

Snapshot of the Profession 2025

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This snapshot draws on information held by the New Zealand Law Society Te Kāhui Ture o Aotearoa as regulator of the practice of law. As at 30 June 2025, there were 17,504 lawyers (defined as a person who holds a current practising certificate).

Of these, 16,119 were in New Zealand and 1,385 were overseas. This equates to one New Zealand based lawyer for every 331 New Zealanders;¹ a slight increase from 2024, but the same proportion as in 2023.

The total number of lawyers increased by 2.9% when compared to the 2024 year. This equates to 495 lawyers.² The largest increase was in New Zealand lawyers based overseas, at 11.7%.

As in 2024, women continue to make up the majority of the profession. In the 2025 year, 56.8% of lawyers were women compared to men, who made up 42.9%.

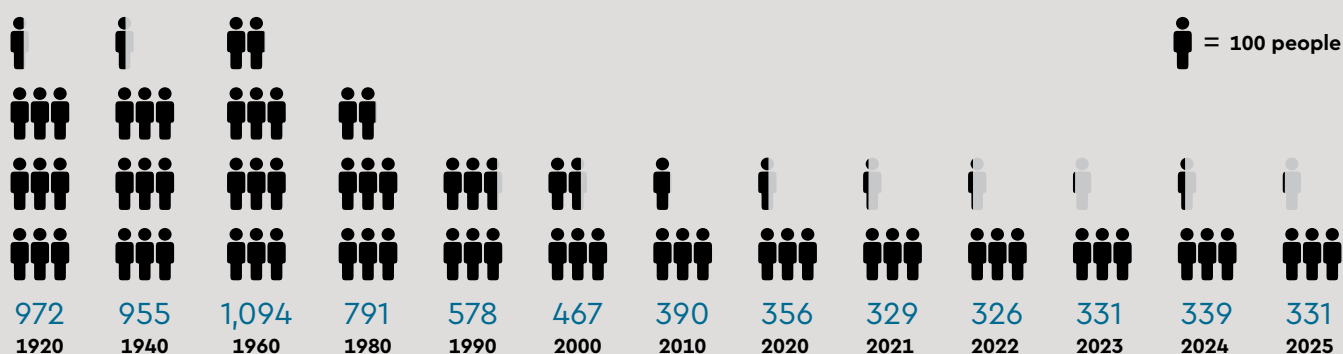
The changes across most categories presented in this report were minor, including areas of practice, years since admission, and demographics of the 0–7 post admission cohort. This suggests that as the profession has grown, the proportions of groups within the profession have grown to scale.

1. Population numbers sourced from: National population estimates: At 31 March 2025 (2023- base) | Stats NZ

2. This is net amount, i.e. the difference between the number of new practising certificate holders over the year and the number of lawyers handing in their practising certificate.

People per lawyer in New Zealand

PEOPLE PER LAWYER IN NEW ZEALAND



LAWYERS BASED IN NZ

16,119

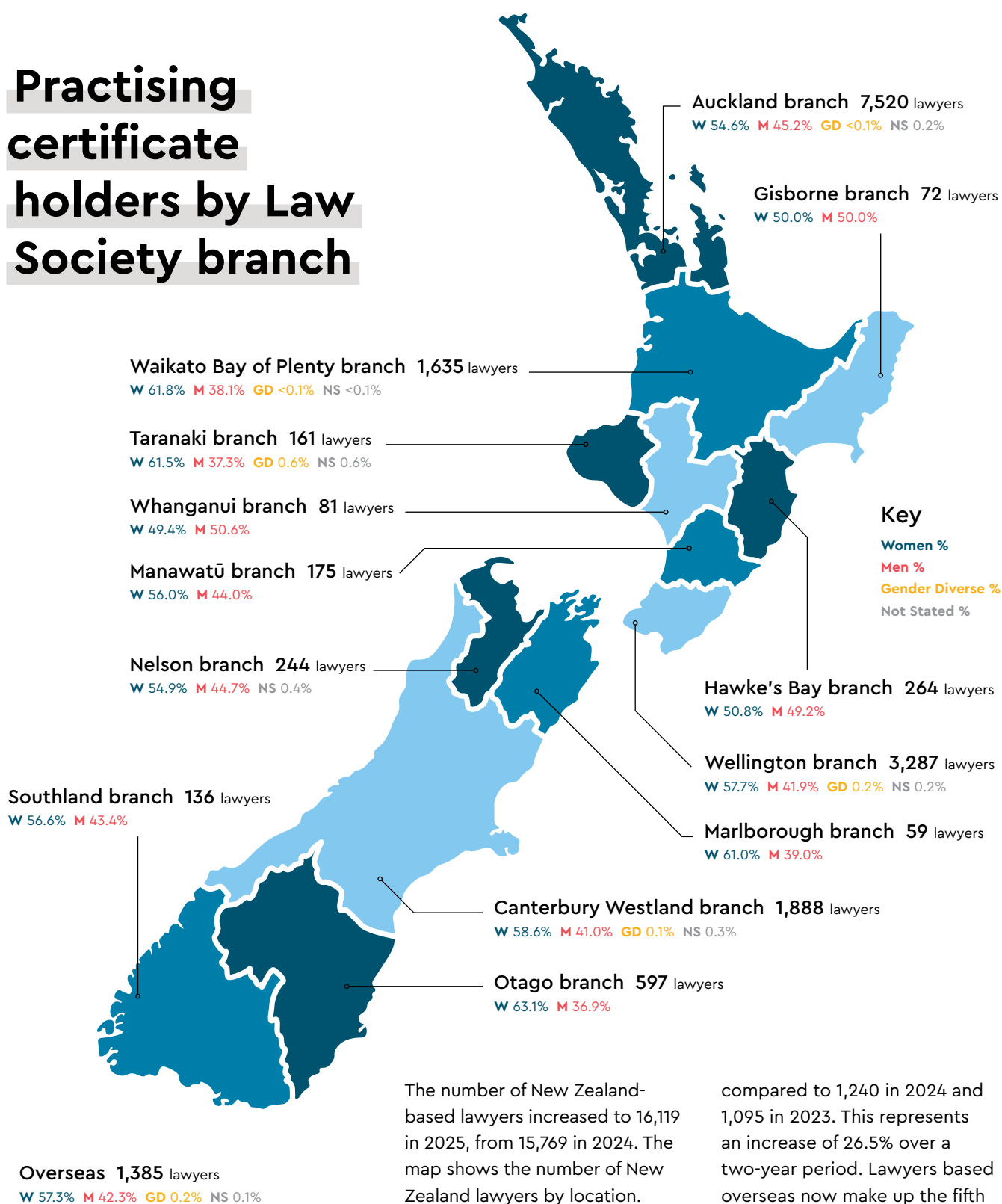
POPULATION

5,330,600

POPULATION PER LAWYER

331:1

Practising certificate holders by Law Society branch



The number of New Zealand-based lawyers increased to 16,119 in 2025, from 15,769 in 2024. The map shows the number of New Zealand lawyers by location. Auckland continues to have the most lawyers in the country with 7,520, an increase of over 1% compared with last year.

The increase in New Zealand lawyers based overseas continued. There were 1,385 lawyers based overseas in the 2025 year

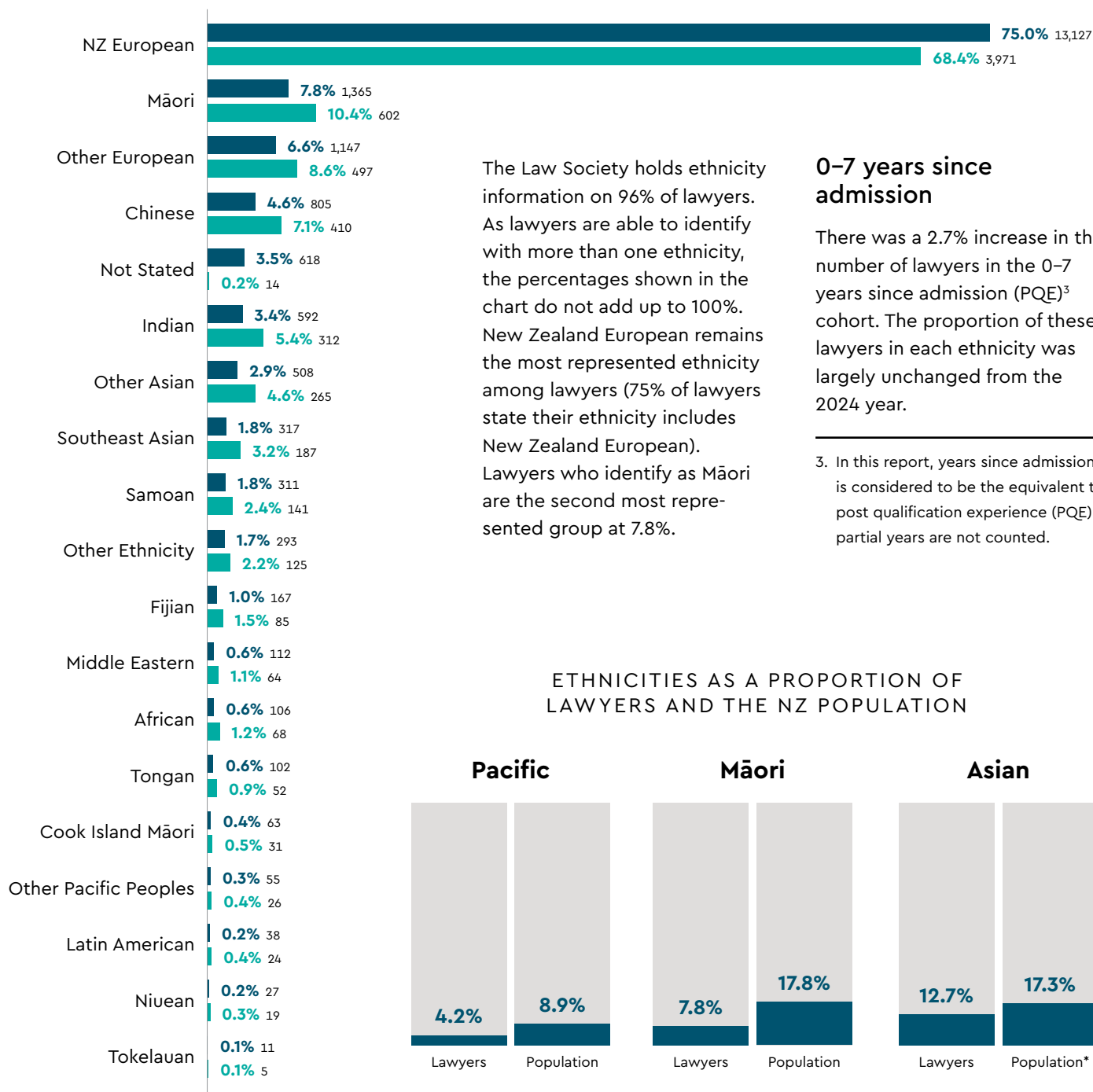
compared to 1,240 in 2024 and 1,095 in 2023. This represents an increase of 26.5% over a two-year period. Lawyers based overseas now make up the fifth largest group after the Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury Westland and Waikato Bay of Plenty branches.

Marlborough and Gisborne are the smallest Law Society branches by number of lawyers.

Ethnicity

PROPORTION OF ALL LAWYERS AND LAWYERS 0-7 YEARS PQE BY ETHNICITY

■ All Lawyers ■ Lawyers 0-7 years PQE



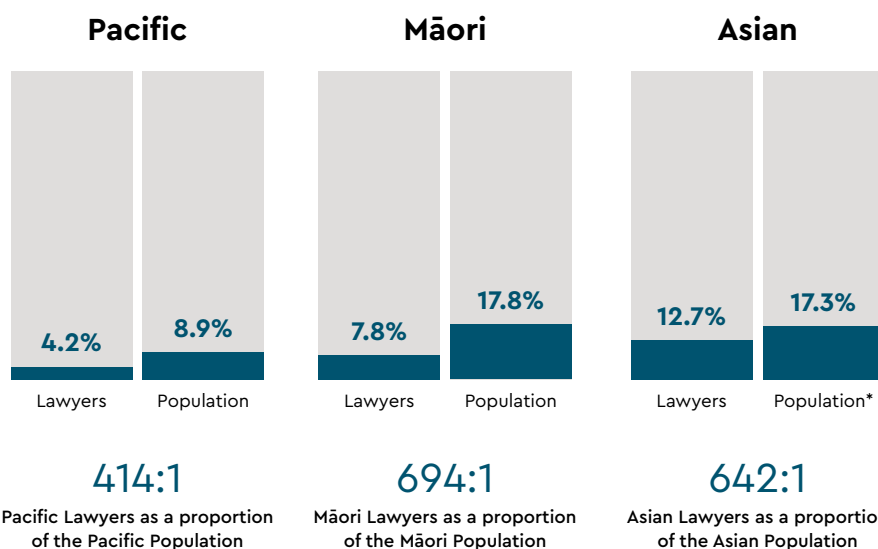
The Law Society holds ethnicity information on 96% of lawyers. As lawyers are able to identify with more than one ethnicity, the percentages shown in the chart do not add up to 100%. New Zealand European remains the most represented ethnicity among lawyers (75% of lawyers state their ethnicity includes New Zealand European). Lawyers who identify as Māori are the second most represented group at 7.8%.

0-7 years since admission

There was a 2.7% increase in the number of lawyers in the 0-7 years since admission (PQE)³ cohort. The proportion of these lawyers in each ethnicity was largely unchanged from the 2024 year.

3. In this report, years since admission is considered to be the equivalent to post qualification experience (PQE); partial years are not counted.

ETHNICITIES AS A PROPORTION OF LAWYERS AND THE NZ POPULATION



*Census 2023, Stats NZ

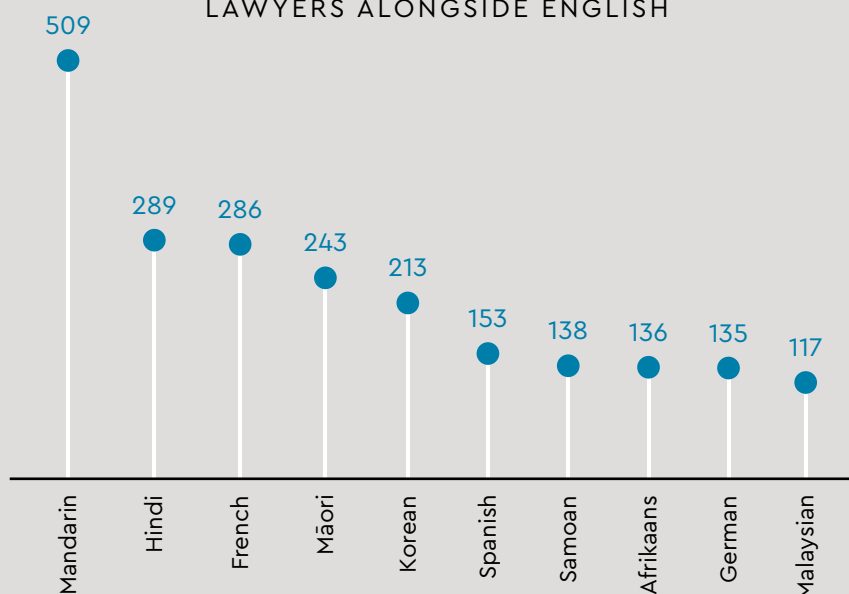
Language

These charts present the top ten languages spoken by lawyers in addition to English. It is inferred that all lawyers speak English.

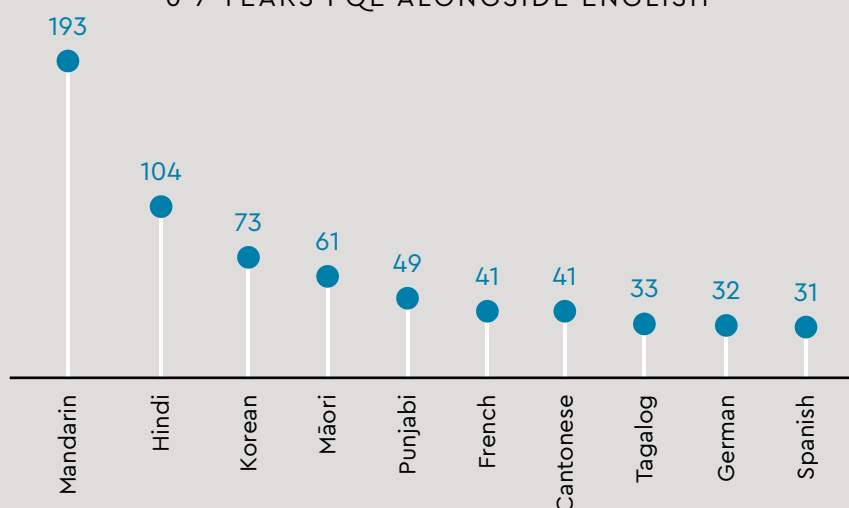
Te reo Māori was spoken by 243 lawyers, making it the fifth most spoken language after English, Mandarin, Hindi, and French. There were small increases in the number of lawyers able to speak the languages in the top ten. However, it should be noted some lawyers may speak several languages and not all lawyers identify their spoken languages.

Aotearoa New Zealand's other official language, New Zealand sign language, is spoken by 12 lawyers (an increase from 10 in the previous year).

TOP TEN LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY ALL LAWYERS ALONGSIDE ENGLISH



TOP TEN LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY LAWYERS 0-7 YEARS PQE ALONGSIDE ENGLISH



LAWYERS WHO SPEAK TE REO MĀORI COMPARED TO THE NZ POPULATION OF TE REO MĀORI SPEAKERS

LAWYERS

243

POPULATION*

213,849

RATIO

880:1

*Census 2023, Stats NZ

LAWYERS WHO USE NZ SIGN LANGUAGE COMPARED TO THE POPULATION OF NZ WHO COMMUNICATE IN NZ SIGN LANGUAGE

LAWYERS

12

POPULATION*

4,600

RATIO

383:1

*Census 2018, Stats NZ

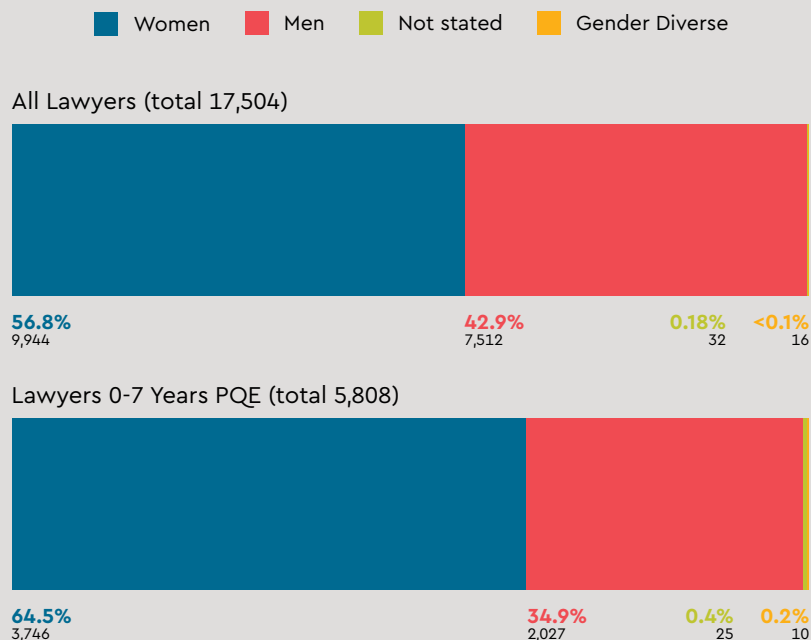
Gender

Lawyers can choose to identify as women, men, gender diverse (i.e., non-binary or other specified gender), or may choose not to state their gender. As at 30 June 2025, the profession was made up of 9,944 women (56.8% of all lawyers), and 7,512 men (42.9% of all lawyers). Around 0.1% of lawyers identified as gender diverse.

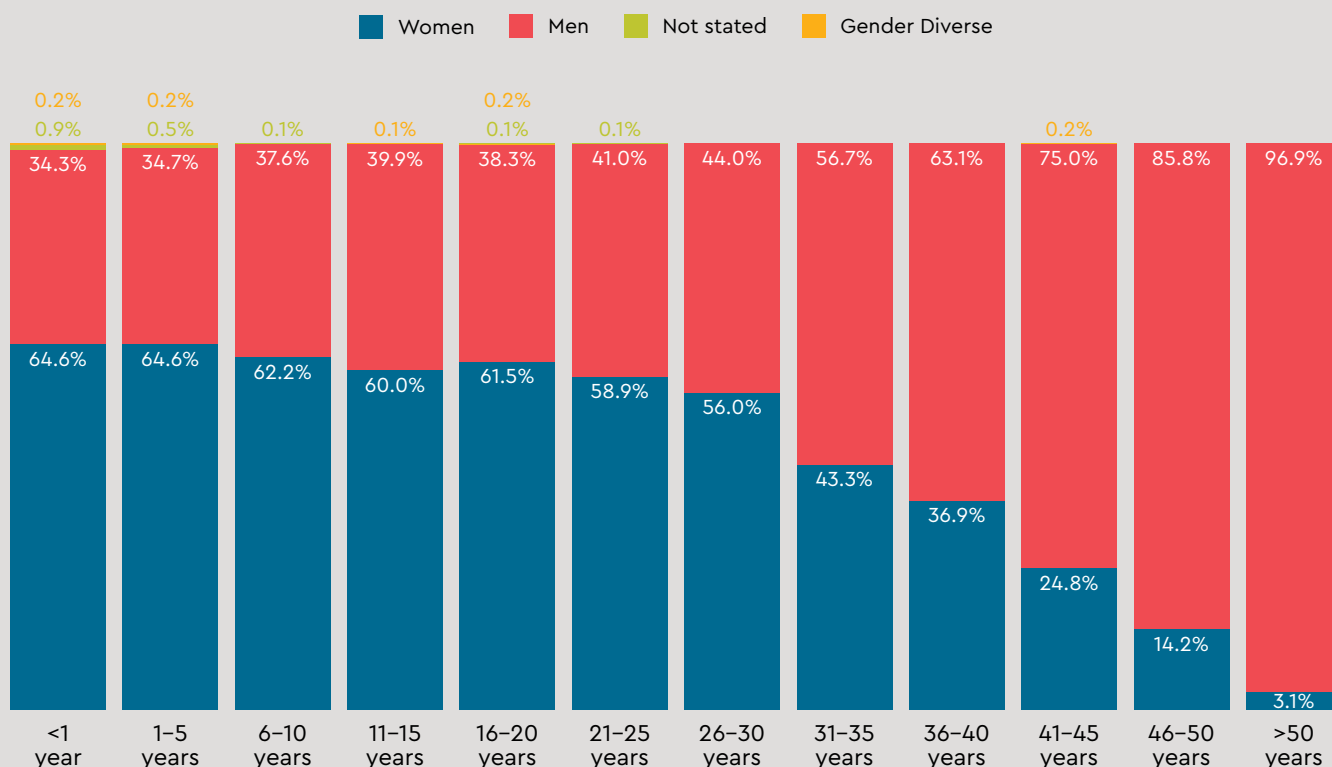
In the 0–7 years since admission (PQE) cohort, the proportion of women is 64.5%. This is likely to continue to shift the gender balance of the profession further over time. In the 0–7 PQE cohort, 0.2% identified as gender diverse.

The proportion of women decreases as PQE increases. This is most noticeable from 26–30 years PQE.

PROPORTION OF ALL LAWYERS BY GENDER COMPARED TO LAWYERS 0-7 YEARS PQE



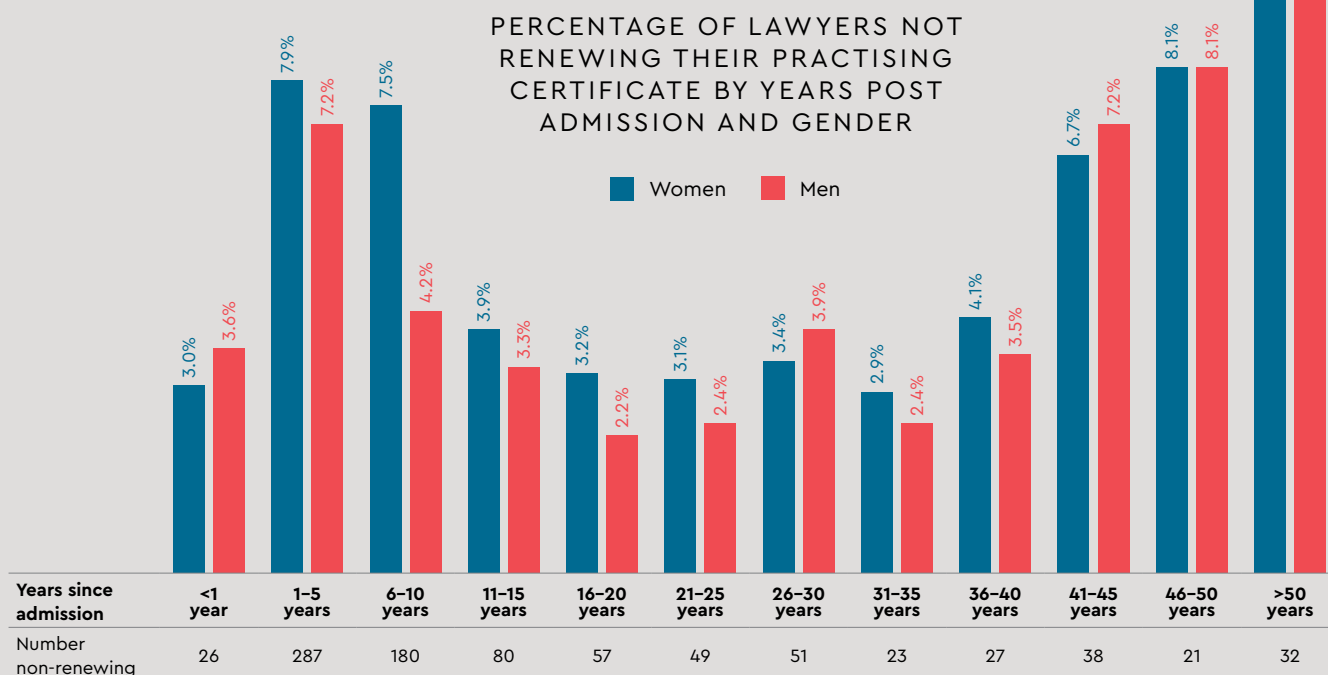
PROPORTION OF LAWYER GENDER BY YEARS POST ADMISSION (PQE)



Gender

Eight hundred and seventy-one lawyers did not renew their practising certificate by 1 July 2025 (comprising 527 women and 342 men). This is a non-renewal rate of 5.0% overall, with non-renewal rates of 5.3% for women and 4.6% for men. As previously stated, women make up 56.8%

of the profession; however, 60.5% of the lawyers who did not renew their practising certificate in 2025 were women. The difference is not uniform across the years since admission, with the greatest difference seen in 6–10 years since admission category.

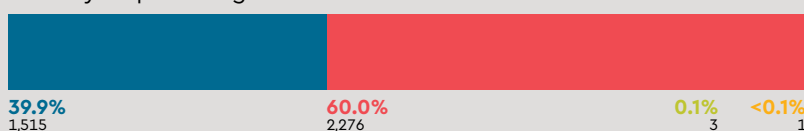


Note: This data, captured on 1 July 2025, may include people who subsequently made a late application to renew, or re-applied for their practising certificate at a later date.

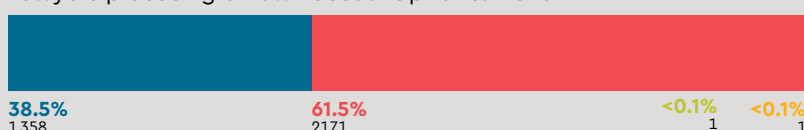
PROPORTION OF LAWYERS PRACTISING ON OWN ACCOUNT BY GENDER

Women Men Not stated Gender Diverse

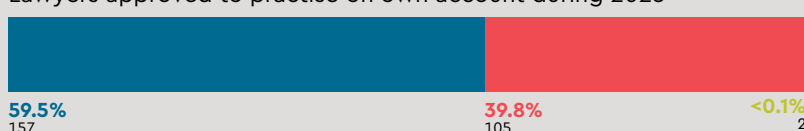
All lawyers practising on own account as at 30 June 2025



Lawyers practising on own account prior to 2025



Lawyers approved to practise on own account during 2025



Lawyers practising on own account

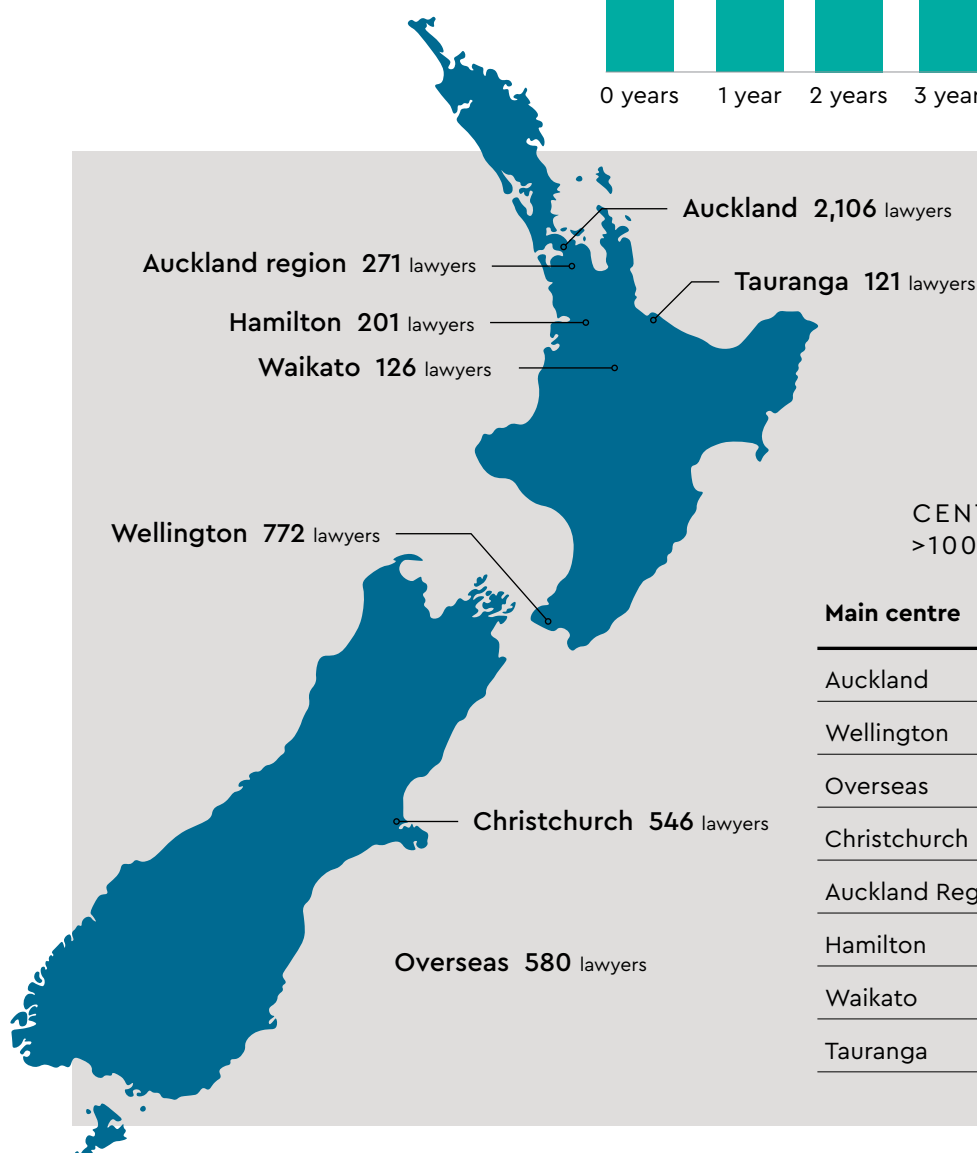
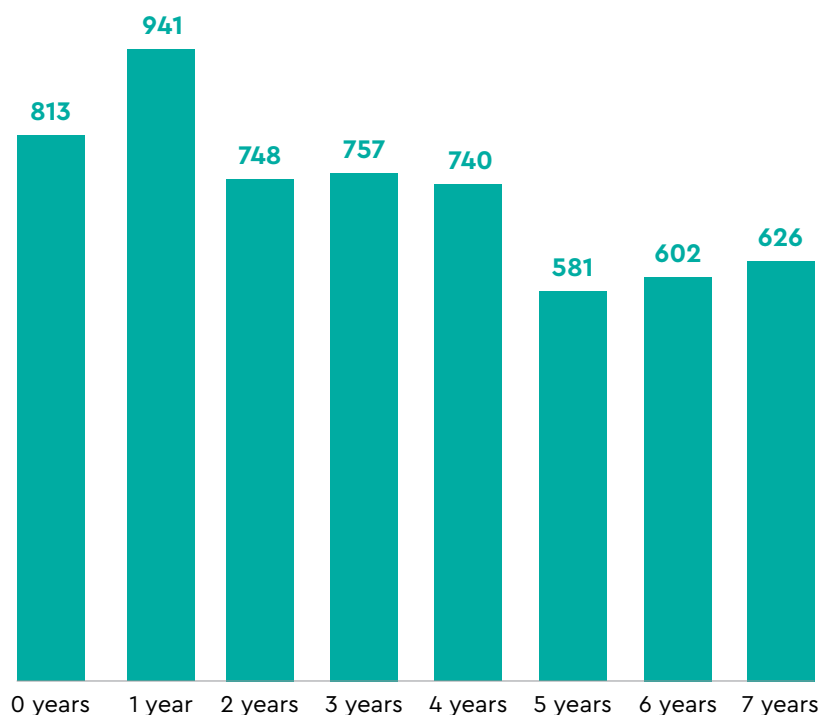
The total number of lawyers who are approved to practise on their own account is 3,795. Of these, 1,515 are women (39.9%), 2,276 are men (60.0%) and four are gender diverse (0.1%).

During 2025, 264 applications to practise on own account were approved – either as barristers and solicitors or as barristers sole. Of these applicants, 157 were women, or 59% which is slightly more than the percentage of women in the profession. In contrast, of those holding a practising certificate in 2025 who were approved to practise on their own account prior to 2025, 38% were women. If this trend continues, there will be an increasing proportion of women practising on own account over time.

New lawyers

As at 30 June 2025, the 0–7 years post-admission cohort comprised 5,808. The largest subset of the new lawyers' group was in the one-year post-admission category with a total of 941 lawyers. This was followed by 813 lawyers in the zero-years since admission category.

PROPORTION OF LAWYERS 0-7 YEARS PQE BY YEARS SINCE ADMISSION

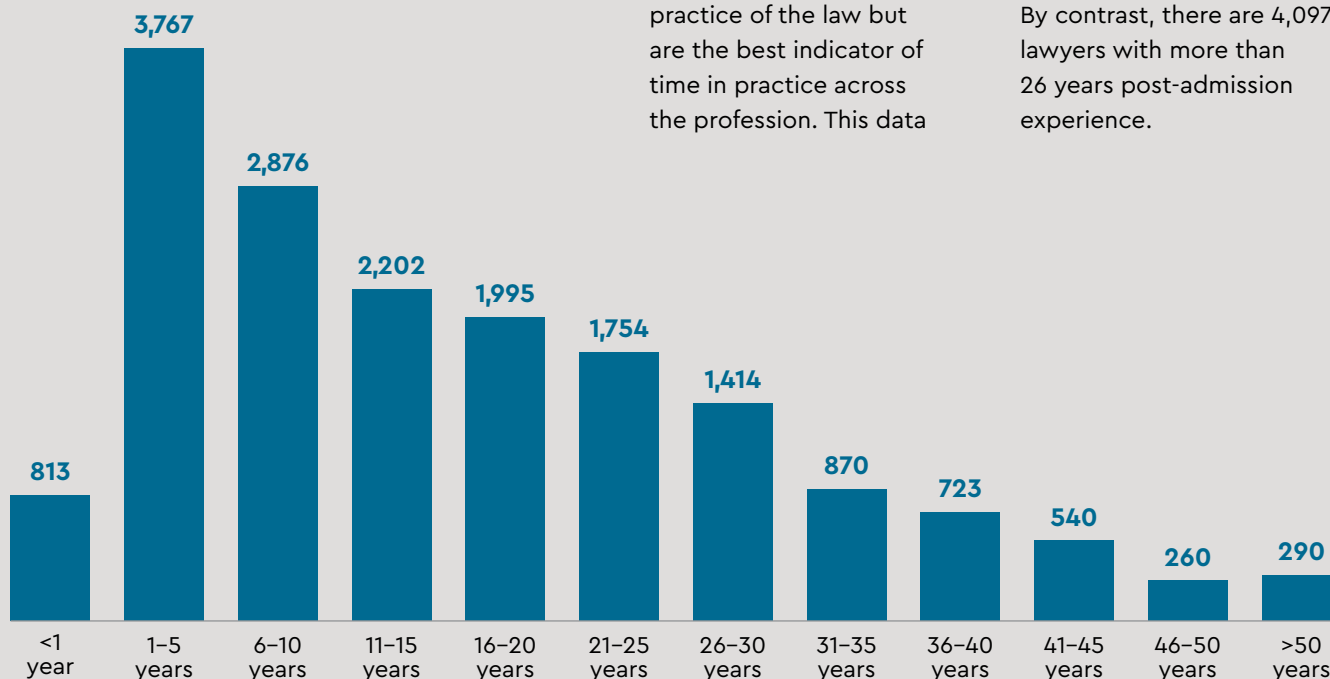


CENTRES WITH COUNT >100 PQE 0-7 LAWYERS

Main centre	Number
Auckland	2,106
Wellington	772
Overseas	580
Christchurch	546
Auckland Region	271
Hamilton	201
Waikato	126
Tauranga	121

Time in practice

LAWYERS BY YEARS SINCE ADMISSION



The Law Society records the years since admission for every lawyer. These figures do not necessarily represent years in practice or account for time when a lawyer has paused their practice of the law but are the best indicator of time in practice across the profession. This data

trends towards lawyers with fewer years post-admission. A significant proportion of lawyers (5,808) are at the junior to intermediate level with less than 7 years post-admission experience. By contrast, there are 4,097 lawyers with more than 26 years post-admission experience.

Types of practice

Lawyers may practise in three ways: as barristers and solicitors, barristers sole, or as in-house lawyers.

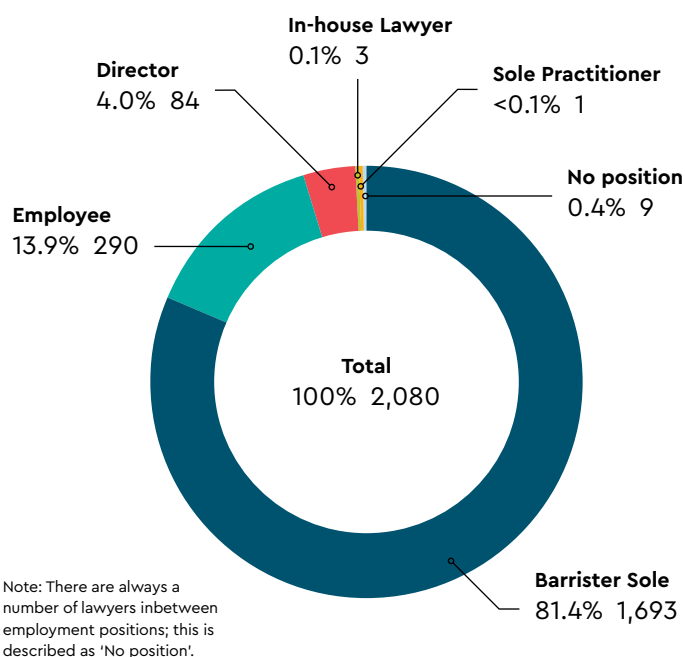
Barristers

As of 30 June 2025, there were 2,080 lawyers who held a barrister practising certificate – 11.9% of all lawyers. The number of barristers recorded as employed barristers was 290, a slight increase compared to last year (254). More men (53.5%) hold practising certificates as a barrister than women (46.1%), while 0.4% of barristers identify as gender diverse.

BARRISTERS COMPARED TO ALL LAWYERS

11.9%

PROPORTION OF POSITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF BARRISTERS

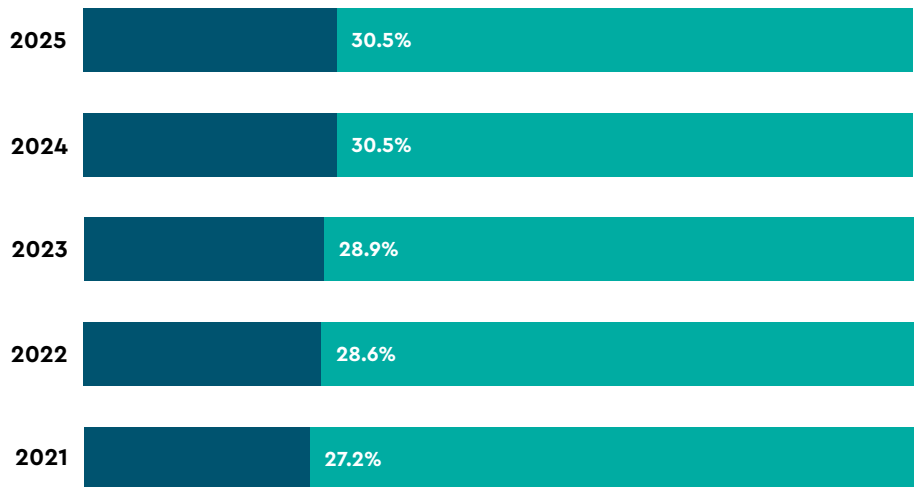


Types of practice

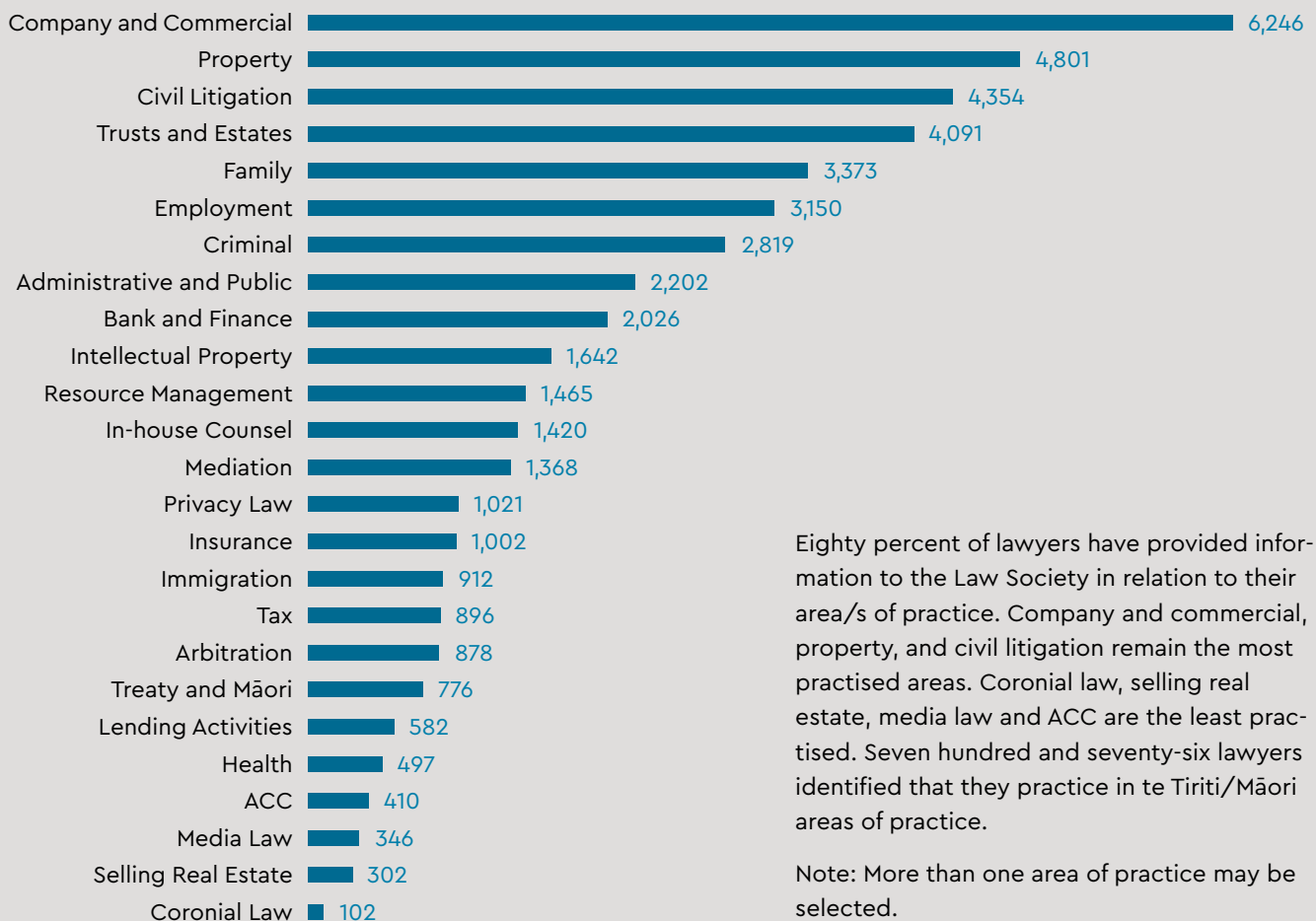
In-house lawyers

The number of in-house lawyers increased from 5,101 to 5,337 this year. The proportion of in-house lawyers remained the same at 30.5% of the profession.

PROPORTION OF LAWYERS THAT PRACTISE AS IN-HOUSE LAWYERS



Areas of practice



Eighty percent of lawyers have provided information to the Law Society in relation to their area/s of practice. Company and commercial, property, and civil litigation remain the most practised areas. Coronial law, selling real estate, media law and ACC are the least practised. Seven hundred and seventy-six lawyers identified that they practice in te Tiriti/Māori areas of practice.

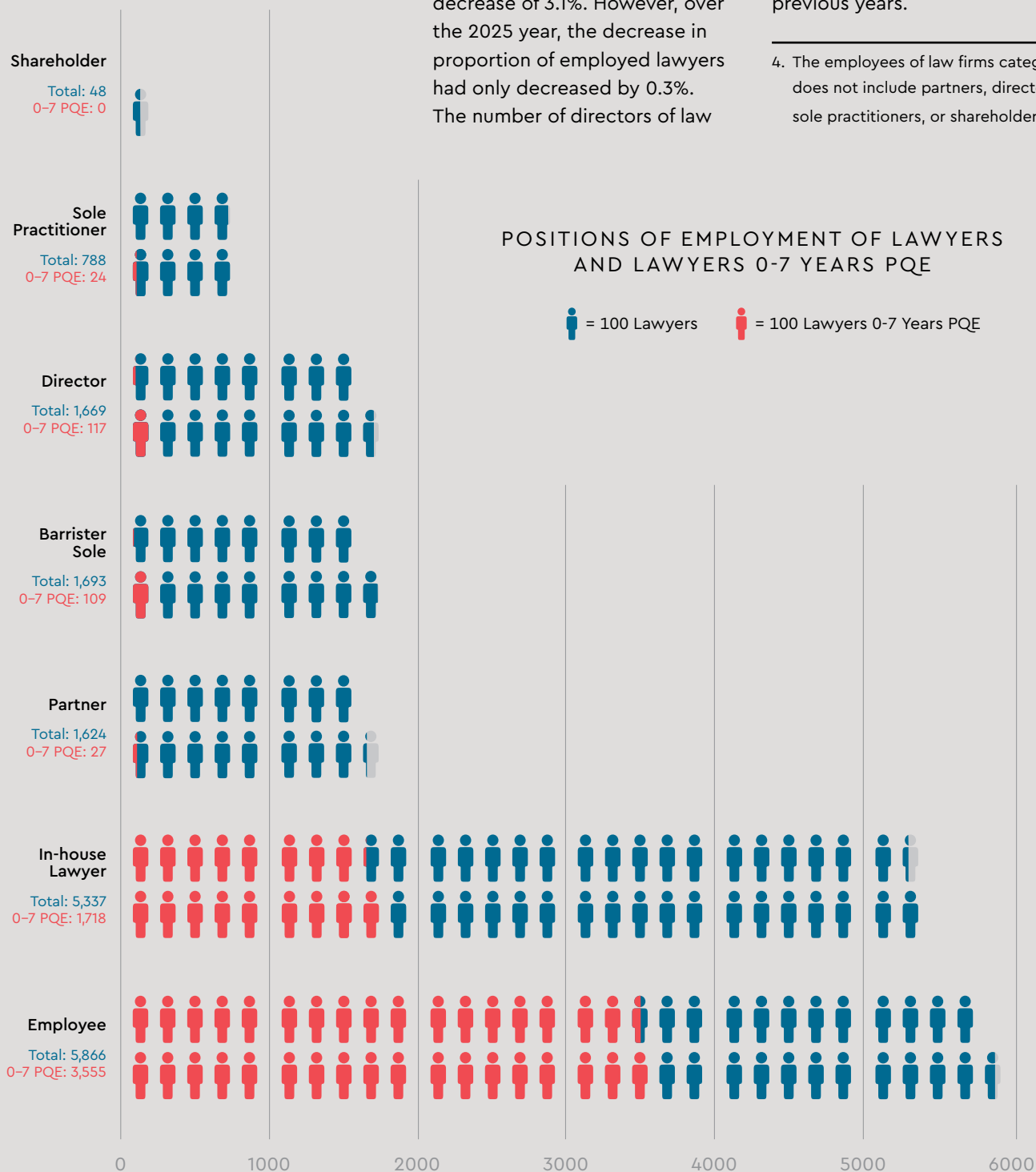
Note: More than one area of practice may be selected.

Positions of employment

As at 30 June 2025, 97% of all lawyers had positions of employment. Employees of law firms⁴ make up the majority of the profession at 5,865 lawyers. Since the 2022 year, there has been a decrease in the proportion of employed lawyers, most notably between 2022 and 2023 when there was a decrease of 3.1%. However, over the 2025 year, the decrease in proportion of employed lawyers had only decreased by 0.3%. The number of directors of law

firms increased from 1,563 to 1,669, which accounts for 9.5% of lawyers. Most new lawyers (0–7 years post admission) are employees and in-house lawyers. There are 27 new lawyers who are practising on their own account as partners and 109 employed lawyers working as barristers, which is similar to previous years.

4. The employees of law firms category does not include partners, directors, sole practitioners, or shareholders.



Positions of employment

The data shows that the gender balance for each category of lawyer position is not reflective of the overall balance for the profession. Employed lawyers and in-house lawyers have a greater proportion of women than the other positions; 64.6% and 64.5% respectively.

In contrast, women make up 43.6% of barristers, 46.1% of directors, and 37.6% of partners, despite the fact they make up 56.8% of all lawyers. In comparison, men make up 56.1% of barristers, 53.7% of directors and 62% of partners.

PROPORTION OF ALL LAWYERS BY GENDER SEPARATED BY POSITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Women Men Not stated Gender Diverse

