



Income at the Bar - by Gender and Ethnicity Research report

June 2025

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Executive Summary

- This report follows our research report “Income at the Bar by Gender & Ethnicity” published in February 2022¹ and seeks to look more specifically at what has happened to barristers’ incomes over the last three financial years (using income declarations from the annual Authorisation to Practise process). It examines differences in the earnings of barristers by ethnicity and gender, and by their seniority, status, region, and practice area.
- This report examines the gross income of barristers and is based entirely on income figures between the 2021/22 and 2023/24 financial years. For the one fifth of barristers who are employed, “income” refers to their gross income before tax and national insurance etc. For the four fifths of barristers who are self-employed, their “income” is their total fee income (excluding VAT) before they pay the costs of their chambers, which is estimated to typically take between 20 and 40 per cent of their income, and other costs such as clerking and pensions.
- The following report presents both the mean and median income analysis. The mean is the overall average of barristers’ income. The median is also reported and represents the middle value of incomes, with 50% of barristers earning less and 50% earning more. Although this research reports both mean and median values, in general the median is more commonly used for comparisons of incomes as it is less prone to being skewed by outliers at the higher end of the income scale and therefore represents a better measure of ‘typical’ incomes for different groups.

Key Findings

- The analysis of income data held by the BSB shows that female barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are likely to earn less than White and male barristers respectively. This holds true when looking at employed barristers, self-employed barristers, KCs, barristers based both inside and outside London, and barristers with similar seniority by year of Call.
- Female barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are the lowest earning group, whereas White male barristers are the highest earning group. There are also differences in the income of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds once ethnicity is looked at in more detail, with Black and Black British barristers earning less than Asian and Asian British barristers overall.
- When barristers are grouped by their main area of practice and seniority by year of Call, female barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds earn less on average than equivalent male and White barristers. This suggests that differences in income by gender and ethnicity cannot be explained solely by practising area or experience.
- Differences in average income are larger when comparing male and female

1. [Income at the Bar by Gender and Ethnicity \(BSB 2022\)](#)

barristers than when comparing White and minority ethnic barristers. Looking at the Bar as a whole, average incomes for women are 57% of those of men, whereas average incomes for barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are 74% of those of White barristers.

- Female barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are the lowest earning group, with average incomes 47% of those of White male barristers when looking at the profession as a whole.
- Both male and female barristers have seen increases in mean and median income overall between 2021/22 and 2023/24. When looking at mean income, female barristers have seen larger increases than male barristers (and so the gap between male and female incomes has narrowed). In contrast, for median incomes, the gap between male and female barristers has increased.
- Analysis of changes by income decile shows that while the top 10% of female barristers have seen their income gap with the top 10% of male barristers reduce (thus narrowing the mean income difference which is more impacted by the highest incomes), the remaining 90% of female barristers have seen the income gap with the remaining 90% of male barristers increase (so the median difference, which is a better reflection of 'typical' earnings, has increased).
- Minority ethnic barristers have seen larger increases in mean income than White barristers between 2021/22 and 2023/24 but smaller increases for median income. This means the gap between the incomes of White barristers and barristers from a minority ethnic background has decreased over this period for mean measures but has increased when looking at the median income.
- Similar to the picture with income by gender, analysis of changes by income decile shows that while the top 20% of minority ethnic barristers have seen their income gap with the top 20% of White barristers reduce (thus narrowing the mean income difference which is more impacted by the highest incomes), the remaining 80% of minority ethnic barristers have seen the income gap with the remaining 80% of White barristers increase (so the median income difference, which is a better reflection of 'typical' earnings, has increased).
- The analysis of the data demonstrates that differences by gender and ethnicity in barrister's median incomes were smaller at the employed Bar than at the self-employed Bar. This shows amongst employed barristers there is less income disparity and minority ethnic barristers, and female barristers' median income is more comparable to their White and Male counterparts, whereas these differences are greater when looking at the self-employed bar.
- The data shows incomes were significantly higher for barristers who are based in London compared to those who are based outside of London. However, while earnings were higher overall for barristers based in London, income disparities by gender and ethnicity were markedly higher than those for barristers outside of London.
- The analysis reported shows several areas where there has been a consistent narrowing of the income gap across both the mean and median measurement,

these include minority ethnic barristers with less than 15 years of call compared with equivalent White barristers, female KC's compared to male KCs, minority ethnic KC's when compared to White KCs, minority ethnic self-employed barristers when compared to White self-employed barristers, female barristers based in London compared to male barristers based in London, and minority ethnic barristers based in London compared to White barristers based in London.

- Even when comparing barristers with the same main area of practice and seniority by year of Call, female barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds still earn less on average than equivalent male and White barristers.
- It is important to note working patterns could have a strong relationship with the level of income declared but we have not controlled for this variable because we currently do not collect this information.

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The Bar Standards Board (BSB) collects data on the income of the practising Bar as part of our Authorisation to Practise process (AtP). This is an annual process in which members of the profession renew their Practising Certificate and provide information covering demographic characteristics and information about their practice (such as whether they are in employed or self-employed practice, or the proportion of their income from particular areas of legal practice). As part of this process, barristers must provide information on their gross income over the previous year (for self-employed barristers, this is calculated by calendar year, and for employed barristers by tax year). This declared figure is used both to set the level of fees they must pay for their Practising Certificate, and to provide information valuable to the BSB as part of its monitoring and research activities.
- 1.2. This report examines the impact of gender and ethnicity on the income levels of barristers (for full details explaining the reason we have analysed the data by gender rather than sex please see paragraph 2.4). The focus on gender and ethnicity is dictated by the quality of data held by the BSB – for most demographic characteristics (beyond gender, ethnicity and age) the data held by the BSB have relatively low response rates (around 60% in most cases). As a result, any analysis of income by (for example) sexual orientation, or religion, would be less reliable due to the lower response rates. We have also not analysed income by age, as in most cases this will effectively be a proxy for years of experience, and thus there would be an expected relationship between age and income as older barristers as are likely to be more experienced (although this will also be impacted by other factors such as area of law). This research repeats the analysis of barrister income that we published in 2020² and in 2022.³

2. [Income at the Bar by Gender and Ethnicity \(BSB 2020\)](#)

3. [Income at the Bar by Gender and Ethnicity \(BSB 2022\)](#)

2 Methodology

- 2.1. Income data has historically been collected by the BSB as one of eight income bands rather than a specific numerical value. Since the 2021 ATP round the BSB has also collected total income as a numerical value. The income bands are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1

Band	Gross Income
1	£0 - £30,000
2	£30,001 - £60,000
3	£60,001- £90,000
4	£90,001 - £150,000
5	£150,001 - £240,000
6	£240,001 - £500,000
7	£500,001 - £1,000,000
8	£1,000,000 and above

- 2.2. The income declarations used for this research were made during the authorisation to practise (AtP) process for the period between 2021/22 and 2023/24 (calendar year for self-employed barristers, financial year for employed barristers).
- 2.3. It is important that the use of the word “income” in this report is not misunderstood. Employed barristers use their gross salary when declaring an income band. Self-employed barristers declare a band based on the total turnover of their practice (excluding VAT). From that figure, the barrister has to fund their office (chambers) and staffing (clerks) costs. We do not have definitive figures for the proportion of barristers’ income taken up by chambers rent, fees and other expenses, but it is estimated that they range from 20 to 40 per cent of fee income. In a sample of 692 barristers with a range of practices undertaken as part of the Criminal Legal Aid review, the middle 50% of barristers had expenses ratios of 20%-30%, and the median was 25%.⁴ Of the fees that remain, there is no provision for sick pay, annual leave, or employer pension. It is clear therefore that there is a difference between fees received, which in this report we refer to as “income” and “earnings” and actual net income for the self-employed Bar. It should also be noted that those barristers in the higher bands tend to be those whose fees are privately funded. Barristers who undertake legal aid work are more likely to appear in the lower bands.

4. [Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid - Annexes A-N \(Bellamy, 2021\)](#)

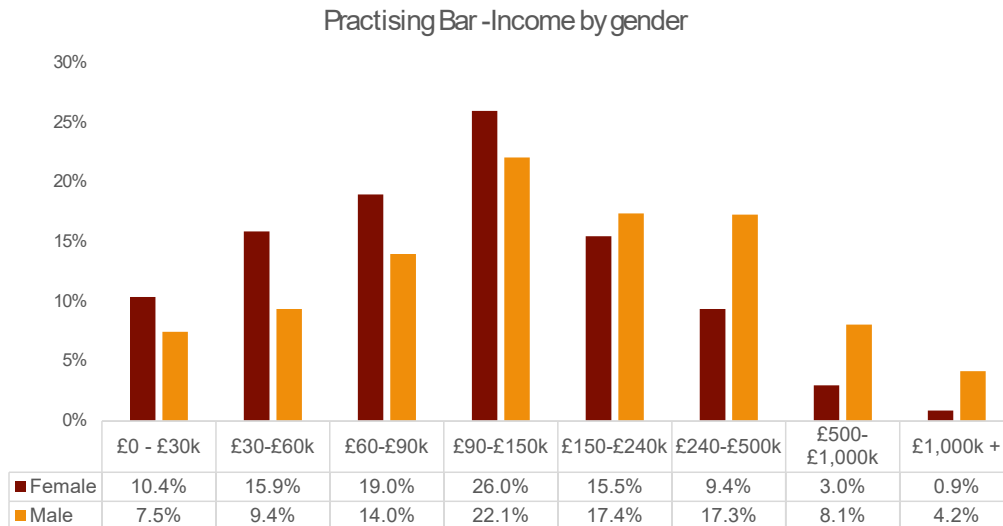
- 2.4. This report uses gender rather than sex to report on income differences. The BSB collects both gender and sex data on the profession. Historically, the question we asked referred to gender. More recently, we added a question about sex, to ensure we were collecting relevant data on the protected characteristic of sex. However, the response rate to the question on sex is far lower. We are seeking to improve the response rate on sex, but the low response rate means we do not report on that in this report. Hence, all the analysis throughout this report will be based on declared gender.
- 2.5. This report has used two approaches to analysing income data. The first is looking at the eight income bands as described in the table above. This gives a detailed picture of how barrister income varies across gender and ethnicity, as it shows precisely how differences manifest (e.g. by showing the proportions of each group within each of the eight income bands). The second approach uses mean and median, which will describe income levels across the population. The mean is the overall average of barristers' income and helps reflect the total declared income at the Bar. However, it is important to note the mean calculation is sensitive to outliers - for example, a small number of very high incomes can have a significant impact on mean income values. The median average is also reported and represents the middle value, with 50% of barristers earning less and 50% earning more. This measurement is less likely to be affected by outliers, as it presents a more 'typical' income, but this measurement could hide any extreme changes. By using all these measures, this report will provide more complete and balanced understanding of income differences at the Bar.
- 2.6. As there are a number of factors that are likely to influence a barrister's income (such as the nature of their practice, their years of Call/years of experience, the areas of law in which they practise, etc.) this report has also included a number of other variables in the analysis of income, to investigate whether any differences in income by gender or ethnicity can be explained by the nature of their practice, seniority, or other factors.

Research limitations

- 2.7. It is important to note (as described in paragraph 2.3) that the income figures provided to the BSB represent gross income, and for self-employed barristers do not consider deductions for chambers fees and contribution (see paragraph 2.3), the analysis presented has not accounted for these deductions. As such, the gross figures given will be (often significantly) higher than barristers' net income and do not take into account variations in chambers fees and contributions among self-employed barristers.
- 2.8. Finally, while this analysis controls for a number of factors that are likely to be associated with income, such as seniority, area of practice, and employed and self-employed status, the research was not able to assess the impact of other factors which will also impact on income, such as working patterns or hours worked.

3 Research Findings

Chart 1



- 3.1. As shown by chart 1 above, a notably higher proportion of female barristers are in the lowest four income bands than male barristers, and a lower proportion are in the highest four income bands. The differences are particularly stark in higher income bands – less than one in seven female barristers had earnings over £240k (13%) compared to close to one in three male barristers (30%).

Table 2

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Female	2021/22	124,782	80,000
	2022/23	143,299	96,335
	2023/24	148,276	99,717
Male	2021/22	229,719	112,927
	2022/23	252,699	132,821
	2023/24	258,558	142,328

- 3.2. A more straightforward illustration of the differences in income by gender is given by looking at the difference in average income between male and female barristers. The mean value for declared income was significantly lower for female barristers than male barristers in the fiscal year 2023/24 - the mean income for female barristers was £148,276, while the equivalent value for male barristers was £258,558. However, median values are often seen as a better measure for income comparisons, as they represent the middle value⁵, and thus can be seen as a better representation of 'typical' incomes rather than mean values which can be skewed by outliers at the high and low ends of the distribution. For female barristers in 2023/24, the median declared income was £99,717, whereas for male

5. In that half of values fall above, and half below, the median value

barristers it was £142,328.

Table 3

	Year	Mean	Median
Proportion of female barristers income to male barristers income	2021/22	54%	71%
	2022/23	57%	73%
	2023/24	57%	70%
Income gap between female and male barristers	2021/22	46%	29%
	2022/23	43%	27%
	2023/24	43%	30%

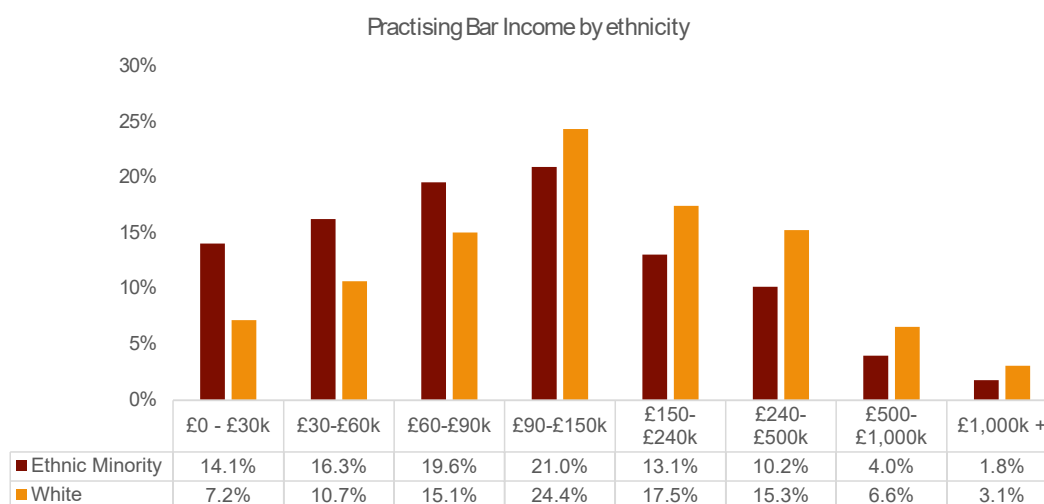
- 3.3. Table 3 demonstrates the changing proportions of female barristers' mean income to male barristers mean income. In 2021/22 the average declared mean income for female barristers was 54% of their male counterparts. By 2023/24 the income gap between female barristers and male barristers had improved by three percentage points to 57%. When looking at the median income, the income gap between female and male barristers shows a more inconsistent trend, in 2021/22 the average declared median income for female barristers was 71% of male barristers. This improved by two percentage points in 2022/23 increasing to 73%, but by 2023/24 the proportion of female income to male income was 70% - lower than that shown in 2021/22.
- 3.4. Table 3 also indicates the changing income gap between female and male barristers between 2021/22 to 2023/24 for both the mean and median declared income. In 2021/22 the mean income gap between female barristers and male barristers declared income was 46%, and by 2023/24 the mean declared income gap has decreased to 43% suggesting an improvement. The median income gap between female barristers and male barristers does not demonstrate a similar trend - in 2021/22 the median income gap between female barristers and male barristers was 29%, an improvement was seen in 2022/23 when the gap reduced to 27% but by 2023/24 it had increased by three percentage points, to 30%.
- 3.5. Analysis of changes in income by income decile⁶ (see appendix 1) shows that while the top 10% of female barristers have seen the income gap narrow with the top 10% of male barristers (thus narrowing the mean difference which is more impacted by high earnings at the top end of the income distribution), the remaining 90% of female barristers have seen the income gap with male barristers increase (so the median difference, which is a better reflection of differences in 'typical' earnings, has increased). This is key to understanding how - in some cases in this analysis - trends around mean income differences differ from those for median

6. Income deciles divide a dataset into ten equal sized groups, ranked by their income – so the first decile represents the 10% with the lowest incomes, and the tenth decile represents the 10% with the highest incomes

incomes.

- 3.6. Mean declared income was higher in 2023/24 for both female and male barristers compared to the equivalent value in 2022/23 and in 2021/22. When looking at the mean income for barristers there has been an increase since 2021/22, but larger growth has been declared for female barristers' year-on-year. Between 2021/22 and 2022/23 the difference between female barristers' income was 15% increase, and between 2022/23 and 2023/24 the year-on-year difference was 4% increase. In comparison, male barristers saw a year-on-year increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23 of 10%, whereas between 2022/23 and 2023/24 there was a 2% increase.
- 3.7. In a similar pattern, the median value for female and male barristers' declared income has increased year-on-year between 2021/22 and 2023/24. Between 2021/22 and 2022/23 female barristers' income increased by 20% and increased by 4% between 2022/23 and 2023/24. Male barristers' median income increased by 18% between 2021/22 and 2022/23, and then by 7% between 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- 3.8. Overall, the mean and median income of barristers have grown between 2021/22 and 2023/24 for both male and female barristers, but female barristers have seen a bigger increase in their mean income thus narrowing the income gap with male barristers, whereas male barristers have seen a bigger increase in their median income, thus increasing the income gap with female barristers.

Chart 2



- 3.9. In a similar pattern to those noted above in relation to gender, a notably higher proportion of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are in the lowest three income bands compared to White barristers, and a lower proportion are in the highest five income bands. For the highest income bands the difference is less notable than that for gender, although still reflects a difference – approximately half the proportion of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are in the £500k-£1 million and £1m+ income bands when compared to White barristers (6% of minority

ethnic barristers compared to 10% of White barristers). As with gender, of note is the minority ethnic barristers who are in the two lowest income bands – nearly a third (30%) of minority ethnic barristers had an income of £60k or less, compared to just under one in five (18%) White barristers.

Table 4

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Minority Ethnic	2021/22	142,343	73,482
	2022/23	159,820	86,246
	2023/24	167,741	90,090
White	2021/22	199,935	104,000
	2022/23	222,303	123,470
	2023/24	227,084	129,920

- 3.10. A more straightforward illustration of the differences in income by ethnicity is given by looking at the difference in mean and median income between White barristers and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. The mean value for declared income was significantly lower for minority ethnic barristers than White barristers in 2023/24 – the mean income for minority ethnic barristers was £167,741, while the equivalent value for White barristers was £227,084. For minority ethnic barristers in 2023/24, the median declared income was £90,090, whereas for White barristers it was £129,920. This shows there is income disparity between White and ethnic minority barristers for both mean and median income.

Table 5

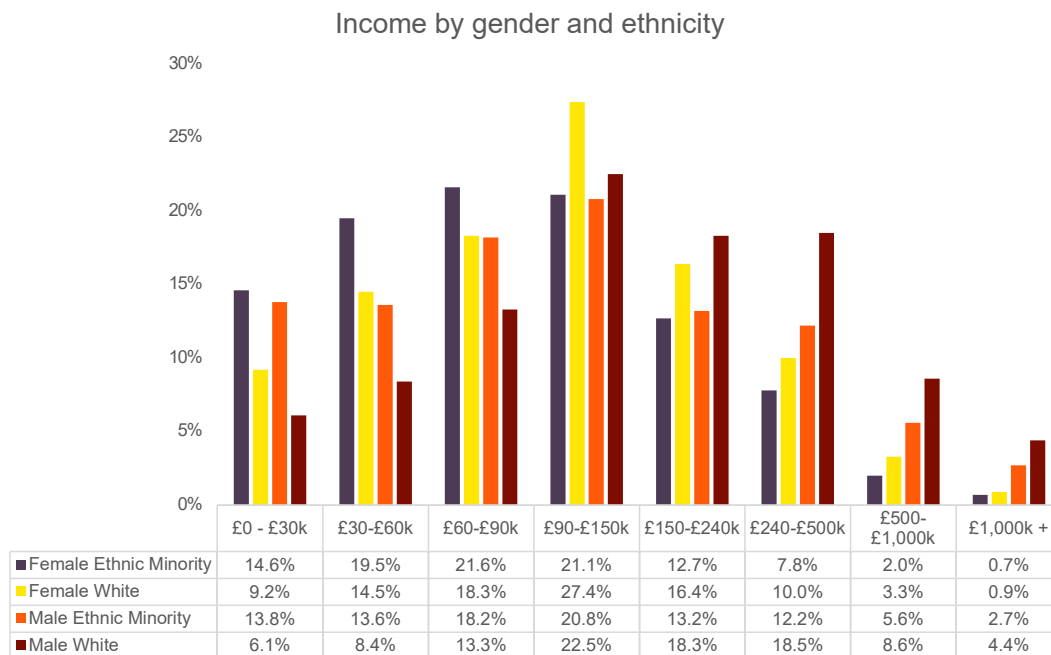
	Year	Mean	Median
Proportion of minority ethnic barristers income to White barristers income	2021/22	71%	71%
	2022/23	72%	70%
	2023/24	74%	69%
Income gap between between minority ethnic and White barristers	2021/22	29%	29%
	2022/23	28%	30%
	2023/24	26%	31%

- 3.11. As with gender, table 5 demonstrates the changing proportions of minority ethnic barristers' mean income compared with White barristers' mean income. While the figures reveal incomes are lower for both barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds and female barristers, the gap is more pronounced with female barristers. In 2021/22 the mean income for minority ethnic barristers was 71% of their White counterparts. By 2023/24 the income proportion of minority ethnic barristers compared to White barristers had improved by three percentage points to 74%. When looking at the median income, the income gap between minority ethnic and White barristers has increased over the period examined - in 2021/22 the average declared median income for minority ethnic barristers was 71%, then

70% in 2022/23 and in 2023/24 the proportion of ethnic minorities earn 69% of their White counterparts. Table 5 also indicates the changing income gap between ethnic minorities and White barristers between 2021/22 to 2023/24 for both the mean and median declared income. In 2021/22 the mean income gap between minority ethnic barristers and White barristers declared income was 29%, by 2023/24 the mean declared income has decreased to 26% suggesting a narrowing of the income gap. However, the median income gap between minority ethnic barristers and White barristers increased over this period - in 2021/22 the median income gap between minority ethnic barristers and White barristers was 29%, this increased in 2022/23 to 30% and in 2023/24 it had increased by another per cent, to 31%, which suggests the gap between the median income of White and ethnic minority barristers is growing.

- 3.12. Analysis of changes in income by income decile⁷ (see appendix 2) shows that while the highest earning 20% of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds have seen the income gap narrow with the highest earning 20% of White barristers (thus narrowing the mean difference which is more impacted by high earnings at the top end of the income distribution), the remaining 80% of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds have seen their income gap with White barristers increase (so the median difference, which is a better reflection of differences in 'typical' earnings, has increased).
- 3.13. The mean income declared value for minority ethnic barristers has seen an increase since 2021/22. For minority ethnic barristers mean declared income increased by 12% between 2021/22 and 22/23 and by five per cent between 2022/23 and 2023/24. The equivalent changes in income value for White barristers were a 11% increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23 and a two per cent increase between 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- 3.14. Looking at median declared income, minority ethnic barristers have seen an increase in the disparity between their median income and that of their White counterparts (see paragraph 3.11) and have seen smaller increases in median income over this period than White barristers. The median declared income for minority ethnic barristers increased by 17% between 2021/22 and 2022/23 and by 5% between 2022/23 and 2023/24. The year-on-year difference is slightly larger for their White counterparts; between 2021/22 and 2022/23 it was 19%, and between 2022/23 and 2023/24 White barristers' median income increased by 5%.
- 3.15. Overall, the mean and median income of barristers have grown between 2021/22 and 2023/24 for both White barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds, but barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds have seen a bigger increase in their mean income thus narrowing the income gap with White barristers, whereas White barristers have seen a bigger increase in their median income, thus increasing the income gap with barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds.

7. Income deciles divide a dataset into ten equal sized groups, ranked by their income – so the first decile represents the 10% with the lowest incomes, and the tenth decile represents the 10% with the highest incomes

Chart 3

3.16. The differences between groups are starker if gender and ethnicity are examined together. Chart three shows that for female barristers from minority ethnic groups, 34% are in the lowest two income bands –this is more than double the proportion of White male barristers (15%). Conversely, just over one in ten female barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds (11%) earn £240k and over, compared to nearly a third (32%) of White male barristers, 21% of male barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds, and 14% of White female barristers.

3.17. Table six looks at mean and median income values. White male barristers have the highest mean value, followed by male barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds. Female barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds have the lowest mean incomes. Looking at median values, White male barristers again have the highest value, although in this case White female barristers have a higher median income than male minority ethnic barristers. This table, in conjunction with chart three, illustrates the differences in mean and median measures – while male minority ethnic barristers have a higher mean income than White female barristers, they have a lower median income value. This is likely to reflect the higher proportions of male minority ethnic barristers in the highest income bands (pulling up the mean income value in comparison to White female barristers) whereas the higher proportion of male minority ethnic barristers in the lowest income band compared to White female barristers leads to a lower median value.

Table 6

	Year	Mean (£)	Median (£)
Female minority ethnic	2021/22	101,691	66,593
	2022/23	120,706	76,792
	2023/24	127,448	81,529
Female White	2021/22	131,024	85,000
	2022/23	149,615	102,218
	2023/24	154,668	104,969
Male minority ethnic	2021/22	174,688	80,000
	2022/23	190,766	97,556
	2023/24	201,083	100,911
Male White	2021/22	239,445	120,000
	2022/23	264,248	141,761
	2023/24	270,352	150,000

- 3.18. Overall, the mean and median income has grown for all four groups between 2021/22 and 2023/24, minority ethnic female barristers saw the biggest mean income increase, whereas minority ethnic male barristers saw the biggest median income increase. Looking at the mean for the declared income, income for all four groups increased between 2021/22 and 2022/23 – from £239,445 to £270,352 for White male barristers, from £131,024 to £154,668 for White female barristers, from £174,688 to £201,083 for male minority ethnic barristers, and from £101,691 to £127,448 for female barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds. This means that minority ethnic female barristers had the largest increase in mean declared income between 2021/22 to 2023/24 (an increase of 25%, compared to 13% for White male barristers, 18% for White female barristers, and 15% for minority ethnic male barristers.)
- 3.19. The median income across all four groups have also increased between 2021/22 and 2023/24, the biggest growth was seen amongst minority ethnic male barristers who saw an increase of 26% between 2021/22 and 2023/24. Their White male counterparts also saw an increase of 25% between the same time-period. Female barristers saw smaller increases, White female barristers seeing an increase of 23% and minority ethnic female barristers saw the smallest increase to their income of 22% between 2021/22 and 2023/24.
- 3.20. Table seven looks at mean and median income by ethnicity, breaking down into more detail rather than simply grouping all minority ethnic barristers together. Analysing ethnicity solely grouped by White and minority ethnic background can mask differences between more disaggregated ethnic groups. However, breaking down ethnicity in more detail displays notable differences by ethnic group. The highest mean value is for 'other minority ethnic' barristers, while the highest median value is for White barristers. Barristers from mixed ethnic backgrounds have higher mean and median values than Asian and Asian British barristers, while the lowest mean and median values are for Black/African/Caribbean/Black British barristers.

Table 7

	Mean (£)	Median (£)
Asian/Asian British	168,954	87,000
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	110,854	76,963
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	189,016	110,143
Other minority ethnic	244,445	121,477
White	227,084	129,920
Total Bar 2023/24	216,232	122,017

- 3.21. Table eight is based on an analysis of ethnicity categories broken down in more detail than in table seven, to determine the ethnic groups with the lowest incomes. This shows that barristers from Asian/Asian British- Bangladeshi backgrounds have the lowest mean incomes, followed by barristers from Black/Black British - African backgrounds. The same two groups have the lowest median incomes.

Table 8

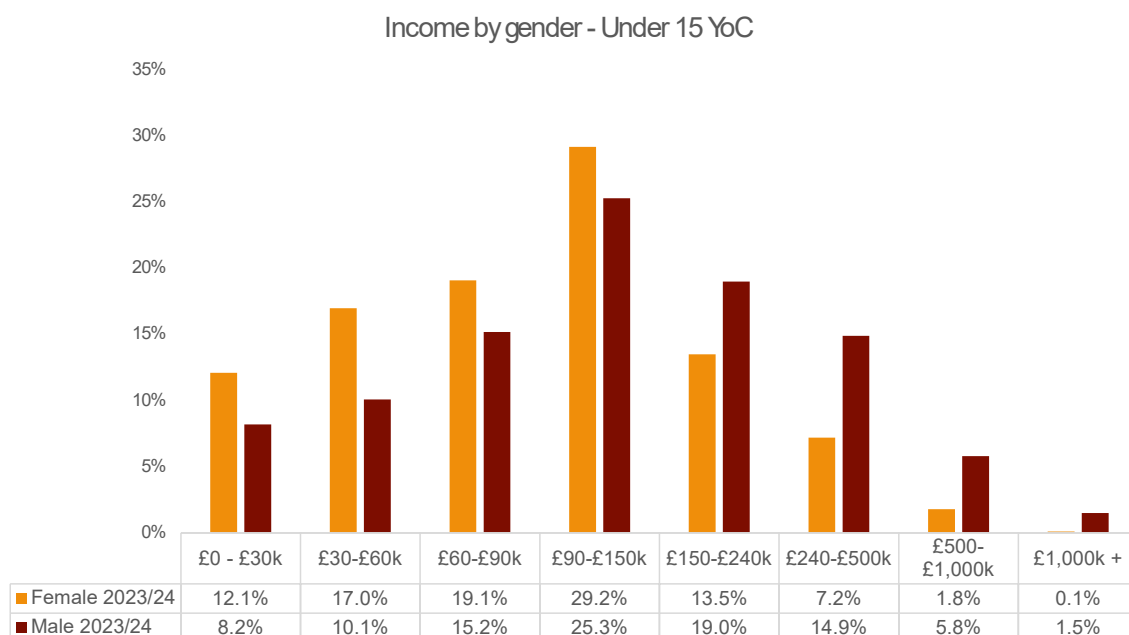
	Mean (£)		Median (£)
Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	134,627	Arab	93,000
Black/Black British - Caribbean	122,654	Black/Black British - Caribbean	81,917
White and Black Caribbean	122,291	Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	76,521
Black/Black British - African	103,250	Black/Black British - African	73,137
Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	100,258	Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	56,042

Seniority

- 3.22. The previous sections of this report analysed income by gender and ethnicity over the Bar as a whole. However, this may give a misleading picture of income disparities at the Bar, as the makeup of the Bar by gender and ethnicity differs substantially by seniority, area of practice, and practising status. For example, in 2023/24 women made up 38% of the practising Bar, but made up 34% of barristers of 15 or more years of Call, and 45% of barristers under 15 years of Call. Differences also exist for ethnicity, although these are not as significant as those for gender – minority ethnic barristers made up 16% of the Bar as a whole in 2023/24, with 14% of barristers of 15 or more years of Call and 19% of barristers under 15 years of Call being from minority ethnic backgrounds. KC status also differs by gender and ethnicity – 7% of female barristers have KC status, and 9% of minority ethnic barristers, compared to 17% of male barristers and 14% of White barristers. To determine if disparities still exist once seniority is taken into account, it is important to compare like with like – so looking at groups of barristers with similar levels of seniority and determining whether income still

shows disparities by gender or ethnicity.

Chart 4



3.23. As can be seen from chart four, analysing barristers under 15 years of Call shows a similar pattern in relation to income disparities by gender as when looking at the Bar as a whole. In 2023/24, higher proportions of women have incomes in the lowest two bands (29% compared to 18% of male barristers), and substantially lower proportions have incomes in the top three income bands (9% compared to 22% of male barristers).

Table 9

			Mean (£)	Median (£)
<15 YoC	Female	2021/22	103,115	75,000
		2022/23	117,543	88,632
		2023/24	121,010	93,791
<15 YoC	Male	2021/22	167,260	100,000
		2022/23	185,305	118,937
		2023/24	192,531	127,852

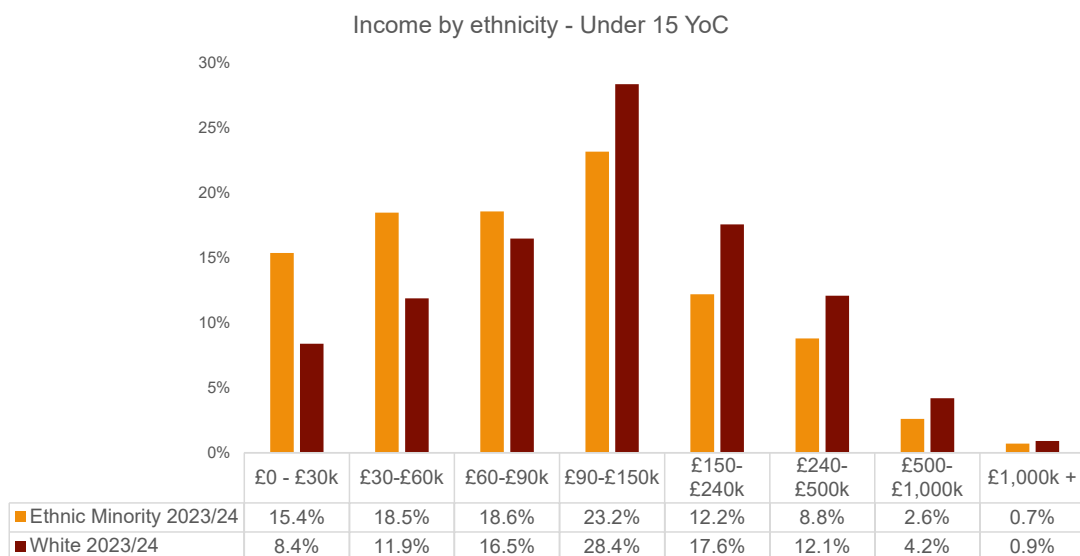
3.24. For female barristers with under 15 years of Call the mean value for income in 2023/24 was £121,010, whereas the equivalent value for male barristers was £192,531. The average declared mean income for female barristers under 15 years of Call was therefore 63% of male barristers in 2023/24. Across every year, male barristers' mean income was higher than female barristers. In 2023/24 female barrister's median declared income was 73% of that of male barristers (a median income of £93,791 for females and £127,852 for male barristers).

3.25. Among barristers under 15 years of Call, between 2021/22 and 2023/24 female barristers' mean income increased by 17%, whereas male barristers' mean income

has risen by 15% over the same period. The median income for female barristers with under 15 years of Call increased by 25% between 2021/22 and 2023/24, whereas the average median income for male barristers between the same time periods saw an increase of 28%.

- 3.26. Both mean and median income have grown between 2021/22 and 2023/24 for female and male barristers with less than 15 years of Call. Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, female barristers with less than 15 years of call saw a larger increase in mean incomes than male barristers. In contrast, male barristers with less than 15 years of call experienced a larger increase in median income. For an explanation of how mean income differences by gender have narrowed, whereas median differences have increased, see paragraph 3.5.

Chart 5

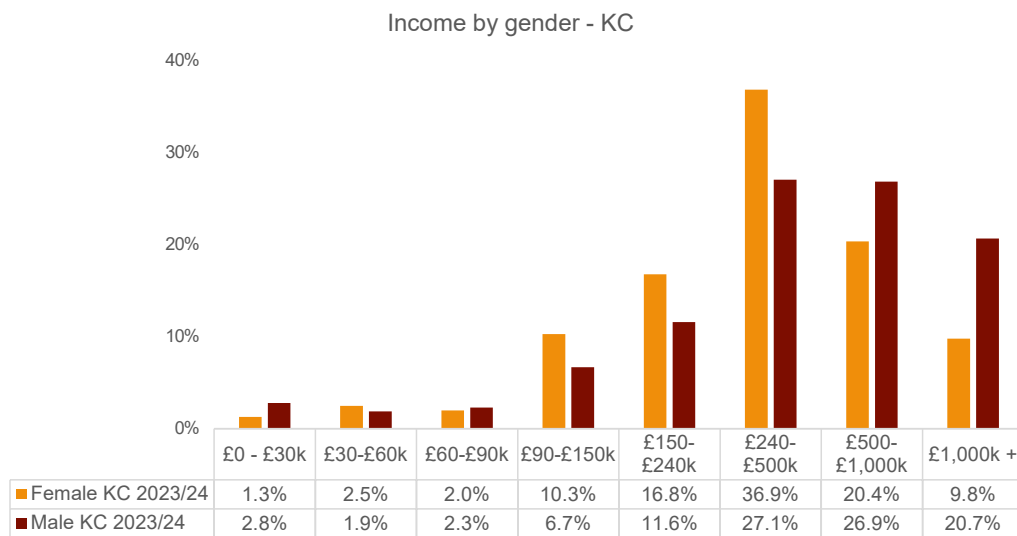


- 3.27. As with gender, restricting the analysis to barristers of less than 15 years of Call also revealed income differences by ethnicity. Higher proportions of minority ethnic barristers were in the lower income bands, and lower proportions in the higher income bands. In 2023/24, 34% of minority ethnic barristers earned £60k or less, compared to 20% of White barristers, whereas 24% earned £150k or more, compared to 35% of White barristers.

Table 10

			Mean (£)	Median (£)
<15 YoC	Minority Ethnic	2021/22	108,189	66,092
		2022/23	133,778	80,000
		2023/24	133,913	86,632
<15 YoC	White	2021/22	143,672	92,000
		2022/23	160,223	109,103
		2023/24	165,997	115,745

- 3.28. The mean value for declared income was lower for minority ethnic barristers of less than 15 years of Call than it was for equivalent White barristers in 2023/24 – the mean income for minority ethnic barristers was £133,913, while the equivalent value for White barristers was £165,997. The average income for minority ethnic barristers was 81% of that of their White counterparts - this demonstrates there is a less income disparity between White and minority ethnic barristers with less than 15 years of call compared to the Bar as a whole (where minority ethnic barristers' income was 74% of their White counterparts). Looking at median income for those under 15 years of Call, the value for minority ethnic barristers was £86,632 compared to £115,745 for White barristers, so 75% of their White counterparts.
- 3.29. Between 2021/22 and 2023/24 minority ethnic barristers mean income increased by 24%, whereas White barristers' mean income has risen by 16% over the same period. The median income for minority ethnic barristers with under 15 years of Call increase by 31% between 2021/22 and 2023/24, whereas the average median income for White barristers between the same time periods saw an increase of 26%.
- 3.30. Both minority ethnic and White barristers with less than 15 years of call have seen their mean and median income grow between 2021/22 and 2023/24, but a larger increase for both mean and median income was experienced by minority ethnic barristers, so barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds saw a narrowing of the income gap with equivalent White barristers across both income measures. This suggests that income disparities by ethnicity at the more junior end of the Bar are narrowing overall, in contrast to the trends observed for the Bar as a whole.
- 3.31. King's Counsel (KC) status represents another measure of seniority at the Bar – KCs are appointed by the independent King's Counsel Appointments, and are considered as experts in their field, generally with a minimum of 15 years' practice. KCs are appointed from advocates who have rights of audience in the higher courts of England and Wales and have demonstrated 'a standard of excellence' in their practice.

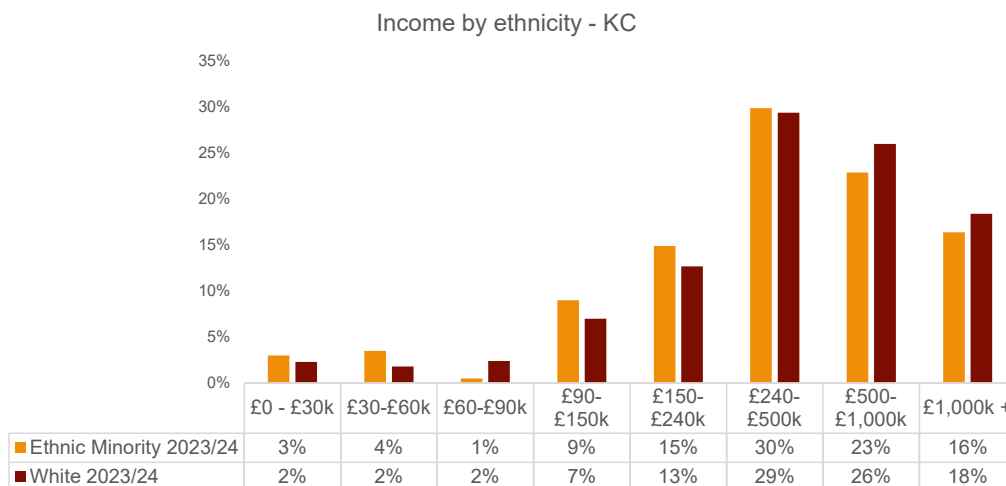
Chart 6

3.32. When looking at KC income by gender in 2023/24, there is little observable pattern for the lowest three income bands, a slightly higher proportion of male KCs declared incomes in these bands than female KCs (7% compared to 6%). However, for higher income bands (£150k and above) there are notable differences between male and female KCs – 54% of female KCs earn between £150k and £500k, whereas 39% of male KCs have earnings in this range. In contrast, 48% of male KCs have earnings of £500k and above, compared to 30% of female KCs.

Table 11

			Mean (£)	Median (£)
KC	Female	2021/22	431,422	303,736
		2022/23	474,805	340,598
		2023/24	480,183	345,198
KC	Male	2021/22	622,612	445,370
		2022/23	672,463	478,940
		2023/24	671,991	475,000

3.33. Once again, mean and median income values provide a more straightforward representation of differences in income. In 2023/24, the mean income for female KCs was £480,183, while the equivalent value for male KCs was £671,991, meaning an average declared income for female KCs that was 71% that of male KCs. The equivalent median values were £345,198 for female KCs and £475,000 for male KCs, meaning female KCs median income was 73% of male KCs. Over the last three years, female KC's mean income increased by 11%, whereas male KC's mean income has risen by 8% over the same period. The median income for female KC's increase by 14% between 2021/22 and 2023/24, whereas the median income for male KCs between the same time periods saw an increase of 7%. As female KCs saw larger growth in both mean and median incomes than male KCs over this period, they saw a narrowing of the income gap with male KCs overall over this period.

Chart 7

3.34. When looking at income breakdowns by ethnicity for KCs in 2023/24, there is a higher representation of KCs from minority ethnic backgrounds in the lower income bands, with 7% of minority ethnic KCs having incomes below 60K compared to 4% of White KCs. A higher proportion of White KCs have incomes in the highest income bands – 44% of White KCs had earnings of £500k and above in 2023/24, compared to 39% of minority ethnic KCs (although this difference by ethnicity is notably lower than the difference between proportions of male and female KCs in the highest income bands as described in paragraph 3.32).

Table 12

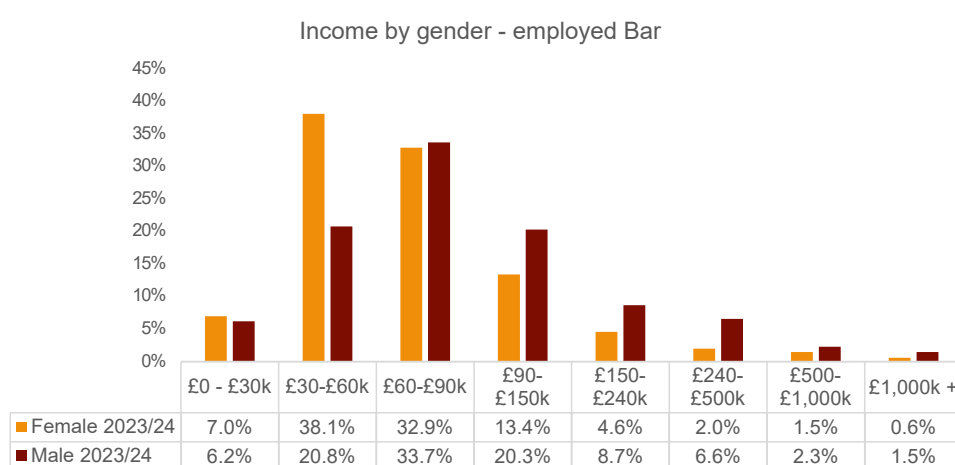
		Year	Mean (£)	Median (£)
KC	Minority Ethnic	2021/22	530,709	287,348
		2022/23	568,739	363,879
		2023/24	618,763	390,817
KC	White	2021/22	588,865	423,370
		2022/23	633,996	440,000
		2023/24	633,275	446,568

3.35. Looking at mean income values, the difference between minority ethnic and White KCs is lower than that between male and female KCs, with KCs from minority ethnic backgrounds earning 98% of the mean income of White KCs (a markedly lower disparity than observed when looking at KC incomes by gender). The equivalent median values show minority ethnic backgrounds earning 88% of White KCs. The declared mean income increased from 2021/22 to 2023/24 for minority ethnic KCs by 17%. In comparison, their White counterparts saw their mean declared income increase by 8%. The median income increases over the same period for minority ethnic KCs was 36%, whereas White KC's median declared income increased by 5% over the same period. The fact that barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds saw larger increases in both mean and median incomes over this period means that the income gap between ethnic minority and White KC's has narrowed for both mean and median income measures.

Employed and Self-employed Bar

3.36. It is also valuable to investigate whether differences in income also exist when employed and self-employed barristers are looked at separately. Both female and minority ethnic barristers are over-represented at the employed bar compared to the profession as a whole, so this may be a factor that contributes to differences in income. It is also valuable to investigate whether differences in income also exist when employed and self-employed barristers are looked at separately. Both female and minority ethnic barristers are over-represented at the employed bar compared to the profession as a whole, so this may be a factor that contributes to differences in income.

Chart 8



3.37. As can be seen in chart 8, in 2023/24 employed female barristers had a slightly higher proportion in the lowest income band, and a significantly higher proportion in the second income band than male barristers. In contrast, male barristers had higher proportions with earnings in all income bands above £60k, if you look only at band 6 (£240-£500k) male barristers are approximately triple the proportions of female barristers, and there is approximately double the proportions of male barristers with income in bands 6, 7 and 8.

Table 13

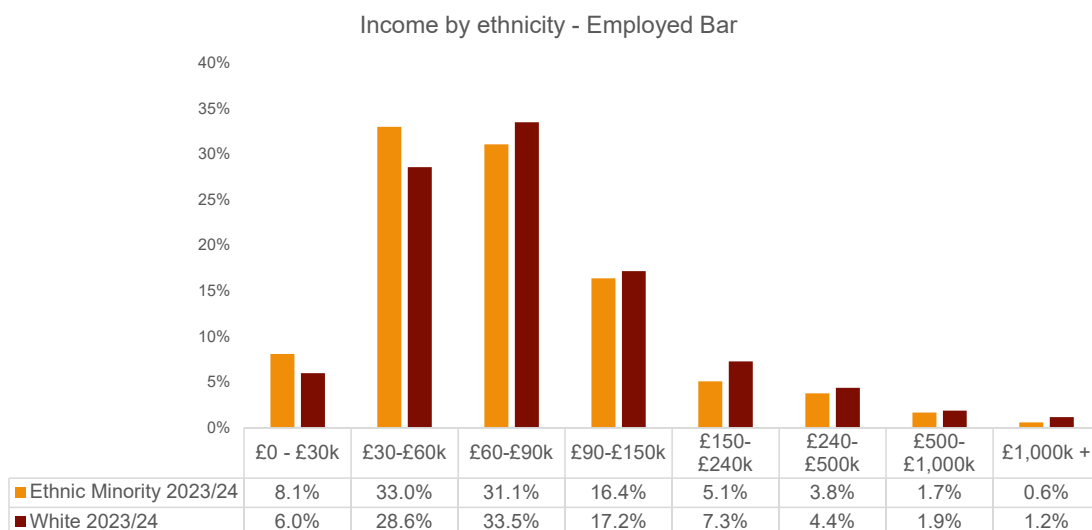
		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Female	2021/22	80,722	60,000
	2022/23	87,442	62,000
	2023/24	91,721	63,378
Male	2021/22	127,069	72,245
	2022/23	129,788	75,000
	2023/24	142,565	78,000

3.38. The mean income of female employed barristers in 2023/24 was £91,721, compared to £142,565 for male employed barristers, meaning that female employed barristers had a mean income of 64% of their male equivalents. The

median income values for employed barristers were £63,378 for women and £78,000 for men, meaning the median declared income for employed female barristers was 81% of that of male employed barristers.

3.39. When comparing the last 3 years, employed female barristers mean income increased by 14% between 2021/22 and 2023/24, while employed male barristers declared mean income increased by 12%. The median income for female barristers' income increased by 6% between 2021/22 and 2023/24, employed male barristers mean income increased by 8% over the equivalent period. The fact that female employed barristers was a larger growth in mean income over this period than male employed barristers means that the disparity in mean incomes by gender at the employed Bar has narrowed over this period. However, as male employed barristers saw a larger increase in median incomes over this period, the gender disparity in median incomes at the employed Bar has increased. For an explanation of how mean income differences by gender have narrowed, whereas median differences have increased, see paragraph 3.5.

Chart 9



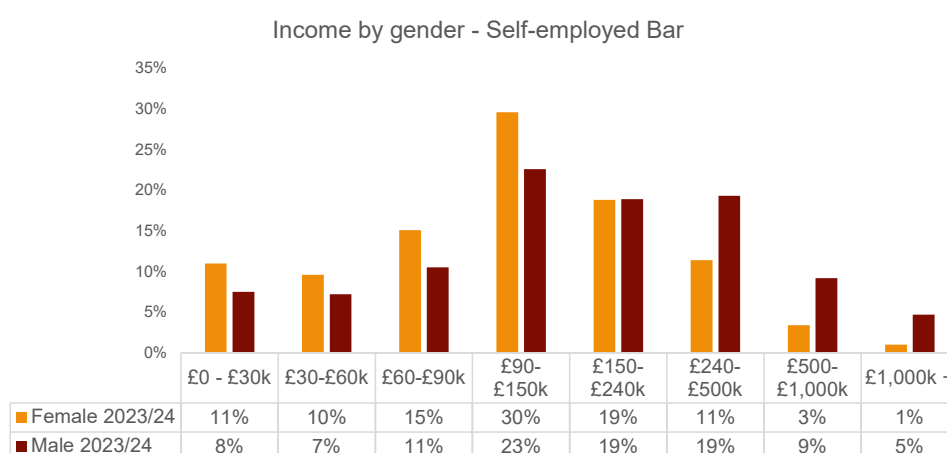
3.40. In contrast to the differences observed for gender, the differences in income by ethnicity among the employed Bar are less pronounced. Nonetheless, barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds have higher proportions in the lowest two income bands in 2023/24 (41% compared to 35% of White barristers), and higher proportions of White barristers have earnings in income bands above £60k (65% compared to 59% of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds).

Table 14

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Minority ethnic	2021/22	102,298	63,000
	2022/23	99,086	65,800
	2023/24	106,709	66,000
White	2021/22	106,107	66,967
	2022/23	112,835	69,430
	2023/24	121,013	70,485

3.41. The mean income of minority ethnic employed barristers in 2023/24 was £106,709, compared to £121,013 for White employed barristers, meaning that employed barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds earned on average 88% of their White equivalents, a much smaller income differential than observed when comparing mean employed barrister incomes by gender. For median incomes, barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds earned £66,000 compared to £70,485 for White barristers, meaning earnings were 94% of White barristers.

3.42. Minority ethnic employed barristers have seen their mean income increase between 2021/22 and 2023/24, increasing by 4%, compared to their White counterparts who saw a 14% increase during the same period. When comparing median incomes, both minority ethnic employed barristers and White employed barristers saw their declared income rise by 5% between 2021/22 and 2023/24. While both minority ethnic and White barristers have seen an increase in mean and median income, White employed barristers saw the biggest growth in mean income, while for median income both White and minority ethnic barristers saw a similar increase. As a result, the disparity in mean incomes by ethnicity is increasing at the employed Bar, while the disparity in median incomes has stayed unchanged.

Chart 10

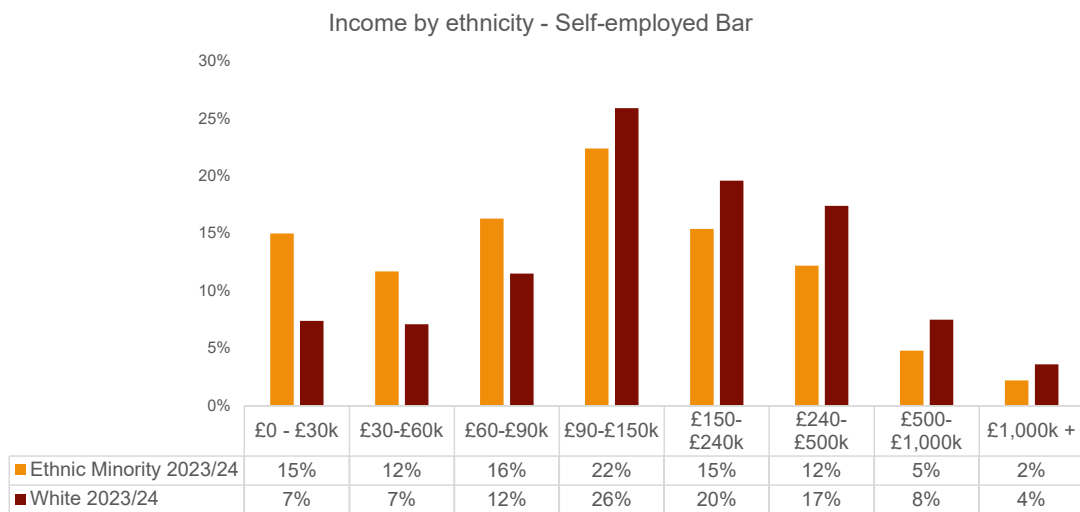
3.43. When looking at income differences by gender for the self-employed Bar, chart 10 shows that in 2023/24 there were higher proportions of female self-employed female barristers in all of the first four income bands, and lower proportions in the top three income bands. For the highest two income bands the difference is

particularly stark – 4% of self-employed female barristers earned £500k or over in 2023/24, compared to 14% of male barristers. Just over one in three (36%) of the self-employed female Bar had an income of £90k or less, compared to one in four (25%) male barristers.

Table 15

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Female	2021/22	138,202	94,000
	2022/23	160,204	112,897
	2023/24	165,146	115,376
Male	2021/22	250,390	126,484
	2022/23	276,721	150,000
	2023/24	281,050	157,456

- 3.44. The mean income of female self-employed barristers in 2023/24 was £165,146, compared to £281,050 for male self-employed barristers, meaning that female self-employed barristers earned on average 59% of their male equivalents. While average incomes were significantly higher for both male and female self-employed barristers in 2023/24 when compared to employed barristers (although this also reflects the differences in income declarations for self-employed and employed barristers as described in paragraph 5), the difference in average incomes between men and women were significantly larger. Looking at median incomes for the self-employed Bar, in 2023/24 female barristers earned 73% of male barristers.
- 3.45. Table 15 also shows the changes in mean and median incomes from 2021/22 to 2023/24. The mean income for both self-employed male and female barristers increased from 2021/22 to 2023/24 - self-employed female barristers saw an 19% increase and male self-employed barristers increased their mean declared income by 12% over the same period. The median declared income for self-employed barristers rose by 23% increase for female self-employed barristers between 2021/22 and 2023/24 and 24% for male self-employed barristers. These were larger increases in mean and median income over this period than observed for employed barristers. As female self-employed barristers saw a larger increase in mean incomes than male self-employed barristers, the mean income disparity by gender narrowed at the self-employed Bar over this period. However, male self-employed barristers saw a larger increase in median income, so the disparity by gender in median incomes increased. For an explanation of how mean income differences by gender have narrowed, whereas median differences have increased, see paragraph 3.5.

Chart 11

3.46. The differences in income by ethnicity among the self-employed Bar follow a slightly different pattern than that observed for gender. While the differences for gender display higher proportions of women in the bottom four income bands, and lower in the top four, for ethnicity there are higher proportions of minority ethnic barristers in the bottom three bands, which represents income below £90k. In 2023/24, 43% of self-employed minority ethnic barristers had earnings under £90k, compared to 26% of White barristers. However, differences at the higher earning end of the profession appear to be less pronounced than for gender – 11% of self-employed White barristers earned £500k and over in 2023/24 compared to 7% of minority ethnic barristers (this compares to 14% and 4% when looking at the differences between men and women).

Table 16

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Minority Ethnic	2021/22	156,629	81,648
	2022/23	180,186	100,000
	2023/24	188,642	105,116
White	2021/22	219,902	118,641
	2022/23	245,063	139,364
	2023/24	248,872	145,274

3.47. The mean income for minority ethnic self-employed barristers in 2023/24 was £188,642, compared to £248,872 for White self-employed barristers, meaning that self-employed barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds earned on average 76% of their White equivalents, a significantly larger income differential than that observed by ethnicity among the employed Bar. The 2023/24 median income values for self-employed barristers were £105,116 for barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds and £145,274 for White barristers, meaning that self-employed barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds median declared income was 72% of their White equivalents.

3.48. Mean income increased for self-employed barristers from both White and minority ethnic backgrounds between 2021/22 to 2023/24. Self-employed barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds saw their average declared income increase by 20%, while their White counterparts saw their mean declared income rise by 13% over the same period. The median income for minority ethnic self-employed barristers increased by 29% since 2021/22, and by 22% for their White counterparts. Again, as with when looking at income change by gender, the self-employed Bar saw larger increases in mean and median income over this period than seen for employed barristers. With barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds seeing larger increases in both mean and median income over this period than White barristers, the income disparity across both mean and median income measures has reduced, suggesting an overall narrowing of the income gap observed by ethnicity at the self-employed Bar over this period.

Region of Practice

Chart 12



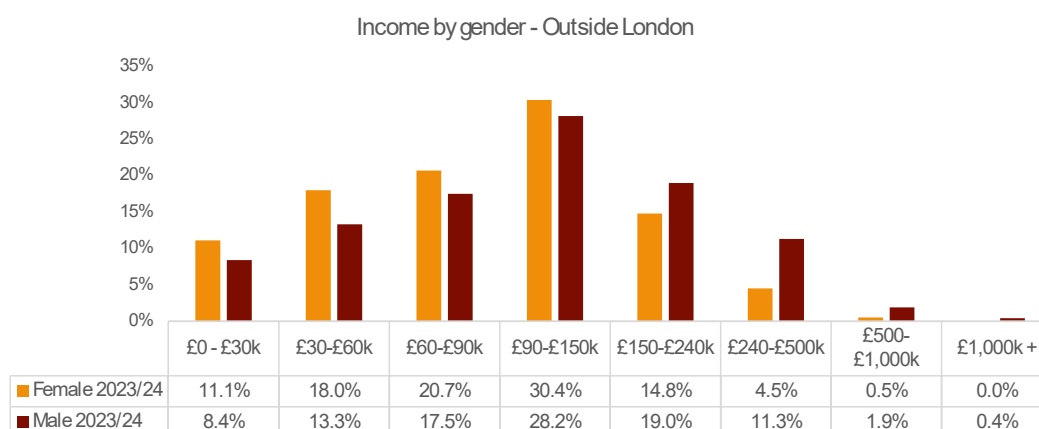
3.49. There are also variations in barrister income by region – barristers whose primary practice address is in London are more likely to declare higher incomes than those based outside London. However, when breaking down income for barristers based both within and outside London, there remain notable differences in income observed between Male and Female barristers (see chart 12). When looking at London-based barristers by gender, in 2023/24 there were higher proportions of female barristers in each of the lowest four income bands, and higher proportions of male barristers in each of the highest four income bands. Close to one in four female barristers earned under £60k (24%) compared to less than one in seven male barristers (14%), whereas over one in three male barristers (38%) earned over £240k compared to less than one in five female barristers (19%).

Table 17

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Female barristers in London	2021/22	150,373	88,000
	2022/23	169,853	102,611
	2023/24	177,140	106,743
Male barristers in London	2021/22	290,481	141,175
	2022/23	313,277	161,488
	2023/24	317,843	169,771

3.50. The 2023/24 mean income of female barristers in London was £177,140, compared to £317,843 for male barristers in London, meaning that London-based female barristers earned on average 56% of their male equivalents, a similar difference in average incomes to that observed for the self-employed Bar by gender. The median income values for London-based barristers were £106,743 for women and £169,771 for men, so female barristers in London had a median income that was 63% of male barristers.

3.51. As shown in table 17, there has been an increase in mean and median income for both male and female barristers in London since 2021/22. Focusing on mean declared income, London based female barristers declared income increased by 18% between 2021/22 and 2023/24 while male barristers based in London saw their income increase by 9% over the same period. Median income for female barristers in London saw an increase of 21% whereas their male counterparts increased their declared median income by 20%. As female barristers based in London saw larger increases in both mean and median income than male barristers, this indicates that for London based barristers, the income gap by gender has narrowed overall between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Chart 13

3.52. Declared incomes for barristers outside London are generally lower than those declared for London. However, as can be seen by chart 13, while there are differences in income between male and female barristers for those based outside London, they are not as stark as those observed for London-based barristers, other than at the higher end of the income distribution. Among female barristers based

outside London in 2023/24, 29% earned under £60k compared to 22% of male barristers. Close to one in seven male barristers outside London earned 240k and over (14%), compared to 5% of female barristers.

Table 18

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Females outside London	2021/22	87,267	72,121
	2022/23	102,540	88,194
	2023/24	105,709	90,320
Male outside London	2021/22	120,675	87,594
	2022/23	135,873	105,000
	2023/24	145,881	112,847

3.53. The 2023/24 mean income of female barristers outside London was £105,709, compared to £145,881 for male barristers outside London, meaning female barristers outside London earned on average 72% of their male equivalents, a markedly smaller difference in average income than that observed for barristers in London. Median incomes outside of London in 2023/24 were £90,320 for female barristers and £112,847 for male barristers, so female barristers had median incomes that were 80% of male barristers.

3.54. The mean income of both female and male barristers outside London increased by 21% between 2021/22 to 2023/24. The median income values for barristers based outside London increased by 25% from 2021/22 to 2023/24 for female barristers and by 29% for male barristers over the same period. Both male and female barristers outside of London therefore saw larger increases in mean and median income than those based in London over this period. As both male and female barristers outside London saw the same growth in mean incomes over this period, the disparity in mean incomes by gender remained the same. However, as male barristers saw a larger increase in median incomes over this period, the gender disparity in median income levels outside of London increased (see paragraph 3.5).

Chart 14



3.55. When looking at London-based barristers by ethnicity, in 2023/24 there were higher proportions of minority ethnic barristers in the lowest three income bands when compared to White barristers, and lower proportions in the higher five bands. In 2023/24, 28% of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds earned under £60k compared to 15% of White barristers. This suggests that in London being from a minority ethnic background has a stronger association with lower earnings than gender, given that the proportion of female London-based barristers with incomes below £60k is 24% (chart 12). However, there was a smaller difference by ethnicity than by gender in terms of the proportion of London-based barristers in the highest income bands. In London, 20% of minority ethnic barristers earned over £240k compared to 34% of White barristers, whereas the equivalent proportions when looking at the difference by gender were 38% of male barristers and 19% of female barristers.

Table 19

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Minority Ethnic barristers in London	2021/22	166,809	79,848
	2022/23	185,206	94,978
	2023/24	195,611	100,000
White barristers in London	2021/22	256,855	129,930
	2022/23	280,039	148,542
	2023/24	284,952	154,946

3.56. The 2023/24 mean income for minority ethnic barristers in London was £195,611, compared to £284,952 for White barristers, meaning that London-based minority ethnic barristers earned on average 69% of their White equivalents. This represents a larger difference in incomes by ethnicity than observed when looking at the Bar as a whole, KCs, barristers under 15 years of Call, or employed or self-employed barristers. However, this was smaller than the difference in average incomes observed for the London-based Bar by gender. Looking at median incomes, barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds within London had a median income that was 65% of that of White barristers in 2023/24 (£100,000 compared to £154,946).

3.57. The mean income for minority ethnic barristers based in London increased by 17% between 2021/22 and 2023/24 and by 11% for White barristers based in London between the same period. The median declared income also increased by 25% for minority ethnic barristers based in London between 2021/22 and 2023/24, and their White counterparts saw a 19% increase over the same period. As minority ethnic barristers based in London saw the largest growth by both mean and median income, this indicates that for London based barristers, the income gap by ethnicity has narrowed overall between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Chart 15

3.58. When looking at differences in income by ethnicity for barristers outside London, there is a similar pattern to that observed for London based barristers, although incomes tend to be lower. Among barristers from a minority ethnic background based outside London in 2023/24, 37% earned under £60k compared to 23% of White barristers. As with London earnings, it appears ethnicity is a stronger predictor of lower earnings than gender for barristers outside London - in 2023/24, 29% of female barristers based outside London earned under £60k compared to 22% of male barristers. At the higher end of the income scale, 11% of White barristers outside London earned 240k and over, compared to 6% of minority ethnic barristers.

Table 20

		Mean (£)	Median (£)
Minority Ethnic barristers outside of London	2021/22	83,140	62,687
	2022/23	93,761	72,000
	2023/24	99,530	77,645
White barristers outside of London	2021/22	110,223	84,262
	2022/23	126,355	102,000
	2023/24	133,061	106,681

3.59. The 2023/24 mean income for minority ethnic barristers outside London was £99,530, compared to £133,061 for White barristers, meaning that minority ethnic barristers outside of London earned on average 75% of their White equivalents. Looking at median incomes, barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds outside London had a median income that was 73% of that of White barristers in 2023/24 (£77,645 compared to £106,681).

3.60. The mean declared income increased by 20% between 2021/22 to 2023/24 for minority ethnic barristers outside London, whereas White barristers outside of London saw an increase of 21%. Similarly, the median income values for barristers

outside London increased by 24% for those from minority ethnic backgrounds and 27% for White barristers. In a similar pattern to that seen when looking at changes in income, both White barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds outside of London saw larger increases in mean and median income than those practising in London. The fact that White barristers based outside of London saw larger increases in both mean and median income between 2021/22 and 2023/24 than those seen by barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds outside London, the income gap by ethnicity has widened for barristers practising outside of London over this period.

Practice Area

- 3.61. Another key area where barrister status is likely to impact on earnings is the area of law that they generally practise in. Areas of law which are largely publicly funded (largely now restricted to Criminal law) will typically attract lower fees, as will areas of law such as family (which also can qualify for legal aid in certain situations). In contrast, areas such as commercial law will generally attract larger fees. As with seniority and KC status, barristers' main area of practice varies considerably by gender and ethnicity. For example, 27% of female barristers' main area of practice is family law, compared to 11% of male barristers, whereas 13% of male barristers primarily practise in commercial and financial services compared to 7% of female barristers. Differences also exist for ethnicity: 8% of barristers from a minority ethnic background primarily practise in immigration, for example, compared to 1.4% of White barristers, while 5% of barristers from a minority ethnic background primarily practise in personal injury compared to 9% of White barristers.
- 3.62. As a result of these differences in main area of practice, it is important to analyse the extent to which income disparities by gender and ethnicity are still apparent for barristers who are working in the same areas of law.

Table 21

Mean Income (£)		
	<15 YoC	>15 YoC
Commercial and Financial Services		
Female	242,969	418,378
Male	359,831	637,603
Minority Ethnic	284,089	553,572
White	336,268	604,374
Crime		
Female	79,511	111,277
Male	100,882	155,315
Minority Ethnic	76,984	121,890
White	93,780	148,991
Family		
Female	115,020	152,531
Male	139,021	193,241

Minority Ethnic	106,853	135,268
White	128,225	175,903
Personal injury		
Female	107,488	209,484
Male	154,385	289,414
Minority Ethnic	111,304	229,705
White	139,999	278,089

3.63. Table 21 looks at mean income band for the four most common primary areas of practice in 2023/24. Given that years of Call also impacts on mean income, barristers have also been grouped by year of Call, for under and over 15 years. The table shows for every area of practice, and for each of the two year of Call bands, female barristers have a lower mean income than male barristers and minority ethnic barristers have a lower mean income than White barristers.

3.64. The largest differences in average income are for female barristers when compared to male barristers, with the largest observable difference being for barristers over 15 years of Call practising in commercial and financial law, where female barristers have an average income of 66% of equivalent male barristers (the second largest difference in incomes by gender is also in commercial and financial law, where the average earnings of women under 15 years of Call is 68% of that of male barristers). The largest observed difference by ethnicity is in family law, where minority ethnic barristers over 15 years of Call earn 77% of the earnings of equivalent White barristers. For female barristers, the closest to equivalence in average incomes is for barristers under 15 years of Call in family law, where women earn on average 83% of the salary of men. For barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds, the closest to equivalence is for barristers over 15 years of Call in commercial and financial services law, where average incomes for those from minority ethnic backgrounds are 92% of those of White barristers.

3.65. This indicates that even for barristers working in the same area of law and with the similar seniority by year of Call, barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds and female barristers earn less than equivalent White and male barristers, with notable differences in mean income observed for all of the groups analysed above.

Table 22

Median Income (£)		
	<15 YoC	>15 YoC
Commercial and Financial Services		
Female	171,914	203,056
Male	267,318	381,182
Minority Ethnic	176,353	218,545
White	257,554	348,964
Crime		
Female	67,268	80,000
Male	90,222	111,999

Minority Ethnic	64,000	83,090
White	81,791	105,000
Family		
Female	106,430	127,566
Male	132,762	147,885
Minority Ethnic	95,392	105,592
White	120,676	140,255
Personal injury		
Female	98,820	161,780
Male	131,932	247,353
Minority Ethnic	84,991	165,283
White	121,520	236,272

3.66. Table 22 looks at median income for the four most common primary areas of practice, and as with table 21, groups barristers by year of Call, for under and over 15 years. While median values are lower than mean values, the table shows a similar pattern to table 21 - for every area of practice, and for each of the two year of Call bands, female barristers have a lower median income than male barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds have a lower median income than White barristers.

3.67. While absolute differences are smaller than in table 22 due to the lower values for median income, the relative differences are similar across all four areas of practice analysed. The largest differences in median income are once again between female barristers and male barristers, with commercial and financial law again displaying the largest income disparities. For barristers over 15 years of Call practising in commercial and financial law, female barristers have a median income that is 53% of equivalent male barristers, even larger than the difference observed when looking at mean income (66%). As when looking at mean income, the difference between female and male barristers under 15 years of Call in commercial and financial law is the second largest income disparity, with median earnings of women equalling 64% of that of male barristers. Similar to when looking at mean incomes the largest observed difference by ethnicity is also in commercial and financial law, where the median income of minority ethnic barristers over 15 years of Call is 63% of equivalent White barristers, a significantly larger income disparity than observed when comparing median incomes in other areas (the next largest disparity is for barristers under 15 years of Call in Personal Injury, where the median income of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds is 70% of comparable White barristers).

4 Summary and Conclusions

- 4.1. The analysis of income data held by the BSB shows that female barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are likely to earn less than White and male barristers respectively. This holds true when looking at employed barristers, self-employed barristers, KCs, barristers based both inside and outside London, and barristers with similar seniority by year of Call.
- 4.2. Female barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are the lowest earning group, whereas White male barristers are the highest earning group. There are also differences in the income of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds once ethnicity is looked at in more detail, with Black and Black British barristers earning less than Asian and Asian British barristers overall.
- 4.3. Even when comparing barristers with the same main area of practice and seniority by year of Call, female barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds still earn less on average than equivalent male and White barristers. This suggests that (while there are notable differences in the proportions of those practising in particular areas of law by both ethnicity and gender) even when you look at barristers of similar experience and working in the same areas, there remain differences in income by both gender and ethnicity. These are often significant – for example, when looking at the median income, women over 15 years of Call working in Financial and Commercial Law earn half their male equivalents' earnings.
- 4.4. Generally, differences in average income are larger when comparing male and female barristers than when comparing White and minority ethnic barristers. Looking at the Bar as a whole, mean incomes for women are 57% of those of men, whereas mean incomes for barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are 74% of those of White barristers. Given this, it is unsurprising that female barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds are the lowest earning group, with mean incomes 47% of those of White male barristers when looking at the profession as a whole.
- 4.5. Differences in median incomes by gender were generally smaller than mean differences, with median incomes for female barristers overall at 70% of male barristers. However, differences for median incomes for barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds were larger than differences by mean income, with barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds earning 69% of the median income of White barristers.
- 4.6. Comparing mean incomes between 2021/22 with 2023/24, all groups analysed saw an increase in income. This analysis suggests the largest increases have been for female barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds, and barristers based outside of London.
- 4.7. When looking at the Bar as a whole, minority ethnic barristers have seen larger increases in mean income than White barristers, but smaller increases in median

income. Female barristers have also seen greater increases in mean income overall than male barristers, but smaller increases in median income. Analysis of changes by income decile shows the narrowing of the mean income gap by gender and ethnicity is driven by greater income gains for the highest earning female barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds (thus narrowing the mean income difference which is more impacted by the highest incomes). However, the majority of female barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds have actually seen an increase in their income disparity with male and White barristers (so the median income difference, which is a better reflection of 'typical' earnings, has increased).

- 4.8. Although when looking at the Bar as a whole there does not appear to be a general narrowing of the income disparities observed by gender and ethnicity, for some groups of barristers the evidence does suggest an improvement. The analysis reported shows several areas where there has been a narrowing of the income gap across both the mean and median measures - these include for minority ethnic barristers with less than 15 years of call, female KC's, minority ethnic KC's, minority ethnic self-employed barristers, female barristers based in London and minority ethnic barristers based in London.
- 4.9. The reasons for the disparities in income may be many. However, some possible explanations have been highlighted in past research undertaken by the BSB. Our Women at the Bar research in 2016⁸ found that some respondents felt there was unfavourable treatment around work allocation, with male barristers more likely to be promoted to potential clients and allocated work within chambers. In addition, some respondents flagged a drop off in work allocated to them if they attempted to work flexibly to care for children, or when they returned from maternity leave. Finally, some respondents felt female barristers were more likely to be expected (both within and outside chambers) to specialise in lower earning, often publicly funded, areas of law than male barristers and that this impacted on the type of work they were offered or allocated. Concerns around unfair work allocation were also raised in the BSB's research into Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment in 2020.⁹ All of these factors may well contribute to female barristers being more likely to have lower earnings than male barristers.
- 4.10. Other research has highlighted that female barristers are more likely to work part-time (14%) than male barristers (8%).¹⁰ Older research suggests that although there is little variation at the Bar in working hours between men and women who work full time, or between men and women who work part time, the higher proportion of women working part-time results in their mean hours worked (47 per week) being slightly lower than the equivalent figure for men (50 per week). That research did not reveal any difference in hours worked between White barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds.¹¹

8. [Women at the Bar \(BSB 2016\)](#)

9. [Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment at the Bar \(BSB 2020\)](#)

10. [Barristers' Working Lives \(Bar Council 2023\)](#)

11. [Barristers' Working Lives \(Bar Council 2013\)](#)

- 4.11. A report published looking at racial disadvantage in the profession¹² highlighted that in all areas of practice, and at all stages of career Black and Asian barristers are earning less than White colleagues. This report also mentioned perceived bias in the way work was allocated, which led to barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds having less opportunity to progress their career – this is likely to impact on the earnings of barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds both in the short and long term.
- 4.12. These research findings will be used to inform the BSB's strategy and shape recommendations about our approach to Equality and Diversity at the Bar. In the light of these findings, the BSB will work with the profession to consider what can be done to reduce the income disparities identified. Chambers are already expected to monitor work allocation, and may wish to consider the Bar Council's guidance on good practice for work allocation around sex and race.¹³ If this monitoring identifies disparities in the allocation of work, chambers should develop plans to address the issue and help ensure equality in work allocation. Similarly, chambers and employers may consider analysing and publishing their income pay gap data by ethnicity and gender.

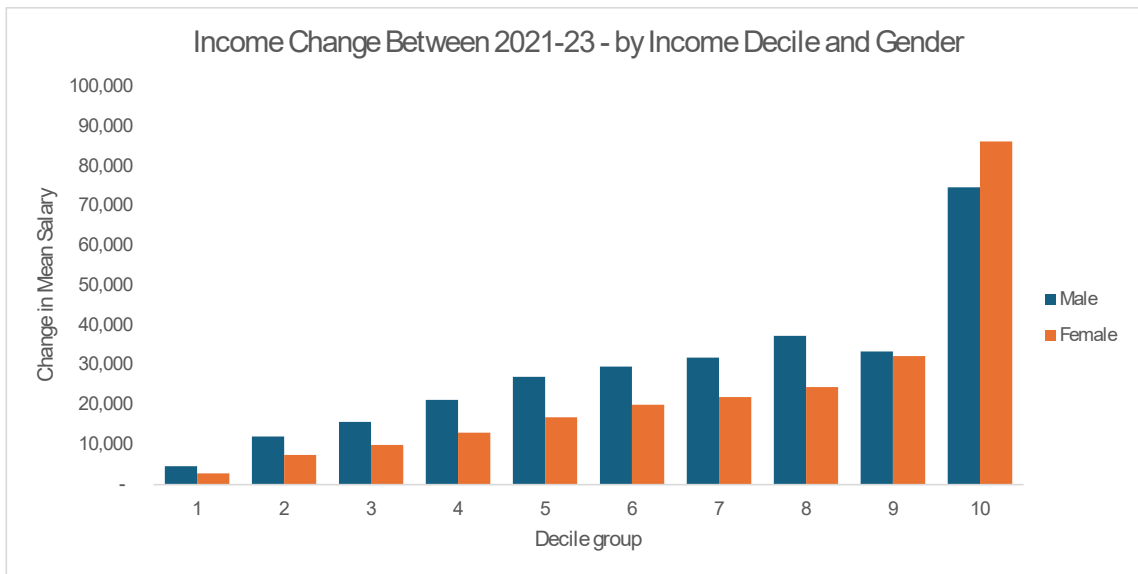
12. [Race at the Bar: Three Years On \(Bar Council 2024\)](#)

13. [Earnings Monitoring Toolkit \(Bar Council 2023\)](#)

5. Appendices

Appendix 1

The below chart looks at income change between the 2021/22 and 2023/24 financial years. This analysis grouped both male and female barristers by income decile for 2021/22 and 2023/24, then calculated the change in mean income over this period for each decile for both male and female barristers.



Appendix 2

The below chart looks at income change between the 2021/22 and 2023/24 financial years. This analysis grouped both White barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds by income decile for 2021/22 and 2023/24, then calculated the change in mean income over this period for each decile for both White barristers and barristers from minority ethnic backgrounds.

