

Statistical Snapshot of Paralegals in Ontario

from the Paralegal Annual Report (PAR) 2019

The Law Society of Ontario collects self-identification data through the Paralegal Annual Report Filing. This snapshot is based on data collected from the 2019 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, 2019

Response Rate in Percent

Question*	Paralegals
Indigenous	92.8
Racialization	83.4
Sexual Orientation	82.2
Identify as Francophone	93.0
Able to Practise in French	86.7
Have a Disability	87.6
Total Number	8,891

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

The Law Society of Ontario has been collecting self-identification data in the Paralegal Annual Report since 2009. The structure of the survey at the time permitted the paralegal to pass over the question and provide no response. This option has been modified so that, while a paralegal can still decline to self-identify, the person must now so indicate by expressly entering this response.

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Table 1: **Indigenous and Racialized Ontario Paralegals**, 2019, 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	64	0.79	85.9	1.84	1.40	0.54
Inuk	1	0.01	*	0.03	0.02	0.01
Métis	51	0.63	68.6	0.94	0.89	0.49
Other and Multiple Indigenous				0.10	0.07	0.04
Total	116	1.44	78.4	2.91	2.38	1.08
Racialized						
Arab	117	1.6	64.1	1.56	1.12	1.89
Black	559	7.5	70.5	4.20	4.00	2.91
Chinese	466	6.3	65.7	5.41	5.44	9.05
Filipino	130	1.8	65.4	2.24	2.75	3.43
Japanese	9	0.1	*	0.14	0.15	0.25
Korean	64	0.9	62.5	0.60	0.60	1.04
Latino	287	3.9	70.4	1.42	1.59	1.29
South Asian	782	10.6	57.8	8.50	8.35	13.21
Southeast Asian	97	1.3	62.9	0.90	0.89	0.66
West Asian	226	3.1	63.7	1.10	1.03	1.61
Other Visible Minority	98	1.3	71.4	0.71	0.70	0.45
More than one Racialized Group		0.0		0.74	0.54	0.66
Racialized and White	112	1.5	69.6	1.76	0.79	1.16
Total	2,947	39.8	64.9	29.28	27.95	37.61
White	4,353	58.8	69.2	67.82	69.65	61.32
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	643		65.5			
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	832		53.0			
Total		100.0	66.1	100.00	100.00	100.00
Number	8,891			12,998,640	5,810,371	1,962,679

Source: 2019 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

Table 1: **Indigenous and Racialized Ontario Paralegals**, 2019, compared to the 2016 Ontario Population

1. 1.4% of paralegals are Indigenous, compared to 2.91% of the 2016 Ontario population, 2.38% of labour force participants age 25–69, and 1.08% of university graduates in the labour force age 25–69.
2. 39.8% 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 communities have considerably more paralegals than their representation in the population. South Asians are the largest non-White group, counting 10.6% of all paralegals, followed by Black paralegals, 7.5%, and Chinese paralegals, 6.3%.
4. Some groups have small numbers of paralegals. In all of Ontario there are just 9 Japanese, 64 Korean, 97 Southeast Asian, and 64 First Nations paralegals.
5. The feminization of paralegal practice is plain: 66% of all paralegals are women, including 78% of Indigenous paralegals, 65% of Racialized paralegals, and 69% of White paralegals.

Table 2: **Racialization by Age** for Ontario Paralegals, 2019

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	14	21	14	13	3	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.4
Métis	14	11	12	11	3	0.7	0.5	0.9	0.9	0.4
Total	28	32	26	24	6	1.4	1.5	1.9	2.0	0.8
Racialized										
Arab	47	29	28	11	2	2.3	1.4	2.1	0.9	0.3
Black	128	169	124	99	39	6.3	8.0	9.2	8.1	5.5
Chinese	94	126	131	83	32	4.6	6.0	9.7	6.8	4.5
Filipino	36	40	28	22	4	1.8	1.9	2.1	1.8	0.6
Japanese	0	2	3	4	0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.0
Korean	25	20	12	7	0	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.0
Latino	59	106	58	51	13	2.9	5.0	4.3	4.2	1.8
South Asian	260	219	125	108	70	12.8	10.4	9.2	8.9	9.9
Southeast Asian	33	33	17	12	2	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.0	0.3
West Asian	51	72	59	29	15	2.5	3.4	4.4	2.4	2.1
More than one Racialized Group	40	25	16	13	4	2.0	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.6
Racialized and White	51	35	12	8	6	2.5	1.7	0.9	0.7	0.8
Total	824	876	613	447	187	40.6	41.6	45.2	36.8	26.3
White	1,177	1,199	716	744	517	58.0	56.9	52.8	61.2	72.8
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	145	212	119	112	55					
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	134	274	162	159	103					
Total	2,308	2,593	1,636	1,486	868	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 2019 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

Table 2: **Racialization by Age** for Ontario Paralegals, 2019

- 72.8% of paralegals age 60 or more are white, compared to 61.2% for paralegals age 50–59, about 54% for ages 30–49, and 58.0% for the youngest, 20–29 age group.
- Indigenous paralegals are small in number and their age distribution suggests a decline in their share of the profession over the last 40 years.
- There is a small decline in the percentage of paralegals who are racialized with age, 45.2% for ages 40–49, compared to about 41% for ages 20–39. 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, 2019

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	1,825	1,914	1,047	800	295	5,881	79.1	73.8	64.0	53.8	34.0	66.1
Men	483	679	589	686	573	3,010	20.9	26.2	36.0	46.2	66.0	33.9
Sexual Orientation												
LGBT2Q	110	107	40	36	11	304	5.6	5.1	3.0	2.9	1.6	4.2
Not LGBT2Q	1,855	1,976	1,286	1,198	687	7,002	94.4	94.9	97.0	97.1	98.4	95.8
Declined to Answer	343	510	310	252	170	1,585						
Identify as Francophone												
Yes	53	59	40	57	18	227	2.4	2.5	2.7	4.1	2.3	2.7
No	2,133	2,346	1,466	1,320	774	8,039	97.6	97.5	97.3	95.9	97.7	97.3
Declined to Answer	122	188	130	109	76	625						
Able to Practise in French												
Can Counsel and Represent	49	57	36	62	24	228	2.5	2.6	2.5	4.7	3.1	3.0
Can Counsel But Not Represent	16	20	24	15	20	95	0.8	0.9	1.7	1.1	2.6	1.2
Cannot	1,867	2,158	1,386	1,246	729	7,386	96.6	96.6	95.9	94.2	94.3	95.8
Declined to Answer	376	358	190	163	95	1,182						
Have a Disability												
Yes	90	122	109	111	78	510	4.3	5.4	7.7	8.7	10.7	6.5
No	2,013	2,137	1,312	1,164	652	7,278	95.7	94.6	92.3	91.3	89.3	93.5
Declined to Answer	205	334	215	211	138	1,103						
Total	2,308	2,593	1,636	1,486	868	8,891	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 2019 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, 2019

1. Overall, 66.1% of paralegals are women. A striking feminization is apparent from a comparison of age groups. From just 34.0% women among paralegals age 60 or more, 53.8% for ages 50–59, 64.0% for ages 40–49, 73.8% for ages 30–39, and 79.1% for paralegals under 30.
2. 4.2% of paralegals identify as LGBT2Q, with higher percentages for women. 5.6% of paralegals age 20–29 identify as LGBT2Q, about 3.0% for ages 40–59, and 1.6% for age 60 or more.
3. 2.7% of Ontario paralegals identify as Francophone, 3.0% indicate that they 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. There is a considerable decline from 4.7% for paralegals age 50–59 able to counsel and represent in French down to about 2.5% for paralegals under 40.
4. The incidence of disability is 6.5% overall, climbing steadily from 4.3% for paralegals under age 30 to 7.7% of paralegals age 40–49 to 10.7% of paralegals 60 or older.

Table 4a: **Status by Racialization*** for Ontario Paralegals, 2019

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	25	3	0	3	8	3	11	3	25	17	100	63
Métis	30	2	2	6	2	6	11	0	21	19	100	47
Total	27	3	1	5	5	5	11	2	24	18	100	110
Racialized												
Arab	25	1	2	3	2	5	6	2	25	30	100	110
Black	22	1	1	6	1	5	10	1	32	21	100	525
Chinese	22	2	1	11	1	2	4	1	32	23	100	447
Filipino	19	2	4	6	1	6	6	0	35	20	100	127
Japanese	11	0	0	11	0	0	0	11	56	11	100	9
Korean	13	3	5	12	0	0	3	0	42	22	100	60
Latino	18	1	1	10	4	5	9	1	29	22	100	274
South Asian	21	2	3	7	1	2	5	1	32	27	100	737
Southeast Asian	14	0	5	4	0	4	5	0	40	26	100	91
West Asian	28	1	2	11	0	1	3	0	26	27	100	217
More than one Racialized Group	14	1	2	6	2	4	10	4	31	26	100	94
Racialized and White	7	1	2	10	0	6	17	1	38	18	100	108
Total	20	1	2	8	1	3	7	1	32	24	100	2,799
White	18	2	3	12	2	6	10	1	29	16	100	4,166
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	21	3	3	9	0	4	8	2	31	20	100	622
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	23	3	2	8	0	5	7	1	24	26	100	810
Total	20	2	3	10	1	5	9	1	30	20	100	8,507

Source: 2019 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

*excludes new licensees

Table 4b: **Region by Racialization**** for Ontario Paralegals, 2019

Group	South-west	Central South	Toronto	Durham, Halton, Peel, York	Central North	North	Ottawa	East	Total	Number
	percent									
Indigenous										
First Nations and Inuk	17	11	24	14	14	6	3	10	100	63
Métis	8	16	25	12	12	16	8	4	100	51
Total	13	13	25	13	13	11	5	7	100	114
Racialized										
Arab	14	10	29	36	2	0	9	0	100	117
Black	2	6	49	36	2	0	5	0	100	554
Chinese	2	2	57	37	1	0	2	0	100	458
Filipino	1	3	66	27	1	0	2	0	100	130
Japanese	0	0	67	22	11	0	0	0	100	9
Korean	3	3	69	22	0	0	3	0	100	64
Latino	6	8	53	28	1	0	4	0	100	283
South Asian	1	3	39	54	1	0	1	0	100	778
Southeast Asian	3	10	45	35	2	0	4	0	100	96
West Asian	1	4	47	45	0	0	2	0	100	223
More than one Racialized Group	5	5	59	26	1	1	3	0	100	97
Racialized and White	8	2	51	27	2	1	7	2	100	110
Total	3	5	49	40	1	0	3	0	100	2,919
White	10	12	31	26	10	2	6	4	100	4,304
Not Indigenous, Declined Racialization Question	6	7	42	35	4	1	4	1	100	634
Declined Indigenous and Racialization Questions	5	7	38	37	6	2	3	3	100	819
Total	7	9	38	32	6	1	5	2	100	8,790

Source: 2019 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

**excludes paralegals whose address is outside Ontario

Table 4a and 4b: **Status and Region by Racialization** for Ontario Paralegals, 2019

- Half of all paralegals are not practising, with 30% in other remunerative employment and 20% not employed at all. Respectively, 42, 56, and 45% of Indigenous, racialized, and white paralegals are in other employment or not working.
- One fifth of all paralegals are in sole practice and 10% are employees of a law firm, with sole practice accounting for 27% of Indigenous paralegals, 20% of racialized paralegals, and 18% of white paralegals. Their numbers are too small to compare the racialized groups with confidence.
- By a wide margin, the largest number of paralegals are in Toronto, 38% of the total. The combination of Durham, Halton, Peel, and York areas surrounding Toronto accounts for another 32%. 9% 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 the East.
- 48% of racialized paralegals are in Toronto and 40% are in Durham, Halton, Peel and York, leaving only 11% in the rest of the province. The North accounts for 11% of Indigenous paralegals, compared to 2% of white paralegals and almost no racialized paralegals. 25% of Indigenous paralegals are in Toronto and 13% are in each of the Southwest, Central South and Central North regions and in Durham, Halton, Peel and York.

Table 5a: **Status by Gender by Age*** for Ontario Paralegals, 2019

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	3.0	0.2	3.0	9.8	0.6	3.0	8.8	0.4	51.2	20.0	100.0	1,675
30–39	8.8	0.8	2.6	11.2	1.3	4.3	9.9	1.1	36.4	23.5	100.0	1,852
40–49	19.6	2.5	2.3	10.6	2.2	6.3	9.5	2.0	24.0	21.1	100.0	1,011
50–59	24.2	1.3	1.3	9.8	2.6	5.5	10.5	1.5	22.1	21.2	100.0	782
60 or more	27.0	2.7	1.7	10.2	7.8	4.8	9.9	2.7	9.6	23.5	100.0	293
Total	12.1	1.1	2.4	10.4	1.8	4.5	9.6	1.2	35.2	21.7	100.0	5,613
Men												
20–29	12.1	1.7	4.0	9.5	0.5	4.5	7.3	0.2	34.1	26.1	100.0	422
30–39	22.3	2.9	3.3	10.8	0.2	5.6	9.2	0.5	26.1	19.2	100.0	660
40–49	35.4	3.6	3.6	9.2	0.7	7.1	6.3	0.7	18.6	14.8	100.0	576
50–59	42.8	4.6	3.6	7.9	0.3	5.2	5.4	0.7	13.4	16.1	100.0	671
60 or more	55.4	5.3	1.8	7.3	0.2	6.7	4.2	0.7	7.1	11.3	100.0	565
Total	34.6	3.7	3.2	8.9	0.3	5.9	6.5	0.6	19.1	17.1	100.0	2,894

Source: 2019 Paralegal Annual Report; analysis by Michael Ornstein

*excludes new licensees

Table 5b: **Region by Gender***** for Ontario Paralegals, 2019

Group	South-west	Central South	Toronto	Durham, Halton, Peel, York	Central North	North	Ottawa	East	Total	Number
	percent									
Women	6.9	8.8	38.3	30.4	6.9	1.5	4.9	2.3	100.0	5,813
Men	6.8	8.2	37.3	35.1	5.0	1.3	4.2	2.1	100.0	2,977
Total	6.9	8.6	37.9	32.0	6.2	1.4	4.7	2.2	100.0	8,790

Source: 2019 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, 2019

1. Men are much more likely to be sole practitioners by a margin of 34.6% to 12.1% for women. This difference is almost entirely made up by “other employment”, which accounts for 35.2% of all women paralegals, compared to 19.1% of men. Sole practice increases with age, from just 3.0% of women paralegals under age 30 to 19.6% for ages 40–49; the comparable figures for men are 12.1% and 35.4%.
2. “Other employment” decreases from 51.2% of women paralegals under age 30 to 36.4% for ages 30–39, and 24.0% for ages 40–49; with comparable figures for men of 34.1, 26.1, and 18.6%. This might mean that most younger paralegals eventually work as paralegals, but it is also possible that licensees who cannot or choose not to practise when they are young drop out and disappear from the records.
3. There is very little difference in the geographical distribution of male and female paralegals.