**Age a barrier for breaking into the Bar**

People aged 30 or over who choose to re-train as barristers are at a significant disadvantage to younger applicants, according to new research from King’s College London.  
   
Dr Anna Zimdars, a lecturer in Higher Education at the King’s Learning Institute, analysed data from aspiring barristers over a four year period to identify the factors which determine success in the highly competitive process for entry to the Bar.  
   
Those aged 30 or over made up 21 per cent of applicants, but only 14 per cent of those who gained pupillages.

This difference in success was not explained by the type of university attended or age differences in levels of attainment.  
   
Dr Zimdars says that this trend shows the apparent preference towards applicants with an uninterrupted educational route towards the Bar and is to the advantage of those with access to economic, social and cultural resources early in life which help them facilitate career choice.  
   
Dr Zimdars said: ‘As we are all living and working longer, it will be increasingly common for individuals to have several different careers.

My research indicates that someone wishing to change careers and become a barrister at the age of 31 might find it significantly harder than if they had been called to the Bar after graduation.’  
   
Dr Zimdars also analysed the impact of schooling, class and university education on successful entry to the Bar.  
   
The study found that those who graduated from Oxford or Cambridge had the highest chance of gaining admission to the profession, with graduates from these universities making up nearly 30 per cent of those who were accepted, but less than 20 per cent of the applicants.

In contrast, 45 per cent of applications came from graduates who had not attended a Russell Group or what Dr Zimdars calls a ‘Golden Four’ university (St Andrews, Durham, Trinity College Dublin and York).

They made up the same percentage of those accepted to the Bar, just under 30 per cent.  
   
Achieving a first class degree at university and a grade of ‘Outstanding’ on the Bar Course were shown to be advantageous in gaining pupillages.

Dr Zimdars found that gender had no impact on whether an applicant achieved entry to the profession.  
   
The data for the study was provided by the Bar Council of England and Wales, with three of the four Inns of Court providing access to their membership records for the research. Additional information regarding social class and schooling was gained from UCAS records.  
   
Dr Zimdars said: ‘It looks like the Bar could be missing a trick here.

It is these career changers who are uniquely placed to facilitate innovative work at the boundaries of different professions by drawing on experiences of more than one field.  
   
‘The Bar needs to move with the changing times and ensure that career changers are as successful in entering their profession as new graduates, which is surely to the benefit of the profession and its future.’

**Notes to editors:**  
   
**Dr Zimdars is available for interview, please contact Anna Mitchell, Press Officer, on 0207 848 3092 or at** [**anna.i.mitchell@kcl.ac.uk**](mailto:anna.i.mitchell@kcl.ac.uk)**.**  
   
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