



2017 BIENNIAL SALARY SURVEY SUMMARY

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COMMENTS ON RESULTS

This report is a summary of findings from the 2017 biennial salary survey of Wisconsin paralegals. The responses are based on 2016 salaries and information received from the respondents.

We received 54 responses to the survey this year. The survey was sent to 153 individuals and although 69 emails were opened, only 54 chose to submit responses. Based on the emailed survey, we have a 35% response rate. As in the previous years, a large portion of the responses were received from the Milwaukee Chapter, 39.62%. The following are the number of respondents to the survey by Chapter:

- Milwaukee: 24
- Madison: 11
- Fox Valley: 7
- Wausau: 7
- La Crosse: 3
- Racine/Kenosha: 0
- At – Large: 2

This report will compare figures of years past, and will provide findings based on the questions asked in the survey. It will not, however, tag a “typical” paralegal, as there are too many variables between counties and types of employers. It is easy to determine though, as in previous years, the majority of the respondents were females (84.91%), in private law firms (64.81%) and, use the title “Paralegal” (81.82%). The largest age group of respondents was 41 – 50 years of age (33.96%), with the next largest group being 31 – 40 years of age (30.19%).

Of particular note, the number of respondents who replied that they were non-exempt employees (hourly) increased from the 2014 survey, from 53.21% to 62.96%, while those respondents who are exempt (salaried) decreased from 44.95% to 37.04%.

Thank you to all who participated this year in our online survey. Your input was greatly appreciated.

Comparison of Findings – Most Popular Answers:

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2016</u>
Sex – Female	89.81%	84.91%
Age	31 - 40	41 - 50
Position – Full Time	93.58%	92.45%
Title – Paralegal	80.91%	81.82%
Type of Employer:		
Private Law Firm	60.91%	64.81%
Corporation	25.45%	22.22%
Insurance Company	8.18%	5.56%
Government Agency	3.64%	5.56%
Freelance/Independent/At Large/ Other	1.82%	1.85%
Work Experience	16+ years	16+ years
Number of Attys. Work With	1 - 3	1 - 3
Classified as Hourly/Non-exempt	53.21%	62.96%
Classified as Salaried/Exempt	44.95%	37.04%
Received a Bonus (Yes)	79.37%	77.36%
Overall F/T Salary	\$52,771	\$60,473
Milwaukee Average F/T Salary	\$55,383	\$59,969
Fox Valley Average F/T Salary	\$52,236	\$63,900
Madison Average F/T Salary	\$50,931	\$55,850
La Crosse Average F/T Salary	\$35,851	\$48,769
Wausau Average F/T Salary	\$44,424	\$40,122
At-Large Average F/T Salary	\$47,350	\$39,800
Billing Rate	\$120+/hour	\$120+/hour

Based on Average Full Time Salary:

By Experience:	2013	2016
Statewide:	\$52,771	\$60,473
0 – 2 years:	\$36,360	\$48,401
3 – 5 years:	\$43,625	\$55,077
6 – 10 years:	\$49,629	\$52,842
11 – 15 years:	\$47,667	\$52,629
16+ years:	\$64,774	\$61,263

By Employer:	2013	2016
Law Firm:	\$49,735	\$54,435
Corporation:	\$59,080	\$70,699
Insurance Co.:	\$51,773	\$56,915
Government:	\$54,897	\$57,967
Freelance/Independent/At – Large/Other	\$59,000	\$39,800

By Gender:	2013	2016
Female:	\$53,890	\$57,109
Male:	\$41,120	\$57,249

By Legal Education:	2013	2016
High School:	\$50,750	\$31,760
Some College:	\$65,000	\$68,000
Certificate Only:	\$49,723	\$67,566
Certificate & Asso. Degree:	\$51,660	\$55,714
Bachelor's Degree:	\$52,429	\$64,411
Master's Degree:	\$51,625	\$56,621
Law Degree (JD)	No Response	\$120,000 (1 response)

*Note: The lowest (\$9,000) and highest (\$120,000) reported salaries were excluded from the calculations for average salaries.

Average Hourly Billing Rate:

Milwaukee Chapter:	2013	2016
Does Not Bill:	47%	50%
Under \$50/hour:	0%	0%
\$51 - \$75/hour:	0%	0%
\$76 - \$100/hour	17%	13%
\$101 - \$120/hour:	3%	4%
More than \$120/hour:	32%	33%

Fox Valley Chapter:	2013	2016
Does Not Bill:	80%	86%
Under \$50/hour:	0%	0%
\$51 - \$75/hour:	10%	14%
\$76 - \$100/hour	10%	0%
\$101 - \$120/hour:	0%	0%
More than \$120/hour:	0%	0%

Madison Chapter:	2013	2016
Does Not Bill:	45%	9%
Under \$50/hour:	0%	0%
\$51 - \$75/hour:	0%	0%

\$76 - \$100/hour	22%	9%
\$101 - \$120/hour:	11%	0%
More than \$120/hour:	22%	82%

La Crosse Chapter:	2013	2016
Does Not Bill:	17%	67%
Under \$50/hour:	0%	0%
\$51 - \$75/hour:	50%	0%
\$76 - \$100/hour	33%	33%
\$101 - \$120/hour:	0%	0%
More than \$120/hour:	0%	0%

Racine/Kenosha Chapter:	2013	2016
Does Not Bill:	100%	NO RESPONSES
Under \$50/hour:	0%	NO RESPONSES
\$51 - \$75/hour:	0%	NO RESPONSES
\$76 - \$100/hour	0%	NO RESPONSES
\$101 - \$120/hour:	0%	NO RESPONSES
More than \$120/hour:	0%	NO RESPONSES

Wausau Chapter:	2013	2016
Does Not Bill:	34%	14%
Under \$50/hour:	0%	0%
\$51 - \$75/hour:	8%	14%
\$76 - \$100/hour	8%	0%
\$101 - \$120/hour:	0%	14%
More than \$120/hour:	50%	57%

Freelance/Independent/At – Large/Other	2013	2016
Does Not Bill:	100%	0%
Under \$50/hour:	0%	0%
\$51 - \$75/hour:	0%	50%
\$76 - \$100/hour	0%	0%
\$101 - \$120/hour:	0%	50%
More than \$120/hour:	0%	0%

Average Number of Total Hours Billed Per Week:

Milwaukee Chapter:	2013	2016
Does not bill		46%
0 – 19	49%	4%
20 – 25	7%	0%
26 – 30	14%	13%
31 – 40	24%	33%
40 or more	6%	4%

Fox Valley Chapter:	2013	2016
Does not bill		86%
0 – 19	80%	14%
20 – 25	10%	0%
26 – 30	0%	0%
31 – 40	0%	0%
40 or more	10%	0%

Madison Chapter:	2013	2016
Does not bill		9%
0 – 19	45%	18%
20 - 25:	33%	27%
26 – 30	11%	18%
31 – 40	11%	18%
40 or more	0%	9%

La Crosse Chapter:	2013	2016
Does not bill		67%
0 – 19	33%	33%
20 – 25	0%	0%
26 – 30	34%	0%
31 – 40	33%	0%
40 or more	0%	0%

Racine/Kenosha Chapter:	2013	2016
0 – 19	100%	NO RESPONSES
20 – 25	0%	NO RESPONSES
26 – 30	0%	NO RESPONSES
31 – 40	0%	NO RESPONSES
40 or more	0%	NO RESPONSES

Wausau Chapter:	2013	2016
Does not bill		14%
0 – 19	42%	14%
20 – 25	8%	0%
26 – 30	8%	14%
31 – 40	25%	43%
40 or more	17%	14%

Freelance/Independent/At – Large/Other	2013	2016
Does not bill		0%
0 – 19	100%	0%
20 – 25	0%	50%
26 – 30	0%	50%
31 – 40	0%	0%
40 or more	0%	0%

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

- 47% of respondents reported sharing secretaries/assistants
- 57% of respondents reported having a private office
- The largest percentage of respondents are employed in litigation – 15.5%
- 62% of respondents who reported having a paralegal certificate received it from an ABA approved or compliant program
- 44.8% and 63.4% of respondents reported merit/performance as the factor for bonuses and salary increases, respectively
- The majority of respondents reported health/dental/life insurance was partially paid by the employer, while short-term and long-term disability was paid by the employer
- 91% of respondents reported that employers offered Paid Time Off (PTO) benefits
- The largest percentage of respondents reported that employers paid for Professional Membership Dues (83%), Regular Membership Dues (63%) and Seminar/Tuition Reimbursement (67%)
- Employee-paid parking was 50/50

In response to the text question regarding credentials held by Member paralegals, the information received is as follows:

- The majority of responses to this question indicated holding a Paralegal Certificate (not Certification)

- Additional responses were: CORE Registered Paralegal; certified court interpreter; certified medical interpreter; Notary Public; Certified Bankruptcy Paralegal; AACP – American Alliance; NALA CP and ACP; Bachelor of Law – University of London; Masters in Library & Information Studies.

SURVEY SUMMARY

As you can see by the above details, our profession is on the upswing. Salary increases were reported by 90.6% of respondents as opposed to 9.4% claiming no increase. The average salary increase was 2 to 3%. Receipt of annual bonuses was reported by 77.4%. Salaries have increased overall with respect to all employers, except for those working as freelance/at-large employees. Interestingly, salaries for male paralegals have significantly increased, but remained relatively stable for female paralegals. For the first time, male and female paralegals reported nearly even wages.

The majority of paralegals are employed in a litigation practice area and work for one to three attorneys. Respondents who have completed their paralegal education at ABA-approved programs are 62%. In years past, the largest percentage of our respondents obtained their current positions by referral. Now, “Referral” and “Other” are the two most recent resources. I would presume “Other” is word of mouth.

For paralegals entering the profession within the last 12 months, the starting salaries ranged from \$9,000 for part-time employment to \$63,000 for full-time employment, with an average starting salary of \$37,500. This remains consistent with the last two survey periods.

Employer-paid benefits included health, dental and life/disability insurance plans. Many respondents indicated employer-paid or partially paid retirement plans, profit sharing plans and stock purchase plans. There appears to be improvement in employer-paid professional membership and meeting dues.

Shared secretarial services and self-secretarial services are running fairly close to one another, which is a growing trend. The majority of our respondents maintain private offices, with the second highest response being assigned to a cubicle, which coincides with the increase in respondents working for corporations/businesses.