

**Year 2006**

**Survey of Michigan Legal Assistants**

**SALARIES AND BENEFITS**

## **Prepared by: Special Counsel**

With the cooperation of:

- Legal Assistants Section of the State Bar of Michigan
- Paralegal Section of Detroit Metro Bar Association
- Eastern Michigan University Legal Assistant Program
- Ferris State University Legal Assistant Program
- Kellogg Community College Legal Assistant Program
- Lansing Community College Legal Assistant Program
- Macomb Community College
- Madonna University Legal Assistant Program
- Oakland Community College

*Special thanks to Professor Robert Kushler of Oakland University for Statistical Calculations*

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Special Counsel is the global leader in legal staffing, specializing in providing quality temporary and direct-hire placement of all legal personnel to Fortune 1000 companies and leading law firms. Our experienced pool of attorneys, paralegals, legal secretaries, project managers, coders, clerks and litigation support staff have serviced clients in all areas of the law.

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- Legal Assistants
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- Litigation Support Personnel
- Docket Clerks

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- Special Counsel maintains a 95% repeat business rate

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# Table of Contents

- Background and Methodology Information
- Detailed Findings:
  - Demographics . . . . . 6
  - Work Environment . . . . . 15
  - Hours Worked . . . . . 19
  - Salary and Benefits . . . . . 22
  - Job Satisfaction . . . . . 31
  - Legal Assistant Career . . . . . 33
  - Salary Linked to:
    - A) Type of Employer . . . . . 38
    - B) Years of Experience. . . . . 39
    - C) Specialty . . . . . 40
    - D) Salary Differences by County . . 41

# Background & Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to document statistics on Michigan Legal Assistants regarding:

- Demographics
- Experience/Employment History
- Areas of practice
- Salary, Compensation, & Benefits

In April of this year, two thousand nine hundred and eighty (2980) surveys were mailed to the members of the Legal Assistant section of the State Bar of Michigan, Paralegal Section of the Detroit Metro Bar Association and to the alumni of the Legal Assistant Programs of Eastern Michigan University, Ferris State University, Kellogg Community College, Lansing Community College, Macomb Community College, Madonna University, and Oakland Community College.

A total of 584 surveys were completed, resulting in a response rate of approximately 19% \*.

\*Note: The actual response rate was slightly higher due to some inherent duplication in the mailing lists. For example, a member of the LA Section who graduated from Madonna University likely received two surveys, but completed and returned only one.

**Statistics** – Except as otherwise noted, all calculations were made based upon the percent of respondents to a particular survey question. Thus, non-responses were counted as missing data and excluded from the denominator.

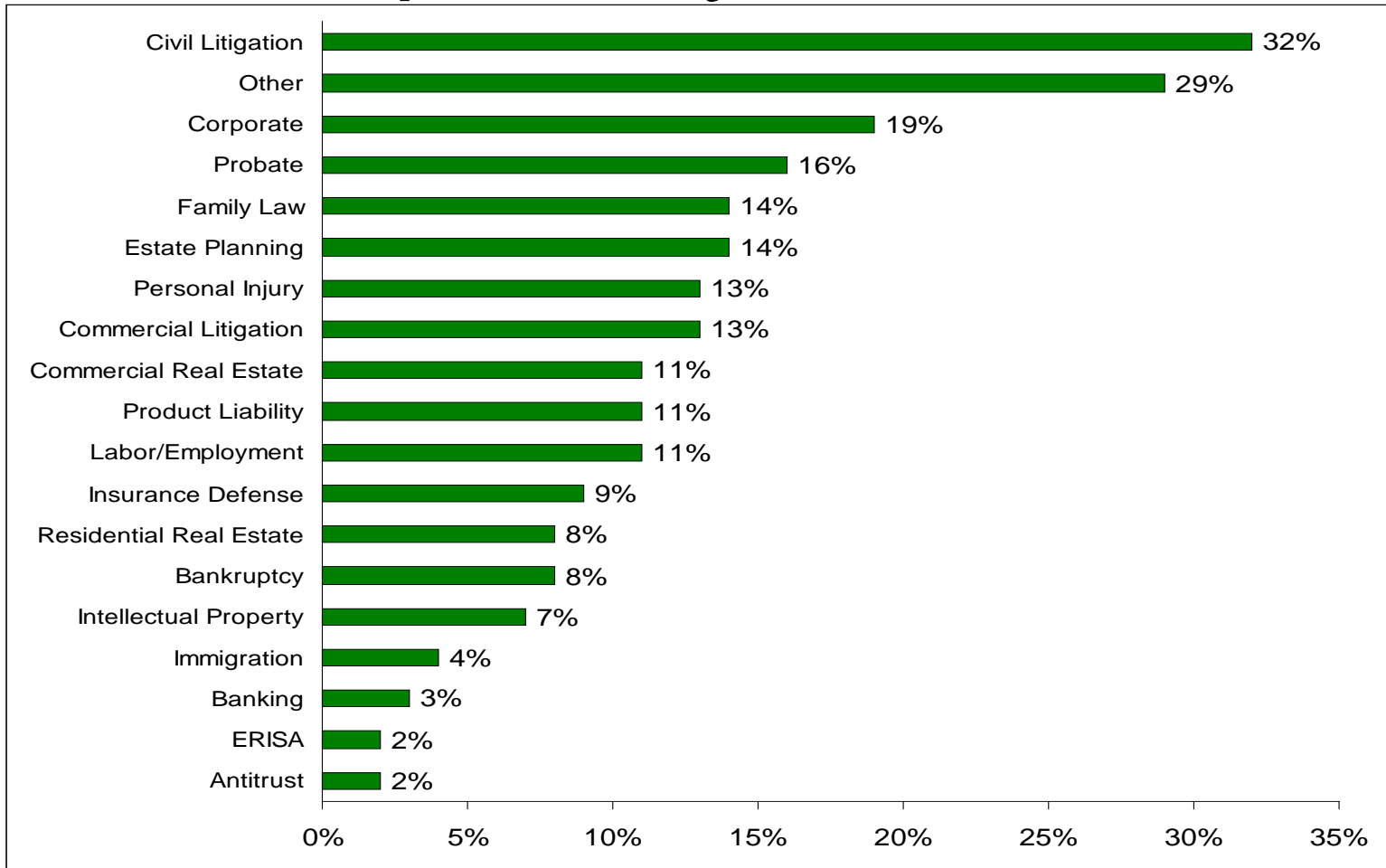
# Demographics Section

# Type of Employer

- Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents are employed by a Law Firm
- Seventeen percent (17%) of respondents are employed by a Corporation

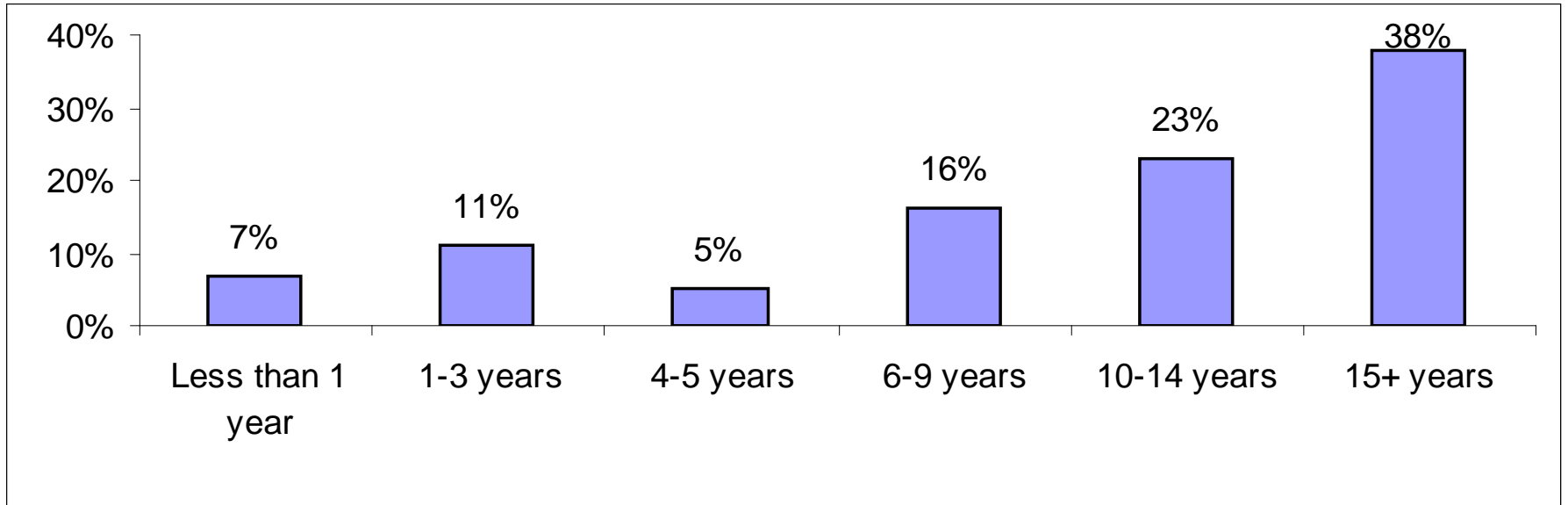
| <b><u>Employed By:</u></b> | <b><u>Percent of Respondents</u></b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Firm                       | 63%                                  |
| Corporation                | 17%                                  |
| Government Agency          | 7%                                   |
| Freelance                  | 2%                                   |
| Other                      | 11%                                  |

# Specialty Areas



\* Calculations made as a percent of all returned surveys (584). Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses

# Years of Experience

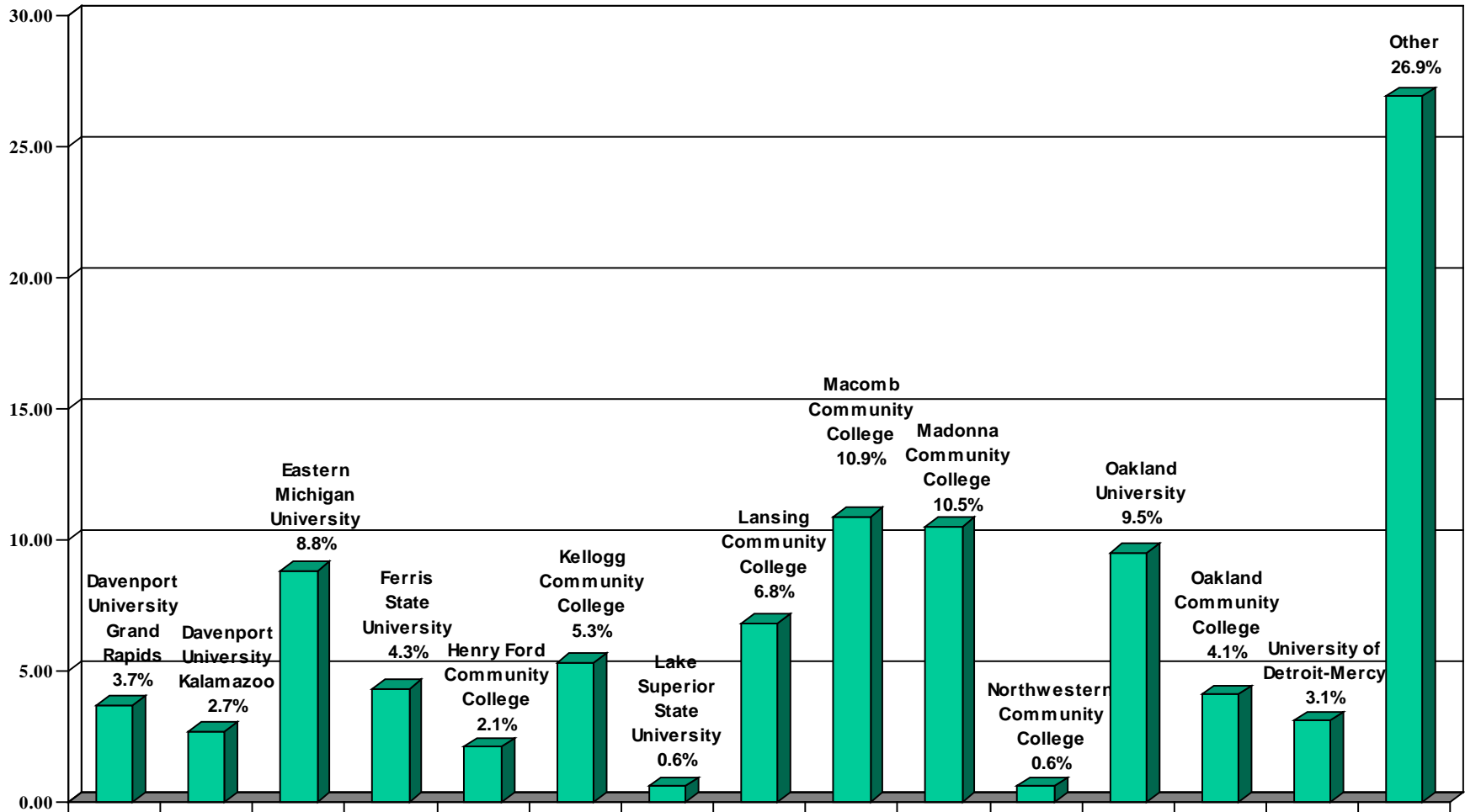


# Education

- Bachelor Degree 58%
  - Paralegal Certificate 40%
  - Associate Degree 40%
  - Masters/Doctorate 8%
- Degree in Legal Assistant Studies
    - Yes 63%
    - No 37%

\*Calculations made as a percent of all returned surveys (584).

# Legal Assistant School Attended

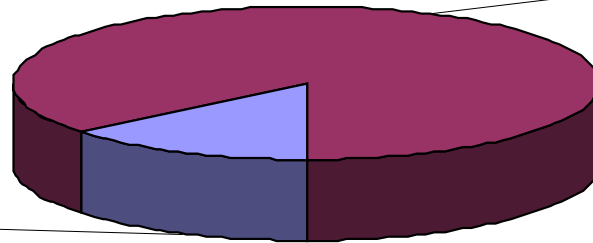


# Membership in Legal Assistant Organizations

- **Legal Assistant Section of the State Bar of Michigan** **52%**
- **Paralegal Section of Detroit Metro Bar Association** **12.7%**
- **National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA)** **12.7%**
- **National Federal of Paralegal Associations (NFPA)** **1%**

# Certification

**NALA  
Certified or  
PACE  
Registered  
Legal  
Assistant  
14%**



**No  
Certification  
86%**

In addition to pursuing a Legal Assistant education, Legal Assistants have the opportunity to sit for a Legal Assistant competency exam, much like the bar exam for attorneys. These exams are offered by the two national legal assistant organizations, NALA & NFPA.

# Work Environment Section

# Number of Attorneys Supported

- 1-3 attorneys 46%
- 4-6 attorneys 25%
- 7-10 attorneys 9%
- 11-15 attorneys 3%
- 16-20 attorneys 2%
- More than 20 3%
- Not Applicable 12%

# Number of Employees

---

## Attorneys

## Percentage of Respondents

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| 1-5           | 34% |
| 6-10          | 10% |
| 11-20         | 10% |
| 21-40         | 10% |
| 41-75         | 7%  |
| 76-100        | 5%  |
| More than 100 | 24% |

## Legal Assistants

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| 1-3          | 44% |
| 3-5          | 12% |
| 6-10         | 11% |
| 11-15        | 7%  |
| 16-20        | 5%  |
| 21-35        | 7%  |
| More than 35 | 14% |

# Legal Assistants Receiving Secretarial & Clerical Support

## Secretarial Support

- Full-time 27%
- Part-time 8%
- Occasionally 18%
- Not At All 47%

## Clerical Support

- Full-time 28%
- Part-time 10%
- Occasionally 33%
- Not At All 29%

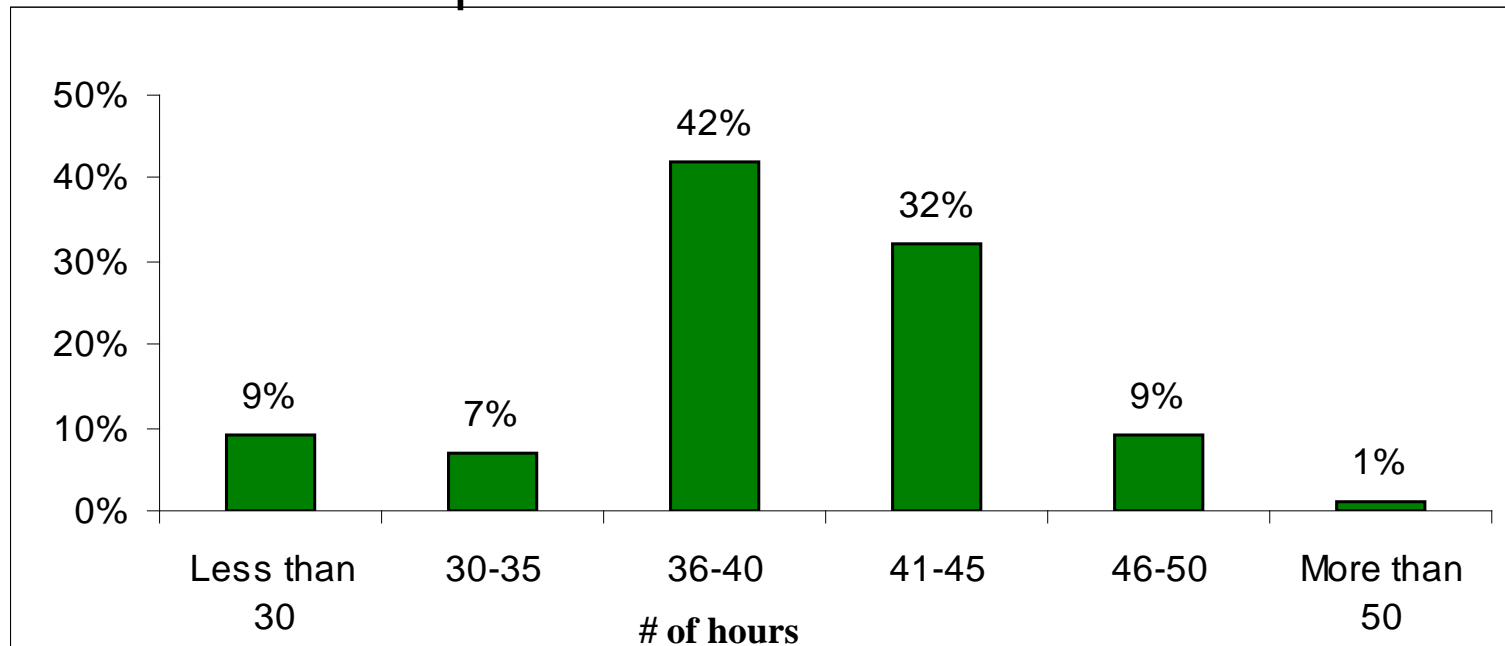
# Hours Worked Section

# Required Billable Hours

| <u>Required Billable Hours Per Year</u>               | <u>Percent of Respondents</u> |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Billable Hours Not Required                           | 57%                           |
| Less than 1,400 hours                                 | 7%                            |
| 1,400-1,500 hours                                     | 12%                           |
| 1,501-1,600 hours                                     | 14%                           |
| 1,601 - 1,700 hours                                   | 4%                            |
| 1,701-1,800 hours                                     | 4%                            |
| More than 1,800 hours                                 | 2%                            |
| <br>  |                               |
| <u>Amount of Time Spent on<br/>Non-Billable Tasks</u> |                               |
| 0-10%   | 23%                           |
| 11-30%  | 23%                           |
| 31-50%  | 10%                           |
| 51-70%  | 5%                            |
| Over 70%  | 2%                            |
| Not Applicable  | 37%                           |

# Average Work Week

Percent of Respondents



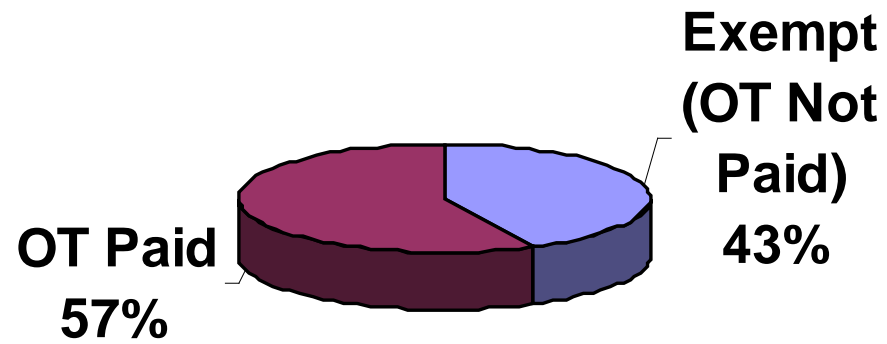
# Salary and Benefits Section

# Salary

- Fifty (50%) of respondents have an annual base salary between \$31,000 - \$50,000.
- Thirty-three (33%) of respondents have an annual base salary of over \$50,000.

| <u>Salary</u> | <u>Percent of Respondents</u> |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Under \$25K   | 10%                           |
| \$26-30K      | 7%                            |
| \$31-35K      | 9%                            |
| \$36-40K      | 13%                           |
| \$41-45K      | 15%                           |
| \$46-50K      | 13%                           |
| \$51-60K      | 19%                           |
| Over \$60K    | 14%                           |

# Overtime



# Bonuses

| <b>Merit-Based or Discretionary Bonus</b> | <b>Percentage of Respondents</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Yes                                       | 57%                              |
| No  | 43%                              |
| <br>                                      |                                  |
| <b>Formula or Structured Bonus</b>        |                                  |
| Yes                                       | 29.5%                            |
| No  | 70.5%                            |

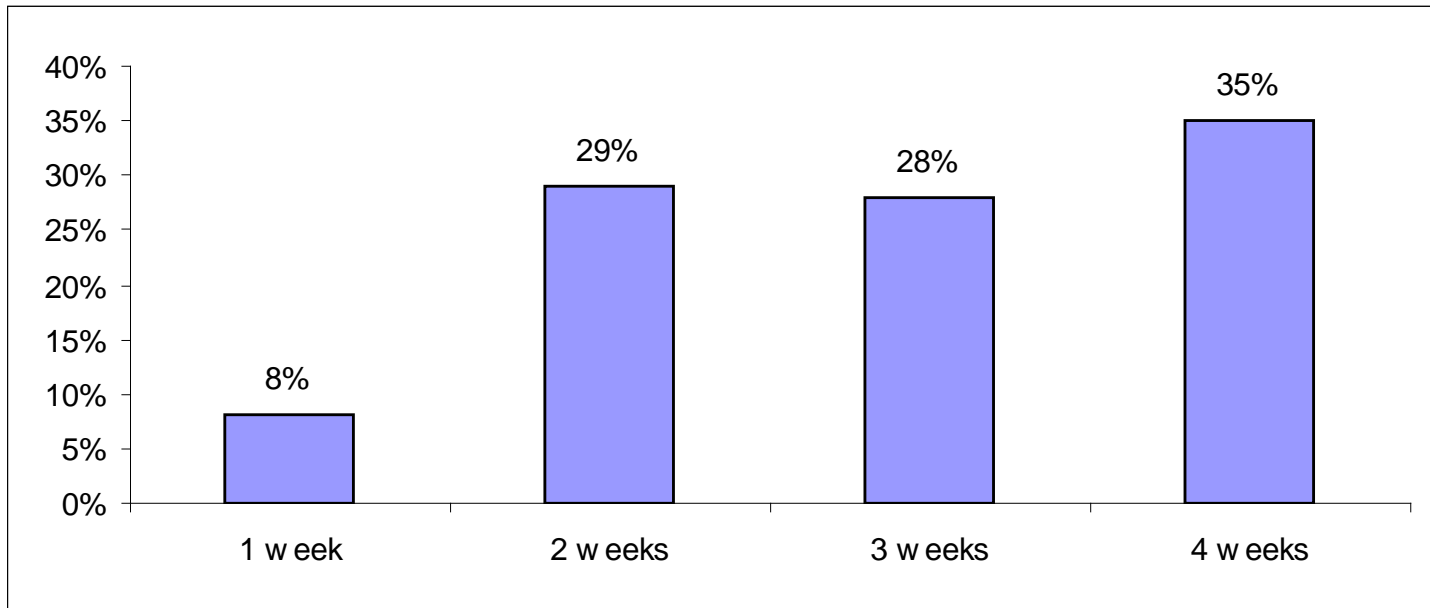
# Annual Raises

| <u>Annual Raise</u>                            | <u>Percent of Respondents</u> |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Yes  | 80%                           |
| No   | 20%                           |
| <br><u>Raise As a Percent of Annual Salary</u> |                               |
| 0-2%   | 32.5%                         |
| 3%-5%  | 58.5%                         |
| 6%-9%  | 7%                            |
| 10% or more                                    | 2%                            |

# Benefits

| <u>Benefit</u>        | <u>Fully</u> | <u>Partially</u> | <u>Employee Paid</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Medical               | 30%          | 59%              | 11%                  |
| Dental                | 26%          | 52%              | 22%                  |
| Vision                | 21%          | 46%              | 33%                  |
| Disabilty             | 47.5%        | 35%              | 17.5%                |
| Prescription          | 21%          | 62.5%            | 16.5%                |
| Parking               | 53%          | 24%              | 23%                  |
| Tuition Reimbursement | 20%          | 40%              | 40%                  |
| Child Care            | 1%           | 4%               | 94%                  |
| Flex Time             | 41%          | 12%              | 47%                  |

# Vacation Time

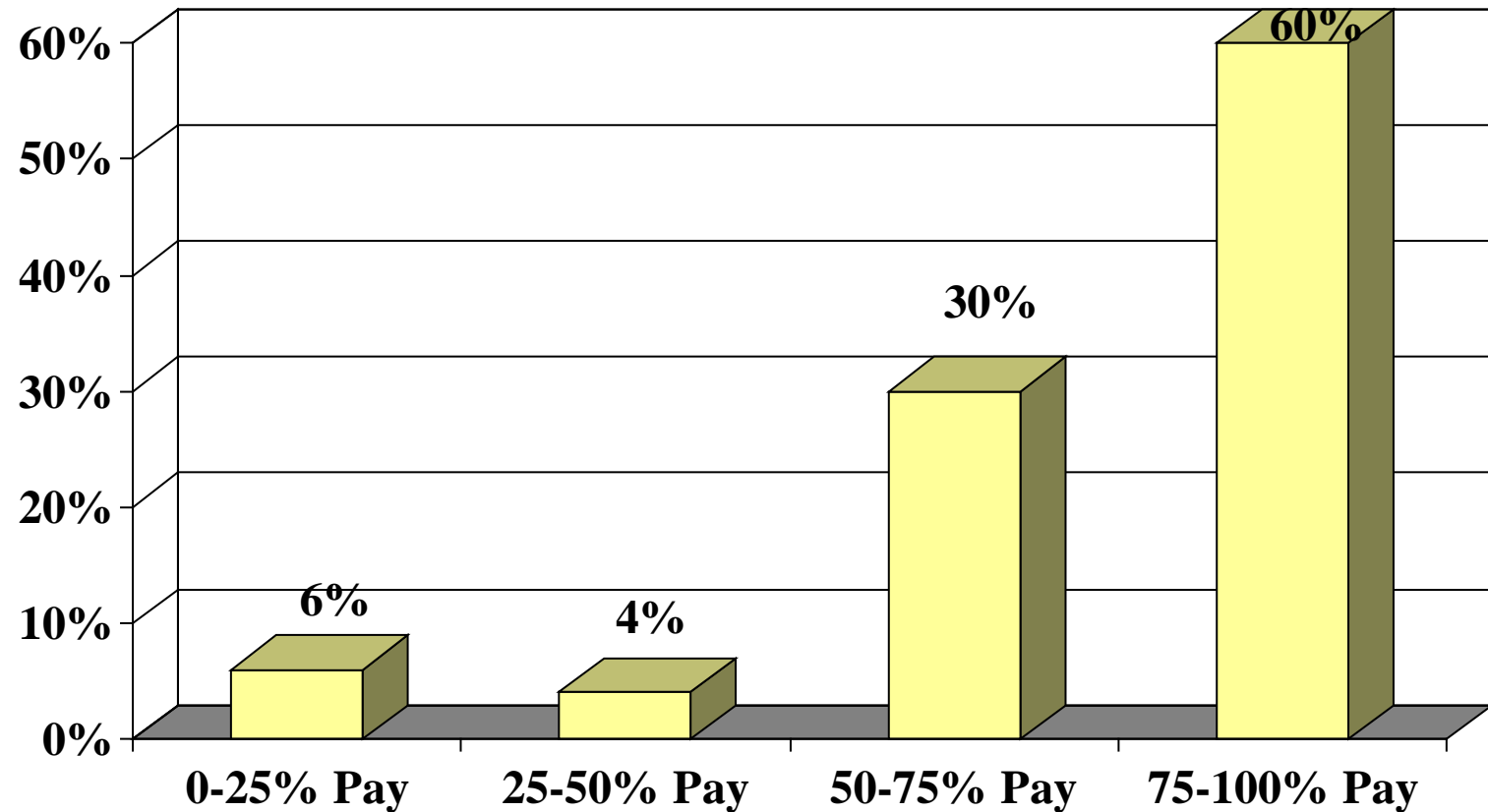


# Maternity/Paternity Leave

|                        | <u>Percent of Respondents</u> |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Paid                   | 54%                           |
| Unpaid                 | 46%                           |
| <br>                   |                               |
| <b><u>How Long</u></b> |                               |
| 1-2 weeks              | 4%                            |
| 3-4 weeks              | 7%                            |
| 5-6 weeks              | 49%                           |
| 7-8 weeks              | 16%                           |
| 9-11 weeks             | 6%                            |
| 12 or more weeks       | 18%                           |

# Maternity/Paternity Leave Pay

Of the respondents that indicated that they received paid maternity/paternity leave, the following chart indicates the percentage of annual salary received.



# Job Satisfaction Section

# Job Satisfaction

81% of respondents identified salary as “very important” in rating job satisfaction.

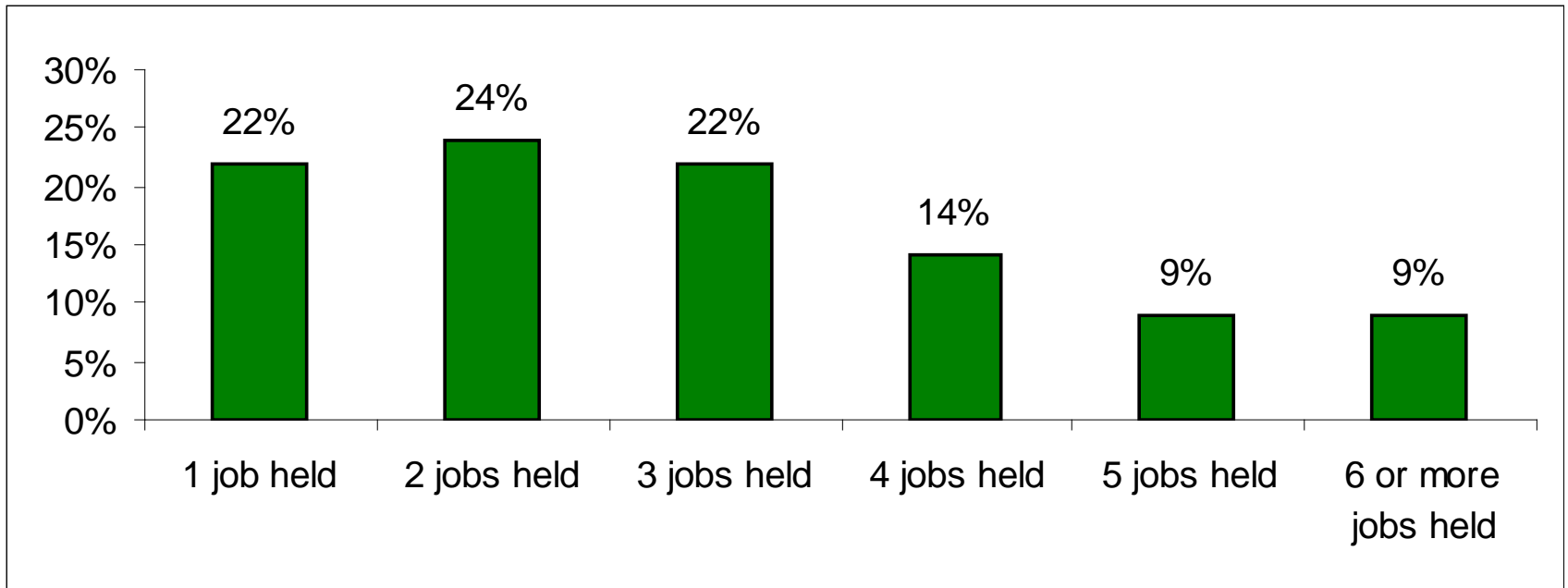
|                     | <b>Very Important</b> | <b>Important</b> | <b>Not Important</b> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Salary              | 81%                   | 19%              | <1%                  |
| Benefits            | 67%                   | 26%              | 7%                   |
| Flexible Hours      | 52%                   | 39%              | 9%                   |
| Partner reported to | 43%                   | 36.5%            | 20.5%                |
| Bonus               | 35%                   | 51%              | 14%                  |
| Prestige            | 11%                   | 40%              | 49%                  |
| Other*              | 39%                   | 32%              | 29%                  |

\* "Other" includes: the environment, the people with whom respondents worked, the respect given by the attorneys, the type of legal work being performed, and the ability to enjoy their time at the office.

# Legal Assistant Career

# Jobs Held

Almost half of the respondents have had 2 or less jobs

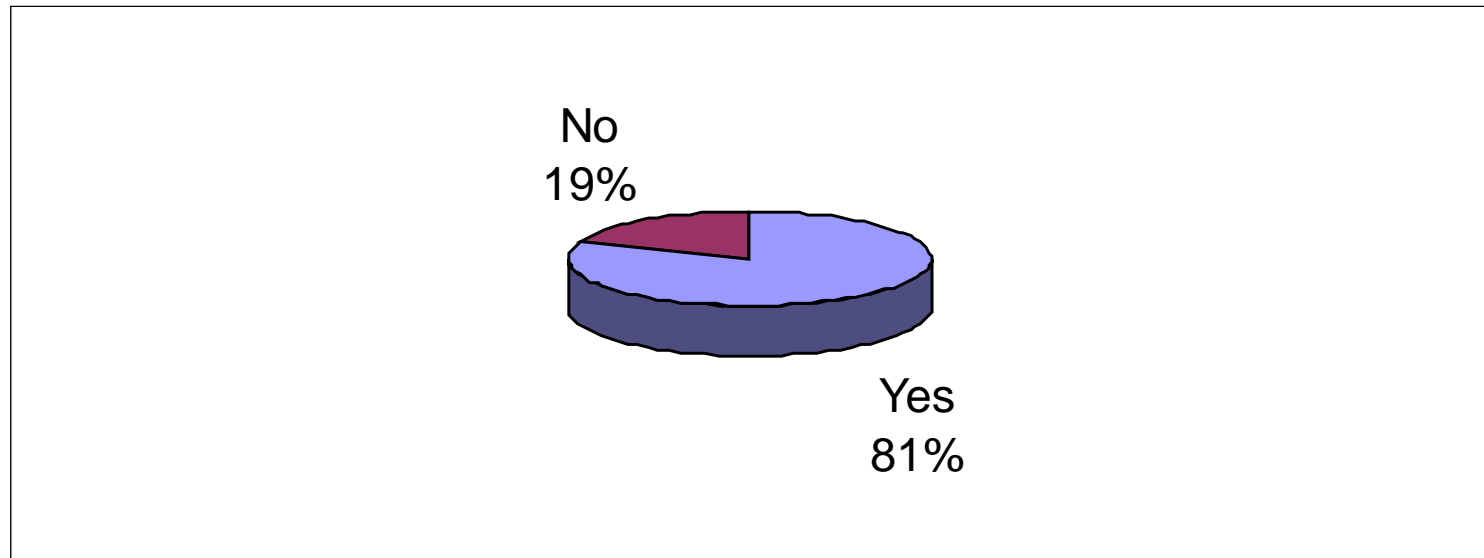


# Length of Time at First Legal Assistant Job

- Less than 1 year 14%
- 1-2 years 27%
- 3-4 years 21%
- 5-6 years 13%
- 7-14 years 14%
- 15 or more years 11%

# Career Legal Assistant

81% of all respondents consider themselves career legal assistants



# Salary Linked to:

- A) Type of Employer
- B) Years of Experience
- C) Specialty – Transactional vs. Litigation
- D) Oakland & Wayne County Employers

# Salary Linked to Type of Employer

|                          | <u>Under \$25K</u> | <u>\$26-30K</u> | <u>\$31-35K</u> | <u>\$36-40K</u> | <u>\$41-45K</u> | <u>\$46-50K</u> | <u>\$51-60K</u> | <u>Over 60K</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Corporation</b>       | 5%                 | 4%              | 8.5%            | 8.5%            | 12%             | 13%             | 28%             | 21%             |
| <b>Firm</b>              | 7%                 | 7%              | 8%              | 12.5%           | 17.5%           | 15%             | 20%             | 13%             |
| <b>Government Agency</b> | 18%                | 3%              | 13%             | 18%             | 11%             | 8%              | 16%             | 13%             |
| <b>Freelance</b>         | 23%                | 0%              | 8%              | 0%              | 31%             | 15%             | 8%              | 15%             |
| <b>Other</b>             | 30%                | 11%             | 11%             | 23%             | 6%              | 7.5%            | 7.5%            | 4%              |

# Salary Linked to Years of Experience

|                         | <u>Under \$25K</u> | <u>\$26-30K</u> | <u>\$31-35K</u> | <u>\$36-40K</u> | <u>\$41-45K</u> | <u>\$46-50K</u> | <u>\$51-60K</u> | <u>Over 60K</u> |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Less than 1 year</b> | 50%                | 17%             | 19%             | 6%              | 8%              | 0%              | 0%              | 0%              |
| <b>1-3 years</b>        | 28%                | 16%             | 17%             | 20%             | 16%             | 1.5%            | 0%              | 1.5%            |
| <b>4-5 years</b>        | 18%                | 11%             | 18%             | 36%             | 7%              | 7%              | 3%              | 0%              |
| <b>6-9 years</b>        | 4%                 | 5%              | 12%             | 20%             | 21%             | 18%             | 11%             | 9%              |
| <b>10-14 years</b>      | 6%                 | 6%              | 5%              | 11%             | 15%             | 20%             | 24%             | 13%             |
| <b>15+ years</b>        | 2%                 | 3%              | 4%              | 7%              | 15%             | 14%             | 31%             | 24%             |

# Salary Linked to Specialty Transactional vs. Litigation

## Transactional Specialties Include:

Banking  
Commercial Real Estate  
Corporate  
ERISA  
Estate Planning  
Immigration  
Intellectual property  
Residential Real Estate

## Litigation Specialties Include:

Antitrust  
Bankruptcy  
Civil Litigation  
Commercial Litigation  
Family  
Insurance Defense  
Labor/Employment  
Personal Injury  
Probate  
Products Liability

|                               | <u>Under \$25K</u> | <u>\$26-30K</u> | <u>\$31-35K</u> | <u>\$36-40K</u> | <u>\$41-45K</u> | <u>\$46-50K</u> | <u>\$51-60K</u> | <u>Over 60K</u> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Transactional Only</b>     | 3%                 | 4%              | 4%              | 13%             | 10%             | 9%              | 31%             | 26%             |
| <b>Litigation Only</b>        | 5%                 | 4%              | 12%             | 15%             | 19%             | 22%             | 13%             | 9%              |
| <b>BOTH Trans. &amp; Lit.</b> | 16%                | 13%             | 9%              | 12%             | 14%             | 8%              | 19%             | 9%              |
| <b>Other</b>                  | 23%                | 9%              | 9%              | 9%              | 17%             | 8%              | 14%             | 11%             |

\*Calculations made as a percent of all returned surveys (584).

# Salary Differences by County

- 75% of Legal Assistants Employed IN Wayne or Oakland County earned \$41,000 or more
- 45% of Legal Assistants Employed Outside of Wayne and Oakland Counties earned \$41,000 or more

|  | <u>Under \$25K</u> | <u>\$26-30K</u> | <u>\$31-35K</u> | <u>\$36-40K</u> | <u>\$41-45K</u> | <u>\$46-50K</u> | <u>\$51-60K</u> | <u>Over 60K</u> |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Employed <u>in</u> Wayne or Oakland County         | 3%                 | 5%              | 5%              | 12%             | 15%             | 17%             | 24%             | 19%             |
| Employed <u>Outside</u> of Wayne or Oakland County | 18%                | 9%              | 13%             | 14%             | 16%             | 8%              | 14%             | 7%              |