

Overrepresentation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic solicitors in reports to the SRA: Perceptions from the profession on the factors driving reports

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1. Introduction

The universities of York, Lancaster, and Cardiff were commissioned by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) to understand the reasons why there is overrepresentation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic solicitors in reports to the SRA. There are two main components to the research. The first looks at the factors, present in the legal sector and wider society, which may explain the overrepresentation in reports of potential misconduct made to the SRA. The second looks at decision making at the assessment stage, when the SRA decides which reports to progress for investigation. The reason for this focus is that the overrepresentation is particularly evident at these two early stages of the SRA's processes. It is present in the reports received and increases further at the assessment stage. The research uses multiple complementary research methods, including both quantitative and qualitative analyses, to shed further light on this subject.

The overall findings from the research, including an overview of the component parts of the project, is published separately. This supporting report is part of component one of the project and presents findings from qualitative interviews undertaken with a cross-section of the solicitor profession about the factors precipitating reports of potential misconduct to the SRA and to explore why these factors might disproportionately impact Black, Asian, and minority ethnic solicitors compared to their White counterparts.

Making a complaint about potential misconduct to a regulator, or being the subject of such a report, is a considerable event for all individuals concerned. Furthermore, the overrepresentation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic solicitors is likely to be a matter of concern for the entire profession. Consequently, a significant aspect of our research was to seek the views of individual solicitors about this issue. To do so we conducted a programme of semi-structured interviews with practising solicitors.

The interviews were intended to provide an opportunity to capture the voice of the profession in relation to the causes of the overrepresentation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic solicitors in reports to the SRA. Furthermore, the interviews also offered a way to further elaborate findings from other components of our research, with reference to the personal experiences and insights provided by individual solicitors.

Conversely, it is important to be clear that this approach cannot and, indeed, is not intended to represent the whole profession nor will it allow us to draw any statistically valid inferences. It cannot prove whether one or more factors are more or less significant in causing the overrepresentation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic solicitors in reports received by the SRA.

[Read the full report \(PDF 12 pages, 211KB\) \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/research/overrepresentation-sra-perceptions-reports.pdf\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/globalassets/documents/sra/research/overrepresentation-sra-perceptions-reports.pdf)