



UK MODEL DIVERSITY SURVEY

UK Model Diversity Forum: FAQs for Law Firm Participants

Please find our Privacy Policy [here](#).

Please find our Terms of Use [here](#).

For information on GDPR compliance and data protection, please see our Data Protection Impact Assessment ("DPIA") [here](#). This was updated on 27 September with additional clarifications.

Q: What are the benefits to law firm participants?

Response:

Please see our UK MDS materials [here](#), which include the business case for law firms in the final pages.

Q: How well has this been received in the US?

Response:

The American Bar Association's Model Diversity Survey ("ABA MDS") in the United States is now in its fourth year and currently has 161 Client Signatories in the US with approximately 500 law firm participants.

Q: Who participated in the consultation process for the UK MDS?

Response:

We convened a working group made up of law firms and clients, meeting over the course of 2020 and 2021. These included: ABA, Addleshaw Goddard, Allen & Overy, Apple, Baker McKenzie, Barclays, BCLP, Clifford Chance, Cooley, Credit Suisse, Dechert, Freshfields, General Electric, Hogan Lovells, HSBC, Linklaters, Lloyds Bank, Macfarlanes, NBCUniversal, Paul Hastings, Pinsent Masons, SRA, Stephenson Harwood, Taylor Wessing, Visa Europe, and Weil Gotshal & Manges.

Q: Is there a minimum number of attorneys needed in the UK in order to participate?

Response:

There is no minimum number of lawyers needed to participate

Q: Who does the UK MDS collect data on?

Response: The UK MDS collects data on UK lawyers only, and you must report on every eligible lawyer in your UK office(s). This is explained in more detail in the Guidance document which accompanies the UK MDS.

Q: Does the data collection also include the demographics of non-fee earners?

Response: Just as with the ABA MDS, the UK MDS focuses on lawyers. Our research and data show us that is where the major challenges exist in the UK legal sector. Our 2012 research showed a much better picture on key D&I metrics and experiences on the business services side. This is something we may explore in the future to give the full picture inside law firms.

Q: Is the data available to clients from the UK MDS just firm-wide data with no further breakdown by who has worked for a specific client?

Response: The UK MDS provides firm-wide data only. It does not (and cannot) track the teams that work on a client's matters.

Q: Will Clients use the UK MDS *in addition to* or *in place of* their current data collection surveys?

Response: Client Signatories will use the UK MDS in place of their existing diversity data surveys.

Q: How many clients have signed up and what is your target number?

Response:

The current list of UK MDS Client Signatories can be found on our website [here](#).

In our first year we anticipate that we will have between 25-30 Client Signatories. We are currently at 25 Client Signatories so we may exceed this goal. There will be a lot of overlap in their panel firms, so we expect there will be around 125-130 different firms nominated to participate when we reach our year-one target number of Client Signatories. Client Signatories will use the UK MDS in place of their existing diversity data surveys. The ultimate goal is to create a single standard for firms to report their diversity stats to their clients, so there is no upper limit on the number of Client Signatories who can participate.

Q: How many firms have signed up and what is your target number?

Response:

We do not share specific law firm information with competitors given their concerns for confidentiality. 112 law firms and legal service providers have been nominated to participate so far by the first ten of our 25 Client Signatories who have compiled their panel lists.

We have over 25 law firms onboarded with another 20 or so in the process, including a mix of US and UK law firms. We would expect 50 or more law firms and legal service providers to participate in our first year.

Q: When is the deadline for firms to join?

Response:

We are asking firms to sign up by the end of September. This should give you sufficient time to gather and collate your data and have it ready to enter into the UK MDS platform when it goes live. The platform is scheduled to go live on or around the beginning of November. This is when our Client Signatories will be expecting their firms' 2020 data to be available and when most of your competitors will have their data there.

Q: When is the deadline to submit the data in the UK MDS platform?

Response:

There is no hard deadline set by us for entering your data into the platform.

The platform will first go live at the beginning of November, so this will be the first date you are able to submit your 2020 data. We have let Client Signatories know that this is a large undertaking and that they need to be patient with timing in this first year as this may take longer for some law firms than others. So that as many firms as possible can fulfil their clients' requests to submit their 2020 data, we intend to leave the platform open to accept your data until the end of February 2022, when we switch over to next year's survey. After this date you will no longer be able to submit your 2020 data.

In future years the survey will be available at the end of Q1 and our Client Signatories will be expecting to access law firm data by early spring.

Q: How do firms submit their data to the UK MDS?

Response: Each firm may submit only one survey annually, using a one-time key code to access the UK MDS platform. There will not be an opportunity to fill out an additional survey or to amend your submission. When you access the platform, you should work from the completed PDF version of the survey which you will have already filled out manually. Please plan to enter all data in a single sitting, as you will not have the ability to begin the data entry at one time and complete it later. Entering your firm's completed data into the platform will take approximately 20 minutes. Once you click submit, your data will immediately be accessible to our Signatories, so be sure of its accuracy.

Q: Depending on the stage firms are at with their SRA data collection (for example, they may already have reached out to employees to complete surveys; or they may not have yet started), what guidance can you provide on how they communicate using this data for both the SRA and UK Model Diversity Survey?

Response:

We are in the process of publishing a best practice guide on data collection which will provide law firm participants with guidance and templates to support them, including a template on how to communicate with employees when collecting data for the UK Model Diversity Survey.

Q: For those who don't currently collect DE&I data, can you advise on how they may get started and share what best practice on monitoring should look like?

Response:

We are in the process of publishing a best practice guide on data collection which will provide law firm participants with guidance and templates to support them on data collection.

Q: Within the cost of the product, what additional support will be provided to firms? Will you offer support/guidance completing the annual survey?

Response:

We will provide a range of services to law firm participants, including ongoing support with queries on data collection, preparing the annual survey, etc. We will also be conducting ongoing programmes to support law firm participants on their journeys. As noted above, one example of support is that we are in the process of publishing a best practice guide on data collection which will provide law firm participants with guidance and templates to support them. We also are providing bolt-on services to the UK Model Diversity Survey, including the **Scotland Woolf Rule** (to support the advancement of diverse and socially mobile talent in senior roles) and the **InterLaw Diversity Forum Diverse Owned Legal Suppliers (IDOLS)** to create a directory of diverse-owned businesses.

Q: Who has access to the UK MDS database? How do we know the correct information is being shared with the client after we submit? Can you confirm which individuals at Client Signatories will have access to the reports? Please explain what is meant by "through secure log-in credentials on a 'need-to-know' basis"?

- The raw data you submit on the UK MDS platform consists only of numbers with no names attached. The only people who can see the raw data in the database are Jonathan Leonhart and Michelle Moon Lim, who will be issued their own unique administrator sign-in credentials. LSAC could theoretically see it as part of system maintenance, as it is all stored on their server. LSAC is a non-profit testing organisation which routinely handles sensitive data.
- Law firms can print out their submission to check that they've entered everything correctly. Law firms do not have any access to the platform or reporting tool. It is possible, though difficult, to correct submission errors. We would need to delete your submission and have you re-enter it in its entirety. This would only be possible until the end of February 2022, when switch over to next year's survey.
- We have begun discussions around producing firm-specific reports for each law firm participant, but while this looks like something we might be able to do in the future, this functionality has not yet been developed.
- Only Client Signatories have access to the platform. The platform never displays any raw data. It draws on the raw data (which is itself anonymous) stored in the database to generate graphs and 'reports' and reports these in percentages.
- We will keep the number of individuals who have platform access at each Client Signatory to the minimum, (most likely 1 or 2 people).

Q: What if one of our clients is not signed up? Will we be able to access the database to provide our UK MDS information to that client?

Response:

Only Client Signatories can access law firm data through the UK MDS platform. It is not an open or public system. Firms are not permitted to use the UK MDS outside of our platform, as this constitutes a violation of our NDA as well as our Terms of Use. The goal is to create a single standard that as many clients as possible use, enabling firms to provide a consistent set of data to a large number of clients by completing a single survey.

Q: In the US, the ABA MDS has not taken the place of all other client D&I surveys. Clients still send different survey requests.

Response: We encourage firms to ask your clients to replace their current diversity data survey with the UK MDS. Some firms in the US who receive many different client data requests have successfully asked many of their clients to shift over to the ABA MDS. Most clients are happy to do so, as it usually provides them with better and more easily accessible information and greatly reduces their own workload. For every additional client who uses the UK MDS instead of their own survey, that is one less unique set of data which needs to be compiled by the law firm.

Q: Will law firms be able to see each other's data?

Response:

No law firm can see any other law firm's data in any form. Law firms only enter their data into the system once. That is the only interaction they have with the system.

Q: Will all participating Client Signatories be able to see our data or just the clients we have a working relationship with?

Response:

Just as with the ABA MDS in the United States, participating Client Signatories will be able to see the data from all law firm participants in the UK MDS. No data about the client signatories' panel composition is ever entered into the system. Clients see everyone and select their own firms to view. The UK MDS does not collect any data on the teams that work on a client's specific matters. It shows UK firm-wide data only.

Q: Is it just UK data that is provided? If so, why is the cost based on global lawyers?

Response:

The global number of lawyers is a common way that law firms are classified, one which most accurately captures a firm's size and corresponding revenue, and we think firm size is the fairest way to spread the cost. Everyone (including our client signatories) is making a contribution to participate and has 'skin in the game'. Everyone pays an annual cost to participate. Costs go to pay licensing, development, maintenance, and running costs (which includes hiring additional employees) of the UK MDS project. Should there be any extra funds, they will be re-invested into our work at the InterLaw Diversity Forum, which is run as a not for profit.

Q: Can we review the UK MDS before deciding to participate?

Response:

Unfortunately we can only distribute the UK MDS questions and guidance once firms have signed our NDA. The UK MDS represents two years of our work, so we need to protect our IP. This has been made necessary because the ABA has had trouble with organisations appropriating and repurposing their IP (the ABA MDS) without consent and using it outside their system. In some cases, organisations have even attempted to monetise it. Signing the NDA does not commit you to participating in the UK MDS.

Q: Will we will need a separate data collection process for the UK MDS?

Response:

The information you collect from the 2021 SRA Diversity Questionnaire will give you all the employee diversity data you need to complete the UK MDS.

Q: As the SRA survey is voluntary, what is the response rate needed in order to be able to provide the same data for the UK MDS?

Response:

Whatever data you have from the SRA survey will enable you to complete the UK MDS. We ask for your return rates in the UK MDS. We also have a space to count anyone who has not disclosed their data.

Q: How are we advised to manage the submission process where some data categories may not be available?

Response:

For LGBT+, Disability, and Social Mobility, please enter '0' where data is not available. When filling in charts on sex and race & ethnicity, all individuals must be counted, but we provide a space to count those individuals who have not disclosed this data (e.g., for those who have chosen 'Prefer not to say' in these categories or those have not responded at all.)

Q: We understand InterLaw will use the aggregate data collected by the UK MDS to analyse the state of diversity, equity, inclusion, and culture in the UK legal profession. What is the ongoing plan for this data collection?

Response:

We will follow the ABA's model in this respect. Working with our research co-leads at the InterLaw Diversity Forum, including Dr. Lisa Webley (Birmingham University School of Law), Dr. Richard Harvey (St. Louis University), and Daniel Winterfeldt, we will produce reports on the state of diversity, inclusion, and culture in the UK legal sector once we have collected our first three years of data. You can see the ABA's recently published report [here](#).