

PRESS NOTICE

Embargoed to 00.01 Thursday 4 June

Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) research finds out why lawyers apply – or don't apply – for judicial office

The JAC's research published today shows that:

- Solicitors are much less likely than barristers to see becoming a judge as part of their future career.
- Many solicitors feel that they are not supported by their firms when they apply for a judicial post.
- The isolated nature of the role of a judge, the loss of flexibility, the reduction in earnings and the judicial culture are identified as unappealing factors.
- More than a third of respondents had never thought of applying for judicial office
- Half said the reason they had not applied to be a judge was because they were happy with their jobs.
- 55% of lawyers said they would be more likely to apply for judicial office if they could work part-time.
- 13% of black and ethnic minority lawyers said they were very likely to apply in future
- 7% of white lawyers said they were very likely to apply in future.
- Exactly equal proportions of women and men said they intended to apply in future.

This survey also shows that some myths still persist which need to be dispelled. For example:

- One third of those who responded believe that they cannot apply unless they know a High Court judge who will act as a referee.
- It is still widely believed that to become a judge one needs to be a barrister, have the right kind of education, be part of the right social network and know the top judges.
- It is believed that being under 40 or working class is a disadvantage.
- Many still do not see the appointments process as based solely on merit. For example, women think men have an advantage and men think women are favoured.

Baroness Prashar, Chairman of the JAC said:

“The findings of this research provide a sound basis for future work by the JAC, the professions, the Judiciary and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and those who support under-represented groups. It also reassures us that while our approach to date has been right it needs to be built upon further.

“We will continue to work with the Law Society, the Bar Council, the Institute of Legal Executives, the Judiciary, the MoJ and other groups to dispel these unfounded myths and to develop an even sharper and better targeted approach to encourage applicants from a much more diverse pool.”

The JAC commissioned this research from the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) and worked with the Law Society and Bar Council to help ensure that the right questions were asked.

A detailed questionnaire was sent to a representative sample of 6,000 solicitors and barristers, of whom 2000 responded.

The JAC is organising a conference in July to discuss the findings of this research with all the interested parties and to determine next steps.

For further information contact Stephen Ward, JAC Media Relations Manager on 020 3334 0329.

EDITORS' NOTES

1. Copies of the BMRB research will be available from 00.01 on 4 June on the JAC website www.judicialappointments.gov.uk
2. The diversity conference will be held on 7 July.
3. The JAC was set up in April 2006 following the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 to select candidates for appointment solely on merit, and also to have regard to the diversity of candidates applying.
4. Details of all JAC published selection exercises are available on the JAC website.