

# Diversity & Inclusion

Annual Report 2021





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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.

Reeds currently have 22 offices across the Thames Valley, Wiltshire, Bristol, South East and City of London areas. As well as offices in the north, in Manchester, Leicester and Hinckley. 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 2020-2021.

# Representation Matters.

## *Reeds Solicitors Commitment to 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 Diversity and Inclusion survey data is published annually 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, helping 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.

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 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.

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...

High on the agenda for Reeds in the past few years and has been 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

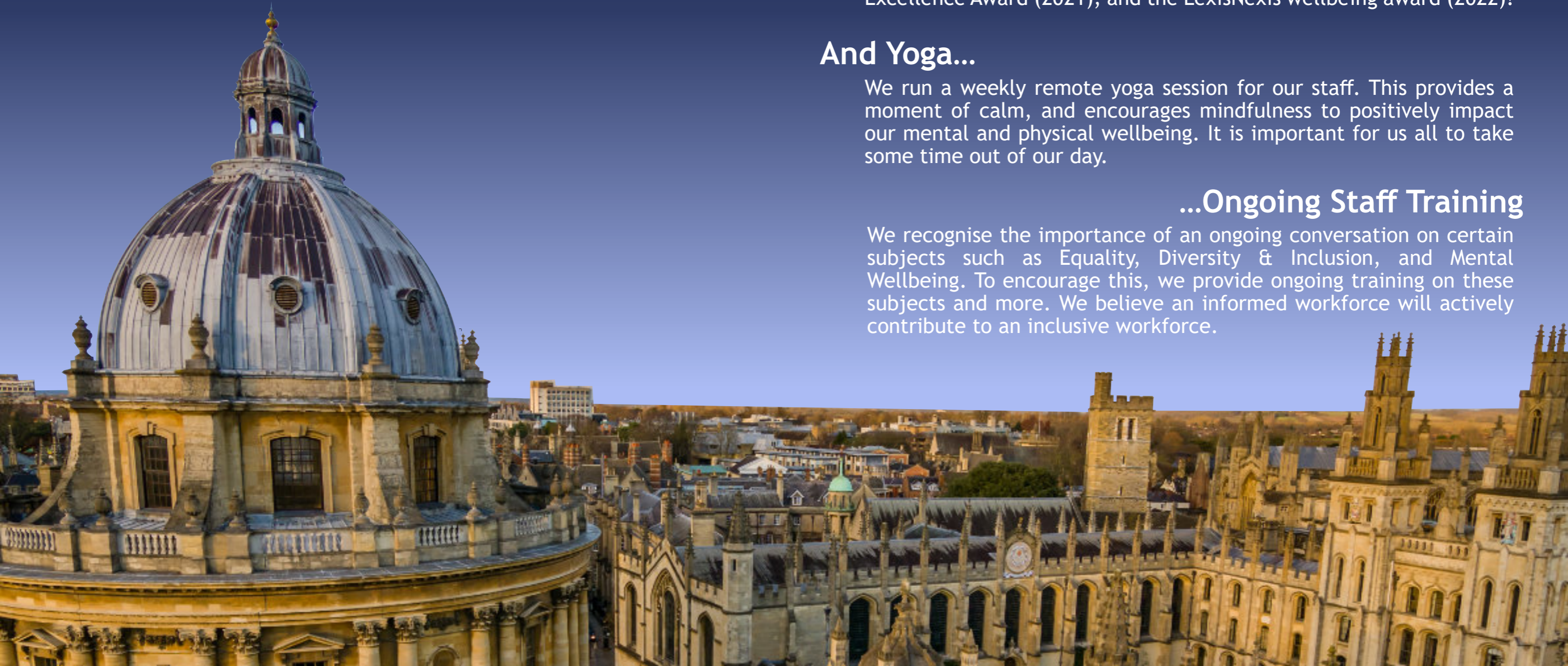
We recognise that the traditional 9am - 5pm is not suitable for everyone. We offer a number of flexible working options to our employees. Flexible working can assist in different ways, including mental health and wellbeing, assisting with disabilities, and supporting a working parent. Our scheme was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

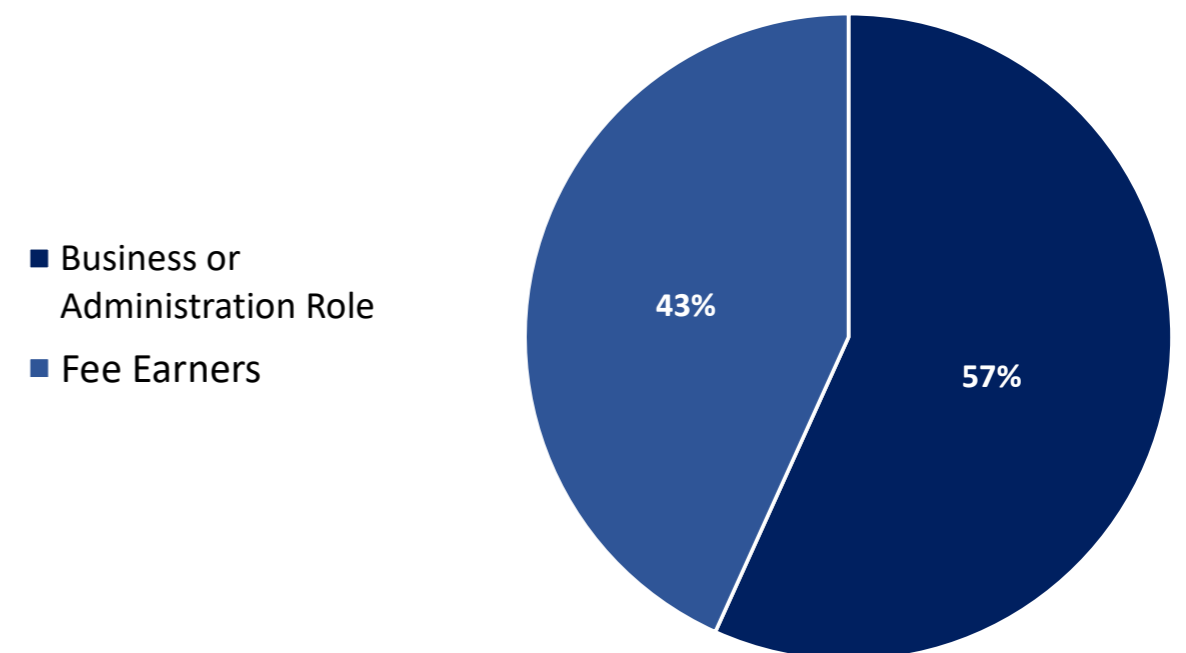
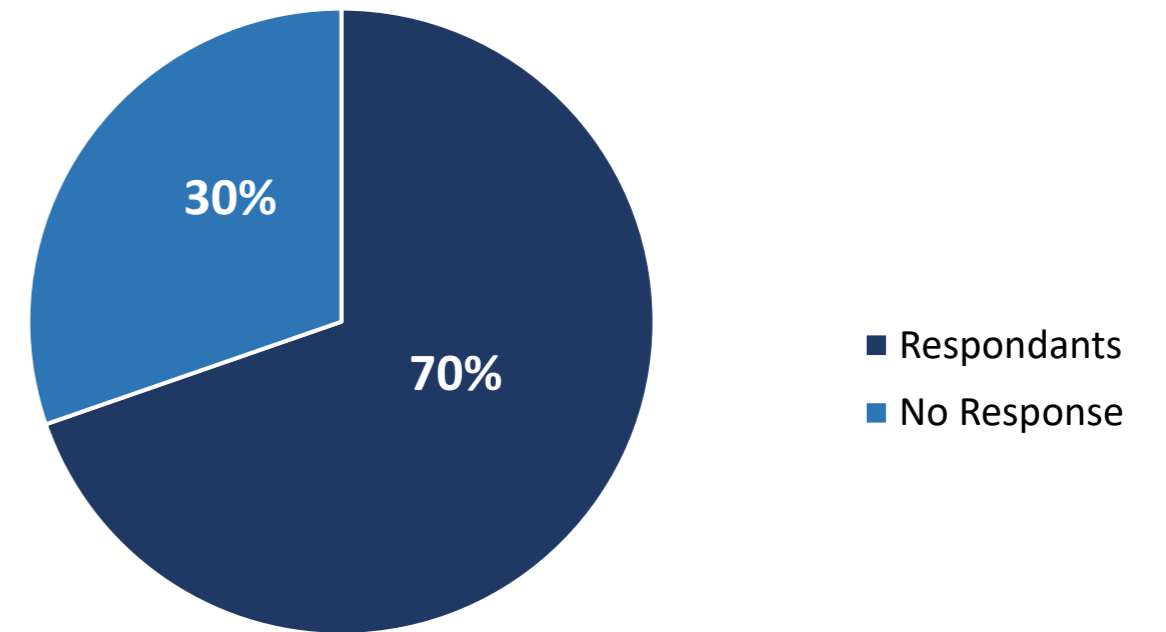
## Overview

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

The survey comprised of 18 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). Each question had the option to skip, or choose a 'rather not say' option.

70% of our staff responded to the survey. Of the respondents, 57% were from a business or administrative role in the firm, and 43% held a fee-earning position.

Our respondents mostly answered all questions fully, with only 1-2% withholding response on a couple of questions (through a 'skip' or 'prefer not to disclose' option). This rose to nearly 6% when answering questions around religious beliefs, and 3% when answering about carer responsibilities that employees may hold outside of work.





# 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 45-54 age bracket across the firm.

This seems a slightly higher proportion of this age bracket in administrative staff, as can be seen by comparing it to the graph below (recording the age range of Fee Earners).

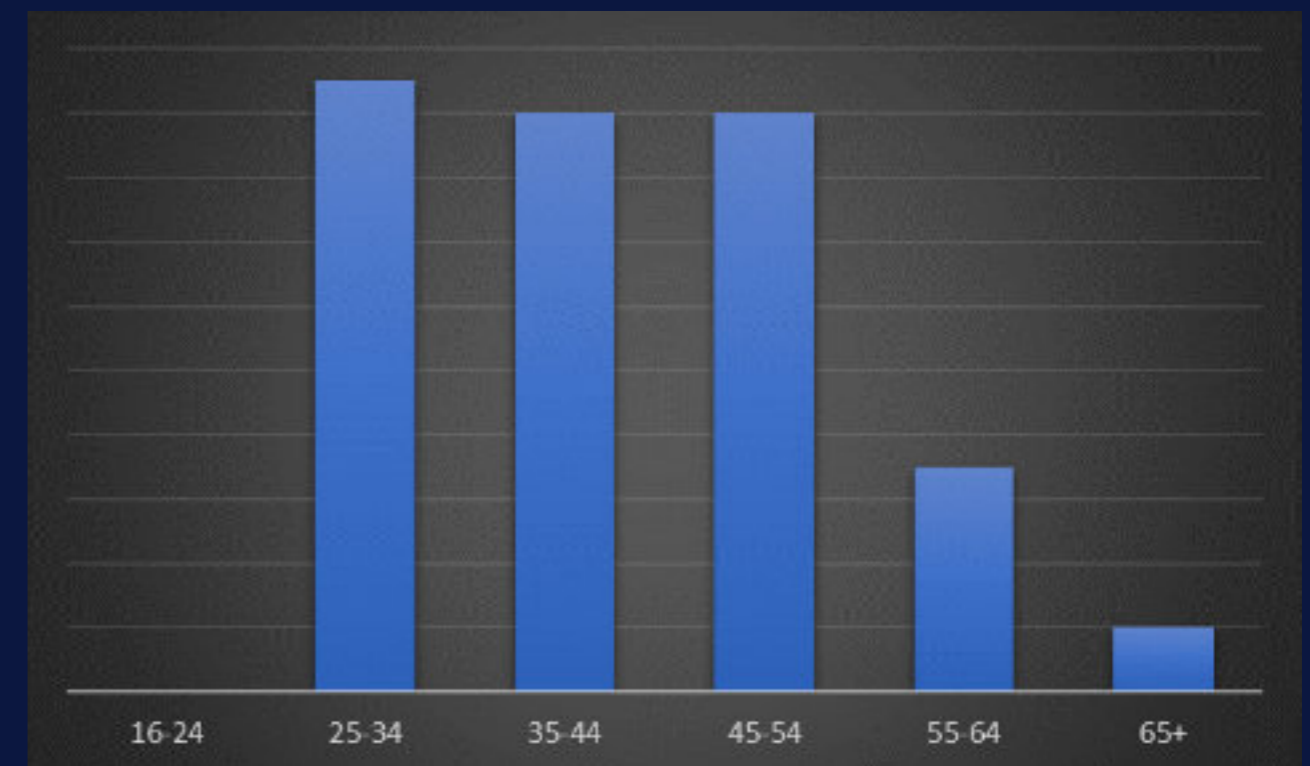


## Fee Earner Age Range

Looking at the Fee Earner data alone, we can see a slightly different story. Reeds Solicitors is 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 are 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 community.

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)

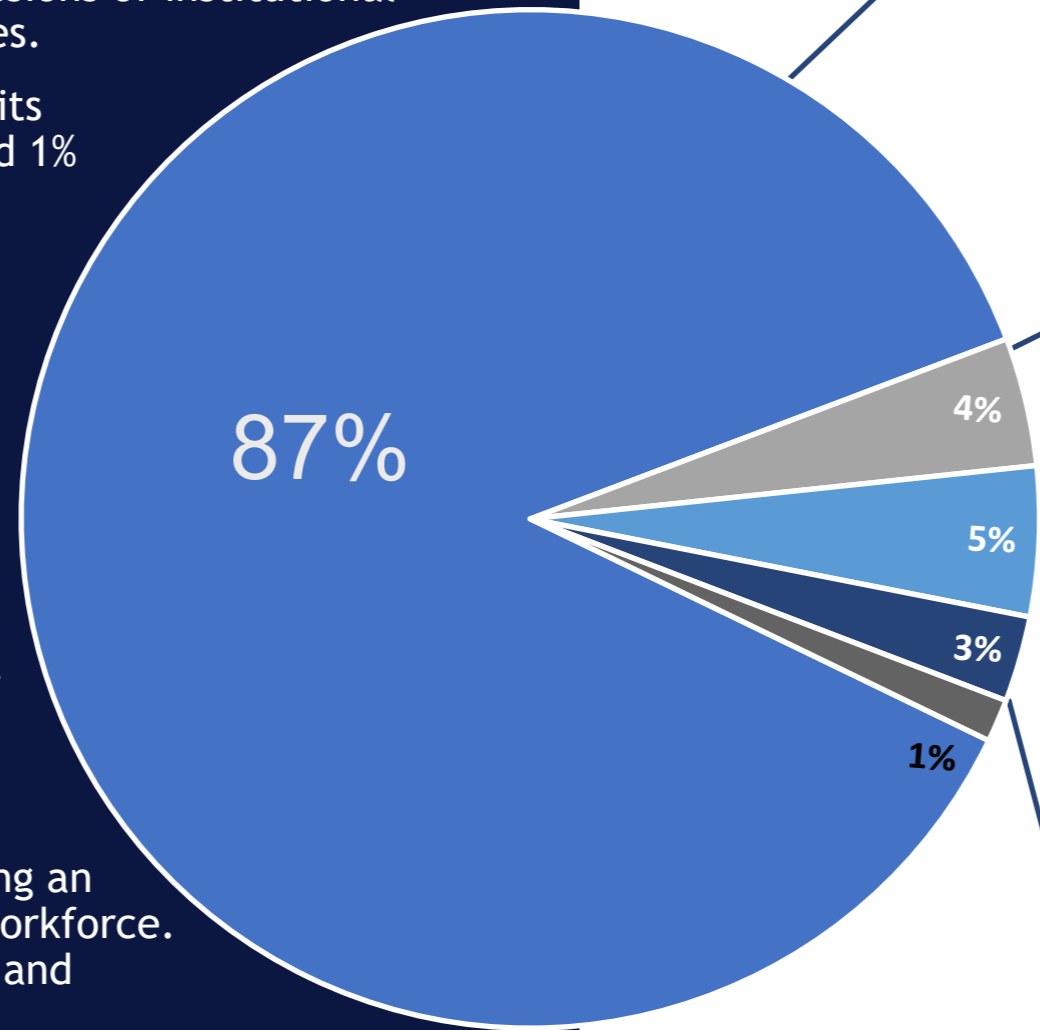
Reeds is starting to see these conversations filter through into improving diversity in our staff. As can be seen from the graphs on the right, our Black, Mixed and Other Ethnic Background employees equal or exceed the industry average. However, our Asian or Asian British employees are 10% under the 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 has such a training programme.

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
- Other ethnic group



**White**

**Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Background**

**Asian or Asian British**

**Black, African, Caribbean or Black British**



# Gender and Gender Expression

# LGBTQIA+

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

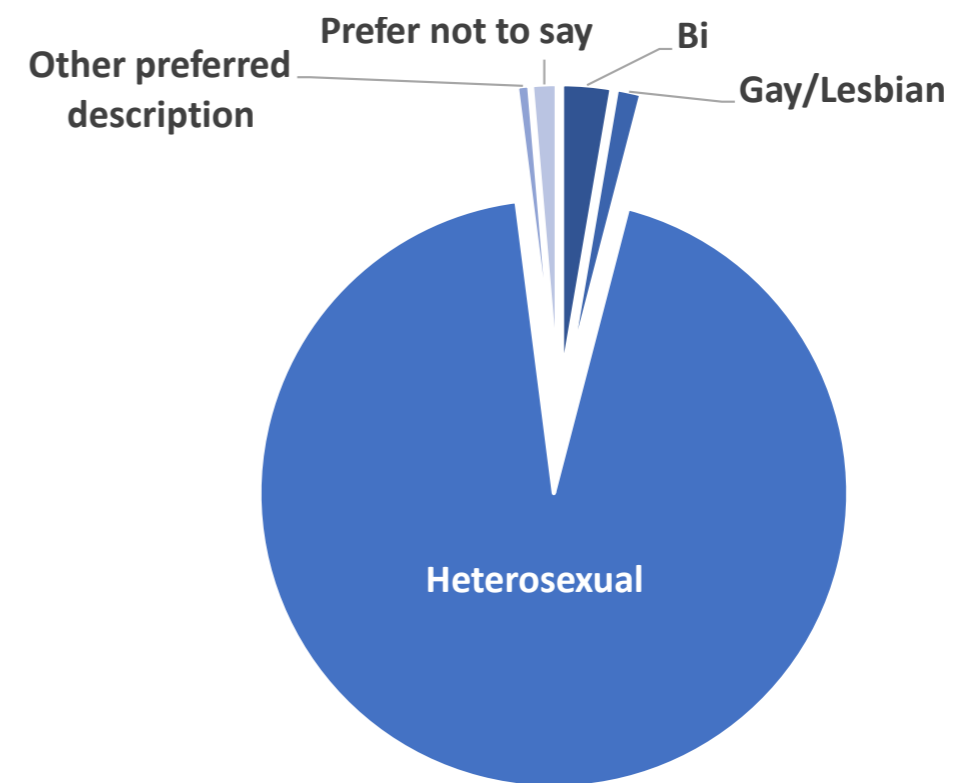
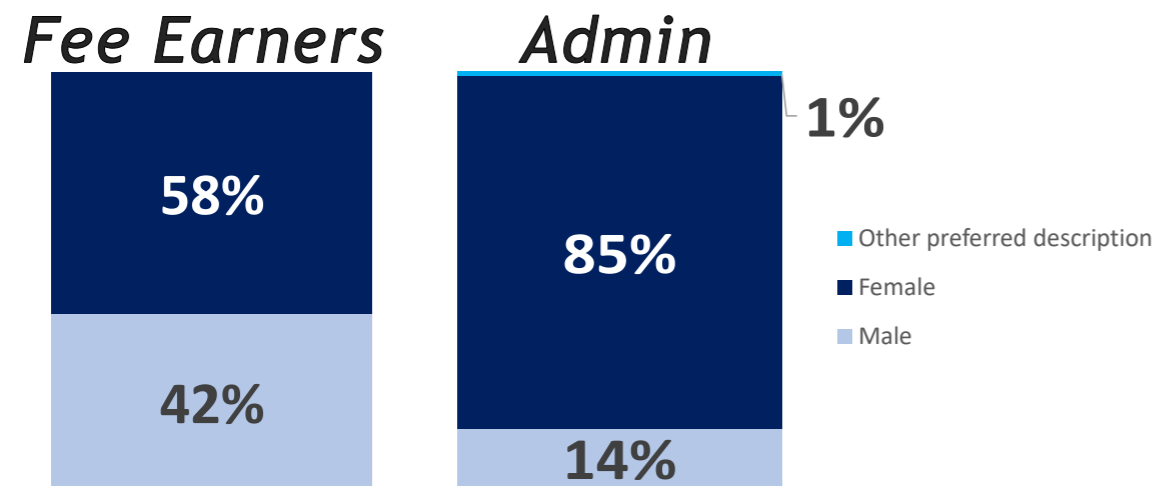
58% of Reeds' Fee Earners identify as female, way over the industry average of 49%. This theme is true when it comes to our non-Fee Earner employees (i.e. administrative roles), where a huge 85% are women - 10% over the industry average of 75%.

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.

As can be seen from the data on gender, 1% of our non-Fee Earner staff preferred another description of their gender, i.e. non-binary. Additionally, 3% 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 3% of our Fee Earners identifying as LGB. Company wide (including non-Fee Earning roles) 5% of our team identify themselves as LGB.



## Spotlight: Women in the Legal Industry

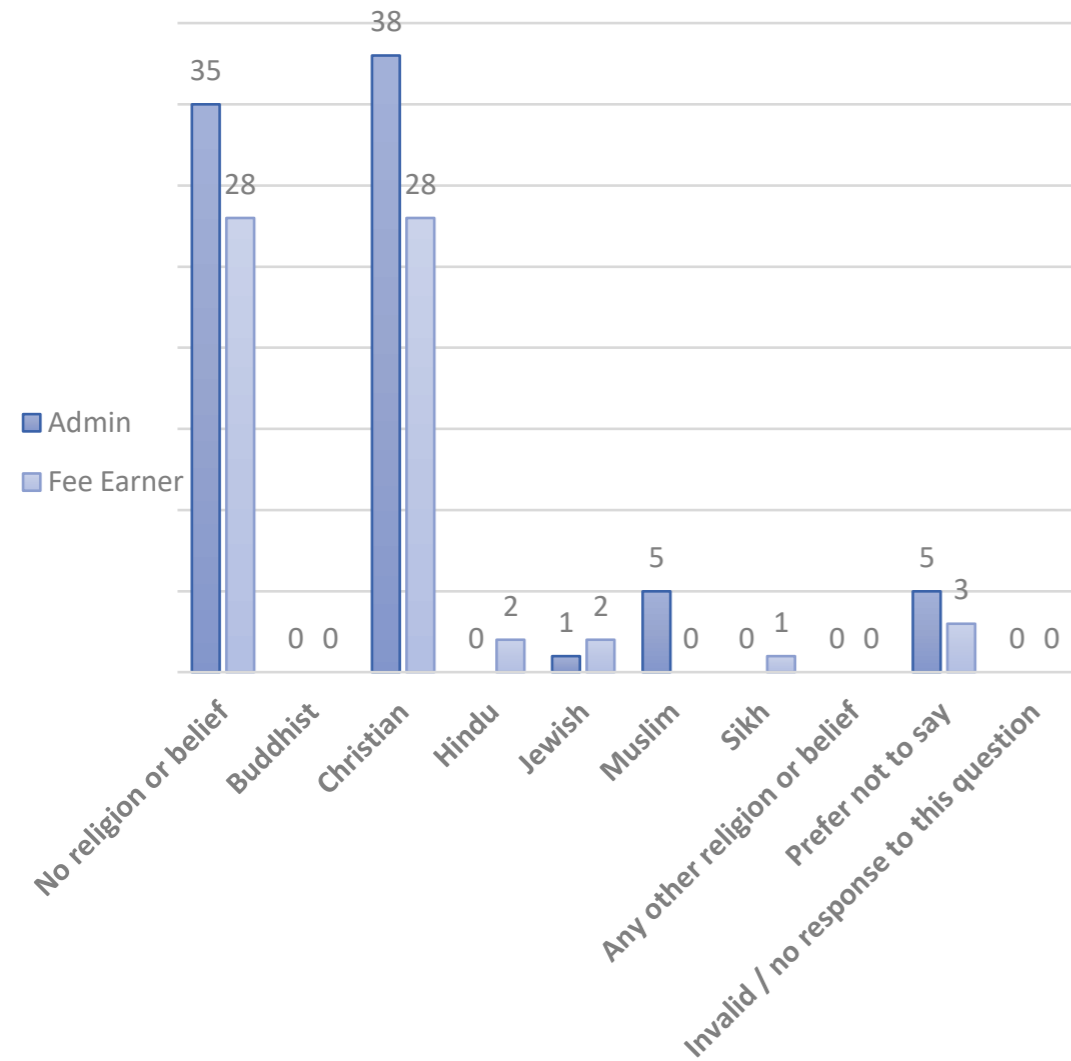
In a historically male dominated industry, women have found it difficult to pursue a career in law. Whilst much has been achieved in recent years, women working in the legal sector still face many distinct challenges.

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 26% of partners. Reeds have 4 female partners within our firm, 3 of which were appointed last year. Whilst women are still under-represented, we're committed to ensuring women are able to achieve their ambitions in the work place.

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.

Sexual orientation	Percentage
Bisexual	3%
Gay/Lesbian	1%
Heterosexual	94%
Other preferred description	1%
Prefer not to say	1%
Invalid / no response to this question	0%

# Religion

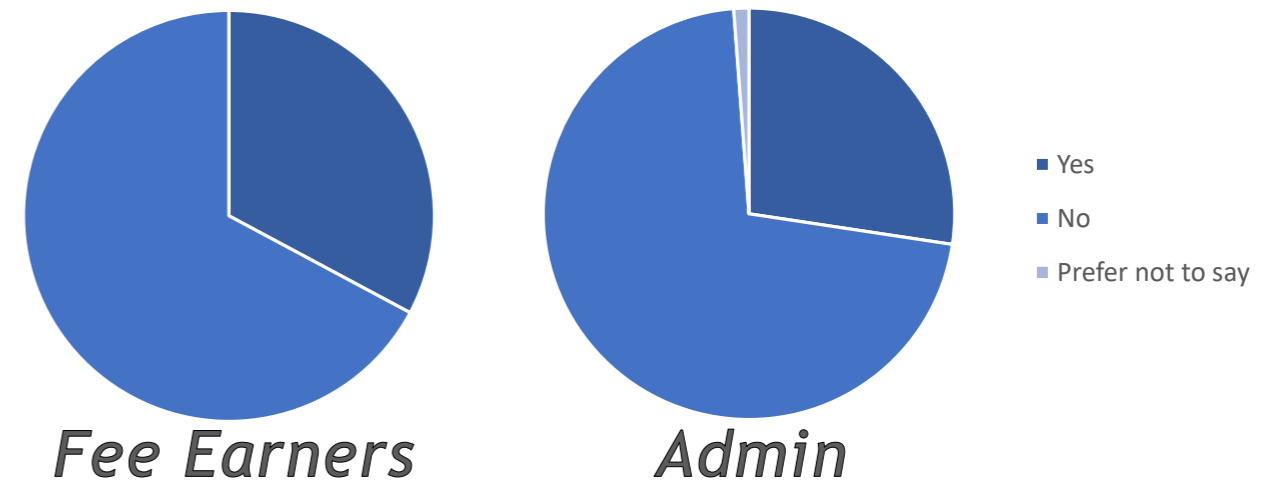


Through our survey we can see the majority of our staff are non-religious, or Christian. However, we also have a minority representation of Hindus, Jewish people, Muslims and Sikhs.

# Other...

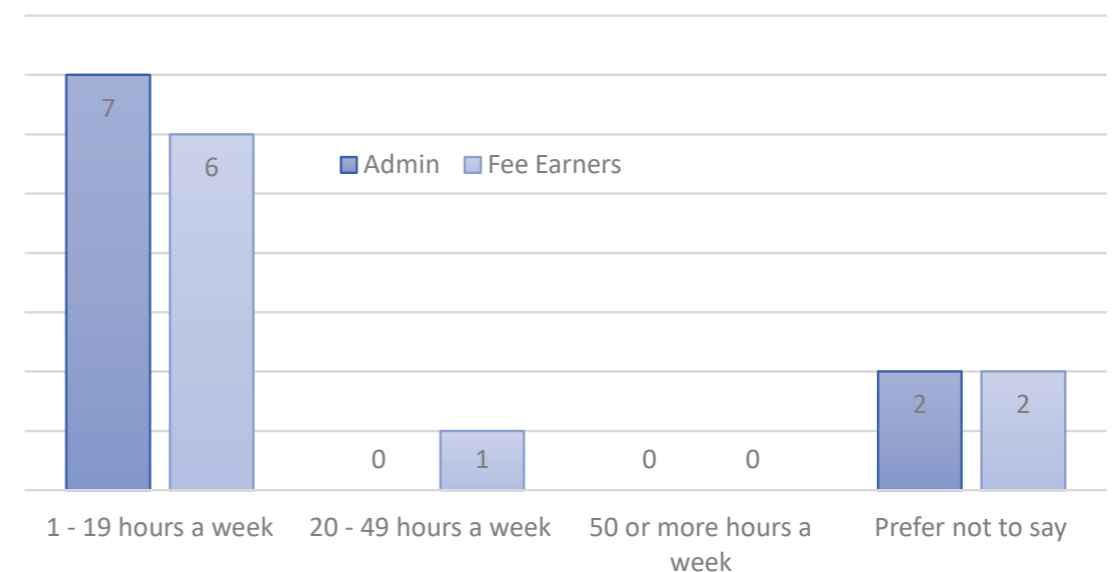
## Our staff are carers...

About 33% of Fee Earners, and 27% 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. Whilst the majority provide only 1-19hrs a week, this can be a physical and emotional strain on our staff on top of regular working hours.

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.





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

<https://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](mailto:recruitment@reeds.co.uk)

