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150TH ANNIVERSARY
1868-2018



2018
Martindale Attorney Compensation Report

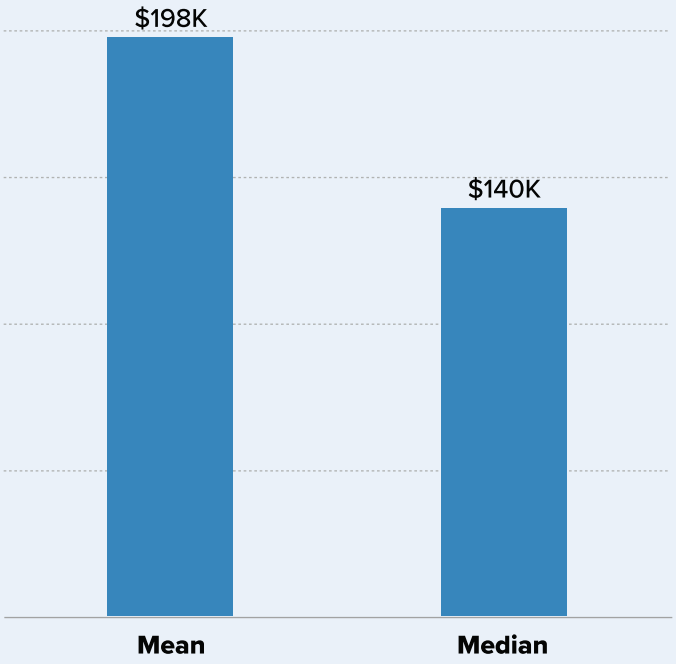
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In 2018, the Martindale Legal Marketing Network initiated its first annual Attorney Compensation Report. The report catalogs the incomes of solo and small-firm attorneys across the United States.

In addition to gathering compensation data, the Martindale Attorney Compensation Report covers important factors that affect income, such as hours worked, time spent with clients, and firm size and location. More than 7,800 attorneys across more than two dozen practice areas responded to the survey. The results focus on the 6,902 respondents who are practicing full-time.

How much did attorneys earn overall in 2017?

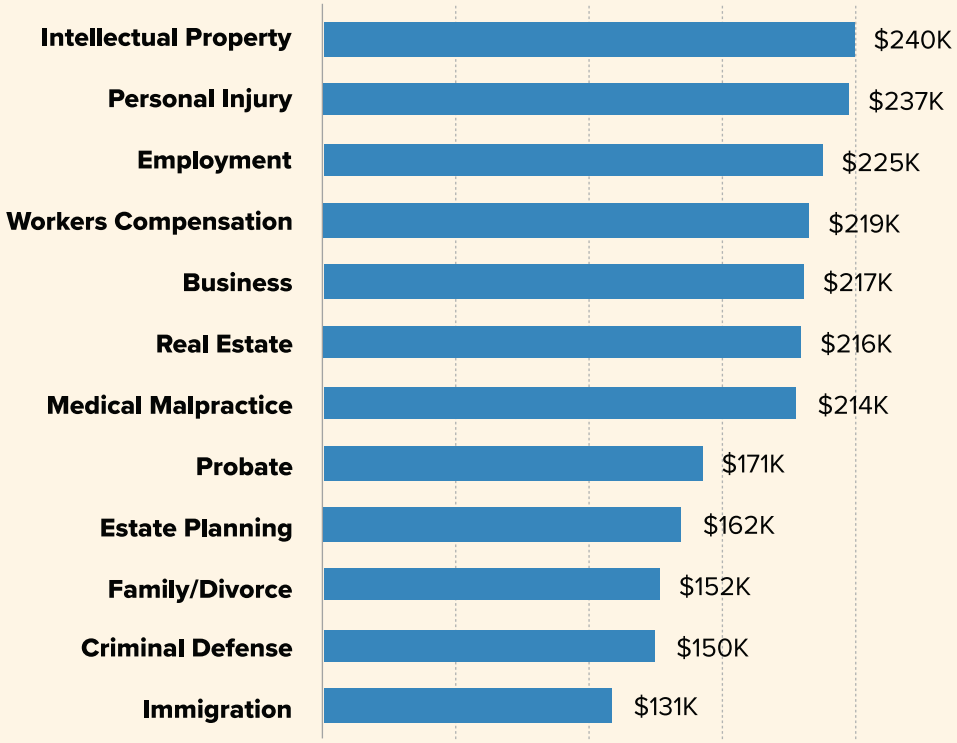
What was your 2017 compensation for providing billable legal services?



Among all U.S. solo and small-firm attorneys who responded to the survey, the average annual full-time compensation was $198,000, excluding non-client-related activities such as serving as an expert witness or speaking engagements. For employed attorneys, reported compensation includes salary, bonus and profit-sharing contributions. For owners, compensation includes earnings after taxes and deductible expenses but before income tax.

Intellectual property attorneys top the list

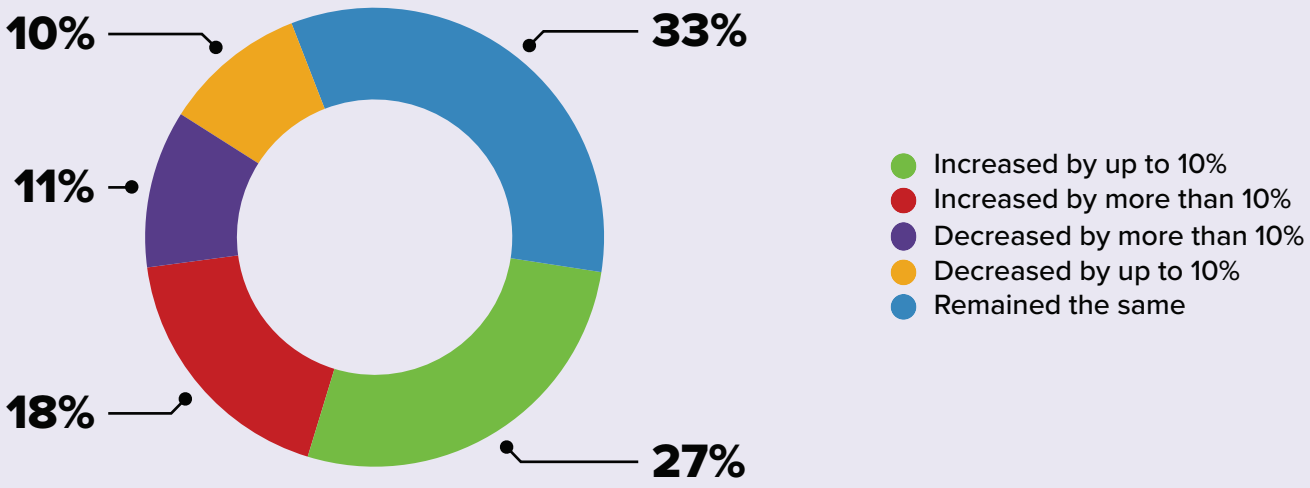
What was your 2017 compensation for providing billable legal services?



Attorneys who identified intellectual property as their primary area of practice reported earning the most with an average of $240,000 annually. Immigration attorneys earned the least with an average of $131,000.

Attorney compensation is up

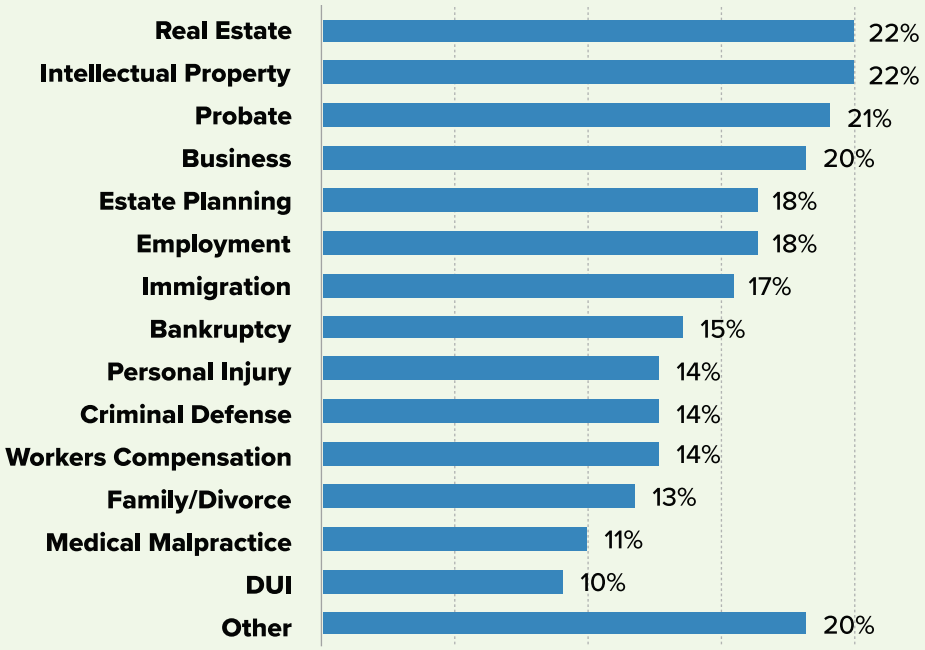
Did your 2017 earnings from legal services increase, decrease, or remain the same compared to 2016?



Compensation increased in 2017 for 45% of the responding attorneys. The largest group that saw an increase comprised attorneys under the age of 35 (66%), and 30% of practitioners 65 and older also experienced an increase.

17% of respondents reported earning supplemental income

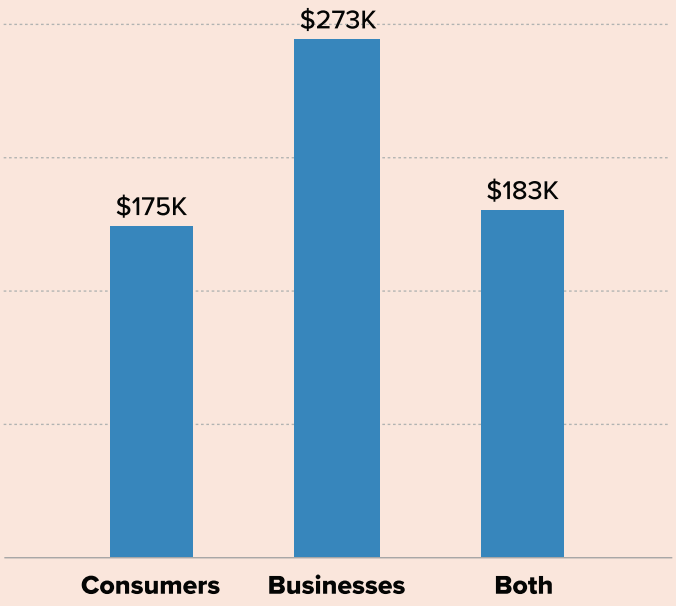
In 2017, how much money did you make in nonlegal services activities?



A majority of attorneys (83%) indicated that they did not earn any supplemental income providing nonlegal services during 2017. This would include income from speaking engagements, serving as an expert witness, etc. Among the different practice areas, intellectual property (22%) and real estate (22%) had the largest proportion of practitioners who earned additional income.

Representing businesses provides more income

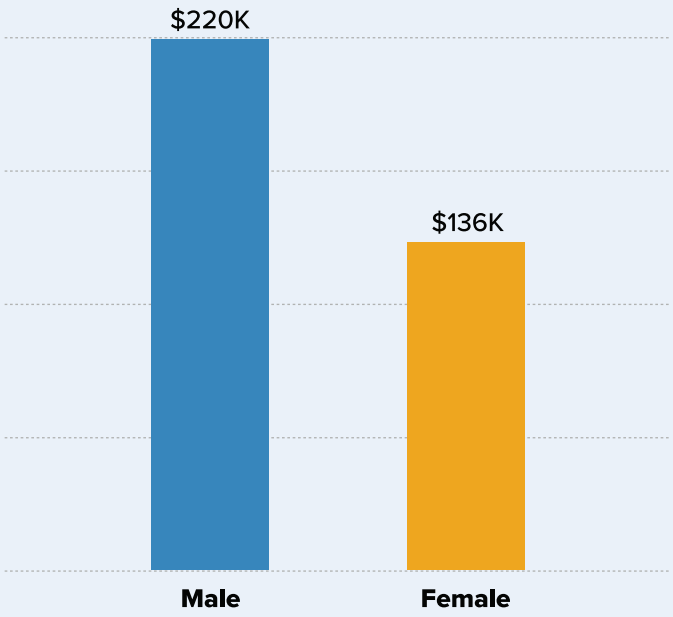
Do you primarily provide legal services to consumers, businesses or both?



Attorneys whose practices focus primarily on representing businesses reported earning 56% more income in 2017 than attorneys who primarily represent consumers.

The gender gap persists in the practice of law

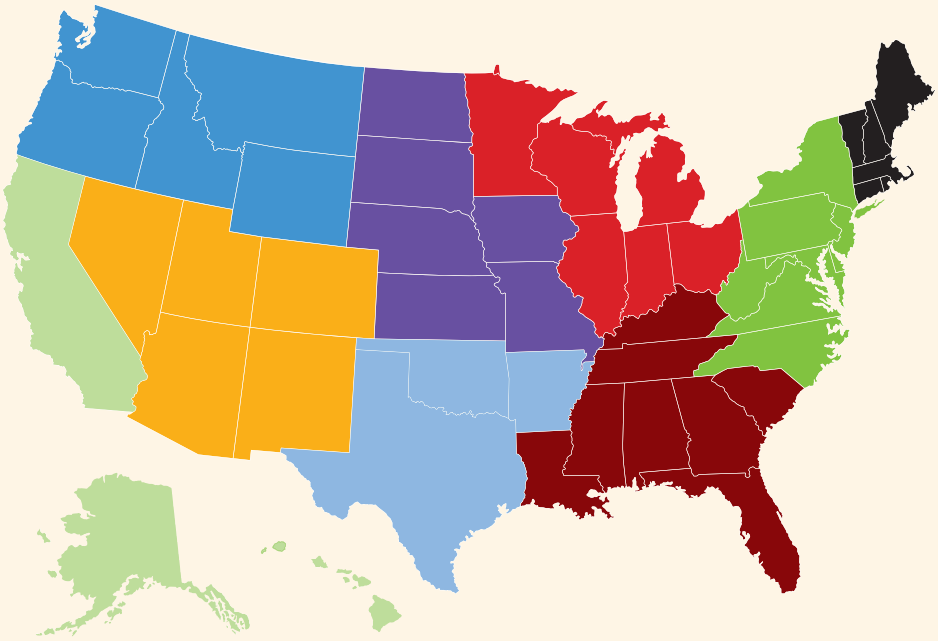
What was your 2017 compensation for providing billable legal services (by gender and client type)?



A compensation gender gap exists among solo practitioners and attorneys employed at small firms, with female attorneys reporting receiving 38% less income in 2017 than their male counterparts. Some of this disparity may be attributed to the number of years spent practicing law, with female attorneys reporting substantially fewer average years (16.4 years) in practice than their male counterparts (23.2 years).

Western region attorneys earned the most

What was your 2017 compensation for providing billable legal services (by location)?

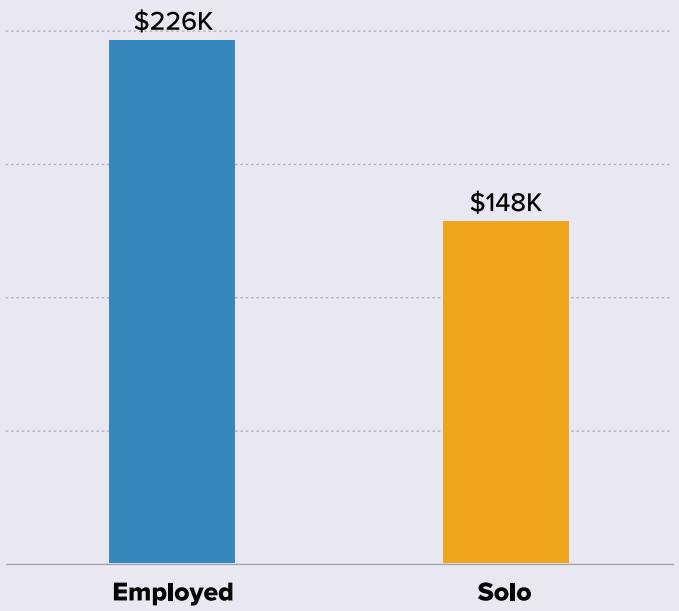


West	$223K
South Central	$213K
Mid-Atlantic	$212K
Northwest	$201K
Northeast	$192K
Southeast	$190K
Great Lakes	$183K
Southwest	$181K
North Central	$168K

Solo practitioner and small-firm attorney compensation varied across the United States, with lawyers in the Western region (CA, HI and AK) earning the most, followed by those in the South Central region (TX, OK and AR). Attorneys in the North Central region (IA, MO, KS, NE, ND and SD) reported the lowest earnings.

Small-firm attorneys earned more than solo practitioners

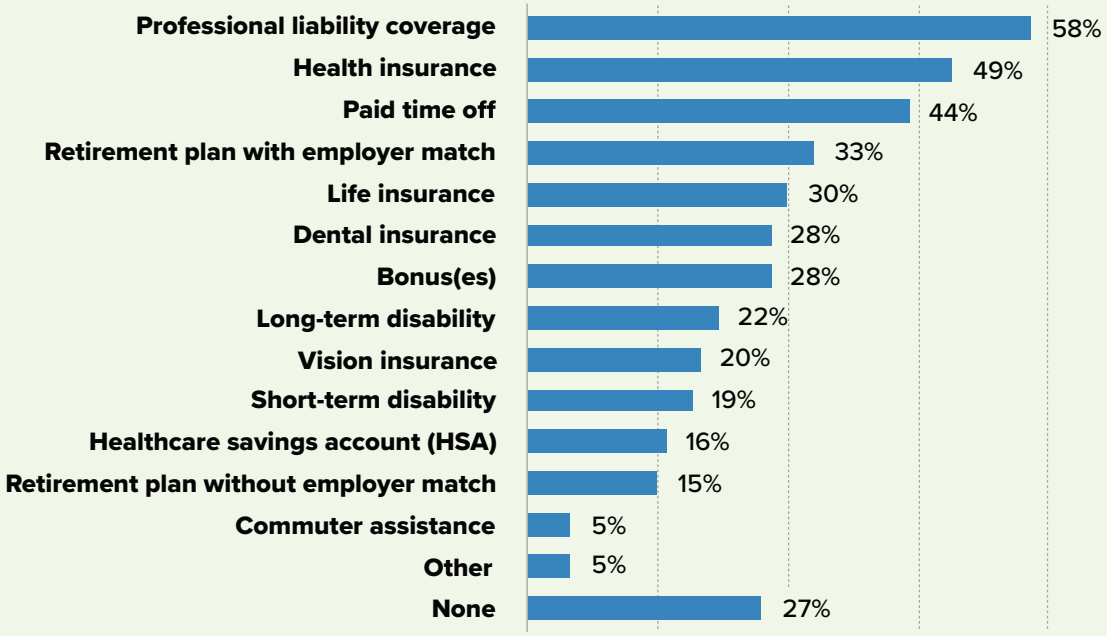
What was your 2017 compensation for providing billable legal services (by practice type?)



Solo practitioners earned an average of $148,000 in 2017. Their counterparts in small firms earned an average of $226,000, or 53% more.

What benefits do attorneys receive?

Which of these employment benefits do you receive? Select all that apply.



Professional liability coverage and health insurance topped the list of employment benefits for both solo practitioners and attorneys in small firms. More than half (58%) of solo attorneys reported receiving none of the benefits listed above.

Overall, attorneys feel fairly compensated for their work

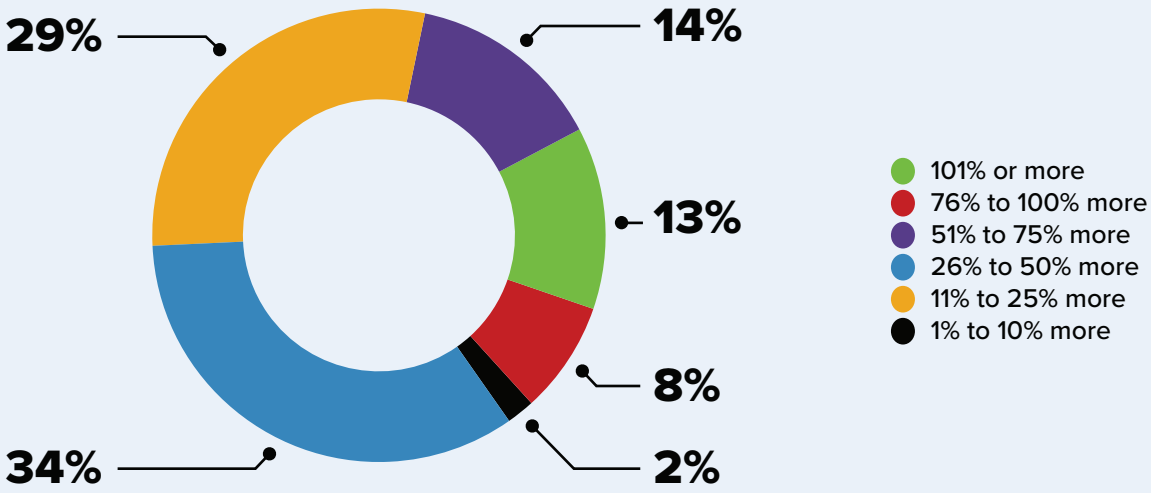
Do you feel that you are fairly compensated for your work?



More than two-thirds (68%) of the attorneys believed that they were fairly compensated for their work, with 70% of the males and 61% of the females reporting that they felt fairly compensated.

If undercompensated, how much more do attorneys expect to earn?

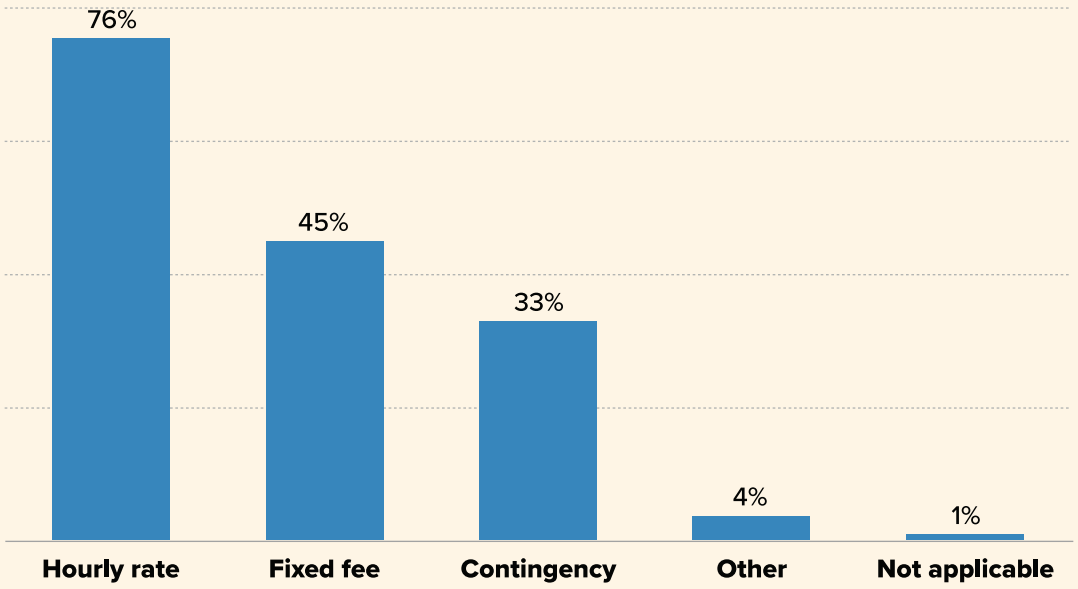
How much more do you feel you should make annually for legal services?



Of the 32% of attorneys who feel they deserve higher compensation, 13% believe they should be earning double what they're earning now. Twenty two percent of solo practitioners believe they should be earning twice their current income.

Hourly billing remains king

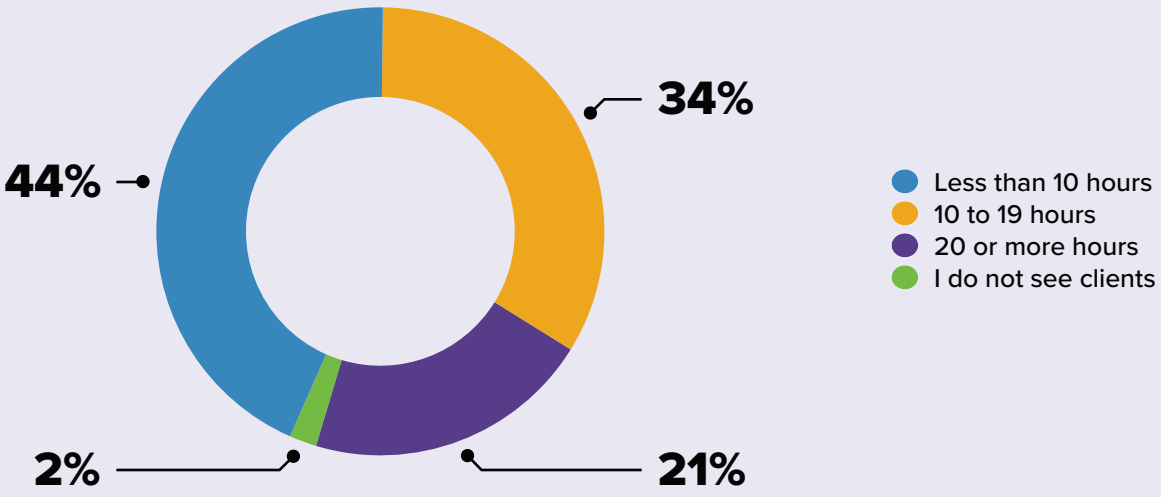
How do you currently bill for legal services? Select all that apply.



While attorneys use a variety of billing methods, the majority of respondents use an hourly rate structure to bill clients. Among attorneys using alternative methods, more than half of solo practitioners (58%) reported using fixed fee billing compared to 39% of employed attorneys.

Time spent with clients averages less than 20 hours weekly

How many hours per week do you typically spend meeting with clients or representing clients in court or before other judicial bodies?

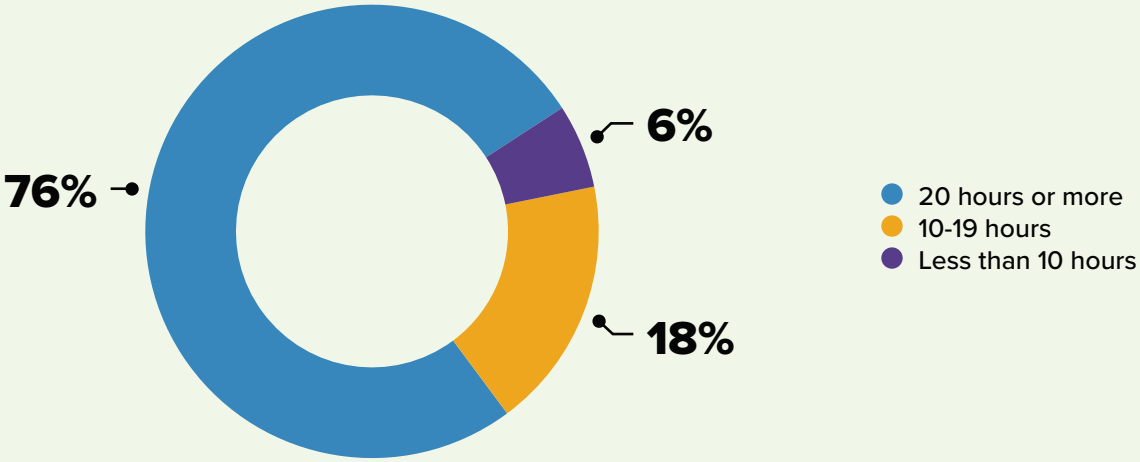


The majority of attorneys spend fewer than 20 hours weekly meeting with their clients or representing them in court or before other judicial bodies. Intellectual property lawyers spend the least amount — less than 10 hours weekly — while criminal defense/DUI attorneys often spend more than 20 hours weekly meeting with clients.

Attorneys representing businesses spent significantly less in-person time with clients, with the majority (62%) reporting that they spend less than 10 hours weekly.

Hours per week spent on other billable work

How many hours per week do you typically spend on work other than meeting with clients or representing clients in court?

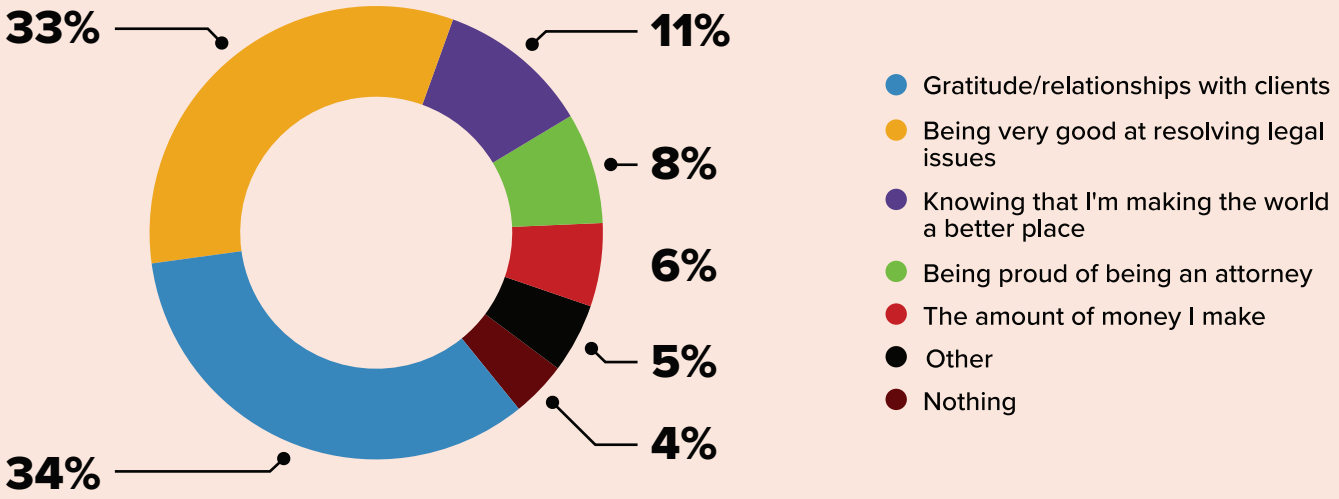


Of the respondents, 76% reported that they spend at least 20 hours on billable work weekly other than meeting with clients or representing them in court. This includes billable time spent on such activities as legal research, court filings and administrative/managerial work.

Attorneys who serve only businesses spend considerably more time on such activities as research and filing than do those serving only consumers. Solo practitioners spend considerably more time on these tasks than attorneys employed by small firms.

Attorneys value client relationships the most

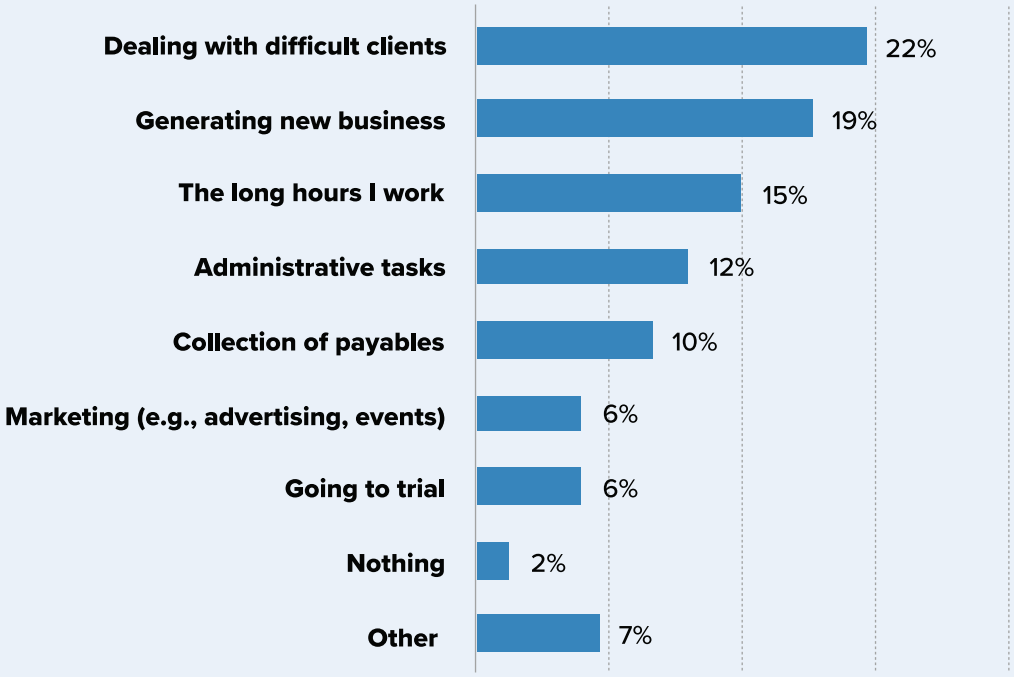
What do you consider to be the most rewarding aspect of your job?



When asked to select the most rewarding aspect of their jobs, attorneys gave far more weight to “Gratitude/relationships with clients” and “Being very good at resolving legal issues” than all other choices, particularly after practicing law for some time. Of the attorneys who represent consumers, 15% chose “Knowing that I’m making the world a better place” compared to only 3% of attorneys representing businesses.

Difficult clients top the list of challenges

What do you consider to be the most challenging aspect of your job?



Attorneys ranked dealing with difficult clients as the most challenging aspect of their job, followed closely by the need to find new clients. Of the consumer-focused attorneys, 27% ranked difficult clients as their greatest challenge, more than double the 12% of those representing businesses. Conversely, 30% of the attorneys focused on businesses ranked generating new clients as the greatest challenge, double that of consumer-focused attorneys (15%).

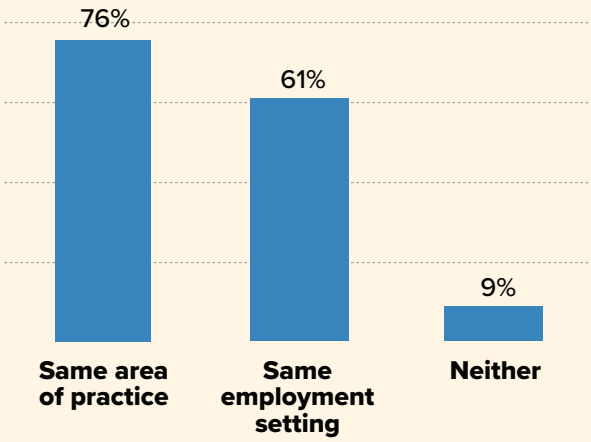
The practice of law remains the top career choice

If you had it to do all over again, would you choose law as a career?

Would you choose a law career again?

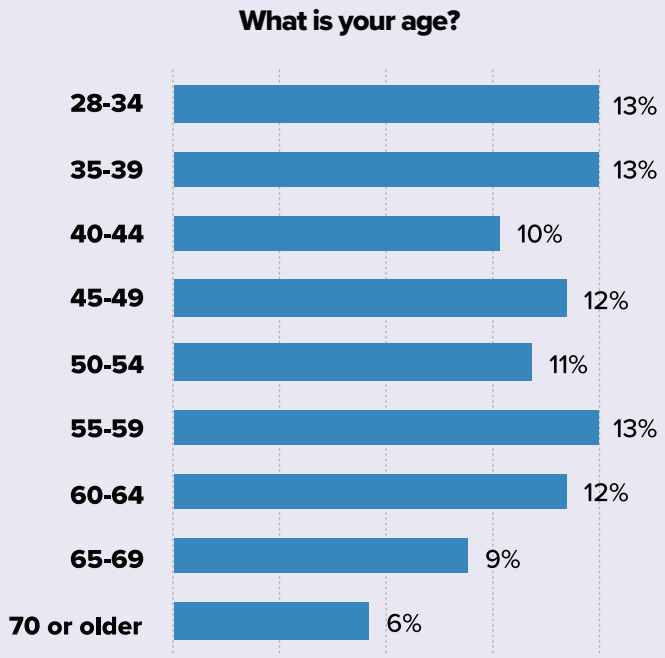


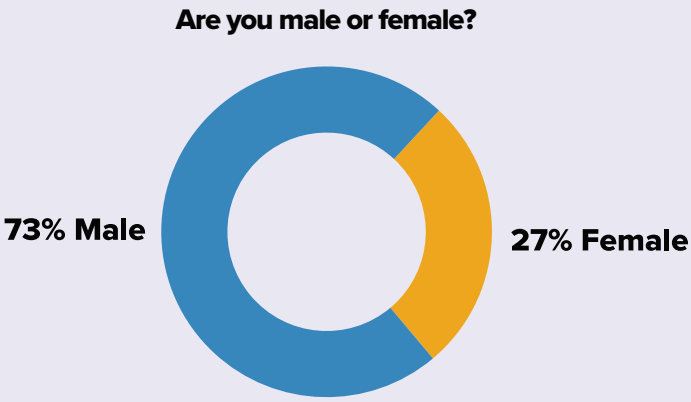
Would you choose the same practice area and/or setting?



The majority of attorneys are satisfied with both their choice of law as a career as well as with their career path. Just over three-quarters (76%) would choose to practice in the same area of the law and 61% would choose the same employment setting (solo practitioner versus employed at a small law firm).

Methodology





- 7,800 U.S.-based solo practitioner and small law firm attorneys in more than 24 practice areas met the screening criteria.
- Recruitment period: January 9, 2018 through March 31, 2018.
- Data collection: Via online survey collection site.
- The margin of error for the full-time employed respondents was +/- 1.18% at a 95% confidence level using a point estimate of 50%.

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