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When will I make Partner?

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Our latest Partnership Survey tracks the legal career development of Solicitors by detailing their qualification dates versus when they become Partner. Discover:

- How long will the path to partnership take you?
- How are you affected by the firm in which you work?
- Will your chosen practice area matter?
- Whether your gender has an impact on your partnership path?

Read on...

A RESOURCE FOR YOU

Origin Legal produces a range of information and resources to assist lawyers in both the strategic and technical aspects of their careers. We frequently discuss career paths and the time it takes to be made up to Partner with firms and lawyers alike. The purpose of this survey (qualification dates and practice areas of Partners made up Spring 2017 by region) is to identify any significant trends or differences between the sample groups in terms of when Solicitors are awarded partnership, in what practice

areas and whether gender has an impact on partnership prospects.

The data collected included qualification dates, practice area, gender and the regions / sample groups were as below:

- Magic Circle firms
- London Top 20 excluding Magic Circle
- London West End firms
- East and West Midlands firms

Survey of Qualification dates and Practices areas of Partners made up Spring 2017 by region

We have taken a representative sample of Solicitors who were made up to Partner and announced in Spring 2017. The data collected was qualification date, practice area, gender and the regions/sample groups were:

- Magic Circle firms – 34 (2016 – 40)
- London Top 20 excluding Magic Circle – 66 (2016 - 71)
- London West End firms – 26 (2016 – 41)
- East and West Midlands – 30 (2016 – 35)

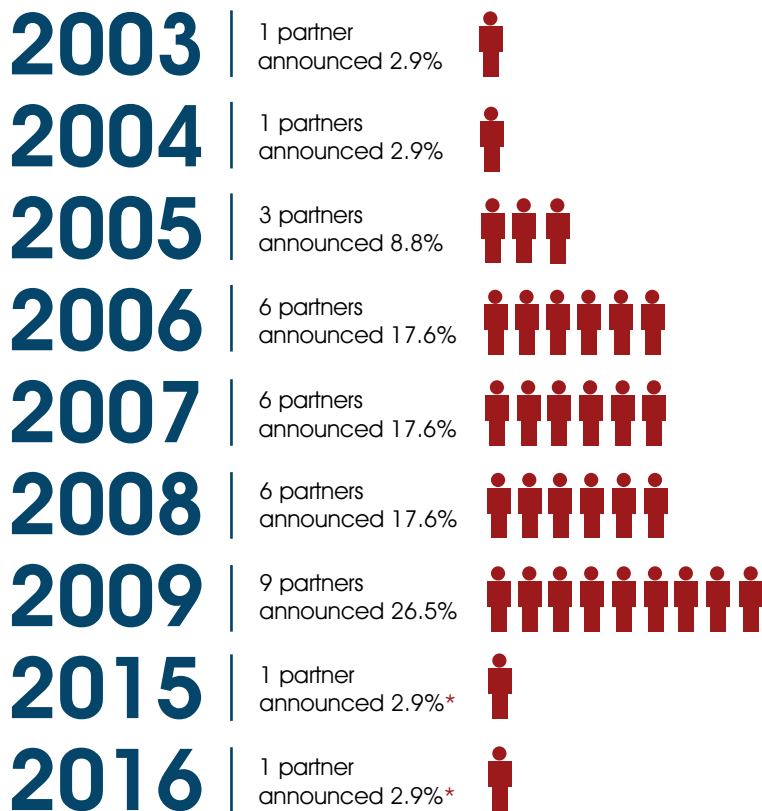
The purpose of the study was to identify any significant trends or differences between the sample groups in terms of when Solicitors were being awarded partnership, their gender and what practice areas were most frequent.



MAGIC CIRCLE

34 Partners were announced Spring 2017

Year of Qualification



*denotes Solicitors made up to Partner originally overseas qualified and qualifications years shown do not necessarily reflect original qualification.

Most intriguingly, the figures show that just 18% (6) of the Partners made within the Magic Circle in 2017 were female and 15% less Partners have been made up in 2017 than in 2016.

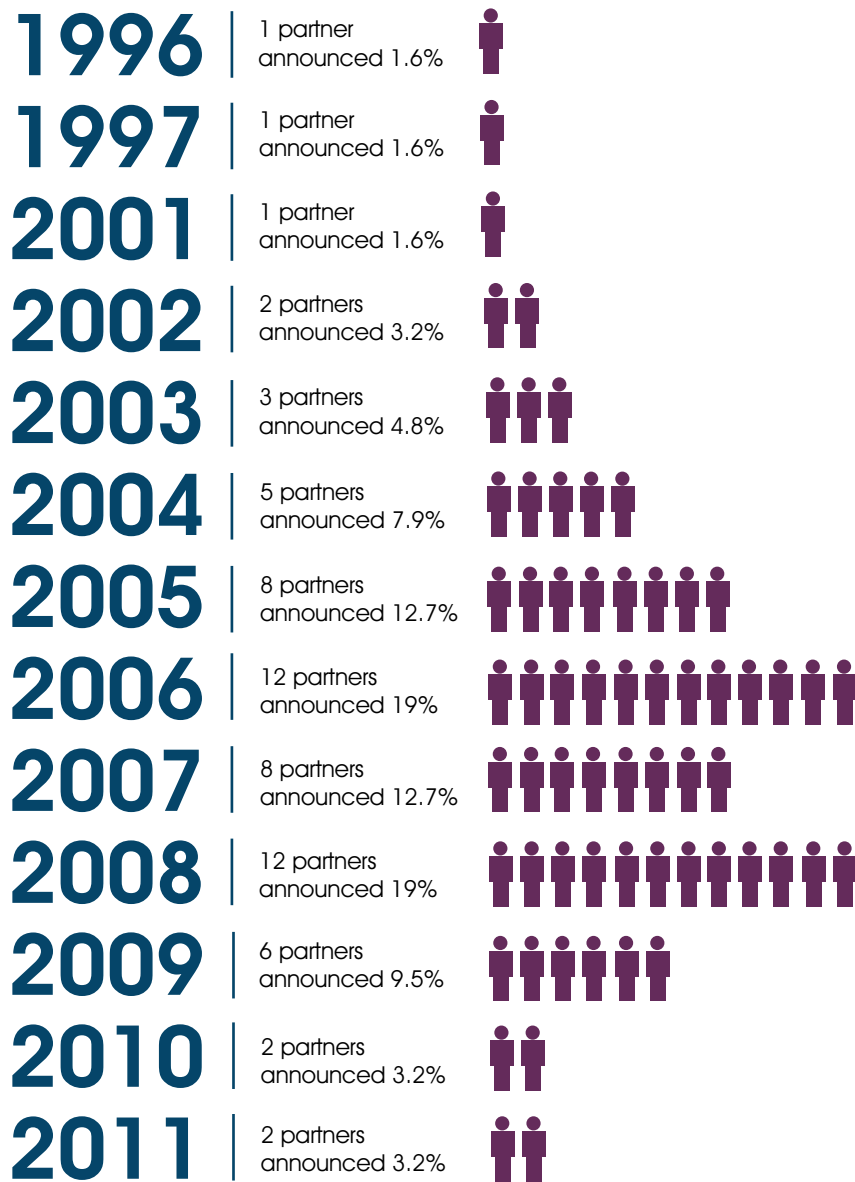
88% of Partners made up were between 8 and 12 years qualified with over a quarter of them just hitting their 8 year milestone. This is in contrast to the 2016 survey when 12.5% of the promotions were 8 years qualified and the majority of made up Partners were at least 10 years' PQE. The change indicates that you could be aiming for Partner two years before your decade PQE is up.

Once again, the survey shows that corporate, finance and banking positions made up 62% of the promotions, which makes these the areas to focus on if you have your targets set on partnership at a Magic Circle firm. If you favour other practice areas, maybe you should be looking elsewhere?

LONDON TOP TWENTY EXCLUDING MAGIC CIRCLE

66 Partners were announced Spring 2017

Year of Qualification



Please note 3 Solicitors made up to Partner were overseas qualified and qualifications dates are unknown.

Notably, the number of female Solicitors made up to Partner in the Top 20 London firms outside the Magic Circle were more than double those inside the Magical Circle at 36.5%; possibly highlighting a discrepancy between these and their more illustriously-placed counterparts.

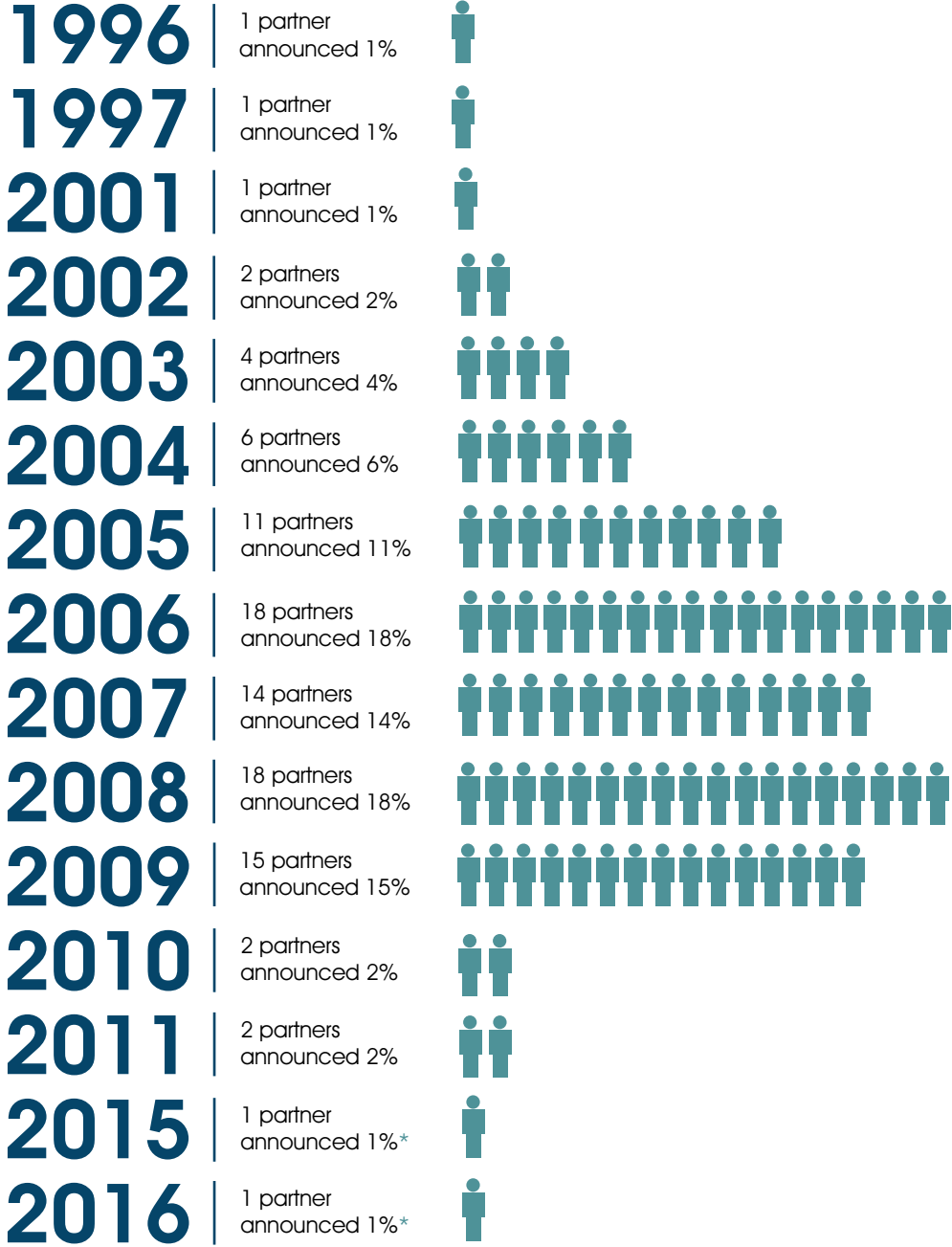
Nearly three-quarters, 73% of Partners made up were between 8-12 years qualified which is in line with the 2016 survey although the total number made up to Partner fell by 7%. Interestingly 20.7% qualified between 13-21 years PQE so if you haven't been made Partner do not give up hope, get planning.

Once again the Corporate, Finance and Banking sectors dominated the promotional ladder.

LONDON COMBINED TOP 20

100 Partners were announced Spring 2017

Year of Qualification



*Please note 3 Solicitors made up to Partner were overseas qualified and qualifications dates are unknown.
 *Additional 2 Solicitors made up to Partner were originally overseas qualified and original qualifications dates therefore are unclear.

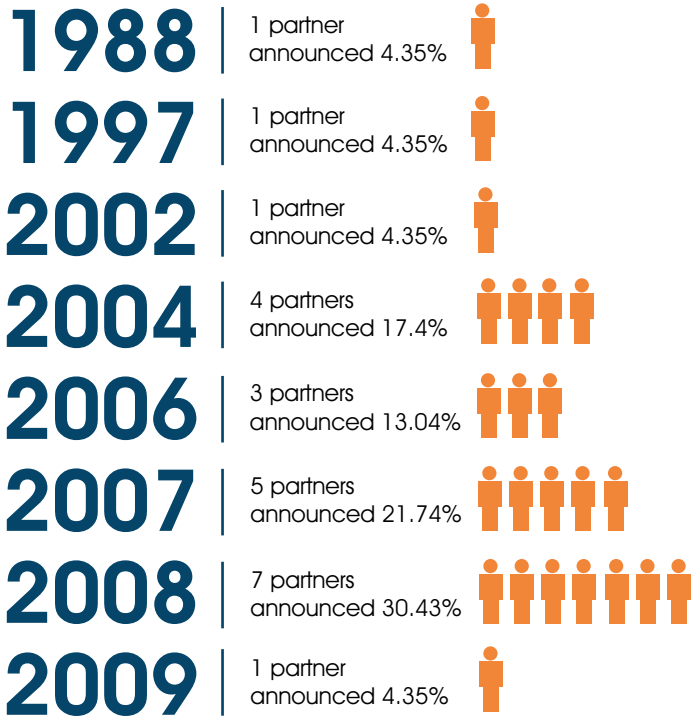
Just 29% of the Partners made up in 2017 within the combined London Top 20 firms were female, which highlights a significant difference in other areas even in the capital (61% in West End, 70% in the East Midlands and 52.6% in the West Midlands).

The combined figures show that experience of 8-12 years is the ideal time period if you want to achieve Partner with nearly three quarters of promotions (73.12%) within this time. This is a shift from 2016 when it was a decade if you wanted promotion within a London firm. Interestingly, 34 Partners were made up in the Magic Circle firms and 66 in the remaining 15 firms that make up London's Top 20. 11% less Partners have been made up in 2017 than in 2016.

WEST END FIRMS

26 Partners were announced Spring 2017

Year of Qualification



Please note 3 Partner’s Qualification Dates are unknown.

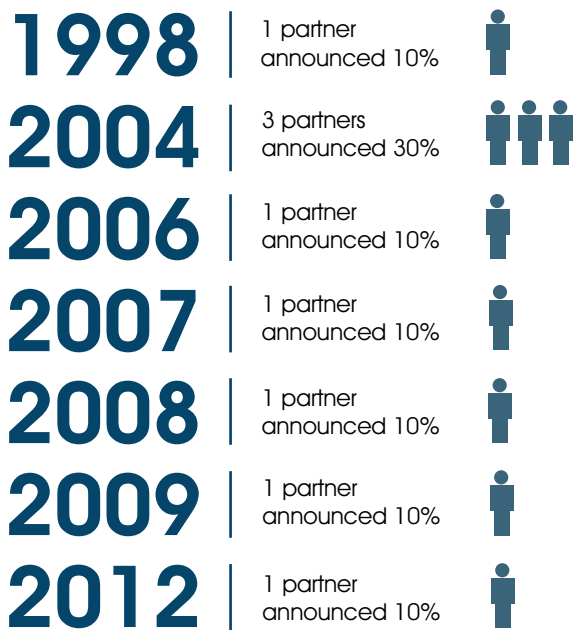
Figures reveal that if you take a step further out of the top firms the number of female promotions to Partner increase with 16 of 26 (61%) appointments. Of the 26 promotions – down 35% on the previous year – more than 50% of those whose qualification dates are known, were Solicitors between 9-10 years qualified, showcasing an increasing trend of needing to aim for Partner before your 10 year anniversary.

In contrast to other parts of London, West End firms made up 9 Partners in Litigation against just 3 in Corporate, Finance and Banking, while the rest were from a broad cross section including Sports, Media, Residential Property, Charity and Private Client.

EAST MIDLANDS

10 Partners were announced Spring 2017

Year of Qualification



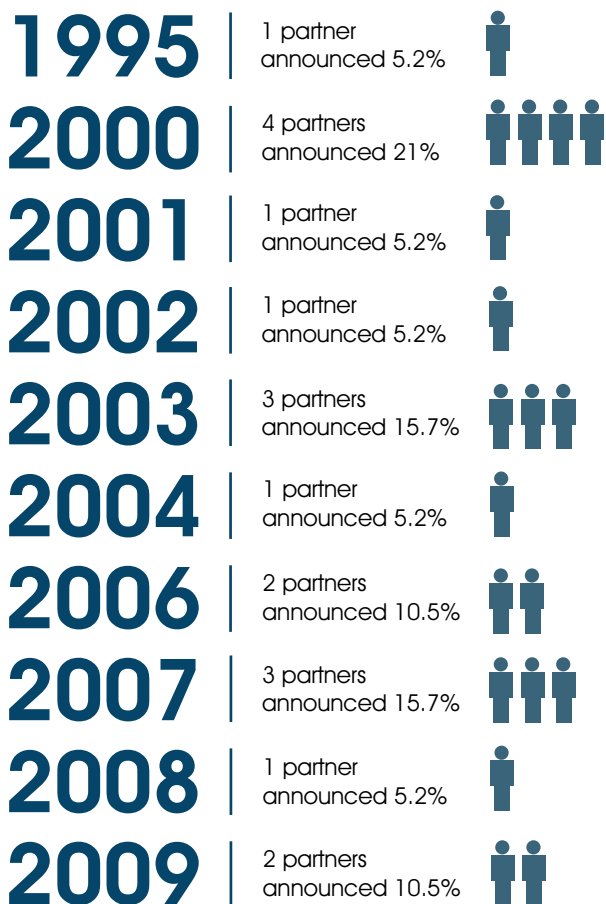
Please note 1 Partner's qualification date is unknown.

Of the 10 Solicitors promoted to Partner, 70% of them were female which reflects a rise of nearly double on the previous year. Like the figures in 2016 promotions were from a broad cross section of fields and there were no stand out timescales for making Partner unlike firms in London. Notably there was a 50% reduction on Partners' made up compared to 2016.

WEST MIDLANDS

19 Partners were announced Spring 2017

Year of Qualification

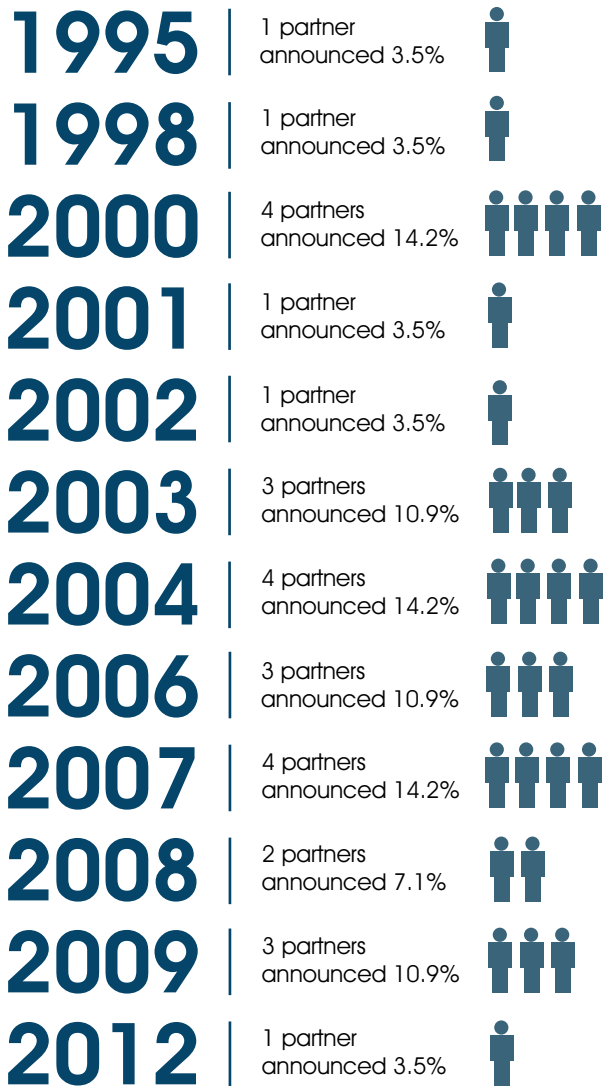


More than half of Partners made up, 52.6%, were female another upturn on the figures from 2016 which stood at 46.7%. Like the East Midlands, it appears as though Solicitors will wait longer to make Partner than their London counterparts and that firms are far more considerate to longer qualified Solicitors. 32% of those promoted to Partner were in Commercial Property.

MIDLANDS (EAST AND WEST COMBINED)

29 Partners were announced Spring 2017

Year of Qualification



Please note 1 Partner's qualification date is unknown.

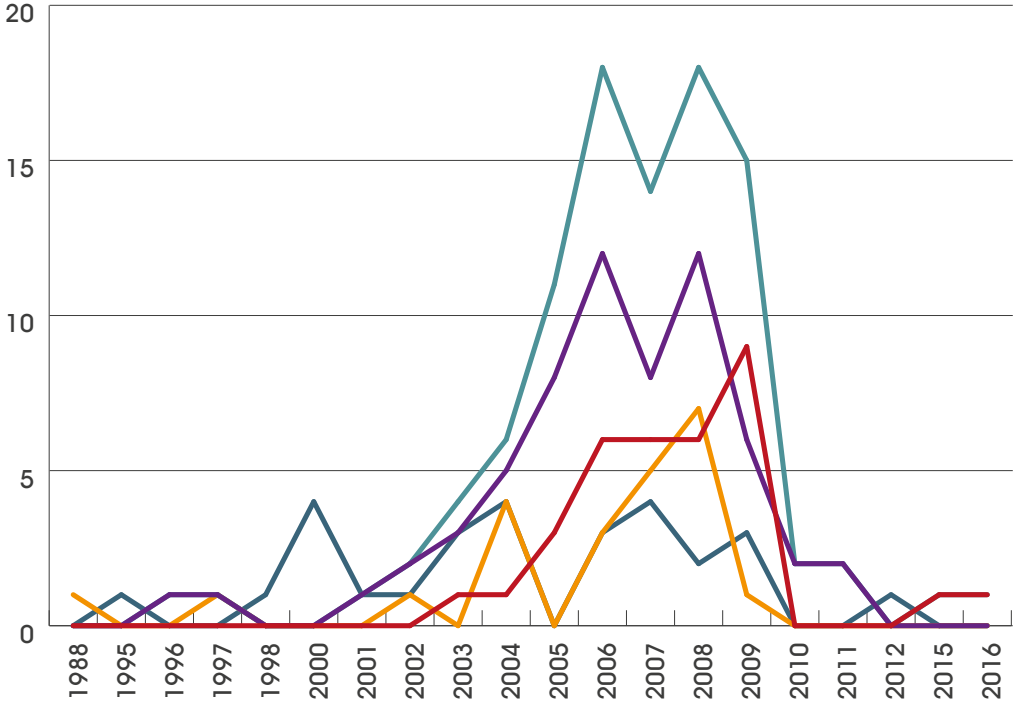
There has been a levelling out of the gender gap that once existed in the annual Partner announcements within the region, 17 of the Solicitors made up were women representing 58.6%.

A number of law firms have actively promoted addressing the gender imbalance that they have previously encountered in their Partnership and this is now showing. Diversity and equal opportunity assessments may also have involved a degree of inward consideration and adjustment.

There is no conclusive qualification date that is predominant in the Midlands Partner announcements. It appears that Partners can be made up on merit at any stage of their career and Solicitors are prepared to wait for the opportunity. There is also a broad range of disciplines that they qualify into perhaps reflecting the more multi-disciplinary nature of major provincial law firms across the UK.

YEARS TO PARTNER...

Summary of the data by years



- Magic Circle firms
- London Top 20 excluding Magic Circle
- London combined top 20
- London West End firms
- Midlands (East and West combined)

SOLICITORS V PARTNERS

Summary of the percentage of Solicitors made up to Partner in 2017

	No of Solicitors excluding Partners	No of Partners	No of Partners made up in 2017	% of Solicitors made up to Partners in 2017
Magic Circle	2770	784	34	1.23%
London Top 20 excl Magic Circle	7133	2721	66	0.93%
London West End	2561	1002	26	1.02%
East and West Midlands	1615	823	10	0.62%

Figures highlight a bumper year for Solicitors being made Partner within Magic Circle firms in 2017 compared to their counterparts in other London firms. This is in stark contrast to last year where it was the opposite, but the statistics revealed that Solicitors in the Magic Circle were nearly twice as likely to make Partner in 2017 as those based in Midlands firms. Despite this the Magic Circle still lags behind other regions when it comes to the number of Partners compared to the number of Solicitors. The Magic Circle stands at 28% compared to 38% and 39% in the other top twenty London firms and West End firms respectively. Whereas, in the Midlands over half of the Solicitors are Partners (51%); which makes the number of Partners made up in the Magic Circle in 2017 surprising.

This survey is reviewing Partners made up in 2017 and Origin Legal intends to produce an annual survey which will enable future year on year comparisons. For further resources please refer to our website www.originlegal.co.uk.

INTERPRETING THE DATA – A SUMMARY

In 2017, just like in 2016, a timescale for making Partner in London focuses around the 8-12 year PQE milestone, accounting for 69.5% of those made up in the West End firms and 65% in the London Top 20 combined. The situation softens in the Midlands, with firms and Solicitors far more patient when it comes to partnership with more than half of those Solicitors made up to Partner being over 13 years PQE.

Whilst it is no surprise that Partnership promotions are clustered around 8-12 years PQE levels given the similar 2016 results, the figures do represent a warning for anyone approaching this milestone without partnership being discussed. With a typical lead time of two years, we would suggest six to eight years' PQE as the time to start the conversation or consider a move if the talks are not forthcoming.



Intriguingly, the survey shows that just 18% (6) of the Partners made up within the Magic Circle in 2017 were female compared to 61% in West End firms and 36.5% of Top 20 London firms not in the Magic Circle.

On the face of it the discrepancy in the number of female Partners made up in different regions is something that strongly suggests a reluctance to promoting women to the biggest roles in the largest firms in the heart of London. The fact that of Magic Circle promotions just 18% were female is surprising given the number of female Solicitors. However you could also reasonably conclude that these figures represent a reflection on the gender balance of contenders at the cusp of partnership, for any number of reasons, at these firms. Further data would be required to be able to confidently theorise on these numbers.

This figure rises slightly to 29% when combining the London Top 20 firms, but remains less than half of those made up in West End firms (61%), drastically less than the 70% in the East Midlands and the 52.6% in the West Midlands. In 2016, 136,176 Solicitors* held current practising certificates, of these Solicitors 49.5% were women and 50.5% men.

Partnership, if achieved with the right firm, remains the best route to playing a key role in the running of your firm and earning handsomely at the same time. In most firms now, you will need to demonstrate the business case for why you should be a Partner – longevity is no longer a guarantee.

Building your business case takes time so if you are a mid-level Associate now is the time to start thinking about it. Are you leading deals, building your internal profile, making good contacts with your future client base? With the right long-term planning you can maximise your chances of success.

* The survey refers to figures published by The Law Society for more details please refer to <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/Law-careers/Becoming-a-solicitor/Entry-trends/>



ABOUT THE SURVEY

Origin Legal's resource team selected a representative sample of Solicitors who were made up to Partner and announced in Spring 2017. The data collected focused on qualification dates and practice areas. The survey analysed sample groups of London based Partners and Solicitors. The data excludes Partners who arrived as lateral hires. The regions / sample groups were:

- Magic Circle firms – 5 firms
- London Top 20 excluding Magic Circle – 15 firms
- London West End – 15 firms
- Midlands – 16 firms

FURTHER RESOURCES

Origin Legal produces a range of information to assist lawyers in both the strategic and technical aspects of making a career move.

We hope you find this document useful please do contact us on +44 (0)1206 233500 if you would like to discuss any of the information in more detail.

For further resources please refer to our website www.originlegal.co.uk.

CONTACT

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