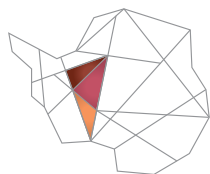


ABOVE THE LAW

# 2022 In-House Compensation Survey Report



LAKE  
WHILLANS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 3 | Introduction

## 4 | Respondent Demographics

Market Size .....	4
Company Size .....	4
Industries Represented .....	4
Size of Legal Department .....	5
Area of Practice .....	5
Regions Represented .....	6
Year of Law School Graduation .....	7
Gender .....	8
Race/Ethnicity .....	8

## 9 | Base Pay

Base Pay: All Respondents .....	9
Base Pay by Market Size .....	10
Base Pay by Company Size .....	11
Base Pay by Industry .....	14
Base Pay by Department Size .....	16
Base Pay by Region .....	18
Base Pay by Area of Practice .....	20
Base Pay by Experience .....	22
Base Pay by Gender .....	24

## 25 | Bonuses

Target Bonus .....	25
Actual Bonus Received .....	26
Bonus Received by Market Size .....	27
Bonus Received by Company Size .....	28
Bonus Received by Industry .....	29
Bonus Received by Area of Practice .....	30
Bonus Received by Experience .....	31
Bonus Received by Gender .....	32

## 33 | Raises

Average Raise: All Respondents .....	33
Average Raise by Market Size .....	33
Average Raise by Company Size .....	34
Average Raise by Industry .....	34
Average Raise by Department Size .....	35
Average Raise by Experience .....	35
Average Raise by Gender .....	36

## 37 | Stock Compensation

Stock Compensation: All Respondents .....	37
Stock Compensation by Company Size .....	37
Stock Compensation of 25% or More by Industry .....	38

**How much do in-house attorneys really make?** Having a sense of the compensation universe is essential not only for working corporate counsel who want to benchmark their pay but also for attorneys considering whether to leave the law firm world for a position in house.

That's where Above The Law's In-House Compensation Survey comes in. Working with our friends at Lake Whillans, leaders in the burgeoning field of litigation finance, we conducted a survey of corporate counsel about their compensation earlier this year. As experts who partner with in-house attorneys to devise strategies to manage risk and ease pressure on their departments' budgets, Lake Whillans takes a keen interest in the developments taking place in corporate law departments.

This year's survey had record participation. Between March and October 2022, we heard from more than 1,600 in-house attorneys who were asked to provide the following information:

- year of law school graduation
- whether or not they work in a big city (which can affect compensation)
- geographic region
- company size (including six categories, from "small private company" to "Fortune 250")
- industry in which they work
- size of legal department
- type of work they engage in (corporate, employment, litigation, etc.)
- base pay
- target bonus (as a percentage of base pay)
- actual bonus received for the last few years
- average raise received over the last few years
- what, if any, stock compensation they receive (as a percentage of base pay)

In addition to comparing salaries by market and company size, this year we also took a closer look at compensation filtered by industry, geographic region, area of practice, size of legal department, years of experience, and gender.

Read on for more insights into the compensation practices at corporate legal departments across the country.

#### Among our findings:

- Almost **90%** of respondents earn a base salary of **at least \$150,000**; the most common range is \$200,000 to \$249,000.
- Compensation **varies significantly among small and medium-sized private companies**, with both the high and low ends of the scale well represented, while in-house pay at **Fortune 250/500/1000 companies** tends to be more **concentrated in the middle** ranges.
- The majority of respondents receive some kind of bonus; the **most substantial bonuses** were reported in the **finance and energy** industries.
- For **two-thirds** of respondents, **raises** in recent years **have averaged less than 5%** of their pay, and **11% received no raise** at all. Lawyers in departments with five or fewer attorneys are the most likely to have received raises of at least 5%.
- Just over **half of respondents receive stock** as part of their compensation package, for most of whom it represents **less than 25% of their base pay**. Among those whose stock is **worth 25% or more**, the largest group work in the **tech sector**.
- The industry with the most respondents earning **\$400,000 or more** is **media & entertainment**; the insurance sector has the highest percentage of respondents who earn **less than \$150,000**.
- **High salaries and bonuses** are more common among counsel who focus on **corporate work** than litigation.
- **Men** were more likely than women to report receiving the **highest salaries, bonuses, and raises**.

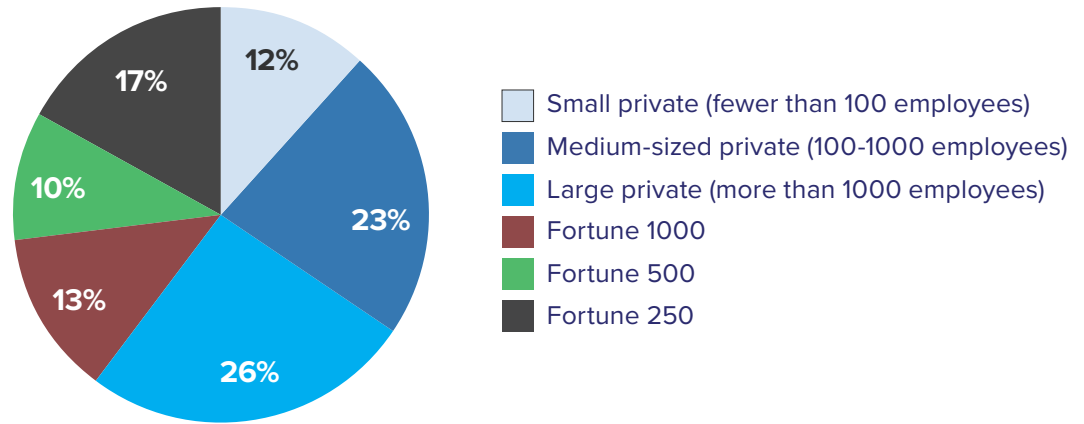
# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

**1,600+** total respondents

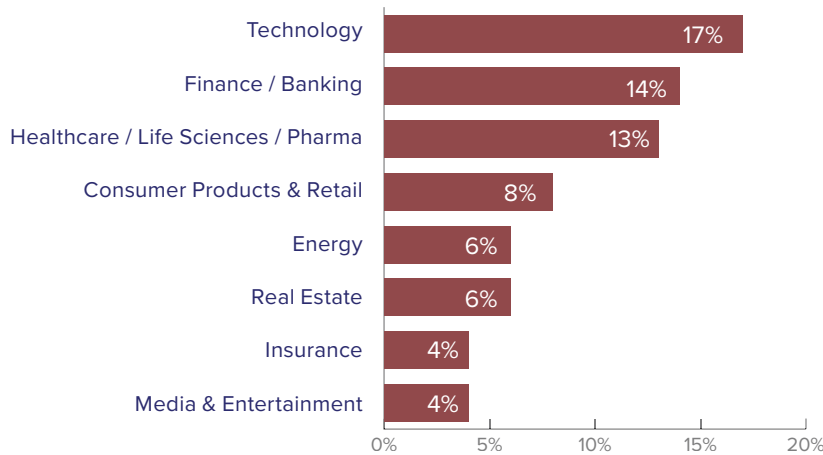
## MARKET SIZE

**70%**  
of respondents  
practice in  
a city with a  
population  
of **1 million+**

## COMPANY SIZE



## INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED



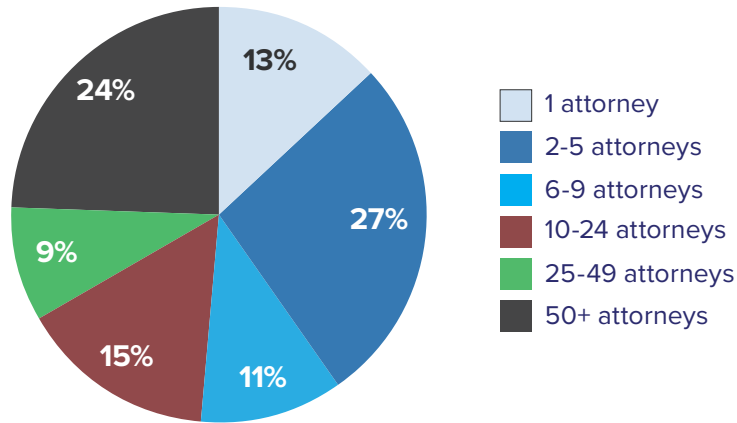
More than **70%** of respondents work in one of the eight industries listed here.

## OTHER SECTORS REPRESENTED IN THE SURVEY POOL INCLUDE:

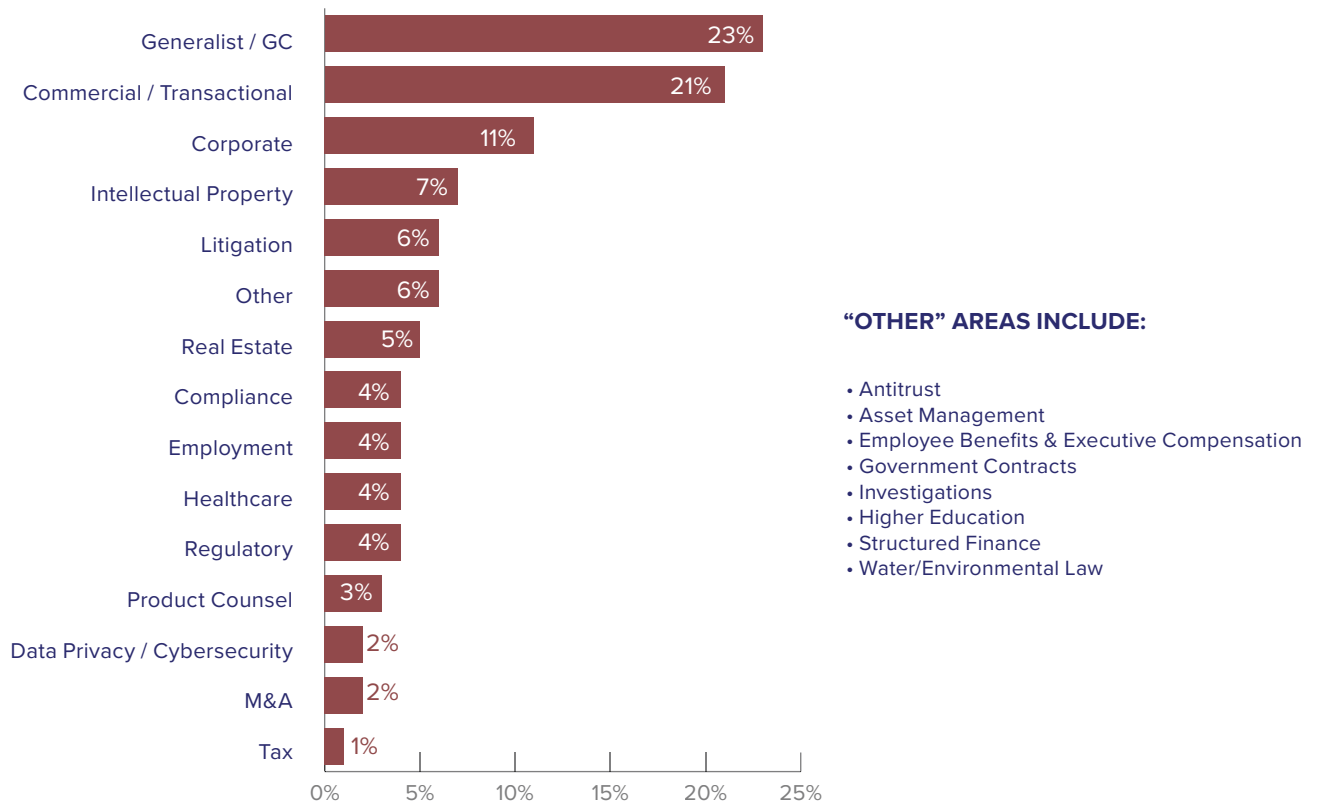
- Agriculture
- Automobiles
- Construction
- Consulting
- Defense
- Education
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Industrial Products
- Manufacturing
- Nonprofit
- Telecommunications
- Transportation &

# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## SIZE OF LEGAL DEPARTMENT



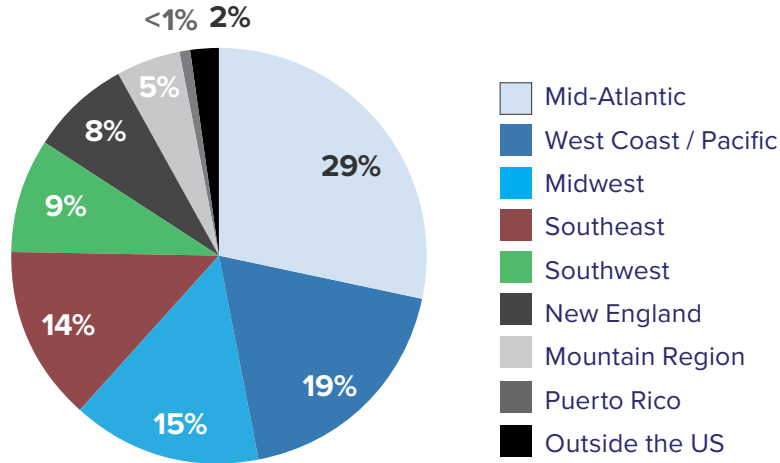
## AREA OF PRACTICE



Where the data is segmented by practice area, this report will focus on the top five areas in which the majority of respondents practice: **Generalist, Commercial/ Transactional, Corporate, Intellectual Property, and Litigation.**

# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## REGIONS REPRESENTED



Almost all 50 states are represented in the survey pool, and **98%** of respondents are located in one of the following US regions:

### Mid-Atlantic:

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

### West Coast / Pacific:

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

### Midwest:

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin

### Southeast:

Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

### Southwest:

Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

### New England:

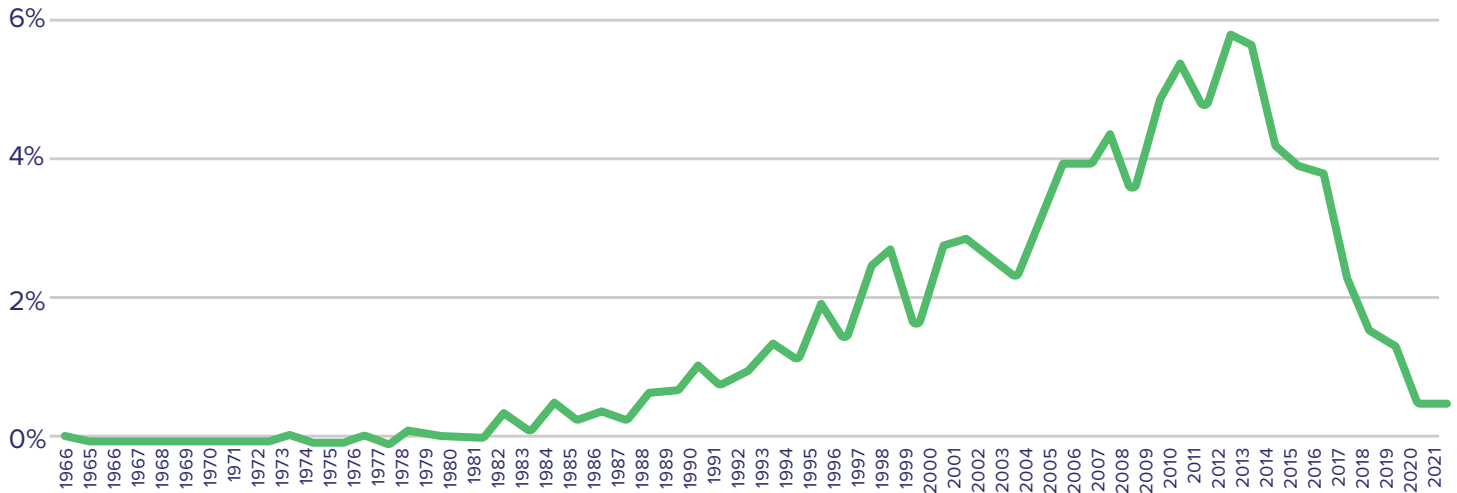
Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

### Mountain Region:

Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming

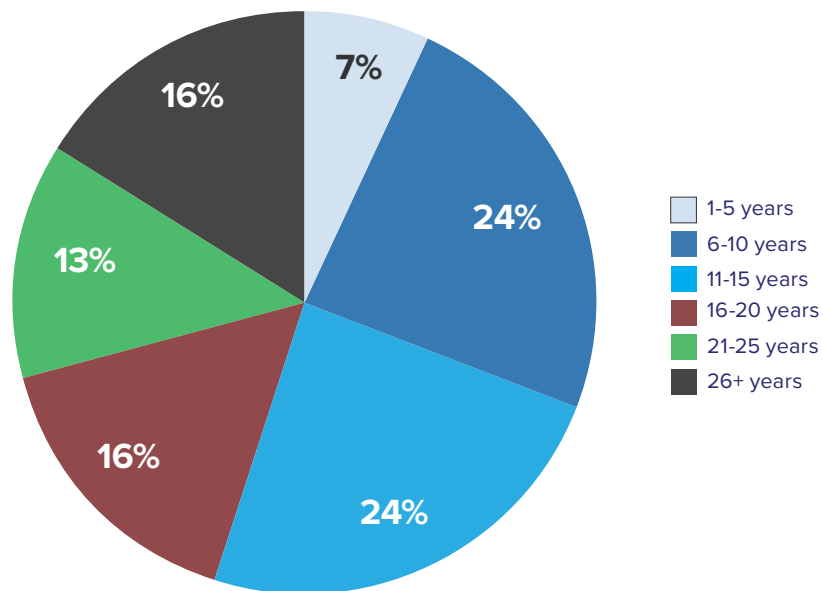
# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## YEAR OF LAW SCHOOL GRADUATION



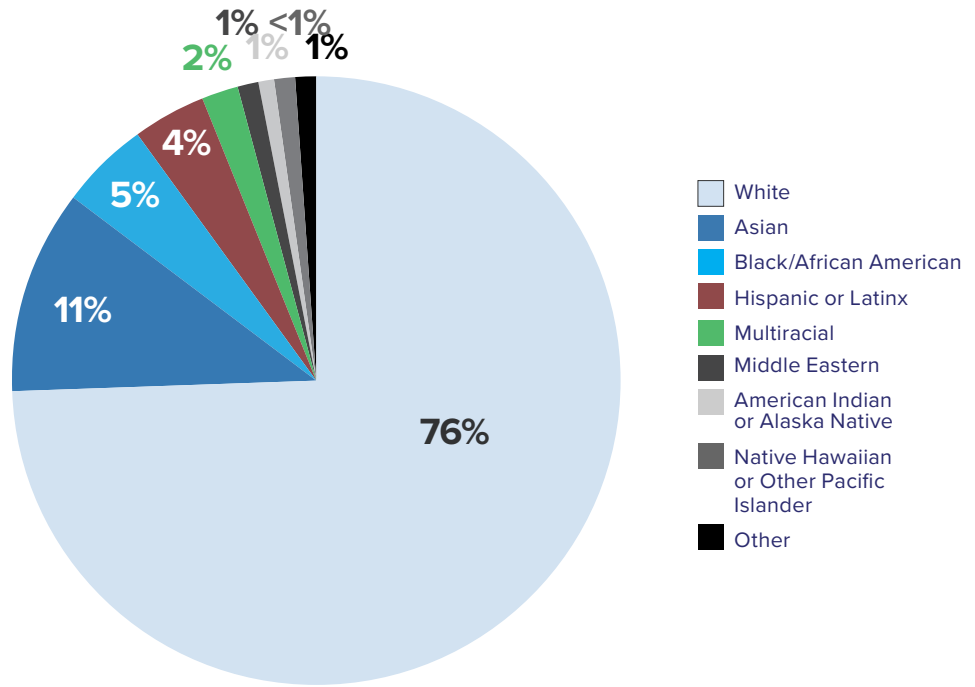
For the purposes of this report, we have grouped respondents into the following cohorts based on the number of years since they graduated law school:

## NUMBER OF YEARS OUT OF LAW SCHOOL

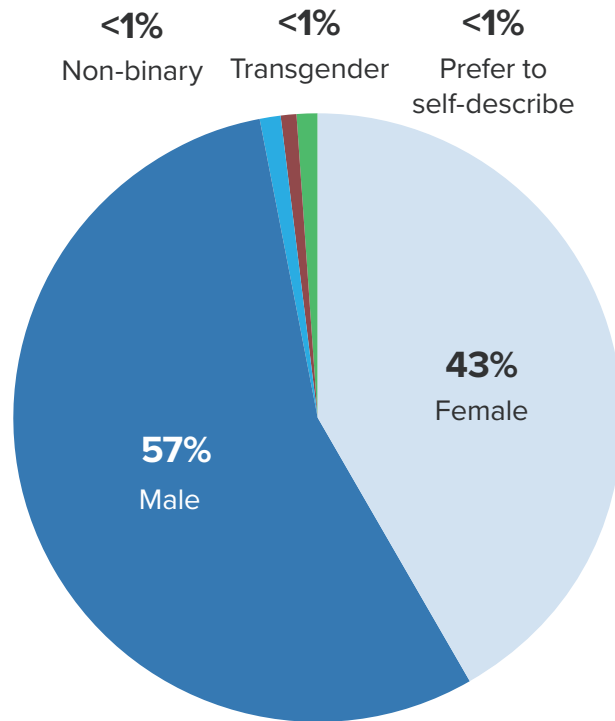


# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## RACE/ETHNICITY



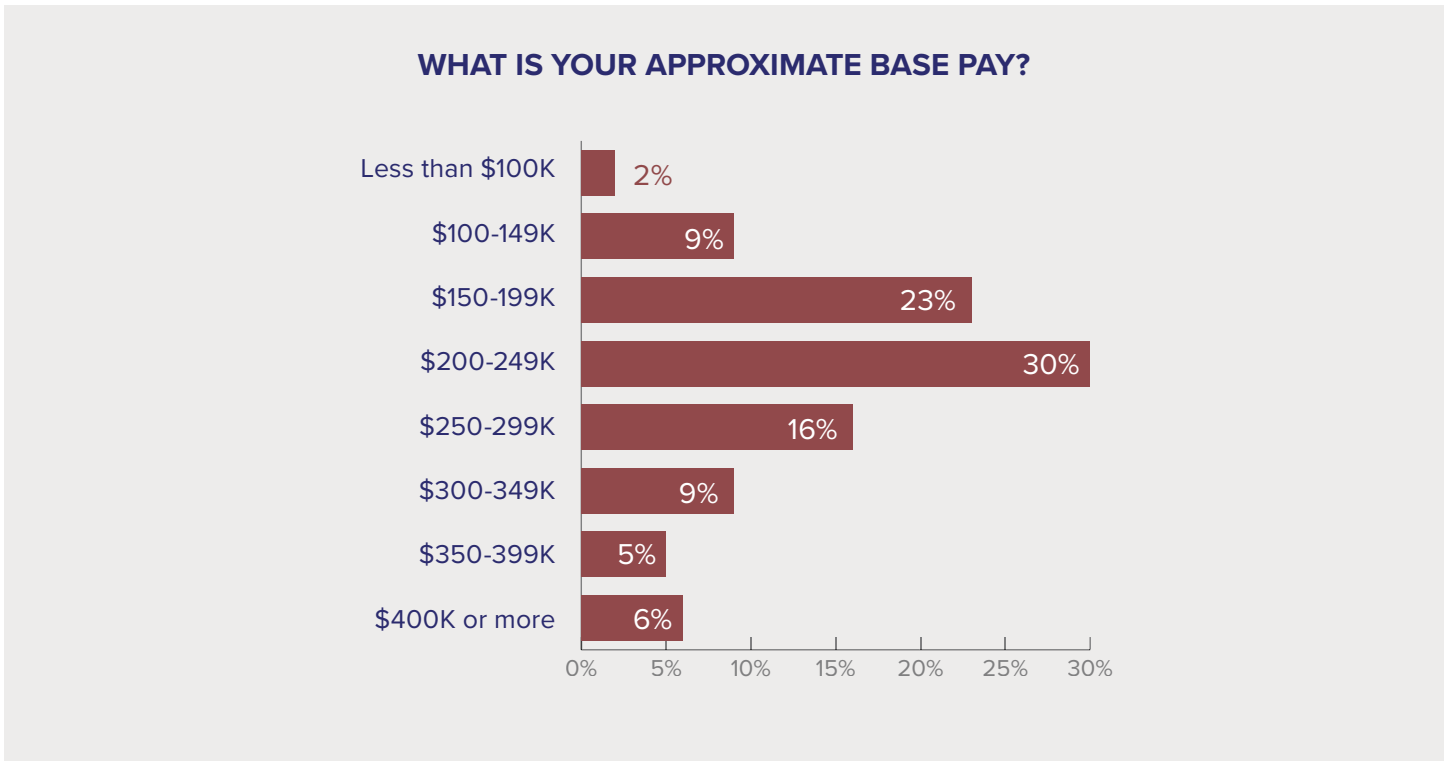
## GENDER





# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY: ALL RESPONDENTS



The vast majority of respondents (**89%**) reported earning a base salary of at least **\$150,000**.

The most common salary range (identified by **30%** of respondents) is **\$200,000 to \$249,000**.

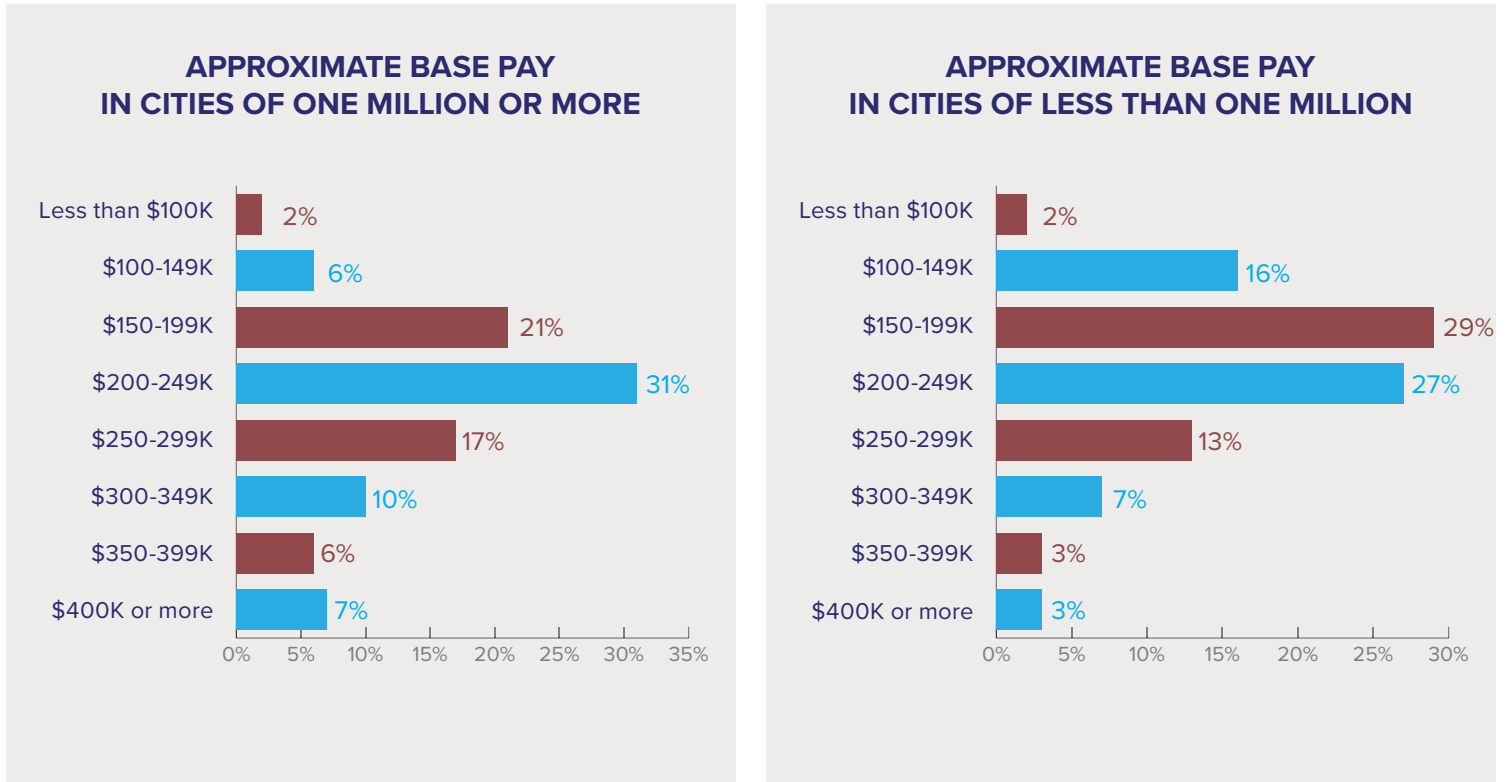
**6%** of respondents reported earning **\$400,000 or more**.

Just **2%** of in-house attorneys said they make less than **\$100,000**.

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# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY MARKET SIZE



Corporate counsel working in larger markets are generally likely to make more money than those in smaller markets.

**71%** of respondents in cities of one million or more reported base pay of **\$200,000 or higher**, compared to **53%** of respondents in **smaller cities**.

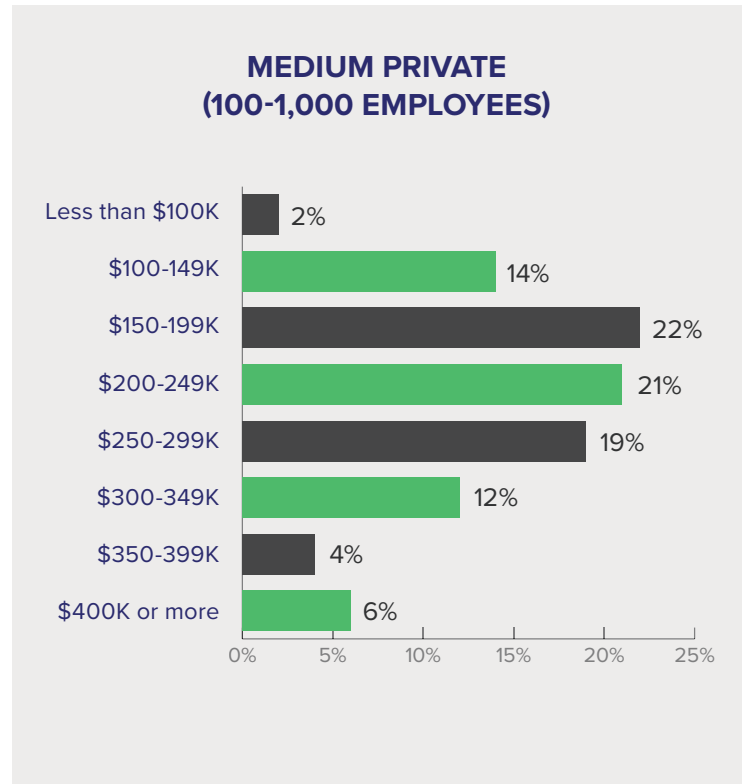
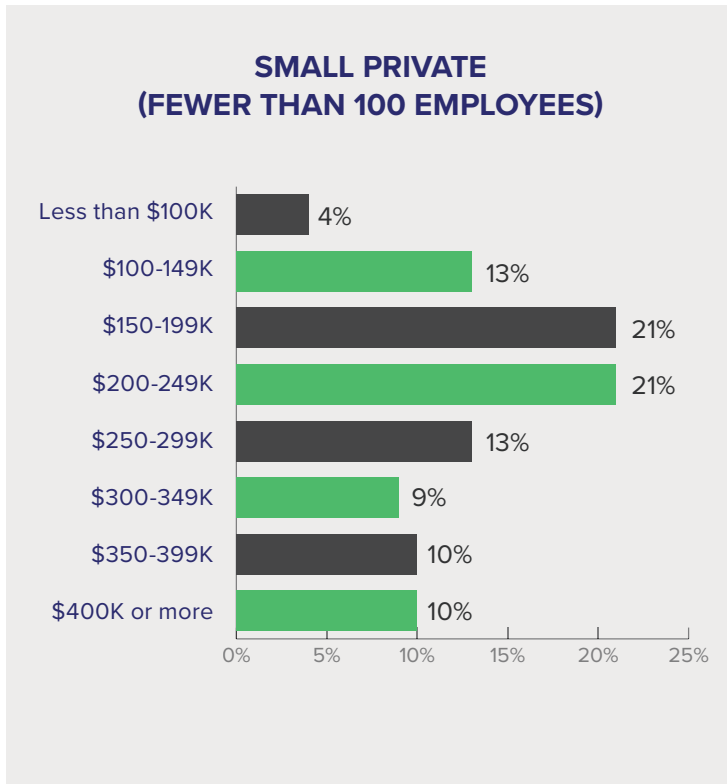
In smaller cities, **\$150,000 to \$199,000** is the most common salary range, while in larger markets the most common range is **\$200,000 to \$249,000**.

At the high end of the spectrum, **7%** of respondents in large cities reported receiving at least **\$400,000** in base pay, while just **3%** of in-house counsel in smaller cities did.

Few attorneys in either market reported earning **less than \$100,000**. But among respondents in smaller cities, **16%** reported base pay between **\$100,000 and \$149,000**, compared to **6%** of respondents in larger cities.

# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY COMPANY SIZE



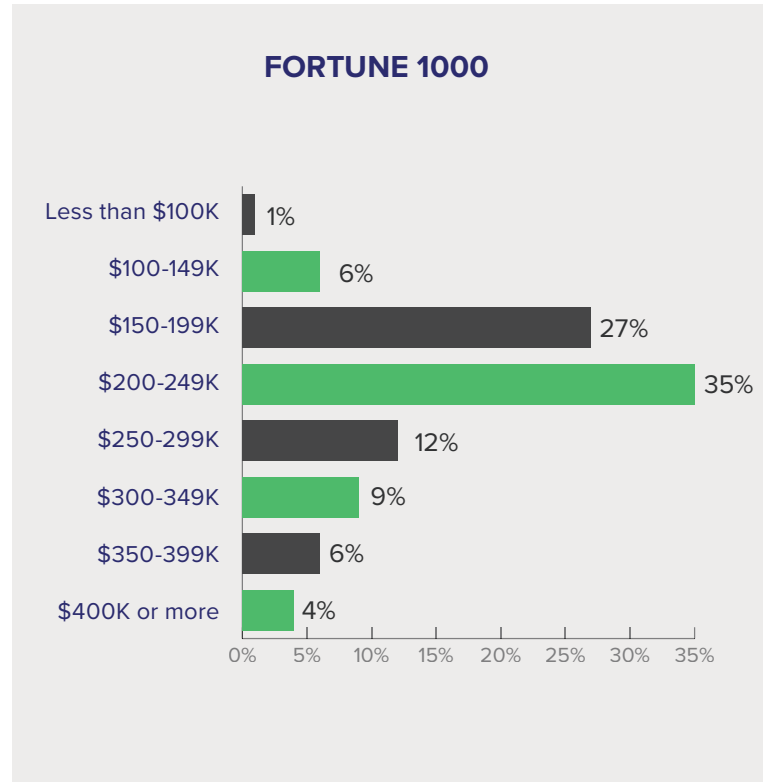
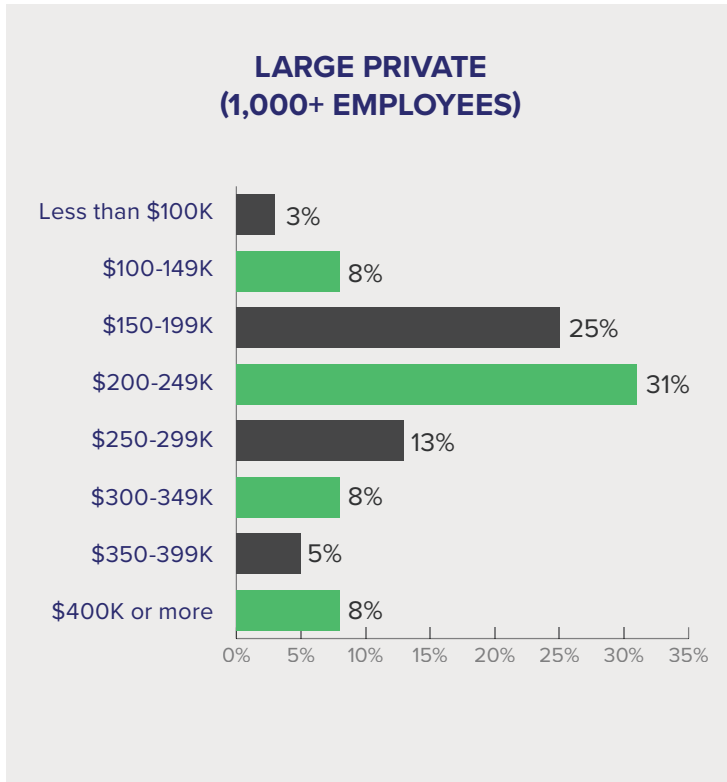
Base pay for corporate counsel at small private companies varies significantly. The largest clusters, each representing **21%** of respondents, are in the ranges of **\$150,000 to \$199,000** and **\$200,000 to \$249,000**. **17%** of respondents make **less than \$150,000**.

At the high end of the scale, **20%** of attorneys at small companies reported earning **\$350,000 or more**. This is a higher percentage than that reported by respondents at both larger private companies and public Fortune 250/500/1000 companies.

Among counsel at medium-sized private companies, the most common salary ranges are **\$150,000 to \$199,000** and **\$200,000 to \$249,000**, closely followed by **\$250,000 to \$299,000**.

# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY COMPANY SIZE

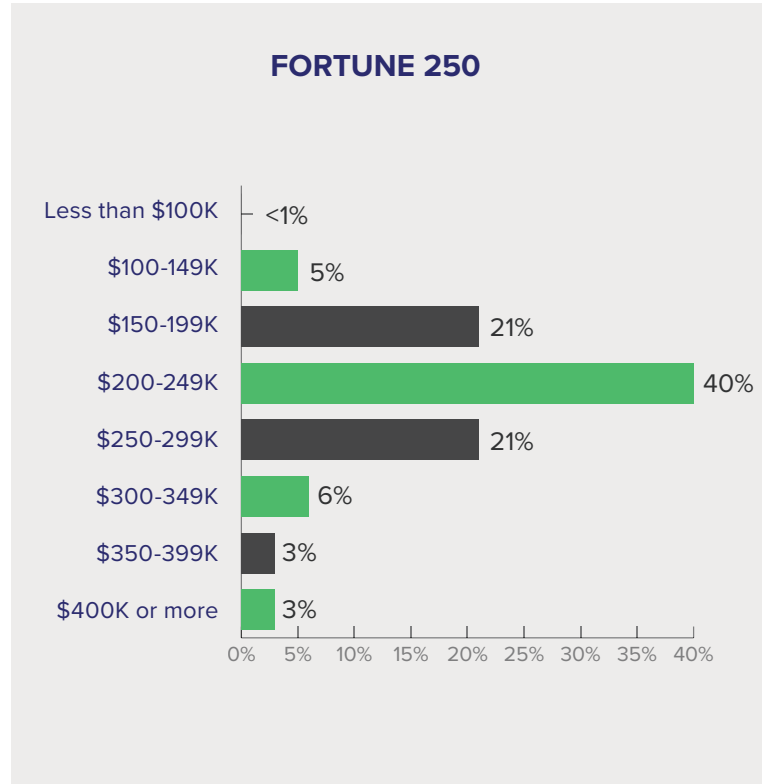
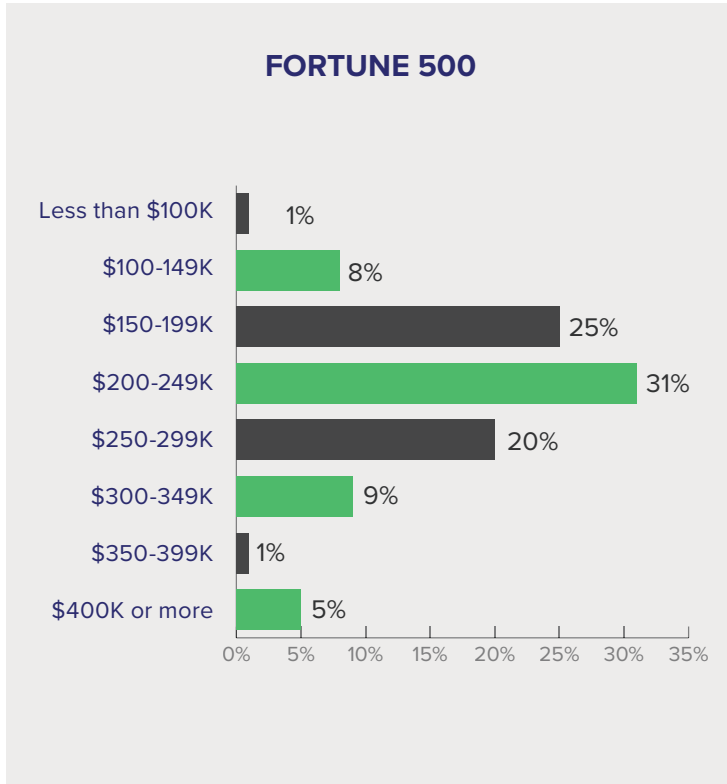


The largest group of respondents at large private companies (**31%**) reported base pay of **\$200,000 to \$249,000**. At the top end of the scale, **8%** of in-house attorneys make **\$400,000 or more**.

More than one-third (**35%**) of in-house counsel at Fortune 1000 companies reported base pay in the **\$200,000 to \$249,000** range. Just **1%** make **less than \$100,000**.

# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY COMPANY SIZE



The distribution of salaries at Fortune 500 companies is similar to that of Fortune 1000, with the largest portion of respondents (**31%**) concentrated in the **\$200,000 to \$249,000** range, followed by those earning **\$150,000 to \$199,000 (25%)**.

The most common salary range among attorneys at Fortune 250 companies is **\$200,000 to \$249,000**. Just one respondent from a Fortune 250 company reported making **less than \$100,000**.

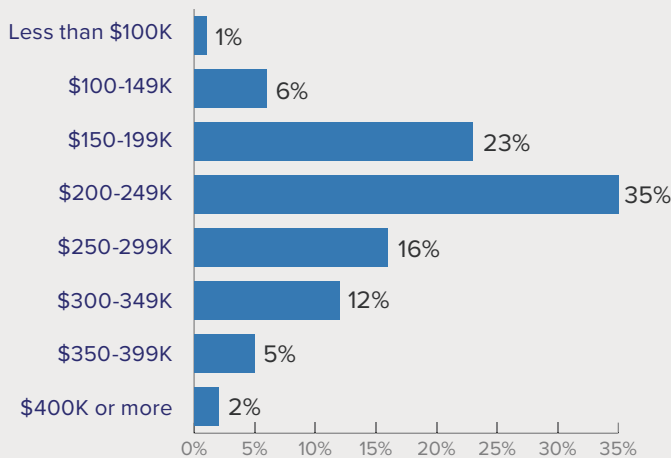
# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY INDUSTRY

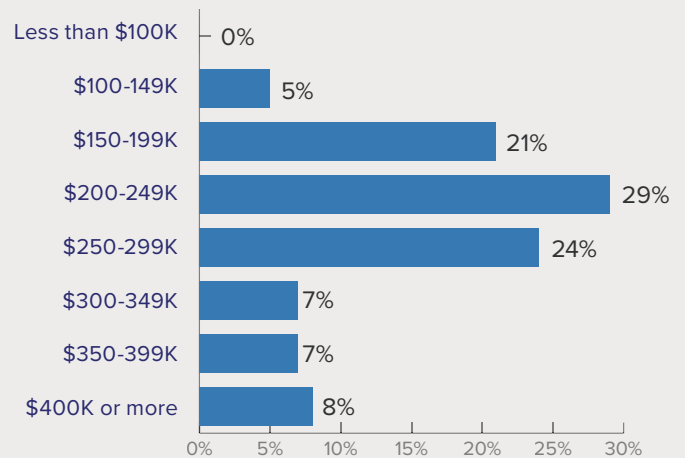
The most commonly reported salary range among in-house counsel across each of the top eight industries is **\$200,000 to \$249,000**.

The industry with the most respondents earning \$400,000 or above is **media & entertainment**, in which **17%** of corporate counsel said their base pay is **at least \$400,000**. At the opposite end of the scale, the **insurance** sector has the highest percentage of respondents (**18%**) who reported base salaries **below \$150,000**.

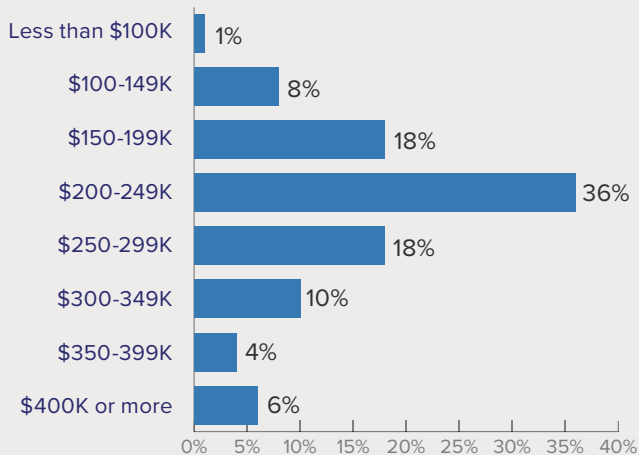
### TECHNOLOGY



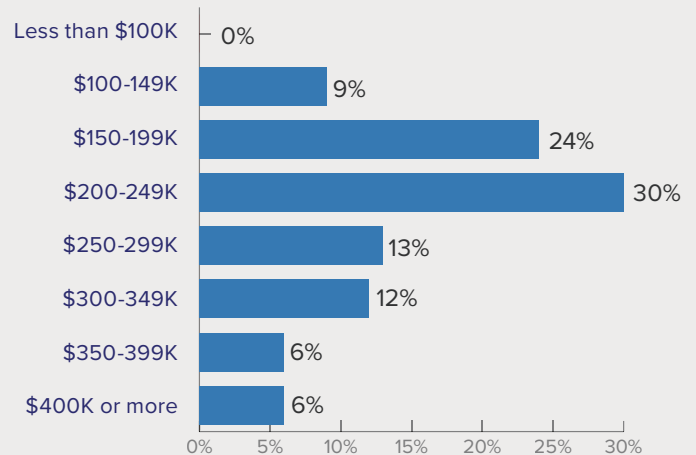
### FINANCE/BANKING



### HEALTHCARE / LIFE SCIENCES / PHARMA



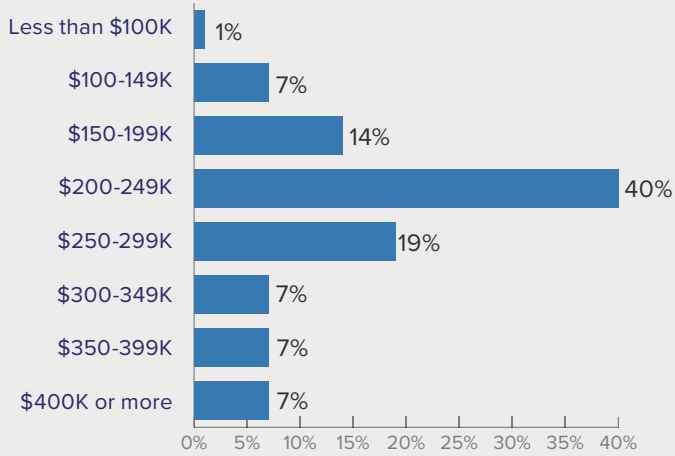
### CONSUMER PRODUCTS & RETAIL



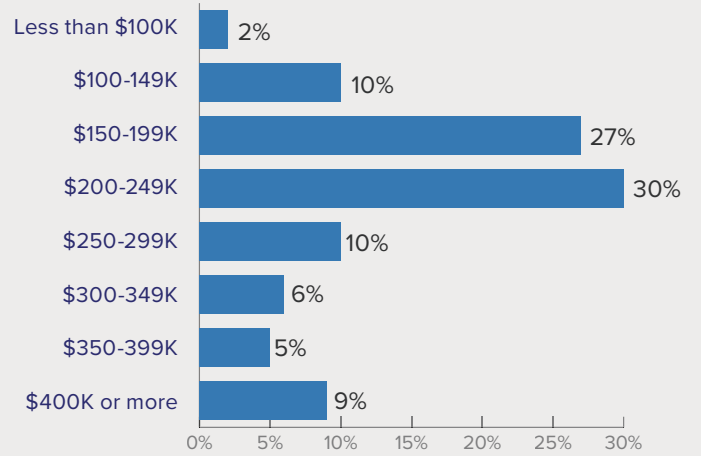
# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY INDUSTRY

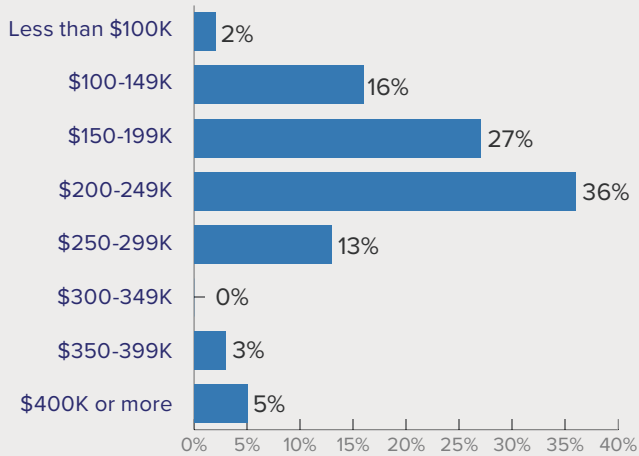
### ENERGY



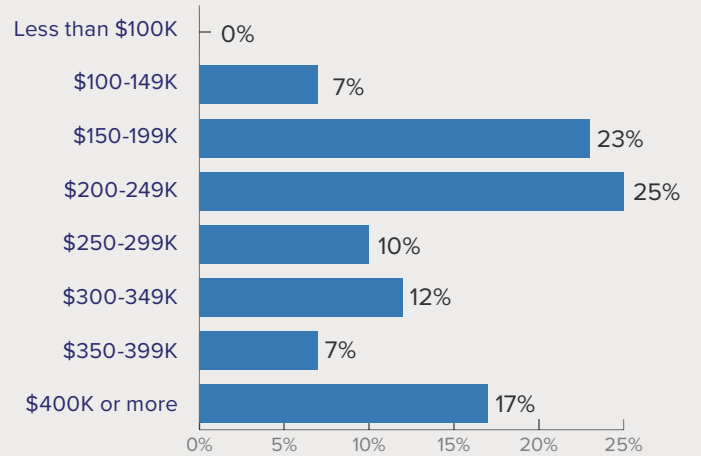
### REAL ESTATE



### INSURANCE



### MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

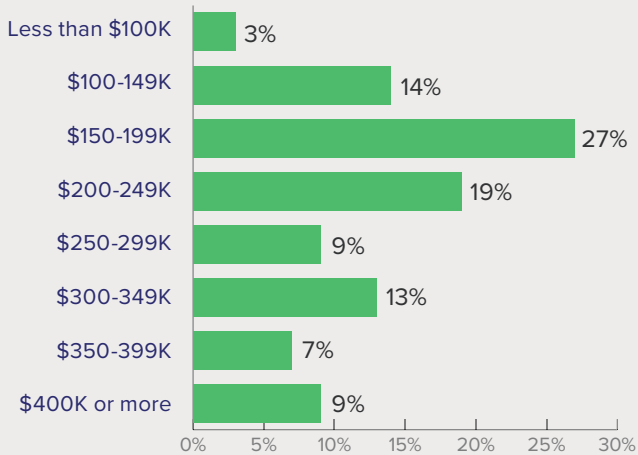


# BASE PAY

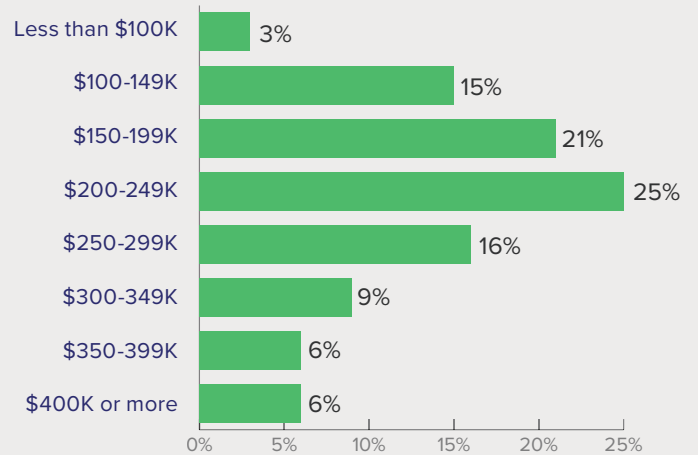
## BASE PAY BY DEPARTMENT SIZE

More than half of respondents in legal departments with at least 10 attorneys reported base pay between **\$200,000 and \$299,000**. Salary ranges generally show more variation in smaller departments, especially those with **5 attorneys or fewer**. In-house counsel in small departments are more likely to make less than **\$150,000** than those in larger departments but also more likely to report salaries of **\$350,000 or more**.

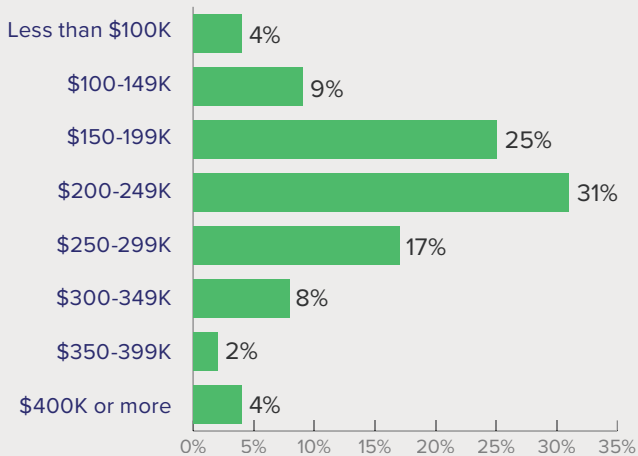
### 1 ATTORNEY



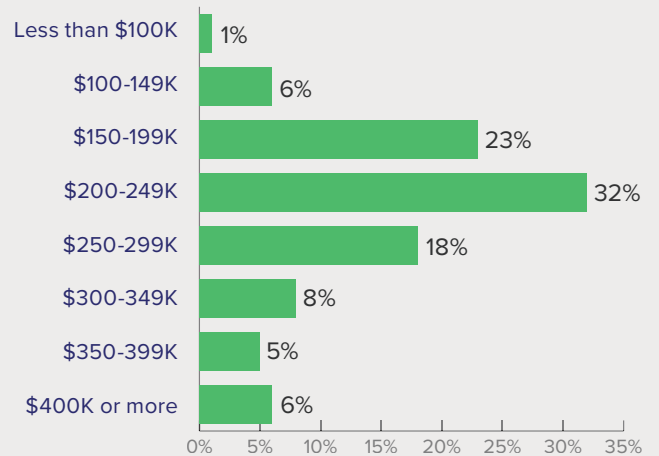
### 2-5 ATTORNEYS



### 6-9 ATTORNEYS



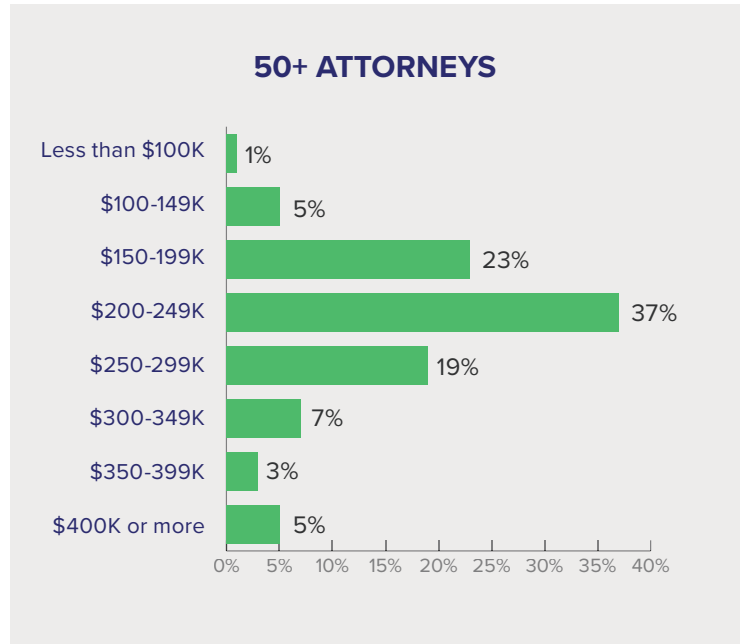
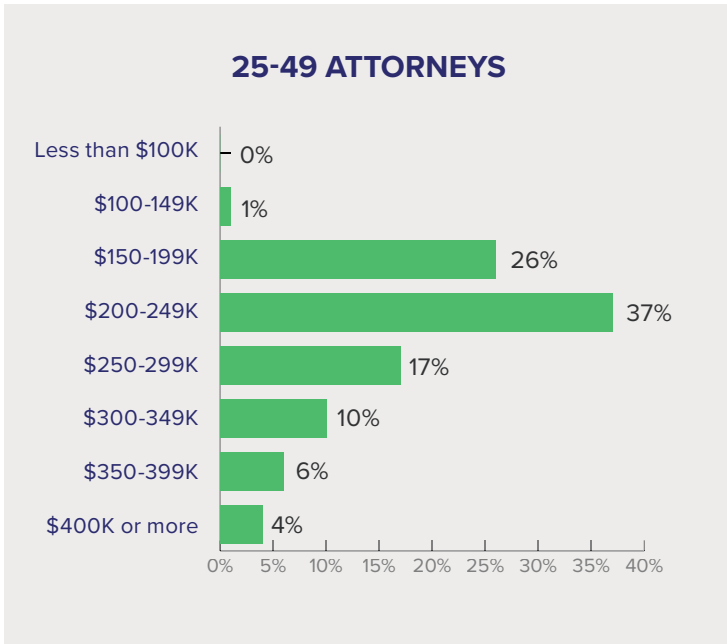
### 10-24 ATTORNEYS





# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY DEPARTMENT SIZE

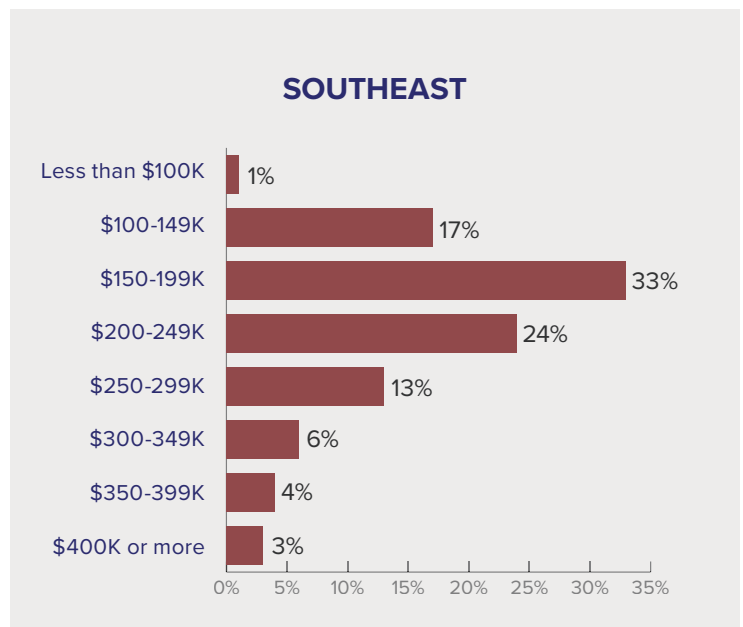
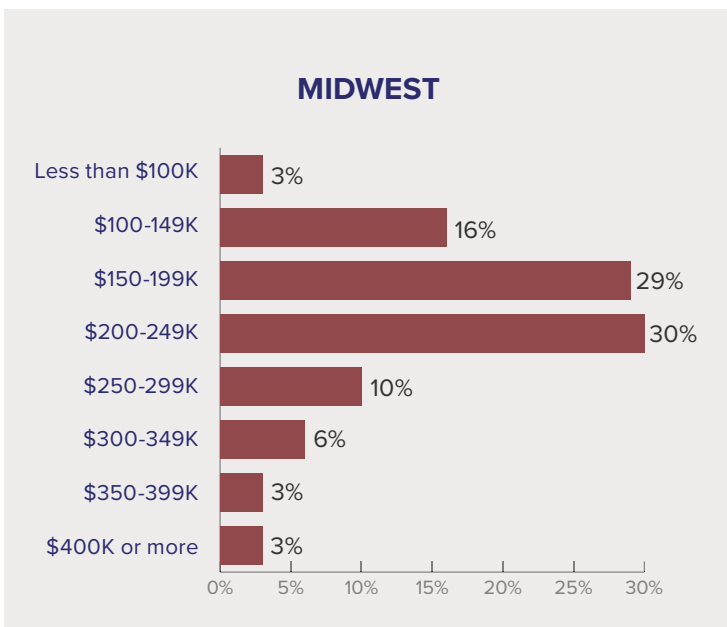
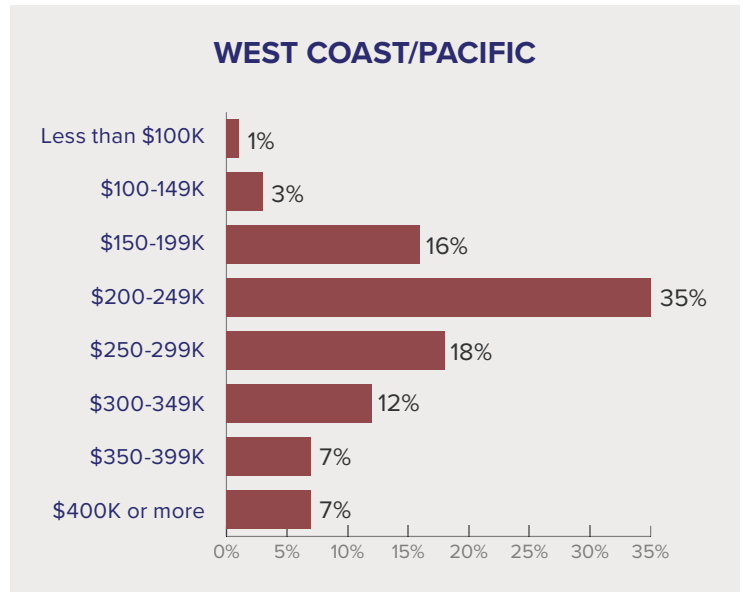
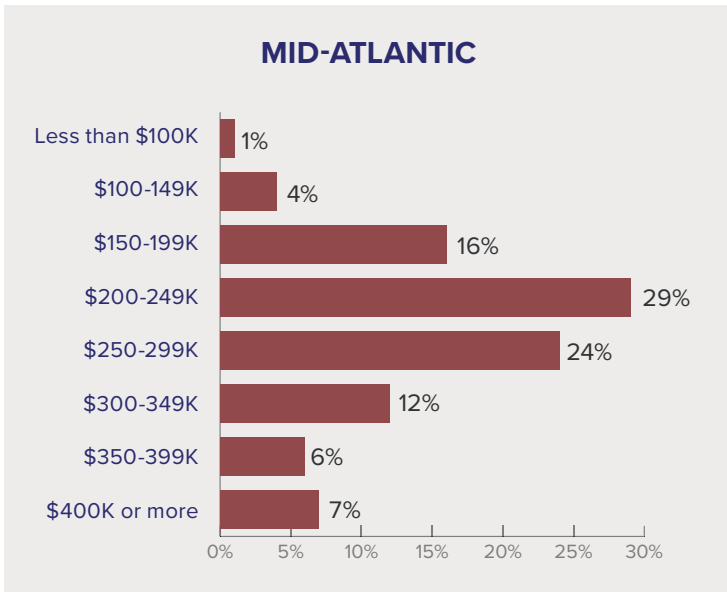


# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY REGION

Many of the highest salaries reported are concentrated in the **West Coast/Pacific** and **Mid-Atlantic** regions, which also had the highest volume of respondents. More than **25%** of attorneys in each region reporting base pay **in excess of \$300,000**. As these two areas include **California, New York, and Washington DC**, that may be unsurprising.

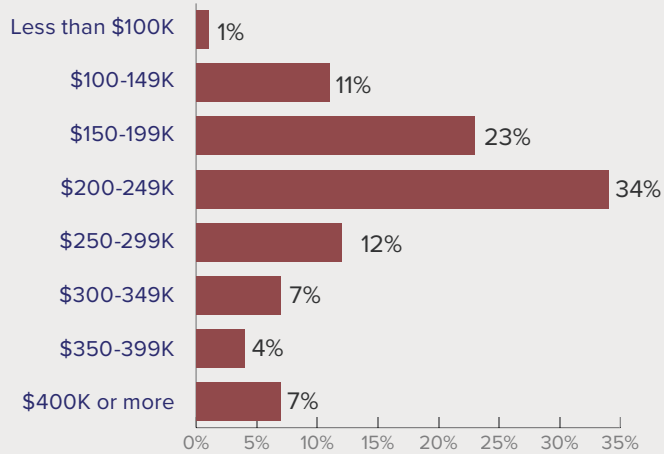
Among all regions **except the Southeast and New England**, the most common salary range is **\$200,000 to \$249,000**. In the **Southeast and New England**, salaries between **\$150,000 and \$199,000** are more common. Nearly all respondents in the **Rocky Mountain** region reported salaries **below \$250,000**, with the largest group in the **\$200,000 to \$249,000** range.



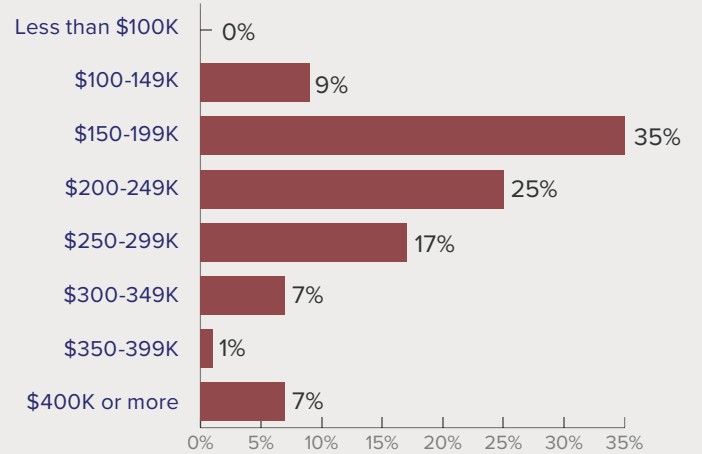
# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY REGION

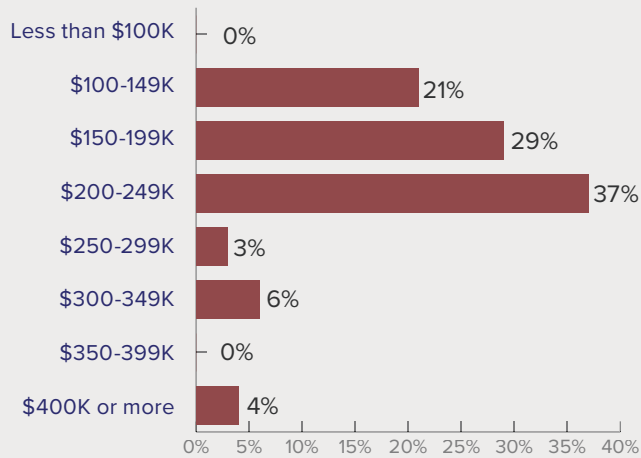
### SOUTHWEST



### NEW ENGLAND



### MOUNTAIN REGION

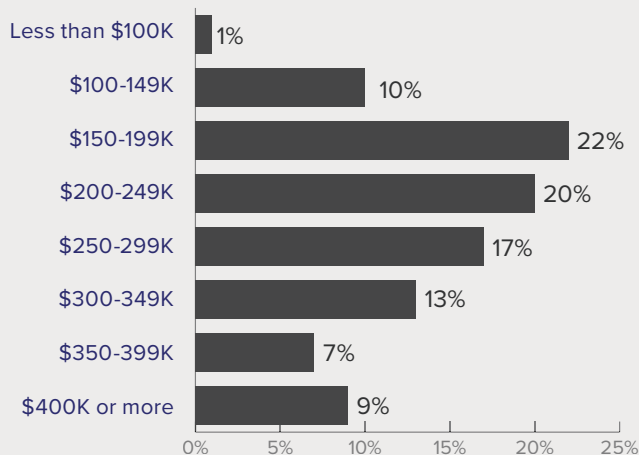


# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY AREA OF PRACTICE

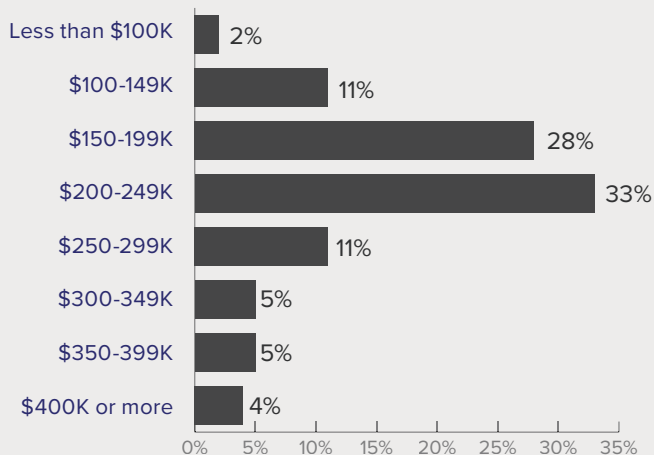
More than two-thirds of respondents identified their area of practice as generalist, commercial/transactional, corporate, intellectual property, or litigation.

### GENERALIST



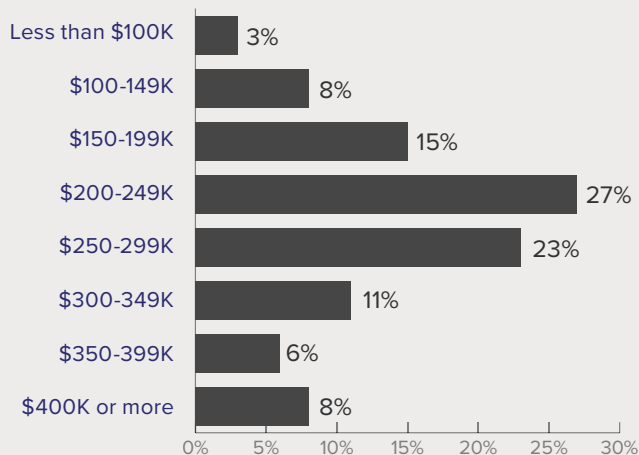
Base pay among generalists runs the gamut. **More than 10%** make **less than \$150,000**, while **16%** make **\$350,000 or more**. The most common salary ranges are **\$150,000 to \$199,000 (22%)** and **\$200,000 to \$249,000 (20%)**.

### COMMERCIAL/TRANSACTIONAL



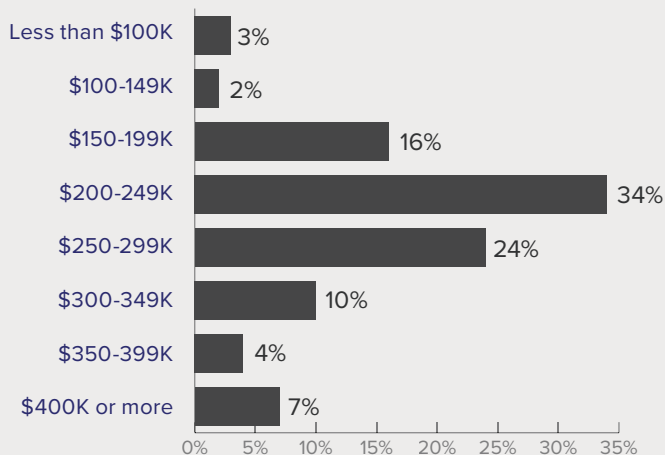
Salaries for commercial/transactional in-house attorneys are largely concentrated in the **\$150,000 to \$199,000 (28%)** and **\$200,000 to \$249,000 (33%)** ranges.

### CORPORATE



At **27%**, the largest set of respondents doing corporate work reported base pay of **\$200,000 to \$249,000**. Most of the others reported making **\$250,000 or more**.

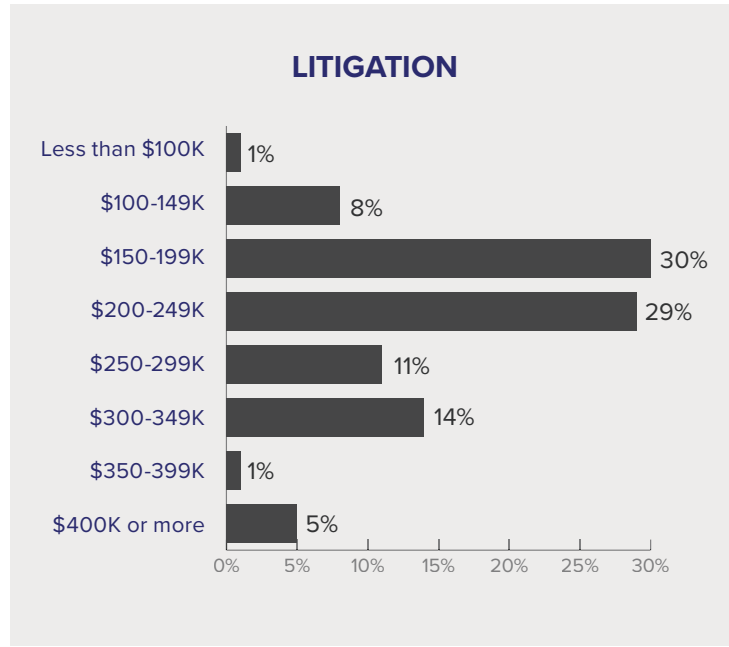
### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY



Very few IP attorneys reported salaries **under \$150,000**. **More than half** reported base pay between **\$200,000 and \$299,000**, with the largest cluster (**34%**) in the **\$200,000 to \$249,000** range.

# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY AREA OF PRACTICE



Of the five practice areas, litigation had the fewest attorneys with base pay of **\$350,000 or more**, although a sizable percentage (**14%**) reported salaries between **\$300,000 and \$349,000**. For almost **60%** of respondents, salaries range from **\$150,000 to \$249,000**.

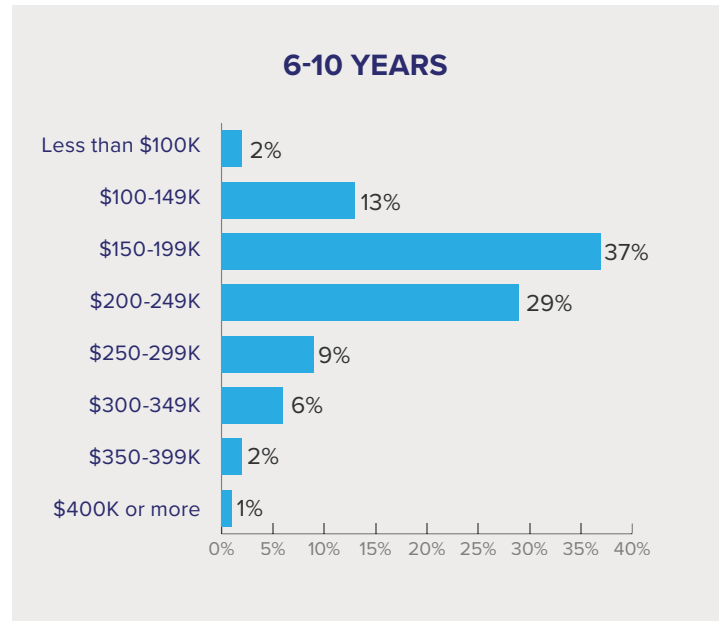
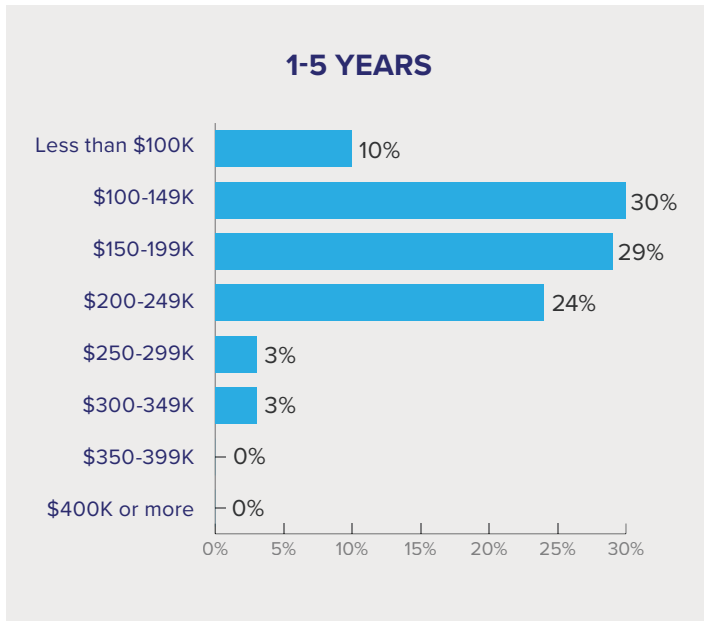
# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY EXPERIENCE

Generally speaking, salary ranges for in-house attorneys correlate with years of experience (measured here by the number of years since graduation from law school).

**More than 90%** of attorneys in their first five years of practice reported base pay **under \$250,000**; the majority of those respondents were in either the **\$100,000 to \$149,000** or **\$150,000 to \$199,000** range.

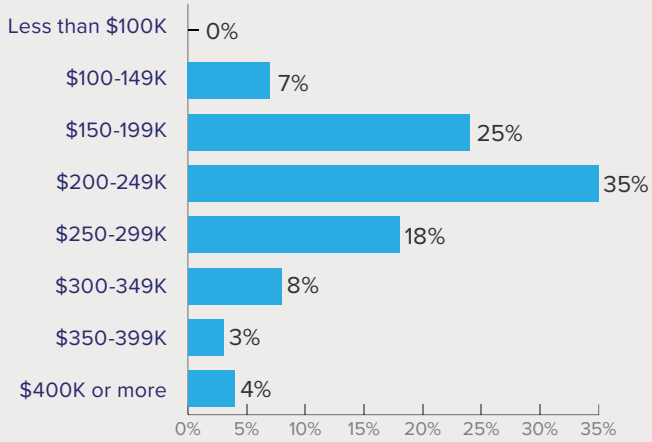
The further out from law school respondents are, the more likely they are to earn higher salaries. Just **6%** of those who graduated within the last **5 years** reported base pay of **\$250,000 or more**, compared to **18%** of respondents with **6 to 10 years** of experience, **32%** of those with **11 to 15 years** of experience, and **43%** of those with **16 to 20 years** of experience. More than half of in-house counsel with **20+ years** of experience make at least **\$250,000**, and **14%** of attorneys who graduated **prior to 1997** earn at least **\$400,000**.



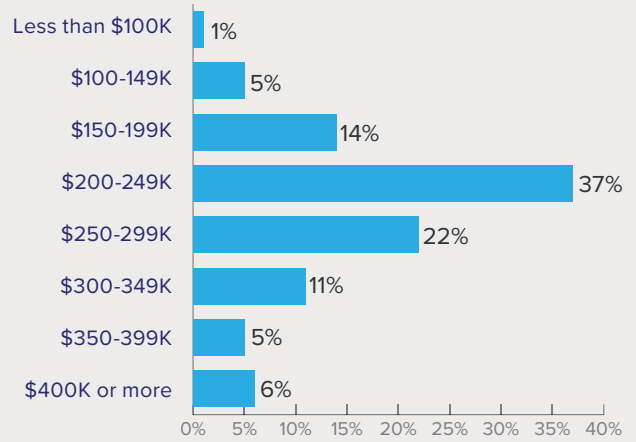
# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY EXPERIENCE

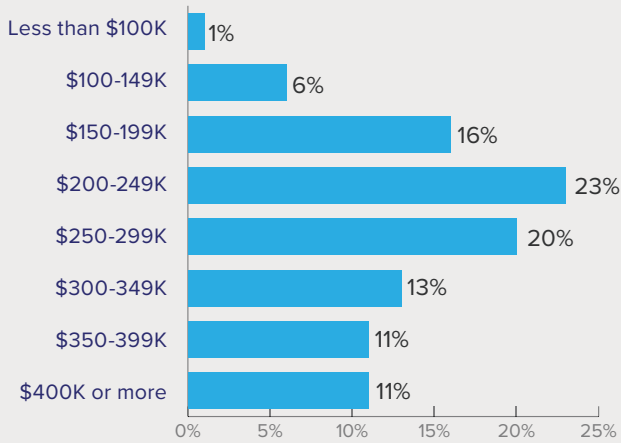
### 11-15 YEARS



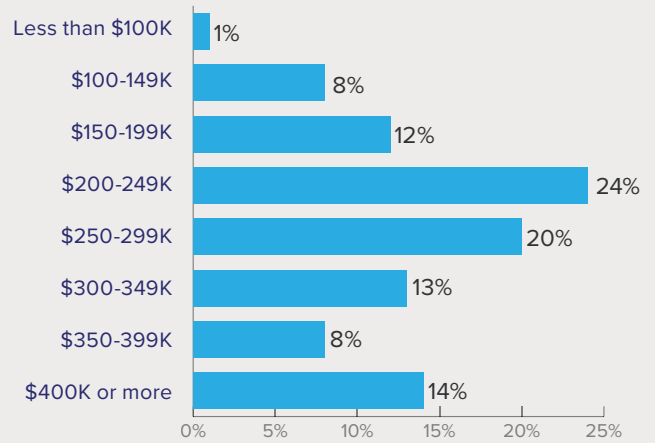
### 16-20 YEARS



### 21-25 YEARS

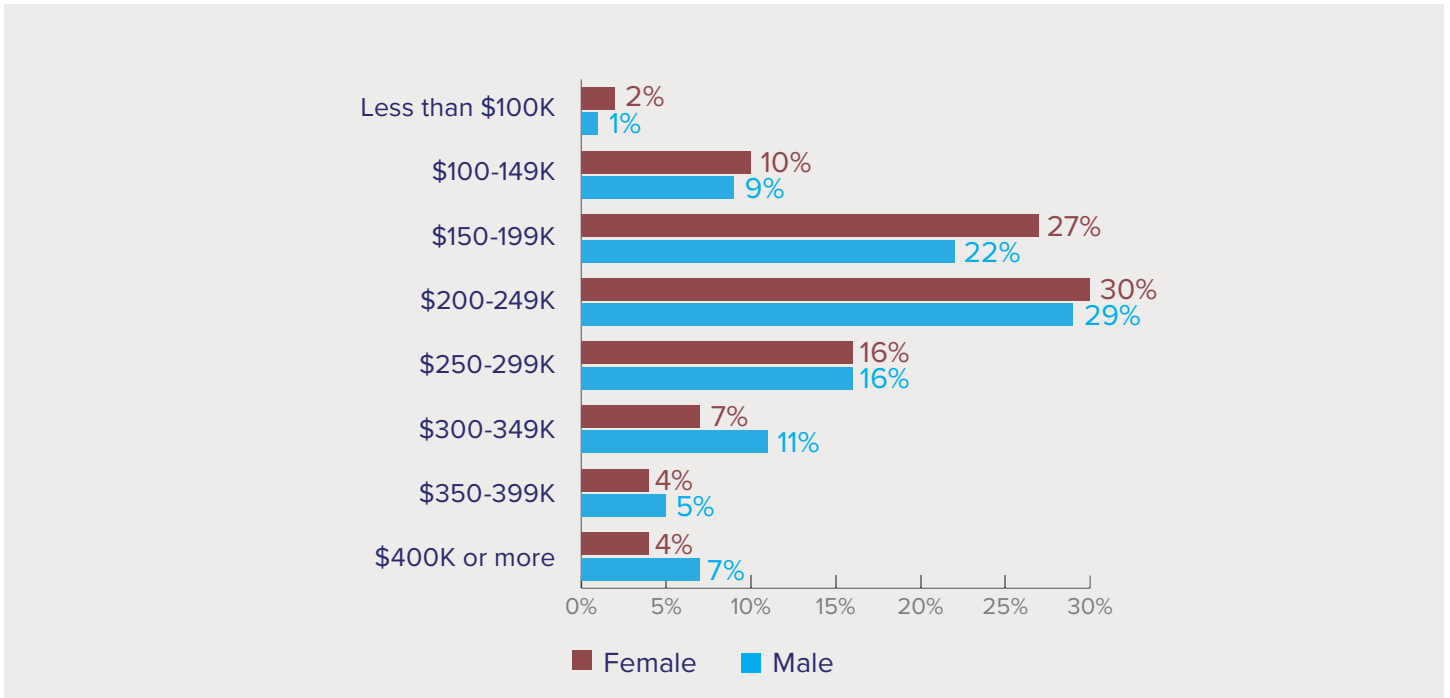


### 26+ YEARS



# BASE PAY

## BASE PAY BY GENDER



The most common salary range among corporate counsel regardless of gender is **\$200,000 to \$249,000**, and similar proportions of men and women (16%) reported base pay of **\$250,000 to \$299,000**.

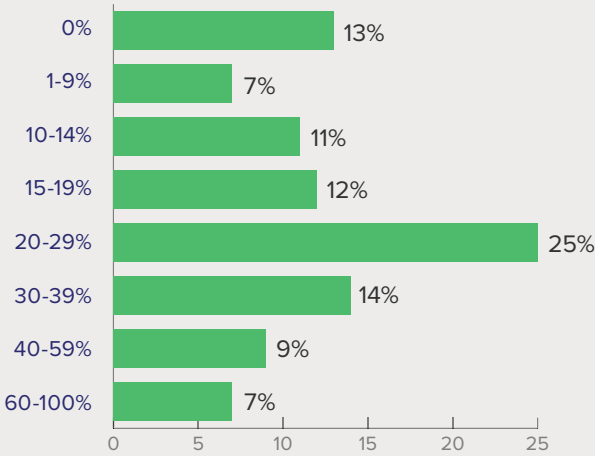
But the results diverge when it comes to figures above and below those ranges. Male attorneys are more likely than female attorneys to report making **\$300,000 or more** (23% of men vs 16% of women) and less likely to report pay below **\$200,000** (32% of men vs 39% of women).



# BONUSES

## TARGET BONUSES

WHAT IS YOUR TARGET BONUS (AS A PERCENTAGE OF BASE PAY)?



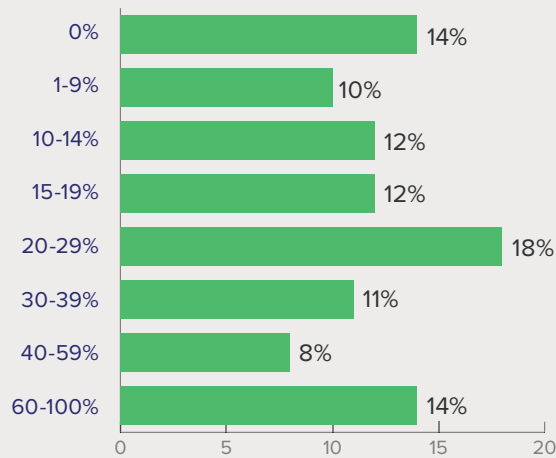
One area in which the survey results show an **increase** in compensation **since 2021** is bonuses. More respondents this year (**87%**) reported having some kind of target bonus than last year (**83%**). The most common range, with **25%** of respondents, is between **20 and 29%** of their base pay.

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# BONUSES

## ACTUAL BONUS RECEIVED

IN WHAT APPROXIMATE RANGE HAS YOUR ACTUAL BONUS BEEN IN THE PAST FEW YEARS?



The majority of attorneys (**86%**) actually received a bonus, and while many of those bonuses fall somewhere between **1%** and **29%**, more respondents this year reported receiving bonuses representing **30%** or more of their base pay.

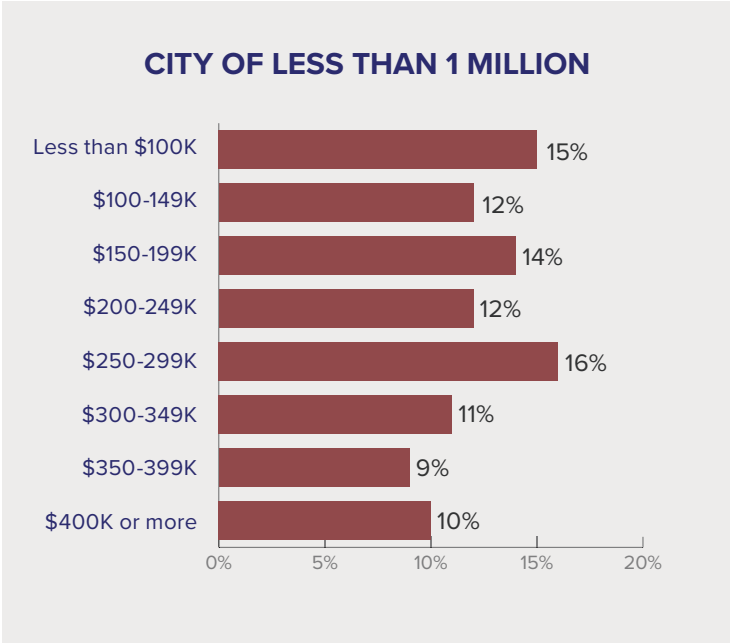
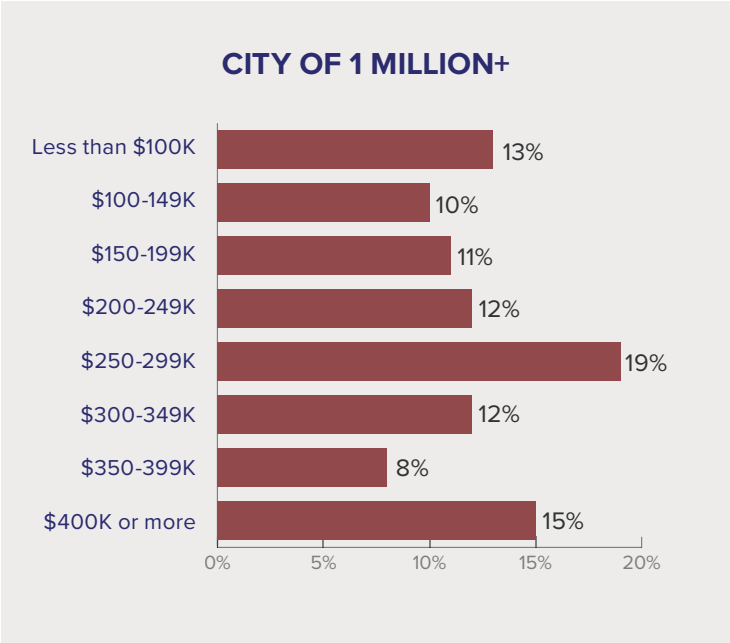
In 2021, **24%** of respondents said they received bonuses of **at least 30%**. This year, **33%** of respondents reported bonuses of **30%** or more, and **14%** of attorneys received bonuses in the **60-100%** range.

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# BONUSES

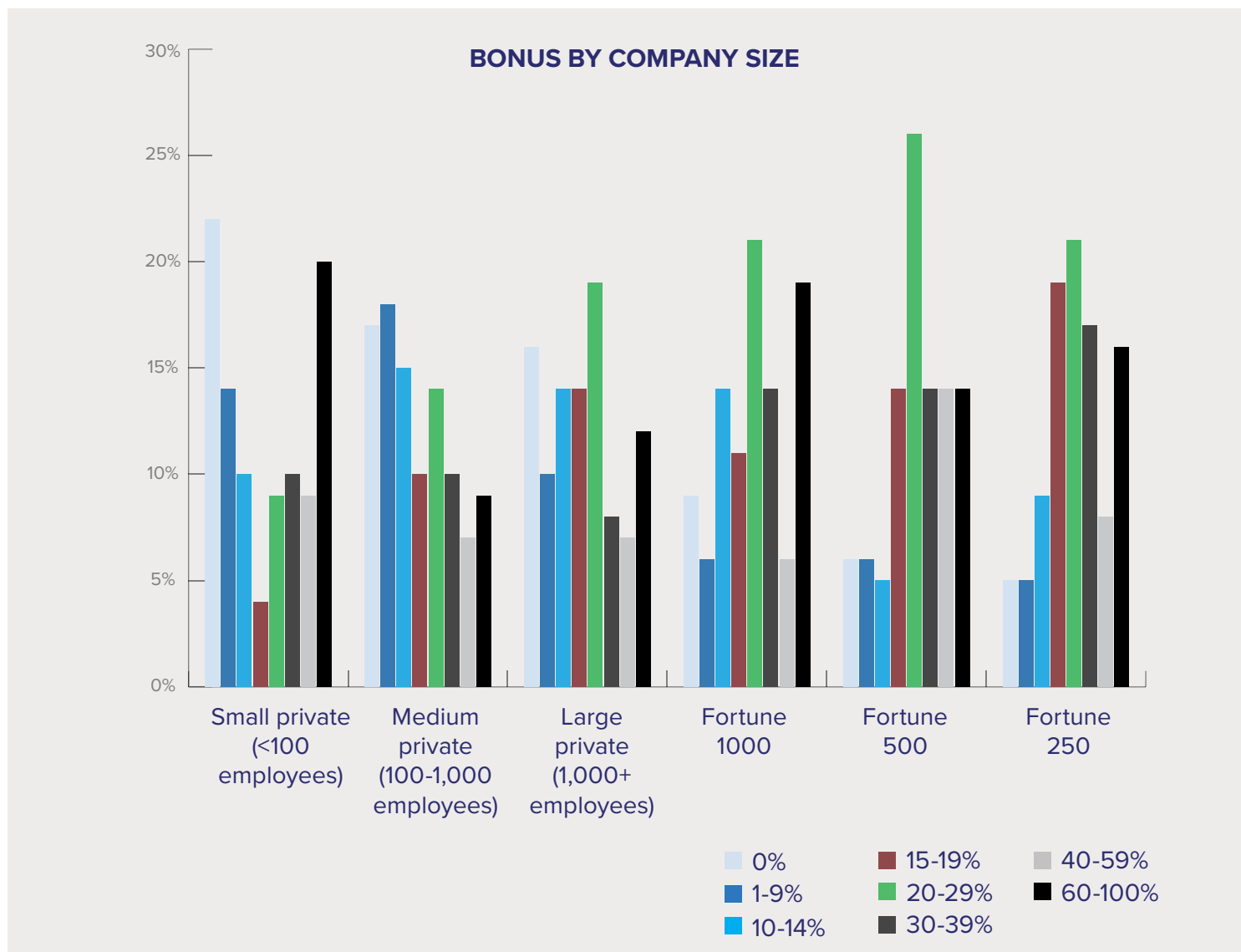
## BONUS RECEIVED BY MARKET SIZE

In-house counsel in larger cities are generally more likely to receive higher bonuses than those in smaller markets. More than half (**54%**) of those in cities of **1 million or more** reported receiving bonuses of **at least 20%**, compared to **46%** of those in smaller cities.



# BONUSES

## BONUS RECEIVED BY COMPANY SIZE

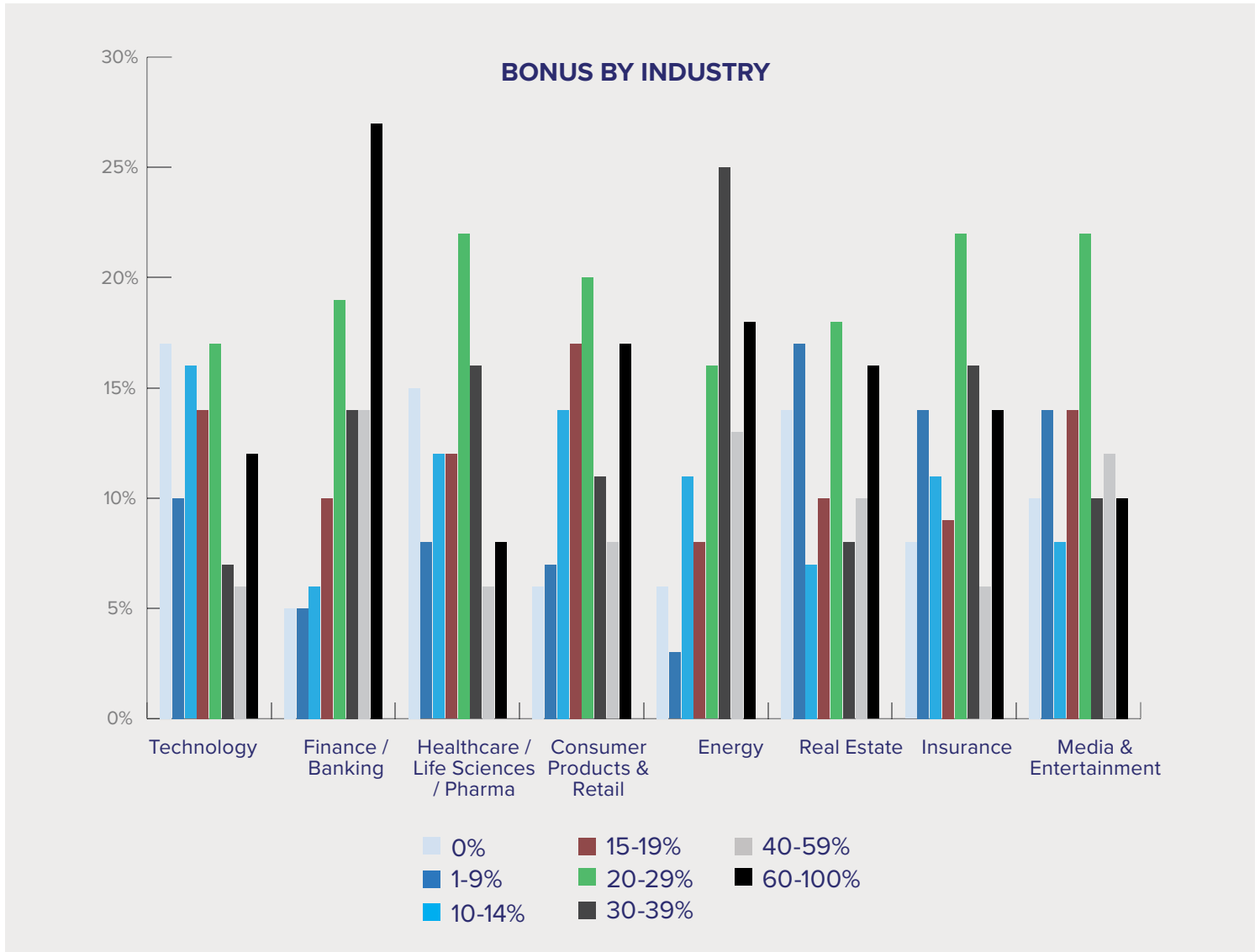


Bonuses awarded by different sized companies vary widely. Many attorneys in **small private companies (22%)** received **no bonus at all**, but the largest group of respondents who received bonuses of **60-100%** of their base pay (**20% of respondents**) were also at **small private companies**.

At large private companies and **Fortune 250/500/1000 companies**, the most common bonus range is **20-29%**. More than **20%** of attorneys at **Fortune 250/500/1000 companies** received bonuses of **40% or more**. Counsel in **medium-sized private companies** were the least likely to report high bonuses. The most common range in this group is **1-9%**.

# BONUSES

## BONUS RECEIVED BY INDUSTRY

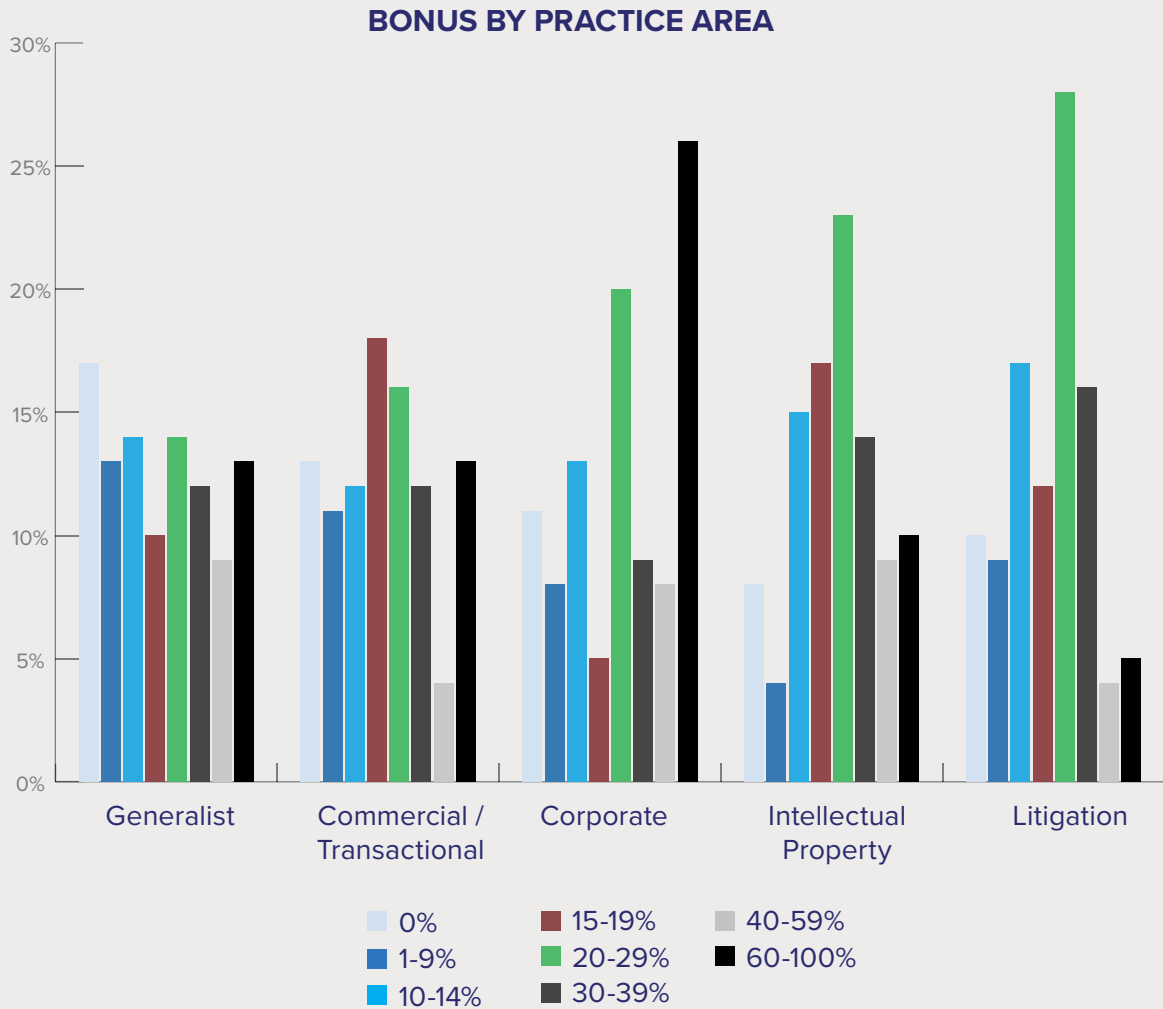


The highest bonuses were reported among attorneys working in the **finance industry**, where **27%** of respondents said they received bonuses of **60-100%**. Substantial bonuses were also reported by in-house counsel at **energy companies**, where the most common range is **30-39%** (**25%** of respondents) and **31%** reported receiving bonuses representing **40% or more** of their base salary.

Bonus figures in the **healthcare/life sciences, consumer products, real estate, insurance, and media & entertainment** sectors skew a little lower, with the most commonly reported range at **20-29%**. In-house attorneys at **tech companies** were as likely to receive **no bonus** at all as to get one in the **20-29%** range.

# BONUSES

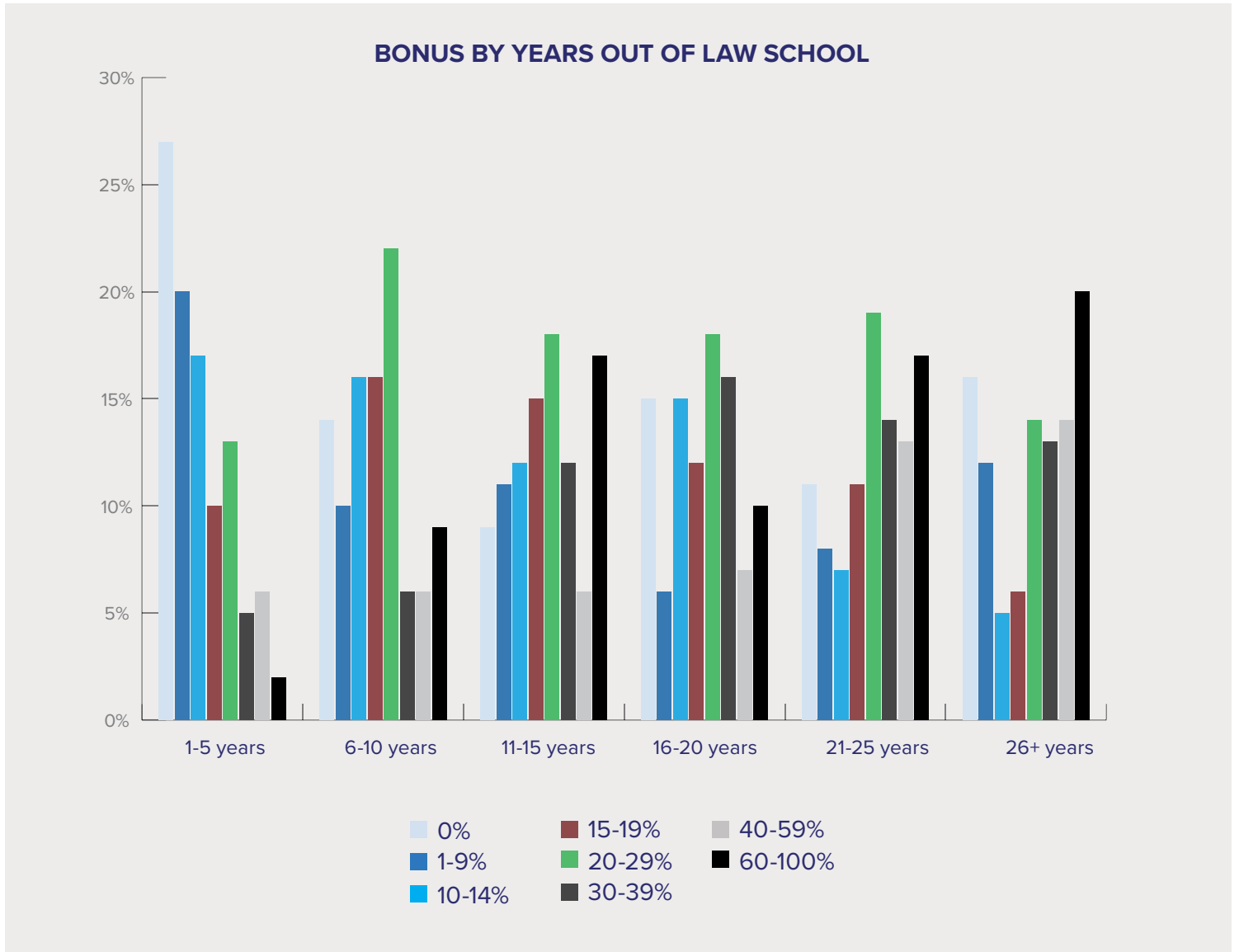
## BONUS RECEIVED BY AREA OF PRACTICE



The in-house attorneys who reported receiving the largest bonuses focus on corporate matters: **26%** of **corporate** respondents received bonuses in the **60-100% range**—compared, for example, to attorneys who focus on **litigation**, of whom just **5%** received bonuses in that range. Many who described themselves as **generalists** reported receiving either a bonus of **less than 10% (13%)** or **no bonus at all (17%)**.

# BONUSES

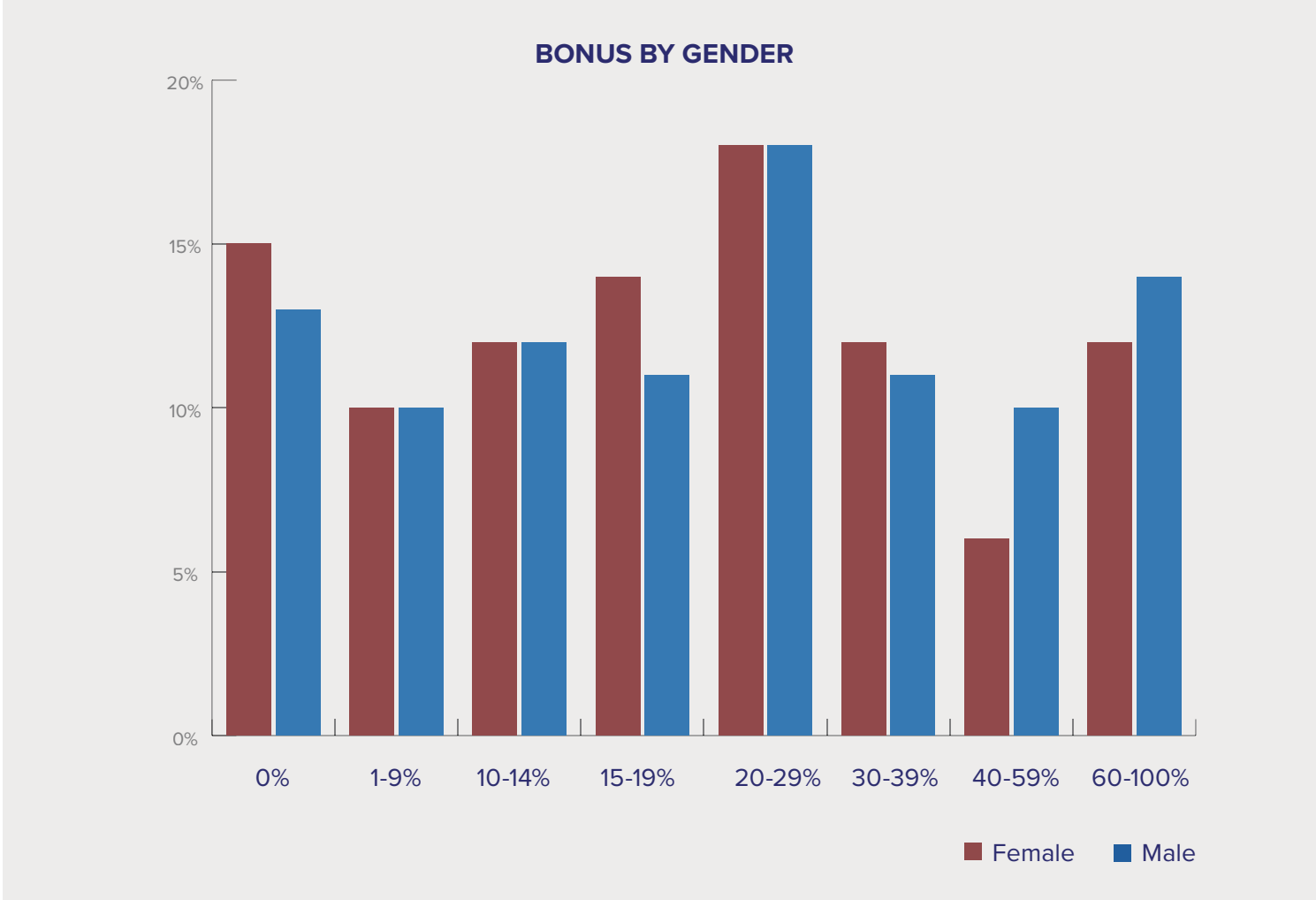
## BONUS RECEIVED BY EXPERIENCE



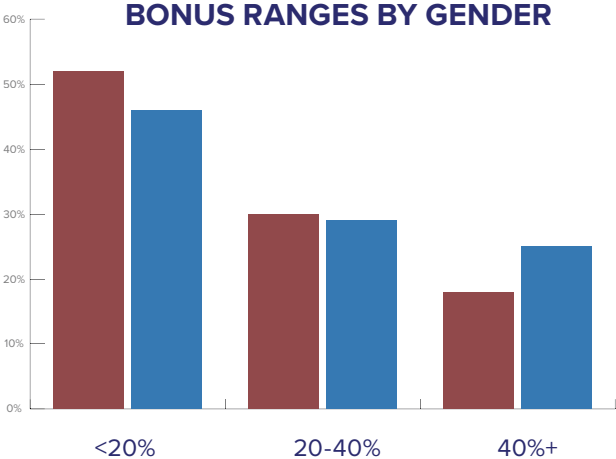
Like base salaries, bonus figures are generally higher for attorneys with **more experience**. While just **13%** of respondents no more than **5 years** out of law school received bonuses of at least **30%**, the numbers climb above **20%** for those with **6-10 years** of experience, above **30%** for attorneys with **11 to 20 years** of experience, and above **40%** for counsel with **over 20 years** of experience.

# BONUSES

## BONUS RECEIVED BY GENDER



Higher bonus awards are more common among male respondents than female respondents. More than half of women (52%) reported receiving bonuses representing **less than 20%** of their base pay, compared to **46%** of men. And while **25% of men** received bonuses of **40% or more**, only **18% of women** did.

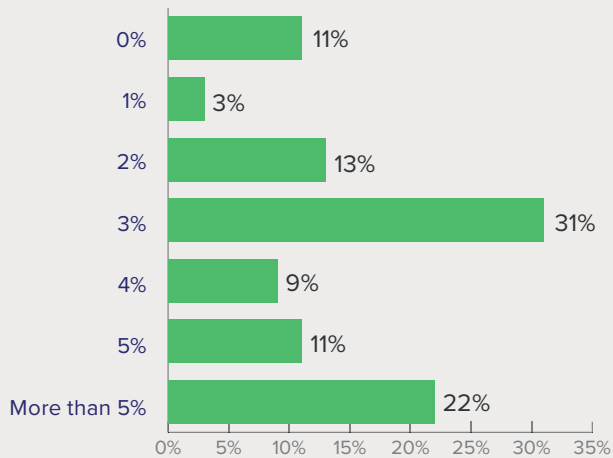




# RAISES

## AVERAGE RAISE: ALL RESPONDENTS

### WHAT IS THE AVERAGE RAISE YOU'VE RECEIVED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS?

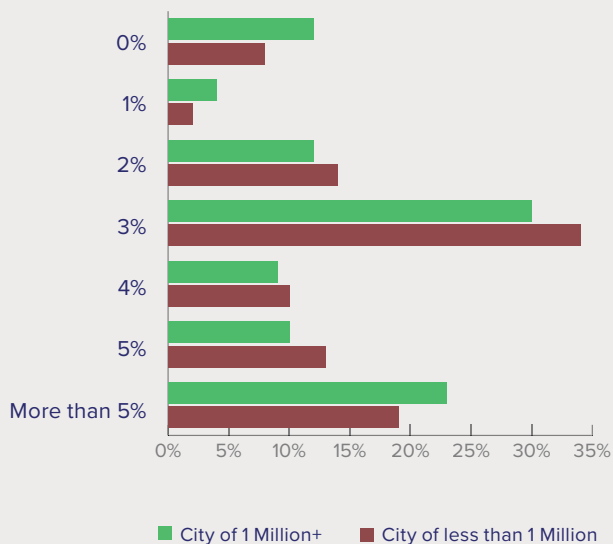


The average raises received by in-house counsel run the gamut, from **1%** (**3%** of respondents) to more than **5%** (**22%** of respondents). The most commonly reported figure was **3%**, cited by **31%** of respondents. **11%** of attorneys said they have received **no raise** at all in the last few years.

This year's survey results show more raises at the **high end**. In 2021, **25%** of respondents said their raises averaged more than **4%**. This year, **33%** reported receiving raises of **5% or higher**.

## AVERAGE RAISE BY MARKET SIZE

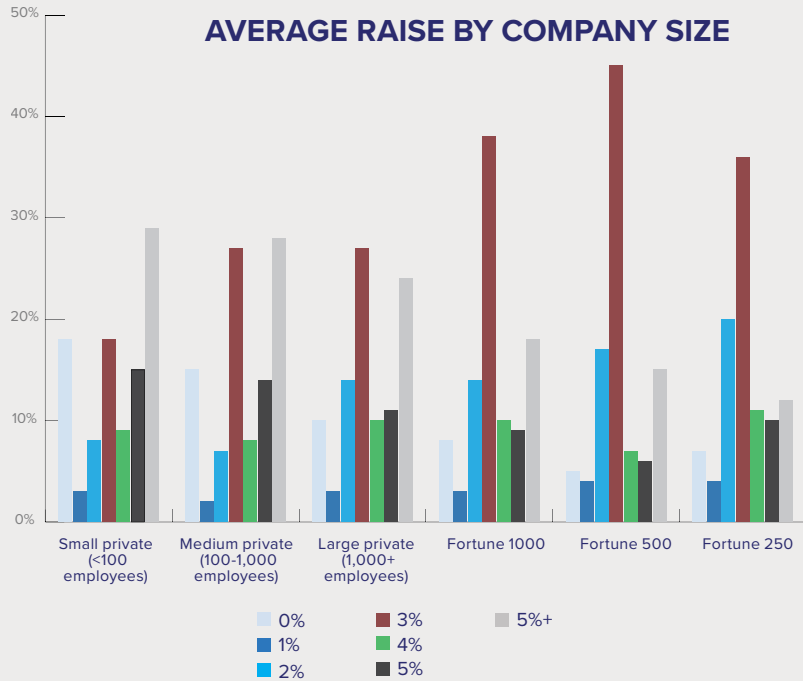
### AVERAGE RAISE BY MARKET SIZE



Raises varied among respondents in different markets. Although raises **above 5%** were more common in **big cities**, more attorneys in big cities also reported receiving **no raise** at all. Among both sets of respondents, the largest group reported average raises of **3%**.

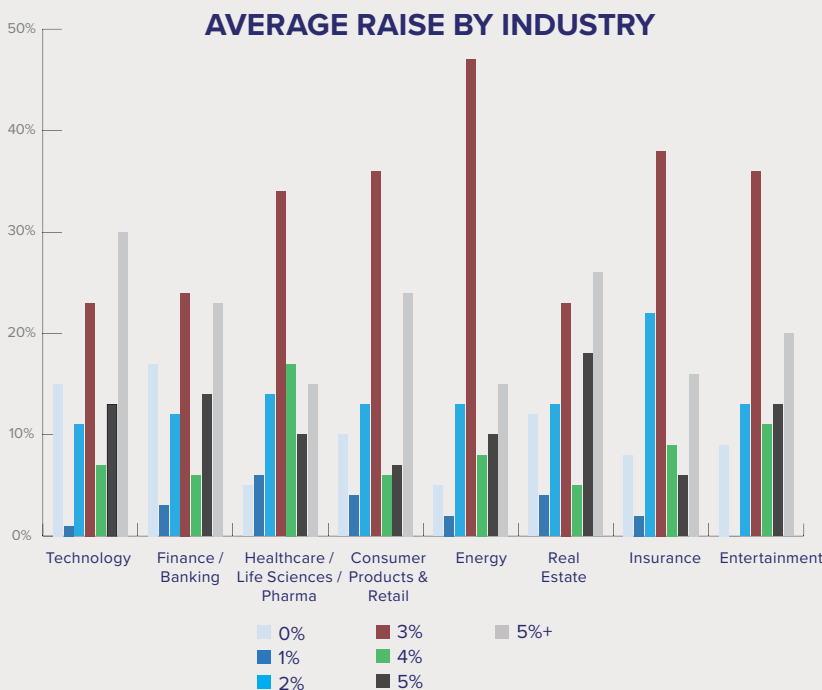
# RAISES

## AVERAGE RAISE BY COMPANY SIZE



Although many respondents at private companies reported receiving **no raise** at all, **high raises** are more common at **private companies** than Fortune 250/500/1000 companies. More than **20%** of respondents at **small, medium, and large companies** reported raises in **excess of 5%**. Raises in the **2-3%** range are most common among **Fortune 250/500/1000 companies**.

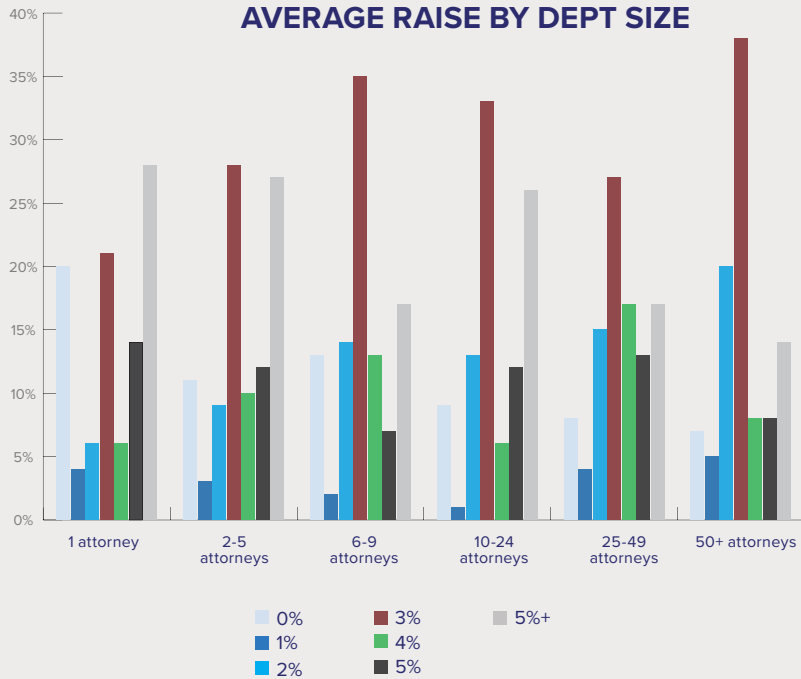
## AVERAGE RAISE BY INDUSTRY



The highest raises were most frequently reported by attorneys working in the **technology, finance, and real estate** industries and less common in the **healthcare/ life sciences, energy, and insurance** sectors. Among other industries, raises of **3%** were more common.

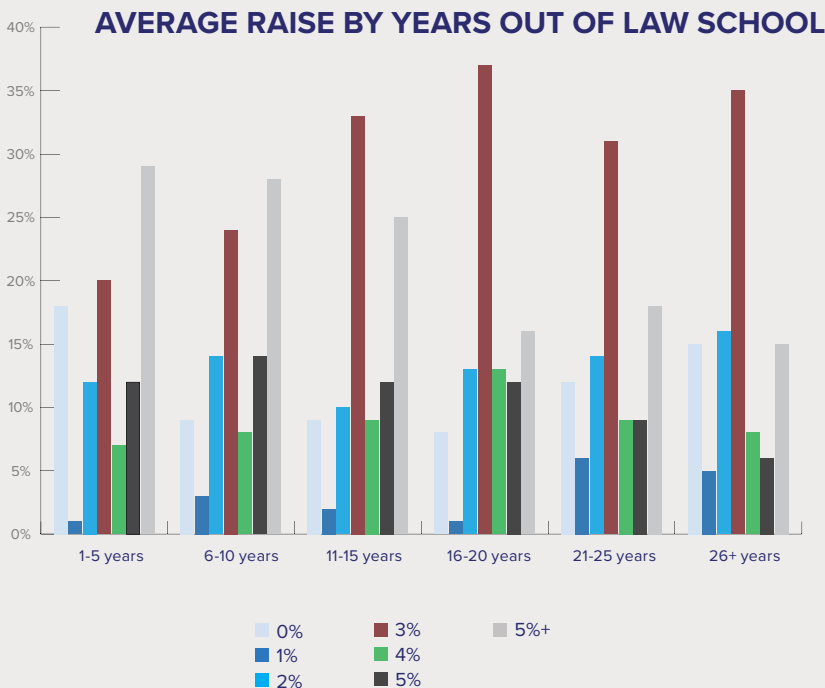
# RAISES

## AVERAGE RAISE BY DEPARTMENT SIZE



In-house lawyers in **small departments (with 5 or fewer attorneys)** are the most likely to have received raises of at least **5%**. Many attorneys in departments with **10-24 attorneys** also received bonuses of **5% or more**. In the **largest law departments**, raises tend to be **lower**; almost **60%** of respondents in departments with **50 or more attorneys** reported bonuses of **2% or 3%**.

## AVERAGE RAISE BY EXPERIENCE



In contrast to salaries and bonuses, which are generally higher among more experienced respondents, raises tend to **start high for more recent graduates** and then settle closer to **3%** for attorneys with **more than a decade of experience**. Among respondents who graduated law school within the last **10 years**, over **40%** said their raises have averaged **5% or more**. By contrast, less than **30%** of respondents who have been **out of school for more than 15 years** reported raises in that range.

# RAISES

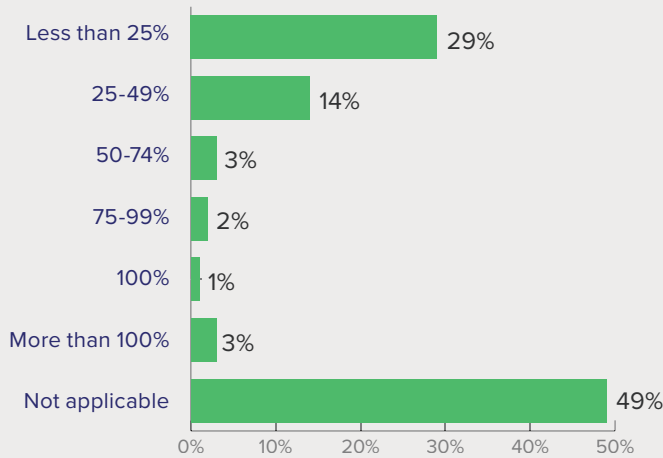
## AVERAGE RAISE BY GENDER



# STOCK COMPENSATION

## STOCK COMPENSATION: ALL RESPONDENTS

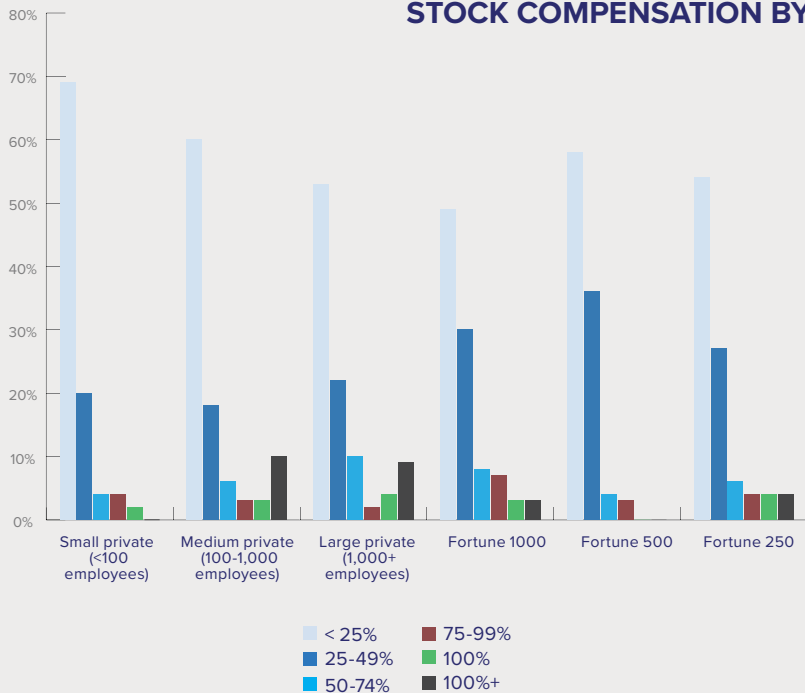
WHAT IS YOUR STOCK COMPENSATION AS A PERCENTAGE OF YOUR BASE PAY?



Just over half of respondents receive stock as a portion of their compensation package, **for most** of whom it represents **less than 25%** of their base pay.

## STOCK COMPENSATION BY COMPANY SIZE

STOCK COMPENSATION BY COMPANY SIZE



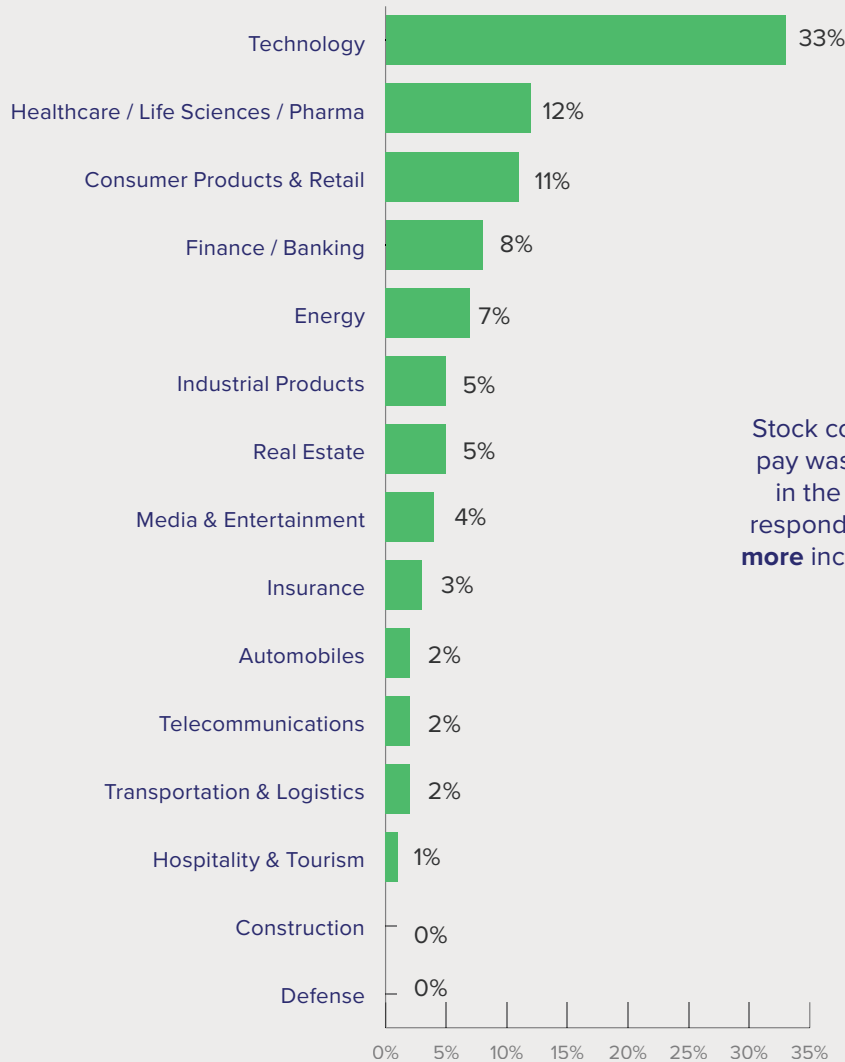
Stock is much more likely to form a portion of the compensation package among **public companies** than private companies, although a sizable minority of in-house counsel at private companies did report receiving some stock.

Among in-house counsel who do receive stock as part of their pay package, the largest groups across all company sizes reported that it reflects **less than 25%** of their base pay. But at least **20%** of attorneys at **Fortune 250/500/1000 companies** receive stock representing **25-49%** of their base pay. Counsel at **large private companies** were the most likely to report receiving stock worth more than **50%** of their base pay.

# STOCK COMPENSATION

## STOCK COMPENSATION OF 25% OR MORE BY INDUSTRY

COUNSEL WHO RECEIVED STOCK COMPENSATION WITH 25% OR MORE OF BASE PAY, BY INDUSTRY



Stock compensation worth at least **25%** of base pay was most commonly reported by attorneys in the **tech sector**. Other industries in which respondents reported receiving stock of **25% or more** include **healthcare/life sciences, consumer products, finance, and energy**.



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## **CONTACT US**

The best way for companies and their counsel to determine if litigation finance is an attractive option is to discuss it with us.

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