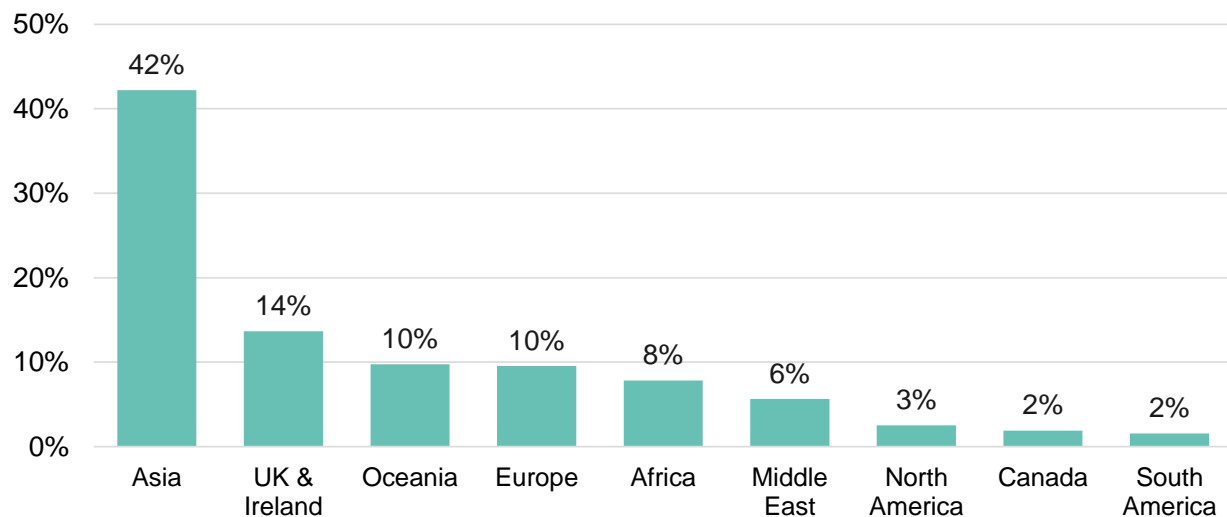
Figure 8 – Proportion of solicitors born in Australia and overseas



Source: Law Society of NSW database. Base N=38,265

Of the 11,514 solicitors born overseas, two-fifths were born in Asia (42%), followed by 14% born in UK/Ireland, 10% in Oceania and 10% in Europe.

Figure 9 – Region of birth of solicitors born overseas

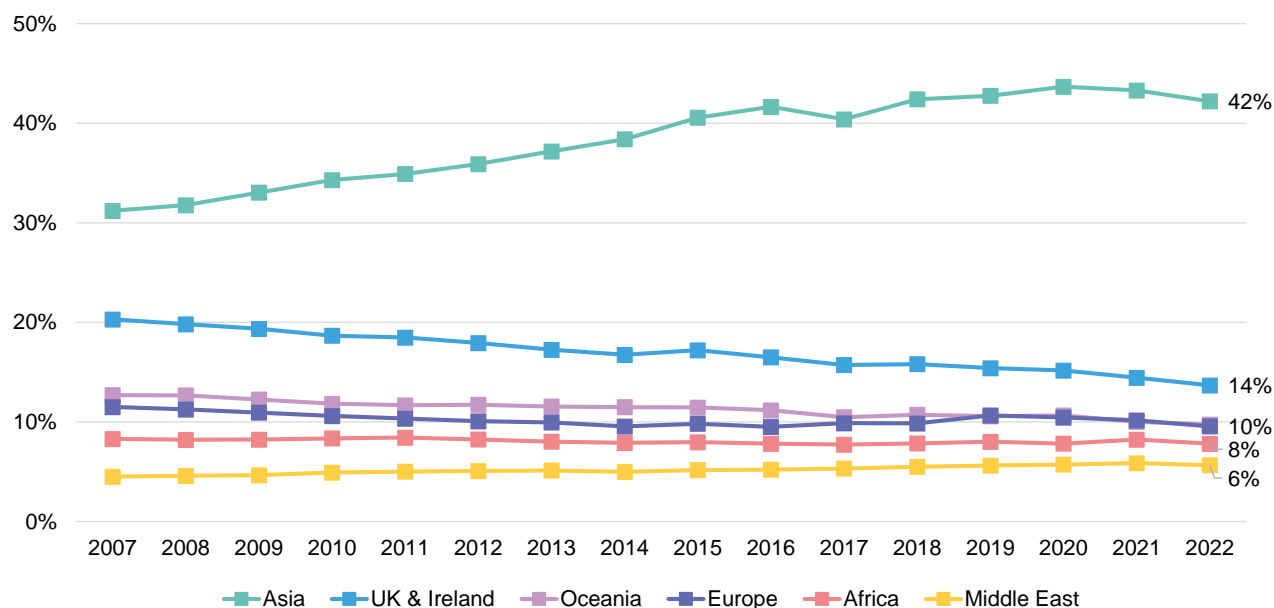


Source: Law Society of NSW database. Base N=11,514

The proportion of solicitors born in Asia is slowly increasing, with an 7% increase over the past 11 years (see Table 3). Meanwhile, there has been a 4% decline in the proportion of solicitors born in the UK and Ireland and a 2% decrease in those born in Oceania. The proportion of solicitors born in other regions has remained relatively consistent over time (see Figure 10).

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022, June 28). *Snapshot of New South Wales*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/snapshot-nsw-2021>.

Figure 10 – Region of birth of solicitors born overseas over time



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Table 3 – Region of birth of solicitors born overseas 2011 to 2022

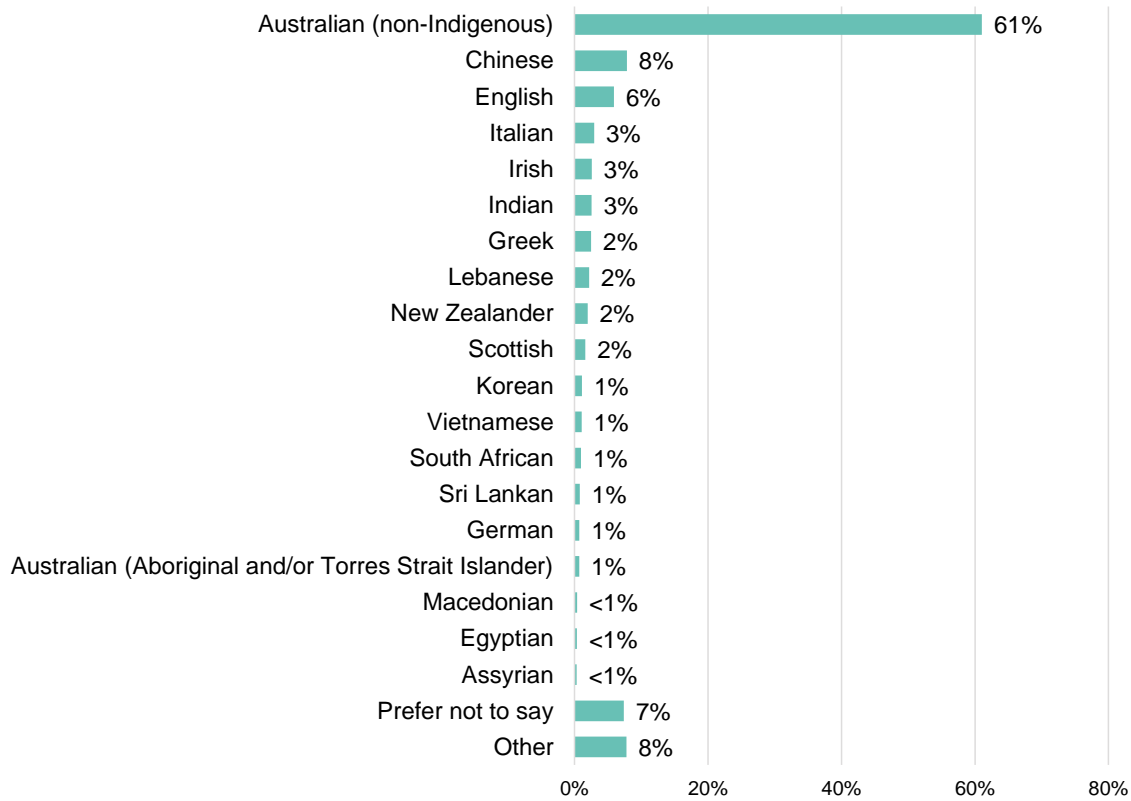
Region	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Change from 2011 to 2022*
Asia	35%	36%	37%	38%	41%	42%	40%	42%	43%	44%	43%	42%	+7%
UK & Ireland	18%	18%	17%	17%	17%	16%	16%	16%	15%	15%	14%	14%	-4%
Oceania	12%	12%	12%	11%	11%	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%	10%	10%	-2%
Europe	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	11%	10%	10%	10%	0%
Africa	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	0%
Middle East	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	+1%
USA & Canada	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%	-1%
South & Central America	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	+1%
Other/unknown	4%	4%	4%	4%	<1%	<1%	6%	3%	2%	0%	2%	5%	+1%

Source: Law Society of NSW database

7.2. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey asked respondents to provide the ethnic or cultural backgrounds with which they identified. Three in five identified as Australian (non-Indigenous) (61%), followed by Chinese (8%) and English (6%). A full breakdown is shown below. Other backgrounds not listed which respondents commonly mentioned included Filipino, Jewish, Polish and Serbian.

Figure 11 – Cultural background



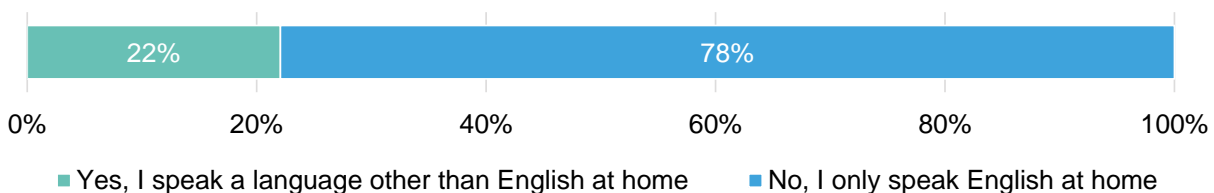
Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base n=16,970

Note: Proportions do not add to 100% due to multiple response options

7.3. LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Respondents to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate survey were also asked, to indicate whether they speak another language other than English at home. Just over one-fifth of respondents reported speaking another language other than English at home (22%). This is lower than the general NSW population, where 27% speak another language other than English.⁷

Figure 12 – Language spoken at home



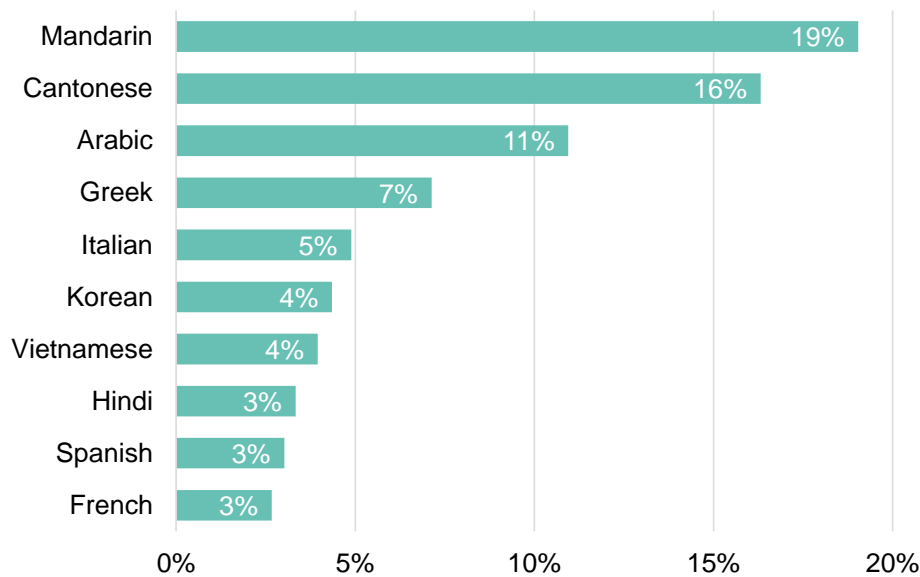
Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base n=16,970

Note: Less than 1% of respondents declined to answer using the 'Yes, other' option.

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *New South Wales 2021 Census Community Profiles*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/1>

Of respondents who spoke a language other than English at home, the most commonly reported language was Mandarin (19%), followed by Cantonese (16%), Arabic (11%) and Greek (7%). A full breakdown is below.

Figure 13 – Top 10 languages other than English spoken at home

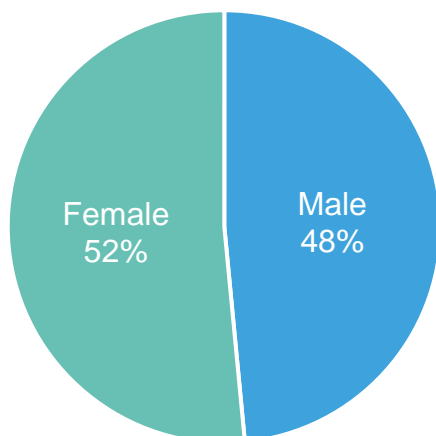


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base n=3,745

7.4. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STATUS

A total of 363 solicitors identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, representing 0.9% of all solicitors in NSW. This is much lower than the general NSW population with the 2021 census reporting 3.4% of all people in NSW identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.⁸ Just over half of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander solicitors were female (52%; 48% male).

Figure 14 – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status by gender



Source: Law Society of NSW database. Base n=363

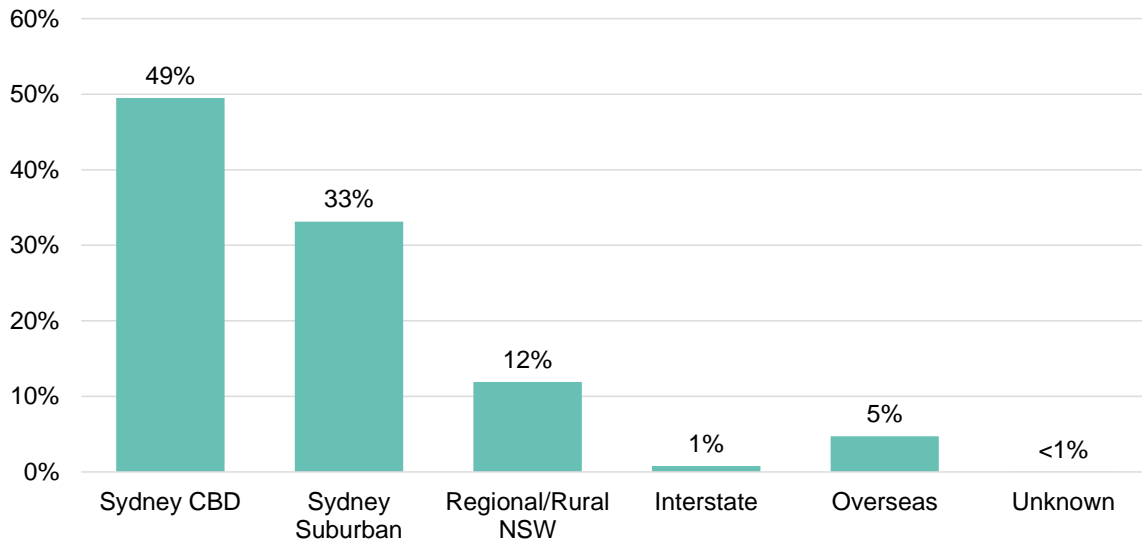
⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022, June 28). Snapshot of New South Wales. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/snapshot-nsw-2021>.

8. LOCATION

8.1. OVERVIEW

At as 31 October 2022, nearly half of all solicitors in NSW were working in the Sydney CBD (49%), followed by a third working in Suburban Sydney (33%). Just over one in ten were working in regional/rural areas of NSW (12%) and 6% were working either interstate or overseas.

Figure 15 – Location

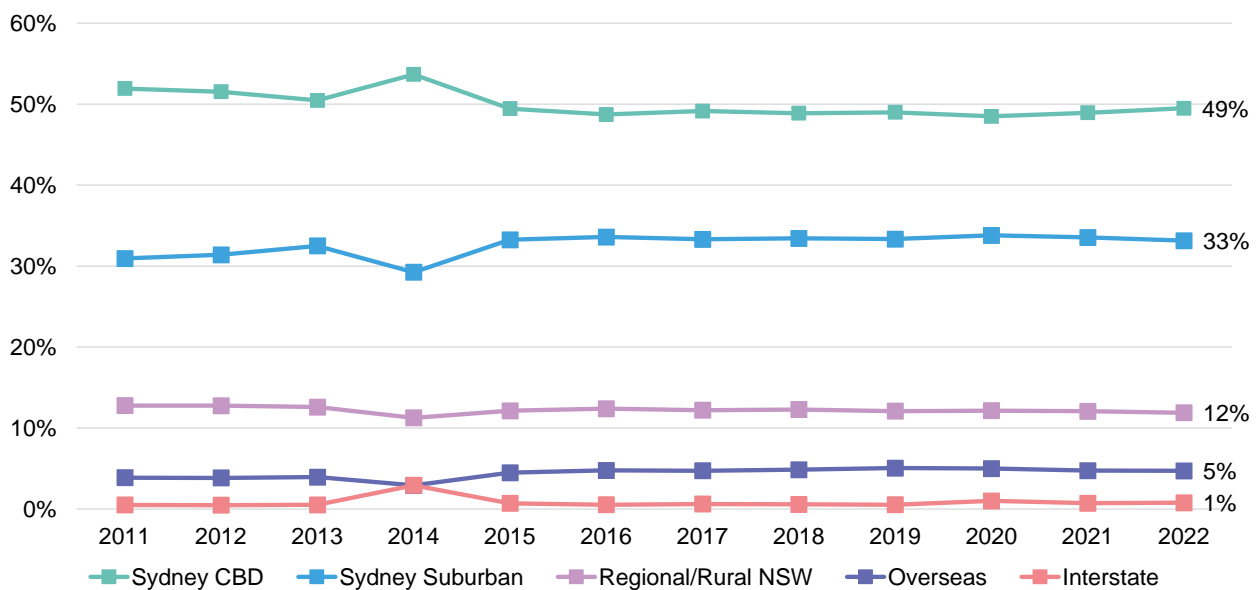


Source: Law Society NSW database. Base N=38,265

Note: Location categories are defined by the Law Society of NSW using postcode data

Over the past eleven years there has been minimal change in the workplace location of solicitors in NSW. The proportion of solicitors working in Sydney CBD has declined slightly, from 52% in 2011 to 49% in 2022. In contrast, the proportion working in suburban areas of Sydney has increased from 31% in 2011 to 33% in 2022. The proportion of solicitors working in regional/rural NSW, interstate and overseas has remained broadly consistent.

Figure 16 – Location over time

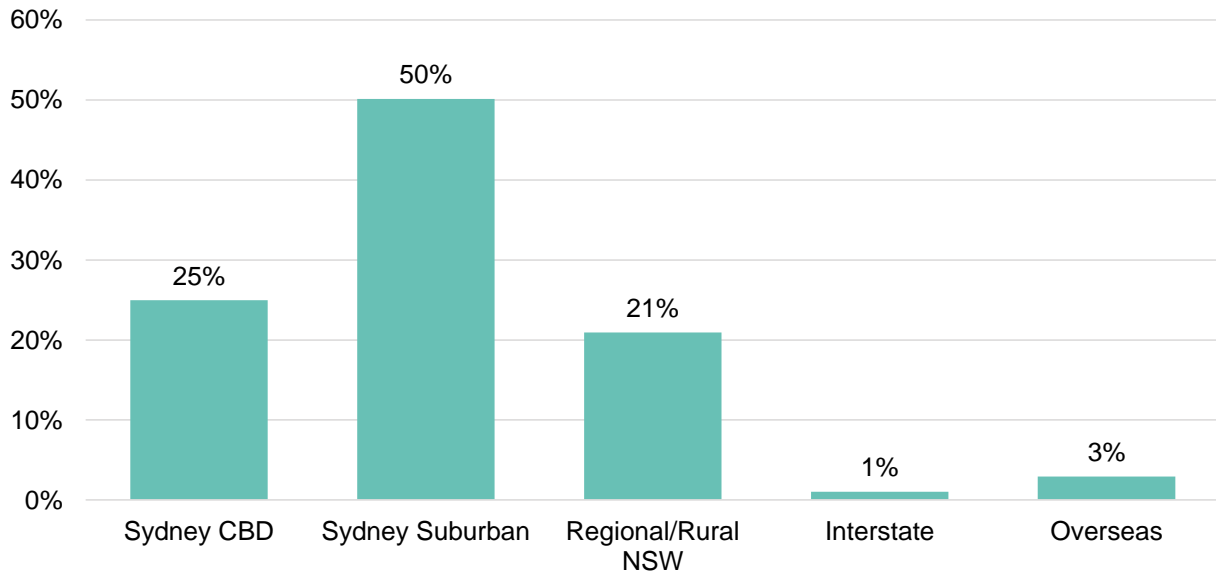


Source: Law Society of NSW database

8.2. LOCATION OF PRIVATE LAW PRACTICES

As at 31 October 2022 there were 7,296 private law practices operating in NSW. Half were located in suburban areas of Sydney (50%) and a quarter in Sydney CBD (25%). A further 21% were based in regional/rural NSW and 4% recorded their main address as interstate or overseas.

Figure 17 – Location of private law practices

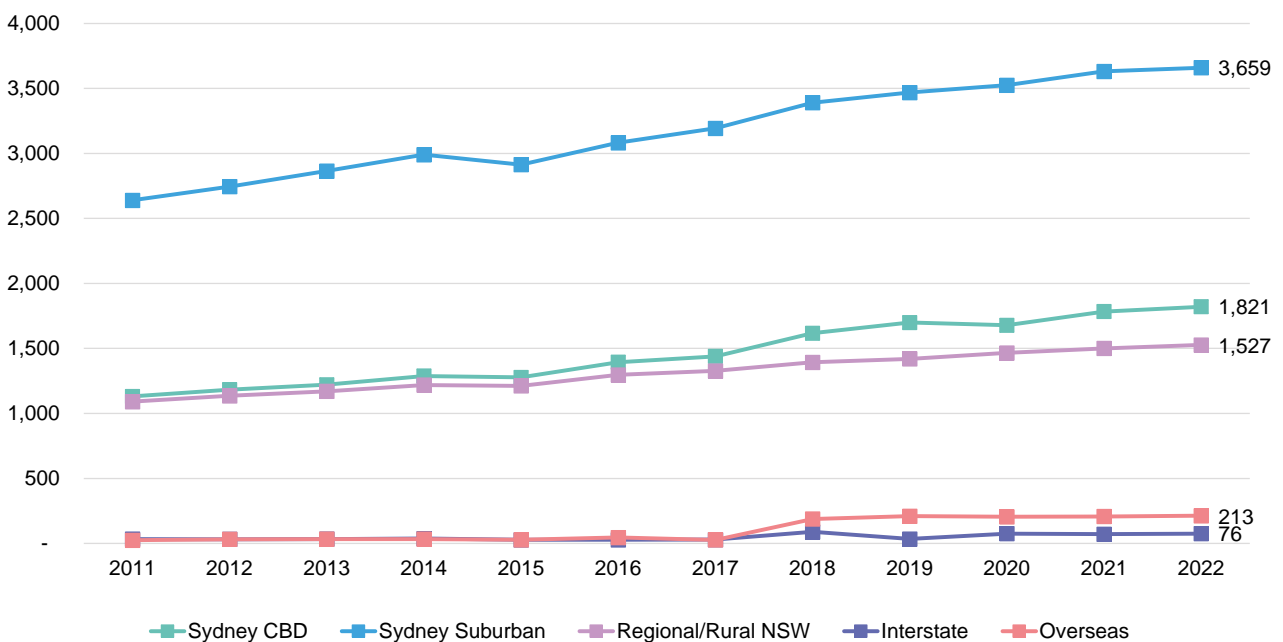


Source: Law Society of NSW database. Base N=7,296

Note: Location categories are defined by the Law Society of NSW using postcode data. Data includes private practice firms with unknown practice size.

There has been a steady increase in the number of private law practices located in Sydney CBD, suburban areas of Sydney and regional/rural NSW since 2011.

Figure 18 – Location of private law practices over time

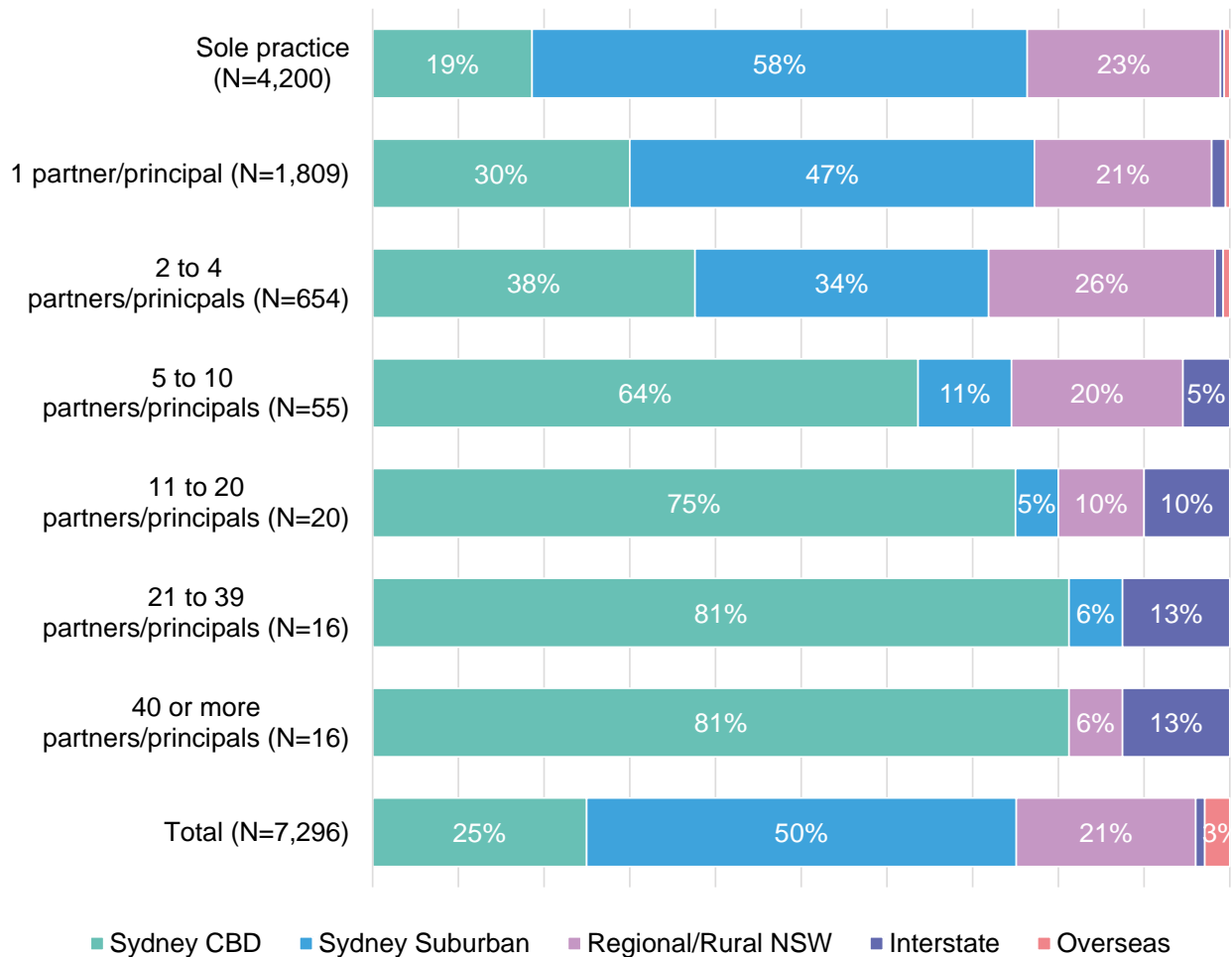


Source: Law Society of NSW database.

Note: Location categories are defined by the Law Society of NSW using postcode data. Data from 2018-2022 includes private practice firms with unknown practice size, data from 2017 and prior did not include practices with an unknown practice size.

The location of private practices varied by practice size, with sole practices and smaller law practices predominately located in suburban areas of Sydney, and larger law practices predominately located in Sydney CBD. It should be noted that the base sizes of larger law practices are smaller compared to other practice sizes (see Figure 19).

Figure 19 – Location of private law practices by law practice size



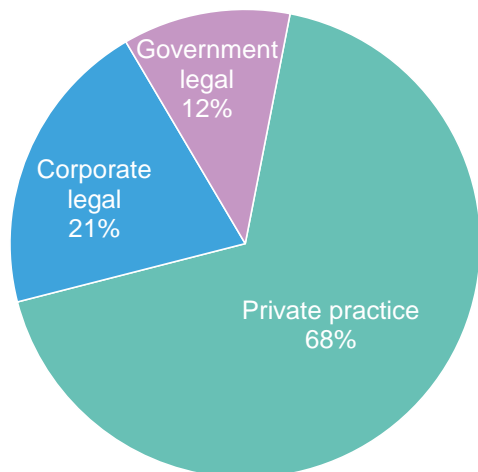
Source: Law Society of NSW database.

Note: Location categories are defined by the Law Society of NSW using postcode data. Total base (N=7,296) includes private law practices with unknown firm sizes.

9. PRACTICE SECTORS

Over two-thirds of NSW solicitors were working in private practice (68%), and one-fifth were working in the corporate legal sector (21%). The remaining 12% were working in the government legal sector.

Figure 20 – Practice sectors



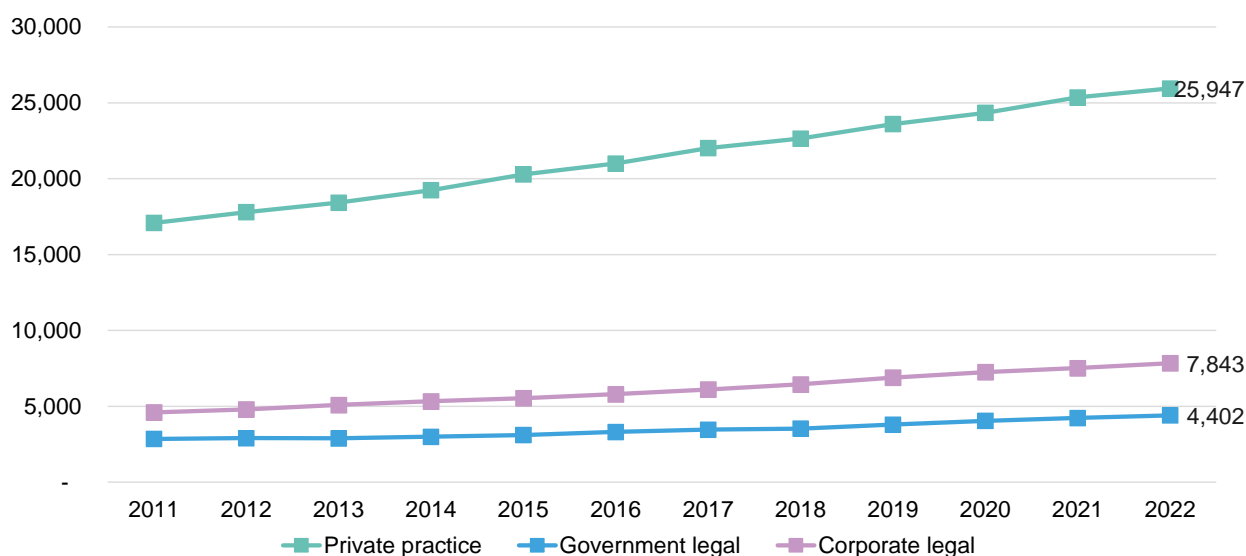
Source: Law Society of NSW database. Base N=38,192 (excludes N=73 solicitors classified as 'other')

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

All three practice sectors have experienced growth since 2011, specifically:

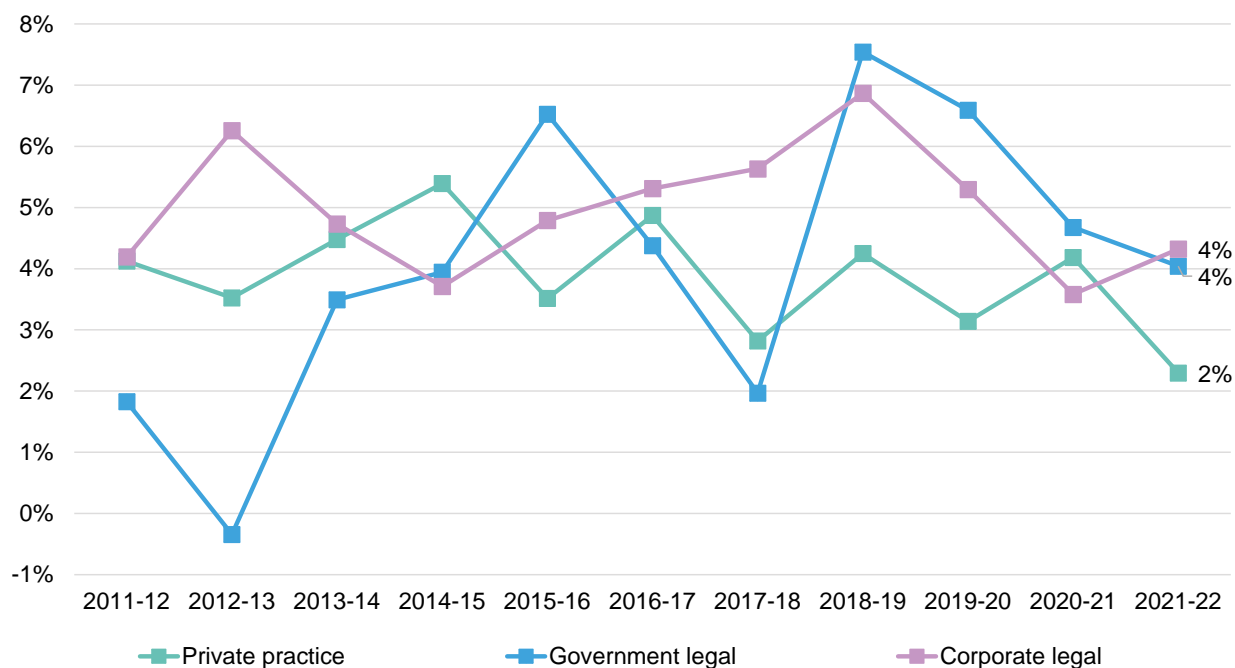
- The number of solicitors in private practice has increased from 17,091 in 2011 to 25,947 in 2022. This amounts to an average annual growth rate of 4%, and 2% growth in the 12 months to October 2022.
- The corporate legal sector has grown from 4,601 practitioners in 2011 to 7,843 in 2022, with an average annual growth rate of 5% and a 4% growth rate in the 12 months to October 2022.
- Finally, the government legal sector experienced 4% growth in the 12 months to October 2022 with an average annual growth rate of 4% from 2011.

Figure 21 – Number of solicitors in each practice sector over time



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Figure 22 – Annual growth rates of practice sectors over time



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Annual growth rates are calculated from October to October each year

The profile of solicitors varied considerably by practice sector, as summarised below.

Gender: In private practice, there was an equal proportion of male and female solicitors (50% respectively). There was a greater proportion of female solicitors in the government legal sector (69%, compared to 31% of males), and in the corporate legal sector (62%, compared to 38% of males).

Age: There was a larger proportion of solicitors aged 30 years and under in private practice (21%), compared to the government and corporate legal sectors (16% and 7% respectively). At the same time, private practice also had a larger proportion of solicitors aged 60 years and older (17%), compared to the government and corporate legal sectors (8% and 6% respectively).

Years since admission: Private practice had the largest proportion of solicitors who had been admitted more recently, which is consistent with the younger age profile of private practice solicitors. Of those in private practice, 30% were admitted for five years or less, compared to 25% in the government legal sector and 14% in the corporate legal sector.

Income: Solicitors working in the corporate legal sector who responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey reported earning higher incomes than survey respondents working in private practice or the government legal sector. Over half of those in the corporate legal sector reported earning more than \$150,000 (54%), compared to 33% of private practice solicitors and 21% of government legal practitioners.

Table 4 – Profile of solicitors by practice sector

	Private practice	Corporate legal	Government legal
Base	25,947	7,843	4,402
Gender			
Male	50%	38%	31%
Female	50%	62%	69%
Location			
Sydney CBD	50%	46%	52%
Sydney suburban	31%	39%	34%
Regional/Rural NSW	14%	4%	12%
Interstate	1%	1%	1%
Overseas	4%	10%	<1%
Age			
<30 years	21%	7%	16%
30-39 years	29%	36%	35%
40-49 years	19%	34%	25%
50-59 years	14%	17%	15%
60-69 years	11%	5%	7%
70+ years	6%	1%	1%
Years since admission			
One year or less	8%	2%	5%
Two to five years	22%	12%	20%
Six to 10 years	18%	21%	23%
11 to 14 years	10%	15%	13%
15 years or more	42%	49%	39%
From the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey			
Base	9,807	3,572	2,061
Mode of work*			
Full time	79%	81%	76%
Part time	17%	12%	15%
Not working as a legal practitioner	2%	5%	6%
On leave at time of survey	2%	2%	3%
Income of full-time and part-time solicitors^			
\$50,000 or less	9%	2%	1%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	26%	12%	23%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	20%	17%	49%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	11%	17%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	7%	14%	5%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	4%	8%	2%
Over \$300,000	11%	15%	2%
Prefer not to say	13%	17%	7%

Sources: Law Society of NSW database (bases provided at top of table, table excludes N=73 solicitors classified as 'other') and 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

*Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (bases provided in table)

^Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (full-time and part-time solicitors bases: private practice n=9,435, corporate legal n=3,321, government legal n=1,876). Bases exclude solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

10. PRIVATE PRACTICE

10.1. OVERVIEW

According to the Law Society of NSW database, there were 25,947 solicitors working in private practice as at October 2022. The characteristics of solicitors working in private practice are summarised below and outlined in detail in Table 5.

Gender: An equal proportion of private practice solicitors were male and female (50% respectively).

Role: Two-fifths of private practice solicitors were principals (38%), while 62% were employees.

Mode of work: Nearly four-fifths of private practice solicitors who responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey reported working full time (79%), which is higher than the profession as a whole (74%).

Location: Half of all private practice solicitors were working in Sydney CBD (50%), and around a third were in suburban areas of Sydney (31%).

Years since admission: Two-fifths of private practice solicitors had been admitted for 15 years or more (42%) while just under a third had been admitted for 5 years or less (30%).

Income: The annual gross income of private practice solicitors who responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey was higher than that of respondents in the government legal sector, but lower than that of respondents in the corporate legal sector. A fifth of respondents in private practice (22%) reported earning over \$200,000, compared to 36% in corporate legal and 9% in government legal.

Table 5 – Profile of solicitors in private practice

	Solicitors in private practice		Whole profession
	N	%	
Base	25,947	-	38,265
Gender			
Male	13,101	50%	46%
Female	12,846	50%	54%
Role within private practice			
Partner/principal	9,759	38%	-
Employee	16,181	62%	-
Location			
Sydney CBD	13,045	50%	49%
Sydney Suburban	8,090	31%	33%
Regional/Rural NSW	3,692	14%	12%
Interstate	138	1%	1%
Overseas	981	4%	5%
Years since admission			
One year or less	2,176	8%	7%
Two to five years	5,760	22%	20%
Six to 10 years	4,608	18%	19%
11 to 14 years	2,494	10%	11%
15 years or more	10,909	42%	43%

	Solicitors in private practice		Whole profession
	N	%	
Age			
<30 years	5,447	21%	18%
30 to 39 years	7,481	29%	31%
40 to 49 years	4,900	19%	23%
50 to 59 years	3,731	14%	15%
60 to 69 years	2,924	11%	10%
70+ years	1,464	6%	4%
From 2022-23 Practising Certificate			
Base	9,807	-	16,970
Mode of work*			
Full time	7,738	79%	74%
Part time	1,697	17%	15%
Not working as a legal practitioner	160	2%	8%
On leave at time of survey	212	2%	2%
Income of full-time and part-time solicitors[^]			
\$50,000 or less	878	9%	7%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	2,407	26%	23%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	1,843	20%	23%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	998	11%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	650	7%	8%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	380	4%	5%
Over \$300,000	1,038	11%	10%
Prefer not to say	1,241	13%	13%

Source: Law Society of NSW database (base provided at top of table, table excludes N=73 solicitors classified as 'other') and 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

*Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (bases provided in table)

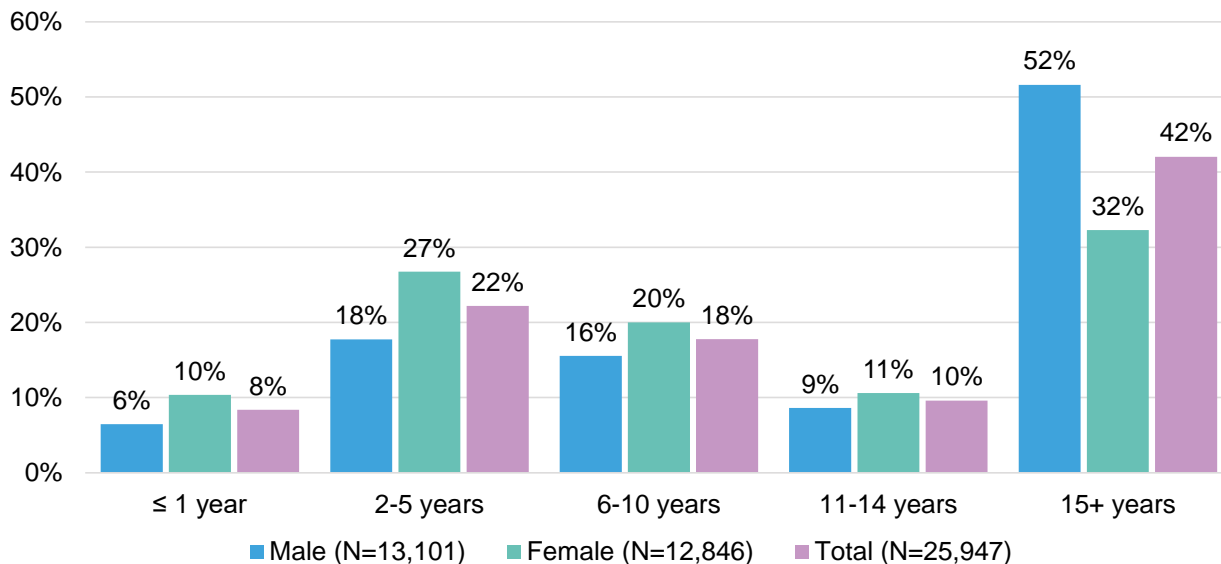
[^]Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (full-time and part-time solicitors bases: private practice n=9,435, whole profession n=15,133). Bases exclude solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

10.2. YEARS SINCE ADMISSION

Females in private practice were admitted more recently compared to males. Almost two-fifths of female private practice solicitors had been admitted for 5 years or less (37%), compared to a quarter of males (24%). Conversely, more than half of male private practice solicitors had been admitted for 15 or more years (52%) compared to under a third (32%) of females.

Figure 23 – Years since admission of private practice solicitors



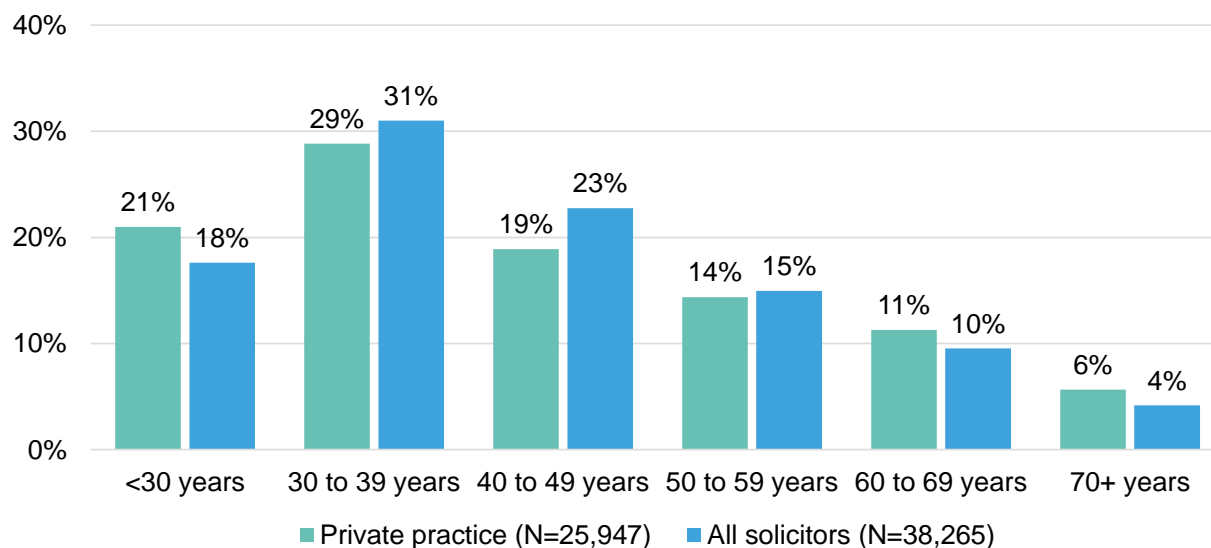
Source: Law Society NSW Database

10.3. AGE

The age profile of solicitors working in private practice was similar to the profile of all solicitors in NSW. This is not surprising as the majority of solicitors work in private practice. Key differences include:

- a larger proportion of private practice solicitors were aged under 30 years, compared to all solicitors (21% compared to 18%)
- a smaller proportion of private practice solicitors were aged between 30 and 49 years compared to all solicitors (48% compared to 54%).

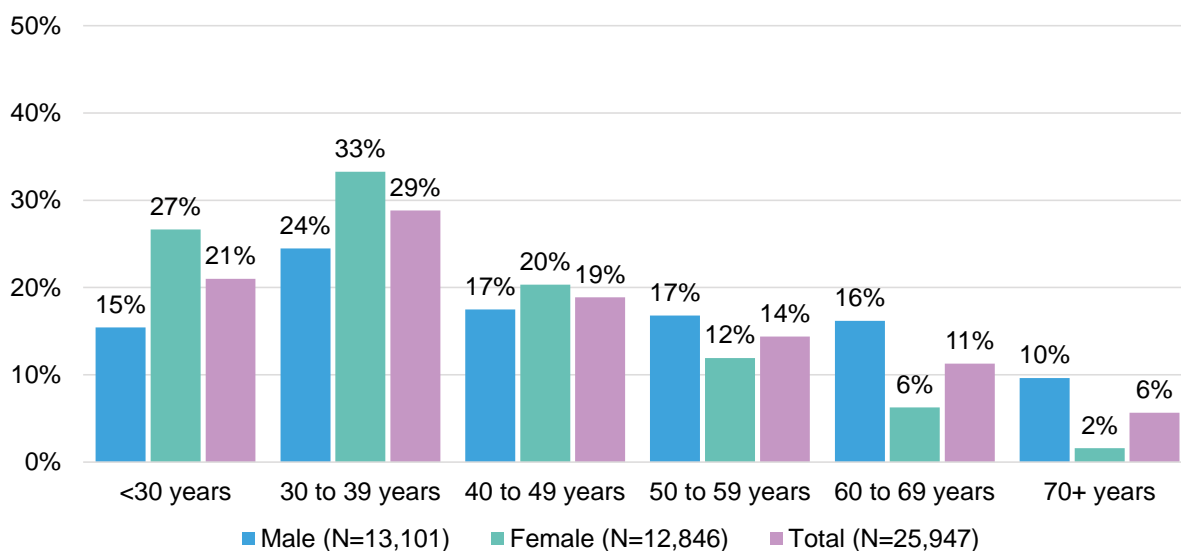
Figure 24 – Age profile of solicitors in private practice vs the whole profession



Source: Law Society NSW Database

When looking at age by gender in private practice, it was clear that females had a younger age profile than males. Three-fifths of female solicitors were aged 39 years or younger (60%), compared to two-fifths of male solicitors (39%). Conversely, over a quarter of male solicitors were aged 60 years or older (26%), compared to only 8% of female solicitors.

Figure 25 – Age profile of male and female solicitors in private practice



Source: Law Society NSW Database

10.4. LAW PRACTICE SIZE AND ROLE

As at October 2022, there were 7,296 private practices operating in NSW. These law practices comprised 9,534 principals and 13,223 employed solicitors.⁹ The majority of private practices were sole practices (62%), followed by law practices with one principal and employed solicitors (27%).¹⁰

There were 16 private law practices with 40 or more principals (1,121 principals in total), which employed 3,405 solicitors. This represents just over one quarter of all non-principal solicitors working in private practice (26%). In total, at October 2022, 20% of private practice solicitors were working in less than one percent of all private practices in NSW.

Table 6 – Private practice solicitors by role and size of law practice

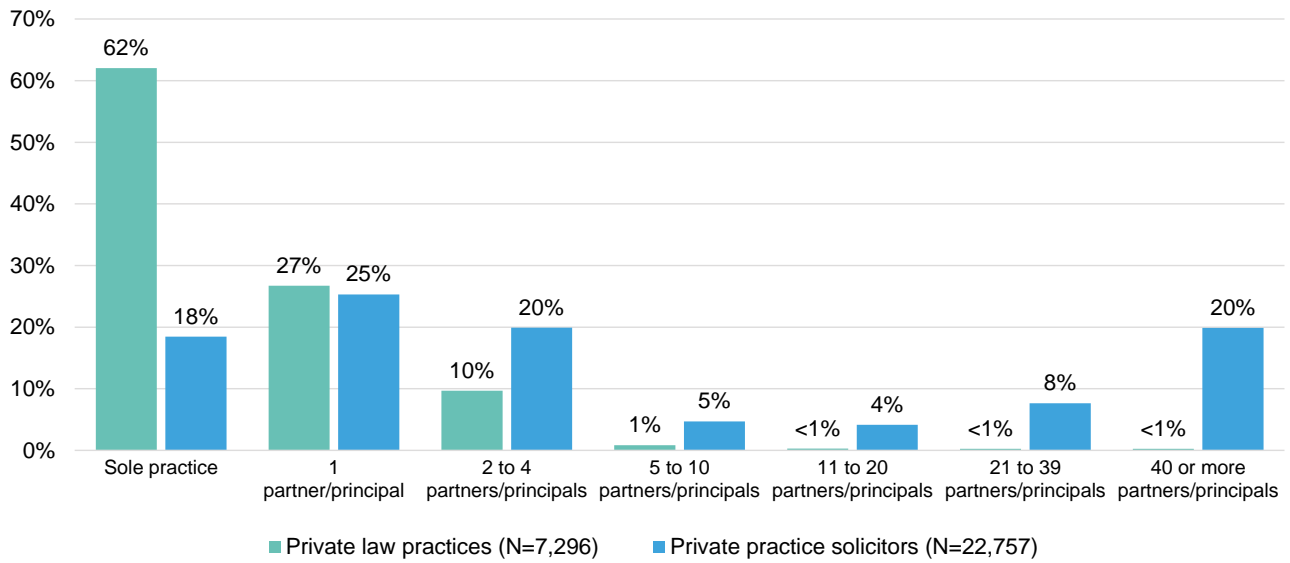
Size of law practice (number of partners/ principals)	Private practices		Solicitors in private practice					
	N	%	Principals		Employees		Total	
			N	%	N	%	N	%
Sole practice*	4,200	62%	4,200	44%	0	0%	4,200	18%
1 partner/principal	1,809	27%	1,726	18%	4,030	30%	5,756	25%
2 to 4 partners/principals	654	10%	1,432	15%	3,097	23%	4,529	20%
5 to 10 partners/principals	55	1%	344	4%	722	5%	1,066	5%
11 to 20 partners/principals	20	<1%	275	3%	665	5%	940	4%
21 to 39 partners/principals	16	<1%	436	5%	1,304	10%	1,740	8%
40 or more partners/principals	16	<1%	1,121	12%	3,405	26%	4,526	20%
Total	6,770	100%	9,534	100%	13,223	100%	22,757	100%

Source: Law Society of NSW database *In previous reports, sole practice figures included sole principal law practices with employed solicitors. This category has since been split. Note: Reduced base of N=22,757 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; excludes N=3,183 solicitors with an 'unknown' practice size.

⁹ Figure excludes N=3,183 solicitors with an 'unknown' practice size.

¹⁰ In reports prior to 2020, sole practice figures included law practices with one principal and employed solicitors. This category has since been split.

Figure 26 – Private legal practitioners by size of law practice

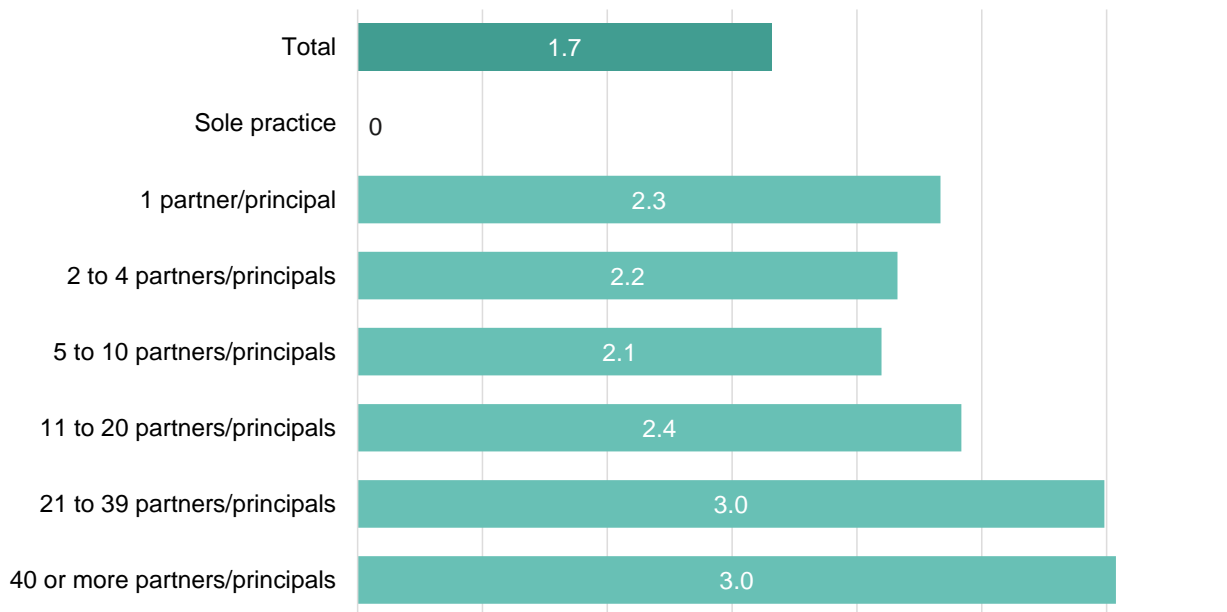


Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=22,757 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=3,183 solicitors with an 'unknown' practice size.

The ratio of employed solicitors to principals in private practices varied by the size of law practice. Larger law practices generally had higher employed solicitor-to-principal ratios. For instance, law practices with 40 or more principals had a ratio of 3.0, while practices of two to four principals had a ratio of 2.2. The ratio across all private practices was 1.7 employed solicitors to each principal.

Figure 27 – Ratio of employees to principals by size of law practice



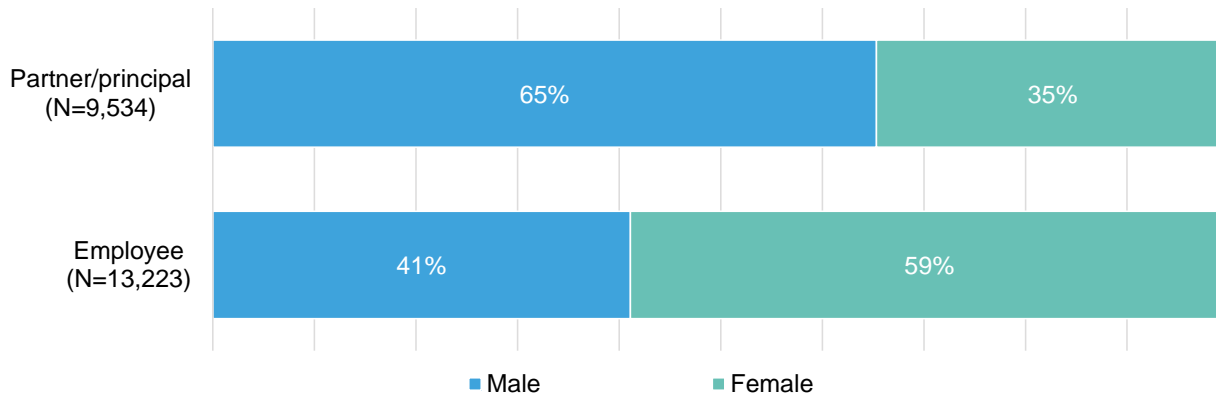
Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Ratio across all private practices includes N=3,183 solicitors with an 'unknown' practice size.

10.4.1. Gender by role in law practice

Consistent with previous years, there was a greater proportion of male principals (65%) than females (35%). However, this gap has been gradually decreasing over time; for instance, in 2013 76% of partners/principals were male and only 24% were female, and in 2021 these proportions were 67% males and 33% females.

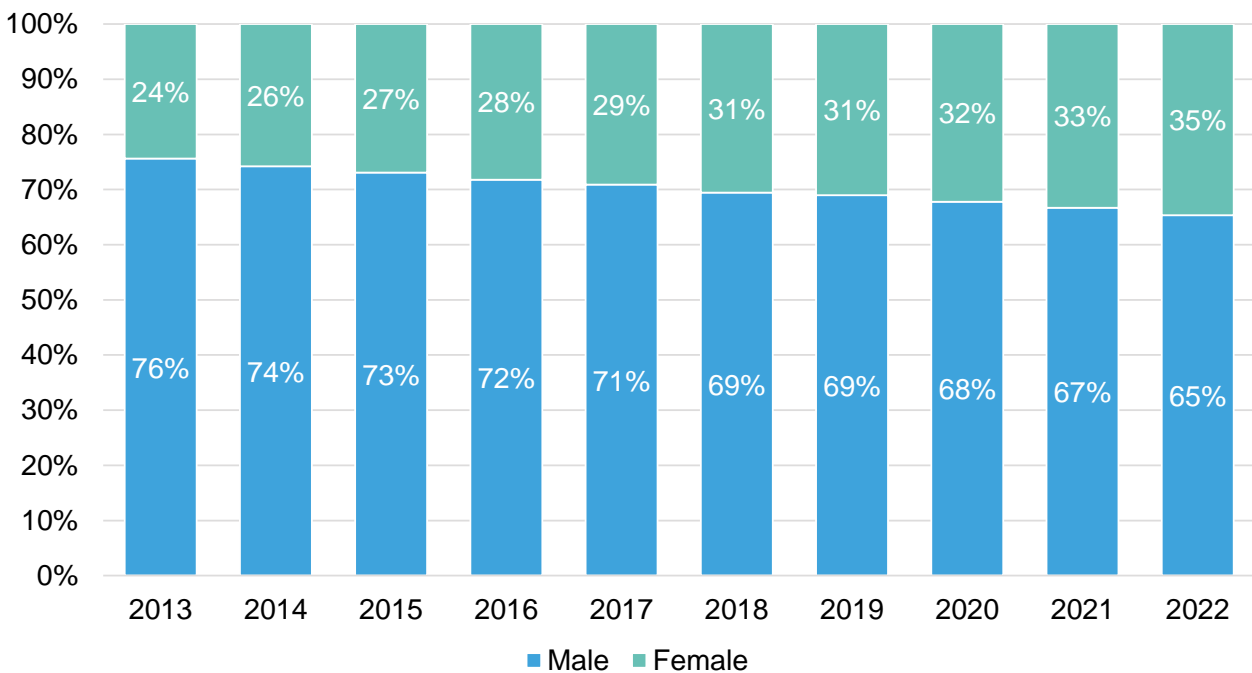
Figure 28 – Gender profile of partners/principals and employed solicitors in private practice



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=22,757 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=3,183 solicitors with an 'unknown' practice size.

Figure 29 – Partners/principals in private practice by gender over time

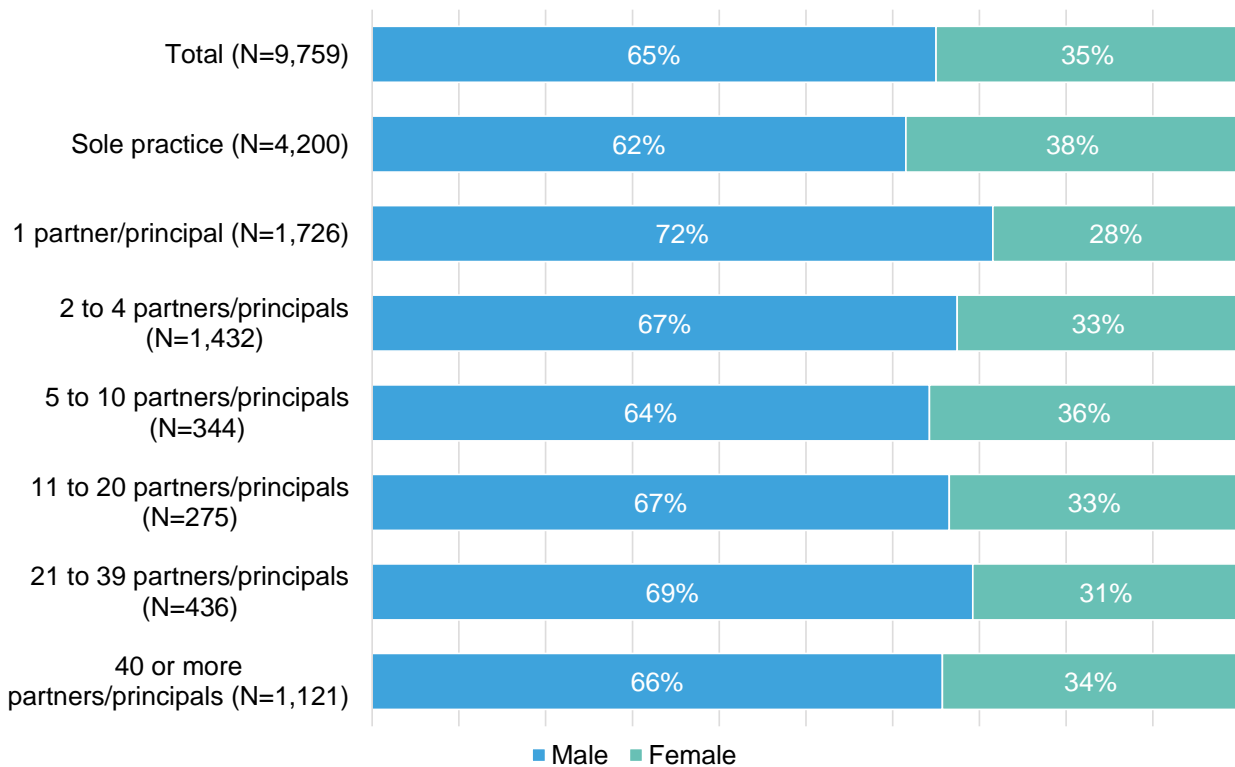


Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=22,757 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=3,183 solicitors with an 'unknown' practice size.

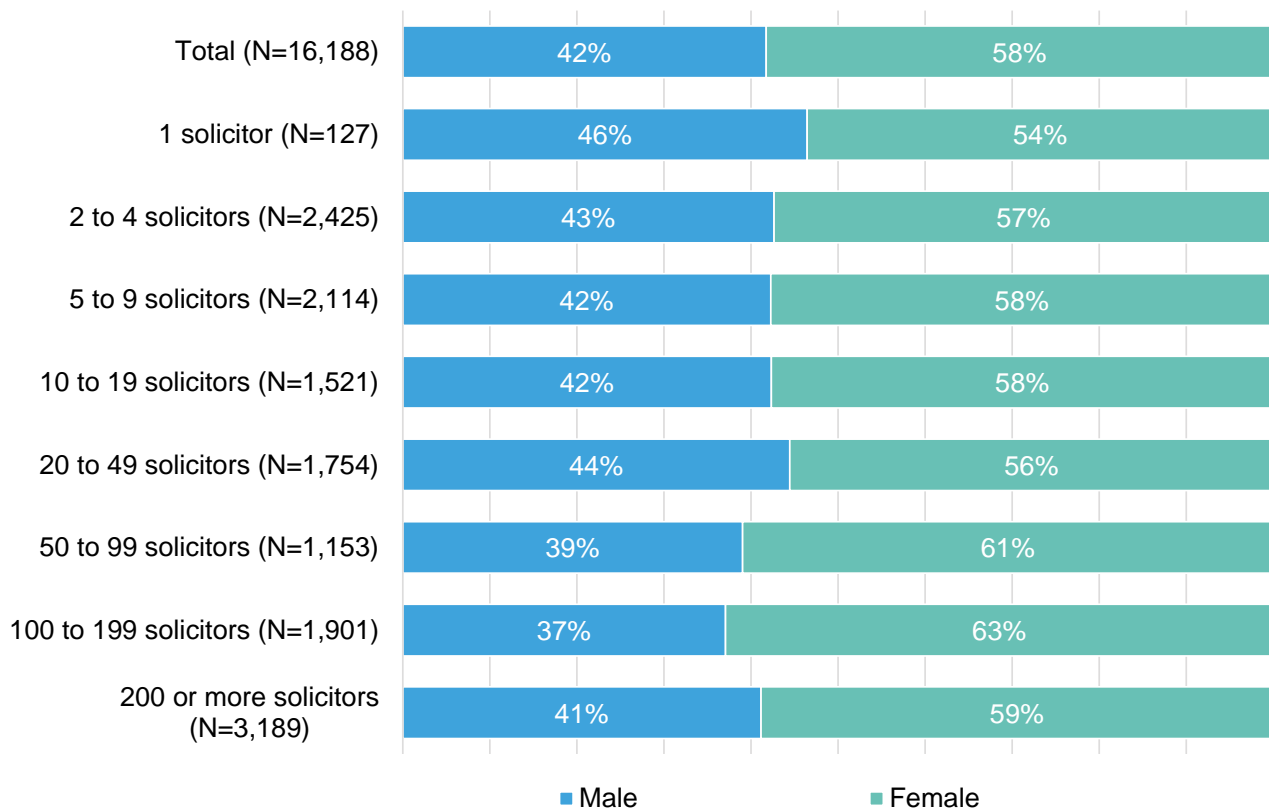
Of all law practice sizes, there was a slightly higher proportion of female principals in sole practices (38%), compared to other law practice sizes. However, for employed solicitors, there was a higher proportion of females in larger firms of over 50 solicitors.

Figure 30 – Gender profile of partners/principals in private practice by law practice size



Source: Law Society of NSW database. Note: Proportions across all law practice sizes (total N=9,759) include N=225 solicitors with an 'unknown' practice size.

Figure 31 – Gender profile of employed solicitors in private practice by law practice size



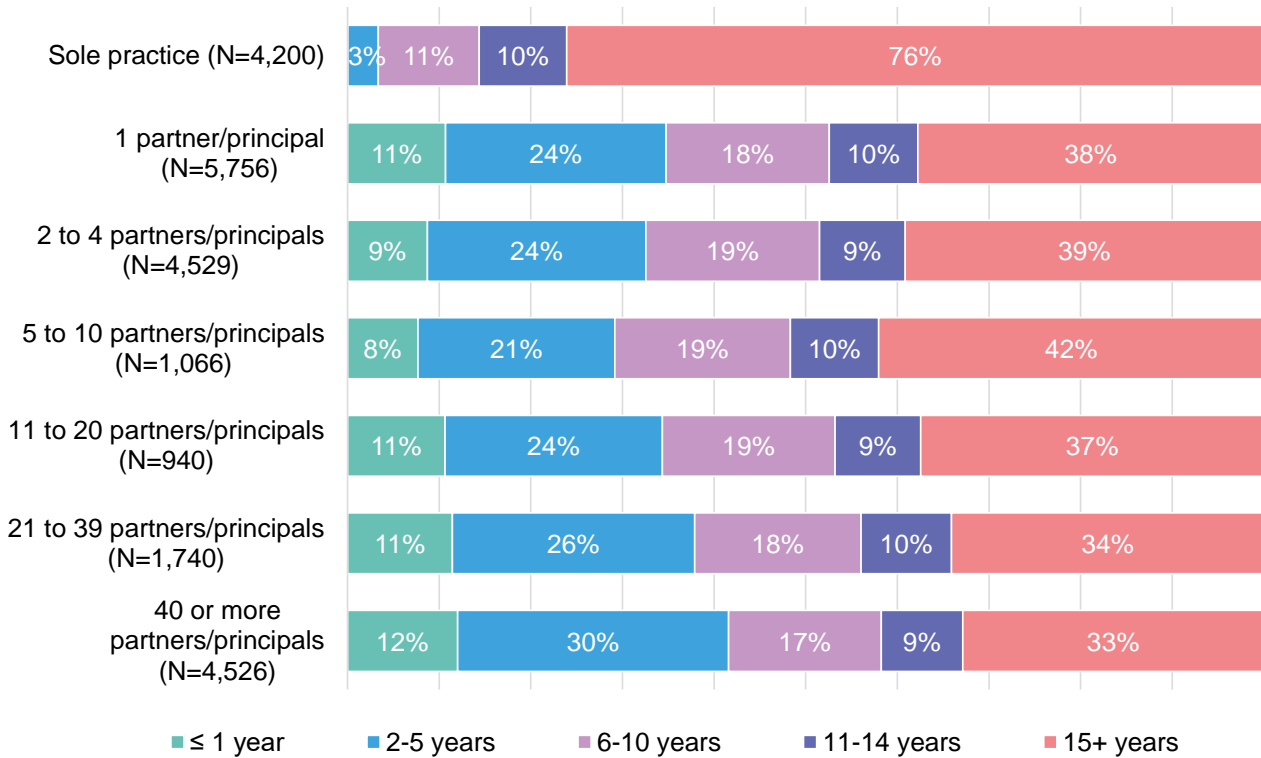
Source: Law Society of NSW database. Note: Proportions across all law practice sizes (total N=16,188) include N=2,004 solicitors with an 'unknown' practice size.

10.4.2. Years since admission by law practice size

Overall, larger law practices had a greater proportion of early career solicitors than smaller law practices. For example, 12% of solicitors in law practices of 40 or more principals had been admitted for one year or less as at October 2022, compared to 9% of those in law practices of two to four principals.

It should also be noted that three-quarters (76%) of solicitors working in sole practices had been admitted for 15 years or more as at October 2022.

Figure 32 – Years since admission of solicitors in private practices by law practice size



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=22,757 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=3,183 solicitors with 'unknown' practice sizes.

11. THE CORPORATE LEGAL SECTOR

According to the Law Society of NSW database, there were 7,843 corporate legal practitioners as at 31 October 2022.

Gender: Almost two-thirds corporate legal practitioners were female (62%).

Mode of work: A slightly higher proportion of corporate legal practitioners who responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey reported working full time (81%), compared to the profession as a whole (74%).

Location: Only 4% of corporate legal practitioners were working in regional/rural NSW, compared to 12% of the whole profession. A larger proportion of corporate legal practitioners were working overseas (10%), compared to the whole profession (5%).

Years since admission: A smaller proportion of corporate legal practitioners had been admitted for five years or less (14%) compared to 27% for the whole profession; however, a greater proportion had been admitted for between 11 and 14 years (15%), compared to 11% for the whole profession.

Age: A smaller proportion of corporate legal practitioners were aged less than 30 years old (7%), compared to the whole profession (18%). A majority of corporate legal practitioners were aged between 30 and 49 years (70%), compared to 54% for the whole profession.

Income: Corporate legal practitioners who responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey generally reported higher incomes, with 54% earning more than \$150,001 compared to only 35% of the whole profession.

Table 7 – Profile of corporate legal practitioners

	Corporate legal practitioners		Whole profession
	N	%	
Base	7,843	-	38,265
Gender			
Male	2,995	38%	46%
Female	4,848	62%	54%
Location			
Sydney CBD	3,597	46%	49%
Sydney Suburban	3,021	39%	33%
Regional/Rural NSW	307	4%	12%
Interstate	110	1%	1%
Overseas	808	10%	5%
Years since admission			
One year or less	189	2%	7%
Two to five years	956	12%	20%
Six to 10 years	1,640	21%	19%
11 to 14 years	1,205	15%	11%
15 years or more	3,853	49%	43%

	Corporate legal practitioners		Whole profession
	N	%	
Age			
<30 years	570	7%	18%
30 to 39 years	2,802	36%	31%
40 to 49 years	2,693	34%	23%
50 to 59 years	1,330	17%	15%
60 to 69 years	387	5%	10%
70+ years	61	1%	4%
From 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey			
Base	3,572		16,970
Mode of work*			
Full time	2,902	81%	74%
Part time	419	12%	15%
Not working as a legal practitioner	175	5%	8%
On leave at time of survey	76	2%	2%
Role within the corporate legal sector*			
Group General counsel	243	7%	-
Head of legal team	357	10%	-
General counsel	364	10%	-
Senior lawyer/Senior legal counsel	1,223	34%	-
Lawyer/Legal counsel	1,039	29%	-
Graduate lawyer	74	2%	-
Paralegal	9	<1%	-
Other	263	7%	-
Income of full-time and part-time solicitors^			
\$50,000 or less	50	2%	7%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	397	12%	23%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	575	17%	23%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	548	17%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	452	14%	8%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	256	8%	5%
Over \$300,000	483	15%	10%
Prefer not to say	560	17%	13%

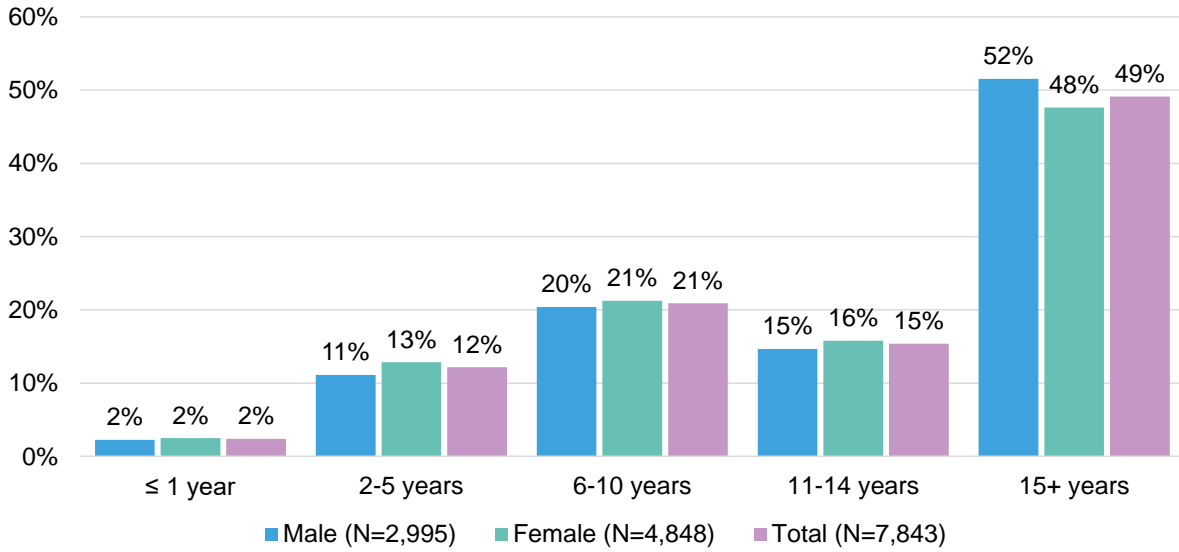
Source: Law Society of NSW database (base provided at top of table) and 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

*Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (bases provided in table). In the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey, the category 'Group general counsel' was added and 'Head of legal team/General counsel' was split into two groups – 'Head of legal' and 'General counsel'.

^Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (full-time and part-time solicitors bases: corporate legal n=3,321, whole profession n=15,133). Bases exclude solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

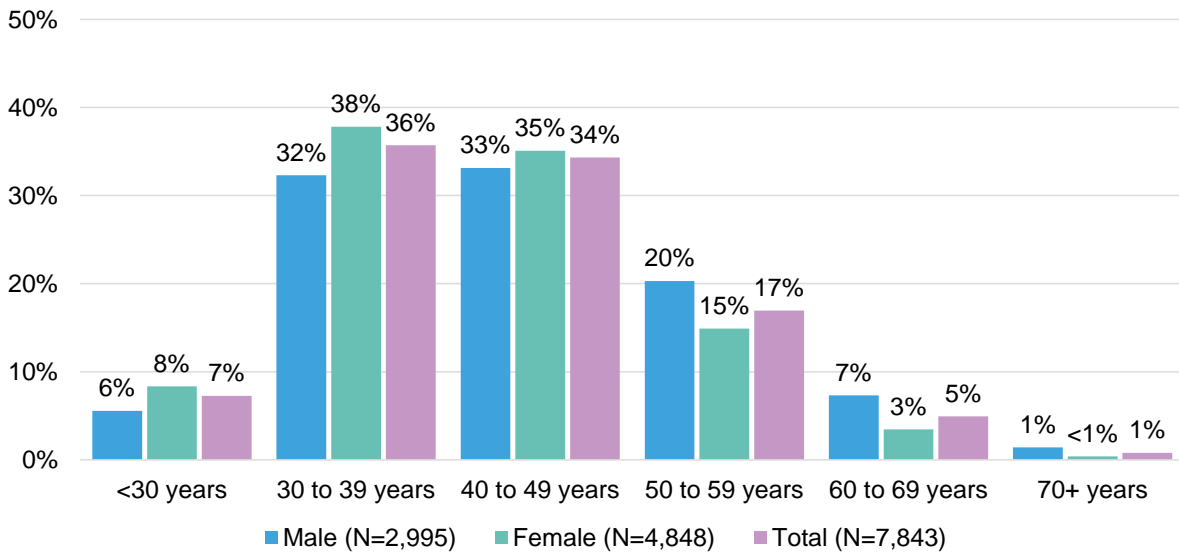
Females in the corporate legal sector were slightly less likely to be admitted more than 15 years and generally had a younger age profile compared to males (see Figure 33 and Figure 34) although these differences were not as large as other sectors.

Figure 33 – Years since admission of corporate legal practitioners



Source: Law Society of NSW database

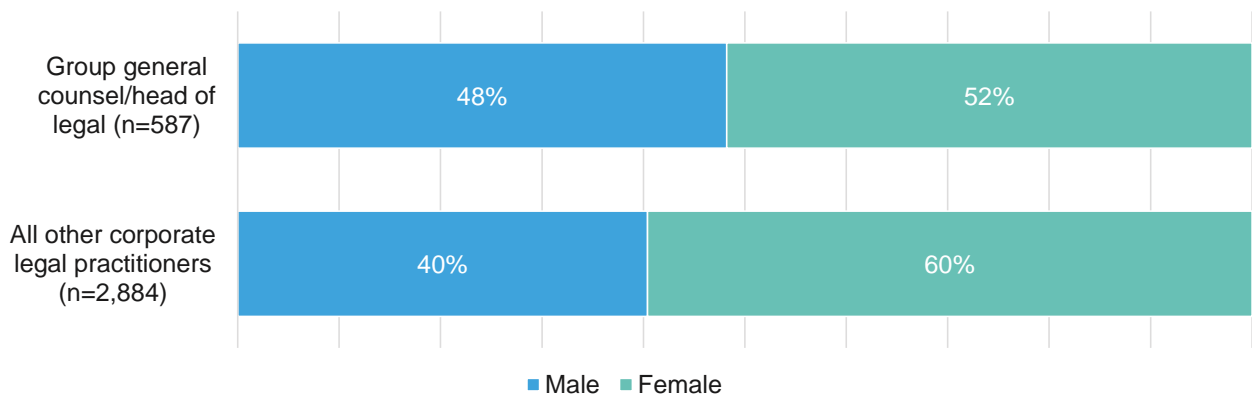
Figure 34 – Age profile of corporate legal practitioners



Source: Law Society of NSW database

There was an even split between male and females in corporate legal working in the most senior roles such as group general counsel and head of legal. Females were overrepresented in all other corporate legal roles.

Figure 35 – Gender of corporate legal practitioners by role



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

12. THE GOVERNMENT LEGAL SECTOR

According to the Law Society of NSW database, there were 4,402 government legal practitioners as at 31 October 2022.

Gender: More than two-thirds of government legal practitioners were female (69%).

Mode of work: Three-quarters of government legal practitioners who responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey reported working full time (76%), followed by 15% working part time, which is consistent with the profession as a whole. A small proportion reported not working as a legal practitioner in October 2022 (6%).

Location: Most government legal practitioners were working in Sydney CBD (52%) or in a suburban area of Sydney (34%).

Years since admission: Almost two in five government legal practitioners had been admitted for 15 years or more (39%), followed by 23% who had been admitted for six to ten years. This was generally consistent with the whole of the profession.

Income: Almost half of government legal practitioners who responded to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey reported earning between \$100,001 to \$150,000 (49%), almost double the proportion for the whole profession (22%). Further, a smaller proportion reported earning more than \$150,000 (21%) compared to the whole profession (35%).

Table 8 – Profile of government legal practitioners

	Government legal practitioners		Whole profession
	N	%	
Base	4,402	-	38,265
Gender			
Male	1,351	31%	46%
Female	3,051	69%	54%
Location			
Sydney CBD	2,290	52%	49%
Sydney Suburban	1,514	34%	33%
Regional/Rural NSW	537	12%	12%
Interstate	47	1%	1%
Overseas	14	<1%	5%
Years since admission			
One year or less	205	5%	7%
Two to five years	878	20%	20%
Six to 10 years	1,017	23%	19%
11 to 14 years	582	13%	11%
15 years or more	1,720	39%	43%
Age			
<30 years	714	16%	18%
30 to 39 years	1,561	35%	31%
40 to 49 years	1,093	25%	23%
50 to 59 years	645	15%	15%
60 to 69 years	324	7%	10%
70+ years	65	1%	4%

	Government legal practitioners		Whole profession
	N	%	
From 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey			
Base	2,061	-	16,970
Mode of work*			
Full time	1,572	76%	74%
Part time	304	15%	15%
Not working as a legal practitioner	122	6%	8%
On leave at time of survey	63	3%	2%
Role within the government legal sector*			
Group General counsel	18	1%	-
Head of legal team	62	3%	
General counsel	59	3%	-
Senior lawyer/Senior legal counsel	903	44%	-
Lawyer/Legal counsel	776	38%	-
Graduate lawyer	37	2%	-
Paralegal	15	1%	-
Other	191	9%	-
Income of full-time and part-time solicitors^			
\$50,000 or less	20	1%	7%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	431	23%	23%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	919	49%	23%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	218	12%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	93	5%	8%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	38	2%	5%
Over \$300,000	29	2%	10%
Prefer not to say	128	7%	13%

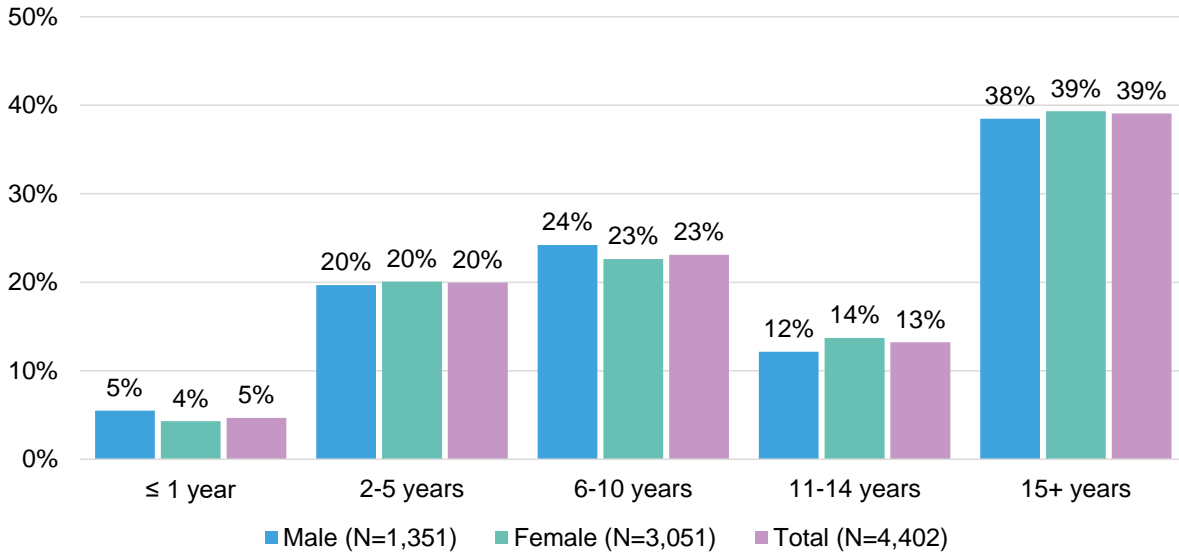
Source: Law Society of NSW database (base provided at top of table) and 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

*Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (bases provided in table). In the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey, the categories of 'Group General counsel' and 'General counsel' were added.

^Figures are from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey (full-time and part-time solicitors bases: government legal n=1,876, whole profession n=15,133). Bases exclude solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

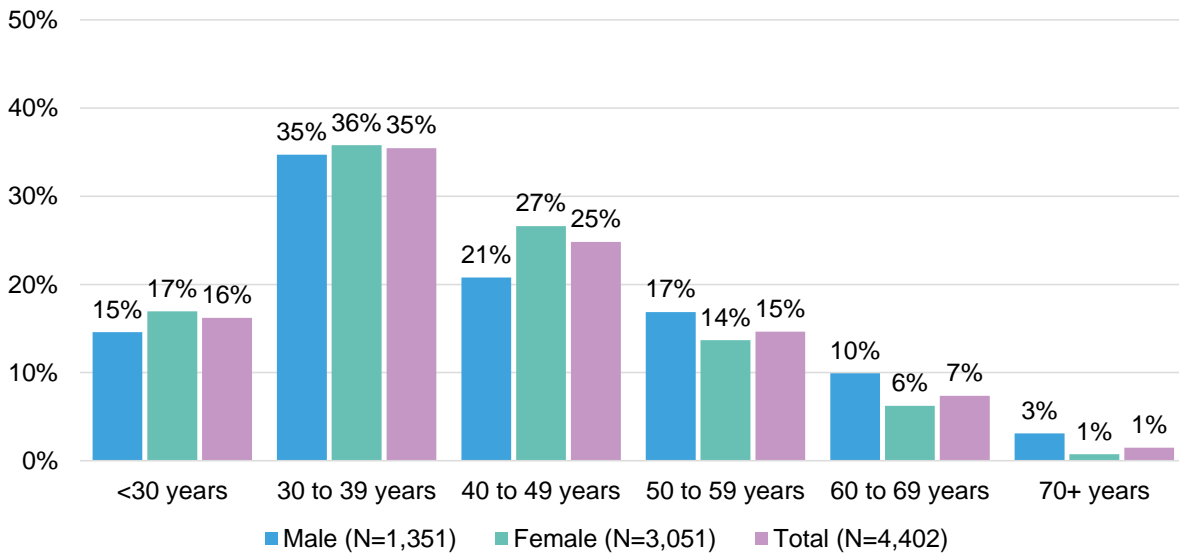
There was very little difference in patterns of years since admission across gender. In previous reports, slightly more males had been admitted for longer compared to females, however since 2020, the distribution was almost equivalent across both genders.

Figure 36 – Years since admission of government legal practitioners



Source: Law Society of NSW database

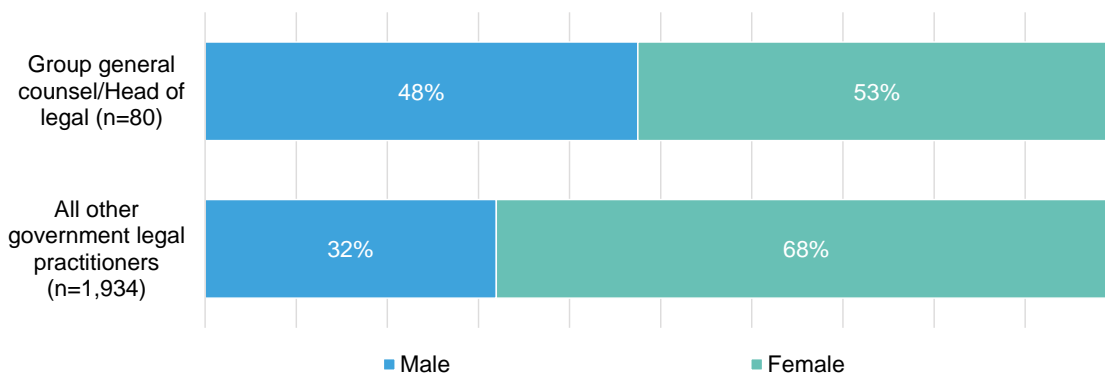
Figure 37 – Age profile of government legal practitioners



Source: Law Society of NSW database

There was approximately even split between male and females in government legal working in the most senior roles as group general counsel and head of legal. Females were overrepresented in all other government legal roles. Over two-thirds of practitioners working in other government legal roles were female (68%) compared to one-third of males (32%).

Figure 38 – Gender of government legal practitioners by role



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

13. AREAS OF PRACTICE

This chapter draws on data from the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. The Survey was completed by 16,970 practitioners, representing 46% of all solicitors who renewed their practising certificate in 2022.

13.1. OVERVIEW

In 2022-23, the most common areas of practice reported by respondents were:

- Commercial law (32%)
- Corporate law (23%)
- Civil litigation (21%)
- Conveyancing/real property (20%).

Over the past 12 years, there has been an increase in the proportion of solicitors practising:

- Corporate law (+5%)
- Banking/finance (+3%)

Meanwhile, there has been a reduction in the proportion of solicitors practising:

- Conveyancing/real property (-10%)
- Wills and estates (-5%)
- Family law (-3%)
- Small business (-3%).

13.2. PRACTICE SECTORS

The main areas of practice varied across practice sectors. Table 9 provides the five most common areas of practice across private practice, and the government and corporate legal sectors.

Table 9 – Five most common areas of practice by practice sector

Private practice		The government legal sector		The corporate legal sector	
Commercial law	30%	Criminal law	38%	Commercial law	53%
Conveyancing/Real property	29%	Administrative law	37%	Corporate law	51%
Wills and estates	28%	Civil litigation	16%	Banking/Finance	24%
Civil litigation	27%	Litigation – general	15%	Intellectual property	17%
Litigation – general	21%	Advocacy	14%	Employment/Industrial law	15%

Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Table 10 provides a breakdown of all areas of practice for respondents to the Practising Certificate Survey across the profession.

Table 10 – Areas of practice 2010/11 to 2022/23

Areas of practice	Areas of practice 2010/11 to 2022/23 (%)													Change (%)	
	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Change from 21/22 to 22/23	Change from 10/11 to 22/23
Administrative law	8	8	8	9	10	10	10	9	8	9	9	9	10	+1	+2
Advocacy	7	6	6	6	8	8	9	7	6	6	6	6	7	+1	0
Alternative dispute resolution	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	4	4	5	5	4	5	+1	-
Banking/Finance	8	11	12	11	11	11	9	10	10	10	10	11	11	0	+3
Civil litigation	23	21	22	23	23	23	24	21	19	19	20	20	21	+1	-2
Commercial law	31	34	33	34	34	35	32	31	28	30	30	32	32	0	+1
Competition law	5	6	6	5	6	6	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	0	-1
Corporate law	18	22	23	23	23	25	29	22	20	20	21	22	23	+1	+5
Conveyancing/ Real property	30	27	25	25	25	24	20	22	20	20	19	20	20	0	-10
Criminal law	15	12	12	12	13	13	14	13	13	13	12	13	13	0	-2
Debts/Insolvency	9	9	8	8	9	8	8	7	5	6	6	6	6	0	-3
Employment/ Industrial law	9	9	9	9	11	11	11	9	8	9	10	10	10	0	+1
Environmental law	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	-1
Family law	17	15	14	14	15	15	18	14	13	13	13	13	14	+1	-3
Immigration law	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	0	+1
Information technology/ Telecommunications	5	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	-1	0
Intellectual property	8	8	8	8	9	9	8	8	7	7	7	8	7	-1	-1
Litigation – general	19	19	19	20	21	20	20	18	15	15	16	18	18	0	-1
Personal injury	10	8	9	9	9	9	10	8	8	8	8	8	9	+1	-1
Planning/Local Government	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	0	0
Small business	10	9	8	8	8	10	11	7	6	6	6	6	7	+1	-3
Taxation	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	-1	0
Wills and estates	23	21	20	20	21	22	26	18	16	17	16	17	18	+1	-5
Other	9	9	10	3	2	1	1	8	8	8	8	9	10	+1	+1

Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base n=16,970.

Note: Proportions do not add to 100% due to multiple response options. 'Trade practices law' was renamed to 'Competition law' for the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

13.3. PRIVATE PRACTICE SIZE AND LOCATION

Within private practice, the main areas of practice varied by law practice size and location. Services related to wills and estates, conveyancing/real property, family law and commercial law were more commonly offered by law practices in major cities of NSW and suburban areas of Sydney than those in the Sydney CBD. Banking and finance services, conversely, were more commonly offered by Sydney CBD law practices. Small law practices with one to four principals more commonly offered services in wills and estates, conveyancing/real property, and family law. Larger law practices more commonly offered services in commercial law, civil litigation and corporate law. Further detail is provided in Table 11.

Table 11 – Main areas of practice by size and location of private practice

Main areas of practice	Law practice size – number of partners/principals (%)						Practice location (%)			All private practice (%)
	1 to 4	5 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 39	40 to 49	50+	Sydney CBD	Sydney suburban	Major cities of NSW	
Administrative law	5	5	4	5	6	7	7	5	4	6
Advocacy	8	6	3	5	6	3	5	7	7	6
Alternative dispute resolution	4	4	4	8	8	7	6	4	3	5
Banking/Finance	4	6	9	5	6	18	11	4	1	8
Civil litigation	25	33	30	39	36	26	31	24	21	27
Commercial law	31	28	29	26	20	30	32	29	24	30
Competition law	2	2	4	2	1	4	3	2	1	2
Conveyancing/Real property	43	23	16	7	11	9	17	45	32	29
Corporate law	12	17	18	17	18	25	21	12	8	16
Criminal law	20	6	2	1	2	1	5	17	20	12
Debts/Insolvency	8	9	7	6	8	7	9	8	6	8
Employment/Industrial law	7	14	12	11	6	7	8	8	10	8
Environmental law	2	3	2	1	1	4	3	2	2	3
Family law	32	16	7	3	2	1	8	32	32	20
Immigration law	8	3	3	1	3	1	4	8	2	5
Information technology/Telecommunications	2	3	3	3	3	5	4	2	1	3
Intellectual property	4	6	6	5	10	6	5	6	2	5
Litigation – general	21	25	22	29	29	21	25	20	13	21
Personal Injury	9	19	25	30	18	8	11	11	19	11
Planning/Local Government	3	5	3	2	0	4	4	3	4	4
Small business	16	8	6	4	3	1	5	18	11	10
Taxation	3	2	5	2	3	5	4	3	2	4
Wills and estates	45	23	12	8	8	2	11	45	44	28
Other	5	6	7	12	8	10	9	6	6	7

Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Base private practice solicitors only n=9,768

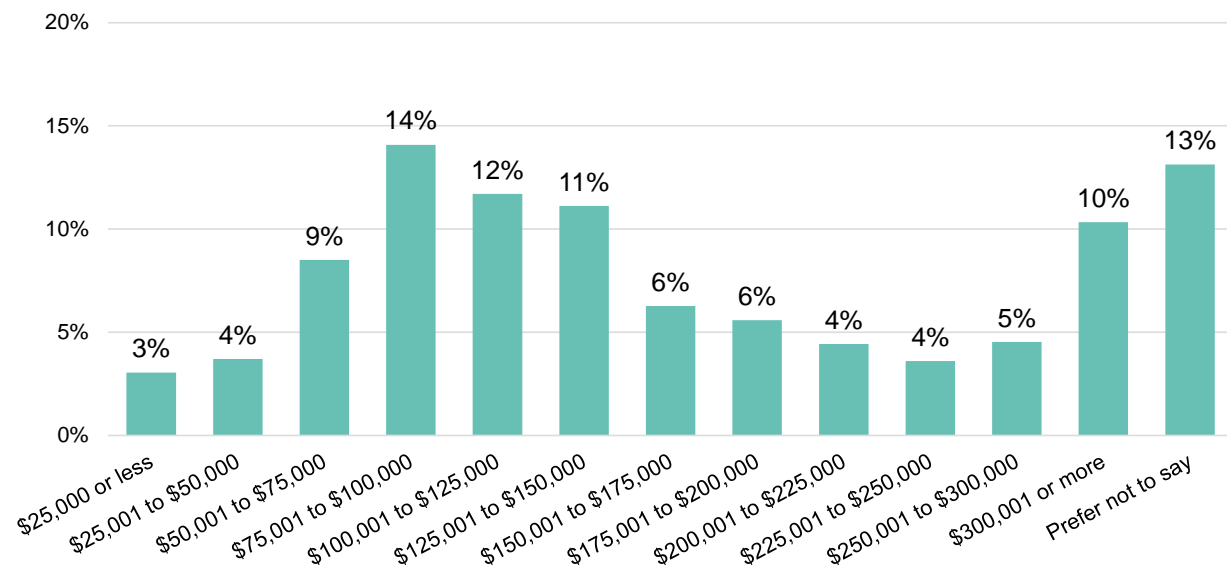
Note: Inner regional, outer regional and remote NSW not shown in practice location. Proportions do not add to 100% due to multiple response options. 'Trade practices law' was renamed to 'Competition law' for the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey.

14. INCOME

14.1. OVERVIEW

The Practising Certificate Survey asks respondents to indicate their gross annual (pre-tax) income for the previous financial year (i.e. FY20/21), by selecting one of 12 income categories. Across full-time and part-time solicitors, the most commonly selected category was \$75,001 to \$100,000 (14%), followed by \$100,001 to \$125,000 (12%), \$125,001 to \$150,000 (11%) and \$300,001 or more (10%). Just over one in ten respondents opted not to report their income range.

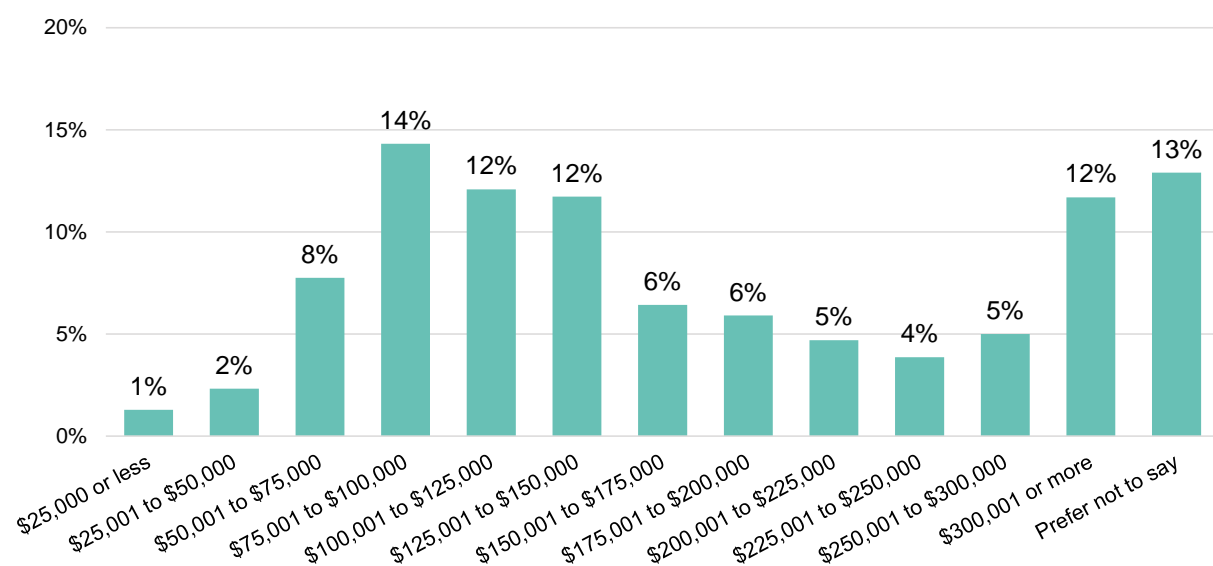
Figure 39 – Annual gross income full-time and part-time solicitors FY21



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base n=15,133. Base excludes solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

The income distribution of full-time solicitors was similar to that of full-time and part-time solicitors combined, with the exception that a smaller proportion of respondents reported incomes of \$50,000 or less (3%, compared to 7% across combined respondents), and a slightly higher proportion reported incomes of more than \$250,000 (17%, compared to 15% across combined respondents).

Figure 40 – Annual gross income full-time solicitors only FY21



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base includes full-time solicitors only, n=12,525

Since FY12, there has been a small change in the reported income of solicitors. The proportion of solicitors earning \$50,000 or less has decreased from 13% in FY12 to 7% in FY21. The proportion of solicitors earning more than \$200,000 has fluctuated slightly and has exceeded the normal range of 17%-20% in FY21 to 23%. Over time there has been an increase in the proportion of solicitors who did not want to state their income, along with adjusted percentage bases in FY21, this may account for some of the variation for FY21.

Table 12 – Annual gross income FY12 to FY21

	Respondents to the Practising Certificate Survey (%)									
	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
\$50,000 or less	13	14	13	13	10	10	9	9	8	7
\$50,001 to \$75,000	14	14	13	13	12	12	10	10	9	9
\$75,001 to \$100,000	17	16	16	15	15	15	15	14	15	14
\$100,001 to \$150,000	21	20	20	20	20	21	20	21	21	23
\$150,001 to \$200,000	12	12	12	11	11	11	11	11	12	12
More than \$200,000	20	18	19	20	17	17	19	19	20	23
Prefer not to say	3	6	6	8	15	15	15	16	14	13

Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

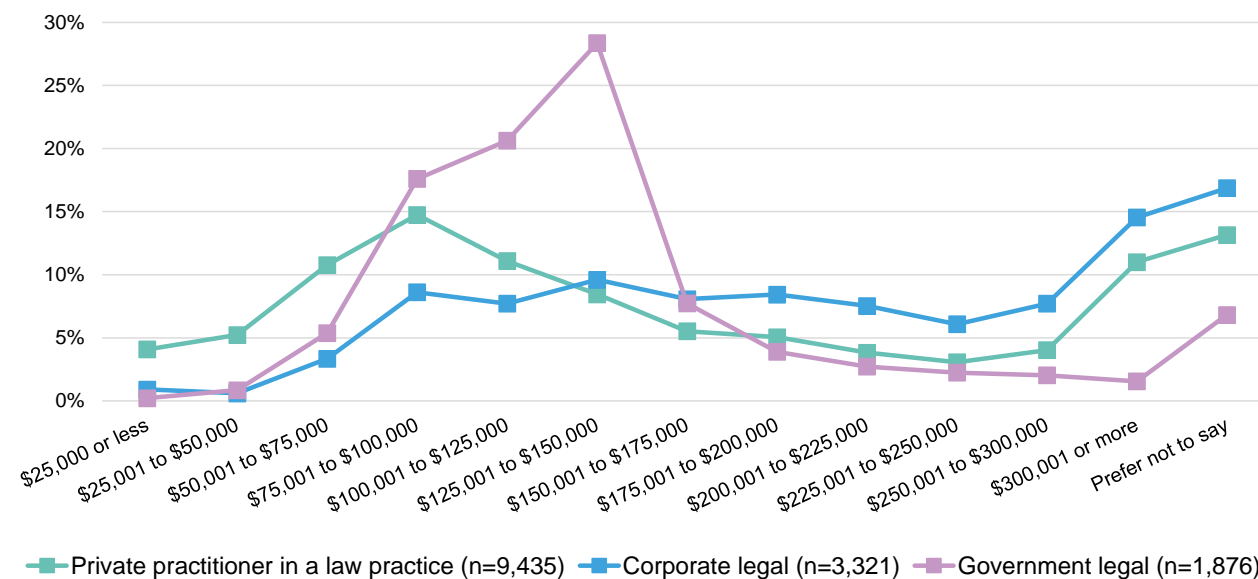
Note: Totals may not exactly equal 100% due to rounding. Findings for FY21 includes full-time and part-time solicitors only, n=15,133. This base excludes solicitors (n=1,837) on leave or not working at the time of the survey. Findings for FY12-FY20 include solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey, hence analysis over time may be slightly skewed.

14.2. INCOME BY PRACTICE SECTOR

The distributions of reported incomes in the private, corporate and government legal sectors are provided in Figure 41, and a summary of reported incomes for each sector is provided in Table 13. The large majority of government legal practitioners reported earning between \$50,001 to \$175,000, while respondents in private practice and corporate legal reported a broader range of incomes.

Corporate legal practitioners tended to report higher incomes than those in other sectors. For instance, 52% of corporate legal practitioners reported incomes of over \$150,000, compared to only 32% of private practice solicitors and 20% of government legal practitioners. Furthermore, just over a third of all corporate legal practitioners reported earning over \$200,000 (36%), compared to 22% of private practice solicitors and 9% of government legal practitioners.

Figure 41 – Income distribution by practice sector FY21



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Note: Includes full-time and part-time solicitors, excludes solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

Table 13 – Annual gross income by sector FY21

	Private practice (n=9,435)	Corporate legal (n=3,321)	Government legal (n=1,876)	Community legal (n=235)	Non-legal employment (n=80)
\$25,000 or less	4%	1%	<1%	3%	4%
\$25,001 to \$50,000	5%	1%	1%	5%	4%
\$50,001 to \$75,000	11%	3%	5%	17%	8%
\$75,001 to \$100,000	15%	9%	18%	40%	11%
\$100,001 to \$125,000	11%	8%	21%	23%	15%
\$125,001 to \$150,000	8%	10%	28%	5%	16%
\$150,001 to \$175,000	6%	8%	8%	1%	3%
\$175,001 to \$200,000	5%	8%	4%	1%	5%
\$200,001 to \$225,000	4%	8%	3%	0%	4%
\$225,001 to \$250,000	3%	6%	2%	0%	3%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	4%	8%	2%	0%	5%
Over \$300,000	11%	15%	2%	0%	5%
Prefer not to say	13%	17%	7%	6%	19%

Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Note: Includes full-time and part-time solicitors, excludes solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

14.3. INCOME BY LAW PRACTICE SIZE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

The incomes of those working in private practice varied by law practice size. Overall, income was higher for respondents in larger law practices than in smaller law practices. For instance, 28% of respondents in law practices with 50 or more principals reported earning more than \$250,000, compared to only 7% of those in law practices with one to four principals. Conversely, only 15% of respondents in law practices with 50 or more principals reported earning \$100,000 or less, compared to 48% of those in law practices with one to four principals.

Table 14 – Annual gross income in private practice by law practice size FY21

	1 to 4 principals	5 to 10 principals	11 to 20 principals	21 to 39 principals	40 to 49 principals	50+ principals
\$50,000 or less	16%	4%	2%	3%	1%	1%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	32%	30%	26%	20%	22%	14%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	18%	20%	21%	20%	25%	21%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	9%	12%	14%	14%	16%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	5%	8%	11%	11%	9%	10%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	2%	4%	5%	5%	7%	7%
Over \$300,000	5%	11%	12%	15%	11%	21%
Prefer not to say	13%	11%	9%	13%	9%	15%

Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base private practice solicitors only n=9,435

Note: Includes full-time and part-time solicitors, excludes solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey.

14.4. INCOME BY GENDER

As seen in previous years, female solicitors reported earning less than males. This result remains the same regardless of age, years since admission and sector.

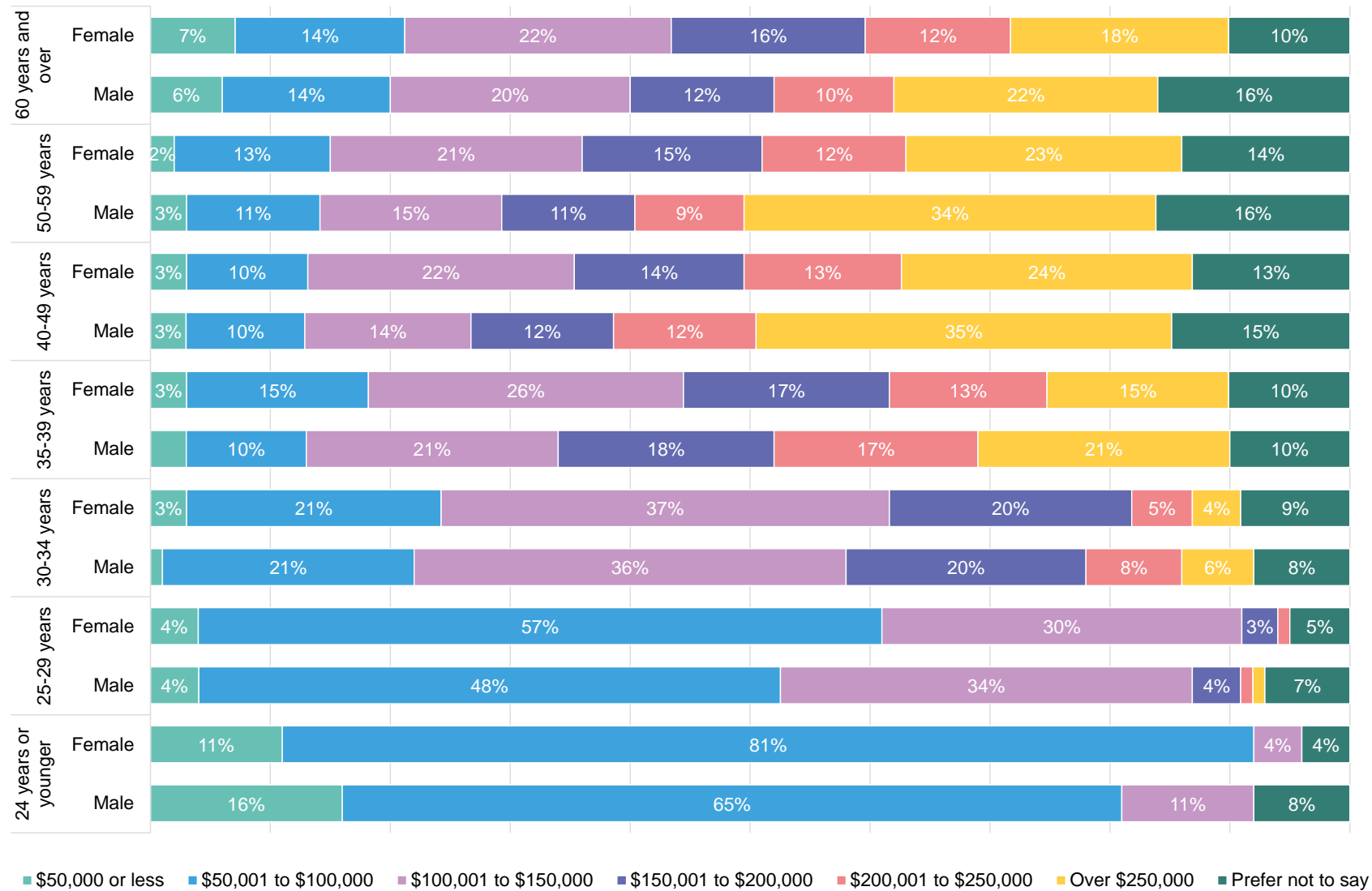
14.4.1. Income by gender and age

The gender pay gap is evident at all ages including:

- in the 24 years or younger age bracket, 11% of male respondents reported incomes of \$100,001 to \$150,000, compared to 4% of females.
- in the 30 to 34 age bracket, a slightly greater proportion of female respondents reported incomes of \$150,000 or less (61%, compared to 58% of males) and a smaller proportion of female respondents reported incomes of over \$150,000 (29%, compared to 34% of males).
- in the 35 to 39 age bracket, 38% of male respondents reported incomes of over \$200,000, compared to 28% of females.
- in the 40 to 49 year age bracket, 35% of male respondents reported incomes of over \$250,000, compared to 24% of females.

A full breakdown of reported income ranges is shown in Figure 42 on the following page.

Figure 42 – Annual gross income of full-time solicitors by gender and age FY21

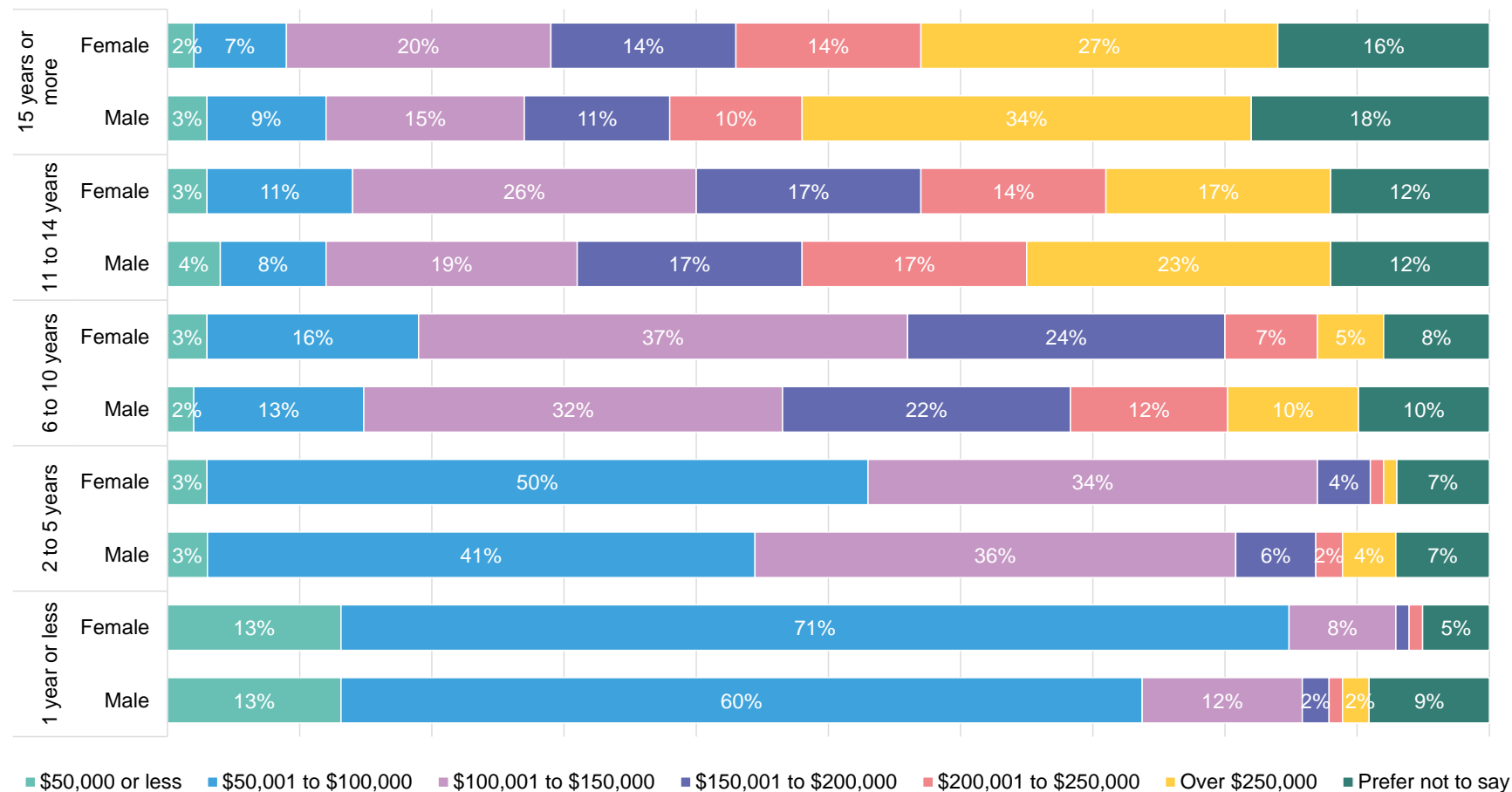


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base: Full-time solicitors only, n=12,069. Excludes respondents who preferred not to state their age.

14.4.2. Income by gender and years since admission across practice sectors

Further analysis of annual gross income by years since admission shows that the gender pay gap is evident regardless of years since admission (i.e. year of admission did not account for the pay gap between men and women). Additional analysis of income and years since admission is provided in Appendix A.

Figure 43 – Annual gross income of full-time solicitors (all practice sectors) by gender and years since admission FY21

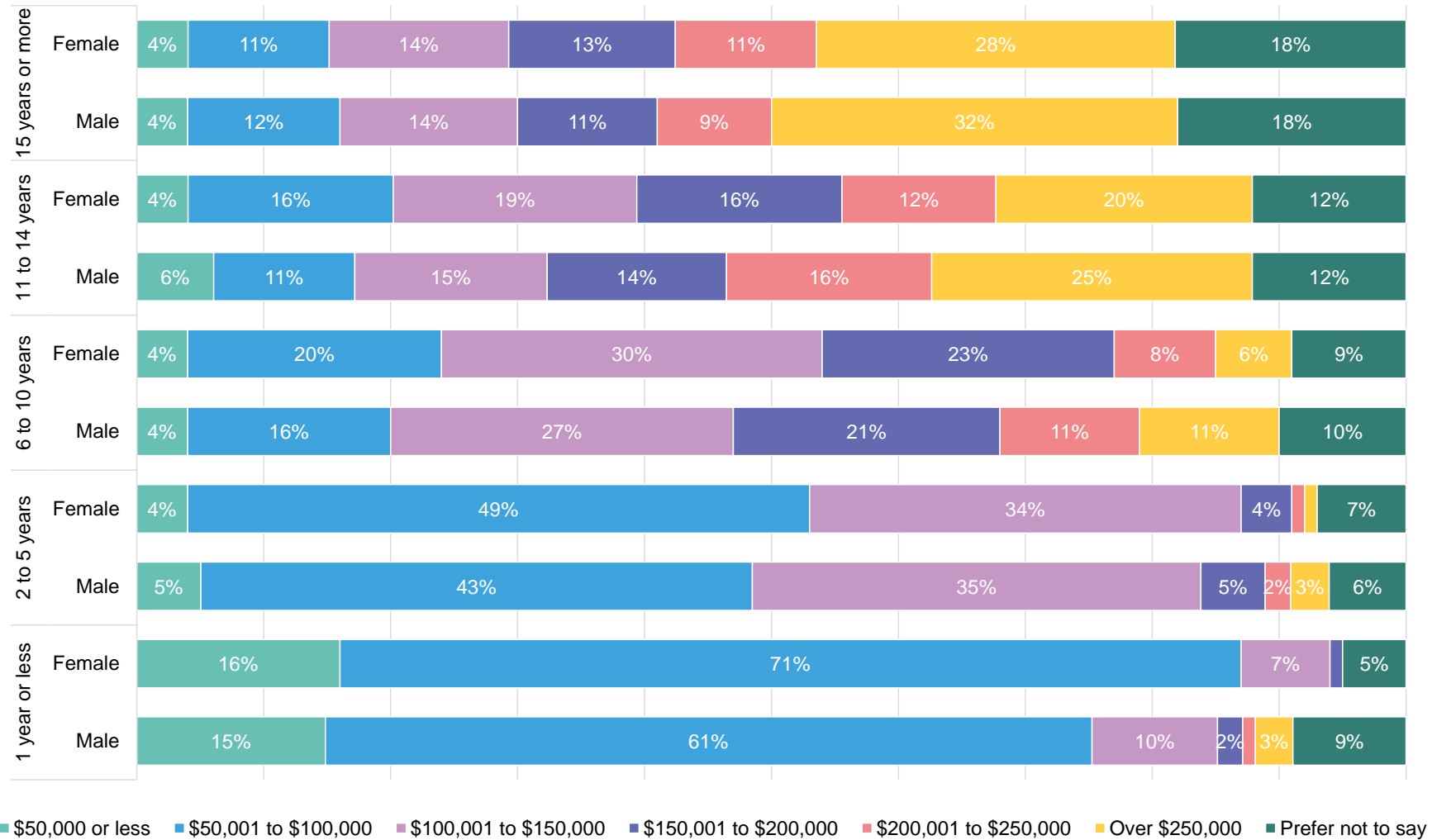


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base: Full-time solicitors only, n=12,248

Further analysis shows that the gap between male and female respondents is evident across all sectors. Over time, male respondents admitted as a solicitor in the same year as their female counterparts reported earning more than women in all sectors of practice, including in female dominated sectors (the corporate and government legal sectors). In particular, the difference is largest in the corporate sector.

Private practice

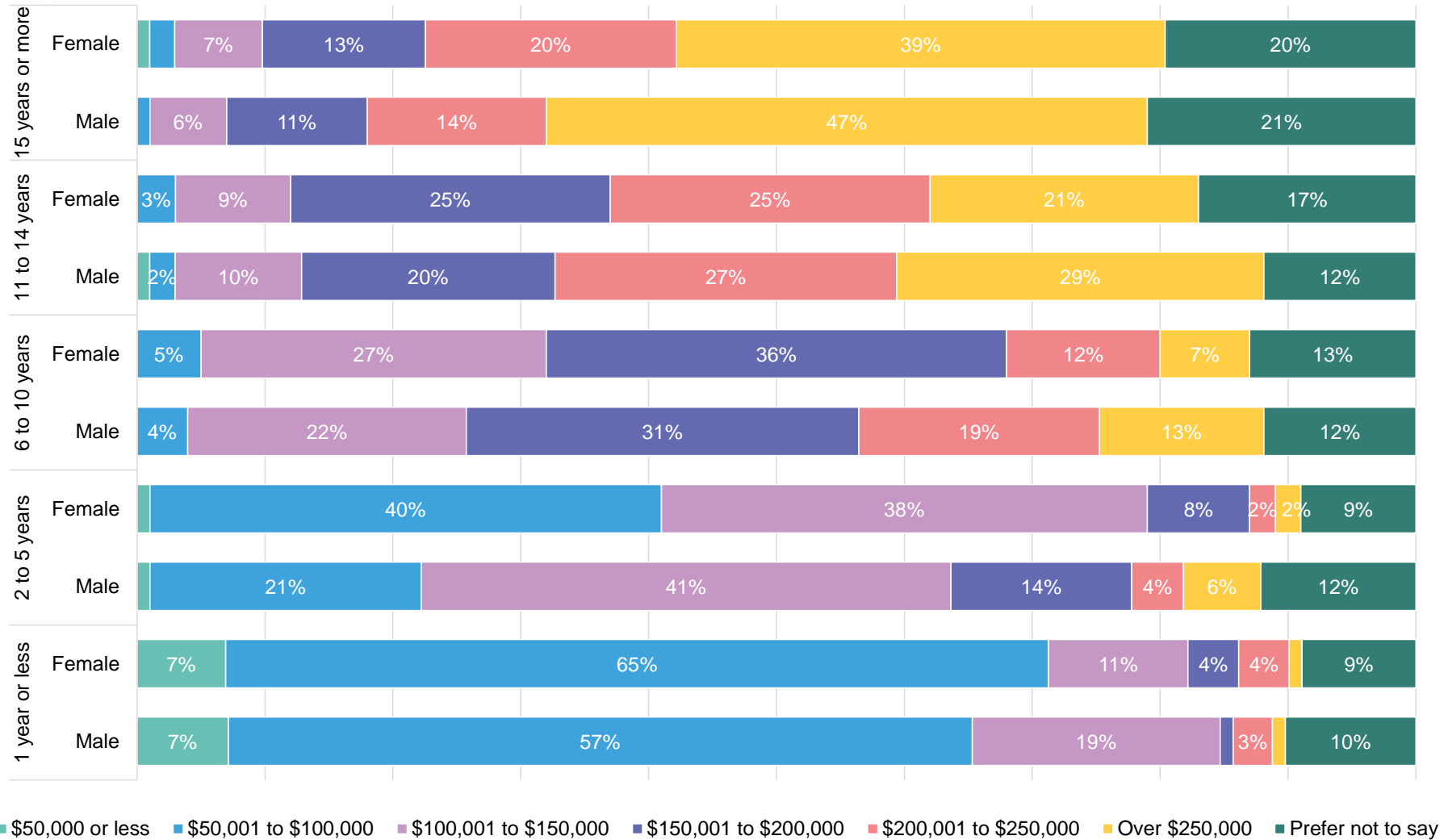
Figure 44 – Annual gross income of full-time private practice solicitors by gender and years since admission FY21



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base: Private practice full-time solicitors only, n=7,585

The corporate legal sector

Figure 45 – Annual gross income of full-time corporate legal practitioners by gender and years since admission FY21

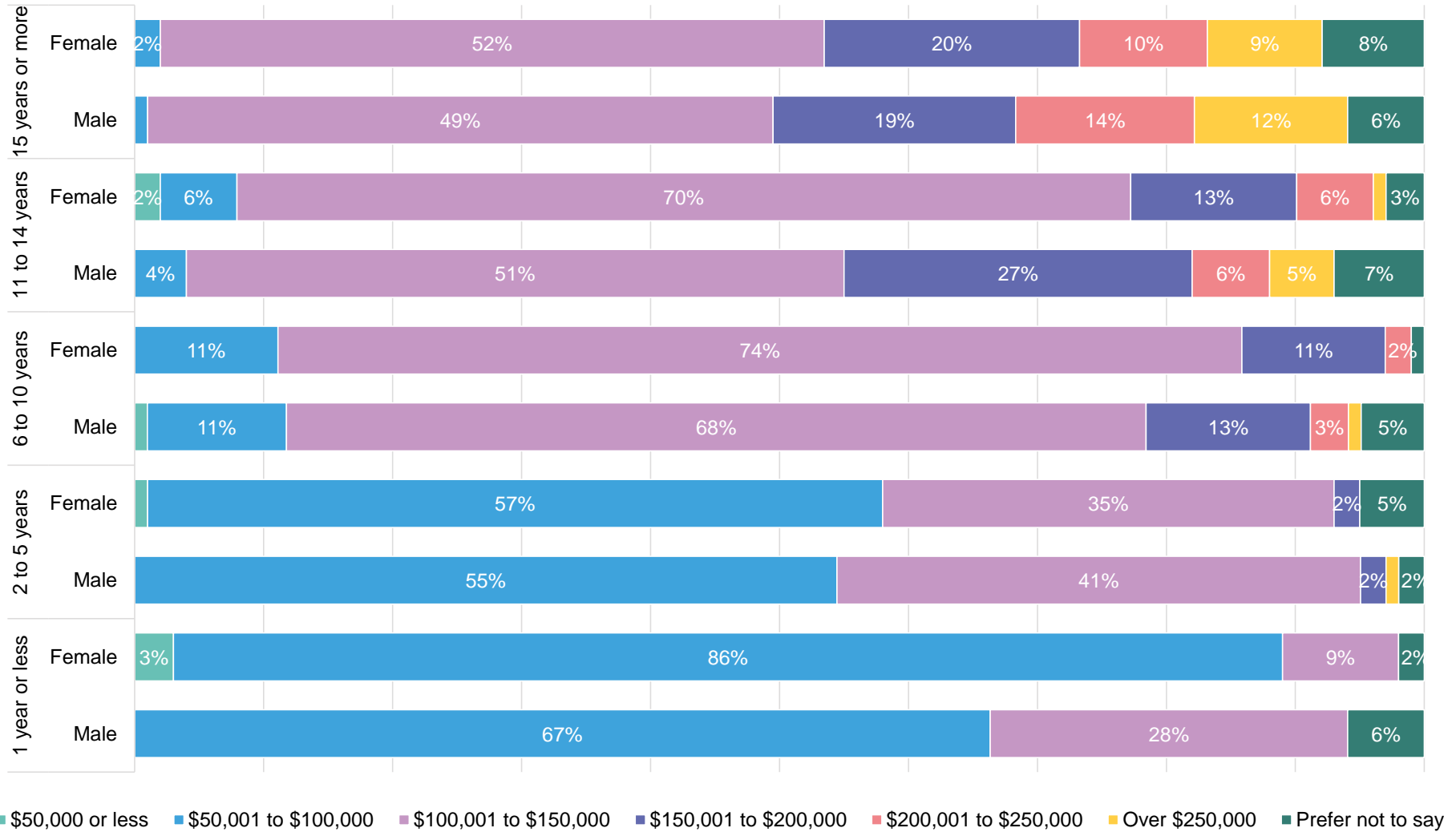


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Base: Corporate full-time solicitors only, n=2,822

The government legal sector

Figure 46 – Annual gross income of full-time government legal practitioners by gender and years since admission FY21

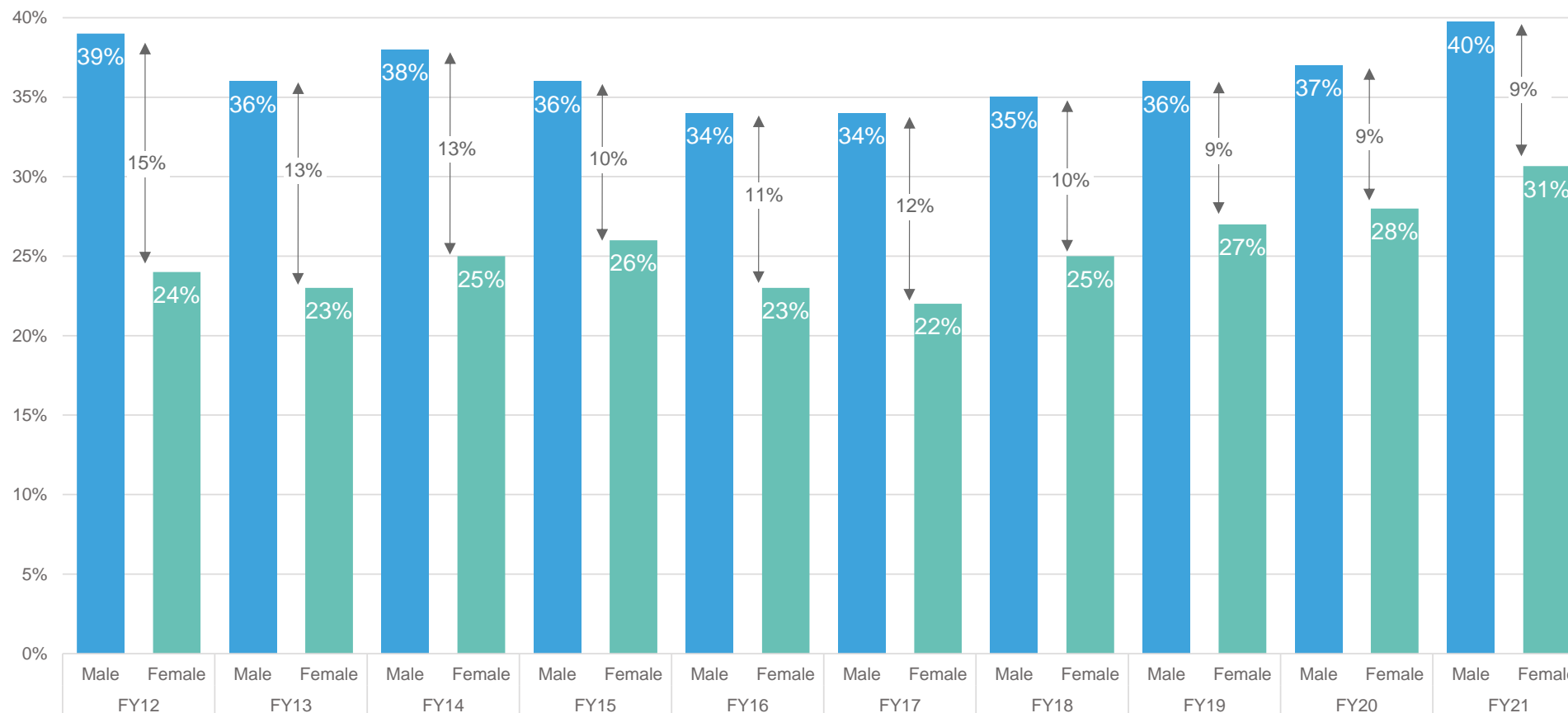


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base: Government full-time solicitors only, n=1,534

14.4.3. Income by gender over time

There has been some improvement in the reported income of female solicitors over time. Figure 47 shows the proportion of male and female solicitors reporting an income over \$150,000. This shows the difference in the proportion of male and female solicitors is narrowing, but has been steady at 9% more males over the past three years. There has been large increase in the proportion of male solicitors who did not want to state their income (3% in FY11/12 compared to 14% in FY20/21), which may be skewing the results.

Figure 47 – Solicitors reporting gross income over \$150,000 by gender FY12 to FY21



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base: FY21 includes full-time and part-time solicitors only n=15,133, excludes solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey. The bases for FY12-FY20 does not exclude these solicitors. There has been large increase in the proportion of male solicitors who did not want to state their income (3% in FY11/12 compared to 14% in FY20/21), which may also be impacting results.

15. WORK STATUS AND HOURS WORKED

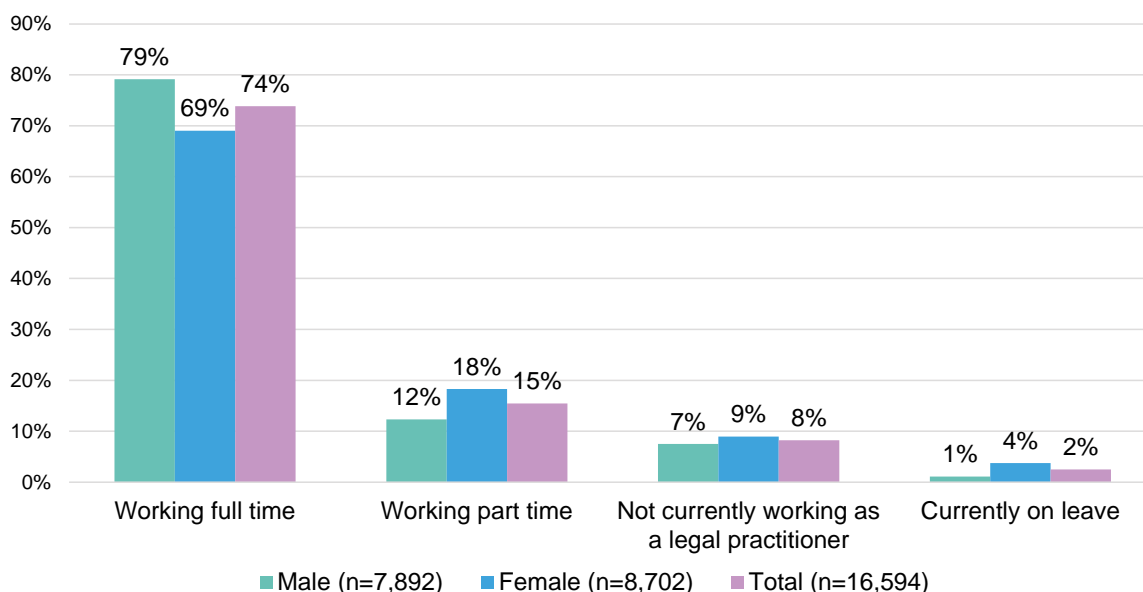
The Practising Certificate Survey collects data on whether respondents work full time or part time, work outside the legal profession, or are not employed at the time of the survey.¹¹ It also captures information on the number of hours worked per week, as reported by respondents.

15.1. OVERVIEW

Just under three-quarters of respondents to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey reported working full time in the legal profession (74%), 15% were working part time, and 8% were working outside the legal profession. The remaining 2% were on leave or unemployed at the time of the survey.

More male respondents were working full time (79%) than females (69%), while more female respondents were working part time (18%) than males (12%).

Figure 48 – Mode of work by gender

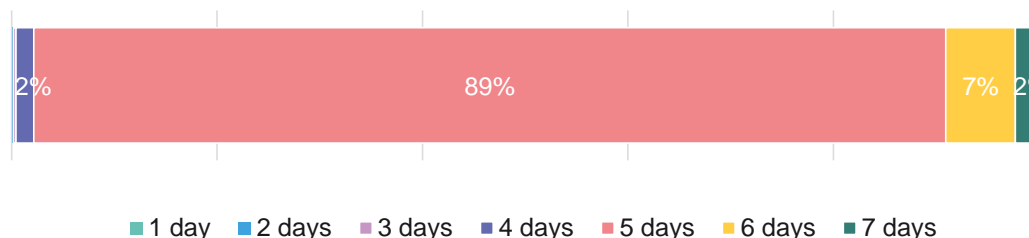


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base n=16,594 excludes those that that selected 'non-binary', 'if you wish to specify otherwise' or 'prefer not to say' for their gender.

15.2. FULL-TIME WORK

The majority of respondents who indicated they were working full time reported working five days per week (89%). A small proportion reported working six days per week (7%). On average, full-time respondents were working 46 hours per week.

Figure 49 – Number of days per week worked by full-time solicitors

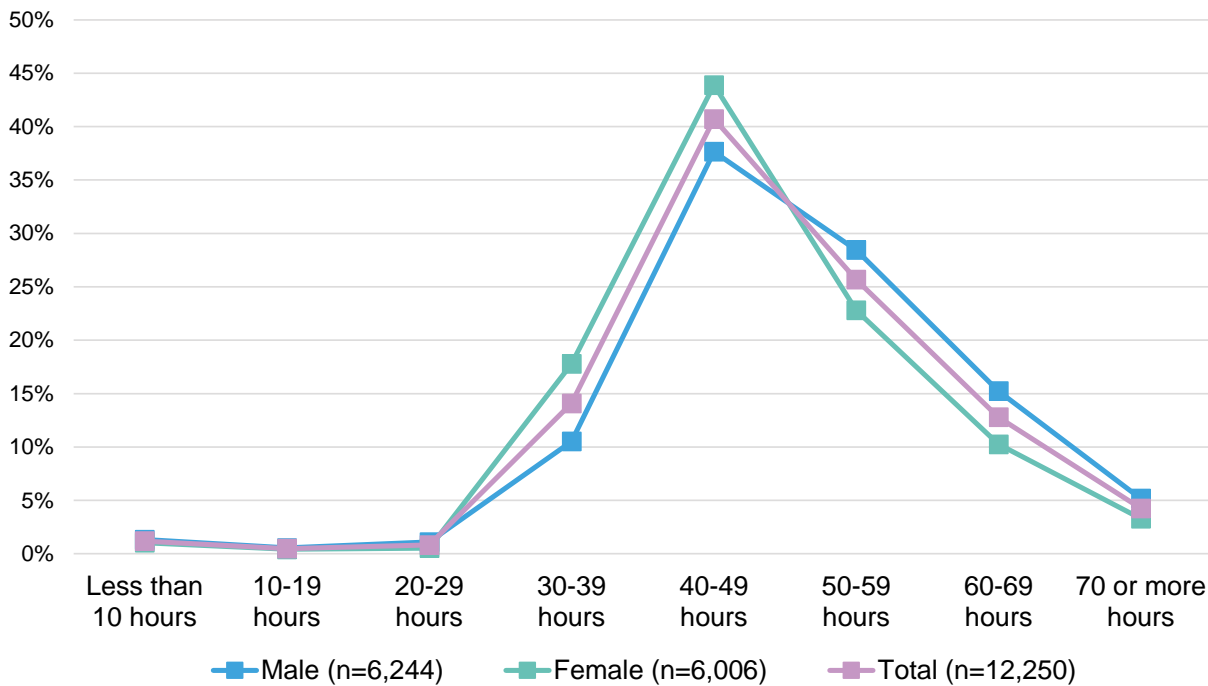


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base n=12,525

¹¹ Work status is analysed based on self-reported status rather than a calculation of hours worked

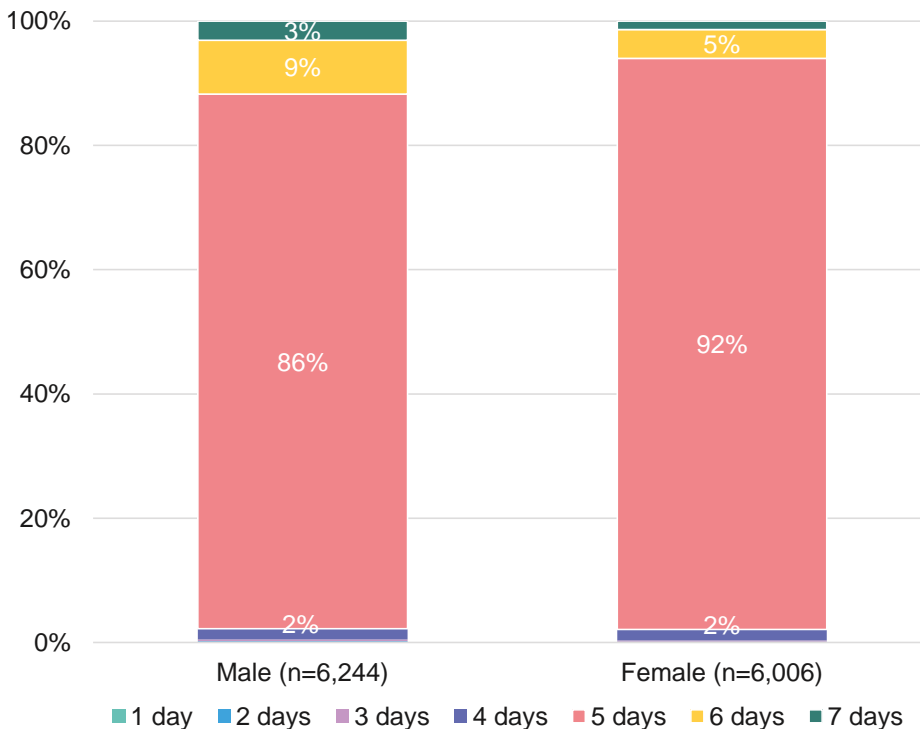
On average, the hours worked by male respondents were slightly higher than those of females (48 hours compared to 45 hours). A greater proportion of male respondents reported working six days in a normal work week (9% of males, compared to 5% of females).

Figure 50 – Average number of hours worked per week by full-time solicitors



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Full-time base n=12,250 (excludes those that that selected 'non-binary', 'if you wish to specify otherwise' or 'prefer not to say' for their gender).

Figure 51 – Average number of days worked per week by full-time solicitors by gender

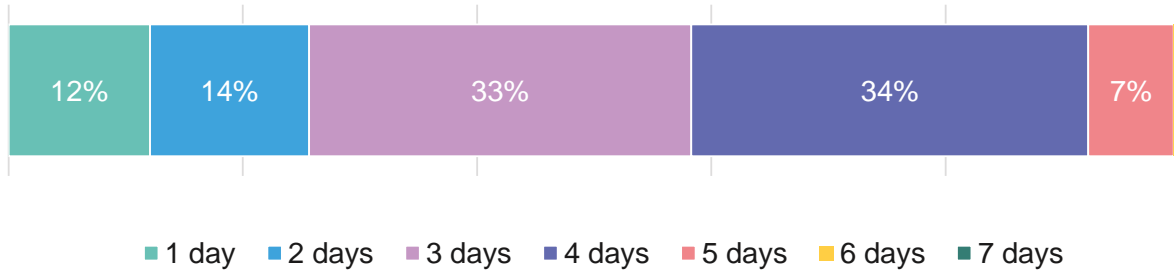


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

15.3. PART-TIME WORK

Of all the respondents to the 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey, 15% reported working part time. Part-time solicitors most commonly worked three (33%) or four (34%) days per week. A quarter of part-time solicitors worked one or two days per week (26%), while 7% reported working five days per week.

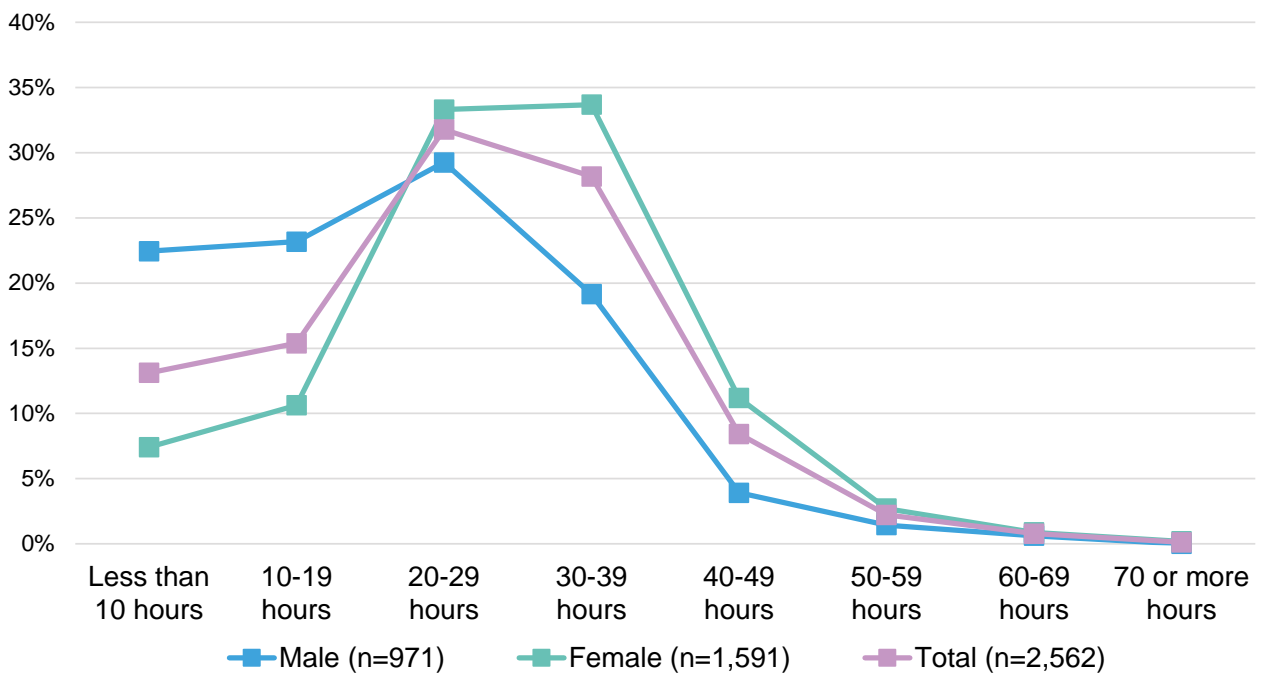
Figure 52 – Average number of days worked per week by part-time solicitors



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base n=2,608

Part-time solicitors worked 24 hours per week on average. Females reported working more hours per week (27 hours) than males (20 hours).

Figure 53 – Average number of hours worked per week by part-time solicitors



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Part-time base n=2,562 (excludes those that that selected 'non-binary', 'if you wish to specify otherwise' or 'prefer not to say' for their gender).

15.4. WORK HOURS BY PRACTICE SECTOR

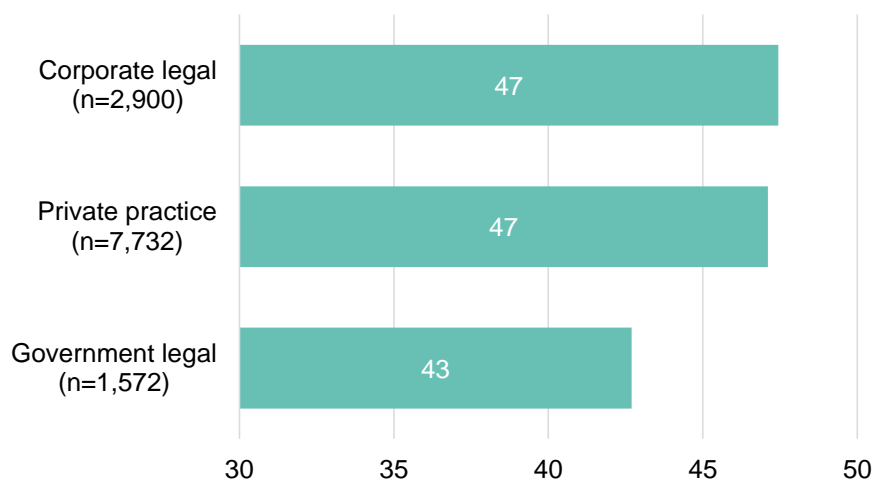
Overall, respondents in the corporate legal sector and private practice reported working the longest hours, followed by those in the government legal sector.

15.4.1. Full-time work

Across all full-time solicitors, those working in private practice and corporate legal reported the highest average hours, at 47 hours per week. This was followed by those in the government legal sector, who reported an average of 43 hours per week (see Figure 54).

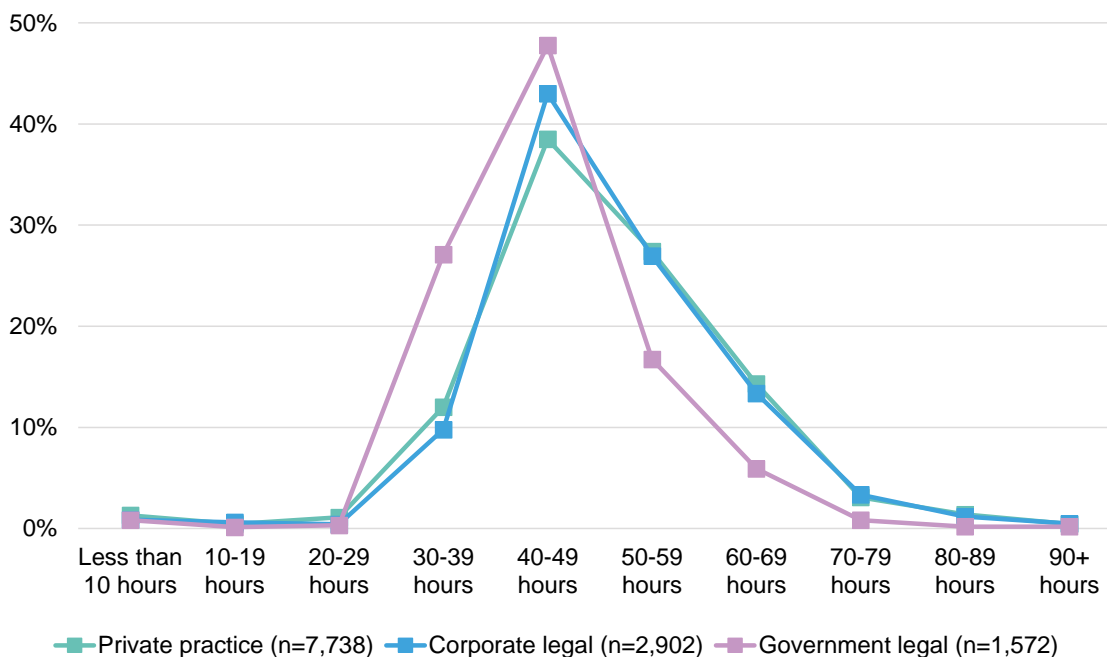
Consistent with this picture, larger proportions of respondents working full time in private practice and the corporate legal sector reported working longer hours compared to those in the government legal sector. For example, approximately half of those in private practice (47%) and the corporate legal sector (45%) reported working 50 or more hours per week, compared to only 24% of those in the government legal sector (see Figure 55 below).

Figure 54 – Average hours worked per week by practice sector (full-time workers)



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Figure 55 – Number of hours worked per week by practice sector (full-time workers)



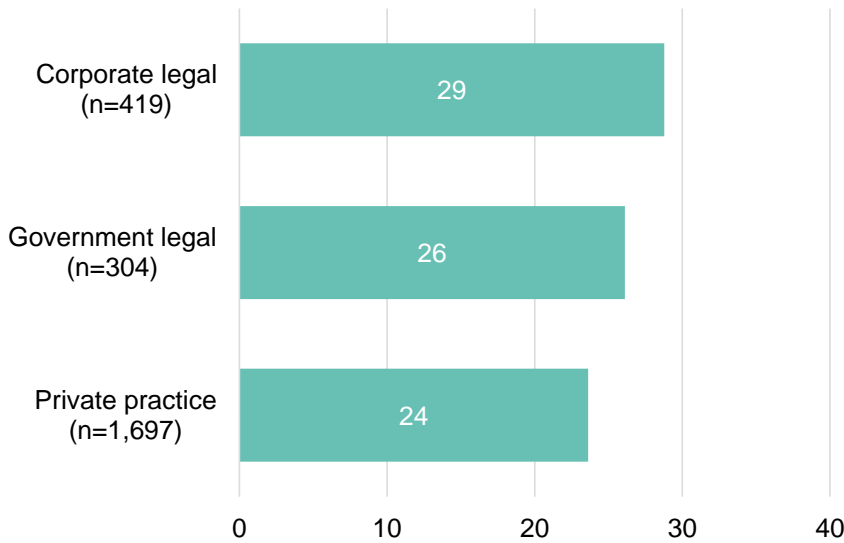
Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

15.4.2. Part-time work

Across part-time solicitors, those working in the corporate legal sector reported working the highest average hours, at 29 hours per week. This was followed by those working in the government legal sector, who reported an average of 26 hours per week. Respondents working in private practice reported an average of 24 hours per week (see Figure 56).

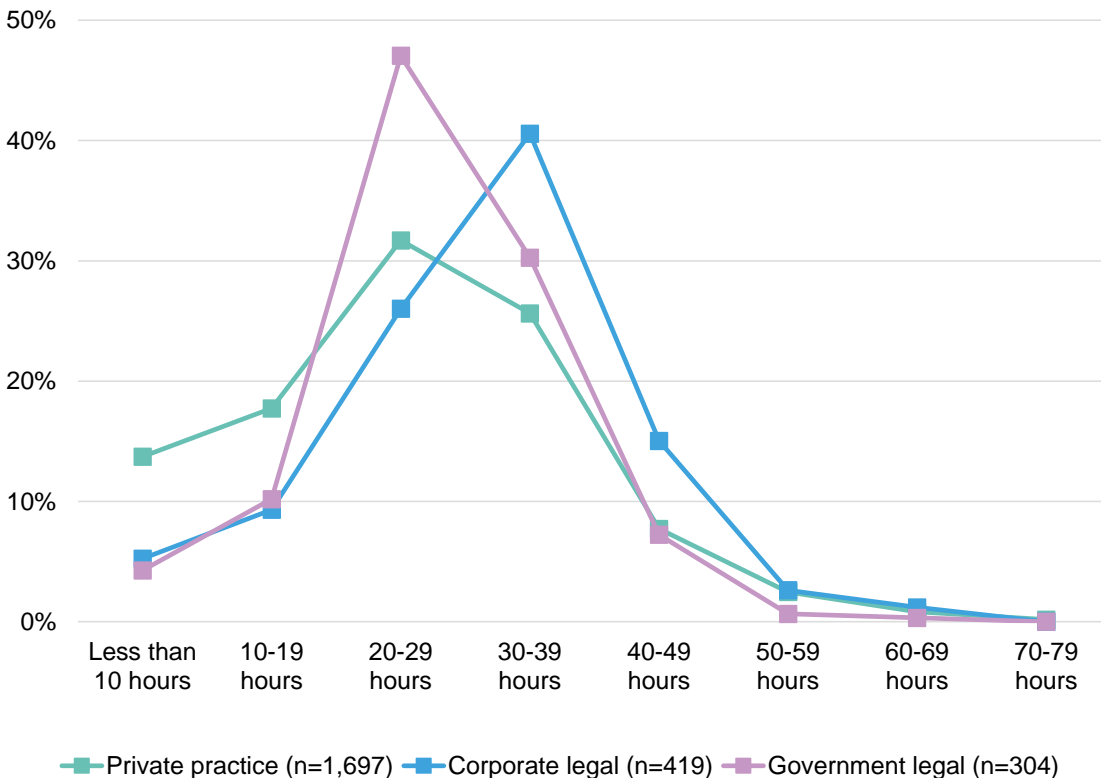
Larger proportions of respondents working part time in private practice and the corporate legal sector reported working longer hours compared to those in the government legal sector. For example, 19% of those in the corporate legal sector and 11% of those in private practice reported working 40 or more hours per week, compared to only 8% of those in the government legal sector (see Figure 57 below).

Figure 56 – Average hours worked per week by practice sector (part-time workers)



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Figure 57 – Number of hours worked per week by practice sector (part-time workers)



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

16. PRO-BONO AND OTHER UNPAID WORK

The Practising Certificate Survey collects data on pro-bono and other unpaid work. In the 2022-23 Survey, two-fifths of respondents reported conducting pro-bono, unpaid or voluntary work as a legal practitioner in the previous year (40%). This is an increase of 2% from 2021-22. On average, they reported having provided 65 hours of service across the previous financial year, which equates to approximately 9 working days.¹²

Across all respondents, 425,272 hours (equivalent to approximately 56,703 working days) were reported to have been donated in the 12 months prior to the survey. Assuming an average charge of \$300 per hour, this equates to approximately \$128 million in free legal work.

In addition to pro-bono work, just over a third of respondents reported providing unpaid help, support or care to friends, family, neighbours or others in the year prior to the survey (35%). These respondents, on average, provided 180 hours of unpaid support during that period, an increase from last year's survey which recorded an average of 165 hours.

¹² Based on a 7.5 hour work day.

DISCLAIMER

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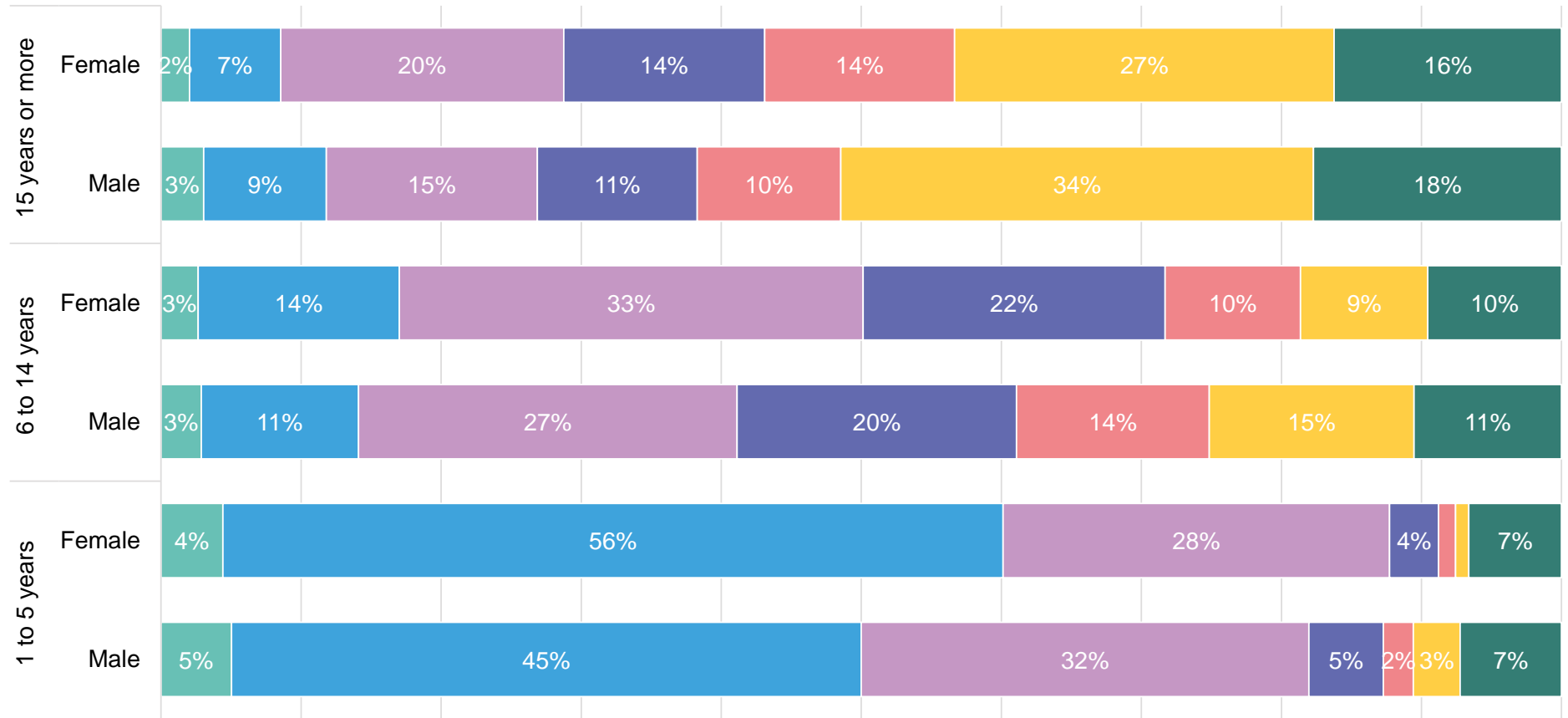
This report has been prepared with due care and diligence by Urbis and the statements and opinions given by Urbis in this report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading, subject to the limitations above.

APPENDIX A

INCOME BY GENDER ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

All practice sectors – years since admission

Figure 58 - Annual gross income of full-time solicitors by gender and years since admission FY21



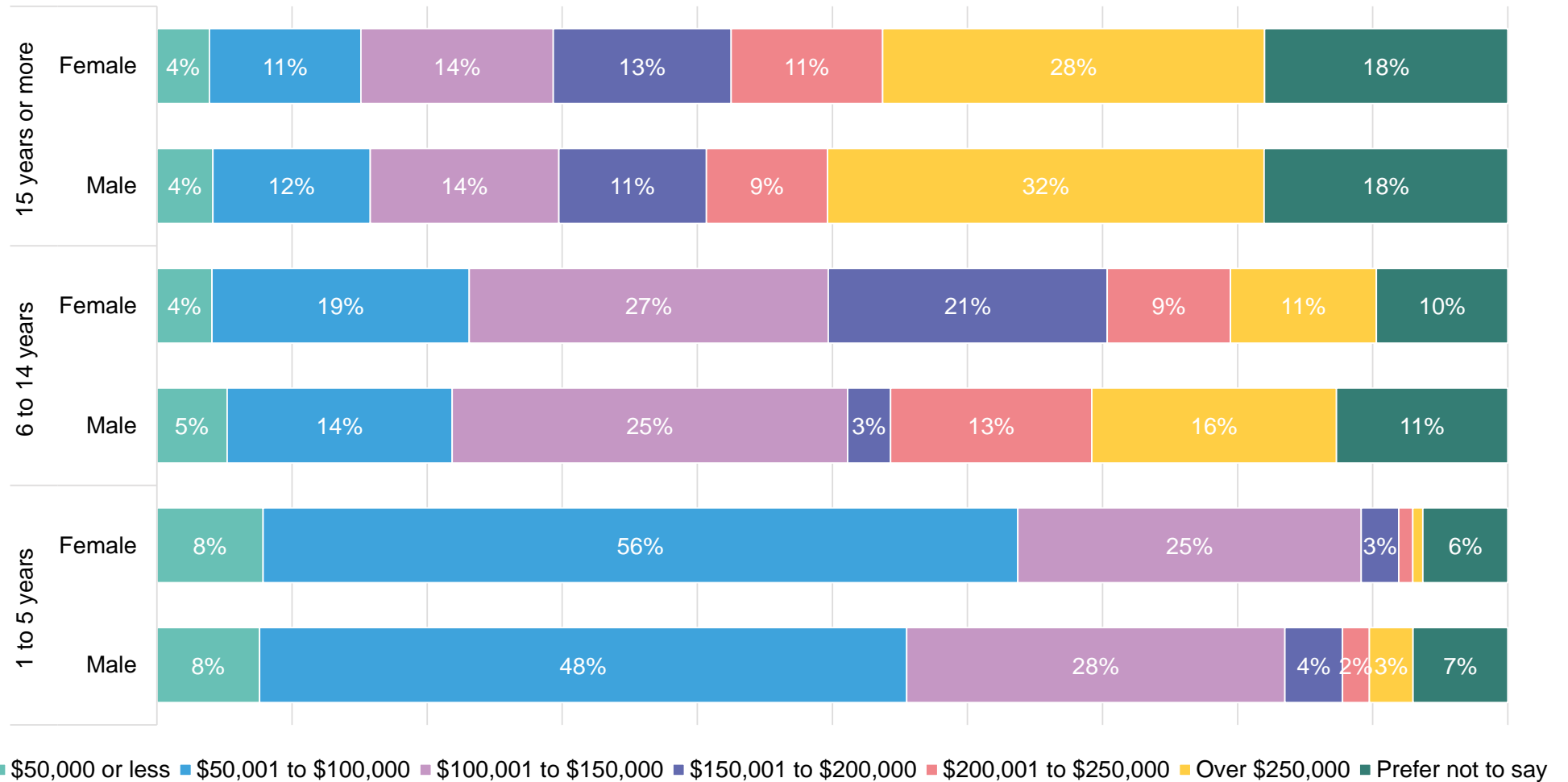
■ \$50,000 or less ■ \$50,001 to \$100,000 ■ \$100,001 to \$150,000 ■ \$150,001 to \$200,000 ■ \$200,001 to \$250,000 ■ Over \$250,000 ■ Prefer not to say

Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Base: Full-time solicitors only, n=12,002

Private practice – years since admission

Figure 59 – Annual gross income of full-time private practice solicitors by gender and years since admission FY21

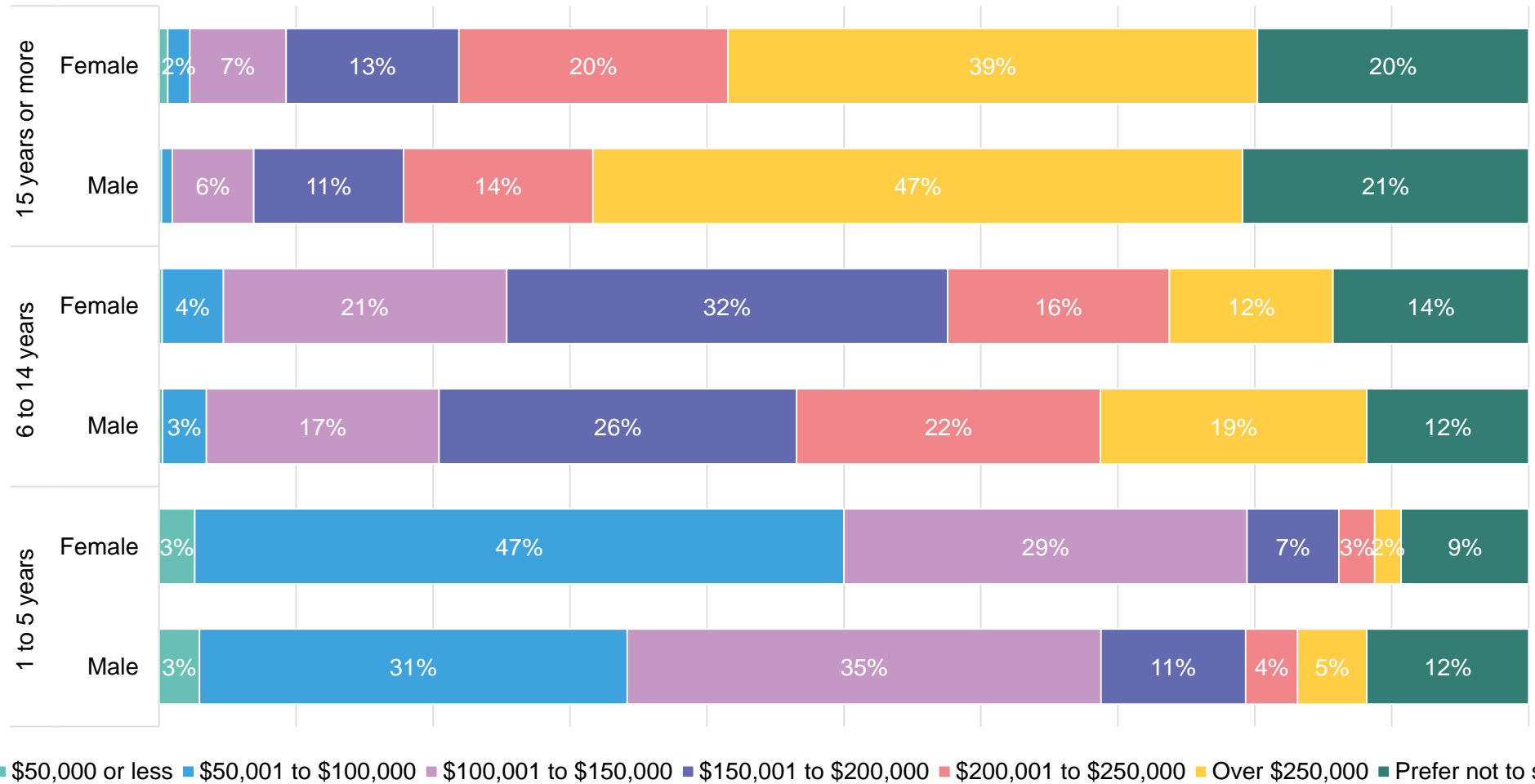


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Base: Private practice full-time solicitors only, n=7,587

The corporate legal sector – years since admission

Figure 60 – Annual gross income of full-time corporate legal practitioners by gender and years since admission FY21

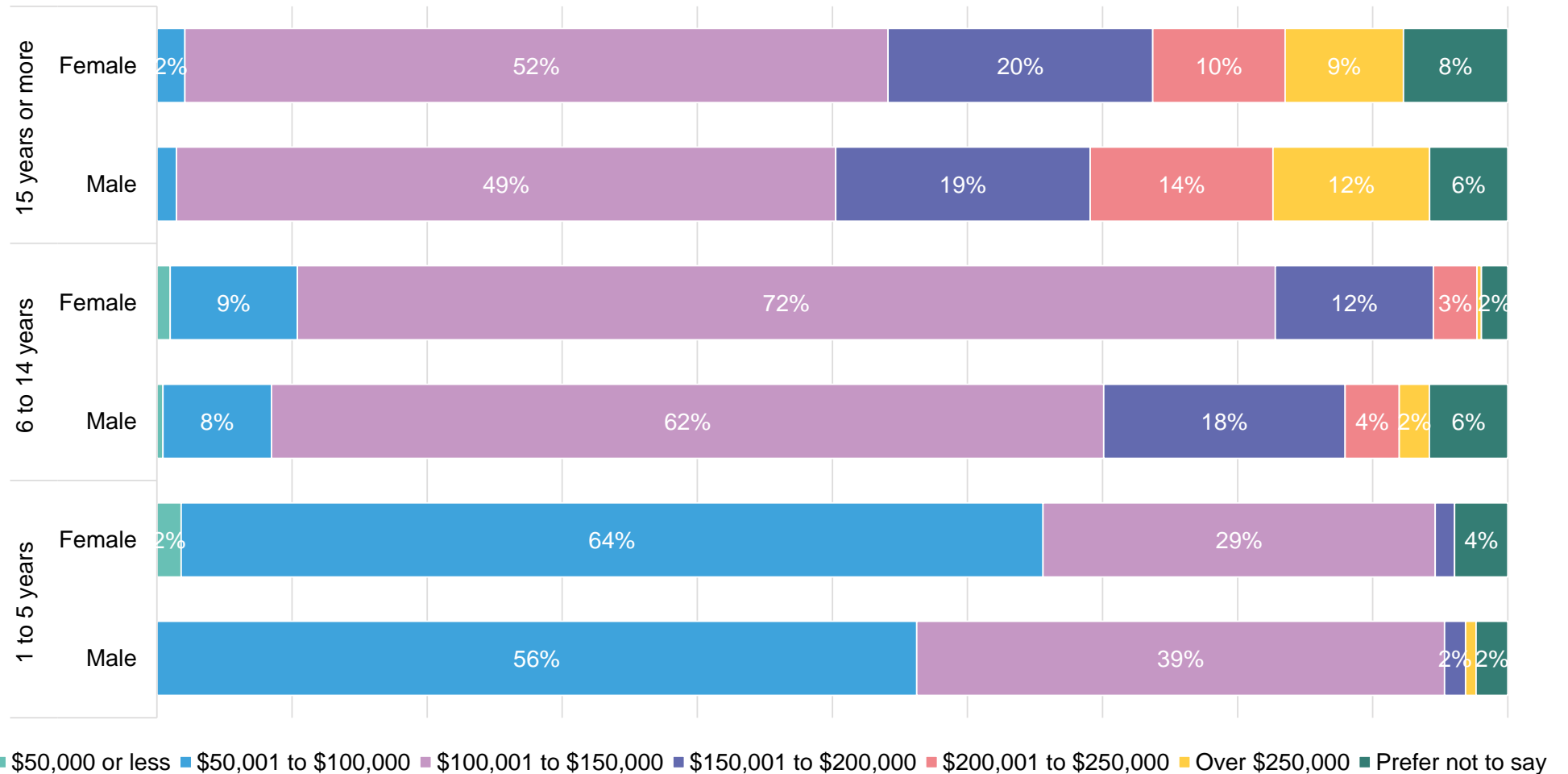


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Base: Corporate full-time solicitors only, n=2,882

The government legal sector – years since admission

Figure 61 – Annual gross income of full-time government legal practitioners by gender and years since admission FY21

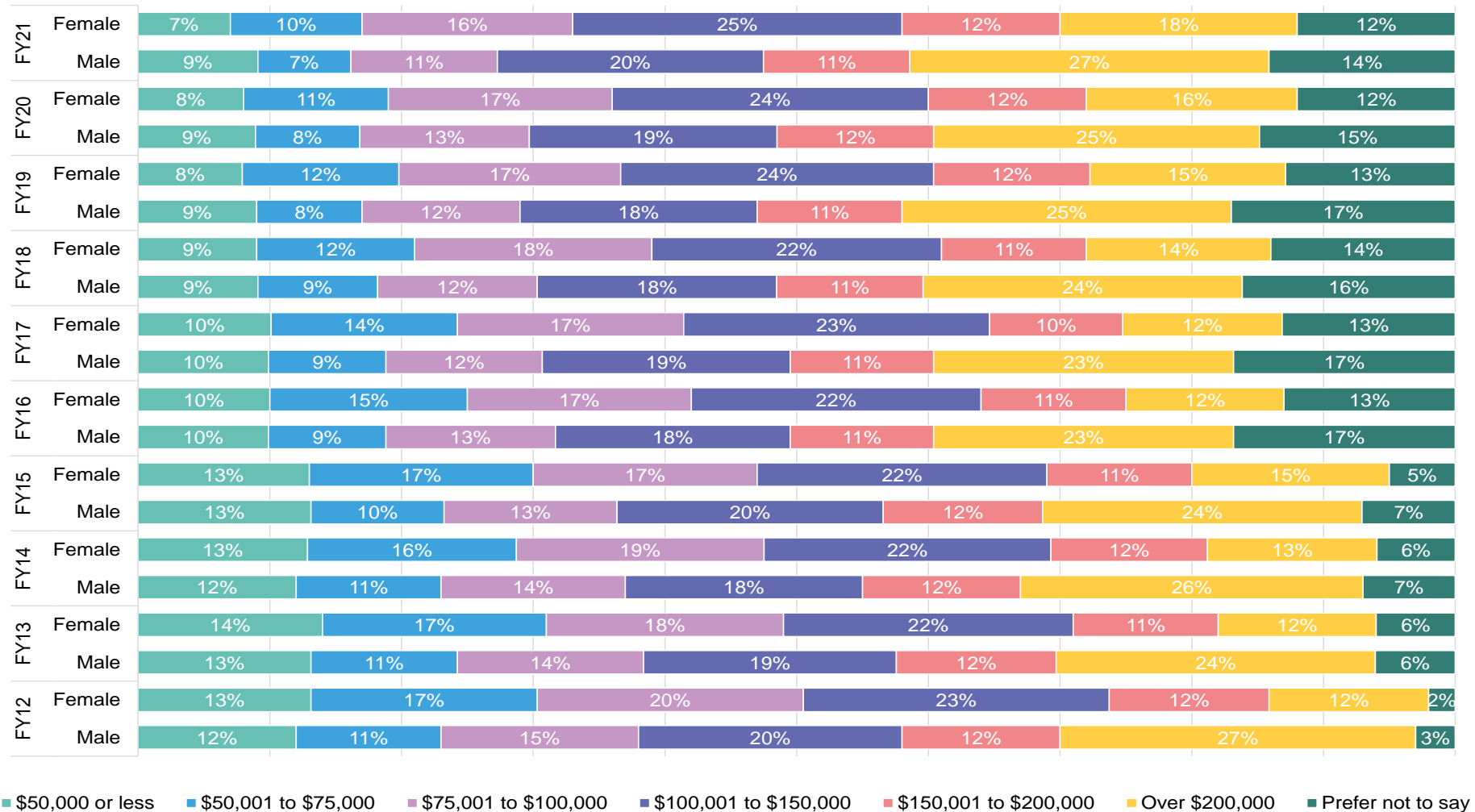


Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey

Base: Government full-time solicitors only, n=1,534

Income over time by gender

Figure 62 – Annual gross income of full-time and part-time solicitors by gender FY12 to FY



Source: 2022-23 Practising Certificate Survey. Base: FY21 includes full-time and part-time solicitors only n=15,133, excludes solicitors on leave or not working at the time of the survey. The bases for FY12-FY20 does not exclude these solicitors, hence analysis may be slightly skewed.

