

URBIS

2021 ANNUAL PROFILE OF SOLICITORS NSW

Final

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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 2021 key findings, based on data collected as at 31 October 2021.

1.2. SNAPSHOT OF SOLICITORS AS AT OCTOBER 2021

Data from the Law Society of NSW database shows:	
Number of solicitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">37,186 solicitors had a NSW practising certificate
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">19,917 female solicitors17,269 male solicitors
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Average age of 42.6 years
Country of birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">More than a quarter of NSW solicitors were born overseas (29%)Of those born overseas, 43% were born in Asia and 14% in the UK/Ireland
Years since admission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Over half had been admitted for more than 10 years (55%)Nearly a fifth had been admitted for 6-10 years (19%)A fifth had been admitted for 2-5 years (19%)Only 8% 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 worked in Sydney CBD (49%)A third worked in the suburbs of Sydney (34%)More than one in ten worked in regional/rural NSW (12%)
Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Most were working in private practice (68%)One fifth were working as corporate legal practitioners (20%)Around one in ten were working as government legal practitioners (11%)
Private law practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">7,195 private law practices operating in NSWThe majority were sole practices.¹ (61%)One quarter had one principal.² (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 (24%)
Of solicitors who responded to the 2020-21 Practising Certificate Survey:	
Areas of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nearly a third were practising commercial law (32%)A fifth were practising corporate law (22%), civil litigation (20%) or conveyancing/real property (20%)
Income (gross annual for FY2019-20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nearly one in 10 were earning \$50,000 or less (8%)A quarter were earning between \$50,001-\$100,000 (24%)A third were earning between \$100,001-\$200,000 (33%)More than one in ten were earning between \$200,001-\$300,000 (11%)Only 9% were earning over \$300,000

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.

1.3. 2021 HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS

Data from the Law Society of NSW database shows:	
The profession continues to grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37,186 solicitors held a NSW practising certificate ↑ 4% from 2020 ↑ 7% annually on average since 1997
For the fifth consecutive year, female solicitors outnumber male solicitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19,917 female solicitors 17,269 male solicitors ↑ 6% women from 2020 ↑ 2% men from 2020
Nearly half of all solicitors are under 40 years old, and women have a younger age profile than men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly one in five solicitors were under 30 years old (17%) Nearly half of all solicitors were under 40 years old (46%) Average age of solicitors 42.6 years old Average age of male solicitors 46.0 years old Average age of female solicitors 39.6 years old
The profession is culturally diverse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 29% of solicitors were born overseas Overseas-born solicitors increasingly come from Asia (+8% since 2011)
The number of private law practices in operation has increased steadily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7,195 private law practices in NSW ↑ 4% from 2020 Growth evident across NSW
The proportion of female private practice principals is increasing but women are still underrepresented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 33% of private practice principals were female Up from 32% of private practice principals in 2020 and 24% in 2013
Of solicitors who responded to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey:	
Almost three quarters of solicitors were working full time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 74% of solicitors reported working full time, whereas 16% of solicitors were working part time, across all practice sectors One in five female solicitors reported working part time (19%), compared to one in ten male solicitors (11%)
Annual gross income for full time solicitors varies considerably across sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just over half of full-time solicitors reported earning \$150,000 or less (53%) Corporate legal practitioners earned the highest median income, followed by those in private practice and government legal
The gender pay gap remains evident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The gender pay gap is most noticeable for those over 30, with a greater proportion of full-time males earning over \$150,000 compared to full-time females This finding was consistent across all practice sectors The gap is evident among males and females of the same age, and males and females who have been admitted for the same number of years
Members of the profession contributed \$344m in legal services free of charge to the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over one third of solicitors (38%) reported providing pro-bono, unpaid or voluntary work in the previous 12 months On average, these solicitors provided 60 hours over the period (equivalent to 8 working days), totalling 471,986 hours This represents an estimated \$142 million in free legal services provided by individual members of the profession to the NSW community (calculated at \$300 an hour)

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: it acts as the licensing authority and a co-regulator by maintaining professional standards of conduct, as well as investigating complaints against solicitors; and, it represents and provides 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 2021, 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 2021 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 2021-22 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 2021.

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 21,267 solicitors responded to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey, representing a high response rate of 57%.

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 37,186 solicitors held a NSW practicing certificate as at 31 October 2021, up from 35,709 in the previous year. This represents a 4% growth in the profession, slightly lower than the average annual rate of growth over the last 21 years. Since 1997, the number of solicitors holding a NSW practising certificate has grown from 13,409 to 37,186, an increase of 177%.

Table 1 – Number of solicitors by gender over time

Year	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
2021	17,269	46%	19,917	54%	37,186	100%
2020	16,900	47%	18,809	53%	35,709	100%
2019	16,448	48%	17,909	52%	34,357	100%
2018	15,882	49%	16,797	51%	32,679	100%
2017	15,595	49%	16,043	51%	31,638	100%
2016	15,085	50%	15,065	50%	30,150	100%
2015	14,705	51%	14,230	49%	28,935	100%
2014	14,204	52%	13,371	49%	27,575	100%
2013	13,775	52%	12,633	48%	26,408	100%
2012	13,463	53%	12,030	47%	25,493	100%
2011	13,112	53%	11,431	47%	24,543	100%
2010	12,845	54%	10,915	46%	23,760	100%
2009	12,516	55%	10,347	45%	22,863	100%
2008	12,260	56%	9,845	45%	22,105	100%
2007	11,974	56%	9,281	44%	21,255	100%
2006	11,712	58%	8,618	42%	20,330	100%
2005	11,677	59%	8,132	41%	19,809	100%
2004	11,368	60%	7,566	40%	18,934	100%
2003	11,112	61%	6,980	39%	18,092	100%
2002	10,815	63%	6,374	37%	17,189	100%
2001	10,417	64%	5,803	36%	16,220	100%
2000	10,060	65%	5,322	35%	15,382	100%
1999	9,777	67%	4,866	33%	14,643	100%
1998	9,414	68%	4,457	32%	13,871	100%
1997	9,310	69%	4,099	31%	13,409	100%

Source: Law Society of NSW database

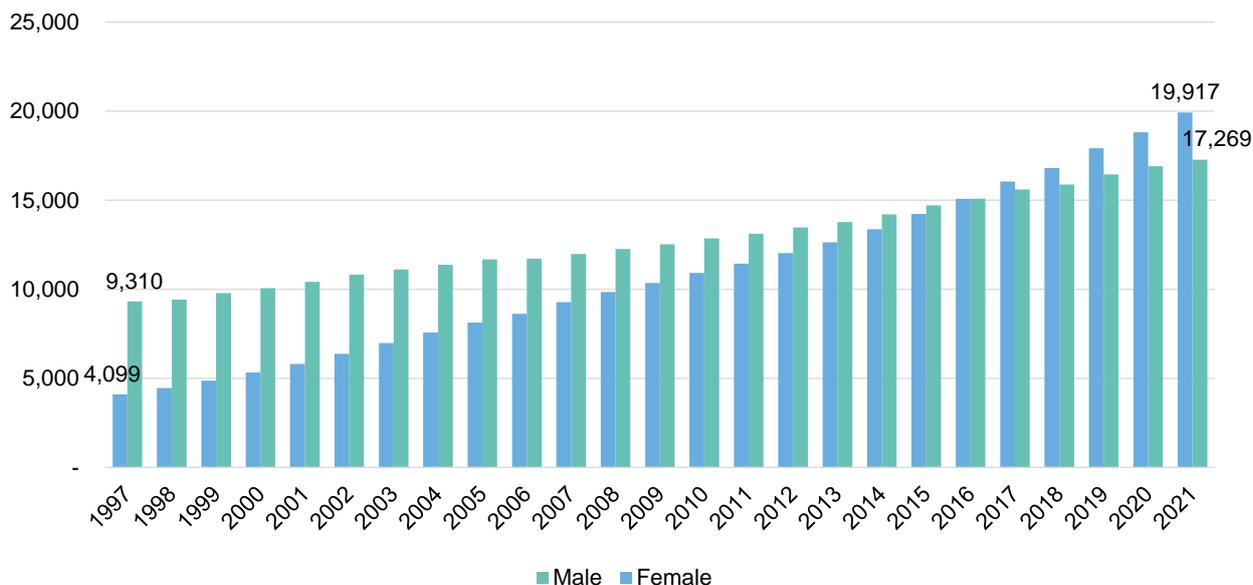
4. GENDER

4.1. GENDER AND GROWTH

In 2021, female solicitors outnumbered male solicitors for the fifth consecutive year. Of all NSW solicitors, 54% were female and 46% were male.

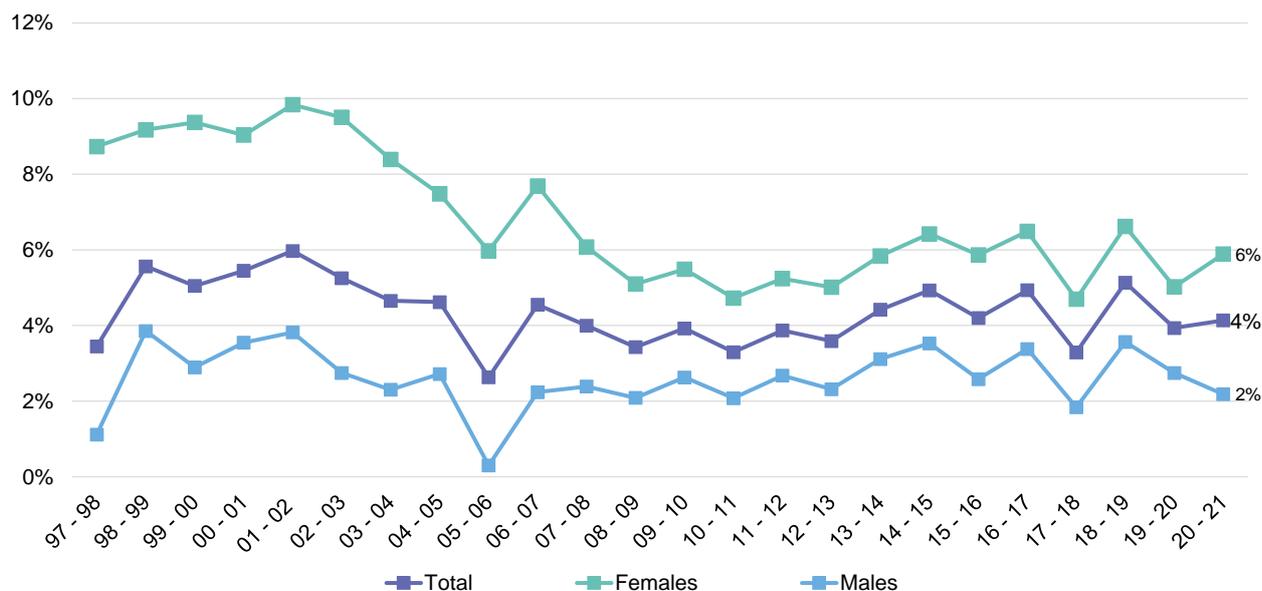
Since 1997, there has been steady growth in the overall number of solicitors; however, the growth rate of female solicitors has been consistently higher than the growth rate of male solicitors. Over this period, the number of female solicitors has grown more than four-fold (from N=4,099 to N=19,917) while the number of male solicitors has grown less than two-fold (from N=9,310 to N=17,269).

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 2021 are:

- a larger proportion of female solicitors in NSW were working in the corporate legal sector (23%), compared to male solicitors (17%)
- a larger proportion of female solicitors in NSW were working in the government legal sector (14%), compared to male solicitors (8%)
- less than a third of female solicitors working in private practice were principals of their law practice (29%), compared to more than half of males working in private practice (54%).
- 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 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey further revealed that:

- one fifth of female respondents reported working part time (19%), compared to only one in ten males (11%)
- overall, female solicitors reported lower incomes than male solicitors:
 - a greater proportion of female solicitors reported earning less than \$150,000 (59%), compared to male solicitors (48%)
 - over a quarter of males reported earning more than \$200,000 (28%), compared to 19% of females.

Table 2 – Profile of female and male solicitors

	Females	Males	Total
Base	19,917	17,269	37,186
Practice sector			
Private practice	62%	75%	68%
Corporate legal	23%	17%	20%
Government legal	14%	8%	11%
Role within private practice**			
Partner/principal	29%	54%	42%
Employee	71%	46%	58%
Years since admission			
One year or less	9%	6%	8%
Two to five years	22%	17%	19%
Six to 10 years	21%	16%	19%
11 to 14 years	13%	10%	12%
15 years or more	36%	51%	43%
Age			
<30 years	21%	14%	18%
30 to 39 years	35%	26%	31%
40 to 49 years	24%	21%	23%
50 to 59 years	13%	18%	15%
60 to 69 years	5%	14%	10%
70+ years	1%	7%	4%

From the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey			
Base	11,080	9,588	20,668
Mode of work*			
Full time	68%	80%	74%
Part time	19%	11%	16%
Not working as a legal practitioner	9%	8%	8%
On leave at time of survey	3%	1%	2%
Income*			
\$50,000 or less	9%	8%	8%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	21%	28%	24%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	19%	24%	21%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	12%	12%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	7%	7%	7%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	8%	7%	7%
Over \$300,000	13%	5%	9%
Prefer not to say	15%	12%	13%

Source: Law Society of NSW database (bases provided at top of table)

*Figures are from the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey (bases: males n=9,588 females n=11,080, whole profession n=20,668)

**Role within private practice figures are from the Law Society of NSW database and include private practitioners only (bases: males N=11,605 females N=10,685, whole profession N=22,290)

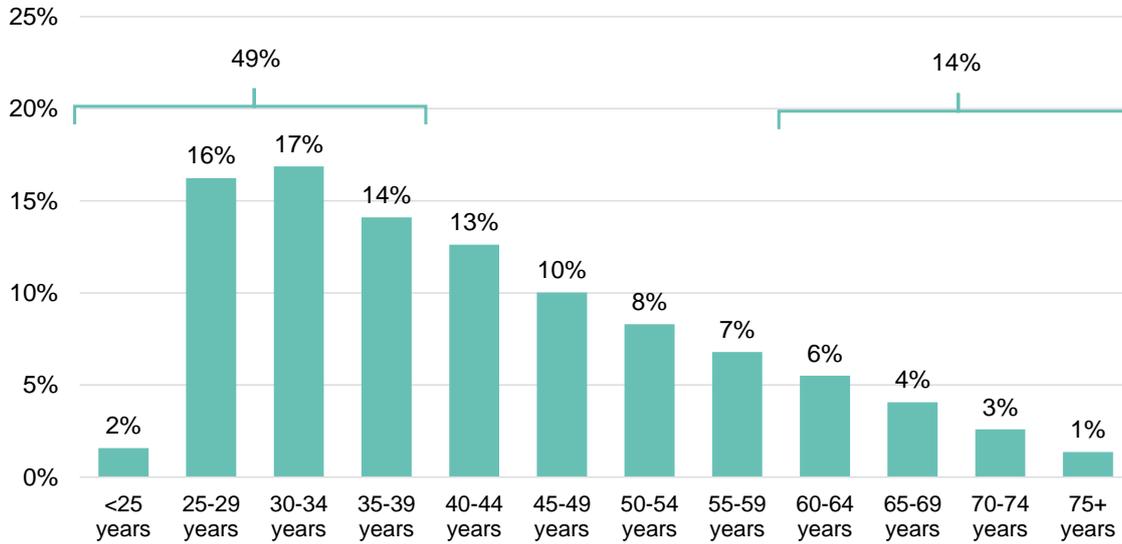
More detailed analysis of results based on gender is provided throughout this report.

5. AGE

The average age of all solicitors in NSW at 31 October 2021 was 42.6 years old, in line with last year's result (42.6 years).³

In 2021, nearly half of all solicitors in NSW were aged under 40 years (49%), while 14% of solicitors were aged 60 years or older.

Figure 3 – Age profile of solicitors

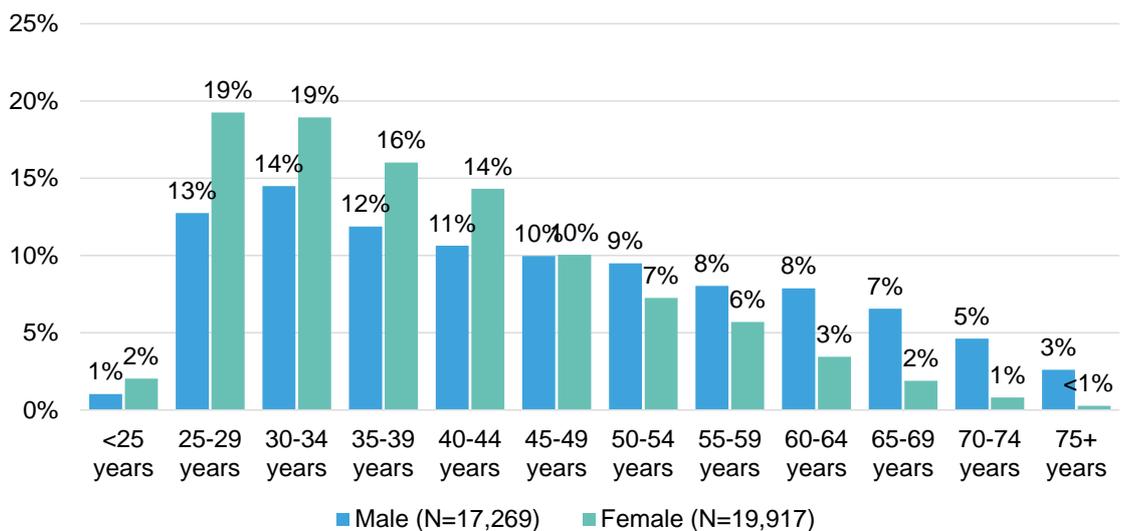


Source: Law Society of NSW database. Base N=37,186

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

- the average age of female solicitors was 39.6 years, compared to 46.0 years for males.⁴
- three in five female solicitors were aged under 40 years old (56%), compared to two in five males (40%)
- four in five females were aged under 50 years old (80%), compared to three in five males (61%)
- one in five male solicitors were aged 60 years or older (23%), compared to only 6% of females.

Figure 4 – Age profile of male and female solicitors



Source: Law Society of NSW database

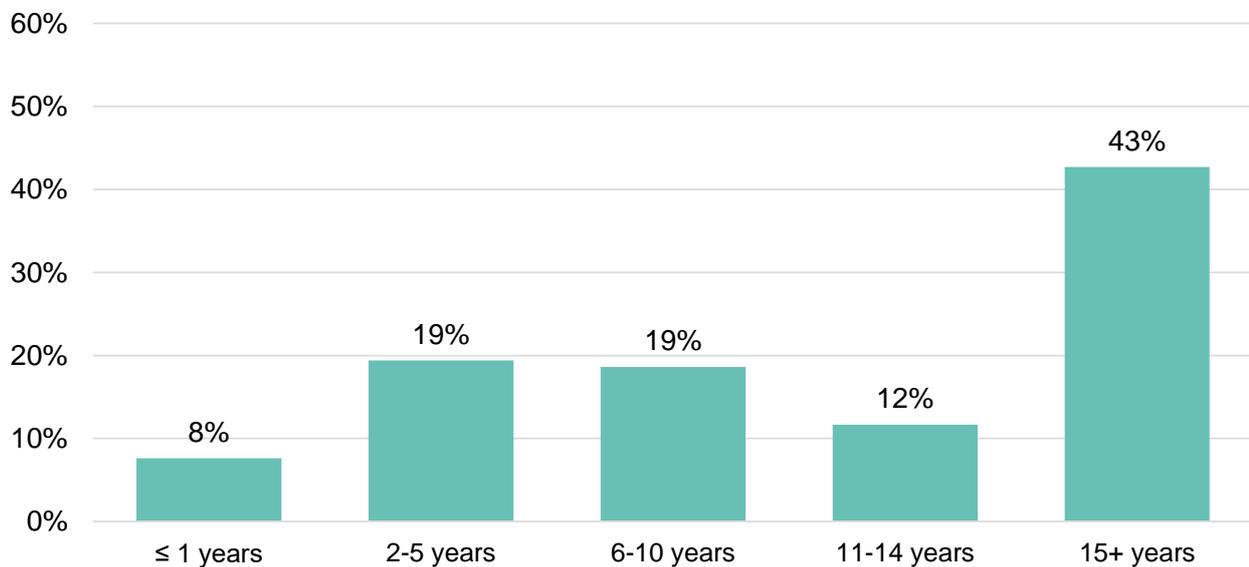
³ Source: Law society of NSW database

⁴ Calculated using the mid-point of the age bands

6. YEARS SINCE ADMISSION

In 2021, more than half of all NSW solicitors had been admitted for more than ten years (55%), while nearly two fifths had been admitted for two to ten years (38%). Only 8% had been admitted for one year or less as at 31 October 2021.

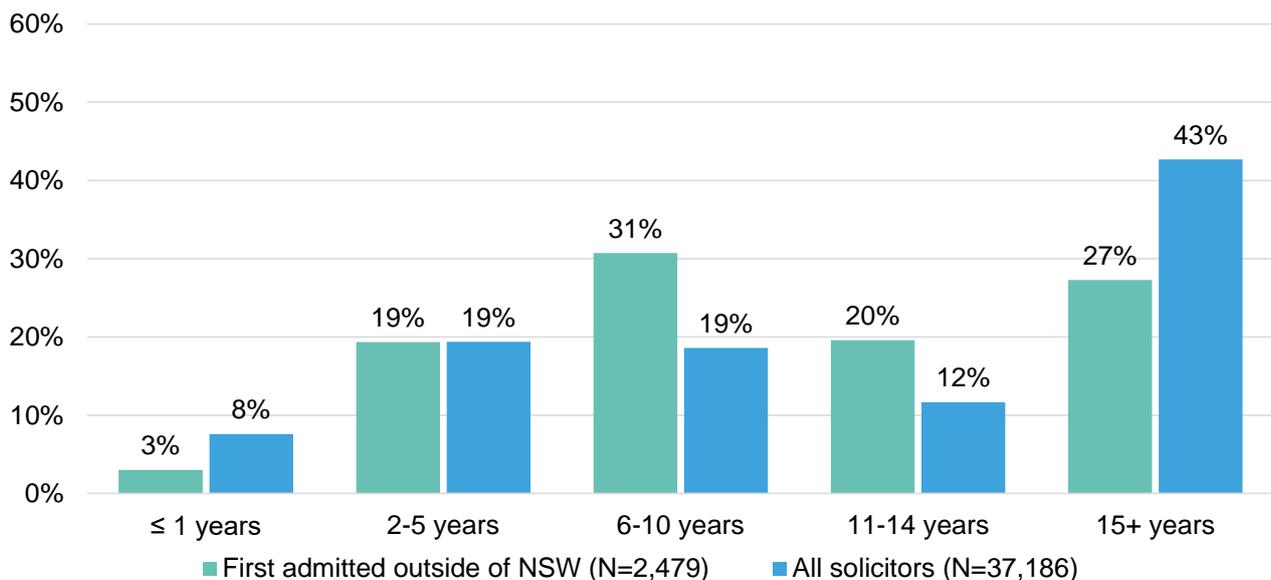
Figure 5 – Years since admission



Source: Law Society of NSW database
Base N=37,186

Of the 37,186 solicitors practising in NSW, 7% (or N=2,479) 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 greater proportion had been admitted for ten years or less (53%), compared to the whole profession (46%). These results align with the 2020 result (56% of those first admitted outside of NSW versus 45% of the whole profession).

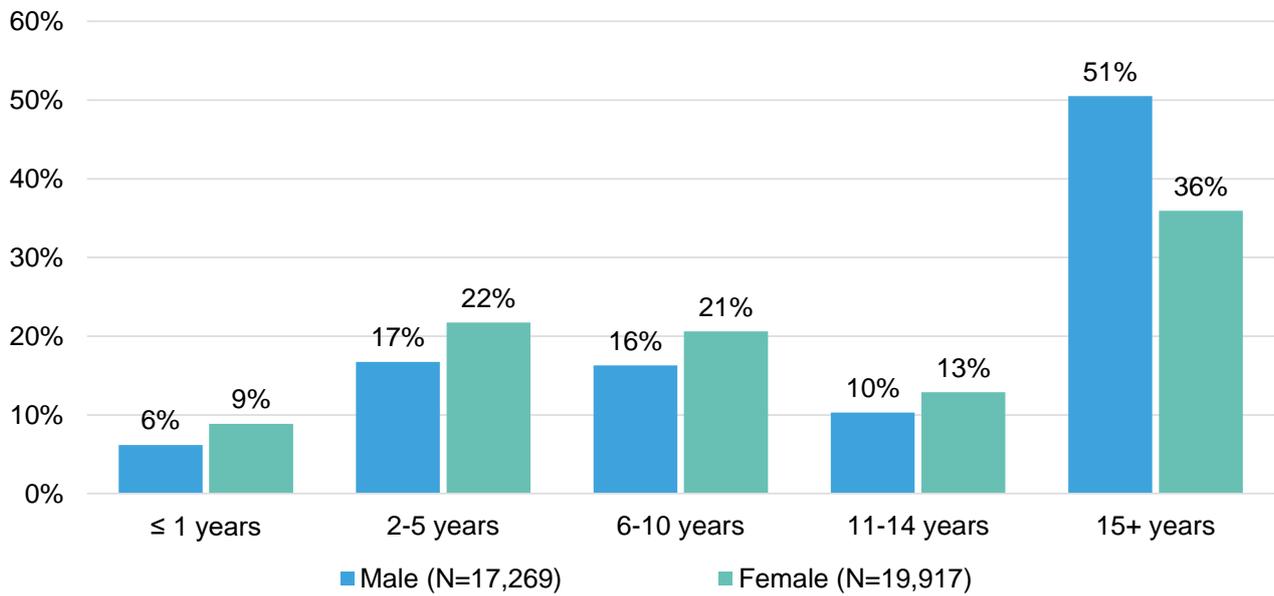
Figure 6 – Years since admission of solicitors who were first admitted outside NSW



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 2021 (51%), compared to over a third of females (36%). 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



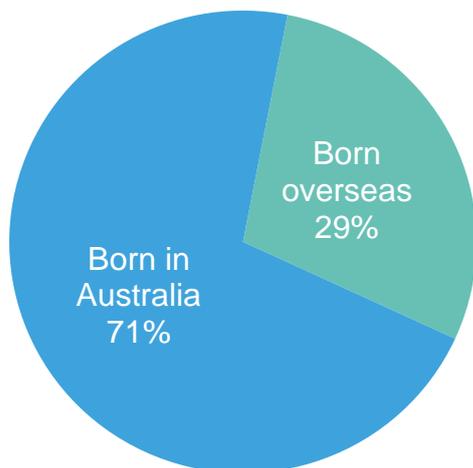
Source: Law Society of NSW database

7. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

7.1. COUNTRY OF BIRTH

More than seven in ten NSW solicitors were born in Australia (71%) and over a quarter (29%) were born overseas. This is consistent with recent years and slightly lower than the general population of NSW. Based on 2016 census data, 35% of all people living in NSW were born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

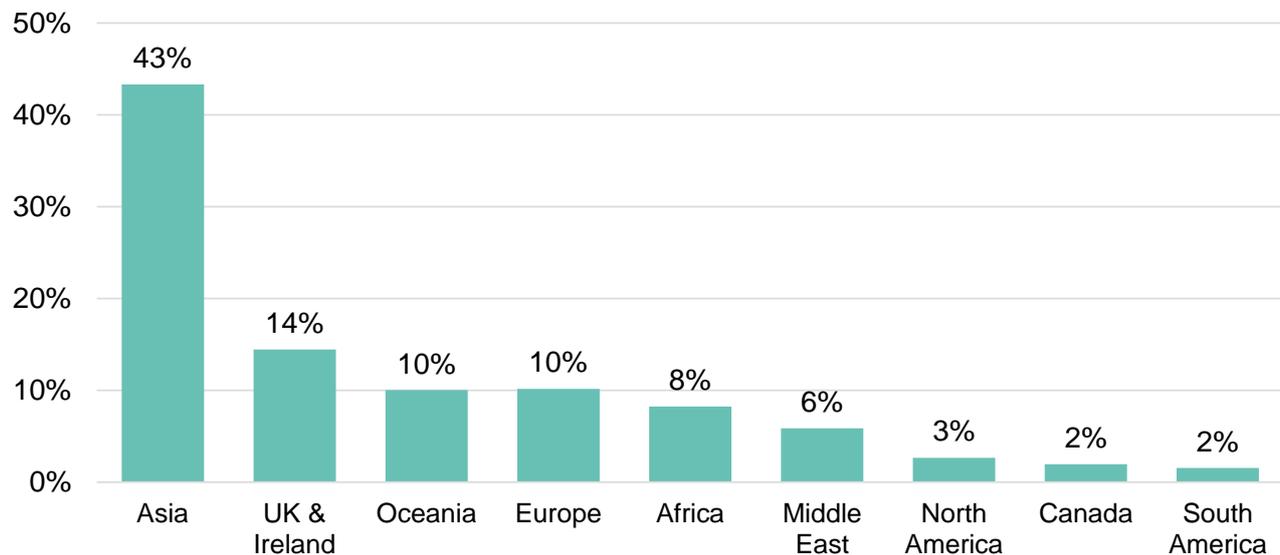
Figure 8 – Proportion of solicitors born in Australia and overseas



Source: Law Society of NSW database
Base N=37,186

Of the 10,719 solicitors born overseas, two fifths were born in Asia (43%), followed by 14% born in UK/Ireland, 10% in Oceania and 10% in Europe.

Figure 9 – Region of birth of solicitors born overseas

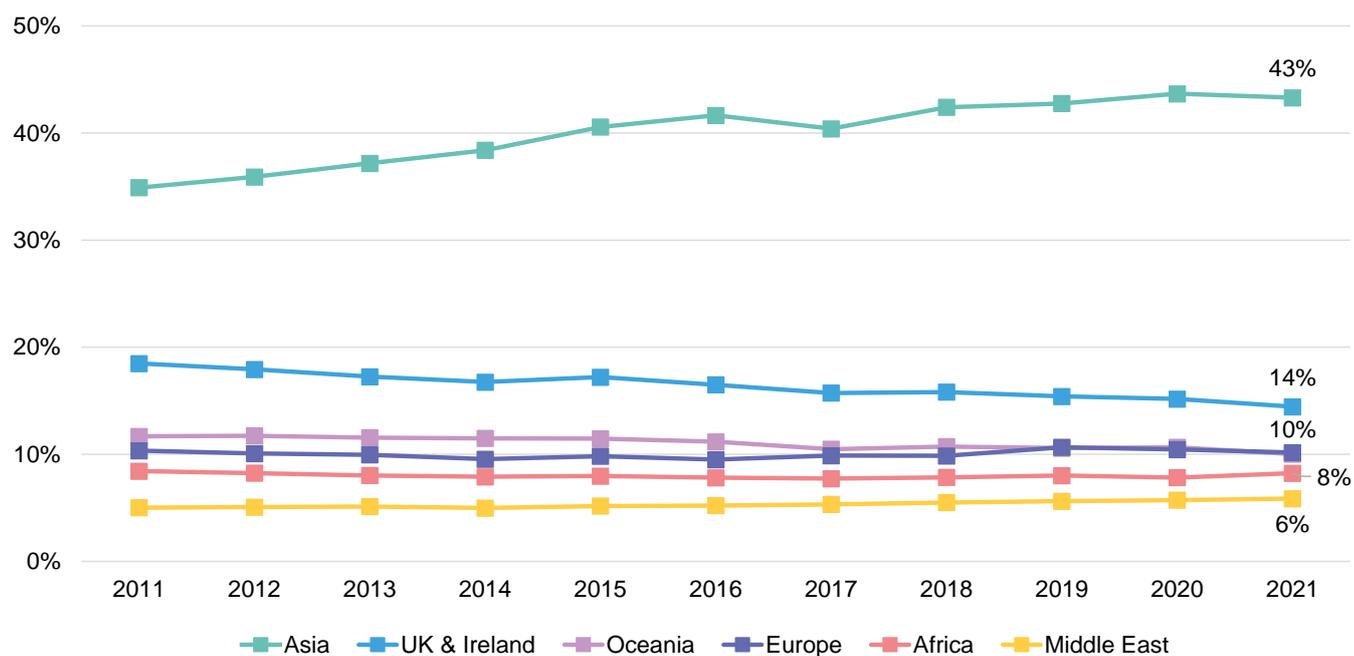


Source: Law Society of NSW database
Base N=10,719

Note: 'Former USSR and Baltic States', a category used in previous reports, has been included in Europe

The proportion of solicitors born in Asia is increasing, with an 8% increase over the past 10 years (see Table 3). Meanwhile, there has been a 4% decline in the proportion of solicitors born in the UK and Ireland and a 1% increase in those born in the Middle East. The proportion of solicitors born in other regions has remained relatively consistent over time (see Figure 10).

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 2021

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

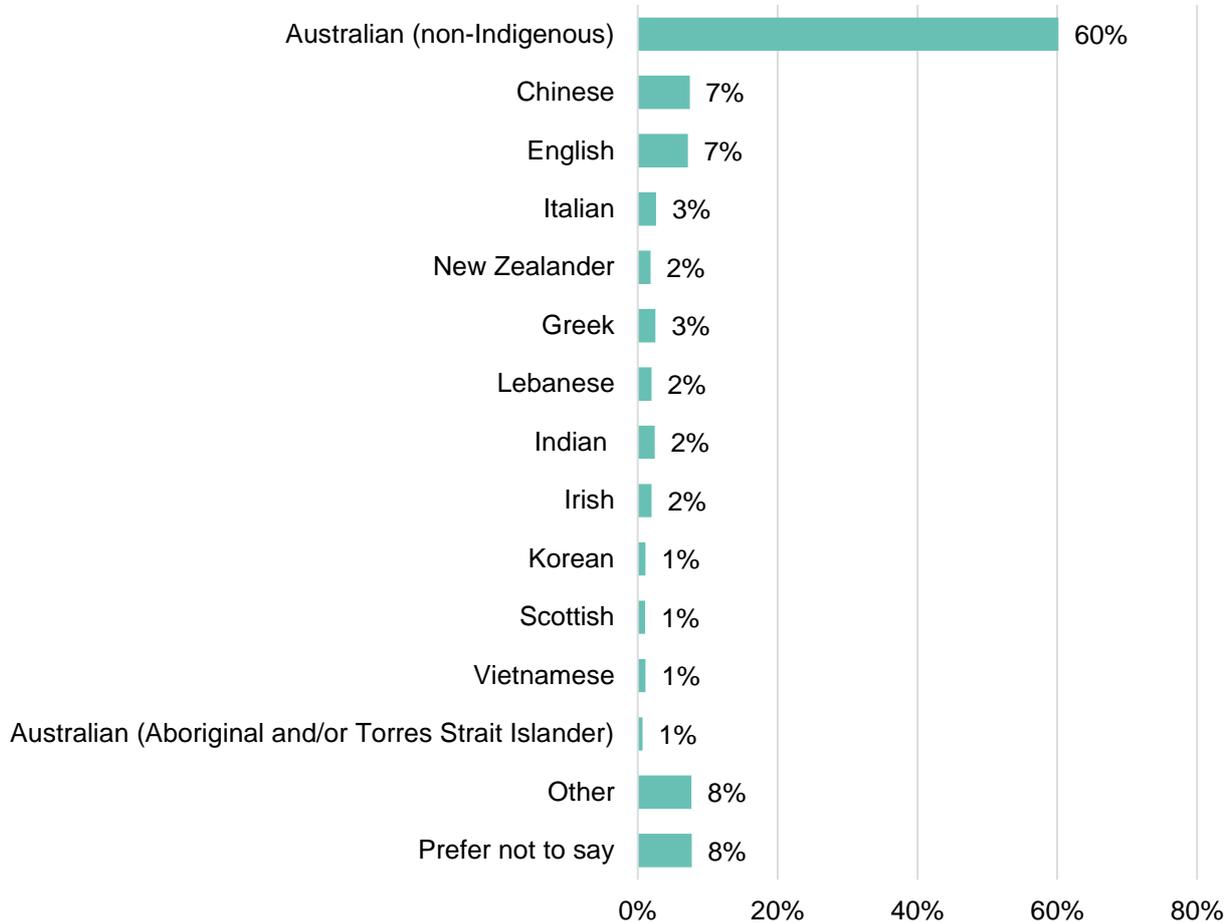
Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: 'Former USSR and Baltic States', a category used in previous reports, has been included in Europe

7.2. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey asked respondents to provide the ethnic or cultural backgrounds with which they identified. Three in five identified as Australian (non-Indigenous) (60%), followed by Chinese (7%) and English (7%). A full breakdown is shown below. Other backgrounds which respondents commonly mentioned included Sri Lankan, South African, German and Macedonian.

Figure 11 – Cultural background

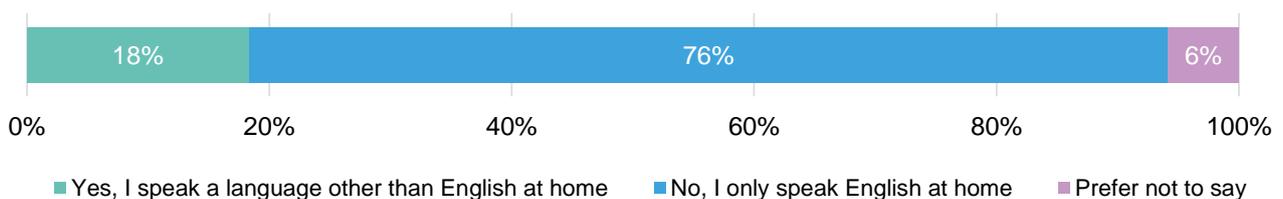


Base n=21,267
Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

7.3. LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Respondents to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate survey were also asked, to indicate whether they speak another language other than English at home. This was included as it is an established measure of cultural diversity. Nearly, one fifth of respondents reported speaking another language other than English at home (18%). This is in line with the wider Australian population, where 21% speak another language other than English (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

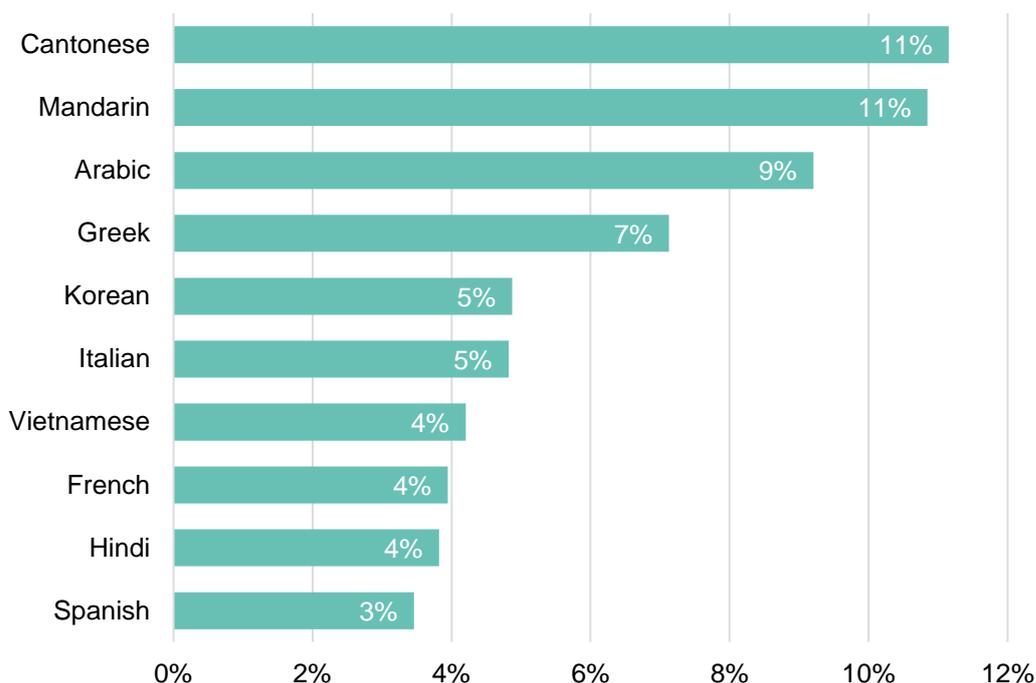
Figure 12 – Language spoken at home



Base n=21,267
Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

Of respondents who spoke a language other than English at home, the most commonly reported languages were Cantonese (11%) and Mandarin (11%). This was followed by Arabic (9%) and Greek (7%). A full breakdown is below.

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

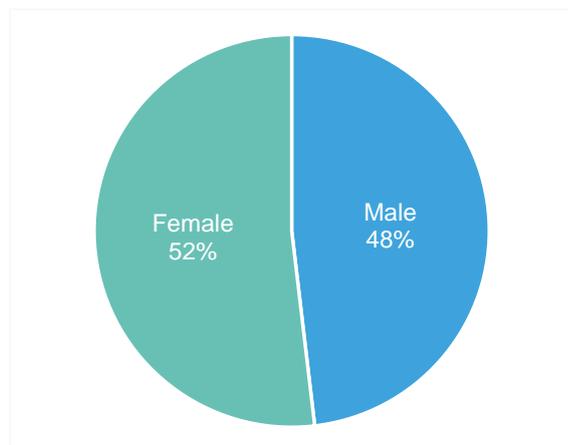


Base n=3,900
Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

7.4. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STATUS

A total of 371 solicitors identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, representing 1.0% of all solicitors in NSW. This is much lower than the general NSW population with the 2016 census reporting 3.4% of all people in NSW identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). 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



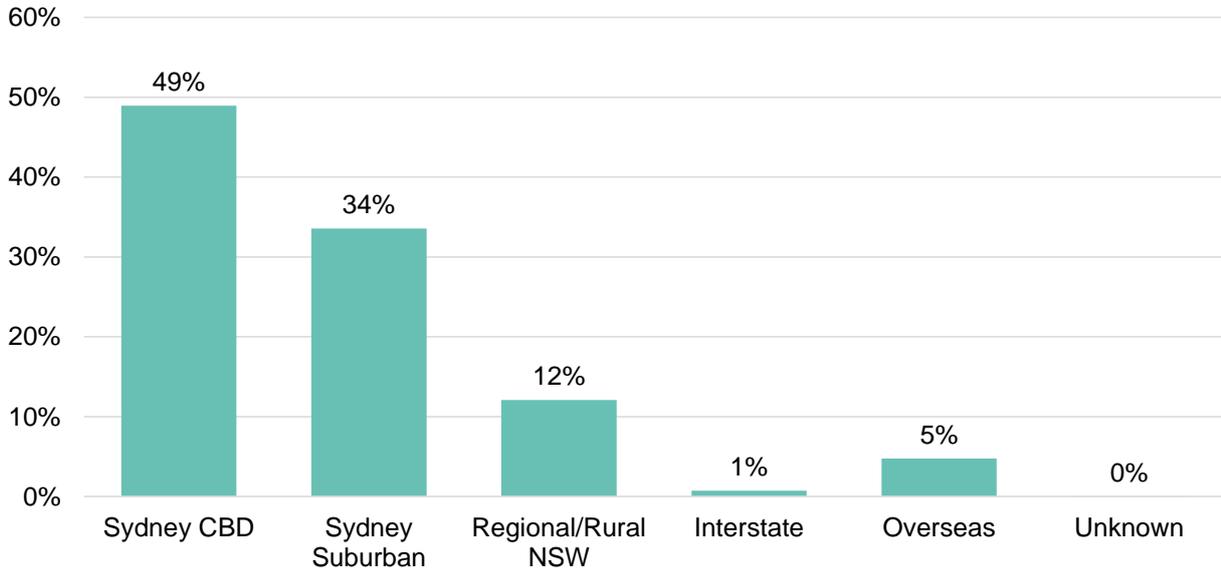
Base n=371
Source: Law Society of NSW Database

8. LOCATION

8.1. OVERVIEW

At as 31 October 2021, nearly half of all solicitors in NSW were working in the Sydney CBD (49%), followed by a third working in Sydney Suburban (34%). 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



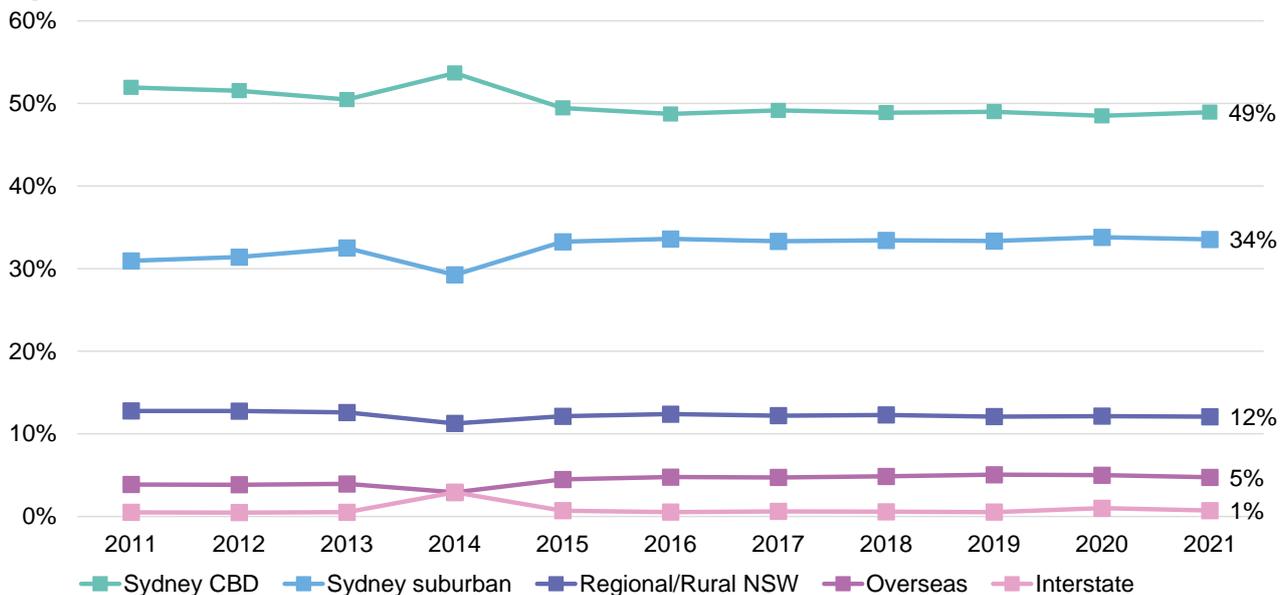
Source: Law Society NSW Database

Base N=37,186

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

Over the past ten years there has been some small 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 2021. In contrast, the proportion working in suburban areas of Sydney has increased from 31% in 2011 to 34% in 2021. The proportion of solicitors working in regional/rural NSW, interstate and overseas has remained broadly consistent.

Figure 16 – Location over time

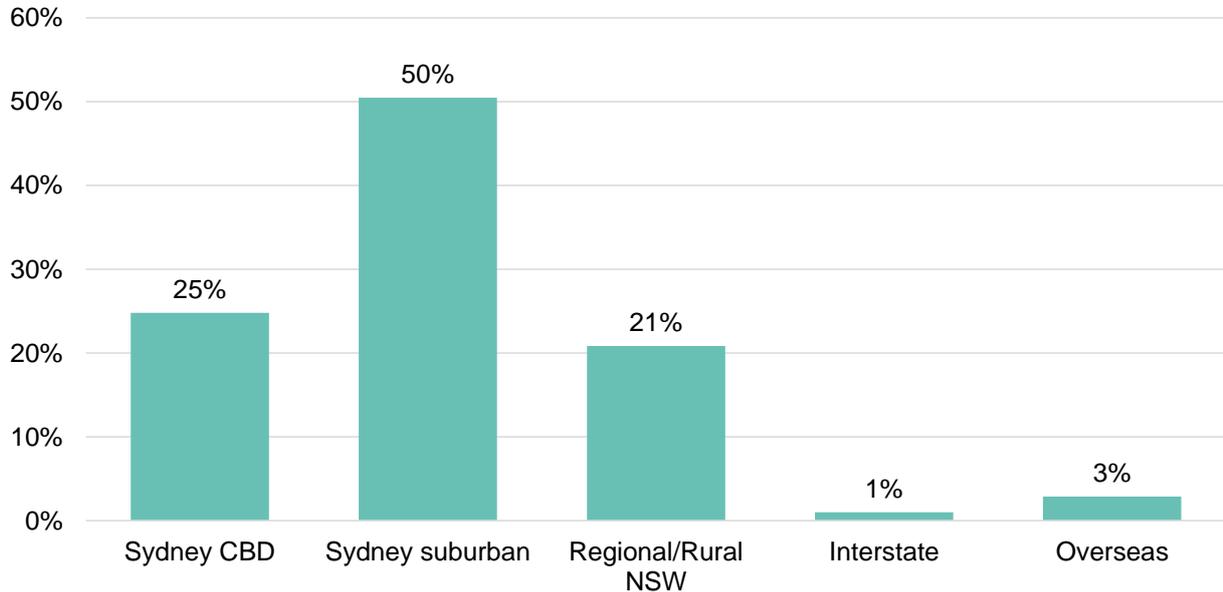


Source: Law Society of NSW database

8.2. LOCATION OF PRIVATE LAW PRACTICES

As at 31 October 2021 there were 7,195 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



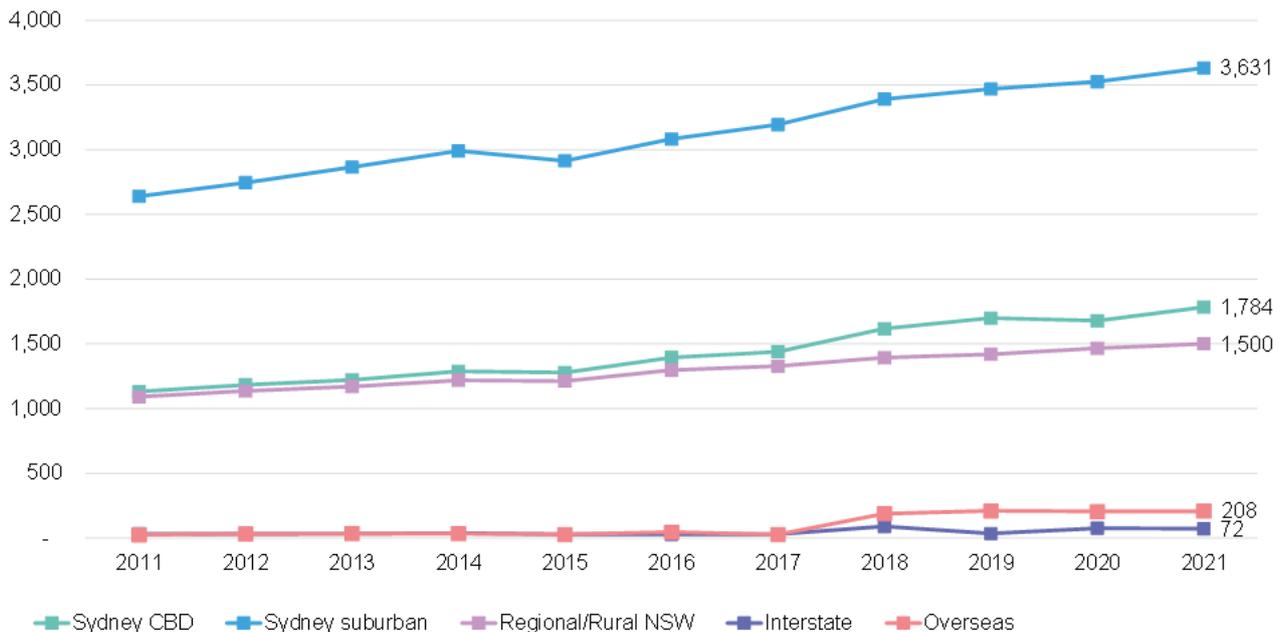
Source: Law Society of NSW database

Base N=7,195

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

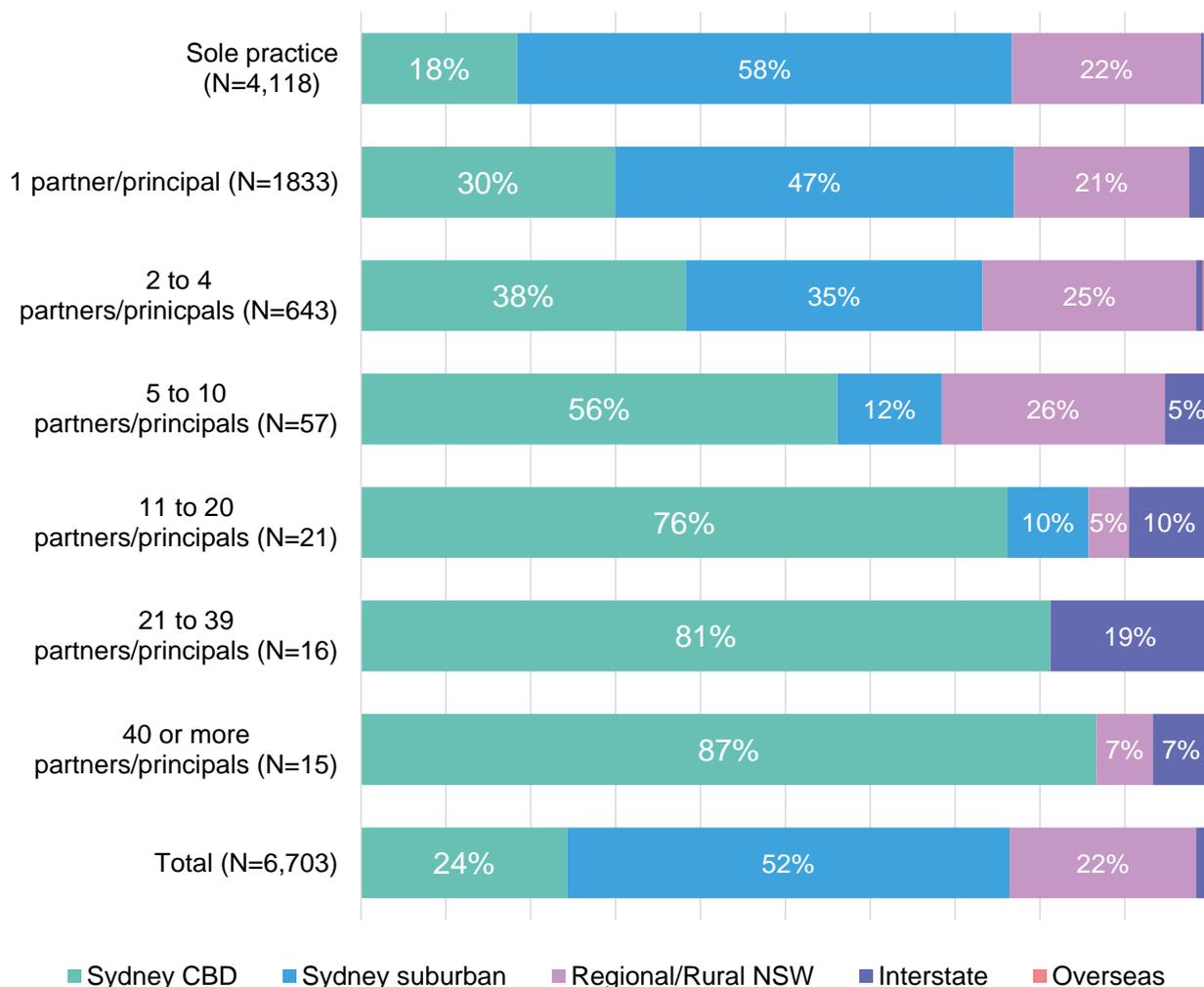


Source: Law Society of NSW database

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. For instance, more than half of all sole practices in NSW (58%), almost half of all law practices with one principal (47%) and over a third of all law practices with two to four principals (35%) were based in suburban areas of Sydney. Conversely, over three quarters of law practices with 11 to 20 principals (76%), 81% of law practices with 21 to 29 principals and 87% of law practices with 40 or more principals were 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



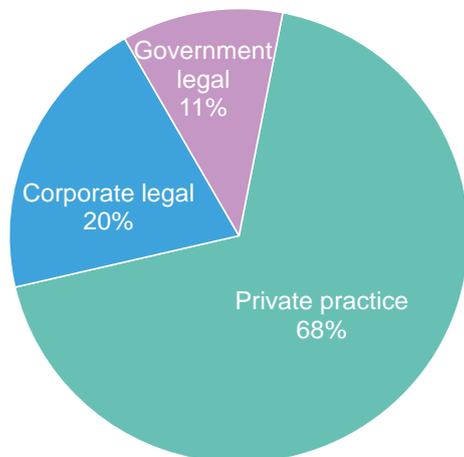
Source: Law Society of NSW database
 Base N=6,703

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

9. PRACTICE SECTORS

Seven in ten NSW solicitors were working in private practice (68%), and one fifth were working in the corporate legal sector (20%). The remaining 11% were working in the government legal sector.

Figure 20 – Practice sectors



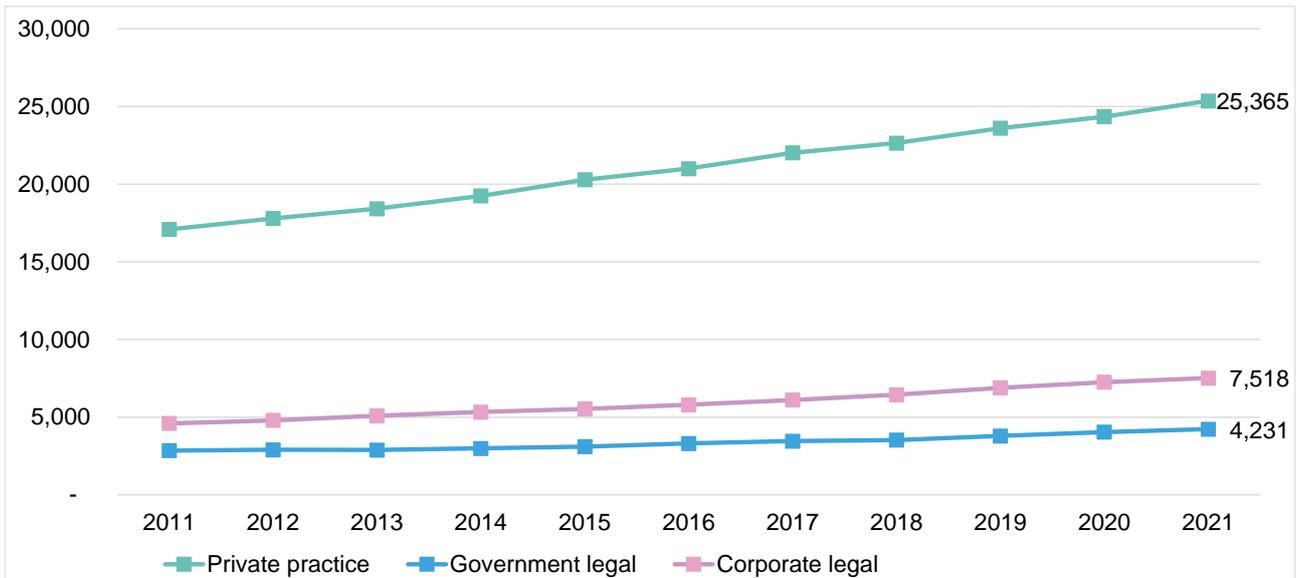
Source: Law Society of NSW database
Base N=37,114 (excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other')

The number of solicitors has grown over time across all three practice sectors. Specifically:

- The largest growth in the number of solicitors has been in private practice, from N=17,091 solicitors in 2011, to N=25,365 in 2021. This amounts to an average annual growth rate of 5%, and 4% growth in the 12 months to October 2021.
- Meanwhile, the corporate legal sector has grown from N=4,601 practitioners in 2011 to N=7,518 in 2021, with an average annual growth rate of 6% and a 4% growth rate in the 12 months to October 2021.
- Finally, the government legal sector has grown from N=2,849 practitioners in 2011 to N=4,231 in 2021, which is an average annual growth rate of 5%, and 5% growth in the 12 months to October 2021 (compared to a 8% growth rate for the 12 months to October 2019 and an 7% growth rate for the 12 months to October 2020).

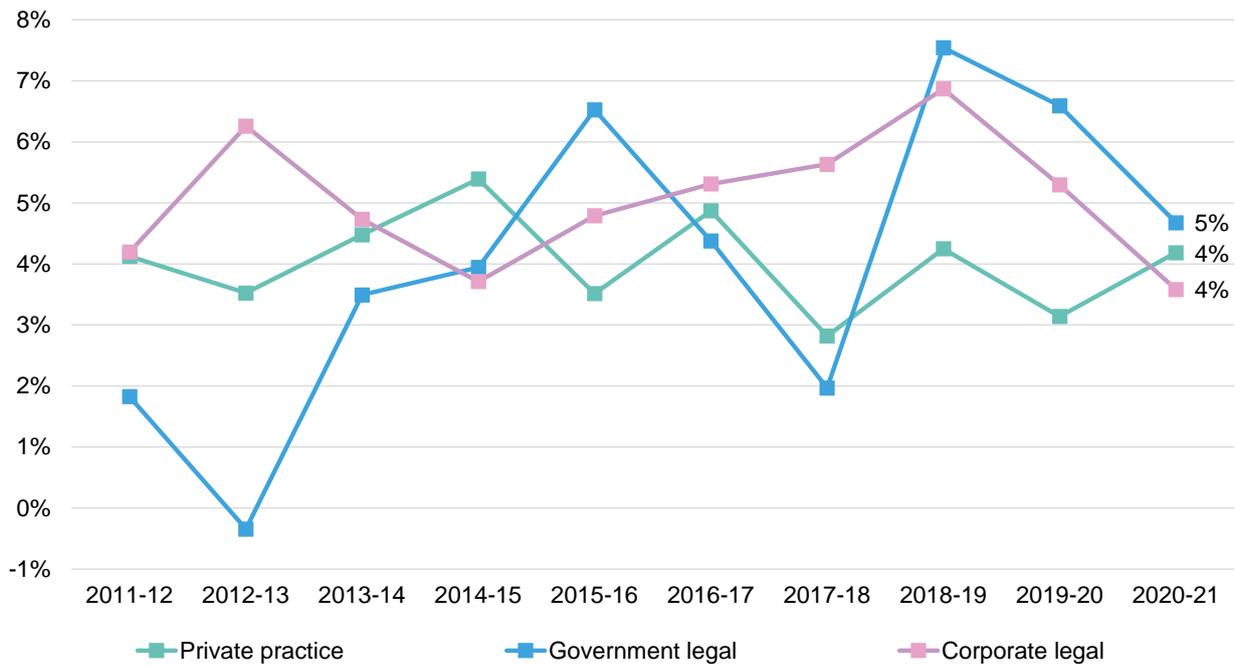
Therefore, the largest rate of growth across all practice sectors in the 12 months to October 2021 has been in the private practice and government legal sector.

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



Source: Law Society of NSW database
 Base N=37,114 (excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other')

Figure 22 – Annual growth rates of practice sectors over time



Source: Law Society of NSW database
 Base N=37,114 (excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other')
 Note: Annual growth rates are calculated from October to October each year

The profile of solicitors varied considerably by practice sector. Figure 23 below summarises the key differences and a full breakdown is provided in Table 4 overleaf.

Figure 23 – Summary of key demographic differences by practice sector

Gender: In private practice, there was a slightly higher proportion of male solicitors (51%) than female solicitors (49%); however, there was a greater proportion of female solicitors in the government legal sector (68%, compared to 32%), and in the corporate legal sector (61%, compared to 39%).

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 (16%), compared to the government and corporate legal sectors (9% 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, 31% were admitted for five years or less, compared to 24% in the government legal sector and 15% in the corporate legal sector.

Income: Full-time solicitors working in the corporate legal sector who responded to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey reported earning higher incomes than survey respondents working in private practice or the government legal sector. Half of those in the corporate legal sector reported earning more than \$150,000 (51%), compared to 30% of private practice solicitors and 19% of government legal practitioners.

Table 4 – Profile of solicitors by practice sector

	Private practice	Corporate legal	Government legal
Base	25,365	7,518	4,231
Gender			
Male	51%	39%	32%
Female	49%	61%	68%
Location			
Sydney CBD	50%	44%	50%
Sydney suburban	31%	39%	32%
Regional/Rural NSW	14%	4%	13%
Interstate	1%	1%	1%
Overseas	3%	10%	1%
Age			
<30 years	21%	7%	16%
30-39 years	29%	37%	35%
40-49 years	19%	34%	25%
50-59 years	15%	17%	15%
60-69 years	11%	5%	8%
70+ years	5%	1%	1%
Years since admission			
One year or less	9%	3%	5%
Two to five years	22%	12%	19%
Six to 10 years	17%	21%	22%
11 to 14 years	10%	16%	14%
15 years or more	42%	48%	39%
From the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey			
Base	12,187	4,398	2,684
Mode of work*			
Full time	80%	79%	77%
Part time	17%	14%	15%
Not working as a legal practitioner	2%	5%	5%
On leave at time of survey	2%	3%	3%
Income*			
\$50,000 or less	11%	2%	2%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	28%	13%	25%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	18%	16%	47%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	10%	19%	10%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	6%	13%	5%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	4%	7%	2%
Over \$300,000	10%	12%	2%
Prefer not to say	14%	17%	8%

Source: Law Society of NSW database (bases provided at top of table, table excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other') and 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

*Figures are from the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey (Bases: private practice n=12,187, corporate legal n=4,398, government legal n=2,684)

10. PRIVATE PRACTICE

10.1. OVERVIEW

According to the Law Society of NSW database, there were 25,365 solicitors working in private practice as at October 2021. The characteristics of solicitors working in private practice are summarised in Figure 24 and outlined in detail in Table 5.

Figure 24 – Summary of key characteristics of private practice solicitors

Gender: A slightly higher proportion of private practice solicitors were male (51%, compared to 49%).

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

Mode of work: Four fifths of private practice solicitors who responded to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey reported working full time (80%), 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 (32%).

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 (31%).

Income: The annual gross income of full-time private practice solicitors who responded to the 2021-22 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 (19%) reported earning over \$200,000, compared to 32% in corporate legal and 9% in government legal.

Table 5 – Profile of solicitors in private practice

	Solicitors in private practice		Whole profession
Base	25,365		37,186
Gender			
Male	12,984	51%	46%
Female	12,381	49%	54%
Role within private practice			
Partner/principal	9,616	38%	-
Employee	15,749	62%	-
Location			
Sydney CBD	12,563	50%	49%
Sydney suburban	8,114	32%	32%
Regional/Rural NSW	3,634	14%	12%
Interstate	130	1%	1%
Overseas	922	4%	5%
Years since admission			
One year or less	2,394	9%	8%
Two to five years	5,479	22%	19%
Six to 10 years	4,368	17%	19%
11 to 14 years	2,498	10%	12%
15 years or more	10,620	42%	43%
Age			

	Solicitors in private practice		Whole profession
<30 years	5,377	21%	18%
30 to 39 years	7,254	29%	31%
40 to 49 years	4,798	19%	23%
50 to 59 years	3,705	15%	15%
60 to 69 years	2,855	11%	10%
70+ years	1,346	5%	4%
From 2021-22 Practising Certificate			
Base	12,187		24,267
Mode of work*			
Full time	9,699	80%	74%
Part time	2,039	17%	16%
Not working as a legal practitioner	204	2%	8%
On leave at time of survey	245	2%	2%
Income*			
\$50,000 or less	1,317	11%	8%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	3,369	28%	24%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	2,212	18%	21%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	1,234	10%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	702	6%	7%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	446	4%	4%
Over \$300,000	1,221	10%	9%
Prefer not to say	1,686	14%	14%

Source: Law Society of NSW database (base provided at top of table, table excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other')

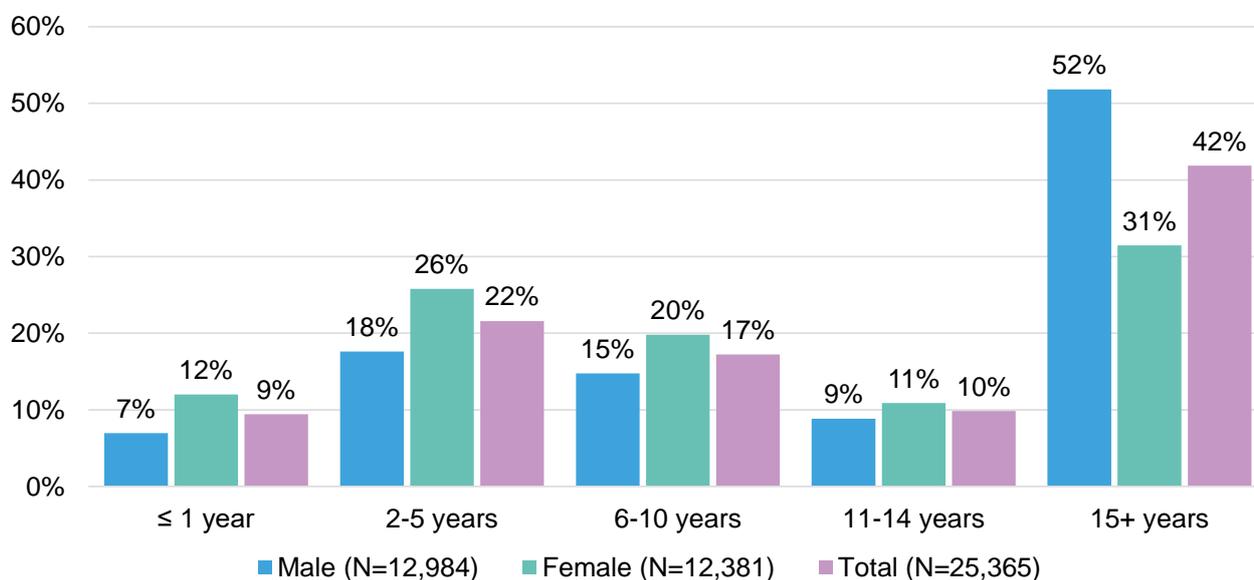
*Figures are from the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey (bases: private practice n=12,187, whole profession n=21,267)

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. Two fifths of female private practice solicitors had been admitted for 5 years or less (38%), compared to a quarter of males (25%). Conversely, more than half of male private practice solicitors had been admitted for 15 or more years (52%) compared to 31% of females.

Figure 25 – Years since admission of private practice solicitors



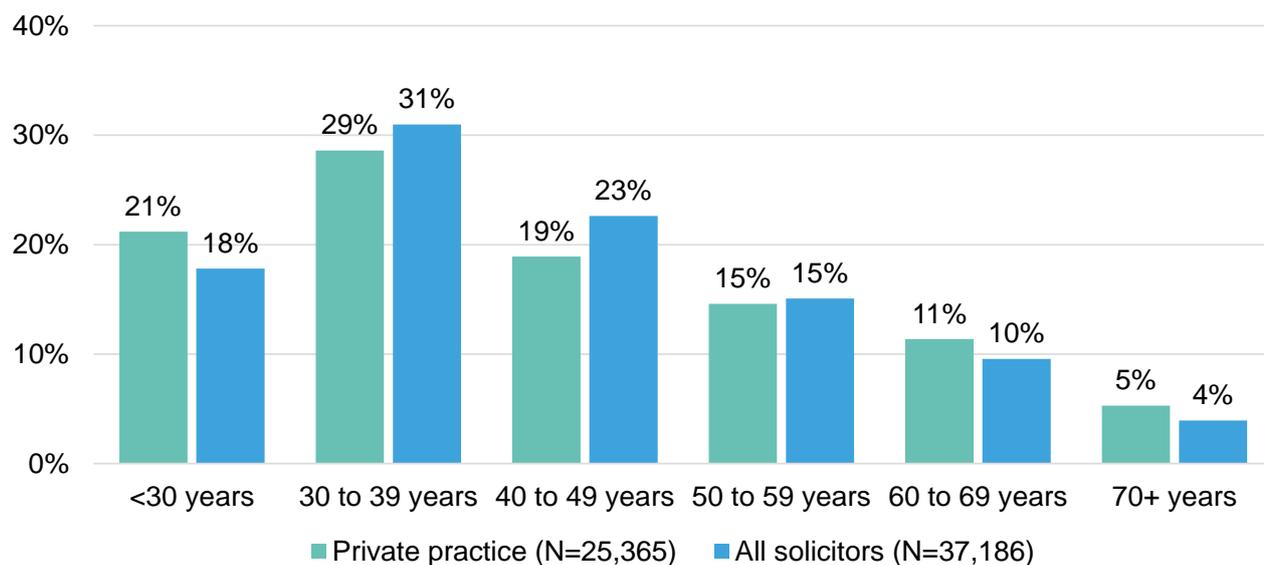
Source: Law Society NSW Database

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%).

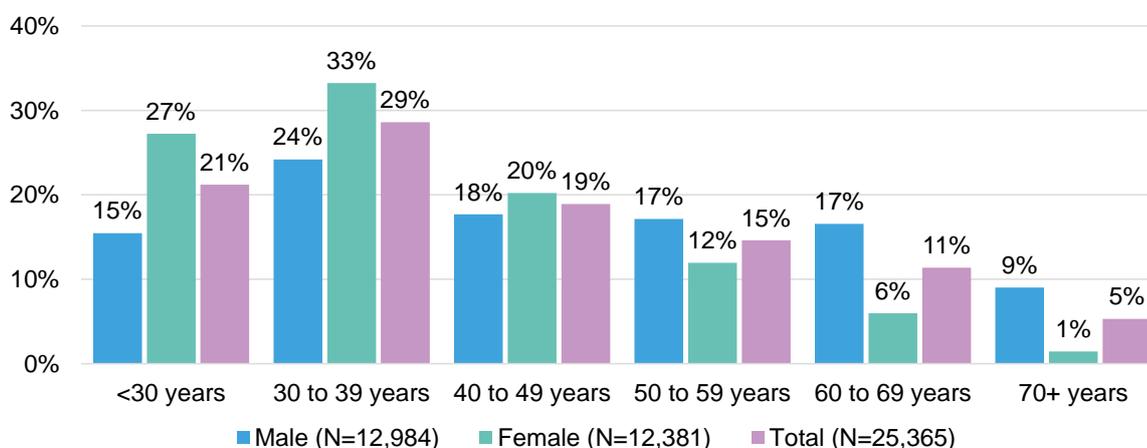
Figure 26 – Age profile of solicitors in private practice vs the whole profession



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 7% of female solicitors (see Figure 27 overleaf).

Figure 27 – 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 2021, there were N=7,195 private practices operating in NSW. These law practices comprised N=9,616 principals and N=15,743 employed solicitors.⁵ The majority of private practices were sole practices (61%), followed by law practices with one principal and employed solicitors (27%).⁶

There were 15 private law practices with 40 or more principals (1,026 principals in total), which employed 3,114 solicitors. This represents one quarter of all non-principal solicitors working in private practice (24%). In total, at October 2021, 19% of private practice solicitors were working in less than one per-cent 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					
	Count	%	Principals		Employees		Total	
			Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Sole practice*	4,118	61%	4,118	44%	0	0%	4,118	18%
1 partner/principal	1,833	27%	1,753	19%	4,147	32%	5,900	26%
2 to 4 partners/principals	643	10%	1,410	15%	2,903	23%	4,313	19%
5 to 10 partners/principals	57	1%	358	4%	750	6%	1,108	5%
11 to 20 partners/principals	21	<1%	294	3%	725	6%	1,019	5%
21 to 39 partners/principals	16	<1%	436	5%	1,256	10%	1,692	8%
40 or more partners/principals	15	<1%	1,026	11%	3,114	24%	4,140	19%
Total	6,703	100%	9,395	100%	12,895	100%	22,290	100%

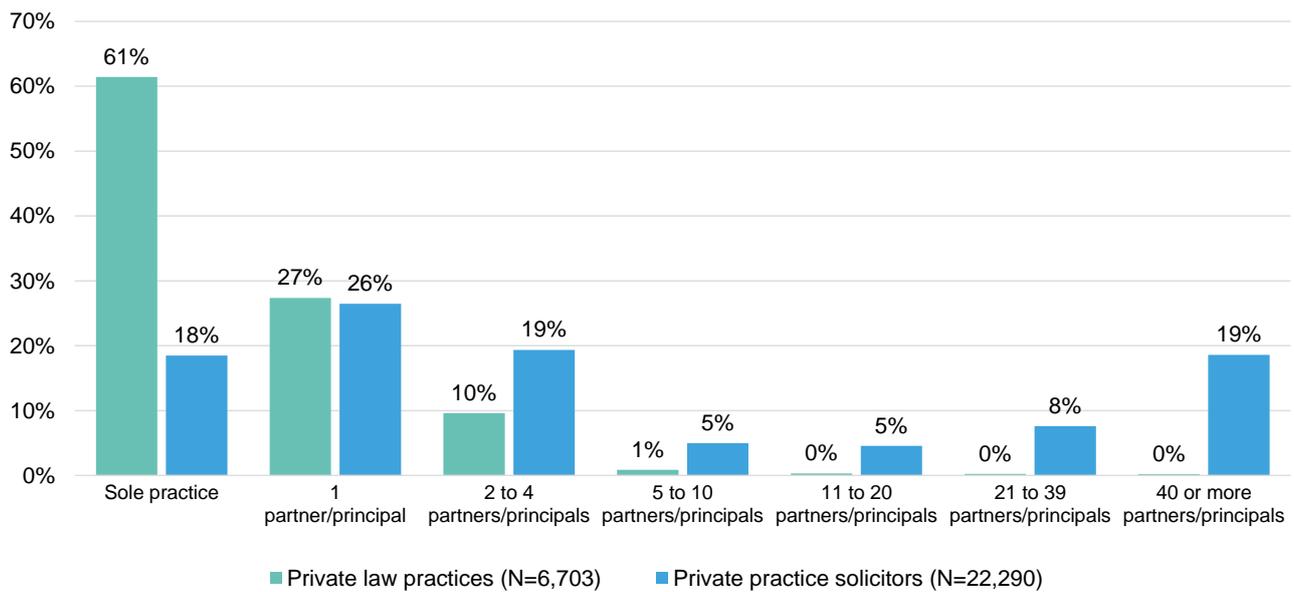
Source: Law Society of NSW database

*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=22,290 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other'

⁵ Figure excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other'.

⁶ In reports prior to 2020, sole practice figures included law practices with one principal and employed solicitors. This category has since been split.

Figure 28 – Private legal practitioners by size of law practice

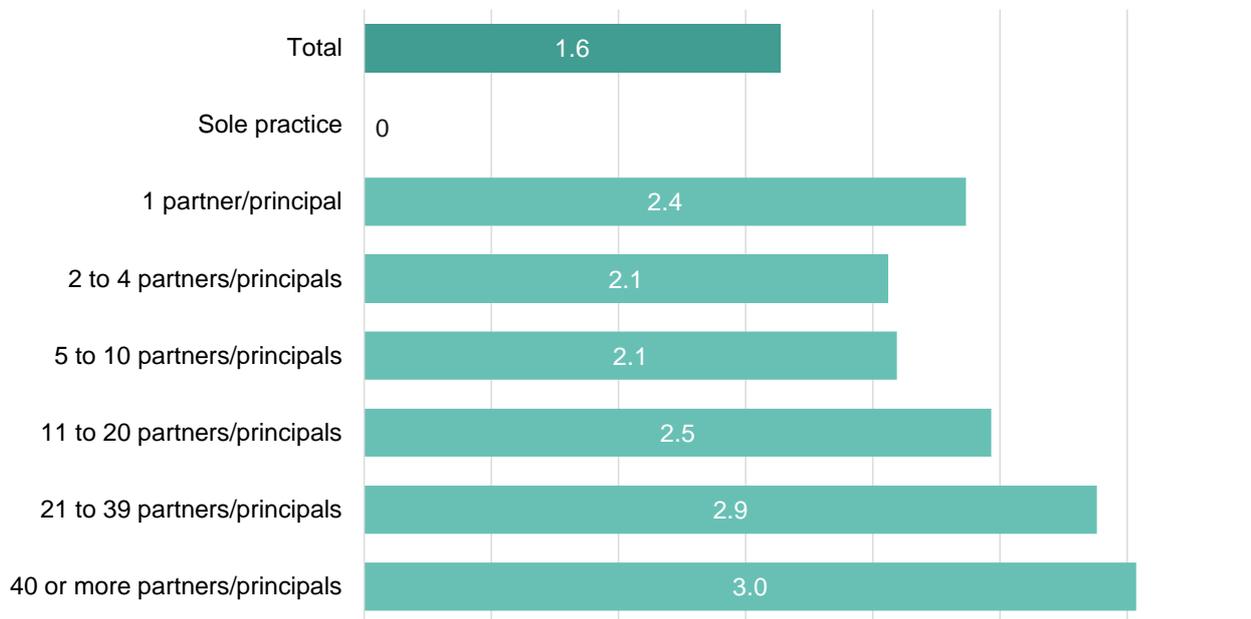


Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=22,290 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other'

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 2.1. The only exception was practices of one principal, which had a ratio of 2.4 employed solicitors to principals. The ratio across all private practices was 1.6 employed solicitors to each principal.

Figure 29 – Ratio of employees to principals by size of law practice



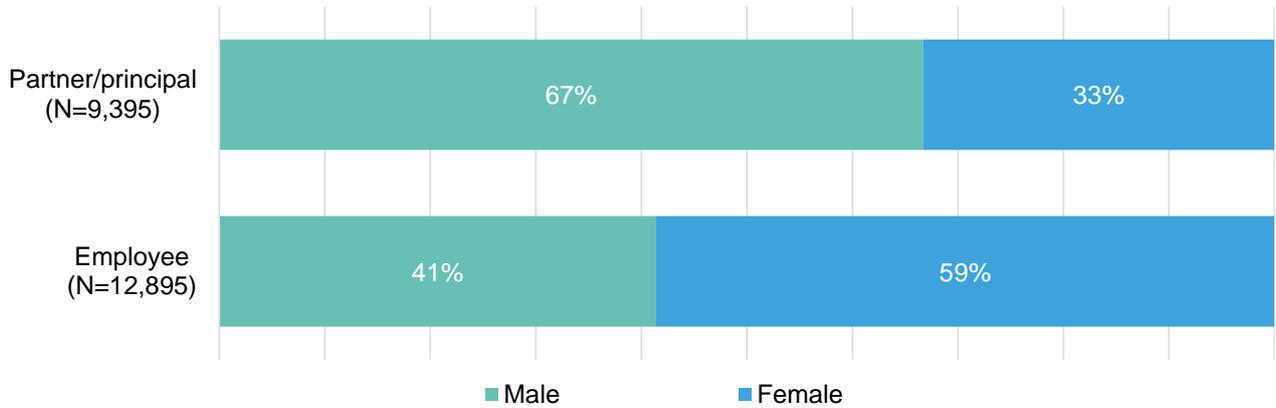
Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Figure excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other'

10.4.1. Gender by role in law practice

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

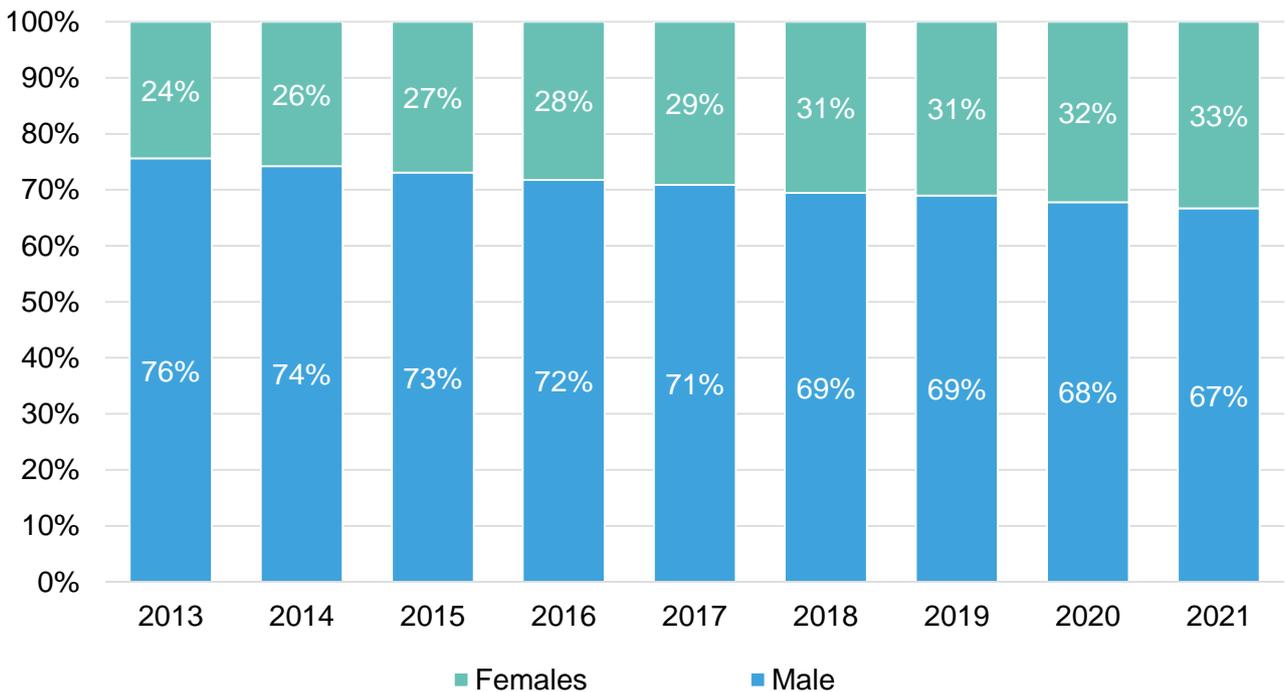
Figure 30 – Gender profile of partners/principals and employed solicitors in private practice



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=22,290 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes n=72 solicitors classified as 'other'

Figure 31 – Partners/principals in private practice by gender over time

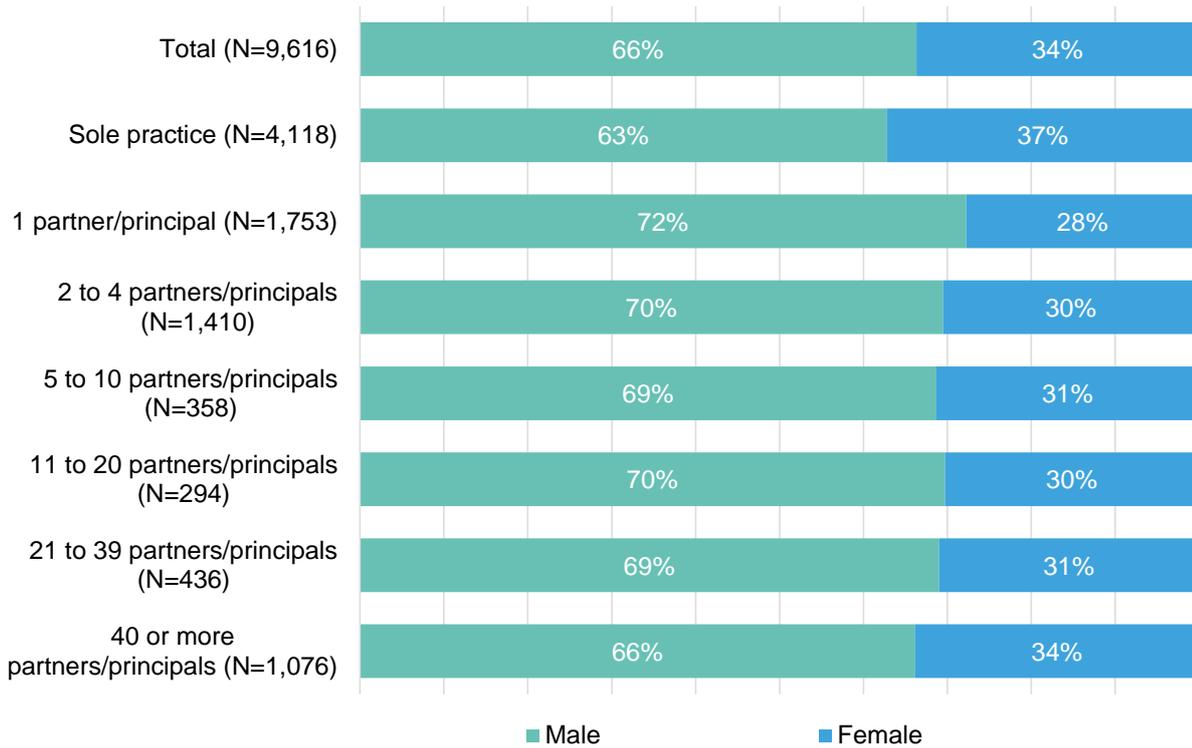


Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=22,290 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other'

Of all law practice sizes, there was a slightly higher proportion of female principals in sole practices (37%), compared to other law practice sizes.

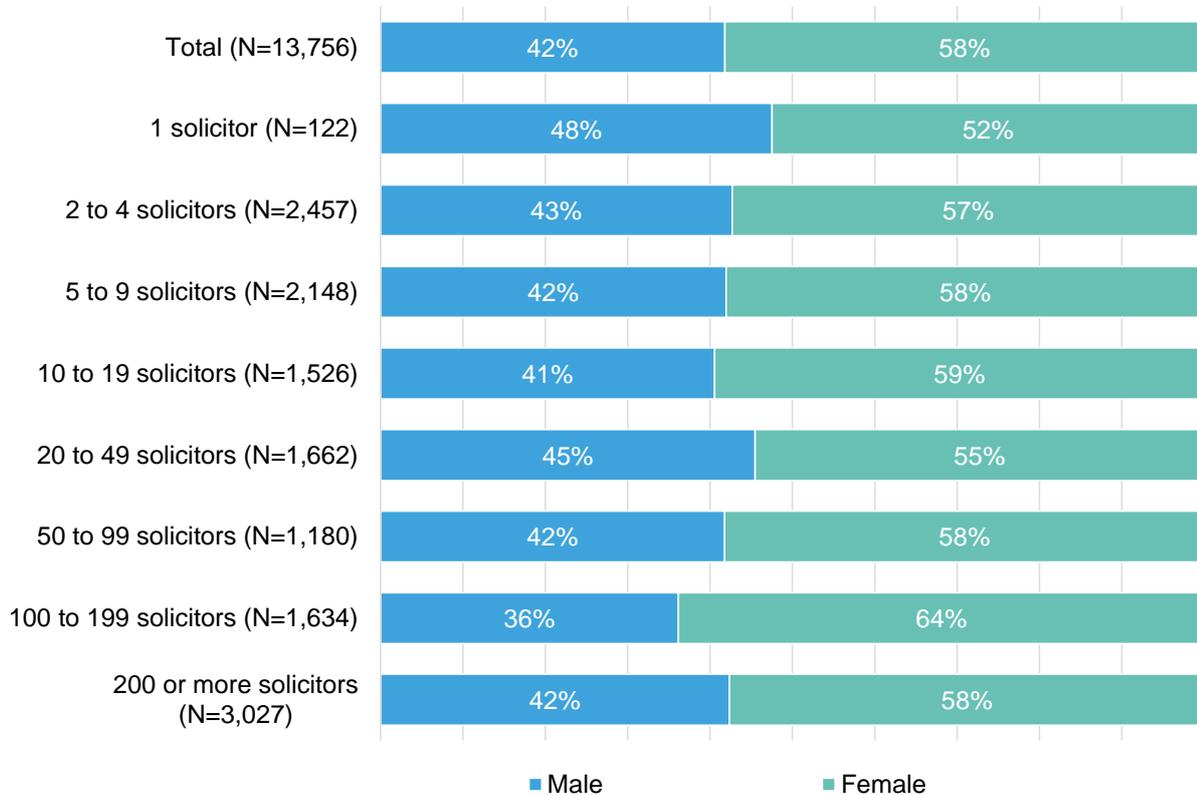
Figure 32 – Gender profile of partners/principals in private practice by law practice size



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=9,395 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other'

Figure 33 – Gender profile of employed solicitors in private practice by law practice size



Source: Society of NSW database

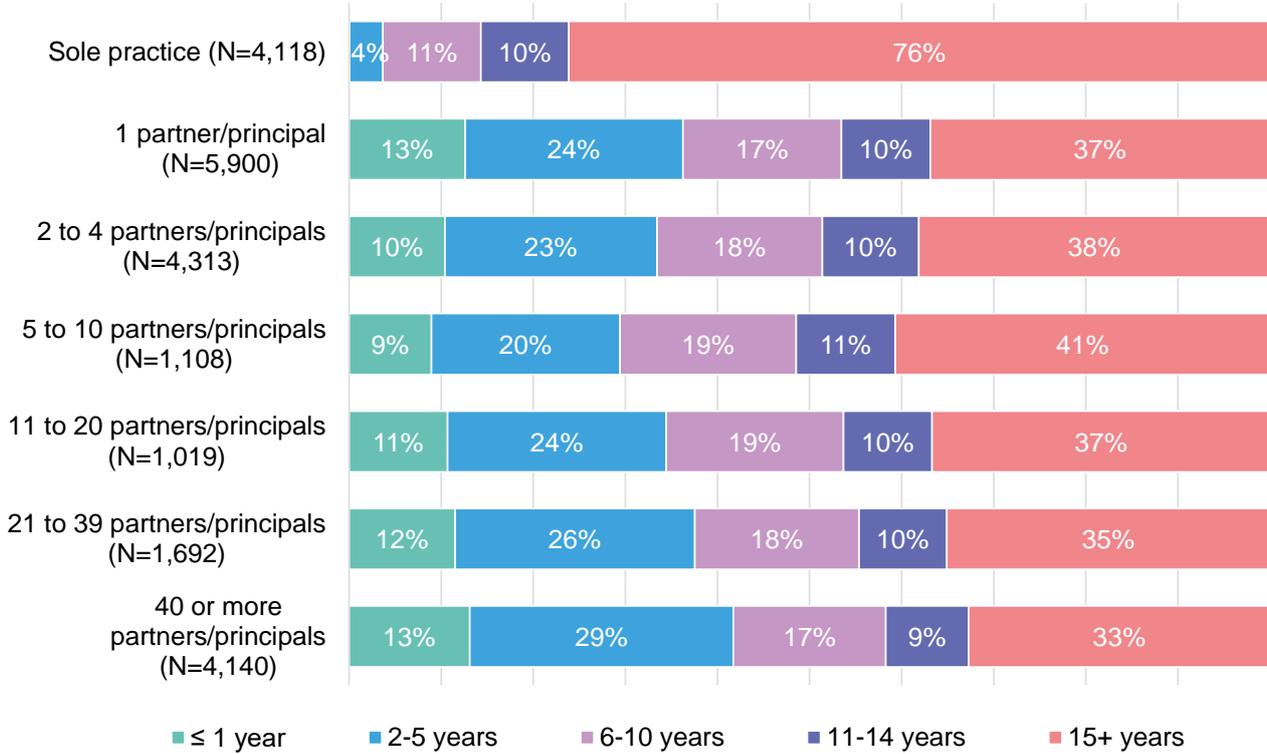
Note: Reduced base of N=13,756 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other' and employees where their firm size was unknown

10.4.2. Years since admission by law practice size

Overall, larger law practices had a greater proportion of more recently admitted solicitors than smaller law practices. For example, 13% of solicitors in law practices of 40 or more principals had been admitted for one year or less as at October 2021, compared to 10% 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 2021.

Figure 34 – Years since admission of solicitors in private practices by law practice size



Source: Law Society of NSW database

Note: Reduced base of N=22,290 is due to law practice classification in the Law Society of NSW database; figure excludes N=72 solicitors classified as 'other'

11. THE CORPORATE LEGAL SECTOR

According to the Law Society of NSW database, there were 7,518 corporate legal practitioners as at 31 October 2021.

Figure 35 – Summary of key characteristics of corporate legal practitioners

Gender: Three in five corporate legal practitioners were female (61%).

Mode of work: A slightly greater proportion of corporate legal practitioners who responded to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey reported working full time (79%), 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; however, a larger proportion of corporate legal practitioners were working overseas (11%), compared to the whole profession (5%).

Years since admission: A smaller proportion of corporate legal practitioners had been admitted for five years or less (15%) compared to 27% for the whole profession; however, a greater proportion had been admitted for between 11 and 14 years (16%), compared to 12% 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%); however, there was a larger proportion of corporate legal practitioners aged between 30 and 49 years (71%), compared to 54% for the whole profession.

Income: Full-time corporate legal practitioners who responded to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey reported slightly higher incomes, with 51% earning more than \$150,001 compared to only 32% of the whole profession.

Table 7 – Profile of corporate legal practitioners

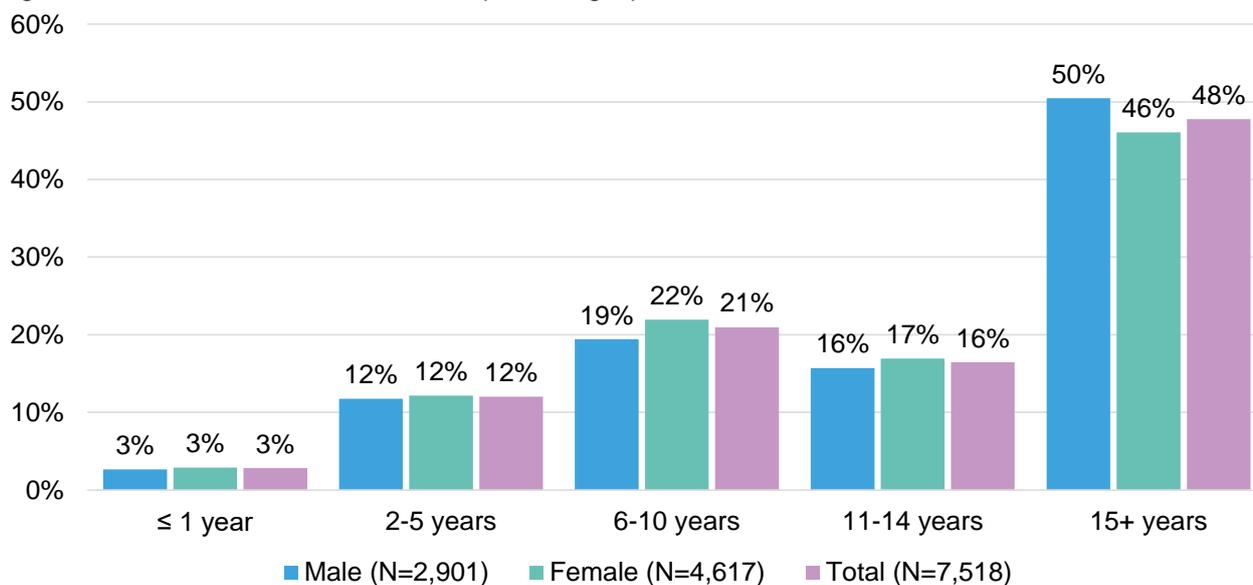
	Corporate legal practitioners		Whole profession
Base	7,518		37,186
Gender			
Male	2,901	39%	46%
Female	4,617	61%	54%
Location			
Sydney CBD	3,411	45%	49%
Sydney suburban	2,922	39%	34%
Regional/Rural NSW	274	4%	12%
Interstate	88	1%	1%
Overseas	823	11%	5%
Years since admission			
One year or less	211	3%	8%
Two to five years	903	12%	19%
Six to 10 years	1,576	21%	19%
11 to 14 years	1,237	16%	12%
15 years or more	3,591	48%	43%
Age			
<30 years	555	7%	18%
30 to 39 years	2,774	37%	31%
40 to 49 years	2,524	34%	23%

	Corporate legal practitioners		Whole profession
50 to 59 years	1,265	17%	15%
60 to 69 years	340	5%	10%
70+ years	60	1%	4%
From 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey			
Base	4,398		
Mode of work*			
Full time	3,476	79%	74%
Part time	601	14%	16%
Not working as a legal practitioner	210	5%	8%
On leave at time of survey	111	3%	2%
Role within the corporate legal sector*			
Head of legal team/General counsel	1,107	25%	-
Senior lawyer/Senior legal counsel	1,584	36%	-
Lawyer/Legal counsel	1,317	30%	-
Graduate lawyer	99	2%	-
Paralegal	15	<1%	-
Other	276	7%	-
Income*			
\$50,000 or less	84	2%	8%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	593	13%	24%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	715	16%	21%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	835	19%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	565	13%	7%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	314	7%	4%
Over \$300,000	534	12%	9%
Prefer not to say	758	17%	14%

Source: Law Society of NSW database (base provided at top of table); *Figures are from the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey (bases: corporate legal n=4,398, whole profession n=21,267)

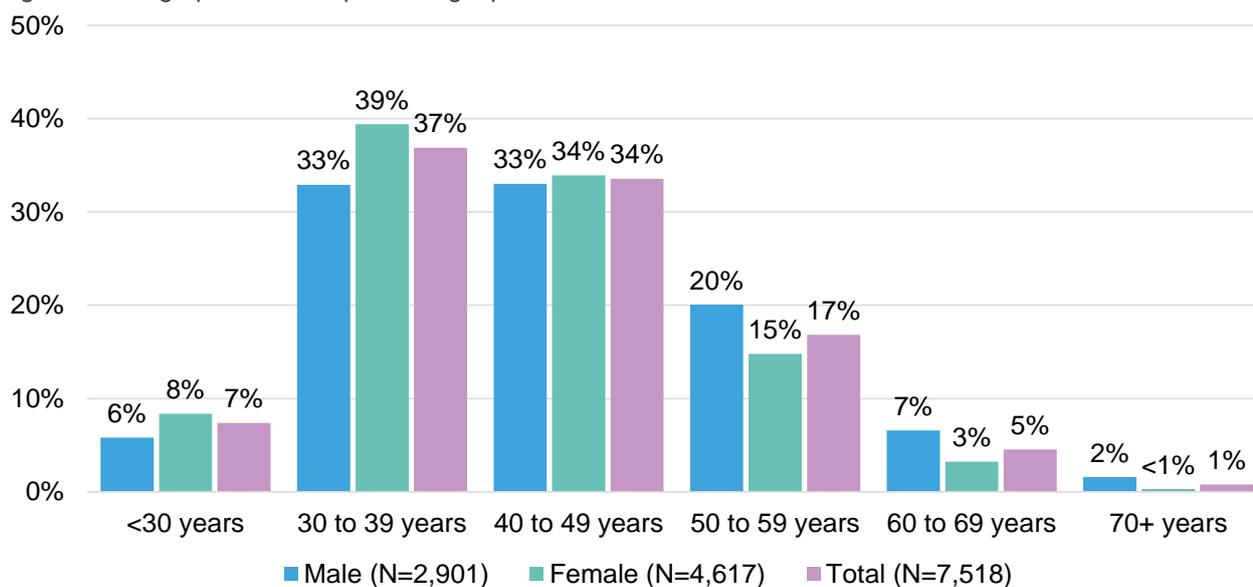
Females in the corporate legal sector were slightly less likely admitted more than 15 years and generally had a younger age profile compared to males (see Figure 36 and Figure 37 below).

Figure 36 – Years since admission of corporate legal practitioners



Source: Law Society NSW Database

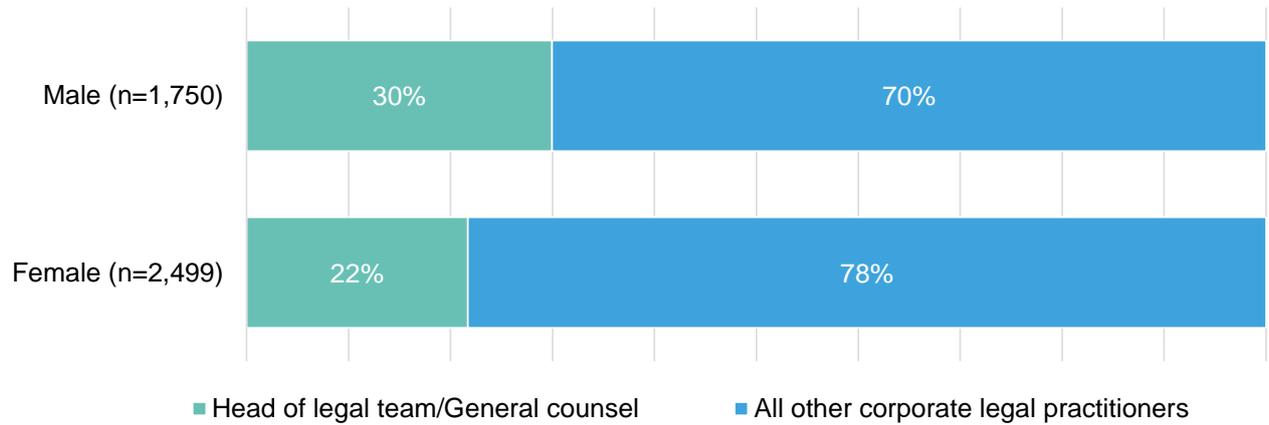
Figure 37 – Age profile of corporate legal practitioners



Source: Law Society NSW Database

Males in the corporate legal sector were overrepresented in the most senior roles. Three in ten males were working as head of legal team/general counsel (30%), compared to two in ten females (22%).

Figure 38 – Gender of corporate legal practitioners by role



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

12. THE GOVERNMENT LEGAL SECTOR

According to the Law Society of NSW database, there were 4,231 government legal practitioners as at 31 October 2021.

Figure 39 – Summary of key characteristics of government legal practitioners

Gender: More than two thirds of government legal practitioners were female (68%).

Mode of work: Three quarters of government legal practitioners who responded to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey reported working full time (77%), 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 2021 (5%).

Location: Most government legal practitioners were working in Sydney CBD (52%) or in a suburban area of Sydney (33%).

Years since admission: Almost two in five government legal practitioners had been admitted for 15 years or more (39%), followed by 22% who had been admitted for six to ten years.

Income: More than twice as many government legal practitioners who responded to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey reported earning between \$100,001 to \$150,000 (47%), compared to 21% for the whole profession. Further, a smaller proportion reported earning more than \$150,000 (19%) compared to the whole profession (32%).

Table 8 – Profile of government legal practitioners

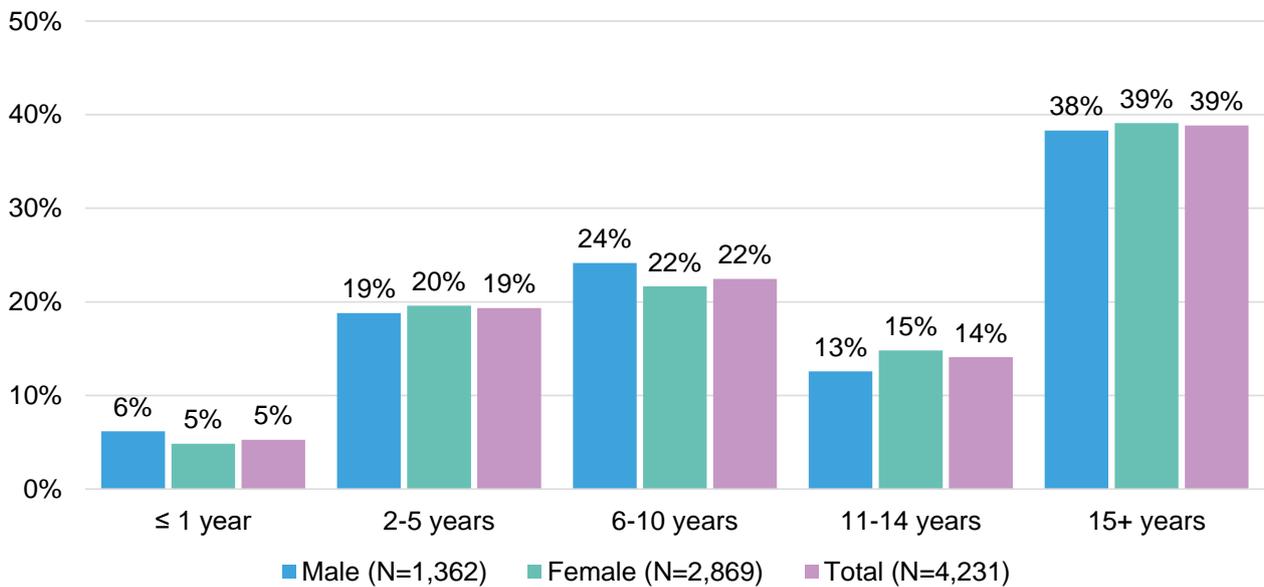
	Government legal practitioners		Whole profession
Base	4,231		37,186
Gender			
Male	1,362	32%	46%
Female	2,869	68%	54%
Location			
Sydney CBD	2,217	52%	49%
Sydney Suburban	1,386	33%	34%
Regional/Rural NSW	566	13%	12%
Interstate	44	1%	1%
Overseas	18	<1%	5%
Years since admission			
One year or less	223	5%	8%
Two to five years	818	19%	19%
Six to 10 years	950	22%	19%
11 to 14 years	596	14%	12%
15 years or more	1,644	39%	43%
Age			
<30 years	685	16%	18%
30 to 39 years	1,467	35%	31%
40 to 49 years	1,073	25%	23%
50 to 59 years	625	15%	15%

	Government legal practitioners		Whole profession
60 to 69 years	321	8%	10%
70+ years	60	1%	4%
From 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey			
Base	2,684		
Mode of work*			
Full time	2,059	77%	74%
Part time	414	15%	16%
Not working as a legal practitioner	139	5%	8%
On leave at time of survey	72	3%	2%
Role within the government legal sector*			
Head of legal team	261	9%	-
Principal lawyer/Principal legal officer	320	12%	-
Senior lawyer/Senior legal officer	807	30%	-
Lawyer/Legal officer	1,039	39%	-
Graduate lawyer	51	2%	-
Paralegal	15	1%	-
Other	191	7%	-
Income*			
\$50,000 or less	41	2%	8%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	674	25%	24%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	1256	47%	21%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	267	10%	12%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	128	5%	7%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	52	2%	4%
Over \$300,000	53	2%	9%
Prefer not to say	204	8%	14%

Source: Law Society of NSW database (base provided at top of table); *Figures are from the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey (bases: government legal n=2,684, whole profession n=21,267)

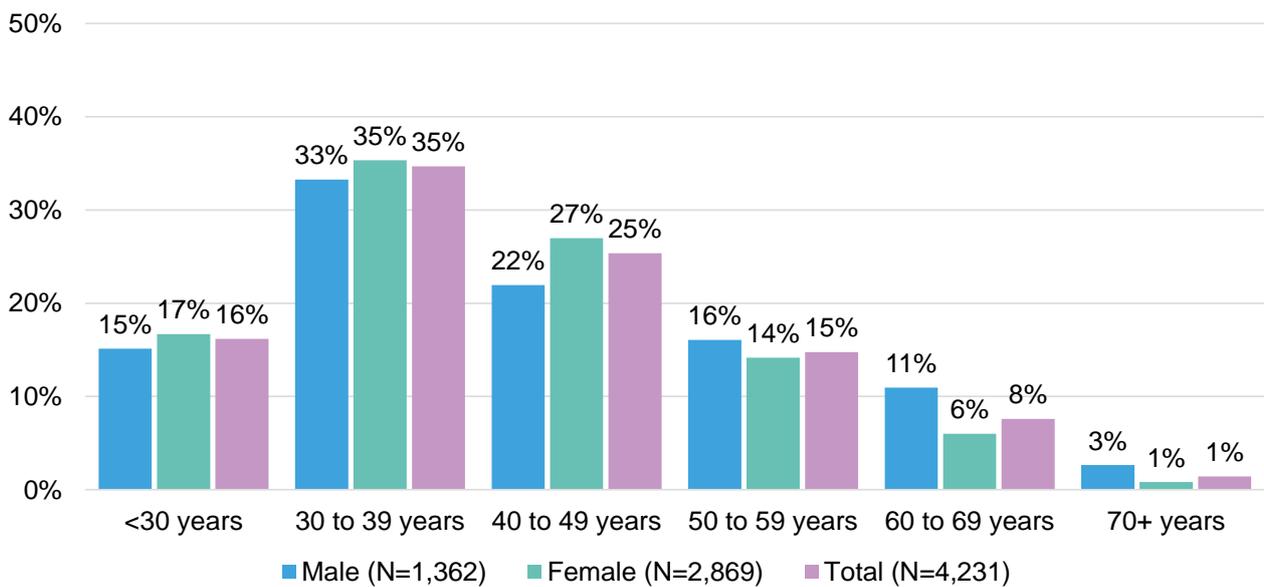
There was very little difference in patterns of years since admission across gender. In previous reports, slightly more males had been admitted for longer compared to females, however since 2020, the distribution was almost equivalent across both genders.

Figure 40 – Years since admission of government legal practitioners



Source: Law Society of NSW database

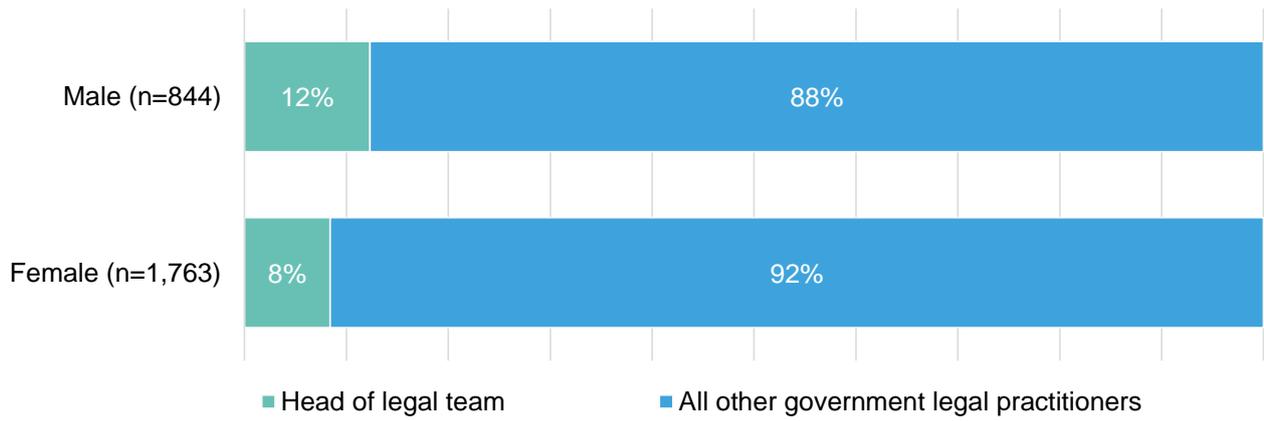
Figure 41 – Age profile of government legal practitioners



Source: Law Society of NSW database

In contrast to other practice sectors, there was smaller difference in the proportion of males and females working in the most senior roles in the government legal sector (11% versus 8%).

Figure 42 – Gender of government legal practitioners by role



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

13. AREAS OF PRACTICE

This chapter draws on data from the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey. The Survey was completed by 21,267 practitioners, representing 56% of all solicitors who renewed their practising certificate in 2021.

13.1. OVERVIEW

Since the 2010-11 Practising Certificate Survey, respondents have been asked to nominate their main area(s) of practice. In 2021-22, the most common areas of practice reported by respondents were:

- Commercial law (32%)
- Corporate law (22%)
- Civil litigation (20%)
- Conveyancing/real property (20%).

Over the past 10 years, there has been an increase in the proportion of solicitors practising:

- Corporate law (+4%)
- Banking/finance (+3%)

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

- Conveyancing/real property (-10%)
- Wills and estates (-6%)
- Family law (-4%)
- Small business (-4%).

13.2. PRACTICE SECTORS

As expected, the main areas of practice in 2021-22 varied across practice sectors. Table 9 provides the five most common areas of practice in 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	37%	Commercial law	53%
Conveyancing/Real property	28%	Administrative law	34%	Corporate law	51%
Wills and estates	26%	Civil litigation	17%	Banking/Finance	23%
Civil litigation	25%	Advocacy	13%	Intellectual property	17%
Litigation – general	22%	Litigation – general	15%	Employment/Industrial law	14%

Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

Table 10 – Areas of practice 2010 to 2021

Areas of practice	Areas of practice 2010 to 2021 (%)												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	Change from 20/21 to 21/22	Change from 10/11 to 21/22
Administrative law	8	8	8	9	10	10	10	9	8	9	9	9	0	+1
Advocacy	7	6	6	6	8	8	9	7	6	6	6	6	0	-1
Alternative dispute resolution	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	4	4	5	5	4	-1	-
Banking/Finance	8	11	12	11	11	11	9	10	10	10	10	11	+1	+3
Civil litigation	23	21	22	23	23	23	24	21	19	19	20	20	0	-3
Commercial law	31	34	33	34	34	35	32	31	28	30	30	32	+2	+1
Corporate law	18	22	23	23	23	25	29	22	20	20	21	22	+1	+4
Conveyancing/ Real property	30	27	25	25	25	24	20	22	20	20	19	20	+1	-10
Criminal law	15	12	12	12	13	13	14	13	13	13	12	13	+1	-2
Debts/Insolvency	9	9	8	8	9	8	8	7	5	6	6	6	0	-3
Employment/ Industrial law	9	9	9	9	11	11	11	9	8	9	10	10	0	+1
Environmental law	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	-1
Family law	17	15	14	14	15	15	18	14	13	13	13	13	0	-4
Immigration law	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	+1	+1
Information technology/ Telecommunications	5	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	6	+1	+1
Intellectual property	8	8	8	8	9	9	8	8	7	7	7	8	+1	0
Litigation – general	19	19	19	20	21	20	20	18	15	15	16	18	+2	-1
Personal injury	10	8	9	9	9	9	10	8	8	8	8	8	0	-2
Planning/Local Government	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	+1	0
Small business	10	9	8	8	8	10	11	7	6	6	6	6	0	-4
Taxation	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	0	+1
Trade practices law	5	6	6	5	6	6	5	4	4	3	4	4	0	-1
Wills and estates	23	21	20	20	21	22	26	18	16	17	16	17	+1	-6
Other	9	9	10	3	2	1	1	8	8	8	8	9	+1	0

Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
Base n=21,267

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 of one to four principals more commonly offered services in conveyancing/real property, commercial law and family law. Larger law practices more commonly offered services in commercial law and civil litigation. 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	7	5	4	6	10	10	7	5
Advocacy	7	5	4	4	5	3	5	7	9	6
Alternative dispute resolution	3	5	6	8	11	6	5	4	4	5
Banking/Finance	3	6	8	7	7	16	14	5	2	7
Civil litigation	23	30	24	38	32	24	23	18	17	25
Commercial law	31	30	26	25	21	29	32	36	24	30
Conveyancing/Real property	42	22	15	8	9	9	13	29	26	28
Corporate law	12	16	18	17	15	25	26	20	10	16
Criminal law	20	6	2	2	2	1	8	15	23	12
Debts/Insolvency	8	9	7	7	6	6	7	6	5	8
Employment/Industrial law	8	13	8	10	6	6	8	11	10	8
Environmental law	2	4	3	2	2	4	3	4	4	3
Family law	31	16	8	2	3	1	6	21	27	19
Immigration law	8	3	0	2	1	1	3	5	2	5
Information technology/Telecommunications	2	2	5	4	3	5	6	7	1	3
Intellectual property	5	6	8	6	4	6	6	12	4	5
Litigation – general	20	24	23	30	23	22	21	17	14	22
Personal Injury	9	16	19	31	23	8	9	8	15	11
Planning/Local Government	3	6	4	2	1	4	4	4	5	4
Small business	15	10	6	4	3	0	3	10	8	9
Taxation	3	2	7	1	3	5	5	3	1	4
Trade practices law	2	3	5	4	3	5	4	6	1	3
Wills and estates	42	21	12	8	4	2	7	25	33	26
Other	5	6	7	11	14	9	9	9	7	7

Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

Base private practice solicitors only n=12,135

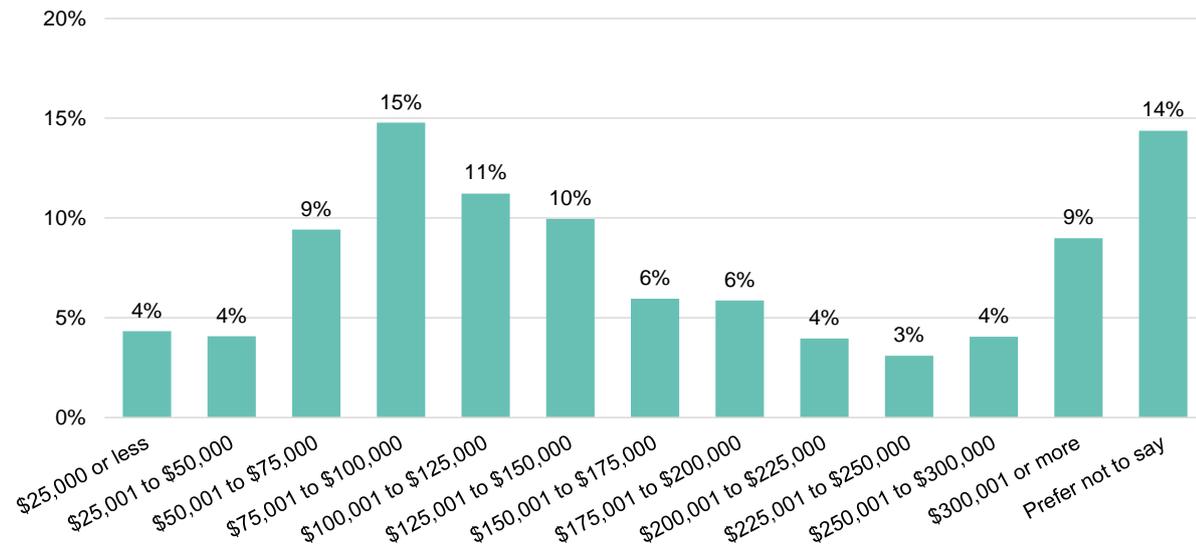
Note: Inner regional, outer regional and remote NSW not shown in practice location

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. FY19/20), by selecting one of 12 income categories. Across all respondents, the most commonly selected category was \$75,001 to \$100,000 (15%), followed by \$100,001 to \$125,000 (11%), \$125,001 to \$150,000 (10%) and \$50,001 to \$75,000 (9%). One in ten respondents reported earning \$50,000 or less (8%), and a further one in ten reported earning over \$250,000 (13%). It should be noted that 14% opted not to report their income range.

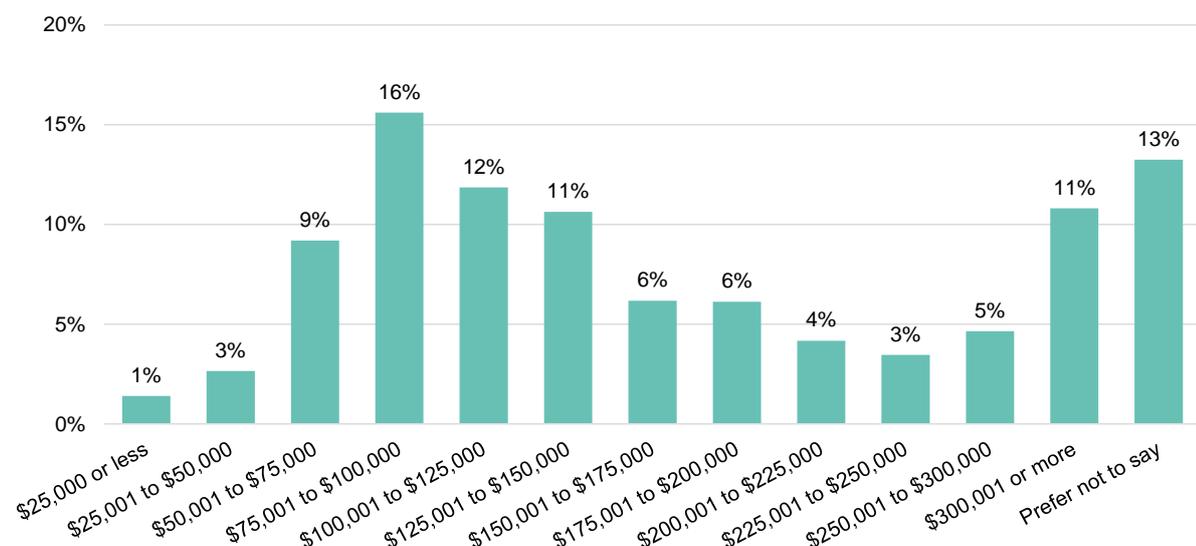
Figure 43 – Annual gross income full-time and part-time solicitors FY20



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
Base n=21,267

The income distribution of full-time solicitors was similar to that of the whole profession with the exception that a smaller proportion of respondents reported incomes of \$50,000 or less (4%, compared to 8% across all respondents), and a slightly higher proportion reported incomes of more than \$250,000 (16%, compared to 13% across all respondents).

Figure 44 – Annual gross income full-time solicitors only FY20



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
Base includes full-time solicitors only, n=15,670

Since FY12, there has been minimal change in the reported income of solicitors. The proportion of solicitors earning \$50,000 or less has decreased from 13% in FY12 to 8% in FY20. The proportion of solicitors earning more than \$200,000 has fluctuated slightly. It should be noted that over time there has been an increase in the proportion of solicitors who did not want to state their income, and this may be skewing the results.

Table 12 – Annual gross income FY12 to FY20

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

Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

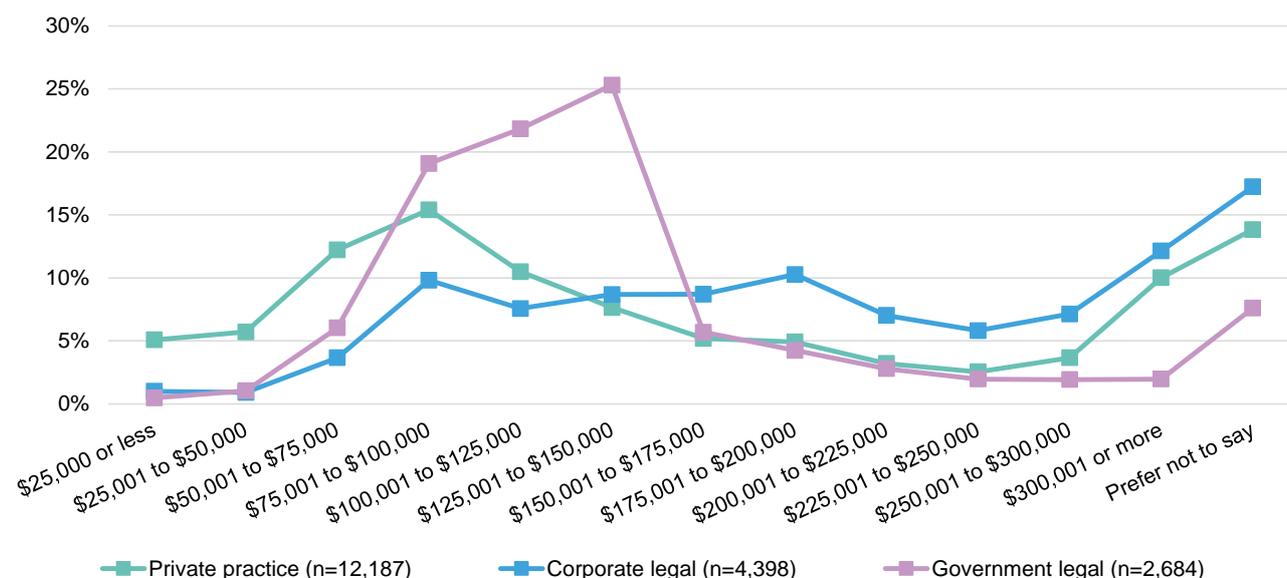
Note: Includes full-time and part-time solicitors, n=21,267. Totals may not exactly equal 100% due to rounding.

14.2. INCOME BY PRACTICE SECTOR

The distributions of reported incomes in the private, corporate and government legal sectors are provided in Figure 45, 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, 51% of corporate legal practitioners reported incomes of over \$150,000, compared to only 30% of private practice solicitors and 19% of government legal practitioners. Furthermore, just under a third of all corporate legal practitioners reported earning over \$200,000 (32%), compared to 19% of private practice solicitors and 9% of government legal practitioners.

Figure 45 – Income distribution by practice sector FY20



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

Note: Includes full-time and part-time solicitors

Table 13 – Annual gross income by sector FY20

	Private practice (n=12,187)	Corporate legal (n=4,398)	Government legal (n=2,684)	Community legal (n=355)	Non-legal employment (n=684)
\$25,000 or less	5%	1%	0%	4%	3%
\$25,001 to \$50,000	6%	1%	1%	4%	4%
\$50,001 to \$75,000	12%	4%	6%	21%	6%
\$75,001 to \$100,000	15%	10%	19%	46%	11%
\$100,001 to \$125,000	10%	8%	22%	12%	11%
\$125,001 to \$150,000	8%	9%	25%	4%	10%
\$150,001 to \$175,000	5%	9%	6%	2%	6%
\$175,001 to \$200,000	5%	10%	4%	1%	6%
\$200,001 to \$225,000	3%	7%	3%	<1%	6%
\$225,001 to \$250,000	3%	6%	2%	<1%	2%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	4%	7%	2%	0%	5%
Over \$300,000	10%	12%	2%	<1%	9%
Prefer not to say	14%	17%	8%	5%	20%

Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
Note: Includes full-time and part-time solicitors

14.3. INCOME BY LAW PRACTICE SIZE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

The incomes of those working in private practice varied by law practice size. Overall, incomes were higher in larger law practices than in smaller law practices. For instance, 25% 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 20% of respondents in law practices with 50 or more principals reported earning \$100,000 or less, compared to 50% of those in law practices with one to four principals.

Table 14 – Annual gross income in private practice by law practice size FY20

	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	18%	5%	2%	2%	3%	1%
\$50,001 to \$100,000	32%	32%	28%	24%	23%	19%
\$100,001 to \$150,000	17%	19%	23%	19%	25%	20%
\$150,001 to \$200,000	8%	12%	11%	13%	11%	13%
\$200,001 to \$250,000	3%	7%	8%	8%	11%	9%
\$250,001 to \$300,000	2%	4%	6%	6%	7%	6%
Over \$300,000	5%	10%	11%	13%	9%	20%
Prefer not to say	16%	13%	12%	13%	12%	14%

Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
Base private practice solicitors only n=12,187
Note: Includes full-time and part-time solicitors

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

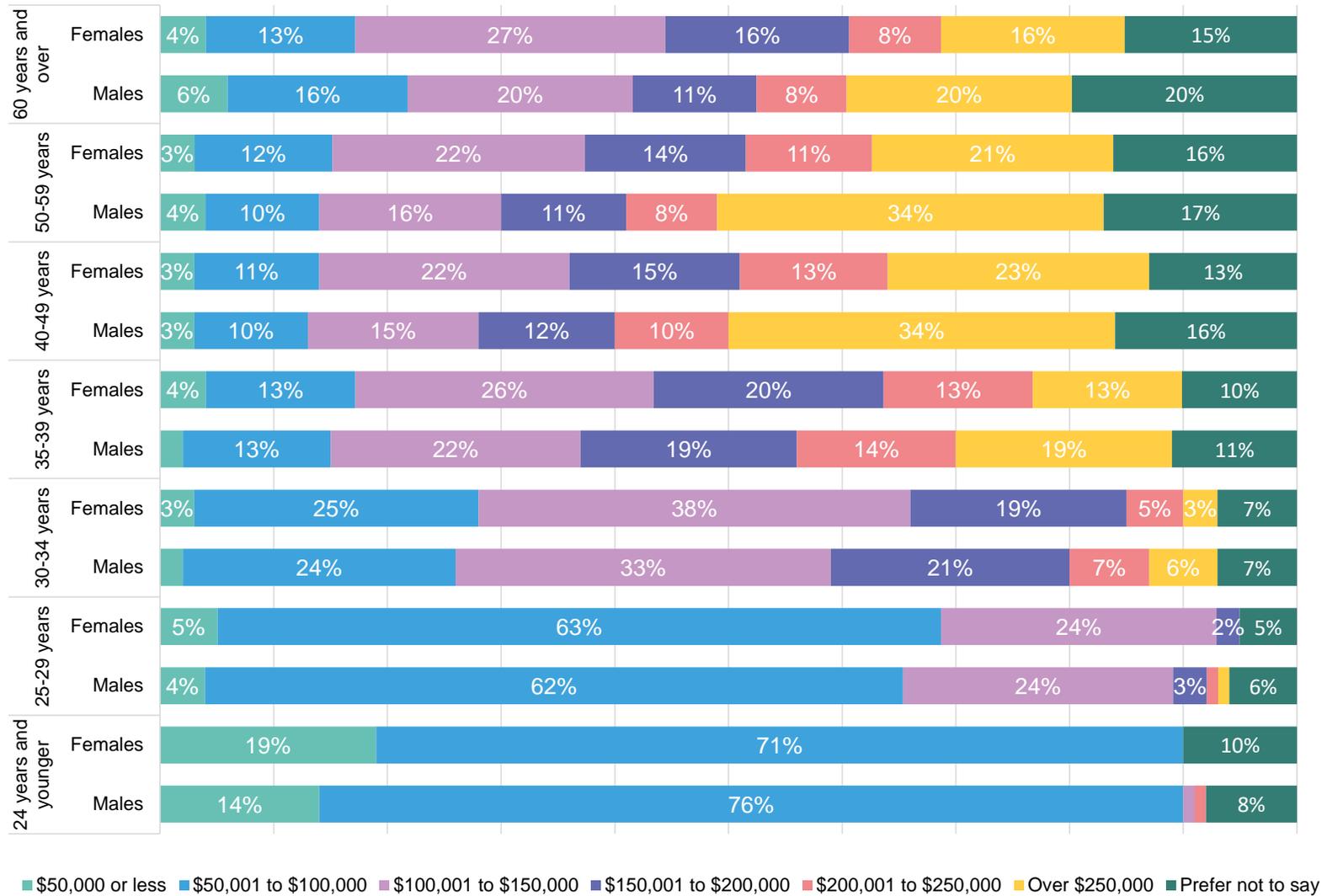
The gender pay gap is evident at all ages.

Key highlights include:

- In the 30 to 34 age bracket, a greater proportion of female respondents reported incomes of \$150,000 or less (66%, compared to 59% of males) and a smaller proportion of female respondents reported incomes of over \$150,000 (34%, compared to 41% of males).
- In the 35 to 39 age bracket, 33% of male respondents reported incomes of over \$200,000, compared to 26% of females.
- In the 40 to 49 year age bracket, 34% of male respondents reported incomes of over \$250,000, compared to 23% of females.

A full breakdown of reported income ranges is shown in Chart 15 on the following page.

Chart 15 – Annual gross income of full-time solicitors by gender and age FY20



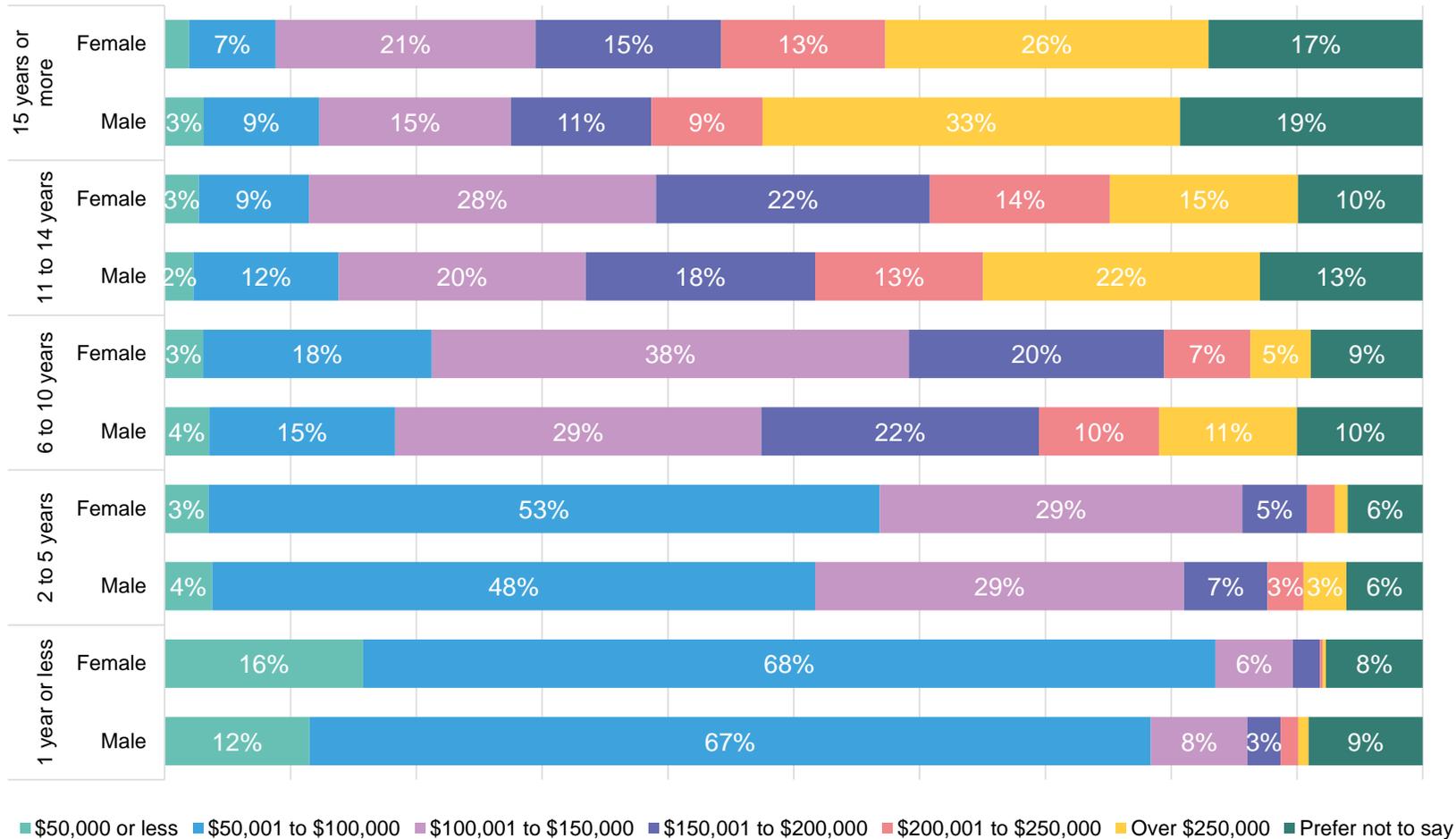
Source: 2020-21 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Full-time solicitors only, n=15,058. Excludes respondents who preferred not to state their age.

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) (see Table 16).

All practice sectors

Chart 16 – Annual gross income of full-time solicitors by gender and years since admission FY20

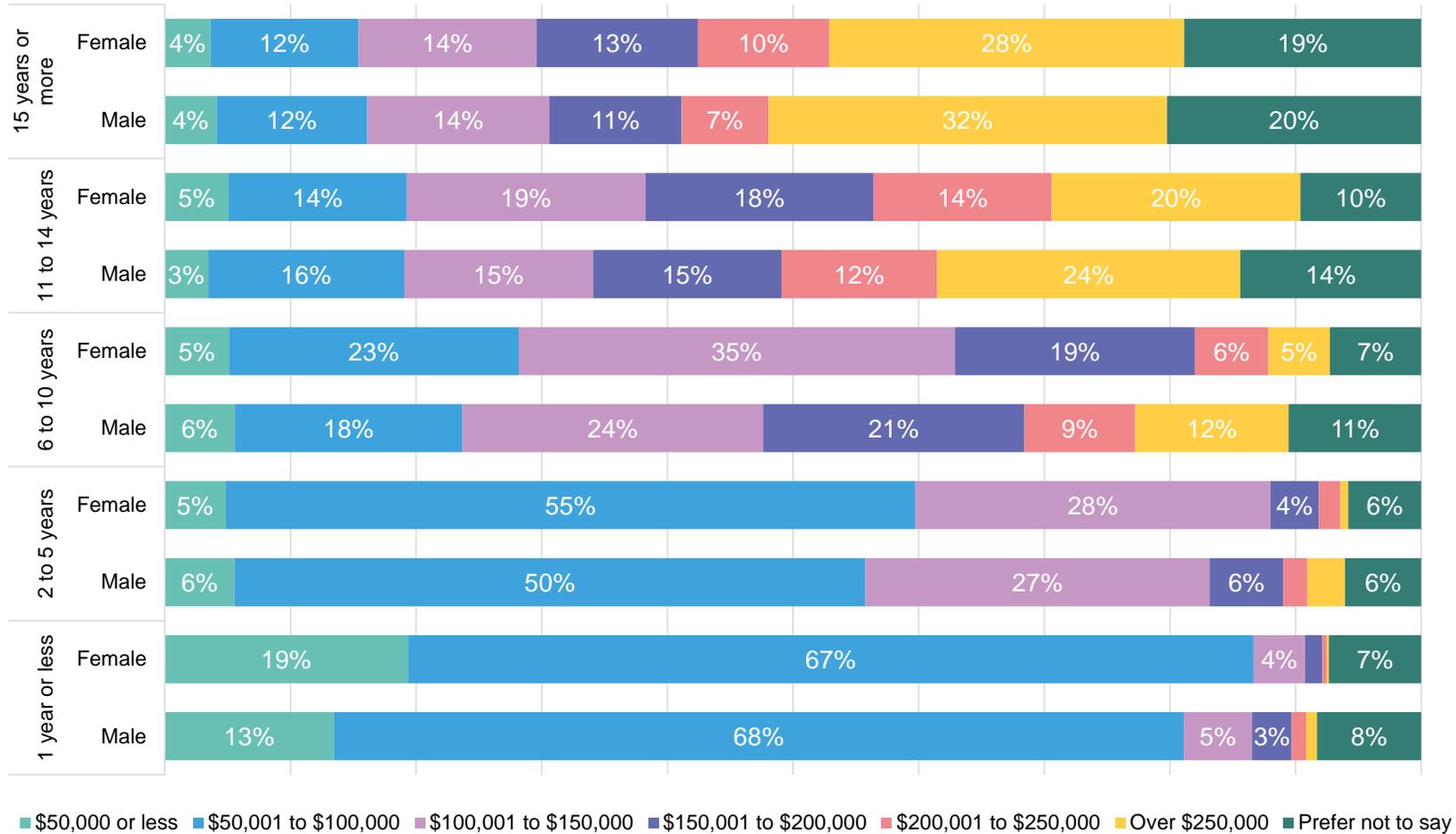


Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
Base: Full-time solicitors only, n=15,234

Further analysis of reported income by years since admission and practice sector shows that the gap between male and female respondents is evident across all sectors. It is particular, the difference is largest in the corporate sector. 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) (see Charts 17, 18 and 19). Additional analysis of income and years since admission is provided in Appendix A.

Private practice

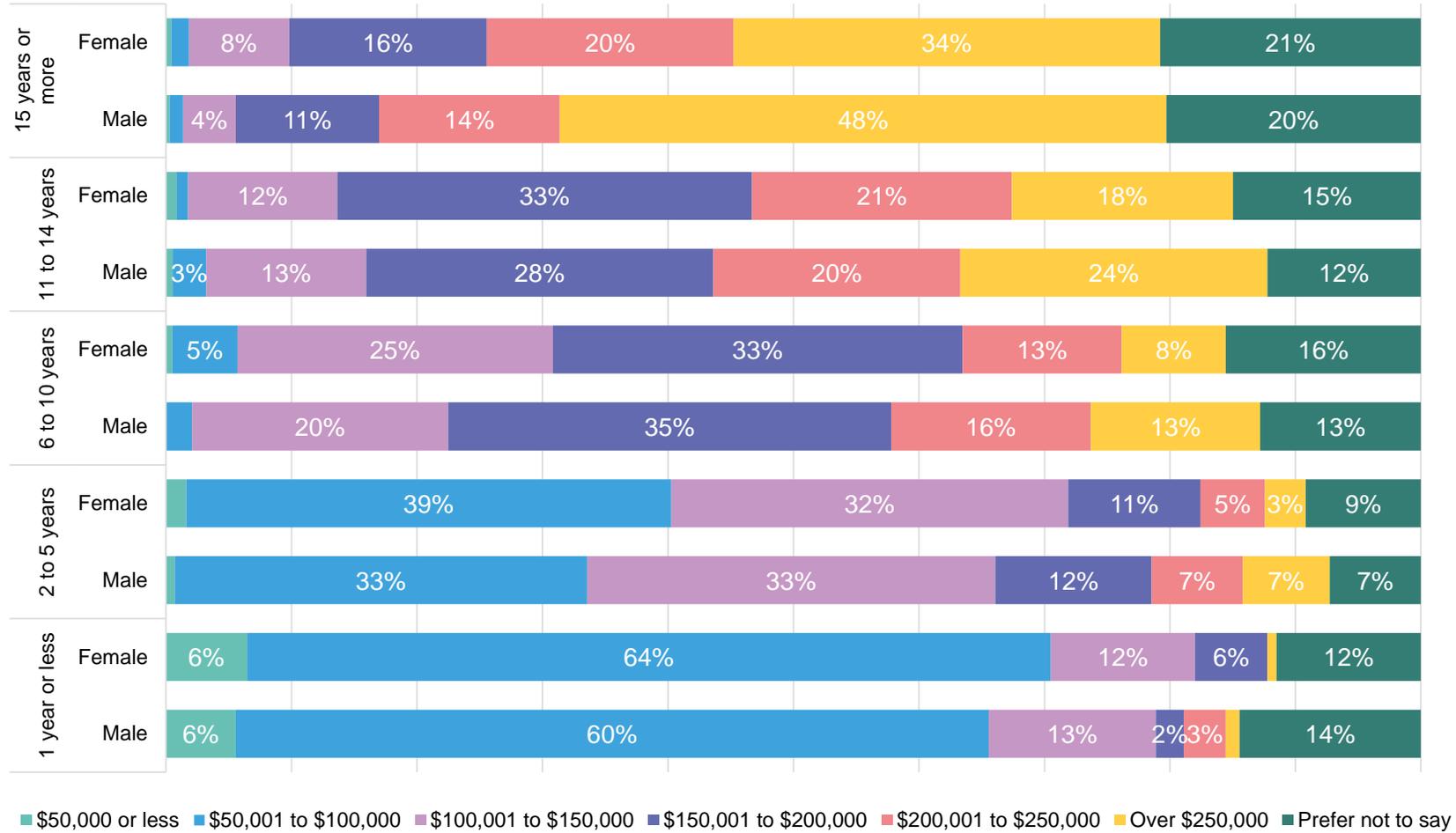
Chart 17 – Annual gross income of full-time private practice solicitors by gender and years since admission FY20



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Private practice full-time solicitors only, n=9,464

The corporate legal sector

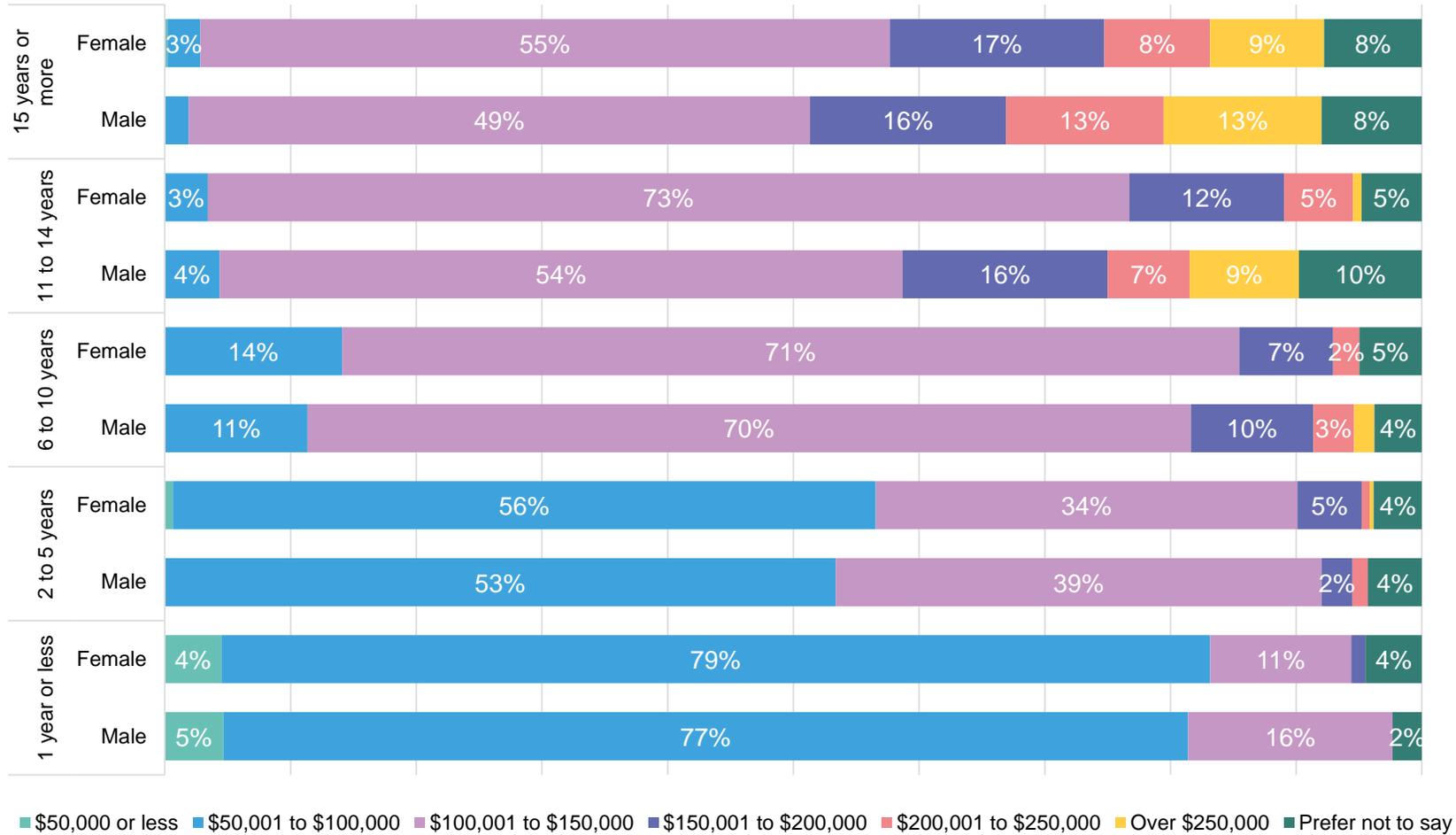
Chart 18 – Annual gross income of full-time corporate legal practitioners by gender and years since admission FY20



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Corporate full-time solicitors only, n=3,356

The government legal sector

Chart 19 – Annual gross income of full-time government legal practitioners by gender and years since admission FY20

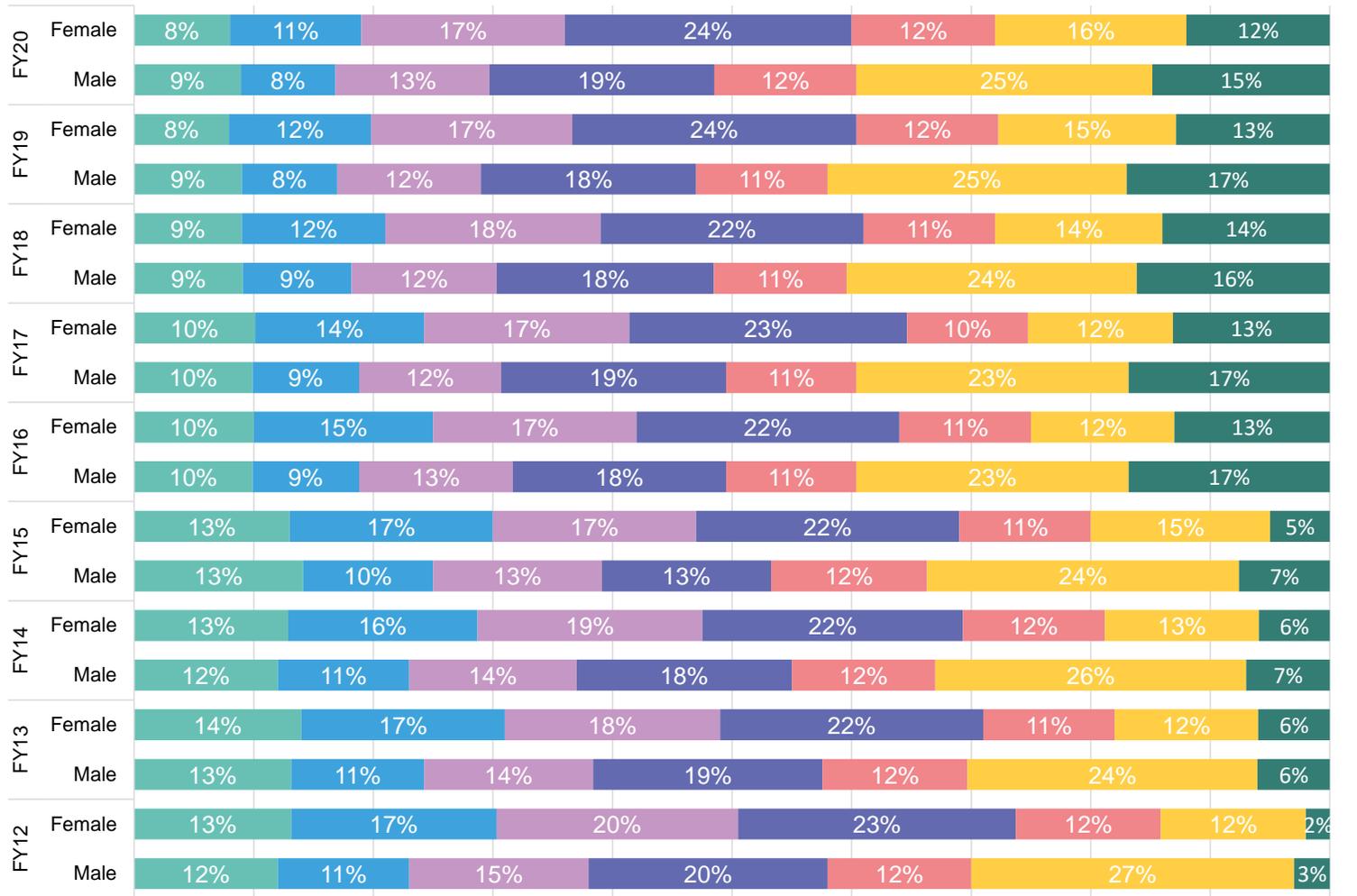


Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Government full-time solicitors only, n=1,998

14.4.3. Income by gender over time

There has been some improvement in the reported income of female solicitors over time. There has been a small decrease in female respondents reporting incomes of \$75,000 or less (30% in FY11/12 compared to 19% in FY19/20). It should be noted, however, that 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 15% in FY20/21), which may be skewing the results.

Chart 20 – Annual gross income of full-time and part-time solicitors by gender FY12 to FY20



■ \$50,000 or less ■ \$50,001 to \$75,000 ■ \$75,001 to \$100,000 ■ \$100,001 to \$150,000 ■ \$150,001 to \$200,000 ■ Over \$200,000 ■ Prefer not to say

Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Includes both full-time and part-time solicitors

15. WORK STATUS AND HOURS WORKED

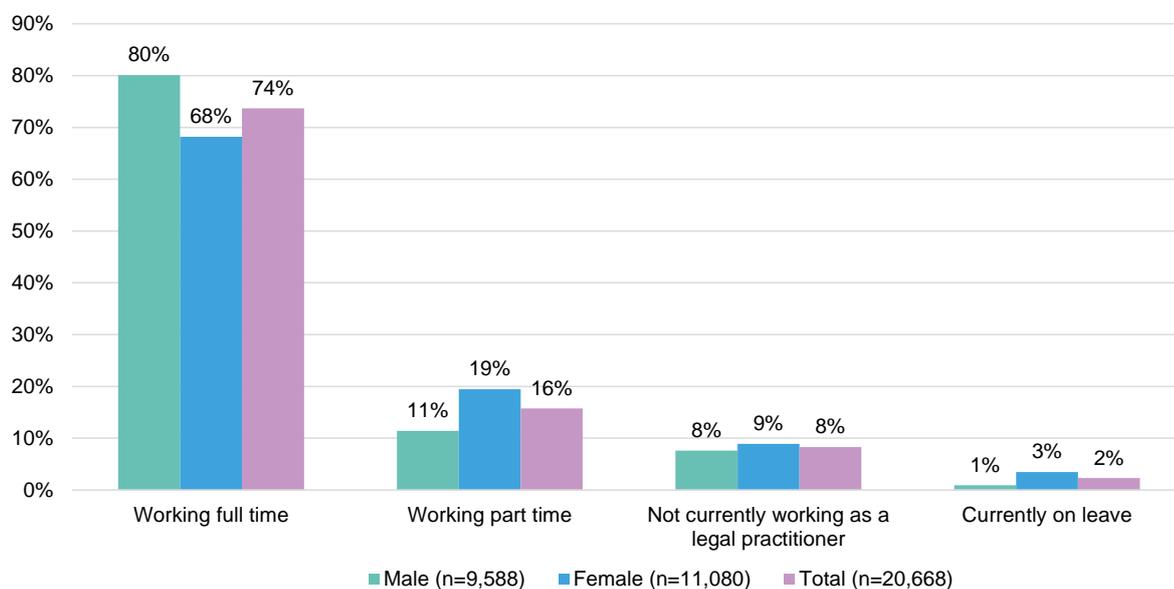
The Practising Certificate Survey collects data on whether respondents work full time or part time, work outside the legal profession, or are not employed at the time of the survey.⁷ It also captures information on the number of hours worked per week, as reported by respondents.

15.1. OVERVIEW

Just under three-quarters of respondents to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey reported working full time in the legal profession (74%), 16% 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 (80%) than females (68%), while more female respondents were working part time (19%) than males (11%).

Figure 46 – Mode of work by gender

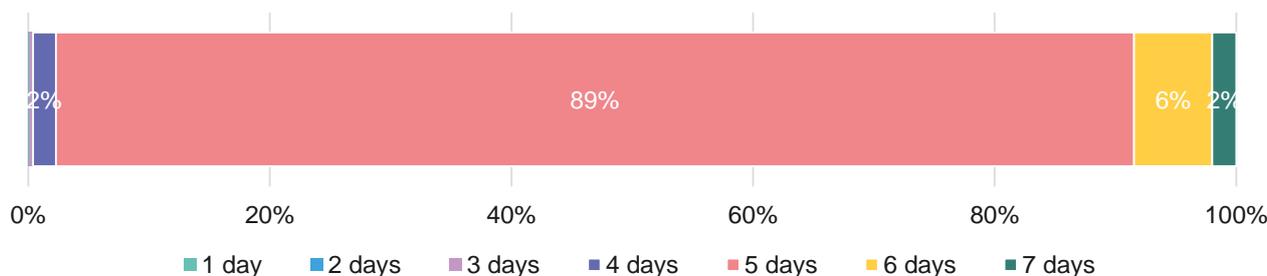


Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

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 (6%). On average, full-time respondents were working 46 hours per week.

Figure 47 – Number of days per week worked by full-time solicitors

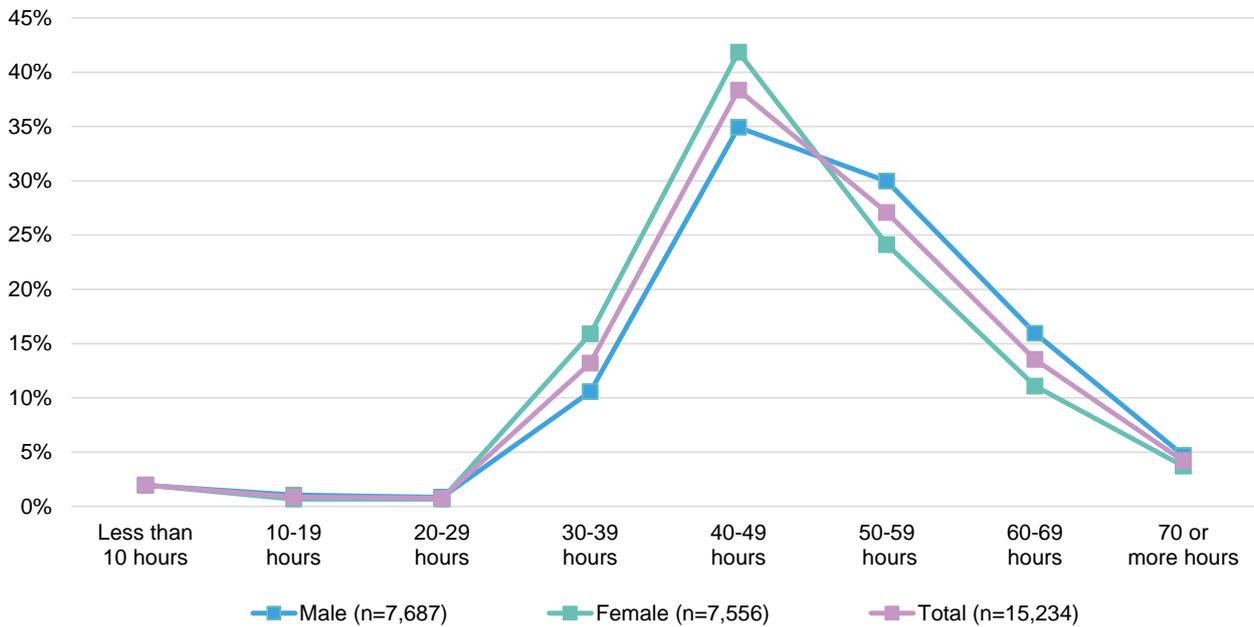


Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
Base n=15,234

⁷ Work status is analysed based on self-reported status rather than a calculation of hours worked

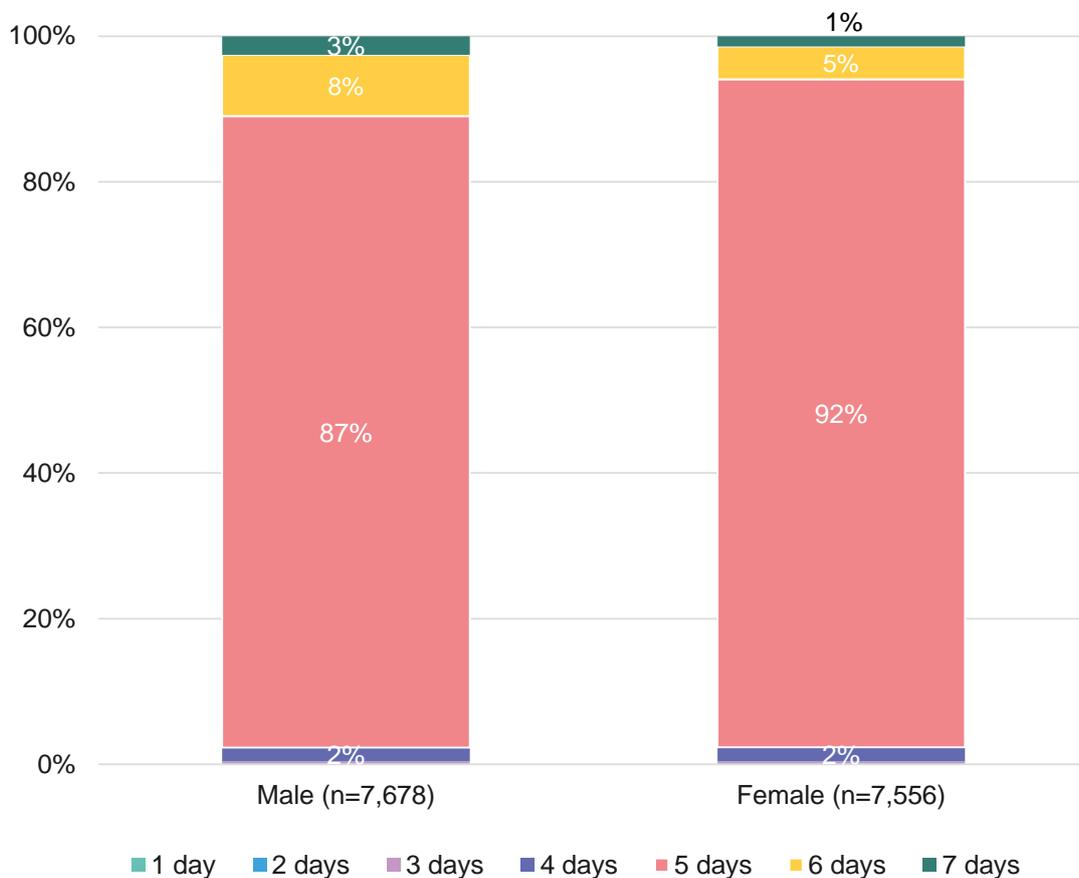
On average, the hours worked by male respondents were slightly higher than those of females (47 hours compared to 45 hours). A greater proportion of male respondents reported working six days in a normal work week (8% of males, compared to 5% of females).

Figure 48 – Average number of hours worked per week by full-time solicitors



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

Figure 49 – Average number of days worked per week by full-time solicitors by gender

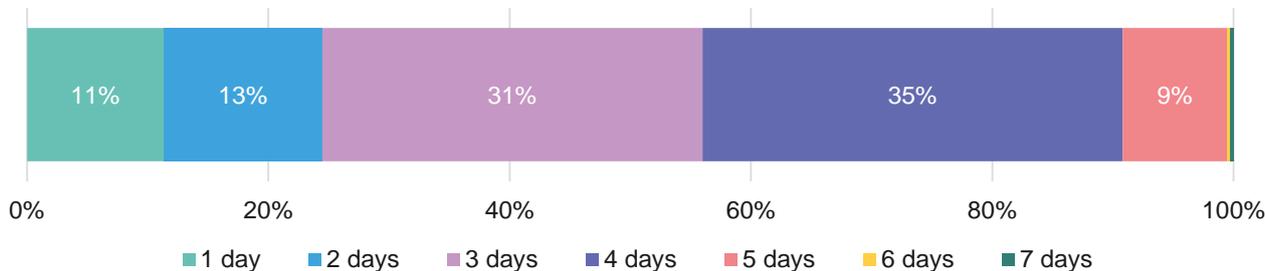


Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

15.3. PART-TIME WORK

Of all the respondents to the 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey, 16% reported working part time. Part-time solicitors most commonly worked three (31%) or four (35%) days per week. A quarter of part-time solicitors worked one or two days per week (24%), while 9% reported working five days per week.

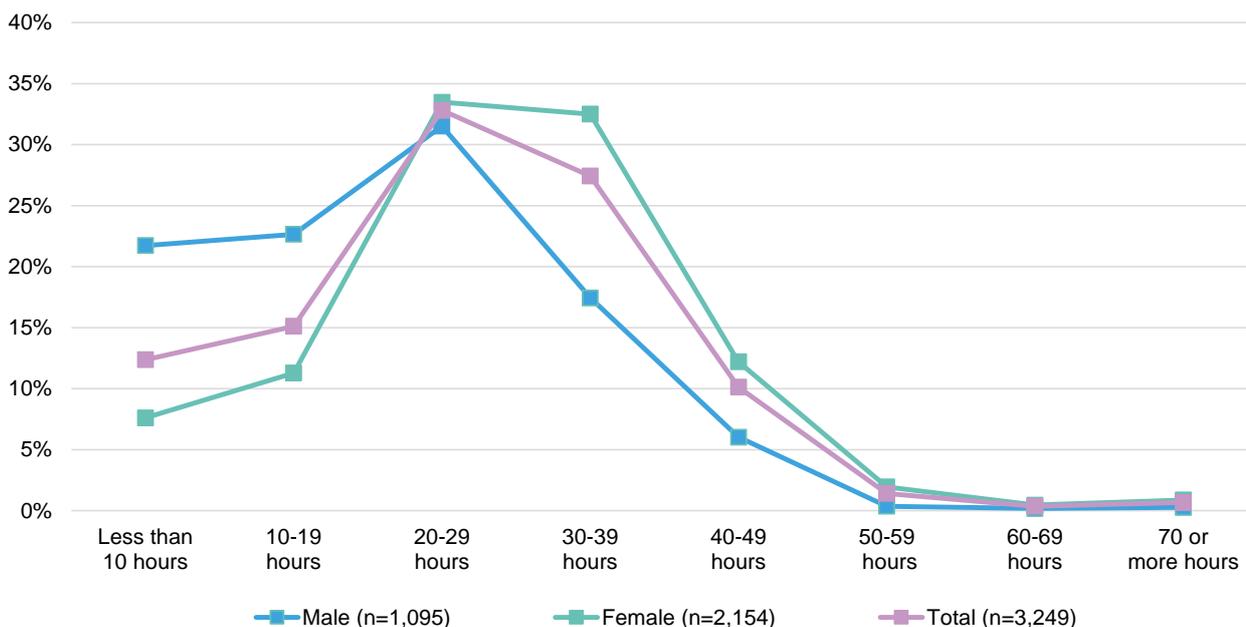
Figure 50 – Average number of days worked per week by part-time solicitors



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
Base n=3,316

Part-time solicitors worked 25 hours per week on average. Females reported working more hours per week (27 hours) than males (19 hours).

Figure 51 – Average number of hours worked per week by part-time solicitors



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

15.4. WORK HOURS BY PRACTICE SECTOR

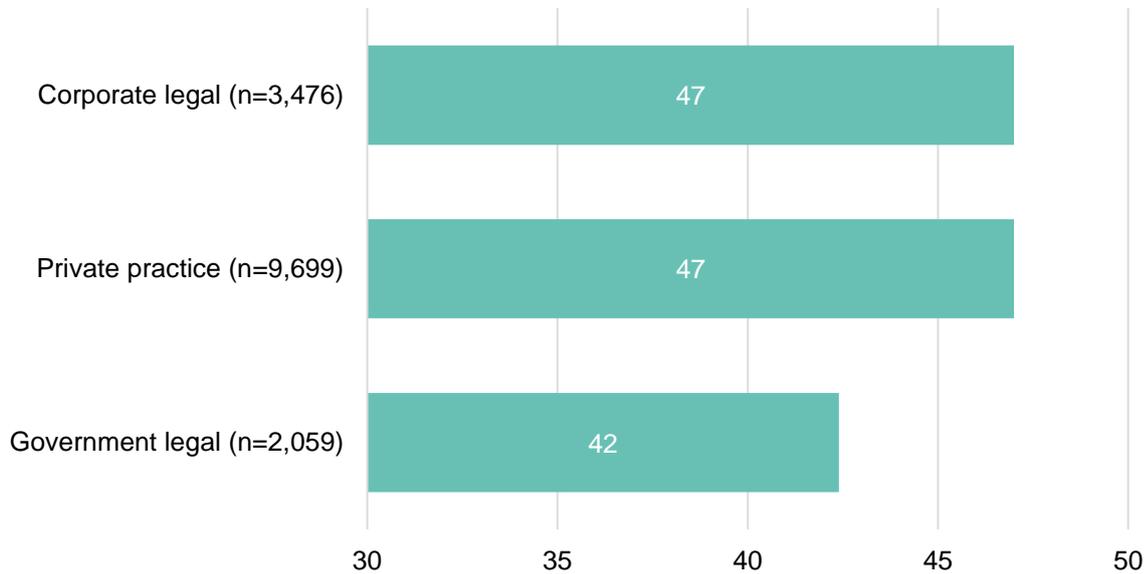
Overall, respondents in the corporate legal sector reported working the longest hours, followed by those in private practice and those in the government legal sector. Further detail is provided overleaf for full-time and part-time solicitors.

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 42 hours per week (see Figure 52 overleaf).

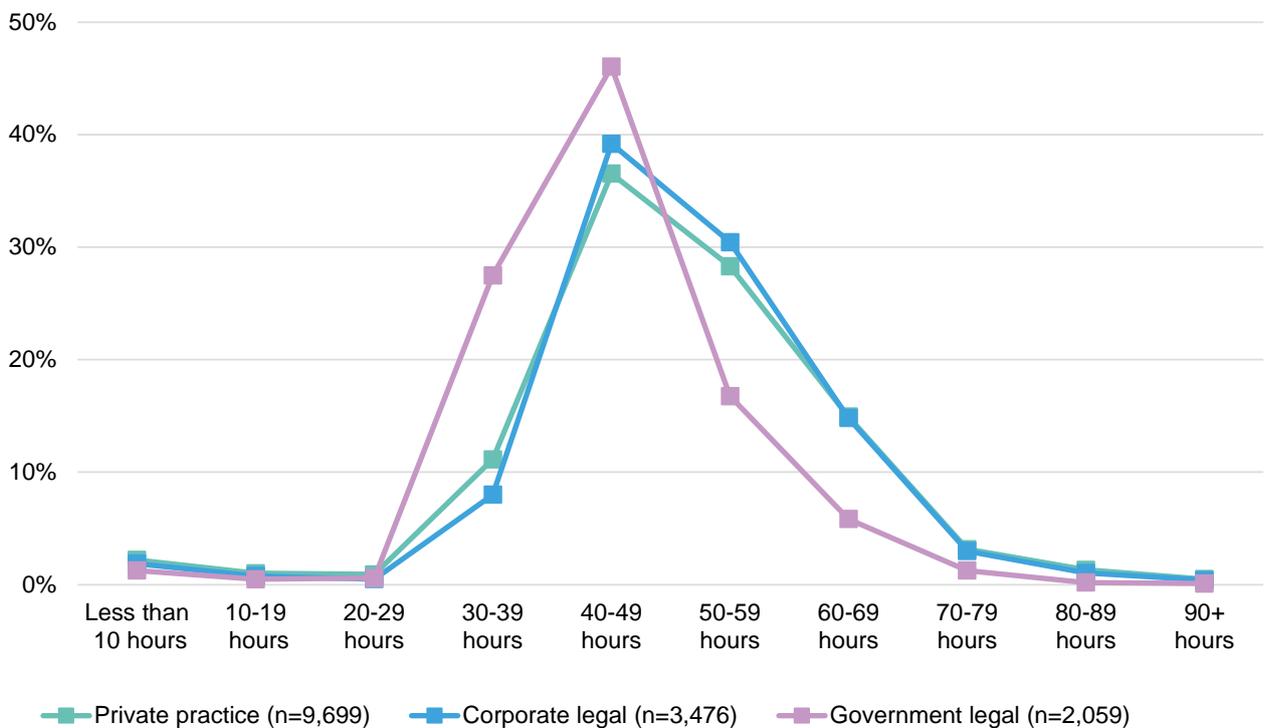
Consistent with this picture, larger proportions of respondents working full time in private practice and the corporate legal sector reported working longer hours compared to those in the government legal sector. For example, approximately half of those in private practice (48%) and the corporate legal sector (50%) reported working 50 or more hours per week, compared to only 24% of those in the government legal sector (see Figure 53 below).

Figure 52 – Average hours worked per week by practice sector (full-time workers)



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

Figure 53 – Number of hours worked per week by practice sector (full-time workers)



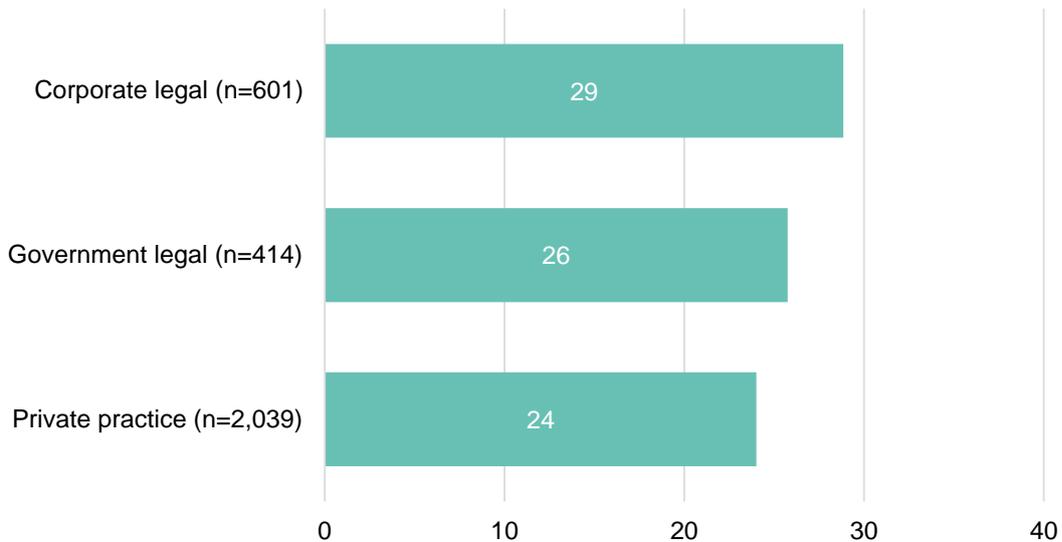
Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

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 54).

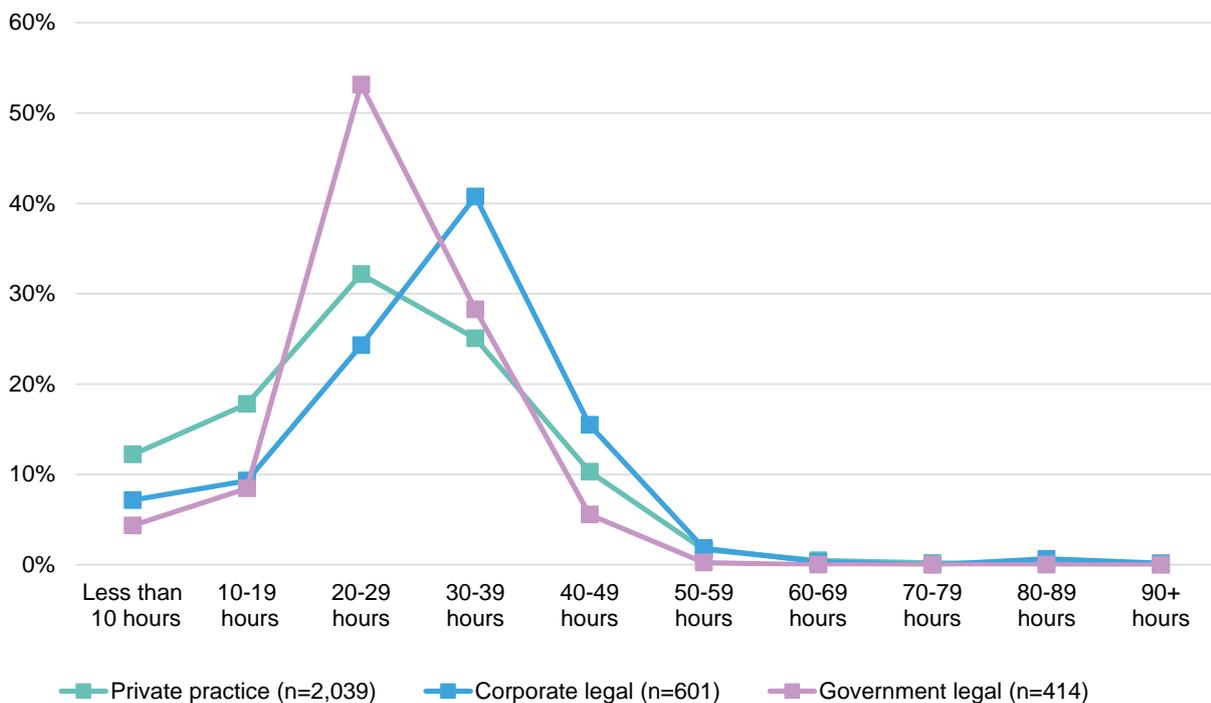
Larger proportions of respondents working part time in private practice and the corporate legal sector reported working long hours compared to those in the government legal sector. For example, 15% of those in the corporate legal sector and 10% of those in private practice reported working 40 or more hours per week, compared to only 6% of those in the government legal sector (see Figure 55 below).

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



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey

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



Source: 2021-22 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 2021-22 Survey, almost two fifths of respondents reported conducting pro-bono, unpaid or voluntary work as a legal practitioner in the previous year (38%). On average, they reported having provided 60 hours of service across the financial year, which equates to approximately 8 working days⁸.

Across all respondents, 471,986 hours (equivalent to approximately 62,931 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 \$142 million in free legal work, a decrease from \$168 million reported in last year's survey.

In addition to pro-bono work, a third of respondents reported providing unpaid help, support or care to friends, family, neighbours or others in the year prior to the survey (33%). These respondents, on average, provided 165 hours of unpaid support during that period.

⁸ Based on a 7.5 hour work day.

DISCLAIMER

This report is dated 2 June 2022 and incorporates information and events up to that date only and excludes any information arising, or event occurring, after that date which may affect the validity of Urbis Pty Ltd (**Urbis**) opinion in this report. Urbis prepared this report on the instructions, and for the benefit only, of Law Society of NSW (**Instructing Party**) for the purpose of reporting on the annual profile of Solicitors in NSW (**Purpose**) and not for any other purpose or use. To the extent permitted by applicable law, Urbis expressly disclaims all liability, whether direct or indirect, to the Instructing Party which relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose other than the Purpose, and to any other person which relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose whatsoever (including the Purpose).

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All surveys, forecasts, projections and recommendations contained in or associated with this report are made in good faith and on the basis of information supplied to Urbis at the date of this report, and upon which Urbis relied. Achievement of the projections and budgets set out in this report will depend, among other things, on the actions of others over which Urbis has no control.

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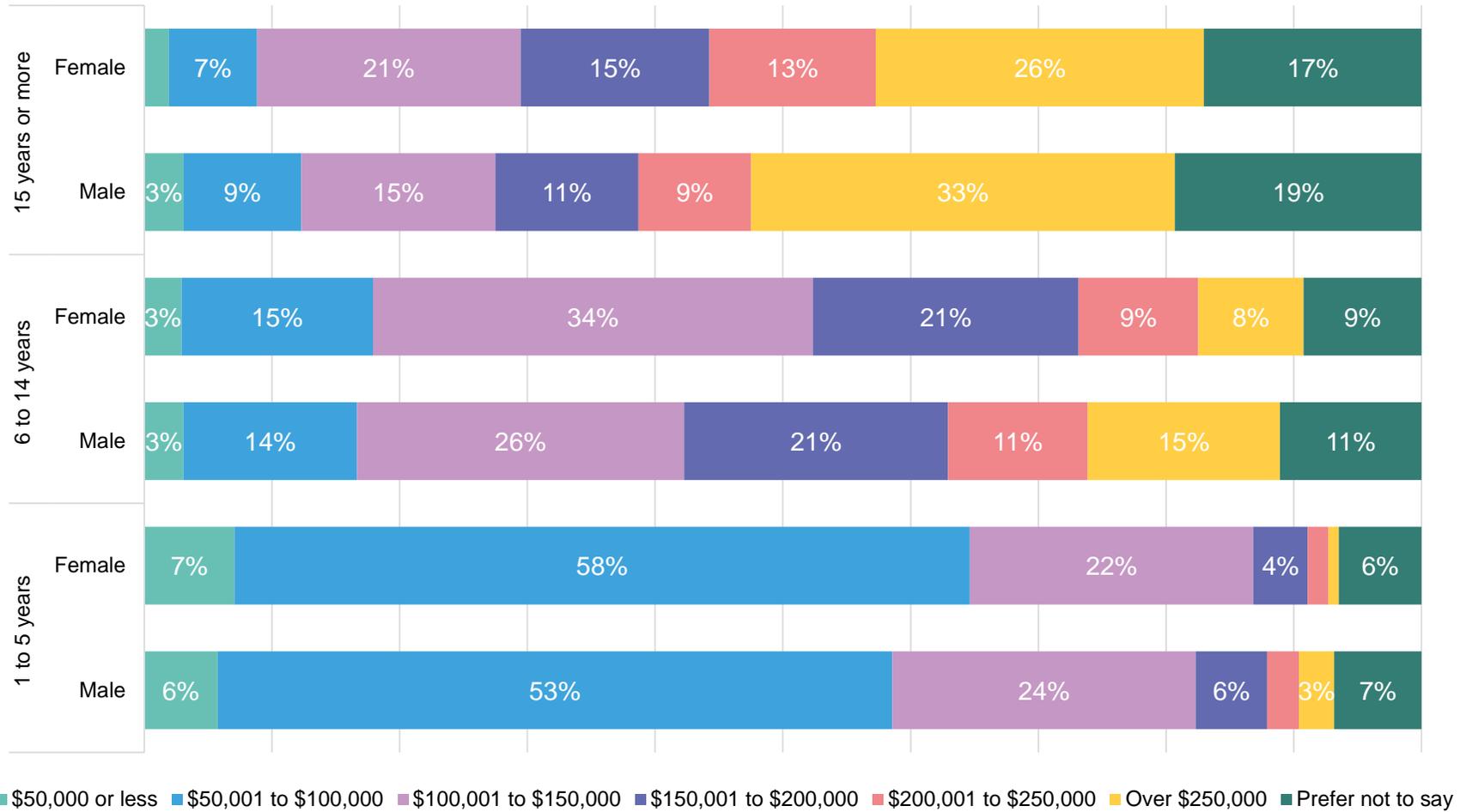
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This report has been prepared with due care and diligence by Urbis and the statements and opinions given by Urbis in this report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading, subject to the limitations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

APPENDIX A **YEARS SINCE ADMISSION BY INCOME ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS**

All practice sectors

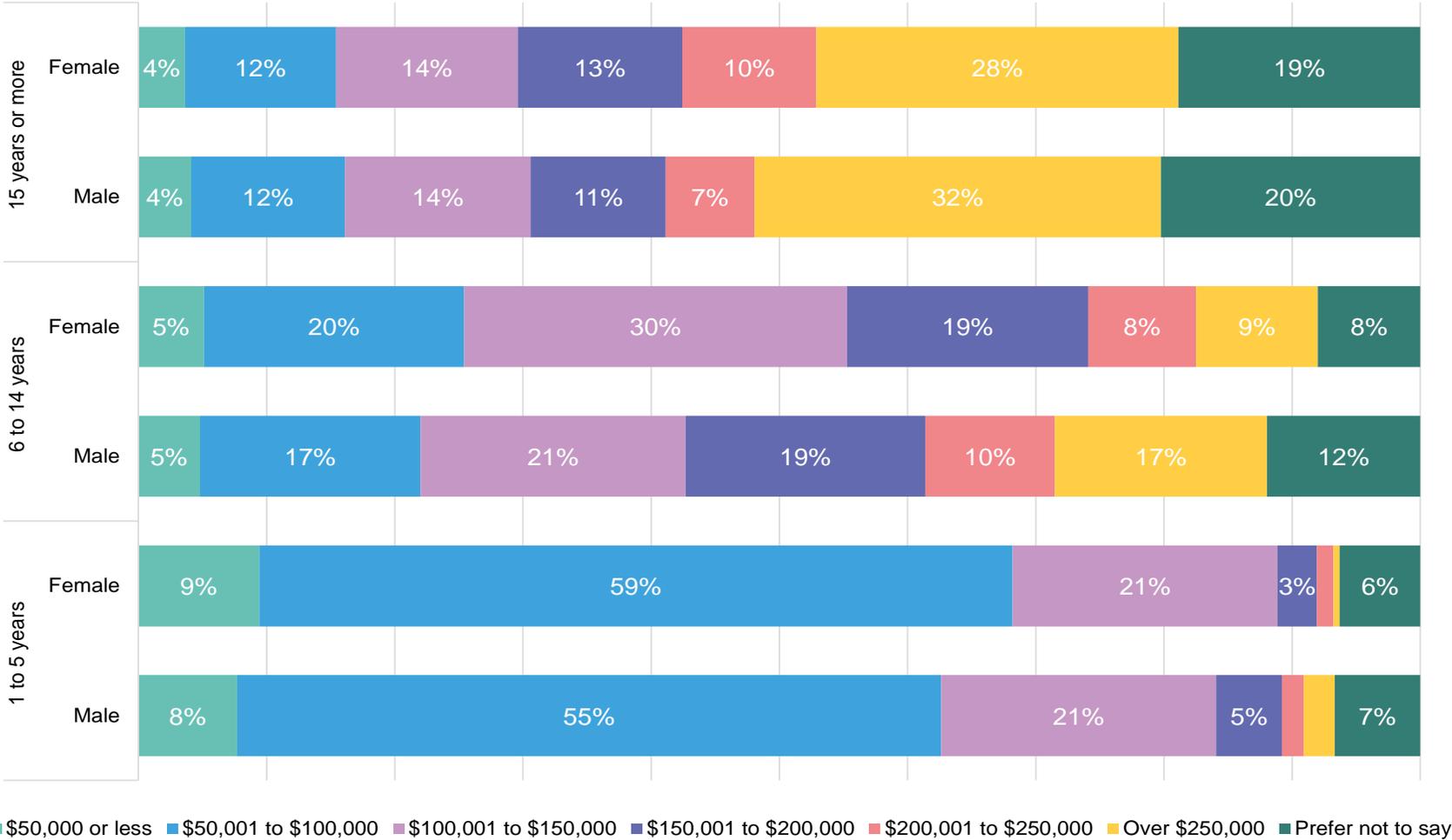
Chart 21 – Annual gross income of full-time solicitors by gender and years since admission FY20



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Full-time solicitors only, n=15,234

Private practice

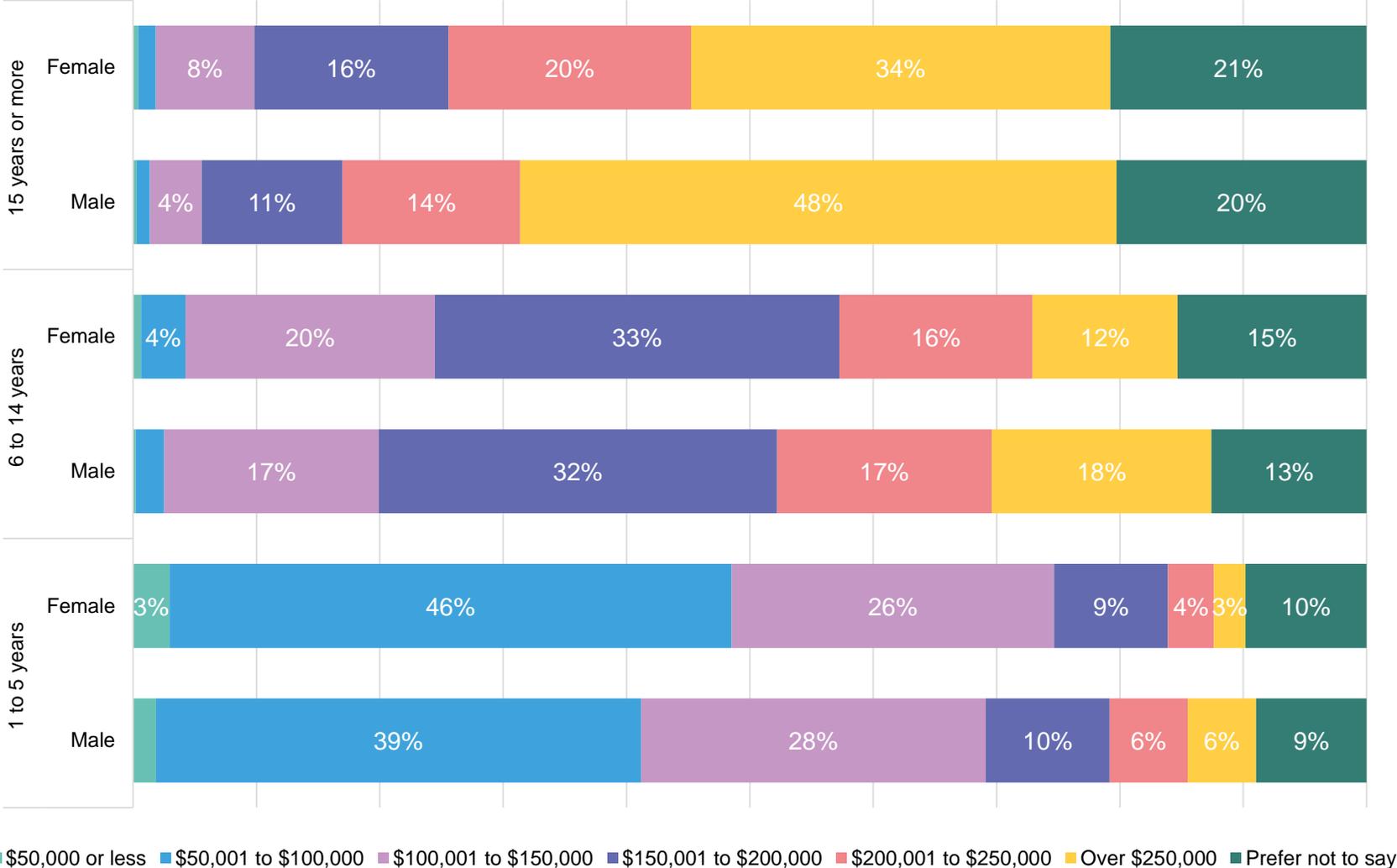
Chart 22 – Annual gross income of full-time private practice solicitors by gender and years since admission FY20



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Private practice full-time solicitors only, n=9,464

The corporate legal sector

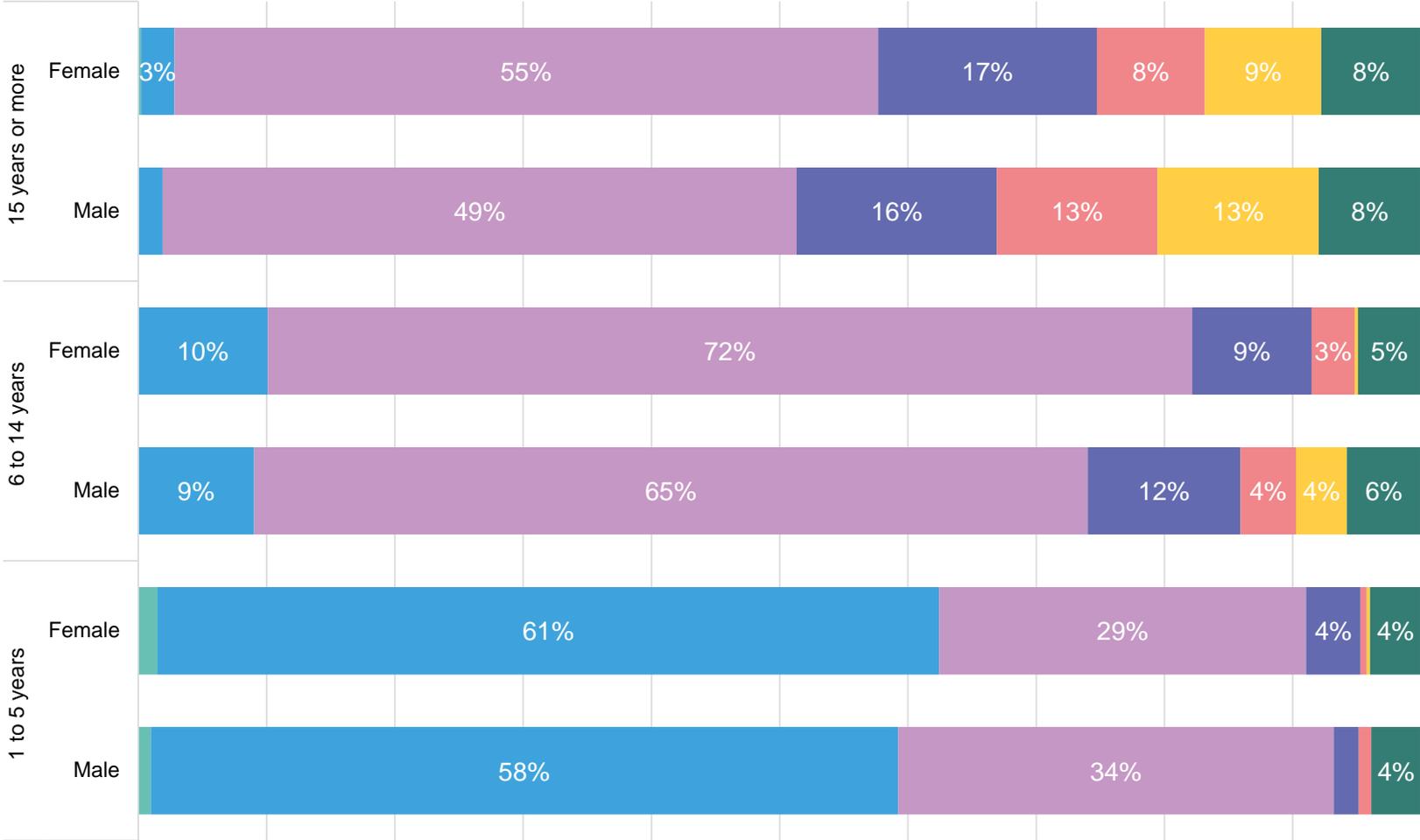
Chart 23 – Annual gross income of full-time corporate legal practitioners by gender and years since admission FY20



Source: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Corporate full-time solicitors only, n=3,356

The government legal sector

Chart 24 – Annual gross income of full-time government legal practitioners by gender and years since admission FY20



Legend: \$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: 2021-22 Practising Certificate Survey
 Base: Government full-time solicitors only, n=1,998

