Background

The Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) is responsible for selecting candidates for judicial office on merit, through fair and open competition. It is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice. An outline of selection processes is provided on its website.

The JAC

The JAC was established by the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 (CRA). It has responsibility for selecting candidates for judicial office in courts and tribunals in England and Wales, and for some tribunals with a UK-wide jurisdiction.

The Commission has 3 main statutory duties under the CRA:

- To select candidates solely on merit
- To select only people of good character
- To have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of persons available for selection for appointment.

The JAC runs a selection exercise in response to a vacancy request from the Lord Chancellor setting out the number of posts, the jurisdiction and/or the circuit or region. Each year the JAC agrees with the MoJ, HM Courts & Tribunals Service and Judicial Office which selection exercises are to be programmed for the following financial year.

Evidence for the SSRB

In response to an annual request for evidence from the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB), the JAC provides written evidence relating to judicial selection exercises, which is then published on the JAC website for wider access. This evidence is used by the SSRB to inform their annual review of judicial pay and their recommendation for the pay award for the judiciary. We also provide evidence to support the SSRB's major reviews of judicial salary structures when these take place.

Contents

Included in this evidence pack:

- **2025-26 Recruitment Update**: Refreshed tables from the JAC's regular SSRB Annual Review submission, detailing outcomes for exercises which have completed since September 2025 (District Judge, Judge of the First-tier Tribunal, Judge of the Employment Tribunals (England and Wales), Recorder and Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts).
- **Table C2** – The percentage of applicants and recommendations who declared that they hold a fee-paid or salaried judicial role as part of their application. For various requested roles, from 2020-21 to 2025-26.
- **Table C3(a)** – High Court Judge applications and recommendations, split by the current judicial roles held by those applying. For various requested roles, from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- **Table C3(b)** – Circuit Judge applications and recommendations, split by the current judicial roles held by those applying. For various requested roles, from 2020-21 to 2025-26.
- **Table C4** – Regional preferences detailed by those applying to various requested roles, where these details were required as part of the application process.
- **Table C5** – PQE distribution of candidates applying to Salary Group 7 roles, across the most recent three selection exercises for each role, up to 2024-25.

Data Sources & Caveats

All data has been extracted from the JAC's Digital Platform. This platform has been used to process applications for JAC selection exercises since 2020. We have not been able to provide data for exercises pre-dating the platform, since it is not held in the level of detail and/or format required.

For tables C2 and C3, data is based on how candidates described themselves and/or the roles they hold as part of the application process. In some cases, we are aware that candidates have not listed all of their existing roles, and/or may have described their roles in a non-standard way, leading to them being inaccurately reflected in the tables.

For table C4, selection exercises for some roles did not require candidates to submit regional preferences as part of the application process, so data is not held in these instances.

2025-26 Recruitment Update: District Judge

Year	Vacancies (s87 &s94)	Applications	Recommended for immediate appointments (s87)	Selected for future appointments (s94)	Total (s87 & s94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2012-13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	54	322	No data	No data	54	6.0	0	45	83%
2014-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2015-16	61	199	45	16	61	3.3	0	65	107%
2016-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017-18	100.5	271	70	26	96	2.8	5	53	55%
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	110	190	47	0	47	4.0	63	27	57%
2020-21	75	141	24	0	24	5.9	51	10	42%
2021-22	106	249	57	0	57	4.4	49	22	39%
2022-23	100	247	67	0	67	3.7	33	27	40%
2023-24	100	237	49	0	49	4.8	51	19	39%
2024-25	100	291	51	0	51	5.7	49	20	39%
2025-26	110	327	67	2	69	4.7	41	30	43%

Notes: The 2025-26 row captures two District Judge exercises. One recruited for 80 vacancies in London and the South East only, while the other recruited for 30 vacancies (including 2 future list vacancies) on all circuits other than London and the South East. There were 21 candidates who applied for both exercises, so there were 306 distinct individuals who applied for either exercise.

The JAC assesses candidates at selection days as outstanding (A), strong (B), selectable (C) or not presently selectable (D). It is important to note that gradings are an internal assessment measure of a candidate's performance in a particular selection exercise and against the specific criteria for that role at that time. They do not indicate performance upon appointment. Caution should be exercised when comparing gradings awarded across a period of years.

2025-26 Recruitment Update: Judge of the First-tier Tribunal

Year	Vacancies (s87 &s94)	Applications	Recommended for immediate appointments (s87)	Selected for future appointments (s94)	Total (s87 & s94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2014-15	6	46	6	0	6	7.7	0	4	67%
2015-16	1	23	1	0	1	23.0	0	1	100%
2016-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017-18	65	956	45	19	64	14.9	1	42	66%
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	112	767	112	0	112	6.8	0	57	51%
2020-21	70	332	50	20	70	4.7	0	35	50%
2021-22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2022-23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2023-24	70	358	47	0	47	7.6	23	13	28%
2024-25	18	143	12	0	12	11.9	6	6	50%
2025-26	113	470	82	0	82	5.7	31	26	32%

Notes: Prior to 2017-18, exercises for the First-tier Tribunal were chamber specific. From 2017-18 to 2022-23, exercises were purely generic, recruiting to all chambers. Whilst we continue to operate generic recruitment campaigns for the First-tier Tribunal, since 2022-23, we have also run specific recruitment for the Tax and Property chambers given the specialist nature of the roles, in addition to recruitment for the General Regulatory Chamber due to the chamber's small headcount and array of jurisdictions.

The 2024-25 row captures two chamber-specific exercises, recruiting to the General Regulatory and Property chambers. The 2025-26 row captures two further chamber-specific exercises, recruiting to the Property and Tax chambers, as well as one larger combined exercise recruiting to a further four chambers. Adjusting for candidates applying for more than one exercise, 24-25 had 132 distinct individuals apply, 25-26 had 460, and across the two years there were 545 distinct individuals applying for the 5 exercises.

The JAC assesses candidates at selection days as outstanding (A), strong (B), selectable (C) or not presently selectable (D). It is important to note that gradings are an internal assessment measure of a candidate's performance in a particular selection exercise and against the specific

criteria for that role at that time. They do not indicate performance upon appointment. Caution should be exercised when comparing gradings awarded across a period of years.

2025-26 Recruitment Update: Judge of the Employment Tribunals (England and Wales)

Year	Vacancies (s87 &s94)	Applications	Recommended for immediate appointments (s87)	Selected for future appointments (s94)	Total (s87 & s94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2014-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2015-16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2016-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017-18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2018-19	59	420	59	0	59	7.1	0	23	39%
2019-20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2020-21	25	62	21	0	21	3.0	4	9	43%
2021-22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2022-23	50	138	35	0	35	3.9	15	16	46%
2023-24	50	75	20	0	20	3.8	30	5	25%
2024-25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2025-26 to date	36	137	34	0	34	4.0	2	17	50%

Notes:
Employment Tribunal fees introduced in 2013 caused cases to drop. Recruitment stagnated as fewer judges were needed until the abolition of fees in 2017. The requirement for previous judicial experience (PJE) was waived for exercises in 2025-26 and 2022-23, which explains the higher number of applications received in these years when compared with exercises in 2023-24 and 2020-21, when PJE was required.

The JAC assesses candidates at selection days as outstanding (A), strong (B), selectable (C) or not presently selectable (D). It is important to note that gradings are an internal assessment measure of a candidate's performance in a particular selection exercise and against the specific criteria for that role at that time. They do not indicate performance upon appointment. Caution should be exercised when comparing gradings awarded across a period of years.

2025-26 Recruitment Update: Recorder

Year	Vacancies (s87 &s94)	Applications	Recommended for immediate appointments (s87)	Selected for future appointments (s94)	Total (s87 & s94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2016-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017-18	150	2425	150	0	150	16.2	0	157	105%
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	160	1233	160	0	160	7.7	0	128	80%
2020-21	121	1001	121	0	121	8.3	0	76	63%
2021-22	164	1043	164	0	164	6.4	0	97	59%
2022-23	164	1,292	164	0	164	7.9	0	88	54%
2023-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2024-25	100	1,134	100	0	100	11.3	0	68	68%
2025-26	87	1,180	87	0	87	13.6	0	39	45%

Notes:
Data is not available for selection exercises reporting prior to 2016-17 for this role.

The JAC assesses candidates at selection days as outstanding (A), strong (B), selectable (C) or not presently selectable (D). It is important to note that gradings are an internal assessment measure of a candidate's performance in a particular selection exercise and against the specific criteria for that role at that time. They do not indicate performance upon appointment. Caution should be exercised when comparing gradings awarded across a period of years.

2025-26 Recruitment Update: Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)

Year	Vacancies (s87 &s94)	Applications	Recommended for immediate appointments (s87)	Selected for future appointments (s94)	Total (s87 & s94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2016-17	18	1,148	18	0	18	63.8	0	20	111%
2017-18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	30	874	30	0	30	29.1	0	34	113%
2020-21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021-22	55	1,000	55	0	55	18.2	0	27	49%
2022-23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2023-24	15	635	15	0	15	42.3	0	24	160%
2024-25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2025-26	136	849	50	86	136	6.2	0	55	40%

Notes:
Data is not available for selection exercises reporting prior to 2016-17 for this role. Numbers for 2025-26 remain subject to minor changes.

The JAC assesses candidates at selection days as outstanding (A), strong (B), selectable (C) or not presently selectable (D). It is important to note that gradings are an internal assessment measure of a candidate's performance in a particular selection exercise and against the specific criteria for that role at that time. They do not indicate performance upon appointment. Caution should be exercised when comparing gradings awarded across a period of years.

Table C2 – Percentage of applications and recommendations holding fee-paid and/or salaried judicial positions (2020-2026)

Role	Number of exercises	Total Applications	% Fee-paid	% Fee-paid or Salaried	Total Recommendations	% Fee-paid	% Fee-paid or Salaried
High Court Judge	5	190	61%	95%	36	78%	94%
Senior Circuit Judge	16	156	14%	89%	39	15%	100%
Salaried Judge of the Upper Tribunal	4	182	32%	69%	30	47%	90%
Circuit Judge	5	1,041	50%	95%	286	60%	99%
Recorder	4	4,650	23%	32%	515	33%	45%
District Judge	6	1,352	70%	73%	291	98%	100%
District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)	3	490	56%	61%	76	95%	99%
Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)	3	2,484	11%	13%	120	10%	12%
Salaried Judge of the First-tier Tribunal	8	1,312	56%	58%	193	85%	89%
Salaried Judge of the Employment Tribunals (E&W)	4	412	39%	41%	110	74%	76%

Notes and commentary on Table C2:
Data for this table is based primarily on candidates' Current Legal Role field from the application form. This field allows candidates to select one or more current roles from a set of options. Candidates listing "Salaried Court Judge" or "Salaried Tribunal Judge" or "Other Salaried Judicial Office Holder" within this field were categorised as holding salaried judicial positions. Candidates listing "Fee-paid Court Judge" or "Fee-paid Tribunal Judge" or "Other Fee-paid Judicial Office Holder" were categorised as holding fee-paid positions (those listing both salaried and fee-paid

roles were categorised as salaried). Having found that some candidates who did hold judicial positions were not always declaring them within this field, we also checked for ongoing judicial roles listed within the section of the application form which asks candidates to detail their post-qualification legal experience.

There is a degree of uncertainty related to the data in this table, since candidates may have had differing interpretations of which roles count as judicial office. For example, we would not typically include Legally Qualified Chair roles within this category (although they are quasi-judicial), but some candidates may have done so. Similarly, some candidates may have chosen not to mention other judicial roles held when applying.

The table above shows very high proportions of candidates holding either salaried or fee-paid judicial roles for those salaried roles that have consistently required previous judicial experience (PJE). For example, 95% of applicants for High Court Judge and Circuit Judge held some form of judicial role when applying. Other salaried roles such as Salaried Judge of the First-tier Tribunal and Salaried Judge of the Employment Tribunals (England and Wales) have had recent exercises in which the requirement for PJE has been waived. They have therefore attracted a higher number of applications from those without a judicial role.

PJE has always been required for District Judge and District Judge (Magistrates' Courts). The lower percentage of applicants holding a judicial role for these two roles demonstrates i) applicants with quasi-judicial experience (e.g., as a legally qualified chair of a disciplinary tribunal) and ii) a number of candidates who apply despite not having previous judicial experience.

For the two fee-paid roles requested, Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) had a relatively low proportion (10-15%) of applicants and recommendations already holding a judicial role, while this proportion was higher for Recorder (around a third of applicants and just under half of those recommended).

Table C3(a) – Applications and Recommendations for High Court Judge, by judicial role(s) held (2021-2026).

This table summarises data on candidates' judicial role(s) across 5 High Court Judge exercises reporting from 2021-22 to 2025-26. Note that percentages sum to more than 100%, as many candidates held more than one of the roles listed.

Role	Applications (%)	Recommendations (%)	Recommendation Rate
All	190 (100%)	36 (100%)	0.19
Circuit Judge	46 (24%)	5 (14%)	0.11
Salaried Judge of the Upper Tribunal	6 (3%)	1 (3%)	0.17
Recorder	71 (37%)	15 (42%)	0.21
Deputy High Court Judge	116 (61%)	27 (75%)	0.23

Notes and commentary on table C3(a):
All data is based on roles declared via the JAC application form ("Previous Experience" section). Where judicial roles were referenced but not made clear, other sources were used to confirm, where possible. However, we cannot be confident that all judicial roles have been accurately captured - candidates may not have exhaustively listed all roles held, or may have used non-standard terminology to describe their role, which has therefore been labelled incorrectly.

The three judicial roles requested for this submission (Circuit Judges, Salaried Judges of the Upper Tribunal (UT) and Recorders) are mutually exclusive. None of the Circuit Judges or Salaried UT Judges listed an ongoing Recorder appointment. However, many Recorders and Circuit Judges also listed Deputy High Court Judge as an ongoing role - we have therefore provided this data as additional important context. We are unfortunately not able to distinguish between s9(4) Deputy High Court Judges and those with s9(1) authorisation to act as judges of the High Court in most cases, as the two are often described interchangeably as Deputy High Court Judge by candidates.

We have included Senior and/or Specialist Circuit Judges within the Circuit Judge count. The majority of Circuit Judge applicants were Senior and/or Specialist Circuit Judges. There were 3 candidates who had other salaried judicial roles who listed ongoing Recorder appointments (1 King's Bench Master, 1 Insolvency and Companies Cout Judge, and 1 senior judge of a UK overseas territory).

These statistics reflect our understanding of the High Court Judge field in recent years, whereby salaried judges comprise typically between a quarter and a third of applicants. The larger proportion of those applying and recommended do not hold salaried judicial roles, instead holding fee-paid roles – most commonly s9(4) Deputy High Court Judge and/or Recorder.

Table C3(b) – Applications and Recommendations for Circuit Judge, by judicial role(s) held (2020-2026).

This table summarises data on candidates' judicial role(s) across 5 Circuit Judge exercises reporting from 2020-21 to 2025-26. Note that percentages sum to more than 100%, as many candidates held more than one of the roles listed.

Role	Applications (%)	Recommendations (%)	Recommendation Rate
All	1040 (100%)	286 (100%)	0.28
District Judge	298 (29%)	71 (25%)	0.24
Deputy District Judge	119 (11%)	18 (6%)	0.15
District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)	51 (5%)	17 (6%)	0.33
Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)	19 (2%)	6 (2%)	0.32
Recorder	488 (47%)	197 (69%)	0.40
Salaried Judge of the First-tier Tribunal	76 (7%)	15 (5%)	0.20
Fee-paid Judge of the First-tier Tribunal	174 (17%)	39 (14%)	0.22
Salaried Judge of the Employment Tribunals (E&W)	24 (2%)	6 (2%)	0.25
Fee-paid Judge of the Employment Tribunals (E&W)	23 (2%)	4 (1%)	0.17

Notes and commentary on table C3(b):
All data is based on roles declared via the JAC application form ("Previous Experience" section). Where judicial roles were referenced but not made clear, other sources were used to confirm, where possible. However, we cannot be confident that all judicial roles have been accurately captured - candidates may not have exhaustively listed all roles held, or may have used non-standard terminology to describe their role, which has therefore been labelled incorrectly.

There were some candidates who did not fall into any of the categories listed. Most often these were Legally Qualified Chairs, Coroners, or Adjudicator/Mediator roles. Many candidates held multiple roles and these combinations can provide important context – for example, a large proportion of Deputy District Judges who were successfully recommended for a Circuit Judge role were also Recorders (10/18).

Data on Recorders applying to Circuit Judge exercises was not requested, but is provided since they are the largest group and provide context relating to the recommendation rates for other roles applying.

Around 35-45% of applications and recommendations for Circuit Judge typically come from existing salaried judges, with the majority of these District Judges.

Circuit Judge exercises attract applications from a range of tribunals roles, although it is important to note that many of the successful applicants who were Employment Judges (Fee-paid and Salaried) or Fee-paid First-tier Tribunal Judges were also Recorders.

Table C4 – Regional Preferences

These tables summarise the regional preferences expressed by candidates for each role requested, across all exercises where data allows (2020-21 to 2025-26).

Data was also requested for Salaried Judge of the Upper Tribunal, Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts), Fee-paid Judge of the First-tier Tribunal and Fee-paid Judge of the Employment Tribunals (England and Wales). However, candidates were not asked to provide regional preferences for any selection exercises recruiting to these roles as part of the application process.

C4(a) – % of candidates selecting each region as their first preference

Role	Number of Exercises	Total Applications	% with location data	1st Preference %					
				Midlands	Northern	Western	North East	Wales	London & SE
Senior Circuit Judge	10	95	100%	19%	2%	15%	7%	5%	52%
Circuit Judge	5	1,041	69%	17%	16%	15%	15%	7%	41%
Recorder	2	2,335	100%	15%	14%	9%	11%	4%	46%
District Judge	4	1,025	100%	16%	19%	10%	13%	6%	36%
District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)	1	116	100%	16%	14%	9%	16%	5%	41%
Deputy District Judge	4	8,914	14%	13%	16%	11%	11%	5%	44%
Salaried Judge of the First-tier Tribunal	3	521	99%	14%	20%	7%	9%	2%	46%
Salaried Judge of the Employment Tribunals (E&W)	3	275	100%	14%	8%	7%	12%	9%	51%

C4(b) - % of candidates selecting each region within their full set of preferences

Role	Number of Exercises	Total Applications	% with location data	Any Preference %					
				Midlands	Northern	Western	North East	Wales	London & SE
Senior Circuit Judge	10	95	100%	24%	2%	17%	16%	7%	54%
Circuit Judge	5	1,041	69%	60%	48%	51%	46%	26%	72%
Recorder	4	4,650	100%	61%	50%	47%	45%	25%	74%
District Judge	4	1,025	100%	63%	57%	54%	54%	40%	71%
District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	1	116	100%	67%	65%	59%	66%	47%	75%
Deputy District Judge	4	8,914	14%	63%	51%	49%	46%	30%	72%
Salaried Judge of the First-tier Tribunal	3	521	99%	42%	50%	20%	21%	6%	67%
Salaried Judge of the Employment Tribunals (E&W)	3	275	100%	56%	44%	45%	40%	35%	78%

Notes and Commentary on Tables C4(a) and C4(b):

- Senior Circuit Judge – 10 of the last 16 exercises requested regional preferences, with the other exercises recruiting to a single location (e.g., the Central Criminal Court). This data should be treated with a high degree of caution, as these exercises recruited to roles covering a maximum of three regions. Therefore, candidates were only able to select a subset of the 6 regions and the data largely reflects where the vacancies were located rather than preferences.
- The two most recent Recorder exercises collected regional preferences which were not ordered (i.e., tick all that apply, rather than numbered preferences). These have therefore been excluded from table C4(a) but included in C4(b).
- Deputy District Judge exercises requested regional preferences only after candidates have been shortlisted, hence only 14% of applicants are covered. This was also the case in the two most recent Circuit Judge exercises.
- District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) – only one of the most recent three exercises collected regional preferences.
- The two District Judge exercises reporting in 2025-26 have been excluded. One recruited exclusively to vacancies in London and the South East, while the other covered all regions outside of London and the South East. Preferences for the regional exercise are likely to have been skewed by the removal of London and the South East as an option, when comparing to previous years.

- Similarly, the 2025-26 Salaried Judge of the Employment Tribunals (England and Wales) has been excluded, as it only allowed three of the 6 regions to be selected and was therefore not comparable with previous years.
- Salaried Judge of the First-tier Tribunal – only three of the 8 exercises running within this period collected regional preferences. These are all exercises from 2024-25 and 2025-26.

Table C5 – Post-Qualification Experience held by those applying for Salary Group 7 roles

This table sets out the mean number of years of Post-Qualification Experience (PQE) among applicants and those recommended to Salary Group 7 roles. Each row is taking the three most recent exercises up to those reporting in 2024-25 (so 2025-26 exercises are not included). The PQE Coverage columns indicate the percentage of the relevant candidate pool for whom PQE data is held.

Role	Applications			Recommendations		
	Total	PQE Coverage	Mean PQE	Total	PQE Coverage	Mean PQE
District Judge	775	92%	19.8	167	95%	19.0
District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)	489	88%	19.6	76	89%	18.0
Salaried Judge of the First-tier Tribunal	501	91%	20.1	59	100%	20.2
Salaried Judge of the Employment Tribunals (E&W)	274	90%	20.9	76	96%	21.7

Notes and commentary for Table C5:
The JAC's PQE data is calculated as the time difference, in years, between the date a candidate first qualified in one of the eligible legal professions (barrister, solicitor, CILEX) and the closing date of the selection exercise. Importantly, this calculation does not take account of career breaks and so may not align accurately with data presented by the legal professions. For example, the Solicitors Regulation Authority calculates PQE by counting the number of practising certificates held, which would therefore differ from this measure.

The data shows that applicants and those recommended for each Salary Group 7 role tend to have, on average, around 20 years' PQE.