



2019 BIENNIAL SALARY SURVEY SUMMARY

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COMMENTS ON RESULTS

This report is a summary of findings from the 2019 biennial salary survey of Wisconsin paralegals. The responses are based on 2018 salaries and information received from the respondents.

We received 71 responses to the survey this year. The survey was sent to 141 individuals. Based on the emailed survey, we have a 50% response rate. As in the previous years, a large portion of the responses were received from the Milwaukee Chapter, 36.62%. The following are the number of respondents to the survey by Chapter:

- Milwaukee 26
- Madison 16
- Fox Valley 11
- Wausau 10
- La Crosse 4
- At-Large 4

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 (87.14%), in private law firms (67.14%) and, use the title “Paralegal” (81.43%). The largest age group of respondents was 31 – 40 years of age (32.39%), with the next largest group being 41 - 50 years of age (22.54%).

Of particular note, the number of respondents who replied that they were non-exempt employees (hourly) increased from the 2016 survey, from 62.96% to 67.14%, while those respondents who are exempt (salaried) decreased from 37.04% to 32.86%.

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

Comparison of Findings – Most Popular Answers

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Sex – Female	84.91%	87.14%
Age Group	41 - 50	31 - 40
Position – Full Time	92.45%	90.00%
Title – Paralegal	81.82%	81.43%
Type of Employer:		
Private Law Firm	64.81%	67.14%
Corporation	22.22%	15.71%
Insurance Company	5.56%	7.14%
Government Agency	5.56%	7.14%
Freelance/Independent/ At-Large/Non-Profit Law Firm	1.85%	1.49%
Work Experience – Highest Response	16+ years	16+ years
Number of Attorneys Work With	1 - 3	1 - 5
Classified as Hourly/Non-exempt	62.96%	67.14%
Classified as Salaried/Exempt	37.04%	32.86%
Received a Bonus (Yes)	77.36%	73.24%
Overall/Average F/T Salary	\$60,473	\$57,039
Milwaukee Average F/T Salary	\$59,969	\$63,517
Fox Valley Average F/T Salary	\$63,900	\$47,306
Madison Average F/T Salary	\$55,850	\$62,580
La Crosse Average F/T Salary	\$48,769	\$51,571
Wausau Average F/T Salary	\$40,122	\$50,456
At-Large Average F/T Salary	\$39,800	\$66,804
Billing Rate	\$120+/hour	\$51 - \$100/hour

Based on Average Full Time Salary

By Experience	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Statewide	\$60,473	\$57,039
0 – 2 years	\$48,401	\$38,940
3 – 5 years	\$55,077	\$54,278
6 – 10 years	\$52,842	\$53,311
11 – 15 years	\$52,629	\$59,962
16+ years	\$61,263	\$66,142

By Employer	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Law Firm	\$54,435	\$56,048
Corporation	\$70,699	\$71,911
Insurance Company	\$56,915	\$65,317
Government	\$57,967	\$50,605
Freelance/Independent/ At- Large/Other	\$39,800	\$66,804

By Gender	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Female	\$57,109	\$54,920
Male	\$57,249	\$55,018

By Legal Education	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
High School	\$31,760	\$40,000
Some College	\$68,000	\$51,545
Certificate Only	\$67,566	\$58,081
Certificate & Assoc. Degree	\$55,714	\$44,913
Bachelor's Degree	\$64,411	\$60,754
Master's Degree	\$56,621	\$52,604
Law Degree (JD)	\$120,000 (1 response)	No response

Average Hourly Billing Rate

Milwaukee Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	50%	30%
Under \$50/hour	0%	0%
\$51 - \$100/hour	0%	31%
\$101 - \$150/hour	13%	15%
\$151 - \$175/hour	4%	12%
More than \$175/hour	33%	12%

Fox Valley Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	86%	55%
Under \$50/hour	0%	0%
\$51 - \$100/hour	14%	27%
\$101 - \$150/hour	0%	9%
\$151 - \$175/hour	0%	9%
More than \$175/hour	0%	0%

Madison Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	9%	25%
Under \$50/hour	0%	0%
\$51 - \$100/hour	0%	27%
\$101 - \$150/hour	9%	13%
\$151 - \$175/hour	0%	6%
More than \$175/hour	82%	25%

La Crosse Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	67%	75%
Under \$50/hour	0%	0%
\$51 - \$100/hour	0%	25%
\$101 - \$150/hour	33%	0%
\$151 - \$175/hour	0%	0%
More than \$175/hour	0%	0%

Wausau Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	14%	20%
Under \$50/hour	0%	0%
\$51 - \$100/hour	14%	20%
\$101 - \$150/hour	0%	30%
\$151 - \$175/hour	14%	20%
More than \$175/hour	57%	10%

Freelance/Independent/ At-Large/Other	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	0%	25%
Under \$50/hour	0%	0%
\$51 - \$100/hour	50%	25%
\$101 - \$150/hour	0%	25%
\$151 - \$175/hour	50%	0%
More than \$175/hour	0%	25%

Average Number of Total Hours Billed Per Week

Milwaukee Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	46%	38%
0 – 19	4%	11%
20 – 25	0%	8%
26 – 30	13%	12%
31 – 40	33%	23%
40 or more	4%	8%

Fox Valley Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	86%	82%
0 – 19	14%	0%
20 – 25	0%	9%
26 – 30	0%	0%
31 – 40	0%	9%
40 or more	0%	0%

Madison Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	9%	25%
0 – 19	18%	25%
20 - 25	27%	13%
26 – 30	18%	18%
31 – 40	18%	13%
40 or more	9%	6%

La Crosse Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	67%	50%
0 – 19	33%	0%
20 – 25	0%	0%
26 – 30	0%	50%
31 – 40	0%	0%
40 or more	0%	0%

Wausau Chapter	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	14%	30%
0 – 19	14%	20%
20 – 25	0%	10%
26 – 30	14%	10%
31 – 40	43%	30%
40 or more	14%	0%

Freelance/Independent/ At-Large/Other	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>
Does not bill	0%	25%
0 – 19	0%	25%
20 – 25	50%	25%
26 – 30	50%	0%
31 – 40	0%	0%
40 or more	0%	25%

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

- 44% of respondents reported sharing secretaries/assistants; 47% of respondents reported self.
- 51% of respondents reported having a private office.
- The largest percentage of respondents are employed in litigation – 15%.
- 58% of respondents who reported having a paralegal certificate received it from an ABA approved or compliant program.
- 39% and 49% 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.
- 97% of respondents reported that employers offered Paid Time Off (PTO) benefits.
- The largest percentage of respondents reported that employers paid for Professional Membership Dues (81%), Regular Membership Dues (61%), and Seminar/Tuition Reimbursement (58%).
- 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).
- 61% of respondents reported being a State Bar of Wisconsin Certified Paralegal; 8% of responses were holders of RP and CRP certifications from the NFPA, CLA certification from NALA, AACP certification from the American Alliance, and 32% held other professional certifications.

SURVEY SUMMARY

As you can see by the above details, our profession is on the upswing. Salary increases were reported by 86% of respondents as opposed to 14% claiming no increase. The average salary increase was 1% to 2%. Receipt of annual bonuses was reported by 74%. Although there were some noted salary increases by region, it would be expected the overall decrease in statewide salary range is as a result of the age and number of years of practice of respondents. Interestingly, salaries for male paralegals increased, while salaries for female paralegals decreased, based on respondents, however wages remained relatively equal by gender.

The majority of paralegals are employed in a litigation practice area and work for one to five attorneys. Respondents who have completed their paralegal education at ABA-approved programs are 58%. In years past, the largest percentage of our respondents obtained their current positions by referral. Now, "Referral" and "Internet Search" are the two most popular resources. I would presume "Other" is word of mouth.

For paralegals entering the profession within the last 12 months, the starting salaries ranged from \$20,001 to \$30,001 for full-time employment. 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.