

# 2018 NALA NATIONAL UTILIZATION AND COMPENSATION REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every other year, NALA conducts a survey of paralegals to explore their duties and responsibilities, as well as billing rates and compensation. NALA has compiled this survey since 1986. This is a summary of the findings of the 2018 survey, conducted from June to July, 2018. For this year's survey we received 1,112 responses. With the U.S. Department of Labor reporting more than 285,600 paralegal jobs in 2016, and the number of responses in our survey, we have a confidence level of 99% and a margin of error of 3.68. Even with the amount of data collected, we are mindful that at best we are providing a generalization of the paralegal industry.

This article provides a summary of some of the survey findings. The full report is available to NALA members, and available for purchase to non-members.

### WHO PARTICIPATED?

Of the 1,112 participants, 96% were female and about 50 years old. Most of these individuals have received their certified paralegal (CP) credential (70%), and 30% of the respondents hold the advanced certified paralegal (ACP) credential. The most responses were from NALA members (70%).

Of the respondents, more than half of them work in a city with less than 500,000 people and have earned a Bachelor's degree. Bachelor's degrees are projected to grow in the next few years among paralegals. Precisely 50% of respondents received a certificate in a paralegal program, which is up 6% since 2016.

The majority (34%) of the paralegals who responded had more than 25 years of legal experience, with 22% of the paralegals who responded having one to five years of experience.

### WHERE ARE PARALEGALS WORKING?

Respondents were from all of the United States. Most of the responses were from paralegals living in the southeast and southwest regions. The majority (54%) of the paralegals work in cities with less than 500,000 people. An additional 23% of the paralegals work in cities with more than 1 million residents.

### WORKING CONDITIONS

Most paralegals are working in private law firms (69%). This is an increase of 8% from our 2014 survey. Secretarial assistance is limited to almost the majority (49%) of paralegals, though a little over 20% report that they do have access to secretarial assistance.

Respondents reported that the amount of work that involves independent judgement has remained the same as 2016 at 86%. While the independent judgement has increased, the amount of client involvement has decreased by 3% overall to 56% vs. 59% in 2016. Case management duties have increased 15% from 2016. Supervisory/administrative duties have decreased 2% from 2016 to 42%.

More paralegals (3%) have employees that report to them compared to 2016 data. More paralegals are receiving their work from specific attorneys with an increase of 2% from 2014.

### SPECIALTY PRACTICE AREAS

Paralegals are spending 80 to 100% of their time in these 10 specialty areas:

1. Litigation – civil (38%)
2. Family law/domestic issues (29%)
3. Personal injury (28%)
4. Criminal (26%)
5. Administrative/government/public, including compliance (22%)
6. Insurance (21%)
7. Medical malpractice (19%)
8. Contracts (18%)
9. Corporate (17%)
10. Mass tort litigation (17%)

### BILLING RATES AND COMPENSATION

Paralegals are billing at rates similar to prior years with the larger firms having a higher billing rate, and the more experienced paralegals billing at higher rates. Average compensation for paralegals has increased to \$67,578, which is a 9.6% increase compared to 2016 at \$61,671.

For more information on how to obtain a copy of the full report, please visit the NALA website at <https://www.nala.org>.

NALA members have exclusive access to the full 34-page report as a member benefit.

If you are not a NALA member but wish to view the survey, it can be purchased on our website for \$79.