

Portland

Commercial Courts

Report 2025

Portland's annual Commercial Courts Report analyses judgments from the London Commercial Courts to identify notable trends each year. This year's report also features exclusive national polling on AI and the legal industry, and for the second time, an analysis on how the media reports on cases in the Commercial Courts.

This year's report analyses

1. A record-breaking year for diversity of nationalities represented
2. A return to prominence for Russian litigants after last year's dramatic drop
3. UAE litigants cementing their place in London's Commercial Courts
4. The special relationship between the US and the UK in commercial litigation
5. The media's interest in litigation involving high-profile companies, and differences in how international and national news outlets report on legal disputes
6. Public perceptions of the role of artificial intelligence in the legal profession

Featuring Portland Insights from



Adrian Lifely

Senior Advisor to Portland's specialist Litigation and Disputes practice



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Partner at Portland Communications

With expert analysis from



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Founder and Managing Partner at Pallas



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And specialist commentary from



Mat Heywood, Senior Partner and Founder at Mantle Law
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Welcome to the 2025 edition of Portland's Commercial Courts Report.

This year's report offers timely evidence of London's continued leading role in international dispute resolution. As trust in public institutions is questioned in many parts of the world, the ability of the London Commercial Courts to attract complex, high-stakes disputes remains a strong signal of confidence and stability. But, and it's an important 'but', the composition of users of the courts is undergoing significant change and this is something that the London litigation community will no doubt want to analyse and understand.

Now in its thirteenth year, Portland's Commercial Courts Report, which is based on published judgments, gives a clear picture of confidence. In these judgments, 89 different nationalities featured – the highest number recorded since the report's inception. Nearly two-thirds of all parties came from outside the UK.

One of the enduring reasons for London's strength is of course the appeal of English law itself. It is the most widely chosen law – governing around 40% of all international business and financial transactions [1]. The reputation of English law for clarity and predictability lies at the heart of London's global litigation offering.

In the foreword to last year's report, the Lady Chief Justice, Baroness Carr, wrote that the continued strength of the Commercial Court was "both no news and good news." That still holds true. But what stands out this year is the consistency with which the Court has handled so much change around the world. As international pressure points shift – whether major geopolitical shifts or significant advancements in technology like AI – the Court has remained a steady and trusted forum for resolving some of the world's most complicated and significant commercial disputes.

This year also highlights the growing importance of the United Arab Emirates to the London Commercial Courts. For the second year in a row, litigants from the UAE hit record numbers – now second only to the UK. We discuss the reasons in the report and meanwhile I note this is further evidence of the

growing importance and influence of the Middle East region. London firms will no doubt be watching legal developments in the region, including in Saudi Arabia, carefully to see what further opportunities might lie there. There is a lot of change under way and, as always, that will lead to opportunities for the in-demand London litigation legal community and the London Commercial Court.

We also note a sharp return in the number of Russian litigants this year, mainly as Defendants. While these figures certainly stand out and they are perhaps surprising, it is likely that these cases represent a 'sweep up' of historical cases in a moment of transition. I would expect the number is boosted by the reignition of cases that had been delayed or disrupted by sanctions. Looking forwards, Russian parties are switching to other jurisdictions like Dubai, Hong Kong, Singapore and they prefer arbitration to the courts. As ever, we see that the composition of users of the London Commercial Court is shaped by global developments, and few areas reflect this fact more clearly than the involvement of Russian parties.

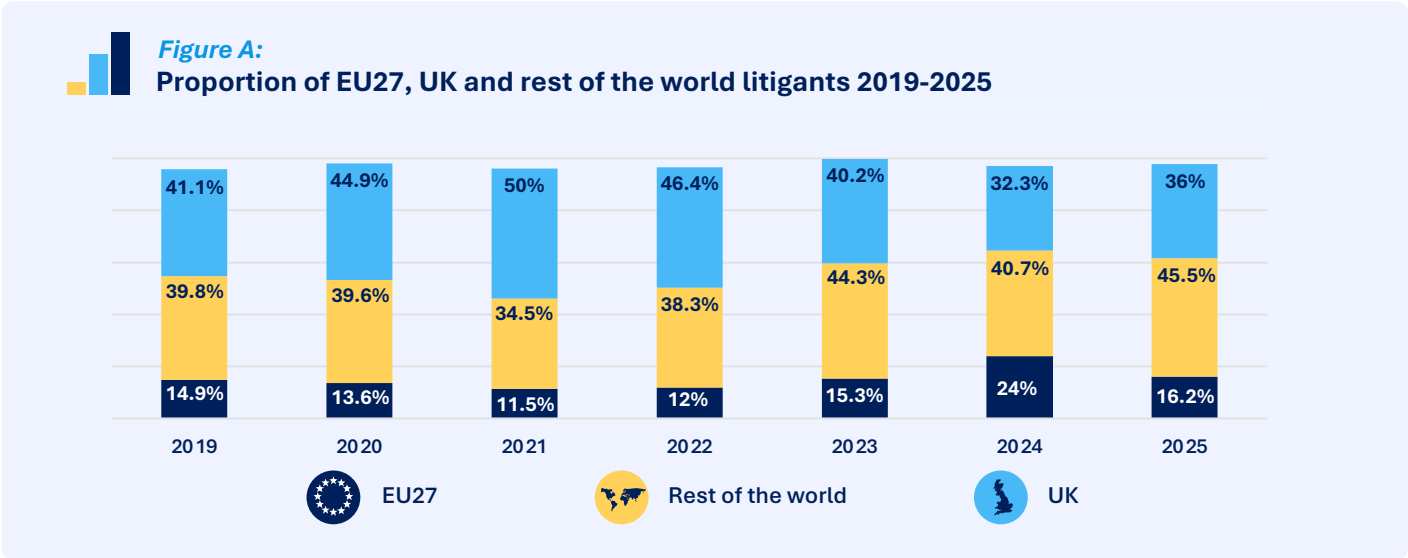
This year's report also includes polling by Portland on public attitudes toward AI in the legal profession. AI is one of the biggest challenges law firms and businesses are grappling with. While use is growing, public trust is still mixed – and for a system like London's, built on reliability and fairness, that matters greatly.

One aspect of legal practice that this year's data highlights for me is that, more than ever, a global outlook is necessary for a practice in international dispute resolution. The most successful lawyers in attracting international disputes work will be those that can truly relate to and represent clients from many different countries, backgrounds and cultures. That will require the lawyers to be more sensitive than ever to understanding their clients' priorities, their pressures and how litigation might impact their reputations. This is both the challenge and fascination of practising in this area.

At Portland, we produce this report to help support that understanding. We hope that you enjoy reading it, and that the data and insights prove useful to your work.

1.0 London Commercial Courts Have a Record Year for International Reach

The London Commercial Courts have had a **record year for nationalities, with ninety-three nationalities represented** – the highest ever recorded. This is the third consecutive increase year on year, demonstrating the Commercial Court’s continuing ability to attract a diverse range of international litigants.



While the overall number of litigants appearing in the Commercial Court increased, the percentage of international litigants shows a decrease of 3%. However, this decrease is not consistent across all regions. For example, there was a significant decrease in the number of EU27 litigants, likely driven by a reduction in judgments concerning Russian aircraft claims, which involved Irish litigants.[2] Meanwhile, the **proportion of litigants from the ‘rest of the world’ has increased to 45.5%, an all-time high.**

There were 1,368 litigants in total recorded across all judgments this past year, marking a 12% increase from the year prior. While the nationality of litigants is more diverse than ever, the number of judgments handed down has remained steady for the third consecutive year, as demonstrated in figure C, indicating that the court is operating at capacity with more multi-party trials than ever before.

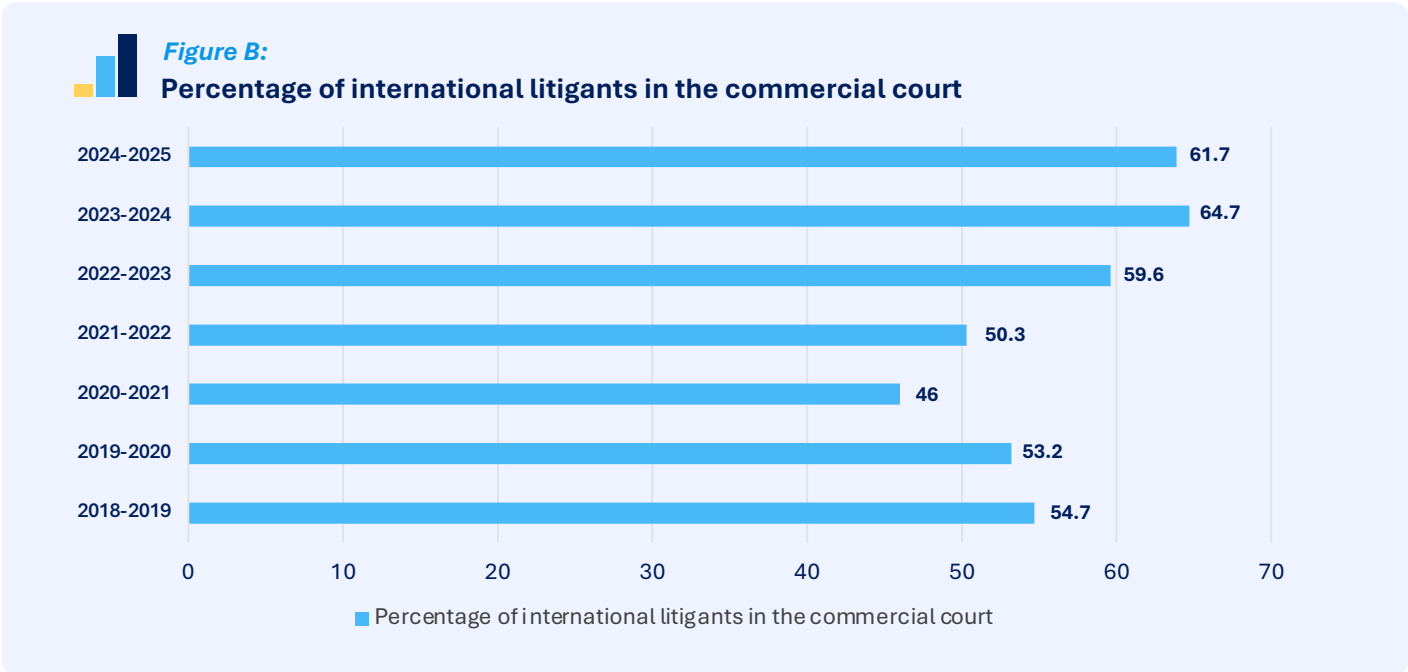
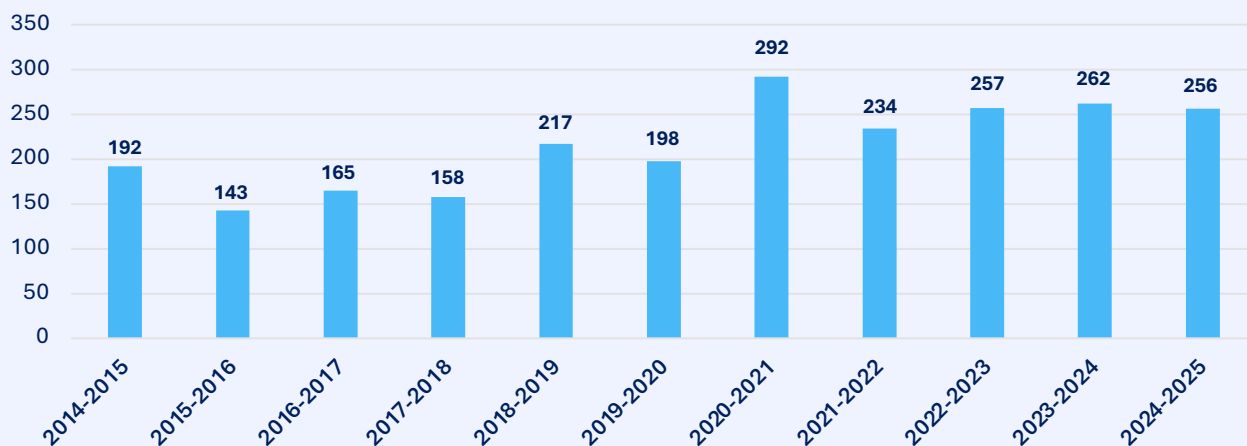


Figure C:
Number of Judgments handed down by the London Commercial Courts

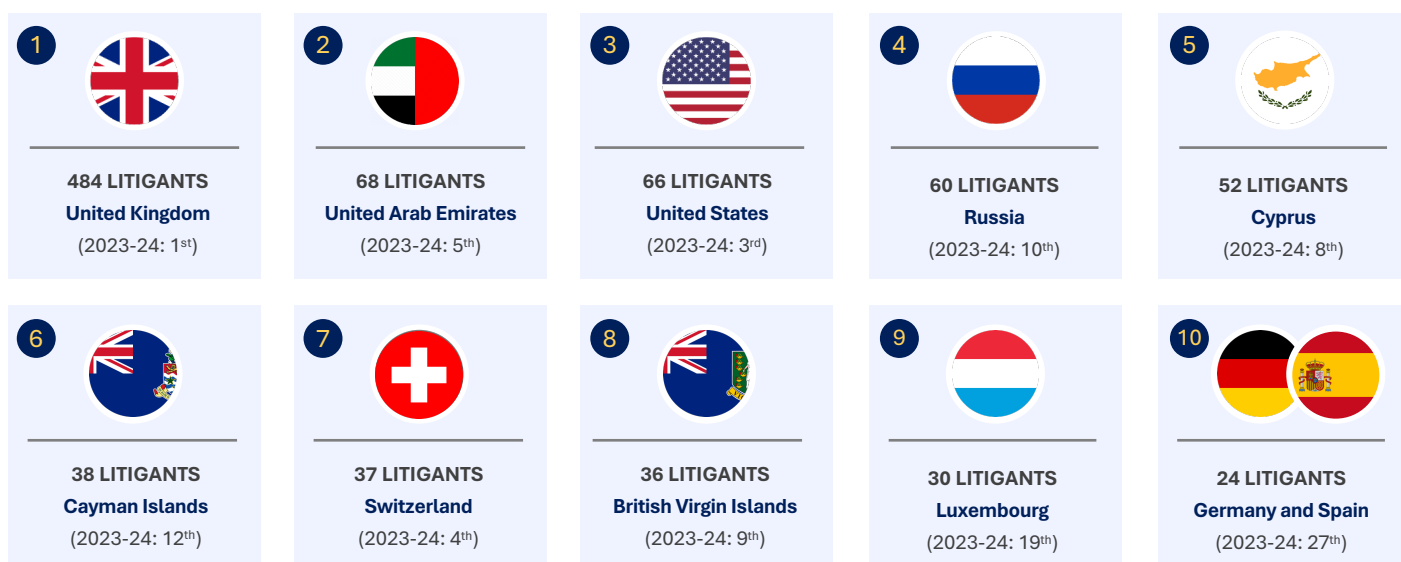


This growth in international litigants in the UK courts is accompanied by strong public recognition of the Commercial Courts' role. According to national polling by Portland, **78% of the UK public agree that the English courts have an important impact on the UK's international reputation**, a two-percentage point increase from last year. Support is particularly strong among those in the legal profession (89%), though somewhat lower among 18–24-year-olds (65%).

78%

of public agree that “the English courts have an important impact on the UK's international reputation”

Figure D:
Top ten litigants by nationality 2024 - 2025 (previous year's ranking)



The three nationalities most frequently appearing in the London Commercial Courts have again shifted; while the UK and US remain in the top three, the UAE has replaced Ireland for second place.

This year's results show an upward trend of UAE litigants using the London Commercial Courts, rising from just seven litigants in 2019-20, to 68 litigants in 2024-25. **An in-depth analysis of UAE's increasing presence can be found on page 14.**

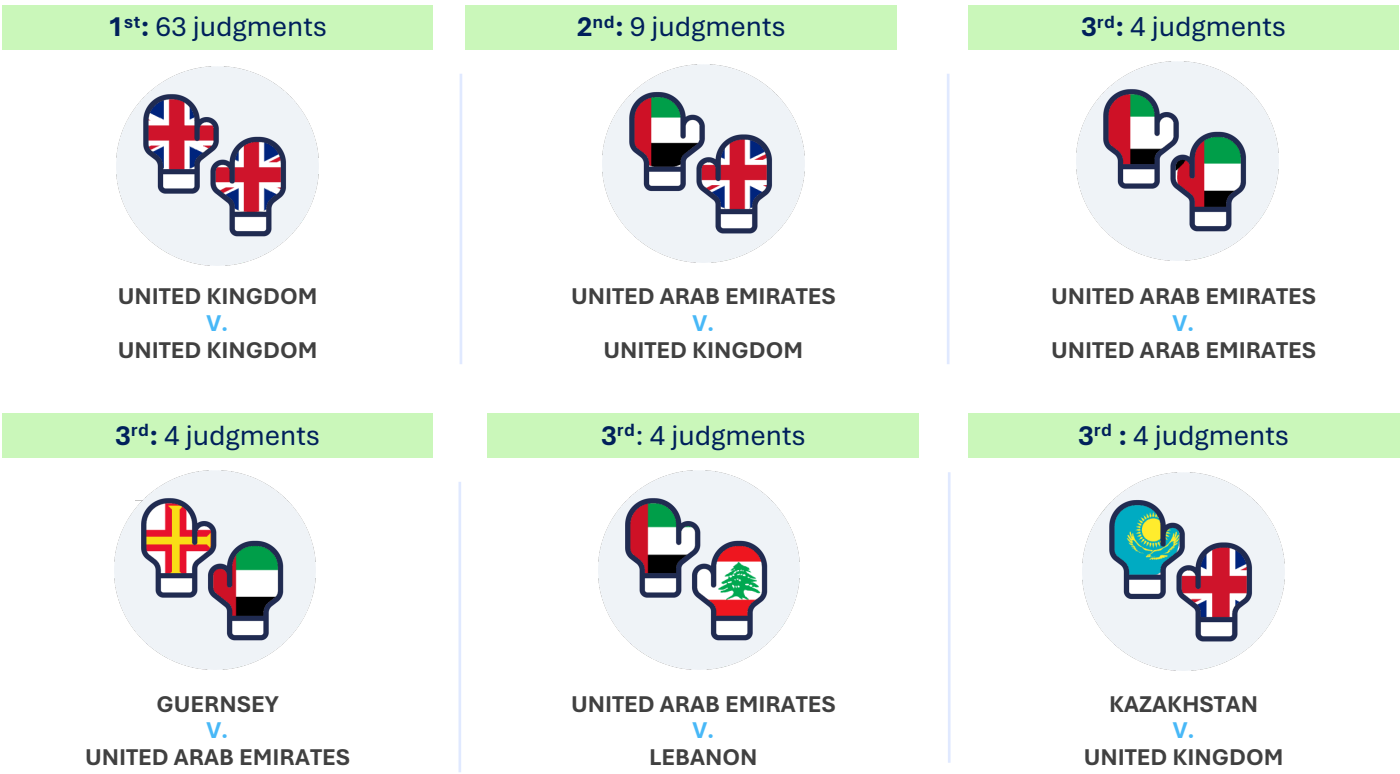
Russia remains outside of the top three nationalities. However, the number of Russian litigants has more than doubled compared to last year and is at its highest since Portland's monitoring began in 2018 (60 litigants in 2025 compared to 27 litigants in 2024). **An in-depth analysis of Russia can be found on page 11.**

Three nationalities have entered the top 10 this year: Luxembourg, Germany and the Cayman Islands. Meanwhile, Singapore has fallen from 5th to 23rd this year, reverting to pre-2022 levels following a temporary spike. This decrease could be due to the success of the Singapore International Commercial Court, as it continues to position itself as an international dispute resolution hub following the introduction of the Singapore International Commercial Court (International Committee) Bill, which passed in November 2024.[3] Other notable trends include a decline in Indian, French and Greek litigants in the Commercial Court.

Alongside the rise in the UAE, Russia and Luxembourg, there was a broadening base of international litigants – with new appearances from jurisdictions such as Azerbaijan, Chad and Uzbekistan. This further illustrates that the London Commercial Court continues to have global appeal as a jurisdiction to litigate commercial matters.

Face off: UK still dominates top pairings despite increasingly international courts

Figure E:
Top Six Party Pairings by Nationality*



*Displayed order of nationalities does not reflect position of a party as claimant or defendant in the case.

As expected, the most frequent head-to-head in the Commercial Courts was UK v UK, which constituted 63 judgments, increasing from last year and marking an end to a three-year downward trend. This is the third year in a row in which UAE v UAE has appeared in the top six pairings. Additionally, the UAE is present in four out of six of the match-ups, demonstrating a growing presence in the London Commercial Courts.

There has been a decline in the number of UK v US cases, dropping from nine last year to just three in 2025. This is the first time that UK v US has not appeared in the top six party pairings since 2018.

1.1 *Natasha Harrison*

Founder and Managing Partner,

Rekha Rogers

Counsel, at Pallas Partners LLP



Portland's 2025 Commercial Court Report shows increasing diversity in the nationality and profile of litigants bringing claims before the Commercial Court. This reflects the Court's continued appeal as a forum for resolving complex, international commercial disputes. This jurisdictional attractiveness intersects with several wider trends in English commercial litigation, including the rise of collective actions, litigation funding, and ESG-related disputes — all of which are reshaping the nature of claims entering the Commercial Court docket.

The number of claims brought before the English Court under Sections 90 and 90A, and Schedule 10A of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 has swelled in recent years. This rapid growth correlates with the explosion of the litigation funding market making large group claims more viable and attractive for investors.

Shareholders from around the world are increasingly willing to participate in claims and seek compensation for serious governance failures, particularly given the risk mitigation offered by the availability of funding. Indeed, where investors are funds that themselves owe duties to their own shareholders, the case for participating in these claims where funding is secured can become even harder to resist.

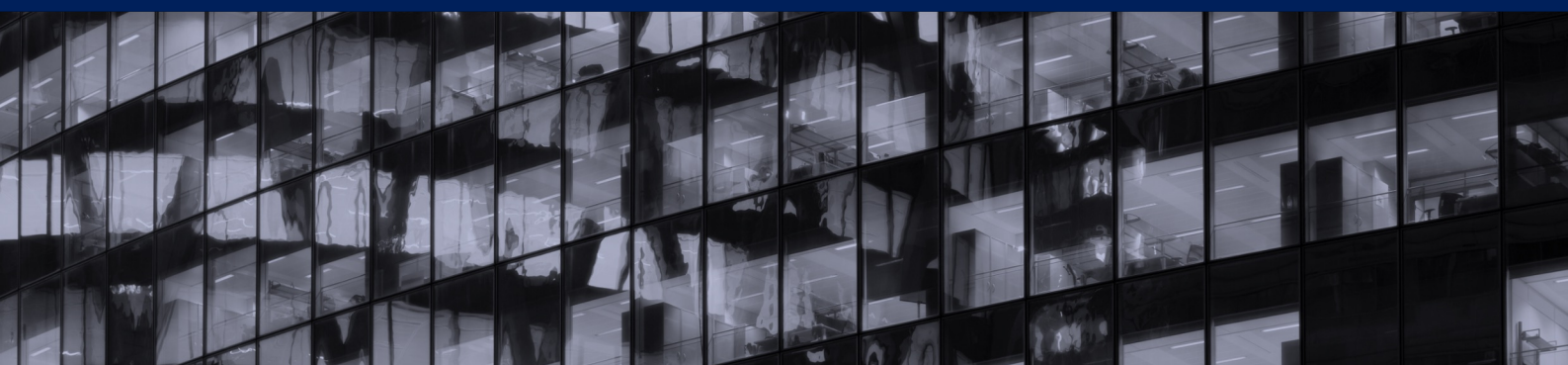
By providing prospective claimants with the resources to fight their claims, litigation funding democratises funding sources, increases diversity in litigant profile, ensures equality of arms across the party divide and facilitates access to justice.

Nowhere is such democratisation more visible than in respect of the retail group claims that have made their way through the English Court over recent years.

Given the cost considerations for retail claimants, a funded group structure is most suited to large consumer or product liability actions.

In terms of the types of claims we're seeing, up until recently, they have largely focused on commercial issues such as the accounting misstatement litigation against Tesco. However, as the world's population increasingly turns its attention towards the ESG agenda, the opportunity for investors to use group litigation as a tool to achieve both financial returns and social, political and environmental change has swung into focus.

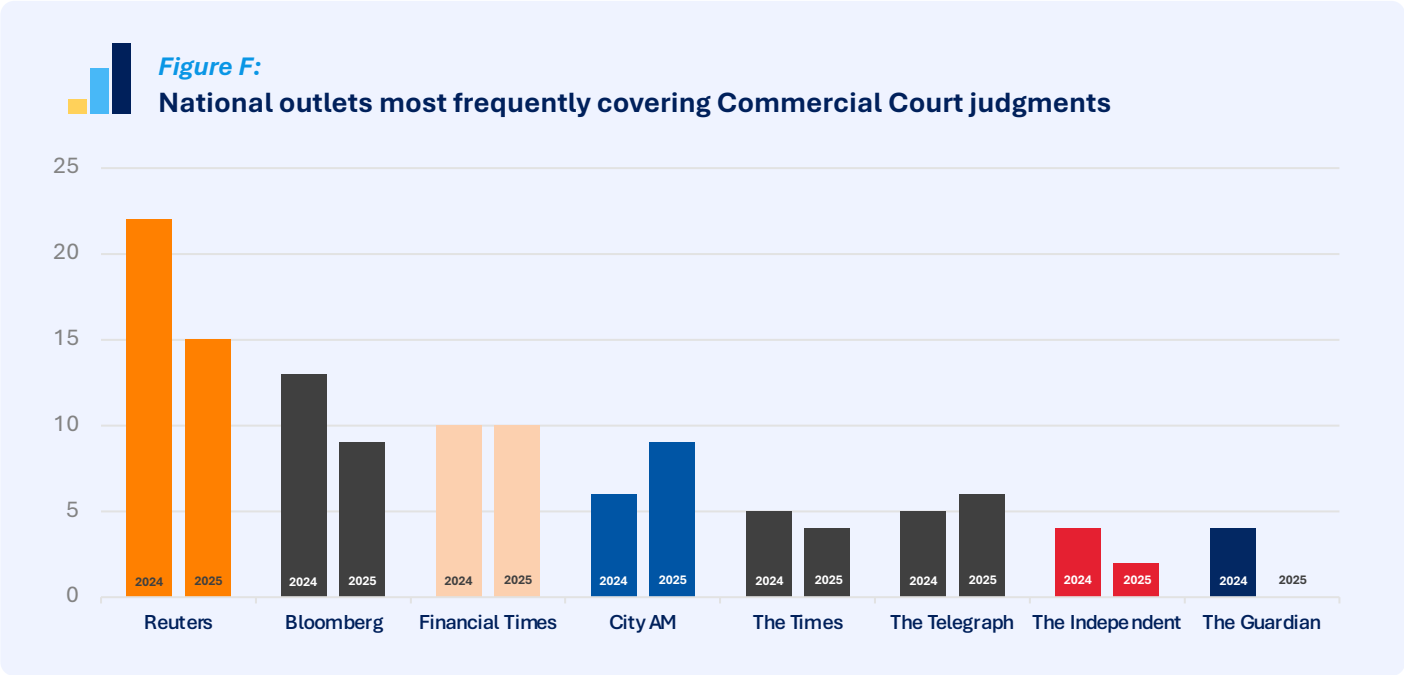
In any event, and regardless of the outcome of these cases, the increasing prevalence of funding will no doubt prompt more group actions in the future, which will further increase the diversity of the litigant profile coming before the English court.



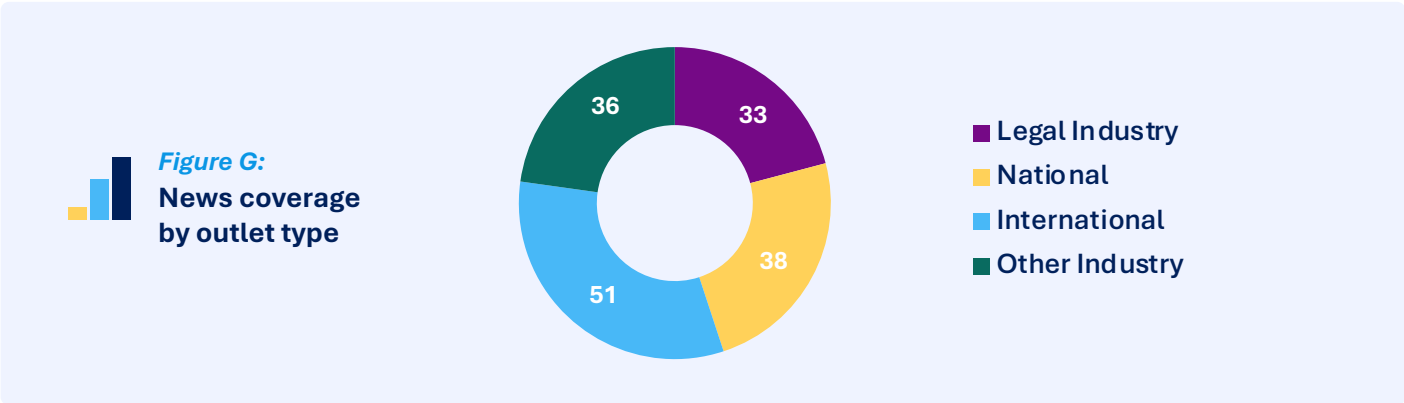
2.0 Media coverage of commercial court judgments

For the second consecutive year, Portland analysed the volume and nature of media coverage of judgments handed down by the Commercial Court.

Media interest in Commercial Court judgments remained strong, with 122 articles published across a wide array of national, international, legal and sector-specific publications. While the overall number of articles declined versus the previous year, the data reveals a continued appetite for coverage of high-profile commercial disputes, particularly those with international or politically sensitive dimensions.



Reuters once again topped international coverage, with a slight drop from 22 to 15 articles this year. Bloomberg also saw a decrease, from 13 to 9, while City AM increased its coverage from six to nine articles. Among UK national outlets, the Financial Times remained the most active, with 10 articles, followed by the Telegraph and The Times.



When analysing outlet type, legal industry coverage remains robust, with a total of 13 distinct publications producing many more articles*. Alongside this, 36 articles appeared in trade and sector specific media, ranging from global banking, to shipping and insurance.

These cases clearly captured media interest due to their political, financial and international dimensions, particularly the West Ham case, or the Vatican-linked investment dispute, which involved issues of significant public interest.

Figure H:

Commercial Courts judgments that had the most top-tier coverage (articles in top 25 UK outlets, Reuters and Bloomberg)

<i>WH Holding Ltd v E20 Stadium LLP</i>	6
<i>Winch Design Ltd v Le Souef</i>	4
<i>Athena Capital Fund Sicav-Fis Sca & Ors v Secretariat of State of the Holy See</i>	4
<i>The Republic of Mozambique v Credit Suisse International & Ors</i>	4

Of the top 25 news outlets in the UK, as defined by Press Gazette, 74% included at least one litigant's name in a judgment-related headline, an increase from 67% the previous year. This trend was even more pronounced among international media: Reuters and Bloomberg named parties in 13 out of 15 headlines (86.6%). The New York Times, which covered one case this year (*WH Holding Ltd v E20 Stadium LLP*) named the claimant, West Ham, in the headline.

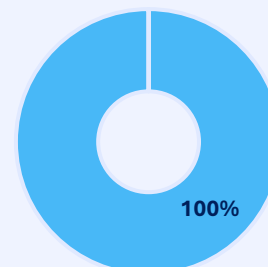
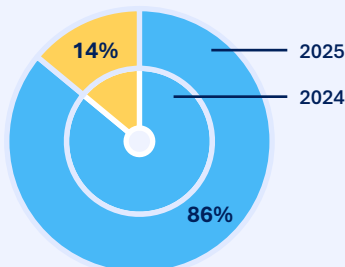
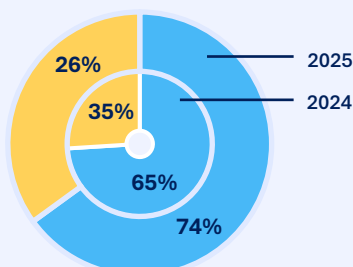
Figure I:

Percent of articles that directly named at least one litigant in the headline

Top 25 UK news outlets

Reuters and Bloomberg

NYT



■ Litigant(s) named ■ No litigant(s) named

Cross-border media engagement

As was seen last year, several judgments received more detailed coverage abroad than in the domestic press (beyond industry press). For instance, *Magomedov v TPG group Holdings* attracted coverage in Russian and US media due to the geopolitical sensitivity surrounding the claim and the high profile of the litigants involved. The case involves Ziyavudin Magomedov, a Russian oligarch and former billionaire, who brought claims alleging conspiracy to misappropriate his stake in a major Russian port operator amid allegations of politically charged asset seizures. The details of the case attracted broader questions around investor protections, cross-border enforcement and Western firms' exposure to sanctioned individuals. Despite this, beyond Russian and US coverage, reporting remained largely limited to legal press in the UK.

This pattern reinforces a trend we observed in 2024, cases involving foreign sovereigns, politically exposed individuals or sensitive financial arrangements in the commercial court may drive media coverage abroad even if they do not generate equivalent UK headlines.

[illegible]

2.1 Simon Pugh

Partner, Portland's Litigation and Disputes Practice



London's Commercial Court has, for many years, embodied Global Britain. This year is no exception, as the nationalities of litigants increased for yet another year. This is good news for London's legal community, and good news for those in Whitehall, who should look at our data and draw the conclusion that the legal services industry is a prized asset.

The Commercial Court is, in general, open and accessible to journalists. Despite the increasing pressures placed on newsrooms, the Court is still able to attract the interest of a diverse range of national and international media, news wires and specialist trade media.

With the rule of law under pressure around the world, and trust in some institutions wavering, the Courts' willingness to protect and make a virtue of open justice is more important than ever.

This year again, we saw strong media interest in judgments handed down by the Court, although there was a drop in the number of articles. It's an important caveat that this is only the second year Portland has compiled this data so it's too early to draw firm conclusions. But, as avid watchers of reporting on the Court, we can provide a few thoughts on what the future might hold.

Firstly, if national and mainstream business media follow the Court a little less closely, a gap opens which could be filled by the already well-established and high-quality specialist legal press. This is a trend that we have observed across the media spectrum, where deep-dive, expert focused coverage is often gaining ground on general reporting.

Secondly, it may mean that we are seeing alternative formats of media coverage take greater prominence, law podcasts, legal Substacks, social media and online explainers may all become common vehicles for unpacking complex judgments to specialist and lay audiences.

Thirdly, it's important not to lose sight of the international nature of the Courts. The interest in the cases and in the litigants transcends the UK media. Cases like *Magomedov v TPG Group Holdings*, for instance, received significant attention in the litigants' home jurisdictions.

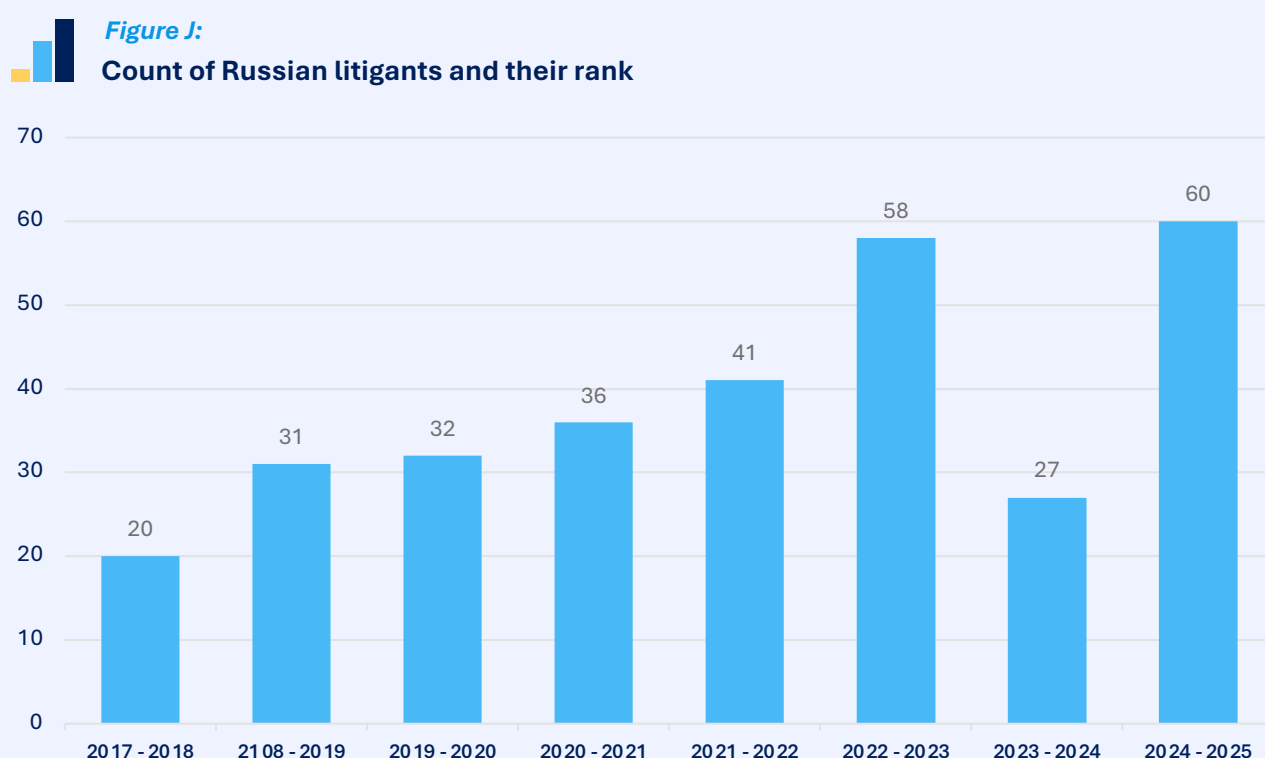
With even a modest drop in UK national media mentions, the total number of articles this year spanned 122 across all categories, speaking to the enduring appeal of the Court's work. From flagship national outlets with an international audience like the FT and the Times, to international heavyweights like Reuters and Bloomberg, and a long tail of specialist legal and industry-specific media, the breadth of coverage highlights the Court's centrality not only to the legal profession, but also to global business and political audiences.

This plurality is essential to the Court's story: it attracts mainstream headlines, and sparks interest across sectors and jurisdictions. That London's Court commands a space in international financial outlets, wire services and legal trades alike is testament to its role as a centre of commercial credibility, transparency and global relevance. While the medium may continue to shift, the story remains compelling.

3.0 *Russia: a return to form?*

Russian litigants have maintained, for the most part, a prominent presence in the Commercial Court landscape over the past six years. A dominance that appeared to be waning in 2024, perhaps due to law firms representing fewer Russian clients, many of whom were restricted by UK sanctions targeting individuals and entities linked to the regime, now looks to be reasserting itself.

This rebound could signal a renewed presence of Russian litigants in London's courts, or it may simply reflect a short-term spike driven by a few large cases, such as the Russian Aircraft Operator Policy Claims. It might also suggest that 2024 was an outlier, and that sanctions have, in reality, had little long-term impact on judgments involving Russian parties. Alternatively, the increase may represent a twilight period, with cases filed before the conflict and delayed by sanctions now making their way through the courts.



Between 2020 and 2023, Russian litigants steadily climbed the ranks, rising from 32 cases in 2020 to a peak of 58 in 2023. For four consecutive years, Russia held firm in the top three foreign jurisdiction spots, taking 2nd place in both 2022 and 2023. It was a clear indication that, despite mounting international and legal pressure, claims involving Russian parties were continuing to make their way through the courts due to the lag time between sanctions biting and this coming through in the judgment data.

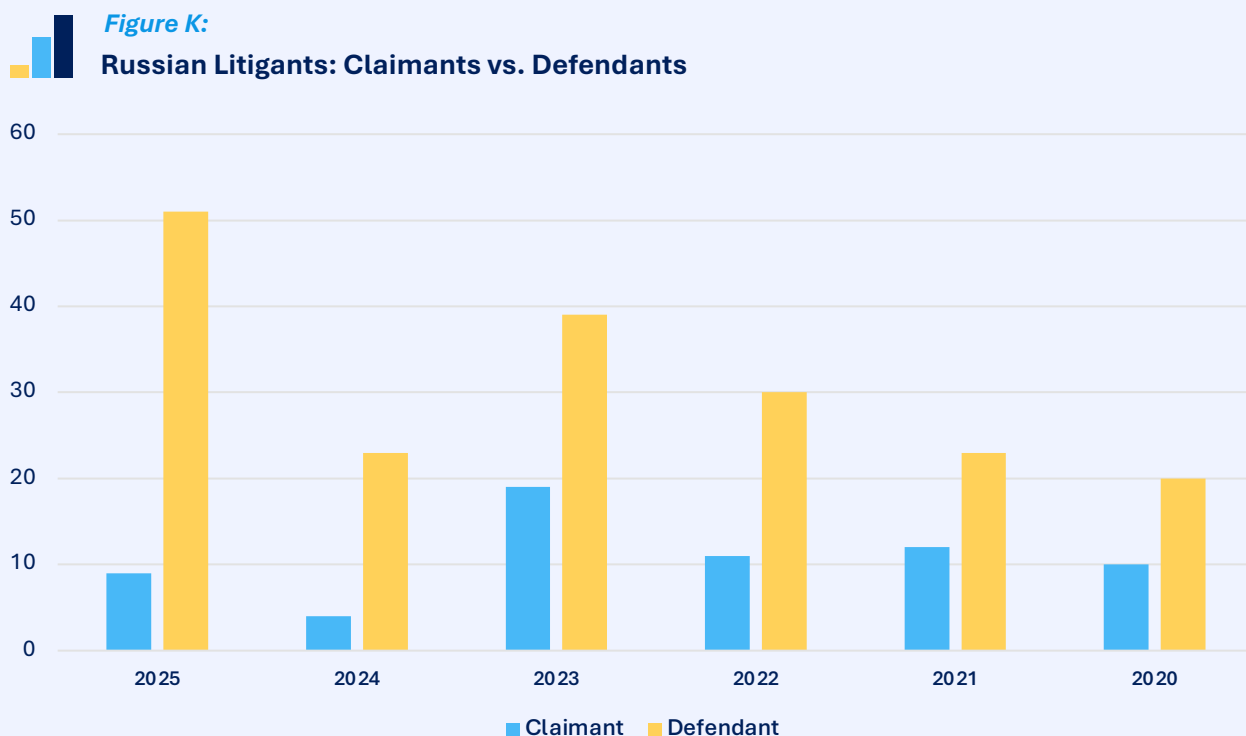
That trend seemed to falter in 2024, when Russia dropped to 10th place with just 27 litigants, a more than 50% decline year-on-year. The fall likely reflected a mix of factors: ongoing sanctions, a cooling legal appetite and growing uncertainty around international enforcement.

But 2025 has seen a dramatic rebound, with 60 Russian litigants, the highest figure since our records began, and a return to 3rd place. The number of Russian litigants using the Commercial Courts could well be higher when considering that Russian-owned businesses remain involved in the courts. Their owners could simply have moved their headquarters to a new jurisdiction outside of Russia.

In 2025, 80% of Russian litigants had legal representation, up from just 30% in 2024, and significantly higher than in 2023.

Individuals: companies, a near 1:1 ratio

Of the 60 Russian parties involved, 32 were companies and 27 were individuals. That is a marked contrast to the overall foreign litigant pool, where corporate entities dominate with 1,025 companies compared to just 320 individuals. The data suggests a strong presence of Russian high-net-worth individuals seeking resolution in London.



While it's not unusual to see more Russian defendants than claimants in the Commercial Court, 2025 saw that trend taken to new heights. **Just nine Russian parties appeared as claimants, compared to 51 as defendants, meaning that 85% of Russian litigants were on the defending side, the widest gap we've seen in recent years.** The imbalance has been consistent over time, but this year's spike is particularly stark. It reflects the largely reactive nature of Russian litigation in London, often tied to enforcement proceedings, asset protection, or disputes triggered by sanctions and complex cross-border dynamics.

The split is much more balanced when looking at other top-ranked jurisdictions. Among UK litigants, the figure was 56%, and for litigants from the UAE, it was 57%.

When analysing the nationality face-offs, the most common pairing is Russia v United Kingdom, appearing in four separate judgments, followed by the United States v Russia in two. There are also three intra-Russian judgments, two involving jailed Russian businessman Ziyavudin Magomedov. Other countries involved in proceedings against Russian parties include Germany (two cases), France, Cyprus and the BVI (each one judgment).



3.1 *Charles Enderby Smith*

Partner, Carter-Ruck

Tom Cameron

Partner, Carter-Ruck



A Russian Rebound

Russian litigants have long been a staple feature of London's Commercial Court, and their numbers steadily increased from 2018 onwards. This consistent trend has been called into question over the last few years, however, in light of the Russia/Ukraine conflict and the UK's response, manifesting in an unprecedented number of sanctions being imposed on Russia and Russian entities and individuals, an exodus of UK law firms and businesses from Russia, and a more general reluctance of UK law firms to accept instructions from Russian clients.

This trend is well demonstrated by the recent dramatic collapse in Russian litigants in the London Commercial Court, as reported in last year's edition of this publication, with a fall of over 50% year-on-year from 22/23 to 23/24.

The number has, however, rebounded significantly this year, recovering all lost ground and then some, even though the geopolitical and sanctions landscape has not really thawed.

It is likely that there are several factors underpinning this return to form.

Perhaps most importantly, it has clearly become easier for Russian litigants to access legal representation in the UK (even where sanctioned – which many of the 60 referred to in this publication are). This is borne out by the analysis in this report revealing that 80% of Russian litigants this year had legal representation, compared to just 30% the year before.

This increased access likely arises as a result of:

(a) the increase in October 2024 in the cap applicable to legal fees under the UK government's legal services general licence (the licence which permits law firms to receive payment for legal services provided to those designated under the UK's Russia regime) from

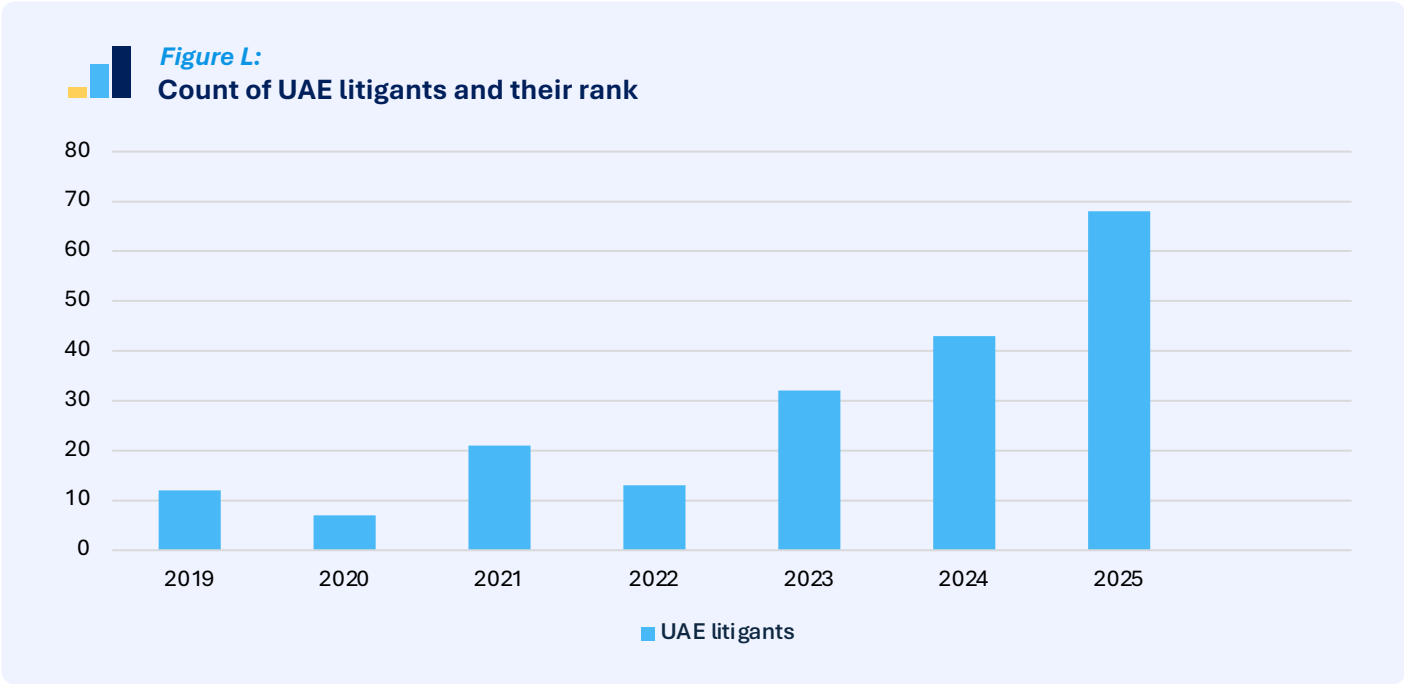
£500,000 to £2million, permitting more heavy-weight commercial disputes to be properly litigated;

(b) Some firms appear to be adopting a more nuanced approach to matters involving non-sanctioned Russian clients, with reputational considerations—while still important—now being assessed within more established internal guidelines. These decisions remain subject to careful review, particularly given the ongoing conflict in Ukraine ; and

(c) UK firms' increased understanding and familiarity with the UK's complex Russia sanctions regime and its parameters, which tempers firms' instinct to take a more cautious approach and “over-comply”.

A further likely explanation for the recent trend is the sheer number of high-value commercial disputes arising out of the Russian sanctions themselves, for example where one party claims performance of a contract is prohibited by sanctions. While not solely the preserve of Russian parties, such disputes are naturally more likely to arise where one party is Russian and even more so where that party is designated. Equally, while the effects on a commercial transaction of sanctions can cut both ways, one explanation for the disproportionately large number of the Russian litigants in the London Commercial Court this year defending claims (51 of the 60 litigants) may be a trend of default by Russian parties who have been designated or who are otherwise impeded in carrying out their contractual duties by sanctions which are ultimately designed to have a greater impact upon them.

4.0 United Arab Emirates takes second place–Emirati litigants cement place in London’s commercial courts



The past year marked an inflection point for Emirati use of London’s Commercial Courts. **For the second year in a row, the number of litigants from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reached record highs**, rising to 68 in 2025 from 43 in 2024 and 32 in 2023. This 113% increase over just two years cements the UAE’s place among the top five non-UK nationalities appearing before the court, ahead of the United States, Switzerland, Russia and India.

This surge reflects a **deepening preference among Emirati individuals and institutions for English law and the reputation of the London courts** as an internationally recognised forum, particularly in resolving complex, high-value disputes. The increasing volume of intra-UAE litigation (UAE v. UAE cases appeared in the top five national pairings for a second consecutive year) underscores how even domestic Emirati disputes are being exported to London.

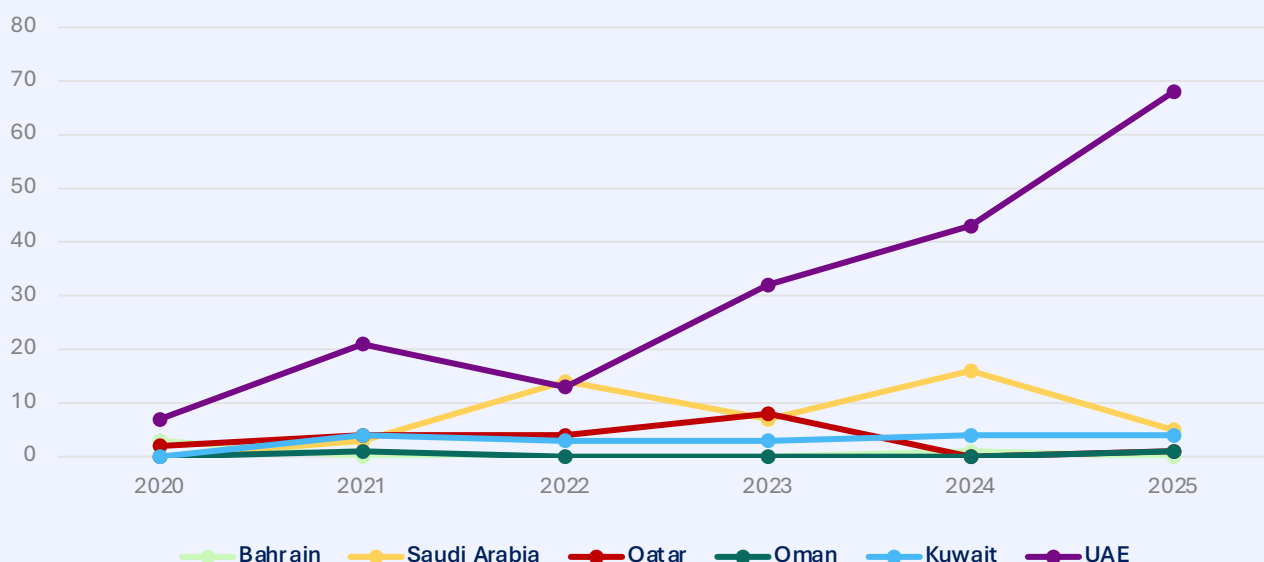
Recent high-profile judgments have included *Emirates NBD Bank PJSC v Almahawi & Anor*, which involved the enforcement of a Dubai court ruling against a former Emirati diplomat in the UK[4]; and *Mubadala Capital v Global Foundries*[5], a dispute centred on the transfer of high-tech intellectual property assets governed by English law. In both cases, the Court’s rulings were closely watched in the Gulf **and reaffirmed the utility of English court decisions in resolving cross-border disputes**.

Furthermore, the sharp increase in Emirati litigants may, in part, be attributable to the reliability of the English courts in recognising and enforcing arbitral awards rendered in the UAE under the New York Convention. While the enforcement of UAE court judgments in England remains subject to common law principles—given the absence of a bilateral treaty—the Commercial Court continues to be perceived as a neutral and credible forum for cross-border dispute resolution involving Emirati parties. A growing body of case law, most notably *Lenkor Energy Trading DMCC v Puri* [2020] EWHC 75 (QB), has affirmed the English courts’ willingness to enforce Dubai court judgments under the principle of reciprocity [6].

This shift is facilitated by ongoing legal alignment between the two jurisdictions. As previously reported, the 2022 directive from the UAE’s Ministry of Justice stating that English judgments are enforceable in the UAE marked a significant step in reciprocal enforcement. In 2024, the courts in both jurisdictions began formalising cooperation mechanisms, which now enable swifter enforcement proceedings in either direction, a dynamic that litigators believe has played a pivotal role in the rise of Emirati litigants in London.

The growth of Emirati presence in London also mirrors legal evolution at home. The UAE's own English law-based courts, the DIFC and ADGM continue to flourish. In the first half of 2023, the DIFC Courts recorded a 692% increase in total case value compared to the same period of 2022. Total claims across all divisions amounting to AED 15 billion (approximately USD 4 billion)[7]. As these courts gain traction regionally, their **coexistence with London rather than competition** appears to be the prevailing dynamic. English common law serves as the connective tissue, ensuring that contractual and procedural familiarity remain intact across jurisdictions.

Figure M:
Number of litigants from GCC states appearing in the London Commercial Courts



While other GCC states have seen stagnant engagement with the English courts, the UAE has charted a steady upward trajectory, suggesting a unique combination of cross-border exposure, legal confidence and alignment with English procedural norms. **With 68 litigants in 2025, the UAE not only achieved its highest annual count on record but crossed a symbolic threshold that places it in the same statistical league as traditional litigation heavyweights such as the US and Switzerland.**

Looking ahead, with continued reforms to the UAE's legal infrastructure and sustained economic diversification, the role of London's Commercial Courts as a forum of choice for UAE-based disputes looks set to grow even further. As the legal ecosystems of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and London evolve in tandem, the Emirati legal community's comfort with London's courts may become the norm, not the exception.

"This trend reflects just how international the UAE's outbound investment has become. UAE parties to high-value, cross-border matters have long been drawn to London by the depth of judicial expertise, its perceived neutrality, the relative speed of proceedings and the global enforceability of English judgments. At the same time, we are also seeing a notable rise in the use of the DIFC Courts, demonstrating that the UAE is not just exporting disputes to global hubs like London, but building a world-class dispute resolution hub of its own."



Mat Heywood, Senior Partner and Founder

Emma Nierinck, Partner

Mantle Law, UAE Specialist Law Firm
of the Year (Chambers and Partners)

4.1 Michael Fletcher

Partner, Pinsent Masons

Gregg Hammond

Legal Director, Pinsent Masons



Understanding the surge of UAE litigants in the London commercial court

The number of UAE litigants in the London Commercial Courts (“**London Courts**”) increased from 43 in 2024 to 68 in 2025, on its face, a striking rise. This growth makes the UAE the second most common nationality represented in the London Courts.

Whilst such growth can be spurred by one or two major cases with multiple UAE litigants, the growing presence of UAE litigants in the London Courts highlights those Courts’ ongoing reputation in the international market; it also reflects English law’s global importance as a choice of law.

Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments

UAE litigants’ confidence in litigating in the London Courts may also have been boosted by recent judgments in the UK and UAE.

Following a UAE Ministry of Justice non-binding circular in September 2022 stating that English judgments could in principle be enforced in the UAE, in 2024 the Dubai Court of Cassation (in Civil Cassation 592/2023) enforced an English judgment, finding that the criteria for enforcement under the UAE Civil Procedure Law had been met. This followed English decisions in *Lenkor Energy Trading DMCC v Puri* [2020] EWHC 75 (QB) and *Emirates NBD Bank PJSC v Almakawi* [2021] EWHC 3051 (Comm), where the English High Court enforced Dubai Court judgments. In *Invest Bank PSC v El-Husseini* [2023] EWHC 2302 (Comm) the English High Court went as far as to enforce an Abu Dhabi judgment which was unenforceable in its original jurisdiction.

Whilst not providing certainty that the Courts of the UAE will always treat England as a reciprocal jurisdiction for the purposes of enforcing its judgments, the Court of Cassation decision may support some UAE litigants’ preference for the London Courts. Nonetheless, UAE Courts ultimately retain discretion over enforcement and may not be

willing to enforce English judgments against all asset classes in the UAE. Enforcement therefore remains a developing picture.

Evolution of Courts in the UAE

Meanwhile, the Dubai International Financial Centre (“DIFC”) Courts are becoming established as another important centre for the resolution of international disputes. In March 2025, the Government of Dubai issued Law No. 2 of 2025 (the “**DIFC Law**”), extending the DIFC Courts’ jurisdiction and confirming their powers to grant interim remedies such as freezing and disclosure orders. The DIFC Law also mandates public hearings and judgments, promoting accessibility. Combined with judicial efficiency, these developments make the DIFC Courts a key player in the UAE’s legal landscape, and internationally.

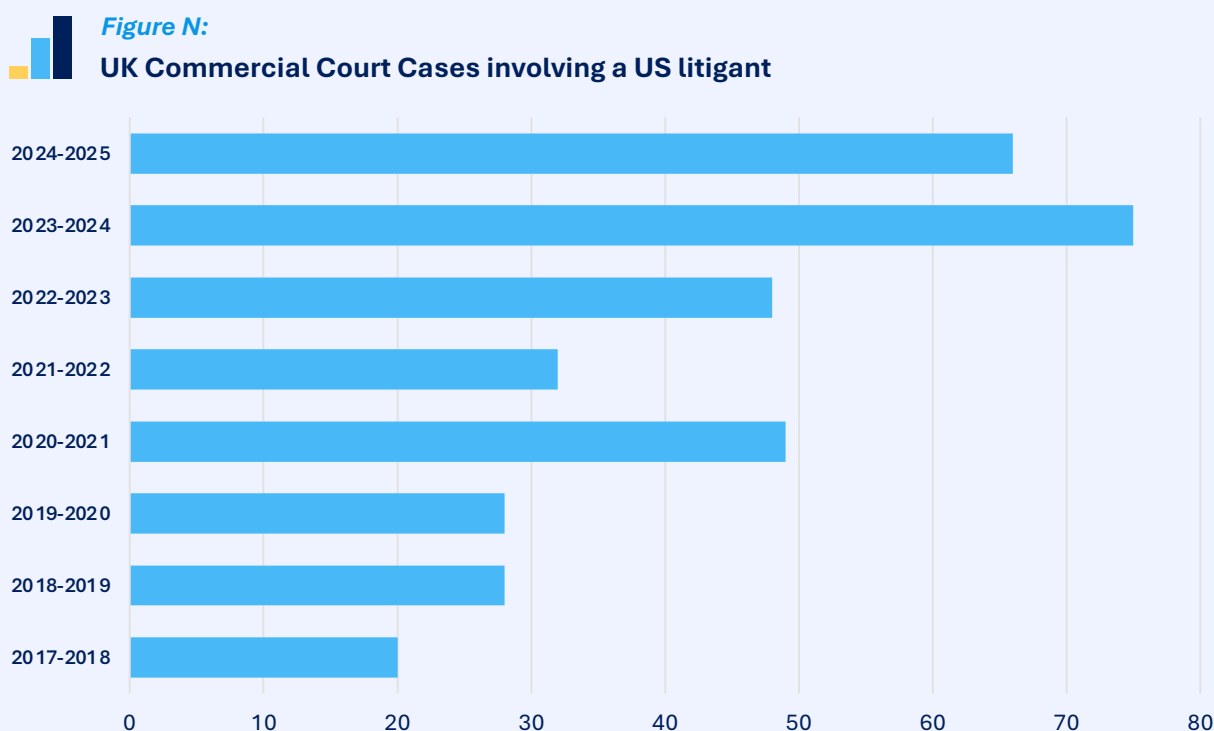
In addition, in the UAE local courts, certain tribunals have since 2022 been permitted to conduct hearings and issue judgments in English. While the local UAE Courts have yet to decide a case heard in English, the potential for English to be used aligns with the UAE’s position as a global business centre.

Looking ahead

UAE litigants’ growing presence in London Courts is testament to the continued strong reputation of those Courts and of English law, and reflects growing recognition of reciprocity between the UAE and UK. However, the UAE is fast developing as a legal hub, with the DIFC playing a key role. Future trends in the number of UAE litigants in London Courts will determine whether the London Courts can maintain their importance to those litigants.

5.0 *US Litigants third most common nationality using London's Commercial Courts for fourth year running*

The United States has consistently remained in the top five most common nationalities bringing their disputes to London's Commercial Courts. That trend held firm in 2024-2025 with the United States retaining its position as the third most active nationality using London's Commercial Courts for the fourth year in a row, following a one-year stint at second place in 2021-22.



The special relationship continues, but is it growing less contentious? 2024-25 brings major drop in UK vs US judgments

Historically, UK vs US disputes have been among the most frequent judgments in the Commercial Courts – reaching a record high of nine judgments in 2023-24. However, despite the continued strong representation of American parties compared to other nationalities, 2024-25 brought a significant drop in judgments issued in cases between UK and US -based litigants.

Only three judgments over the past year were between American and British parties, representing a drop from the record-setting nine US v UK judgments in 2023-24, and six in 2022-23. Instead, it appears that American parties are litigating against a wider variety of nationalities, with no clear front runner taking the UK's place. Coming in at three cases, Spain tied with the United Kingdom for judgments involving disputes with American parties in 2024-25, alongside The Cayman Islands, China, Cyprus and Russia all tying in second place with two cases each.

American companies, especially banks and financial institutions flock to courts

When it comes to the profile of parties bringing disputes to London, US banks and financial services firms continue to dominate, with US individuals being rare. In 2025, 92% of US litigants were corporates, up from 87% the year before. While many of these disputes centred on familiar contractual and financial claims, two headline-making exceptions stood out. Both involved US litigants locked in high-stakes disputes against Russian counterparties. The first was the previously mentioned £10.5 billion (\$14 billion) civil fraud claim: *Magomedov & Ors v TPG Group Holdings*, and the second was *Google LLC & Anor v NAO Tsargrad Media & Ors* – a case that drew particular attention for the staggering £1.85 octillion value cited in pleadings. Mr Justice Henshaw pointed out that the sum was ‘*about a trillion times greater than the estimated GDP of all the economies in the world.*’ [8]

In the *Google* case, Henshaw ruled in favour of the US tech giant, marking a rare win for a Western corporation in a sanctions-adjacent case involving a Russian media outlet. Meanwhile, *Magomedov v TPG* brought a dramatic close to a years-long dispute initiated by jailed Russian businessman Ziyavudin Magomedov. Taken together, these cases illustrate not only the geopolitical undercurrents present in commercial litigation to which US litigants are party in non-US jurisdictions, but also the continued strength of London as a trusted, neutral forum for adjudicating the world’s most complex and politically charged disputes.



5.1 Richard Marshall

Partner, Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP



In recent years, we have seen a marked increase in the number of US litigants seeking either to bring legal proceedings in the Commercial Court or to enforce US judgments in this jurisdiction. This trend reflects the perceived procedural advantages of litigation in the London Commercial Court.

While US judgments can be enforced in England, there have been recent cases in which enforcement has been refused. As a result, we are increasingly seeing claimants commencing substantive disputes through the English courts. We anticipate continued political and economic uncertainty to continue this shift towards neutral venues such as London, for resolving disputes with a US connection.

A key issue for enforcement is the status of awards for multiple or punitive damages, often found in IP disputes. In the long-running litigation between Motorola Solutions Inc and Hytera Communications Corp, the Commercial Court considered novel (and topical) points of law on the enforcement of foreign judgments. In one ruling (*Motorola v Hytera* [2024] EWHC 2891 (Comm)), the court refused to enforce part of a multi-million dollar US judgment because it fell within the definition of ‘multiple damages’ under section 5 of the Protection of Trading Interests

Act 1980 (PTIA), a provision so rarely relied upon there is only a ‘sprinkling’ of authority on it.

When the other part of Motorola's judgment was overturned on appeal in the US, the Commercial Court then set aside the order for enforcement (*Motorola v Hytera* [2025] EWHC 257 (Comm)). Again, the circumstances in which a final order enforcing a foreign judgment can be varied or revoked are vanishingly rare. However, given the importance of these issues to litigants, the Court of Appeal will hear an appeal on the point.

These recent cases highlight that enforcing US judgments in England is not always straightforward. This is against a background where there has been a marked increase in US litigants seeking to enforce US judgments in this jurisdiction, particularly in multi-defendant IP infringement claims. With no reciprocal agreement in place for mutual recognition and enforcement (unless the US ratifies the Hague Judgments Convention), parties need to be wary of the challenges in enforcing US judgments.

Based on recent events, we expect to see more US litigants opting to try their substantive dispute in the UK, rather than just seeking to enforce US judgments here.



6.0 AI and the legal system – public opinion in 2025

As the legal sector starts to explore the use of AI in courts and in legal practice, public confidence will be very important to its success. People need to trust that the justice system is fair, and that includes trust in how technology is being used. This matters not just for public confidence at home, but also for how the UK’s legal system is seen around the world. London’s commercial courts are respected globally, and part of that is because of the strong reputation for fairness, predictability and transparency. But equally, it needs to keep up with other global hubs for dispute resolution on efficiency and innovation. If AI is going to be part of the legal system, it’s important that people feel confident in how it’s being used.

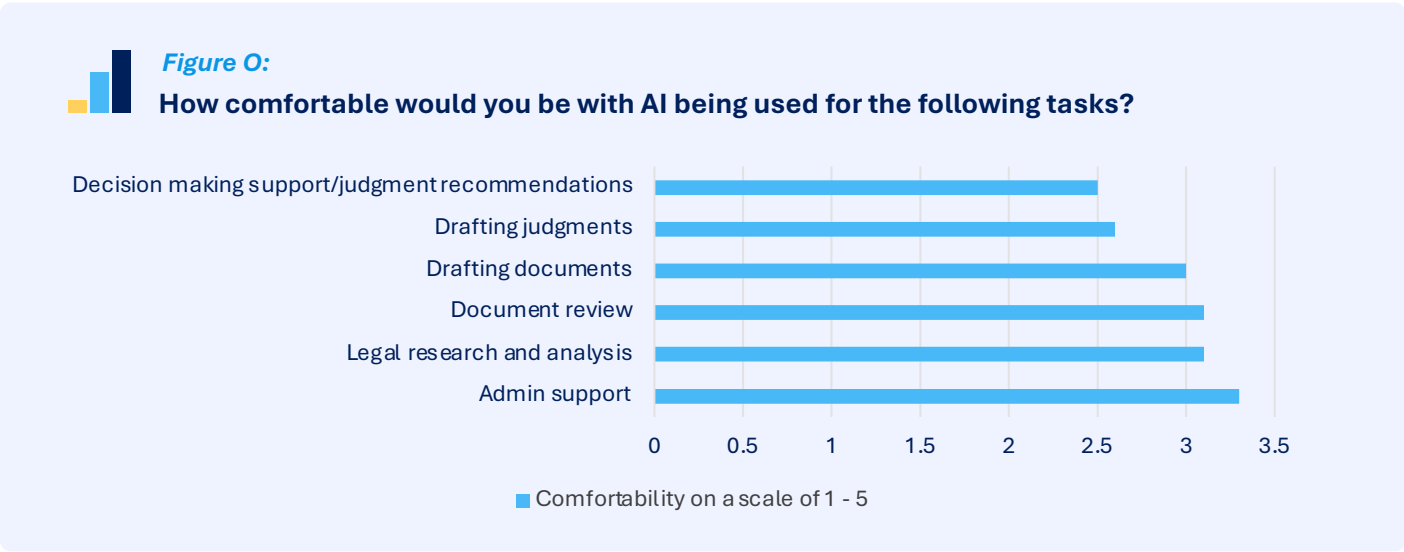
This year’s polling builds on last year’s data and offers a more detailed picture of how the public thinks AI should (or shouldn’t) be used by lawyers and judges. The findings suggest that while awareness of AI has grown, attitudes toward its use in the legal system remain cautious, and in some cases divided. While many people support the use of AI for certain tasks, a significant portion remain unconvinced about its place in the legal system altogether. One in four respondents said AI should not play any role at all in the legal industry. This reflects a level of unease that cannot be ignored, especially as the use of AI tools becomes more common across the legal sector.

What the public supports - and what it doesn’t

This year’s polling asked respondents how they would feel about judges and lawyers using AI for a range of tasks. The responses suggest that the context does make a difference. People are more open to AI being used in supportive or administrative roles, and more resistant to it having a role in tasks such as drafting judgments or decision-making support.

For both lawyers and judges, the most favourably viewed uses of AI were those focused on identifying inconsistencies, for example, in witness statements or in the arguments presented by the opposing side. Around 40% of people said that they view the use of AI to assist with these functions favourably. Using AI to help conduct legal research also scored favourably overall.

But once AI is seen to play a role in drafting legal arguments or judgments, public support drops. Nearly half of respondents said they would feel less positively towards a lawyer using AI to write arguments. The same sentiment also applies to judges using AI to draft judgments.



Further to this point, as shown in Figure O, when respondents were asked how comfortable they would be with AI being used for certain tasks, its use for administrative support was rated the most comfortable, scoring an average of 3.3 on a 5-point scale (1 – very uncomfortable to 5 – very comfortable). Legal research and document review followed closely, both scoring just above 3. These are areas where AI is already being adopted in many law firms, and where the public appears ready to accept further integration.

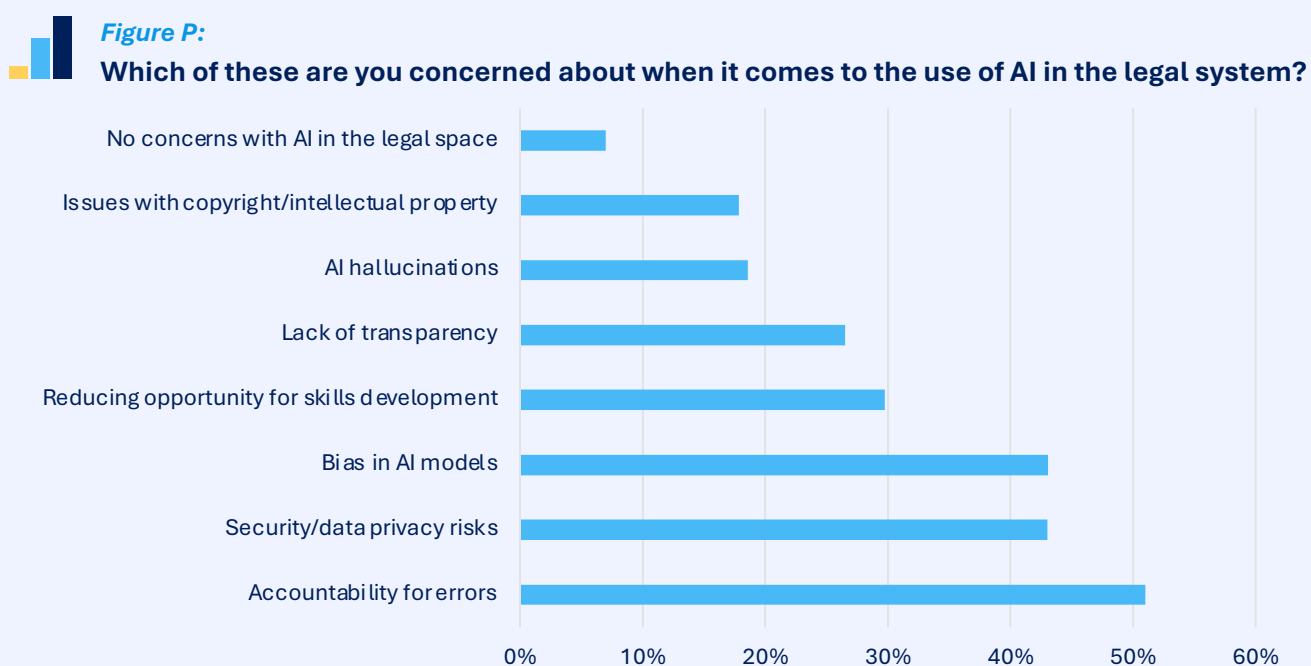
On the other hand, comfort dropped significantly when AI was involved in drafting judgments or supporting judicial decisions. Both received average comfort scores below 2.7 – placing them much closer to the uncomfortable range.

This suggests that perhaps the line in the sand is being drawn at any use of AI that might influence arguments and decisions.

Where concerns are focused

The hesitancy seen in the data is reflective of much of the concerns we are seeing about AI's use more broadly. People worry about losing human oversight, not knowing how AI systems make decisions, and the risks of error or bias going unnoticed. As illustrated in Figure P, the top worry among respondents was accountability, specifically, how responsibility for errors would be handled if AI were involved in a legal process. Just over half of the public listed this as their main concern.

Other common worries included data privacy and security risks, and bias in AI systems - each cited by over 40% of respondents. Only a small minority, just 7%, said they had no concerns about AI in the legal space.

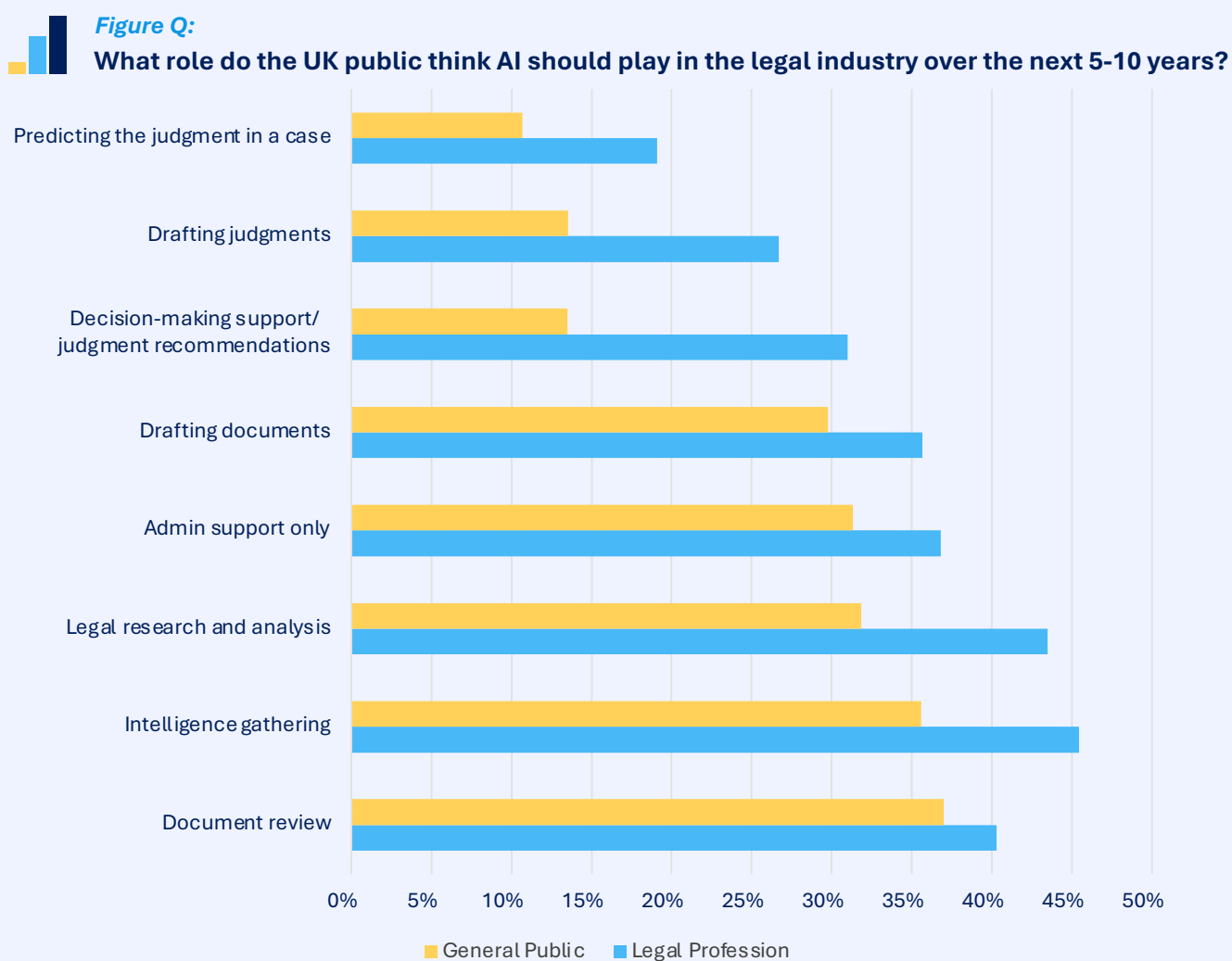


The future role of AI in law

Looking ahead, respondents were also asked which tasks they thought AI should be used for in the legal system over the next five to ten years - document review, intelligence gathering, and research topped the list, tasks that are largely supportive and behind-the-scenes (Figure Q).

This year, we also asked respondents whether they work in the legal profession or have legal responsibilities as part of their job. Segmenting the data this way reveals some notable differences in how AI is viewed by those inside the system. Legal professionals still prioritised document review, intelligence gathering, and research, but they were significantly more open to AI taking on higher-stakes tasks. For instance, while just 13% of the general public thought AI should be used for decision-making support or judgment recommendations in the future, this figure more than doubled to 31% among those working in the legal profession.

This suggests that legal professionals may be more confident in the potential for AI to take on more complex functions and are already considering broader and more ambitious applications for AI in the years ahead.



Does the type of case matter?

The public does not view all legal scenarios equally when it comes to using AI. This year's polling introduced a new question: should AI be used differently depending on the type of case?

The response was clear: yes, the nature of the issue matters. When asked, about a third of the public said they would be uncomfortable with AI being used in both civil and criminal cases. But many others drew a distinction: more than one in five respondents said they would be more comfortable with AI in civil rather than criminal cases. Only 12% said the opposite.

When asked to rank comfort levels across specific case types, people expressed the most support for AI in low-level criminal offences, such as traffic violations. Commercial disputes followed closely. But when it came to violent crimes, a strong majority, nearly 60%, ranked this as the least appropriate context for AI use.

This response suggests that the public may be more open to AI playing a role in commercial disputes, perhaps because they see these cases as more technical matters with less human impact, whereas they place greater emphasis on human oversight in criminal cases, where there are usually jury trials and the outcomes may be perceived as having more serious consequences on individuals.

Is AI making the system fairer?

Our survey asked whether the use of AI was making the legal system more, or less, fair – here, opinion was almost evenly split: 24% said it makes the system more fair, 23% said less fair, and the largest group, 39%, said it makes no difference either way. The rest, 14%, said they didn't know. (Figure R)

This lack of consensus suggests that the public is still watching and waiting, open to the idea that AI might improve the system, but unconvinced so far.

However, among legal professionals or those who have legal responsibilities as part of their job, the picture looks very different. A clear majority, 60%, believe that AI is making the system more fair, with only 12% saying it makes it less so. This contrast highlights a gap between those inside the system, who may see AI's practical benefits firsthand, and the wider public, who remain more cautious and unsure about its impact. (Figure S)

Figure R

Do you think AI makes the legal system more, or less fair? (wider public)

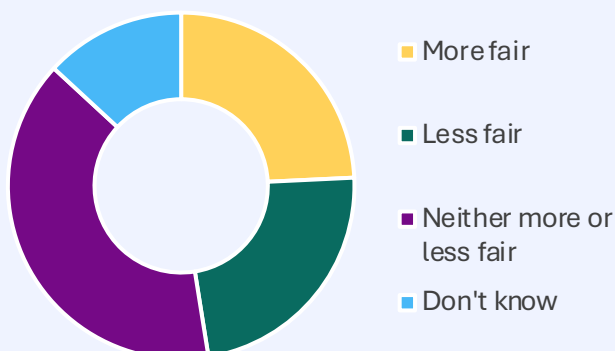
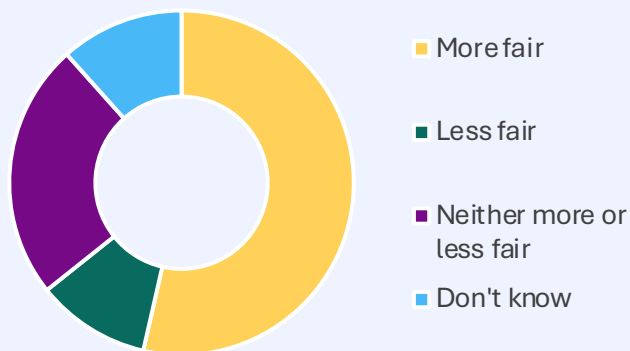


Figure S

Do you think AI makes the legal system more, or less fair? (legal profession)



In brief...

The 2025 data confirms that public opinion about AI in the legal system is neither hostile nor enthusiastic, but careful. People are thinking practically: they support AI when it helps the legal process run more smoothly or efficiently, but they are wary of it stepping too far.

Judges and lawyers are still expected to carry the weight of the legal process and of legal decisions. AI may offer new ways to gather information, spot patterns, or improve workflows, but for now, the public wants to keep it in more of an advisory role rather than a decisive one.

These boundaries are important and should give legal professionals, policymakers and other professionals a clearer sense of where public trust in AI lies.

6.1 *William Peake*

Global Managing Partner, Harneys



AI's floodlight on two other letters - EQ.

The world is replete with articles on AI and knowledge is power right now. You simply cannot read enough around the topic. When I reflect on this ever-evolving state, it's impossible not to be drawn to Heraclitus' observations around no person ever stepping in the same river twice - it's not the same river and not the same person.

Why are we so obsessed with AI? Well, it's obvious really. It drives efficiency and should allow us to complete tasks more easily and therefore presents a cost savings to clients.

The trick of course is to remember it doesn't make you smarter and I already see so many people falling into this trap. They're trying to hoodwink clients into thinking, "This is my original thought." That is Danger Bay, and firms must educate people now on the existential threat this would cause to their business. Clients are the lifeblood of any firm, and lawyers do a great job of forgetting them at every turn.

Yes, clients want efficiency and savings, but they still want to be managed well. They still want to feel special. They still want to know

their business is essential to you and that they're always the most important person in the room. They're paying for the right answer, but they're also paying to have these feelings.

It's the emotional connection between attorney and client which makes clients return to certain firms over others. This is the space that AI will take the longest to catch up on. Simply put, it's EQ that creates the lawyer and client glue, not AI.



They're trying to hoodwink clients into thinking, "this is my original thought." That is Danger Bay, and firms must educate people now on the existential threat this would cause to their business.



7.0 Methodology and sources

Methodology

Portland's Commercial Courts Report 2025 analysed data published on the British and Irish Legal Information Institute (BAILII). This ongoing data analysis process is periodically revised to minimise duplication, rectify data omissions and remove anomalies. Research from primary and secondary sources supplemented our analysis.

Portland used a combination of specialist media monitoring tools (Talkwalker, Factiva and Signal AI) to collect all news coverage analysed in this report.

This report includes exclusive data from Portland's proprietary polling on AI. Portland polled 1,009 adults online, between 23rd and 28th April 2025. Results have been weighted to nationally representative standards, based on ONS figures. Portland's polling methodology is accredited by the British Polling Council.

Please contact Portland's Litigation and Disputes practice at disputes@portland-communications.com for additional data and analysis, or to use the findings in this report.

This report was produced by: Stephen Bateman, Alex Murphy, Izzie Weller, Sam Woolbank and Megan Lambert from the Litigation and Disputes Team. Thanks also to Alex Humphries from Portland's creative and design team, Jude Ryan-Gray and Katie Norton Williams from the research team and Emma Vaughn from the marketing team. With special thanks to Simon Pugh, Luke Baker and Adrian Lively for their input.

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8.0 *Portland's Litigation and Disputes team*

Portland's Litigation and Disputes practice provides specialist advice and strategic communications support to help reinforce your legal strategy.

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