



## 2008 COMPENSATION SURVEY

BY GUEST COLUMNIST JASMINE K. MEHTA

*“Survey results allow attorneys to evaluate salary and working conditions in the job market and allow employers to make fair and informed offers to potential employees.”*

Every two years, the Young Lawyers Section conducts a survey on salary compensation within the state of Nevada. The results allow attorneys to evaluate salary and working conditions in the job market and allow employers to make fair and informed offers to potential employees.

### Participants:

In the summer of 2008, Nevada-licensed attorneys who are members of the Young Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Nevada were e-mailed a link to an electronic compensation survey. A link to the survey was also posted on the Young Lawyers Section web page on the state bar’s website. By definition, a young lawyer is someone who is 36 years old or younger or who has been practicing law in Nevada for fewer than five years (note that Nevada’s definition varies from the American Bar Association’s Young Lawyers Division, which applies the five-year criteria to an attorney’s first bar). The survey was conducted entirely online, and 151 young lawyers responded in the fall of 2008. The number of responses this year was much lower than the 347 responses to the 2006 Compensation Survey. Obviously, a lower response rate makes the results less representative of the demographics of young lawyers.

Male respondents outnumbered female respondents by nearly 2 to 1 (males:  $n = 92$ , 60.9%; females:  $n = 59$ , 39.1%). Likewise, married responders ( $n = 94$ , 63.1%), and those self-identifying as “in a committed relationship/civil union” ( $n = 22$ , 14.8%), outnumbered single ( $n = 27$ , 18.1%) and divorced responders ( $n = 3$ , 2.0%) by more than 2 to 1.

The majority of the respondents self-identified as Caucasian ( $n = 121$ , 81.8%), a 2-percent decrease from 2006, with remaining participants indicating they were of multiracial ( $n = 9$ , 6.1%) (a 4-percent increase from 2006),

Hispanic/Latino ( $n = 5$ , 3.4%), Asian/Pacific Islander ( $n = 4$ , 2.7%), or African-American ( $n = 3$ , 2.0%) descent. Three individuals (0.02%) did not respond to this question, which is down from the 5.7 percent of non-responders in 2006. The age of the respondents ranged from 25 to 71.

Young lawyers licensed in Nevada were surveyed regardless of whether or not they actually reside in the state. Of the submitted responses, over two-thirds of the attorneys practiced in Las Vegas ( $n = 101$ , 68.2%). Attorneys working in Reno ( $n = 20$ , 13.5%), Carson City ( $n = 4$ , 2.7%), and rural Nevada ( $n = 2$ , 1.4%) rounded out the in-Nevada component of the respondents. Out-of-state attorneys ( $n = 12$ , 8.1%), and attorneys practicing in Lake Tahoe ( $n = 3$ , 2.0%) comprised the remainder of the sample.

The law schools attended varied greatly. The Boyd School of Law at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas continued to make up a very strong segment of the respondents ( $n = 42$ , 28.2%), a 10-percent increase over 2006. BYU had the next greatest number of graduates comprising YLS members ( $n = 9$ , 6.0%), followed by Cal-Western ( $n = 7$ , 4.7%) and McGeorge ( $n = 5$ , 3.4%).

The most common areas of practice cited were litigation (60%, a 24% increase from 2006), real estate (31.7%, a 20% increase from 2006), commercial (29.7%), corporate (29%), personal injury (27.6%), insurance (21.4%), and administrative (17.2%). Domestic law practitioners and criminal law practitioners were nearly even at 13.8 percent and 12.4 percent, respectively. In terms of practice settings, 118 participants (78%) worked in private law firms (ranging from one to 40-plus attorneys). Seventeen attorneys (11.9%) worked for the government/state, and four (2.8%) were solo practitioners.



**Base Salary for 2007-2008:**

For all responders (n = 144) to the survey, the mode (the most frequent response) (n = 18) for 2007 salaries was \$90,001 to \$95,000. The range of responses ran from lows of \$0 to \$20,000 (three responses collectively) to \$160,000 for 2007. For 2008, the responses ranged from lows of \$0 to \$20,000 (n = 3) to a high of \$165,000 (n = 1). For males (n = 86), the mode salary was \$65,001 to \$70,000 (n = 10), and the range ran from \$0 (n = 2) to \$140,000 (n = 1). In 2008, the mode salary was \$80,001 to \$85,000 (n = 10), ranging from \$0 (n = 1) to \$155,000 (n = 3). For females (n = 58), the range of responses ran from a low of \$0 from legal practice because they were not yet licensed (n = 2) to a high of \$160,000 (n = 1), and the mode was \$90,001 to \$95,000 (n = 9) for 2007. For 2008, expected salaries ranged from a low of \$20,000 (n = 1) to a high of \$165,000 (n = 1), with a mode of \$100,001 to \$105,000.

Las Vegas responses (n = 99) ranged from a low of \$0 (n = 1) to a high of \$160,000 (n = 1), with a mode (n = 15) of \$90,001 to \$95,000 for 2007, and \$10,000 (n = 1) to \$165,000 (n = 1), with a mode (n = 13) of \$95,001 to \$100,000 for 2008. Of the Reno respondents who answered the question (n = 18), the responses ranged from a low of \$45,000 (n = 1) to a high of \$125,000 (n = 1), with a mode (n = 4) of \$110,001 to \$115,000 for 2007. The average Reno salary in 2007 was \$96,190. The average expected salary in 2008 was \$106,180. There were four modes for 2008, ranging from \$105,001 to \$110,000 (n = 2); \$115,001 to \$120,000 (n = 2); \$120,001 to \$125,000 (n = 2) and \$130,001 to \$135,000 (n = 2).

Carson City respondents (n = 4) reported salaries ranging from \$59,000 to \$89,000 and expected salaries for 2008 ranging from \$61,000 to \$103,000. The average for 2007 was \$73,500, and the expected average for 2008 was \$80,750. The three Lake Tahoe practitioners had salaries ranging from \$79,000 to \$140,000 for 2007, and \$85,000 to \$142,500 for 2008. Results from rural Nevada are sparse. Only two responders identified themselves as practicing in rural parts of the state. One reported a 2007 income of \$69,000, and an expected 2008 income of \$70,000. The other reported a salary of \$65,000 for both 2007 and 2008.

**Billable Hours:**

A billable hours requirement impacted 95 of the 146 respondents who answered the question (65.1%), down from 80 percent in the 2006 Compensation Survey. The billable hours requirement ranged from a low of 980 hours annually (n = 1) to a high of 2400 hours annually (n = 2). The mode was 1800 hours annually (n = 24).

**Bonuses:**

Respondents were also asked if they received a salary bonus. Almost 80 percent of the sample (n = 144, 79.2%) answered the question affirmatively. Seventy-two respondents reported the amount of their bonus received: 40 respondents

(56.0%) reported a bonus of \$5,000 or less; 10 respondents (14.0%) reported a bonus in the \$5,001 to \$10,000 range; 10 respondents (14.0%) reported a bonus in the \$10,001 to \$15,000 range; and six respondents (8.0%) reported a bonus in the \$15,001 to \$20,000 range. Two people (3.0%) received bonuses in the \$20,001 to \$25,000 range. Four people reported bonuses in excess of \$25,000 and one of those reported a bonus in excess of \$50,000.

**Benefits:**

Results revealed that employers offered a range of benefits to their employees. Health insurance was available to 95.1 percent of the sample (n = 135), down slightly from 96.4 percent in 2006. Employees were also offered dental insurance (n = 115, 81.0%), which is up from 76.6 percent in 2006. Employees were also offered vision insurance (n = 80, 56.3%), life insurance (n = 84, 59.2%), dependent health insurance (n = 49, 34.5%), and disability insurance (n = 55, 38.7%), the latter of which is down from 46.4 percent in 2006. The majority of employers also covered professional membership dues (n = 121, 85.2%) and payment of continuing legal education fees (n = 123, 86.6%). Over two-thirds of the sample (n = 11, 78.2%) indicated that professional liability insurance was an additional benefit that they received. Only 40 respondents reported that their employers offered paid Family Medical Leave Act leave (28.2%).

**Involvement in Pro Bono and State Bar Activities:**

The majority of respondents reported that their employers somewhat encourage pro bono activity (n = 61, 42.7%) or tolerate it (n = 37, 25.9%). Only 13 respondents reported that their employers strongly encouraged pro bono activity. The responses were similar for state bar activities: 52.8 percent (n = 76) reported that their employers somewhat encourage active participation with the state bar; 18.1 percent (n = 26) reported that their employers tolerate it; and 16 percent (n = 23) reported that their employers strongly encouraged it.

When asked whether they participated in Young Lawyer's Section activities in the past year, the majority of respondents (n = 87, 60.4%) reported that they had never participated in Young Lawyers Section activities. Fifty-seven respondents (40.0%) reported that they had participated infrequently.

**Employer Flexibility Regarding Family Demands on Employees' Time:**

This year's survey added questions about employer flexibility with respect to family demands that may affect employees. Fifty-four (38.6%) of the 140 respondents who answered whether or not they were the primary caregiver

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reported in the affirmative. The majority (n = 86, 61.4%) reported that they were not. The overwhelming majority of respondents reported that their employers were very supportive (n = 74, 52.5%) or somewhat supportive (n = 55, 39.0%) of family demands on employees' time. Only five respondents of the 141 who answered the question reported that their employers were not supportive.

When asked if they believed their role as a caregiver negatively impacted their potential for advancement with their employer, 36 out of 50 respondents (72.0%) reported no. Two respondents said the question was not applicable. Twelve respondents (24.0%) reported that they believed their potential for advancement was negatively impacted by their role as a caregiver.

In addition to the quantitative questions above, the survey asked what kind of flexibility was offered by employers. Most reported that the firm allowed them

flexible time to take care of family needs so long as yearly billable hours were met. Several respondents reported that their employers offered remote access capabilities so that they could work from home on occasion.

### What Do Young Lawyers Like About Their Employment?

In addition to the quantitative data recited above, the survey contained open-ended questions which asked respondents to identify what they liked most and least about their current positions. In the "like most" column, words like "people," "responsibility," "flexibility," "relaxed atmosphere" appear frequently. Only three of the 106 respondents reported "money" or "salary" as what they liked most. A few responses were worthy of note: "Ability to work independently and receiving encouragement and support in growing a niche practice;" "Big firm benefits – little firm feel;" "Helping people;" and "The people I work with."

In the "like least" column, the overwhelming majority of responses focused on "billable hours." Other familiar complaints including "inaccessibility of some partners" and "low pay" were both cited frequently. Some notable comments included: "Struggling to get the billable hours in when I also am responsible for so much administrative/non-billable tasks;" "Corporate nonsense;" and "Lack of formal maternity policy." The survey results are viewable online at the Young Lawyers Section webpage: [www.nvbar.org/sections/Sections\\_Young\\_Lawyers.htm](http://www.nvbar.org/sections/Sections_Young_Lawyers.htm). **NL**

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