

LCQ13: Development and training in legal services sector

Following is a question by the Hon Nick Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, in the Legislative Council today (July 15):

Question:

There are views that the legal services sector is one of the key pillars of Hong Kong's economic development, playing a vital role in gross domestic product (GDP), overall employment and the export of professional services. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the development trends and talent development in Hong Kong's legal sector will help further strengthen the city's international competitiveness. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has assessed the legal services sector's overall contribution to GDP over the past five years (including the total value of its services and its share of GDP), with the total value of services and the share of GDP set out by litigation services, non-litigation legal services, arbitration, mediation and other professional legal services;

(2) in respect of professional training, whether the Government will introduce specific measures to enhance the legal services sector's knowledge of the six major emerging pillar industries (i.e. integrated circuits, aerospace, biomedicine, the low-altitude economy, new energy storage and intelligent robot) and the six future frontier industries (i.e. quantum technology, biomanufacturing, green hydrogen and fusion energy, brain-computer interfaces, 6G communications and embodied intelligence), so as to facilitate the sector's provision of legal services to such industries in the future;

(3) whether it has compiled statistics on (i) the total number of persons employed in Hong Kong's legal services sector, broken down into practising lawyers, legal assistants and legal executives; (ii) the number of corporate legal advisors in Hong Kong, set out by industry (such as finance, technologies and multinational enterprises); (iii) the number of arbitrators and mediators in Hong Kong, as well as their respective caseloads and the number of international cases in which they have been involved in each of the past five years; and

(4) given the constantly evolving models of legal service provision and the gradual replacement of certain manual processes by legal technology, whether the Government has compiled statistics on the number of personnel in the legal sector who have left the sector to pursue careers in other industries over the past five years; if it has, which industries have they mainly moved into?

Reply:

President,

Our consolidated reply to the various parts of the Hon Nick Chan's question is as

follows:

According to data from the Census and Statistics Department, the following shows the value added contributed by the "Legal, accounting and auditing services" and their share in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the past five years on record (i.e. 2020 to 2024):

	Value added at current prices	
Year	HK\$ million	% share in GDP
2024	34,700	1.1
2023	35,100	1.2
2022	36,000	1.3
2021	36,200	1.3
2020	35,600	1.4

In addition, professional and effective legal services, coupled with a well-established and robust legal system, facilitate the reduction of trade barriers, lowering of transaction costs and provision of a stable and predictable environment for doing business. These factors in turn indirectly increase the overall substantive contribution to the GDP by different industries.

The following shows the public data on the legal profession (solicitor and barrister) collated by the two legal professional bodies and reflects the point of time at which the Department of Justice (DoJ) accessed them.

According to the website of The Law Society of Hong Kong (Law Society), the breakdown of the number of members of the Law Society with practising certificates is as follows:

	Month/Year				
	12/2021	12/2022	12/2023	12/2024	12/2025
Members of the Law Society with Practising Certificates	11 235	11 457	11 589	11 758	11 977
Members in Private Practice	7 940	7 930	7 966	8 019	8 181

Members with Practising Certificates, but not in Private Practice	3 295	3 527	3 623	3 739	3 796
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According to the website of the Hong Kong Bar Association (Bar Association), the number of the Bar Association members with practising certificates over the past five years were 1 758 (December 2025), 1 716 (January 2025), 1 672 (November 2023), 1 612 (December 2022) and 1 595 (December 2020) respectively.

The Law Society's and the Bar Association's websites do not provide the breakdown of the number of legal assistants, legal executives and corporate legal advisors.

Regarding the data on attrition within the legal profession, the DoJ does not have the relevant information. In fact, according to the Law Society's and the Bar Association's data, the number of members of the Law Society and the Bar Association with practising certificates respectively has been steadily increasing over the past five years.

Regarding legal education and professional training, the DoJ has been actively engaged in the development of legal education and training in Hong Kong through the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training (SCLET), and has maintained good communication with the legal sector and the three law schools to keep abreast of the latest supply and demand of legal talent. The DoJ would continue to support the local law schools, the Law Society, the Bar Association and the SCLET in continuously reviewing and improving local legal education and professional training, thereby cultivating more outstanding and highly adaptable legal talent for Hong Kong.

In addition, the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy of the DoJ has been actively collaborating with international organisations, central ministries, professional bodies, and academic institutions since launched in November 2024. The Academy organises capacity-building initiatives for the legal and dispute resolution sectors in Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland and overseas, covering various areas of law and hot legal topics.

For example, the Academy, together with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), successfully organised the Conference on Climate Change and International Trade Law in March 2025, and the 6th UNCITRAL Asia Pacific Judicial Summit 2025 - Judicial Conference themed "Building Towards End-to-End Trade Digitalization" in November 2025 in Hong Kong, exploring the application of international instruments to areas including climate change, digitalisation in trade and transportation. In addition, in August 2025 the Academy organised the Mainland Civil and Commercial Legal Practice Training Course 2025 specifically for the local legal sector, inviting counsel from state-owned enterprises in emerging technology sectors to share their needs and challenges in legal services and going global, enabling Hong Kong's legal and dispute-resolution community to stay abreast of international developments and market trends across different legal domains. Looking ahead, the Academy will continue to monitor regional developments, especially the demand for

professional talent in various areas of legal services, and host targeted capacity-building initiatives to strengthen Hong Kong's competitiveness in international legal services and cultivate outstanding legal talent for the country and Hong Kong.

With regard to arbitration and mediation services, at present, arbitrators and mediators in Hong Kong are not subject to mandatory licensing or accreditation regimes. In addition, arbitration and mediation cases are subject to the principle of confidentiality. Therefore, the DoJ does not collate the relevant statistics.

Hong Kong is home to many prestigious international arbitral institutions. A number of institutions headquartered overseas or in the Chinese Mainland have also chosen to establish branches here. Some statistics in arbitration can be found in information released by arbitral institutions voluntarily. For example, the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC) has established its panel and list of arbitrators. As of July 3, 2026, there were 511 and 540 arbitrators on its panel and list of arbitrators respectively.

According to the 2025 statistics released by HKIAC, a total of 582 cases were submitted to HKIAC in 2025. Of those cases, 388 were arbitration cases and nine were mediation cases. 84.3 per cent of all arbitration cases were international in nature, i.e. at least one party was not from Hong Kong.

Some statistics in mediation can be found in public information released by the Hong Kong Mediation Accreditation Association Limited (HKMAAL) and the Hong Kong Judiciary. HKMAAL is an industry-led mediation accreditation and regulatory body. As of July 3, 2026, there were a total of 1 889 general mediators in the mediator panel published on HKMAAL's website.

According to the statistics released by the Hong Kong Judiciary, the number of cases with mediation minutes filed in the Court of First Instance in the past five years were 303, 211, 192, 201 and 175 in each of the years from 2021 to 2025 respectively. The number of cases with mediation minutes filed in the District Court in the past 5 years were 459, 339, 338, 380 and 311 in each of the years from 2021 to 2025 respectively.

Ends/Wednesday, July 15, 2026