10.7 Legal & Security Occupations

Overall employment	60,100
Share of total workforce	2%
Main sectors of employment	46% - Public administration and defence 24% - Professional activities [15%] - Administrative and support services
Employment growth	3,100 between 2019 and 2025 +0.9% on average annually (compared to +3.4% for total workforce) +4.2% growth since 2024 (compared to +2.2% for total workforce) Projected annual average growth (2025-2030): **0.6%**
Key skills identified in OJAs	adaptability, teamwork, communication, access & analyse digital data, assist customers, customer service, use MS office, provide information, attend to detail

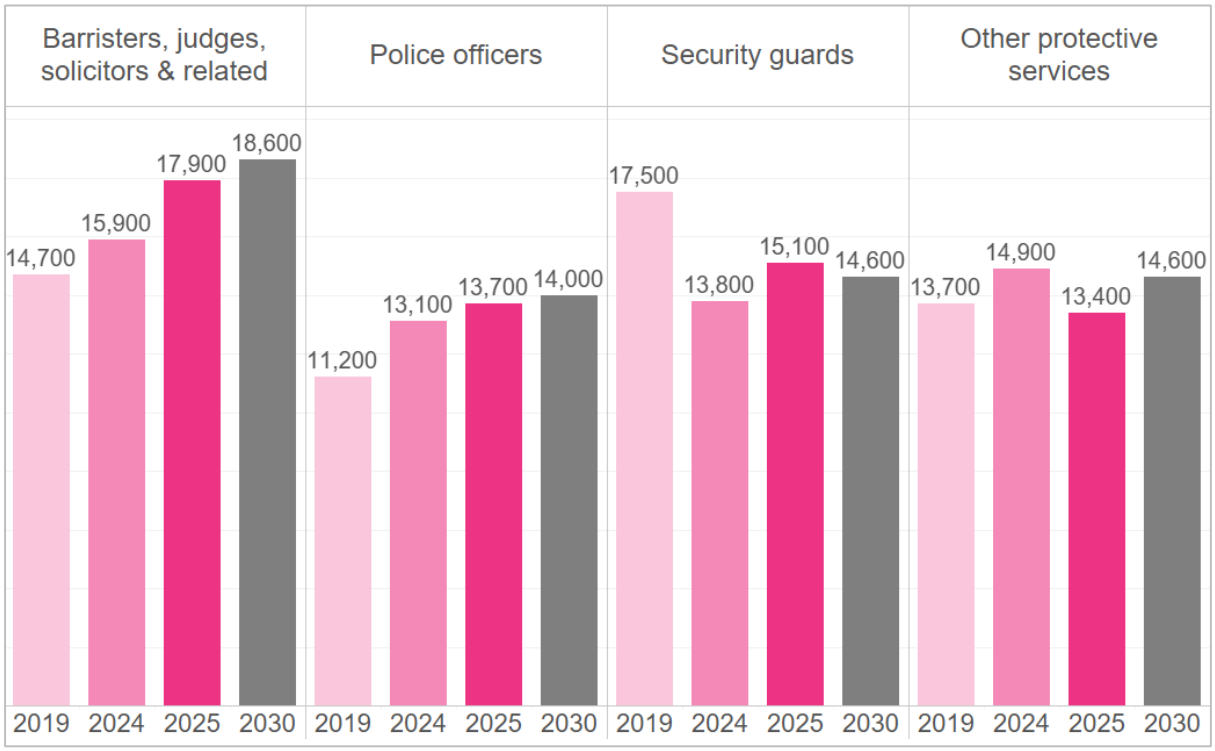
Overview: At just under 1% on average annually, employment growth over the period 2019-2025 was below the national average (3.4%) for these occupations. Well over two fifths of persons employed in these occupations worked in the public administration and defence sector.

Challenges and opportunities: Although there has been a shift towards a greater female share working in these occupations (with an increase from 25% to 31% in the year to 2024), employment in these occupations continues to be male dominated. Demand will be in part be driven by the current Programme for Government, which outlined a commitment to fund recruitment of 5,000 Gardai across the five-year term of Government[1] (on average, 1,000 a year).

Outlook: This occupational group has seen little employment growth in recent years with projected growth expected to be below average. Employment declines are projected for security-related roles, with minor gains for other protective services (which includes army, prison services).

[1] programme-for-government-securing-irelands-future.pdf

Figure 10.7 Annual Average Employment (2019, 2024 & 2025) & Employment Projections (2030)



Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO (LFS) data,

Table 10.7 Labour Market Profile of Legal and Security Occupations

	Annual average growth		Quarter 4 2025					2025	
	2019-2025	2025-2030f	% Female	% Full-time	% Age 55 yrs +	% Irish citizens	% Third level grads	No. of new emp. permits	RAS
Barristers, judges, solicitors & related professionals	3.3%	0.8%	58%	89%	..	97%	99%	25	
Police officers	3.4%	0.4%	..	99%	..	98%	87%	..	
Security guards	-2.4%	-0.7%	..	[75%]	..	65%	..	1	
Other protective services	-0.4%	1.7%	..	90%	..	82%	[57%]	..	
Overall total	**0.9%**	**0.6%**	**31%**	**88%**	**19%**	**86%**	**72%**	**26**	

Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO (LFS) data, DETE, and SLMRU Recruitment Agency Survey (RAS)
Numbers in square brackets should be treated with caution; an ellipsis (..) denotes numbers too small to report

Barristers, judges, solicitors & related professionals

Employment grew by 2,000 persons in the year since 2024, resulting in an annual average growth rate almost on par with the national average for the six-year period to 2019. Females accounted for the higher share (at 58%), almost all had third level qualifications and three quarters were employed in the professional activities sector. A small number of new employment permits were issued for trainee solicitors, lawyers and legal directors.

There were 3,128 persons on the Roll of Practicing Barristers as of December 2025 and 12,430 solicitors held practising certificates (increases of 57 and 255 respectively since 2024).[2] In addition, there are approximately 200 judges in Ireland with an additional 20 judges expected to be appointed in the coming years.[3]

Police officers (e.g. gardaí)

Employment numbers for police officers grew marginally in 2025, having declined in the previous year. Those employed were primarily male, Irish and held third level qualifications. Garda workforce data as of August 2026 estimates the total garda strength at 14,497, with civilians bringing the total workforce to 18,113, with little change observed in recent years. The growing population would indicate future demand for police officers but attractiveness and retention issues may hinder future growth in this occupation.

Security guards

Despite an increase in employment since 2024, employment remained below 2019 levels. Most employed were male and the share of non-Irish citizens was above average (35% compared to 21% nationally) and higher than in 2024 (26%). Over half were employed in the administrative and support services sector with the remainder spread across most other sectors. Skills for Growth data point to issues attracting security guards for event and crowd management.

Other protective services (e.g. army personnel, fire/prison service officers)

With employment declining between 2024 and 2025, numbers returned to just below 2019 levels. Most (87%) were employed in the public administration and defence sector, most were male, over half (57%) held third level qualifications and 18% were non-Irish citizens. Recent recruitment campaigns for the prison service and defence forces aim to boost numbers across these services.

[2] FINAL-LSRA-Annual-Report_2025-single-page-view.pdf
[3] Minister McEntee secures government approval for 20 additional Judges