

Statistical Snapshot of Paralegals in Ontario

from the Paralegal Annual Report (PAR) 2020

The Law Society of Ontario collects self-identification data through the Paralegal Annual Report Filing. This snapshot is based on data collected from the 2020 Annual Report and reveals the changes in the profession over time and in comparison to the Ontario population.

The comparisons to the Ontario population are based on the most recently available 2016 Canadian Census. An update using the 2021 Census will be possible in 2023.

RESPONSE RATE BY QUESTION, 2020

Response Rate in Percent

Question*	Paralegals
Indigenous	92.8
Racialization	83.5
Sexual Orientation	81.9
Identify as Francophone	93.0
Able to Practise in French	91.6
Have a Disability	87.4
Total Number	9,128

* There is no missing data for gender, which is obtained from administrative records.

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Table 1: **Indigenous and Racialized Ontario Paralegals**, 2020, compared to the 2016 Ontario Population

Group	Paralegals			2016 Ontario Population		
				Everyone	Persons in the Labour Force, Age 25–69	University Graduates in the Labour Force, Age 25–69
	number	percent, excluding missing	percent Women	percent		
Indigenous						
First Nations	97	1.17	78	1.84	1.40	0.54
Inuk	1	0.01	*	0.03	0.02	0.01
Métis	56	0.68	63	0.94	0.89	0.49
Other and Multiple Indigenous				0.10	0.07	0.04
Total	154	1.86	73	2.91	2.38	1.08
Racialized						
Arab	146	1.9	68	1.56	1.12	1.89
Black	598	7.9	71	4.20	4.00	2.91
Chinese	486	6.4	66	5.41	5.44	9.05
Filipino	143	1.9	69	2.24	2.75	3.43
Japanese	9	0.1	*	0.14	0.15	0.25
Korean	69	0.9	65	0.60	0.60	1.04
Latino	287	3.8	69	1.42	1.59	1.29
South Asian	839	11.0	58	8.50	8.35	13.21
Southeast Asian	103	1.4	69	0.90	0.89	0.66
West Asian	228	3.0	66	1.10	1.03	1.61
Other Visible Minority	92	1.2	73	0.71	0.70	0.45
More than one Racialized Group		0.0		0.74	0.54	0.66
Racialized and White	119	1.6	69	1.76	0.79	1.16
Total	3,119	41.0	66	29.28	27.95	37.61
White	4,347	57.1	71	67.82	69.65	61.32
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	656		67			
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	852		52			
Total		100.0	67	100.00	100.00	100.00
Number	9,128			12,998,640	5,810,371	1,962,679

Source: 2020 Paralegal Annual Report and 2016 Canadian Census Public-Use Master File;
analysis by Michael Ornstein

**too few cases for a meaningful estimate*

Table 1: **Indigenous and Racialized Ontario Paralegals**, 2020, compared to the 2016 Ontario Population

1. 1.9% of paralegals are Indigenous, compared to 2.9% of the 2016 Ontario population, 2.4% of labour force participants age 25-69 and 1.1% of university graduates in the labour force age 25-69.
2. 41.0% of paralegals are racialized, compared to 29.3% of the 2016 Ontario population, 28.0% of labour force participants age 25-69 and 37.6% of university graduates in the labour force age 25-69.
3. The Black, Latino and West Asian groups have considerably more paralegals than their representation in the population. South Asians are the largest non-white group, counting 11.0% of all paralegals, followed by Black paralegals, 7.9%, and Chinese paralegals, 6.4%.
4. Some groups have small numbers of paralegals. In all of Ontario, there are just 9 Japanese, 69 Korean, 103 Southeast Asian and 154 Indigenous paralegals.
5. The feminization of paralegal practice is plain: 67% of all paralegals are women, including 73% of Indigenous paralegals, 66% of racialized paralegals and 71% of white paralegals.

Table 2: **Age by Indigeneity and Racialization** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

Group	Age					Age				
	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60 or more	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60 or more
	number					percent				
Indigenous										
First Nations and Inuk	25	30	23	14	6	1.3	1.3	1.7	1.1	0.8
Métis	12	16	9	11	8	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.9	1.1
Total	37	46	32	25	14	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.0	1.9
Racialized										
Arab	46	44	34	17	5	2.4	1.9	2.5	1.4	0.7
Black	123	185	134	109	47	6.5	7.9	9.7	8.7	6.3
Chinese	88	148	126	94	30	4.7	6.3	9.1	7.5	4.0
Filipino	42	46	27	23	5	2.2	2.0	2.0	1.8	0.7
Japanese	0	2	4	2	1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.1
Korean	20	26	15	8	0	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.6	0.0
Latino	52	102	69	49	15	2.8	4.4	5.0	3.9	2.0
South Asian	248	257	131	117	86	13.1	11.0	9.5	9.3	11.5
Southeast Asian	27	36	19	19	2	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	0.3
West Asian	41	81	57	33	16	2.2	3.5	4.1	2.6	2.1
More than one Racialized Group	32	30	14	14	2	1.7	1.3	1.0	1.1	0.3
Racialized and White	49	41	15	10	4	2.6	1.8	1.1	0.8	0.5
Total	768	998	645	495	213	40.6	42.7	46.6	39.3	28.4
White	1,085	1,293	707	738	524	57.4	55.3	51.1	58.7	69.8
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	150	207	133	97	69					
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	121	294	173	161	103					
Total	2,161	2,838	1,690	1,516	923	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 2020 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

Table 2: **Age by Indigeneity and Racialization** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

1. In each of the five age groups, about 2% of paralegals identify as Indigenous. This compares to 69.8% of paralegals age 60 or more are white, compared to 58.7% for ages 50-59, 55.3% for ages 30-39 and 57.4% for the youngest, 20-29 age group.
2. There are fewer racialized paralegals age 60 or more, 28.4% of the total, than in the younger groups where the figures are between 39.3% and 46.6%, with the youngest age group, 20-29, with 40.6% racialized. Younger paralegals are less likely to identify as Black, Chinese, Latino and West Asian, but more likely to be South Asian.

Table 3: **Gender, Sexual Orientation, Francophone Identity, Ability to Practise in French, and Disability by Age**
for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

Group	Age						Age					
	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60 or more	Total	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60 or more	Total
	number						percent					
Gender												
Women	1,741	2,104	1,109	829	329	6,112	80.6	74.1	65.6	54.7	35.6	67.0
Men	420	734	581	687	594	3,016	19.4	25.9	34.4	45.3	64.4	33.0
Sexual Orientation												
LGBT2Q	127	128	50	37	9	351	7.0	5.6	3.6	2.9	1.2	4.7
Not LGBT2Q	1,693	2,150	1,324	1,231	728	7,126	93.0	94.4	96.4	97.1	98.8	95.3
Declined to Answer	341	560	316	248	186	1,651						
Identify as Francophone												
Yes	57	65	48	56	23	249	2.8	2.5	3.1	4.0	2.7	2.9
No	2,002	2,564	1,519	1,340	814	8,239	97.2	97.5	96.9	96.0	97.3	97.1
Declined to Answer	102	209	123	120	86	640						
Able to Practise in French												
Can Counsel and Represent	47	62	42	51	29	231	2.4	2.4	2.7	3.6	3.4	2.8
Can Counsel But Not Represent	17	20	34	14	19	104	0.9	0.8	2.2	1.0	2.2	1.2
Cannot	1,859	2,513	1,485	1,364	807	8,028	96.7	96.8	95.1	95.5	94.4	96.0
Declined to Answer	238	243	129	87	68	765						
Have a Disability												
Yes	89	134	114	117	74	528	4.5	5.4	7.9	8.9	9.7	6.6
No	1,895	2,343	1,326	1,195	689	7,448	95.5	94.6	92.1	91.1	90.3	93.4
Declined to Answer	177	361	250	204	160	1,152						
Total	2,161	2,838	1,690	1,516	923	9,128	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 2020 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

Table 3: **Gender, Sexual Orientation, Francophone Identity, Ability to Practise in French, and Disability by Age**
for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

1. 67.0% of paralegals are women. The striking and continuing feminization of paralegal practice is apparent from a comparison of age groups. From just 35.6% women among paralegals age 60 or more, their representation increases to 54.7% for ages 50-59, 65.6% for ages 40-49, 74.1% for ages 30-39 and 80.6% for paralegals under 30.
2. 4.7% of paralegals identify as LGBT2Q, with 7.0% of paralegals age 20-29 identifying as LGBT2Q, about 3.6% for ages 40-49, and 1.2% for age 60 or more.
3. 2.9% of Ontario paralegals identify as Francophone, 2.8% can counsel and represent clients in French; and another 1.2% can counsel but not represent clients in French. Both indicators are highest for older paralegals, with a decline from 3.6% for paralegals age 50-59 able to counsel and represent in French down to about 2.4% for paralegals under 40.
4. The incidence of disability is 6.6% overall, climbing steadily from 4.5% for paralegals under 30 to 7.9% of paralegals age 40-49 to 9.7% of paralegals 60 or older.

Table 4a: **Status* by Indigeneity and Racialization** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

Group	Sole Practitioner	Firm Partner	Firm Associate	Firm Employee	Legal Clinic	In-House	Government	Education	Other Employment	Retired or Not Working	Total	Number
	percent											
Indigenous												
First Nations and Inuk	18	3	2	4	7	2	14	1	27	21	100	91
Métis	38	4	0	4	6	4	11	0	13	21	100	53
Total	25	3	1	4	6	3	13	1	22	21	100	144
Racialized												
Arab	24	1	1	4	1	4	9	2	27	27	100	139
Black	20	1	2	6	1	5	10	1	29	26	100	575
Chinese	21	2	1	10	1	3	4	2	31	25	100	468
Filipino	16	4	3	6	1	7	6	0	35	22	100	136
Japanese	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	11	44	33	100	9
Korean	14	3	5	9	2	0	3	0	35	29	100	65
Latino	19	1	2	10	3	6	7	1	28	22	100	277
South Asian	20	2	3	6	0	2	5	1	32	28	100	804
Southeast Asian	12	0	4	4	1	4	4	1	38	32	100	100
West Asian	30	0	1	8	0	3	5	0	25	28	100	217
More than one Racialized Group	11	1	0	8	1	5	14	5	33	23	100	88
Racialized and White	10	2	0	9	1	3	14	0	40	21	100	116
Total	20	1	2	7	1	4	7	1	31	26	100	2,994
White	17	2	3	11	1	6	10	1	30	18	100	4,203
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	19	2	4	9	1	4	8	1	26	27	100	632
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	24	3	2	8	1	5	8	1	23	25	100	827
Total	19	2	3	9	1	5	9	1	29	22	100	8,800

Source: 2020 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

*excludes new licensees

Table 4b: **Region** by Indigeneity and Racialization** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

	South-west	Central South	Toronto	Durham, Halton, Peel, York	Central North	North	Ottawa	East	Total	
Group	percent									Number
Indigenous										
First Nations and Inuk	9	17	23	23	13	6	2	6	100	95
Métis	13	9	25	16	11	14	7	5	100	56
Total	11	14	24	21	12	9	4	6	100	151
Racialized										
Arab	14	8	31	36	1	0	10	0	100	146
Black	2	7	48	36	3	0	5	0	100	594
Chinese	2	2	56	36	1	0	2	0	100	476
Filipino	2	3	63	27	1	0	3	0	100	143
Japanese	0	0	63	25	13	0	0	0	100	8
Korean	3	1	75	17	0	0	3	0	100	69
Latino	6	8	51	28	2	0	4	0	100	283
South Asian	1	3	40	54	1	0	1	0	100	829
Southeast Asian	3	9	49	34	3	0	3	0	100	103
West Asian	0	7	48	39	0	0	4	0	100	224
More than one Racialized Group	4	3	58	31	1	1	1	0	100	90
Racialized and White	9	4	50	25	1	2	6	3	100	116
Total	3	5	48	39	2	0	3	0	100	3,081
White	9	12	30	26	10	2	6	4	100	4,284
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	6	6	41	37	4	1	3	1	100	648
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	5	8	37	37	5	2	3	2	100	837
Total	7	9	38	32	6	1	5	2	100	8,790

Source: 2020 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

**excludes paralegals whose address is outside Ontario

Table 4a and 4b: **Status and Region by Indigeneity and Racialization** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

1. Just over half of all paralegals are not practising: 29% have other remunerative employment and 22% report they are not employed. Respectively, 43%, 57% and 48% of Indigenous, racialized and white paralegals are in other employment or not employed.
2. 19% of paralegals are in sole practice and 9% are employees of a firm, with sole practice accounting for 25% of Indigenous paralegals, 20% of racialized paralegals and 17% of white paralegals.
3. The largest number of paralegals is in Toronto, 38% of the total. The combination of the Durham, Halton, Peel and York areas surrounding Toronto accounts for another 32%. Nine percent of paralegals work in the Central South, 7% in the Southwest, 6% in the Central North and 5% in Ottawa. Just 1% of paralegals are in the North and 2% in Eastern Ontario.
4. 48% of racialized paralegals are in Toronto and 39% are in Durham, Halton, Peel and York, leaving only 13% in the rest of the province. In contrast, 24% of Indigenous paralegals are in Toronto and 21% in Durham, Halton, Peel and York. The North accounts for 9% of Indigenous paralegals, compared to 2% of white paralegals.

Table 5a: **Status* by Gender by Age** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

Group	Sole Practitioner	Firm Partner	Firm Associate	Firm Employee	Legal Clinic	In-House	Government	Education	Other Employment	Retired or Not Working	Total	Number
	percent											
Women												
20–29	2.7	0.6	3.2	9.3	0.5	3.8	9.1	0.2	48.6	21.9	100.0	1,618
30–39	8.2	0.8	2.5	9.4	0.9	4.2	10.3	1.0	37.6	25.0	100.0	2,033
40–49	17.4	2.0	2.8	10.1	2.6	5.8	9.8	2.1	24.3	23.1	100.0	1,080
50–59	23.5	1.6	1.1	10.0	2.5	5.9	10.3	1.3	20.1	23.7	100.0	816
60 or more	27.8	2.4	1.5	9.2	6.1	5.5	8.9	3.1	11.3	24.2	100.0	327
Total	11.6	1.2	2.5	9.6	1.6	4.7	9.8	1.2	34.3	23.6	100.0	5,874
Men												
20–29	10.7	1.3	4.0	7.2	0.5	4.3	8.3	0.0	31.7	32.0	100.0	375
30–39	20.9	2.8	3.6	9.9	0.7	5.0	9.2	0.7	26.7	20.5	100.0	718
40–49	32.7	2.3	4.4	9.4	0.7	6.9	6.7	0.5	18.6	17.7	100.0	565
50–59	41.2	4.9	3.1	8.0	0.4	5.0	5.8	0.7	13.1	17.8	100.0	678
60 or more	56.1	5.3	1.9	6.3	0.2	4.9	4.4	0.8	6.4	13.7	100.0	590
Total	33.7	3.5	3.3	8.3	0.5	5.3	6.8	0.6	18.6	19.4	100.0	2,926

Source: 2020 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

*excludes new licensees

Table 5b: **Region** by Gender** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

Group	South-west	Central South	Toronto	Durham, Halton, Peel, York	Central North	North	Ottawa	East	Total	Number
	percent									
Women	6.6	9.0	37.5	30.9	7.1	1.5	5.0	2.2	100.0	6,024
Men	6.6	8.6	37.1	34.8	5.1	1.3	4.4	2.0	100.0	2,977
Total	6.6	8.9	37.4	32.2	6.4	1.5	4.8	2.1	100.0	9,001

Source: 2020 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

**excludes paralegals whose address is outside Ontario

Table 5a and 5b: **Status by Gender by Age and Region by Gender** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

1. Male paralegals are much more likely to be sole practitioners, by a margin of 33.7% to 11.6%. The difference is almost entirely made up by “other employment”, which accounts for 34.3% of all women paralegals, compared to 18.6% of men. Sole practice increases with age, from just 2.7% of women paralegals under 30 to 17.4% for ages 40-49; and the comparable figures for men are 10.7% and 32.7%.
2. “Other employment” outside of paralegal practice, decreases from 48.6% of women paralegals under the age of 30 to 37.6% for ages 30-39 and 24.3% for ages 40-49; with comparable figures for men of 31.7%, 26.7% and 18.6%. This might mean that most younger paralegals eventually practice as paralegals, but it is also possible that licensees who cannot or choose not to practise do not maintain their licence.
3. Gender has little impact on the geographical distribution of paralegals.

Table 6: **Area of Practice by Indigeneity and Racialization and by Gender** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

Group	Accident Benefits	Human Rights	Landlord and Tenant	Provincial Offenses	Property Tax	Small Claims	Summary Conviction	Workers' Compensation	Other	Number
	<i>percent of paralegals whose work in the area accounts for at least 30 percent of their total practice</i>									
First Nations and Inuk	0	0	24	22	0	22	8	11	30	37
Métis	10	0	26	29	0	26	10	13	10	31
Arab	9	9	17	28	0	20	7	7	17	46
Black	12	2	25	21	4	32	3	7	15	201
Chinese	13	1	31	22	4	29	1	4	13	164
Filipino	5	0	19	28	2	30	2	5	30	43
Japanese										<5
Korean	42	0	21	16	0	32	0	0	16	19
Latino	25	1	15	15	1	19	2	8	22	109
South Asian	24	3	22	32	1	22	1	3	12	243
Southeast Asian	21	0	8	29	0	29	0	4	17	24
West Asian	5	3	19	27	1	36	3	3	21	77
More than one Racialized Group	17	0	13	21	0	33	4	0	17	24
Racialized and White	7	10	14	21	10	21	0	7	14	29
White	10	2	21	23	9	23	3	13	10	1,796
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	16	2	19	24	5	21	3	10	13	242
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	8	2	19	31	6	29	3	8	11	370
Women	13	2	23	18	4	25	3	10	17	1,574
Men	11	2	18	32	9	25	2	10	7	1,882
Total	12	2	21	24	6	25	3	10	12	3,456

Source: 2020 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

Table 6: **Area of Practice by Indigeneity and Racialization and by Gender** for Ontario Paralegals, 2020

To be counted as specializing in an area of practice in Table 6, at least 30% of a paralegal's practice must be in the area. By this criterion, most paralegals' practice is concentrated in just one area. Note that Table 6 reports on only 3,456 of the total of 9,128 licensees show in Table 1.

1. The number of paralegals reporting their area of practice, in the rightmost column, is quite small for many of the racialized groups and this results in some random variation. For example, not too much should be made of 42% of Korean paralegals reporting "Accident Benefits" as an area of specialization, as the figure describes just 7 out of 19 individuals reporting, compared to 65 Korean paralegals in Table 1.
2. It is difficult to see meaningful differences in the areas of practice of the individual racialized groups or between racialized, Indigenous and white paralegals.
3. Similarly, the gender differences are small except that 32% of male paralegals report practising in the area of "Provincial Offenses", compared to 18% of women, while 17% of women work in "other" areas (*not* among the eight areas listed specifically), compared to 7% of men.