

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Report 2023



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*“Diverse and inclusive teams
have a positive impact on
our clients...
Representation Matters.”*

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#DiversityMatters





SOLICITORS

REEDS

Who We Are

Reeds Solicitors is a leading criminal defence, family law, court of protection, prison law and mental health firm in England and Wales. The family-based firm was established in 2000.

Solicitor Advocate Lee Reed started the business as a sole practitioner practising criminal law from her basement at home. Lee was joined shortly after, in July 2000, by her son Stuart Matthews. Stuart is a Senior Solicitor and Partner who now heads our Private Crime Team.

Lee's other son, Jan Matthews, then joined the firm in 2006. Jan is the firm's Managing Partner and is also a qualified Criminal Solicitor. Jan is responsible for the overall management and business development of the firm.

The firm has had a strong focus on Legal Aid but has quickly grown a private crime department over the last few years. The firm is also a member of the Very High Costs Cases Panel and can therefore provide representation for complex and large-scale/high-value fraud cases. Overtime, Reeds has built a strong reputation in Family Law, Prison Law, Court of Protection and Mental Health Law and has strong and experienced teams in place to offer these services.

Reeds currently have 22 offices across the Thames Valley, Wiltshire, Bristol, South East and City of London areas. As well as an office in the north, based in Manchester. Over the years the company has grown substantially in size, and is now one of the country's leading criminal defence firms.

This document has been created to outline our diversity data for 2023.

Representation Matters.

Reeds Solicitors Commitment to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Representation.

Diverse and inclusive teams have a positive impact on our clients, where representation truly does matter...

At Reeds there are two fundamental pillars to our vision: client care and employee care.

We strive to provide the best possible service for our clients, whatever the circumstances. And we want to provide the best possible working environment for our employees. It is important to us to provide this culture and level of service regardless of gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, age, neurodiversity, disability status, citizenship, or any other aspect which makes someone unique.

We are committed to ensure that, at all points of contact, our clients and employees feel valued, appreciated, and free to be who they are. To us, diversity and inclusion is more than a check-box activity. It's fundamental to our roles as legal representation. Reeds believe that to provide adequate care to clients of all backgrounds, our staff should reflect the diversity of our clients.

We want to ensure that the legal profession reflects the society it serves. The legal profession has a long way to go before it eradicates inequality. Yet strides are being made to improve diversity, promote inclusion and tackle discrimination.

As part of our commitment to transparency and visibility, our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion survey data is published every two years on our website.

Our commitment to diversity and inclusion...

Attracting and Onboarding - Our mission is to create a local workforce to reflect local clients. This starts with the way we advertise and fill our vacancies. To make our teams more inclusive, we have created benefits to attract different diverse groups. This includes our flexible working scheme, which helps open doors to working parents, people with disabilities, or those with specific religious needs.

Engaging and Developing - By supporting our employees, building skills and training we aim to create an inclusive community. Our annual Equality and Diversity training programme is constantly being updated. This includes training on unconscious bias and mutual respect

Everyone's needs are as unique as they are. Ongoing support provides opportunities for improvement, and ensuring our staff have their needs met where possible. In addition to our support, anonymous staff surveys are conducted to provide honest feedback. Feedback which inform future policies, staff benefits, or even training.

Building the Culture -The values of equality, diversity and inclusion need to be embedded into the fabric of Reeds Solicitors. We recognise that our culture starts from management and the partners. We have on-going training for those in management positions to develop their skills and highlight any improvements. Our partners recognise the unique characteristics, skills and experiences of our staff. We want to ensure that each one of them feel valued and celebrated. Our goal is to create a culture where diversity and inclusion is the natural by-product.

Working at Reeds Solicitors...

Reeds Solicitors has established itself as one of the leading criminal defence and family law practices in the South of England. It is a leading top tier Legal500 firm, which spans over 20 offices nationally.

In addition, the COP and MH departments have significantly grown in size and reputation over the past 5 years since they were established. We have been shortlisted for a number of awards to recognise our commitment to these areas of law, and we continue to grow the teams nationally to ensure we can offer these services to as many potential clients as possible.

Reeds have taken time to carefully recruit a team of exceptional police station representatives, paralegals, and solicitors, based not only on their recognised legal knowledge, but also their passion and genuine commitment to achieving the best possible results for our clients.

Reeds' mission is summarised in its two pillars: Providing second-to-none client care, and exceptional employee care.

Reeds' management work hard to ensure that Reeds Solicitors continues to be a dynamic and inclusive workplace, in accordance with its mission.

Mental Health and Wellbeing...

This has been high on the agenda for Reeds over the past few years, with much expedited since the pandemic and lockdown. We have a number of dedicated mental health first aiders across the business and promote an open and transparent environment where employees are encouraged to discuss any mental health or wellbeing concerns.

...Flexible Working Scheme

We recognise that the traditional 9am - 5pm is not suitable for everyone. We offer a number of flexible working options to our employees. Flexible working can assist in different ways, including mental health and wellbeing, assisting with disabilities, and supporting a working parent. Our scheme was shortlisted for a HR Excellence Award (2021), and the LexisNexis wellbeing award (2022)!

And Yoga...

We run a weekly remote yoga session for our staff. This provides a moment of calm, and encourages mindfulness to positively impact our mental and physical wellbeing. It is important for us all to take some time out of our day.

...Ongoing Staff Training

We recognise the importance of an ongoing conversation on certain subjects such as Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, and Mental Wellbeing. To encourage this, we provide ongoing training on these subjects and more. We believe an informed workforce will actively contribute to an inclusive workforce.



This Year's Data...

Overview

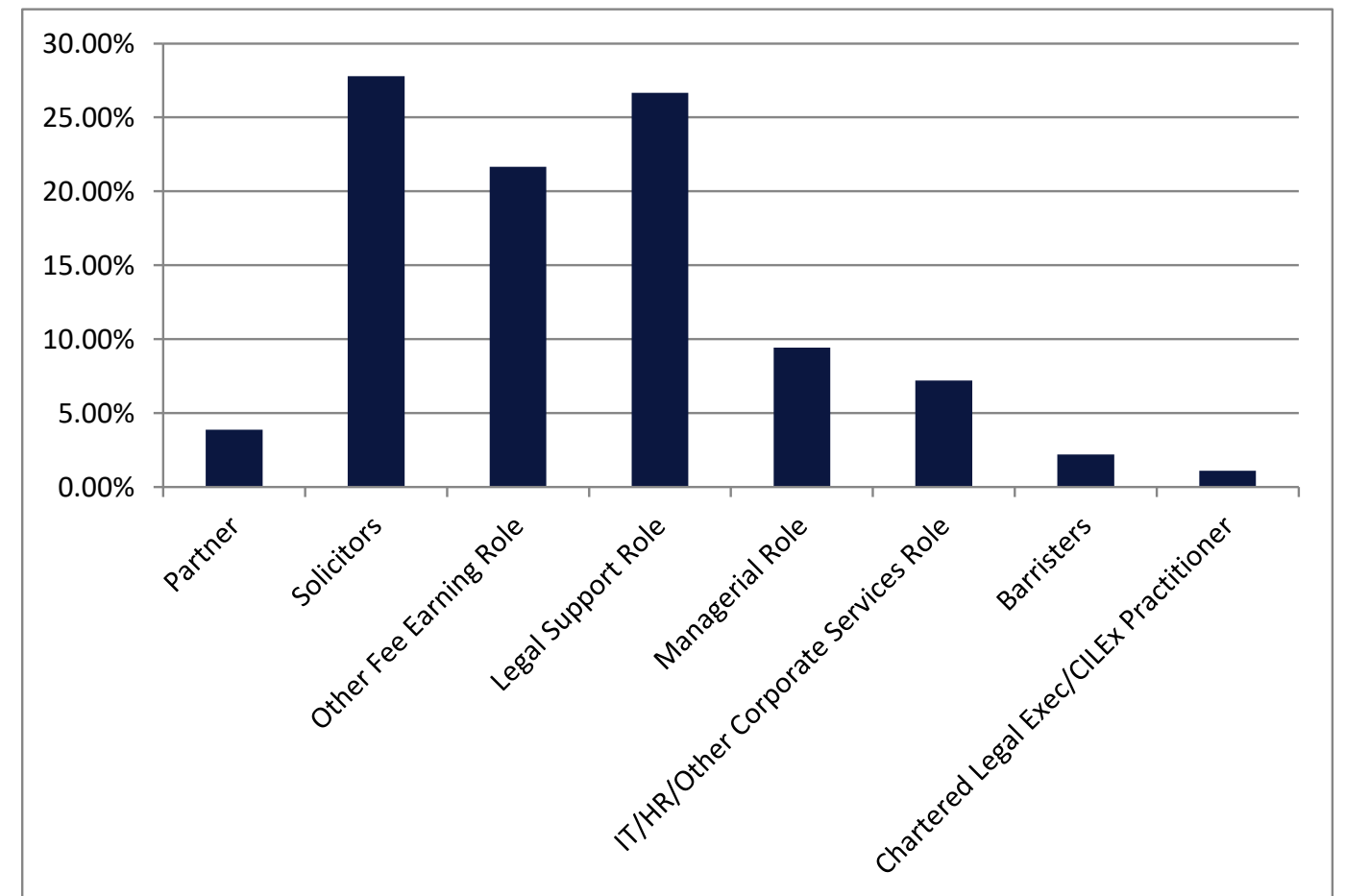
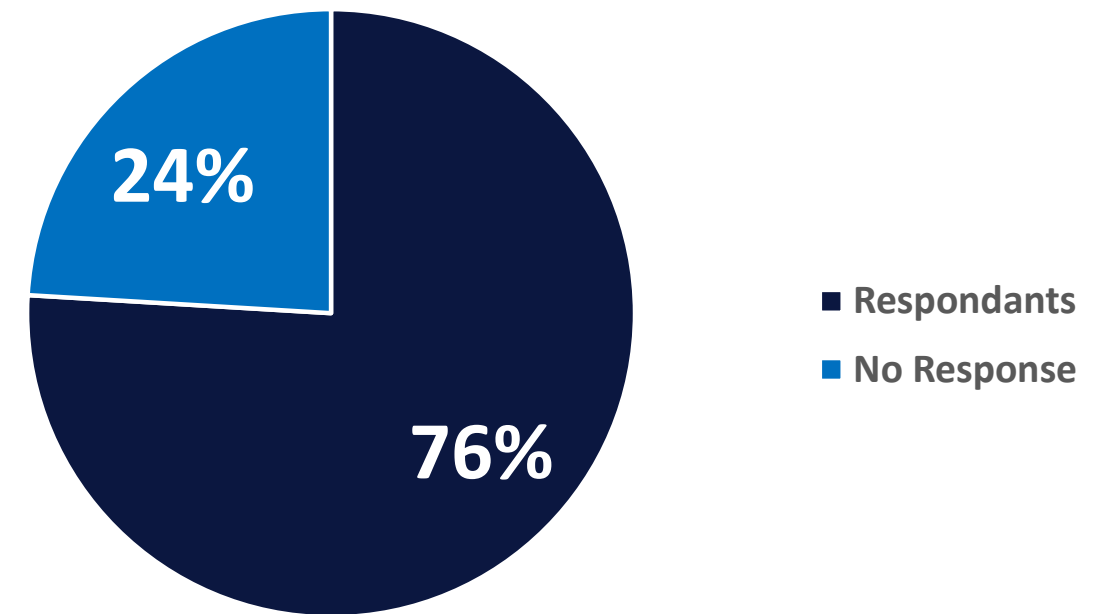
Employees were invited to complete an anonymous survey. Our annual survey was sent out to all 200+ employees.

The survey comprised of 24 questions with sections dealing with age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity, disability, social class or economic background, and family responsibilities (such as being a carer). The respondents had the option to skip a question, or choose a 'rather not say' option.

76% of our staff responded to the survey this year, an increase of 6% on our last survey in 2021. We have worked hard in putting into action much of the feedback received in our previous survey, and the increased participation rate could, in part, be in response to the positive effects from last time.

Of the respondents, 57% held a legal or fee-earning position (partner, solicitor, fee earner) and 43% held a business or administrative role in the firm.

Our respondents mostly answered all questions fully. Looking at the total response rate across all questions, only 7% of responses were withheld (through a 'skip' or 'prefer not to disclose' option). The questions with the highest skip rate were for questions which asked for opinions and thoughts on gender and sexuality, whilst the highest 'prefer not to say' response rate was for questions relating to family and background.

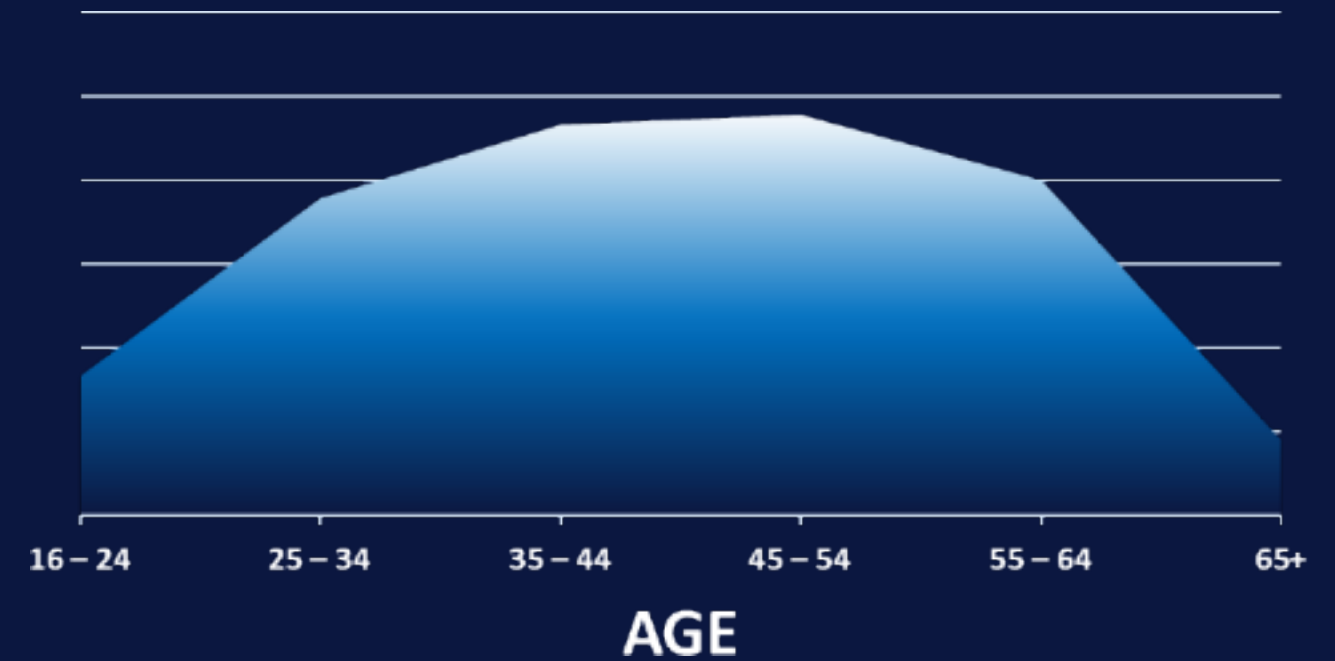


Age

Overall Age Range

The age range of all our employees is relatively spread across age groups. We have a slight increase in employees in the 35-54 age bracket across the firm.

There seems a slightly higher proportion of this age bracket in administrative staff than with our fee-earners, as can be seen by comparing it to the graph below (recording the age range of Fee Earners).

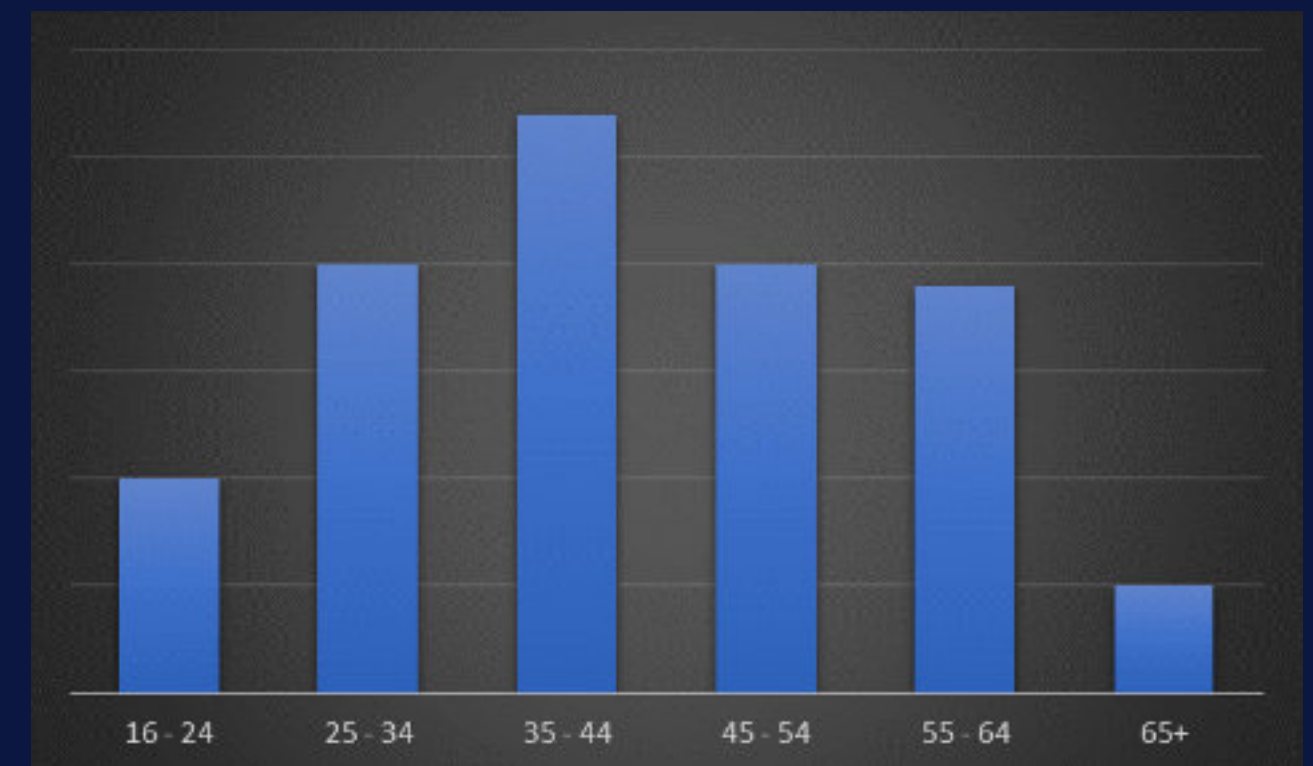


Fee Earner Age Range

Looking at the Fee Earner data alone, we see a similar story. We see a slightly higher proportion of our fee-earning staff on the younger side of the age range. This highlights Reeds as an employer for solicitors out of university and the newly qualified as much as it is for experienced lawyers.

We have a thriving training programme, which encourages younger people coming into business. Yet it is also clear from this data that we equally have experienced advocates who have a wealth of knowledge and continue to be an asset to Reeds.

We believe this demonstrates Reeds Solicitors as a dynamic place to work at the start of a solicitor or fee-earners career.



Ethnicity

Reeds Solicitors is proud that our local employees are representative of the local communities they serve.

There has been an ongoing discussion around BAME representation in the legal profession, encouraged by national discussions of institutional racism and bias in university selection processes.

The employment of BAME Solicitors currently sits around 21% (15% Asian, 3% Black, 2% Mixed, and 1% Other Ethnic Background)

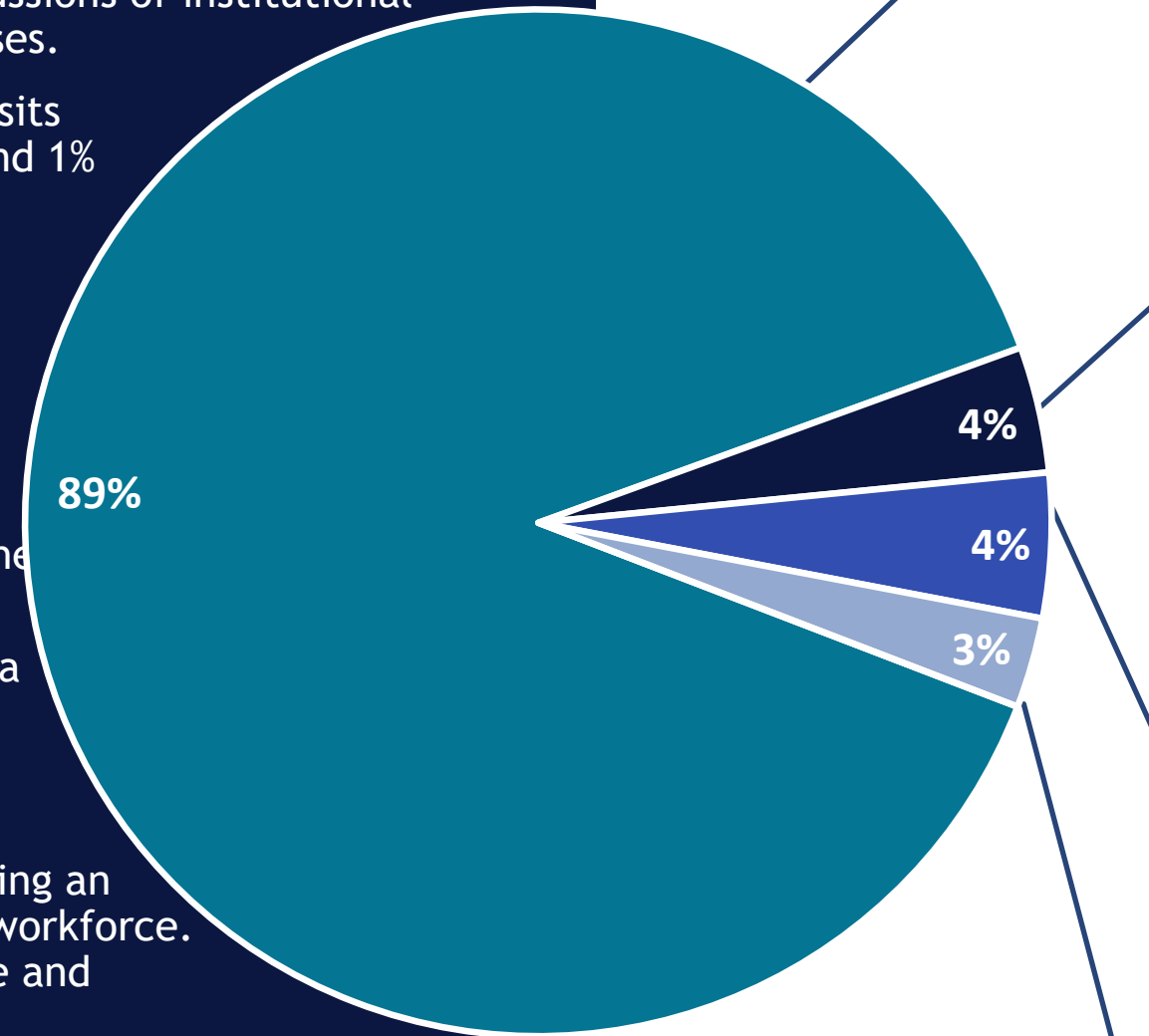
Reeds is starting to see these conversations filter through into improving diversity in our staff. As can be seen from the graphs on the right, our Black and Mixed Background employees equal or exceed the industry average. Our Asian or Asian British employees are under represented, currently 11% under the industry average.

For Reeds Solicitors, employing anyone is not a tickbox exercise - whether on the basis of ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender expression.

That said, we see the importance of maintaining an ongoing conversation on ethnicity within our workforce. This starts by building a culture of acceptance and recognising bias.

One way we've encouraged this is through our staff training programme - this includes diversity and inclusion, but also psychological understanding of unconscious bias. We believe we may be the only law firm in the UK that run this style of training programme, helping our staff reflect on unconscious biases.

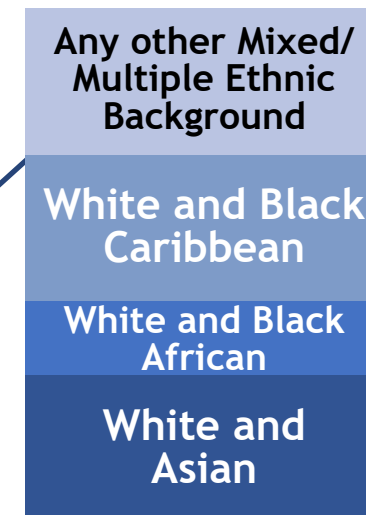
Reeds also looks to accept trainees from the local areas so it is representative of local community. Finally, we are investigating new ways of accessing qualifications e.g. SQE and we are hopeful this will be impactful in the future. This widens opportunities for all groups.



- White
- Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups
- Asian or Asian British
- Black, African, Caribbean or Black British



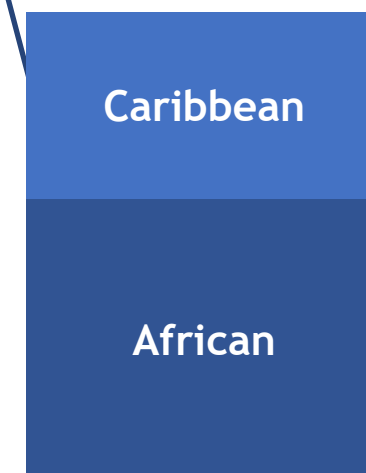
White



Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Background

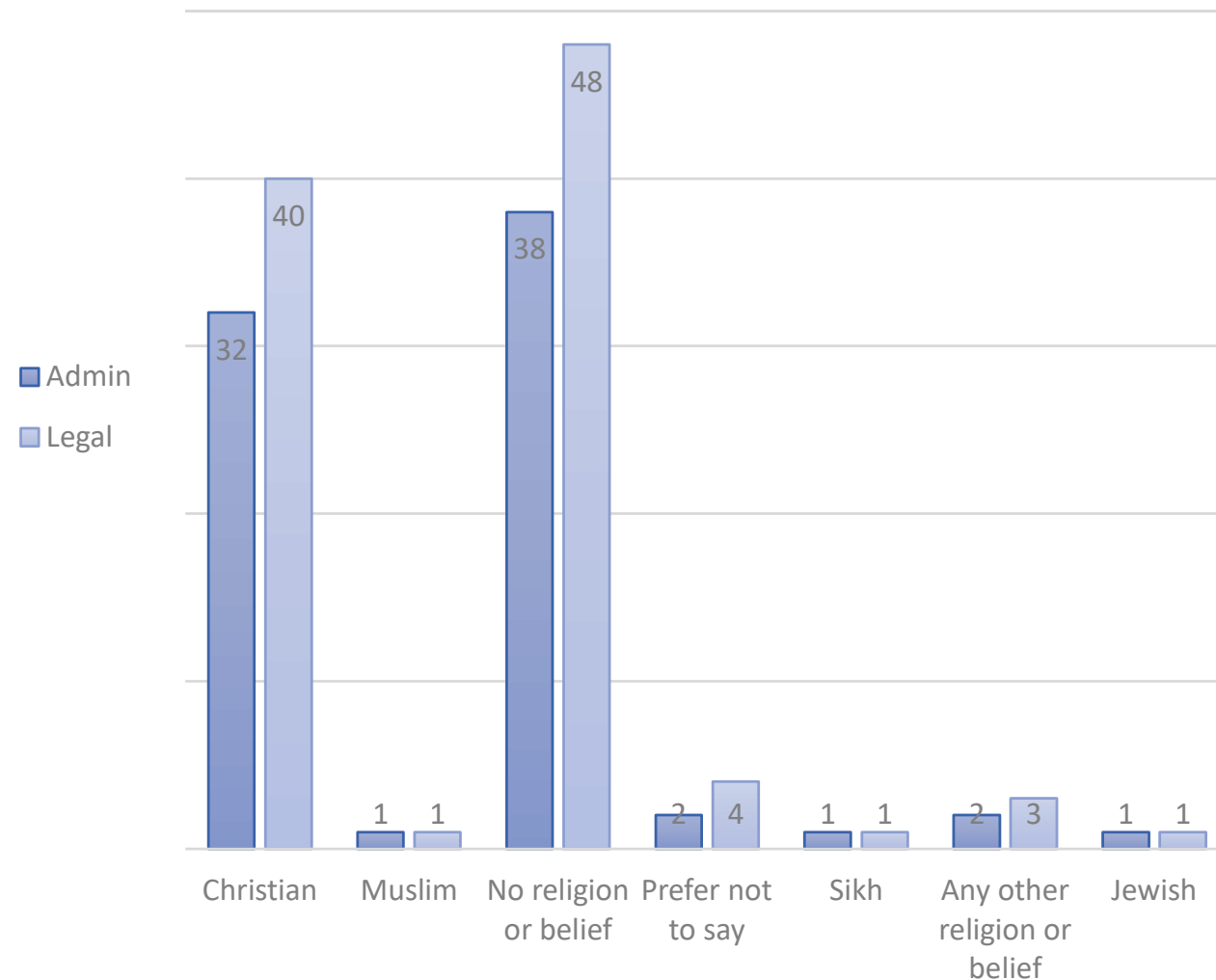


Asian or Asian British



Black, African, Caribbean or Black British

Religion



Through our survey we can see the majority of our staff are non-religious, or Christian. However, we also have a minority representation of Hindus, Jewish people, Muslims and Sikhs.

In recognition of our staff who hold religious beliefs, we have recently changed one of our employee perks to be more flexible. Previously we provided all staff a day off for their birthday, though this has now been adapted to a day off as a 'celebration day'. Employees may continue to take this on their birthday, though they can also use it to ensure they aren't working on important religious observance, holiday, or feast days.

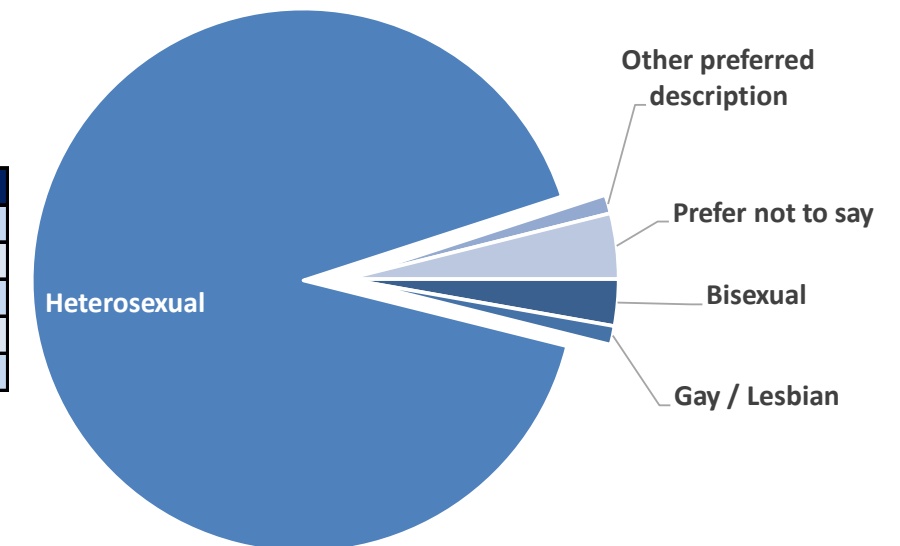
LGBTQIA+

As can be seen from the data on gender, 1% of our non-Fee Earner staff preferred another description of their gender, e.g. non-binary. Additionally, 1% of our team identified as a different gender to what they were assigned as at birth.

The legal industry has a good representation of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) employees as solicitors. The national average is 2%, however LGB Fee Earners make up 3% of our workforce.

And there's no exceptions at Reeds Solicitors, with 5-7% of our Fee Earners identifying as LGB. Company wide (including non-Fee Earning roles) this figure increases to 4-5% of our team who identify as LGB.

Sexual Orientation	Percentage
Bisexual	3%
Gay / Lesbian	1%
Heterosexual	91%
Other preferred description	1%
Prefer not to say	4%



Our survey this time included an option for staff to make comments about the importance of LGBTQIA+ expression in the workplace. Here's a selection of some:

"It is liberating that people can be themselves."

"It should be acknowledged, shown understanding and respect."

"Everyone should be able to be themselves at work."

"Everybody should be themselves. Love is Love."

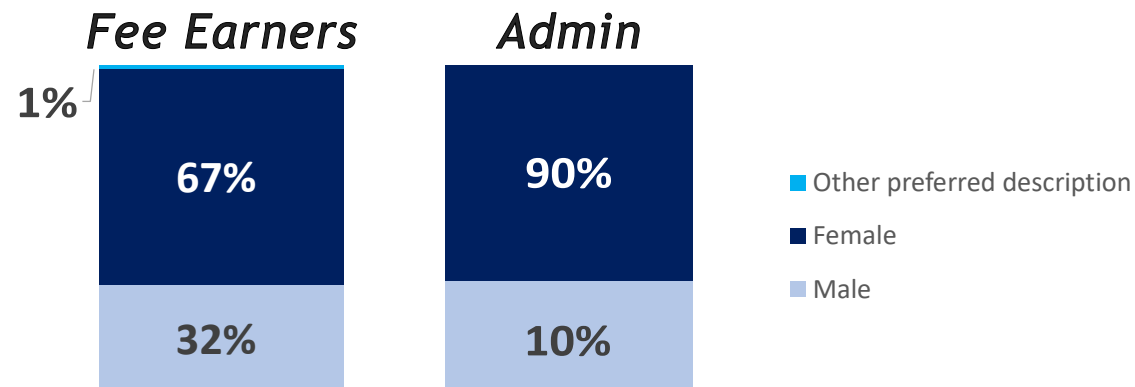
"Gender expression and sexuality are very personal matters and failure to be able to express these can lead to mental health issues etc. It is important for persons to be able to express their gender/sexuality."

Gender and Gender Expression

Our survey highlighted how strong of a presence women have in our business.

67% of Reeds' Fee Earners identify as female, way over the industry average of 49%. This is also the case when it comes to our non-Fee Earner employees (i.e. administrative roles), where a huge 90% are women - 15% over the industry average of 75%. The ratio of women in our business has grown since our last report.

We provide training on gender and gender expression as part of our annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training to raise awareness and promote an inclusive workforce.



Spotlight: Women in the Legal Industry

In a historically male dominated industry, women have found it difficult to pursue a career in law. Whilst much has been achieved in recent years, women working in the legal sector still face many distinct challenges.

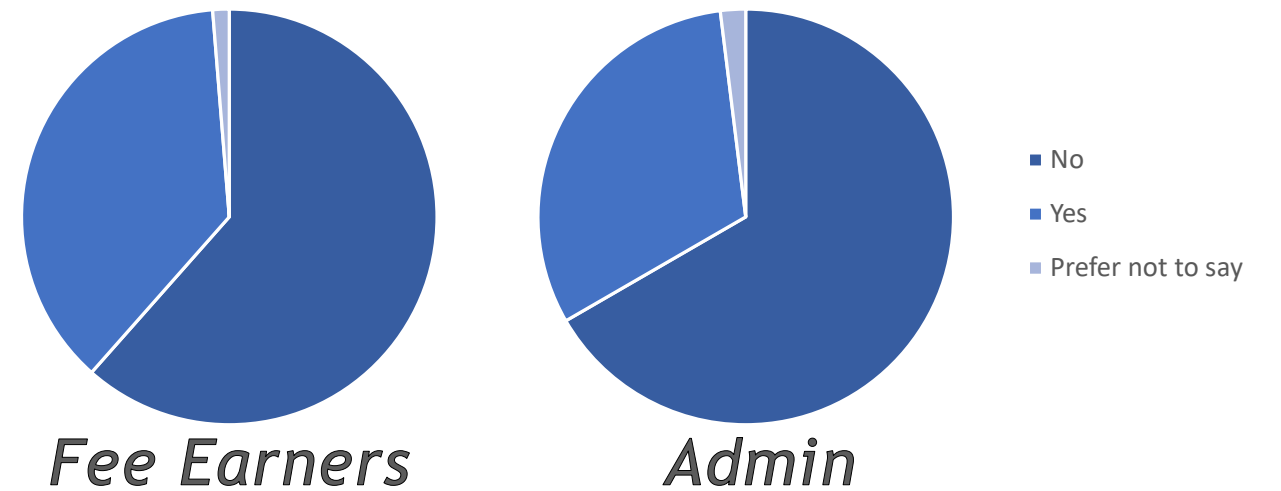
One difficulty has been women not able to achieve their ambitions by attaining senior management positions in legal firms, or the 'Glass Wall' effect. In the legal industry, women represent 30% of partners. Reeds have 3 female partners within our firm, one of which is an equity partner. Whilst women are still under-represented, we're committed to ensuring women are able to achieve their ambitions in the work place. Reeds have recently introduced a promotional structure for everyone to achieve their career goals. This removes any barriers to women having the same opportunities to reach partnership level, and isn't solely based on billing figures but instead recognises other contributions and personal merit.

Additionally, women with care commitments often have difficulty fitting work around childcare needs. This has been particularly true during the ongoing pandemic and it has been reported that women have provided two-thirds more childcare than men during recent lockdowns. Reeds recognise those challenges and provide flexible working programmes to support those with caring/parental responsibilities.

Caring

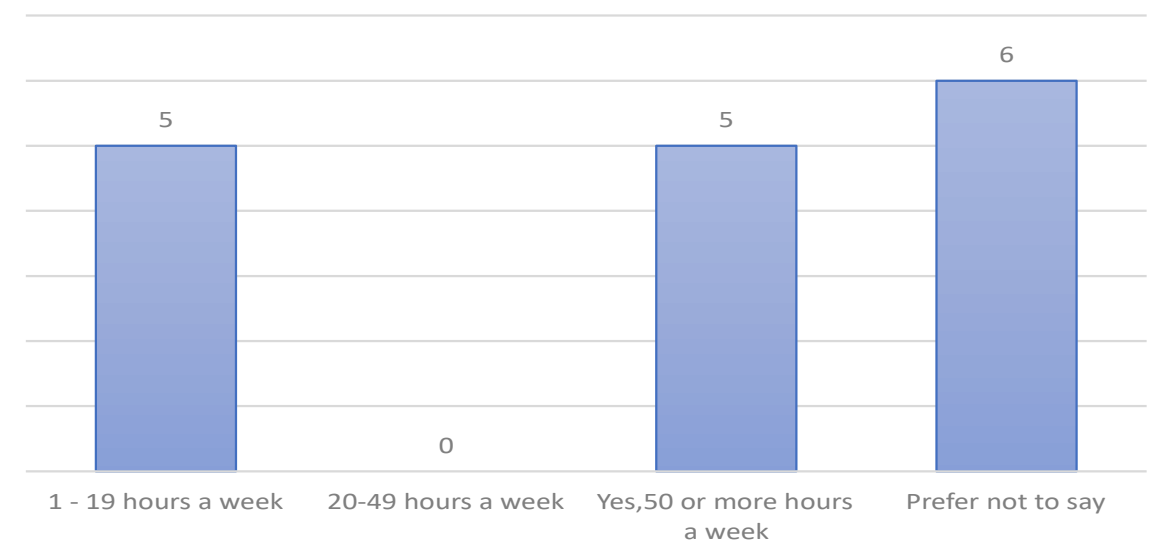
Our staff are carers...

About 37% of Fee Earners, and 31% of administration staff act as a primary carer for a child under 18 years old.



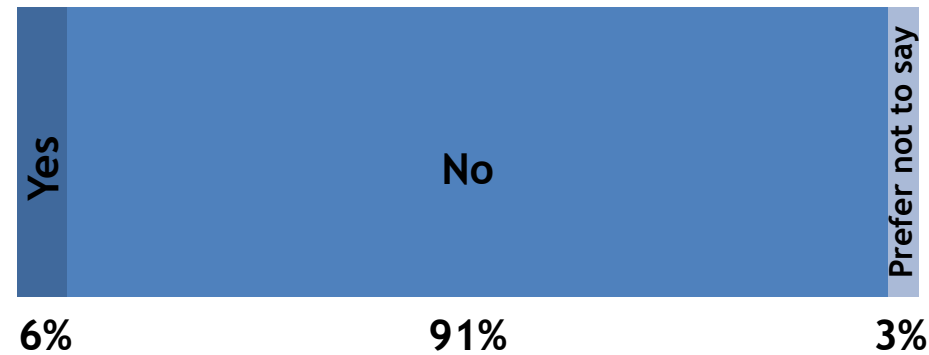
Additionally, some of our staff provide unpaid care for those with long-term physical or mental health difficulties. The majority of these provide 1-19hrs or 50+ hours a week, this can be a physical and emotional strain on our staff on top of their paid work.

We've been supporting our staff to be parents, carers and all they can be through the development of our flexible working scheme. We have seen this help single/sole parents, as well as those that have dependants with complex health issues.

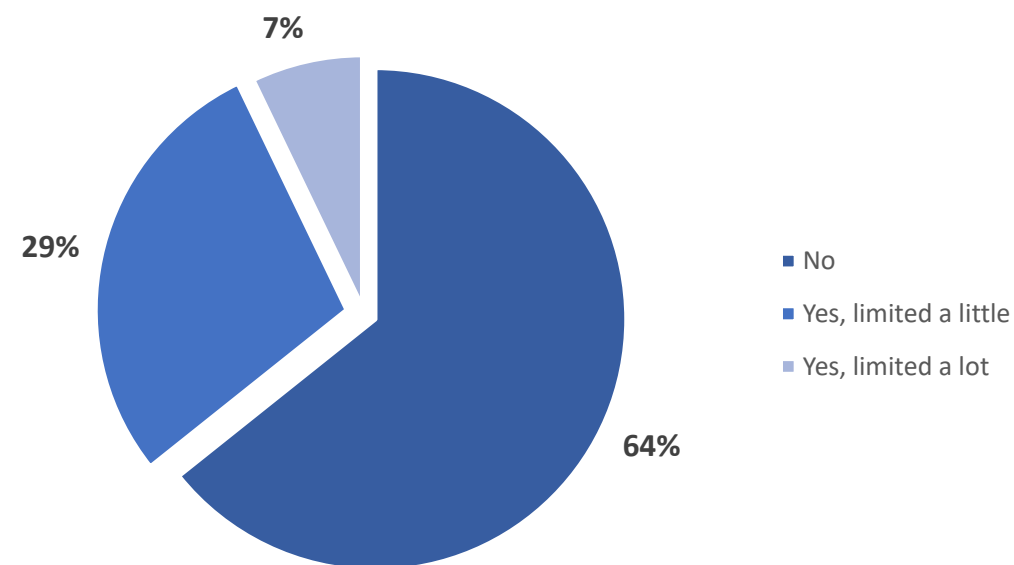


Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability according to the definition in the Equality Act 2010?



The results of the survey show that around 6% of our staff consider themselves as having a disability. When asked if they find their day-to-day activities limited because of health or disability, 36% replied that they do. Whilst it is true that this only equates to 0.42% of our staff, we are dedicated in improving the working lives of all our team members.



“The road to true inclusivity and equity is a continuous process of growth and improvement.”

(Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)

Spotlight: Disability

At Reeds, we are dedicated to raising awareness about disabilities and promoting inclusivity and acceptance. Historically disabled people have been marginalised, often amongst those left furthest behind in the workplace. We are committed to supporting our employees who experience more than the usual challenges in their daily lives. We wish to foster an environment where everyone, regardless of their abilities, is valued and included. Together we work towards creating a more accessible and inclusive world for all.

Undertaking regular training and raising awareness is a critical factor within Reeds, as is the flexible working programmes available to all employees, which create more opportunities. We are continuously seeking feedback and looking for more ways we can improve our commitment to all groups within our organisation. Our aim is to help our staff to overcome barriers and allow them to continue in the profession they love.

Case Study: Mrs X

After a serious accident left her with significant leg injuries, one of our team (let's call her Mrs X) is registered as a disabled person.

Flexible working means that she can work around the pain in her leg, as well as getting exercise as and when she needs it. Mrs X doesn't have to struggle around the office as work can be done from home. When her leg becomes uncomfortable X can move, stretch or step away from work until she is able to work again (even outside the usual 9-5).

This flexibility with work also means that she doesn't need to share her difficulties with colleagues, she has privacy and is judged on her work merit alone.

X has been provided with specialist equipment for home working and in the office, to ensure she has the choice of where she wants to work depending on how she feels on any given day. Facilities have been made available on the ground floor (previously located on the first floor) to reduce the need to climb the stairs when office working.

All of our staff can use the same flexible working hours scheme, meaning less distinction between able- and disabled-people and accessibility needs. Mrs X said that the flexible working scheme was “life changing” for her, this arrangement has been successfully in place for over 4 years and has ensured X can continue in her role.

Reeds Solicitors is a leading Top Tier Legal500 firm. By joining our expanding company you will become part of an exceptional team which spans over 20 offices nationally. We have a passion and commitment to achieve the best possible results for every one of our clients, whatever their legal problem. Our reputation is for quality, and for providing our clients with straightforward, honest and pragmatic advice.

If you want to find out more information about why you should work for Reeds, [click here to view our brochure](#).

If you are interested in working for Reeds Solicitors, current vacancies can be found on our website:

www.reeds.co.uk/reeds-solicitors/careers/

Reeds Solicitors encourage and invite individuals who are looking for their next position to get in touch and email a short summary of yourself and what you are looking for, along with your CV to:

recruitment@reeds.co.uk

