

Presented By



Counselwell

2024 In-House Lawyer Salary Guide



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Introduction

ZSA Legal Recruitment and Counselwell are excited to present the 2024 In-House Lawyer Salary Guide! In 2024, job seekers will prioritize salary and benefits when seeking opportunities in a challenging economic landscape. However, the modern workforce values more than just monetary compensation. Flexibility, training, recognition, and an organization's commitment to ethical values and equity are also significant factors for today's candidates. Employers are adapting to labour shortages through innovative strategies such as quiet hiring, skill-based pay structures, and revised hiring practices.

Successfully navigating the current economic conditions requires a deep understanding of the job market and industry-specific insights. Before delving into detailed salary data across various positions and locations in Canada, it's essential to acknowledge the prevailing employment trends and forecasts. These factors not only impact on a company's ability to offer competitive salaries but also shape its recruitment approach.

Taking a moment to reflect on these analyses, positions organizations to develop robust, long-term staffing strategies. This proactive approach enables companies to not only compete effectively in the present but also to thrive in the evolving landscape of the future.

About ZSA Legal Recruitment

ZSA Legal Recruitment is Canada's largest national legal recruitment firm specializing in the headhunting, recruitment and placement of lawyers, legal support staff and law firm management.

ZSA partners with Canadian and international law firms and organizations of all sizes, serving as their ambassador and trusted advisor and spearheading efforts to recruit top legal talent to fulfill their hiring needs. ZSA's experienced team of highly-skilled recruiters and headhunters work closely with clients to solve complex talent acquisition challenges by utilizing industry-leading techniques to source, headhunt and proactively search the market for top-notch legal professionals.

Visit zsa.ca to learn more.

About Counselwell

Counselwell is a community of in-house lawyers looking to take their in-house game to the next level. We provide our members with everything they need to succeed, including in-person networking events, live and on-demand virtual content, CPD credits, a Slack group, a peer to peer and mentorship group, legal tech discounts, a precedent bank, and more.

We'd love to have you in our community - [join today!](#)



Key Highlights of the Survey



Current Market Conditions

Explore the prevailing economic and industry conditions influencing salary structures in the legal field. This information is crucial for making informed decisions and providing valuable insights to both employers and job seekers.



Positioning for Success

Understand how your organization's compensation practices compare to industry benchmarks and gain insights to position yourself competitively in the talent market.



Talent Attraction and Retention

Discover effective strategies for attracting and retaining top legal talent by offering competitive and appealing compensation packages. Awareness of the prevailing salary rates enables employers to tailor their approach to attract and retain top legal talent.



Navigating Legislative Changes

Stay abreast of any recent legislative changes impacting compensation and ensure your organization is compliant with the latest regulations.



Tailored Insights

Receive customized insights based on specific legal roles, experience levels, and geographic locations to make targeted decisions for your organization or career.



As we examine the details of salary trends, we invite you to use this survey as a valuable resource to inform your decisions, refine your hiring strategies, and ultimately contribute to the growth and success of your organization or your own career.

What the Lawyer Salary Guide Provides:



Candidate Expectations

Salary surveys help guide job seekers on realistic salary expectations based on their skills, experience, and the current market conditions. This facilitates smoother negotiation processes between candidates and employers.



Industry Knowledge

Beyond salaries alone, salary surveys also provide insights into other trends within the legal industry, such as in-demand skills, emerging job roles, and changes in the job market landscape.



Market Leadership

An employer that regularly consults salary surveys and shares valuable insights can build a strong reputation as an industry leader. This reputation can attract more candidates, further solidifying its position in the legal hiring market.



Added Value

In summary, conducting a salary survey in the legal field in Canada allows employers to stay informed, provide valuable services to candidates and employees, and position themselves as experts in the industry.



"As we embrace 2024, our In-House Lawyer Salary Guide is a crucial compass, navigating us through evolving compensation trends."

– Christopher Sweeney, CEO
ZSA Legal Recruitment

Survey Design & Data Methodology

Counselwell and ZSA Legal Recruitment conducted an online survey throughout December 2023 and January 2024. We sent the survey to our email lists, posted about it on LinkedIn, and even ran an advertisement in the Ontario Reports. We almost went door to door, but it was too cold.

In total, we received 546 legitimate responses. Our goal for our first survey was 500 responses so we're pretty happy with the results.

Our survey asked approximately 25 questions collecting data points such as job title, years of experience, province and city of work, base salary, bonus, stock options, other benefits, and compensation satisfaction. We provided the option for respondents to enter their emails if they wanted to receive a copy on the date of publication of this report. All personal information collected by Counselwell and ZSA is kept strictly confidential.

The report utilizes average as the main method of standardization for the data, although we use median where appropriate (for example, if an outlier skews the results).

We've split job titles into four (4) buckets: Legal Counsel, Senior Legal Counsel, Deputy General Counsel, and General Counsel. This exercise was more art than science, as there is an astounding amount of discrepancy between job titles in the in-house world. We know that there are some instances where titles like General Counsel are given to lawyers with less experience than the average range of experience typically required for such titles. So, we added the following filters based on Bar admission date to the three latter buckets:

- General Counsel: We excluded lawyers called to the Bar in 2013-2024
- Deputy General Counsel: We excluded lawyers called to the Bar in 2016-2024
- Senior Legal Counsel: We excluded lawyers called to the Bar in 2021-2024

Further, we only provided Province-specific compensation insights for Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec, because we didn't receive enough data from folks in the other Provinces. However, in all the other sections where we say "nationwide," we're including compensation data from all of our survey responses (including from respondents in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan).



RESPONDENTS



QUESTIONS



JOB TITLE BUCKETS



**PROVINCE
SPECIFIC CHARTS**



Demographics of Survey Respondents

JOB TITLE LEGEND

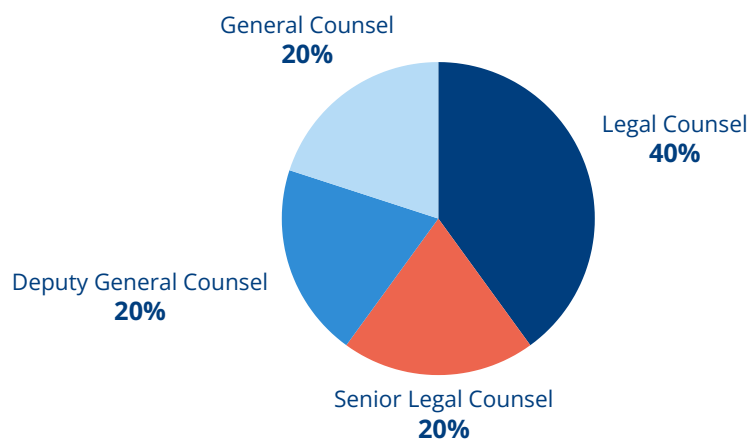
“**Legal Counsel**” includes the following full-time roles: Corporate Counsel; Corporate Legal Counsel; Lawyer; Legal Counsel; In-House Counsel; Junior Legal; Legal Counsel, Assistant Corporate Secretary; Contracts Lawyer and Advisor; Contracts Manager

“**Senior Legal Counsel**” includes the following full-time roles, but excludes lawyers admitted to the Bar in 2021-2024: Associate Director, Legal; Associate Director, Legal Affairs; Associate Managing Counsel; Associate Legal Counsel; Manager, Counsel; Compliance Advisor; Senior Legal Counsel; Principal Associate

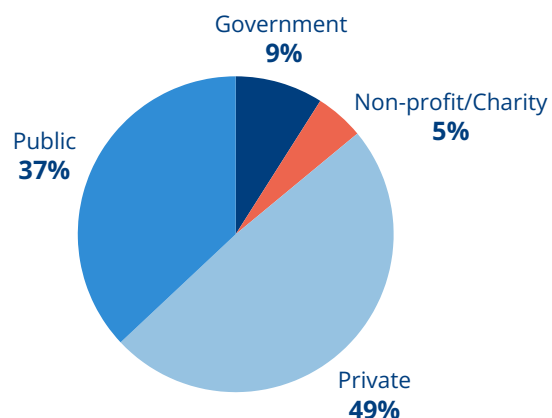
“**Deputy General Counsel**” includes the following full-time roles, but excludes lawyers admitted to the Bar in 2016-2024: Deputy General Counsel; Assistant/Associate Vice President; Assistant VP Legal; Associate/Assistant General Counsel; Director, Legal; Director; Senior Director, Legal

“**General Counsel**” includes the following full-time roles, but excludes lawyers admitted to the Bar in 2013-2024: Chief Legal Officer; EVP, Legal; Vice President, Legal; Head of Legal; Head; Manager, Legal; Legal Department Manager; Chief Counsel; Legal Counsel Lead

RESPONSE BY POSITION

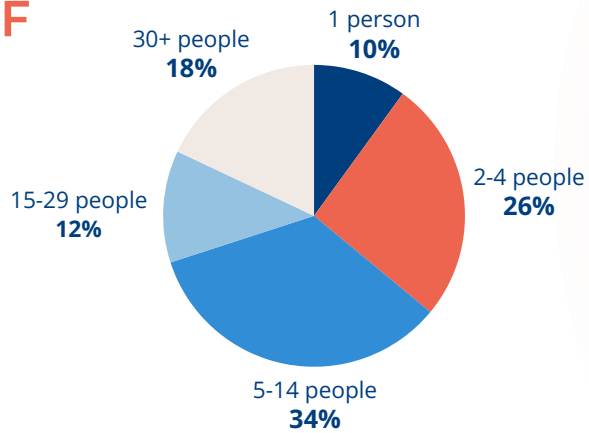


RESPONSE BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

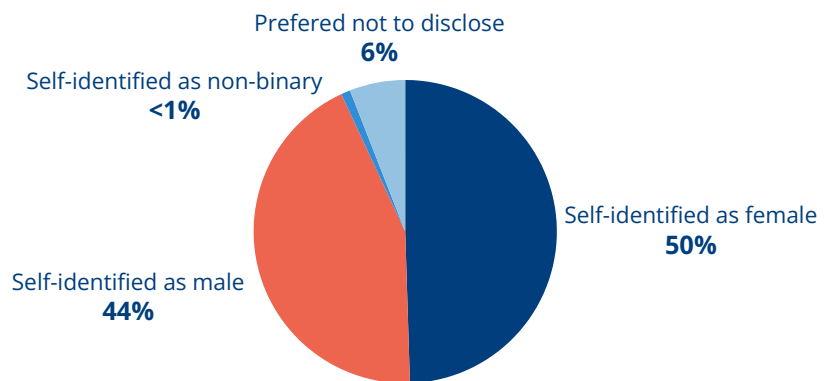


RESPONSE BY SIZE OF LEGAL DEPARTMENT

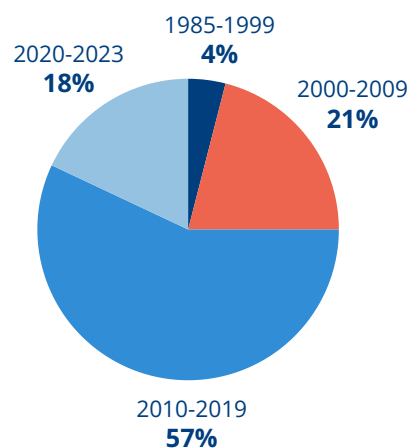
Note: Includes total number of people in the legal department (lawyers, legal ops, clerks, paralegals, students, etc.)



RESPONSE BY GENDER



RESPONSE BY BAR ADMISSION DATE



Total Compensation by Province (Ontario, B.C., Alberta, Quebec only)



ONTARIO

The median base salary in Ontario is **\$171,000**.

	LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL ¹	GENERAL COUNSEL ¹
Average base salary	\$138,471	\$186,267	\$202,173	\$260,005
Average target bonus	\$29,197	\$42,755	\$52,877	\$105,614
Average value of stock options at time of award	\$29,860	\$83,106	\$54,188	\$297,444



ALBERTA

Note: The GC average base salary was skewed because the highest reported base salary was nearly \$1.5M from a GC in Alberta.

The median base salary in Alberta is **\$152,000**.

	LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL ¹	GENERAL COUNSEL ¹
Average base salary	\$152,108	\$178,438	\$188,000*	\$605,500 or \$314,000 if we remove a single outlier
Average target bonus	\$26,750	\$33,660	\$67,500*	\$152,250
Average value of stock options at time of award	\$43,750	\$28,595	\$0*	\$2,016,667

*Not conclusive, only two entries in this sample size.

¹ Please refer to the Job Title Legend on [page 5](#), which shows how we've defined each of the four job title categories.



BRITISH COLUMBIA

The median base salary in British Columbia is **\$200,000**.

	LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL ¹	GENERAL COUNSEL ¹
Average base salary	\$141,250	\$163,000	\$232,157	\$281,667
Average target bonus (\$)	\$20,250	\$60,000	\$63,220	\$238,750
Average value of stock options at time of award	\$46,375	\$0* *Not conclusive, only three entries in this sample size.	\$80,000	\$331,250



QUEBEC

The median base salary in Quebec is **\$145,000**.

	LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL ¹	GENERAL COUNSEL ¹
Average base salary	\$109,901	\$146,267	\$193,631	\$252,778
Average target bonus (\$)	\$15,879	\$28,042	\$37,000	\$98,943
Average value of stock options at time of award	\$12,583	\$102,333	\$320,438	\$356,143

¹ Please refer to the Job Title Legend on [page 5](#), which shows how we've defined each of the four job title categories.

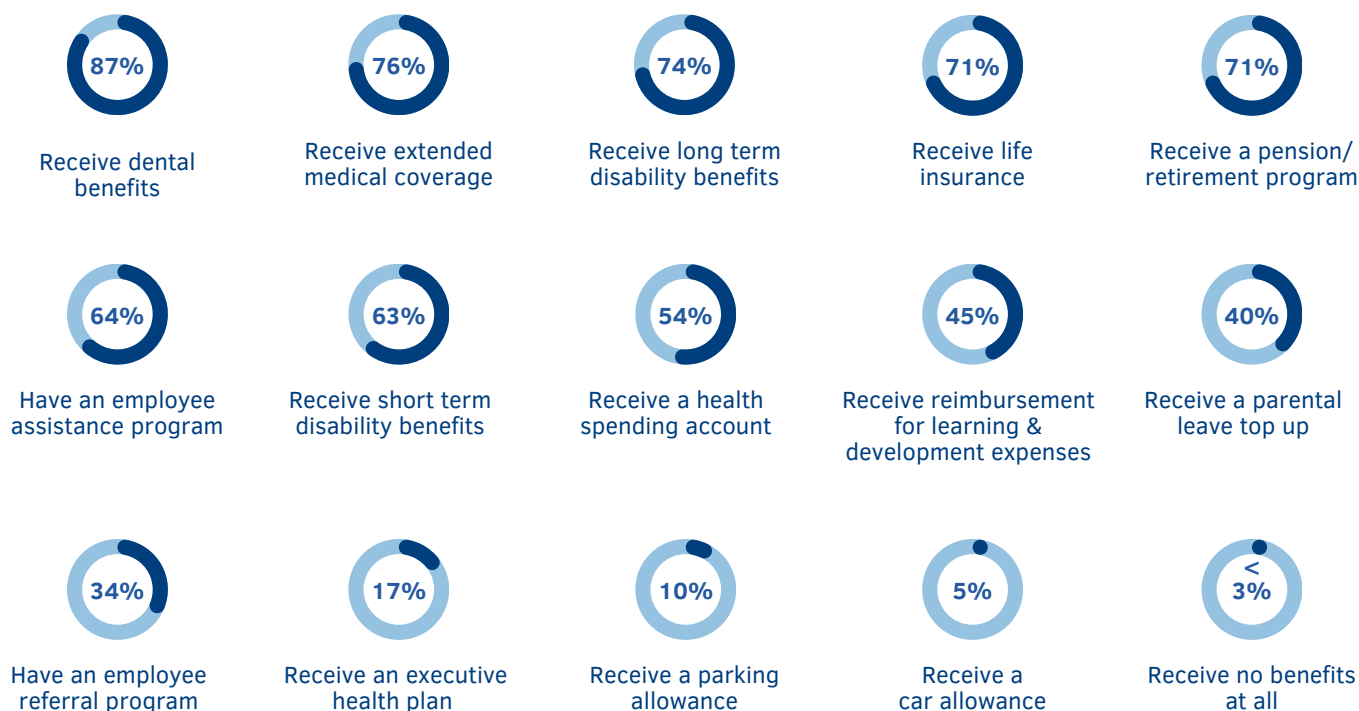
DETAILS OF BONUSES AND STOCK OPTIONS (Nationwide)

	LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL ¹	DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL ¹	GENERAL COUNSEL ¹
% with a target bonus structure	40%	59%	68%	75%
% with a discretionary bonus structure	34%	34%	28%	18%
% with no bonus structure	26%	7%	4%	7%
% who receive stock options	19%	42%	43%	58%

¹ Please refer to the Job Title Legend on [page 5](#), which shows how we've defined each of the four job title categories.

DETAILS OF OTHER BENEFITS

(Medical, Dental, Retirement Plan, etc.)

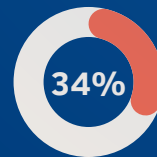


COMPENSATION SATISFACTION

Do you feel that your compensation is reasonable?



SAID YES

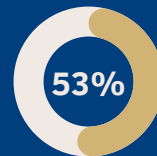


SAID NO

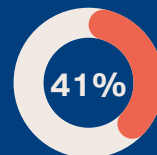
Would you leave your company if another role paid more?



SAID NO



SAID MAYBE



SAID YES



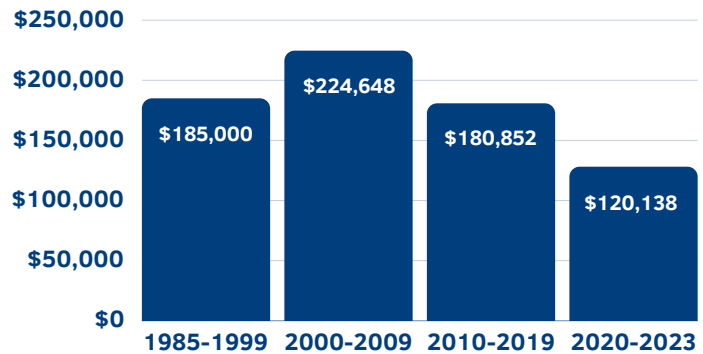
REMOTE/HYBRID/ON-SITE AND EFFECTS ON COMPENSATION

On-Site workers made the most on average, followed by Hybrid workers, and then Remote workers.

However, On-Site workers with only a few years of experience made, on average, less than both Remote and Hybrid workers.

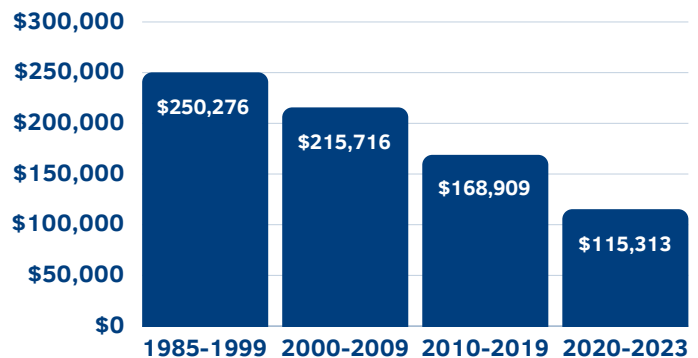
Average base salary (nationwide) of remote workers: \$181,733

Average base salary (nationwide) of remote workers by Bar admission date:



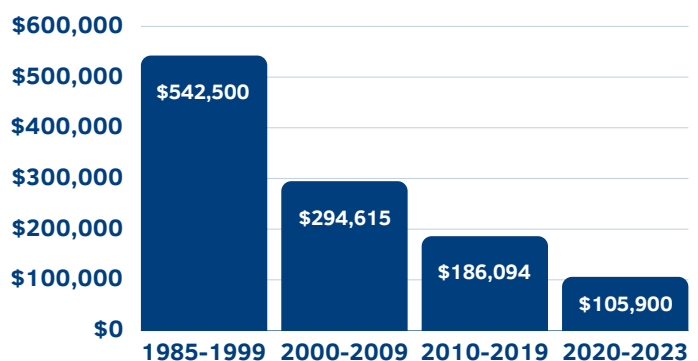
Average base salary (nationwide) of hybrid workers: \$172,210

Average base salary (nationwide) of hybrid workers by Bar admission date:



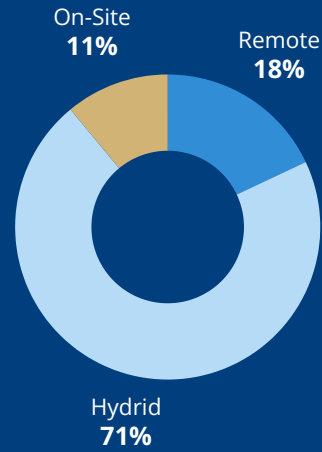
Average base salary (nationwide) of on-site workers: \$221,171

Average base salary (nationwide) of on-site workers by Bar admission date:





Percentage of respondents who work on-site, remote or hybrid:



PRIVATE PRACTICE EXPERIENCE AND EFFECTS ON COMPENSATION

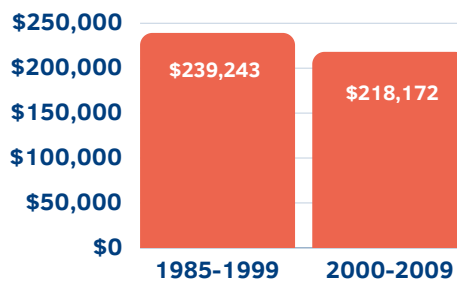
81% of respondents have at least some private practice experience.
19% of respondents do not have any private practice experience.

Average base salary (nationwide) of those who have experience in private practice: **\$186,547**

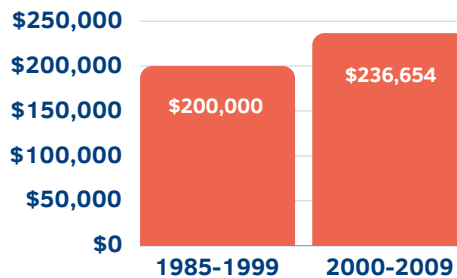
Average base salary (nationwide) of those who have NO experience in private practice: **\$146,603**

As illustrated below, more years of private practice experience generally leads to higher compensation in-house.

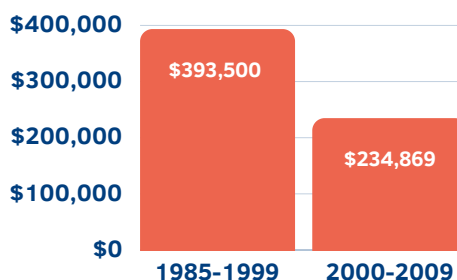
Respondents who have **1-4 years** of private practice experience, based on Bar admission date:



Respondents who have **5-9 years** of private practice experience, based on Bar admission date:

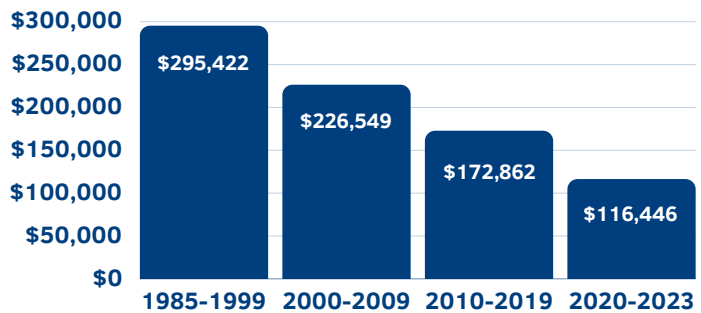


Respondents who have **10+ years** of private practice experience, based on Bar admission date:



YEARS OF TOTAL PRACTICE AND EFFECTS ON COMPENSATION

Average base salary (nationwide) by Bar admission date:

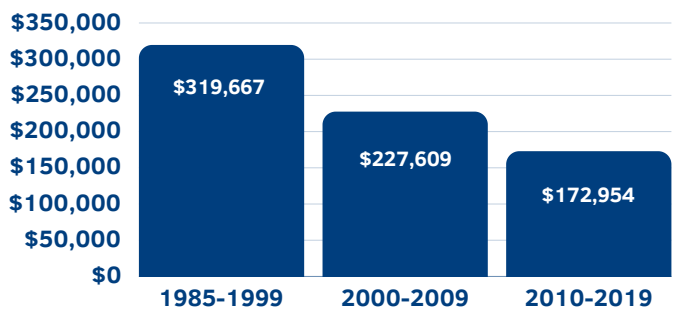


YEARS AT CURRENT COMPANY AND EFFECTS ON COMPENSATION

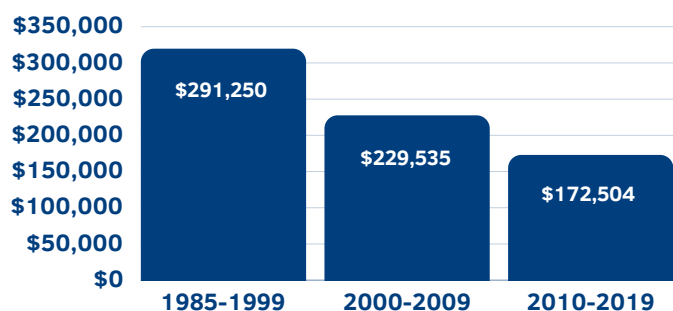
Years at current position:

- Respondents who have been at their current position for **0-4 years** reported an average salary (nationwide) of: **\$173,574**
- Respondents who have been at their current position for **5-9 years** reported an average salary (nationwide) of: **\$194,347**
- Respondents who have been at their current position for **10-19 years** reported an average salary (nationwide) of: **\$214,807**
- Respondents who have been at their current position for **20-29 years** reported an average salary (nationwide) of: **\$166,500**

Respondents who have been at their current position for **0-4 years**:



Respondents who have been at their current position for **5-14 years**:



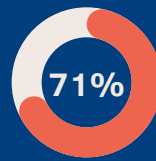
If we compare years at current position against years since Bar admission, we can see that job hopping for salary bumps is not a better strategy than staying at one company for longer.

GENERALISTS VS SPECIALISTS AND EFFECTS ON COMPENSATION



GENERALISTS

Average base salary for Generalists (nationwide): **\$182,445**



SPECIALISTS

Average base salary for Specialists (nationwide): **\$171,050**

Average base salary (nationwide) by specialization:

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT \$168,167	INSURANCE \$171,122	CORPORATE/COMMERCIAL \$202,173
PRIVACY \$189,610	BANKING \$193,333	LITIGATION \$174,813

Generalists make more on average than Specialists. The specialization that pays the most on average is Corporate/Commercial, and the specialization that pays the least on average is Labour & Employment.

COMPENSATION BY JOB FUNCTION

Those who reported having a secondary job function generally made more on average than those whose only function was Legal. The most lucrative secondary job function was Regulatory, and the least lucrative secondary job function was People / HR.

Average base salary nationwide by job function:



JOB FUNCTION ONLY LEGAL

Average base salary nationwide:
\$169,165



JOB FUNCTION INCLUDES COMPLIANCE

Average base salary nationwide:
\$202,837



JOB FUNCTION INCLUDES
PRIVACY OFFICER

Average base salary nationwide:
\$212,735



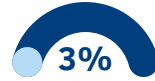
JOB FUNCTION INCLUDES
REGULATORY

Average base salary nationwide:
\$265,000



JOB FUNCTION INCLUDES
OPERATIONS (E.G. COO)

Average base salary nationwide:
\$220,800



JOB FUNCTION INCLUDES
CORPORATE SECRETARY

Average base salary nationwide:
\$220,367



JOB FUNCTION INCLUDES
PEOPLE OFFICER / HR FUNCTION

Average base salary nationwide:
\$151,438

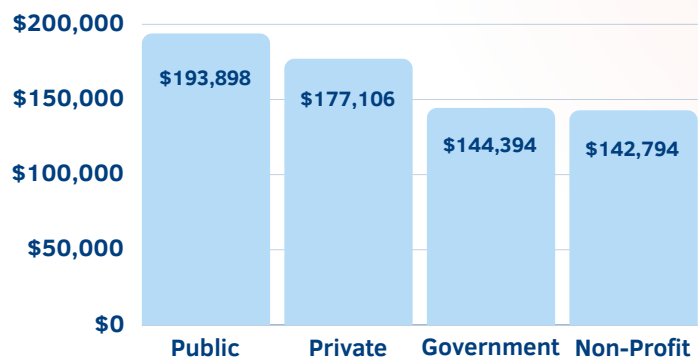


COMPENSATION BY INDUSTRY

AEROSPACE & DEFENSE \$157,400	AUTOMOTIVE \$206,800	CANNABIS \$126,667
CONSTRUCTION & INFRASTRUCTURE \$193,000	CONSULTING \$137,063	EDUCATION & RESEARCH \$126,500
ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES \$241,097	ENTERTAINMENT & MEDIA \$179,347	FINANCE & BANKING \$188,251
FOOD & BEVERAGE \$213,385	GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SECTOR \$145,731	HEALTHCARE & PHARMACEUTICALS \$161,711
HOSPITALITY & TOURISM \$221,667	INSURANCE \$167,207	MANUFACTURING & INDUSTRIAL \$174,242
NONPROFIT & CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS \$126,129	PENSIONS \$182,662	PRIVATE EQUITY \$220,000
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES \$184,125	REAL ESTATE & CONSTRUCTION \$186,236	RETAIL & CONSUMER GOODS \$165,285
TECHNOLOGY & IT \$189,113	TELECOMMUNICATIONS \$169,675	TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTICS \$192,438

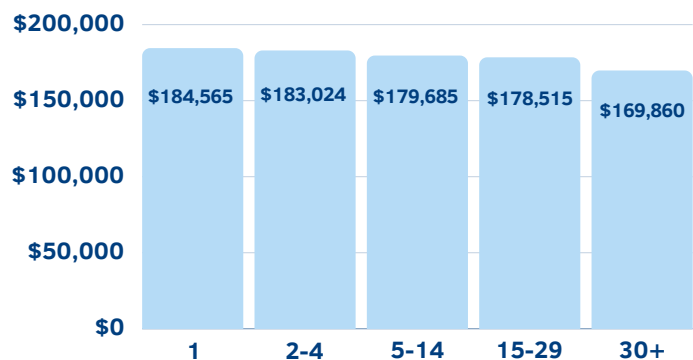
COMPENSATION BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

Average base salary (nationwide) per type of company:



COMPENSATION BY SIZE OF LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Average base salary (nationwide) by size of legal department (including clerks, legal ops, assistants, paralegals, etc.):



DIVERSITY AND EFFECTS ON COMPENSATION

Average base salary (nationwide) of those who reported considering themselves a **member of a visible minority**:

\$164,109

Average base salary (nationwide) of those who reported considering themselves **not a member of a visible minority**:

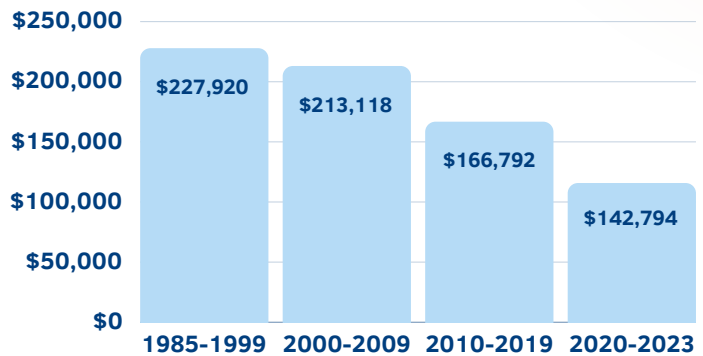
\$186,903

GENDER AND EFFECTS ON COMPENSATION

On average, those identifying as male made more per year than those identifying as female.

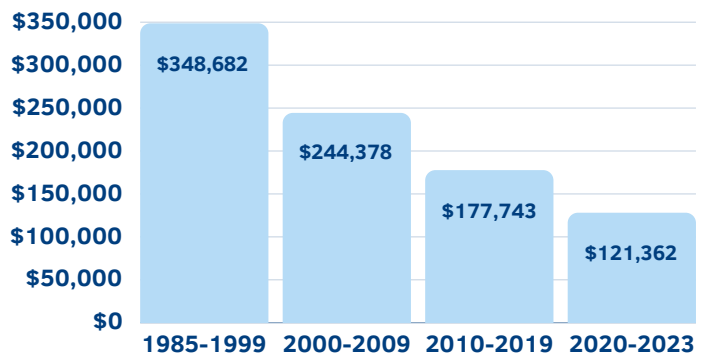
Average base salary (nationwide) of those who self-identified as female: \$169,494

Average base salary (nationwide) of those identifying as female by Bar admission date:



Average base salary (nationwide) of those who self-identified as male: \$189,317

Average base salary (nationwide) of those identifying as male by Bar admission date:



Within every grouping by seniority, those identifying as female made less than those identifying as male. The gap grows with seniority. In the 2020-2023 grouping, there is a difference of \$5,590, but in the 1985-1990 grouping, the difference is a whopping \$120,762!