

Law Society of Ontario 2021 Annual Report

Professional Regulation statistics

Complaints received in 2021

In 2021, the number of new complaints received in Professional Regulation increased by 6.3% from the number of complaints received in 2020, but was 3% lower than the number received in 2019.

New complaints received, 2016 to 2021

Year	Number of new complaints received
2016	4,833
2017	4,737
2018	4,200
2019	4,379
2020	3,987
2021	4,238

With respect to the 4,238 new complaints received in Professional Regulation in 2021, the breakdown by subject and by complainant are consistent with past years.

The breakdown by subject was:

- 79% against lawyers
- 12% against paralegals
- The remaining complaints/cases involved non-licensees and lawyer and paralegal applicants.

The breakdown by complainant was:

- 72% of complaints were brought by members of the public
- 14% of complaints were brought by licensees
- 14% of complaints were internally raised (i.e., the complainant is the Law Society).

Types of complaints

The types of allegations raised in complaints received in Professional Regulation and those complaints transferred to Investigations were generally similar to the types of allegations raised in these two groups in the past few years. With respect to the underlying complaints in the notices filed in 2021, the proportion of service complaints increased, but the proportion of financial complaints and special applications decreased from 2020.

Types of allegations raised in complaints in 2021

Type of complaint	Complaints received in Professional Regulation	Complaints received in Investigations	Complaints underlying notices filed by Discipline
Service issues	45%	44%	40%
Integrity issues	44%	43%	43%
Governance issues	20%	41%	40%
Financial issues	10%	20%	25%
Conflict issues	5%	7%	5%
Special applications (including capacity, interlocutory suspension, reinstatement or terms dispute and licensing matters)	6%	12%	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 2021 were generally similar to 2020, although there was an increase across administrative/immigration for complaints received in Professional Regulation. With respect to the underlying complaints for notices filed in 2021, the proportion was higher for civil litigation and the "other" category, and lower in corporate/commercial and real estate than in 2020.

Areas of law raised in complaints in 2021

Area of law raised in the complaint	Complaints received in Professional Regulation	Complaints received in Investigations	Complaints underlying notices filed by Discipline
Civil litigation	23%	24%	28%
Real estate	15%	19%	18%
Family	20%	15%	14%
Criminal	8%	12%	9%
Administrative/immigration	13%	15%	19%
Estates	8%	6%	5%
Corporate/commercial	3%	4%	3%
Employment	3%	3%	0%
Other	13%	12%	18%

Hearings before the Law Society Tribunal – Hearing Division

Notices filed

In 2021, 168 notices were filed: 109 involved lawyers; 42 involved paralegals; 9 involved paralegal applicants; 8 involved lawyer applicants.

Types of notices filed in the Hearing Division, 2016 to 2021

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)
2016	127	26	16
2017	116	21	23
2018	103	16	13
2019	114	14	16
2020	131	12	22
2021	136	9	23

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 2021, a total of 151 hearings were completed before the Law Society Tribunal – Hearing Division: 106 involving lawyers/lawyer applicants; 45 involving paralegals/paralegal applicants.

Penalties imposed in conduct matters

Penalties imposed in conduct matters completed in 2016 to 2021

Year	Reprimand	Suspension	Permission to surrender / revocation of licence	Fine only
2015	16	46	25	0
2016	20	49	24	0
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

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 54% of all penalties imposed (with a range between 51% and 58% in the 6 years depicted).