

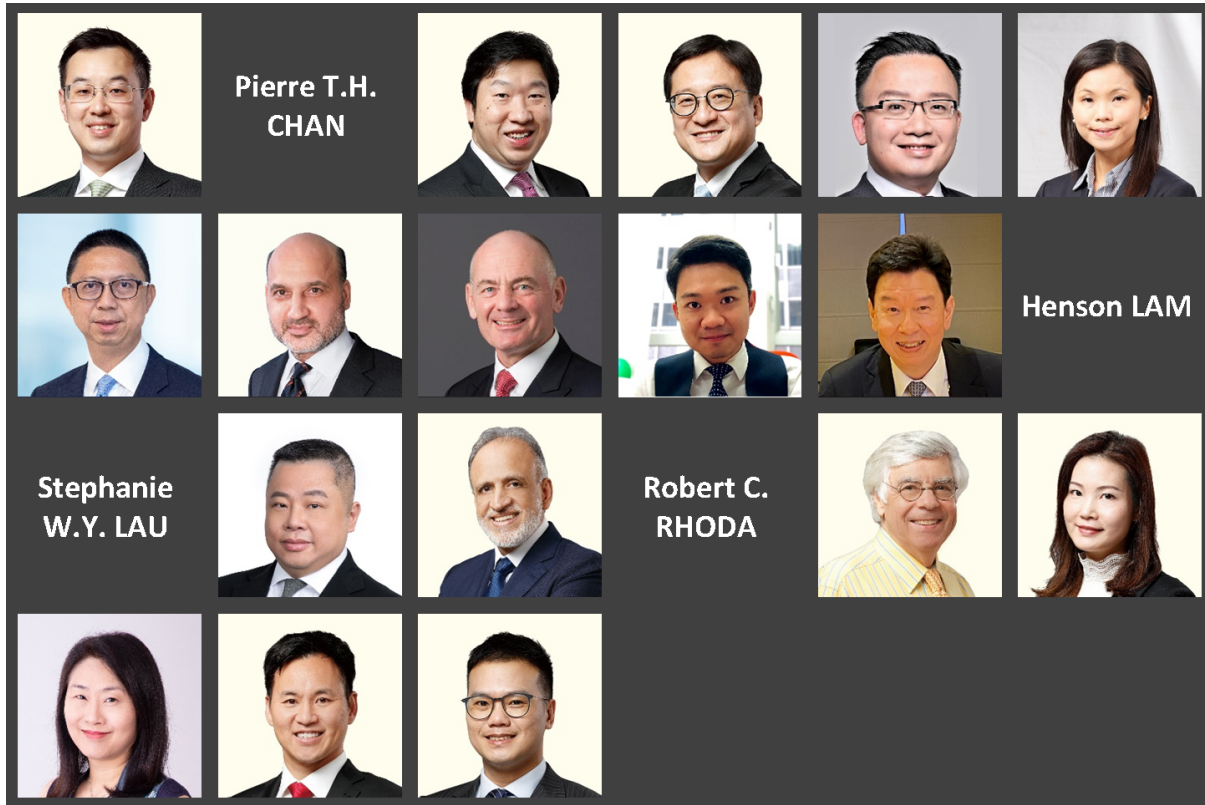


THE
LAW SOCIETY
OF HONG KONG
香 港 律 師 會

Standing Committee on Compliance

2021

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMPLIANCE



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 11 times during the year and considered 187 agenda items (192 agenda items in 2020).

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 2021, it handled 1,090 complaints (913 in 2020), of which 428 complaints (381 in 2020) were lodged or referred by members of the public and government organisations and 40 complaints (45 in 2020) 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.

1,359 files were closed during the year; of which 703 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.

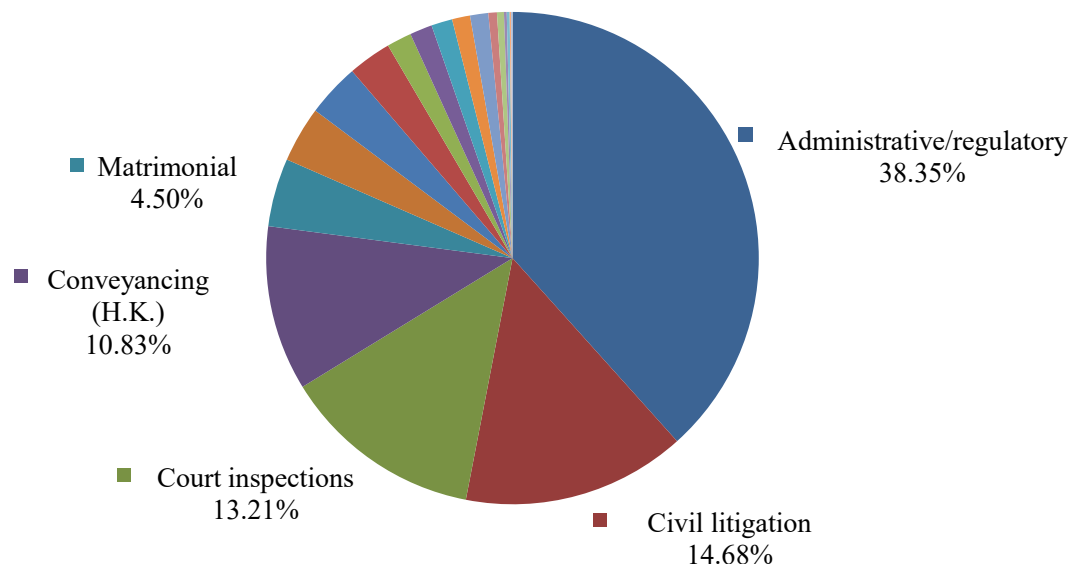
Investigation Committees may recommend to the Standing Committee to issue letters of good practice, regret, or disapproval, and to submit matters to the Tribunal Convenor of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal Panel.

Investigation Committees considered 276 complaints by circulation of 276 agenda. (In 2020, 316 complaints were considered by circulation of 316 agenda.)

The Standing Committee reviewed 9 decisions of the Investigation Committees. Eight decisions were upheld; and one decision was upheld and the complainant was advised to seek independent legal advice. (In 2020, four decisions were reviewed.)

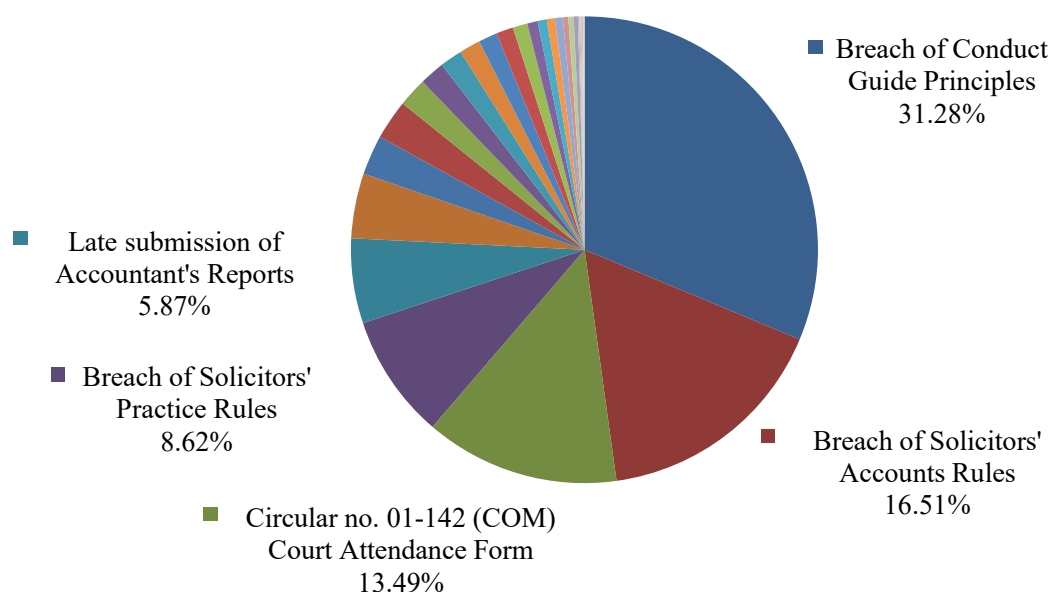
Determination of Complaints in 2021

Figure 1: Subject matters of complaints



Subject Matters of Complaints	2021	2020	2019
Administrative/regulatory	38.35%	31.98%	35.85%
Civil litigation	14.68%	17.96%	19.44%
Court inspections	13.21%	15.44%	13.39%
Conveyancing (H.K.)	10.83%	7.67%	8.53%
Matrimonial	4.50%	3.83%	3.02%
Miscellaneous	3.67%	4.27%	3.13%
Probate	3.49%	0.99%	2.92%
Criminal	2.84%	6.13%	2.16%
Company/commercial	1.65%	5.26%	4.10%
Reports of purported law firms	1.47%	2.30%	2.38%
Solicitors' Clerks (s.53 of the LPO)	1.38%	—	—
Civil Celebrant	1.19%	0.44%	0.76%
Owners'/incorporated owners' disputes	1.19%	1.10%	1.08%
Bankruptcy	0.55%	1.10%	0.43%
Contract	0.46%	0.55%	—
Landlord & tenant	0.18%	0.44%	1.51%
Legal Visit	0.18%	—	0.11%
Conveyancing (other than H.K.)	0.09%	—	0.11%
Inspections	0.09%	0.22%	0.22%
Media/promotion	—	0.33%	0.43%
Recovery agents	—	—	0.22%
Election	—	—	0.22%

Figure 2: Nature of professional misconduct

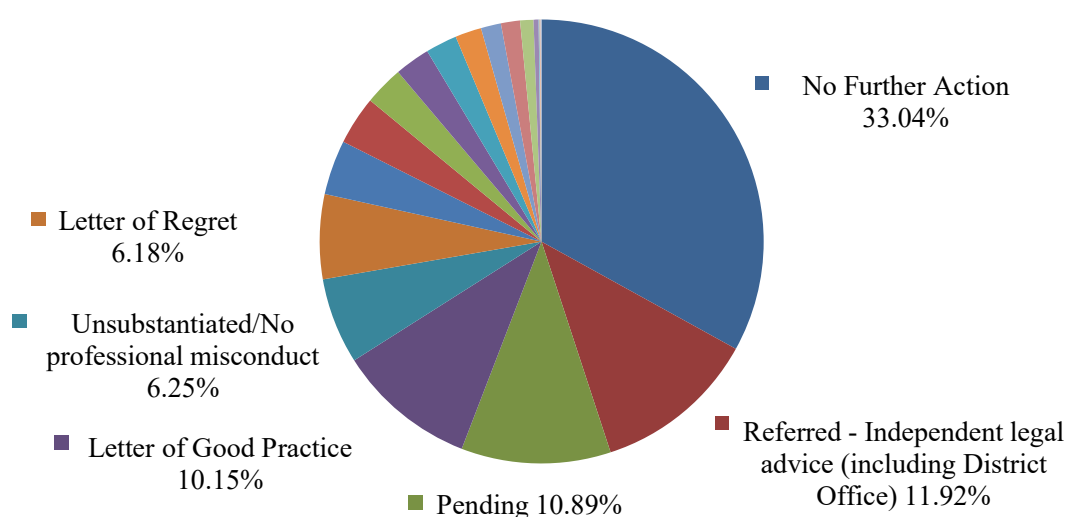


Nature of professional misconduct	2021	2020	2019
Breach of <i>Conduct Guide Principles</i>	31.28%	35.49%	34.99%
Breach of <i>Solicitors' Accounts Rules</i>	16.51%	7.89%	5.29%
Circular no. 01-142(COM) (Court attendance form)	13.49%	15.33%	13.39%
Breach of <i>Solicitors' Practice Rules</i>	8.62%	12.71%	17.17%
Late submission of Accountant's Reports	5.87%	4.82%	4.54%
Miscellaneous	4.50%	5.91%	5.29%
Breach of <i>Foreign Lawyers Registration Rules</i>	2.75%	2.08%	1.73%
Breach of <i>Practice Directions</i>	2.75%	1.53%	0.76%
Dishonesty	2.02%	0.33%	1.62%
Breach of undertaking	1.74%	0.55%	1.73%
Unqualified persons acting or pretending to be a solicitor (ss.45-48 of the <i>LPO</i>)	1.56%	2.19%	2.38%
Negligence	1.47%	0.33%	1.08%
Misbehaviour	1.28%	1.64%	0.97%
Non-payment of barristers' fees	1.19%	0.22%	0.22%
Breach of <i>Foreign Lawyers Practice Rules</i>	1.01%	1.75%	0.86%
Commission-taking	0.73%	2.96%	2.27%
Overcharging	0.64%	0.33%	0.54%
Breach of <i>Solicitors' Practice Promotion Code</i>	0.55%	1.64%	0.86%
Inadequate service	0.55%	—	0.97%
Conflict of interest	0.37%	0.55%	0.65%
Failure to reply to letters on behalf of a client or to inquiries from The Law Society	0.37%	0.33%	0.97%
Offences in relation to foreign lawyers, etc. (s.50B of the <i>LPO</i>)	0.28%	0.22%	0.32%
Delay	0.09%	0.11%	0.43%

Nature of professional misconduct	2021	2020	2019
Breach of <i>Solicitors (Professional Indemnity) Rules</i> (general)	0.09%	0.22%	0.43%
Being a partner with a conditional practising certificate (s.6(6) of the <i>LPO</i>)	0.09%	—	—
Practising without a practising certificate	0.09%	—	0.32%
Touting	0.09%	—	—
Property fraud	—	0.88%	0.11%
Breach of <i>Continuing Professional Development Rules</i>	—	—	0.11%

“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



	2021	2020	2019
No further action	33.04%	22.85%	27.57%
Referred – Independent legal advice (incl. District Office)	11.92%	10.93%	11.58%
Pending	10.89%	8.23%	8.11%
Letter of Good Practice	10.15%	7.99%	11.58%
Unsubstantiated/No professional misconduct	6.25%	11.55%	11.22%
Letter of regret	6.18%	10.81%	5.49%
Letter of disapproval	3.97%	4.18%	2.51%
Referred – relevant Authorities	3.53%	3.19%	4.30%
Unpursuable	2.87%	4.05%	5.97%
Referred – enforcement agencies	2.58%	2.70%	2.39%
Strong letter of disapproval	2.28%	1.84%	0.84%

Referred – Tribunal Convenor	1.91%	4.79%	2.98%
Withdrawn	1.40%	2.70%	2.86%
Referred – taxation	1.47%	2.21%	0.95%
Resolved amicably	0.96%	1.11%	1.43%
Referred – Joint Tribunal	0.37%	0.25%	—
Summary Disposal	0.07%	0.37%	—
Referred – others (incl. intervention agents)	0.07%	0.12%	0.24%
Referred – other departments of The Law Society	0.07%	0.12%	—

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 2021, there was one 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.

In the past year, the Investigation Counsel conducted 20 visits to 12 law firms. (16 visits to 13 law firms in 2020). One of these visits was made under section 8AA of the LPO. In addition, four 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. 85 visits were made to 51 solicitors’ firms and foreign law firms; some firms required more than one visit. (81 visits to 60 firms in 2020).

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*. Once a firm has been intervened, it ceases practice. 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 in order for the intervention agents to verify and determine the claims, claimants must complete a statement of truth and declaration and produce supporting documents to substantiate 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 2021.

In 2021, The Law Society continued to give instructions and support to the Intervention Agents and the assisting firms, organize the indexing and storage of files, deal with taxation and assist Police investigations in the current and past interventions.

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 103 matters by circulation of 61 agenda. (In 2020, 128 matters were considered by circulation of 44 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.

In 2021, pursuant to section 9A(1) of the LPO, the Council resolved to submit eight matters to the Tribunal Convenor concerning the conduct of nine solicitors and one clerk (one matter concerning one solicitor in 2020) and the Standing Committee on Compliance resolved to submit to the Tribunal Convenor seven matters concerning the conduct of six solicitors and one trainee solicitor. (13 matters concerning 10 solicitors, one trainee solicitor and two clerks in 2020.) There was no resolution made by the Standing Committee on Compliance to submit a matter to the Tribunal Convenor under section 9AB of the LPO in 2021 for summary disposal. (3 resolutions were made under this section in 2020.)

A total of six matters (including one summary disposal) had been submitted to the Tribunal Convenor in 2021 (five in 2020).

Eight disciplinary proceedings were determined by the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal in 2021 (three in 2020). All the complaints were proved and the following orders were made:

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 count of principle 6.04 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) and rule 2(d) of the SPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> censured to pay fixed costs 	Fined HK\$15,000
1	Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 counts of section 2(2) of the LPO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> censured prohibited from employment with any solicitor or firm or foreign lawyer or firm for a period of 6 years from the date of the order to pay fixed costs 	N/A
2	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 counts of rules 2(a) and (d) of the SPR 1 count of rules 2(d) and (e) of the SPR and rule 10(6) of the SAR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> censured shall not practise as a sole proprietor or partner of a firm of solicitors for 3 years 	Jointly and severally liable with the other Respondent : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fined HK\$300,000 in respect of

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 count of principle 2.03 of the Guide (2nd Ed.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> jointly and severally liable with the other Respondent to pay fixed costs 	Complaint 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fined HK\$25,000 in respect of Complaint 2 Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaint 3 Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaint 4
	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 counts of rules 2(a) and (d) of the SPR 1 count of rules 2(d) and (e) of the SPR and rule 10(6) of the SAR 1 count of principle 2.03 of the Guide (2nd Ed.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> censured shall not practise as a sole proprietor or partner of a firm of solicitors for 3 years jointly and severally liable with the other Respondent to pay fixed costs 	Jointly and severally liable with the other Respondent : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fined HK\$300,000 in respect of Complaint 1 Fined HK\$25,000 in respect of Complaint 2 Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaint 3 Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaint 4
2	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 count of rule 3 of the SAR 1 count of rules 3, 10(1) and (2) of the SAR 1 count of rule 7 of the SAR 1 count of rule 7 of the SAR and Principle 13.02 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> censured suspended from practice as a solicitor for a period of 2 years and thereafter shall not practise as a sole practitioner, partner or 	Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of each Complaint

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of rule 7A of the SAR • 1 count of rule 10(1) of the SAR • 1 count of rules 10(1) and 10(2) of the SAR • 1 count of rules 10(3) and 11 of the SAR • 1 count of rules 10A and 11 of the SAR • 1 count of rule 9A of the SAR • 1 count of rules 2(a), (c), (d) and (c) of the SPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consultant in a law firm in Hong Kong but may resume practice as a solicitor under the supervision of a solicitor who has practised continuously in Hong Kong for not less than 20 years • to pay 20% of the fixed costs 	
	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of rule 3 of the SAR • 1 count of rules 3, 10(1) and (2) of the SAR • 1 count of rule 7 of the SAR • 1 count of rule 7 of the SAR and Principle 13.02 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) • 1 count of rule 7A of the SAR • 1 count of rule 10(1) of the SAR • 1 count of rules 10(1) and 10(2) of the SAR • 1 count of rule 10(3) of the SAR • 1 count of rules 10A of the SAR • 1 count of rule 9A of the SAR • 1 count of rules 2(a), (c), (d) and (c) of the SPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • suspended from practice as a solicitor for a period of 6 months and thereafter may resume practice as a solicitor under the supervision of a solicitor who has practised continuously in Hong Kong for not less than 20 years • to pay 80% of the fixed costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$135,000 in respect of Complaints 1 to 7 and 10 to 11 • Fined HK\$20,000 in respect of Complaints 8 and 9
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of principle 6.04 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) and rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • suspended from practice as a 	Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of each Complaint

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
		2(a) and (d) of the SPR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of section 8AA of the LPO and rules 2(a) and (d) of the SPR • 1 count of principle 14.02 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) and rules 2(a) and (d) of the SPR 	solicitor for a period of 12 months from 1 June 2021 and afterwards may resume practice as a solicitor only under supervision of a solicitor who has practised continuously in Hong Kong for not less than 20 years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shall not practise as a sole practitioner, partner or consultant in a law firm in Hong Kong • to pay fixed costs 	
1	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of rule 8(1) of the PIS Rules and rule 2(d) of the SPR • 1 count of principle 6.04 of the Guide (2nd Ed.) • 1 count of paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the PIS Rules and rule 2(d) of the SPR • 1 count of principle 6.04 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • to pay fixed costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$80,000 in respect of Complaints 1 and 3 • Fined HK\$60,000 in respect of Complaints 2 and 4
2	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of rule 2(d) of the SPR • 1 count of section 8AA of the LPO and rule 2(d) of the SPR • 1 count of rules 2(c) and 2(d) of the SPR • 2 counts of rule 3 of the SAR and principle 2.03 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) • 1 count of rules 7 and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • suspended from practice as a solicitor for a period of 30 months, followed by a temporal restriction from practising as a partner or principal of a firm but only as an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of Complaint 2 • Fined HK\$100,000 in respect of Complaint 4 • Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
	Solicitor	<p>8(2) of the SAR and principle 2.03 of the Guide (3rd Ed.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of rule 9A of the SAR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of section 8AA of the LPO and rule 2(d) of the SPR • 2 counts of rule 3 of the SAR and principle 2.03 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) • 1 count of rules 7 and 8(2) of the SAR and principle 2.03 of the Guide (3rd Ed.) • 1 count of rule 9A of the SAR 	<p>assistant solicitor under the supervision of a solicitor of not less than 15 years standing with no disciplinary record for a period of 3 years commencing from the date when the Respondent resumes practice as a solicitor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to pay 70% of the fixed costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • to pay 30% of the fixed costs 	<p>Complaint 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaint 6 • Fined HK\$40,000 in respect of Complaint 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of Complaint 8 • Fined HK\$100,000 in respect of Complaint 9 • Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of Complaint 10 • Fined HK\$50,000 in respect of Complaint 11 • Fined HK\$40,000 in respect of Complaint 12
2	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of section 8(1) of the LPO • 1 count of sections 8(1) and (2) of the LPO and rules 8(2) and (7) of the ARR • 1 count of rules 2(a), (d) and 2(e) of the SPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • censured • subject to conditional practice that he may not practise as a sole practitioner or in any partnership for 	<p>Fined HK\$30,000 in respect of Complaints 1, 2 and 3</p>

Respondent	Position	Charge(s)	Penalty	Fine (HK\$)
	Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 count of section 8(1) of the LPO • 1 count of rules 2(a), (d) and 2(e) of the SPR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a period of 24 months • to pay 3/5 of the fixed costs • censured • subject to conditional practice that he may not practise as a sole practitioner or in any partnership for a period of 18 months • to pay 2/5 of the fixed costs 	Fined HK\$20,000 in respect of Complaints 1 and 2

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

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

“SPR” = *Solicitors’ Practice Rules, Cap 159H*

“SAR” = *Solicitors’ Accounts Rules, Cap 159F*

“PIS Rules” = *Solicitors (Professional Indemnity) Rules, Cap 159M*

In 2021, the Tribunal Convenor summarily disposed of one matter by making an order requiring the solicitor concerned to pay respective sums of HK\$10,000 as fine and HK\$15,000 as costs.

Appeals and other Litigation proceedings

Appeal Proceedings

In April 2021, five Respondents informed the Law Society that they would withdraw the appeal against the decision of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal dismissing their application for permanent stay of the disciplinary proceedings against them.

In May 2021, an application for leave to appeal was lodged with the Court of Appeal by the Law Society against the order of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal regarding the sentence of a Respondent.

In October 2021, an application for leave to appeal was lodged with the Court of Appeal by the Law Society against the order of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal regarding the sentence of another Respondent.

Charging Order Proceedings

In 2021, four Charging Order Absolute were obtained against the properties of (1) the Plaintiff in three High Court actions against the Law Society and (2) the Respondent in a High Court action brought by the Law Society.

Litigation Proceedings

In February 2021, the High Court dismissed the application for judicial review taken out by the solicitors against the Law Society's decision to intervene in the practice of a law firm and awarded costs in favour of the Law Society.

In April 2021, the High Court struck out the complainant's claim made against the Law Society with costs awarded in favour of the Law Society.

In July 2021, the High Court granted an order to the Law Society to restrict a complainant to commence any new proceedings in any courts against the Law Society with costs awarded in favour of the Law Society.

In November 2021, the High Court dismissed the application for judicial review lodged by a complainant against the Law Society and awarded costs in favour of the Law Society.

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 21 times during the year and considered 560 items (in 2020, 21 meetings and 453 items). A further 44 matters were dealt with by circulation of four agenda (in 2020, 42 matters by circulation of four agenda).

The Standing Committee on Compliance reviewed four decisions of the Consents Committee; all four decisions were upheld.

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	2021	2020	2019
Admissions	633	666	654
Certificates of eligibility for admission	695	729	753
Practising certificates:	11,235	10,790	10,344
Practising certificates – removal of conditions under s.6(6) <i>LPO</i> (solicitors)	207	168	219
Membership	12,795	12,296	11,764
First registration as a foreign law firm	4	5	11
First registration as a foreign lawyer	256	199	411
Renewal of registration as a foreign lawyer	1,606	1,669	1,664
Removal of conditions on certificates of registration (foreign lawyers)	81	63	61

Nature of applications	2021	2020	2019
Registration as an Association	2	4	8
Removal of name from the roll of solicitors	3	4	7
Restoration of name to the roll of solicitors	2	2	1
Qualifications for admission s.4(1A) <i>LPO</i>	82	86	131
Employment of staff: s.53(1) <i>LPO</i>	1	1	4
s.53(3) <i>LPO</i>	5	2	7
Practising certificates – removal of conditions under s.6(6A) <i>LPO</i>	37	30	55
Practising certificates – Special Conditions	31	8	21
Registration of first trainee solicitor contracts	686	511	616
Registration of subsequent trainee solicitor contracts	114	106	128
Special leave to employ trainee solicitors	22	8	8
Other trainee solicitor matters	109	123	263
Law costs draftsmen	5	2	1
Accountant’s report – solicitors’ firms	950	937	926
Accountant’s report – foreign law firms	93	93	90
Firm name and letterhead	15	27	29
Waiver applications – general	8	7	*2
Waiver applications – <i>PD</i>	1	3	1
Registration of new associate member	—	1	—
Certificates of standing for solicitors or foreign lawyers	1,403	656	797
Certificates of standing for solicitors' firms or foreign law firms	20	20	20
Letters regarding employment or training visas	186	198	494
Authorised solicitors’ clerks	35	44	50

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

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

* Applications were under the *SPR, Cap. 159H*

Figure 4: Admission of solicitors 2012—2021

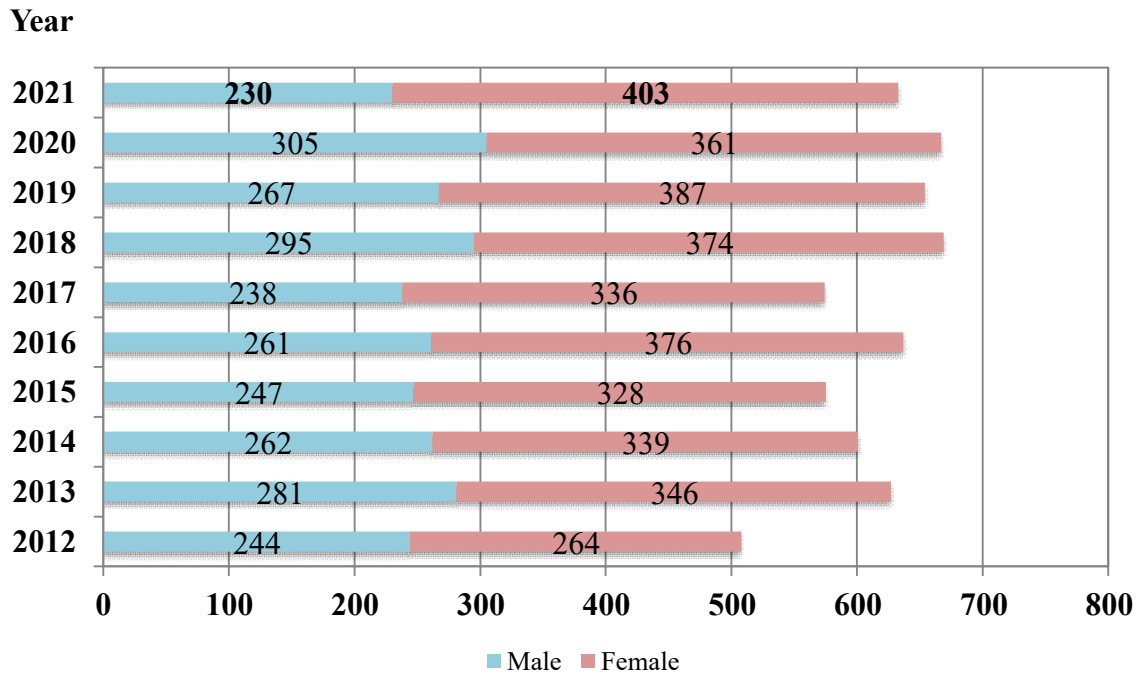


Figure 5: Solicitors holding practising certificates 2012—2021

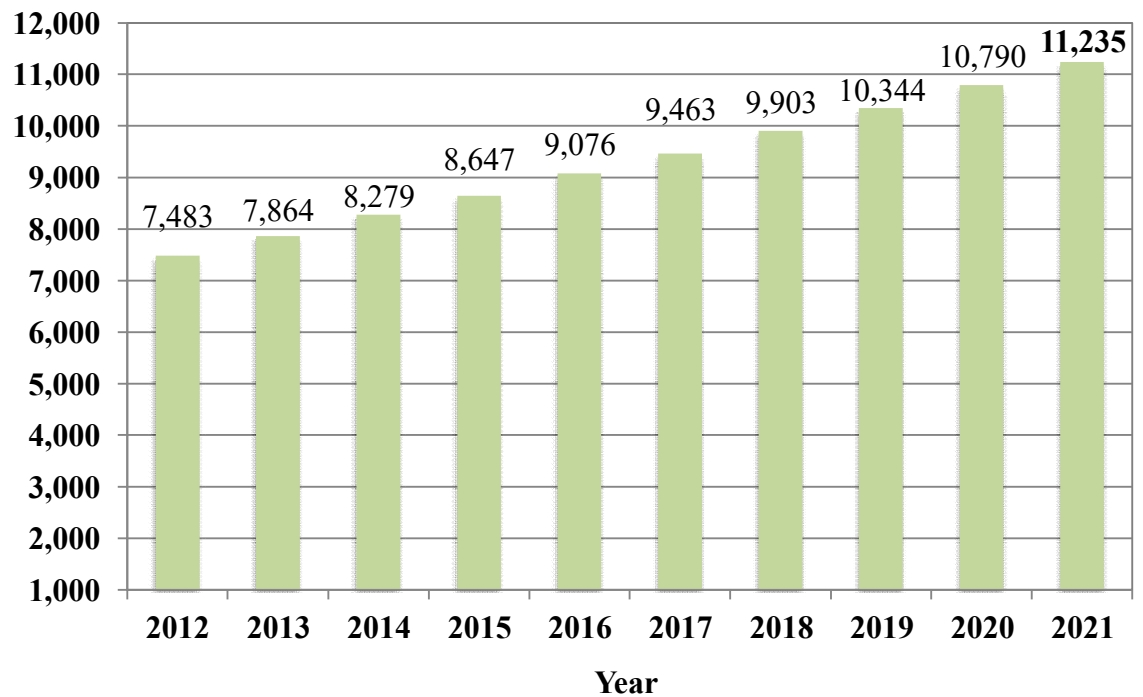


Figure 6: Years of admission - solicitors holding a 2021 practising certificate

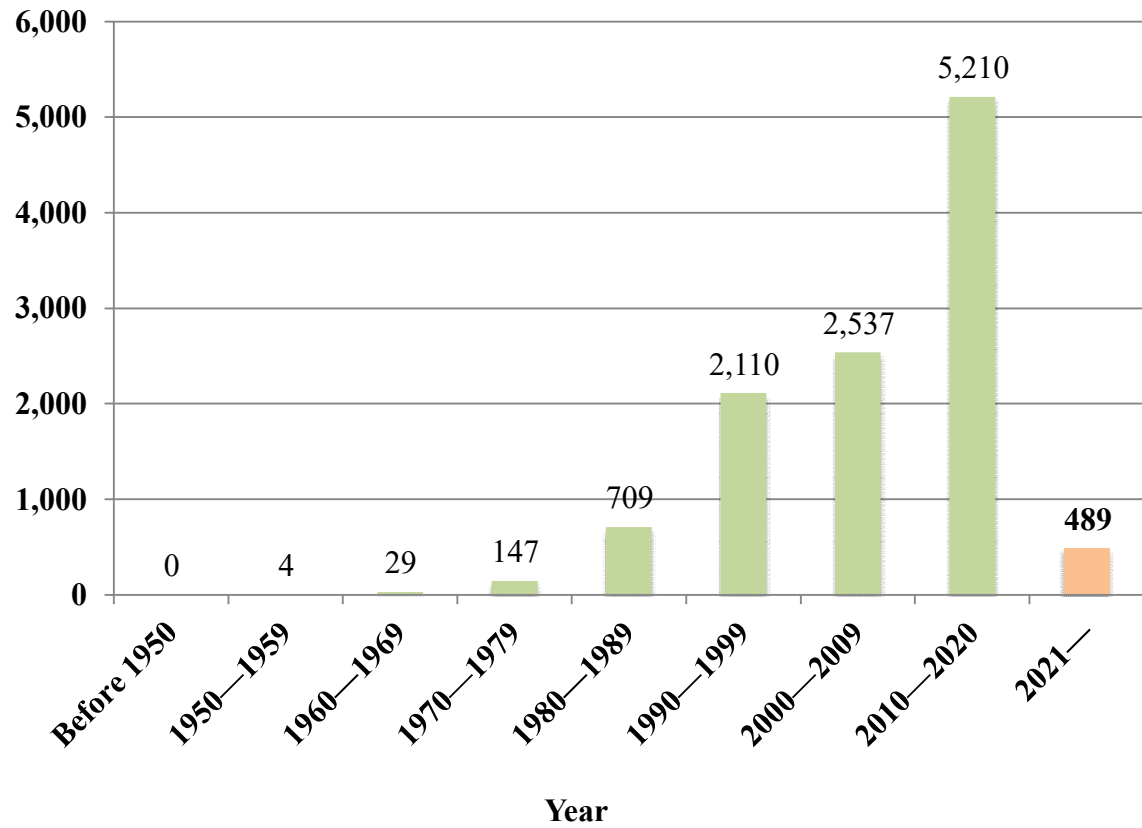


Figure 7a: Gender ratio – Solicitors holding a practising certificate (2014 – 2021)

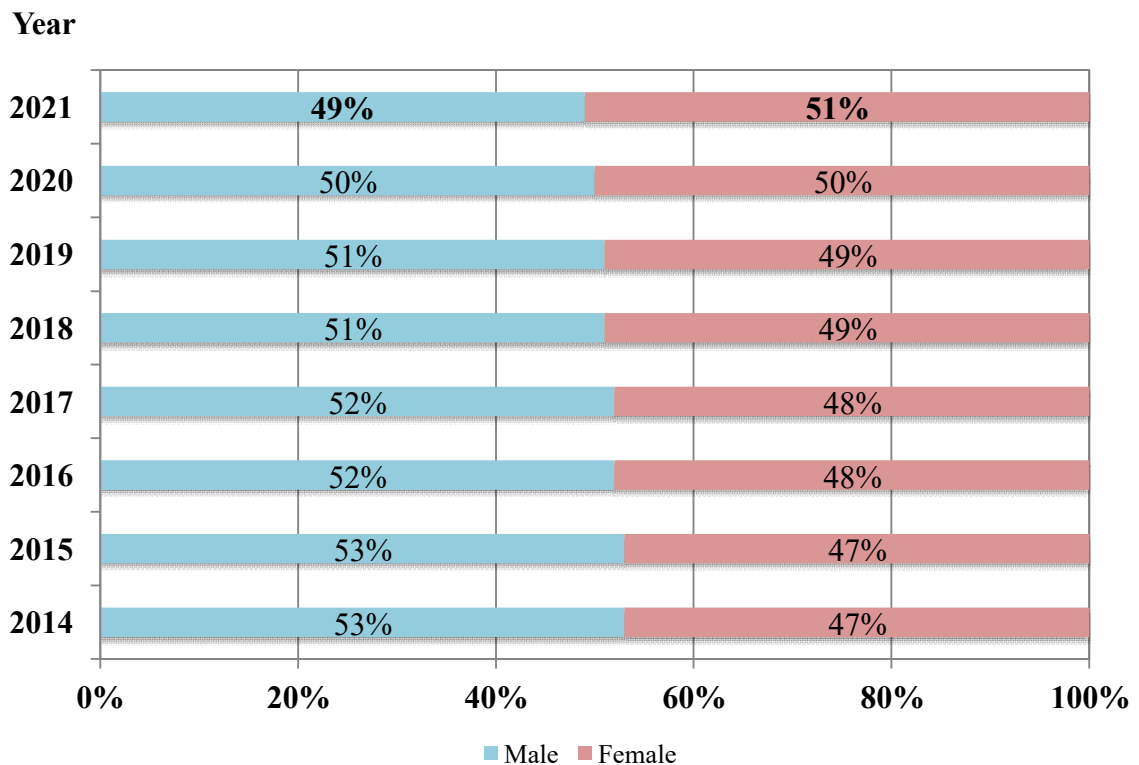


Figure 7b: Gender ratio – Trainee solicitors 2016 – 2021

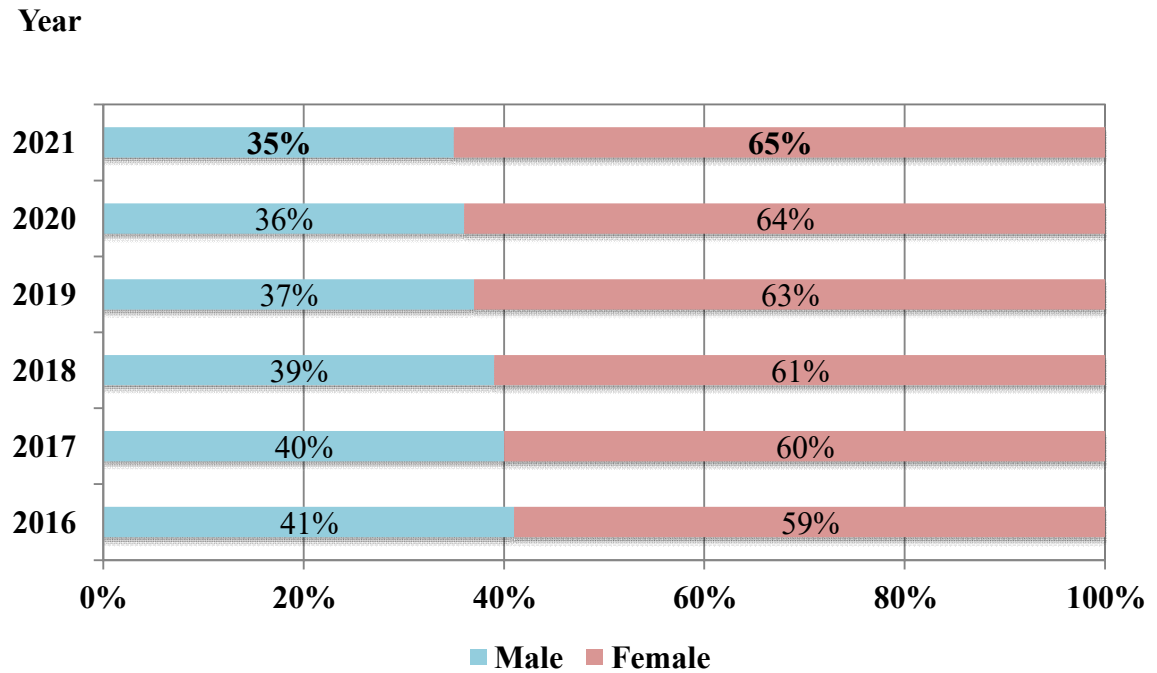


Figure 7c: Gender ratio – Partners 2016 – 2021

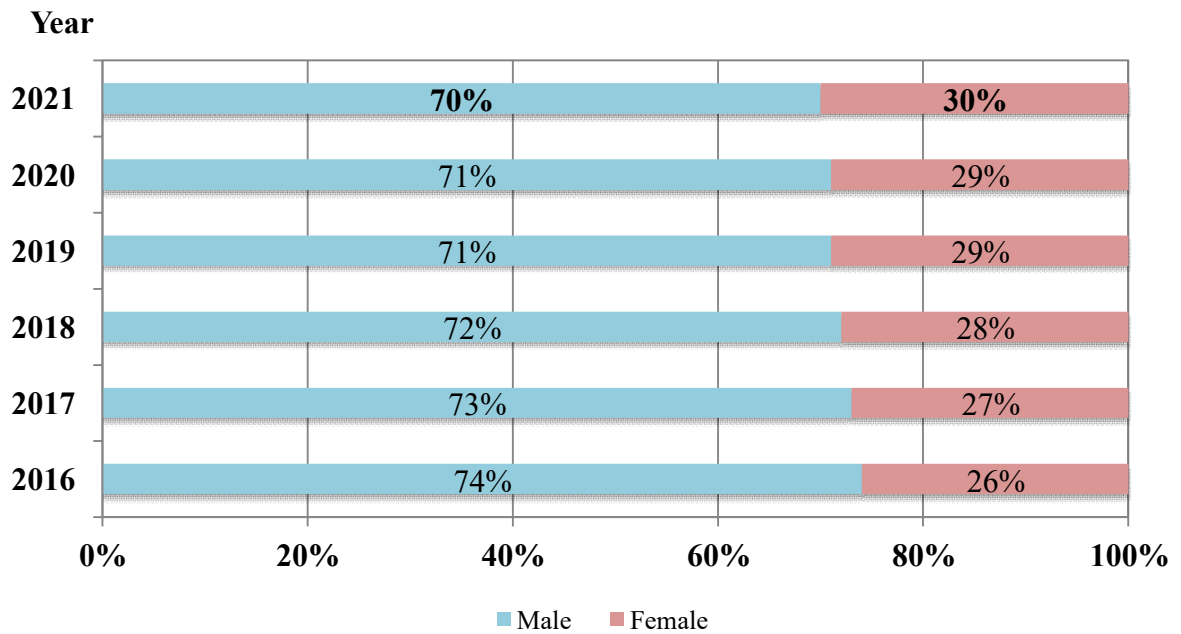


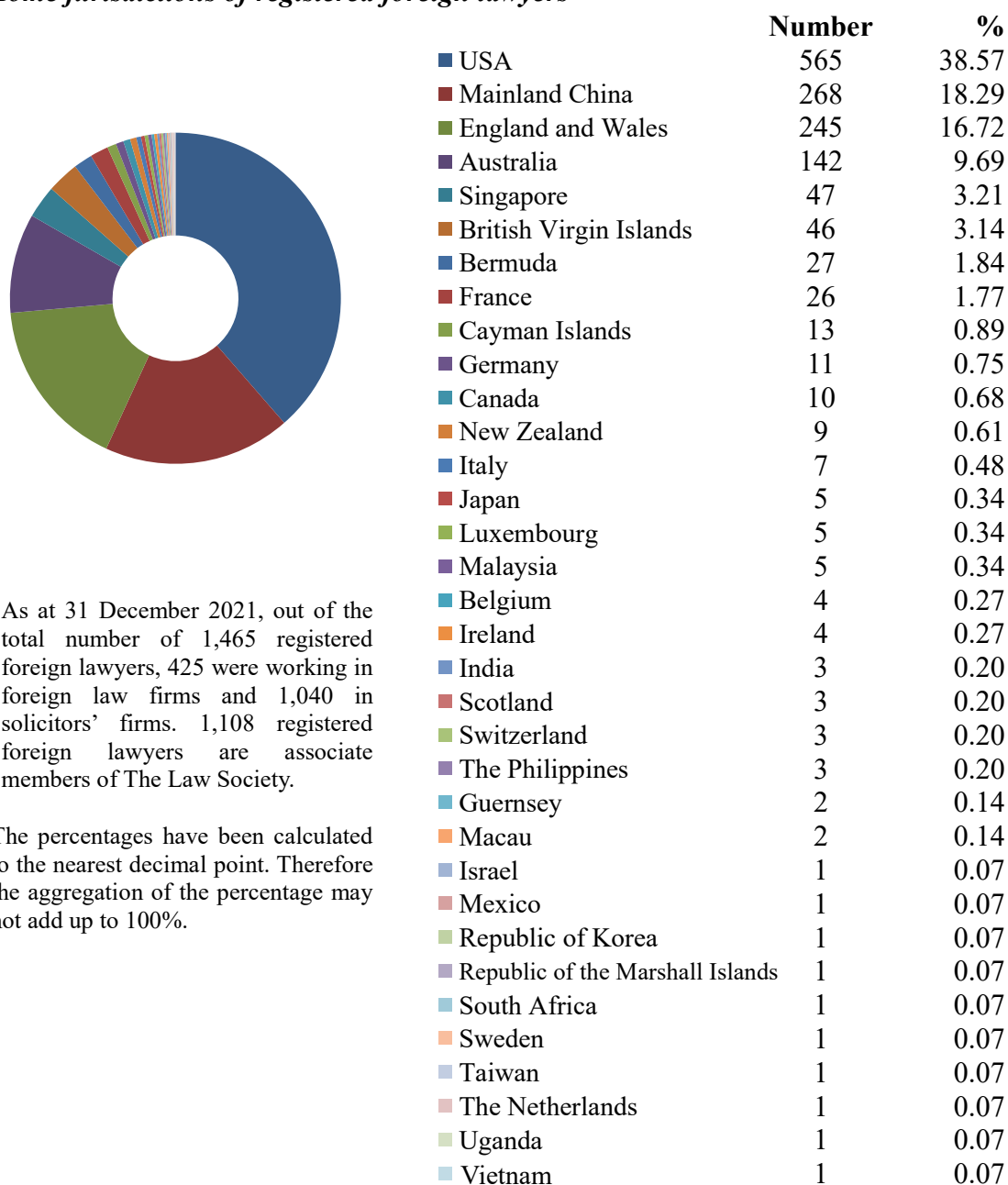
Figure 8: Size of solicitors' firms and number of trainee solicitors in 2021

Size of firm	No. of firms		No. of trainee solicitors	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
Sole practitioners	445	446	75	54
2—5 partners	390	390	350	310
6—10 partners	51	50	192	181
11—20 partners	41	41	275	294
Over 20 partners	15	15	239	234
Total	942	942	1131*	1073#

* excluding 22 in government and 7 working “in-house”

excluding 15 in government and 3 working “in-house”

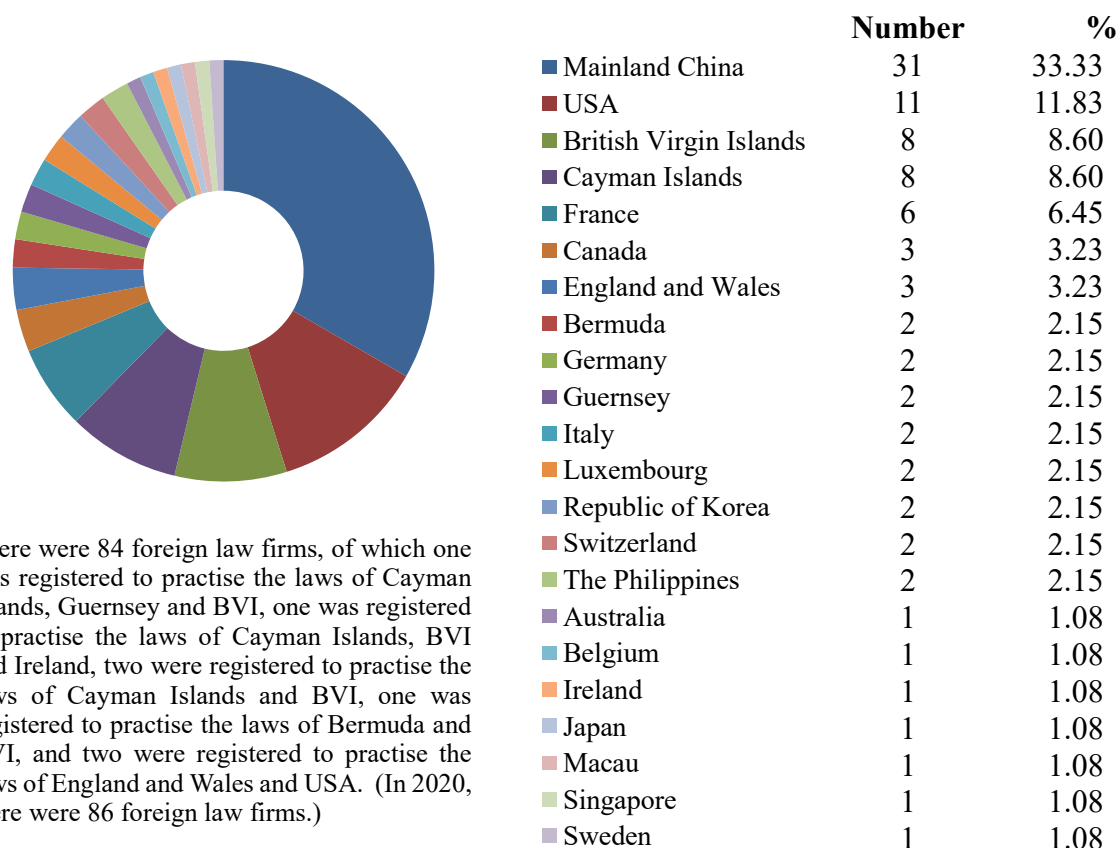
Figure 9: Home jurisdictions of registered foreign lawyers



Notes: As at 31 December 2021, out of the total number of 1,465 registered foreign lawyers, 425 were working in foreign law firms and 1,040 in solicitors' firms. 1,108 registered foreign lawyers are associate members of The Law Society.

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

Figure 10: Home jurisdictions of foreign law firms



Notes: There were 84 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, two were registered to practise the laws of Cayman Islands and BVI, one was registered to practise the laws of Bermuda and BVI, and two were registered to practise the laws of England and Wales and USA. (In 2020, 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 37 Associations registered between foreign law firms and solicitors' firms (38 in 2020). Four new foreign law firms commenced practice (5 in 2020). Six foreign law firms were closed, three of which established local practice. (In 2020, 10 foreign law firms were closed, five of which established local practice.)

There were 15,527 unqualified staff members employed by solicitors' firms at the end of the year (15,683 at the end of 2020). In addition, there were 676 unqualified staff members employed by foreign law firms at the end of 2021 (612 in 2020).

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 704 authorised solicitors' clerks (742 in 2020).

The Law Society continued to waive subscription fees for student members in 2021. By the end of the year, there were 224 student members registered with The Law Society (290 in 2020).

At the end of December, the number of Law Society Approved Law Costs Draftsmen was 40 (36 in 2020).