



2024 Salary Survey

by Greg Wayment

Once again, the Paralegal Division has completed a salary survey. The first one was conducted in 2008, followed up in 2012, 2015, 2017, and 2020. The goal of the paralegal salary survey is to first answer the question, “What salary can a paralegal in Utah expect to make?” The survey also helps to track trends in education, skills, CLE opportunities, membership in professional organizations, and benefits for paralegals in Utah. By conducting these surveys, the Paralegal Division hopes to provide a baseline when negotiating salaries, benefits, and bonuses.

To dive right into it, every time the Paralegal Division has done a survey there have been a few takeaways. This year, the takeaway is obvious: salaries are up, but they are not keeping pace with inflation. Here is just a sampling of the comments:

- I cannot afford the same standard of living, despite a recent raise.
- I just received my first raise after six years. Although the raise is better than I was earning, you have to keep pushing as a paralegal to keep up with the costs.
- Raises not keeping up with inflation.
- I feel I work way too hard to have my income only cover 65% of my housing payment.
- 4% merit increases don't keep up with the inflation rate over the last few years.
- While I acknowledge that I get paid average to well, especially given my practice in public service, I still barely manage to make ends meet most months.
- Cost of housing has exponentially increased to a point where about 40% of my net monthly income goes to rent.

This year eleven out of 100 respondents indicated that their gross annual salary (excluding bonuses) was over \$100,000. In 2020, there was just one. There were also many respondents reporting salaries in the \$70,000s, \$80,000s, and \$90,000s, which indicates a trend towards higher salaries.

Some of the other takeaways included: many respondents being at their places of employment for a short time (less than five years) or many being at them for quite a while (over twenty years). Membership in professional paralegal organizations and CLE attendance is down. And lastly, raises and bonuses are up since the last survey.

The survey was open to Paralegal Division members and non-members alike. For the sake of full disclosure, there was no eligibility screening, meaning anyone that had access to the link was welcome to answer the questions. By and large, most of the respondents (at least 86%) reported their job title as paralegal. 5% reported as being legal assistants and the other 9% reported titles such as office/billing manager and Licensed Paralegal Practitioner.

The 2024 survey contained sixty-one questions and was taken by a total of 100 individuals, which is twenty-two less than those who took it in 2020. This participation rate is down from an all-time high of the 173 that responded in 2015. We would like to thank the 100 professionals that took the time this year to take the survey! The following is a reporting and analysis of the results:

As has been the trend, most of the respondents are employed in Salt Lake County (78%), with just 9% reporting from Utah County, and 2% in Weber and 3% in Washington Counties respectively. At 88% of the respondents, women still account for most of the paralegals working in Utah.

Just over 25% of respondents have held their job title for over

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twenty years, with 28% reporting in the one to five-year category. As for current employment, almost 32% have been with the same employer for over ten years, and roughly 13% more (or almost 45%) have held their current positions for between one and five years, indicating some growth in the profession.

Membership in paralegal organizations has dropped, with 77% of respondents belonging to the Paralegal Division (down 16% from the last survey), and approximately 8% participating in the Utah Paralegal Association (down 5% from the last survey). Roughly 15% of the respondents are members of the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) (also down 11% from the last survey).

Most respondents, about 91%, are not required to have passed a national paralegal certification exam prior to being hired. Of the respondents, 16% answered affirmative to obtaining a C.P. (Certified Paralegal) designation and 7% answered to having obtained an A.C.P. (Advanced Certified Paralegal) designation, while 71% of the respondents currently working have no professional designations.

This year's survey revealed that 47% of Utah paralegals report having earned a bachelor's degree (up 16%), while 5% have a paralegal certificate (down 7%). According to our survey, most paralegals in Utah have a bachelor's degree (in 2020, the majority had an associate degree). As for employers, 47% require their paralegals to have met a minimum education level; of these, 31% require a certificate from an American Bar Association-approved paralegal program (up 2%). Education is not often directly tied to compensation, however, as 19% of respondents indicated that their employers do not consider education levels as a factor in setting compensation. Currently, approximately 24% of law firms require paralegals to have a bachelor's degree.

The second part of our survey addressed employment environment, duties, and responsibilities. Of respondents, nearly 57% work in private law firms, with approximately 14% working in corporations, and 26% work in the government sector. As for practice areas, we found that 51% of respondents practice in litigation. The other biggest areas of employment are family, criminal, and personal injury.

A clear majority of respondents, 52%, work in organizations that employ no more than five paralegals. As for organization size, the vast majority are either quite small or quite large, with nearly 45% employing between one and ten attorneys and 33% employing over forty attorneys.

Following up on the third time we've asked (my favorite)

question "What software does your firm/you currently use to manage large formal document productions?" The overwhelming majority (sixty-four respondents) use Adobe, followed closely with Everlaw and iPro. There were additional programs listed by the respondents such as Karpel, Kofax, and Logikull, however seven people skipped this question. Given the number of people who answered PDF or skipped the question, the takeaway is that the Utah legal community is still behind when it comes to using industry leading e-discovery platforms, although the perception is that the best solution is still evasive.

Overtime appears to be up with only 38% reporting no overtime and 29% reporting working one to five hours per month and 16% at six to ten hours per month and 9% working over twenty hours a month. The question of whether respondents bill time to clients was nearly evenly split in earlier surveys but has changed to 61% billing their time and 39% not. Most respondents spend over 88% doing substantive work, with under 12% of their time spent on non-substantive/administrative work.

This year 33% of respondents reported that their average hourly billing rate was not applicable, 17% were in the \$150 to \$200 an hour, 12% were in the \$100 to \$125, and 10% were in the \$75 to \$100 category.

In this survey, we found that about 42% of employers are providing in-house CLE, and over 80% of employers pay for outside CLE (down 8%). Of those who pay for outside CLE, 58% of respondents receive payment of registration fees, with about 42% receiving hotel accommodations and 41% receiving mileage as well; a smaller number provide reimbursement for airfare and per diem. Nearly 21% of paralegals have annual CLE budgets.

We are also pleased to report that most of the respondents report attending the Paralegal Division's annual Paralegal Day Luncheon and the Annual Meeting, but the biggest category of attendance was the Brown Bag Lunch CLE events, and CLE's presented by other Bar sections. This is most likely due to the fact that these events have been widely hosted online (and at no cost) since COVID.

Turning to paralegal salary, benefits, and other compensation, the largest category of respondents, at 18%, report making between \$70,000 and \$74,999. The next largest categories (in a three-way tie at 11%) make between \$75,000 and \$79,999, \$80,000 and \$84,999, and \$100,000 or more. The lowest reported salary was under \$25,000 with one respondent. There were eleven respondents who reported being in the \$100,000 and higher category.

About 55% of the respondents report that their employers do have a bonus structure in place. Of those who do, about 23% tie bonuses directly to billable hours and fees collected (down 2%). Overwhelmingly 57% of bonuses are based on personal performance, with 35% based on company success.

A large percentage, 83% (up 15%), reported receiving a raise in the last twelve months, this time with the majority (40%) reporting the percentage of the raise being 4–6% of their annual salary. This was down in 2020, most likely due to economic uncertainty around COVID.

More respondents indicated being paid hourly vs. salary (59% and 37% respectively). As for benefits provided, 76% of respondents have access to health insurance for themselves (down 3%) and roughly 68% have access to dental insurance.

Over 76% have a 401(k) plan with their employer, and just over 17% have profit sharing plan in place.

A majority at 93% of respondents answered that they feel secure in their position with 57% reporting that if they needed to find new employment, they are optimistic they could do so.

Because of the current state of inflation, we wanted to ask Utah paralegals, “Do you feel that your salary keeps up with the current economic demands? As a response to this question, 53% answered yes, 47% answered no.

We greatly appreciate the participation we received in conducting this survey and hope that this information is valuable to both paralegals and their employers during salary negotiations, raise contemplation, and employee satisfaction.

Utah Paralegal Salaries

