

Standing Committee on Compliance



THE
LAW SOCIETY
OF HONG KONG
香港律師會

2019

The Standing Committee oversees The Law Society's administrative and regulatory functions, these responsibilities having been delegated to it by the Council.

The Standing Committee met 12 times during the year and considered 208 agenda items (compared to 186 agenda items in 2018). Some agenda items were considered more than once by the Standing Committee.

The Compliance Department (Conduct and Registration Sections) of the Secretariat supports the work of the Standing Committee.

Conduct Section

The Conduct Section of the Compliance Department is mainly responsible for investigating allegations of professional misconduct against solicitors, foreign lawyers, trainee solicitors and employees of solicitors and foreign lawyers. In 2019, it handled 926 complaints (985 in 2018), of which 398 complaints (436 in 2018) were lodged or referred by members of the public and government organisations and 44 complaints (45 in 2018) were made by solicitors.

Particulars about the subject matters of the complaints and the nature of the alleged professional misconduct are set out in the charts below. Complaints against a respondent which involved the same subject matter and nature of professional conduct are counted as one complaint.

838 files were closed during the year; of which 439 were closed without seeking an explanation.

INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

Investigation Committees are ad-hoc Sub-Committees of the Standing Committee. Three members of the Standing Committee are appointed to each Investigation Committee to consider reports prepared by the Conduct Section and to adjudicate on complaints.

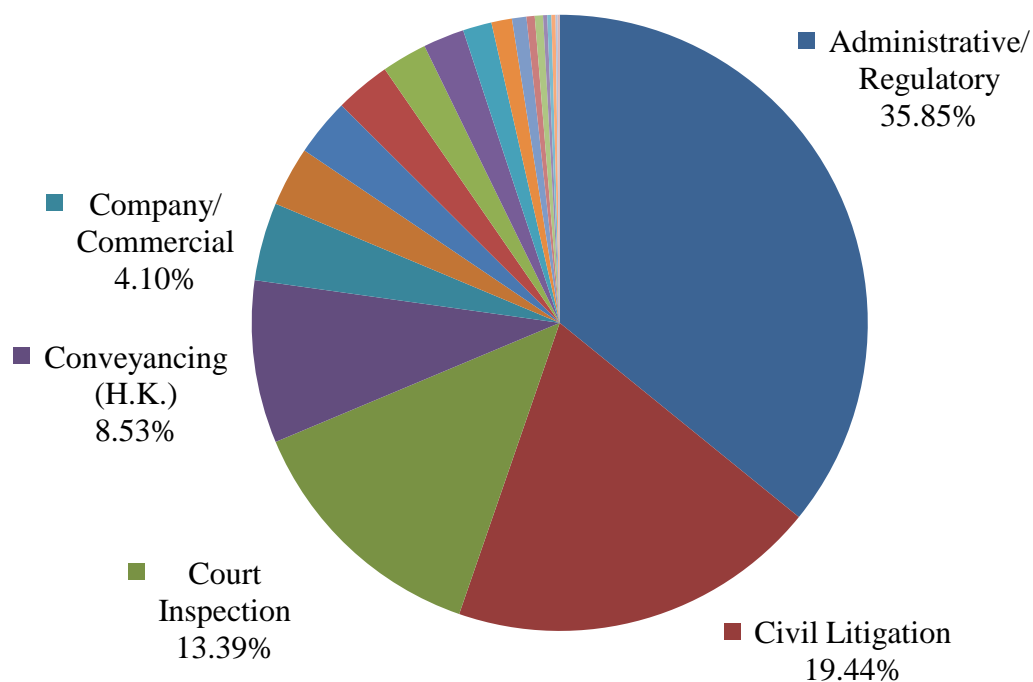
Investigation Committees may recommend to the Standing Committee to issue letters of good practice, regret, or disapproval, and to submit matters to the Tribunal Convenor of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal Panel.

Investigation Committees considered 311 complaints by circulation of 311 agenda. (In 2018, 402 complaints were considered by circulation of 402 agenda.)

The Standing Committee reviewed nine decisions of the Investigation Committees. One review was deferred until after the final resolution of a court proceedings. Eight decisions of the Investigation Committees were upheld. (In 2018, nine decisions were reviewed.)

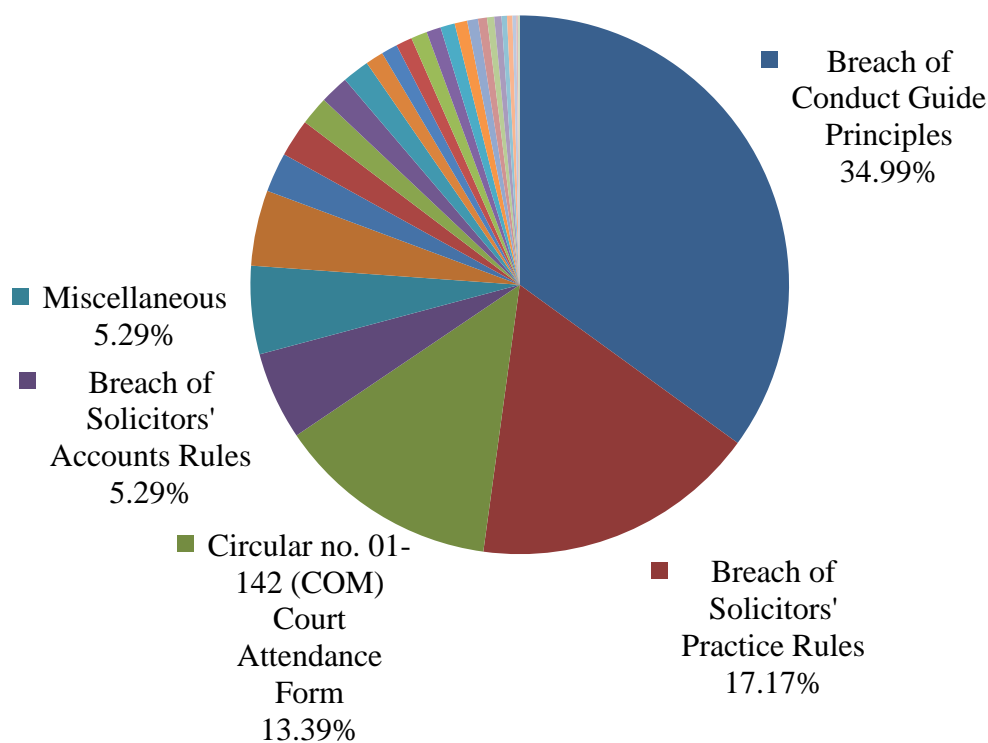
Determination of Complaints in 2019

Figure 1: Subject matters of complaints



Subject Matters of Complaints	2019	2018	2017
Administrative/regulatory	35.85%	39.29%	31.73%
Civil litigation	19.44%	16.55%	18.23%
Court inspections	13.39%	8.02%	8.58%
Conveyancing (H.K.)	8.53%	10.36%	11.57%
Company/commercial	4.10%	4.26%	4.34%
Miscellaneous	3.13%	5.08%	3.09%
Matrimonial	3.02%	5.58%	6.17%
Probate	2.92%	2.54%	2.60%
Reports of purported law firms	2.38%	1.62%	2.70%
Criminal	2.16%	2.03%	3.47%
Landlord & tenant	1.51%	0.10%	0.68%
Owners'/incorporated owners' disputes	1.08%	1.62%	1.64%
Civil Celebrant	0.76%	0.71%	0.58%
Media/promotion	0.43%	0.20%	0.10%
Bankruptcy	0.43%	0.91%	0.48%
Inspections	0.22%	0.20%	0.39%
Recovery agents	0.22%	—	—
Election	0.22%	—	—
Conveyancing (other than H.K.)	0.11%	0.61%	1.93%
Legal Visit	0.11%	—	0.29%
Contract	—	0.30%	1.16%
Mediation	—	—	0.29%

Figure 2: Nature of professional misconduct

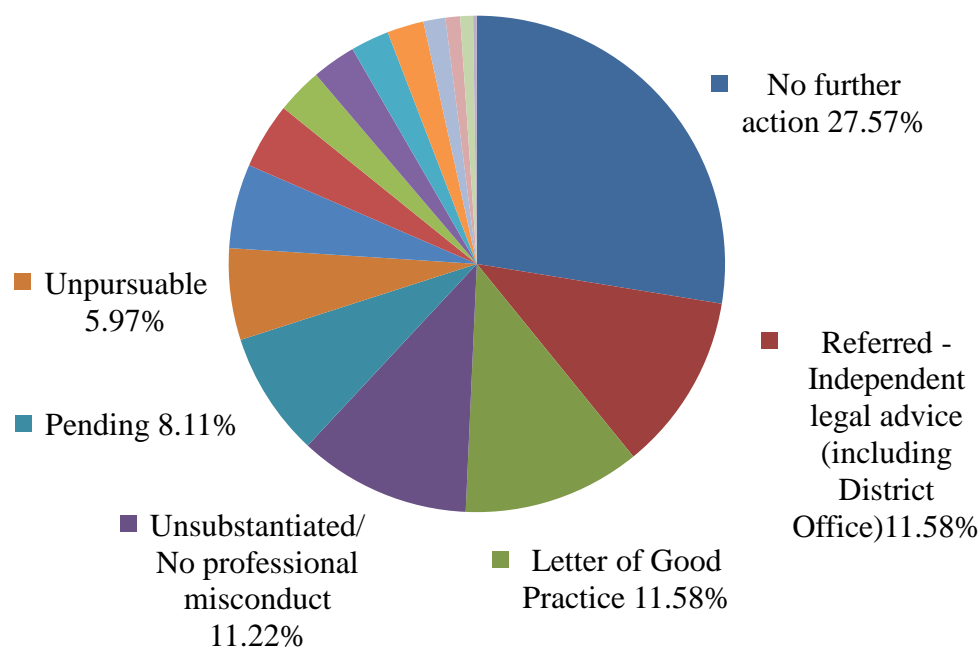


- Breach of Conduct Guide Principles
- Breach of Solicitors' Practice Rules
- Circular no. 01-142 (COM) Court Attendance Form
- Breach of Solicitors' Accounts Rules
- Miscellaneous
- Late submission of Accountant's Reports
- Unqualified persons acting or pretending to be a solicitor (ss.45-48 of the LPO)
- Commission-taking
- Breach of undertaking
- Breach of Foreign Lawyers Registration Rules
- Dishonesty
- Negligence
- Inadequate Service
- Misbehaviour
- Failure to reply to letters on behalf of a client or to inquiries from The Law Society
- Breach of Foreign Lawyer's Practice Rules
- Breach of Solicitors' Promotion Code
- Breach of Practice Directions
- Conflict of interest
- Overcharging
- Delay
- Breach of Solicitors (Professional Indemnity) Rules (general)
- Practising without a practising certificate
- Offences in relation to foreign lawyers, etc. (S50B of the LPO)
- Non-payment of barristers' fees
- Breach of Continuing Professional Development Rules
- Property Fraud

Nature of professional misconduct	2019	2018	2017
Breach of <i>Conduct Guide</i> Principles	34.99%	37.36%	38.57%
Breach of <i>Solicitors' Practice Rules</i>	17.17%	19.29%	15.14%
Circular no. 01-142(COM) (Court attendance form)	13.39%	8.73%	8.49%
Breach of <i>Solicitors' Accounts Rules</i>	5.29%	3.86%	8.20%
Miscellaneous	5.29%	2.44%	3.66%
Late submission of Accountant's Reports	4.54%	8.32%	1.54%
Unqualified persons acting or pretending to be a solicitor (ss.45-48 of the <i>LPO</i>)	2.38%	1.83%	3.09%
Commission-taking	2.27%	0.10%	1.74%
Breach of undertaking	1.73%	2.54%	2.22%
Breach of <i>Foreign Lawyers Registration Rules</i>	1.73%	2.13%	1.45%
Dishonesty	1.62%	2.03%	2.70%
Negligence	1.08%	0.61%	0.77%
Inadequate service	0.97%	—	0.39%
Misbehaviour	0.97%	0.61%	0.58%
Failure to reply to letters on behalf of a client or to inquiries from The Law Society	0.97%	0.10%	0.19%
Breach of <i>Foreign Lawyers Practice Rules</i>	0.86%	1.73%	1.35%
Breach of <i>Solicitors' Practice Promotion Code</i>	0.86%	0.30%	0.39%
Breach of <i>Practice Directions</i>	0.76%	1.02%	2.03%
Conflict of interest	0.65%	0.71%	0.29%
Overcharging	0.54%	1.02%	1.54%
Delay	0.43%	0.51%	1.35%
Breach of <i>Solicitors (Professional Indemnity) Rules</i> (general)	0.43%	0.41%	—
Practising without a practising certificate	0.32%	—	0.19%
Offences in relation to foreign lawyers, etc. (s.50B of the <i>LPO</i>)	0.32%	0.81%	0.10%
Non-payment of barristers' fees	0.22%	0.20%	0.48%
Breach of <i>Continuing Professional Development Rules</i>	0.11%	2.94%	3.28%
Property fraud	0.11%	0.10%	—
Breach of <i>Trainee Solicitors Rules</i>	—	0.30%	—
Touting	—	—	0.29%

“*Conduct Guide*” = *The Hong Kong Solicitors' Guide to Professional Conduct* (Volume 1, 2nd and 3rd editions)
“*LPO*” = *Legal Practitioners Ordinance*, Cap. 159

Figure 3: Analysis of closed files decided by Investigation Committees



	2019	2018	2017
No further action	27.57%	16.36%	28.22%
Referred – Independent legal advice (incl. District Office)	11.58%	10.70%	6.61%
Letter of Good Practice	11.58%	11.05%	10.08%
Unsubstantiated/No professional misconduct	11.22%	12.10%	9.41%
Pending	8.11%	10.97%	7.50%
Unpursuable	5.97%	7.14%	6.05%
Letter of regret	5.49%	9.31%	13.66%
Referred – relevant Authorities	4.30%	2.09%	0.90%
Referred – Tribunal Convenor	2.98%	1.04%	1.79%
Withdrawn	2.86%	4.61%	3.47%
Letter of disapproval	2.51%	4.87%	6.94%
Referred – enforcement agencies	2.39%	3.92%	1.34%
Resolved amicably	1.43%	1.13%	0.90%
Referred – taxation	0.95%	1.65%	0.90%
Strong letter of disapproval	0.84%	2.61%	1.79%
Referred – others (incl. intervention agents)	0.24%	—	—
Summary Disposal	—	0.17%	—
Referred – other departments of The Law Society	—	0.09%	—
Referred – Joint Tribunal	—	0.09%	0.22%
Circular issued	—	0.09%	—
Referred – Inspection by the Monitoring Accountant	—	—	0.22%

Applications to the Chief Judge under section 9A(2) of the *Legal Practitioners Ordinance, Cap. 159* (“LPO”)

Under section 9A(2) of the *LPO*, where a complaint is made to the Council and the Council does not submit a matter to the Tribunal Convenor of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal Panel ("the Tribunal Convenor") under section 9A(1) of the *LPO* within six months after receiving the complaint, the Chief Judge may, on application by any person or on his own initiative, submit the matter to the Tribunal Convenor if he considers that the Council ought to have done so.

In 2019, there was no application made to the Chief Judge under section 9A(2) of the *LPO*.

Inspections and visits

Under section 8AA of the *LPO*, the Council is empowered to appoint inspectors to verify compliance with the provisions of the *LPO* or any *Practice Direction* (“*PD*”) issued by The Law Society, and to determine whether the conduct of those against whom an inspection was made should be inquired into or investigated. Section 8AA of the *LPO* stipulates the powers of an inspector in making such inquiries and investigations.

During the year, Investigation Counsel made 16 visits to 13 law firms. Three of these visits were made under section 8AA of the *LPO*. In addition, three court inspections were conducted by inspectors at magistrates’ courts. For these court inspections, the Council appointed inspectors to verify compliance with rule 5D of the *Solicitors’ Practice Rules* (“*SPR*”), Cap. 159H and to monitor the proper completion of court attendance forms.

The Monitoring Accountants paid visits to law firms to provide assistance in their accounting procedures/systems and to inspect their books and accounts to ensure compliance with the rules relating to solicitors’ accounting. 91 visits were made to 66 solicitors’ firms and foreign law firms; some firms required more than one visit (82 visits to 50 firms in 2018).

Interventions

The Council’s power of intervention is exercised for the protection of the public and occurs when clients’ interests are at risk. The powers vested in the Council for the exercise of an intervention under Sections 26A, 26B or 26C of the *LPO* are set out in Schedule 2 to the *LPO*. Through the intervention agents, The Law Society first takes control of the office and clients’ monies of the intervened firms and takes possession of the intervened firms’ documents. If necessary, The Law Society may commence court applications to implement the Council’s resolution to intervene. The intervention agents return documents to clients who have specifically requested their return or forward clients’ documents to other firms of solicitors on the instructions of clients. The process of distributing clients’ money of the intervened firms may involve court proceedings and claimants must produce supporting documents to verify their claims. Documents in the possession of the Council are indexed and kept in storage in accordance with the guidelines in The Law Society

circular 12-475 (PA) or until there is a Court order as to disposal or destruction.

Subject to any Court order for the payment of costs, any costs incurred by the Council in the intervention shall be paid by the solicitor or the foreign lawyer whose practice was being intervened.

The Council has intervened in the practice of three solicitors' firms in 2019.

In 2019, the Law Society continued to give instructions and administrative support to the Intervention Agents, organize the indexing and storage of files, deal with taxation and assist Police investigations.

INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

The Investigation Committee (Disciplinary Matters) is the only Investigation Committee with a fixed membership drawn from senior members of the Standing Committee. The Committee's work includes monitoring the progress of disciplinary proceedings, appeals and court proceedings (including bankruptcy petitions), giving instructions to prosecutors and The Law Society's legal representatives, and authorising the payments of fees incurred in disciplinary proceedings, appeals and court proceedings.

The Committee considered 90 matters by circulation of 21 agenda. (In 2018, 87 matters were considered by circulation of 35 agenda.)

Disciplinary proceedings and summary disposals

A Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal is a statutory tribunal established by the *LPO*. It is independent of The Law Society which is the prosecuting body. Members of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal Panel are appointed by the Chief Justice. The Chief Justice also appoints the Tribunal Convenor and the Deputy Tribunal Convenors who have the responsibility to appoint a panel of three or four members to sit as a Tribunal to determine applications, and who have the power to dispose of certain classes of complaint on a summary basis.

The Council resolved to submit three matters to the Tribunal Convenor concerning the conduct of three solicitors and in addition, the Standing Committee on Compliance resolved to submit six matters to the Tribunal Convenor concerning the conduct of six solicitors and two clerks; all submissions were made under section 9A(1) of the *LPO* (eight matters concerning eight solicitors and five clerks in 2018).

In 2019, a total of nine matters had been submitted to the Tribunal Convenor (10 in 2018).

Nine disciplinary proceedings were determined by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal in 2019 (five in 2018) which resulted in the following orders being made:

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of rule 2(a), (c) and (d) of the SPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • struck off from the Roll of Solicitors • to pay costs 	
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of breach of 2(a), (c) and (d) of the SPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • struck off from the Rolls of Solicitors • to pay costs 	
2	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of breach of rule 10(1) of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 10(2) of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 10(3) of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 10A of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 11 of the SAR • 2 counts of breach of rule 7 of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 9A and 9A(2) of the SAR • 1 count of breach of section 8AA of the LPO and rules 2(d) and (e) of the SPR • 1 count of breach of 4A of the SPR and Principle 2.04 of the Conduct Guide • 1 count of Principle 6.04 of the Conduct Guide • 1 count of rule 2(d) of the SPR • 1 count of common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured in respect of Complaints 1 to 4 and 9 to 12 • suspension from practising as a solicitor for 12 months in respect of Complaint 5 • struck off the Roll of Solicitors in respect of Complaints 6 and 7 • to pay costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$100,000 in respect of Complaints 1, 2 and 3 • Fined HK\$20,000 in respect of Complaint 4 • Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaint 5 • Fined HK\$150,000 in respect of Complaints 6 and 7 • Fined HK\$80,000 in respect of Complaint 8 • Fined HK\$100,000 in respect of Complaints 9, 10 11 and 12

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
		law of misconduct		
	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of breach of rule 10(1) of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 10(2) of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 10(3) of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 10A of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 11 of the SAR • 2 counts of breach of rule 7 of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 9A and 9A(2) of the SAR • 1 count of breach of section 8AA of the LPO and rules 2(d) and (e) of the SPR • 1 count of breach of 4A of the SPR and Principle 2.04 of the Guide • 1 count of common law of misconduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured in respect of Complaints 1 to 4 and 9 to 10 • suspension from practising as a solicitor for 12 months in respect of Complaint 5 • struck off the Roll of Solicitors in respect of Complaints 6 and 7 • to pay costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$100,000 in respect of Complaints 1, 2 and 3 • Fined HK\$20,000 in respect of Complaint 4 • Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaint 5 • Fined HK\$150,000 in respect of Complaints 6 and 7 • Fined HK\$80,000 in respect of Complaint 8 • Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaints 9 and 10
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of conduct unbecoming a solicitor, contrary to common law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • suspended from practice for 2 years and after the Respondent resumed his practice, be prohibited from practising as a sole proprietor or partner or manager of a solicitors' 	

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
			<p>firm until the Law Society is satisfied that the Respondent is fit to do so</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to pay costs 	
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 count of breach of Principle 6.04 of the Conduct Guide and rule 2(d) of the SPR 1 count of breach of section 8AA of the LPO and rule 2(d) of the SPR 1 count of breach of Principle 14.02 of the Conduct Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> censured suspended from practice as a solicitor for 6 months with effect from the date falling 3 months after the Orders, provided that the suspension shall not apply if before the expiry of the said 3 months period the Respondent and the Respondent's firm (or at the complainant's option, another law firm if so requested by the complainant) shall either have completed all of the underlying matters giving rise to the complaints or have received the complainant's confirmation in writing that the complainant and his parents no longer wish those instructions to be carried out either by the Respondent's firm or any other firm 	Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of each of the 3 Complaints

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to bear all legal costs of the complainant and his parents and expenses of the Respondent's firm and of any new firm instructed in carrying out their instructions since the Respondent's firm was first instructed in 2010 in connection with and until the underlying matters giving rise to the complaints have been completed (or not completed at the complainant's option) to pay costs 	
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 count of breach of section 8 of the LPO 1 count of breach of Principle 2.03 of the Conduct Guide 1 count of breach rule 3 of the SAR 2 counts of breach rule 7 of the SAR 2 counts of breach rule 10(1) of the SAR 1 count of breach of rule 10(2) of the SAR 1 count of breach of rule 10(3) of the SAR 1 count of breach of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> censured the Respondent for three years, be subject to the conditions that: he cannot practise as a sole proprietor or partner of a solicitors' firm; be supervised by a full-time solicitor of no less than 15 years' standing and of good standing; and shall attend and complete the relevant RME and/or CPD Accounting course, for at least 	<p>Finced HK\$290,000</p>

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
		<p>rule 10A of the SAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of breach of rule 9A of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 11 of the SAR • 1 count of breach of rule 2(e) of the SPR • 1 count of breach of Principle 6.04 of the Conduct Guide 	<p>15 hours (at least 5 hours for each year) with satisfactory result</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to pay costs 	
2	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of breach of Principle 2.03 of the Conduct Guide • 1 count of breach of rules 2(a), (d) and (f) of the SPR and Principle 10.03 of the Conduct Guide • 1 count of breach of rules 2(a), (d) and (e), 5(2) and 5(3) of the SPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • to pay costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$120,000 in respect of Complaint 1 • Fined HK\$60,000 in respect of Complaint 2 • Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of Complaint 3
	Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of breach of rule 8 of the TSR • 1 count of section 2(2) of the LPO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • to pay costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$40,000 in respect of Complaint 4 • Fined HK\$40,000 in respect of Complaint 5
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 counts of breach of Principle 6.04 of the Conduct Guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to pay costs 	HK\$40,000
1	Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of disgraceful, dishonourable and discreditable conduct within the meaning of section 2(2) of the LPO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prohibited from being employed in any solicitors' firm or foreign law firm in Hong Kong for a period of 20 years 	

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
			• to pay costs	

“*Conduct Guide*” = *The Hong Kong Solicitors’ Guide to Professional Conduct*
(Volume 1, 2nd and 3rd editions)

“LPO” = *Legal Practitioners Ordinance, Cap.159*

“SPR” = *Solicitors’ Practice Rules*

“SAR” = *Solicitors’ Accounts Rules*

“TSR” = *Trainee Solicitors Rule*

Appeals and other Litigation proceedings

- 1) In respect of an appeal lodged by The Law Society against the penalties imposed by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal, the Reasons for Judgment and Decision on Costs was handed down on 3 June 2019. The Court of Appeal set aside the penalties imposed by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal and ordered that the respondent be suspended from practising as a solicitor for three years; if the respondent resumes his practice after the expiry of the suspension, his practice will be subject to the conditions as specified by the Court for three years; and the costs of the proceedings, summarily assessed by the Court, be to the Law Society.
- 2) In December 2019, the Originating Summons for an application under section 4(3) of the LPO to remove the name of a solicitor from the Roll of Solicitors was issued by the Law Society.
- 3) A Writ of Summons in relation to a complaint matter was received in December 2019.
- 4) An Originating Summons in relation to a section 6 of the LPO matter was received in December 2019 and the proceedings have been stayed by consent.

CONSENTS COMMITTEE

The Consents Committee is a Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee on Compliance.

The Consents Committee decides on applications made under the *LPO*, its subsidiary legislation and The Law Society's *PD* for (i) registration by solicitors; (ii) registration as a (a) trainee solicitor, (b) foreign lawyer and (c) foreign law firm; and (iii) consent and waiver.

The Committee met 22 times during the year and considered 706 agenda items (in 2018, 19 meetings and 567 agenda items). A further 20 items were dealt with by circulation of two agenda (in 2018, 84 items by circulation of six agenda). Some agenda items were considered more than once by the Committee.

The Standing Committee on Compliance reviewed two decisions of the Consents Committee, one of them was upheld and the other was reversed.

Registration Section

The Registration Section of the Compliance Department processes applications and handles applications considered by the Consents Committee.

As with previous years, in conjunction with the Conduct Section, the Registration Section reviewed, processed and filed the “employees’ returns” submitted by all solicitors’ firms and foreign law firms in January of each year, and the Notification of Changes to a Practice on firms’ particulars submitted by solicitors’ firms and foreign law firms throughout the year.

Nature of applications

Applications considered by the Consents Committee and those processed by the Registration Section during the year included:

Nature of applications	2019	2018	2017
Admissions	654	669	574
Certificates of eligibility for admission	753	654	586
Practising certificates: English	10344	9,903	9,463
Chinese	—	4,736	4,402
Practising certificates – removal of conditions under s.6(6) <i>LPO</i> (solicitors)	219	236	243
Membership	11,764	11,266	10,798
First registration as a foreign law firm	11	8	9
First registration as a foreign lawyer	411	473	413
Renewal of registration as a foreign lawyer	1,664	1,509	1,393
Removal of conditions on certificates of registration (foreign lawyers)	61	60	70
Registration as an Association	8	10	8
Removal of name from the roll of solicitors	7	5	5
Restoration of name to the roll of solicitors	1	0	1
Qualifications for admission s.4(1A) <i>LPO</i>	131	102	104
Employment of staff: s.53(1) <i>LPO</i>	4	3	6
s.53(3) <i>LPO</i>	7	7	2
Practising certificates – removal of conditions under s.6(6A) <i>LPO</i>	55	30	34
Practising certificates – Special Conditions	21	10	10
Registration of first trainee solicitor contracts	616	628	606
Registration of subsequent trainee solicitor contracts	128	97	74
Special leave to employ trainee solicitors	8	6	10
Other trainee solicitor matters	263	236	222
Law costs draftsmen	1	2	—
Accountant’s report – solicitors’ firms	926	899	874
Accountant’s report – foreign law firms	90	87	84
Firm name and letterhead	29	28	24
Waiver applications – general	*2	*3	*1
Waiver applications – <i>PD</i>	1	4	3
Registration of new associate member	—	3	3
Certificates of standing for solicitors or foreign lawyers	797	816	618
Certificates of standing for solicitors' firms or foreign law firms	20	—	—
Letters regarding employment or training visas	494	467	411
Authorised solicitors’ clerks	50	33	30

“*LPO*” = *Legal Practitioners Ordinance, Cap. 159*

“*PD*” = *The Law Society’s Practice Directions*

* Applications were under the *LPO, Cap 159*; the *SPR, Cap. 159H* and the *FLRR, Cap.159S*

Figure 4: Admission of solicitors 2010—2019

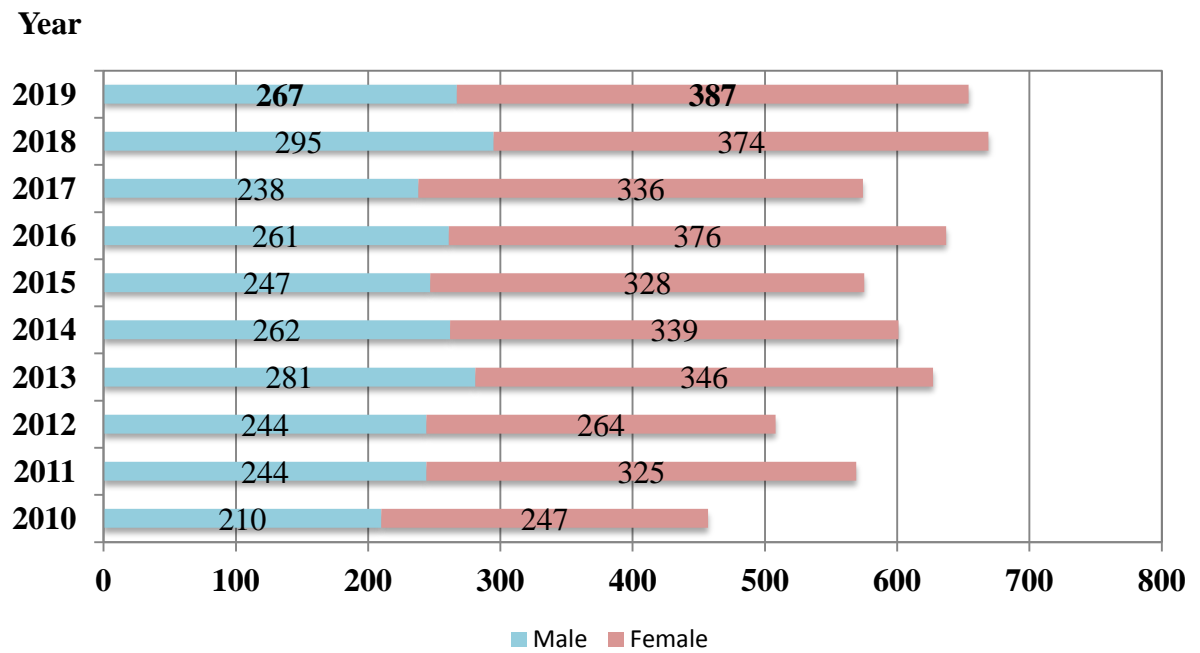


Figure 5: Solicitors holding practising certificates 2010—2019

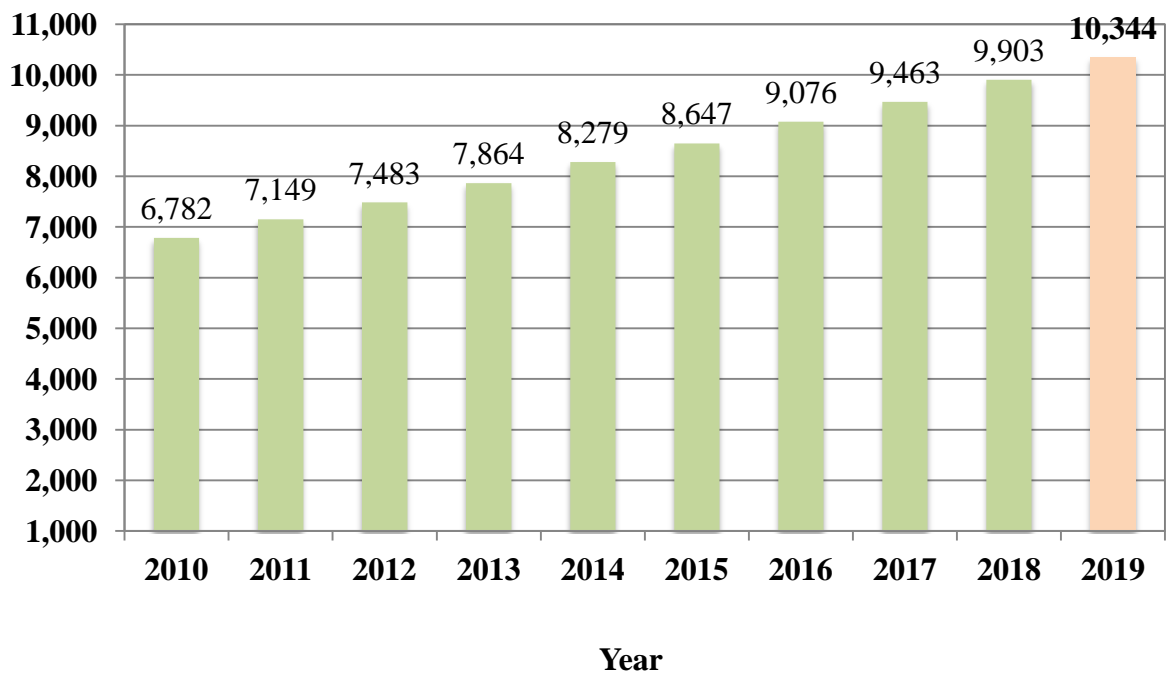


Figure 6: Years of admission - solicitors holding a 2019 practising certificate

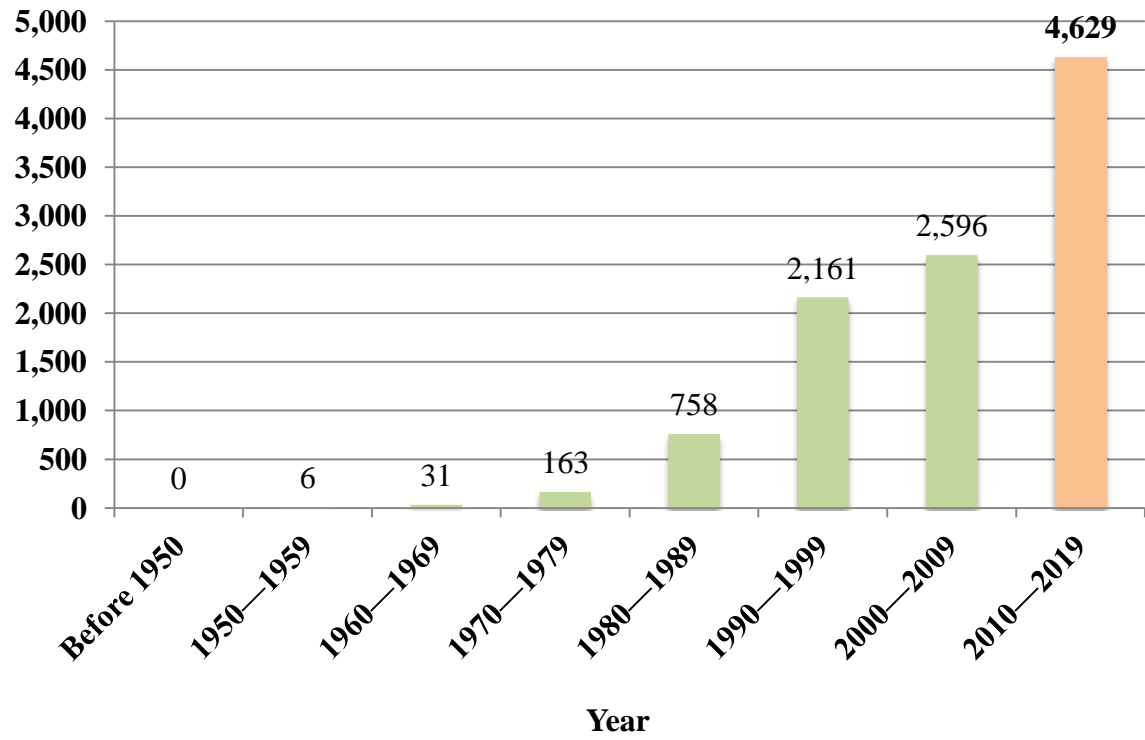


Figure 7a: Gender ratio – Solicitors holding a practising certificate (2014 – 2019)

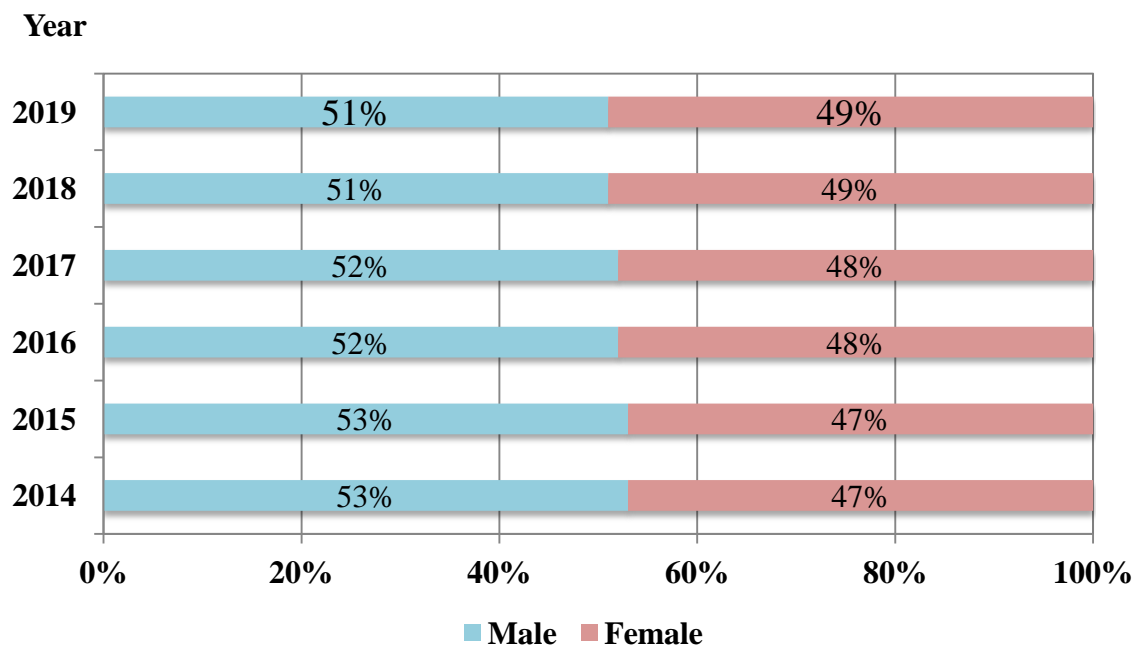


Figure 7b: Gender ratio – Trainee solicitors 2014 – 2019

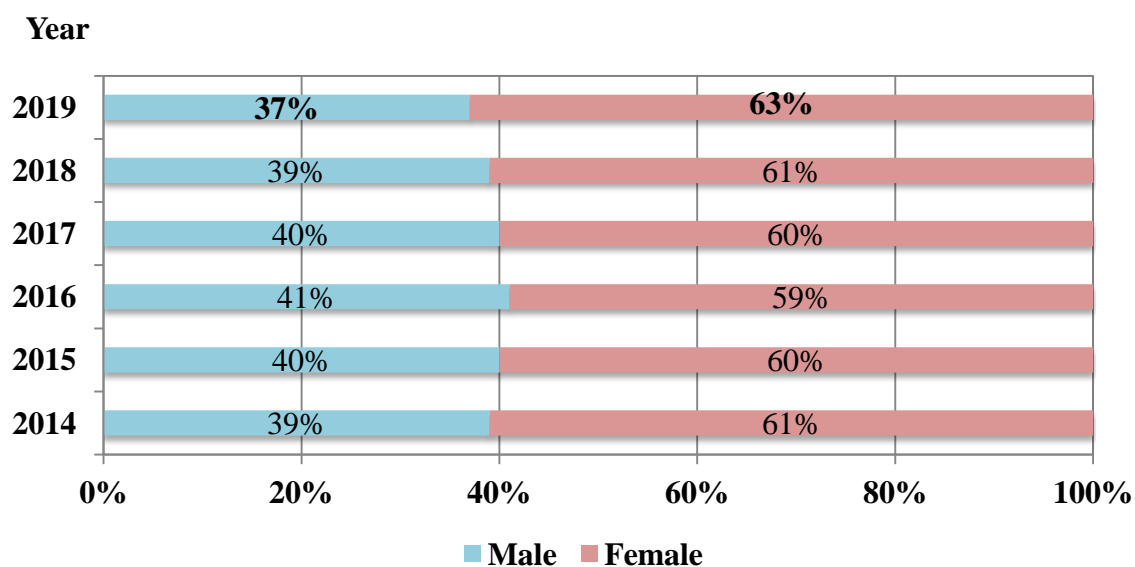


Figure 7c: Gender ratio – Partners 2014 – 2019

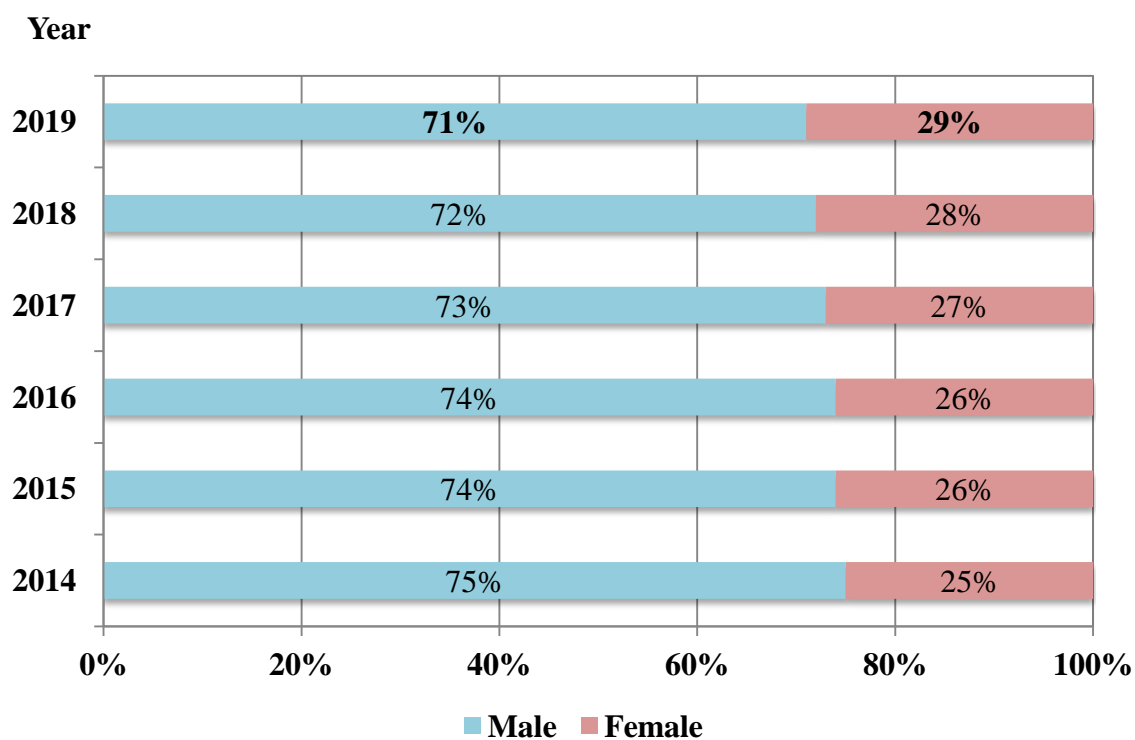


Figure 8: Size of solicitors' firms and number of trainee solicitors in 2019

Size of firm	No. of firms		No. of trainee solicitors	
	2019	2018	2019	2018
Sole practitioners	434	424	60	59
2—5 partners	394	393	346	398
6—10 partners	49	46	220	209
11—20 partners	40	37	328	303
Over 20 partners	15	15	243	242
Total	932	915	1197*	1211#

* excluding 18 in government and 4 working “in-house”

excluding 27 in government and 3 working “in-house”

Figure 9: Home jurisdictions of registered foreign lawyers

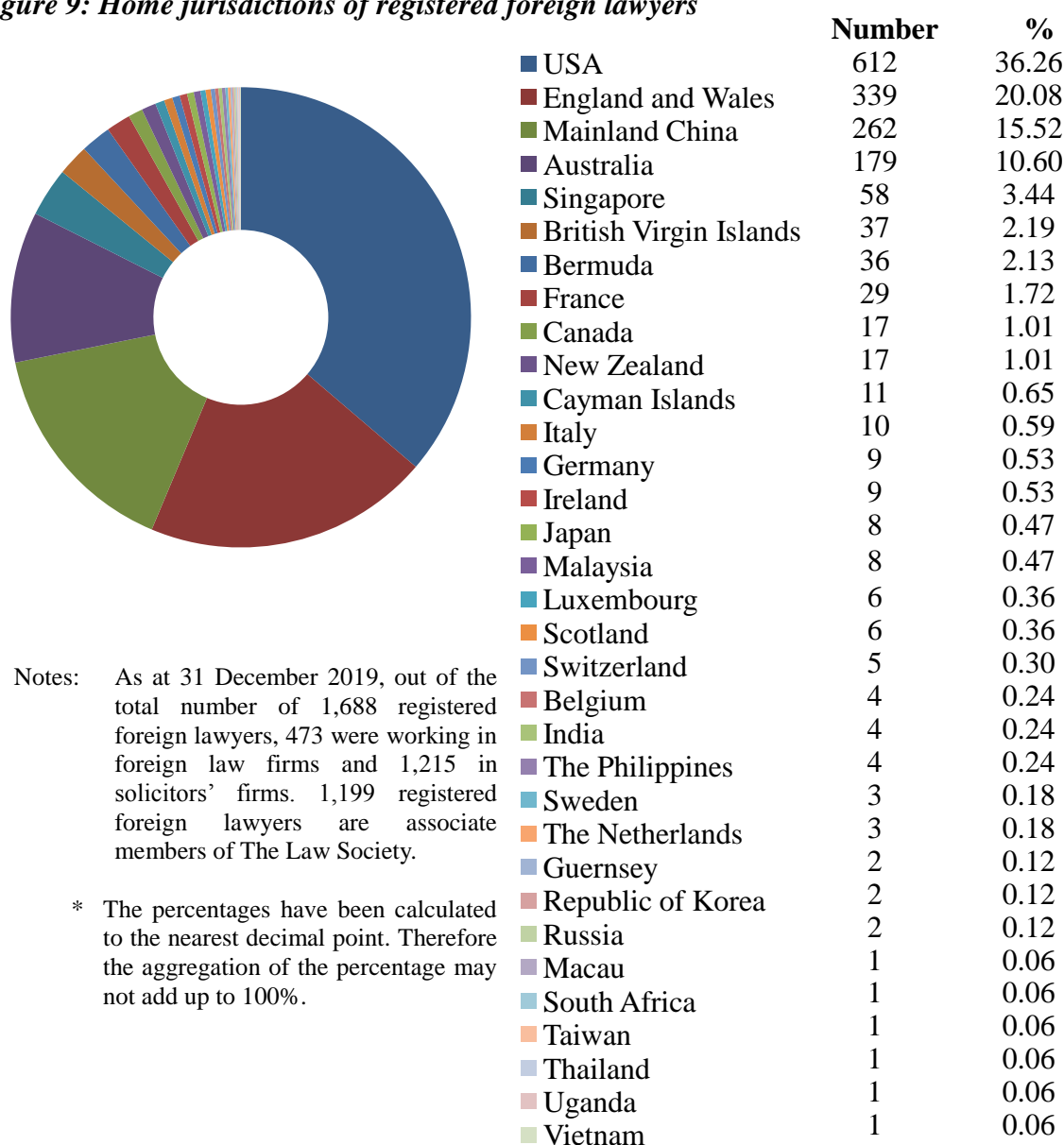
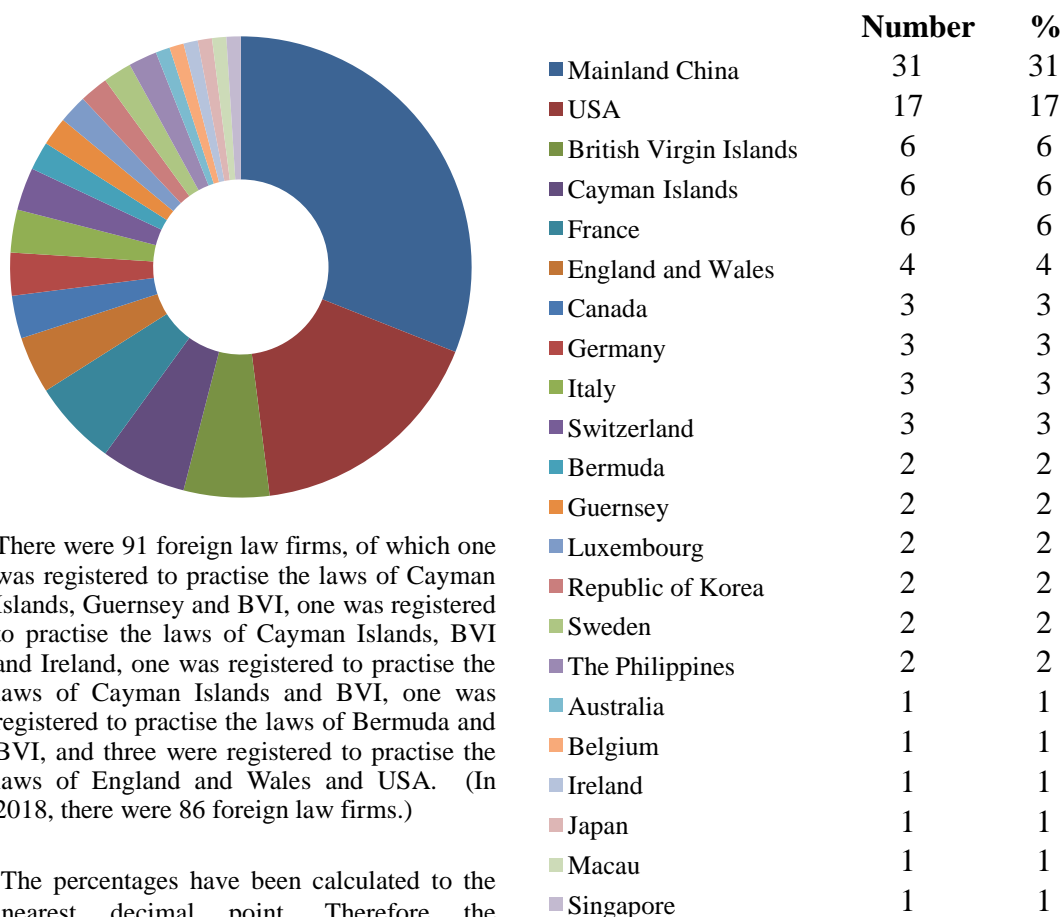


Figure 10: Home jurisdictions of foreign law firms



Notes: There were 91 foreign law firms, of which one was registered to practise the laws of Cayman Islands, Guernsey and BVI, one was registered to practise the laws of Cayman Islands, BVI and Ireland, one was registered to practise the laws of Cayman Islands and BVI, one was registered to practise the laws of Bermuda and BVI, and three were registered to practise the laws of England and Wales and USA. (In 2018, there were 86 foreign law firms.)

* The percentages have been calculated to the nearest decimal point. Therefore the aggregation of the percentage may not add up to 100%.

There were 41 Associations registered between foreign law firms and solicitors' firms (40 in 2018). 11 new foreign law firms commenced practice (eight in 2018). Six foreign law firms were closed, three of which established local practice. (In 2018, five foreign law firm were closed, one of which established local practice.)

There were 16,181 unqualified staff members employed by solicitors' firms at the end of the year (16,032 at the end of 2018). In addition, there were 604 unqualified staff members employed by foreign law firms at the end of 2019 (560 in 2018).

The Standing Committee oversees the work of the Conduct Section in administrating the authorised solicitors' clerks scheme and has delegated its power to the Consents Committee to consider applications. By December, there were 758 authorised solicitors' clerks (818 in 2018).

The Law Society continued to waive subscription fees for student members in 2019. By the end of the year, there were 371 student members registered with The Law Society (289 in 2018).

At the end of December, the number of Law Society Approved Law Costs Draftsmen was 35 (34 in 2018).