



Law Society of Ontario 2022 Annual Report

Professional Regulation statistics

Complaints received in 2022

In 2022, the number of new complaints received in Professional Regulation decreased by 2.2% from the number of complaints received in 2021 but was still 4% higher than the number received in 2020.

New complaints received, 2017 to 2022

| Year | Number of new complaints received |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2017 | 4,737 |
| 2018 | 4,200 |
| 2019 | 4,379 |
| 2020 | 3,987 |
| 2021 | 4,238 |
| 2022 | 4,145 |

With respect to the 4,145 new complaints received in Professional Regulation in 2022:

- The breakdown by subject was:
 - 73% against lawyers
 - 14% against paralegals
 - The remaining complaints/cases involved non-licensees and lawyer and paralegal applicants.
- The breakdown by complainant was:
 - 68% of complaints were brought by members of the public
 - 15% of complaints were brought by licensees
 - 17% of complaints were internally raised (i.e., the complainant is the Law Society).



Types of complaints

In 2022, the receipt of a large number of lawyer applicant special application cases (stemming from the investigation into apparent academic misconduct on the Law Society's November 2021 barrister and solicitor online licensing examinations) impacted the proportion of complaints received in Professional Regulation and, subsequently in Investigations. As a result of these cases, the proportion of complaints raising service, integrity, governance and financial issues was lower than in previous years. With respect to the underlying complaints in the Notices filed in 2022, the proportion of governance complaints increased, but the proportion of complaints raising service issues decreased from 2021.

Types of allegations raised in complaints in 2022

| Type of complaint | Complaints received in Professional Regulation | Complaints received in Investigations | Complaints underlying Notices filed by Discipline |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Service issues | 43% | 38% | 28% |
| Integrity issues | 40% | 37% | 44% |
| Governance issues | 19% | 34% | 52% |
| Financial issues | 11% | 18% | 22% |
| Conflict issues | 5% | 7% | 5% |
| Special applications (including capacity, interlocutory suspension, reinstatement or terms dispute and licensing matters) | 12% | 24% | 14% |

Areas of law raised in complaints

Note that these statistics include only complaints in which at least one area of law was identified. More than one area of law can be identified in a complaint.

The areas of law raised in complaints received in Professional Regulation and complaints transferred to Investigations in 2022 were generally similar to 2021. With respect to the underlying complaints for Notices filed in 2022, the percentage was higher for civil litigation, real estate and estates, and lower in immigration/ administrative, family and the "other" category than in 2021.

Areas of law raised in complaints in 2022

| Area of law raised in the complaint | Complaints received in Professional Regulation | Complaints received in Investigations | Complaints underlying Notices filed by Discipline |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Civil litigation | 26% | 23% | 32% |
| Real estate | 19% | 24% | 24% |
| Family | 19% | 13% | 11% |
| Criminal | 9% | 11% | 9% |
| Administrative/Immigration | 12% | 17% | 12% |
| Estates | 9% | 8% | 8% |
| Corporate/Commercial | 3% | 4% | 2% |
| Employment | 3% | 2% | 2% |
| Other | 11% | 9% | 9% |



Hearings before the Law Society Tribunal – Hearing Division

Notices filed

In 2022, 143 Notices were filed: 99 involved lawyers; 33 involved paralegals; seven involved paralegal applicants; four involved lawyer applicants.

Types of Notices filed in the Hearing Division, 2017 to 2022

| Year | Notices filed by the Law Society (including conduct, capacity and non-compliance) | Notices of motion for interlocutory suspension or restriction (including motions to vary or cancel existing orders) | Notices filed by licensees or applicants (including licensing, reinstatement and terms dispute) |
|-------------|---|---|---|
| 2017 | 116 | 21 | 23 |
| 2018 | 103 | 16 | 13 |
| 2019 | 114 | 14 | 16 |
| 2020 | 131 | 12 | 22 |
| 2021 | 136 | 9 | 23 |
| 2022 | 115 | 15 | 13 |

Completed hearings

Note that a “completed hearing” for Professional Regulation is defined as one in which the Law Society Tribunal – Hearing Division has rendered a final order and the Tribunal is considered *functus* or when a matter has been withdrawn, abandoned or deemed abandoned.

In 2022, a total of 160 hearings were completed before the Law Society Tribunal – Hearing Division: 115 involving lawyers/lawyer applicants; 45 involving paralegals/paralegal applicants.

Penalties imposed in conduct matters completed in 2017 to 2022

| Year | Reprimand | Suspension | Permission to surrender / revocation of licence | Fine only |
|-------------|-----------|------------|---|-----------|
| 2017 | 25 | 67 | 22 | 1 |
| 2018 | 22 | 55 | 24 | 0 |
| 2019 | 10 | 37 | 25 | 0 |
| 2020 | 16 | 43 | 19 | 1 |
| 2021 | 16 | 63 | 31 | 0 |
| 2022 | 8 | 73 | 37 | 0 |

Similar results are found with respect to the proportion of yearly totals that each type of penalty has. For example, suspensions constitute, on average, about 56% of all penalties imposed (with a range between 51% and 62% in the six years depicted).