

**REPORT OF THE FINDINGS OF THE
LSRC EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SURVEY, 2000**

Research Paper 6
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FINDINGS OF THE LSRC EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES RESEARCH EXERCISE, 2000

Introduction

The following text sets out the main findings of the LSRC Equal Opportunities Research Exercise conducted between August 1999 and April 2000. It is comprised of four main sections.

The first section sets out the findings of an analysis of equal opportunities survey data (LSRC survey data). The survey data was obtained through confidential questionnaires distributed in the autumn of 1999, when legal aid solicitors were invited to bid for legal aid contracts. 3,974 of the questionnaires were completed and returned, of which 3,938 contained sufficient data to be included in the analysis. The 3,938 completed and returned forms represented over a 60% response rate.

The questionnaire used to generate the survey data was designed by the LSRC after extensive consultation with those working in the field of equal opportunities. The LSRC is particularly grateful to the Commission for Racial Equality and the Law Society for their help in developing the form and their advice as to survey methods, in this most sensitive area of enquiry. Further details of the design process are included in the Legal Services Commission's initial report to the Lord Chancellor on ethnic, gender and disability monitoring, produced in September 1999. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix A.

The second section sets out the findings of an analysis of a composite data set derived from the LSRC survey data and Legal Services Commission administrative data. The composite data set relates to survey firms known to have been awarded contracts, and contains details of contracts awarded. The data relates to 2,968 firms.

The third section sets out the findings of an analysis of a second composite data set derived from the LSRC survey data and Legal Services Commission administrative data. The composite data set relates to survey firms known *not* to have been awarded contracts. The data relates to 373 firms. This section also includes an analysis of reasons for firms' dropping out of the contracting process, derived from a sample of 367 such firms.

The two composite data sets taken together account for 3,341 of the LSRC survey firms. 293 of the remaining survey firms did not provide any of the data requested for data merging purposes. A further 304 provided insufficient data.

The fourth section notes the general picture relating to the solicitors' profession as a whole, as provided by the Law Society.

Findings from the LSRC Equal Opportunities Survey Data (n=3,938)

Ethnicity

2,789 (71%) of the equal opportunity survey firms reported that they contained no minority ethnic fee earners.¹ 197 (5%) of the firms reported containing no white fee earners. Over half of those firms reporting at least one minority ethnic fee earner contained no more than one.

¹ For the purposes of this study 'fee earners' include all those whose time is chargeable direct to clients unless otherwise stated.

As can be seen from figures 1, 2 and 3, firms with only white or only minority ethnic fee earners tended to contain fewer fee earners overall. As a firm with both white and minority ethnic fee earners cannot be a sole practice to some extent this finding is inevitable. However, firms with 2-9 fee earners were also far more likely to be comprised of only white or only minority ethnic fee earners. Firms containing only minority ethnic fee earners tended to be the smallest. 70% of such firms contained fewer than 5 fee earners and over 12% were sole practices.

*Figure 1
Size of Survey Firms*

No. of Fee Earners	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	193	4.9	4.9
2-4	1,444	36.9	41.8
5-9	1,390	35.6	77.4
10-14	446	11.4	88.8
15-19	191	4.9	93.7
20-24	86	2.2	95.9
25-49	132	3.4	99.3
50 plus	27	0.7	100.0
Total	3,908	100.0	

*Figure 2
Size of Survey Firms with No Minority Ethnic Fee Earners*

No. of Fee Earners	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	169	6.1	6.1
2-4	1134	40.7	46.8
5-9	982	35.2	82.0
10-14	287	10.3	92.3
15-19	103	3.6	95.9
20-24	52	1.9	97.8
25-49	53	1.9	99.7
50 plus	9	0.3	100.0
Total	2,789	100.0	

*Figure 3
Size of Survey Firms with No White Fee Earners*

No. of Fee Earners	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	24	12.1	12.1
2-4	114	57.9	70.0
5-9	48	24.4	94.4
10-14	8	4.1	98.5
15-19	2	1.0	99.5
20-24	1	0.5	100.0
25-49	0	0	100.0
50 plus	0	0	100.0
Total	197	100.0	

The 3,938 firms contained around 31,000 fee earners - an average of around 8 fee earners per firm. The size of firms ranged from 1 to 280 fee earners. The median number of fee earners was 5.

Of these fee earners, 11% were from minority ethnic categories. Of these, just under 20% were categorised only as 'other'. The largest specific ethnic minority categories were 'Indian'

and 'Pakistani', representing 3.2% and 1.4% of all fee earners respectively. The ratio of white solicitor fee earners to white other fee earners was 1.7:1. This was significantly higher than the 1.2:1 ratio observed for minority ethnic fee earners. There was no uniformity of ratios as between different ethnic minority categories. Ratios ranged from 1.6:1 in respect of the Indian category to 1:1.7 in respect of the Bangladeshi category. Figure 5 sets out the distribution of fee earners by ethnic category.

*Figure 5
Fee Earner by Ethnic Category*

	Solicitor Fee Earners		Other Fee Earners	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
White	17,070	90.3	10238	86.9
Irish	215	1.1	115	1.0
Black African	154	0.8	207	1.8
Black Caribbean	180	1.0	175	1.5
Black Other	45	0.2	51	0.4
Indian	599	3.2	370	3.1
Pakistani	210	1.1	245	2.1
Bangladeshi	29	0.2	50	0.4
Chinese	57	0.3	35	0.3
Other	348	2.0	300	2.5
Total	18907	100.0	11786	100.0

The number of firms with a majority of minority ethnic fee earners was 356 – 9% of all firms. A further 81 firms (2%) had even numbers of white and minority ethnic fee earners.

Just under 10% (387) of firms reported that they had minority ethnic ownership and control. A substantial proportion of these firms described the ownership and control as falling in the 'other' ethnic category. From a review of the forms, coding practice, and a comparison between ownership and control and fee earner responses, it became clear that the 'other' category was regularly used to describe mixed ownership and control. Again, the largest specific minority ethnic category was 'Indian'. Figure 6 sets out the distribution of ownership and control by ethnic category.

*Figure 6
Ownership and Control of Survey Firms*

	Frequency	Percent
White	3527	90.1
Irish	12	0.3
Black African	31	0.8
Black Caribbean	23	0.6
Black Other	6	0.2
Indian	95	2.4
Pakistani	36	0.9
Bangladeshi	3	0.1
Chinese	5	0.1
Other	176	4.5
Total	3914	100.0

When the firms with a majority of minority ethnic fee earners were compared to those with minority ethnic ownership and control it was found that there was substantial overlap. 307 (79.3%) of the 387 firms with minority ethnic ownership and control contained a majority of minority ethnic fee earners. A further 31 (8%) contained equal numbers of white and minority ethnic fee earners. The remaining 49 (12.7%) contained a majority of white fee earners.

Figures 7 and 8 show the distribution of firm sizes by ownership and control category. From Figure 8 it can be seen that firms with minority ethnic ownership and control tend to be smaller than others. Whereas around 50% of firms with minority ethnic ownership and control have 4 or less fee earners, and 89% have fewer than 10 fee earners, the figures are 41% and 76% respectively for other firms.

Figure 7
Size of Firm by Ownership and Control (Number)

	Size of Firm (by Fee Earners)								Total
	1	2-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-49	50+	
White	170	1,265	1,249	414	184	84	129	27	3,522
Irish	2	7	2	0	0	0	1	0	12
Black African	1	13	14	2	1	0	0	0	31
Black	1	13	8	1	0	0	0	0	23
Caribbean									
Black Other	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	6
Indian	5	51	28	8	1	1	1	0	95
Pakistani	2	15	14	3	1	0	0	0	35
Bangladeshi	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Chinese	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	5
Other	10	72	70	16	4	1	1	0	174
Total	192	1,442	1,390	446	191	86	132	271	3,906

Figure 8
Size of Firm by Ownership and Control (Percentage)

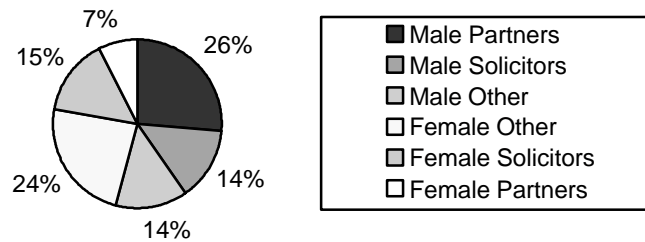
	Size of Firm (by Fee Earners)								Total
	1	2-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-49	50+	
White	5%	36%	35%	12%	5%	2%	4%	1%	100%
Irish	17%	58%	17%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	100%
Black African	3%	42%	45%	6%	3%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Black	4%	57%	35%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Caribbean									
Black Other	17%	50%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Indian	5%	54%	29%	8%	1%	1%	1%	0%	100%
Pakistani	6%	43%	40%	9%	3%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Bangladeshi	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Chinese	0%	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Other	6%	41%	40%	9%	2%	1%	1%	0%	100%
All	5%	37%	36%	11%	5%	2%	3%	1%	100%

The proportion of minority ethnic fee earners decreased with size of firm. Thus 12.9% of fee earners in firms with 5 or fewer fee earners fell into minority ethnic categories, compared to 7.6% in firms with 11 or more fee earners. Looking only at solicitors, the figures were 11.3% and 6.3% respectively.

Gender

The ratio of male to female fee earners was 1.2:1. However, This ratio varied dramatically as between different types of fee earner. Whereas there were three and a half times as many male than female partners, there were slightly more female than male solicitors (excluding partners). Non-solicitor fee earners were predominantly female, with a female to male ratio of 1.7:1. These differences are illustrated in figure 9.

Figure 9 – Fee Earners by Type and Gender



The data did not include age profiles or the years of experience of fee earners and so it was not possible to analyse the position of male and female fee earners on a like for like basis. Previous studies, however, would suggest that the female fee earner group is younger and less experienced than the male fee earner group. However, the extent to which this explains the observations set out above is unclear.

Findings from the Contract Award Composite Data Set (n=2,968)

General

The basic characteristics of the first composite data set are broadly similar to those of the survey data described in the preceding section. However, there are a number of material differences that should be noted.

As can be seen from Figure 10, the percentage of firms with minority ethnic ownership and control is reduced from 9.9% to 8.8%. This can be explained in part by the fact that a disproportionate number of forms returned without data merging details (293) were from firms with minority ethnic ownership and control. Also, though, as is shown in the next section, a disproportionate number of forms returned by firms not awarded contracts indicated minority ethnic ownership and control.

A consequence of these disproportions is that there are no examples of 'Black Other' owned and controlled firms in the first composite data set.

*Figure 10
Ownership and Control of Composite Data Set 1 Firms*

	Frequency	Percent
White	2,708	91.2
Irish	9	0.3
Black African	23	0.8
Black Caribbean	14	0.5
Black Other	0	0.0
Indian	60	2.0
Pakistani	22	0.7
Bangladeshi	2	0.1
Chinese	4	0.1
Other	124	4.2
Missing	2	0.1
Total	2,968	100.0

Similarly, as can be seen from Figures 11 and 12, there were a greater percentage of larger firms in the first composite data set. Again, though, minority ethnic owned and controlled firms

were smaller than others. 45% of such firms had fewer than 5 fee earners, compared with 38% of other firms. 84% had fewer than 10 fee earners, compared with 74%.

The mean number of fee earners in firms with white ownership and control was 8.3 (median = 6). This compares with a figure of 6.3 (median = 5) for firms with minority ethnic ownership and control.

118 (4%) of the firms in the first composite data set had no 'White' fee earners, as compared to 197 (5%) of the LSRC survey firms. Of these 118 firms 109 (92%) had fewer than 10 fee earners. 9 firms had 10 or more fee earners, compared to 11 of the equivalent LSRC survey firms.

The proportions of solicitor fee earners in each ethnic category were very similar to those found in relation to the LSRC survey firms. The most notable observation was a slight increase in the percentage of 'White' fee earners, from 90.3% to 90.9%. The difference was slightly more marked in respect of other fee earners, with a shift from 86.9% to 88.0%.

*Figure 11
Size of Firm by Ownership and Control (Number) (Composite Data Set 1)*

	Size of Firm (by Fee Earners)								Total
	1	2-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-49	50+	
White	113	928	974	338	156	77	102	16	2,706
Irish	1	5	1	0	0	1	1	0	9
Black African	1	9	8	4	1	0	0	0	23
Black Caribbean	0	9	4	1	0	0	0	0	14
Black Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indian	2	30	21	4	1	1	1	0	60
Pakistani	0	8	9	4	1	0	0	0	22
Bangladeshi	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Chinese	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Other	6	44	51	16	2	3	1	0	123
Total	123	1,034	1,071	369	161	82	105	16	2,961

*Figure 12
Size of Firm by Ownership and Control (Percentage) (Composite Data Set 1)*

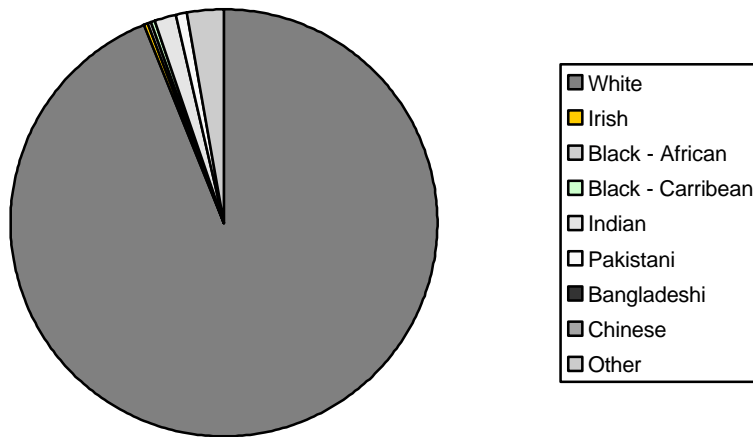
	Size of Firm (by Fee Earners)								Total
	1	2-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-49	50+	
White	4%	34%	36%	12%	6%	3%	4%	1%	100%
Irish	11%	56%	11%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	100%
Black African	4%	39%	35%	17%	4%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Black Caribbean	0%	64%	29%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Black Other	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Indian	3%	50%	35%	7%	2%	2%	2%	0%	100%
Pakistani	0%	36%	41%	18%	5%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Bangladeshi	0%	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Chinese	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Other	5%	36%	41%	13%	2%	2%	1%	0%	100%
All	4%	35%	36%	12%	5%	3%	4%	1%	100%

The overall ratio of male to female fee earners was 1.2:1. As was seen before this varied greatly as between different levels of fee earner. The first composite data set contains a slightly greater proportion on male partners (3.7:1) and a slightly lower proportion of male solicitors (1:1.1). The ratio of male to female 'other' fee earners was unchanged at 1:1.7.

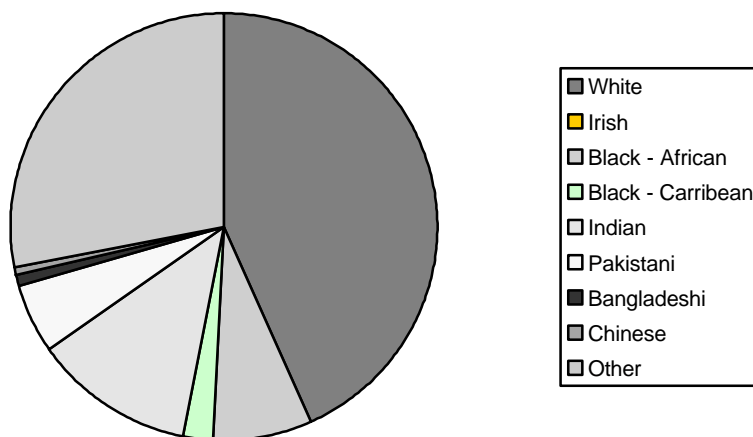
Contract Types – Ethnicity

Figure 16 sets out the ownership and control of firms entering into contracts for different types of work. As can be seen, there seems to be significant variation in the focus of legal aid undertaken by firms with different ethnic ownership and control. For example, as is illustrated by Figures 13 and 14, whereas just 6% of family contracts are let to firms with minority ethnic ownership and control – almost a third less than overall – over 55% of immigration contracts are let to firms with minority ethnic ownership and control. Family work is unusual, though, in the number of contracts let. In numerical terms more family contracts (159) are let to firms with minority ethnic ownership and control than immigration (149). Mental health contracts therefore provide the greatest contrast. Just 12 mental health contracts are let to composite data set 1 firms with minority ethnic ownership and control, representing 6% of them.

*Figure 13
Ownership and Control of Firms – Family*



*Figure 14
Ownership and Control of Firms – Immigration*



A similar pattern emerges from an analysis of solicitors. As Figure 17 shows, there are proportionately many more minority ethnic solicitors in firms awarded immigration contracts (37.8%) than those awarded family (7.6%) or mental health contracts (11.0).

These different proportions may in part be connected with there being a lower average number of solicitors in firms awarded immigration contracts than all other types of contract except family.

Gender

The ratio of male to female fee earners varies as between firms awarded different types of contract. Figure 15 shows male to female ratios for each of 8 types of contract firms.

As can be seen there is little variation in respect of *all* fee earners. Perhaps surprisingly, though, the male to female ratios of both partner and solicitor fee earners as a whole are amongst the highest in firms with family law contracts. The lowest ratios relate to firms with immigration contracts.

*Figure 15
Male to Female Ratios by Contract Type*

Contract Type	Male to Female Ratio		
	Partners	All Solicitors	All Fee Earners
Family	3.7 : 1	1.9 : 1	1.2 : 1
Mental Health	2.7 : 1	1.4 : 1	1.1 : 1
Employment	3.5 : 1	1.6 : 1	1.1 : 1
Debt	3.5 : 1	1.8 : 1	1.1 : 1
Consumer	3.8 : 1	1.8 : 1	1.2 : 1
Welfare	3.1 : 1	1.4 : 1	1.1 : 1
Housing	3.0 : 1	1.5 : 1	1.1 : 1
Immigration	2.5 : 1	1.4 : 1	1.1 : 1

Contracts in General

Data for 2,432 contracting legal aid service suppliers could not be merged into the composite data set, either because of insufficient matching data, because they did not respond to the LSRC equal opportunities survey or because they were not solicitors' firms. This last fact goes some way to explaining why there was a higher proportion of family contracts within the first composite data set firms than in general, and a lower proportion of welfare type contracts. A further explanation can be found through the observation, set out above, that a greater proportion of firms with minority ethnic ownership and control returned completely anonymised survey questionnaires.

Figure 16
Ownership and Control by Contract Types

	Family		Mental Health		Employment		Debt		Consumer		Welfare		Housing		Immigration	
	n=	%	n=	%	N=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%
White	2,471	94.0	186	94.0	196	92.5	241	89.9	100	85.5	242	81.5	370	81.0	114	43.3
Irish	7	0.3	2	1.0	0	0.0	1	0.4	1	0.9	1	0.3	3	0.7	0	0
Black African	7	0.3	2	1.0	2	0.9	1	0.4	0	0.0	6	2.0	10	2.2	20	7.6
Black Caribbean	10	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.5	2	0.7	0	0.0	4	1.3	6	1.3	6	2.3
Black Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Indian	46	1.7	3	1.5	6	2.8	7	2.6	8	6.8	12	4.0	18	3.9	33	12.5
Pakistani	15	0.6	1	0.5	2	0.9	5	1.9	3	2.6	9	3.0	8	1.8	12	4.6
Bangladeshi	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.2	2	0.8
Chinese	3	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.7	2	0.4	2	0.8
Other	71	2.7	4	2.0	4	1.9	11	4.1	5	4.3	20	6.7	39	8.5	74	28.1
Total	2,630	100.0	198	100.0	212	100.0	268	100.0	117	100.0	297	100.0	457	100.0	263	100.0

Figure 17
Solicitors by Contract Types

	Family		Mental Health		Employment		Debt		Consumer		Welfare		Housing		Immigration	
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%
White	12,473	92.4	1,236	89.0	1,583	91.1	1,542	91.5	881	90.9	1,326	85.0	2,475	84.6	856	62.2
Irish	140	1.0	15	1.1	21	1.2	17	1.0	12	1.2	16	1.0	49	1.7	16	1.2
Black African	62	0.5	12	0.9	15	0.9	8	0.5	2	0.2	22	1.4	48	1.6	75	5.5
Black Caribbean	101	0.7	24	1.7	20	1.2	13	0.8	9	0.9	31	2.1	57	1.9	60	4.4
Black Other	21	0.2	7	0.5	8	0.5	3	0.2	0	0.0	8	0.5	14	0.5	10	0.7
Indian	377	2.8	51	3.7	50	2.9	53	3.1	40	4.1	76	4.9	150	5.1	156	11.3
Pakistani	121	0.9	19	1.4	21	1.2	29	1.7	15	1.5	36	2.3	51	1.7	68	4.9
Bangladeshi	16	0.1	2	0.1	2	0.1	3	0.2	2	0.2	5	0.3	8	0.3	11	0.8
Chinese	38	0.3	6	0.4	2	0.1	4	0.2	0	0.0	4	0.3	11	0.4	11	0.8
Other	151	1.1	16	1.2	16	0.9	14	0.8	8	0.8	36	2.3	61	2.1	113	8.2
Total	13,500	100.0	1,419	100.0	1,755	100.0	1,686	100.0	969	100.0	1,560	100.0	2,924	100.0	1,376	100.0

Findings from the No Contract Award Composite Data Set (n=373)

As can be seen from Figure 18, the proportion of second composite data set firms with minority ethnic ownership and control was quite a bit higher, at 16.9%, than for first composite data set firms, at 8.8%.

*Figure 18
Ownership and Control (Composite Data Set 2)*

	Frequency	Percent
White	310	83.1
Irish	0	0.0
Black African	2	0.5
Black Caribbean	5	1.3
Black Other	2	0.5
Indian	18	4.8
Pakistani	7	1.9
Bangladeshi	1	0.3
Chinese	0	0.0
Other	28	7.5
Total	373	100.0

As regards fee earners, around 15% of the second composite data set solicitor fee earners fell in minority ethnic categories. This compares to fewer than 10% of the first composite data set solicitor fee earners. When other fee earners are examined the position is more dramatic still. One quarter of the second composite data set other fee earners fell into minority ethnic categories compared to one eighth of first composite data set other fee earners. 'Indian' and 'Pakistani' fee earners saw the greatest change.

As can be seen from Figures 19 and 20, 88.7% of the second composite data set firms had fewer than 10 fee earners. This compares to 75.2% of first composite data set firms. No minority ethnic owned and controlled firm with 15 or more fee earners was found in the second composite data set. Only 3% of all second composite data set firms fell in this category, compared to 12.3% of first composite data set firms.

*Figure 19
Size of Firm by Ownership and Control (Number) (Composite Data Set 2)*

	Size of Firm (by Fee Earners)								Total
	1	2-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-49	50+	
White	25	162	82	26	5	4	4	1	309
Irish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black African	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Black Caribbean	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	5
Black Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Indian	1	12	5	0	0	0	0	0	18
Pakistani	1	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
Bangladeshi	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	2	15	9	2	0	0	0	0	28
Total	30	195	105	28	5	4	4	1	372

Figure 20
Size of Firm by Ownership and Control (Percentage) (Composite Data Set 2)

	Size of Firm (by Fee Earners)								Total
	1	2-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-49	50+	
White	8%	52%	27%	8%	2%	1%	1%	0%	100%
Irish	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Black African	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Black Caribbean	0%	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Black Other	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Indian	5%	67%	28%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Pakistani	14%	29%	57%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Bangladeshi	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Chinese	n/a	n/a	N/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other	7%	54%	32%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Total	8%	52%	28%	8%	1%	1%	1%	0%	100%

There was a greater proportion of male fee earners in the second composite data set. The ratio was 1.5:1, compared to 1.2:1 for the first composite data set. For partners the ratio was 4.1:1, for solicitors 1.2:1 and other fee earners 1:1.3.

From an analysis of a sample of 367 firms not awarded contracts, and information from members of the Legal Services Commission's civil contracting team, it seems that there are two principal reasons for firms withdrawing or being excluded from the contracting process. The first is restructuring. Of the large number of firms involved in civil legal aid work, a significant number restructure over the course of even a single year. Firms merge or demerge, and individual fee earners come and go. Each of these eventualities can see a shift in the focus of work, and may lead to a withdrawal from certain categories of work altogether. The second, more important within the context of this report, is failure (or anticipated failure) to meet the Legal Services Commission's required quality standards. If a firm fails a quality audit, then it may lose the opportunity to gain a contract. The precise consequences depend upon the prospects for the failure being rectified. The main non-structural reason for withdrawal or exclusion from the contracting process is failure or anticipated failure of a quality audit.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to address the details of each individual response to audit failure in this paper. Although information on every decision is kept within the Legal Services Commission, this information is not put in electronic form. It should be noted, though, that, in the light of the general findings set out above, a review should be undertaken in the near future, to ensure that the process is free of discriminatory practice.

The Bigger Picture

Figures produced by the Law Society for July 1999, covering 80% of solicitors in private practice and extracted from the REGIS database, indicate that 6% of such solicitors fall into minority ethnic categories. This compares to 9.7% of solicitors in the LSRC equal opportunities survey, although the figure drops to 8.6% if the 'Irish' category, not recognised in the Law Society figures, is excluded and 6.6% if the 'Other' category is excluded. There are twice as many 'Other' solicitors in the LSRC survey. The largest Law Society minority ethnic category was 'Asian', making up 3.5% of the total. This compares to the 4.3% figure derived from the LSRC survey. Figure 21 sets out the Law Society figures in full.

Figure 21
Law Society Survey Results

	Solicitors in Private Practice	Percentage of Total
White European	52,648	94.0
Afro-Caribbean	267	0.5
African	201	0.4
Asian	1,945	3.5
Chinese	387	0.7
Other	568	1.0
Total	56,016	100.0

As regards fee earners generally, the Law Society found, as did the LSRC survey, that a greater proportion of non-solicitor than solicitor fee earners fell into minority ethnic categories.

Law Society figures indicate that 67.1% of solicitors in private practice are male. This compares to 64.5% of solicitors in the LSRC survey.