

2019

# In House Salary & Lifestyle Survey



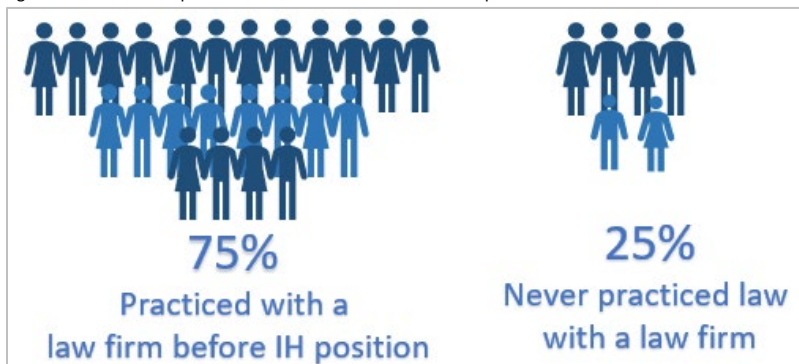
A survey by  LEOPARD SOLUTIONS

## Corporate Counsel Salary and Lifestyle 2019

The 2019 Leopard Solutions' Corporate Counsel Salary and Lifestyle Survey is Leopard's second corporate counsel survey aimed at understanding corporate counsel, practice trends, and the demands that corporate counsel not only sets upon themselves but on law firms and the attorneys that ultimately represent them. We wanted to learn more about in-house attorneys, their origins, and how they feel about their position within the organization.

Of the 964 individual responses from attorneys representing 666 companies and organizations in the US, seventy-five percent (75%) stated that before becoming corporate counsel, they were attorneys at law firms.

Figure 1. Percent of corporate counsels that have and have not practiced with a law firm.



### THE SURVEY

#### WE POLLED:

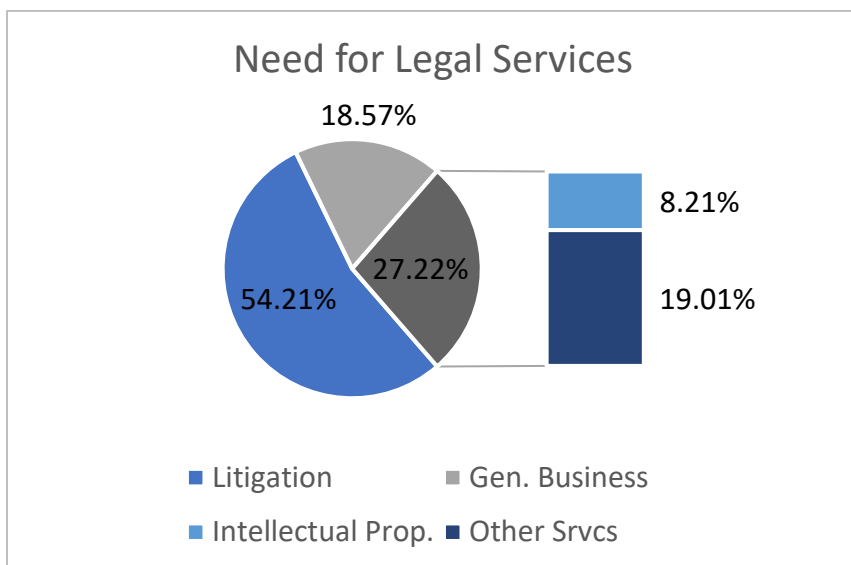
In house/corporate attorneys in the US including public companies and private entities.

#### PARTICIPATION:

964 attorneys representing 666 companies the majority of which employ more than 5,000 employees.

With most of the respondents working for organizations of 1,000 employees or more (83.35%), there is a great disparity in the sizes of the legal department; the most common department size response was between one and ten (27.65%) and 100 or more (26.40%). Regardless of the size of the legal department, nearly one hundred percent (99.38%) of the respondents answered that their company hires outside counsel for various reasons. The top reason organizations hired outside counsel is litigation (54.21%) followed by corporate/general business law (18.57%), and intellectual property (8.21%).

Figure 2. Reasons corporate counsel requires outside counsel



Interestingly, three-quarters (73.15%) of the organizations polled earn over one billion in revenue annually and over fifty-five percent (55.7%) of the respondents represent the following industries: financial services (15.56%, including fin-tech); manufacturing (11.51%); healthcare, pharmaceutical and biotech (14.11%); and software, internet, and technology (14.52%). In the Leopard 2017 Corporate Counsel Survey, 65.38% of the respondent's organizations made over one billion annually; an increase of nearly eight percentage points. The top industries manufacturing (11.54%), technology (10.77%), and business services including management consulting (8.46) all saw an increase in 2019.

## A Return To Law Firm Life

The big questions revolve mainly around work-life balance and whether in house counsel would or would not ever return to law firm life. The answer is complicated. Forty-nine percent (49.32%) say no – they will not return to the “law firm life.” A small group



(12.80%) stated yes, they would return to a law firm, but they have conditions along with their colleagues that are “on the fence.” The “fence” consists of attorneys in the middle (37.67%) that state that returning to law firm life will greatly depend on the conditions ranging from flex time off, few to no billable hours, or if there were no in-house jobs available. In a 2019 article titled “[Are you in or out? Deciding if the time is right to go to In-House](#)” (Olds Som, S. previously

with MLA, currently with [Heidrick & Struggles](#), and [Cohen Nicol, T.](#) for [Major, Lindsey & Africa](#) a premier legal executive search firm), it states that a return to practicing at an established law firm may not even be an option for many in-house attorneys and they may be correct. [Leopard In-House](#) data confirms Som and Nicol’s point, a very small percentage of all the attorneys within the In House network (over 70,000) return to law firm life from in house positions. Those that do take the leap back to law firm work are mostly from management and consulting firms such as Deloitte, Goldman Sachs, etc. But why return? One assumption that can be made is advancement. Some in-house attorneys stated that they are not happy with the level of opportunities for advancement: twenty-eight percent (28.12%) are only “somewhat satisfied” while a total of 36.81% are between somewhat and very dissatisfied with the level of advancement at their company.

## It's More Than Just Money

What is the lure to in-house, is it just the balance of time? Nearly sixty percent (58.62%) of the respondents earn an annual salary between \$150,000 and \$250,000 and though working for a law firm may be more stress-inducing, many law firms compensate their first-year associates within range of in house attorneys with more tenure.

Using the Leopard Solutions, [Firmscape](#) Top Compensation Report, we compared the survey results below to the reported 2019 starting salaries at many top 200 law firms. Firms in major markets like New York City, San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Boston offer starting salaries between \$150,000 to \$190,000 with an average of nearly \$175,000. These salaries are for first-year associates, without a book of business or the legal acumen to represent anyone on their own. According to the same reported data, fifth-year associate salaries start around \$200,000 with an average over \$274,000 in 2019 for firms within major markets – a salary base that may take some in house attorneys many years to reach.

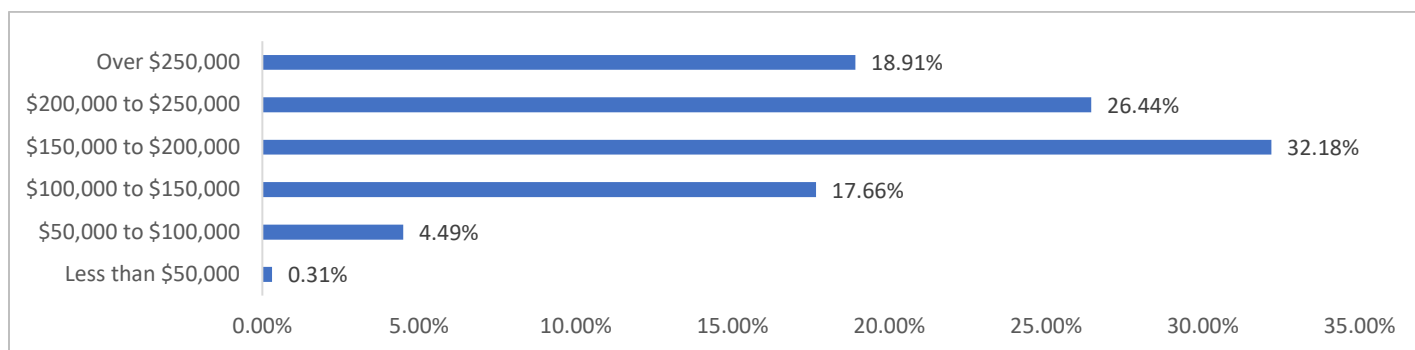


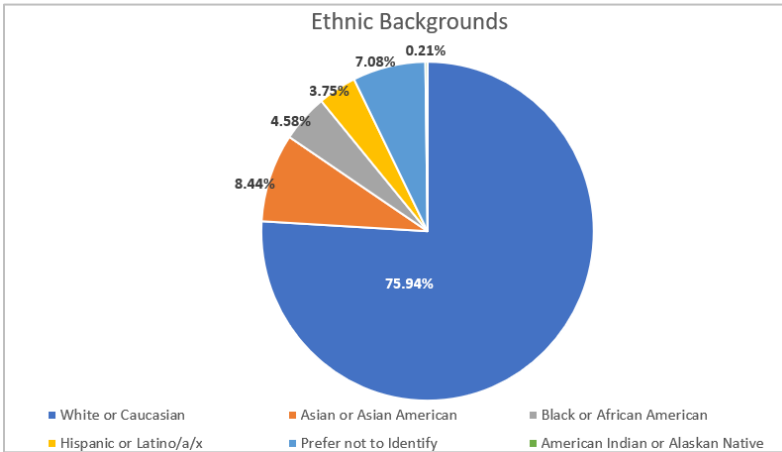
Figure 3. The salary range for all in house survey respondents

On the other hand, since the 2017 Leopard Corporate Counsel Survey, the number of attorneys receiving bonuses has increased, thus increasing the total compensation package. In 2017, only 80% of the respondents reported receiving a year-end bonus. In 2019, that number greatly increased to 93.56% with a total compensation package that can mean somewhere between \$25-50 thousand for nearly 27% of our survey respondents. Of course, if you’re chief general counsel at Apple, your total compensation package may be slightly higher by about \$24-25 million ([Corporate Law News, Bloomberg Law](#). 2020), but we assume that is a special case.

Another point that differentiates in house attorneys and their law firm counterparts is retention. Yes, law firm compensation is alluring, but associate retention is a pain point for many firms where an average 50% of all associates exit a firm around the three-year mark regardless of experience according to our data. Three years is usually the point where an associate’s probability of movement increases dramatically (also based on geographic location, firm rank, practice area, law school rank, among other data

points) and while some associates leave before or slightly after, very few (if any) retire from their first law firm. For this survey, two-thirds of the respondents have over four-years with their organization and with perks like remote work, no billable hours, and a lot less stress, it is doubtful that the exit trend to in house counsel will end as corporations are increasing their financial packages to compete for talent.

Figure 4. Ethnic distribution of surveyed in-house attorneys



### In House Diversity

Diversity is a rather sensitive subject within the legal industry. In January 2019, GCs from major US organizations [penned an open letter to law firms](#) to improve diversity or lose their business. The open letter was in response to the release of new partner classes at top US law firms. The new partner class was expressed to be “largely male and largely white.” However, while the gender split for this survey is pretty even across all respondents with 50.47% identifying as male, 46.41% as female, and 3.42% preferring not to identify; of the nearly 1,000 individual respondents, 75.94% identify as white or caucasian, 8.44% are Asian or Asian American, 4.58% identify as black or African American and 3.75%

identify as Hispanic, Latino/a/x. This, however, is not indicative of the overall company’s commitment to diversity. Diversity can be very tricky for many companies as “it usually begins and ends with talent acquisition.” (Cash, D. 2018, currently Director of Talent Acquisition, News & Sports, Warner Media) Though many initiatives are in place, a large majority of those organizations simply do not have a diversity development plan to retain the diverse candidates in the various business departments. How can a company or a law firm improve on something that is not properly planned? It is one thing to hire diverse candidates, quite another to have plans in place to make them feel included. Cash states that “[diversity] should truly be a comprehensive approach that involves not only talent acquisition but talent development, diversity and inclusion, employee engagement as well as business and employee resource groups. It takes a village approach to address diversity in a meaningful way.” (Cash, D. 2020) Hopefully, for the next round of surveys, corporations can close the ethnic gap.

### The Upside of Corporate Counsel Life

What is the upside of being corporate counsel? The answer can be a combination of factors including work-life balance with 75.55% feeling satisfied to very satisfied with the lifestyle their company offers and/or the flexibility. But does flexibility equal no advancement opportunities? Not according to a post by [Special Counsel \(2014\)](#) – the nation’s leading full-service provider of legal consulting, legal talent, legal technology, and eDiscovery – they state that law firm career tracks are generally one-dimensional, unlike in-house positions that can lead to management positions within the legal department, the attorneys can move between focus areas, and can even lead to executive positions within the organization. According to this article, the sky’s the limit for corporate counsel, while for law firm attorneys, the limit is the sky. However, it is all about perspective. A team of legal search professionals that specifically place attorneys in corporate counsel positions will be of one opinion, while search professionals who place attorneys laterally at law firms will have the opposite opinion. In the end, only data is the most accurate indicator of attorney and legal market trends.

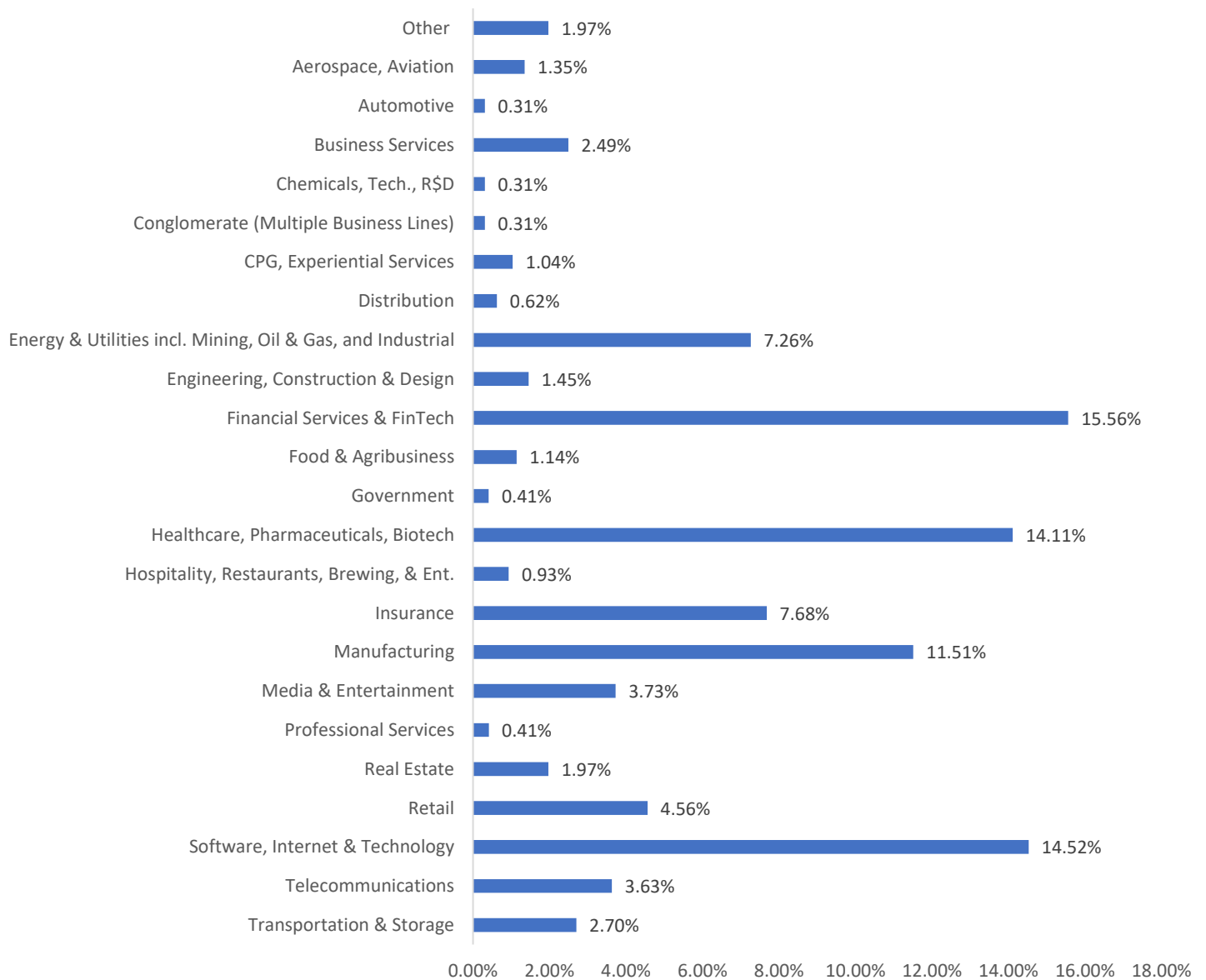
For more data-driven white papers and legal industry content, visit the [Leopard Research](#) page for the latest information.

**Leopard Solutions delivers the highest quality, most accurate and in-depth information on the legal market, leading law firms, and attorneys with easily searchable products.**

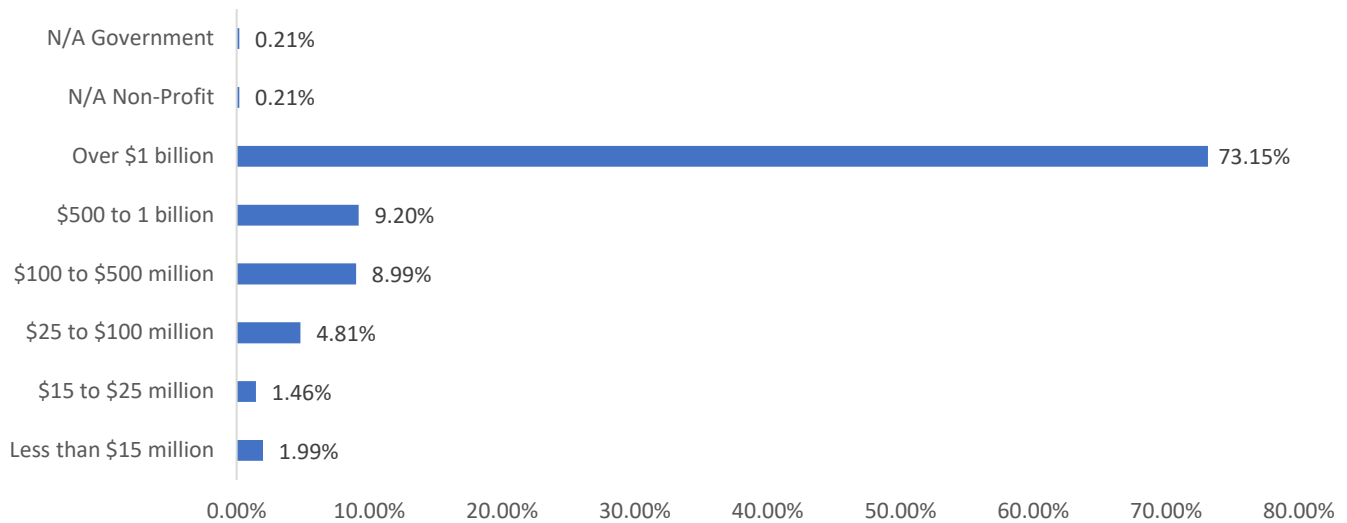
Established in 2002, Leopard Solutions is a proud WBE organization that has grown into one of the most recognized and trusted legal market data providers in the United States. Developed in direct response to the professional needs of clients and emerging industry trends, our diverse data solutions are designed to fulfill a wide variety of intelligence needs. Our curated reports help you get the information you need to make data-driven business decisions and know the legal market inside out.

Our technology and the data are continuously updated to ensure market relevance and your competitive edge. Leopard Solutions’ high level of quality and depth is unmatched in the industry.

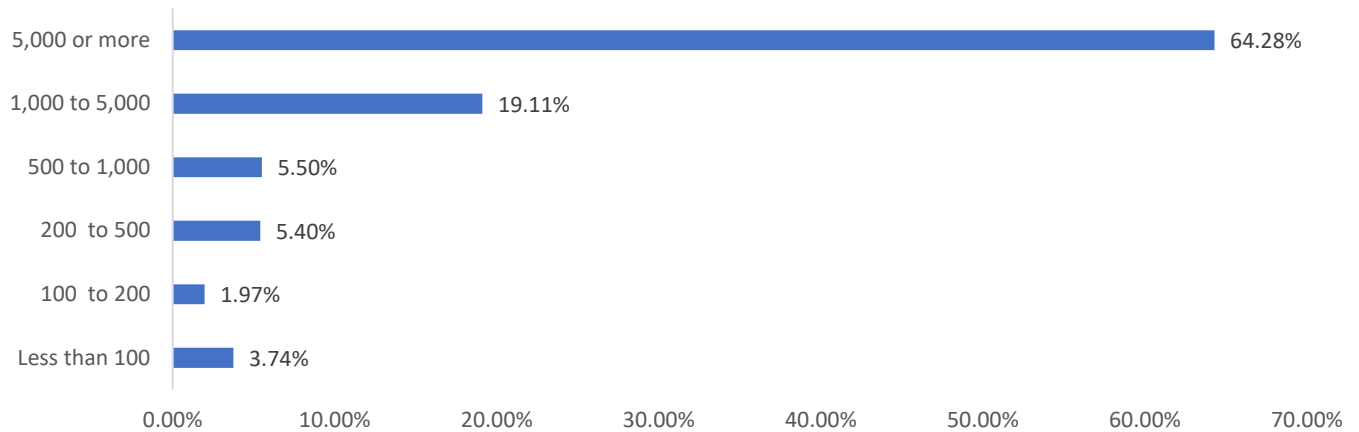
## Q1: What industry best describes your organization?



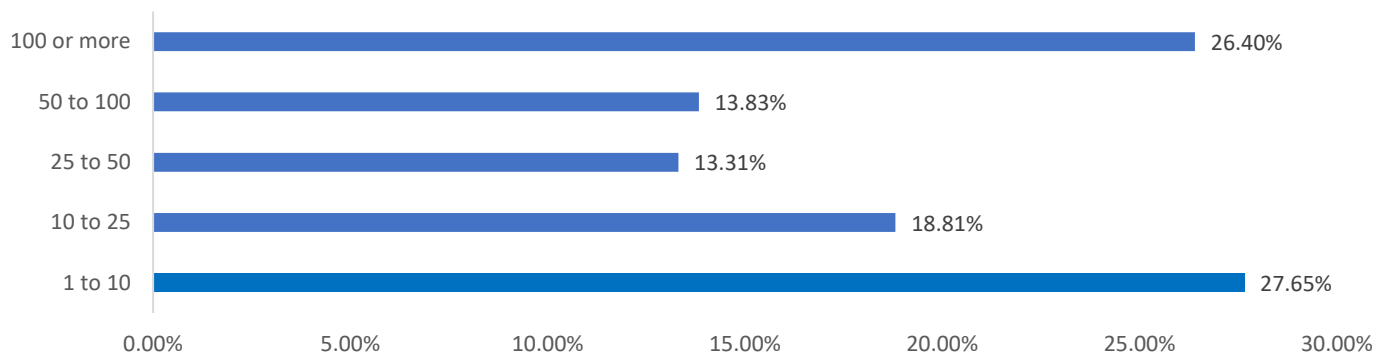
## Q2: What is your organization's annual revenue?



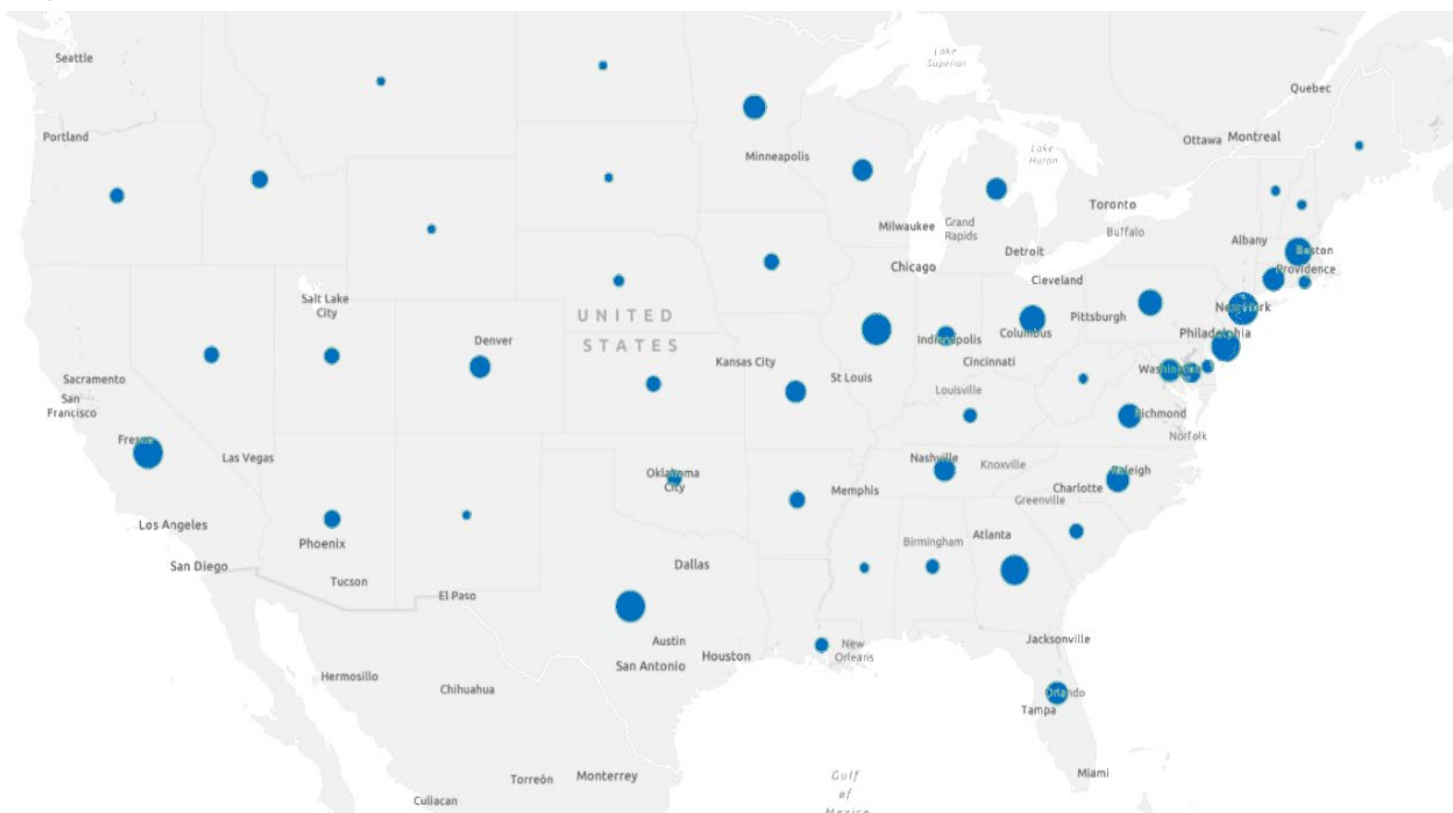
## Q3: How many employees in your organization?



## Q4: What is the size of your legal department?

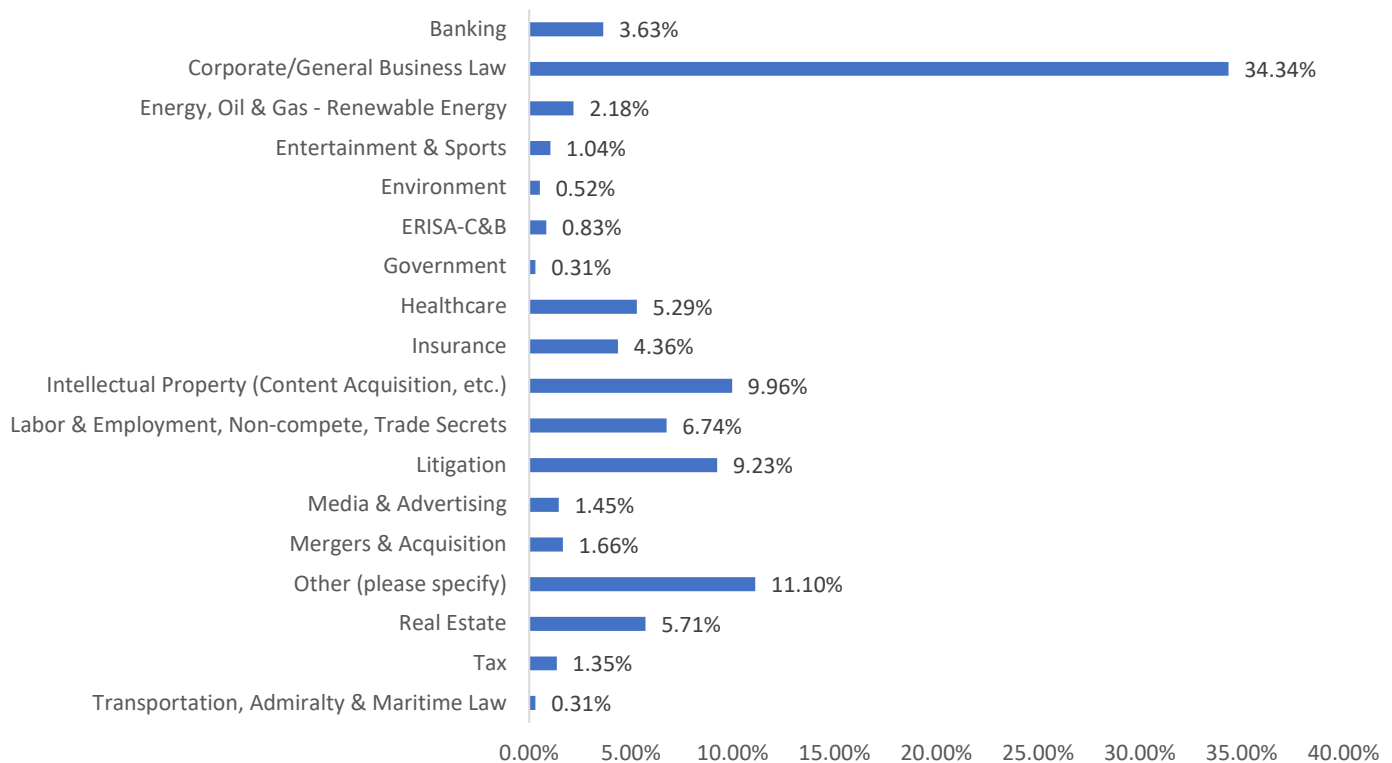


# Q5: What state are you located?

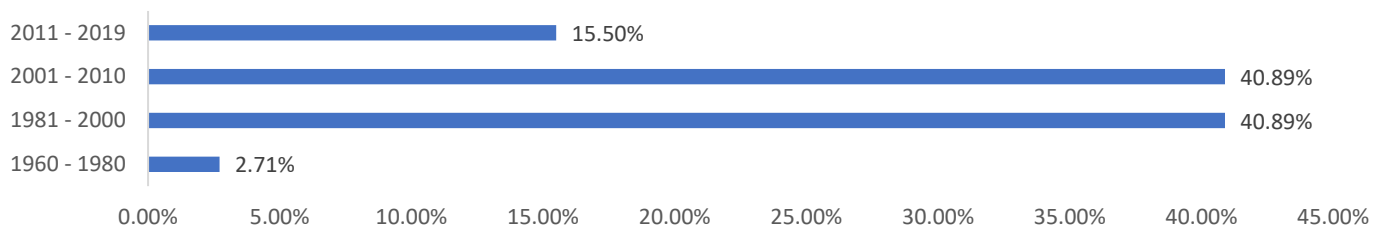


STATE	PERCENTAGE	STATE	PERCENTAGE	STATE	PERCENTAGE
Alabama	0.41%	Maine	0.00%	Oregon	0.52%
Alaska	0.00%	Maryland	1.35%	Pennsylvania	3.32%
Arizona	0.93%	Massachusetts	4.67%	Rhode Island	0.31%
Arkansas	0.83%	Michigan	1.97%	South Carolina	0.52%
California	12.45%	Minnesota	2.80%	South Dakota	0.00%
Colorado	2.07%	Mississippi	0.10%	Tennessee	2.28%
Connecticut	2.28%	Missouri	1.97%	Texas	8.20%
Delaware	0.31%	Montana	0.00%	Utah	0.73%
Florida	2.28%	Nebraska	0.21%	Vermont	0.10%
Georgia	5.39%	Nevada	0.73%	Virginia	2.70%
Hawaii	0.00%	New Hampshire	0.10%	Washington	2.28%
Idaho	0.93%	New Jersey	5.50%	Washington DC*	1.66%
Illinois	6.12%	New Mexico	0.00%	West Virginia	0.10%
Indiana	1.24%	New York	9.54%	Wisconsin	1.87%
Iowa	0.73%	North Carolina	3.01%	Wyoming	0.00%
Kansas	0.62%	North Dakota	0.00%	International	1.24%
Kentucky	0.41%	Ohio	4.15%		
Louisiana	0.41%	Oklahoma	0.62%		

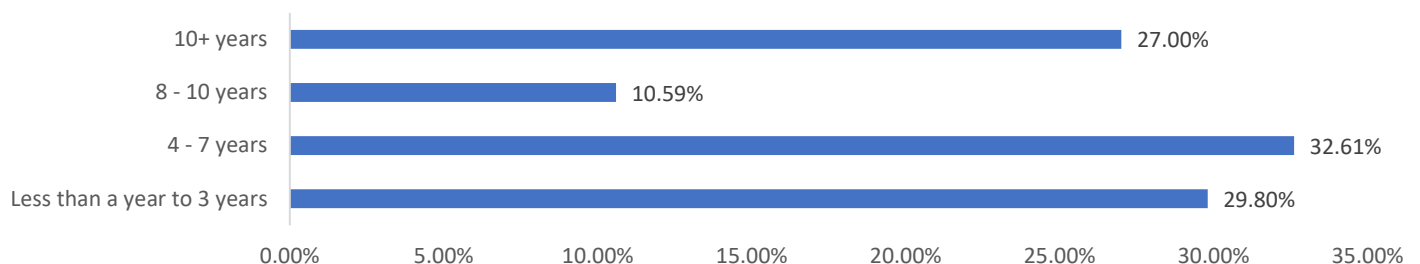
## Q6: Which best describes your legal specialty?



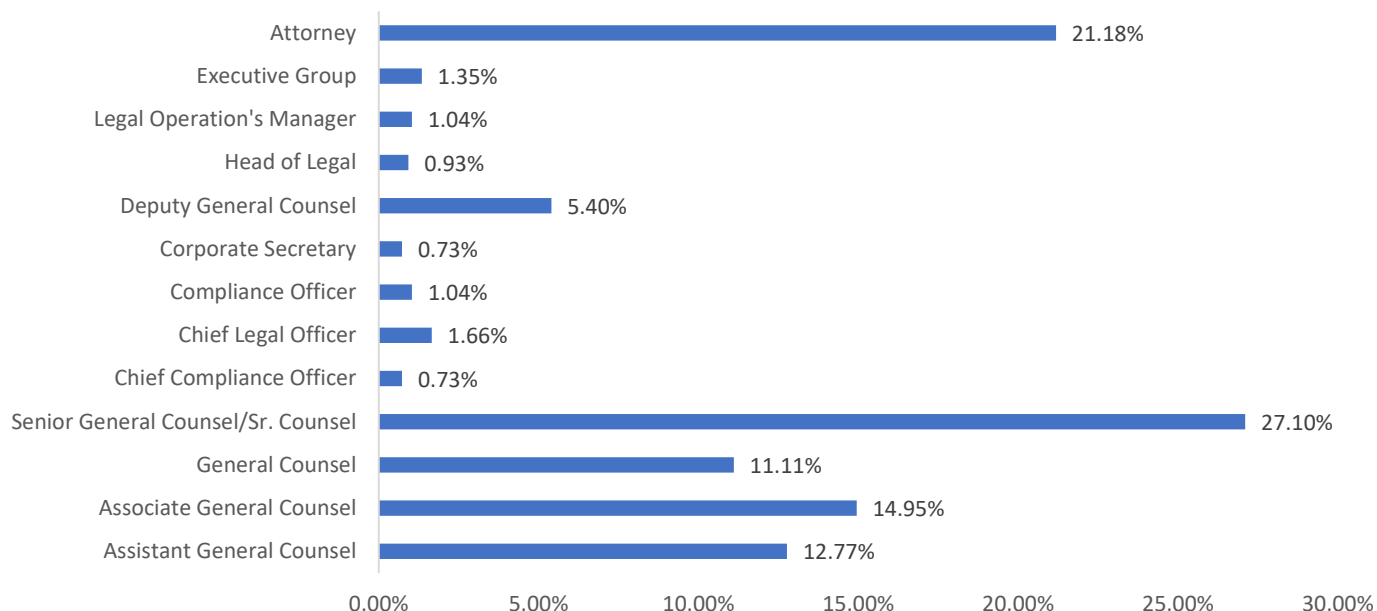
## Q7: When did you receive your JD/LLM?



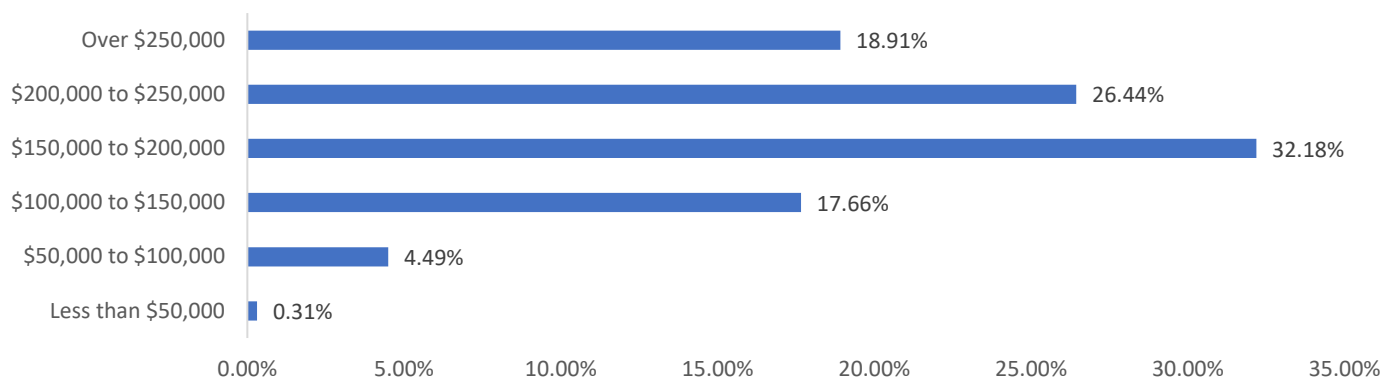
## Q8: How long have you been with your organization?



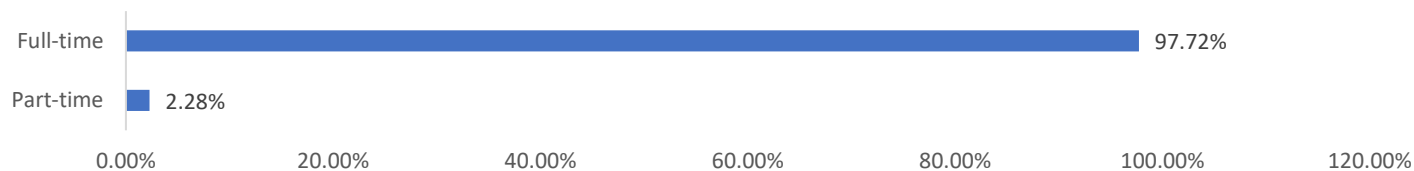
## Q9: What is your job title/position at your organization?



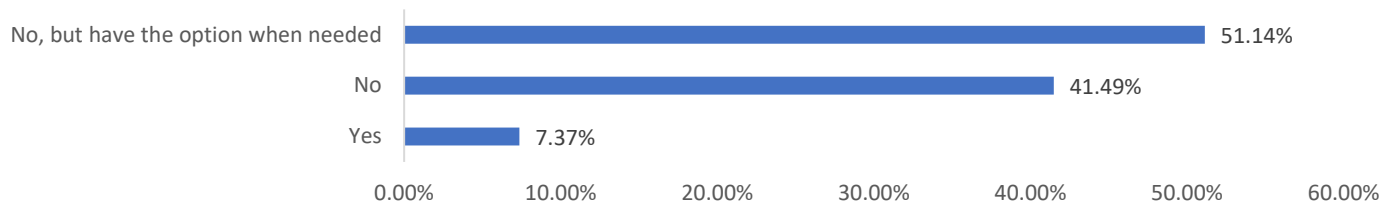
## Q10: What is your base annual salary?



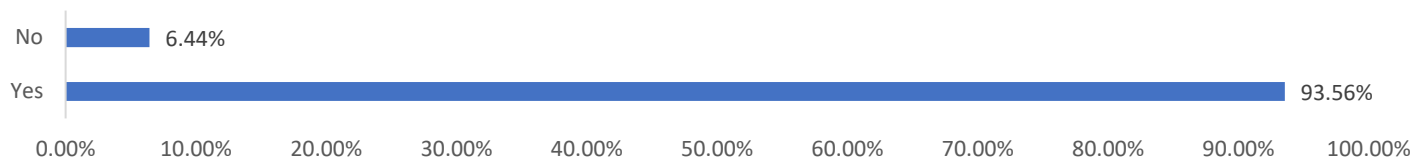
## Q11: Is your position full-time or part-time?



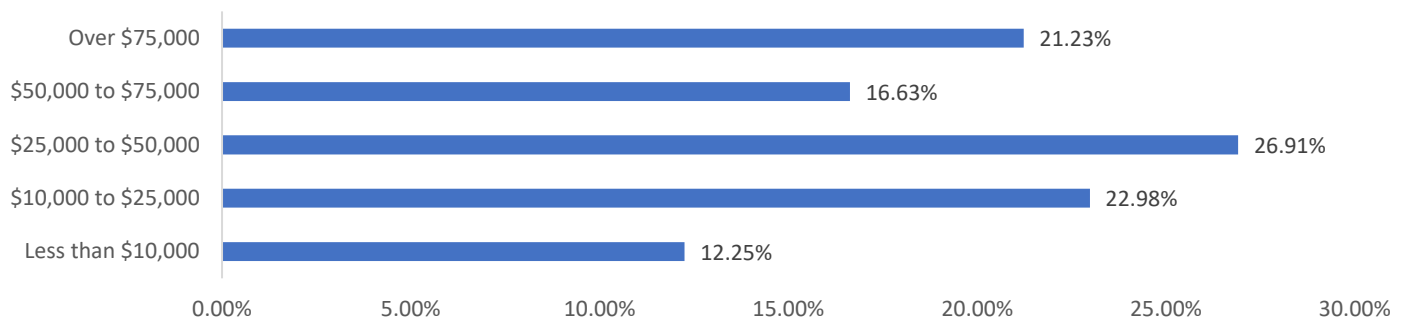
## Q12: Is your position remote or work-from-home?



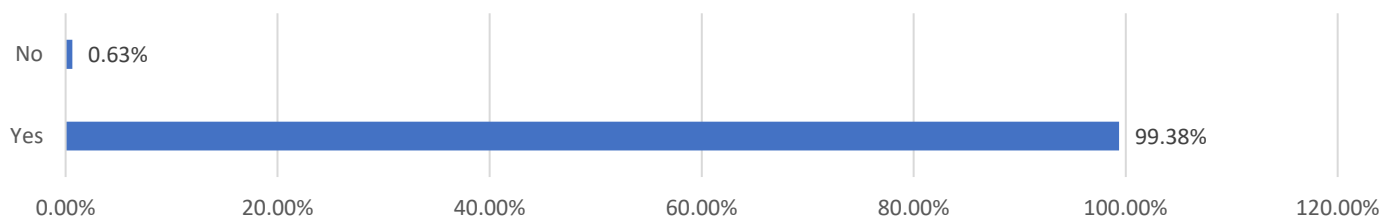
## Q13: Does your organization offer an annual bonus?



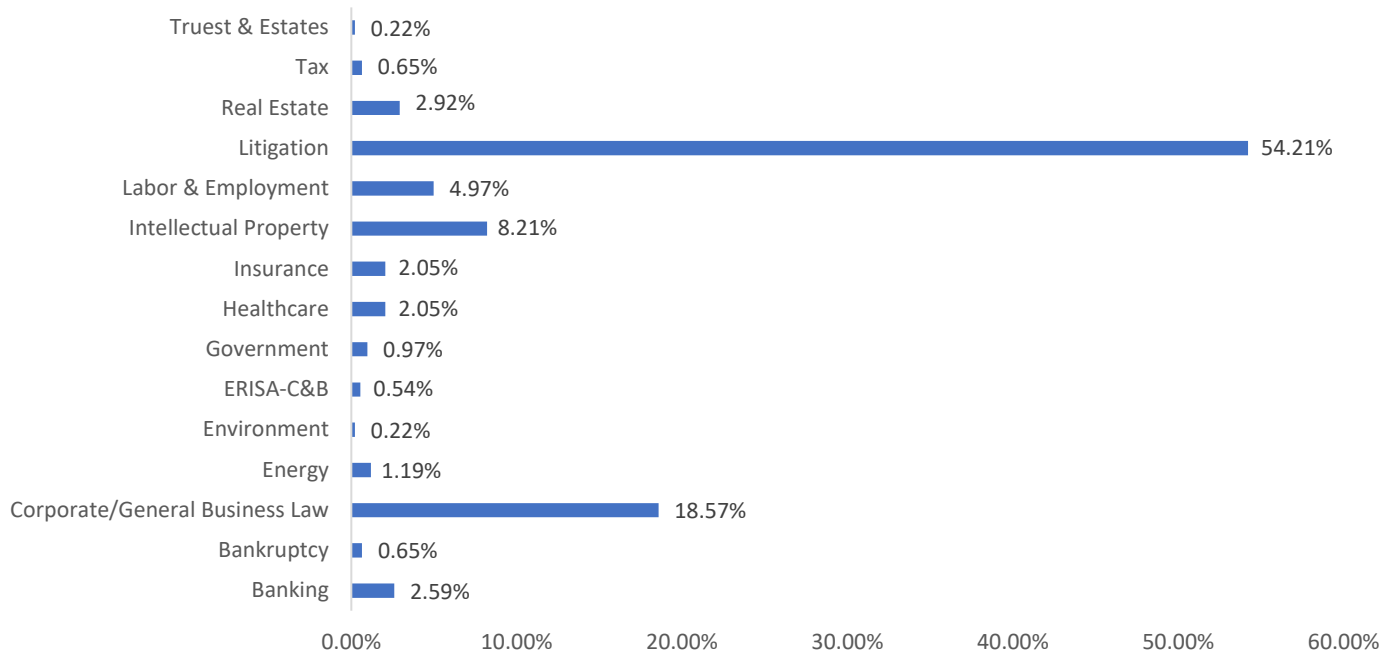
## Q14: What is the range of your annual bonus?



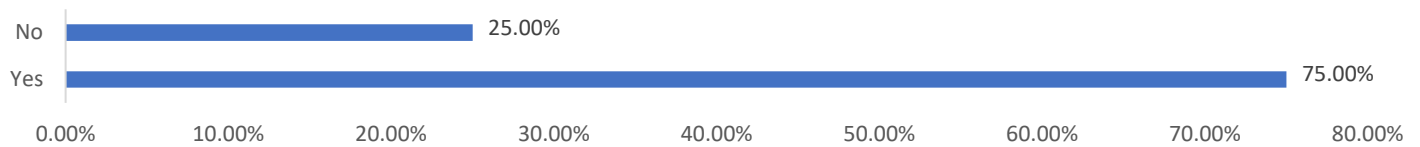
## Q15: Does your organization hire outside counsel?



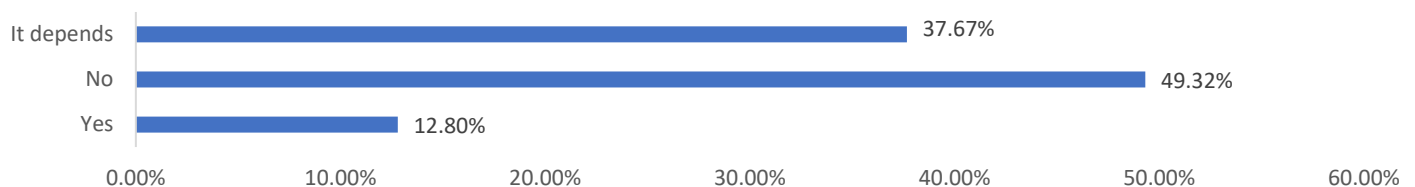
## Q16: What is the primary need for outside counsel?



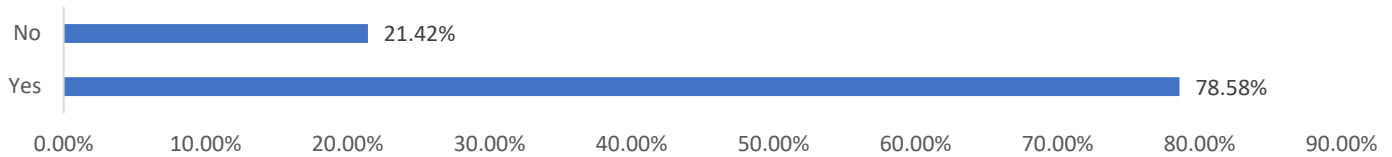
## Q17: Have you ever worked for a law firm (Biglaw, AmLaw200, boutique, etc.)?



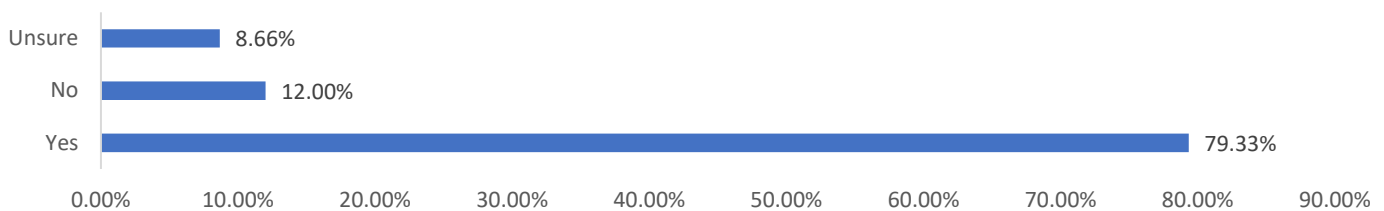
## Q18: Would you ever consider returning/entering law firm life?



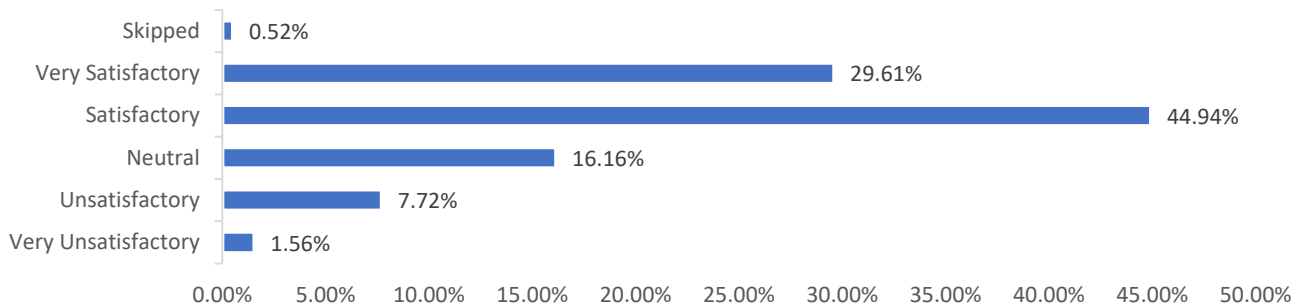
**Q19:** Do you think your organization invests interest in your professional development (time off for CLE, continuing education, corporate responsibility, social outreach, etc.)?



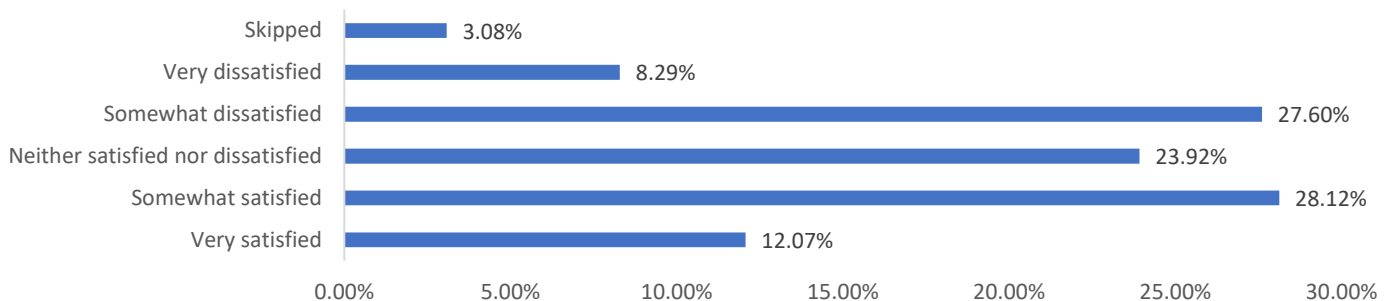
**Q20:** Does your organization offer parental leave?



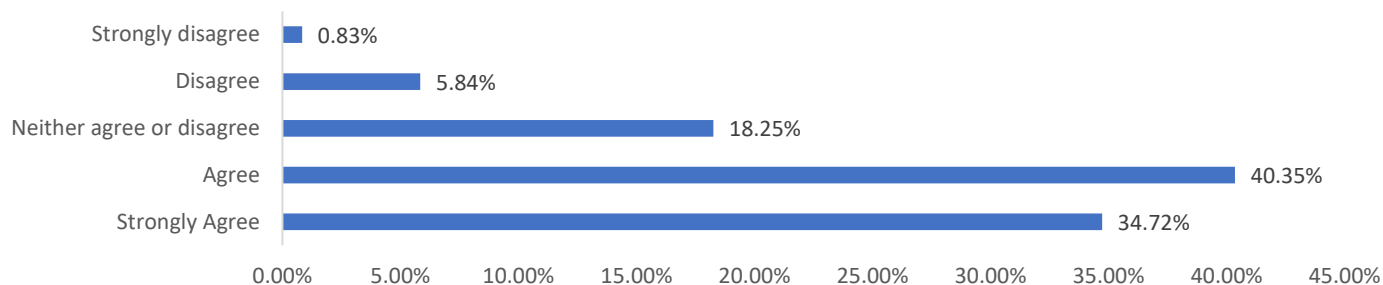
**Q21:** How would you rate your work/life balance?



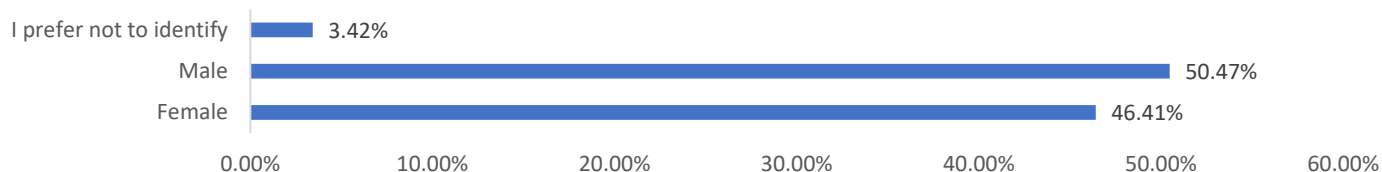
**Q22:** How satisfied are you with the opportunity for advancement as corporate counsel?



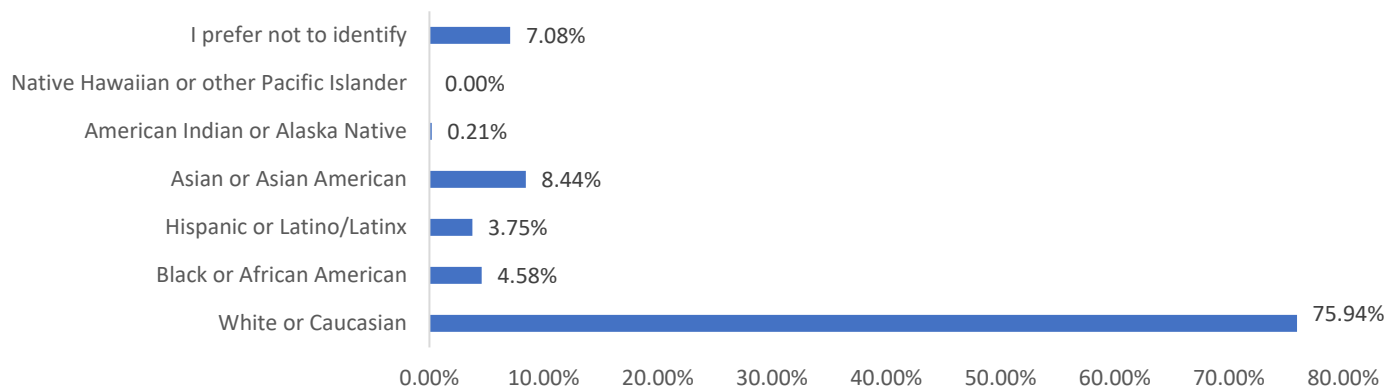
**Q23:** How would you rate this statement? My organization is committed to diversity.



**Q24:** What is your gender?



**Q25:** What is your ethnic background?



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