



Hard Graft & Enthusiasm: Working Life At The Bar

Two thirds of criminal barristers work at least a day a week for which they are not paid*

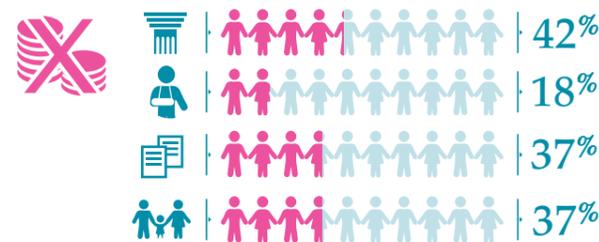


* This is not the same as pro-bono work, where no payment is expected for the work that is undertaken.



Criminal and family barristers do at least 20 hours work a week for which they are not paid. That is the equivalent of at least two working days every week. The most frequently cited factors for this are the unpredictability of cases and workload and that barristers are bearing the burden of cuts faced by other legal professionals working on the same case.

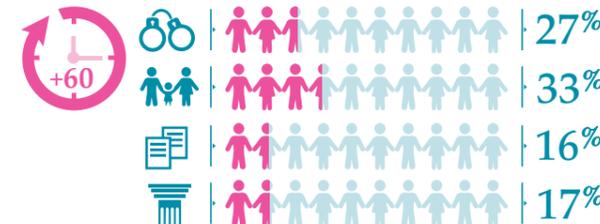
Barristers work more unpaid hours when clients and litigants in person need more support



In many areas of private practice, more than a third of barristers work additional hours unpaid where their client cannot afford more.

One third (33%) of family barristers work additional unpaid hours where a litigant in person requires extra support.

60 hour weeks are commonplace at the criminal and family bar, and the hours are getting longer



More barristers across all practice areas are working more than 60 hours a week, but this is especially so for criminal and family barristers who have seen an 11% and 13% increase respectively (since 2013) in the number who are working more than 60 hours a week.

Criminal barristers are among those most likely to be considering their career options (or planning to leave the Bar)



Among criminal and family barristers, the main reasons for considering an alternate career were respectively: funding and legal aid cuts (47% and 28%), workload and stress (37% and 49%), and work life balance (42% and 54%).

Work pressure is too much as more barristers report difficulties in balancing work and home lives



Fewer barristers feel able to balance their home and working lives. 50% said they could in 2011, 47% in 2013, and only 39% in 2017.

Criminal and family barristers were most likely to say that they could not balance their home and work lives. The figure is 20-25% for other practice areas.



Criminal and family barristers are emotionally drained by their work.



Criminal barristers and family barristers felt they were under too much work pressure.

Across the Bar only 26% of barristers said they were not under too much pressure in 2017 compared with 34% in 2011 and 33% in 2013.

Interest and enthusiasm is high across the Bar



89% of barristers across all areas of practice agreed that they found their work interesting.

61% of barristers across all areas of practice agreed that on most days, they are enthusiastic about their work.

The Bar is committed to developing talent



47% of those at the self-employed Bar either are or have been a pupil supervisor at some point in their careers.



31% of all respondents have been, or are involved in, mentoring others.

Calendar icon Days per week | Clock icon Hours per week

Person icon The Whole Bar

Person with scales icon Criminal Barristers

Person with scales icon Family Barristers

Person with scales icon Commercial & Chancery Barristers

Person with scales icon Civil Barristers

Person with scales icon Professional Negligence & Personal Injury Barristers

The Bar Council-commissioned survey of Barristers' Working Lives was undertaken by the Institute of Employment Studies (IES) and Employment Research Ltd (ERL) in July 2017. This is the third working lives survey of the Bar (previous surveys took place in 2011 and 2013). The survey was part sponsored by the Specialist Bar Associations and Circuits.

4092 respondents (26% of the profession). 40% women (37% of barristers are women); 13% BAME (13% of barristers identify as BAME); 6% declared a disability, 6% identified as LGBT and respondents were of mixed age and Call. 13% were employed and 87% were self-employed (18% of the Bar is employed and 82% self-employed). Respondents came from the following practice areas: Civil 8%, Commercial & chancery 4%, Criminal 23%, PN/PI 4%, EU/Int./other 2%, Family 12%. 48% practise in more than one area.

A copy of the research report from which this data is drawn is available on www.barcouncil.org.uk