

2019.

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QUEENSLAND

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# SALARY AND CAREERS GUIDE





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# QUEENSLAND YOUNG LAWYERS

Queensland Young Lawyers (QYL) is an independent not-for-profit association dedicated to encouraging and supporting the personal and professional development of young lawyers and barristers in Queensland.

Together with Peppercorn Recruitment, the QYL Committee has worked tirelessly to collate and present the results of the Salary Survey.



Georgia Dalton  
QYL President

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Following the successful launch of our inaugural Salary Survey & Careers Guide in 2018, Queensland Young Lawyers, in Partnership with Peppercorn Recruitment, are delighted to release the 2019 Queensland Salary Survey and Careers Guide.

Our aim in conducting this Survey is to provide our members and other young lawyers with the data and tools to negotiate better salaries.

We all know discussing pay and employment conditions with our colleagues or peers is almost taboo in the legal industry (and even expressly prohibited by some employers). As a result, many lawyers, particularly junior lawyers, are uninformed about industry conditions.



Hannah Daley  
QYL Vice-President

We hope this guide will shed some light on the legal industry (for better or for worse). We also hope that the article on preparing for your performance review is of assistance to young lawyers.

Thank you to those committee members, their friends and colleagues for assisting with preparing this guide.

We would also like to extend a big thank you to our sponsors and partners through this project, Peppercorn Recruitment. Peter and Ross have provided unwavering support and assistance in the production of this Guide and we are very grateful.

The QYL Executive Committee  
May 2019



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# PEPPERCORN RECRUITMENT

Established in 2015, Peppercorn Recruitment has grown to be Brisbane's leading specialist legal, risk and compliance recruitment agency.

We are lawyers, and we are legal recruiters. We understand the intricacies, demands and challenges of the legal, risk and compliance industries. This, combined with our extensive networks, ensures we match the best candidates to the right jobs.

Based in Brisbane, we have recruited at all levels across private practice, in-house and government for permanent, fixed term, contract and temporary positions.



Peter Liaw  
Partner

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In 2018 and in conjunction with QYL we put together the only comprehensive legal salary survey specifically for Queensland lawyers. We received great feedback on last year's report with over 700 lawyers accessing the Salary and Careers Guide in order to "know their worth" and help with their salary review discussions.

This year we were thrilled to have seen a 90% increase in respondents taking part in the survey, which only strengthens the integrity of the data contained in this year's report. When it comes to review time, we genuinely hope and believe the 2019 Salary and Careers Guide will give you the confidence (and the hard data) to negotiate a salary that reflects your worth relative to other lawyers in the industry in Queensland.



Ross Dakin  
Partner

When discussing salaries, we have always said that every lawyer is in a unique situation. In saying that, we both extend and welcome the opportunity for you to come and discuss not only your salary but where your legal career can take you.

We would like to thank our partners in the QYL Committee for all of the hard work put in behind the scenes in pulling together this report. We also thank all of those lawyers who contributed their time towards completing the survey this year and hope to make next year's survey bigger and better again.

Ross Dakin & Peter Liaw  
May 2019

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# SURVEY DETAILS

The statistics in this guide are derived from the 2019 Queensland Legal Salary Survey which was open for three weeks in March 2019. This year, there was a total of 589 participants (compared to 310 participants in 2018). Of those participants, 93% were employed on a full-time basis.

The sample of data collected was sufficient to provide the averages and statistics in this guide. Where there was a data sample too small, those statistics have been omitted. Prior to any analysis, entries in the survey were reviewed and corrected where obvious errors were identified. For example, a 1-2 year PAE lawyer earning \$650,000 per year, was corrected to \$65,000.

## Definitions

Micro Law Firm = 2-5 Solicitors

Small Law Firm = 6-19 Solicitors

Medium Law Firm = 20-49 Solicitors

Large Law Firm = 50+ Solicitors but no offices outside of Queensland

National Law Firm = 50+ Solicitors where the firm has offices outside of Queensland

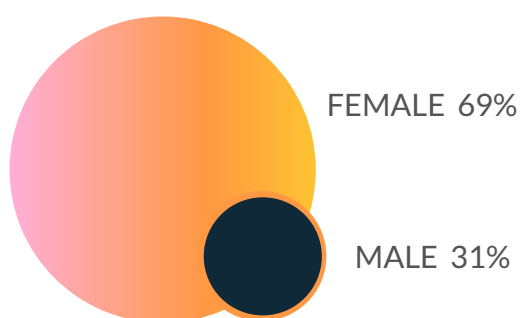
International Law Firm = firm with international offices

PAE = post admission experience

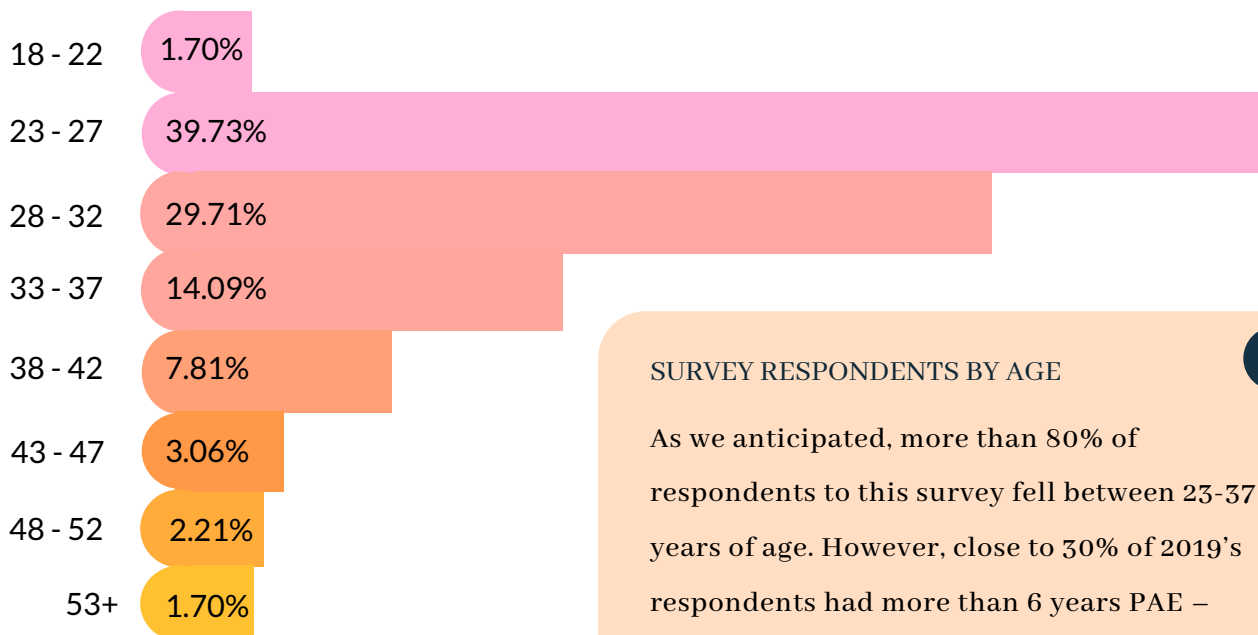


# SURVEY RESPONDENTS

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY GENDER



## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE



### SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE

As we anticipated, more than 80% of respondents to this survey fell between 23-37 years of age. However, close to 30% of 2019's respondents had more than 6 years PAE – highlighting that it is not just “young” lawyers who want to know their worth, but more experienced ones too!

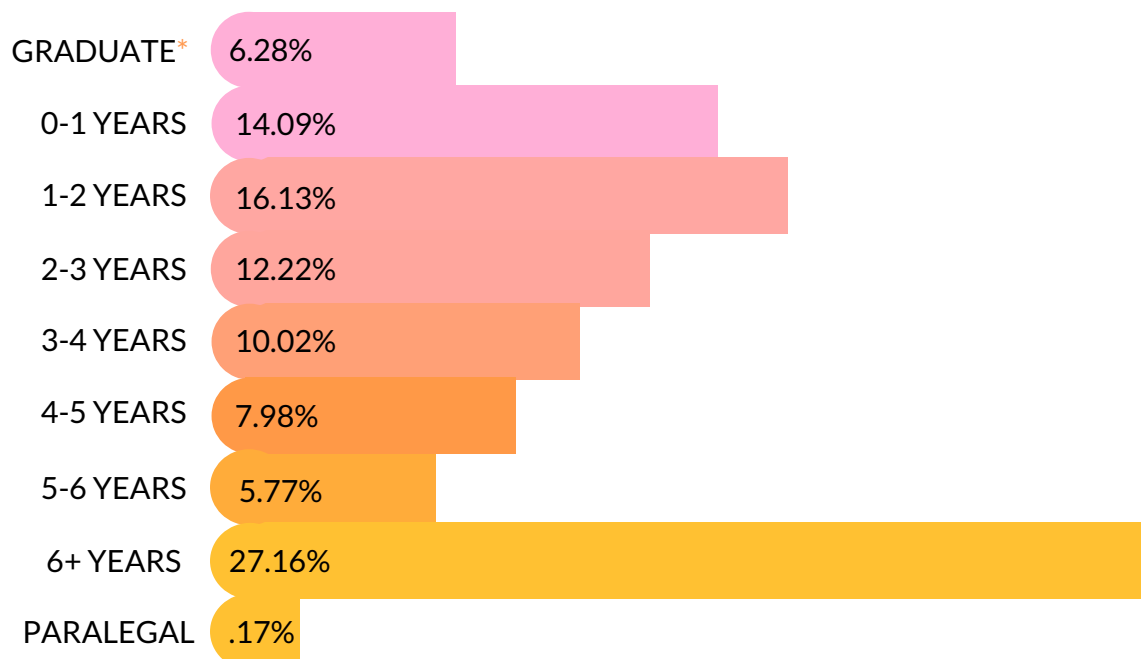




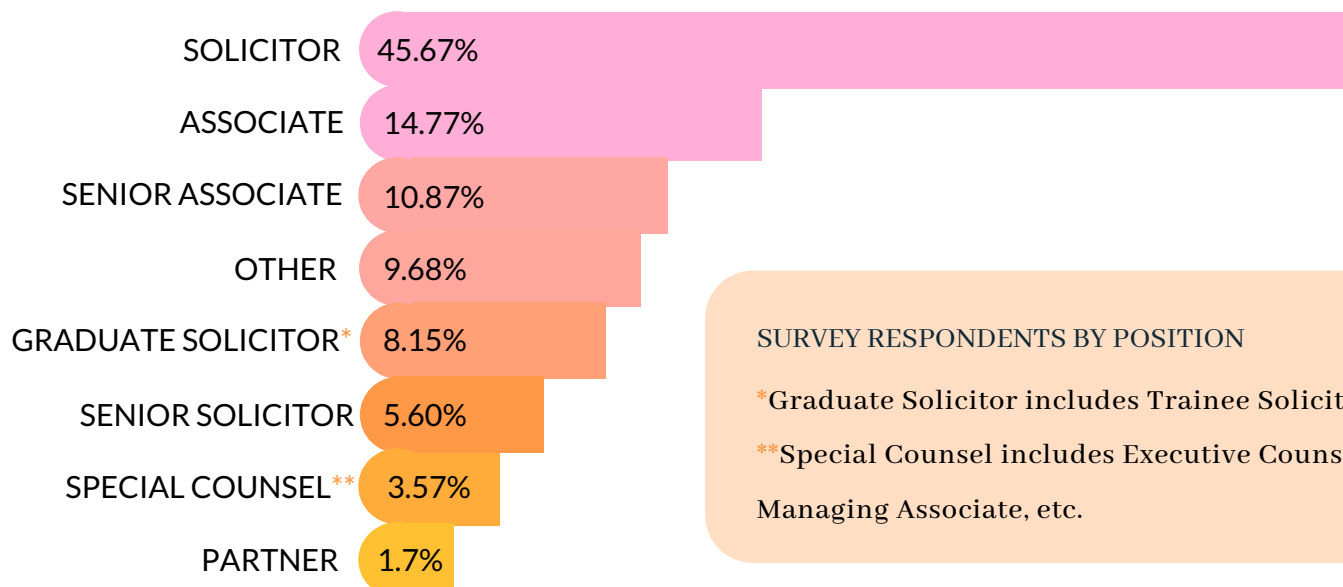
# SURVEY RESPONDENTS



## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY PAE



## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY POSITION



### SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY POSITION

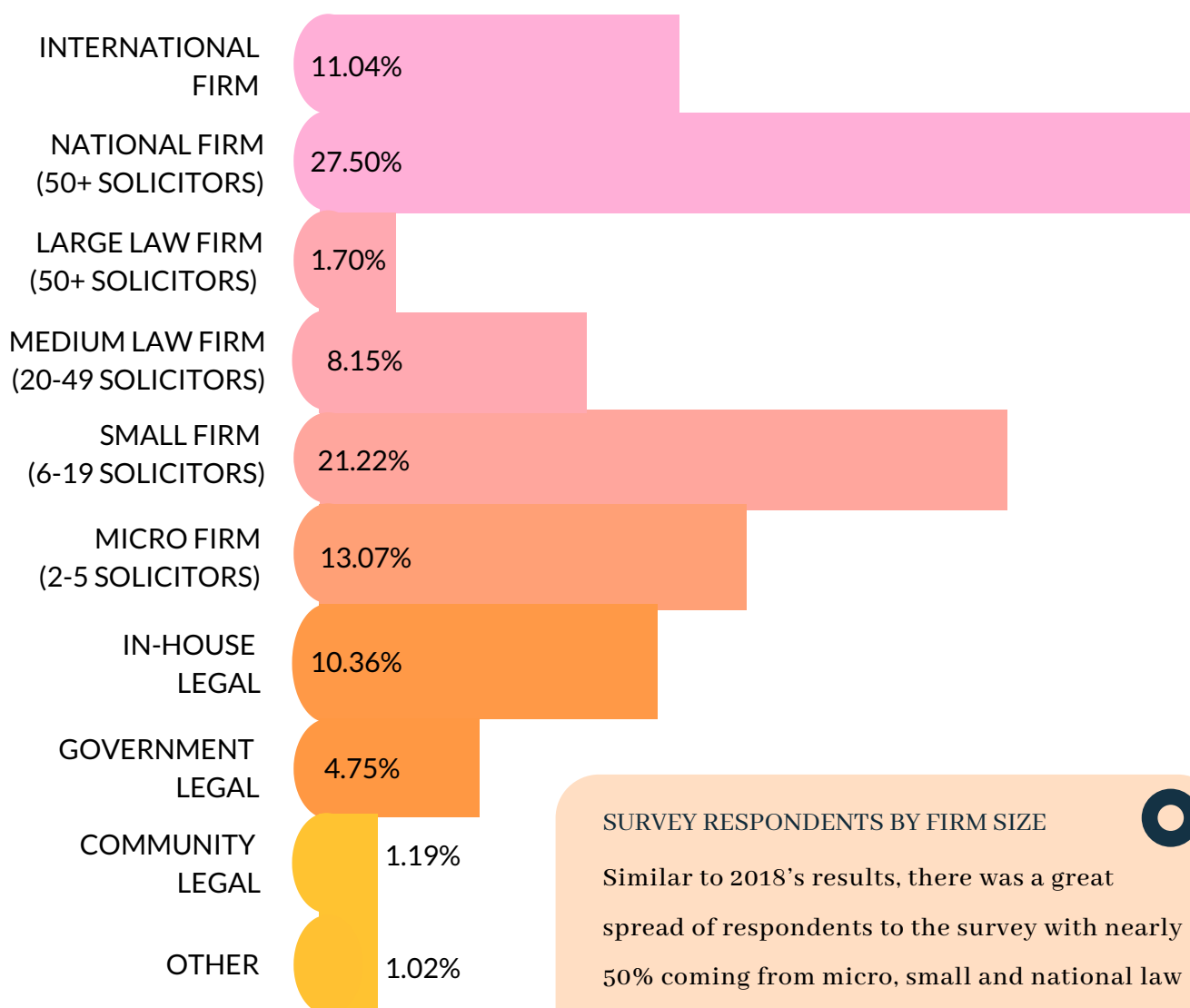
\*Graduate Solicitor includes Trainee Solicitors

\*\*Special Counsel includes Executive Counsel, Managing Associate, etc.



# SURVEY RESPONDENTS

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY FIRM SIZE



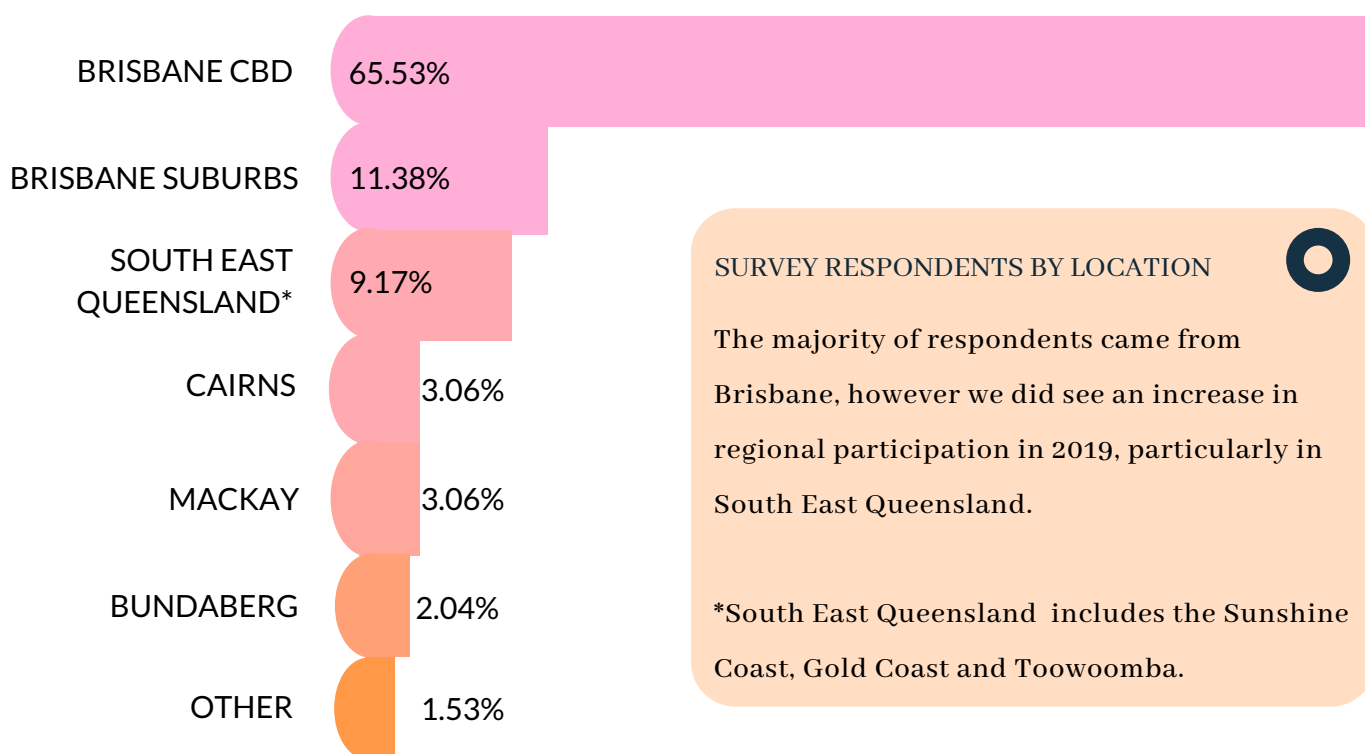
### SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY FIRM SIZE

Similar to 2018's results, there was a great spread of respondents to the survey with nearly 50% coming from micro, small and national law firms.



# SURVEY RESPONDENTS

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY LOCATION



### SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY LOCATION

The majority of respondents came from Brisbane, however we did see an increase in regional participation in 2019, particularly in South East Queensland.

\*South East Queensland includes the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Toowoomba.

<1% WIDE BAY  
BURNETT

<1% TOWNSVILLE

<1% NORTH  
QLD

<1% CENTRAL  
QLD

<1% GLADSTONE

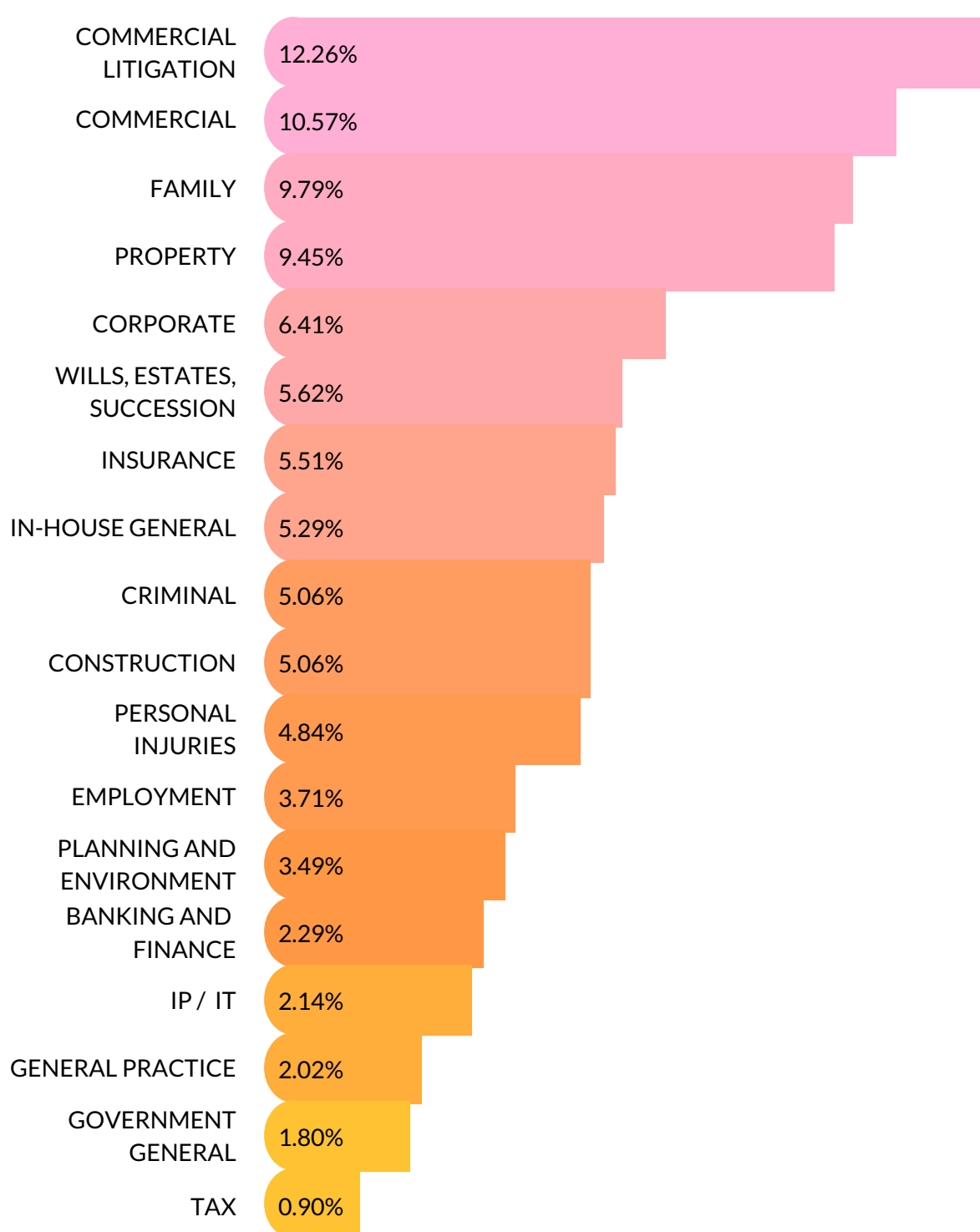
<1% FAR NORTH  
QLD

<1% MT ISA



# SURVEY RESPONDENTS

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY PRACTICE AREA

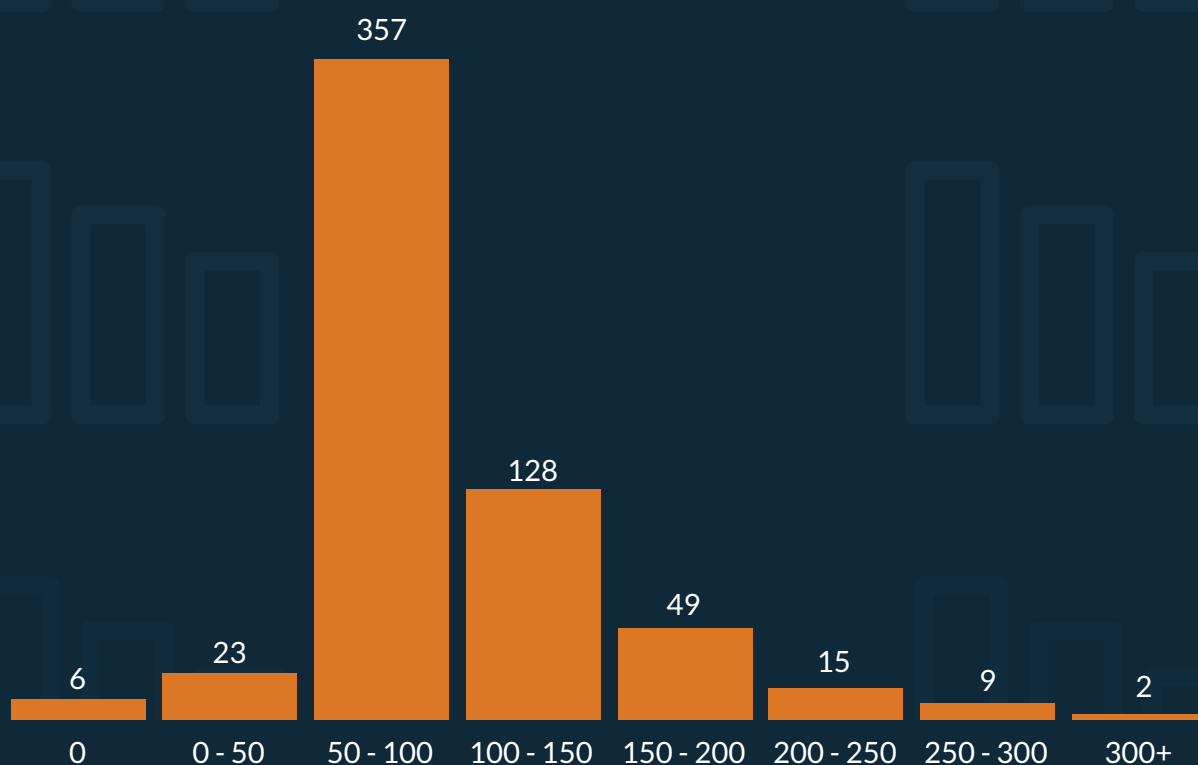




# SALARIES

The salary figures presented in this report are inclusive of superannuation. Hyphens indicate that the data sample was too small.

- Highest salary - \$290,000 per year for a 2-3 year PAE In-house Legal Counsel in Southeast Queensland
- Lowest salary - \$25,000 per year for a Graduate/Trainee Solicitor working in a small law firm in Southeast Queensland



*Average annual salary for Queensland based legal practitioners (Number of responses / \$'000s)*



## GRADUATE / TRAINEE SOLICITOR

Of the law firms, International firms by far and away have the highest average salary for graduates. Interestingly, the highest average salary for graduates and trainees were those who are working in-house. While initially higher than those at law firms, annual increases in salary for in-house lawyers in subsequent years are typically much lower.

FIRM SIZE	AVERAGE	LOWEST	HIGHEST
MICRO	-	-	-
SMALL	\$54,000	\$25,000	\$68,438
MEDIUM	\$62,500	\$58,000	\$67,000
LARGE	\$53,500	\$50,000	\$55,000
NATIONAL	\$64,000	\$60,000	\$80,000
GOVERNMENT	-	-	-
INTERNATIONAL	\$72,500	\$72,000	\$73,000
IN-HOUSE	\$74,500	\$64,000	\$132,500

## 0 - 1 YEAR PAE

It isn't a surprise that lawyers in government are paid higher at the 0-1 PAE level than lawyers in firms. While salaries in government start high, they don't have the same annual increases that you can expect in law firms.

FIRM SIZE	AVERAGE	LOWEST	HIGHEST
MICRO	\$54,000	\$33,800	\$75,000
SMALL	\$63,000	\$50,000	\$82,000
MEDIUM	\$61,500	\$45,500	\$71,175
LARGE	\$66,500	\$60,000	\$72,000
NATIONAL	\$72,000	\$60,000	\$88,987
GOVERNMENT	\$77,500	\$62,000	\$92,928
INTERNATIONAL	\$75,000	\$72,000	\$80,000
IN-HOUSE	\$71,000	\$70,000	\$72,270



## 1 - 2 YEARS PAE

Already we can see that despite the perception that larger firms pay better, there are plenty of examples of lawyers in small firms (and indeed micro firms) who are earning more than their counterparts in bigger firms.

FIRM SIZE	AVERAGE	LOWEST	HIGHEST
MICRO	\$70,500	\$46,000	\$104,000
SMALL	\$68,000	\$50,000	\$99,000
MEDIUM	\$71,500	\$52,000	\$95,000
LARGE	\$73,000	\$62,963	\$91,000
NATIONAL	\$75,500	\$55,000	\$112,391
GOVERNMENT	\$92,000	\$67,000	\$105,000
INTERNATIONAL	\$80,500	\$50,000	\$110,000
IN-HOUSE	\$76,500	\$58,000	\$95,000

## 2 - 3 YEARS PAE

The 2-3 PAE bracket has always been an interesting one as lawyers at this level become very profitable for a law firm. Firms, irrespective of size, will look after their high performers at this level, particularly through bonuses or other incentives. This may explain the close correlation in highest salary irrespective of firm size (between most of the firms).

FIRM SIZE	AVERAGE	LOWEST	HIGHEST
MICRO	\$68,500	\$47,500	\$90,000
SMALL	\$72,000	\$50,000	\$90,000
MEDIUM	\$83,500	\$65,549	\$110,000
LARGE	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000
NATIONAL	\$92,000	\$62,000	\$140,000
GOVERNMENT	\$81,000	\$73,000	\$94,300
INTERNATIONAL	\$86,500	\$77,000	\$92,000
IN-HOUSE	\$112,500	\$110,000	\$290,000



### 3 - 4 YEARS PAE

In 2018, we saw the tipping point of private practice salaries generally outstripping in-house remuneration at the 5-6 PAE level. However, 2019 has seen a noticeable uptick in demand for in-house lawyers which may explain why salaries at the 3-4 PAE level in law firms are exceeding in-house salaries. Law firms are now paying a premium to retain their staff, particularly in high demand areas like construction.

FIRM SIZE	AVERAGE	LOWEST	HIGHEST
MICRO	\$74,000	\$54,000	\$125,000
SMALL	\$84,000	\$57,487	\$125,000
MEDIUM	\$86,500	\$62,500	\$110,000
LARGE	-	-	-
NATIONAL	\$98,000	\$76,000	\$119,000
GOVERNMENT	\$92,000	\$80,000	\$105,000
INTERNATIONAL	\$99,500	\$90,000	\$110,000
IN-HOUSE	\$102,500	\$100,000	\$105,000

### 4 - 5 YEARS PAE

Associate and Senior Associate promotions at this level explain the large variation in salaries for a number of firms.

FIRM SIZE	AVERAGE	LOWEST	HIGHEST
MICRO	\$86,000	\$65,700	\$100,000
SMALL	\$88,000	\$70,000	\$140,000
MEDIUM	\$88,500	\$80,000	\$95,200
LARGE	\$100,000	\$94,000	\$140,000
NATIONAL	-	-	-
GOVERNMENT	\$87,000	80,760	\$92,910
INTERNATIONAL	\$120,000	90,000	\$135,000
IN-HOUSE	123,500	\$110,000	\$130,000





## 5 - 6 YEARS PAE

At this level, firms have earmarked (and want to look after and retain) their high performers, which is highlighted by the significant difference between the highest and lowest salaries of the respondents.

FIRM SIZE	AVERAGE	LOWEST	HIGHEST
MICRO	\$97,500	\$75,000	\$120,450
SMALL	\$110,500	\$79,500	\$150,000
MEDIUM	\$95,500	\$87,600	\$110,740
LARGE	-	-	-
NATIONAL	\$126,500	\$100,000	\$158,000
GOVERNMENT	\$105,000	\$77,600	\$124,716
INTERNATIONAL	133,500	\$124,000	\$165,000
IN-HOUSE	124,000	\$104,000	\$150,000

## 6+ YEARS PAE (AVERAGE SALARY ONLY)

The figures in the table below are the Average Salary per position from the data collected from respondents with 6+ PAE. The range of salary is large at this level given there are many more factors influencing lawyer remuneration. These include practice area, bonuses, staff supervision, client introductions and promotions.

FIRM SIZE	SOLICITOR	ASSOCIATE	SENIOR ASSOCIATE	SPECIAL COUNSEL	PARTNER	SENIOR SOLICITOR	GENERAL COUNSEL
MICRO	\$76,500	\$102,000	\$96,000	\$92,000	\$105,500	-	-
SMALL	\$ 104,000	\$107,500	\$128,500	\$178,500	\$197,000	-	-
LARGE	-	-	\$120,000	-	-	-	-
MEDIUM	-	\$112,000	\$170,000	\$192,000	-	-	-
NATIONAL	\$87,500	\$116,000	\$157,000	\$207,000	\$197,000	-	-
GOVERNMENT	-	-	-	\$174,000	-	\$118,000	-
INTERNATIONAL	-	-	\$181,000	\$224,500	-	-	-
IN-HOUSE	\$145,000	-	-	-	-	\$174,500	\$245,500
EMPLOYER ASSOCIATION	-	-	\$131,500	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION	-	-	-	-	-	\$150,000	-

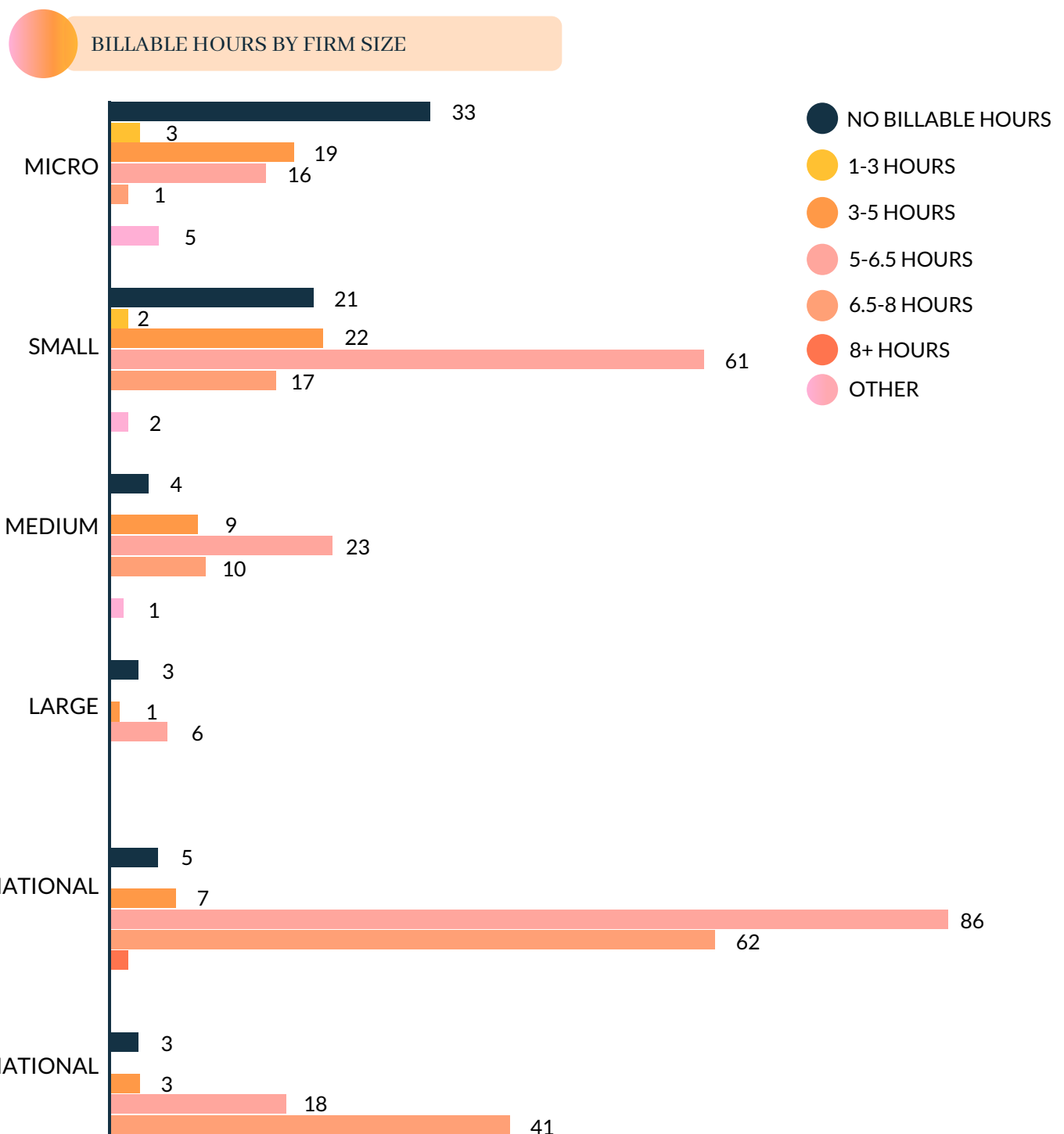


# BILLABLE HOURS

The most common budget for billable hours was between 5 and 6.5 hours per day (36.7%).

Only 10.9% of respondents had a budget of between 3 and 5 hours per day and less than 1% had a budget of between 1 and 3 hours per day. 1% of respondents had a budget of over 8 billable hours per day.

25% of respondents said that they did not have billable hours.



*Billable hours by firm size (number of responses)*



# BUDGETS

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47.5% of respondents did not know if they have an annual budget. The remaining 52.5% of respondents stated that their annual budgets were calculated by reference to their annual salaries, being:

- 24.8% had an annual budget of between three and four times their annual salaries
- 12.5% had an annual budget of between four and five times their annual salaries
- 10.5% had an annual budget of more than five times their annual salaries

18% of respondents noted that their budget was calculated in accordance with their billable hours.



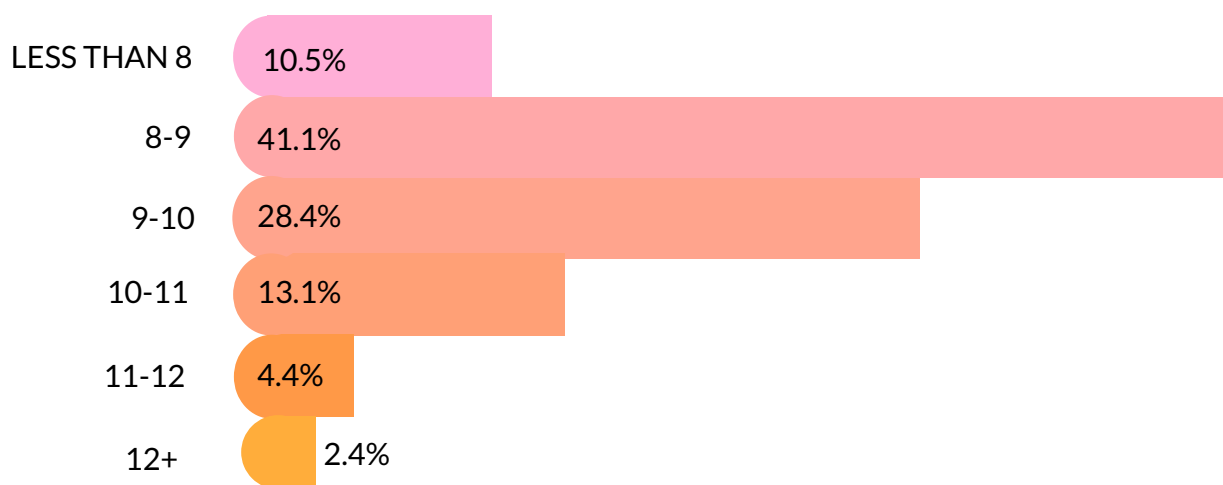
# HOURS WORKED

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41% of respondents estimated that the average number of hours they worked each day was between 8 and 9 hours. Less than 20% of respondents worked 10 or more hours each day.



## AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER DAY

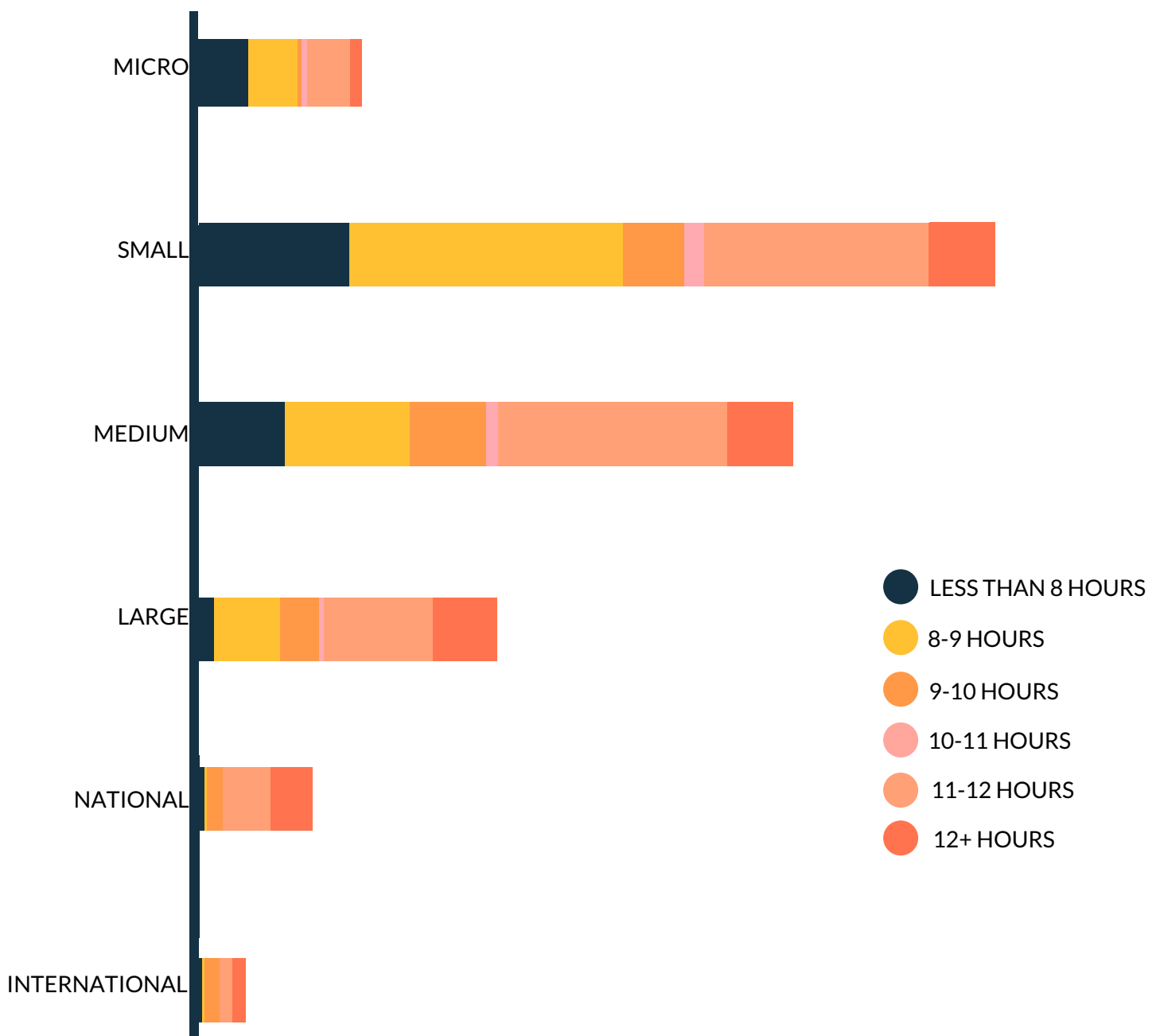




# AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER DAY



## AVERAGE HOURS BY FIRM SIZE

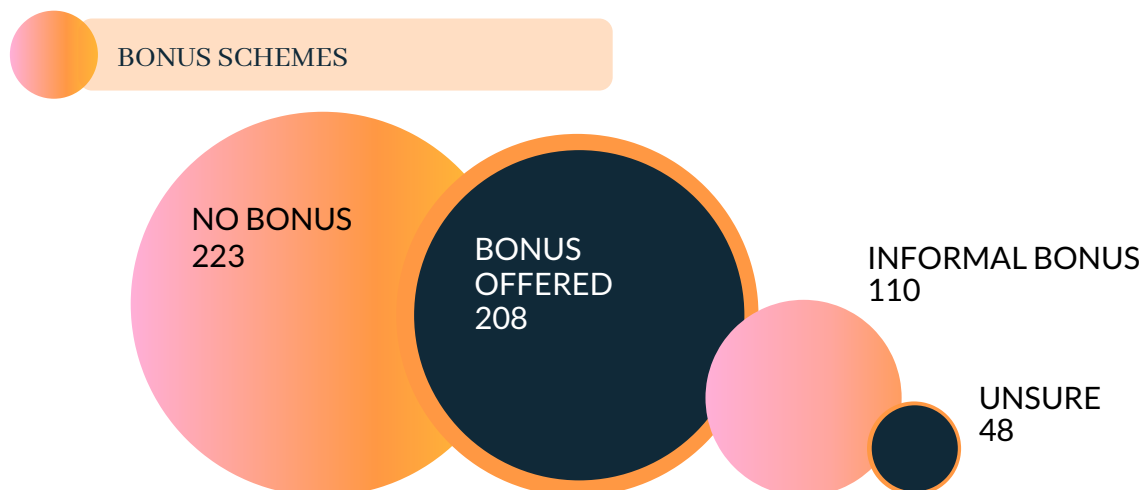




# BONUSES

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The most common bonus structure was obtaining a percentage of receipted fees over budget as a bonus.



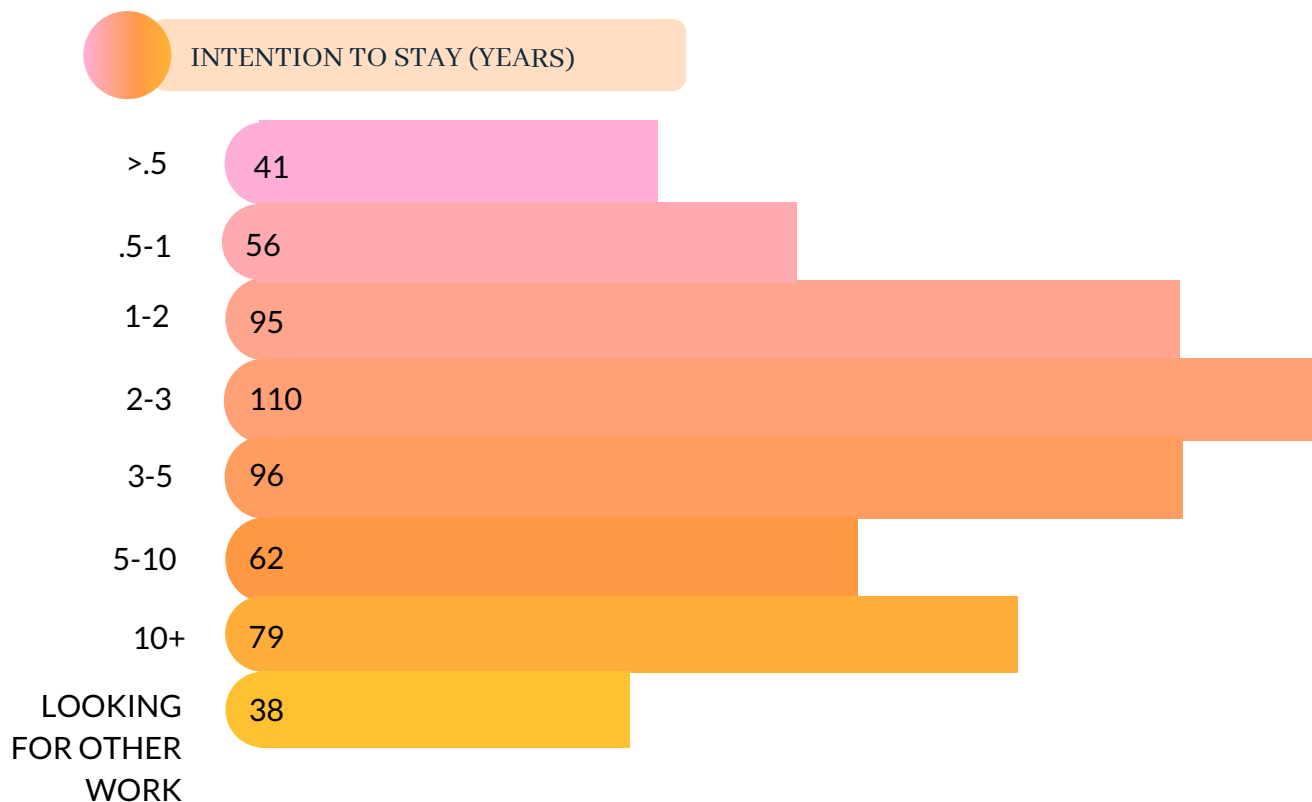
The most common percentage stated by respondents was 30%. Other responses included 10%, 15%, 20% and 33%. The highest percentage was 50% of any recovered fees over budget. Some were calculated on a quarterly basis and others annually.

Some respondents disclosed that their firm offered a fixed bonus of an amount if the lawyers made their budget. Some of these amounts included \$5,000 or \$10,000 and others had their bonuses capped at no more than 10% of their annual salary.



# STAYING POWER & FLEXIBILITY

Most respondents intend to stay at their employer for 2-3 years:

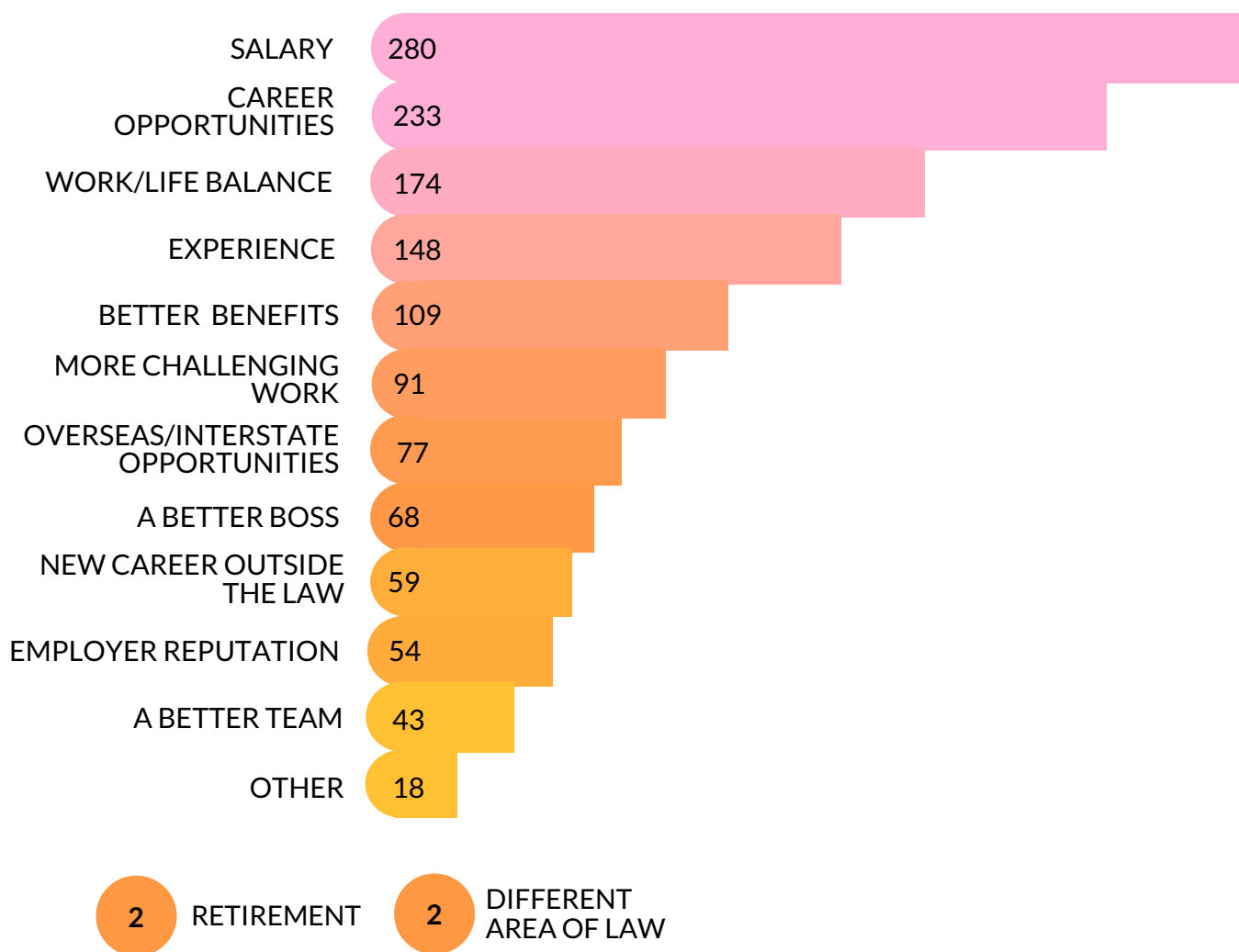




# KEY MOTIVATORS FOR MOVING FIRMS

The number one reason identified by respondents this year as a reason to leave their employer was salary, with 47.5% of respondents indicating this was their key motivator to move firms. This was closely followed by career opportunities (39%) and work/life balance (29.5%).

## MOTIVATORS FOR MOVING FIRMS





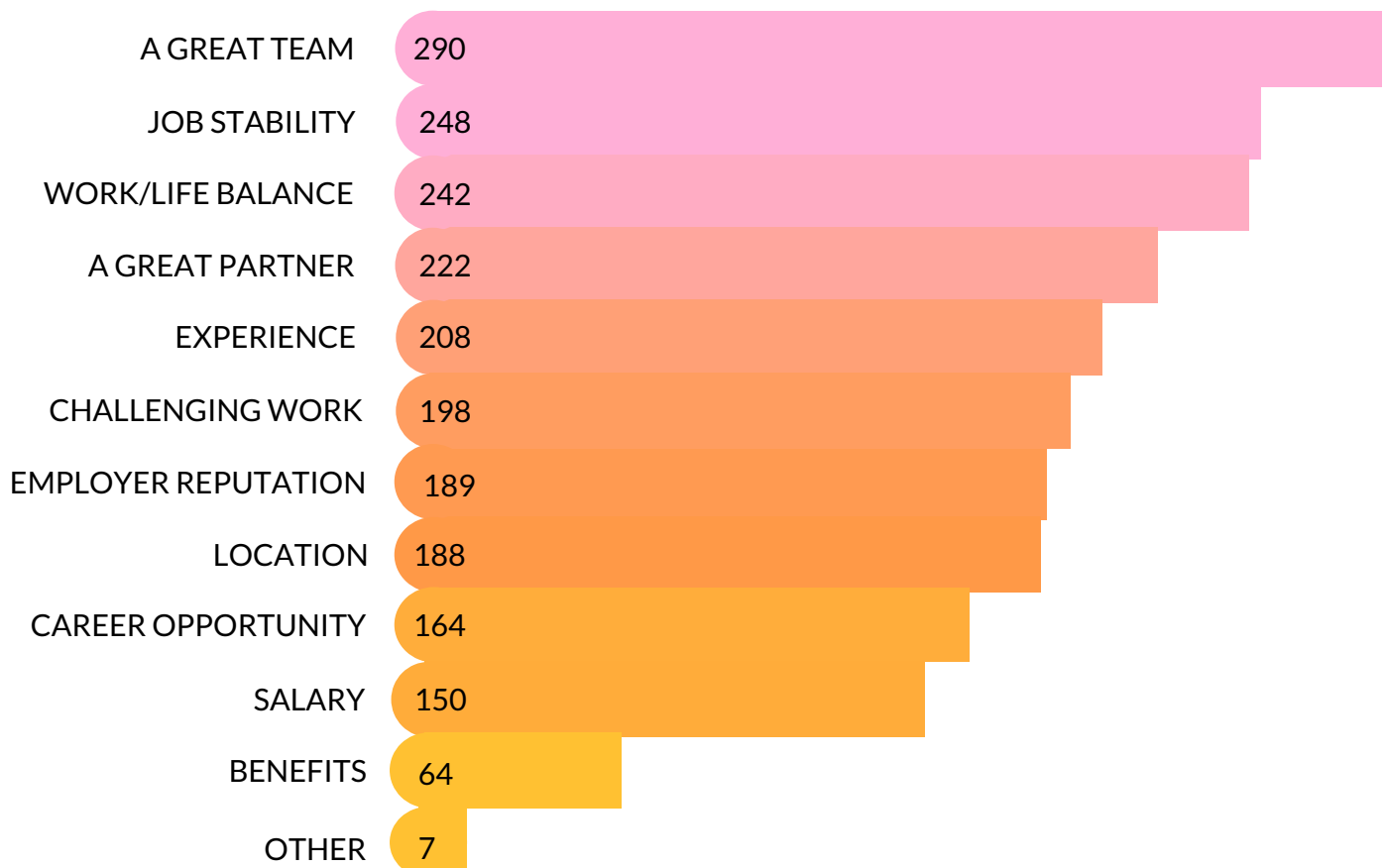


# KEY REASONS TO STAY

The number one reason identified by respondents this year as a reason to stay with their employer was a great team, with 49% of respondents indicating this was their key motivator to stay. This was closely followed by job stability (42%) and work/life balance (41%).



## KEY REASONS TO STAY





# FLEXIBILITY

Key results include:

- 38.2% of respondents stated that their firm offered no flexible working arrangements.
- 29.5% of respondents indicated that they had the option of working from home.
- 11.2% stated that their firm offered days in lieu.
- 0.8% stated that their firm allowed them to work part-time hours.

## FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS





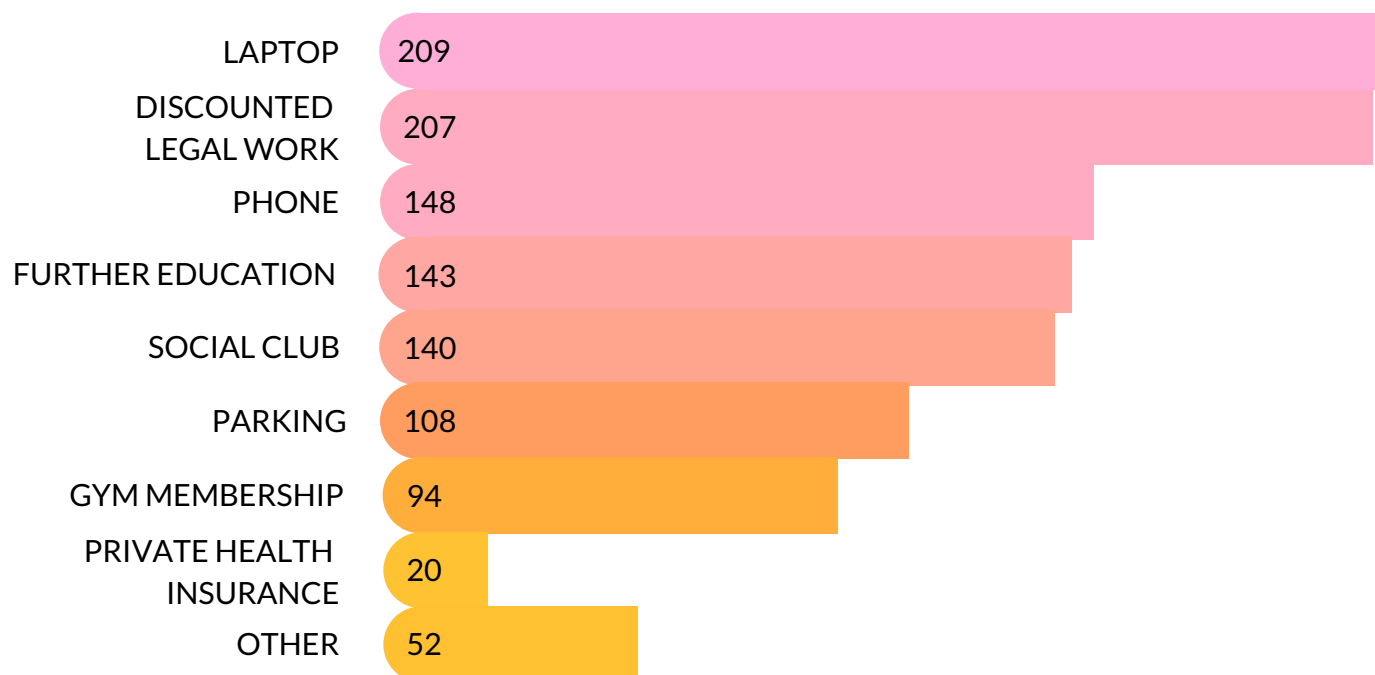
# BENEFITS

Key results include:

- 35.4% of respondents identified being given a laptop by their employer as an additional benefit.
- 25.1% of respondents received mobile phones and 24.2% received further education and support.



## ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

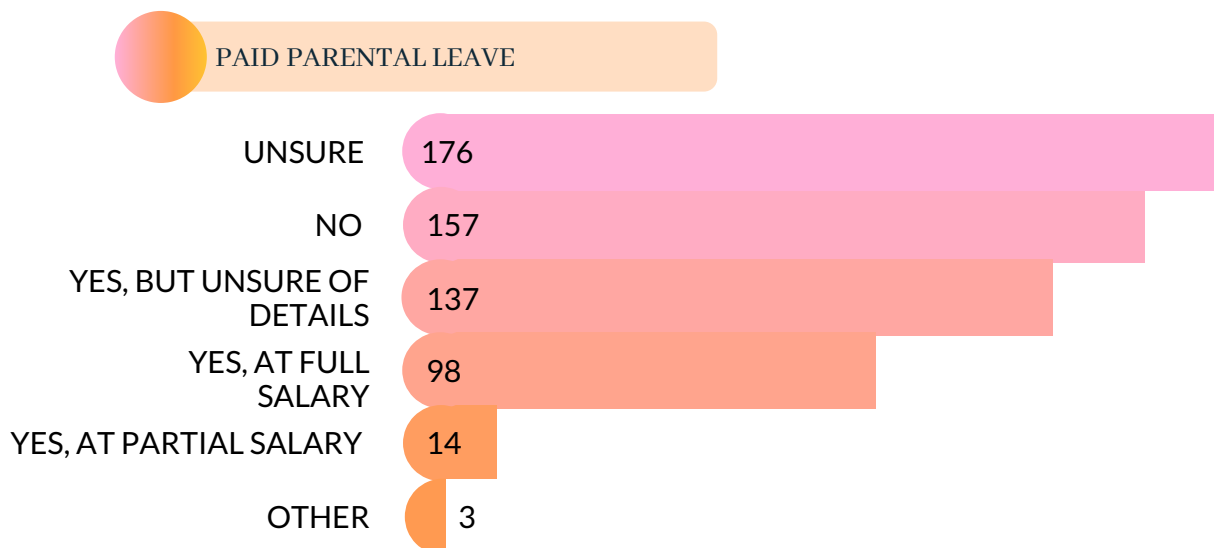




# PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

Key results include:

- 29.88% of respondents were unsure if their employer offered any paid parental leave.
- 26.66% of respondents were not entitled to any paid parental leave and 23.26% were entitled but were unsure of the details.
- 16.64% of respondents were entitled to a period of paid parental leave at full salary and 2.38% at partial salary.
- One respondent was only entitled to received paid parental leave after three years of full-time employment.





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# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A PAY REVIEW

Around the middle of the year we get a lot of enquiries from lawyers about what salary they should be on and generally seeking tips on how to negotiate it. Preparation is critical and it shouldn't be done simply the night before. In preparing for your review we have highlighted some of the key points here.



### BUSINESS CONVERSATION

A salary review meeting is a business conversation and you have to approach it as such. Law is quite unique in that a lot of lawyers we speak to simply expect a pay rise. However, for many professions, law included, you have to justify any increase in salary.

### JUSTIFICATION

There are a few key areas to think about when seeking a salary increase:

**Work quality** – Use your review to update your resume / transaction bible. This might help you highlight some of your work achievements for the year or matters where you have gone above and beyond your normal work requirements. Either way, a transaction bible helps form the basis of a good CV! Your Partner / Manager is busy and time poor and may not remember everything you have done during the year so use this opportunity to remind them;

**Financials** – have your financials handy and be across them or at the very least, ask to see them. It shows you are thinking in a commercial way and understand your value/cost to the business;

**Client feedback** – If clients give you good feedback ask for an email or testimonial. It can help build your case for that salary increase especially when your busy Partner / Manager may not be across the great feedback you are receiving;

**Marketing** – what marketing have you done and were there any successful outcomes to report?

### BENCHMARKING

Do market research and have a salary benchmark in mind that you can back up with data. The best source of reliable data doesn't just come from a salary survey but speaking to experienced, specialist legal recruiters (like Peppercorn Recruitment!) who can give you market based salary advice specific to your individual situation (level of post admission experience, firm type, practice area and performance).

For those of you in big firms there are salary bands that come from significant research done by your HR Departments (typically Mercer data for the big law firms) and there is usually a top and bottom range. Knowing what they are might help push you to the top of the band. In smaller firms, who often don't have access to such data, it may be the case that you need to educate your Partner about the market more generally. If you don't ask you definitely won't get!

### NEGOTIATE GOALPOSTS

If you don't get the salary increase that you wanted, it might be worth negotiating some KPIs or outcomes and link a salary to achievement of those outcomes with a specific timeline. Some firms do out of cycle salary reviews and this may allow you to be caught by that. For example, one candidate we recently placed was in line for a salary increase not in the June/July review but in the October "market review" where the firm again reviews data.



### CAREER CHECK

Use the hour you have with your busy Partner / Manager to do a career check. Your salary review is also the time to raise any other related issues with your supervisor. This is an hour you rarely get to discuss your career and nothing else. Some of these concerns might include:

- Are you being given enough work or indeed the right type of work to get you to the next step in your career (promotion, building your practice or moving on to a bigger firm, overseas, in-house/government)?;
- Are you getting sufficient supervision/mentoring/guidance?;
- Do you want to do further study;
- Do you see business or client opportunities;
- What goals/KPIs do you need to achieve next year to achieve a bonus if you didn't get it this year?

### CONCLUSION

At Peppercorn Recruitment, our Partners are both former lawyers and have a combined two decades of legal recruitment experience. We have provided frank, honest and pragmatic advice to many lawyers over their careers on matters such as negotiating salaries, drafting CVs, interview tips and tricks and of course, changing jobs.

We hope you find this a useful point of reference in your career planning, but should you wish to have a confidential discussion about how we can help, please contact either Peter or Ross on 07 3031 3625. We're happy to help!

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# CONCLUSION

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The goal for producing the 2019 Queensland Legal Salary Survey was straight forward – for young lawyers to “know their worth”.

Knowledge is power, and with this document, we hope that young lawyers are empowered in their next pay review or job interview.





#queenslandlegalsalarysurvey